



NEWS RELEASE

***Embargoed, Hold For Release Until:
Wednesday, May 24, 2006, 10:00 a.m. EST***

CONTACTS: Stephanie Germeraad at (202) 357-7504 or stephanie.germeraad@ed.gov
Matt Maurer at (202) 955-9450, ext. 322 or mmaurer@commworksllc.com

U.S. Students Show Mixed Progress In Science

Fourth Grade Performance Improves, 12th Grade Declines, Since 1996

WASHINGTON (May 24, 2006) – Science achievement in the United States has improved for elementary school students over the last decade, but has remained flat for middle school students and declined among high schoolers, according to The Nation's Report Card™.

The results are presented in *The Nation's Report Card™ Science 2005*, which details student achievement on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), administered by the National Center for Education Statistics in grades 4, 8, and 12 nationally. The report also includes state-by-state results in grades 4 and 8.

Fourth-grade scores were higher in 2005 than in both 2000 and 1996, when previous science assessments were conducted. However, there was no overall improvement among eighth-graders, and average scores in grade 12 – though not significantly different from the 2000 results – have decreased since 1996.

The 2005 results from The Nation's Report Card for math and reading, released last October, showed similar trends: the fourth-grade math and reading scores have significantly increased since 2000, while since 2003, eighth-graders demonstrated modest improvement in math and a decline in reading.

“Policymakers and industry representatives are concerned about national competitiveness in an increasingly technical world,” said Darvin M. Winick, chair of the National Assessment Governing Board, the bipartisan group that sets policy for NAEP. “The lackluster achievement of our older students in science, as in math and reading, appears to confirm those concerns.”

(more)

Frequently, minority students showed improvement on the 2005 science assessment. In grade 4, average scores increased by seven points for Black students and 11 points for Hispanic students since 2000.

Those gains resulted in narrowing of the White-Black and White-Hispanic achievement gaps among fourth-graders since 2000. However, the 12th-grade White-Black gap widened during the same time period.

The Nation's Report Card™ Science 2005

In 2005, a representative sample of more than 300,000 fourth, eighth and 12th-grade students nationwide participated in the NAEP assessment in science.

Copies of *The Nation's Report Card™ Science 2005* as well as additional data collected from the 2005 NAEP science assessment are available online at <http://nationsreportcard.gov>.

#

The Nation's Report Card is the only nationally representative, continuing evaluation of the condition of education in the United States and has served as a national yardstick of student achievement since 1969. Through the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) administered by the National Center for Education Statistics, The Nation's Report Card informs the public about what America's students know and can do in various subject areas, and compares achievement data among states 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 set policy for NAEP.