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# SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION (1998 – 2018)



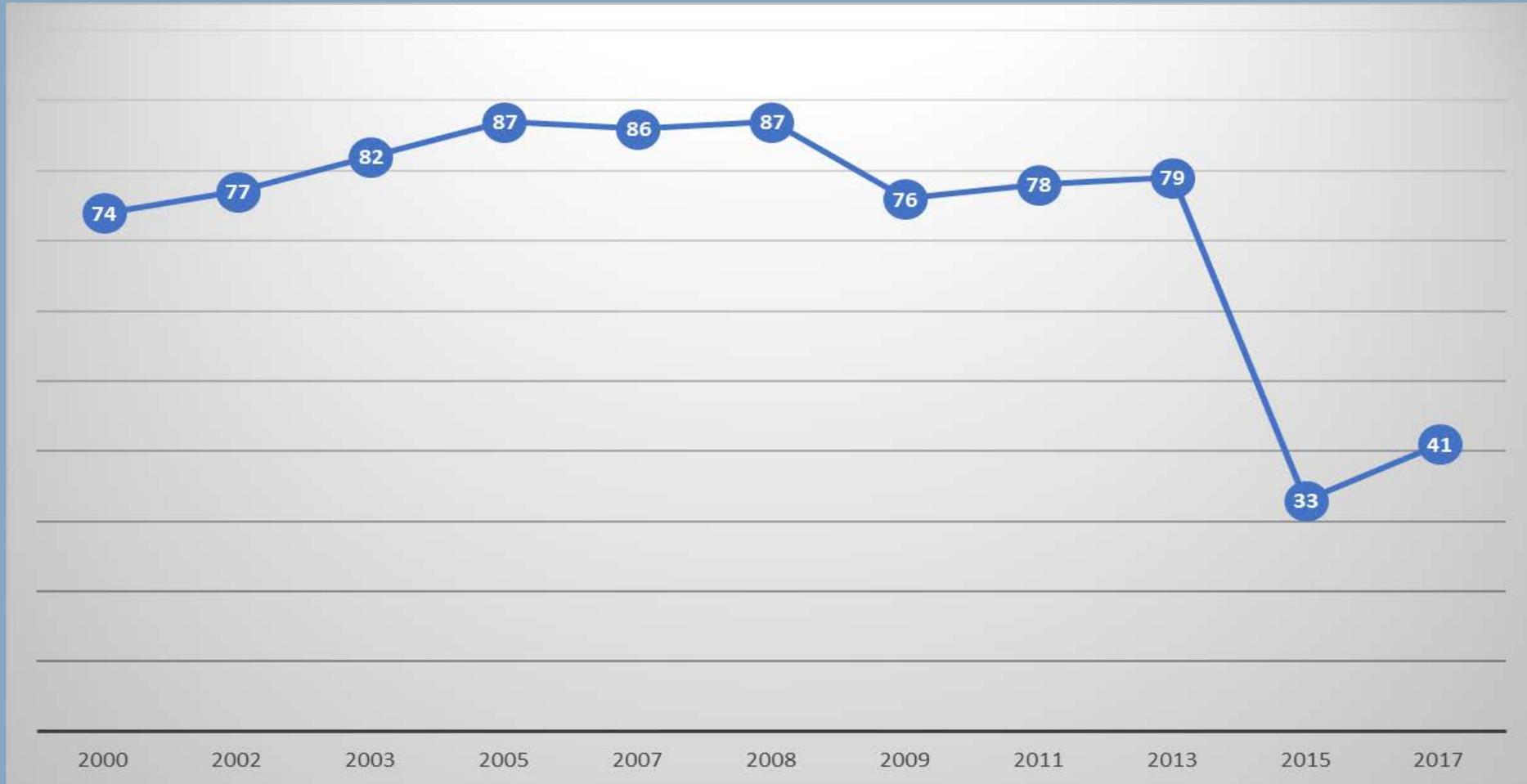
# A Few Caveats

- The data I will be presenting are not longitudinal data. That is, the data do not represent the same students over time. Nonetheless, the sample sizes are sufficiently large (more than 50,000 per grade level) that looking across time seems a reasonable thing to do.
- The data I will be presenting do not represent the same tests. In South Carolina we have the habit of changing tests frequently, whether we need to or not.
- I have chosen to focus on certain years. Most of my choices are based on the fact that the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests in reading/ELA currently are administered in odd-numbered years.
- Finally, I am reporting the data in terms of the percent of students, not scale scores. Students are real, scale scores are manufactured.

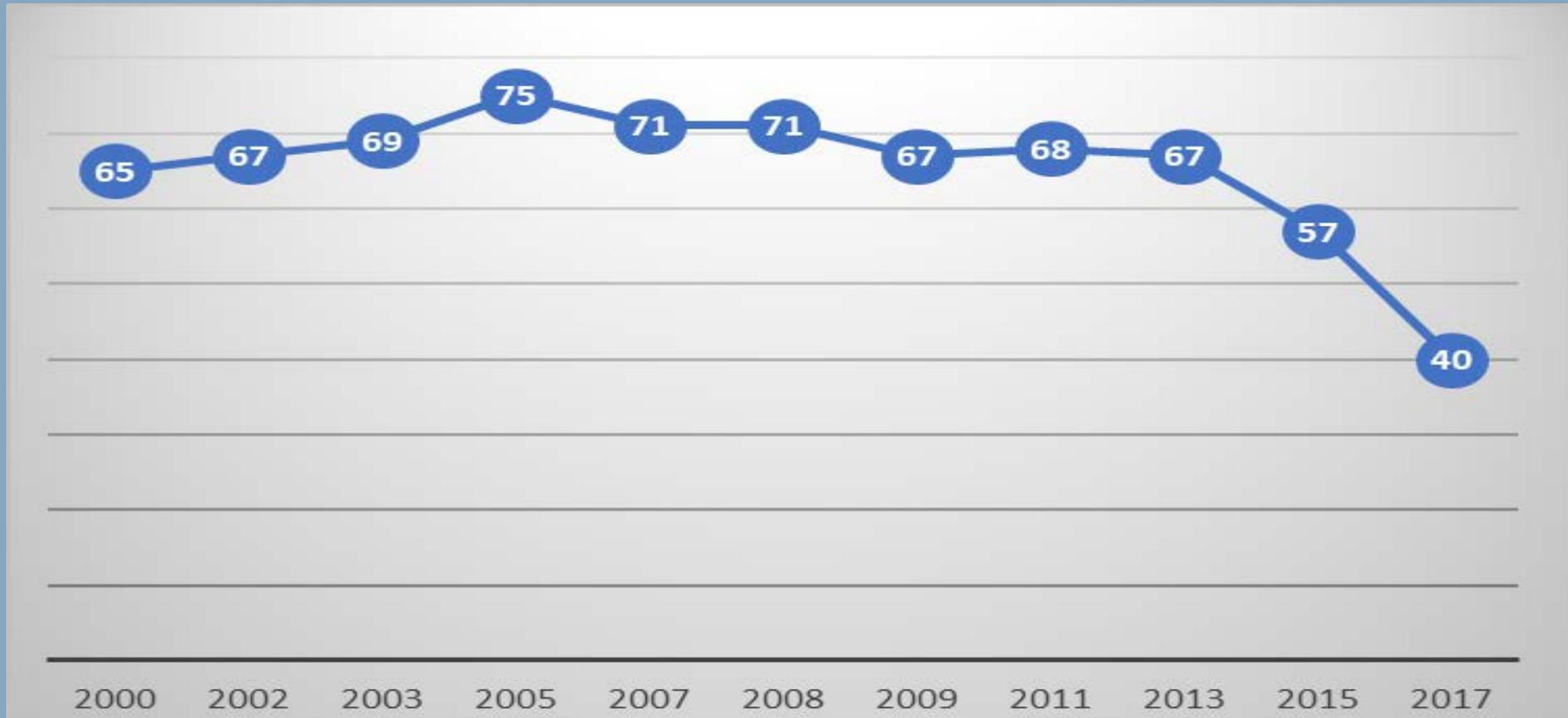
“There is nothing either good or bad,  
but thinking makes it so.”

