

# EVALUATION REPORT

## I HAVE A DREAM- OVERTOWN PROGRAM

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July 2009

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### **Acknowledgements**

This report would not have been possible without the help, cooperation, and patience of the staff at Phillis Wheatley Elementary School, the *I Have a Dream- Overtown* teachers and mentors, and especially the children that this program serves. Special thanks go out to Eric Lewis who shared his life experiences, candid observations and insights. We would not have been able to understand the program without his expert guidance. Thanks also to Mark and Margie Buchbinder who first approached us about doing this evaluation, and have provided us with unfettered access to their thoughts, ideas and experiences.

## Executive Summary

The *I Have a Dream- Overtown* (IHAD-Overtown) has just completed its sixth year in existence. The program's goal at the beginning was to nurture and prepare an entire class of high-risk children from one of Miami's most troubled neighborhoods, Overtown, for eventual enrollment in college. This evaluation at the half-way point in this program focused on both the academic and social-emotional progress of the children, and the overall effectiveness of the program.

With respect to the academic progress, the children in the IHAD- Overtown program are doing unequivocally better than their peers at Phillis Wheatley when comparing cross cohorts of children at different ages. Observations of the children confirm that they have positive views of school, and strong beliefs in their ability to succeed in it. They have developed initial career goals and are forming affinities to areas of academic study. They also display a high level of maturity and self-regulation, allowing them to work unsupervised and on task. In sum, they show all the social and emotional prerequisites necessary for academic success. They have also absorbed and embraced the culture of schooling that is essential for higher learning, but is so often absent in children from poverty. The adults, in their turn, have raised expectations for the children and are beginning to believe that these children will succeed—something that is conspicuously absent from many high-poverty schools. Within this group there is a wide range of abilities and aptitudes, but the range for all children seems to have been shifted upward. The stars are starting to reach the levels of gifted children throughout the district, and the lower performers are at the levels of comparable children from more affluent schools.

The foundation for success in the later grades has been built but the children still have a long way to go. When comparing them with state averages, their scores on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) are still low. Their math and reading skills as a group, the two best predictors of academic success, fall in the bottom 50%. There are too few high achievers and too many at the bottom. This

shortcoming has been noted by the program and is being addressed by a summer math academy and continued tutoring in reading and language arts.

What remains to be seen is whether these students will be able to meet the increasing academic and social challenges that await them at the next stage of their lives. Early adolescence is typically a time when successful students begin to separate themselves from less academically motivated and gifted peers. It requires more sacrifice, single mindedness, and dedication than in the earlier ages.

Distractions (e.g., friends, hormones, mindless popular culture, violence, drugs, crime) lurk and tempt and can derail the most able pupil.

The challenge for the IHAD- Overtown program is to not stifle the positive self-belief and downplay the considerable gains already made, while at the same time letting the students know that their skills and knowledge are still below where they need to be, and that they will have to work harder to make the same gains as more advantaged children. This is a hard agenda to sell to any group of middle school children. The other challenge is to keep the distractions and dangers at a minimum, while keeping the children's eyes pointed firmly toward the future.

## **I. Introduction**

Mark and Margie Buchbinder, two former 1960's Vista volunteers and life-long activists, decided at the age when most couples begin thinking about retirement, to become mentors to 51 first graders from one of the most troubled and neglected neighborhoods in Miami, Overtown. This act of extraordinary selflessness is the first thing that stands out in this program. The next thing is the audacity of the quest, to navigate these 51 small boats through the tempests of life and into the safe harbor of college. This report focuses on where those small boats are at the half-way point of their journey.

The "I Have a Dream" concept, launched by Eugene M. Lang in East Harlem in the early 1980s, is surprisingly simple: stay in school, do not break the rules and you can go to college. The idea, though, is more far reaching and profound than this. Children growing up in low-income, urban neighborhoods lack the resources to get from poverty to Princeton (or even Peoria), but with support and encouragement at an early age more of them will make it. The more children from poverty who make it to college, the logic continues, the more who will escape the whirlpool of poverty pulling down so many of our inner city youth today. The child from the neighborhood going to college can be a lifeline for other children to hold onto. Pretty soon going to college is more the norm than the exception, and studying and achieving becomes the new cool thing. Nerds replace dropouts and dope dealers as the neighborhood leaders and SAT study groups replace gang initiations.

This is the vision that compelled the Buchbinder's to start the Overtown program on Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday in 2003. They chose Overtown as the site for their program because they saw it as the place of most need, and where they thought they could do the most good. By adopting the entire first grade class at Phillis Wheatley Elementary they were giving the message that all could succeed, and that none were beyond reach. They were also affirming a model that chose to nurture a community of children, rather than cream the top and leave the rest to spoil.

This approach is beneficial in a number of ways. It ensures that this program, if it works, can be replicable in almost all poor urban classrooms across the country. It also teaches the students that they are ultimately responsible for each other's success. Instead of competing with each other for a limited number of seats, they are competing with the odds to see how many of them can make it to their seats in a college lecture hall in the not too distant future.

The students came to be called Dreamers, a fitting name for the hopes that lie incubating in all children. The program made its first significant hire in coordinator, Eric Lewis. Lewis, a special education paraprofessional at Phillis Wheatley at the time, was handpicked by the school and the Buchbinder's to serve as the chief steward of the program. He has, remarkably, remained with the program the entire six years it has been operating. This level of consistency is rare in the lives of the program's children. Eric was entrusted with this position not only because he had demonstrated tremendous skills as a teacher, but because he had knowledge of the challenges facing these children. He had grown up in Overtown, had experienced the violent loss of his father, the dislocation of family, the instability of foster and relative care, and the temptation of life on the streets--but managed to overcome it all. He is someone who has been made stronger by his adversities and now uses them to teach others how to do the same.

In his spare time Eric referees high school basketball games. He gets in the middle of two fighting teams, two angry crowds and impartially enforces the agreed-upon rules of the game. This is a position that makes you a friend to no one, but one that earns you grudging respect for taking on a difficult job that few are willing to do. His embracing of this role as an impartial broker is emblematic of his approach to mentoring the Dreamers. In the classroom he is constantly challenging the students to do better. He enforces rules of respect and decorum. But he is also not averse to giving a big bear hug to a student who has done well on an exam. Eric fulfills many roles: at times, as the tough father figure for

many children growing up without one; at other times, the patient, nurturing teacher carefully explaining a math problem.

For parents of the children the benefits of participating are tangible: a paid college education. This is something that had been denied to most of them. But besides the more obvious benefits, the parents also receive a number of equally important boosts. They become Dreamers themselves by association. This is seen in the way that many have embraced adult education and have taken to heart the advice of the IHAD- Overtown staff to get their lives more in order so that their children can better succeed. Many have also connected with other parents to form a larger, informal support network. This is something that is less common in low-income schools (where distrust of non-family members often runs high) than in middle class communities where networking is seen as one of the keys to getting ahead.

The costs to the parents are 1) being held to a high standard of parenting, 2) opening your life up to enhanced scrutiny, and 3) making time for parent meetings and program events. A three-way contract signed between children, parents and the sponsors helps make the commitment binding. In reality, though, it is not the signing of a contract that connects parents to the program, but the consistent commitment of the IHAD- Overtown team to the education of the children that has made believers out of skeptical parents. Without the continued follow-through over six years, most of the parents probably would have disconnected years ago.

Even with the heroic efforts to include parents in all aspects of the program, the reality is that the relationship with the parents is probably the most difficult to navigate. Parents often feel like they are being judged and react defensively. They have a difficult time trusting outside agencies--which are often seen as the enemy. They are often fiercely loyal to their children at the cost of not seeing their shortcomings. Many parents have a hard time accepting responsibility for their own actions or the actions of their children (in psychological terms having an external locus of control) and blame any and



everyone else for their problems. Some become overwhelmed by the economic and social problems that often plague poor families (dislocation, substance abuse, domestic violence, and incarceration) to be fully engaged in the program. In sum, gaining parents' trust and getting them to fully support and cooperate with the program is an ongoing challenge for the many reasons stated above; and is likely to continue into the future. The good news is that the program itself bolsters the family support for many of the children and provides a kind of safety net for the ones from some of the most troubled homes.

The program has been run on a shoestring budget from the beginning; often relying on the support of volunteers and friends of the Buchbinder's to supplement the support given by the public schools system and grant funding. In 2007, the program received a major boost after it was awarded a \$50,000 Starter Grant (and a subsequent \$25,000) from The Children's Trust and then a full Out of School contract in 2008.

The Children's Trust is a designated funding source for children and youth voted into law by the citizens of Miami-Dade County in 2003, and reapproved in 2008. Its goal is to help all children in Miami-Dade have a chance at a healthy life. It supports many grass roots organizations like IHAD- Overtown create sustainable models of learning.

The Overtown program uses its money to fund after school tutoring, an on-site mentor/teacher (Eric Lewis), enrichment programs such as art, dance and music, field trips to cultural events, and college campus visits. It uses its connections in the community to bring additional resources such as instruction in literature and writing from the Miami-Dade College students of Carlos Gonzalez and Alex Salinas, and a summer school math program directed by FIU's and Bob Moses' nationally recognized Algebra project.

The IHAD- Overtown program is about 51 mostly African American children from one neighborhood, in a large urban city, but it is also about creating effective school reform for an entire demographic that has been stubbornly hard to move—urban poor. The reason that it has attracted so much attention both

within Miami and nationally, is that it is showing how a grassroots effort run on limited resources can potentially have profound effects on the educational achievement of our most vulnerable children. It is the realization of a private/public enterprise that has been promoted as theoretically sound, but practically difficult to realize.

## **II. Review of Literature**

Before evaluating the *I Have a Dream- Overtown* program, it is important to understand the context in which it developed. The road from early childhood to college for high-risk children is cratered with more potholes than a typical Overtown street. And the way to navigate around them is still an inexact science. Lisa Delpit's seminal work, *Other People's Children* (1995), talks about the need for culturally sensitive pedagogy that reflects the historical record of the group. For African American students this means understanding the legacy of slavery and apartheid, as well as the much longer traditions of African culture that merged and morphed in the New World. Learning styles, parenting beliefs and even the rules of social engagement are distinct within the African American culture and not well understood by the world at large. Deficit models of African American children growing up in urban poverty have been the norm, suggesting the achievement gap is caused by the bad choices that are made by Black parents. If we could just somehow teach them to act like "middle class" parents, as the thinking goes, then we would not have these problems. But if anthropological research of the past thirty years has taught us anything it is that culture and class are many layered constructs that begin early and stay with us deep into our lives. Teaching kids to act "white" is not, according to Delpit, the way to create an empowered Black educated class. The way to counteract the effects of institutional neglect is to reclaim the legacy of Black culture that has been such a driving force in the shaping of history and civilization. This is seen most clearly in the Algebra Project directed by Bob Moses. In this ground breaking program,

math is seen as a tool for liberation in traditionally oppressed black communities. It is a continuation of the struggle for equality began during the civil rights movement almost 50 years ago.

Annette Lareau, in her ten-year study of family and class in America, characterizes the parenting style of the middle class as Concerted Cultivation in contrast to the Natural Growth observed in poor and working class families (2003). In Concerted Cultivation children are seen as malleable, raw material to be shaped and refined through lessons, tutors, enrichment activities, and the right playmates. In Natural Growth, children are seen more as already formed entities who need mostly love and support to develop their natural talents. The first profile led to a more competitive form of rearing that was in tune with the world of elite colleges and high paying professions. The second profile was more accepting of individual differences and human frailties—this was more adapted to the uncertain realities facing poor children. Though Lareau tries to suggest that both styles offer advantages and disadvantages, her findings suggest that in the game of success, especially when it comes to going to and succeeding in college, Concerted Cultivation has huge advantages. Since the I Have a Dream program is about sending low-income children to college, this last point is especially relevant. Lareau suggests that to achieve this goal there is a cost for poor children, and this cost is having these children be disconnected with the world in which they are growing up in, the families in which they are being raised.

First generation college students often have a hard time adapting to a world that was not previously open to them. College educated and professional African American women have a hard time finding same race mates. Once achieving a level of privilege and comfort, first generation professionals are the target of a certain amount of envy and jealousy as well as pride and praise. This point should not be overlooked in a project like this. These children's lives are being changed in fundamental ways (for the best I would argue) but these changes and adaptations do not come without a certain amount of loss and disconnection.

Jonathan Kozol has written extensively and eloquently about the challenges facing inner city poor children and their families. In *Savage Inequalities* he documents that middle class students receive by far more resources and advantages than their poor, mostly minority counterparts. Even when resources are comparable, the type of teaching and learning is often quite different. For example, he observed that in comparable computer classes in a mostly white middle class school and a black inner city school the emphasis was strikingly different. The middle class students were taught how to write programs and learn the language of computers, whereas the poor students were taught to use the computer for word processing and data entry. One class was being prepared to be electrical engineers or computer programmers, while the other was being trained for lower level clerical work. Kozol also showed that inner city schools had crumbling infrastructure, teachers who were less experienced, and populations that had many more special needs. (1991). In his view the odds were stacked against urban, poor children, not only from their less salubrious home environment, but also from unequal access to educational resources.

Delpit's, Lareau's and Kozol's work suggests that if you grow up middle class to educated professional parents, the expectations are that you too will become educated and follow in the footsteps of your parents. These expectations are supported by a system of education that exposes more privileged students to the type of knowledge, speech, and behavior that is accepted and rewarded in society. If you grow up poor to parents who are not highly educated, the expectations for you are likely to be much more modest. And even if the expectations are similar, the knowledge of how to reach them is not. What we have in urban America, and in urban Miami, is a highly different set of circumstances surrounding the education of poor and middle class children. This not only pertains to the education that the children receive in the schools themselves, but also the contexts of family and community in which they grow up. Making sure the schools are sound is a must, but it is not enough. Though many educational gains have been made during the last few decades of urban educational reform, it still

remains a fact that if you are African American (the largest group in the IHAD Overtown program), growing up in poverty in the inner city, you have a much greater chance of going to prison than to college.

Overall the news for urban educational reform is not good. Head Start, the landmark government program for young children that was created as part of the “War on Poverty” has been in effect for over forty years but has not had the profound effect on the number of urban poor who make it to college it was supposed to (Zeigler & Zyfco, 2004). Dropout rates remain stubbornly around fifty and sixty percent for the most disadvantaged youth (more for boys than girls). Elite colleges struggle to diversify their rolls with qualified Black and Hispanic students. And it is not just the cost of a college education that is standing in their way, it is the cost of preparing them for success once they get there. Urban school districts today are cutting resources when more are what is called for. Infrastructure is crumbling, teacher recruitment in poor urban schools is lagging, and the best that can be done for children in these schools is not enough.

