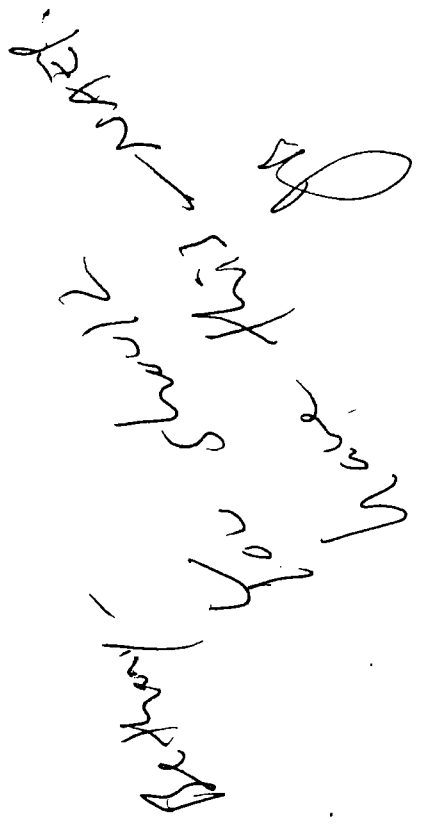

BETHANY —

This is some stuff you ought to have for files or at your fingertips. Didn't want to archive.

— JP

EDUCATION DAILY

The education community's independent daily news service

30-Year NAEP Trend Shows Math Gains, Widening Gaps

Except in math, U.S. students' performance in core subjects remains stalled, and racial achievement gaps, which had been narrowing, are growing wider again, says a new Education Department report.

Math scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) increased somewhat in the last decade, but less dramatically than in the 1980s, according to the 30-year trend report released yesterday.

The report also indicates that racial achievement gaps, with black students generally scoring lower than their white peers, may be getting wider. Over the last 30 years, black students caught up considerably, but in the 1990s, their scores began dropping off somewhat while white students improved.

"Parents generally, and African-American parents in particular, must insist that their children have access to high-quality schools, high-quality curricula and teachers who are the very best," said Michael Nettles, vice-chairman of the National Assessment Governing Board, in prepared remarks.

'Other Inequities'

"None of this will be easy. None of it will happen overnight," added Nettles, who is a professor of education and public policy at the University of Michigan. "But until these academic disparities are greatly reduced, the other inequalities in our society will persist, and the nation will continue to fall short of developing the full talents and abilities of so many students."

The study tracks performance in math, reading and science for 9-, 13- and 17-year-olds. In the past, writing scores were also included, but NAEP policymakers decided in March to drop that data, calling it unreliable (ED, March 27).

(more on p. 3)

In This Issue

Vol. 33, No. 162 ■ Friday, August 25, 2000

Internal Strife Spurs Ga. School Board Lawsuit

The four black members of the Clayton County, Ga., school board this week sued the other five members, all white, over the appointment of a superintendent earlier this month.

At issue are events at the board's Aug. 7 meeting. The white board members—Mark Armstrong, Joy Cavin, David Halcome, Barbara Wells and Susan Wilson-Tucker—offered interim superintendent Dan Colwell a three-year contract, adding the vote to the agenda at the last minute.

The lawsuit, filed Monday in Clayton Superior Court, charges that the defendants acted illegally by adding the item to the agenda without prior notice, and by failing to conduct a national search for a superintendent, as planned.

Disident Members Want Search

The lawsuit seeks a temporary restraining order to prevent the board from hiring Colwell or anyone else until a search has been conducted. Colwell has headed the suburban Atlanta district since January, when former schools chief Joe Hairston resigned amid controversy. Hairston is now Baltimore's superintendent.

(more on p. 2)

Internal Strife On Ga. School Board Spurs Lawsuit (Cont.)

Board member Wells noted that several of the plaintiffs in this lawsuit opposed Hairston, who is black, and used a similar procedure at the meeting that decided his fate in the district, adding the issue to the agenda at the last minute.

"Why is this different than what they did several months ago when Dr. Hairston resigned?" Wells asked.

"The majority of the board ... feel that they did not act inappropriately," said school board attorney Gary Sams. He said the board traditionally has not voted along racial lines.

The lawsuit mentions that in July, Noreese Haynes, an African-American, defeated Wells in the Democratic primary for a spot on the school board. Haynes's election is all but sealed, since there is no Republican contender in the general election.

With Haynes, the lawsuit notes, Clayton County would have the first majority-black school board in the district's history.

Still, Lloyd Bell, the attorney representing the plaintiffs, insisted, "My clients do not see this as a racial case." Rather, Bell said, they see it as a matter of the other school board members acting illegally.

The black board members—Linda Crummy, Connie Kitchens, Antonia Parks and Nedra Ware—all belong to the Metro Association of Classroom Educators, though they are suing as individuals.

Prospective board member Haynes also belongs to the group, which is not affiliated with either the American Federation of Teachers or the National Education Association.

By law, Clayton County board members cannot work for the district's schools, but the four plaintiffs all work for the nearby Fulton County school system.

A hearing on the complaint is scheduled for Monday.

—Hannah R. Gladfelter

Bush Would Increase Aid For Minority Higher Ed

Continuing his two-week "education tour," Texas Gov. George W. Bush yesterday unveiled a proposal to boost federal funding for higher education institutions that serve minorities, as well as a plan to offer enhanced Pell Grants for students who take advanced math and science courses.

The GOP presidential nominee promised to almost double formula grants for historically black colleges and universities, from $180 million to $360 million. Bush also pledged to raise funding for the nation's 195 Hispanic-serving institutions to $80 million a year.

Over five years, both initiatives would cost about $600 million—not nearly as much as the $1 billion it would take to finance his proposal to raise the maximum Pell Grant by $1,000 for students who passed Advanced Placement math and science exams and passed college-level math and science courses while in high school.

Bush said the increase would especially benefit students at black or Hispanic colleges, where between half and three quarters of students are eligible for Pell Grants, respectively.

(more on p. 4)

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NAEP Trend Shows Math Gains, Widening Gaps (Cont. from p. 1)

Scores, on a scale of 0-500, represent specific skill levels, so younger students tend to score lower than older students. For example, a student scoring 200 in math is thought to have beginning skills, while a score of 300 indicates the student grasps moderately complex procedures and reasoning. Most students score between 150 and 350.

Math Scores Rise, Others Stall

Math was the only area to show gains across the board. Science and reading scores were stagnant, for the most part.

Since the math test was introduced 23 years ago, scores have climbed for students in all three age groups. Nine-year-olds showed the biggest long-term gain—from average scores of 219 in 1973, to 232 in 1999. But most of that jump occurred between 1982 and 1990. Scores in the last decade rose only two points.

Average math scores for 13-year-olds rose 10 points, from 266 to 276, over the long term. But unlike their older and younger peers, most of that improvement came in the 1990s, with average scores rising six points over the course of the decade. For 17-year-olds, math scores dipped from the initial average of 304 to a low of 298 in 1982. By last year, they had risen again to 308, with most of that gain coming between 1982 and 1992.

The picture for reading and science was less encouraging. Reading scores for all age groups essentially held steady during the 1990s, in some cases, rising or dropping off slightly. Gains since 1971, when the first NAEP reading tests were given, were three to four points.

In science, scores for 17-year-olds dropped 22 points between 1969 and 1982, but recovered 12 points by 1999. As in math, most of that gain occurred in the 1980s. For 9-year-olds and 13-year-olds, science scores also dipped in the 1970s and early '80s, then climbed after 1982 and hit a plateau in the 1990s.

Little Progress

NAEP has separated out scores for black and white students since the tests were launched 30 years ago, but scores for Hispanics were not disaggregated for several years.

In general, Hispanic students tend to score somewhat higher than African-Americans, but lower than whites. In the 1990s, discrepancies for whites and Hispanics fluctuated, but stayed relatively level.

But the performance gap between black and white students leveled off or grew larger in the 1990s, after getting considerably smaller in the previous decades. Black students have nearly caught up to whites in basic skills, but they continue to lag behind at the higher proficiency levels.

