

Georgia Cyber Academy COMPREHENSIVE REPORT

July 2022



Prepared by the Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts

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Introduction

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2093 requires the Department of Audits and Accounts to produce an annual report for each virtual charter school. The annual reports include information related to school enrollment and attendance, academic achievement, academic performance, governance, operations, staffing, finances, and future plans. In addition, O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2093 requires the Department of Audits to create a comprehensive report approximately every three years from prior annual reports that compiles the following elements and to identify any long-term trends regarding:

- Academic performance,
- Financial data,
- Governance data, and
- The school's actual performance compared to the goals outlined in its charter

This report includes information from the three prior annual reports (2018, 2019, 2020), covering school years 2016-17 through 2019-20; however, some data was not available because of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the 2019-20 school year, Georgia Milestones tests were not administered and College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) was not produced, both of which serve as the basis for a number of data points that we typically include in the annual report.

Academic Performance

There are eight measures that we reported in our prior annual reports that are included in this comprehensive report as academic measures. These measures are:

- attrition,
- student persistence,
- course segment completion rate,
- student engagement,
- the Value Added Model (VAM),
- Beating the Odds (BTO),
- College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI), and
- the Comprehensive Performance Framework Academic Measures (CPF).

This comprehensive report generally covers school years 2016-2017 through 2019-2020. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some data was not collected, impacting some of the analyses that can be conducted. The VAM, BTO, CCRPI, and CPF Academic Measures were not produced for the 2019-20 school year.

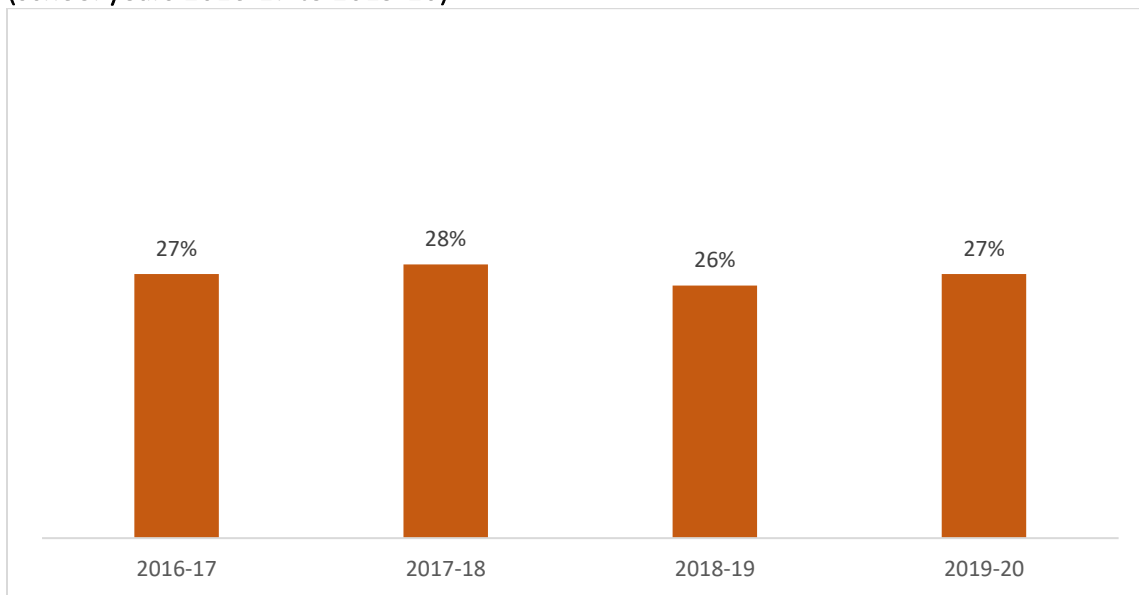
Attrition

Virtual charter schools normally experience a high amount of student mobility, or attrition through withdrawals. Withdrawals serve as the basis to calculate school attrition, which refers to students who are enrolled in school but withdraw prior to the end of the school year. In a virtual school, some students withdraw because they determine that they are not well-suited for a virtual education, lacking the discipline or educational support at home. Others may have enrolled to satisfy temporary needs (e.g., health issues, extracurricular activities, family issues) without an intention to remain in the school throughout the year. Regardless of the reason for withdrawals, changing schools can negatively impact student performance. Curriculum can vary among school districts and different teachers and classrooms move at different paces.

As shown in **Exhibit 1**, the percentage of students that withdrew from Cyber before the end of the school year has remained steadily between 26% and 28% from 2016-17 to 2019-20. In the 2019-20 school year, Cyber recorded a total of 10,589 enrollments and 2,905 withdrawals.

Exhibit 1

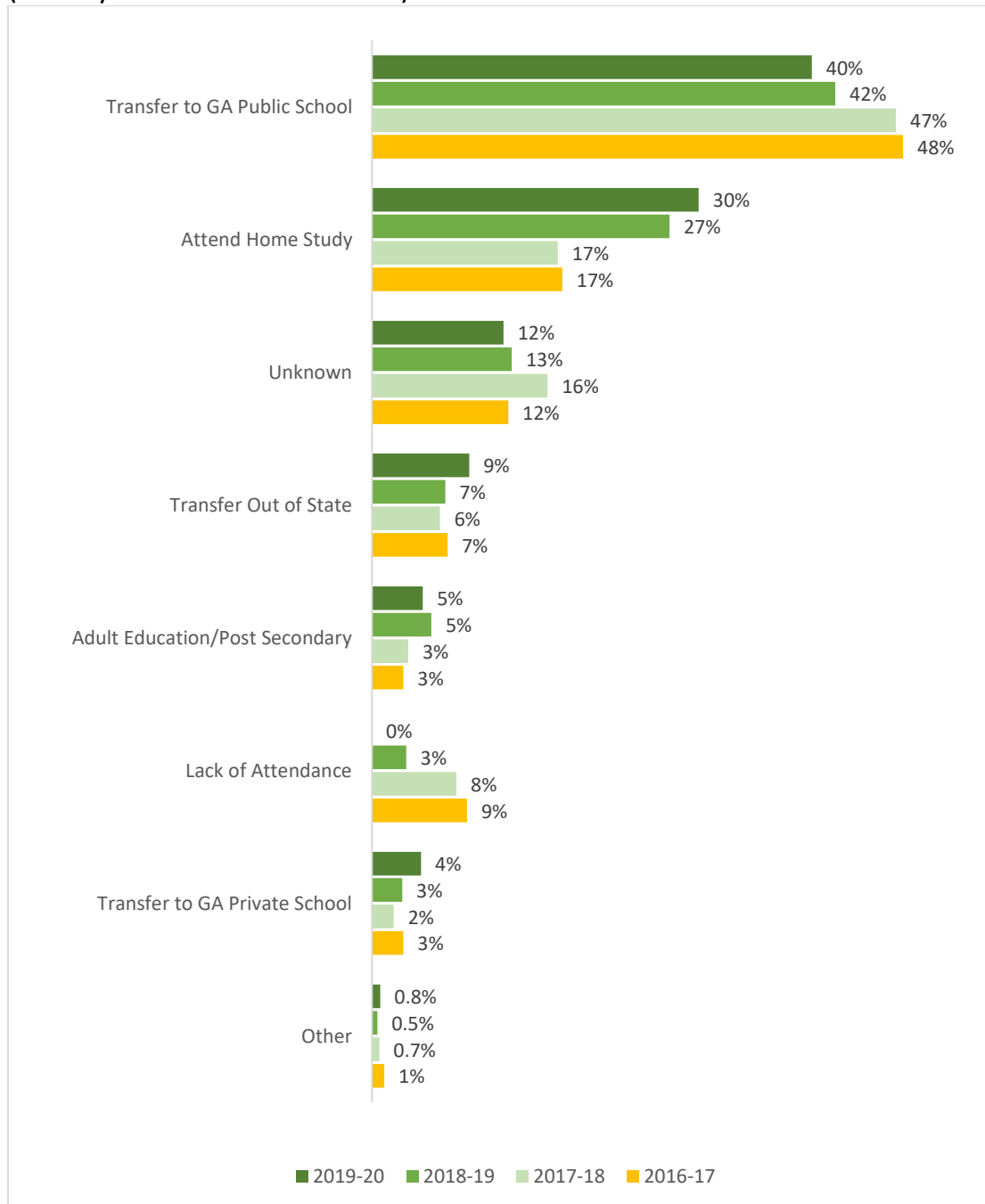
Approximately one-quarter of students enrolled at Cyber withdrew during each school year (school years 2016-17 to 2019-20)



Source: GaDOE student enrollment records

As shown in **Exhibit 2**, 40% of withdrawals from Cyber during the 2019-20 school year were students transferring to another state public school. This was the most common reason for withdrawals in each of the years reviewed, with annual withdrawals of 1,200 to 2,200 students. Between 17% and 30% of withdrawals are due to those opting for homeschooling (shown as “attend home study” in **Exhibit 2**). Home study increased from 771 students in 2016-17 to 860 students in 2019-20. While the percentage of students Cyber removed for lack of attendance is reported as 0% in 2019-20, Cyber officials indicated that this is the result of a change in the way that withdrawals are captured. Students who were removed for lack of attendance will be included in the “Unknown” category initially and subsequently will be recategorized after the school obtains documentation related to why the student left Cyber, which could include lack of attendance.

Exhibit 2
Reported reasons for student withdrawal from Cyber,
(school years 2016-17 to 2019-20¹)



¹ Beginning with the 2019-20 school year, Cyber changed the way that it reports withdrawal codes and the “Unknown” category may include students whose withdrawal reasons are determined at a later date, including those withdrawn for “Lack of Attendance”.
 Source: GaDOE student enrollment records

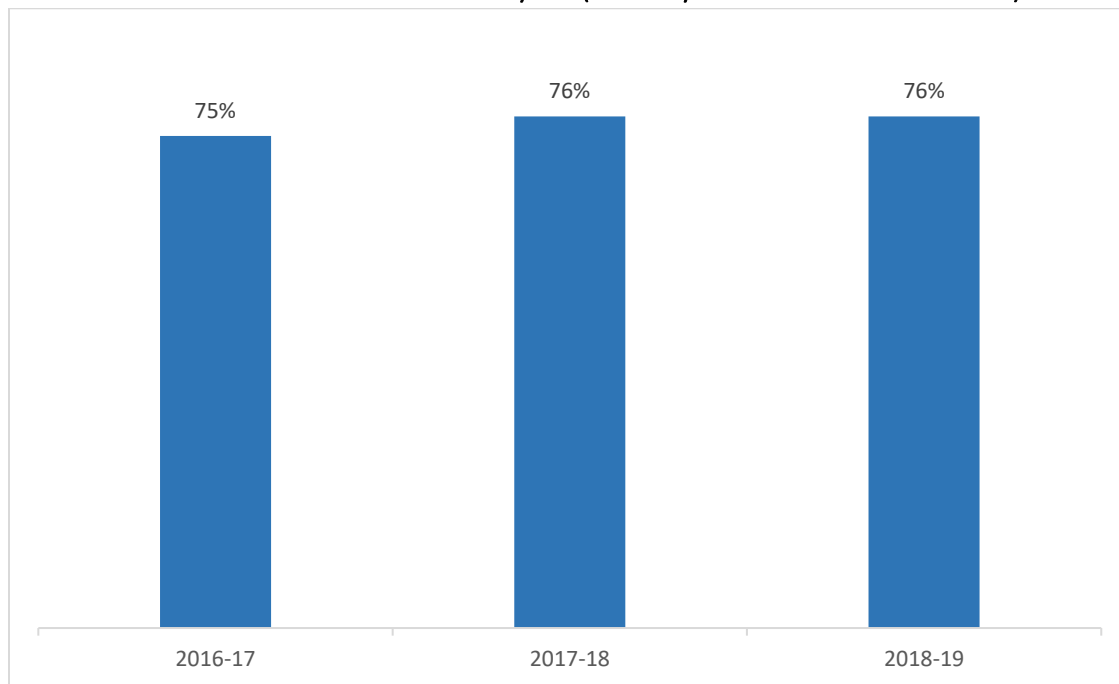
Student Persistence

Student persistence is the act of continuing towards an educational goal. It is a measure generally used in the postsecondary education environment when students can more easily discontinue their education. Student persistence can be measured by a year-to-year retention rate for a school and can provide a proxy measure for students' satisfaction with the learning environment at their school.

As shown in **Exhibit 3**, we found that the overall percentage of students who completed grades Kindergarten through 11 and returned the following year is approximately 76% between the 2016-17 school year and 2018-19 school year.

