

The Reality for Reading Test Scores: Los Angeles Unified

Or,
Urban Stall? no way

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This is the second in a series of short reports on the unsubstantiated claims by Bruce Fuller that improvement in reading scores is "stalled". (Fuller's series of essays and tables can be found on the PACE site.)
My prior report

"The California Reality on Reading Test Scores"

<http://www-stat.stanford.edu/~rag/nclb/careality.pdf>
shows Fuller's claim that California children's reading scores in elementary schools have "stalled" not to be consistent with state of California data. This followup report repeats that analysis for Los Angeles Unified (LAUSD).

Summary of results:

1. For LAUSD elementary students, improvement from 2001-4 in CST ELA is just about the same as improvement from '99-02 on the Stanford 9 Reading. Moreover, the improvements for LAUSD are almost double the statewide California results.
2. For disadvantaged students (SD) in LAUSD the improvement from 2001-4 in CST ELA is slightly greater than the improvement from '99-02 on the Stanford 9 Reading. Again, LAUSD improvement exceeds the statewide result.

For LAUSD elementary students, improvement from 2001-4 in CST ELA is just about the same as improvement from '99-02 on the Stanford 9 Reading. (The Stanford 9 results use a rough proficiency equivalent of the 60th national percentile, a standard somewhere between basic and proficient in the CST standards.) The LAUSD improvements in the CST ELA from 2001-2004 of .096 in proportion at least Basic and .074 in proportion at least Proficient bracket the improvement from 1999-2002 of .087 in the proportion of students at least 60th national percentile on the Stanford 9.

For the subset of Socioeconomically Disadvantaged students (SD) improvement on the ELA again matches the prior Stanford 9 improvement. The improvement from 1999-2002 in the proportion of students at least 60th national percentile on the Stanford 9 is .094, whereas ELA improvements from 2001-2004 in proportion at least Basic and in proportion at least Proficient are .108 and .082. The improvement of SD students in LAUSD exceeds the improvement in statewide results for SD students.

Taking shorter periods on either side of NCLB chronology, a comparison of improvements in the period 2002-2004 with 2000-2002 does show greater improvement for 2000-2002. Improvement in proportion at least

Proficient in the post-NCLB period is .042 for LAUSD students grades 2-5, whereas the 2000-2002 improvement from the Stanford 9 in the pre-NCLB period .053. SD students improved .049 in proportion at least Proficient in the 2002-2004 period, whereas improvement on the Stanford 9 2000-2002 was .065.

In his August 22 Commentary in the Los Angeles Times (Accountability Rises, Scores Fall), Bruce Fuller misstates and misleads in his claims (including Los Angeles) of "faltering achievement levels", scores "hit a plateau", scores "stalled". Fuller's strategy of selective data presentation is simple dissembling and should not be given credibility.

Data summary displays are shown below. All summaries are for the student scores in grades 2-5. Pooling over grades 2-5 gives the elementary student emphasis of the current debate and smooths out year-to-year features in the scores that often distract presentations. Computations were carried out using the full STAR dataset for the Stanford 9 and California state reports for the CST ELA (thus the ELA results do suffer from the rounding in the CDE reports). For the CST ELA, results for Proportion at least Basic are shown along with the usual Proportion at least Proficient.

Real LAUSD Test Results

 CST ELA results 2001-2004
 STAR students grades 2-5

	Proportion at least Basic				Improvement
	2001	2002	2003	2004	
All Students	0.502	0.562	0.618	0.598	.096
SD Students	0.45	0.528	0.572	0.558	.138

	Proportion at least Proficient				Improvement
	2001	2002	2003	2004	
All Students	0.188	0.22	0.265	0.262	.074
SD Students	0.13	0.173	0.21	0.212	.082

 Rough proficiency equivalent
 proportion at or above 60th percentile on Stanford 9 reading

STAR students Grades 2-5	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	Improvement	
						'99-02	'98-02
All Students	0.152	0.156	0.187	0.215	0.242	0.087	0.09
SD Students	0.09	0.099	0.128	0.16	0.193	0.094	0.103
SD Students in HighSD Schools	0.078	0.093	0.121	0.154	0.188	0.095	0.11
