

# Memorandum

Date: 10/22/2009

To: Eric Witherspoon, Superintendent

Cc: Judy Levinson, Director of Research, Evaluation & Assessment  
Regina Armour, Literacy Coordinator

From: Laura Cooper, Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum & Instruction

RE: Report on the Reading Programs

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The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the activities of the reading intervention programs. One of the Board goals for 2008-2010 was to design and conduct an ongoing evaluation of the Literacy Program. The Literacy Program at ETHS has two components: Reading Across the Content Areas (Achievement Now) and Reading Programs. In the spring of 2009, the Board of Education received a report about progress on Reading Across the Content Areas (Achievement Now). At that time, data were not available for the Reading Programs because grades and pre-post data were not collected until the end of the academic year.

This report focuses on the Reading Programs, providing data on several aspects of student achievement, including attitudes toward reading, strategy use, course grades, and pre-post data on the Gates-Macginitie Reading Test. The report concludes with the program changes that we have made and are making based on upon a review of the data.

At the Board Meeting Regina Armour, Literacy Coordinator, will join me to present the highlights of the report and answer questions.

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**READING PROGRAMS AT  
EVANSTON TOWNSHIP HIGH  
SCHOOL**

Report to the Board of Education District 202

Regina Armour, Literacy Coordinator

Judith Levinson, Director of Research, Evaluation & Assessment

October 26, 2009

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## Part I: Overview

The Reading Programs serve students who enter high school reading below grade level. Courses are designed at the freshman and sophomore levels to intensively support students’ reading development so they experience success in their other courses and are prepared to be successful learners, workers, and citizens.

Our Reading Programs are informed by the national research that is available on adolescent literacy. According to a report released recently from the Carnegie Corporation’s Council on Advancing Adolescent Literacy entitled, **Reading in the Disciplines: The Challenges of Adolescent Literacy**, the sad truth is that 25-35 percent of the students entering high school have major deficits relating to reading and comprehending grade level texts. According to the Carnegie report, deficits in reading nationwide primarily stem from an underdeveloped skill set in reading comprehension, inadequate vocabulary development, insufficient prior knowledge, poor fluency and little or no motivation to read. Of that 25-35 percent, approximately 2-5 percent of students currently read two to three years below grade level. The data in this report reflect some of the same national patterns in student reading performance.

## Part II: The Reading Program: Course Descriptions and Demographic Data

The program is comprised of a sequence of courses that provide reading instruction and show students how to apply reading skills in their other courses. The program is intended to “catch up” many students so they will exit from the program at the end of the freshman or sophomore year. However, some students require ongoing support. The Reading Program is comprised of the following components:

Target Student Population	Course Description
9 <sup>th</sup> grade: 1% - 29 <sup>th</sup> percentile (placement determined by EXPLORE & MAP)	Reading Enriched/Read 180: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two elective credits</li> <li>• Two-period class</li> </ul> 1 Humanities Enriched: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two credits – one in English and one in history</li> <li>• Two-period class</li> </ul>
9 <sup>th</sup> grade: 30 <sup>th</sup> % - 49 <sup>th</sup> percentile (placement determined by EXPLORE & MAP)	Freshman Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One elective credit</li> <li>• One period class</li> </ul>
10 <sup>th</sup> grade: (placement determined on performance in freshman humanities enriched)	2 Humanities Enriched: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two credits – one in English and one in History</li> <li>• Two-period class</li> </ul>
Special Education (placement determined by EXPLORE, MAP & IEP team recommendation)	Reading (System 44): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two elective credits</li> <li>• Two-period class</li> </ul> Reading (Read 180): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two elective credits</li> <li>• Two-period class</li> </ul> 10/12 Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One elective credit</li> <li>• One period class</li> </ul>

In 2008-09 there were a total of 186 students enrolled in reading programs (Read 180 = 65; Sped Read 180 = 29; bilingual Read 180 = 10; Freshman Reading = 55; and 2 Humanities Enriched = 27). The majority of students were Black or Hispanic (87%) and from low-income households (73%). Approximately 32 percent had IEP's and five percent were bilingual students.

### **Part III: 2008-2009 Performance**

This section summarizes data from the student survey, grades, and measures of reading comprehension.

#### **Pre-Post Test Data on Reading**

Teachers met in the fall of 2008 and set a target for student growth. This target was for students to show more than a year's growth in terms of grade equivalents both in vocabulary and comprehension. In grade equivalent terms, "1.00" is one year's growth; ".1" is one month's growth.

**Gates-McGinitie Data.** For the Gates-McGinitie Test, students were tested in October of 2008 and then again in May of 2009. Appendix A includes charts that show the change in grade equivalent scores from pre- to post-test. The data indicate that:

#### *Freshman Reading-READ 180- 2 Humanities Enriched:*

- For vocabulary, a greater percentage of students made more than a year's growth in 2008-09 compared to 2007-08: 44% for Frosh Reading; 28% for READ 180; and 50% for 2 Humanities Enriched.
- For comprehension, the percentage of 2008-09 students making more than a year's growth was slightly higher than in 2007-08 except for students in 2 Humanities Enriched which was lower.
- The percentage of students making "0" or negative growth in vocabulary decreased from 2007-08 to 2008-09. (It is unclear whether students actually lose ground or do not take the post-test seriously.)