Exhibit 3

Around 76% of students returned each year (school years 2016-17 to 2018-19)

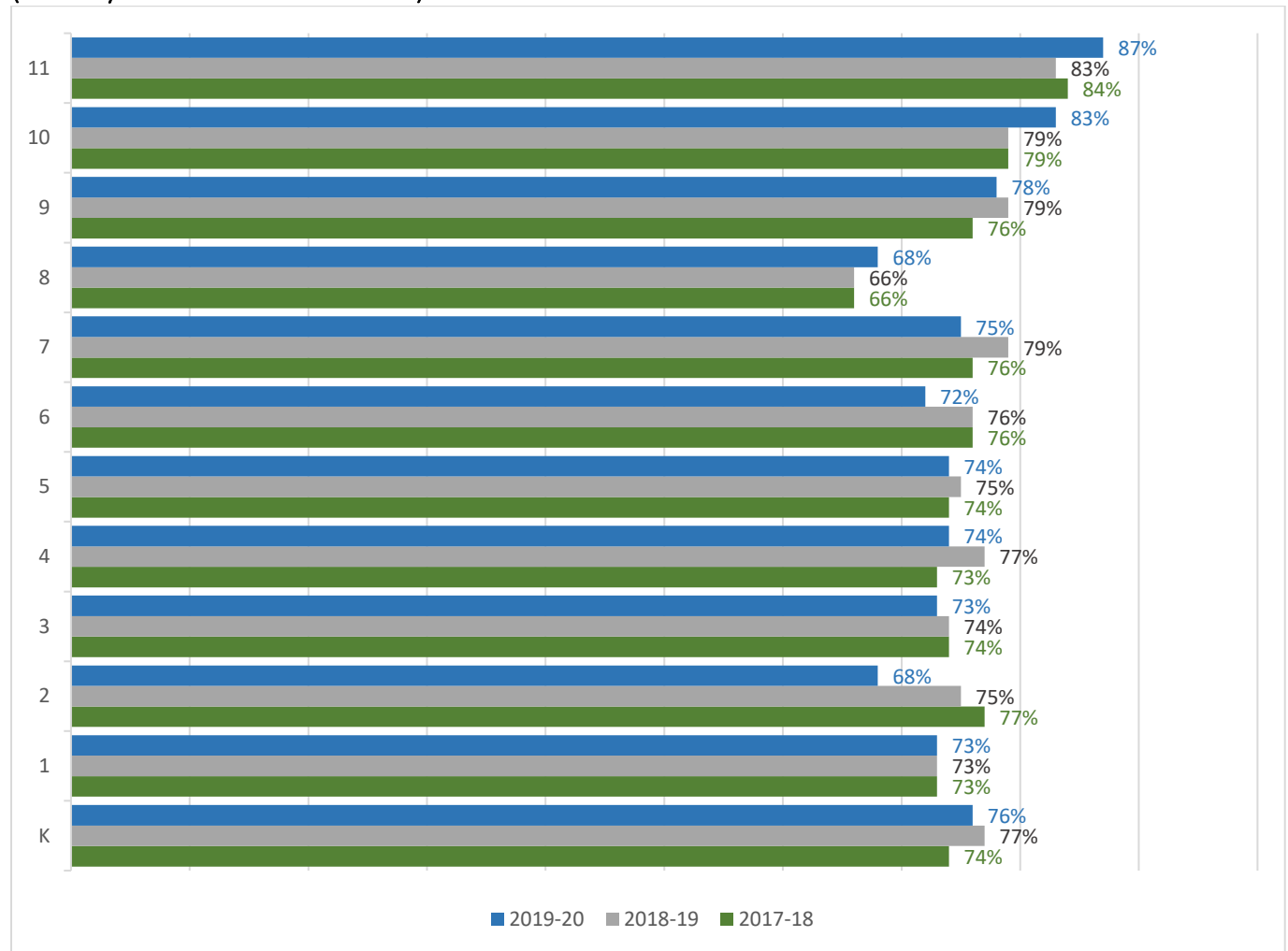


Source: GaDOE student enrollment records

In general, when reviewing student persistence by grade, high school grades experience the highest percentage of returning students. In each of the three years reviewed, eighth grade had the lowest percentage of returning students. **Exhibit 4** shows the percentage of students by grade by year that returned to Cyber the next year.

Exhibit 4

Student retention is lowest in 8th grade and higher in high school grades across all three years (school years 2016-17 to 2018-19)

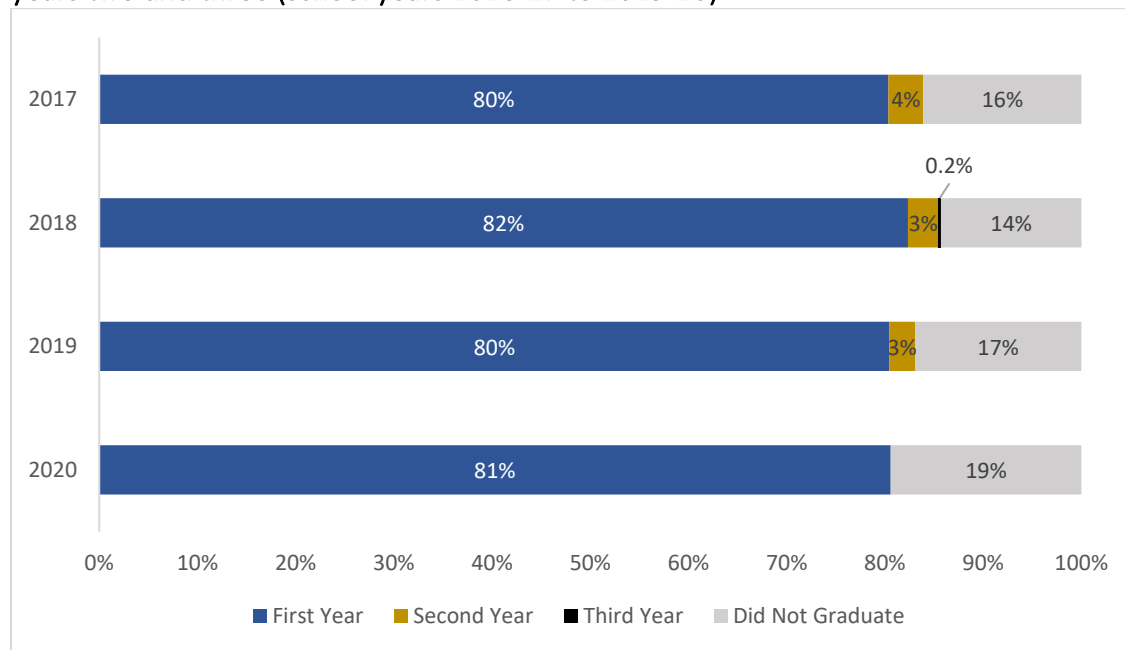


Source: GaDOE student enrollment records

We also examined the persistence related to graduation. **Exhibit 5** shows the percentage of seniors graduating in the first year as a senior is around 80%. In the 2017 and 2018 senior cohorts, a small number of students continued for up to three years and graduated. The 2017 senior cohort covers a four year period but had no students who graduated after year three. Data is more limited for the 2019 and 2020 senior cohorts and students in these senior cohorts who did not graduate in 2020 may re-enroll and graduate in a later year.

Exhibit 5

The majority of a senior cohort graduates in the first year, but a small percentage continues to years two and three (school years 2016-17 to 2019-20)



Source: GaDOE student enrollment records

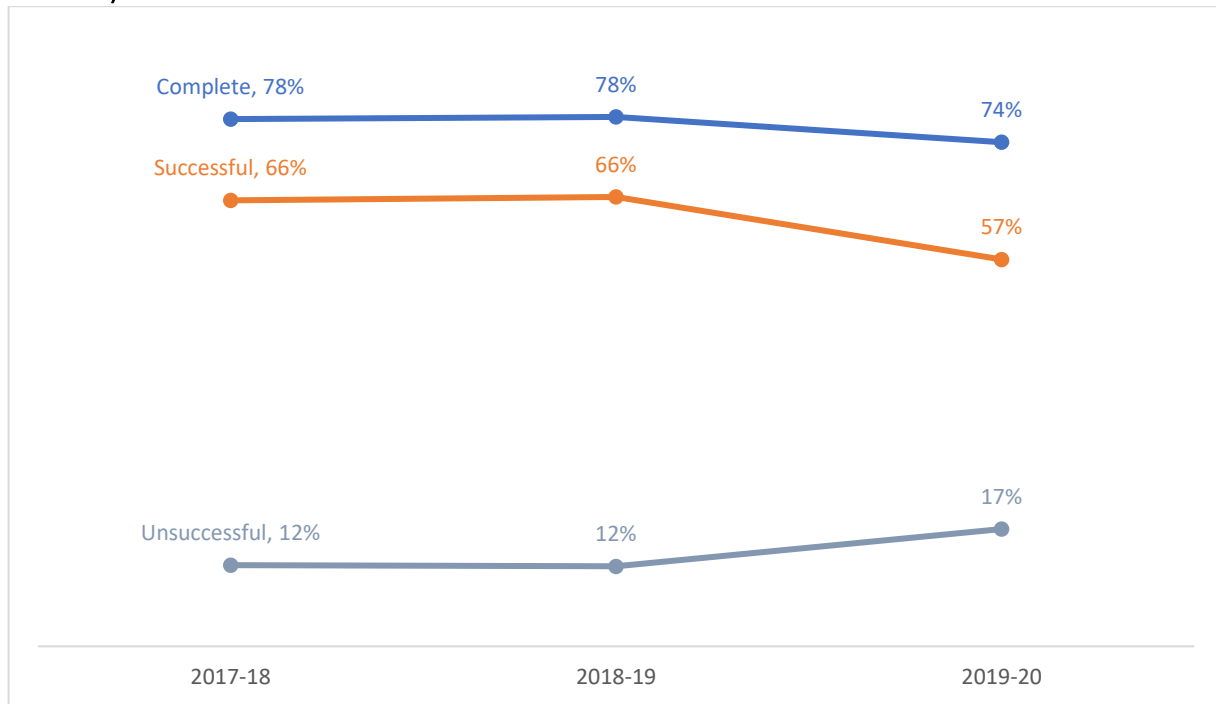
Course Segment Completion Rate

Given student mobility and attrition, not all students will complete their enrolled courses. GaDOE data does not permit a determination of the percentage of students who complete a course, but we were able to determine the portion that complete a course segment. A yearlong course will often have two segments (first and second semester). Completing a single segment in a multi-segment course does not result in academic credit; a passing grade in the final segment is required.

The rates of completion and success for Cyber students for school year 2019-20 declined from school years 2017-18 and 2018-19 (see **Exhibit 6**).

Exhibit 6

The rates of course completion and successful completion decreased (school years 2017-18 to 2019-20)



Source: Cyber and GaDOE course records

The rates of completion for Cyber students decreased from the 2017-18 to the 2019-20 school year for most grades (see Exhibit 7). However, shifts in these rates for individual grade levels vary. Completion rates decreased for kindergarten, 4th, 5th, and 8th through 12th grades. Rates increased for remaining grades: 1st-3rd and 6th-7th. Only 1st-3rd grades had increases in successful completion from the 2017-18 to the 2019-20.

Exhibit 7

Percent of completed course segments and successful course segments decreased (school year 2019-20)



Source: Cyber and GaDOE course records

Student Engagement

Student engagement is the degree to which students are attentive and interested in their coursework, and engaged students are more likely to perform well in school. Common measures of engagement, such as students raising their hands to pose or answer questions, participating in class discussion, or interacting with teachers in the classroom, are not available in an online environment. As such, virtual schools must develop systems to define and capture student engagement.

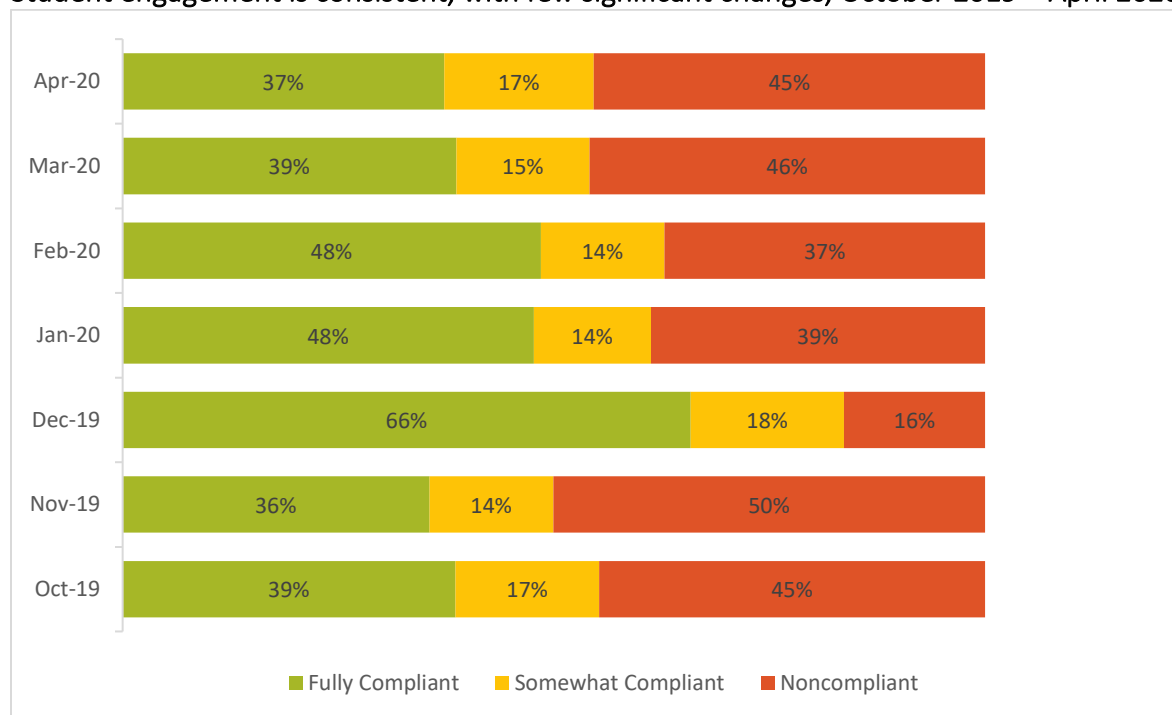
Cyber implemented a school-wide engagement policy and method for measuring student engagement during the 2018-19 school year. The engagement policy awards a student a certain level of flexibility for each subject or course. Students who meet criteria related to performance and participation are granted the most flexibility, required to check in with the teacher for short time each week with optional participation in many other sessions. Students with the lowest grades and performance are granted the least flexibility. They are required to attend all live and other types of sessions and to have a formal class participation agreement. If a student's performance declines, the flexibility level will change to a more restrictive level. A student can only move up in level at the end of each semester.