For example, in 1990, 63 percent of white 17-year-olds scored 300 or better in math, up from 55 percent in 1982. By the end of the decade, that figure climbed to 70 percent.

By contrast, 33 percent of black 17-year-olds posted math scores of 300 or better in 1990—up significantly from 17 percent eight years before. But in 1999, the share had fallen to 27 percent—43 percentage points behind white students.

Nettles suggested that the initial improvements "probably reflect the success of the civil rights movement and the great efforts to improve the education of low-income children that started with the Head Start and Title I programs in the 1960s."

"The stagnation and even reversal in some areas since then indicate we have not built adequately upon these gains," he continued.

Scores for all students rose with their parents' education level—but there, too, discrepancies remained. For example, in 1999, white 17-year-olds had average reading scores of 279 if their parents had finished high school, and 304 if their parents had a college degree.

For black students, the average reading score was 254 if their parents were high school graduates, and 268 if they were college graduates—lagging 25 points and 36 points, respectively, behind their white peers.

Seventeen-year-old Hispanic children of high school graduates had average reading scores of 271, an 8 point lag behind white students.

"NAEP 1999 Trends in Academic Progress: Three Decades of Student Performance" is available online at http://nces.ed.gov.

—Hannah R. Gladfelter

Clinton Challenges Congress For School Modernization

While the presidential candidates duke it out on the campaign trail, the sitting president this week is making one last push to have his school modernization initiatives passed before leaving office.

Speaking at an overcrowded New Jersey middle school Wednesday, President Clinton chastised Congress for quibbling over the federal government's role in education while record enrollments are pushing schools' resources to the limit (ED, Aug. 22).

"I don't think we ought to let, in this sense, philosophy get in the way of practicality here," he said. "I'm not proposing to take over the schools. I'm not proposing to do anything except to have legislation that will give tax credits to communities to help them build or drastically modernize 6,000 schools."

Give Me One Reason ...

Clinton posited three reasons for the federal government's involvement in school construction, which Republican legislators have often argued should be a local responsibility:

- Although states are constitutionally responsible for overseeing education and districts are responsible for carrying it out, education still should be a "national priority";
- While the federal government is enjoying a record surplus, many states are not, and "there's no better way to spend it than by investing in our children's future"; and
- Local property tax bases often are already stretched to their limits in supporting day-to-day school operations.

House Republicans responded by touting their own school construction bill, H.R. 7, which would provide only $2.7 billion over the next 10 years.

Clinton's plan would appropriate $1.3 billion in federal funding over five years to support nearly $7 billion of renovation projects in high-poverty, high-need school districts that have little capacity to do this on their own (ED, Jan. 6).

The administration also is reprising a failed proposal from fiscal 2000, which would provide $3.7 billion in tax credits over five years to fund about $25 billion worth of special 15-year bonds local districts could use to finance school construction and repair (ED, Feb. 2, 1999).

Under that proposal, investors would have received federal tax credits instead of annual interest payments on the bonds.

No Easy Solution

In recent years, the president has made school construction a priority, but his proposals have failed to make their way through the budget process.

Even if it they had, the money would have only gone so far toward fixing America's dilapidated schools.

The General Accounting Office has said it would take $112 billion to repair and modernize existing schools, while the National Education Association pegs the total at $322 billion (ED, May 3).

The Education Department, meanwhile, says 6,000 new schools will need to be built in the next decade to accommodate the nation's surging enrollment (ED, Aug. 22, 1997).

—Michael Cardman

Bush: More For Minority Higher Ed (Cont. from p. 2)

Minority institutions "successfully open the doors of opportunity to many Americans, and our federal government should encourage and support their efforts to extend the promise of higher education to all," Bush said at Dillard University in New Orleans.

Meanwhile, Bush's rival, Vice President Al Gore, continued to hawk his college tax credit plan at the University of Maryland yesterday (ED, Feb. 10).

For more information, visit www.georgewbush.com or www.algore.com.

—Michael Cardman

In The Classroom

Miami School Pioneers Dual-Language Approach

At Coral Way Elementary School, students are taught to read, write and do their 'rithmetic—just like at any K-5 throughout the country. But at Coral Way, kids master the three "Rs" in Spanish as well as English—and they also learn to debate each other, perform in school plays, decipher maps and memorize the solar system in both languages.

Coral Way, part of Miami-Dade County Public Schools, is one of the country's oldest dual language programs and often serves as a pioneer and model for bilingual schools and programs throughout the world. Today, it is one of the six dual language schools in Miami and part of an extensive network of bilingual programs offered in the district.

Two-way dual language programs—designed to educate students in Spanish and English by spending a half-day teaching various subjects in each language—have grown from 30 in 1987 to about 260 last year.

Education Secretary Richard Riley recently expressed his hope that the number will exceed 1,000 by 2005. Their popularity is on the rise because children—typically non-native English speakers—can learn in two languages, and quickly become proficient in both.

"Our program is designed to teach kids equally, in both languages, regardless of whether they are Spanish-speaking immigrant children or if they were born in Wyoming and never spoke a word of Spanish," said Lourdes Rovira, director of Miami Dade's Division of Bilingual/Foreign Language Skills.

"Our aim is that all students—no matter what their home language—graduate as bilingual, not just conversationally, also academically."

As educators know, bilingual learning sounds good in theory, but can be difficult to implement. Administrators at Coral Way have been seeking effective ways to educate students since 1963, when it opened to cope with an influx of Spanish-speaking Cuban immigrants.

Located in Miami's Little Havana neighborhood, Coral Way is classified as a Title I school, meaning more than 70 percent of its 1,400 students qualify for free or reduced-fee lunches. Still, Florida gave the school an "A," last year, due to high test scores, excellent attendance and other factors.

It's an achievement that has been hard-won, and is the result of a constant process of evaluating priorities and strategies to improve educational standards, according to administrators.

'It is important that we do not switch back and forth between languages. We want students to start thinking in a particular language.'

Amy Simpson, assistant principal

"We try to stay very focused on our goals, and that's how we make small gains," said Coral Way's assistant principal, Amy Simpson. "We look carefully at what we'd like to implement, try not to bite off more than we can chew and then take small steps to integrate our ideas."

Several factors have contributed to Coral Way's success. At the top of the list is a high level of communication between the teachers, administrators and staff. Teachers meet several times a week to discuss ways to approach various projects.

"We have block scheduling so that teachers have a chance to meet and plan out their classes at least twice a week," said Simpson, who has been at the school for 10 years. "We've found that you need to give teachers time to work together as a team."

Administrators also make an effort to involve staff members in many aspects of bilingual education. Teachers and staff members are kept informed of new developments with clippings and research findings. They are consulted on decisions, and on ways to improve the program. The staffs' contributions are also rewarded and successes are celebrated.

(more)

Miami School Pioneers Dual-Language Approach (Cont.)

Perhaps one of the most effective tools, according to administrators, is encouraging teachers to help design the curriculum.

"We sit down as a team and look at the state standards, then empower the teachers to make decisions about what they want to teach," Simpson said. "They're the ones who are out there everyday."

In the classroom, educators at Coral Way are committed to setting high standards and expecting the best from their students. Kids are encouraged to participate in an array of challenging extra-circular activities, including a chess club, young authors' group and many others.

"We don't believe in the premise that bilingual means remedial," said Rovira. "In fact, what we are seeing is that the Spanish community is rapidly losing their Spanish. They might be bilingual on a conversational level, but we want to ensure that students are truly bilingual."

It is also important that teachers strictly adhere to each language. For instance, if a 30-minute math session is taught in Spanish, teachers—and students—should refrain from using English or "Spanlish."

"It is important that we do not switch back and forth between languages," explained Simpson. "We want students to start thinking in a particular language."

The school also makes extra efforts to involve parents in their process whenever possible. Parent workshops are frequent, and teachers provide a great deal of information on the school's mission, homework policies, assignments, field trips and more. The school also seeks to convey a sense of pride to parents—many of whom are immigrants—as well as to the community.

