Charleston County SCHOOL DISTRICT

excellence is our standard

Department of Assessment and Accountability

ACCELERATION PROGRAM RESULTS FOR 2006-07 AND 2007-08 MGAP AND EGAP COHORTS

Brief No. 09-048
February 2009

Acceleration Program
Results for 2006-07 and 2007-08
MGAP and EGAP Cohorts

Charleston County School District
Nancy J. McGinley, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Janet S. Rose, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Department of Assessment and Accountability

Laura Donnelly, Ph.D.
Program Evaluator
Department of Assessment and Accountability

February 2009

Data Brief #09-048

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Acceleration Program has operated since 2004-05 to provide alternative learning environments for students who have been retained and as a result, are now older than normal for their grade level. During 2006-07 and 2007-08, the Acceleration Program has consisted of three levels: the Primary Grades Acceleration Program (PGAP) at the second-grade level; the Elementary Grades Acceleration Program (EGAP) at the fourth-grade level; and MGAP at the eighth-grade level. This report presents data from a variety of sources that together provide a picture of how students who participate in EGAP and MGAP progress, especially compared to other overage students in the district.

MGAP

- 98 participants at 4 middle schools (Burke, James Island, Laing, West Ashley) in 2007-08
- Average student was 1.6 years overage.
- Results for 2007-08 participants as 9th graders (end of 1st semester):
  - Slightly lower suspension and absence rates compared to other overage students
  - Less likely to be passing their core courses than other overage students
- Results for 2007-08 participants during the MGAP year:
  - Much better suspension and absence rates
  - MAP gains were better than other overage students for Reading but not for Math.
  - PACT improvement was slightly better for ELA but substantially worse for Math.
  - Teachers reported that students' counseling needs were met.
  - Teachers noted substantial improvements in student confidence, reading ability, and attitude.
- Results for 2006-07 participants one year later (at the end of their 9th grade):
  - Average student earned 4 high school credits
  - For each of the four core subjects, about half of the MGAP students passed.
  - Students credited smaller class size for reducing behavior problems and increasing focus.
  - Students reported that compared to previous school experiences, MGAP kept them excited about and interested in learning.
  - Students noted that the transition to high school had been made easier through talking with their MGAP teachers about high school and visiting the high school.

EGAP

- 42 participants at 4 elementary schools (CC Blaney, Hunley Park, James Simons, Mary Ford) during 2007-08
- Average student was 1.5 years overage.
- Results for 2007-08 participants as 5th graders (end of 1st semester):
  - Slightly lower suspension and absence rates compared to other overage students
- Results for 2007-08 participants during the EGAP year:
  - Suspension rate was higher for EGAP than for other overage students.
  - Absences were slightly lower for EGAP than for other overage students.
  - MAP Reading gains were slightly higher for EGAP participants; when compared to the VCG (Virtual Comparison Group), they performed about the same as other overage students.
  - MAP Math gains were slightly lower for EGAP participants; when compared to the VCG, other overage students outperformed the EGAP students.
  - PACT improvement was much lower for EGAP students, especially for Math.
  - Teachers reported that students' counseling needs were not met very well.
  - Teachers noted substantial improvements in student confidence, reading ability, and motivation.

Introduction

Charleston County School District (CCSD) has operated the Acceleration Program since 2004-05 as part of a larger effort to address the diverse learning needs of overage students. The program is designed to provide alternative learning environments for students who have been retained and as a result, are now older than normal for their grade level. Students are expected to receive intensive math and literacy instruction and personalized support in a low teacher-student ratio setting. The Acceleration Program has evolved since 2004-05, when about 90 students at four schools took part in the Middle Grades Acceleration Program (MGAP), focusing on students who were two or more years overage for their grade and below grade-level in reading and/or math. A complementary program for fifth-graders was added during 2005-06 at four schools. During 2006-07 and 2007-08, the Acceleration Program has consisted of three levels: the Primary Grades Acceleration Program (PGAP) at the second-grade level; the Elementary Grades Acceleration Program (EGAP) at the fourth-grade level; and MGAP at the eighth-grade level.

