

REPORT OF THE EDUCATE 200 FOUNDATION
TO THE WHEATON-WARRENVILLE DISTRICT 200 COMMUNITY

Hubble Huskies: Leading the Pack in Learning

*Middle School Academic Achievement Growth
Compared With Elementary Academic Achievement in District 200
July 2006*

Executive Summary

District 200 student achievement test results show that Hubble Middle School ranks number one among the four District 200 middle schools in Total Growth, Overall Achievement Growth, and ISAT Growth achieved by its students, based on current (2004-2005) test scores. Hubble's success is even more impressive when considering that (1) at 24.7 students Hubble had the largest class size of all four middle schools (almost three students per class more than number two-ranked Franklin at 21.85 students), and (2) Hubble is the largest middle school in the District, with 48 percent more students than Franklin. The following table shows achievement growth, defined as each middle school's success in raising the percentage of its students who meet or exceed Illinois learning standards for ISAT and overall achievement, compared with the achievements of their peers at the elementary schools feeding each middle school.

School	Total Growth	Overall Achievement Growth	ISAT Achievement Growth
1. HUBBLE	+ 3.00	+ 4.45	+ 1.56
2. Franklin	+ 1.96	+ 3.48	+ 0.45
3. Edison	+ 0.74	+ 1.68	- 0.20
4. Monroe	- 7.38	- 9.67	- 5.08

We believe these results, compiled from official District 200 records by the EDUCATE 200 Foundation as part of our recent study described in this report, demonstrate that Hubble truly exemplifies District 200's mission "to inspire, educate, challenge, and support all students to reach their highest level of learning and personal development." We encourage those who have criticized Hubble's learning environment to take a look at these numbers, and we congratulate the students, staff, and support personnel at Hubble for their achievements.

We especially encourage parents who have expressed concern about the learning environment at Hubble to take pride in the fact that, despite some significant challenges in achievement levels facing some of the elementary schools that feed into Hubble, their Hubble students are thriving.

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I. INTRODUCTION – Why We Conducted Our Study

Hubble Middle School has been publicly criticized by District 200 School Board members and some administrators. They have claimed, among other things, that Hubble provides a “substandard” learning environment that does not meet the needs of today’s middle school students (Superintendent’s Newsletter, December 2004). These statements have caused some members of the Warrenville and Wheaton communities to feel that Hubble is inferior, and that their children are at an academic disadvantage because they attend Hubble Middle School.

In light of these criticisms, we decided to study the academic results of all four District 200 Middle Schools to determine, using objective data, how the schools actually compare. We used the key quantitative measure of academic achievement publicly available from District 200: achievement test scores showing the percentage of students at each school who *met or exceeded Illinois Learning Standards*. (For a note on why we chose to use these test results, see *Caveats*, Section III.)

Considering only raw test scores, the percentage of Hubble students who meet or exceed state standards ranked second or third among the District’s four middle schools during 2004-2005, as shown in **Table 1**, below.

Table 1 – Middle School Basic Achievement Rank, 2004-2005

Source: 2004-05 School Year Report Card District Summary, Part 6, District 200

School/Rank	2004 Overall	2005 Overall	2004 ISAT	2005 ISAT	Average Rank
Edison	1	1	1	1	1.00
Hubble	3	2	3	3	2.75
Franklin	2	4	2	4	3.00
Monroe	4	3	4	2	3.25

Still, looking at raw test scores alone can be misleading, because demographic and socioeconomic factors are not consistent across all schools in the District. For example, it would be unfair to compare raw student achievement scores from one school with a relatively high percentage of limited English proficiency students to another school where almost all students speak English as their first language. We decided to go one step further.

Middle school is a time of physical, personal, social and academic growth for adolescents. *We chose to compare the achievement levels of the elementary feeder schools for each middle school with the achievement levels of their graduates at the middle schools to see how students grew in their middle school experience.*

By using this method, each school is measured not against the other schools, but is challenged against itself on a level playing field. Given the average achievement levels of entering students, what is the middle school doing to improve those levels? Understanding that each student is starting at his or her own level of achievement, what is each middle school doing to take its students from good to great?

II. METHODOLOGY – How We Conducted Our Study

a. *Data Sources*

To avoid allegations of bias, we used information provided directly by District 200 on its official web site, www.cusd200.org. Our core data is taken from the table, “Percent of Students Meeting or Exceeding the Illinois Learning Standards, 2004-05 School Year,” **Appendix A** to this report. This data is the most recent information available consisting of the student achievement results reported by the District to the Illinois State Board of Education. To avoid undue reliance on a single year or single test, we also averaged all four data sets from the two most current years available on the District web site (2004-2005) for Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) and overall achievement testing.

