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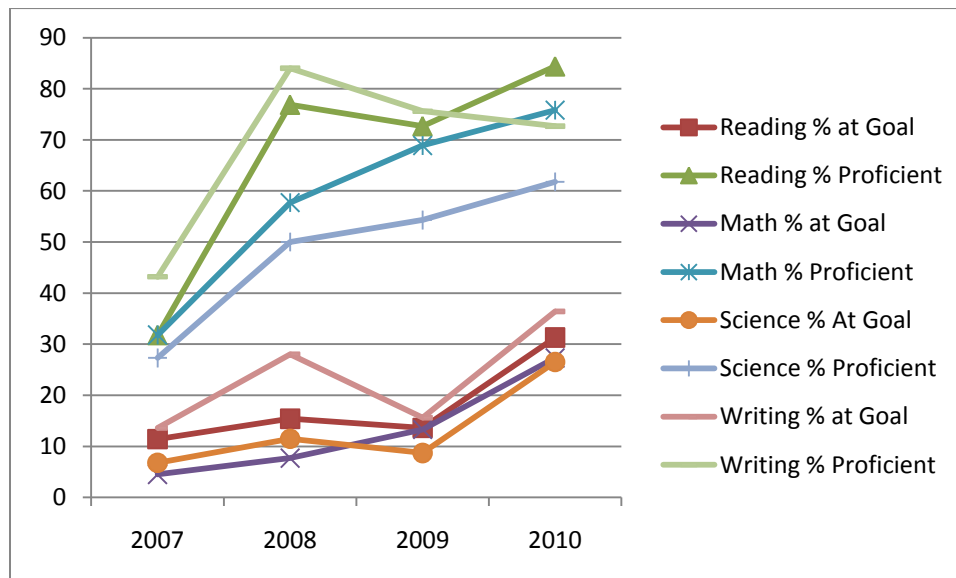
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**For Third Straight Year, Common Ground Students Make Major CAPT Gains**

New Haven, CT, July 19, 2010 – In the latest round of the Connecticut Academic Performance Tests, students at Common Ground High School have again posted significant gains in every subject area. The percentage of students scoring the “State Goal” range doubled or tripled in every subject area: increasing from 13.3% to 27.3% in math and from 13.6% to 31.6% in reading, for instance. In reading, these gains made Common Ground the city’s highest-performing public high school.

At the same time, the percentage of students scoring at the “proficient” level increased in three of four subject areas tested: 6.9 percentage points in math, 7.5 points in science, and 11.7 points in reading. Since 2007, the percent of Common Ground students who score proficient has increased 44 percentage point in math, 34 points in science, 52 points in reading, and 28 points in writing. These sustained gains mean that Common Ground’s students are for the first time scoring above the state average in reading, and above the New Haven city average in every subject area.



CAPT scores are not the only measure of Common Ground students’ progress; this spring, 93% of this year’s graduating class was admitted to college.

“In 2007, we knew that Common Ground needed to turn things around, and produce real results for our students,” says Liz Cox, School Director. “We have been relentless in our pursuit of student success. Since then, we’ve gone from one of the lowest-performing public high schools in New Haven to one of the city’s highest performing. Last year, we set a new aim: doubling the number of our students who reach the state goal. A year later, we’ve met that goal. Our students are now scoring above the state average in reading, and near the state average in math. We’re glad to be part of a real, sustained city-wide effort to erase the achievement gap.”

Like other New Haven public schools, Common Ground is continuing its concerted efforts to erase the gaps between the state’s urban students and their peers state-wide. “Our work is far from done,” says Cox. “We aren’t satisfied with our students’ performance in writing, for instance, so our teachers are hard at work on a school-wide strategy to embed writing instruction in every single Common Ground class. We are glad that our students are making progress – but won’t be satisfied until all our students are achieving at the highest levels.”

Founded in 1997, Common Ground was the nation’s first public charter school to focus on the urban environment. From the start, the school emphasized small school support, opportunities for real-world challenges, and an integrated environmental curriculum.

Since 2006, Common Ground has maintained its focus on environmental leadership and ecology, while strengthening its standards-based, college-prep curriculum. Teachers start with state standards when planning all courses, meet regularly to examine data on student achievement and plan responses, and employ a common set of research-based teaching strategies. Students who enter high school behind in core subjects are connected with more time in reading and math classes, after-school academic enrichment, and other supports – all designed to accelerate their academic progress.

This standards-based reform is paired with authentic learning and opportunities for environmental leadership. Common Ground students design permanent museum exhibits on Common Ground’s site, work with professional actors to perform Shakespeare outdoors, develop small business ventures, and take on senior projects on environmental and social justice issues. For Common Ground, preparing students for competitive colleges and environmental leadership are closely connected goals, not competing priorities. Interestingly, Common Ground and New Haven’s other environmentally themed high school – The Sound School – were the city’s top two performers in this year’s CAPT testing.

The CAPT test measures students’ performance on a series of reading, writing, math, and science tasks. For instance, on the writing test, students read two newspaper articles and write a letter to a decision-maker in which they use the articles to take and defend a point of view. Students can earn scores that fall into 1 of 5 “bands” on the CAPT test. Band 3, “Proficient,” is the target set for Connecticut students under the Federal No Child Left Behind Act. Band 4, “Goal,” is the target set by the State Department of Education. Last year, Common Ground’s performance on the CAPT test made it the state’s only high school to exit “in need of improvement” status in either 2008 or 2009.

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