

DOMUS

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February 11, 2009

To: Members of the CGA Appropriations Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the almost 300 students who are enrolled in the two Domus charter schools in Stamford, Connecticut: Trailblazers Academy and Stamford Academy.

These are middle and high school students who've not been successful in a traditional school environment. Youth regularly enter our high school reading at elementary school levels. Domus, the City of Stamford, and the Stamford Public Schools saw that our district was unable to meet the needs of every student, so we came together to address the gap, utilizing City of Stamford tax dollars, federal monies, State charter per-pupil funding, and private funds.

Our students consistently move two, three, and four grade levels in one school year but are still be classified as Below Basic, the lowest possible level, because they enter school so tremendously far behind. Measuring progress made by charter schools but ignoring gains other than those at the Proficient level misses an entire spectrum of youth and families that are given new leases on their futures—hundreds of children who will now stay in school instead of dropping out.

Our unique partnership saves State and City taxpayer dollars: We serve children who would require a disproportionate number of services were they entered back into the comprehensive school system; in fact, a portion of them would require special out-of-district placements, costing taxpayers in excess of \$20,000 each.

Left to struggle in traditional schools, our students would enter adulthood as less productive and effective workers earning significantly less money and thus contributing far less to State tax coffers. Youth with limited academic skills commit more crimes, rely more heavily on public assistance, and often fail to enter the workforce at all. The short- and long-term economic and social costs of each of these outcomes are heavy.

Please find attached a one-page academic and demographic profile of our students with funding information, plus two pages of charts detailing the academic growth of Trailblazers students.

We appreciate your time and attention. Thank you.

Sincerely,



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C: Lt. Governor Michael Fedele, Stamford legislative delegation, Stamford Mayor Dan Malloy

We are happy to provide you with backup regarding the fiscal and social implications of a poor educational experience.

STUDENT PROFILE: 285 students, 89% from Stamford (32* from outside the city)

Trailblazers Academy:

- 21% are special education (compared to 10% for Stamford district, 11% for state)
- 97% are youth of color (Stamford district 59%, state 25%)
- 76% qualify for free or reduced lunch (Stamford district 41%, state 29%)
- 95% are from Stamford
- 12 students per class
- 1 in 5 goes on to Stamford Academy after Trailblazers
- academic performance **upon entry to the school** (based on CMT data):
 - in **reading**, the majority enter the school THREE levels behind; 31% proficient (compared to Stamford 70% and state 75%), *more than twice* as many nonproficient students as the district
 - in **math**, most students are more than TWO levels behind; 29% proficient (compared to Stamford 70% and state 80%), *more than twice* the number of nonproficient students as the district

** Some of the 32 students started their school careers with us as Stamford residents but moved; others split time between a Stamford parent and a parent outside the district.*

Stamford Academy:

- 14% are special education (compared to 10% for Stamford district, 11% for state)
- 97% are youth of color (Stamford district 59%, state 25%)
- 80% qualify for free or reduced lunch (Stamford district 41%, state 29%)
- 81% are from Stamford
- 12 students per class
- academic performance **upon entry to the school** (based on CMT data):
 - in **reading**, the majority enter the school FOUR levels behind; 22% proficient (compared to Stamford 79%)—*more than three times* the number of nonproficient students as the district
 - in **math**, most students enter FIVE levels behind; 9% proficient (compared to Stamford 72%)—*eight times* the number of nonproficient students as the district

IMPACT ON DISTRICT TEST SCORES (NCLB)

Example: If Black Trailblazers students districted to attend Cloonan were included in that school's NCLB results (for 2006/2007), the number of Black students scoring below proficient **jumps from 58% to 64%** for reading and from **38% to 45%** for math.