For that reason, school administrators frequently solicit the community's involvement and resources. For instance, the school recently re-landscaped some patios. Parents and local businesses volunteered time and supplies, while large chain stores donated goods and funds.

Over the years, administrators have learned to establish and cultivate links with the outside world, and the community apparently values the chance to provide their kids with the opportunity to learn in two languages.

"Historically, getting a bilingual education was something that was only available to the economically elite, and kids were sent abroad to learn a second language," said Rovira. "But our goal is to make that kind of learning available for everyone."
—Su Avasthi

*Editor's note: **Education Daily** will not publish Monday, August 28.*

THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20202

FAX TRANSMITTAL

TO IB Buxton

PHONE 4 FAX 456-5581

FROM Diane Rossi

PHONE ____ FAX 401-2098

PAGE(S) TO FOLLOW about 20 DATE ____

MESSAGE: Additional Statements on today's NAEP release

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UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION NEWS

FOR RELEASE
August 24, 2000

Contact: Roberta Heine
(202) 401-3026

Remarks as prepared for delivery by
U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley

On the Release of
NAEP 1999: Trends in Academic Progress
Washington, DC

Thank you, Gary [Phillips]. NCES data is an essential part of the effort to improve America's schools, and I'm grateful for your work.

I don't know who likes statistics more – baseball fans or our friends at NCES. If we have any baseball fans in the audience, you've probably heard your father say that the players of his era were better than the players of your era. We will never know for sure whether Sandy Koufax could have handled Mark McGwire or whether Willie Mays was better than Ken Griffey Jr.

But the Trends report puts today's students on the same field with students from 30 years ago, and the results may surprise a few cynics: Today's students do better. Critics of public education would have you believe that reports like this are full of arrows and lines pointing down. In fact, for the 9 major categories since 1971, scores have fallen significantly in just 1 category. And during the 1990s, scores have not fallen significantly in any category.

And, remember, this is for a group of students that is larger and more diverse than ever before – with higher percentages of test-takers with disabilities or whose home language is not English.

The Trends report is another reminder of how much we owe teachers, principals, and parents across the country who have worked to improve education. But while this report can help steer us away from the cynical attitude that some people have about our schools, it should not lead to complacency.

Let me highlight a few of the trends – some good, some not so good. Of the 9 major categories – all 3 age levels in math, science, and reading – 6 were significantly better and 2 edged up slightly. The science scores for 17-year-olds were lower, but they have moved up significantly during the 1990s.

It's also relevant to look at a few of the trends over the 1990s. There is good news here, too. Of the 9 categories, most are up significantly, and none are down. There is an upward trend in math, with steady progress at every age level – up significantly since 1971, up significantly during the '90s. In fact, for every age level in 1999, the math scores reached their highest level ever.

Again, I want to caution against complacency. The math scores are better, but they are not good enough. At the 13-year-old level, for example, just 15% of students scored well in computing with decimals and simple fractions. We welcome the progress, but we know we still have a lot of work to do in math.

Gary discussed the results for children from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. At the national level, our resources are targeted for minority and low-income students. And if you take a close look at the data, you'll see that in several categories, Blacks and Hispanics are scoring better than ever – and that is good news.

Over the last two times the tests were given – 1996 and 1999 – white children tied or exceeded their highest scores ever in 6 of the 9 categories. For Black children, it was also 6 of 9 categories. And for Hispanic children, it was 7 of 9 categories. But despite this, we have a persistent gap in achievement and we must work to close it while lifting achievement for all.

Now I'd like to shift to what educators have learned over the last 3 decades – both about lifting performance and closing the achievement gaps. Since these tests were first given, we have experience and research that tell us what works in our nation's classrooms. Our challenge today is to spread the word and provide targeted resources so that every child in every classroom has the benefits of good teaching and what works. Let me outline 4 proven ways to improve student performance.

First, we have better evidence about the importance of good teaching. A recent study in Tennessee found that teacher-quality factor resulted in a difference of 50 percentile points on a statewide achievement test. That is why we have focused on recruiting and training good teachers and keeping their skills up to date. And we have called on Congress to live up to its commitment to hire 100,000 well-trained teachers to reduce class size in the early grades.

Second, as I have often said, we could revolutionize education in America if parents would read to their children for 30 minutes a day. The Trends report finds that reading in the home is down, and that there is a correlation between reading in the home and achievement on these tests. So, I ask parents to read to their children, starting at an early age. I urge children to get in the habit of reading.

And I urge Congress to honor our request for a 10% increase in the Reading Excellence Act – they haven't so far. Our goal is for every child in America to read well and independently by the end of the 3rd grade. It's a nationwide goal, and it will require a nationwide effort.

Third, we know today that disadvantaged students are not well served by a watered-down curriculum and low expectations. So in 1994 we included a new emphasis on high standards in Title I, our effort to help low-income students improve their reading and math skills. And if you look at the reading scores in the 1990s for the lower quartile of 9-year-olds – many of whom are Title I students – you'll see that they improve dramatically by 1999.

For older students, the high standards movement has meant taking advanced courses – for instance, algebra instead of general math in 8th or 9th grade, and calculus or precalculus in high school. I believe that this trend, which is highlighted in this report and in a recent survey by the ACT, is one of the main reasons for the consistent, across-the-board improvement in math scores. It is clear that students excel when they are challenged. This is especially true for disadvantaged, black, or Hispanic children.

The next step is to move high standards into every classroom and encourage more students, including low-income and minority students, to take advanced courses and AP classes. In October, the Glenn Commission will release a report with specific recommendations on ways to support high-quality teaching in math and science in all grades. The Commission recognizes that in order to improve student achievement, we need to dramatically improve math and science teaching.

This is a very important issue. As I said before, more students are taking advanced math and science courses. But many of the teachers in these classes are teaching "out of field." No matter what we call the course, it won't truly be an "advanced" course unless the teacher is well trained in that subject. So if we want to raise student achievement, we need well-qualified math and science teachers for the advanced classes.

Fourth, we have stronger evidence today about school reform measures that have a significant, positive impact on learning. I was in Chicago earlier this week, where they have had great success with by offering extended learning opportunities after school and during the summer. And the RAND report, released just last month, identified reforms that have helped to raise student achievement levels.

The most effective measures include those in which this Administration is asking Congress to make serious investments – smaller class size, early childhood education, and extended after-school and summer school programs.

If we set support good teaching, encourage families to read together, set high standards for all students, and invest in research-based strategies, we can continue to improve student performance. We know how to improve our schools; we can make it happen. We need those who count themselves as "Congressional leaders" to get on board. That means adopting a federal education budget that includes investments in smaller classes, up-to-date schools, effective pre-school programs, strong after-school programs, and well-trained teachers.

I'd like to thank NCES again for their work on the NAEP Trends report. We need to make the right decisions now to put well-trained teachers and high standards in every classroom and give our students the extra help to succeed. If we do that, we can build on the positive trends cited in this report, address the challenges of educating a larger, more diverse group of students, and provide an excellent education for every child in America.

Thank you.

Embargoed Until August 24, 2000 at 10 a.m. EDT

NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS

Press Release

Contact: Barbara Marenus, NCES, (202) 502–7391

National Assessment Shows Encouraging Trends in Mathematics Performance

"Encouraging trends in student achievement" were reported today by Gary W. Phillips, Acting Commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Dr. Phillips stated that "the most consistent and steady gains were in mathematics and advanced course taking in mathematics and science." These results are from a new trend report, *NAEP 1999 Trends in Academic Progress*, that examines the academic performance of 9-, 13-, and 17-year olds. Data show that for mathematics, since 1973, students in all age groups assessed achieved consistent gains. These increases began in the 1980s and continued into the 1990s.

NAEP 1999 Trends in Academic Progress also describes student performance since the early 1970s in reading and science. Reading scores have also improved, but showed less improvement than mathematics scores. Nine and 13-year-olds are reading better than they did nearly 30 years ago. However, scores for 17-year-olds remained unchanged.

