

The Critical Role of the Central Office 2009 Research Guidance

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January 28, 2008**

Outcomes

- **Clarify district priorities by**
 - **Reviewing the recent research on district effectiveness**
 - **Making recommendations for actions for superintendents and central office staff**

Biggest Challenge for Districts

- To provide district-wide leadership to substantially reform the quality of teaching and learning in classrooms across the district
 - True?
 - Not true?
 - Why?

Knapp, M. S. (2008). How can organizational and socio-cultural learning theories shed light on district instructional reform? *American Journal of Education*. Volume 114 (#4).

Central Office Administrators Are Crucial in the School Improvement Process

Maclver, M. A., & Farley- Ripple, E. (2008). Bringing the district back in: The role of the central office in instruction and achievement. *Educational Research Services (ERS)*.

Role of Central Office Guidance

“Clear expectations for instruction are as critical as clear expectations for student learning.”

David and Shields, cited in Supovitz, J. A. (2006). *The case for district-based reform*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

“To initiate and sustain progress, a district must first have a deliberate, well-articulated *strategy* for improving instruction.”

“Communication from district-level supervisors who oversee teacher leadership initiatives can influence principals’ knowledge and interactions... (and) can promote principals’ support for teacher leadership.”

Mangin, M. M. (2007). Facilitating elementary principals support for instructional teachers leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, Volume 43 (#3).

“Research (has) show(n) that districts can influence school improvement efforts, (however) ...

Mangin, M. M. (2007). Facilitating elementary principals support for instructional teachers leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, Volume 43 (#3).

“...weak guidance from knowledgeable central office staff undermines (the) school’s use of knowledge.”

Mangin, M. M. (2007). Facilitating elementary principals support for instructional teachers leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, Volume 43 (#3).

**School leaders will succeed
or fail depending on whether
they master the practice of
instructional improvement in
classrooms and schools**

Elmore, R. F. (2004). *School reform from the inside out*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Publishing Group.

2008 Guidance on District Leadership

Summary

- **Do a few well and deeply**
 - **Two to three focused goals**
 - **Focus on instruction**
 - **Implement well, including ongoing learning**
 - **Monitor well — indicators**
 - **Evaluate well — frequently shared assessments**

Eight Organizational Conditions Characterizing Effective Districts

- 1. A district-wide focus on student achievement and the quality of instruction**
- 2. District-wide use of data**
- 3. Targeted and phased focuses for improvement**
- 4. Investment in instructional leadership at the school and the district level**

Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (2008). Linking leadership to student learning: The contributions of leader efficacy. *Educational Administration Quarterly*. Volume 44 (#4).

Eight Organizational Conditions Characterizing Effective Districts

- 5. An emphasis on teamwork and professional community**
- 6. New approaches to board-district and district-school relations**
- 7. District culture**
- 8. District-sponsored teacher professional development**

Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (2008). Linking leadership to student learning: The contributions of leader efficacy. *Educational Administration Quarterly*. Volume 44 (#4).

Eight Organizational Conditions Characterizing Effective Districts

1. A district-wide focus on student achievement and the quality of instruction (e.g., goals focused on student learning, programs aligned with state standards, and support for the use of particular forms of instruction)

Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (2008). Linking leadership to student learning: The contributions of leader efficacy. *Educational Administration Quarterly*. Volume 44 (#4).

Eight Organizational Conditions Characterizing Effective Districts

2. District-wide use of data

**(e.g., capacity for reliably
assessing student learning, use of
such data and district decision
making)**

Eight Organizational Conditions Characterizing Effective Districts

3. Targeted and phased focuses for improvement

(e.g., improvement efforts focused on clear goals, targeting specific areas of the curriculum and lower-performing schools and classrooms)

Eight Organizational Conditions Characterizing Effective Districts

4. Investment in instructional leadership at the school and district level

**(e.g., training for principals in
school-improvement processes,
systematic and written appraisals
of principals' performance)**

Eight Organizational Conditions Characterizing Effective Districts

5. An emphasis on teamwork and professional community

(e.g., foster the flow of ideas through the district, chances for principals to share knowledge with peers, support for teacher collaboration in schools)

Eight Organizational Conditions Characterizing Effective Districts

6. New approaches to board- district and district-school relations

**(e.g., find appropriate balance
between local autonomy and
central control)**

Eight Organizational Conditions Characterizing Effective Districts

7. District culture

(e.g., widespread understanding of district goals, values of community partnerships, and recognition of contributions)

Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (2008). Linking leadership to student learning: The contributions of leader efficacy. *Educational Administration Quarterly*. Volume 44 (#4).

Eight Organizational Conditions Characterizing Effective Districts

8. District-sponsored teacher professional development

**(e.g., a focus on district priorities,
intensive teacher development
opportunities)**

While all eight district conditions are significantly correlated to leader efficacy, the strongest relationship is with the district's expressed concern for student achievement and the quality of instruction

Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (2008). Linking leadership to student learning: The contributions of leader efficacy. *Educational Administration Quarterly*. Volume 44 (#4).

Primary Strategies to Achieve These Eight Outcomes

Strategies

- **Use data well**
- **Focus your goals**
- **Share instructional practices**
- **Implement deeply**
- **Monitor and provide feedback and support**

Strategy # 1

Use Data

- Use data to establish improvement goals
- Use ongoing data to monitor
 - Implementation
 - Impact on student learning

The effect sizes of principals promoting and participating directly with teachers in the formal and informal learning of the use of data to influence appropriate instructional activities was more than twice as powerful as any other leadership dimension

OLAC Superintendents Data & the Decision Making

Essential Skills & Practices

- **Use data to set performance targets for each building and grade level**

OLAC Superintendents Data & the Decision Making

Essential Skills & Practices

- **Ensure the skillful and accurate use of data by providing ongoing training and support throughout the organization**
- **Expect district administrators and principals to model and monitor use of data to inform instructional decisions**

OLAC Superintendents Data & the Decision Making

Essential Skills & Practices

- **Establish as a part of the central office services to regularly review and analyze building-level data**

Superintendent Instruction & the Learning Process

Essential Skills and Practices

- Require the frequent use of collaboratively-developed common formative classroom assessments

***This is the ongoing data that
BLTs and the DLTs review!***

What Data Do You Collect and Analyze in an Ongoing Way ?

Share with Your Partner

Strategy # 2

Focused Goals

- **Focus, focus, focus**
- **Identify and focus on a limited number of goals and strategies**
- **Maintain the goals over time**
- **Go deeper into the implementation**

OLAC Superintendents Focused Goal-Setting Process

Introduction

- Importance of identifying — based on a review of data — a limited number of goals and a limited number of strategies for each goal

OLAC Superintendents Focused Goal-Setting Process

Introduction

- Importance of aligning district work with district goals for instruction and achievement (i.e., non-negotiable goals stable/sustainable over an extended period of time)

OLAC Superintendents Focused Goal-Setting Process

Importance of reducing the number of initiatives to align improvement efforts on a district-wide basis around two or three focused goals directly related to identified needs

Ohio Leadership Development Framework-OLAC. (2008). Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA. & The OH Department of Education.) Columbus, OH.

