

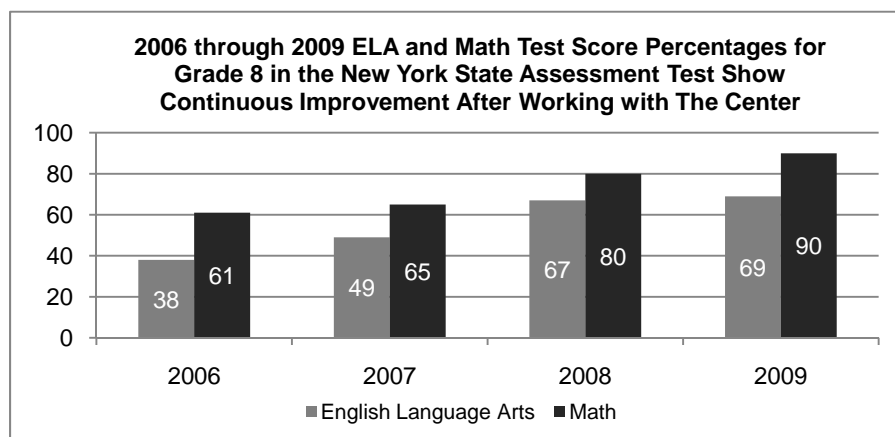
White Paper Series

Waterloo Central School District

Waterloo, New York

The
Leadership
and Learning
Center™

Waterloo Central School District increased student achievement in grades 5 through 8 across all subject areas from 2006 through 2009.



Issues

- Teachers had numerous types of student data, but they lacked an efficient process for identifying the most relevant data as well as an organized system to track student progress.
- Classroom educators had no common assessment system to monitor student progress.
- Writing across the curriculum was not a consistent segment of daily lesson plans.
- Educators needed a better understanding of differentiated instruction and implementing strategies for differentiated instruction to increase student achievement for *all* learners.

Solutions Provided by The Leadership and Learning Center

- The Center's seminars, *Data-Driven Decision Making* and *Data Teams*, provided Waterloo educators with a process for identifying data skills and using data to drive instruction in their classrooms.
- Through The Center's *Common Formative Assessments* seminar, teachers gained a common system to assess student work.
- Waterloo Middle School educators attended The Center's *Writing to Learn* and *Vocabulary for Academic Success* seminars to gain research-based writing strategies aligned to the middle-school curriculum that they could immediately implement across all subject areas.
- The Center's seminar, *Making Differentiated Instruction Work*, provided Waterloo educators with real-life solutions for implementing differentiated lesson plans, assessments, and tools for monitoring student progress using differentiated assessments.

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1.0 Executive Summary

Waterloo Central Schools, a rural district in central New York, serves about 2,000 pre-kindergarten through grade 12 students. The district made significant gains on the New York State Assessment over the past four years. In grades 5 through 8, student achievement increased in every tested subject.

Waterloo Central School District employed several critical professional development strategies to attain these gains. The district formed a partnership with The Leadership and Learning Center (The Center) to develop a systemic, professional development plan with implementation strategies focused on standards, common formative assessments, nonfiction writing, and data analysis. In doing so, Waterloo Central Schools focused on implementing a long-term professional development plan that provided teachers with strategies that they could immediately apply in the classroom, as well as sustainable tactics to ensure enduring improvements in student achievement.

2.0 The Needs of Waterloo Central School District

Waterloo Central School District's vision is to become the best rural school district in the heartland of New York. To achieve this goal, the district focused on attaining academic excellence and provided a variety of instructional strategies to meet the needs of all students. This vision recognizes that educators must have open communication, collegiality, an infusion of technology, and an enlightened attitude toward teaching and learning. A "Standards of Excellence" approach is in place throughout the district.

Waterloo Central School District strives to provide quality education through a variety of curricula, including advanced placement, computer programming, computer applications, music theory and appreciation, fifth-year mathematics, science research, Spanish and French courses, and programs such as vocational education through the Wayne-Finger Lakes Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), academic intervention services, and special education. Waterloo Central School District also offers its students extensive extracurricular activities, including highly rated vocal and instrumental music programs, and a variety of interscholastic sports.

