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Virginia Outscores Nation in Reading & Math *Achievement in Virginia Steady; Most States See Declines*

RICHMOND, Va. — Virginia fourth graders outperformed their nationwide peers in reading and mathematics by significant margins in both subjects on the latest National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The national reading and mathematics assessments are taken every two years by representative samples of fourth- and eighth-grade students in each state and nationwide.

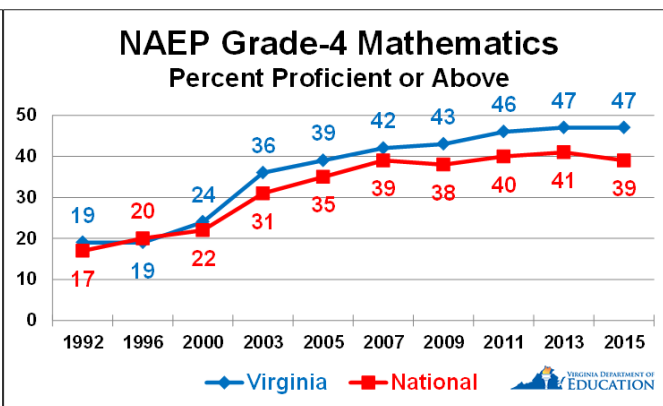
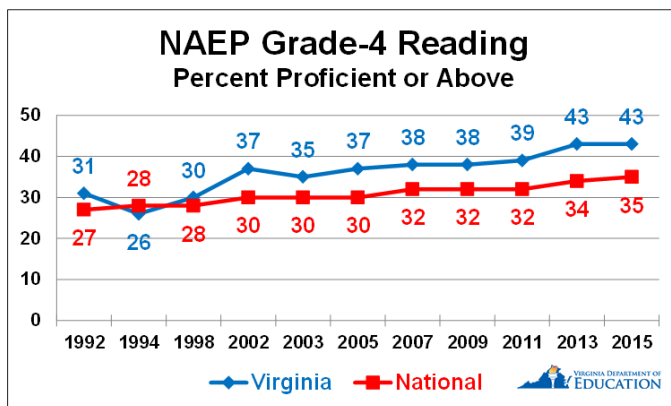
Forty-three percent of the commonwealth’s grade-4 students met or exceeded the national reading test’s rigorous standard for proficiency, with 14 percent demonstrating advanced reading skills. Only students in Massachusetts performed at a statistically higher level in fourth-grade reading.

In mathematics, 47 percent of Virginia fourth graders achieved at or above the proficient level, with 10 percent earning advanced scores. Only fourth graders in Massachusetts and Minnesota performed at a statistically higher level.

The national testing program defines proficiency as “solid academic performance ... over challenging subject matter, including subject-matter knowledge, application of such knowledge to real-world situations, and analytical skills appropriate to the subject matter.”

Although the performance of Virginia fourth graders on the 2015 NAEP was similar to 2013, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) says Virginia fourth graders have made statistically significant gains in both reading and mathematics since 2007.

“Supporting these positive long-term trends are thousands of teachers, principals and other educators in the commonwealth’s elementary schools who challenge their students every day to meet Virginia’s high expectations,” Superintendent of Public Instruction Steven R. Staples said.



Nationwide, 35 percent of fourth-grade public school students demonstrated reading skills at or above the proficient level, with eight percent achieving advanced scores.

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Thirty-nine percent of the nation’s grade-4 public school students demonstrated achievement at or above the proficient level in mathematics, with seven percent achieving advanced scores.

There were no changes in the achievement gaps in fourth-grade reading between white students and black and Hispanic students. Fifty-two percent of white Virginia fourth graders performed at or above the proficient level, compared with 19 percent of blacks, and 32 percent of Hispanics.

