

# URBAN ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL

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## WORLD'S BEST WORKFORCE SUMMARY REPORT



**Minnesota Charter School District #4088**

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# GENERAL INFORMATION

**School Program.** Strategically located in downtown Saint Paul, UA is a charter school that serves urban learners in grades K-6. UA focuses on a connected curriculum that recognizes and celebrates diversity. The focus of the school stems from the belief that quality education for urban students will lead to a productive future and end the cycle of poverty in the students' lives. This belief extends beyond academic education as the school works to instill community-based values such as non-violence, respect, responsibility, accountability, and social reliability. The staff at UA implements an urban teaching strategy through the Urban Learner Framework and with guidance from professional development trainers from higher education. UA is a non-profit trust registered with the Minnesota Attorney General's Office. UA's authorizer is Novation Education Opportunities.

**Mission Statement.** *"Our mission is to work in partnership with urban parents to provide an opportunity for every child to meet or exceed their individual potential in basic academic and life skills by utilizing research-proven methods in a safe, structured, and respectful community."*

## URBAN ACADEMY'S STUDENTS

**Characteristics of UA Students.** In 2013-2014, the large majority of students were students of color (97%) and qualified for free or reduced lunch (97%); these percentages have been very consistent since UA's inception. UA's percentage of Limited English Proficiency students nearly doubled (32%) compared to the previous school year. UA served some Special Education Students (12%) and this percentage is fairly consistent compared to years past. Many students often have a variety of other needs such as students new to the country and homeless students. The table below shows a number of important demographic characteristics of UA students.

### Characteristics of UA Students

	08-09	09-10	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14
October 1 Enrollment	275	268	259	302	268	267
Attendance Rate <sup>1</sup>	95.3%	93.3%	92.7%	93.2%	94.1%	N/A <sup>2</sup>
Male	153 (56%)	144 (54%)	124 (48%)	157 (52%)	158 (59%)	146 (55%)
Female	122 (44%)	124 (46%)	135 (52%)	145 (48%)	110 (41%)	121 (45%)
Race / Ethnicity						
American Indian	2 (>1%)	1 (>1%)	0 (0%)	1 (>1%)	2 (>1%)	2 (>1%)
Asian/Pacific Islander	63 (23%)	54 (20%)	34 (13%)	44 (15%)	48 (18%)	92 (35%)
Black/Non-Hispanic	191 (69%)	197 (74%)	215 (83%)	245 (81%)	206 (77%)	168 (63%)
Caucasian	13 (5%)	11 (4%)	7 (3%)	8 (3%)	9 (3%)	3 (1%)
Hispanic	6 (2%)	5 (2%)	3 (1%)	4 (1%)	3 (1%)	2 (<1%)
Students of Color	262 (95%)	257 (96%)	252 (97%)	294 (97%)	259 (97%)	264 (99%)
Free or Reduced Lunch	266 (97%)	262 (98%)	253 (98%)	285 (94%)	260 (97%)	266 (99%)
Limited English Proficient	64 (23%)	55 (21%)	31 (12%)	39 (13%)	42 (16%)	86 (32%)
Special Education Status	34 (12%)	39 (15%)	29 (11%)	37 (12%)	33 (12%)	22 (8%)

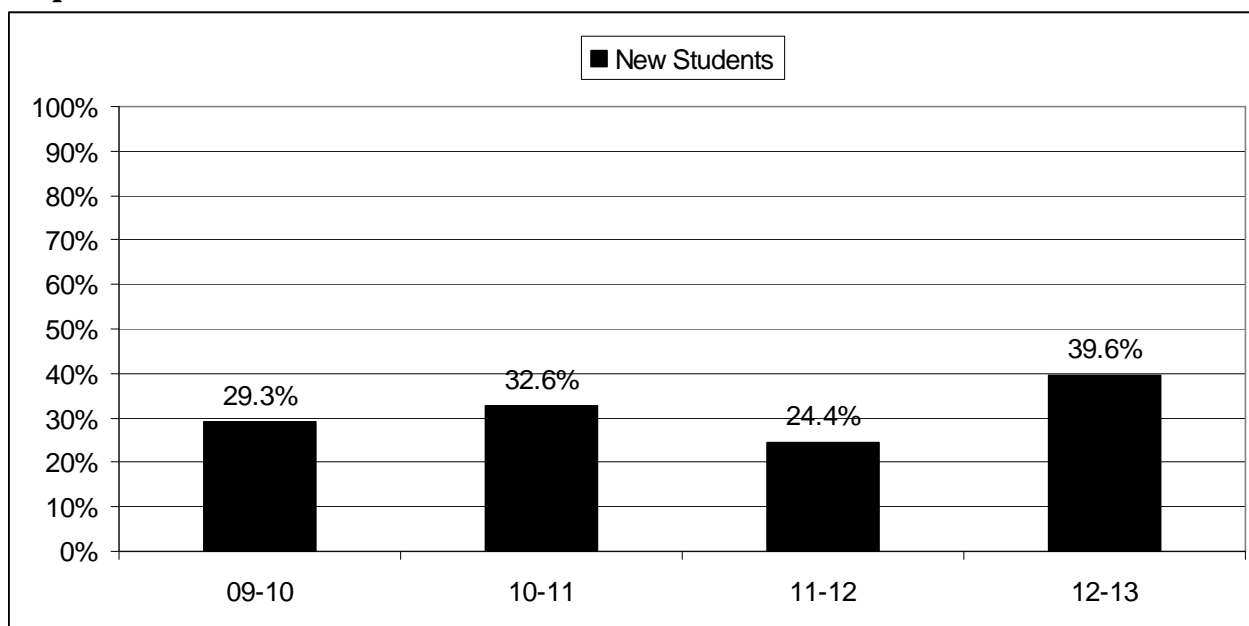
**Student Attrition.** UA welcomes all students regardless of their background or life situation and many families are drawn to the school for this reason, and these families also tend to be highly

<sup>1</sup> The formula for attendance rate is the Average Daily Attendance (ADA) divided by the Average Daily Membership (ADM). ADA is computed by taking the number of days a student was marked in attendance divided by the number of instructional days reported for that school. ADM is computed by taking the number of days the student was reported as enrolled divided by the number of instructional days reported for that school.

<sup>2</sup> Not currently available.

mobile. Although UA connects families with community resources to stabilize their lives and living situations, family situations often result in students leaving UA before 6<sup>th</sup> grade graduation. The chart below describes the mobility of UA students in grades 1 through 6 looking back from 2010 to 2013. As can be seen in the chart, nearly a quarter or more of UA students have been new students for each of the four school years displayed. In the 2013-14 school year, nearly 40% of UA students were new students.

### Proportion of New Students



## URBAN ACADEMY'S PROGRAM

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### Innovative and Best Practices

**Curriculum Best Practices.** UA's curriculum is rigorously aligned to the Minnesota Academic Standards.

For reading, staff utilize teaching methods defined by the National Reading Panel and Balanced Literacy strategies for teaching reading. The skills are implemented within a Balanced Literacy instructional approach within the Readers and Writers Workshop framework of instruction. Key elements of the framework include: Interactive Read Aloud, Modeled Shared Readings, Guided Reading, Phonics/Word Study, Rigorous Independent Reading, and Literature Circles. UA teachers have regularly taught and provide practice opportunities for students to use key reading strategies to improve comprehension.

UA utilizes the Envisions mathematics curriculum, which aligns to the Minnesota Mathematics Standards. UA teachers analyze student MCA results from the previous year and MAP results to identify key concepts and skills that students need to master in order to become grade level proficient. Then they identify assessments that measure mastery of those benchmarks and identify curriculum resources that will help students understand the concepts and develop the skills that lead to mastery. This is commonly referred to as "backwards lesson design." The Envisions curriculum has the advantage of providing a more visual approach to helping students understand math concepts. UA teachers are also trained to implement the concrete-abstract-representational instructional design that increases student engagement and conceptual understanding. UA utilizes

a Title I mathematics teacher to provide additional classroom support to students slightly below grade level in mathematics.

**Data Driven Instructional Practices.** UA has a variety of structures for analyzing student data and developing interventions to help students meet grade level proficiency. Given what UA learns about student needs, decisions are always made in the best interests of the students. And given the small size of the school there is little “red tape” hindering the process of adapting to student needs.

