

North Carolina Should Focus on Early Childhood Learning in Order to Raise Achievement in Predominantly Disadvantaged School Districts

A presentation to the Joint Legislative
Program Evaluation Oversight Committee

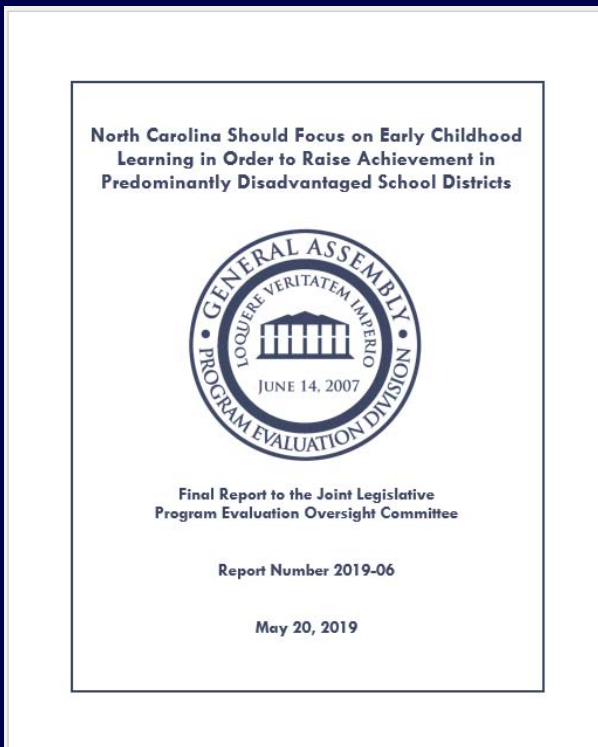
May 20, 2019

Jeff Grimes, Principal Program Evaluator



Presentation Materials

Full Report



Slides

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Program Evaluation Division  North Carolina General Assembly



Our Charge

- Identify at least 10 high-performing American school systems with predominantly economically disadvantaged student populations
- Explore reasons for the better outcomes of these systems

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Overview: Findings

1. Economically disadvantaged districts that demonstrate average or better performance are uncommon
2. Predominantly disadvantaged districts with average or above performance are already demonstrating high achievement in third grade



Overview: Findings

3. Economically disadvantaged districts that perform well share common characteristics
4. In North Carolina, opportunities exist to improve achievement among predominantly disadvantaged districts through state funding and other forms of support



Overview: Recommendations

The General Assembly should

1. Require low-performing school districts to include an early childhood improvement plan as a component of their required plans for improvement
2. Require an assessment of early childhood learning as part of the Department of Public Instruction's comprehensive needs assessment process for districts



