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R E P O R T

Achieving State and National Literacy Goals, a Long Uphill Road

A Report to Carnegie Corporation
of New York

Jennifer Sloan McCombs, Sheila Nataraj Kirby,
Heather Barney, Hilary Darilek, Scarlett Magee

Prepared for Carnegie Corporation of New York

EDUCATION

The research described in this report was conducted within RAND Education for Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Achieving state and national literacy goals : a long uphill road : a report to Carnegie Corporation of New York / Jennifer Sloan McCombs ... [et al.].

p. cm.

"TR-180."

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 0-8330-3710-2 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Literacy—Government policy—United States. 2. Education—Standards—United States. 3. Educational accountability—United States. 4. Educational accountability—United States—States. 5. Education—United States—Evaluation. 6. National Assessment of Educational Progress (Project) I. McCombs, Jennifer Sloan, 1970– II. Carnegie Corporation of New York.

LC151.A25 2005

379.1'58'0973—dc22

2004025332

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Published 2005 by the RAND Corporation
1776 Main Street, P.O. Box 2138, Santa Monica, CA 90407-2138
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201 North Craig Street, Suite 202, Pittsburgh, PA 15213-1516
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Preface

To succeed in post-secondary education or employment, students must emerge from high school possessing literacy skills and critical-thinking skills so that they can extract and construct meaning from a variety of texts. Recent reform efforts have yielded positive results in improving reading achievement for the nation's children in the primary grades. However, many children are not moving beyond basic decoding skills—deciphering and/or sounding out—to fluency and comprehension, even as they advance to the fourth grade and classes in history, mathematics, and science (deLeon, 2002).

In an effort to focus national attention on the problem of adolescent literacy, Carnegie Corporation of New York launched a new initiative, *Advancing Literacy*, to promote policy, practice, and research in the field of adolescent literacy, which encompasses reading and writing in grades 4 through 12. Its new initiative was the result of a two-year review that showed that, although substantial attention had been devoted to grades K–3, adolescent literacy remained “an orphaned responsibility in the K–12 world” (deLeon, 2002, p. 3). As part of this initiative, Carnegie decided to appoint an Advisory Council to propose promising strategies for the improvement of adolescent literacy. As a first step, Carnegie asked the RAND Corporation to convene a small study group for one year to lay the foundation for the work of the larger Advisory Council. Carnegie also asked RAND to produce a comprehensive, quantitative survey of the state of adolescent reading and writing achievement in the United States.

RAND gathered information from the 50 states and the District of Columbia (DC) on state assessment systems and on the performance of students in reading, English language arts, and writing on state assessments. To examine the relative performance of students against national standards, the RAND team also used data from the 2003 state component of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in reading and the 2002 state component of the NAEP in writing. This report documents the results of this research and provides a portrait of the condition of adolescent literacy as measured by these national and state assessments. The appendices contain individual state write-ups for the 50 states and the District of Columbia (DC) that describe the assessment systems; the content, format, and performance levels of reading, writing, and English language arts assessments between 4th and 12th grades; and student performance on those assessments.

Achieving State and National Literacy Goals, a Long Uphill Road: A Report to Carnegie Corporation of New York should be of interest to educational researchers and education policymakers at the national, state, and local levels who are working to improve educational opportunities and learning for all students.

This research was conducted within RAND Education, a division of the RAND Corporation, and reflects RAND Education's mission to bring accurate data and careful, objective analysis to the national debate on education policy.

Contents

Preface.....	iii
Figures.....	vii
Tables.....	ix
Summary.....	xi
Acknowledgments.....	xvii
 CHAPTER ONE	
Introduction.....	1
Why Adolescent Literacy Matters	1
Teaching Students to Read to Learn: An “Orphaned Responsibility” in the K–12 World	2
Scope of the Project.....	3
Purpose and Outline of This Report	4
 CHAPTER TWO	
State and National Assessments of Adolescent Literacy.....	7
State Assessment Systems.....	7
State Assessment Systems in Transition	8
Literacy Assessment Content and Format.....	10
State Assessment Achievement Standards.....	11
National Assessment of Educational Progress.....	12
Reading Assessment.....	12
Writing Assessment.....	13
 CHAPTER THREE	
The Current State of Adolescent Literacy Achievement: Results from State Assessments.....	17
What We Present in This Chapter	17
Performance of Elementary School Students.....	20
Reading Assessments: Overall Pass Rates.....	20
Reading Assessments: Differences in Performance Among Students, Disaggregated by Race/Ethnicity and Poverty Status.....	20
Writing Assessments.....	24
Performance of Middle School Students.....	27
Reading Assessments: Overall Pass Rates.....	27
Reading Assessments: Differences in Performance Among Students, Disaggregated by Race/Ethnicity and Poverty Status.....	27

Writing Assessments	30
Performance of High School Students	34
Student Performance on Graduation Assessments	34
Student Performance on High School Assessments Not Required for Graduation	36
Summary	36

CHAPTER FOUR

The Current State of Adolescent Literacy Achievement: Results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress	39
Performance of 4th-Graders	39
Reading Assessment: Overall Proficiency Rates	39
Reading Assessment: Differences in Performance Among Students, Disaggregated by Race/Ethnicity and Poverty Status	39
Writing Assessment	42
Performance of 8th-Graders	46
Reading Assessment: Overall Proficiency Rates	46
Reading Assessment: Differences in Performance Among Students, Disaggregated by Race/Ethnicity and Poverty Status	46
Writing Assessment	50
Summary	50

CHAPTER FIVE

The Current State of Adolescent Literacy Achievement: Reconciling Results from State and National Assessments	55
Overall Proficiency Rates	55
Differences in Performance of Subgroups	57
Summary	59

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusions and Policy Implications	63
The NCLB Context	63
Meeting State and National Literacy Goals: A Long Uphill Road	64
Multiple Sources of Data Regarding Literacy Achievement Help Provide a More Complete Picture	65
References	67

Figures

3.1. Pass Rates of Elementary School Students on State Reading Assessments, 2001–2002/2002–2003	21
3.2. Differences in Pass Rates of White and African American Elementary School Students on State Reading Assessments, 2001–2002/2002–2003	22
3.3. Differences in Pass Rates of White and Hispanic Elementary School Students on State Reading Assessments, 2001–2002/2002–2003	23
3.4. Differences in Pass Rates of Economically Advantaged and Economically Disadvantaged Elementary School Students on State Reading Assessments, 2001–2002/2002–2003	25
3.5. Pass Rates of Elementary School Students on State Writing Assessments, 2001–2002/2002–2003	26
3.6. Pass Rates Of Middle School Students on State Reading Assessments, 2001–2002/2002–2003	28
3.7. Differences in Pass Rates of White and African American Middle School Students on State Reading Assessments, 2001–2002/2002–2003	29
3.8. Differences in Pass Rates of White and Hispanic Middle School Students on State Reading Assessments, 2001–2002/2002–2003	31
3.9. Differences in Pass Rates of Economically Advantaged and Economically Disadvantaged Middle School Students on State Reading Assessments, 2001–2002/2002–2003	32
3.10. Pass Rates of Middle School Students on State Writing Assessments, 2001–2002/2002–2003	33
4.1. Percentage of 4th-Grade Students Scoring “Proficient” and Above on the National Assessment of Educational Progress 2003 Reading Assessment	40
4.2. Difference in Percentages of White and African American 4th-Grade Students Scoring “Proficient” and Above on the National Assessment of Educational Progress 2003 Reading Assessment	41
4.3. Difference in Percentages of White and Hispanic 4th-Grade Students Scoring “Proficient” and Above on the National Assessment of Educational Progress 2003 Reading Assessment	43
4.4. Difference in Percentages of Economically Advantaged and Disadvantaged 4th-Grade Students Scoring “Proficient” and Above on the National Assessment of Educational Progress 2003 Reading Assessment	44
4.5. Percentage of 4th-Grade Students Scoring “Proficient” and Above on the National Assessment of Educational Progress 2002 Writing Assessment	45
4.6. Percentage of 8th-Grade Students Scoring “Proficient” and Above on the National Assessment of Educational Progress 2003 Reading Assessment	47

4.7.	Difference in Percentages of White and African American 8th-Grade Students Scoring “Proficient” and Above on the National Assessment of Educational Progress 2003 Reading Assessment.....	48
4.8.	Difference in Percentages of White and Hispanic 8th-Grade Students Scoring “Proficient” and Above on the National Assessment of Educational Progress 2003 Reading Assessment.....	49
4.9.	Difference in Percentages of Economically Advantaged and Disadvantaged 8th-Grade Students Scoring “Proficient” and Above on the National Assessment of Educational Progress 2003 Reading Assessment.....	51
4.10.	Percentage of 8th-Grade Students Scoring “Proficient” and Above on the National Assessment of Educational Progress 2002 Writing Assessment.....	52
5.1.	Differences in Proficiency Rates of 4th-Grade Students: State Reading Assessments – National Assessment of Educational Progress 2003 Reading Assessment.....	56
5.2.	Differences in Proficiency Rates of 8th-Grade Students: State Reading Assessments – National Assessment of Educational Progress 2003 Reading Assessment.....	58

