



Wyoming Department of Education

PRESS RELEASE

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Wyoming NAEP Scores in Vocabulary Released

Cheyenne – State Superintendent of Public Instruction Cindy Hill today announced Wyoming’s performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress—known as the Nation’s Report Card or NAEP—in the area of vocabulary. This is a new reporting area for NAEP, and Wyoming’s results for 2011 and 2009 are being released today for the first time ever.

NAEP vocabulary is derived from students’ performance within NAEP’s reading assessment, and assesses their ability to understand the meaning of words within an article or reading passage. An example of a NAEP vocabulary test question is as follows:

“On page 1, the article says that finding the planet orbiting 55 Cancri was "a major **breakthrough**." This means that the planet was

- A. splitting into pieces when it was found
- B. made of gas rather than solid rock
- C. an extremely important discovery
- D. a way to prove scientific theories

The correct response for this vocabulary question is option C.

Wyoming’s fourth and eighth grade scores were statistically the same as the nationwide average for public schools in 2011. This was also true for Wyoming grade four results during 2009.

Wyoming grade eight vocabulary scores were above the national average in 2009, but not so during the 2011 assessment.

	Wyoming		National Public Schools	
	2011	2009	2011	2009
4 th Grade NAEP Vocabulary Scale Scores	219	220	217	217
8 th Grade NAEP Vocabulary Scale Scores	266	272	263	263

As noted above, NAEP vocabulary is derived from students’ performance within NAEP’s reading assessment. Wyoming results on the overall NAEP reading assessment during 2011 and 2009 were above the national averages for both grades four and eight.

-MORE-

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Disaggregated 2011 vocabulary results generally indicate students groups in Wyoming performed at the same level as their peers nationally, but with important exceptions.

In grade four, three groups—Whites, American Indian, and students *not* receiving a free or reduced-price lunch—all performed *below* the average of students elsewhere in the United States with the same characteristics. Only Wyoming’s grade eight students receiving free or reduced-price lunch performed higher than their peers nationally on the 2011 vocabulary assessment.

These results reflect Wyoming standards that had not been revised since 2003. Since 2011, Wyoming has adopted new, more rigorous literacy standards. Superintendent Hill stated, “These results do not represent a level of academic performance that one would expect from a system designed for success. What I think we are witnessing is a result of the misalignment of past policy and practice, statewide and nationally, that, hopefully, will be rectified for our state through refinement of our Wyoming Accountability in Education Act.”

Numeric shifts in Wyoming’s average vocabulary scores between 2009 and 2011—220 to 219 in grade four, 272 to 266 in grade eight—were not sufficiently large enough to signal a reliable i.e., statistical change in Wyoming results for those grades during the two-year period.

Unlike PAWS testing, NAEP is administered to a sampling of Wyoming students every two years and does not provide individual student test scores.

NAEP scale scores operate similar to a thermometer in measuring student achievement. NAEP vocabulary scores range on a scale from 0 to 500 points.

NAEP testing is part of the nation’s No Child Left Behind legislation, and is administered to Wyoming’s fourth and eighth grade students in reading, vocabulary, and mathematics. All states and the District of Columbia and Department of Defense (DoD) schools are assessed every two years.

For full details on Wyoming’s NAEP results in vocabulary, please direct your Internet web browser to http://edu.wyoming.gov/Programs/statewide_assessment_system/naep.aspx and then click the “2011 NAEP” button.

