



NEWS

CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

DR. DIANNA R. WENTZELL, COMMISSIONER

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Connecticut Performance on National Science Assessment Remains Steady; Progress Made Toward Closing Achievement Gap with Hispanic Students

(HARTFORD, CT)—The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), known as the “Nation’s Report Card,” released results from the 2015 science assessments today, which showed performance among Connecticut students remained steady, with progress made toward closing the achievement gap with Hispanic students.

Connecticut students in grade 4 performed at the national average in science, while Connecticut grade 8 students performed above the national average. In grade 4, 38 percent of Connecticut students performed at or above proficient on the NAEP science test, while 35 percent of Connecticut students in grade 8 performed at or above proficient.

“In Connecticut, we raised the bar for all children with more rigorous learning standards in reading and math, and with adoption of the Next Generation Science Standards. These results show that Connecticut students are holding their own nationally in science, but that we need to do more to ensure that all students have access to high-quality STEM education that prepares them to take on the advanced jobs of the future,” said Commissioner of Education Dianna R. Wentzell. “We are committed to supporting school districts in their efforts to strengthen science instruction and improve student performance in this critical field.”

Connecticut students in grades 4 and 8 are in the middle of the pack in terms of performance, with fourth-graders outperforming students in 12 states and eighth-graders outperforming students in 16 states.

2015 NAEP Science Scores: Connecticut and National Public Schools

	Grade	Average Scale Score	Percent of Students At/Above Proficient
Connecticut	4	154	38
	8	155	35
National Public	4	153	37
	8	153	33

One bright spot in the results is that Connecticut demonstrated progress toward closing the achievement gap in science between white and Hispanic students, an important step forward as the state continues to work toward the goal of ensuring equity and excellence in education for all students. However, Connecticut NAEP scores

continue to show an achievement disparity among subgroups and it continues to be a priority of the department to close these gaps through support to districts and increased focus on accountability.

Connecticut Grade 4 Subgroup Comparison Data

Subgroup Comparison	Size of Gap in Scale Score Points		
	2009 Gap	2015 Gap	Gap Change
White-Black	38	35	No statistically significant change
White-Hispanic	39	31	8-point decrease in gap
NSLP ¹	36	33	No statistically significant change

Connecticut Grade 8 Subgroup Comparison Data

Subgroup Comparison	Size of Gap in Scale Score Points		
	2009 Gap	2015 Gap	Gap Change
White-Black	38	34	No statistically significant change
White-Hispanic	37	30	7-point decrease in gap
NSLP ¹	33	28	No statistically significant change

¹ *National School Lunch Program*

“In Connecticut we are intensively focused on closing achievement gaps and finding pathways to equity and excellence in education for all students. We can only achieve this goal through working together at the state and local levels with educational leaders, teachers, parents, students and community members. We have raised the bar for achievement in Connecticut; now we must deliver on our promise to kids,” Commissioner Wentzell said.

The NAEP science assessment is a rigorous test that measures student knowledge in three areas: physical science, Earth and space sciences, and life science. The statewide scores are based on the performance of a sample of students selected to statistically represent the whole state.

After extensive feedback from a wide array of stakeholders, Connecticut adopted the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) in November 2015. The NGSS is a new set of more rigorous and real world-based science standards for teaching and learning. Like Connecticut’s Core Standards in English language arts and mathematics, NGSS places greater emphasis on critical thinking and less on rote memorization of facts or terminology. In an NGSS classroom, students investigate natural phenomena and real-world problems in much the same way that scientists and engineers do. Mathematics and language skills are applied as students collaboratively reason with evidence and explain their thinking to others.

The State Department of Education is working with educators, science education partners, and test development experts to develop a new assessment that is aligned to the NGSS. The CSDE expects that this assessment will be ready for initial implementation in the 2018-19 school year. In the meantime, the CSDE is actively supporting educators through diverse professional learning opportunities to develop and implement curriculum, instructional materials, and teaching strategies that will enable educators to thoughtfully implement these new science standards. The CSDE has partnered with the Connecticut Science Center to deliver innovative

professional development for teachers related to the implementation of the new science standards in the classroom.

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