Hamlet, Act III, Scene II

# Percent of 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Students Meeting Standards on South Carolina Reading Tests (2000 – 2017)



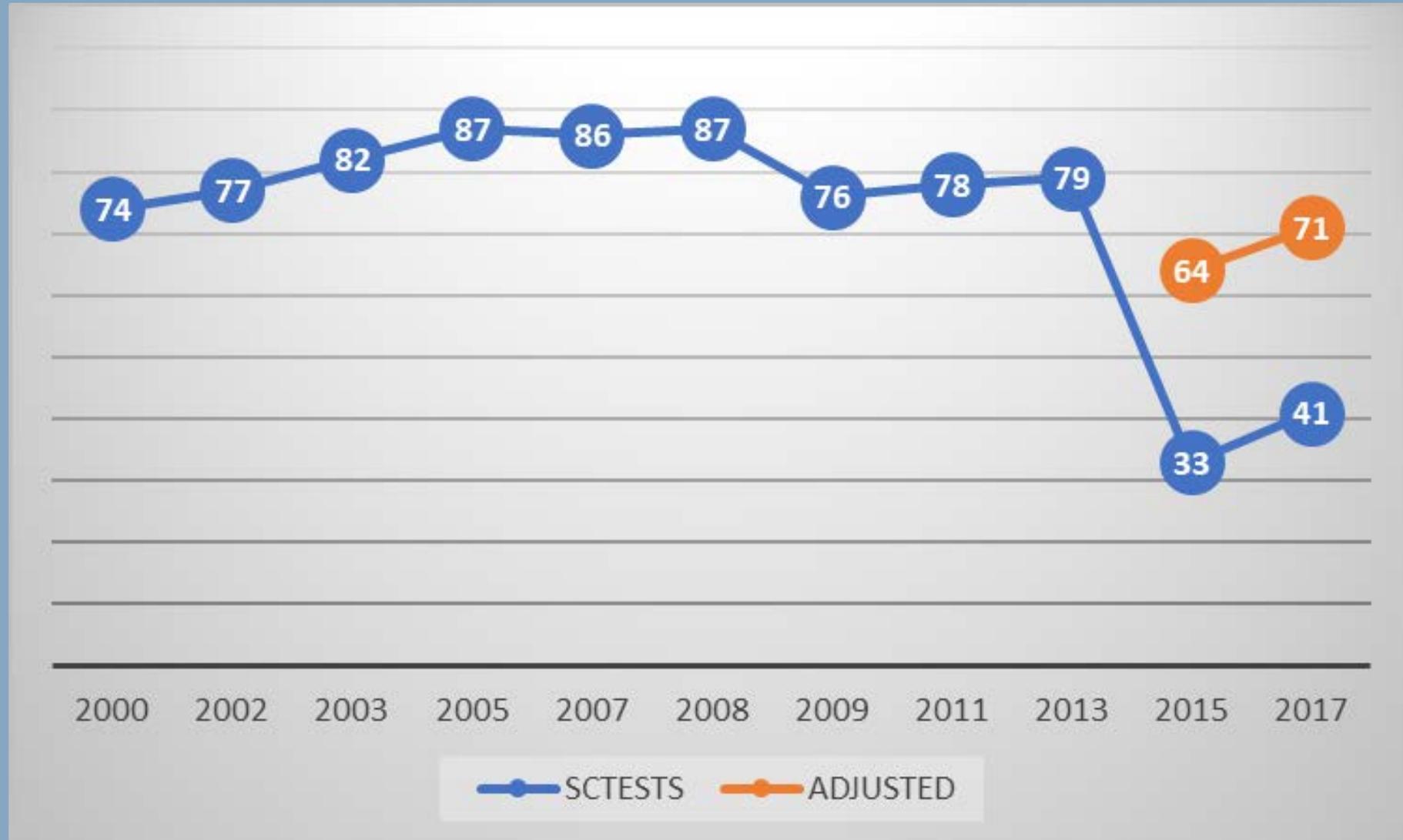
# Percent of 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Students Meeting Standards on South Carolina Reading Tests (2000 – 2017)



