

# **The Comer School Development Program**

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School Development Program**

# What is the Comer School Development Program?

- The use of child and adolescent development as the foundation for
  - School organizational structure
  - Classroom management
  - Curriculum, instruction and assessment

# History

- Developed 35 years ago by Dr. James P. Comer and colleagues at the Yale Child Study Center through working with three of the lowest achieving schools in New Haven.
- Is currently in about 35 districts and 400 schools.

# Vision

Our vision is to help create a just and fair society in which all children have the educational and personal opportunities that will allow them to become successful and satisfied participants in family and civic life.

# Mission

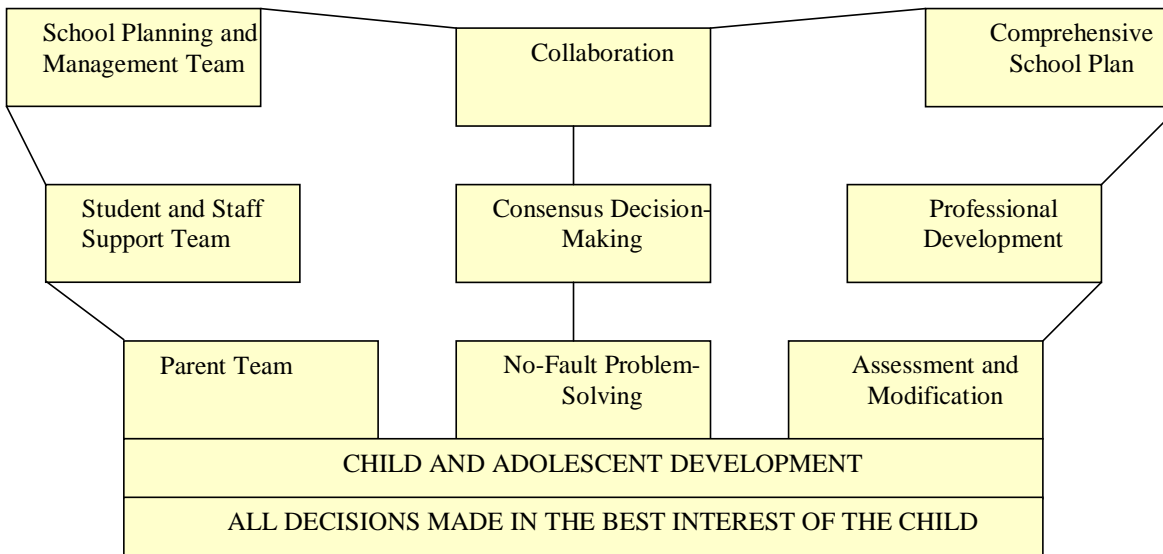
The School Development Program is committed to the total development of all children by creating learning environments that support children's physical, cognitive, psychological, language, social and ethical development.

# Basic Elements

Three Teams

Three Guiding Principles

Three Operations



# Key Players

- **Board of Education**
- **The superintendent**
- **The SDP Implementation Coordinator**
- **The District Facilitator**
- **The principal and school staff**

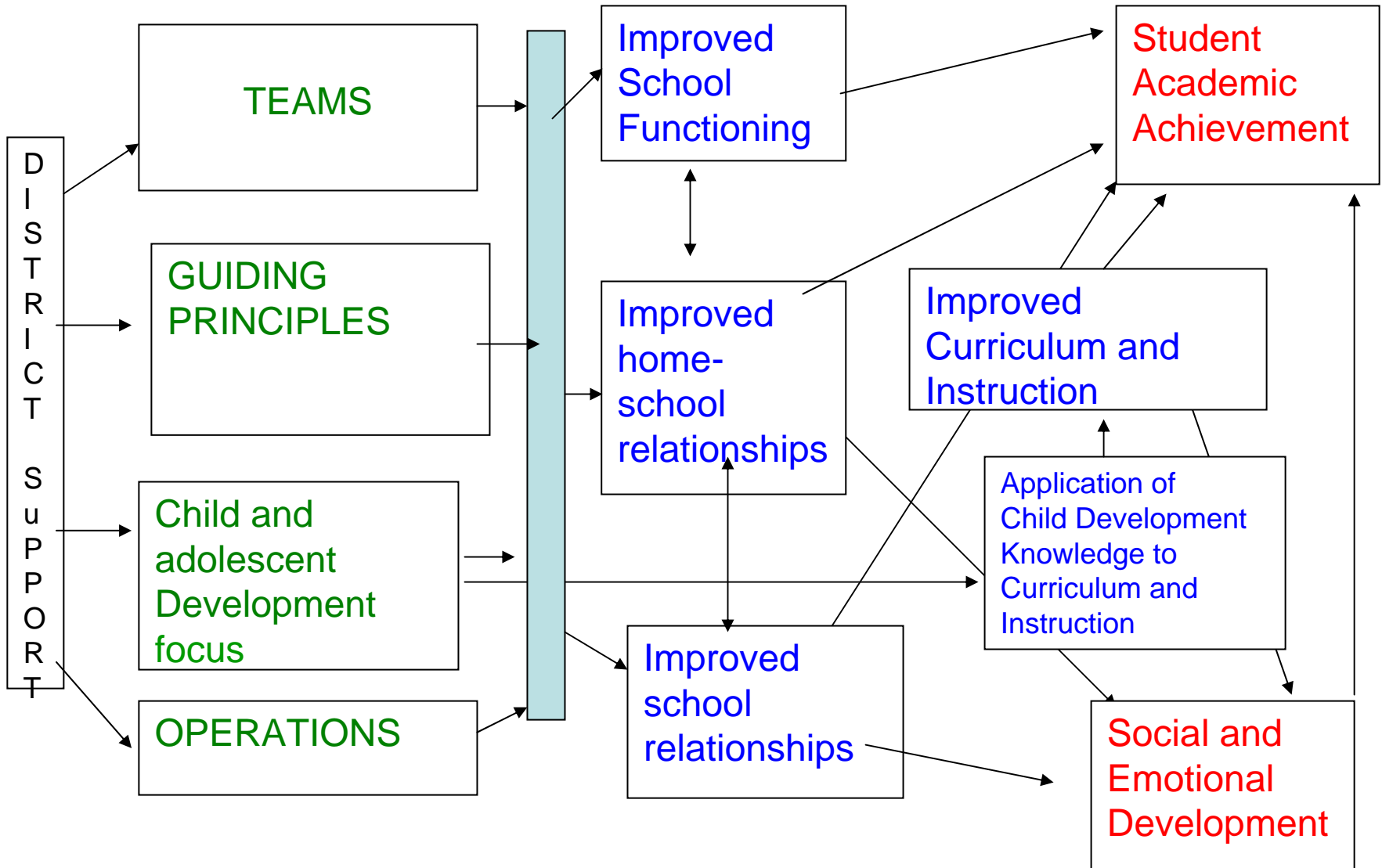
What is the SDP's Evaluation  
Process?