Student Achievement Is Influenced by Family, Community, and School Factors



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Data Source

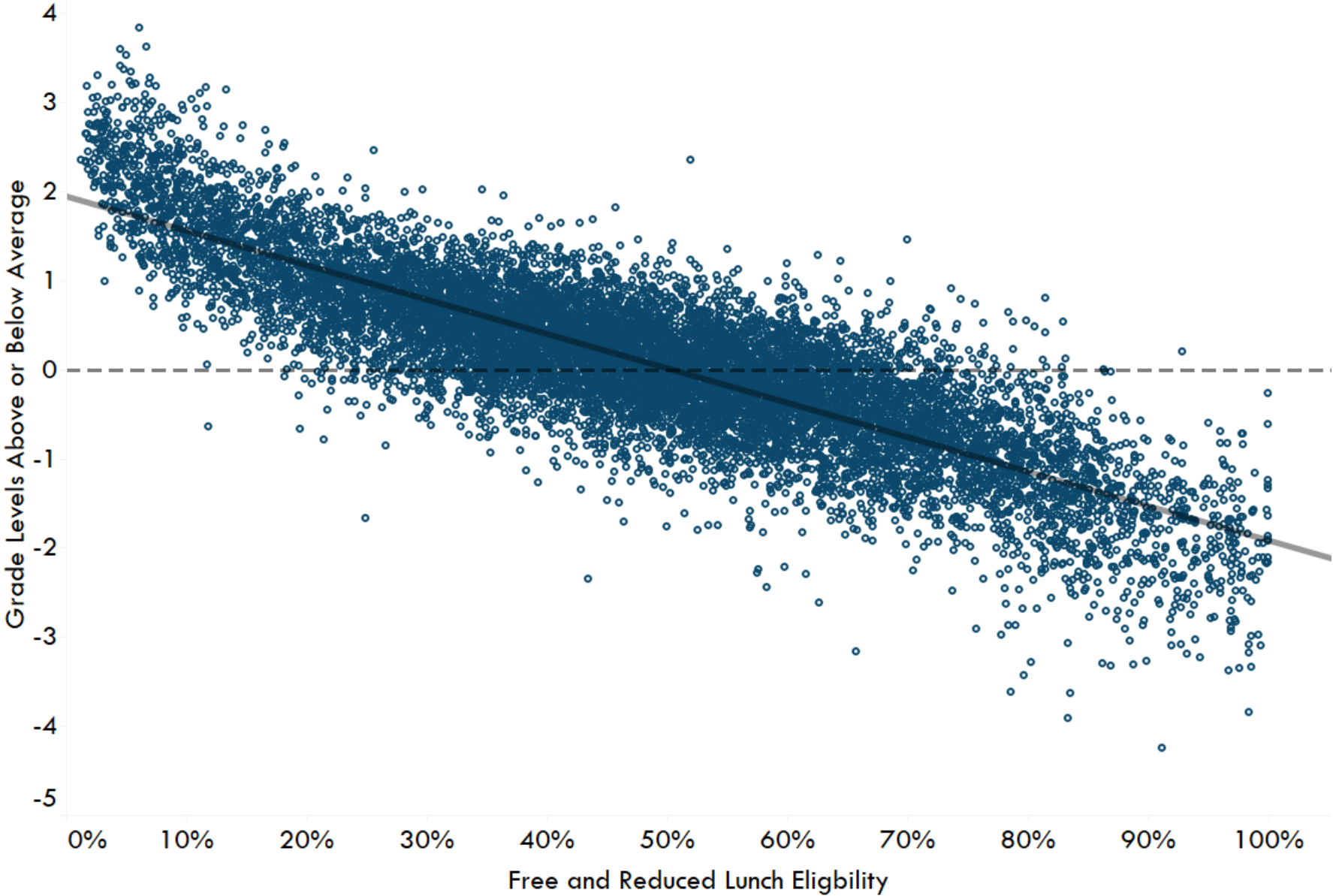
Stanford Education Data Archive (SEDA)

- National dataset of US school districts
- 2009-2015 test score data
- Contains math and English/Language Arts scores for grades 3-8
- Data is on a common scale

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Average Test Scores in the Poorest School Districts Are Several Grade Levels Below Those in the Most Advantaged Districts



Findings



Finding 1

Economically disadvantaged districts that demonstrate average or better performance are uncommon