FUNDING

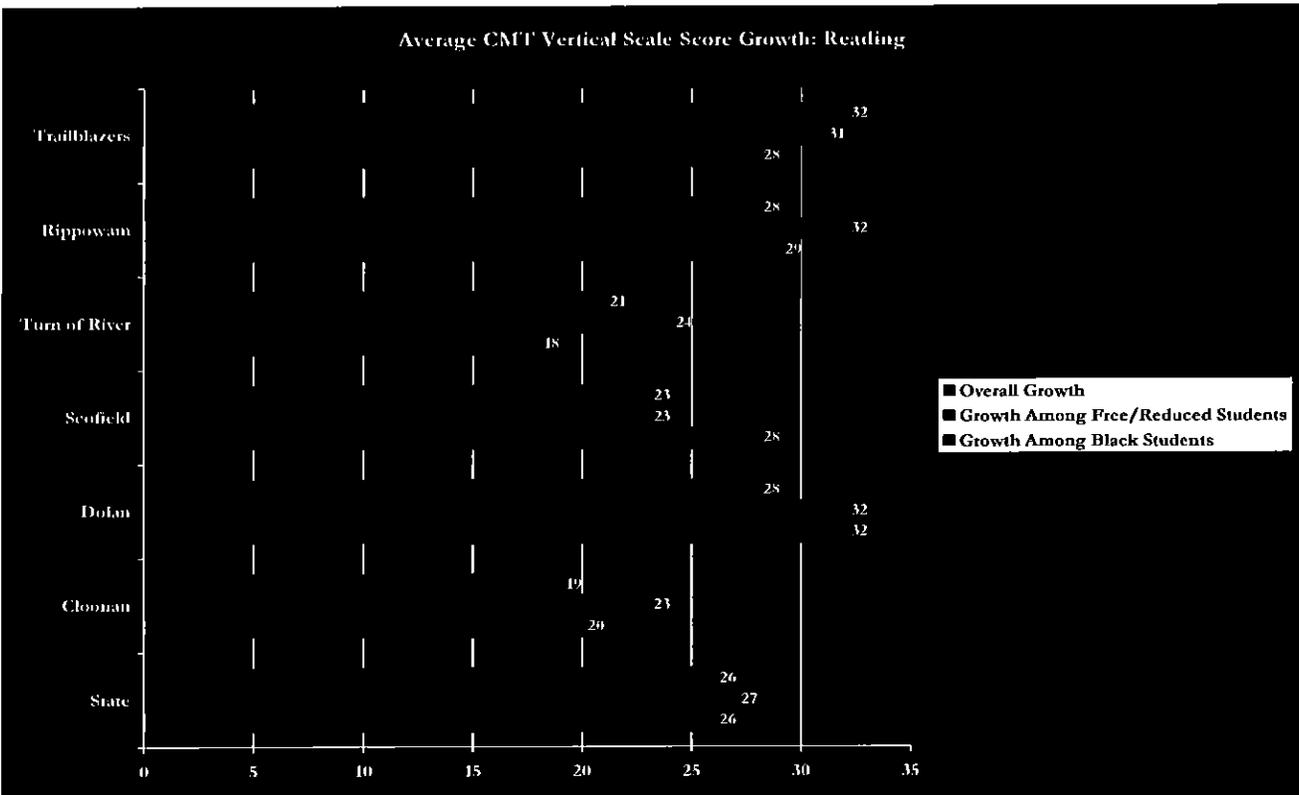
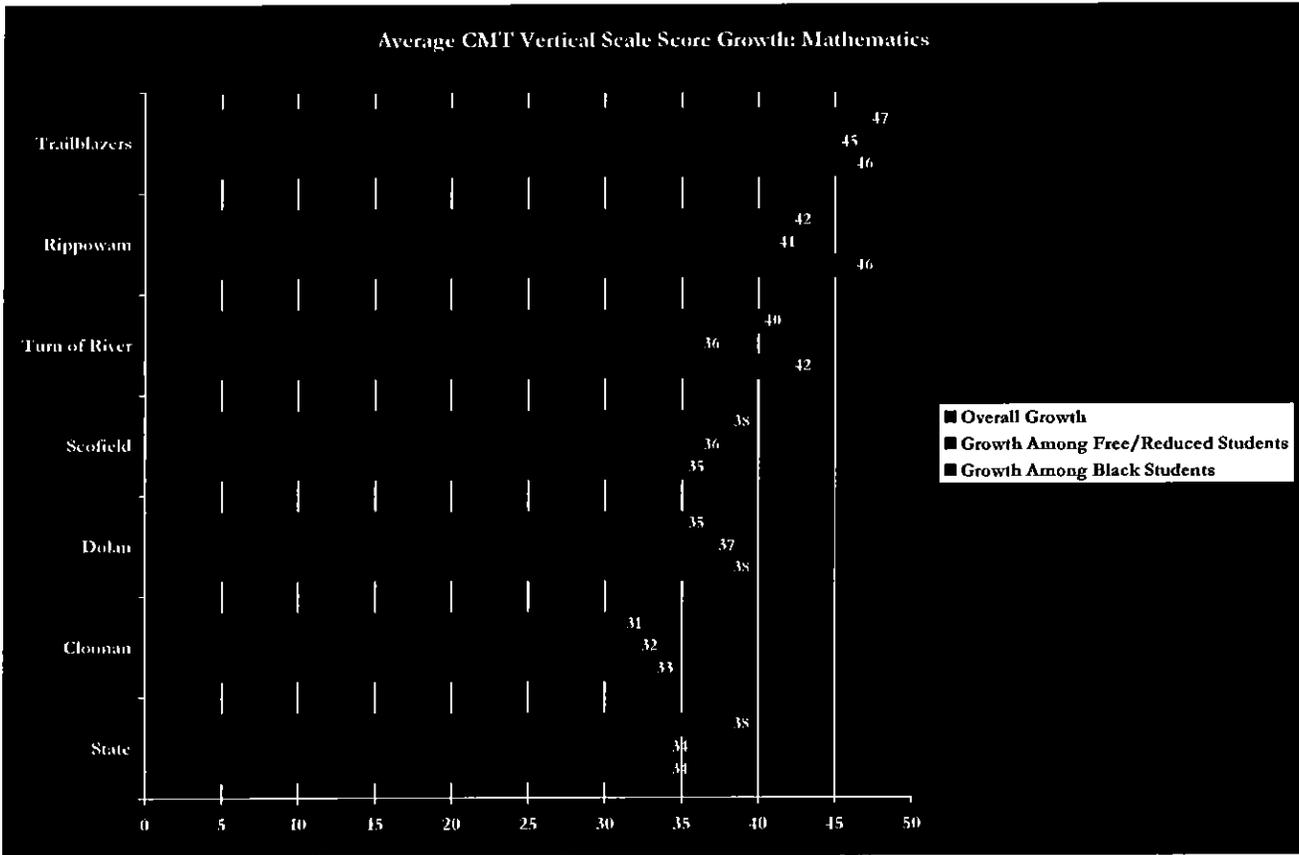
Between the two schools, **Domus raises over three-quarters of a million dollars** annually to supplement the extra services needed to help students regain lost ground, such as literacy specialists. (\$784,170 for FY0809). The Trailblazers budget does not count an additional \$228,500 spent on a free after-school program operating 14 hours per week.

