

**PHASE II ANNUAL EVALUATION REPORT
THE CHILDREN'S SCHOLARSHIP FUND
PHILADELPHIA PROGRAM
YEAR FOUR**

December 2008

Prepared by:

Alexander D. Schuh, Ph.D.

FRONTIER21 EDUCATION SOLUTIONS

304 Levering Mill Road Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004
Tel: 610.771.0108 www.frontier21.net

INTRODUCTION

For over ten years, The Children’s Scholarship Fund Philadelphia (CSFP) has provided scholarships to low income families, enabling them to choose the type of private schooling that they felt would best benefit their children. Each year, thousands of families apply for the scholarships, and four year scholarship awards of up to \$1,975 per student per year are made to support over 1,000 students from Philadelphia in grades Kindergarten through 8. Since 2003, an outside evaluation study has tracked the academic progress of two cohorts of students in the CSFP scholarship program, as well as a cohort of CSFP graduates. The evaluation is being conducted by Dr. Alex Schuh of FRONTIER 21 Education Solutions. This report provides the results from the fourth year of the five year evaluation study of CSFP.

CSFP Background

CSFP is a non-profit organization dedicated solely to supporting the educational progress of economically disadvantaged students through the provision of partial scholarships to attend private elementary schools in the region. Originally started as a local Philadelphia branch of the national Children’s Scholarship Fund in 1998, CSFP is now an independent, non-profit corporation with its own management and by-laws, and funding from multiple sources. The ultimate goals of CSFP are to improve student academic opportunities for children from low-income families and to provide support that leads to their long-term success. CSFP does not impose criteria on their scholarship recipients, other than that they must earn below the income limits set by the program and the students must attend an accredited school in the Philadelphia area. Over the past ten years, CSFP has received over 80,000 applications, and has served over 5,800 students in 205 schools. The average school tuition per child is \$2,400 and the average CSFP scholarship is \$1,106, with a maximum award of \$1,975. The average family contribution per child is \$1,100/year on an average annual income of \$28,500, and the minimum contribution is \$500 per family per year. CSFP believes that requiring families to contribute financially to their child’s education ensures that they are more personally invested in their child’s experience. CSFP serves only students in grades K-8, with a maximum of four years of scholarship support for each student.

Methods of the Evaluation Project

The evaluation of CSFP is designed to provide the organization with a better understanding of: 1) how well their scholarship recipients are achieving academically; 2) what their scholarship recipients and their families might need to improve their educational achievements; and 3) how to track their scholarship recipients during their elementary school career and beyond through high school graduation. In order to obtain the best possible understanding of these three areas, FRONTIER 21 created a five year longitudinal study that would address the following research questions:

- a) Are CSFP students growing academically relative to their peers (including, e.g., standardized test scores, academic grades, grade retention rates, graduation rates, and academic awards);
- b) What types of social and academic supports do CSFP students need in order to succeed in school?
- c) Are CSFP students succeeding in high school?
- d) Where are the students going when they leave the CSFP program?

- e) Is four years of a scholarship sufficient to establish a firm foundation for student success?

The five year tracking study is following the experiences of two groups of CSFP scholarship recipients. The first group is comprised of current scholarship recipients in elementary school who were in second and fifth grades in the 2004-05 School Year. Those students were in the 5th and 8th grade during the 2008-09 school year. The second group consists of 9th graders in 2004-05 who exited the scholarship program at the end of their 8th grade year. Their experiences are being tracked from Freshman year through the end of high school in order to assess their transition to high school and through the critical time of high school graduation. The large majority of the CSFP alumni cohort were in their Senior year of high school during the 2008-09 school year.

In order to track the progress of these two sets of students over five years, the evaluators have done the following:

- Tracking Databases:
 - **Current Scholarship Recipients Database:** Created a tracking database for CSFP elementary students (2nd and 5th grade students in school year '04-'05 through the 5th and 8th grades, respectively),
 - **CSFP Alumni Database:** Created a tracking database for CSFP alumni who completed the 8th grade in 2004 (high school class of 2008),
- Surveys:
 - **School Mail Surveys:** Conducted baseline and annual follow-up mail surveys of schools of CSFP elementary students collecting student standardized test scores and attendance records,
 - **CSFP Alumni Surveys:** Conducted a baseline phone survey, annual mail surveys, and semi-annual follow-up phone surveys of CSFP alumni from the class of 2008,
 - **Alumni Parent Surveys:** Conducted a mail survey of parents of CSFP alumni who completed their 4 years in the scholarship program.
 - **Current Recipient Parent Survey:** Conducted a baseline survey of parents of CSFP elementary school students,
- Focus Group:
 - **Scholarship Recipient Focus Group:** Conducted a focus group of CSFP elementary school students.

