



Model Schools for Inner Cities: 3-Year Highlights

Narrowing the Gap

February 2010

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Overall Findings



Over the last 2-3 years, **all 7** Model Schools have made notable gains:

- a) academically based on tracking of individual students (with the use of standardized measures) over the last three years - 2007, 2008 and 2009;
- b) in multiple outcome areas – e.g., physical, social and emotional well-being, resiliency, school readiness, student, staff and parent engagement in school, and community involvement

Provisos:



There are variations among the 7 Model Schools in:

- the degree of progress (how much)
- the rate of growth (how fast)
- the areas of improvement (what)

depending on each school's:

- level and unique set of external challenges (LOI)
- initial standing (baseline)
- internal organizational structure (e.g., leadership and staff)

It is therefore important to examine the progress at the individual school level.

Case Study:

Nelson Mandela Park



- NMP was chosen *not* because it has made the largest gain. (In fact, all other 6 Model Schools have produced faster and bigger gains than NMP, at least in the academic area.)
- Rather, to demonstrate that the Model School efforts, resources and initiatives could potentially close the gap, the Model School with the most challenges was selected.

Nelson Mandela Park:
*External Challenges (1) -
student family background*



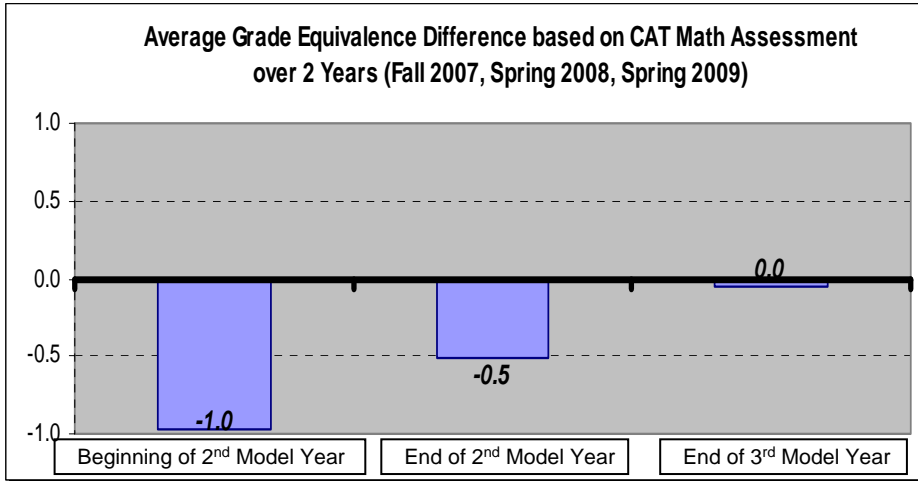
- 85% of the NMP families have annual household income of less than \$30,000 - lower than the Low Income Cut-off (LICO) for Metro Toronto.
- Most parents are of immigrant background – 85%.
- 60% have large families of more than 3 children.
- Many families in the neighbourhood have been temporarily displaced and relocated due to the housing redevelopment in the community.

Nelson Mandela Park:
*External Challenges (2) –
student characteristics*

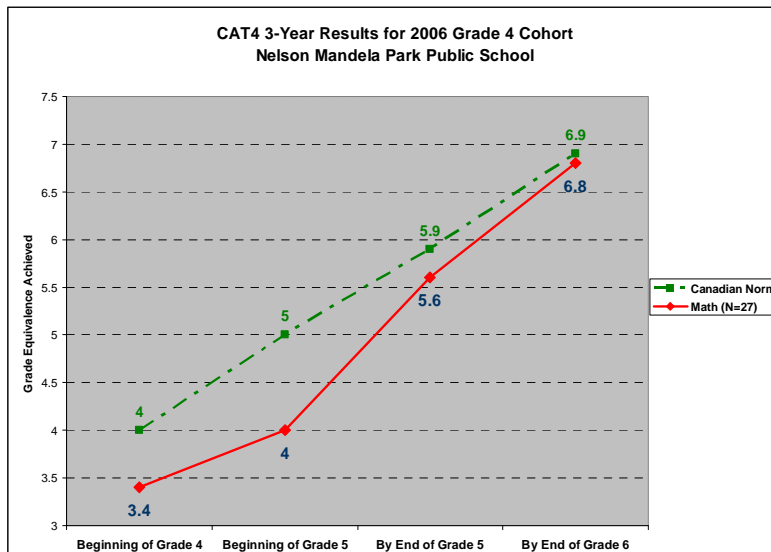


- Most young children come to kindergarten with multiple challenges in all 5 EDI domains.
- The proportion of special needs is much higher than the system – about a third vs. a fifth.
- NMP serves a wide age range of students from JK to Grade 8 (including transition years).
- Historically, the academic standing of NMP was one of the most challenging as indicated by the school's EQAO results.

