

***Adventures in Language: A Direct Instruction Program for the Teaching of Basic Language and Writing Skills* © Novel Ideas, Inc.  
By Fay Goodfellow and Terry Dodds**

*Adventures in Language* © Novel Ideas, Inc. is a four-level basic language and writing program that provides teaching strategies and instructional materials for assisting students in developing the skills necessary to become clear and effective communicators. At the same time, they master correct grammar, word usage, and written expression skills.

**Students for Whom these Materials are Appropriate:**

There are four levels of instruction in *Adventures in Language*: I, II, III, and IVA and B. Level I is appropriate for students who have a mid-Grade 1 reading level through Grade 3. Level II is appropriate for students from grade 2 through grade 5. Levels I and II may also be appropriate for some older special-education students to help them acquire basic language skills. Level III is appropriate for students from grade 3 through grade 6. It may also be appropriate for some older special-education students to help them acquire more advanced language and written expression skills. Level IV (A and B) is appropriate for students from grade 4 through grade 8. It may also be appropriate for some older special-education students to help them acquire advanced language and written expression skills. Students should be placed in the program based on the results of placement tests included with each level of the program.

**Program Design**

Each level of *Adventures in Language* (I, II, III, and IVA and B) consists of tracks, rather than units. Tracks are sequences of activities that teach a skill across multiple lessons. Each lesson contains activities from several tracks, thus enabling the teacher to extend teaching and practice of a skill across many lessons while weaving in prerequisite skill tracks into the tracks that integrate these skills into more complex strategies. (Marchand-Martella, 2004, p. 37).

The carefully designed teaching sequence is one of the reasons for the high level of student success. Confidence and fluency develop through teacher directed instruction and cumulative practice. Skills are coordinated to state standards for language and written expression, across the United States, as well as to the *Core Knowledge Curriculum* by E. D. Hirsch, Jr. As students progress through the various levels of the program they acquire important basic skills that enable them to be effective speakers and reflective writers. Test practice formats throughout the program ensure that students will be more successful in meeting the criteria specified in state and nationally norm referenced tests.

**Building Vocabulary and Developing Core Knowledge**

E.D. Hirsch, Jr. made it clear in his book *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*(1987) that young learners need to have adequate background knowledge to be successful academically. The topics found in the "Picture It" activities in *Adventures in language I and II* provide students with exposure to expository text, while developing their listening

comprehension, vocabulary, and store of factual information. "Picture It" activities cover a range of knowledge in history, fine arts, science, and social studies.

Many of the topics found in the sentences, paragraphs, and passages in *Adventures in Language III and IVA and IVB* are directly correlated to the topics covered in the Core Knowledge Curriculum by Hirsch. Students can also gain further reinforcement of the knowledge taught in various curriculum areas (e.g., science and social studies) through meeting them within the context of language instruction. Topics are also correlated to a number of the science and social studies curricula from various states.

### Using the Six-Trait Writing Approach to Develop and Evaluate Writing

*Adventures in Language* actively engages students in the steps of the writing process. Students apply sentence and paragraph-writing skills they learn in this sequential language program first to story and expository writing. The students participate in evaluating class cooperative-writing projects, and their own writing, by identifying and analyzing six things to think about if they want to write a good paragraph or story. The six traits are defined and practiced under teacher guidance, and in "student-friendly" language. This enables them to evaluate written expression for content, organization, voice, sentence fluency, word choice, and conventions. The Six Traits become a habit as the students develop as writers.

In *Adventures in Language III, IVA and IVB* the Writing for Fluency track enables students to develop the skills required to write in a variety of genre (practical, descriptive, expository, narrative, persuasive, and report writing) as well as to write on demand in a test-taking situation or classroom setting. Structured writing activities provide students with writing experiences that extend into other content areas such as science and social studies.

### Summary of Key Tracks by Level

#### Level I

Increasing General Knowledge  
Words  
Word Usage (Grammar)  
Thinking Skills  
Sentences  
Parts of Speech  
Paragraphs  
Listening to a Story  
Retelling a Story  
Writing Activities  
Project Writing

Literature (Story grammar)  
The Writing Process (prewriting, drafting, editing, proofreading, publishing, presenting)  
Evaluating (Six Traits)  
Editing for Grammar  
Capitalization  
Punctuation  
Proofreading Marks  
Study Skills

Level II

Increasing General Knowledge  
Words  
Word Usage (Grammar)  
Thinking Skills  
Sentences  
Parts of Speech  
Paragraphs  
Multiple paragraph Report  
Quotations/Dialog  
Dialog and Narrative Rules  
Listening to a Story/Report  
Writing Activities  
Project Writing

Literature (Story Grammar)  
The Writing Process (prewriting, drafting, editing, proofreading, publishing, presenting)  
Evaluating (Six Traits)  
Editing for Capital Letters, Punctuation, Spelling  
Editing for Grammar, Making Editing Decisions  
Capitalization  
Punctuation  
Proofreading Marks  
Study Skills

Level III

Words  
Word Usage (Grammar)  
Thinking Skills  
Sentences  
Parts of Speech  
Sentence Formulas  
Paragraphs  
Responding to Text  
Dialog

Figurative Language  
Writing for Fluency  
Project Writing  
Capitalization  
Punctuation  
Proofreading Symbols  
Study Skills

Level IV(A and/or B)

Words  
Grammar and Word Usage  
Thinking Skills  
Sentences  
Parts of Speech  
Sentence Formulas  
Paragraphs  
Multi-paragraph Passages  
Quotations/Dialog  
Figurative Language  
The Writing Process (prewriting, drafting, editing, proofreading, publishing, presenting)

Writing for Fluency  
Narratives  
Letters  
Expository Writing  
Descriptive Writing  
Persuasive Writing  
Journal Writing  
Newspaper Article  
Poetry Writing  
Capitalization  
Punctuation  
Proofreading for Correct Spelling  
Proofreading Symbols  
Study Skills

### **Program Components**

Each of the four levels includes the following components:

- Teacher's Guide Book
  - placement test
  - scope and sequence
  - 80-85 scripted lessons
- Blackline Masters Packet
- Blackline Master Homework Program
- Student Workbook
- Answer Key (presented as a filled-in student workbook)
- Out of Program Mastery Tests and Rubrics for scoring written expression

### **Research Base and Principles of Instruction**

The methodology used in *Adventures in Language* is based on current research in effective instruction generally and specifically in instruction in language and writing. In their review and consolidation of empirically-supported effective teaching principles, Ellis, Worthington, and Larkin (1994) identify ten key principles of effective instruction:

**Principle 1:** *Students learn more when they are engaged actively during an instructional task.*

**Principle 2:** *High and moderate success rates are correlated positively with student learning outcomes, and low success rates are correlated negatively with student learning outcomes.*

**Principle 3:** *Increased opportunity to learn content is correlated positively with increased student achievement. Therefore, the more content covered, the greater the potential for student learning.*

**Principle 4:** *Students achieve more in classes in which they spend much of their time being directly taught or supervised by their teacher.*

**Principle 5:** *Students can become independent, self-regulated learners through instruction that is deliberately and carefully scaffolded.*

**Principle 6:** *The critical forms of knowledge associated with strategic learning are (a) declarative knowledge, (b) procedural knowledge, and (c) conditional knowledge. Each of these must be addressed if students are to become independent, self-regulated learners.*

**Principle 7:** *Learning is increased when teaching is presented in a manner that assists students in organizing, storing, and retrieving knowledge.*

**Principle 8:** *Students can become more independent, self-regulated learners through strategic instruction.*

**Principle 9:** *Students can become independent, self-regulated learners through instruction that is explicit.*

**Principle 10:** *By teaching sameness both within and across subjects, teachers promote the ability of students to access potentially relevant knowledge in novel problem-solving situations.*

As well, G. Adams (1996), in his meta-analysis of over 350 publications established that the overall success of explicit instructional practices is substantial. Careful use of direct instruction design principles (big ideas, conspicuous strategies, mediated scaffolding, strategic integration, judicious review, and primed background knowledge) and a delivery system that features group instruction and a high level of teacher and student interactions provides effective instruction for all students.

*Adventures in Language* incorporates the key principles of effective instruction, explicit instructional practices, and direct instruction design, organization, and delivery of instruction in its instructional approach.

### Grammar

Although there is limited research on the teaching of grammar, the lack of student achievement in grammar has caused concern nationally. (Allender, 2000.) As well, there is much evidence that there is a large difference between the language experiences of children from high-income families and those from low income families, with most children from high-income families entering kindergarten having heard twice the vocabulary and understanding twice the meanings and language conventions of the typical low-income student. (Hirsch, Jr., 2001.) Educators need to find a way to help students bridge the gap between home language and standard American English in order to clearly communicate their ideas orally and in writing. (Yoder, 1996.) By using the proven design, organization, and delivery of instruction of the Direct Instruction approach, (Borman, Hewes, Overman, & Brown, 2002 p. 29), *Adventures in Language* teaches grammar concepts in an orderly fashion that allows for new skills to build upon previously mastered ones, while using those skills to help produce clear and effective written communication.

### Writing

Gersten and Baker (1999) identified key components of a writing program that leads to improved expressive writing by students: (1) it adheres to the basic framework of planning, writing, and revision; (2) it explicitly teaches the critical steps in the writing process; and (3) it provides feedback guided by the information explicitly taught.

*Adventures in Language* uses a three-step instructional model based on current educational research that supports the belief that all children can become writers. In the first step of the instructional model, students hear or read exemplary pieces of writing in the form they're studying. This allows the teacher to build on the students' knowledge while introducing challenging new material. (Applebee, 1986.) The teacher and the students work together to analyze the piece. The teacher helps the students identify the key elements in ideas and content, organization, voice, word choice, and sentence fluency, building metacognition skills they can use to approach their own writing tasks.

In the second step of the instructional model the teacher guides the students through the writing process, using a variety of strategies and organizers. Murray (1982) suggests that 70 percent or more of students' writing time should be spent on prewriting activities. These first two steps of the *Adventures in Language* instructional model involve students in the important prewriting process. Skills that have been explicitly taught in previous tracks are integrated into the students' writing. The teacher then guides them through a revision process geared to the specific form in which they're writing. Students are also guided through a proofreading process, proofreading for writing conventions such as grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. During this step, students have ample time to learn the writing process and participate in it (Corona, Spangenberg, and Venet, 1998). Research by Robinson (1985) found that children in grades two through six produced better stories when they participated in this type of teacher-directed revision.

In the final step of this instructional model, students evaluate their writing. Checklists and Out of Program tests include rubrics for evaluating student writing. The use of writing rubrics which evaluate the six traits of effective writing: ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions (Spandel, 2001) gives teachers the tools they and their students need to successfully evaluate students' writing. (Strickland & Strickland, 1998.) Through this giving and receiving of feedback, students learn to evaluate their own writing as well as the writing of others (Zemelman, Daniels, Hyde, 1998).

