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Key Findings

- 41% of kindergarteners entering the District in 2018-19 were considered kindergarten ready based on Fall MAP Reading results, and 31% met the benchmarks for kindergarten readiness in both Reading and math—a decrease of 2 percentage points from 2017-18.
- 45% of kindergarteners enrolled in 2018-2019 were enrolled in SCS Pre-k in 2017-2018
- 2013-2014 Pre-K students achieved higher 3rd grade ELA proficiency (21%) on the 2018 TNReady assessment when comparing economically disadvantaged students.
- 44% of kindergarteners who attended an SCS Pre-K program in 2017-18 were considered kindergarten ready in reading compared to only 35% of students who did not attend an SCS Pre-K program.
- 74% of exiting Pre-K students in 2018 met the iStation Literacy Benchmark for kindergarten readiness
- 82% of SCS Pre-K participants in 2017-2018 were retained, and enrolled in SCS kindergarten in 2018-2019.
- The National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) for 2016-2017 shows SCS achieved scores below the average for large city public schools in the US.

Prior Enrollment in a Pre-K Program

SCS Pre-K programs support of Priority 1 of Destination 2025 to strengthen early literacy. SCS Pre-K enrollment has the potential to bridge an opportunity gap for District students with the most need. The 2017-2018 cohort of Pre-K had a total of 5,296 students enrolled. When we compare the Pre-K enrollment to the 6,370 Kindergarteners enrolled in 2018-2019 receiving direct certified services (Figure 1), the need does outpace Pre-K program participation. This means that SCS could potentially fill over 1,000 additional Pre-K seats for incoming kindergartners who were eligible.
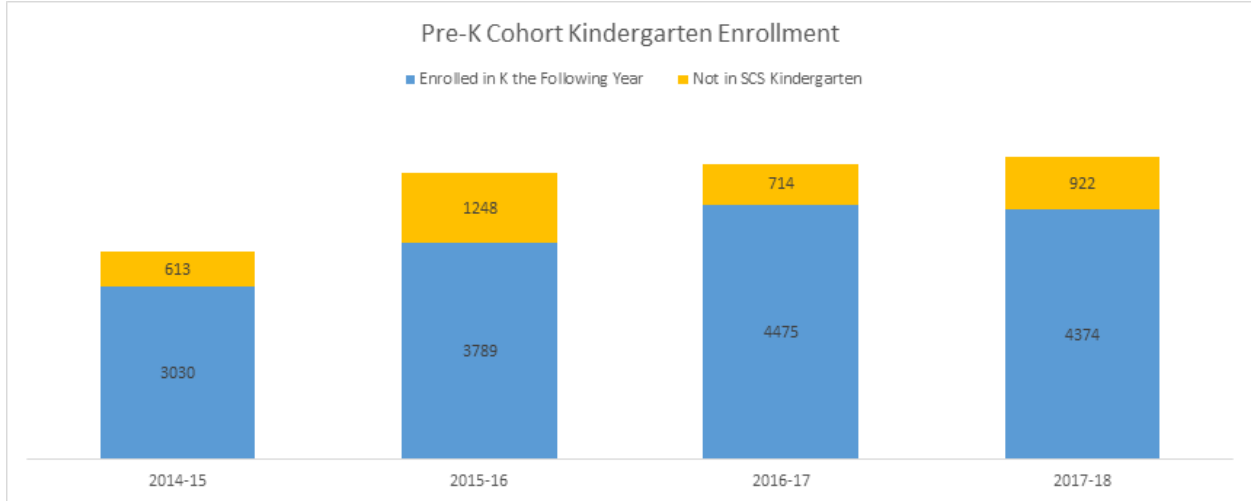
Figure 1

Note: 2018-19 Pre-K enrollment is 5,496 in the myHeadstart system which is used by Department of Early Childhood Programs for real-time student tracking. The counts above reflect Pre-K enrollment in PowerSchool, which SCS uses to match students to kindergarten enrollment for other data in this month's KPIs.

