

Highlights of Imagine Schools' 2009-10 Academic Performance

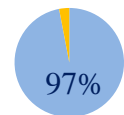


Students at 97% of Imagine Schools Achieve Learning Gains Greater than One Grade in 2009-10 School Year

Summary

At Imagine Schools, we measure the academic performance of our students and schools primarily based on same-student learning gains: the improvement in reading and math achievement measured for the same students from the beginning until the end of each school year.

In the 2009-10 school year, **students at 97% of Imagine's 71 campuses achieved average learning gains of more than a grade as measured by the Stanford 10 tests.**



Many students enter Imagine's schools well below their grade-level peers, which means that they have been gaining less than a year of proficiency for each year they have been in school. **Hence, Imagine Schools students have dramatically improved their annual learning gains, giving many of them a chance to catch up and ultimately perform at grade level, a goal that had eluded many in their prior schools.**

How Imagine Schools Measures its Performance

Imagine Schools succeeds in large part because we rigorously measure (and publicly report) our schools' performance on five Measures of Excellence: Academic Achievement, Positive Character Development, Shared Values, Parent Choice, and Economic Sustainability. We use the results to evaluate and improve performance of our campuses and of Imagine Schools overall.



Measuring Academic Achievement is subject to intensive scrutiny due to the requirements of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law. As educators, we realize that the quality of a child's education cannot be measured solely by scores on standardized tests, which by their nature do not assess students' conceptual thinking, their ability to do research and to evaluate and defend ideas, their skill at written and oral expression, or their success in collaborative or teamwork settings.

Nonetheless, like all public schools we must use testing to gauge growth in academic proficiency throughout the school year. These tests demonstrate our schools' ability to help students become proficient in reading and math. We are proud of our performance thus far.

NCLB'S INCONCLUSIVE RESULTS

While scores on No Child Left Behind proficiency tests have great visibility, at Imagine Schools we view them as an incomplete measure of school performance because they give only a snapshot of students' academic performance. Proficiency test scores may be more closely related to the demographics of the student body than the quality of the education provided.

EXAMPLE

If a fifth grade student who transfers to a school is reading at the second grade level and the school helps the student reach the fourth grade reading level in one year (i.e., two years of progress in one academic year), the NCLB tests would still show the student (and school) as failing.

The NCLB evaluation ignores the fact that many students had been achieving far less than one year of progress previously and ignores the dramatic progress a new school helps such children achieve.

“The current law is too punitive; it’s too prescriptive. It’s led to a dumbing down of standards. It’s led to a narrowing of the curriculum. We have to fix all of those things. We have to reward success . . . We have to celebrate and learn from those places that are doing a great job with increasing student achievement . . . **We want to focus much more on growth and gain rather than absolute test scores – how much a student is improving every single year.**”

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan



We couldn't agree more with Secretary Duncan, which is why at Imagine Schools we place heavy emphasis on measuring our schools' performance based on annual same-student academic progress. We test students at the start of each year to provide baseline information for a variety of tested skills and knowledge, enabling teachers to focus on the areas where each student needs the most help. We test students again at the end of the year to assess how much each student has progressed and how much on average the students in the class, the grade, and the school have gained. Thus we recognize as successful a student, class, or school that made significant progress in one year, whether students begin the year above, on, or below grade level.



Though state tests typically are administered only to selected grades, our approach has the advantage of evaluating our schools' performance at every grade level.

We recognize that some students may start ahead of grade level. These students will likely score well on proficiency tests, while showing more modest learning gains since they are already ahead of their expected grade level. For this reason, we evaluate our schools using both same-student learning gains and performance on state tests, and we grade our schools based on the stronger of the two.