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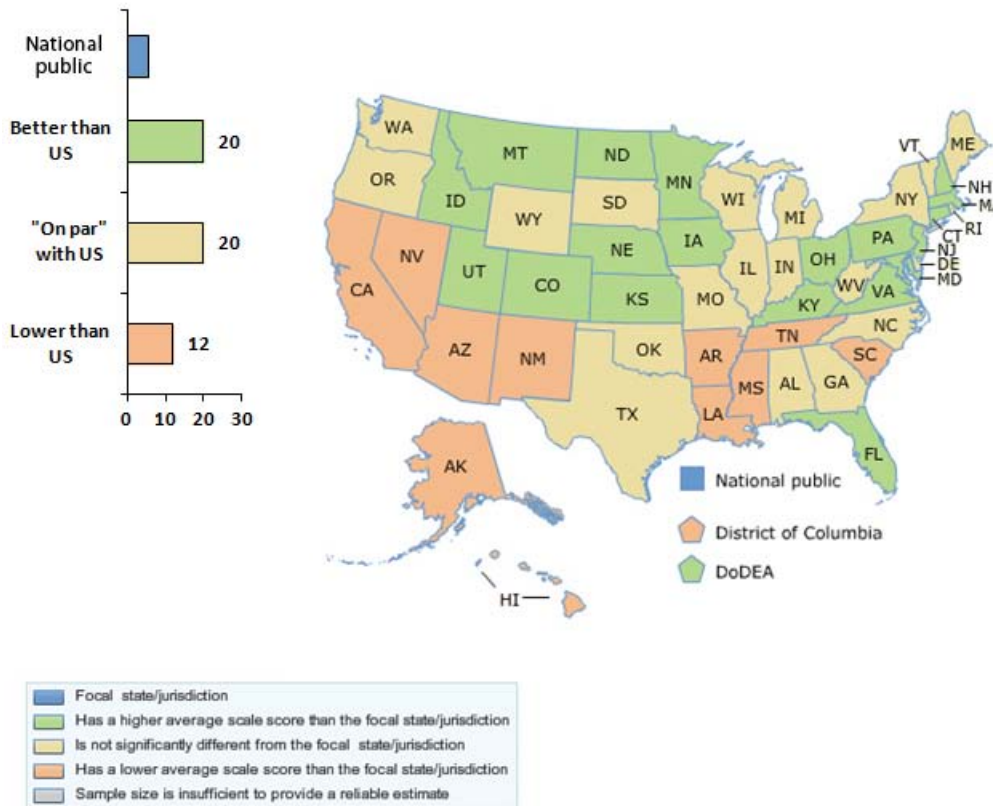
In grade four, the year-to-year NAEP results in Wyoming were as follows:

	2011	2009
NAEP Scale Scores, grade 4 Vocabulary	219	220

Although there is a cross-year numeric difference—220 to 219—scores were statistically unchanged in 2011 from the prior assessment in 2009. This is because NAEP works similar to a survey or poll. The one-point difference in results reported since 2009 is not statistically significant because it falls within NAEP’s margin-of-error in its sampling of students’ responses.

Comparing Grade Four Vocabulary Results

Comparing Results to the National Average for U.S. Public Schools. Twenty states and *jurisdictions* (the District of Columbia and Department of Defense schools) performed higher than the average for U.S. public Schools, twelve performed lower than the national average, and twenty (including Wyoming) were not reliably different from the 2011 U.S. national public school average in grade 4 NAEP Vocabulary.



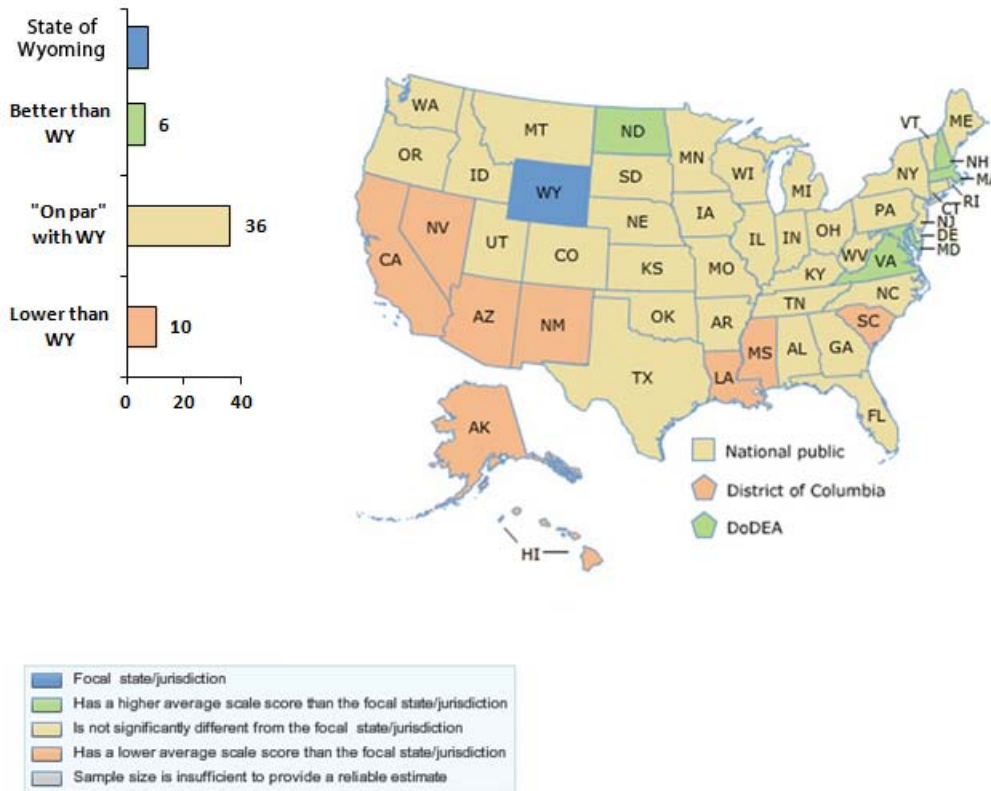
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Comparing Wyoming's Results. Six states and jurisdictions (Department of Defense Schools, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, North Dakota and Virginia) performed higher than Wyoming, ten performed lower than Wyoming, and thirty-six were not reliably different from Wyoming in 2011 grade 4 NAEP Vocabulary.



