New York City Public School Student Improvement Before and After Mayoral Control

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Purpose of Report

The New York State Legislature is now beginning a review of how the New York City school system is governed as the "mayoral control" law that passed in June 2002 expires on June 30, 2009. It is useful to the discussion to look at test scores, spending, and programming since the 1998-99 school year, when the New York State new testing program began as a result of the development of the New York State Regents standards through the period that followed mayoral control.

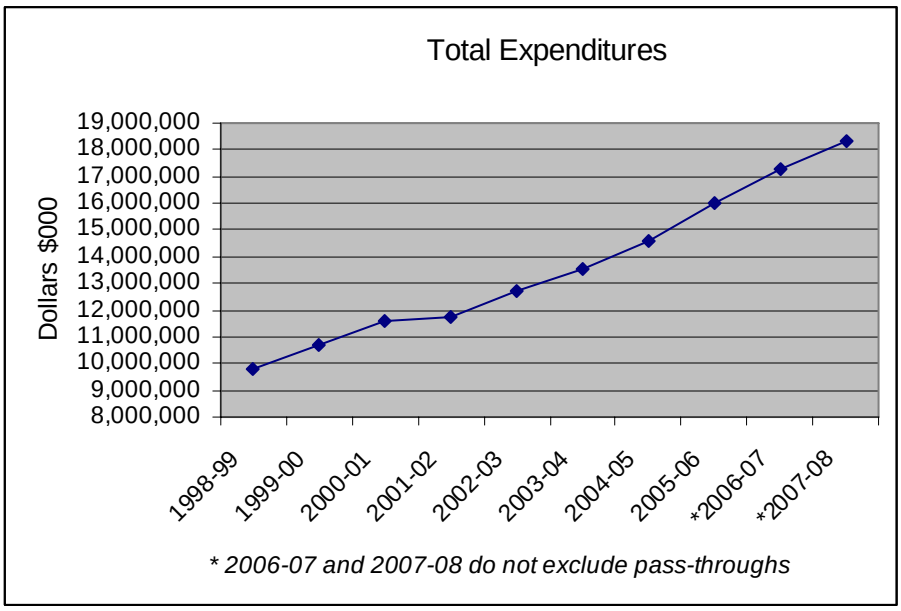
This report examines changes in the test scores, spending, and programming both before and after mayoral control to understand the impact of the Mayor's reforms compared to the impact of earlier reforms. It demonstrates that the groundwork for student improvement had largely been laid prior to the Mayor's reforms. New York City public schools spending virtually doubled from 1998-99 to 2007-08. Over this same period 4th grade ELA and math scores increased by about 30 percentage points. Eighth grade math scores increased by nearly 37 points and 8th grade ELA scores increased by 8 points. Certainly every party involved in the public schools – students, parents, teachers and the staff of the school system, the Mayor and the legislative bodies that appropriate funds – deserve credit for these achievements.

