# Answering the Call
Improving Rural Schools and Closing Achievement Gaps

Cindy S. McIntee

National Conference on Rural Education Research

Omaha, Nebraska

April 3, 2013

How are rural schools fairing?

NAEP 8th Grade Reading 2011
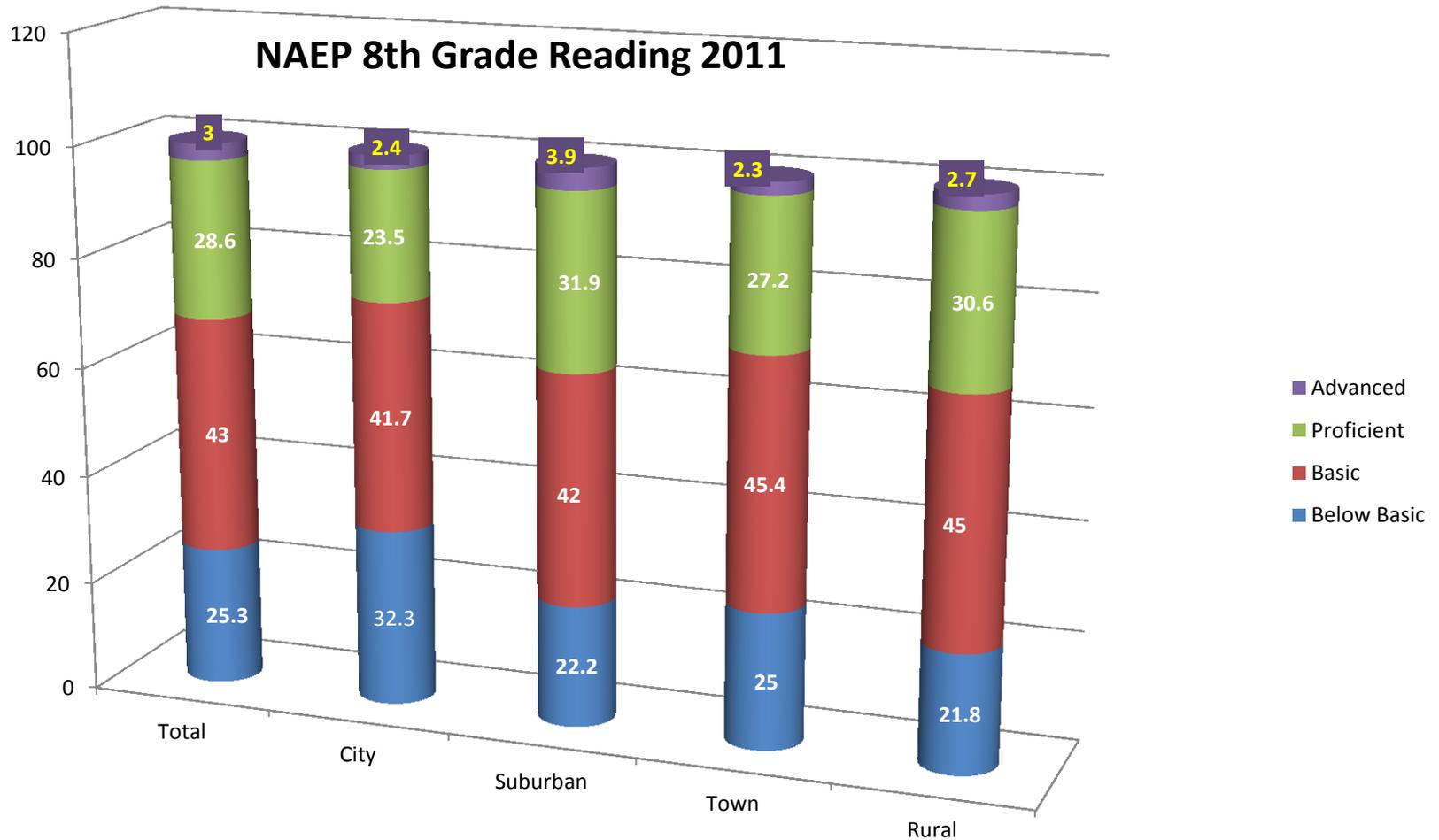
How are they fairing in the Southeast?

