General comments

• Tension between research imperative and policy imperative
• Small N problem
• Need for more context about systems
• Attribution of test scores to schooling
• Lack of a life-course perspective
What do average test scores tell us?

1. Average test scores differences are not solely the result of differences in schools; they are the total result of children’s home, neighborhood, pre-school, after-school, and K-12 schooling experiences.

2. They are not measures of intelligence, but of performance (so are affected by what students have been taught and have learned and how motivated they are to perform on standardized tests).

3. Test performance is not the only educational outcome we care about; but it is a reasonable proxy for the extent of opportunity.

4. The estimated average achievement levels are not exact, and so should not be used to make fine distinctions among school districts.
Academic Achievement and Socioeconomic Status
US School Districts, 2009-2013
Academic Achievement and Socioeconomic Status

MA School Districts, 2009-2013
Academic Achievement and Socioeconomic Status
KY School Districts, 2009-2013
Academic Achievement and Socioeconomic Status

CA School Districts, 2009-2013
Average Academic Performance Growth, Grades 3-8, by School District

Average Performance (Grade Level)

Grade in School

AVERAGE

Average Academic Performance Growth, Grades 3-8, by School District

Average Performance (Grade Level)

Grade in School

AVERAGE
Average Academic Performance Growth, Grades 3-8, by School District

Graph showing the average performance (grade level) by grade in school for different school districts:
- Union City, NJ
- Baltimore
- Chicago
- Average

The graph plots the average performance growth against the grade level, with grades 3-8 on the x-axis and average performance on the y-axis.
Academic Achievement Growth and Socioeconomic Status
California and Massachusetts School Districts, 2009-2013