#### *Special Education and Bilingual READ 180:*

2008-09 was the first year that Gates-McGinitie pre-post data were collected for students in special education and bilingual READ 180 classes.

- Special education students showed a higher rate of growth in vocabulary than in comprehension, with 52% making more than a year's growth.
- Students in bilingual READ 180 showed more growth in comprehension than vocabulary, with 20% making more than a year's growth and 50% making between one month and a year's growth.

**SRI Data.** The Read 180 program also uses the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) to monitor student progress. Scores are reported as lexiles. Lexiles range from 10 to 1700, and expected annual growth for high school students in the READ 180 program is 50 points or more. Appendix A includes results from the SRI data. Data for READ 180 bilingual students are reported for the first time this year.

- A little over half of READ 180 students improved 50 lexile points in 2008-09, down about 5% from the previous year.
- The percent of students making 50 points or greater in special education READ 180 improved from 62.1% to 66.7%.
- 60% of Bilingual READ 180 students improved 50 points or greater.
- For all three programs, a percentage of students showed negative growth, with a third of READ 180 students showing the most negative growth rate.

## Course Grades

Appendix B provides the percentage of D/F/NC grades from 2005-06 through 2008-09 for READ 180, Freshman Reading, and 2 Humanities Enriched.

- In English:
  - The percentage of D/F/NC's increased from 2007-08 to 2008-09 for READ 180, Freshman Reading and 2 Humanities Enriched.
  - The percentage of low grades for 2 Humanities Enriched English was extremely high both semesters (85% and 78% respectively).
  - The percentage of D/F/NC grades for READ 180 decreased from 47% to 37% between first and second semester.
- In history:
  - The percentage of D/F/NC grades decreased between 2007-08 and 2008-09 for students in READ 180.
  - The percentage of D/F/NC grades for Freshman Reading students slightly increased in first semester 2008-09 compared to first semester of 2007-08 although this percentage decreased for second semester of 2008-09.
  - Almost 70% of 2 Humanities Enriched students received D/F/NC grades in second semester of 2008-09.
- Most of the READ 180 special education and bilingual students received a grade of C or better in English and history.

## Data from the Special Student Reading Survey

The Special Student Reading Survey includes several types of items. As in past years, one section of the survey focused on student attitudes toward reading (Appendix C, Part 1). The last time students took these survey items was in 2006-07.

- Generally, the responses of special education students were less positive than the regular READ 180 and Freshman Reading students for the 2008-09 year.
- Students reported that they have a lot of reading materials at home. Yet only about half responded they like to read when they have free time. Furthermore, students' responses suggest that the difficulty of the books is not what keeps them from reading.

Another section asked questions on teacher encouragement and some miscellaneous items including questions on time students spent reading and their understanding of texts in various core subjects (Appendix C, Part 2).

- A large percentage of students felt their reading teacher knows what they are capable of doing academically.
- Freshman Reading and special education students reported being congratulated more on an academic achievement than students in READ 180.
- A larger percentage of READ 180 students in 2008-09 reported they spend more time reading silently in school compared to 2006-07.
- Students' responses indicate that they have more trouble reading the material for Science than for English, history, or math.
- Compared to 2006-07, a larger percentage of 2008-09 READ 180 Special Education students report they understand what they read in math (72% vs. 25%).

Based on feedback from Jimi Cannon, our literacy consultant, we revised a series of questions from prior surveys to collect more focused feedback (Appendix C, Part 3). About 50% or more of students indicated they were using the following strategies:

- Finding the main idea
- Re-reading a passage to make sense of difficult text
- Adjusting their reading pace
- Using pictures, illustrations, and graphs
- Using headings and subheadings in textbooks
- Using the author's clues to make inferences
- Asking themselves questions to help stay involved and check their understanding
- Setting a purpose before reading

The responses to the remaining items suggest that the majority of students have not yet learned to self-monitor in these areas:

- Using connections in their lives to help them understand
- Thinking about what they already know to help them understand
- Monitoring themselves for words they do not understand
- Checking for both clues and word parts they know
- Taking notes or highlighting important information and then writing a brief summary

#### **Part IV: Looking forward to 2009-2010 – An Action Summary**

All of the student data collected was shared with the teachers and department chairs in a meeting over the summer and in a follow-up this fall. These data are driving the specific changes in our program already made for this year; these data are also being used to focus our professional development work and program development with Jimi Cannon. This information has the following implications:

- Reading instruction should be more directly connected to the classroom instruction in English and History. For example, pre-teaching of the reading content might help to improve course grades and reduce the large percentage of D/F grades.
- We are making progress on student strategy use. This year we should focus more on the five strategies that the data indicated the majority of students reported not utilizing.
- The data provide confirmation that students have difficulty reading science material and that our literacy efforts in the science department are important to continue.
- We need to continue to find opportunities for students to read in school and to encourage reading outside of school. Students indicate they like to read and have reading materials at home. It may be that students do not put time aside to read.

