

**NOBLES COUNTY FAMILY CONNECTIONS COLLABORATIVE**

**OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITY:  
TRENDS, OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES, BEST PRACTICES**

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## HIGHLIGHTS

- **Babies are born healthy**
  - Preterm births are higher than for Minnesota, although use of prenatal care and low birth weight rates are the same.
- **Children grow up healthy and meet appropriate developmental milestones**
  - Many children are not fully immunized on time.
  - Most children get regular physical exercise.
- **Children are ready for school**
  - Many children enter kindergarten with some preschool experience, but most have not participated in ECFE.
- **Children are successful in school**
  - While overall attendance and graduation rates are good, Hispanic and Asian children attend school less regularly and are less likely to graduate.
  - The majority of Hispanic and Asian children have poor reading skills by mid-elementary school.
- **Children and youth have skills to make positive health and life decisions**
  - Teenage pregnancy and birth rates are on the increase in Nobles County, and the birth rate is higher than in Minnesota as a whole.
  - Many teenagers use alcohol and as many as 20 percent of 12<sup>th</sup> graders engage in frequent binge drinking.
- **Children and families are safe and secure in their homes, schools, and communities**
  - Child abuse and neglect are less frequent in Nobles County than across the state.
  - Child involvement in serious crimes is at the same level as for Minnesota as a whole.

- **Families are supported by the community and have access to needed resources**
  - Parents have found their church, school staff , parent liaisons and family advocates, and social workers from SMOC and Family Services helpful.
  - Parents would like more information and support in helping their children in school and in learning more about parenting.
  - Professionals see the need to help families meet their basic needs, as well as manage their role as parents. They view immigrant families and teen parents as especially vulnerable.
  
- **The community supports the development of assets for children and youth**
  - Parents believe that their children would benefit from more academic assistance and after school activities, youth groups, and summer programs.
  - Youth would like more activities that provide a safe environment for having fun with friends.
  
- **Community resources are used efficiently and effectively**
  - Professionals believe that services for children and families in Nobles County would be strengthened by –
    - Improving cross-agency communication
    - Making the location and time of services more convenient for families
    - Streamlining the paperwork involved with getting services
    - Having greater capacity to work with non-English speaking families
    - Engaging parents more consistently

## SUMMARY

### **Who are the children and families of Nobles County?**

- About 11 percent of Nobles County residents identify as Hispanic and nearly 4 percent as Asian.
- About 9 percent were born outside the United States and over 7 percent of adults do not speak English well or at all.
- One-quarter of adults do not have their high school diploma or GED.
- Currently only about 4 percent of children in Nobles County live in families with incomes below the federal poverty level. More live in families who are income-eligible for food stamps and over 40 percent of school students participate in the school lunch program for children from low-income families.

### **What outcomes for children, families and the community is Nobles County Family Connections Collaborative seeking to influence?**

- Babies are born healthy
- Children grow up healthy and meet appropriate developmental milestones
- Children are ready for school
- Children are successful in school
- Children and youth have skills to make positive health and life decisions
- Children and families are safe and secure in their homes, schools, and communities
- Families are supported by the community and have access to needed resources
- The community supports the development of assets for children and youth
- Community resources are used efficiently and effectively

### **In which outcomes areas are children and families in Nobles County doing well, and in which areas is improvement needed?**

- Nobles County has higher than average preterm births, compared to Minnesota as a whole.
- Nobles County women generally receive adequate prenatal care and most babies are born at normal birth weight.
  
- One-quarter of the county's young children are not fully immunized by age two.
- Every year a small but consistent number of children are found to have elevated blood lead levels.
- Nobles County children are about as frequently engaged in physical activities or exercise as are children in Minnesota as a whole.

- Depending on the community, many children in Nobles County enter kindergarten with some kind of preschool experience.
- However, generally few have participated with their parents in the Early Childhood Family Education program.
- Overall, students in Nobles County have higher attendance rates than across the state.
- Overall, students in Nobles County are no more likely to drop out of school than students across Minnesota and they are just as likely to graduate on time.
- White children in Nobles County do better than their counterparts across the state on standardized reading tests.
- However, about two-thirds of children of color – especially Hispanic children, but children of Asian descent as well – have reading scores below grade level.
- Youth in Nobles County are no more likely to engage in sexual activity or to become pregnant than are teenagers in Minnesota as a whole.
- Teen pregnancy and birth rates have increased, and the birth rate is much higher than in the state as a whole.
- Youth in Nobles County are less likely to report using tobacco products than Minnesota youth in general.
- Nobles County youth use of alcohol alone is much higher than the state as a whole, and less likely to use both alcohol and other drugs.
- When both types of alcohol use are combined, Nobles county teenagers are just as likely to use alcohol as their counterparts across the state, and about two-thirds of 12<sup>th</sup> graders do so. .
- Substantiated reports of child abuse and neglect and out-of-home placements occur less frequently in Nobles County than in the state as a whole.
- The rate of youth arrests for serious crimes, while variable from year to year, is about at the Minnesota average.
- Nobles County has more DWI violations than the state average.

**What do professionals working with children and families in Nobles County feel are their most important needs?**

- Basic needs and services for the adults and family, like transportation, housing, stable jobs, child care
- Support for immigrant families to help them obtain services and understand expectations, particularly related to schools
- Services for particularly vulnerable families, such as teen parents
- Parenting information and skills

**What services, programs and activities that parents in Nobles County feel have benefited their children and themselves?**

- There are some differences across the communities in the County, reflecting differences in the parents surveyed and resources in the community.

- Often mentioned as having benefited their children are:
  - Sports
  - Church groups
  - Youth groups (such as Scouts and 4-H)
  - After school and summer programs
  - Programs and activities at the library and the Y
  - Academic supports
  
- Often mentioned as having benefited themselves as parents are:
  - School staff and related staff such as family advocates and parent liaisons
  - Services provided by agencies such as SMOC and Family Services
  - Churches

**What services, programs or activities do parents think would be beneficial for themselves and their children?**

- Often mentioned as having benefits for their children are:
  - Assistance with academics
  - After school programming
  - Youth groups including those organized by churches
  - Summer programs
  
- Mentioned as having benefits for themselves as parents are:
  - More support from school staff in understanding how their children are doing and in assisting their children with school – through programs, meetings with teachers, newsletter
  - Parenting programs

**What do professionals in Nobles County feel are some major challenges to families getting the support they need?**

- Language and cultural issues, including immigration concerns
- Transportation
- Concerns about employment if take time for parenting responsibilities

**What do professionals in Nobles County feel are some ways that services might be improved?**

- Regardless of agency, the professionals saw themselves as helping families connect with resources and become better parents.
- There was general agreement that services in Nobles County would be strengthened by
  - Improving communication across agencies
  - Making the location and hours of service more convenient for families
  - Streamlining paperwork involved with getting services
  - Hiring more bilingual staff and having more resources available in languages spoken by families
  - Engaging parents more effectively and consistently

## Babies are born healthy.

*Babies' health at birth is influenced by the mother's health, behaviors and use of medical care. In turn, babies' health – particularly whether they are born at low birth weight or prematurely – influences how they grow and develop in their earliest years. Low birth weight and preterm babies may continue to fall behind other children once they reach school.*

*While most Nobles County babies appear to get off to a good start in life, attention should be paid to ensuring that those in the most vulnerable families – low-income families, in which parents do not have a solid educational background or are unfamiliar with the English language and may be reluctant to seek out prenatal care – do as well.*

*Early and regular prenatal care provides opportunities for families – both mothers and fathers – to gain access to a wider array of support services and to be educated on the importance of good nutrition and avoidance of exposure to toxins like tobacco during pregnancy.*

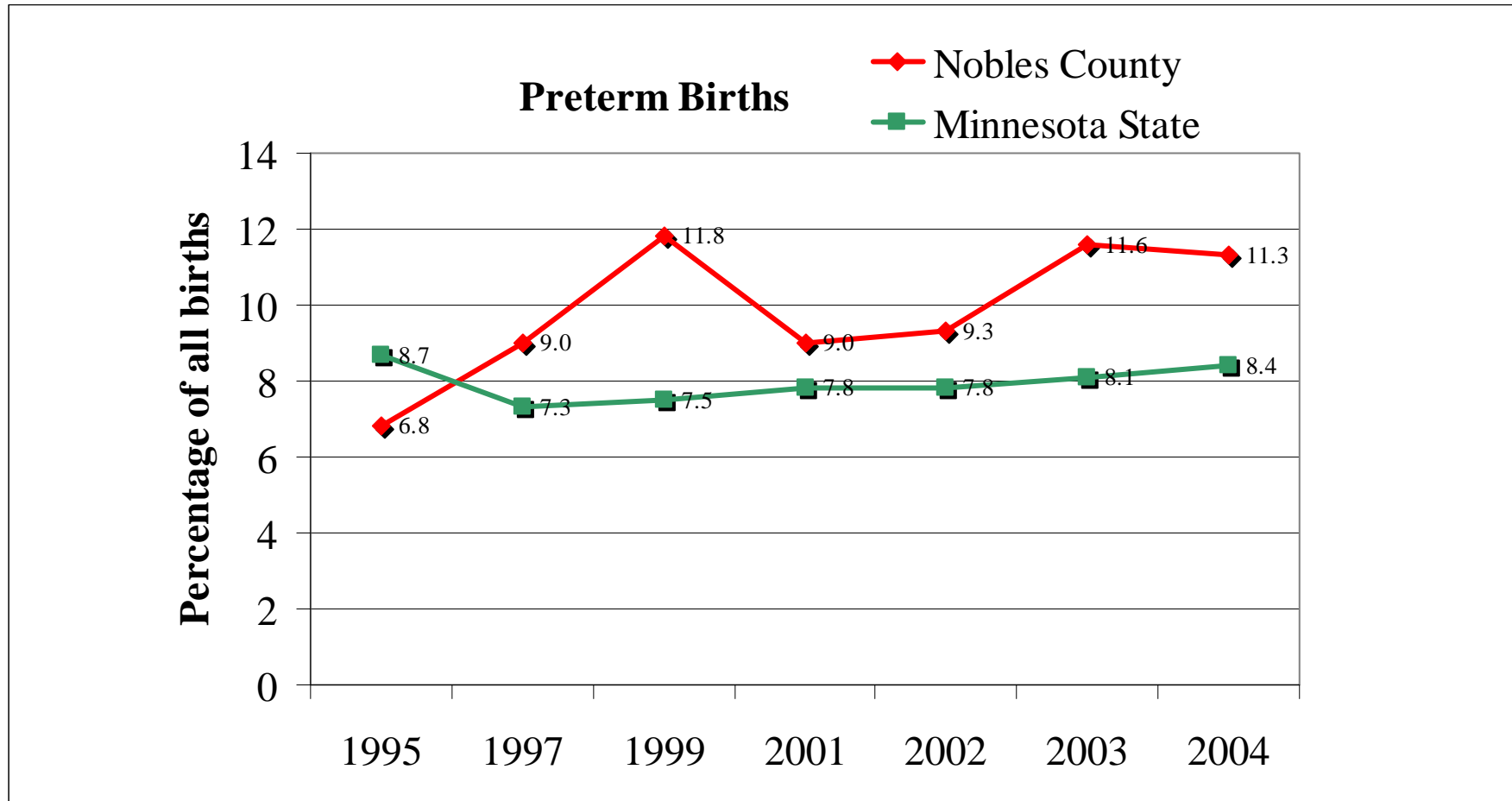
### Indicators:

- Preterm births as percentage of all births
  - Definition: A live birth in which the baby is less than 37 weeks gestation at time of birth.
  - Source: Minnesota Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics
- Babies born at low birth weight as percentage of all births
  - Definition: A live birth in which the baby weighs less than 2500 grams at birth.
  - Source: Minnesota Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics
- Percent of births in which the mother received adequate pre-natal care
  - Definition: Adequate or Better: Prenatal care started in the 1st trimester *and* the woman had an adequate number of visits.
  - Source: Minnesota Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics

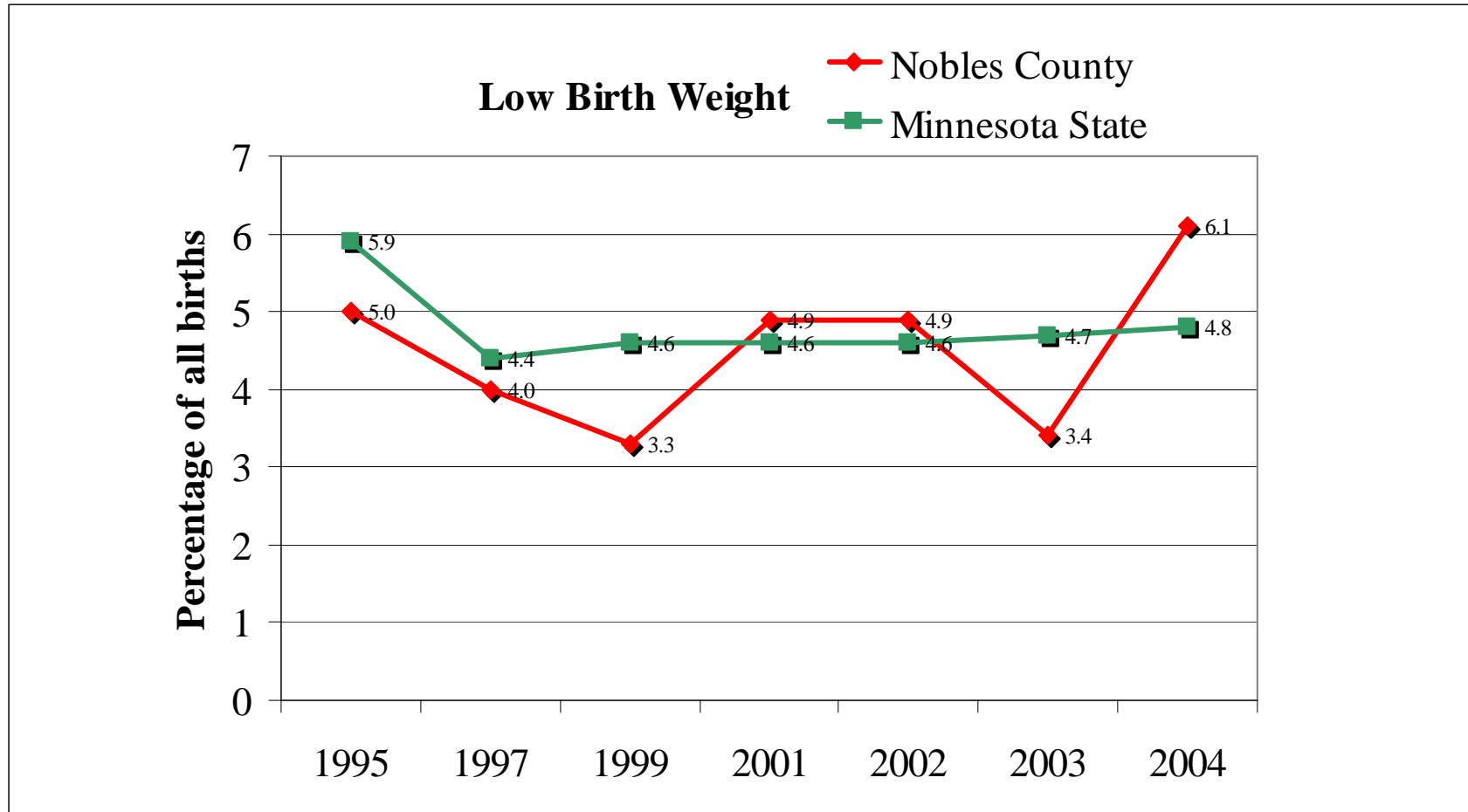
### Observations:

- Most pregnant women in Nobles County receive adequate prenatal care, more than in the state as a whole.
- Babies born in Nobles County are generally born at normal birth weight. Low birth weight occurs at about the same frequency as in the state as a whole.
- More babies are born preterm than at low birth weight in Nobles County, and the rate of preterm births is slightly above the state average.

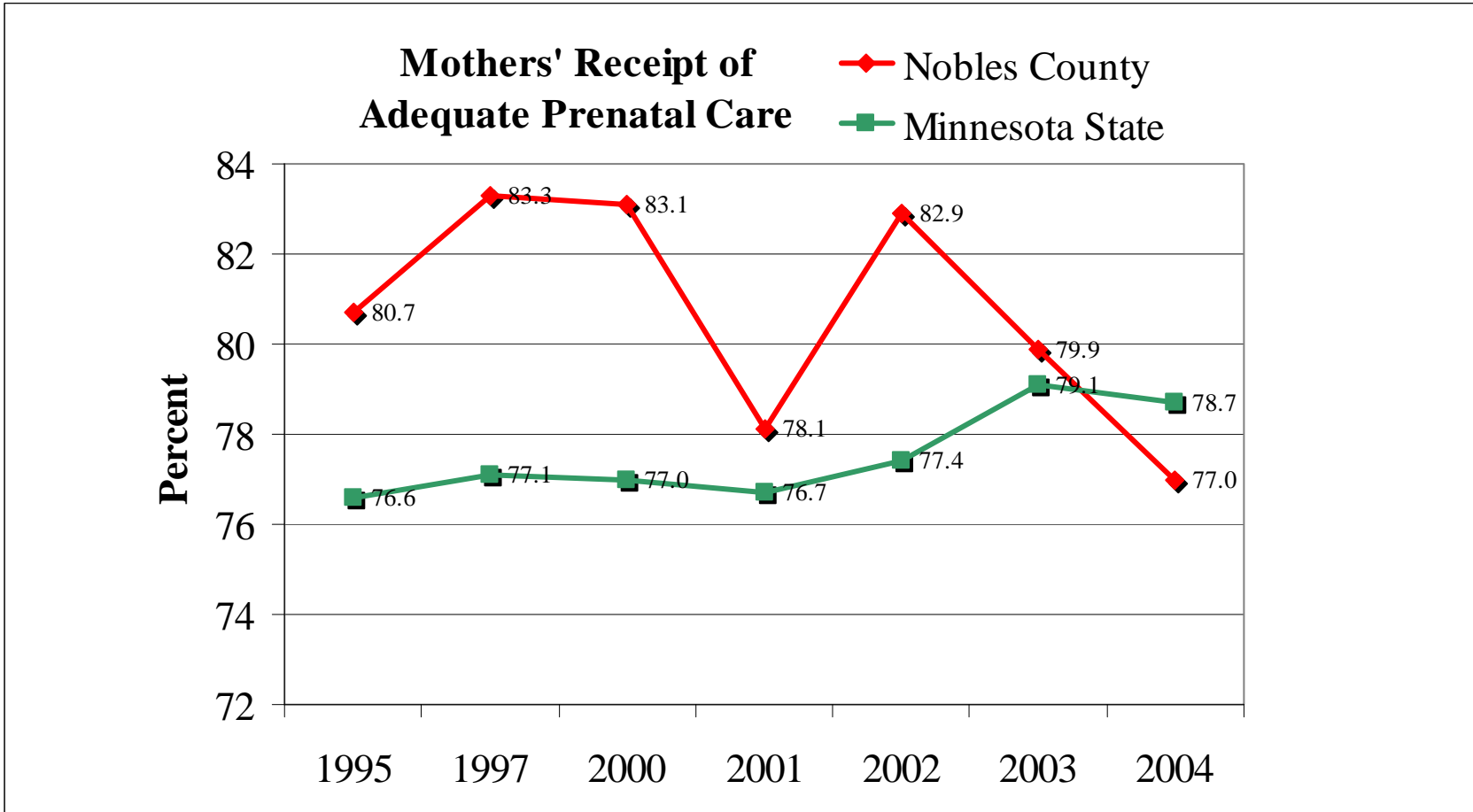




<sup>1</sup>A preterm birth is defined as a live birth of a baby who is less than 37 weeks gestation at time of birth. (Source: Minnesota Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics <http://www.health.state.mn.us/stats.html>).



<sup>2</sup>Low birth weight is defined as a weight of less than 2500 grams at birth. (Source: Minnesota Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics <http://www.health.state.mn.us/stats.html>).



<sup>3</sup> Percent of mothers receiving adequate prenatal care -- prenatal care started in the 1st trimester *and* the woman had an adequate number of visits. (Source: Minnesota Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics <http://www.health.state.mn.us/stats.html>).

## What Do Professionals in the County Say?

*“Families have easy access to prenatal care...” (Community Survey Worthington ECI Fall 2004)*

## Best Practices in Ensuring Positive Birth Outcomes

Characteristics of state programs to improve birth outcomes:

- Information sharing with providers and educating the public about importance of prenatal care and health issues related to pregnancy and birth outcomes
- Collaborations and partnerships to facilitate identification and referral of high-risk pregnancies
- Providing a continuum of care before and after pregnancy
- Use of home visits and outreach by community members

From “Strides among State Health Agencies to Improve Birth Outcomes: A Compendium of Programs,” Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, July 2005 ([www.astho.org](http://www.astho.org)).

Community strategies to improve birth outcomes should include:

- Outreach via peer education, family (sisters, parents, grandparents) involvement, media and the use of incentives
- Parenting education, smoking cessation, domestic violence prevention programs
- Psychosocial support for mothers and families

From “Where It All Begins: The Impact of Preconceptional and Prenatal Care on Early Childhood Development,” UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities, January 2001 ([www.healthychild.ucla.edu](http://www.healthychild.ucla.edu)).

### See:

“Toward Improving Birth Outcomes: A Best Clinical and Administrative Practices Toolkit for Medicaid Health Plans,” Center for Health Care Strategies, Inc., 2001 ([www.chcs.org](http://www.chcs.org)).

“Strides among State Health Agencies to Improve Birth Outcomes: A Compendium of Programs,” Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, July 2005 ([www.astho.org](http://www.astho.org)).

“The Prevention Of Preterm Birth: Research Based Practice, Nursing Interventions, And Practice Scenarios,” Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses, 2000 ([www.awhonn.org](http://www.awhonn.org)).

“Research to Practice: Services and Outcomes for Early Head Start Families Enrolled During Pregnancy: Is There a Magic Window?” Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2005 ([www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/ehs/ehs\\_resrch/reports/pregnancy/pregnancy.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/ehs/ehs_resrch/reports/pregnancy/pregnancy.pdf)).

## Children grow up healthy and meet appropriate developmental milestones.

*The early years of life are critical in laying the foundation for continued learning and development. In these years children need to be protected from disease and other factors that can have long term negative effects, such as immunization-preventable diseases and exposure to lead or other environmental toxins. About one in four Nobles County children are not fully immunized by age 2 and a small but consistent number are identified each year with blood lead levels that may cause developmental delays.*

*Childhood obesity is becoming more of a concern as a risk factor for long-term health problems. A large percent of Nobles County children are physically active on a regular basis, but about four in twenty-five adolescents does not exercise at all.*

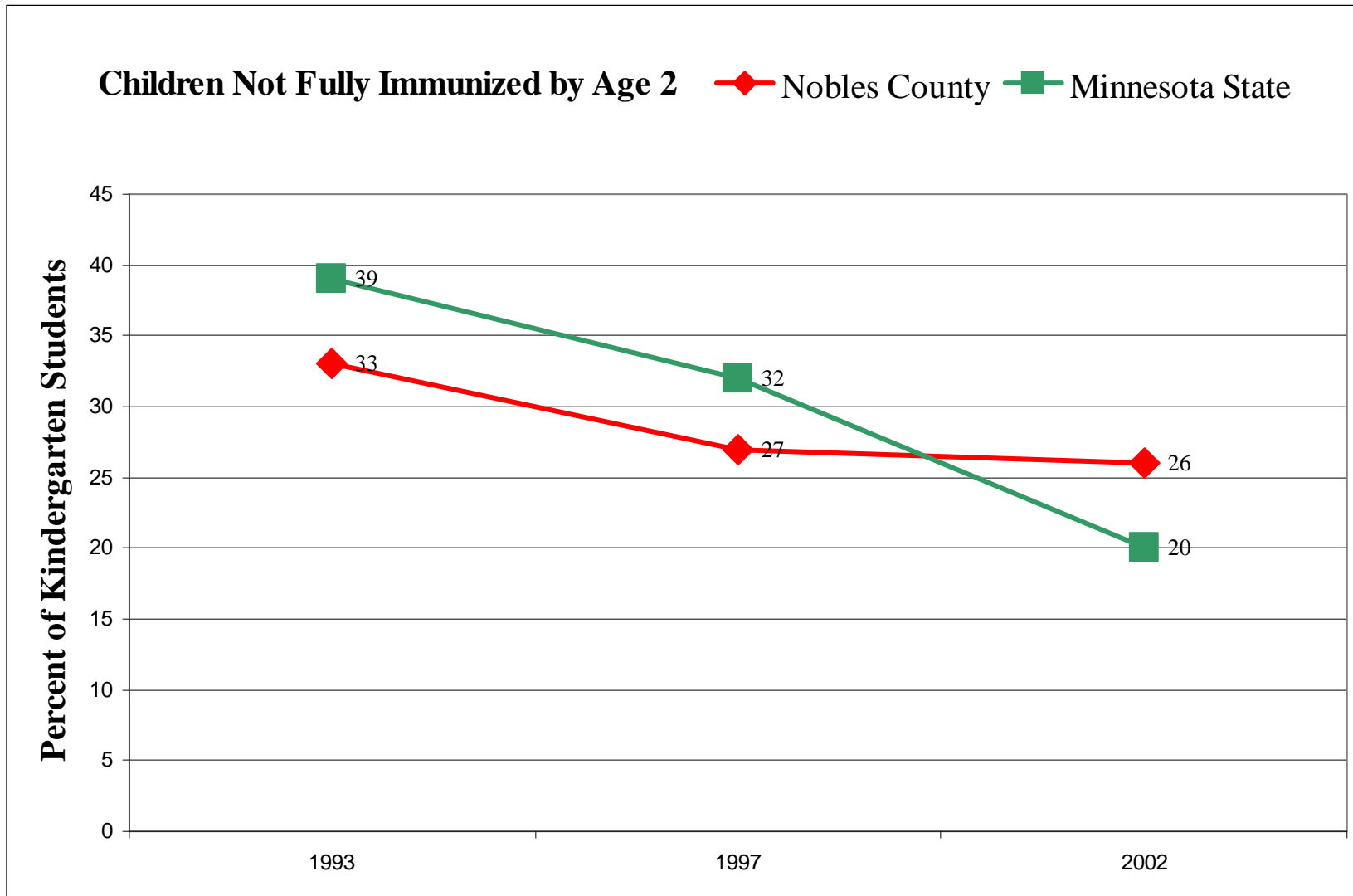
### Indicators:

- Percent of children not immunized on time
  - Definition: The percent of kindergartners who did not receive all of the appropriate immunizations by age two, based on survey of immunization records.
  - Source: Minnesota Kids Count
- Percent of children tested who have elevated blood lead levels
  - Definition: The percent of children tested who were found with blood lead levels >10 mg/dL.
  - Source: Minnesota Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics
- Percent of children exercising or engaging in physical activities
  - Definition: The percent of 9th graders who reported on Minnesota Student Survey exercising or playing sports that made them sweat or breathe hard for at least 20 minutes on 3 or more of the past 7 days.
  - Source: Minnesota Department of Education

### Observations:

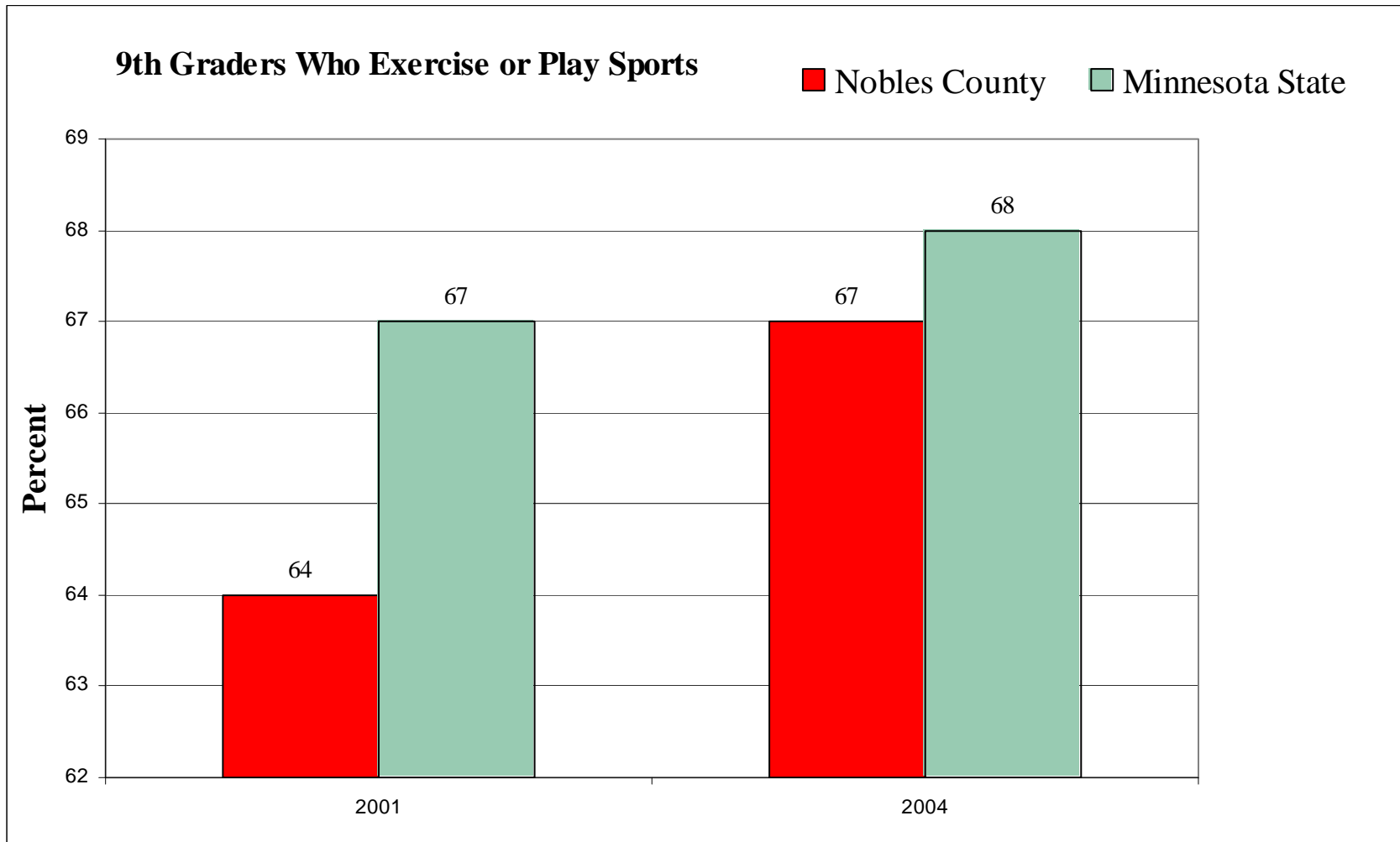
- In both Nobles County and in Minnesota as a whole, the percent of children who were not fully immunized by age two has fallen.
- However, one-quarter of Nobles County's young children were not fully immunized on time in 2002, compared to only one-fifth in the state as a whole.
- While in Minnesota as a whole the percent of children tested with high blood lead levels has consistently declined since 2001, during that same time the Nobles County rate has remained about 3 percent.

- Young people in Nobles County have increased their involvement in exercise and physical activity over the past several years. About two-thirds of 9<sup>th</sup> grade students are physically active most days of the week.

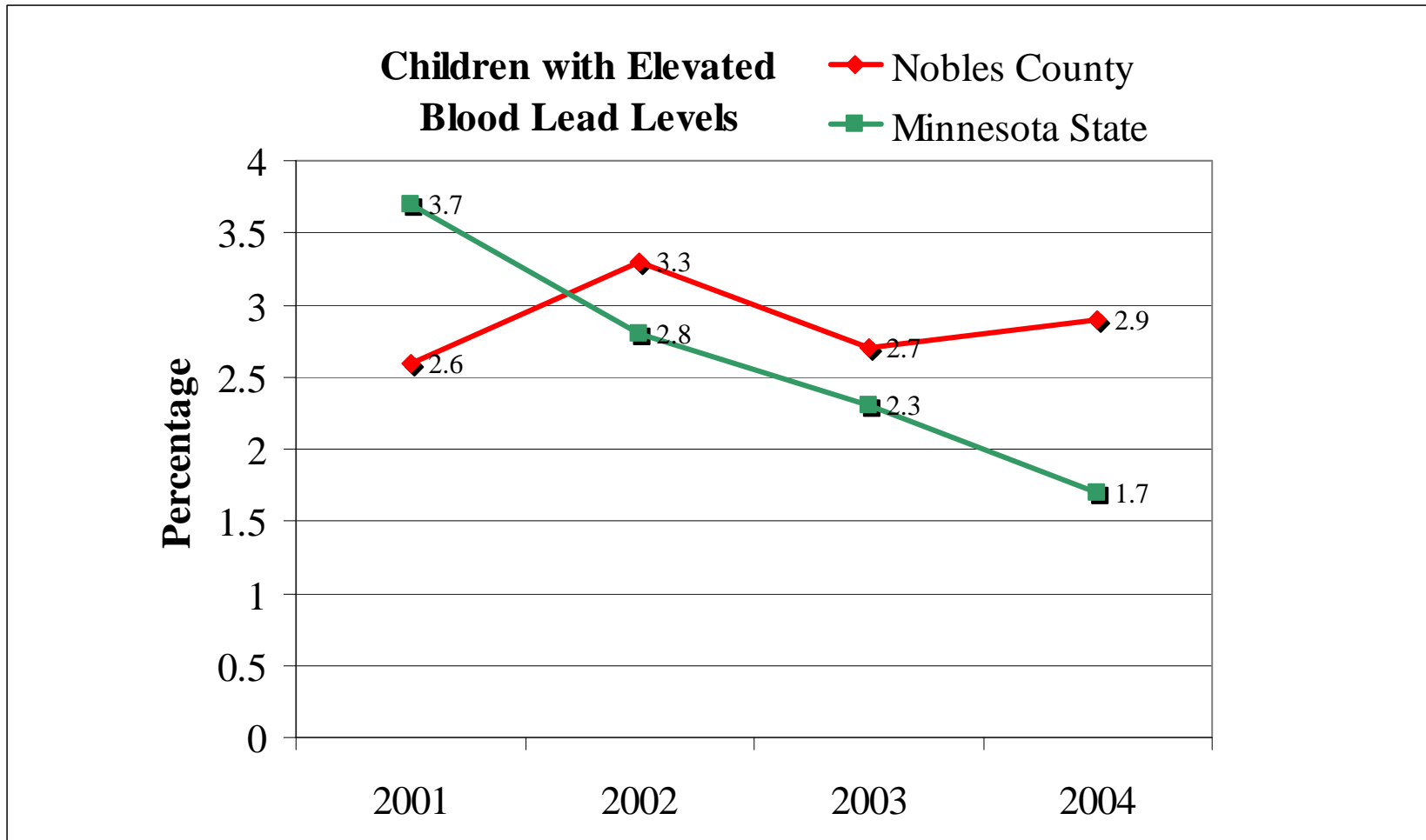


<sup>4</sup>The percent of kindergartners who did not receive all of the appropriate immunizations by age two. The data was collected through a review of the immunization records of kindergarteners. (Source: Minnesota KidsCount [www.cdf-mn.org/kidscount.htm](http://www.cdf-mn.org/kidscount.htm).)





<sup>5</sup> The percent of 9th graders who reported on Minnesota Student Survey exercising or playing sports that made them sweat or breathe hard for at least 20 minutes on 3 or more of the past 7 days. (Source: Minnesota Department of Education [www.mnschoolhealth.com](http://www.mnschoolhealth.com)).



<sup>6</sup>Percentage of a children tested who were found with blood lead levels >10 mg/dL (Source: Minnesota Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics [www.health.state.mn.us/stats.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/stats.html)).

## What Do Professionals in the County Say?

*“All children are provided with health/development screening and referral services” (Community Survey Worthington ECI Fall 2004)*

*Challenges include:*

- *Adequate nutrition and good diet*
- *Access to mental health services and dental services*

*(Community Survey Worthington ECI Fall 2004;*

- *“A major health concern...is the lack of dental care available to [low-income] families...children each year require extensive dental treatment due to baby bottle tooth decay or lack of good diet and dental hygiene. This is an area where parent education is needed...”*
- *“Nutrition concerns noted by local nutritionists are obesity, diets high in fat/sugar and children not receiving a balanced diet.”*

*(Community Assessment for SMOC Head Start for 2005-2006)*

## Best Practices in Ensuring Child Health and Development

“The goal of the SECCS [State Early Childhood Comprehensive Services] initiative is to help states and communities build **early childhood service systems that promote the health and development of your children**. The components include:

- Access [to] health insurance and a medical home,
- Child care and early care,
- Mental health and social-emotional development,
- Parenting education, and
- Family support.”

From: “Building Community Systems for Young Children: Early Childhood Education,” National Center for Infant and Early Childhood Health Policy, January 2005 ([www.healthychild.ucla.edu/NationalCenter](http://www.healthychild.ucla.edu/NationalCenter)).

**Characteristics of effective infant mental health interventions:**

1. Interventions with high-risk families are more successful when they address not only the parent-child relationship, but also the extenuating problems parents face, such as poverty, unemployment, housing, and substance abuse.
2. The caregiver's relationships with other family members and partners also need to be addressed, as they impact the mother's relationship with the infant.
3. Interventions should begin as early as possible, preferably during pregnancy so that the parent can rely on a relationship with an established provider before having to support her infant.
4. Early intervention programs need to be of sufficient length and intensity, including frequency of services, length of therapeutic engagement, and complete duration of services, in order to be effective...

In addition,...the need for individualized services that...target the everyday experiences of the child and caregiver [and]...targeting the caregiver-child relationship, rather than either the parent or the child.”

From: “Clinical Interventions to Enhance Infant Mental Health: A Selective Review,” National Center for Infant and Early Childhood Health Policy, July 2005 ([www.healthychild.ucla.edu/NationalCenter](http://www.healthychild.ucla.edu/NationalCenter)).

**See:**

“State Innovations to Improve Access to Oral Health Care for Low-Income Children: A Compendium Update,” American Dental Association, 2005 ([www.ada.org](http://www.ada.org)).

“State and Community Practice Examples of Best Practice Approaches [for Oral Health Programs],” Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors, 2005 ([www.astdd.org](http://www.astdd.org)).

“Resources To Promote Social And Emotional Health And School Readiness In Young Children: A Community Guide,” National Center for Children in Poverty, 2005 ([www.nccp.org](http://www.nccp.org)).

“Improving SCHIP Access For Hispanic Children: Report And Recommendations From The Field,” National Alliance for Hispanic Health, 2003 ([www.hispanichealth.org](http://www.hispanichealth.org)).

“Expanding Perspectives: Improving Cultural Competency In Children's Health Care,” National Initiative for Children's Health Care Quality, 2005 ([www.nichq.org](http://www.nichq.org)).

“State Approaches To Childhood Obesity: A Snapshot Of Promising Practices And Lessons Learned,” National Academy for State Health Policy, 2004 ([www.nashp.org](http://www.nashp.org)).

“Children's Mental Health: New Developments In Policy And Programs,” National Institute for Health Care Management, 2005 ([www.nihcm.org](http://www.nihcm.org)).

“Promising Practices In Early Childhood Mental Health,” Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice, American Institute for Research, 2001 ([www.cecp.air.org](http://www.cecp.air.org)).

“Overall Findings and Implications for Programs from the Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project,” Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, January 2003 ([www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/ehs/ehs\\_resrch/reports/dissemination/overall\\_short/overall\\_findings\\_talkingpts.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/ehs/ehs_resrch/reports/dissemination/overall_short/overall_findings_talkingpts.pdf)).

“Strategies for Integrating Developmental Services and Promoting Medical Homes,” National Center for Infant and Early Childhood Health Policy, July 2005 ([www.healthychild.ucla.edu/NationalCenter](http://www.healthychild.ucla.edu/NationalCenter)).

## **Children are ready for school.**

*Children who start school healthy, emotionally secure and socially competent, with an extensive vocabulary and having had a range of experiences at home and in early care settings to stimulate their curiosity and foster learning are much more likely to acquire the basis skills necessary for long-term success in school and life.*

*Minnesota has in place two programs that are intended to help young Minnesotans enter school ready developmentally ready for success – the Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) Program and the Early Childhood Screening (ECS) Program. There is now strong research evidence that experience in a preschool that provides sufficient duration and intensity of exposure to a developmentally appropriate experience is strongly associated with early success in school as well as having long-term effects in adolescence and early adulthood.*

*In order to have a better idea of how young children are faring in Nobles County, it would be valuable to routinely collect and analyze data on use of these kinds of programs. Preliminarily, staff at several of the school district in the County provided some information on the results of the ECS Program and on the extent to which entering kindergarten students were reported to have been in preschool or participated in ECFE. It is difficult without more information collected from all the districts over several years to make any definitive statements, but these are some patterns that are worth continuing to monitor.*

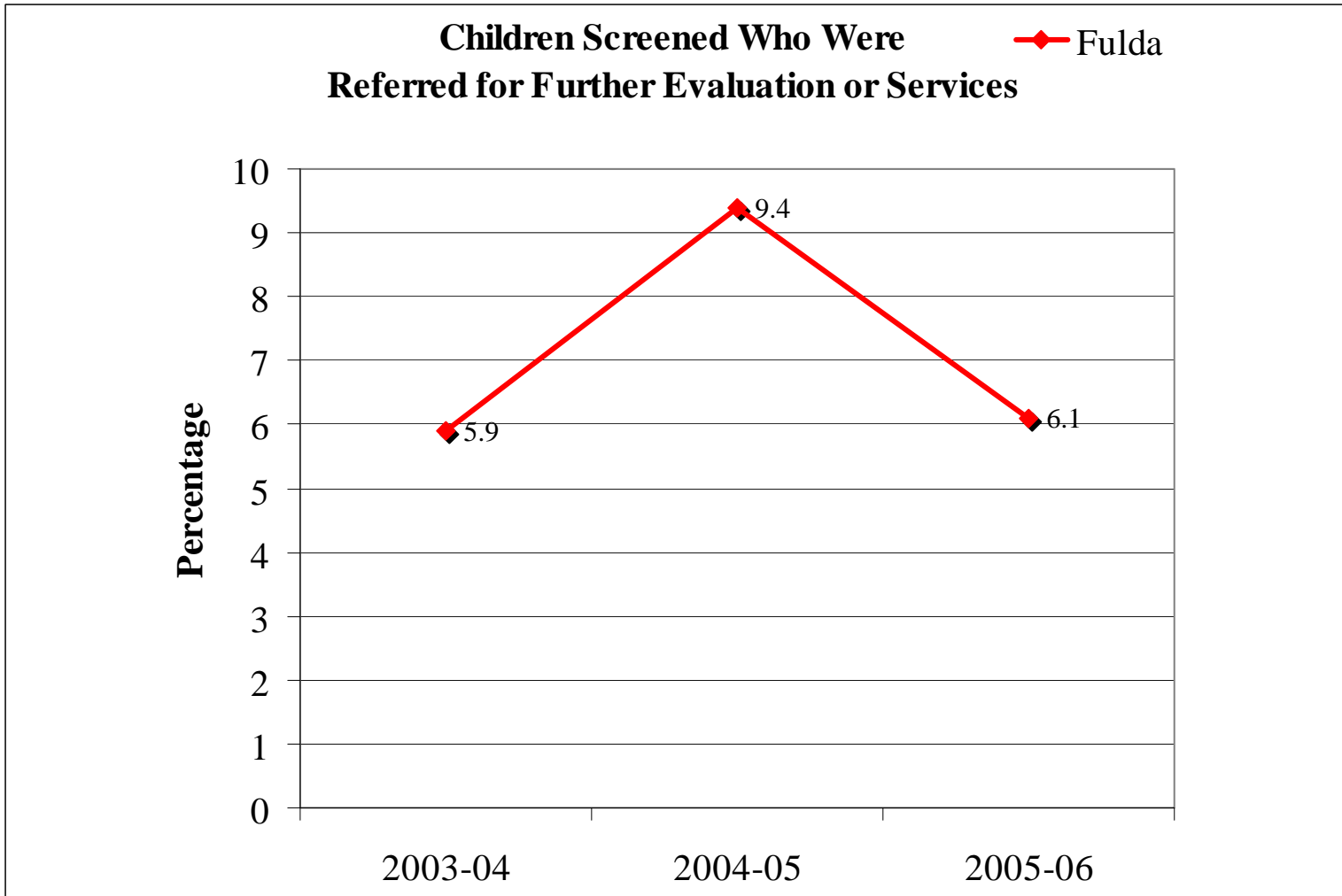
*Many young children in Worthington who were screened at age 3 or 4 were referred for additional assessment because of concerns about their development. Given the demographic composition of Worthington, this suggests that children in immigrant and low-income families, who are a larger part of the population in Worthington than in other parts of the county, have not received adequate health care and other developmental services in their earliest years. This concern is reinforced by the low participation of young children entering Worthington schools in the ECFE program. A factor in this may be geographic mobility, particularly immigration from out of state where these services are not available. But anecdotal information suggests that immigrant families may not be as likely to take advantage of developmental services. In that light, it may be useful to look at the family backgrounds of children who were not fully immunized by age 2, so see if a similar issue exists.*

**Indicators:**

- Percent of children participating in Early Childhood Screening who are referred for further assessment
  - Definition: Percent of children participating in Early Childhood Screening program who are referred for further assessment
  - Source: Reports of school district staff
- Percent of entering kindergarten students who have participated in Early Childhood Family Education
  - Definition: Percent of entering kindergarten students who have participated in Early Childhood Family Education
  - Source: Reports of school district staff
- Percent of entering kindergarten students who have had a preschool experience
  - Definition: Percent of entering kindergarten students who have had a preschool experience
  - Source: Reports of school district staff

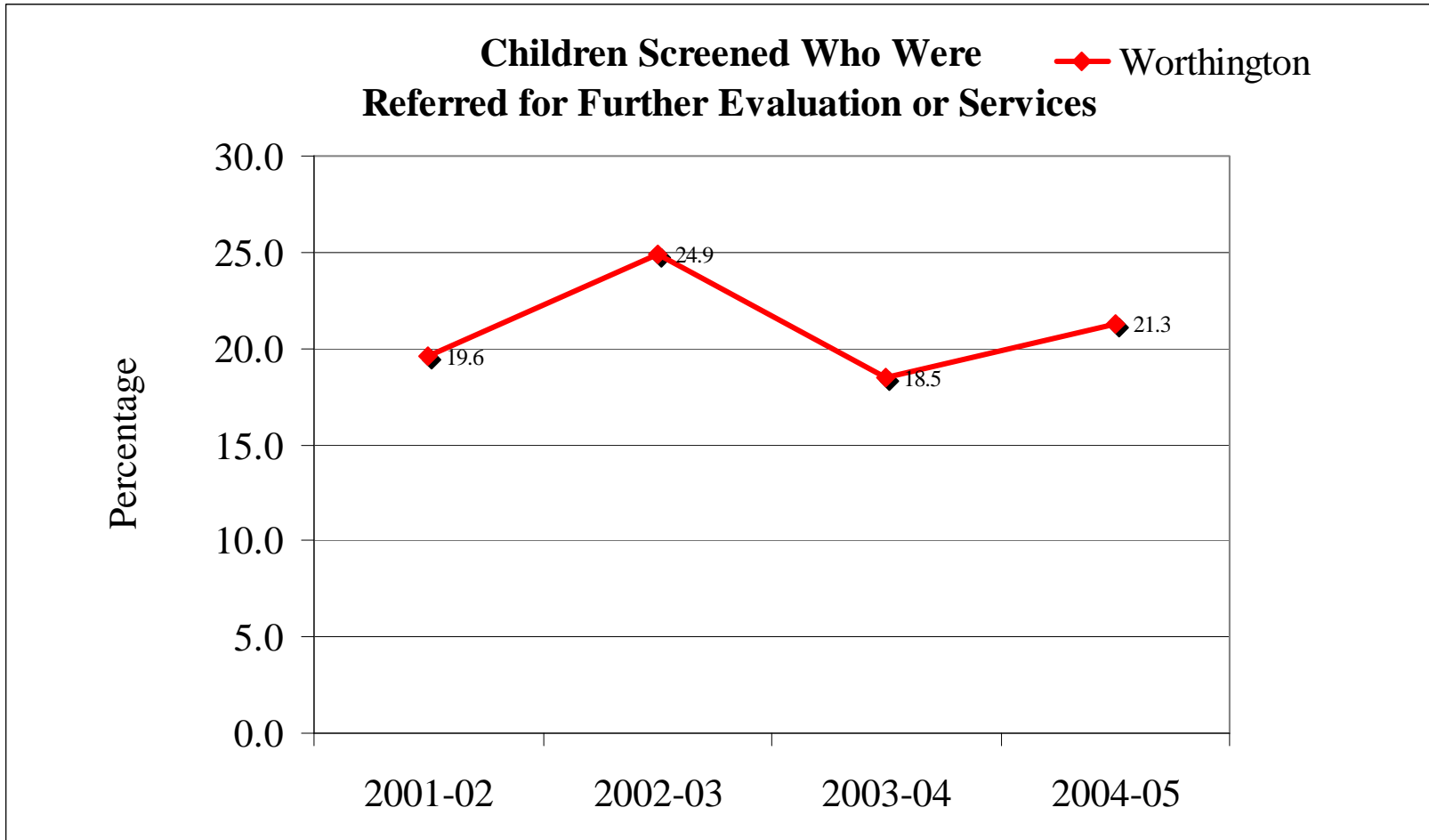
**Observations:**

- There was wide variation in the results of the Early Childhood Screening program in the two communities in the county providing data.
  - In Fulda, between 6 and 9 percent of young children participating in the screening were referred for further assessment.
  - In Worthington, around 20 percent of young children participating in the screening were referred for further assessment.
- Many more young children in Worthington were identified with potential developmental concerns than in Fulda.
- Four communities provided data on the percent of entering kindergarten students who had had a preschool experience.
  - This ranged from 95 percent in Adrian to 60 percent in Ellsworth. Fulda was close to Adrian at 90 percent and 83 percent of Worthington students had been in preschool.
  - Fulda provided data for the past three school years and saw the percent of its entering kindergarten class with preschool experience rise into the 90 percent range.
- The same four communities provided data on the percent of entering kindergarten students who had participated in ECFE.
  - Fulda had the highest rate at 38 percent and Worthington the lowest at 2 percent.
  - The ECFE program is intended to help parents of young children promote healthy development at home and to encourage parents to make use of community resources on their children's behalf. The low ECFE participation rate in Worthington may be associated with the higher proportion of 3 and 4 year olds whose health and development at the time of Early Childhood Screening suggest the need for further assessment.

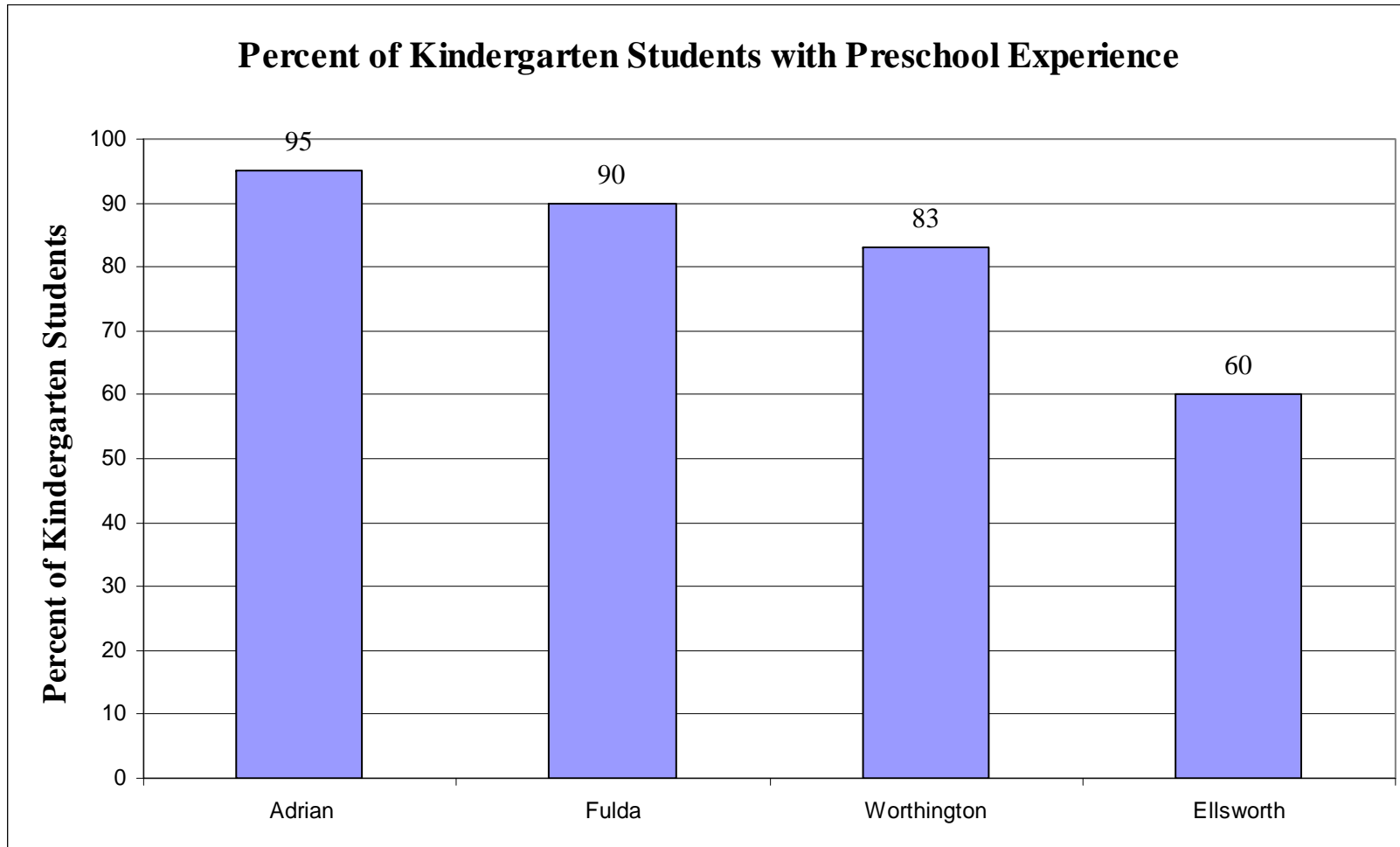


<sup>7</sup> Percent of children participating in Early Childhood Screening program who are referred for further assessment, as reported by school district staff.

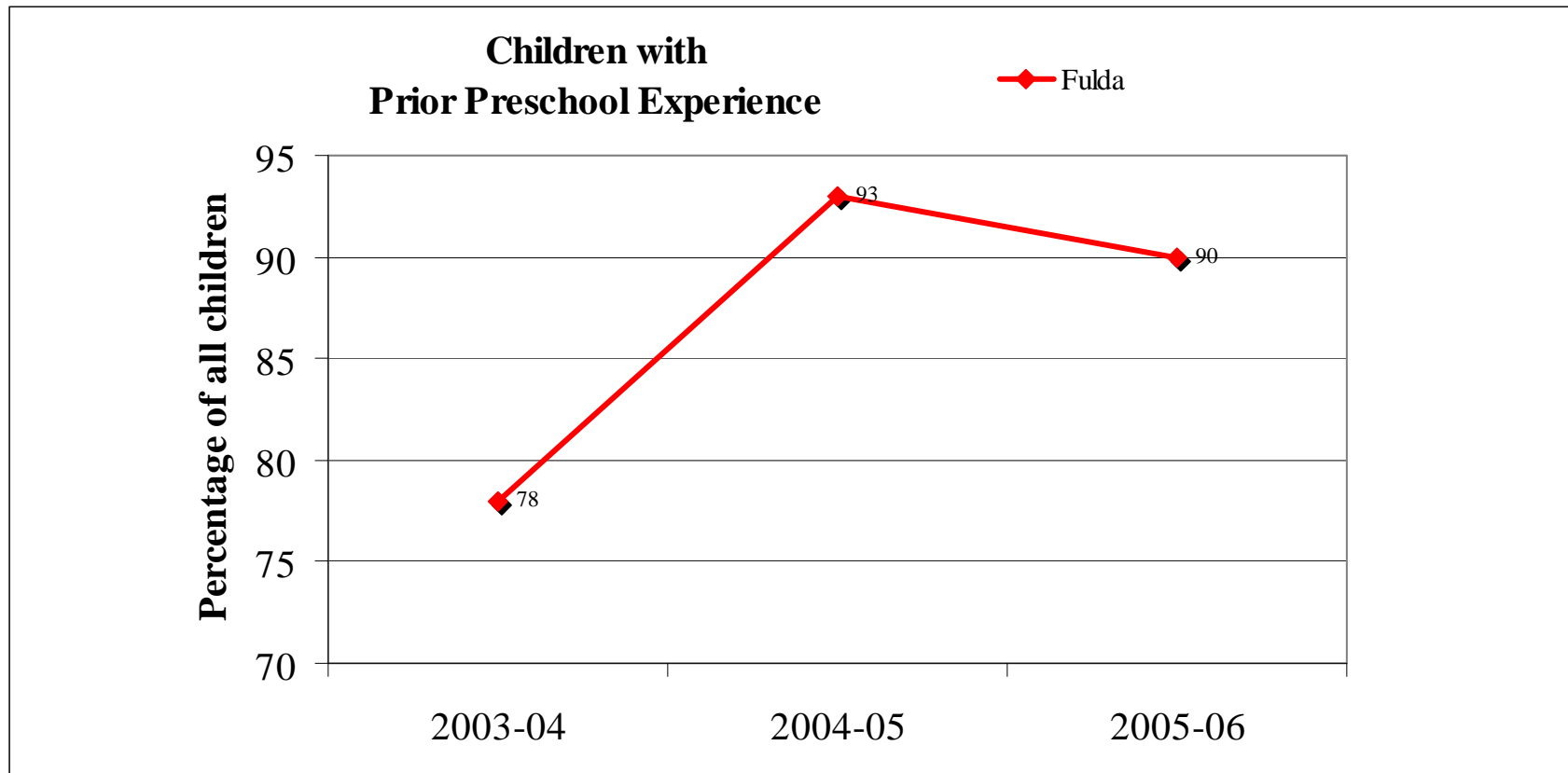




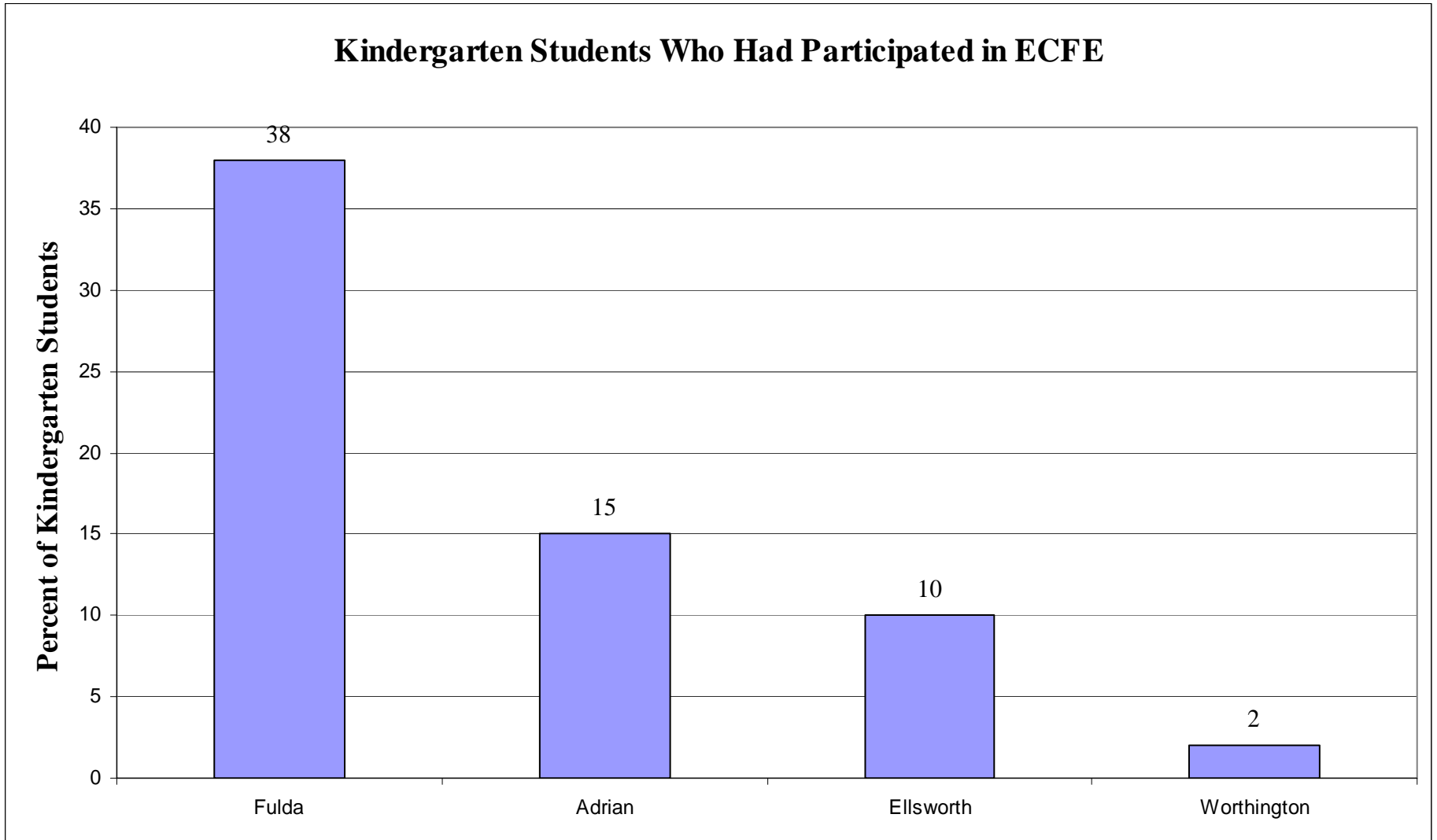
<sup>8</sup> Percent of children participating in Early Childhood Screening program who are referred for further assessment, as reported by school district staff.



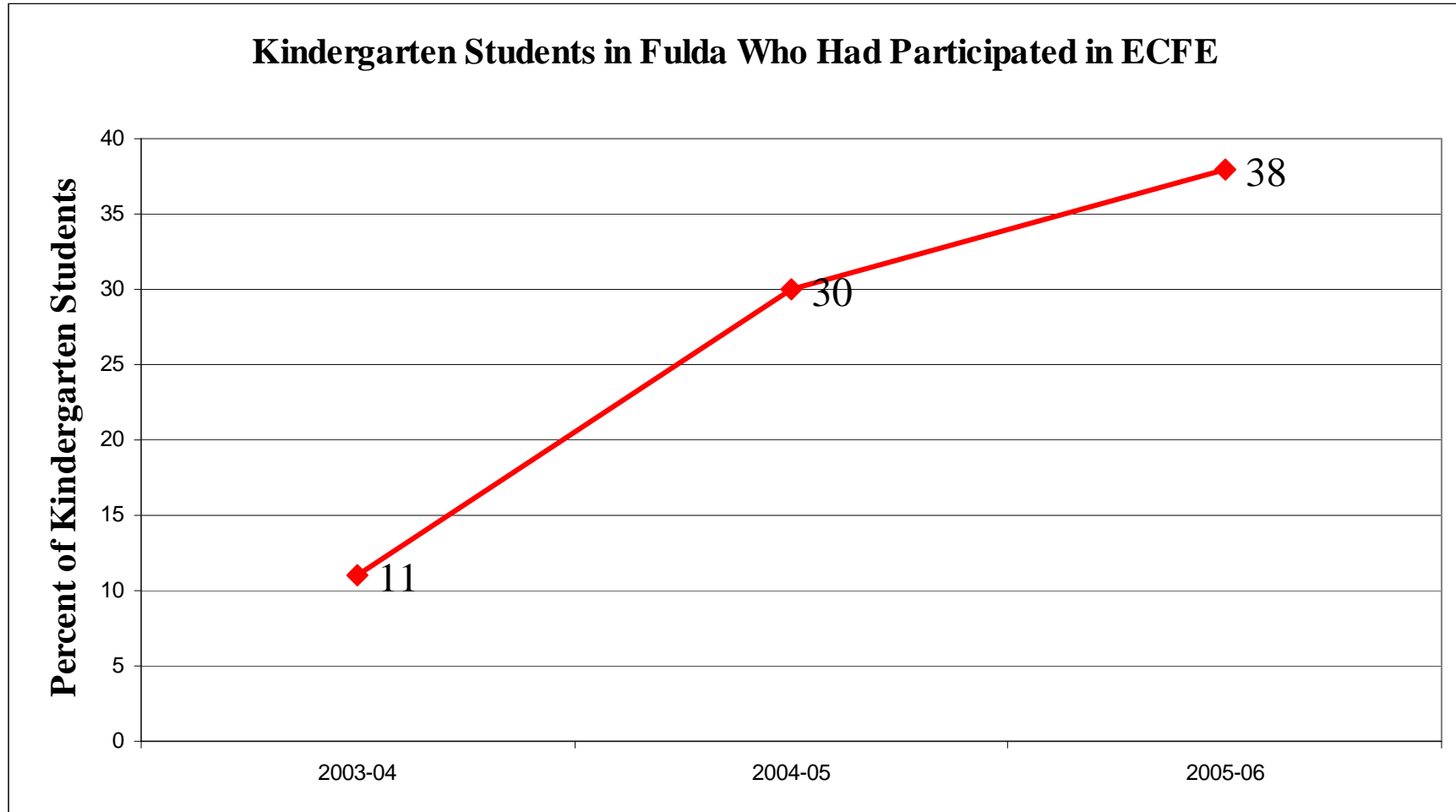
<sup>9</sup> Percent of 2005-2006 entering kindergarten students who have had a preschool experience, as reported by school district staff.



<sup>10</sup> Percent of entering kindergarten students who had participated in Early Childhood Family Education, as reported by school district staff.



<sup>11</sup> Percent of entering kindergarten students who have had a preschool experience, as reported by school district staff.



<sup>12</sup> Percent of entering kindergarten students who had participated in Early Childhood Family Education, as reported by school district staff.

## What Do Professionals in the County Say?

- *Child Care Assets:*
  - *Parents feel their children are safe*
  - *Services are nurturing*
  - *ECE professionals work well with early grade K-12 professionals to support kindergarten transition*
- *Child Care Challenges:*
  - *ECE having enough resources and ECE providers*
  - *ECE professional compensation*
  - *Culturally diverse staff, materials*

*(Community Survey Worthington ECI Fall 2004)*

*“[What are the gaps?] Child care, especially evening hours or shift hours and sick child care. Infant care is difficult with no openings. Sick child care is difficult as parents have so sick leave or vacation to use and older sibling may be kept home from school to care for younger sibling.”*

*(Adult Services Workers Focus Group January 2006)*

## Best Practices in Ensuring School Readiness

**“...high-quality early childhood programs are characterized by**

- Small class sizes and low child-to-staff ratios.
- Curricula and instruction that engage children as active learners.
- Well-trained teachers and ongoing staff supervision and training.
- A minimum threshold of program exposure (two-and-a-half hours per day, five days per week).
- Substantial outreach to parents through home visits, group meetings, and classroom participation.
- At least two years of intervention to produce effects.”

From: Education Update, March 2006, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development ([www.ascd.org](http://www.ascd.org)).

As more and more becomes known about how program quality translates into results for children, greater emphasis is being given to the relationships and experiences offered to children. These include:

- Being with a responsive teacher/caregiver
- Having learning experiences and other aspects of care individualized to meet the child’s development level and needs
- Being in a classroom that is rich in language, both oral and written
- Having access to developmentally appropriate materials and activities.

From: “Quality in Child Care Centers,” Early Childhood Research and Policy Brief, Vol. 1, No. 1, Summer 1997, National Center for Early Development and Learning (<http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~ncedl/PDFs/brief11.pdf>). Also see “Child Care Quality: Does It Matter and Does It Need To Be Improved?” B. L. Vandell and V. Wolfe, 2000 (<http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/ccquality00/ccqual.htm>).

**See:**

“What Works: Approaches to Enhance School Readiness,” Child Trends, 2000 ([www.childtrends.org](http://www.childtrends.org)).

“School Readiness Pathway,” Pathways Mapping Initiative, no date given ([www.pathwaystooutcomes.org](http://www.pathwaystooutcomes.org)).

“Home Visiting: A Service Strategy To Deliver Proposition 10 Results,” UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities, 2001 ([www.healthychild.ucla.edu](http://www.healthychild.ucla.edu)).

“What Research Tells Policymakers about Strategies to Promote Social and Emotional School Readiness among Three- and Four-Year Old Children,” National Center for Children in Poverty, 2002 ([www.nccp.org](http://www.nccp.org)).

“Early Childhood Interventions: Proven Results, Future Promise,” RAND, 2005.

“Pathways to Early School Success: Helping the Most Vulnerable Infants, Toddlers, and Their Families,” National Center for Children in Poverty, 2006 ([www.nccp.org](http://www.nccp.org)).

“Stair Steps to Quality: A Guide for States and Communities Developing Quality Rating Systems for Early Care and Education,” United Way of America Success by Six, 2005 ([national.unitedway.org/sb6](http://national.unitedway.org/sb6)).

