



NATIONAL EDUCATION GOALS PANEL

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EIGHTH GRADERS SHOW IMPROVEMENT BUT ACHIEVEMENT GAP PERSISTS

WASHINGTON, D.C. – As America's students head back to classrooms across the nation, a new study shows improvement in math performance across all racial groups for 8th graders. However, achievement gaps remain between the performance of white and minority (black and Hispanic) students. These findings are based on data recently released by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which provides national and state-by-state data on educational performance in core subject areas.

The NAEP data show heartening improvement in 8th graders' math scores between 1992 and 2000. NAEP shows improvement at two levels of achievement: both those "at or above basic," who show partial mastery of knowledge and skills necessary for proficient work in that grade, and those "at or above proficient," who demonstrate competency over challenging subject matter.

NAEP data in math for the year 2000 show improvements across racial groups. Black students' scores increased from 21 to 32 percent at or above basic and increased from 2 to 6 percent at or above proficient. Hispanic students' performance increased from 34 to 41 percent (basic or above) and from 6 to 10 percent (proficient or above) respectively. Scores of white students also increased, from 69 to 77 percent (basic) and from 27 to 35 percent (proficient), effectively maintaining the achievement gap between whites and minorities.

"These results are of particular interest to the Goals Panel because one of our major objectives is to narrow and eventually close the gap between white and minority students," said Gov. Frank O'Bannon, the panel's chair. "Closing the achievement gap is still a struggle for education leaders. A rich and diverse nation cannot afford to leave a single child behind."

These most recent NAEP results echo Goals Panel findings published in *Raising Achievement and Reducing Gaps*, which characterized the achievement gap on a state-by-state basis.

"While the NAEP data shows an overall improvement in student achievement," said John Barth, the panel's acting executive director, "there is not much evidence of the gap narrowing between white and minority students. This is a significant concern and an issue that policymakers must continue to address."

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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