

Assessment Brief

Number 8

Report from the Department of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment

January 16, 2009

African American Male Achievement Update

AUTHOR: Hope E. White, Ph.D., Program Evaluation Specialist
Department of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment

OTHER CONTACT PERSON: Jared A. Cotton, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent
Department of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment

ABSTRACT

This brief is intended to serve as an update regarding progress that has been made toward achieving the goal of improving the academic achievement of African American males in Virginia Beach City Public Schools (VBCPS). Overall, progress has been made in narrowing the achievement gap between African American males and all other males. During the 2007-08 school year, African American males narrowed the achievement gap on the SOL tests in end-of-course (EOC) English: Reading, grade 5 English: Reading, grade 8 English: Reading, and grade 4 mathematics. Continued progress was observed in the number of African American males successfully completing an advanced placement or honors course, as well as the number of students receiving an Advanced Studies or International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma. African American males made progress toward closing the graduation rate gap and met the objective to decrease by 5 points or more annually the gap in SAT mean scale scores for each section. Despite progress in narrowing the achievement gap, there continues to be areas in need of further improvement. A few of those areas include the grade 3 reading and mathematics SOL tests, the grade 4 English: Reading SOL test, the grade 7 mathematics SOL test, meeting adequate yearly progress (AYP) benchmarks, and decreasing the dropout rate.

BACKGROUND

The focus on African American males began with the School Board Goal 5, which was developed out of the School Board Retreat in August 2007. During 2007-08, 12 objectives were developed and baseline data were provided. The strategic plan came later, but this important goal has remained a focus area as strategic Goal 3 addresses achievement gaps among all student subgroups with special emphasis on African American males. This brief is intended to serve as an update regarding progress that has been made toward achieving this important goal and its objectives.

METHODOLOGY

One way to measure achievement is to compare the performance of one subgroup to the performance of another subgroup. This methodology is at the root of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation that seeks to eliminate achievement gaps between all subgroups.

Key Topics:

<i>Background</i>	<i>p. 1</i>
<i>Methodology</i>	<i>p. 1</i>
<i>Objectives of improving the academic achievement of African American males ..</i>	<i>p. 2</i>
<i>Summary</i>	<i>p. 9</i>

Since any performance gap will be influenced by the composition of the comparison group, it is important to carefully define the comparison group. For the purpose of this report the performance gap measures the difference in performance between the primary group – African American males and the comparison group – all other males.

OBJECTIVES OF IMPROVING THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES

This brief will focus on presenting achievement data for African American males in the Virginia Beach City Public Schools (VBCPS). Each objective uses 2006-07 as the baseline year in order to compare to the 2007-08 school year. In addition, each objective also has multiyear goals to be reached over a specific period of time.

Objective 1: *Eliminate double-digit gaps between African American males and non-African males on reading and mathematics SOL tests over the next three years, using 2006-07 data as the baseline.*

The numbers displayed in Table 1 represent the differences in the passing rate for African American males compared to the passing rate for all other males, for both the SOL English: Reading and mathematics tests administered in grade 3 through EOC. The numbers in Table 1 represent the percentage-point difference between the percentage of African American males who passed the SOL English: Reading test compared to the percentage of all other males who passed the same test. Progress toward the objective is evidenced by the numbers **decreasing** from year-to-year. The cells highlighted in gray indicate that progress was made toward meeting the objective, and the cells highlighted in black indicate that no progress was made toward meeting the objective. In the case of the performance gaps reported here, gray means there was a meaningful decrease in the achievement gap. The black highlighted cells mean that the gaps remained the same or increased. For the SOL English: Reading test, the gap decreased in grades 5, 6, 7, 8, and EOC. For the EOC English: Reading test, the objective of eliminating the double-digit performance gap has been met. Gap increases, however, were noted in grades 3 and 4. For the SOL mathematics test, the gap decreased in grades 4, 5, 6, 8, and EOC. Gap increases were seen in grades 3 and 7.