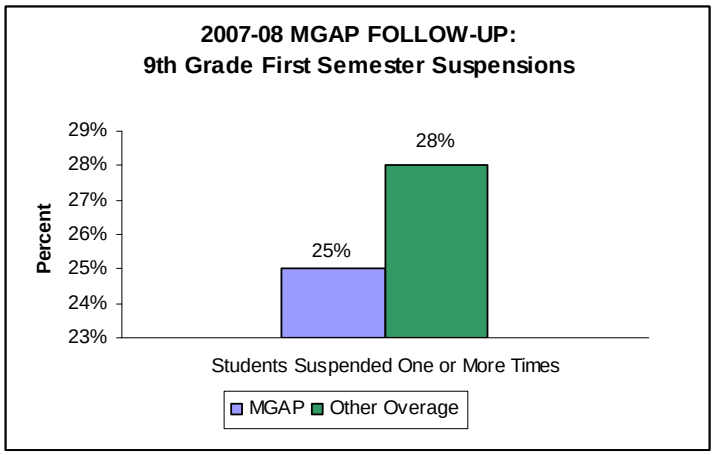
This report presents data from a variety of sources that together provide a picture of how students who participate in EGAP and MGAP progress[1]. For comparative purposes, wherever possible, data for Acceleration Program students are provided alongside data from other CCSD overage students who were not program participants. This report includes a 2008-09 mid-year review of the academic, attendance, and discipline performance for 2007-08 MGAP and EGAP participants one semester after leaving the program. For MGAP participants, this relates to their first semester in high school; for EGAP students, this relates to their first semester as fifth graders. The report also reviews the performance of 2007-08 MGAP and EGAP participants during the year of the program and shares teacher perceptions of the program. In addition, this report follows the 2006-07 MGAP cohort for the entirety of their first year in high school, including information on attendance, discipline, course grades, and credits earned, as well as student perceptions of the program during and after leaving it.

MGAP (Middle Grades Acceleration Program)

Mid-year 2008-09 Follow-up of 2007-08 MGAP Cohort (semester 1, 9th grade in 2008-09)

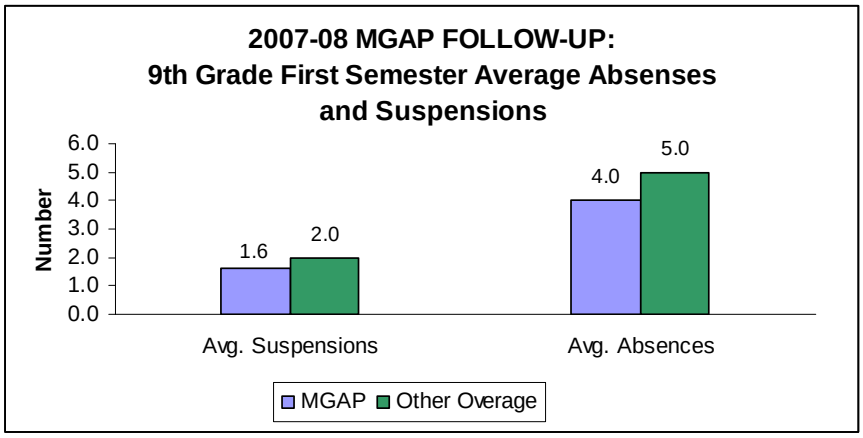
Student Performance (MGAP completers compared to other overage students, 7th/8th grade in 2007-08)

- 88% of students returned to CCSD schools in 2008-09
- Students suspended one or more times: 25% MGAP vs. 28% Overage

