

Talk

about Today's Public Schools

Editor's Note:

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For more information, write info@nisd.net.

'Stacking Up Well'

Texas Students Top National Average on "Nation's Report Card"

Texas students outperformed the national average on three of four 2005 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) exams and performed slightly below the U.S. average on the fourth test, the Texas Education Agency announced recently.

Texans scored higher than the national average on the fourth- and eighth-grade mathematics exams and on the fourth-grade reading test, but were two points lower than the national average on the eighth-grade reading test.

However, when the scores are examined by ethnic groups, Texas students in all major ethnic groups outpaced students in the same ethnic groups across the country on both the NAEP mathematics and reading tests and at both grade levels.

The NAEP is known as the "nation's report card" because it is the only assessment test given to students of all academic levels in all states. Results for 2005 are based on the performance of 600,000 fourth- and eighth-grade students across the country. There are four NAEP achievement levels: below basic, basic, proficient, and advanced.

"It is encouraging that most Texas students are showing improvement in these two important subject areas," Commissioner of Education Shirley J. Neeley said. "Texas stacks up very well when the scores of individual student groups are compared nationally. We clearly have work to do, however, as we strive to move more students up to the proficient level."

Fourth-grade Math

On the fourth-grade mathematics test, Texas ranked in fourth place nationally with 87 percent of its students at or above the basic performance level. Only Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and North Dakota had higher performance levels.

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Fourth-grade students in Texas showed significant gain on the over-all scale score on the exam too, earning a score of 242, up from 237 in 2003. The national average scale score was 237. Texas' white, African-American, Hispanic, and Asian-American students all outperformed similar ethnic groups nationally, according to information from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), which administers the NAEP program.

Asian-Americans from Texas earned the highest average scale score of 264, compared to a score of 251 for Asian-American students nationally. Texas white students received a score of 254, compared to a score of 246 for white students across the country. Texas's African-American students posted a score of 228, compared to 220 for the group nationally. Hispanic Texans earned a score of 235, 10 points higher than their peers nationally.

The percentage of Texas' fourth-grade students scoring at the proficient level increased over the state's past test scores and was higher than the national average. Thirty-five percent of Texas students were at the proficient level, up from 29 percent in 2003. Nationally, 30 percent of the students were proficient in math.

A student who has earned a proficient achievement level has demonstrated 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, according to NCES.

Texas has also greatly reduced the percentage of students who are performing below the basic level. In 1992, 44 percent of the state's fourth-graders scored below the basic level, compared with 13 percent today.

"Texans can be proud of these students who achieved the fourth-highest ranking in the nation. The performance on this test shows that we are moving the academic performance of fourth-graders up at all levels," Neeley said.

Eighth-grade Math

Texas eighth-grade students earned an average scale score of 281 this year on the NAEP mathematics test, up from 277 in 2003. This year's score exceeded the national average scale score of 278. Texas had slightly more students at the proficient level, with 25 percent of the state's eighth-graders performing at this level, versus 23 percent at the national level.

However, 12 other states plus the Department of Defense schools had a higher percentage of students at or above the basic level on the math test.

Like the fourth-grade students, each major ethnic group at eighth-grade outperformed the national average. White students earned an average scale score of 295, compared to a score of 288 for whites nationally. African-American students in Texas earned a score of 264, 10 points higher than the national average for this group. Hispanic Texans with a score of 271 also had a 10-point lead over Hispanics nationally. Asian-Texans earned an average scale score of 308, 14 points higher than their peer group across the country.

Fourth-grade Reading

Texas' fourth-grade students earned an average scale score of 219 on the reading NAEP, up from 215 in 2003. While the national average scale score was two points lower than the Texas score, the difference is not statistically significant. Both Texas and the nation had 23 percent of students at the proficient level.

The nation had more students performing below the basic level. Thirty-eight percent of students nationally were at the below basic level, compared to 36 percent in Texas.

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Twenty states plus the Department of Defense schools had a higher percentage of students achieving at or above the basic level.

Once again, students in Texas' major ethnic groups outperformed their peers across the country. Texas' white students earned a score of 232, compared to a scale score of 228 for white students nationally. African-American students in Texas achieved a scale score of 206, compared to 199 nationally. Hispanic Texans received a score of 210, compared to 201 for Hispanics students across the country. Asian-Texans received an average score of 234, versus 227 for this group nationally.

Eighth-grade Reading

The average scale score on the eighth-grade reading exam was 258 for Texas students in 2005, compared to 259 in 2003, a variation that was called "not significantly different" by NCES. The national average score was 260. Twenty-four percent of Texans and 26 percent of the students nationally were at the proficient level.

Sixty-nine percent of Texas eighth-grade students achieved at or above the basic level, which means 32 states or jurisdictions had higher performance percentages.

Yet Texas' ethnic groups earned higher scores than their classmates nationally. White Texans earned an average scale score of 270, compared to a national average of 269. Texan African-Americans earned a score of 246, four points higher than the national average for African-Americans. Hispanic Texans scored an average of 248, three points higher than their peers nationally. Asian-Texans, with a score of 280, were 10 points above Asian-American students across the country.

More information about NAEP and the 2005 results is available at nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/.★

Article is reprinted with permission from the June 2006 special edition of Texas Lone Star magazine, published by the Texas Association of School Boards, Roger White, Managing Editor.



Northside ISD

5900 Evers Road, San Antonio, Texas 78238, 210-397-8500

The Nation's Report Card 2005
 National Assessment of Educational Progress,
 October 2005

	U.S. Average	Texas Average	Texas Rank
Reading			
Grade 4	217	219	29
African-Am.	199	206	8
Hispanic	201	210	9
White	228	232	5
Reading			
Grade 8	260	258	36
African-Am.	242	246	10
Hispanic	245	248	15
White	269	270	19
Math			
Grade 4	237	242	9
African-Am.	220	228	2
Hispanic	225	235	2
White	246	254	1
Math			
Grade 8	278	281	20
African-Am.	254	264	3
Hispanic	261	271	2
White	288	295	3