Cyber designates a student as “Noncompliant,” “Somewhat Compliant,” or “Fully Compliant” based on the flexibility requirements with which each is complying. A fully compliant student is on track regarding attendance, assignments and performance. A somewhat compliant student is meeting some requirements, but not others, while a noncompliant student is not meeting requirements.

Cyber’s engagement data covers seven months during the 2019-20 school year. As shown in **Exhibit 8**, while 66% of students were fully compliant in December 2019, less than half students were fully compliant for the remaining six months. It should be noted that Cyber personnel reported that in December, Cyber administers a number of assessments and December’s engagement is based on attendance.

Exhibit 8

Student engagement is consistent, with few significant changes, October 2019 – April 2020



Source: Cyber engagement data report

Value Added Model

The Value-Added Model (VAM) established by the Governor’s Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) measures the ability of state charter schools to positively impact student performance. The VAM controls for demographic, academic, and socioeconomic factors so that student achievement can be attributed to the school. After controlling for certain factors, the VAM calculates a predicted score for each student. The difference between the predicted and actual score is the school’s impact on the student’s achievement.

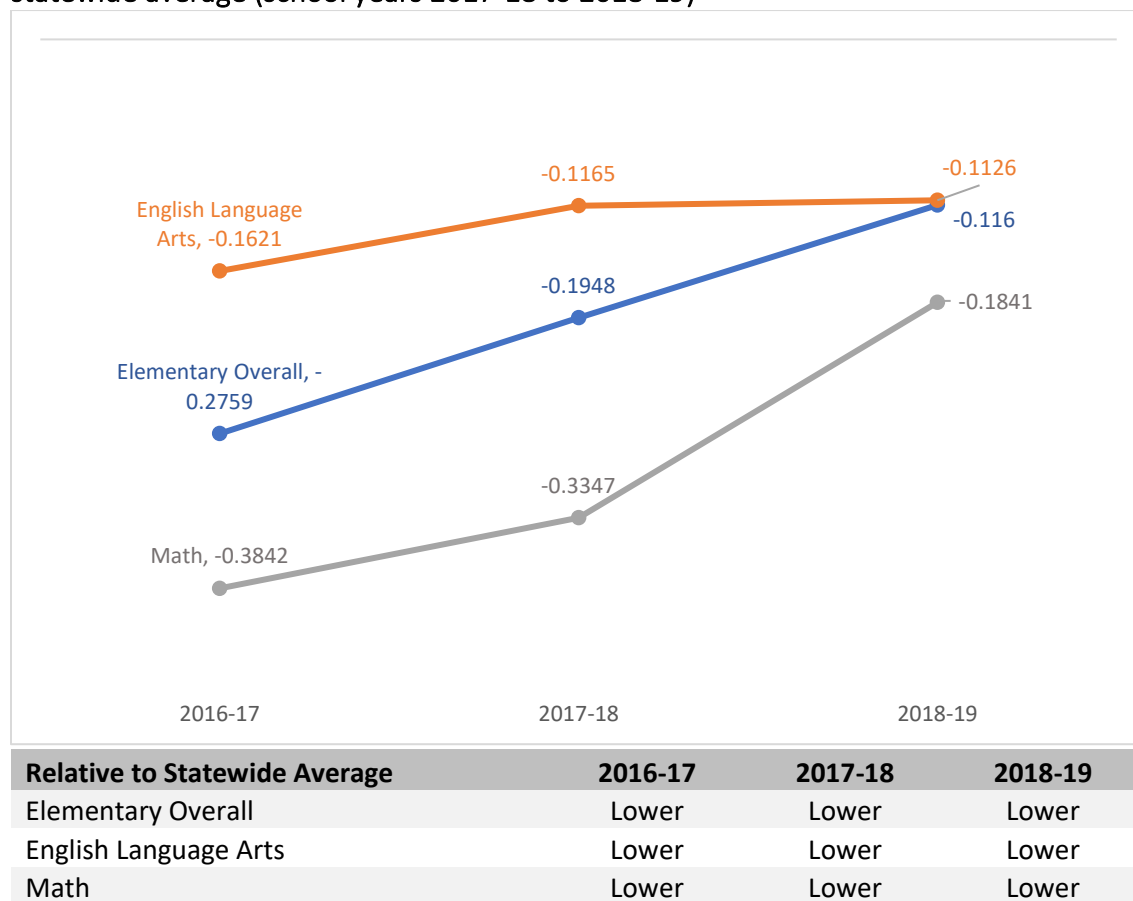
The analysis consists of a two-step process to get the final value-added measurement. The first step is to find the difference between a student’s actual score and their predicted score. For each student, a predicted score is calculated based on the student’s characteristics, the student’s previous test

scores, and the student's school characteristics. For each school, the difference between the predicted and actual scores for all students is averaged. In the second step, the scores are weighted to account for the unique populations that each school serves. The model has separate estimates by grade level and subject. A negative value-added measurement denotes that the actual scores for the students were lower than the predicted scores and a positive score denotes the opposite. The state average value-added effect is zero and it is used as the comparison district for virtual schools since they serve students across the state.

As shown in **Exhibit 9**, although Cyber's VAM elementary impact score showed improvement in the Elementary Overall and Math in the 2017-2018 and 2018-19 years when compared to the 2016-2017 year, its performance is lower than the state's performance when the VAM is calculated. Cyber's elementary students English Language Arts scores decreased in the 2018-19 school year after increasing in the 2017-18 school year; however, the VAM impact was lower than the state's performance.

Exhibit 9

While Cyber's scores are trending up in elementary, it continues to perform lower than the statewide average (school years 2017-18 to 2018-19)

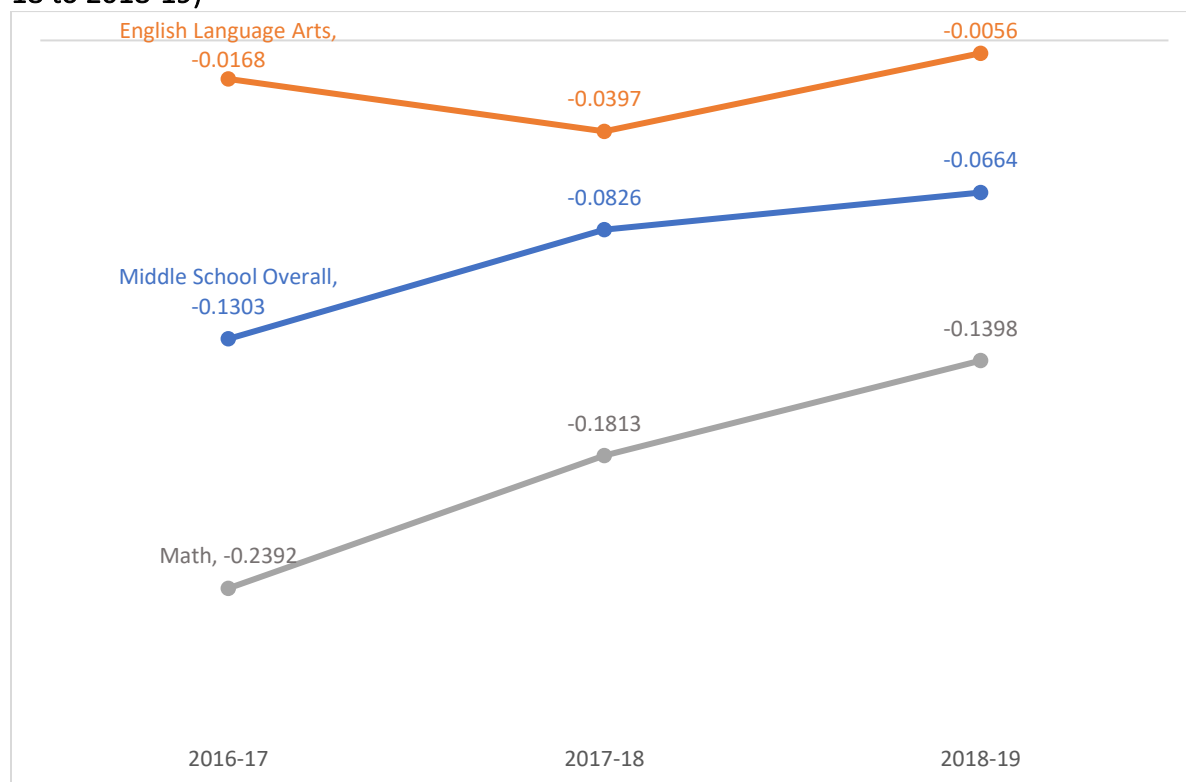


Source: SCSC Value-Added Model

As shown in **Exhibit 10**, Cyber’s middle school overall and math Value-Added impact scores are lower than the state’s, although Cyber’s middle school overall and math scores improved in the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years. Additionally, the school was not statistically higher or lower than the statewide average in Middle School ELA in the 2016-2017 and 2018-2019 school years.

Exhibit 10

Cyber’s middle school scores are generally lower than the statewide average (school years 2017-18 to 2018-19)



Relative to Statewide Average	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Middle School Overall	Lower	Lower	Lower
English Language Arts	No Stat. Difference	Lower	No Stat. Difference
Math	Lower	Lower	Lower

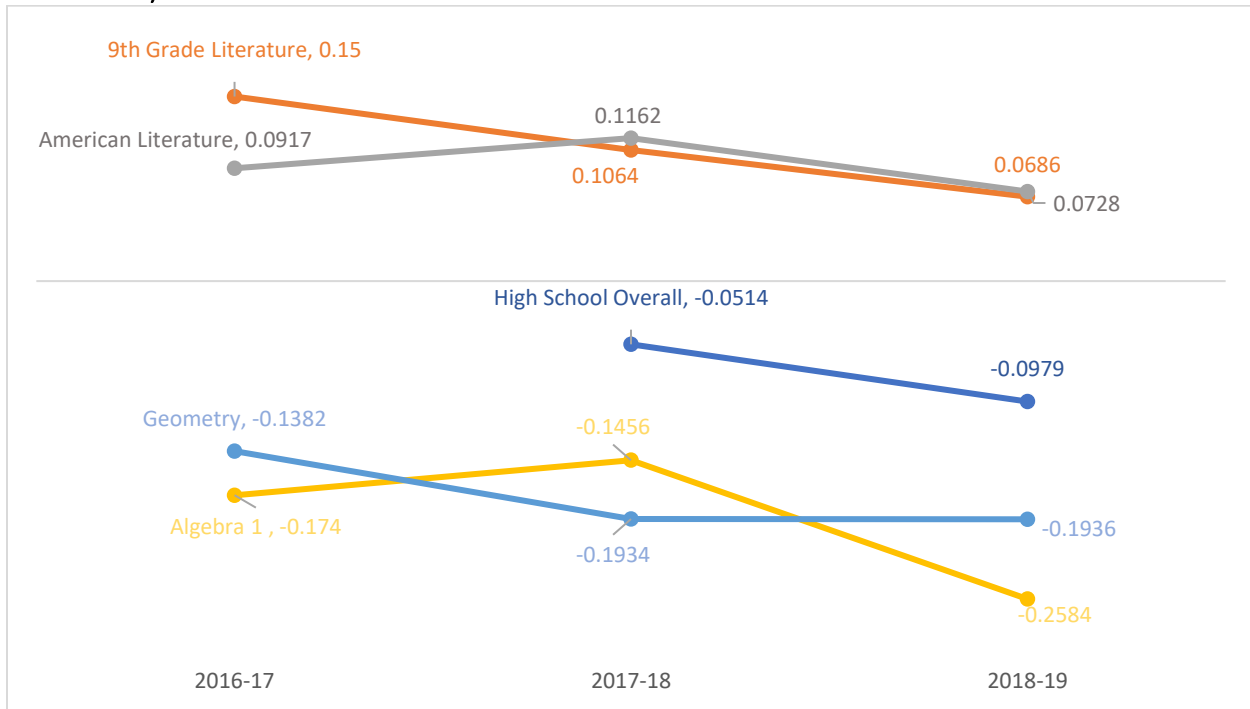
Source: SCSC Value-Added Model

As shown in **Exhibit 11**, Cyber’s value-added impact score for high school overall was lower than the statewide average in the 2017-2018 school year (the first year that it was calculated) and the 2018-2019 school year. For the individual subjects, the school was typically lower in Geometry and Algebra I and higher in the 9th grade literature and American Literature categories. When the value-added

impact scores are compared over time, the scores increased from the 2016-2017 school year to the 2017-2018 school year before declining in the 2018-2019 school year.

Exhibit 11

Cyber's high school scores are mixed compared to the statewide average (school years 2016 - 17 to 2018-19)



Relative to Statewide Average	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
High School Overall	N/A	Lower	Lower
9th Grade Literature	Higher	Higher	Higher
American Literature	Higher	Higher	Higher
Algebra 1	Lower	Lower	Lower
Geometry	Lower	Lower	Lower

Source: SCSC Value-Added Model

Beating the Odds

The Beating the Odds (BTO) analysis established by GOSA is an outcome measure that compares charter schools' performance on the CCRPI¹ with the performance of similar schools. The BTO model also calculates a predicted score and range (confidence interval) for each school based on demographic characteristics. The characteristics used in the 2018-19 comparison include the following:

- Percentage of female students
- Percentage of students in certain races/ethnicities (including Asian, Black, Hispanic, and Multi-racial)
- Percentage of students with disabilities
- Percentage of English language learners
- Percentage of economically disadvantaged students
- Student mobility rates
- School grade cluster
- Whether the school is traditional or non-traditional
- School size: the model splits schools into three size groups for small (0 to 500 students), medium (501 to 1,000 students), and large (over 1,000 students) schools because there was a large difference in variability between small and large schools.