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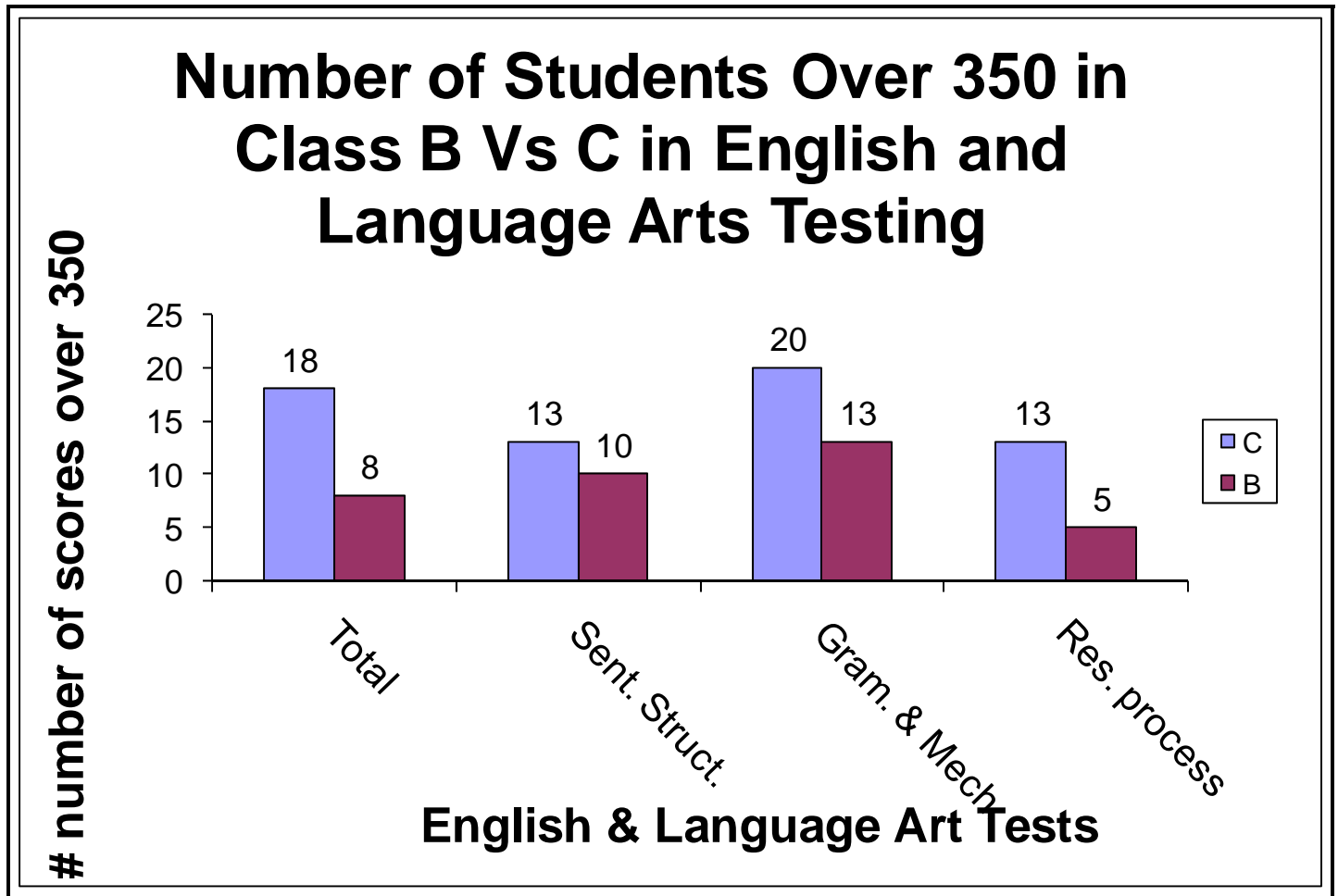
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**Effectiveness**

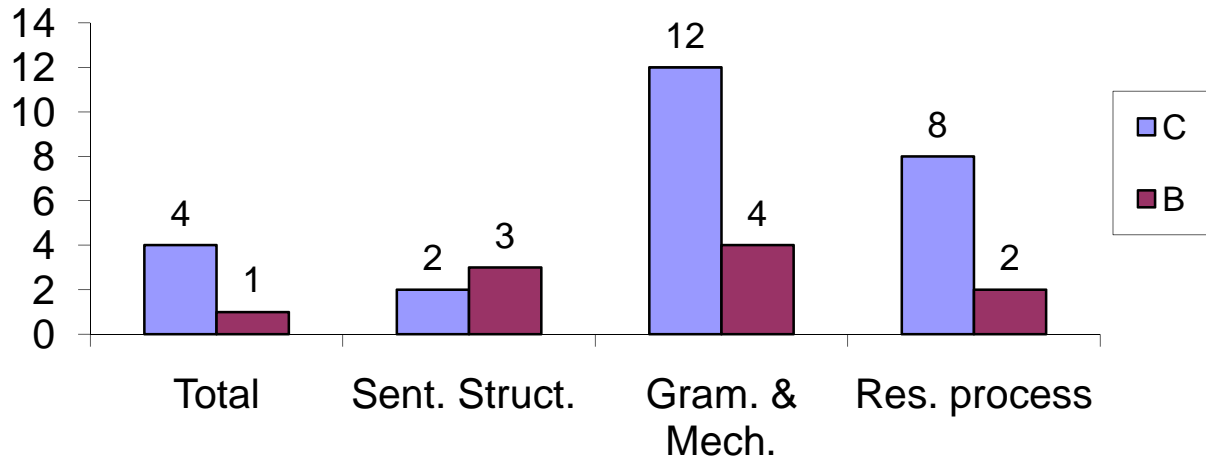
Study 1: In the first study presented, two comparable first grade groups in a rural Title 1 school were set up to test the effectiveness of *Adventures in Language Level One*. Students were randomly assigned to each group. Group C used *Adventures in Language Level 1* as the instructional program for language and written expression. Group B used teacher designed materials that came from a variety of sources. The results are based on the Georgia Criterion Referenced Competency Test. The students needed to attain a score of 350 to pass the state test.





