

**DRAFT**



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Council for Education Policy,  
Research and Improvement

**NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND, STATE TESTING,  
AND THE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF  
EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS**

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## Introduction

The No Child Left Behind Act is the latest revision of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). It makes substantial changes to state standards and testing and how states measure student progress. The Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) provisions of this act are among the more complex of the new requirements. AYP sets the minimum level of improvement that states, school districts and schools must achieve each year as they progress toward the ESEA goal of having all students reach the proficient level on state tests by 2014. States must establish increasing annual targets for proficiency that will bring them to 100 percent within this period.

This paper will examine the utility of the NCLB results within and among states.

## Questions

**Is the percentage of schools that did not make satisfactory improvement under NCLB's Adequate Yearly Progress standard a meaningful statistic to use for comparisons among states?**

No, the AYP statistics on percent of schools that 'need improvement' do not provide valid comparisons among states.

NCLB allows each state great flexibility in the way it determines Annual Yearly Progress. The following is a brief summary of some of the variations allowed. **Each state** may:

- establish its own curricular goals
- assess students' mastery of those goals using state-chosen tests
- determine how well students must perform on state assessments to be labeled 'proficient'
- decide the pattern of annual target goal increases
- determine the minimum number of students needed to comprise a group
- decide how to calculate graduation rates
- determine whether or not to use confidence intervals in calculating proficiency rates.

Because of this flexibility in NCLB implementation state AYP results are not comparable to each other because they are not standardized across the states.

Florida, for example, had the highest percentage of schools that were judged 'in need of improvement' of 44 states that have submitted AYP results to date (Table 1). However, most states that ranked above Florida on this list used minimum subgroup sizes larger than did Florida, whose minimum subgroup size is 30. ('Subgroups' are groups of students categorized by race, ethnicity, economic status or disability.) Larger subgroup minimums mean fewer subgroups are evaluated at the school level. This means that on average fewer of these schools will have a subgroup which fails to meet NCLB adequate yearly progress standards.

**Can NCLB data which describes the percent of schools/student groups that are making adequate yearly progress be meaningfully compared to the results of state accountability programs?**

*Probably not. Each state accountability program is different, but in general the standards of the No Child Left Behind Act are much stricter than those found in many state programs, making it much easier for a state to have poor NCLB results and relatively good results on its own assessment.* NCLB characteristics of particular concern to state educators because they may result in poor AYP performance are:

- If any subgroup in a school fails to meet adequate yearly progress standards, the entire school is judged to be ‘in need of improvement’ no matter how well the other subgroups performed on the assessment.
- All subgroups must meet a 95% participation rate. A subgroup that falls below this rate, regardless of its percent proficient, will cause its school to be categorized as ‘in need of improvement’.
- NCLB mandates that all student subgroups must reach a level of 100% proficient by 2014. There are two subgroups for which this target is especially problematic: Limited English Proficient (LEP) students and Students with Disabilities (SWD).
  - By definition LEP students are not proficient on a State’s assessments. Technically, the LEP subgroup members would never reach 100% proficiency because once an LEP student reaches proficiency, that student will no longer be considered an LEP student.
  - Disabled students with severe learning disabilities are unlikely to attain proficiency, thus making the goal of 100% proficiency all but impossible. The Department of Education has recently relaxed its testing rules for disabled students. Now the most severely disabled students will not be held to the grade level proficient standard that other students are held to. Whether this relaxation in the rules will allow states a reasonable chance to bring SWD AYP results to mandated levels by 2014 is unclear.

In the case of Florida, the NCLB results and Florida’s A+ school accountability program clearly measure very different aspects of the state educational system. For example, while only 13% of Florida schools made adequate yearly progress in 2002-03, under the A+ Plan 69% of schools received grades of A or B. In fact, a comparison of the NCLB Act and Florida’s A+ Plan shows them to be distinctly different accountability programs.

There are four major differences between the two programs:

1. The A+ program takes a more aggregative look at school student populations, quite unlike the NCLB, which focuses on student subgroups.
2. A second major difference is the importance the A+ program attaches to student score gains over time. The NCLB, on the other hand, generally insists on student subgroups attaining discrete target rates for proficiency and largely ignores progress which falls short of proficiency (though the safe harbor provision provides some leeway in this respect).
3. Another important difference is the NCLB’s requirement that all school subgroups must meet the proficiency standards without exception. This means there are many more chances for a school to fail to meet the requirements under NCLB than under the A+ Plan simply because there are more categories that it must ‘pass’.

4. Lastly, under the NCLB the high scores of groups of students who do particularly well on the NCLB assessment will not pull up the average score of a school. Under the A+ Plan, however, high scores of some students can raise a school's overall grade.

**Is there any pattern of association between National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores and NCLB results?**

*We should not expect a strong positive association between these two assessments simply because they measure different aspects of academic achievement.* Common differences between the NAEP assessment and NCLB are:

1. State assessments used in NCLB are often tailored to incorporate curricular sequencing and objectives of a particular state. NAEP does not reflect the curriculum of any particular state.
2. NCLB is not structured to focus on subgroup score gains that fall below the proficient level. NAEP results can be and are used to evaluate student performance through score gains at levels below proficient.
3. NCLB results are greatly influenced by the 95% test participation requirement. NAEP has no participation requirements beyond those required for statistical validity.
4. NCLB requires all Limited English Proficient students and most Students with Disabilities to be included in its assessment. NAEP tests only a small percentage of such students.

The effects of some of these differences can be seen if we compare NAEP statistics with Florida and the other states that have submitted AYP results. From Table 2 we can see that statewide averages of the percent of students who scored at the plevel or above on the NAEP do not correlate very strongly with state-level AYP results. From Table 2 it is interesting to note the particularly stark contrast between Florida and Texas: Texas has one of the best AYP results in the nation thus far, Florida the lowest. Yet Florida has a slightly higher percent of NAEP-proficient students.

NAEP results will support or vary from AYP results depending on the NAEP statistic chosen. Thus, if we look at NAEP gain scores for Blacks and Hispanics we find Florida above the national average in both 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades for both Blacks and Hispanics (Tables 3-6) as well as overall. This gain in NAEP test scores is not reflected in Florida's AYP ranking because NCLB does not, in general, acknowledge gain scores. However, if we chose to compare AYP results with the change in the gap over time between the NAEP reading scores of White students and the scores of Black or Hispanic students, we would see Florida ranked quite low for Black 4<sup>th</sup> graders (Table 7) or in the middle range for Black and Hispanic 8<sup>th</sup> graders (Table 8).

It is not surprising that Florida's good performance in gain scores is not reflected in its AYP rankings. The NCLB was designed to focus on the disparity in academic achievement between students who are at risk for poor academic results and those who are not. It takes little account of score improvement, especially if the improvement falls below levels that would qualify as proficient.

One additional aspect of the relationship between NAEP and state accountability assessments being used for NCLB should be noted. In general, the percentage of students who qualify as NAEP-proficient is much smaller than the number of students who qualify as proficient on state assessments. As an example, if one compares the NAEP 2000 Grade 8 math results to state math assessments taken in 2002, we find that on average the percentage of pupils identified as proficient on state assessments was twenty-three percentage points higher than the number identified as proficient on the NAEP (Table 9). NAEP may represent a national standard in the sense that it is widely deployed, but not in the sense that states are generally aligned to it.

### **Conclusion**

While Florida's A+ Plan and the No Child Left Behind Act share the same goals of high achievement for all students, the ways in which the two laws measure progress toward this goal differ significantly. Consequently the results of these two programs are not directly comparable. These results should rather be seen as complementary, giving different perspectives to the issue of educational excellence. Likewise state rankings based on percent of schools 'in need of improvement' under NCLB guidelines are also not comparable to each other because assessment procedures are not standardized across states.

A comparison of NAEP reading gap changes over time between Whites and Blacks and Whites and Hispanics showed only a weak association with Florida's low AYP ranking. The reading gap change between Florida's African-American 4<sup>th</sup> graders and white students failed to decrease at all between 1998 and 2003, ranking Florida quite low (Table 7). However, Florida's reading gap change rankings for Hispanic 4<sup>th</sup> graders and African-American and Hispanic 8<sup>th</sup> graders were all in the mid range of states for which data is available (Table 8) – a far cry from Florida's last place AYP ranking. This analysis demonstrates that NAEP scores will not necessarily mirror the NCLB results.

Neither NCLB results, A+ Plan results, nor NAEP scores should be read in isolation. Rather, they should be thought of as representing complementary perspectives on an educational system that is multifaceted, complex and constantly changing.

### **Additional Resources**

[The Education Trust](#) has published “The ABCs of AYP: Raising Achievement for All Students,” April 2003, which describes the requirements and goals of the law.

“Making Valid and Reliable Decisions in Determining Adequate Yearly Progress,” a December 2003 paper from the [Council of Chief State School Officers](#), addresses policy implications related to states’ calculation of adequate yearly progress.

[The American Association of School Administrators](#) offers extensive links to resources and best practices for implementing the No Child Left Behind Act.

“From Capital to the Classroom,” January 2003, the [Center on Education Policy](#) asserts that in implementing the No Child Left Behind Act, the federal government must be sensitive to “the complex and varying circumstances found in states and school districts.”

The [Education Commission of the States](#) has developed a real-time database to track and compare states’ progress on meeting the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act.

**Table 1 Adequate Yearly Progress  
2002-03**

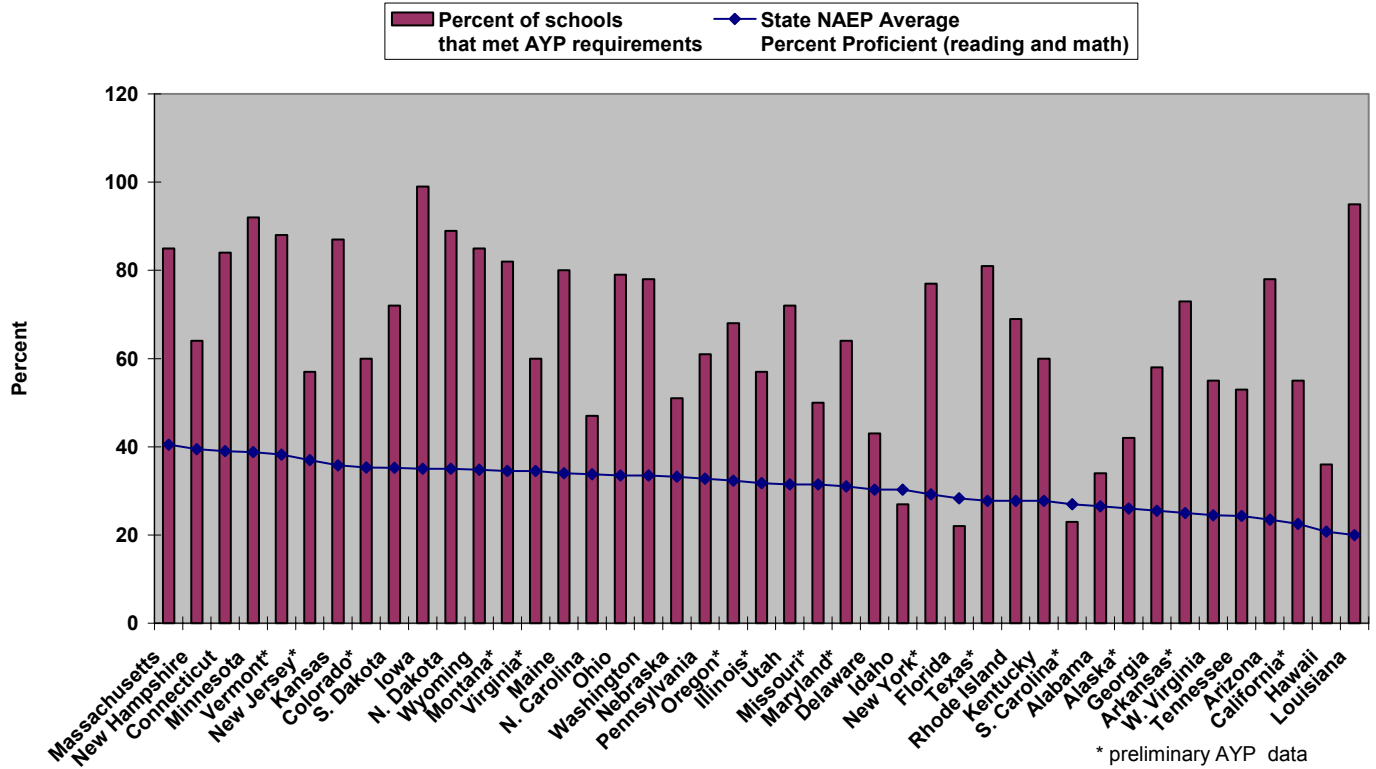
<b>State</b>	<b>Percent of schools that Failed to make AYP</b>
Iowa	01
Louisiana	05
Minnesota	08
North Dakota	11
Vermont*	12
Kansas	13
Wyoming	15
Massachusetts	15
Connecticut	16
Montana*	18
Texas	19
Maine	20
Ohio	21
Arizona	22
Washington	22
New York*	23
Mississippi	25
Arkansas*	27
South Dakota	28
Utah	28
Rhode Island	31
Oregon*	32

Maryland*	36
New Hampshire	36
Pennsylvania*	39
Kentucky	40
Virginia*	40
Colorado*	40
Georgia	42
New Jersey*	43
Illinois*	44
California*	45
West Virginia	45
Tennessee	47
Nebraska	49
Missouri*	50
North Carolina	53
Delaware	57
Alaska*	58
Hawaii	64
Alabama	66
Idaho	73
South Carolina*	77
Florida	78

Sources: Arizona Department of Education; Arkansas Department of Education; Hawaii Department of Education; Illinois Board of Education; Iowa Department of Education; Louisiana Department of Education; Massachusetts Department of Education; Mississippi Department of Education; Montana Office of Public Instruction; Nebraska Department of Education; North Carolina Department of Public Instruction; National Conference of State Legislatures 2003 presentation; Rhode Island Department of Education; South Dakota Department of Education; Texas Education Agency; Tennessee State Department of Education; Utah State Office of Education; Virginia Department of Education; Vermont Department of Education; Washington Office of the Superintendent of Instruction; all other data from *Education Week* research.

\*Preliminary results.

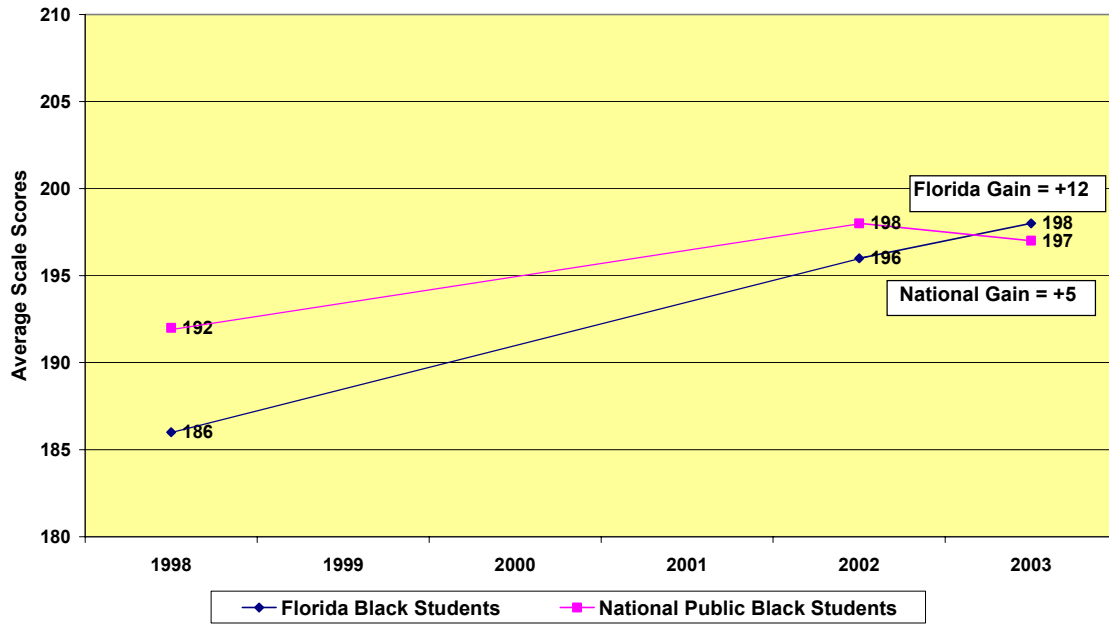
**Table 2 Relationship of State AYP Scores to NAEP Average Percent Proficient by State 2002-03**