All of these research activities have provided valuable insight into the academic progress and the needs of CSFP scholarship recipients both during and after their scholarship years. Findings from the fourth year of the longitudinal study are provided below.

Findings About Elementary Students' Achievements

CSFP elementary scholarship students are succeeding academically

- CSFP students performed near or above the average of their peers nationally in Mathematics, Reading and Language Use in the spring of 2008 on nationally standardized tests

- CSFP students’ academic achievement increased relative to their peers nationally over two consecutive years in Math and Reading, based on their performance on nationally standardized tests. CSFP students’ achievement decreased slightly on tests of Language Use relative to their peers nationally, but remained near the national average.

All one hundred twenty-two (122) schools that served CSFP 5th and 8th graders in the 2007-08 school year were surveyed in the summer of 2008 to obtain information on student attendance and standardized test scores in reading, mathematics and language use for the previous school year. One hundred nine (109) schools (89%) returned the survey with information about 315 (87%) of the 362 CSFP students.

Of the schools surveyed, 106 schools (97%) tested their 5th and 8th grade students with some form of standardized test. The majority of schools surveyed in 2008 (68 schools - 67%) used the Terra Nova standardized test for their students. The second most widely used test was the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT-10): 14 CSFP schools (9%) used this test. Because of their widespread use, the Terra Nova test scores and the SAT 10 test scores were used to compare student achievement in Reading, Language Use and Mathematics to the CSFP students’ national peer group and to the students’ performance on those tests in previous years. The following table shows the variety of tests used in the CSFP schools, and the percentage of schools using those tests in the 5th and 8th grades in the 2007-08 school year.

Table. Standardized Tests Used in CSFP Schools in 2007-08

Test Name	# of Schools	% of Schools
Terra Nova	82	67%
SAT-10	14	11%
Unknown	13	11%
Educational Records Bureau (ERB)(CTP)	5	4%
No test given	3	2%
Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT-8)	1	1%
Gates MacGinitie Reading	1	1%
Giselle & Basis	1	1%
GMADE	1	1%
GRADE	1	1%
WISC	1	1%
PSSA	1	1%
TOTAL	122	

As can be seen in the table above, over two-thirds of schools (82 schools, 67%) surveyed reported using the Terra Nova tests. The table below shows that the large majority of 5th and 8th grade CSFP students whose test scores were reported in the survey, over eighty-three percent (83%), were tested using the Terra Nova test. Nine percent (9%) were tested with the SAT-10 (Stanford Achievement) test, and other tests made up the remaining 8% of test scores. These results were nearly identical to the previous year’s survey.

Table. Standardized Tests Taken by 5th and 8th Grade CSFP Scholarship Students in 2007-08

Test Name	# of Students	% of Students
Terra Nova	229	83%
SAT-10	25	9%
Educational Records Bureau (ERB)(CTP)	7	3%
PSSA	8	3%
Gates MacGinitie Reading	1	1%
Giselle & Basis	1	1%
GMADE	1	1%
GRADE	1	1%
WISC	1	1%
TOTAL	272	

The evaluators originally considered administering one standardized test to all of the students in the two CSFP tracking cohorts. However, after considering the many factors that would weigh on student performance on those assessments (e.g., not being prepared for that assessment by their school, taking the test in an unfamiliar environment, ability to administer an assessment under standard conditions for over 300 students each year, testing fatigue of most students in the spring), the evaluators and CSFP staff determined that using test results from assessments administered at individual schools would provide sufficient information on the academic achievement levels of CSFP students. The fact that over 80% of CSFP students were tested using one company's test- the Terra Nova from CTB-McGraw Hill- supported this decision.

The total number of CSFP scholarship students in the 2012 and 2015 graduation cohorts of CSFP dropped considerably from the 2004-05 to 2005-06 school years, and again from the 2005-06 to the 2006-07 school years. The total number in those two cohorts increased to 362 scholarship students in the 2007-08 school year, up from 270 in the previous year. Attrition from the scholarship program is due in part to the four year limit on scholarship awards by CSFP, and also to general factors such as elementary school student mobility and movement from private to public schools. Some of the students who drop out have been replaced by new students in those grades. From 2005 to 2008, the total number of students in the two cohorts has dropped by 90 students (19%). The majority (75%) of the students in the 2007-08 two study cohorts were new since the 2004-05 school year: only 107 (25%) of the original 433 students in the study remained in the program four years later. Of the 362 5th and 8th grade students in CSFP in 2007-08, 135 (37%) of them were new to CSFP that year, and 227 (63%) had participated in the program in the previous year. Thirty-four percent (34%) of the 8th grade cohort was new to the program in 2007-08, and forty-seven percent (47%) of the 5th grade cohort was new to the program in 2007-08.