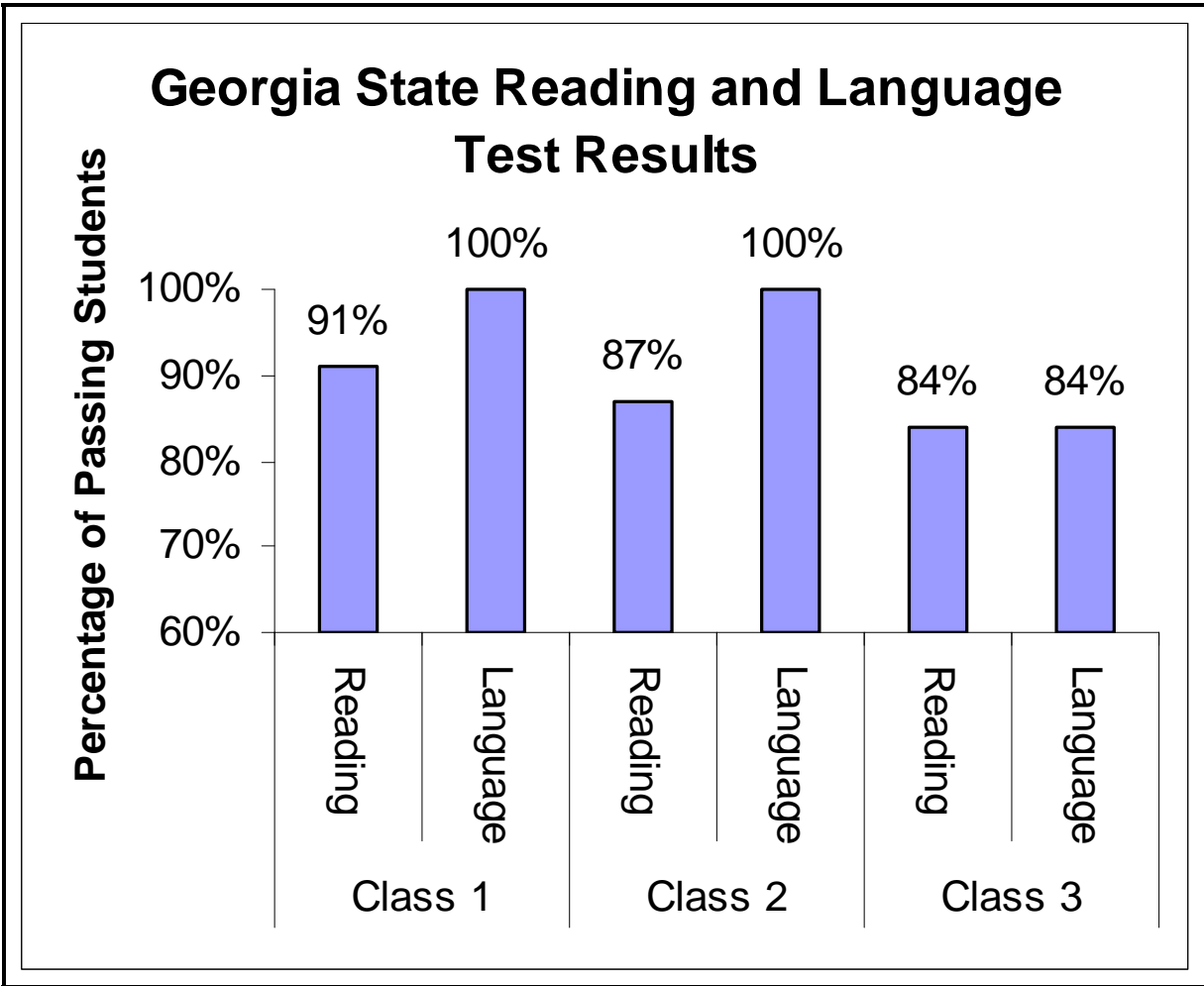
## Number of Students Over 400 in Class B Vs C in English & Language Arts

