



STATE OF ALABAMA  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**



Joseph B. Morton  
 State Superintendent  
 of Education

Alabama  
 State Board  
 of Education

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**ALABAMA LEADS THE NATION IN GAINS MADE IN 4<sup>TH</sup> GRADE READING**  
*The Nation's 2007 Report Card Shows State is Closing the Achievement Gap*

Governor Bob Riley  
 President

**Montgomery, Ala.** — Alabama students are number one in the nation. In a state consumed by rankings, that fact is especially significant as it relates to academics. In data released today on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the nation's report card shows that Alabama's public schools made more improvement in fourth grade Reading than any other state in the nation.

Randy McKinney  
 District I  
 President Pro Tem

"I want to be the first to congratulate the state of Alabama for leading the nation in 4th grade Reading gains," said U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings. "Combining proven methods of instruction with hard-working students and dedicated teachers has paid off with reading scores rising eight points in just two years. It's phenomenal."

Betty Peters  
 District II

Stephanie W. Bell  
 District III

"Alabama's gain in fourth grade Reading scores is higher than any other state between 2005 and 2007," said Mark Schneider, Commissioner for the National Center for Education Statistics. "This gain stands out for this year's assessment, and in the history of NAEP's state-level Reading assessment."

Dr. Ethel H. Hall  
 District IV  
 Vice President  
 Emerita

The NAEP report shows a significant gain of eight points in fourth grade Reading for Alabama students. That's almost triple the national average in gains. In 2005, the scale score was 208 and in 2007 the gain increased significantly to 216 – resulting in a net gain of eight points. This improvement closes the gap and Alabama is only four scale score points from the national average (220) in fourth grade Reading.

Ella B. Bell  
 District V

David F. Byers, Jr.  
 District VI  
 Vice President

Governor Bob Riley said, "Alabama is number one in the nation in reading improvements at the fourth grade level. This didn't happen by accident. This is part of our game plan to improve education in Alabama, and this is proof positive that our game plan is working. The progress we have made in just a few years is truly remarkable, and if we keep our focus on funding the programs, we will continue to record these types of amazing gains. I want to thank all the teachers because they are doing exactly what we asked them to do. They know how incredible our Alabama Reading Initiative is and that one of the reasons it is so successful is because it provides support for our teachers. They know we must continue to expand it to all grade levels, and we will."

Sandra Ray  
 District VII

Dr. Mary Jane Caylor  
 District VIII

Joseph B. Morton  
 Secretary and  
 Executive Officer

Alabama also made significant gains in the *Advanced* category in fourth grade Reading. In 2005, 4 percent of Alabama students scored at the *Advanced* level. In 2007, that percent nearly doubled to 7 percent of the students scoring at the *Advanced* level. That percentage equals the national average of students scoring at the *Advanced* level.

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## NAEP Results

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Reading and Mathematics results are reported by average scale scores (on a 0-500 scale) and by achievement levels (*Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, and Advanced*). NAEP assesses a representative sample of students in Grades 4 and 8 from each state in Reading and Mathematics every two years.

“We’re now beginning to see the results of our efforts,” said David Byers, vice president of the state Board of Education and District 6 representative. “Investments in our Alabama Reading Initiative and Math, Science, and Technology Initiative demonstrate increases in teaching and learning.”

State Superintendent of Education Joe Morton observed: “We’re number one on the list of fourth grade Reading improvement in the nation, and it is not because the states are listed alphabetically.”

For the first time in Alabama history, Alabama public school students in grades K-3 had completed the Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI) training before the 2007 NAEP assessment was administered to fourth graders. And the dramatic increase in NAEP reading results points out the need for ARI training in the middle grades. The ARI will expand to Grades 4 through 8 by 2009.

“The impact ARI has had on our school has been unbelievable,” said Ms. Sherry Calvert, Principal of FE Burselson Elementary in Hartselle. “When I asked my faculty what they attribute our positive change in performance, the answer was, “The training ARI provides in reading comprehension.”

Student scores in both fourth and eighth grade Mathematics show significant gains as well. In 2005, fourth-graders in Alabama scored 225 points and in 2007 the score rose to 229. The national average improved by two points while Alabama’s score showed a four point gain. The percentage of students who performed at or above the NAEP *Proficient* level was 26 percent in 2007, up from 21 percent in 2005. Alabama’s eight-graders improved NAEP Mathematics score from 262 in 2005 to 266 in 2007 while the nation only rose by two points over 2005 scores.

“This is a marathon, not a sprint,” observed State Superintendent of Education Joe Morton. “When we started the Alabama Reading Initiative nearly a decade ago, we knew it would take time to get full funding and implement it statewide. We had to prove ourselves and we are doing so. The same is true for the Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative. In grades and schools where we have these state initiatives, we have seen improvement. Now we must continue to work to expand both programs to higher grades and all schools.”

In addition, the 2007 scores reflect the first time that the NAEP test was administered to students enrolled in schools that participated in Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSTI). Those schools that have implemented AMSTI continually see increased test scores on all levels. Currently, only 25% percent of Alabama’s schools have implemented AMSTI; however, that number could grow to more than 40 percent if additional funding is approved in FY 2009.

“AMSTI training requires students to think, question, and find answers they are able to support and defend,” said Mrs. Carol Broughton, Principal Fairhope Intermediate School in Baldwin County. “Such critical thinking skills are beneficial for learning and testing.”

## NAEP Results

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NAEP, also known as “the Nation’s Report Card,” is the only nationally representative and continuing assessment of what America’s students know and can do in various subject areas. The 2007 results provide national and state data about the current status of American students’ reading and mathematics skills and allow the United States to chart trends over time. NCLB requires states receiving Title I funding to participate in NAEP and to administer Reading and Mathematics assessments in Grades 4 and 8 every other year.

Approximately 12,000 students from approximately 230 schools in Alabama participated in the NAEP Reading and Mathematics assessments in February 2007. These assessments are required by *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB).

NAEP does not report on the performance of individual schools and students. Instead, assessments are administered to representative samples of students in specified grades, and each participating student takes only a portion of the test. Assessment results are based on the performance of students in these samples.

2007 NAEP Reading and Mathematics results can be viewed at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard> and [click here](#) to view State Department of Education charts indicating the significant gains in 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Reading and Math.

(All schools participating in NAEP are selected by NAEP, not the State Department of Education, and all assessments are administered by individuals selected by NAEP)

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