



NEWS RELEASE

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High School Students Show No Progress In Reading, According To The Nation's Report Card™

12th-Grade Results at Odds With Data Showing That High School Graduates Are Taking More Advanced Courses and Earning Higher Grade Point Averages

WASHINGTON (February 22, 2006) – While, on average, high school graduates are taking more challenging courses and earning higher grades during their high school years, 12th-graders failed to produce gains on the 2005 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), according to The Nation's Report Card™.

Together, two reports released today – *The Nation's Report Card: 12th-Grade Reading and Mathematics 2005* and *The Nation's Report Card: America's High School Graduates* – present a mixed picture of educational achievement for high schoolers in the U.S.

On one hand, a review of the high school transcripts of 2005 graduates indicates that 68 percent completed at least a standard curriculum, up from 59 percent in 2000, and that the overall grade point average was about one-third of a letter grade higher than in 1990.

However, the average 12th-grade reading score was the lowest since 1992, but not significantly different from 2002. In mathematics, which saw the introduction of a new assessment in 2005 that is not comparable to previous versions, less than one-quarter (23 percent) of 12th-graders scored at or above the *Proficient* level.

Previously released data from *The Nation's Report Card: Science 2005* showed a similar trend for 12th-graders, with average scores decreasing since 1996 but not significantly different from results in 2000.

(more)

“On the surface, these results provide little comfort and seem to confirm the general concern about the performance of America’s high school students,” said Darvin M. Winick, chairman of the National Assessment Governing Board, which oversees and sets policy for NAEP. “The findings also suggest that we need to know much more about the level of rigor associated with the courses that high school students are taking.”

Overall, the percentage of 12th-grade students performing at or above the *Basic* level in reading has fallen from 80 percent to 73 percent since 1992, with the percentage performing at or above *Proficient* declining from 40 to 35 percent during the same time. In 2005, 61 percent of high school seniors performed at or above *Basic* in math, and 23 percent performed at or above *Proficient*.

Achievement differences also persist among racial/ethnic student groups. From 1992-2005, reading score gaps between White students and their Black and Hispanic counterparts was unchanged. During that time, the Hispanic student population doubled, while their scores showed no significant change. In contrast, average reading scores for both White students and Black students have dropped significantly since 1992. In math, the average score for White students in 2005 was 31 points higher than for Black students and 24 points higher than for Hispanic students.

The 2005 NAEP assessments in reading and math were administered by the National Center for Education Statistics to a nationally representative sample of over 21,000 high school seniors in 900 schools. Information from high school transcripts was also collected for 26,000 graduates from about 640 public schools and 80 private schools. The transcript study does not contain information about dropouts and other 12th-graders who did not graduate at the end of the 2004-05 school year.

Copies of *The Nation's Report Card: 12th-Grade Reading and Mathematics 2005* and *The Nation's Report Card: America's High School Graduates*, and additional data from the 2005 12th-grade assessments, are available online at <http://nationsreportcard.gov>.

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

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 set policy for NAEP.