

Hawthorne Elementary School: The Evaluator's Perspective

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An independent evaluation of Hawthorne Elementary in San Antonio, published in the *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, [Vol. 1., No. 1, 1996 (Lawrence Erlbaum Associates)] concludes as follows:

A central assumption of Hirsch's Core Knowledge theory is that a sequenced curriculum will lead to steady increases in achievement, grade level by grade level. These findings do support that claim because at least with respect to reading performance, the successive grade-level increases for Hawthorne in general show stronger upward trends than are evident in SAISD elementary schools in the aggregate.

The findings in this article are suggestive of a curriculum-sequencing effect — that is, that achievement builds upon itself at successive grade levels. If "schooling over time" at Hawthorne Elementary is viewed as a constant, then the data reported in this article appear to indicate that despite the early deprivation that makes itself apparent to the teachers of children who enter school far below the academic standing of more advantaged peers, potential failure to thrive over time can be ameliorated for children of teachers committed to the principle put simply by Hirsch that knowledge does, in fact, build on knowledge in rather dramatic ways.

The article on Hawthorne Elementary includes the following graph, which compares the reading performance of Hawthorne students to the student population in grades 3, 4, and 5 in the San Antonio Independent School District, as measured by the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills. Note that while the district reading performance remains generally consistent across grade levels, Hawthorne students begin in third grade markedly below the district average, but by fifth grade they significantly *exceed* the district average — which supports the idea of cumulative progress over time as knowledge builds on knowledge in a school following the solid, sequenced Core Knowledge curriculum.

**1994 Texas Assessment of Academic Skills
Reading Performance**

