

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Texas public school students earn top national rankings in math when compared to their peers in other states**

When scores are examined by ethnic groups, Texas students earned top national rankings on the 2005 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) math exams.

“While Texas 8<sup>th</sup> graders ranked 20<sup>th</sup> overall and 4<sup>th</sup> graders ranked 9<sup>th</sup> overall, a closer look tells a much different story,” says Scott Milder, President and CEO of Friends of Texas Public Schools. “Overall scores are misleading because student populations are radically different from one state to the next. When all results are lumped together they fail to account for ethnic and socioeconomic variables.”

When comparing student subgroups by state, Texas 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders (the only two grade levels at which NAEP state data is collected) actually outperformed their peers in nearly every other state on the math portion of the NAEP exam. Following are the results:

- Hispanic 4<sup>th</sup> graders and 8<sup>th</sup> graders rank 2<sup>nd</sup> in the nation.
- African American 4<sup>th</sup> graders and 8<sup>th</sup> graders also rank 2<sup>nd</sup> in the nation.
- Asian 4<sup>th</sup> graders rank 1<sup>st</sup> in the nation and Asian 8<sup>th</sup> graders rank 3<sup>rd</sup> in the nation.
- White 4<sup>th</sup> graders rank 1<sup>st</sup> in the nation and White 8<sup>th</sup> graders rank 3<sup>rd</sup> in the nation.

“When you consider that Texas arguably has the most diverse and challenging student population in this country, these results really are extraordinary,” says Milder. “Contrary to popular opinion and the day’s headlines, Texas students and educators lead this nation when it comes to results and we congratulate them for their success.”

*The NAEP is known as the nation’s report card because it is the only assessment test given to students of all academic levels in all states. Results are based on the performance of 600,000 fourth and eight-grade students across the country.*

Further examination of the NAEP results reveals even more high marks for Texas students.

## Fourth-Grade Math

On the overall 4th-grade mathematics test Texas students ranked in fourth place nationally with 87 percent of its students **at or above the basic performance level**, which includes performance at the basic, proficient and advanced levels. Only Massachusetts, New Hampshire and North Dakota had higher performance levels. *(NOTE: The 9<sup>th</sup> place ranking mentioned earlier is based solely on overall average score. The 4<sup>th</sup> place ranking mentioned in this paragraph refers to students at or above the basic performance level)*

“Again, these results are remarkable when you compare the student population of Texas with these other three states,” says Milder.

Fourth-grade students showed significant gains on the overall scale score on the exam as well, earning a score of 242, up from 237 in 2003. The national average scale score was 237.

Texas’s white, African-American, Hispanic and Asian-American students all outperformed similar ethnic groups nationally, according to information from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), which administers the NAEP program.

- Asian-Americans from Texas earned the highest average scale score of 264, compared to a score of 251 for Asian-American students nationally.
- Texas white students received a score of 254, compared to a score of 246 for white students across the country.
- Texas’s African-American students posted a score of 228, compared to 220 for the group nationally.
- Hispanic Texans earned a score of 235, 10 points higher than their peers nationally.

The percentage of Texas’ 4th-grade students scoring at the proficient level increased over the state’s past test scores and was higher than the national average. Thirty-five percent of Texas students were at the proficient level, up from 29 percent in 2003. Nationally, 30 percent of the students were proficient in math.

A student who has earned a proficient achievement level has demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter, including subject-matter knowledge, application of such knowledge to real-world situations, and analytical skills appropriate to the subject matter, according to NCES.

Texas has also greatly reduced the percent of students who are performing below the basic level. In 1992, 44 percent of the state’s fourth graders scored below the basic level, compared with 13 percent today.

## 8th-grade math

Texas 8th-grade students earned an average scale score of 281 this year on the NAEP mathematics test, up from 277 in 2003. This year's score exceeded the national average scale score of 278.

Texas had slightly more students at the proficient level, with 25 percent of this state's eighth-graders performing at this high level, versus 23 percent at the national level.

Like the 4th-grade students, each major ethnic group in 8<sup>th</sup> grade outperformed the national average.

- White students earned an average scale score of 295, compared to a score of 288 for whites nationally.
- African-American students in Texas earned a score of 264, 10 points higher than the national average for this group.
- Hispanic Texans with a score of 271 also had a 10 point lead over Hispanics nationally.
- Asian-Texans earned an average scale score of 308, 14 points higher than their peer group across the country.

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