Staff are trained to “backwards plan” to benchmark assessments to determine mastery of standards. The staff has been trained in the Response to Intervention (RtI) methods and trained in how to use weekly Professional Learning Communities (PLC) to further analyze weekly student data from benchmark assessments based on the Minnesota Standards in language arts and reading. Teachers in the PLCs examine student results and collaborate on developing strategies to help all students meet grade level proficiency. UA also has grade level planning and data analysis meetings on a regular basis. In addition, there are weekly team meetings (comprised of grade level teachers, ESL, Title I-reading and math, special education, and paraprofessionals, and the principal) to discuss the overall progress of students the effectiveness of interventions.

The Instructional Leadership Team/Q Comp Team meets weekly to review benchmark data and plan aligned professional development activities to support teachers in helping students that are not achieving their full potential. They also meet monthly for 60 minutes to examine what is working and not working overall in the program as well as discuss the Q Comp teacher observation and evaluation data. The data from benchmark assessments as well as analysis of data from MAP and MCA assessments are used to determine professional development needs on an ongoing basis.

The Leadership Team/Q-comp Team is tasked to support teachers. They are expected to be coaches, models and support of staff, for individual growth as well as the team as a whole. The leaders are self-starters, and take initiative based on these expectations. The leaders help staff by building relationships between staff members and by generating buy-in with staff on the school improvement process. The team meets weekly for 30 minutes to look at data from weekly assessments, examine trends, and identify professional development needs that will help students succeed. They also talk through feedback from teachers and Q Comp observations to identify effective teaching strategies that can be model during upcoming PLC. Additionally, the leadership team meets monthly for 60 minutes to review the overall School Improvement Plan and to review progress on team goals, stay focused on student learning, improve communication, and build capacity across staff.

**Reading Interventions.** UA applies a wide range of reading interventions to ensure all students are reading at grade level by 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, and thereby meeting the standards for the World’s Best Workforce. Reading interventions are built off of a variety of student achievement results. Teachers use the Fountas and Pinnell reading level assessment system to assess students reading level. UA also uses internally developed or selected benchmark assessments directly aligned with Minnesota standards on a bi-weekly basis to determine grade level proficiency in reading. The students are also assessed in reading through MAP three times a year. Students are asked to complete a writing sample three times a year, which they need to score 85% or higher to be proficient. The MN Reading Corps members give weekly assessments to students who qualify for the MRC program. Diagnostics tests are also given to check proficiency. The students are assessed with the DSI spelling assessment, and grouped according to their assessment score.

Bi-weekly benchmark assessment results are analyzed on a bi-weekly basis at PLC meetings where teachers develop targeted goals for students and collaborate to form strategies to help students that are not meeting grade level proficiency. Teachers use this formative data to identify students who are not meeting a specific benchmark and collaboratively plan for remediation as well as

identify those students who meet the grade level benchmark and need enrichment. The school's Principal and teachers all share best practices in remediation and collaboration to improve student outcomes includes all instructional staff including paraprofessionals, Title I, ESL and Special Education.

UA uses reading strategies and interventions identified by the National Reading Panel (direct vocabulary instruction, generating questions, and monitoring comprehension) and that are implemented within a Balanced Literacy instructional approach within the Readers and Writer's Workshop framework of instruction. Key elements of the framework include: interactive read aloud, modeled shared readings, guided reading, phonics/word study, rigorous independent reading, and literature circles.

Reading Corps staff tutors students one-on-one using research based specific interventions. This provides K-3 students additional practice to improve deficient skills such as letter sound and nonsense word fluency correspondence, phoneme blending, phoneme segmenting, word blending, repeated reading with comprehension, and oral reading fluency. This strategy is most effective for those students who are closest to achieving grade level reading standards and will improve their performance in a timely manner.

The Title I program also has a specific focus on reading literacy. The Title I teacher works with one-on-one or small groups of students focusing on increasing the students reading skills. UA also uses two ESL teachers to improve the reading skills of ELL students. The ELL teachers will provide small group English and reading instruction for the ELL students on a daily basis during the literacy block to provide additional instruction in reading.

**Parent Involvement.** UA families are notified through goal sheets related to math and reading achievement at conferences two times a year. If parents cannot attend conferences, phone calls are made to make sure they are informed of their child's score. Phone logs are kept to insure parents are being notified of their child's progress throughout the year. A letter is sent home each year with MCA scores listed. MAP test scores and reading levels are included on report cards.