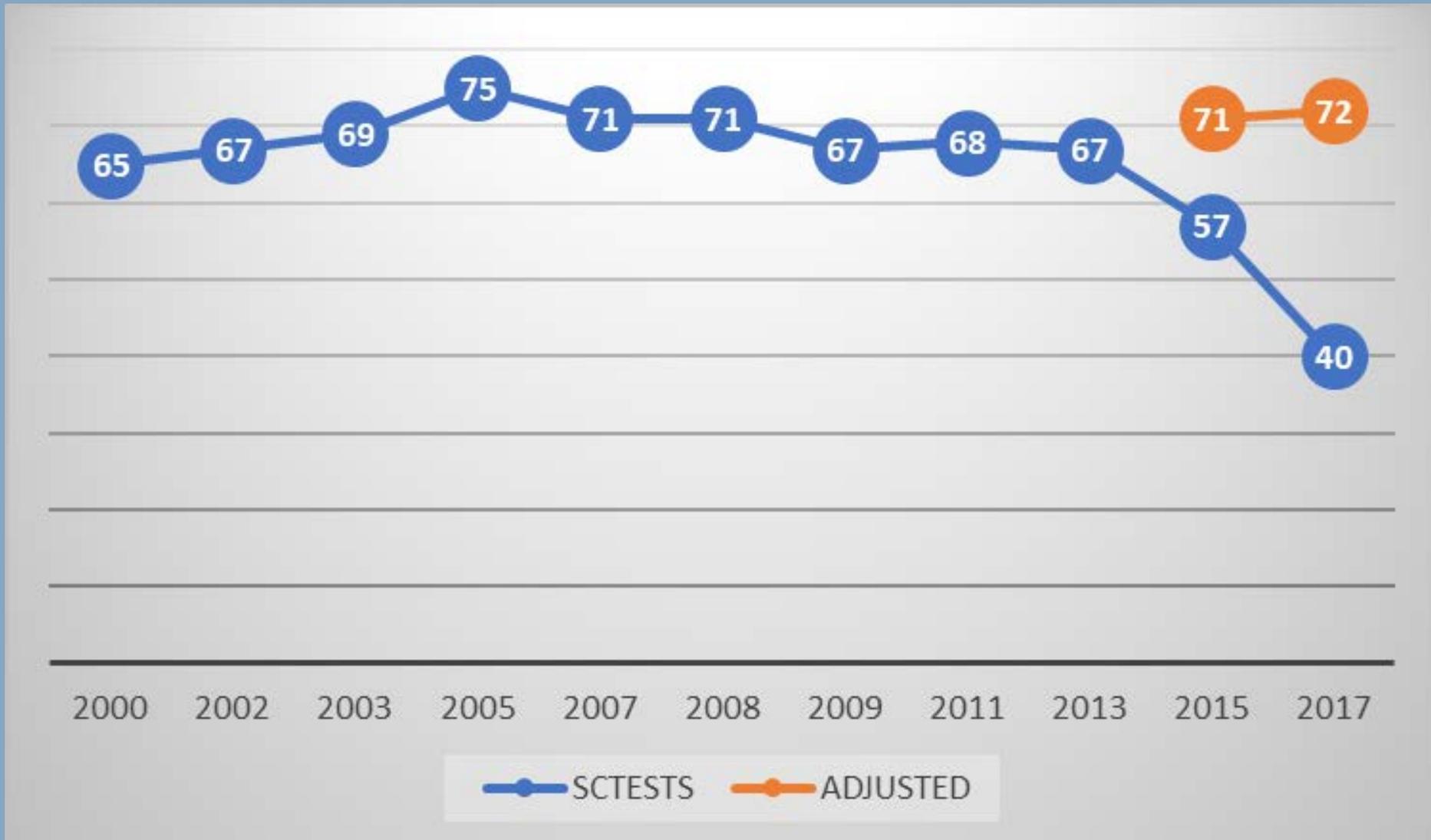
# Changes in SC Tests (1999 – 2017)

- Palmetto Achievement Challenge Tests (PACT) (1999 – 2008)
  - *[Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, Advanced]*
- Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (PASS) (2009 – 2014)
  - *[Not Met, Met, Exemplary]*
- ACT ASPIRE (2015) [Note. Legislature mandates 4 levels]
  - *[In Need of Support, Close, Ready, Exceeding]*
- SC READY (2016 – present)
  - *[Does Not Meet, Approaches, Meets, Exceeds]*

