

Written Testimony Only

FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	AFFILIATION	TITLE/ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	Testimony
		Education Not Radiation	Parents of Anne Arundel County Students	Yes
Penny	Zimring	Maryland Gifted and Talented	Co-chairs	Yes
Dennis	Jutras	Advisory Council		
Simeon	Russell	Maryland Head Start Association	Executive Officer	Yes
Leslie	Seid Margolis	Disability Rights Maryland	Managing Attorney	Yes
Rachel	London	Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council	Executive Director	
Kyle	Potter	Maryland School Psychologists' Association	Chair, Legislative Committee	Yes
Sally	Murek	Montgomery County Public Schools	Coordinator, Paraeducator Program	Yes
Dave	Heilker			Yes
Natasha	Escobar	Baltimoreans for Educational Equity	Leadership Team	Yes
Wesley	Hawkins			
Dave	Heilker			
Alaine	Jolicoeur			
Lauren	Lamb			
Abigail	Swisher			
Jamal	Turner			
Maritza	Solano	CASA	Director of Education	Yes
Peggy	Williams			Yes

From: Education Not Radiation
To: Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education
Subject: Testimony
Date: Thursday, November 07, 2019 2:58:48 PM

Please provide wired computer stations for students and hire a building biologist to mitigate the wireless radiation concerns that are putting our students at risk of developing cancer, DNA damage and other health effects.

Please watch this video as it relates to the radiation concerns in Anne Arundel County Schools.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rlj_7HRTmiE

Sincerely,
Parents of Anne Arundel County Students
<https://educationnotradiation.com/>

p.s. Yes, we are real parents!

July 15, 2019

William E. Kirwan, Ph.D.
Commission Chair
Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education
Office of Policy Analysis
Department of Legislative Services
Legislative Services Building, 90 State Circle, Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Dr. Kirwan and Members of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future Funding Formula Workgroup,

This letter is written on behalf of the Maryland State Gifted and Talented Advisory Council (GTAC). Mr. Jutras and I previously communicated with Dr. Kirwan and other commission members in August 2018. In that communication, we requested that gifted and talented (GT) students be named as a specific student group in the commission's final report and that funding for this student population be explicitly included in Maryland's future funding formula. The acknowledgement of this student group would proactively raise the level of awareness that these students have unique academic and social/emotional needs; help local school systems to continue funding specialized programming which may already be in place; and spur the creation or return of specialized supports across all districts. Historically, programs and supports for GT students have been early round targets for elimination/reduction when budgets constrict. Similar to the educational aphorism of what gets tested, gets taught – what gets funded, gets implemented. To that end, we now outline reasons that necessitate a budgetary line-item for gifted and talented education in this letter.

The GTAC recommends supplemental funding for gifted and talented students using a weighted formula (like that which is used for special education students and those with limited English proficiency) that would be granted to local school systems in addition to the general per pupil allocation. This supplemental funding would help each local school system provide the necessary assessment instruments for equitably identifying GT students and would help develop/implement more challenging curricula and differentiated instructional services. Local school systems would be held accountable for the effective use of this funding since gifted and talented students in Maryland are now an identified student group under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the state's accountability framework.

The GTAC is pleased to report that on June 25, 2019, the Maryland State Board of Education (BOE) adopted amendments to the Regulations .01—.04 and .06 under COMAR 13A.04.07 Gifted and Talented Education. This amended regulation raises expectations for local school systems regarding gifted and talented students and programming for them. For example, it requires the local school systems to formally identify a significant number of students in each school, with a minimum of 10% for the district, and to provide specialized services to meet their unique needs. This updated COMAR requires districts to use universal screening as an assessment strategy in the formal identification process. This best practice in the field of gifted education necessitates that all students be assessed/tested for potential giftedness or ability, not only those students who have been nominated by parents and/or teachers – a practice which has a long history of bias against students of color and students living in poverty. The Maryland State BOE and the GTAC want to ensure that schools are identifying the tremendous potential in students from all ethnic, economic, and linguistic backgrounds and are providing services for them so that they have the necessary skills and

opportunities to develop their potential to the fullest. Only then, will Maryland begin to shrink current excellence gaps¹ and begin to achieve educational equity.

The implementation of universal screening requires an annual funding source. Local school systems continue to ask how they are going to fund this. As Dr. Li and other members of the Maryland State BOE have noted, the state budget does not currently include any funding allocated for gifted and talented education. Therefore, if universal screening is now required to identify students, especially those who have been typically under-identified and under-served, and shrink excellence gaps, there needs to be a budgetary line-item for gifted and talented education, or we risk rendering Maryland's proactive regulations meaningless.

The Institute for Educational Advancement conducted a bipartisan poll that focused on public attitudes towards gifted education.² One finding indicated that 86% of the respondents support additional funding to support programs for gifted students, especially in under-served communities. In addition, the Maryland Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Plan and the amended COMAR 13A.04.07 Gifted and Talented Education now hold local school systems accountable to identify, serve, and monitor the academic progress of their gifted and talented students. These students will be identified as a specific student group, as part of the state's accountability framework beginning in 2019. The convergence of these two Maryland governing documents, in tandem with research and public sentiment, afford your workgroup the opportunity to upend the paradigm of exclusion.

The GTAC feels that gifted and talented education is a social justice issue. Therefore, we feel that the Kirwan Commission Report and future funding formula must include ALL students across the achievement/ability spectrum, including those who are gifted and talented. Only then will ALL Maryland public school students have the opportunity for an excellent and innovative education that is designed to equitably meet their needs.

Thank you for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact us, if we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Penny Zimring, Co-chair, Maryland Gifted and Talented Advisory Council

Dennis Jutras, Co-chair, Maryland Gifted and Talented Advisory Council

Cc: Maryland State Board of Education

¹. Jonathan Plucker. (2018) *Excellence Gap Update: 2017 Data – Report to the Maryland State Department of Education*. Johns Hopkins University. Baltimore, MD.

². Institute for Educational Advancement. (2018) *Poll Summary: Public Attitudes Towards Gifted Education*. Pasadena, CA. Retrieved from <https://educationaladvancement.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/IEA-Poll-Summary.pdf>

Attachments

August 9, 2018

William E Kirwan, Ph.D.
Commission Chair
Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education
Office of Policy Analysis
Department of Legislative Services
Legislative Services Building, 90 State Circle, Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Dr. Kirwan,

Thank you for your efficient email reply to the letter that Mr. Jutras and I sent on behalf of the Maryland State Gifted and Talented Advisory Council (GTAC). We look forward to the inclusion of gifted and talented students in the final Kirwan Commission Report which will raise the level of awareness in Maryland that these students have unique academic and social and emotional needs, thereby necessitating excellence in gifted and talented education programming.

The GTAC recommends supplemental funding for gifted and talented students using a weighted formula (similar to what is used for special education students) that would be granted to Local Education Agencies (LEAs), in addition to the general per pupil allocation. This supplemental funding would help LEAs to provide the necessary assessment instruments and develop more challenging curricula and differentiated instructional services. LEAs would be held accountable for use of this funding since in Maryland gifted and talented students are an identified group under the Every Student Succeeds Act and the state's newly adopted accountability framework.

The GTAC also recommends reinstating an innovation incentive grant program to enable LEAs to apply for funding to meet a specific district need. These grants would help to "level the playing field," as there are currently great funding disparities among the LEAs. District and GT leaders are currently working to develop consistent and equitable identification procedures and more robust gifted and talented programming. They aim to reduce excellence gaps in Maryland by providing more opportunities for talented students who are traditionally underserved in gifted and talented education programs. For example, a district could use this grant funding to implement innovative interventions and programming to close excellence gaps by raising the percentage of low-income students who score at advanced levels. Additionally, these grants could provide necessary funding for districts to implement new assessment protocols, develop a new GT program component, enhance an existing program, and/or provide much-needed, high-quality professional learning opportunities for teachers in gifted and talented education. Grant-funded projects would be anchored by current research and best practices in gifted and talented education and aligned with the Annotated Code of Maryland (COMAR) Chapter 13A.04.07 Gifted and Talented Education and the *Maryland State Department of Education Criteria for Excellence: Gifted and Talented Education Program Guidelines*. The grant funds would provide an incentive for districts that try innovative approaches in gifted and talented education and would result in model programming that could be adopted state-wide.

The GTAC would like to work with the Kirwan Commission to determine the appropriate level of differentiated funding to address the unique academic and social/emotional needs of gifted and talented students, using both existing and new funding sources.

Maryland students have tremendous potential. GTAC members want to ensure that gifted and talented students from all ethnic, economic, and linguistic backgrounds are recognized and have the necessary skills and opportunities to develop their potential to the fullest. These students are a “talent pipeline” for future economic development in Maryland, as they embark on innovative careers ranging from the sciences to the humanities. They have the potential to become Maryland’s future industry and civic leaders.

The GTAC is passionate about properly identifying and providing the necessary supports and services for Maryland’s gifted and talented students. Like the Kirwan Commission members, we want to help prepare every student, including those who are gifted and talented, to meet and exceed their potential and to be as productive as possible in their efforts to solve the mounting problems facing our world. We feel that it is a social justice issue!

Thank you for your consideration of these recommendations.

Sincerely,

Penny Zimring, Chair, Maryland Gifted and Talented Advisory Council
Dennis Jutras, Co-Chair, Maryland Gifted and Talented Advisory Council

Excellence Gap Update: 2017 Data

Jonathan A. Plucker

Johns Hopkins University

Prepared for the Maryland State Department of Education

May 18, 2018

@JonathanPlucker
jplucker@jhu.edu

The purpose of this slide deck is to provide a brief update on Maryland's NAEP performance at the advanced level. Much of this information was shared at the April superintendents' meeting, but it is now updated with the recently-released 2017 data. In addition, I provided more detail about the items maps for each assessment and different ways to look at trends over time.

National data are drawn from the National Public results (although adding in private students makes surprisingly little difference).

The explanatory notes work better if you scroll through in presentation mode.

Of course, please contact me with any questions or comments.

Grade 4 Math

Grade 4 Math Item Map

333 Identify pairs of congruent figures

307 Identify multiple correct solution methods to an addition problem

286 Determine and apply rule based on input-output table

282 Represent fractions using a model

Advanced Benchmark (282)

281 Identify point in a coordinate grid that will form a right triangle

280 Compare two sets of related data given in a table

278 Measure a rectangle to determine the area

272 Compare heights of objects in a figure

250 Identify the face of a given solid

Proficient Benchmark (249)

243 Estimate the weight of an object

242 Subtract decimal numbers to the tenth

229 Compose 4-digit number using place value

Basic Benchmark (214)

207 Find value of an unknown in a number sentence

207 Identify the place value of a digit in a whole number

189 Identify appropriate measurements from a context

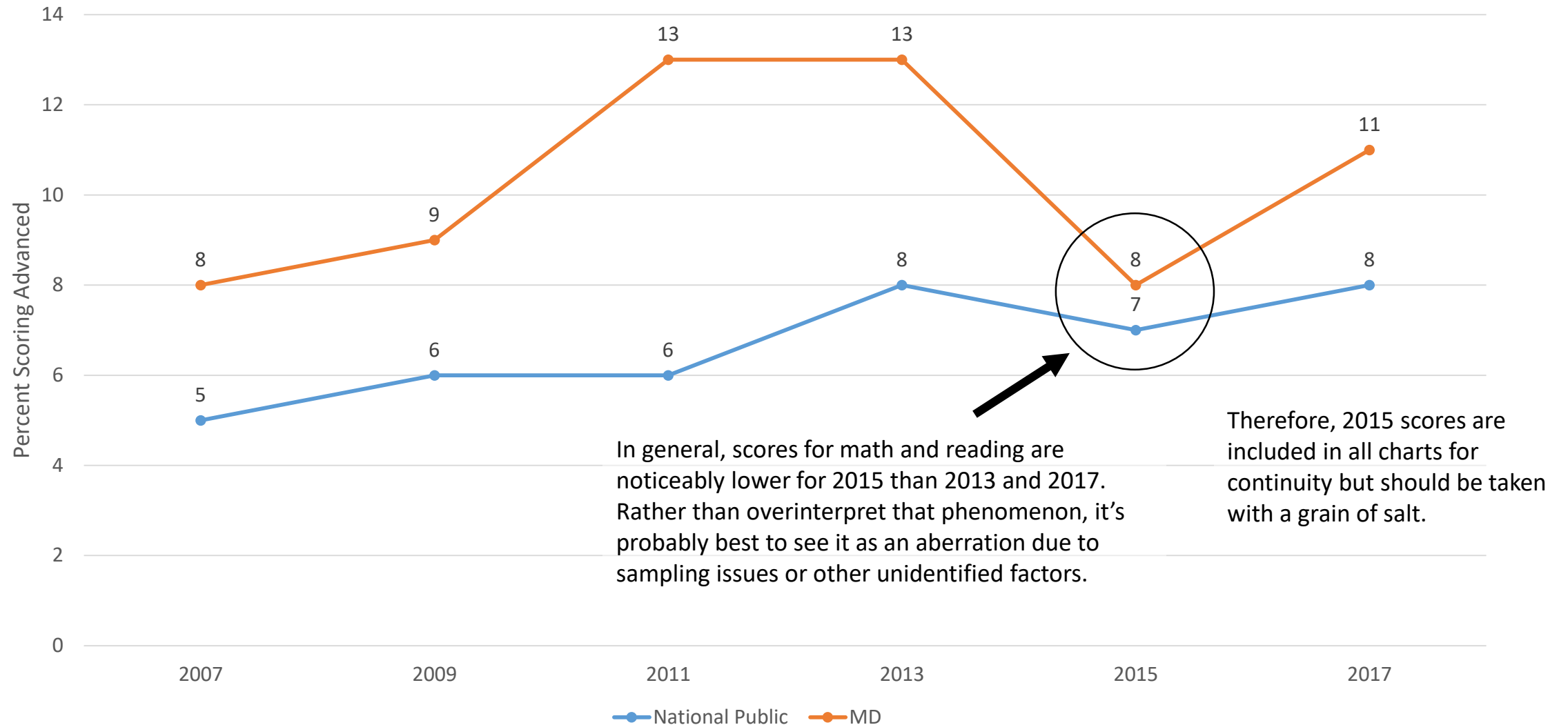
These item maps aren't comprehensive, but they provide a framework for interpretation of the results in each set of slides.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2017 Mathematics Assessment.

Check out the full web site, which includes additional items, item type, sample items, and other information:

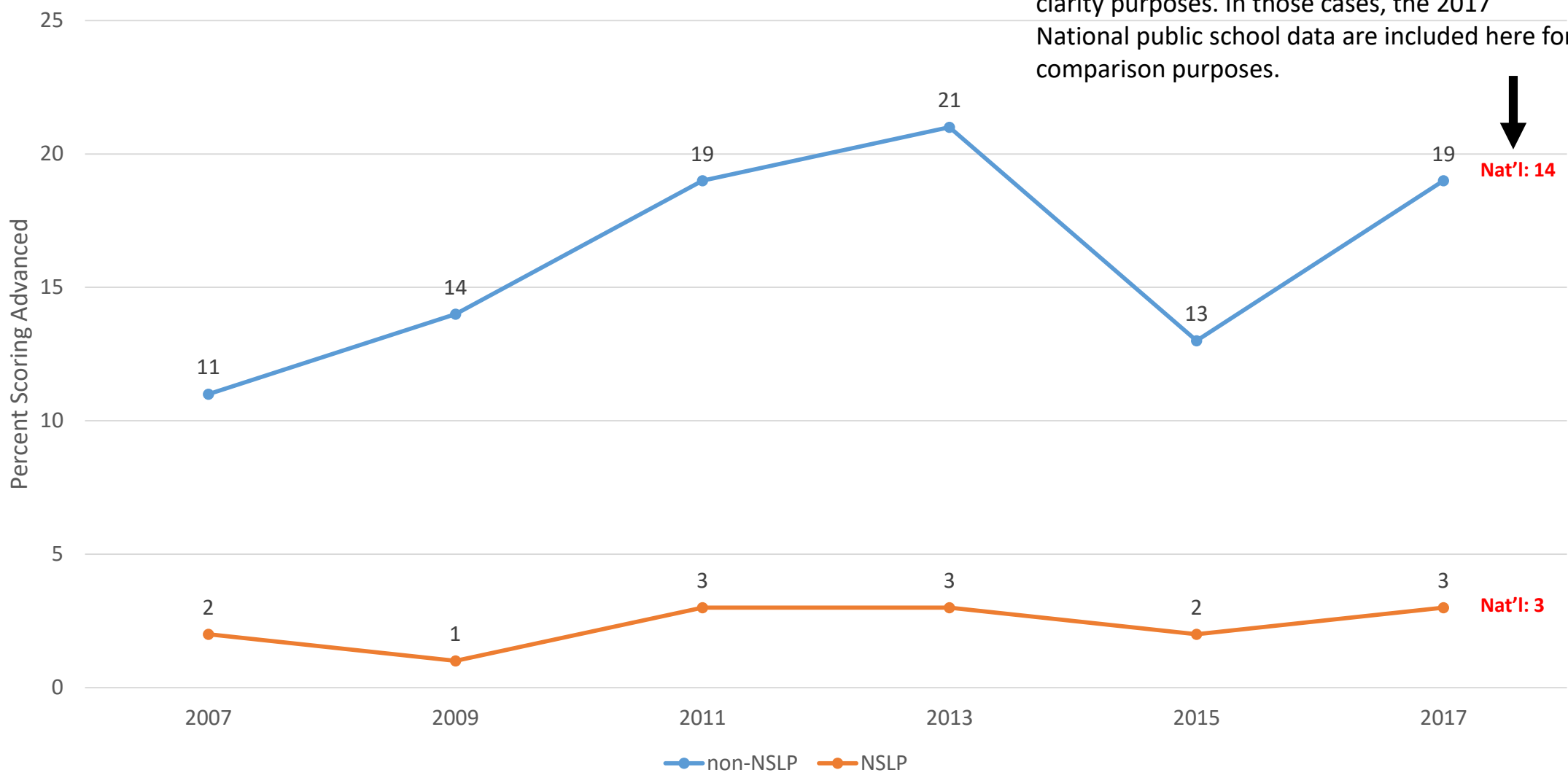
<https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/itemmaps/?subj=MAT&grade=4&year=2017>