Despite this pessimistic portrayal of urban schools, a number of programs nation-wide have had remarkable success in making fertile once barren learning communities and schools (Tough, 2008). The Harlem Children’s Project, begun by Geoffrey Canada in the early 1990s, has created an integrated system of health care, early childhood education, parent education and high expectation charter schools that is delivering some of the best prepared students in New York City. The Chicago public schools with its parent focused school reform efforts and its emphasis on small academies is looked upon as a model for the country. The San Antonio School district has done much to help low-income Hispanics succeed in school and go on to college. Los Angeles School District has created model gang prevention programs. And in Miami-Dade a system-wide effort has been underway by the MDCPS, the taxpayer funded Children’s Trust, the Early Childhood Initiative Foundation, the Kellogg Foundation and many others to

introduce what is known to work elsewhere. These and many other efforts from around the country serve as reminders that when there is the will and the resources much can still be done.

The reason for some optimism is that reformers have learned from past mistakes. Approaches like the Kellogg foundation's Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids program (SPARK) worked to create a robust network of families, schools and communities. SPARK is showing gains in school achievement across eight different states with vastly distinct populations of poor children using methods that are tailored to each community and tap into the networks already formed by community change agents. This follows roughly an ecological approach to reform, in which the each nested context (child, family, school, and community) is mutually reinforcing. A strong ecology can be self-correcting and will stand a certain amount of abuse. It is therefore a good model for human systems in which change and uncertainty is a given. It remains to be seen if this new generation of urban reform (of which IHAD – Overtown is a part) works in the long run, but in the short term it is showing to be much more effective than the piecemeal or culturally blind efforts of the past.

### **III. Methodology**

Measuring the efficacy of a multi-pronged, multiple year programs like IHAD- Overtown is difficult. Just looking at the statistical outcomes without understanding the program or its participants is not enough. For these reasons we sought to evaluate this program using a combination of interviews, observations, and statistical analysis. This is called a mixed methods approach in evaluation jargon and is gaining much traction in the field of research and evaluation.

Interviews with adults were conducted one on one or in small groups using semi-structured questioning. The questions were constructed to get 1) a historical perspective of the program, 2) the person(s) role in the program, and 3) the person(s) thoughts and perspective on how the program worked. The students were interviewed in a more informal manner during their normal after school tutoring sessions at Phillis

Wheatley Elementary School. Observations were made at Phillis Wheatley during the month of May, 2009. Children were observed in their after school activities which included English tutoring, informal meetings, snack time, and practice for an upcoming presentation.

Statistical analysis was conducted using data on the children's grades and FCAT scores using linear regressions and mean comparisons using t-tests. Scores were provided by the IHAD- Overtown program. Additional comparison data found on district and FCAT data were also used.

#### **IV. Qualitative Evaluation**

Why does this program believe it has a chance when so many before it have failed? This is the question that I posed to Mark and Margie Buchbinder. They point to the pragmatic, anything it takes, approach of the team. They also suggest that they understood the challenges when they began, having spent a good part of their lives working for social change (beginning as Vista Volunteers in Broward County in the 1960s). "We knew this was not going to be easy," stated Mark, "and that is one of the reasons we took it on." They are also long time residents of Miami and see this program as a way to make the city they have come to call their own a better place. "Miami is special..." Margie says, "...in its ability to accommodate so many outsiders. This diversity is its greatest strength but also its greatest challenge." "When the program began, we didn't know exactly what form it would take. It just began to evolve gradually over time."

This evolving nature of the plan is illustrated in the way the Mark and Margie are trying to find a middle school that is outside Overtown. "The children need to be exposed to other students, from other backgrounds" says Mark. "They need to know what their competition is and what the expectations are in the larger world." "We don't want to give them the false hope that they are doing enough just because others around them may be doing worse." Finding the right middle school has taken much of

Mark and Margie's time. They have had meeting after meeting with district officials and school principals to try to find the best place for their Dreamers to transition to the next step of their journey.

Mark and Margie never stop looking for resources for their dreamers. In the short time I observed the program they had arranged for their students to attend a summer math program at FIU started by renowned civil rights activist Bob Moses. The "Algebra Project" as it is called is an award winning program that seeks to give poor children of color the kinds of math skills that are essential to succeeding in the world.

Their plan is continually evolving to meet the changing needs of the children. Before math, they were concerned about literacy. Now they are also worried about the coming challenges of adolescence. This is the kind of forward anticipatory thinking that helps them stay one step ahead of the pitfalls.

When the Buchbinder's talk about the program it is with the pride and sometimes frustration of parents. The feeling of family that they have tried to create is one of the strengths of the program. Their example filters down to Eric, the mentors and the children. Like in any large family there are sometimes conflicts. But how these conflicts are dealt with are as important as the conflicts themselves.

Effective parenting involves allowing children the freedom to make decisions--and sometimes mistakes--but with the knowledge that there are always consequences. How those consequences are arrived at is through a negotiated process in which all sides have the opportunity to air their views. This helps to build respect for the members of the families, and a sense of impartial justice. This system of rules and consequences, reviews and negotiations is not present in the many of the children's families. The families that many of the children come from are chaotic with shifting rules and expectations. This teaches the children that much of what happens in the world is arbitrary and that it does not matter what you do. The family structure implemented by the Buchbinder's and their staff provides the students stability and consistency. It may be the first time that students have had to deal with the



consequences of their own actions and the responsibilities of belonging to a well functioning social group.

Some of them have had a hard time adjusting. During the time of this evaluation one child was asked not to continue in the program because they had continually been breaking the rules. This child acted at first, according to Mark Buchbinder, like it was no big deal. Later on this child, realizing how much he missed and needed the support of the IHAD- Overtown program, petitioned to rejoin. The program staffs are in the process of negotiating the petition. This is an example of how a follow through can be a powerful motivator for the children to succeed.

Another quality that the Buchbinder's bring to the program is their incessant organizing and networking. They are outsiders in the respect that they did not grow up in Overtown, are not African-American, have attended some of this country's best universities and have an expansive knowledge of the outside world. This outsider status, though, allows them to tap the resources of the larger community to help the one they are creating in Overtown. Having an outside broker who has friends in high places and connections to resources is an advantage. It is also important for the mostly African American children to see those outside of their race and class choosing to work in their school. This is truly a multi-cultural readiness program that exposes the children to all the diversity that is Miami—Latin America, Caribbean, Afro America, White, and Jewish America. The range of organizations that this small program works with to give the children the human, material, and experiential resources needed to succeed in school is impressive—universities, school district hierarchy, and private foundations.

The IHAD- Overtown program and Phillis Wheatley are tightly integrated. The regular classroom teachers morph into after school tutors. Children who are not Dreamers are still allowed to participate in the enrichment activities. Eric Lewis and the teachers are there for all the children. The school administration sees the IHAD program as part of the larger Phillis Wheatley family. This is not a typical

relationship between public schools and outside programs. Often there is turf to be protected and space and resources to be hoarded. Mutual suspicion is the norm rather than cooperation. As in any successful relationship it has been built up overtime and has proven to be mutually beneficial. FCAT scores overall have been trending upwards since the program began and the program itself has been able to tap into the school district for support and resources.

By not standing pat, and always trying to improve their position the Buchbinder's make their own luck. They also demonstrate the kind of agency that is necessary to break through the barriers of poverty and ignorance. This might be as powerful a lesson--that you can make your own destiny and that you don't have to settle for what you are initially given--as study hard and stay out of trouble.

If the Buchbinder's are working from the outside in, they have a partner working from the inside out. The IHAD- Overtown on-site director, Eric Lewis, is an example of a person who has made a successful transformation and adaptation from the kind of life these children are living day to day. Eric described to me in our interview his own upbringing in Miami, in the very same neighborhoods from which the children grew up. He experienced the violent loss of his father, abandonment from his mother, the transiency of foster care and relative care and the pull of easy money and status from the street. "When I lost my father at age 16, the first thing I did was get a job working at Burger King. I didn't want to be a burden to anyone." When asked if he was tempted to drift to the streets he said, "I had good friends who were making lots of money dealing drugs. This was not the life I wanted for myself. This was not the person my father would have wanted me to become. I saw another way." The way he saw was through hard work and education. He graduated high school and began college at Miami Dade College. He went on to Florida International University to get his bachelor's degree in education. He chose to go back into the same neighborhood he grew up with when he accepted a job at Phillis Wheatley, and he chose an even bigger commitment when he took on the coordination of the IHAD- Overtown program.

When asked why he had made the decisions he did he explain, "It is hard to say exactly what made a difference in my life but my father, even though he was not always able to take care of us (Eric has a sister) taught us the difference between right and wrong. When my father needed help there were always friends and relatives ready to pitch in." Eric fits the profile of a resilient child. He is a living example to the children and a knowledgeable guide.

Eric can be tough, even harsh with the children. His voice booms across the room complaining to the children they are not sharp in their turns and that they can't be heard when saying their lines. "Say it like you mean it!" he shouts. The children are preparing for a luncheon with the program's sponsors. "What's a luncheon?" one boy asks. "A fancy lunch" replies Eric matter of factly. "Getting these children ready to interact with the larger world is one of my most important jobs. Some have never been to a nice restaurant. They don't know where to put the napkin, or which fork to use. These are important skills that they will need. "

Eric is an example the potential that is inside all of these children, but he is still a statistical outlier. More often than not children in Eric's situation would not have finished high school, and certainly not have gone on to college. His goal is to make failure the outlier among the Dreamers. So far the program has lost 11 of its original 51, but has also picked up 19 to participate in the enrichment activities without the promise of college. More importantly the program, with the support of its coordinator is creating a culture of success that goes beyond the IHAD- Overtown program concept.

## **V. Quantitative Evaluation**

### *Sample Description*

The following analyses present students' academic progress participating in the *I Have a Dream-Overtown Program*, sponsored by The Children's Trust based in Miami-Dade County in Southeast Florida. For the 2008-2009 school year, the program had a total of 40 participants (47.5% males; 12-14

years old,  $M=12.52$  years old;  $SD= .598$ ) attending fifth and sixth grades. Of this sample, 52.5% ( $n=21$ ) of students attended Phillis Wheatley Elementary School, with the other 47.5% ( $n=19$ ) of the students attending other elementary schools across Miami-Dade County. Of the 40 students, 13 (32.5%) were identified attending grade 5, while 27 (67.5%) of the students were identified attending grade 6.

Mean developmental scores for third grade math and reading from the 2008 Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) were gathered to compare students participating in the I Have a Dream-Overtown program with scores from students at the State, District, and School Level. The mean differences for reading ranged from -12 to +296. Compared to State scores, students participating in the I Have a Dream program had a -12 point mean difference. The mean difference for Miami-Dade County was +46. Students participating in the program had a staggering +296 mean difference compared to other students attending Phillis Wheatley, but who were not part of the program.

Mean developmental differences for math ranged from +20 to +229. Compared to the State level scores, students participating in the I Have a Dream- Overtown program had a +20 mean difference than compared to students at the State level. The mean difference for Miami-Dade County was +31. As with reading, students participating in the program had a staggering +229 mean difference compared to other students attending Phillis Wheatley, but who were not part of the program. For a more detailed picture and a breakdown of content areas, please refer to Tables 1 & 2.

Since not all participants attended Phillis Wheatley elementary school, a mean difference analyses using an independent groups  $t$  test was conducted to examine any mean differences between math and reading achievement levels in the FCAT for the 2008 school year between students who were attending Phillis Wheatley and those students who were attending other elementary schools throughout Miami-Dade County.

Additionally, the relationship between FCAT achievement level scores and academic cumulative grade point averages were examined for children who are part of the I Have a Dream- Overtown program for first through fourth grade. Grades for the 2008-2009 school year were not included since they were not available. Analyses looked at students 2008 FCAT scores in conjunction with their reading, math, and language arts cumulative grade point average for all students. Three separate analyses were conducted for each school year. The first analysis examined students' math GPA with their FCAT math achievement level. The second analysis examined students' reading GPA with their FCAT reading achievement level. The last analysis examined students' language arts GPA with their FCAT reading achievement level. Analyses also examined FCAT achievement outcomes with their academic GPAs separately for students who were in fifth grade and sixth grade during the 2008-2009 school year.

Table 1 Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test- Third Grade 2008 Reading Results

Sample	Total Test Scores								Mean Points Earned			
	Number of Students	Mean Developmental Scale Score	Mean Scale Score	% in each Achievement Level					By Content			
				1	2	3	4	5	Words/Phrases	Main Idea/Purpose	Comparisons	Reference/Research
<i>Total Possible Points</i>									8	10	22	5
State Totals *	204,251	1378	313	16	12	34	31	7	6	15	7	3
Miami Dade County*	27,722	1320	303	21	13	34	27	6	5	15	6	3
Phillis Wheatley Elementary*	60	1070	262	45	12	35	7	2	4	11	5	2
<b>I Have a Dream Participants*</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>1366</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>

\*Information for State and District results was retrieved from *The Florida Department of Education* website.

Table 2 Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test- Third Grade 2008 Math Results

Sample	Total Test Scores									Content Mean Scores				
	Number of Students	Mean Developmental Scale Score	Mean Scale Score	% in each Achievement Level					Content Mean Scores					
				1	2	3	4	5	Number Sense	Measurement	Geometry	Algebraic Thinking	Data Analysis	
<i>Total Possible Points</i>										12	8	7	6	7
State Totals	204,180	1454	333	10	13	33	29	14	9	6	5	4	4	4
Miami Dade County*	27,720	1443	331	11	14	33	28	13	8	5	5	4	5	5
Phillis Wheatley Elementary*	60	1245	288	25	23	37	15	0	6	4	4	3	4	4
<b>I Have a Dream Participants*</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>1474</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>

\*Information for State and District results was retrieved from *The Florida Department of Education* website.