## Children are successful in school.

*Success in school is a passport to economic self-sufficiency and overall greater opportunities for a fulfilling life. Consistently attending school, while not guaranteeing academic success, exposes students to the learning opportunities offered at school. Early reading success is a factor that strongly predicts continued positive engagement in school and school completion. Lack of adequate reading skills and poor school performance are associated with, not only school dropout prior to graduation, but also poor life choices in the areas of sexual behavior, early and overuse of harmful substances, and involvement with the law enforcement system.*

*Overall, students in Nobles County appear to be doing quite well in school. However, students of color – particularly Hispanic but also Asian students – are struggling. Many are not acquiring competency in basic skills early in their school careers and subsequently are disengaged from school, often leaving without graduating.*

### Indicators:

- School attendance rate
  - Definition: “The formula for attendance rate is the Average Daily Attendance (ADA) divided by the Average Daily Membership (ADM). ADA is normally computed by taking the number of days a student was marked in attendance and dividing by the number of instructional days reported for that grade and school. ADM is normally computed by taking the number of days the student was reported as enrolled and dividing by the number of instructional days reported for that grade and school.” County data were compiled from district statistics, weighted for number of students in the district.
  - Source: Minnesota Department of Education
- School dropout rate
  - Definition: “Students are included in these counts if their last reported record within the district indicated the student was a dropout and the student grade was indicated as 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, or 12.” County data were compiled from district statistics, weighted for the number of students in the district.
  - Source: Minnesota Department of Education
- Graduation rate
  - Definition: Percent of students who graduate during the year.
  - Source: Minnesota Department of Education
- Percent of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students with MCA reading scores at levels 1 and 2 (lowest of the five levels) in 2004-2005
  - Definition: The Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments—Series I (MCA-II) are used to measure student performance against state academic standards. On the reading test, students read both fiction and nonfiction and answer multiple choice questions about concepts and skills such as main idea; setting, characterization, and plot; fact and opinion; author’s point of view; analysis or evaluation of the text; vocabulary in context; and information contained in charts or graphs. Scores are

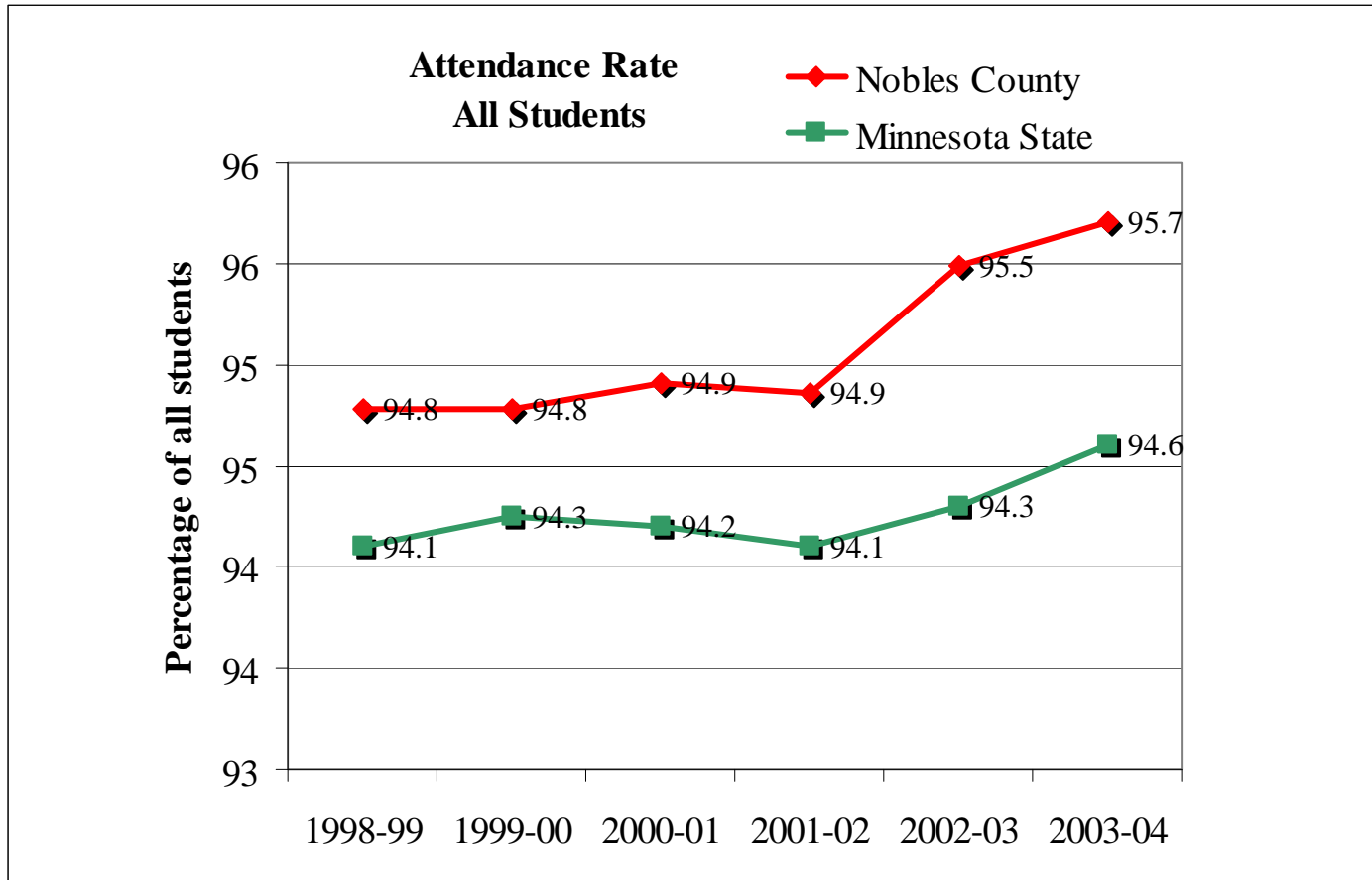


categorized into five levels; levels 1 and 2 are below satisfactory. County data were compiled from district statistics, weighted for the number of students taking the test.

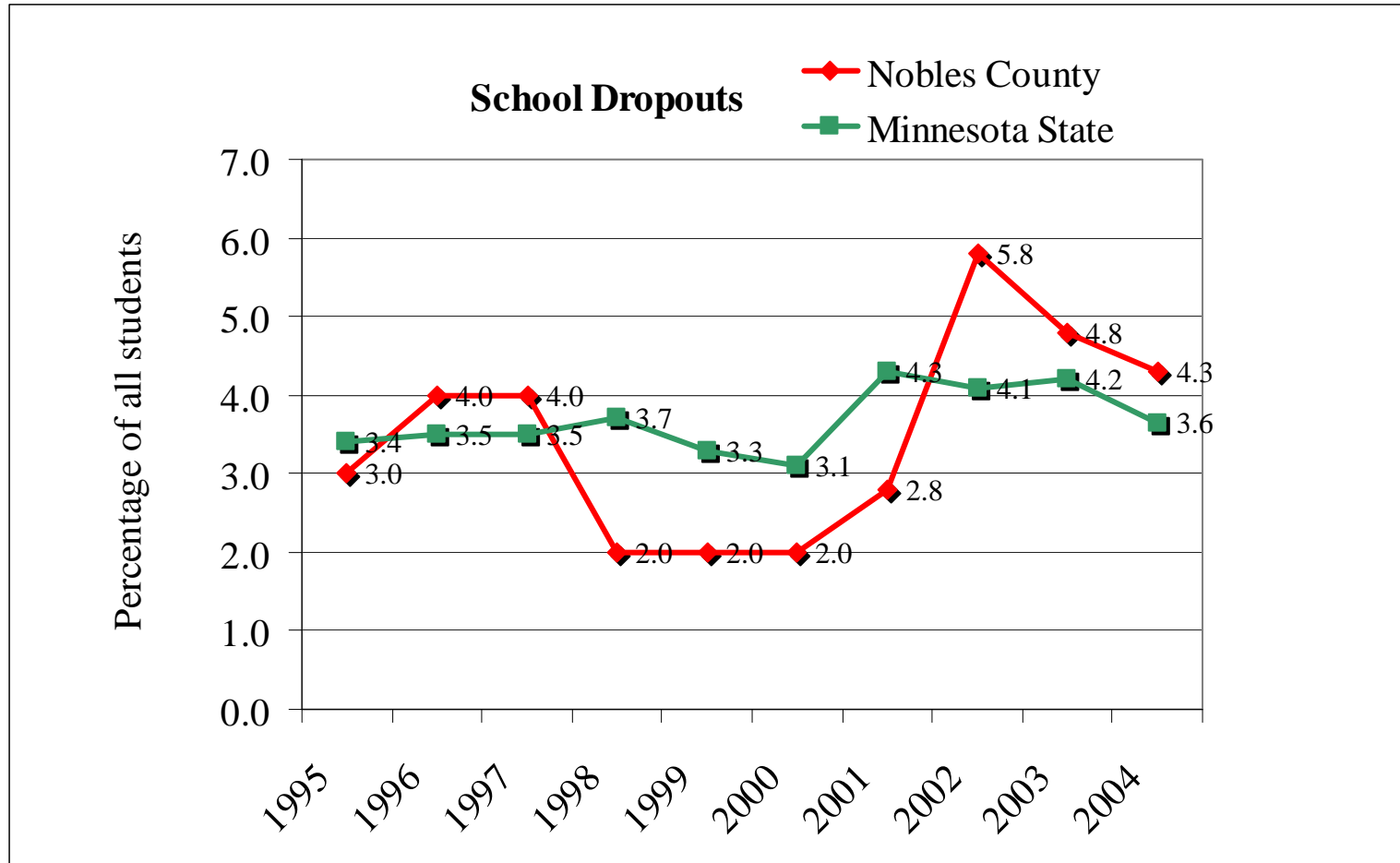
- Source: Minnesota Department of Education
- Note: Because Worthington is the only district in the county with sufficient numbers of Hispanic and Asian students for separate ethnic group data to be published, the graphs illustrating differences by ethnic group are for that district only. It might be assumed that the experience of Hispanic and Asian students in the other districts in the county would be comparable.

### **Observations:**

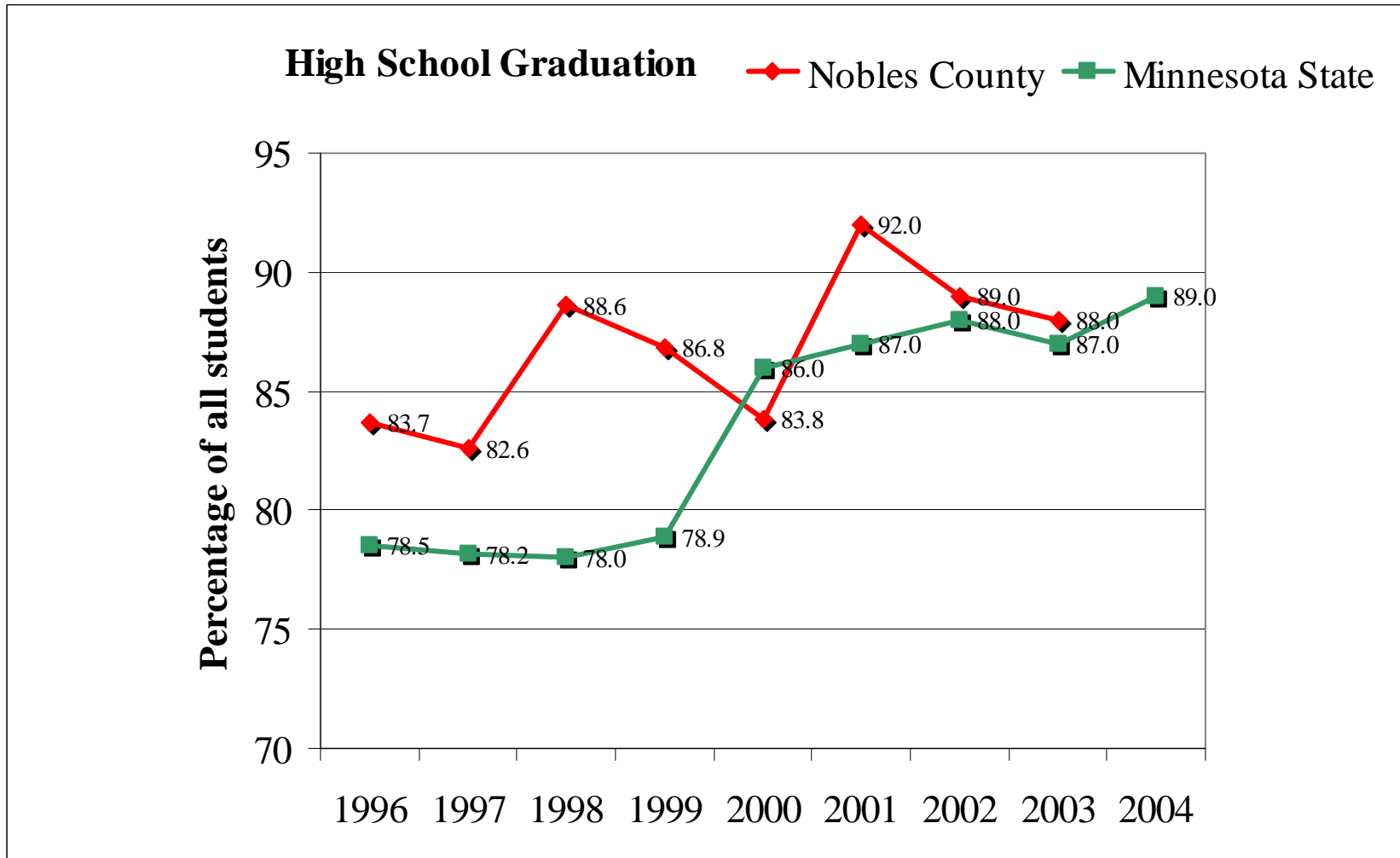
- School attendance in Nobles County is in the mid 90 percent range, higher than the statewide average.
- The dropout rate in Nobles County and the state as a whole is around 4 percent.
- The overall Nobles County graduation rate is around 90 percent, again higher than the statewide average.
  
- However, the dropout and graduation rates among Hispanic students are quite different from the overall averages.
- Because there were small numbers of Hispanic students in other communities, data by ethnic group are only available for the Worthington school district.
- In Worthington, the dropout rate among Hispanic students is 10 percentage points higher than for all students taken together.
- Hispanic students attending school in Worthington are much less likely to graduate from high school than students as a whole – between 30 and 60 percent depending on the year, compared to 80 percent overall.
  
- Poor reading skills among elementary school students is a strong predictor of poor academic performance in future grades and of failure to complete high school. MCA test scores that fall in Levels 1 or 2 indicate that the student's reading performance is less than satisfactory.
- In 2004-2005, a higher proportion of Nobles County 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> students had scores in Levels 1 and 2 than in the state as a whole. Almost half of Nobles County 3<sup>rd</sup> graders had poor reading skills compared to about one-quarter state-wide.
- Many more Hispanic and Asian elementary school students had less than satisfactory reading test scores than white students. More than two-thirds of Hispanic 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders and almost half of Asian 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders had poor reading skills.



<sup>13</sup> The formula for attendance rate is the Average Daily Attendance (ADA) divided by the Average Daily Membership (ADM). ADA is normally computed by taking the number of days a student was marked in attendance and dividing by the number of instructional days reported for that grade and school. ADM is normally computed by taking the number of days the student was reported as enrolled and dividing by the number of instructional days reported for that grade and school. Source: Minnesota Department of Education ([www.education.state.mn.us](http://www.education.state.mn.us)).

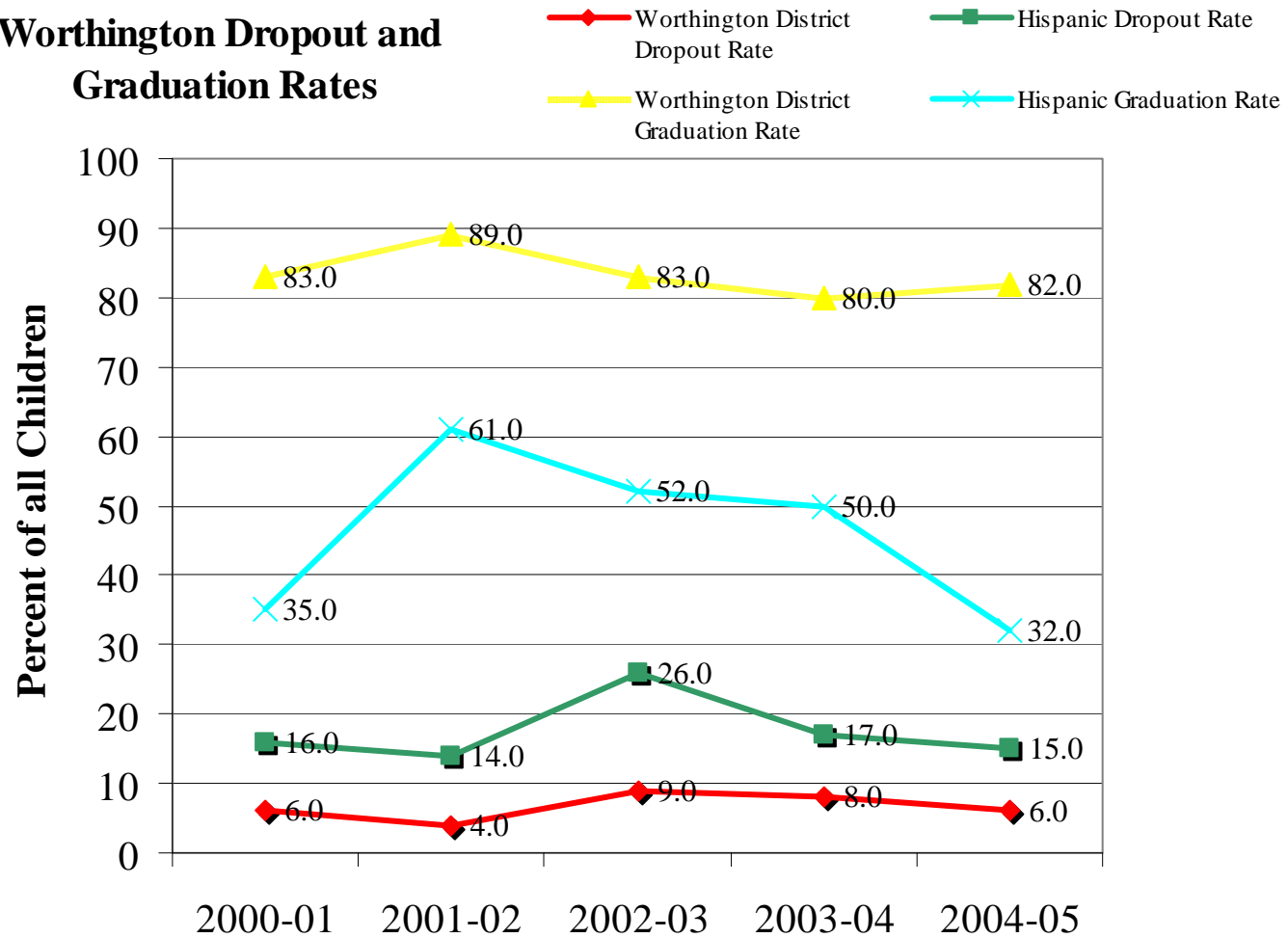


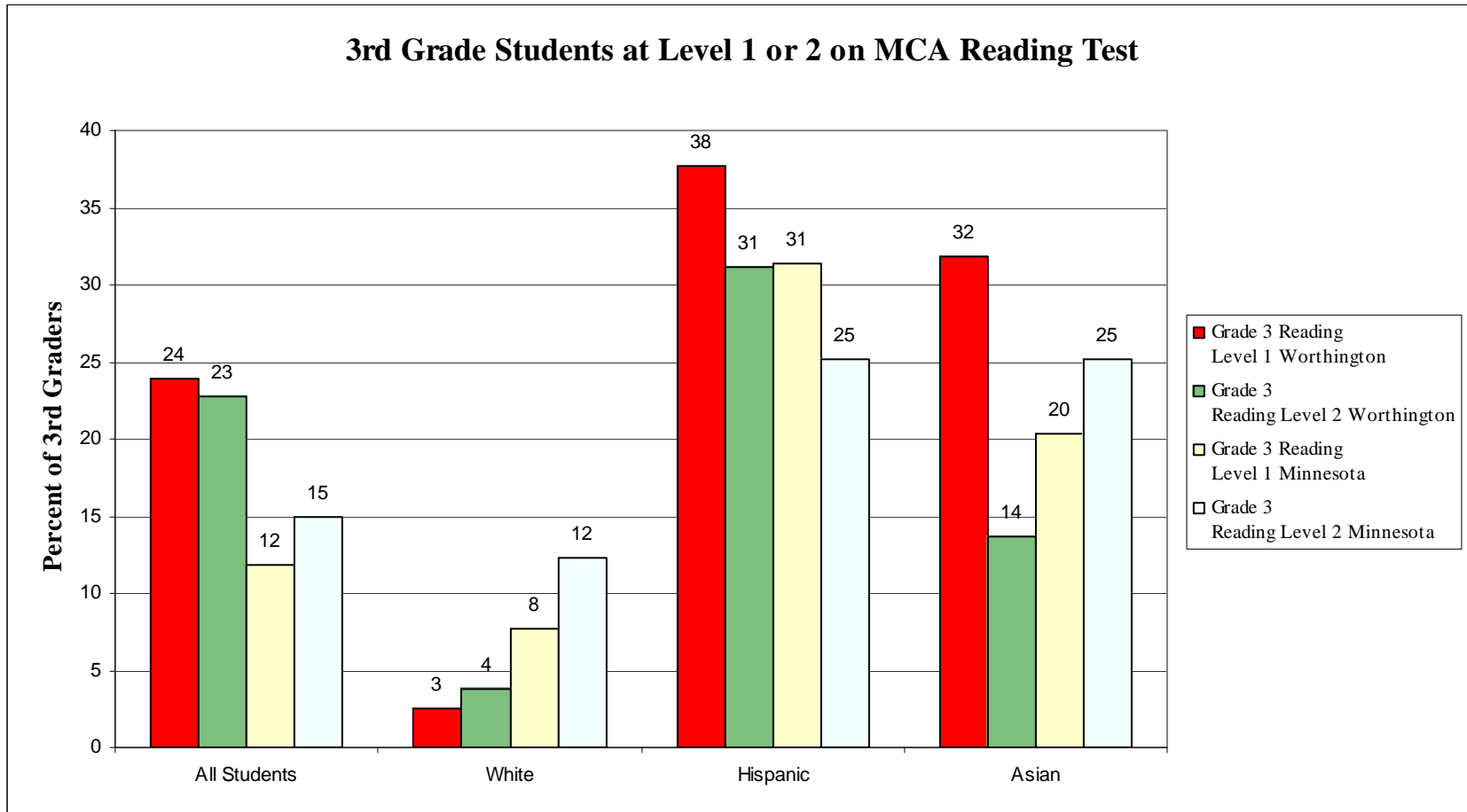
<sup>14</sup>The percentage of students who dropout within a school year and do not return by the following October 1st. The percentage is the total reported dropouts divided by the October 1 enrollment for grades 7-12. Data represent the cumulative dropouts for grades 7-12 reported by each district for the school year. Schools are assigned to the county where their district offices are located, and private and home-schooled children are not included. (Source: Minnesota KidsCount. [www.cdf-mn.org/kidscount.htm](http://www.cdf-mn.org/kidscount.htm)).