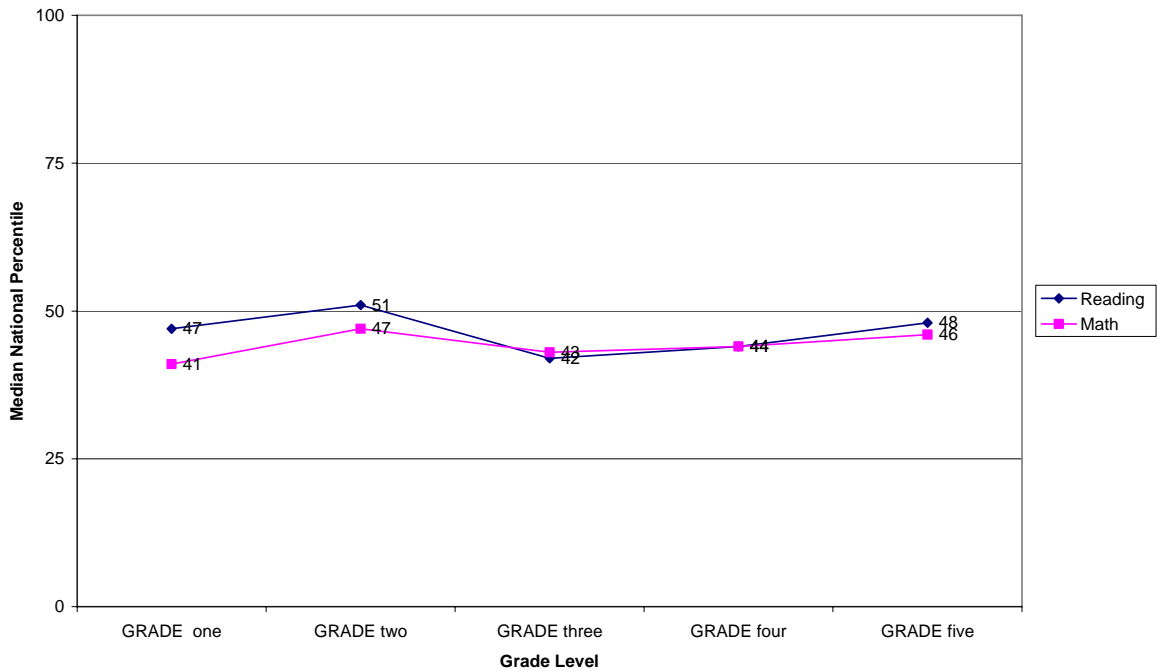
The 2007-08 tracking survey found that students in CSFP in 5th and 8th grades that year were performing near the national average of their peers in Reading, Math, and Language Use on nationally standardized tests. The following table provides the median national percentile ranks of the two CSFP cohorts (classes of 2012 and 2015) in Reading, Math and Language Use for the current year, and for the four previous years. The Terra Nova test score table and accompanying

charts below show that the median performance of students in both cohorts in all three subjects has remained fairly consistent over the 5 years of data collection. Median Reading percentile scores have registered at or just below the national average (42nd percentile to 60th percentile). Median Math scores have also registered from just below to just above the national average (41st to 52nd percentile). Median Language Use scores have likewise registered from just below to just above the national average (43rd to 53rd percentile). In 2008, the CSFP scholarship 2012 cohort (8th graders) scored on average at their highest level over the five years of data collection in all three subjects: at the 53rd percentile in Language Use, at the 60th percentile in Reading, and at the 52nd percentile in Math. The 2015 cohort (5th grade) scores at a higher level on average in Reading and Math than they had in the past 2 years, at the 48th percentile in Reading, and at the 46th percentile in Math. Their Language Use scores on average were slightly lower than the two previous years, at the 42nd percentile.