Student performance in science has varied by age group. Scores for 9-year-olds were higher in 1999 than in 1970, while scores for 13-year-olds remained unchanged. For 17-year-olds, scores were lower in 1999 than in the first assessment, administered in 1969. Actually, the science scores for this group decreased between 1969 and 1982, before they started increasing. While this age group's science scores have not returned to their initial level, there is an emerging trend of 17-year-olds taking more advanced science courses.

Embargoed Until August 24, 2000 at 10:00 a.m. EDT

The report also provides data related to the nation's ongoing concerns about the educational gap between minorities and whites. While scores for whites have consistently been higher than for blacks and Hispanics for all three ages in all three subjects, some gaps have narrowed for some age groups in all three subjects since the early 1970s. For example, in mathematics, the score gap between black and white students narrowed for all three age groups. For Hispanics, the gap narrowed for 13- and 17-year-olds, but not for 9-year-olds. In reading, score gaps for blacks and whites also narrowed for all three age groups. For Hispanics, the gap narrowed for 17-year-olds only. In science, the score gaps for blacks and whites narrowed for 9- and 13-year-olds only. The gaps for whites and Hispanics remained unchanged. Despite these improvements in the 1970s and 1980s, there have not been consistent decreases in the size of the gaps since 1990.

The report also describes performance by gender. In reading, females continued to outperform males in all three age groups. In mathematics, males had outperformed females at age 17 in previous long-term trend assessments, but in 1999 this gap disappeared, resulting in similar performance for males and females for all three age groups. In science males outperformed females at ages 13 and 17, but not at age 9. The science gap favoring 17-year-old males has declined since the first assessment in 1969.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is administered by NCES, an agency within the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement. NAEP has administered 10 long-term trend assessments for reading, 10 for science, and 9 for mathematics over the past 30 years. In 1999, approximately 16,000 students took each of the three assessments.

For further information on the *NAEP 1999 Trends in Academic Progress*, please visit NCES's NAEP Web site at http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard. All NAEP reports can be ordered by calling toll free 1-877-4ED-Pubs (1-877-433-7827), TTY/TTD 1-877-576-7734; e-mailing at edpubs@inet.ed.gov; or via the Internet at http://www.ed.gov/pubs/edpubs.html/

A live on-line chat hosted by Dr. Phillips on the trends report will take place on Thursday, August 24th from 2:00 to 3:00 pm EDT. Interested persons should go to the NCES Web site at http://nces.ed.gov/statchat/conference to participate.

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD
National Assessment Governing Board
National Assessment of Educational Progress

FOR RELEASE
Thursday, August 24, 2000

Contact: Lawrence Feinberg
(202) 357-6942

STATEMENT ON THE NAEP 1999 TRENDS REPORT

MICHAEL T. NETTLES

Vice-Chairman, National Assessment Governing Board;
Professor of Education and Public Policy, University of Michigan

The trend report being released today is an important part of the National Assessment of Educational Progress. It provides the nation with the most reliable information we have on the patterns of academic achievement of American students going back over three decades. It gives some evidence to answer the popular question of whether or not the schools are improving.

What the report shows is a mixed picture of some good news and some bad, of gains and disappointments, of gaps narrowing and then widening again.

- In mathematics and science, there have been substantial gains since around 1980, which followed declines during the 1970s. Thus, the efforts of many schools and states to improve math and science education, which received a major boost from the "Nation at Risk" report in 1983, seem to have paid off.

- In the 1990s, student performance in mathematics has continued improving, though generally at a slower pace than in the 1980s. In science, particularly since 1992, gains in student achievement appear to have stalled.

- In reading, there has been little change in achievement over the past three decades despite considerable ferment in the curriculum. The one point at which some patterns are discernable is age 9, which usually is at grade 4 when basic instruction in how to read normally ends. During the 1970s, there was a clear improvement in early reading, followed by a clear decline in the 1980s. Since 1990, the average score for 9-year-olds has risen by three points, but that's not enough to be statistically significant.

- For 9-year-olds in the lower quartile of achievement, reading improved substantially from 1971 to 1980. These gains were lost, however, during the slide in the 1980s. Since 1990, there has been a significant recovery, though the scores

-MORE-

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seem unchanged from 1996 to 1999, and the 1999 reading level of 9-year-olds in the bottom quartile was below where it was in 1980.

- Overall, students in the lower quartile of the score distribution have made gains since the early 1970s. But with the exception of mathematics, these improvements have not continued in most age groups since 1990.

- Over the three decades of NAEP reporting, the difference in average scores between white and black students and between whites and Hispanics has narrowed--in some cases dramatically--because of gains in minority achievement. This is encouraging news.

- Virtually all of the reduction, however, in the gaps between whites and blacks took place before 1986 or 1988. Since then, the gaps have either widened somewhat or stayed the same. The average scores of black students have remained well below those of whites, and at age 17 the reading achievement of black students was lower last year than it was in 1988, a depressing reversal of the gains made over the previous two decades.

- Among Hispanic students, average scores are somewhat higher than those for blacks. Hispanics were not reported separately in NAEP's first few assessments in the early 1970s. In the past decade, the gaps between whites and Hispanics have fluctuated--some narrowing, some widening--but overall little has changed.

Results for Asian students are not reported separately in the NAEP long-term trend assessments, although they are presented for the main NAEP assessments introduced in the 1990s. On these assessments, Asians generally perform about as well as whites, and in some cases higher.

These racial gaps are an important subject. They are difficult and sensitive to talk about. But, as difficult as it is, the discussion is now underway in many communities and states across the country. More states and districts are finding that, as a first step toward reducing gaps in student achievement, it is important to disaggregate test scores by race.

Often in order to improve performance it is necessary to know first what the performance levels are. NAEP has been reporting its results by race since the program began three decades ago. It shows a pattern of substantial change that was immensely encouraging for two decades and now somewhat discouraging in the most recent decade.

Among 17-year-olds, for example, the black-white gap in reading was cut by more than half, from 53 points when the assessment was first administered in 1971 to 20 points in 1988. In math for 17-year-olds, the gap was reduced from 40 points in 1973 to 21 points in 1990. In more recent years, though, the gaps have widened again--back to 31 points in reading and 32 points in math.

Another way to look at the data is that the average scores for 17-year-old black students in reading and math are about the same as the averages for 13-year-old whites. While these differences are not as large as they were three decades ago, the pattern is disturbing and demands careful attention.

The average scores, however, are not the only way to understand what is happening. The NAEP long-term trends report also has performance levels, describing what students can do at 50 point intervals along the scale. At the basic skills levels in both math and reading the racial gaps have diminished sharply as the performance of black students has nearly caught up to whites. But when you move up the NAEP scales to more complicated work, the differences remain wide.

For example, at age 17, almost all students can add, subtract, multiply, divide, and solve one-step problems. About 99 percent of whites reach this level 250 on the NAEP math scale, compared to 89 percent of blacks. In 1978, when these anchor points were first used, about 96 percent of whites could reach 250, compared to 71 percent of blacks. Thus, a gap of 25 percentage points has shrunk to 10 percentage points.

At level 300, however, which requires students to solve moderately complex problems and use decimals, fractions, and percents, the black-white gap is 43 percent. Both whites and blacks have improved since 1978, but the whites have gone up from 58 percent reaching this level to 70 percent, while the proportion of blacks attaining level 300 has climbed from 17 percent to 27 percent. The gap is unchanged.

There is a similar pattern in reading.

For the basic skill level of finding facts in simple stories and drawing inferences based on short passages, 95 percent of black 17-year-olds reach the anchor point up from 82 percent in 1971, compared to 98 percent of whites in both years. At the level of understanding and analyzing relatively complicated information, whites have moved up only 3 percentage points to 46 percent over the three decades. Blacks have gone up from 8 percent to 17 percent, but a 29 percentage point gap remains.

Undoubtedly, all these disparities reflect differences in income, family, and societal factors, as well as in schooling. But, according to a special tabulation of the long-term trends data, the gaps are just as wide or even slightly wider among black and white students with college-educated parents as they are for students whose parents have much less education. The same is true even more strikingly for the gaps between whites and Hispanics. Having better-educated parents is related to higher achievement for students of all races, but it does not seem to close the racial gaps. This may raise questions about the quality of the college education that students of different races receive and the different impact college may have on incomes, careers, and families.