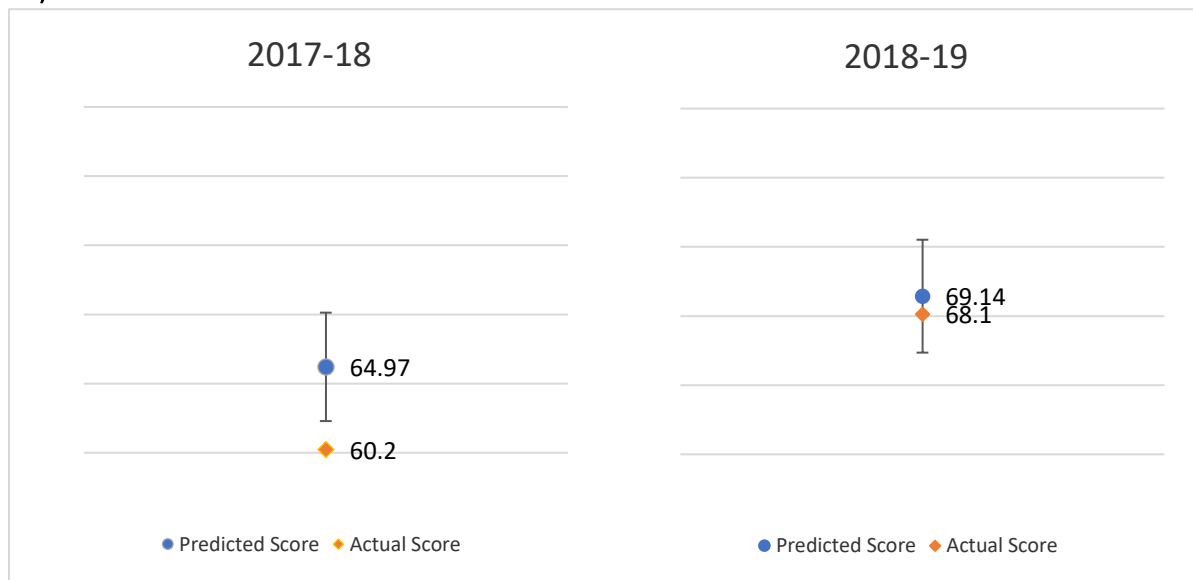
The BTO analysis includes only those students counted in the October full-time equivalent (FTE) count. The school will receive a score of "Below Expected Range" if the score is below the predicted range, "Within Expected Range" if the score falls within the predicted range, or "Beating the Odds" if the score is above the predicted range. Given that the analysis controls for certain characteristics, a school with a relatively low CCRPI could be Beating the Odds.

As shown in **Exhibit 12**, Cyber has never been distinguished as Beating the Odds across the periods studied. In the 2018-2019 school year, Cyber was classified as Within Expected Range. Cyber's CCRPI score was 68.1 which was within the predicted score range of 65.88 to 72.41.

¹ The College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) is an accountability tool the state uses to measure performance and hold schools accountable for student achievement. The CCRPI provides multiple measures of student performance.

Exhibit 12

Cyber has not obtained the CCRPI score needed to qualify as BTO (school years 2017-18 to 2018-19)



Source: Beating the Odds Analysis, 2017-18 – 2018-19

College and Career Ready Performance Index

The College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) is an accountability tool the state uses to measure performance and hold schools accountable for student achievement. The CCRPI provides multiple measures of student performance. GaDOE redesigned the framework for measuring and reporting CCRPI and implemented the new methodology beginning in 2017-18.

CCRPI is comprised of four main indicators used to assess students in multiple areas. All students are assessed based on content mastery, progress, closing gaps, and readiness. An additional assessment, a graduation rate, is also included for fourth- and fifth- year high school students. **Exhibit 13** shows each of the CCRPI indicators and the measures used to score each indicator. In the prior annual reports, we included the 2017-18 and 2018-19 CCRPI; however, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the GaDOE did not publish a CCRPI for the 2019-20 school year.

Exhibit 13

CCRPI indicators and measures (school years 2017-18 and 2018-19)

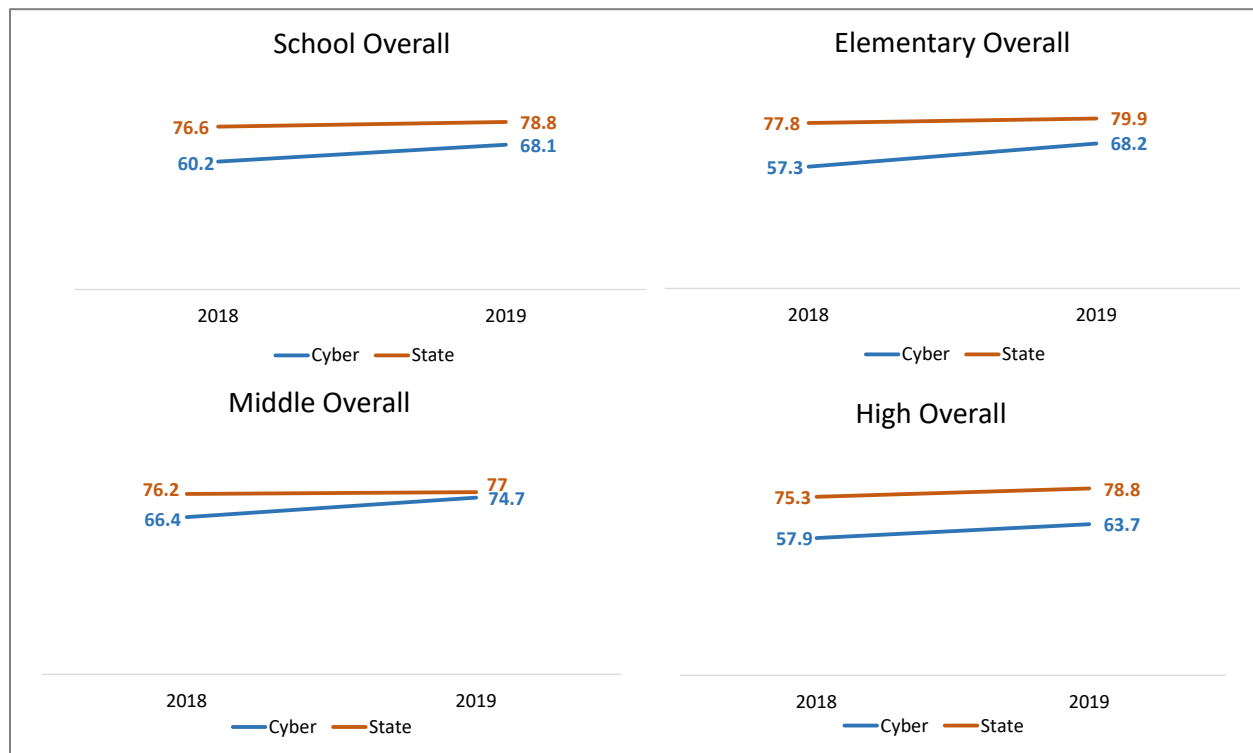
Indicator	Description	Weights (E, M, H)		
Content Mastery	Performance on the Georgia Milestones Assessment and the Georgia Alternate Assessment in ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies.	30%	30%	30%
Progress	Amount of growth a student has demonstrated relative to academically-similar students in ELA and mathematics, as well as English learners' progress toward language proficiency.	35%	35%	30%
Closing Gaps	Based on CCRPI improvement targets for academic achievement, represented by improvement flags, in order to show that all students and all subgroups of students continue to make improvements.	15%	15%	10%
Readiness	Percent of students that show readiness in the certain areas: <i>Elementary & Middle</i> : literacy, attendance, and Beyond the Core (earning a passing score in fine arts or world language); <i>High</i> : literacy, attendance, accelerated enrollment, pathway completion, and college/career readiness.	20%	20%	15%
Graduation Rate	Percent of 12 th grade students that graduate in four or five years.	n/a	n/a	15%

Source: GaDOE Accountability Division

GaDOE calculates a score for each CCRPI indicator and an overall score for each school. Cyber's overall CCRPI score for both the 2017-18 (60.2) and 2018-19 (68.1) school years are lower than the state (76.6 in 2017-18 and 78.8 in 2018-19); the state is Cyber's "comparison district" for charter purposes because it is a statewide school. Cyber's overall CCRPI score is lower than the state in elementary, middle school, and high school in both the 2017-18 and 2018-19 school years as shown in **Exhibit 14**.

Exhibit 14

Cyber's CCRPI scores increased in school year 2018-19 although students scored lower than the state

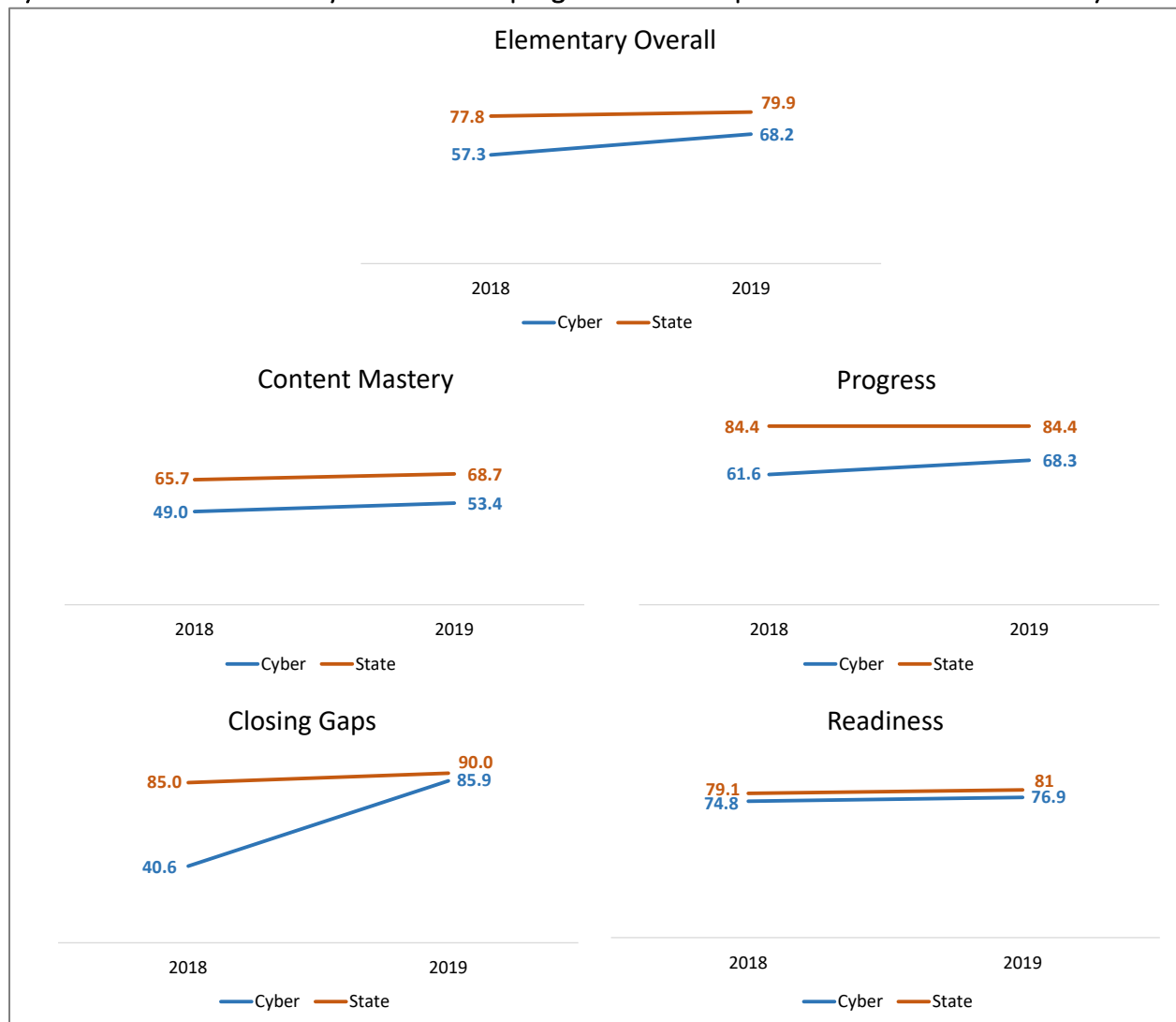


Source: GaDOE Accountability Division

- **Elementary School** – While Cyber scores are lower than the state for each CCRPI component in both the 2017-18 and the 2018-19 school years, Cyber students and the state showed improvements in each of the component sub scores (see **Exhibit 15**). The overall score for elementary school increased for Cyber and the state from 2018 to 2019. Cyber's score increased from 57.3 to 68.2, while the state's score increased from 77.8 to 79.9. Cyber improved in content mastery from the 2018 score to 2019 (4.4 point increase or 9%), while the state's improvement was lower (3 point increase or 4.6%). While Cyber had an increase in progress (6.7 points or 10.9%), the state score did not change. Cyber's most improved component is closing gaps (increase of 45.35 points or 111.6%) while the state had an increase of 5 points in closing gaps (5.9%). Cyber had a 2.1 (2.8%) point increase in its readiness score, while the state had a 1.9 (2.4%) increase.