# SDP's Program Evaluation Process

- Is congruent with Program philosophy
- integrates both program theory and implementation theory in its design (Weiss, 1997).
- is participatory in approach
- It expands the scope and use of evaluation (Caracelli & Preskill, 2000).

# SDP's Implementation Theory



# Main Research Questions

- What are the characteristics of the district with which the SDP is about to enter into partnership?
- To what extent is the Comer Process being implemented?
- What is the impact of implementation?

# Measures

- **Implementation**
  - *School Implementation Questionnaire*
  - *Process Documentation Inventory*
  - Individual interviews and Focus groups
  - Observation
- **School Climate**
  - Student, staff and parent surveys
- **Student achievement**
  - State and City tests

What Have We Learned?

# What We Have Learned

- School reform is not for the faint of heart.
- District support is critical for faithful replication.
- Walking the talk: the importance of strong leadership at all levels
- The district/school needs a coach and cheerleader.

# What We Have Learned

- Too frequent change makes people change resistant. Systemic reform is for the long term.
- Systemic reform requires movement out of your comfort zone.
- Knowledge of the process is critical: Participants need to attend professional development sessions.

# What We Have Learned

- Quality of implementation varies across school and district.
- Federal, state and local policies have an impact on implementation.
- The guiding principles, particularly no-fault, are critical for creating a psychologically safe environment, a critical condition for creating change.



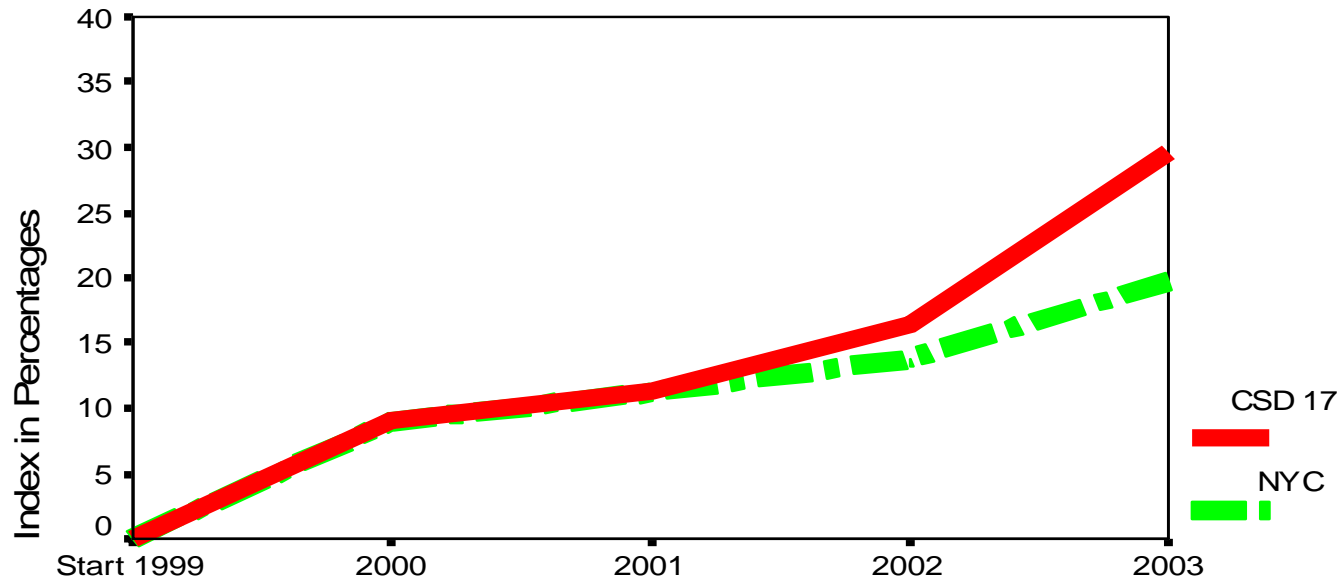
# What We Have Learned

- **Getting the real deal: the importance of side-bars**
- **Evaluate. In other words, assess and modify. Positive results feed the process.**
- **Need for stability and continuity: smooth transitions**
- **Unwillingness to give up**
- **Getting students involved in understanding the process and the practice of the principles.**

