



NEWS RELEASE

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Long-Term Reading and Math Scores on The Nation's Report Card Rise for 9-and 13-Year-Olds; 17-Year-Olds See Fewer Gains

***Most Test Score Gaps Have Narrowed as Black Students
Make Greater Overall Gains Than White Students Since 1970s***

WASHINGTON (April 28, 2009) – Students at ages 9 and 13 have posted significant gains in both reading and mathematics since the early 1970s, while the average scores for 17-year-olds were not significantly different in either subject, according to the new long-term trend report on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

The Nation's Report Card: NAEP 2008 Trends in Academic Progress charts the educational progress of students at ages 9, 13, and 17 in reading and mathematics on the NAEP. The report compares results from the most recent NAEP long-term trend assessments, which were given in the 2007–08 school year, to results from 2004 and to the first years the reading and mathematics assessments were given in 1971 and 1973, respectively. The report provides national results only.

According to the report, the average reading scores were 12 points higher for 9-year-olds and 4 points higher for 13-year-olds than in 1971. In mathematics, the average scores rose 24 points for 9-year-olds and 15 points for 13-year-olds from 1973.

“The results at ages 9 and 13 are encouraging, but the lack of improvement by high school students provides little comfort,” said Darvin M. Winick, chairman of the National Assessment Governing Board, which oversees and sets policy for NAEP. “Clearly, we need to do more to ensure that students are continuing to learn throughout elementary, middle, and high school and are prepared for higher education and the workforce.”

Average reading scores for White, Black, and Hispanic students were higher in all three age groups in 2008 than in the first assessment year. Increases since 1971 were larger for Black students than for White students. Gains by Hispanic students also outpaced those of White students from 1975 to 2008 at ages 9 and 17.

Gaps in reading scores between White and Black students have narrowed for all three age groups since 1971, though those gaps did not change significantly from 2004 to 2008. Reading score gaps between White and Hispanic students were smaller in 2008 than in 1975 at ages 9 and 17, though there were no significant changes from 2004 to 2008.

In mathematics, both Black and Hispanic students at all age groups made greater gains than White students since 1973. In comparison to 2004, only White students at age 9 saw an increase in scores. Score gaps in mathematics between White students and both Black and Hispanic students narrowed from 1973 to 2008 at all three ages, but showed no significant changes from 2004.

Most gender gaps did not change significantly, though there were exceptions. While female students continued to score higher on average in reading than male students, the gap narrowed significantly for 9-year-olds from 1971 to 2008. In mathematics, there was no significant difference between 9-year-old male and female students in 2008, though male students continued to score higher at ages 13 and 17. While the male – female gap for 13-year-olds in 2008 was not significantly different from 2004, it was larger than in 1973.

The mathematics scores of 13- and 17-year-olds whose parents did not finish high school have increased significantly in 2008 compared to 1978. The report also found an association between higher-level mathematics courses and higher NAEP scores at ages 13 and 17. For example, 13-year-olds who were enrolled in algebra scored higher on average than those enrolled in pre-algebra or regular mathematics.

NAEP includes both main and long-term trend assessments. Main NAEP assessments are periodically updated or changed to reflect current curricula and standards, while long-term trend assessments have essentially measured the same knowledge and skills since the 1970s. It is not possible to accurately compare results from the main and long-term trend assessments because of differences in content and procedures.

The 2007–08 NAEP assessments in reading and mathematics were administered by the National Center for Education Statistics of the U.S. Department of Education to a nationally representative sample of over 26,000 public and private school students in each subject area.

The Nation's Report Card: NAEP 2008 Trends in Academic Progress and additional data collected from the 2008 long-term trend assessments are available online at <http://nationsreportcard.gov>.

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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), 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 between 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.