From what we have learned from the data, national research and teacher experiences, we are already implementing the following:

- A new Scholastic program called *System 44* (named for the 44 sounds in the alphabet) that address the small percentage of students who need explicit instruction in phonics and basic word identification
- More intensive coaching support to the reading program teachers by the literacy coordinator and by Jimi Cannon on strategies and methods for one-on-one student interventions
- A newly revised Freshman Reading curriculum to more closely support students in being successful in 1 Humanities

- More explicit instruction that does not just teach students reading comprehension skills and build vocabulary, but also pushes them to identify themselves as *readers*. (Teachers and coaches will explicitly model what good readers and writers do.)
- More reading time in all reading classes to further develop the independent reader by having students wrestle with challenging questions while teachers monitor student comprehension

Over the course of this year, we will be taking the following actions:

What	Who Develops	Who Uses	Completion Timeline
Refine classroom <b>observational rubric</b> with explicit literacy markers to identify good instruction or gaps in instruction	Literacy Coordinator with input from School Administrators, Coaches, Chairs, Reading Teachers, J. Cannon	School Administrators, Chairs, Coaches, Literacy Coordinator, J. Cannon	Fall 2009
Select and develop <b>monitoring tools</b> that provide more frequent, more discrete measures of students' reading growth (e.g., formative assessments, individual reading inventories, running records)	Literacy Coordinator, Coaches, Reading Teachers, J. Cannon	Literacy Coordinator, Coaches, Reading Teachers	Currently in use
Set <b>short-term targets</b> in addition to annual targets for students in the reading programs	Literacy Coordinator, Coaches, Reading Teachers, J. Cannon	Literacy Coordinator, Coaches, Reading Teachers, J. Cannon	Currently in use
Investigate the <b>needs of our junior and senior</b> students and design new support mechanisms for readers who are not yet proficient at those levels	Associate Principal for Teaching & Learning, Literacy Coordinator, with input from Administrators, Teachers and J. Cannon	Reading Teachers, English Teachers	Spring 2010
Utilize clear <b>entrance and exit criteria</b> for Freshman Reading and Humanities Enriched classes that are shared with students and their parents	Associate Principal for Teaching & Learning, Literacy Coordinator, Coaches, Chairs, Teachers, J. Cannon	Teachers, Chairs	Currently in use

## Conclusion

We have mixed results so far, but we are doing critical work in an evolving field that keeps changing as we identify crucial subtleties of reading development. We are all trying to figure out one of the big questions in American education today—how to teach the struggling adolescent readers. We are *not* satisfied with our small gains, but incremental progress that consistently moves upward constitutes some success.

We are currently receiving support, but continued support is needed. We specifically request:

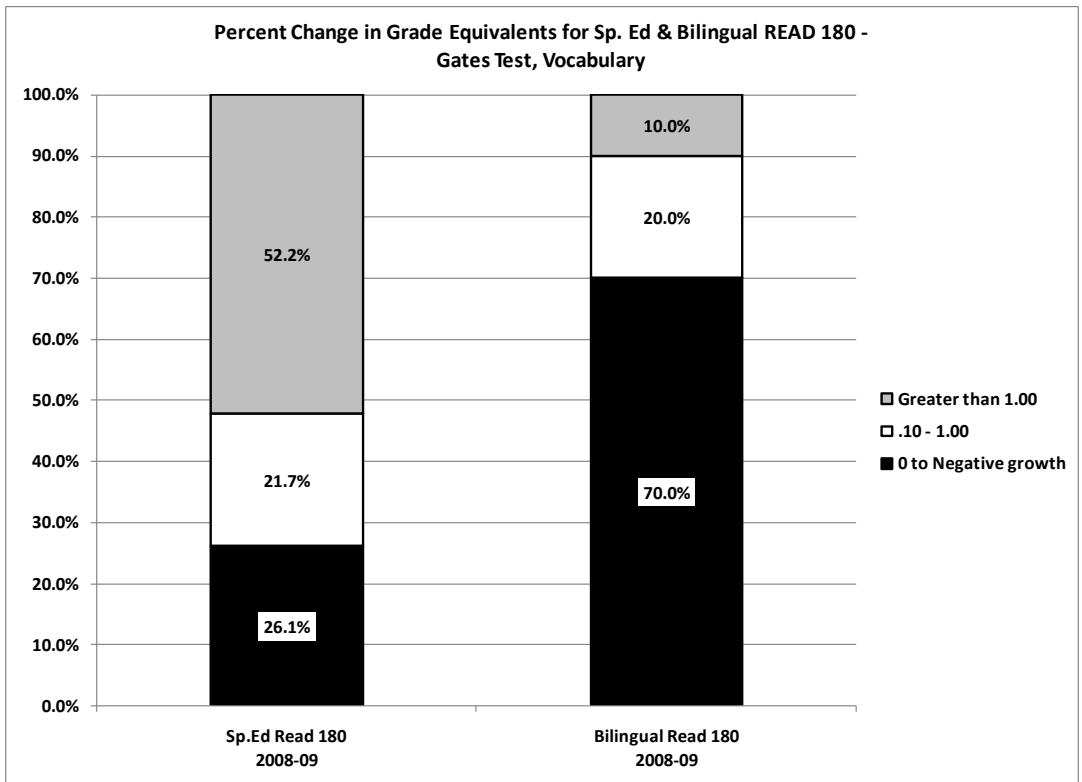
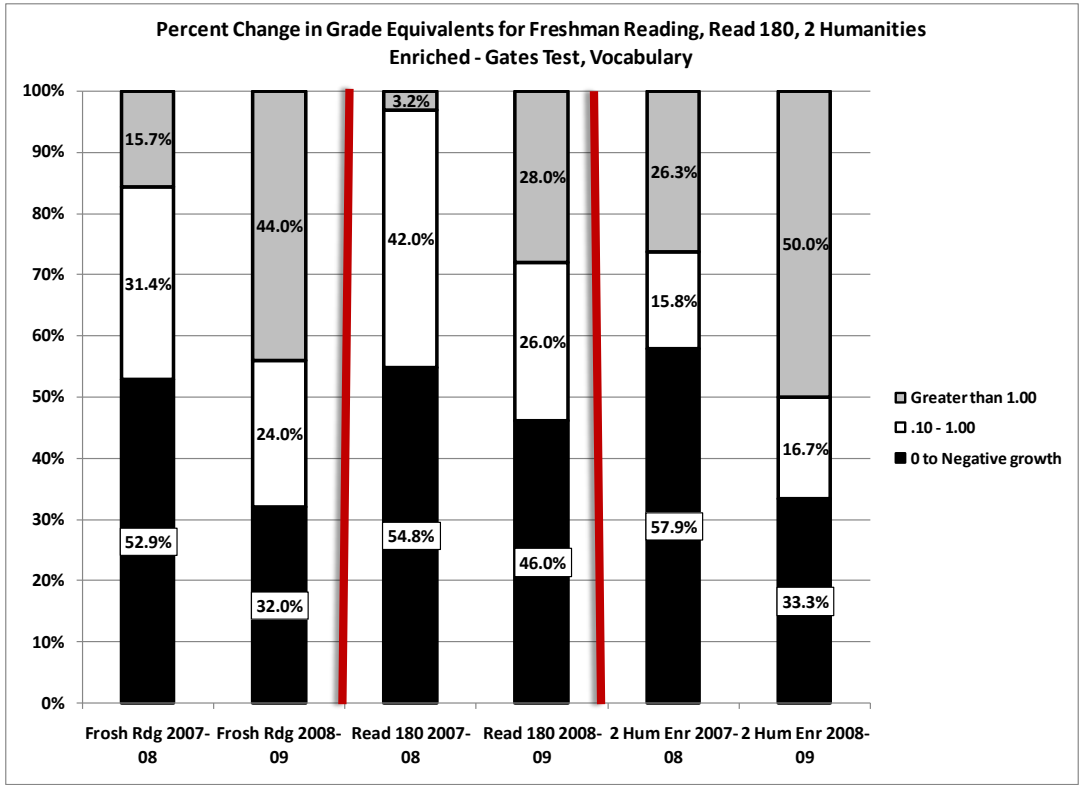
- The committed leadership from administration, chairs, coaches and teacher leaders as this is not a quick project
- Time and resources for continued, intensive professional development
- Understanding and patience as we use this information to address this daunting problem
- Strong accountability for finding solutions to make progress

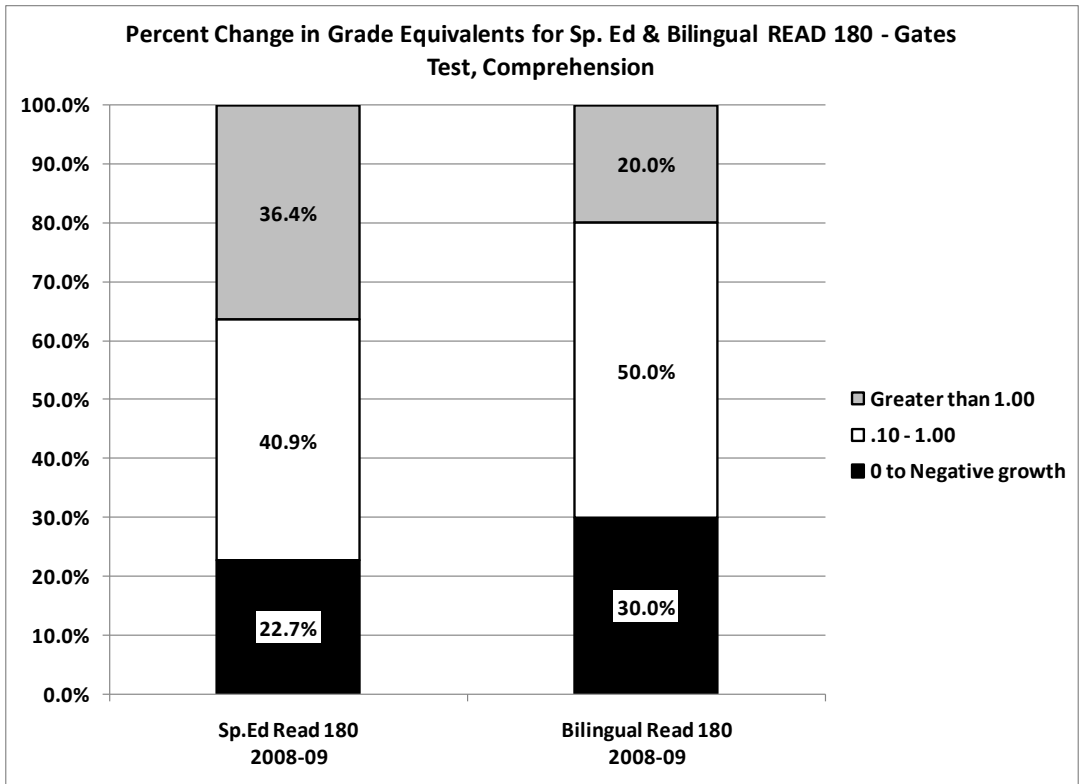
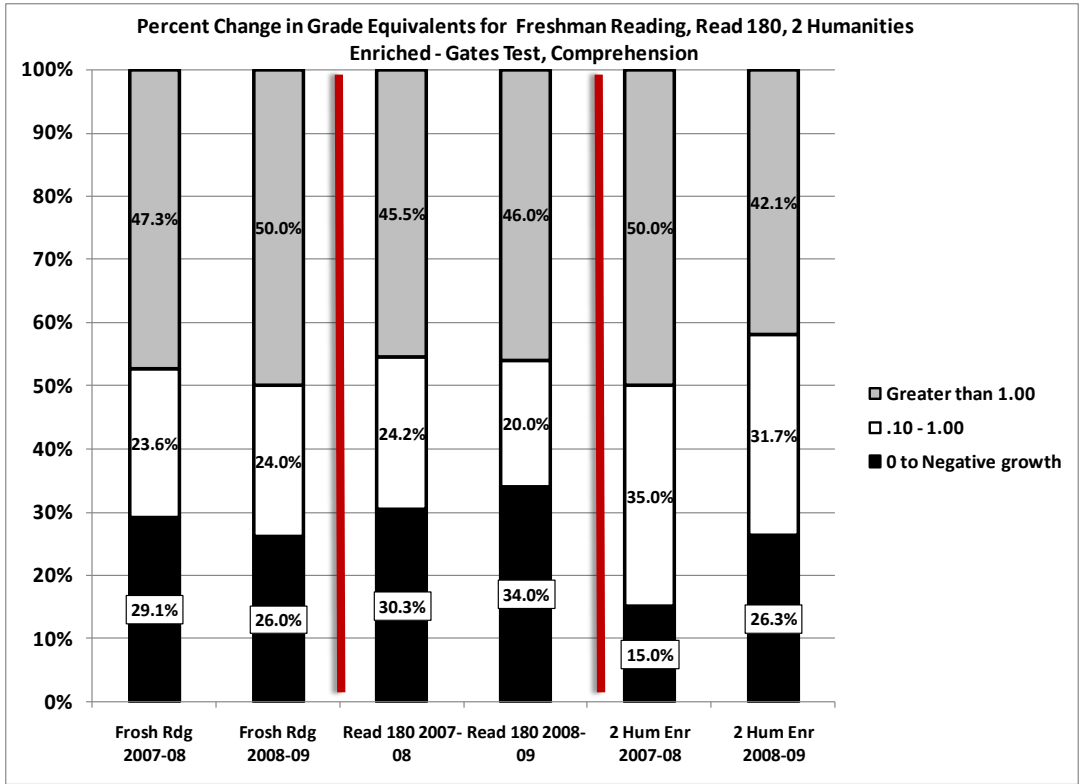
The progress we have made today is reflective of these commitments. ETHS is consistently moving toward ensuring that our reading AND content teachers are honing strategic skills and to help students make critical connections in a variety of texts. We have not achieved our goals in reading, but we have a solid framework in place and are willing to work relentlessly to gain more insight into the difficulties of low-achieving readers in order to prepare them not only to graduate from ETHS but for success in life.

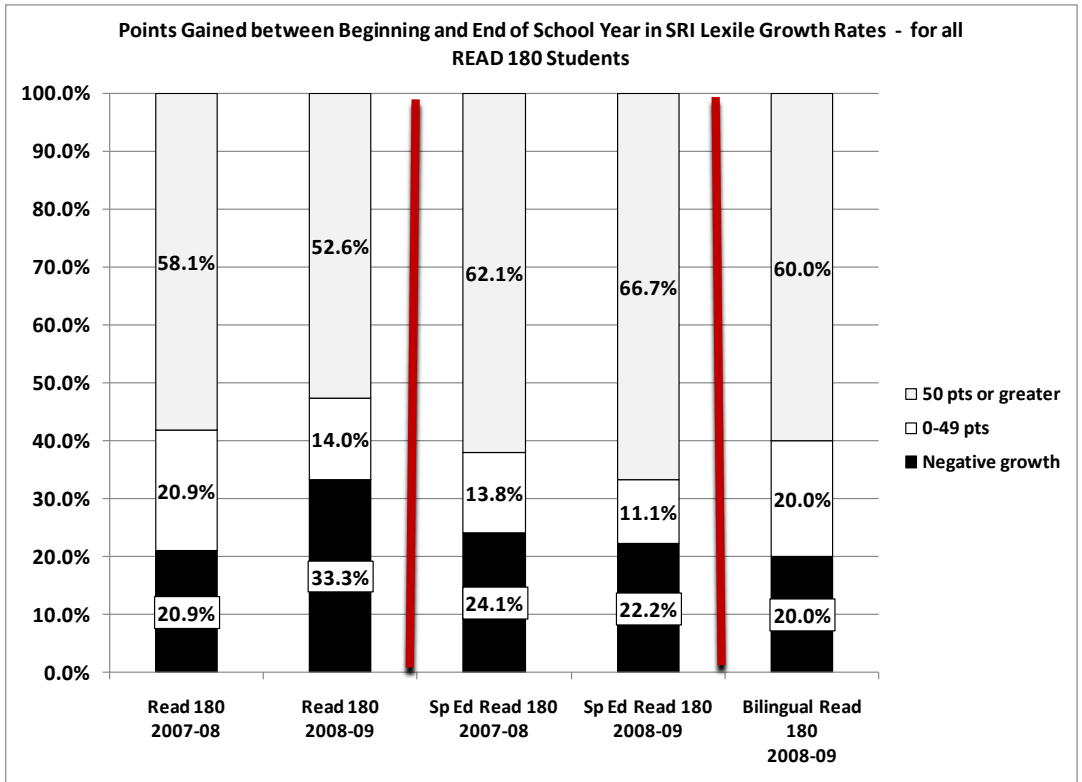


# Appendix A

Gates McGinitie Pre-Post Test Data

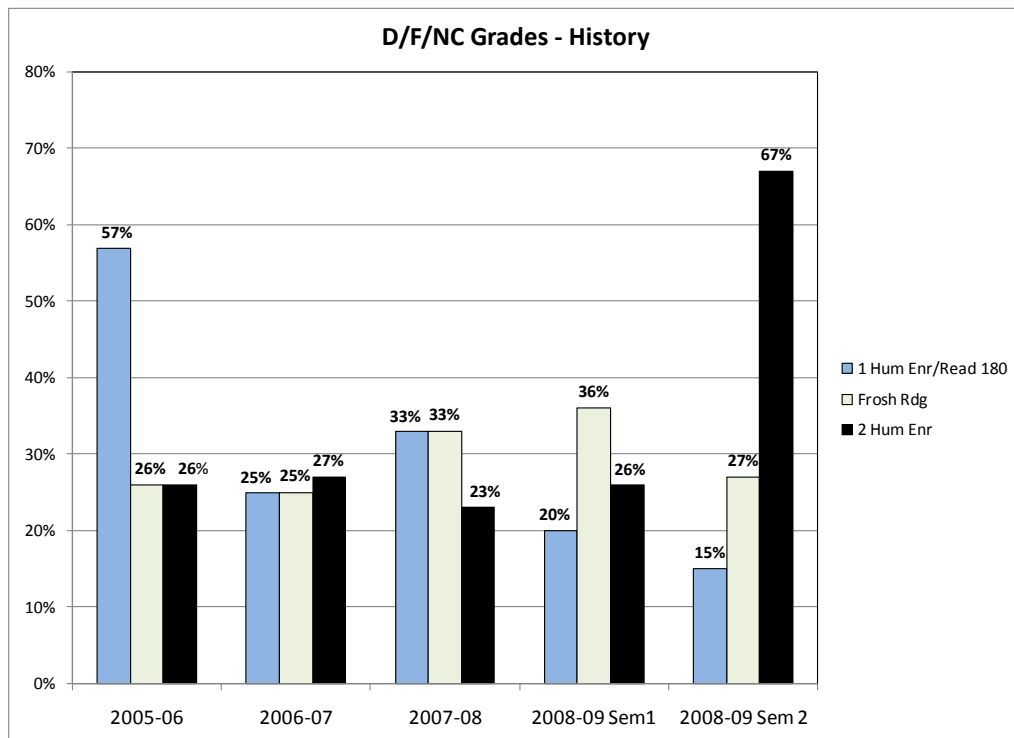
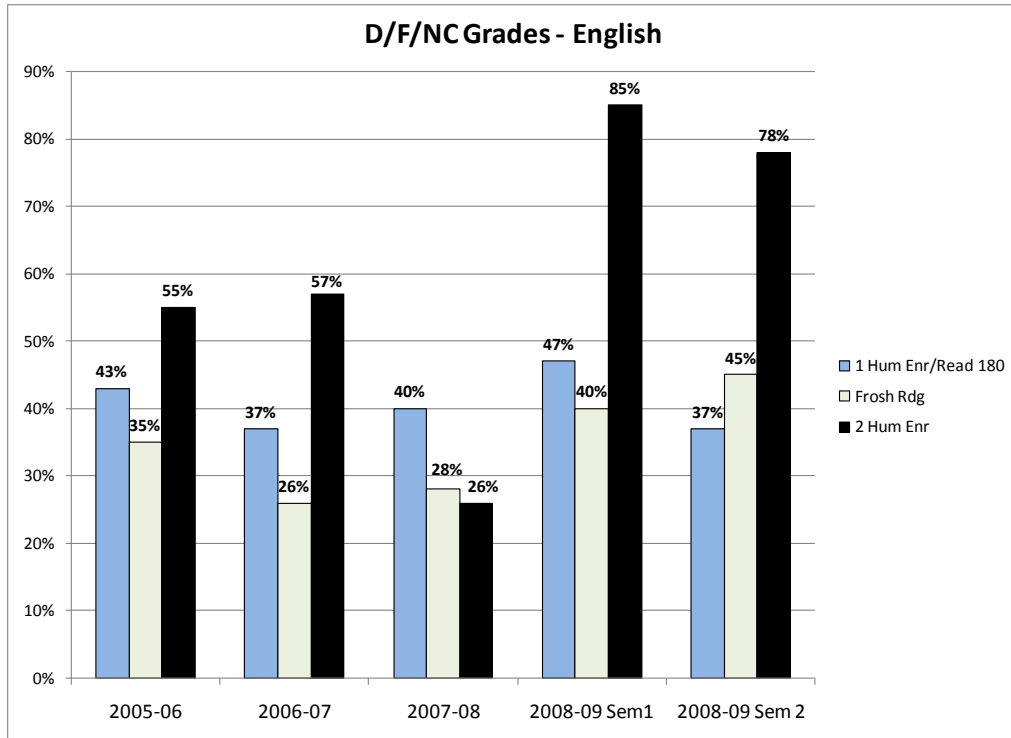






# Appendix B

## Course Grades for Read 180, Freshman Reading, & 2 Humanities Enriched



# Appendix C

Part 1

**Student Survey: Attitudes Toward Reading**

		READ 180		Frosh Rdg		Sp. Ed.	
		2006-07	2008-09	2006-07	2008-09	2006-07	2008-09
I like to buy books.	# of responses	41	51	60	48	13	14
	Agree/Strongly agree	33%	53%	50%	38%	31%	36%
I like to read a book when I have the free time.	# of responses	40	50	59	47	13	14
	Agree/Strongly agree	44%	58%	41%	51%	39%	43%
I get excited about some of the books I read.	# of responses	41	50	59	48	13	14
	Agree/Strongly agree	65%	72%	73%	71%	46%	64%
I think reading is a good use of time.	# of responses	40	50	59	48	13	14
	Agree/Strongly agree	65%	73%	59%	56%	69%	36%
I think reading is interesting.	# of responses	40	50	59	48	13	14
	Agree/Strongly agree	79%	70%	59%	65%	69%	50%
I like to read to learn about things that I'm interested in.	# of responses		50		48		14
	Agree/Strongly agree		78%		79%		79%
There are a lot of reading materials at home: books,	# of responses	41	49	59	47	13	14
	Agree/Strongly agree	81%	84%	85%	83%	85%	79%
I don't read because I think it's hard.	# of responses		49		48		14
	Agree/Strongly agree		14%		8%		7%
I share what I read with others.	# of responses		50		47		14
	Agree/Strongly agree		64%		70%		79%

Part 2

**Student Survey: Teacher Encouragement and Miscellaneous**

		READ 180		Frosh Rdg		Sp. Ed.	
		2006-07	2008-09	2006-07	2008-09	2006-07	2008-09
How often did you read for fun this semester? (magazines, newspapers, poetry, books and on-line " e-zines" or articles)	# of responses	40	51	60	47	13	13
	1-2 times a week	25%	29%	27%	30%	8%	39%
	Almost every day	20%	16%	25%	13%	31%	15%
How comfortable do you feel coming to a reading teacher for help with class work?	# of responses	43	51	59	49	13	14
	Comfortable	40%	37%	34%	49%	23%	21%
	Very comfortable	30%	28%	22%	27%	39%	21%
My reading teacher knows what I'm capable of doing academically.	# of responses		51		49		14
	Agree/Strongly agree		84%		92%		100%
How often during this semester has your reading teacher congratulated you on a good grade or other academic achievement?	# of responses	43	51	59	49	13	14
	3-4 times	21%	26%	37%	25%	23%	14%
	5-6 times	14%	10%	10%	16%	23%	36%
	More than 6 times	21%	8%	20%	20%	31%	36%
How often during this semester has your reading teacher encouraged you to do better in class?	# of responses	43	49	54	48	12	12
	3-4 times	19%	27%	15%	19%	0%	17%
	5-6 times	9%	16%	19%	8%	17%	17%
	More than 6 times	44%	27%	24%	50%	58%	17%
How many minutes a day do you read silently in school?	# of responses	34	41	54	40	10	12
	11-20 minutes	59%	44%	44%	40%	30%	50%
	21-30 minutes	26%	37%	22%	30%	40%	17%
	More than 30 minutes	6%	10%	22%	13%	20%	17%
How many minutes a day do you read at home?	# of responses	42	51	56	43	9	10
	11-20 minutes	21%	29%	21%	28%	22%	30%
	21-30 minutes	21%	18%	23%	19%	33%	10%
	More than 30 minutes	12%	16%	14%	19%	22%	10%



Part 2 (continued)

**Student Survey: How much do you understand when you read material for the following classes?**

	2006-07			2008-09		
	<i>READ 180</i>	<i>Frosh Reading</i>	<i>Special Ed</i>	<i>READ 180</i>	<i>Frosh Reading</i>	<i>Special Ed</i>
	A lot/All or nearly all	A lot/All or nearly all	A lot/All or nearly all	A lot/All or nearly all	A lot/All or nearly all	A lot/All or nearly all
English	65%	68%	85%	66%	71%	72%
History	65%	54%	42%	60%	54%	57%
Science	39%	41%	42%	33%	43%	33%
Math	67%	71%	25%	58%	73%	72%