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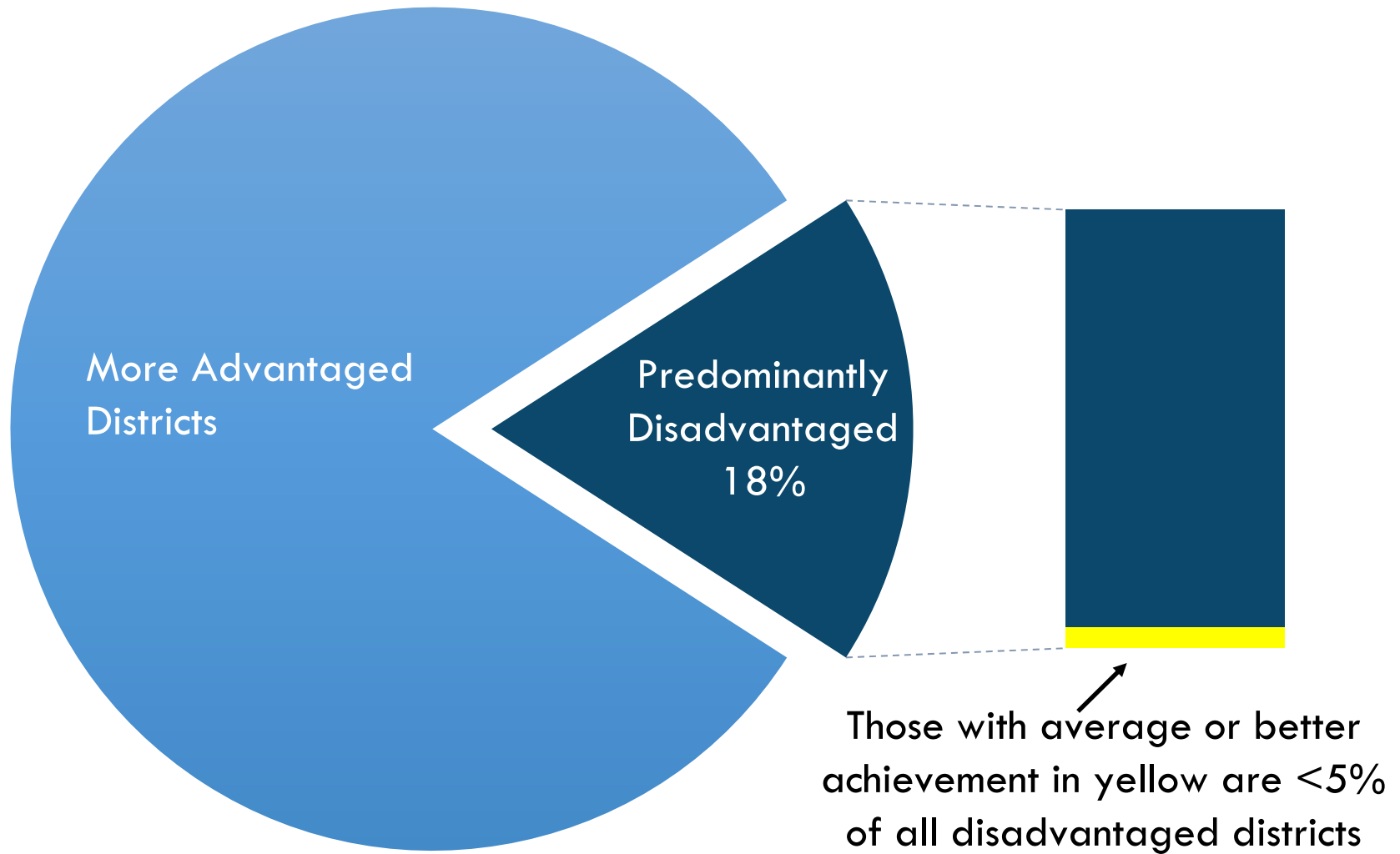
PED Criteria for “Predominantly Disadvantaged”

- Districts in the top quartile (most disadvantaged) of Free and Reduced Lunch Program Eligibility
- Districts in the bottom quartile (most disadvantaged) for a composite measure of socioeconomic status

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Few Predominantly Disadvantaged Districts Have High Achievement



Percentage of Predominantly Disadvantaged Districts that Perform at Grade Level or Above is Small

	National	North Carolina
Total Districts in Dataset	11,054	115
Total Predominantly Disadvantaged Districts	1,988	45
Percentage of Districts that are Disadvantaged	18%	39%
Total Disadvantaged Districts Performing at Grade Level or Better	94	7
Percentage of Disadvantaged Districts Performing at Grade Level or Better	5%	16%

