



NEWS

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For immediate release

Kansas NAEP scores show nine-year growth trend

Math, English language learner performance especially strong

TOPEKA – Reading and math scores from the 2011 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), released today, show that Kansas students' scores have improved significantly since 2003, showing particularly strong gains in mathematics and among the English language learner (ELL) population. Measurement from 2003 is significant because it's the year the state adopted new curricular standards and the first year the state achieved 100 percent participation from schools identified to participate in NAEP, ensuring the validity and reliability of the results.

Kansas students' scores are significantly better than scores for the nation as a whole and remain unchanged from 2009, the last time NAEP reading and math exams were administered. The state's performance ranks it in the top half of the nation in both math and reading at both the fourth and eighth grade levels.

"That Kansas students have maintained a level of performance that is strong when compared against the nation and other states demonstrates the commitment of Kansas educators to providing a comprehensive range of instruction in core subject areas," said Kansas Commissioner of Education Dr. Diane DeBacker. "The continued improvement trend we see on our state assessments attests to Kansas students' ability to learn to the education standards established by the state; our continued strong performance on the NAEP exams demonstrates that instruction in Kansas schools takes a broader approach than simply teaching to the state test."

NAEP results are measured in two ways: by an average scale score from 0 to 500 and by one of three achievement levels – basic, proficient or advanced.

Scale Score Performance – Math

Kansas students saw their greatest gains in math, where average scale scores for fourth

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grade showed a statistically significant increase from 242 in 2003 to 246, and average scores for eighth grade increased with statistical significance from 284 in 2003 to 290. Nationally, fourth grade students have an average scale score of 240 in math and eighth grade students have an average scale score of 283 in math. Only three states in the nation scored significantly higher than Kansas in fourth grade math and just seven states scored significantly higher in eighth grade math.

Kansas' ELL students have shown even more pronounced improvement than the all student population, particularly when compared to the nation as a whole, where Kansas students perform significantly better than the nation at both the fourth and eighth grades.

Fourth grade ELL students in Kansas increased their average scale score with statistical significance in math from 224 in 2003 to 233. Across the nation, English language learners' average scale score in fourth grade math moved from 214 in 2003 to 219. The gap in performance between ELL and non-ELL students in fourth grade math is 15 percentage points in Kansas as compared to 24 percentage points for the nation. The difference between Kansas' performance and that of the nation is even more marked at the eighth grade level. There, Kansas ELL students have improved their average scale score on the math exam by 12 percentage points since 2003, moving from 249 to 261. This is a statistically significant improvement. At the same time, ELL students nationally improved their average scale score from 241 to 244 on the eighth grade math exam. The gap in performance on the eighth grade math exam between ELL and non-ELL students is 31 percentage points in Kansas and 41 percentage points for the nation.

Scale Score Performance – Reading

Reading results were more mixed for Kansas students, who showed statistically significant improvement from 2003 in fourth grade but no significant change in eighth grade scores. The average scale score for the all student population in fourth grade reading improved from 220 in 2003 to 224, while the average scale score for eighth grade students went from 266

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in 2003 to 267. Nationally, fourth grade students had an average scale score of 220 in reading while eighth grade students had an average scale score of 264. Just eight states or jurisdictions scored significantly higher than Kansas in both fourth grade and eighth grade reading.

As in math, Kansas' ELL population posted impressive gains in reading, and scored significantly better than the nation at both the fourth and eighth grades. The state's ELL students improved the average scale score in fourth-grade reading by 12 percentage points from 2003 to 2011, jumping from 191 to 203. Nationally, ELL students' average scale score for fourth grade reading was 186 in 2003 and 188 in 2011. The gap in performance between ELL and non-ELL students on the fourth grade reading exam is 23 percentage points in Kansas and 36 percentage points nationally. On the eighth grade reading exams, scores for ELL students in Kansas are not available prior to 2007 because the population of ELL students tested prior to that was too small for reporting purposes. Scores for the state's ELL population increased 15 percentage points from 2007 to 2011, moving from 227 to 242. The small population tested in 2007 makes it difficult to determine whether the improvement is statistically significant. Nationally, ELL students' scores on the eighth grade reading exam were 222 in 2007 and 223 in 2011. The gap in performance between ELL and non-ELL students on the eighth grade reading exam is 27 percentage points in Kansas and 43 percentage points nationally.

“While I'm excited and pleased with the gains our ELL students are making, it's clear that in reading our state has some room to grow,” DeBacker said. “I believe the State Board of Education's decision to adopt the Kansas Common Core Standards for English language arts and mathematics, and the work our state has done in developing our Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant application will facilitate growth in that area over time. The plan for early literacy set out in our Early Learning Challenge grant application coupled with the more challenging standards developed through the Common Core will move our students to stronger reading performance in general.”

A review of NAEP performance by achievement levels for Kansas students shows the percent of students performing at the proficient level or above has increased significantly since

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2003 in math, but has not changed significantly in reading. The percent of Kansas students performing at the basic level or above has increased significantly since 2003 at both grade levels in math and at the fourth grade level in reading.

Achievement Levels – Math

Unlike state assessments where proficient, or “meets standards,” represents satisfactory performance for the grade level, the NAEP exam sets a more aspirational goal for proficient performance, defined as competency over challenging subject matter. The NAEP basic performance level is more in line with the state’s “meet standards” performance level.

In fourth grade math, Kansas saw a statistically significant increase from 2003 to 2011 both in the percentage of students performing at the proficient level or above and in the percent of students performing at the basic level and above. In 2003, 41 percent of Kansas students performed at the proficient level or above on the fourth grade math exam, and 85 percent of students performed at the basic level or above. Those numbers jumped to 48 percent and 90 percent respectively in 2011. Only three states have a higher percentage of students performing at the proficient level or above, and only two states have a higher percentage performing at the basic level or above.

Eighth grade students in Kansas also saw a statistically significant increase in performance on the math exam both at the proficient level and above and at the basic level and above. Thirty-four percent of Kansas eighth graders performed at the proficient level or above in math in 2003 and 76 percent scored at the basic level or above. By 2011, those numbers had increased to 41 percent and 80 percent respectively. Just five states have a higher percentage of students performing at the proficient level or above and only four states have a higher percentage at the basic level or above.

Achievement Levels – Reading

In reading, the only statistically significant change in performance by achievement level was among fourth grade students at the basic level or above. There, performance jumped from

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66 percent in 2003 to 71 percent in 2011. The percent of students performing at the proficient level or above in fourth grade reading went from 33 percent in 2003 to 36 percent in 2011, but the increase is not statistically significant. Only seven states have a higher percentage of students performing at the proficient level or above, and just five states have a higher percentage at basic or above.

On the eighth grade reading exam, the percentage of Kansas students performing at the proficient level or above remained constant at 35 percent in both 2003 and 2011. The percent of students at the basic level or above increased from 77 percent in 2003 to 79 percent in 2011, but the increase is not considered statistically significant. Six states have a higher percentage of students performing at the proficient level or above in eighth grade reading and nine states have a higher percent of students at basic or above.

More information about the state's performance on the NAEP assessment can be found at www.nationsreportcard.gov.

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