Tables

5.1. Average Differences in Proficiency Rates of 4th- and 8th-Grade Students, Disaggregated by Race/Ethnicity and Poverty Status: State Reading Assessments and National Assessment of Educational Progress 2003 Reading Assessment	xiv
2.1. State Assessment Systems for Adolescent Literacy	9
2.2. Achievement-Level Definitions for NAEP Reading Assessment, Grades 4 and 8	13
2.3. Achievement-Level Definitions for NAEP Writing Assessment, Grades 4 and 8	15
3.1. Elementary and Middle School Grades Reported for State Accountability Reading Assessments, by State	18
3.2. Differences in Pass Rates of Elementary School Students, Disaggregated by Race/Ethnicity and Poverty Status: State Writing Assessments	26
3.3. Differences in Pass Rates of Middle School Students, Disaggregated by Race/Ethnicity and Poverty Status: State Writing Assessments	34
3.4. Results for First-Time Test Takers: High School Tests Required for Graduation, 2002–2003	35
3.5. High School Results Not Linked to Graduation Requirements, 2002–2003	37
4.1. Differences in Proficiency Rates of 4th-Grade Students, Disaggregated by Race/Ethnicity and Poverty Status: 2002 National Assessment of Educational Progress Writing Assessment	46
4.2. Differences in Proficiency Rates of 8th-Grade Students, Disaggregated by Race/Ethnicity and Poverty Status: National Assessment of Educational Progress 2002 Writing Assessment	53
5.1. Distribution of States by Percentage of 4th-Grade Students Scoring at the “Proficient” Level and Above on the State Reading Assessments and National Assessment of Educational Progress 2003 Reading Assessment	55
5.2. Distribution of States by Percentage of 8th-Grade Students Scoring at the “Proficient” Level and Above on the State Reading Assessments and National Assessment of Educational Progress 2003 Reading Assessment	57
5.3. Differences in Proficiency Rates of 4th-Grade Students, Disaggregated by Race/Ethnicity and Poverty Status: State Reading Assessments and National Assessment of Educational Progress 2003 Reading Assessment	59
5.4. Differences in Proficiency Rates of 8th-Grade Students, Disaggregated by Race/Ethnicity and Poverty Status: State Reading Assessments and National Assessment of Educational Progress 2003 Reading Assessment	59
5.5. Differences in Proficiency Rates of 4th- and 8th-Grade Students, Disaggregated by Race/Ethnicity and Poverty Status: State Reading Assessments and National Assessment of Educational Progress 2003 Reading Assessment, Selected Samples	61

Summary

Recent reform efforts in education have yielded positive results in improving reading achievement for the nation's children in the primary grades, but many children are not moving beyond basic decoding skills to fluency and comprehension, even as they advance to the fourth grade and classes in history, mathematics, and science. This lack of progress is especially troubling because adolescents are facing a post-secondary job market that demands high literacy skills.

In an effort to focus national attention on the problem of adolescent literacy, Carnegie Corporation of New York launched a new initiative, *Advancing Literacy*. Carnegie's objective is to advance adolescent literacy, which encompasses reading and writing in grades 4–12, by promoting policy, practice, and research in this field. As a first step, Carnegie asked the RAND Corporation to convene a small study group for one year to lay the foundation for the work of a larger Advisory Council and to undertake a study examining the state of adolescent achievement in literacy in the nation.

Our analysis focused on three research questions:

1. To what extent are *adolescents* (defined as students in the 4th through 12th grades) meeting state literacy goals, as measured by state assessments?
2. To what extent are adolescents meeting national literacy goals, as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)?
3. To what extent are the results from state assessments and the NAEP consistent with one another?

To answer these questions and to understand how states define and measure adolescent literacy and how students fare on assessments of those measures, we examined the state assessment systems adopted by the 50 states and the District of Columbia.¹ For each state, we sought to briefly describe the assessments that are being used to measure literacy levels among adolescents, including how they are linked to content standards, the content and format of the assessments, and student performance on those assessments. We also describe how students are performing relative to national goals, as measured by the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP). We describe the NAEP reading and writing assessment, including the content and format, and student performance on that assessment. Our

¹ The District of Columbia, being a large urban district, is quite different in nature from the states in terms of demographics, population, and educational governance. It offers a look at how students in a high-poverty, urban district perform and some of the challenges such districts face in trying to meet the No Child Left Behind (*NCLB*) goals.

timeline did not allow for detailed analyses of these assessment or the results: Our purpose was simply to report publicly available data.

This report documents the results of RAND's research effort and provides a portrait of where the nation's adolescents stand relative to state and national literacy goals and how far we need to go to help our children achieve those goals.

Under No Child Left Behind, All Students Should Become Proficient by 2014

It is important to place the research in the context of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which requires states to adopt standards-based accountability systems that set challenging content and performance standards for all students. To ensure that students are meeting these standards, by 2005–2006, states must annually test all children in reading and math, in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and at one grade in high school. By 2007–2008, states must test students in science at least once in grades 3–5, 6–9, and 10–12. States must establish goals for performance on the assessment and track performance for all students and subgroups of students (e.g., racial/ethnic groups, students with disabilities, migrant students). By the end of 12 years, all schools should have reached 100-percent proficiency—that is, all children in the school must pass the state test.

To meet these federal requirements, states are currently changing and expanding state testing programs, which will be used to hold schools accountable under the federal law. Schools that fail to make adequate yearly progress face escalating sanctions over time, such as being required to offer school choice or supplemental services and may include, among others, decreased decisionmaking; reconstituting the school staff; instituting a new curriculum based on scientifically based research; extending the school year or school day; and appointing an outside expert to advise the school. In addition, a growing number of states are holding students accountable by requiring that students pass high school assessments before they can graduate or to pass a given grade assessment to be promoted to the next grade.

States Have a Long Way to Go to Meet State and National Literacy Goals

We include data both from the NAEP and the state assessments to provide multiple indicators of student performance in the states and to show how students are faring with respect to national and state literacy goals. Note that, because of the differences in the tests themselves and the definitions of *proficiency levels* in the NAEP and state performance standards, these data are not directly comparable. While one could argue that state and national literacy goals should be reasonably similar, in reality there is debate regarding at what level standards should be set. For instance, there is debate about whether NAEP achievement standards are too ambitious and challenging (Linn, 2003). If NAEP achievement standards are indeed more rigorous and challenging than many state standards, then one would expect differences: Students would perform worse on the NAEP than on state assessments, and such differences would not imply that the data from state assessments are wrong or unreliable. Our purpose here is not to draw such inferences but simply to offer two different data points on adolescent literacy achievement measured against state and (arguably, more stringent) national literacy standards. We believe that it is important for state policymakers, practitioners, and parents to examine both sources of data and to make their own judgments regarding the rela-

tive performance of their students against both sets of standards. In addition, under NCLB, states are now required to participate in the NAEP in order to help verify state results using a common measure; therefore, states need to become familiar with the NAEP, what it measures, and how this differs from their own assessments.

Our findings suggest some major concerns about the ability of states to meet the ambitious goal set by NCLB of 100-percent proficiency for all students.

First, in several states, fewer than half the students meet the state proficiency standards, and in no state do even half the students meet the NAEP national literacy standard of proficiency:

- The pass rates on the elementary-school state assessments (4th- or 5th-grade assessments) differed widely across states, ranging from 28 to 87 percent. In seven states, less than half of the students passed at the elementary level.
- Fourth-grade state proficiency rates on the 2003 NAEP Reading Assessment ranged from 10 to 43 percent, and the average state proficiency rate on the NAEP was 30 percent. Three states had proficiency rates of less than 20 percent; 15 states had proficiency rates of 20–29 percent; 30 states had proficiency rates of 30–39 percent. In only three states—Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Connecticut—did the proportion of students scoring at the proficient level reach 40 percent and above.
- The pass rates on the middle-school state assessments ranged from 21 to 88 percent. Three states had pass rates of less than 30 percent. In 12 states, less than half of the students passed the reading assessment.
- Overall, between 10 and 43 percent of 8th-graders scored at the proficient level on the 2003 NAEP Reading Assessment. DC was the only jurisdiction to have a proficiency rate of less than 20 percent; New Hampshire and Massachusetts were the only states to have proficiency rates of 40 percent or higher. In 17 states, 20–29 percent of students scored proficient and above; in 31 states, 30–39 percent scored proficient and above. The average state proficiency rate of 8th-graders was 32 percent.
- Pass rates on the state and the NAEP writing assessments tended to be somewhat lower than on the reading assessments.

Second, the wide disparity in the achievement of subgroups of students makes reaching the 100-percent proficiency goal for all students a more challenging task for certain schools and districts. The NAEP and state assessments show large achievement gaps between subgroups of students disaggregated by race/ethnicity and poverty status (Table S.1). For example:

- At the 4th-grade level in reading, national and state assessments show, on average, a difference of 27 percentage points between the proficiency rates of white and African American students; 24–27 percentage points between white and Hispanic students; and 23–25 percentage points between economically advantaged and economically disadvantaged students.
- This is true at the 8th-grade level in reading as well, where we see a difference of 26–28 percentage points between the proficiency rates of white and African

Table S.1
Average Differences in Proficiency Rates of 4th- and 8th-Grade Students, Disaggregated by Race/Ethnicity and Poverty Status: State Reading Assessments and National Assessment of Educational Progress 2003 Reading Assessment

Subgroups of Students	Average Difference in Proficiency Rates (percentage points)	
	State Assessments	NAEP
4th Grade		
White and African American students	27	27
White and Hispanic Students	27	24
Economically Advantaged and Economically Disadvantaged Students	23	25
8th Grade		
White and African American students	28	26
White and Hispanic Students	26	22
Economically Advantaged and Economically Disadvantaged Students	24	22

American students; 22–26 percentage points between white and Hispanic students; and 22–24 percentage points between economically advantaged and economically disadvantaged students.

