

## Teaching Context

I am currently a 7th-grade English Language Arts teacher at Dwight D Eisenhower Academy of Global Studies, located in Algiers, the second oldest neighborhood in New Orleans <sup>1</sup>. Eisenhower has a strong legacy in New Orleans, being a school that has retained its name and some of its identity, post-Katrina. Eisenhower currently serves 693 PreK-8<sup>th</sup> grade students. Of these 693 students, 82% are Black, 13% Latinx, 3% Asian, 1% White and Hawaiian<sup>2</sup>. Out of the 13% Latinx students, 10% percent are ELL<sup>2</sup>. In 7<sup>th</sup> grade, there are about 3% ELL students<sup>2</sup>. In addition, 95% of students qualify for free and reduced lunch<sup>2</sup>. Students at Eisenhower represent a diverse group, a true reflection of the diversity of New Orleans.

I teach 75 students in total between three academic blocks. The data for this narrative is from my homeroom class. My homeroom is the largest of the three classes, with 25 students total. Of these 25, 11 of them are girls. In addition, 99% of students are black, and 1% are white. I had this group of students the previous year for 6<sup>th</sup> grade. I looked back to three previous years of LEAP(State-administered test) scores: 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> grade, to understand where students have been academically before 7<sup>th</sup> grade. According to 2015 Leap results, in students' 4<sup>th</sup> grade year, 51% of students scored basic or above <sup>3</sup>. Here, almost half of the students did not have the skills ready to enter 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Comparatively, according to 2016 LEAP results, in students' 5<sup>th</sup> grade year, 41% of students scored basic or above on their LEAP. Here, the data demonstrates that my students continued to struggle. Compared to their 4<sup>th</sup> grade year, student scores dropped by 10%. This data demonstrates two significant facts 1). more than half of the students had not been ready for this next course of study for two years, and 2). more students struggled during their 5<sup>th</sup> grade year. These determinations were more serious because middle school years only get more complex and challenging, especially when students enter their 6<sup>th</sup>-grade year because their focus shifts immediately to grades, and they are required to make more real-life decisions<sup>4</sup>. Further, according to 2017 LEAP results, in students 6<sup>th</sup> grade year, 38% scored basic or above on LEAP<sup>3</sup>. This most recent data is the lowest of all and demonstrates the highest number of students, 62%, were not ready for their next course of study, 7<sup>th</sup> grade. This data displays a trend of, on average, half of the class being behind on skills needed for the next grade. The data is most alarming because the more gaps students have, the more time it would take to fill those gaps. Most importantly, this data shows how crucial it was for me to return for an additional year with these same students. According to the data alone, most of my students were at a deficit when I met them two years ago. Additionally, with my first year being the lowest

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<sup>1</sup>The History of Algiers. *Algiers Historical Society*. Retrieved from <http://algiershistoricalsociety.org/index.html>

<sup>2</sup> School demographics. *JCampus*. Retrieved from <https://algiers.edgear.net/jcampus/>

<sup>3</sup> Performance Scores: 2016, 2017 7<sup>th</sup> grade LEAP. *Department of Education, Louisiana Believes*. Retrieved from <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/resources/library/performance-scores>

<sup>4</sup> Salyers, Frank; McKee, Carol, *The Young Adolescent Learner*. Retrieved from <https://www.learner.org/workshops/middlewriting/images/pdf/W1ReadAdLearn.pdf>. Date accessed: 5/25/18

percentage of students demonstrating readiness on LEAP, students were even further behind; therefore, the only immediate remedy for such a deficit was an additional year. I have spent this year catching my students up to where they needed to be and catapulting them into their next year of study, ensuring they are confident, knowledgeable, and prepared. This narrative represents where the students started as 7<sup>th</sup> graders to where they are heading as 8<sup>th</sup> graders. This narrative represents a year of strategic, thoughtful, and intentional strategies that were student-centered and hyper-focused on student achievement and growth.



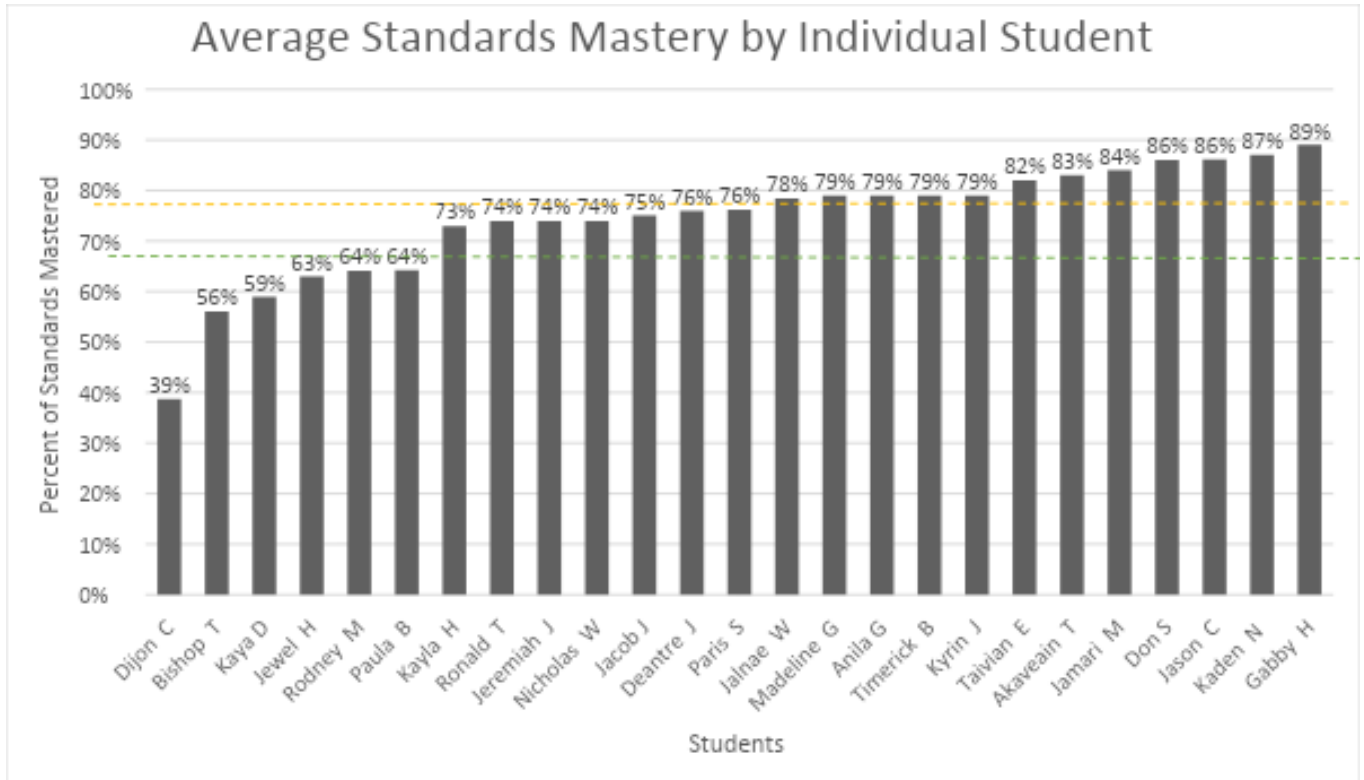
## Data Analysis for All Students

To determine readiness for the next grade, we measure fiction, informational, speaking/listening, grammar, and writing standards, all components of ELA instruction. Each of these components contains very specific standards with skills that students need to master. Student understanding and knowledge of the standards is a gradual process. For example, students start with simple, low-level standards. Then as the standards increase, the rigor increases. Therefore, students are constantly practicing old skills and adding new elements. As the year progressed, they got more practice, and with more practice came more confidence. This mixture of confidence and practice set students up for achievement. That achievement was reflected in a higher assessment score, resulting in higher mastery of standards. The fiction and informational components will be the focus of this data narrative as they are the most prominent standards assessed in 7<sup>th</sup> grade. According to benchmark data taken 3 months into the year, students were on the same level in fictional texts and below level in informational texts relative to other students in their district and state<sup>5</sup>.