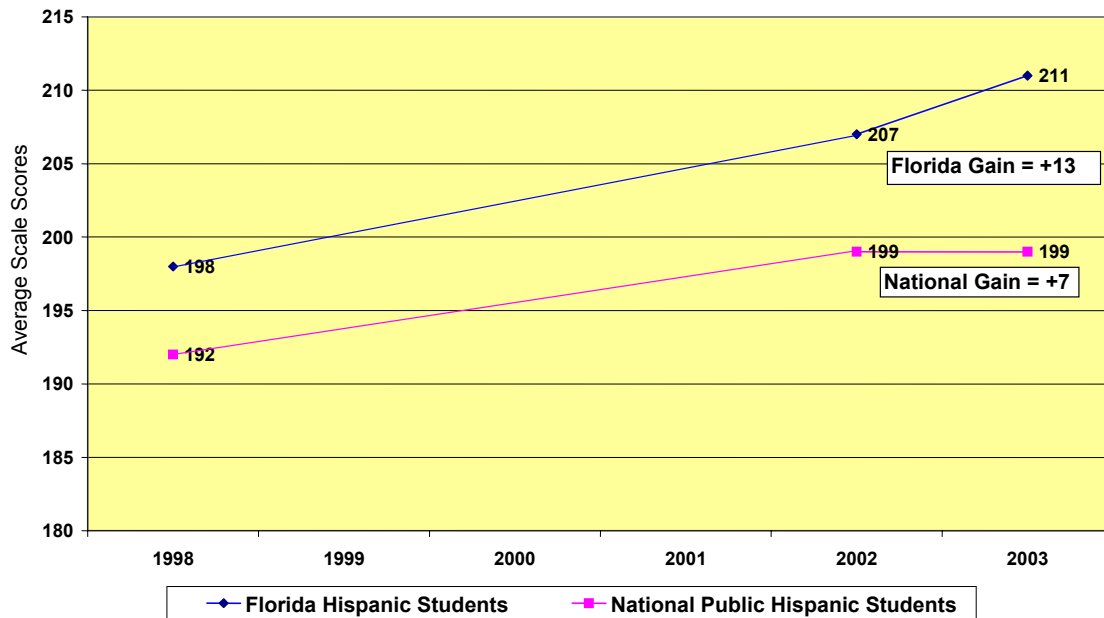
\* preliminary AYP data



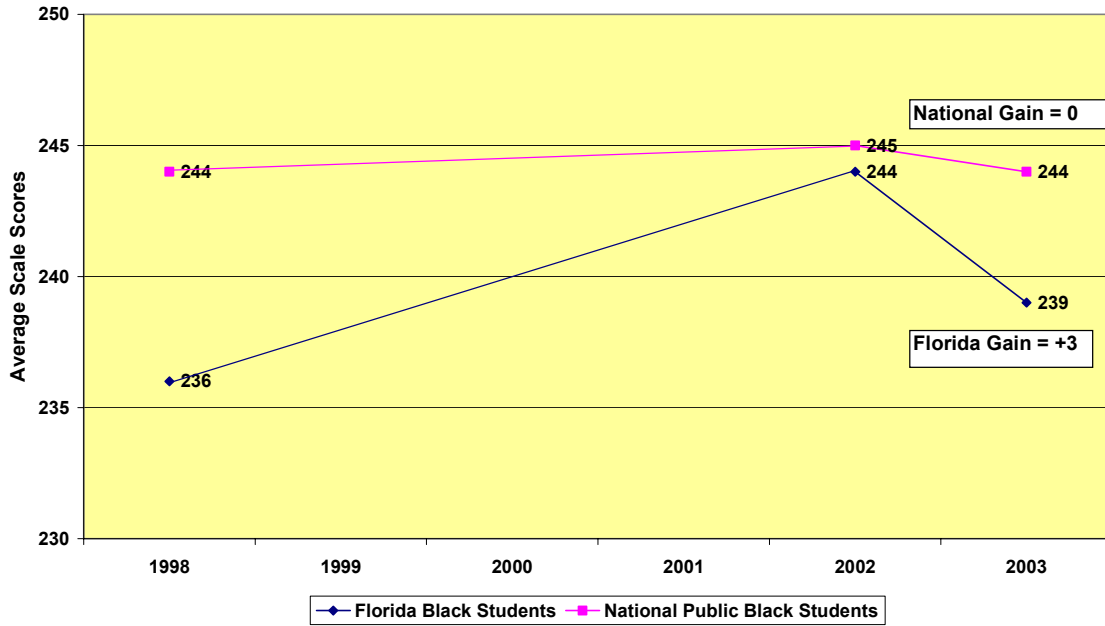
**Table 3 NAEP Grade 4 Reading Score Gains  
Black Students - 1998, 2002, 2003**



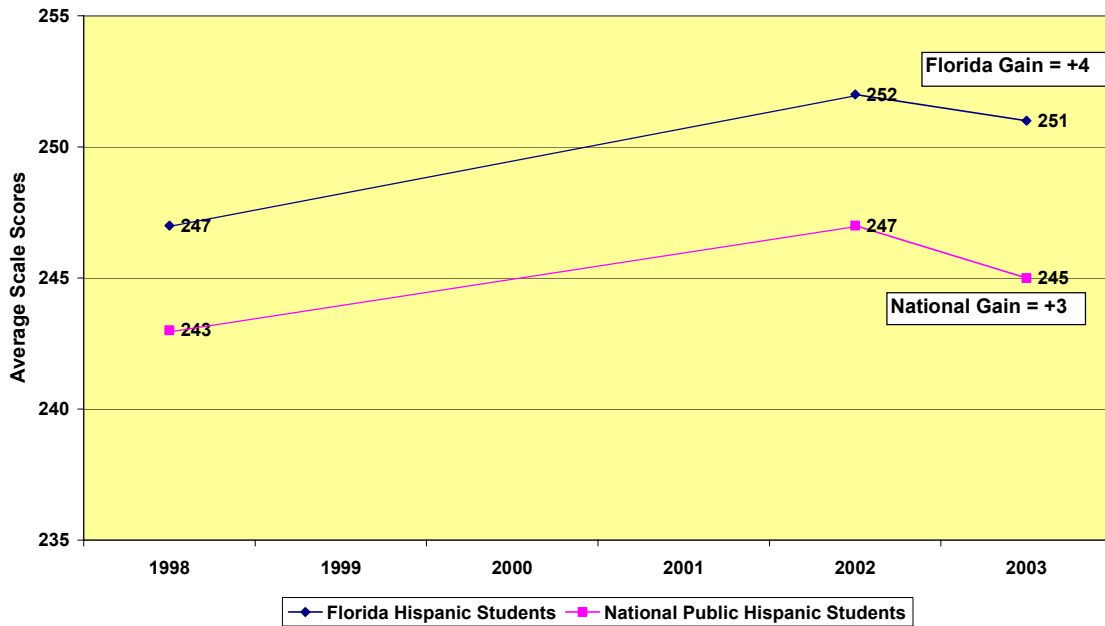
**Table 4 NAEP Grade 4 Reading Score Gains  
Hispanic Students 1998, 2002, and 2003**