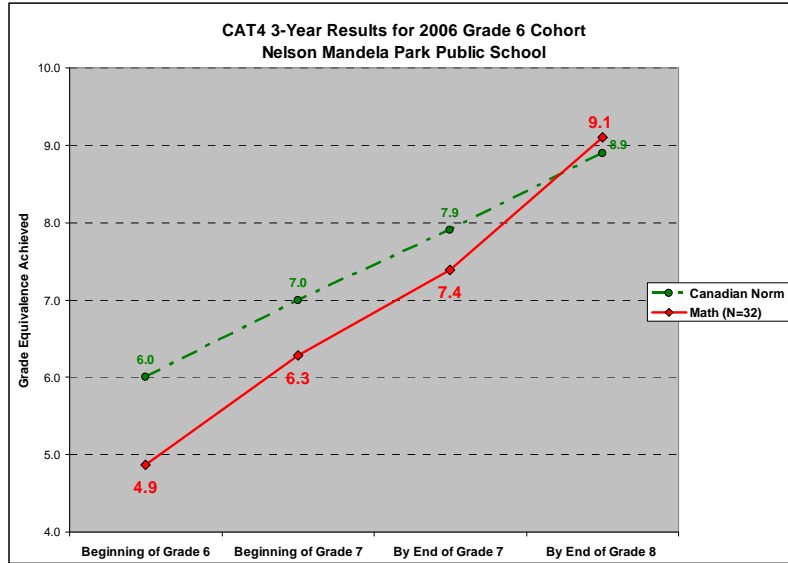
Nelson Mandela Park:
CAT Math Tracking Results
(Average of Grades 2-8)



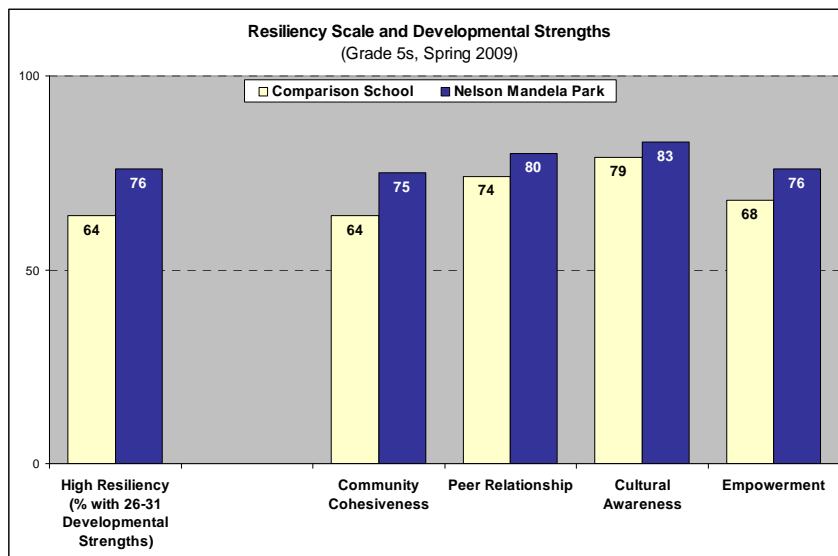
Nelson Mandela Park:
3-Year CAT Math Tracking
of 2006 Grade 4 Cohort



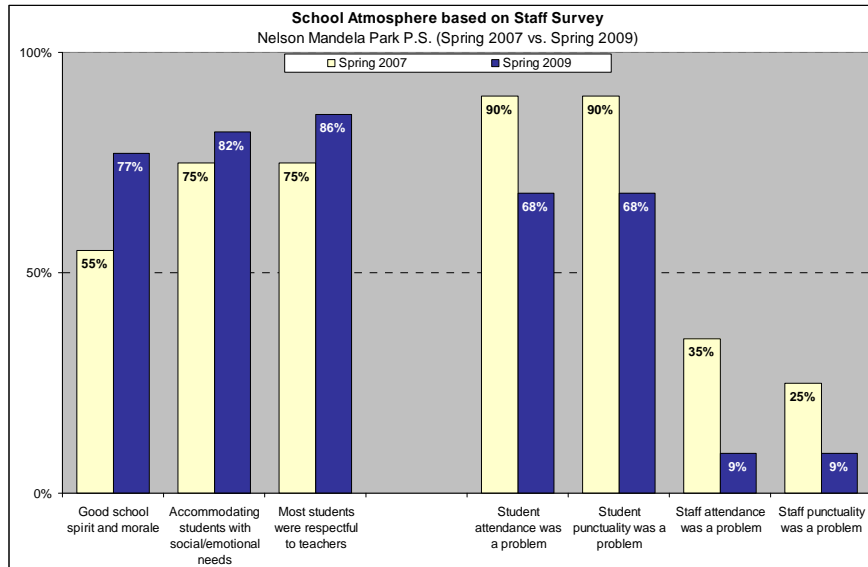
Nelson Mandela Park: 3-Year CAT Math Tracking of 2006 Grade 6 Cohort