What should we make of all this?

Because of its nature as a survey, NAEP cannot tell us why these changes occurred. My own view, given the trends in academic performance and attainment elsewhere, is that the gains of the 1970s and 1980s probably reflect the success of the civil rights movement and the great efforts to improve the education of low-income children that started with the Head Start and Title One programs in the late 1960s. The stagnation and even reversal in some areas since then indicate we have not built adequately upon these gains.

We should not lose sight though, that our schools have been successful in closing the gaps at the important basic skills levels of performance. This is the point at which many states have focussed the greatest attention by actions such as the passing scores they have set on high school graduation and grade promotion exams. The racial differences on many of these tests have been reduced, and NAEP provides a confirming bit of evidence that change has occurred.

That is not an inconsequential accomplishment. It means that thousands of students are graduating from high school each year with a minimum set of reading and math skills that many students three decades ago did not have.

At the same time, however, this is clearly not enough. The same disparities we see at the higher skill levels on NAEP show up in enrollments in high school honors classes and more rigorous curricula and in the upper score ranges of college entrance exams that are used for admission to the most selective and rigorous colleges. The resulting inequalities are great.

Certainly, more resources must be directed at dealing with the problem. There must also be clear standards and expectations for all students that are much higher than the minimum competencies that have been put in place. But I think values and attitudes must be taken into account as well.

Parents generally and African American parents in particular must insist that their children have access to high quality schools, high quality curricula, and teachers who are the very best. They must also insist that the schools challenge their children and that the children work hard to meet the challenges. There must be pride in academic and scholarly accomplishment and the discipline and focus that successful academic work demands.

None of this will be easy. None of it will happen overnight. But until these academic disparities are greatly reduced, the other inequalities in our society will persist, and the nation will continue to fall short of developing the full talents and abilities of so many students.

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Statement of

Gary W. Phillips, Ph.D.
Acting Commissioner
National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

The Release of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) NAEP 1999 Trends in Academic Progress

August 24, 2000

[Slide #1: Title Page]

Good morning. My name is Gary Phillips, the Acting Commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics. Today we are releasing the results of a survey we have been conducting for over three decades on what students in school know and can do. Education is the number one issue in the minds of Americans today. If we are to make intelligent decisions about improving education, we must understand where we are and where we have been. The National Assessment of Educational Progress long-term trend report, conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics, is our nations only measure of educational progress over the past thirty years. The *NAEP 1999 Trends in Academic Progress*, released today, provides valuable findings in the subject areas of reading, science, and mathematics achievement, for 9-, 13-, and 17-year-old students.

From the surveys we have conducted over the past three decades we now have 10 assessments for reading, 10 assessments for science, and 9 assessments for mathematics.

In 1999, approximately 16,000 students took the mathematics and science assessments and over 17,000 students took the reading assessment. A long-term trend writing assessment was also administered in 1999; however the results of the assessment are still undergoing evaluation.

Generally, the trends in mathematics and science are characterized by declines in the 1970s, followed by increases during the 1980s and early

1990s, and mostly stable performance since then. Some modest gains are also evident in reading. Of all three subjects assessed, students have demonstrated the most improvements in mathematics. We also see increased numbers of students taking advanced mathematics courses.

Because NAEP scores are based on samples, there is a margin of error, which statisticians call a "standard error," associated with each score. In its statistical calculations, NCES uses the standard errors to determine whether two scale scores are "significantly different" from one another. A score that is not significantly different from another score is neither higher nor lower than that score. As a matter of policy, NCES only discusses differences in scale scores that are significantly different. In the charts, you will see a star indicates a significant difference from 1999.

[Slide #2: Average Scale Scores in Mathematics]

Mathematics

The first long-term trend in mathematics assessment was administered in 1973. Since then, all three age groups have experienced overall patterns of improvement both in the long and the short run. The average score of 9-year-olds in 1999 was 2 points higher than in 1990 and 13 points higher than average scores from 1973 to 1982.

Thirteen year-olds show the same pattern. The average score in 1999 was 6 points higher than it was at the beginning of the decade and 10 points higher than it was in 1973.

Although the average score of 17-year-olds declined between 1973 and 1982, since 1982 the age group has experienced a 10-point-gain in average scores. As a result, the average mathematics score of 17-year-olds in 1999 was higher than in 1973.

[Slide #3: Average Scores in Reading]

Reading

The first long-term reading assessment was given in 1971. Scores for 9- and 13-year-olds increased during the 1970's, so that by 1980 scores for both age

groups were higher than in 1971. However, since 1980 no further improvements in average reading scores for these age groups have occurred.

Despite increases in average scores from 1971 to 1984, since 1994 average scores for 17-year-olds have returned to a level that is not significantly different than that in 1971.

[Slide #4: Average Scores in Science]

Science

The first science assessment was given in 1969, for 17-year-olds only. Nine and 13-year-olds were first assessed in 1970. Since the first assessments, all three age groups showed different trends in science performance. Scores for all three groups fell in the 1970s, and improved thereafter, but the extent of improvement differed among the different age groups.

By 1990, scores of 9-year-olds were higher than they had ever been. Although scores have not improved since then, they remain higher than in the first assessment.

The average score for 13-year-olds in 1999 was higher than the low point reached in 1977, but is no higher than the average score in the first assessment in 1970.

For 17-year-olds, scores fell after the first assessment in 1969, reaching a low point in 1982. Scores have improved since then, but are still lower than in 1969.

In addition to reporting average scores for students based on age, the *NAEP 1999 Trends in Academic Progress* also reports scores by race, gender, parental education, type of school, course taking patterns, technology and scientific equipment in the classroom, homework experiences and home experiences. I will briefly discuss a few of these categories and then explore in detail race, gender, course taking patterns, and homework experiences.

The report confirmed many relationships in 1999 that have also been identified in previous NAEP reports. For example:

- The data show a positive relationship between level of parental education and student performance.
- Data also show that non-public school students tend to out-perform public school students.
- Student's performance in math and science is higher when they take more advanced courses.
- Use of scientific equipment is positively associated with student performance.
- Home experiences such as reading for fun and watching less television are associated with higher performance.

Gaps Between Racial/Ethnic Subgroups

The trend report discusses the performance of white, black, and Hispanic students. Other racial or ethnic subgroups are not discussed because the samples collected were of insufficient size to analyze and report separately. The report reveals that overall scores for white students were higher than those of black and Hispanic students for all three ages in all three subjects, in all assessment years. However, each subgroup made significant gains in all three subject areas.

In Mathematics:

Students in each racial/ethnic group at all three ages showed gains in scores across the assessment years.

[Slide #5: White Minus Black in Mathematics]

- While mathematics scores for black students remained below the scores for white students, black students showed greater gains. As a result, the gap between white and black students in mathematics narrowed between 1973 and 1999 in each age group. Some widening is evident since 1986 at age 13, and since 1990 at age 17.

[Slide #6: White Minus Hispanics in Mathematics]

- Mathematics scores for Hispanics also improved in comparison to whites but not as consistently as for blacks. The gap between white and Hispanic 13- and 17- year-olds narrowed between 1973 and 1999, but has widened since 1982 among 9-year-olds.

In Reading:

Among white students, gains in average scores are evident since the first assessment for 9- and 13-year-olds. Among black and Hispanic students, overall gains are evident at each age.

[Slide #7: White Minus Blacks in Reading]

- Because of the increases in reading scores for black students, the gap between whites and blacks narrowed between 1971 and 1999 in each age group. Between 1988 and 1992, the gap widened somewhat among 13- and 17-year olds but has not changed significantly since then.

[Slide #8: White Minus Hispanics in Reading]

- Although reading scores improved for Hispanics for all three age groups between 1975 and 1999, the increases for 9- and 13-year-olds were not sufficient to narrow the gap between their performance and that of white students. However, the gap did narrow for 17-year-olds.

In Science:

Among white and black students, overall gains are evident for 9- and 13-year-olds. Hispanic students at each age show overall gains across the assessment years.