**Table 5 NAEP Grade 8 Reading Score Gains  
Black Students 1998, 2002, 2003**



**Table 6 NAEP Grade 8 Reading Score Gains  
Hispanic Students 1998, 2002, 2003**



**Table 7 Comparison of AYP Rankings with NAEP 4th Grade Reading Gap Change Rankings 1998-2003**

State	Percent of Schools that Met AYP Requirements <sup>1</sup>	Change in White-African American Reading Gap <sup>2</sup>	State	Change in White-Hispanic Reading Gap <sup>2</sup>	State
Iowa	99	-20**	Rhode Island	-20**	Rhode Island
Louisiana	95	14**	Texas	-18	Delaware
Minnesota	92	-9**	Missouri	-16**	Oregon
N. Dakota	89	-8**	Delaware	-13**	New York
Vermont*	88	-7	Colorado	-8**	Texas
Kansas	87	-6	W. Virginia	-8	Connecticut
Massachusetts	85	-6	Oregon	-7	Kansas
Wyoming	85	-5	Minnesota	-4	Wyoming
Connecticut	84	-5	New York	-3	Arizona
Montana*	82	-3	Georgia	-2	California
Texas*	81	-3	Louisiana	<b>-2</b>	<b>Florida</b>
Maine	80	-3	Washington	-2	Massachusetts
Ohio	79	-3	Maryland	0	Utah
Washington	78	-2	Kansas	1	Hawaii
Arizona	78	-2	S. Carolina	1	Colorado
New York*	77	-2	Virginia	3	Virginia
Arkansas*	73	-1	N. Carolina	3	Washington
S. Dakota	72	-1	Alabama	4	Maryland
Utah	72	-1	Hawaii		
Rhode Island	69	-1	Iowa		
Oregon*	68	-1	Arizona		
New Hampshire	64	-1	Kentucky		
Maryland*	64	0	California		
Pennsylvania	61	<b>0</b>	<b>Florida</b>		
Colorado*	60	1	Arkansas		
Virginia*	60	1	Massachusetts		
Kentucky	60	3	Connecticut		
Georgia	58	3	Mississippi		
Illinois*	57	7	Tennessee		
New Jersey	57				
W. Virginia	55				
California*	55				
Nebraska	51				
Tennessee	53				
Missouri*	50				
N. Carolina	47				
Delaware	43				
Alaska*	42				
Hawaii	36				
Alabama	34				
Idaho	27				
Mississippi	25				
S. Carolina*	23				
<b>Florida</b>	22				

1. AYP data as of December 2003.

2. States matched to AYP list. Some data unavailable.

\* preliminary data

\*\* significantly different from 1998

**Table 8 Comparison of AYP Rankings with NAEP 8th Grade Reading Gap Change Rankings 1998-2003**

State	Percent of Schools that Met AYP Requirements <sup>1</sup>	Change in White-African American Reading Gap <sup>2</sup>	State	Change in White-Hispanic Reading Gap <sup>2</sup>	State
Iowa	99	-15	Oregon	-15**	Oregon
Louisiana	95	-9	Minnesota	-5	Kansas
Minnesota	92	-8	Washington	-5	Washington
N. Dakota	89	-6	Maryland	-1	California
Vermont*	88	-4	California	-1	Wyoming
Kansas	87	-4	Delaware	0	Alabama
Massachusetts	85	-3	Tennessee	0	Massachusetts
Wyoming	85	-2	Georgia	<b>0</b>	<b>Florida</b>
Connecticut	84	-2	Alabama	0	New York
Montana*	82	-2	W. Virginia	1	Virginia
Texas*	81	-1	N. Carolina	1	Connecticut
Maine	80	-1	Connecticut	1	Rhode Island
Ohio	79	-1	Massachusetts	1	Colorado
Washington	78	-1	Connecticut	2	Texas
Arizona	78	0	S. Carolina	3	Arizona
New York*	77	0	Texas	3	Arkansas
Arkansas*	73	0	Mississippi	6	Utah
S. Dakota	72	<b>1</b>	<b>Florida</b>	9	Maryland
Utah	72	1	Virginia	12	Delaware
Rhode Island	69	2	Louisiana		
Oregon*	68	3	Arizona		
New Hampshire	64	4	Arkansas		
Maryland*	64	4	New York		
Pennsylvania	61	4	Arkansas		
Colorado*	60	4	Rhode Island		
Virginia*	60	4	Colorado		
Kentucky	60	5	Missouri		
Georgia	58	5	Kansas		
Illinois*	57	5	Kentucky		
New Jersey	57				
W. Virginia	55				
California*	55				
Tennessee	53				
Nebraska	51				
Missouri*	50				
N. Carolina	47				
Delaware	43				
Alaska*	42				
Hawaii	36				
Alabama	34				
Idaho	27				
Mississippi	25				
S. Carolina*	23				
<b>Florida</b>	22				