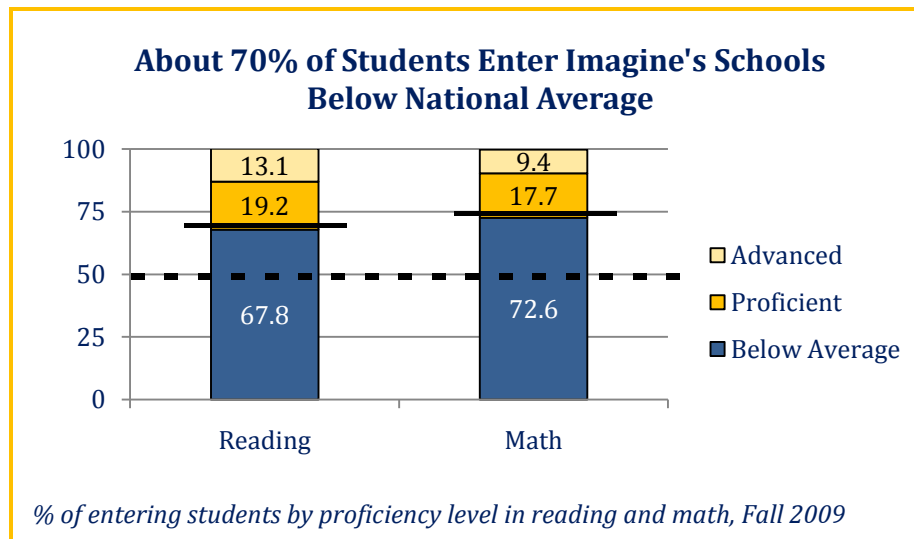
The Academic Status of Students Entering Imagine Schools from Other Schools

At Imagine Schools, we educate many students who come to our schools well below grade level in reading and math proficiency. This is because students in many schools are underserved – their schools have not helped them to make sufficient growth in each academic year.

As a result, their parents are often searching for alternatives where their children can be more successful. Imagine Schools has provided a welcome choice for parents and guardians who are not satisfied with the progress their children are making in the schools they attend.



We test all students' proficiency at the start of the school year to provide valuable information for our teachers and to serve as a baseline for measuring academic growth. These data clearly show that in 2009 **more than two-thirds of newly enrolled Imagine students were behind their grade level in proficiency.**



Put simply, these students were gaining far less than a grade a year in proficiency in their previous schools, which likely was a key factor in their parents exercising school choice by enrolling them at an Imagine campus.

My boys were several years behind their peers academically when I enrolled them at Imagine Great Western in Columbus, Ohio. What a difference my choice to transfer them to Imagine made! Fall and spring testing showed that they both improved by two grades levels after only one year at Imagine Great Western. I am confident that these academic improvements were because the teachers really believed in them and reassured them. The teachers took the time to figure out the best ways for my boys to learn. The boys' confidence skyrocketed, and so did their grades. As a parent, I am exceptionally thankful to our school and am so glad that I made the choice to send them to Imagine.

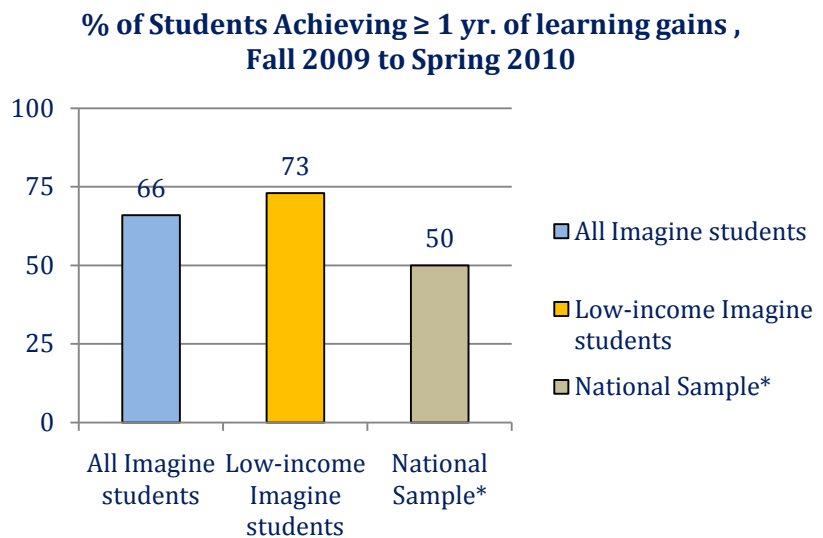
Karen Wilson, parent
Imagine Great Western Academy

Imagine Schools Students' Academic Gains

Testing all students at the beginning and end of each academic year using the Stanford Achievement Test Series (Stanford 10) allows us to measure individual student learning gains, as well as the average increase in proficiency for each class, grade, or school.