Southeastern NAEP scores 8th Grade Reading
**Basic: 243 Proficient: 281 Advanced: 323**
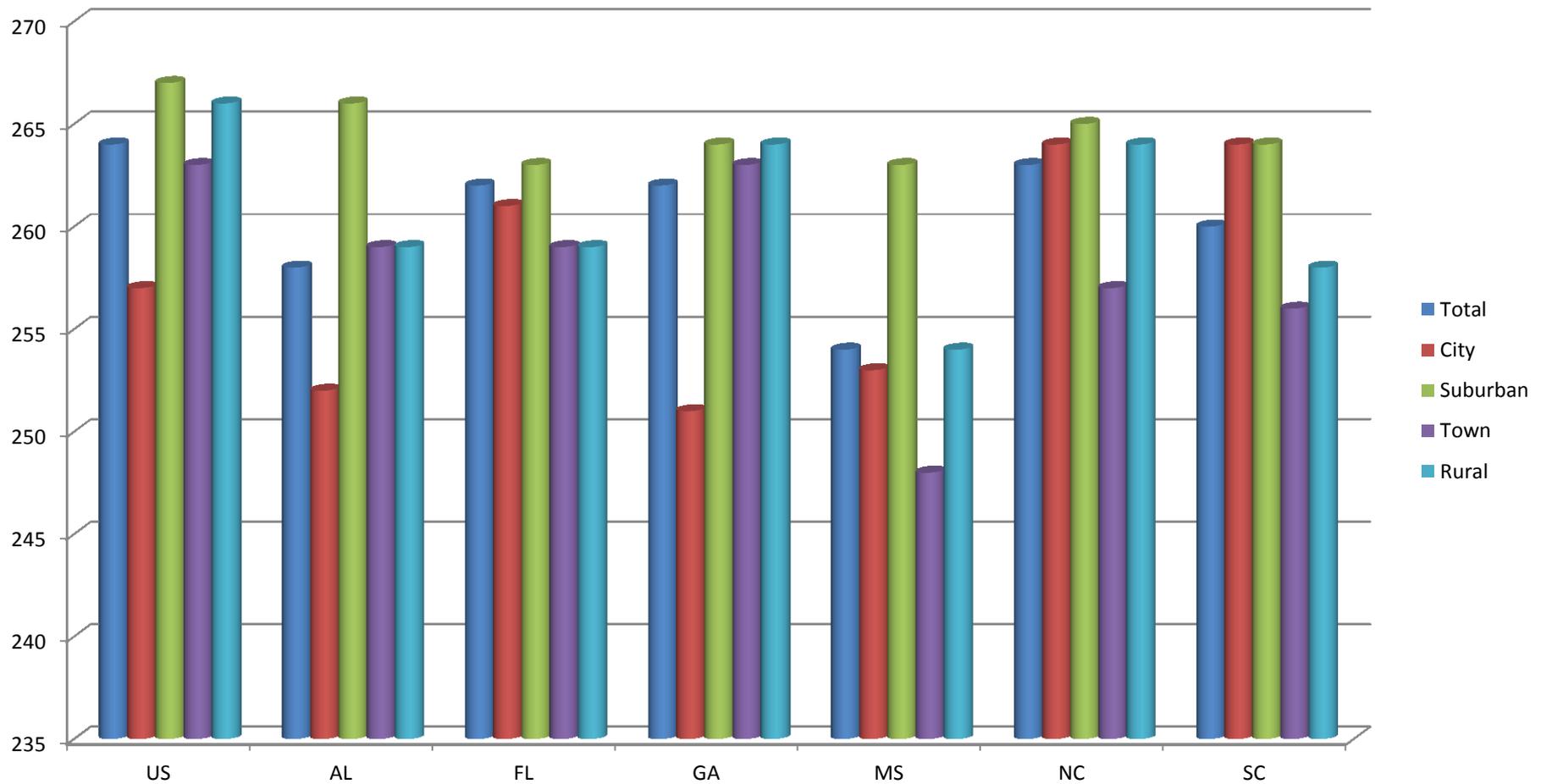
Gaps continue