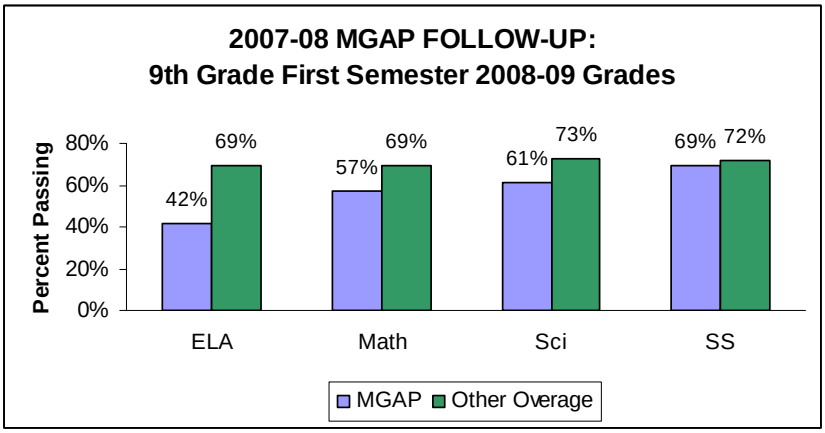


[1] This report does not provide details about the PGAP component of the Acceleration Program, which served 13 students at one school (Hursey Elementary) during 2007-08.

- Average number of suspensions per suspended student: 1.6 MGAP vs. 2.0 Overage
- Absences in first semester 2008-09: 4.0 MGAP vs. 5.0 Overage



- Grades:
  - Passing ELA—42% MGAP vs. 69% Overage
  - Passing Math—57% MGAP vs. 69% Overage
  - Passing Science—61% MGAP vs. 73% Overage
  - Passing Social Studies—69% MGAP vs. 72% Overage



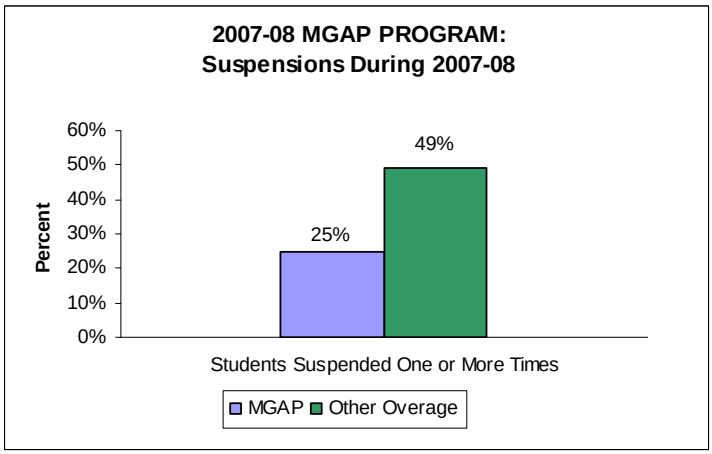
2007-08 MGAP Program *(data pertain to 2007-08, the program year)*

Participation

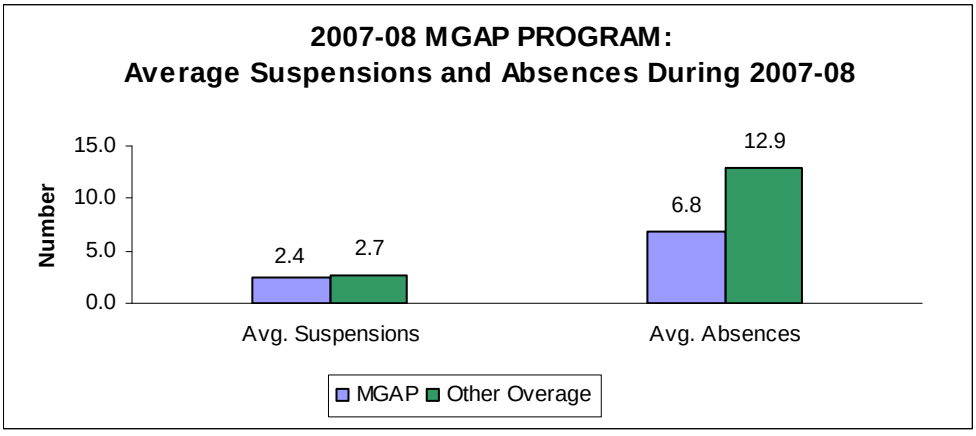
- 98 students participated at 4 sites (Burke MS; James Island MS; Laing MS; West Ashley MS)
- 78% completed program; 16% returned to regular/other program; 6% withdrew/transferred
- 71% black; 21% white; 6% Hispanic
- 44% female; 56% male
- 78% free/reduced lunch
- 5% special education
- Average student was 1.6 years overage for grade
- Average student was enrolled in program for 82% of the year