Table 1
SOL English: Reading and Mathematics Gaps

English: Reading							
R	3	4	5	6	7	8	EOC
2006-07	16.5	11.2	16.9	14.4	12.3	18.0	12.0
R 2007-08	17.3	15.5	12	13.5	10.8	13.4	8.6
Mathematics							
M	3	4	5	6	7	8	EOC
2006-07	13.0	20.8	16.4	27.2	17.8	15.4	13.0
M 2007-08	15.0	18.3	15.5	23.4	17.9	12.8	11.2

R = Reading M= Mathematics

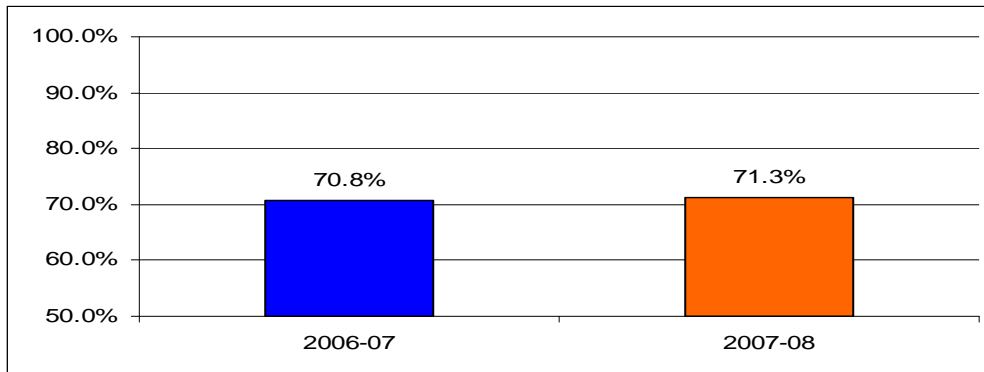
 highlighted cells indicate progress toward goal

 highlighted cells indicate lack of progress toward goal

Objective 2: Ensure that all African American males read on grade level by the end of grade 3 no later than 2011.

In assessing whether progress has been made toward this objective, results from the grade 3 English: Reading SOL test were analyzed. Figure 1 displays the grade 3 English: Reading SOL passing rates for African American males. During the baseline year, 70.8 percent of African American males scored at the passing level on the grade 3 English: Reading SOL test. The 2007-08 school year showed progress toward meeting this goal with 71.3 percent of African American males scoring at the passing level on the grade 3 English: Reading SOL test.

Figure 1
Grade 3 English: Reading SOL Passing Rate for African American Males



Objective 3: Increase the SOL passing rates by 5 percentage points for African American males in reading and mathematics at each level of schooling (elementary, middle, and high) over a two-year period using 2006-07 data as a baseline.

Figures 2 and 3 show the passing rates for African American males on the combined SOL tests for English: Reading and mathematics at each level of schooling. The school level passing rates for African American males increased for reading at all grade levels and the EOC English: Reading test. In addition, the passing rates increased for mathematics at all grade levels and the EOC mathematics test. The smallest percentage-point increase was observed in elementary school English: Reading, which had a slight gain of 1 percentage point. The largest percentage-point increase was noted in middle school mathematics, which had an 8.6 percentage-point gain. During the 2007-08 school year, the objective of increasing the passing rate by 5 percentage points was met in middle school mathematics, middle school reading, and end-of-course reading.