Out of 25 students, 21 or 84% met the proficient or ambitious goal with an overall standards mastery of 74.31%. Therefore, students mastered a proficient level of standards. Individual Student Mastery is illustrated in graph 2.1.

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<sup>5</sup> Interim Assessment Summary Report ELA 2017-2018 grade 7. *Department of Education, Louisiana Believes*

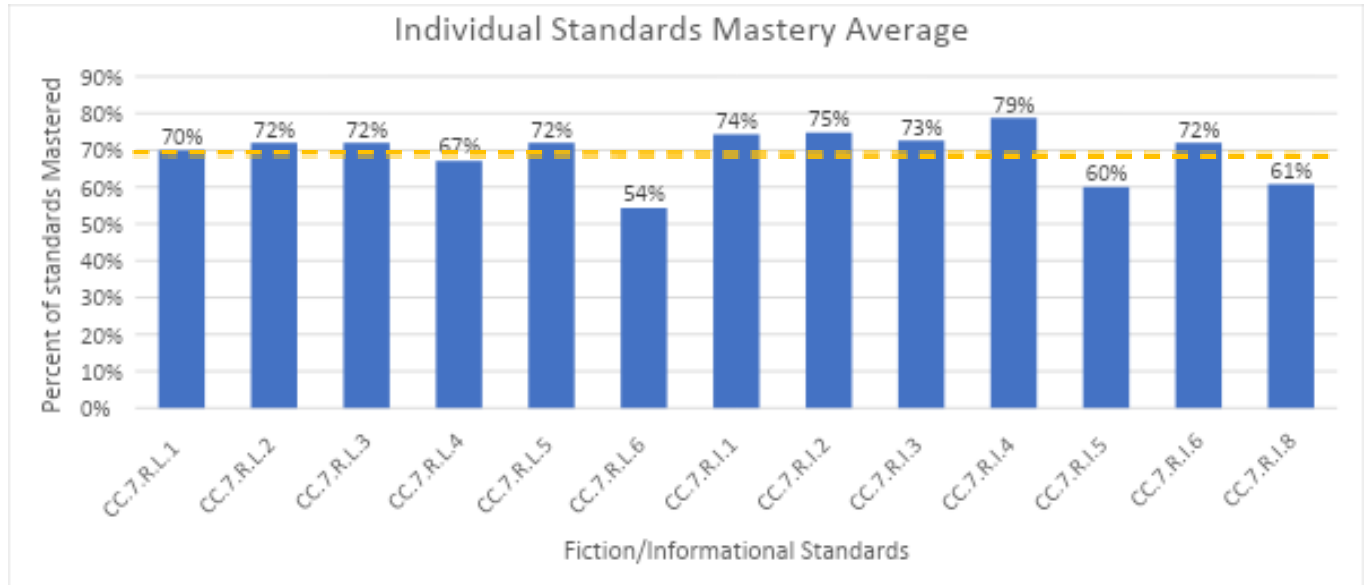


(2.1, individual student mastery)

The green line represents the proficient goal of 69% reached by 19 students, including two students, Paula and Rodney, who each had individual goals of 60%. The yellow lines represent the ambitious goal of 79% reached by 11 students. Nineteen reached either the proficient or ambitious goal, and four did not. This data is crucial because it demonstrates how hard students have worked throughout the year, especially with the many challenges and deficits faced when starting the new year. Overall, the majority of the students reached the proficient goal or ambitious goal. This achievement was a major success for my homeroom.

Each assessment was a series of at-bats for students on their quest to standards mastery. The more at-bats students were successful in, the higher their overall standards mastery. The initial fiction assessment was the students' first assessment in 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Initially, most students scored less than 60%. 60% on a grading scale would equate to a failing grade. This is because the initial fiction assessment was the first assessment of the year. These fiction texts and standards immediately challenged students. From this data, it is safe to assume that since students were not on the correct reading level, they would need help accessing 7<sup>th</sup> grade texts and assessments. For the first informational assessment, more than half of the class scored less than 60%, also a failing score. This assessment data reinforced how challenging informational texts were and correlated to benchmark results<sup>5</sup>. Together, the assessment and benchmark data, asserted how informational standards were more difficult for students than fiction. However, as

the school year progressed, students practiced and refined their ELA skills, thus increasing assessment scores and overall standards mastery. This is illustrated in graph 2.2.



(2.2 Individual Standards Mastery)

According to data, the standard mastered by the highest percentage of students is RI 7.4, which is about finding word usage<sup>6</sup>. Similarly, students were also successful with standards RI 7.1, RI 7.2, and RI 7.3<sup>6</sup>. A proficient level of standards mastery in fictional texts and informational texts is important because high individual standards mastery is essential to achieving a proficient or ambitious overall standards mastery. Students were least successful in standards RL 7.6, RI 7.5, and RI 7.8. These three higher-level standards can be most challenging for students because they require a more in-depth look at the text. With more time, they could have mastered all fiction and informational standards on, at least, a proficient level.

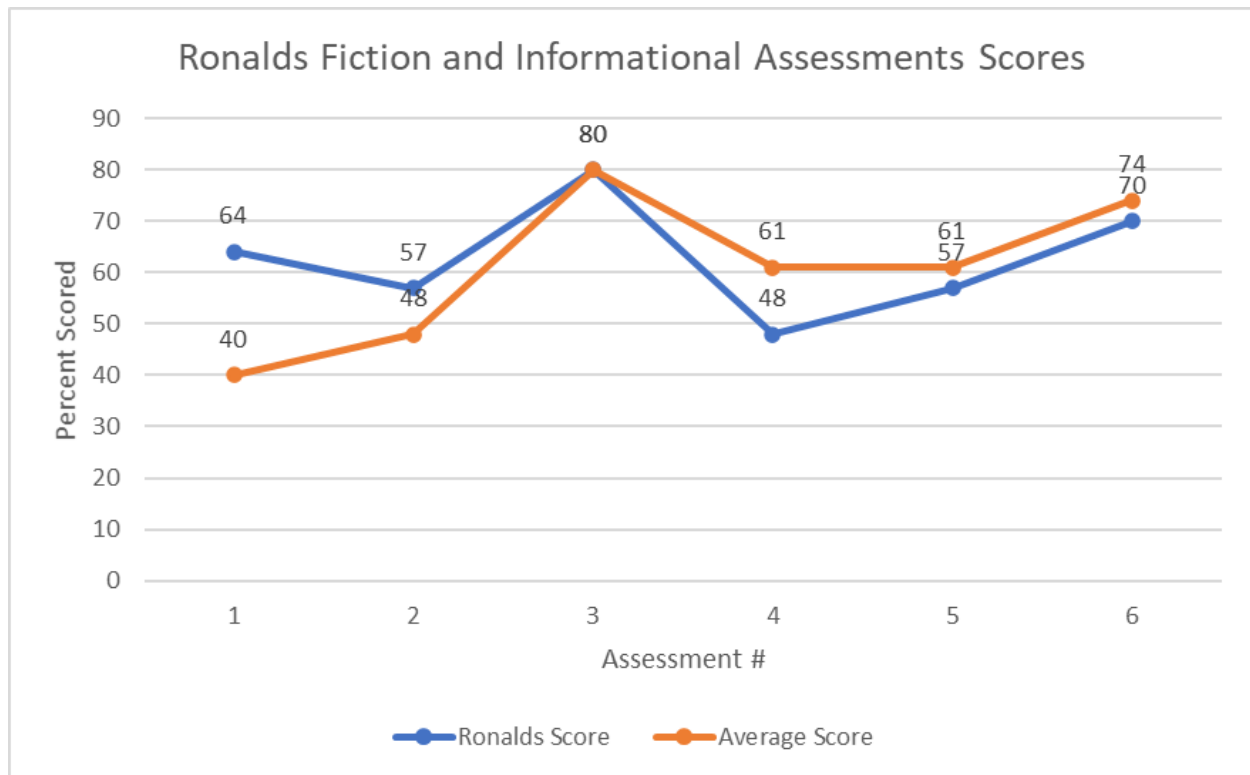


<sup>6</sup> Common Core State Standards: **RI 7.1** Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.**RI.7.2** Determine two or more central ideas in a text and analyze their development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.**RI.7.3**Analyze the interactions between individuals, events, and ideas in a text (e.g., how ideas influence individuals or events, or how individuals influence ideas or events).**RI.7.4**Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.