# Selected Results

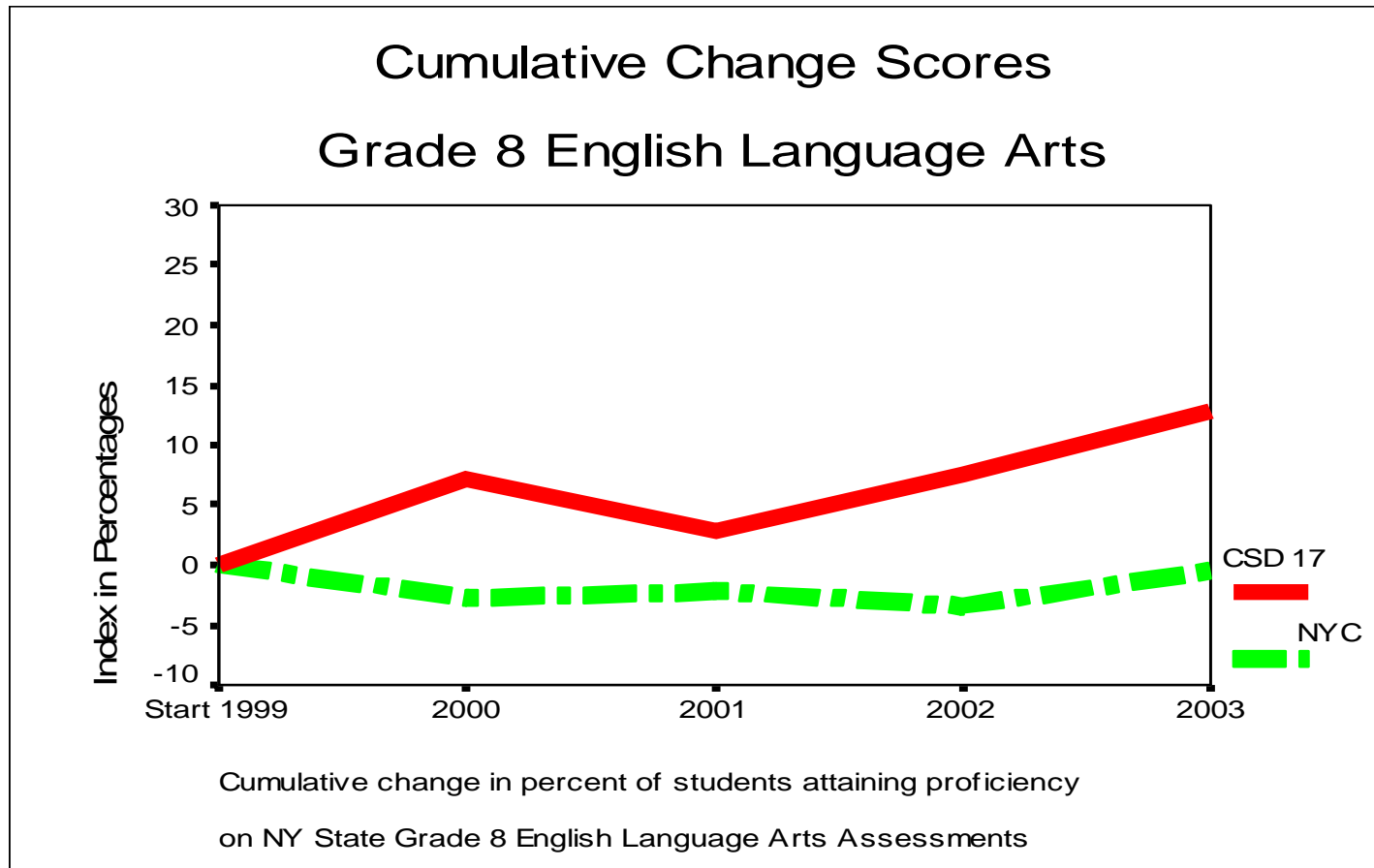
# Community School District 17, NYC

## Cumulative Change Scores Grade 4 English Language Arts

