



NEWS RELEASE

CONTACT: Stephaan Harris, (202) 357-7504, stephaan.harris@ed.gov

2011 Nation's Report Cards Show Highest Mathematics Scores to Date for Fourth and Eighth Graders; Reading Performance Is Mixed with Fourth Grade Scores Flat

(Washington, D.C.) – The nation's fourth and eighth graders continued their steady upward trend in mathematics achievement in 2011, posting the highest scores to date on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as "The Nation's Report Card." In reading, however, the picture was mixed: the average score for fourth graders was unchanged from 2009, while the average score for eighth graders continued to rise.

At grade 4, the average mathematics score was 1 point higher than in 2009 and 28 points higher than in 1990. At grade 8, it was 1 point higher than in 2009 and 21 points higher than in 1990. By contrast, reading performance for fourth graders was unchanged from 2009 and 4 points higher than in 1992; at grade 8, the average score rose by 1 point from 2009 and was 5 points higher than in 1992.

In both grades, mathematics scores at the five percentiles reported were higher than in 1990, with lower-performing students making greater gains than higher performers in grade 4. In reading, fourth graders at all the percentiles made gains compared to 1992, while at grade 8, particularly large gains were seen among students at the 10th and 25th percentiles, but increases in scores were not observed for the highest-performing students.

The 2011 mathematics assessment was administered by the National Center for Education Statistics of the U.S. Department of Education to a nationally representative sample of about 209,000 fourth graders and 175,200 eighth graders. The 2011 reading assessment was given to about 213,100 fourth graders and 168,200 eighth graders. State-level data for 52 states and jurisdictions are included in both report cards.

NAEP results are reported as average scores on a scale of 0 to 500 and broken down by three achievement levels: *Basic*, which denotes partial mastery of the skills and knowledge students need for proficient work; *Proficient*, which represents solid academic performance; and *Advanced*, which represents superior work. To show how students' knowledge and skills have progressed, the reports include trends in mathematics from 1990 to 2011, and in reading from 1992 to 2011.

In both subjects, fourth- and eighth-grade students across all income levels posted the highest scores to date.

In mathematics, 40 percent of fourth graders and 35 percent of eighth graders scored at or above *Proficient* in 2011, higher than in all previous years in which the assessment was conducted. Mathematics is the only NAEP subject with average scores showing a consistent upward trajectory at both grades over 10 or more years. In reading, 34 percent of fourth graders scored at or above *Proficient*, unchanged since 2009 but higher than in 1992. In the eighth grade, 34 percent of reading test-takers scored *Proficient* or above—higher than in 2009 and 1992.

"The assessments reported today include the foundational competencies for achievement in all other subject areas," said David P. Driscoll, chair of the National Assessment Governing Board, which sets policy for NAEP. "We applaud all students and teachers for their impressive and consistent gains in math achievement. And while we are encouraged by the continued progress in eighth-grade reading, we remain concerned about the stalled performance in fourth-grade reading."

Although racial-ethnic achievement gaps remain in both mathematics and reading, eighth-grade Hispanic students narrowed the gap with White students from 2009 to 2011 in both subjects. In addition, the results for Asian students were notable. For the first time, to comply with new federal regulations on data collection, the results separate Asian students from a broader category that formerly included Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students. In reading and mathematics, average scores for Asian students were higher than the scores for other racial/ethnic groups at both grades. In mathematics, 64 percent of Asian fourth graders and 58 percent of Asian eighth graders scored at or above *Proficient*. For reading, those figures are 50 percent at grade 4 and 49 percent at grade 8.

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READING

The NAEP reading assessment asked students to respond to questions designed to measure their reading comprehension on two types of texts: literary and informational. Fourth graders performing at the *Proficient* level should be able to integrate and interpret texts and apply their understanding to draw conclusions and make evaluations. Eighth graders performing at the *Proficient* level should be able to provide relevant information and summarize main ideas and themes, as well as make and support inferences about a text, connect parts of a text and analyze text features.

Other fourth-grade highlights:

- Average scores were higher than in 2009 for four states (Alabama, Hawaii, Maryland and Massachusetts) and lower for two states (Missouri and South Dakota).
- A 25-point gap between the average scores of White and Black students was not significantly different from 2009.
- A 24-point gap between the average scores of White and Hispanic students was not significantly different from 2009.

Other eighth-grade highlights:

- Scores were higher than in 2009 for lower-performing students at the 10th percentile and for higher-performing students at the 75th and 90th percentiles.
- Average scores for 10 states were higher than their 2009 scores, and no state had lower scores. Other states' average scores were unchanged from 2009. Students in two states—Hawaii and Maryland—scored higher in both grades.
- A 25-point gap between the average scores of White and Black students was not significantly different from 2009, but it was smaller than the 30-point gap in 1992.
- A 22-point gap between the average scores of White and Hispanic students narrowed from 24 points in 2009 and 26 points in 1992.

MATHEMATICS

The NAEP mathematics assessment is designed to measure what students know and can do across five mathematical content areas: number properties and operations; measurement; geometry; data analysis, statistics and probability; and algebra. Fourth graders performing at the *Proficient* level should consistently apply integrated procedural knowledge and conceptual understanding to problem-solving in the five content areas. Eighth graders performing at the *Proficient* level should apply mathematical concepts and procedures consistently to complex problems in the five content areas.

Other fourth-grade mathematics highlights:

- Scores were higher than in 2009 for all percentiles except the 10th percentile.
- A 25-point gap between the average scores of White and Black students was not significantly different from 2009, but larger gains by Black students from 1990 to 2011 made the gap smaller than in 1990. The White/Black gap narrowed since 1992 in 16 states.
- A 20-point gap between the average scores of White and Hispanic students was not significantly different from 1990 or 2009. The White/Hispanic gap narrowed since 1992 in four states (Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York and Rhode Island).

Other eighth-grade mathematics highlights:

- Scores increased from 2009 for students at the 25th and 50th percentiles, but scores did not change significantly for lower- or higher-performing students.
- The average score for Hispanic students was 4 points higher than in 2009, while there were no significant changes in average scores for White and Black students.
- Gaps between the average scores of higher- and lower-income students narrowed from 2003 in four states and widened in one state.

The Nation's Report Card: Mathematics 2011 and *The Nation's Report Card: Reading 2011* are available at <http://nationsreportcard.gov>. Visit www.nagb.org/reading-math-2011 for more information on the recent results.

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The National Assessment of Educational Progress is the only nationally representative, continuing evaluation of the condition of education in the United States. It has served as a national yardstick of student achievement since 1969. Through The Nation's Report Card, NAEP informs the public about what American students know and can do in various subject areas and compares achievement between states, large urban districts, and various student demographic groups.

The National Assessment Governing Board is an independent, bipartisan board whose members include governors, state legislators, local and state school officials, educators, business representatives and members of the general public. Congress created the 26-member Governing Board in 1988 to oversee and set policy for NAEP.