



NEWS RELEASE

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A decade of progress for urban districts in mathematics and reading

But most TUDA scores for fourth- and eighth-grade students lower than the nation

WASHINGTON—Ten years after The Nation’s Report Card began measuring progress in America’s urban school districts, the 2013 Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA) shows that most districts that participated in the first reading or math assessments scored higher this year at both grades 4 and 8, and none of the participating districts scored lower than in the first testing year. The District of Columbia Public Schools was the only one of the 21 districts that participated this year to show gains in both mathematics and reading at both grades compared with 2011. In Los Angeles, scores improved in reading at both grades, and in mathematics at grade 4.

The Nation’s Report Card: 2013 Mathematics and Reading—Trial Urban District Assessment, reports the achievement of public school students in 21 urban districts on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). In addition to providing national and state-level results for context, the urban district assessment includes findings for the nation’s large cities (based on the combined scores of all cities in the nation with populations of 250,000 or more—including the participating districts). Some 30 percent of America’s students—about 15 million in all—attend schools in urban districts, including those not participating in TUDA. There is a great deal of racial and ethnic diversity throughout the districts, where most of these students are eligible for free and reduced-price lunches.

“Anyone interested in the state of our nation’s education should start by looking at progress in these urban districts, which face a concentration of the challenges all schools grapple with to some degree,” said David P. Driscoll, chair of the National Assessment Governing Board, which sets policy for NAEP. “By volunteering to be part of TUDA, these districts gain insights and data they can use to focus their academic efforts.”

Average reading and mathematics scores for fourth- and eighth-grade students in most TUDA districts, even those that have improved, were lower than the average scores for students in their home states and the nation. When participating urban districts are compared with large cities nationally, more districts score lower than their city peers in reading than in math. For example, in grade 4 math, nine districts scored lower than the average for large cities. In grade 4 reading, 12 districts scored lower than large cities nationally.

The 2013 TUDA results are based on representative samples of 1,100 to 2,300 public school students at grade 4 and 900 to 2,100 public school students at grade 8 in each participating urban district. NAEP attempts to include in its assessments a highly representative sampling of

students, and counts as a factor the percentage of participating students who have disabilities or are English language learners. The District of Columbia Public Schools, for example, at both grades in math, and at fourth grade in reading, included more than 85 percent of its students with disabilities and those learning English—a percentage that exceeds the standard set by the Governing Board as being representative.

Notable progress in closing gaps in achievement in urban districts includes:

- Black, Hispanic and white students in Los Angeles scored higher in 2013 than in 2011 in mathematics at grade 4.
- Black, Hispanic and white students in the District of Columbia scored higher in 2013 than in 2011 in reading at grade 8.
- Students who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches increased their average scores from 2011 to 2013 in at least one subject and grade combination in eight districts (Atlanta; Baltimore City; Charlotte, N.C.; Chicago; Dallas; D.C.; Fresno, Calif.; and Los Angeles).

“Every district has its own story, but as a whole over the last 10 years all of the districts are improving,” Driscoll said. “In general, though, these scores are too low, and that should concern everyone. TUDA matters because these school systems need our attention more than ever before.”

Scores fall on a 0-500 scale, and are divided into achievement levels described as *Basic* (partial mastery of the knowledge and skills needed at that grade), *Proficient* (solid academic performance) and *Advanced* (superior work). The National Center for Education Statistics, in partnership with the Governing Board and Council of the Great City Schools, created TUDA in 2002 to support the improvement of student achievement in the nation’s large urban districts. The TUDA measures educational progress within participating large urban districts. Reading results were first reported for six urban districts in 2002, and mathematics results were first reported in 2003 for 10 districts. Since 2002, urban districts have been added, culminating in the 21 districts that participated in both 2011 and 2013.

This report card is the second to be published in an interactive online report that allows searches using multiple variables within districts and for comparison against other regions. The “district profiles” pages include, for example, the performance gaps by race/ethnicity, gender, and eligibility status for the National School Lunch Program. It also includes classroom context, such as how much time teachers spend teaching a subject compared with the corresponding information at the state and national levels. The report [website](#) also features a video to help people understand the multiple ways the new site allows searches for hundreds of findings.

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The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is a congressionally authorized project sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education. The National Center for Education Statistics, within the Institute of Education Sciences, administers NAEP. The Commissioner of Education Statistics is responsible by law for carrying out the NAEP project.

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.