In grade eight, the year-to-year NAEP results in Wyoming are as follows:

	2011	2009
NAEP Scale Scores, grade 8 Vocabulary	266	272

Similar to the Wyoming grade 4 results just discussed, the reported differences between years are not statistically significant.

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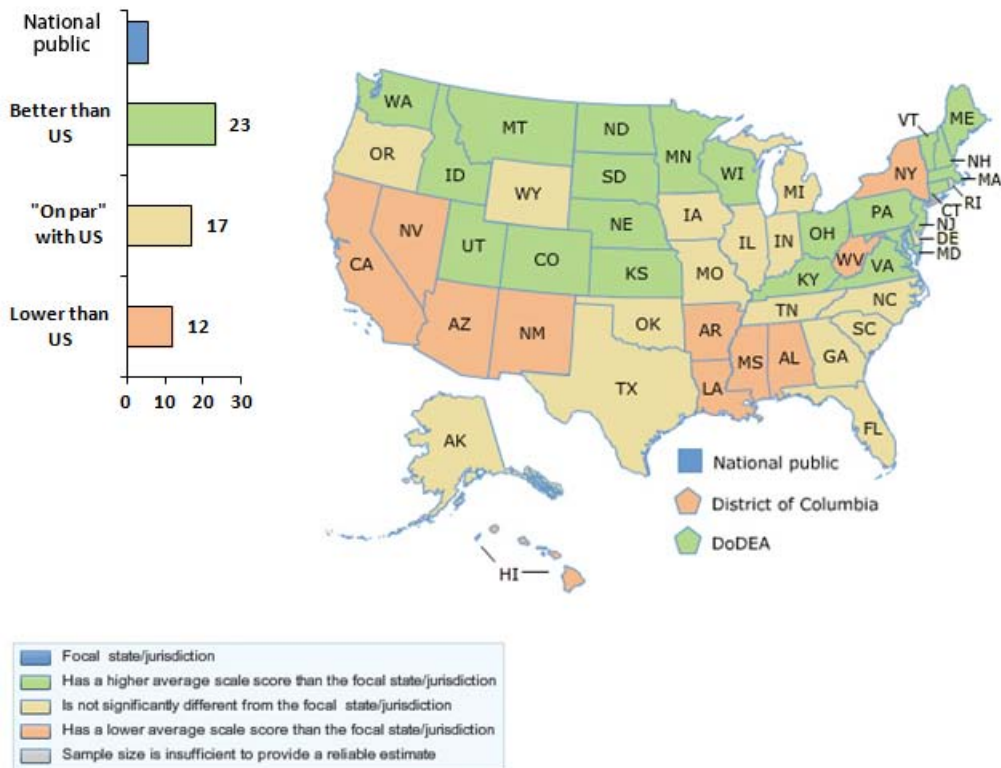


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Comparing Grade Eight Vocabulary Results

Comparing Results to the U.S. Public Schools National Average. Twenty-three states and jurisdictions performed higher than the average for U.S. Public Schools, twelve performed lower than the national average, and seventeen (again, including Wyoming) were not reliably different from the 2011 national average in grade 8 NAEP Vocabulary.