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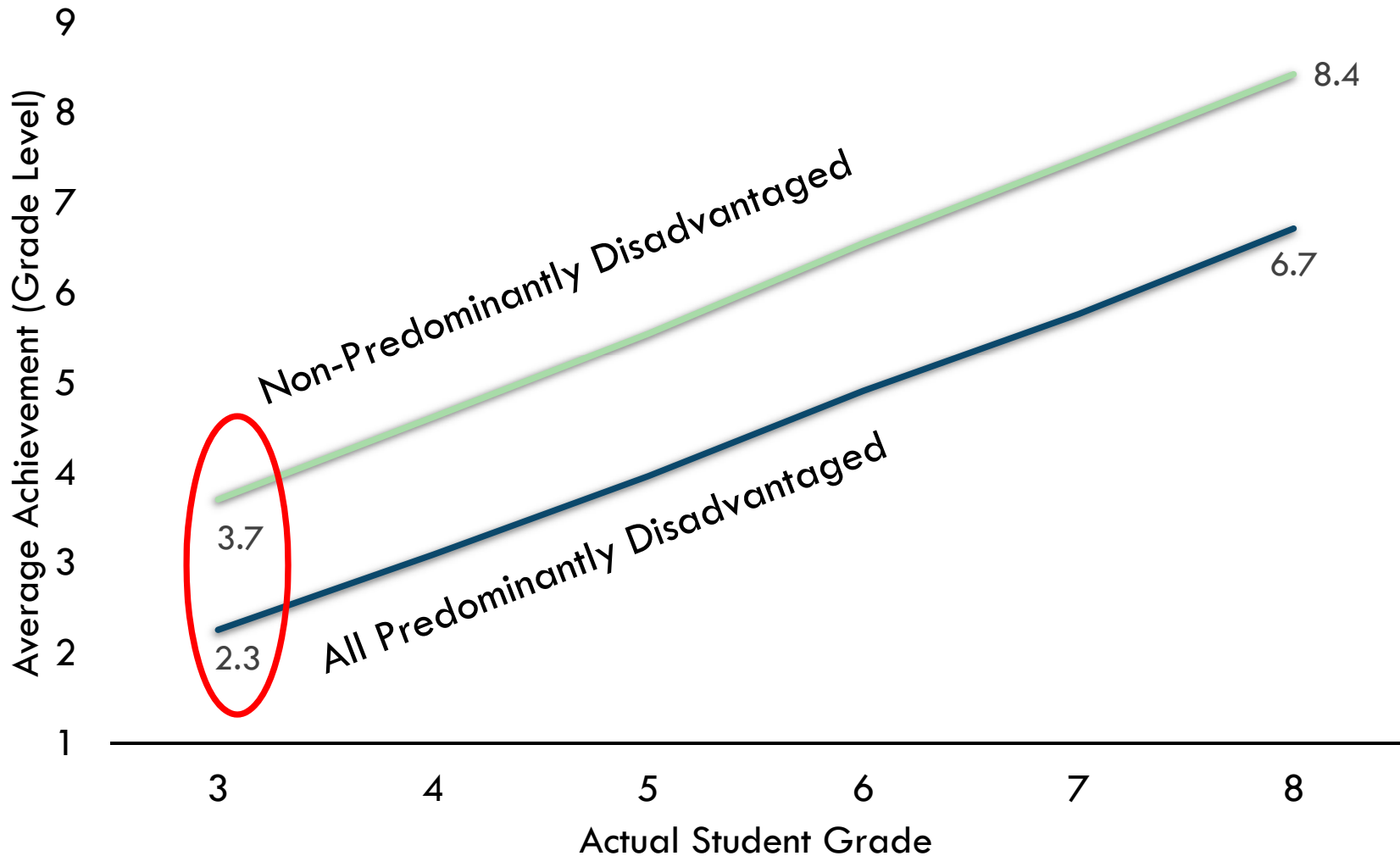
Finding 2

Predominantly disadvantaged districts with average or above performance are already demonstrating high achievement in third grade