Nelson Mandela Park: Grade 5's Resiliency

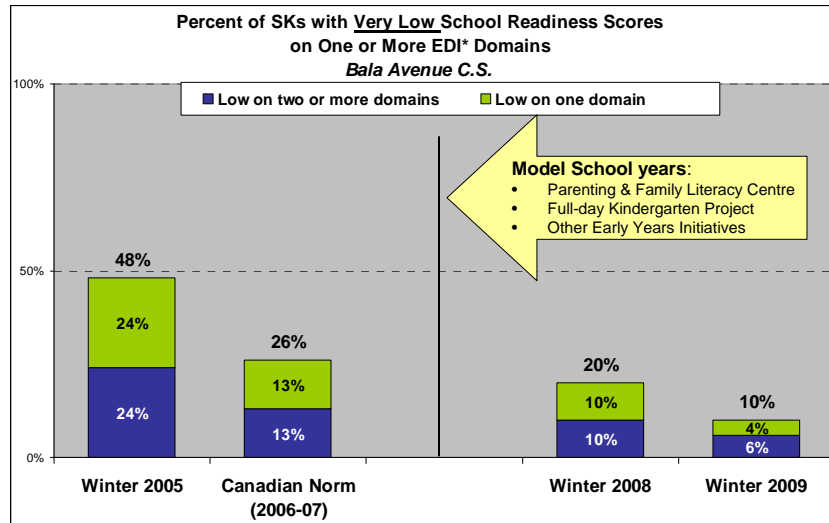


Nelson Mandela Park: School Atmosphere



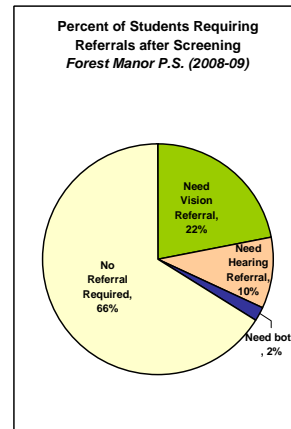
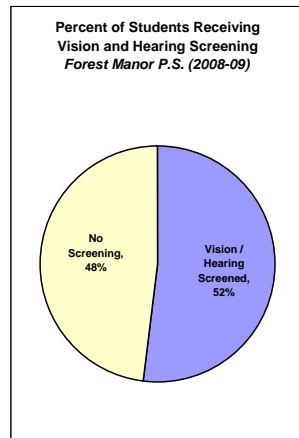
Success Stories of Other Model Schools

Bala Avenue: Early Year School Readiness



*EDI stands for Early Development Instrument – a community-based measure to assess young children's readiness for formal schooling.

Forest Manor: Vision/Hearing Screening



**What have we learned from
the 3-year Model School
research?**



*All high needs schools - no matter how challenging –
can bring about change, and
can close the achievement gap
as long as the school has (or is given) the following:*

Condition 1:



Solid support and resources
to fill the opportunity gaps,
i.e., to level the playing field

Condition 2:



Extra efforts
(innovative and intensive interventions)
to make up the initial achievement gaps

Condition 3:



Relevant research and review information
to help monitor progress,
to inform programming and planning, and
to adjust practices where necessary

Condition 4:



Sufficient time
for school and students to demonstrate growth
*The more challenging the school,
the longer the time is needed*

Condition 5:



Sustained leadership
which is fair, open, collaborative,
forward thinking and visionary

Condition 6:



Staff support and
active engagement

Condition 7:



Continuous resources and efforts
to cope with the changing challenges
(often unpredictable or uncontrollable)
both external and internal

All 7 Conditions:



All high needs schools - no matter how challenging – can bring about change, and can close the achievement gap as long as the school has (or is given):

1. Solid support and resources to level the playing field (to fill the opportunity gaps)
2. Extra efforts (innovative and intensive interventions) to make up the initial achievement gaps
3. Relevant research and review information to help monitor progress, to inform programming and planning, and to adjust practices where necessary
4. Sufficient time for school and students to demonstrate growth – the more challenging the school the longer the time is needed.
5. Sustained leadership which is fair, open, collaborative, forward thinking and visionary
6. Staff support and engagement
7. Continuous resources and efforts to cope with the changing (often unpredictable or uncontrollable) external and internal challenges.

