



For Immediate Release: May 10, 2012

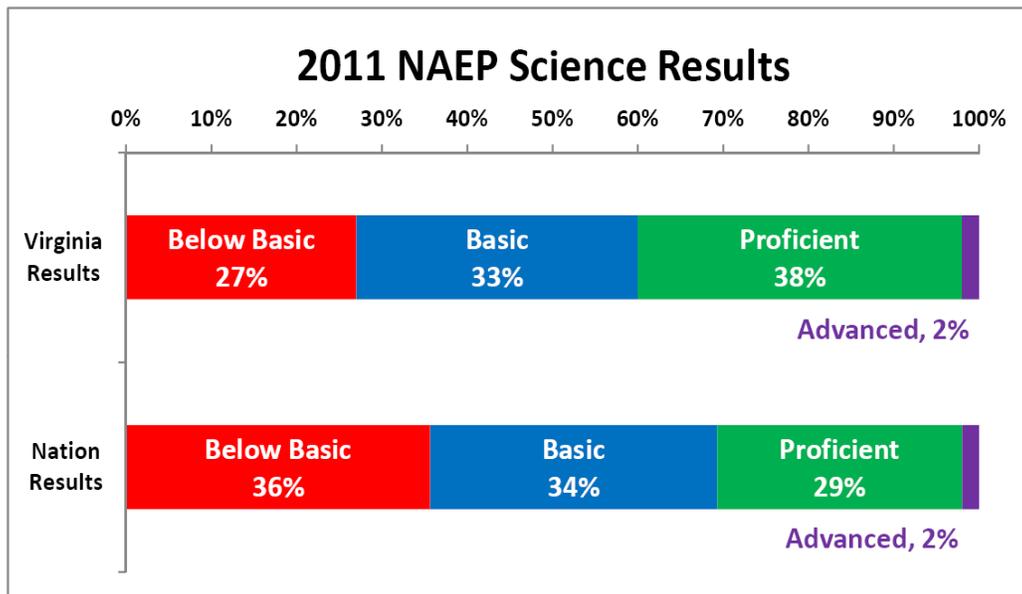
Contact: Charles B. Pyle, Director of Communications, (804) 371-2420
Julie C. Grimes, Communications Manager, (804) 225-2775

Virginia Students Make New Gains on National Science Test *Commonwealth's 8th Graders Outperform Peers Nationwide and in Most States*

The percentage of Virginia eighth graders meeting or exceeding the rigorous national standard for proficiency in science increased significantly in 2011. Forty percent of the Virginia students tested on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) science test last year achieved at either the proficient or advanced level, compared with 36 percent in 2009.

The commonwealth's eighth graders also achieved at a significantly higher level than students nationwide and than students in 34 states and jurisdictions. Nationwide, 31 percent of public school students achieved at or above the proficient level on the 2011 science test. The performance of students in 12 states and jurisdictions was comparable to that of Virginia students. Students in only five states achieved at a higher level.

"Virginia schools are fortunate to have many outstanding science teachers and nationally recognized science standards that stress inquiry-based learning as well as content knowledge," Superintendent of Public Instruction Patricia I. Wright said. "The implementation of even more rigorous science standards in 2012 will provide a foundation for even higher achievement."



Wright also attributed the strong performance of Virginia students on the 2011 national science assessment to professional development opportunities for teachers made possible through partnerships between school divisions and science education associations, state agencies and institutions of higher education.

(more)

Approximately 2,300 students in 110 Virginia schools were selected to participate in last year’s special administration of the national grade-8 science assessment as a representative sample of the commonwealth’s eighth graders. Their scores, and the scores of eighth graders on the 2011 NAEP in mathematics, will be linked to the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) assessment scale.

Linking data from the two assessment programs will allow for valid comparisons of student achievement in Virginia and other states with achievement in the more than 50 countries that participate in TIMSS. The results of the NAEP-TIMSS linking study are expected to be released to the public late this year.

“For the first time, we will be able to use NAEP results to compare the science and mathematics achievement of Virginia students with the performance of their peers around the globe,” Wright said.

Virginia’s average score of 160 on the 2011 science test was nine points higher than the national public-school average of 151 and represented a statistically significant improvement over 2009’s state average of 156.

Black and Hispanic students in Virginia outperformed their regional and nationwide peers. The 2011 science tests, however produced no significant changes in the gaps separating the achievement of these students with that of white students. Asian students were again the commonwealth’s highest performers in science with 56 percent meeting or surpassing the NAEP proficiency standard.

2011 Grade-8 Science — Percent “At or Above Proficient”					
Jurisdiction	All Students	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/ Pacific Island
National	31	43	9	16	41
Virginia	40	51	15	24	56
South	29	41	10	22	48

2011 Grade-8 Science — Average Scale Scores					
Jurisdiction	All Students	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/ Pacific Island
National	151	163	128	136	159
Virginia	160	169	138	145	172
South	150	162	129	145	166

NAEP is the only nationally representative test of what American students know and can do in various subject areas. The national science tests, which are usually 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 and 2011 tests cannot be compared with the results of previous NAEP science results.

The next administration of the science NAEP is scheduled for 2015, when both fourth-grade and eighth-grade students will be assessed.