Student Performance (MGAP completers compared to other overage 7th/8th graders)

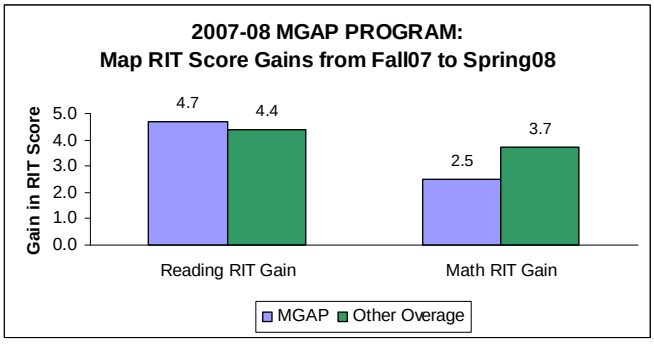
- Students suspended one or more times: 25% MGAP vs. 49% Overage

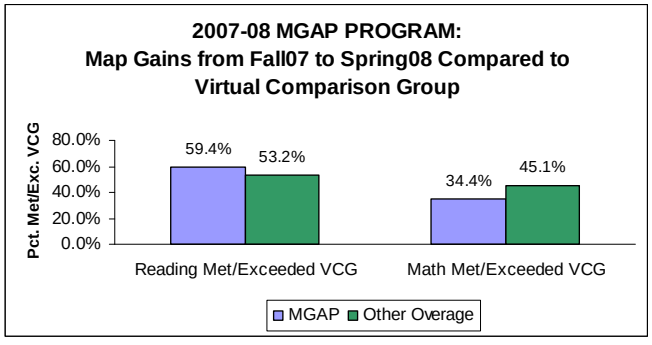


- Average number of suspensions per suspended student: 2.4 MGAP vs. 2.7 Overage
- Absences during 2007-08: 6.8 MGAP vs.12.9 Overage

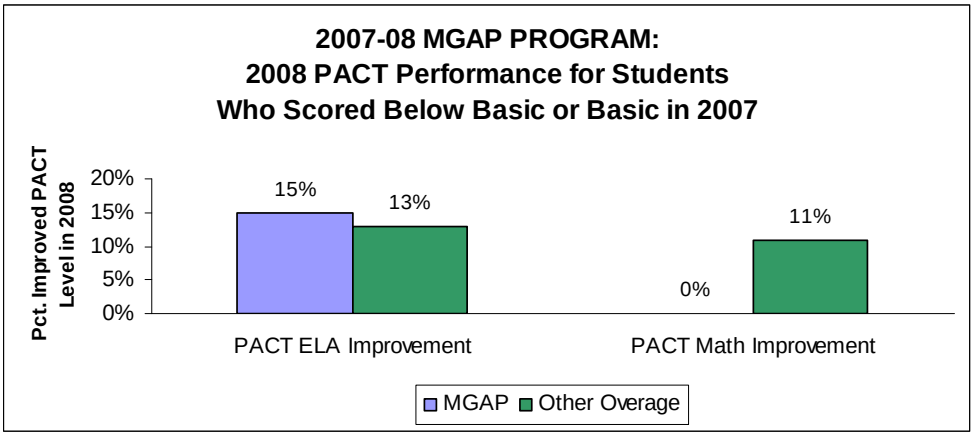


- MAP Reading Gains:
  - RIT Gains—4.7 points MGAP vs. 4.4 points Overage
  - Met/exceeded Virtual Comparison Group—59.4% MGAP vs. 53.2% Overage
- MAP Math Gains:
  - RIT Gains—2.5 points MGAP vs. 3.7 points Overage
  - Met/exceeded Virtual Comparison Group—34.4% MGAP vs. 45.1% Overage