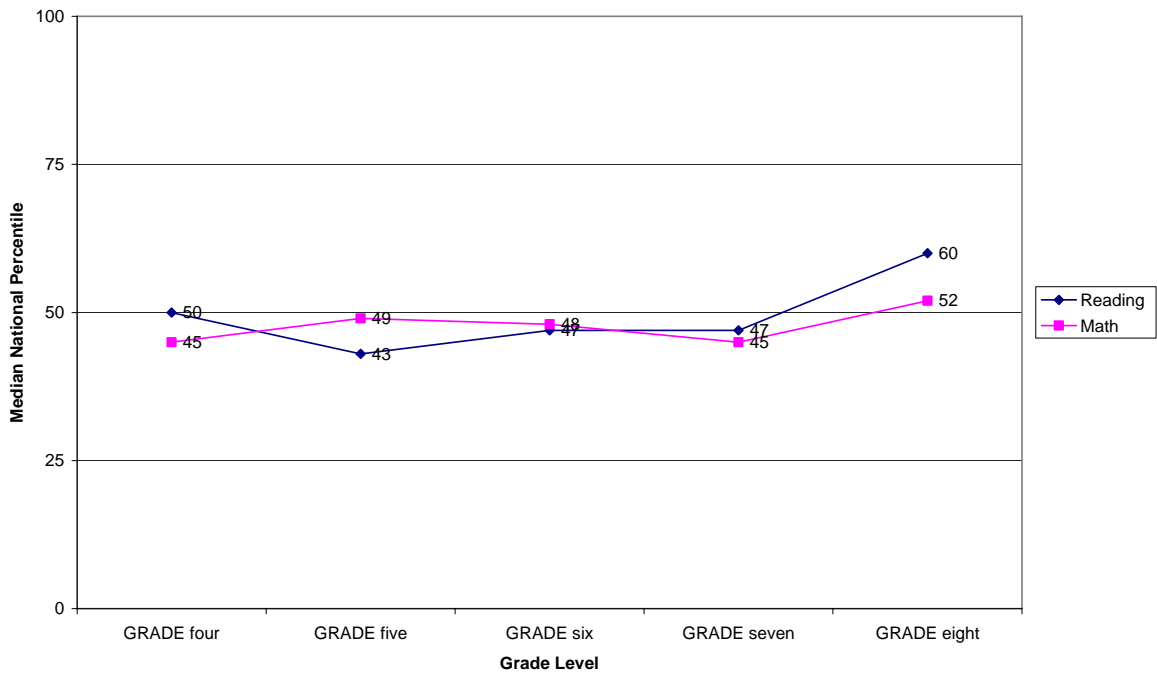
Terra Nova Test Scores of All CSFP 5th and 8th Grade Students in Spring 2008 (Classes of 2012 and 2015)

Median National Percentile Rank					
	Spring '04	Spring '05	Spring '06	Spring '07	Spring '08
Cohort 2015	GRADE one	GRADE two	GRADE three	GRADE four	GRADE five
Reading	47	51	42	44	48
Language Use	N/A	N/A	43	49	42
Math	41	47	43	44	46
Cohort 2012	GRADE four	GRADE five	GRADE six	GRADE seven	GRADE eight
Reading	50	43	47	47	60
Language Use	N/A	N/A	48	51	53
Math	45	49	48	45	52

Median National Percentile Scores in Reading and Math of CSFP Cohort 2015, 2004 to 2008



Median National Percentile Scores in Reading and Math of CSFP Cohort 2012, 2004 to 2008



The previous tables and charts reference the test scores of all students in the two CSFP cohorts in each year of the study. While this shows how each cohort is doing in each year, it does not provide an accurate picture of student “growth” over time, because each year each cohort is different due to new scholarship recipients entering CSFP and former scholarship recipients leaving CSFP. To obtain a more accurate picture of student achievement change over time, a second analysis was done that looked only at students who had been in the program and had test scores reported in both 2007 and 2008. A more complete analysis will be performed in the fifth annual report next year, as part of a review of student performance over the entire five years of the study.

The tables and accompanying charts below show the average change in national percentile scores in Math, Reading and Language Arts of students in the two CSFP cohorts (students who will graduate from high school in 2012 and 2015) who took the Terra Nova tests in the spring of 2007 and the spring of 2008. In Math, the first table shows that students with test scores from both years in the 2015 cohort (5th grade) had a slightly higher average percentile score in 2008 than in 2007 (46th vs. 44th percentile). The same table shows that the 2012 cohort (8th grade) also had a higher average percentile score in Math in 2008 than in 2007 (49th vs. 46th percentile).

The CSFP students showed even more improvement in Reading from 2007 to 2008. The median national percentile in Reading for the 2015 cohort (5th grade) improved from the 43rd to the 50th percentile (+7 percentile points). The median national percentile in Reading for the 2012 cohort (8th grade) improved from the 47th to the 60th percentile (+13 percentile points).

The third table below shows that the CSFP students’ Terra Nova test scores in Language Use (e.g., grammar, punctuation) declined for both cohorts from 2007 to 2008. The 2015 cohort’s average Language Use score declined by 7.5 percentile points, while the 2012 cohort’s average Language Use score declined by 2 percentile points.