# Of Students with Scores Over 400

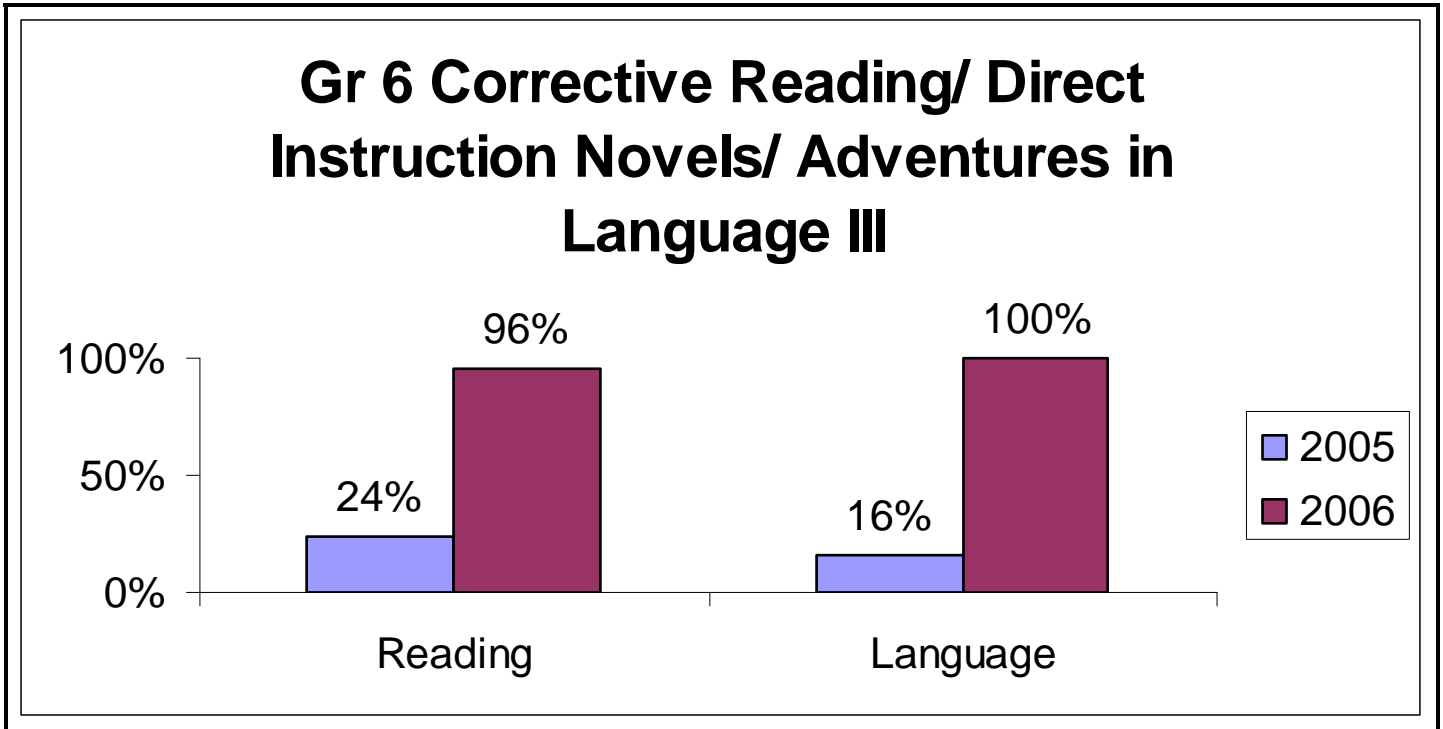


English & Language Arts Testing

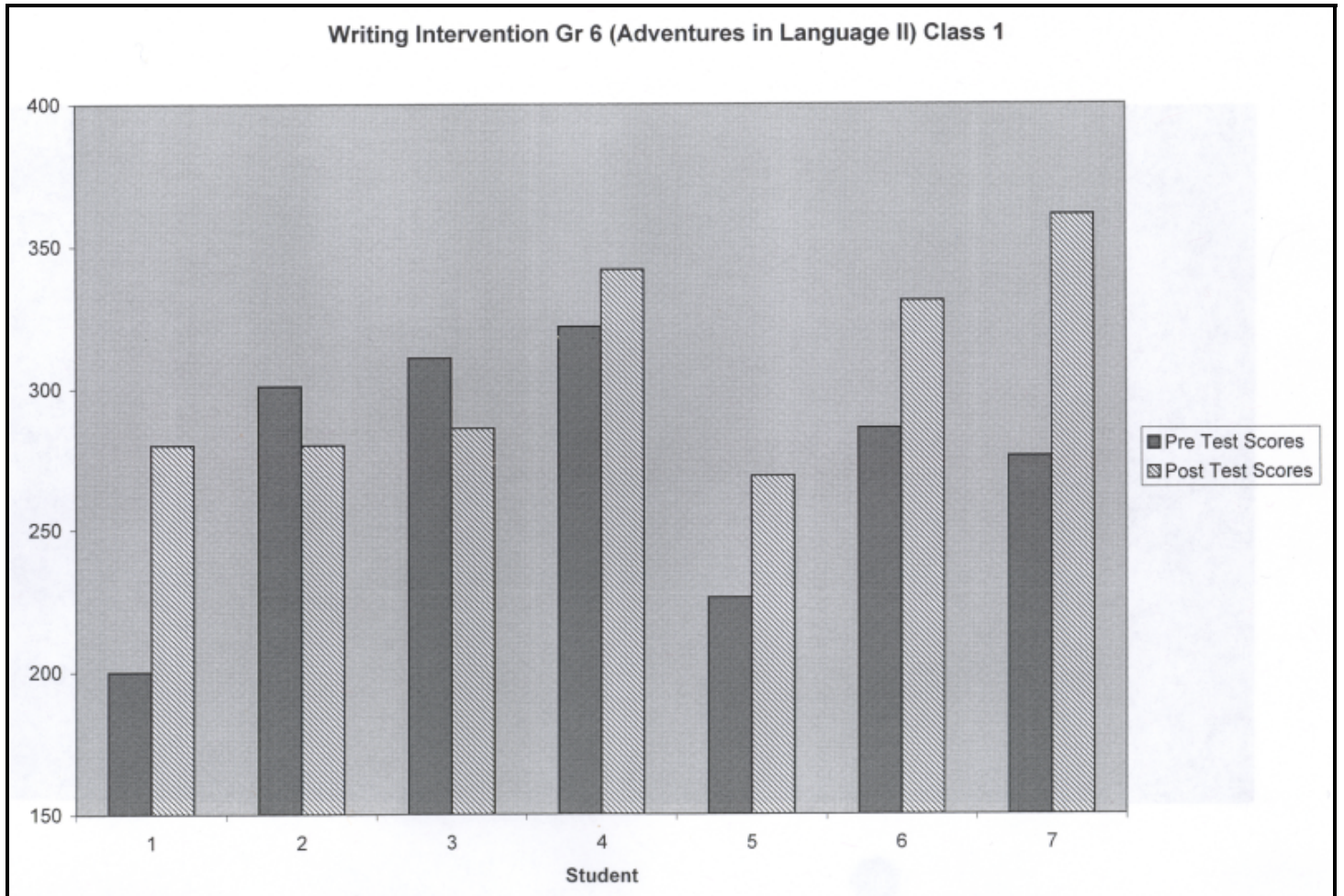
Study 2: In the second study presented, three first grade groups in a rural Title 1 school were established. Classes 1 and 2 were Early Intervention classes of Grade 1 students identified as being at risk. These students received instruction in Reading Mastery I at the beginning of the year and completed Reading Mastery II by the end of the school year. They completed 80 lessons of Adventures in language I (Revised edition) with a high level of fidelity of implementation. Class 3 was an average to high average grade 1 class. These students completed Reading Mastery II and completed 60 lessons of Adventures in Language I (revised edition, but with a low level of fidelity of implementation). The graph represents the percentage of students who passed the Georgia Criterion Referenced Competency Test.