Grade 4 Math: Percent Scoring Advanced

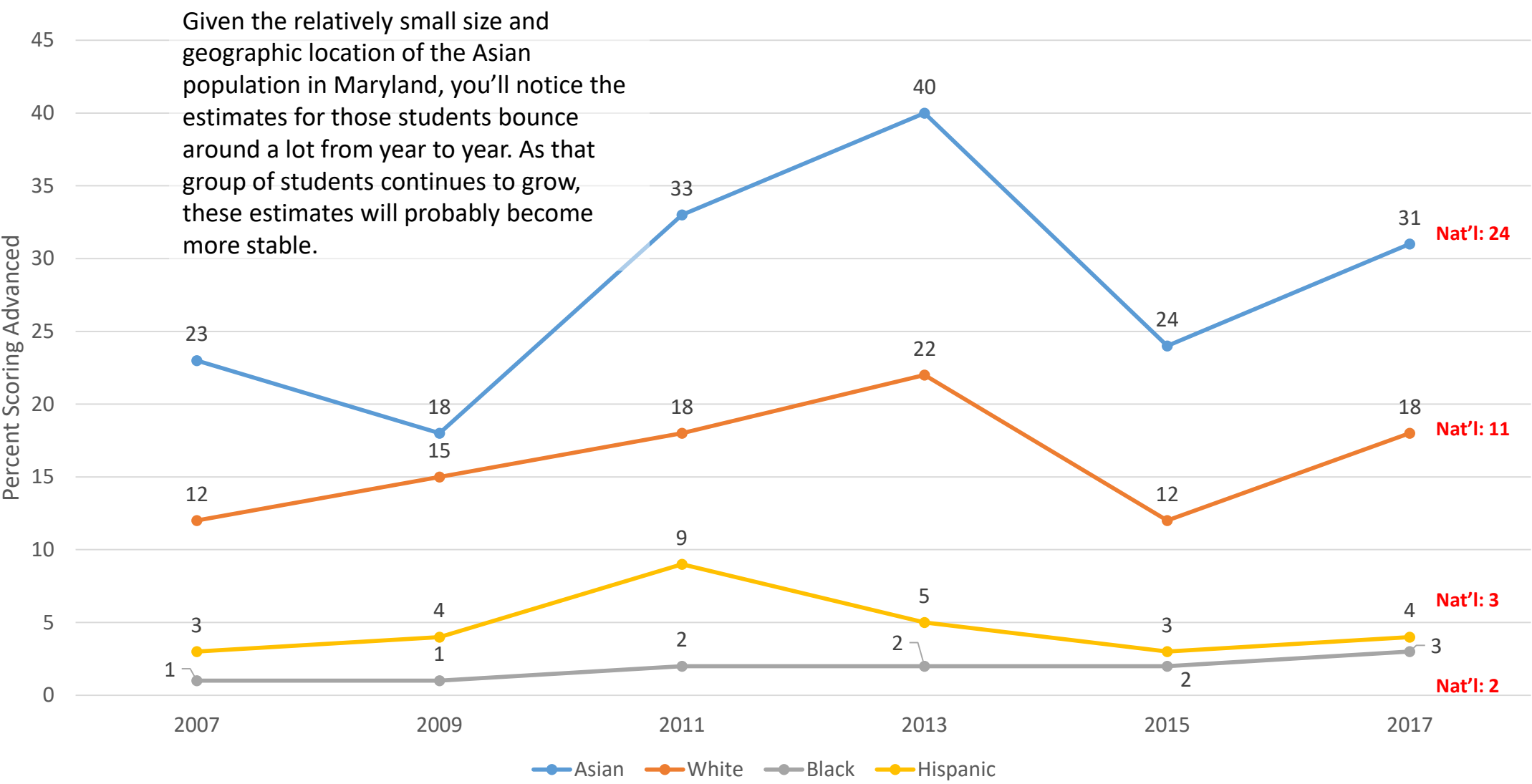


Grade 4 Math: Excellence Gaps by Lunch Status

On some charts, national data were removed for clarity purposes. In those cases, the 2017 National public school data are included here for comparison purposes.



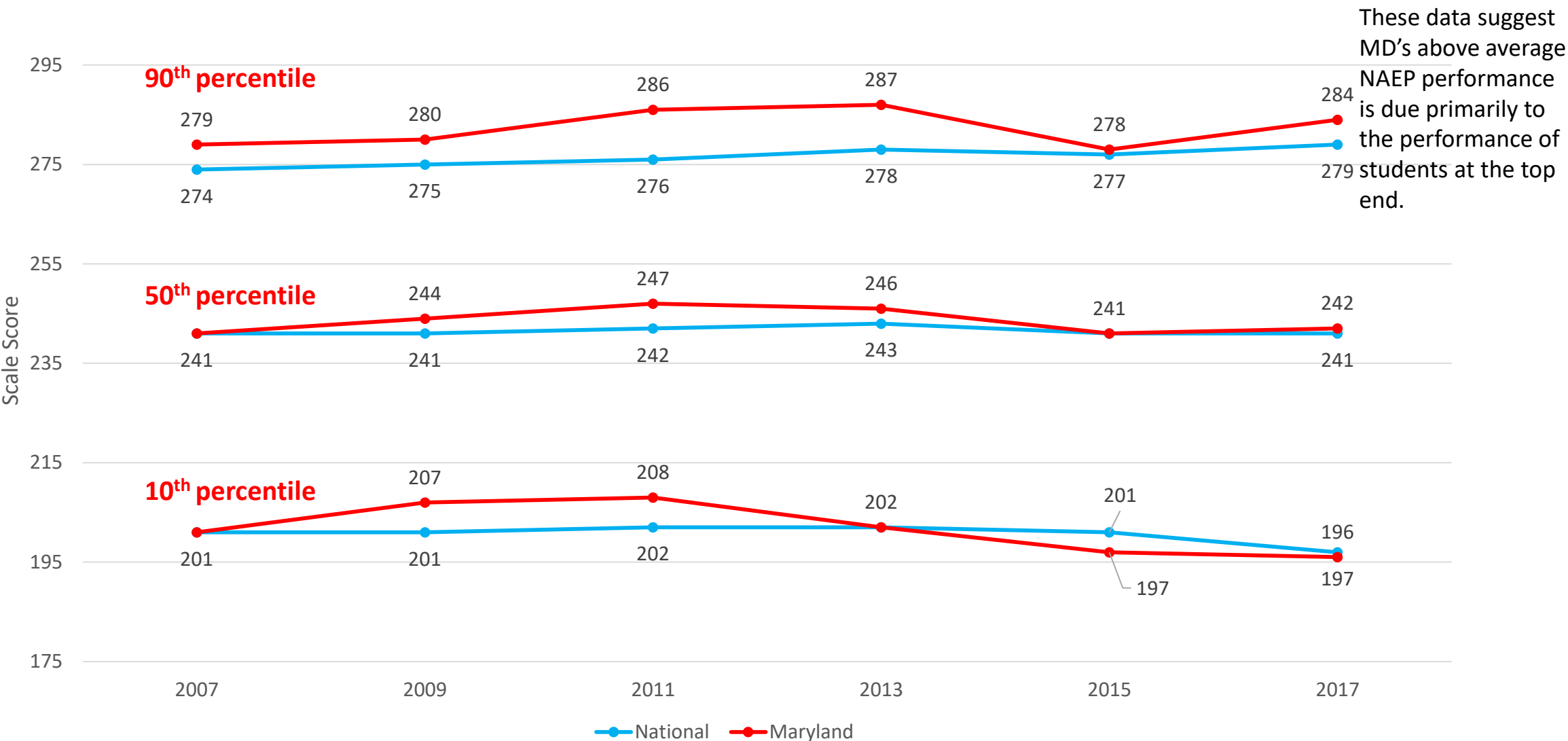
Grade 4 Math: Excellence Gaps by Race/Ethnicity



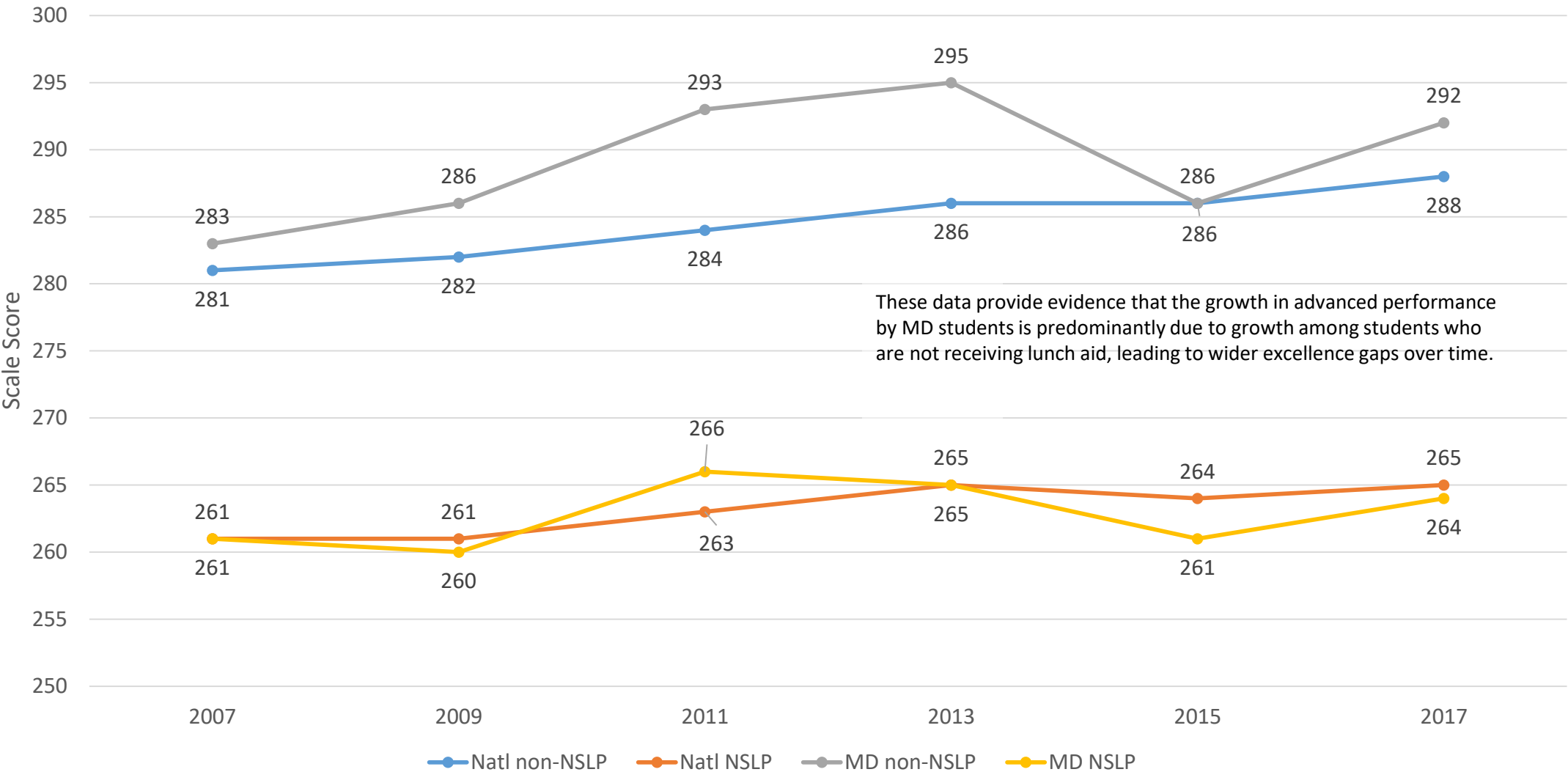
Another way to look at it ...

- ... is using the average score at the 90th percentile.
- Tells a slightly different story, but the big take-aways are the same.
- A rule of thumb is that 8-10 points on this scale is roughly one grade level (very roughly).

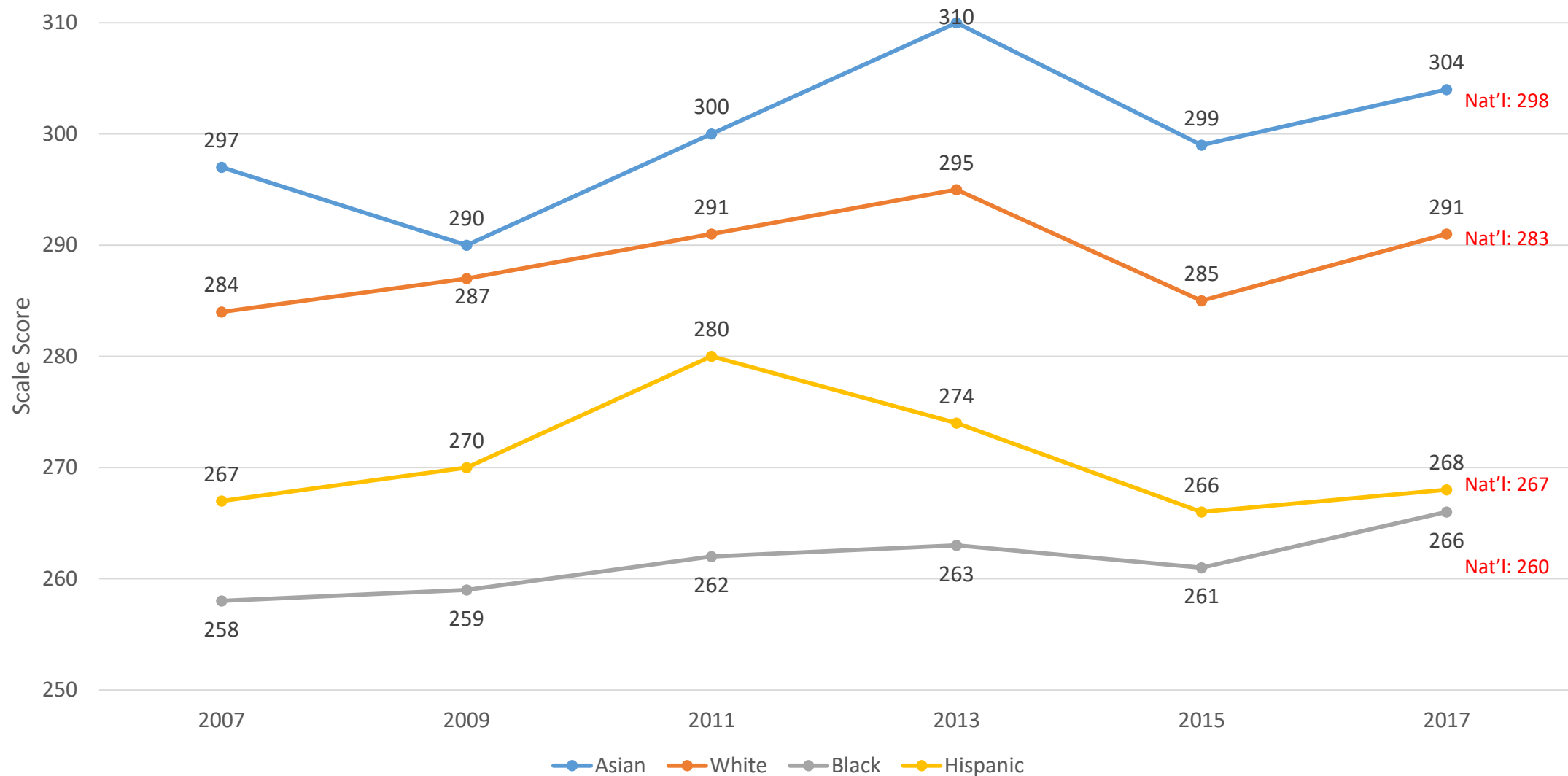
Grade 4 Math: By 10th, 50th, and 90th Percentiles



Grade 4 Math: 90th Percentile Score by Lunch Status



Grade 4 Math: 90th Percentile Score by Race/Ethnicity



Grade 8 Math

We'll start with % scoring advanced again ...