Parents are invited to collaborate in a variety of ways. First, parents are invited to Reading, Math, and MCA nights and to parent-teacher conferences twice a year. Additionally, teachers are required to contact at least 10 parents each month. Newsletters from the school go out monthly, and some classroom teachers have class newsletters. We have a parent survey each year. Parents are also invited to volunteer in the classroom, additionally; we have family dinners throughout the year, where parents are invited to attend.

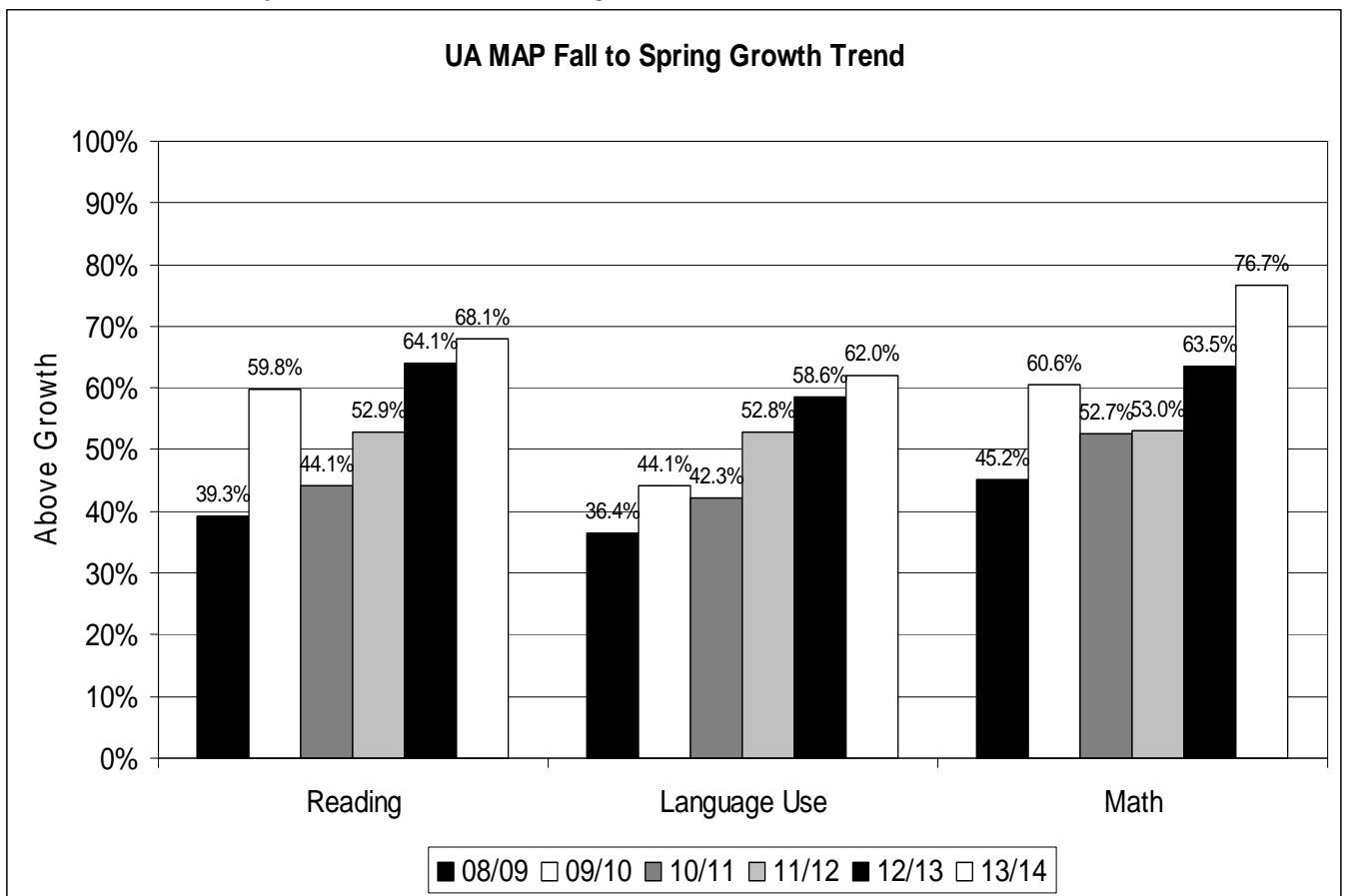
# STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

## Academic Achievement

**Academic Growth.** UA established the goal of achieving at least 55% of students would meet or exceed their growth targets from fall to spring on the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment in reading, language use, and mathematics. UA exceeded the goal in all three subject areas (68.1% in reading, 62.0% in language use, and 76.7% in mathematics).