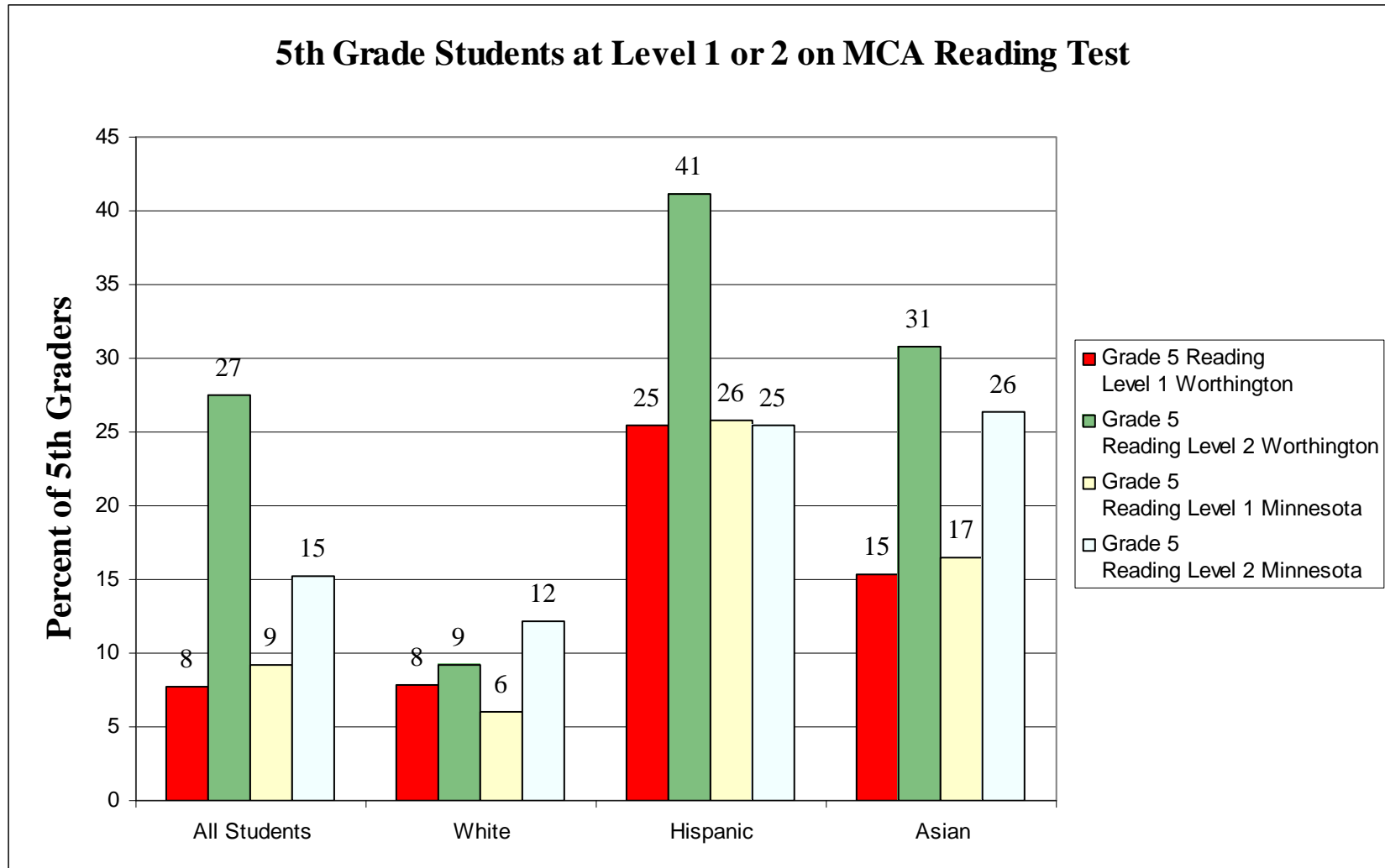
<sup>15</sup> The percent of students who graduate in a year. (Source: Minnesota Department of Education [www.education.state.mn.us](http://www.education.state.mn.us)).

## Worthington Dropout and Graduation Rates





<sup>16</sup> The Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments—Series I (MCA-II) are used to measure student performance against state academic standards. Scores are categorized into five levels; levels 1 and 2 are below satisfactory. These data are for the 2004-2005 school year. (Source: Minnesota Department of Education [www.education.state.mn.us](http://www.education.state.mn.us)).



<sup>17</sup> The Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments—Series I (MCA-II) are used to measure student performance against state academic standards. Scores are categorized into five levels; levels 1 and 2 are below satisfactory. These data are for the 2004-2005 school year. (Source: Minnesota Department of Education [www.education.state.mn.us](http://www.education.state.mn.us)).

## **What Do Professionals in the County Say?**

*Assets and Challenges in Family Perspectives on Education:*

- “Parents don’t understand how important it is to follow through with education...” (referring to attendance issues)
  - “Education is not always a high priority, but keeping food on the table is.”
  - “Even if the parent is not well-educated, some still have high expectations for their children.”
- (Family Advocates/Parent Liaisons Focus Group January 2006)

## **Best Practices in Reducing Racial/Ethnic Disparities in School Success**

**What do research studies indicate about teacher behaviors and attitudes, classroom practices and curriculum choices that benefit students of color and those that harm them?**

The major factors shown in research to be of benefit to students of color in achieving academic success, particularly in elementary and middle school, and those that have worked against their success are:

- Teacher communication in classroom
- Teacher-student relationship and interactions
- Teacher attitudes and approach to teaching
- Approaches to learning in the classroom
- Specific instructional practices in the classroom
- Curriculum and lessons
- Classroom culture – general
- Classroom culture – “culturally responsive”
- School culture
- Teacher professional development – cultural understanding
- Teacher professional development – general
- Planning for change at the school level

From: “Major School and Classroom Factors Affecting Academic Achievement for Students of Color – Working Paper,” Center for Assessment and Policy Development, July 2005.



**See:**

“Addressing the Achievement Gap: A Challenge for Washington State Educators,” Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2002 ([www.k12.wa.us](http://www.k12.wa.us)).

“Developing Guiding Concepts for Improving the Education of Disadvantaged Children,” Center for Research on Effective Schooling of Disadvantaged Students, The Johns Hopkins University, 1989-1995 ([www.csos.jhu.edu/otherlinks/cds/cds.html](http://www.csos.jhu.edu/otherlinks/cds/cds.html)).

“Fostering the Academic Success of Minority and Low-Income Students,” North Central Regional Educational Laboratory/Learning Points Associates, 2004 ([www.learningpt.org](http://www.learningpt.org)).

Promising Practices, Minority Student Achievement Network, 2002 ([www.msanetwork.org](http://www.msanetwork.org)).

“Bridging the Great Divide: Broadening Perspectives on Closing the Achievement Gaps,” a print and audio resource, Viewpoints, Volume 9, North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 2002 ([www.ncrel.org/policy/pubs/pdfs/bridging.pdf](http://www.ncrel.org/policy/pubs/pdfs/bridging.pdf)).

“Major School And Classroom Factors Affecting Academic Achievement For Students Of Color,” Center for Assessment and Policy Development, Summer 2005.

“Raising Minority Academic Achievement: A Study of 20 Successful Programs,” American Youth Policy Forum, 2000 ([www.aypf.org](http://www.aypf.org)).

“Raising Minority Academic Achievement: A Compendium of Education Programs and Practices,” American Youth Policy Forum, 2001 ([www.aypf.org](http://www.aypf.org)).

## **Children and youth have skills to make positive health and life decisions.**

*As they move into adolescence, young people in Nobles County must make decisions about whether to engage in behaviors that might put them at risk for poor health or life outcomes. Two areas of behavior are of particular concern – early sexual activity and childbearing, and use of substances that are potentially addictive and harmful to health.*

*While the percent of young people in Nobles County who are sexually active is no greater than in Minnesota as a whole, more teenagers in Nobles County are becoming pregnant and giving birth. This puts these young women at risk of dropping out from school and remaining in poverty during their lifetime and their children at risk for poor birth outcomes and early development.*

*Adolescents in Nobles County are less likely than teenagers across Minnesota to use tobacco products and the rate of use fell between 2001 and 2004 for both 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders. Even so, one in five 9<sup>th</sup> graders and two in five 12<sup>th</sup> graders report using tobacco products.*

*Nobles County young people are more likely than their peers around the state to use alcohol alone and less likely to combine the use of alcohol and other drugs. However, when both types of alcohol use are combined the rates of use for Nobles County and for Minnesota as a whole are the same. In 2004, about 40 percent of 9<sup>th</sup> graders and 65 percent of 12<sup>th</sup> graders reported using alcohol alone or with other drugs.*

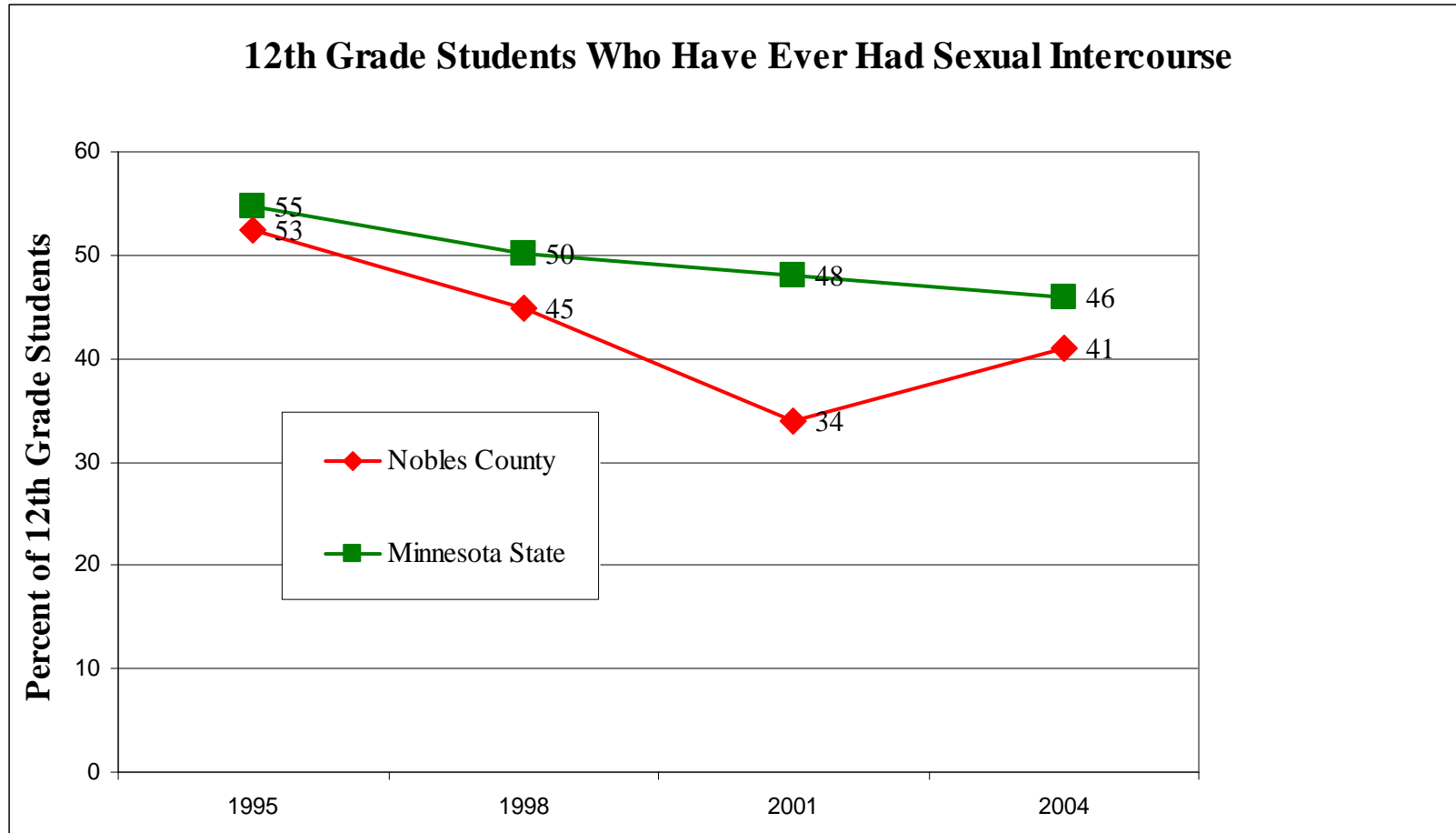
### **Indicators:**

- Percent of youth engaging in sexual activities
  - Definition: Percent of 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders who reported on Minnesota Student Survey ever having had sexual intercourse
  - Source: Minnesota Department of Education
- Percent of teenage females who become pregnant
  - Definition: Number of females age 15 to 17 per 1,000 who became pregnant in a given year
  - Source: Minnesota Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics
- Percent of teenage females who give birth
  - Definition: Number of live births in a given year per 1,000 females age 15 to 17
  - Source: Minnesota Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics
- Percent of youth using tobacco products
  - Definition: The percentage of 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders who reported on Minnesota Student Survey that they had used any tobacco products during the past year
  - Source: Minnesota Department of Education

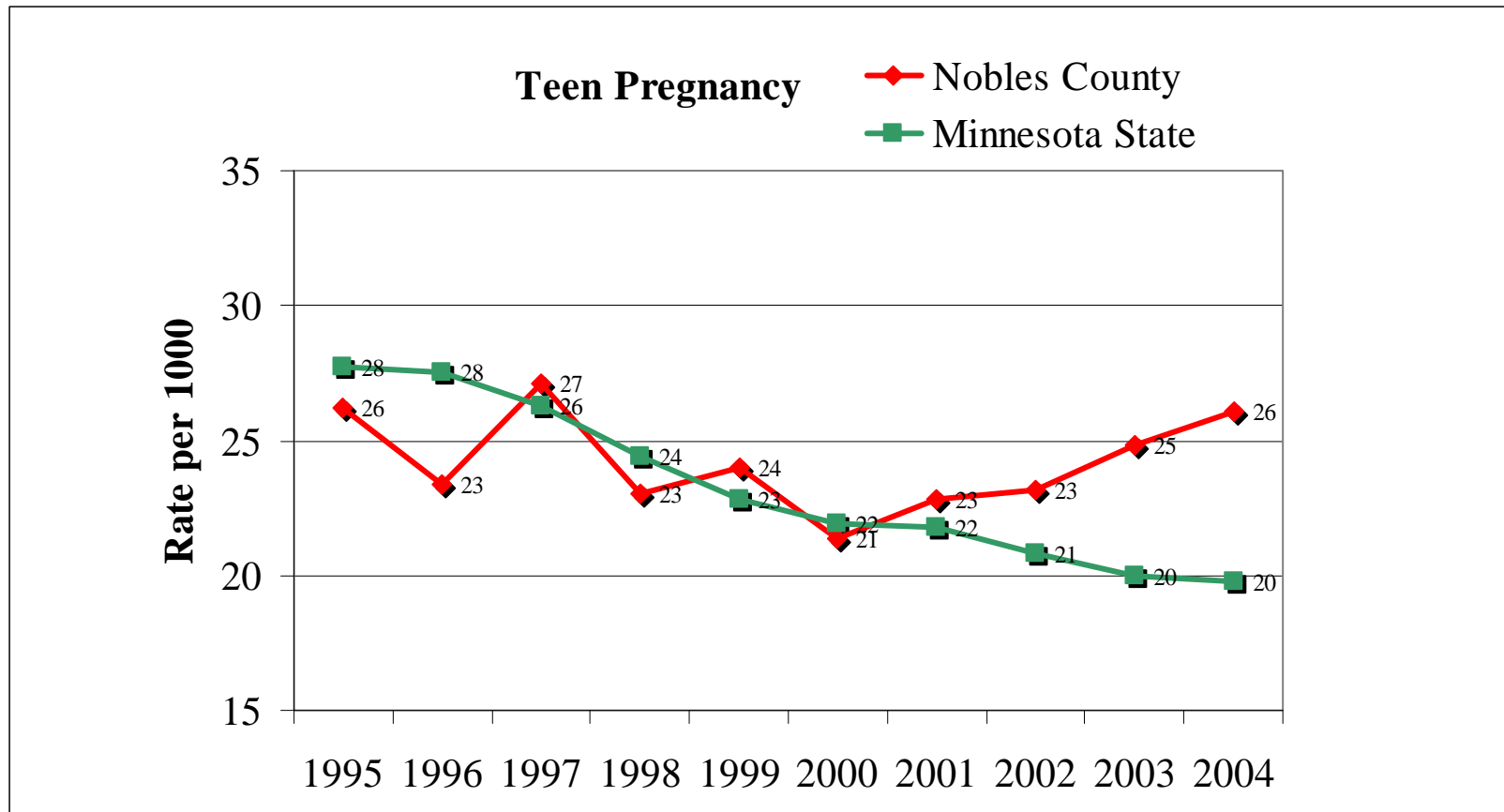
- Percent of youth using alcohol but not other drugs
  - Definition: The percentage of 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders who reported on Minnesota Student Survey that they had used alcohol but not other drugs during the past year
  - Source: Minnesota Department of Education
- Percent of youth using alcohol and other drugs
  - Definition: The percentage of 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders who reported on Minnesota Student Survey that they had used alcohol and other drugs during the past year.
  - Source: Minnesota Department of Education
- Percent of youth engaging in frequent binge drinking
  - Definition: The percentage of 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders who reported on Minnesota Student Survey that they had engaged in frequent binge drinking during the past year (consumed 5 or more drinks at a time and drank on 10 or more occasions)
  - Source: Minnesota Department of Education

**Observations:**

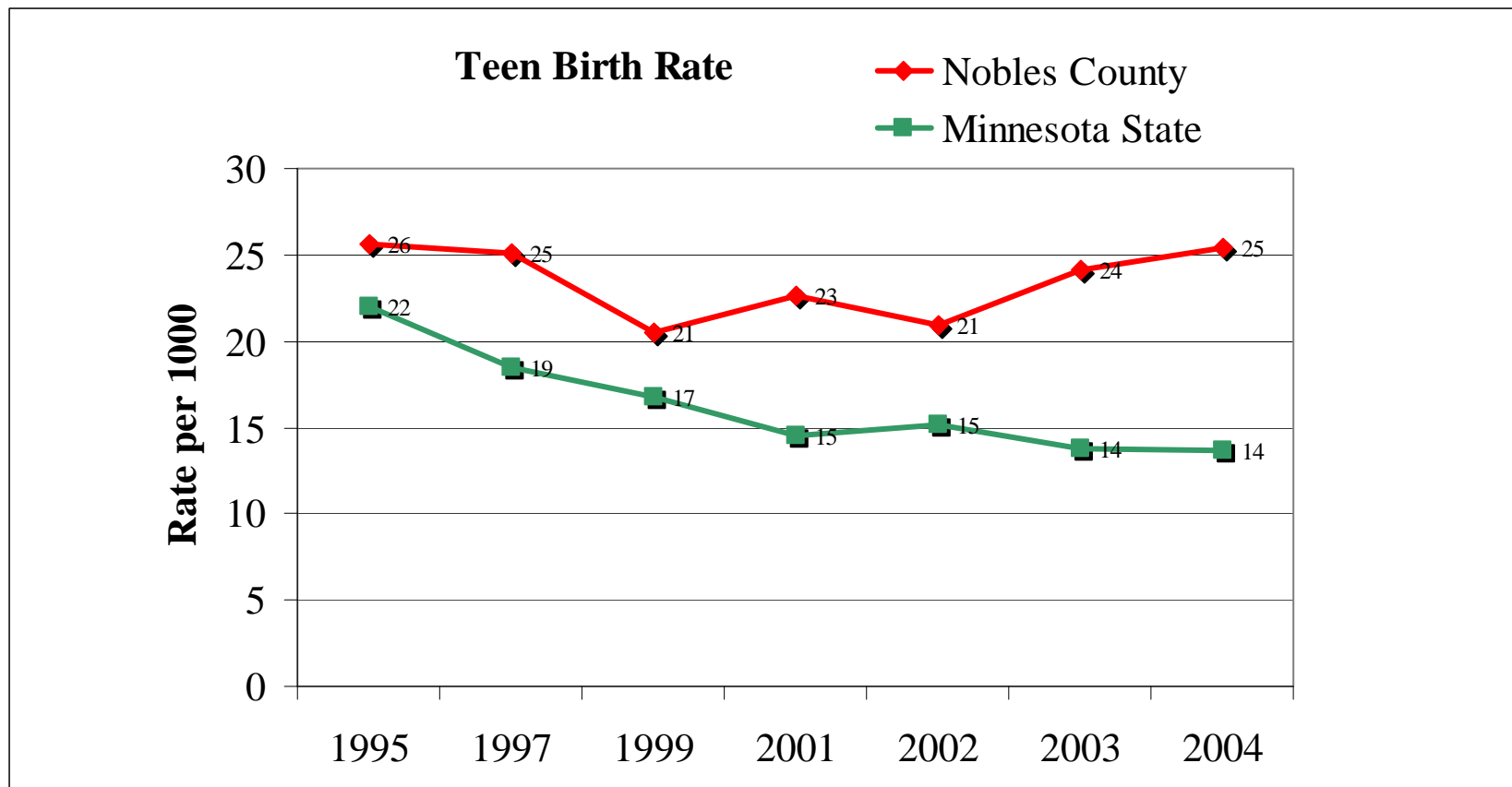
- The percent of Nobles County 12<sup>th</sup> grade students who had ever had sexual intercourse by the 12<sup>th</sup> grade declined between the mid-1990s and 2001. There was a slight upturn to around 40 percent in 2004.
- The percent of sexually active teenagers in Nobles County is less than in the state as a whole.
- Teen pregnancy and birth rates increased in Nobles County.
- In particular, the teen birth rate – 25 per 1000 in 2004 – was much higher than in the state as a whole.
  
- Use of tobacco products among 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders in Nobles County is less than statewide and is declining slightly.
- Use of alcohol alone is much higher in Nobles County in the state as a whole and remained steady between 2001 and 2004.
- About one-third of 9<sup>th</sup> graders and nearly half of 12<sup>th</sup> graders in Nobles County had used alcohol, but no other drugs.
- Nobles County teenagers were much less likely than their peers statewide to use both alcohol and other drugs.
- Frequent binge drinking was infrequent among 9<sup>th</sup> graders in Nobles County and statewide, but one-quarter of 12<sup>th</sup> graders in 2001 and one-fifth in 2004 reported this drinking pattern.



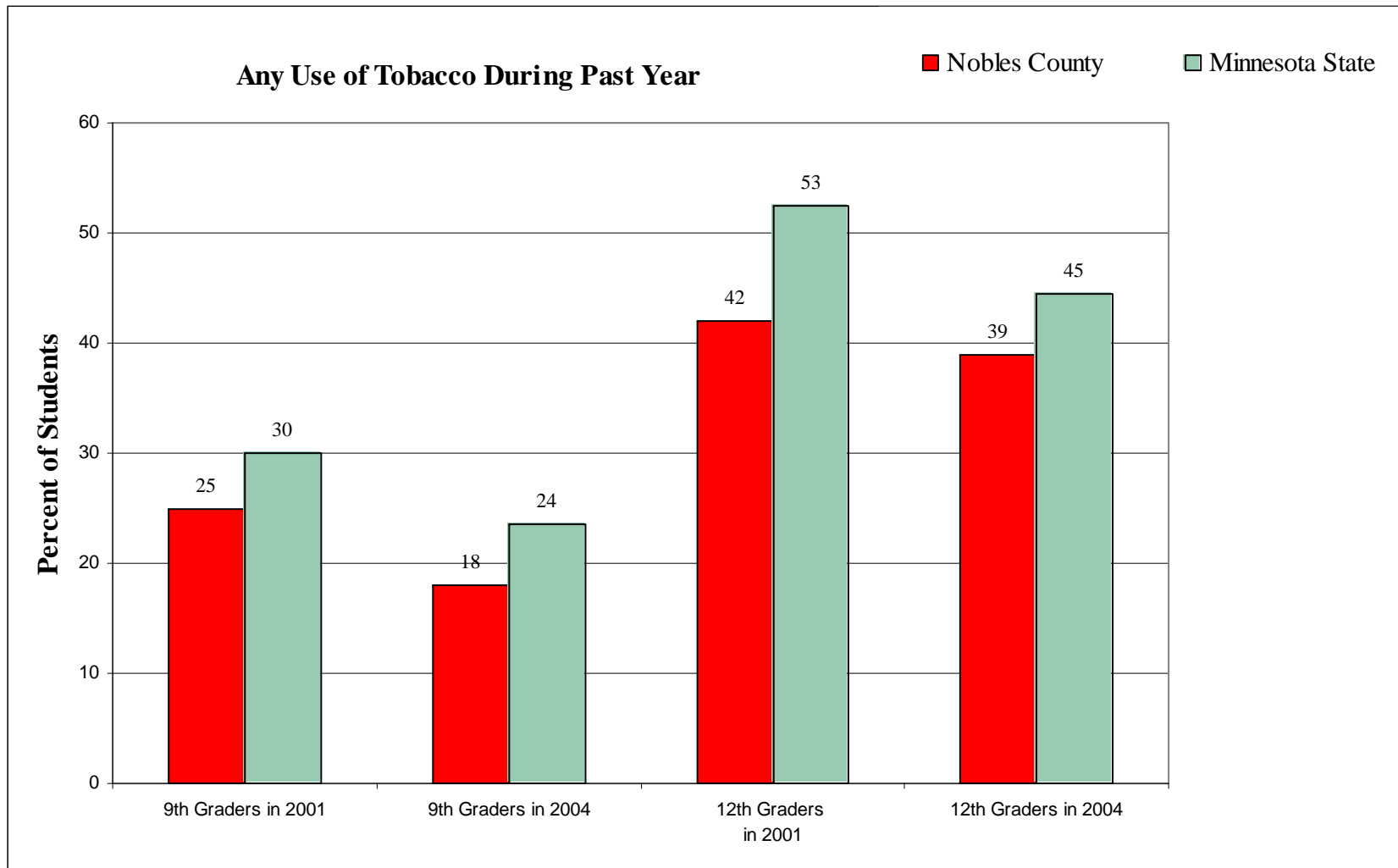
<sup>18</sup> The percentage of 12th graders who reported on Minnesota Student Survey having had sexual intercourse (Source: Minnesota Children's Report Card [www.mnplan.state.mn.us/children](http://www.mnplan.state.mn.us/children) and Minnesota Department of Education [www.education.state.mn.us](http://www.education.state.mn.us)).



