

The Nation's Report Card on 4th Grade Reading 2011 Achievement Gaps Increase; Overall Proficiency the Same as 2009

Executive summary

The latest results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) indicate that 34 percent of all American fourth-grade students are at or above the proficient level in reading. Achievement gaps persist by race and by income. These figures indicate that, as a nation, we must continue to raise the standards of educational achievement for all students.

Overall Findings

The U.S. Department of Education releases the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) every two years. A national sample of 213,000 fourth grade students responded to questions on the 2011 NAEPⁱ in reading. Although overall fourth-grade proficiency has increased in the last decade, there was no significant change in proficiency from 2009 to 2011 (See Figure 1).ⁱⁱ

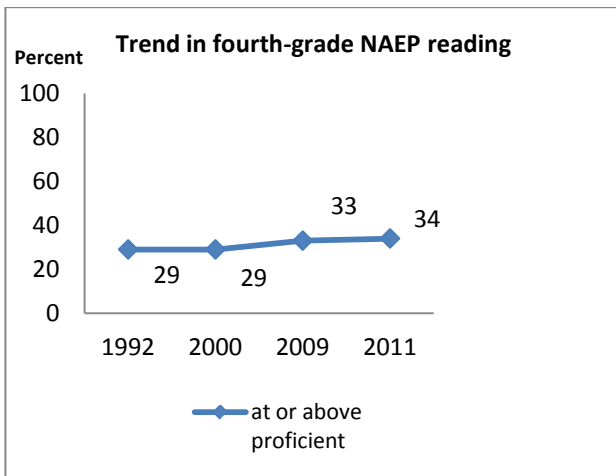


Figure 1. Trend in Fourth-Grade NAEP Reading from 1992 - 2011.

State findings

Fourth graders in 30 states were more proficient than the national average. Half of the fourth-grade students in Massachusetts were proficient in reading. Students in New Jersey (44%), New Hampshire (43%), Maryland (43%), Connecticut (42%), Pennsylvania (41%) and Vermont (41%) had the highest levels of proficiency after Massachusetts.

Massachusetts' students also had the highest level of proficiency in 2009 (47%). Compared to 2009 NAEP Reading results, four states improved their ranking within the top proficient states: New Jersey [40%-44%], New Hampshire [41%-43%], Maryland [37%-43%] and Pennsylvania [37%-41%].ⁱⁱⁱ

The 2011 results show that students in the District of Columbia were the least proficient (19%). The states with the lowest number of students proficient in reading are Nevada (25%), California (25%), Louisiana (23%), Mississippi (22%) and New Mexico (21%). Since 2009, eight states and jurisdictions increased proficiency within the 10 least proficient: District of Columbia [17%-19%], New Mexico [20%-21%], Louisiana [18%-23%], California [23%-25%], Nevada [24%-25%], Arizona [25%-26%], West Virginia [25%-27%] and Hawaii [26%-27%].

Achievement Gaps

Income

Students from lower-income families^{iv} were less proficient in reading than their peers. Eighteen percent of students in low-income families were proficient on the NAEP reading, in comparison to 48% of their peers. The majority of fourth graders from low-income families did not achieve proficiency in reading in 2011. Nationally, the achievement gap between students in low-income families and their peers grew from 28% to 30% between 2009 -2011.

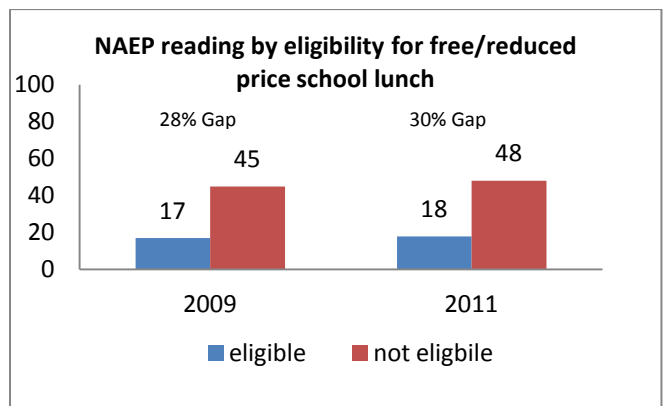


Figure 2. Fourth-Grade Reading Proficiency by Eligibility for Free/ Reduced Price Lunch.

Race

Achievement gaps by race /ethnicity continue to persist. Black, Hispanic, American Indian and Alaska Native children have the lowest percentages of proficiency in reading. See figure 3.