NAEP 8th Grade Reading
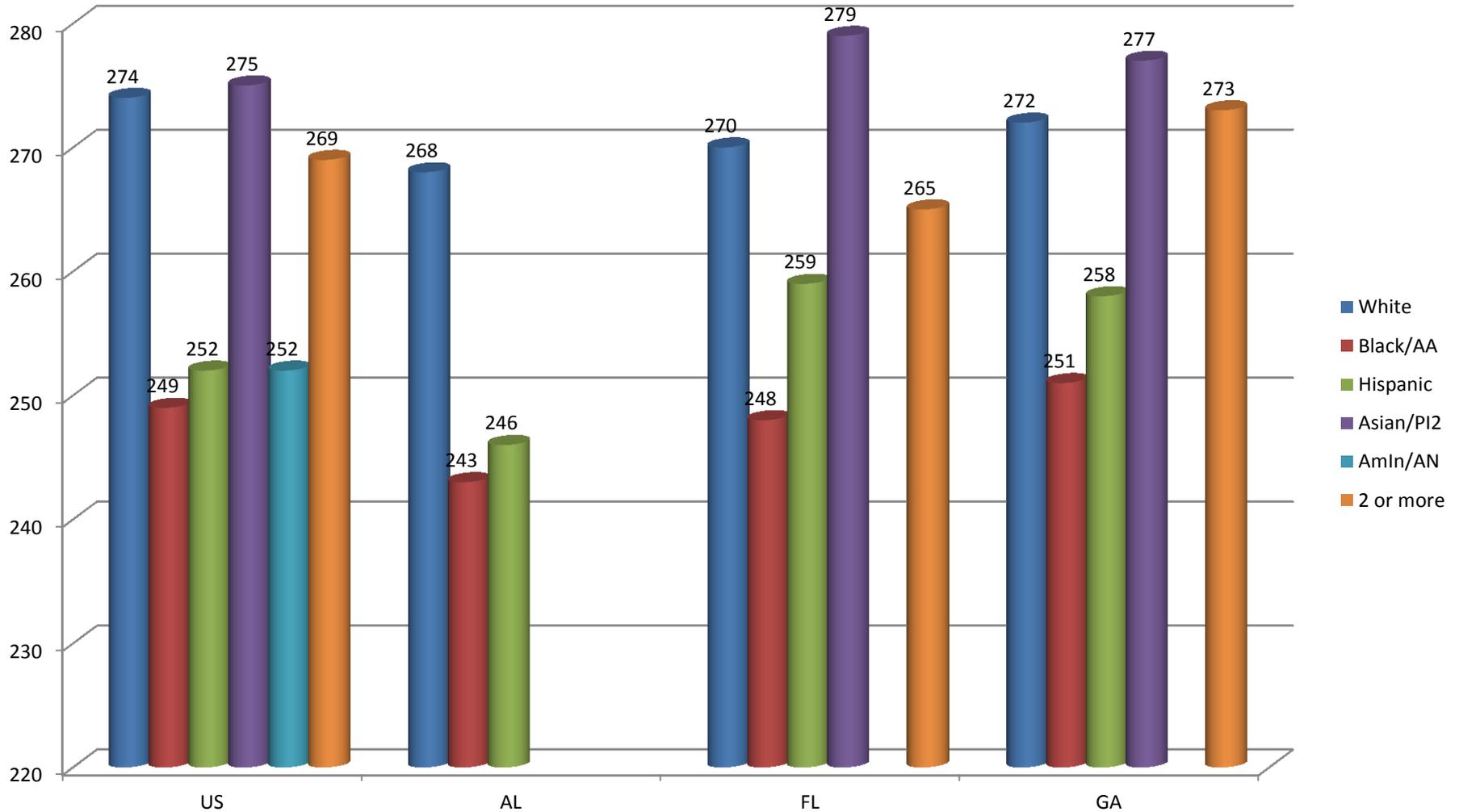
And Continue…

8th Grade NAEP Reading
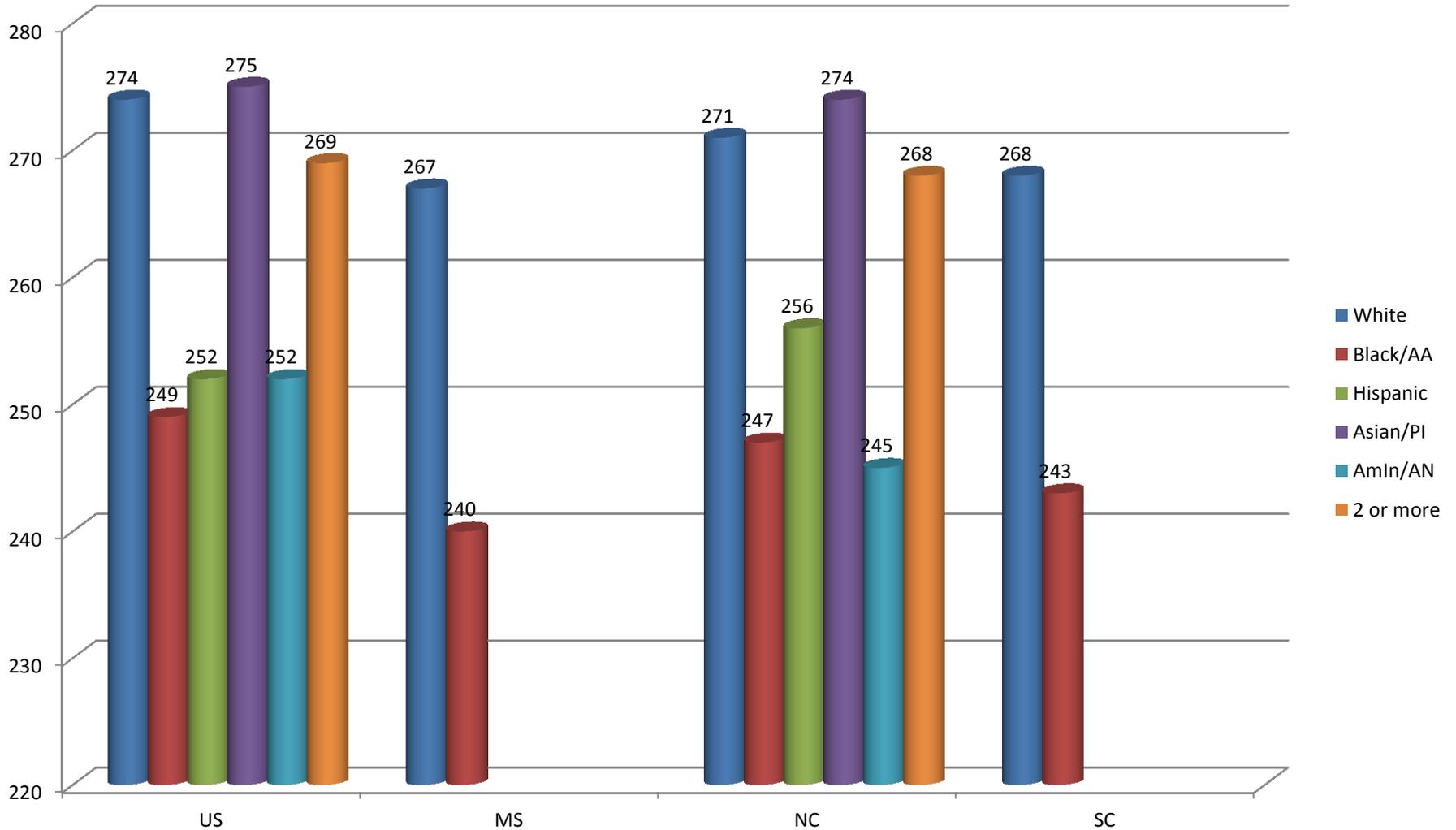
Responding to School Gaps

Many students attend schools that have been persistently low achieving .

One method for dealing with the school wide gaps was through the funding of School Improvement Grants.

School Improvement Grants

Designed to provide assistance to persistently low achieving schools

Designed to target $3.5 billion over 3 year period to schools

SEAs may award LEAs up t o $2 M annually to each SIG school

Eligible Schools

Tier I: Any Title I school in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring that (1) is among the lowest-achieving five percent of those schools in the state; or (2) is a high school that has had a graduation rate below 60 percent for a number of years.

Tier II: Any secondary school that is eligible for, but does not receive, Title I, Part A funds and (1) is among the lowest-achieving five percent of such secondary schools in the state; or (2) had a graduation rate below 60 percent for a number of years.

Tier III, which includes the remaining Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring that are not Tier I schools.