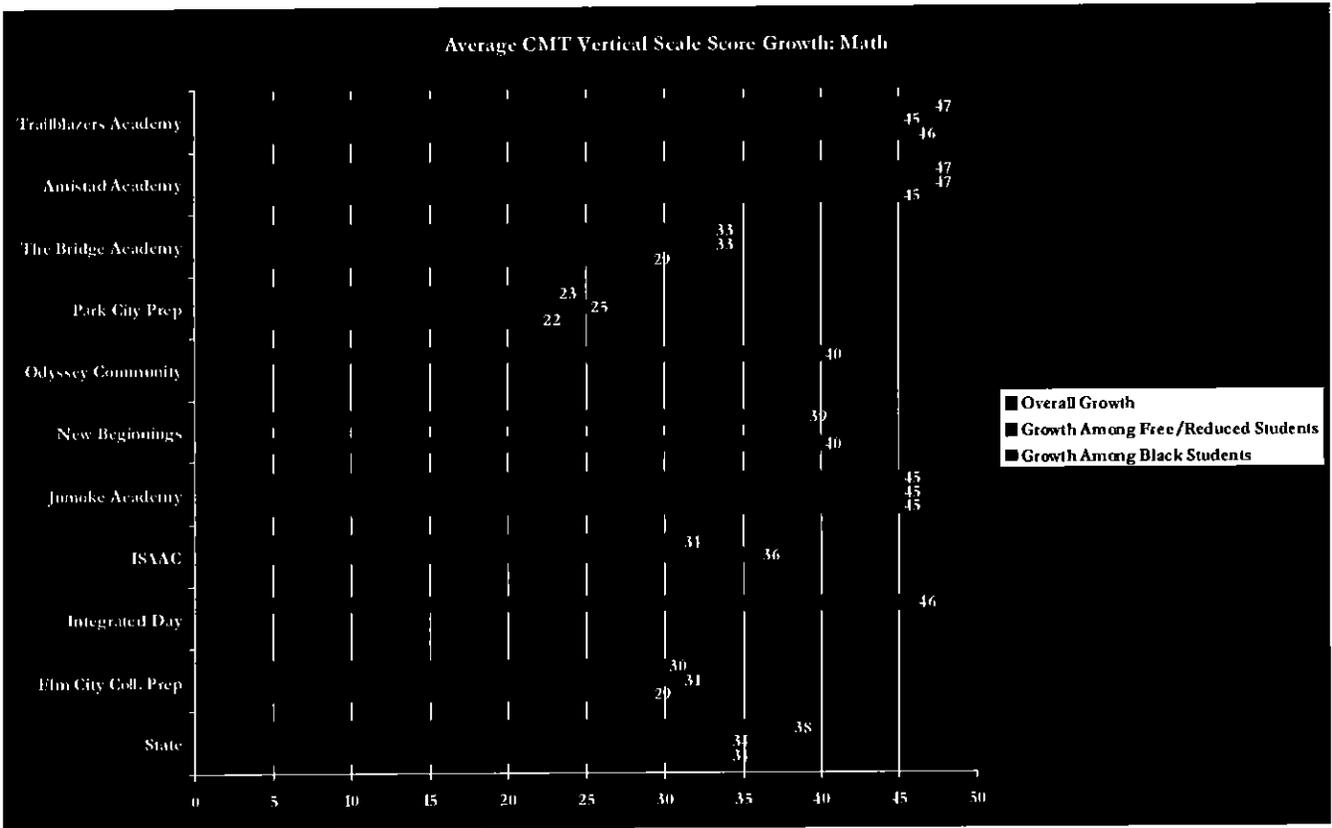
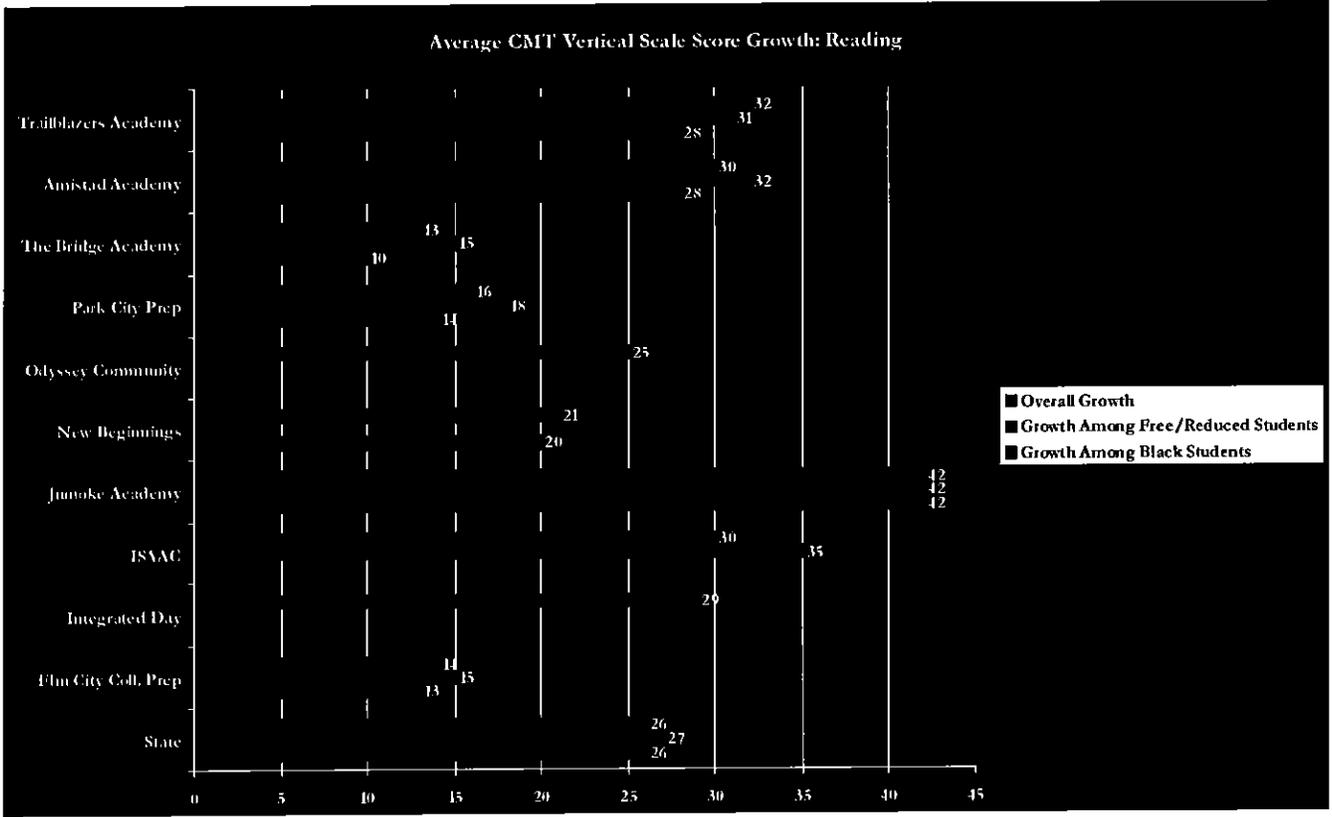
FOR BOTH SCHOOLS in FY0809:

Total \$5.1M: SPS pays 29% (\$1.5M), private funds 15% (\$784K); balance is State funding of \$2.6M, and federal grants (\$225K)

- Trailblazers Academy: total budget \$2.7M (SPS 28%/\$749,759; private funds 16%/\$430,328)
- Stamford Academy: total budget \$2.4M (SPS 30%/\$722,226; private funds 15%/\$353,842)

Trailblazers Academy's average CMT vertical scale overall growth outpaces or matches that of every Connecticut charter middle school and Stamford middle school, as well as the State middle school average, with a single exception.





Source: www.ctreports.com