As mentioned before, students participating in the I Have a Dream- Overtown program attended either Phillis Wheatley or another elementary school within Miami-Dade County. For the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT), taken on March 2008 the majority of the students, 43.6% scored a 1 for the reading portion and 38.5% of the students scoring a 2 for the math portion of the FCAT. (See Tables 3 & 4 for a breakdown of students attending Phillis Wheatley and students attending Other Schools and Figures 1 & 2 for all students)

Table 3 2008 FCAT Reading Levels

School	Level	Frequency	Percent
Phillis Wheatley Elementary	1	7	33.3
	2	4	19.0
	3	4	19.0
	4	5	23.8
	Missing	1	95.2
	Total	21	100.0
Other Schools	1	10	52.6
	2	7	36.8
	4	2	10.5
	Total	19	100.0

Table 4 2008 FCAT Math Levels

School	Level	Frequency	Percent
Phillis Wheatley	1	5	23.8
	2	6	28.6
	3	5	23.8
	4	4	19.0
	Missing	1	4.8
	Total	21	100.0
Other Schools	1	6	31.6
	2	9	47.4
	3	3	15.8
	4	1	5.3
	Total	19	100.0

Figure 1- 2008 FCAT Reading Level Frequencies

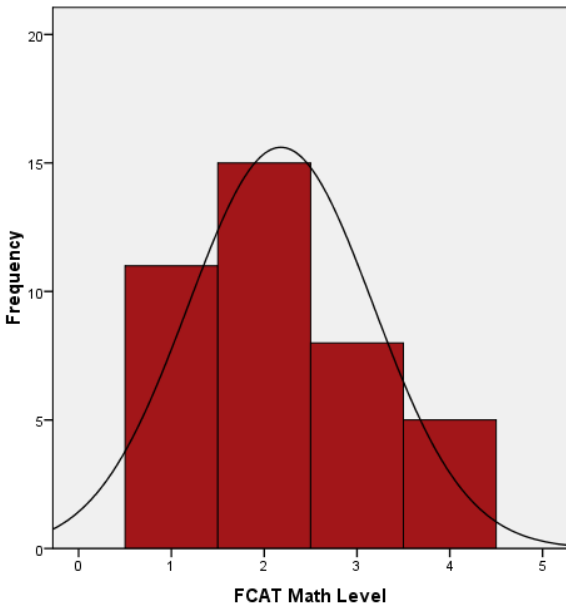
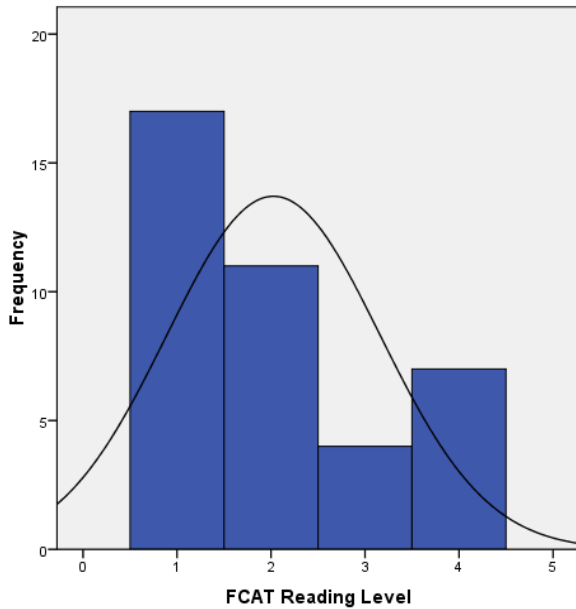


Figure 1- 2008 FCAT Reading Level Frequencies



### FCAT Differences between Schools

An independent groups *t* test compared the means for FCAT reading achievement level for students attending Phillis Wheatley Elementary ( $M= 2.35, SD= 1.23$ ) and students attending other elementary schools in Miami-Dade ( $M= 1.68, SD= .946$ ). This test was found to be statistically significant at an alpha level of .05,  $t(37)= 1.892 p < .01$ , indicating there is a school difference in FCAT reading achievement level, where students at Phillis Wheatley performed better than students who attended other schools. The strength of the relationship between Phillis Wheatley and other schools as indexed by  $\eta^2$ , was .09. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference was -.047 to 1.379.

An independent groups *t* test compared the means for FCAT math achievement level for students attending Phillis Wheatley Elementary ( $M= 2.40, SD= 1.09$ ) and students attending other elementary schools in Miami-Dade ( $M= 1.95, SD= .848$ ). This test was found not to be statistically significant at an alpha level of .05,  $t(37) = 1.437 p > .05$ , indicating there is no school difference in FCAT math achievement level. The strength of the relationship between Phillis Wheatley Elementary and other



schools as indexed by  $\eta^2$ , was .05. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference was -.185 to 1.091.

#### *FCAT Differences between Grade Levels*

An independent groups *t* test compared the means for FCAT reading achievement level for students attending fifth grade ( $M= 1.38, SD= .506$ ) and sixth grade ( $M= 2.35, SD= 1.23$ ). This test was found to be statistically significant at an alpha level of .05,  $t(37)= -2.690$   $p < .01$ , indicating there is a grade level difference in FCAT reading achievement level, where students who were in sixth grade performed better than those students attending fifth grade. The strength of the relationship between Phillis Wheatley and other schools as indexed by  $\eta^2$ , was .16. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference was -1.689 to -.237.

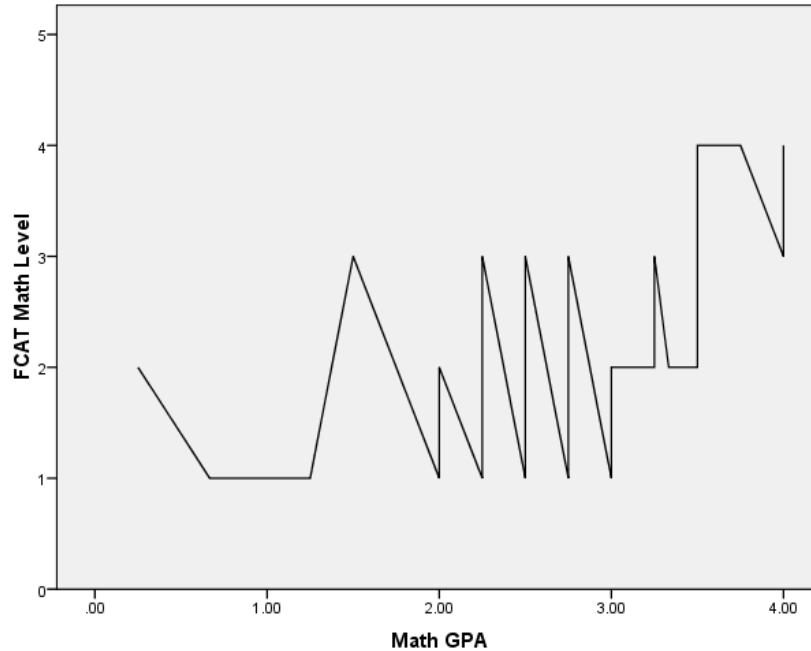
An independent groups *t* test compared the means for FCAT math achievement level for students attending fifth grade ( $M= 1.69, SD= .855$ ) and sixth grade ( $M= 2.42, SD= .987$ ). This test was found not to be statistically significant at an alpha level of .05,  $t(37) = -2.274$   $p > .05$ , indicating there is no grade difference in FCAT math achievement level. The strength of the relationship between Phillis Wheatley Elementary and other schools as indexed by  $\eta^2$ , was .12. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference was -1.358 to -.103.

### **Results- First Grade**

#### *Fifth & Sixth Graders - Math Achievement Level*

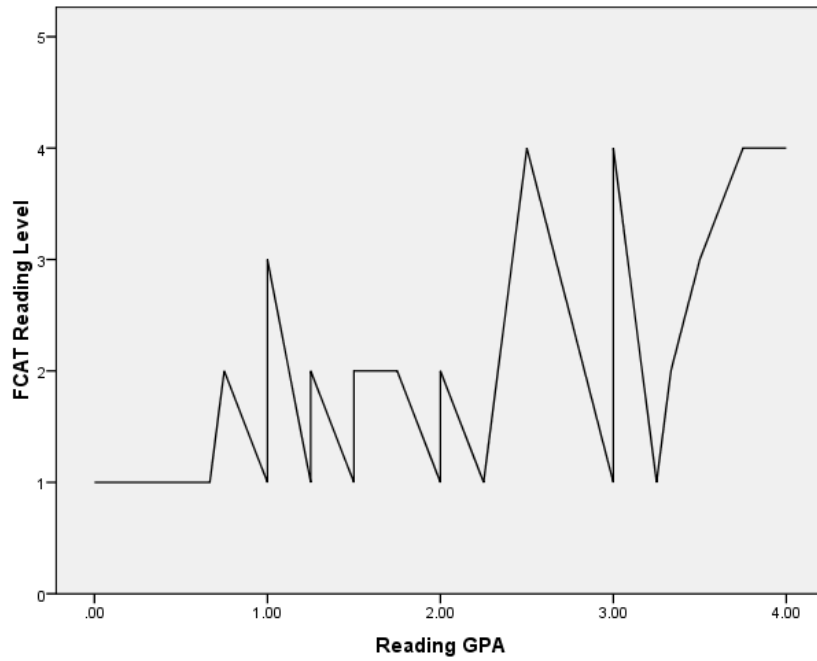
The relationship between students' math grade point average (GPA) for all grading periods during their first grade school year and their FCAT math achievement level at third grade was analyzed using linear regression. The correlation was .532 ( $p < .05$ ), indicating that students' GPA in math during first grade accounts for 28% of the variation of their FCAT math achievement level. The regression coefficient was

.590, indicating that for every one unit that GPA increased in math, students' FCAT math achievement level will increase by .590.

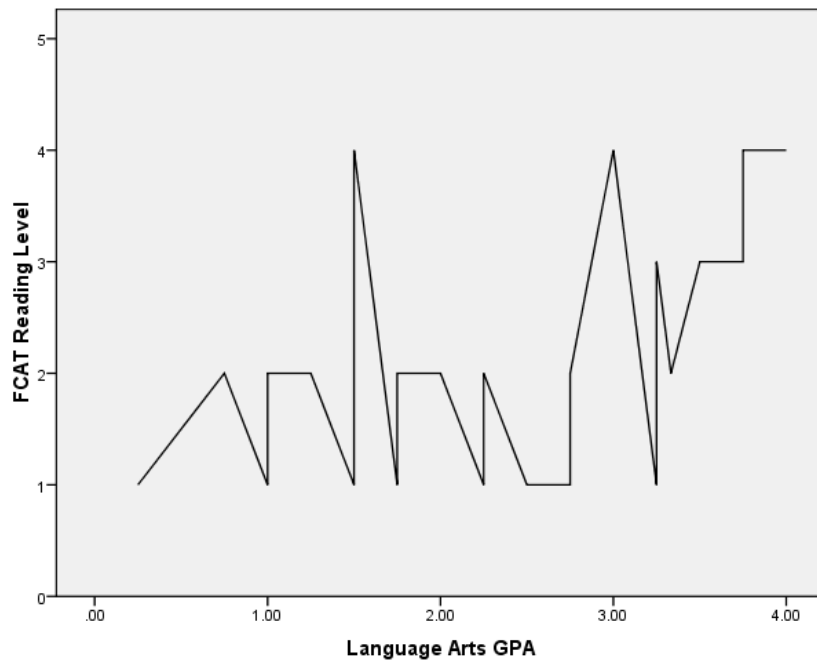


#### *Fifth & Sixth Graders- Reading Scores*

The relationship between students' reading grade point average (GPA) for all grading periods during their first grade school year and their FCAT reading achievement level at third was analyzed using linear regression. The correlation was .542 ( $p < .05$ ), indicating that students' GPA in reading during first grade accounts for 30% of the variation of their FCAT reading achievement level. The regression coefficient was .540, indicating that for every one unit that GPA increased in reading, students' FCAT reading achievement level will increase by .540.

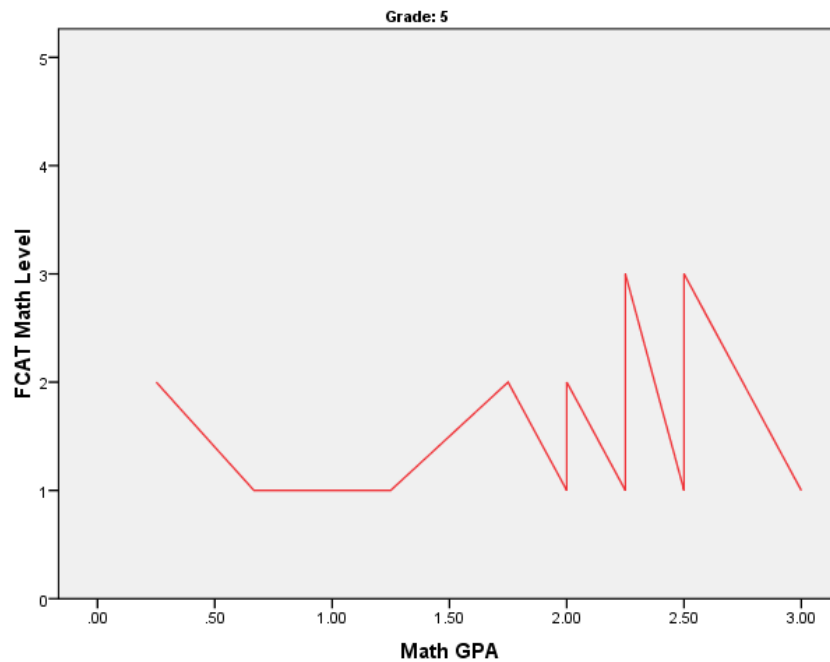


The relationship between students' language arts GPA and their FCAT reading achievement level was also analyzed. The correlation was .497 ( $p < .05$ ), indicating that students' GPA in language arts during first grade accounts for 25% of the variation of their FCAT reading achievement level. The regression coefficient was .545, indicating that for every one unit that GPA increased in language arts, their FCAT reading achievement level will increase by .545.



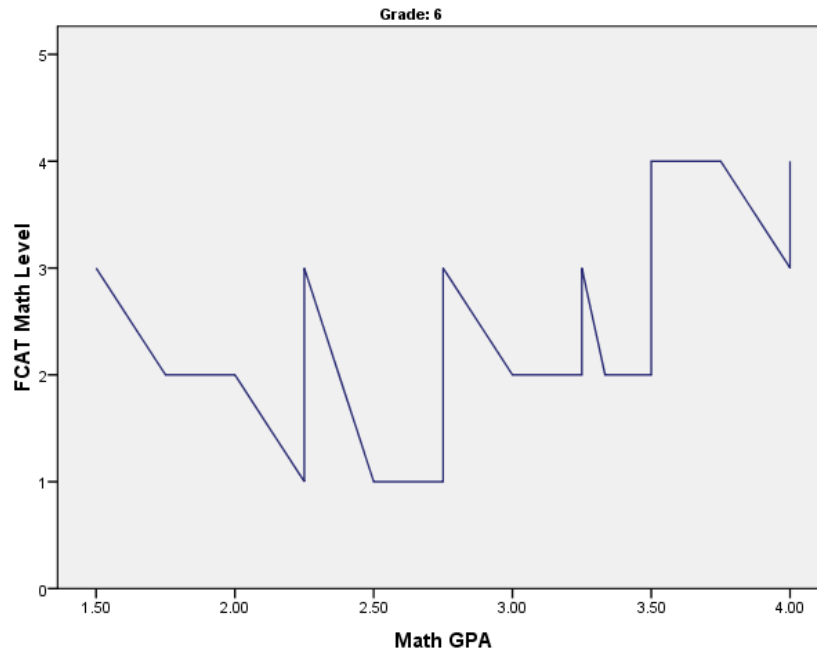
### *Fifth Graders- Math Scores*

The relationship between students' math grade point average (GPA) for all grading periods during their first grade school year and their FCAT math achievement level at third was analyzed using linear regression. The correlation was .245 ( $p > .05$ ), indicating that students' GPA in math during first grade accounts for 6% of the variation of their FCAT math achievement level. The regression coefficient was .249. Having a p value greater than .05 indicates that students' math grades were not a significant predictor for their math achievement level in their FCAT when they were in first grade.