## Data Analysis for Individual Student

I met Ronald last year in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, where I will never forget an innocent imitation he made of me, where he insisted on holding my clipboard in the way I had because he wanted to look like me. This moment illustrated why I started this work. Ronald was an overall great student. He was mostly well-behaved, occasionally in trouble for common adolescent challenges, but nothing too serious. Ronald was one of the youngest 7th graders, currently only 12, while his colleagues were at least 1-3 years older. According to last year's LEAP results, Ronald scored approaching basic. His LEAP results reminded me of the 62% of his class who had not been ready for their next course of study. For Ronald, 7<sup>th</sup> grade was a crucial year because it was a year of growth in many ways; mentally, physically, socially, and emotionally. However difficult, Ronald met this challenge and was successful in his mastery of standards.

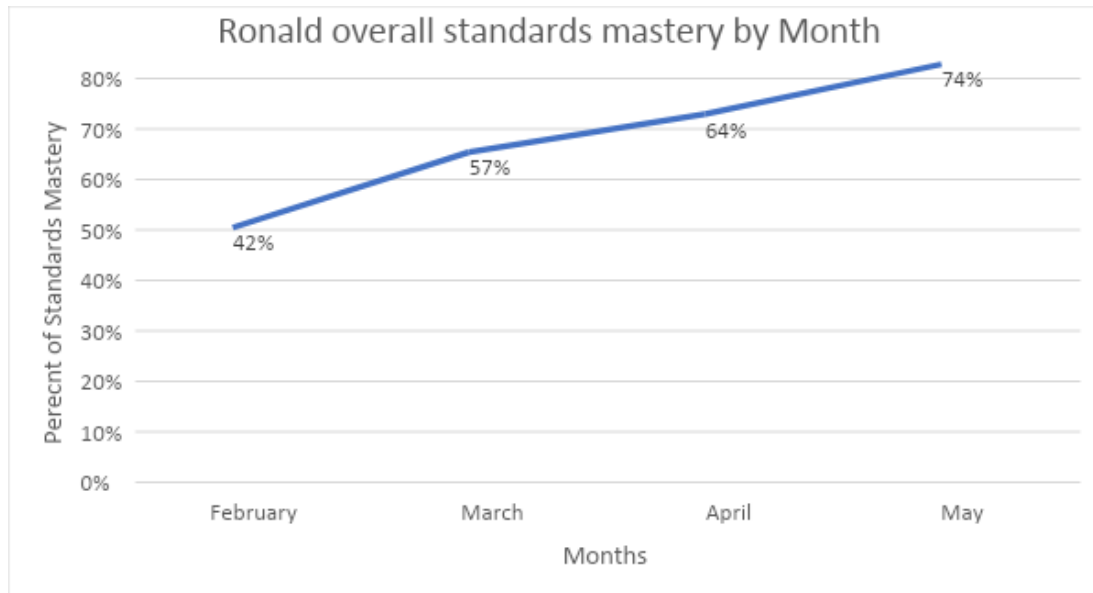
In the current year, students were assessed three times on fiction and three on informational standards. The assessment scores are illustrated in graph 2.3



(2.3 Ronalds Assessment Scores)

On the first assessment in fiction, Ronald scored a 64%. Comparatively, on assessment #4, the first major informational assessment, Ronald scored a 48%, both failing grades. This score of 48% reflects that he has more challenges with informational texts and correlates with previous class data on informational text<sup>3</sup>. As the year progressed and texts and skills got more challenging, Ronald's scores dipped. On his 2<sup>nd</sup> assessment in fiction, he showed a 7% dip,

scoring 57%. Similarly, he scored 57% on assessment #5, the second assessment for informational texts. The results of these scores over time are illustrated in graph 3.1.



(3.1. Overall standards mastery by month for individual student)

By the end of February, Ronald had mastered less than half of the overall standards. This low overall standards mastery directly reflected low assessment scores in fiction and informational texts. In a later discussion, Ronald noted how it is sometimes hard to remember everything that he reads and when he reads in his head, it sounds different than when he reads aloud<sup>7</sup>. This discussion highlighted some significant challenges that Ronald faced throughout the year. From there, we worked to fill these two deficits. By April, Ronald had mastered 64% of standards. This increase is due, in part, to an 80% score on the final fiction and a 70% on the final informational assessment. In addition, Ronald mastered at least 7% more standards each month. Ronald's strengths showed in the standards RL 7.2, RL 7.3, and RL 7.6<sup>8</sup>, all mastered by the beginning of March. Ronald continued to improve in his challenge areas in April and May and eventually mastered 74% of all 7<sup>th</sup> grade ELA standards.

By the end of the year, Ronald demonstrated success with both fiction and informational standards. Ronald's grit helped him to reach the proficient level in overall standards mastery. With careful and intentional planning, Ronald overcame past hurdles and moved toward success. Ronald's success also highlights the benefits of both a familiar and effective teacher. I came into this year with a growth mindset that really helped to meet students where they are. In addition, knowing the previous years' standards allowed me to scaffold in a way that was

<sup>7</sup> Unpublished. Ronald Trotter (student) in discussion with the author, March 2018

<sup>8</sup> Common Core State Standards: 7<sup>th</sup> grade; **RL 7.2:** Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text; **RL 7.3** Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot); **RL 7.6** Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text.

helpful for each individual student like Ronald. Ronald embodied diligence and grit and it paid off through a proficient mastery of 7<sup>th</sup> grade standards.

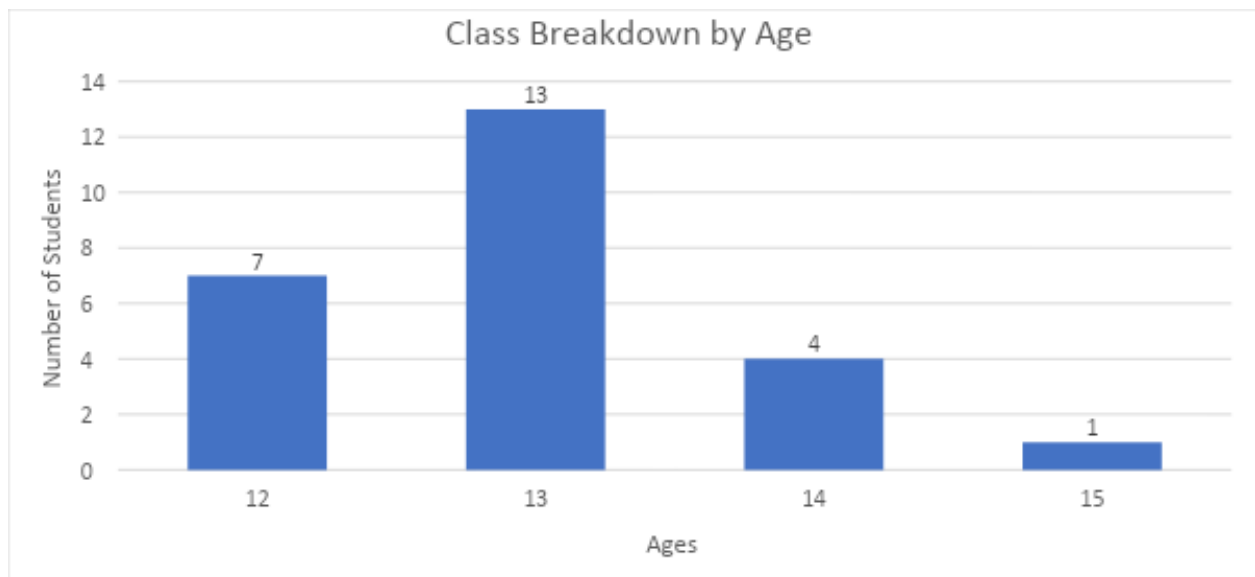


Data Analysis for Subgroups of Students.