As we look at the number of students from each Pre-K cohort who subsequently enrolled in SCS kindergarten (Figure 2), 4,374 of the 5,296 (82%) Pre-K students in 2017-18 went to an SCS kindergarten program in 2018-2019. This indicator further accentuates the necessity to increase Pre-K program participation in support of SCS students with the most need.
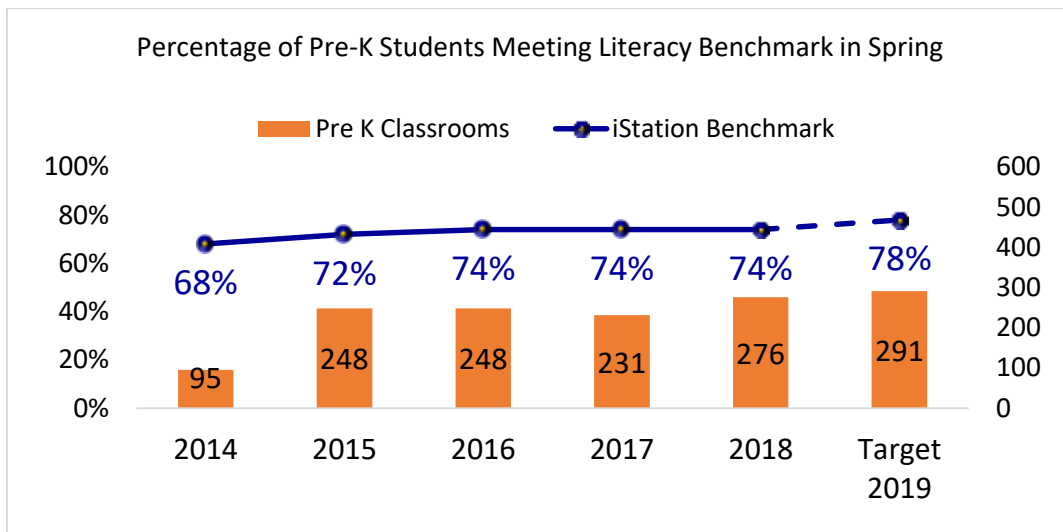
Figure 2

iStation

SCS Pre-K programs use iStation as a measurement for literacy and as an indirect indicator of readiness for incoming kindergarteners. In spring 2017-18, 74% of Pre-K students reached the benchmark for literacy (Figure 3). From 2014-2018, the percentage of exiting Pre-K students reaching the literacy benchmark has remained level after an increase as the Pre-K program has scaled in size from 65 to 276 classrooms. The Department of Early Childhood Programs has set a target of 78% and the program has scaled to 291 classrooms in 2018-19.
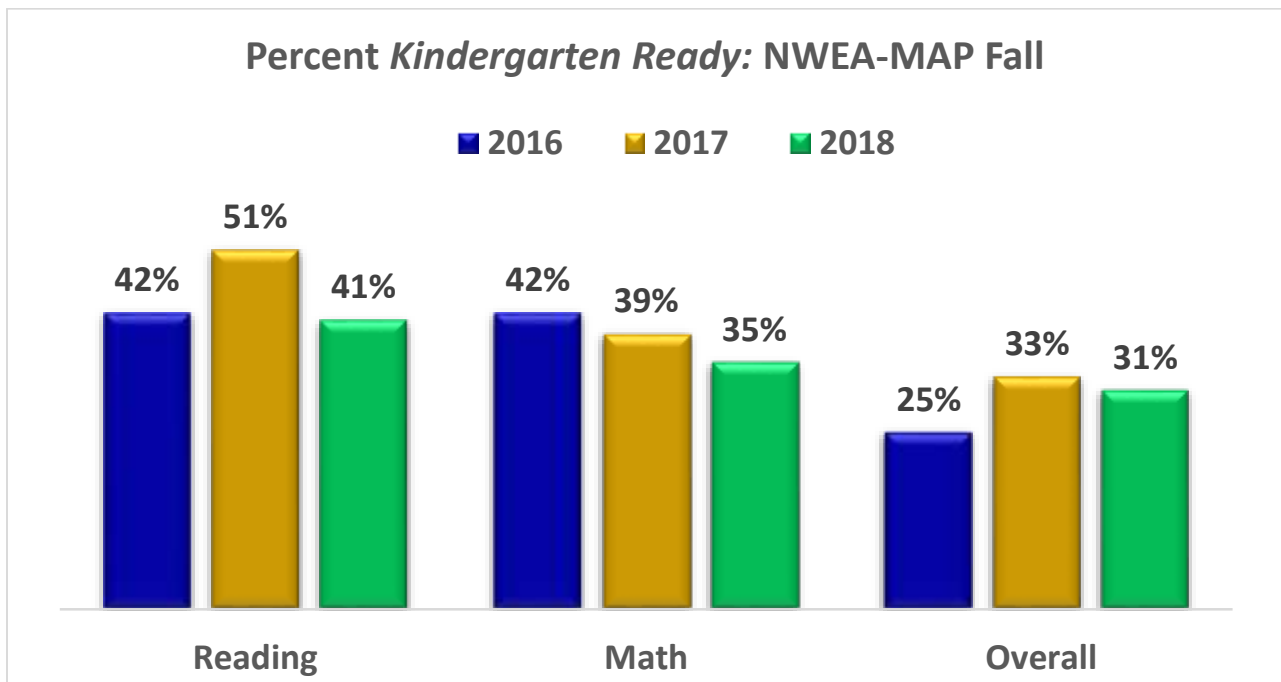
Figure 3