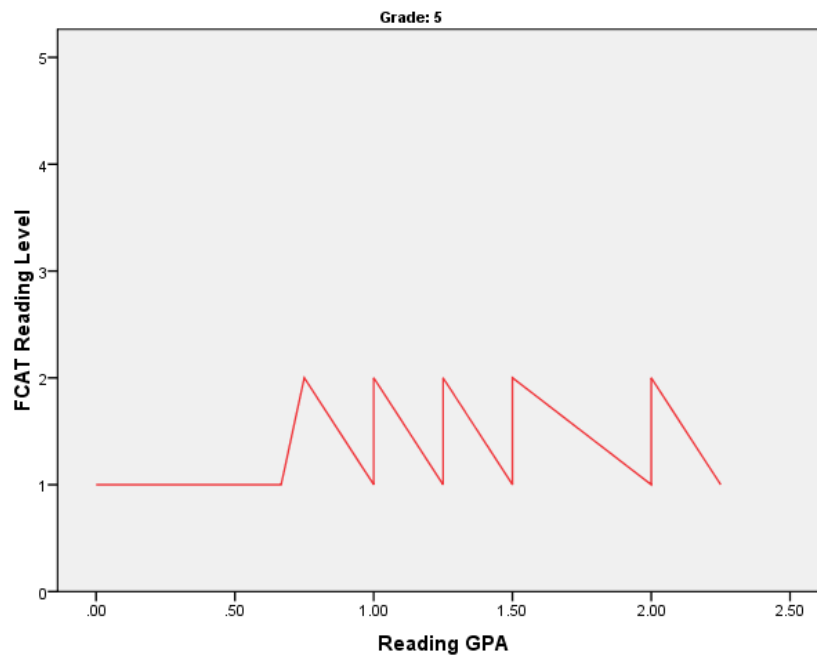
### *Sixth Graders- Math Scores*

The relationship between students' math grade point average (GPA) for all grading periods during their first grade school year and their FCAT math achievement level at third was analyzed using linear regression. The correlation was .535 ( $p < .05$ ), indicating that students' GPA in math during first grade accounts for 29% of the variation of their FCAT math achievement level. The regression coefficient was .789, indicating that for every one unit that GPA increased in math, students' FCAT math achievement level will increase by .789.

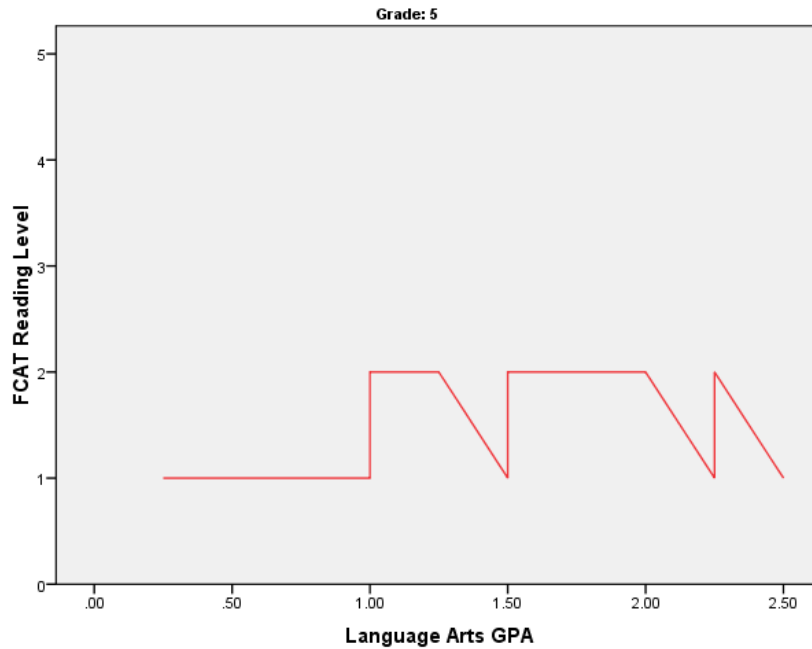


*Fifth Graders- Reading Scores*

The relationship between students' reading grade point average (GPA) for all grading periods during their first grade school year and their FCAT reading achievement level at third grade was analyzed using linear regression. The correlation was .155 ( $p > .05$ ), indicating that students' GPA in reading during first grade accounts for 2.4% of the variation of their FCAT reading achievement level. The regression coefficient was .111. Having a p value greater than .05 indicates that students' reading grades were not a significant predictor for their reading achievement level in their FCAT when they were in first grade.

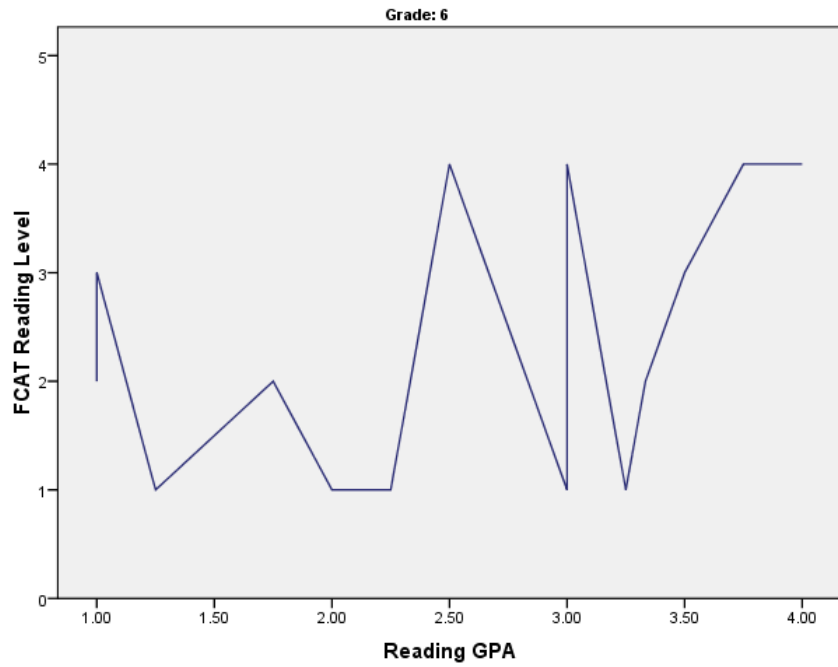


The relationship between students' language arts GPA and their FCAT reading achievement level was also analyzed. The correlation was .131 ( $p > .05$ ), indicating that students' GPA in language arts during first grade accounts for 2% of the variation of their FCAT reading achievement level. The regression coefficient was .105. Having a p value greater than .05 indicates that students' reading grades were not a significant predictor for their reading achievement level in their FCAT when they were in first grade.

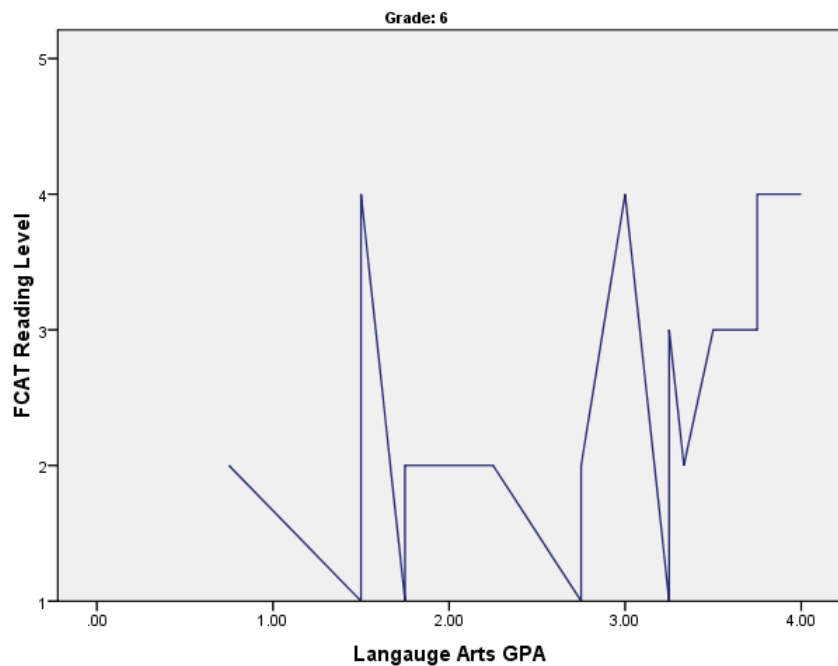


### *Sixth Graders- Reading Scores*

The relationship between students' reading grade point average (GPA) for all grading periods during their first grade school year and their FCAT reading achievement level at third grade was analyzed using linear regression. The correlation was .447 ( $p < .05$ ), indicating that students' GPA in reading during first grade accounts for 20% of the variation of their FCAT Reading achievement level. The regression coefficient was .579, indicating that for every one unit that GPA increased in reading, students' FCAT reading achievement level will increase by .579.



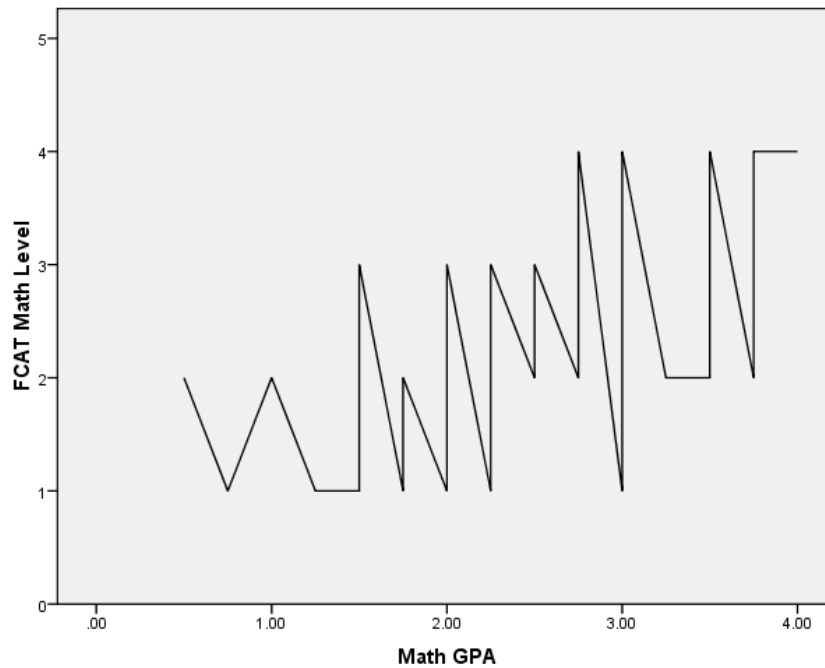
The relationship between students' language arts GPA and their FCAT reading achievement level was also analyzed. The correlation was .384 ( $p > .05$ ), indicating that students' GPA in language arts during first grade accounts for 14% of the variation of their FCAT reading achievement level. The regression coefficient was 506. Having a p value greater than .05 indicates that students' reading grades were not a significant predictor for their reading achievement level in their FCAT when they were in first grade.



## Results- Second Grade

### *Fifth & Sixth Graders - Math Achievement Level*

The relationship between students' math grade point average (GPA) for all grading periods during their second grade school year and their FCAT math achievement level at third grade was analyzed using linear regression. The correlation was .535 ( $p < .05$ ), indicating that students' GPA in math during second grade accounts for 29% of the variation of their FCAT math achievement level. The regression coefficient was .606, indicating that for every one unit that GPA increased in math, students' FCAT math achievement level will increase by .606.

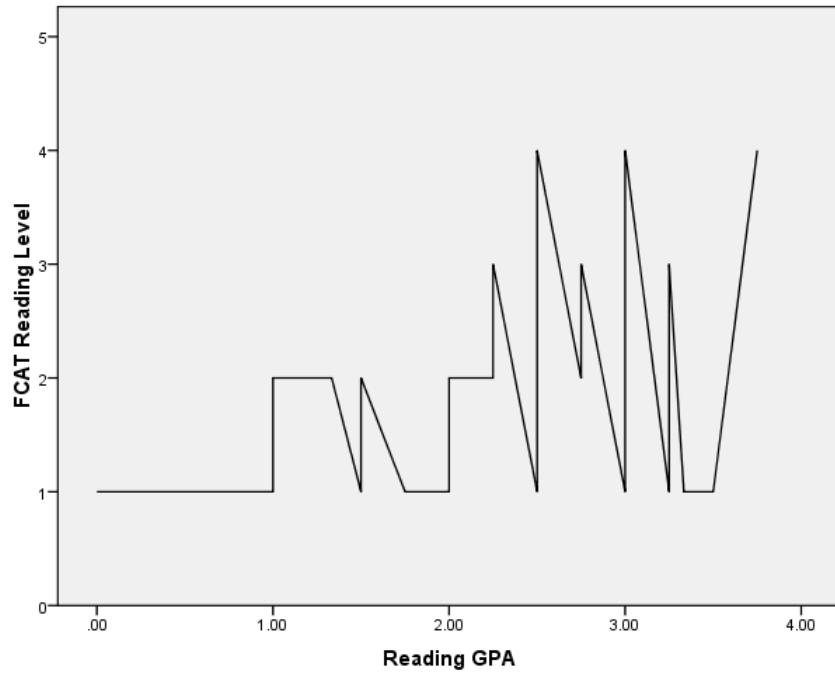


### *Fifth & Sixth Graders- Reading Scores*

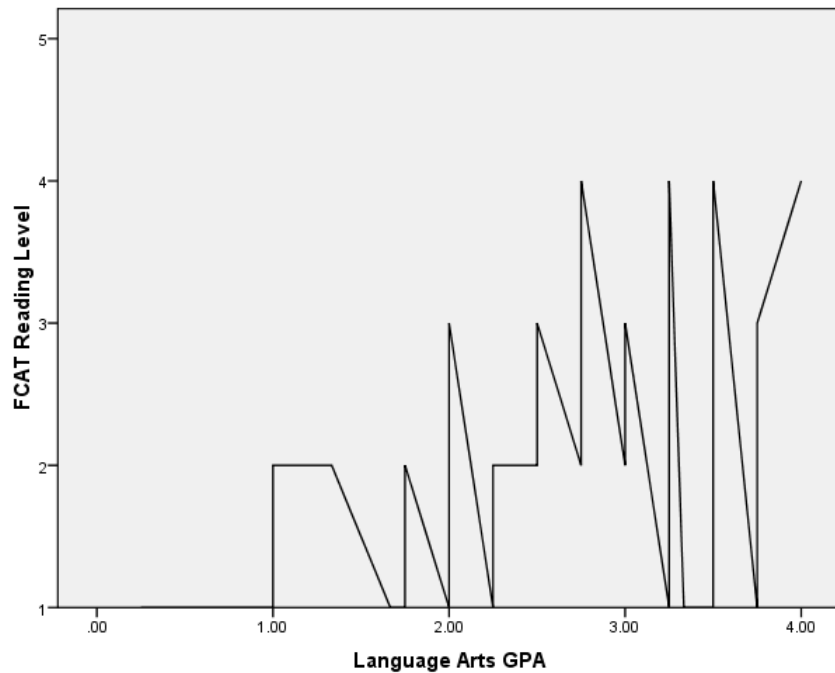
The relationship between students' reading grade point average (GPA) for all grading periods during their second grade school year and their FCAT reading achievement level at third grade was analyzed using linear regression. The correlation was .536 ( $p < .05$ ), indicating that students' GPA in reading during second grade accounts for 29% of the variation of their FCAT Reading achievement level. The



regression coefficient was .624, indicating that for every one unit that GPA increased in reading, students' FCAT reading achievement level will increase by .624.