District leaders facilitated a comprehensive needs assessment and revision of the state-mandated professional development plan. Results indicated the need for professional development in all subject areas and more focused training at targeted grade levels. While the district succeeded in offering students a wide variety of coursework to meet their educational needs, educators did not have a way to identify and acknowledge achievement gains beyond the use of mandated state assessments. Within this five-school district, teachers (even those who taught the same grade levels) employed a wide range of various assessments to evaluate student progress. The goal for the district was to move beyond summative assessments and provide teachers with training to build benchmark formative assessments that they could use quarterly and apply across subjects and grade levels. Additionally, district leaders wanted to provide Waterloo Central educators with the skills to analyze the assessment data and use the results to reframe and drive classroom instruction.

The Leadership and Learning Center and district and school leaders also recognized a need for Waterloo Middle School educators to schedule additional professional development to incorporate student-writing strategies into their curriculum across all subject areas. Finally, results indicated a need for all educators to gain a better understanding of strategies for differentiated instruction.

3.0 The Role of The Leadership and Learning Center

Waterloo Central School District developed a comprehensive professional development plan that incorporated The Leadership and Learning Center's professional development seminars, customized to directly align with Waterloo Central Schools' needs assessment and curriculum. Each part of the plan also introduced innovative teaching strategies to the teachers.

Over two school years, the professional development plan included the following seminars:

Data-Driven Decision Making and Data Teams: In order to provide educators the tools to create measurable indicators, the expertise to analyze student achievement data, and the means to track progress, teachers and building-level administrators from each school participated in *Data-Driven Decision Making* (DDDM—now *Decision Making for Results*) and *Data Teams* seminars. As a follow-up to the seminars, each school initiated a school improvement plan using the *Decision Making for Results* model. Participants created a form for all schools to use that incorporated the components of planning, implementation, and monitoring. The key for the district was consistency at each site. Thorough integration of the *Decision Making for Results* model continued throughout the 2008-2009 school year to ensure ongoing success.

Common Formative Assessments: For training in creating interim assessments, a small group of Waterloo Central School educators attended the *Common Formative Assessments* seminar. The Center helped grade-level teams design and format common formative assessments to mirror district and state assessments, and The Center aligned the seminar with each school's goals to directly support the school-level accountability system. Educators continue to administer these assessments to students in a grade level or course several times during the quarter, semester, trimester, or the entire school year.

Vocabulary for Academic Success: The Leadership and Learning Center presented this one-day seminar to help Waterloo Central School District teachers target effective instructional strategies to improve vocabulary learning. Participants became familiar with current research in vocabulary acquisition and learned how to use research-based instructional strategies to improve students' vocabulary. Additionally, each educator learned about The Center's unique tripod plan for improving vocabulary instruction and developed a classroom and school plan for teaching vocabulary more effectively. Finally, participants received a training manual CD that contained additional forms, templates, and examples to assist with successful implementation.

Writing to Learn: In the *Writing to Learn* seminar, middle-school educators created several lesson plans that allowed them to implement nonfiction writing in all classrooms and subjects.

Additionally, they developed a school-wide writing rubric that teachers could use across subject areas. This seminar promotes the understanding that there is no class “in which English expression is unimportant.”

The Leadership and Learning Center directly aligned this seminar to the writing needs of middle-school students. The seminar reviewed the essentials of the writing process and focused on various writing products teachers could use, specifically products that have a proven impact with middle schoolers. Participants left the seminar with writing prompts and assignments for immediate use, an action plan, a calendar to strategize implementation, a training manual, and a CD with additional resources, including samples of student writing. The next school year, participants attended a follow-up professional development day to address implementation issues and challenges and share success stories.