States had options to identify other persistently lowest-achieving schools

Rural SIG Schools

SIG Eligible Schools

- Large/Med City
- UrbanFringe/Town
- SmTown/Rural

44.9
35.2
19.9
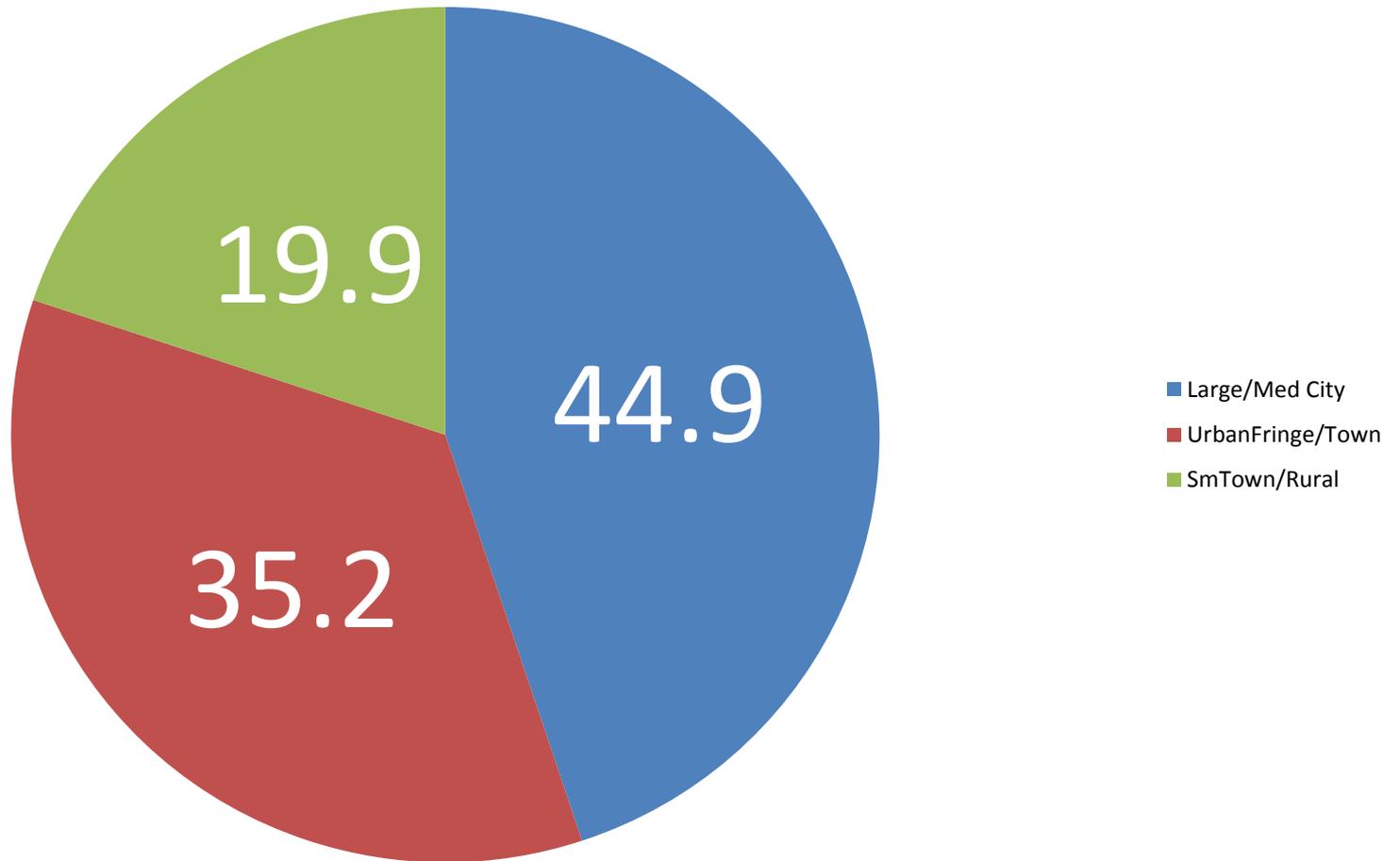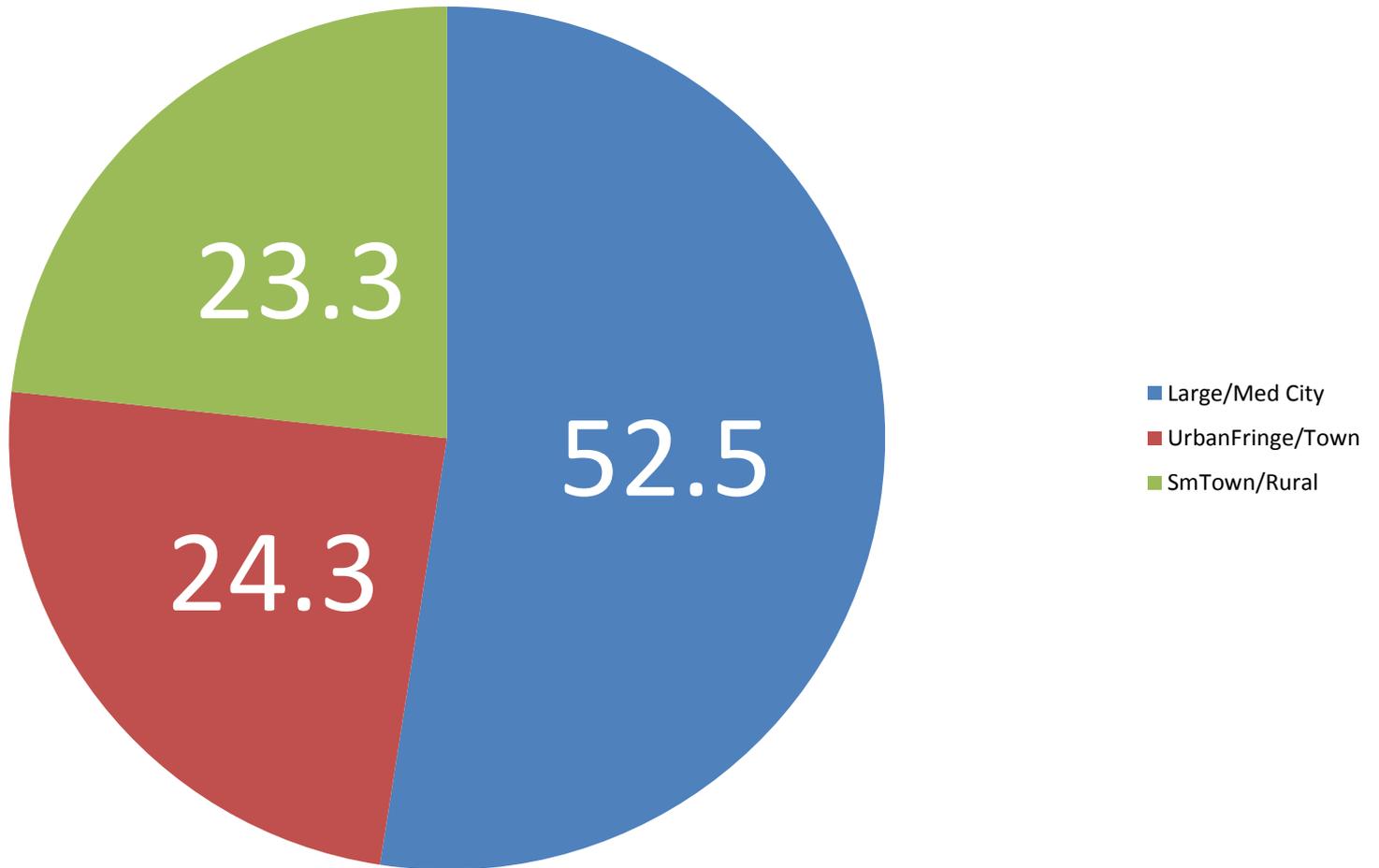
SIG Awards