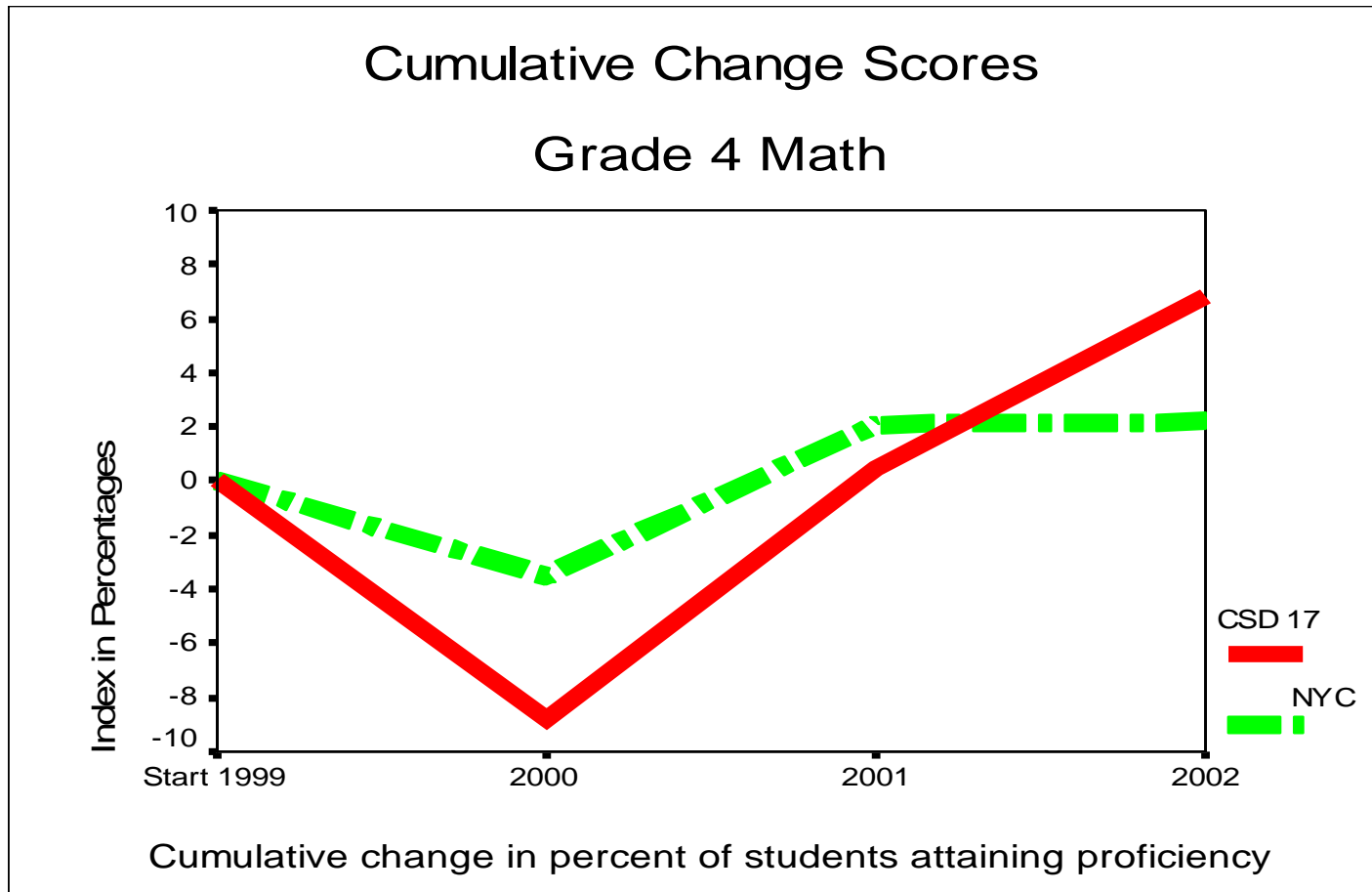


Cumulative change in percent of students attaining proficiency  
on NY State Grade 4 English Language Arts Assessment

