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Council of the Great City Schools

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Large City Schools Maintain Long-Term Gains on National Test

Some Big-City Schools Show Significant Progress since 2015

WASHINGTON, April 10 – Student achievement in the nation’s big-city public schools largely held steady between 2015 and 2017 on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), while continuing to show longer term gains in both reading and math over the last 10 to 15 years.

Since 2015, large city public schools saw little change in eighth-grade reading and math and in fourth-grade reading, but they saw a significant decline in fourth-grade math—the first such decline in any subject or grade since large cities began participating in *The Nation’s Report Card: Mathematics and Reading Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA)*.

At the same time, several participating cities defied broader national trends and produced significant gains. For instance, San Diego saw significant gains in fourth-grade reading and math compared to 2015, and it had numerically higher scores in both subjects at the eighth-grade level. Duval County (Jacksonville), Fresno, and Miami-Dade County posted significant gains in fourth-grade math and Albuquerque and Boston saw significant gains in eighth-grade reading.

In all, five city school districts saw numerically higher scores in at least three subject/grade combinations: San Diego, Atlanta, Fresno, Hillsborough County (Tampa), and Los Angeles. Four additional city school districts saw numerically higher scores in two subject/grade combinations: Chicago, the District of Columbia, Duval County, and Miami-Dade County. And six other cities showed numerically higher scores in one subject or grade: Albuquerque, Austin, Boston, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Cleveland, and Detroit.

In addition, the new data show that several major city school systems scored comparably to or above the national average, including Austin, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Duval County, Guilford County (Greensboro, N.C.), Hillsborough County, Miami-Dade County, and San Diego, in fourth-grade math. In fourth-grade reading, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Duval County, Guilford County, Hillsborough County, Jefferson County (Louisville), Miami-Dade County, and San Diego posted 2017 scores that were at or above national averages. At the eighth-grade level,

Austin, Boston, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Duval County, Hillsborough County, and San Diego scored comparably to or above the national average in either reading or math—or both.

“We are still striving to increase the pace of progress in all of our big-city school districts, and the Trial Urban District Assessment helps us to analyze and accelerate student achievement,” says Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools, the nation’s primary coalition of large urban public-school systems.

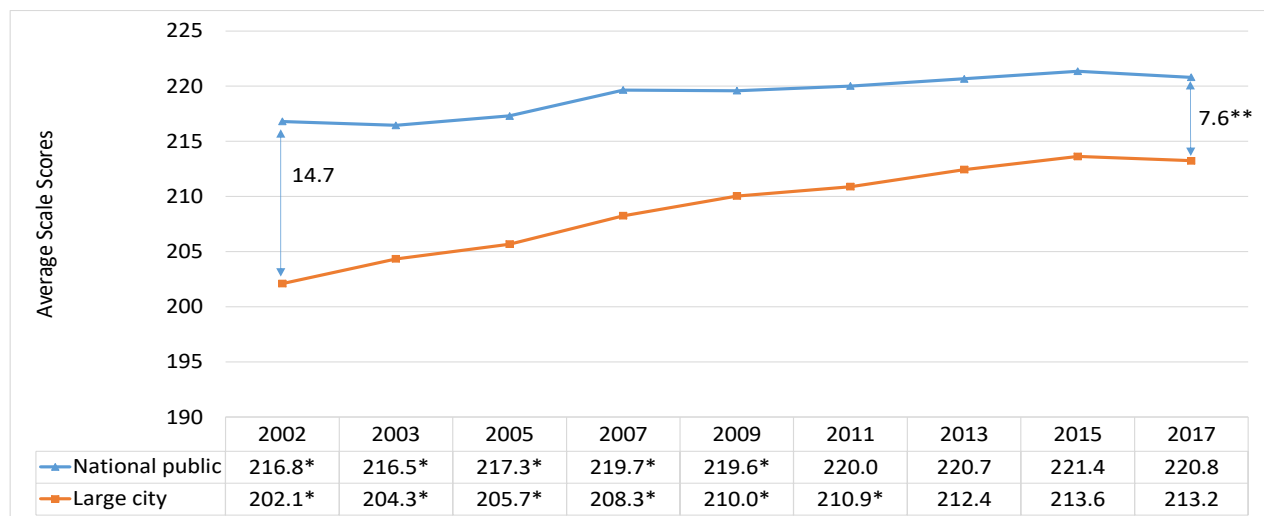
In 2000, the Council appealed to Congress to allow urban school districts to participate independently in the rigorous national test so that the nation’s largest school systems could track their progress against other cities, states, and the nation. Under TUDA, 27 big-city school districts participated in the 2017 urban NAEP, with Clark County (Las Vegas), Denver, Fort Worth, Guilford County (Greensboro), and Shelby County (Memphis) participating for the first time. Milwaukee also rejoined the TUDA program after not participating in 2015.

Reading and Math Progress Over Time

Long-term growth in reading and math scores in large city schools significantly decreased the achievement gap with the nation over the last 15 years.