OLAC Superintendents Focused Goal-Setting Process

Importance of developing one plan, rather than multiple and often contradictory plans, aligned with the district goals

District Goals

- How many people can articulate the district goals and strategies?
- How successful have you been at implementation?
- Talk to your partner

Strategy # 3

Focus on Shared Instructional Practices

- **Get clarity on “high-quality instruction”**
- **Focus on high-leverage strategies**

“Clear expectations for instruction are as critical as clear expectations for student learning.”

David and Shields cited in Supovitz, J. A. (2006). *The case for district-based reform*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

**It is essential for school leaders to
foster relentless consistency
relative to those practices that are
known to be effective —**

**These practices come to have the
status of being “non-negotiable”**

**We need more assertive principals
in this regard**

Transformation leadership was
three times less impactful on
student-learning outcomes than
instructional or pedagogical
leadership

It is specific, targeted actions
that count

**Most schools cannot improve
instruction and achievement
without some outside help,
whether from the district office or
some other external partner**

**Maclver, M. A., & Farley- Ripple, E. (2008). Bringing the district back in:
The role of the central office in instruction and achievement. *Educational
Research Services (ERS)***

Example —THE BIG THREE

Power Strategies



- Compare and contrast
- Justify answers
- Focus on content vocabulary

Strategy # 4

Implement Deeply

- **Implement the strategies deeply at the 90-percent level**

**We Have a Significant
Problem with
Following-Through**

The Knowing-Doing Gap

- We know more than we do already
- We have started more good initiatives than we have stuck with
- Data or evidence is not enough by itself

Effective Teachers

It appears that the most important difference between the most and least effective classrooms is the teacher, but the most important variable appears to be what they do, rather than what they know

**So if we are serious about
raising student achievement,
we must focus on helping
teachers change what they do
in classrooms**

It's Not Just Teachers There Is A Similar "GAP" In Follow-Through

- For principals**
- For central office staff**
- For superintendents**

Effective vs. Ineffective Principals

- Both tend to promote the same reforms — e.g., looking at data, teacher teams, etc.
- The difference is follow-through — Effective principals closely monitor to ensure follow-through

Superintendents and Central Office in Successful Districts

- Were active in monitoring curriculum and instruction in classrooms and schools
- Exercised tighter controls over decisions about what would be taught and what would be monitored

**“The consistent use of what
is already known
would lead to significant
improvements in leadership,
teaching, and
learning.”**

Sparks, D. (2005). *Leading for results: Transforming teaching, learning, and relationships in schools*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

**We Close the Achievement Gap
by
Closing the Implementation Gap**

Strategy # 5

Monitoring, Feedback, & Support

- Identify and collect implementation indicators
- Develop a deeper sense of inquiry
 - Identify exemplars
 - Provide feedback and support
 - Transparency

**The superintendent and staff
identify the strengths and
weaknesses throughout the
district and work with the
schools to improve their
performance**

New Forms of Accountability

**Internal, Reciprocal,
Holistic Accountability**

1. Internal Accountability Precedes External Accountability

Elmore, R. F. (2004). *School reform from the inside out: Policy, practice, and performance*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

**Schools are unlikely to
successfully respond to any
external demands for
demonstrable student
performance unless
they have their own internal
environment for holding people
accountable**

**Simmons, J. (2006). *Breaking through: Transforming urban schools*.
Amsterdam, NY: Teachers College Press.**

**School personnel must share
a coherent, explicit set of
norms and expectations
about what a good school
looks like before they can
use signals from the outside
to improve student learning**

Elmore, R. F. (2004). *School reform from the inside out: Policy, practice, and performance*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Developing Internal Accountability

- Internal accountability consists of clear expectations about what constitutes high-quality instruction
 - Classroom by classroom
 - Subject by subject
 - Grade by grade

Internal accountability to one another is the most powerful sources of continuous improvement in teaching and learning

Sparks, D. (2005). *Leading for results: Transforming teaching, learning, and relationships in schools*. Thousands Oaks, CA: Corwin.

2. Accountability is Reciprocal

Turn the central office into a support center rather than a command and control center

Simmons, J. (2006). *Breaking through: Transforming urban schools*. Amsterdam, NY: Teachers College Press.

**Design everyone's work
primarily in terms of
improving the capacity and
performance of someone else**

Elmore, R. F. (2004). *School reform from the inside out: Policy, practice, and performance*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Reciprocal Accountability

- The central office is accountable for making sure schools have the training, support, and tools to do their jobs well

“The objective is not to identify whom to blame for a problem, it is to find out where the system failed.”

(Liker & Meier, 2007, p 289.)

“We cannot develop capacity through criticism, punitive consequences, or judgementalism.”

Fullan, M. (2008). *The six secrets of change: What the best leaders do to help their organizations survive and thrive*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

Negative Monitoring Does Not Work

Fullan, M. (2008). *The six secrets of change: What the best leaders do to help their organizations survive and thrive*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

Transparency Rules

Transparency means openness about the results. It also means openness about what practices are most strongly connected to successful outcomes.

3. Accountability is Holistic

Two Types of Data

Effect Data: i.e., the outcomes, student achievement results from state, district, school, grade level or classroom initiated — formative and summative

Cause Data: i.e., What caused these outcomes? Information based on actions of the adults in the system

Reeves, D. R. (2004). *Accountability in action*. Englewood, CO: Lead and Learn Press.

Reeves, D. R. (2004). *Accountability for learning*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

**Monitoring and Feedback
Are Critical at All Levels**

A District Example
Norfolk Public Schools, VA

The Story Started with Literacy

- Question from superintendent
- What percentage of our teachers fully implement the K-2 reading program on a daily basis?
 - Staff answer — About 75 percent
 - Question — How do you know it is 75 percent?
 - Answer — It's an educated guess
 - Actual implementation after study=50 percent

Determining the Implementation Level

- Started with a high-leverage practice required by the district in all classrooms
- Developed the observation rubric from the requirements in the reading plan
- Piloted the instrument and made revisions based on feedback
- Trained a team of observers
- Collected the data and generated reports

Data Collection Tool

- **Implementation of District Reading Plan — Comparative Report**
- **Divided into major components from the Reading Plan**
- **Contained specific “look fors”**
- **Showed progress over time**
- **Clearly identified specific areas for growth and strengths**

Review Monitoring Handouts

Review Monitoring Handouts

- Handout #1: Notice how well-defined their reading plan is
- What do you see
 - At the beginning?
 - Over time?

Review Monitoring Handouts

- Handout # 2
- At the grade 3-5 level they were focused on “Writer’s Workshop” implementation
- Notice how well-defined their strategies are
- How well-developed are your strategies?

Review Monitoring Handouts

- Handout # 3
- At the secondary level they were focused on “questioning strategies”
- Notice how well-defined their strategies are
- How well-developed are your strategies?

