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# Using Time to Expand Learning Opportunities: Foundational Research Activities on the Elizabeth Public Schools

Foundational Research Activities on the  
Elizabeth Public Schools

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## Executive Summary

This report is the first installment on a multiyear project to document the implementation of Expanded Learning Time (ELT) in the Elizabeth Public Schools (EPS) and its association with student academic performance and other outcomes. The report provides a foundation for upcoming qualitative and quantitative analyses to assess the impact of ELT on the academic performance of EPS' economically, culturally and racially diverse student population. Here we provide a description of the EPS environment, philosophy, and ELT practices, and we identify areas in need of further investigation. This report also highlights issues that the EPS administration and school board may wish to address given their commitment to provide equity of resources and outcomes for all students across district schools (Elizabeth Public Schools, 2014). In future years, our research will go more deeply into describing variations in ELT implementation, the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches, and we will use sophisticated quantitative methods to attempt to isolate any effect of ELT on student academic gains.

In the sections below, we provide a summary description of the City of Elizabeth and EPS, and a summary of our findings.

### **The City of Elizabeth**

Elizabeth is New Jersey's 4<sup>th</sup> largest city in with a population of approximately 125,000 persons. The median household annual income of Elizabeth is \$43,590, and 19% of households live below the federal poverty line. Although Elizabeth is fairly poor, it is better off economically than New Jersey's poorest cities. For example, neighboring Newark has a median household income of \$34,387, and 29% of its population lives below the poverty line.

Elizabeth is increasingly a Hispanic city. Between 2000 and 2010, the Hispanic population of the city increased by 22%. In 2010, the city was 60% Hispanic, 18% Non-Hispanic Black, and 18% Non-Hispanic White. The Hispanic population is largely of Central (the biggest population is from El Salvador) and South American origin (mostly from Columbia, Ecuador, and Peru).

As is the case with most cities, Elizabeth is comprised of neighborhoods/areas of varying economic and demographic characteristics. In particular, the Port area has a reputation as the area in which immigrants first settle because of low rents. The Port area is associated with some of the lowest performing schools in EPS.

### **The Elizabeth Public Schools (EPS)**

EPS is a so-called "Abbott District," one of 31 New Jersey school districts that receive additional funding from the state because of their low-income status. EPS has a student enrollment of nearly 25,000 students (in 2013-14). In recent years, student enrollments have increased substantially (by 16% since the 2007-08 school year). Nearly all of this increase has been due to Hispanic students. In 2012-13, Hispanic students comprised almost 70% of total school enrollment.

## **EPS Reforms**

Under the leadership of former Superintendent Pablo Munez, a series of major educational reforms were instituted beginning in 2006. In 2006, EPS adopted a system of *managed instruction* (MI), in which seven components are managed by the central office— curriculum, human resources, professional development, student information systems, support structures, accountability, and assessment. MI mandated that every school use a “pacing guide” (the same curriculum) and “benchmark” assessments. As a result, students can transfer among EPS schools and encounter the same instructional content as used at the sending school.

A second major reform was reconfiguration of the district in 2006 from a three-tier model (elementary, middle, and high school) to a two-tier model (pre-K/K-8, and high school) to reduce middle school size and improve safety and behavioral issues. Additionally, the “giant” Elizabeth High School was divided into six smaller, thematically organized high schools (including two magnet high schools) in 2009.

A third reform was the adoption of school uniforms for all students. Among the advantages of school uniforms was the enhanced ability of school staff to keep uninvited, non-school youth off of school premises.

## **Expanded Learning Time at EPS**

Expanded Learning Time (ELT) is another major reform that has been implemented by EPS, and is the focus of our research. ELT began in 1998-99, when it was implemented at the new Dr. Orlando Edreira Academy School, No. 26. In 2006-07, the school day was extended to 8 hours for all three of the district’s K-8 magnet schools and in the high schools. Four years later (in 2010-11) ELT was extended to five low performing preK-8 neighborhood schools. The following year (2011-12), EPS took \$81.7 million in additional Abbott funding to implement ELT in its remaining 14 K-8 schools. As a result, EPS now offers ELT to all students from Kindergarten through high school.

The Elizabeth Public Schools has three distinct ELT models that coincide with school type: magnet and gifted and talented (G&T) K-8, “neighborhood” K-8, and high school. In the magnet and G&T schools, students are offered enrichment electives based on the school’s theme. And, magnet students who need academic support are placed in intervention classes until their grades improve.

In the neighborhood schools, students must receive two 45-minute intervention periods during the daily schedule for math and language arts.<sup>1</sup> However, the intervention periods are implemented differently by each school. According to interviewees, despite the district’s managed instruction philosophy, school principals and administrators received little direction from the central office for ELT implementation.

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<sup>1</sup> Due to Abbott budget cuts, the ELT day will be scaled back for the coming 2014-15 academic year to 3 days per week, and to just 45 minutes per ELT day (down from 90 minutes per day).

In the high schools, the ELT model revolves around the increased 160- credit requirement for graduation. High school teachers do not work an extended day; high school teachers are scheduled to work one of the three daily shifts.

### **The Effect of ELT on Academic Performance**

The results presented in this report are preliminary and based on school level data from the New Jersey Department of Education. This approach has severe limitations in its ability to detect and characterize any causal effect of ELT on student academic performance. So, the results presented here are suggestive and interesting, but in no way constitute a rigorous evaluation of the effects of ELT. In future analyses, we will use student level data from EPS and from “control” districts to attempt to better isolate an effect of ELT on student achievement.

Our analyses of school level data show increases in NJASK and HSPA scores for some, but not all, grades that is associated with implementation of ELT and other district reforms. Among high school students, “proficiency” in mathematics and language arts as measured by the HSPA examination has increased dramatically following the splitting of Elizabeth High School into 6 academies and the implementation of ELT in each. Math proficiency, in particular, has risen dramatically since 2006-07.

Among the elementary school students, the pattern is more complex. Based on data from the five elementary schools that implemented ELT in 2010-11, rates of proficiency in language arts and mathematics (NJASK) have increased steadily among 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. However, we see no sign of improvement in language arts among 5<sup>th</sup> grade students, and just a hint of improvement in mathematics. For 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students, the severe limitations of the NJASK examination became clear: rates of “proficiency” varied dramatically from year-to-year in a manner that cannot accurately reflect actual student achievement.<sup>2</sup> However, our analyses show a “hint” of an increase in language arts proficiency with the implementation of ELT.

### **Themes Resulting from Interviews on ELT**

RUNERC staff conducted 44 interviews of purposely selected NPS administrators and teachers, and convened 7 focus groups. A preliminary analysis of these data yielded four important themes:

#### *EPS Innovative Programs Outshine Surrounding Suburban Districts, but “Troubled” Schools Exist and Need Support*

Consistently, interview respondents described EPS as being an innovative, rigorous “urban” school district with technology and research-based programs and curriculum and pedagogy that outshine surrounding suburban districts. Yet, interviewees lamented that some schools “that present many of the problems that you would find in a big city” remain troubled by chronically low student achievement. Respondents talked about the same

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<sup>2</sup> As a result, future analyses of student level achievement data will necessitate obtaining data from “control” school districts.

group of schools, located mostly in the Port area, where “the kids aren’t performing as well as they should be, and where we could probably be doing better by those students.”

*The Disconnect Between Centralized Managed Instruction and the Decentralized Aspects of ELT in Individual Schools Can Lead to Inequities*

When ELT was implemented in the neighborhood schools four years ago, as one teacher stated, it was “just figure it out yourselves.” For many schools, even under the umbrella of centralized MI, which requires the same curriculum and benchmarks in every school, the intervention periods can look very different. Thus, each neighborhood school building and even individual teacher across the hall from one another can implement the two intervention periods differently. Wee found the biggest difference between schools is the staffing of the intervention periods, scheduling the interventions, and the types of intervention programs/technology available at each school.

*The ELT Tension Between “More [time] is Better” in the Magnets/G&T and “Less is More” in the Neighborhood Schools*

There is a consensus among district-level and school-level staff that if “instruction isn’t where it needs to be, extended day is just extended time with poor instruction.” In other words, ELT needs to not only be more time, but quality time in terms of intervention and enrichment. Many respondents believed the main disadvantage of ELT is the lack of enrichment programming in the neighborhood schools as compared to magnet and G&T schools. This is especially true for students who do not need interventions.

In the neighborhood schools, teachers and principals spoke of a need to schedule more “down time” during the day with additional time for recess, study hall, and/or electives so students have a mental break from academics and are able to socialize more.

*The High Personal and Financial Costs of ELT Make for an Uncertain Future*

While respondents cited numerous advantages to having ELT (e.g. keeping students safe and off the streets), the biggest criticism of ELT programming is the length of the school day is too long for both teachers and students. There is a personal cost for teachers and families because of the longer school day in terms of childcare, commute, health and well-being, and homework time in the evening. And, students lose focus by the end of the day, especially the younger children.

## 1 Introduction

Since passage of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, educators have created an array of educational policies and programs that are intended to narrow the achievement gap between white and black, white and Latino, and poor and non-poor students. Expanded learning time (ELT), sometimes referred to as Extended Learning Time, is an educational intervention strategy that is intended to reduce academic achievement disparities. ELT is based on the idea that low-income youth typically do not have the same access to high quality afterschool enrichment activities, such as tutoring, as their middle class peers. The theory is that by giving students more quality time in school, they will have more time to spend on core subjects, like math and Language Arts Literacy (LAL).

ELT initiatives have recently gained national attention as policymakers at local, state, and federal levels of government have sought interventions to improve academic performance, enhance career and college readiness, and increase high school graduation rates. Some studies have found ELT to be effective in raising student achievement for high-poverty students in urban districts (Checkoway et. al. 2012; Dobbie & Fryer, 2011; Hoxby, Murarka, & Kang, 2009; Farbman, 2009). However, critics claim that the research is “skimpy” and assert that what matters most is the quality vs. quantity of instruction. Cuban (2014) has concluded that most studies on year-round schools have “serious design flaws” and “show slight positive gains in student achievement.” Nevertheless, ELT is gaining traction across the country. Farbman’s (2009) census of extended time schools found 655 schools in 36 states had added about 25 percent more time each year to their schedule; three-quarters of these were charter schools, “but the most rapidly growing group is in-district conversions” (Gabrieli, 2014).

## 2 The Scope of this Report

This report is the first installment on a multiyear project to document the implementation of ELT in the Elizabeth Public Schools and its association with student academic performance and other outcomes. The report provides a foundation for upcoming qualitative and quantitative analyses to assess the impact of ELT on the academic performance of Elizabeth Public School’s economically, culturally and racially diverse student population. Here, we provide a description of the Elizabeth Public School environment, philosophy, and ELT practices, and we identify areas in need of further investigation. This report also identifies issues that the EPS administration and the Elizabeth Board of Education may wish to address given their commitment to provide equity of resources and outcomes for all students across district schools (Elizabeth Public Schools, 2014). In future years, our research will go more deeply into describing variations in ELT implementation, the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches, and we will use sophisticated quantitative methods to attempt to isolate any effect of ELT on student academic gains.

This report is based on information obtained from a wide variety of sources, including district documents, interviews, focus groups and classroom observations, and quantitative analyses using district and publically available data. Our research objectives were to

describe the policy and evolution of the district-wide ELT initiative in EPS, including the planning and implementation stages, to gather stakeholder perspectives of the ELT initiative, and to make a preliminary assessment of the impact of ELT programming on student level outcomes.

### **3 Sources of Data Used in this Report**

#### ***3.1 Archival Data***

This past year we obtained an extensive library of EPS internal documents that we have used to understand the implementation of educational policies in the district.

#### ***3.2 Quantitative Research Methods***

For this report, we present analyses of data from the New Jersey Department of Education. We use this information to describe the student population of EPS and their academic performance as assessed by the NJASK and HSPA examinations. These school level data raise interesting questions that we will address with more analytic sophistication in coming years. However, because of the severe limitations of school level data in assessing the impact of ELT, the results presented here provide insights into how to conduct future analyses on ELT, but provide only tantalizing views of the possible effect of ELT on academic performance as measured by standardized tests.

This year, working with the EPS Instructional Technology (IT) Department, we were introduced to the structure of their data system. We learned what student level data is collected, where it is stored, by whom and in what format. Additionally, we were given access to all EPS student achievement data available on NJSmart, the NJDOE achievement data warehouse.

EPS has student level data stored in two separate student information systems (SIS): Edumet and PowerSchool (PS). Edumet contains individual student level data from 1991 – 1997; PS contains data from 1998 to the present. Student level data include: demographics, enrollment history (original registration in district and each student’s enrollment in school(s) per year), attendance data, course history/grade information (depending on year), student achievement data (NJAsk, NJPass, TerraNova, Access, HSPA, GEPA, SAT, MAP, depending on year) and discipline data (PS only). Special education and English Language Learner classification data are available in the SISs. Additional special education information, including student’s Individual Education Plan and testing accommodation, is stored in a separate database called Tienet. Tienet data are available since 2003. For our quantitative analyses we asked for a data “dump” of all information described above from 2003 to the present to include data for the three years prior to Superintendent Munoz’s tenure. We have all requested data stored on a secured server at the Rutgers-Newark School of Public Affairs & Administration.

### 3.3 Qualitative Research Methods

This past year (2013-14), we conducted 44 individual, semi-structured, audio taped interviews with district and school level personnel and 7 focus groups with academic and specialty teachers. Interviews and focus groups lasted between 30-90 minutes and were conducted between March and June 2014. **Appendix B** provides the interview protocol.

Using purposive and snowball sampling methods, we selected interviewees so as to obtain a variety of perspectives and knowledge of the ELT initiative. Principals and district-level administrators suggested teachers to contact, as well. We recruited interviewees directly by phone or email and asked them to participate in the interview. Total interviews to date include 16 district-level personnel, 10 principals, and 17 teachers. See **Table 1**.

**Table 1. Interviews and Focus Groups with District and School Staff**

Level	Interview Type	# of Interviews
District	Superintendents	2
	Directors	5
	Supervisors	7
	Coordinators	2
	<b>Total District Level Interviews</b>	<b>16</b>
School	<i>Principals</i>	10
	<i>Vice Principals</i>	1
	<i>Teachers</i>	17
	<b>Total School Level Interviews</b>	<b>28</b>
	<i>Teacher Focus Groups</i>	7

Interviewed principals and teachers work in different schools across the district; the majority work in one of the ten case study schools we investigated in more depth (see, *Case Study Schools*). A discussion of case study schools is described below. We also conducted 7 focus groups with teachers and school staff, and observed classrooms in 3 schools.

In addition, Allison Roda, Heather Padgette and Sharon Deitch from *Ed Strategies* conducted a 2-day data collection event on the various financial costs of ELT implementation<sup>3</sup>. The district chose the respondents to be interviewed for this separate ELT analysis on finances, including 5 district-level individuals, 3 school board members, 1 Education Law Center researcher, 1 Teacher’s Union representative, 1 focus group of four principals, and 1 focus group of four teachers (not included **Table 1**).

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<sup>3</sup> Heather Padgette and Sharon Deitch from *Ed Strategies* are collaborators of our study. We were asked by Ford to speak with them about their Ford Foundation funded study of financing ELT in Elizabeth so we do not duplicate efforts. We have worked with them as fellow Ford grantees and participated in their data collection activities, but they are not part of our research team.

### 3.4 Case Study Schools

Interviews this year were focused on a selection of “case study schools.” School sampling was driven by the need for diverse perspectives and by variability in demographic, test score, and stability school data, as well as recommendations from the district-level respondents. Our goal was to sample a range of different types of schools in terms of demographics, location within Elizabeth, level of parent involvement, and academic offerings to represent the range of school experiences and opportunities for students and educators.

According to the interview respondents, student demographics vary greatly across Elizabeth schools. Depending on school location and neighborhood characteristics, “different pockets” of “demographic identity” exist at each school. **Map 1** and **Map 2** show the City of Elizabeth and the location of neighborhood Pre-K/K-8 schools within the district. Respondents describe a tale of two cities within Elizabeth between Uptown and Downtown. Additional “pockets” in the city include the North End, West End, Westminster and Midtown (see *The Geography of Elizabeth*, below).

Of the 34 district schools, the ten case study schools<sup>4</sup> include one G&T 2-8 grade school (GT-1), two Pre-K-8 magnet schools (MS-1, MS-2), four neighborhood PreK-8 schools (NS-1 to NS-4), one magnet high school (HS-1), and two non-magnet high schools (HS-2, HS-3). **Table 2** shows that within each of the ten case study schools we interviewed principals, guidance counselors, social workers, and academic and specialty teachers.

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<sup>4</sup> All case study schools were given pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality.

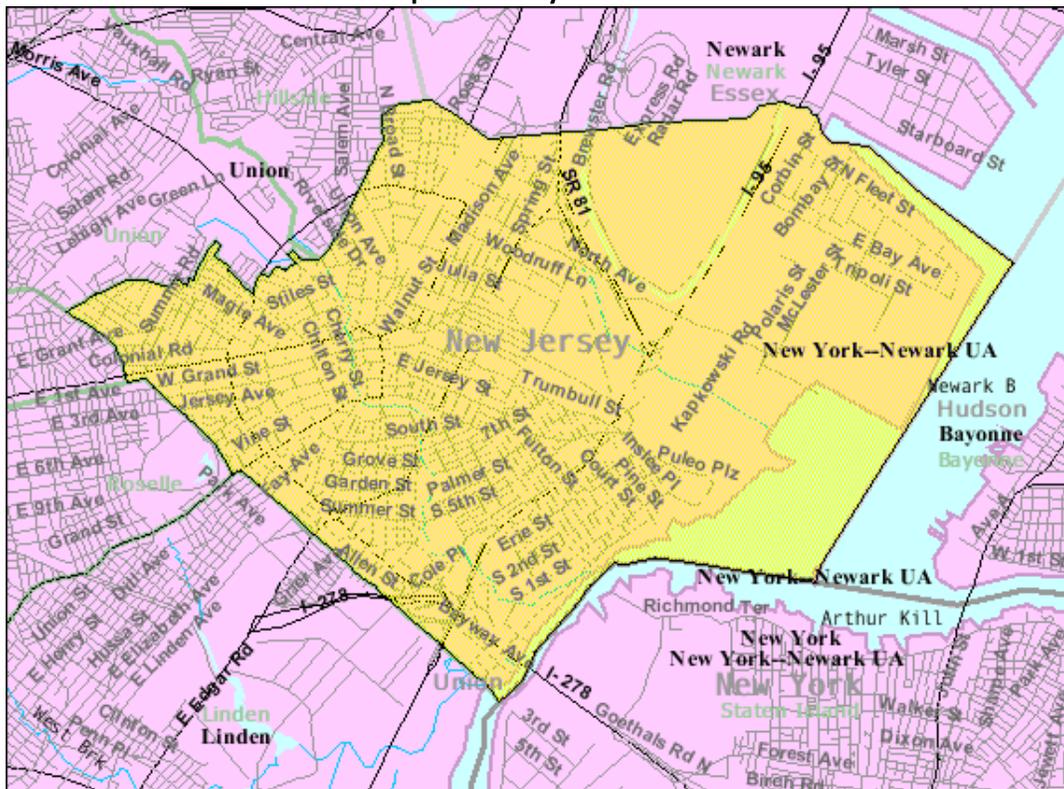
**Table 2. Interviews and Focus Groups by Case Study School**

School Type	School	School Description				Interview Type			
		Grades	Location	School Type	Application Process	Principal	Teacher	Focus Group	Classroom Observation
Neighborhood	NS -1	Prek/K-8	Port	Non-Magnet	None‡	1	0	0	0
	NS-2	Prek/K-8	West End	Non-Magnet	None‡	1	0	1*	0
	NS-3	Prek/K-8	Elmora	Non-Magnet	None‡	1	4	1	0
	NS-4	Prek/K-8	North End	Non-Magnet	None‡	1	3	0	0
Magnet	MS-1	Prek/K-8	District	Magnet	Lottery	1	3	0	1 day
	MS-2	Prek/K-8	District	Magnet	Lottery	1	3	1**	1 day
Gifted & Talented	GT-1	Prek/K-8	District	GT	Application	1	0	2***	1day
High School	HS-1	9-12	District	Non-Magnet	Application	2 (1 VP)	0	1*	0
	HS-2	9-12	District	Magnet	Application	1	0	0	0
	HS- 3	9-12	District	Non-Magnet	Application	1	0	1*	0
Additional Interviews						0	4	0	0
<b>TOTALS</b>						<b>11</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>

## 4 The City of Elizabeth

Elizabeth is New Jersey's fourth largest city, with a population of 124,969 in 2010. It is located 12 miles west of New York City and borders Newark to its north (**Map 1**). The city is a central transportation hub with U.S. Highways 1 and 9, Routes 24, 27 and 28 and the New Jersey Turnpike traversing the city. Additionally, one half of Newark-Elizabeth seaport and Newark Liberty International Airport are located within city borders, providing numerous service and business opportunities. The Elizabeth Port is the second largest containership port on the east coast (The Historical Society of Elizabeth, 2014). Elizabeth is also county seat for Union county, and is home to the Elizabeth Campus of Union County Community College.

**Map 1. The City of Elizabeth**



Elizabeth residents are a diverse population. Residents come from more than 50 countries, representing 37 language groups (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). The total population is 60% Latino, 18% White, and 21% Black. Notably, the Latino population changed greatly from 2000 to 2010, increasing from 49 to 60% of the population. Most recent Latino immigrants come from South and Central America, with a growing population from Columbia. One district-level administrator commented that Elizabeth is “a town where the immigrant population changes every 10 to 12 years.”

According to the EPS website, Elizabeth “is a proud community that faces many of the challenges common to urban environments including: poverty, unemployment, a

higher than average crime rate, and a transient population” (Elizabeth Public Schools, 2014). The median household income in Elizabeth is \$43,590, and 19% of households live below the poverty level; 29% of households are female-headed households, and 72% of the population lives in rental properties (U.S. Census). Therefore, Elizabeth is somewhat better off than other large New Jersey cities such as Trenton, Newark, or Camden (U.S. Census, 2014). The residents who have jobs most commonly work in production, transportation, and material-moving occupations (12%), sales and office occupations (11%), and service occupations (10%)(Elizabeth Public Schools, 2014). Almost half of all children over the age of 5 speak Spanish at home.

Elizabeth uses the Mayor-Council system of government with the mayor and a city council making decisions. In 1992, the current mayor, J. Christopher Bollwage, who grew up in Elizabeth, was first elected. He has subsequently served five four-year terms. During Mayor Bollwage’s watch, Elizabeth’s Urban Enterprise Zone (UEZ) was named number one in the nation. It has generated more than thirty billion dollars in new investments and five thousand new jobs (Elizabeth Public Schools, 2014). The UEZ program includes safety improvements to fifty city intersections, renovation of city playgrounds, the city’s ongoing economic redevelopment plans at The Elizabeth Center at 13A and the Jersey Gardens Mall, ninety million dollars for HOPE VI housing, and numerous projects to redevelop the city’s brownfield sites.

#### ***4.1 The Geography of Elizabeth***

As is the case with any city, significant geographical/neighborhood differences exist within Elizabeth, and these areas are associated with important differences in SES background, race/ethnicity, and academic performance by students.

##### ***Uptown/Elmora***

Uptown is located in the northwestern side of the city. It borders on Union and Linden. Residents refer to this part of the city as the Elmora or Elmora Hills section of town. Respondents describe the uptown area as “middle class” with owner-occupied single-family homes. Most of the higher end restaurants and shops are located uptown and this section of the city has a “suburban” feel.

Those administrators and teachers who live in Elizabeth (which is somewhat rare) live uptown. Elmora schools are more desirable for parents and referred to by some as “country clubs” or “private schools” as compared to other schools in Elizabeth. When asked to describe her school to others in the district, an Elmora teacher explained:

Sometimes we're called the country club of Elizabeth because the parents are involved. We have a lot of community support. We don't have a lot of issues that maybe the downtown schools have. Since it's a neighborhood school, the kids know each other and it's a very – it's a close community. I think the parents depend on the school for a lot and we welcome that.

Schools in Elmora are disproportionately white and higher income. One respondent states:

...you could take the Elmora section, you could plop it down right in the middle of a Cranford or a Westfield and it would fit. It's white, although it's changing a little bit to Portuguese and it's having more of a Hispanic bend to it, but it's a middle class community with parents who work and want their kids to be educated, where a college degree is pretty much just expected.

The Elmora school we sampled is NS-3.<sup>5</sup>

### ***Downtown/The Port***

Downtown, commonly referred to as "The Port," is a "troubled," poorer section of town. One interviewee compared The Port to an "inner city that quite frankly you could put down in the middle of Newark and they would fit right in."

Downtown contains most of the city's rental apartments and the Section 8 housing units for residents with low incomes. Respondents told us that immigrant families settle in the port area when they first arrive because of the lower rents, or they move in with family and move out once they secure employment and can afford a home of their own. In the last 15 years, the port has been revitalized and the housing projects were torn down and replaced with apartment complexes and townhouses. Some of the poorest performing EPS schools are in the Downtown/Port area.

The Downtown schools are overcrowded, low performing, and have the highest student mobility rates. Respondents characterize the port schools as being "rough" with more historical, intergenerational poverty, and a higher proportion of African American students. One downtown principal's focus is to increase parent involvement and to set high expectations with the teachers. Test scores have slowly improved over time in this particular port school (NS-1), but still significantly lag behind other schools. According to principals and teachers, parents living in this area move around frequently for jobs, or families return to their home country.

### ***The North End***

The North Avenue section of town, also known as the North End, borders on Newark. The NJ Transit train station to New York City and Newark is located here. It is diverse and more working class. A respondent described North Avenue as being "a working poor area where it's probably lower-middle class, but people are working and again they want what's best for their kids."

The North End has a mixture of owner-occupied homes and higher priced rentals as compared to the Port. Families are more stable in this neighborhood with the

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<sup>5</sup> Pseudonym

majority of students enrolling in Kindergarten and staying through to 8<sup>th</sup> grade. North End neighborhood schools tend to have more Portuguese students.

According to teachers, NS-4 has moderate parent involvement and less access to technology than other neighborhood schools. The ELA and math test scores lag in comparison to other district schools.

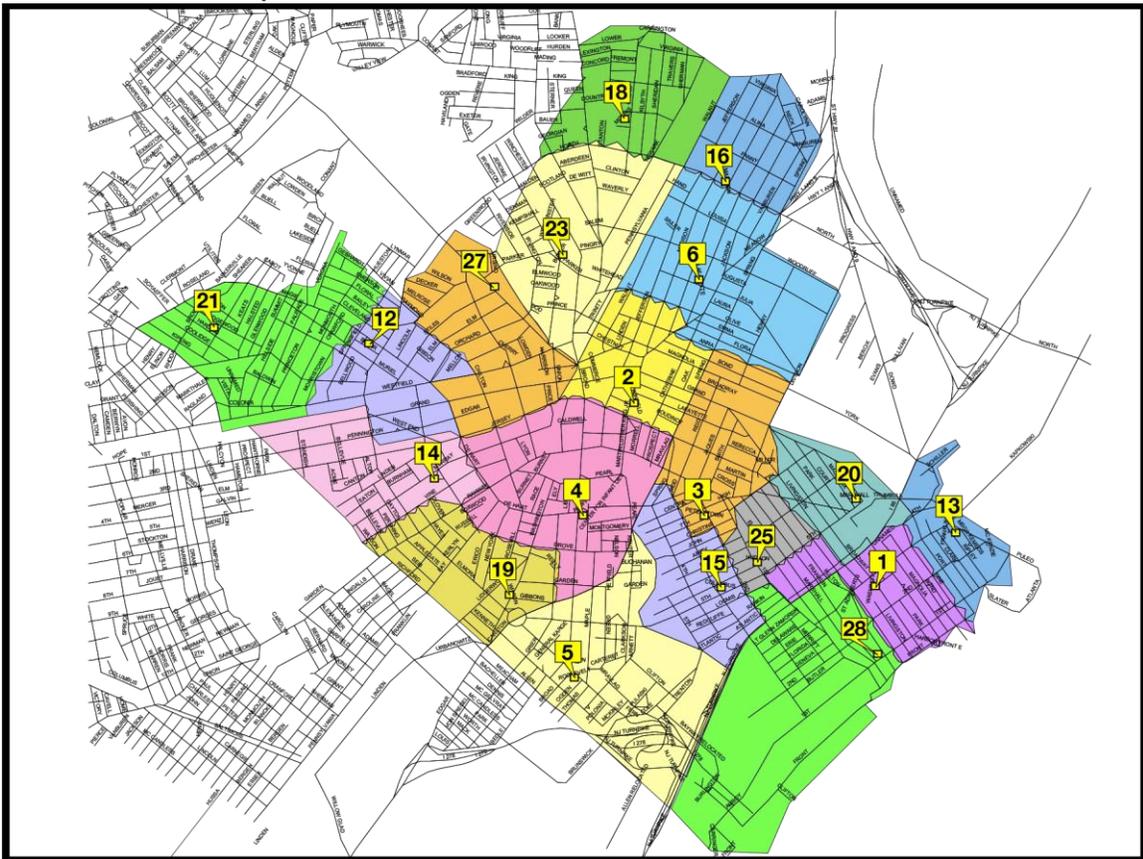
### ***The West End***

The West End is located just south of the Elmora neighborhood. It has many row homes that have been converted into rental apartments. Teachers report that parent involvement in these neighborhood schools is very high and principal leadership is strong. During the teacher focus group at NS-2, teachers boasted that their school was the best neighborhood school in the district.