<sup>19</sup>The rate per 1000 of pregnancies for girls aged between 15 and 17 (Source: Minnesota Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics [www.health.state.mn.us](http://www.health.state.mn.us)).

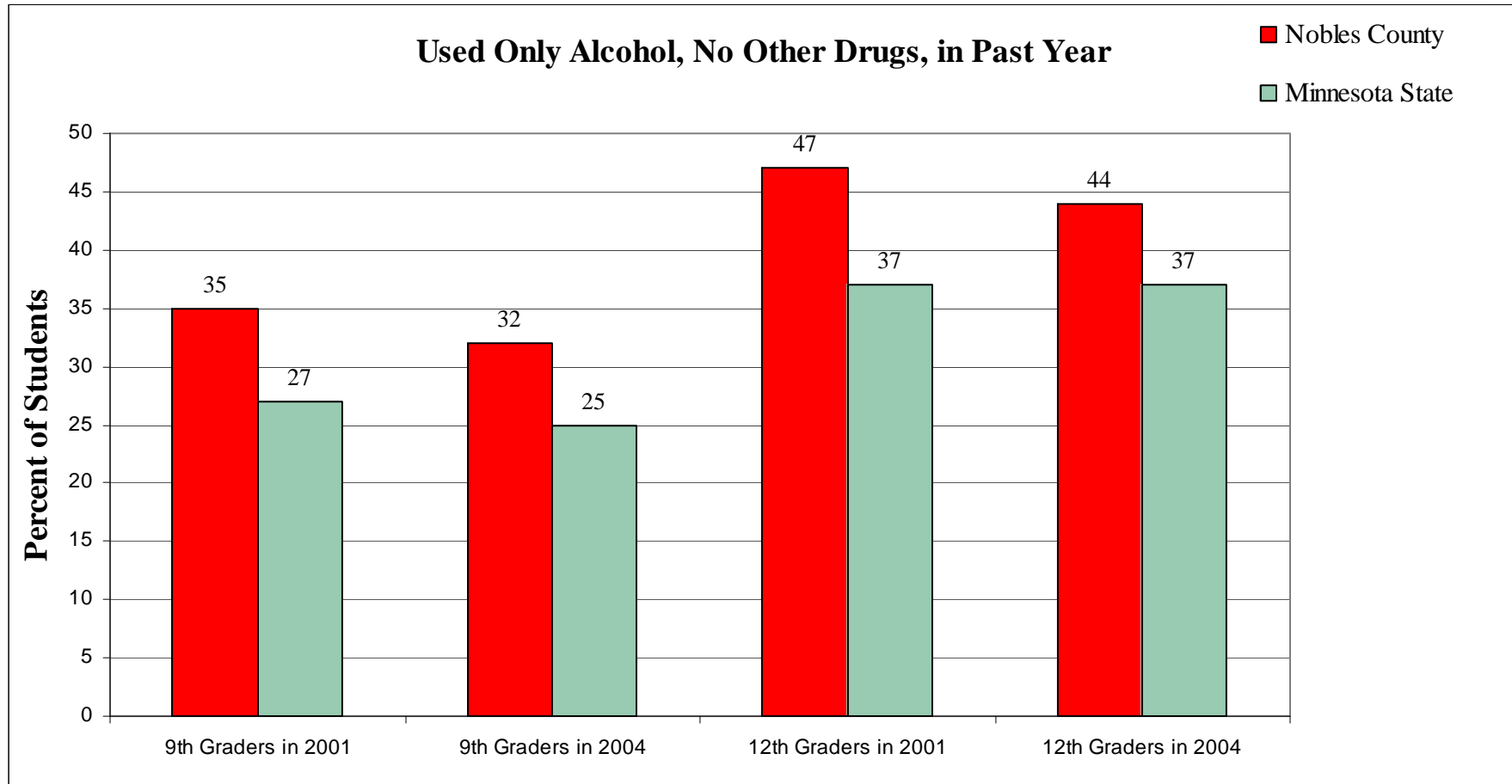


<sup>20</sup>The rate of live births per 1000 teens (aged 15-17). (Source: Minnesota Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics [www.health.state.mn.us](http://www.health.state.mn.us)).



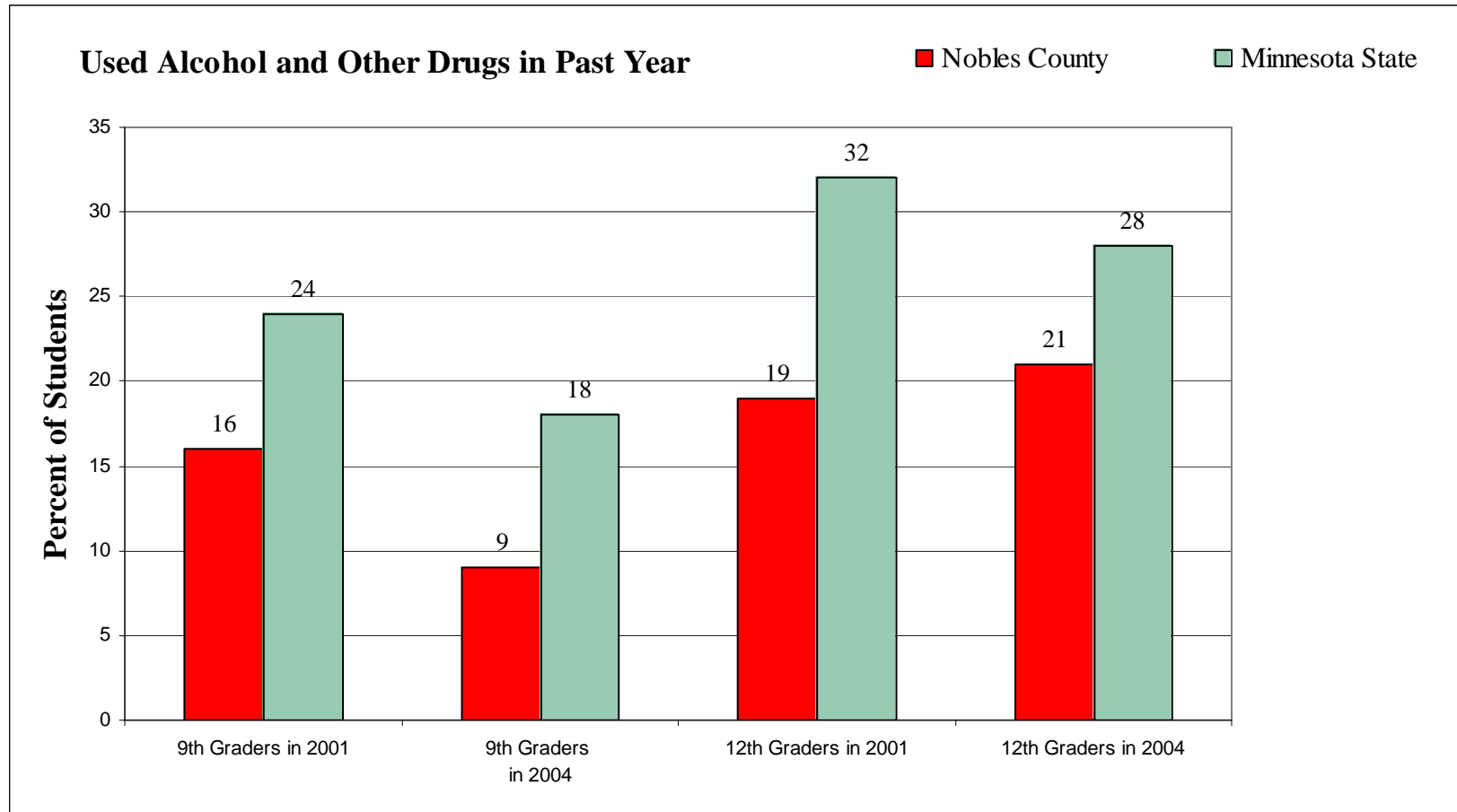
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<sup>21</sup> The percentage of 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders who reported on Minnesota Student Survey that they had used any tobacco products during the past year. (Source: Minnesota Department of Education [www.education.state.mn.us](http://www.education.state.mn.us)).

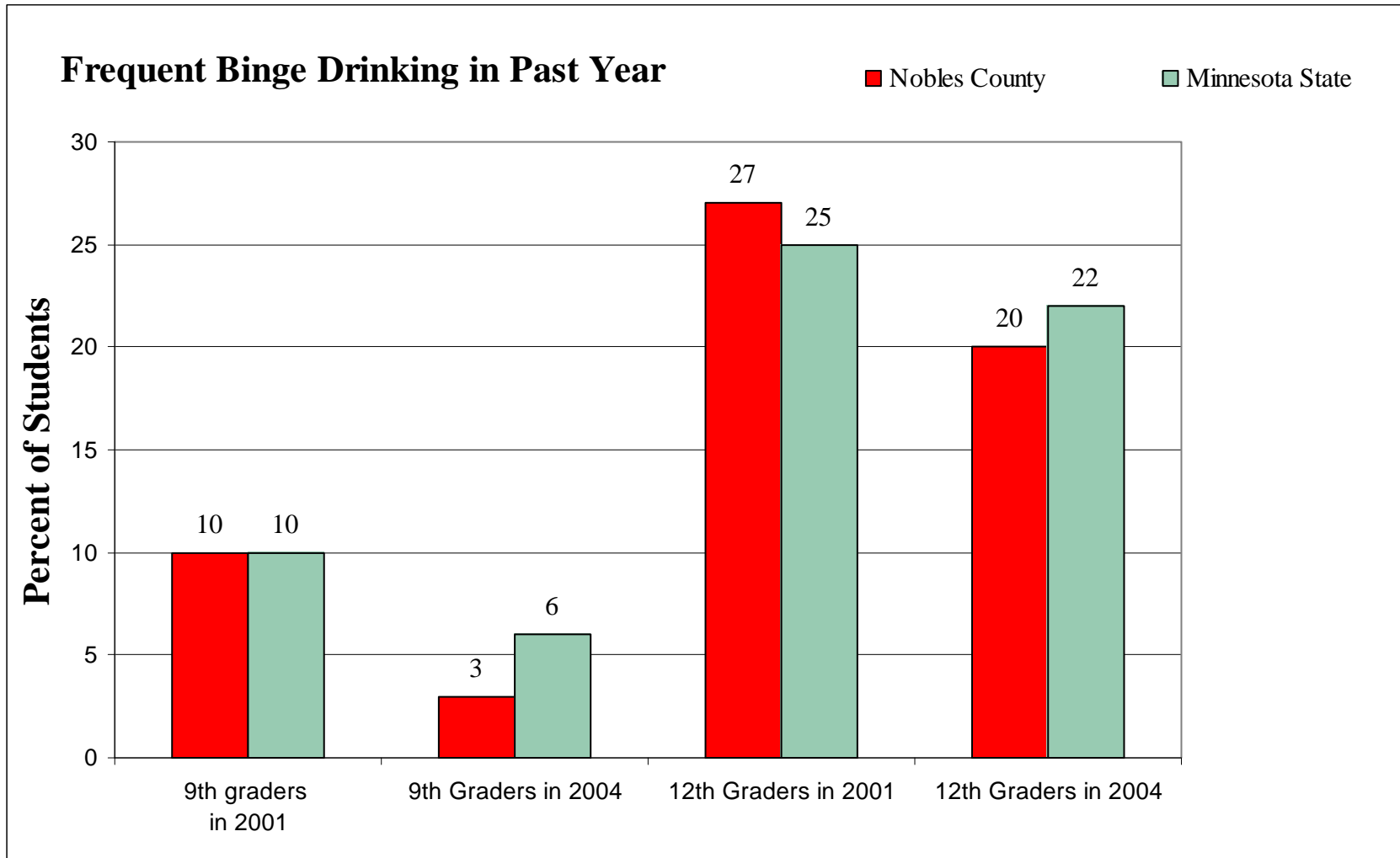


<sup>22</sup>The percentage of 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders who reported using alcohol and no other drugs during the past year (Source: Minnesota Department of Education [www.education.state.mn.us](http://www.education.state.mn.us)).





<sup>23</sup> The percentage of 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders who reported on Minnesota Student Survey that they had used both alcohol and other drugs during the past year. (Source: Minnesota Department of Education [www.education.state.mn.us](http://www.education.state.mn.us)).



<sup>24</sup> The percentage of 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders who reported on Minnesota Student Survey that they had engaged in frequent binge drinking in the past year (consumed 5 or more drinks at a time and drank on 10 or more occasions). (Source: Minnesota Department of Education [www.education.state.mn.us](http://www.education.state.mn.us)).

## **What Do Youth in the County Say?**

- *What youth do after school*
  - *Work, taking care of siblings*
  - *Organized activities affiliated with school or other community agency (such as Y, 4H)*
  - *Hang out*
  
- *What youth want to get from community activities and programs:*
  - *“To make a difference” “To be heard” “To be the best you can be”*
  - *Meet new people, socialize*
  - *Develop skills and experiences for later in life*
  
- *Barriers to youth involvement in available programs*
  - *Family problems*
  - *Transportation*
  - *Fees*
  - *Not fitting in*

*(Youth Voices Worthington Focus Group April 2004)*

## Best Practices in Ensuring Positive Youth Development

“Conditions for healthy development should provide young people with opportunities:

- to participate as citizens, members of a household, and responsible members of society;
- to gain experience in decision-making;
- to interact with peers and acquire a sense of belonging;
- to have time to reflect on self in relation to others;
- to discuss conflicting values and formulate their own value system;
- to experiment with their own identity, with relationships to others, with ideas;
- to develop a feeling of accountability;
- to cultivate a capacity to enjoy life.

...promising prevention strategies are similar across various health-related behaviors....Structured parent-child home-based activities and other types of parent programs, such as parenting classes or home visits, have been successful in enhancing the home environment and social relations within the home. Promising strategies within the school include: school policies that promote health and the creation of a health-enhancing environment; comprehensive health curricula in kindergarten through grade 12; health-enhancing school-wide media; innovative approaches to education that emphasize the active participation of students and parents; quality early childhood education opportunities; and the availability of health services. Promising community strategies include: citizen involvement through community organizing, youth development opportunities, health-enhancing media messages, ordinances and policies promoting health, and the availability of health services. In addition to the specific components highlighted below, effective prevention initiatives base their activities on theory and knowledge of risk and protective factors; include multi-components; involve multiple sectors of the community; actively involve youth, parents, teachers and other school staff, and community members; devote adequate resources; involve trained and supported staff; and have a population-based and long-term orientation.”

From: “Growing Absolutely Fantastic Youth: A Review Of The Research On ‘Best Practices’,” Konopka Institute for Best Practices in Adolescent Health, 2000 ([www.med.umn.edu/peds/gpah/programs/bestpractices/home.html](http://www.med.umn.edu/peds/gpah/programs/bestpractices/home.html)).

“Out-of-school time programs for older youth need to look very different than the middle or high schools the young people attend. The foundation for any successful OST program must be positive youth development principles. To retain older youth, OST programs must offer a menu of activities, with many high-interest programs. Out-of-school time program leaders and staff need to develop strong partnerships with the administrators and teachers of the nearby schools. When OST programs employ teachers from the local schools, it is critical that the teaching methods are interactive, youth-led, and relevant, not a continuation of regular academic classes. Out-of-school time programs must hire staff who want to work with adolescents. Older youth participation in OST programs can be strengthened through parental and family involvement. Out-of-school time programs should keep track of the youth in their programs and provide follow-up support after they have left the program. Out-of-

school time programs should focus on evaluation as a tool of self-improvement, use a range of evaluation tools to collect data, and use a variety of measures to determine effectiveness.”

From: “Helping Youth Succeed through Out-of-School-Time Programs” American Youth Policy Forum, January 2006 ([www.aypf.org](http://www.aypf.org)).

**See:**

“Growing Absolutely Fantastic Youth: A Review Of The Research On ‘Best Practices’,” Konopka Institute for Best Practices in Adolescent Health, 2000 ([www.med.umn.edu/peds/gpah/programs/bestpractices/home.html](http://www.med.umn.edu/peds/gpah/programs/bestpractices/home.html)).

“Lessons Learned About Effective Policies And Practices For Out-Of-School-Time Programming,” American Youth Policy Forum, 2003 ([www.aypf.org](http://www.aypf.org)).

“Helping Youth Succeed through Out-of-School-Time Programs” American Youth Policy Forum, January 2006 ([www.aypf.org](http://www.aypf.org)).

“Implementing Science Based Prevention: The Experiences Of Eighteen Communities And Progress Towards Inter-Agency Coordination To Reduce Alcohol And Substance Abuse Among Adolescents—Evaluation Report For The Washington State Incentive Grant (July 1998-July 2002),” Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, 2003 ([www.dshs.wa.gov/rda](http://www.dshs.wa.gov/rda)).

“Making The List: Understanding, Selecting, And Replicating Effective Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs,” National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2004 ([www.teenpregnancy.org](http://www.teenpregnancy.org)).

“Less Hype, More Help: Reducing Juvenile Crime – What Works – And What Doesn’t,” American Youth Policy Forum, date unknown ([www.aypf.org](http://www.aypf.org)).

“Some Things That Do Make A Difference for Youth: A Compendium of Evaluations of Youth Programs and Practices” (1997) and “More Things that Do Make a Difference for Youth” (1999), American Youth Policy Forum ([www.aypf.org](http://www.aypf.org)).

“Whatever It Takes: How Twelve Communities Are Reconnecting Out-of-School Youth,” American Youth Policy Forum, 2006 ([www.aypf.org](http://www.aypf.org)).

## **Children and families are safe and secure in their homes, schools and communities.**

*More and more is becoming known about the long-term effects of violence and trauma on children's development. Children who are abused or neglected or who are placed in one or more foster care arrangements experience both physiological as well as psychological consequences. Children in Nobles County are less likely to have substantiated reports of abuse or neglect and to be in out-of-home placements than children across the state.*

*Children involved in serious crimes not only create unsafe situations for others, but are themselves in circumstances that may put their lives in danger and their health and well-being at risk. While highly variable from year to year, children commit serious crimes at about the same rate as in the state as a whole and that rate has been steadily declining over the past decade.*

*Driving while under the influence of alcohol or drugs is a major factor in motor vehicle injuries and fatalities. The rate of DWI violations in Nobles County has historically been above that for Minnesota as a whole, although there was a steep decline in the most recent year.*

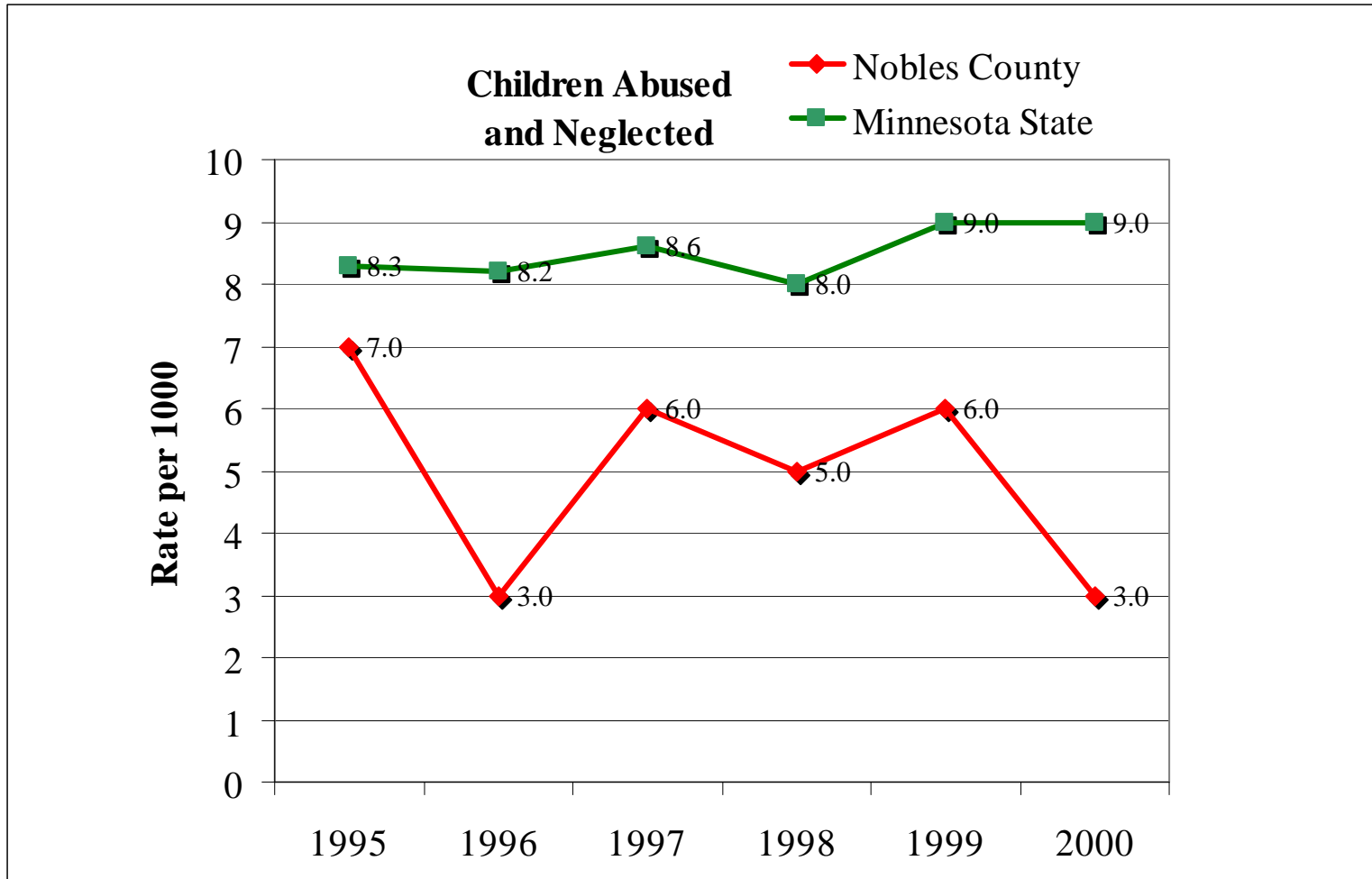
### **Indicators:**

- Rate of children who were abused or neglected
  - Definition: The rate per 1000 of children for whom a report of child abuse or neglect was substantiated by a county child protection worker. Substantiated abuse means that the county has conducted an assessment in response to a report and found that maltreatment occurred.
  - Source: Minnesota KidsCount
- Rate of children placed in out-of-home care
  - Definition: The rate per 1000 of children who spent time in foster care, group homes, emergency shelter or residential treatment facilities during the year, including those formally placed with relatives. This figure does not include most children in correctional facilities.
  - Source: Minnesota KidsCount
- Rate of children arrested for serious crimes
  - Definition: The rate per 1000 of children under 18 arrested for Part I crimes: murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, vehicle theft and arson. Not all children arrested for serious crimes committed these crimes, and some children are not arrested for crimes that they actually committed.
  - Source: Minnesota KidsCount
- Rate of DWI violations
  - Definition: The rate per 1000 of children under 18 arrested for Part I crimes: murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, vehicle theft and arson. Not all children arrested for serious crimes committed these crimes, and some children are not arrested for crimes that they actually committed.