Historical Background

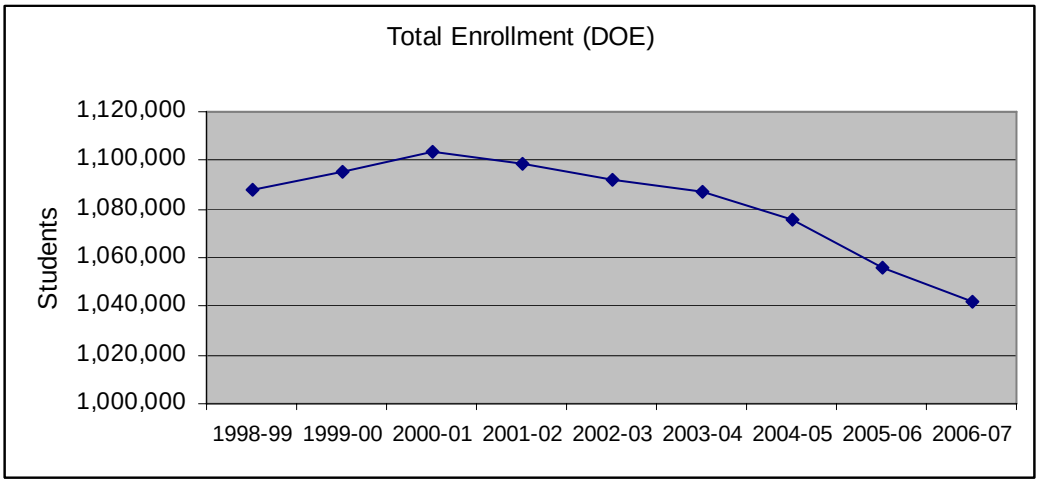
In 1995, the New York State Board of Regents developed a three-tiered plan for raising standards for all students that included: setting higher learning standards and revising the assessment system; building the capacity of schools to support student learning; and developing an institutional accountability system with public reporting. In 1996 the Regents adopted a set of 28 learning standards for seven subject areas and issued a series of core curricula related to the standards. The New York State Education Department and school districts began the testing program during the 1998-99 school year in grades 4 and 8. In addition, new Federal and State efforts were introduced in 1998 to reduce early grade class sizes. Further, in 1997, the New York State Legislature and the Governor agreed to a new plan for Universal Pre-K, placing New York at the forefront of the Universal Pre-K movement. In June, 2002 the New York State Legislature approved mayoral control of the New York City public schools. The momentum created by these reform efforts from 1998-99 to 2007-08 was complemented by increased spending on education in New York City. These policy changes are examined further below.

NYC School Spending

Over these past ten school years, from 1998-99 to 2007-08, the education budget has nearly doubled from $9.79 billion to $18.34 billion. Spending rose from 1998-99 to 2002-03, growing from $9.79 billion to $12.71 billion or by 30%. From 2002-03 to the 2005-06 school year the budget continued to increase from $12.71 billion to $15.99 billion or by 26%. Spending after the 2005-06 school year continued to increase to $17.26 billion in 2006-07 to $18.34 billion in 2008-09. This represents a 44% increase from 2002-03 to 2007-08. It should be noted that the figures from 1998-99 to 2005-06 are based on New York City Department of Education School Based Expenditure Reports, whereas the 2006-07 and 2007-08 figures come from Financial Status Reports. The two reports are calculated somewhat differently however, they are still comparable. All of the above figures include all categories of spending with the exception of pass throughs. The "pass throughs" category includes all funds to non-public schools, in large measure special education pre-schools.

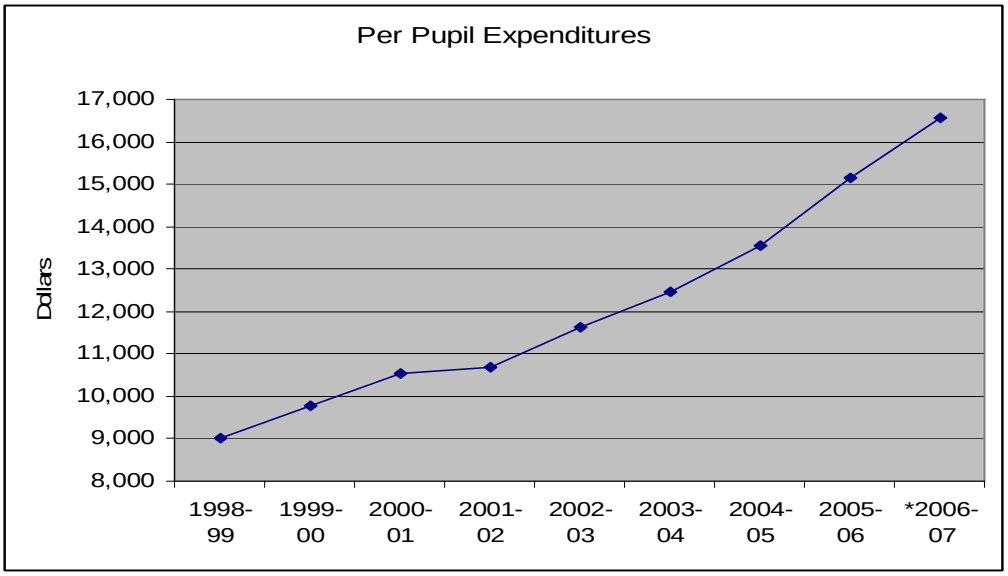


During this same period, New York City public school enrollment declined slightly. In 1998-99 the total student enrollment in New York City Schools was 1,088,079. Enrollment increased slightly for the next two years and then decreased every year since 2000-01. By 2006-07 enrollment had fallen to 1,042,100 students, or by 45,879 fewer students than were enrolled in 1998-99.



