



## THE NATION'S REPORT CARD 2007: AN EDUCATION REFORMER'S GUIDE

*September 2007*

For almost four decades, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as the "nation's report card," has been tracking the educational progress of our students. This year's report card is an improvement over the last; students made significant progress in math in 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades, and some, but less noteworthy, improvements in reading. Since the early 90s, assessment scores are up, telling us that our focus in recent years on reforms demanding accountability does make a difference.

**Scores are not rising in a vacuum.** It's important to understand the driving forces behind this improvement. We've seen improvement only since meaningful education reform began to take hold about 15 years ago:

- States began adopting performance standards.
- The charter school movement began in 1992.
- Several years later, No Child Left Behind brought added accountability to public schools.

This report tells us nothing about progress made by any particular school or district and thus it cannot tell us whether one kind of school is better. We must look to **state-level assessments** to see that certain reforms ensure greater accountability for all schools, expand learning opportunities outside conventional education, yield achievement and are vital to continue improvements.

We are pleased to provide you with the following fact sheets and "talking points" to help you get the most out of this report and what is already available from state-level assessments. If you have any additional research questions, or if you'd like more information on state-level achievements, please do not hesitate to contact us at (800) 521-2118.



## THE DETAILS BEHIND THE DATA

September 2007

The NAEP report provides a snapshot in time of a representative sample of students. Among those students conclusions can be made about how they measure as a group, **but not about individual progress.**

- With the exception of private school 8<sup>th</sup> graders, proficiency is well below 50 percent nationally. There is still much to be done!
- Today, 32 percent of fourth graders are proficient in reading, up two points from the 2005 assessment and 4 points from 1992.
- Thirty-nine percent of fourth graders are proficient in math, up two points from 2005 and 27 points higher than 1990.
- While the black-white achievement gap narrowed in reading, there was little difference in math. These achievement gaps are still too large.
- The math scores of poor children increased, while their reading scores did not.
- Eighth grade charter students improved 4 points since 2005 in math, the only area that conventional public school students remained stagnant.
- Overall, the least progress was made at all levels in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Previous assessments of twelfth grade found similar stagnant scores.
- While we need to applaud the clear progress made among the students in the early grades, trends suggest that the longer U.S. students are in school, the less progress they make. There were higher percentages of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students at or above proficiency in mathematics but no change in reading, according to the statistics released today.
- Charter school students went up in all but 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading when compared to the 2005 assessment, but were slightly less proficient compared to students in conventional public schools.
- Charter school students tend to be more disadvantaged, and more minority, according to both government and private research statistics.
- States with proven reforms at work tended to have better results on NAEP. Massachusetts set the bar high when it adopted the MCAS and leads the rest of the nation in this report across all four categories.
- Private school scores are up for 8<sup>th</sup> grade math with 45 percent at or above proficiency and at 51 percent at or above proficiency in 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading.

**To Sum:** The Nation's Report Card tells us where we are relative to where we should be— and nationally, **our children are still woefully behind.**



## STATE-BY-STATE CHARTER SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT

September 2007

State-level assessments are stronger indicators of charter school achievement. Comparisons at this level continue to show that charter school students are outpacing their conventional public school peers in reading and math. The following represents a small picture of the state-level data released on charter schools this year:



**Alaska:** 85 percent (18 of 21) of charter schools beat statewide averages in reading, math, and writing on the Standards Based Assessment (SBA).

**Arizona:** Arizona's charter high school students posted large gains on the Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) in 2007, and in some grades outperformed their peers. Arizona's black charter school students also made impressive progress in writing. Fifth grade Hispanic students increased by 6 percentage points to "meet or exceed standards" in math and reading, and improved by 15 percent to "meet or exceed standards" in writing.

**Hawaii:** Sixty-seven percent of Hawaii's charter schools made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in 2007 compared to 65 percent of conventional publics. Despite no new schools parents continue to demand better options for their children. Enrollment in Hawaii's charter schools rose by 17 percent in 2007.

**Minnesota:** In Duluth, charter school 4<sup>th</sup> graders had a greater percentage of students who scored at or above proficient in math than conventional public schools by nearly 13 points (71.4 percent for charters, 58.5 percent for traditional schools) on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA). Minneapolis' 4<sup>th</sup> grade charter students also outperformed their conventional public school counterparts. Charter school eighth graders had close to a 13-percentage point advantage in math and a 10-percentage point advantage in reading.

**Michigan:** Charter schools in Michigan continue to improve upon their performance each year according to the Michigan Association of Public School Academies (MAPSA). In the most recent MEAP scores, charter schools across the state outperformed their district schools on 23 out of 27 tests. Detroit's charter schools exceeded their conventional school counterparts on 24 of 27 tests.



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**New Mexico:** According to the *Santa Fe New Mexican*, a higher percentage of charter schools made adequate yearly progress (AYP) in New Mexico while serving a larger disadvantaged student population. Forty-seven percent of New Mexico's charter schools made AYP under the federal No Child Left Behind Act, compared to 41.5 percent of conventional public schools.

**New York:** According to the New York City Charter Schools Evaluation Project, recent test data on the city's charter schools show students in grades 3-8 making greater gains each year they attend a charter school than they would remaining in the conventional public school system.

**Ohio:** According to a new report released by Public Impact and the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, Dayton charter schools students outperformed their conventional public school peers by 8 percentage points in both reading and math. When comparing urban charter schools to district schools, student performance has improved more rapidly in the past six years at charters than in the conventional publics.

**Rhode Island:** Seventy-one percent of Rhode Island's elementary and middle charter schools were classified as "high performing," according to the state's report card for 2006-2007. In Providence, two charter schools were the highest performing schools in the district.

For more information, or to share your state's achievements with CER, please call us at (800) 521-2118 or via email at [cer@edreform.com](mailto:cer@edreform.com).