### ***Locations of EPS Schools***

**Map 2** shows the location of EPS neighborhood schools within the City of Elizabeth. Schools 1, 13, 20 and 28 are in the “Port” neighborhood; Schools 21 and 12 are in the Elmora section; Schools 14 and 19 are in the West End; Schools 16 and 18 are in the North End.

**Map 2. Locations of Schools in the Elizabeth Public Schools**

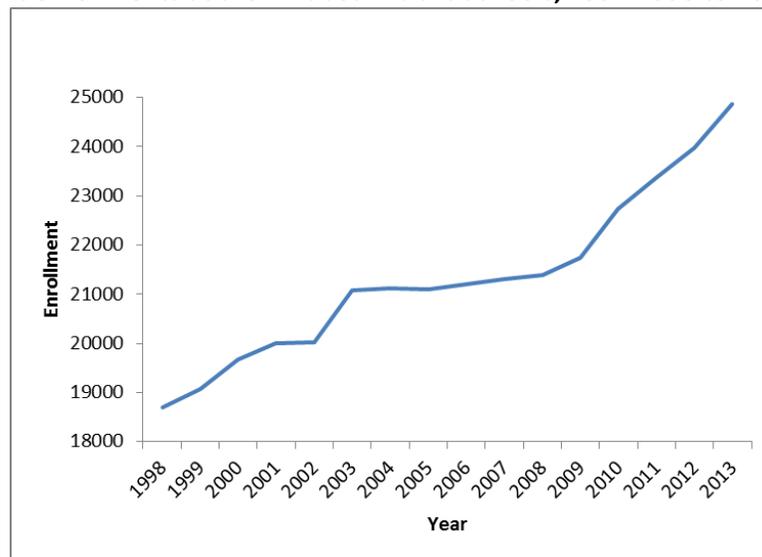


## 5 The Elizabeth Public Schools

EPS qualifies as an Abbott district because it serves a majority of students from low-income families. Unlike other Abbott school districts, such as Camden or Newark, Elizabeth has *not* been taken over by the state. This is a source of great pride for EPS administrators, principals and teachers. Like Union City, the best known “successful” urban district in the state (Kirp, 2013), Elizabeth is not a typical neoliberal urban school district story of school closures, school choice, *Teach For America* recruits, and charter school expansion. Instead, Elizabeth and EPS have put their energy and resources in creating an equitable and high performing, locally-created public school system. EPS has demonstrated success in this endeavor as evidenced by parents “climbing the walls” to move to the city for its public schools. Thus, one of the main goals of our research is to tell the story of how this came to be.

NJDOE data indicate a steady increase in public school enrollment in EPS over the past 10 years (**Figure 1**). Between the 1999-2000 and 2012-2013 school years, the student enrollment increased by 26%. This has occurred at a time when enrollments were declining in many of New Jersey’s other urban districts. **Table 3** shows EPS enrollment has increased by 18% between 2003-04 and 2012-13 as compared to decreases of 31%, 10% and 18% in Camden, Jersey City and Newark. Growth in EPS enrollments shows no sign of tapering off.

**Figure 1. Student enrollments at the Elizabeth Public Schools, 1997-1998 to 2012- 2013**



Source: New Jersey Department of Education

In some cities, a significant portion of this decline in enrollment has been due to rapid increases in public charter school openings. Elizabeth, on the other hand, has been attracting families to the district and has no charter schools within its borders. Moreover, all but one of the Elizabeth Catholic schools have closed due to declines in enrollment and the current economic climate, which reduced city residents’ abilities to pay private school tuition.

**Table 3. The number and percent change in selected urban public school districts**

School District	2003-04	2013-14	N of change	% change
Camden	16,955	11,660	-5,295	-31.2
Elizabeth	21,040	24,875	3,835	18.2
Jersey City	30,732	27,571	-3,161	-10.3
Newark	42,802	34,975	-7,827	-18.3

Source: New Jersey Department of Education

## 5.1 Educational Reform

The EPS aspiration is to be the number one school district in the state. During the last 15-20 years, EPS has undergone many education reforms with a goal of providing a quality education to all of its students. As part of its reform initiatives, EPS has partnered with the Broad Foundation Reform Governance Association and the Panasonic Foundation. EPS sets high expectations for its students with a 160-credit high school graduation requirement, the highest in the state, and innovative programs and policies. Interviews with EPS administrators and district staff indicate that the main school reforms believed to have led to increases in math and language arts test scores (see *Academic Performance*, below) are: managed instruction, district reconfiguration, universal pre-school, school uniforms, and universal ELT. **Table 4** provides a timeline of important district dates.

### 5.1.1 Managed Instruction

In the 1990s, the State of New Jersey mandated that school districts implement the decentralized whole school reform model. According to interviewed EPS administrators, whole school reform was a “failed experiment” in Elizabeth because of high student transiency rates—both between EPS schools and in and out of the district. Interviewees explained that high student mobility led to huge gaps in student learning, especially in the port area schools. As a result, district leaders asked the Commissioner of Education, Gordon MacInnes, for permission to create a unique whole school reform model. EPS partnered with the NJDOE to create a K-3 instructional model.

In 2005, Pablo Munoz was named interim superintendent of EPS. Munoz agreed with EPS district officials that whole school reform was hurting the district. Greatly influenced by the Boston Public Schools, which had just won the Broad Prize for Urban Education, Munoz implemented MI in 2006, a centralized reform model in the district. The MI framework included seven components that are managed by the central office-- Curriculum, Human Resources, Professional Development, Student Information Systems, Support Structures, Accountability, and Assessment. MI mandated that every school use a “pacing guide” (the same curriculum) and the same benchmarks at the end of each marking period, making it easy to chart and compare student progress across schools. Additionally MI provided all teachers with the same professional development. The district gave each school a choice among three models—the ALEM (Adaptive Learning Environments Model), SFA (Success for All), and Comer School Development models. Each school had the

authority to make decisions about curriculum, staffing, and assessments in order “to turn their schools around.” Currently, EPS is poised to begin phase II of MI. Phase II will gradually decentralize some management decision making to local schools that have demonstrated increases in student achievement.

**Table 4. Timeline of Elizabeth Public Schools Reforms**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Change</b>
1991	Thomas Dunn Jr. appointed Superintendent (14 year tenure)
	Whole School Reform Model Adopted
1998	Abbott V Decision and Universal Pre-K begins
	Magnet School No. 26 Opens, Offers ELT (longer day and year) and IB Candidate Program
2001	Opening of Early Childhood Center No. 50 Dual Language Program
2004	Opening of Early Childhood Center No. 51 Dual Language Program
2005	Pablo Munoz named Interim Superintendent
	Keys to Excellence Strategic Plan
	Opening of Early Childhood Center No. 52 Dual Language Program
2006	School District Reconfiguration to K-8 and HS model (middle schools closed); High School divided into Upper (10 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup> ) and Lower Academy (9 <sup>th</sup> grade) for G&T students
	Neighborhood School Boundary Shifts
	Managed Instruction (MI) begins
	Introduction of Uniform Policy
	High School ELT begins; School 29 STEAM Magnet School and School 30 Leadership Magnet School Open with ELT
2008	Hamilton Prep HS Academy opens under the umbrella of Elizabeth High School, using AVID
	EPS is selected to partner with Panasonic Foundation
	SmartBoards and Computers added to classrooms as part of a multi-year initiative
2009	School No. 7 Terence C. Reilly Gifted and Talented school opens
	Elizabeth High School is split into six high schools (“Academies”). Principals are hired from within the district.
	Excellent Choices program offers HS choices to theme-based “Academies”
2010	ELT started in lowest performing schools (Schools 1, 2, 5, 13, 28)
	Adaptation of Danielson FFT for teacher evaluation
2011	ELT expanded to all remaining K-8 schools
	All Pre-K classrooms are bilingual
2012	Marzano Principal Evaluation Model Adopted
	All EPS students wear uniforms
	Point of Entry program for ELL students
	Implementation of Common Core State Standards
2013	School No. 8 iPrep Academy opens
	Olga Hugelmeyer named Interim Superintendent. Later named Superintendent.
2014	ELT reduced by 45 minutes in all K-8 schools

### ***5.1.2 District Reconfiguration***

During Pablo Munoz's leadership (2005-2013), EPS reconfigured its district schools from a three-tiered model (Elementary K-5, middle, and high schools) to a two-tiered model (Pre-K/K-8 and high schools) to reduce middle school size and to improve safety and behavioral issues. Administrators believed a greater sense of school community could be fostered among teachers, administrators and staff as they followed students continually from Kindergarten to 8<sup>th</sup> grade. In 2008, Hamilton High School, a magnet school, was created under the umbrella of Elizabeth High School. The next year, 2009, Elizabeth High School was divided into the six smaller thematic high schools.

### ***5.1.3 Universal Pre-School***

With the Abbott V ruling in 1998, Elizabeth began universal Pre-K for all 3 and 4-year old students living within the district. MacInnes (2009) writes, "Abbott V funding allowed EPS to take the most critical step in narrowing the kindergarten gap...preparing poor children in poor cities so that they can learn how to read and write well." The Abbott V funding paid for three new pre-school buildings in Elizabeth, allowed the district to align and evaluate the preschool curriculum to the standards, and financed certification of all Pre-K to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teachers. In 2001 and 2004, two bilingual early childhood centers were opened and by 2011, all Pre-K classrooms were bilingual.

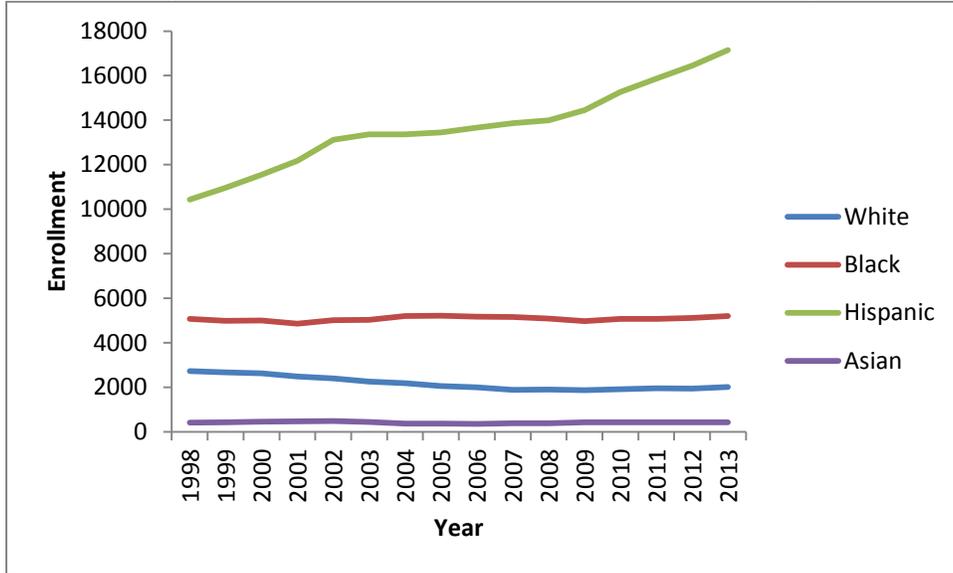
### ***5.1.4 School Uniforms***

Mandatory school uniforms began in 2006 in the magnet schools with the opening of schools 29 (Dr. Albert Einstein Academy) and 30 (Ronald Reagan Academy). One interviewed EPS director stated, "There's actually such a value and a calming effect of uniforms. It just kind of takes away one layer of potential obstacles that teachers face in classrooms every day and administrators face in school every day." The district-wide uniform policy was expanded incrementally over time, and uniforms are now required for all students.

## ***5.2 The Student Population***

Using New Jersey Department of Education data, we have examined changes in the racial/ethnic composition of the EPS student population (**Figure 2**). In 1997-1998, the Hispanic enrollment was 10,434 students, or 56% of the EPS student population. By 2012-13, the Hispanic enrollment had increased to 17,156, or 69% of the student population. During the same time period, White enrollments declined in absolute numbers (by 26%), with White students representing just 8% of EPS students in 2012-13. Black student enrollments increased slightly (+2%) during this same time period. In 2012-13, Black students were 21% of the EPS student population.

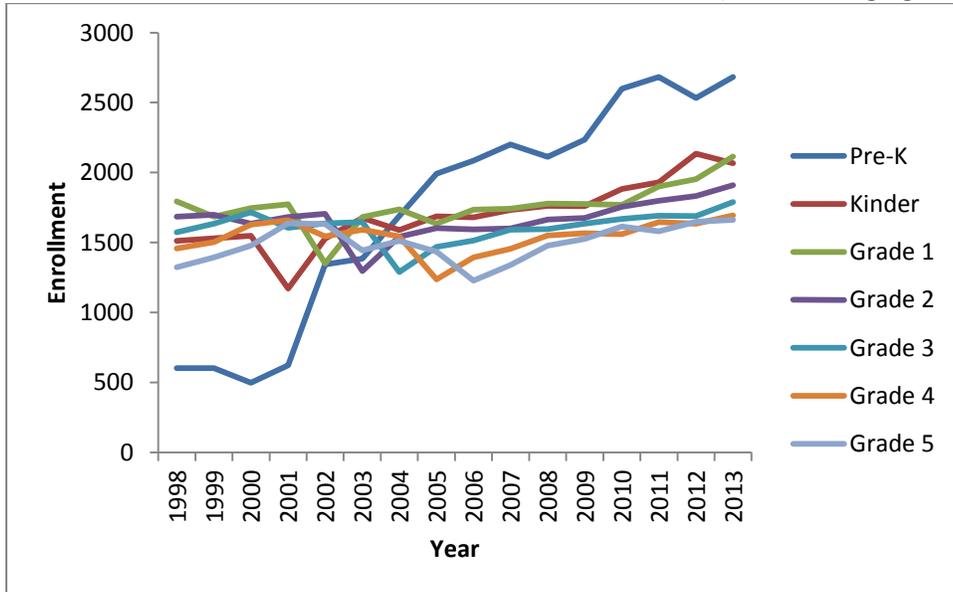
**Figure 2. Growth in Student Enrollment at EPS: Ethnicity**



Source: New Jersey Department of Education

**Figures 3, 4 and 5** show changes in student enrollments by grade. **Figure 3** shows the greatest growth in student enrollments occurred among pre-Kindergarten (pre-K) students (3 and 4 years of age). In the 10 years from 2003 to 2013, pre-K enrollments increased by nearly 1,400 students—an increase of 94%, which coincides with the opening of the three bilingual preschool centers. In comparison, increases in enrollments among the elementary school aged children (K through 5) have been much more modest (a 20% increase over the 10 years), although these increases are still substantial.

