

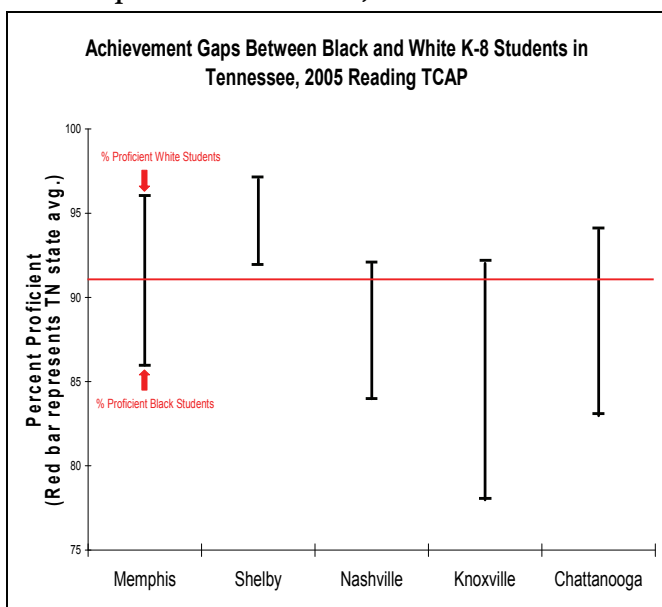


## In Memphis and across Tennessee, there are Achievement Gaps between Black and White students and between Low and Middle Income students.

Most Americans believe that public education provides an opportunity for all children to get ahead in our society. Across the U.S., however, there are gaps in the achievement levels of racial and ethnic groups and between children from low and middle income families. By examining these achievement gaps we can see where progress needs to be made to insure that schools provide equal opportunity.

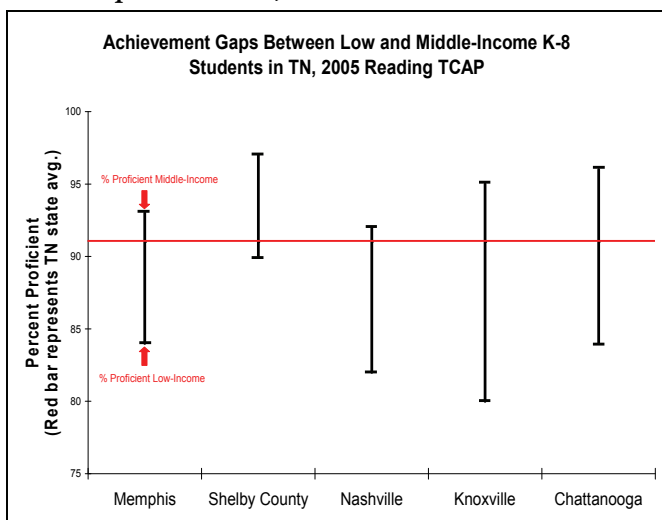
- Most students in Memphis City Schools are Black (87 percent) and low-income (71 percent).
- Students in Memphis perform about as well as other students in Tennessee on the TCAP (86 v. 91 percent proficient).
- If we look beyond system averages, we find an achievement gap between Black and White & between Low and Middle Income students in Memphis and across the state.

## In Memphis and Tennessee, more White than Black students are proficient in reading and math



- This figure indicates the size of Black—White achievement gaps on the Reading TCAP in Tennessee.
- Longer bars indicate a wider gap.
- In Memphis, 86 percent of Black students and 96 percent of White students are proficient in reading.
- In Shelby County, the Black—White gap is smaller—and both groups earn higher scores than their counterparts in Memphis.
- In Chattanooga, the Black—White gap is comparable to Memphis, but scores for both Black and White students are lower than in Memphis.
- The Black—White gap is widest, and proficiency rates for both groups are lowest—in Knoxville.
- Across the state, Black—White achievement gaps are wider in math than in reading, and grow wider as students enter high school.
- Across the state, Black students are twice as likely as White students to be below proficient.

## In Memphis and TN, more Middle-Income than Low-Income students are proficient in reading and math.



- In Memphis and across TN, low income students earn scores far below their middle and upper income peers.
- In Memphis, 91 percent of middle and upper-income students are proficient in reading, while 84 percent of low-income students are proficient or above.
- In Shelby County, the gap between middle and low-income students is smaller, and both earn higher scores than their counterparts in Memphis.
- Knoxville has the largest achievement gap between low and middle income students.
- Across TN, gaps between low and middle income students are wider in math than in reading, and grow wider as students enter high school.
- Across the state, Low Income students are twice as likely as Middle Income students to be below proficient.