**CSFP Students’ Terra Nova Reading Test Scores in 2007 and 2008:
Only Students Taking Assessments Both Years**

COHORT	Reading Median Percentile 2007	Reading Median Percentile 2008	Difference 2007 to 2008
5 th Grade (Class of 2015)	43	50	+7
8 th Grade (Class of 2012)	47	60	+13

**CSFP Students’ Terra Nova Language Use Test Scores in 2007 and 2008:
Only Students Taking Assessments Both Years**

COHORT	Language Use Median Percentile 2007	Language Use Median Percentile 2008	Difference 2007 to 2008

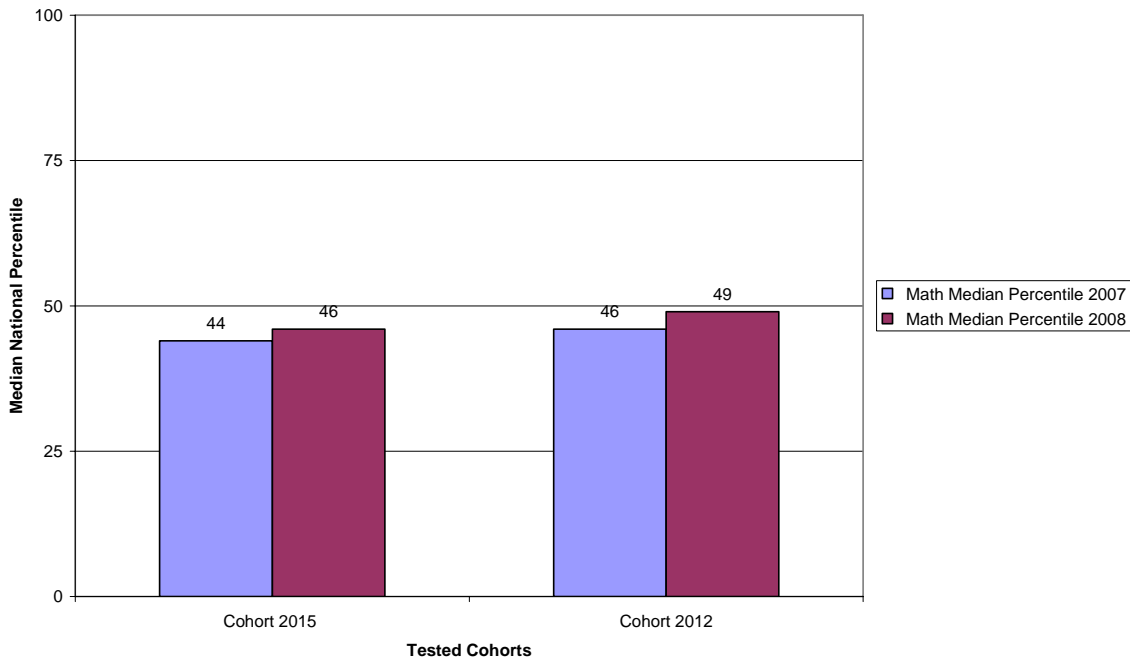
5 th Grade (Class of 2015)	47.5	40	-7.5
8 th Grade (Class of 2012)	51	49	-2

