



PRIMARY PROGRESS, SECONDARY CHALLENGE:

A State-by-State Look at Student Achievement Patterns

By Daria Hall and Shana Kennedy

One year ago, the nation's governors, spurred by the demands of a rapidly changing economy, committed to transforming high schools into institutions that prepare all students for the demands of college, the 21st-century workforce, and society.¹ This call to action built on the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act, which represents a national commitment to raising academic achievement for all students and closing the gaps that separate low-income students and students of color from their peers.

The significance of these commitments cannot be overstated. They required vision and leadership to challenge long-held notions about what we can expect of both our schools and our students. But making commitments is one thing. Living up to them, quite another. An analysis of state assessment results shows that while student achievement in reading and math is rising in many states, much work lies ahead to ensure that *all* students meet state standards.

To assess patterns of student achievement since NCLB and in the wake of the governors' call to action, we have examined state assessment results from 2003 to 2005. The results show that progress in raising achievement and closing gaps has been strongest in the elementary grades. Middle and high school achievement has improved somewhat, especially in mathematics. But, four years into NCLB, states have struggled when it comes to closing gaps in these grades. And it is clear that they are not making progress at nearly the rate needed to get all students to at least grade-level standards.

These findings affirm the need to not only maintain but expand successful improvement strategies in the elementary grades while at the same time dramatically strengthening our secondary schools by providing all students with the high-quality curriculum and instruction they need and deserve.



THREE- VS. FOUR-YEAR ANALYSIS

We examined results from 2003 to 2005 – rather than from 2002, the first year of NCLB implementation – because it allowed us to include many more states in the analysis. States still are developing and refining their systems of standards and assessments and of public reporting. Many made changes in one or both of these systems, which rendered results from 2002 not comparable to those from later years. Using the 2003 to 2005 time frame allowed us to include eight additional states in our analysis of overall results and 14 additional states in our analysis of achievement gaps in the elementary grades. Many of the states that are not included in the analysis made changes to reporting or standards and assessment in 2003 or later. (See Appendix B for more information about the states that are not included in the analysis.)

In almost all cases, the changes made to public reporting have meant that more information than ever before is available about the academic achievement of all groups of students. In 2002, some states struggled to report achievement results broken down by student group. California, for example, did not report the results of racial and ethnic groups that year, the first time states were required to disaggregate results by student groups under the new federal law. Most states now report disaggregated results, which allow parents, educators, and community members to see how all students are performing. One state, Maine, still does not.

In other cases, states have made changes to state standards and assessments. This is good news when the changes are undertaken to make these standards and tests better reflect the knowledge and skills students need in the real world. Texas and Arkansas are examples of states that are moving in that direction. But changes are not always made to increase rigor or improve measurement. Arizona, for example, has lowered the passing score on its assessment.² Considering the low level of most state's standards, lowering these standards further, lowering the level of knowledge and skills assessed, and lowering passing scores all reflect diminished expectations of students and the schools that serve them. Given the rapidly increasing expectations of the economy and society, such changes amount to a failure of responsibility on the part of education leaders.

But even the lowering of standards has to be examined on a state-by-state basis. For example, Missouri is one of a handful of states where a higher percentage of students meet the proficient level on National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) than on the state test, and it has begun a process to lower its performance standards to bring them more in line with the national test. There's an active debate among policymakers, educators, and the public in Missouri about whether this change will help or hinder educational progress.³

To conduct this analysis, we looked at state assessment results in reading and math from 2003 to 2005 at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. That time frame allowed us to examine the greatest number of states with comparable trend data. (For more detail, see sidebar at left and page 4.)

We analyzed both overall achievement patterns and whether states made progress closing gaps between groups of students. The overall achievement trends are important because they provide a picture of whether states are moving in the right direction by increasing the percentage of students meeting grade-level proficiency standards.

Examined this way, we found that overall achievement gains were most consistent in the elementary grades, where math achievement increased in 29 of 32 states and reading achievement increased in 27 of 31 states. Math achievement declined in 1 state, reading achievement in 3.

In middle school math, 29 states improved overall achievement while 1 lost ground and 1 saw no change. The picture in middle school reading, however, is more mixed. Overall reading achievement increased in 20 of the 31 states examined, while achievement declined in 6 states and did not change in 5 others.

The trend of more success in math than reading is seen in high school as well. High school math results increased in 20 of 23 states and decreased in 2. High school reading results increased in 17 of 24 states and decreased in 5.

ACHIEVEMENT GAPS

While important, overall trends do not show the whole picture. The goal is to increase achievement for all students while accelerating gains for the low-income and minority students who are furthest behind, thereby closing achievement gaps. While many states are meeting this goal in the elementary grades, the middle and high school results are cause for concern.

In the elementary grades, 26 of 30 states narrowed the African American-White math gap. Twenty-four of 29 states narrowed the Latino-White reading gap. The majority of these states narrowed the gap by raising achievement for all groups. That is, most states increased the achievement of White students while at the same time accelerating improvements for minority students. States that narrowed their minority-White gaps considerably were Kansas, New York, Oregon, and Pennsylvania. Massachusetts and Connecticut, on the other hand, narrowed most elementary gaps, but the achievement of White students declined in both states. Connecticut's African American-White math gap actually grew while the achievement of both groups went down.

There was much less progress in narrowing gaps between groups in the middle and high school grades, especially the Latino-White gap. In middle school reading, the Latino-White gap narrowed in just 17 of 29 states. The gap widened in 7 states and stayed the same in 5. In high school math, gaps stayed the same or widened in

10 states and narrowed in 10. Fortunately, some states have seen progress on this front. Delaware, for example, raised achievement for both Latino and White students and narrowed gaps between these groups in middle school reading and high school reading and math.

Far fewer states reported the data necessary to analyze income gaps, but where trends can be examined, the high school news is, again, discouraging. In high school math, the gap between poor and non-poor students widened or stayed the same in 8 of the 12 states analyzed. In high school reading, the gap widened or stayed the same in 6 of 13 states.

