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## Virginia Students Earn High Science Marks on Nation’s Report Card *Virginia Fourth Graders in Virtual Tie for Highest Achieving in Nation*

Results of national science tests announced today show that Virginia public school students are among the highest achieving in the nation in the subject.

The average science scores of Virginia fourth-grade and eighth-grade students on the 2009 National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) – also known as "The Nation’s Report Card" – were significantly higher than the averages of their national peers:

- Virginia fourth graders achieved an average score of 162 on the national science test. Students in no other state achieved at a statistically higher level, although New Hampshire fourth-graders achieved an average score that was one point higher. The national average score for grade-4 students was 149.
- Forty-six percent of Virginia fourth-grade students met or exceeded the rigorous NAEP proficiency standard in science, compared with 33 percent nationwide.
- Students in only six states performed at a statistically higher level than Virginia eighth graders with an average score of 156. The national average for eighth graders also was 149.
- Thirty-six percent of the commonwealth’s grade-8 students met or exceeded the NAEP proficiency standard, compared with 29 percent nationwide.

“Virginia’s high standards in science for both students and teachers continue to pay dividends in learning and achievement,” Superintendent of Public Instruction Patricia I. Wright said. “The introduction of even more rigorous science standards in 2012 will further strengthen the foundation for student achievement in this critical subject.”

Grade 4 — Average Scale Scores					
Jurisdiction	All students	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/ Pacific Island
National	149	162	127	130	160
Virginia	162	172	141	152	174
South	148	162	128	138	164

Grade 4 — Percent “At or Above Proficient”					
Jurisdiction	All students	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/ Pacific Island
National	32	46	10	13	45
Virginia	46	59	18	32	61
South	31	46	11	18	49

Virginia had the second highest achieving girls in the nation on the grade-4 test with an average score of 161. New Hampshire’s fourth-grade girls ranked first, with an average score of 163. The commonwealth’s fourth-grade boys also achieved an average score of 161 and ranked fifth in the nation. North Dakota had the highest achieving fourth-grade boys with an average score of 164.

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Virginia Asian, black, Hispanic and white fourth-grade students achieved the highest average scores for their respective subgroups.

In grade 8, black and white students in the commonwealth achieved the fourth-highest state averages for their subgroups, Hispanic students in Virginia ranked fifth when compared with Hispanic students in other states, and Asian students ranked seventh.

<b>Grade 8 — Average Scale Scores</b>					
<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>All students</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>Asian/ Pacific Island</b>
<b>National</b>	149	161	125	131	159
<b>Virginia</b>	156	166	135	144	168
<b>South</b>	147	159	125	139	167

<b>Grade 8 — Percent “At or Above Proficient”</b>					
<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>All students</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>Asian/ Pacific Island</b>
<b>National</b>	29	41	8	12	40
<b>Virginia</b>	36	48	11	20	49
<b>South</b>	27	38	8	16	49

Eighth-grade girls in Virginia ranked ninth among the states in science achievement with an average score of 155. The commonwealth’s eighth-grade boys achieved an average score of 157 and ranked 17th compared with boys in other states.

“Recently revised standards in science, mathematics and English all include more rigorous objectives for learning in the middle grades,” said Board of Education President Eleanor B. Saslaw. “The board’s expectation is that as middle school students meet these higher benchmarks, more students will enter high school on a trajectory for college and career readiness, and this increased achievement will be reflected in the performance of Virginia eighth graders on the national tests.”

NAEP is the only nationally representative test of what American students know and can do in various subject areas. Approximately 2,900 fourth-grade students and 2,800 eighth graders participated in the assessment between late January and early March 2009. The tested students were selected to form a sample representative of the state as a whole.

The national science tests, which are administered every four years, were updated in 2009 to reflect developments in curriculum standards, state assessments and research. Because of the changes, results from the 2009 national science tests cannot be compared with the results of previous NAEP science results.

Approximately 13 percent of the tested students in grade 4, and 12 percent of the students tested in grade 8 were students with disabilities. Participating students with disabilities were tested under standard conditions or with accommodations permitted by NAEP. Students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that requires testing accommodations that are not allowed under NAEP or who participate in an alternative state assessment program were excluded from testing.

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