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Texas students outperform peer groups on NAEP science exam

AUSTIN – African-American, Hispanic, white, Asian/Pacific Islander, economically disadvantaged and English language learners in Texas’ fourth-grade class outperformed their peer groups nationally on the 2005 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) science exam.

Texas’ white and African-American fourth-grade students ranked second on the science test with only Virginia’s students from these two ethnic groups earning statistically significantly higher average scores than the Texans, according to information released today by the National Center for Education Statistics. Hispanics in only four states earned a statistically higher average scale score than did Texas fourth-grade students. Those states were Virginia, Missouri, Kentucky and Florida.

Following are the average scale scores for the various student groups in fourth grade.

Student group	Texas	Nation
White	165	161
African American	133	128
Hispanic	141	132
Asian/Pacific Islander	165	156
Economically Disadvantaged	139	135
English Language Learners	129	120
All students	150	149

Note: The NAEP science scale ranges from 0 to 300.

At eighth grade, the only other grade for which states receive state-level results, exam, Texas’ Hispanic students earned a significantly higher average scale score than their national peers. While average scale scores for white, African American, and Asian/ Pacific Islander students in Texas were higher than their peer groups nationally, the difference was not statistically significant because of the standard error of measurement. Following are the scale scores for eighth-grade student groups.

Student group	Texas	Nation
White	160	159
African American	125	123
Hispanic	131	127

Asian/Pacific Islander	161	155
Economically Disadvantaged	129	130
English Language Learners	99	107
All students	143	147

Note: The NAEP science scale ranges from 0 to 300.

Only three states – Missouri, Wyoming and Virginia - had statistically higher average scale scores for Hispanic students than did Texas. This occurred even though Texas had a significantly higher percentage of Hispanic test takers than all but two other states. Nationally, 17 percent of the students tested were Hispanic, compared to 38 percent in Texas.

Just four states – Washington, Delaware, Massachusetts and Virginia – had statistically higher average scale scores for African-American students than did Texas.

“Texas students stacked up well compared to their peers nationally. This is very encouraging news,” Commissioner of Education Shirley J. Neeley said. “We want to build on the strong base found at fourth grade. Rather than having scores begin to dip at eighth grade, we want them to continue to climb. We want more students to achieve at proficient and advanced levels on the NAEP and to excel at their science studies in general. Like our own Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills results, which we released last week, the NAEP results show that we have room to improve our achievement in the area of science.

“Texas, in December, launched an exciting project that should help us do this. The Texas Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (T-STEM) Initiative is focused on improving instruction and performance in these subject areas for students in grades 6-12. Additionally, both the State Board of Education and the Texas Legislature called for adding a fourth year of science to the state’s graduation requirements,” she said.

The fourth year of science classes will be required for all students following the state’s Recommended High School Graduation Plan or Distinguished Achievement Plan, beginning with the group of students who are today in seventh grade.

To view slides that show how the various student groups in Texas compare with their peers nationally on the NAEP, please go to:

http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/resources/naep/NAEP_science.ppt .

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