



NEWS RELEASE

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Several Urban Districts Post Gains But Most Score Below Nation in Nation's Report Card for Reading *18 School Systems Part of the NAEP Trial Urban District Assessment*

(ATLANTA) – Several of the 18 participating U.S. urban school districts produced reading scores that exceeded the average for large cities, and a few posted gains over their scores in previous years, according to the results of a special survey by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as “The Nation’s Report Card.” However, overall scores for fourth and eighth graders in most of these districts continue to lag behind their peers nationwide.

The NAEP Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA) tested representative samples of between 800 and 2,400 fourth and eighth grade students in each of the 18 large school districts to gauge performance in reading. Overall scores in 2009 were lower for most participating districts when compared to the national average. The nation showed a one-point gain at grade 8 but no change in grade 4 from 2007. However, some districts showed progress on TUDA at each grade level. NAEP is administered and analyzed by the National Center for Education Statistics.

At grade 4, scores for 2009 increased for students in 4 districts—Boston, the District of Columbia, Houston, and New York City—compared to 2007. Moreover, scores were higher in 2009 than in 2002 for 5 districts—Atlanta, Chicago, the District of Columbia, Los Angeles, and New York City. At grade 8, Atlanta and Los Angeles were the only two districts that showed reading gains in 2009 compared to 2007 and 2002, the first assessment year of TUDA.

“Despite promising gains in some districts, clearly the ongoing challenge in urban education is great,” said David Driscoll, Chairman of the National Assessment Governing Board, the independent, bipartisan body that sets policy for NAEP. “The results underscore the importance of reliable measures like NAEP to spotlight education gaps while also highlighting school districts that have produced solid results.”

NAEP is the only nationally representative measure of what American students know and can do. NAEP TUDA is a voluntary program that assesses the educational progress of large, urban school districts with a majority of either non-White or low-income students. Participation in NAEP TUDA has grown from 6 districts in 2002 to 18 school districts in 14 states and the District of Columbia in 2009. The Governing Board selects from among urban districts that volunteer to participate.

The 11 districts that participated in both 2007 and 2009 are Atlanta Public Schools, Austin Independent School District, Boston Public Schools, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, Chicago Public Schools, Cleveland Metropolitan School District, District of Columbia Public Schools, Houston Independent School District, Los Angeles Unified School District, New York City Department of Education, and San Diego Unified School District.

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Districts added in 2009 are Baltimore City Public Schools, Detroit Public Schools, Fresno Unified School District, Jefferson County Public Schools (Louisville, KY) Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Milwaukee Public Schools, and School District of Philadelphia.

NAEP TUDA results compare the 18 districts not only to each other and the nation, but also to large cities (cities with a population of 250,000 or more that may or may not have a TUDA district). Fourth graders in 6 districts—Austin, Boston, Charlotte, Jefferson County, Miami-Dade, and New York City—scored higher than fourth graders in large cities overall. In 5 districts—Austin, Boston, Charlotte Jefferson County, and Miami-Dade—eighth grade scores were higher than those of large cities overall.

Differences in average NAEP scores between TUDA districts and large cities as a whole sometimes varied among student groups. Among the 9 districts where average scores were lower than the scores for large cities at grade 4, only Detroit and Philadelphia showed lower scores for all categories of students by race/ethnicity and eligibility for free/reduced-price school lunch with samples large enough to report results, for example. And among the 5 districts where overall scores were higher than the average score for large cities at both grades, Charlotte was the only district to have higher scores for White, Black, and Hispanic students and for lower-income students at grade 4.

It should be noted that when comparing the urban districts to the nation, demographic characteristics in the TUDA districts are often different from those in many other school systems in the country. The percentage of TUDA eighth-grade students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch ranges from 46 percent in Charlotte to 100 percent in Cleveland. By contrast, in the nation, it is 43 percent at grade 8 and 47 percent at grade 4. In addition, the percentage of English language learners (ELL) in large cities for grade 4 is twice as high—18 percent—as in the nation, and it ranges within the TUDA districts from 41 percent in Los Angeles to just 1 percent in Atlanta, Baltimore City, and Jefferson County, KY.

Like the results of the NAEP Reading Report Card released in March, the results of TUDA are reported as average scores on a 0 to 500 scale, and as percentages of students performing at or above three achievement levels: *Basic*, *Proficient*, or *Advanced*. The total number of districts in TUDA will grow to 21 in 2011 as 3 more jurisdictions have agreed to participate—Dallas Independent School District, Hillsborough County (FL.) Public Schools (including Tampa), and Albuquerque (NM) Public Schools. The Governing Board late last year approved the inclusion of these districts.

The 2009 Reading Assessment is based on a new framework, developed by the Governing Board, which includes several changes aimed at improving the way NAEP measures reading comprehension. Informed by the latest scientific research and extensive input from educational experts and others, the new framework provides a more well-defined measure of reading comprehension. It requires using more high-quality literature and a broader range of text types to challenge students; including poetry in grades 4, 8, and 12; and assessing vocabulary in a new way that shows students understand the meaning of words as used in the passage.

The full Reading 2009 TUDA Report Card is available at <http://nationsreportcard.gov>.

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The National Assessment Governing Board is an independent, bipartisan board whose members include governors, state legislators, local and state school officials, educators, business representatives, and members of the general public. Congress created the 26-member Governing Board in 1988 to oversee and set policy for NAEP.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is the only nationally representative, continuing evaluation of the condition of education in the United States. It has served as a national yardstick of student achievement since 1969. Through The Nation's Report Card, NAEP informs the public about what America's students know and can do in various subject areas, and compares achievement between states, large urban districts, and various student demographic groups.