***What, if any, differences exist in student ELA standards mastery achievement based on student age?***

**Rationale for selection of research question #1:**

Middle school is such a pivotal step in students' lives as they begin to make decisions that could impact them for the rest of their lives<sup>4</sup>. In seventh grade, students are in the middle of their middle school journey and developmental years. Seventh grade is a year of growth for children as they gain new knowledge through more experiences. My class consists of a range of ages from 12-15. This age range is developmentally referred to as the adolescent stage<sup>9</sup>. My class breakdown by age is illustrated in graph 4.1



(4.1)

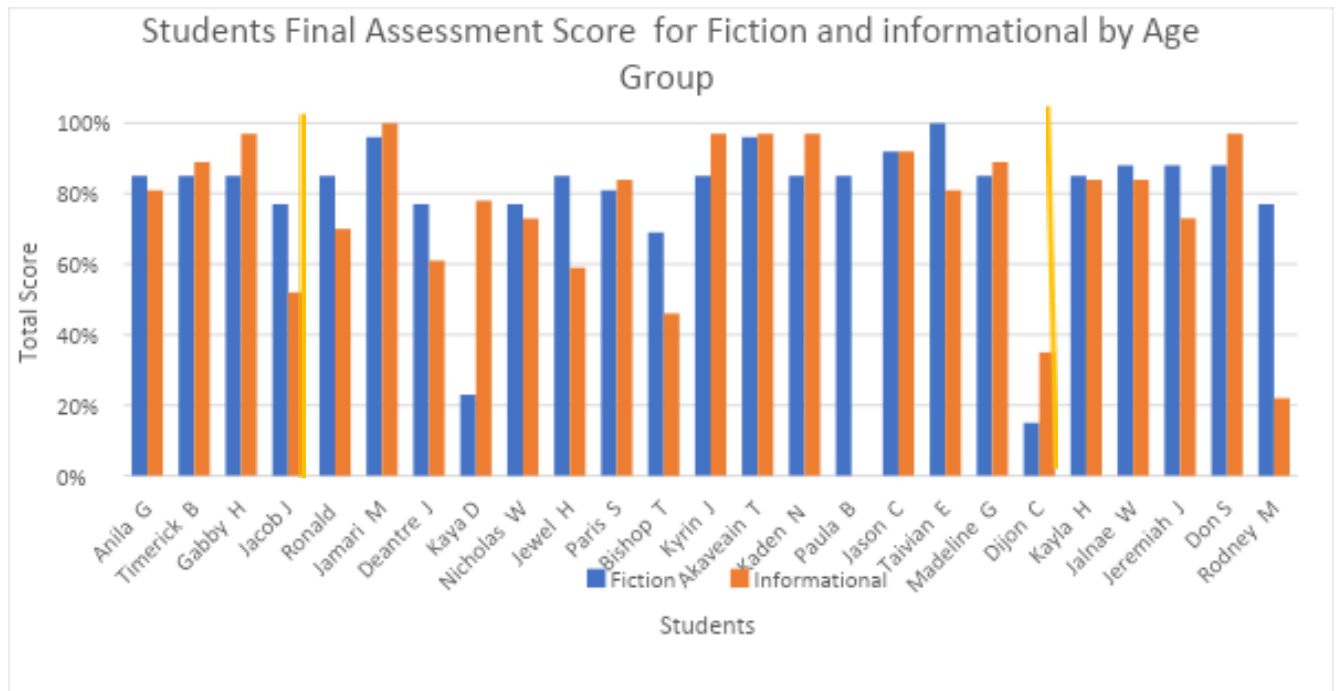
This research is essential in my classroom because I've been teaching my students for two years. In this time, I've had a more in-depth view of their growth socially, emotionally, and academically. The range of students in my class this and last, represent a range of students, who, developmentally, may not have excelled because the content was not appropriate for them, alternatively others that may have excelled because they are on grade level, or higher. However, it is noteworthy to see how students performed compared to their peers of similar

<sup>9</sup>healthychild.org

and different ages. The results show a range of achievements throughout the different age groups.

**Analysis:**

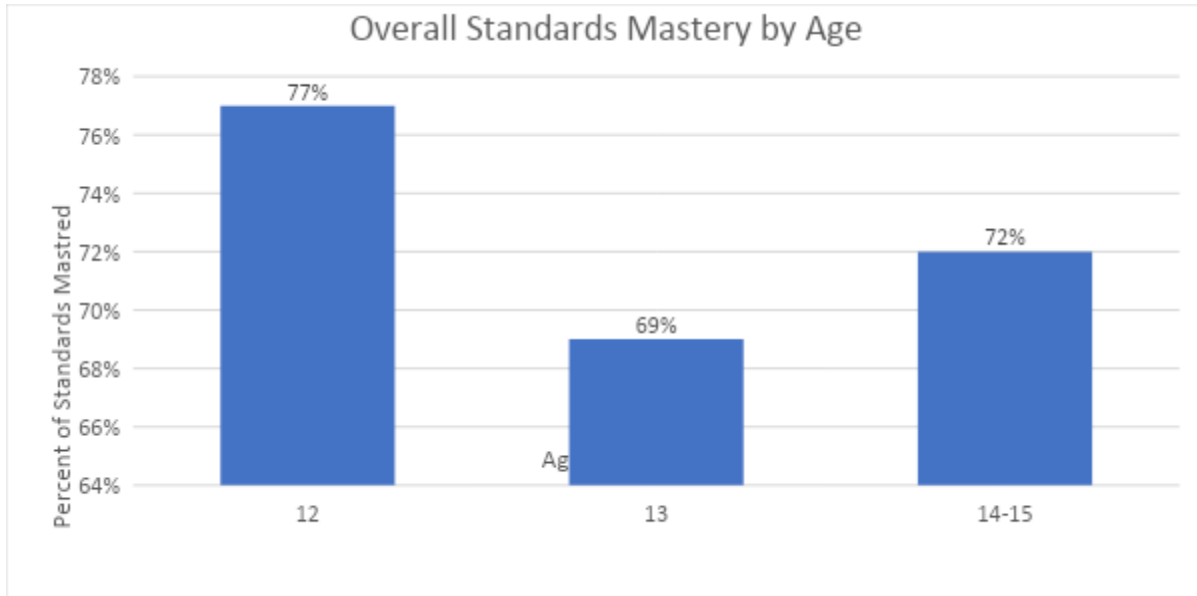
There is no direct correlation between age and student achievement. For example, in my classroom, older students did not achieve better than their younger counterparts just because they were older. My experience with a range of ages in my class has helped to reinforce this. Graph 4.2 illustrates the average score of each individual student according to two components, fiction and informational assessments. The students are ordered by age, with Anila, the youngest, to Rodney, the oldest, and divided into age groups by the yellow line.



(4.2)

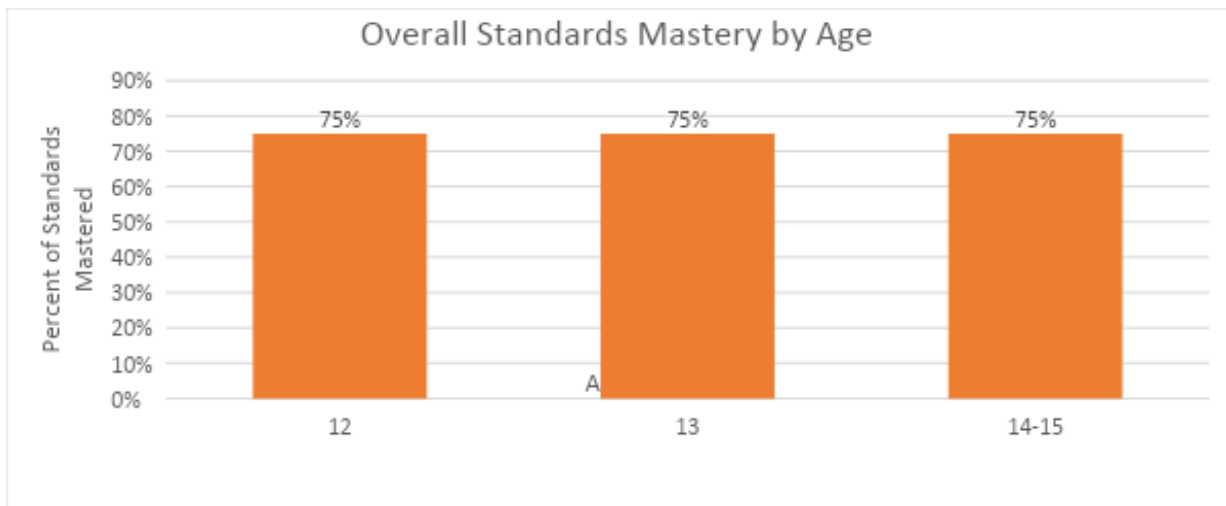
According to Graph 4.2, 14 and 15-year-old students were the most consistent when assessing fiction and informational texts. However, there are no significant achievement differences between these age groups overall. To more thoroughly analyze the data to see any specific achievements, I used the final overall standards mastery score, which is a combination of fiction and informational texts, to determine the average of each group. The results are illustrated in Graph 4.3