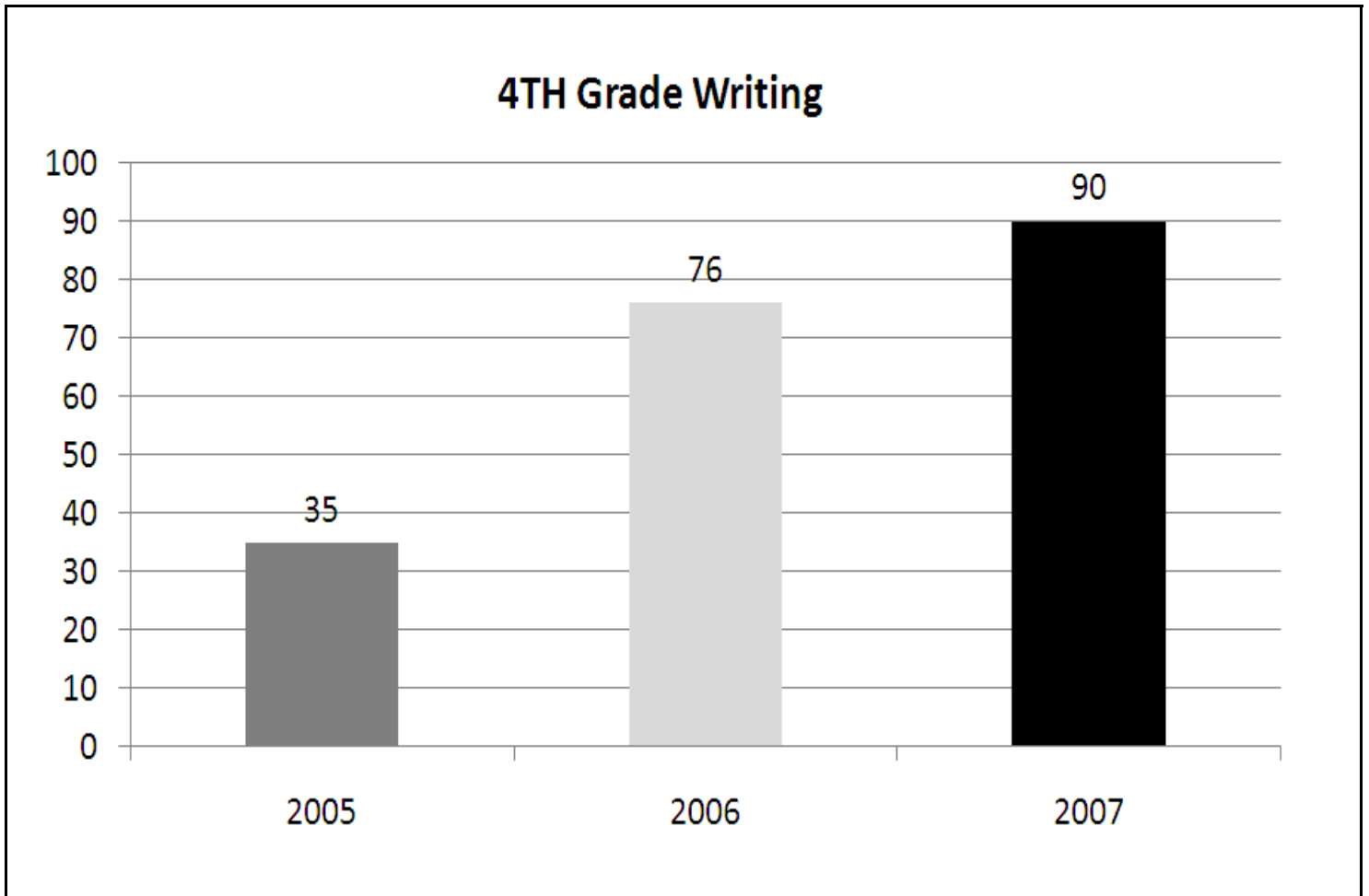
Study 3: The third study presented shows the results achieved by a grade six corrective Reading group in a rural Title 1 school in Georgia. This group received one additional hour of language arts instruction each day that included Corrective Reading Decoding B2, Reading for Success direct instruction novel studies, and 80 lessons of *Adventures in Language* Level III. There was a high degree of fidelity of implementation. The graph represents the percentage of students who passed the state achievement tests.



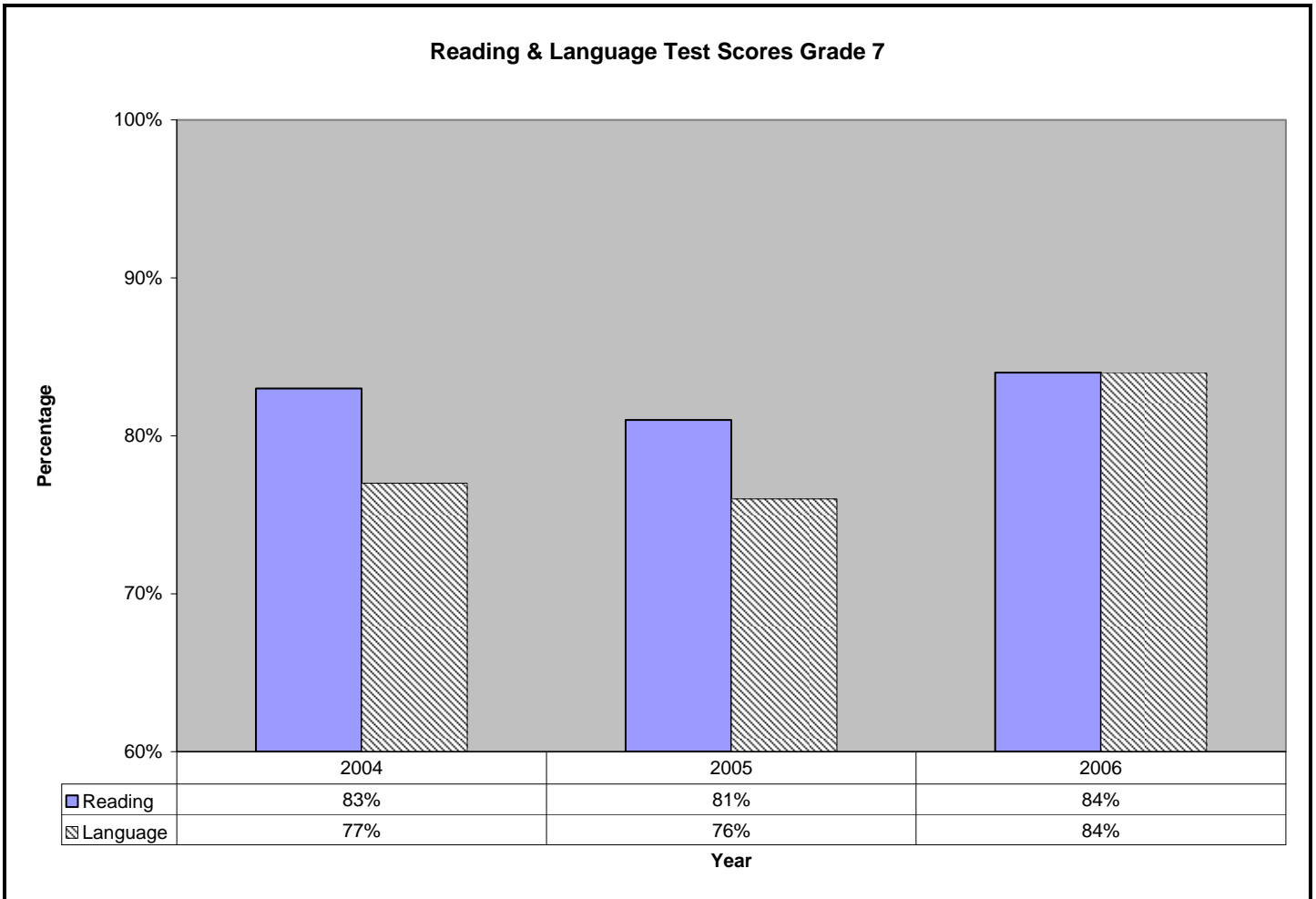
Study 4: The fourth study presented shows the results achieved by a grade six writing intervention class in a Title 1 school in Alaska. Adventures in Language II was used as the writing intervention. The graph represents the percentage of students who passed the Alaska state writing test. Students required a score of 300 to pass the test.