Between 2002 and 2017, large city schools have narrowed the gap with the nation from 14.7 scale score points to 7.6 in fourth-grade reading, and from 12.5 points to 7.4 in eighth-grade reading. In math, between 2003 and 2017, large cities narrowed the gap with the nation from 10 points to 7.6 in the fourth grade, and from 14.2 points to 7.7 in the eighth grade—meaning that over the long run large city schools have improved faster than the nation at large.

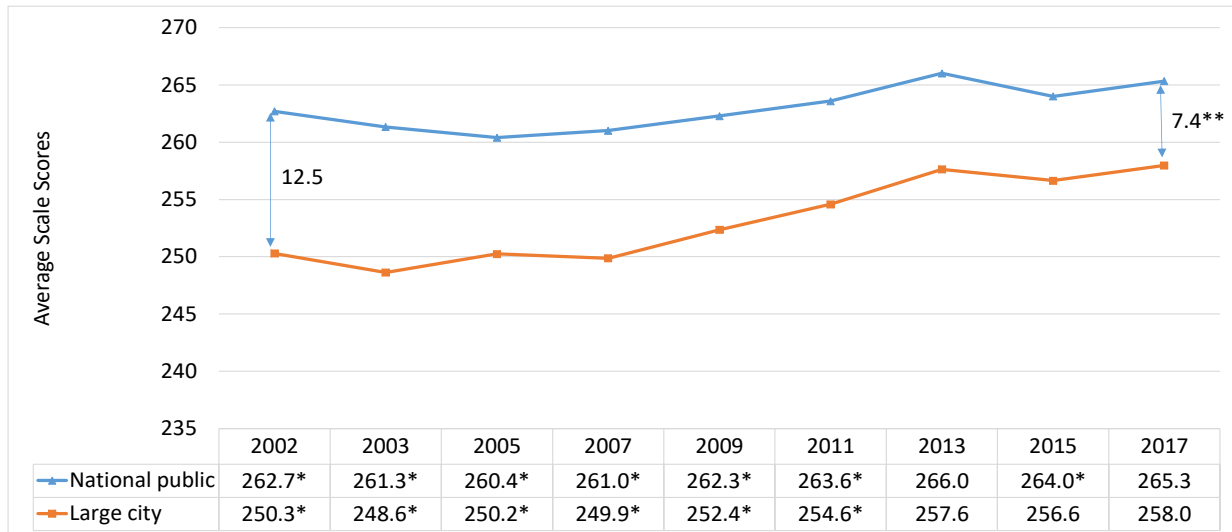
Average Scale Scores for Public School Students on NAEP Reading in Grade 4, 2002-2017



*Value is significantly different ($p < .05$) from the value for the same jurisdiction and student group in 2017.

**Gap is significantly different ($p < .05$) from the gap in 2002.

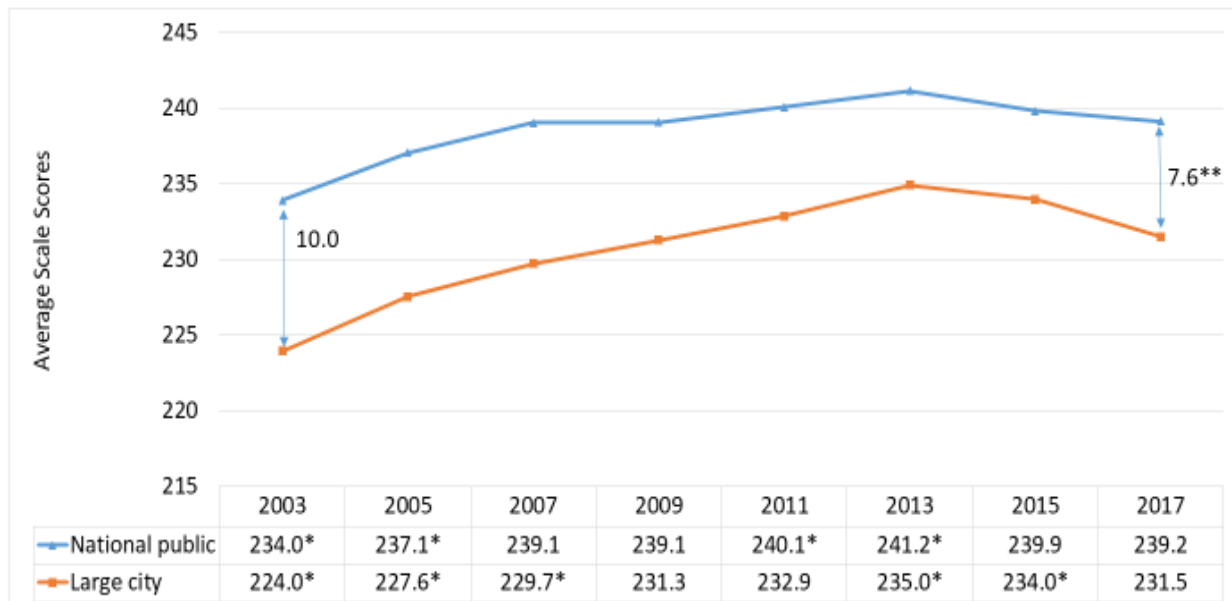
Average Scale Scores for Public School Students on NAEP Reading in Grade 8, 2002-2017