- PACT ELA Improvement for Below Basic and Basic students
  (for both MGAP and Overage, 90% were Below Basic/Basic in 2007)
  - Improved PACT level (BB to B or B to P/A) in 2008: 15% MGAP vs. 13% Overage
- PACT Math Improvement for Below Basic and Basic students
  (for MGAP, 88%, and for Overage, 87%, were Below Basic/Basic in 2007)
  - Improved PACT level (BB to B or B to P/A) in 2008: 0% MGAP vs. 11% Overage



Teacher Survey

- 83% noted that students' self-confidence improved during the year
- 50% indicated that students' reading ability improved during the year
- 33% pointed to great improvements during the year in students' attitude toward authority, classroom behavior, academic performance, and interpersonal skills
- 83% believe that MGAP is extremely effective as an alternative learning environment for overage students, in increasing students' expectations of graduating, and in reducing students' likelihood of dropping out
- 100% reported that their students' counseling needs were met (17% met fully; 83% met mostly)
- Ratings of Read 180 software program
  - Holding students' interest: 67% excellent; 33% did not use
  - Technical problems: 67% minimal or none; 33% did not use
  - Overall effectiveness: 67% excellent; 33% did not use
- Academy of Reading and Academy of Math software programs
  - Only 33% of MGAP teachers used these programs
  - 67% reported receiving no training
- Suggestions offered to potentially improve program:
  - Conduct better screening for students on their past academics and behavior
  - Remove students who are not trying—they become huge stumbling blocks for the others
  - Screen out students with IEP's

One-year Follow-up of 2006-07 MGAP Cohort (as 9th graders in 2007-08)

Student Performance

- 82% returned in 2007-08 and finished the year in a CCSD school
- Average attendance rate was 90.2%
- Students suspended one or more times: 46%
- Average student attempted 6 credit hours and earned 4 credits

- Grades:

Core Subject Area	Percent Passed
ELA	54%
Math	45%
Science	54%
Social Studies	46%

Student Interviews about the MGAP Program

- Students believed that MGAP's smaller class size reduced behavior problems and helped them focus
- Students reported that MGAP teachers were effective at motivating them and keeping them engaged
- Over 75% of students indicated that MGAP was better than their previous school experiences in terms of helping them want to do well in school and in helping them be excited about and interested in learning

Student Interviews about the Transition from MGAP to High School

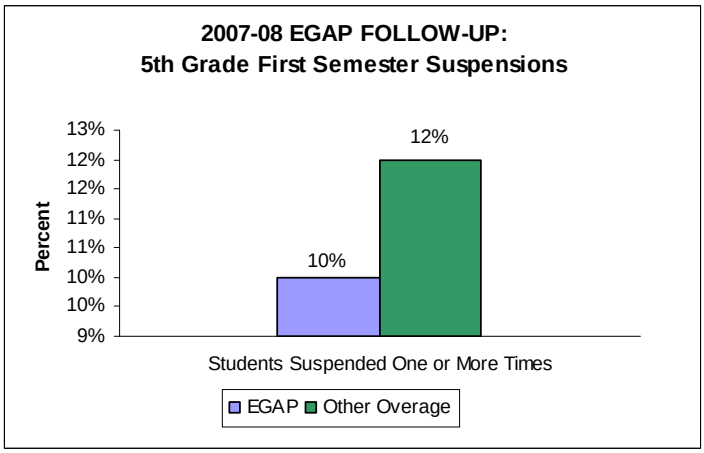
- 71% said transition from MGAP to high school was "easy" or "somewhat easy"
- 82% felt a part of their high school
- Most difficult aspects of high school: full class schedule, difficult courses, time-management
- 94% said talking with MGAP teachers about going to high school was very helpful in the transition
- 92% said visiting the high school while in MGAP program was very helpful in the transition