INTERPRETING THESE NUMBERS

To help the public better understand state achievement results, Congress required states to participate in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). This group of assessments, often referred to as the Nation's Report Card, provides an external check of the rigor of states' standards and assessments. While there is considerable debate about the process for setting the NAEP proficiency levels – and for that matter, the way states set proficiency levels on their own tests – even a cursory comparison of results from state assessments and NAEP suggest that some states set the bar too low. According to NAEP, just 29 percent of the nation's eighth-graders demonstrate proficiency in reading and math.⁴ Most states report much higher proficiency rates on their own assessments. Although minor differences between the percentage of students achieving proficiency on state assessments and how students in that state perform on NAEP may not be significant, major discrepancies should be cause for concern. (See Appendix C for more information on comparisons between state assessments and NAEP.)

THE SECONDARY CHALLENGE

The trends in both overall achievement and achievement gaps on state assessments are a reflection of inconsistent progress across grade levels in many states. Florida exemplifies this inconsistency. The state significantly raised overall achievement and narrowed gaps between groups in elementary reading. But in middle and high school, Florida's overall reading achievement declined. While gaps narrowed, it was only because the scores of White and non-poor students fell faster than those of minority and poor students.

The implications are clear—while education leaders need to continue to commit energy and resources to elementary education, they must dramatically step up efforts to improve secondary schools, especially for the low-income students and students of color who struggle the most.

Fortunately, there is a growing body of evidence about what schools and systems can do to rise to this challenge.

STATE ACHIEVEMENT DATA SUMMARY CHARTS

Elementary School 2003-2005

Reading

	Increased/ Narrowed	No Change	Decreased/ Widened	Total
Overall	27	1	3	31
African American- White Gap	22	3	4	29
Latino- White Gap	24	1	4	29
Native American- White Gap	14	3	9	26
Income Gap	17	1	3	21

Math

	Increased/ Narrowed	No Change	Decreased/ Widened	Total
Overall	29	2	1	32
African American- White Gap	26	1	3	30
Latino- White Gap	22	2	6	30
Native American- White Gap	19	2	6	27
Income Gap	15	6	1	22

Middle School 2003-2005

Reading

	Increased/ Narrowed	No Change	Decreased/ Widened	Total
Overall	20	5	6	31
African American- White Gap	22	2	5	29
Latino- White Gap	17	5	7	29
Native American- White Gap	16	1	9	26
Income Gap	13	2	6	21

Math

	Increased/ Narrowed	No Change	Decreased/ Widened	Total
Overall	29	1	1	31
African American- White Gap	18	3	8	29
Latino- White Gap	18	4	7	29
Native American- White Gap	13	4	9	26
Income Gap	14	1	6	21

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STATE ACHIEVEMENT DATA SUMMARY CHARTS (CONTINUED)

High School 2003-2005

Reading

	Increased/ Narrowed	No Change	Decreased/ Widened	Total
Overall	17	2	5	24
African American- White Gap	13	1	6	20
Latino- White Gap	11	1	8	20
Native American- White Gap	10	3	4	17
Income Gap	7	2	4	13

Math

	Increased/ Narrowed	No Change	Decreased/ Widened	Total
Overall	20	1	2	23
African American- White Gap	12	1	7	20
Latino- White Gap	10	4	6	20
Native American- White Gap	8	1	8	17
Income Gap	4	1	7	12

1) Ensure that all students have access to rigorous courses that will prepare them for the demands of college and the workforce.

Research and common-sense have long told us that the rigor of the high school curriculum plays a major role in college success.⁵ We now know that the rigor of the high school curriculum also plays a major role in *high school* success, especially for students who are struggling.

In a recent study of the characteristics and practices of a group of “high-impact” high schools – high schools that are especially effective at improving the academic achievement of previously low-performing students – Education Trust researchers found that these schools open the door to rigorous courses to all students, regardless of prior achievement, and that struggling students in these schools spend more time in academic, rather than ‘support,’ courses compared to their peers in high schools that do not demonstrate the same academic gains.⁶

The key role of rigor also is documented in the work of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), which, in a study of career-oriented graduating seniors from their *High Schools That Work* network, found that “the one change in school practices that has the greatest impact on achievement is to give every student the opportunity to complete a challenging academic core...”⁷

It is also supported by young people themselves. In a survey of recent high school graduates, two in three college students and three in four entrants to the workforce reported that knowing what they now know about what is expected of them, they wished they had taken higher-level and more challenging high school courses.⁸

PATTERNS FROM 2002 TO 2005

We chose to examine trends from 2003 to 2005 so that we could include as many states as possible in the analysis, but we also looked at patterns from 2002 to 2005.

Results from this longer time frame reveal the same story: Overall improvement and gap closing is most evident at the elementary level; middle and high schools did see some overall improvement but did not make much progress in closing gaps between groups. Like the 2003-2005 analysis, the picture is better for math achievement than reading achievement.

Of the states that had comparable data for both time frames, the pattern is as one would expect – the majority made more progress in overall achievement and gap closing over four years than over three. In fact, some states made large achievement gains between 2002 and 2003 that were not replicated in later years. New York, for example, made more gains between 2002 and 2003 (10 percentage points) than it did between 2003 and 2005 (7 percentage points) in grade four math.

Some states, however, accelerated gains more recently. Georgia, for example, made no progress in overall achievement for grade four reading between 2002 and 2004, but improved

by 8 percentage points between 2004 and 2005. The gains between 2004 and 2005 were even larger for African-American and Latino students (12 and 13 percentage points, respectively) contributing to sizeable gap-closing between 2004 and 2005. A similar pattern is seen in Minnesota and Oregon in the elementary grades and Colorado and Delaware in the middle grades.

But here, too, the high school news is bleak. Few states have increased the pace of gains in high schools, but in states that did accelerate progress, as in Pennsylvania’s grade 11 reading scores, that progress has not been accompanied by gap-closing. While Pennsylvania’s African-American 11th-graders made more gains between 2004 and 2005 than in previous years, White students made even larger gains, and the gap between these groups widened.

No matter how one looks at the data, there are signs of progress for our elementary school students and cause for concern about our high schools.