Exhibit 15

Cyber and state elementary school CCRPI progress scores improved in the 2018 19 school year

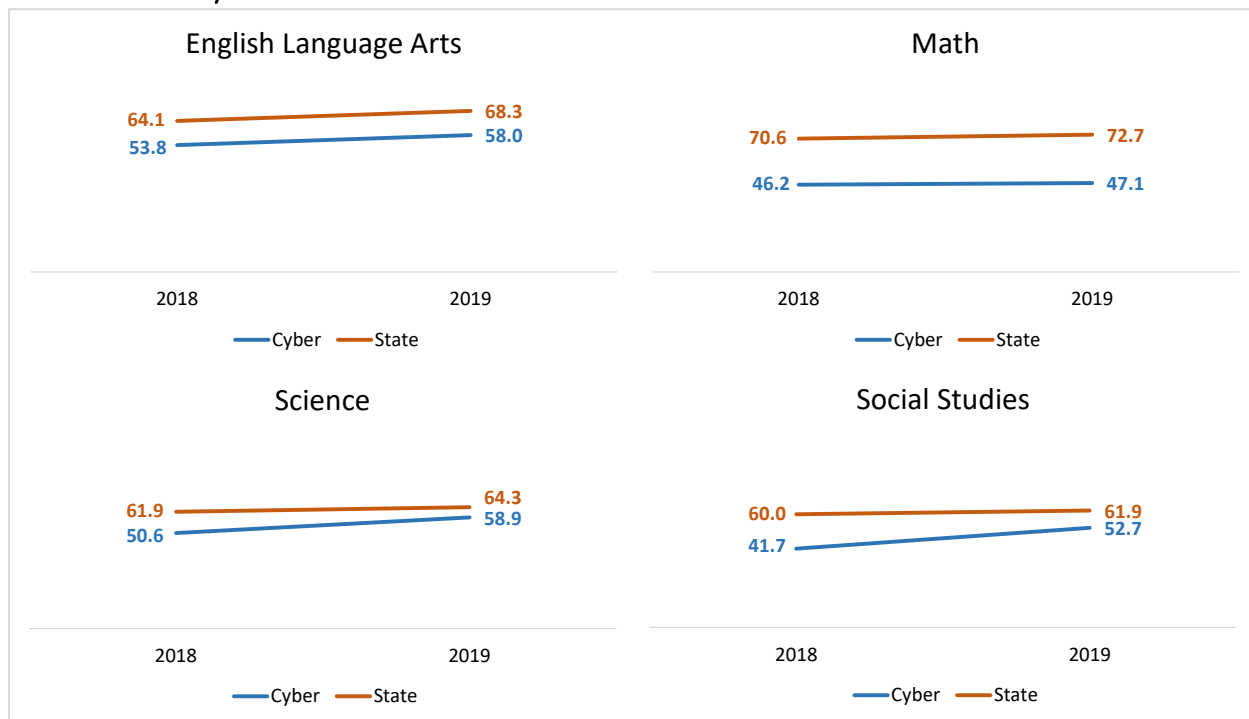


Source: GaDOE Accountability Division

As shown in **Exhibit 16**, Cyber had more significant changes in its elementary school content mastery by subject scores than the state. Cyber's elementary school students increased in all subjects with the largest increases in social studies (11 points or 26.3%) and science (8.3 points or 16.3%). In contrast, the state elementary school content mastery scores increased only 3.2% in social studies and 4% in science. Cyber's ELA remained below the state's scores in both years, but had an 7.8% increase, while the state had a 6.6% increase. Cyber's math remained below the state score but increased 2% (.9 points).

Exhibit 16

Cyber's elementary school CCRPI content mastery scores showed significant improvement in the 2018-19 school year

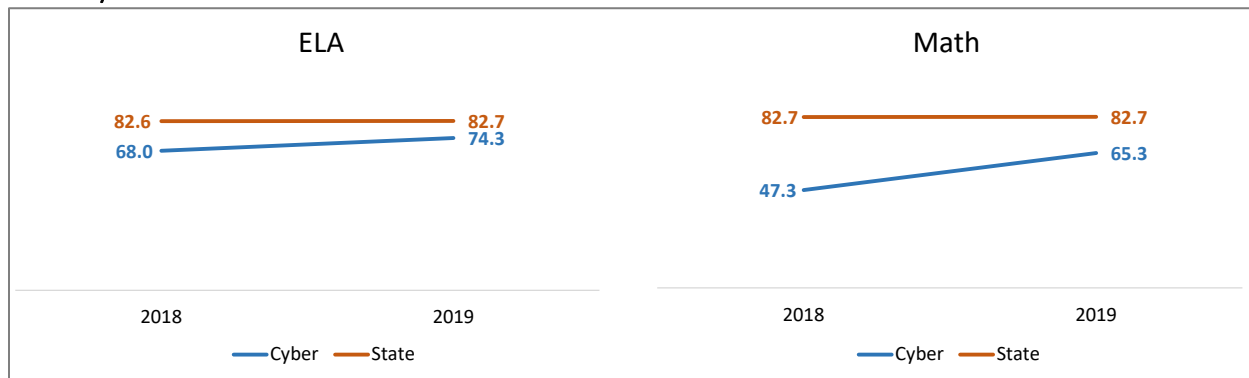


Source: GaDOE Accountability Division

Exhibit 17 shows that Cyber's elementary school students made improvements in their progress indicator scores for ELA and math, while the state score increased by 0.1 point in ELA and remained the same for math. However, Cyber scored below the state in both the 2017-2018 and the 2018-2019 school years in ELA and math.

Exhibit 17

Cyber's elementary school CCRPI progress scores for ELA and math improved in the 2018-19 school year

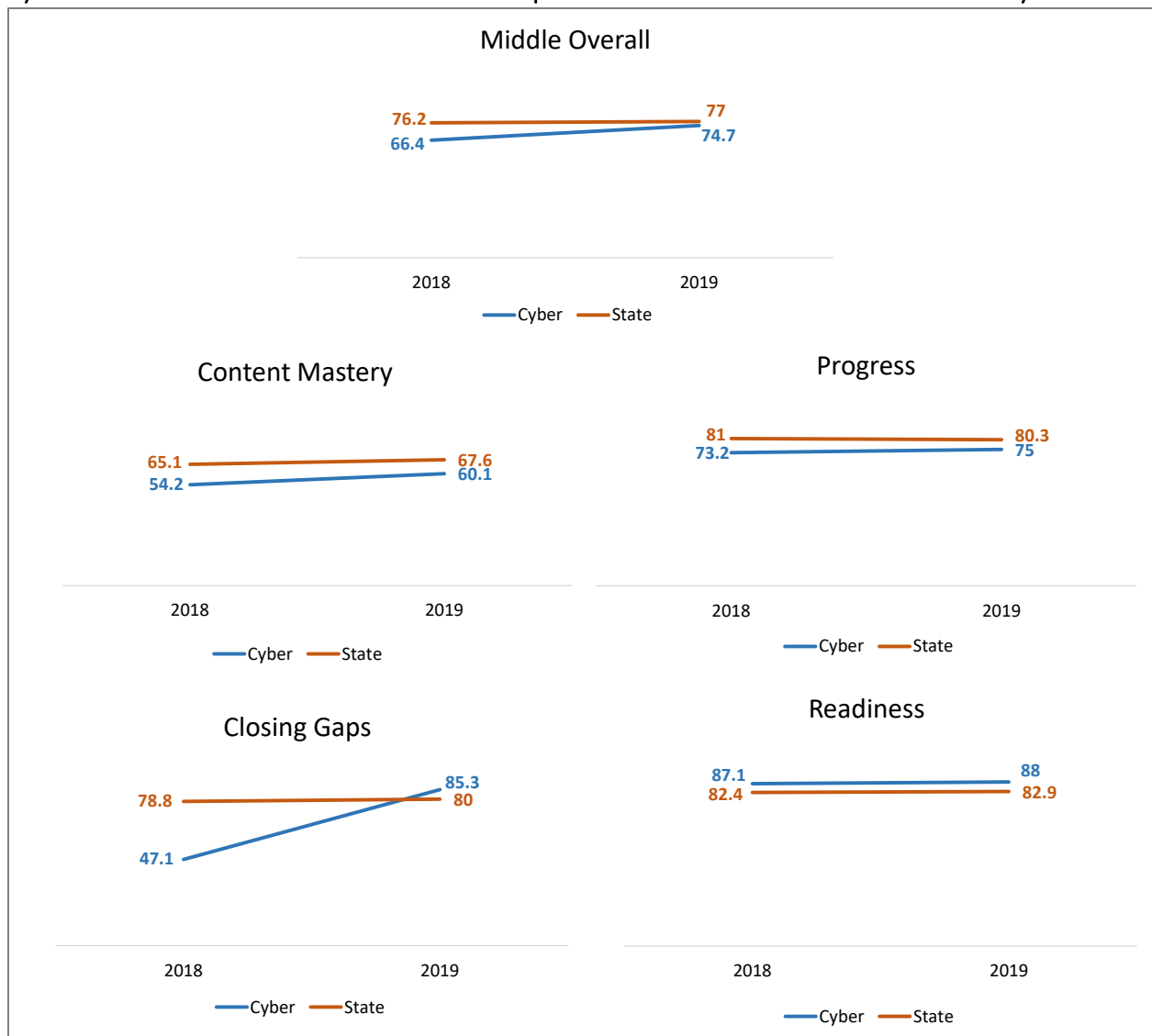


Source: GaDOE Accountability Division

- Middle School** – Cyber had increases in all of its component sub scores, while the state had decreases in three components and increases in two components. The overall score for middle school increased for Cyber by 12.5% (8.3 points) and increased for the state by 1% (.8 points) from 2018 to 2019 (see **Exhibit 18**). Cyber’s most improved component is closing gaps (increase of 38.2 points or 81.1%) while the state had an increase of 1.2 points in closing gaps (1.5%). Cyber improved in content mastery from the 2018 score to 2019 (5.9 point increase or 10.9%), while the state’s improvement was lower (2.5 point increase or 3.8%). The state had a decrease in progress (-.7 or -.9%) while Cyber had an increase of 1.8 points (2.5%). Cyber had a 1% increase in its readiness score, while the state had a .6% increase, and Cyber had a score of 88 compared to a score of 82.9 for the state.

Exhibit 18

Cyber had increases in all middle school component sub scores in the 2018-19 school year

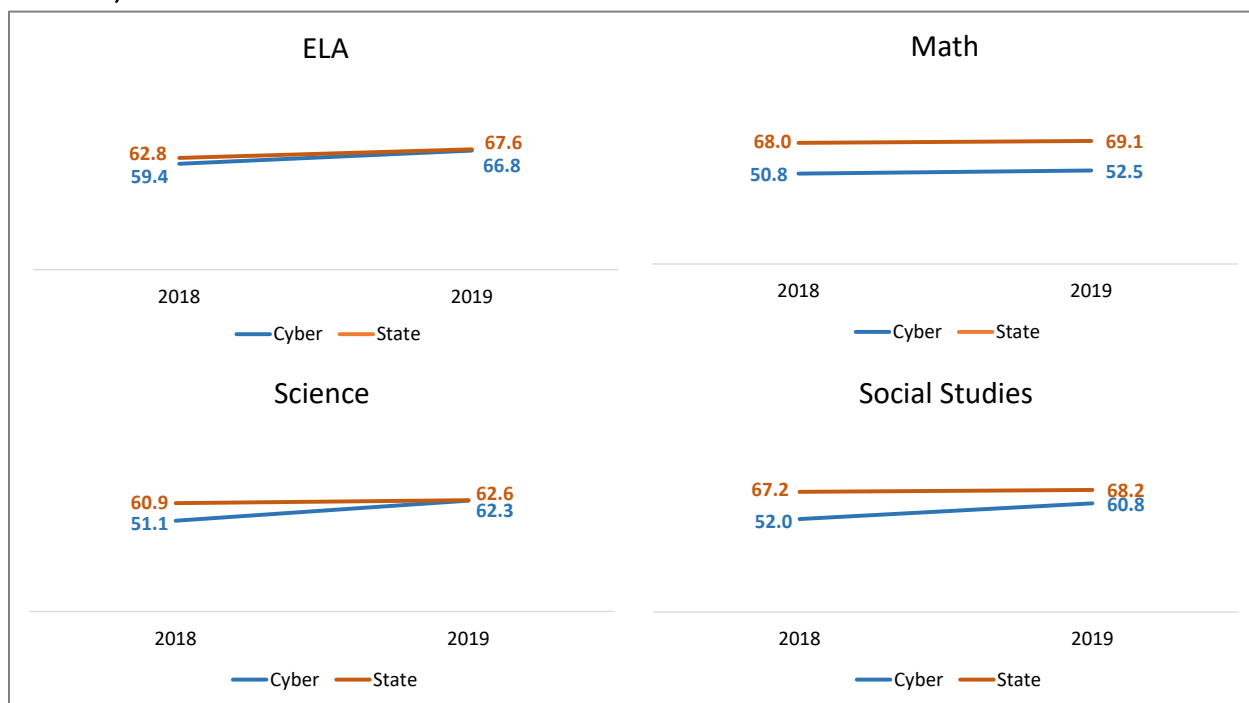


Source: GaDOE Accountability Division

As shown in **Exhibit 19**, Cyber had more significant changes in its middle school content mastery by subject scores than the state. Cyber's middle school students increased in all subjects with the largest increases in social studies (8.8 points or 16.8%) and science (11.2 points or 22%). The state middle school content mastery scores also increased in all four areas. Cyber's ELA remained below the state's scores in both years, despite increasing 12.5% (7.4 points). Cyber's math also remained below the state score, despite increasing 3.4% (1.7 points).

