

Children's Scholarship Fund Baltimore Academic Performance of Scholarship Recipients in the 2005 – 2006 School Year

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Children's Scholarship Fund Baltimore assessed the academic performance of students who received scholarships during the 2005 – 2006 school year. Language arts, math, science and social studies grades from report cards issued at the end of the school year were used. Academic performance for scholarship recipients in grades three through eight was assessed.

Based on the results of research sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education the academic performance for scholarship recipients in kindergarten through second grade was not assessed. This research suggested that children came to kindergarten with a variety of skill levels. In addition, this research suggested that children in the early academic grades, kindergarten through second grade, gained skills at different rates.

In 2003 the first wave of scholarship recipients entered high school and became Children's Scholarship Fund Baltimore alumni. Between 2003 and 2006 one hundred twenty-six alumni entered high school. Report cards were returned for less than half the alumni. As a result, their academic performance was not assessed.

Scholarship recipients were placed in three academic performance groups based on their grades.

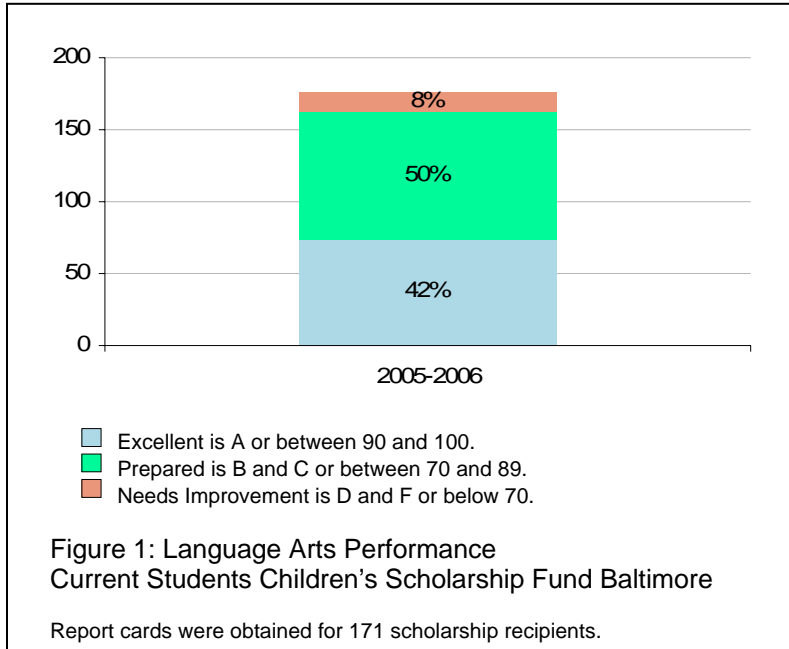
- **Excellent** includes A grades and grades between 90 and 100.
- **Prepared** includes B and C grades and grades between 70 and 89.
- **Needs Improvement** includes D and F grades and grades between 0 and 69.

Grades for the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Calvary Lutheran and several schools with a small number of scholarship recipients were recoded. B+ grades were changed to A and C+ grades were changed to B. These changes were made because three out of four numerical grades in the range were in the category used by the Children's Scholarship Fund.

Results of the Research

- One-third of the students earned "Excellent" math grades.
- Two out of five students earned "Excellent" grades in language arts, science and social studies.
- Three out of five students earned "Prepared" grades in math.
- Half the students earned "Prepared" grades in language arts, science and social studies.
- Less than one in ten students earned "Needs Improvement" grades in all the academic disciplines.

