



# RESEARCH BRIEF

## Research Services

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## Readiness for College

### The Performance of M-DCPS Students on the Common Placement Test

#### At A Glance

*This Brief examines the performance of M-DCPS students on the Florida College Entry-Level Placement Test which is administered to entering freshmen in Florida colleges and universities. A smaller proportion of M-DCPS graduates were considered "ready" in all three content areas included on the test (i.e., mathematics, reading, and writing). However, the performance deficits were reduced when weighting the performance of the racial/ethnic groups in the district to reflect the proportion in the state.*

#### Introduction

##### Remedial Cutoff Scores for 2003

###### CPT

Elementary Algebra	72
Reading	83
Sentence Skills	83

###### SAT-I

Verbal	440
Math	440

###### ACT

Reading	18
English	17
Math	19

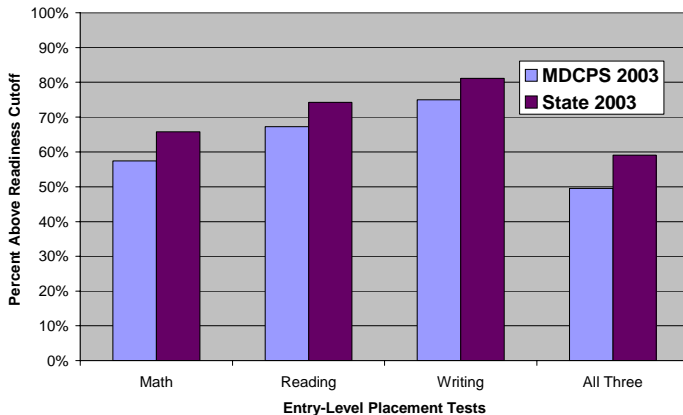
Every year the State provides reports to districts and high schools on their graduates' performance on entry-level placement tests at Florida public community colleges and state universities. All entering freshmen must demonstrate certain basic skills before beginning college-level courses. Students who meet minimum standards on the elementary Algebra, Reading Comprehension, and Sentence Skills portions of the Florida College Entry-Level Placement Test (FCELPT), also known as the Common Placement Test (CPT) are considered 'ready' for college-level math, reading, and writing, respectively. Students may be exempted from these tests if they score high enough on the SAT or ACT. Students who test below the cutoff score for an area are required to enroll in remedial coursework.

The students represented in this report are not a random sample of all Florida high school graduates nor a random sample of all M-DCPS graduates. This report focuses on the test results for students who:

- graduated during the 2002-03 school year with a standard diploma from a Florida High School  
*and*
- entered a Florida public university or community college as degree-seeking students in 2003.

These students represent roughly half of the 2002-03 graduates in Florida and a little more than half of the M-DCPS graduates. The report **does not include**: graduates who do not go to college, graduates who attend private or out-of-state colleges, transfer students, casual or non-degree-seeking students, students who take time off between high school and college, GED or non-standard diploma recipients, and private high school graduates.

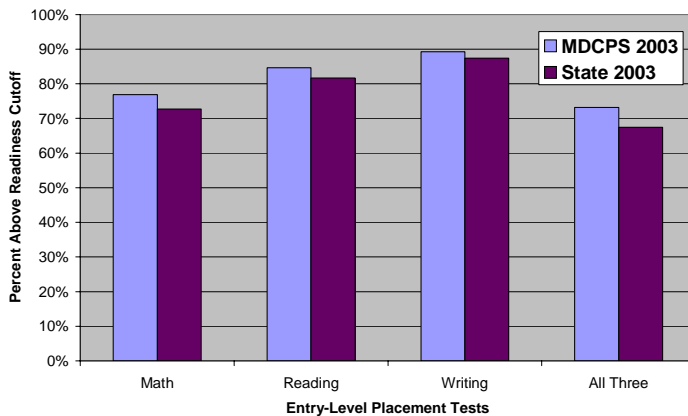
### Readiness for College -- Overall



### Overall Comparisons

In comparisons of M-DCPS students with those of the whole state, it appears that graduates from our district were proportionately less likely to pass the tests. Approximately 9% less M-DCPS students were considered “ready” in all three content areas. Percentage differences on individual tests were somewhat less, but consistent across the tests.

### Readiness for College -- White Non-Hispanic

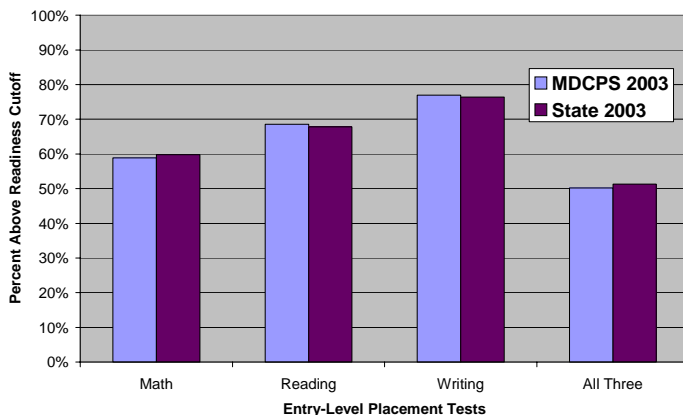


### Race/Ethnicity Comparisons

The major race/ethnic groups had different success rates on the tests, with White students passing at a higher rate than Hispanic students, who in turn passed at a higher rate than Black students. The reasons for these racial/ethnic differences are multifaceted and not well understood. These differences are not a phenomenon of Miami-Dade alone — the same relative differences between racial/ethnic groups are observed throughout the state.

