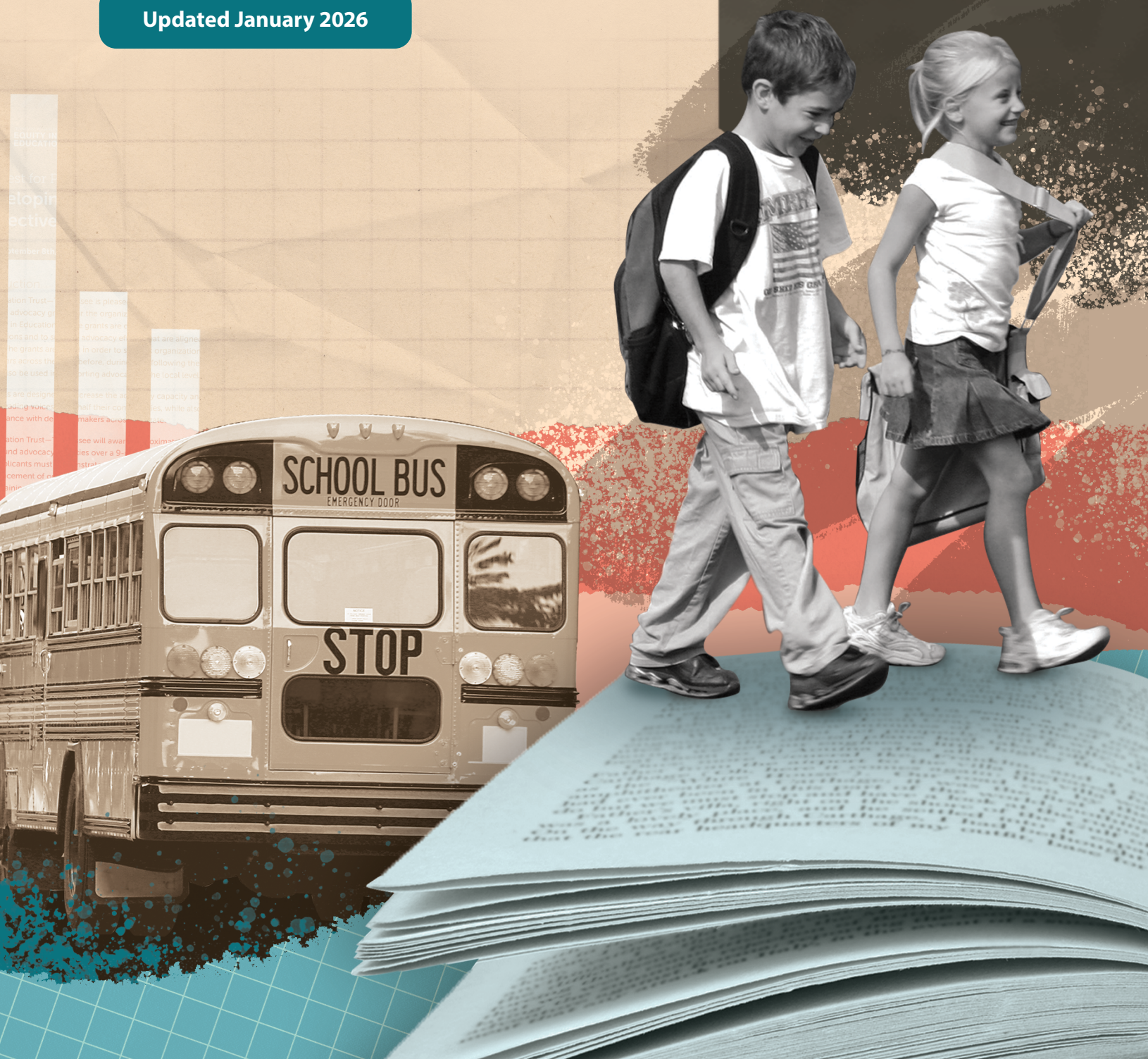


The Undercount

Dashboard Data Guide

Updated January 2026





The Undercount dashboard is intended to highlight the disparity between the number of Tennessee students who meet the state’s definition of an economically disadvantaged¹ student and students who meet the federal definition of identified students.² This data guide provides information about the dashboard’s sources, variables, and limitations while also advising on the utility of the dashboard.

Data Source

The data featured in the dashboard is from the TN Comptroller of the Treasury’s Office of Research and Education of Accountability (OREA) and the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE). The featured data is publicly accessible. It relies on data that spans from SY2018-2019 to SY2024-2025.

Number of students

Number of students is the average daily membership (ADM)³ for students as reported by TDOE in [Profile Data Files](#).

Percentage of economically disadvantaged students via SNAP and TANF

As reported by TDOE in [Profile Data Files](#). This also includes students identified as experiencing homelessness, foster care, unaccompanied youth, or those with migrant status.

TISA funding via economically disadvantaged students

This variable is the estimated economically disadvantaged weighted funding a district received under TISA. This is the number of economically disadvantaged students multiplied by the TISA economically disadvantaged student weight (\$1,715 in SY23-24). TISA funding data comes from OREA which houses a public dashboard.⁴

Percentage of students approved for free meals via SNAP, TANF, and Medicaid

This variable is the identified student percentage (ISP) as reported by TDOE in the [Community Eligibility Provision \(CEP\) Annual Notification of Local Education Agencies](#).

Potential funding by including students approved for free meals via SNAP, TANF, and Medicaid

A new variable was created for an estimated calculation of potential funding by extending the definition economically disadvantaged to include identified students. The new variable is the number of identified students multiplied by the TISA economically disadvantaged student weight (\$1,715 in SY23-24).