EGAP (Elementary Grades Acceleration Program)

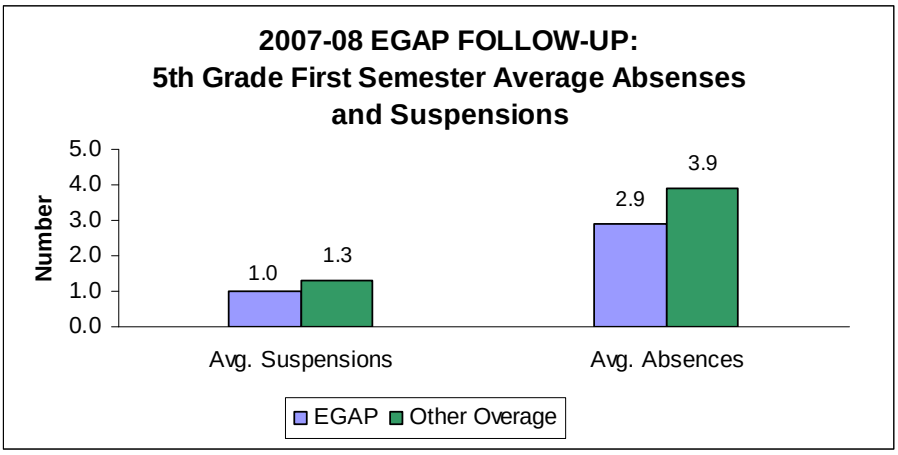
Mid-year 2008-09 Follow-up of 2007-08 EGAP Cohort (end 1st semester, most in 5th grade in 2008-09)

Student Performance (EGAP completers compared to other overage students, 4th grade in 2007-08)

- 91% of students returned to CCSD schools in 2008-09
  - 97% in SASI 2008-09 as 5th graders
  - 2% in SASI 2008-09 as 4th graders
  - 1% in SASI 2008-09 as 6th graders
- Students suspended one or more times: 10% EGAP vs. 12% Overage



- Average number of suspensions per suspended student: 1.0 EGAP vs. 1.3 Overage
- Absences in first semester 2008-09: 2.9 EGAP vs. 3.9 Overage



- Grades (too few mid-year grades recorded to report)

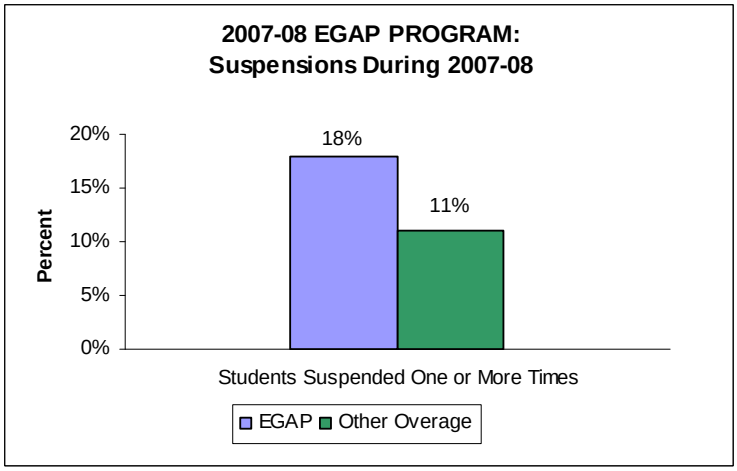
2007-08 EGAP Program *(data pertain to 2007-08, the program year)*