Figure 2
English: Reading SOL Passing Rates for African American Males

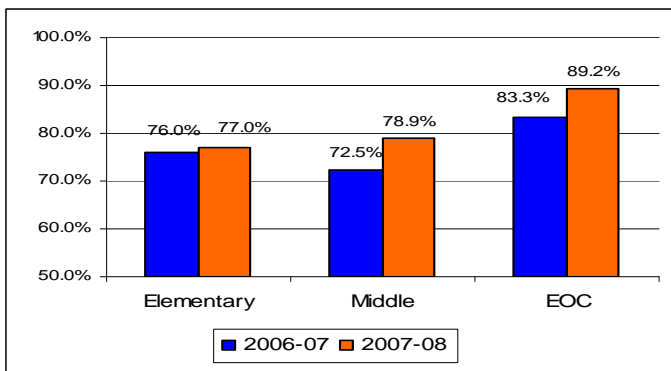
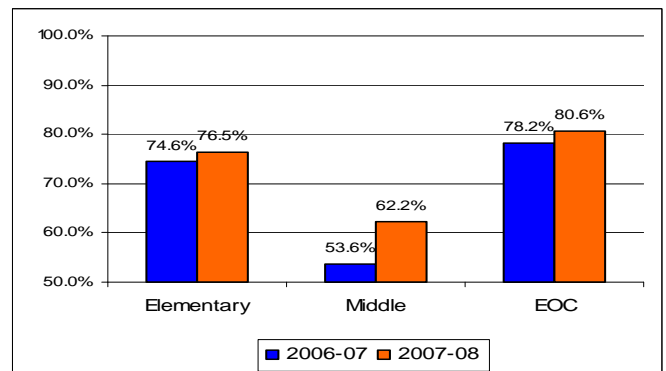


Figure 3
Mathematics SOL Passing Rates for African American Males



Objective 4: Increase by 5 percentage points the percentage of African American males scoring at the pass advanced level on English: Reading and mathematics SOL tests over the next three years, using 2006-07 data as the baseline.

Table 2 represents the pass advanced rate for English: Reading and mathematics tests at each grade level and all EOC. The percentage of African American males who scored at the pass advanced level increased in 11 of the 14 measures. The increase ranged from 0.2 percentage points on the grade 4 English: Reading test to 10.4 percentage points on the grade 8 English: Reading test. While the percentage of African American males scoring at the pass advanced level on the grade 3 and grade 7 English: Reading tests and grade 5 mathematics tests decreased, the overall African American males passing rate for each of these tests increased. The objective of increasing the pass advanced rate by 5 percentage points was met on the grade 8 English: Reading, EOC English: Reading, and grade 4 mathematics tests.

Table 2
Pass Advanced Level for African American Males on the SOL English: Reading and Mathematics Tests

English: Reading							
	3	4	5	6	7	8	EOC
R 2006-07	23.3%	28.8%	18.4%	18.5%	26.4%	9.5%	23.5%
R 2007-08	19.6%	29.0%	20.4%	20.3%	23.7%	19.9%	32.9%
Mathematics							
	3	4	5	6	7	8	EOC
M 2006-07	28.8%	19.5%	32.6%	12.0%	4.2%	26.1%	10.5%
M 2007-08	29.6%	26.4%	30.4%	16.4%	6.7%	29.6%	14.4%

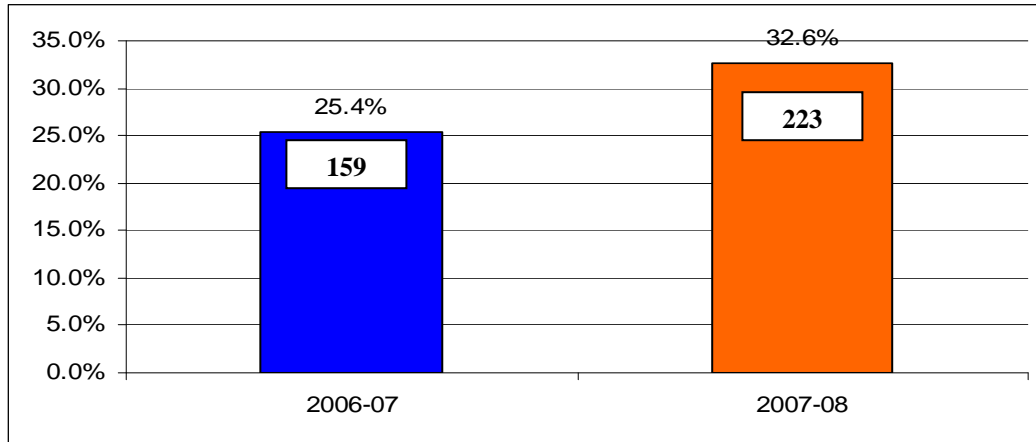
R = Reading M= Mathematics

Green highlighted cells indicate progress toward goal Yellow highlighted cells indicate lack of progress toward goal

Objective 5: Increase by 10 percentage points the percentage of African American males receiving an Advanced Studies Diploma beginning with the class of 2011.