Education leaders are heeding the call for increased rigor in the high school curriculum. The National Association of Secondary School Principals has called for states to follow the lead of Arkansas, Indiana, Oklahoma, and Texas by establishing a core curriculum that is aligned with college-admission standards.⁹ The National Governors Association, too, has called on governors, legislatures, and state boards of education to restore value to the high school diploma by requiring all students to complete a common set of high school courses that will provide them with the skills and knowledge they need for college and work.¹⁰ The federal government is supporting this momentum by offering increased tuition grants for college freshmen and sophomores from low-income families who complete a rigorous curriculum in high school. Almost \$800 million has been budgeted to pay for these academic competitiveness grants in 2006.¹¹

This agreement about the need for increased rigor is powerful, but as we move to make increased rigor a reality, we must not lose sight of two things. First, course names do not equal rigor; challenging course content and high expectations for achievement equal rigor. Second, students who are struggling will need additional support in order to be successful in a rigorous curriculum. Our research in high-impact high schools shows that this support takes the form of early warning systems to identify students who need help *before* they struggle in challenging academic courses, extended time when students can get the extra help they need while not being put off pace in the curriculum, and active monitoring from school counselors. It also, importantly, takes the form of increased attention to reading and literacy.

2) Make literacy a priority.

Literacy skills are the foundation of academic success for all students, yet 29 percent of the nation's eighth-graders do not read at even the basic level according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The numbers for low-income students and students of color are even worse. Forty-nine percent of African-American students, 45 percent of Latino students, and 43 percent of low-income students have below basic eighth-grade reading skills.¹² The analysis in this report confirms that secondary literacy poses a problem, with states experiencing the least success in raising achievement and closing gaps in middle and high school reading.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals sums up the situation succinctly:

Historically, direct literacy instruction has been supported up to the third grade...When literacy instruction stops early, how can middle and high school students learn the strategies to read

increasingly difficult text and to comprehend more abstract ideas? If a 'regular' student continues to need direct instruction to read and comprehend the text found in secondary textbooks, consider the tremendous need for instruction and intervention that struggling students must require. And sadly, if students two to three grade levels behind their peers do not receive intensive literacy instruction, the results can be devastating because the struggling reader will not experience success within the content areas.¹³

If literacy is a stumbling block for many struggling students, then it follows that attention to literacy will raise student achievement across the curriculum. This is exactly what we've seen in schools that have been successful with previously low-achieving students. In the high-impact high schools, students who arrived behind spent 25 percent more time over four years in courses with substantial reading and/or reading instruction than their peers in high schools that do not demonstrate the same academic gains. This translates into at least 60 additional instructional hours per year that are focused on literacy acquisition, or 240 hours additional instructional hours over four years. SREB, too, has found that "schools that set standards for the amount and variety of reading and writing that students are expected to do in all courses—mathematics, science, social studies, career/technical, and others—will have higher-achieving students."¹⁴

Of course, realizing the benefits of increased attention to literacy is contingent on the ability of teachers to support struggling readers and utilize reading and writing to advance subject-matter knowledge across the curriculum. Meeting the literacy needs of secondary school students, as with all school improvement efforts, ultimately depends on the quality of classroom instruction.

3) Use students' academic needs to drive teacher assignment and support.

When it comes to improving student learning, teachers matter most. Absent high-quality teaching, the full benefit of reforms cannot be realized. Research from the Illinois Education Research Council illustrates this well. Researchers at the IERC evaluated teacher quality in every Illinois high school using a variety of measures. Because Illinois administers the ACT Assessment to every 11th-grader, the researchers also were able to evaluate the college-readiness of all high school students. They then looked at patterns of college-readiness compared to teacher quality in the school and highest math course completed. They found that even when students complete high-level math courses, such as calculus or trigonometry, their college-readiness is influenced greatly

by the quality of their teachers. In fact, in the schools with the highest teacher quality, students who had only completed Algebra II were more prepared for college than their peers who had completed calculus in schools with the lowest teacher quality.¹⁵

If struggling students are to catch up to their peers, they need access to quality teaching, yet far too often they do not get it. The most recent federal data indicate that nationally, 34 percent of core academic classes in high-poverty secondary schools are taught by teachers lacking even a college minor in the subject they teach, as opposed to 19 percent of classes in low-poverty schools.¹⁶ The problem exists within schools, too. Research from the Dallas Independent School District indicates that low-achieving students are far more likely to be assigned to ineffective teachers than to effective teachers.¹⁷

Fortunately, some schools and districts are breaking this trend and trying to connect the most vulnerable students with the most effective teachers. Not surprisingly, the same schools and districts are raising achievement for these students. In the high-impact high schools, teacher assignments are linked to student need rather than seniority or teacher preference. The National Center for Educational Accountability has also found that higher-performing schools and districts select and allocate staff based on student learning.¹⁸ And researchers at SREB have found that “high school principals...are discovering that their ‘best’ teachers can teach challenging content to low-performing students in ways that will raise achievement significantly.”¹⁹

Matching teacher assignments to student needs is no easy task. It can fly in the face of long-held assumptions that the most experienced or qualified teachers have earned a place teaching courses with fewer struggling students. Using student-centered criteria for teacher assignments shifts to the forefront the interests of the students, rather than the adults. As a principal of a high-impact high school observed, his changing teacher-assignment practices reoriented the culture of the school. Rather than forego assignments to work with struggling students, he believes that teachers “need to wear [the assignment] like a badge of honor.” Changing the current culture of teacher assignment is absolutely necessary to

ensure that the needs of the struggling students are met by the most skilled teachers in the school.