Evaluating Kindergarten Readiness

SCS *kindergarten readiness* is measured using kindergartener NWEA-MAP Fall RIT scores to determine the preparedness of students for Reading and Math at the kindergarten level. Based on the national averages of Fall kindergarten RIT scores for Reading, students who scored a RIT of at least 141 for Reading are considered *kindergarten ready*. The math readiness benchmark is a RIT score of 140. Understanding the readiness level of students entering Shelby County Schools allows District decision makers to take actions; not only to increase early identification for intervention pathways, but also to support SCS Pre-K rigor and enrollment. Schools receiving fewer students prepared for kindergarten will need greater support for targeted intervention.

Compared to 2017, the percentage of kindergarteners reaching the Reading benchmark in 2018 decreased by 10 percentage points (Figure 4). The percentage of students meeting both cut scores for Reading and Math decreased by two points from 2017 to 2018, 33% and 31%, respectively. One variance that affects this year over year comparison is the fact that the 2017 Fall MAP was administered in October versus August/September in 2018 and 2016. This would allow for more instructional time at the Kindergarten level before being assessed for Kindergarten Readiness.

Figure 4

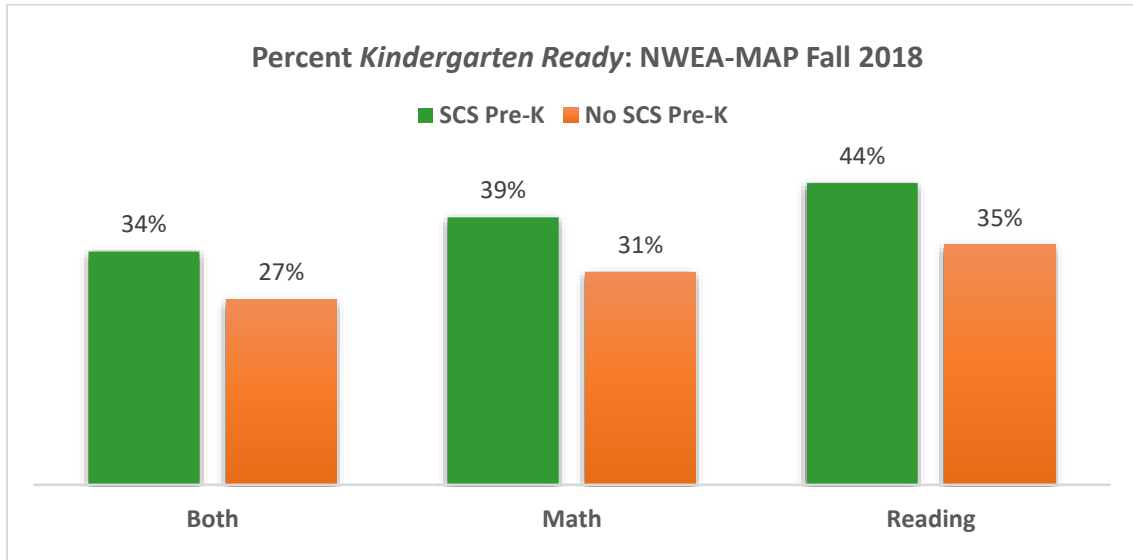## Pre-K and Kindergarten Readiness

Kindergarten readiness can be further evaluated as an indicator of SCS Pre-K effectiveness. When kindergarten students who participated in a SCS Pre-K program are compared with those who did not, we find that a higher percentage of students with SCS Pre-K participation are considered kindergarten ready (Figure 5). 44% of students with SCS Pre-K achieved the reading benchmark for kindergarten readiness compared to 35% of students who did not participate in SCS Pre-K. For

students achieving both math and reading benchmarks, 34% of students with SCS Pre-K met both benchmarks versus 27% of students without SCS Pre-K.
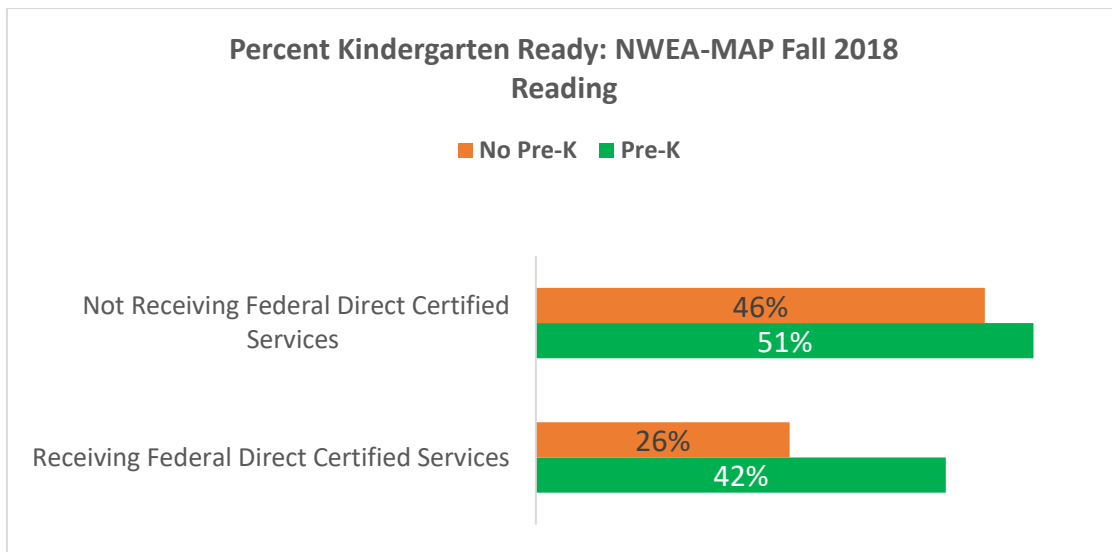
Figure 5

Percent *Kindergarten Ready*: NWEA-MAP Fall 2018

Pre-K and Economic Status

Kindergarten students of varying economic backgrounds consistently show a gap in performance on measures of kindergarten readiness. Filling Pre-K seats with students that have the most need has been employed as an effective strategy to close the gap. In 2018 kindergarten students receiving Federal Direct Certified services were kindergarten ready at a significantly higher percentage (42%) having attended SCS Pre-K versus not (Figure 6). Economically disadvantaged students with Pre-k also performed at a level much more comparable to their non-economically disadvantaged peers.