Grade 8 Math Item Map

388 Evaluate a circle graph and bar graph to determine possible sets of data

374 Identify characteristics of lines and angles in a plane

369 Estimate the radius of a circle given the area

343 Evaluate a circle graph and bar graph to determine possible sets of data

335 Use theoretical probability to predict an outcome

Advanced Benchmark (333)

332 Convert from degrees Fahrenheit to degrees Celsius

321 Decompose a composite shape in more than one way

299 Evaluate a circle graph and bar graph to determine possible sets of data

Proficient Benchmark (299)

298 Evaluate multiple representations of rational numbers in context

280 Interpret the rate of change defined by a linear equation

271 Determine population of a city given density and area

Basic Benchmark (262)

261 Use order of operations

256 Determine the shortest path between two points

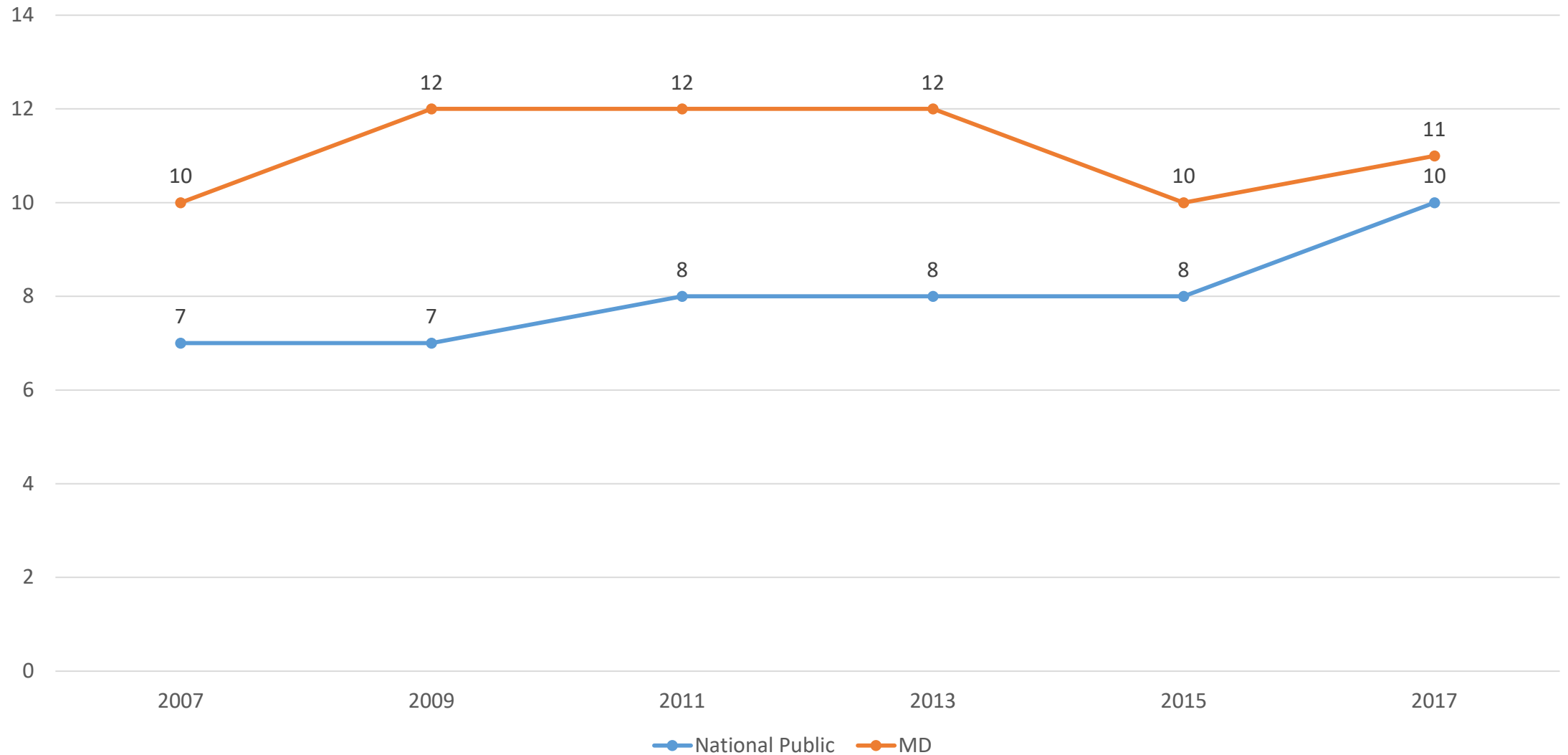
243 Evaluate multiple representations of rational numbers in context

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2017 Mathematics Assessment.

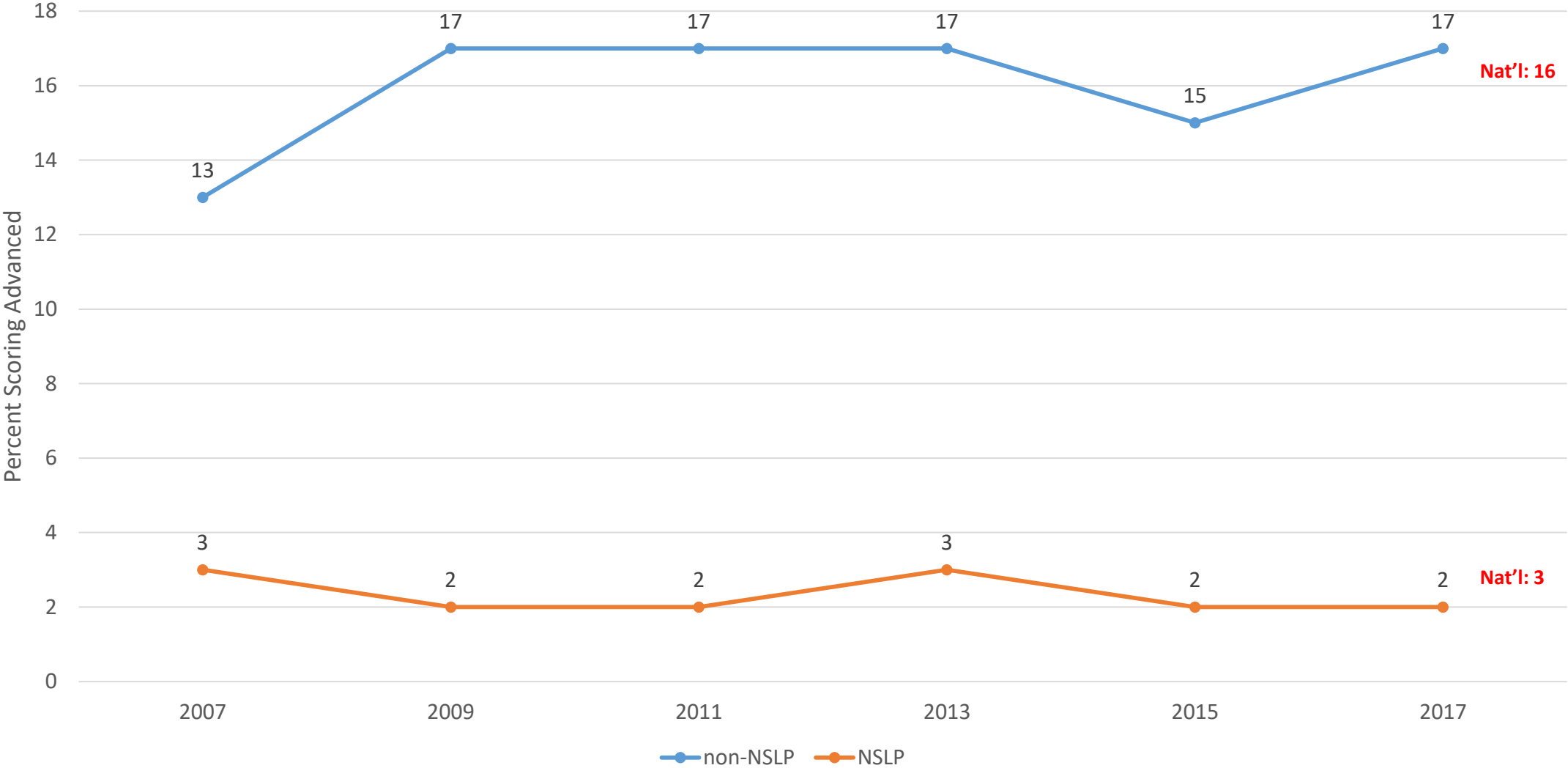
Check out the full web site, which includes additional items, item type, sample items, and other information:

<https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/itemmaps/?subj=MAT&grade=8&year=2017>

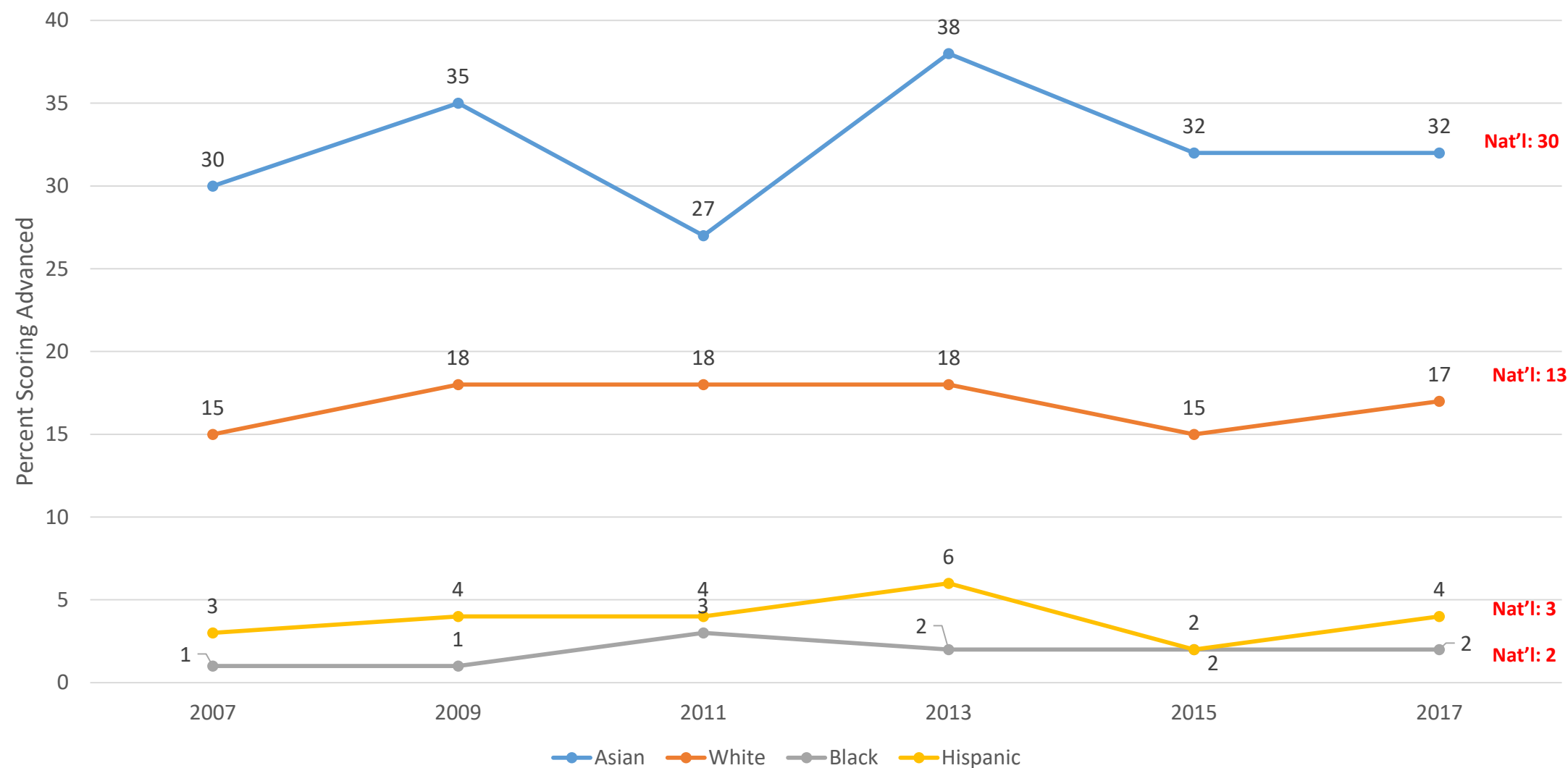
Grade 8 Math: Percent Scoring Advanced



Grade 8 Math: Excellence Gaps by Lunch Status

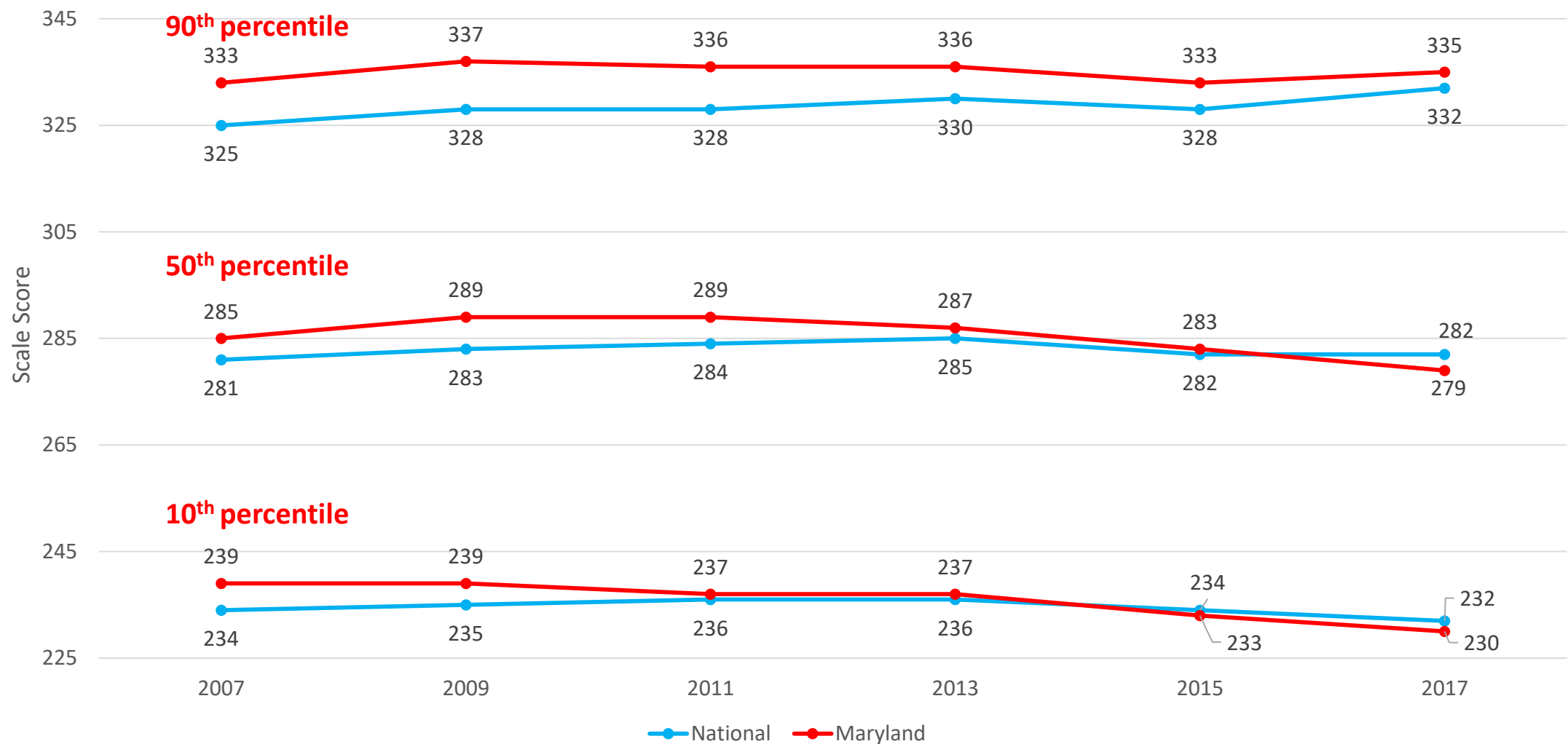


Grade 8 Math: Excellence Gaps by Race/Ethnicity

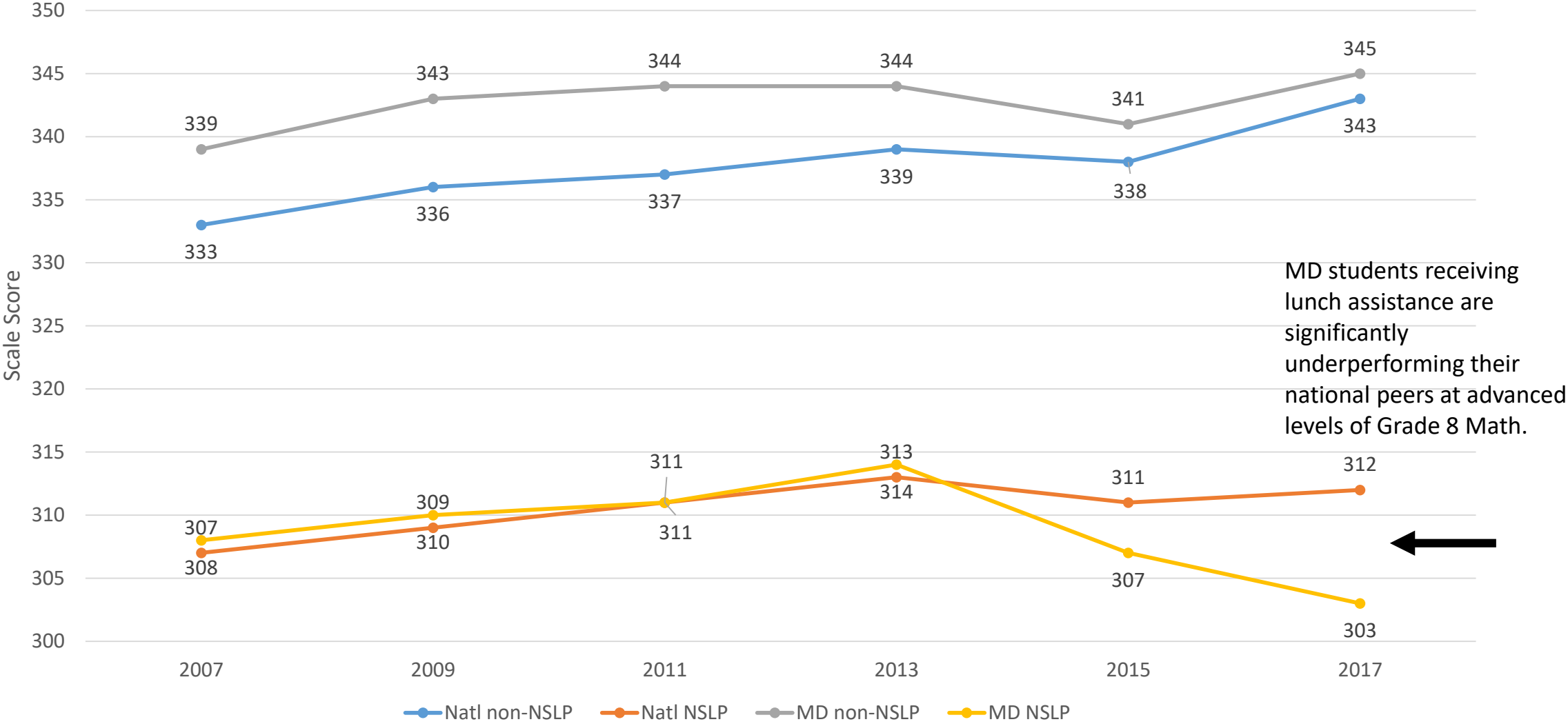


Switching back to scale scores again ...