While higher-performing secondary schools are expecting more from their teachers in terms of accepting challenging assignments and delivering a rigorous, literacy-rich curriculum to all students, they are also providing those teachers with more support. These schools have given teachers a greater say in the content of professional development and have put in place systems for supporting and mentoring new teachers that are focused on curriculum and instruction.²⁰ For example, at Elmont Memorial Junior-Senior High School, a predominantly African-American school in Elmont, New York, where almost all students are passing the state’s rigorous Regents Exam, new teachers are observed seven times a year by administrators and department chairs. These observations are considered tools for instructional growth. Observers are responsible for making detailed suggestions for improvement that are then put into ‘action plans’ for the teacher. Lessons that need little improvement are used as models. Teachers at Elmont credit this system of observation with helping them bolster their instruction.²¹ Just as students need deliberate, structured support to meet high expectations, so, too, do teachers.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this analysis represent cause for both optimism and concern. In most states, schools and systems are raising achievement and closing gaps, especially in the elementary grades. But in far too many states, they are struggling to educate students, especially low-income and minority students, to middle and high school standards. Whether educators and education leaders can marshal the energy, experience, and will necessary to address this problem head-on will have lasting consequences for our economy and our society. The greatest cause for optimism is the fact that there are schools out there that are leading the way. Through hard work and laser-like focus on curriculum and instruction, these schools are meeting the challenge of improving secondary education. It’s time for all schools to follow their lead.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TRENDS

Reading Overall		
Increase	No Change	Decrease
California +8	Illinois	Colorado -1
Delaware +7		Connecticut** -2
Florida +11		Massachusetts -6
Georgia +7		
Hawaii +15		
Idaho +11		
Indiana** +3		
Iowa* +1		
Kansas +9		
Kentucky +5		
Louisiana +5		
Maine +4		
Maryland +8		
Michigan +7		
Minnesota +4		
Mississippi +2		
Missouri +1		
New Jersey +4		
New York +6		
North Carolina +1		
Oregon +5		
Pennsylvania +6		
South Carolina +3		
South Dakota +2		
Virginia +2		
Wisconsin** +1		
Wyoming +3		

Math Overall		
Increase	No Change	Decrease
California +5	Massachusetts	Connecticut** -2
Colorado +3	North Carolina	
Delaware +6		
Florida +10		
Georgia +1		
Hawaii +6		
Idaho +12		
Illinois +5		
Indiana** +6		
Iowa* +2		
Kansas +11		
Kentucky +7		
Louisiana +3		
Maine +11		
Maryland +14		
Michigan +7		
Minnesota +5		
Mississippi +5		
Missouri +6		
New Jersey +12		
New York +7		
Ohio +7		
Oregon +8		
Pennsylvania +13		
South Carolina +7		
South Dakota +9		
Virginia +7		
Wisconsin** +1		
Wyoming +2		

Notes:

* Iowa reports assessment results in biennium periods.

** These states administer assessments in the fall. The data included is from the fall of 2004.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TRENDS

Reading African American-White Gap		
Narrows	No Change	Widens
Delaware -7	Colorado	California +1
Florida -7	Kentucky	Idaho +6
Georgia -3	South Carolina	Wisconsin** +2
Indiana** -5		Wyoming +1
Iowa* -4		
Kansas -8		
Louisiana -3		
Maryland -6		
Michigan -6		
Minnesota -3		
Mississippi -4		
Missouri -5		
New Jersey -5		
New York -2		
North Carolina -1		
Oregon -4		
Pennsylvania -3		
South Dakota -4		
Virginia -2		
<i>Illinois -3</i>		
<u>Connecticut** -2</u>		
<u>Massachusetts -6</u>		

Math African American-White Gap		
Narrows	No Change	Widens
California -2	South Carolina	North Carolina +2
Colorado -3		Wisconsin** +4
Delaware -7		
Florida -4		
Georgia -1		
Idaho -5		
Illinois -3		
Indiana** -2		
Iowa* -4		
Kansas -11		
Kentucky -1		
Louisiana -6		
Maryland -5		
Michigan -4		
Minnesota -7		
Mississippi -7		
Missouri -2		
New Jersey -9		
New York -7		
Ohio -3		
Oregon -10		
Pennsylvania -7		
South Dakota -2		
Virginia -4		
Wyoming -10		
<i>Massachusetts -3</i>		<u>Connecticut** +2</u>

In *italicized* states, the performance of White or non-poor students has declined since 2003, while the performance of minority or poor students has increased.

In underlined states, the performance of White or non-poor students has declined since 2003, while the performance of minority or poor students has either declined or remained the same.

* Iowa reports assessment results in biennium periods.

** These states administer assessments in the fall. The data included is from the fall of 2004.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TRENDS

Reading Latino-White Gap		
Narrows	No Change	Widens
Delaware -8	Indiana**	California +1
Florida -6		Colorado +2
Georgia -8		Louisiana +3
Idaho -12		Mississippi +7
Iowa* -2		
Kansas -5		
Kentucky -3		
Maryland -5		
Michigan -2		
Minnesota -2		
Missouri -1		
New Jersey -6		
New York -5		
North Carolina -8		
Oregon -8		
Pennsylvania -4		
South Carolina -1		
South Dakota -6		
Virginia -4		
Wisconsin** -2		
Wyoming -2		
<i>Illinois -12</i>		
Connecticut** -3		
Massachusetts -5		

Math Latino-White Gap		
Narrows	No Change	Widens
California -1	Ohio	Indiana** +3
Colorado -3	Iowa*	Kentucky +1
Delaware -7		Mississippi +1
Florida -4		Missouri +1
Georgia -2		South Carolina +2
Idaho -8		Wisconsin** +1
Illinois -11		
Kansas -6		
Louisiana -1		
Maryland -2		
Michigan -3		
Minnesota -5		
New Jersey -9		
New York -7		
North Carolina -6		
Oregon -10		
Pennsylvania -6		
South Dakota -4		
Virginia -2		
Wyoming -5		
<i>Massachusetts -2</i>		
Connecticut** -1		

Reading Native American-White Gap		
Narrows	No Change	Widens
Delaware -16	California	Colorado +1
Florida -7	Maryland	Georgia +2
Idaho -10	Wyoming	Michigan +1
Indiana** -4		New York +1
Iowa* -2		North Carolina +2
Louisiana -1		South Carolina +13
Minnesota -1		South Dakota +2
Mississippi -2		
Missouri -11		
New Jersey -1		
Oregon -6		
Pennsylvania -4		
Virginia -2		
Wisconsin** -5		
		Connecticut** +5
		Massachusetts +1