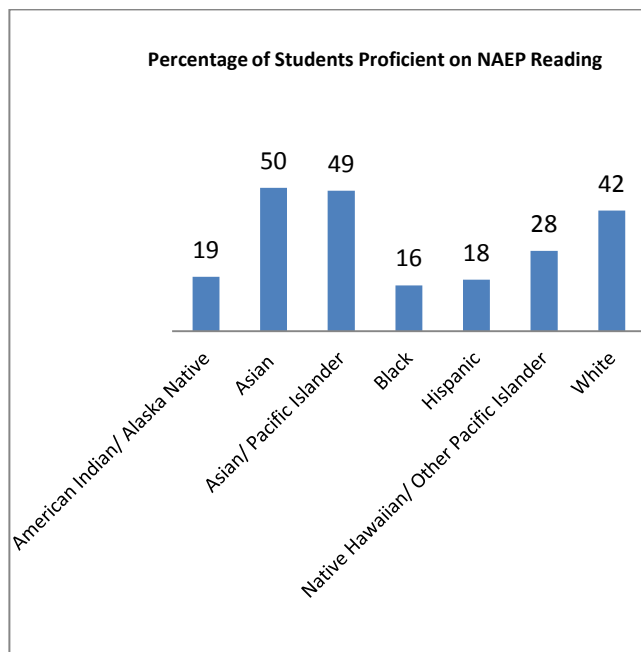


Figure 3. Proficiency on NAEP Reading 2011 by Race/ Ethnicity

The achievement gaps between White and Black Students and between White and Hispanic students remained the same from 2009-2011. There is a 27% gap in reading proficiency between White and Black students; there is a 26% gap in reading proficiency between White and Hispanic students (Refer to Figure 4).

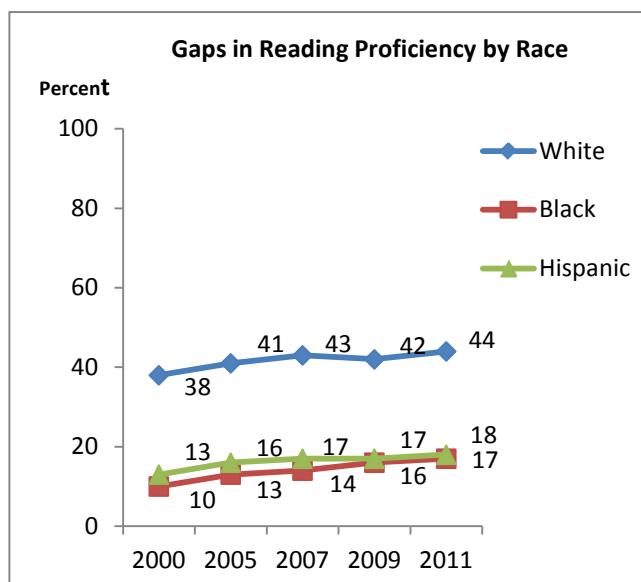


Figure 4. Trend in NAEP Fourth-Grade Reading Proficiency by Race/ Ethnicity

Black /White Achievement Gap

Eighteen states have higher gaps between Black students and White students in comparison to the national gap.

The states with the largest proficiency gaps in fourth-grade reading between White and Black students are Maryland (34%), Massachusetts (35%) and Connecticut (41%); the District of Columbia has the highest gap of 62%.

Hispanic / White Achievement Gap

Sixteen states and the District of Columbia have larger proficiency gaps between White and Hispanic students in comparison to the national gap. The largest gap is in the District of Columbia (55%). The states with the largest gaps are Connecticut (38%), Massachusetts (38%) and Colorado (33%).

Conclusion

The latest results of the NAEP 2011 indicate that two-thirds of fourth-grade students are not reading at grade level. The results are far worse for low-income students (82% are not proficient in reading) and Black and Hispanic children. We cannot afford to leave so many children behind, especially in this globalized economy. We must invest more early – quality early learning and education should be used to improve school readiness particularly for children of color and children in low-income families. State and local school boards should ensure that schools are equipped with the resources needed to provide a quality education to *all* students. Congress should continue its commitment to high standards and accountability for all students through the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

ⁱ Achievement levels (Basic, Proficient and Advanced) are “based on recommendations from policy makers, educators, and members of the general public” (U.S. Department of Education). **Proficient represents “solid academic performance” To achieve proficiency a student must demonstrate** “competency over challenging subject matter, including subject-matter knowledge, application of such knowledge to real-world situations, and analytical skills appropriate to the subject matter”.

ⁱⁱ http://nationsreportcard.gov/reading_2011/reading_2011_report/

ⁱⁱⁱ Appendix 2 www.Voices.org need a link to excel sheet

^{iv} NAEP uses students’ eligibility for the National School Lunch Program as an indicator of family income. Children from families below 130 percent of the poverty level are eligible for free meals; students in families with incomes between 130 and 185 percent of the poverty level are eligible for reduced-price meals.