

**National Assessment of Educational Progress**  
**The Nation's Report Card: Mega-States**

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Today, we release our new report, *Mega-States*, which examines the educational performance of students in the five most heavily populated states. The Mega-States are California, Florida, Illinois, New York, and Texas. Data are from the NAEP assessments in reading, mathematics, and science from 1990 to 2011.

We focused on these five states because they enroll 18.7 million public school students—about 40 percent of the nation's total. These students attend a third of the nation's public schools. The K-12 student populations of these states range from 2.1 million in Illinois to 6.3 million in California. These are the only five states with a student population over 2 million.

In addition to having large overall student populations, these states all have large numbers of Black, Hispanic, and Asian students. Much of the diversity of the nation's student population is contained in these states.

All five of these states have very large concentrations of students in urban areas. In fact, 8 of the 10 most heavily populated cities in the nation are in these states.

Over the past 20 years, the nation has experienced large changes in the composition of our student population, as the percentage of White students has declined substantially while the percentage of Hispanic students has tripled in size. Nationally, the proportion of eighth grade White students fell from 73 percent to 54 percent, while the proportion of Hispanic students rose from 7 percent to 23 percent. Much of this change has occurred in the five Mega-States.

Two of the Mega-States have grade 8 public school populations that are majority Hispanic—California and Texas. In only two of the states do White students constitute a majority—Illinois and New York—and both by the slim margin of 51 percent.

The heavy concentration of Hispanic students in the Mega-States contributes to their large number of English language learners—fully 55 percent of all ELL students are located in these five states. California alone has more than a quarter of these students.

Nationwide, about 1 percent of fourth-graders were excluded in the 2011 reading assessment because of their limited English ability, and this is true for four of the five Mega-States as well. In Texas, the ELL exclusion rate was 5 percent.

Most of the Mega-States participated in NAEP during the 1990s. In most cases, they first participated in 1992 for grade 4 reading and mathematics, 1998 for grade 8 reading, and 1990 for grade 8 mathematics. Participation was voluntary in the early assessments, and we have results for Illinois for the first assessment in grade 8 mathematics only. For the other grade/subject combinations, Illinois' first year of participation occurred in 2000 or 2003.

All NAEP results reported here are based on samples, which means that there is a margin of error associated with each score or percentage. Therefore, in the report we only identify those differences in scores or percentages that meet our standard for statistical significance. For the most part, the report compares the Mega-States' performance with that of the nation. When a Mega-State has a score higher, or lower, than the remaining four Mega-States, we note that as well.

We report NAEP results as scale scores and as percentages of students performing at or above the *Proficient* achievement level, as defined by the National Assessment Governing Board. Reading scores are reported on a scale of 0 to 500.

There were increases in reading performance for the nation and some of the Mega-States at grades 4 and 8. Grade 4 reading scores increased from 1992 to 2011 for the nation and four states. The 16-point increase recorded by Florida was larger than the 5-point increase nationally and also larger than the increases recorded by California, New York, and Texas. In Illinois, where the comparison only goes back to 2003, there was no significant change.

At grade 8, the average score increased nationally from 1998 to 2011. The average score increased for Florida as well, but did not change significantly in the remaining four states. The Florida increase was larger than the increase nationally.

If we look at the performance of specific student populations in the five Mega-States and compare them to the performance of the same student groups nationally, we get a more detailed picture of student performance. For example, examining the performance of 4<sup>th</sup> grade students by race/ethnicity, Black students in California increased their average reading score by 28 points from 1992 to 2011, a larger increase than Black students achieved nationally.

In Florida, score increases for both Black and White students were larger than the national increases, comparing 1992 with 2011. In addition, both students with disabilities and those from lower-income families, as indicated by eligibility for the National School Lunch Program, had larger score increases than their peers nationally from 2003 to 2011.

(We use 2003 as the comparison year for these groups because our data only go back that far).

In New York, Hispanic 4<sup>th</sup>-grade students increased their score by 25 points from 1992 to 2011, larger than the national increase for Hispanic students over the same time period.

At grade 8, Black students in Florida increased their average score by 12 points from 1998 to 2011, exceeding the national increase. Also in Florida, students with disabilities had a larger score increase than their peers nationally, again comparing 2003 with 2011.

The Mega-States report also provides the percentages of students at or above the *Proficient* achievement level for selected student groups. The National Assessment Governing Board defines *Proficient* as competency over challenging subject matter. In 2011, 42 percent of grade 4 White students nationally were at or above *Proficient*. In Florida, the percentage was 48 percent, larger than the national percentage. Sixteen percent of Black students were at or above *Proficient* nationally. The percentage did not differ significantly from any of the five Mega-States. Eighteen percent of Hispanic students were at or above *Proficient* nationally. In California, the percentage was 12 percent, lower than the nation and any of the other four states, while in Florida it was 30 percent, higher than the nation and any of the other four states.

Turning to grade 8, nationally, 18 percent of students from lower-income families were at or above *Proficient*. In California, 13 percent were at or above *Proficient*, lower than the nation, while in New York 24 percent were at or above *Proficient*, higher than the nation.