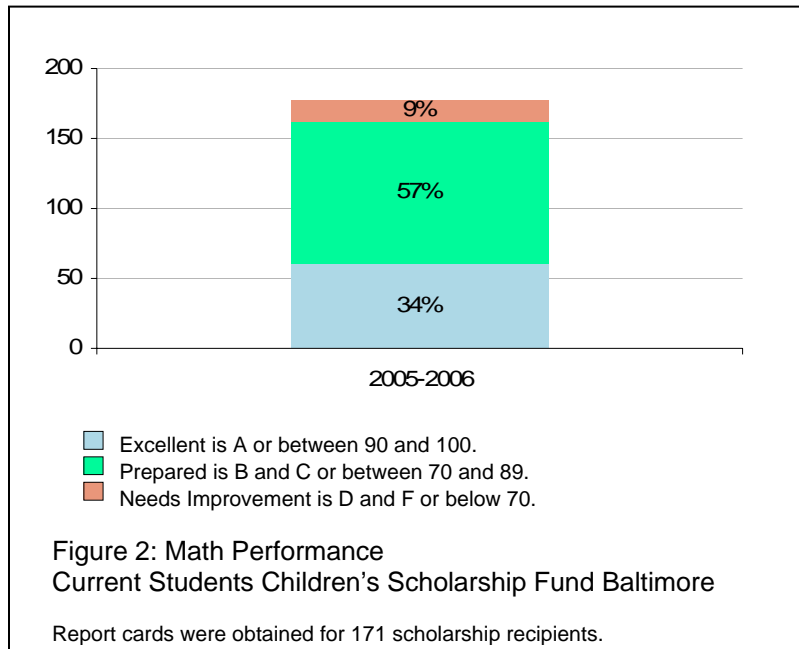
Language Arts



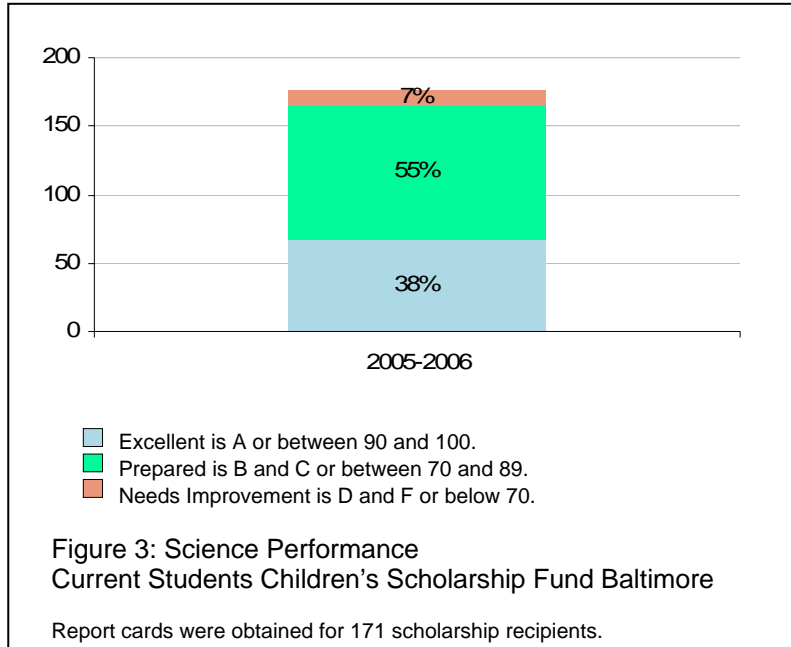
- About two out of five students (42%) earned “Excellent” grades.
- Half of the students (50%) were “Prepared”.
- Less than 1 in 10 (8%) of the students earned “Needs Improvement” grades.

Math

- About one-third of the students (34%) earned “Excellent” grades.
- About three out of five students (57%) were “Prepared”.
- Less than 1 in 10 (9%) of the students earned “Needs Improvement” grades.