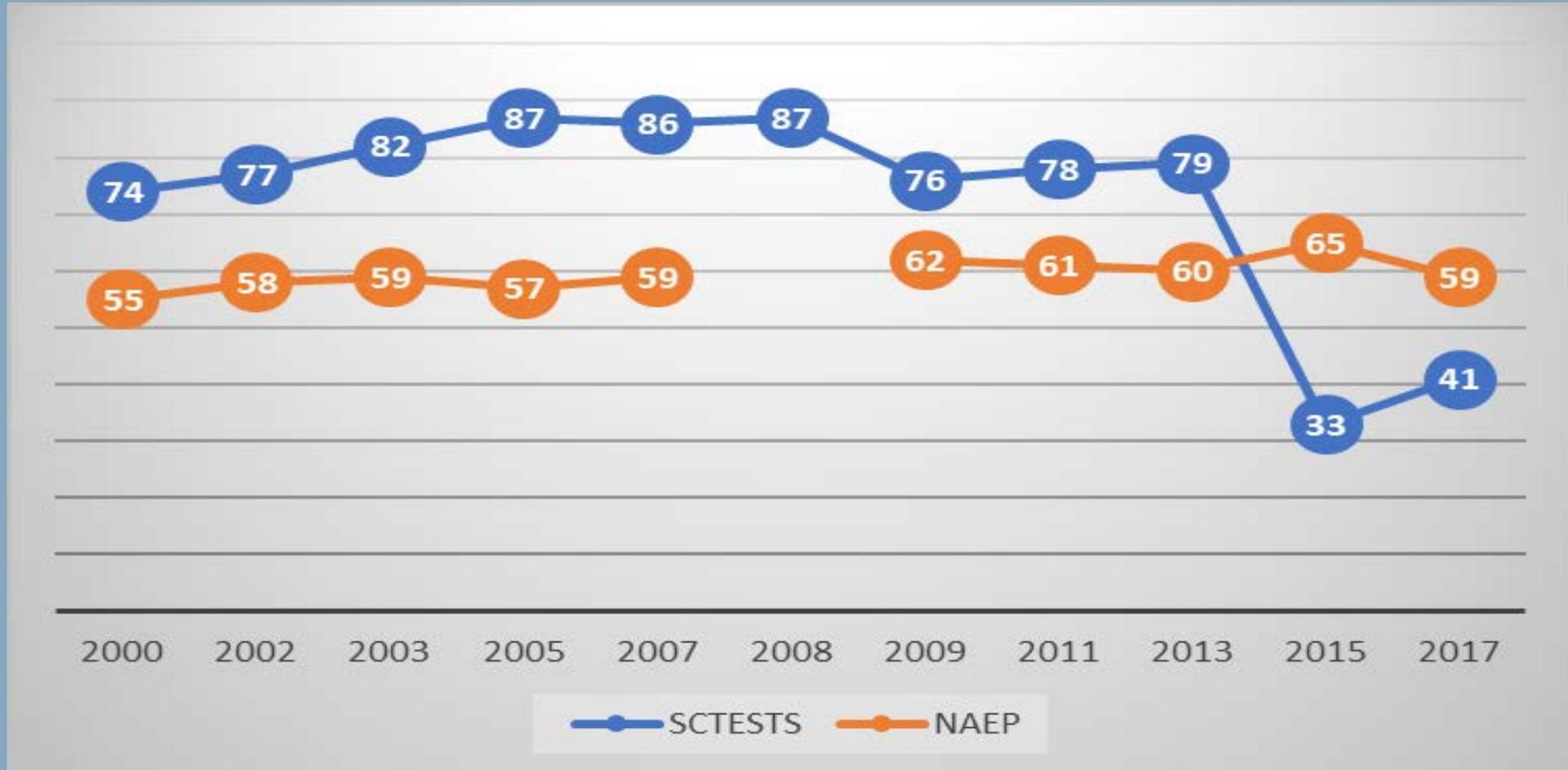
# Revisiting the Grade 4 Test Scores



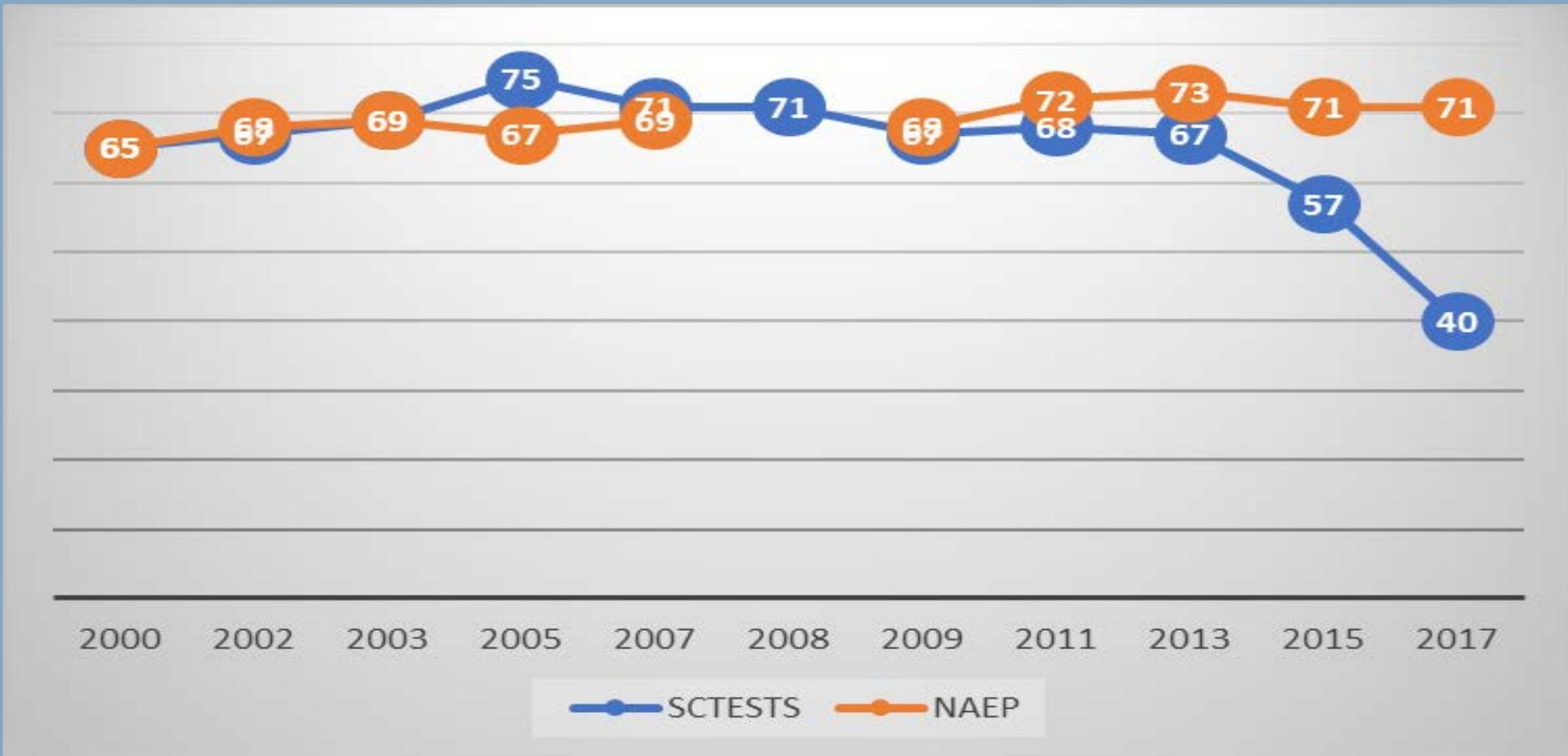
# Revisiting the Grade 8 Test Scores



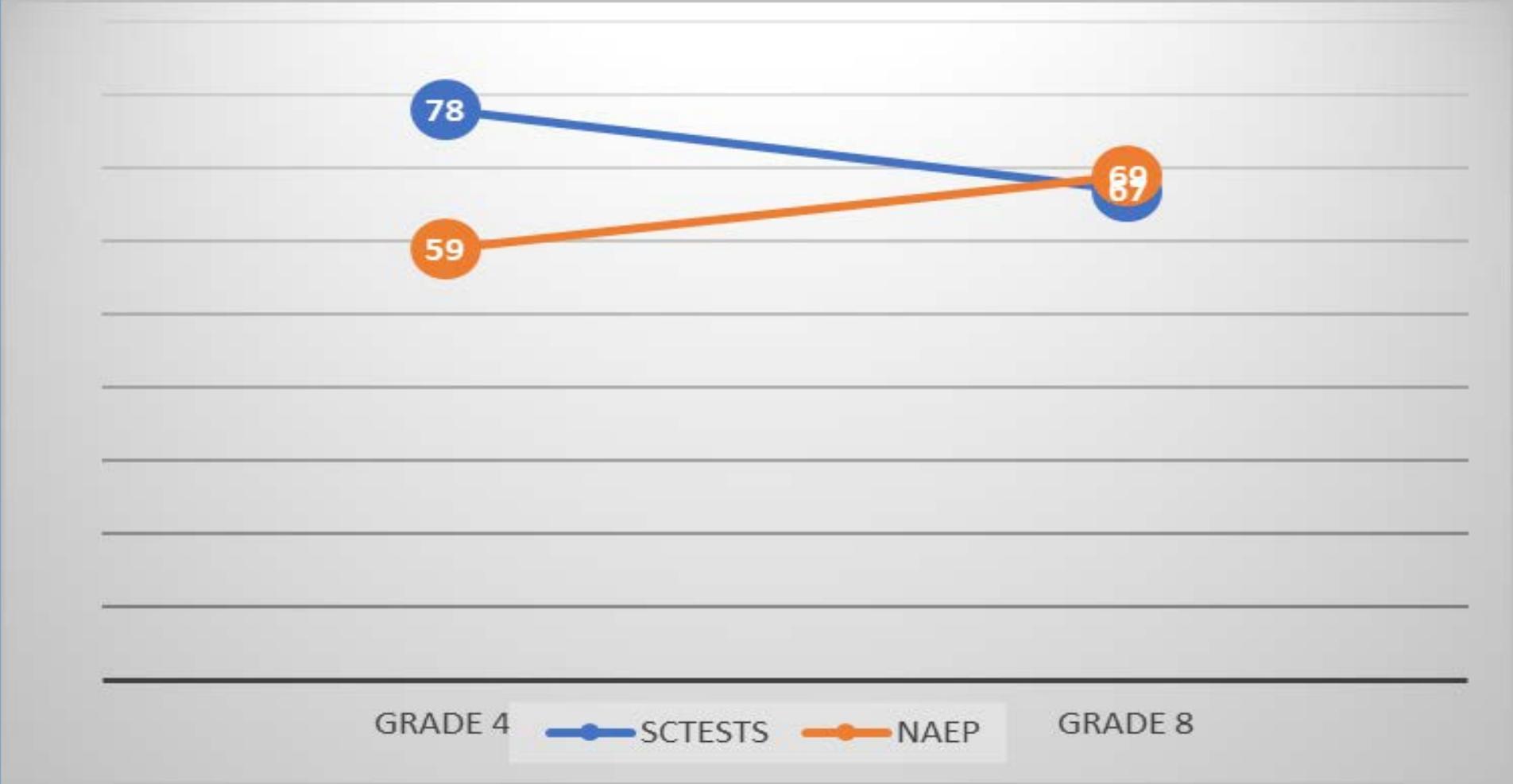
# Comparison of Percent of 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Students Meeting Standards on SC Tests and NAEP (2000-2017)



# Comparison of Percent of 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Students Meeting Standards on SC Tests and NAEP (2000-2017)



# Median Percent of Students Meeting Standards on 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Grade SC Tests and NAEP (2000 – 2017)



# Sample Item from 4<sup>th</sup> Grade PACT 2008

Summary. Scientific description of Antarctica describing location and weather conditions. **Length of Passage=218 wds.** **Ave. Sentence Length=14 wds.**  
**Ave. Number of Syllables per Word=2.4**

1. According to the selection, what is the main reason few animals live in Antarctica?
  - a. *It is at the bottom of the globe.*
  - b. *It is the windiest place on Earth.*
  - c. *It has no rivers or forests.*
  - d. *It is the coldest place on Earth.*
