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**STATEMENT ON THE NATION'S REPORT CARD**  
*Mega-States: An Analysis of Student Performance in the Five  
Most Heavily Populated States in the Nation*

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I appreciate Illinois' being given the opportunity to discuss the performance of our students on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). We are pleased to present some highlights of our students' achievement today. I would like to recognize State Superintendent Chris Koch and Deputy Superintendent Susie Morrison for their leadership in shaping the educational reform agenda for Illinois. Without their vision and dedication we would not be making the progress that we will discuss today. Additionally, it is important to note the level of dedication from Illinois educators who work tirelessly to support our students.

I would like to spotlight our work with Hispanic students in the state. We have seen a sharp rise in the number of Illinois schoolchildren who are Hispanic. The NAEP report indicates a threefold increase from 1990 to 2011. The increase more recently is also significant, from approximately 138,000 students in 2006 to approximately 218,000 in 2012.

With this rise in student population, the educators in Illinois have worked to develop new programs, adjust existing programs, and continually improve the support that we provide for those students within the Hispanic population who are English language learners.

As the NAEP data indicate, a higher percentage of Hispanic students are reading at or above the *Proficient* level than the national average at the eighth-grade level. This high level of achievement is also evident in the statewide achievement test, the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT), which finds that 80 percent of Hispanic students in the eighth grade scored at or above the proficient level in reading. This level of achievement has been evinced in the last several years of ISAT data.

We believe that several factors are contributing to this increase in reading achievement. As a member of the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment consortium since 2006, Illinois has assessed our English language learners (ELL) on science and social science knowledge. The

expectation of being assessed in these areas has led to instructional emphasis on reading in the sciences and social sciences. Additionally, we recently increased the level of English language proficiency necessary to be exited from support services. This adjustment of the transition criterion has allowed students to receive support for a longer period of time, if need be. The additional support may be a factor in ELL students' performance on the reading assessment.

We are pleased with the progress our students are making on large-scale assessments. We will continue to work on further improvements so that all students are achieving at high levels.