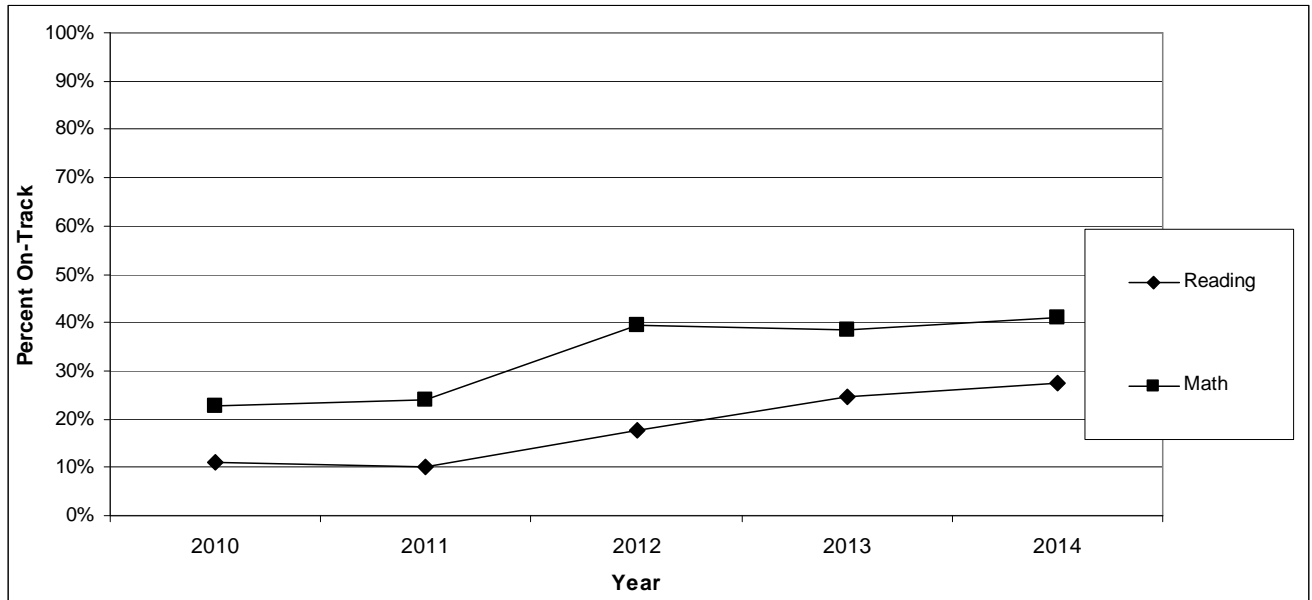
The figure below displays the percentages of students meeting or exceeding growth targets in all 3 subject areas in 2008-09 through 2013-14. Compared to all previous school years, UA had higher percentages of students meeting or exceeding growth targets in 2013-2014 in all three subject areas.

### Student Growth by School Year and Subject



**On Track for Success.** MDE defines students “on track for success” if they meet one of two conditions on their Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) tests: 1) students proficient in the previous year make medium or high growth in the following year 2) non-proficient students in the previous year make high growth in the following year. The percent of students on track for success has risen in each progressive year since 2010 through 2014. In 2014, 27.6% of students were on track for success in reading for a +16.7% change since 2010; 40.9% of students were on track for success in math for a +18.3% change.

## UA Students On Track for Success



## UA Students On Track for Success

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Reading	10.9%	10.2%	17.6%	24.5%	27.6%
Mathematics	22.6%	24.0%	39.3%	38.5%	40.9%

**MCA Proficiency SMART Academic Achievement Goal.** UA has established data based goals for incrementally increasing student proficient rates. The goal for 2013-2014 was: (1) 24.3% (an increase of +7%) of all students will be proficient on the 2014 MCA reading test and (2) 34.1% (an increase of +7%) of all students will be proficient on the 2014 MCA math test.

