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**STATEMENT ON THE NATION'S REPORT CARD:
*NAEP 2009 Mathematics Trial Urban District Assessment***

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The Mathematics 2009 Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA) results were generally flat for most of the trial urban districts since 2007. Nonetheless, there is much to admire about the performance of the districts that serve our neediest youngsters.

Boston and the District of Columbia at grade 4 and Austin and San Diego at grade 8 showed impressive gains from 2007 to 2009. And it is important to note that no districts lost ground during this period, in many places characterized by the beginnings of financial instability.

In general, mathematics achievement trends at grades 4 and 8 have been very positive since 2003. During this period, five of 10 TUDA districts scored double-digit gains at each grade level.

Additionally, results compared to the large cities average are stronger than they appear. At grade 4, New York and Houston scored higher than the large cities average despite serving a significantly greater number of needy students. Houston also outscored the large cities at grade 8, and New York's score was comparable. Charlotte scored above the national average at grade 4, and Austin did so at grade 8.

Looking at the demographics in the report, 13 of the 18 TUDA districts have larger proportions of students eligible for the national school lunch program than the large cities average at both grade levels, and four TUDA districts have substantially larger numbers of English language learners.

For years, it was unfortunately expected that school leaders in urban districts would turn over every few years. This leadership carousel usually led to fruitless searches for

instructional panaceas and quick fixes that, not surprisingly, never worked. That has changed. Now many districts have leaders who are committed to the tougher, long-term challenge of changing the culture and systems of districts to focus on high expectations and high performance.

Producing consistently good teaching, strong school leadership, wise use of data and a culture of “no excuses” for poor performance takes years in a large system. But it has certainly paid off. Over time, large districts with stable leadership, such as Boston, Chicago, and New York, have shown improvement since 2003 in student performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Newer leaders in districts like Washington, D.C.; Charlotte; Philadelphia; and Fresno understand that they are on a five- to seven-year journey to create systematic change that has the capacity to produce sustained high performance.

Over the past decade urban districts have had the courage to embrace NAEP as a vehicle to inform their constituents, their states, and the nation of their needs and progress. My hat is off to Mike Casserly and the Council of the Great City Schools for their leadership in spearheading this effort. The group of TUDA districts has grown from 11 in 2007 to 18 in 2009 and will expand to 21 in 2011. Many more districts are on a waiting list to join TUDA, and many of the current TUDA districts are interested in adding international comparisons to the existing NAEP data if and when funding becomes available.

As the Superintendent in Fresno recently told me, “Even here in the Central Valley of California, our economic competition is increasingly coming from other nations—and we need good data on where we stand.”