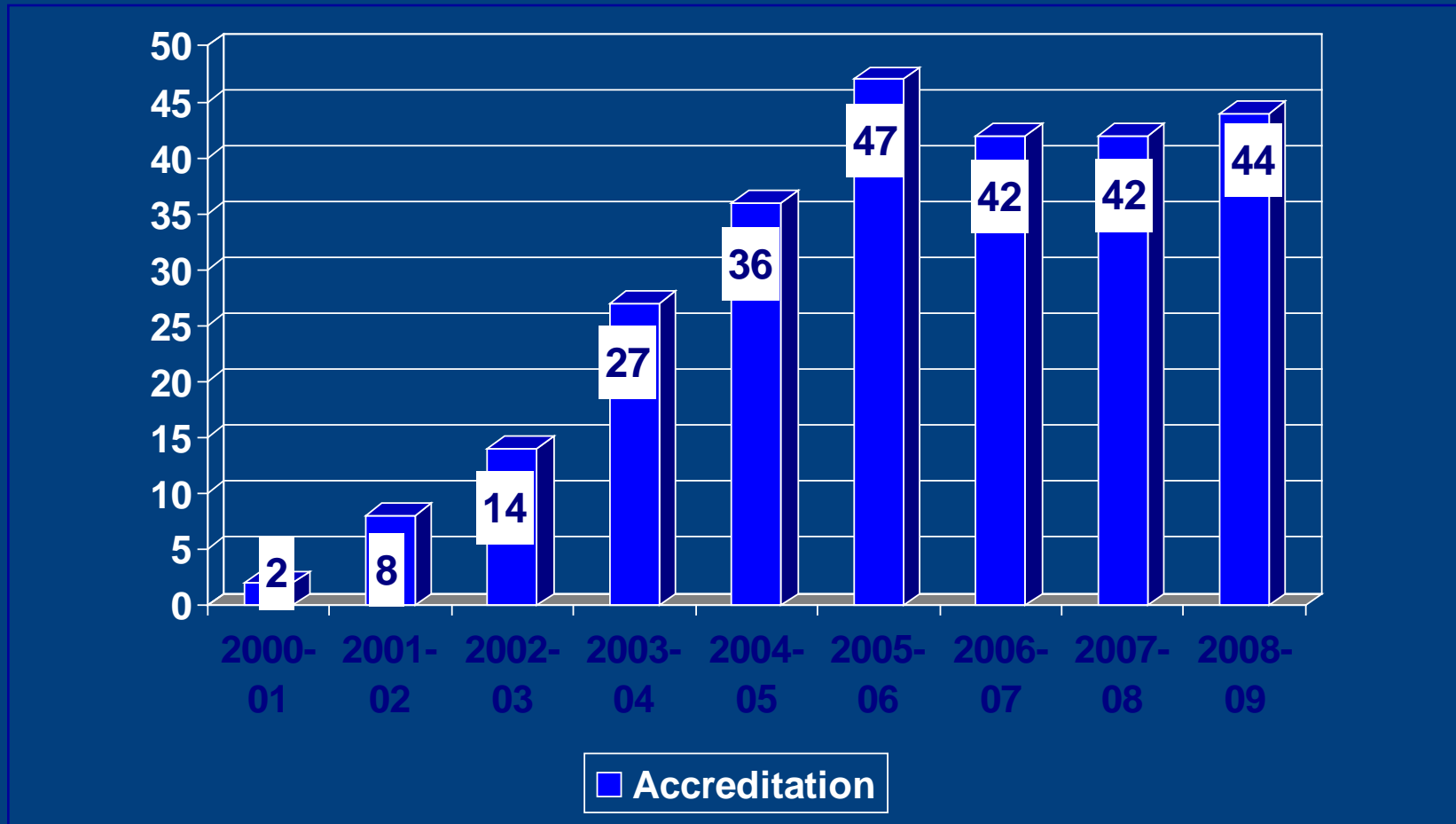
Review Monitoring Handouts

- Handout # 4
- How could you use the implementation-gap organizer for your initiatives?

Data Snapshot

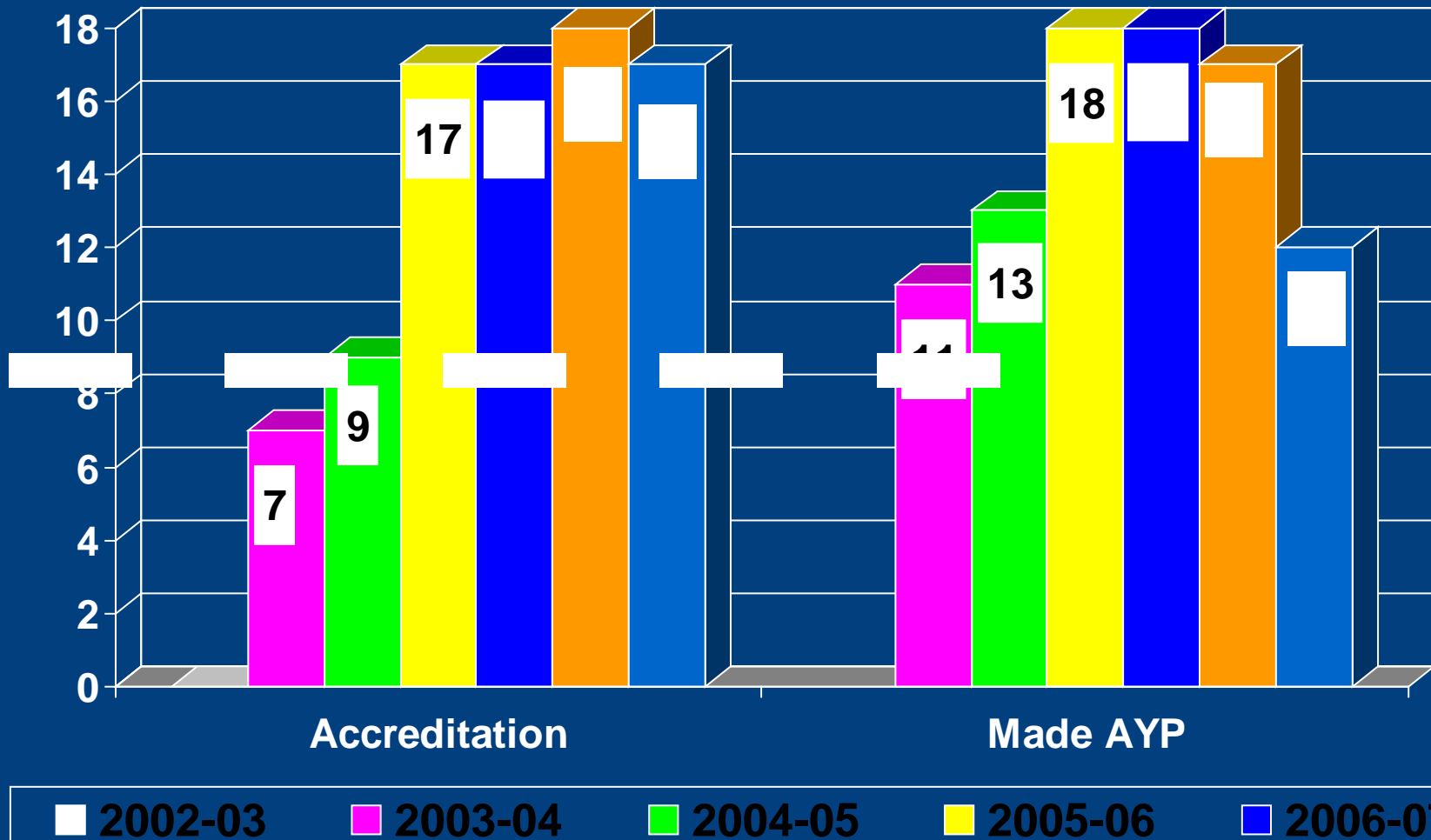


Virginia State Accreditation (Norfolk — 49 Schools)