Figure 6

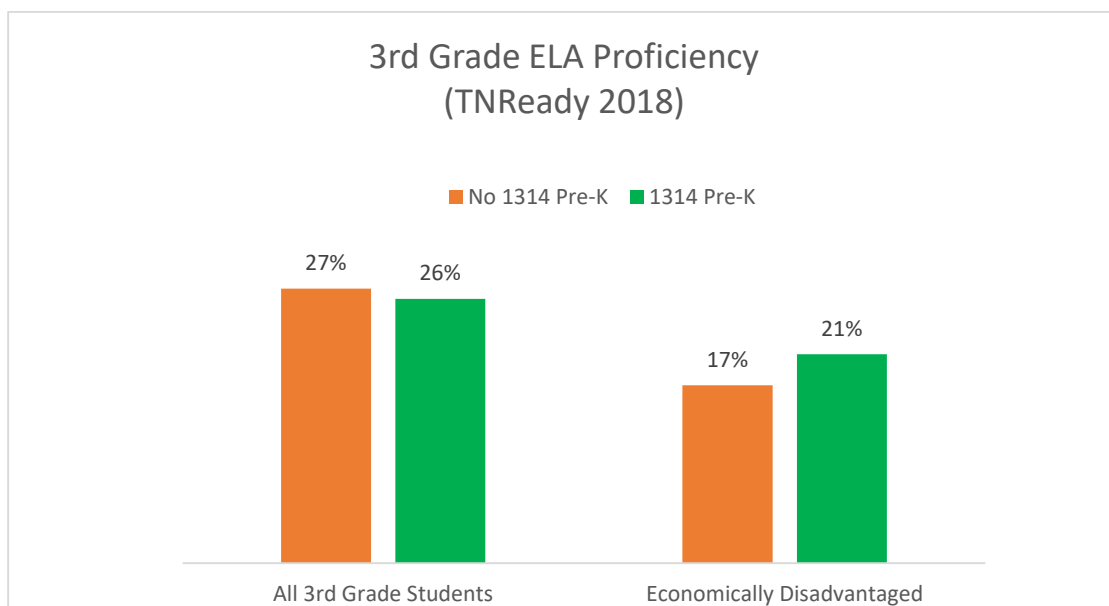Percent Kindergarten Ready: NWEA-MAP Fall 2018 Reading

Pre-K and 3rd Grade Reading

Pre-K can affect academic achievement and close gaps at the Kindergarten level. When students matriculate to 3rd grade the effect of having attended Pre-K becomes dramatically less pronounced compared to earlier grades. The results of the TNReady ELA assessment of Spring 2018 shows no advantage for students that attended SCS Pre-K in 2013-2014 when comparing all 3rd grade students. However, there is still a difference in achievement for economically disadvantaged students (Figure 7) with 21% of the 13-14 Pre-K students achieving proficiency versus 17% of their peers who were not a part of the 13-14 Pre-K cohort.
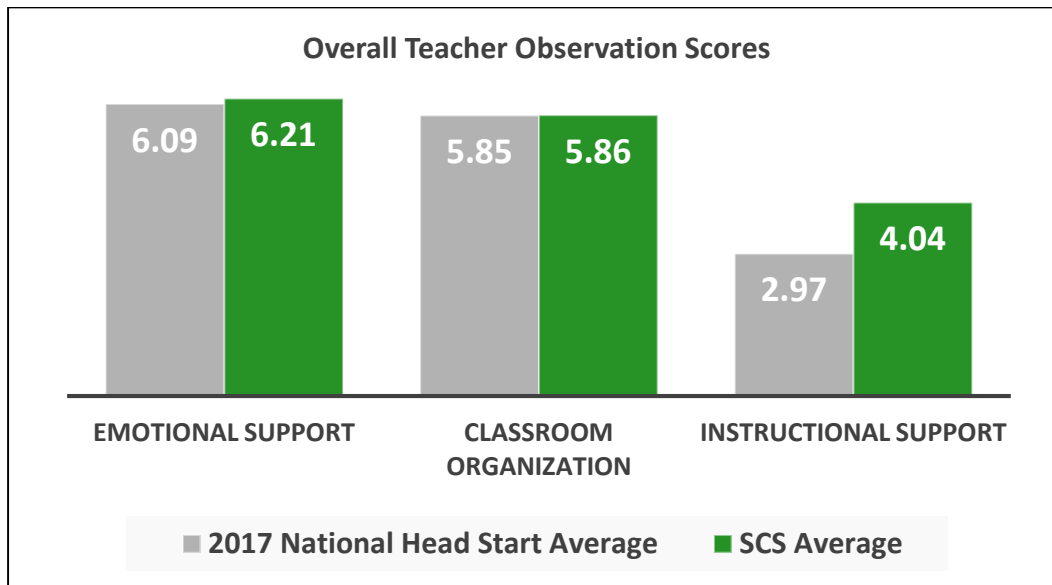
Figure 7

Of the 4,806 students that participated in the 2013-2014 Pre-K cohort, 2,515 (52%) were successfully matched to 3rd grade TNReady ELA Scores.