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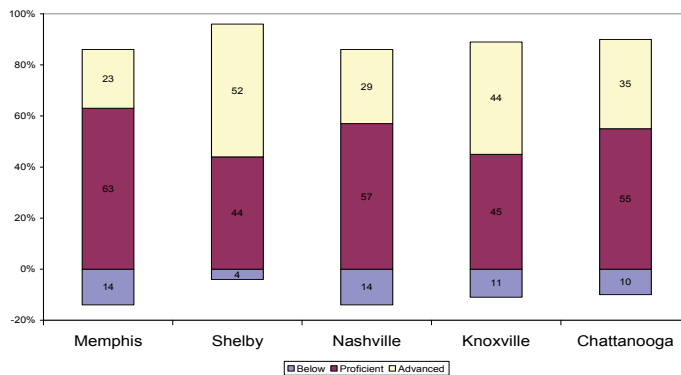
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**Student performance on both the Reading and Math TCAP in five districts in Tennessee (Memphis, Shelby County, Nashville, Knoxville and Chattanooga) varies by race and by income level.**

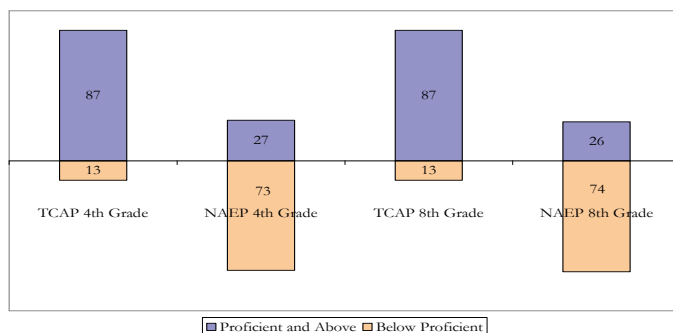
**TCAP Reading Proficiency Rates in TN, K-8**



- On the Reading TCAP, White students are twice as likely to receive advanced scores as are Black students across TN. Black students are twice as likely to score below proficient as are White students.
- The achievement gap between Black and White students is greater in Math throughout TN. White students are more than twice as likely to score advanced on the Math TCAP than are Black students.
- Black students are two to four times more likely to score below proficient on the Math TCAP than are White students across TN.

**While 87 percent of students in Tennessee receive proficient scores on the TCAP, only 27 percent of TN students receive proficient scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress**

**TCAP and NAEP Reading Performance, 2005**



- A sample of Tennessee students also take the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) - a nationwide achievement test—each year.
- By comparing the performance of Tennessee students on the NAEP and TCAP, we are able to place the performance of Tennessee students into a broader context.
- The TCAP and the NAEP paint markedly different pictures of educational achievement in Tennessee.
- The U.S. Department of Education suggests that states that show a discrepancy between proficiency levels on state tests and on the NAEP need to take a closer look at their standards and assessments.

**Implications for Public Policy**

- Low income students reach school much less likely to be prepared to succeed. Children in Memphis score in the 20<sup>th</sup> percentile on national tests of kindergarten readiness. These students begin school at a disadvantage which persists throughout their academic careers.
- In Memphis and across Tennessee, there are achievement gaps between Black and White students and between Low and Middle Income students.
- Achievement gaps are larger in math than in reading, and they grow wider as young people progress through school.
- Federal No Child Left Behind legislation mandates that states make adequate yearly progress (AYP) in reducing achievement gaps. To make AYP, students in low income schools are eligible for supplemental services like tutoring. It remains to be seen if these interventions will help to close the achievement gaps.
- To accurately determine how students are faring in school, states must establish passing scores that stay constant across school years—in spite of pressure to show Adequate Yearly Progress.
- Likewise, states are doing a disservice if they fail to peg their measures of performance to national assessments (e.g.: the NAEP, the National Assessment of Educational Progress), allowing for appropriate comparisons with systems across the country.

**Things we need to know:**

- What accounts for the relative differences in achievement gaps in different Tennessee school districts?
- What are best practices when it comes to educating low income and minority students?

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