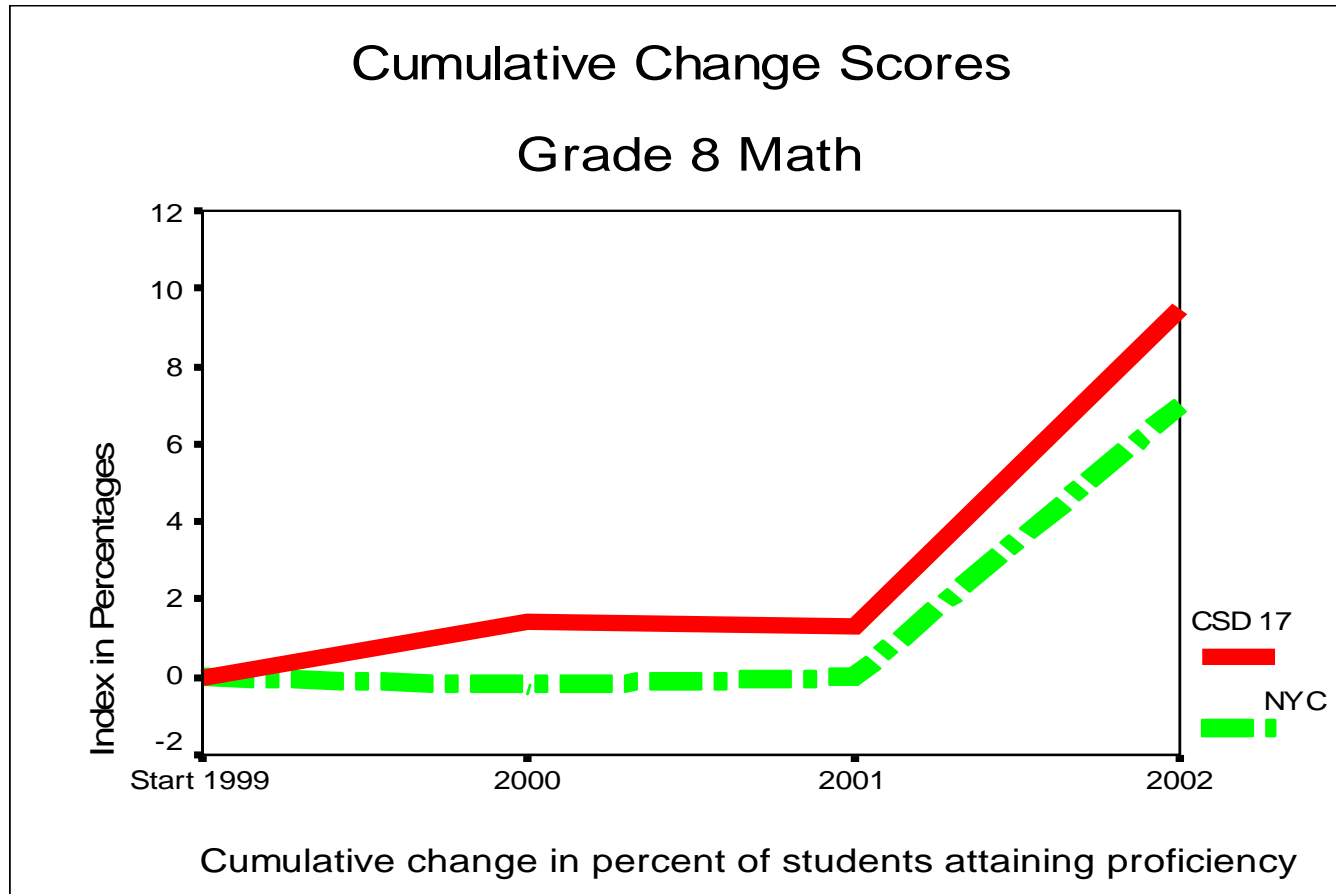
# Community School District 17, NYC



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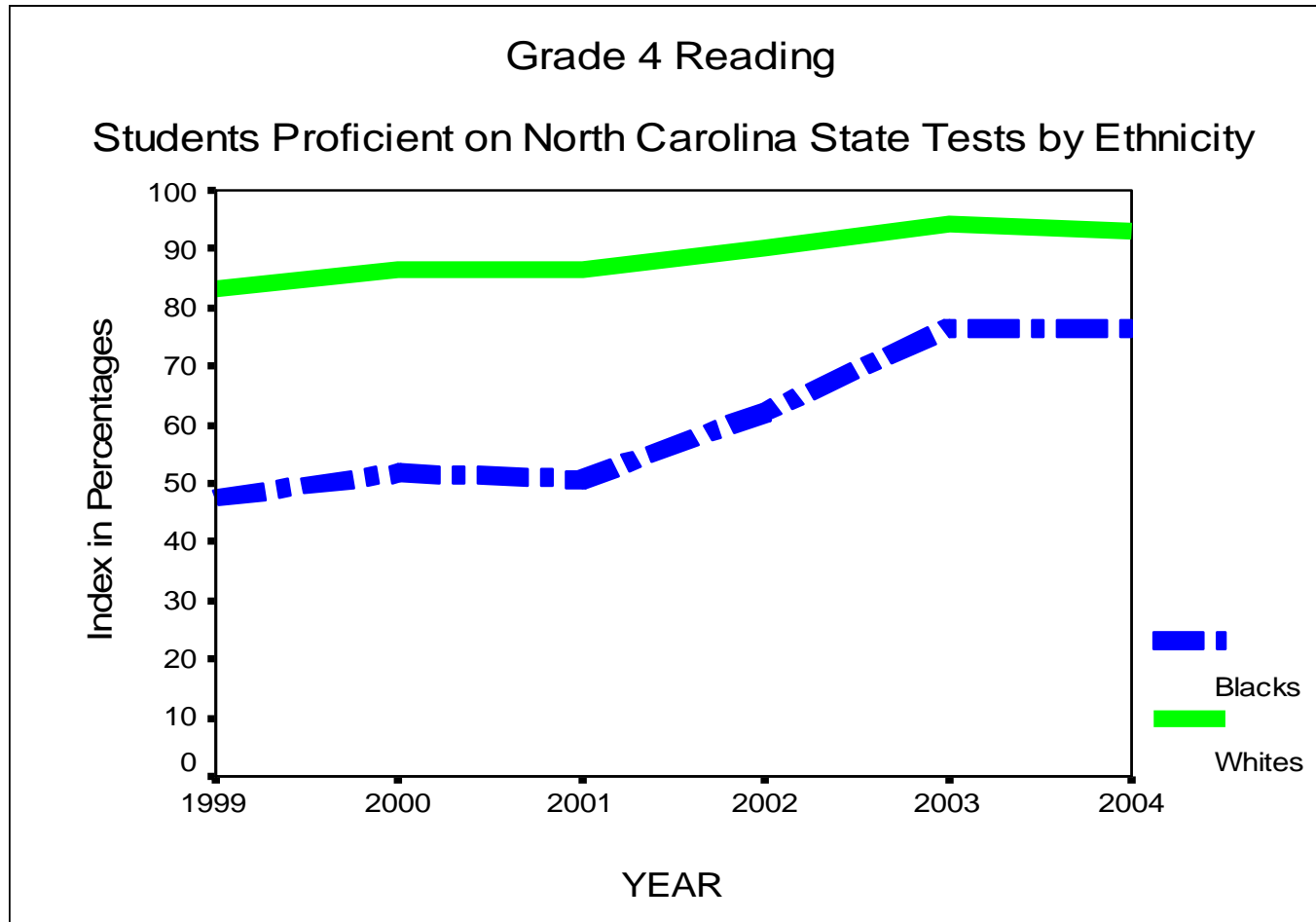