(4.3)

At first look, the 12 year old age group has mastered the most standards, however, the range of student mastery was vast in all three groups. Therefore, I recalculated overall student mastery, minus any outliers. For the age 12 group, there was one outlier, for 13 there were three outliers, and for 14 and 15, there was one outlier. This redistribution saw an overall standards mastery similar across all age groups, 75%. This redistribution of data is illustrated in Graph 4.4.



(4.4)

In the data redistribution, all ages scored on average, the same across the board. This data reinforces the above commentary and the absence of a direct correlation between student age and achievement. There are some instances when older students have the capacity to handle more challenging themes due to their extra experience. However, this data reasserts that student age does not have a direct connection to student achievement.

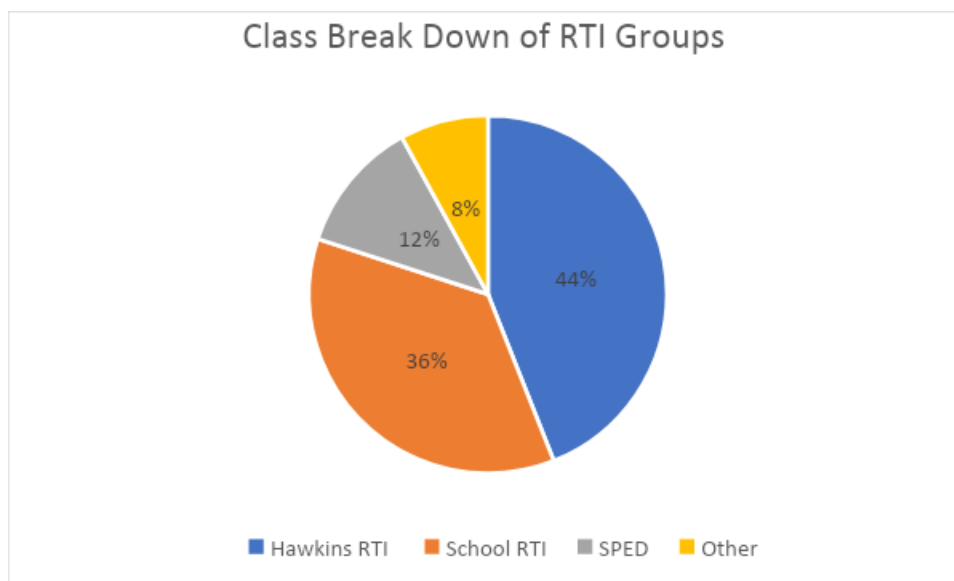


*What, if any, differences exist in student ELA standards mastery achievement between students who attended teacher led RTI versus school led RTI?*

**Rationale for selection of research question #2:**

The year's focus has been to accelerate student achievement. This mindset was reflected in both my classroom and by the administration. The administration reflected this mindset in the school schedule with the addition of an RTI or intervention block. Even more specifically they focused on reading growth, which was directly aligned to my ELA classroom and mindset.

In my classroom, students were segregated into intervention groups according to last year's LEAP results; 11 stayed with me, 9 went to school designated groups, 3 went to Special Education and 2 went to talented theater. Graph 4.1 illustrates the breakdown of RTI groups



(5.1, percent of students in RTI groups)

Students in school designated RTI groups scored the lowest on their LEAP and therefore received more remediated English instruction from the school to match and increase their reading level. Students in my group were 1-3 grade levels behind as illustrated in Table 5.2

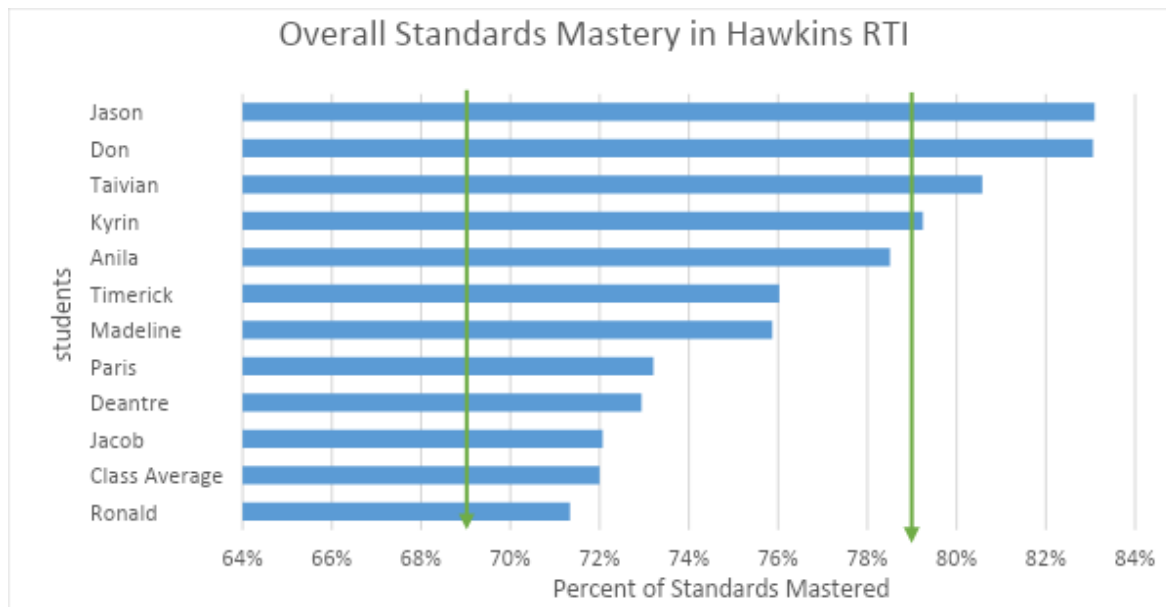
Name	Timerick	Jason	Taivian	Anila	Madeline	Deantre	Don	Paris	Ronald
Grade Levels Behind I reading	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	3	3

(5.2 reading levels behind)

Laser focus and guidance was a major aspect of my RTI. This attention to detail helped to guarantee growth for all students in my RTI group. My students showed significant growth in standards mastery throughout the year. All the students in my RTI group have at least met the proficient goal, while four students met the ambitious goal. Through data analyzation, reteaches, small groups, Iready<sup>10</sup> etc, this group of students made constant progress throughout the year. This intervention block was important because my students have a range of developmental and/or social challenges to their learning in whole grou settings, however in my RTI group they had specific and individual help to keep them achieving on pace with peers.

**Analysis:**

Overall, most students in my RTI group showed more achievement by either reaching the proficient or ambitious goal.

