

News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DPI-NR 2011-10 B

Tuesday, January 25, 2011

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Overall state results on NAEP science exceed national average

MADISON — Science scores for Wisconsin students exceeded the national average on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) science assessment, administered between January and March of 2009.

The state’s scale scores on the assessments were 157 at both fourth and eighth grades, eight points higher than the national scale scores of 149 for both grades. In state-by-state comparisons, Wisconsin’s results at fourth grade were higher than those in 27 states, not significantly different from those in 12 states, and lower than seven states. At eighth grade, Wisconsin’s results were higher than 27 states, not significantly different than 14 states, and lower than five states.

“This national assessment shows solid science achievement overall for Wisconsin students,” said State Superintendent Tony Evers. “But, it is not enough to be above average, especially when this, and other assessments, show major gaps in student achievement. We must pursue proven strategies to improve teaching and learning to regain our position among the top-achieving states in the nation.”

When looking at NAEP results for student subgroups, Wisconsin had some bright spots. The gap between Hispanic and white fourth-graders in the state, though large, was among the lowest in the nation, with 26 points separating the two student groups compared

2009 NAEP Science

Average Scale Scores for Public School Participants

| | Grade 4 | | Grade 8 | |
|----------------------------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| | State | Nation | State | Nation |
| Overall | 157* | 149 | 157* | 149 |
| African-American | 121 | 127* | 120 | 125* |
| American Indian | 145 | 137 | ‡ | 138 |
| Asian | 153 | 160 | 152 | 159 |
| Hispanic | 138* | 130 | 134 | 131 |
| White | 164* | 162 | 165* | 161 |
| Females | 156* | 148 | 155* | 147 |
| Males | 157* | 149 | 160* | 151 |
| Disadvantaged | 141* | 134 | 139* | 133 |
| Not Disadvantaged | 166* | 163 | 166* | 161 |
| Students with Disabilities | 134* | 129 | 130* | 122 |
| Non-disabled | 160* | 151 | 161* | 152 |
| English-Language Learners | 131* | 114 | 128* | 103 |
| Non-ELL | 158* | 153 | 159* | 151 |

‡ Sample size insufficient to permit a reliable estimate.

* Statistically higher (p<.05) within the same reporting group when comparing Wisconsin and national public students for same grade and year. No (*) between groups means the scores are not statistically different.

(more)

to a 32-point gap nationally. At fourth grade, both student groups also had achievement that was above the national average. Achievement for other subgroups of students in Wisconsin — economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and English-language learners — were higher than their peers nationally. Achievement by Wisconsin’s American Indian and Asian students was not statistically different than the national average. Wisconsin’s African-American students had achievement that was below the national average for both tested grades, and at eighth grade, the gap between black and white students was the highest in the nation.

Improving student achievement is central to establishment of the state’s Response to Intervention (RtI) center. The center already has trained 500 schools to use RtI strategies to act early to support students who need assistance and challenge those who are ready for the next level. The state also is implementing the Common Core State Standards for mathematics and English language arts and is working on the national effort to develop rigorous science standards. These reforms, along with developing better assessments, continuing the Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) program, and working on educator effectiveness models that include mentoring and professional development, represent core investments in teaching and learning that are the foundation for better student achievement statewide. And, a recent grant from the GE Foundation will target professional development in science and mathematics in Milwaukee Public Schools.

“Rigorous curriculum taught by quality educators who have support from parents and the community will speed our progress in closing achievement gaps,” Evers stressed. “We must work together. We owe it to our children to make sure they gain the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in the workforce or further education.”

The NAEP science assessments were given to a sample of Wisconsin public school students: 3,800 in 240 schools at fourth grade and 3,512 in 167 schools at eighth grade. The assessments were based on a new science framework, thus NAEP is not making comparisons to previous science assessment results. Both the fourth- and eighth-grade assessments included multiple-choice questions and questions that required students to compose a written answer. At fourth grade the assessment consisted of 143 questions. The eighth-grade assessment had 162 questions. Each student took a portion of their grade-level exam. All 50 states and jurisdictions participated in the NAEP science assessment, though only 46 states and the Department of Defense Schools had sufficient participation to report results.

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NOTE: This news release is available electronically at http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpinr2011_10.pdf. Additional information about the National Assessment of Education Progress is available at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/>.