

INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATION AND SOCIAL POLICY
Steinhardt School of Education, New York University



Final Report of the
Evaluation of New York
Networks for School Renewal
An Annenberg Foundation Challenge for New York City

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I. Introduction: The NYNSR Project

In 1993, Walter Annenberg, publisher, philanthropist, art patron and former Ambassador to England, gave \$500 million to improve public education, and in particular to improve American urban school systems. In 1994, the Annenberg Foundation, through grants that became known as the Annenberg Challenge, targeted the New York City school system as the first Challenge site, and asked three New York City school reform groups, the Center for Collaborative Education, the Center for Educational Improvement and New Visions for Public Schools, to jointly develop a comprehensive reform proposal. A fourth group, the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, or ACORN, joined the others during the proposal development stage. (See page 2 for a description of each of the NYNSR sponsoring organizations.)

Since the four groups had played a key role in starting small schools, their proposal focused on the creation, nurturing and support of small schools. The proposal pledged to form more than 100 such schools, organized according to a set of principles that stressed small size, autonomy, personalization, and the formation of professional teaching communities. The proposal envisioned that the participating schools would form networks for mutual support and accountability, and that eventually a Learning Zone would be established through which successful networks could demonstrate new forms of school organization, administration and governance for the New York City school system.

In 1994, the group's proposal was accepted and an Annenberg Challenge grant of \$25 million across five years was awarded to the New York Networks for School Renewal (NYNSR), the name chosen by the four groups. The \$25 million was to be matched by private funds raised by the NYNSR groups, who came to be called the sponsor organizations, as well as an equivalent amount to be allocated by the New York City school system. The Schools Chancellor, the New York City School Board, the president of the United Federation of Teachers, and the Office of the Mayor all signed on to support the NYNSR effort, and became the leading members of a NYNSR advisory board. In 1995-96, the NYNSR project began with 80 schools; that number grew to almost 140 across the five years of the NYNSR effort.

THE NYNSR EVALUATION

In 1995, a group of research organizations, led by New York University's Institute for Education and Social Policy, was awarded the contract to evaluate the implementation and outcomes of the NYNSR project. The groups formed the NYNSR Research Consortium, which began its work during the fall of 1995, and has produced a series of interim reports. (See page 5 for a list of the consortium's publications.)

The sponsor organizations posed broad questions for the Research Consortium about the implementation of the NYNSR project, the nature of the project's academic outcomes in comparison to citywide results, and the costs and equity implications.

The NYNSR Sponsoring Organizations

ACORN (The New York Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now)

ACORN is a grassroots community organization governed by its membership of over 22,000 low to moderate income families. Beginning with campaigns to improve specific schools, ACORN members' education work has mainly been: 1) to develop small autonomous public schools which are characterized by high educational standards, social change/community organizing activities and curriculum themes, democratic governance, and strong parent/community involvement; 2) to wage citywide campaigns around equity and access issues as documented in ACORN's Secret Apartheid I, II, and III reports, as well as around issues of school overcrowding, inadequate facilities, and systemic reform.

Center for Collaborative Education (CCE)

CCE is a network of New York City public schools. CCE's work is built on the successful practices of its members' schools and is based on the belief that schools serve children best when parents, students and educators collaborate to build student-centered communities. The success of schools in creating learning environments that can achieve such goals is based on a shared set of instructional principles. The CCE network of schools share their knowledge and practice in an ongoing exchange with schools and districts working for education reform. Member schools both drive the agenda for education reform and provide the key resources for supporting school change. CCE is the conduit for this school-led effort.

Center for Educational Innovation (CEI)

CEI, now an independent non-profit organization, was established in 1989, and has become a premier force in revitalizing public education. CEI actively encourages and develops public schools as communities of learning. CEI's mission is to transform public education by shifting accountability from centralized bureaucracies to local schools and by creating systems of school choice for communities. CEI's hands-on work empowers teachers, parents, students and community organizations to work together to design innovative schools characterized by entrepreneurial leadership and high academic achievement. With more than 120 years of combined experience as teachers, principals and school superintendents, CEI's staff of Senior Fellows provides leadership to dozens of schools and school districts in New York City and inspires others around the country to follow their lead.

New Visions for Public Schools

New Visions for Public Schools works with the New York City school system, the private sector and the community to mobilize resources and develop programs and policies that lead to significant, lasting improvement in the achievement of all children. New Visions and its partners take the most direct route to change by working in the classroom, where learning happens, to shape programs that address the needs of educators, students and parents. New Visions is assisting educators to prepare for the higher academic standards adopted by the city and state. New Visions also helps to provide up-to-date books and technology, working libraries, intimate and rigorous learning environments in small schools, and opportunities for educators to learn and grow professionally.

To respond to the questions about implementation, Columbia University's National Center for Research in Education, Schools and Teaching (NCREST) designed a study that began during the 1995-96 and 1996-97 school years. Subsequently, Dr. Gordon Pradl and a research team from the Department of Teaching and Learning at the NYU Steinhardt School of Education took over, redesigned and completed the implementation analysis. Dr. Nancy Barnes, from the New School University, developed a teacher action research component to the implementation analysis, which she carried out with a sub-set of NYNSR schools. Dr. Pedro Pedraza, from Hunter College's Center for Puerto Rican Studies, carried out an in-depth participant observation study of a NYNSR high school.

To respond to the questions about student outcomes, as well as to concerns about costs and equity, New York University's Institute for Education and Social Policy designed and carried out an extensive outcomes evaluation. This report encompasses the findings of all the implementation and outcomes research and summarizes the experience and achievements of the NYNSR project across the five years of its efforts.

METHODOLOGY

Because the NYNSR effort was conceived as a systemic initiative, and represents a substantial intervention into New York City public schooling (the project ultimately comprised 5% of the city's public school students and 10% of its schools), the sponsor organizations decided that all research results should be reported as aggregates - that is, for the project as a whole. Thus the evaluation treats the NYNSR initiative as a sectoral intervention and reports aggregate findings for all outcome and implementation results. Although the descriptive data from the teacher action research and participant observation study identify particular schools, all other findings are reported at the NYNSR project level.

Outcomes Study

The outcomes findings are reported primarily through a series of comparisons:

- of NYNSR outcomes to comparable outcomes for the city school system as a whole, or to levels of schools such as all the city's elementary, middle and high schools;
- of NYNSR outcomes to the outcomes of a group of NYC public schools we refer to as comparison schools, selected to match NYNSR schools in size, location, student demographics and prior test scores;
- of NYNSR outcomes to the outcomes of a group of NYC public schools selected randomly;
- of NYNSR outcomes across time, through comparisons of the progress, or lack of progress, NYNSR schools make on particular outcome variables.

Two additional analyses are presented. The first, which utilizes a value-added methodology, compares NYNSR schools to the random sample of schools, examining the contribution that participation in the NYNSR project makes to student achievement. Student mobility and variables describing school characteristics are included as controls in the model. Second, we provide a cost

effectiveness analysis, which compares expenditures and outcomes in NYNSR schools to expenditures and outcomes in the comparison and random school sample. All these analyses are designed to demonstrate the extent of effectiveness of the NYNSR schools.

Implementation Study

The implementation evaluation consisted of a series of administrator and teacher surveys, interviews and observations that assessed the extent of fidelity to the NYNSR core principles in participating schools, as well as the extent of network development. Interviews were also conducted with a variety of New York City public school administrators and policymakers, to assess the extent to which NYNSR advocacy improved the systemic support for small schools, as well as how the NYNSR project affected the evolution of school reform policy in the city school system. Excerpts from these interviews are used to highlight particular findings in this report.

The qualitative and survey data were considered together to identify, as fully as possible, the school practices common in NYNSR schools. The implementation analysis was structured to determine how closely schools adhered to the seven educational principles articulated in the original NYNSR proposal to the Annenberg Foundation:

- Small school size and school autonomy
- Innovative instructional practices
- Coherent curriculum
- Focus on student learning
- Professional development
- Parent and community involvement
- Sponsor support for schools and their networks

The data were also examined to identify possible differences among particular types of schools based upon:

- Founding status (founding schools are the cohort of schools funded during NYNSR's first year of operation and are distinguished from those schools that joined NYNSR in subsequent years)
- School level (designated as elementary, middle, high, or mixed level school)
- School size (enrollment of under 301 students, 301-500 students, 501-1000 students, or over 1000 students).

The findings from the implementation study, which are reported in Section IV, are organized by the seven principles and also report differences across these three school types when appropriate.

Action Research

The teacher action research and the participatory observation study developed descriptive data that help clarify and amplify the project-wide outcomes and implementation findings, by specifying how the NYNSR core principles are operationalized in particular NYNSR schools. Excerpts from these studies are used to illustrate the outcome and implementation findings throughout the report.

The NYNSR Research Consortium's Publications

July 1997. *Who We Are: Students and Schools in the NYNSR Project, 1995-96*, by NYU Institute for Education and Social Policy.

September 1997. *Why Participatory Research?* by Nancy Barnes.

April 1998. *The New York City Board of Education's Data Systems: An Initial Approach*, by NYU Institute for Education and Social Policy.

May 1998. *New York Networks for School Renewal and English Language Learners*, by NYU Institute for Education and Social Policy.

October 1998. *What Questions Are Teachers Asking: Reflecting on Practice IS Professional Development*, by Nancy Barnes.

October 1998. *The New York Networks for School Renewal Parent and Guardian Survey*, by the Community Service Society of New York.

Fall 1998. *How Does a Range of Students Experience Middle College High School? A School Based Research Project*, by David Godsky, Shammeeza Jameer, Gail Kleiner, Jean Myers, and Melanie Pflaum, Middle College High School.

January 1999. *Outcomes Study*, by NYU Institute for Education and Social Policy.

October 1999. *Outcomes Study*, by NYU Institute for Education and Social Policy.

Fall 1999. *How Can Teacher Reflection on Practice Improve Student Outcomes? School-Based Practitioners at Work*, by Olivia Ifill-Lynch, School for Academic and Athletic Excellence.

Fall 1999. *Teachers as Learners: The Need for Professional Development at Alternative Public Schools*, by Lori Chajet and Janice Bloom, East Side Community High School.

January 2000. *Teachers Teaching Teachers*, by Nancy Barnes.

October 2000. *Outcomes Study*, by NYU Institute for Education and Social Policy.

December 2000. *School-based Research at East Side Community High School*, by Nancy Barnes.

December 2000. *Can Professional Development Impact Classroom Practice?* By Kiran Chaudhuri, East Side Community High School.

December 2000. *How Does One Create and Provide Professional Development to a Vertical Team that Has Teachers in Very Different Places?* by Pankti Sevak, East Side Community High School.

December 2000. *Math Professional Development at East Side*, by Tammy Vu, East Side Community High School.

December 2000. *Developing Practice and Supporting Teachers: Lessons from East Side Community High School*, by Jeremy Kaplan.

December 2000. *Teacher Leadership in Democratic Schools*, by Janice Bloom and Lori Chajet, East Side Community High School.

January 2001. *New York Networks for School Renewal: An Implementation Study*, by Gordon Pradl, Christine Donis-Keller, Monica Martinez, and Carmen Arroyo.

April 2001. *What Makes Research Useful?* by Nancy Barnes.

December 2001. *Final Report on the Participatory Ethnographic Research Project at El Puente*, by Pedro Pedraza, Rossy Matos, Melissa Rivera, Héctor Calderón, Josh Thomases, Tony De Jesus, and Carmen Mercado.

II. DEFINING THE NYNSR SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS

The NYNSR project was initially seen as, in the words of a former New York City Schools Chancellor, "a boutique initiative," meaning a delimited effort targeting advantaged students with little applicability to systemic improvement. Many school people and policymakers had similar perceptions of the NYNSR effort, for several reasons.

- Choice was a core NYNSR principle; not only did many students choose NYNSR schools, and many NYNSR schools choose their students, but NYNSR schools chose their teachers as well. (The sponsor organizations negotiated a School-Based Option with the United Federation of Teachers, which allowed NYNSR schools to select their teachers without reference to seniority.) Many observers assumed that the application of these choice principles would result in a sector of schools serving advantaged students whose demographics and outcomes would not be comparable to the city as a whole. Or, in simpler terms, that the NYNSR schools would use choice to practice creaming, and select the system's best students and teachers.
- Small size was another NYNSR core principle; schools were to be small enough so that every student was known to teachers and administrators, and instruction could be individualized to meet student need. Although the NYNSR effort also included reconfiguring large schools into smaller units and restructuring existing schools for improved performance, many observers assumed that the NYNSR effort was only a small schools initiative, and therefore quite limited as a sectoral intervention.
- Although the NYNSR initiative was committed to serving the entire New York City public school population, many of the sponsor organizations' early initiatives were implemented in the few districts that had consistently supported small school reform. Some observers assumed that the NYNSR effort would continue to concentrate on these districts, and would not expand across the entire city system.