Math Native American-White Gap		
Narrows	No Change	Widens
California -2	Colorado	Georgia +5
Delaware -17	Virginia	Indiana** +4
Florida -2		North Carolina +1
Idaho -7		Ohio +1
Iowa* -4		South Carolina +8
Louisiana -2		
Maryland -1		
Michigan -1		
Minnesota -4		
Mississippi -8		
Missouri -2		
New Jersey -2		
New York -5		
Oregon -3		
Pennsylvania -7		
South Dakota -1		
Wisconsin** -2		
Wyoming -2		
Connecticut** -1		Massachusetts +4

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TRENDS

Reading Income Gap		
Narrows	No Change	Widens
Delaware -8	Connecticut**	California +2
Florida -6		Colorado +1
Georgia -6		Wisconsin** +1
Idaho -6		
Illinois -2		
Indiana** -1		
Iowa* -2		
Kentucky -2		
Maryland -7		
Michigan -4		
Minnesota -1		
Mississippi -2		
Missouri -1		
North Carolina -3		
South Carolina -1		
Virginia -4		
Wyoming -3		

Math Income Gap		
Narrows	No Change	Widens
Colorado -3	California	
Delaware -7	Georgia	
Florida -5	Indiana**	
Idaho -7	Missouri	
Illinois -4	North Carolina	
Iowa* -1	South Carolina	
Kentucky -2		
Maryland -6		
Michigan -3		
Minnesota -4		
Mississippi -3		
Ohio -4		
Virginia -6		
Wisconsin** -1		
Wyoming -3		
		<u>Connecticut** +1</u>

MIDDLE SCHOOL TRENDS

Reading Native American-White Gap		
Narrows	No Change	Widens
Connecticut** -8		California +1
Georgia -4		Colorado +2
Idaho -8		Delaware +4
Indiana** -6		Mississippi +9
Iowa* -4		Missouri +1
Maryland -2		New York +3
Massachusetts -1		Ohio +5
Michigan -4		Pennsylvania +3
North Carolina -2		South Dakota +4
Oregon -8		
South Carolina -7		
Virginia -5		
Wisconsin** -2		
Wyoming -5		
<i>New Jersey -3</i>		
Florida -1	Louisiana	

Math Native American-White Gap		
Narrows	No Change	Widens
Colorado -2	California	Delaware +19
Georgia -1	New York	Florida +1
Idaho -2	Pennsylvania	Indiana** +2
Iowa* -2	South Dakota	Michigan +1
Louisiana -2		Mississippi +1
Maryland -4		Missouri +1
Massachusetts -9		New Jersey +5
North Carolina -1		Ohio +5
Oregon -3		Wisconsin** +1
South Carolina -2		
Virginia -3		
Wyoming -9		
<i>Connecticut** -8</i>		

Reading Income Gap		
Narrows	No Change	Widens
Delaware -4	Illinois	California +5
Georgia -2	Iowa*	Colorado +3
Idaho -5		Connecticut** +3
Indiana** -3		Mississippi +1
Kentucky -2		Missouri +1
Maryland -2		South Carolina +5
Michigan -4		
North Carolina -3		
Ohio -3		
Virginia -5		
Wisconsin** -1		
Wyoming -2		
Florida -2		

Math Income Gap		
Narrows	No Change	Widens
Colorado -6	Maryland	California +1
Delaware -2		Connecticut** +1
Florida -3		Illinois +2
Georgia -1		Kentucky +1
Idaho -1		Missouri +2
Indiana** -4		South Carolina +2
Iowa* -1		
Michigan -2		
Mississippi -1		
North Carolina -3		
Ohio -1		
Virginia -3		
Wisconsin** -1		
Wyoming -3		

HIGH SCHOOL TRENDS

Reading Overall		
Increase	No Change	Decrease
Arkansas +4	Colorado	Alabama -2
Connecticut +1	Iowa*	Alaska -1
Delaware +3		Florida -4
Hawaii +2		Maine -2
Illinois +4		Virginia -4
Kansas +3		
Kentucky +7		
Massachusetts +3		
Missouri +1		
New Hampshire +10		
New Jersey +3		
Oregon +2		
Pennsylvania +6		
South Dakota +16		
Tennessee +6		
Wisconsin** +3		
Wyoming +5		

Math Overall		
Increase	No Change	Decrease
Alaska +2	Illinois	Alabama -1
Colorado +3		Iowa* -1
Connecticut +2		
Delaware +7		
Florida +3		
Hawaii +3		
Kansas +5		
Kentucky +2		
Maine +2		
Massachusetts +10		
Missouri +5		
New Hampshire +9		
New Jersey +10		
Oregon +2		
Pennsylvania +2		
South Dakota +4		
Tennessee +8		
Washington +9		
Wisconsin** +3		
Wyoming +6		

Notes:

* Iowa reports assessment results in biennium periods.

** Wisconsin administers assessments in the fall. The data included is from the fall of 2004.

HIGH SCHOOL TRENDS

Reading African American-White Gap		
Narrows	No Change	Widens
Alaska -12	Kansas	Kentucky +2
Colorado -1		Massachusetts +1
Connecticut -1		Missouri +1
Delaware -1		Pennsylvania +3
Illinois -1		
Iowa* -1		
New Hampshire -8		
New Jersey -12		
Oregon -1		
South Dakota -7		
Wisconsin** -5		
Wyoming -7		
<u>Florida -2</u>		<u>Alabama +1</u>
		<u>Virginia +5</u>

Math African American-White Gap		
Narrows	No Change	Widens
Alaska -4	Kentucky	Illinois +2
Colorado -2		Kansas +1
Connecticut -4		Massachusetts +5
Delaware -2		Missouri +5
Florida -6		Oregon +1
Iowa* -1		Washington +2
New Hampshire -4		Wyoming +4
New Jersey -6		
Pennsylvania -2		
South Dakota -18		
Wisconsin** -3		
<u>Alabama -1</u>		

Reading Latino-White Gap		
Narrows	No Change	Widens
Colorado -1	New Hampshire	Alaska +1
Connecticut -3		Iowa* +1
Delaware -6		Kentucky +4
Illinois -3		Massachusetts +1
Kansas -1		Missouri +1
New Jersey -5		South Dakota +6
Oregon -2		Wyoming +3
Pennsylvania -1		
Wisconsin** -4		
<u>Alabama -2</u>		<u>Virginia +4</u>
<u>Florida -2</u>		

Math Latino-White Gap		
Narrows	No Change	Widens
Colorado -2	Iowa*	Alaska +7
Connecticut -3	Washington	Kansas +1
Delaware -6	Wyoming	Kentucky +4
Florida -3		Massachusetts +3
Illinois -2		Missouri +6
New Jersey -5		New Hampshire +5
Oregon -1		
Pennsylvania -1		
South Dakota -8		
Wisconsin** -2		
	<u>Alabama</u>	

In *italicized* states, the performance of White or non-poor students has declined since 2003, while the performance of minority or poor students has increased.