When we first break down the students into their respective racial/ethnic groups and then compare M-DCPS graduates to those of the whole state, new relationships are revealed.

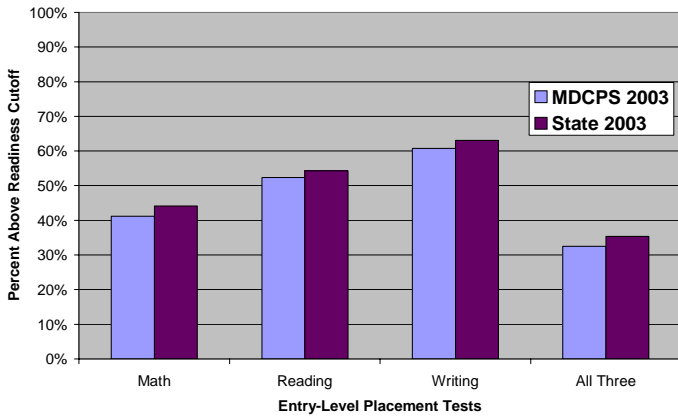
### Readiness for College -- Hispanic



Among **White Non-Hispanic** students, M-DCPS graduates outperform those of the whole state. On individual tests, the differences are 3 or 4 percentage points. Approximately 5% more M-DCPS graduates passed all three tests than did the students of the whole state.

For **Hispanic** students, the percentages passing the tests are about the same between M-DCPS graduates and those from the whole state. The differences are only about 1%, with M-DCPS graduates exceeding the state as a whole in Reading and Writing.

### Readiness for College -- Black Non-Hispanic



**Black Non-Hispanic** students from M-DCPS scored only slightly less well than did the Black students in the whole state. The difference was only 2 percentage points on passing all three tests.

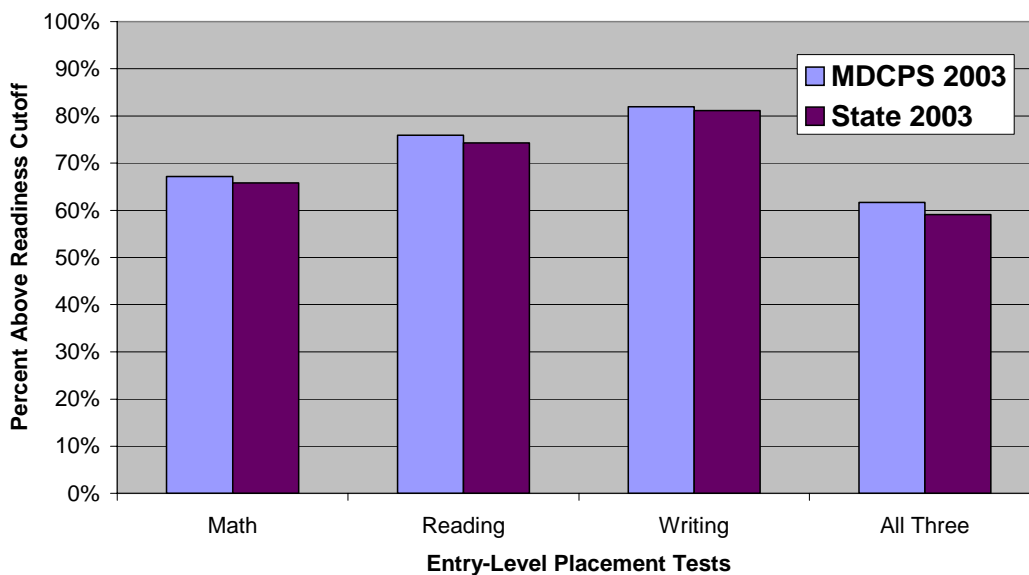
### Weighting by Ethnicity

At first, it may seem difficult to understand how the district results can appear to be lower than the state as a whole when the district performs almost equal to if not better within each racial/ethnic group. The explanation lies in the differences in relative proportions of racial/ethnic groups in the district versus the

relative proportions in the state. With White, non-Hispanic students outperforming Black, non-Hispanic students and the district having a lower proportion of White students and greater proportion of Black students, the overall comparisons make the academic skills of M-DCPS students appear less well developed than students throughout the state.

However, it is possible to weight the performance of the racial/ethnic groups in the district to reflect the proportions in the state. In effect, we are asking “What would the District look like if we had the same distribution of racial/ethnic groups as is observed in the entire State?” When we make these adjustments, and then look at the weighted overall comparisons, we see in the graph below that the district now appears to be outperforming the state as a whole on each subtest of the Common Placement Tests. In fact, when regarding the passing rates for all three tests, approximately 3% more of the M-DCPS graduates than state graduates would be deemed “ready” for college-level courses by these standards.

### Readiness for College -- Weighted by Ethnicity



## **Conclusion and Implications**

The findings reviewed in this Research Brief lend further support to the secondary school reform initiatives currently being implemented in the district. It is imperative that we improve the preparation for college, careers, and responsible civic participation of our high school graduates. As part of this preparation, it is clear that more programs should be designed for students that are well aligned to the core learning principles of the research-based framework, including small learning communities, career academies, and high expectations for every student. The findings also suggest that more collaborative parent and community outreach efforts are needed given the disparity in performance of students from different racial/ethnic backgrounds. Particular emphasis should be given to historically under-served students, families, and communities.

NOTE: Research Services has prepared a compendium of the most recent results from the common placement tests. This report provides data for each M-DCPS senior high school for students graduating in 1999-2000, 2000-01, 2001-02, and 2002-03. It is anticipated that this report will be completed on an annual basis in order to track this important information.