Making Differentiated Instruction Work: In order to learn the elements of differentiated instruction and the considerations educators should carefully weigh to meet the needs of struggling and advanced learners, classroom teachers attended the *Making Differentiated Instruction Work* seminar. Each building received differentiated professional development directly aligned to the educators’ stated needs. This seminar targeted aspects of effective classroom instruction with a focus on differentiated instruction.

4.0 Waterloo Central School District Results

New York test results provide an indication of whether students are making progress toward mastery of the state's content standards, and the New York State Assessment results show the level of proficiency a student demonstrates in each of the subject areas tested.

New York State uses the New York State Assessments to test students in grades 3 through 8 in English language arts and math, grades 4 and 8 in science, and grades 5 and 8 in social studies. The assessments are standards-based tests that measure how well students are meeting the state's grade-level expectations. Students receive a score of Level One through Level Four. The state goal is for 90 percent of students to score at or above Level Three (proficient) on the tests.

High school students take a series of subject-specific Regents examinations. Students must pass the exam in English, mathematics, global history and geography, U.S. history and government, and science in order to graduate. The state scores the Regents examinations on a 100-point scale. Scores of 65 and above are passing; scores of 55 and above earn credit toward a local diploma (with the approval of the local board of education). The state goal is for all students to pass each Regents examination.

Waterloo Central Schools made significant gains on the New York State Assessment over the past four years. From 2006 through 2009, assessment scores indicated that in grades 5 through 8, student-achievement scores increased in every tested subject (see Appendix One). Additionally, students surpassed the state average in every grade except grade 4. In many subject areas, students exceeded the state average by as much as 10 percentage points. Additionally, Waterloo Central School students who took the Regents Physics exam and Living Environment exam have exceeded the state average every year since 2004 (see Appendix Two).

The Character Education Partnership (CEP), one of the world's premier character-education organizations, is a leader in the field for developing young people of good character and civic virtue. CEP recognized Waterloo Middle School as one of only 12 schools in the nation for their planning and advisement program known as PRIDE: Planning, Reading, Improving academic success, Development of character, and Enjoying each other's company. Every student participates in this program that focuses on academics as well as social skills. Students meet every day in small groups for 27 minutes during their advisement period under the leadership of an advisement teacher.