2. In the third paragraph, the author writes about the “mildest summer days.” What does mildest mean?
  - a. *less mild.*
  - b. *little mild.*
  - c. *most mild.*
  - d. *not mild.*

## Sample Item from 4<sup>th</sup> Grade PACT 2008 (continued)

3. What is the main purpose of this selection?
  - a. *to convince people to visit Antarctica.*
  - b. *to describe the wildlife of Antarctica.*
  - c. *to explain why Antarctica has severe winds.*
  - d. *to describe weather conditions in Antarctica.*
  
4. In the section, what is the most likely reason that temperatures are listed in both Fahrenheit and Celsius?
  - a. *Only scientists would normally read this selection.*
  - b. *More people can understand the information.*
  - c. *The numbers look more impressive listed this way.*
  - d. *Celsius temperatures make Antarctica seem colder.*

## Sample Item from 4<sup>th</sup> Grade NAEP

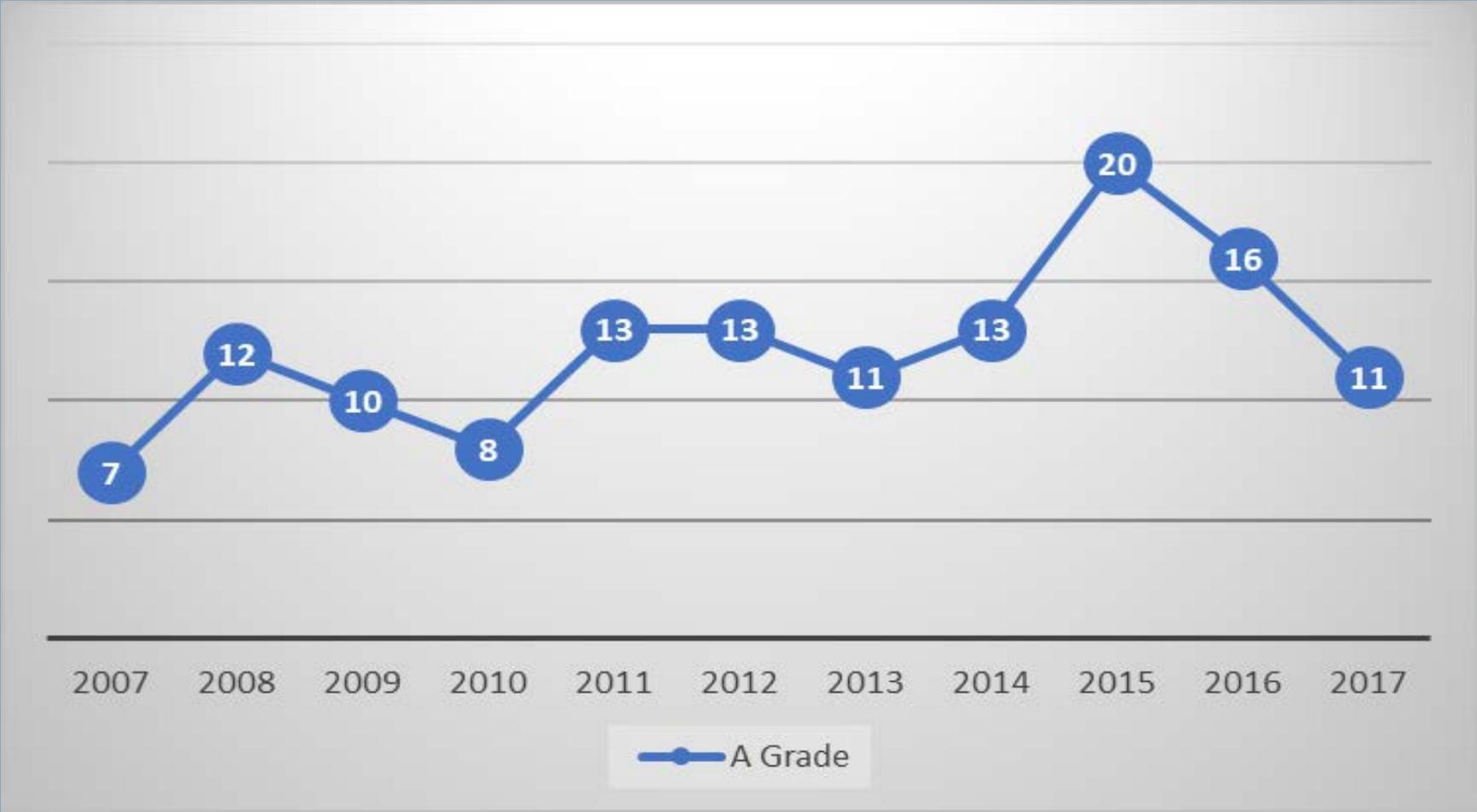
Summary. Daisy is the only girl on the school's wrestling team. She defeats three boys to win the championship for her weight division. **Length of Passage= 800 words.**  
**Average Sentence Length=7 words.** Average Number of Syllables per Word=1.1.