[Slide # 9: White Minus Blacks in Science]

- Increases in scores for black 9- and 13-year-olds brought their performance levels closer to those of white students. However the performance gap did not change significantly for 17-year-olds.

[Slide # 10: White Minus Hispanics in Science]

- Despite increases in scores for Hispanic students at all three age levels, the gap between white and Hispanic students at any age in 1999 was not significantly different from 1977. It has widened somewhat among 13-year-olds since 1992.

Score Differences by Gender

The *NAEP 1999 Trends in Academic Progress* also reports results for gender. For most subject areas and ages, males and females demonstrated similar trends across the assessment years. There were significant differences in performance in some subjects, particularly reading. However, the differences were not as large as those between white and black students and white and Hispanic students.

In Mathematics:

Since 1973, scores for males and females increased overall for all age groups except 17-year-old males.

[Slide #11: Male v. Female in Mathematics]

- The most interesting changes in male and female score gaps occurred in mathematics. For 9- and 13-year-olds, score differences favoring females in the 1970s had shifted to score differences favoring males in the 1990s.

- However, in 1999, the difference between male and female students' average scores was not significant at any age.
- Among 17-year-olds the score gap that had favored male students in the 1970s ultimately disappeared.

In Reading:

Since 1971, scores increased for males at ages 9 and 13 and for females at age 13.

[Slide # 12: Male v. Female in Reading]

- In 1999, female students had higher average reading scores than male students in each age group. Among 9-year-olds, the gap between males and females narrowed between 1971 and 1999.

In Science:

In looking at differences between the first assessment and 1999, the results in science have been mixed. For example, when compared to 1970, the 1999 scores were unchanged for males aged 9, up for females aged 9, and unchanged for male and female 13-year-olds. Scores in 1999 for male and female 17-year-olds were lower than in 1969.

[Slide #13: Male v. Female in Science]

- In 1999, males outperformed females at ages 13 and 17, but the average score for 9-year-old males was not significantly higher than that of 9-year-old females. Among 17-year-olds, the score gap between males and females has narrowed since 1969.

Amount of Time Spent on Homework

The development of reading and literacy skills may be directly related to the extent and variety of students' reading experiences. One factor that influences how much students read is the number of pages they must read for school and homework assignments.

[Slide #14: Average Reading Scores by Pages Read Per Day]

- The report reveals that at all three ages, students who said they read more pages each day scored higher than their peers who read fewer pages. By age 17, the highest average score was attained by those students who said they were reading more than 20 pages daily.

- A greater percentage of 9- and 13-year-olds read more than 20 pages each day for school and for homework in 1999 than in 1984. There was no significant change, however, in the pages read per day by 17-year-olds.

[Slide #15: Average Mathematics Scores by Frequency of Doing Mathematics Homework]

The assessment revealed that 17-year-old students who indicated doing mathematics homework more frequently scored higher than students who did mathematics homework less often.

[Slide #16: Percentage of 17-year-olds by Frequency of Doing Mathematics Homework]

- Although 17-year-olds showed no increase in the percentage who reported reading more than 20 pages per day, a greater percentage did say they were doing mathematics homework more frequently in 1999 than in 1978.

Course Taking Patterns

Students in the NAEP long-term assessment are asked several questions about school experiences considered to be related to achievement. Asking students what courses they had taken prior and/or during the assessment revealed several trends. Most importantly, there was an increase in the number of students taking advanced mathematics courses and an increase in the number of students taking all science courses. The increase in advanced math and science course taking is associated with recent improved mathematics and science achievement.

[Slide #17: Percentage of 13-Year-Olds by Type of Mathematics Course, 1986 and 1999]

In Mathematics:

- A greater percentage of 13-year-olds were taking prealgebra or algebra, and a smaller percentage were taking regular mathematics in 1999 than in 1986.

[Slide #18: Percentage of 17-Year-Olds by Highest Mathematics Course]

- For 17-year-olds, a greater percentage had taken precalculus/calculus and algebra II in 1999 than in 1978. Increases in advanced mathematics course taking were seen for both male and female students. White, Black, and Hispanic 17-year-olds all showed increases in the percentage of students taking algebra II. However, only white students showed an increase in the percentage taking precalculus/calculus.

[Slide #19: Percentage of 17-Year-Olds by Science Courses Taken, 1986-1999]

In Science:

Science course-taking among 17-year-olds increased between 1986 and 1999 at all levels of course work- general science, biology, chemistry, and physics. Most notably the percentage taking chemistry increased from 40% to 57%.

[Slide 20: Title Page with Web address and phone numbers]

In conclusion, the trends in student achievement are encouraging. This is especially true in mathematics achievement, and in the narrowing of the gap between majority and minority students. It is also encouraging to see the increase in advanced course taking in mathematics and science.

I would like to thank the authors of this report, Jay Campbell, Catherine Hombo, and John Mazzeo, as well as many other people, whose contributions are acknowledged in this report.

A live on-line chat on the trends report will take place on Thursday, August 24th from 2:00 to 3:00 pm EDT. Interested persons should go to the NCES

Web site at http://nces.ed.gov for instructions on how to participate. The URL for the chat is http//nces.ed.gov/statchat/conference.

For further information about the *NAEP 1999 Trends in Academic Progress* please visit our website at http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard. To order the publication or other U.S. Department of Education products, call toll free 1-877-4ED PUBS (877-433-7827).

News...News... Council of the Great City Schools **News...News...**

Council of the Great City Schools
1301 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W. ◆ Suite 702 ◆ Washington, D.C. ◆ 20004

NAEP 1999: TRENDS IN ACADEMIC PROGRESS
Three Decades of Student Performance

Remarks by Michael Casserly
Executive Director
Council of the Great City Schools

Good morning. I am Michael Casserly, Executive Director of the Council of the Great City Schools, a coalition of nearly sixty of the nation's largest urban school districts, serving some 6.6 million students. Thank you for the invitation to join you today.

I would like to commend Secretary Riley, Acting NCES Commissioner Gary Phillips, and NAGB Trustee Michael Nettles for this outstanding report on the academic performance of the nation's students.

It is, bar none, the most comprehensive and unbiased review of student achievement trends in reading, math, and science—for three critical age groups—that we have seen. It should answer, once and for all, the question about whether achievement has improved. The answers since 1990 are encouraging in mathematics and sobering in reading. And they are downright heartening in all subjects if one takes the longer thirty-year view.

It is clear, however, that the nation needs a major new and targeted initiative to improve reading. We need to do a better job of integrating reading in all subject areas and grades and ensure that our teachers can teach reading no matter what their area of specialty. The time for feel-good reading programs has ended.

I will be brief in my remarks this morning. The previous speakers have done a good job of summarizing the findings of this study. The study, as you see, does not present data explicitly on urban schools.

Still, the results are important to urban schools because it tells us about the achievement gaps. While we enroll only 14.3% of the nation's public school enrollment, our cities serve about 33% of the nation's African American students, 30% of its Hispanic students, and about 25% of the country's Asian American students. We also enroll about 25% of the nation's children eligible for free lunch.

The good news in the NAEP data is that the achievement gaps by race, particularly the gaps between white and black students, have closed appreciably in all subjects across all grades since

1970. The bad news is that progress reducing the gaps since 1990 is mixed, depending on the group, the grade, and the subject. In some cases, the gaps have worsened. (The difference between math scores of 17-year-old whites and blacks was 31 points in 1999, compared with 21 points in 1990; and the difference between science scores of 13-year-old whites and Hispanics was 39 points in 1999, compared with 30 points in 1992.)

It is hard to imagine that these national trends are not due partly to progress in urban schools, given our share of the nation's enrollment.
The Council of the Great City Schools is conducting a separate analysis of central city trends on state NAEP scores. We are also examining big city trends on state assessments and on locally administered standardized tests. Our preliminary findings mirror the results being released today. Big city schools have improved significantly in math since 1992 but have not shown much progress in reading. We have a lot of work to do, especially in reading, and we need a lot of assistance from our state and federal partners.