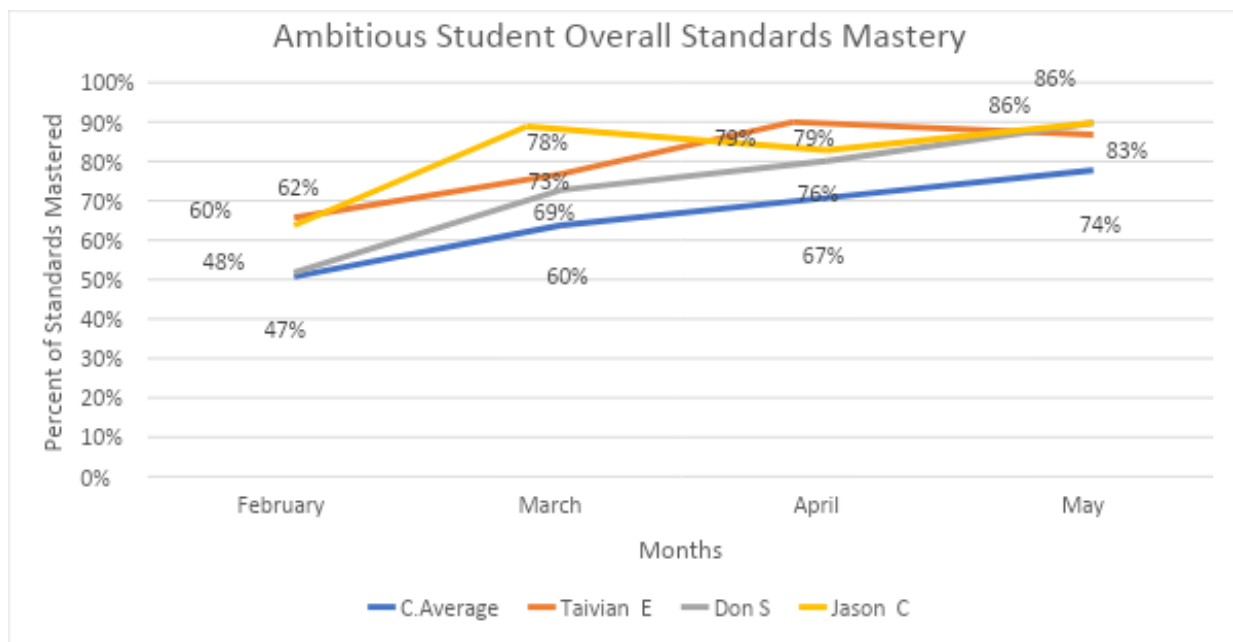


(5.3,Hawkins RTI)

<sup>10</sup> *i-Ready* is an integrated blended learning program that personalizes learning for all students.

As illustrated in Table 5.3 all students reached the proficient goal. More specifically, 8 students reached the proficient goal, and 3 students reached the ambitious goal. More than half of students were at least 4% away from reaching the ambitious goal. With more time in the year, most of the students in my RTI group would have reached the ambitious goal. Compared to the rest of the class, more students in my RTI group reached the ambitious goal vs students in other RTI groups. Similarly, my RTI had the most overall number of students reach the proficient or ambitious goal than any other groups. For example, all 11 of my students reached the proficient goal, also contributing 11 students to the overall average. These milestones helped to spearhead achievement and growth for 7<sup>th</sup> graders.

During the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the year, as students returned from holiday break, attention to standards mastery increased through multiple intervention strategies, including differentiation, remediation, and reteaches. Therefore, students started to make significant growth in overall standards mastery. For example, the three students (Taivian, Don, Jason) who reached their ambitious goal, continuously mastered more standards than the class average in the last four months of the year.

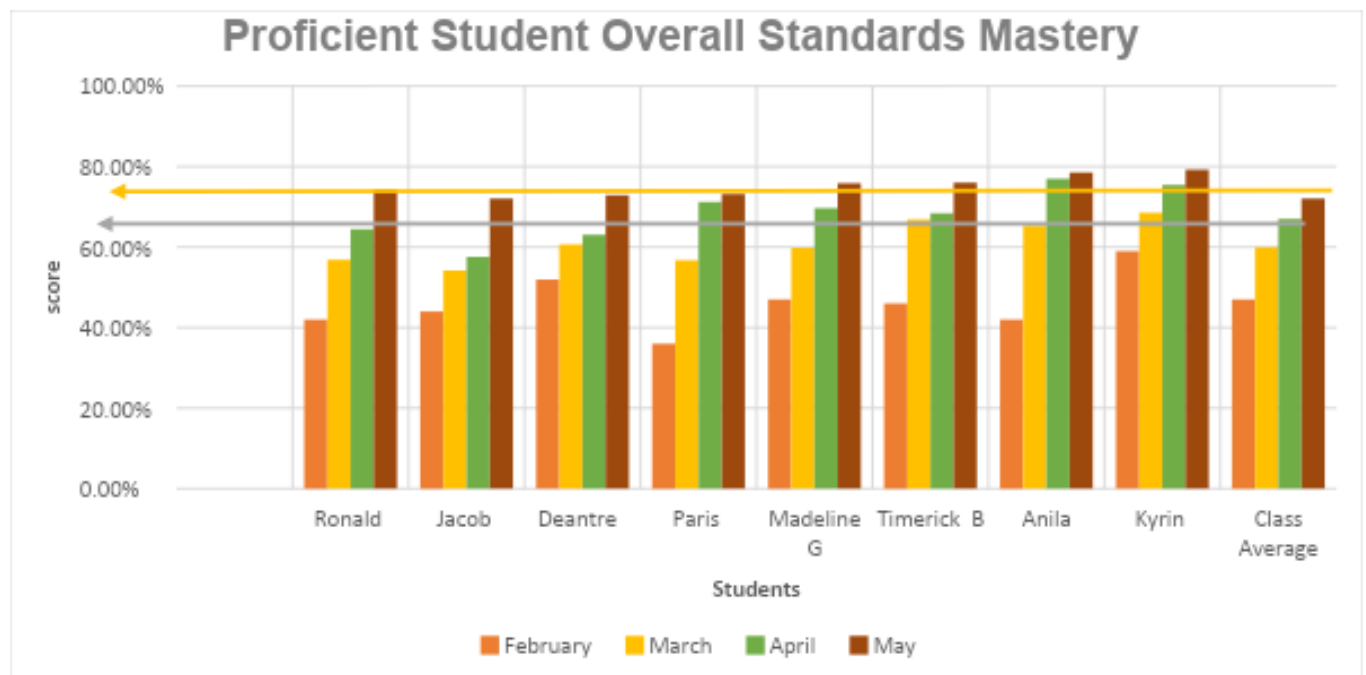


(5.4)

According to Graph 5.4, students who reached the ambitious goal continuously mastered more standards than the class on average. In fact, by February, Tavian and Jason had mastered 13% more standards than their class. Continually by April, Tavian and Jason reached the proficient goal. In fact, these two reached the proficient goal almost two months before most of their peers. Don showed tremendous success with standards from February to March. In fact, Don mastered 21% more standards between these two months. Don reached the proficient goal by April. Furthermore, according to the table 5.4, ambitious students had mastered at least 9%

more standards than the class since March. All three students displayed the data driven and student-centered effects of my RTI. Not only had they been consistently scoring above class average, but also showing steading understanding and success with standards. For each of these three students the path to achievement looked different. Tavian used RTI the most thoughtfully and diligently. He was the first to get on Iready<sup>10</sup> each day and passed the most lessons there. He also was eager to review skills pertaining to standards RL 7.2 and RI 7.3<sup>9</sup>. For Jason, it was extra practice in challenging skills, specifically finding best evidence and main idea RI 7.1, RI 7.2, RI 7.3<sup>6</sup>. For Don, it was motivation. He had a good understanding of most skills but needed more practice to keep the skillset. When Don noticed that he could do it, he continued to shine. All students benefited from use of Iready<sup>10</sup>, small groups, and individual time with me each week and all demonstrated the positive effects of my RTI.

Similarly, students who reached proficient goal also showed significant success in standards mastery over the last four months. Their progress is illustrated by graph 5.5.

