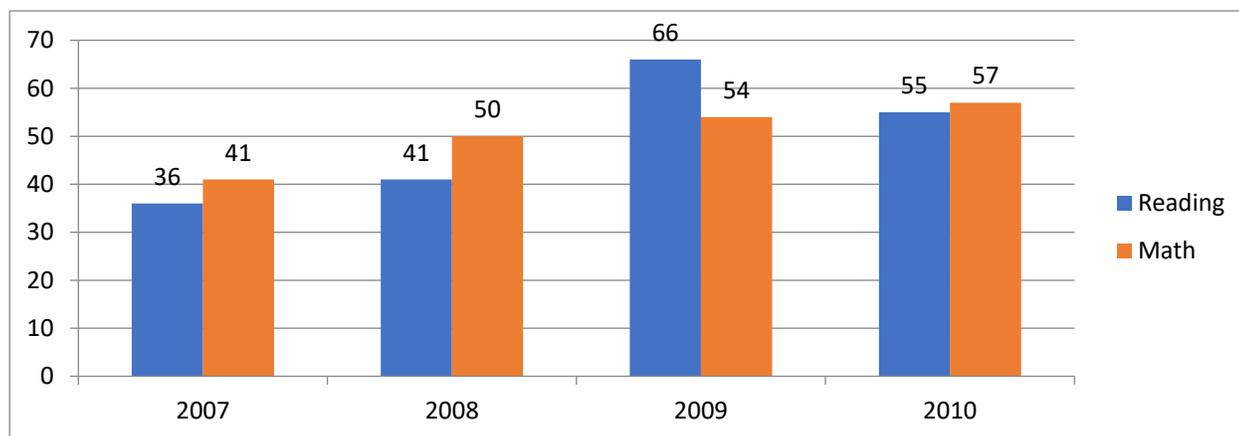


The Fragility of Justice and Freedom: Corrective Strategies

Dr. Melvin Steals, a former distinguished principal in Aliquippa PA, shared the most recent achievement results of 108 Public School Districts and Charters in Southwestern Pennsylvania. From this report we note the following:

1. **Schools in Aliquippa** are dead last, that is, #108 on the list.
2. **Urban Pathways Charter School of Pittsburgh** is listed #106, two steps away from dead last.
3. Figure 3 below is our record of achievement at Urban Pathways Charter School where we implemented our Values for Life curriculum. In the third year of our reform package, you will notice that scores were such that the racial achievement gap in reading and math were closed in this school with more than 80 percent of its enrollment being Black. Additionally, the public record shows that (a) the racial achievement gaps in reading and math were closed in 2009; (b) the graduation rate in 2009 was the highest in the City of Pittsburgh; and (c) the 2009 rates of acceptance of graduates to undergraduate colleges or trade schools were the highest in the City of Pittsburgh. **However, following cancellation of our contract under their new CEO and its new Board in 2010, there were sharp drops in achievement levels from that point to the most recent data point shared by Dr. Steals.**
4. **KEY LESSON:** The diminution or elimination of racial achievement gaps in reading and math is fragile as we've discovered locally as well as nationally. Not unlike the lyrics in Paul Simon's song—*You know the nearer your destination, the more you're slip sliding away*—equity attainment at one point in time is no guarantee of equity attainment at subsequent points in time. In this regard, the critical role of municipal leadership is to arrange ongoingly the type of training and certification that will hasten and sustain accelerated closures and reversals on all policies and practices prioritized in its portfolio. **As such, continual vigilance coupled with continuous training are required to enable and sustain Justice (Outcome Equity) and Freedom (Fair Access) over changing times and circumstances. Justice and Freedom attained must not be taken for granted.**

Figure 3. Values for Life and Accelerated Achievements in High School Reading and Math



Over a period of 4 years, we were invited to implement our Values for Life curriculum at a charter high school located in downtown Pittsburgh. We documented progressive gains in math and reading achievement proficiencies over the first three years in the predominately Black secondary school setting. In the fourth year when the CEO of the school was fired—its board composition and leadership changed hands and our contract was cancelled—achievement scores plummeted sharply without recovery even in the latest evaluations.