4. STANDARDS MAINTENANCE

To ensure maintenance of the standards set in previous years, students' scores on the 2008 TSA tests were equated with students' scores on the 2007 TSA tests. This was done by administering the same Research Test to a sample of students in both years, as shown diagrammatically below.

	Research Test	**2007 TSA**	**2008 TSA**
2007 Equating Sample			
2008 Equating Sample			

Note: Different shadings indicate different sets of items.

Having equated 2008 TSA with scores on earlier TSA tests, the same cut score as used in previous years was used to calculate percentages of students achieving basic competency.

The final result in Territory-wide percentages of students achieving basic competency in 2008 is summarised in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Territory-wide Percentages of Students Achieving Basic Competency

Subject and Level		Percent Achieving Basic Competency				
		2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Chinese Language	P.3	82.7	84.7	85.2	84.9	85.4
(Listening, Reading and Writing)	P.6	--	75.8	76.5	76.7	76.4
	S.3*	--	--	75.6	76.2	76.5
English Language	P.3	75.9	78.8	79.4	79.5	79.3
(Listening, Reading and Writing)	P.6	--	70.5	71.3	71.3	71.5
	S.3	--	--	68.6	69.2	68.9
Mathematics	P.3	84.9	86.8	86.9	86.9	86.9
	P.6	--	83.0	83.8	83.8	84.1
	S.3	--	--	78.4	79.9	79.8

Note: Chinese Audio-visual component included in the calculation of the cut score at the S.3 level in 2007 and 2008.

At all three levels, the proportion of students achieving basic competency was once again highest in Mathematics followed by Chinese Language and English Language. At the primary level, results for 2007 were virtually unchanged from 2006. At all three levels, the percentages of students achieving the basic competency in 2008 were virtually the same as in 2007.

In the case of performance at P.3, with five consecutive years of results, it is possible to discern overall trends, which are shown graphically in Figure 4.1. There was a significant improvement in 2005 in all three subjects, a small improvement in 2006 in the two languages and virtually no change in 2007 and 2008.

Figure 4.1. P.3 Territory-wide percentages of students achieving basic competency

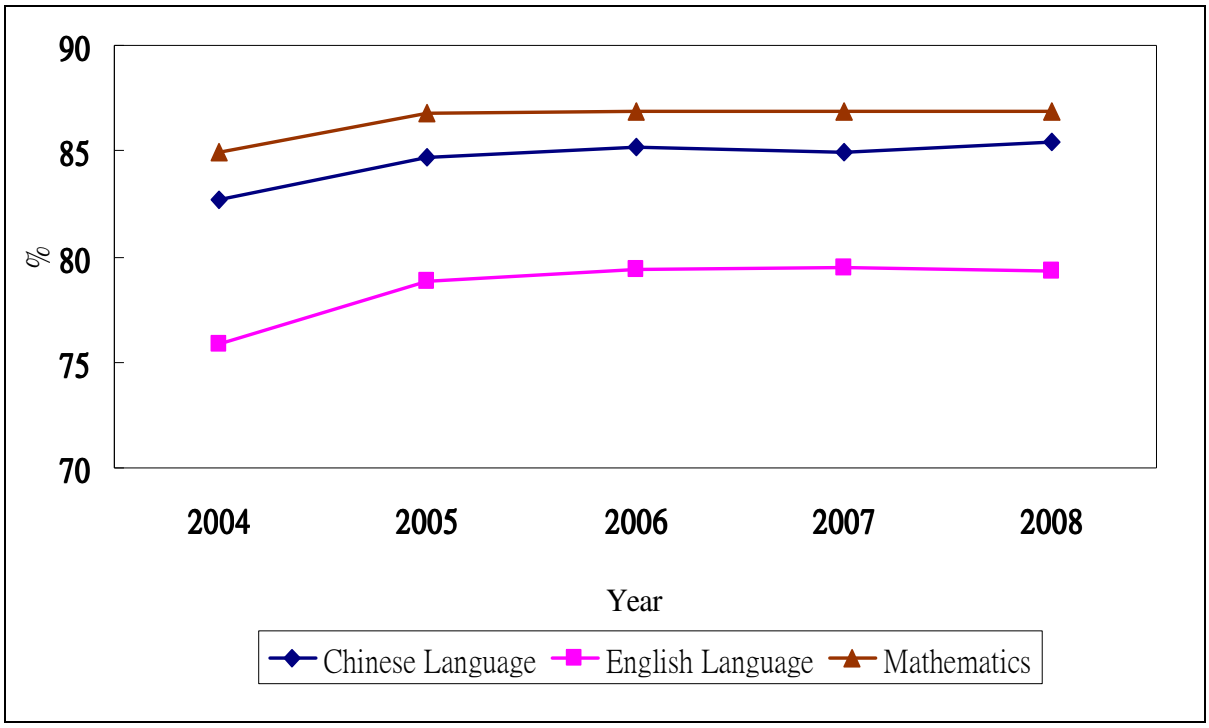

Table 4.2 summarises some key statistics for those P6 and S3 TSA 2008 students who also took the TSA in both 2005 and 2008.

Table 4.2 Percentages of Students Achieving or Not Achieving Basic Competency in Both 2005 and 2008

	Chinese Language		English Language		Mathematics	
	P.6	S.3	P.6	S.3	P.6	S.3
Achieved basic competency in both 2005 and 2008	74.0%	69.5%	67.9%	64.4%	82.0%	77.1%
Achieved basic competency in 2005 but not 2008	11.9%	9.1%	11.3%	7.8%	6.8%	8.8%
Achieved basic competency in 2008 but not 2005	3.8%	8.5%	4.7%	6.4%	3.7%	4.0%

To generate this table, it was necessary to link the data for 2005 and 2008. The number of students that were successfully linked was smaller than the total number of students currently in P.6 and S.3. This is largely explained by problems in matching some students on the basis of their STRN identifier. It was however possible to identify records for around 85% of students who sat the TSA in 2005 when they were in P.3 and in 2008 when they were in P.6, and of around 87% students who sat the TSA in 2005 when they were in P.6 and in 2008 when they were in S.3.

As anticipated, most students achieved basic competency both in 2005 and in 2008. In fact, with the exception of Chinese at the S3 level, the percentages of such students, indicated in the first row of Table 4.2, are only 2-4% lower than the percentages for all students achieving basic competency in 2008, as summarized in Table 4.1. This indicates the importance of prior attainment on future success. If they do well early on, students are likely to do well in future years.

The percentages of students who achieved basic competency in 2005, but not in 2008 were greater than the percentages achieving basic competency in 2008 but not in 2005. This is as expected, since as can be seen from Table 4.1, the proportion of students achieving basic competency decreases over the Key Stages, in line with the widely observed tendency for a growing achievement gap to emerge between high and low performing students over successive years of schooling.

What is noticeable, however, is that for Mathematics the proportion achieving basic competency in P.3 but not in P.6 is smaller than for the two language subjects. This may reflect the fact that Mathematics learning builds strongly on mastery of discrete competences and is more hierarchical in nature than the language subjects. Therefore, performance at P.3 in this subject is highly predictive of performance at P.6.

The issues raised by Table 4.2 will be further examined in 2010, when it will be possible, for the first time, to track the first cohort of students over six years from P.3 to P.6 to S.3.