Figure 4 shows the number of African American males who earned an Advanced Studies or International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma out of all African American male graduates. For the 2006-07 benchmark year, 25.4 percent, or 159, of the 625 African American males who graduated earned an Advanced Studies Diploma. In 2007-08, the Advanced Studies Diploma rate increased to 32.6 percent with 223 of the 685 African American male graduates earning an Advanced Studies Diploma.

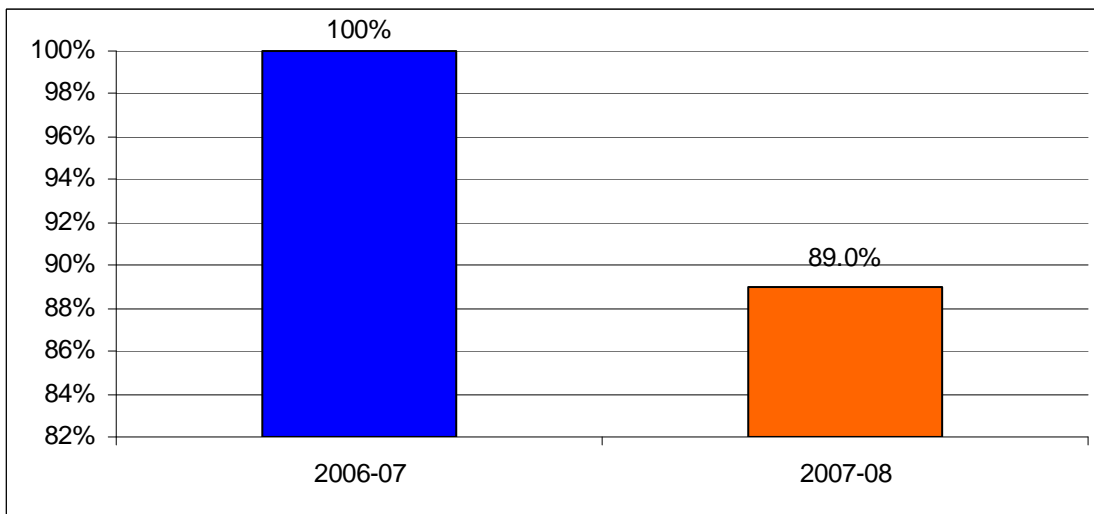
Figure 4
Percentage of African American Males with an Advanced Studies or IB Diploma



Objective 6: Meet all Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) benchmarks for the African American subgroup each year at all schools.

Figure 5 displays the percentage of schools meeting the AYP benchmark for the African American subgroup. For SOL tests taken in 2006-07, 100 percent of the schools across the division met or exceeded all of the Annual Measurable Objectives for the African American subgroup population, which included both males and females. For SOL tests taken in 2007-08, 89 percent of the schools across the division met or exceeded the Annual Measurable Objectives for the African American subgroup. The nine schools that did not meet the Annual Measurable Objectives for the African American subgroup included four elementary schools and five middle schools. One elementary school did not meet the passing rate benchmark for English, and eight schools did not meet the benchmark for mathematics. It is important to note that the Annual Measurable Objectives for reading and mathematics increase each year. The AYP benchmarks for 2007-08 were a 75 percent pass rate in mathematics and a 77 percent pass rate in reading. The AYP benchmarks in 2008-09 will increase to a 79 percent pass rate in mathematics and an 81 percent pass rate in reading.