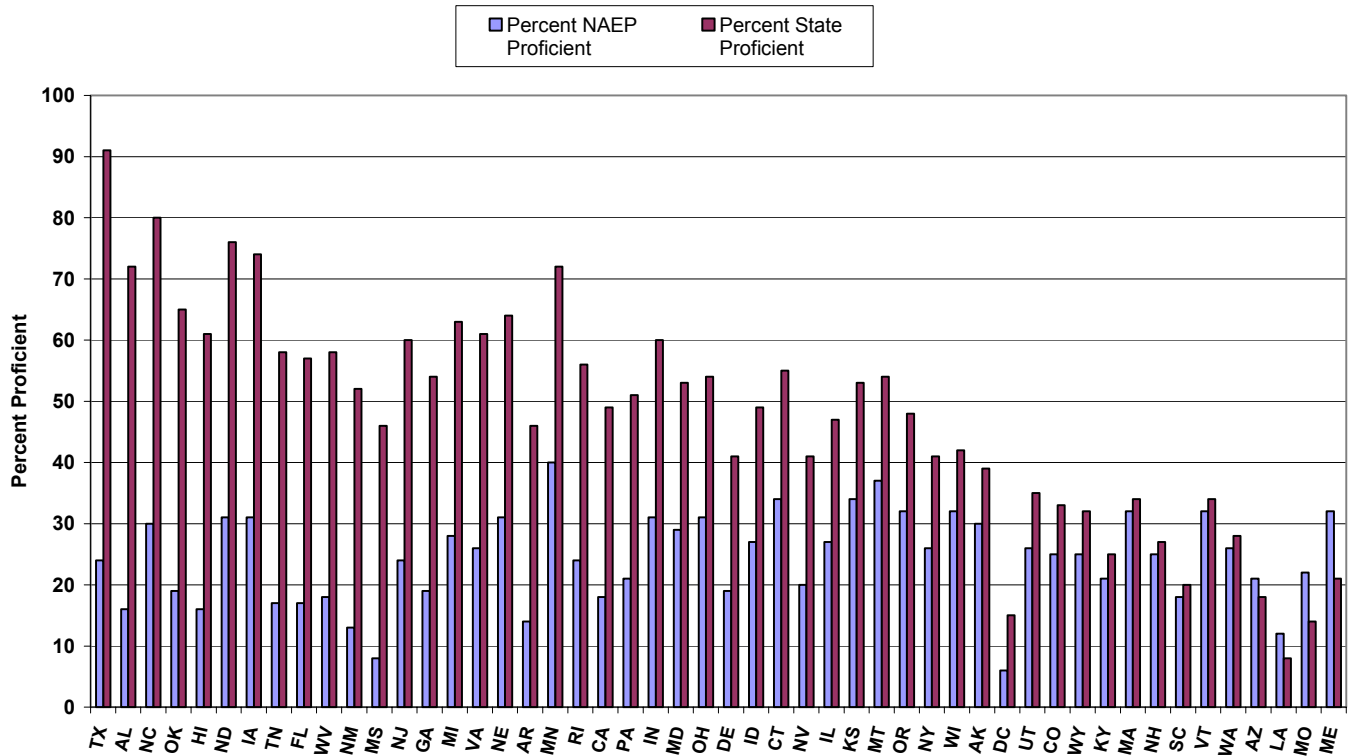
1. AYP scores as of December 2003

2. States matched to AYP list. Some data unavailable.

\* preliminary data

\*\* Significantly different from 1998

**Table 9 Varying Standards of Grade 8 Math Proficiency:  
NAEP 2000, States 2002<sup>1</sup>**



Source: The Princeton Review, 2003

1. Some data from grades 6, 7 or 9. Some data from 2001.