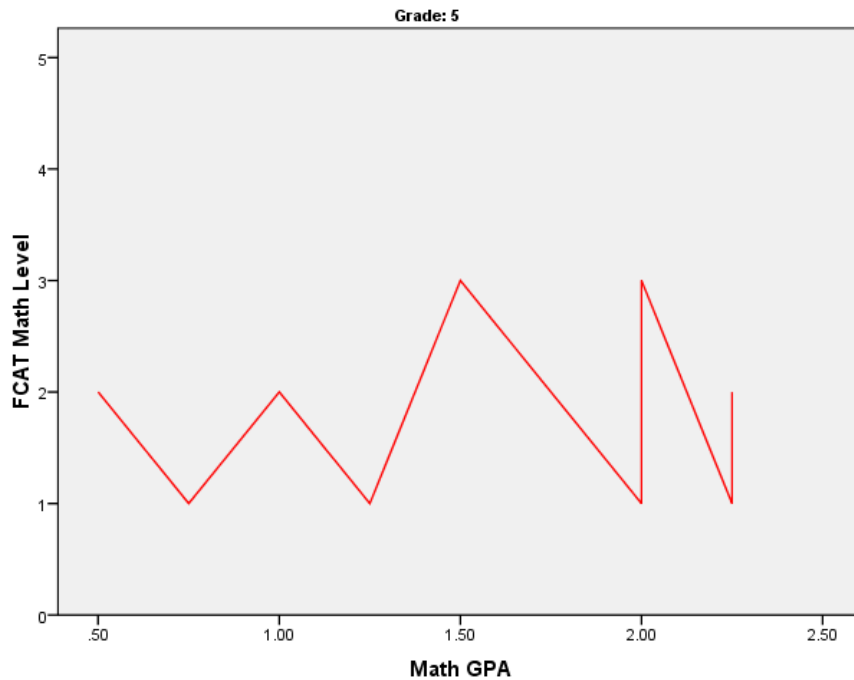


The relationship between students' language arts GPA and their FCAT reading achievement level was also analyzed. The correlation was .560 ( $p < .05$ ), indicating that students' GPA in language arts during second grade accounts for 31% of the variation of their FCAT reading achievement level. The regression coefficient was .630, indicating that for every one unit that GPA increased in language arts, their FCAT reading achievement level will increase by .630.



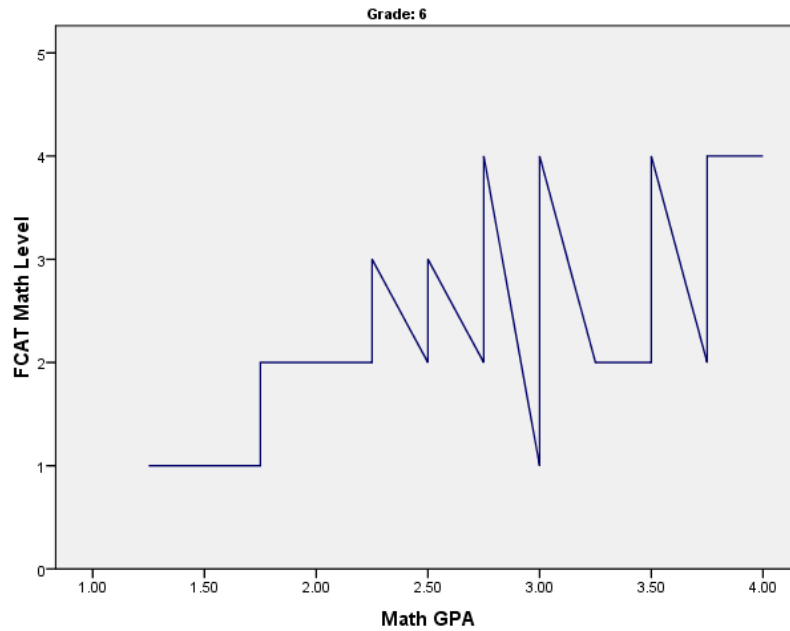
### *Fifth Graders- Math Scores*

The relationship between students' math grade point average (GPA) for all grading periods during their second grade school year and their FCAT math achievement level at third grade was analyzed using linear regression. The correlation was .113 ( $p > .05$ ), indicating that students' GPA in math during second grade accounts for 1.3% of the variation of their FCAT math achievement level. The regression coefficient was .153. Having a p value greater than .05 indicates that students' math grades were not a significant predictor for their math achievement level in their FCAT when they were in second grade.



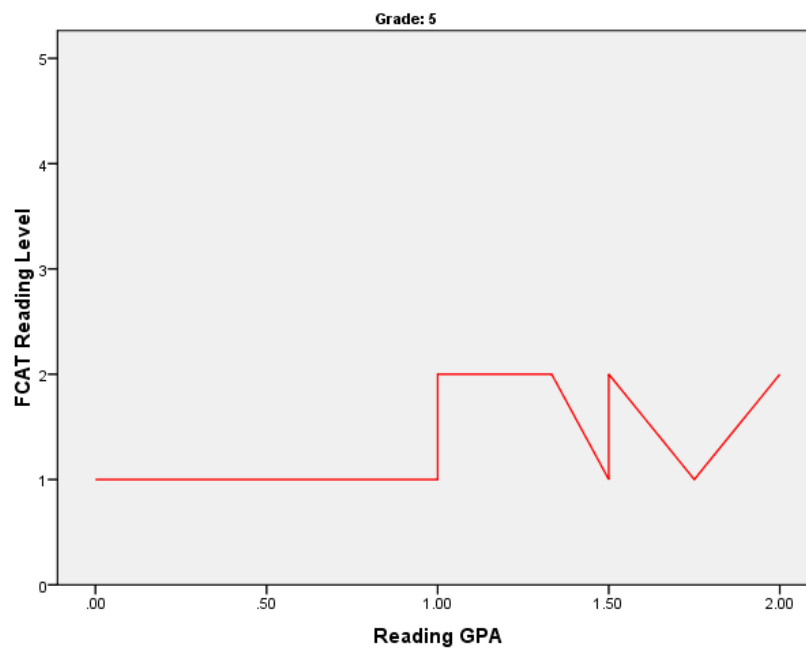
### *Sixth Graders- Math Scores*

The relationship between students' math grade point average (GPA) for all grading periods during their second grade school year and their FCAT math achievement level at third grade was analyzed using linear regression. The correlation was .547 ( $p < .05$ ), indicating that students' GPA in math during second grade accounts for 30% of the variation of their FCAT math achievement level. The regression coefficient was .730, indicating that for every one unit that GPA increased in math, students' FCAT math achievement level will increase by .730.

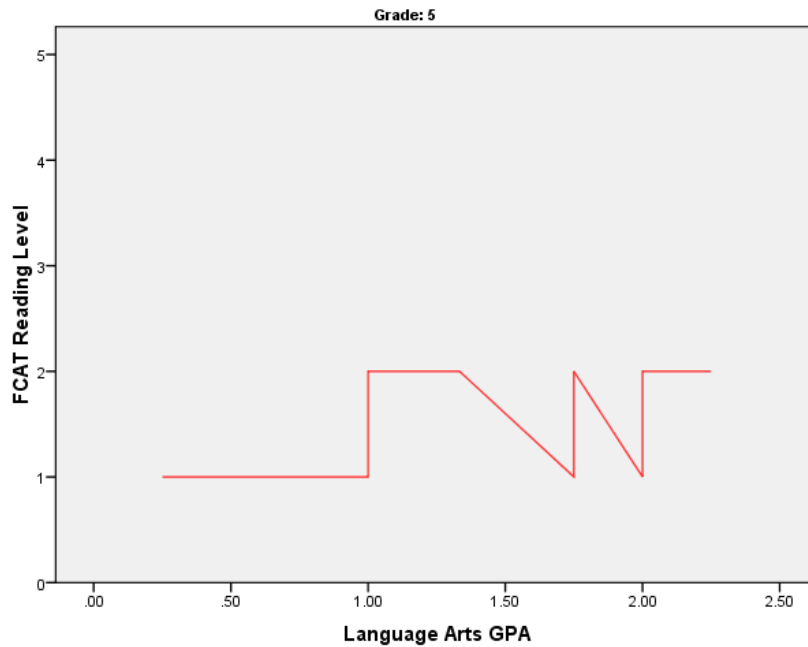


*Fifth Graders- Reading Scores*

The relationship between students' reading grade point average (GPA) for all grading periods during their second grade school year and their FCAT reading achievement level at third grade was analyzed using linear regression. The correlation was .514 ( $p > .05$ ), indicating that students' GPA in reading during second accounts for 26% of the variation of their FCAT reading achievement level. The regression coefficient was .413. Having a p value greater than .05 indicates that students' reading grades were not a significant predictor for their reading achievement level in their FCAT when they were in second grade.

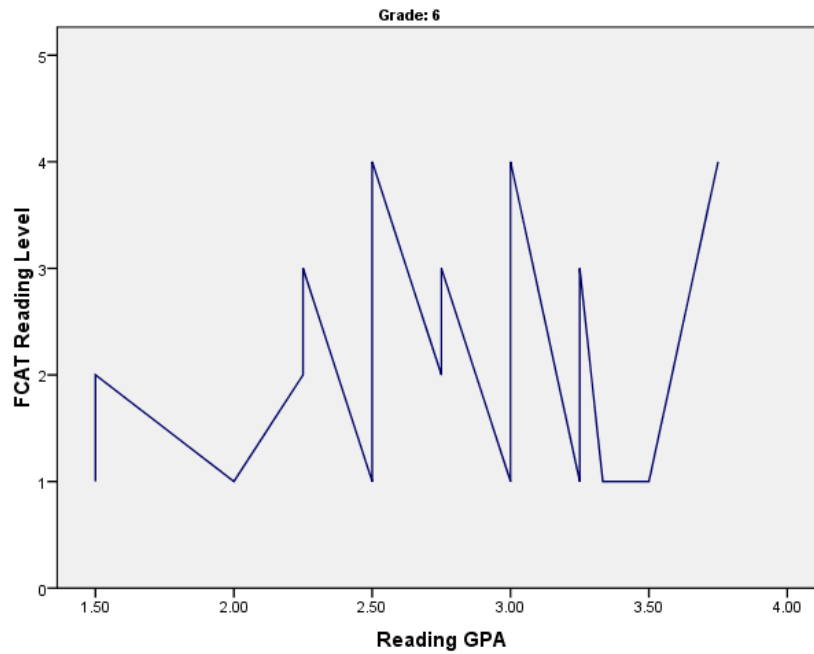


The relationship between students' language arts GPA and their FCAT reading achievement level was also analyzed. The correlation was .307 ( $p > .05$ ), indicating that students' GPA in language arts during second grade accounts for 9% of the variation of their FCAT reading achievement level. The regression coefficient was .226. Having a p value greater than .05 indicates that students' reading grades were not a significant predictor for their reading achievement level in their FCAT when they were in second grade.

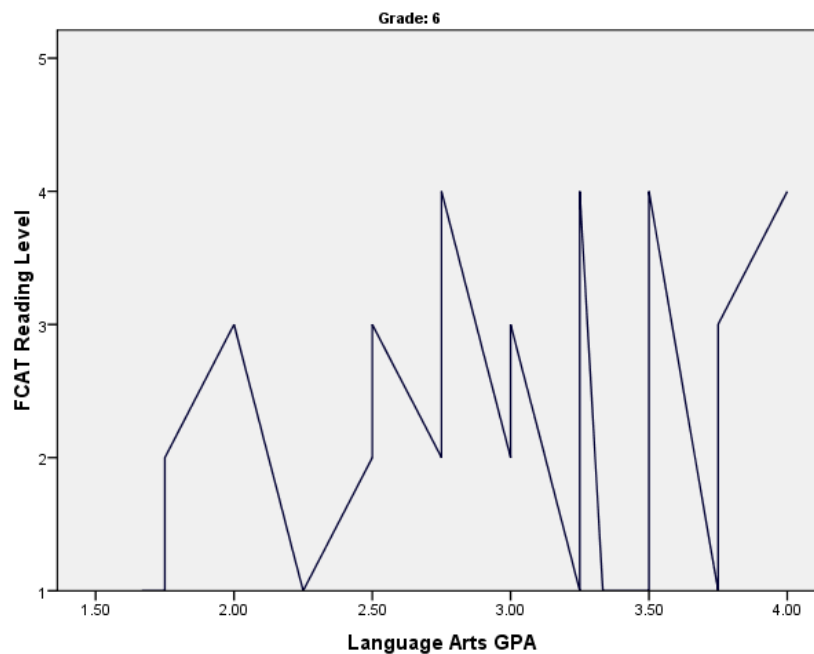


#### *Sixth Graders- Reading Scores*

The relationship between students' reading grade point average (GPA) for all grading periods during their second grade school year and their FCAT reading achievement level at third grade was analyzed using linear regression. The correlation was .383 ( $p > .05$ ), indicating that students' GPA in reading during second grade accounts for 15% of the variation of their FCAT reading achievement level. The regression coefficient was .728. Having a p value greater than .05 indicates that students' reading grades were not a significant predictor for their reading achievement level in their FCAT when they were in second grade.



The relationship between students' language arts GPA and their FCAT reading achievement level was also analyzed. The correlation was .466 ( $p < .05$ ), indicating that students' GPA in language arts during second grade accounts for 18% of the variation of their FCAT reading achievement level. The regression coefficient was .761, indicating that for every one unit that GPA increased in language arts, students' FCAT reading achievement level will increase by .761.

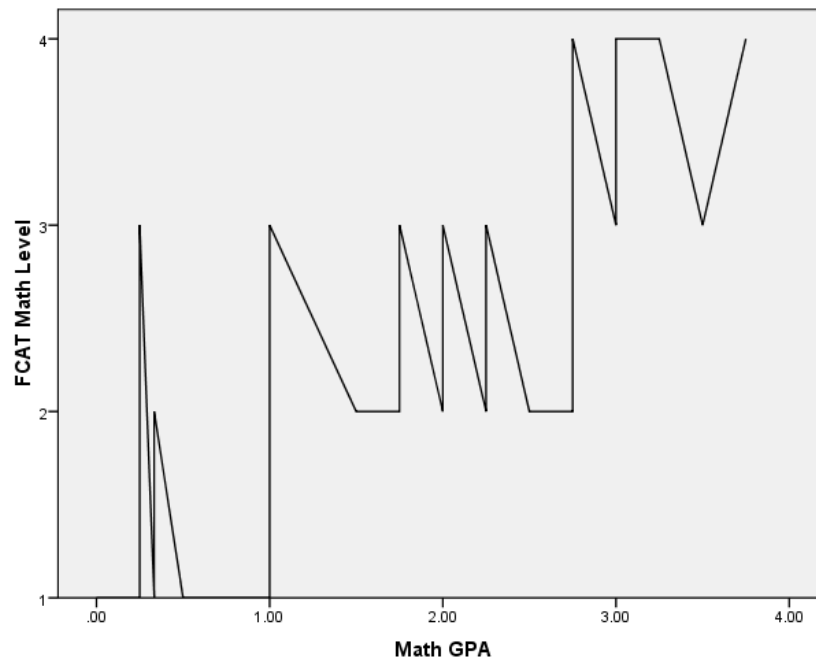


## Results- Third Grade

### *Fifth & Sixth Graders - Math Achievement Level*

The relationship between students' math grade point average (GPA) for all grading periods during their third grade school year and their FCAT math achievement level was analyzed using linear regression.

