What is NAEP?

Created in 1969, the National Assessment of Educational Progress, or NAEP, is known as "the Nation's Report Card." Education Sector's "NAEP Explainer" describes NAEP as "a series of assessments in math, reading and other subjects. It is given regularly to national samples of fourth, eighth and 12th-grade students to determine both what they do know and what they should know." NAEP assessments allow states to be compared to each other using a common, high national standard.

How do Georgia's students rank against the nation?

This fall, NAEP released the results of the 2007 4th and 8th grade math and reading tests. This was the first NAEP administration since the adoption of Georgia's new curriculum, the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS), at those levels.

The following links show Georgia public school students' performance compared to previous years and to the nation as a whole in Grade 4 Reading, Grade 8 Reading, Grade 4 Math and Grade 8 Math.

NAEP 2007	Georgia vs. US	Georgia vs. SREB
Grade 4 Reading	33rd (tie)	7th
Grade 8 Reading	36th (tie)	8th (tie)
Grade 4 Math	41st	11th (tie)
Grade 8 Math	39th (tie)	9th (tie)

Georgia's 2007 NAEP rankings compared to the U.S. and the 15 other Southern Region Education Board (SREB) states

Georgia seems to be making the most progress in reading. The state showed its greatest improvement on the 4th grade reading test; this year, Georgia's score on that test was on par statistically with the national average for the first time. The U.S. as a whole also saw the most improvement on the 4th grade reading assessment. Georgia's scores in 8th grade reading, 4th grade math, and 8th grade math were higher than 2005 (the last time the tests were given), but the differences were not statistically significant.

Are Georgia's students improving over time?

NAEP	2003 Grade 4	2007 Grade 8	Change '03-'07
Reading	58	70	+12
Math	71	64	-7

Percent of Georgia's students at basic level or above on Math and Reading + their growth over time as a group

NAEP scores increased at each grade level, but it is also important to examine how the state is doing in helping students improve over time. Last year's 8th graders are in the high school graduating class of 2011. How did this class of 8th graders in 2007 score compared to their scores as 4th graders in 2003? Are more of these students achieving at higher levels now than they were four years ago? This table shows those students' scores from 2003 and 2007.

Over the same time, the nation overall saw an 11 percent gain at this level in Reading and a 6 percent decline in Math. This year, Georgia 4th graders scored higher than they ever have and are at the national average. Will they still be there as 8th graders in 2011?

How is NAEP linked to postsecondary enrollment?

This growth over time matters. A separate report released by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in September tries to measure "student performance on the 12th-grade NAEP in terms of readiness for college, the workplace, and the military." The authors followed a group of 8th graders in 1988 through high school and on until 2000.

According to this study, students' scores on the 12th grade NAEP predicted their postsecondary enrollment well. 46 percent of those who scored Below Basic had no postsecondary attendance record 2 years later. Conversely, 98 percent of those who scored at the Advanced level and 95 percent of those at the Proficient level had enrolled in a postsecondary opportunity of some kind during that time.

Finally, the report includes seniors' NAEP-scaled Math achievement levels as related to their postsecondary outcomes 8 years later. For example, 91 percent of students who scored at the Advanced achievement level as high school seniors in 1992 had earned a bachelor's degree or higher by 2000, compared to just 18 percent of those at the Below Basic level.

NAEP-scaled Math Achievement Level in 1992	Percent earning a Bachelor's Degree or Higher by 2000
Advanced	91
Proficient	79
Basic	50
Below Basic	18

One interpretation of these results: if schools could get students to perform at the NAEP Basic level by 12th grade, those students would have a 50 percent chance of graduating from college by age 26; if schools can move students into the Proficient or Advanced levels, then college graduation is almost certain for those students.

Bottom Line: Georgia vs. NAEP

Georgia's scores have reached the national average on one of the four high-profile NAEP tests conducted this year (Grade 4 Reading). Clearly, Georgia's ability to sustain those gains and to improve on them will be an important indicator for students' future success. What strategies will help us to ensure this success? Experts have cited school-based efforts such as Georgia's new curriculum and *No Child Left Behind's* focus on reading and math as reasons for NAEP gains.

But surely one of the most important factors in improving these scores and other educational outcomes for children is students' home life. A study released by the Education Testing Service (ETS) in October reports that family and parental factors are strong forces on states' NAEP scores. According to Paul Barton, one of the study's authors, "When parents, teachers and schools work together to support learning, students do better in school and stay in school longer…Our analysis shows that [various family factors], when combined, account for about two-thirds of the large differences among states in NAEP reading scores."

NAEP is an example of a test based on a high national standard and is one of the few reliable ways to compare Georgia to other SREB states and to the nation as a whole. From an even wider perspective, the American Institutes for Research released a study this month comparing individual American states' performance on NAEP math and science tests to other nations' scores on TIMSS, an internationally recognized math and science assessment. In this comparison, Georgia scored above most foreign countries, but well below the highest-achieving ones. Scores on these assessments, while having no stakes for students themselves, are worthy of attention. Let's hope that the combination of our more rigorous curriculum, federal education policy, and parent engagement will reap greater achievement gains in Georgia on the next administration of NAEP in reading and mathematics in 2009.

SAT Sidebar

To extend last month's bulletin on schools exceeding expectations on the SAT, Becky Chambers, Program Manager for AP, PSAT, SAT and ACT Testing at the Georgia Department of Education, informally surveyed the principals of the highest-performing non-magnet schools to learn about how they prepare their students for the SAT. Several common strategies emerged from Chambers' research:

- Principals take responsibility for the 'academic climate' in the school;
- Principals hold and clearly communicate high expectations for faculty and students;
- Faculty strongly encourage and guide students to enroll in rigorous courses, including Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses;
- Teachers participate in AP and IB training opportunities, whether or not they currently teach AP or IB courses;
- Schools make a serious commitment to writing in all courses; and
- Schools offer SAT prep classes to students.

The Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) researches and publishes monthly education bulletins. For more information, please visit www.gaosa.org or send an email to GOSA@gov.state.ga.us.