Participation

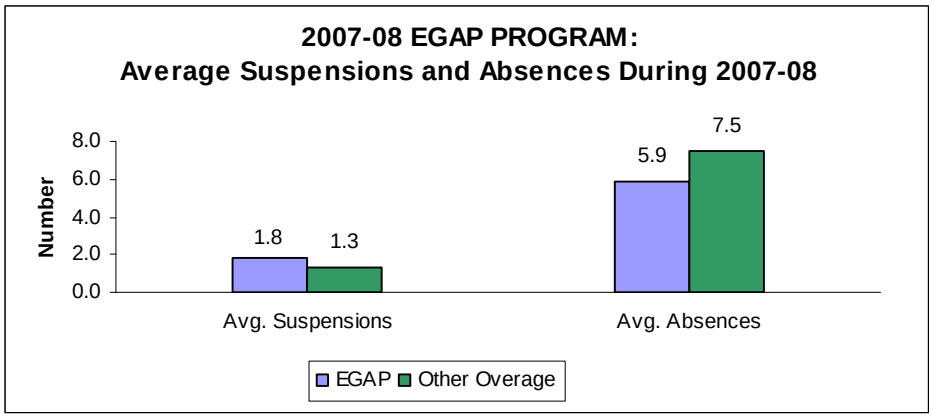
- 42 students participated at 4 sites (CC Blaney, Hunley Park, James Simons, Mary Ford)
- 83% completed program; 5% returned to regular/other program; 12% withdrew/transferred
- 95% black; 5% white
- 31% female; 69% male
- 98% free/reduced lunch
- 14% special education
- Average student was 1.5 years overage for grade
- Average student was enrolled in program for 81% of the year

Student Performance (EGAP completers compared to other overage 4th graders)

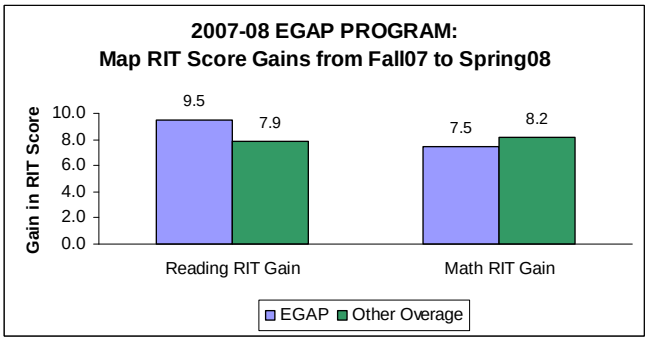
- Students suspended one or more times: 18% EGAP vs. 11% Overage

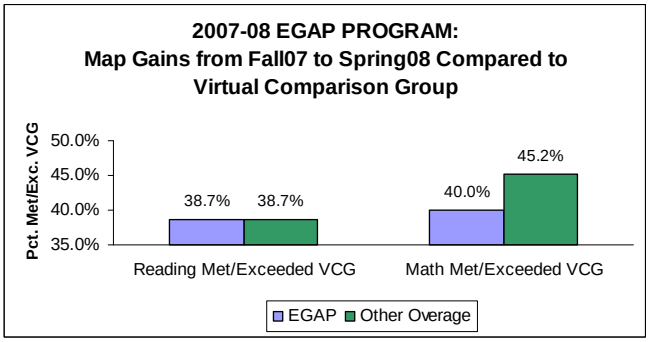


- Average number of suspensions per suspended student: 1.8 EGAP vs. 1.3 Overage
- Absences during 2007-08: 5.9 EGAP vs.7.5 Overage