Given these assumptions, it became crucial for the outcomes evaluation to determine the demographic characteristics of the NYNSR students and compare them to the characteristics of the city's students as a whole. The following tables present this comparison for the project across the five years of its implementation.

STUDENTS

Table 1 indicates that the NYNSR schools served a higher percentage of Black and Latino students, as well as a similar percentage of elementary and middle school students eligible for free or reduced price lunch, as the city system as a whole across each of the project's five years.¹ (High school data on free and reduced price lunch are too unreliable to cite.) What these data show is that the NYNSR project has not used choice to select advantaged students for the project's schools.

I think people often go to the union very late in the process and have to work out the staffing problem, but we [NYNSR] had the union brought into this as a concept. They thought it would be neat for teachers to be able to work in an environment like this -- where they'd be well-supported.

Alan Dichter, Director of New School Development, New York City Board of Education

Table 1: Student Characteristics--NYNSR and Citywide Averages

	95-96	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00
NYNSR Students					
Percent Female	51.3	51.3	51.1	50.6	51.0
Percent Latino	46.4	39.9	40.1	39.5	38.2
Percent Black	38.9	38.7	38.1	37.9	38.7
Percent White	9.7	12.3	12.3	12.5	12.7
Percent Asian or Other	5.0	9.1	9.5	10.1	10.4
Percent Eligible for Free Lunch*	76.4	72.3	72.1	72.3	72.6
Citywide Averages					
Percent Female	49.0	49.0	49.1	49.1	49.1
Percent Latino	37.3	37.3	37.5	37.7	37.7
Percent Black	36.4	35.5	35.9	35.7	35.2
Percent White	16.5	16.3	15.7	15.5	15.4
Percent Asian or Other	9.9	10.8	10.3	11.1	11.7
Percent Eligible for Free Lunch*	74.7	75.4	75.6	74.9	74.5

*For Elementary and Middle School Students only

When the characteristics of NYNSR students are examined across the project's five years, some trends emerge. The percentage of Latino students has decreased by eight percentage points, the Asian student percentage has doubled, the percent White has increased as well, and the percentage of Blacks has remained the same. When the NYNSR student characteristics are examined by level - elementary, middle and high schools - strong variations masked by aggregation become apparent. NYNSR high schools attract and enroll significantly more females than males. Latino students are the largest racial/ethnic group in NYNSR elementary schools, Blacks are the largest group in middle schools, and by far the largest group in high schools. Whites and Asians, in contrast, make up much smaller percentages of the NYNSR high school population than they do of the NYNSR elementary and middle school students. (See the *NYNSR Final Evaluation: Technical Report*, hereafter *Technical Report*, for tables detailing student characteristics in NYNSR elementary, middle and high schools, from 1995-96 through 1999-2000. This report can be obtained by contacting the Institute for Education and Social Policy.)

Attendance

Student attendance can be seen as both a student characteristic and an outcome indicator. Schools may select students who are better attenders, or a school's culture, climate, and effective instructional practices may significantly improve student attendance. The following table compares NYNSR student attendance to the attendance of students in the citywide system, across the five years of NYNSR effort.

A Black and Latino school has to take on intellectual rigor as its job. Parents of color don't feel they can ask for rigor-they just want a nice principal. Nobody will ever correct our staff for not doing enough for these children. Yet these children have never been taught in a superior manner; we have to be grounded in the struggle to achieve this.

Olivia Ifill-Lynch, *Report on Participatory Research for the NYNSR/Annenberg Evaluation*, Sept 1997

The longer the kids stay with us, the better they perform. Only three eighth graders scored below grade level on the reading test. I am just so proud! We're in the right conversation when we talk so much about academic rigor. The teacher makes the difference!

Olivia Ifill-Lynch, *How Can Teacher Reflection on Practice Improve Student Outcomes?* Fall 1999

Table 2: Percent Average Daily Student Attendance--NYNSR and Citywide Averages

	95-96	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00
NYNSR Students					
Elementary school students	89.9	91.1	92.0	92.3	94.5
Middle school students	87.4	90.0	91.1	91.4	92.9
High school students	87.5	88.3	92.0	87.6	90.5
High school students in transfer alternatives	79.0	81.4	90.7	78.8	91.5
Citywide Averages					
Elementary school students	89.0	90.2	91.1	91.0	91.7
Middle school students	87.3	88.4	89.2	89.5	90.4
High school students	85.0	85.8	86.4	86.7	85.8
High school students in transfer alternatives	N/A	75.1	79.9	78.1	77.8

This table indicates that NYNSR students at each school level achieved higher attendance, and in some instances much higher attendance, than students in equivalent-level schools in the city system, across each of the five years of the NYNSR effort.

Stability

The percentage of students who remain in the same school for the entire academic year (stable students) can also be seen as either a student characteristic or a school-induced outcome. The following table shows the percentage of stable students in NYNSR schools and schools in the city system, for the five years of the NYNSR project.

Table 3: Student Stability--NYNSR and Citywide Averages

	95-96	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00
NYNSR Students					
Percent Stable Students	98.2	94.8	94.7	94.2	94.3
Citywide Average					
Percent Stable Students	N/A	92.2	91.8	92.2	N/A

In the years for which equivalent data were available, the percentage of stable students in NYNSR schools was consistently greater than the stable student percentage in all the city system's schools.

Students with Special Needs

Two additional student characteristics deserve attention: students whose first language is not English, and students who are diagnosed as having disabilities that interfere with their learning. The following table compares the percentages of English Language Learners (ELL) and students identified as requiring special education in NYNSR schools to the equivalent student percentages in all New York City public schools.

Table 4: Student Characteristics--NYNSR and Citywide Averages

	95-96	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00
NYNSR Students					
Percent English					
Language Learners	13.8	11.6	12.1	11.0	10.7
Percent in Special Education	4.6	4.5	4.0	4.1	4.2
Citywide Averages					
Percent English					
Language Learners	17.8	15.9	16.8	16.0	12.9
Percent in Special Education	7.5	6.3	6.1	7.9	5.9

These data indicate that the NYNSR schools enrolled lower percentages of both English Language Learners and students identified as requiring special education, across all five years of the project's effort. The differences are smaller for English Language Learners than for special education students. While these differences are not insignificant, they do not affect the NYNSR test score outcomes reported below because until recently, special education and ELL students either were exempted from city and state testing, or had their test scores excluded from their school's aggregate scores.

TEACHERS

Because NYNSR schools chose their teachers, the outcomes evaluation explored the teacher characteristics in NYNSR and citywide schools to assess the results of teacher selection in the project's schools. The following tables compare teachers in NYNSR and citywide elementary and high schools on a range of variables associated with teacher quality. (Middle school data and data for 1995-96 are omitted because most NYNSR schools have missing data for these variables on the *New York City Annual School Reports*.)

Table 5: Teacher Characteristics--NYNSR and Citywide Elementary Schools

	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00
NYNSR Elementary Schools				
Percent of teachers fully licensed and permanently assigned	81.6	84.7	79.8	73.2
Percent of teachers with more than five years of teaching experience	57.9	54.5	48.6	40.3
Percent of teachers with master's degrees or higher	87.3	76.0	76.2	75.3
Average number of days teachers are absent during the school year	6.5	7.8	8.5	8.7
Citywide Elementary Schools				
Percent of teachers fully licensed and permanently assigned	83.2	86.3	83.7	81.1
Percent of teachers with more than five years of teaching experience	68.6	61.3	60.7	56.9
Percent of teachers with master's degrees or higher	89.5	78.4	79.2	77.1
Average number of days teachers are absent during the school year	6.8	7.9	8.8	9.8

As two liberal arts graduates finishing college in the early 1990's, we found these schools attractive places where we could think about teaching. While both of us were interested in education as undergraduates-- and, particularly interested in the issues of urban education-- we could not picture ourselves teaching the same thing over and over to 150 students a day, based on a curriculum given to us and intended to prepare students for an end of the year standardized test. We wanted to work in a place where time in a school had meaning to students: where they were experiencing, first hand, the connection education had to their lives. We wanted to work in a school where we knew our students well, and could design curriculum to best meet their learning needs and to engage them in their work. And we wanted to be a part of a place where there was a strong professional community, where teachers had a voice- in their own classroom and the school as a whole- and had the opportunity to work with each other in meaningful ways.... These schools have delivered all of the challenges that we sought-- and then some.

Lori Chajet and Janice Bloom,
Teachers as Learners: The Need for Professional Development at Alternative Public Schools, Fall 1999

Table 6: Teacher Characteristics--NYNSR and Citywide High Schools

	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00
NYNSR High Schools				
Percent of teachers fully licensed and permanently assigned	64.1	62.8	57.7	61.4
Percent of teachers with more than five years of teaching experience	42.1	35.3	32.0	34.4
Percent of teachers with master's degrees or higher	84.6	68.0	70.5	71.4
Average number of days teachers are absent during the school year	5.3	6.5	7.3	8.1
Citywide High Schools				
Percent of teachers fully licensed and permanently assigned	80.7	81.5	81.2	82.4
Percent of teachers with more than five years of teaching experience	69.0	63.3	65.3	65.0
Percent of teachers with master's degrees or higher	90.4	80.7	80.2	81.1
Average number of days teachers are absent during the school year	6.2	7.0	8.5	9.0

These tables show that at both the elementary and high school levels, NYNSR teachers are less certified, less experienced and have fewer advanced degrees than teachers citywide. Some of these differences are quite striking: from 1997-98 through 1999-2000, the citywide high schools had almost twice as many teachers with more than five years of teaching experience as the NYNSR high schools.

Even when we compare a subset of NYNSR high schools to comparison high schools with similar student populations, the NYNSR schools still employ lower percentages of licensed, experienced and educated teachers.

Table 7: Teacher Characteristics--Matched NYNSR and Comparison High Schools

	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00
NYNSR Matched High Schools				
Percent of teachers fully licensed and permanently assigned	62.8	63.2	59.6	61.3
Percent of teachers with more than five years of teaching experience	40.8	33.4	32.6	36.4
Percent of teachers with master's degrees or higher	83.9	67.3	70.4	70.5
Average number of days teachers are absent during the school year	5.2	6.9	8.0	8.6
Comparison High Schools				
Percent of teachers fully licensed and permanently assigned	69.9	73.7	72.3	68.7
Percent of teachers with more than five years of teaching experience	50.9	45.2	43.7	48.4
Percent of teachers with master's degrees or higher	87.4	76.3	79.1	77.1
Average number of days teachers are absent during the school year	6.3	7.0	8.8	8.9

Because these teacher variables are only proxies for teacher quality, the results do not necessarily mean that the NYNSR schools are choosing poorer quality teachers. Moreover, teachers choose schools just as much, if not more, than schools choose teachers; it may be that more experienced and qualified teachers are choosing not to apply to NYNSR schools. The data available do not define whose choice determines teacher placement. What the data do show is that NYNSR schools are not using their ability to choose their staffs to select experienced teachers from the rest of the city system. Instead, they are choosing relatively uncertified, inexperienced and less highly schooled teachers. The data also indicate that these less experienced and less qualified NYNSR teachers are absent less and in some cases, absent much less than teachers citywide; that finding may indicate something about the commitment of these novice teachers, the supportive culture NYNSR schools create, or both.

Size

Schools in the NYNSR project on the whole are significantly smaller than the comparable level schools in the New York City system. The median NYNSR elementary school is about half the size of the median citywide elementary school, while the median NYNSR middle or high school is about one-quarter the size of the median citywide middle or high school. But the data also indicate that the NYNSR project is not limited to a subset of small schools.