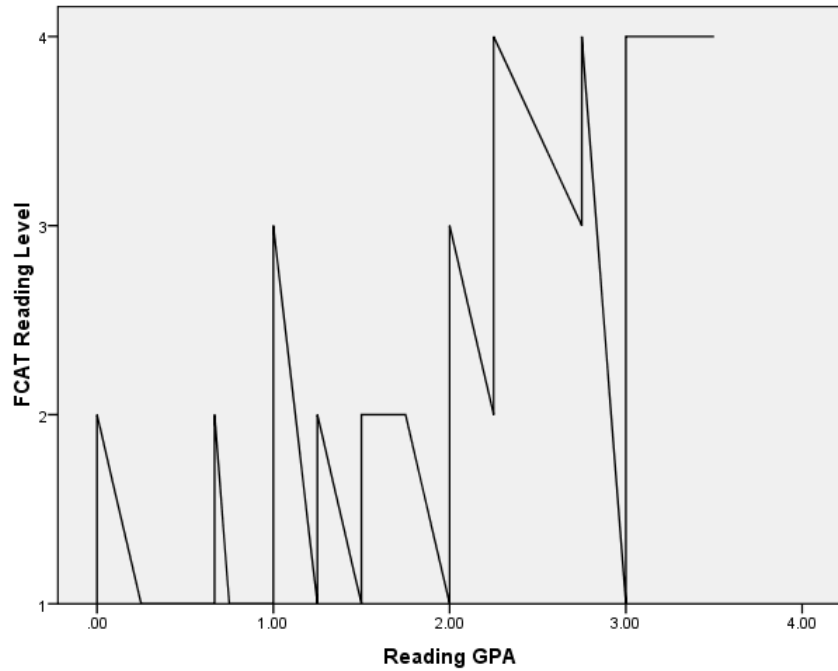
The correlation was .769 ( $p < .05$ ), indicating that students' GPA in math during third grade accounts for 59% of the variation of their FCAT math achievement level. The regression coefficient was .708, indicating that for every one unit that GPA increased in math, students' FCAT math achievement level will increase by .708.



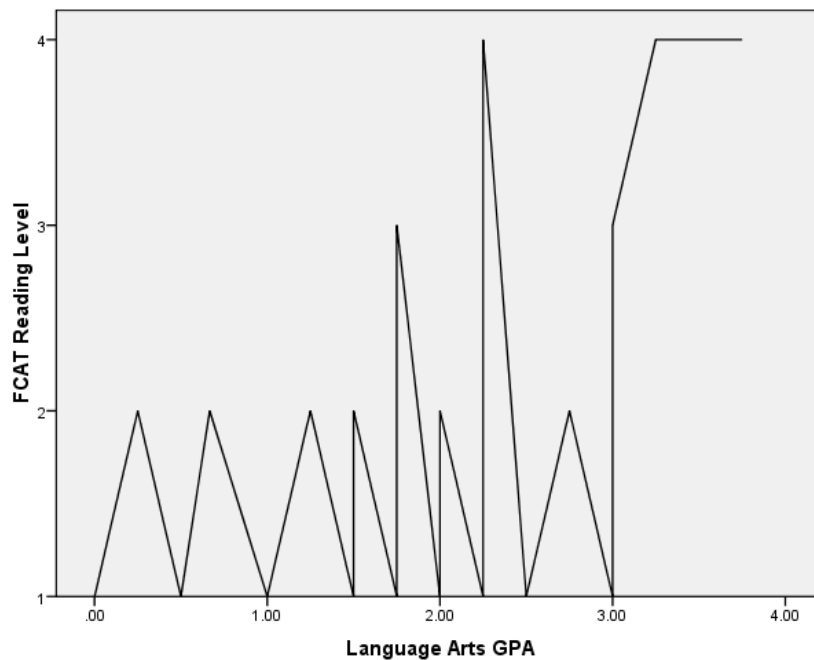
### *Fifth & Sixth Graders- Reading Scores*

The relationship between students' reading grade point average (GPA) for all grading periods during their third grade school year and their FCAT reading achievement level was analyzed using linear regression. The correlation was .713 ( $p < .05$ ), indicating that students' GPA in reading during third grade accounts for 51% of the variation of their FCAT Reading achievement level. The regression

coefficient was .745, indicating that for every one unit that GPA increased in reading, students' FCAT reading achievement level will increase by .745.



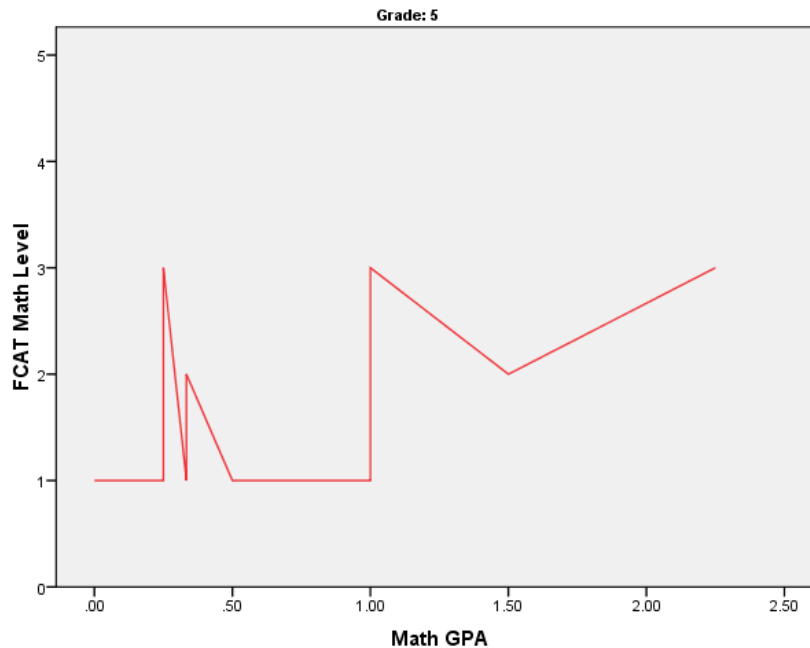
The relationship between students' language arts GPA and their FCAT reading achievement level was also analyzed. The correlation was .660 ( $p < .05$ ), indicating that students' GPA in language arts during third grade accounts for 44% of the variation of their FCAT reading achievement level. The regression coefficient was .680, indicating that for every one unit that GPA increased in language arts, their FCAT reading achievement level will increase by .680.



### *Fifth Graders- Math Scores*

The relationship between students' math grade point average (GPA) for all grading periods during their third grade school year and their FCAT math achievement level was analyzed using linear regression.

The correlation was .540 ( $p > .05$ ), indicating that students' GPA in math during third grade accounts for 29% of the variation of their FCAT math achievement level. The regression coefficient was .733. Having a p value greater than .05 indicates that students' math grades were not a significant predictor for their math achievement level in their FCAT when they were in third grade.

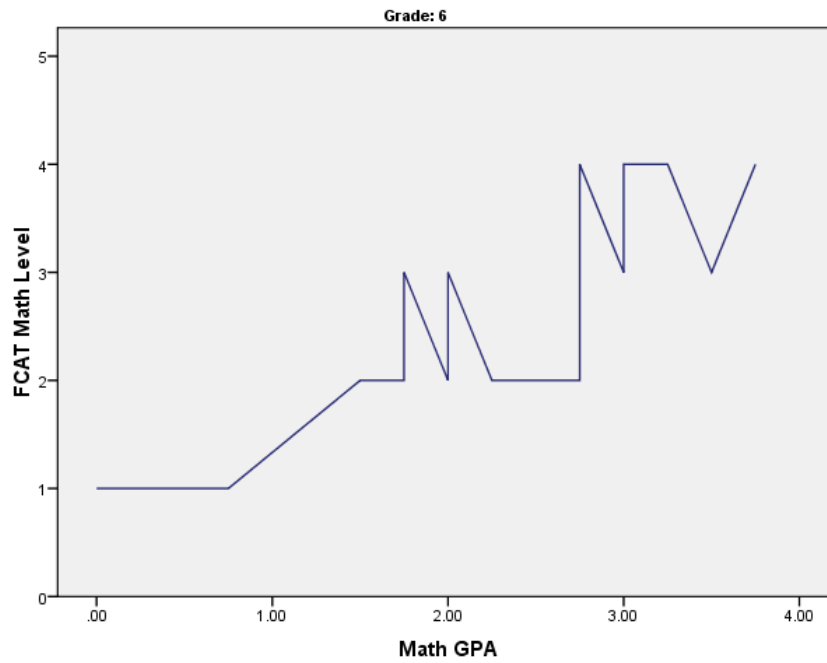


### *Sixth Graders- Math Scores*

The relationship between students' math grade point average (GPA) for all grading periods during their third grade school year and their FCAT math achievement level was analyzed using linear regression.

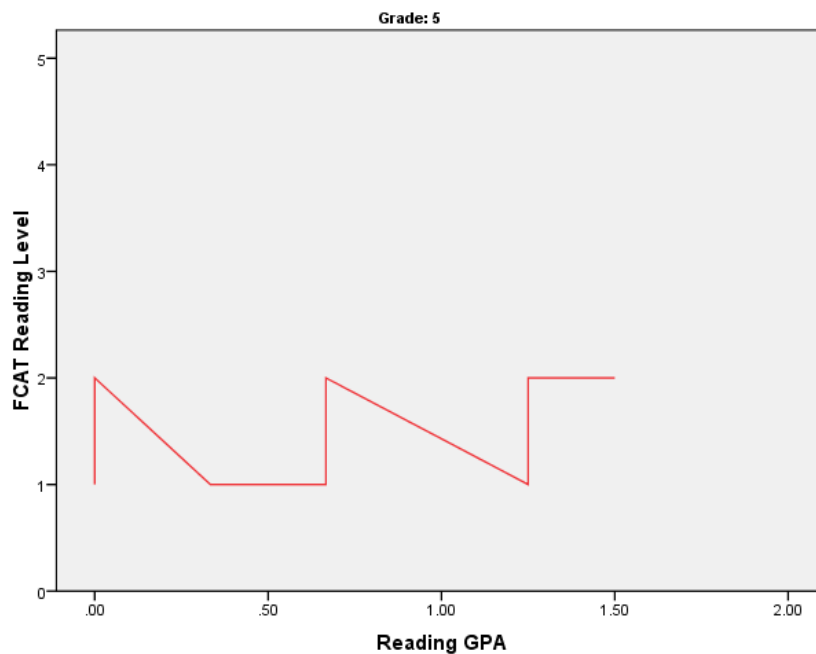
The correlation was .810 ( $p < .05$ ), indicating that students' GPA in math during third grade accounts for 66% of the variation of their FCAT math achievement level. The regression coefficient was .832, indicating that for every one unit that GPA increased in math, students' FCAT math achievement level will increase by .832.



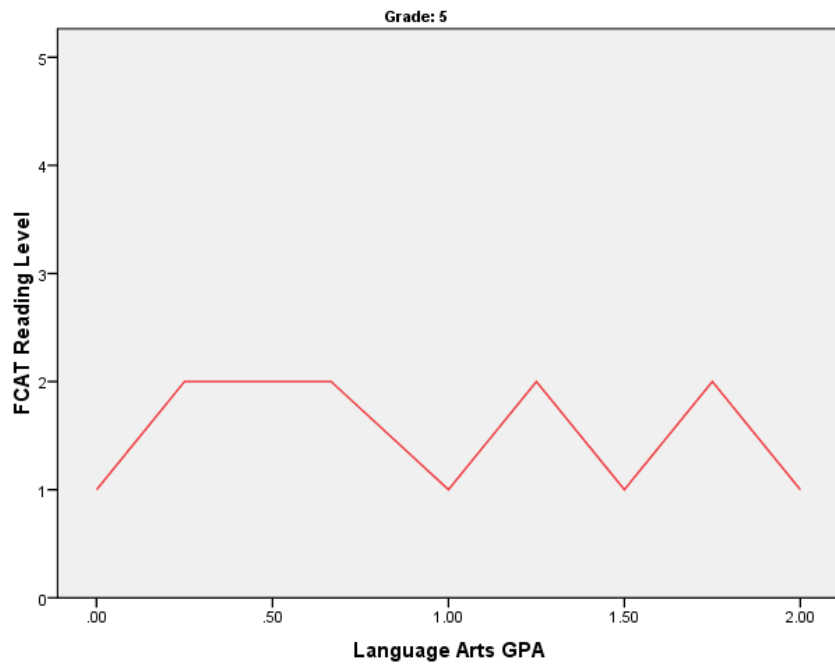


*Fifth Graders- Reading Scores*

The relationship between students' reading grade point average (GPA) for all grading periods during their third grade school year and their FCAT reading achievement level was analyzed using linear regression. The correlation was .289( $p > .05$ ), indicating that students' GPA in reading during third grade accounts for 8.4% of the variation of their FCAT reading achievement level. The regression coefficient was .263. Having a p value greater than .05 indicates that students' reading grades were not a significant predictor for their reading achievement level in their FCAT when they were in third grade.

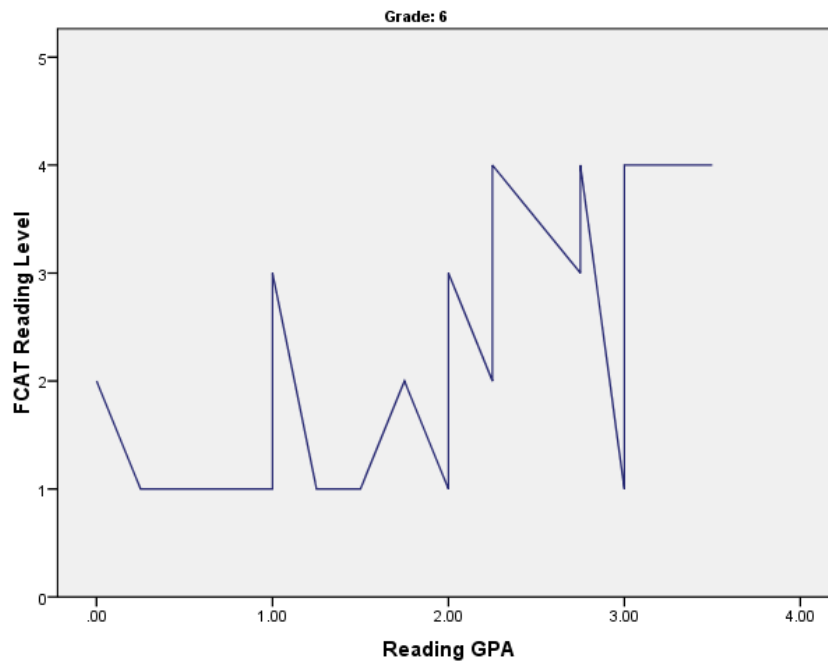


The relationship between students' language arts GPA and their FCAT reading achievement level was also analyzed. The correlation was .102 ( $p > .05$ ), indicating that students' GPA in language arts accounts for 1% of the variation of their FCAT reading achievement level with a regression coefficient of .072. Having a p value greater than .05 indicates that students' reading grades were not a significant predictor for their reading achievement level in their FCAT when they were in third grade.