Comparison

Eligible

SIG Eligible Schools

■	Large/Med City
■	UrbanFringe/Town
■	SmTown/Rural

Awards

SIG Awards

■	Large/Med City
■	UrbanFringe/Town
■	SmTown/Rural
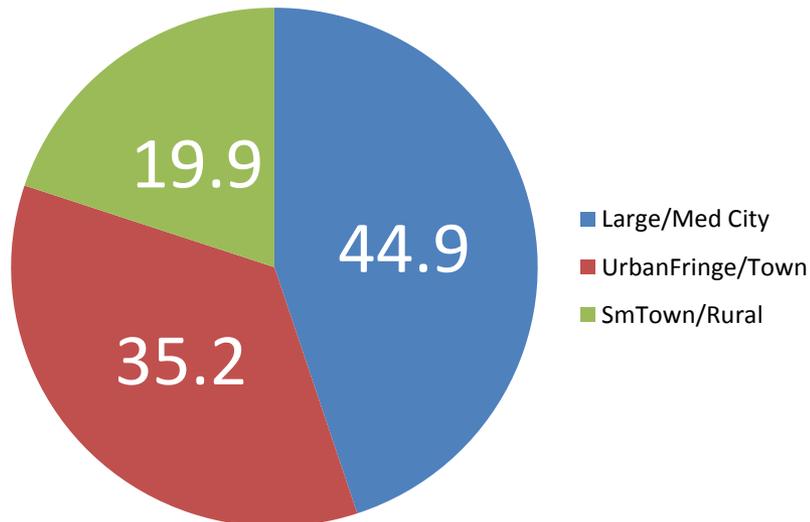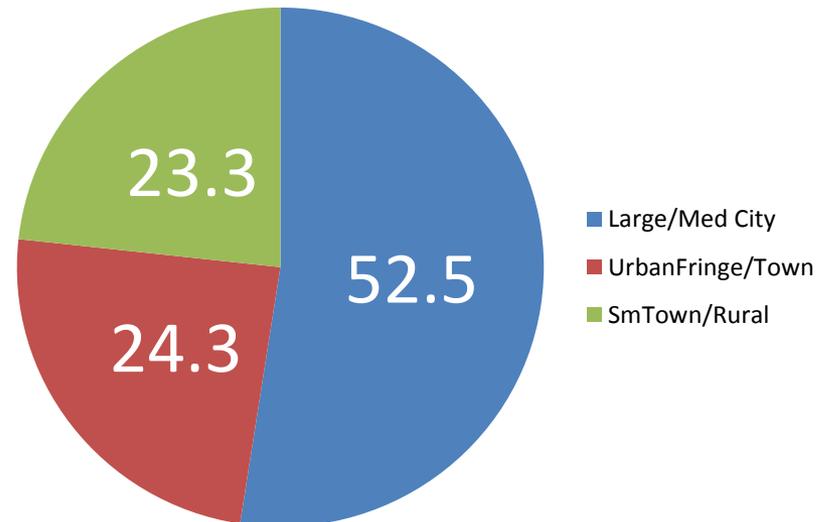
SIG Intervention Improvement Models

1. Turnaround model: replace the principal and no less than 50 percent of the staff; and introduce significant instructional reforms, increase learning time, and provide flexibility and support.

2. Restart model: reopen the school under the management of a charter school operator, charter management organization, or an education management organization.

3. School closure: close the school and reassign students to higher achieving schools.

4. Transformation model: replace the principal, introduce significant instructional reforms, increase learning time, and provide flexibility and support.

Transformation Model

1. Replace the Principal.

 2. Use rigorous, transparent, and equitable evaluation systems for teachers and principals.

 3. Identify and reward school leaders, teachers, and other staff and remove those who have not improved.

4. Provide staff ongoing, high-quality, job-embedded professional development.

5. Implement strategies to recruit, place, and retain staff with the skills necessary to meet the needs of the students in a transformation model.

 6.   Use data to identify and implement an instructional program that is research-based and vertically aligned from one grade to the next as well as aligned with state academic standards.

Transformation Model

7. Promote the continuous use of student data to inform and differentiate instruction.

8. Establish schedules and strategies that provide increased learning time.

9. Provide ongoing mechanisms for family and community engagement.

10. Give the school sufficient operational flexibility.

11. Ensure that the school receives ongoing, intensive technical assistance and related support from the LEA, the SEA, or a designated external lead partner.

Despite concerns about capacity, SIG schools in small towns and rural areas showed similar gains to urban and suburban schools.

Distribution of SIG-Awarded Tier I/II Schools by Gains and Losses in Math and Reading, by Locale, 2009-10 to 2010-11