In underlined states, the performance of White or non-poor students has declined since 2003, while the performance of minority or poor students has either declined or remained the same.

HIGH SCHOOL TRENDS

Reading Native American-White Gap		
Narrows	No Change	Widens
Colorado -2	Iowa*	Alaska +2
Massachusetts -4	Oregon	Connecticut +5
Missouri -2	Pennsylvania	Delaware +12
New Hampshire -19		Wisconsin** +3
New Jersey -12		
South Dakota -3		
Wyoming -4		
<i>Florida -5</i>		
<u>Alabama -2</u>		
<u>Virginia -2</u>		

Math Native American-White Gap		
Narrows	No Change	Widens
Alabama -3	Massachusetts	Connecticut +6
Alaska -1		Delaware +17
Colorado -4		Missouri +3
Florida -2		New Jersey +3
Iowa* -2		Oregon +3
New Hampshire -3		Washington +3
Pennsylvania -14		Wisconsin** +1
South Dakota -7		Wyoming +2

Reading Income Gap		
Narrows	No Change	Widens
Connecticut -3	Colorado	Alabama +4
Delaware -6	New Hampshire	Iowa* +1
Illinois -1		Missouri +2
Kentucky -1		
Wisconsin** -1		
Wyoming -1		
<u>Florida -3</u>		<u>Virginia +5</u>

Math Income Gap		
Narrows	No Change	Widens
Colorado -1	Wisconsin**	Alabama +3
Connecticut -5		Illinois +1
Delaware -4		Iowa* +2
Florida -2		Kentucky +3
		Missouri +3
		New Hampshire +1
		Wyoming +2

In *italicized* states, the performance of White or non-poor students has declined since 2003, while the performance of minority or poor students has increased.

In underlined states, the performance of White or non-poor students has declined since 2003, while the performance of minority or poor students has either declined or remained the same.

* Iowa reports assessment results in biennium periods.

** These states administer assessments in the fall. The data included is from the fall of 2004.

APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY

As a follow-up to our January 2005 report, *Stalled in Secondary: A Look at Student Achievement Since the No Child Left Behind Act*, we examined state-level reading and math achievement data from the elementary, middle, and high school standards-based assessments that each state uses for NCLB accountability purposes. We looked at overall student achievement and achievement disaggregated by race/ethnicity and family income.

We based the analysis on the proficiency level each state uses to determine adequate yearly progress (AYP). For most states this is the percentage of students at or above the “proficient” or “meets standards” achievement level. Some states, however, use a different standard to make accountability decisions. Colorado uses the percentage of students scoring at or above the “partially proficient” level, while Louisiana uses the percent at “basic or above.”

Overall achievement was analyzed by calculating the change in the percentage of students meeting state standards between 2003 and 2005. Achievement gaps were analyzed by calculating the difference between the percentages of White and minority or poor and non-poor students meeting standards in 2003 and in 2005. The change in the size of those gaps over time was then calculated.

States had to publicly report comparable achievement data for 2003, 2004, and 2005 to be included. At the time of the analysis, 32 states met these criteria for the elementary grades, 31 for the middle grades, and 25 for high school.

States that made any changes to their standards or assessments that would invalidate comparisons over time were excluded from the analysis. Such changes included altering standards for what students should know or be able to do, adopting new tests, or adjusting cut scores on existing tests. To ensure comparability, we contacted state assessment officials for verification.

Many states permit students to retake high school assessments until they pass, either for graduation or scholarship purposes. Some states use these same tests for NCLB accountability purposes. However, only the results of first-time test-takers can be used for AYP determinations. For our high school analysis, we have only included states that make the results of first-time test-takers publicly available.

The *elementary school* analysis focused on fourth-grade reading and math achievement. For states without three years of comparable results for fourth-grade assessments, we used three years of fifth-grade assessment results. Where neither fourth-grade nor fifth-grade data were available, we used three years of third-grade results.

The *middle school* analysis focused on grade eight reading and math achievement. In states without three years of eighth-grade achievement results, we examined three years of seventh-grade achievement results. If three years of comparable achievement data were not available for either grade seven or eight, we used three years of grade six results.

The *high school* analysis focused on the assessment each state uses for NCLB accountability purposes. Some states use a grade-specific exam, while others use end-of-course exams taken by students at different high school grade levels. In three states, Maryland, Mississippi, and Virginia, “high school” end-of-course math assessments can be taken in the middle grades. These states are not included in the analysis.

The same inclusion criteria applied to overall results were applied to the results disaggregated by race/ethnicity and family income that are the basis of our achievement-gap analysis. Maine did not report any disaggregated data and thus appears nowhere in the gap analysis. Many more states do not report the results of non-poor students as a group, making income gap analyses impossible. Only 22 states reported non-poor data at the elementary level, 21 at the middle-grade level, and just 13 at the high school level.

APPENDIX B: WHO'S MISSING?

The following is a list of states not included in the analysis and the reasons for their exclusion.

ELEMENTARY

Of the 18 states not included in the elementary school analysis:

- Five states made available only two years of comparable data (AL, MT, NV, WA, WV)
- Five states did not report the 2005 scores at the state level at the time of the analysis (ND, NH, RI, UT, VT)
- Six states made changes to their assessments between 2004 and 2005 (AK, AR, AZ, NM, OK, TX)
- Tennessee did not publicly report grade-specific data.
- Available Nebraska data were inconsistent and not chronological.
- Ohio made changes to their reading assessment so is included in the analysis for math only.