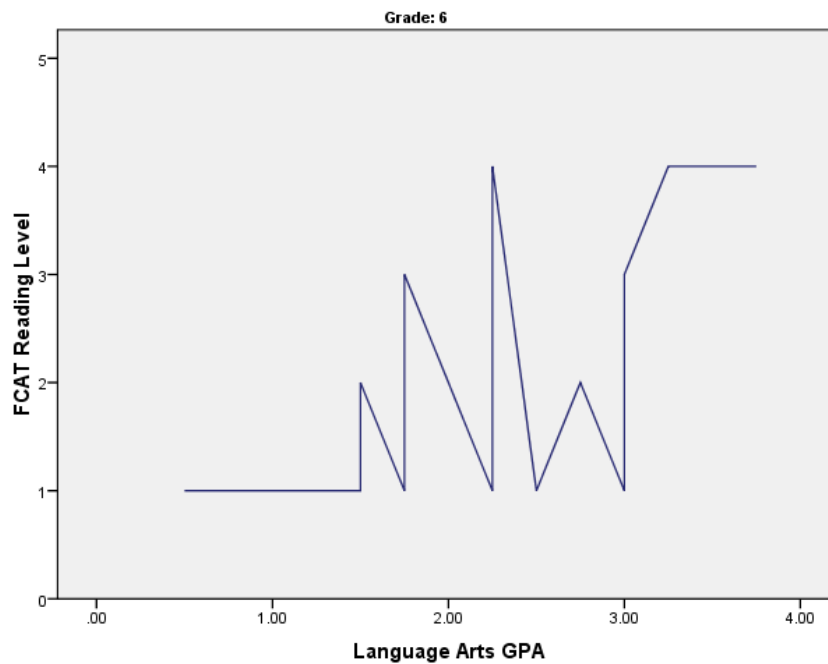


#### *Sixth Graders- Reading Scores*

The relationship between students' reading grade point average (GPA) for all grading periods during their third grade school year and their FCAT reading achievement level was analyzed using linear regression. The correlation was .688 ( $p < .05$ ), indicating that students' GPA in reading during third grade accounts for 47% of the variation of their FCAT Reading achievement level. The regression coefficient was .881, indicating that for every one unit that GPA increased in reading, students' FCAT reading achievement level will increase by .881.



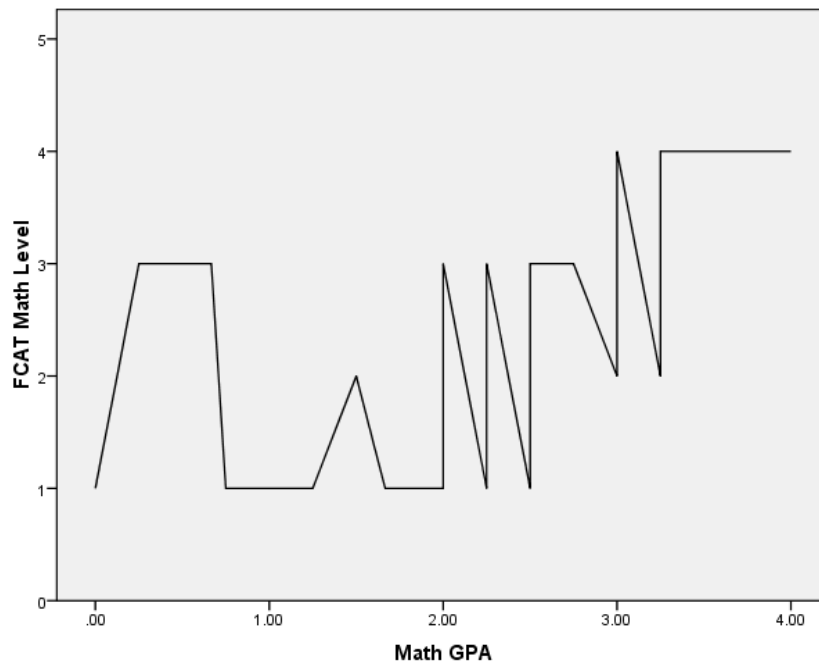
The relationship between students' language arts GPA and their FCAT reading achievement level was also analyzed. The correlation was .687 ( $p < .05$ ), indicating that students' GPA in language arts accounts for 47% of the variation of their FCAT reading achievement level. The regression coefficient was 1.04, indicating that for every one unit that GPA increased in language arts, their FCAT reading achievement level will increase by 1.04.



## Results- Fourth Grade

### *Fifth & Sixth Graders - Math Achievement Level*

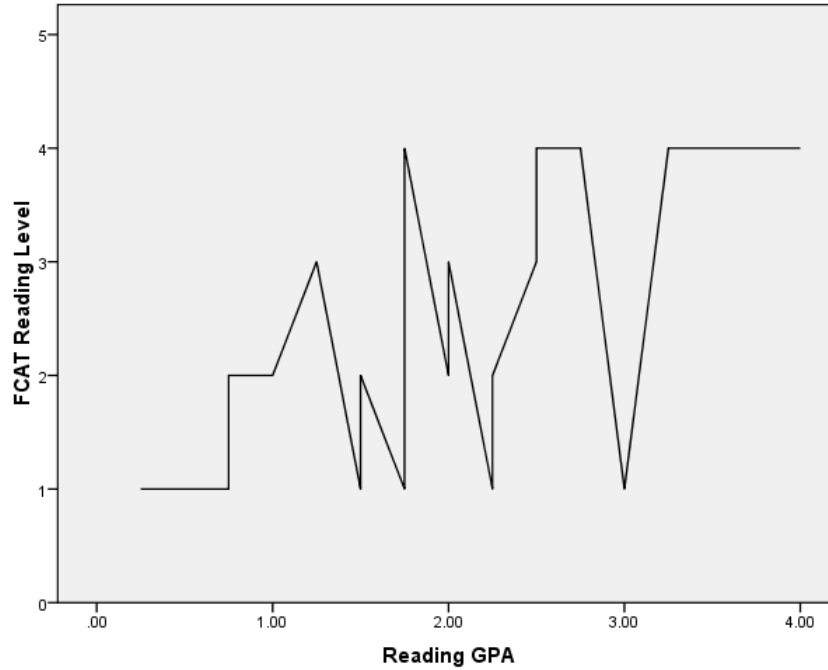
The relationship between students' math grade point average (GPA) for all grading periods during their fourth grade school year and their FCAT math achievement level was analyzed using linear regression. The correlation was .467 ( $p < .05$ ), indicating that students' GPA in math during fourth grade accounts for 22% of the variation of their FCAT math achievement level. The regression coefficient was .549, indicating that for every one unit that GPA increased in math, students' FCAT math achievement level will increase by .549.



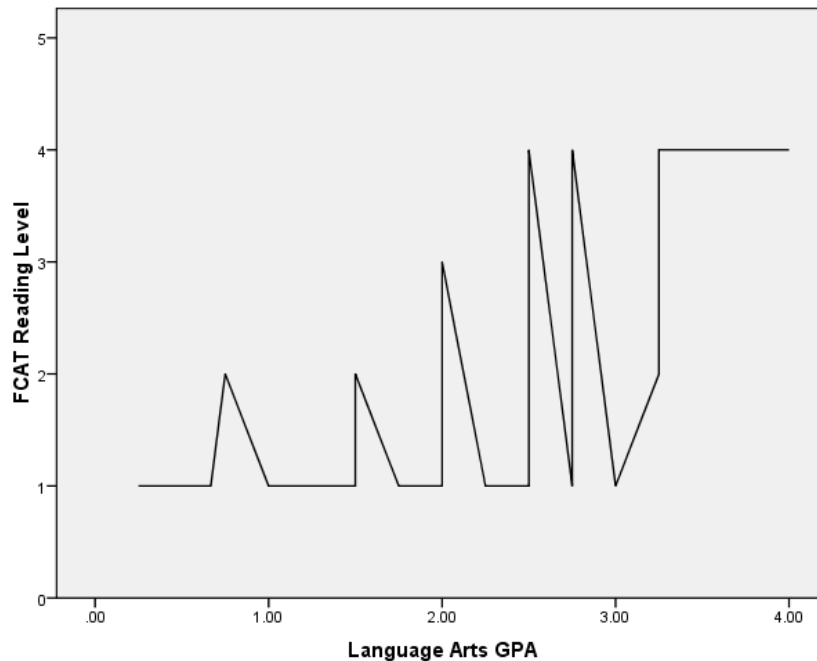
### *Fifth & Sixth Graders- Reading Scores*

The relationship between students' reading grade point average (GPA) for all grading periods during their fourth grade school year and their FCAT reading achievement level was analyzed using linear regression. The correlation was .622 ( $p < .05$ ), indicating that students' GPA in reading during fourth grade accounts for 39% of the variation of their FCAT Reading achievement level. The regression

coefficient was .852, indicating that for every one unit that GPA increased in reading, students' FCAT reading achievement level will increase by .852.



The relationship between students' language arts GPA and their FCAT reading achievement level was also analyzed. The correlation was .594 ( $p < .05$ ), indicating that students' GPA in language arts during fourth grade accounts for 35% of the variation of their FCAT reading achievement level. The regression coefficient was .810, indicating that for every one unit that GPA increased in language arts, their FCAT reading achievement level will increase by .810.

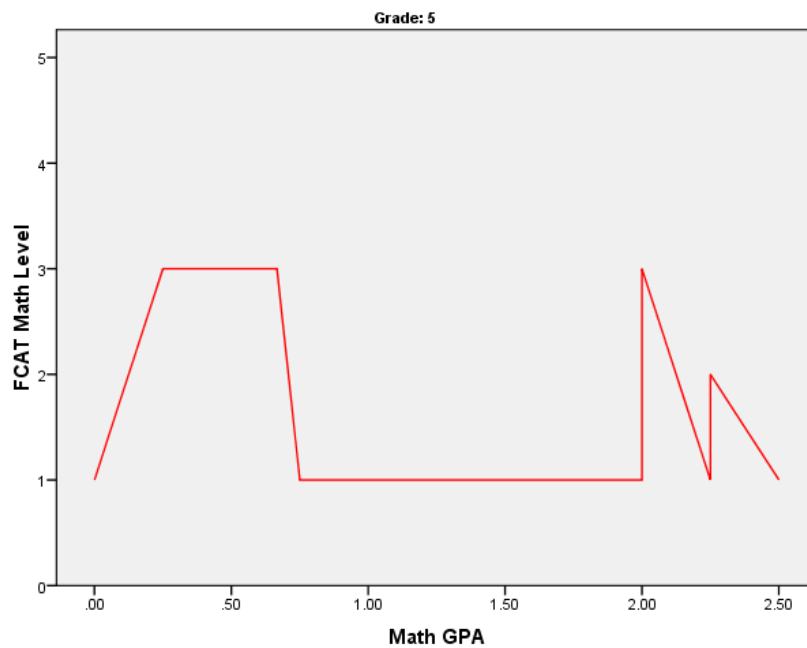


### *Fifth Graders- Math Scores*

The relationship between students' math grade point average (GPA) for all grading periods during their fourth grade school year and their FCAT math achievement level was analyzed using linear regression.

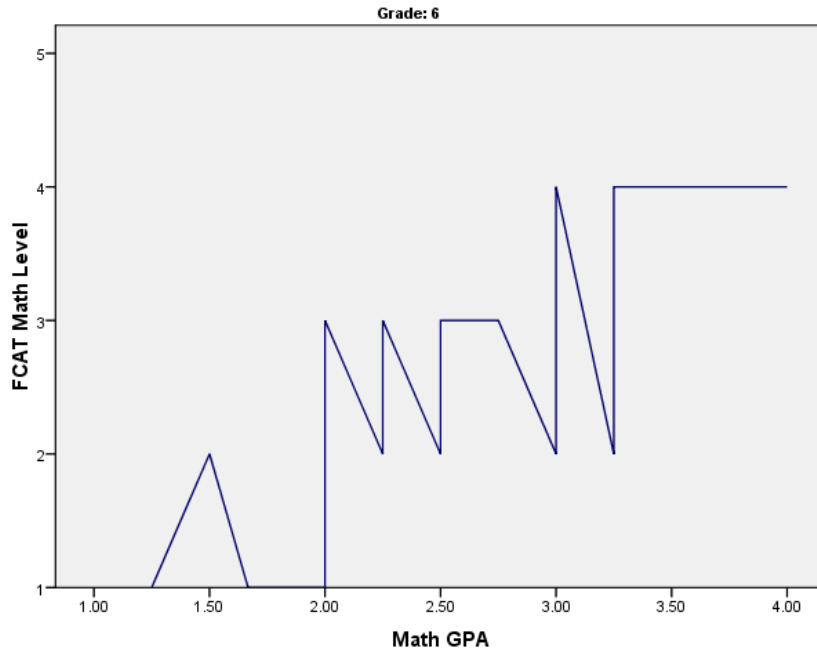
The correlation was .233 ( $p > .05$ ), indicating that students' GPA in math during fourth grade accounts for 5% of the variation of their FCAT math achievement level. The regression coefficient was -2.32.

Having a p value greater than .05 indicates that students' math grades were not a significant predictor for their math achievement level in their FCAT when they were in fourth grade.



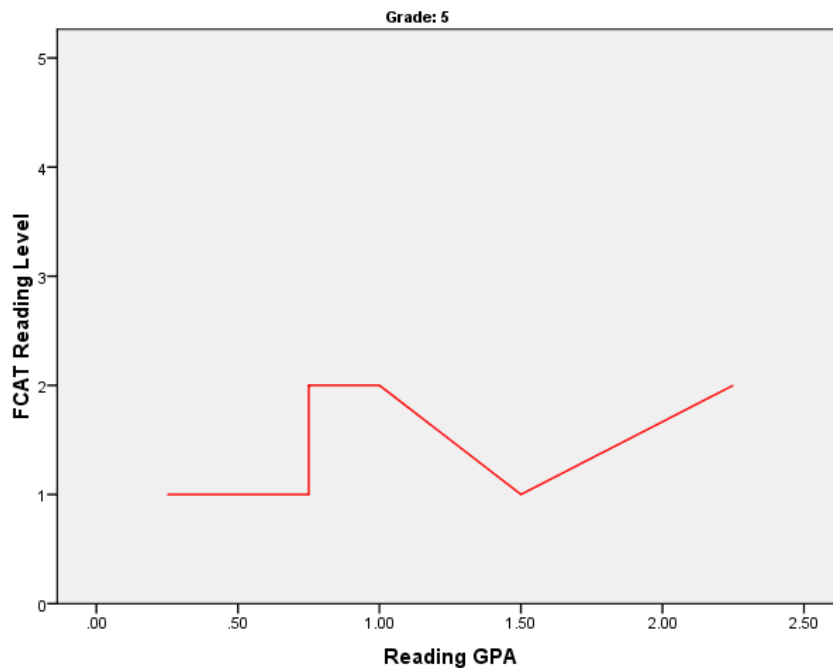
### *Sixth Graders- Math Scores*

The relationship between students' math grade point average (GPA) for all grading periods during their fourth grade school year and their FCAT math achievement level at third grade was analyzed using linear regression. The correlation was .697 ( $p < .05$ ), indicating that students' GPA in math during fourth grade accounts for 49% of the variation of their FCAT math achievement level. The regression coefficient was 1.06, indicating that for every one unit that GPA increased in math, students' FCAT math achievement level will increase by 1.06.