- Source: Minnesota KidsCount

**Observations:**

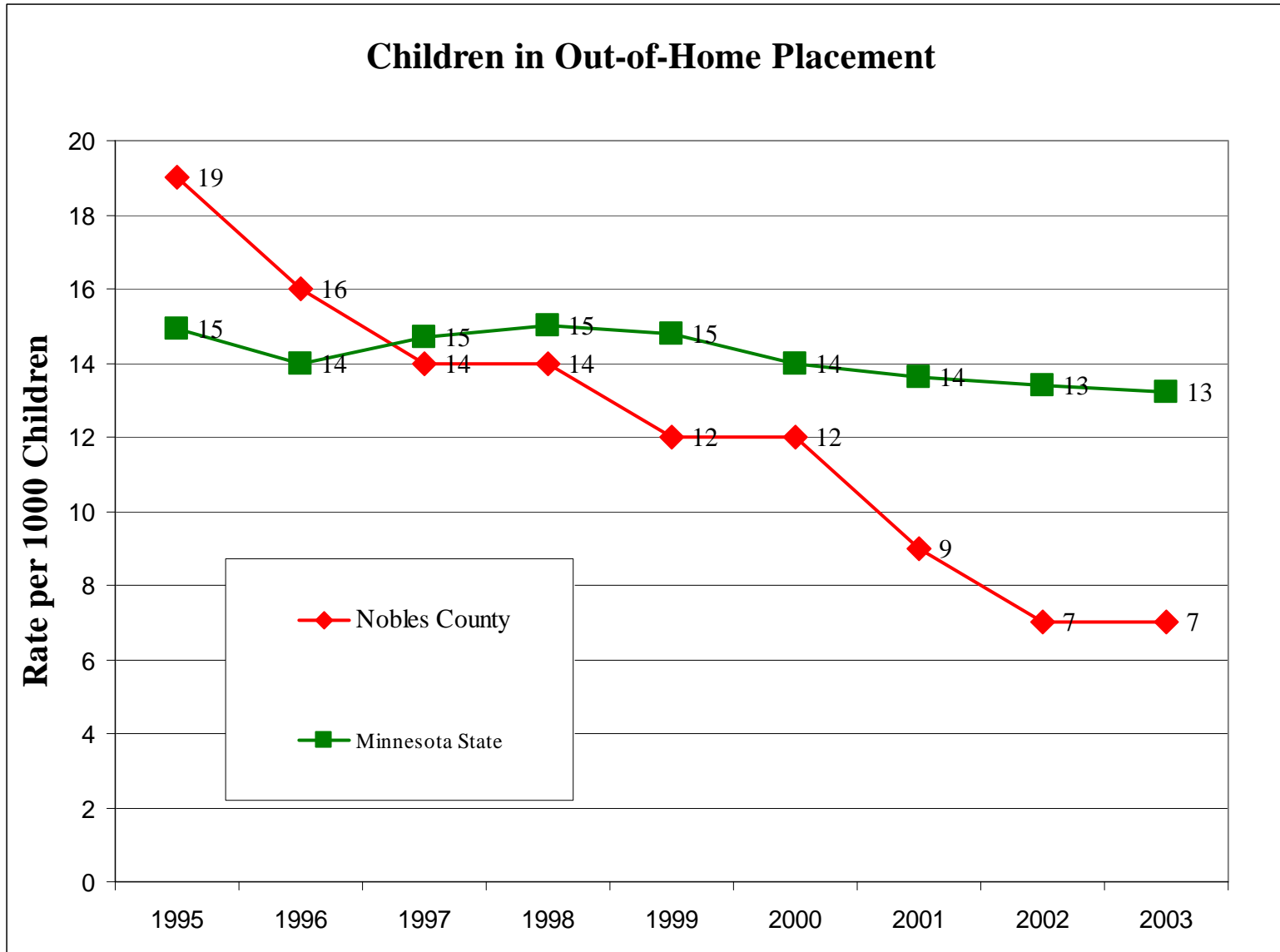
- Rates of substantiated child abuse and neglect and out-of-home placements in Nobles County were less than in Minnesota as a whole and have been declining.
- While varying greatly from year to year, children in Nobles County were, on average, arrested for serious crimes at about the same as statewide.
- Historically, the rate of DWI violations in Nobles County was higher than in the state as whole, although that rate declined substantially in 2004.



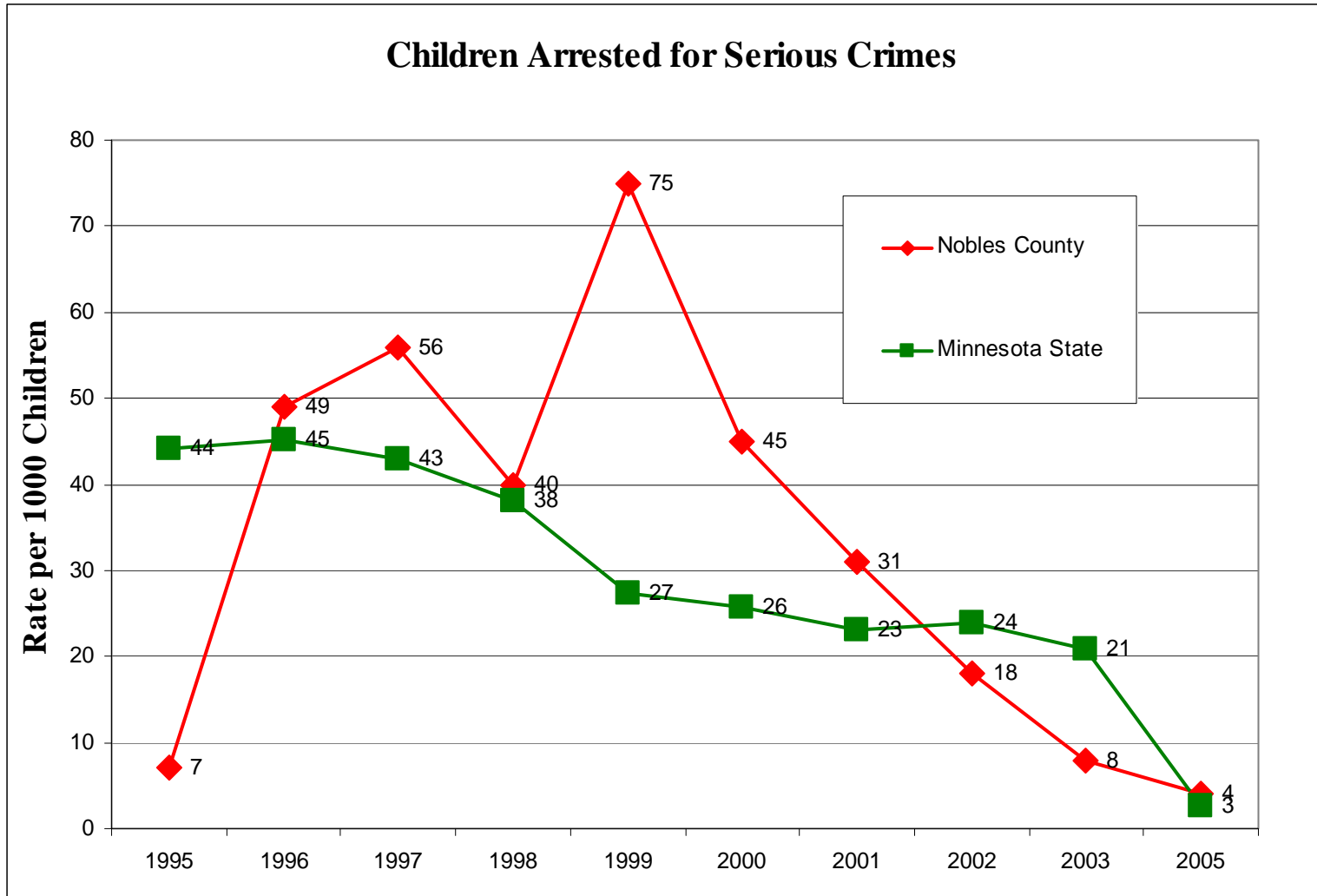
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<sup>25</sup> The rate per 1000 of children for whom a report of child abuse or neglect was substantiated by a county child protection worker. Substantiated abuse means that the county has conducted an assessment in response to a report and found that maltreatment occurred.. (Source: Minnesota KidsCount [www.cdf-mn.org/kidscount.htm](http://www.cdf-mn.org/kidscount.htm)).

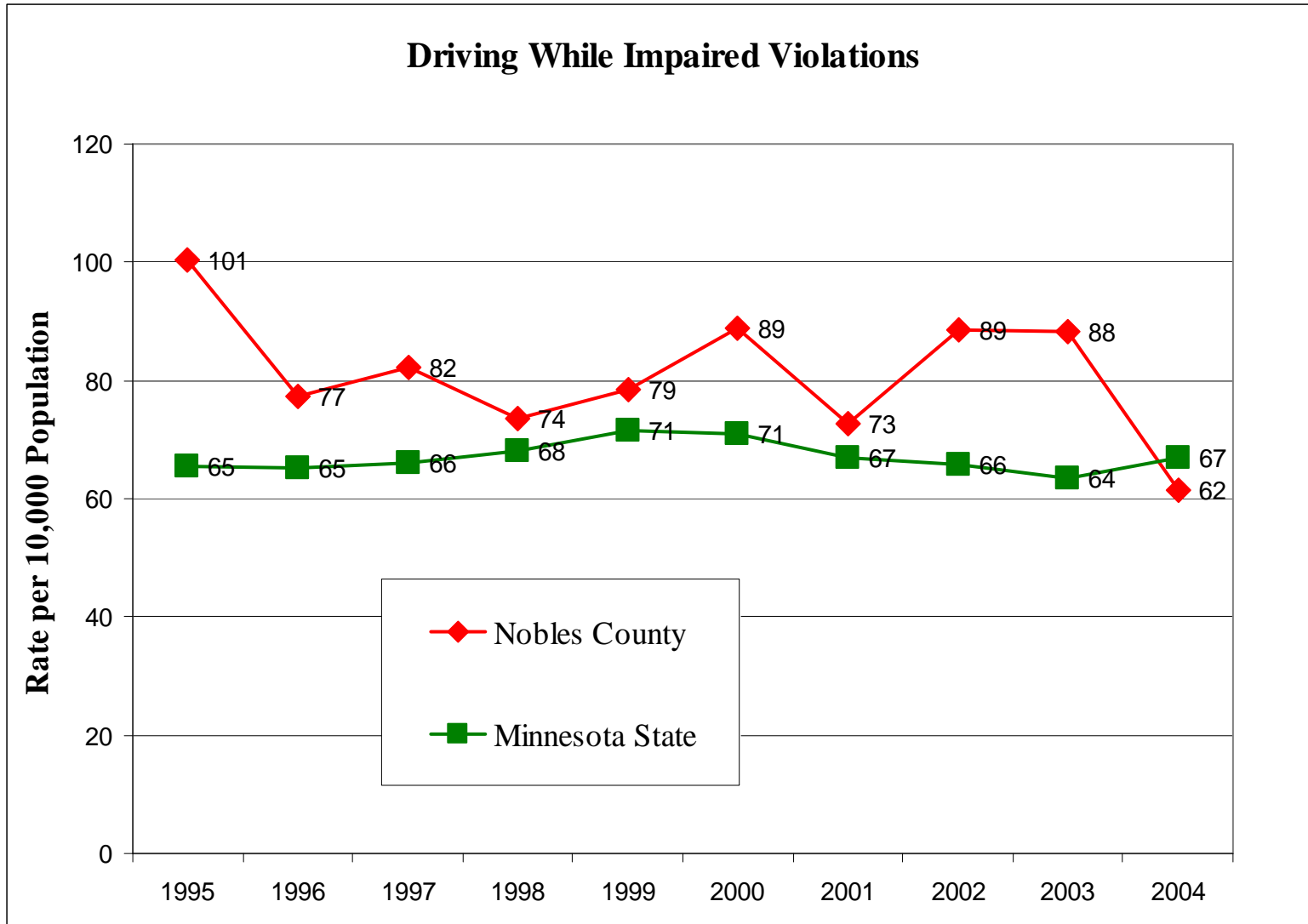




<sup>26</sup> The rate per 1000 of children who spent time in foster care, group homes, emergency shelter or residential treatment facilities during the year, including those formally placed with relatives. This figure does not include most children in correctional facilities. (Source: Minnesota KidsCount [www.cdf-mn.org/kidscount.htm](http://www.cdf-mn.org/kidscount.htm)).



<sup>27</sup> The rate per 1000 of children under 18 arrested for Part I crimes: murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, vehicle theft and arson. Not all children arrested for serious crimes committed these crimes, and some children are not arrested for crimes that they actually committed. (Source: Minnesota KidsCount [www.cdf-mn.org/kidscount.htm](http://www.cdf-mn.org/kidscount.htm)).



<sup>28</sup> The rate per 1000 of children under 18 arrested for Part I crimes: murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, vehicle theft and arson. Not all children arrested for serious crimes committed these crimes, and some children are not arrested for crimes that they actually committed. (Source: Minnesota KidsCount [www.cdf-mn.org/kidscount.htm](http://www.cdf-mn.org/kidscount.htm)).

### **Best Practices in Influencing Parenting Practices**

“...home- and center-based programs with a parenting component improve parental nurturance and discipline. Programs that target families with children with behavior problems improve parents’ skills in dealing with such children...certain family literacy programs improve parents’ skills in talking with their children.”

From: “The Contribution of Parenting to Ethnic and Racial Gaps in School Readiness,” in “School Readiness: Closing Racial and Ethnic Gaps,” Future of Children, Spring 2005 ([www.futureofchildren.org](http://www.futureofchildren.org)).

#### **See:**

“Best Practices: Child Abuse Prevention,” Prevention Leadership Council (Colorado), no date given ([www.colorado.gov/bestpractices/childabuse](http://www.colorado.gov/bestpractices/childabuse)).

“Emerging Practices in the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect,” Caliber Associates, 2003 (<http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov/topics/prevention/emerging/report.pdf>).

“Improving Maternal and Infant Mental Health: Focus on Maternal Depression,” National Center for Infant and Early Childhood Health Policy, 2005 ([www.healthychild.ucla.edu/NationalCenter](http://www.healthychild.ucla.edu/NationalCenter)).

“Promoting Positive Parenting Practices through Parenting Education,” National Center for Infant and Early Childhood Health Policy, January 2005 ([www.healthychild.ucla.edu/NationalCenter](http://www.healthychild.ucla.edu/NationalCenter)).

### **Best Practices in Preventing Community Violence**

“The Guide to Community Preventive Services Fact Sheet: Violence,” Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, June 2005 ([www.astho.org](http://www.astho.org)).

“Preventing violence and related health-risking social behaviors in adolescents,” U.S. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, 2004 ([www.ahrq.gov](http://www.ahrq.gov)).

“Best Practices Of Youth Violence Prevention: A Sourcebook For Community Action. (Rev. Ed.),” Division of Violence Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2002 ([www.cdc.gov/ncipc](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc)).

“Healthy Families America: State Systems Development Guide,” Prevent Child Abuse America, 2003 ([www.preventchildabuse.org](http://www.preventchildabuse.org)).

“Emerging Practices In The Prevention Of Child Abuse And Neglect,” U. S. Office on Child Abuse and Neglect, 2003 ([www.nccanch.acf.hhs.gov](http://www.nccanch.acf.hhs.gov)).

## **Families are supported by the community and have access to needed resources.**

*Families are the most important influence in the lives of young children and even as children move out of childhood into adolescence they continue to play an important role in their children's transition into adulthood. All families need support to be the best teachers, guides, advocates, and caregivers for their children. Some families have kin close at hand to provide or financial resources to pay for supports. Other families are more isolated or have fewer resources and/or greater stressors. Ideally, communities would make a wide array of types and levels of formal and informal supports available for families to use as needed. Often, however, families do not know about available services, are afraid or embarrassed about asking for help, or can't find supports available in their native language or that are accessible and affordable.*

*Parents in Nobles County have found many organizations and groups that have been helpful to them as parents – from churches to ECFE to sports and other programs for their children to support from family advocates, parent liaisons, and social workers. Parents would like to have more information, particularly on how to help their children be successful in school, and opportunities to share experiences with other parents.*

*Professionals working in various Nobles County service agencies see many families struggling with basic needs – employment, housing, food – as well as facing obstacles to accessing the programs and services that are available. Major obstacles in the view of those working in the County include language and cultural issues, transportation, employer leave policies, and fears related to immigration status.*

### **Indicators:**

Currently None

## What Do Professionals in the County Say about What Parents and Families Need?

- *Child care that is caring and where children are learning so that parents can focus on work*
- *Classes and other activities to involve and inform parents*
- *Understanding of importance of their role as parents*
- *Teen parents, and their babies' grandparents, need support*  
(Early Childhood Professionals Focus Group January 2006)
  
- *Basics – food, shelter, employment*
- *Basic parenting skills*
- *Connections with other families*
- *Having a voice, being successful as an advocate with schools*  
(Family Advocates/Parent Liaisons Focus Group January 2006)
  
- *“Life skills on how things work (paying tickets, attending school)”*
- *Learn how to set appropriate boundaries with children, use effective discipline – “don’t know how to handle [children’s misbehavior], some ignore or will go off the deep end”*
- *“Need direction on what is acceptable and not acceptable in Minnesota law” [with regard to youth behavior, parenting practices]*
- *Know what resources are available [such as ECFE]*  
(Adult Services Workers Focus Group January 2006)
  
- *Respite for families with young children*  
(Community Survey Worthington ECI Fall 2004)

## What Do Professionals in the County Say about Challenges to Families Getting the Support They Need?

- *Access to reliable transportation*
  - *Teen parents being supported*
  - *Facilitating father involvement*
- (Community Survey Worthington ECI Fall 2004)*
- *Transportation to preschool and child care*
  - *Cost of programs such as preschool programs*
  - *Language barriers and cultural differences*
  - *Fears about immigration issues*
  - *Family stress and crises (relationships, mental health, financial)*
- (Early Childhood Professionals Focus Group January 2006)*
- *Dynamics within the family – generational/cultural differences in expectations*
  - *“Swift is constantly recruiting for help. Their goal is not to set up permanent housing...Swift has policies that create many barriers for their employees. The employees know that they can easily be replaced if they do not follow the rules.”*
- (Family Advocates/Parent Liaisons Focus Group 2006)*
- *Pride, stigma*
  - *Language barriers*
  - *Fear about deportation or that children will be taken away*
  - *Transportation*
  - *Not knowing what is available*
- (Adult Services Workers Focus Group January 2006)*

## What Do Parents in the County Say about What Has Been Helpful to Them as Parents?

- *After school activities/programs*
- *Summer classes/activities 2*
- *Right On Kids*
- *Social worker*
- *Family Advocate*
- *Preschool*
- *Library*
- *Education classes*
- *Internet access*

*Adrian (8 surveys returned)*

- *Church 17*
- *Optimist Club 12*
- *Special Education 5*
- *School psychologist*
- *Family Advocate 4*
- *Summer School 3*
- *Family Services*

*Ellsworth (28 surveys returned)*

- *Library 3*
- *Community Education 2*
- *ECFE 2*
- *School computer programs*
- *Book fairs*
- *Sports*
- *School web site*
- *One-on-one help from school*

*Round Lake-Brewster (15 surveys returned)*

- *Family Advocates/Parent Liaisons/Community Connectors (34)*
- *Public health (14)*
- *Churches (50)*
- *ECFE (35)*
- *Family Services (15)*
- *SMOC (11)*

*Worthington – Prairie Elementary (118 surveys returned)*

- *Workforce Center*
- *Communication from school 5*
- *Caseworker*

*Worthington – ALC (5 surveys returned)*



## What Do Parents in the County Say about What Would Be Helpful to Them?

- *Assistance for parents in helping with homework*

*Adrian (8 surveys returned)*

- *Parenting programs*

*Round Lake-Brewster (15 surveys returned)*

- *School meetings with parents*

- *Support for parents who don't speak English well (4)*

*Worthington – ALC (5 surveys returned)*

- *Information for parents on academic subjects*

- *Low cost family programs*

- *Parent meetings/resource center (3)*

- *Parent newsletter*

- *More parent-teacher interaction (2)*

- *Classes (exercise, English)*

- *Information on health issues (3)*

- *Affordable child care*

- *Affordable health care*

- *More early childhood programs like Head Start and Even Start*

*Worthington – Prairie Elementary (118 surveys returned)*

## Best Practices in Family Support and Parent Involvement

Principles of Family Support Practice:

- Staff and families work together in relationships based on equality and respect.
- Staff enhance families' capacity to support the growth and development of all family members—adults, youth, and children.
- Families are resources to their own members, to other families, to programs, and to communities.
- Programs affirm and strengthen families' cultural, racial, and linguistic identities and enhance their ability to function in a multicultural society.
- Programs are embedded in their communities and contribute to the community-building process.
- Programs advocate with families for services and systems that are fair, responsive, and accountable to the families served.
- Practitioners work with families to mobilize formal and informal resources to support family development.
- Programs are flexible and continually responsive to emerging family and community issues.
- Principles of family support are modeled in all program activities, including planning, governance, and administration.

From Family Support America ([www.familysupportamerica.org](http://www.familysupportamerica.org))

### See:

“Family Support: Fostering Leadership And Partnership To Improve Access And Quality,” National Center for Infant and Early Childhood Health Policy, 2004 ([www.healthychild.ucla.edu/nationalcenter](http://www.healthychild.ucla.edu/nationalcenter)).

“No More Islands: Family Involvement in 27 School and Youth Programs,” American Youth Policy Forum, date unknown ([www.aypf.org](http://www.aypf.org)).

“Taking a Closer Look: A Guide to Online Resources on Family Involvement,” Harvard Family Research Project, no date given, ([www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/content/projects/fine/resources/guide/tools.html](http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/content/projects/fine/resources/guide/tools.html)).

“Parent Involvement Toolkit for School Leaders,” Pritchard Committee for Academic Excellence (Kentucky) , no date given ([www.fcps.net/fcs/default.asp?prcItem=10](http://www.fcps.net/fcs/default.asp?prcItem=10)).

“Family Economic Success Pathway,” Pathways Mapping Initiative, no date given ([www.pathwaystooutcomes.org](http://www.pathwaystooutcomes.org)).