5.0 Lessons Learned in Waterloo Central School District

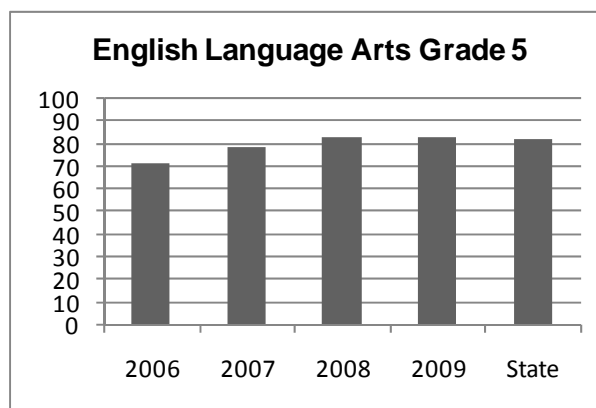
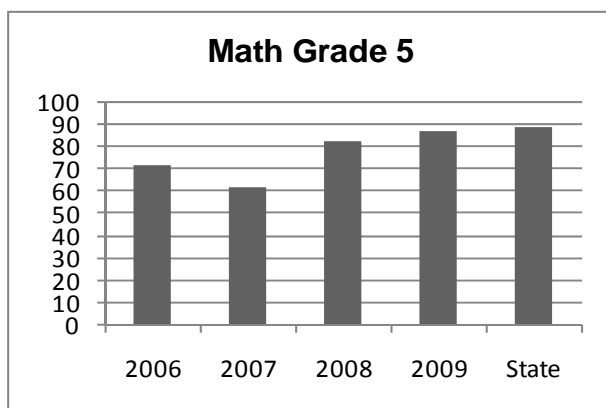
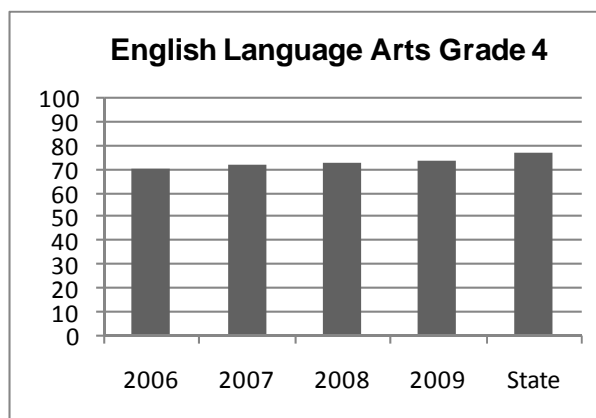
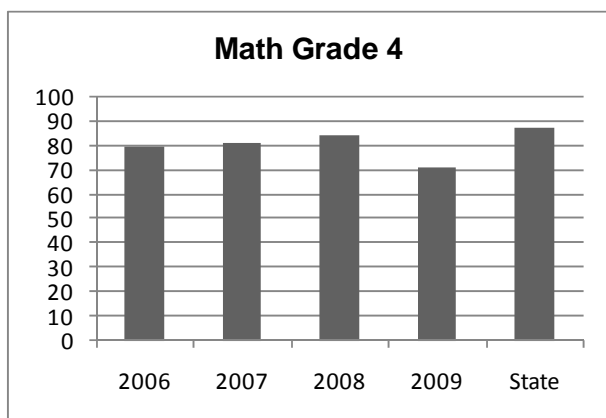
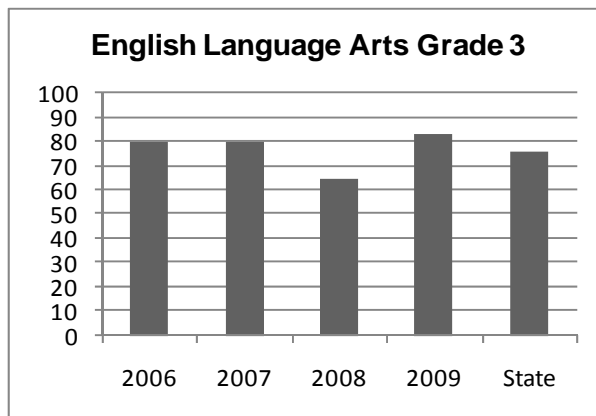
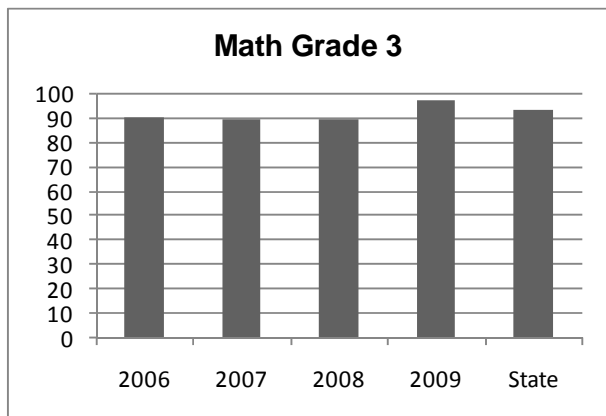
Waterloo Central School District continues to implement The Leadership and Learning Center's strategies and develop a successful partnership. Waterloo Central School leaders and The Center recognize that the following specific lessons contributed to the district's success:

- The Center's professional development associates developed strong ties with Waterloo Central School district leaders. This created a partnership that went beyond "one-shot" professional development; all participants worked hard to develop content that would truly impact Waterloo Central School District's student achievement.
- The Center customized all seminars for Waterloo Central with each school's individual goals in mind and aligned the content toward participants' needs in each seminar.
- District leaders worked to incorporate a common language and uniform strategies throughout the district, including common quarterly assessments, standards-based report cards, and data-driven school improvement plans.
- The Leadership and Learning Center and Waterloo Central School leaders considered the future needs of teachers as they developed the district's professional development plans and allocated expenses for these expectations.
- The district identified Power Standards for English language arts and mathematics for grades K–12.
- Waterloo Middle School saw the greatest impact in student achievement and implementation of teaching strategies. Middle-school leaders expressed tremendous support for The Center's seminars and strategies throughout the implementation process.
- Waterloo Central School leaders planned exceptionally well for the future by investing in resources to support educators. The district continues to invest in books and other materials for classroom teachers and school leaders.