Declining enrollment, combined with the rise in spending, increased the per pupil expenditures significantly. From 1998-99 to 2002-03 per pupil spending rose from $8,957 to $11,640 or a

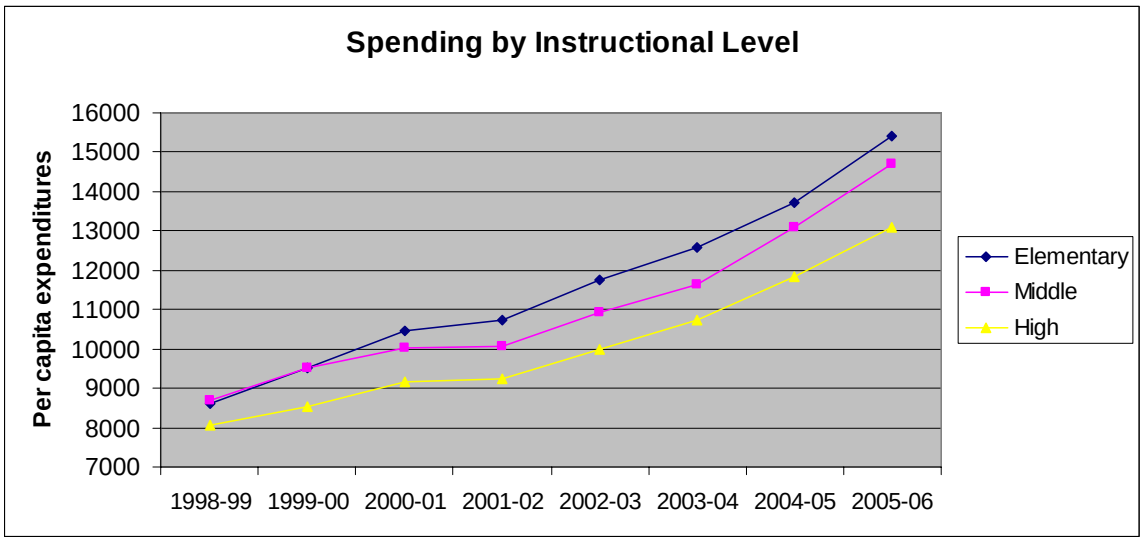
$2,683 overall per pupil increase, which represents an increase of $671 per student per year. Thus, from 1998-99 to 2002-03 the average per pupil expenditure rose by 29%. From 2002-03 to 2006-07, per pupil spending rose from $11,640 to $16,566 or a $4,926 increase, which represents an average annual per pupil increase of $1,232. This is a per pupil expenditure increase of 42% from 2002-03 to 2006-07. Overall, from 1998-99 to 2006-07 the average per pupil expenditure rose by 85% from $8,957 to $16,566. When controlling for inflation, per pupil spending from 1998-99 to 2006-7 rose by 49%.



In 2002, the State passed the Maintenance of Effort law (MOE) requiring the City to maintain its own level of school funding and preventing it from using State dollars to replace City dollars for schools. The Legislature required that pensions and debt service be excluded from the annual maintenance requirements because of the wide fluctuations in those costs due to the City's practice of pre-paying these costs before the beginning of a new fiscal year. This would assure that required spending be focused on actual services. As a result, the City has added billions of dollars for the schools that have gone to instruction.

Instructional Level

While per pupil spending increased at every instructional level, spending at the elementary level outpaced both middle school and high school spending. From 1998-99 to 2002-03 the per pupil expenditure for the elementary school level increased by 37%. For middle school the per pupil expenditure increased by 26% and for high school the increase was 24%. From 2002-03 to 2005-06 the increases for the elementary, middle, and high school instructional levels were 31%, 34% and 31%, respectively. Per pupil spending for elementary school students increased by 79% from 1998-99 to 2005-06. For middle school and high school the increase for the same time period was 69% and 62% respectively.