What is clear from our analysis is that some urban school systems are showing substantial progress. Others are not.

Scores in Philadelphia, Houston, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Louisville, San Francisco, Ft. Worth, Indianapolis, and others are showing unusually rapid gains. They are also closing the achievement gaps faster than most. Clearly some of our cities are doing things that others are not, something that our Task Force on Achievement Gaps is exploring in order to accelerate the achievement gains of all cities.

Our preliminary research shows that the places improving the fastest are cities that have—

- implemented higher standards more deeply into the classroom,
- more credentialed teachers,
- more extensive pre-school programs,
- better professional development for their teachers,
- more successful after-school and summer programs,
- lower class sizes,
- increased the proportion of students taking rigorous coursework, and
- implemented stronger accountability systems for students and staff.

Urban schools have been using these reform strategies, to greater or lesser extent, for some years. The number of urban students who have successfully completed algebra by the end of 10th grade, for instance, has jumped from 37% in 1990-91 to 62% in 1996-97. Nearly 90% of the cities have raised standards. About 72% of our kindergartners are now in full-day programs. And over half of the major cities have moved to end social promotions.

We are still facing major challenges, however. We are losing teachers, particularly math and science teachers, to higher paying suburbs. Our classes are too large. Our buildings are falling apart. Our pre-school programs are not reaching enough children. Our schools are actually getting larger. And our high schools do not have enough high-level courses. (Over two-thirds of the nation's white students had taken a second year of algebra or precalculus/calculus in 1999,

compared with slightly more than half of the nation's African-American students, and less than half of Hispanic students.)

As urban schools, we need to accelerate our progress, despite the challenges. We need to close the gaps. We need to stay with the standards. We will not back away from their implementation. We need to accelerate the learning of our poorest students beyond national averages. But we need the nation to meet us half way to ensure that our kids can meet them. Otherwise, our progress will never be any faster and our gaps will never be any narrower.

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Fact Sheet

The Council of the Great City Schools is the only organization in the nation exclusively representing the needs of urban public schools. Composed of 55 large city school districts, its mission is to promote the cause of urban schools and to advocate for inner-city students through legislation, research and media relations. The organization also provides a network for school districts sharing common problems to exchange information, and to collectively address new challenges as they emerge in order to deliver the best possible education for the nation's urban youth.

Total number of students served by Council member district schools: 6.6 million

Student enrollment characteristics:

41.2% - African American
31.9% - Hispanic
19.2% - White
6.9% - Asian/Pacific Islander
0.7% - Alaskan/Native American

21% - English Language Learners
62.5% - Eligible for free/reduced price lunch
11.5% - Students with Individualized Education Programs

Member districts: Albuquerque, Anchorage, Atlanta, Baltimore, Birmingham, Boston, Broward County, Buffalo, Charlotte, Chicago, Cleveland, Columbus, Dallas, Dayton, Denver, Des Moines, Detroit, Fort Worth, Fresno, Houston, Indianapolis, Las Vegas, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Louisville, Memphis, Mesa, Miami-Dade County, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Nashville, Newark, New Orleans, New York City, Norfolk, Oakland, Omaha, Orlando, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Portland, Providence, Richmond, Rochester, Sacramento, St. Louis, St. Paul, Salt Lake City, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, Toledo, Tucson, Tulsa and Washington, D.C.

School districts eligible for membership must be located in cities with populations over 250,000 or student enrollment over 35,000. School districts located in the largest city of any state are also eligible for membership, regardless of size.

8/2000

Embargoed Until August 24, 2000 at 10 a.m. EDT

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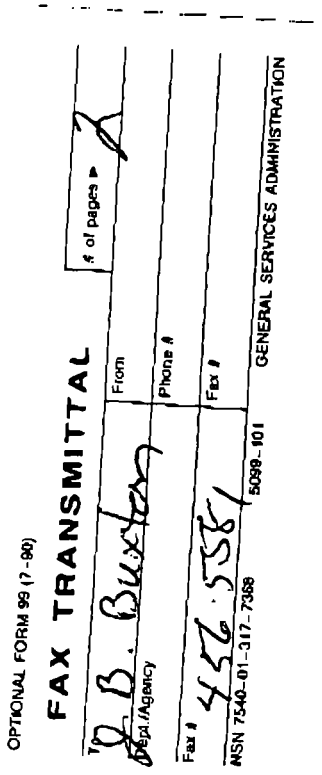

Press Release

Contact: Barbara Marenus, NCES, (202) 502–7391

National Assessment Shows Encouraging Trends in Mathematics Performance

"Encouraging trends in student achievement" were reported today by Gary W. Phillips, Acting Commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Dr. Phillips stated that "the most consistent and steady gains were in mathematics and advanced course taking in mathematics and science." These results are from a new trend report, *NAEP 1999 Trends in Academic Progress*, that examines the academic performance of 9-, 13-, and 17-year olds. Data show that for mathematics, since 1973, students in all age groups assessed achieved consistent gains. These increases began in the 1980s and continued into the 1990s.

NAEP 1999 Trends in Academic Progress also describes student performance since the early 1970s in reading and science. Reading scores have also improved, but showed less improvement than mathematics scores. Nine and 13-year-olds are reading better than they did nearly 30 years ago. However, scores for 17-year-olds remained unchanged.

Student performance in science has varied by age group. Scores for 9-year-olds were higher in 1999 than in 1970, while scores for 13-year-olds remained unchanged. For 17-year-olds, scores were lower in 1999 than in the first assessment, administered in 1969. Actually, the science scores for this group decreased between 1969 and 1982, before they started increasing. While this age group's science scores have not returned to their initial level, there is an emerging trend of 17-year-olds taking more advanced science courses.

Embargoed Until August 24, 2000 at 10:00 a.m. EDT

The report also provides data related to the nation's ongoing concerns about the educational gap between minorities and whites. While scores for whites have consistently been higher than for blacks and Hispanics for all three ages in all three subjects, some gaps have narrowed for some age groups in all three subjects since the early 1970s. For example, in mathematics, the score gap between black and white students narrowed for all three age groups. For Hispanics, the gap narrowed for 13- and 17-year-olds, but not for 9-year-olds. In reading, score gaps for blacks and whites also narrowed for all three age groups. For Hispanics, the gap narrowed for 17-year-olds only. In science, the score gaps for blacks and whites narrowed for 9- and 13-year-olds only. The gaps for whites and Hispanics remained unchanged. Despite these improvements in the 1970s and 1980s, there have not been consistent decreases in the size of the gaps since 1990.

The report also describes performance by gender. In reading, females continued to outperform males in all three age groups. In mathematics, males had outperformed females at age 17 in previous long-term trend assessments, but in 1999 this gap disappeared, resulting in similar performance for males and females for all three age groups. In science, males outperformed females at ages 13 and 17, but not at age 9. The science gap favoring 17-year-old males has declined since the first assessment in 1969.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is administered by NCES, an agency within the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement. NAEP has administered 10 long-term trend assessments for reading, 10 for science, and 9 for mathematics over the past 30 years. In 1999, approximately 16,000 students took each of the three assessments.

For further information on the *NAEP 1999 Trends in Academic Progress*, please visit NCES's NAEP Web site at http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard All NAEP reports can be ordered by calling toll free 1-877-4ED-Pubs (1-877-433-7827), TTY/TTD 1-877-576-7734; e-mailing at edpubs@inet.ed.gov; or via the Internet at http://www.ed.gov/pubs/edpubs.html/

A live on-line chat moderated hosted by Dr. Phillips on the trends report will take place on Thursday, August 24th from 2:00 to 3:00 pm EDT. Interested persons should go to the NCES Web site at http://nces.ed.gov/statchat/conference to participate.

NAEP 1999

TRENDS IN ACADEMIC PROGRESS: Three Decades of Student Performance

- The long-term trends over the past 30 years show that math, science and reading scores have risen, with the exception of science scores for 17-year-olds. We've made solid gains but continue to have much more work to do. We now know more about what works and need to aggressively and boldly apply what works in our schools (and budgets). This report certainly contradicts the critics who say we've gone backward in education over the last decade.