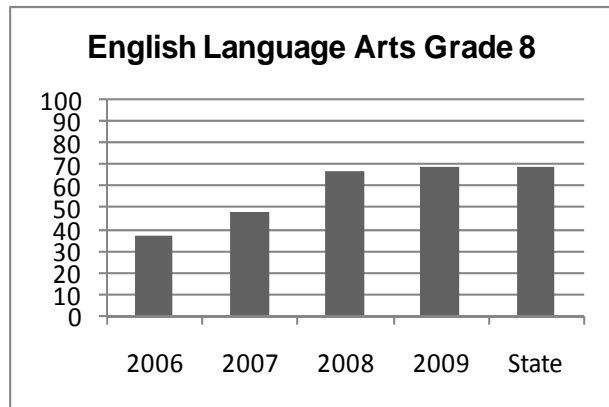
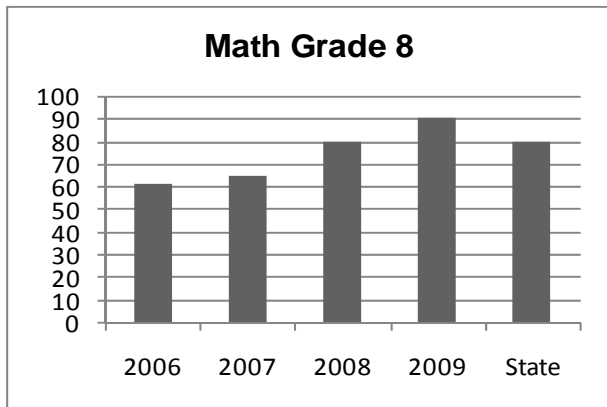
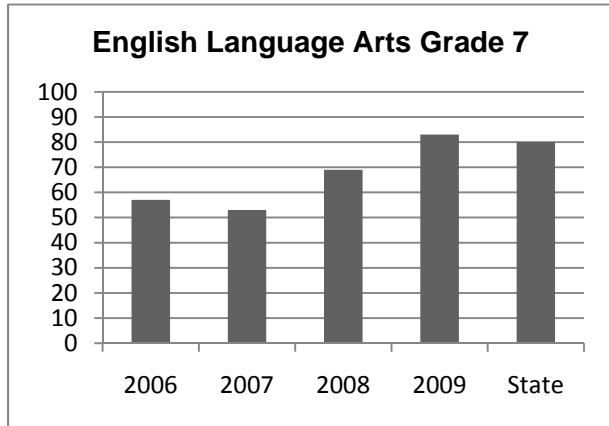
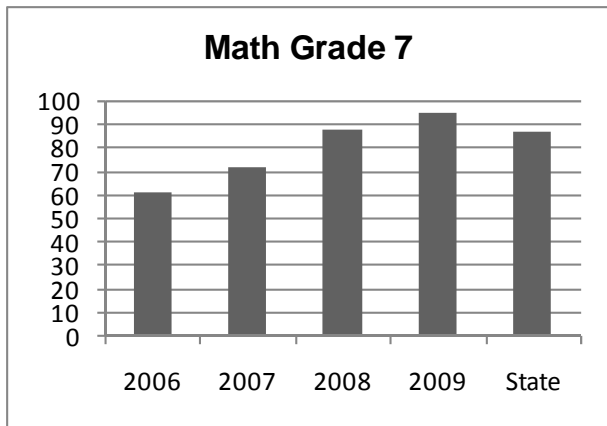
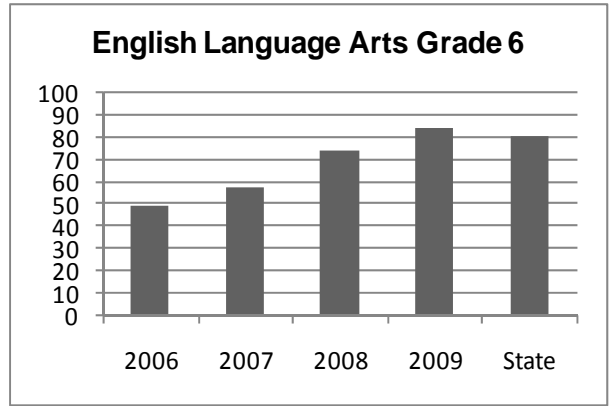
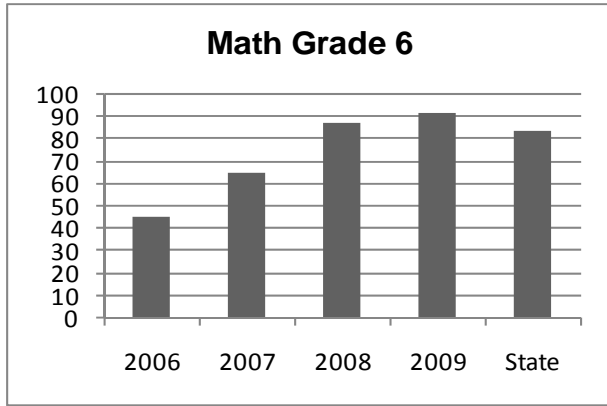
Waterloo Central School District has made tremendous gains in student achievement over the past three years. District and school leaders continue to provide support to sustain The Leadership and Learning Center's teaching strategies that have a direct impact on student achievement. The Center's work with Waterloo Central School District will assist teachers and students into the future as they strive toward meeting the district's achievement goals.