Revenue Sources

All sources of funds – City State, and Federal - rose significantly during the 1998-99 to 2007-08 period. City funds rose from $4.9 billion in 1998-99, to $5.7 billion in 2002-03, then to $9.97 billion in 2007-08. State funds rose from $4.4 billion in 1998-99 to $5.38 billion in 2002-03, to $7.88 billion in 2007-08. Federal funds rose from $1.07 billion in 1998-99 to $1.58 billion in 2002-03 and up to $1.89 billion in 2007-08.

Test results

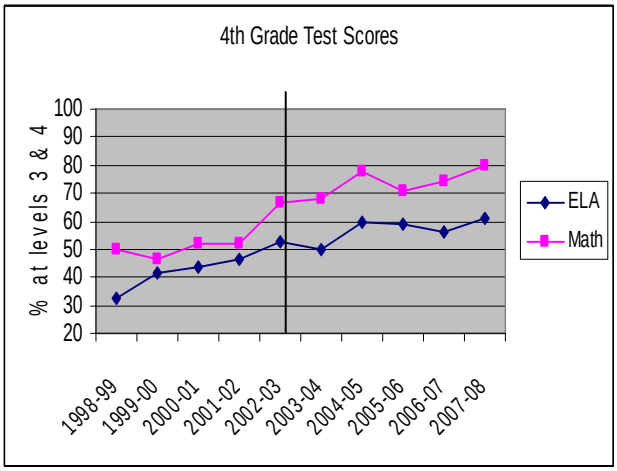
This section focuses on the test scores of 4th and 8th grade students. These two grade levels are notable benchmarks. The 4th grade test scores demonstrate the extent to which children have gained the skills that will prepare them for higher learning. The 8th grade benchmark demonstrates high school readiness. As a practical matter, only the 4th grade and the 8th grade tests have been under the auspices of the New York State Education Department for the duration of this report. In 2005-06, the New York State Education Department expanded the ELA and mathematics testing programs to grades 3-8. Previously, state tests were administered in grades 4 and 8 and citywide tests were administered in grades 3, 5, 6 and 7.

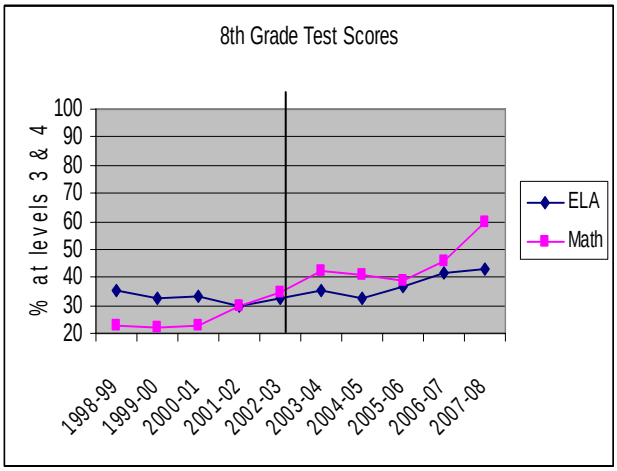
From 1998-99 to 2007-08 the percentages of students scoring at levels 3 & 4 in the 4th and 8th grades in both ELA and math increased. In 1998-99, 32.7% of students in the 4th grade scored at levels 3 & 4 in ELA. In 2002-03, 52.4% of students in the 4th grade scored at levels 3 & 4 in ELA. Thus, from 1998-99 to 2002-03, the period prior to mayoral reforms, the percentage of 4th graders that scored at levels 3 & 4 increased by 19.7. In 2007-08, the percentage of 4th grade students who scored at levels 3 & 4 continued to increase to 61.3%. This represents an 8.9% gain from the five year period from 2002-03 to 2007-08, the period after the implementation of mayoral reforms. The largest single-year gain made on the 4th grade ELA occurred in 2004-05 which saw a 9.9 point gain over the previous year's scores. The greatest decrease occurred in 2006-07, when the percentage of students scoring at levels 3 & 4 declined by 2.9 from the previous year. Overall, from 1998-99 to 2007-08, 4th grade students scoring at levels 3 & 4 on the ELA exam increased by 28.6%.