Table 8: School Enrollment in 1999-2000 -- NYNSR and Citywide

	Elementary Schools	Middle Schools	High Schools
NYNSR Schools			
Smallest School	87	66	40
Largest School	1783	1681	1584
Median Size of Schools	381	206	358
Citywide Schools			
Smallest School	75	67	53
Largest School	2200	2235	4583
Median Size of Schools	754	938	1220

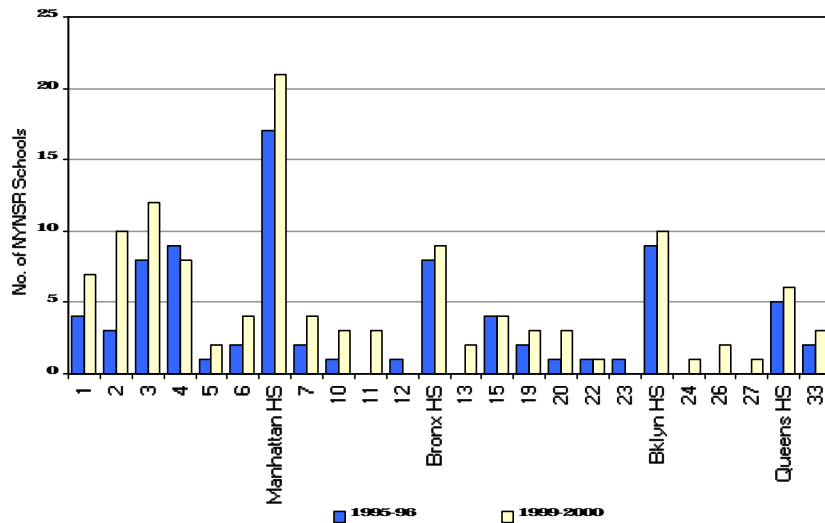
NYNSR didn't do a good job of communicating how large they were. It wasn't until mid-way through 1998 that somebody actually pointed it out to the Chancellor that there were something like 300 small schools in the system. They may not have all been NYNSR schools, but if you looked at schools that had 400 students and less, it was nearly a third of the system, that's huge! It's not a novel new reform tool anymore, it's here.

Victoria Van Cleef, Formerly
Special Assistant to the Chancellor,
New York City Board of Education

Location

As the chart below indicates, NYNSR schools were concentrated in a relatively small number of Manhattan and Brooklyn districts at the inception of the project, but expanded to other districts throughout the city across the five years of NYNSR effort. This expansion from initially supportive districts to a broader range of districts indicates the project's applicability to students, and schools, across the city.

Figure 1: NYNSR Schools by Community School District and Superintendency



I think there was this common wisdom that small was going to be better.... It would be more manageable and teachers could provide for intensive focused effort, get to know kids, teachers would have a better opportunity to collaborate, etc, etc. But there's always a bottom line. And the bottom line is, show me. It's supposed to be better, but better means that kids are going to learn more. And they're going to perform better and be higher achievers.

Robert Tobias, Director, Division of Assessment and Accountability, New York City Board of Education

Taken together, these outcomes demonstrate that the perception of the NYNSR projects as a boutique effort is false. NYNSR schools enrolled, across the life of the project, a student population very similar to the city system as a whole. NYNSR schools began with attendance rates much like the city system but increased their attendance notably across the five years of the project. NYNSR schools' stability rates were also higher than citywide averages. Moreover NYNSR schools did not employ more qualified teachers, but had less certified, experienced and educated teachers than the city system's teaching force. The project's schools, though smaller on average, included a wide range of school sizes, and the project expanded from relatively few districts to a larger number of districts across the entire city. These data demonstrate that perceptions that the NYNSR effort has limited applicability to the city system are quite mistaken. The student performance outcomes that NYNSR schools have produced should command the interest of everyone committed to improving major urban school system.

III. DEFINING STUDENT AND SCHOOL OUTCOMES

GAP ANALYSIS

The ultimate goal of the NYNSR project was to improve student performance in all its participating schools. The evaluation assessed the performance of NYNSR students and schools through a number of different methods; the first focuses on the relationship between the test score performance of NYNSR schools and citywide school performance, or what we call a gap analysis. The following two charts compare the performance of NYNSR elementary and middle schools, in Reading and Math testing, to the comparable citywide averages.

Figure 2: NYNSR Reading, Citywide Tests

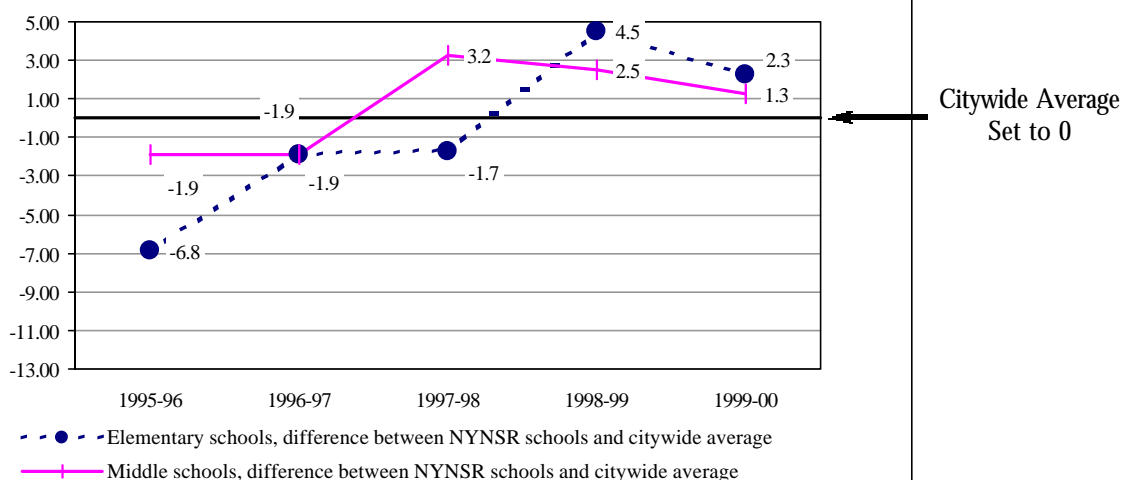
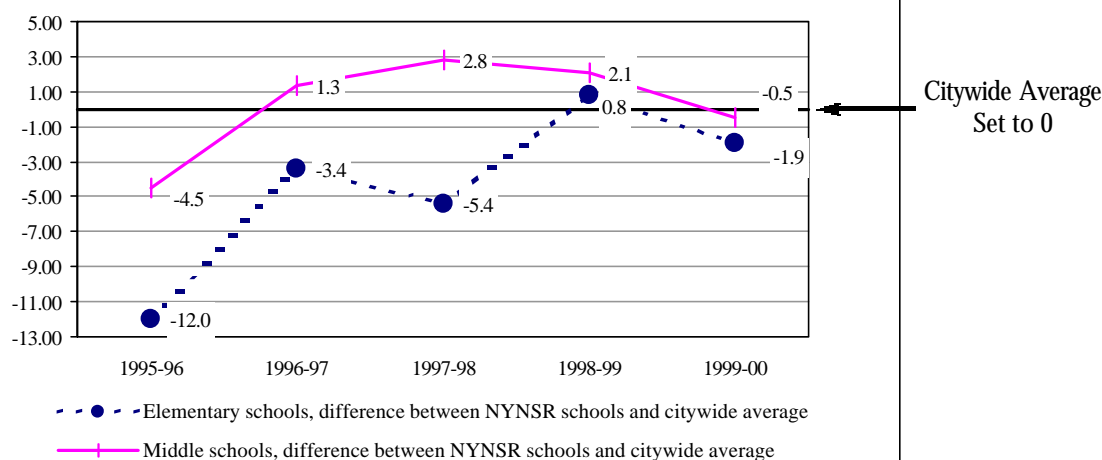


Figure 3: NYNSR Math, Citywide Tests



Whenever I explain the concept of Sankofa [El Puente's two-year integrated humanities curriculum], the conversation inevitably turns to the new question of rigor and standards. Can students perform well on the Regents Competency Test and Regents examinations? Can El Puente Academy students compete with other students from other academically rigorous high schools? These questions operate on the assumption that meaningful inquiry and rigor are anathema to each other. I argue that in order to create learning communities, the learning should not just be academic but should speak to an inner quest. It is this quest that later shapes our passions, and consequently our career paths. Using information to illuminate, explain, and reveal the mysteries of our lives is truly a rigorous pursuit. In addition, almost ninety percent of students who have gone through the Sankofa curriculum have passed standardized tests required by the city and state. The greatest achievement, however, of the Sankofa curriculum is its insistence on essence: the journey of the soul.

Faculty member, El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice, in *Final Report on the Participatory Ethnographic Research Project at El Puente*, December 2001

In Reading test performance, the scores of NYNSR elementary and middle school students are much lower than the citywide average at the start of the project. Both NYNSR elementary and middle schools improve their students' outcomes considerably across the following years; NYNSR middle school students do better than their citywide equivalents in the project's third year, and maintain that above-average performance during the project's fourth and fifth years. NYNSR elementary school students perform below the citywide average until the fourth year, when their outcomes exceed citywide performance. Both NYNSR schooling levels maintain performance above the citywide average in the project's fifth year, though both sustain a slight drop in performance from their fourth year.

In Math, both NYNSR elementary and middle schools perform considerably lower than the citywide average at the start of the project. But NYNSR middle schools quickly raise their performance above the citywide average, and maintain that above-average performance until the project's last year, when their outcomes slip slightly. NYNSR elementary schools register initial performance far below the citywide average, stay substantially below average until the project's fourth year, when they score slightly above the citywide average, and then slip back in the project's last year.

Overall, NYNSR students start out below, and in some instances far below, citywide performance, improve their performance sufficiently to exceed the citywide average, and maintain their above-average performance (except for elementary school Math) across the duration of the project.

Comparison Schools

The ability of NYNSR schools to raise their students' achievement is also demonstrated by juxtaposing NYNSR performance to the outcomes of a comparison sample. We matched a subset of the NYNSR founding schools, at all levels, to a group of non-NYNSR schools, using size, location, student demographics, and prior test scores, as the matching variables. (See the *Technical Report* for a listing of NYNSR matched schools and comparison schools and for a comparison of the student characteristics of both groups of schools.) The following two charts present a gap analysis, for Reading and Math outcomes, comparing the performance of NYNSR matched elementary and middle schools to the performance of elementary and middle comparison schools across the five years of the project.

Figure 4: Citywide Reading Tests, Matched NYNSR vs. Comparison

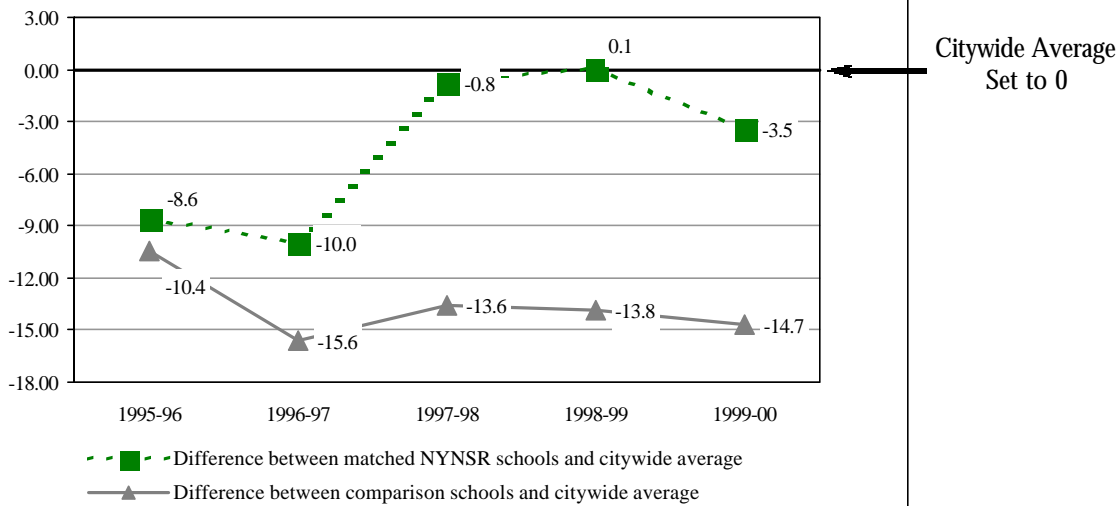
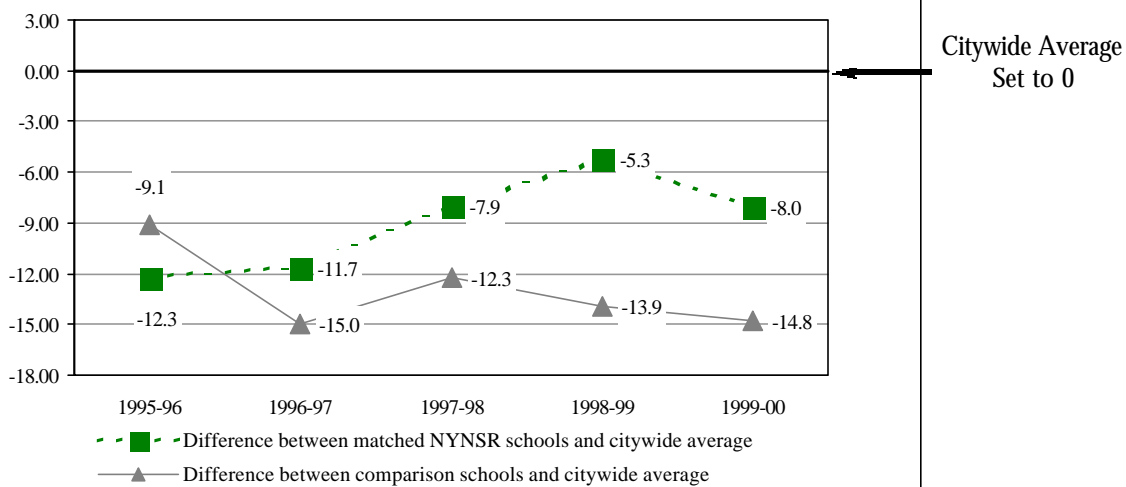


Figure 5: Citywide Math Tests, Matched NYNSR vs. Comparison



These two charts tell a similar story. First, matched NYNSR elementary and middle schools considerably out-perform their comparison schools. Although both groups of schools achieve at roughly similar levels at the start of the project, the difference in performance between matched NYNSR and comparison schools becomes quite wide, sometimes more than 10 percentage points, across the five-year duration of the project. Yet, in Reading and Math testing, both groups' performance remains below the citywide average. Matched NYNSR schools improve their Reading performance to only slightly below citywide outcomes by the end of the project; NYNSR schools' Math outcomes, while also improving, remain considerably below. In contrast, the performance of the comparison schools stays essentially flat across the five years of the NYNSR effort, and remains far below both the matched NYNSR schools' performance, and even farther below the citywide average, in Reading and Math.