How much more your district should receive

A new variable was created for an estimated calculation of how much districts could receive by subtracting the number of identified students multiplied by the TISA economically disadvantaged student weight (\$1,715 in SY23-24) from the number of economically disadvantaged students multiplied by the TISA economically disadvantaged student weight.

¹ As defined under [TISA](#).
² As defined under [7 CFR 245.9\(f\)\(1\)\(ii\)](#) and [7 CFR 245.9\(f\)\(1\)\(iii\)](#).
³ TN Comptroller of the Treasury shares a definition of ADM and other terms in the [TISA Glossary](#).
⁴ Current OREA dashboard data is from [SY24-25](#).

Using the Data

The dashboard is not able to make any funding guarantees. Yet, it does have value as a tool to illustrate an estimate of the funding disparity that has resulted from not fully accounting for a wider proportion of students from low-income backgrounds.

What the Dashboard Tells Us

The dashboard uses historical data to provide an approximation of the number of students in each district who would be considered economically disadvantaged if the definition under TISA was expanded to include students identified via Medicaid participation. The dashboard’s strength is its ability to illustrate district funding discrepancy linked to the undercounting of students from low-income backgrounds. It also gives a sense of the extent of the discrepancy.

What the Dashboard Does Not Tell Us

The dashboard cannot inform on a guaranteed funding amount should the economically disadvantaged definition expand to include identified students. The additional funding that districts could receive is an estimate based on publicly available, prior year data. Future funding is reliant on accurate, real-time data reporting of student counts, the number of economically disadvantaged students in a district, and the number of identified students.



Data Limitations

The subsections below explain why interpretation of the dashboard is limited and expand on its inability to provide a precise estimation of funding should the definition of economically disadvantaged extend to identified students.

Accuracy of Data

A review of the data showed some inaccuracies in the reporting of ISP. It is illogical for a district to report an ISP that is lower than the percentage of economically disadvantaged students. Not only would counting Medicaid recipients expand the definition (thus supplementing the number of economically disadvantaged students rather than replacing students), the number of children in Tennessee participating in Medicaid far eclipses the number receiving SNAP benefits. Additionally, including Medicaid participation has been repeatedly [found to increase the number of students identified as eligible for free meals](#). Ultimately, it is most likely that school districts reporting a lower ISP than economically disadvantaged percentage is a result of incorrect data collection or calculation. This occurred less in SY23-24 data (the first year Tennessee included Medicaid in free meal identification and from which the majority of the dashboard pulls from).⁵ In the few instances where data inaccuracy is suspected, the dashboard will use economically disadvantaged and identified student data from a year other than SY23-24.

Accurate data collection and calculation may occur since Medicaid is a federal policy. As federal policy surrounding Medicaid shifts, so can eligibility and enrollment. This could potentially cause shifts in Medicaid participation year-to-year despite a family’s income remaining the same. Legislation passed in 2025 made significant changes to the Medicaid program and funding amounts. Many experts anticipate significant declines in Medicaid participation across the country as these changes are implemented. This may impact the number of students identified via Medicaid participation amounts and potential funding allocations for districts if Medicaid data is used to identify economically disadvantaged students. Consequently, identified student estimations displayed in the dashboard showing data from before 2025 could be higher than estimations from 2025 onward.



⁵ The inclusion of Medicaid data is a recent change. SY23-24 was the first year of using Medicaid data. With the new implementation there are [data challenges and inaccuracies](#).

Multiple School Years and ISP Submission Periods

Although most districts refer to data from SY23-24, the dashboard in its entirety pulls from multiple school years. This was a result of data missingness or perceived inaccuracies (as described in the previous section). Additionally, the dashboard pulls from a single point in time within a year for each district. The identified student population for each district is updated throughout an academic year. With multiple updates occurring in a single year, the calculation of ISP can vary drastically between submissions. Where data adjustments were needed, the most conservative estimate of ISP was made by substituting data from other years or, in rare cases, using an average from available data. This occurred while keeping TISA SY23-24 economically disadvantaged funding data consistent. The districts where substitutions occurred are categorized below.

- Districts that use data from SY24-25
 - Benton County
 - Campbell County
 - West Carroll SSD
 - Cliborne County
 - Newport
 - Davidson County
 - Hamilton County
 - Hardemon County
 - Meigs County
 - Moore County
 - Franklin SSD
 - Carroll County
 - Fayette County Public Schools
 - Robertson County
- Districts that use data from SY21-22
 - Sweetwater
- Districts that use data from SY19-20
 - Athens
 - Marion County
- Districts that use data across school years
 - Oak Ridge
 - ↳ Oak Ridge ISP is an average of reported ISP from SY18-19 to SY21-22 — the years reporting was most consistent.
 - McKenzie
 - ↳ McKenzie ISP is an average of reported ISP from SY18-19, SY19-20, and SY21-22 — the years data was available and most consistent.
 - Bartlett
 - ↳ Bartlett ISP data is from SY24-25 but economically disadvantaged data is from SY23-24.

Exclusion of Data Points

Richard City is not included

Data is not available for SY23-24 and all other years reported a higher percentage of economically disadvantaged students than identified students.

State level data is not included

Data inaccuracies and substitutions as described above greatly increase the chance for error in calculating state estimates.

Please contact Nikkolette Hunter, nhunter@edtrust.org, or Emily Bengyak, ebengyak@edtrust.org, for more information.