MIDDLE

Of the 19 states not included in the middle school analysis:

- Six states made only two years of comparable data available (AL, MN, MT, NV, WA, WV)
- Five states did not report the 2005 scores at the state level at the time of the analysis (ND, NH, RI, VT, UT)
- Five states made changes to their assessments between 2004 and 2005 (AK, AZ, AR, NM, TX)
- Tennessee did not publicly report grade-specific data.
- Available Nebraska data were inconsistent and not chronological.
- Oklahoma has been inconsistent with reporting the results of students with disabilities.

HIGH

Of the 25 states not included in the high school analysis:

- Six states made only two years of comparable data available (GA, LA, MN, MT, OH, WV)
- Four states did not report the 2005 scores at the state level at the time of the analysis (ND, NY, RI, UT)
- Five states made changes to their assessments between 2004 and 2005 (AZ, IN, NC, NM, TX)
- Five states did not report the scores of first-time test-takers (CA, ID, MI, NV, SC)
- Vermont reported results by specific skills. While this is useful instructionally, it poses challenges in terms of analytic comparability.
- Oklahoma has been inconsistent in reporting the results of students with disabilities.
- Available Nebraska data were inconsistent and not chronological.
- Maryland allows students to take the geometry exam for NCLB purposes anywhere between grades eight and 12. Additionally, Maryland changed the exam used for accountability purposes from English I to English II in 2005.
- Mississippi allowed students to take the math exam used for NCLB purposes anytime between grades eight and 12. Additionally, Mississippi reports English results by skill, posing challenges in terms of analytic comparability.
- Virginia uses the composite of end-of-course exams in Algebra I, Algebra II, and Geometry for NCLB purposes so is included in the analysis for reading only.
- Washington changed the cut score for the reading assessment so it is included in the analysis for math only.
- Arkansas is included for reading only due to a change in the reporting of math results. Prior to 2005, Arkansas reported the results of the Algebra and Geometry end-of-course exams separately for the winter and spring administrations; this year the results were combined.

APPENDIX C: STATE ASSESSMENTS AND THE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS

This report looks at whether states are making progress toward the goal of having all students meet the standards for grade-level knowledge and skills set by each state. This report does not take into consideration the actual rigor of the standards and assessments or the scores used to determine proficiency, which we know vary drastically across states.

As an external check on individual state standards, participation in the National Assessment of Educational Progress is required by NCLB. In the following tables, we compare for each state the percentage of students meeting the standard for proficiency on state assessments to the percentage meeting the standard for proficiency on NAEP. We also include the percentage of students performing at the basic level or above on NAEP.

We know that there is considerable debate about what constitutes proficiency on NAEP. There is also debate about how states set proficiency levels on their own tests. But when we compare achievement on state assessments to NAEP results and find major disparities between the two, that should send a warning signal to educators, policymakers and the public.

It is evident that the percentage of students scoring at the proficient level on most state tests is much closer to the percentage at basic or above on NAEP. This indicates that most state standards for proficiency are closer to the basic level on NAEP. While ensuring that students are able to demonstrate at least basic reading and math skills is important, it is not enough.

Below are two examples of questions from NAEP for grade four math. For both questions, students must use their early algebra skills to construct their answers but the difference in the skill level necessary to complete the questions is clear.

States should utilize the external check provided by NAEP as a way to ensure that their own standards and assessments are aligned to the challenges today's young people will face when they enter college or the workforce.

BASIC LEVEL

3,6,5,8,7,10,9,?
In the number pattern above, what number comes next?
Answer: _____

PROFICIENT LEVEL

Jan entered four numbers less than 10 on his calculator. He forgot what his second and fourth numbers were. This is what he remembered doing.
$8 + \square - 7 + \square = 10$
List a pair of numbers that could have been the second and fourth numbers. (You may use the number tiles to help you.)
_____ , _____
List a different pair that could have been the second and fourth numbers.
_____ , _____

Source for sample questions: National Center for Education Statistics, <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard>

States	% Proficient and Above State Assessment Elementary Reading 2005	% Proficient and Advanced NAEP Grade 4 Reading	% Basic and Above NAEP Grade 4 Reading
Alabama	83	22	53
Alaska	78	27	58
Arizona	68	24	52
Arkansas	52	30	63
California	47	21	50
Colorado	64 (86)	37	69
Connecticut	67	38	71
Delaware	85	34	73
Florida	71	30	65
Georgia	87	26	58
Hawaii	56	23	53
Idaho	87	33	69
Illinois	60	29	62
Indiana	75	30	64
Iowa	78	33	67
Kansas	78	32	66
Kentucky	68	31	65
Louisiana	21 (64)	20	53
Maine	53	35	71
Maryland	74	32	65
Massachusetts	50	44	78
Michigan	82	32	63
Minnesota	81	38	71
Mississippi	89	18	48
Missouri	35	33	67
Montana	75	36	71
Nebraska	79	34	68
Nevada	43	21	52
New Hampshire	*	39	74
New Jersey	82	37	68
New Mexico	52	20	51
New York	70	33	69
North Carolina	83	29	62
North Dakota	*	35	72
Ohio	77	34	69
Oklahoma	83	25	60
Oregon	81	29	62
Pennsylvania	64	36	69
Rhode Island	67	30	62
South Carolina	36	26	57
South Dakota	87	33	70
Tennessee	**	27	59
Texas	79	29	64
Utah	*	34	68
Vermont	*	39	72
Virginia	85	37	72
Washington	80	36	70
West Virginia	81	26	61
Wisconsin	82	33	67
Wyoming	47	34	71

The numbers in parentheses show the percentage of students at or above the achievement level used for NCLB accountability determinations in Colorado and Louisiana. Those were the achievement levels used for the trend analysis of state assessment results in this report.