Note that we were not able to match all NYNSR schools; we could not find comparison schools with appropriate characteristics to match approximately 20 NYNSR schools. Among those 20 were some of the NYNSR project's highest elementary and middle school achievers. The following two charts, which compare the performance of NYNSR matched and unmatched schools, in Reading and Math, across the life of the project, demonstrate the much higher performance of the unmatched NYNSR schools.

Figure 6: Reading, Matched NYNSR vs. Unmatched NYNSR

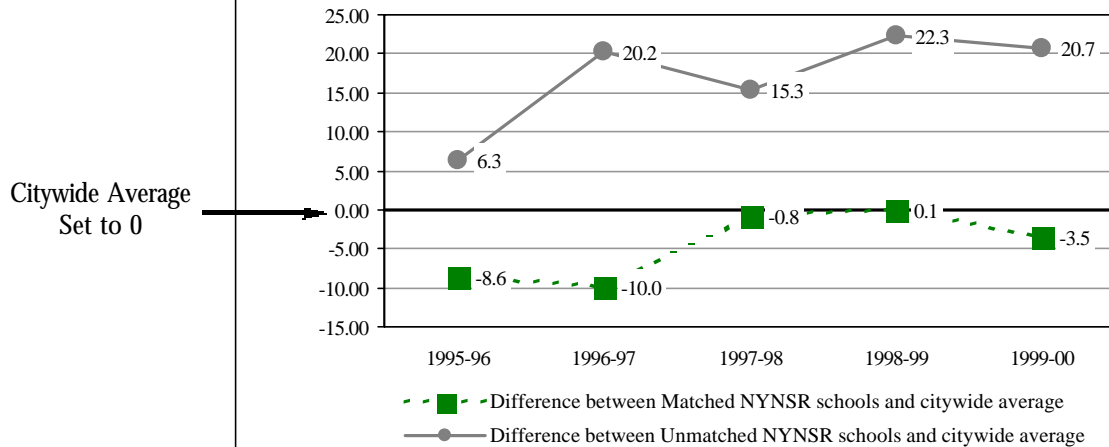
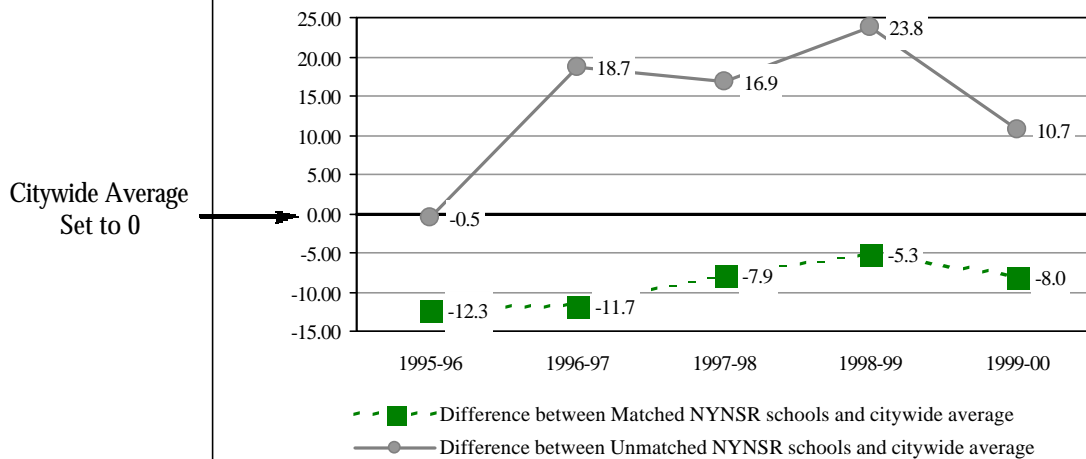


Figure 7: Math, Matched NYNSR vs. Unmatched NYNSR



Random Schools

We compared NYNSR founding schools to a much larger sample of randomly selected elementary and middle schools. (See the *Technical Report* for details on student characteristics of the randomly selected schools.)

The following charts present a gap analysis comparing the Reading and Math testing performance of NYNSR founding elementary and middle schools to the performance of the random sample across the five years of the NYNSR initiative.

Figure 8: Reading, Founding NYNSR and Random

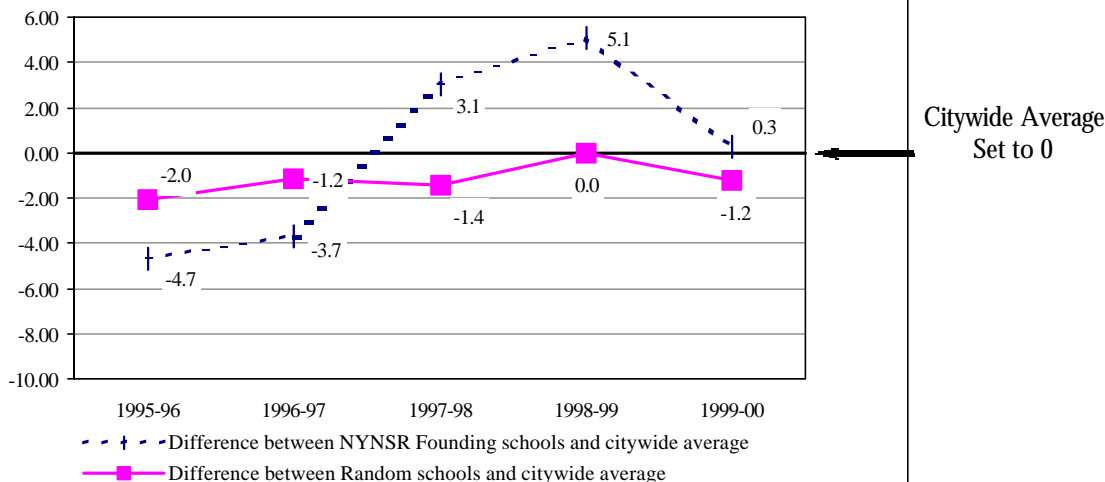
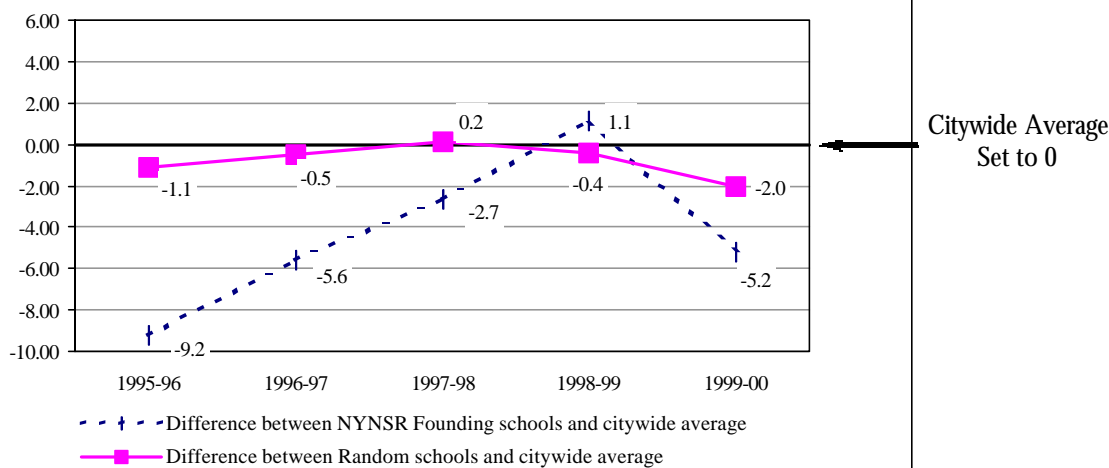


Figure 9: Math, Founding NYNSR and Random

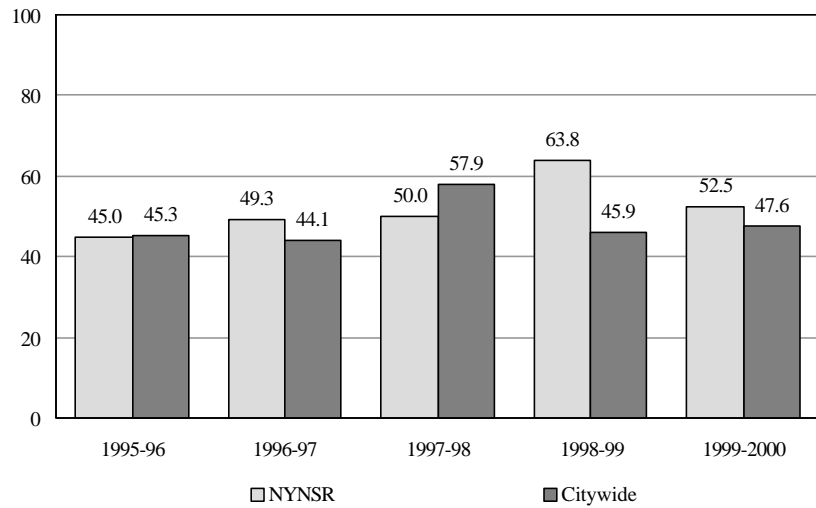


These charts demonstrate that, while the random schools' progress was relatively flat compared to the citywide average, the NYNSR founding schools made considerable progress compared to the citywide average from 1995-96 to 1998-99. Both the NYNSR founding schools and the random schools experienced a decline in their progress relative to the citywide average in 1999-2000.

MEETING THE CITYWIDE AVERAGE

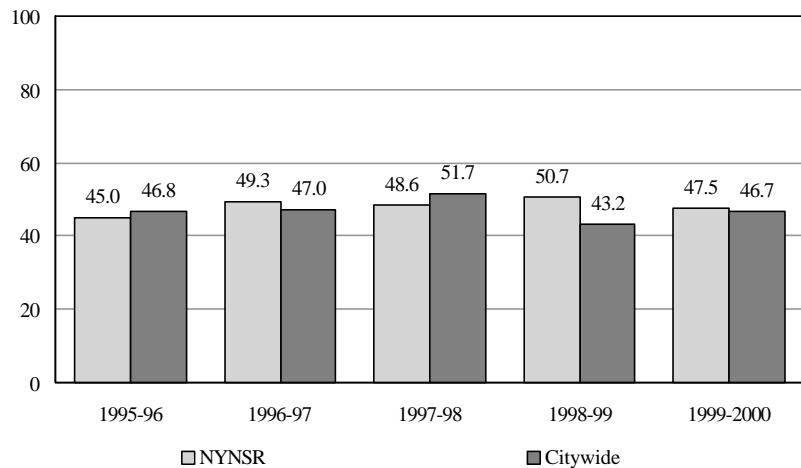
The following charts demonstrate another way to examine test score data across time. These charts indicate the percent of NYNSR schools whose students, on average, scored at or above the citywide average. While the NYNSR schools did not achieve consistent gains during the five years of the project, their progress when compared to schools citywide is notable. In citywide Reading tests, the percent of NYNSR schools scoring at or above the citywide average increased over the course of the project. By the end of the project, a larger percent of NYNSR schools were at or above the citywide average, compared to schools citywide.

Figure 10: Percent of Schools At or Above the Citywide Average for Reading, by Year



In citywide math tests, the NYNSR schools exhibit a different pattern. The percent of NYNSR schools that scored at or above the citywide average in Math remained more constant than for Reading, and more similar to schools citywide.