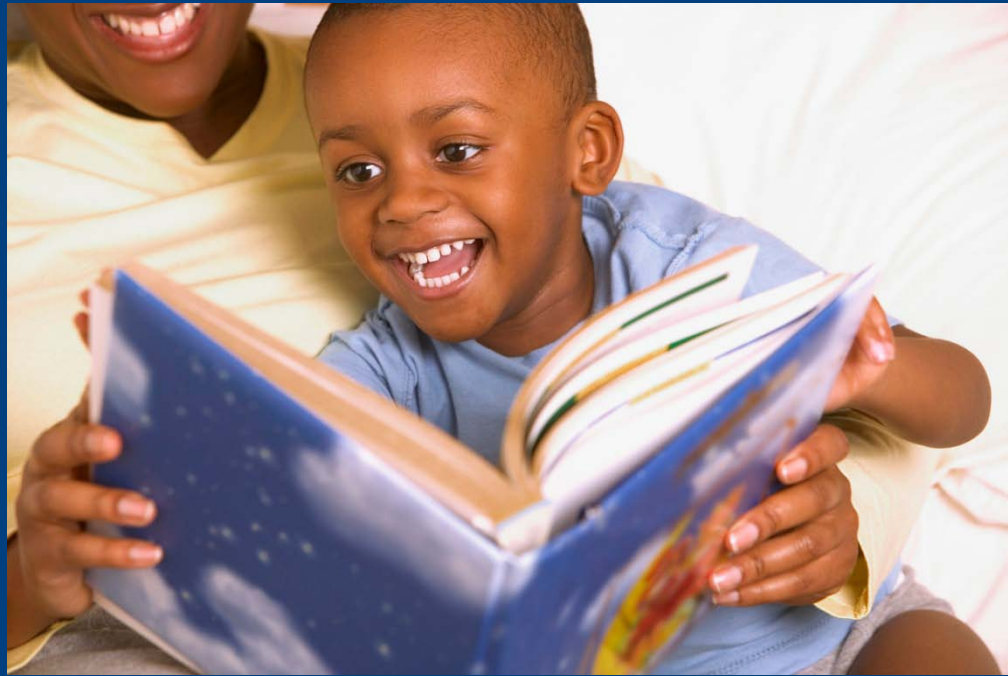
O'Konek, L. (2008). Norfolk Public School District, Norfolk, VA.

Virginia State Accreditation NCLB – Adequate Yearly Progress (Title I Schools - 18 Schools)

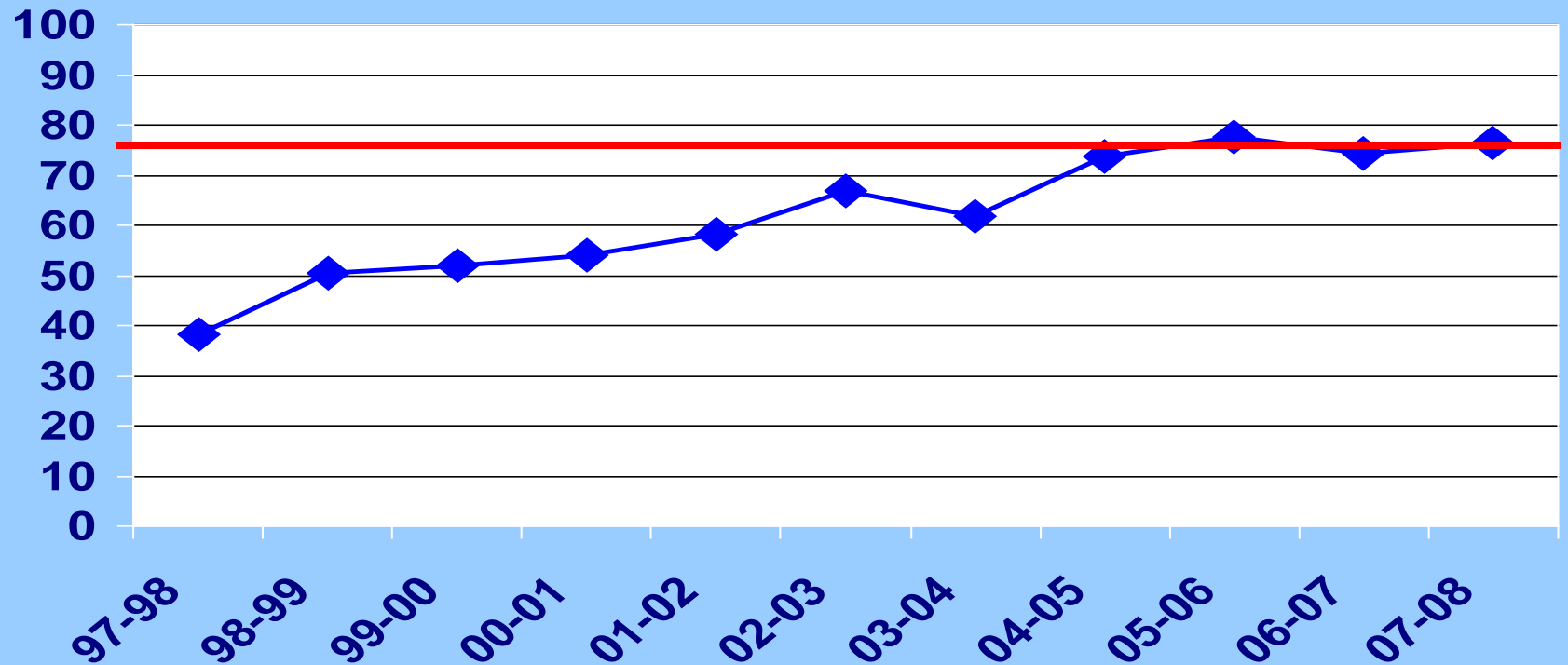
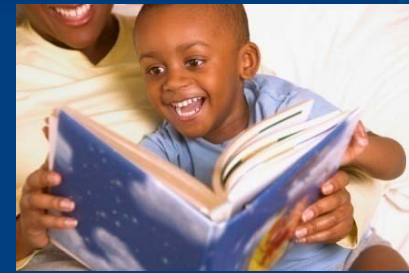