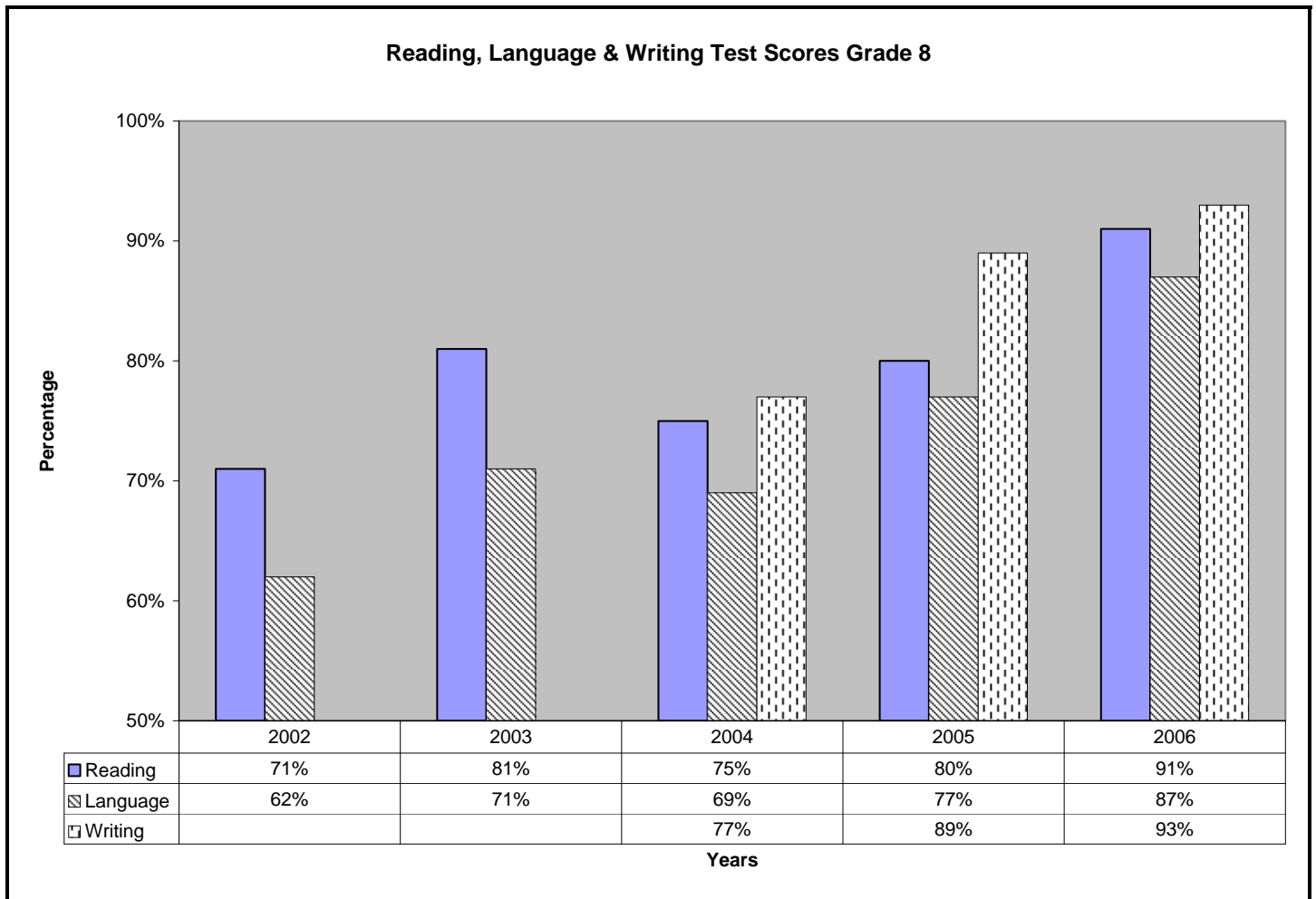
Study 5: In the fifth study presented, academic results are shown for an inner city school in the Midwest. This Title One school has a 99% minority population. In 2006 Adventures in Language was implemented in this school. Students completed Adventures in Language Levels I and II with a high level of fidelity of implementation. In 2007 Grade 4 students completed Adventures in Language Level III. They had previously completed Adventures in Language I and II. The graph represents the percentage of grade four students who passed the state writing achievement tests.



