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## **News Release**

### ***“Nation’s Report Card” Shows Colorado Students Outpace Most Other States In Reading***

Colorado students in grades four and eight perform higher than the national average on reading assessments, according to results released today from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

Seventy-two percent of fourth-grade students and 78 percent of eighth-grade students performed at or above the NAEP Basic level for reading in 2009. Nationally, 66 percent of fourth-grade students and 74 percent of eighth-grade students performed at or above the NAEP Basic level.

“Basic” is defined by the National Assessment Governing Board as demonstrating “prerequisite knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient work” at each grade assessed.

“This represents the hard work of teachers and all parents and others who help students learn this most fundamental skill,” said Colorado Commissioner of Education Dwight D. Jones. “Overall these are extremely positive results, but we continue to see a disparity in performance based on race and income and know that the focus on improving reading instruction must continue.”

Commissioner Jones noted that this is an emphasis of the department’s Closing the Achievement Gap initiative, now in its second year. The Colorado State Legislature allocated \$1.8 million for the pilot program to assist six school districts in their efforts to close

achievement gaps associated with race and income. Each of the six districts selected is partnering with an on-site achievement gap manager to develop and implement formative assessments, intervention services and professional development.

### **Fourth-Grade Scores**

Colorado fourth-grade students received an average scale score of 226. Only four states outperformed Colorado fourth-grade students in scale score (Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey and Vermont). There were 19 states with results that were not significantly different than Colorado and 28 states significantly lower than Colorado.

The Colorado fourth-grade average scale score has not significantly changed since the 2007 administration, when the scale score was 224. The average scale score in 1992 was 217.

Among fourth-grade students who are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch (an indicator of poverty level), only four states (Florida, North Dakota, Vermont and Kentucky) outperformed Colorado.

The fourth-grade average scale score for white students was 236, while Hispanic students averaged 204 and black students averaged 213.

### **Eighth-Grade Scores**

The average scale score for Colorado eighth-grade students was 266. Eleven states (Massachusetts, New Jersey, Vermont, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Montana, South Dakota, North Dakota and Wyoming) and the Department of Defense outperformed Colorado eighth-grade students in scale score; 19 states were not significantly different than Colorado and 20 states were significantly lower than Colorado.

The Colorado grade eight average scale score has not significantly changed since the 2007 administration of the test or since the 1998 administration.

White eighth-grade students average scale score was 274 while both Hispanic and black students averaged 250.

### **Results By Gender**

Both Colorado fourth-grade and eighth-grade males and females perform higher than the national average for these same groups. The

scale score for fourth-grade Colorado females was 229 compared to the national scale score for females of 213. The scale score for fourth-grade Colorado males was 222 compared to the national scale score for males of 216. Eighth-grade Colorado females (270) and males (262) were similarly ahead of their national counterparts (267 and 258 respectively).

Colorado students in grades four and eight showed no significant change in closing achievement gaps between white and black students and between white and Hispanic students since 2007. A similar gap pattern was seen nationwide.

### **About NAEP**

NAEP, established in 1969, is the only U.S. Department of Education federally-mandated and nationally representative assessment of what young students know and can do in key subject areas. Commonly referred to as the "Nation's Report Card," it is used to provide a point of reference for comparisons between states and to provide an accurate and representative picture of student performance over time.

NAEP provides national and state results in eight subject areas including mathematics, reading, writing and science. Results have been produced for the nation and participating states for more than 30 years.

The NAEP 2009 Reading Assessment was administered to a representative sample of fourth- and eighth-grade students at both the national and state levels. In addition, 12th-graders were assessed at the national level in all states and at the state level in 11 states. The 12th-grade results are expected to be released before the end of 2010.

Fifty-two jurisdictions participated, including the 50 states, the District of Columbia and the Department of Defense Schools (domestic and overseas). In addition, 18 urban districts voluntarily participated in the NAEP Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA). The TUDA results are expected to be released in May.

Nationally, about 172,000 students in 9,004 public schools in grade four and 155,000 students in 6,589 public schools in grade eight took the tests.

In Colorado, approximately 2,920 students in 154 public schools in grade four participated. In grade eight, approximately 2,755 in 121

Colorado public schools participated. Students across the nation participated in the same assessment for each grade and subject.

The 2009 NAEP reading assessment is a test of reading comprehension based on a new framework that was approved by the National Assessment Governing Board which oversees NAEP, <http://www.nagb.org/>. This year poetry was added to the grade four test. This new framework replaces the previous one that has been used in NAEP since 1992 and it was equated to the past tests to provide valid results.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, "The exam requires students to read passages of written English text—either literary or informational—and to answer questions about what they have read. In some cases, the questions deal with facts in the text or vocabulary. In other cases, a complete answer requires a clear analysis or coherent argument supported by sound evidence from the text."

Each student received two 25-minute reading tests, in addition to general background questions and reading-specific background questions. The test requires a little more than an hour per student to administer—about 50 minutes on the reading test questions, and about 10 to 15 more minutes on background questions.

The results are reported in average scale scores in which the range is zero to 500. The results are also reported in achievement levels defined by the National Assessment Governing Board.

The president and Congress use NAEP results in setting education policy. States are neither rewarded nor sanctioned based on their results. The Nation's Report Card is produced by the U.S. Department of Education and has generated more than 600 reports in its history.

For more information about the 2009 NAEP reading results go to the initial release site: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/> or the CDE Web site, [http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeassess/documents/NAEP/index\\_naep.html](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeassess/documents/NAEP/index_naep.html)

Results from the 2009 NAEP science assessments are expected to be released by late summer in 2010. National results from the 2010 NAEP social studies tests are expected to be released in late 2011.

**For more information, contact** Mark Stevens, 303-866-3898, or Megan McDermott, 303-866-2334, in the CDE Office of Communications. To sign up for the

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<http://www.cde.state.co.us/Communications/index.html>.

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