Department of Early Childhood Program Outlook

The Department of Early Childhood programs is working to continuously improve quality while expanding its reach. One way the department has been tracking program quality is through classroom teacher observations. Teacher observations are compared to the national average across domains including; emotional support, instructional support, and classroom organization. In 2017-2018 teacher ratings were above the national average across all 3 domains (Figure 7).

Figure 8

Quality improvement efforts are also taking shape in the form of new initiatives for academic engagement and student wrap around services. Initiatives to further engage young students academically include; Khan Academy (an online learning platform), Bridge Curriculum to connect what students learn in Pre-K to the rigor of kindergarten, and CLUE identification for advanced learners in Pre-k. Other initiatives are targeted at student wrap around services including; partnerships with the Salvation Army and Agape to support homeless students, training teachers to support students with social and emotional growth, and continuing to work toward universal pre-k for families of Shelby County.

Early Childhood programs is expanding its reach through numerous engagement efforts for parents and students. Pre-K screening and recruitment will be happening across several neighborhoods from March through the end of June. Events have been designed not only to screen students for pre-k, but to provide information for students transitioning to kindergarten, and provide a fun environment to connect with families.

Appendix: National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP)

The National Assessment for Educational Progress measures and compares District level performance across urban school districts in the United States. In 2016-17, SCS was assessed in both reading and math for 4th and 8th grade (Figures 6-9). The assessment results were compared to other large city public school districts and national averages. SCS had average assessment scores below large city and national comparisons across 4th and 8th grade for both math and reading.
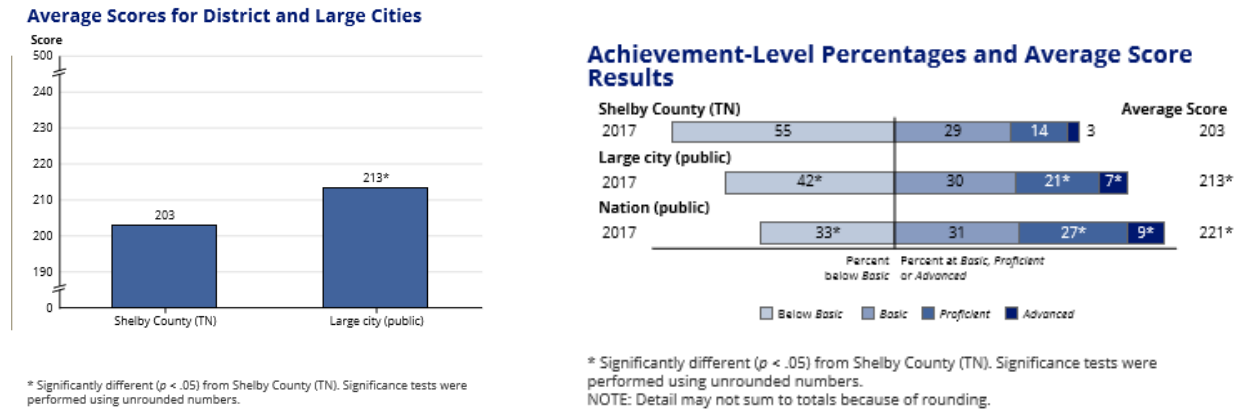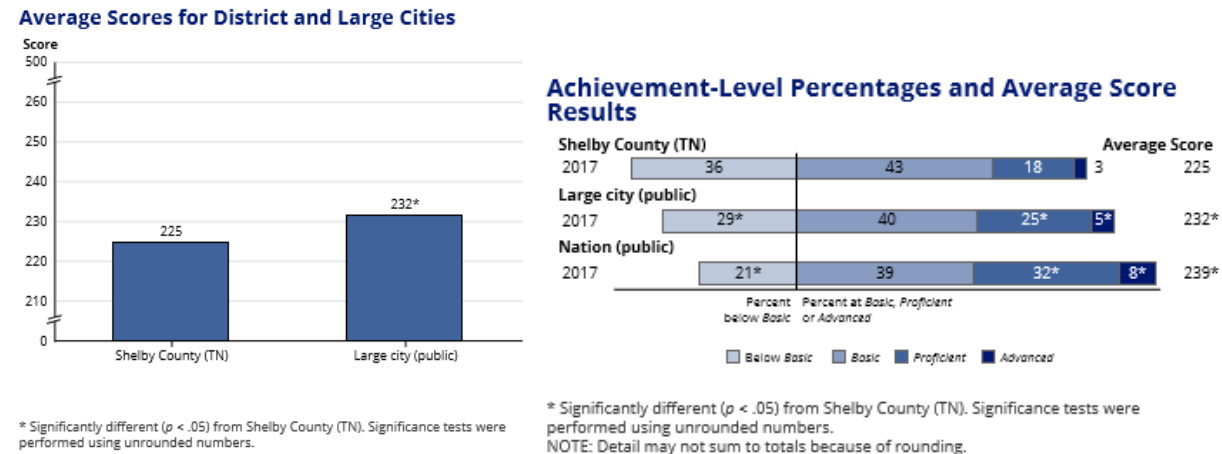
Figure 9: 4th Grade Reading
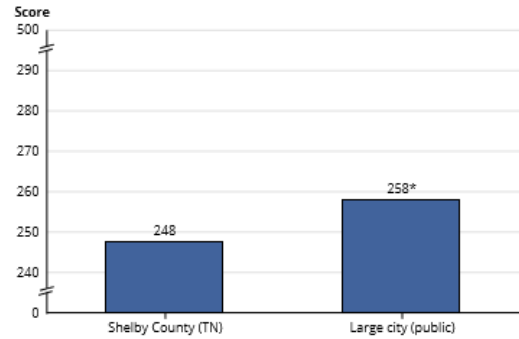

