

# Education: The State We're In

States vary widely on standards, and consequently, student results

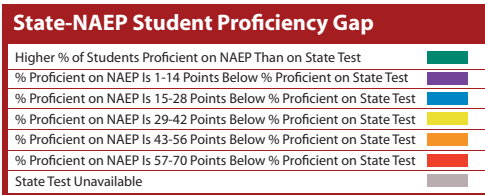
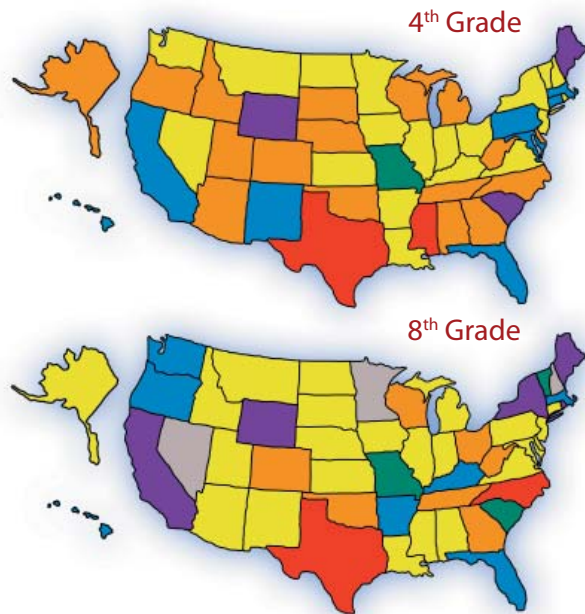
Every child – regardless of race, ethnicity, income, or language status – can and should learn to read and do math well. This basic premise guides the No Child Left Behind Act, the bipartisan law that requires each state to set steadily rising annual student achievement targets that move toward the long-term goal of proficiency for all by 2014. If schools fall short of these annual measures, the law requires them to take a series of steps to improve.

Under NCLB, however, states set their own curriculum standards. The law leaves it up to states to adopt their own standards-aligned tests for measuring students' skills. Then each state decides what scores students need in order to be deemed proficient. As a result, knowing how to read and do math well, and determining whether students can actually do so, does not mean the same thing in Texas as in Missouri.

Some states have chosen to set high expectations of their students, while others have set the bar low. Perversely, it is those states that have established stringent standards that are most likely to have schools labeled as “in need of improvement” under NCLB. And because there is no direct and easy way of determining which route states have chosen, parents are left in the dark about whether their children are truly getting a world-class education.

Fortunately, states must also administer a national test, known as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) to a sample of 4<sup>th</sup>- and 8<sup>th</sup>-graders from each state. This test has long been considered the gold standard for measuring student achievement nationwide. Comparing the percent of students in each state who achieve proficiency on this test with the percent who achieve proficiency on the state-specific test gives a rough measure of how state standards compare to national measures. In those states where large percentages of students pass the state test, but

## Reading



Source: Skinner, Ronald A., *State of the States*, Education Week, Jan. 6, 2005

<sup>1</sup> If states did not offer tests in 2003 at grade 4 or 8, test results from the next closest grade level were used.

<sup>2</sup> Column denotes differences between the total percent of students scoring at or above proficient on NAEP and the total percent of students scoring at or above proficient on the state required assessment at the equivalent subject and grade.

Rank	State	NAEP Test <sup>1</sup>	State Test <sup>1</sup>	Gap <sup>2</sup>
1	Missouri	34	34	0
2	South Carolina	26	31	5
3	Wyoming	34	44	10
4	Maine	36	49	13
5	Massachusetts	40	56	16
6	California	21	39	18
7	Hawaii	21	42	21
8	Pennsylvania	33	58	25
9	Connecticut	43	69	26
9	New Mexico	19	45	26
9	Maryland	32	58	26
12	Florida	32	60	28
13	Nevada	20	49	29
14	New York	34	64	30
15	Illinois	31	62	31
15	Kentucky	31	62	31
17	Ohio	34	66	32
18	Rhode Island	29	62	33
18	Vermont	37	70 <sup>3</sup>	33
20	Washington	33	67	34
20	Arkansas	28	62	34
22	Kansas	33	69	36
22	New Hampshire	40	76	36
24	Virginia	35	73	38
25	New Jersey	39	78	39
25	Indiana	33	72	39
25	Minnesota	37	76	39
28	Louisiana	20	61	41
28	Iowa	35	76 <sup>4</sup>	41
28	Montana	35	76	41
31	North Dakota	32	74	42
32	Michigan	32	75	43
33	West Virginia	29	73 <sup>5</sup>	44
34	Idaho	30	75	45
35	Utah	32	78	46
35	Alaska	28	74	46
35	Delaware	33	79	46
38	Nebraska	32	79	47
39	Oklahoma	26	74	48
39	North Carolina	33	81	48
41	Wisconsin	33	82	49
42	Colorado	37	87	50
43	Oregon	31	83	52
43	South Dakota	33	85	52
45	Georgia	27	80	53
46	Arizona	23	77	54
46	Tennessee	26	80	54
48	Alabama	22	77 <sup>5</sup>	55
49	Texas	27	85	58
50	Mississippi	18	87	69
	Average			37

Rank	State	NAEP Test <sup>1</sup>	State Test <sup>1</sup>	Gap <sup>2</sup>
1	South Carolina	24	20	-4
2	Vermont	39	36 <sup>3</sup>	-3
3	Missouri	34	32	-2
4	Wyoming	34	39	5
5	California	22	30	8
5	Maine	37	45	8
7	New York	35	45	10
8	Rhode Island	30	41	11
9	Washington	33	48	15
9	Arkansas	27	42	15
11	Hawaii	22	39	17
12	Massachusetts	43	65	22
12	Florida	27	49	22
14	Kentucky	34	57	23
15	Oregon	33	60	27
16	Illinois	35	64	29
16	Maryland	31	60	29
16	Michigan	32	61	29
19	Arizona	25	55	30
20	North Dakota	38	69	31
20	Indiana	33	64	31
20	New Mexico	20	51	31
20	Louisiana	22	53	31
20	Pennsylvania	32	63	31
25	Iowa	36	69 <sup>4</sup>	33
25	Montana	37	70	33
27	Virginia	36	70	34
28	Kansas	35	71	36
28	Utah	32	68	36
28	Mississippi	21	57	36
28	Alabama	22	58 <sup>5</sup>	36
32	New Jersey	37	74	37
33	Delaware	31	70	39
33	South Dakota	39	78	39
35	Connecticut	37	77	40
36	Alaska	27	68	41
36	Idaho	32	73	41
38	Nebraska	35	77	42
39	Wisconsin	37	84	47
40	Oklahoma	30	79	49
41	Colorado	36	86	50
42	Ohio	34	87	53
43	Tennessee	26	80	54
44	Georgia	26	81	55
44	West Virginia	25	80 <sup>5</sup>	55
46	North Carolina	29	86	57
47	Texas	26	88	62
N/A	New Hampshire	40	--	N/A
N/A	Minnesota	37	--	N/A
N/A	Nevada	21	--	N/A
	Average			31