AYP and accreditation status based on data from previous school year

Reading — Grades 3 and 5

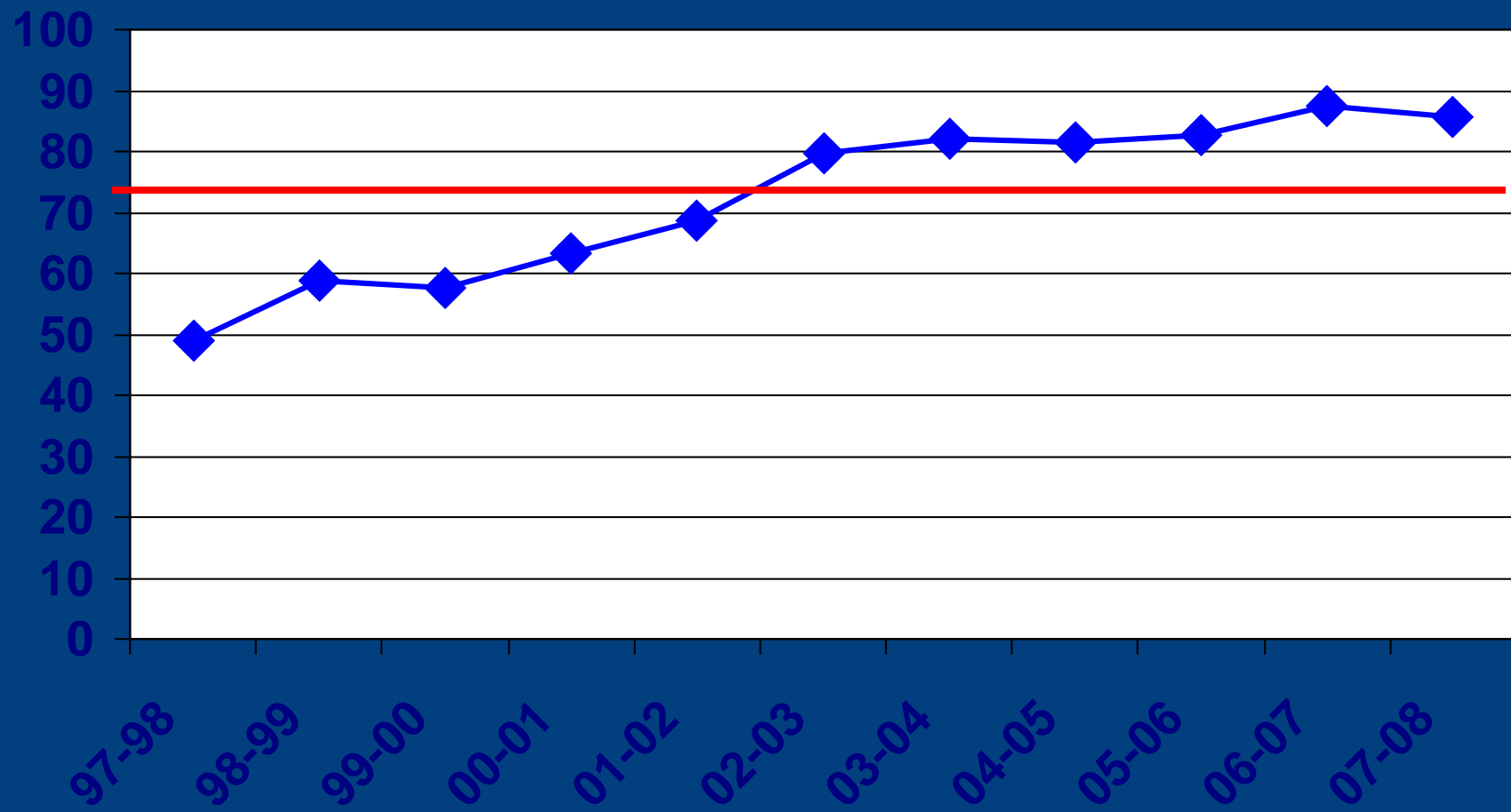


English Reading — Grade 3



O'Konek, L. (2008). Norfolk Public School District, Norfolk, VA.

English: Reading — Grade 5



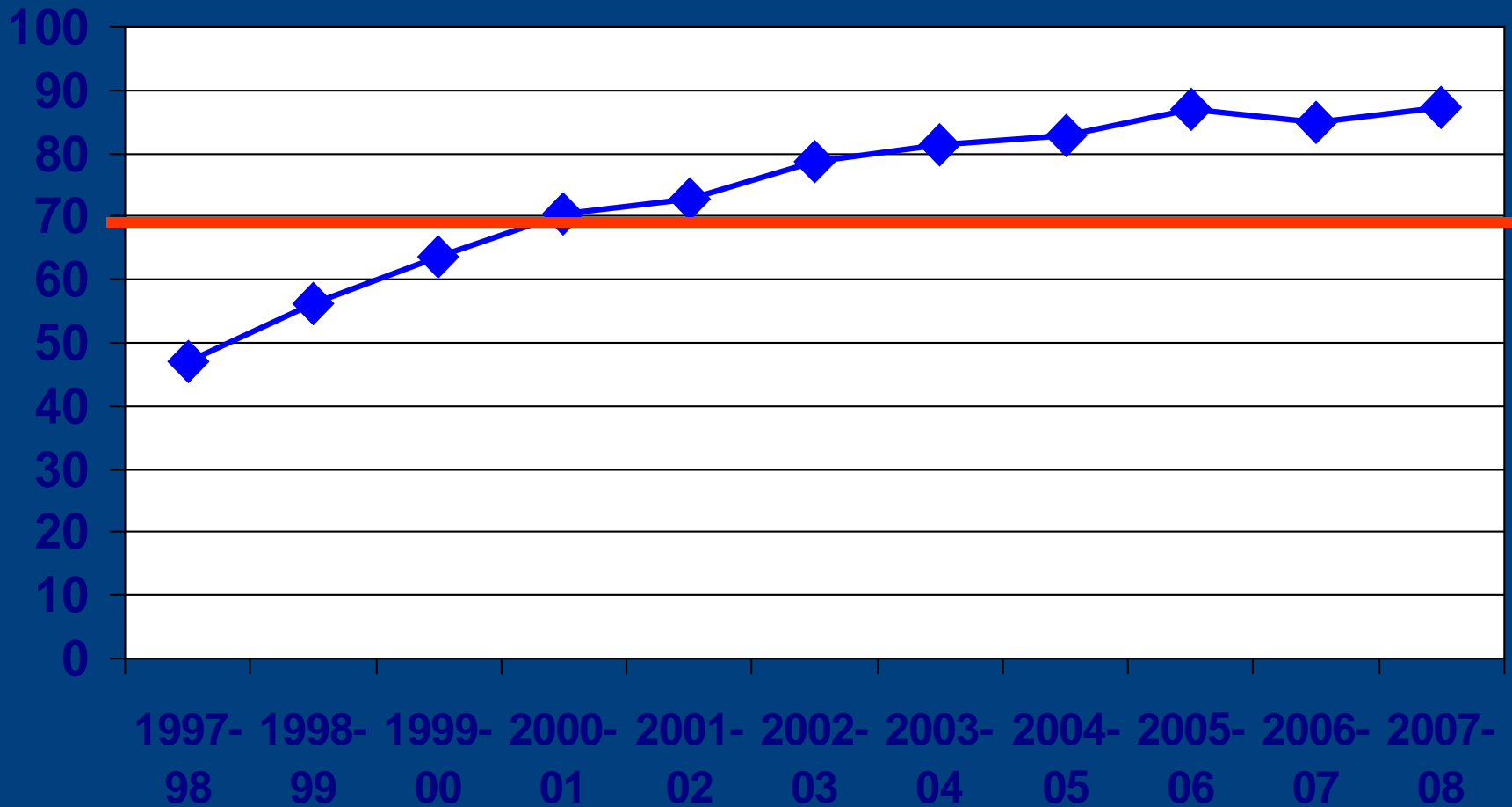
O’Konek, L. (2008). Norfolk Public School District, Norfolk, VA.