Comparing Wyoming's Results. Three states and jurisdictions (Connecticut, Montana and Massachusetts) performed higher than Wyoming, forty performed lower than Wyoming, and nine were not reliably different from Wyoming in grade eight NAEP Vocabulary.

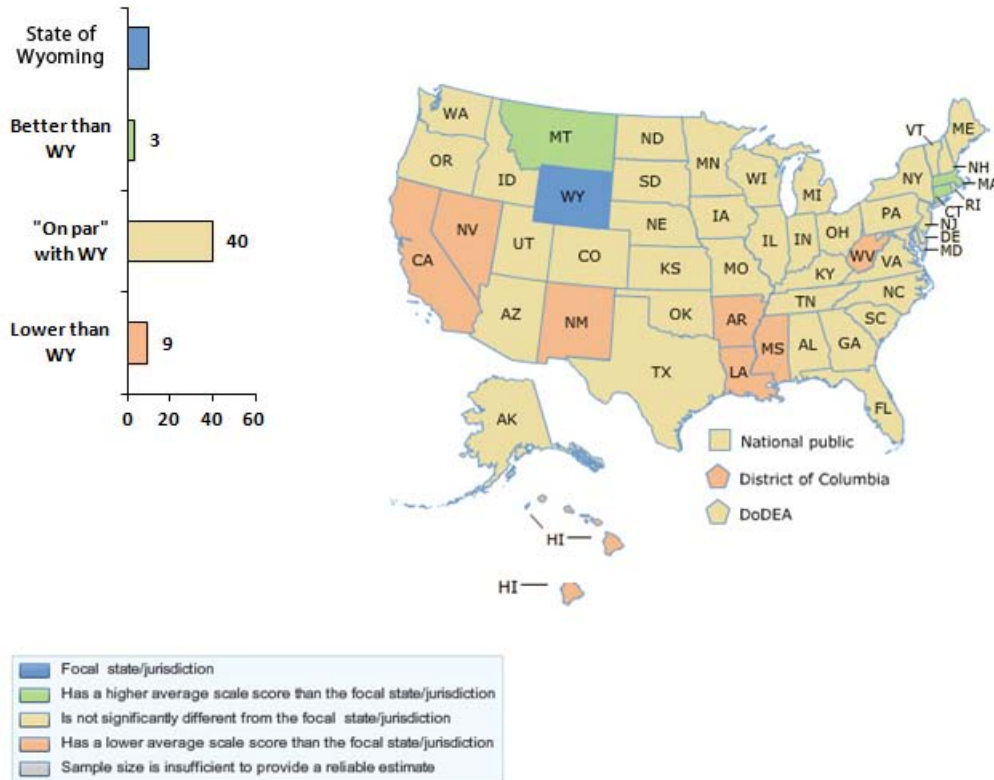
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Wyoming's NAEP Vocabulary scores were equivalent in nearly all comparisons to its neighboring states for both the 2011 and 2009 assessment. In only one instance did an adjacent state have a higher NAEP Vocabulary scores than Wyoming (Montana, during 2011, in grade eight).

Gaps between white and non-white (Hispanic and American Indian) students in Wyoming remained unchanged in 2011—neither narrowing nor widening—from previous NAEP results in 2009. This was true for both grade four and eight gaps. Interestingly, gender gaps often characterizing student reading (where girls generally outperform boys) were nonexistent in Wyoming and many other states (thirty in all, including Wyoming) during the 2011 Vocabulary assessment.

Disparities in learning certainly remain as areas of concern for all educators in Wyoming. Reducing educational gaps between student groups is a key aspect of elementary and secondary education under No Child Left Behind.