Figure 10: 4th Grade Math

Figure 11: 8th Grade Reading

Average Scores for District and Large Cities

Achievement-Level Percentages and Average Score Results

Shelby County (TN)					Average Score
2017	43	40	16	1	248
Large city (public)					
2017	32*	41	24*	3*	258*
Nation (public)					
2017	25*	41	31*	4*	265*

Percent below Basic · Percent at Basic, Proficient or Advanced

☐ Below Basic ☐ Basic ■ Proficient ■ Advanced

* Significantly different (*p* < .05) from Shelby County (TN). Significance tests were performed using unrounded numbers.

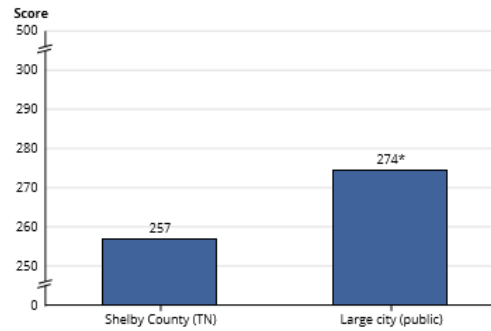* Significantly different (*p* < .05) from Shelby County (TN). Significance tests were performed using unrounded numbers.
NOTE: Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

Figure 12: 8th Grade Math

Average Scores for District and Large Cities

Achievement-Level Percentages and Average Score Results

Shelby County (TN)					Average Score
2017	58	30	10	3	257
Large city (public)					
2017	39*	34*	19*	7*	274*
Nation (public)					
2017	31*	36*	24*	10*	282*

Percent below Basic · Percent at Basic, Proficient or Advanced

☐ Below Basic ☐ Basic ■ Proficient ■ Advanced

* Significantly different (*p* < .05) from Shelby County (TN). Significance tests were performed using unrounded numbers.

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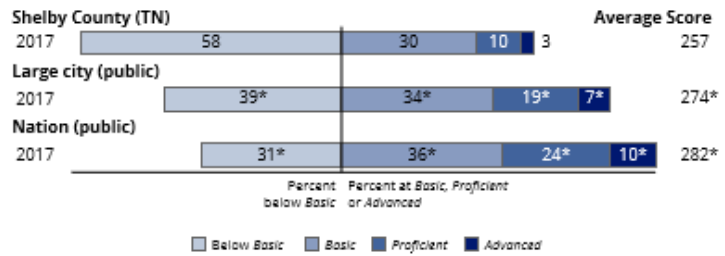NOTE: Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.