# Asheville City Schools

## Asheville, North Carolina

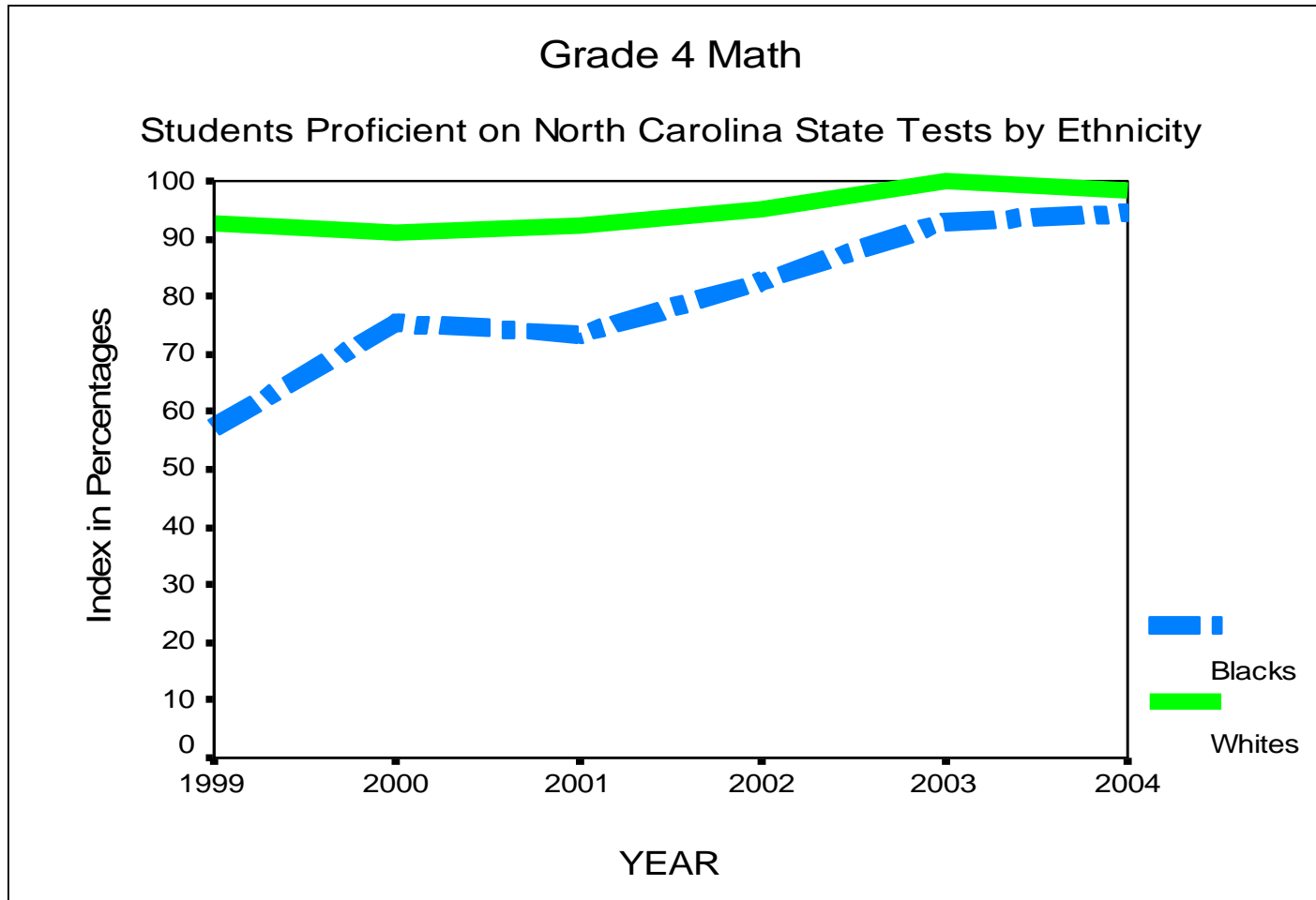
- The first year (1998-1999) of data given is the year prior to any implementation of the Comer School Development Program or Comer Process in Asheville City Schools.
- In 1999-2000, one elementary school began the Comer Process.
- In 2000-2001, Asheville City Schools began the systemic implementation of the Comer Process.
- Note the rapid closing of the achievement gap between Blacks and Whites from 2001 to 2004.