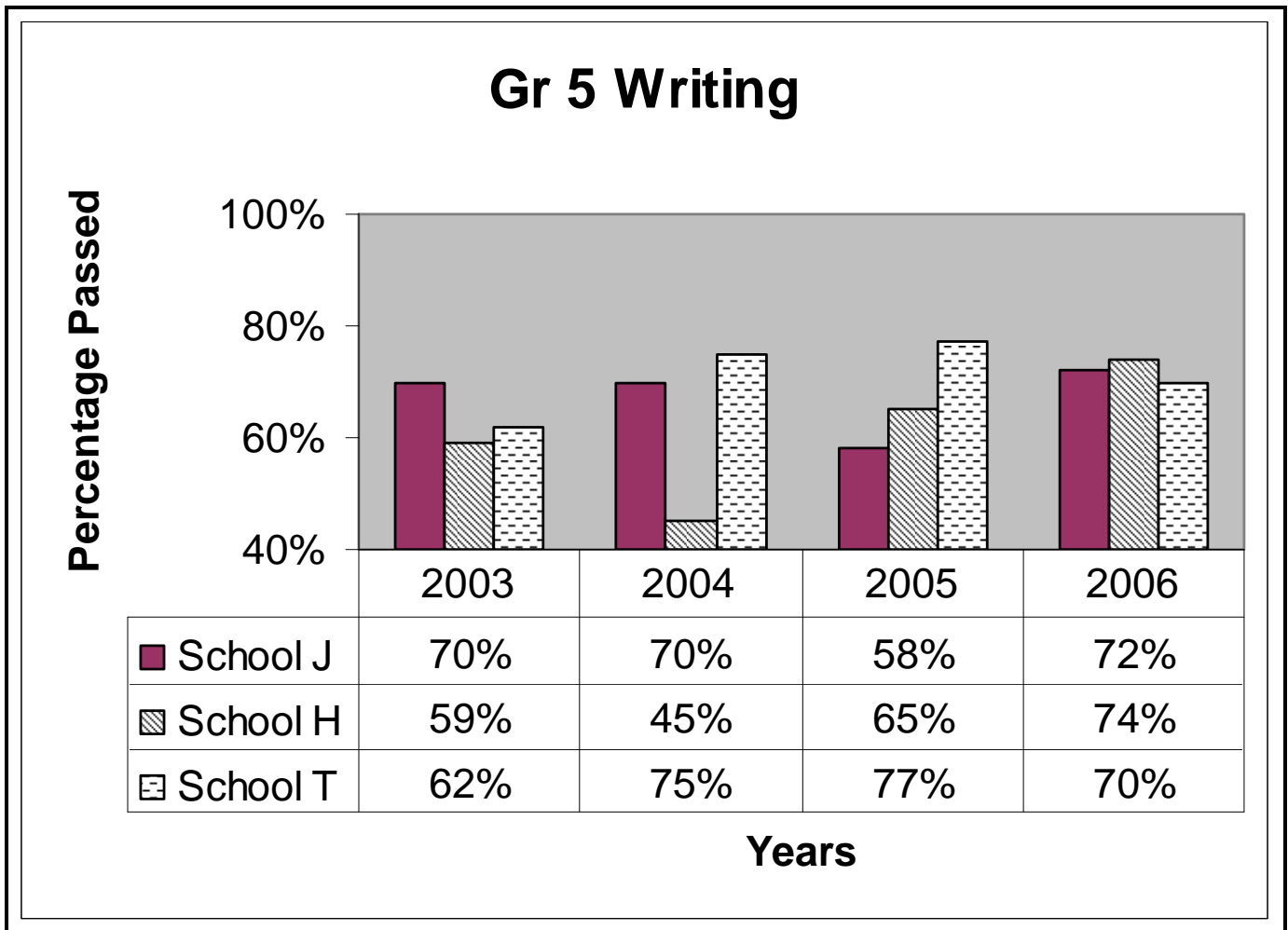
**Study 6:** The sixth study presented shows the results achieved by a grade seven class in a rural Title 1 school in Georgia. In 2005 the students completed Adventures in Language III (60 lessons.) In 2006 the students finished Adventures in Language Level III and completed 80 lessons of Adventures IVA and B. The graph represents the percentage of students who passed the state achievement tests.



Study 7: The seventh study presented shows the results achieved by two grade eight classes in a rural Title 1 school in Georgia. In 2005 the students completed Adventures in Language IVA and B (80 lessons) and Corrective reading decoding C. In 2006 the students completed Language IVA and B as well as Corrective Reading Decoding C with Reading for Success (©Educational Resources, Inc.) direct instruction novel studies interspersed throughout. The graph represents the percentage of students who passed the state achievement tests.



**Study 8:** The eighth study presented compares the results achieved by School H in a rural Title 1 school in Georgia to two other schools within the district. This group of fifth grade students was the first group in this school who had Adventures in Language I, II, and III, and then did *High Performance Writing* (©SRA McGraw Hill) in grade 5. The lower performing students in this grade took more than one year to complete each level of Adventures in language (i.e., they started Level I in grade one and finished it in grade 2; finished Level 1 in grade 2 and started Level II; finished Level II in grade 3 and started Level III, then finished Level III in grade 4). The graph represents the percentage of students who passed the state achievement tests.





Study 9: The ninth study presented shows the results achieved by grades three, five, and seven over a two year period. The students attended an inner city school in the Midwest. The school is a Title 1 school with a population of 98% Hispanic students; 95 % non-native speakers; and 99% living at or near the poverty level. This Core Knowledge/Direct Instruction school has been using Adventures in Language Levels I-IVB since 2006. The graph represents the percentile achieved on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills.

