



# Wyoming Department of Education

## PRESS RELEASE

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### 2009 NAEP Reading Scores for Wyoming Released

**Cheyenne** –State Superintendent of Public Instruction Dr. Jim McBride today announced Wyoming’s performance on the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress, known as the Nation’s Report Card or NAEP.

Wyoming’s students in 2009 continue to outperform the national averages in both fourth and eighth grade reading. Nationally, fourth grade scores were flat or unchanged from 2007, while eighth grade scores increased one point on NAEP’s reading scale.

Wyoming’s 2009 reading scores were lower in fourth grade than reported in 2007 (the prior NAEP reporting year)—and eighth grade scores were statistically unchanged from 2007. NAEP’s estimated average scale score for Wyoming fourth graders fell two scale points from 225 points in 2007 to 223 in 2009.

The performance reductions occurred mostly among white fourth grade students (down 4 points since 2007), male students (down 3 points), students from high socio-economic status (down 3 points), and Wyoming’s mid-range and higher performing fourth graders—those scoring at NAEP’s 50<sup>th</sup>, 75<sup>th</sup>, and 90<sup>th</sup> percentiles (down 2, 3 and 5 points respectively).

Reading scores remained unchanged in 2009 from their performance levels in 2007 for Wyoming’s fourth graders who are School Lunch Eligible, Hispanic and American Indian students, Special Education learners, and lower performing students—fourth graders scoring at NAEP’s 10<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> percentile.

Compared to the rest of the nation in 2009, seven jurisdictions had a higher percentage of students than in Wyoming performing at or above NAEP’s *Basic* achievement level for fourth grade reading; these were Connecticut, the DoD schools, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Dakota and Vermont.

In eighth grade, Wyoming’s reading scores remained essentially unchanged—from an average scale score of 266 points in 2007 to 268 this year. These year-to-year scores are not considered statistically different.

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This is because NAEP employs various sampling and weighting procedures to administer its assessments, with a margin of error related to all scores that NAEP reports

Only two jurisdictions nationally had a higher percentage of students than Wyoming scoring at or above NAEP's *Basic* achievement level in eighth grade NAEP reading; these were the DoD schools and North Dakota.

Based on the 2009 results, Wyoming has successfully closed past achievement disparities or 'gaps' that have perennially been unchanged between student groups. For example in 2009, Hispanic eighth graders increased their scores nearly 10 and a half points from their reading results in 2007. Due to this singular achievement, the gap between White and Hispanic students closed in 2009 for the first time since public reporting of Wyoming's NAEP results for the two groups began in 1998.

In fourth grade NAEP Reading, gaps between Whites and Hispanic students have also narrowed by 10 points since 2005 – another first for Wyoming.

Likewise, Wyoming's has made notable progress in closing achievement gaps between Special Education students and their classmates in fourth grade reading. Fourth graders with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) have raised their scores 11 full points since 2003 on NAEP's reading scale—and in so doing, significantly closed the learning gap between themselves and their non-Special Education peers.

Based on the 2009 results, Wyoming also continues to retain some of the smallest educational gaps in the nation between "have" and "have-not" students, as indicated by student eligibility for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). For example, estimated differences in average scores for Wyoming NSLP eligible and non-eligible students this year in fourth grade reading was 16 scale points. Only one state had less of a disparity or poverty "gap" than Wyoming's (North Dakota, 15 points).

Reducing learning gaps between student groups is a key aspect of the elementary and secondary education policy under No Child Left Behind, and in the U.S. Department of Education's "Race to the Top" grant competition for increased educational funding to states.

Wyoming in 2009 also continued to perform favorably on NAEP reading in comparison to its neighboring states. No adjacent state had higher percentages of students than in Wyoming scoring at or above NAEP's *Basic* achievement level, either in fourth or eighth grade reading.

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Additionally, Wyoming statistically outperformed Utah (in grade 4 reading), and both Colorado and Idaho (at grade 8) in terms of NAEP's *Basic* or above reading achievement level.

NAEP's *Basic* level reflects where most states have set their "at grade level" performance expectations on their annual state assessments in grades 3 through 8 as mandated under NCLB (e.g., PAWS in Wyoming).

A key purpose of NAEP is to serve as an external audit or reference point for comparing academic assessment results, both within and across states. In this respect, Wyoming's lower NAEP scores in fourth grade reading during 2009 was foreshadowed by students' lower year-to-year performance on their 2009 PAWS results, i.e., when compared the 2008 PAWS results.

When making NAEP and PAWS comparisons, it's critical to note that the PAWS primary purpose involves measuring *each individual student's* achievement. NAEP on the other hand employs various sampling procedures to measure and make comparisons between *groups of students*, and to estimate a state's overall educational progress over time.

Additionally, NAEP provides a common or standard metric for making direct state-to-state comparisons of educational progress and achievement.

NAEP testing is administered to Wyoming students every two years. All states plus the District of Columbia and Department of Defense (DoD) schools are assessed by the NAEP.

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