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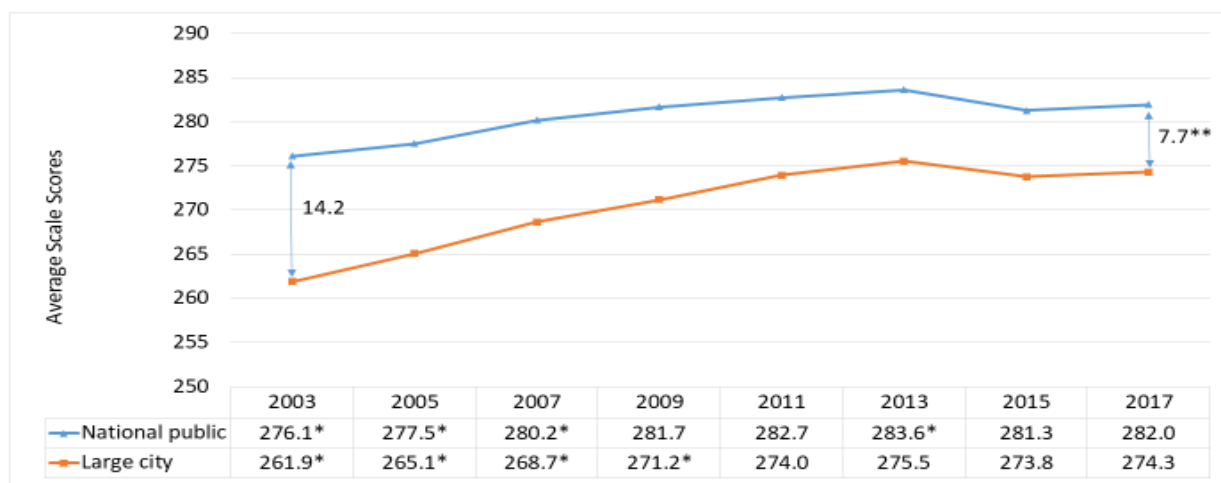
Average Scale Scores for Public School Students on NAEP Mathematics in Grade 4, 2003-2017



*Value is significantly different ($p < .05$) from the value for the same jurisdiction and student group in 2017.

**Gap is significantly different ($p < .05$) from the gap in 2003.

Average Scale Scores for Public School Students on NAEP Mathematics in Grade 8, 2003-2017



*Value is significantly different ($p < .05$) from the value for the same jurisdiction and student group in 2017.

**Gap is significantly different ($p < .05$) from the gap in 2003.

Since TUDA began in 2002 (reading) and 2003 (math), cities that have made among the largest gains in reading or math include Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, the District of Columbia, Los Angeles, Miami-Dade County, and San Diego.

Overall progress on the national public sample appears to have leveled off or dropped compared to 2013 for reasons that are unclear. The nation's large cities often reflect this broader trend except in the specific cities cited earlier. Preliminary analysis by the Council of the Great City Schools of fourth-grade math results, for example, indicated that many of the cities that declined on NAEP held steady or improved on PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) or SBAC (Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium), suggesting a possible alignment issue rather than a performance problem. The organization respectfully requests that the National Assessment Governing Board and the National Center for Education Statistics work with the Council and others to better understand the new results and to determine what might be done to avoid the public's misinterpreting trends in the data.

Progress of Black and Hispanic Students

The average scores in reading of African American fourth graders in large city schools were 204 in 2015 and 203 in 2017. The average reading scores of Hispanic fourth graders in large cities were 206 in both 2015 and 2017.

The average scores in reading of African American eighth graders in large city schools were 246 in both 2015 and 2017. The average scores in reading of Hispanic eighth graders were 251 in 2015 and 253 in 2017.

The average scores in math of African American fourth graders in large cities were 222 in 2015 and 220 in 2017. The average scores in math of Hispanic fourth graders were 230 in 2015 and 227 in 2017.

The average scores in math of African American eighth graders in large cities were 258 in 2015 and 257 in 2017. The average scores in math of Hispanic eighth graders in large cities were 268 in 2015 and 267 in 2017.

However, between 2003 and 2017 African American students in large cities improved ten points in fourth-grade reading; eight points in fourth-grade math; ten points in eighth-grade math; and six points in eighth-grade reading. Over the same period, Hispanic students in large cities improved 12 points in eighth-grade reading; 12 points in eighth-grade math; nine points in fourth-grade reading; and eight points in fourth-grade math.

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