- At all levels, students with limited English proficiency and students with disabilities trailed well behind their peers.

Multiple Sources of Data Regarding Literacy Achievement Help Provide a More Complete Picture

It is clear that while states are operating under a common mandate for proficiency, there are large differences in the rigor of the assessment and in performance levels that states consider “proficient” under NCLB—proficiency cut-scores—leading to quite disparate outcomes. Compare, for instance, South Carolina, Wyoming, North Carolina, and Texas. At the 8th-grade level, 21 percent of students in South Carolina and 39 percent of students in Wyoming passed the state assessment, compared with 86–88 percent of 8th-graders in North Carolina and Texas. However, when one looks at the 8th-grade NAEP scores, 24 percent of students in South Carolina and 34 percent of students in Wyoming scored at the proficient level, compared with 26 percent of students in Texas and 29 percent of students in North Carolina. Clearly, even if each state were to meet its 100-percent proficiency goal for reading, students in those states would likely have quite disparate abilities, knowledge, and skills.

Further, simply looking at proficiency rates on state assessments may not provide the public and parents with all the information they might want about student achievement. For example, in an examination of individual states, we see both similarities and marked differences in some states regarding what state assessments show about the relative performance of subgroups and what the NAEP shows. If state assessments show small performance gaps among these groups of students while the NAEP, arguably using a more challenging standard of literacy, shows large performance gaps, it is important for state policymakers and parents to reflect on what this disparity might imply for the likely future employment and education opportunities for these students. If we fail to give due attention to multiple sources of

information regarding literacy achievement, we may fail to miss important problem areas and may end up shortchanging those most in need of assistance.

Overall, the data show that our nation faces a tremendous challenge to raise the literacy skills of our nation's adolescents. It is clear that simply mandating standards and assessments is not going to guarantee success. Unless we, as a nation, are prepared to focus attention and resources on this issue, our schools are likely to continue producing students who lack skills and are ill-prepared to deal with the demands of post-secondary education and the workplace. Policymakers, schools, and teachers need to step up and accept the "orphaned responsibility" of teaching students to read to learn. The costs of inattention are very high, both in personal and economic terms.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank Carnegie Corporation for funding this research. We particularly thank Andrés Henríquez, our project sponsor at Carnegie.

We are grateful to our reviewers, Laura Hamilton and Scott Naftel of RAND, for their critical and insightful reviews. Their recommended changes greatly improved the organization and clarity of the report. Both Dominic Brewer and Susan Bodilly also provided overall guidance for the project as directors of the program under which this report was produced.

We are also grateful to our editors, Marian Branch and Paul Arends, for their patient and careful editing.

We also thank our administrative assistant, Carolyn Rowe, for her work helping to create the tables in this report.

Introduction

Why Adolescent Literacy Matters

Today's economy places a premium on knowledge and skills, and most jobs require at least a high school education. For example, in 1998, only 11 percent of blue-collar workers had not completed high school compared with 33 percent in 1973, and nearly half had acquired at least some post-secondary education (Carnevale, 2001). Even the military—historically a viable first career step for high school dropouts—now requires its recruits to be high school graduates. The U.S. Department of Labor (2001) estimates that 70 percent of the 30 fastest-growing jobs will require some post-secondary education and 40 percent of all new jobs will require at least an associate's degree. The premium on knowledge and educational attainment translates into large and growing gaps in annual earnings, with college graduates earning more than twice as much as high school dropouts, and people with graduate or professional degrees earning three times as much as high school graduates (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2002).

As part of the American Diploma Project, Achieve (2004) recently delineated the content and skills that graduates need to have mastered by the time they leave high school if they expect to succeed in post-secondary education or in high-performance, high-growth jobs (see <http://www.achieve.org/achieve.nsf/AmericanDiplomaProject?OpenForm>). These skills include the ability to read and interpret a wide range of reference materials (e.g., periodicals, memoranda, and other documents that may contain technical information), to judge the credibility of sources, to evaluate arguments, to understand and convey complex information, and to communicate effectively in writing.

Given this information, it is important that our schools equip students with the knowledge and skills to succeed in post-secondary education and/or in the labor market. Unfortunately, many of our nation's students fail to acquire these skills and many fail to continue their schooling. According to a recent report from the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education (2004), out of every 100 students who enter 9th grade, only 68 graduate from high school four years later. Of those, 40 enroll immediately in higher education. A year later, only 27 are still enrolled as sophomores. Allowing up to six years for completion of the bachelor's degree, and three for an associate's degree, only 18 of the original 100 9th-graders will have graduated with a college diploma in that time frame. Even factoring in those who eventually find their way into college after obtaining their high school (or equivalent) diploma and/or a period in the workforce, the reality is that only one American in three obtains a post-secondary degree by his or her mid-thirties. These figures are even lower for minority students. In fact, on-time high school graduation rates are 50

percent for African American students, 51 percent for Native American students, and 53 percent for Hispanic students (Greene and Forester, 2003).

The data suggest that the leaks in our education pipeline are at least partially due to the fact that large numbers of young people reach high school without being able to read with sufficient fluency¹ and comprehension to do serious academic work. In urban, high-poverty schools, a majority of incoming 9th-graders read at or below the 7th-grade level. Students in the bottom quartile of achievement are 20 times more likely to drop out than are students in the top quartile (Carnevale, 2001).

Students who manage to get a high school diploma but whose literacy skills are meager are likely to have difficulty as well. Of those heading to college, many require one or more remedial classes—not just in community colleges, but in selective four-year institutions as well. For example, in the California State University system, which routinely enrolls students graduating in the top-third of their high school class, almost half of students require remediation in English. Interestingly, the average high school GPA of these students was quite high—3.19 (http://iar.csumb.edu/campus_demographic/remediation/remediation_entry.xls). Not surprisingly, students who enter college not ready to do college-level work graduate at significantly lower rates than do those not requiring remediation. Only a third of students assigned to a remedial reading course manage to obtain a degree (U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

Literacy matters, independent of credentials, and the costs of poor literacy skills are high. The National Adult Literacy Survey found a greater economic return for higher versus lower literacy skills for high school graduates, for those with some college, and for those with undergraduate and professional degrees (Kirsch et al., 1993). Over 40 percent of all adults with the lowest levels of literacy were living in poverty, compared with only 4 to 8 percent of those in the two highest proficiency levels.

Teaching Students to Read to Learn: An “Orphaned Responsibility” in the K–12 World

For a number of years, the federal government has made substantial investments in early reading, most recently through Reading First, which provides resources targeted to improve reading skills among children in kindergarten through third grade, and Early Reading First Grants, which provides resources for pre-reading skills of children from birth to age 5. However, our nation has not made a commensurate effort to improve the literacy skills of students as they progress to fourth grade and beyond.²

Middle school and high school students build on the literacy strategies they learned in the early grades to make sense of abstract, complex subjects removed from their personal experiences. The need to guide adolescents to advanced stages of literacy is not necessarily the result of any teaching or learning failure in the preschool or primary years; rather, it is a

¹ *Reading fluency* encompasses the speed or rate of reading, as well as the ability to read materials with expression. Meyer and Felton (1999, p. 284) defined fluency as “the ability to read connected text rapidly, smoothly, effortlessly, and automatically with little conscious attention to the mechanics of reading, such as decoding.”

² Over the past year, the federal government began to turn some attention to the question of adolescent literacy. The President’s proposed Striving Readers program, which would target middle and high school students, would be a step forward toward turning attention and resources to adolescent literacy; however, at \$100 million, the funding still falls far short of the \$1.26 billion President Bush requested for the Reading First and Early Reading First grants.

necessary next step in normal reading development. Many students need specific instruction in how to tackle texts of such disciplines as science and history, each of which contains a specific vocabulary and structure of written language.

It is clear that continual instruction beyond the early grades is needed. However, as deLeon (2002) eloquently points out, teaching students to read to learn is an “orphaned responsibility” in the K–12 system. Elementary schools traditionally emphasize literacy instruction, but middle and secondary schools shift attention to the disciplines, rarely overtly presenting instruction in reading and writing. The assumption that students will automatically learn to read more-complex, content-laden texts is particularly invalid for students who struggled when learning to read. As a nation, if we fail to properly address adolescent literacy, the reading gains achieved for Pre-K–3 students may be lost or diluted.

Scope of the Project

In an effort to focus national attention on the problem of adolescent literacy, Carnegie Corporation of New York launched a new initiative, *Advancing Literacy*. As part of this initiative, Carnegie decided to appoint an Advisory Council to propose promising strategies for the improvement of adolescent literacy. As a first step toward forming this council, Carnegie asked the RAND Corporation to convene a small study group for one year to lay the foundation for the work for the larger Advisory Council. Carnegie also asked RAND to examine data from reading and writing assessments and to summarize the state of adolescent literacy achievement in the United States as measured by these tests.