**Figure 3. Student Enrollment at EPS from 1997-98 to 2012-13 (Pre-K through grade 5)**

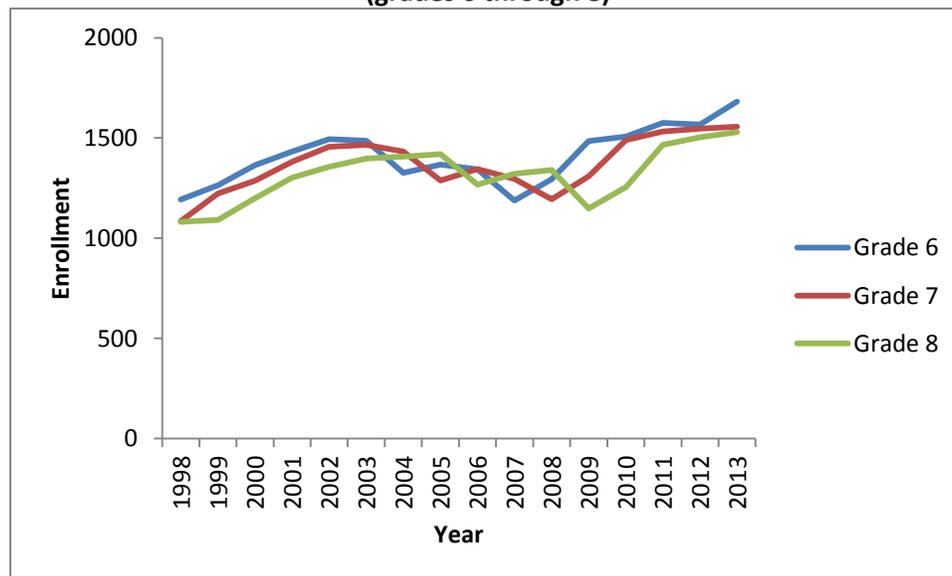


Source: New Jersey Department of Education

**Figure 4** shows the enrollment numbers for middle school aged students. From 1997-98 to 2002-03, middle school enrollments increased substantially (by about 25%). In the subsequent 3-4 years, however, enrollments steadily declined until 2006 or 2007, after which enrollments again increased. From 2006-07 to 2012-13, the 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade population increased by 25%. The district attributes a portion of this increase to the creation of pre-K-8 schools in 2006. Prior to that change, many Elizabeth parents pulled their students from district middle schools as their children aged out of elementary school. Additionally, the financial crisis of the fall of 2008, and the subsequent Great Recession led many parents to abandon the parochial and private schools, and enroll in EPS schools; and, these financial problems led to the closing of a number of Elizabeth parochial schools, including St. Patrick’s High School in June 2012. Lastly, EPS’ educational reputation has increased markedly—to the point that as many as 10% of EPS students may be out-of-district residents, who have “voted with their feet” in abandoning Linden, Roselle, and other neighboring school districts.

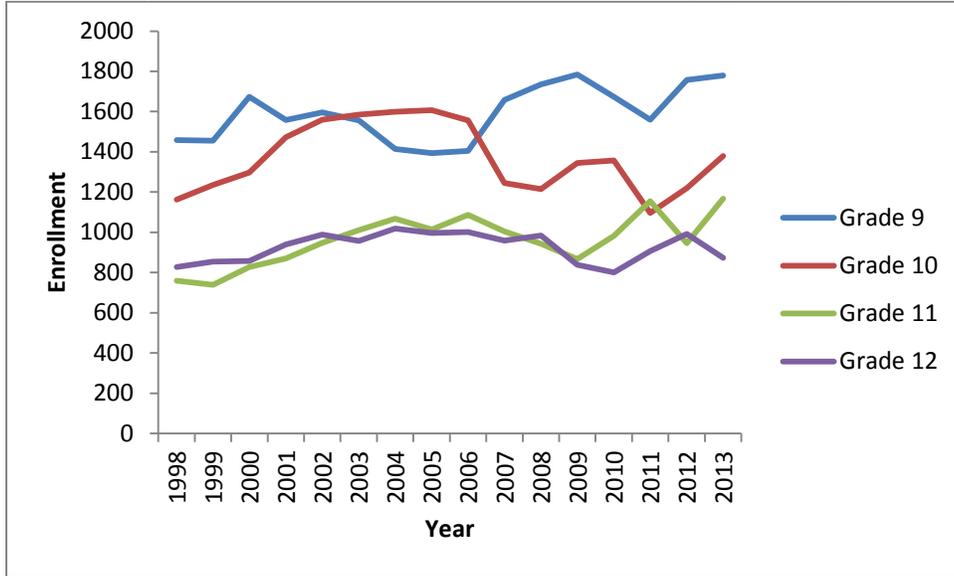
**Figure 5** shows high school enrollments. The reader will note the substantial gap in enrollments between grades 9 and 10 vs. grades 11 and 12, presumably because of drop-outs. The New Jersey Department of Education reports the adjusted 4-year cohort graduation rate for EPS high school students was 71% for 2012-13. **Figure 5** shows grade 11 and 12 student enrollment has remained fairly constant across the years, while grade 9 and 10 student enrollments have varied more greatly for unknown reasons.

**Figure 4. Student Enrollment at EPS from 1997-98 to 2012-13  
(grades 6 through 8)**



Source: New Jersey Department of Education

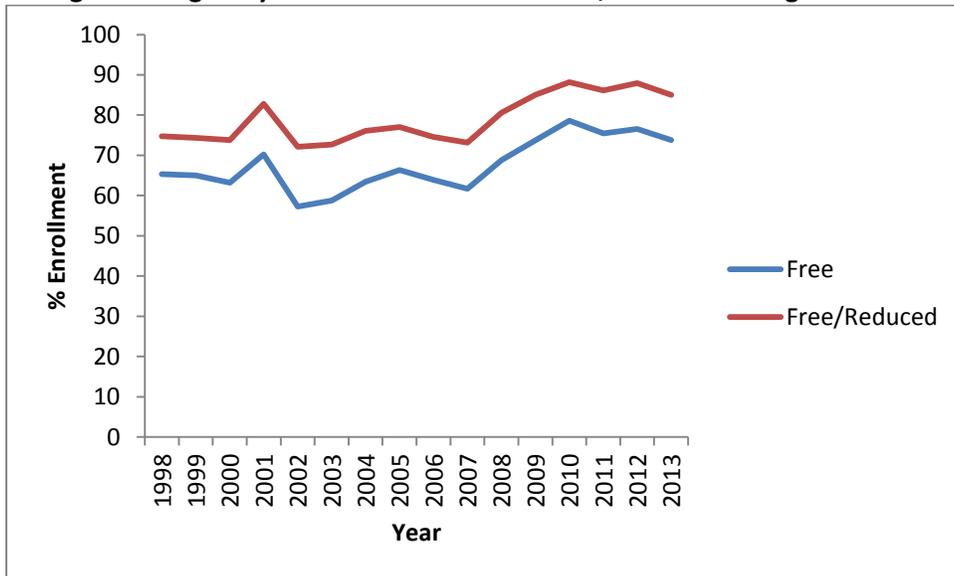
**Figure 5. Growth of Student Enrollment at EPS (High School)**



Source: New Jersey Department of Education

**Figure 6** shows the percent of EPS students who were eligible for free or reduced school lunch. In 2013, 85% of students were eligible for free or reduced lunch, and 74% were eligible for free lunch. With the onset of the Great Recession in 2008, this population was hard hit: eligibility for free lunch increased by nearly 20% between 2004-05 and 2012-13.

**Figure 6. Eligibility for free and reduced lunch, 1997-98 through 2012-13**



Source: New Jersey Department of Education

## 5.3 The District Schools

### 5.3.1 Structure of the District Schools

The current configuration of district schools is the result of several education reform initiatives as described above. District schools are characterized by the grades served and school “type.” As noted above, the district reorganized in 2006 from a three-tiered model (elementary, middle school, high school) to a two-tiered model that is comprised of Pre-K/K- grade 8 and high schools. Additionally, Elizabeth High School, with over 5,000 students, was divided into six separate themed high school academies in 2009.

**Table 5** details the district configuration of schools in school year 2013-14, the first year of our research. At that time, EPS had 28 Pre-K/K to grade 8 (henceforth “elementary” schools) public schools and 6 high schools. Among the elementary schools, three enrolled Pre-K students only, 2 schools were for gifted and talented (G&T) students (grades 2-8), and 4 were lottery based Pre-K – grade 8 magnet schools.

Students must apply for admission to the G&T and magnet elementary schools. For the G&T application process, parents can choose to fill out the application when their child is in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade. There are certain academic criteria for G&T admission (i.e. test scores, GPA, etc.), but students can also be gifted in the arts, music, theater, or in physical education to be eligible for a G&T seat. Specialty teachers from the student’s neighborhood schools are asked to write recommendations as part of the application process. Most parents apply to the magnet school lotteries when their child enters preschool. Students that do not get in are placed on a waiting list and called if a seat becomes available. Each magnet school offers a different theme and there is no sibling priority. Hence, students attending the gifted and talented and magnet schools come from across the school district. Enrollment in the remaining nineteen Pre-K /K - grade eight schools is based on neighborhood of residence. Hence, we term these schools “neighborhood schools.”

**Table 5. The number of different schools in the Elizabeth Public School District, 2012-13**

School Level	School Type	N
Pre-K only		3
Pre-K - 8	Neighborhood school	19
	Magnet school	4
	Gifted and Talented	2
High School	Comprehensive High School	4
	Magnet High School	2
TOTAL		34

All district high schools are application based. Of the six public high schools in Elizabeth, two, Elizabeth High School (EHS) and Alexander Hamilton Preparatory Academy, are application-based magnet schools and have specific academic requirements. Each of the four non-magnet high schools are application based, too.

However, there are no academic admissions requirements. These non-magnet high schools offer students a rigorous college preparatory program and a unique career “strand.” **Table 6** shows the different high schools and their academic “strands.”

In the spring of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, students apply to the high schools of their choice. At EHS, students are admitted on the basis of 8<sup>th</sup> grade grades and 7<sup>th</sup> grade NJASK scores. Students must have a GPA of 3.0 or better. These students are ranked academically, and 220 students are accepted by EHS. The rest are waitlisted and/or their name is sent to their second choice school for admission process there. At Hamilton High School, students must have a 2.0 GPA or better in the 8th grade for consideration. As is the case at EHS, students are then ranked on the basis of GPA until all seats are filled. The other 4 schools employ a lottery if more students apply to HS than the number of seats. For these schools, students select their top 6 academic "strands", all of which, or many of which, could be in the same academy.

Slightly less than one third of EPS high school students are enrolled in a magnet high school (1766/5472, 32%). Magnet students receive a rigorous academic course sequence to get them career and college ready. Magnet students are expected to enroll in and take Advance Placement courses and exams.

**Table 6. The six EPS high schools.**

Type	High School	Strands
Magnet	Elizabeth High School	College preparatory
	Hamilton High School	
Non-Magnet	John Dwyer Technology Academy	Industrial Technology, Pre-engineering, Information Technology, and the NAF Academies of Information Technology and Engineering
	Admiral William F. Halsey, Jr. Leadership Academy	Military Leadership, Criminal Justice and Law Leadership, Education Leadership, Business Leadership and the NAF Academy in Finance.
	Thomas Jefferson Arts Academy	Creative Writing, Theater, Visual Arts, Performing Arts, and Audio and Visual Media Studies.
	Thomas A. Edison Career and Technical Academy	Construction Technology, Health Science, Hospitality and Retail Services, Automotive Technology and the NAF Academy of Hospitality and Tourism.

**Table 7. Enrollments of EPS schools, 2013-14**

	<b>School Name</b>	<b>Enrollment</b>
<b>Pre-K Only Schools</b>	Frances C. Smith Early Childhood Center #50	300
	Donald Stewart Early Childhood Center #51	300
	Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. ECC #52	300
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>900</b>
<b>Neighborhood Schools (Pre-K – 8)</b>	George Washington School No. 1	791
	Winfield Scott School No. 2	
	Nicholas S. Lacorte-Peterstown School No. 3	1365
	Joseph Battin School No. 4	682
	Mabel G. Homes School No. 5	687
	Louverture-Lafayette School No. 6	884
	Elmora School No. 12	670
	Benjamin Franklin School No. 13	455
	Abraham Lincoln School No. 14	783
	Christopher Columbus School No. 15	682
	Madison Monroe School No. 16	786
	Robert Morris School No. 18	539
	Woodrow Wilson School No. 19	715
	John Marshal School No. 20	421
	Victor Mravlag School No. 21	418
	Nicholas Murray Butler School No. 23	715
	Charles J. Hudson School No. 25	612
	Dr. Antonia Pantoja School No. 27	979
	Juan Pablo Duarte - Jose Julian Marti No. 28	917
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14,071</b>
<b>Magnet Schools (pre-K - 8)</b>	IPrep Academy School No 8	502
	Dr. Orlando Edreira Academy School No. 26	
	Dr. Albert Einstein Academy School No. 29	793
	Ronald Reagan Academy School No. 30	791
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,469</b>
<b>Gifted and Talented (grades 2 – 8)</b>	Terence C. Reilly School No. 7	1018
	William F. Halloran School No.22	945
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,963</b>
<b>Magnet High Schools</b>	Elizabeth High School	816
	Alexander Hamilton Preparatory Acad.	950
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1766</b>
<b>Non-Magnet High Schools</b>	Thomas Jefferson Arts Acad.	826
	Thomas A. Edison Career and Technical Acad.	700
	John E. Dwyer Technology Acad.	1070
	Admiral William F. Halsey Jr. Leadership Acad.	1110
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,706</b>

**Table 7** provides district enrollment figures for the school year 2013-14, by school type and individual school. Subtotals are listed separately for Pre-K/K-8 and high school enrollments. Ten percent (10%) of Pre-K to grade 8 students are enrolled in a G&T school (1963/19403); 13 percent are enrolled in magnet schools (2469/19403).