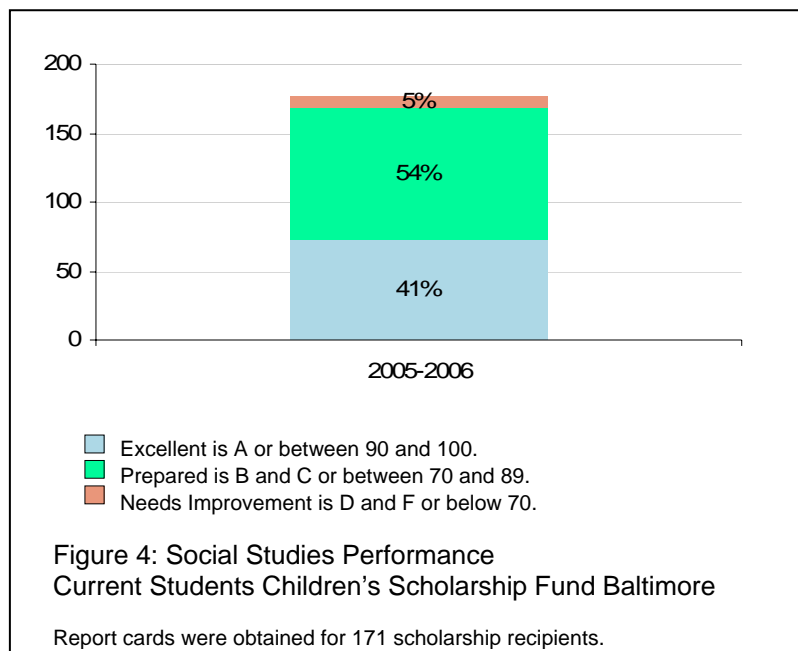
Science



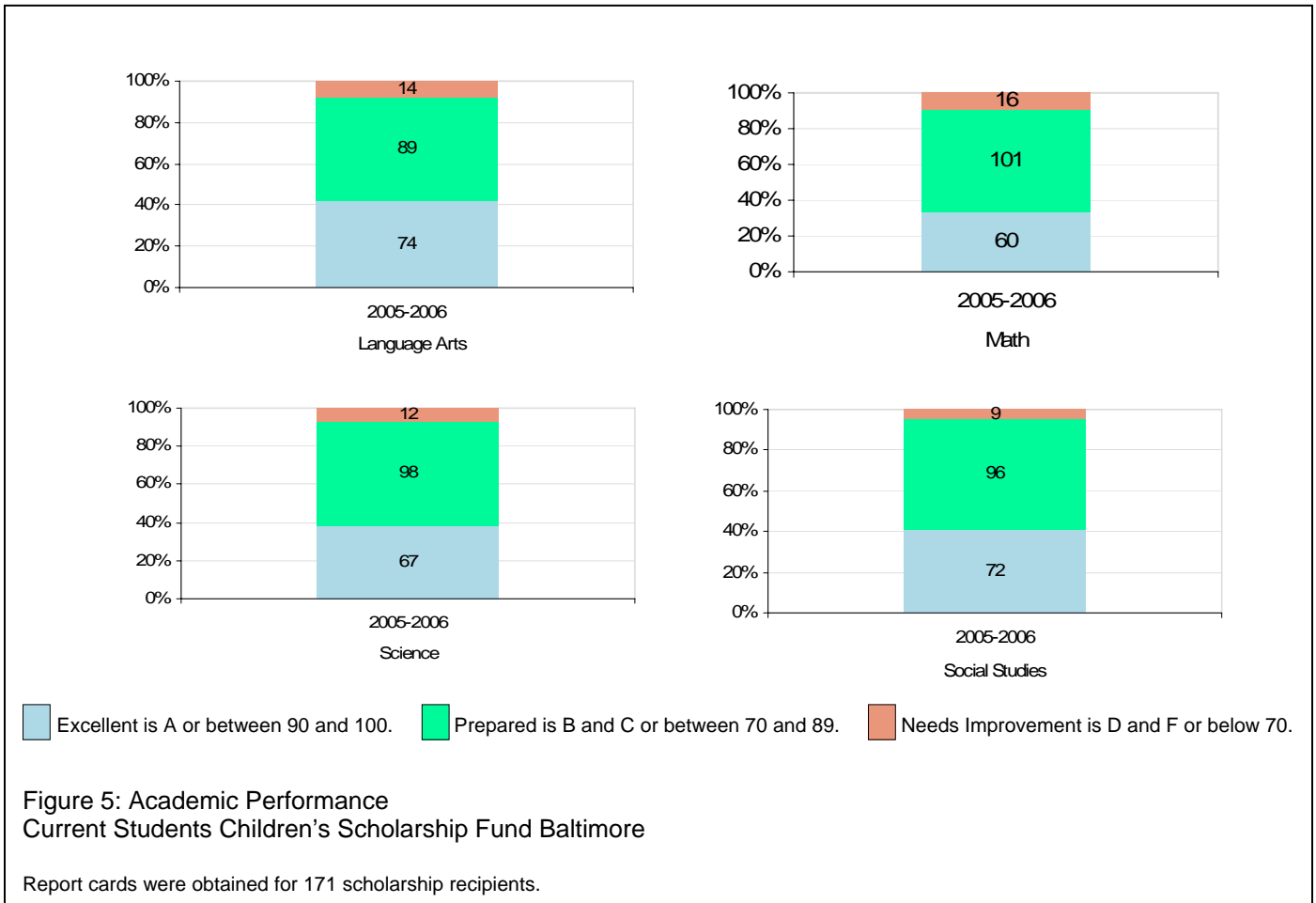
- About two out of five students (38%) earned “Excellent” grades.
- About half of the students (55%) were “Prepared”.
- Less than 1 in 10 (7%) of the students earned “Needs Improvement” grades.

Social Studies

- About two out of five students (41%) earned “Excellent” grades.
- About half of the students (54%) were “Prepared”.
- Less than 1 in 10 (5%) of the students earned “Needs Improvement” grades.



Academic Performance



About one-third of the students earned “Excellent” math grades while about two out of five students earned “Excellent” grades in language arts, science and social studies.

About half the students earned "Prepared" grades in language arts, science and social studies while about three out of five students earned “Prepared” grades in math.