**CSFP Students' Terra Nova Math Test Scores in 2007 and 2008:
Only Students Taking Assessments Both Years**

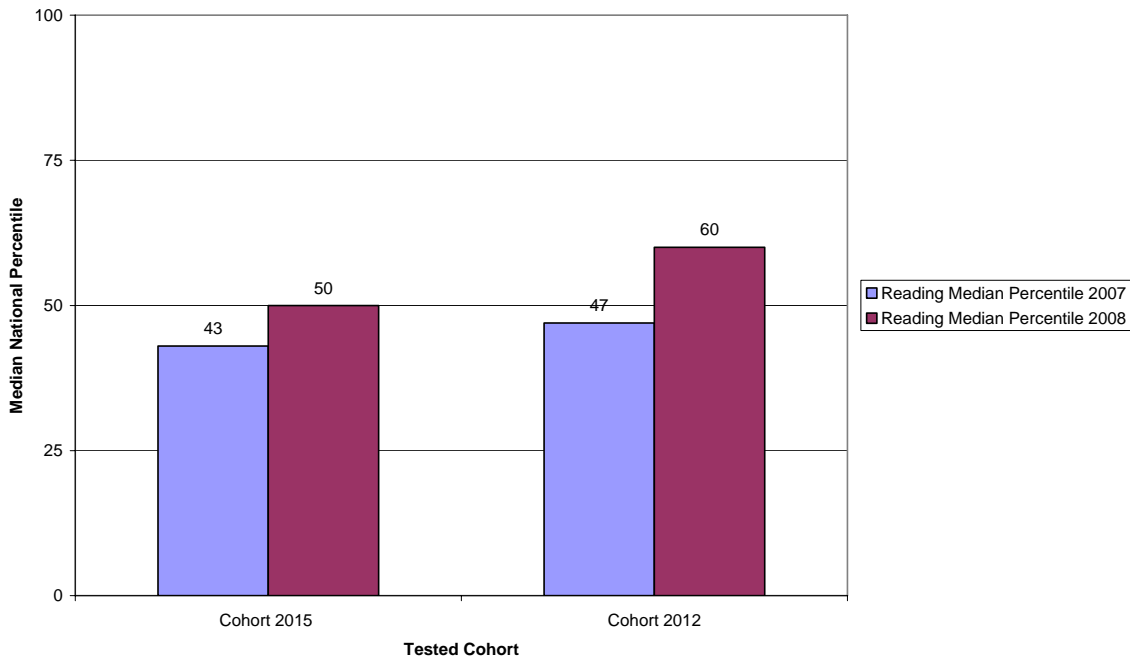
COHORT	Math Median Percentile 2007	Math Median Percentile 2008	Difference 2007 to 2008
5 th Grade (Class of 2015)	44	46	+2
8 th Grade (Class of 2012)	46	49	+3

Overall, the Terra Nova test results showed that the CSFP students in both cohorts generally gained ground relative to their peers nationally in Math and Reading from 4th to 5th grade and from 7th to 8th grade. The improvements in average test scores are illustrated clearly in the following two charts. The results were derived from the test scores of 55 CSFP scholarship students in cohort 2012 who were tested with the Terra Nova test in two consecutive years, and 63 CSFP scholarship students in cohort 2015 who were tested with the Terra Nova test in two consecutive years. The results from students with two consecutive sets of Terra Nova test results were very similar to the results from the two cohorts as a whole, indicating that the students who had moved into and out of the program from 2007 to 2008 were not considerably different from the students who had remained in the program over the two consecutive years.

**CSFP Students' Math Terra Nova Test Score Growth, 2007 to 2008,
Only Students Tested Both Years**



**CSFP Students' Reading Terra Nova Test Score Growth, 2007 to 2008,
Only Students Tested Both Years**



Aggregate student test scores are sometimes reported as averages or medians, and sometimes as percentages scoring above the national average. A group that mirrored the national peer group would have 50% of their scores above the national average (50th percentile), and 50% below. As the table below illustrates, more than half of the CSFP scholarship students in 8th grade in 2008 scored above the national average in Math and Reading (52% and 61%, respectively). In the 5th grade in 2008, half (50%) of the CSFP scholarship students scored above the national average, mirroring the national student population in that grade. Slightly less than half of the 5th graders scored above the national average in Math in 2008 (44%).

Percentage of CSFP Students Scoring at or above the National Average (50th Percentile) on the Math and Reading Terra Nova Tests in 2008, 5th and 8th Grade Cohorts

Cohort	Math 2008		Reading 2008
5 th Grade (Class of 2015)	44%		50%
8 th Grade (Class of 2012)	52%		61%

Considering that all of the CSFP students are from economically disadvantaged families, the fact that half of them or more are scoring above the national average in Reading and Math at the 8th grade level is remarkable. The fact that half or close to half of them are scoring above the national average in 5th grade in Math and Reading is equally remarkable. In the School District of Philadelphia, by comparison, where at least 71% of the students are eligible for free or reduced priced lunch (nearly 100% of CSFP students would qualify based on family income levels), in 2004 the percentage of all 4th grade students who scored at or above the national average on the Terra Nova Reading test was 40% (vs. CSFP 5th graders 50% in 2008), and the percentage of all School District of Philadelphia 7th grade students scoring above the national average on the Terra Nova Reading test was 31% (vs. CSFP 8th graders 61% in 2008). In 2004, the percentage of all 4th grade students in the School District of Philadelphia who scored at or above the national average on the Terra Nova Math test was 38% (vs. CSFP 5th graders at 44%), and the percentage of all School District of Philadelphia 7th grade students scoring above the national average on the Terra Nova Math test was 36% (vs. CSFP 8th graders at 52%). The CSFP students' Terra Nova test scores were higher on average than the School District of Philadelphia's scores, despite overall lower income levels. These results are particularly noteworthy because the relationship between family income levels (Socio-Economic Status, or SES) and student achievement has been well established (White, K. R., 1982, *The relationship between socioeconomic status and academic achievement. Psychological Bulletin*, 91(3), 461–481. Based on family income levels alone, one would expect lower achievement scores on standardized tests among CSFP students than School District of Philadelphia students in general. In this case, however, the 2008 Terra Nova scores were equal or higher than those of School District of Philadelphia students.