* 2005 data was not yet available at the time of this analysis

** Tennessee does not report grade specific results

States	% Proficient and Above State Assessment Elementary Math 2005	% Proficient and Advanced NAEP Grade 4 Math 2005	% Basic and Above NAEP Grade 4 Math 2005
Alabama	74	21	66
Alaska	69	34	77
Arizona	74	28	70
Arkansas	50	34	78
California	50	28	71
Colorado	63 (89)	39	81
Connecticut	79	42	84
Delaware	77	36	84
Florida	64	37	82
Georgia	75	30	76
Hawaii	26	27	73
Idaho	90	40	86
Illinois	73	32	74
Indiana	73	38	84
Iowa	79	37	85
Kansas	85	47	88
Kentucky	45	26	75
Louisiana	18 (61)	24	74
Maine	39	39	84
Maryland	69	38	79
Massachusetts	40	49	91
Michigan	72	38	79
Minnesota	80	47	88
Mississippi	79	19	69
Missouri	43	31	79
Montana	57	38	85
Nebraska	78	36	80
Nevada	51	26	72
New Hampshire	*	47	89
New Jersey	80	45	86
New Mexico	39	19	65
New York	85	36	81
North Carolina	92	40	83
North Dakota	*	40	89
Ohio	66	43	84
Oklahoma	75	29	79
Oregon	84	37	80
Pennsylvania	69	41	82
Rhode Island	51	31	76
South Carolina	41	36	81
South Dakota	82	41	86
Tennessee	**	28	74
Texas	81	40	87
Utah	*	37	83
Vermont	*	44	87
Virginia	81	39	83
Washington	61	42	84
West Virginia	74	25	75
Wisconsin	72	40	84
Wyoming	39	43	87

The numbers in parentheses show the percentage of students at or above the achievement level used for NCLB accountability determinations in Colorado and Louisiana. Those were the achievement levels used for the trend analysis of state assessment results in this report.

* 2005 data was not yet available at the time of this analysis

** Tennessee does not report grade specific results

States	% Proficient and Above State Assessment, Middle School Reading 2005	% Proficient and Advanced NAEP Grade 8 Reading 2005	% Basic and Above NAEP Grade 8 Reading 2005
Alabama	69	22	63
Alaska	80	26	70
Arizona	67	23	65
Arkansas	57	26	69
California	39	21	60
Colorado	64 (86)	32	75
Connecticut	75	34	74
Delaware	79	30	80
Florida	44	25	66
Georgia	83	25	67
Hawaii	38	18	58
Idaho	82	32	76
Illinois	73	31	75
Indiana	67	28	73
Iowa	71	34	79
Kansas	77	35	78
Kentucky	62	31	75
Louisiana	13 (50)	20	64
Maine	44	38	81
Maryland	66	30	69
Massachusetts	66	44	83
Michigan	73	28	73
Minnesota	74	37	80
Mississippi	57	18	60
Missouri	33	31	76
Montana	64	37	82
Nebraska	77	35	80
Nevada	51	22	63
New Hampshire	*	38	80
New Jersey	72	38	80
New Mexico	51	19	62
New York	48	33	75
North Carolina	88	27	69
North Dakota	*	37	83
Ohio	70	36	78
Oklahoma	73	25	72
Oregon	63	33	74
Pennsylvania	64	36	77
Rhode Island	*	29	71
South Carolina	30	25	67
South Dakota	79	35	82
Tennessee	**	26	71
Texas	83	26	69
Utah	*	29	73
Vermont	*	37	79
Virginia	76	36	78
Washington	69	34	75
West Virginia	80	22	67
Wisconsin	85	35	77
Wyoming	39	36	81

The numbers in parentheses show the percentage of students at or above the achievement level used for NCLB accountability determinations in Colorado and Louisiana. Those were the achievement levels used for the trend analysis of state assessment results in this report.

* 2005 data was not yet available at the time of this analysis

** Tennessee does not report grade specific results

States	% Proficient and Above State Assessment, Middle School Math 2005	% Proficient and Advanced NAEP Grade 8 Math 2005	% Basic and Above NAEP Grade 8 Math 2005
Alabama	63	15	53
Alaska	62	29	69
Arizona	63	26	64
Arkansas	33	22	64
California	37	22	57
Colorado	44 (75)	32	70
Connecticut	76	35	70
Delaware	53	30	72
Florida	59	26	65
Georgia	69	23	62
Hawaii	20	18	56
Idaho	70	30	73
Illinois	54	29	68
Indiana	71	30	74
Iowa	74	34	75
Kansas	68	34	77
Kentucky	36	23	64
Louisiana	7 (51)	16	59
Maine	29	30	74
Maryland	52	30	66
Massachusetts	39	43	80
Michigan	62	29	68
Minnesota	76	43	79
Mississippi	53	14	52
Missouri	16	26	68
Montana	63	36	80
Nebraska	72	35	75
Nevada	49	21	60
New Hampshire	*	35	77
New Jersey	62	36	74
New Mexico	24	14	53
New York	56	31	70
North Carolina	84	32	72
North Dakota	*	35	81
Ohio	63	33	74
Oklahoma	69	21	63
Oregon	64	34	72
Pennsylvania	63	31	72
Rhode Island	*	24	63
South Carolina	23	30	71
South Dakota	69	36	80
Tennessee	**	21	61
Texas	61	31	72
Utah	*	30	71
Vermont	*	38	78
Virginia	81	33	75
Washington	51	36	75
West Virginia	71	18	60
Wisconsin	73	36	76
Wyoming	38	29	76

The numbers in parentheses show the percentage of students at or above the achievement level used for NCLB accountability determinations in Colorado and Louisiana. Those were the achievement levels used for the trend analysis of state assessment results in this report.

* 2005 data was not yet available at the time of this analysis

** Tennessee does not report grade specific results

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ABOUT THE EDUCATION TRUST



The Education Trust, Inc. was created to promote high academic achievement for all students, at all levels – pre-kindergarten through college. While we know that all schools and colleges could better serve their students, our work focuses on the schools and colleges most often left behind in plans to improve education: those serving African-American, Latino, Native American and low-income students.

The Education Trust works side by side with policymakers, parents, education professionals, community and business leaders – in cities and towns across the country – who are trying to transform their schools and colleges into institutions that genuinely serve all students. We also bring lessons learned in local communities back to Washington to help inform national policy debates.

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