Similar gains were made by 4th graders in math. From 1998-99 to 2002-03, prior to mayoral reforms, the percentage of 4th graders at levels 3 & 4 went from 49.6% to 66.7% or a gain of 17.1 percentage points. Following mayoral reforms from 2002-03 to 2007-08, the percentage of 4th graders at levels 3 & 4 in math increased by 13 points from 66.7% to 79.7%. The greatest single-year increase was 14.7 percentage points and occurred in 2002-03. The biggest one-year decrease in 4th grade math was 6.5 percentage points in 2005-06. Overall, from 1998-99 to 2007-08, 4th grade students scoring at levels 3 & 4 on the math exam increased by 30.1%.

Prior to mayoral reforms, percentage of 8th grade students scoring at levels 3 & 4 on the ELA decreased by 2.7% from 1998-99 to 2002-03 (a drop from 35.2% to 32.5%) of students at levels 3 & 4). From 2002-03 to 2007-08 the percentage of 8th grade students scoring at levels 3 & 4 increased from 32.5% to 43%, or an increase of 10.5%. The largest one-year gain occurred in 2005-06, a 5.2% increase. The greatest loss occurred in 2001-02, which was a loss of 3.5 percentage points. From 1998-99 to 2007-08, 8th grade students scoring at levels 3 and 4 on the ELA increased by 7.8%.

In 1998-99, 22.8% of 8th grade students scored at levels 3 & 4 in math. In 2002-03, 34.4% did so, which represents 11.6% increase that occurred prior to mayoral reforms. From 2002-03 to 2007-08, the percentage of 8th grade students scoring at levels 3 & 4 on the math exam increased from 34.4% to 59.6%, a 25.2% gain, occurring after mayoral reforms. The greatest single-year increase in 8th grade math scores was 14 percentage points and occurred in 2007-08. The biggest one-year decrease in 8th grade math was 1.9 percentage points in 2005-06. Overall, from 1998-99 to 2007-08, eighth grade students scoring at levels 3 & 4 on the math exam increased by 36.8%.





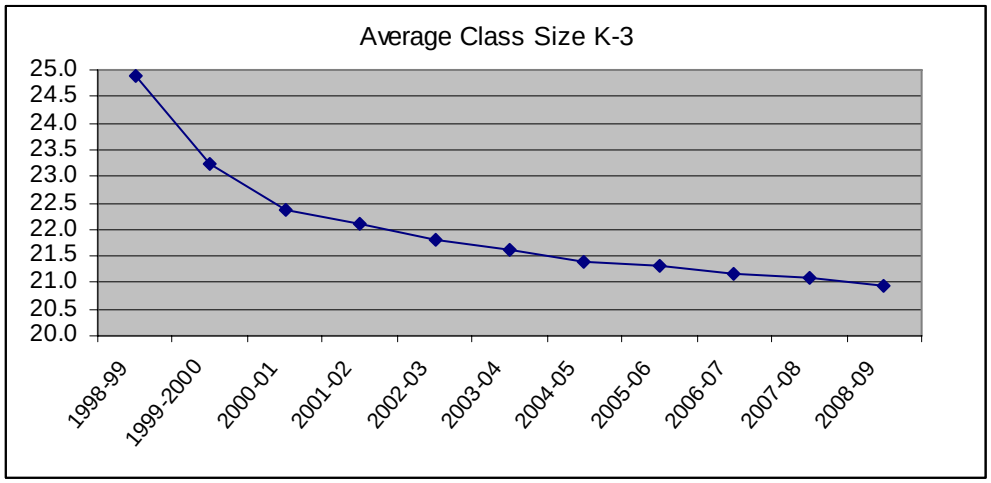
Pre-Kindergarten

There has been a dramatic expansion of pre-kindergarten funding and enrollment over the past ten years. Pre-kindergarten enrollment in New York City prior to the adoption of the State's Universal Pre-K program consisted of a small number of programs called Even-Start, Super-Start, and others, and in 1997-98 stood at about 14,000. The next few years, the State provided the funds to implement Universal Pre-K, starting a rapid, near-tripling of enrollment. By the

