



# Wyoming Department of Education

## *PRESS RELEASE*

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### **2007 Wyoming NAEP writing scores released**

**Cheyenne** – State Superintendent of Public Instruction Dr. Jim McBride today announced Wyoming’s performance for eighth grade writing on the 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress, known as the Nation’s Report Card or NAEP. The state’s test scores increased from previous performance results in 2002 and 1998, and notably, Wyoming for the first time surpassed U.S. national averages for eighth grader writing scores:

Year	Number of states with reliably (i.e., statistically) Higher, Lower, or the Same average NAEP writing scores as Wyoming’s eighth graders:			Did Wyoming outperform the U.S. average NAEP writing score?
	Higher	Lower	Same	
1998	11	8	17	No, same
2002	11	17	14	No, same
2007	6	24	15	Yes

“Our writing results show that Wyoming’s educators and students are working hard in their classrooms to achieve success,” Dr. McBride said. “We will continue to focus on the fundamental core areas such as reading, writing and math that help students to succeed.”

“With the programs that we have developed in our schools, I believe we can continue to excel both locally and nationally in the core curriculum areas in which we measure,” he said.

NAEP testing is an integral part of the nation’s No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. Regular assessments in reading and mathematics are mandated under the legislation, and are administered to Wyoming fourth and eighth grade students every two years.

NAEP writing assessments, by contrast, are not mandated under NCLB; instead, participation in writing is conducted on a voluntary basis in each state.

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Besides Wyoming, 45 other states participated in the NAEP writing assessment during 2007, compared to 42 and 36 states in the previous assessment years 2002 and 1998 respectively. Those states or jurisdictions not participating in the 2007 NAEP writing assessment include Alaska, Maryland, Nebraska, Oregon, South Dakota, and the District of Columbia.

Wyoming's NAEP writing scores in eighth grade increased from the previous assessment in 2002. The estimated average score for Wyoming rose seven scale points to 158 during 2007, as compared to 151 in 2002. Wyoming's estimated average scale score during the 1998 writing assessment was 148.

That indicates a nine-point scale score increase during the 1998 through 2007 period. In terms of achievement results and the portion of students that were writing at or above NAEP's *Basic* achievement level, only two jurisdictions during 2007 (the Department of Defense schools and New Jersey) had a statistically higher percentage of eighth graders than Wyoming.

Overall, Wyoming's increase in NAEP writing results during 2007 tended to mirror writing results and trends nationally. The national average in writing scores increased between 2002 and 2007 by two scale score points in eighth grade.

Of 39 states participating in both the 2007 and 2002 NAEP writing assessments, increases in scores occurred in 20 states, 18 states showed no significant change from their 2002 results, and results declined in one state from those reported during 2002.

Of 34 states participating in both the 2007 and 1998 NAEP writing assessments, increases occurred in 29 out of 34 states; only five states showed no change between 1998 and 2007, and no state showed a decrease in the writing average scale score estimate.

Wyoming also retained one of the smallest writing skills gaps reported nationally between White and Hispanic students during 2007. Specifically, the differences in average writing scores between Wyoming white and Hispanic eighth graders was an estimated 11 scale score points. Only one jurisdiction in 2007 (the Department of Defense schools) reported a slimmer difference in White/Hispanic writing skills for eighth graders—exactly the same outcome pattern as shown during the 2002 writing assessment.

The magnitude or size of “gaps” between white and non-white students (i.e., Hispanic and American Indian students) in NAEP writing results for Wyoming, however, remained statistically unchanged—that is, neither narrowing nor widening—from previous NAEP writing scores in 2002 and 1998. Note that Wyoming's small portion of Black or Asian eighth graders prohibit NAEP reporting of writing results for these student groups.

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Further, gaps in student writing performance based upon gender (Wyoming girls outperform boys) or family income as indicated by student eligibility for the National School Lunch Program—also remain unchanged from the prior reporting periods.

“Clearly, disparities in student group scores remain a key concerns for Wyoming as reducing achievement gaps is a central aim of elementary and secondary education under No Child Left Behind,” Dr. McBride said.

Wyoming continued to fare favorably in NAEP performance in comparison to its neighboring states. Wyoming had higher average scale scores in eighth grade writing than Idaho, North Dakota and Utah—and no neighboring state reported a statistically higher average writing scale score than Wyoming eighth graders. As noted above, Nebraska and South Dakota did not participate in the 2007 NAEP writing assessment.

One purpose of NAEP under No Child Left Behind is to serve as an external reference or a “second look” and external point of comparison for understanding a state’s academic testing programs and educational progress.

This year’s NAEP results provide an initial opportunity to directly compare results on the national writing assessment of Wyoming students to the state’s Proficiency Assessments for Wyoming Students or PAWS, since its initial deployment in the Spring of 2006.

The percentage of students in 2007 meeting Wyoming’s grade level academic standards in writing as measured by PAWS’ statewide census of 6,591 eighth graders was 79.4 percent. This is in comparison to 90.5 percent of students scoring at or above grade level on the NAEP writing assessment (as based upon a NAEP sampling of 1,838 Wyoming eighth graders during 2007).

When making these types of comparisons, it’s critical to note that PAWS is distinctive from NAEP because its main assessment purpose centers on measuring *individual student achievement* and providing instructional advice to teachers. NAEP, on the other hand, employs various sampling procedures to track a whole state’s educational progress and, in so doing, provides a common metric for making between-state or 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 by the No Child Left Behind legislation. For more information regarding NAEP in Wyoming, please visit <http://www.k12.wy.us/SAA/NAEP.asp>

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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 Tim Lockwood at (307) 777-6386 or by e-mail at [tlockw@educ.state.wy.us](mailto:tlockw@educ.state.wy.us)*

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