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Council of the Great City Schools
1301 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. ♦ Suite 702 ♦ Washington, D.C. ♦ 20004
<http://www.cgcs.org>

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CONTACT: Tonya Harris
(202) 393-2427 or tharris@cgcs.org

Large City Schools Hold Steady on National Test Amidst Nationwide Decline

Several Big-City Schools Make Substantial Gains

WASHINGTON, Oct. 28—Students in the nation’s large city public schools held steady in fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in the face of declining national scores in three of four subject and grade combinations.

The Nation’s Report Card: 2015 Mathematics and Reading Trial Urban District Assessment reveals that average mathematics and reading scores for students in large cities were stable in both grades 4 and 8, following an unbroken 10-year upward trend in urban student performance on the rigorous federal test from 2003 to 2013.

Notably, several individual big-city school districts showed substantial progress on NAEP, including the District of Columbia, Dallas, Miami-Dade County, Cleveland, Chicago, and Boston.

In addition, several cities have now caught up to the national average in at least one grade or subject after significantly trailing the nation in past years. For example, Boston has now caught up to the national public school average in eighth grade math and fourth grade reading after having been significantly behind on the 2003 NAEP assessment. Houston has now caught up to the nation in fourth grade math. And Miami-Dade County has now moved significantly ahead of the national average in fourth grade reading.

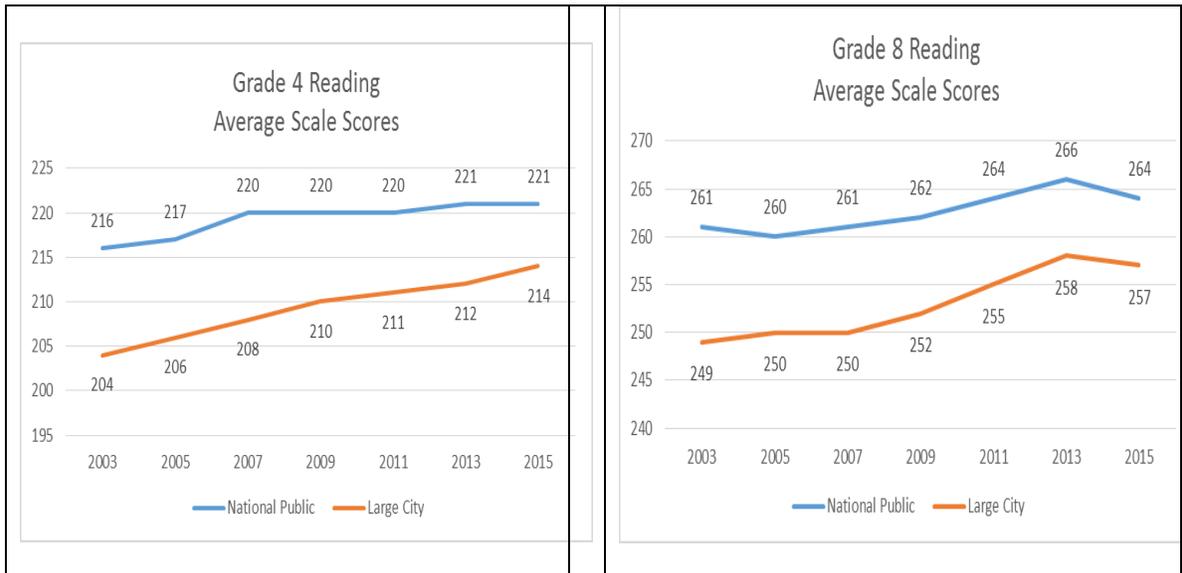
Three other urban school districts—Austin, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, and Duval County (Jacksonville, Fla.)—also had scores in the fourth and eighth grades that met or exceeded national averages in mathematics and reading.

“The last several years have been marked by significant transitions in academic standards, and schools always risk the possibility that short-term trends will dip as new instructional expectations and methods are put into place,” said Michael Casserly, Executive Director of the Council of the Great City Schools. “But, for the most part, the large cities defied the national odds, pursuing comprehensive instructional reforms and

standards-implementation efforts and showing remarkable stability—and even progress in a number of large urban school systems—on this rigorous national assessment.”