Less than one in ten students earned “Needs Improvement” grades in all the academic disciplines.

Rationale for Recoding Grades

Grades for the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Calvary Lutheran and several schools with a small number of scholarship recipients were recoded. B+ grades were changed to A and C+ grades were changed to B. These changes were made because three out of four numerical grades in the range were in the A or B category used by the Children’s Scholarship Fund.

B+ grades at Archdiocese schools ranged from 89 – 92. Grades of 89 would not be in the “Excellent” range. However, grades of 90 through 92 were above the “Prepared” range. Children’s Scholarship Fund Baltimore decided to recode these B+ grades to A. It seemed likely that fewer students with a grade of 89 would be placed in the incorrect group. The alternative would involve placing students with three grades, 90 through 92, in the incorrect group.

At Calvary Lutheran B+ grades range from 90 – 91 were recoded because they were in the “Excellent” range.

Similar rationale was used to recode C+ grades.

Assessing Academic Success for Children in Early Academic Years

Children's Scholarship Fund Baltimore did not report academic performance for scholarship recipients in grades kindergarten through second grade. A research project sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998–99 (ECLS-K) informed the Children's Scholarship Fund Baltimore's position.

The ECLS-K research demonstrated that children in the early academic grades, kindergarten through second grade, came to school with a variety of skill levels and gained skills at different rates.

Children entered kindergarten with a wide variety of cognitive and general knowledge skills that include reading and mathematics (West 2000.) Gains were made in reading and math skills during kindergarten (West 2000.) However, children developed specific knowledge and skills (e.g. letter recognition, letter sound connections, relative size and numbers) at different rates. (West 2000.) According to Denton (2002), “Both reports revealed that while first-time kindergartners are similar in many ways, their knowledge and skills differ in relation to their age at school entry, race/ethnicity, health status, home educational experiences, and child care histories.”

Schools have chosen to use multiple measures of cognitive and general knowledge skills due to young children’s wide variation in skills and gains. The Early Childhood Center, Indiana Institute on Disability and Community (Indiana 2006) summarized this practice:

“The design of individual assessment and program evaluation practices provides multiple approaches to finding out what children know and can do in order to equitably assess individual learning, development, and educational progress.”

Reports cards collected from the Children's Scholarship Fund Baltimore's kindergarten to second grade scholarship recipients in 2006 demonstrated the use of multiple measures. For example:

- Archdiocese of Baltimore report cards included eight language arts, eight language development, twelve reading and thirteen math skills.
- Bethlehem Christian Day School report cards included eleven language arts, eleven reading, five oral expression, four spelling, fourteen math, two science and two social studies skills.
- Yeshivas Chofetz Chaim report cards included two reading, three written language, oral expression, math, science and social studies skills.

Because current research demonstrated young children’s variations in skills and gains, the Children's Scholarship Fund Baltimore began tracking of academic performance with scholarship recipients in the third grade.

Response Rate

Three hundred thirty-seven students in grades three through eight received scholarships for the 2005 – 2006 school year. One hundred seventy-one report cards were obtained. The response rate was fifty-one percent.

The percentage of report cards for each grade was a reasonably close match with the percentage of students in each grade.

Table 1
Report Cards Returned

Grade	Number of Scholarship Recipients	Percent of Scholarship Recipients	Number of Report Cards Returned	Percent of Report Cards Returned
Third	131	39%	62	36%
Fourth	51	15%	20	12%
Fifth	53	16%	24	14%
Sixth	66	20%	42	25%
Seventh	33	10%	20	12%
Eighth	3	1%	3	2%

Because Children's Scholarship Fund summarized the data by grouping children according to academic performance, determining the response rate needed for a ninety-five percent confidence level was not necessary.

Data Collection Procedures

A letter was sent to parents of three hundred thirty-seven current scholarship recipients and parents of one hundred twenty-six alumni.

Phone calls were made to parents. At least two attempts were made to reach parents with busy, message or no answer phone contacts.

Thirty-seven parents of current students could not be reached by phone due to busy signal (3), no answer (11), no longer at number or disconnected (14) and wrong number (9).

Thirty-six parents of alumni could not be reached by phone due to busy signal (12), no answer (4), no longer at number or disconnected (16) and wrong number (4).

Messages were left for ninety-eight parents of current students and twenty-eight parents of alumni.

The decision to eliminate scholarship recipients in kindergarten through second grade was made after report cards were collected.

The number of report cards collected for scholarship recipients in kindergarten to second grade was not counted.

A decision was made to restrict research to current scholarship recipients because nine out of ten scholarship recipients (91%) who left the program before eighth grade had been in the program for three years or less.

References

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