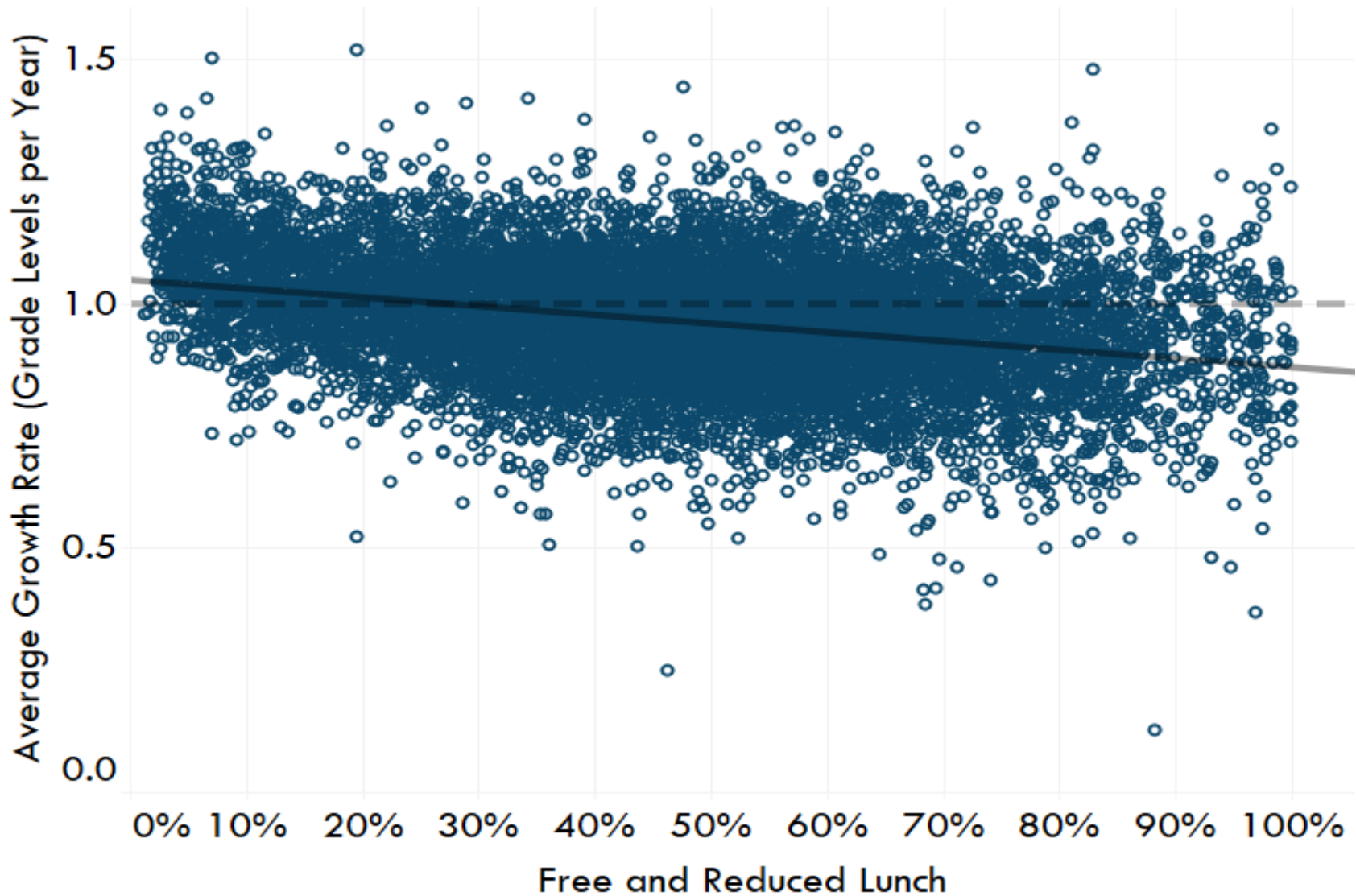
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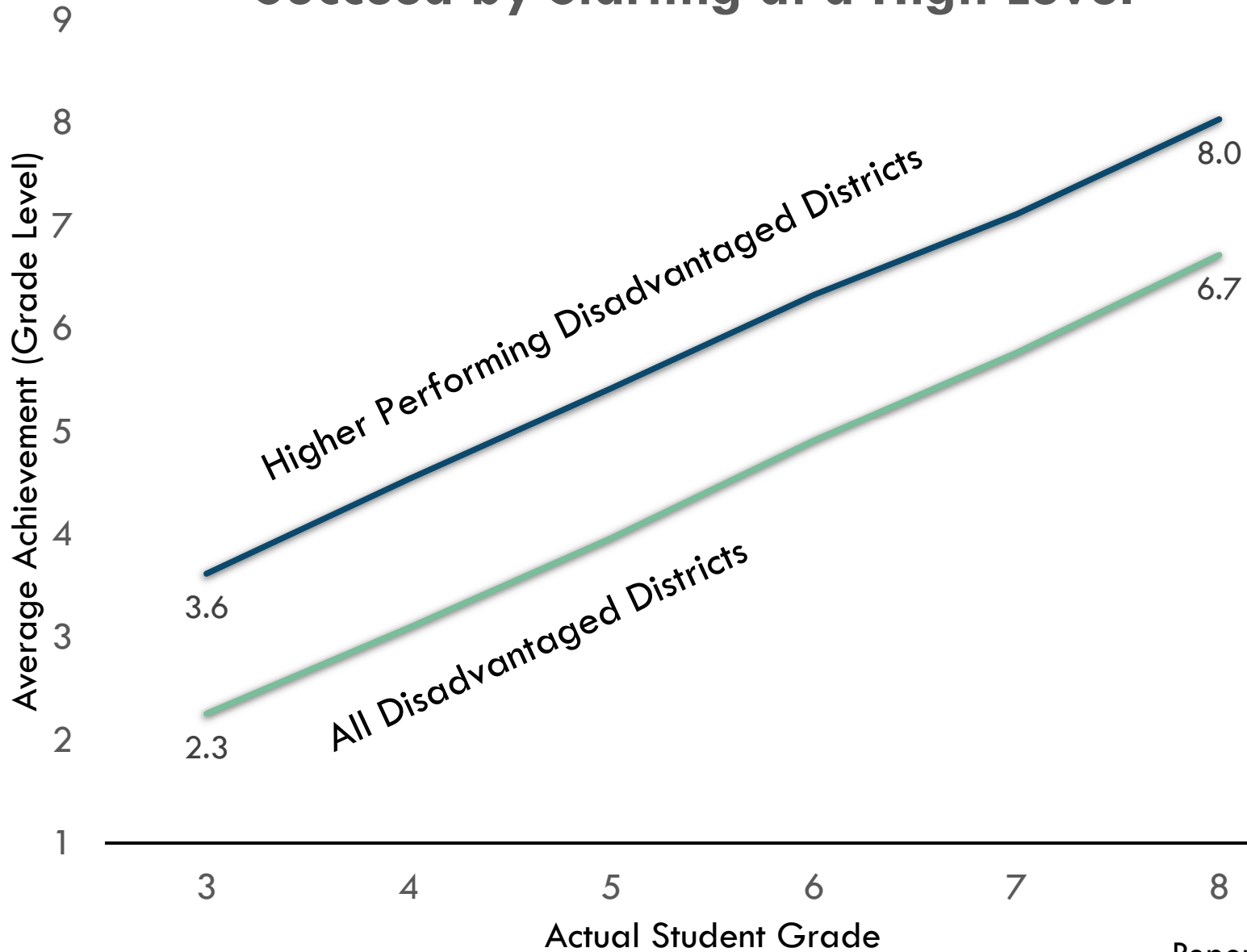
Most of the Gap in Achievement Between Predominantly Disadvantaged Districts and More Advantaged Districts is Present at Third Grade