# Asheville City Schools Asheville, North Carolina

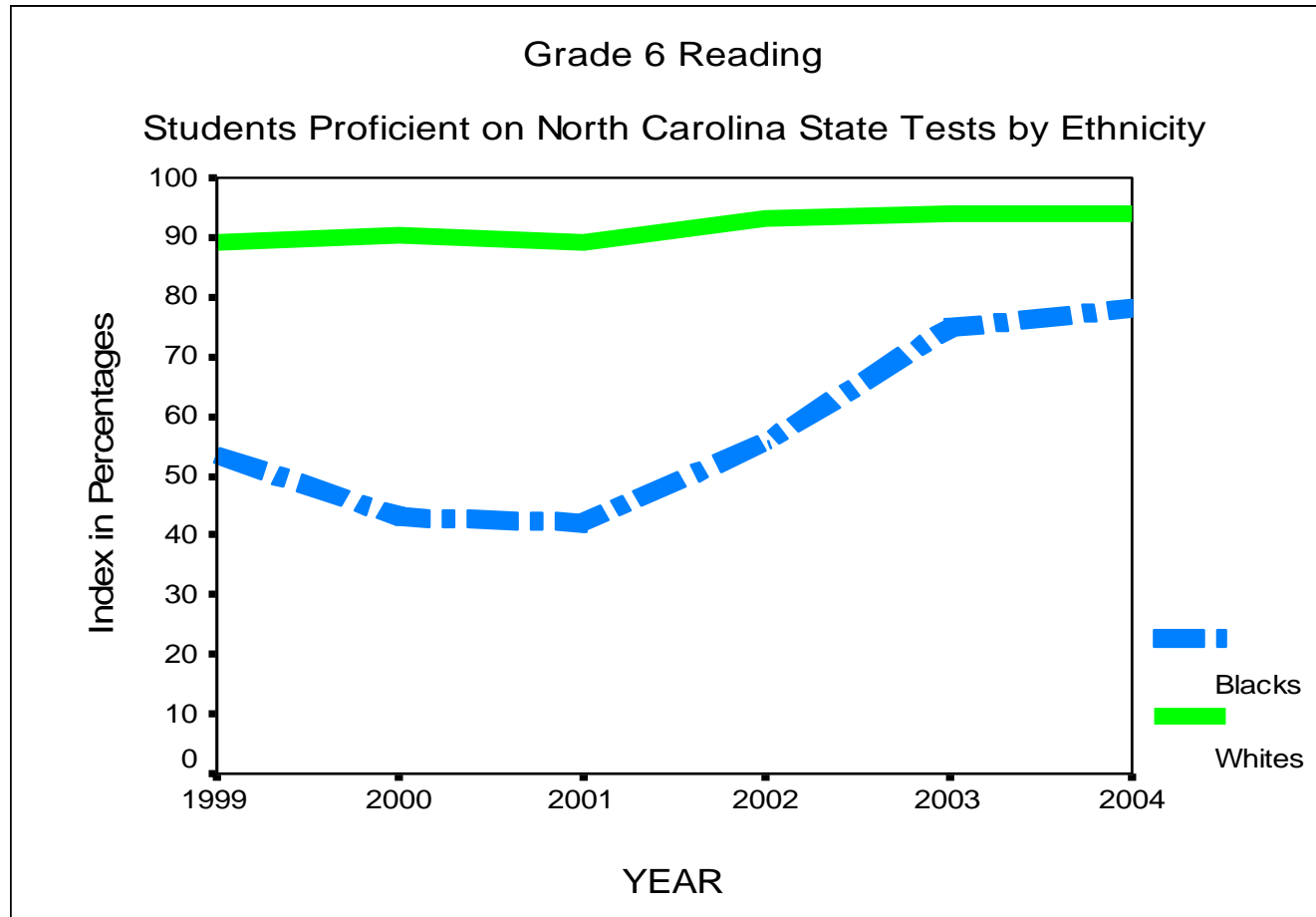




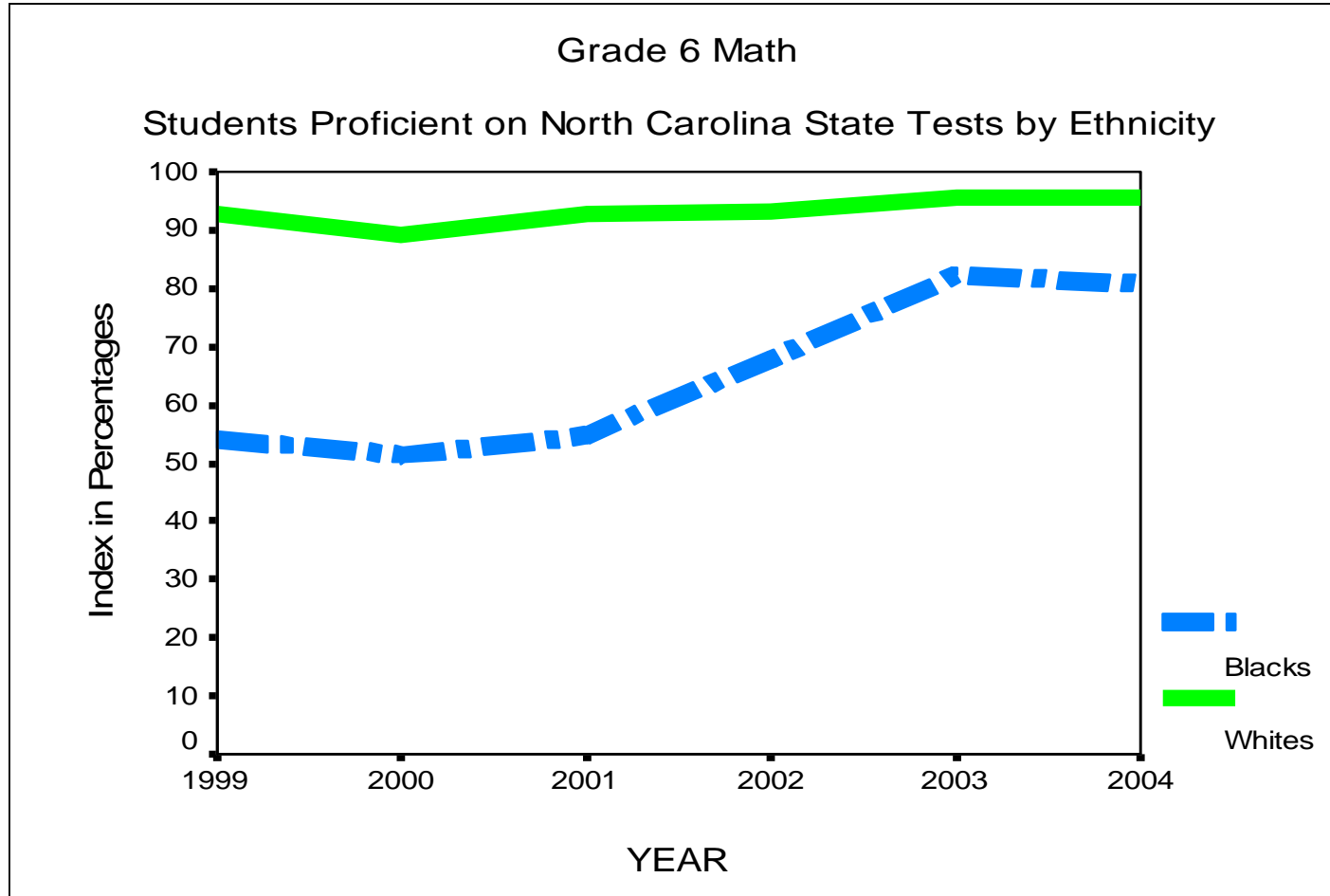
# Asheville City Schools Asheville, North Carolina



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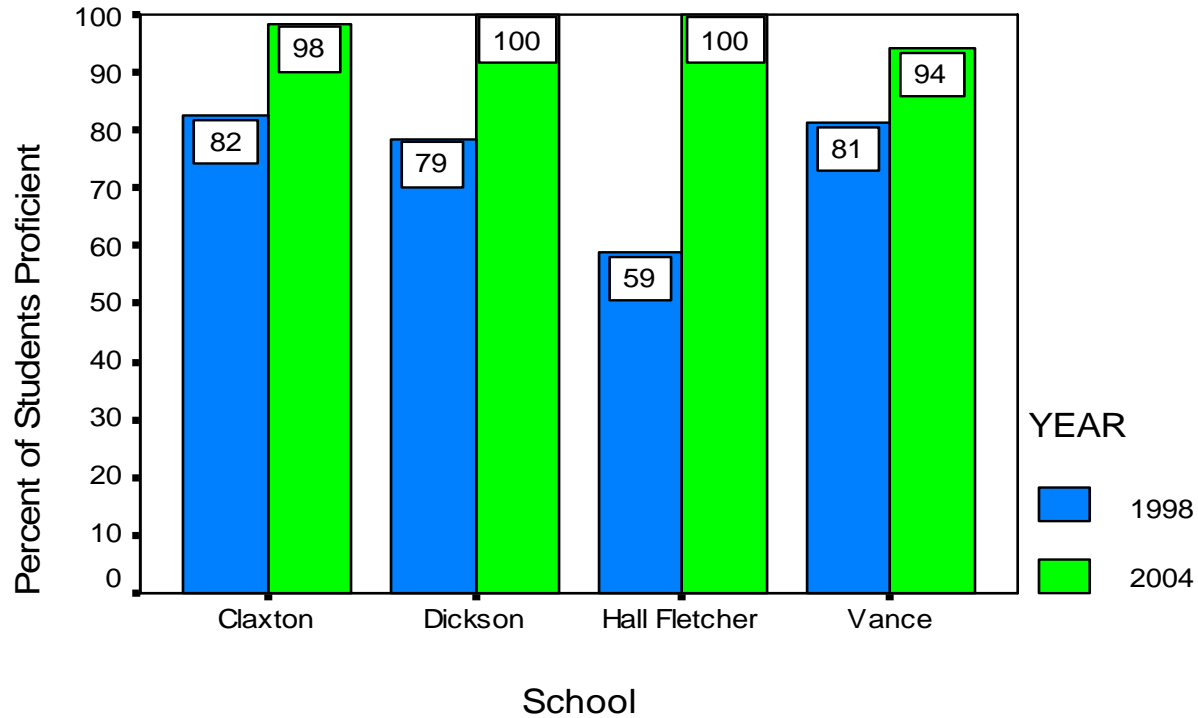
# Asheville City Schools Asheville, North Carolina



# Asheville City Schools Asheville, North Carolina

Percent of Grade 5 Students

Proficient in Reading by School, 1998 and 2004



# Asheville City Schools Asheville, North Carolina