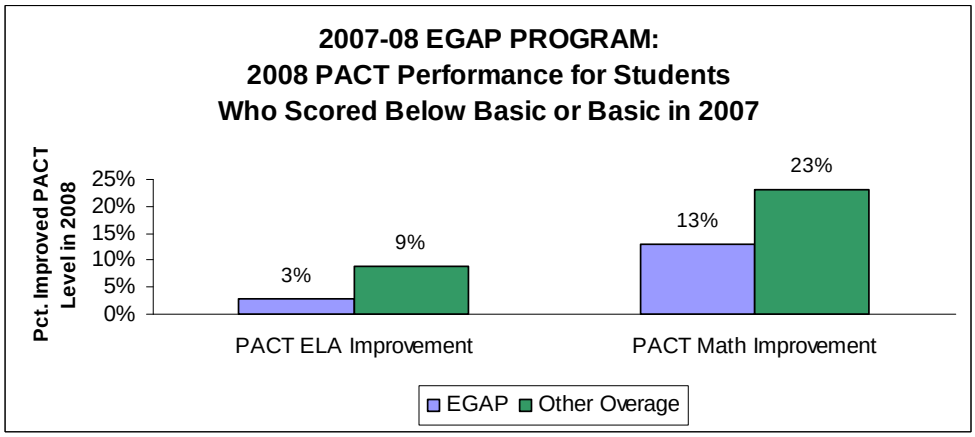


- MAP Reading Gains:
  - RIT Gains—9.5 points EGAP vs. 7.9 points Overage
  - Met/exceeded Virtual Comparison Group—38.7% EGAP vs. 38.7% Overage
- MAP Math Gains:
  - RIT Gains—7.5 points EGAP vs. 8.2 points Overage
  - Met/exceeded Virtual Comparison Group—40.0% EGAP vs. 45.2% Overage





- PACT ELA Improvement for Below Basic and Basic students
  (97% of EGAP and other Overage students were Below Basic/Basic in 2007)
  - Improved PACT level (BB to B or B to P/A) in 2008: 3% EGAP vs. 9% Overage
- PACT Math Improvement for Below Basic and Basic students
  (100% of EGAP and 91% of other Overage students were Below Basic/Basic in 2007)
  - Improved PACT level (BB to B or B to P/A) in 2008: 13% EGAP vs. 23% Overage



Teacher Survey

- 75% noted that students' self-confidence improved during the year
- 100% indicated that students' reading ability improved during the year
- 50% pointed to great improvements during the year in students' motivation and academic performance
- 75% believe that EGAP is extremely effective as an alternative learning environment for overage students
- 75% believe that EGAP is very effective in increasing students' expectations of graduating and in reducing students' likelihood of dropping out
- 25% reported that their students' counseling needs were mostly met; 75% reported they were not (25% not met very well; 50% met very poorly)
- Ratings of Academy of Reading software program
  - Holding students' interest: 33% excellent
  - Technical problems: 67% minimal or none
  - Overall effectiveness: 33% excellent
- Ratings of Academy of Math software program
  - Holding students' interest: 100% excellent
  - Technical problems: 67% minimal or none
  - Overall effectiveness: 67% excellent
- Suggestions offered to potentially improve program:
  - Teacher move up to next grade with students to ensure their success
  - Make EGAP a two-year program that moves students ahead three years since many students are only half-way there at the end of the year
  - Since many program students are unidentified special-needs students, earmark special education funds to fully fund the program with teacher assistants in the classes

Conclusions

Review of data relating to MGAP and EGAP participants from 2006-07 and 2007-08 suggests that the Acceleration Program may offer certain limited benefits to students.

The MGAP program appears to be associated with somewhat more favorable outcomes relating to suspensions and absences, especially during the year that students are in the program. Compared to other overage students in the district, MGAP participants struggle academically following completion of the program. MAP and PACT data suggest that MGAP participants receive stronger preparation in ELA than in Math. Teachers also noted the improvement in reading, identifying it as one of the most positive outcomes of the MGAP program.

On average, participants of the EGAP program did not have notably better suspension or absence rates than other overage students. In terms of MAP results, the advantage of Reading over Math that was found for MGAP was also present for EGAP. EGAP graduates were substantially less likely to improve their PACT performance than other overage students, especially in Math.

As we continue to monitor the progress of students who participate in the Acceleration Program, let us be mindful of the benefits identified by teachers and students, including improvements in students' self-confidence and attitude, a more positive school experience, and an easier transition to high school. Let us focus, however, on improving instructional strategies and delivery to increase achievement of these students, especially in math.