Final Remarks



All the above conditions are important:
***not only for closing the gap,
but also for keeping the gap from widening again
in our inner city schools***



Other Success Stories:

Firgrove P.S. (Phase I)

Kingsview P.S. (Phase II)

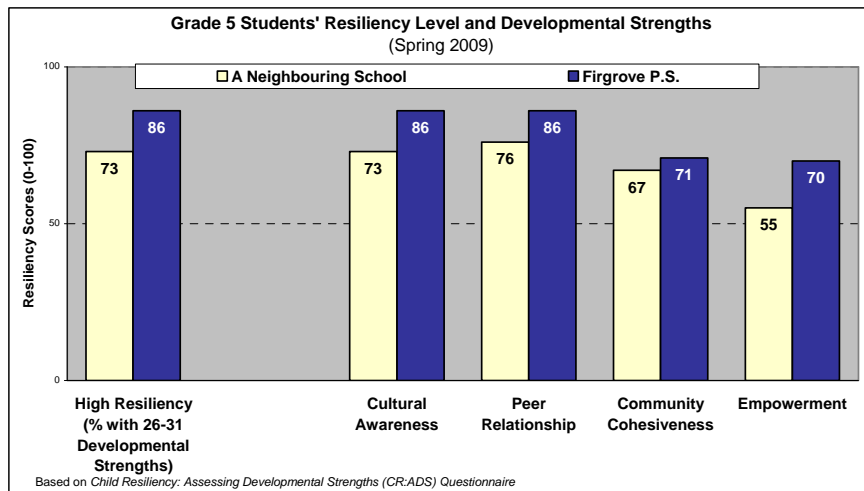
George Webster (Phase II)

Willow Park (Phase I)

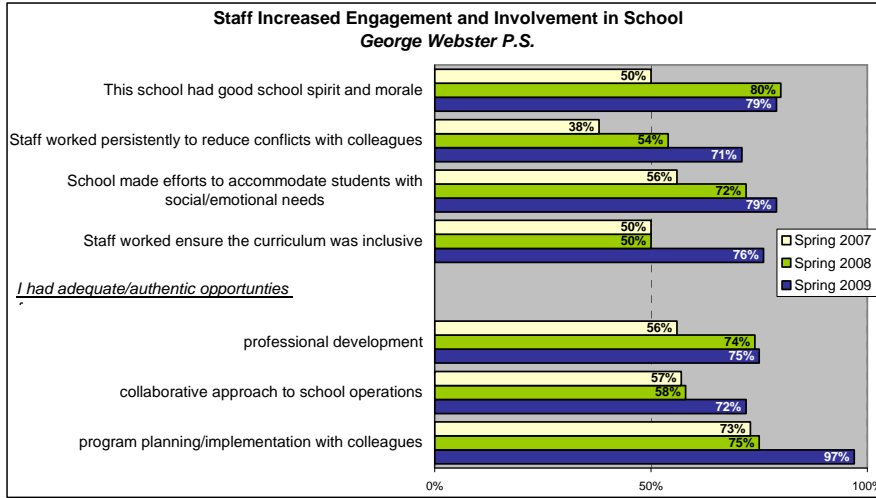
(Also see the 7 Posters)

Firgrove Public School:

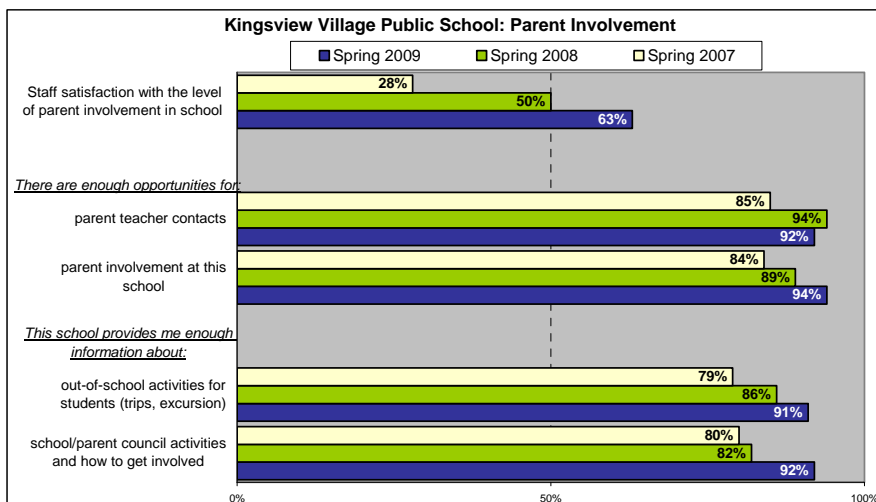
*More support and skills
to cope with challenges*



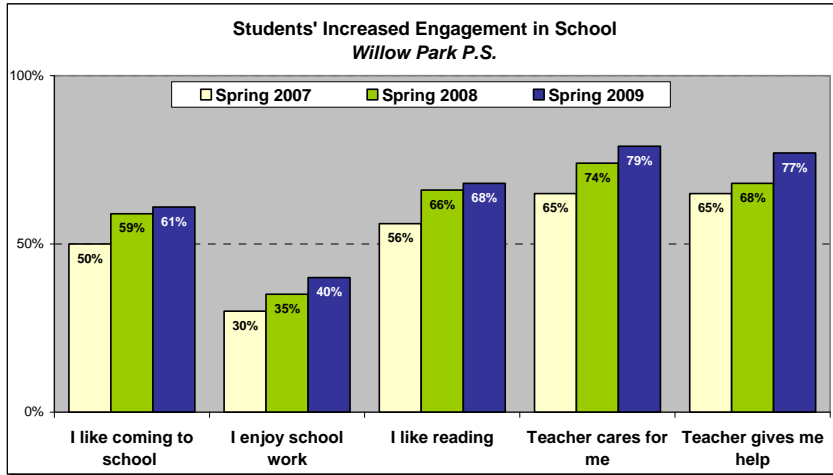
George Webster: Increased Staff Engagement



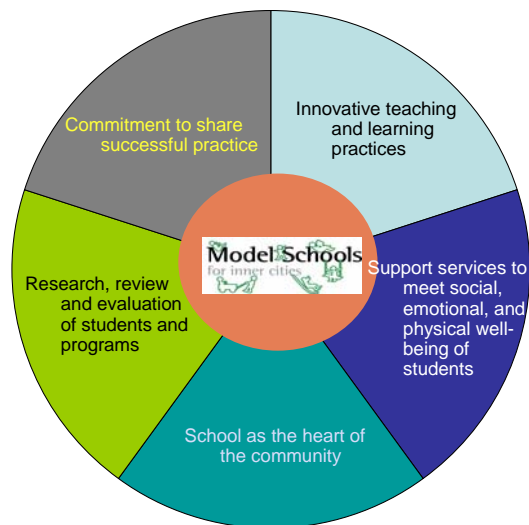
Kingsview Village : Increased Parent Involvement



Willow Park:
*Students' Increased Engagement
 in School and Learning*



Model Schools for Inner City:
5 Essential Components



Some of External Measures Used



1. *CAT – Canadian Achievement Test* – a standardized assessment tool to measure students' basic skills in reading, writing and math from Grade 2 to 12 with Canadian norms
2. *CR:ADS - Child Resiliency*: Assessing Developmental Strengths Questionnaire* – a Canadian-based tool developed in early 2000s to measure one's developmental strengths. This tool has been widely used in Canada and by the Toronto Public Health (TPH) in their community youth initiatives. Altogether 31 Developmental Strengths are assessed under 10 resiliency factors – 5 external and 5 internal:
 - External resiliency factors - family support, peer relationships, school experiences, and community support
 - Internal resiliency factors – cultural sensitivity, self-control, empowerment, self-concept, and social sensitivity
3. *EDI – Early Development Instrument* – a community-based measure to assess young children's readiness for formal schooling in five developmental areas – physical, social, emotional, academic, communication skills and general knowledge. The instrument was developed by the Offord Centre at McMaster U. in late 1990s, and has been widely used at system level across Canada and internationally.

*Resiliency is defined as one's ability "to cope effectively with life challenges (e.g., stress-related, at-risk or adversarial situations) and to become productive and responsible adults in society".