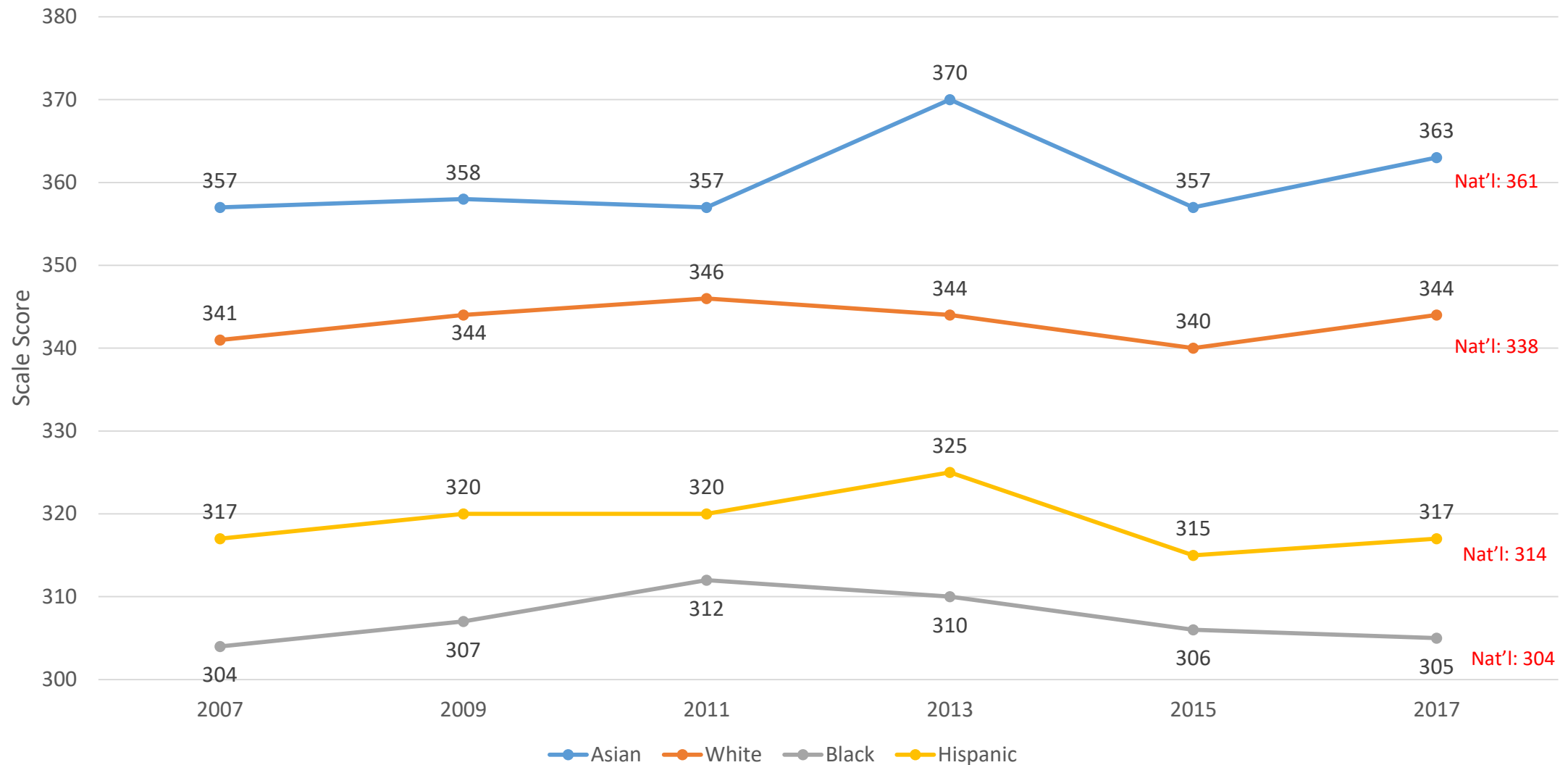
Grade 8 Math: By 10th, 50th, and 90th Percentiles



Grade 8 Math: 90th Percentile Score by Lunch Status



Grade 8 Math: 90th Percentile Score by Race/Ethnicity



Grade 4 Reading

We'll start with % scoring advanced again ...

Grade 4 Reading Item Map

332 Use examples from article to explain interpretation

321 Evaluate video in relation to written content of article

307 Infer character trait from story details to provide a description

295 Evaluate section titles in relation to text and support evaluation

281 Make a text-based inference to recognize reason for action

272 Use story events to support an opinion about a character's behavior

Advanced Benchmark (268)

265 Recognize meaning of word as used in a story

256 Recognize reason for plot resolution in a story

247 Recognize paraphrase of explicit details about main character in a story

242 Recognize main questions answered by an article

Proficient Benchmark (238)

230 Infer and recognize main problem faced by story character

223 Recognize story detail related to main action

210 Recognize reason for character's action in a story

Basic Benchmark (208)

207 Recognize meaning of word as used in a story

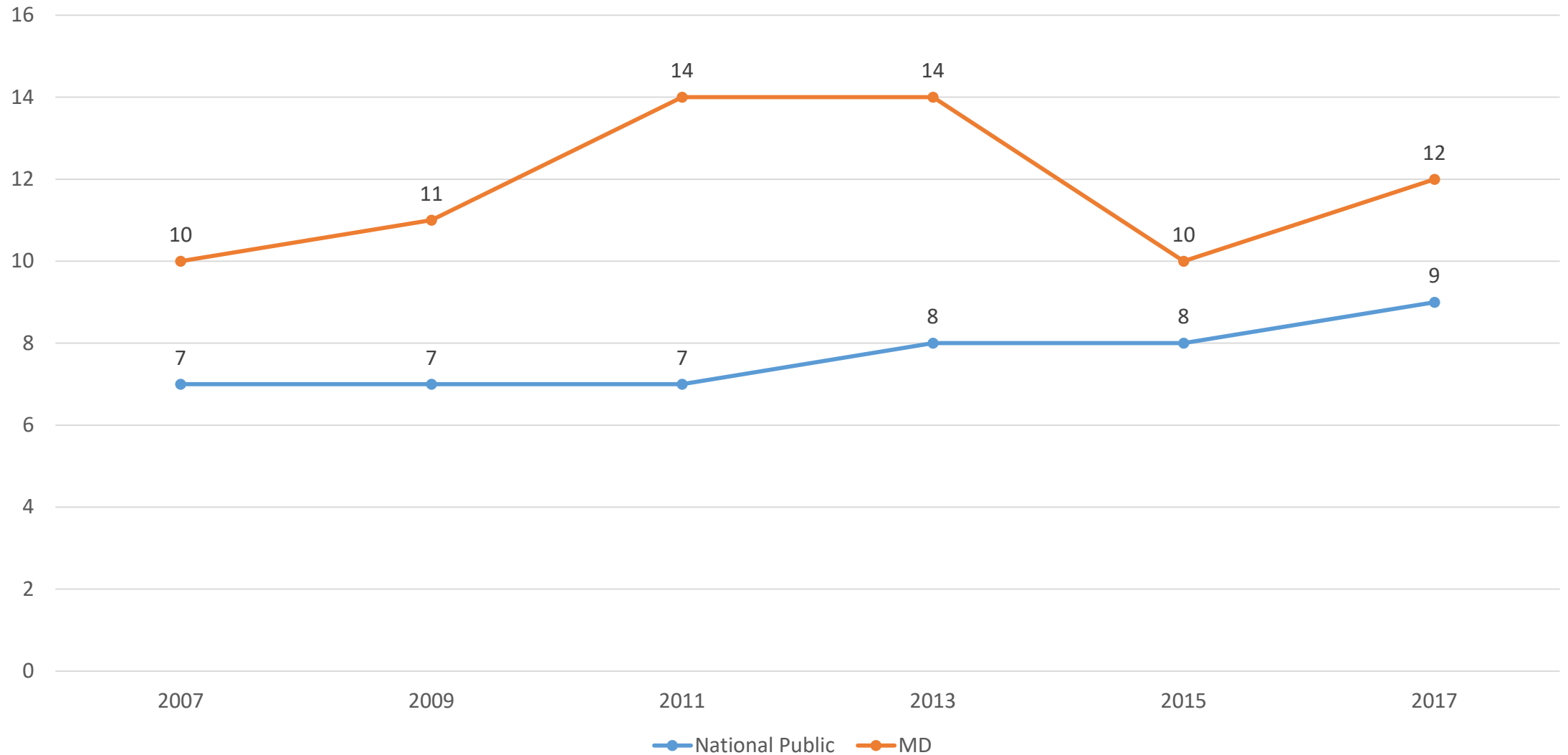
204 Recognize description of character's action stated in a story

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2017 Mathematics Assessment.

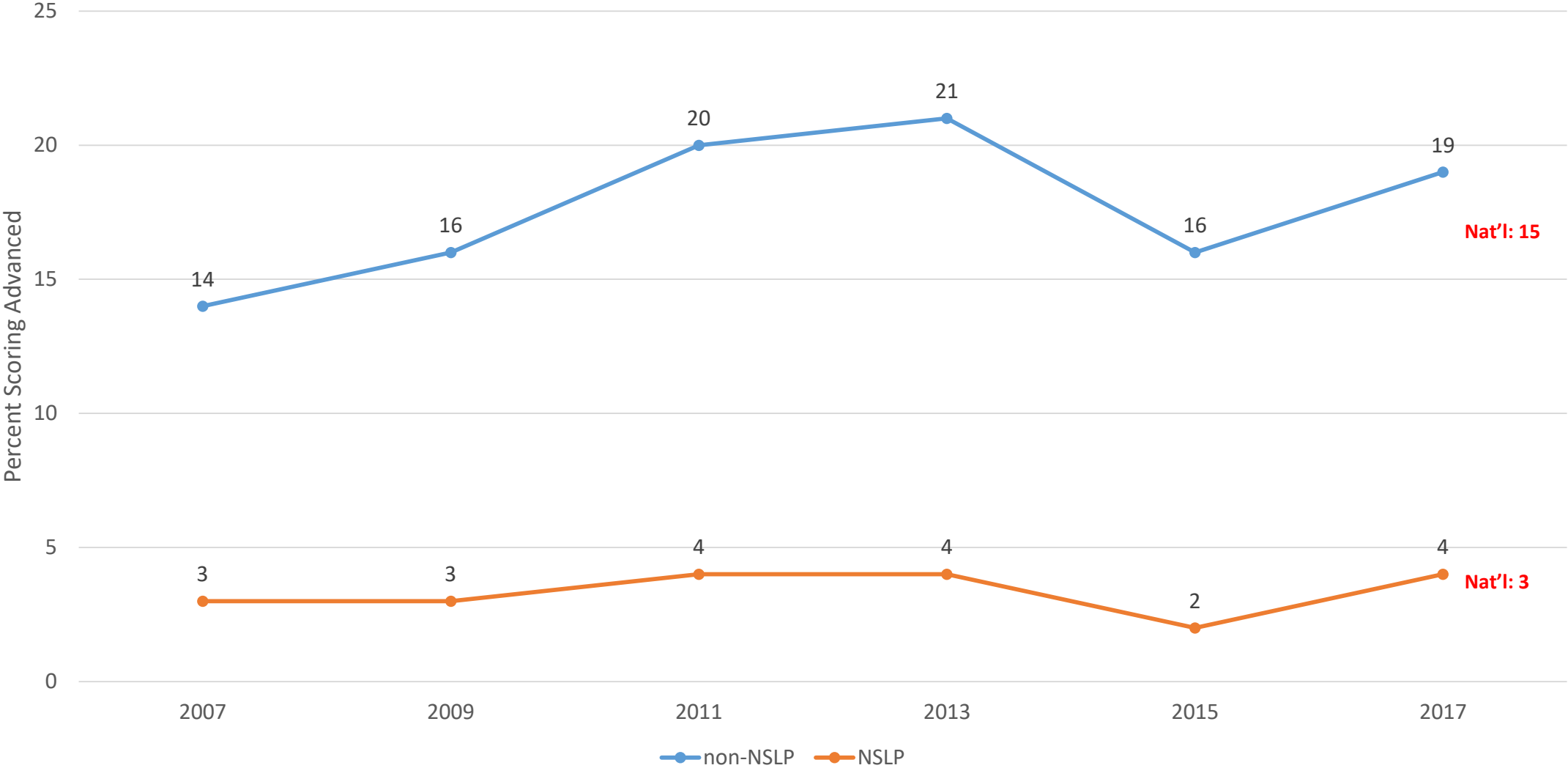
Check out the full web site, which includes additional items, item type, sample items, and other information:

<https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/itemmaps/?subj=RED&grade=4&year=2017>

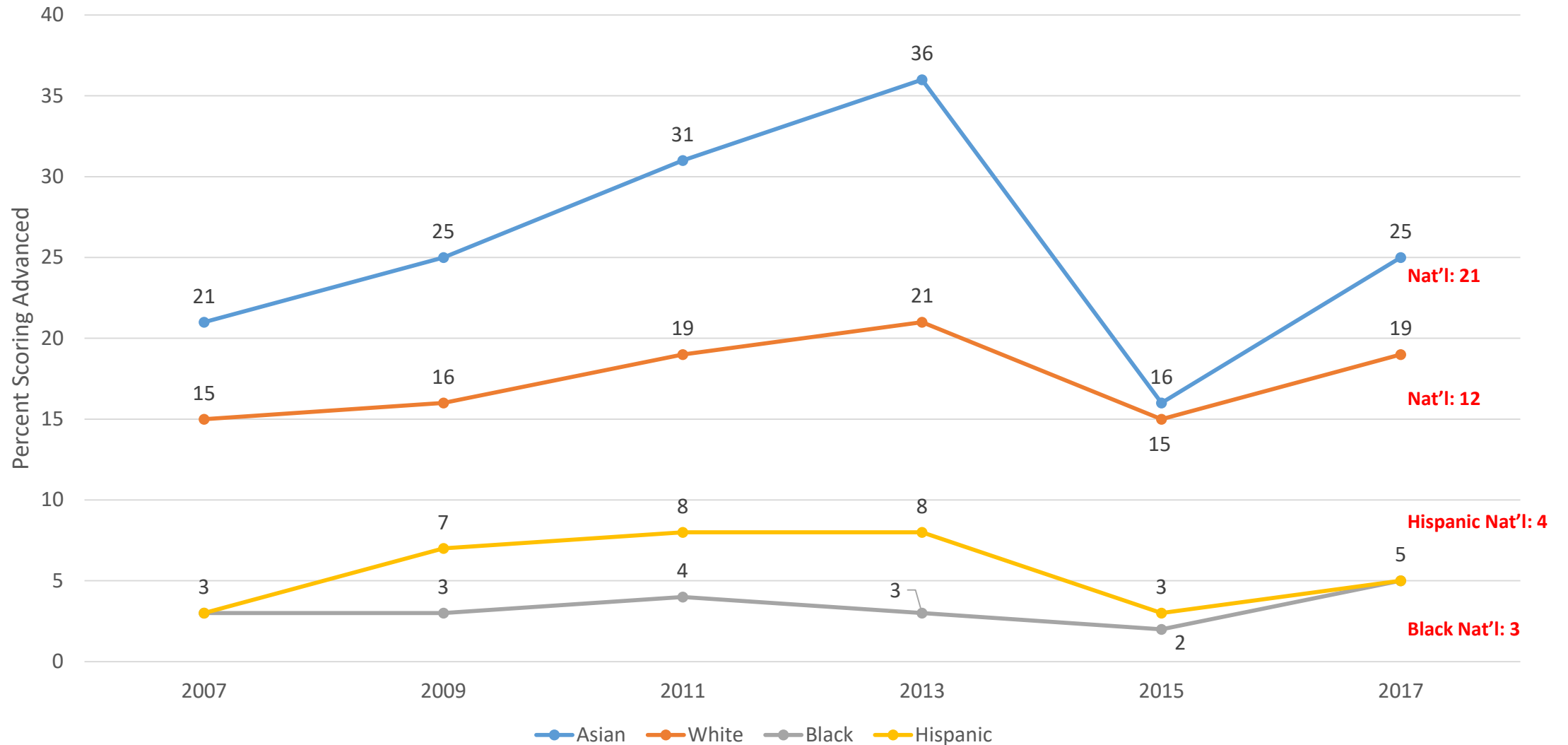
Grade 4 Reading: Percent Scoring Advanced