Part 3

Student Use of Reading Strategies	Strategy Options				
<b>Sometimes when I read, a portion of the text reminds me of something in my life or something I've read before. If this happens...</b> <i>READ 180</i> <i>Frosh Rdg</i> <i>Special Ed</i>	Number of Responses	I don't do anything.	I look for context clues to help my comprehension or understanding.	I use the connection to help my comprehension or understanding	
	50	12%	44%	44%	
	48	23%	35%	42%	
	13	15%	46%	39%	
<b>There are certain steps I do before reading to help me understand better what I'm about to read. One thing I do is...</b> <i>READ 180</i> <i>Frosh Rdg</i> <i>Special Ed</i>	Number of Responses	I re-read sections to understand better.	I think about what I already know about the topic.	I use context clues to understand new words.	
	50	44%	42%	14%	
	48	40%	40%	21%	
	12	58%	42%	0%	
<b>To keep myself interested while reading, I often use clues from the text and my own knowledge to guess what will happen next. In other words, I...</b> <i>READ 180</i> <i>Frosh Rdg</i> <i>Special Ed</i>	Number of Responses	make predictions	look for answers	highlight words or phrases	
	49	65%	22%	12%	
	47	60%	23%	17%	
	13	54%	15%	31%	
<b>While I read, I monitor myself for...</b> <i>READ 180</i> <i>Frosh Rdg</i> <i>Special Ed</i>	Number of Responses	words I don't know	answers	things I don't understand	words I don't know and things I don't understand
	50	18%	32%	20%	30%
	47	13%	30%	19%	38%
	13	15%	46%	8%	31%
<b>It is most important to...</b> <i>READ 180</i> <i>Frosh Rdg</i> <i>Special Ed</i>	Number of Responses	make predictions as I read so I can understand what the author is trying to tell me	find the main idea as I read so I can understand what the author is trying to tell me	examine illustrations as I read so I can understand what the author is trying to tell me	
	49	29%	63%	8%	
	45	22%	71%	7%	
	13	15%	69%	15%	
<b>If I find words that I don't know ...</b> <i>READ 180</i> <i>Frosh Rdg</i> <i>Special Ed</i>	Number of Responses	I check to see if I know any of the word parts	I check for clues in the text	I check for both clues and word parts that I know	
	50	18%	34%	48%	
	47	13%	51%	36%	
	13	31%	23%	46%	

\*Shaded option is the preferred response.

Part 3 (continued)

If I realize that I don't understand something while reading, I usually...		go on and finish the assignment even if I'm still confused			
	Number of Responses		give up and quit	re-read passage to make sense of it	
	<i>READ 180</i>	50	8%	10%	82%
	<i>Frosh Rdg</i>	49	10%	8%	82%
<i>Special Ed</i>	13	23%	0%	77%	
When reading textbooks, I...		use pictures, illustrations, and graphs to help me understand			
	Number of Responses		try to understand the characters	look for similes or metaphors	
	<i>READ 180</i>	50	56%	30%	14%
	<i>Frosh Rdg</i>	47	57%	40%	2%
<i>Special Ed</i>	13	31%	54%	15%	
When reading textbooks, I also...		use the setting to help understand			
	Number of Responses		look for figurative language	use headings and subheadings to help me find main ideas	
	<i>READ 180</i>	49	33%	12%	55%
	<i>Frosh Rdg</i>	46	22%	17%	61%
<i>Special Ed</i>	13	39%	23%	39%	
When reading difficult text, I know to...		pretend it is easy			
	Number of Responses		read slower or re-read	take notes	
	<i>READ 180</i>	50	2%	64%	34%
	<i>Frosh Rdg</i>	49	4%	45%	51%
<i>Special Ed</i>	13	8%	77%	15%	
To understand what the author doesn't come right out and say, I use clues the author has given me and my own knowledge to...		make predictions			
	Number of Responses		make inferences	learn word parts	
	<i>READ 180</i>	50	44%	52%	4%
	<i>Frosh Rdg</i>	48	27%	67%	6%
<i>Special Ed</i>	13	46%	46%	8%	
To help me study and remember important information that I've read, I...		take notes or highlight important information			
	Number of Responses		highlight what I think the text will be about	take notes or highlight important information and then write a brief summary of what I've learned	
	<i>READ 180</i>	51	55%	20%	26%
	<i>Frosh Rdg</i>	49	53%	14%	33%
<i>Special Ed</i>	13	46%	23%	31%	
To keep myself involved and help my understanding, I...		read slower			
	Number of Responses		ask myself questions about what might happen or about what I want to find out	list words I don't know	
	<i>READ 180</i>	49	22%	69%	8%
	<i>Frosh Rdg</i>	48	33%	58%	8%
<i>Special Ed</i>	14	36%	50%	14%	
Before reading, it is important to know WHY I am reading and what I'm trying to learn. Therefore, I...		set a purpose for reading			
	Number of Responses		make a prediction	write a summary	
	<i>READ 180</i>	51	45%	45%	10%
	<i>Frosh Rdg</i>	48	56%	40%	4%
<i>Special Ed</i>	14	50%	36%	14%	

\*Shaded option is the preferred response.