Mathematics

Grades 3 and 5

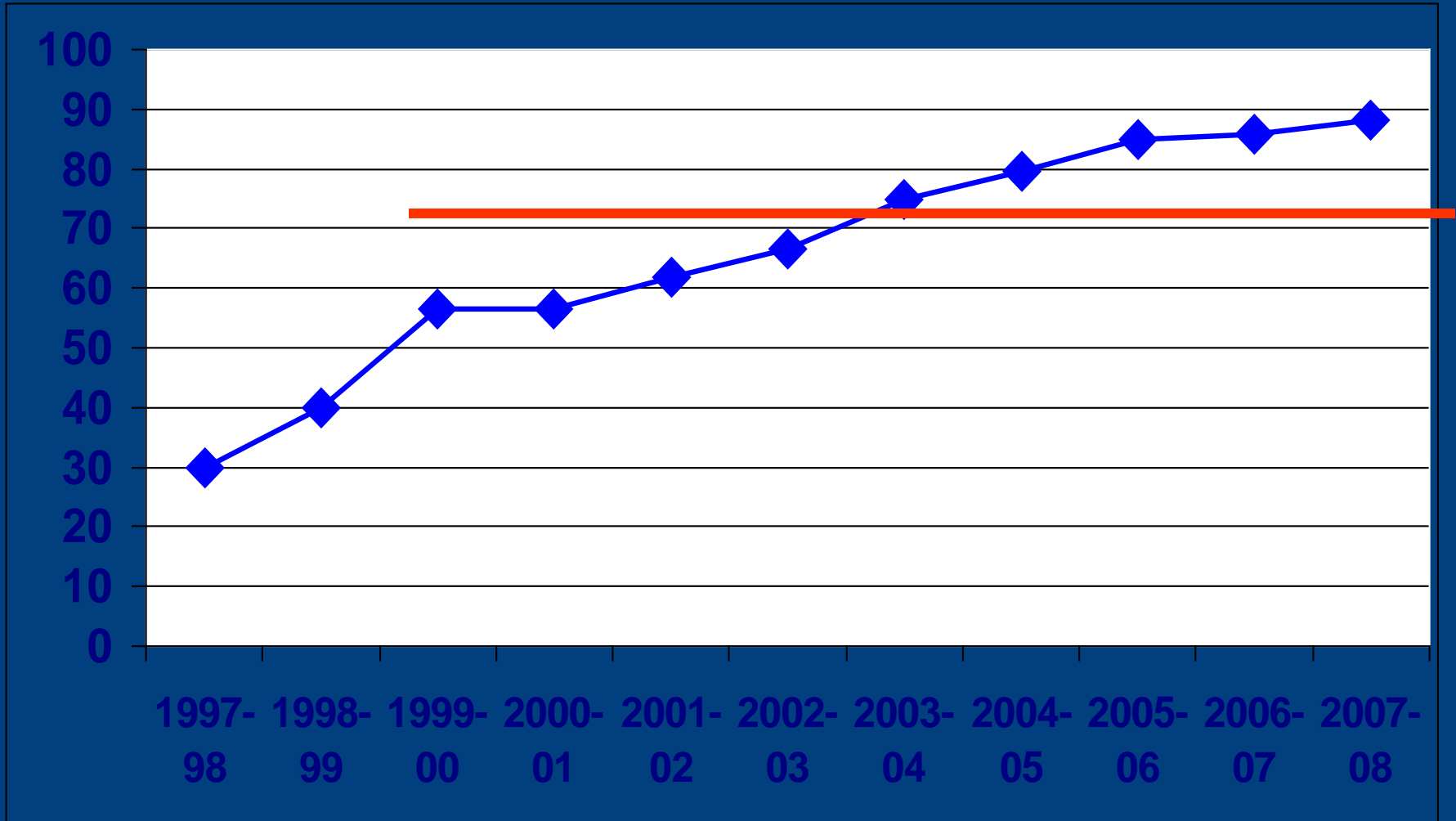


Mathematics — Grade 3



O'Konek, L. (2008). Norfolk Public School District, Norfolk, VA.

Mathematics Grade 5



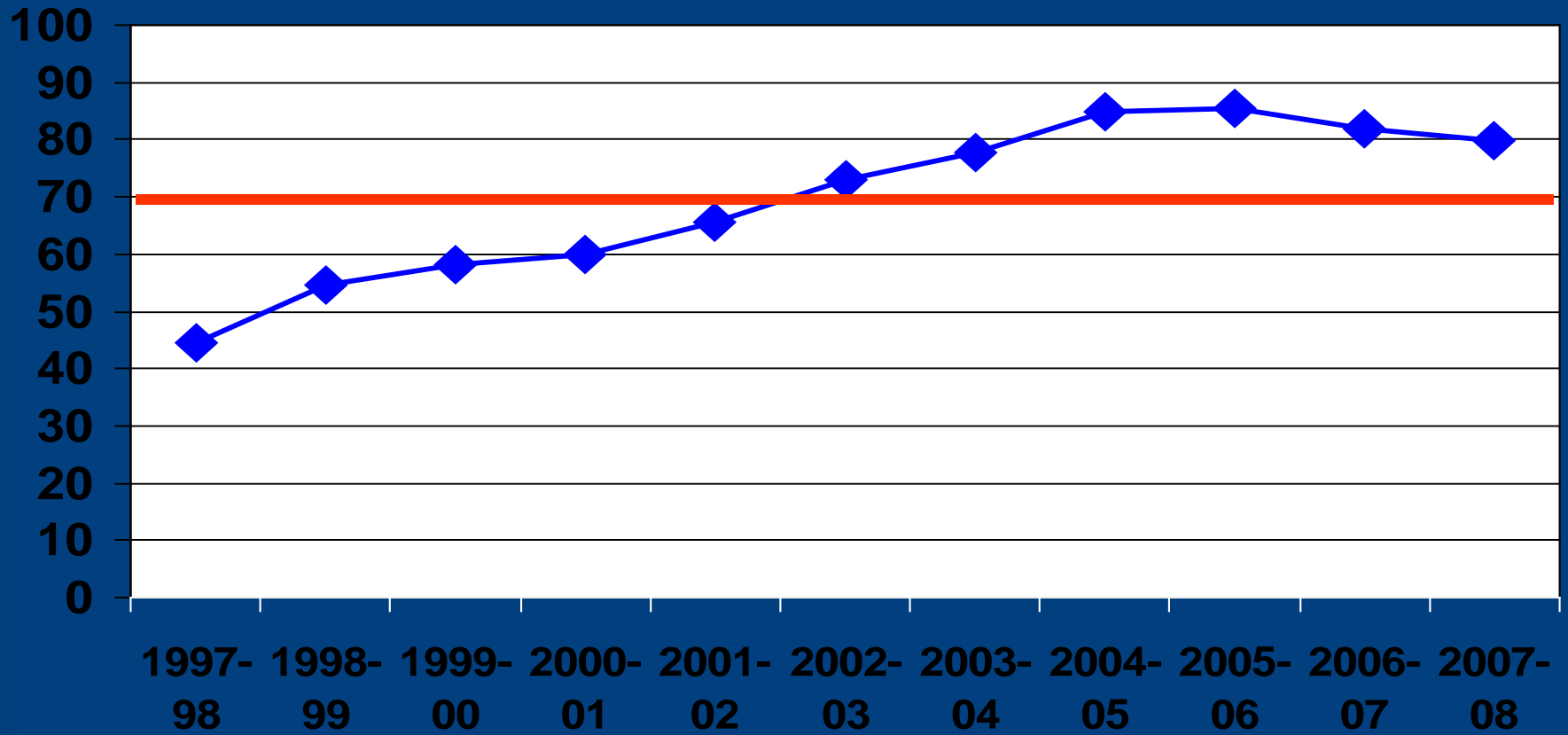
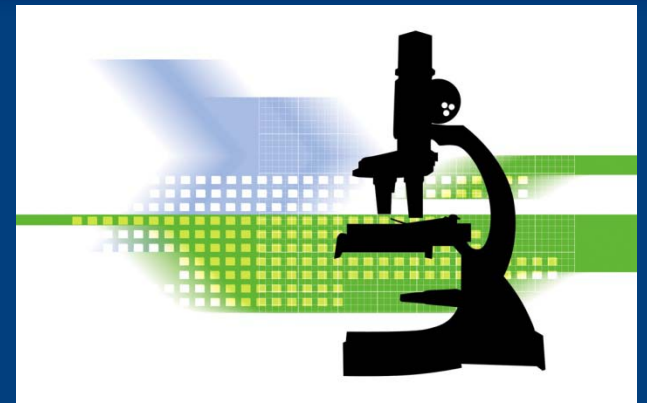
O'Konek, L. (2008). Norfolk Public School District, Norfolk, VA.