Our analysis focused on three research questions:

1. To what extent are *adolescents* (defined as students in the 4th through 12th grades) meeting state literacy goals, as measured by state assessments?
2. To what extent are adolescents meeting national literacy goals, as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)?
3. To what extent are the results from state assessments and the NAEP consistent with one another?

To answer these questions, we examined the state assessment systems adopted by the 50 states and the District of Columbia³ in order to understand how states define and measure adolescent literacy and how students fare on these assessments. For each state, we described the state standards-based assessment system, the content and format of the assessment, and student performance on those assessments. We collected data on the state assessment systems and student performance from state websites. The state assessment data presented in this report are from the 2003 assessment, with a few exceptions. For Connecticut, Minnesota, New Jersey, Ohio, Tennessee (writing scores), and Utah, we used the results of the 2002 administration because 2003 data were not available. We supplemented the assessment data with school-level data obtained from the National Longitudinal School-Level State Assessment Score Database (<http://208.253.216.16/Assessment>). We

³ The District of Columbia, being a large urban district, is quite different from the states, which tend to have both rural and urban areas. It offers a look at how students in a high-poverty, urban district perform and some of the challenges such districts face in trying to meet No Child Left Behind (NCLB) goals.

primarily used school-level data to examine the relative performance of urban, rural, and suburban schools. In addition, some states did not publish disaggregated data by student socioeconomic status; in these cases, we reported school-level performance data by school poverty status. Data regarding student demographics in the states were obtained from the 2002 NCES Common Core of Data (<http://www.nces.ed.gov/ccd/>).

To get a national picture and to understand whether and how student performance differed across the states, we examined data from the 2003 state NAEP in reading and the 2002 state NAEP in writing for 4th and 8th grades.⁴ The NAEP, known as “the Nation’s Report Card,” is the only nationally representative and continuing assessment of what America’s students know and can do in various subject areas; the state NAEP provides representative estimates of student performance in participating states. NAEP does not provide scores for individual students or schools; instead, it offers results regarding subject-matter achievement for populations and subgroups of students (e.g., fourth-graders, female students, Hispanic students). In 2003, NAEP administered the reading assessment to approximately 343,000 students in grades 4 and 8 throughout the nation. The sample assessed students in approximately 7,143 schools at grade 4 and 5,714 schools at grade 8 across the nation.

Purpose and Outline of This Report

It is important to understand what this report does and does not do.

An important contribution of the report is that it brings together all available data on achievement in adolescent literacy, thus providing a portrait of how adolescents perform against state and national literacy goals. However, our timeline did not allow for detailed analyses of these assessments or the achievement results. Our mandate was simply to report publicly available data. As a result, the report is purely descriptive and perhaps raises more questions than it answers, particularly in the different pictures of adolescent literacy achievement offered by the state and the national assessments.

One important caveat to keep in mind is that, although we present data on the similarities and differences in the results of state assessments and the state NAEP, data from these two assessments are not directly comparable, because of the differences in the tests themselves and in the definitions of *proficiency levels* in the NAEP and state performance standards.⁵ While one could argue that state and national literacy goals should be reasonably similar, in reality there is debate about whether NAEP achievement standards are too challenging. Indeed, Linn (2003) points out that the proficiency standard on the NAEP is an ambitious one, intended to encourage greater effort. The National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), which sets the standards for the NAEP, notes that the proficiency level on the NAEP indicates that “students reaching this level have demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter” (<http://www.nagb.org>).

⁴ We do not present results from the 12th-grade NAEP assessments, because the state NAEP does not test grade 12.

⁵ See, for example, National Research Council. (1999). *Uncommon Measures: Equivalence and Linkage Among Educational Tests*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press; Linn, R. L. (2000). Assessments and Accountability. *Educational Researcher*. Vol. 29, No.2; Linn, R. L. (2003). Performance Standards: Utility for Different Uses of Assessments. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*. Vol. 11, No. 31.

If NAEP achievement standards are indeed more rigorous and challenging than many state achievement standards, then one would expect fewer students to reach proficiency on the NAEP than on state assessments, and such differences would not imply that the data from state assessments are wrong or unreliable. Our purpose here is not to draw such inferences but to offer two different data points on adolescent literacy: achievement measured against state and achievement measured against (arguably more stringent) national literacy standards. We believe that it is important for state policymakers, practitioners, and parents to examine both sources of data and to make their own judgments regarding the relative performance of their students against both sets of standards. In addition, under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), states are now required to participate in the NAEP in order to help verify state results by using a common measure; therefore, states need to become familiar with the NAEP, what it measures, and how its assessment differs from their own assessments.

The report is organized into six chapters. The second chapter provides an overview of state assessments and the NAEP. The third and fourth chapters present summary data from the state assessments and the NAEP to paint a broad picture of adolescent literacy achievement across the nation. The fifth chapter looks at the similarities and differences between what the state NAEP and state assessments reveal about the performance of adolescents, subject to the caveat listed above. The final chapter offers some thoughts on the policy implications of these findings.

The appendices contain individual state write-ups that describe the assessment systems; the content, format, and performance levels of reading, writing, and English language arts assessments between 4th and 12th grades; and student performance results on those assessments. Given that the report encompasses 50 states and the District of Columbia, the sheer volume of the readily available and public information on state standards and assessments required us to make choices about what to include in the report. We focus on the reading, writing, or language arts assessment used for accountability purposes and report results at the elementary (grades 4–5), middle (grades 6–8), and high school (grades 9–12) levels. Thus, for a state that tests students in grades 3–12 in reading, we present findings for only three grades (i.e., grades 4, 8, and 11). When a choice of grades needed to be made, we selected grades 4 and 8 whenever possible so that we could examine those results in combination with NAEP data. Consequently, our state write-ups are intended to be illustrative, not exhaustive. Specifically, each state summary includes the following sections:

- **State Assessment System**—Information on the state’s assessment system as a whole, including what tests are used for accountability, and if they are intended to measure state content standards.
- **Assessment Format and Content**—Information regarding the format and content of the selected assessments.
- **Achievement-Level Descriptions**—An overview of the achievement levels set by each state and what is considered “proficient” (or passing) under NCLB.
- **Performance Results**—Data on student and school-level performance on the selected state reading and writing assessments.

State and National Assessments of Adolescent Literacy

This chapter presents a description of state assessments in the context of NCLB used to measure student progress toward state academic goals in literacy¹ and on the NAEP, which measures student performance against a set of national standards.

State Assessment Systems

After the nation's governors issued a call in 1989 for "world-class" standards to guide educational practice, in response to the poor performance of U.S. students on international comparative assessments (McKnight et al., 1987; National Governors Association, 1989; Travers and Westbury, 1989), state policymakers have steadily moved toward a system that emphasizes explicit performance standards, systematic standardized testing, and consequences for results. The National Research Council (1999, pp. 2–3) described the rationale for such a system:

The centerpiece of the system is a set of challenging standards. By setting these standards for all students, states would hold high expectations for performance; these expectations would be the same regardless of students' backgrounds or where they attended school. Aligned assessments to the standards would allow students, parents, and teachers to monitor student performance against the standards. Providing flexibility to schools would permit them to make the instructional and structural changes needed for their students to reach the standards. And holding schools accountable for meeting the standards would create incentives to redesign instruction toward the standards and provide appropriate assistance to schools that need extra help.

In the 1990s, most states were moving toward establishing systems of content standards and assessments. However, NCLB mandated that all states adopt standards-based accountability systems for all schools and, with its marked emphasis on sanctions for poor performance, raised the stakes for schools and students. As a consequence, state assessments are likely to exert significant influence over instruction.

Specifically, NCLB requires states to adopt standards-based accountability systems that set challenging content and performance standards for all students. To ensure that students are meeting these standards, by 2005–2006, states must annually test all children in reading and math, in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and at one grade in high school. By 2007–2008,

¹ For details on individual state systems, see Appendices A through YY.

states must test students in science at least once in grades 3–5, 6–9, and 10–12. States must establish goals for performance on the assessment and track performance for all students and subgroups of students (e.g., racial/ethnic groups, students with disabilities, migrant students). By the end of 12 years, all schools should have reached 100-percent proficiency—that is, all children in the school must pass the state test.

Schools that fail to make adequate yearly progress face escalating sanctions over time, such as being required to offer school choice or supplemental services and may include, among others, decreased decisionmaking; reconstituting the school staff; instituting a new curriculum based on scientifically based research; extending the school year or school day; and appointing an outside expert to advise the school. In addition, a growing number of states are holding students accountable by requiring that students pass high school assessments before they can graduate or to pass a given grade assessment to be promoted to the next grade.

Almost all states have content standards in the four major content areas—English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies—and most have standards in a number of additional subjects as well. To support implementation of standards in the classroom, most states also have developed (at least in tested grades and subjects) grade-level expectations, which delineate specific learning goals by grade level, to support instruction (see state appendices for specific examples). There is, however, considerable variability in the depth and specificity of standards among the states (Linn, 1998).