Figure 11: Percent of Schools At or Above the Citywide Average for Math, by Year



QUARTILE ANALYSIS

The previous charts demonstrated how much the NYNSR schools improved their students' Reading and Math testing performance, compared to the citywide average, to the performance of a group of non-NYNSR comparison schools, and to a group of randomly selected schools. But because these analyses consider only the aggregate performance of NYNSR school students, the results could be masking relatively static, or even declining performance by the lowest achieving NYNSR students. Another possible result that might be masked by aggregate reporting is variation by race/ethnicity. Do NYNSR students of color consistently perform more poorly than NYNSR White students, and are the performance gains, across time, achieved by NYNSR schools due primarily to the gains of White students, rather than to performance increases for all students, and particularly for students of color?

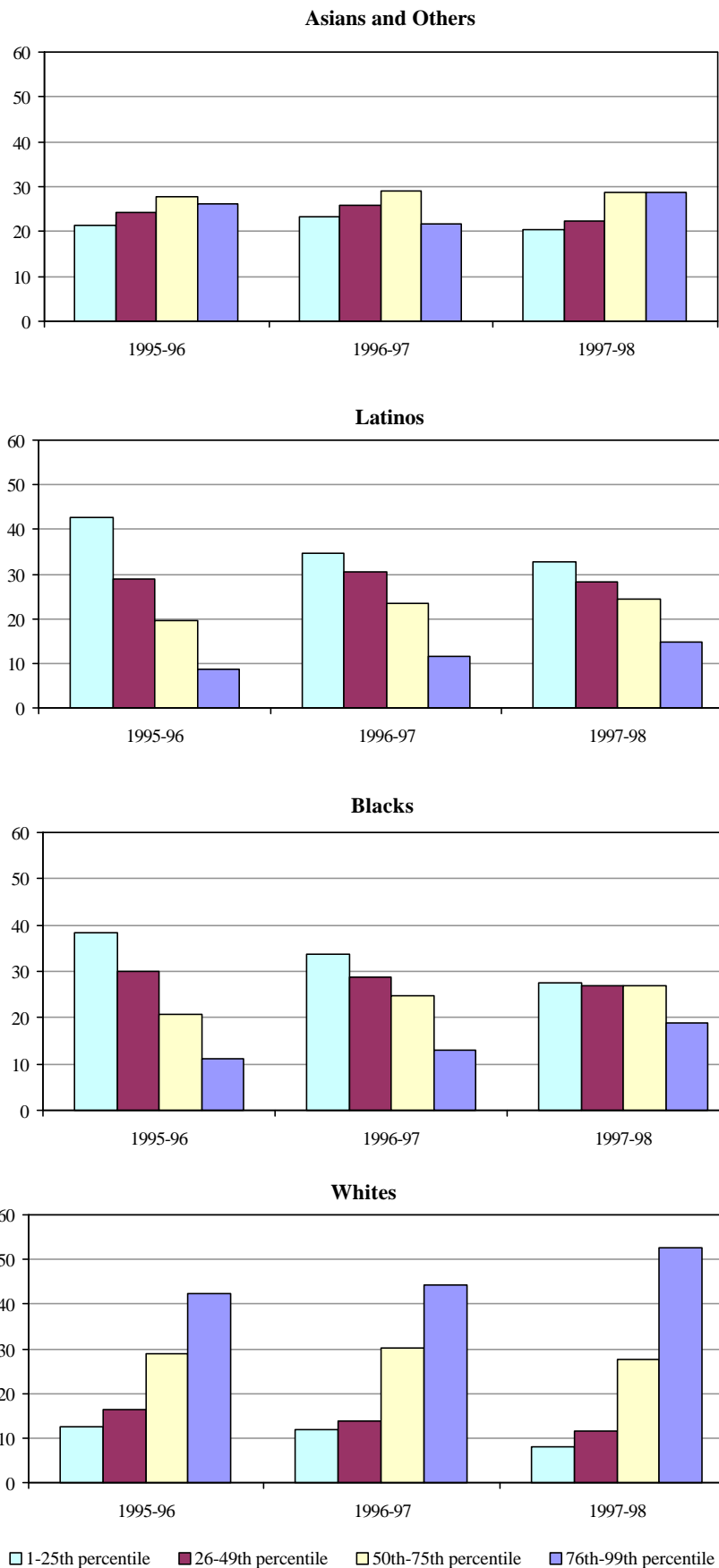
The following table shows performance across time, in citywide Reading and Math testing, for NYNSR founding students divided into four quartiles of achievement, from the bottom 25% to the top 25%.

Table 9: Reading and Math Results by Quartiles Founding NYNSR Students

	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98
CTB Reading Exam			
1-25th Percentile	37.4	31.3	29.8
26-49th Percentile	28.1	28.0	24.9
50-75th Percentile	21.3	24.9	25.5
76th-99th Percentile	13.3	15.8	19.9
CAT Math Exam			
1-25th Percentile	30.4	25.8	29.9
26-49th Percentile	24.7	24.9	31.0
50-75th Percentile	23.9	24.0	35.5
76th-99th Percentile	21.1	25.4	37.7

This table, as well as the following four charts, show that the performance gains in Reading of NYNSR founding students are fairly well distributed across achievement groups and racial/ethnic groups. NYNSR students in the bottom quartile are clearly making gains and moving into higher quartiles. Though NYNSR Black, Asian, and Latino students consistently register lower achievement than their NYNSR White student counterparts, NYNSR Black and Latino students do achieve consistent gains across the five years of the NYNSR effort. Moreover, the quartile analysis demonstrates a consistent reduction across time, especially among Black and Latino students, in the percentage of NYNSR students in the lowest quartile.

Figure 12: Reading Quartiles by Ethnicity/Race for Founding NYNSR Students



GRADUATION ANALYSIS

All the outcomes data presented thus far have been for elementary and middle schools. But the creation of new, small high schools and the restructuring of large high schools into smaller units have been critical components of the NYNSR strategy. Because there were no consistent test score or examination results across all the years of the project, the only reliable measures available to assess the effectiveness of NYNSR high schools were the four-year and seven-year graduation rates.

The following tables present data from the *New York City Board of Education's Four-Year Longitudinal Reports* and *The Class of 1997: Final Longitudinal Report, A Three-Year Follow-up Study*, produced annually for all the city system's high schools. These reports track all the students who begin high school in the 9th grade across the following four years or seven years, and report the percentages of those who graduate, dropout or are still enrolled after their date of projected graduation. The analysis also filters out students who have left the system. For the purposes of this report, the Board of Education distinguishes two types of high schools: academic and articulated high schools, which allow students to enroll directly, and transfer high schools, which operate on a second chance basis, enrolling only those students who have dropped out of academic/articulated high schools or are transferring out of them.

Table 10: Academic and Articulated High Schools Four-Year Graduation Rates-NYNSR High Schools and Other New York City High Schools

Class of	1997	1998	1999	2000
NYNSR High Schools				
Graduated	55.3	58.7	54.0	56.3
Dropped Out	6.6	7.4	7.8	8.4
Still Enrolled	38.1	34.0	38.2	35.3
All Other High Schools				
Graduated	57.0	57.9	57.9	58.3
Dropped Out	11.1	12.0	12.6	13.5
Still Enrolled	31.9	30.1	29.5	28.3

Table 11: Transfer High Schools Four-Year Graduation Rates NYNSR High Schools and Other New York City High Schools

Class of	1997	1998	1999	2000
NYNSR High Schools				
Graduated	24.9	24.1	21.4	21.5
Dropped Out	14.0	12.9	17.5	20.4
Still Enrolled	61.1	63.0	61.1	58.2
All Other High Schools				
Graduated	26.3	28.7	24.2	24.3
Dropped Out	15.0	12.7	13.7	11.8
Still Enrolled	58.8	58.6	62.1	63.8

During the course of the NYNSR project, both the state and city assessments at all levels of schooling have changed. Until 2000, high school students in New York State graduated under a two-tiered system in which students could obtain either a Local diploma or a more rigorous Regents diploma. In 1997, the Regents raised the graduation standards in New York State by requiring all students to pass Regents Examinations to obtain a high school diploma. These new requirements are being phased in, starting with the students who entered in September of 1996.

As an alternative school, we're geared towards providing a supportive environment (which includes guidance and counseling)...There's a fine line between understanding a student's problems which are hindering her achievement and still expecting her to perform at a satisfactory level. The issues are not black and white and we may never find definitive answers as to how to enable each student to successfully complete their years here. Yet the more we communicate with them, the closer we may be to helping most of our population accomplish this in a timely manner, all the while learning a lot about themselves, and about the real world out there.

Shammeeza Jameer, teacher, Middle College High School in Grodsky, Jameer, Kleiner, et al., *How Does a Range of Students Experience Middle College High School? A School Based Research Project*, Fall 1998

These tables show interesting results. For the academic and articulated high schools, though the NYNSR schools' graduation rate is consistently close to, and occasionally exceeds, the graduation rate of all the city's other high schools, the NYNSR schools' dropout rate is significantly lower for all four years of this analysis. Moreover, the percentage of NYNSR students who remain in school beyond their fourth year is significantly higher for all the years of the project's operation. Thus the NYNSR academic and articulated high schools are losing fewer students as dropouts, and are retaining a higher percentage of students who need more than four years to graduate. Since Board of Education analyses indicate that approximately 50% of those high school students who fail to graduate in four years, but remain enrolled, graduate by the end of their seventh year, the seven-year graduation rate for NYNSR academic and articulated high schools should substantially exceed the graduation rate for all the city's high schools. Figures 13 and 14 below report the results of the first seven-year cohort analysis for academic and articulated and transfer high schools; NYNSR schools' graduation rates do exceed citywide rates.

The four-year outcomes for transfer high schools are not as promising. The six NYNSR transfer schools have a lower four-year graduation rate and for the most part, a higher dropout rate than the rest of the city's transfer high schools. But the seven-year analysis shows NYNSR transfer high schools graduating a higher percentage of students than all other transfer high schools.

Figure 13: Class of 1997--Seven-Year Graduation Rates--NYNSR Academic and Articulated High Schools and Other NYC High Schools

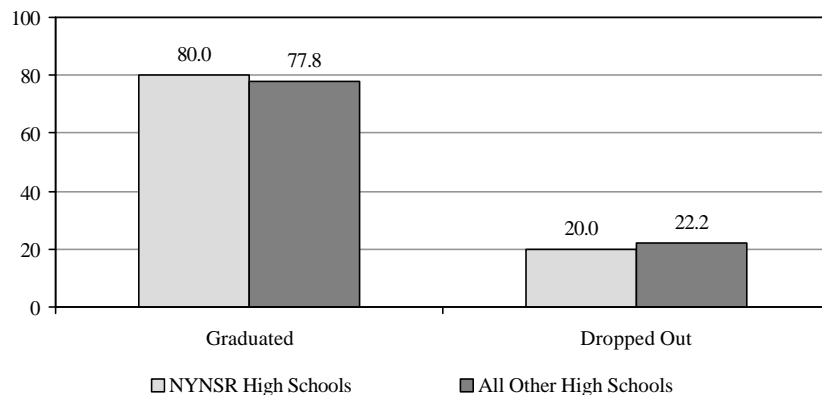
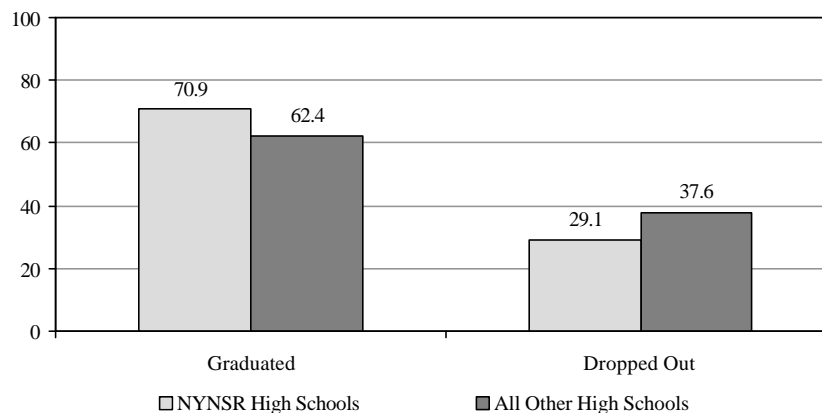


Figure 14: Class of 1997--Seven-Year Graduation Rates--NYNSR Transfer and Alternative High Schools and Other NYC High Schools



Comparison Schools

Using the comparison sample, we matched many of the NYNSR academic and articulated high schools with similar high schools in size, student demographics, location and level of selectivity. We also matched the NYNSR transfer high schools with similar transfer high schools. (See the *Technical Report* for a comparison of the student characteristics of NYNSR matched high schools to the student characteristics of the comparison schools.)