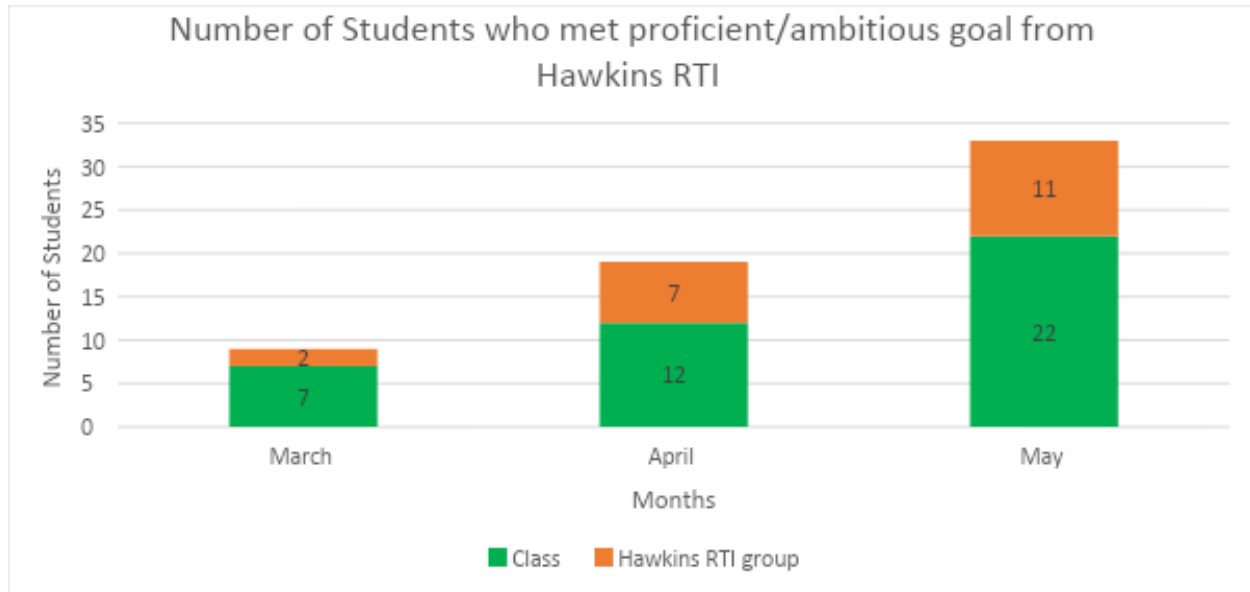


(5.5)

By February, most were mastering less standards than the class on average. This data reflects the deficits that students had and how they can have an overall effect on learning. For example, most of these students were two or three grade levels below in reading in the beginning of the year as illustrated on graph 5.2. To accelerate success with standards we hyper-focused on vocabulary, finding main idea, and determining best evidence. This data driven remediation helped the majority of the proficient students to master more standards than the class, on average, by April. This is significant because it is another example of high achievement from my RTI block. Furthermore, by May, not only had students reached their proficient goal, but they also continued to master more standards than the class, on average. Therefore, by May,

majority of my RTI students began to achieve on a higher level than their colleagues. Students in my RTI group often showed grit through the way they continued to push themselves. Overall, students in my RTI group showed significant improvement over the course of the year.

This data reinforces that the students can reach their goal through constant remediation and data analysis. Each of these strategies played a vital role in reteaching skills that students were unsure on and practicing skills that students mastered so that they could be retained and used more successfully throughout the year. The success of my RTI group is illustrated by Table 4.6.



(5.6)

In March my RTI group contributed two of the seven students who had reached the proficient goal. By April, out of the 12 students who had reached proficient goal my RTI contributed seven, which is more than half. By May, all my students had reached their proficient goal, accounting for half of all students who had reached their goal. To highlight their achievement even more, out of the seven students who reached their ambitious goal, my RTI contributed three. The data reinforces how students in my RTI group received the remediation they needed to catapult them to success. In fact, they were able to outpace their peers and grow rapidly over the course of a year. My RTI group successfully used the intervention space and were successful in achieving the growth mindset presented by me and our school.



## Data Analysis for Character Results

### Character Measure:

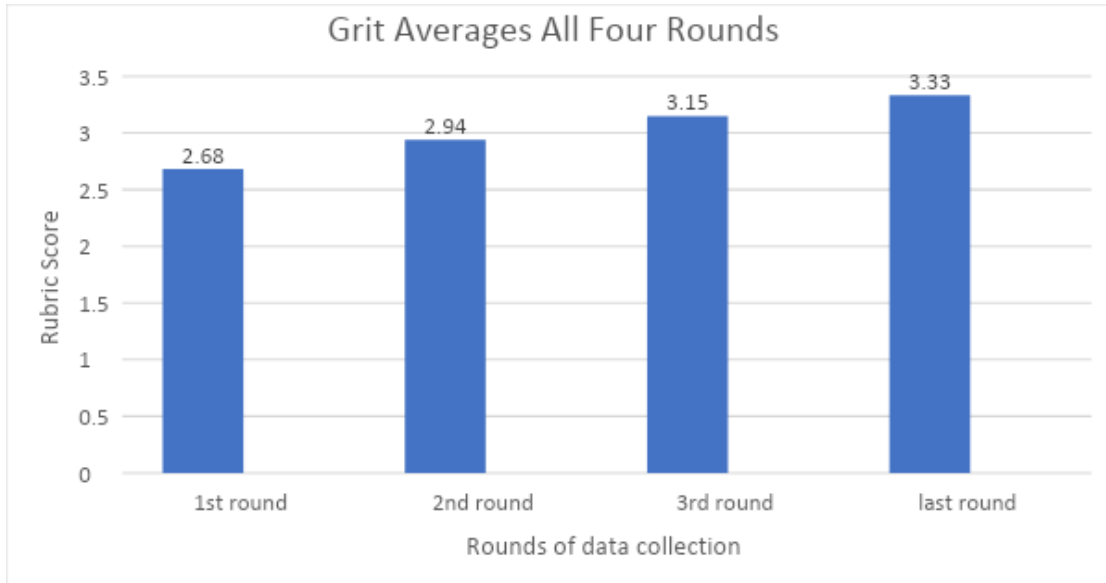
I chose to measure the character strength grit. I decided this strength because it helps students reach and sustain classroom success. Angela Duckworth, a psychologist who has extensively studied grit “found that grit—the tendency to sustain interest in and effort toward very longterm goals—contributes significantly to successful outcomes.”<sup>11</sup>This is important because for a growth mindset, grit is essential. It is a tangible driving source for students. Measuring grit gave students the self-motivation to achieve either the ambitious or proficient goal. Specifically, students measured grit with three indicators: working independently, dealing with failure, and finishing all projects. With grit, it was less about what I can do as the teacher, but what they can do to reach the proficient or ambitious goal. I responded to data by presenting different pushes for the students according to how they rated themselves. For example, if a student had trouble working independently with focus, they would reflect on what was stopping them from being able to focus all the way and eliminate it. Also, I implemented things like student of the week, each week from February until end of year, who most closely displayed the characteristics of grit. To make it as relevant and intentional as possible after each student was chosen I made sure to give specific ways they’ve shown grit. By the end of the year, I had a wall of about 12 students of the week. These different strategies helped students to really embody this character trait.

### Character Results Analysis:

Students assessed their embodiment of the character trait grit four times throughout the year. The rubric consisted of 3 questions and a scale from 1 to 4. It is important to note, although it was recommended for 1-5 range, a smaller range of numbers were easier for class to interact with. Overall, students scored an average of 3.33. The results for each round are illustrated in graph 6.1.