Findings about Elementary Students' Engagement

- *CSFP scholarship students are engaged in school*

Children’s Scholarship Fund Philadelphia students are required to attend school at least 90% of the time in order to keep their scholarship. However, this figure is rarely enforced, as the individual schools must track and report the students’ attendance to CSFP. The schools may not be aware that a student’s attendance has passed below the 90% mark until the end of the year. Schools that served CSFP 5th and 8th graders during the 2007-08 school year were surveyed in the Summer of 2008 and asked to provide information on those students’ school attendance and absences for that year. A few students (20, 7%) from the two tracking cohorts had average daily attendance rates for the school year 2007-08 below 90% and the rest (93%) had attendance rates above 90%. The average daily attendance for CSFP students in the two cohorts for the 2007-08 school year was 96%, the same average attendance rate as was recorded for the previous year. This figure is much higher than the average reported attendance in Philadelphia public schools of 86%. CSFP students’ attendance has remained at a high level each year of the study.

Students who attend school more regularly generally have higher academic achievement than their peers who are less engaged in their schools (Brewster & Fager, 2000, *Increasing Student Engagement and Motivation: From Time-on-Task to Homework*, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory). Student motivation to participate in their academic and extracurricular activities has been linked to a combination of factors internal and external to the student, including, but not limited to, the fit between student learning style and the teaching style of their teacher and school, the perceived safety of the school environment, and parental encouragement of student academic achievement (Ames, C., 1992, *Classrooms: Goals, structures, and student motivation*. Journal of Educational Psychology, 84(3), 261-271; Lumsden, L.S., 1994, *Student motivation to learn* (ERIC Digest No. 92). Eugene, OR: ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 370 200)). The most widely used measure of student engagement in school is student average daily attendance (ADA), which has been shown to be highly correlated with student achievement (Vedder & Hall, 2004, *Effective, Efficient, Fair: Paying for Public Education in Texas*, Texas Public Policy Foundation).

Findings About High School Transitions of CSFP Alumni

- *The overwhelming majority of CSFP Alumni who leave the program after 8th grade are graduating from high school (96%)*
- *The majority of CSFP Alumni continue to attend private high schools after leaving the program at the end of 8th grade, with nearly two-thirds attending Catholic school in their Senior year in high school*

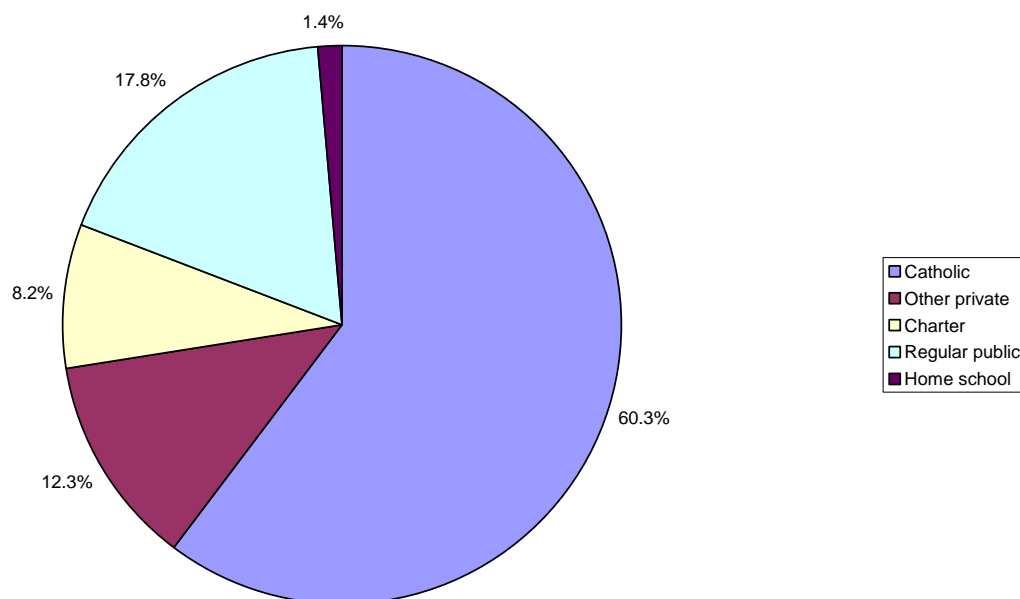
Beginning in the fall of 2004, evaluators from FRONTIER 21 began tracking 135 alumni of CSFP who had completed their final scholarship year as 8th graders the previous spring. CSFP’s Board and staff were interested to learn how well the four years of scholarship was preparing students to succeed in high school, and to learn what percentage of their alumni were graduating from high school. Early research for this study focused on understanding how well CSFP alumni were adjusting to and achieving in their first years in high school. Numerous researchers have found that making a successful transition into and through the 9th grade year is critical for students’ ability to thrive in and graduate from high school (Kerr, 2002, *An Examination of Approaches to Promote Ninth-Grade Success in Maryland Public High Schools*,