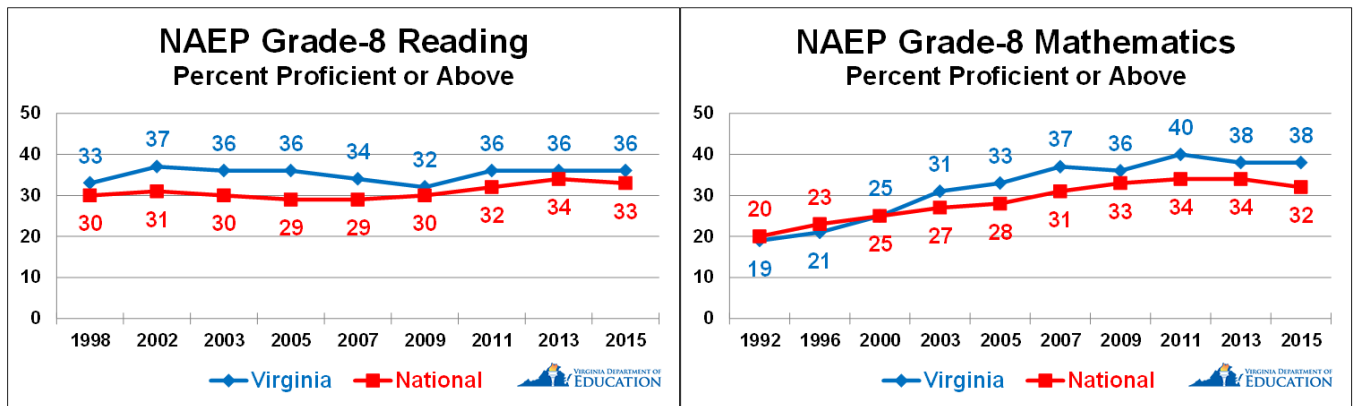
Achievement gaps in grade-4 mathematics also were unchanged. Fifty-seven percent of white Virginia fourth graders earned proficient or advanced scores, compared with 25 percent of blacks, and 29 percent of Hispanics.

“While the overall trend lines are positive, these persistent and significant gaps are a reminder of the importance of the commonwealth’s efforts to improve instruction and raise achievement in schools challenged by poverty and other impediments to learning,” Secretary of Education Anne Holton said.

The overall performance of Virginia eighth graders on the 2015 national reading and mathematics tests also was little changed from 2013.

Thirty-six percent of Virginia eighth-grade students achieved at or above the proficient level in reading, with three percent achieving advanced scores. Eighth graders in only four states — Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont — and Department of Defense schools achieved at a statistically higher level.

Nationally, 33 percent of eighth graders achieved proficient or advanced scores — a statistically significant one-point decline — and three percent earned advanced scores.



In mathematics, 38 percent of Virginia eighth graders achieved proficient or advanced scores in 2015, with 10 percent performing at the advanced level. Nationally, 32 percent of public eighth graders achieved at the proficient level or above in mathematics — a statistically significant two-point decline compared with 2013. Eight percent nationwide achieved advanced scores.

“Some of the biggest changes in the Standards of Learning during the last few years have been at the middle school level,” Staples said. “Teachers and students in our middle schools are working hard to meet these more rigorous state standards, and I am confident that their efforts will be reflected in the performance of Virginia students on the national tests as we move into the second half of the decade.”

There were no changes in the achievement gaps in eighth-grade reading. Forty-four percent of white Virginia eighth graders performed at or above the proficient level, compared with 16 percent of blacks, and 25 percent of Hispanics.

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Achievement gaps in grade-8 mathematics also were unchanged. Forty-six percent of white students achieved proficient or advanced scores, compared with 12 percent of blacks, and 29 percent of Hispanics.

NAEP — also known as the Nation’s Report Card — reflects the performance of representative samples of students in each state and nationwide. The 2015 NAEP sampling of Virginia students included approximately 4,600 fourth-grade students and approximately 4,600 eighth graders.

NAEP results are not reported for school divisions or for individual schools.

For more information about the performance of Virginia students on the 2015 NAEP, see the following state snapshot reports from NCES:

- [Grade-4 Reading Virginia Snapshot](#)
- [Grade-4 Mathematics Virginia Snapshot](#)
- [Grade-8 Reading Virginia Snapshot](#)
- [Grade-8 Mathematics Virginia Snapshot](#)

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