

## A PLACE OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

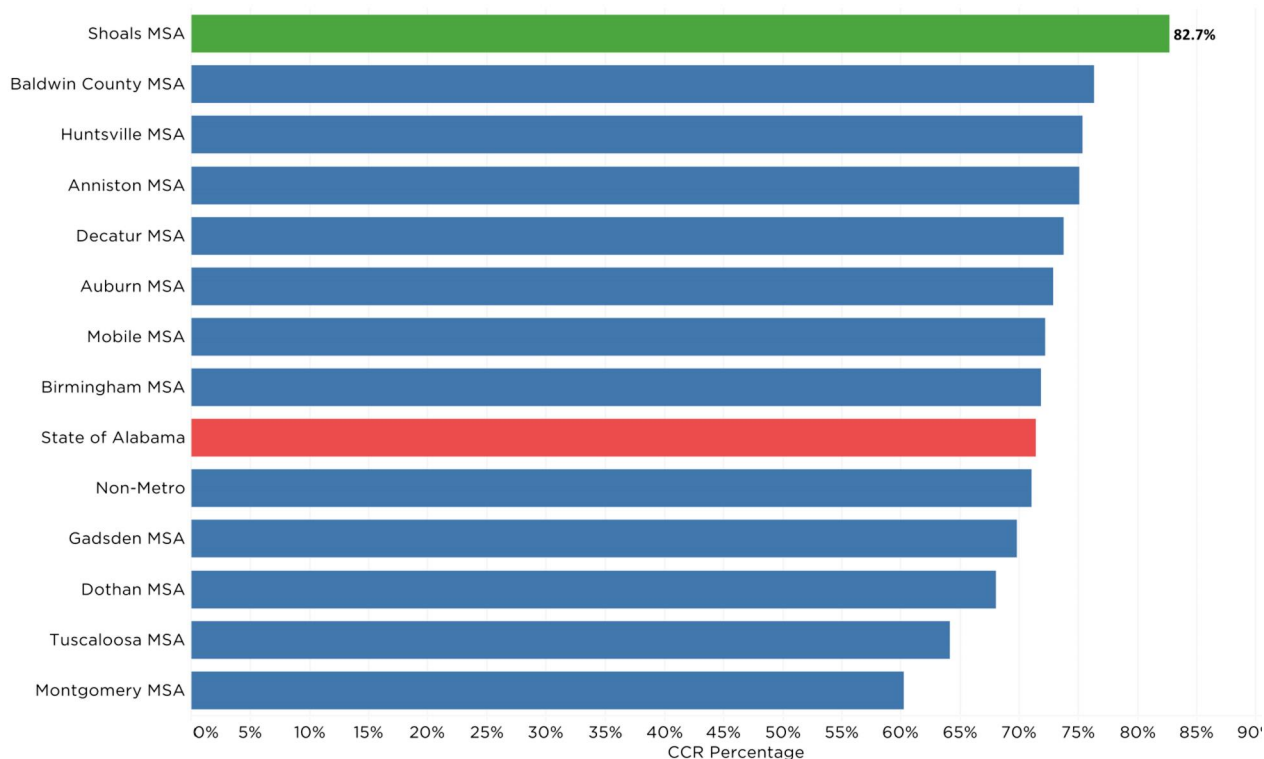
The Shoals has also generated a level of success in education that even locals may not be aware of: On multiple measures, The Shoals can claim a higher level of educational success from its K-12 schools than any other metropolitan area in the state of Alabama, a distinction that should be better understood, advertised, and built upon.

When educational statistics are analyzed at the level of metropolitan areas, The Shoals school systems collectively (the combined results from the six systems operating in Colbert and Lauderdale counties) rank at or near the top on multiple measures of success.

In 2017, The Shoals had the highest percentage of high school seniors that met the state’s definition of college and career ready.

**Figure 1.** Source: Alabama State Department of Education, PARCA calculations.

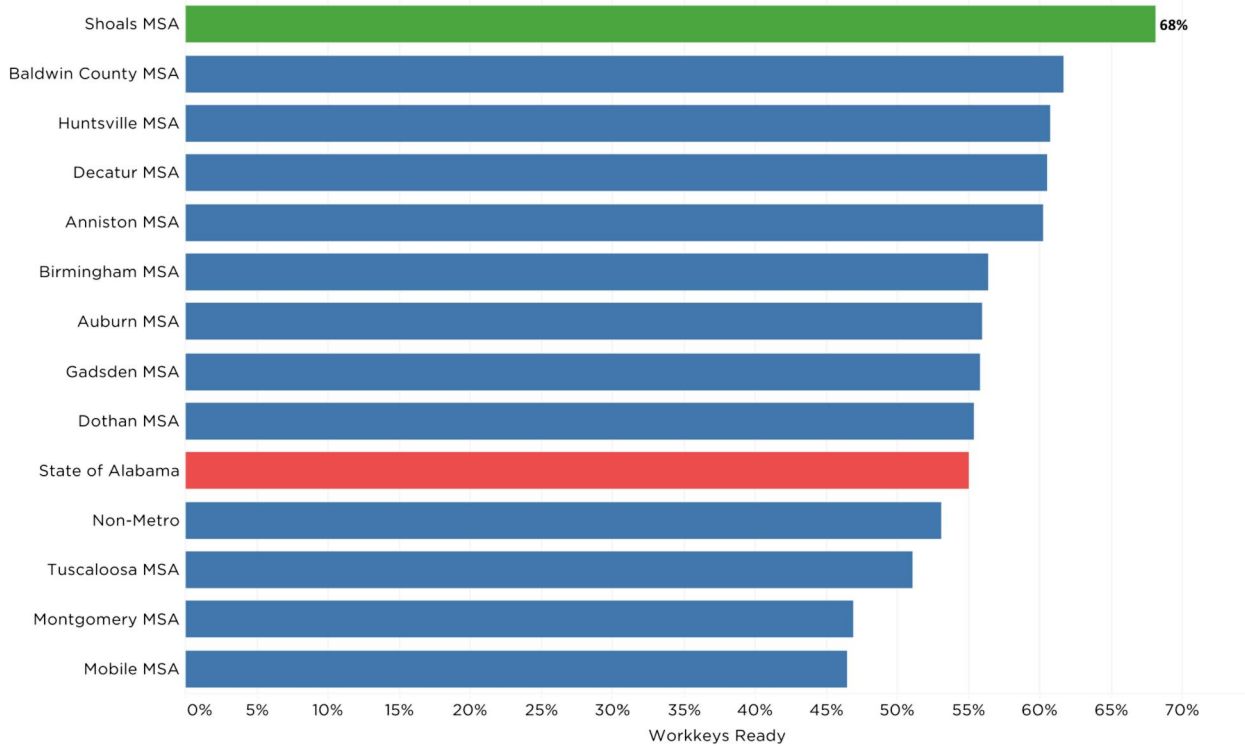
### Percent of HS Seniors College & Career Ready by MSA, 2017