All the states with criterion-referenced tests (CRT)² note that their assessments are aligned with their content standards, and many states detail the particular standards that form the basis for the assessments. Previous research indicates that, although state assessments do tend to be aligned with standards, the collection of items on a test tends to measure only a few of the less-challenging standards and objectives. As a result, few state tests can be said to be well-aligned assessments of challenging standards (Rothman et al., 2002).

State Assessment Systems in Transition

Because of NCLB, many state assessment systems are currently in flux. Table 2.1 details the grade levels at which states are currently testing in reading, English language arts, and writing, and the changes that will be made to these systems so that they meet the assessment requirements under NCLB.

All states currently administer state assessments in reading, English language arts, or writing in various grades, except for Nebraska, which requires districts to administer district-selected assessments in certain grades. Twenty-nine states assess writing in at least one grade, although these writing tests are not used for federal accountability purposes. Another 12 states include a writing section in the English language arts assessment.

To meet the testing requirements under NCLB, as of 2003, 36 states were planning to expand the number of grades tested and nine states were developing new CRTs. In 2003, only 15 states required no changes to comply with NCLB. Among them were such states as Maryland, which had already changed their assessment systems in response to NCLB.

² Criterion-referenced tests measure how well a person has learned a specified body of knowledge and skills.

Table 2.1
State Assessment Systems for Adolescent Literacy

State	Grades Tested on Reading/English Language Arts	Grades Tested on Writing	High School Graduation Test	Revisions Needed to Comply with NCLB
Alabama	3–8	5, 7	Yes	New CRT in development; expanding tested grades
Alaska	3, 6, 8	3, 6, 8	Yes	New CRT in development; expanding tested grades
Arizona	3, 5, 8, 10	3, 5, 8, 10	(class of 2006)	Expanding tested grades
Arkansas	4, 6, 8, 11	Part of literacy exam	No	Expanding tested grades
California	3–11	Included in ELA	(class of 2006)	
Colorado	3–10	3–10	No	
Connecticut	4, 6, 8, 10	4, 6, 8	No	Expanding tested grades
Delaware	2–10	3–10	No	
District of Columbia	1–11		No	New CRT in development
Florida	2–10	4, 8, 10	Yes	
Georgia	1–11		Yes	
Hawaii	5, 8, 10	5, 8, 10	No	Expanding tested grades
Idaho	2–10	5, 7, 9 (in 2004)	(class of 2004)	
Illinois	3, 5, 8	3, 5, 8	No	Expanding tested grades
Indiana	3, 6, 8, 10, High school EOG tests		Yes	Expanding tested grades
Iowa	4, 8, 11	3–12	No	Expanding tested grades
Kansas	5, 8, 10	5, 8, 11 (every 2 years)	No	Expanding tested grades
Kentucky	4, 7, 10 (CRT) 3, 6, 9 (NRT)	4, 7, 12	No	Augmenting CTBS and adding grade
Louisiana	4, 8, 10		Yes	Expanding tested grades
Maine	4, 8	4, 8	No	Developing new CRTs; expanding tested grades
Maryland	3–8, 10		No	
Massachusetts	4, 7, 10	Included in ELA	Yes	Expanding tested grades
Michigan	4, 7, 11	Included in ELA	No	Expanding tested grades
Minnesota	3, 5, 7 8, 10 (Basic Skills Test)	5	Yes	Expanding tested grades
Mississippi	2–8, HS	4, 7	No	
Missouri	3, 7, 11	Included in ELA	No	Expanding tested grades
Montana	4, 8, 11		No	Developing new CRT; expanding tested grades
Nebraska	Districts tests in 4, 8, 11	Districts tests in 4, 8, 11	No	Expanding tested grades
Nevada	3, 5, 8 (CRT) (4, 7 NRT)	4, 8	Yes	Expanding tested CRT grades

Table 2.1—Continued

State	Grades Tested on Reading/English Language Arts	Grades Tested on Writing	High School Graduation Test	Revisions Needed to Comply with NCLB
New Hampshire	3, 6, 10	Included in ELA	No	New CRT in development; expanding tested grades
New Jersey	4, 8, 11	Included in ELA	Yes	Expanding tested grades
New Mexico	3–9, 10	HS competency test includes writing	Yes	New CRT in development
New York	4, 8, HS		Yes	Expanding tested grades
North Carolina	3–8, 10	4, 7, 10 (pilot 2003)	No	
North Dakota	4, 8, 12		No	Expanding tested grades
Ohio	4, 6, 9	4, 6, 9	Yes	Expanding tested grades
Oklahoma	5, 8, HS		No	Expanding tested grades
Oregon	3, 5, 8, 10	5, 8, 10	No	Expanding tested grades
Pennsylvania	5, 8, 11	6, 9, 11	No	Expanding tested grades
Rhode Island	4, 8, 10	Included in ELA	No	New CRT in development; expanding tested grades
South Carolina	3–8, 10	Included in ELA	Yes	
South Dakota	3–8, 11	5, 9	No	
Tennessee	K–8, HS	5, 8, 11	Yes	
Texas	3–11	Included in ELA	(class of 2004)	
Utah	1–11	6, 9	(class of 2003)	
Vermont	4, 8, 10	Included in ELA	No	New CRT in development
Virginia	3, 5, 8, HS (CRT) 4, 6, 9 (NRT)	Included in ELA	Yes	Expanding tested CRT grades
Washington	4, 7, 10 (CRT) 3, 6, 9 (NRT)	4, 7, 10	No	Expanding tested CRT grades
West Virginia	3–8, 10	4, 7, 11	No	
Wisconsin	4, 8, 10		No	Expanding tested grades
Wyoming	4, 8, 11	4, 8, 11	No	Expanding tested grades

NOTES: ELA=English language arts; EOG=End of Grade; NRT=norm-referenced test; HS=High school; CTBS=Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills.

In addition, a growing number of states require students to pass high school assessments in order to graduate. Twenty-two states will have this requirement in place by 2006. In all of these states, students who do not pass their graduation assessments the first time are provided multiple opportunities to retake the test. A few states are also requiring students to pass the assessments in certain grades in order to be promoted (not shown). For example, Georgia is phasing in new promotion policies that will require students to pass the state assessment before they can be promoted from third to fourth and from fifth to sixth grade.

Literacy Assessment Content and Format

As part of the individual state descriptions in the appendices, we provide an overview of the design and content of the literacy assessments, based on state-published information. It is difficult to provide a summary across the states regarding the content and competencies

covered, for a number of reasons. First, states differ in the amount of detail provided about the assessments. Second, language used by the states differs considerably. Without an independent and detailed review, trying to interpret the differences may lead to erroneous conclusions regarding similarities and differences among the assessments. Such a content analysis would be enlightening but was beyond the scope of this project.

There are, however, a few general points worth noting.

First, the dominant form of state large-scale on-demand assessments is multiple-choice; however, almost all the states (except for four) included some sort of constructed-response or writing section to their assessments.

Second, states with writing assessments or a direct writing section in their English language arts assessment generally reported requiring elementary students to respond to a descriptive or narrative prompt, which asked students to describe a situation or to tell a story, respectively. States reported that writing assessments for middle school and high school students required students to respond with expository or persuasive essays, which are intended to inform or influence the reader. However, the narrative form was an option on upper-grade assessments in many states as well, although this form of writing is the least likely to be used by students in post-secondary work and education.

Third, most of the states reported including both fiction and nonfiction reading passages on their assessments, and some states reported using specific content-area readings such as science or history. We do not know whether, in most cases, these are authentic texts that students are likely to encounter in their everyday lives or whether the passages are manufactured for the assessment. The question of whether these assessments actually test students on skills they need for post-secondary success is important, particularly in high-stakes assessment environments in which assessments influence classroom instruction in significant ways (Wolf and McIver, 1999; Borko and Elliott, 1999). In a recent study of high school graduation examinations in six states, Achieve (2004) found that, although the high school examinations did measure key skills without which students could not succeed, the examinations measured only a fraction of the skills and knowledge that colleges and employers report as being essential. Further, in both reading and mathematics, the majority of test questions tap basic skills, such as literal recall in English language arts.

State Assessment Achievement Standards

As of 2003, all but two states reported scores in state-set achievement (e.g., basic, proficient, advanced) levels, as required under NCLB. Although NCLB has set a common goal for all the states—100-percent proficiency in mathematics and reading—states have been given the latitude to set their own achievement levels. Previous research has shown that proficiency standards differ dramatically. For instance, the Northwest Evaluation Association found that proficiency standards in the 14 states they studied differed enough to cause dramatic differences in the percentage of students categorized as “proficient,” even if students had the same skills. In addition, proficiency standards within individual states differ across grades enough that they may provide teachers with inconsistent indicators of student progress (Kingsbury et al., 2003).

National Assessment of Educational Progress

The National Assessment of Educational Progress is the only nationally representative and continuing assessment of what America's students know and can do in various subject areas. With the passage of NCLB, NAEP's role has been expanded. All states will be required to participate in the NAEP, with the idea that it will be used to validate state assessment results in reading and mathematics.

Below, we describe the content and format of the NAEP reading and writing assessments for grades 4 and 8 that were used in this report.