As seen in table below, from 2012 to 2014, UA increased the percent of students scoring proficient in reading and math in each progressive year. In reading, proficiency increased by +4.0%, falling slightly short of the goal. For math, proficiency increased by +4.4% from 2013 to 2014 falling slightly short of the goal. Proficiency rates in 2014 showed a total of 21.3% of students proficient in reading and 31.5% proficient in math.

## UA Proficiency Rates of Change from 2011 to 2012

Year	2012	2013	Difference (2012-13)	2014	Difference (2012-13)
Reading	N/A	17.3%	N/A	21.3%	+4.0%
Mathematics	22.5%	27.1%	+5.1%	31.5%	+4.4%

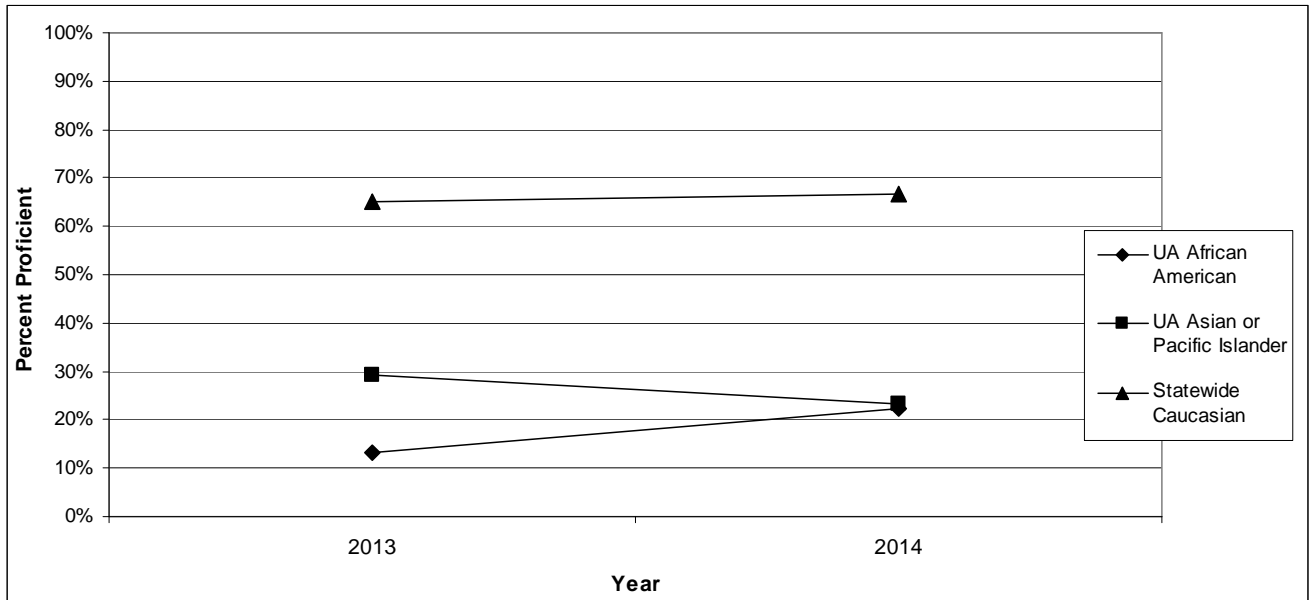
## Achievement Gap Reduction

UA's progress towards closing the achievement is one way in which the school is contributing to building the World's Best Workforce. The figure and table below display proficiency trends for UA's African American (AA) and Asian or Pacific Islander (API) student populations<sup>3</sup> and statewide Caucasian proficiency rates in reading. Although UA's AA and API student group proficiency rates were below that of statewide Caucasian students, UA's AA students increased proficiency rates at a higher rate than statewide Caucasian students between 2013 and 2014 (+9.1 for AA students compared to +1.5% for statewide Caucasian students); UA's API students

<sup>3</sup> Other ethnic categories of Hispanic and American Indian or Alaskan Native had too few students to report.

decreased slightly in proficiency (-5.9%).

