



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **High School Seniors Show Gains on 2009 Nation's Report Card for Reading and Math, but Reading Score Declines Compared to 1992** *Eleven states report results on 12th-Grade NAEP for the first time*

(WASHINGTON, DC) – The performance of 12th graders nationwide in reading and mathematics has improved since 2005, according to new results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), or The Nation's Report Card—the only nationally representative measure of what American students know and can do. However, the average score for reading was lower compared to 1992, and significant achievement gaps among major racial/ethnic groups remain in both subjects.

For the first time, the 2009 results also show the performance of 12th-grade public school students in the 11 states that volunteered to participate: Arkansas, Connecticut, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, South Dakota and West Virginia. States were not selected based on geography or size, and are also not representative of the nation.

The 2009 NAEP tested representative samples of 12th graders from 1,670 schools across the nation. About 52,000 students were assessed in reading and 49,000 in mathematics. The test is administered and analyzed by the National Center for Education Statistics.

Grade 12 reading results are reported as average scores on a 0 to 500 scale, and mathematics scores are reported on a 0 to 300 scale. Results are also reported as percentages of students performing at or above three achievement levels: *Basic*, *Proficient* and *Advanced*. The reading results are compared to results from five previous assessments conducted since 1992; the mathematics results are compared only to 2005, when a new framework was adopted, starting a new trend line. Reading results were based on students' responses to questions designed to measure reading comprehension across two types of texts: literary and informational. The mathematics results were based on students' responses to questions designed to measure their knowledge and skills across four content areas: number properties and operations; measurement and geometry; data analysis, statistics, and probability; and algebra.

The average **reading** score for 12th graders overall was 2 points higher than in 2005, but 4 points lower than in 1992. Thirty-eight percent of students performed at or above *Proficient* in reading in 2009—an increase of 3 percentage points from 2005, but not significantly different from assessment years prior to 2005. The percentage of students performing at or above *Basic* was not significantly different from the percentage in 2005, but it was lower than in 1992. There was no change in the percentage scoring at the *Advanced* level since 2005, although it increased by 1 percentage point from 1992.

The average **mathematics** score for 12th graders overall was 3 points higher than in 2005. About one-quarter of students performed at or above *Proficient*, and two-thirds performed at or above *Basic*. Students who took more advanced mathematics courses scored higher on average than students who took lower-level courses, with those taking calculus scoring highest.

“We are encouraged with the gains students have made since 2005, but we are disappointed in declines compared to 1992. Improvement is still needed in both reading and math,” said David Driscoll, chairman of the National Assessment Governing Board, which sets policy for NAEP. “It is noteworthy that grade 12 state-specific scores are available for the first time. I want to commend these 11 courageous states for volunteering to know more about achievement.”

In reading, White and Asian/Pacific Islander students made gains since 2005, but no racial/ethnic or gender group has shown significant changes in scores since 1992. Reading scores did not change significantly among Black, Hispanic and American Indian/Alaska Native students, or for female students, since 2005. Students attending suburban schools scored higher on average than those attending schools elsewhere. Higher scores were also associated with a higher frequency of writing long answers to questions involving reading, higher levels of parental education and higher educational aspirations.

In mathematics, all racial/ethnic groups made gains since 2005. The average score for Asian/Pacific Islander students was up 13 points from 2005—14 points higher than the average score for White students—and the average score for American Indian/Alaska Native students was up 10 points over the same period. As they did on the reading assessment, students attending suburban schools scored higher on the mathematics assessment than those attending schools elsewhere. Higher average scores were also associated with students who expected to attend four-year colleges and with students whose parents had higher levels of education.

### **11 States that Participated in the Pilot**

Reading scores in seven of the pilot states—Connecticut, Idaho, Illinois, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and South Dakota—were higher than the national average. Scores for three states—Arkansas, Florida and West Virginia—were lower than those for the nation overall, although Black students in West Virginia scored higher than Black students in any other state. The percentage of students performing at or above *Proficient* ranged from 29 percent in Arkansas and West Virginia to 46 percent in Massachusetts.

In mathematics, students scored higher than the national average in six states: Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey and South Dakota. Scores for three states—Arkansas, Florida and West Virginia—were lower than the national average. The percentage performing at or above *Proficient* ranged from 13 percent in West Virginia to 36 percent in Massachusetts.

*The Nation’s Report Card: Grade 12 Reading and Mathematics 2009* is available at <http://nationsreportcard.gov>.

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*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.*

*The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 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 America’s students know and can do in various subject areas, and compares achievement between states, large urban districts, and various student demographic groups.*