



NEWS

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Kansas students post average NAEP science scores as compared to nation

2011 exam marks first state-level results for Kansas

TOPEKA – Results from the 2011 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) science exam place Kansas students' performance just about in the middle of nation when compared against the performance of other states. The results were released today and mark the first time Kansas has received state-level results on the exam.

Kansas eighth graders had an average scale score of 156, significantly higher than that of the nation at 151. Just 15 states had an average scale score higher than Kansas, while 26 states had a lower scale score than Kansas.

"In many ways these results represent a baseline for Kansas students," said Education Commissioner Dr. Diane DeBacker. "This is the first time we've had state-level results on the NAEP science exam and they come as we're working to develop new curricular standards for science within the next year. This is a good time to get a sense of where our students are compared to the rest of the nation and I think being in the middle of the pack is a good position from which to grow."

The NAEP science exam is given to a sampling of eighth grade students in participating states. In 2009, 47 states and jurisdictions participated in the voluntary exam; in 2011 all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Department of Defense schools participated.

NAEP scores are reported in two ways, by average scale score from 0 to 300, and by one of three achievement levels – basic, proficient and advanced. In Kansas, 71 percent of students performed at the basic level or above, while 35 percent of students performed at the proficient level or above. At the national level, 64 percent of students performed at basic or

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above and 31 percent of students performed at proficient or above.

Significant performance gaps were evident among ethnic and racial groups in Kansas, and between students who were eligible for free or reduced price lunches and those who were not. African American students in Kansas had an average scale score that was 35 points lower than that of White students, matching the gap seen at the national level. Hispanic students had an average scale score 30 points lower than that of White students in Kansas, a gap on par with that seen at the national level.

Kansas students who were eligible for free or reduced price lunches scored 24 points below students who were not eligible. At the national level, the difference in scores between these two groups was 27 points.

“Meeting the needs of some of our minority populations will need to be an area of particular focus as we work toward improving the performance of all students in the area of science,” DeBacker said. “I believe the work we’re doing as a state to implement the Kansas Common Core Standards, and what we learn as we assist in the development of the Next Generation Science Standards will go a long way toward improving student achievement in science.”

More information about the 2011 NAEP science exam can be found on the NAEP website at www.nationsreportcard.gov.

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