

From: Honeysett, Adam <Adam.Honeysett@ED.GOV>
To: ED_REVIEW@LISTSERV.ED.GOV
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NAEP 2017

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as the Nation's Report Card, provides results for the nation, states, and 27 urban school districts for assessments in fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics. NAEP reports performance at or above three [achievement levels](#): Basic, Proficient, and Advanced. Proficient denotes solid academic performance demonstrating competency over challenging subject matter, including subject-matter knowledge, the application of such knowledge to real world situations, and analytical skills. Proficient is not the same as being “on grade level,” which refers to student performance based on local standards and curriculum that can vary among districts (see [2017 reading and math highlights](#), [state profiles](#), and [district profiles](#)).

On the [2017 NAEP reading assessment](#), 37% of fourth-graders (no significant change from 2015) and 36% of eighth-graders (up two percentage points from 2015) scored at or above Proficient. Among states and jurisdictions, 17 had higher percentages of fourth-grade students at or above Proficient than the nation as a whole, and 17 had higher percentages of eighth-grade students at or above Proficient than the nation as a whole.

On the [2017 NAEP mathematics assessment](#), 40% of fourth-graders (no change from 2015) and 34% of eighth-graders (no significant change from 2015) scored at or above Proficient. Among states and jurisdictions, 15 had higher percentages of fourth-grade students at or above Proficient than the nation as a whole, while 20 had higher percentages of eighth-grade students at or above Proficient than the nation as a whole.

Overall averages in both subjects were higher than they were in the early 1990s, when assessments were first administered. Since that time, the gap between the scores of white and black fourth-graders narrowed in reading and math. On the other hand, 2017 scores reflected a growing gap between the highest- and lowest-scoring students when compared to 2015. Scores were higher for eighth-graders performing at the 75th and 90th percentiles and lower for fourth-graders performing at the 10th and 25th percentiles.

Scores held steady versus 2015 for most of the [large urban districts](#) that volunteer to participate in NAEP.

The 2017 assessments marked the first time that most students were assessed digitally using tablet computers, while a smaller percentage of students used the traditional paper-and-pencil format. Importantly, the content the assessments measured was the same as in previous years.

“The report card is in, and the results are clear: We can and we must do better for America’s students,” asserted Secretary DeVos in a [statement](#). “Our nation’s reading and math scores continue to stagnate. More alarmingly, the gap between the highest- and lowest-performing students is widening, despite billions in federal funding designated specifically to help close it.”

The Secretary also addressed NAEP results at the recent [Reagan Institute Summit on Education](#) (RISE), observing the 35th anniversary of the “A Nation at Risk” report released under President Ronald Reagan. During a fireside chat with former Secretary of Education William Bennett, she noted, “If you look at per-pupil spending, it’s gone up since ‘A Nation at Risk’ was reported. Scores continue to muddle along. This is not something we’re going to spend our way out of, and this is not something we’re going to mandate or regulate our way out of” ([video](#)).

SCHOOL CLIMATE LISTENING SESSIONS

Last week, Secretary DeVos hosted two [listening sessions](#) on school safety issues and the current climate in schools nationwide. The conversation focused on school discipline and the [Dear Colleague Letter](#) on Title VI of the *Civil Rights Act* (which prohibits racial discrimination) jointly issued by the Departments of Education and Justice on January 8, 2014.

The first session had 15 participants, representing themselves or organizations that shared positive experiences under the current guidance. Topics discussed included: the need to address the unique needs of students holistically; how the guidance helped force conversations around school discipline practices; how the implementation of reforms has been problematic in instances; and the importance of a safe school climate in improving student achievement.

The second session had 14 participants, representing themselves or organizations that shared concerns regarding the current approach. Topics discussed included: teachers being denied discretion in discipline decisions, leading to disruptions and violence; legal and procedural flaws in the previous administration’s approach of enforcing the guidance; districts under-reporting school discipline issues; and the impact of school violence on both teacher retention and student well-being.

At the request of many of the participants, the sessions were closed to the press to protect those who fear retaliation, are in active litigation, or shared personal stories involving family and/or minors.

The Secretary subsequently penned a [blog post](#). “These listening sessions made clear that while progress is being made for some students and educators, the situation for others has worsened,” she said. “We...cannot be satisfied until *all* students have access to a safe and nurturing learning environment where they can grow and thrive. As a country, we must honor that promise to our nation’s students.”

SECOND CHANCE TRIP

Also last week, as part of [Second Chance Month](#), Secretary DeVos traveled to the Dallas-Ft. Worth, Texas, area for school visits and a community tour ([readout](#)).

First, she visited Birdville Center of Technology and Advanced Learning in Richland Hills, which helps students identify their passions and follow multiple pathways to their careers. She saw Joshua Gentry’s culinary arts class, Michael Sanders’ forensic science class, and Chris Copeland’s robotics class. She also joined students for a virtual welding lesson in Mike Benton’s construction class. Additionally, she led a roundtable discussion on the importance of career and technical education and exposing students to career pathways (photos [1](#), [2](#), and [3](#)).