next year, 1998-99 enrollments had grown to about 24,000, by 1999-00 to 34,000 and by 2000-01 to 41,000. In 2001-02 enrollment had grown to 39,000 and by 2002-03 to nearly 42,000. By 2006-07, New York City Department of Education was reporting 48,000 students in Pre-K and enrollment now exceeds 50,000. It is interesting to note that this first major influx of Pre-kindergarteners became 4th grade students in the 2003-04 school year. The percentage of these students who scored at levels three and four on the ELA increased by 16.9 and their math scores increased by 18.5 percentage points, compared to the 1998-99 4th grade test scores. Once this same cohort of students reached the 8th grade in 2007-08, the percentage scoring at levels 3 & 4increased by 7.8 on the 8th grade ELA test and by 36.8 on the 8th grade math exam, compared to the 1998-99 4th grade scores. By 2006-07 Pre-K enrollment had expanded to 48,126, which represents a 245% increase in Universal Pre-K enrollment. The Universal Pre-K enrollment figures reported above are from the New York State Education Department's Chapter 655 reports to the State Legislature. Different figures exist on other reports, such as the DOE website, but all such reports demonstrate dramatic growth in Universal Pre-K enrollment.

Early Grade Class Size Reduction

Another early childhood investment was made in early grade class size reduction. In 1998, President Clinton called for a national initiative to lower class size in the early grades and provided $1.2 billion targeted to school districts with the highest overall enrollments and with the highest concentration of children in poverty. Within these districts, funding to hire teachers was generally targeted to schools with the greatest needs or highest class sizes. The original allocation for New York City was $61,190,120, quickly growing to $95,806,879 in 2001, which allowed for the hiring of 808 teachers for the early grades. In addition, New York City received 1999-00 funding from the State of New York to reduce early grade class size. Thus the momentum for class size reduction was established. In 1998-99, the average class size in grades K-3 was 24.9. The federal and state funds were used to create approximately 950 new, smaller classes in grades K-3, decreasing average class size to 21.1 by the 2002-03 school year. New York State provided the early grade class size reduction "program funding" in the amount of over $88 million from 2000-01 until 2007-08, and average K-3 class sizes continued to drop to an average of 21 by 2008-09.



Programming

In tandem with the introduction of the New York State Regents 28 learning standards, New York City Board of Education introduced new curricula. According to the 1999 Mayors Management Report (MMR) the City introduced Project Read for 104,084 students in grades 1-3, including 26,559 students in the School Day programs and 46,956 in extended day programs. In the fall of 2000, Chancellor Harold O. Levy established a Commission on Mathematics Education to evaluate math instruction in the schools and in April, 2002 announced WNYE program to help parents prepare students for the May State math exam. Several instructional initiatives were introduced during the 2000-01 school year, including the statewide implementation of Academic Intervention Services (AIS) as well as Saturday programs, which were both designed to help students at risk of not meeting proficiency standards in reading and math. In May, 2001, the Chancellor announced the creation of a task force to address declining performance in the City's middle schools.

