



Wyoming Department of Education
PRESS RELEASE

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2005 Wyoming NAEP scores released

Cheyenne – State Superintendent of Public Instruction Dr. Jim McBride today announced Wyoming’s performance on the 2005 National Assessment of Educational Progress, known as the Nation’s Report Card or NAEP. Wyoming’s fourth and eighth grade students continue to outperform national average test scores, and generally held onto or increased past gains in reading and mathematics skills.

“Wyoming continues to perform well on NAEP and at the national level,” Dr. McBride said. “I want to commend our districts, educators and students for their hard work.”

“We continue to perform well because we are working together to ensure our students and staff receive the best education, resources and training possible,” he said. “And by following the commitment that ‘It’s always about the kids’ I believe we will see continuous improvements.”

NAEP testing is an integral part of the nation’s No Child Left Behind legislation, and is administered to Wyoming students every two years. All states, including the District of Columbia and Department of Defense schools, are assessed. Wyoming’s reading scores this year for fourth and eighth grade were above national averages for the nation as a whole—as was the case in 2003.

In reading, scores edged up in both fourth grade and eighth grade since the previous assessment in 2003. For fourth grade, the estimated average rose one scale point from 222 in 2003 to 223 this year. This result placed Wyoming 15th overall among states or jurisdictions administering the NAEP this year. In 2003, Wyoming was 17th nationally in fourth grade reading.

In eighth grade, reading scores were up slightly—from 267 scale points in 2003 to 268 this year. This placed Wyoming 11th nationally, compared to 16th in 2003. Only three jurisdictions this year (Massachusetts, Department of Defense schools, and North Dakota) were significantly higher than Wyoming; 34 states scored lower, and 14 were not significantly different from Wyoming.

In mathematics, scores increased significantly from 2003 for fourth graders but were down slightly in eighth grade. For fourth grade, the estimated scores rose two scale points from 241 in 2003 to 243 this year. This increase was significant, and placed Wyoming seventh nationally.

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Wyoming also placed seventh in 2003. Only four states this year (Massachusetts, Kansas, Minnesota, and New Hampshire) were significantly higher than Wyoming in fourth grade math; 36 states scored lower, and 11 were not significantly different from Wyoming.

In eighth grade math, score estimates dropped two points from 284 scale points in 2003 to 282 this year. As a result, Wyoming placed 18th overall this year in eighth grade math, compared to 13th in 2003.

Eight states were significantly higher than Wyoming this year, 23 states scored lower, and 20 were not significantly different from Wyoming. As reported for reading, Wyoming's mathematics results for both grades were again (as in 2003) above national averages.

Overall, Wyoming's NAEP results tended to mirror national trends where the most significant gain in performance since 2003 was shown in fourth grade mathematics. Fourth grade national reading results increased one point from 2003, but eighth grade reading scores declined by one scale point. By contrast, Wyoming showed small gains in both fourth and eighth grade reading.

Wyoming also retained some of the smallest educational gaps between White and Hispanic students in the nation.

For example, estimated differences in White and Hispanic results for fourth grade math dropped from 14 scale points in 2003 to 11 points this year. Only three jurisdictions (Montana, Tennessee and the Department of Defense schools) showed smaller learning "gaps" in fourth grade mathematics.

In eighth grade reading, only four (Department of Defense, Missouri, Florida, and Iowa) had smaller gaps than Wyoming. The results are similar for Whites and Hispanics in eighth grade math.

The sole exception to this trend for Wyoming in 2005 is found in fourth grade reading, where group disparities between White and Hispanic students widened from 11 scale points in 2003 to 23 point this year. Reducing and maintaining learning gaps between diverse student groups is a key aspect of elementary and secondary education under No Child Left Behind.

In terms of gaps between Whites and Native Americans, data were not reportable this year for fourth grade Native American students. But at eighth grade, gaps between White and Native Americans narrowed by 3 scale points in mathematics, and by 8 points in reading from the last assessment in 2003.

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Wyoming also continued to fare favorably on NAEP this year in comparison to its neighboring states. For example, Wyoming's results in fourth grade math were significantly higher than in Utah, Colorado, Nebraska and Montana, and statistically the same as South Dakota and Idaho.

Similarly, eighth grade reading scores were significantly higher in Wyoming than in Idaho, Utah and Colorado and roughly equal to its other neighbor states. Only Montana and South Dakota had higher results in grade eight mathematics results when compared to Wyoming, and all states performed roughly the same in fourth grade reading.

One purpose of NAEP under No Child Left Behind is to serve as an external reference point when viewing a state's academic testing program. Results from this year's NAEP in Wyoming continued to track in roughly the same pattern as past WyCAS scores.

WyCAS was administered for the final time earlier this spring. Results for the state's new Proficiency Assessment for Wyoming Students or PAWS will be available next summer.

Importantly, PAWS will be distinctive in that it will focus upon measuring *individual student achievement* and providing teachers with instructional tools as its primary assessment goals. This is different from WyCAS which employed various sampling procedures to measure a school's, a district's, or—as in the case of NAEP—a state's progress towards educational goals.

Focusing on individual student achievement—and providing assessment results quickly to teachers so they can address learning gaps—will be critical to ensuring that each student meets the bar set by No Child Left Behind.

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