1. According to the story, why was it natural for Daisy to be interested in wrestling?
  - A. *Her father and her brothers wrestled. (86% of SC students answered correctly)*
  - B. Her coach at school encouraged her to wrestle.
  - C. She had seen wrestling matches on television.
  - D. Many of her friends were on the wrestling team.
2. On page 3, Daisy says that boys with muscles always underestimate her. This means that the boys
  - A. think Daisy is not very smart
  - B. *think they can beat Daisy (73% of SC students answered correctly)*
  - C. feel sorry for Daisy
  - D. make fun of Daisy

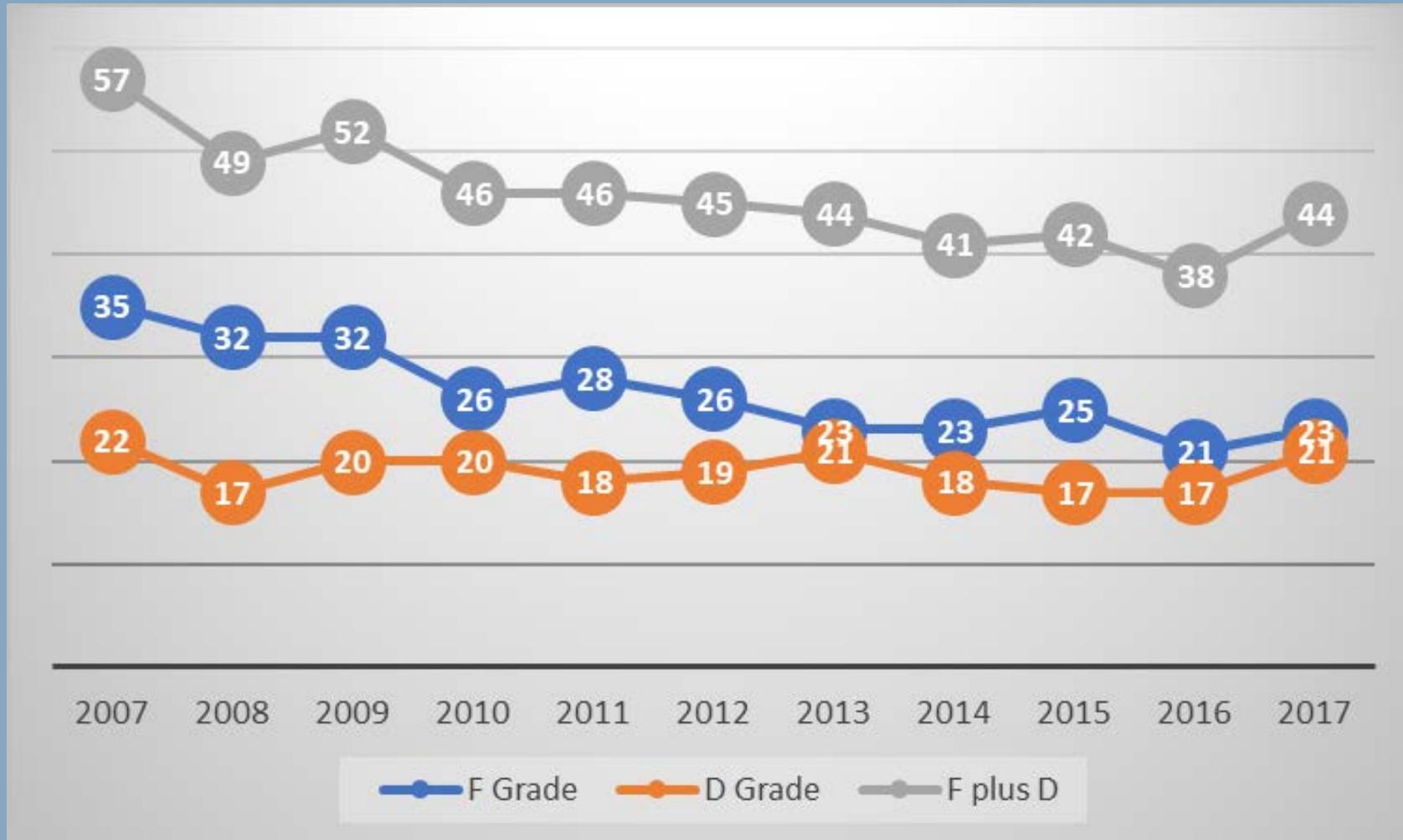
## Sample Item from 4<sup>th</sup> Grade NAEP (continued)

3. What is the main problem Daisy faces in this story?
  - A. She has to make new friends at school.
  - B. She has to perform in front of huge crowds.
  - C. *She has to prove that she is a good wrestler.*  
*(53% of SC students answered correctly)*
  - D. She has to wrestle against strong boys.
  