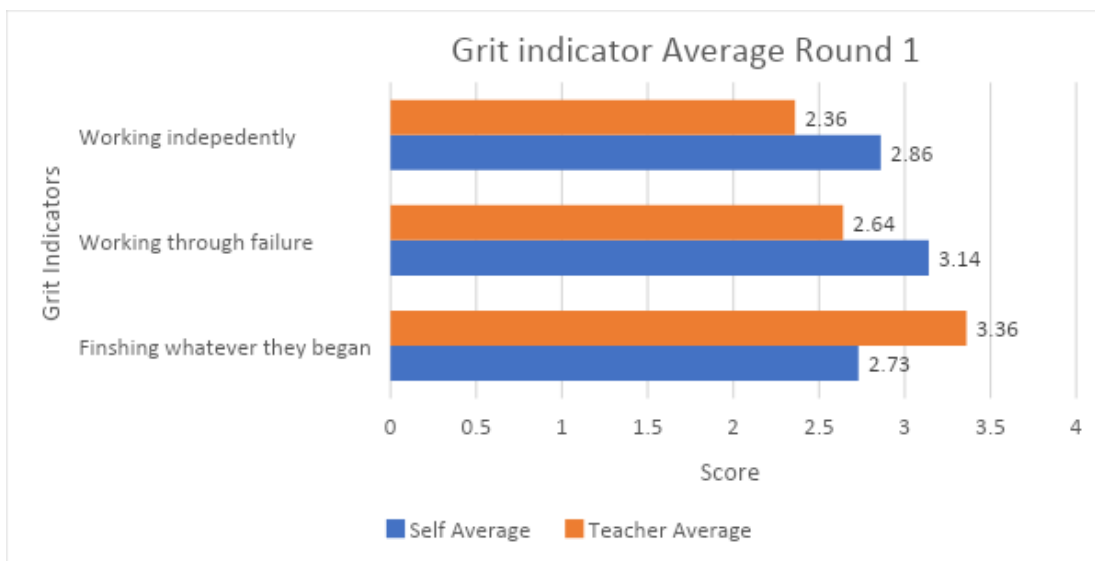
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<sup>11</sup> Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007. *Grit: perseverance and passion for long-term goals*. NCBI. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17547490>. Date accessed 5/25/18



(6.1)

The first round of data is on trend with what I know of students from our previous year of study. My students are so smart, demonstrated in the way they show up for class and overall assessment scores. However, through class observations from this year and last, it seemed they were lacking the skills to self-motivate and had trouble working independently. More specifically, graph 6.2, illustrates self and teacher scores for each indicator for round one.



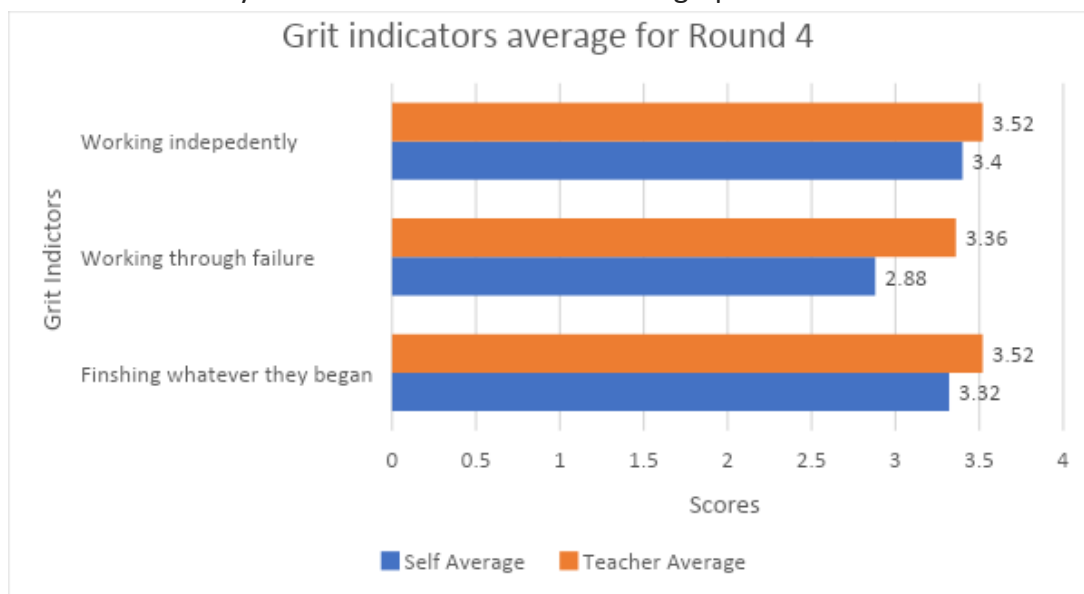
(6.2)

The data reflects teacher and student scores on being able to work independently and being able to work through failures. Working independently and through failure are the lowest



student scored indicators. However, these are important for long term success in education. Furthermore, I entered 7<sup>th</sup> grade with an arrow set on achievement and their embodiment of grit is shown in the second round. For example, from the first to the second round, students saw a .24 increase in grit. Indicators scores went up in both working through failure and finishing what they began. Students continued to see an increase in grit with the third round with a .21 increase. This is significant because these indicators helped students to work most successfully in 7<sup>th</sup> grade. For example, in my class, I expected there to be failure and I needed students to still work through their failures to improve. In fact, students rated themselves higher in being able to handle failure by round three than they previously did. This is significant because they are more strongly embodying this character trait at a really pivotal time of the year. In fact, there is a correlation between overall grit average and average standards mastery. As students embodied more grit, then they did better on assessments, and thus, mastered more standards.

The last round represents an amalgamation of all strategies that went into making grit ever-present in my class and the ways it helped students throughout the year. My scores grew by .35 points from third to last round and students' reflections increased by .03. Thus, the last round increased by .18 overall. Data is illustrated in graph 6.1.



(6.3)

According to graph 6.3, students rated themselves higher in working independently. I also rated students higher there as well. This is on trend with class observations as students began to spend much more time working independently, especially in the last quarter. Also, students just finished LEAP test which is heavily focused on independent work. However, there is a noteworthy dip in self-evaluations. Working through failure saw a big decrease from round 3 to 4. In fact, students rated themselves almost the same percent they had done during their first round. Although they did not score as high as predicted, I saw students display grit in so many

meaningful ways that year. I saw students who were able to keep working even though they were tired or upset. I saw students follow up a day or two after. Some scholars were so set on reaching their standards mastery goal that they requested extra work. These are all examples of the positive effects grit can have on students. Overall, students embodied grit through a final rating of 3.33. This overall rating helped to catch them up from where they started and catapult them to success.



### **Next Steps Character Results:**

I fought with this idea of grit and its usefulness in the classroom. I would hear it in conversation about other people's school and often thought it was problematic to expect students to show this unwavering grit although they go through traumatic circumstances in their lives. However, in my research with this character trait and using it in my class, the positive effects of grit were on display most of the time. However, I wish I had more time to increase the average score to a solid 4. Grit scores steadily increased throughout the year, but could have been even higher from round to round. Specifically, during the last round of data, students overall scored themselves low on the indicator working through failure. Something significant had shifted in students in how they saw themselves working through failure. This could have negatively affected student achievement towards the end of the year. I wish I had the chance to respond to this to help students work through this crucial indicator. Furthermore, I wish I would have implemented student of the week sooner in the year. I think that strategy would have helped more students to embody grit faster, thus capitulating that score higher. The results showed that the higher the overall average, the higher the student achievement. Therefore, I wish I had done more to push students even closer to success. Next year, I intend to teach character earlier and have more strategies in place to better respond to indicators to help increase student character averages.

### **Academic Results:**

This data narrative and my work with 7<sup>th</sup> grade have shown me many useful assets in my journey through teaching. One of the most important is data-driven teaching. Last school year, I really struggled with using data to inform my teaching. Grading assessments was one of my least favorite things, especially if at least half of class failed. I usually cringed when looking through low overall assessments. I thought that the students must not be trying hard enough. I even struggled with this at the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> grade year. More specifically, not using the data to inform my next steps. However, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of this year, things shifted, and I started to use the data to learn more about and drive student achievement. For example, I was able to see that a low assessment score doesn't necessarily mean students don't know anything or didn't try, instead it informed me of certain skills that were challenging. Looking at it through this lens

made student achievement more attainable. For example, Ronald often had low assessment scores at the beginning of the year. He was frustrated, and so was I, but in looking back through his assessments, through a data lens, I learned the skills he was most successful with. Therefore, I was not reteaching a skill at which he was already successful. Instead, Ronald needed more attention on those challenging skills, including reading fluency and vocabulary<sup>8</sup>.

I also learned data analysis is also another way to observe students. Assessments help to give key information, including students' test-taking strategies, how students were feeling throughout the test, and most importantly, knowledge of skills. All this information could have been influential in understanding students.

Lastly, If I had responded to data earlier, I'm confident all my students would have individually reached proficient or ambitious goals. I had about four students who were so close. I'm especially thinking of Kaya, who was determined to reach her goal, but ran out of time to assess. I learned how important it is to track student data throughout the year and how to use it to accelerate student growth.