



NEWS RELEASE

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Eighth-Graders Make Progress in U.S. History Since 2006, But Percent Proficient Remains Low on Nation's Report Card Most Subgroups and Low Performers Show Greatest Improvement Since 1994

Washington, D.C. – Eighth-graders earned the highest NAEP U.S. history scores to date. Still, only 17 percent scored at or above the *Proficient* level. In fact, on the seemingly easy question shown here, only 32 percent of all eighth-grade students who took the assessment provided a complete response. Among students who scored at the *Proficient* level, however, 72 percent answered the question correctly.

Performance on the *U.S. History 2010 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) at Grades 4, 8, and 12* has shown some overall improvement since 1994. However, the only progress since 2006 was at grade eight, with significant improvement of Black and Hispanic eighth grade scores over these years. Performance by fourth and twelfth graders remained unchanged compared to 2006.

The NAEP scores of lower-performing fourth graders have increased since 1994, according to the *U.S. History 2010* assessment. The report, released today, showed some of the greatest gains by fourth graders since 1994 were among the historically lowest-performing groups. In the fourth-grade, there was a 22-point increase from 1994 to 2010 in the scores for students ranking in the bottom 10th percentile of performance. In the eighth-grade, students whose scores ranked in the 10th, 25th and 50th percentiles were higher than in 2006. Meanwhile, performance of twelfth-graders was only 2 points higher than in 1994, and there was no significant change in scores from 2006 in any of the five percentiles or racial/ethnic groups. In 2010, over half (55 percent) of high school seniors performed below the *Basic* achievement level.

“We are encouraged by the progress of our fourth and eighth graders, particularly by the gains being made by students who traditionally have been among the lowest performers,” said David P. Driscoll, chair of the National Assessment Governing Board, which sets policy for NAEP. “We need to bring even more of these students up to the *Proficient* level, and we want to see more progress overall by our twelfth graders, who will soon be active citizens.”

Broken down by racial and ethnic groups, Blacks and Hispanics in the fourth grade made larger gains (22 points and 23 points, respectively) from 1994 to 2010 than their White counterparts. And in the eighth grade, the increases posted by Black and Hispanic students since 2006 helped them narrow the gaps with their White peers.

Do you know 8th grade U.S. History?

Identify one important advantage that the American forces had over the British forces in the American Revolution.

Examples of Correct Responses

- Colonists did not have to transport supplies across the ocean
- They fought on familiar territory/terrain
- They fought to protect their homes, land and freedom
- Americans had more at stake than British soldiers, many of whom were forced to serve

Compared to 1994, average scores in 2010 for males were higher at all three grade levels, and scores for female students increased at grades 4 and 8. Males outperformed females in 2010 in grades 8 and 12. Although there was no significant difference in scores between males and females at grade 4 in 2010, the scores of male students were higher than in 2006.

NAEP results are reported as average scores on a 0 to 500 scale and as percentages of students scoring at or above three achievement levels: *Basic*, denoting partial mastery of the knowledge and skills fundamental for proficient work; *Proficient*, representing solid academic performance and competency over challenging subject matter; and *Advanced*, representing superior performance. The scores can be compared to those from 1994, 2001 and 2006 to show how students' knowledge and skills have progressed.

The history assessment, a mix of multiple choice and constructed-response questions, was administered by the National Center for Education Statistics to nationally representative samples of public and private school students, including 7,000 fourth graders, 11,800 eighth graders and 12,400 twelfth graders.

Questions were designed to measure students' knowledge and analytical skills in U.S. history in the context of four historical themes: *democracy*, including basic principles and core values developed from the American Revolution through the present; *culture*, focusing on how different racial, ethnic and religious groups interacted and the traditions that resulted; *technology*, focusing on the transformation of America's economy from rural frontier to industrial superpower and its impact on society, ideas and the environment; and *world role*, the movement of America from isolationism to worldwide responsibility.

At grade 4, students who scored at or above the *Basic* level (73 percent) were likely to be able to interpret a map about the Colonial economy; students scoring at or above *Proficient* (20 percent) were likely to be able to understand that canals increased trade among states; students scoring at *Advanced* (2 percent) were likely to be able to explain how machines and factories changed work.

At grade 8, the 69 percent of students scoring at or above *Basic* were likely to be able to identify a result of Native American-European interaction; the 17 percent at or above *Proficient* were likely to be able to identify a domestic impact of war; the 1 percent at *Advanced* were likely to be able to explain two differences between plantations and small farms in the antebellum South.

At grade 12, the 45 percent of students scoring at or above *Basic* were likely to be able to understand the context of a women's movement document. The 12 percent who scored at or above *Proficient* were likely to be able to understand Missouri statehood in the context of sectionalism; and the 1 percent who scored at *Advanced* were likely to be able to evaluate Civil War arguments.

The Nation's Report Card: U.S. History 2010, Grades 4, 8, and 12 is available at www.nationsreportcard.gov. Additional information is available at www.nagb.org/history

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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.