## **5.4 Academic Performance**

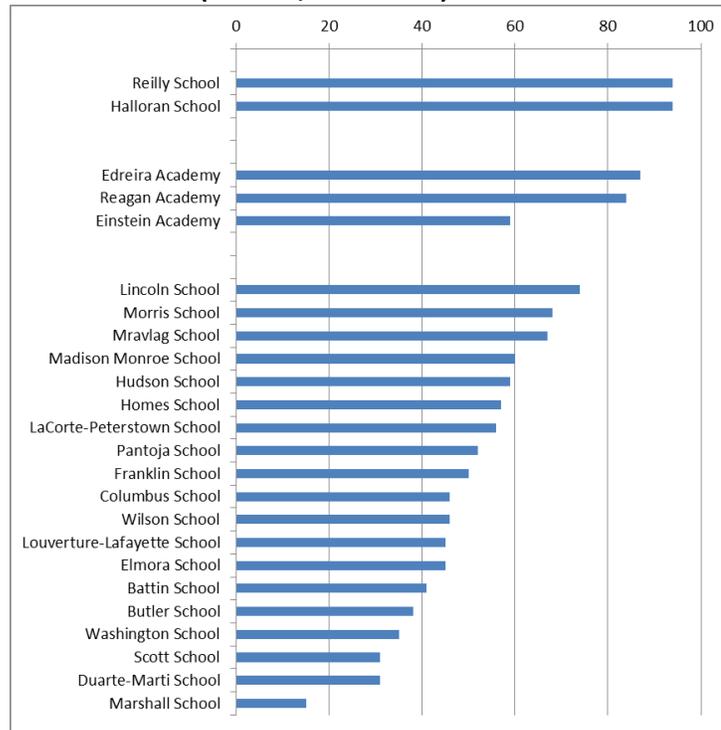
### **5.4.1 Elementary School (grades 3-8) Student Achievement Scores**

In 2012, 18 of the 28 pre-K-8 schools made annual student progress under NCLB (New Jersey Department of Education, 2014). Elizabeth continues to score lower on the NJASK standardized examinations than the state average, particularly in Language Arts in the lower grades.

For example, only 44% of 4<sup>th</sup> grade students scored proficient or greater on the Language Arts test as compared to the state average of 59%. The district scored closer to the state average in math, with 73% scoring proficient or above as compared to the 78% statewide. In 8<sup>th</sup> grade, these percentages flip with 72% scoring proficient or above on Language Arts and 58% in math.

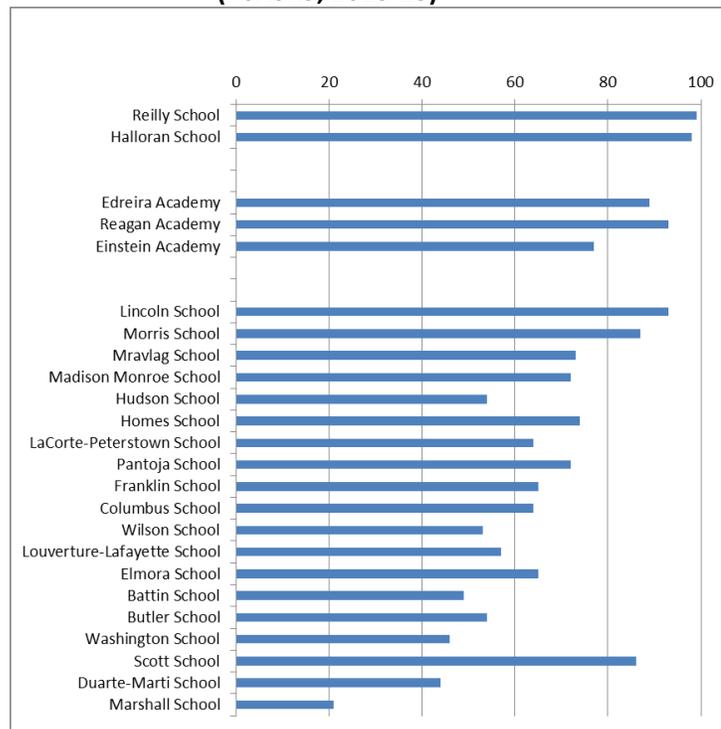
**Figures 7** through **9** show the distribution of student academic proficiency on the NJASK academic achievement examinations by elementary school for 2012-13. The figures show considerable variation in academic performance among EPS schools. As might be expected, rates of proficiency on the NJASK examination are very high at the district's two gifted and talented schools (between 90 and 100% for language arts and mathematics for the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> graders). The magnet elementary schools, although less high performing than the gifted and talented schools, nevertheless show levels of academic proficiency that generally equal or exceed the New Jersey average of 70-80%. At the other end of the scale are a handful of neighborhood schools that have very low language arts and mathematics proficiency rates in the 30 to 40% range.

**Figure 7. The percent proficient and advanced proficient, 3rd grade language arts (NJASK3, 2012-2013)**



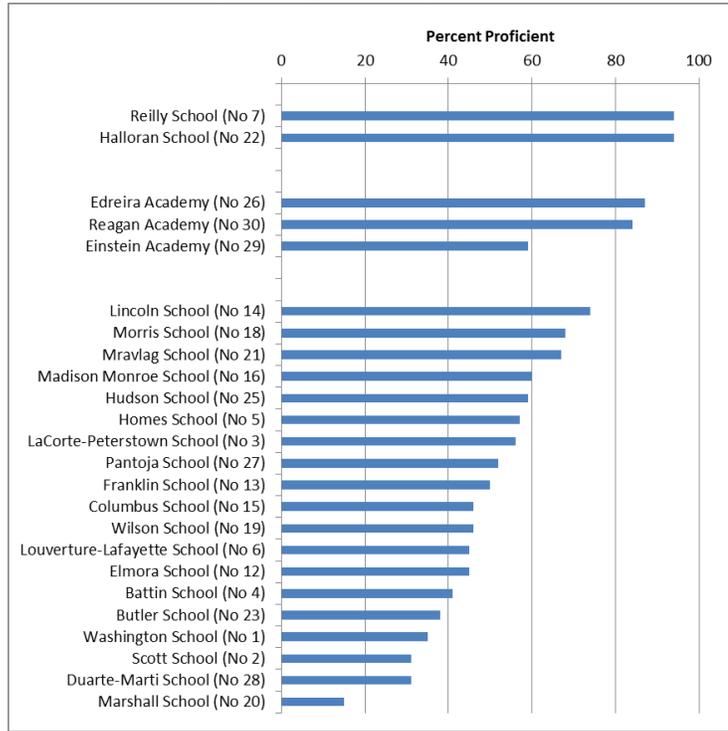
Source: New Jersey Department of Education

**Figure 8. The percent proficient and advanced proficient, 3rd grade mathematics (NJASK3, 2013-13)**



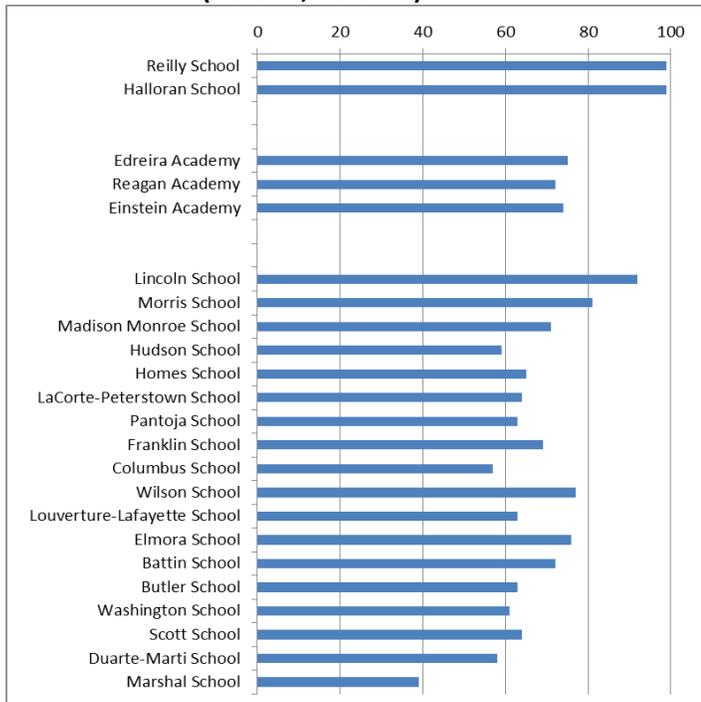
Source: New Jersey Department of Education

**Figure 9. The percent proficient and advanced proficient, 5rd grade language arts (NJASK5, 2013-13)**



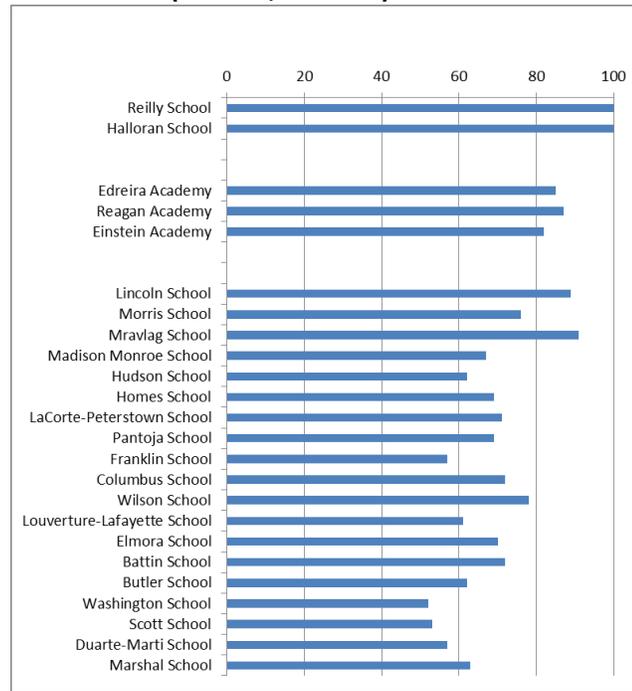
Source: New Jersey Department of Education

**Figure 10. The percent proficient and advanced proficient, 5rd grade mathematics (NJASK5, 2013-13)**



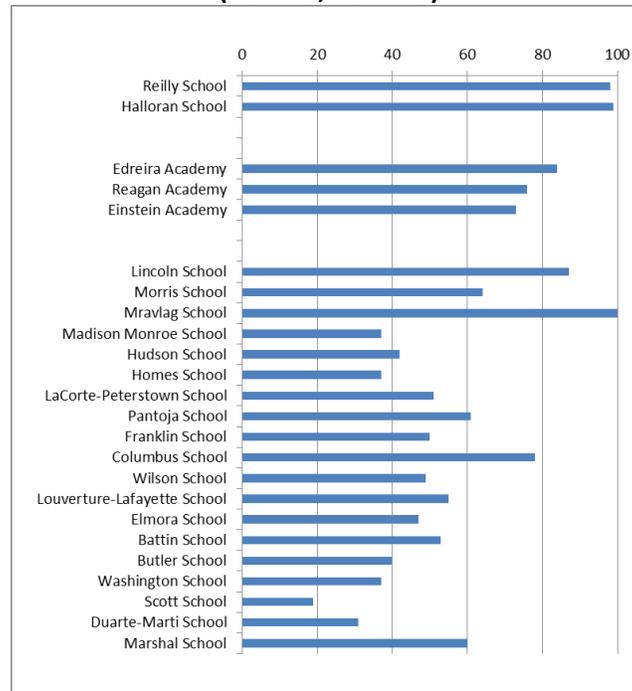
Source: New Jersey Department of Education

**Figure 11. The percent proficient and advanced proficient, 8th grade language arts (NJASK8, 2013-13)**



Source: New Jersey Department of Education

**Figure 12. The percent proficient and advanced proficient, 8th grade mathematics (NJASK8, 2013-13)**



Source: New Jersey Department of Education

### 5.4.2 High School Student Achievement Scores

**Table 8** provides the most recent 4-year adjusted cohort graduation data available for EPS from the New Jersey Department of Education.<sup>6</sup> For a comparison, the final column lists statewide statistics. The data show students in EPS have a lower graduation rate as compared to the statewide average. Specifically, 71% of students graduate from EPS as compared to a statewide graduation rate of 87%. For all categories of students, EPS graduation rates are lower than the statewide statistics, particularly for black students, who have a 57% graduation rate in EPS as compared to 76% for black students across the state.

**Table 8. Comparison of EPS and New Jersey Graduation Rates, 2012-13**

Category of Student		4-yr Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (%)	
		EPS	New Jersey
Ethnicity	Black	57.3	76.4
	Hispanic	74.2	78.6
	White	82.2	93.4
Limited English Proficiency (LEP)		62.7	70.5
Economically Disadvantaged (free or reduced lunch)		72.4	77.0
Student with Disability		50.5	75.9
All Students		71.1	87.5

Source: New Jersey Department of Education

**Table 9** shows the 4-year adjusted graduation rates for the six EPS high schools. **Table 10** shows the percent of students who were proficient on the language arts and mathematics portions of the New Jersey HSPA examination. As might be expected, the two magnet high schools have very high graduation rates (greater than 90%) and very high rates of proficiency on the HSPA examination. As a result, Elizabeth High School was recently named the best high school in the state and 34<sup>th</sup> in the country by the Washington Post (2014). The non-magnet high schools are high performing in comparison with neighboring Newark, where the comprehensive high schools have much lower HSPA proficient rates (in the range of 45 to 70% for language arts, and 40 to 70% for mathematics) and graduation rates (ranging from 48 to 80% for 2012-13)(Backstrand 2014).

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<sup>6</sup> In our prior research in other districts we have found internal district graduation calculations can differ importantly from NJDOE data. Hence, in future reports we will calculate an internal graduation rate and dropout numbers for the district based on careful cohort classification and analysis of student exit codes. Additionally, we will analyze internal graduation trends for the past several years.

**Table 9. Four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate by high school, 2012-13**

Type of School	High School	4-yr Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (%)
Magnet	Elizabeth High School	95.9
	Alexander Hamilton Preparatory Academy	91.0
Non-Magnet	Thomas Jefferson Arts Academy	63.4
	Alva Edison Career & Technical Academy	75.6
	John E. Dwyer Technology Academy	60.3
	Admiral William F. Halsey, Jr. Leadership Academy	61.2

Source: New Jersey Department of Education

**Table 10. HSPA examination proficient rates by high school, 2012-13**

Type of School	High School	Proficient or Higher (%)	
		Language Arts	Mathematics
Magnet	Elizabeth High School	98.8	98.8
	Alexander Hamilton Preparatory Academy	95.4	94.2
Non-Magnet	Thomas Jefferson Arts Academy	93.9	68.5
	Alva Edison Career & Technical Academy	80.5	60.5
	John E. Dwyer Technology Academy	74.3	56.4
	Admiral William F. Halsey, Jr. Leadership Academy	79.7	57.7

Source: New Jersey Department of Education

## 6 Expanded Learning Time (ELT) at the Elizabeth Public Schools

The Elizabeth Public Schools is one of the few school districts that have implemented ELT for nearly all students. Initial conversations with district administrators during the fall of 2013 gave us the impression that ELT had been implemented uniformly throughout the district. And, with regard to the length of the school day, it is. Specifically, all district schools have extended the school day by ninety minutes. However, since its inception in 2006, ELT programming and content has varied greatly within and among the district schools. For example, magnet elementary schools provide a combination of remedial/test-prep instruction and enrichment activities. Children who require extra help in math and language arts are “pulled out” of “elective” courses (i.e., enrichment) to receive extra tutoring and returned to the elective class upon improvement. On the other hand, in non-magnet elementary schools, ELT programming is only intervention, even if students do not need it. **Table 11** below lists ELT programming by school type.