Exhibit 19

Cyber's middle school content mastery scores improved in all subjects (school years 2017-18 to 2018-19)

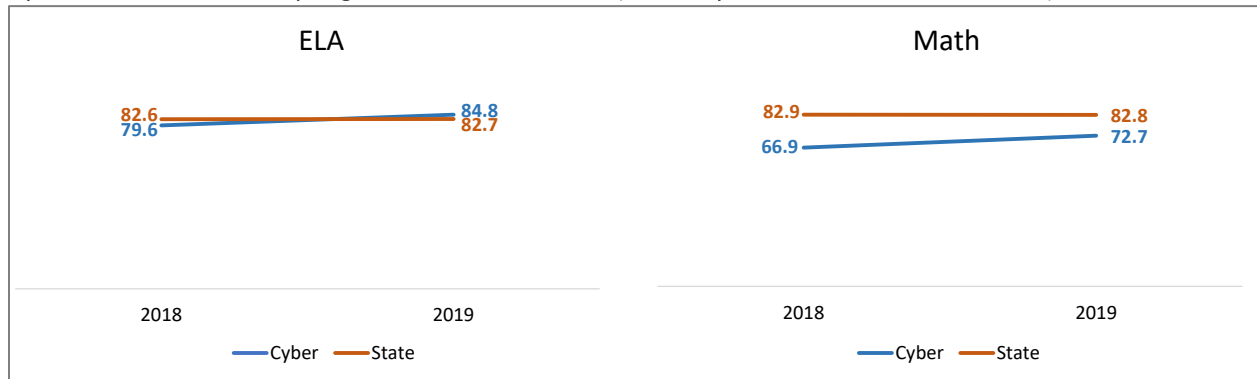


Source: GaDOE Accountability Division

Exhibit 20 shows that Cyber's middle school students made improvements in their progress indicator scores for ELA and math. In ELA, Cyber scored higher than the state in 2018-19, but scored lower in math despite an increase of 8.7% (5.8 points).

Exhibit 20

Cyber's middle school progress increased from (school years 2017-18 to 2018-19)

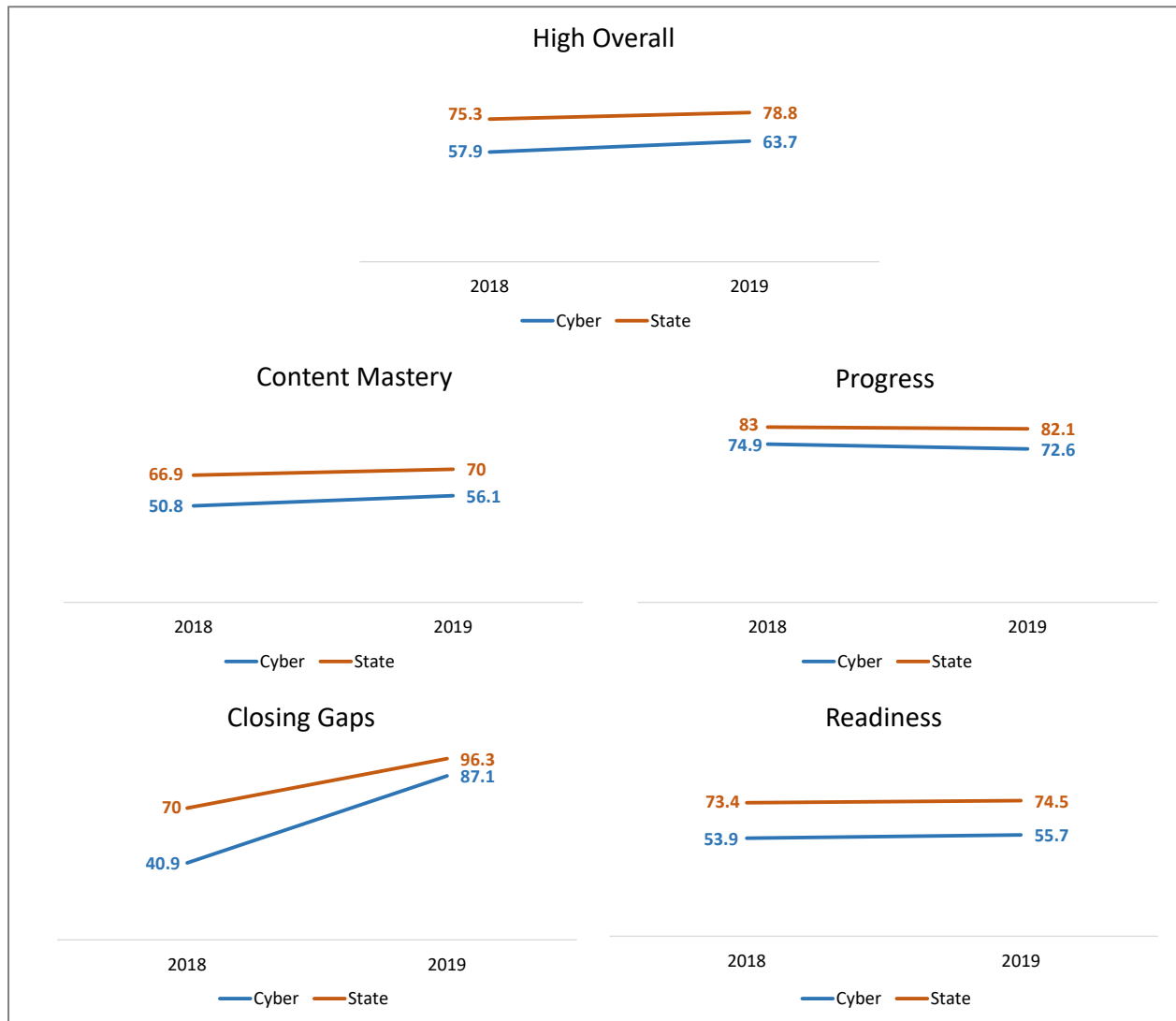


Source: GaDOE Accountability Division

- **High School** – All of the school's CCRPI high school component scores increased from the 2017-2018 to the 2018-2019 school year except progress, which decreased by 2.3 points (-3.1%), as shown in **Exhibit 21**. Similar to Cyber, the state's high school scores increased in all components except progress, which decreased by .9 points (-1.1%). The school's overall CCRPI score increased by 5.8 points (10%) from 2017-2018 to 2018-2019, while the state's overall score increased 3.5 points (4.6%). The school's largest increase is in closing gaps, which had an increase of 46.2 points (113%).

Exhibit 21

All of Cyber's high school CCRPI scores increased (school years 2017-18 to 2018-19)

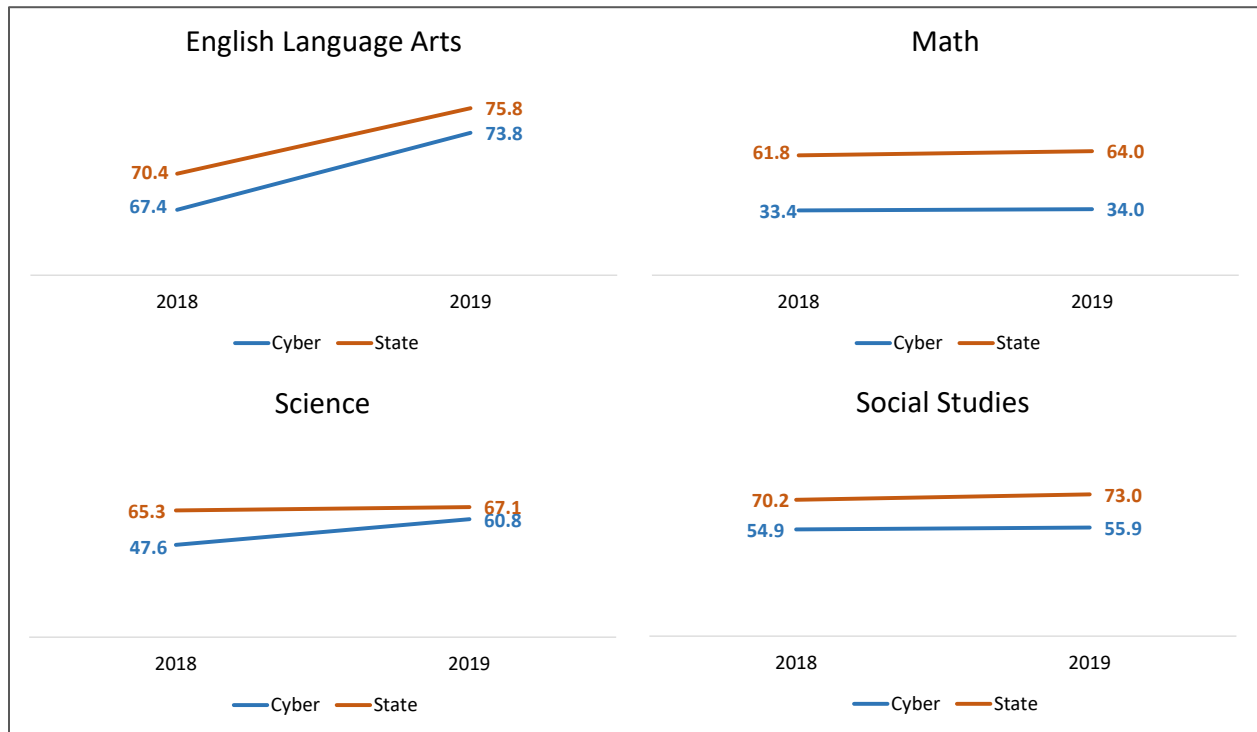


Source: GaDOE Accountability Division

As shown in **Exhibit 22**, both Cyber's high school content mastery scores and the state's high school content mastery scores increased from the 2017-2018 school year to the 2018-2019 school year in all subjects. Cyber scored below the state in all subjects for both years.

Exhibit 22

Cyber's high school CCRPI Content Mastery scores increased (school years 2017-18 to 2018-19)

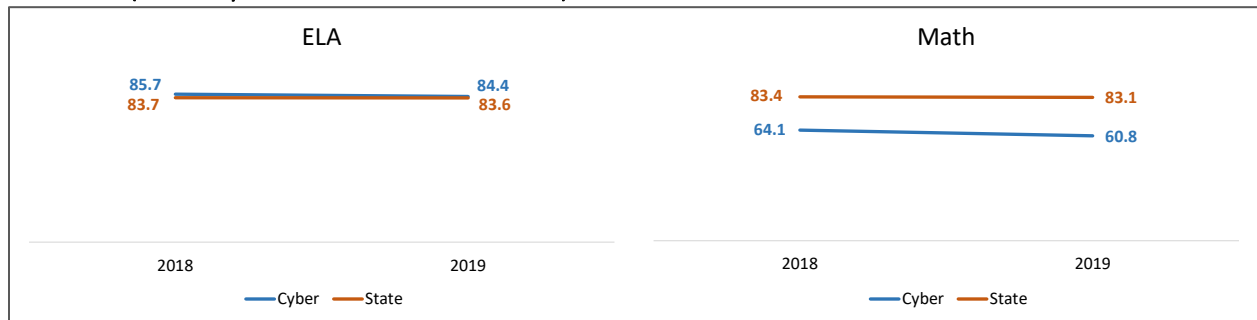


Source: GaDOE Accountability Division

Exhibit 23 shows Cyber's high school progress scores for ELA and math. Cyber's high school students scored higher in ELA in both the 2017-2018 and the 2018-2019 school years, although their score decreased slightly in the 2018-2019 school year. Cyber's high school students scored lower than the state in math in the 2017-2018 and the 2018-2019 school years. Cyber's math score decreased by 3.3 points (-5.1%) in the 2018-2019 school year while the state had a decrease of .3 points (-.4%).