Grade 4 Reading: Excellence Gaps by Lunch Status

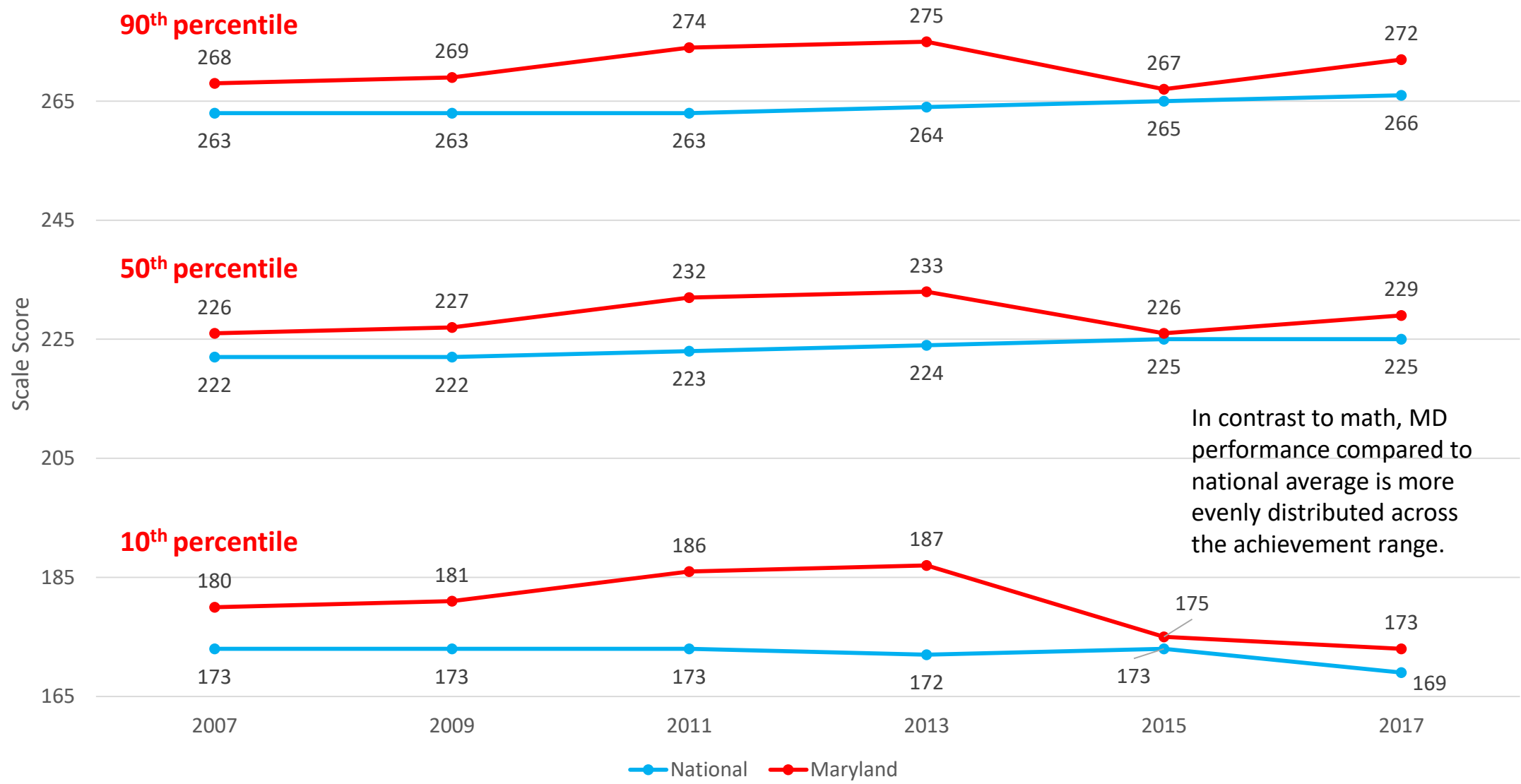


Grade 4 Reading: Excellence Gaps by Race/Ethnicity

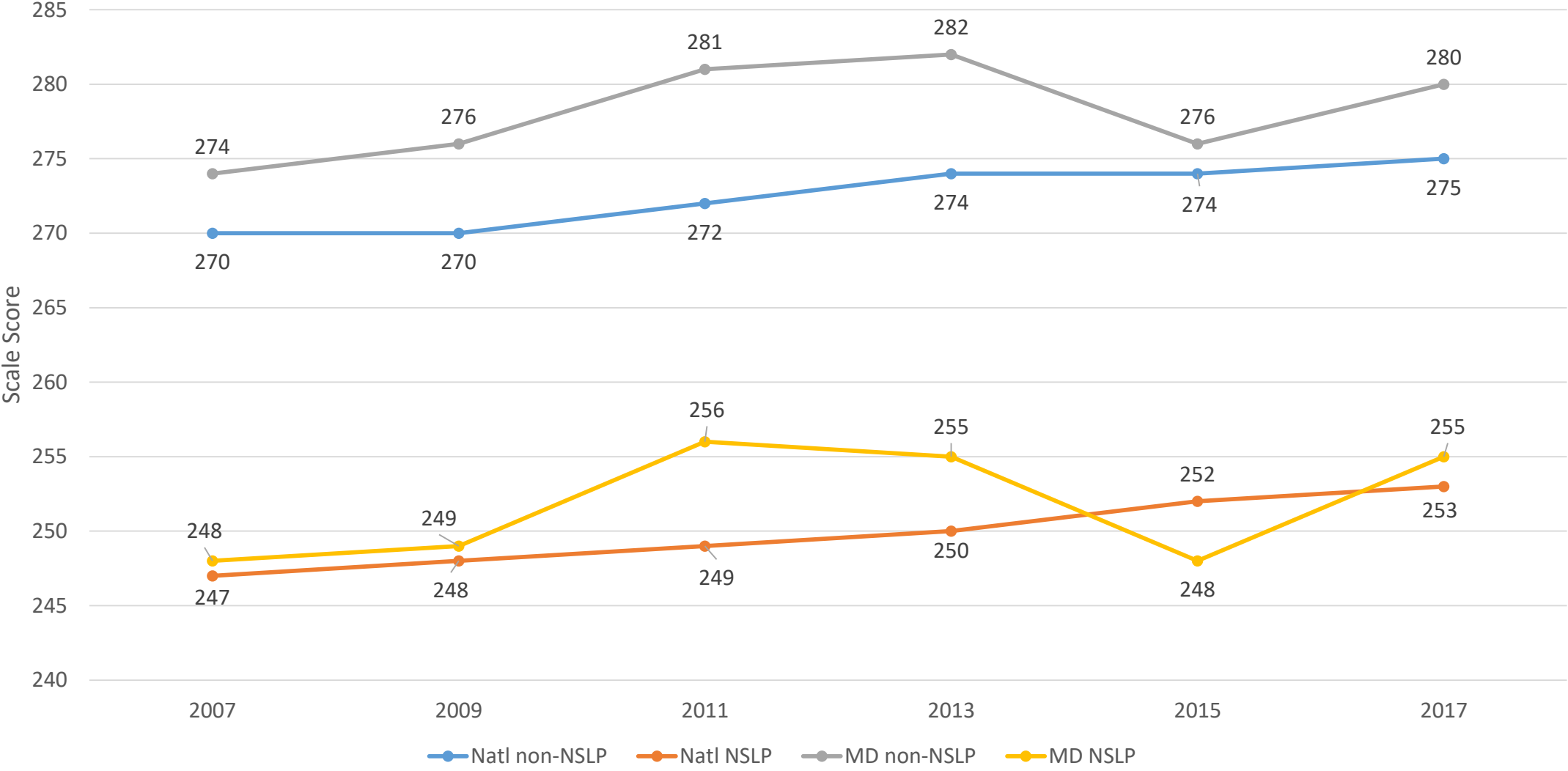


Switching back to scale scores again ...

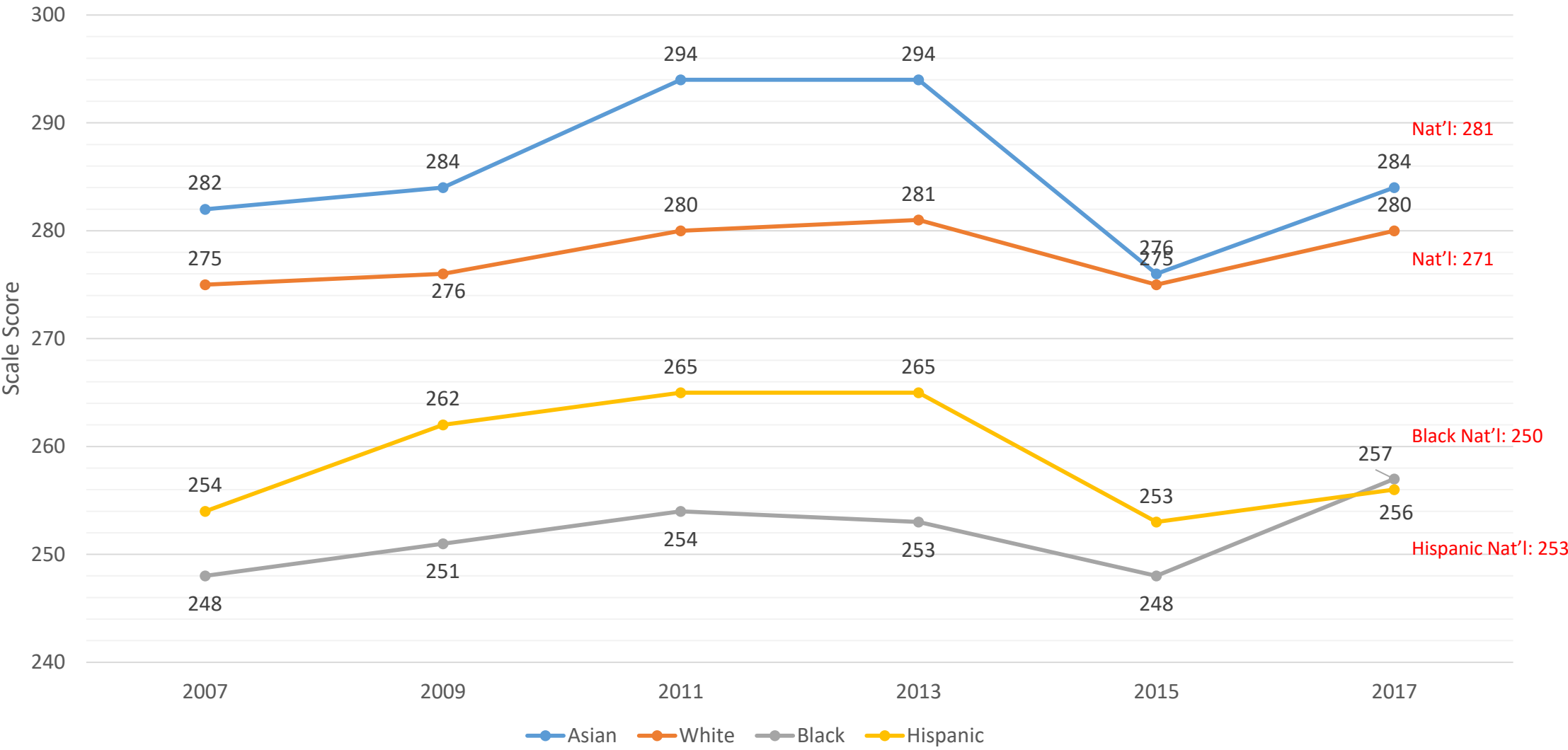
Grade 4 Reading: By 10th, 50th, & 90th Percentiles



Grade 4 Reading: 90th Percentile Score by Lunch Status



Grade 4 Reading: 90th Percentile Score by Race/Ethnicity



Grade 8 Reading

We'll start with % scoring advanced again ...

Grade 8 Reading Item Map

355 Evaluate author's use of evidence to support an argument

353 Integrate and interpret ideas to determine theme

336 Support opinion about author's creation of mood in a story

326 Explain relationship of photograph to article with reference to both

323 Synthesize across story to provide theme and support with text

Advanced Benchmark (323)

318 Use examples from article to explain interpretation

304 Compare information across two texts to provide a similarity and a difference

302 Provide and support an opinion about relation of ideas in story and poem

291 Infer character trait from story details to provide description

Proficient Benchmark (281)

278 Recognize reason from argument of article

264 Recognize main purpose of argument text

244 Recognize main question answered by article

Basic Benchmark (243)

241 Recognize paraphrase of story details

232 Recognize main purpose of chart included in an article

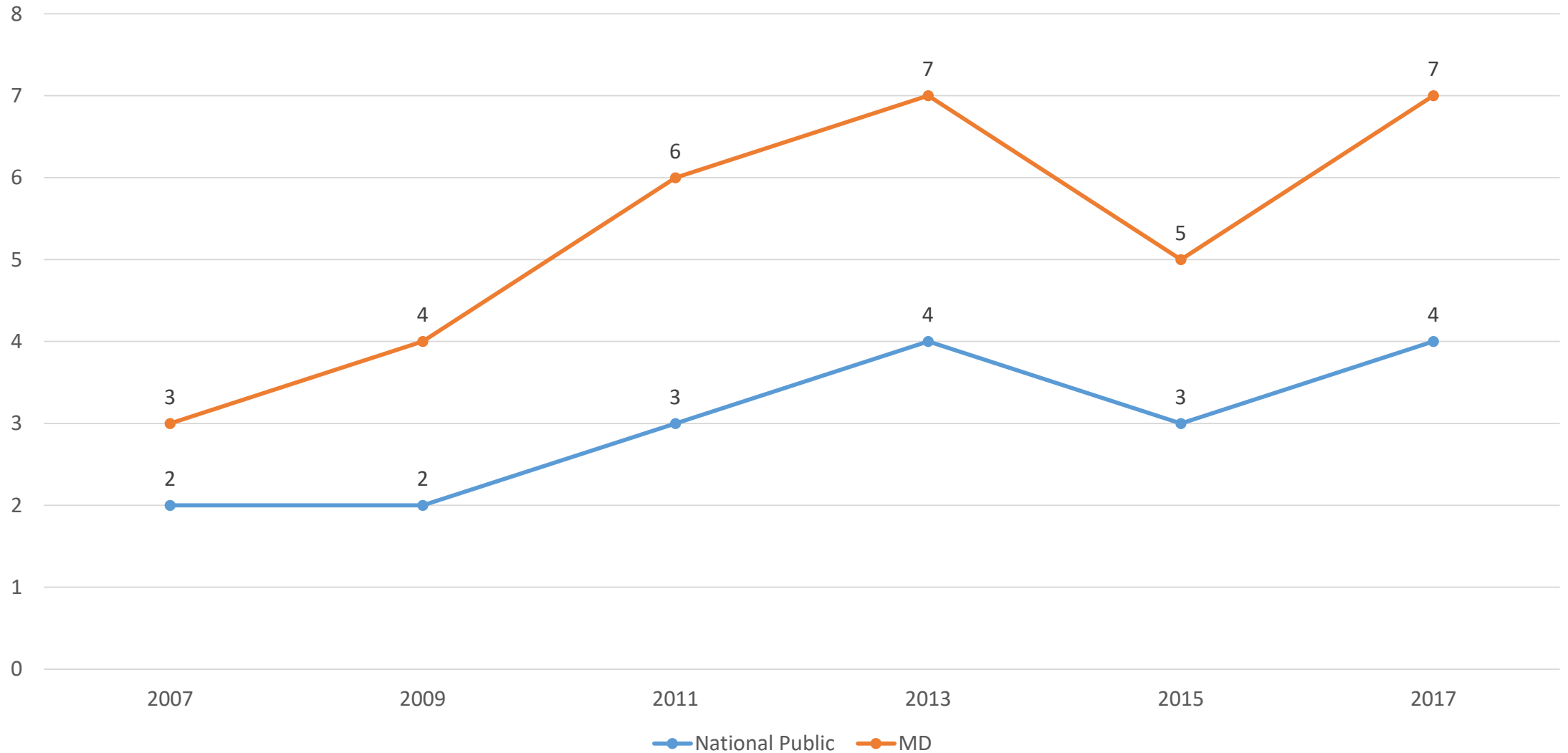
214 Recognize meaning of word as used in a story

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2017 Mathematics Assessment.