**Table 11. Type of school and ELT content**

School Level	School Type	ELT Content
Pre-K only		No ELT
Pre-K/K – Grade 8	Neighborhood	Intervention Only
	Magnet School	Intervention and Enrichment
	Gifted and Talented (G&T)	Enrichment Only
High School	Magnet High School	Intervention and Enrichment
	Non-Magnet High School	Intervention and Enrichment

ELT implementation in Elizabeth has been phased in over time (**Table 12**). The ELT initiative officially began in 2006, although ELT was first offered in the district in School 26 when it opened in 1998. In 2006 the district’s Board of Education implemented an 8-hour day in all existing magnet K-8 schools<sup>7</sup> and the high school<sup>8</sup> (Kaplan et al., 2014). In 2010, the district and Board extended the school day in the five lowest performing schools—Schools 1, 2, 5, 13, and 28. The following school year, EPS chose to make the remaining fourteen K-8 schools extended day when they were awarded \$81.7 million additional baseline funding from a Supreme Court of NJ equity funding mandate for Abbott districts<sup>9</sup> (Kaplan et al., 2014). According to Kaplan et al. (2014), the district-wide “time expansion was a deliberate effort to follow the lead of School 26 and a few other district schools, which were demonstrating a very high level of academic performance among their students.”

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<sup>7</sup> School Number 8 opened school year 2013-14.

<sup>8</sup> This refers to the old Elizabeth High School before it was broken up into six thematic high schools.

<sup>9</sup> In 1981, the Education Law Center filed a lawsuit, *Abbott v. Burke*, against the state of New Jersey, arguing that New Jersey’s local funding of public schools led to significant funding disparities between suburban and urban school districts. They argued that poor urban districts could not adequately fund the educational needs of their students. In one of several Abbott decisions over the last 30 years, in 1990, the NJ Supreme Court found that the system of school funding was unconstitutional and changed the funding formula for 31 of the poorest urban school districts, including EPS, across the state. Subsequent Abbott rulings have allowed these urban districts to offer universal preschool and school construction and renovation funds (Education Law Center, 2014).

**Table 12. Year of ELT implementation for the K-8th grade schools**

Type of School	School	School Year					
		1998-1999	2006-2007*	2010-2011	2011-2012	2013-2014	2014-2015**
Neighborhood	George Washington School No. 1			X			X
	Winfield Scott School No. 2			X			X
	Nicholas S. Lacorte-Peterstown School No. 3				X		X
	Joseph Battin School No. 4				X		X
	Mabel G. Homes School No. 5			X			X
	Louverture-Lafayette School No. 6				X		X
	Elmora School No. 12				X		X
	Benjamin Franklin School No. 13			X			X
	Abraham Lincoln School No. 14				X		X
	Christopher Columbus School No. 15				X		X
	Madison Monroe School No. 16				X		X
	Robert Morris School No. 18				X		X
	Woodrow Wilson School No. 19				X		X
	John Marshal School No. 20				X		X
	Victor Mravlag School No. 21				X		X
	Nicholas Murray Butler School No. 23				X		X
	Charles J. Hudson School No. 25				X		X
	Dr. Antonia Pantoja School No. 27				X		X
Juan Pablo Duarte - Jose Julian Marti No. 28			X			X	
Magnet	IPrep Academy School No 8 (opened 2013)					X	X
	Dr. Orlando Edreira Academy School No. 26	X					X
	Dr. Albert Einstein Academy School No. 29		X				X
	Reagan Academy School No. 30		X				X
Gifted and Talented	Terence C. Reilly School No. 7 (opened in 2009)						X
	William F. Halloran School No.22						X
*Managed Instruction Begins							
** ELT Instruction Time Reduced to 45 Minutes							

So, Elizabeth has three distinct ELT models that coincide with school type: magnet and G&T Pre-K/K-8, “neighborhood” Pre-K/K-8 and high school. However, according to interviewees, despite the district’s Managed Instruction philosophy, school principals and administrators received little direction from the central office for ELT implementation.<sup>10</sup> As a result, each school has designed a program based on

<sup>10</sup> In addition, schools have access to Sunday, Read 180, or Everyday Math, research-backed published intervention programs, which may be used if desired.

student needs and available staff, which has led to some variation between schools of the same type, as we describe below.

## **6.1 Differing Models of ELT**

### **6.1.1 The Magnet/Gifted and Talented Model**

The magnet and the gifted and talented schools provide enrichment ELT programming. They have the flexibility and resources to offer enrichment electives based on the school's themes. Magnet students who need academic support are placed in intervention classes for reading or math and return to elective classes once their grades improve. G&T students only receive enrichment during the day. They are encouraged to attend after-school tutoring programs if they require them.

### **6.1.2 The "Neighborhood" K-Grade 8 Model**

"Neighborhood" Pre-K/K-8 schools are required to use the extra hour and fifteen minutes to offer a 30-minute sustained silent reading during a morning mini-period, and two 45-minute intervention periods during the daily schedule for math and language arts. However, the intervention periods are implemented differently by each school. For instance, some schools allow the self-contained teachers to group the students and teach the interventions in the student's regular classroom. Other schools group students by ability and allow students to move to another grade-level classroom, depending on academic level (i.e., low, medium/Tier 1, or high/enrichment intervention). A few schools structure the schedule to use the entire school staff (including specialty and academic teachers) to offer a "push in" or "pull out" program that is designed to provide small group interventions.

In some schools, reading "interventionists" pull the lowest performing students out of the classroom for small group instruction. For the medium and high performing students, though, the teacher or principal decide what to teach during the intervention periods. Some teachers give the medium and high groups "centers" to complete, or spend the extra learning time reinforcing skills.

Notably, unlike the magnets and G&T schools, ELT time is not used for enrichment, which many administrators, principals and teachers would like to provide.

### **6.1.3 The High School Model**

The high school ELT model revolves around the increased 160 credit requirement for graduation. High school teachers do not work an extended day; high school teachers are scheduled to work one of the three daily shifts. Up to grade ten, students receive 90 minute/double blocks of math and LAL during the ELT schedule. For example, if a student is taking geometry in 9<sup>th</sup> grade they are taking it for two periods. The intervention periods in the high school are available for students who need it. There are fundamental courses in 9<sup>th</sup> grade for students who need extra help in algebra. There are also writing seminars and math and ELA strategies courses with specific curriculum for "struggling learners." Like the K-8

magnets, if high school students do not need interventions, they receive an additional elective.

#### **6.1.4 ELT and School Year 2014-2015**

Due to budgetary constraints, in school year 2014-15, the ELT day will be scaled back by 45 minutes, and will now be reduced from 5 days to 3 days per week. The school schedule will change from 7:30 am to 3:45 pm, to 7:45 am to 3:15 pm. However, students receiving school breakfast can arrive at 7 am and students staying for an after school program will remain until 4:15 pm. Given the cost structure of ELT financing in the district, only the pre-K/K-8 schools are affected by the change; high school teacher time is unaffected as they will continue to work a regular high school shift.

## **6.2 Changes in Academic Performance as Measured by Standardized Tests**

### **6.2.1 The Neighborhood Elementary Schools**

The analyses presented here are for 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders for the period 2003-04 through 2012-13 for the subset of 5 elementary schools that implemented ELT in 2010. ELT was implemented in these first because they were identified as low performing schools.<sup>11</sup>

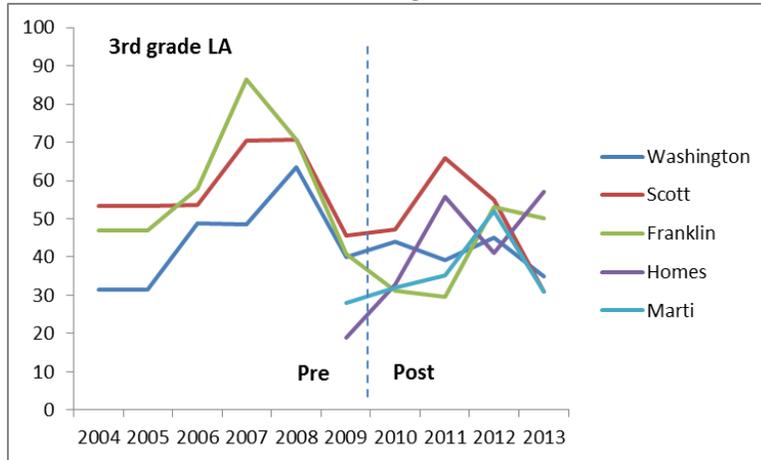
**Figure 13** shows rates of language arts proficiency (proficient or advanced proficient) for 3<sup>rd</sup> graders between 2003-04 and 2012-13. Firstly, the figure shows considerable annual variation in rates of NJASK proficiency. One source of this variability is likely year-to-year variation in the students taking classes, teachers, etc. However, a second much more important factor appears to be important annual differences in test content and scoring. For example, in six years the proportion of “proficient” 3<sup>rd</sup> graders at the Benjamin Franklin School (No. 13) went from fewer than half of students being “proficient” in language arts to nearly 90% proficient in 2006-07, and then back down to only 30% proficient in 2009-10. This annual variation in language arts proficient is clearly nonsensical, and points to the need for data from other comparable districts to “control” for changes in test content if we are to meaningfully assess the influence of ELT on academic performance as

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<sup>11</sup> We provide these results to provide an indication as to whether ELT has positively influenced academic performance as measured by standardized examinations, and also to identify the challenges in using these data to assess the impact of ELT and other educational reforms. Comparable analyses are not shown for the 14 schools that implemented ELT in 2010-11 because of difficulties in presenting the information in graph form, and because they provide little additional information beyond that provided by the 5 schools presented here.

measured by NJASK.<sup>12</sup> However, despite the shortcomings of NJASK, **Figure 13** shows a general pattern of increasing language arts performance during the time since implementation of ELT in these five schools.

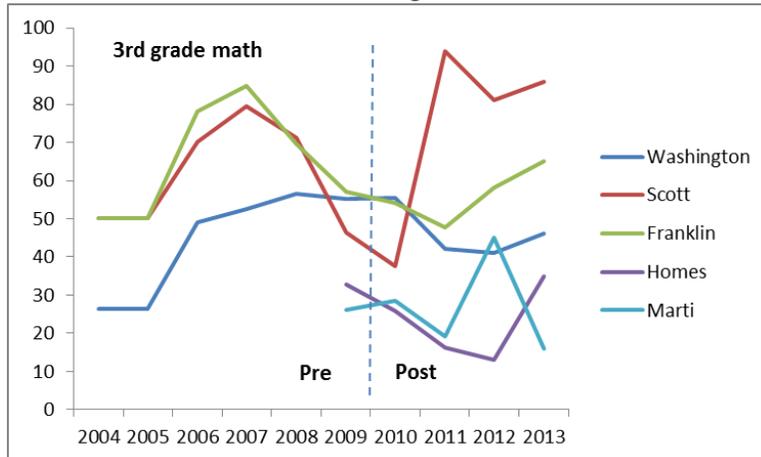
**Figure 13. Percent proficiency on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade NJASK language arts examination, 2003-04 through 2012-13**



Source: New Jersey Department of Education

**Figure 14** shows 3<sup>rd</sup> grade proficiency in mathematics. This figure shows even greater annual variability in mathematics proficiency. And, any effect of ELT on mathematics performance these schools is not apparent from this very simplistic analysis.

**Figure 14. Percent proficiency on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade NJASK mathematics examination, 2003-04 through 2012-13**



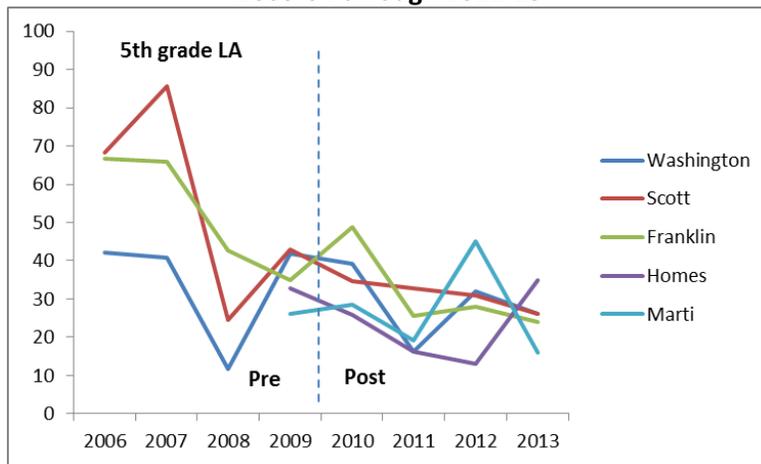
Source: New Jersey Department of Education

<sup>12</sup> This coming year, we will be approaching the Passaic and Perth Amboy school districts to seek NJASK data that can be used to adjust for annual variation in NJASK testing.

**Figures 15 and 16** show the percent of 5<sup>th</sup> graders who were proficient in language arts and mathematics during the years 2003-04 through 2012-13. **Figure 15** suggests declining language arts proficiency since implementation of ELT. A plausible explanation for this pattern might be increased migration of LEP students into these schools. However, the pattern for Hispanic students is essentially the same (not shown).

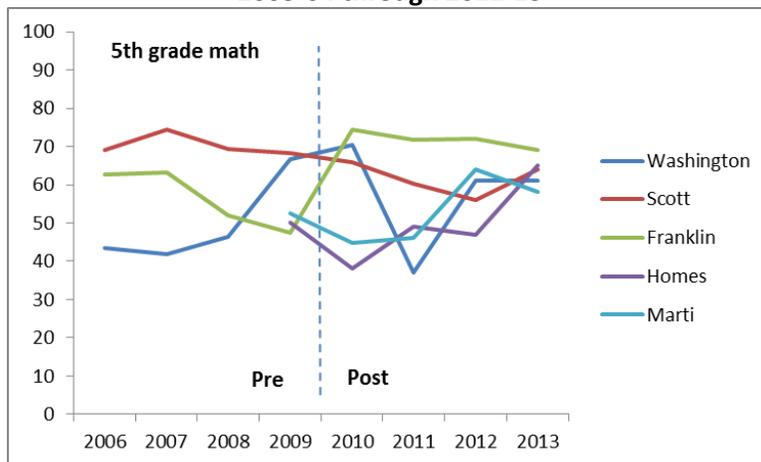
**Figure 16** suggests improvement in mathematics proficiency in the time since ELT implementation—with the exception of the Winfield Scott School (No. 2).