Science

Grades 3 and 5

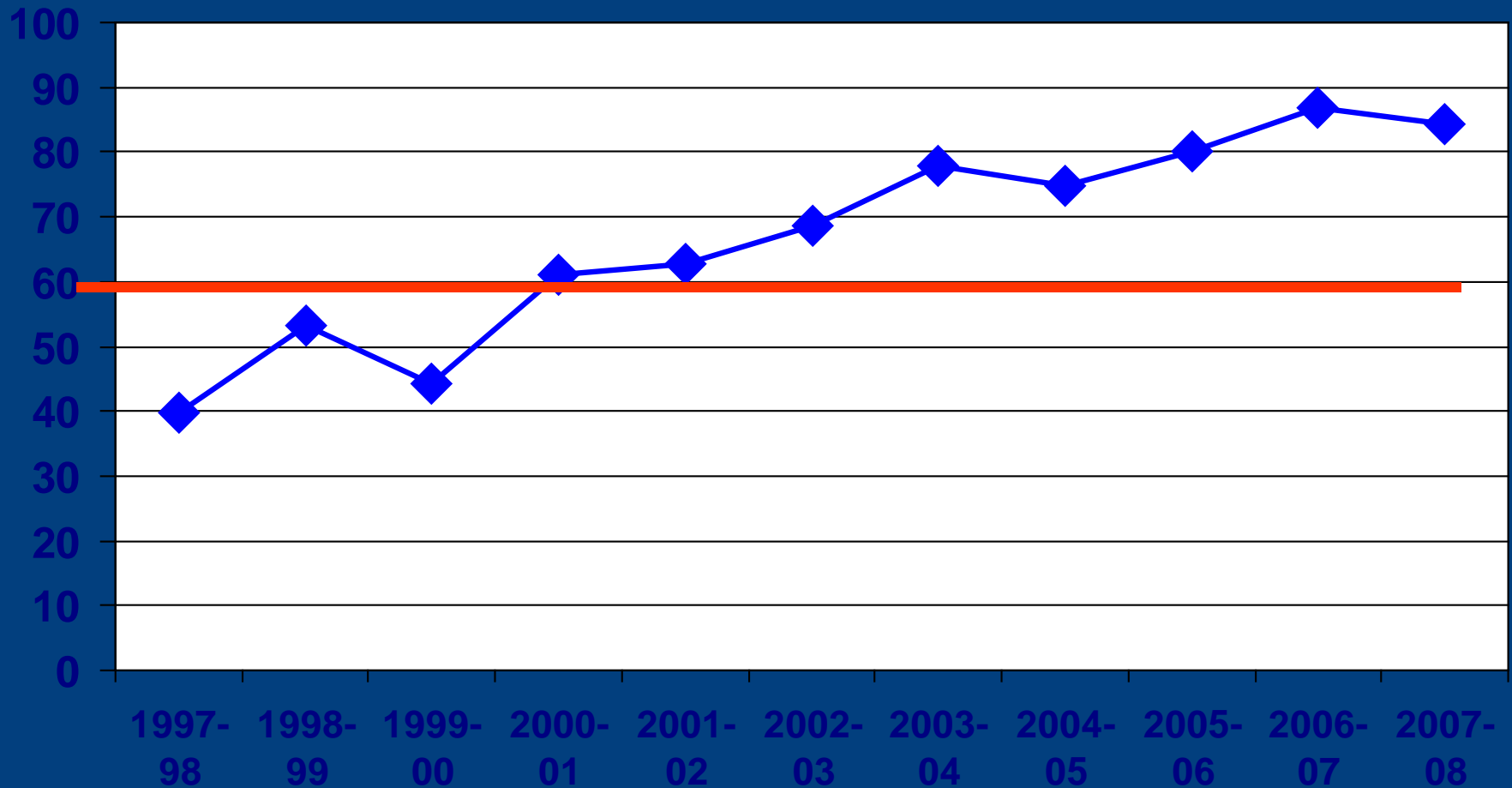
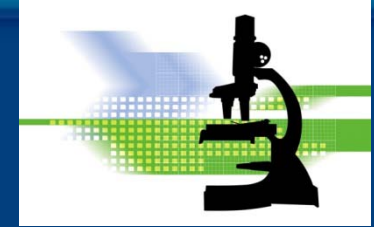


Science — Grade 3



O'Konek, L. (2008). Norfolk Public School District, Norfolk, VA.