## Community supports the development of assets for children and youth.

*The community – whether that means local government and its investments in youth programs and services, after school programs offered through the schools, church and other youth groups, opportunities for youth employment or for volunteer community service – is an important factor in the healthy development of children and youth.*

*Parents noted a number of activities and programs available in their local community that they feel have benefited their children. Both they and local young people believed that more were needed and barriers to youth participation, such as transportation, addressed.*

### Indicators:

Currently none

### What Do Professionals in the County Say?

:

- *Community assets:*
  - *Public library*
  - *Parks and playgrounds*
- *Concerns in community:*
  - *Safe affordable housing*
  - *Jobs with adequate wages and benefits*
  - *Family-friendly businesses/employers*

*(Community Survey Worthington ECI Fall 2004)*

*“Need employer cooperation with parents to allow time with child for health concerns and school. For example, an older sister brought a sibling to preschool screening because the parent was afraid to lose his/her job—older siblings stay home from school to watch sick sibling—hard to get time off for medical appointments”*

*(Adult Services Workers Focus Group January 2006)*

**What Do Parents in the County Say about Activities and Programs (Outside of School) that Benefit Their Children?**

- *Sports (5)*
- *Learning activities with parents*
- *After school program(2)*
- *Breakfast program*
- *Quest classes at Y*
- *Library*
- *Church*
- *ECFE*

*Adrian (8 surveys returned)*

- *CIRCLE mentoring (2)*
- *Youth groups (Scouts, 4-H) (4)2*
- *Sports and physical activities (9)*
- *After school program*
- *Summer programs (4)*
- *Computer learning programs*
- *Educational TV*
- *Library visits*
- *Church*

*Round Lake-Brewster (15 surveys returned)*

- *The Y (69)*
- *After school academic program (16)*
- *Scouts (19)*
- *Kids College (9)*
- *Library programs (36)*
- *Quest classes (15)*
- *Community education classes (32)*
- *Church youth groups (59)*

*Worthington Prairie Elementary (118 surveys returned)*

## What Do Parents in the County Say about Other Activities and Programs that Could Benefit Their Children?

- *Transportation for after school activities*
- *Youth center*
- *Socialization experiences*
- *After school programs that build life skills*
- *Summer camp/activities*
- *School social worker*
- *Study skills classes*

*Adrian (8 surveys returned)*

- *Church youth group (19)*
- *Mentoring/tutoring (2)*
- *4-H (8)*
- *Sports (1)*
- *Better communication with school (5)*

*Ellsworth (28 surveys returned)*

- *Summer programs (3)*
- *After school activities (4)*
- *Boy Scouts*
- *Tutoring (2)*
- *Enrichment activities*
- *Access to computers*
- *Socialization experiences*

*Round Lake-Brewster (15 surveys returned)*

- *Mentoring/tutoring (4)*
- *Sports (3)*
- *Physical activities (7)*
- *After school activities (3)*
- *Summer school/programs (7)*
- *Transportation*
- *Socialization experiences (2)*
- *Enrichment activities (5)*

*Worthington Prairie Elementary (118 surveys returned)*

## What Do Youth in the County Say?

*Ideas for youth programs*

- *Have variety of programs [to attract youth and keep them interested]*
- *Have a place where can hang out (mall is closing, just drive around, end up going to Sioux Falls) – “a place where they have like living rooms, movies playing, a little bit of different things, like what teens will do to hang out but all in one place”*

*(Youth Voices Worthington Focus Group April 2004)*

## Best Practices in Ensuring Positive Youth Development

### See:

“Growing Absolutely Fantastic Youth: A Review Of The Research On ‘Best Practices’,” Konopka Institute for Best Practices in Adolescent Health, 2000 ([www.med.umn.edu/peds/gpah/programs/bestpractices/home.html](http://www.med.umn.edu/peds/gpah/programs/bestpractices/home.html)).

“Some Things That Do Make A Difference for Youth: A Compendium of Evaluations of Youth Programs and Practices” (1997) and “More Things that Do Make a Difference for Youth” (1999), American Youth Policy Forum ([www.aypf.org](http://www.aypf.org)).

“Helping Teens Develop Healthy Social Skills and Relationships: What the Research Shows about Navigating Adolescence,” Child Trends, July 2002 ([www.childtrends.org](http://www.childtrends.org)).

“Lessons Learned About Effective Policies And Practices For Out-Of-School-Time Programming,” American Youth Policy Forum, 2003 ([www.aypf.org](http://www.aypf.org)).

“Helping Youth Succeed through Out-of-School-Time Programs” American Youth Policy Forum, January 2006 ([www.aypf.org](http://www.aypf.org)).

“Implementing Science Based Prevention: The Experiences Of Eighteen Communities And Progress Towards Inter-Agency Coordination To Reduce Alcohol And Substance Abuse Among Adolescents—Evaluation Report For The Washington State Incentive Grant (July 1998-July 2002),” Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, 2003 ([www.dshs.wa.gov/rda](http://www.dshs.wa.gov/rda)).

“Making The List: Understanding, Selecting, And Replicating Effective Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs,” National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2004 ([www.teenpregnancy.org](http://www.teenpregnancy.org)).

“Less Hype, More Help: Reducing Juvenile Crime – What Works – And What Doesn’t,” American Youth Policy Forum, date unknown ([www.aypf.org](http://www.aypf.org)).

“Whatever It Takes: How Twelve Communities Are Reconnecting Out-of-School Youth,” American Youth Policy Forum, 2006 ([www.aypf.org](http://www.aypf.org)).

## **Community resources are used efficiently and effectively.**

*Like most communities, Nobles County and the towns in this rural area have limited resources and in fact have seen cut-backs in public expenditures, such as school budgets. A central tenet of the Nobles County Family Connections collaborative was to make the best use of available resources through coordination among effective programs and services regardless of their organizational home.*

*Suggestions for improving services for children and families revolve around improved communication among agency staff and with the public, re-locating services or providing services at non-traditional times,, providing interpreter and related services to non-English speaking families, and making materials easier to understand and streamlining processes.*

### **Indicators:**

Currently none

### **What Do Professionals in the County Say about Their Work and Ways to Improve Services?**

*All professionals involved in focus groups conducted in 2006 (early childhood professionals, family advocates/parent liaisons, adult services workers) “...see themselves as bridges – connecting people to further resources, education and support services. A key role is to build trust. All...see their role as helping parents to be better parents in some way.”*

*Gaps in services and supports and ways to improve service delivery:*

- *Improve interagency communication*
- *Make location and hours of services more convenient*
- *Streamline paperwork*
- *Have more bilingual/bi-cultural staff and resources*
- *Get parents more involved*

## **What Specific Suggestions do Professionals in the County Have?**

- *Outreach and identification of families*
- *Bilingual professionals*
- *Health care costs and access/availability of dental care*
- *Streamline forms to determine eligibility for services*
- *Offer pre-K*
- *Work with employers to make it easier for parents to respond to family needs (such as when children are sick)*

*Early Childhood Professionals Focus Group January 2006*

- *“Interpreters are not available in every language.” “We need to provide something in their language – either written or verbal.”*
- *Some parents might be able to read...[but] the terminology is difficult through translation...We need to share information in a meaningful way by working with parents at their level that they understand.”*
- *Educate teachers and parents about cultural differences*
- *“Update ourselves—we are infringing upon other agencies on what we have, what we offer – keep communication open”*
- *“We meet but other agencies don’t give us feedback...The only time I hear from a social worker is if I call them. My dream is to have meetings...to work with me.”*
- *Setting priorities, clarifying focus of program, getting more leadership and supervisory support*

*Family Advocates/Parent Liaisons Focus Group January 2006*

- *Explanations “need to be direct and in simple laymen’s terms on letters and forms” – “need to spend the time to explain to people”*
- *“Take away the red tape [for better] communication between agencies” – “Less red tape, fewer forms, streamline the process”*
- *“If agency refers someone to another agency, call ahead to explain the situation, clarify the situation, and prepare the receiving party for the client”*
- *“ECFE services have been cut, parents can’t afford it, and there is no transportation”*
- *Language services*
- *“Change provider hours to outside of traditional hours”*
- *“Immigration attorneys are always needed...need somewhere to get answers...rumors cause fear”*
- *Put all services in same building or have satellite offices in smaller communities “It is a hardship for some to come to Worthington...be more accessible in smaller communities. Ideally, all services would be available – could stagger hours to accomplish this.”*
- *Have a “newcomer week/day to introduce community services” – give out informational packets*

*Adult Services Workers Focus Group January 2006*



## **Best Practices in Effective Services for Children and Families**

### **See:**

“Attributes of Effectiveness: Family Economic Success” and “Attributes of Effectiveness: School Readiness,” Pathways Mapping Initiative, no date given ([www.pathwaystooutcomes.org](http://www.pathwaystooutcomes.org)).

Publications of the Child and Family Policy Center (Charles Bruner) in areas of:

- Early childhood and school readiness
- Family support and frontline service
- Comprehensive, community-based services
- Child welfare and family preservation

([www.cfpciowa.org/publications](http://www.cfpciowa.org/publications)).

“Attributes of Effective Services for Young Children,” summary by Texas Youth Commission, original published in 1991

([www.tyc.state.tx.us/prevention/services.html](http://www.tyc.state.tx.us/prevention/services.html)).

## A Profile of the People of Nobles County at the 2000 Census<sup>29</sup>

- **Population Distribution by Age**
  - Nobles County’s population, like that of Minnesota as a whole, is about one-quarter children under the age of 18.
  - A higher proportion of Nobles County residents are over the age of 65 – 17 percent compared with 12 percent.
  
- **Special Populations**
  - Overall, more residents of Nobles County were born outside of the United States than in the state. – 9 percent compared with 5 percent.
  - More than three times as many Nobles County residents identify as Hispanic than do in Minnesota as a whole – almost 11 percent compared with about 3 percent.
  - The difference between Nobles County and the state in percent of the population identifying as Asian is much smaller – 3.6 percent compared with 2.8 percent.
  - More than three times as many Nobles County adult residents do not speak English well or at all – over 7 percent compared with 2 percent.
  
- **Human Resources**
  - Twice as many adult residents of Nobles County did not have a high school diploma or GED as in Minnesota – almost one-quarter in Nobles County compared with 12 percent in the state as a whole.
  - The median income for households in Nobles County was almost \$36,000 in 2000 – more than \$10,000 less than the statewide average.
  
- **Child Poverty<sup>30</sup>**
  - Historically, more of Nobles County’s children have lived in families with incomes below the federal poverty line than in Minnesota as a whole.<sup>31</sup>

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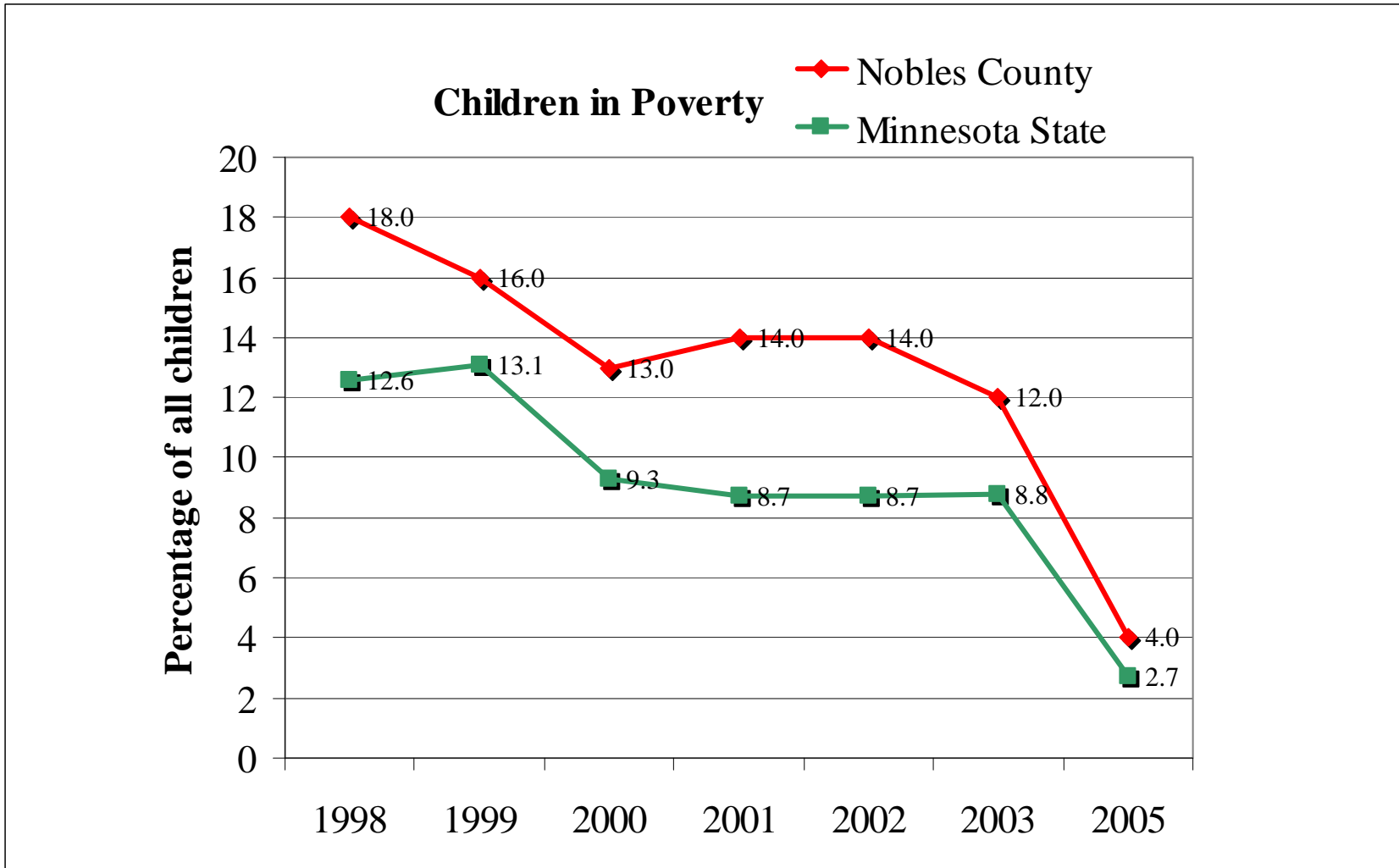
<sup>29</sup> See the attached charts produced from DataPlace, a [KnowledgePlex®](#) initiative sponsored by the [Fannie Mae Foundation](#). DataPlace provides easy access to data at geographic scales ranging from the neighborhood to the nation. The site currently contains data from the 1990 and 2000 Censuses (demographic, economic, housing, and social characteristics), Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (home mortgage applications and loans), Section 8 Expiring Use database (neighborhood- and property-level data on federally assisted housing at risk of loss), and Consolidated Plan special tabulations (data on housing needs by household income level).

<sup>30</sup> See the graphs below.

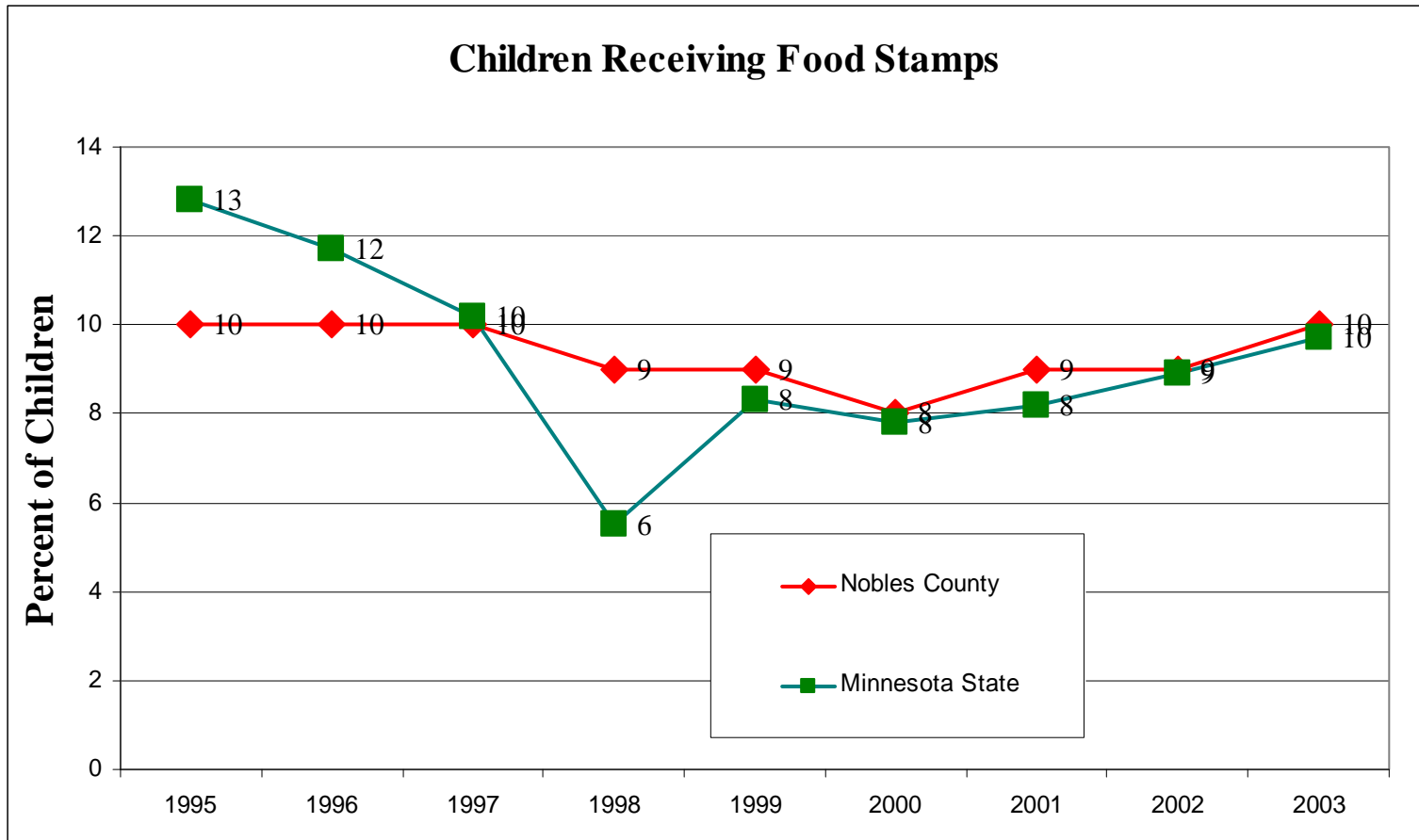
- Although the current projected proportion of the child population living in poverty is low both in Nobles County and in the state – 4 percent and 2.7 percent, respectively – Nobles County children are still poorer than in many other communities in Minnesota.
- Federal programs provide food support to children and families who are low income, but with incomes above the poverty line. Some eligible families do not apply, however.
- About 10 percent of the children in Nobles County and in the state receive food stamps.
- Many more school age children in Nobles County participate in the free and reduced school lunch program than do in the state as a whole. In 1995 32 percent of school children in Nobles County participated in the school lunch program compared with 25 percent in Minnesota as a whole – a difference of 7 percentage points. In 2003, not only had the percentages increased but so had the gap – 43 percent of Nobles County school children were in the school lunch program compared with 28 in Minnesota Children – a difference of 15 percentage points.

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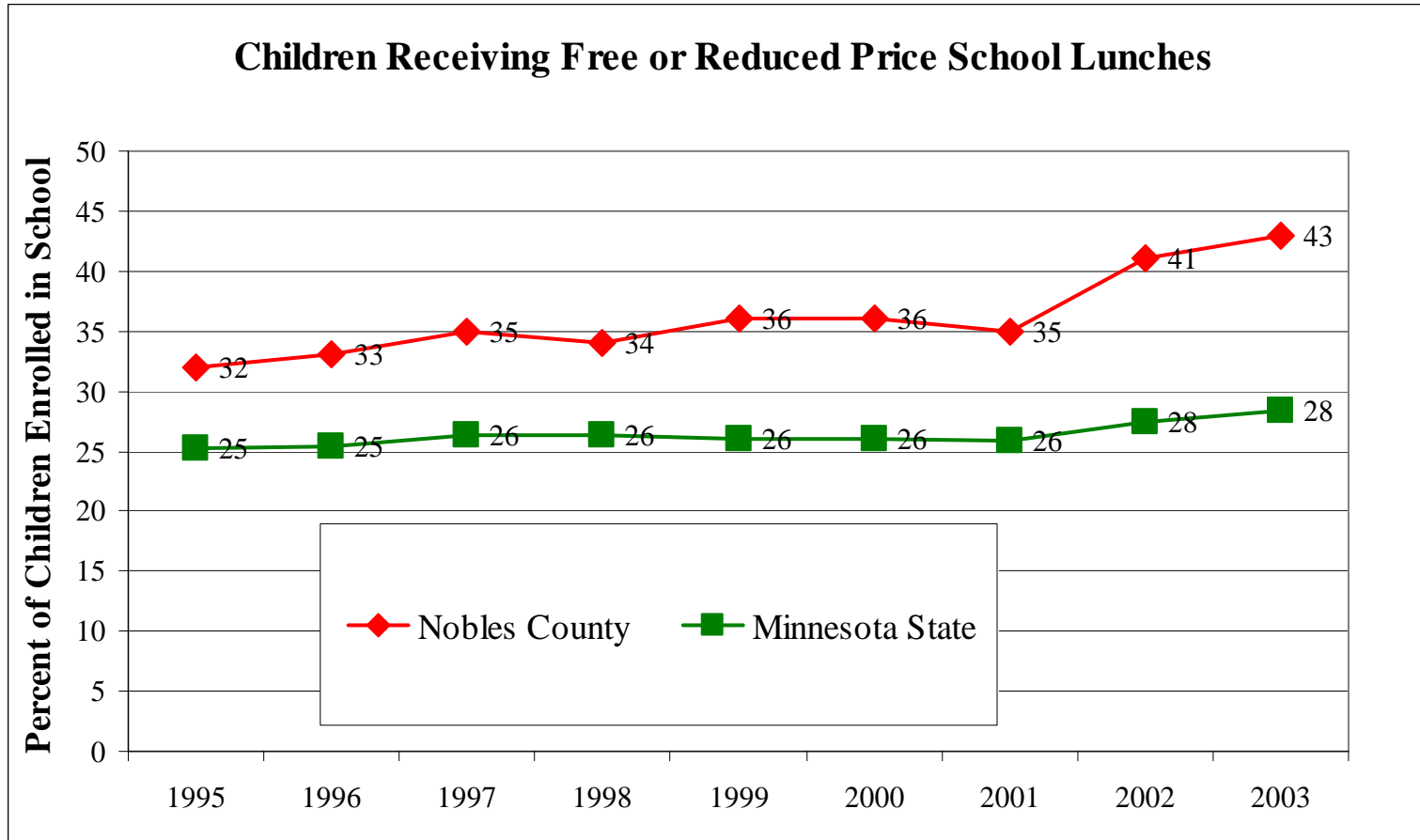
<sup>31</sup> Child poverty rate is an estimate of the percentage of children below the federal poverty line. The Census Bureau creates this estimate based on administrative data derived from tax returns, counts of food stamp participants, data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), decennial census estimates, intercensal population estimates, and the March Current Population Survey (CPS). (Source: Minnesota KidsCount. <http://www.cdf-mn.org/kidscount.htm>).



<sup>32</sup>An estimate of the percentage of children below the federal poverty line. The Census Bureau creates this estimate based on administrative data derived from tax returns, counts of food stamp participants, data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), decennial census estimates, intercensal population estimates, and the March Current Population Survey (CPS). (Source: Minnesota KidsCount. [www.cdf-mn.org/kidscount.htm](http://www.cdf-mn.org/kidscount.htm)).



<sup>33</sup> The percent of children receiving food stamps during July of each year. The percentage is the estimated number of children receiving food stamps divided by the estimated total number of children in the state or county. Not all income-eligible children participate in the program. (Source: Minnesota KidsCount [/www.cdf-mn.org/kidscount.htm](http://www.cdf-mn.org/kidscount.htm)).



<sup>34</sup> The percent of children approved to receive these meals in October of each school year. Family income must be below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level. The percentage is the number of children approved divided by the total enrollment. Schools are assigned to the county where their district offices are located. Not all income-eligible children participate in the program, and private and home-schooled children are not included. (Source: Minnesota KidsCount [www.cdf-mn.org/kidscount.htm](http://www.cdf-mn.org/kidscount.htm)).