**Figure 15. Percent proficiency on the 5rd grade NJASK language arts examination, 2003-04 through 2012-13**



Source: New Jersey Department of Education

**Figure 16. Percent proficiency on the 5rd grade NJASK mathematics examination, 2003-04 through 2012-13**

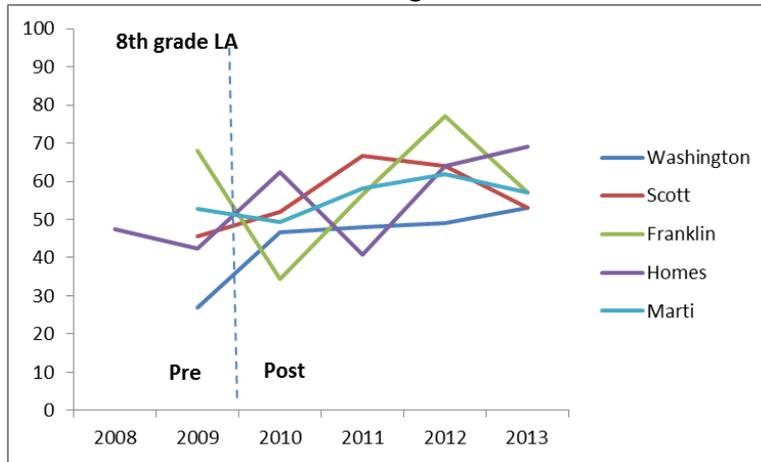


Source: New Jersey Department of Education

**Figures 17 and 18** present the NJASK proficiency for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade students in the 5 ELT neighborhood schools. First, we would like to point out the great reduction in annual variation in NJASK proficiency for 8<sup>th</sup> graders. This suggests that the test content is much more comparable from year to year. Second, both mathematics and

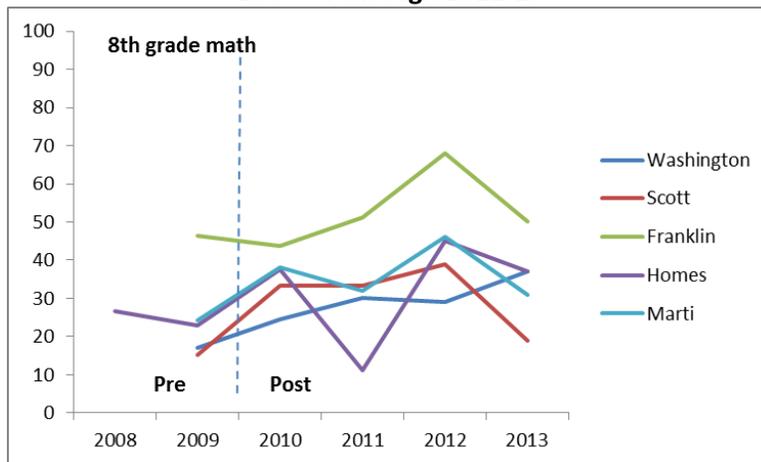
language arts proficiency appear to have improved steadily since implementation of ELT.

**Figure 17. Percent proficiency on the 8rd grade NJASK language arts examination, 2003-04 through 2012-13**



Source: New Jersey Department of Education

**Figure 18. Percent proficiency on the 8rd grade NJASK mathematics examination, 2003-04 through 2012-13**



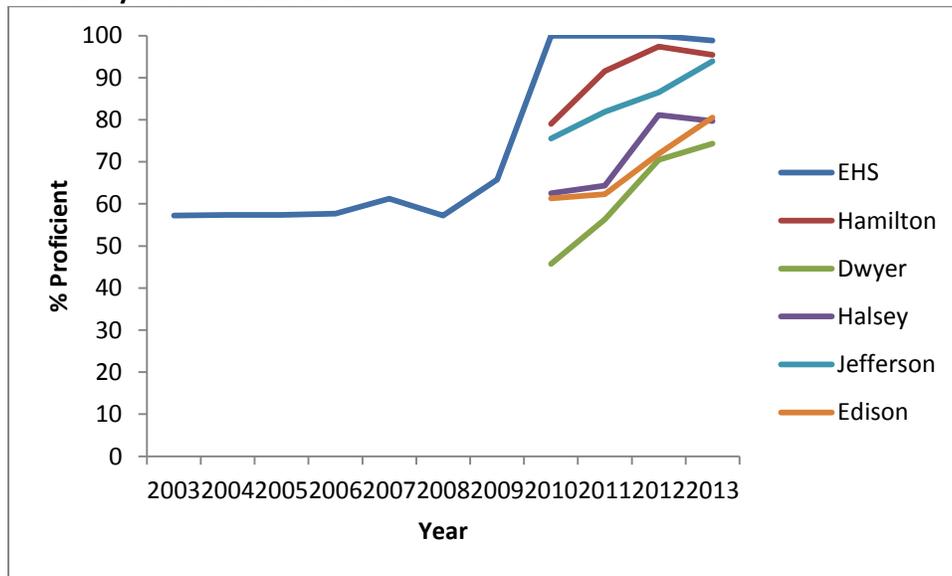
Source: New Jersey Department of Education

In summary, these preliminary analyses provide support for the proposition that ELT has positively influenced elementary school students' language arts and mathematics performance as measured by NJASK.

### 6.2.2 The High Schools

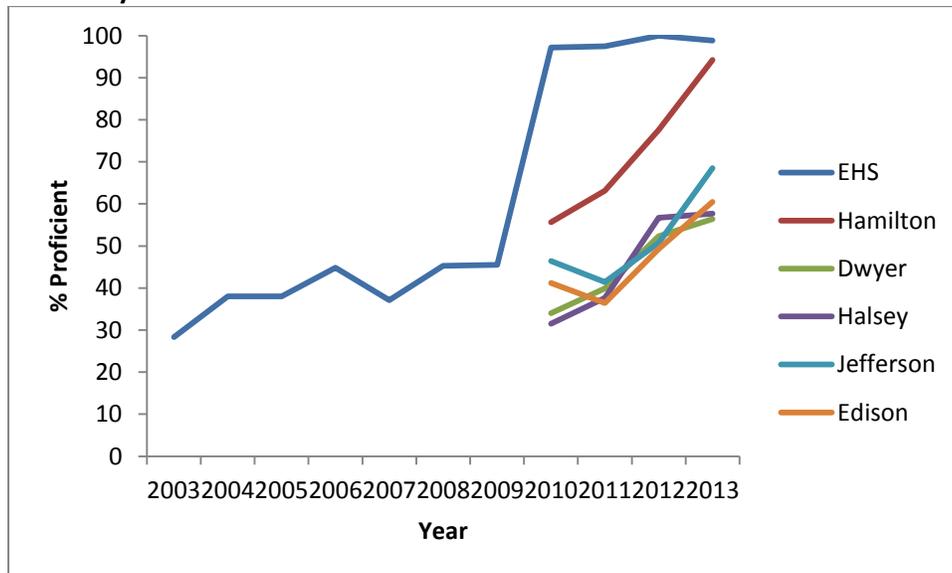
ELT was implemented in the high schools in 2009 when Elizabeth Public High School was split into six high schools. **Figures 19** and **20** show the remarkable improvement in HSPA performance that has occurred at both magnet and non-magnet high schools. **Figure 19** shows steady, substantial improvements in language arts proficiency in the 4 non-magnet high schools.

**Figure 19. Percent of high students scoring “proficient” or better on the language arts portion of the New Jersey HSPA examination**



Source: New Jersey Department of Education

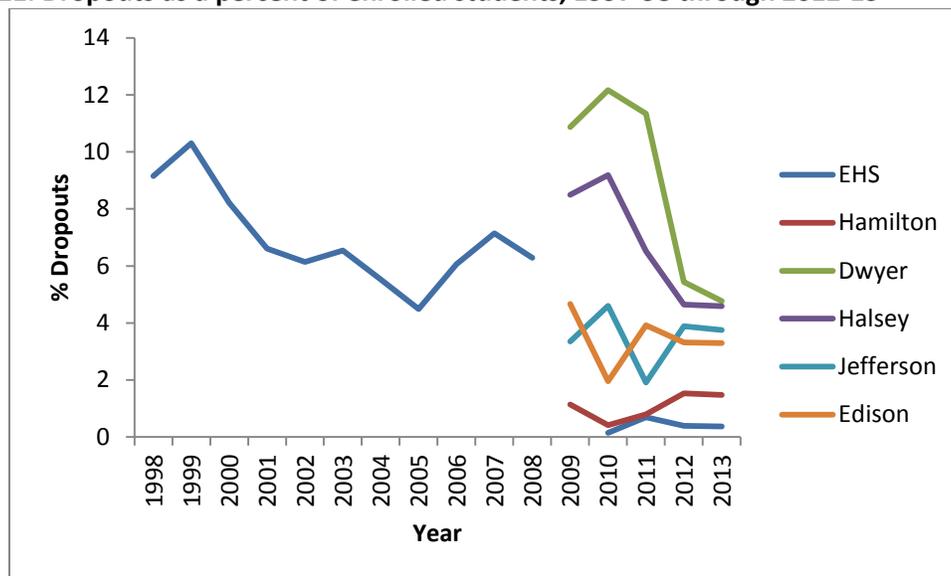
**Figure 20. Percent of high students scoring “proficient” or better on the mathematics portion of the New Jersey HSPA examination**



Source: New Jersey Department of Education

One concern when school districts toughen graduation requirements and implement ELT is the potential for increased rates of dropouts. Indeed, **Figure 5** suggests that increased numbers of students may be dropping out of EPS high schools. However, **Figure 21** shows dropout figures from the New Jersey Department of Education. The figure shows an increase in dropouts that coincided with implementation of ELT in Elizabeth High School in 2006. However, the values suggest an important reduction in rates of high school dropout after Elizabeth High School was split into the six smaller, themed high schools. Indeed, all the high schools (magnet and non-magnet) report lower dropout rates than were seen at Elizabeth High School before the reforms were implemented.<sup>13</sup>

**Figure 21. Dropouts as a percent of enrolled students, 1997-98 through 2012-13**



Source: New Jersey Department of Education

## 7 Interview Data on ELT Implementation

### 7.1 Preliminary Themes, 2013-14

As outlined in **Table 1**, 44 interviews were conducted during the spring of 2014. Audio recorded, and 12 of these have been transcribed to date. However, an analysis of the transcribed qualitative interview data, and impressions formed during the interviews, yield four preliminary themes: 1) “EPS Innovative Programs Outshine Surrounding Suburban Districts;” 2) “The Disconnect Between Centralized

<sup>13</sup> Dropouts are one statistic that can be very misleading, depending on how dropouts are defined and counted. One important future research activity will be to carefully assess dropouts at EPS, using a consistent, rigorous, and explicit definition of dropout status over the several years spanning the implementation of ELT.

Managed Instruction and the Decentralized Aspects of Expanded learning time Can Lead to Inequities;" 3) "The ELT Tension Between 'More [Time] is Better' in the Magnets/G&T and 'Less is More' in the Neighborhood Schools;" and 4) "The High Personal and Financial Costs of ELT Make for an Uncertain Future." We describe these in detail below.

### ***7.1.1 EPS Innovative Programs Outshine Surrounding Suburban Districts, but "Troubled" Schools Exist and Need Support***

Consistently, interview respondents described EPS as being an innovative, rigorous "urban" school district with technology and research-based programs and curriculum and pedagogy that outshine surrounding suburban districts. Interviewees compared Elizabeth to other high performing suburban school districts like Westfield or Cranford, and said they believe EPS is not only more "rigorous" and challenging than their suburban counterparts, but also adopts a more student-centered pedagogy and has a more community feel. A teacher who attended a NJ suburban school district not too long ago replied,

I feel like the kids here are just taught in a completely different way than how I was taught. It was memorization and this is what you do, and you do your dittos. Now it's hands-on and it's discussion and questioning. It's just a lot more student-driven than teacher-driven.

Additionally, one district administrator explained that the district supplements the curriculum and has created quarter benchmarks that are more aligned to NJASK, which "does not always happen in other districts." A bilingual, K-8 teacher said,

I have friends, for example, who live in Westfield, and their kids don't have as much access as our kids do here and that's for sure. We have smart boards in practically all of the buildings now as opposed to when you'd go to Union or Westfield, which are neighboring towns — they don't have all of this availability.

In fact, many of the school policies and programs that were implemented during Superintendent Munoz's tenure, like universal pre-K, ELT, and the gifted/magnet programs are big draws for new families moving into the city. Interviewees explained that families who could afford to leave Elizabeth once did because of the school system, but now they are "climbing the walls" to enroll their children in the district. This is evident by the increasing student enrollment, parochial school closures, and the number of people using false addresses in order to enroll their children in EPS schools. Based on the interviews and school observations, there is also a strong community feeling within the schools with principals, teachers, students and families treated like a school "family." An administrator explained that,

Even the magnet schools become – even though they’re not servicing the neighborhood, the families that attend those schools become their own community within that school—the support that we provide to the families that extends beyond the education and the walls of the school buildings...is a really dynamic thing.

Even though there are more families moving into Elizabeth for the schools, outside perceptions of EPS being “an inner city” school district remain. A fifth grade teacher explained the reputation of Elizabeth schools:

I think when you say Elizabeth, they just think Elizabeth and they think poor and minorities and “Oh my gosh, do you get combat pay?” I mean, I get that a lot. But if they actually came here and saw, their minds would change.

These different conceptions of “urban” versus “suburban” school districts—the different challenges, populations, curriculum and pedagogy, etc.— and how these relate to a respondent’s definition of school and academic success, relates back to the context of neoliberal school policies and conception concerning who needs (and who does not need) the longer day to raise test scores.

A district administrator who has worked in the district a long time remarked:

Elizabeth is an urban district.... We have very, very strong academic programs across the board. We have wonderful after-school programs, summer programs, athletic programs and visual and performing arts, so we are, I think, a strong, urban district. We like to bill ourselves as the #1 urban district in the state, and I believe that we are. So I guess in summation, what I’m saying is we’re an urban district and we do have many of the problems that are endemic—that are common to urban districts. But within that, we do a good job.

*AR:* And when you say “urban district”, what does that mean?

*District Administrator:* Well, ‘urban’ as opposed to ‘suburban’.... We’re a big city. We have a large minority population. We have – I don’t know the exact figure of our kids that are on free or reduced lunch, but it’s very high. And that’s what I mean...

Yet, interviewees lamented that “troubled” EPS schools “that present many of the problems that you would find in a big city” remain troubled by chronically low student achievement. Respondents talked about the same group of schools, located mostly in the Port area, where “the kids aren’t performing as well as they should be, and where we could probably be doing better by those students.” Another district administrator described the situation:

Unfortunately some of the struggling schools are the same schools that were struggling 10 years ago. Despite changing leadership and despite changing the length of the school day and all of the other great things we've done, there are some schools that were still struggling with getting up to par. That's unfortunate because it is something that – if that part hasn't really changed in that long.

Turning around the “problem” schools is a district priority and extra resources and administrator and teacher reassignment is designed to enhance equity. Equity, or as one administrator replied, “making sure that every student is getting the same quality education,” is the biggest challenge for the district moving forward.

