

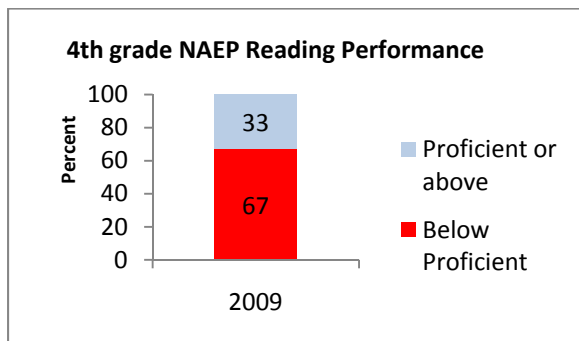
**The Nation's Report Card on Reading 2009:
How are America's Children Faring on the National Assessment of Educational Progress?**

The 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress¹ (NAEP) reading results provides an indicator of student performance nationally and statewide. A nationally represented sample of 178,000 fourth-graders from 9,530 public schools and 160,000 eight-graders from 7,030 public schools participated in the 2009 national assessment in reading.

Understanding the NAEP Results

The NAEP reading scores are described as average scores on a scale of 0-500. Achievement levels (Basic, Proficient, and Advanced) are based on student reading performance. Basic indicates “partial mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient work at each grade;” Proficient denotes “solid academic performance,” and; Advanced signifies “superior performance.”

Findings for 4th Grade Students:

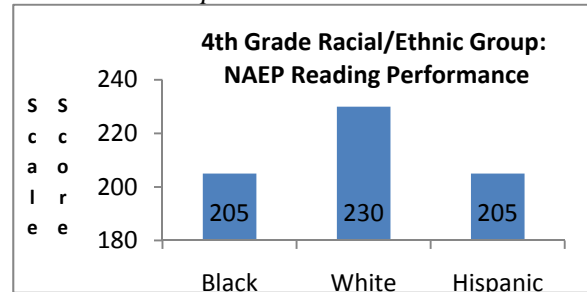


Only one-third of American 4th grade students are at or above the Proficient level in reading. The majority (67%) of 4th graders in the nation perform below the proficient level. This performance represents no change from 2007.

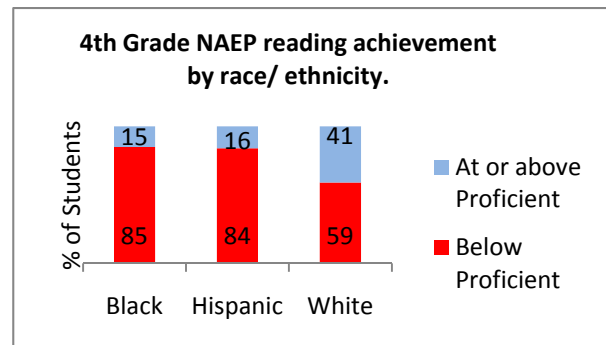
4th graders at the Proficient level were likely to be able to “use information from an article to provide and support an opinion.”

¹ 2010, National Assessment of Educational Progress, National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education.

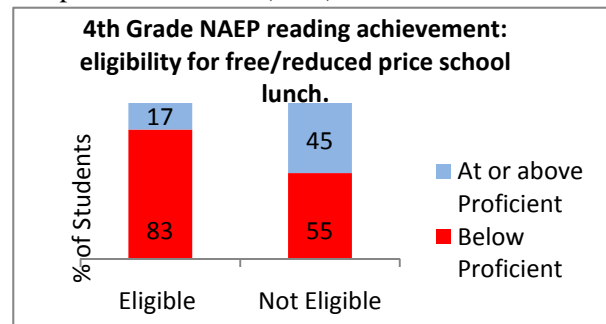
Achievement Gaps



There was a 26-point scale score gap between Black and White students in 2009. There was a 25-point scale score gap between White and Hispanic students. These gaps are the same as the gaps that persisted in 2007 NAEP results.

