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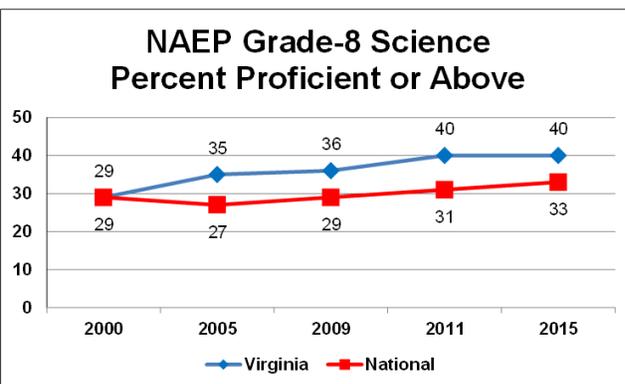
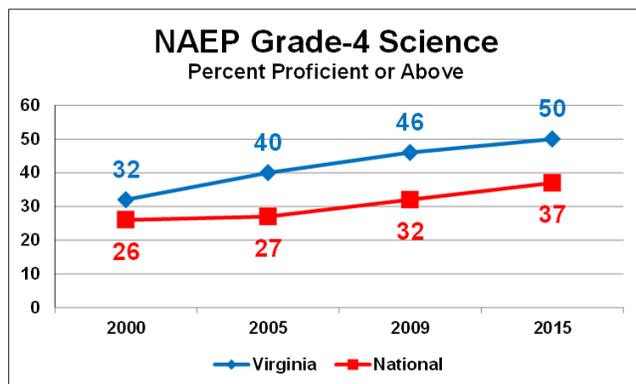
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Virginia Students Earn Top Science Marks *Virginia Fourth Graders Tie for Highest Achieving in Nation*

RICHMOND, Va. — Results of 2015 national science tests announced today show that Virginia public school students are among the highest achieving in the nation in the subject, far outperforming their peers nationwide and in most other states.

The average science scores of Virginia fourth-grade and eighth-grade students on the 2015 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) – also known as "The Nation's Report Card" – were significantly higher than the averages of their national peers.

- 50 percent of Virginia fourth-grade students met or exceeded the rigorous NAEP proficiency standard in science, compared with 37 percent nationwide.
- Virginia fourth graders achieved an average score of 165 on the national science test, with no state performing at a statistically higher level. Nationwide, the average score for fourth-grade public school students was 153.
- 40 percent of the commonwealth's grade-8 students met or exceeded the NAEP proficiency standard, compared with 33 percent nationwide.
- Virginia eighth graders achieved an average score of 160, compared with a national average of 153. Students in only three states performed at a statistically higher level.



“Virginia’s science standards require students to investigate and understand scientific concepts and then apply what they have learned,” Superintendent of Public Instruction Steven R. Staples said. “The commonwealth also has made significant investments in programs to increase the content knowledge of teachers and equip them with the ability to tap into their students’ sense of wonder, whether they are teaching in the classroom or in the field.”

Black and Hispanic students in Virginia in both grades outperformed their nationwide peers and their peers in most other states. The 2015 science tests, however, produced no significant changes in the gaps separating the achievement of these students with that of white students in the commonwealth.

- 23 percent of black fourth graders, and 32 percent of Hispanic fourth graders achieved at or above the proficient level, compared with 63 percent of white fourth-grade students.

(more)

- 14 percent of black eighth graders, and 23 percent of Hispanic eighth graders achieved at or above proficiency, compared with 52 percent of white eighth-grade students.

“Narrowing and ultimately closing these achievement gaps in science and other subjects is the great challenge facing the public schools of Virginia and of every other state,” Secretary of Education Dietra Y. Trent said. “Our teachers and schools must have the resources they need to close these gaps and prepare all of our students to succeed in the new Virginia economy.”

NAEP is the only nationally representative test of what American students know and can do in various subject areas. The 2015 NAEP science tests were administered in Virginia to approximately 2,300 fourth graders in 99 schools, and to approximately 2,300 eighth graders in 87 schools. The next administration of the science NAEP is scheduled for 2019.

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