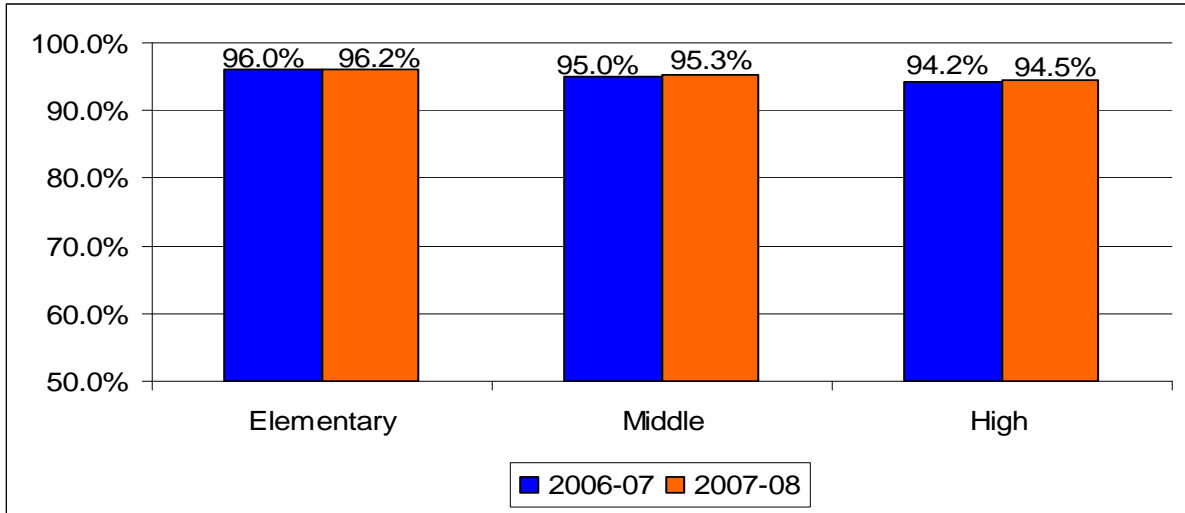
Figure 5
Percentage of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Benchmarks Met



Objective 7: Maintain or exceed a 95 percent attendance rate for African American males at each level of schooling.

Figure 6 contains the attendance rates for African American males at each school level. The 2007-08 attendance rates for African American males in elementary school, middle school, and high school increased over the 2006-07 attendance rate levels. In addition, the African American males' attendance rates for elementary school and middle school met or exceeded the 95 percent attendance rate benchmark that was established for this objective.

Figure 6
Attendance for African American Males



Objective 8: Decrease by 0.5 percentage points or more the dropout rate of African American males no later than 2012.

Table 3 represents the number of African American males in grades 7-12 who were reported as dropouts based on the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) guidelines divided by the total number of African American males in grades 7-12. The preliminary dropout rate for African American males in 2007-08 was 2.1 percent, which is a slight increase over the 2006-07 dropout rate of 2.0 percent. However, the final dropout rate is likely to be slightly less as the state further reconciles the disposition of dropouts who may have transferred to other divisions across the state.

Table 3
Dropout Rate for African American Males

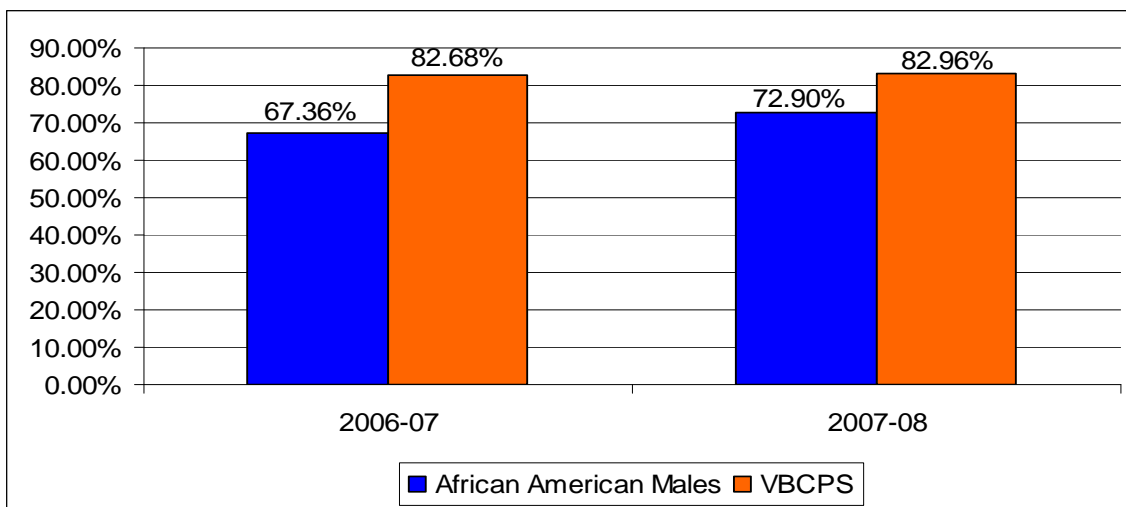
<u>2007</u> 2.00%	<u>2008</u> 2.10% (Preliminary Estimate)
----------------------	------------------------------------------------