Reading Assessment

The NAEP reading assessment measures the reading comprehension of 4th- and 8th-grade students. The assessment consists of multiple-choice and constructed-response questions. At least half of the questions are constructed-response, designed to test critical-thinking skills as opposed to simply testing recall. Materials used in the assessment are taken from sources that are typically available to students inside and outside of school, such as collections of stories, children's magazines, and informational books. Passages vary in length: Students in 4th grade read passages of 250 to 800 words; students in 8th grade read passages of 400 to 1,000 words.

NAEP tests students in 4th and 8th grade in two contexts for reading: reading for literary experience (e.g., exploring events, characters, and plots, by reading literary texts); and reading for information. In addition, 8th-grade students are tested on their ability to perform a task, reading directions for repairs. In 2003, about half of 4th-grade questions tested reading for literacy experience; the other half tested reading for information. The 8th-grade test focused most heavily on reading for information (41 percent of questions), followed by reading to perform a task (30 percent) and reading for literary experience (28 percent) (<http://www.nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/reading/distributequest.asp>).

The NAEP framework also categorizes questions by particular aspects of reading: the ability to form a general understanding, develop an interpretation, evaluate text content and structure, and connect information in the text with knowledge and experience on all types of texts. The majority of the assessment items fall into forming a general understanding or developing an interpretation (56–61 percent), followed by evaluating text content and structure (22–26 percent) and connecting information (17–18 percent).

NAEP has established four achievement levels: advanced, proficient, basic, and below basic.³ Table 2.2 presents definitions that the National Assessment Governing Board has established to describe the advanced, proficient, and basic levels for 4th and 8th grades.

³ The 2001 reauthorization law requires that the achievement levels be used on a trial basis until the Commissioner of Education Statistics determines that the achievement levels are "reasonable, valid, and informative to the public." Until that determination is made, the law requires the Commissioner and the National Assessment Governing Board to state clearly the trial status of the achievement levels in all NAEP reports.

Table 2.2
Achievement-Level Definitions for NAEP Reading Assessment, Grades 4 and 8

Achievement Level	4th Grade	8th Grade
Advanced	Fourth-grade students performing at the <i>Advanced</i> level should be able to generalize about topics in the reading selection and demonstrate an awareness of how authors compose and use literary devices. When reading text appropriate to fourth grade, they should be able to judge text critically and, in general, to give thorough answers that indicate careful thought.	Eighth-grade students performing at the <i>Advanced</i> level should be able to describe the more abstract themes and ideas of the overall text. When reading text appropriate to eighth grade, they should be able to analyze both meaning and form and support their analyses explicitly with examples from the text; they should be able to extend text information by relating it to their experiences and to world events. At this level, student responses should be thorough, thoughtful, and extensive.
Proficient	Fourth-grade students performing at the <i>Proficient</i> level should be able to demonstrate an overall understanding of the text, providing inferential as well as literal information. When reading text appropriate to fourth grade, they should be able to extend the ideas in the text by making inferences, drawing conclusions, and making connections to their own experiences. The connection between the text and what the student infers should be clear.	Eighth-grade students performing at the <i>Proficient</i> level should be able to show an overall understanding of the text, including inferential as well as literal information. When reading text appropriate to eighth grade, they should be able to extend the ideas in the text by making clear inferences from it, by drawing conclusions, and by making connections to their own experiences—including other reading experiences. <i>Proficient</i> eighth-graders should be able to identify some of the devices authors use in composing text.
Basic	Fourth-grade students performing at the <i>Basic</i> level should demonstrate an understanding of the overall meaning of what they read. When reading text appropriate for fourth-graders, they should be able to make relatively obvious connections between the text and their own experiences and extend the ideas in the text by making simple inferences.	Eighth-grade students performing at the <i>Basic</i> level should demonstrate a literal understanding of what they read and be able to make some interpretations. When reading text appropriate to eighth grade, they should be able to identify specific aspects of the text that reflect overall meaning, extend the ideas in the text by making simple inferences, recognize and relate interpretations and connections among ideas in the text to personal experience, and draw conclusions based on the text.

SOURCE: <http://www.nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/writing/achieveall.asp>.

These achievement levels are cumulative; therefore, students performing at the proficient level also display the competencies associated with the basic level, and students at the advanced level also demonstrate the skills and knowledge associated with both the basic and the proficient levels. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the “proficient” standard on NAEP is widely considered to be an ambitious one, intended to encourage greater effort (Linn, 2002; <http://www.nagb.org>).

Writing Assessment

The NAEP writing assessment presents a broad view of the writing skills of America’s students. The assessment tests students in three styles of writing: narrative, informative, and persuasive. The writing assessment was designed around six overarching objectives (<http://www.nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/writing/whatmeasure.asp>):

- Students should write for a variety of purposes: narrative, informative, and persuasive.
- Students should write on a variety of tasks and for many different audiences.
- Students should write from a variety of stimulus materials, and within various time constraints.

- Students should generate, draft, revise, and edit ideas and forms of expression in their writing.
- Students should display effective choices in the organization of their writing. They should include detail to illustrate and elaborate their ideas, and use appropriate conventions of written English.
- Students should value writing as a communicative activity.

Similarly to the NAEP reading assessment, student writing assessment results fall into four achievement levels: advanced, proficient, basic, and below basic. Table 2.3 presents the achievement-level definitions for writing in grades 4 and 8.

The next chapter presents a discussion of the assessment results from the state assessments.

Table 2.3
Achievement-Level Definitions for NAEP Writing Assessment, Grades 4 and 8

Achievement Level	4th Grade	8th Grade
Advanced	<p>Fourth grade students performing at the <i>Advanced</i> level should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> create an effective and elaborated response to the task in form, content, and language; express analytical, critical, and/or creative thinking; have unity of form and content in response to the task; demonstrate an awareness of the intended audience; use effective organization appropriate to the task; show proficient use of transitional elements; elaborate and enhance the central idea with descriptive and supportive details; use language appropriate to the task and intended audience; and enhance meaning through control of spelling, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization. 	<p>Eighth grade students performing at the <i>Advanced</i> level should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> create an effective and elaborated response to the task in form, content, and language; express analytical, critical, and/or creative thinking; have well-crafted, cohesive organization appropriate to the task; show sophisticated use of transitional elements; use varied and elaborated supporting details in appropriate, extended response; begin to develop a personal style or voice; demonstrate precise and varied use of language; use a variety of strategies such as analogies, illustrations, examples, anecdotes, and figurative language; and enhance meaning through control of spelling, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization.
Proficient	<p>Fourth grade students performing at the <i>Proficient</i> level should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> create an effective response to the task in form, content, and language; demonstrate an awareness of the intended audience; use effective organization appropriate to the task; use sufficient elaboration to clarify and enhance the central idea; use language appropriate to the task and intended audience; and have few errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization that interfere with communication. 	<p>Eighth grade students performing at the <i>Proficient</i> level should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> create an effective response to the task in form, content, and language; express analytical, critical, and/or creative thinking; demonstrate an awareness of the purpose and intended audience; have logical and observable organization appropriate to the task; show effective use of transitional elements; use sufficient elaboration to clarify and enhance the central idea; use language (e.g., variety of word choice and sentence structure) appropriate to the task; and have few errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization that interfere with communication.
Basic	<p>Fourth grade students performing at the <i>Basic</i> level should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrate appropriate response to the task in form, content, and language; use some supporting details; demonstrate organization appropriate to the task; and demonstrate sufficient command of spelling, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization to communicate to the reader. 	<p>Eighth grade students performing at the <i>Basic</i> level should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrate appropriate response to the task in form, content, and language; use some supporting details; demonstrate organization appropriate to the task; and demonstrate sufficient command of spelling, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization to communicate to the reader.

SOURCE: <http://www.nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/reading/achieveall.asp>.

The Current State of Adolescent Literacy Achievement: Results from State Assessments

Data from state assessments, or results, are important because they measure progress against state-set goals, generally are taken seriously by teachers and schools, and are likely to influence instruction, particularly in high-stakes environments. However, these results cannot be compared across states, because states set differing goals for student performance in terms of content and appropriate achievement levels. This chapter focuses on results from the state assessments and examines overall proficiency levels, as well as differences in performance, for students disaggregated by race/ethnicity and by poverty status.^{1,2}

What We Present in This Chapter

- We use data from the most recent state accountability assessment available on the state website. Generally, data are for the 2003 administration (school year 2002–2003); however, for a few states, we report data from 2001–2002. Because test scores tend to rise (for a number of reasons—growing familiarity with the test, regression to the mean, increased teaching of content that is on the test) over time, these scores may underestimate current student achievement levels.
- Data from state assessments were mapped to state definitions of “passing” for purposes of meeting the requirements of NCLB. This mapping allowed us to identify the “pass rate” for elementary and middle school students in each state. States that did not report such data on websites were automatically excluded from the analysis. For example, two states (Alabama and Tennessee) reported scores in average percentile ranks, not in proficiency levels.

—For pass rates of elementary students, we use 4th- or 5th-grade results. For reading, we use 4th-grade results, whenever available (see Table 3.1). Ten states did

¹ While the appendices detail student performance, where available, for students with disabilities and for students with limited English proficiency, we do not focus on these data in this chapter. We found large achievement gaps between these students and their peers at all grade levels and on all assessments. However, given the wide variety of student needs and abilities within these groups, the wide variety in accommodations across and sometimes within states, it is difficult to determine what these scores mean and at what level these students should be expected to perform. For an example of a state that provides detailed scores by language background and proficiency, see the entry for Colorado.