Later, she met with Bishop Omar Jahwar, founder and CEO of [Urban Specialists](#), and the group’s business and community leaders to discuss what is being done to help at-risk youth in the community. She then joined Bishop Jahwar on a three-stop driving tour, including Billy Earl Dade Middle School, 16 Streets Neighborhood (the core area where Urban Specialists works), and 16 Streets Center (where the group hosts after-school programs and other activities).

FIRST LADY EVENT

This week, First Lady Melania Trump and Secretary DeVos hosted a group of local middle school students to talk about issues facing children today. Held in the White House Blue Room, which had been set up like a classroom, the First Lady asked the 13 students from traditional, charter, and home schools to write on a board how they were feeling; she began the session by writing “Excited.” “I feel very excited and thankful because you’re here, and we’re opening up the conversation,” she explained. “Thank you...for sharing your stories and your thoughts about your struggles and triumphs. I want to help children everywhere be their best. So, with your help, we can achieve positive results” ([video](#)).

FINANCIAL LITERACY

April is [National Financial Capability Month](#), and the [Secretary’s final supplemental priorities](#) for competitive grant programs includes financial literacy (see Priority #4). In recognition, the Administration is carrying out a number of supporting activities. For example, the Department is running a special series about financial literacy on its Homeroom blog. Two of four planned posts are already available: “[Help Secure Your Future by Discovering Financial Literacy Resources Available to You](#)” and “[5 Ways to Cut the College Price Tag](#).”

Moreover, on April 25, the Department of Labor, joined by representatives from the Department of Education and Federal Trade Commission, is sponsoring a “Your Financial Future Starts Now” [webcast](#) for college seniors and recent entrants to the workforce. The webcast will provide information and tools for creating a financial plan and preparing to make informed financial decisions, such as setting financial goals, budgeting, saving, managing debt, and avoiding scams.

Furthermore, on April 27, the Department of Education and the members of the [Financial Literacy and Education Commission](#) will welcome state and local leaders and other stakeholders to a dedicated “Financial Education in America’s Schools” convening. This event will both spotlight promising state and locally led K-12 financial education initiatives and, with public and private sector experts, delve into strategies and resources to enhance and expand programs.

ODDS AND ENDS

- On April 2, Secretary DeVos read to students attending the White House Easter Egg Roll ([video](#)).
- On April 4, President Trump [proclaimed](#) the 50th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s assassination, noting “Though he was taken from this earth unjustly, he left us with his legacy of justice and peace.” The Secretary marked the occasion by recognizing recipients of the 2018 [MLK, Jr. Drum Major Innovative Service Award](#).
- The President announced his [intent to appoint](#) individuals to the [Commission on Presidential Scholars](#). Commissioners make the final selection of each year’s [U.S. Presidential Scholars](#).
- The Department posted [state-by-state budget tables](#) with Fiscal Year 2017 final appropriations and FY 2018 appropriations estimates.
- Secretary DeVos ordered [further review](#) of a 2016 petition for recognition by the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS).
- Under the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) legislation, the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) was required to prepare a [report](#) on the educational impact of access to digital learning resources outside of the classroom. The findings highlight generally wide home-based access to computers and the Internet, although significant gaps remain between different groups of students.
- A National Center for Education Statistics’ (NCES) [Statistics in Brief](#) examines early-career teachers’ preparation for teaching and receipt of support by selected characteristics of their schools throughout the 2011-12 school year.

- Also from NCES, “[Projections of Education Statistics to 2026](#)” provides data on student enrollment, graduates, teachers, and expenditures for schools and degree-granting institutions.

QUOTE TO NOTE

“Florida leaders, administrators, and, most importantly, teachers are to be commended for their continued efforts on behalf of students. Florida has been at the forefront of bold, comprehensive education reform for decades. From accountability, to literacy, to teacher certification and recognition, to providing parents more freedom to select the learning environment that best fits their students’ needs, Florida is rethinking education. Florida’s [NAEP] results show what is possible when we focus on individual students. This Administration is committed to working with states and communities across our country to bring about the much-needed change our students deserve.”

-- Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos (4/10/18), in a [statement](#) on the 2017 NAEP results

UPCOMING EVENTS

Among other key observances, April is designated [Autism Awareness Month](#), [Child Abuse Prevention Month](#), and [Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month](#).

This month’s free Federal Student Aid (FSA) [webinars](#) for students and families include “Tips for Understanding and Comparing Financial Aid Offers” (April 19, 4-5 p.m. Eastern Time) and “Common Mistakes When Filling Out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Form” (April 26, 4-5 p.m. ET).

In accordance with the Department’s commitment to honor the government-to-government relationship between federally recognized tribes and to engage in regular and meaningful consultation and collaboration with Indian tribes and education stakeholders, the agency plans to conduct a series of consultations in 2018. To start, with the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) and the White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education, the Department invites interested parties to an [onsite tribal consultation](#) at the Albuquerque, New Mexico, Convention Center (April 22, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Mountain Time).

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