Appendix One

Waterloo Central New York State Assessment Scores 2006–2009 Percentage of Students Scoring Proficient (Level Three and Level Four)

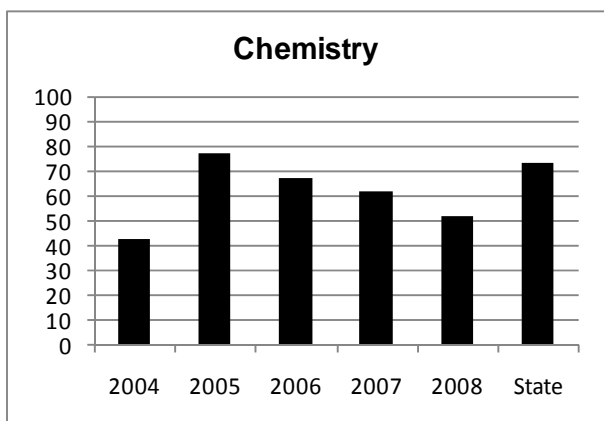
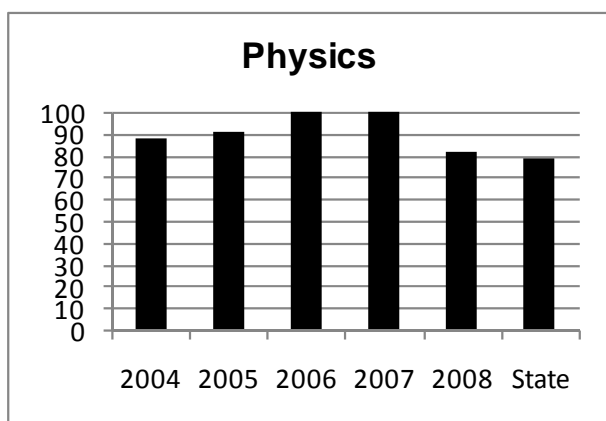
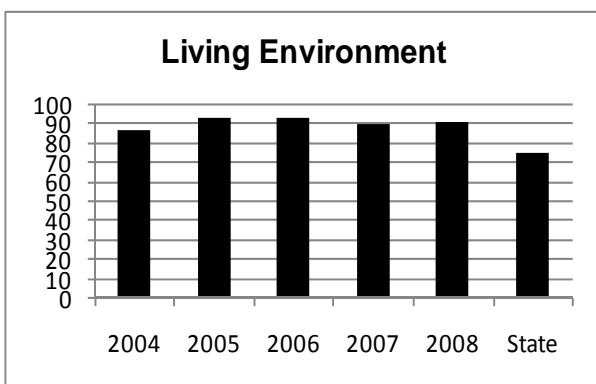
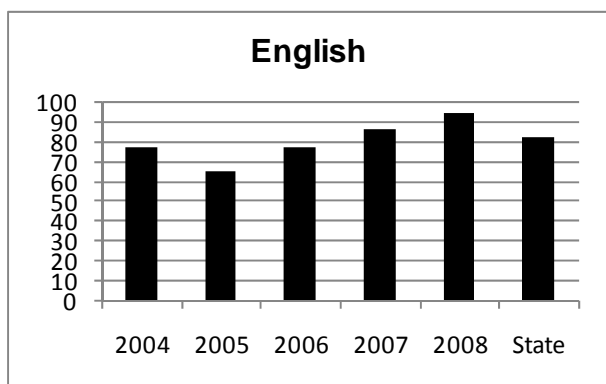
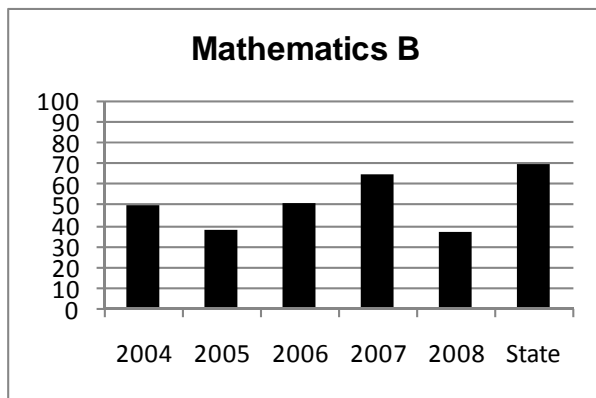
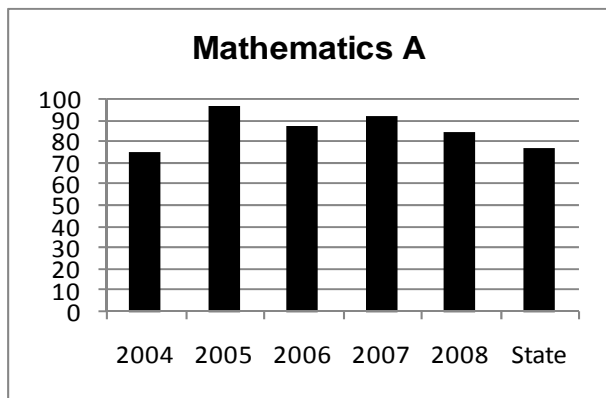


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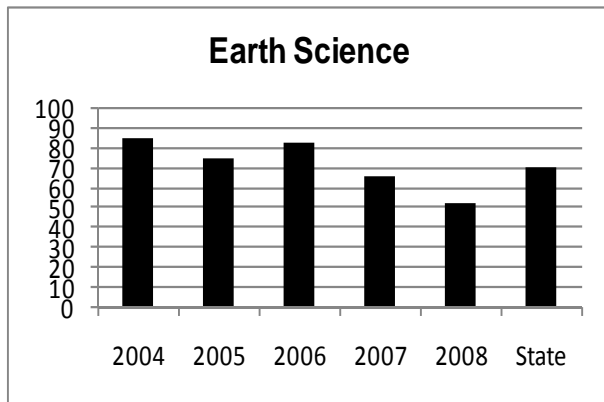


Appendix Two

Waterloo Central New York State Regents Scores 2004–2008



Appendix Two *(Continued)*



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