The following tables show the percent of students who graduated, dropped out or were still enrolled in NYNSR and comparison high schools, across the four years of the NYNSR project.

Table 12: Academic and Articulated High Schools Four-Year Graduation Rates--NYNSR High Schools and Comparison High Schools

Class of	1997	1998	1999	2000
Matched NYNSR High Schools				
Graduated	57.5	63.0	56.3	58.6
Dropped Out	6.0	6.8	8.3	8.7
Still Enrolled	36.5	30.2	35.5	32.7
Comparison High Schools				
Graduated	50.1	51.2	53.9	55.3
Dropped Out	10.4	11.3	11.4	10.9
Still Enrolled	39.4	37.5	34.7	33.8

Table 13: Transfer and Alternative High Schools Four-Year Graduation Rates--NYNSR Matched High Schools and Comparison High Schools

Class of	1997	1998	1999	2000
Matched NYNSR High Schools				
Graduated	24.9	24.1	21.4	21.6
Dropped Out	14.0	12.9	17.5	20.3
Still Enrolled	61.1	63.0	61.1	58.1
Comparison High Schools				
Graduated	22.1	15.8	18.1	18.6
Dropped Out	16.5	18.8	19.0	15.0
Still Enrolled	61.3	65.5	62.9	66.4

These data show quite large differences between the performance of NYNSR matched high schools and non-NYNSR comparison high schools. The NYNSR academic and articulated high schools have considerably higher graduation rates, and considerably lower dropout rates, than their comparison schools. The comparison schools have a higher percentage of students still enrolled in the earlier years, but the differential narrows during the last two years. NYNSR matched transfer schools manage a higher graduation rate than the comparison schools across all four years, and show a lower dropout rate for three of those years. The comparison transfer schools have a consistently higher rate of students still enrolled. (Note that we were unable to match several NYNSR high schools, including a number of quite high-performing ones.) The seven-year cohort analysis shows even larger gains for the NYNSR high schools.

Figure 15: Class of 1997--Seven-Year Graduation Rates--Matched NYNSR and Comparison High Schools-- Academic and Articulated High Schools

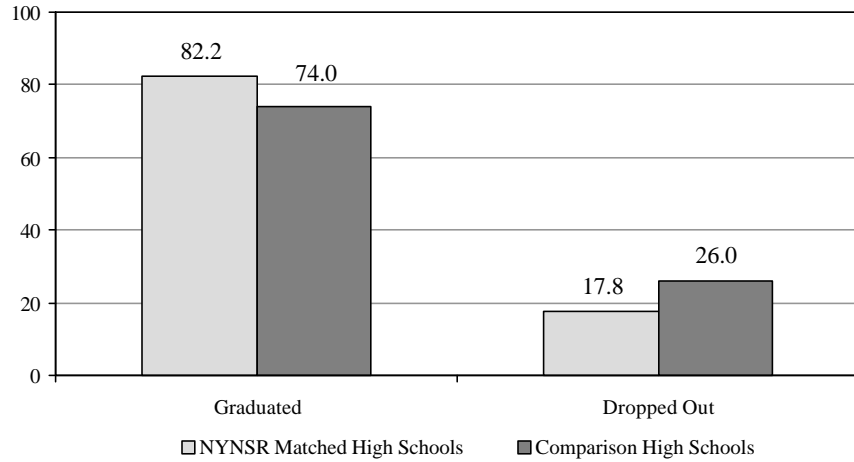
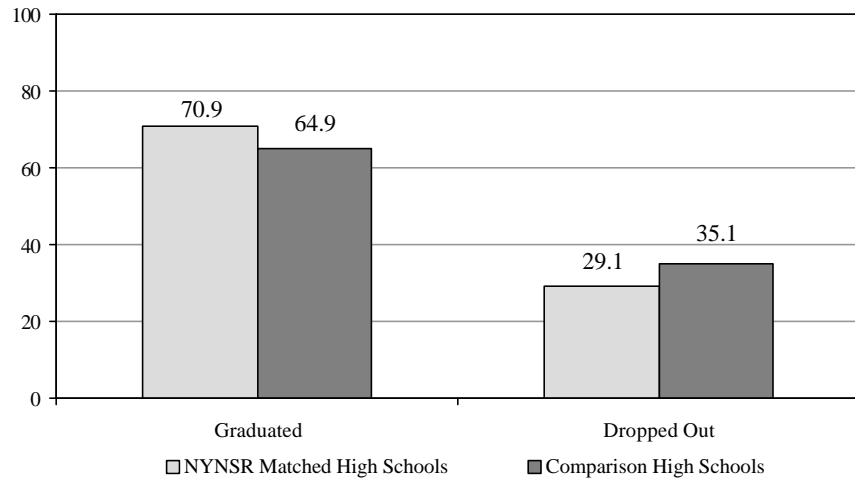


Figure 16: Class of 1997--Seven-Year Graduation Rates--Matched NYNSR and Comparison High Schools-- Transfer and Alternative High School



These graduation rate analyses indicate that the NYNSR academic and articulated high schools do quite well when compared to all the system's high schools. NYNSR schools have comparable graduation rates, lower dropout rates and higher rates of students still enrolled. When NYNSR matched high schools are compared to similar high schools, their outcomes are even more positive - considerably higher graduation rates and lower dropout rates. Thus at the high school level, NYNSR schools either hold their own or outperform the city's high schools.

VALUE-ADDED

A more sophisticated method for assessing student outcomes in NYNSR schools is to construct a value-added model. This model uses student test-scores as outcomes, and holds constant many of the factors affecting student performance to examine the importance of attending a school participating in the NYNSR project. We constructed such a model for three cohorts of students who attended 4th, 5th or 6th grade in founding NYNSR elementary and middle schools in 1995-96. The model compares the outcomes of these three cohorts of NYNSR students to students enrolled in our randomly selected sample of schools. We use five years of student data, a pre-baseline year (1994-95), a baseline year (1995-96) and three outcome years, 1996-97, 1997-98, and 1998-99, to estimate the effect of attending a NYNSR school on student performance on Reading and Math tests.²

The results indicate that there is a positive impact on both the Reading and Math test score performance of students attending NYNSR schools in the 4th grade, and those positive results persist across students' subsequent 5th and 6th grade testing performance. The evidence for 5th grade students is mixed; there are gains in Reading but not in Math. There was little or no evidence of any positive impact on test performance for 6th graders.

What these results may indicate is that NYNSR elementary schools have a stronger effect on student performance than NYNSR middle schools, since the 4th grade cohort spent at least two years in elementary schools, while the 6th grade cohort may have begun their NYNSR experience in middle schools. The results may also mean that the NYNSR elementary schools are stronger in reading instruction than in math. But at a minimum, the value-added analysis demonstrates a strong and sustained positive effect on 4th grade students in NYNSR schools, and some effect on 5th grade students as well.

COST EFFECTIVENESS OF NYNSR SCHOOLS

The previous test score gap, graduation and value-added analyses all demonstrate that NYNSR schools are more academically effective than the samples of comparison and randomly selected New York City schools we constructed for this evaluation. Moreover, NYNSR schools are at least as effective as, if not more effective than, the New York City school system as a whole, across many of the same outcome categories. But given that the Annenberg Foundation invested \$25 million across five years, and the sponsors raised an additional \$13 million, all of which went directly to the NYNSR schools, for a total additional investment of more than \$150 per year per student, how cost-effective was the NYNSR effort?

In a previous analysis of small high schools' cost-effectiveness, the Institute for Education and Social Policy, in collaboration with NYU's Wagner School of Public Service, carried out a study which demonstrated that New York City's small high schools, many of them NYNSR members, achieved lower costs per graduate than most of the city system's high schools.³

²Schwartz, A.E., Stiefel, L. and Kim, D.Y. (2001). "The Impact of School Reform on Student Performance: Evidence from the New York Network for School Renewal Project." Wagner School Working Paper 2001-10 or see the *Technical Report*.

³Stiefel, L. Berne, R., Iatarola, P., and Fruchter, N. (2000). "High School Size: Effects on Budgets and Performance in New York City." *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 22(Spring):27-39.

If you make the appropriate comparisons, which we've done, then small schools held their own. And maybe did a little better in certain cases. And that's on the hard measures. And then, of course, there are the more qualitative benefits that accrue to being a small entity and being part of a network and to have a particular instructional philosophy Which can't be measured by the achievement test scores. It transcends the test scores.

Robert Tobias, Director, Division of Assessment and Accountability, New York City Board of Education

To extend this cost-effective analysis to NYNSR elementary and middle schools, we estimated the differences in both expenditure - school spending - and school-level student performance that we could attribute to NYNSR schools, and then calculated a set of ratios that reflected the cost-effectiveness of NYNSR schools in relation to both our comparison sample and our random sample. We used multivariate regression methods to isolate spending differences attributable to being a NYNSR elementary or middle school, controlling for other factors related to school spending such as student socio-economic status and educational need.

Our results clearly indicate that NYNSR schools are more cost-effective than the comparison or random schools in our sample. On average, NYNSR elementary and middle schools spend more than \$400 less than the random sample of schools, and \$900 less than the comparison sample, and achieve higher results. In terms of Reading results, for example, NYNSR schools spend \$600 less than random schools for every percentage point of students meeting the state's proficiency requirement, and \$408 less than comparison schools. For each percentage point fewer students in the bottom quartile of Reading performance, NYNSR schools spend \$577 less than random schools and \$828 less than comparison schools. These differentials are substantially more than the \$150 per pupil that NYNSR schools received through the Annenberg Challenge grant and matching funds.

NYNSR elementary and middle schools achieve this cost-effectiveness by spending less on services other than teachers, and more on professional development. NYNSR schools have lower pupil teacher ratios, but as previously demonstrated, have fewer teachers who are licensed, experienced or have achieved Masters' degrees. This relatively young and inexperienced teaching force produces the higher student academic achievement that makes the NYNSR schools cost-effective.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The implementation phase of the evaluation study examined the extent to which the NYNSR goals and principles were carried out in the participating schools during the 1998-99 school year. The principles are:

- Small school size and school autonomy
- Innovative instructional practices
- Coherent curriculum
- Focus on student learning
- Professional development
- Parent and community involvement
- Sponsor support for schools and their networks

Among the 122 schools participating in NYNSR during the time of the study, 92% contributed in some aspect to this study, either by returning a School Profile, Administrator or Teacher Survey or through a site visit and interview. Table 14 presents the pattern of participation as represented by the School Profile Surveys submitted by NYNSR school administrators during the 1998-99 school year.

Table 14: 1998-1999 NYNSR Schools that Participated in School Profile Survey

	All NYNSR Schools	Participating NYNSR Schools	Percent of NYNSR Schools
NYNSR Founding Status			
Founding Schools	54 (44%)	47 (60.3%)	87%
Non-Founding Schools	68 (56%)	31 (39.7%)	46%
School Level			
Elementary (K-5)	41 (33%)	22 (28.2%)	54%
Intermediate (6-8)	22 (18%)	16 (20.5%)	73%
High School (9-12)	35 (29%)	26 (33.3%)	74%
Mixed levels*	24 (20%)	14 (17.9%)	58%
School Size			
Under 301 students	57 (47%)	34 (43.6%)	60%
301-500 Students	36 (29%)	24 (30.8%)	67%
501-1000 Students	18 (15%)	13 (16.7%)	72%
>1000 Students	11 (9%)	7 (9.0%)	64%

*Mixed levels refer to any combination of K-12.

Table 15 presents the distribution of completed Administrator and Teacher Surveys across NYNSR schools of varying founding status, size, and academic levels. Administrators who completed an Administrator Survey were likely to have teachers who also participated in the study. Although the data includes more surveys from teachers than administrators, chi-square analysis shows that, within the schools representing similar founding status, size, and academic level, similar proportions of Administrator and Teachers Surveys were returned. The greatest number of administrator and teacher respondents came from founding NYNSR schools (62.3%), high schools (34.4%), and schools with fewer than 301 students (34.3%). The second highest number of respondents came from elementary schools (24.9%) and schools that enroll 301-500 students (32.1%).

Peeking into an 11th grade chemistry classroom, I caught a glimpse of 10 students and their teacher engrossed in discussing the environmental impact of global warming. A student, seated with his back to the blackboard, was leading the conversation. This chemistry class represented East Side Community High School's conviction that ideal learning happens when students and teachers are actively involved in assembling knowledge for themselves and for each other... The deliberate practice of collaboration in the classroom serves to reinforce what we learn from each other and allows for the development of respect of students for each other. The collaboration model also allows practice for the world of work. In addition, all staff planning and student assessment is predicated on the proposition that student growth be judged by what they can do as well as what knowledge they have mastered. The standards and criteria by which work is to be evaluated and reflected upon are part of the collaboration among members of our school community.