Forty-four percent of grade 8 students from higher-income families nationally were at or above *Proficient*. For California, the percentage was 36 percent, lower than the nation, and for Illinois 48 percent, higher than the nation.

Turning to mathematics, grade 4 mathematics scores increased for the nation and for four Mega-States from 1992 to 2011. The 26-point increase for Florida was larger than the national increase of 22 points.

At grade 8, scores increased from 1990 to 2011 both nationally and for all the Mega-States. The 32-point increase for Texas was larger than the 21-point increase nationally.

In mathematics, some student groups in the Mega-States achieved larger increases than their peers nationally. In California at grade 4, both Black and White students showed larger increases than their peers nationally. In Florida, the same was true for White students only. Also in Florida, students with disabilities had larger score increases than their peers did nationally from 2003 to 2011.

At grade 8, students with disabilities in Florida had larger score increases than their peers did nationally. In Texas at grade 8, White, Black, and Hispanic students all achieved larger increases than their peers nationally from 1990 to 2011. This was also true in

Texas for both students from low-income families and students with disabilities from 2003 to 2011.

Considering the achievement level results, 24 percent of grade 4 students from lower-income families were at or above *Proficient* nationally. In California, 18 percent were at or above *Proficient*, lower than the nation, and in Illinois 20 percent were at or above *Proficient*, also lower than the nation. In Texas 28 percent were at or above *Proficient*, higher than the nation

Fifty-seven percent of the nation's higher-income students were at or above *Proficient*. In New York, 49 percent of higher-income students were at or above *Proficient*, lower than the national percentage.

At grade 8 in 2011, 43 percent of White students were at or above *Proficient* nationally. In Florida, the percentage was 37 percent, lower than the nation, and in Texas, 58 percent, higher than the nation.

Thirteen percent of Black students were at or above *Proficient* nationally. The percentage in Texas, 21 percent, was larger than the national percentage.

Twenty percent of Hispanic students were at or above *Proficient* nationally. In California and New York, the percentage was 13 percent, lower than the nation, while in Texas it was 31 percent, higher than the nation.

The report also presents results for science, using data from 2009 for grade 4 and 2009 and 2011 for grade 8.

At grade 4 in 2009, California's average score of 136 on a 300-point scale was lower than the national score of 149 and lower than those of the other Mega-States.

In 2011 at grade 8, the average score for Texas of 153 was higher than the nation (151) and the other four Mega-States. The 2011 scores for the other four Mega-States were below the nation, and California's score was below those of the other four Mega-States as well.

In 2009 at grade 8, only the scores for California and Florida differed from the national score, and both were lower. California's score was also lower than the other four Mega-States.

Fifty-three percent of grade 4 White students in Texas scored at or above *Proficient* in science in 2009, higher than the nation. The percentages of Black students in Texas (18 percent) and Hispanic students in Florida (23 percent) at or above *Proficient* were higher than in the nation and in the other Mega-States. Hispanic students in Texas had a higher percentage at or above *Proficient* (16 percent) than their peers nationally, while those in California had a lower percentage (8 percent).

Sixteen percent of grade 8 students from lower-income families were at or above *Proficient* nationally in 2011. In California and Illinois, 10 percent were at or above

*Proficient*, lower than the nation, while in Texas 20 percent were at or above *Proficient*, higher than the nation.

Forty-four percent of higher-income 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students nationally were at or above *Proficient*. For California, the percentage was 38 percent, lower than the nation. In Texas, it was 50 percent, higher than the nation.

In sum, the report highlights the results for each of the five Mega-States across all three subjects.

For California, scores were lower than the nation for grades 4 and 8 reading, mathematics, and science. However, Black students in California had larger score increases over time than Black students nationally at grade 4 for both reading and mathematics, compared to the first assessments in these subjects.

In Florida, scores were higher than the nation for grade 4 reading. They were lower for grade 8 mathematics and science. There were higher percentages of Hispanic students at or above *Proficient* than the nation in all three subjects.

For Illinois, the average reading score for grade 8 in 2011 was higher than the national average score. In grade 8 science, Illinois scored lower than the nation. In addition, there was a higher percentage of Hispanic students at or above *Proficient* than for the nation in grade 8 reading.

For New York, the grade 4 reading score was higher than the nation, while average scores for grade 4 mathematics and grade 8 mathematics and science were lower than the nation. Students from lower-income families—those eligible for the National School Lunch Program—had higher percentages at or above *Proficient* than the nation for reading for both grades 4 and 8.

In Texas, overall average scores were higher than the nation in grade 8 mathematics and science, and lower in grade 8 reading. Score increases were higher than for the nation in grade 8 mathematics for Black, Hispanic, and White students, as well as for lower-income students.

The report, *Mega-States*, provides all of this information and much more. In addition, the website (<http://nationsreportcard.gov>) offers extensive information on the performance of students, access to released assessment questions through NAEP's Questions Center (<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/itmrlsx>), and the NAEP Data Explorer, our online data-analysis tool (<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/naepdata>).

In conclusion, we would like to offer our sincere thanks to all the students, teachers, and schools who participated in these assessments.