Reading Progress in Grades 4 and 8

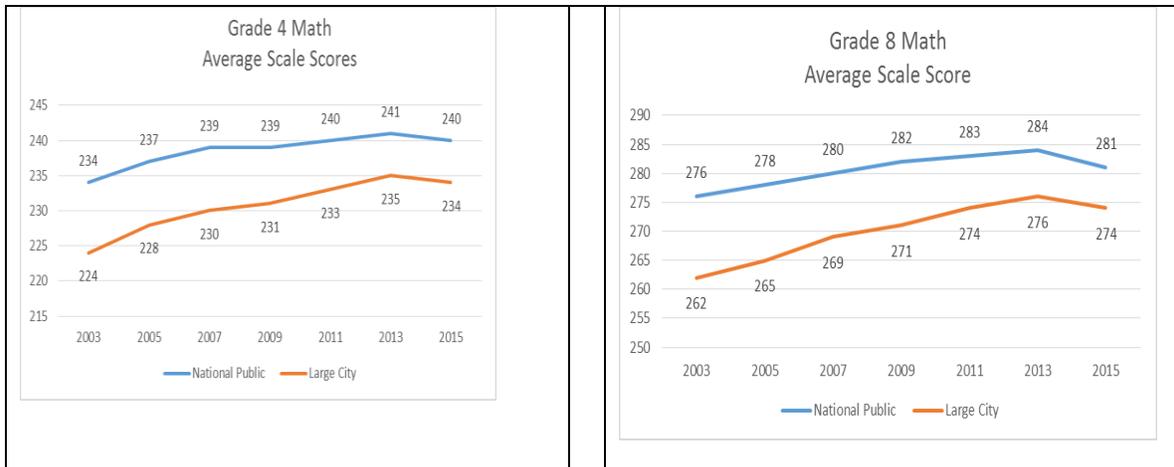
It is also noteworthy that the long-term progress of the nation’s large city public schools as a whole continues to narrow the achievement gap with the nation in reading. Between 2003 and 2015, large city public schools narrowed this gap in fourth grade reading from 12 scale score points to eight, a reduction of 33.3 percent. And in eighth grade reading, large city public schools reduced the gap from 13 points to seven, a decrease of 46.2 percent.



Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

Mathematics Progress in Grades 4 and 8

Similarly, between 2003 and 2015 large city public schools narrowed the gap in mathematics achievement in the fourth grade from 10 scale score points to six, a reduction of 40 percent. And in eighth grade, large city public schools reduced the gap from 14 points to eight, a decrease of 42.9 percent.



Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

Progress of Black and Hispanic Students

Over the years, large city school systems have shown progress on a number of fronts with their African American and Hispanic students, particularly males of color—

- Between 2002 and 2015, fourth grade reading scores among African American males in the nation’s large cities improved 12 scale score points, while scores among African American males nationwide went up eight.
- Over the same 2002 to 2015 period, fourth grade reading scores among Hispanic males improved by ten scale score points in the nation’s large city public schools compared to an increase of eight points nationwide.
- Between 2002 and 2015, eighth grade reading scores among African American males in the nation’s large cities increased by six points while scores among African American males nationwide did not change significantly—up only two points. Moreover, between 2013 and 2015 scores for African American students in large cities remained flat while nationwide scores dropped significantly by two points.

District Participants in TUDA

Twenty-one large urban school districts volunteered to participate for the 2015 urban NAEP, with Florida’s Duval County in Jacksonville participating for the first time. The other districts are Albuquerque, Atlanta, Austin, Baltimore City, Boston, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Chicago, Cleveland, Dallas, Detroit, District of Columbia, Fresno, Hillsborough County in Tampa, Houston, Jefferson County in Louisville, Los Angeles, Miami-Dade, New York City, Philadelphia, and San Diego.