In 2017, the school systems in The Shoals also led the state in the percentage of high school seniors who scored at the silver level or above on the ACT WorkKeys assessment, a test of math and reading skills as they are used in a workplace setting. Scoring silver indicates a student has the skills required for 67 percent of jobs in ACT’s database.

**Figure 2.** Alabama State Department of Education, PARCA calculations.

**Percent of HS Seniors Workforce Ready by MSA, 2017**



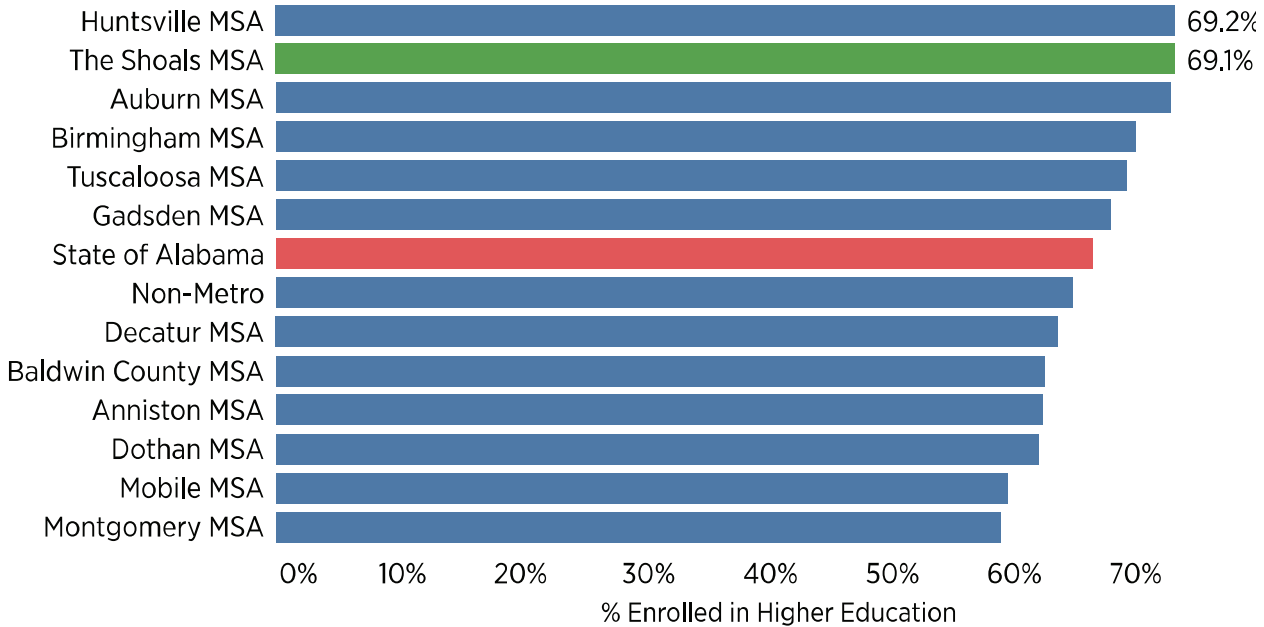
Looking back to the graduating class of 2016, schools in The Shoals MSA had the second highest college-going rate among Alabama MSAs, second only to the Huntsville MSA where the college-going rate was just one-tenth of one percent higher.



According to the statistics drawn by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education from the National Student Clearinghouse, almost 70 percent of Shoals graduates went on to enroll in a two- or four-year college in the year following their high school graduation.

**Figure 3.** Source: Alabama Commission on Higher Education, PARCA calculations.

### College Going Rates of High School Graduates by MSA, Class of 2016



From these three attributes alone, it is clear that The Shoals provides hard-to-match attributes as a place to live, a place to visit, a place to educate children, and a place to find a healthy pipeline of educated workers.

The question that remains is how can The Shoals effectively advertise and build upon these strengths to bring needed population and job growth?

No one city or county in The Shoals has the complete complement of attractions that make The Shoals appealing. No one city or county has the authority, resources, or responsibility to pursue a regional agenda for maximizing the region's potential.

— **Each city's fate is interconnected to the others. Cooperation is the clearest route to success.**