- We have a record number of students in our schools, and we have a more diverse student population than ever before – including larger numbers of children who speak English as a second language and children with disabilities – and **today's students are doing better than students did 30 years ago.**

  (A second set of NAEP assessments developed this decade to reflect schools' current curricula show increases in all three age groups in reading and math.)

- **Math scores are at an all-time high** in 1999 in all three age-levels. But that is not good enough – we have to do even better.

- We've seen solid improvement in **students in the bottom quarter, where we've really been targeting our funding**. Reading scores for nine-year-olds show strong improvement – in 1990, the score was 157 and in 1999 these kids scored 165.

  - Beginning in 1994, through Title I, we raised standards, targeted resources and strengthened accountability for schools serving the most disadvantaged tudents. (Current NAEP scores show solid increases in reading for the lowest performing 10 percent.)
  - Our progress may have been limited by the "reading wars," we now realize that we need both phonics and reading in context.
  - Four years ago we set a national goal that by the end of third grade, all children would be able to read well and independently.
  - Our Reading Excellence Act supports research-proven reading instruction methods. The first-year state grants – made last year – will be impacting schools this fall.
  - Students from more than 1,200 colleges and universities are serving as mentors to young readers as part of the America Reads program.

- **We now know what works and Congress must respond to the President's budget request to build on this so our children do even better during this decade.**

  - A new Rand Report and other recent studies have identified reforms that have helped to raise student achievement levels. The most effective measures according to these studies are those we are making the largest budget requests to Congress – smaller class size, early

childhood education, after-school programs, quality teachers, improved teaching resources, and reading programs.

- **Progress across ethnic and racial groups**: Despite a record number of students – including more children with disabilities and more students for whom English is a second language – blacks and Hispanics have increased scores in all grade levels in math and reading, but 17-year-old blacks (as well as 17-year-old whites) had lower science scores in 1999 than when the test was originally given. This is not good enough – our goal is to close the gap and help ALL kids learn to their highest potential.

Statement by
U.S. Secretary of Education
Richard W. Riley

On the Release of
NAEP 1999: Trends in Academic Progress

Washington, DC
Thursday, August 24, 2000

Thank you, Gary [Phillips]. NCES data is an essential part of the effort to improve America's schools, and I'm grateful for your work.

I don't know who likes statistics more – baseball fans or our friends at NCES. If we have any baseball fans in the audience, you've probably heard your father say that the players of his era were better than the players of your era. We will never know for sure whether Sandy Koufax could have handled Mark McGwire or whether Willie Mays was better than Ken Griffey Jr.

But the Trends report puts today's students on the same field with students from 30 years ago, and the results may surprise a few cynics: Today's students do better. Critics of public education would have you believe that reports like this are full of arrows and lines pointing down. In fact, for the 9 major categories since 1971, scores have fallen significantly in just 1 category. And during the 1990s, scores have not fallen significantly in any category.

And, remember, this is for a group of students that is larger and more diverse than ever before – with higher percentages of test-takers with disabilities or whose home language is not English.

The Trends report is another reminder of how much we owe teachers, principals, and parents across the country who have worked to improve education. But while this report can help steer us away from the cynical attitude that some people have about our schools, it should not lead to complacency.

Let me highlight a few of the trends – some good, some not so good. Of the 9 major categories – all 3 age levels in math, science, and reading – 6 were significantly better and 2 edged up slightly. The science scores for 17-year-olds were lower, but they have moved up significantly during the 1990s.

It's also relevant to look at a few of the trends over the 1990s. There is good news here, too. Of the 9 categories, most are up significantly, and none are down. There is an upward trend in math, with steady progress at every age level – up significantly since 1971, up significantly during the '90s. In fact, for every age level in 1999, the math scores reached their highest level ever.

Again, I want to caution against complacency. The math scores are better, but they are not good enough. At the 13-year-old level, for example, just 15% of students scored well in computing with decimals and simple fractions. We welcome the progress, but we know we still have a lot of work to do in math.

Gary discussed the results for children from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. At the national level, our resources are targeted for minority and low-income students. And if you take a close look at the data, you'll see that in several categories, Blacks and Hispanics are scoring better than ever – and that is good news.

Over the last two times the tests were given – 1996 and 1999 – white children tied or exceeded their highest scores ever in 6 of the 9 categories. For Black children, it was also 6 of 9 categories. And for Hispanic children, it was 7 of 9 categories. But despite this, we have a persistent gap in achievement and we must work to close it while lifting achievement for all.

Now I'd like to shift to what <u>educators</u> have learned over the last 3 decades – both about lifting performance and closing the achievement gaps. Since these tests were first given, we have experience and research that tell us what works in our nation's classrooms. Our challenge today is to spread the word and provide targeted resources so that every child in every classroom has the benefits of good teaching and what works. Let me outline 4 proven ways to improve student performance.

First, we have better evidence about the importance of good teaching. A recent study in Tennessee found that teacher-quality factor resulted in a difference of 50 percentile points on a statewide achievement test. That is why we have focused on recruiting and training good teachers and keeping their skills up to date. And we have called on Congress to live up to its commitment to hire 100,000 well-trained teachers to reduce class size in the early grades.

Second, as I have often said, we could revolutionize education in America if parents would read to their children for 30 minutes a day. The Trends report finds that reading in the home is down, and that there is a correlation between reading in the home and achievement on these tests. So, I ask parents to read to their children, starting at an early age. I urge children to get in the habit of reading.

And I urge Congress to honor our request for a 10% increase in the Reading Excellence Act – they haven't so far. Our goal is for every child in America to read well and independently by the end of the 3rd grade. It's a nationwide goal, and it will require a nationwide effort.

Third, we know today that disadvantaged students are not well served by a watered-down curriculum and low expectations. So in 1994 we included a new emphasis on high standards in Title I, our effort to help low-income students improve their reading and math skills. And if you look at the reading scores in the 1990s for the lower quartile of 9-year-olds – many of whom are Title I students – you'll see that they improve dramatically by 1999.

For older students, the high standards movement has meant taking advanced courses – for instance, algebra instead of general math in 8th or 9th grade, and calculus or precalculus in high school. I believe that this trend, which is highlighted in this report and in a recent survey by the ACT, is one of the main reasons for the consistent, across-the-board improvement in math scores. It is clear that students excel when they are challenged. This is especially true for disadvantaged, black, or Hispanic children.

The next step is to move high standards into every classroom and encourage more students, including low-income and minority students, to take advanced courses and AP classes. In October, the Glenn Commission will release a report with specific recommendations on ways to support high-quality teaching in math and science in all grades. The Commission recognizes that in order to improve student achievement, we need to dramatically improve math and science teaching.

This is a very important issue. As I said before, more students are taking advanced math and science courses. But many of the teachers in these classes are teaching "out of field." No matter what we call the course, it won't truly be an "advanced" course unless the teacher is well trained in that subject. So if we want to raise student achievement, we need well-qualified math and science teachers for the advanced classes.

Fourth, we have stronger evidence today about school reform measures that have a significant, positive impact on learning. I was in Chicago earlier this week, where they have had great success with by offering extended learning opportunities after school and during the summer. And the RAND report, released just last month, identified reforms that have helped to raise student achievement levels.

The most effective measures include those in which this Administration is asking Congress to make serious investments – smaller class size, early childhood education, and extended after-school and summer school programs.

If we set support good teaching, encourage families to read together, set high standards for all students, and invest in research-based strategies, we can continue to improve student performance. We know how to improve our schools; we can make it happen. We need those who count themselves as "Congressional leaders" to get on board. That means adopting a federal education budget that includes investments in smaller classes, up-to-date schools, effective pre-school programs, strong after-school programs, and well-trained teachers.

I'd like to thank NCES again for their work on the NAEP Trends report. We need to make the right decisions now to put well-trained teachers and high standards in every classroom and give our students the extra help to succeed. If we do that, we can build on the positive trends cited in this report, address the challenges of educating a larger, more diverse group of students, and provide an excellent education for every child in America.

Thank you.

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