**Achievement Gap Reading Trends for UA African American and Asian or Pacific Islander Students Compared to Caucasian Students**



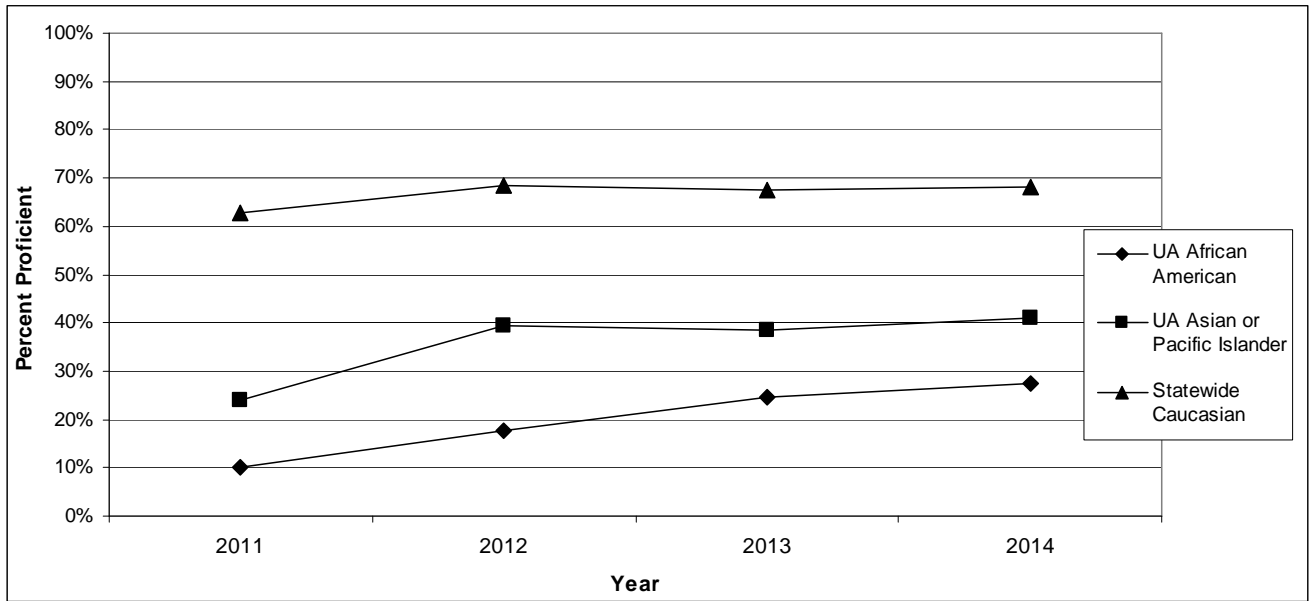
**Achievement Gap Reading Trends for UA African American and Asian or Pacific Islander Students Compared to Caucasian Students**

Group	2013	2014	Change
UA African American	13.3%	22.4%	+9.1%
UA Asian or Pacific Islander	29.2%	23.3%	-5.9%
Statewide Caucasian	65.1%	66.6%	+1.5%

The figure and table below display proficiency trends for UA’s African American (AA) and Asian or Pacific Islander (API) student populations and statewide Caucasian proficiency rates in math. Although UA’s AA and API student group proficiency rates were below that of statewide Caucasian students, UA’s students of color increased proficiency rates at a higher rate than statewide Caucasian students between 2013 and 2014 (+3.1 for AA students and +2.4 for API students compared to +0.6% for statewide Caucasian students). Since 2011, UA AA students have gained +12.0% towards closing the achievement gap and UA API students gained +11.5%.



**Achievement Gap Math Trends for UA African American and Asian or Pacific Islander Students Compared to Caucasian Students**



**Achievement Gap Math Trends for UA African American and Asian or Pacific Islander Students Compared to Caucasian Students**

Group	2011	2012	Change 2011 to 2012	2013	Change 2012 to 2013	2014	Change 2013 to 2014
UA African American	10.2%	17.6%	+7.4%	24.5%	+6.9%	27.6%	+3.1%
UA Asian or Pacific Islander	24.0%	39.3%	+15.3%	38.5%	-0.8%	40.9%	+2.4%
Statewide Caucasian	62.7%	68.3%	+5.6%	67.5%	-0.8%	68.1%	+0.6%