² Data regarding the performance of schools by urbanicity are available in the appendices. In general, we found that findings regarding urbanicity were confounded with poverty levels. Students in areas with higher concentrations of high-poverty schools performed at lower levels than students in areas with lower-poverty rates.

Table 3.1
Elementary and Middle School Grades Reported for State
Accountability Reading Assessments, by State

State	Elementary Grade	Middle School Grade
Alabama ^a	—*	—*
Alaska	—*	8
Arizona ^b	—	—*
Arkansas	4	8
California	4	8
Colorado	4	8
Connecticut	4	8
Delaware	5	8
DC	4	8
Florida	4	8
Georgia	4	8
Hawaii	5	8
Idaho	4	8
Illinois	5	8
Indiana	—*	8
Iowa	4	8
Kansas	5	8
Kentucky	4	7
Louisiana	4	8
Maine	4	8
Maryland	5	8
Massachusetts	4	7
Michigan	4	7
Minnesota	5	8
Mississippi	4	8
Missouri	—*	7
Montana	4	8
Nebraska ^c	—*	—*
Nevada	5	—*
New Hampshire	—*	6
New Jersey	4	8
New Mexico	4	8
New York ^d	—*	—*
North Carolina	4	8
North Dakota	4	8
Ohio	4	6
Oklahoma	5	8

Table 3.1—Continued

State	Elementary Grade	Middle School Grade
Oregon	5	8
Pennsylvania	5	8
Rhode Island	4	8
South Carolina	4	8
South Dakota	5	8
Tennessee ^e	—*	—*
Texas	4	8
Utah	4	8
Vermont	4	8
Virginia	5	8
Washington	4	7
West Virginia ^f	—*	—*
Wisconsin	4	8
Wyoming	4	8

NOTES:

* These states did not have readily available or reportable data for the selected grades and are not included in the results presented in this section.

^a Alabama's student-performance results are reported as national percentile ranks, not as proficiency levels.

^b Arizona reports its scores for two groups based on English-language proficiency, and all disaggregated data are for non-English-language learners only. As a result, these are not comparable with the scores reported by other states.

^c In Nebraska, each district administers its own assessment. As a result, there are no state-level results.

^d No data for New York were publicly available.

^e Tennessee student-performance results are reported as national percentile ranks, not as proficiency levels.

^f In 2003, West Virginia did not report student scores for the performance levels by grade level.

not have readily available or reportable data. Of these, two states—Alaska and Indiana—did not test either 4th or 5th grades in 2003.

—For the middle school students, we report 6th-, 7th-, or 8th-grade results. For reading, we use 8th-grade results for most states. We use 7th-grade results for seven states and 6th-grade results for New Hampshire. An additional seven states did not have readily available or reportable data.

- For high school students, we report assessment results in two categories—those from high school assessments that are required for graduation and those from assessments that are not required for graduation.

We present data of pass rates from all the states in order to determine their progress toward meeting the 100-percent proficiency goal set by NCLB. However, these state pass rates are not comparable. State standards and assessments differ widely in format, rigor, and proficiency thresholds. The purpose of showing pass rates across the 50 states is simply to provide a broad-brush snapshot of adolescent literacy based on states' own definitions, tests,

and standards. Differences in student performance shown below can be due to several factors—most particularly, differences in the content of the assessments; differences in the proficiency levels set by the states; and differences in student abilities. This report does not disentangle these differences; detailed or multivariate analyses were beyond the scope and timeline of the project. Consequently, one should not assume that a state with higher levels of passing on a state assessment has a greater percentage of students with advanced literacy skills than a state with lower passing rates.

Performance of Elementary School Students

Reading Assessments: Overall Pass Rates

Figure 3.1 shows the pass rates for elementary school students on the state assessments for the 40 states and DC that had readily available and reportable data in terms of percentages of students (in 4th or 5th grade) who scored at the passing level on the state assessment.

The average pass rate was 66 percent, and the pass rates for states in the middle half of the distribution ranged from 57 to 76 percent. The pass rates differed widely across states, ranging from a low of 29 percent in DC to a high of 87 percent in Colorado. Three states had a pass rate of below 40 percent—DC, South Carolina, and California; in seven states, less than half of the students passed at the elementary level. In contrast, eight states had pass rates of 80 percent or higher—Georgia, Utah, Wisconsin, Virginia, Mississippi, Texas, North Carolina, and Colorado.

Reading Assessments: Differences in Performance Among Students, Disaggregated by Race/Ethnicity and Poverty Status

Among states that reported data for students disaggregated by race/ethnicity, we find large differences in pass rates of white and African American students ($n=32$ states) and white and Hispanic students ($n=29$ states) (Figures 3.2 and 3.3).

The difference in pass rates of white and African American students ranged from a low of 12 percentage points in Hawaii to a high of 65 percentage points in DC (Figure 3.2). In eight states, the difference was 20 percentage points or less; in 11 states, it was 30 percentage points or more; and in three states—Minnesota, Pennsylvania, and DC—African American students trailed their white counterparts by 40 percentage points or more.³

We also find large performance gaps between white and Hispanic elementary school students. The smallest differences in pass rates were in Arkansas, Hawaii, and Texas—13 percentage points—and the largest difference was in DC—68 percentage points. In nine states, the achievement gap was 20 percentage points or less; in 10 states, the gap was 30 percentage points or more.

Of the twenty-seven states for which we have data on the pass rates of white, Hispanic, and African American students, African American students performed better than

³ In some states, we found that while the achievement gap at the passing level is relatively small, particularly in those states with high overall pass rates such as Massachusetts and Colorado, there was a much larger achievement gap at the next-higher level of achievement. For example, in Massachusetts, at the next level of achievement, the achievement gap between white students and African American students jumped to 36 percentage points while the gap between white students and Hispanic students was 44 percent (see appendices for details).

Figure 3.1
Pass Rates of Elementary School Students on State Reading Assessments, 2001–2002/2002–2003

NOTE: Ten states are excluded from the figure because they did not have readily available and reportable data for grades 4–5.

RAND TR180-3.1

Figure 3.2
Differences in Pass Rates of White and African American Elementary School Students on State Reading Assessments, 2001–2002/2002–2003

NOTE: Eighteen states did not have readily available and reportable data disaggregated for African American students in grades 4–5.

RAND TR180-3.2

Figure 3.3
Differences in Pass Rates of White and Hispanic Elementary School Students on State Reading Assessments, 2001–2002/2002–2003

NOTE: Twenty-two states did not have readily available and reportable data disaggregated for Hispanic students in grades 4–5.

RAND TR180-3.3

Hispanic students in 11; in 14 states, the opposite was true. However, generally, the difference in pass rates between the two groups was between -6 and $+6$ percentage points. There were some exceptions. In Arkansas, for example, Hispanic students outperformed African American students by 16 percentage points; in Washington, African Americans scored better than their Hispanic counterparts by about 11 percentage points.

Economically disadvantaged⁴ students lagged behind their counterparts who were not economically disadvantaged. As shown in Figure 3.4, 25 states provided data for students, disaggregated by poverty status. The achievement gap ranged from 15 to 37 percentage points. Ten states reported differences in pass rates of the two groups of 20 percentage points or less. In seven states—South Carolina, Minnesota, Vermont, Illinois, California, Pennsylvania, and Connecticut—the difference ranged from 30 to 37 percentage points. By and large, these performance gaps were somewhat smaller than those found among racial/ethnic groups. This lesser gap was particularly evident in DC: 18 percentage points among advantaged and disadvantaged students compared with over 65–68 percentage points between white and African American and white and Hispanic students.

Writing Assessments

Some states also gave writing assessments in the elementary grades. Pass rates on the writing assessments for the 18 states that had data with achievement levels are shown in Figure 3.5. Kentucky had the lowest passing rates: Only 9 percent of elementary school students passed the state writing assessment. Four states had pass rates of less than 30 percent, whereas five states had pass rates of 80 percent or higher. Between 81 and 91 percent of students in Ohio, Connecticut, Virginia, Texas, and Colorado passed the writing assessment at the elementary grade level. In many cases, the pass rates on the writing assessments were considerably lower than the pass rates on the state reading assessments. For example, in Kentucky, 63 percent of elementary students passed the reading assessment, compared with 9 percent passing the writing assessment. In Rhode Island, the percentage of students passing the reading assessment was exactly double the percentage that passed the writing assessment (62 percent versus 31 percent). Given that achievement levels can be set considerably differently across subjects, even within a state, this finding may not be surprising (Kingsbury et al., 2003).

At the top end of the distribution, pass rates on both assessments tended to be more comparable. For example, 82–85 percent of students in Virginia passed both the reading and writing assessments; in Texas, 85–88 percent of students did so.

Some states provided data on pass rates disaggregated by race/ethnicity and poverty status of students. Because these data largely mirror what we found on the reading assessments, we provide only a summary distribution of the achievement gaps in writing for the various subgroups of students (Table 3.2). The achievement gaps range from a low of 3 to a high of 26 percentage points. We divided the range into four categories: 0–9, 10–19, 20–29, and 30+ percentage points and then tallied the number of states that fell into each group. There were three states in which the difference in pass rates between white and African American students was less than 10 percentage points, nine states in which the

⁴ Most states used eligibility or receipt of free or reduced-price lunch as a proxy for economic disadvantage or poverty.

