NEWS RELEASE
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Nation's Mathematics, Reading Scores Largely Flat Since 2015; Gains Only in Grade 8 Reading

Results mixed for states and urban school districts; Gap grows between highest- and lowest-scoring students nationally

WASHINGTON — The average reading score for the nation's eighth-graders increased compared with 2015, but there were no changes for reading at fourth grade or for mathematics at either grade, according to *The Nation's Report Card: 2017 Mathematics and Reading.* However, results varied considerably among states and the 27 large urban school districts that participated in the 2017 Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA).

At the national level, mathematics and reading scores reflected a growing gap between the highest- and lowest-scoring students when compared to 2015. Scores in both subjects were higher for eighth-graders performing at the 75th and 90th percentiles and lower for fourth-graders performing at the 10th and 25th percentiles than they were in 2015.

Overall average scores in both subjects at grades 4 and 8 were higher than they were in the early 1990s, when the assessments were first administered. Since that time, the gap between the scores of white and black fourth-graders narrowed in both reading and mathematics.

The Nation's Report Card, also known as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), provides results for the nation, states/jurisdictions, and 27 urban school districts for assessments administered in 2017. NAEP reports performance at or above three achievement levels: *Basic*, *Proficient*, and *Advanced*. *Proficient* denotes solid academic performance demonstrating competency over challenging subject matter, including subject-matter knowledge, application of such knowledge to real-world situations, and analytical skills. *Proficient* is not the same as being "on grade level," which refers to student performance based on local standards and curriculum that can vary among school districts. *Advanced* represents superior performance beyond *Proficient*, while *Basic* signifies partial mastery of the knowledge and skills being tested.

National and State Results

On the 2017 NAEP reading assessment, 37 percent of fourth-graders scored at or above *Proficient*. In eighth grade, the national percentage rose two percentage points to 36 percent of students scoring at *Proficient* or above when compared to 2015. Among states and jurisdictions for fourth grade, 17 states/jurisdictions had higher percentages of students at or above *Proficient* than the nation as a whole, while 15 states/jurisdictions had lower percentages than the nation. Overall, 10 states had higher scores in eighth-grade reading compared with 2015.

"I'm pleased that eighth-grade reading scores improved slightly but remain disappointed that only about one-third of America's fourth- and eighth-grade students read at the NAEP *Proficient* level," said Gov. John Engler, the chair of the National Assessment Governing Board. "We are

seeing troubling gaps between the highest- and lowest-performing students. We must do better for all children."

On the 2017 NAEP mathematics assessment, 40 percent of fourth-graders in public schools performed at or above *Proficient*, with 15 states/jurisdictions having higher percentages of students at or above *Proficient* than the nation and 19 states/jurisdictions having lower percentages. For eighth grade, 33 percent of students scored at or above the *Proficient* level in the nation overall, with higher percentages of students in 20 states/jurisdictions and lower in 20 states/jurisdictions than the nation.

"We continue to see measurable achievement differences among states," said Tonya Matthews, the CEO of the Michigan Science Center and vice chair of the Governing Board. "For example, in Florida, average scores in fourth- and eighth-grade mathematics increased, while in other states, scores declined. As a scientist and educator, these results spark my curiosity. We need to dig into, investigate, and learn from this data."

Urban District Results

Scores held steady compared to 2015 for most of the large urban school districts that volunteer to participate in NAEP's Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA). However, in fourth-grade mathematics, four districts saw score gains between 2015 and 2017, while four districts showed lower scores. A total of 27 districts participated in TUDA in 2017, up from 21 districts in 2015. Together, the participating districts educated about 367,100 students at grade 4 and 316,400 students at grade 8 in 2017, which represented about 10 percent of public school students in the nation at grade 4 and 9 percent at grade 8.

Transition to Digitally Based Assessments (DBA)

The 2017 reading and mathematics assessments marked the first time that most students were assessed digitally using tablet computers, while a smaller percentage of students used the traditional paper-and-pencil format. Importantly, the content the assessments measured was the same as in previous years. Like the paper-based approach, assessing students on digital devices supported a consistent assessment experience, whether the students lived in Massachusetts, Mississippi, or Montana. This transition from paper to digital assessment represents the culmination of extensive research over several years.

"The NAEP digital assessment environment is flexible and forward-thinking," said Andrew Ho, a Governing Board member and professor of education at Harvard University. "It helps us to measure progress from the past and prepares us to measure relevant skills as they emerge in the future."

The Nation's Report Card also provides an array of valuable information on students' opportunities and experiences. When asked about their access to digital devices at school, 99 percent of students in grades 4 and 8 had teachers who reported that at least one digital device, such as a desktop, laptop, or tablet computer, was available for students' use in school.

And consistent with past findings, students who report lower levels of absenteeism scored higher than students who missed more school. For example, eighth-grade students who reported that they had not missed any school in the previous month scored on average 271 on the reading assessment, while students who missed 5-10 days of school in the previous month

scored 256, a 15-point difference. And if they missed more than 10 days, they scored 236, a full 35 points lower.

Highlights for student performance in each subject appear below:

State Highlights in Mathematics	**Urban District Highlights in Mathematics**
Compared to 2015, In Florida, average scores increased in fourth and eighth grades. Average scores increased for students in Puerto Rico in fourth grade and in the Department of Defense schools in eighth grade. Scores have decreased in 10 states in fourth grade: Alaska, Arizona, Delaware, Louisiana, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Vermont. Scores have decreased in three states in eighth grade: Alaska, Rhode Island, and Vermont.	Compared to 2015, Four districts had increases in fourth-grade scores: Duval County (FL), Fresno, Miami-Dade, and San Diego. Four districts had decreases in fourth-grade scores: Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Cleveland, Dallas, and Detroit. Detroit had 4 percent of students at or above *Proficient*. In eighth grade, Charlotte-Mecklenburg had 41 percent of students at or above *Proficient*; while Detroit had 5 percent of students at or above *Proficient*. Philadelphia had a decrease in its average score for eighth grade.

State Highlights in Reading	**Urban District Highlights in Reading**
Compared to 2015, Average scores for fourth grade did not increase in any state/jurisdiction, and scores decreased in nine states. In eighth grade, 10 states/jurisdictions had score increases, and one state, Montana, saw a score decrease.	Compared to 2015, In fourth grade, San Diego saw its average score increase. In eighth grade, Albuquerque and Boston had increases in scores.

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The National Assessment Governing Board is an independent, nonpartisan 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 the National Assessment of Educational Progress. For more information about the Governing Board, visit www.nagb.org.