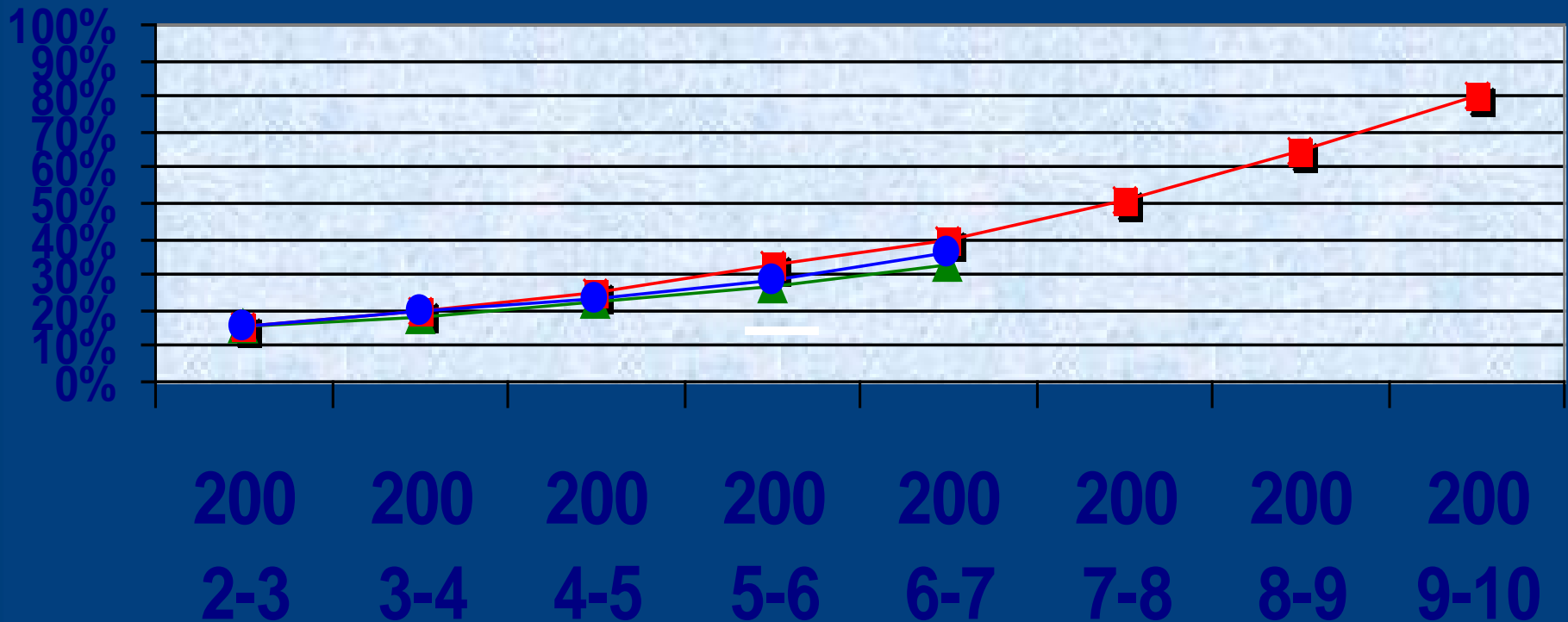
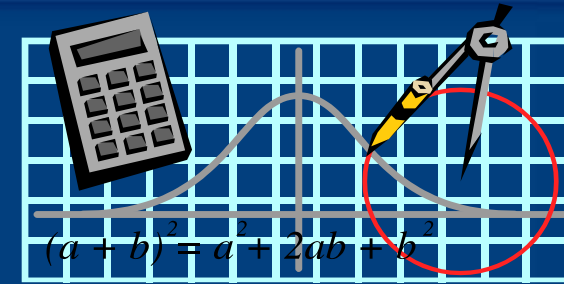
Science — Grade 5



O’Konek, L. (2008). Norfolk Public School District, Norfolk, VA.

Middle School Math

Middle School Algebra District Benchmarks



- Benchmark of % passing with "C" or better
- % passed

Final Words

Central office leaders should ask themselves “to what extent are we as a school system engaging in the development not only of teachers, principals, and other school staff, but also our central office staff as central agents in strengthening teaching and learning district-wide?”

Honig, M. I. (2008.) District central offices as learning organizations: How socio-cultural and organizational learning theories elaborate district central office administrators' participation in teaching and learning improvement efforts. *The American Journal of Education*, Volume 114 (#4).

District Role

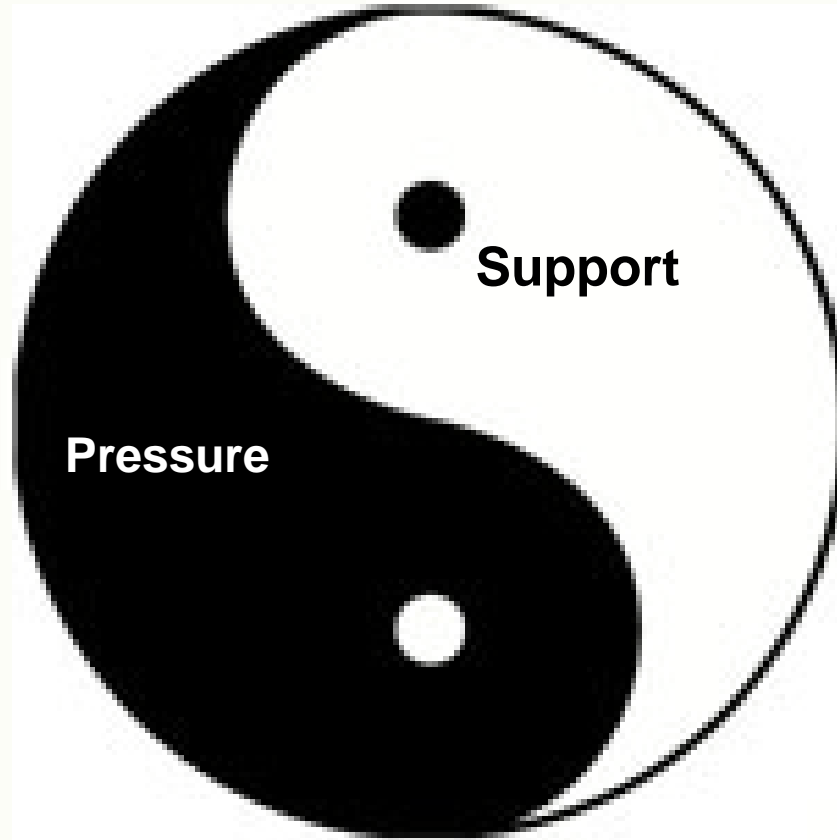
The most serious hurdle facing instructional leadership is whether districts are willing to reorganize schools such that principals have more time for this work

**“Improving practice can
only be done by teachers,
not to teachers.”**

Wurtzel, J. (2007). The professional, personified. *Journal of Staff Development, Volume 28 (#4)*.

“Organizations are ultimately only as effective as the promises made and kept by the individuals within them.”

Sparks, D. (2005). *Leading for results: Transforming teaching, learning, and relationships in Schools*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.



Support

Pressure

Your Priorities

- **Limit the number of goals and strategies—go deeper**
- **Focus on instruction**
- **Implementation matters—monitor follow through**
 - **Create internal reciprocal, and holistic accountability**
- **Evaluate student progress frequently**

Evaluation and Feedback

Your ideas and reflections are important to us. Please take time to complete the short evaluation form that we reviewed at the beginning of this seminar.

The Leadership and Learning Center

866.399.6019

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The
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and Learning
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