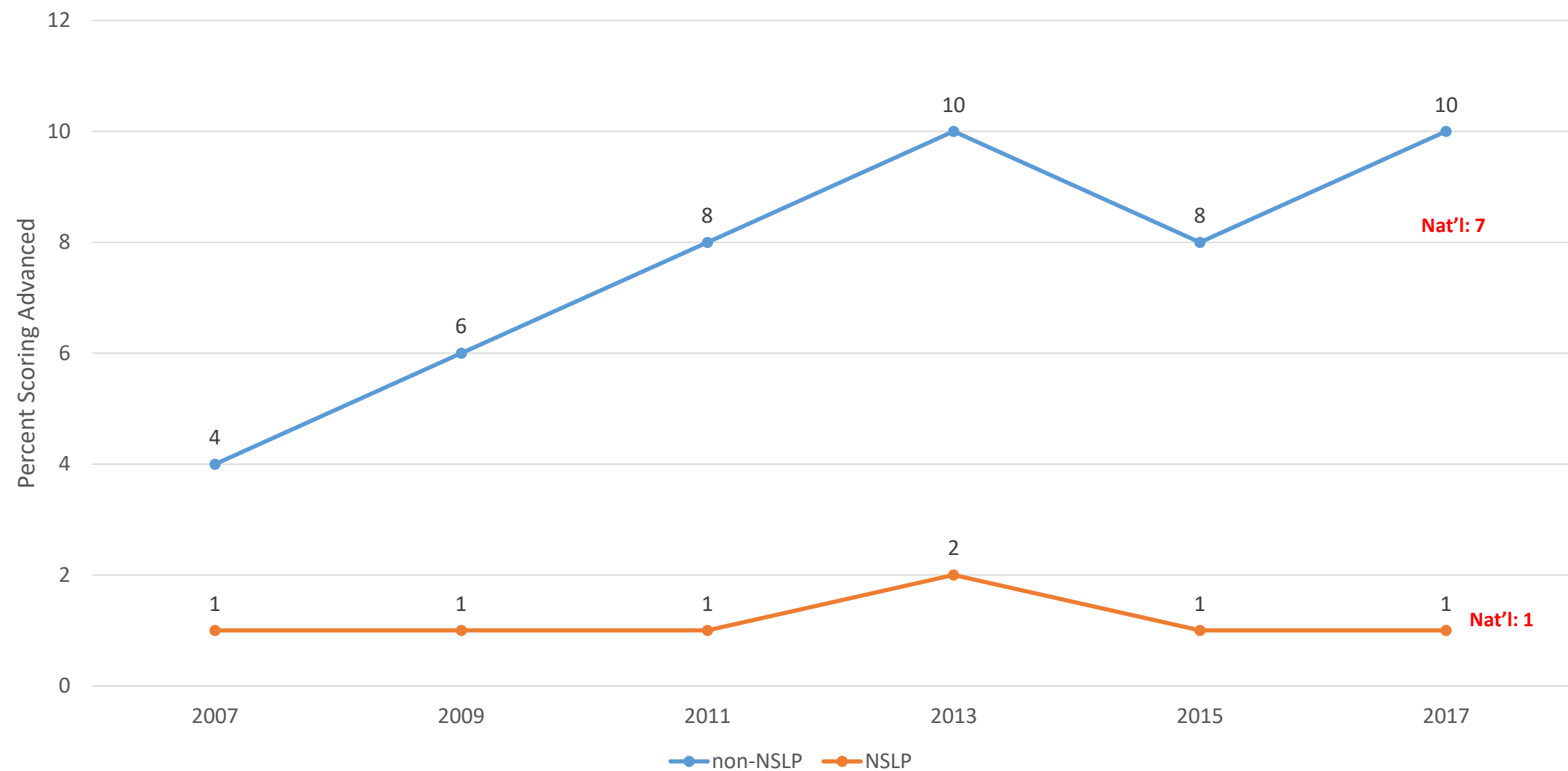
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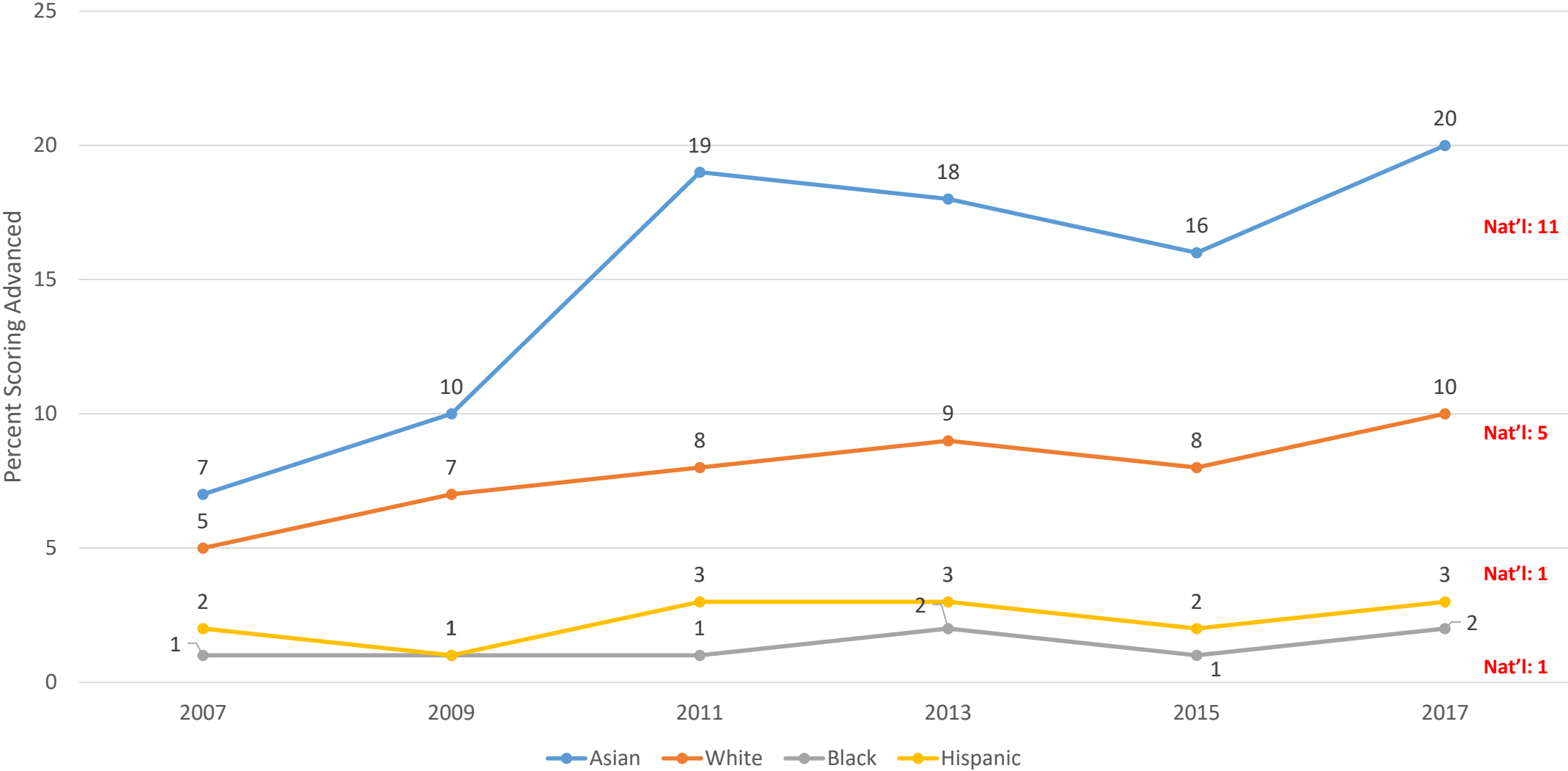
Grade 8 Reading: Percent Scoring Advanced



Grade 8 Reading: Excellence Gaps by Lunch Status

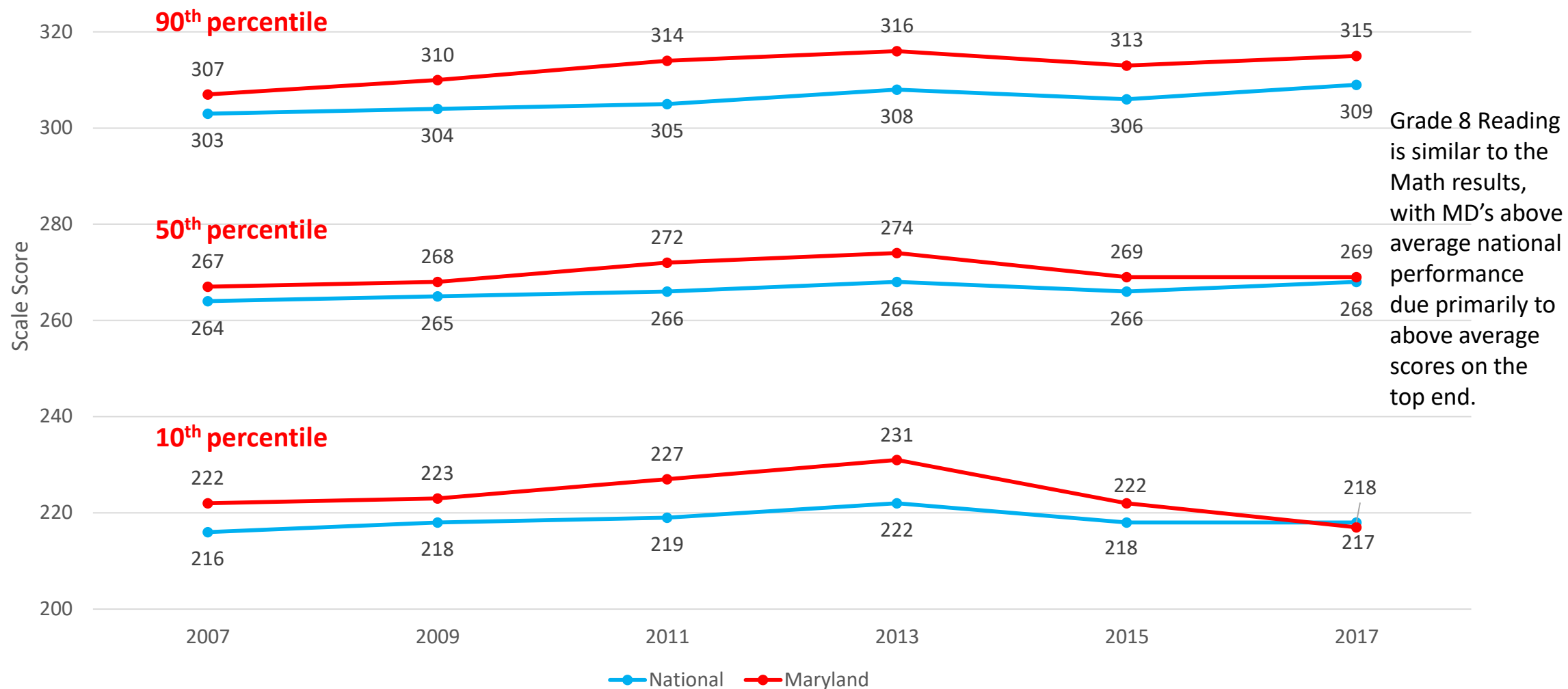


Grade 8 Reading: Excellence Gaps by Race/Ethnicity

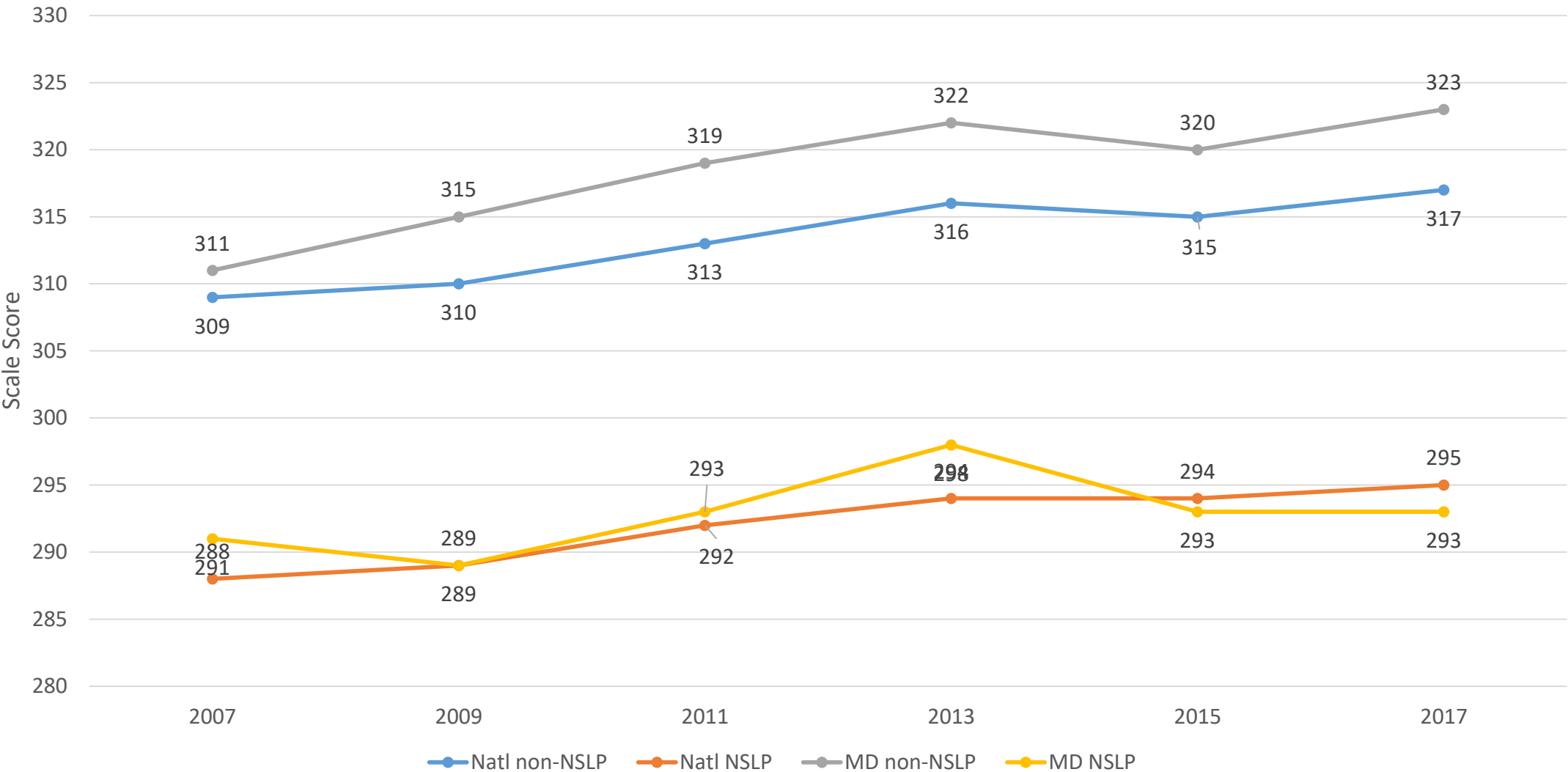


Switching back to scale scores again ...