ERS Spectrum, retrieved 9.30.05 from <http://www.ers.org/spectrum/sum02a.htm>). Roderick (1993) for example, found a substantial drop in grades among 9th graders regardless of prior achievement levels, increased feelings of anonymity, and a decreased sense of belonging (Roderick, M., 1993, *The path to dropping out: Evidence for intervention*. Westport, CT: Auburn House).

The evaluators have been keeping track of the addresses, school attendance and school achievement of the alumni cohort through mail and telephone surveys administered twice a year for each of the past four years. During the first year of the study, the alumni's 9th grade year, the students were found to be succeeding academically in general. Results were similar in the second year of the study. In the second study year, the evaluators were able to contact 71 students (65%) in the fall 2005 survey, and 50 students (45%) in the summer 2006 survey. It is important to note that, as the students became more distanced from the program, they became increasingly difficult to track. The majority of the students moved, many of them out of City. In the third year of the study, we were able to contact 61 of the original 135, and we were able to remove five students who had been mistakenly identified as 8th graders in the CSFP database in 2004 (61 of 130 = 47%). In the fourth year of the study, the alumni cohort's Senior high school year, the researchers redoubled their efforts to track the students, using electronic databases, Web searches, multiple post card mailings, telephone surveys and mail surveys. This effort yielded positive results, as we were able to contact 73 of the original 130 students (56%) and to determine whether they had graduated from school by the end of their fourth year after 8th grade.

The following chart provides information on the types of schools that CSFP alumni attended in their final year in high school. The large majority of students attend Catholic school (60.3%) and other types of private schools (12.3%). Just over a quarter of the seniors that we surveyed attended schools that were not private or sectarian. Of those, the majority attended regular public schools. Interestingly, although all of the students were residents of Philadelphia when they completed the scholarship program in 2008 in 8th grade, more than half of those who attended regular public high schools in their senior year were enrolled in schools outside of Philadelphia (7 of 13, 54%). Six of the 73 seniors (8%) the researchers contacted in the spring of their senior year had attended charter schools, and one (1%) was home schooled.

Percentage of CSFP Alumni by Type of High School Attending in 12th grade



Of great import to this study was determining what percentage of former CSFP students who left the scholarship program after their 8th grade year (the final year of the CSFP scholarship program) were graduated from high school after four years. The study found that 96% of the students (70 of 73) who were contacted in the survey reported graduating from high school four years after leaving 8th grade. One student was still in school, and had not yet graduated. The other two had left school prior to graduation.

Conclusions and Next Steps for the Evaluation Study

In the fourth year of the study, the evaluators tracked for the final year the annual academic progress and engagement in school of the CSFP 8th grade alumni Class of 2008 and of two cohorts of CSFP scholarship students (Classes of 2012 and 2015). The tracking of both the alumni and two scholarship recipient cohorts was successful in Year 4 of the evaluation. Information on student achievement and engagement in school was collected and compared to the baseline and the previous year's (2006-07) data. Overall, CSFP students and high school level alumni appear to be doing well academically, especially considering that all of the students come from economically disadvantaged homes. The majority of the students leaving CSFP after 8th grade continued to attend private or parochial schools through the end of their Senior year in high school, demonstrating a continuing commitment of parents to find resources to send their

children to a private education. Over 96% of CSFP alumni who were contacted four years after their participation in the program reported graduating from high school on time.

During the fifth year and last year of Phase II, we will take a longitudinal look at the data we have collected on the progress of CSFP students and alumni as they made their way through the education system. We will examine how student achievement grew in the different cohorts over time, and explore factors that might be contributing to that achievement. We will also examine the process of tracking both the participating scholarship students and the alumni over time, in order to determine strategies that might help CSFP to track their students over time.