In the 2009-10 school year, 69 out of 71 of Imagine's schools had average student math and reading gains that exceeded a year or more.

Moreover, two-thirds of Imagine Schools students demonstrated average reading and math learning gains of one year or more (vs. 50% in Pearson's 2007 Stanford 10 national norming sample). Almost three-quarters of students at low-income Imagine schools (i.e., schools with over 90% of students qualifying for free and reduced price lunch) attained average reading and math gains of one year or more.



**Based on the Pearson 2007 Stanford-10 national norming sample*

These data show that many of the students attending Imagine's schools who were falling behind in other schools are catching up by far exceeding their prior academic performance.

I can't tell you enough how I appreciate the accelerated classes at Rosefield. My 6th grader is being challenged on every level. She is learning so much and is *enjoying* it so much! I especially love the MAPS assignment from Ms. Fosgreen. Essentially an open-ended project, the students choose a topic that interests them, research and learn about it, then create a way to share their knowledge with the class. Learning to love learning! I love it!

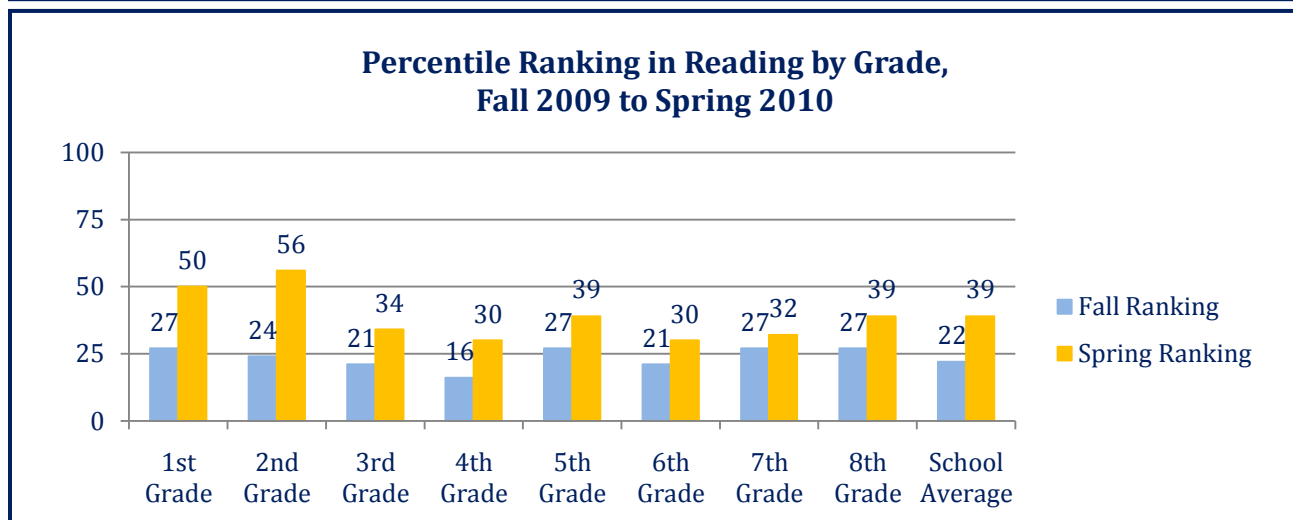
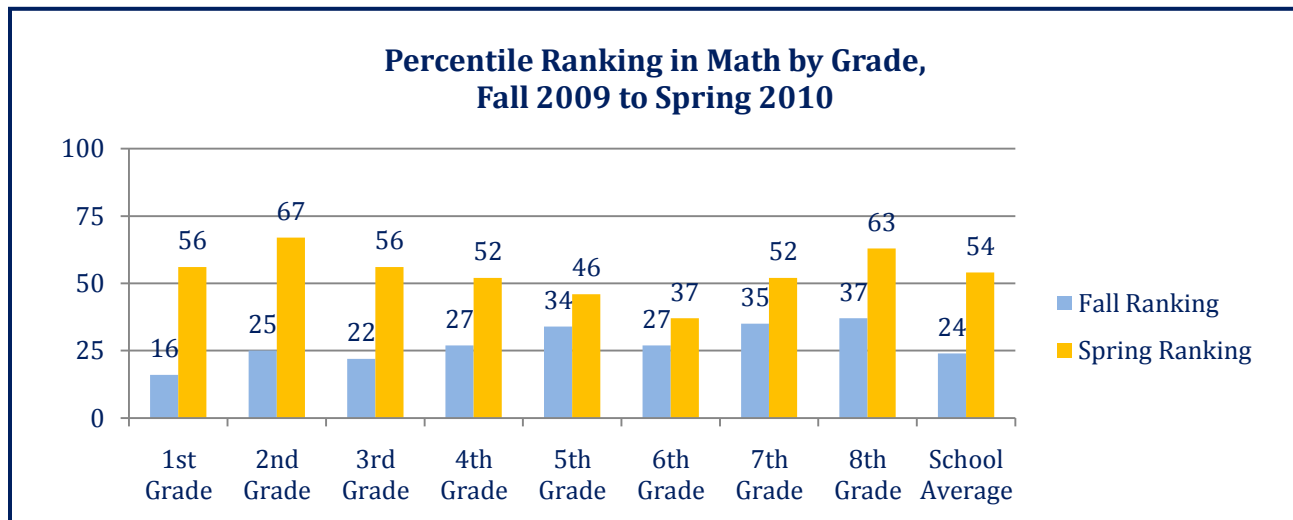
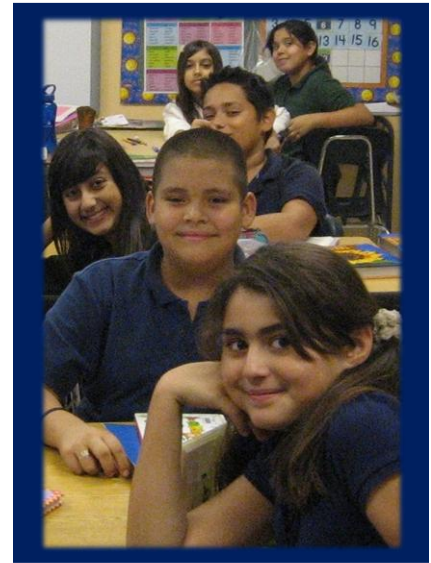
Anne Shaw, parent
Imagine Rosefield



LEARNING GAINS CASE STUDY: IMAGINE SCHOOLS AT DESERT WEST

Imagine Schools at Desert West in Phoenix, Arizona serves about 880 students in grades K to 8. In this school, which opened in 2006, approximately 90% of students are Hispanic, and 91% are eligible for the federal free and reduced lunch program.

As a high performing charter school, Imagine Desert West students achieved phenomenal results in the 2009-10 school year with 90% achieving learning gains of one year or more in math and 80% of students achieving learning gains of one year or more in reading. Students who entered far below average in the fall made tremendous strides over the course of one academic year, with many students exceeding national averages on spring testing – particularly in math.



Based on the Stanford 10 Achievement Test administered in Fall 2009 and Spring 2010. Based on the Pearson 2007 Stanford 10 national norming sample, the average student is at the 50th percentile, and 50% of students achieved one year of academic progress over the course of the school year.