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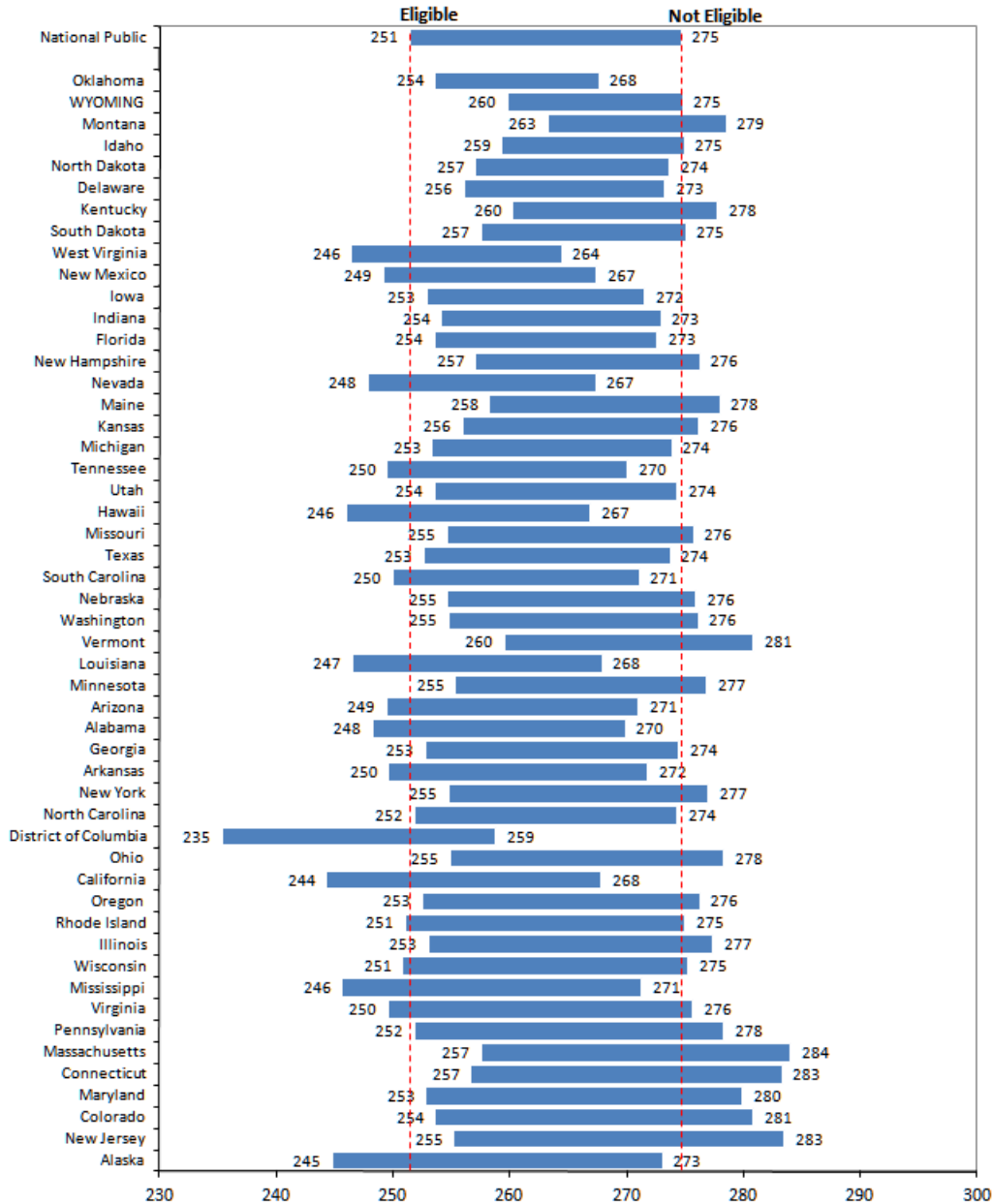


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In 2011, Wyoming displayed some of the smallest educational gaps nationally in vocabulary between high and low income students as indicated by eligibility for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). The difference in average scores for Wyoming NSLP eligible and non-eligible students, this year in eighth grade vocabulary was 15 scale points.

NAEP Meaning Vocabulary, Gr. 8 — National School Lunch Eligibility
Gap - Average Scale Score: 2011



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A key role of NAEP under No Child Left Behind is to serve as an external audit or point-of-reference and comparison in understanding each state's academic standards and educational testing program.

It's critical to note that the state's Proficiency Assessments for Wyoming Students or PAWS is distinctive from NAEP in that PAWS' primary assessment purpose is to measure an *individual student's achievement* and provide specific instructional advice to teachers. NAEP, on the other hand, employs various sampling procedures for measuring the educational progress for *groups of students* and providing a common yardstick in making direct state-to-state comparisons.

Focusing on individual student achievement—and providing assessment results to teachers to address learning gaps—is critical to ensuring that each student meets the academic bar set under No Child Left Behind.

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If you would prefer to receive this and other announcements or press releases in electronic format, please contact Public Information Officer Jerry Zellars at (307) 777-7675 or by e-mail at jerry.zellars@wyoming.gov

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