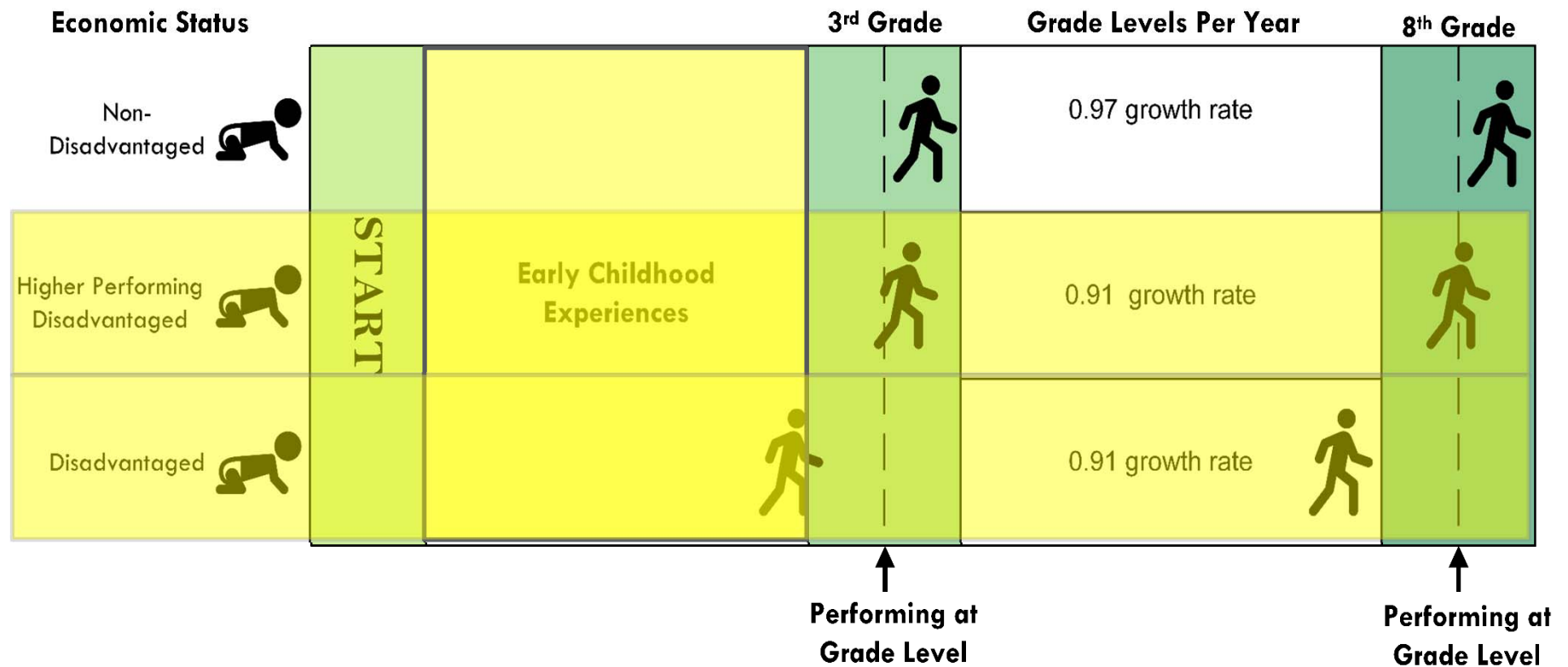
Student Growth Rates are Not Strongly Correlated with Economic Disadvantage