4. In the story, Daisy's father describes her as "tough." What are two other ways to describe Daisy's character? Support your answer with information from the story.  
*(26% of SC students gave an answer judged to be "Extensive" or "Essential.")*

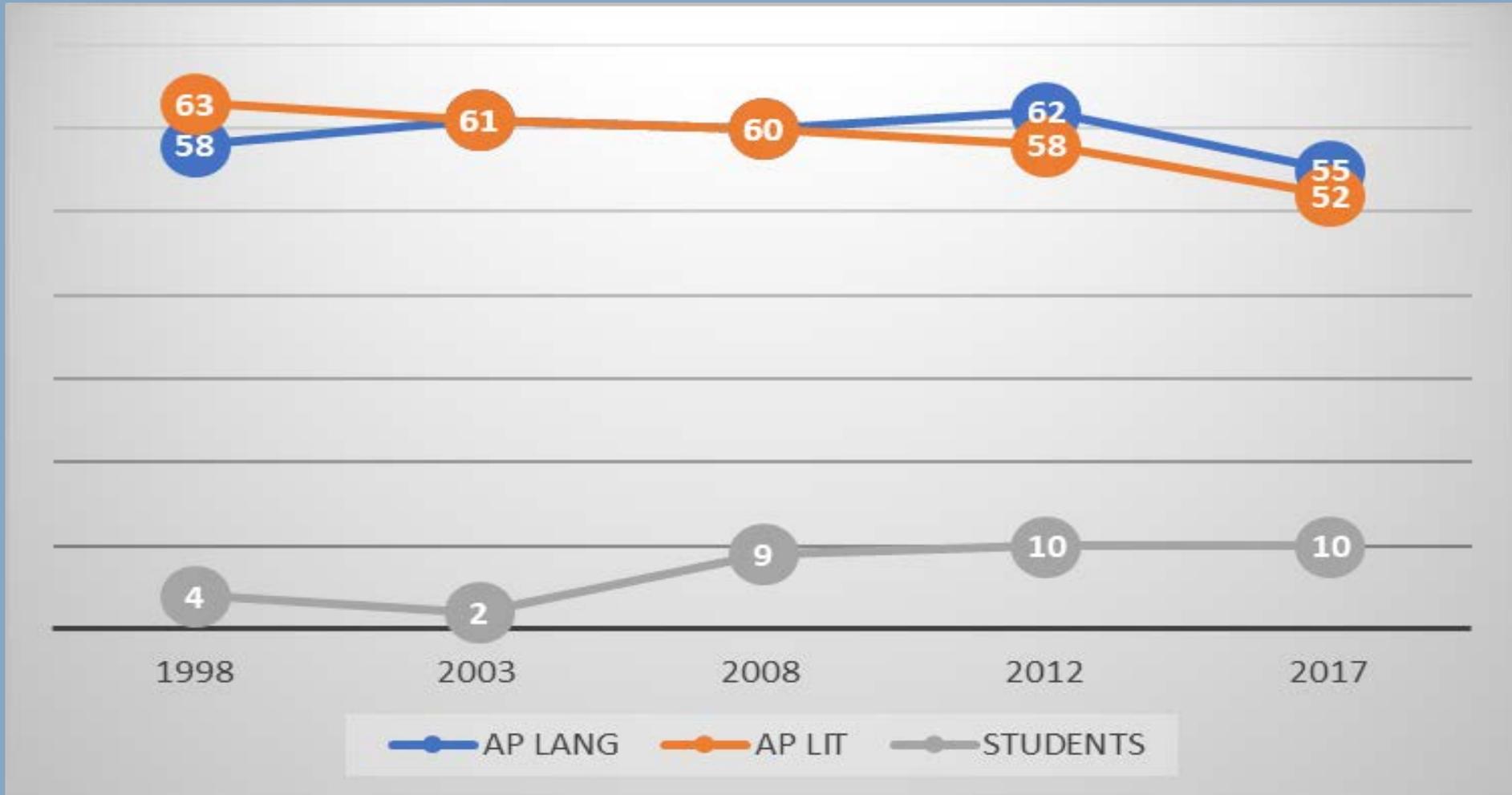
# Percent of Students Receiving an “A” Grade on the English EOC



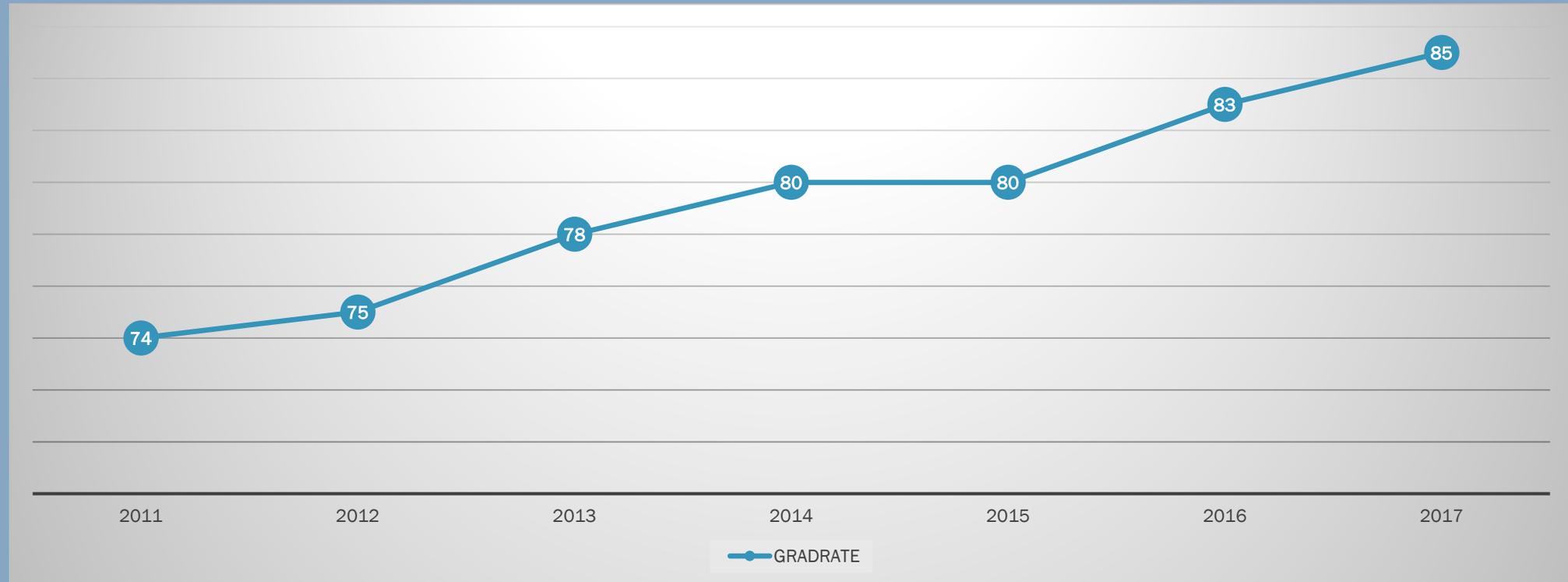
# Percent of Students Receiving Grades of D or F on the English EOC Tests