According to the District 200 web site, all students, except certain special education and ESL (English as a Second Language) students, take the ISAT. Subjects tested include reading, math and writing (grades 3, 5, 8, and 10), and science, social science, fine arts and physical education (grades 4, 7 and 11). The ISAT replaced the Illinois Goal Assessment first administered in 1988. ISAT test questions are based on the Illinois Learning Standards. Students in grades 2, 5 and 7 also take the In View Cognitive Abilities Test. See **Appendix C**.

b. *Growth Measurement*

Data reported by District 200 tells the percentage of students who *meet or exceed Illinois Learning Standards*. Illinois Learning Standards are the minimum standards established by the State of Illinois to determine if children are learning necessary concepts and skills in various academic subjects. Because we wanted a broad picture of learning, we focused our study on the overall achievement scores and ISAT scores, and did not compare test scores in individual subjects. The larger a sample pool is used, the less likely the data will be subject to bias.

We started by grouping the District’s 13 elementary schools together based on the middle schools their graduates attend. We then averaged achievement levels from those elementary schools for both ISAT and overall achievement, over the two-year period the District reports on its web site. This gave us a baseline figure for the elementary student pool that each middle school serves, and allowed us to treat each middle school fairly. We measure not where students started or finished, but how much their learning grew, based on the increase (or decrease) in the percentage of students meeting or exceeding minimum state standards.

Appendix B contains the complete data analysis results. We input the raw numbers for each test and each year for the elementary schools that feed into each middle school, and averaged them over a two-year period. We then compared these average numbers with the scores achieved at the middle school in the same two-year period. *Our goal is not to establish whether a given class of students is “smarter” than another, but to look at overall achievement trends from the elementary level to the middle school level, among thousands of students over a two-year period.* For example, the middle school students tested in 2004 are the siblings and neighbors of the younger students tested at the elementary level in 2004. (See *Caveats* in Section III, for a detailed explanation of the significance of this data.)

III. WHAT WE LEARNED

a. *Success at Hubble*

Our results showed that among the four District middle schools, Hubble was the clear leader in increasing average student achievement from the elementary level to the middle school level.

On average, 84.22 percent of students at the four elementary schools feeding into Hubble met or exceeded minimum Illinois Learning Standards. Yet at Hubble, 87.22 percent of students met or exceeded these standards – ***a gain of three points*** from the elementary to middle school level. Hubble achieved these results despite having the largest average class size of all middle schools in the District, and the largest total enrollment. Runner-up Franklin (which has been renovated by the District) with an average class size of almost three fewer students and a much smaller total enrollment, only increased the percentage of students meeting or exceeding state standards by less than two points. Monroe, the District’s newest middle school (which the District has held out as the school most closely approximating its goal for a new middle school), suffered a substantial decline of more than seven points in percentage of students meeting or exceeding state standards, when compared with its feeder schools. (See ***A Word about Monroe***, below.)

Ideally, all students will meet or exceed minimum standards. If the same percentage of students tests at the “meets or exceeds” level year to year, the students are progressing at a constant level of achievement. An increase in the percentage means that more students are learning at higher levels – growth in learning is occurring. Conversely, a decline in the percentage means that some students are not maintaining the levels of achievement they reached in earlier years.

Table 2 summarizes the key results. It shows the total enrollment at each school, its year of initial construction, and its average class size, all as reported by District 200.

Hubble, the school with the largest average class size, nonetheless posted the highest growth in its students’ achievement levels.

Table 2 – Middle School Achievement Growth, 2004-2005

Source: 2004-05 School Year Report Card District Summary, Part 6, District 200

School/ Enrollment Year Built ⁽¹⁾	Total Growth	Overall Achievement Growth	ISAT Achievement Growth	Average Class Size
1. HUBBLE / 935 1925	+ 3.00	+ 4.45	+ 1.56	24.7
2. Franklin / 632 1953	+ 1.96	+ 3.48	+ 0.45	21.8
3. Edison / 788 1960	+ 0.74	+ 1.68	– 0.20	23.8
4. Monroe / 918 1969	– 7.38	– 9.67	– 5.08	23.8

(1) Information from District 200 web site; District 200 reports that all four middle schools have been renovated and/or expanded since their construction.