Higher Performing Disadvantaged Districts Succeed by Starting at a High Level



What Happens in Early Childhood Largely Explains How a School District Performs in 8th Grade



Finding 3

Economically disadvantaged districts that perform well share common characteristics

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12 Case Study Districts

North Carolina:

- Alleghany County School District
- Hickory Public Schools
- Jones County Public Schools
- Wilkes County Schools
- Whiteville City Schools

Other States:

- Casey County School District, Kentucky
- Durant Independent School District, Oklahoma
- Fayette County School Corporation, Indiana
- Henderson County School District, Tennessee
- Johnson County Schools, Kentucky
- Steubenville City Schools, Ohio
- Whitley County School District, Kentucky

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Case Study Districts Prioritized Early Education

- All 12 case study districts provide Pre-K
- Some districts expend significant resources
- 4 of 5 North Carolina districts had 75% or more of eligible population participating in NC Pre-K

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Case Study Districts – Other Characteristics

- Maximized learning time
- Obtained additional resources
- Had local school boards that focus on policy and academic achievement

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Case Study Districts – Other Characteristics

- Attract, develop, and retain high-quality teachers
 - Principals given autonomy to lead
 - Positive district culture
 - Teacher onboarding and development
- Used data and coaching to improve instruction

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Finding 4

Opportunities exist to improve achievement among predominantly disadvantaged districts through state funding and technical assistance

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DPI Provides Support to Districts

- In 2019 DPI launched redesigned structure for supporting schools and districts
- Provides more intensive support for low-performing schools and districts

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NC Pre-K

- Targets children from families with incomes at or below 75% of state median income
- General Assembly has been increasing the number of children enrolled
- Estimated serving roughly 47% of eligible children, 24% of all four year-olds in state

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B-3 Interagency Council

- Created by General Assembly in 2017
- Charged with establishing a vision and accountability for a birth through third grade system of early education



Recommendation 1

General Assembly should require low-performing school districts to include an early childhood improvement plan as a component of their required plans for improvement

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Recommendation 2

General Assembly should require an assessment of early childhood learning as part of the Department of Public Instruction's comprehensive needs assessment process for districts

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Summary

- Relatively few predominantly disadvantaged districts perform at grade-level or above; those that do are usually demonstrating high achievement in third grade
- General Assembly should require early childhood improvement plans for low-performing districts and assessments of early childhood learning as part of comprehensive needs assessments



Report available online at
www.ncleg.net/PED/Reports/reports.html