Yellow highlighted cells indicate lack of progress toward goal

Objective 9: Increase the graduation rate for African American males to meet or exceed the graduation rate for the division no later than 2012.

Figure 7 includes the African American males' graduation rate compared to the division's graduation rate. The graduation rate was calculated by using the state graduation report that calculates the graduation rate using AYP rules. This calculation was derived by adding the number of standard diplomas, advanced studies diplomas, and IB diplomas, which were then divided by the total number of students who received a diploma or completion certificate plus the number of relevant dropouts from the previous four years. The preliminary 2007-08 graduation rate indicated that African American males are closing the gap on the division graduation rate. While the preliminary 2007-08 division graduation rate of 82.96 indicated an increase of 0.28 percent over the previous year's graduation rate, the preliminary 2007-08 graduation rate for African American males (72.9%) represents an increase of 5.5 percent over the 2006-07 African American male graduation rate.

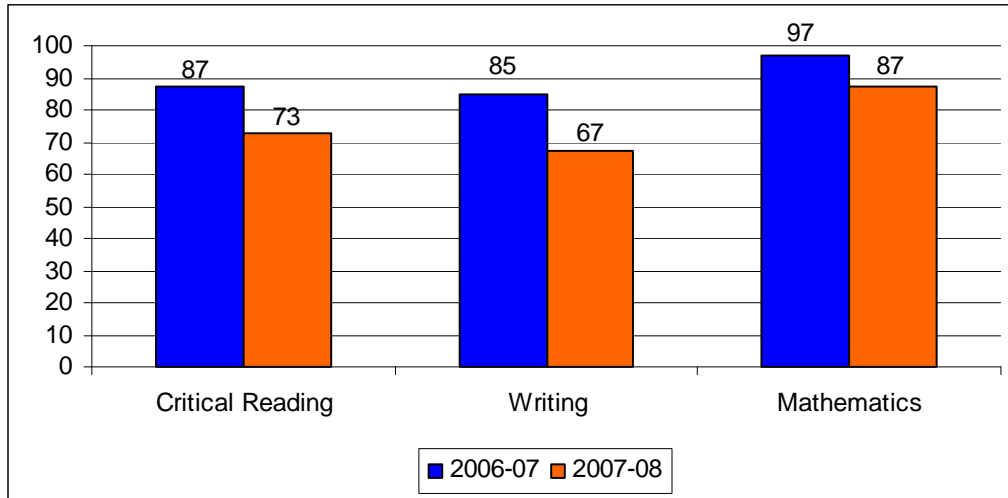
Figure 7
Graduation Rate for African American Males



Objective 10: Decrease by 5 points or more annually the gap in SAT mean scale score performance for African American males on each section of the SAT over the next four years, using 2006-07 data as a baseline.

The gaps reported in Figure 8 represent the gap between African American males' mean scale score on each section of the SAT compared to the mean scale score for all other males. Results indicated that African American males are closing the performance gaps on each section of the SAT. For the 2007-08 school year, the writing section of the SAT showed the largest decrease in the gap between African American males and all other males, with a decrease of an 85-point gap in 2006-07 compared to a 67-point gap in 2007-08. The critical reading section of the SAT showed a 14-point gap decrease from the previous year, while the mathematics section of the SAT revealed a 10-point gap decrease from the 2006-07 school year. In addition, both African American males and all other males posted an increase from the previous year in their mean critical reading and mathematics scores, yet different results were observed in regard to the mean writing score. Whereas African American males increased their mean writing score from the previous year by 18 points, all other males saw a decrease of 2 points in their mean writing score. With gap decreases ranging from 10 points in mathematics to 18 points in writing, the objective was met for all SAT sections during the 2007-08 school year.