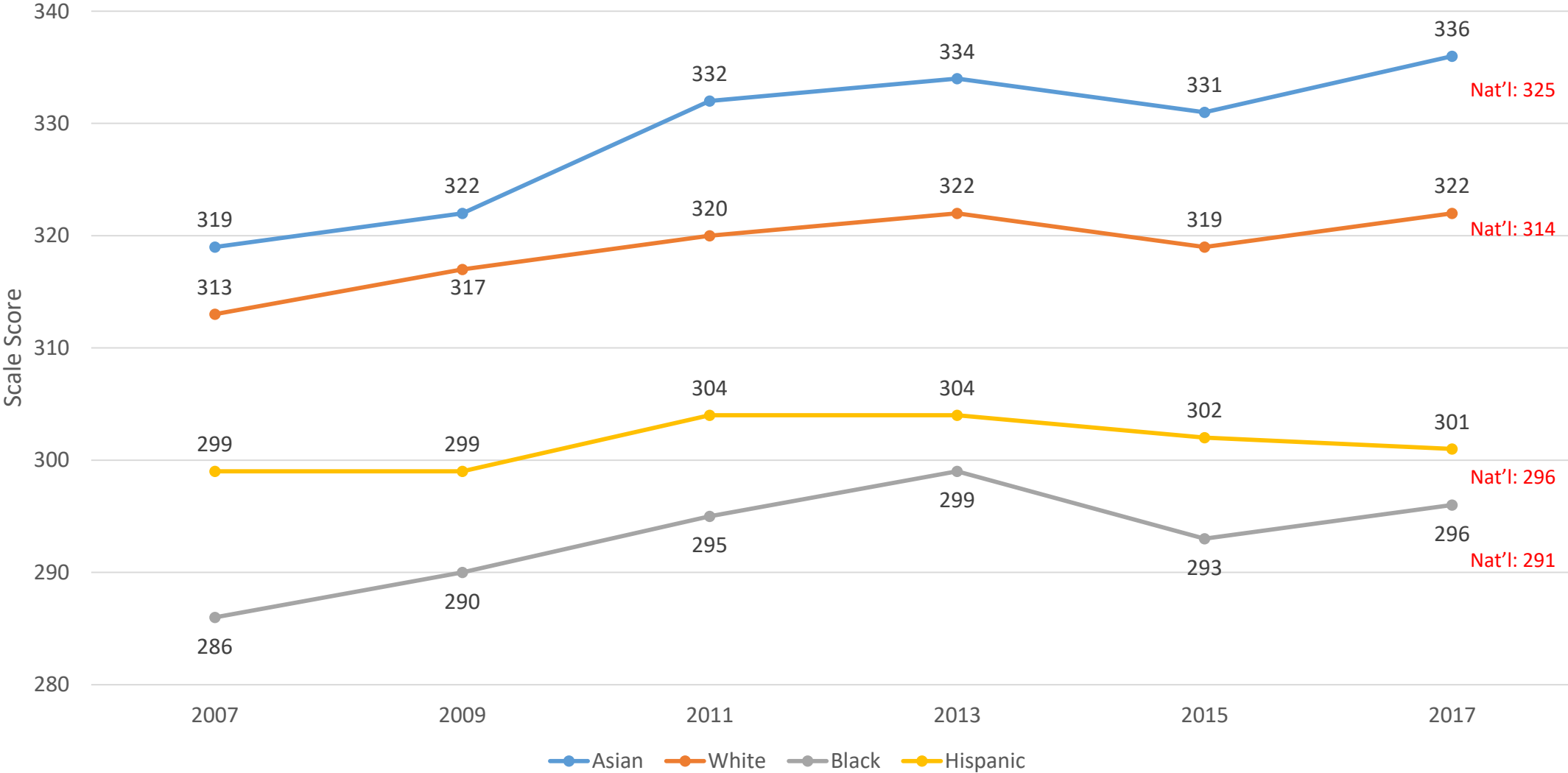
Grade 8 Reading: By 10th, 50th, & 90th Percentiles



Grade 8 Reading: 90th Percentile Score by Lunch Status



Grade 8 Reading: 90th Percentile Score by Race/Ethnicity



Major Take-Aways

Compared to the National Averages ...

- Maryland public school students' performance relative to the national averages has eroded somewhat.
 - Advantage still apparent in Grade 8 Reading.
- Maryland's above-average national performance on NAEP appears to be due primarily to the state's top students outperforming national averages.
 - No difference between MD and national averages at 10th and 50th percentiles (in all but Grade 4 Reading).
- In general, MD students outperform national averages on the top end of excellence gaps but are close to or at national averages on the bottom end.
 - This suggests that MD's superior performance at the advanced level is predominantly due to the scores of Asian American, White, and non-lunch-assistance students.
 - And, therefore, the state's overall NAEP success is due largely to the scores of those students at the advanced level.

Within Maryland ...

- Excellence gaps are big and either stubbornly resistant to shrinking or even growing in some cases.
- In both Math and Reading, at both Grade 4 and 8, excellence gaps are among the biggest in the country.
- There are a couple excellence gap bright spots:
 - Black students in Grade 4 Reading; only group to increase their average score over the past several years at the 90th percentile.
 - Regarding excellence gaps in Grade 8 Reading, every racial group (and non-NSLP students) outperforms the national averages at advanced levels.
 - HOWEVER: Some of these positive data points are starting to trend in negative directions, and they still represent very large excellence gaps.

POLL SUMMARY

PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS GIFTED EDUCATION

AUGUST 2018

Prepared by the Institute for Educational
Advancement with polling by Benenson
Strategy Group and The Winston Group





INTRODUCTION

In the United States, our goal is to provide a free and appropriate education for all children. Yet children with advanced cognitive ability are likely to enter their classrooms having mastered over half of the curriculum before the first day. Gifted young people have an intense intellectual curiosity and are eager to explore and learn, but they are often destined for days filled with repetition, lack of engagement and boredom. This is a tragic circumstance for those with such great potential to change our country and our world for the better. Advanced learners who come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds are especially at risk of being unidentified, underserved and thus unmotivated. Since the turn of the 20th century, educators and policy makers have grown increasingly aware of this issue, making small waves of progress at times in support of gifted students, yet nothing has taken hold.

The lack of services for these students is an issue that has been smoldering for decades and a crime for the individual and our community. According to the Davidson Institute for Talent Development, of the 37 states that mandate gifted youth are served, only four have programs that are fully funded, 24 are partially funded, and nine states mandate services but are not funded at all. Of the 13 states with no mandate, nine have no dollars going towards advanced learners, and five only have partially funded programs. These numbers are dismal. As Chester Finn, former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Education, once put it:

"If we cannot bring ourselves to push smart kids as far as they can go, we will watch and eventually weep as other countries surpass us in producing tomorrow's inventors, entrepreneurs, artists and scientists."

In 2014, the *Institute for Educational Advancement* (IEA) approached The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation with a proposal to fund a symposium as the first phase of a larger public policy initiative to advance programs and services for gifted youth. In November 2015, IEA invited a diverse group of 11 individuals with backgrounds in business, technology, education, politics and innovation to discuss why this part of our educational system continues to fall short and what can be done to make effective change. Through our dialogue, it was clear the first step to making progress was to conduct a study determining how the American public really feels about the issue. The hope was that this information would explain why gifted students are still not a priority.

In the fall of 2016, IEA commissioned Benson Strategy Group and the Winston Group to conduct the first national poll surveying American voters about their perceptions of gifted education in the United States. During the course of the survey, participants responded to questions about messaging, the meaning of the term "gifted," identification of gifted students, optimal services, professional development, and funding.

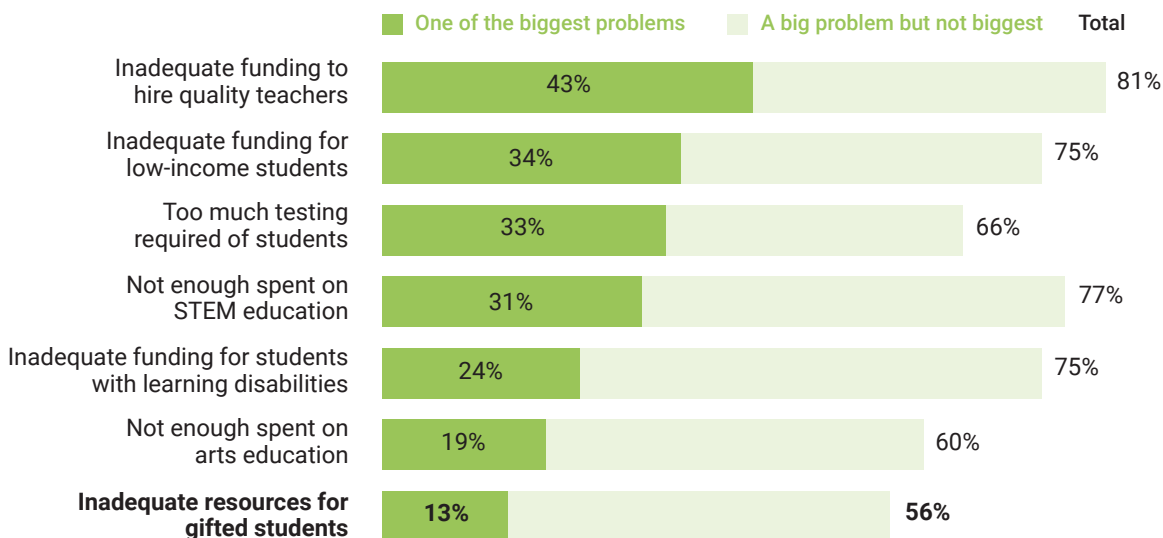
This document tells the story of how participants initially perceived gifted education in the United States and how particular messages increase a sense of urgency around the issue. The more voters hear, the stronger their support. Voters are concerned that gifted students are not getting the resources they need. Now, how do we encourage them to act?

SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

QUESTION: WHAT ARE THE LARGEST ISSUES FACING OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM AND HOW WELL ARE PUBLIC SCHOOLS ADDRESSING THEM?

Initially, participants were asked . . .

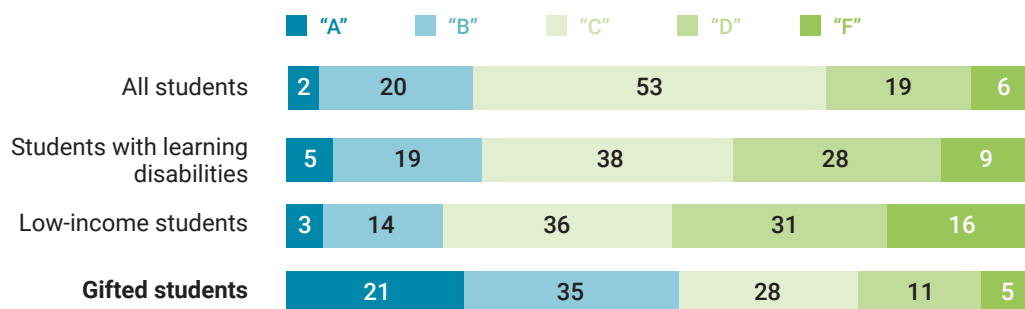
A) How big of a problem for our education system is each statement?



FINDING:

Resources for gifted students ranked in the bottom three for all major demographics.

B) Using a grading scale of A-F, how good of a job do you think K-12 public schools across the country are doing at addressing the needs each of the following types of students?



FINDING:

56%

of respondents gave public schools an A or B grade for addressing needs of gifted students.

IMPLICATION: WHAT DO THESE RESULTS MEAN?



The majority of people do not see gifted education as a priority when directly compared with other areas of education because they believe that the current system already meets the needs of gifted students better than others.

SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

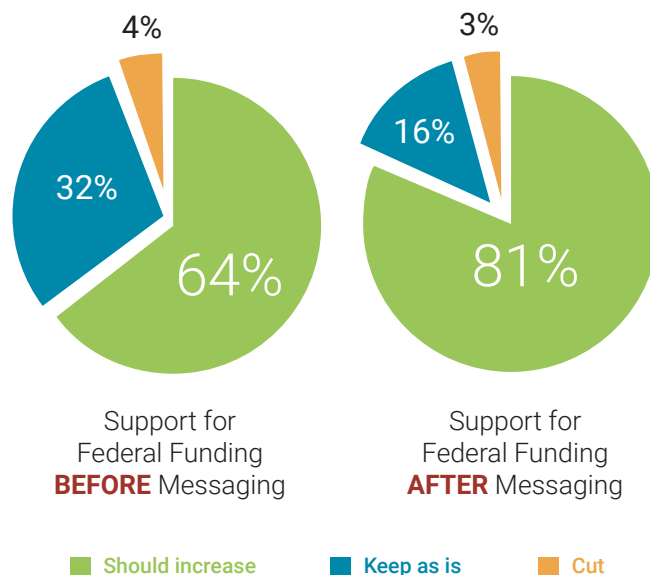
QUESTION: WHAT MESSAGING IS MOST EFFECTIVE IN BOOSTING SUPPORT FOR FUNDING GIFTED IDENTIFICATION & EDUCATION?

After messaging, there was strong support for increasing funds to support gifted identification, professional development and program/services. These findings were virtually equal across the political spectrum and socioeconomic groups!

81% of those surveyed supported increased state & federal funding after messaging



Participants associated “Advanced Learner,” “Gifted” and “Gifted and Talented” with above average ability over alternative terms.



IMPLICATION: WHAT DO THESE RESULTS MEAN?



There is more support than initially believed for increased funding towards gifted education. **This support increased substantially as participants learned more about the lack of resources for gifted and advanced students.**

ACTION: WHAT SHOULD WE DO?



The support for funding exists if messaging is structured correctly. Assert the problem, then follow up with potential consequences.

Example: In 2014, the federal government spent almost nothing on programs for gifted students in public schools. In fact, more than half of public schools have zero funds going to gifted learners. Other countries, like China and India, invest millions of dollars in their advanced students. If our country wants to remain globally competitive, we need to ensure these gifted young Americans receive the support and resources they need to succeed.

SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

QUESTION: WHAT ARE THE TOP PRIORITIES FOR GIFTED EDUCATION & TEACHER TRAINING?



42% reported a great deal of concern that “Minority students and those from low-income households are often not identified as gifted when they should be”



43% said inadequate funding to hire quality teachers is one of the biggest problems for our education system

PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS THAT SUPPORT THE FOLLOWING:

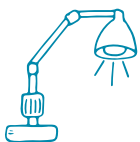
90% support improved funding to help train teachers who **identify and serve** gifted children

89% support improved funding to help train teachers who **are educating** gifted children

86% support requirements that any teacher who serves gifted children **receives special training**

86% support additional funding to schools in **underserved communities** specifically to support programs for gifted students

IMPLICATION: WHAT DO THESE RESULTS MEAN?



Across the board, the greatest concerns were for increased identification and access to gifted services among minority and low-income students, and increased professional development for all teachers of the gifted.

ACTION: WHAT SHOULD WE DO?



Advocate for pre-service training that prepares all teachers to equitably identify and serve gifted youth.

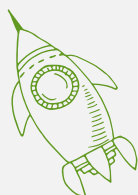
Additionally, local partnerships that provide supplemental services in schools as well as annual professional development sessions dedicated to serving advanced learners can help to ensure all advanced students are identified and served.

IMPLEMENTATION

SO WHAT DO WE DO NOW?

Based on these findings, here are some low-cost solutions we recommend pursuing:

- ✓ Cross-departmental conversations on how to meet the needs of advanced learners, especially underrepresented groups (minority, ELL, Title 1 students)
- ✓ Local partnerships that provide supplemental services in schools (after school courses, mentors, content area specials as visiting teachers, special interest clubs)
- ✓ Dual enrollment, subject acceleration and grade-level acceleration
- ✓ Annual professional development sessions dedicated to serving advanced learners
- ✓ Parent information sessions about early identification and gifted characteristics



87% of respondents support enabling students who have been identified as gifted to have their education accelerated (allowing them to skip a grade, grouping students by ability, or other means)

KYLE'S STORY:

Kyle started to read when he was two. He carried the first Harry Potter book with him to preschool and proceeded to finish the book in a week. His preschool teacher recognized Kyle's needs and advised his parents that Kyle should skip kindergarten. At first, the school district denied the request due to policy. As a result, Kyle's initial experience of kindergarten was fraught with boredom and frustration. He cried every morning and would try to negotiate ways to get out of going to school.

Knowing that something had to change, his parents went back to the district who then decided to take the risk and allow Kyle to accelerate to first grade. With the support of his teachers, administrators and parents, Kyle is once again motivated to learn, he is gaining confidence, making friends and maturing among his new peers. This has changed school policy, ensuring other children have similar opportunities.

CONCLUSION

As an organization, this information is a clear call to act. As educators and concerned citizens, we have work to do. **These students cannot be ignored.** We need to ensure that gifted youth have access to rigorous content thus inspiring exploration and engagement. We need to ensure that we are providing our teachers with the tools they need serve these students.

We need to educate the public and make it known that quality services for these students are rare, and largely unfunded.

"Every child deserves the opportunity to learn in an appropriate, challenging and engaging educational environment. We must support our advanced students to grow as individuals and global citizens who are able to contribute to the innovation, strength and growth of our nation."

– Elizabeth D. Jones, IEA President & Co-Founder

There is good news, people recognize the issue.

Now, **we must act.**

As we continue to work towards policy change, there is much that can be done now. Whether you're a parent, educator, administrator, academic or supplemental service provider, you have the ability to advocate for improvements and create change.



If you are interested in receiving a report, joining the conversation or learning more about next steps, please contact **Morgan Carrion** at mcarrion@educationaladvancement.org.

Or visit our website at:
www.educationaladvancement.org.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Organizations and individuals who were instrumental in the creation of the instrument and report include:

Alan Arkotov

Katzman/Ernst Chair in Educational Entrepreneurship, Technology & Innovation, University of Southern California

Dr. James Delisle

Growing Good Kids, Inc.

Dr. Shelagh A. Gallagher

Engaged Education

René Islas

National Association for Gifted Children

Elizabeth D. Jones

Institute for Educational Advancement

Michael Petrilli & Chester Finn

Thomas B. Fordham Institute

Dr. Amy Shelton

Johns Hopkins University Center for Talented Youth & School of Education

Ann Smith

Gifted Support Center

Adam Umhoefer

American Foundation for Equal Rights

The Benenson Strategy Group and The Winston Group conducted 1414 online interviews from December 19, 2016-January 6, 2017 with registered voters nationwide, including oversamples of: 150 Opinion Elites, 150 Parents, 150 Hispanics, and 150 African Americans.