Other Indicators of Imagine Schools Performance

While we rely heavily on the learning gains demonstrated by our students and our schools, we also pay close attention to proficiency measures states are using for all public schools. As discussed above, scores on state standardized tests, though used extensively to evaluate and compare schools, are limited in their ability to measure the quality of education provided by a teacher or a school. We are pleased that there are a variety of other indicators, academic and non-academic, that Imagine's schools are earning distinction as high quality schools of choice.

Some such examples of strong performance include:



The Imagine Charter School at Weston was the second highest ranked Broward County elementary school on the Florida state proficiency test and 11th in the State (including elementary, middle, and high schools). Imagine Weston (a 71% minority school, largely Hispanic) had 98% of its students earn “high standards” in reading, 97% in math, and 97% in writing on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test. Once again it was rated an A school by the State of Florida.

Imagine Foundations Public Charter School in Upper Marlboro, MD was recognized as an Exemplary School by the Prince George's County Board of Education each of the past two years, the only first-year school and the only charter school so honored. Imagine Foundations had 88% of its students demonstrating proficiency on the MSA state proficiency test in reading and 85% in math in 2009-10, which were the highest scores for any elementary school in the county with 97% or more African American enrollment.

Imagine School at South Lake was honored as a Florida State School of Character by the national Character Education Partnership, recognizing its exemplary positive character education program. The school received the Promising Practices award for its creative use of drama as a means of middle school students teaching character education to younger students. It is one of eight Imagine schools in AZ, FL, IN, and OH to receive this award. This school also **had the highest proficiency percentage of any school in Lake County, FL on the Florida Comprehensive Test** for 6th Grade Reading and Math and for 8th grade Science. The State of Florida has again rated it an A school.



Imagine College Prep High School in St. Louis, MO graduated 141 seniors in 2010, and 100% were accepted at one or more of 51 colleges and universities, with 80% accepted at four-year schools. One student, accepted at the University of Pennsylvania, received nearly \$100,000 in scholarships. Imagine College Prep's student body is 99% African American, with 88% qualified for free and reduced meals.



Imagine School at North Port was named a Project CHILD National Demonstration Site and its Principal was named Project CHILD Innovation Principal of the Year for 2010. Project CHILD is an instructional system utilizing computers and hands-on active learning in fifty schools in six states. Imagine North Port has also been rated an A school by the State of Florida.

Continued Improvement in Academic Performance

Though we are proud of our performance in helping students advance more than one grade level per year, we aspire to do even better. The reality is that students who transfer into Imagine schools several grades behind must gain significantly more than one grade level a year in order to catch up with their classmates and realize their full academic potential.

With nearly all Imagine schools currently demonstrating average student learning gains higher than a grade level a year, we are confident of our ability to improve learning gains significantly in all of our schools. We expect to spread the effective practices from our strongest academic schools throughout the Imagine Schools family so our students can achieve even more dramatic academic growth.



What a Difference a Choice Made

We believe that, given a choice of public schools, parents will seek out the best school for their child. Parents see their children's strides and struggles. Parents care about the whole child, which encompasses character, discipline, and safety, in addition to academic achievement. The learning gain results for the 2009-10 school year show that Imagine students across the nation are being helped to realize their full academic potential. The true successes are better understood and appreciated by the parents who choose Imagine Schools every day.



We believe it has been to our advantage that we have been able to have our children here in Imagine Schools at Town Center. The administration here at Imagine has truly been awesome. Our children feel safe and confident in those around them, and they are learning real life experiences from their education. The goals they set and the strong standards of character building truly set them apart from standard education. As a family we are truly thankful to the staff at Imagine for putting the effort and care back into the education of our children.

James and Deborah Geraghty, parents
Imagine Town Center

Imagine Schools is a national family of 73 public charter school campuses in 12 states and the District of Columbia. Our committed educators impact the lives of 40,000 students in pre-K through 12th grade. At Imagine Schools, we recognize that there are no "standardized" students. Imagine teachers design their instruction to enable each student to be a successful learner. Guided by innovative, values-drive focus, Imagine provides hope and a pathway to life-long success to parents and children by offering high-quality schools of choice.