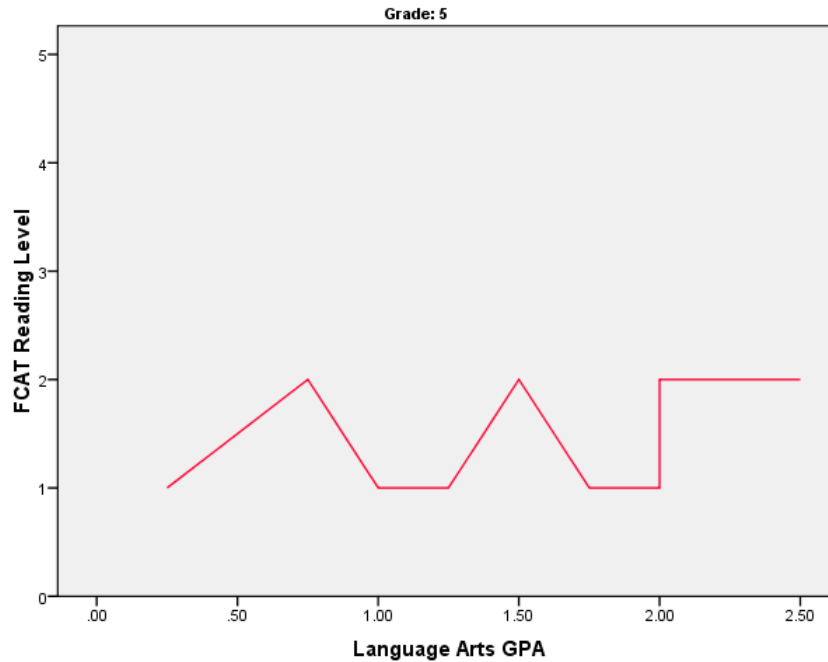


*Fifth Graders- Reading Scores*

The relationship between students' reading grade point average (GPA) for all grading periods during their fourth grade school year and their FCAT reading achievement level was analyzed using linear regression. The correlation was .468 ( $p > .05$ ), indicating that students' GPA in reading during fourth grade accounts for 22% of the variation of their FCAT reading achievement level. The regression coefficient was .348. Having a p value greater than .05 indicates that students' reading grades were not a significant predictor for their reading achievement level in their FCAT when they were in fourth grade.



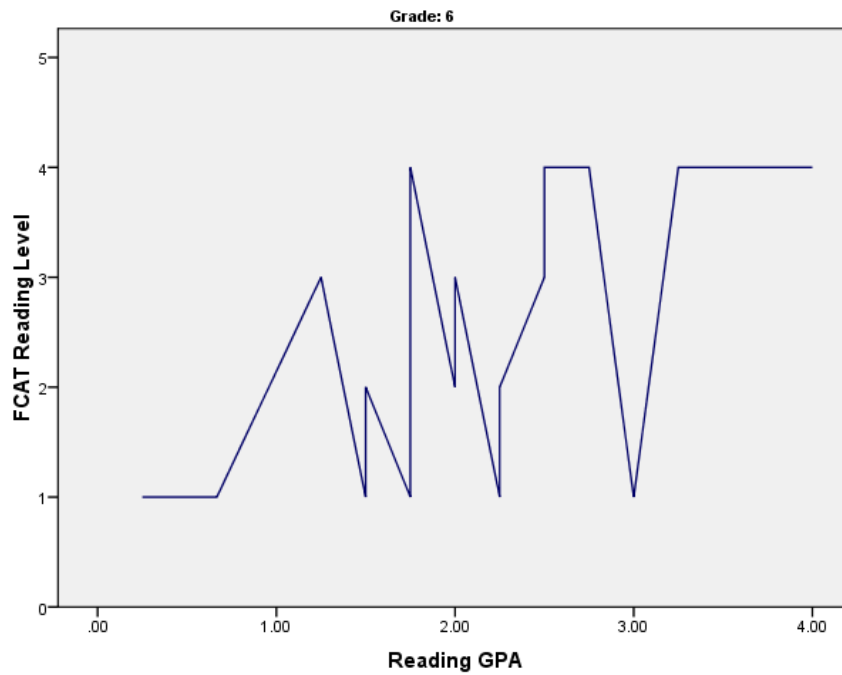
The relationship between students' language arts GPA and their FCAT reading achievement level was also analyzed. The correlation was .327 ( $p > .05$ ), indicating that students' GPA in language arts accounts for 11% of the variation of their FCAT reading achievement level with a regression coefficient of .245. Having a p value greater than .05 indicates that students' reading grades were not a significant predictor for their reading achievement level in their FCAT when they were in fourth grade.



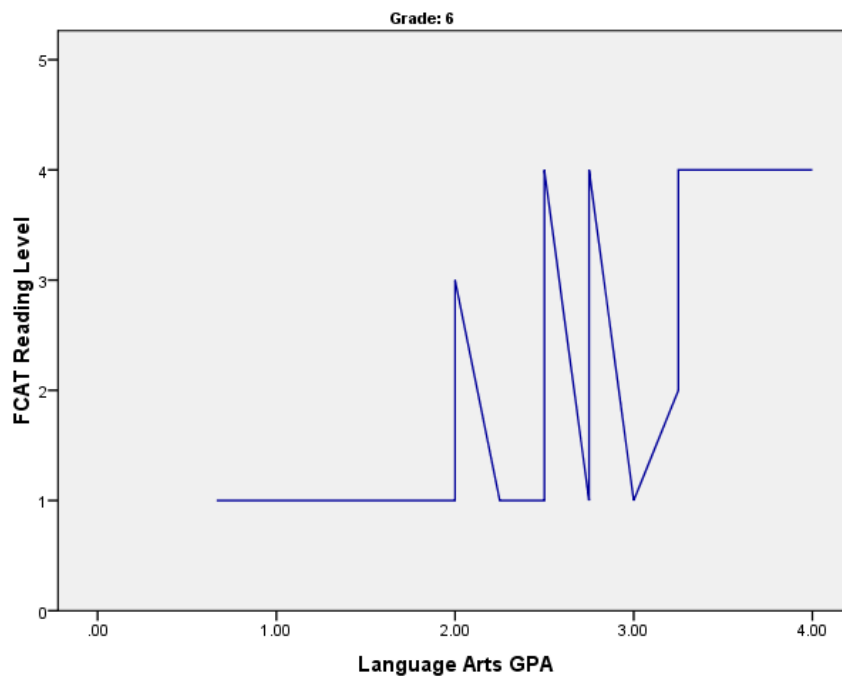
#### *Sixth Graders- Reading Scores*

The relationship between students' reading grade point average (GPA) for all grading periods during their fourth grade school year and their FCAT reading achievement level was analyzed using linear regression. The correlation was .585 ( $p < .05$ ), indicating that students' GPA in reading during fourth grade accounts for 34% of the variation of their FCAT Reading achievement level. The regression coefficient was .926, indicating that for every one unit that GPA increased, students' FCAT reading achievement level will increase by .926.





The relationship between students' language arts GPA and their FCAT reading achievement level was also analyzed. The correlation was .563 ( $p < .05$ ), indicating that students' GPA in language arts accounts for 32% of the variation of their FCAT reading achievement level. The regression coefficient was .971, indicating that for every one unit increase their GPA, their FCAT reading achievement level will increase by .971.



### *Discussion*

Statistical analysis suggests that students' academic grades are a predictor for the FCAT reading and math outcomes. For this specific sample, students' gender, race, and unexcused absences from school did not have any significant correlations with their FCAT outcomes and accounts for little variance. For those students who were in fifth grade, it seems that when it comes to their academic grades for math and reading did not have a significant role in their FCAT achievement level outcomes. However, this was not the case for students who were in sixth grade. The *t* test analyses that were conducted suggested that math achievement levels were not determined by which school students attended. One plausible explanation for this can be the mentorship program students received through the *I Have a Dream-Overtown* program.

## Conclusion

Overtown itself is symbolic of the struggles confronting the Dreamers. Originally called Colored Town, it grew to become a vibrant center for Black culture and commerce up through the middle of the century. It was home to thriving businesses, churches and schools. The Overtown of the thirties and forties produced the generation of socially conscious, educated Blacks who helped overturn the racist policies that had created Overtown in the first place. Their success, the generation of the fifties and sixties ironically helped insure its demise.

With the opening of opportunities for African Americans in the sixties and seventies also came the dissolution of black, inner city communities. They became pockets of poverty and crime, not the enclaves of creativity and commerce they had been. Hastening the decline of Overtown was the wholesale partitioning of the community by the highway building of the 1950's with its bulldozing of entire neighborhoods. With rows of single family housing being replaced by government subsidized apartment buildings, the neighborhood changed forever.

Overtown became a flash point for racial division (and even riots), and an easy target for an invasion of drug dealers and petty criminals. This continued even through the prosperous years of the 1990s when Miami became a rising center for commerce and culture. While skyscrapers, luxury apartment buildings, and a world-class performing arts complex rose in plain sight, Overtown itself remained unchanged, in the shadows.

Warehouses and car body shops populate the commercial areas just outside the neighborhood. Rows of two and three story cement block apartment buildings line the streets adjacent to the school. Few single-family homes remain. Almost no green space exists. It is in this harsh environment that Dreamers try to grow.

The results for the program are so far mixed. It is commendable that the program after six years has only lost 11 of its original 51 students and even picked a second cohort of 19 (non-college commitment) students. This is a victory in and of itself. This rate of attrition would be expected to be higher during the first years because of a natural settling and adjusting. The children and families that remain, however, should constitute a more stable population. If more than a handful of children leave during the next six years this would indicate that the program has not been able to insulate the children from the coming challenges and the raised expectations of middle and high school.

The student's grades and FCAT scores are considerably better than their "non Dreamer" counterparts at Phillis Wheatley, but they still lag behind district averages, and are not near where they need to be to excel. The majority of the students are still scoring below acceptable (3), and few are in the upper reaches (4 and 5) of the FCAT. This will need to change in order for these students to compete effectively in the more elite high schools. The only thing to do is redouble the efforts, and stress to the children that the standards that they will be held to will keep getting harder.

Much depends on the many unknowns still to come. Mark and Margie Buchbinder are working to find a Middle School that takes the children out of their neighborhood and exposes them to higher achieving children. Some of the children are looking at magnet schools or scholarships to private schools (one student received a scholarship to attend the elite all girls school Carrollton). The current economic downturn in Miami will determine how much outside funding is available and how much economic opportunity the families have. The constancy and stability of the staff will also have a tremendous effect on whether the group can stay together.

Eric plays such a central role for the Dreamers that it is hard to see the program without his stamp on it. This is both good and bad. Certainly there are many others who are committed to the program and provide important support roles (not the least of which are the Buchbinder's themselves). But having a

program rely so much on a single person is not a good long-term strategy. It also puts an unfair burden of responsibility on one person. If Eric were to leave, the program would hire another coordinator (maybe someone already in the sphere of the program), but it would take time for the students and their parents to develop the same type of relationship. The program should start thinking about bringing in additional support. This is also a time in the program in which the girls are entering the difficult period of adolescence. It seems that having a female mentor with a similar background to Eric's would help strengthen the program's ability to support the girls. A strong female and male presence working together would also be beneficial to both the girls and boys, helping them develop multi-dimensional gender identities, instead of one dimensional, media-fed stereotypes.

Success is a relative term. It is important for the program to define reasonable goals to shoot for and possibly succeed. Working with the national IHAD program and with similar programs in Miami-Dade will be helpful to setting reasonable expectations for the Overtown cohort as the program goes forward. Having realistic goals for how many children are likely to stay with the program, graduate from high school, and go on to two and four year colleges is helpful for setting the future agenda and personalizing the program for the students. After six years in the program, the team has a pretty good idea of the composition of the students. Doing some targeted brainstorming about each child's potential and abilities might help to decide the best course of action for individual students.

Keeping the students together in the same school is certainly a good goal, but this analysis suggests that the students can do just as well if they attend other schools but remain connected by their enrichment activities and mentoring. Students should be encouraged to look at charter or magnet schools that fit their specific talents, and those that prove to be truly outstanding should be encouraged to look for scholarships to some of Miami-Dade's elite private or public schools. By having diverse educational experiences they can help expand each other's sphere of knowledge.

What the Dreamers are getting at Phillis Wheatley Elementary School is nothing less than what all at-risk students in this country deserve. After-school tutoring is a must for students who many not have anyone to help them with homework at home; as are enrichment activities so that their world extends beyond the borders of Overtown, exposure to the arts so that they can fully enjoy the cultural heritage of civilization, career and college counseling so that they understand the culture of success and are not afraid of it, good teachers who have high expectations for them, and a school administration that is willing to work flexibly with the teachers and parents. And even this is sometimes not enough.

The IHAD program has done a heroic effort to keep a highly mobile, at risk population connected to the goals of the program. Some children have gone to other schools but continued on in the program. That shows commitment. Many academic gains have been made. Socially, the children feel that they can achieve. They are thinking about the future and looking forward to the challenges ahead. They want to be teachers, veterinarians, lawyers, doctors and writers just like other children their age. They, for the most part, still like school and are achieving noticeable success. When asked to read aloud from a novel, they proudly show off their reading skills. This is the good news.

The bad news is that the most difficult years are still ahead. If these children are going to continue to make progress they are going to need to overcome increased peer pressure and distractions that come with adolescence, plus the added dangers of crime, violence, and drugs associated with life in poor urban environments.

If IHAD- Overtown ultimately succeeds it will be primarily the result of those directly involved, but it will also be because the larger community in which it exists is affording the possibility to succeed. This larger community starts with the Buchbinder's, but extends to the Miami-Dade County Public Schools System, The Children's Trust, Miami Dade College, Florida International University and the many other arts and culture based organizations that have expanded the children's horizons. That is a good model

overall for this community--both external and internal forces, macro-systemic change and micro-systemic change complementing each other. And if this program continues the successes it has had in both bringing resources to children and community and improving the children academic and social outlook, it will be the exception that will hopefully become the rule.

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