-At the 95% confidence level, the margin of error for the entire sample is $\pm 2.51\%$. It is, $\pm 6.21\%$ among Opinion Elites, $\pm 3.73\%$ among Parents, $\pm 6.03\%$ among African Americans, $\pm 5.81\%$ among Hispanics, and higher among subgroups.



P.O. Box 39894
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443-595-6472; 301-744-9472

Dr. William E. (Brit) Kirwan, Chair
Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education
Room 120, House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Dr. Kirwan,

The Maryland Head Start Association (MHSA) works to strengthen the Maryland Head Start community by providing advocacy for vulnerable children and families, leadership, and professional development. MHSA is in full support of your effort to build a world-class education system in Maryland as it pertains to Policy Area 1 of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future or better known as universal pre-k.

Although we support your effort, we have concerns about the policy's impact on Head Start programs across the state. Primarily, we are concerned that universal pre-k may cause programs to struggle to reach full enrollment, which will have a significant impact on funding for the community-based programs that implement Head Start.

Since 1965, Head Start has been the leader and most innovative program in our nation and in the State of Maryland at working with the most vulnerable children and families in our community. Comprehensive services in the areas of Health, Nutrition, Disabilities, Family Support Services, Family Goal Setting, Parent Training, Parent Involvement, and other services conducive to the needs of the community give Head Start programs expertise in working with vulnerable children and families matched by no other program. A negative impact on Head Start has an even worse effect on those families.

MHSA believes there is a solution that will benefit the State of Maryland, the Head Start community, and foremost, children and families. **Partner with Head Start.** Partnering with Head Start will lessen the cost burden of universal pre-k and expand quality by providing supplemental funding to Head Start programs. Please see the explanations below:


1. In the State of Maryland, 26 grantees have been awarded over \$104 Million to provide services for Head Start, Early Head Start, and Child-Care Partnerships. Approximately 8,000 pre-k aged children have already been funded by the Office of Head Start to receive Head Start services. By ensuring Head Start programs are fully enrolled, the state can mitigate the cost burden of universal pre-k.
2. Since Head Start would serve approximately 8,000 children to help mitigate the cost of universal pre-k, MHSA asks the state to provide supplemental funding to qualified Head Start programs. These funds will be used to ensure Head Start teachers receive a comparable salary to public school teachers, provide transportation, and support for enhanced comprehensive services.

3. Together, we can provide the highest quality and most innovative services to the most vulnerable children and families in our state by strengthening the relationship between local education agencies and Head Start programs in each community.

As you review funding formulas, we ask that you seriously consider partnering with Head Start. We ask that you amend the policy to include Head Start wherever applicable. MHSA would like to continue the conversation so that we can look at the details of a partnership. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

MHSA believes you are on a path to achieve your goal of building a world-class education system. As the most innovative program to work with vulnerable children and families, Head Start must be included. We look forward to working with you and helping to lead the charge to promote growth and prosperity within our communities!

Sincerely,



Simeon Russell
Executive Officer

Maryland Head Start Association



Maryland Developmental
Disabilities Council



November 12, 2019

William E. Kirwan, Chair
Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education
c/o Office of Policy Analysis
Department of Legislative Services
90 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chairman Kirwan and Commission Members:

We have written previously as you have worked through the many issues before you regarding the restructuring of Maryland's education system. We write now to state our continued support for the Commission's work and the recommendations and to highlight one issue of particular, ongoing concern. Specifically, additional assurances are needed to make sure school districts provide a robust level of services to meet the needs of students with disabilities receiving special education services. Based on how many, if not all, school districts handled the additional funds that were allocated to them for special education services during the 2019 legislative session, **it is essential that the Commission recommend and that the General Assembly enact a provision requiring school districts to use additional funding to supplement, not supplant, the special education funds they already receive.**

Districts consistently report that special education is underfunded and parents often report that IEP team members tell them that there are no funds available for services their children need, such as one-to-one assistants or particular types of therapy. It was our understanding that the additional state funds allocated by the General Assembly, based on the recommendations of the Commission, were intended to supplement existing school district special education funds; however, a number, if not all districts, instead moved an equivalent amount of money out of their special education budgets. As a result, the budgets for special education services remained level funded.

In order to fund special education services at a level that would alleviate at least some of the stress on the system, districts need to have enough funding to enable them to increase staff and services to meet the needs of the children with disabilities who come through their doors as required by state and federal law. Therefore, it is essential that districts be required to supplement, not supplant, their existing special education funds with the additional state funds allocated to them for this purpose. **We recommend adding stronger language to assure that school districts do not use additional state aid to supplant, but rather to supplement current funding, build capacity, and ensure students with disabilities receive the services and supports they need to succeed. Specifically, we recommend a "supplement not supplant" requirement as part of the accountability framework recommended by the Commission.**

Thank you for your consideration of this recommendation.

Sincerely,

Leslie Seid Margolis
Managing Attorney
Disability Rights Maryland

Rachel London
Executive Director
Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council



November 12, 2019

Dr. Brit Kirwan
Chair, Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education

Position: MSPA supports full funding of Commission recommendations related to mental health services, including improving staffing ratios of school psychologists.

Dear Dr. Kirwan and members of the Commission:

I, on behalf of the Maryland School Psychologists' Association (MSPA), am writing to express support for the full funding of recommendations created by the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education. MSPA, a professional organization representing approximately 500 school psychologists in Maryland, is committed to ensuring all Maryland students receive the highest quality education, to include ready access to school-based mental health services.

MSPA was thrilled to see, in the January Interim Report, that the base funding recommendation included mental health services in the form of community schools and health services practitioners, as well as additional social workers, counselors, and school psychologists. Specifically, page 223 of the report indicates that increasing staffing ratios for school psychologists (500-700 students to 1 school psychologist) is included in the base per pupil amount from the Augenblick, Palaich, and Associates recommendation.

One in five children and youth in our country experience a mental health disorder, but about 80% *do not* receive professional support. Between 70 and 80% of children who *do* receive such support, receive it inside the schoolhouse. To ensure that our students are receiving vital mental health supports in schools, there needs to be a sustained commitment to reaching appropriate staffing ratios of school psychologists. Maryland school psychologists currently operate under an average staffing ratio exceeding 1500 students for every 1 school psychologist, which is *worse* than the national average of 1382 to 1. In some Maryland school systems, the ratio is upwards of 4000 to 1.

As the Commission takes under consideration recommendations from the Blueprint for Maryland's Future Funding Formula Workgroup, MSPA strongly encourages these recommendations be fully funded so that all students can achieve success in school, at home, and in life.

Respectfully,

Kyle Potter, Ph.D., NCSP
Chair, Legislative Committee
Maryland School Psychologists' Association

Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education

Public Hearing

Tuesday, November 12, 2019

Written Testimony

Dear Members of the Commission,

I applaud your passage of the legislation on the recommendations of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, and the inclusion of incentive grant compensation.

As a member of SEIU Local 500 and the 9500 Montgomery County Public Schools support professionals we represent, I wish to write to you specifically about the 3000 support professionals that work directly in supporting the academic achievement of our students, our paraeducators/paraprofessionals, media assistants, English Composition Assistants, and other support professional instructional staff who are also educators.

25% of student instruction in our school system is provided by these support professionals under the supervision of certificated teachers. 70% of these individuals hold a four-year degree or higher. These educators amplify the work done by teachers through direct instructional support to individual students which includes special needs students, students learning the English language, students in small group instruction, along with seamless support to students on using technology.

As an educated workforce, these educators have selected to be and to remain a paraprofessional or media assistant as their chosen profession, not as a fall back job. They daily see the difference their work accomplishes in supporting all students to achieve.

Teachers recognize the value of these educators and wish there were more of them so as to better support the growing needs of our students and our increased enrollment.

This is a request to include in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future the due respect and compensation for ALL educators that instruct and touch the lives of our students by adding language to include paraprofessionals, media assistants, English Composition assistants, and all other instructional staff.

Sally Murek

Coordinator, Paraeducator Program
Montgomery County Public Schools
VP, Paraeducator Chapter
SEIU Local 500

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]



November 11, 2019

To the esteemed members of the Commission for Innovation and Excellence in Education:

I was once a Baltimore City Public Schools student. From my first day at Hamilton Elementary/Middle (#236), I was placed in Gifted and Talented programs.

I didn't know it at the time, but the school was trying to "powergame" its shortcomings; figuring that "doing what we can for the students whose potential is overwhelmingly obvious is better than doing nothing for anyone."

It came as a severe shock to me when I learned that in Baltimore County (where I attended middle and high school), in a neighborhood less than five miles away, they didn't have a "gifted and talented program." At my new school, they had the resources and the will to provide for all of their students.

Abandoning our children didn't work in 1987, and it doesn't work today. We cannot leave struggling students to fend for themselves — especially when we **know, unequivocally** that educational outcomes are largely impacted by systemic biases that students (and more often than not, their families) have no control over.

If we won't do right by our future, then what's the point of anything?

I look at the recommendations of this group of incredibly intelligent people at the forefront of educational analysis and thought as a comprehensive public safety and economic development plan. Though these recommendations are not comprehensive, they are much better than the neoliberal incrementalism that too often paves the fiery road ahead of us with "good intentions."

There is so much potential in Maryland, and it lies within the students who will blast the horns of a prosperous future, shining as a model for the entire country.

I am full-throatedly calling for our leaders to pass the recommendations of the Kirwan Commission, and to do so with the sense of urgency that is needed to show the people of Maryland that we are prioritizing our collective future by committing to this once-in-a-generation opportunity.

In solidarity with our future,

Dave Heilker

Authority: Dave Heilker for Baltimore. Jevon Hamlet, Treasurer


www.daveforbaltimore.com

###

From: BEE
To: Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education
Subject: Written testimony for this evening's Kirwan Hearing
Date: Tuesday, November 12, 2019 4:51:07 PM

Please add the attached testimony to the public record for this evening's hearing.

Thank you!

* * * *

We, the members of Baltimoreans for Educational Equity's Leadership Team know that a high-quality education is paramount to the success and upward mobility of the students of Baltimore City, and to the people of Maryland writ large.

Every year, we see students being pushed out of school by systems that are rigged against them.

Every year, we see teachers grow progressively more dispirited as they continue to go far above the call of duty to support the needs of their students living in poverty in ways that no one else will, and are compelled to pour their personal money into classroom supplies that should be paid for by their schools.

Every year, we see parents struggle to understand why their children are being sent home yet again due to inadequate heating or air conditioning.

If you stack up enough of these years, you see a whole generation: A generation falling through the cracks. A generation underperforming — not because we aren't working hard enough; on the contrary, because no matter how hard we work, the resources afforded us will simply not get us across the finish line.

We need to do better for our future.

Funding the Kirwan Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education recommendations, and doing so with the appropriate sense of dire urgency, is the single best investment in public safety and economic development available to our great state right now.

This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity. We must seize it, and hold onto it as if the future depends on it because it absolutely does.

Signed,

Natasha Escobar, Wesley Hawkins, Dave Heilker, Alaine Jolicoeur, Lauren Lamb, Abigail Swisher, Jamal Turner

Baltimoreans for Educational Equity (BEE) is a group of teachers, former teachers, families, students, and allies committed to improving educational outcomes for all kids. Learn more about our work at www.beequity.org

* * * *

Thank you!



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Every year, we see students being pushed out of school by systems that are rigged against them.

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Signed,

Natasha Escobar, Wesley Hawkins, Dave Heilker, Alaine Jolicoeur, Lauren Lamb, Abigail Swisher, Jamal Turner

Baltimoreans for Educational Equity (BEE) is a group of teachers, former teachers, families, students, and allies committed to improving educational outcomes for all kids. Learn more about our work at www.beequity.org



Dr. William E. 'Brit' Kirwan, Chair, and Commissioners of Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education

House Office Building, Room 121
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Dr. Kirwan and fellow Commissioners,

In order to support the mission of the Kirwan Commission in creating a more equitable public education system in Maryland, CASA, the largest immigrant rights organization in Maryland and as a coalition member of the Maryland Alliance for Racial Equity in Education, we submit this letter outlining our position and concerns regarding the current recommendations. We are committed to ensure that new reforms do not replicate old mistakes. We appreciate the considerable analyses conducted thus far and ask that you consider the following ways that the framework can be bolstered. Our solutions consider the racially equitable impact on schools across the state, prioritizing both marginally served and historically under-resourced communities.

The key issues addressed in this letter include: appropriate methods to count all students regardless of status, addressing the needs of EL students and scope of recommendations to best serve these students, and strengthening the community school model. Our specific concerns and proposals, while not exhaustive, represent areas where gaps in our plan would have a substantial negative impact on marginalized students.

Accurate count of all students

Ensuring an accurate count to ensure adequate resources: Due to changes in how districts collect data to determine which students are low-income, many students are not being counted in schools' poverty data. The switch to using government assistance rolls as the primary means to identify the poor and working poor has led fewer families identified as living in poverty. Poverty measures are faltering as a result of official policies that raise eligibility requirements for poor and working poor families seeking access to government programs, and limit the time that families can stay in the programs. This problem is particularly pronounced among recent immigrant populations. This inaccurate collection of data leads to significant reductions in state and federal funds, and loss of funding opportunities for schools in areas of concentrated poverty. We urge the Commission to:

- Identify economically disadvantaged students through the use of a hybrid model that combines, but does not duplicate, families identified through the Direct Certification process and families identified through an annual alternative income declaration form; and/or
- Utilize a multiplier of 1.8 (reflecting the ratio of students eligible for free and reduced meals to the number of direct certification students) to ensure that students are accurately counted.

High needs populations and how to best address ELs

When considering costing out needs for “at promise” and high needs students, the Commission’s first round of recommendations also omitted the inclusion of recommendations for students identified as English Learners. It is imperative that the Commission add proven best practices and recommendations given the growing number of EL students across our state. According to data published by the Maryland State Department of Education, in 2016-2017, the EL population made up 9% of the overall student population in the state; increasingly, counties are seeing significant increases in this population with some counties doubling or nearly tripling their numbers in the last five years. Noting these changes in 2015, MSDE launched a task force made up of immigrant serving organization partners, public school staff and administrators and higher education experts to create a comprehensive set of recommendations on how best to serve EL students which must be revisited and considered in the final Kirwan Commission recommendations. Below is a sample of those recommendations:

- Consideration on new ways and guidance on how LEAs identify students as English Learners
- Require a stand-alone Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) specific course for all pre-service educators and all educators renewing certification.
- Systemic professional development for administrators, counselors, nurses, and teachers to help them to both understand and address the social emotional (SE) needs of ELs.
- Implement Universal Pre-kindergarten in order to increase enrollment of ELs in Pre-K programs.
- Increase availability of dual language programs in public schools.

Strengthening the Community Schools

The Kirwan Commission’s recommendations for community schools rely on a service model for community schools rather than an organizing model. By focusing on building sustainable community capacity, an organizing model for community schools creates change in poor communities. Community schools should empower parents and community to change the systemic forces that continue to disadvantage them. Instead, the Commission’s expectation is that organizational partners and staff members will drive this work. This replicates the conventional top-down systems currently in place that have proven to fail poor and historically oppressed communities.

- There should be clear language to ensure that community school funding is supplemental and cannot supplant current funding streams.
- Community schools should establish Community Leadership Teams (CLT’s) made up of school leadership, teachers, parents, and community members, in which all parties are democratically elected rather than appointed by school or district leadership, and funding earmarked to train parent leaders.
- Reexamine the MSDE role so that oversight mechanisms reflect an organizing model.
- Ensure MSDE is sharing a common, standard definition of key roles and responsibilities for staff assigned to Community Schools to school districts and schools so as to have a streamlined method for implementation.
- Extending the initial timeline for Community School implementation in this first round of schools to ensure proper implementation.

We hope that these recommendations are given favorable consideration as the Commission embarks on the last phase of their work in the next few weeks. CASA appreciates the work and time the Kirwan Commission, both the Commissioners and legislative staff, have placed to ensure Maryland students have access to a world class education.

Thank you,

Maritza Solano
Director of Education



From: Peggy Williams
To: Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education
Subject: Kirwan Commission public comment
Date: Tuesday, November 12, 2019 8:18:30 PM

WiFi should be taken out of classrooms - funding and effort should be used to provide wired local area network (LAN) which provide a reliable and secure form of networking for devices as necessary without any radio frequency microwave electromagnetic field exposure. More school resources should be put into taking wireless routers out of classrooms and schools should be provided funding to hire independent building biologists to ensure that children are not exposed to cancer-causing radio frequency radiation in their classrooms from wireless routers, laptops, mice, cell phones, cell towers and cellular communications antennas.

Too many children and teachers are being diagnosed with brain, eye and other soft tissue cancers. Please provide funding to find ways to provide technology to our children without harmful technologies, and educate children and teachers about best practices on the use of these devices. Please see the recommendations in the WiFi Radiation in Schools in Maryland Final Report Dec 2016,

here: https://phpa.health.maryland.gov/OEHFP/EH/Shared%20Documents/CEHPAC/MD_CEHPAC_SchoolWiFi_022017_final.pdf

Peggy Williams, Severna Park