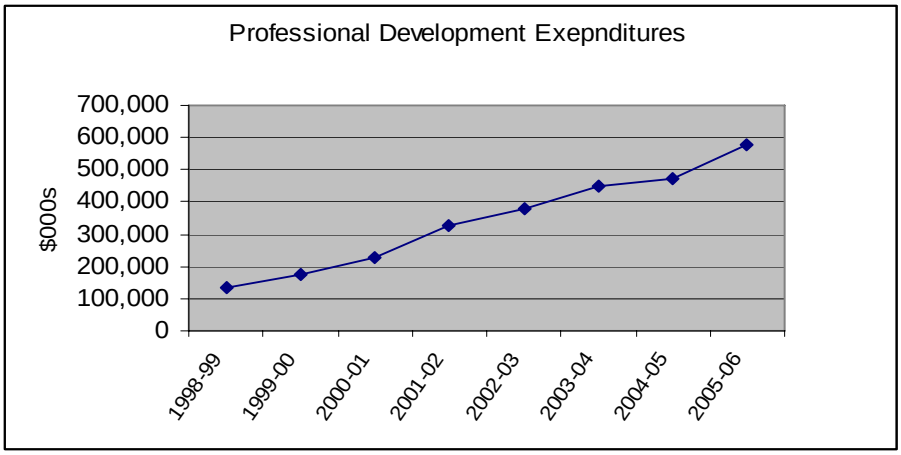
Summer School

By June of 1999 students in grade 3, 6 and 8 whose city reading and/or math scores fell below promotional criteria were required to attend summer school. That summer 26,676 students in grades 3, 6, and 8 attended summer school. After summer school, 8,361 additional students were promoted based on summer school tests (32.4% in 3rd grade, 30.6% in 6th grade, and 33.8% in 8th grade). The cessation of social promotion in early grades was supported by the provision of summer school programs beginning in 1999. Spending for summer school nearly doubled from $93 million in 1998 to $172 million in 2000. The school based expenditure reports combine summer school spending with the more modest evening school expenditures. From 1998-99 to 2002-03, expenditures on summer/evening school increased from $142,678 million to $209,184 million or by 47%. From 2002-03 to 2005-06, these expenditures decreased from $209,184 million to $181,531 or by 13%. Thus, New York City had a major summer school program up and running by 2003, prior to mayoral reforms.

Professional Development

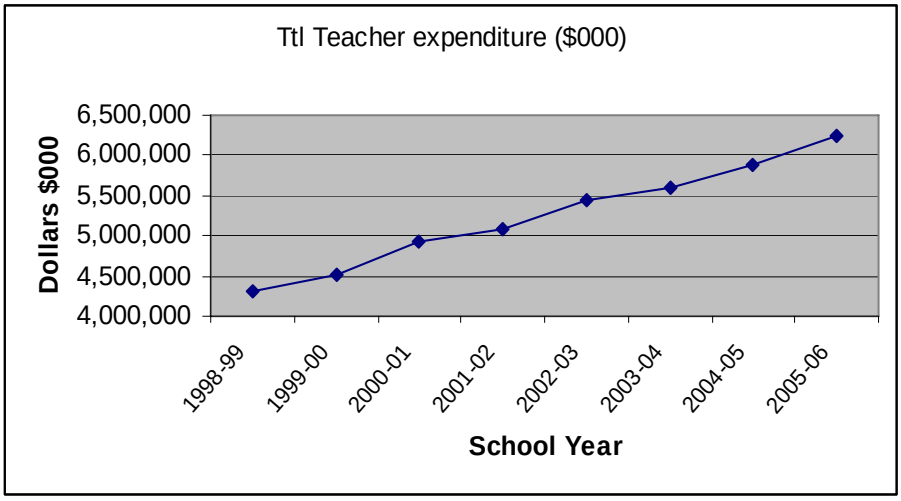
From 1999-00 to 2001-02, spending on professional development grew substantially, when Chancellor Levy, overhauled the system's teacher recruitment efforts, expanded international recruiting, and upgraded certification and professional development programs for existing teachers. He also created the New York City Teaching Fellows program, which recruited an estimated 5,000 teachers and was the largest alternative certification program of its kind in the country. The 2003 MMR reports that from FY 2002 to 2003, the total number of teachers employed decreased by one percent but the percent of certified teachers increased from 83% to nearly 90%.

Spending on professional development was also increasing. For the period prior to mayoral reforms, from 1998-99 to 2002-2003, professional development expenditures increased from $135,880 million to $379,820 million or by 179%. From 2002-03 to 2005-06 expenditures continued to increase from $379,820 million to $575,790 million or by 51%.



Teacher Compensation

When Mayor Bloomberg came into office, New York City teacher salaries lagged behind those in the suburbs. However, the 2006 UFT contract meant that between 2002 and 2009 teacher salaries rose by more than 40%. The contract provided a minimum salary of $45,530 for new hires as compared to $42,512 under the previous contract and the maximum salary went up to $100,049, from $93,416. The increase from 1998-99 to 2002-03 was a 26% increase and from 2002-03 to 2006-07 the expenditure for teachers rose by an additional 15%. Overall, the total teacher expenditure rose by 45% from 1998-99 to 2006-07. On a per pupil basis, spending for teachers rose by 50% from 1998-99 to 2005-06.