Tammy Vu, *Math Professional Development at East Side*, December 2000

Table 15: Administrator and Teacher Surveys Returned

	Administrators	Teachers	Total
NYNSR Status			
Founding Schools	62.1%	62.4%	62.3%
Non-Founding Schools	37.9	37.6	37.7
School Level			
Elementary	27.2%	24.3%	24.9%
Middle School	24.3	20.7	21.3
High School	33.0	34.8	34.4
Mixed Levels	15.5	20.2	19.4
School Size			
< 301 students	39.8%	33.0%	34.3%
301-500 students	32.0	32.2	32.1
501-1000 students	12.6	17.4	16.5
> 1000 students	15.6	17.4	17.1

PATTERNS OF ORGANIZATION EMPHASIZING SMALL SCHOOL SIZE AND SCHOOL AUTOMONY

As previously established in the demographic portrait of the participating NYNSR schools, almost half of NYNSR schools have 300 or fewer students. This focus on relatively small administrative structures is also apparent in the many NYNSR schools with over 500 students that have created schools-within-schools or other smaller structures to help bring about more manageable and cohesive instructional units. One key result of "smallness" is that the predominant class size in NYNSR schools is under 30, with a majority of classes containing between 20-24 students. Further, according to the surveys, NYNSR schools with 301-500 students have the highest proportion of classes with 21-25 students.

Small schools have meant that School Leadership Teams, or equivalent school-based governance structures that involve school personnel, parents, and students, are in place in approximately 85% of NYNSR schools. All of the decision-making structures included teachers, and 53.7% included school staff, parents, and students, 14.9% of these bodies were comprised solely of principals and teachers, while 16.4% included someone from outside of the school - either a community member, district staff member, or business representative. There was a tendency, however, for administrators and teachers from elementary schools and from schools with fewer than 300 students to report the use of more governance practices consistent with the NYNSR principles. Further, administrators were more likely than teachers to report the implementation of school governance practices that promote shared responsibility and decision-making. One of the presumed benefits of smallness results in the instructional staff working closely together on the educational mission of the school. According to the survey findings, teachers at NYNSR schools do meet frequently to collaborate on curriculum design; to discuss individual students; to plan staff development activities; and to share general information. Most important, the majority of teachers and administrators describe NYNSR schools as collegial and collaborative places where teachers want to teach and students want to learn.

In terms of school autonomy (the ability of a school's professional staff to control instruction and the other aspects of running the educational program), administrators and teachers at NYNSR schools believe that they have authority to hire new teachers, set discipline policies, design professional development activities, and evaluate fellow teachers. Forces outside the school, including the State Department of Education, the Board of Education, and District offices, were seen as significantly governing decisions regarding curriculum guidelines and performance assessment. Determining graduation requirements was seen as the purview of the Board of Education.

Conflicts among layers of the educational bureaucracy surrounding the schools were experienced by a majority of NYNSR administrators and teachers. Almost 90% of the administrators and teachers reported that the State Department and 55% reported that the New York City Board of Education never or rarely support administrators' authority and ability to lead. Almost 70% of respondents did feel that their administration was supported by the district staff. The teachers' unions, parents, and the NYNSR office were viewed as having the least influence upon school-wide decisions. Over 55% of respondents indicated that the teachers' union never or rarely supports the administrator's authority and ability to lead; one third of respondents indicated positive support from parents; and almost 40% of the respondents indicated that the NYNSR office sometimes or frequently supported the administrator's authority.

INNOVATIVE INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

Not unexpectedly, across the three types of schools, the "founding" NYNSR schools, the elementary schools, and those schools with 301-500 students reported enacting pedagogical practices consistent with NYNSR principles. This suggests that a pedagogy focused on a more progressive approach to instruction, one that invites more student agency and activity, thrives more readily in smaller schools and with younger students. Schools organized prior to the establishment of NYNSR seem to have come into existence to create conditions that make it possible for teachers to enable students to pursue their own learning agendas within the constraints of the established curriculum. Thus across the total cohort of NYNSR schools, there are clusters of schools in which teachers are not merely transmitters of content through the medium of large group instruction, but more importantly have a key role in "facilitating" learning by creating hands-on learning experiences in which they often work collaboratively with their students. Yet, regardless of particular learning approaches being advocated, administrators across all school levels stressed their commitment to meeting the needs of the whole child, to maximize each student's growth potential through both academic and non-academic activities. Finally, as was often the case across the various implementation measures, administrators were more likely than teachers to report instructional approaches that were consistent with the NYNSR principles.

There is a tension between democracy and efficiency that underlies the kinds of school that we work in. We were founded under democratic principles. Many of us are accustomed to talking things out until we can come to a unified decision. Theoretically this is powerful and practically it is often overwhelming when there are other things that must take priority to these types of conversations. There is something amazing about building the house that you live in. It is even more amazing when you do it as a team. Much like a heterogeneous classroom, we must know the needs and strengths of the players in order to make sure that everyone can put in their energy. The process is not easy or clear but it is very possible.

Pankti Sevak, *How Does One Create and Provide Professional Development to a Vertical Team that Has Teachers in Very Different Places?* December 2000

In preparation for the negotiation [of the curriculum with my students], I designed a week-long process of answering the four questions: What do we know already? What do we want and need to find out? How will we go about finding out (what we need to know)? How will we know and show what we've found out when we've finished? Before I started, I did some visioning on what I thought the course should look like.

"The goal of the course should be to explore a variety of ways in which we have responded to government action, participated in government, and attempted to change government. We will look at and reflect on why we chose the actions we did, the short and long term consequences, and the results. We will look at other actions that could have been taken and have been taken in the past. We will look at El Puente within the history of community organizing and social activism by studying the civil rights movement and labor movements from the 1950's until the present..."

The class was a stunning success. The responsibility of learning was clearly on the students and the quality of thinking was tremendous. The course was in many ways more rigorous than most. Because the students designed the work, they were more committed to completing it well. It has been the most exciting course I have taught at the Academy.

Staff member, El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice, *Final Report on the Participatory Ethnographic Research Project at El Puente*, December 2001

COHERENT CURRICULUM

NYNSR schools offer a rigorous and coherent curriculum, strongly influenced by experiential learning and often organized around a school's theme or mission. The pattern of teacher assignments offers additional supporting evidence for the way the curriculum is integrated around the core subjects of math, science, Language Arts, and social studies. The majority of sampled teachers report teaching the core subjects in many NYNSR schools. In many of the interviews teachers gave examples of working together to plan curriculum across subject areas. Of sampled teachers, over 25% (65% of whom teach at the elementary school level) are certified to teach "common branches," all the subjects that are included in K-6 classrooms with an emphasis on the language arts.

Internship programs are another instructional component that support active student learning and connect that learning to the world beyond the school. Many NYNSR schools have integrated such programs into their academic curriculum, to provide first-hand experience with and mentoring from professionals in the field. Beyond the core academic subjects, both administrators and teachers emphasized the key role played by arts instruction in ensuring the development of students' imaginative and creative work. Further, the arts were seen as an important means of helping students develop leadership and collaboration skills. Acting on this commitment to the arts, many NYNSR schools have established formal linkages with NYC artists and arts institutions to offer extended learning opportunities.

FOCUS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Administrators consistently referred to "project-based," "theme-oriented," "hands-on," "work-related," "experiential," "field work," "investigations," and "exhibitions" as opportunities for students to engage in problem solving as part of the learning process, in order to develop both critical and creative habits of mind. Such student-focused learning activities, including using reasoning and evidence to explain their viewpoints and using extended writing to elaborate their understanding of concepts or phenomena, were reported more frequently by founding NYNSR schools and elementary schools than by non-founding schools and other school levels. Also the "301-500 student" schools reported more frequently than other schools that they emphasized cooperative forms of instruction, which were directly geared toward students learning to develop ownership of their own knowledge and applying this knowledge to experiences outside of the classroom.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

One of the key NYNSR capacity-building principles was to break the cycle of episodic and top-down approaches that often characterize staff development in large school systems. Data from the implementation study indicates that professional development activities at NYNSR schools are built into the "daily work of teaching" and thus permeate the overall school culture. Sixty-five percent of the administrators indicated that a faculty committee frequently serves as a source of professional development. Fifty-five percent of administrators also indicated that the school leadership committee - composed primarily of administrators, staff, parents, and/or members of the school curriculum committee - also frequently influence professional development activities. While only 25% of respondents said that NYNSR networks were a frequent source of professional development, both teachers and administrators said they valued the variety of teaching methods that were introduced and the insights they gained by sharing their experiences with others when they attended NYNSR training sessions. Finally, the climate of a school's professional culture is also characterized by the willingness of faculty to keep their classrooms open to their peers. A minority of NYNSR schools reported using peer coaching and other peer review strategies to enhance instruction and collegiality among the teaching staff.

PARENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Almost all the administrators at NYNSR schools reported trying to ensure that parents are integral to the overall operation of the school. They also indicated that their school staffs are generally open to parents and their concerns and eagerly seek parental cooperation in their educational endeavors. While administrators and teachers do not believe parents influence academic decisions such as establishing curriculum, assessment criteria, or graduation requirements, parents are seen as playing a role in discipline policy and the hiring of teachers. Further, parental support of the administrator as the leader of the school was reported to be a key aspect of a school being able to carry out its educational mission. Connecting to parents, however, is often a more pressing concern for schools serving younger students and for schools that are trying to establish their reputations in the community. Over 85% of administrators report that teachers and staff are aware of community issues, and more than 75% of the administrators report that teachers work sometimes or frequently with community organizations. Administrators and teachers from elementary schools and non-founding schools indicated more frequently that they engaged in practices aligned with the NYNSR principles regarding parent and community involvement.

I think [functioning small schools are] building parents into the culture. Schools that do performance assessment and public exhibitions of work -- if you establish with the parents right up front, we want to involve you in looking at student work and tuning standards with us, and deciding what's good enough, and critiquing our assignments -- rather than having you come and try to raise money so we buy a speaker system for the gym. Then it's a legitimate engagement of things that genuinely interest the parents -- which is what's happening with their kids.

Alan Dichter, Director of New School Development, New York City Board of Education

In front of us we had a list of "needs" that the staff had identified...This list was long: how to teach in heterogeneous classrooms, how to integrate arts in the classroom, how to use technology; redefining the school's disciplinary policy and Spanish program; teaching reading and writing across the classroom; getting feedback on classroom methods, and seeing other teacher's classrooms. Individual teachers had a variety of needs themselves, and across the staff as a whole, there was an even grater range of needs. How could we meet them all?

At first, we took out a calendar and began to try to schedule the meetings...As we talked it through more, however, it began to seem clear to us that the list in front of us couldn't just be transformed into a list of meetings - that it encompassed a range of different kinds of needs that the staff had. In some areas, they simply needed information or training, such as technology or methods for working with resource room students. In other areas, they needed to be able to work in small groups to have ongoing conversations about issues such as classroom practice and curriculum. And at times the whole staff needed to be together to make policy decisions or talk through whole-school issues.

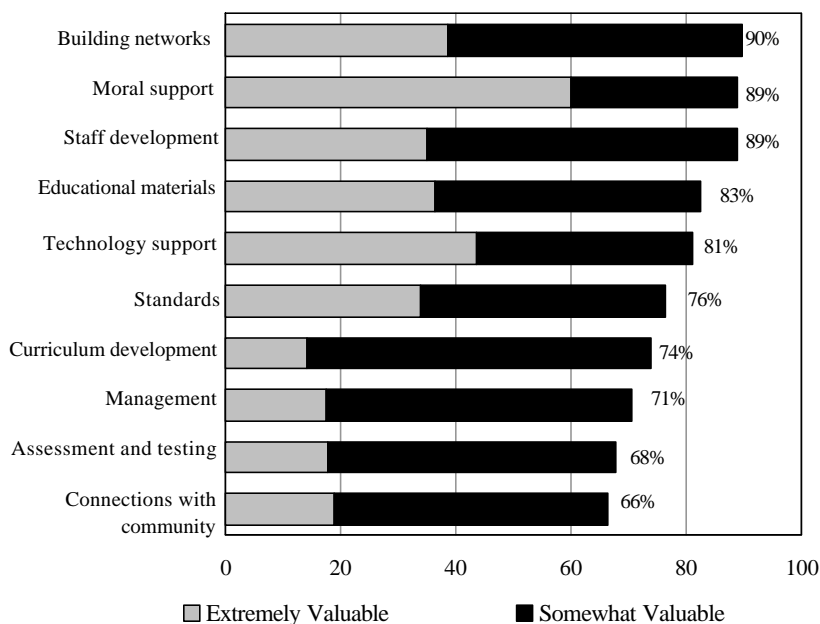
It seemed, then, that we needed to create a structure which would allow these different groupings to meet regularly throughout the year. This was one of our first realizations: a good professional development program needs to provide teachers with a range of kinds of groups and meetings to address all of their needs.