Exhibit 23

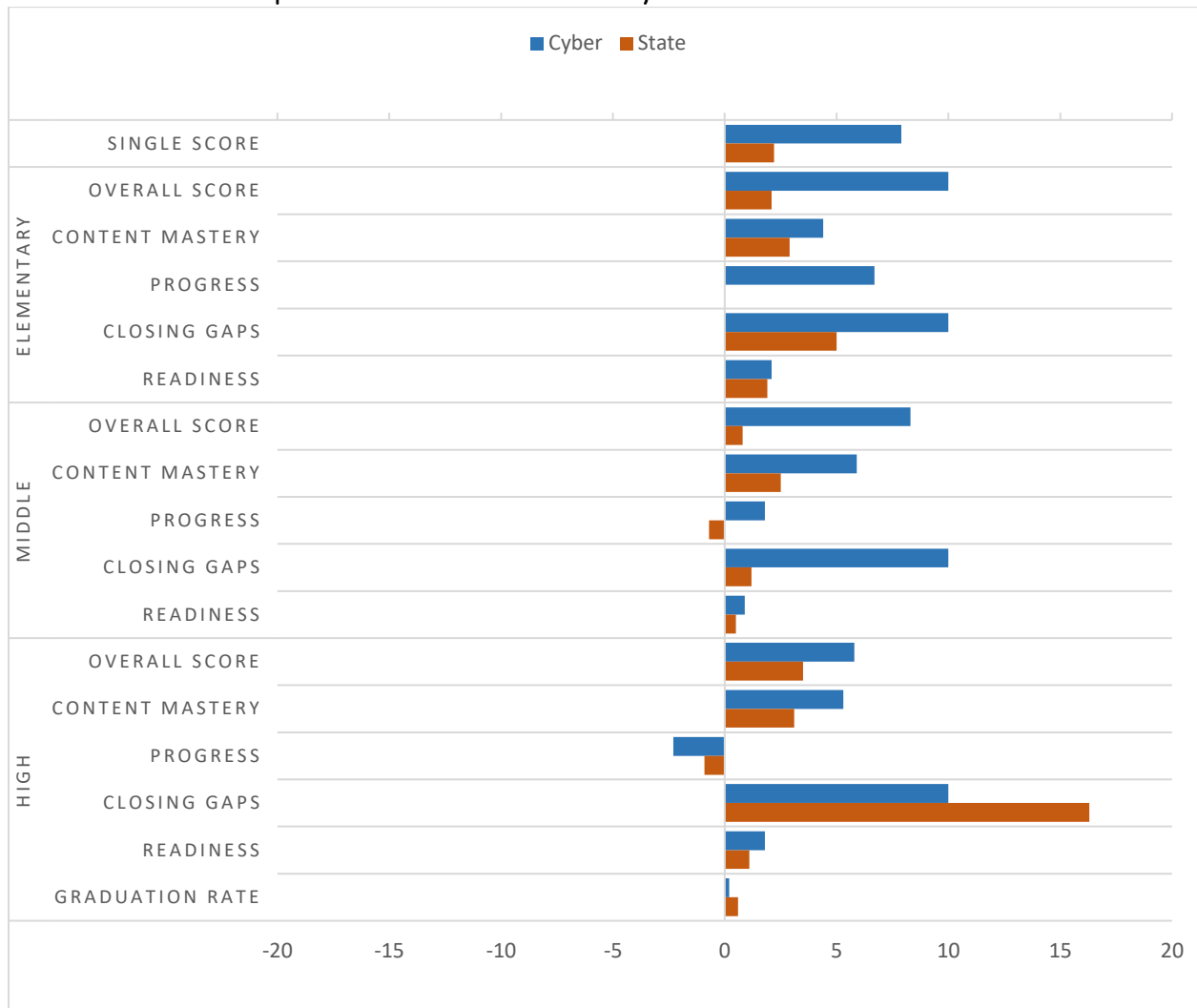
Cyber's high school CCRPI progress score for math had a significant decrease when compared to the state (school years 2017-18 to 2018-19)



Source: GaDOE Accountability Division

Exhibit 24 below shows the change in Cyber's CCRPI scores from the 2017-18 school year to 2018-19. In one of the seventeen scores shown, high school progress, Cyber's performance decreased. The remaining 16 scores increased in 2018-19. The state's changes were similar with all but two scores increasing.

Exhibit 24
Most CCRPI scores improved in the 2018-19 school year



Source: GaDOE Accountability Division

Comprehensive Performance Framework Academic Measures

The State Charter Schools Commission (SCSC) conducts annual performance reviews of all state charter schools. The Comprehensive Performance Framework (CPF) contains the performance standards each charter school is evaluated against in three sections – operational performance, financial performance, and academic performance. The SCSC uses each year’s CPF results to inform charter renewal.

In the 2018-19 school year, the SCSC revised the method used to report performance. In general, the measures reviewed in the performance framework remain similar; however, points are no longer assigned in the Academic Performance section. Schools receive a score of “meets standards,” “approaches standards,” or “does not meet standards.” In order to receive a “meets the standard” designation, the school must outperform the district it serves (i.e., the State for virtual schools) in one of the 6 academic metrics evaluated.

Cyber’s academic performance results for the 2018-2019 school year are shown in **Exhibit 25**. The first measure looks at the CCRPI single score. Cyber received a “does not meet standards” score, meaning the school earned a lower CCRPI single score than the attendance zone². The second through fourth measures look at different CCRPI sub-scores. To earn the “meets the standards” designation, the school must earn a higher “student progress” score on the CCRPI than the attendance zone. To earn the “approaches standard” score on any measure, the school must be performing the same as or above its comparison district in at least one of the grade bands served. Cyber earned an “approaches standard” score for measure 2, student achievement, based on Cyber’s “content mastery” CCRPI scores. Cyber earned a “does not meet standards” score for measure 3, student growth, based on Cyber’s CCRPI progress scores. Cyber earned an “approaches standard” score for measure 4, grade band score, based on Cyber’s CCRPI grade band scores.

The CPF also provides “Value-Added Model Impact Scores” and “Beating the Odds” scores as another way for schools to approach or meet the academic performance standards. Cyber earned a “does not meet standards” score for both measure 5, Value-Added Model (VAM) Impact and measure 6, Beating the Odds, based on GaDOE’s determination in all three years.

As part of the 2018-2019 CPF comparison score calculation methods, Cyber was categorized with the school designation of “approaches standards,” meaning that Cyber Academy performed as well as the district it serves. This was an improvement over the prior two years.

² The attendance zone is the comparison district. Because Cyber is a statewide school, the comparison district is the state.

Exhibit 25

SCSC determined that Cyber approaches CPF academic standards in the 2018-19 school year under the revised method

Cyber Academy: CPF Academic Performance Measures	Designation
Measure 1 - CCRPI Single Score: Is the school annually outperforming the attendance zone (as measured by CCRPI single score)?	Does Not meet
Measure 2 - Student Achievement: Is the school annually outperforming the attendance zone (as measured by grade-band CCRPI content mastery scores)?	Approaches
Measure 3 - Student Growth: Is the school annually outperforming the attendance zone (as measured by grade-band CCRPI progress scores)?	Does Not Meet
Measure 4 - Grade Band Score: Is the school annually outperforming the attendance zone (as measured by grade-band CCRPI grade band scores)?	Approaches
Measure 5 - Value-Added Model (VAM) Impact Scores: Is the school annually outperforming the attendance zone (as measured by value-added impact scores)?	Does Not Meet
Measure 6 - Beating the Odds: Is the School “beating the odds” as determined by the Georgia Department of Education?	Does Not Meet
School Designation	Approaches

Source: State Charter Schools Commission 2018-19 CPF results amended version

In 2018-19, the SCSC also used the prior method to evaluate Cyber’s academic performance which allows comparison to the 2017-18 school year. Cyber did not meet academic performance standards in either the 2017-18 or 2018-19 school years.

Financial Data




There are several financial data points that we reported in prior annual reports that describe the financial performance of the virtual charter school. These points include the Financial Star Efficiency Rating (FESR) revenues and expenditures, per pupil expenditures, and expenditure categories compared to the state average.

Financial Star Efficiency Rating

The Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) calculates a Financial Efficiency Star Rating (FESR) for each school in the state. The FESR compares a school district's spending per student with its overall academic performance. The FESR for 2017, 2018, and 2019³ compared each school's spending per student to its CCRPI score and assigned between 0.5 and 5 stars to each school. Schools in the highest spending category with low CCRPI scores received only 0.5 stars, while those in the lowest spending category with CCRPI scores at 90 or above could receive 5 stars. In each of the three years, Cyber received a FESR of 3.5 stars, as shown in **Exhibit 26**.

Exhibit 26

Cyber generally scores higher than most schools (school years 2016-17 to 2018-19)

School Year	Star Rating	% of Schools with a lower Star Rating	% of Schools with the same Star Rating
2016-17		38%	16%
2017-18		60%	15%
2018-19		59%	17%

Source: Governor's Office of Student Achievement

School Finances

During the 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020 fiscal years, state charter schools received Quality Basic Education (QBE) funding and supplemental state funding from the State Charter Schools Commission (SCSC). The supplemental funds were provided because SCSC-chartered schools are not eligible for local funds. Virtual charter schools received two-thirds of the supplemental funding provided to

³ No FESR was available for school year 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

brick-and-mortar schools, did not receive capital funding until fiscal year 2019, and generally received no transportation or nutrition funding.⁴

Cyber's annual financial reports show that revenue decreased from \$94.1 million in fiscal year 2019 to \$88.6 million in fiscal year 2020 (see **Exhibit 27**). State funds provide the majority of Cyber's funding, with federal and other funds providing the remainder. Revenue in 2017 was approximately \$2.7 million more than expenditures, while in 2018 and 2019 revenue equaled school expenditures. According to Cyber officials, the revenue and expenditure amounts match in fiscal years 2018 and 2019 because of adjustments made to expenditures after the end of the fiscal year. K12 provided a balanced budget credit, applied as a discount on the management fee/school administration costs charged to Cyber each year. Those reductions are made to the expenditure categories listed below.⁵ These adjustments are made to result in expenditures exactly equal to revenue. In fiscal year 2020, Cyber's revenue was approximately \$18 million more than expenditures, which Cyber officials indicated is a result of its separation with K12.

6

⁴ With passage of HB 787 during the 2018 legislative session, funding for all state charter schools increased in the 2018-19 school year and virtual schools began receiving capital funding. As part HB 787, virtual charter schools were, for the first time, provided with capital outlay funding equal to 25% of the capital funding provided to Commission brick and mortar charter schools in order to pay for the computer hardware and software their students require in order to attend classes.

⁵ The contract states that K12 will provide the school balanced budget credits to ensure that it does not end the fiscal year in a negative net asset position. Cyber received balanced budget credits of \$13.7 million in fiscal year 2017, \$9.9 million in fiscal year 2018, and \$6.9 million in fiscal year 2019.

⁶ During the 2019-20 school year, the school board was under contract with K12 Virtual Schools, LLC (K12) for a broad range of educational products and services, as well as management and administrative services; however, K12 did not provide services to Cyber in the 2019-20 school year. Cyber and K12 were in arbitration to end the contract during the 2019-20 school year and a final settlement was reached in July 2020. Cyber manages all services previously provided by K12 in-house. The only exception is a contract for computer support which includes the provision of laptops and computer support services/maintenance for those laptops.

Exhibit 27

Cyber's revenue primarily state funds, Fiscal Years 2017-2020

Revenue	2017	2018	2019	2020 ¹	Percent Change 2017-20
State	\$78,316,134	\$82,728,184	\$86,437,251	\$82,231,707	5%
Federal	\$6,648,407	\$7,166,871	\$7,573,721	\$6,379,906	-4%
Other income	\$17,332	\$18,464	\$53,013	\$8,075	-53%
Local	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	N/A
Total Revenue	\$84,981,873	\$89,913,519	\$ 94,063,985	\$88,619,688	4%
Expenditures					
Instruction	\$62,496,763	\$71,582,812	\$70,859,097	\$50,593,209	-19%
School Administration	\$14,151,631	\$11,412,682	\$15,901,532	\$7,245,754	-49%
Pupil Services	\$4,427,746	\$5,557,166	\$5,250,903	\$8,174,648	85%
Improvement of Instructional Services	\$271,507	\$443,224	\$595,851	\$1,260,299	364%
General Administration	N/A	\$370,644	\$501,904	\$67,126	N/A
Operation of School	\$945,215	\$337,196	\$348,065	\$367,507	-61%
Support Services – Business	N/A	\$209,795	\$606,633	\$2,062,589	N/A
Federal Grant Administration	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$309,391	N/A
Instructional Staff Training	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$471,254	N/A
Total Expenditures	\$82,292,862	\$89,913,519	\$94,063,985	\$70,551,777	-14%
Revenues Less Expenditures	\$2,689,011	\$ -	\$ -	\$18,067,911	572%

¹ Beginning in FY2020, Cyber began using the state chart of accounts. In prior years, Cyber used its EMO chart of accounts. This change contributes to some of the changes in categories from FY2019 to FY2020.

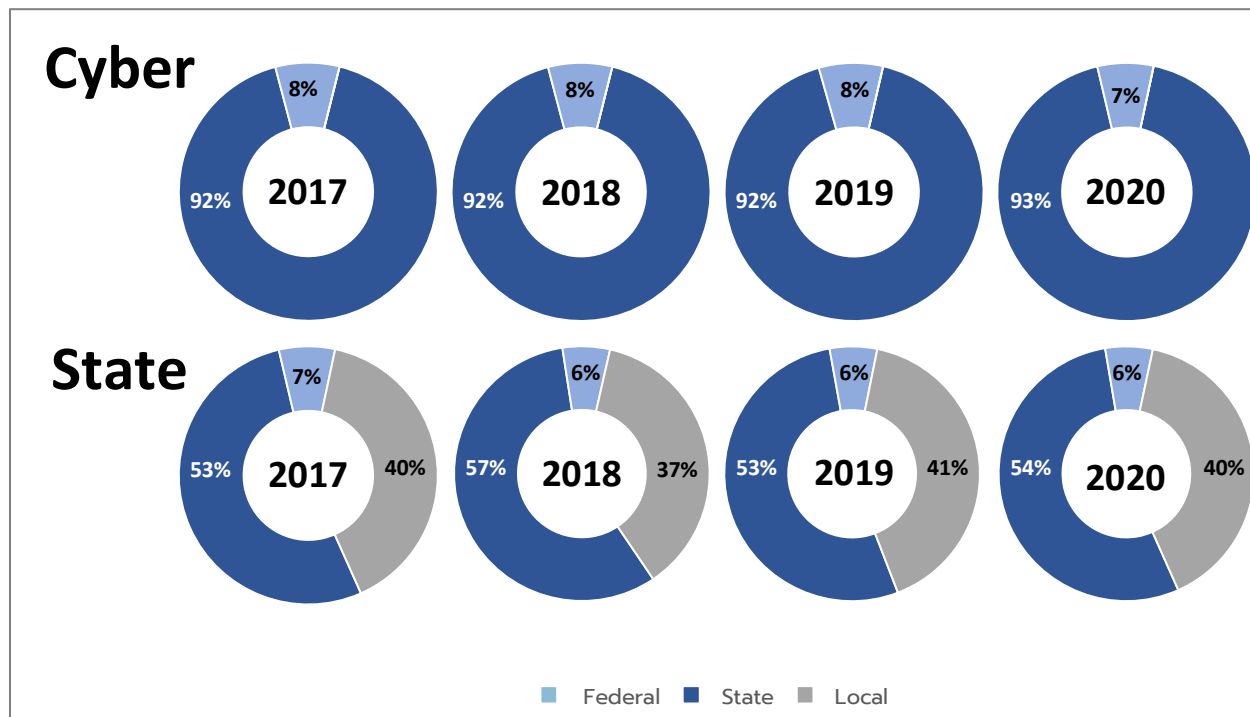
Source: Georgia Cyber Academy, Inc. audited financial statements

We used GaDOE's fiscal year 2017 - 2020 revenue and expenditure reports to compare Cyber's revenue and spending patterns to other public schools.⁷ As shown in **Exhibit 28**, Cyber relies on state funding more than typical public schools. This is true of all state charter schools that do not qualify for local funding. State charter schools receive QBE funding and a state charter commission supplement to offset a portion of the local funding that they do not receive.