### ***7.1.2 The Disconnect Between Centralized Managed Instruction and the Decentralized Aspects of Expanded learning time in Individual Schools Can Lead to Inequities***

When ELT was implemented in the neighborhood schools four years ago, as one teacher stated, it was “just figure it out yourselves.” For many schools, even under the umbrella of centralized MI, which requires the same curriculum and benchmarks in every school, the intervention periods can look very different. Principals are mandated to schedule the two periods of math and ELA intervention, but when and how to structure school schedules is open. Teachers are required to grade students for the intervention period (satisfactory/unsatisfactory), but how students are grouped (except for the lowest group), and what is taught is up to them. As one administrator commented, “managed instruction has given a lot of structure to the district and to what the teachers do in their individual classrooms,” however, since the intervention blocks are not under MI, teachers and principals are sometimes unclear about how to use ELT effectively. Similar to the previous problems of site-based management in individual school buildings, some schools execute the intervention blocks well and others do not. An administrator explained:

“It [the interventions] really depends on the classroom teacher and it depends who you have teaching the intervention block, really, what it looks like. I think if you were to go into a nice healthy sampling of classrooms across the district, you would see some very meaningful things going on. You would probably see some wasted time also, and about everything in between. So I think we're all over the place with the intervention period, to be honest with you.”

Thus, each neighborhood school building and even individual teachers across the hall from one another can implement the two intervention periods differently. We heard that one school in particular has seen tremendous growth in student achievement because the principal groups students for interventions. Grouping is based on test score reports that analyze NJASK and/or Terra Nova skill clusters and teacher strengths. In other neighborhood schools, the teachers use benchmark and test score data to group the students themselves. Some teachers use the intervention period as an extension of the 90-minute math or ELA block, “essentially

a study hall,” which is not allowed by EPS policy. Some schools have K-3 interventionists who can pull students out and reinforce reading and comprehension skills with the Read 180 program during intervention. In other schools, the classroom teacher is the “interventionist” and might not have access to Read 180 because of technology issues or problems with licenses. Most schools, though, schedule interventions by grade level, so students can be grouped based on skill level –low, medium and high –and are able to move among grade level teachers.

Thus, we found the biggest difference between schools is the staffing of the intervention periods, scheduling the interventions, and the types of intervention programs/technology available at each school. A couple of schools schedule interventions first and last period in order to utilize all specialty teachers, e.g. the physical education teacher or music teacher, to teach small group interventions. As one administrator explained:

Each school schedules it [intervention] differently. It’s tied into being able to staff it, because if you’re truly providing the interventions the way that the kids need it then the kids are actually being broken up and going to different teachers so that you can really address the needs of the children. Some schools have had more success in being able to schedule that than others, but some do their intervention periods early on in the day, some of them have them later in the day and some, you know, are in the middle whenever they can fit them in.

One thing most respondents would change about ELT is being able to staff the intervention periods appropriately, which magnets can do because they have more staff available.

### ***7.1.3 The ELT Tension Between “More [Time] is Better” in the Magnets/G&T, and “Less is More” in the Neighborhood Schools***

There is a consensus among district-level and school-level staff that if “instruction isn’t where it needs to be, extended day is just extended time with poor instruction.” In other words, ELT needs to not only be more time, but quality time in terms of intervention *and enrichment*. Many respondents believed the main disadvantage of ELT is the lack of enrichment programming in the neighborhood schools as compared to magnet and G&T schools. This is especially true for students who do not need interventions.

In the neighborhood schools, teachers and principals spoke of a need to schedule more “down time” during the day with additional time for recess, study hall, and/or electives so students have a mental break from academics and are able to socialize more. Teachers said that by 2:30 or 3 pm students are tired, and the focus becomes more about keeping them engaged and on task rather than on learning, especially for the Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade students. The last two periods are the hardest ones to teach because students are mentally drained. In fact, most administrators and school-level staff would like to see the ELT be “more well rounded” in the

neighborhood schools instead of being “more of the same math and Language Arts time.”

In the neighborhood schools, where two intervention periods were added, administrators, principals and teachers raise the issue of quantity vs. quality. For example, many teachers were “torn” about whether the benefits of ELT outweigh the negatives. When asked what impact ELT has had on the school experience, one teacher responded: “It’s a long day. At about 3:00, the students are done and they are looking at the clock just like the teachers are, especially during the summer months when it’s hot and they’ve had enough. They’ve had enough. I don’t know how helpful it is. I don’t know. I’m torn.” This teacher went on to explain that the advantages of the ELT programming are the intervention periods with small groups that you can differentiate instruction, whereas the negatives are the students getting “tired and lazy” and “behavior problems arise also.” The majority of teachers stated that they were happy that the ELT would be shorter for the next school year. As for whether ELT will still be at EPS in the future, a neighborhood school principal said:

I would think so, yes. Quite frankly, I was surprised that we're cutting it already, but I understand for budget constraints. I would think that we would definitely see it and maybe this extended for the 45, not the 90, might be the perfect marriage of it all. It seems like it's very doable for the professionals as well as timeframe for a student, particularly a younger one.

One administrator asked, “What does an extended day look like where it doesn’t look like more school?” The answer to that question is the ELT programming at the magnet and G&T schools. Specifically, magnet and G&T schools use the extra time for electives, not “test prep” or “more of the same,” so students are not just doing core academic subjects all day. For magnet/G&T students, more time is better for them because they are expanding the curriculum to take new and exciting courses such as Mandarin Chinese or Dance. The longer day for them is beneficial because students learn how to play an instrument or do an experiment. Students are not sitting at their desks all day doing more of the same math and ELA work. In other words, magnet and G&T schools seem to balance the academic support and enrichment time well. When asked if teachers could make the intervention periods more enriching, since those periods are not under MI, one neighborhood school teacher replied: “Not really. You’re just so scheduled. They could tell you ‘At 12:30 we start this, at 9:00 we start this.’ There’s really no freedom in that way.”

The other benefit for magnet school teachers of having more electives during the day is that teachers have more planning time with other grade level teachers. The opposite is true at the neighborhood schools. Since the contracted school day is longer, neighborhood teachers said they do not have the planning time that they used to have, especially before and after school because the school day starts earlier and ends later. Also, during lunch-time and specialty periods—the only two planning periods neighborhood teachers have, they are often required to attend school-level or professional development meetings instead. Therefore, what we heard is that most planning time and grading gets done at home.

#### **7.1.4 High Personal and Financial Costs of ELT Make for an Uncertain Future**

While respondents cited numerous advantages to having ELT (e.g. keeping students safe and off the streets), the biggest criticism of ELT programming is the length of the school day is too long for both teachers and students. Students arrive to school at 7 am for breakfast and leave at 4 pm; students staying for the extended day program do not leave until 5 pm. Teachers are concerned because if they live outside of the district they must find before and aftercare for their own children who do not begin school until 8:30 am. Principals also said the longer day affects teacher attendance because teachers need to time take off for doctor's appointments, etc. In sum, there is a personal cost for teachers and families because of the longer school day in terms of childcare, commute, health and well-being, and homework time in the evening.

There are financial costs for the district as well. The biggest monetary cost of ELT is due to K-8 teacher salaries –high school teachers, on the other hand, work a regular school day in one of three shifts. Hence, due to budget cuts amounting to \$60 million dollars for the upcoming school year 2014-15, the district and school board decided to reduce the length of the ELT day instead of raising taxes, as was done the year before to maintain ELT. As a result, next year's ELT program in all K-8 schools will run from 7:45 am – 3:15 instead of 7:30 am-3:45pm.

As one district administrator explained when asked about the future of ELT:

“I don't know how it's going to get funded unless we get more money from the state. I don't know how the teachers are going to get paid their salaries, because their salaries increase year to year. So I don't know. Unless we make some major drastic cuts elsewhere, I can't see them being able to fund it year after year.”

Therefore, the future sustainability of ELT is uncertain unless the district finds new ways to leverage funding for the program.

## **8 Conclusions and Discussion**

Elizabeth Public Schools is an urban school district that is characterized by a growing reputation, innovative programs, and a rapidly increasing student population. Under the leadership of former Superintendent Pablo Munoz and the current Superintendent, Olga Hugelmeyer, the district's focus has been and remains to provide a high quality education to every child, making sure that each student has the same access to quality teachers, curriculum, and resources. Through such programs as MI, ELT, universal Pre-K, and after school tutoring, the district is attempting to narrow the achievement gap among students attending different schools across the city.

Our analyses show that EPS on average is very high performing as compared with other low income, urban school districts in New Jersey. Since the splitting of Elizabeth High School into 6 smaller academies in 2009, rates of proficiency on the New Jersey HSPA examination have increased dramatically. Additionally, drop-out rates appear to have dropped at all high schools. Our NJASK analyses suggest that ELT has positively influenced language arts and mathematics proficiency in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. For younger grades, the picture is less clear. There is some sign that mathematics performance has improved among 5<sup>th</sup> graders, while 3<sup>rd</sup> grade language arts proficiency may have improved. Future analyses should provide a much better characterization of academic performance in the district as it related to ELT and other reforms.

Yet, as district administrators admit, there is still work that needs to be done to realize the district's goals of academic excellence and equity. Some chronically struggling schools seem little affected by the different school reforms that have been implemented. Again, future analyses will provide a better characterization of who may benefit from ELT and who may not.

In terms of the implementation of ELT and equity, we found variations in the staffing, and the resources/technology that are available among schools and the scheduling of ELT. Given the results in this report, we have the following recommendations:

- Provide adequate staffing in each school to teach the math and language arts intervention periods with small student groups.
- Share best practices on how to schedule the intervention periods and how to utilize all available staff.
- Make sure each school is provided with (and has access to) the intervention programs, materials and curriculum to ensure success across schools and grade levels.
- Add more enrichment activities to the curriculum in the neighborhood schools (i.e. project based learning, electives, clubs, etc.) like they have in the magnets and G&T schools. This would also allow for an additional period of teacher planning time.
- Find new ways to leverage funds to sustain the ELT program for the next five years.
- Continue redistricting school boundary lines in order to curtail overcrowding, especially in the Port schools.

In coming years, we will be able to provide much greater detail concerning the variability in the implementation of ELT in the Elizabeth Public Schools and the influence of ELT interventions on student academic performance. We will also be able to provide the district with more nuanced, and detailed recommendations concerning what seems to work and what does not when it comes to ELT in Elizabeth.

## 9 Appendix A. Elizabeth Benchmarks/Tasks Completed, 2013-2014

### Benchmarks/Tasks Completed:

- Attended research planning meetings with EPS Directors, Superintendent and Ed Strategies
- Completed IRB application and received Rutgers IRB approval
- Scheduled meetings with Data Analysts and Instructional Technology Department at EPS
- Asked for and received extensive EPS student-level data from the district
- Collected EPS artifacts and documents online and through EPS respondents, including newspaper articles, EPS newsletters and school application materials, Broad Foundation training manual and notes on MI, sample teacher schedules across the different school types, NCTL report on financing ELT (see Kaplan et al., 2014), power points on math and ELA interventions, timelines of education reforms, etc.
- Conducted 44 qualitative interviews and 7 focus groups
- Attended debrief meetings with Ed Strategies and EPS
- Wrote Preliminary Findings Report for the Ford Foundation, August 2014

## 10 Appendix B. Interview protocol for expanded learning time in Elizabeth Public Schools study for district officials, school leaders, teachers, and parents

For all respondents: Introduction, IRB consent form signed, consent form for audio recording signed, give a copy of the project description...

**Brief Project Description:** This study explores the policy evolution of expanded learning time (ELT) in Elizabeth Public Schools (EPS), how district officials, school leaders, teachers, and parents make sense of and interact with the policy changes in their schools, and what ELT's effects have been on student outcomes over time. We hope to better understand the relationship between schools as social, cultural and political spaces and the educational opportunities available to children in Elizabeth, as well as how the ELT initiative fits into the larger school reform agenda. The school district and schools included in this study will be confidential and thus will not be named or identified in our research. The initial interviews will last about 60 minutes, and the follow-up interview, if necessary, will be approximately 30-60 minutes.

### I. Introduction:

1. Can you please tell us your name, title, how long you have worked in your current position, and experience in education? [For parents, how long have you lived in your current residence (and Elizabeth) and why did you move to Elizabeth?]
2. How did you come to work as a [Job Title]? Briefly describe what your job entails.  
Probe: How long have you been in the district?  
Probe: How did they end up their current position and why? (e.g. why administration from teaching, if applicable)
3. How would you describe EPS to someone who isn't familiar with the district, schools or programs in this district?  
Probe: Racial/Ethnic and SES diversity, Programs, Reputation, Comparable school districts, Test scores, parent involvement?

### II. School Reform in EPS

1. What is the biggest issue or concern facing EPS today and how is that different than 10-15 years ago? Explain. How has the district responded (or not responded) to this issue or concern?
2. Have you ever heard of Managed Instruction, and if so, how does it relate to other programs/policies in this district, like Instructional Rounds or ELT?  
Probe: Has it been adopted by teachers? How were teachers and administrators trained?

### III. ELT Policy

1. Briefly describe the ELT initiative in Elizabeth.
2. What are the advantages or disadvantages of having an ELT program at every school? Do you believe that the ELT program benefits the whole school district or is it more beneficial in certain schools? Why or why not?  
Probe: Is ELT programming the same in every school? If not, how is it different?
3. If you had the chance, what things would you change about the ELT program to make it more successful in all schools?

#### IV. Response to ELT

1. What has been the general response to ELT? If there are concerns or criticisms how has the district responded to them?  
Probe: Principal, teachers, parent, community response?
2. To what extent do you think *the teachers* in the school embrace or resist the changes you described before (in terms of ELT)?  
Probe: Hiring policies related to this
3. To what extent do you think *EPS parents* embrace or resist these changes?
4. How has ELT or other district-wide policies changed the culture of the district, school, or classroom?  
Probe: Teacher and principal accountability, language, testing, interventions, etc.
5. Do you think ELT will still be here in the future? Why or why not?  
Probe: Funding issues, Leadership changes, political support, etc.

#### V. Parent Involvement/ School Choice

1. Describe the different neighborhoods and schools in Elizabeth?  
Probe: Are there distinctions between schools/programs in this district? Which schools have had success with ELT and which have not? Explain.  
Probe: Racial/Ethnic and SES diversity, Program type (G&T, Magnet, IB, Pre-K, Dual Lang), Leadership, Teachers, Reputation, marketing of schools, etc.
2. Briefly describe the school choice options at EPS? How many parents participate in school choice and where do they get information about their school options?  
Probe: Wait lists, less desirable schools, neighborhood school boundary shifts, dropped middle schools and made all schools K-8  
Probe: In which neighborhoods and schools do parents prefer to live and send their children to school? Why?
3. How could the district expand access to high quality schools (including preschools), and reduce the disparities between student outcomes and high achieving and low achieving school options?

#### VI. Conclusion

1. Who would you recommend we talk to next about ELT planning and implementation?
2. If we were to study three or four schools that have been successful or less successful in implementing some of these policies, which ones should we

study and why?

3. Are there any questions that we should have asked that we didn't ask? Is there anything else you want to add?

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