

# NEWS

Connecticut State Department of Education

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## **National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Shows Connecticut Students Are Among America's Highest Performers State Earns High Overall Scores in Reading and Math, But Many Gaps Persist**

(HARTFORD, CONN.) Consistent with past NAEP results, Connecticut's students in the 2003 national assessment of reading and math achievement, score among the best in the nation.

"Although Connecticut's performance when compared to other states is strong, in an absolute sense, we need to continue to raise the achievement of all students," said State Education Commissioner Dr. Betty J. Sternberg, in announcing the State's results. "In particular, closing the gaps in achievement between rich and poor, minority and nonminority, and boys and girls, is the key to continued success in our schools and a better life for all children." We must focus our attention on better ways to help all students become successful readers and to develop confidence in school and a love for learning."

The **National Assessment of Educational Progress** (NAEP), which assesses a representative sample of public school students from each state, reports the performance of economic, gender and racial groups in 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades and compares their performance in the state as well as with their counterparts in states nationwide. For the first time, every state is required to participate in the biennial reading and mathematics assessments as part of H.R. 1, "No Child Left Behind."

Connecticut students were among the top performers in the nation in both reading and math. For example, Connecticut's fourth graders scored first in the nation—tied with three other states—in the percentage of students reading at or above proficient level and in the percentage of students scoring at the advanced level. Connecticut was grouped with several states in reading, (grades 4 and 8) and mathematics, (grades 4 and 8) as "performing above the national average." (See attachments.)

"However, the gaps among racial groups and between affluent and poor students are wide and are larger here than in many other states," said Commissioner Sternberg.

“We need to do more to make sure that all students, no matter where they live or what their parents earn, become skilled, confident readers and proficient in math.

“We plan to launch a comprehensive approach to addressing these significant achievement gaps,” said Dr. Sternberg. “Our efforts will focus first on finding out what parents and students need in order to make them successful. Second, we will ensure that all schools have planned, ongoing, systematic and up-to-date programs that teach the essential skills we test. Third, we must develop programs that attract and retain passionate, committed and capable teachers and administrators to our schools.”

### **Highlights of the test results are as follows:**

#### **Grade 4 Reading**

In Grade 4 (percent of students scoring at or above the proficient level)

- Connecticut was grouped three other states—Massachusetts, New Hampshire and New Jersey—as highest performing in the nation, (see attachment: *Percent at or above Proficient Level*).
- Connecticut’s white and black students in 4<sup>th</sup> grade are reading as well as or better than their counterparts in other states. The performance of Connecticut’s Hispanic students is not significantly different than Hispanic students’ performance nationwide.
- 38 percent of males and 47 percent of females performed at or above the proficient level in Connecticut. This was significantly higher than males (26 percent) and females (33 percent) nationally.
- In Connecticut, students who were eligible for free/reduced price lunch scored significantly lower (18 percent at/above proficient) than students who were not eligible (53 percent at/above proficient).
- The respective percentages of white and Hispanic students performing at or above the proficient level were significantly greater in 2003 than in 1992. There was no significant difference in performance for black students during this time period.
- 19 percent of students from central cities in Connecticut scored at or above proficient level 2003 compared with 22 percent of central city students across the nation.
- 53 percent of students from rural/small towns in Connecticut scored at or above the proficient level. This was significantly higher than in rural/small towns across the nation (32 percent).

#### **Grade 8 Reading**

At Grade 8, (percent of students reading at or above the proficient level)

- Only one State (Massachusetts) outperformed Connecticut on the 2003 Grade 8 reading test.
- Connecticut’s white and black students in 8<sup>th</sup> grade are reading as well as or better than their counterparts in other states nationwide. The Hispanic students in only one other state (Virginia) outperformed Connecticut’s Hispanic students.

- 31 percent of males and 43 percent of females performed at or above the proficient level in Connecticut. These were significantly higher than males (25 percent) and females (35 percent) nationally.
- In Connecticut, students who were eligible for free/reduced price lunch scored significantly lower (12 percent at/above proficient) than students who were not eligible (44 percent at/above proficient).
- 19 percent of students from central cities in Connecticut scored at or above the proficient level in 2003. This was not significantly different from central city students across the nation (22 percent).
- 46 percent of students from rural/small towns in Connecticut scored at or above the proficient level. This was significantly higher than in rural/small towns across the nation (31 percent).

### **Grade 4 Mathematics**

In Grade 4 (percent of students scoring at or above the proficient level):

- Connecticut was grouped with nine other states as highest performing in the nation.
- Connecticut's white and black students in 4<sup>th</sup> grade are performing as well as or better than their counterparts in other states in mathematics.
- 45 percent of males and 37 percent of females performed at or above the proficient level in Connecticut. This was significantly higher than males (34 percent) and females (29 percent) nationally.
- In Connecticut, students who were not eligible for free/reduced priced lunch (54 percent at/above proficient) scored significantly higher than students who were eligible (12 percent at or above proficient).
- The respective percentages of Connecticut's white, black and Hispanic students performing at or above the proficient level were significantly greater in 2003 than in 1992.
- 17 percent of students from central cities in Connecticut scored at or above Proficient level in 2003. This was significantly lower than central city students across the nation (23 percent).
- 53 percent of students from rural/small towns in Connecticut scored at or above the proficient level. This was significantly higher than in rural/small towns across the nation (32 percent).

### **Grade 8 Mathematics**

Grade 8, (percent of students reading at or above the proficient level)

- Except for Minnesota, Connecticut performed as well as or better than all other states in the nation.

- Connecticut's white, black and Hispanic students in 8<sup>th</sup> grade performed as well as or better than their counterparts in other states nationwide.
- 37 percent of males and 33 percent of females performed at or above the proficient level in Connecticut. These were significantly higher than males (29 percent) and females (26 percent) nationally.
- In Connecticut, students who were eligible for free/reduced lunch scored significantly lower (12 percent at/above proficient) than students who were not eligible (44 percent at/above proficient).
- 13 percent of students from central cities in Connecticut scored at or above the proficient level in 2003. This was significantly lower than central city students across the nation (20 percent).
- 49 percent of students from rural/small towns in Connecticut scored at or above the proficient level. This was significantly higher than in rural/small towns across the nation (28 percent).

“While Connecticut studies and uses the NAEP results to improve student achievement and to benchmark statewide achievement against national achievement, it is only one indicator of the progress and needs of the state’s students and schools,” said Commissioner Sternberg.

The State Board of Education defines successful students as “those who read, write, compute, think creatively, solve problems, and use technology. All students should enjoy and perform in the arts and athletics and understand history, science, and other cultures and languages. Each student must be responsible for his or her learning and behavior, work well with and be helpful to others, and contribute to the community. Every student must graduate from high school and be prepared to move on to productive work and further study, and to function in a global economy. Ultimately, students must become active citizens and lifelong learners who lead healthy lives.”

The National Report is available on the World Wide Web: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard>