



## NATIONAL EDUCATION GOALS PANEL

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
July, 15, 2001

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### **NATION'S LOW-PERFORMING READERS ARE FALLING BEHIND** *Fourth Grade Reading Scores of Bottom 10<sup>th</sup> Percentile Declined in the 1990's*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – Despite improvements in reading scores of the nation's top 4<sup>th</sup> graders, recent data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) indicate a decline in the reading scores of the weakest readers. NAEP data show that between 1992 and 2000 the 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading scale score in the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile increased significantly from 261 to 264, while scores decreased significantly from 170 to 163 in the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile.

The 2000 NAEP results in reading that were released in April underscore similar findings of a study, also released in April, by the National Education Goals Panel (NEGP). The Goals Panel study showed the average performance of the top 25% of students improved while the bottom 25% declined.

“The new NAEP data coupled with National Education Goals Panel findings reinforce the need to focus attention on the nation's weakest readers,” said Gov. Frank O'Bannon (D-IN), the Panel's chair. “We need to identify and adopt effective policies and practices for early reading efforts with at-risk students. By the 4<sup>th</sup> grade our nation's youth should be reading to learn, not learning to read.”

Reading achievement, which is an important focus of President Bush's reform efforts, is also a Goals Panel indicator of Student Achievement, the third of the eight national education goals. The Goals Panel sets its performance standard at the two highest levels of achievement on NAEP. NAEP provides the only nationally representative and continuing assessment of what America's students know and can do in various subject areas, including reading.

“Reading is the cornerstone to learning,” says John Barth, Acting Executive Director of the Goals Panel. “We must reverse this trend if we are going to meet the needs of all children.”

#### **About the National Education Goals Panel**

Created in July 1990, the National Education Goals Panel is a bipartisan body consisting of an equal number of Republicans and Democrats from the federal and state levels of government. The Panel is made up of eight governors, four members of Congress, four state legislators and two members appointed by the President. The eight National Education Goals call for greater levels of: student achievement; high school completion; teacher education and professional development; parental participation in the schools; adult literacy and lifelong learning; and safe, disciplined, and alcohol-and-drug-free schools. The Goals also call for all children to be ready to learn by the time they start school and for US students to be first in the world in mathematics and science achievement.

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