Proper Benchmarking of Test Results

The Bloomberg administration continued many of the efforts and investments that preceded mayoral control of schools. Therefore it is important to properly benchmark the point at which reforms under the Bloomberg administration would have had an effect. Over the years since

mayoral control, Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein have based the improvement of test scores for New York City 4th and 8th graders on comparisons with 2002 test results. However, the New York State Legislature did not approve Mayoral control of the schools until June, 2002. Mayor Bloomberg announced his overhaul of the school system on January 15, 2003 at a New York Urban League's Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. symposium. This was one day after the 8th grade ELA testing had begun and only three weeks prior to the start of the 4th grade tests. Following the announcement of the Mayor's curriculum and administrative overhauls, the legal basis for some of the changes were challenged in a lawsuit. On June 13, 2003, after the administration of the 4th and 8th grade ELA and math exams, an agreement to resolve the legal challenges was announced. Thus, substantive curricular, administrative, and instructional approaches to education were implemented by the Bloomberg administration in September 2003.

To be clear, since the school year begins in September but statewide tests are all administered in and after January, a test given in 2002 pertains to the 2001-02 school year. Thus, in order to compare student achievement with mayoral control of the schools, the 2003 scores from the 2002-03 school year should be the benchmark to which current results can be compared.

In 2003, 52.4% of New York City's 4th grade students performed on the ELA at or above grade level. In September 2006, the DOE announced that the percentage of 4th graders reading at or above grade level increased to 58.9%, marking a 6.5% increase above the 2003 results. However the DOE claimed the 2002 to 2006 increases of 12.4% (from 46.5% to 58.9%) which is not the correct benchmark in relation to mayoral control. The 6.5% improvement still compares favorably with gains made statewide; however the margin reported by the Department of Education was overstated. New York City students outpaced the improvement rate of the New York statewide average by 2.2 percentage points, rather than the 7.1% noted in the DOE's September 21, 2006 press release. New York City schools did not double the rate of improvement vis a vis New York State as a whole, as they claimed.

Similarly, in 2003 32.5% of New York City's 8th grade students met or exceeded standards on the state ELA. The Department of Education claimed that the 8th grade students at or exceeding standards increased by 7.1 percentage points when comparing 2006 to 2002 test scores. However, when correctly applying the 2003 scores as a baseline, the 8th grade students increased their scores by a more modest 4.1 percent.

Conclusion

Educational achievement as measured by the test scores of New York City public school students has improved significantly. To understand how new initiatives have contributed to these improvements; they must be examined in terms of the impacts they have had on cohorts of students over time. When viewed in this manner, many major school initiatives predate or are roughly contemporaneous with the onset of mayoral reforms.

About two-thirds of the improvements in 4th grade test results predate the implementation of mayoral control. In 1998-99, 32.7% of students scored at levels 3 & 4 on the ELA test; in 2002-03 52.4% reach those levels. By 2007-08, 61.5% have reached levels 3 & 4. In 1998-99 49.6% of students score 3 & 4 in math; by 2002-03, 66.7% reach those levels. By 2007-08, 79.7% score at levels 3 & 4.

Pre-Kindergarten enrollments rose rapidly as the State program was implemented, and early grade class sizes are reduced from about 25 to nearly 21 before the mayor's program begins. Pre-K enrollment rises from 14,000 in 1997 to 24,000 in 1998; 34,000 in 1999 and 41,000 in 2000; to 42,000 in 2002. The cohorts of these students, as they reach the 4th and 8th grades in later years, perform substantially better than earlier groups of students. A comprehensive summer school program for students needing help was developed in the years immediately preceding mayoral control and already incorporated into the system. From a spending perspective, Mayor Bloomberg's main contribution was substantially increased teacher compensation.

Regionalization of the former school districts occurred in 2003-04, with regional superintendents, local instructional superintendents, and curriculum coaches creating a new supervisory system over teaching and learning. The accountability initiatives and empowerment schools came into play in the 2006-07 school year, but generally speaking, the overwhelming proportion of student improvements in the past ten years had already occurred by 2006-07 and new reforms have little relevance as a "dramatic" improvement. Far more dramatic is the doubling of spending, with teacher compensation, early childhood initiatives and elementary school investments paving the way for a strengthened foundation for learning. One could argue that reorganization of administration plays a secondary part in school improvement.