Lori Chajet and Janice Bloom, *Teachers as Learners: The Need for Professional Development at Alternative Public Schools*, Fall 1999

SPONSOR SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS AND THEIR NETWORKS

The four NYNSR sponsor organizations were seen by school administrators as contributing to their educational efforts. Areas of support judged to be most valuable included staff development, building networks with affiliate schools, technology expansion, and providing moral support for the school staff. Because NYNSR was able to channel unrestricted funds into their participating schools during a time of relative fiscal austerity in New York City, this aspect of support loomed large in the comments of the administrators. Schools relied on direct NYNSR funding to promote innovative programming, provide additional support to personnel and parents, and acquire new materials (particularly library books and computers). Further, administrators consistently praised NYNSR for the fact that their funding was discretionary and thus freed them to initiate efforts that best fit the needs of their schools.

Figure 17: Sponsor Support of School Capacity



Administrators valued highly the networking that membership in NYNSR made possible. This networking allowed them to maintain their educational focus and helped mitigate the pressures of both starting and running a small school. The main criticism expressed by many administrators was that they believed the sponsors did not adequately define their partner relationship with respect to participating schools. Indeed, administrators suggested that NYNSR's influence might have been significantly extended had schools been better informed as to what support they could expect from their sponsors.

V. CONCLUSION

The findings of the outcomes evaluation demonstrate that NYNSR schools achieve strong academic performance for a student population very similar to the city system as a whole. Across the project's five years, NYNSR schools show higher student and teacher attendance and greater student stability than the city system. NYNSR schools' standardized test scores often exceeded the citywide average, and their longitudinal gains exceeded the performance of schools in the comparison and random samples. NYNSR schools also achieve quite favorable graduation rates and dropout rates. The results of the value-added analysis indicates strong and sustained performance for NYNSR 4th grade students, and the cost-effectiveness analysis shows that NYNSR schools are more cost-effective than the schools in our comparison and random samples.

The findings of the implementation evaluation indicate that, as a group, NYNSR schools are highly student-centered and focused on linking instruction to student learning styles. In most cases, principals and teachers collaboratively exercise instructional leadership, and the schools provide the resources and professional development necessary to support teachers. Most important, the findings indicate that NYNSR schools are characterized by innovative, respectful and collaborative learning environments that seek to redefine the relationships between districts and schools, as well as to transform the relationships among administrators, teachers, students, parents and the communities the NYNSR schools serve.

Through the Annenberg Challenge grant, NYNSR created, restructured or reorganized almost 140 schools serving almost 50,000 students, a sector of the New York City school system larger than most districts across the nation. Those 50,000 students, as an aggregate, were well-served by NYNSR schools. Many of the schools developed innovative responses to the system's persistent challenges by creating effective instructional practices, engaging curriculum and consistent student and teacher support. Employing small size and scale, student and teacher choice, consistent focus on instruction, school-based professional development, and individualized forms of student support, the NYNSR experience has generated successful methods that the New York City Board of Education, as well as other large urban systems, can build on to ensure the academic excellence and equity of outcomes necessary for all our children.

VI. ENDNOTES

Tables 1-4: Student Characteristics--NYNSR and Citywide Averages. The Board of Education's Division of Assessment and Accountability have provided us with student-level data for all NYNSR, comparison, and random students over the five years of the project. The data on NYNSR student characteristics presented in these charts come from these student-level databases. The averages for New York City as a whole come from the Annual School Reports for each year. The Annual School Reports are compiled by the New York City Board of Education's Division of Assessment and Accountability each year and are the primary source for the school-level data we use in this report. NYNSR schools are included in the New York City averages presented in these tables.

Table 3: Student Stability--NYNSR and Citywide Averages. Percent stable indicates the percent of students who were in the same school in fall and spring of a particular school year.

Table 5: Teacher Characteristics--NYNSR and Citywide Elementary Schools. Data for both NYNSR schools and Citywide schools come from the Annual School Reports for each year. The citywide average in these tables includes NYNSR schools. For many NYNSR schools there is no data for their teaching staffs reported on the Annual School Reports. In 1996-97, data was available for 22 out of 37 NYNSR elementary schools, in 1997-98 24 out of 36, in 1998-99 21 out of 39, and in 1999-2000 25 out of 35 NYNSR elementary schools had data.

Table 6: Teacher Characteristics--NYNSR and Citywide High Schools. Data for both NYNSR and Citywide schools come from the Annual School Reports for each year. The citywide average in these tables includes NYNSR schools. In 1996-97, data was available for 39 out of 43 NYNSR high schools, in 1997-98 41 out of 46, in 1998-99 43 out of 48, and in 1999-2000 41 out of 47 NYNSR high schools had data.

Table 7: Teacher Characteristics--Matched NYNSR and Comparison High Schools. Data for both NYNSR and Citywide schools come from the *Annual School Reports* for each year. In 1996-97, data was available for 31 out of 31 matched NYNSR high schools, in 1997-98 30 out of 31, in 1998-99 28 out of 31, and in 1999-2000 27 out of 30 matched NYNSR schools had data. In 1996-97, data was available for 24 out of 24 comparison high schools, in 1997-98 24 out of 24, in 1998-99 22 out of 24, and in 1999-2000 23 out of 24 comparison high schools had data.

Table 8: School Enrollment in 1999-2000 --NYNSR and Citywide. Data for both NYNSR and Citywide schools come from the Annual School Reports for each year. The data for citywide schools does not include NYNSR schools.

Figure 1: NYNSR Schools by Community School District and Superintendentcy. These data are from the NYNSR School Directories for 1995-96 and 1999-2000. This chart includes the location of NYNSR schools with and without BDS codes.

Figures 2-9: Gap Analysis Charts. The data come from the Annual School Reports for each year. The citywide average calculated for these charts includes NYNSR schools. During the NYNSR project (1995-96 to 1999-2000), the New York City Board of Education has repeatedly changed the format of the standardized tests administered to public school students in New York City. As a result, straightforward comparisons of test score results across multiple years cannot be made. By highlighting the difference, or gap, between the average NYNSR or comparison school performance, we avoid the problem of standardized test incomparability over the five years shown on these graphs. To create figures 2-9, the aggregate average NYNSR or comparison test results were subtracted from the citywide average to get a score indicating the difference between the average for NYNSR schools or for comparison schools and the citywide school average. Negative numbers indicate that schools, as an aggregate, scored below the citywide average, while positive numbers indicate that NYNSR schools or comparison school, as an aggregate, scored above the citywide average.

Number of schools included in citywide averages calculated for each chart

	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-1999	1999-2000
Citywide Elementary	666	675	676	680	675
Citywide Middle	232	237	238	241	242

Figure 2: NYNSR Reading, Citywide Tests. This chart includes all NYNSR schools for each year of the project. Number of schools included in Figure 2

	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-1999	1999-2000
NYNSR Elementary	17	32	34	35	31
NYNSR Middle	21	28	32	30	30

Figure 3 NYNSR Math, Citywide Tests. This chart includes all NYNSR schools for each year of the project. Number of schools included in Figure 3:

	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-1999	1999-2000
NYNSR Elementary	17	32	35	35	31
NYNSR Middle	22	28	32	30	30

Figure 4: Citywide Reading Tests, Matched NYNSR vs. Comparison. Number of schools included in Figure 4:

	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-1999	1999-2000
NYNSR Matched	27	27	26	25	26
Comparison Matched	20	21	20	19	18

Figure 5: Citywide Math Tests, Matched NYNSR vs. Comparison. Number of schools included in Figure 5:

	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-1999	1999-2000
NYNSR Matched	28	27	26	25	26
Comparison Matched	20	21	20	19	18

Figure 6: Reading, Matched NYNSR vs. Unmatched NYNSR. Number of schools included in Figure 6:

	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-1999	1999-2000
NYNSR Matched	27	27	26	25	26
NYNSR Unmatched	11	10	11	10	7

Figure 7: Math, Matched NYNSR vs. Unmatched NYNSR. Number of schools included in Figure 7:

	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-1999	1999-2000
NYNSR Matched	28	27	26	25	26
NYNSR Unmatched	11	10	11	10	7

Figure 8: Reading, Founding NYNSR and Random. Number of schools included in Figure 8:

	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-1999	1999-2000
NYNSR Founding	38	37	37	35	33
Random Schools	80	79	78	78	77

Figure 9: Math, Founding NYNSR and Random. Number of schools included in Figure 9:

	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-1999	1999-2000
NYNSR Founding	39	37	37	35	33
Random Schools	80	79	78	78	77

Figures 10-11: Percent of Schools Whose Students Scored above the Citywide Average, Reading and Math. The data come from the 1995-96, 1996-97, 1997-98, 1998-99, and 1999-2000 *Annual School Reports*. Like the gap analysis charts, these charts allow us to compare test performance over time despite changes in tests. The citywide average calculated for this chart includes NYNSR schools. This chart includes all NYNSR schools for each year of the project.

Number of schools included in Figures 10 and 11:

	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-1999	1999-2000
NYNSR	40	67	70	69	61
Citywide	918	912	915	924	960

Table 9: Reading Results & Math Results by Quartiles--Founding NYNSR Students Only. Data come from student-level data files. Reading results are for the CTB Reading exam given in years 1995-96, 1996-97, and 1997-98 in New York City. Math results are for the CAT Math exam. For these three years, the scores on both exams are comparable across years.

Figure 12: Reading Quartiles by Ethnicity/Race for Founding NYNSR Students. Data come from student-level data files. Test is the CTB Reading exam given in years 1995-96, 1996-97, and 1997-98 in New York City. For these three years the scores on this exam are comparable across years.

Tables 10-13: Four-Year Graduation Rates--NYNSR High Schools and Other New York City High Schools. Data for the years 1997, 1998 and 1999 are from the Board of Education of the City of New York's *Four-Year Longitudinal Reports* for each year. The data for Class of 2000 is from the *1999-2000 Annual School Reports*. NYNSR schools' data are not included in the "Other New York City" data. The "All Other High Schools" category includes specialized and vocational high schools. GED and other non-diploma granting programs are not included. Articulated alternative high schools enroll a majority of their students from junior high/intermediate schools at the ninth grade and expect that those students will graduate within four years. Transfer alternative schools only enroll students who are transferring from other educational settings from which they may have dropped out or have been suspended. These are often "last chance" schools.

Number of schools included in Table 10:

	Class of	1997	1998	1999	2000
NYNSR High Schools		20	27	30	33
All Other High Schools		123	131	135	130

Number of schools included in Table 11:

	Class of	1997	1998	1999	2000
NYNSR Transfer High Schools		6	6	6	6
All Other Transfer High Schools		10	10	10	10

Number of schools' data included in Table 12:

	Class of	1997	1998	1999	2000
Matched NYNSR High Schools		15	15	21	25
Comparison High Schools		15	17	19	18

Number of schools' data included in Table 13:

	Class of	1997	1998	1999	2000
Matched NYNSR Transfer High Schools		6	6	6	5
Comparison Transfer High Schools		5	5	5	5

Figures 13-16: Class of 1997--Seven-Year Graduation Rates--NYNSR High Schools and Other New York City High Schools. Data are from the Board of Education of the City of New York's *The Class of 1997: Final Longitudinal Report, A Three Year Follow-up Study*. NYNSR schools' data are not included in the "Other New York City" data. Articulated alternative high schools enroll a majority of their students from junior high/intermediate schools at the ninth grade and expect that those students will graduate within four years. Transfer alternative schools only enroll students who are transferring from other educational settings from which they may have dropped out or have been suspended. These are often "last chance" schools.

There were 18 NYNSR articulated and alternative high schools with data and four NYNSR transfer high schools. Citywide, there were 125 articulated and alternative high schools with data and 12 transfer high schools.

There were 16 matched NYNSR articulated and alternative high schools with data and four matched NYNSR transfer high schools. There were 13 comparison articulated and alternative high schools with data and 5 comparison transfer high schools.

Table 14: 1998-1999 NYNSR schools that participated in School Profile Survey. Data are from the results of Implementation Survey

Table 15: Administrator and Teacher Surveys Returned. Data are from the results of Implementation Survey.

Figure 17: Sponsor Support of School Capacity.

	Number of respondents
Building Networks	88
Moral Support	90
Staff Development	89
Educational Materials	85
Technology Support	85
Standards	80
Curriculum Development	84
Management	68
Assessment and Testing	84
Connections with Community	80

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