Figure 8
Gaps in SAT Performance for African American Males



Source: College Board report

Objective 11: *Develop, present, and implement a plan to engage the community in support of the Board’s goal.*


Objective 11 focuses on engaging the community in support of the School Board goal of improving the academic performance of African American males. This objective does not include a formal assessment of academic performance-related data. As a result, an update on this objective is not included in this assessment brief.

Objective 12: *Increase by 15 percentage points over the baseline the percentage of African American males successfully completing advanced/honors and advanced placement (AP) courses over four years.*

Table 4 represents the number of African American males successfully completing an advanced course, compared to the number of African American males in grades 6-8 or 9-12 depending on the school level reported. Successful completion is defined as “passing” the respective course. The percentage of African American males who successfully completed an advanced course increased across all 15 target areas. The increase ranged from a 0.1 percent increase in the percentage of high school students completing advanced science and foreign language courses to a 7.3 percent increase in the percentage of seventh graders completing advanced science courses. During the 2007-08 school year, the largest percentage-point gains were observed in grade 7 science, mathematics, and English.

Table 4
African American Males Completing Advanced/Honors and AP Courses

Grade 6				
Grade 6 2007	<u>English</u> 16.80%	<u>Mathematics</u> 20.30%	<u>Science</u> 19.00%	
Grade 6 2008	<u>English</u> 20.40%	<u>Mathematics</u> 22.90%	<u>Science</u> 21.20%	
Grade 7				
Grade 7 2007	<u>English</u> 13.10%	<u>Mathematics</u> 15.10%	<u>Science</u> 11.70%	<u>Foreign Language</u> 6.20%
Grade 7 2008	<u>English</u> 18.30%	<u>Mathematics</u> 22.00%	<u>Science</u> 19.00%	<u>Foreign Language</u> 9.50%
Grade 8				
Grade 8 2007	<u>English</u> 12.10%	<u>Mathematics</u> 13.00%	<u>Science</u> 10.50%	<u>Foreign Language</u> 21.90%
Grade 8 2008	<u>English</u> 14.80%	<u>Mathematics</u> 16.10%	<u>Science</u> 12.60%	<u>Foreign Language</u> 23.50%
High School				
High School 2007	<u>English</u> 10.80%	<u>Mathematics</u> 9.80%	<u>Science</u> 27.40%	<u>Foreign Language</u> 9.60%
High School 2008	<u>English</u> 11.60%	<u>Mathematics</u> 10.10%	<u>Science</u> 27.50%	<u>Foreign Language</u> 9.70%

 highlighted cells indicate progress toward goal

SUMMARY

This brief is intended to serve as an update regarding progress that has been made toward achieving the goal of improving the academic achievement of African American males in Virginia Beach City Public Schools (VBCPS). Overall, progress has been made in narrowing the achievement gap between African American males and all other males. During the 2007-08 school year, African American males narrowed the achievement gap on the SOL tests in EOC English: Reading, grade 5 English: Reading, grade 8 English: Reading, and grade 4 mathematics. Continued progress was observed in the number of African American males successfully completing an advanced placement or honors course, as well as the number of students receiving an Advanced Studies or International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma. African American males made progress toward closing the graduation rate gap and met the objective to decrease by 5 points or more annually the gap in SAT mean scale scores for each section. Despite progress in narrowing the achievement gap, there continues to be areas in need of further improvement. A few of those areas include the grade 3 reading and mathematics SOL tests, the grade 4 English: Reading SOL test, the grade 7 mathematics SOL test, meeting adequate yearly progress (AYP) benchmarks, and decreasing the dropout rate.