For definitions of localities:
http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/rural_l
ocales.asp
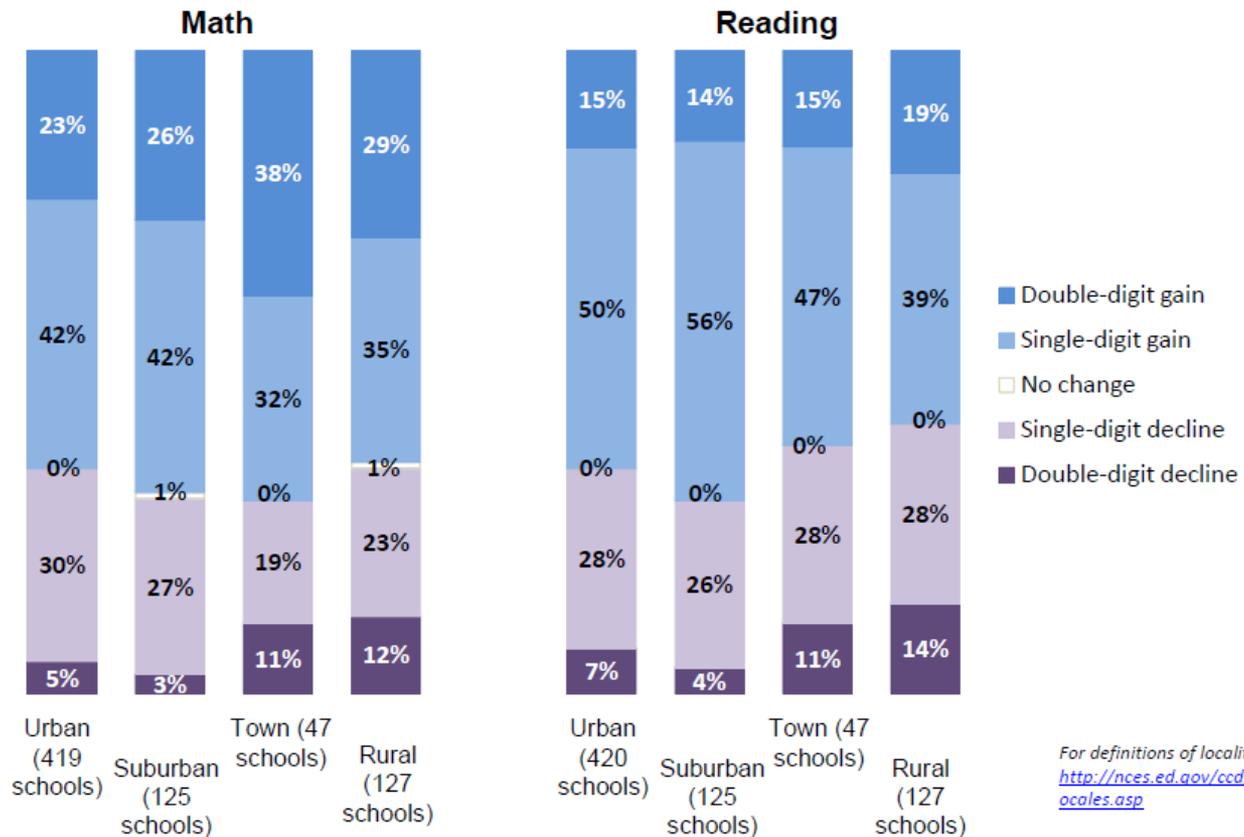
Do SIG requirements respond to the research on closing gaps?

Here are some things we think we know

To reduce the concentration of poor children of color in struggling schools
1. Equalize funding
2. Extend learning opportunities after school & during summer
3. Hire teachers who are qualified, competent and receive high quality, appropriate professional development.
4. Provide training and support to promote student engagement

A. Wade Boykin & Pedro Noguera

Closing Achievement Gaps

...the need to provide teachers with the requisite skills to teach effectively, regardless of race, class and culture, is now widely recognized as essential.

Boykin and Noguera

Teaching effectively

- Acknowledge differences related to race, class, and culture without lowering expectations because of the differences.

- Move community so that all stakeholders: teachers, parents, students, and administrators accept responsibility for their roles in raising achievement

- Countering the normalization of failure.

- Student engagement in academic tasks is paramount.

Engagement / Increased Learning Time

Engagement had a greater effect on math gains than instructional time

Increased engagement benefited struggling readers more than non-struggling readers

Where explicitly promoted cognitive engagement in classrooms increased comprehension in high poverty classroom

Engagement – time student spends actively and progressively involved in learning process

3 guiding functions (or adaptive learning postures) are linked to increased engagement levels

1. Self efficacy
2. Self regulated learning
3. Incremental beliefs about ability

Teacher- Student Relationship Quality

Quality teacher student relationships has very strong evidence of closing achievement gaps

Teachers display

- ✓ empathy
- ✓ support
- ✓ encouragement
- ✓ optimism
- ✓ they are perceived to be fair, genuine, and non patronizing in their feedback and praise

How do we effectively disseminate and move policy and practice?

- Embedding within districts, states, schools, develop relationships
- Seek to understand the primary concerns of rural school administrators, teachers and students
- Seek to provide research that address the needs they identify
- Assist them in gaining skill in use of data and research
- Utilize Labs, CCs, Content centers, universities

National Rural Education Association Research Symposium and Convention

"Next Generation Learning in Rural Schools.“
October 18-20

Chateau on the Lake

Branson, MO