⁷ The amounts in GaDOE's financial reports are slightly different than those in the school's financial statements due to the exclusion of certain revenue sources (e.g., in-kind contributions) and expenditure categories. However, GaDOE's reports allow a comparison to other Georgia public schools.

Exhibit 28

State funds are nearly twice the revenue source for Cyber than the statewide average, Fiscal Years 2017-2020



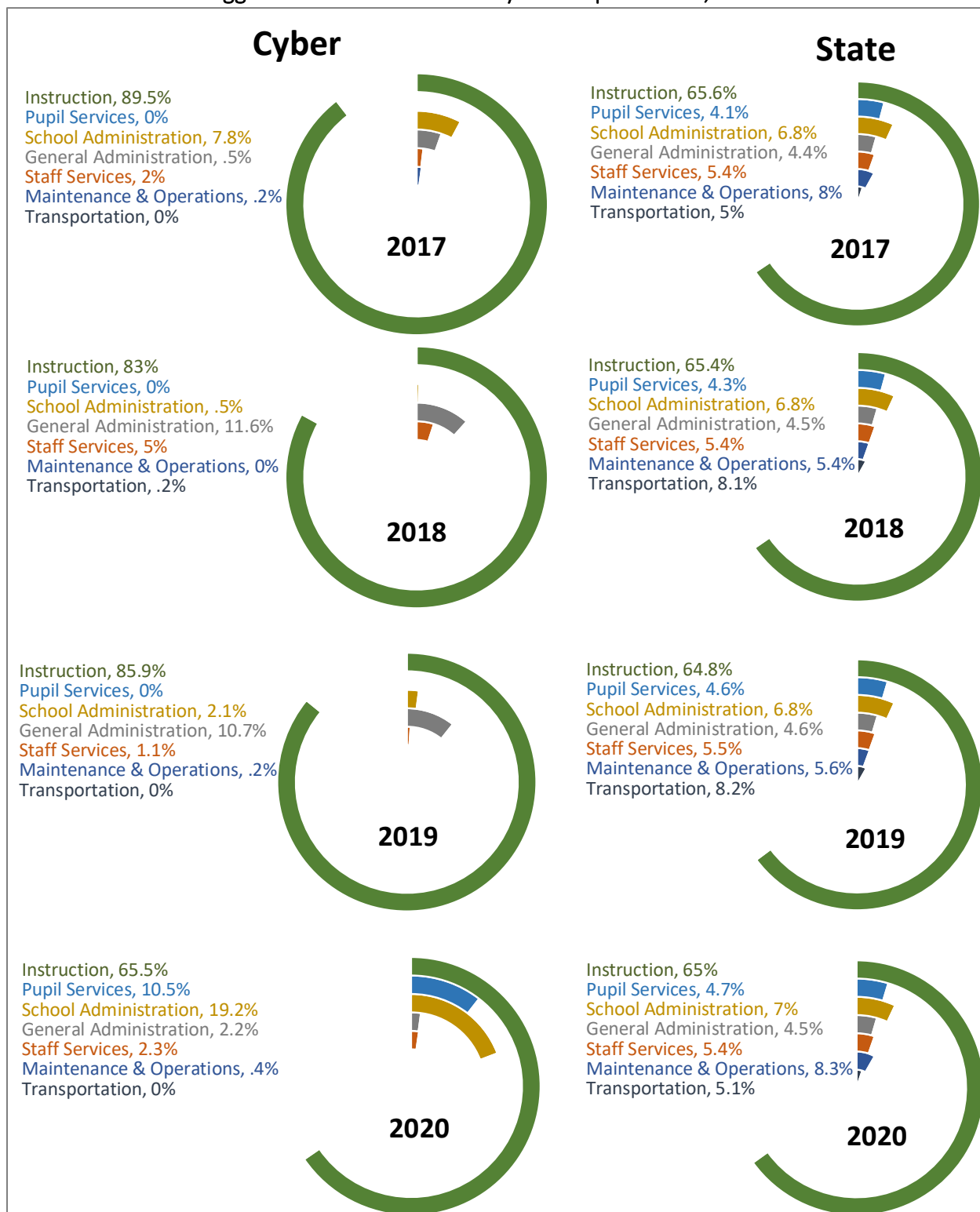
Source: Statewide & Cyber GaDOE financial report

Compared to statewide averages for expenditures, in fiscal years 2017-2019, Cyber spent more on instruction, and less on school administration, general administration, pupil services, and staff services (see **Exhibit 29**). School administration includes funding for leadership positions such as principals and assistant principals, while general administration covers positions such as Title I director and homeless liaison, as well as maintenance and technology related services not covered under school administration. Pupil services includes the purchase of materials such as e-books and periodicals, communication and coordination with parents, and additional educational offerings, such as summer school. As expected, Cyber spends less on maintenance and operations (typically associated with buildings) and transportation than the statewide averages.

As shown in **Exhibit 29**, Cyber's spending shifted in fiscal year 2020 (as noted on page **X**, Cyber ended its contract with its education management organization in FY2020). In fiscal year 2020, Cyber reported spending approximately the same proportion of funds on instruction compared to the state average and a higher proportion on school administration and pupil services than the state average. However, it reported spending little on general administration, staff services, and no expenditures on transportation.

Exhibit 29

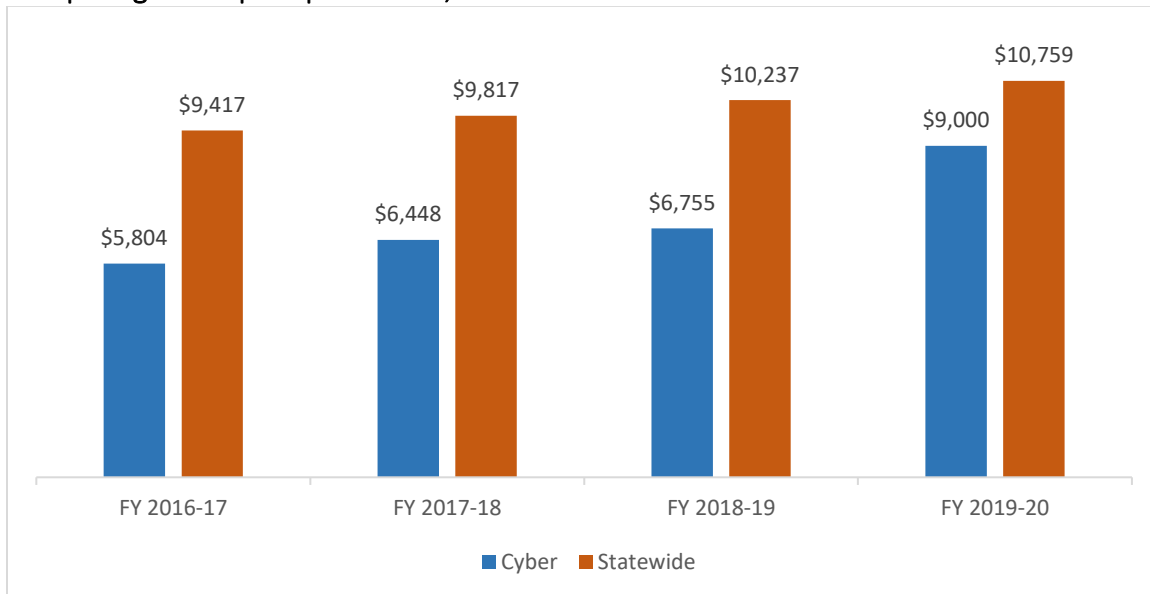
Instruction saw the biggest decrease in share of Cyber's expenditures, Fiscal Years 2017-2020



Source: Statewide GaDOE financial report and DE46 financials

Cyber's expenditures per FTE were lower than the statewide average for fiscal year 2017 through fiscal year 2020, as shown in **Exhibit 30**. Cyber spent the most per FTE in FY2020 (\$9,000) which was 83.7% of the statewide average of \$10,759.

Exhibit 30
Comparing Per Pupil Expenditures, Fiscal Years 2017-2020



Source: Statewide GaDOE financial report

Governance

Charter schools operate under the leadership of a board that serves as the governing authority of the school. The primary responsibilities of the governing board relate to strategic planning and policymaking, budgeting and fiscal stability, hiring and providing oversight for the school leader, and ensuring accountability. The governing board is also responsible for ensuring compliance with laws and regulations, maintaining records of meetings, committees and policies, and monitoring school achievement. Board members with diverse backgrounds and skills in areas such as education, finance, human resources, and legal affairs can contribute to a board successfully performing its duties.

State law and State Charter School Commission guidelines establish qualifications for governing board membership and member training requirements. O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2084 requires board members to be a U.S. citizen and Georgia resident, and it prohibits members from being an employee of the school. The law also prohibits board members from being an officer or board member of any organization that sells goods or services to the school. State Charter School Commission guidelines require board members to receive 12 hours of training annually. The required training must consist of charter school finance and budgeting, best practices for charter school governance, requirements relating to public records and meetings, and other applicable laws, rules, and regulations.

Cyber's by-laws authorize between five and thirteen board members. Cyber had a seven-member governing board in the 2017-18 school year and a five-member governing board in the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years.

The board elects its members and officers at its annual meeting. Members are elected to serve three-year terms and may serve up to four successive terms. They are not paid but may be compensated for expenses incurred in connection with their duties. A majority of board members are required to transact business at meetings. The board met 11 times in 2017-18, 13 times in 2018-19, and 14 times during the 2019-20 school year.

The Operational Performance section of SCSC's Comprehensive Performance Framework (CPF) covers several aspects of charter school operations, including governance. The CPF states that a governing board must provide adequate oversight of school management and operations to ensure that the school is fulfilling its duties to students, employees, parents, and the general public. Given that CPF indicators and measures are incorporated into all charter contracts, a school's CPF standing is a reflection of whether the school has met the requirements and goals set forth in its charter contract, as well as applicable law, and SCSC rules and policies.

The framework consists of four standards for charter school governance as part of its expectations for operational performance. The State Charter Schools Commission (SCSC) concluded that Cyber met all standards pertaining to governance in the 2017-18, 2018-19, and 2019-20 school years (see **Exhibit 31**).

Exhibit 31

Cyber Met All Standards in each year reviewed (school years 2016-17 to 2019-20)

CPF Governance Performance Indicators	2016-17	2017-18	2019-20
General Governance – <i>The school complies with applicable laws rules, regulations, charter contract provisions and school policies relating to board governance.</i>	Met	Met	Met
Open Governance – <i>The school complies with the Georgia Open Meetings Act and open records requirements.</i>	Met	Met	Met
Governance Training – <i>The school ensures that all governing board members participate in required trainings.</i>	Met	Met	Met
Transparent Governance and Communication with Stakeholders – <i>The school complies with all applicable laws, rules, regulations, provisions of its charter contract or its policies relating to operating transparently and effectively communicating with stakeholders.</i>	Met	Met	Met
Source: State Charter Schools Commission report			

School-Specific Academic Goals

Virtual charter schools operate under the terms of a charter which is basically a performance- based contract that spells out the services that the charter school will provide and performance that will be achieved. According to SCSC staff, in the early years of charter schools, the schools set whatever goals they desired, but the SCSC found that monitoring and evaluating charter school performance with a lot of school specific goals proved to be difficult, and it was to determine if students were receiving a quality education. In the 2015 – 2016 school year, the SCSC implemented the comprehensive performance framework (CPF) to evaluate state charter schools. The CPF specifically sets expectations for performance and ensures that schools meet those expectations. The mission specific goals that are included in the CPF (and included in the school's charter) are to acknowledge the school's particular model and their internal goals; however, the goals are not weighted as much as other parts of the CPF.

Cyber has established an academic goal in its charter to develop an individualized learning plan (ILP) for at least 95% of enrolled students each year of the charter term. The ILP will specify individualized service and plans for student success. The State Charter Schools Commission found that Cyber met this goal in the 2017-18, 2018-19, and 2019-20 school years.