# Percent of Students Receiving Scores of 3, 4, or 5 on AP Tests in English Language and English Literature

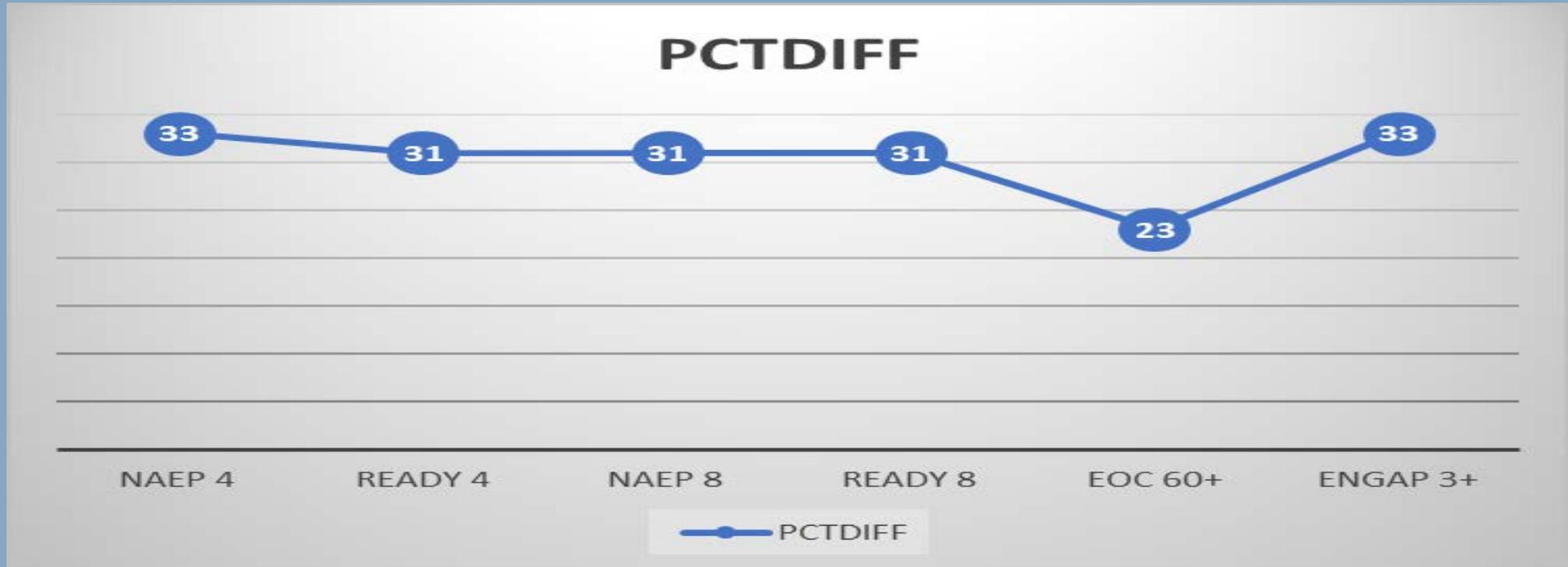


# High School Graduation Rate (ACGR) (2011 – 2017)



State education agencies calculate the ACGR by identifying the "cohort" of first-time 9th-graders in a particular school year. The cohort is then adjusted by adding any students who transfer into the cohort after 9th grade and subtracting any students who transfer out, emigrate to another country, or die.

# Racial Differences in Percent Meeting Standards (Most Recent Test Administration)



The numbers represent the differences between white and black students (that is, white percent minus black percent). Thus, 33 (NAEP 4) means that 33% fewer black students meet the standard in comparison to white students.

# Major State Legislation and Programming Concerning Education Over the Past 20 Years

- First Steps to School Readiness Act (1999) (Countdown to Kindergarten, 2005)
  - *Healthy Start, Family Strengthening, BabyNet, Quality Health Care, Early Education, School Transition*
- SC Education Lottery Act (2001)
- SC Education and Economic Development Act (EEDA) (2005)
  - *designed to better prepare students for the workforce and post-high-school education through early career planning and an individualized curriculum.*
- Child Development Education Pilot Project (CDEPP) (2006)
  - *early intervention for at-risk children in Plaintiff Districts*
- Amended Educational Accountability Act (2008)
  - *gave birth to SC PASS*
- Read to Succeed (including SC Early Reading and Development Act) (2014)

# Closing Observations

- Changing tests has not changed the quality of education we provide our students. Rather, changing tests has made it difficult to measure change over time and often leads to a “blame the test” culture.
- We must stop reacting (I would probably say, overreacting) to year-to-year changes in test scores. Understanding and using test scores appropriately require that we take a larger and longer perspective. Such a perspective enables us to see outliers and anomalies.
- Not being able to read by the end of grade 3 makes it difficult to succeed in later grades. However, reading by grade 3 does not guarantee success in later grades. Furthermore, the grade 8 data suggest that many students have made learning gains in reading/ELA during their middle school years.

# A Few More Closing Observations

- If students are to be successful throughout their school careers, our curriculum, instruction, and assessments must provide a bridge from where they are to where they need to go. Do we need to revisit (and perhaps raise) our cut-scores in the early grades to increase the likelihood of success in later grades?
- More is not better. In elementary schools, more time is already spent teaching reading and language arts than spent teaching all other academic areas combined. More dollars have been spent on professional development in reading/ELA than on all other areas combined. Are we satisfied with the return on our investment?
- If we believe the test data, for the past 20 years we have been failing to provide at least 25 percent of our young people with the knowledge and skills they need to be successful in the future, whether the future is the next grade or school level, college, or career. This failure rate is substantially greater when we focus on minority students. Are these rates consistent with our community needs and values?