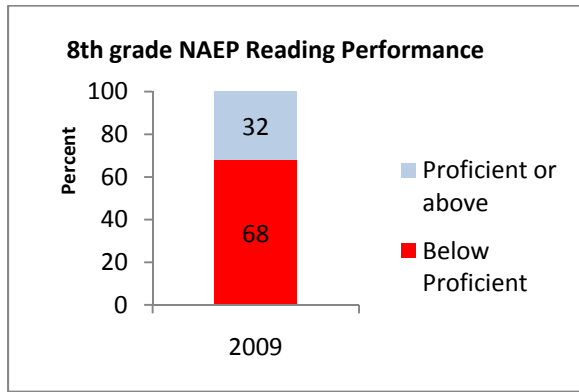


The majority of each racial group performed below the proficient level. A lower percentage of Black (15%) and Hispanic (16%) students performed at the Proficient level or above in comparison to White (41%) students.



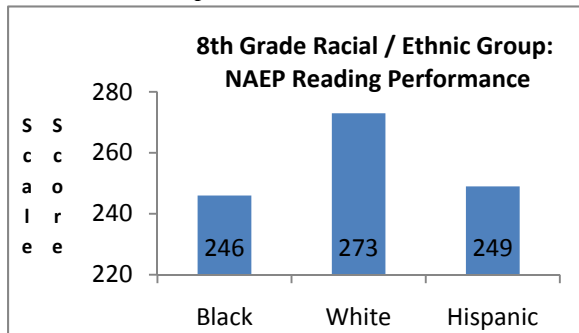
Four in five students (83%) eligible for free and reduced price lunch performed below Proficient.

Findings for 8th grade students:

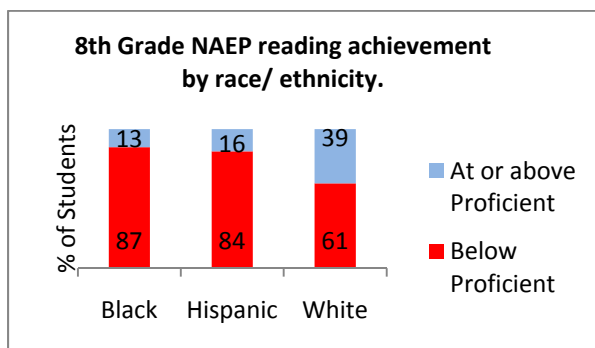


Only one-third of 8th grade students performed at the proficient level or above. The majority of 8th grade students in the nation performed below the Proficient level.

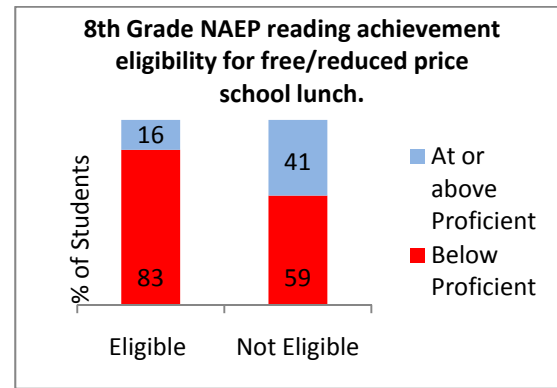
Achievement Gaps



The 8th grade achievement gaps in the 2009 NAEP were consistent with previous years of testing. There was a 26-point scale gap between Black and White students; a 24-point scale gap exists between Hispanic and White 8th graders.



A lower percentage of Black (13%) students and Hispanic (16%) students performed at the Proficient level or above in comparison to White (41%) students.



Sixteen percent of 8th grade students eligible for free and reduced price lunch performed at the Proficient level in reading. In contrast, 41% of 8th graders not eligible for free and reduced lunch performed at the Proficient level or above.

Summary

A shocking one-third of the nation's children attending public schools perform at proficient levels in reading in the 4th grade and in the 8th grade. Race and ethnicity gaps continue to persist; Black and Hispanic children have the lowest reading scores. In addition, students that are eligible for reduced or free lunch (based on family income) have much lower proficiency rates than their peers.

Policy Implications

These results have glaring short- and long-term consequences. Students who are not proficient in key subjects such as reading typically experience unfavorable outcomes including high-school dropout, failure to graduate, low-income jobs, engagement with the juvenile justice system and crime. A poorly educated workforce directly impacts a nation's ability to compete in a global economy.

The public school system needs an urgent transformation. Standards must be improved so that children are exposed to learning skills that will equip them to be career and college ready. Children also need access to quality early care and early learning environments that can reduce some of the achievement gaps that exist as early as 18-months.