Figure 3.4
Differences in Pass Rates of Economically Advantaged and Economically Disadvantaged
Elementary School Students on State Reading Assessments, 2001–2002/2002–2003

NOTE: Twenty-six states did not have readily available and reportable data disaggregated by poverty.

RAND TR180-3.4

Figure 3.5
Pass Rates of Elementary School Students on State Writing Assessments,
2001–2002/2002–2003

NOTE: Thirty-one states either did not administer a separate writing assessment or did not have reportable data at the elementary grade level.

RAND TR180-3.5

Table 3.2
Differences in Pass Rates of Elementary School Students, Disaggregated by
Race/Ethnicity and Poverty Status: State Writing Assessments

Difference Between Pass Rates of Selected Subgroups of Students (percentage points)	White and African American Students (n=15)	White and Hispanic Students (n=11)	Economically Advantaged and Economically Disadvantaged Students (n=12)
	Number of States		
≤10	3	4	2
10–19	9	5	5
20–29	3	2	5
30+	0	0	0

difference was between 10 and 19 percentage points, and three states in which the difference was between 20 and 29 percentage points.

The achievement gap between white and African American students on the writing assessments ranged from 3 to 26 percentage points. Kentucky, Oklahoma, and Maine reported the lowest achievement gap—less than 10 percentage points (Kentucky and Maine had very low pass rates overall); Connecticut, Ohio, and Illinois had an achievement gap of 20–29 percentage points.

Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas also showed a difference in pass rates of less than 10 percentage points between white students and Hispanic students. Connecticut's achievement gap between white students and Hispanic students was the highest, at 24 percentage points.

Two states—Kentucky and Maine—reported a difference in pass rates between economically advantaged and disadvantaged students of 5–8 percentage points; five states reported an achievement gap of 20–29 percentage points between the two groups.

Performance of Middle School Students

We now turn to data on the performance of middle school students.

Reading Assessments: Overall Pass Rates

Figure 3.6 presents the pass rates of middle school students on the state reading assessment for the 44 states that had readily available and reportable data. The pass rates range from 21 percent in South Carolina to 88 percent in Texas, and the average is 61 percent. Three states had pass rates of 30 percent or less. In 12 states, less than half of the students passed the reading assessment. Six states had pass rates of 80 percent and higher.

Middle school students had lower pass rates on reading assessments than did elementary school students in 27 of the 40 states for which we had data on pass rates for both elementary and middle school students. In 23 of the states, the difference was between 1 and 19 percentage points; in four states—Arkansas, Mississippi, Rhode Island, Vermont—the difference in pass rates was 20 percentage points or higher. In North Carolina, 86 percent of both sets of students passed the respective reading assessments. In 13 of the 40 states, middle school students passed at a higher rate than did elementary school students. In South Dakota, the difference was quite large: Pass rates of middle school students were 27 percentage points higher than those of elementary school students.

Among the states, for both sets of students, DC had the lowest pass rates, whereas Texas, North Carolina, and Colorado had pass rates of 80 percent or higher.

Reading Assessments: Differences in Performance Among Students, Disaggregated by Race/Ethnicity and Poverty Status

Figure 3.7 shows differences in pass rates of white and African American middle school students. These ranged from 12 percentage points in Colorado and Texas to 64 percentage points in DC. In eight states, the difference in performance was 20 percentage points or lower. In three states—Minnesota, Pennsylvania, and DC—the difference was 40 percentage points or higher.

Figure 3.6
Pass Rates of Middle School Students on State Reading Assessments, 2001–2002/2002–2003

NOTE: Seven states are excluded from the figure because they did not have readily available and reportable data for grades 6–8.

RAND TR180-3.6

Figure 3.7
Differences in Pass Rates of White and African American Middle School Students on State Reading Assessments, 2001–2002/2002–2003

NOTE: Sixteen states are excluded from the figure because they did not have readily available and reportable data for African American students in grades 6–8.

RAND TR180-3.7

Figure 3.8 shows data for white and Hispanic students. The smallest difference in performance was in Texas, where Hispanic students trailed white students by 11 percentage points, and the largest difference was in DC (65 percentage points). In five states, the difference in pass rates was 20 percentage points or lower. In eight states, the performance gap between white and Hispanic students was 30 percentage points or higher.

As with elementary school students, the performance of Hispanic and African American middle school students was relatively similar across states. With some exceptions, of the 29 states that published data on all three groups of students (whites, Hispanics, and African Americans), 17 had a difference in pass rates of between -6 and $+6$ percentage points. In four states—Arkansas, Florida, Michigan, Missouri—Hispanic pass rates were between 10 and 13 percentage points higher than those of African American students. In North Carolina, African American students outperformed Hispanic students by 11 percentage points.⁵

Twenty-seven states reported data for students that were disaggregated by poverty status (Figure 3.9). The achievement gap by poverty status ranged from 17 to 37 percentage points. Nine states reported differences in pass rates of 20 percentage points or less for the two groups. In three states—Florida, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania—the difference ranged from 30 to 37 percentage points. Connecticut and Pennsylvania showed differences of over 35 percentage points between economically advantaged and disadvantaged students at both the elementary and middle school levels.

As with elementary school students, the performance gaps between students from low-income households and those from more-advantaged backgrounds were slightly smaller than those found among racial/ethnic groups, with one notable exception. In DC, students from low-income households trailed their counterparts by 15 percentage points compared with 59–64-percentage-point differences between white and Hispanic and African American students.

Writing Assessments

Twenty-one states reported writing assessment data with achievement levels in the middle grades (Figure 3.10). As with elementary school students, Kentucky had the lowest passing rate—only 17 percent of its middle school students passed the state writing assessment—and it was the only state with a pass rate lower than 30 percent. Six states had pass rates of 80 percent or higher—Connecticut, Tennessee, Texas, Ohio, Georgia, and Colorado—and the last two had pass rates of 90 percent. In 15 of the 21 states, over half the students passed the writing assessment.

In most states that reported pass rates on both the reading and writing assessments for middle school students, the pass rates tended to be fairly comparable (± 7 percentage points). Of the remaining states, two (Kentucky and Mississippi) had considerably higher

⁵ There were also large achievement gaps between white students and minorities other than African Americans and Hispanics, such as Native Americans, Alaskan Natives, and Hawaiian natives. For instance, the percentages of Native American students scoring at the proficient level in middle school reading in Wyoming, Montana, South Dakota, and North Dakota were 27–38 percentage points lower than the proficiency rates of white students in those states. In Hawaii, the proportion of Hawaiian natives at the proficient level was 16 percent lower than the percentage of white students; in Alaska, the achievement gap between white students and Alaskan natives is 40 percentage points. These achievement gaps occurred in writing and in lower grades as well.

Figure 3.8
Differences in Pass Rates of White and Hispanic Middle School Students on State Reading Assessments, 2001–2002/2002–2003

NOTE: Nineteen states are excluded from the figure because they did not have readily available and reportable data on Hispanic students in grades 6–8.
 RAND TR180-3.8

Figure 3.9
Differences in Pass Rates of Economically Advantaged and Economically Disadvantaged
Middle School Students on State Reading Assessments, 2001–2002/2002–2003

NOTE: Twenty-four states are excluded from the figure because they did not have readily available and reportable data on poverty status for grades 6–8.

Figure 3.10
Pass Rates of Middle School Students on State Writing Assessments,
2001–2002/2002–2003

NOTE: Thirty states either did not administer writing assessments or did not have reportable data at the middle school level.

RAND TR180-3.10

pass rates on the reading assessment than on the writing assessment; in Ohio and Vermont, the opposite was true. The differences in pass rates ranged from 26 to 41 percentage points in these states. In three states, the pass rates were uniformly high on both assessments—78–80 percent of students in Connecticut; 85–88 percent of students in Texas; and 87–92 percent of students in Colorado passed the reading and writing assessments.

As with the elementary school data, we provide only a summary distribution of the achievement gaps in writing for the various subgroups of students for the states that reported such data (Table 3.3). As before, we divided the range (6–34 percentage points in this case) into four categories: 0–9, 10–19, 20–29, and ≥ 30 percentage points and counted the number of states that fell into each group.

The achievement gap between white and African American students on the writing assessments ranged from 6 to 25 percentage points. Kentucky and Oklahoma reported the lowest achievement gaps (6–8 percentage points). Five states had an achievement gap of 20–29 percentage points—Alabama, Michigan, Connecticut, Virginia, and Illinois.

Oklahoma was the only state that reported a difference in pass rates between white students and Hispanic students of less than 10 percentage points, and it was the only state to

Table 3.3
Differences in Pass Rates of Middle School Students, Disaggregated by
Race/Ethnicity and Poverty Status: State Writing Assessments

Difference Between Pass Rates of Selected Subgroups of Students (percentage points)	White and African American Students (n=17)	White and Hispanic Students (n=13)	Economically Advantaged and Economically Disadvantaged Students (n=12)
	Number of States		
≤10	3	1	1
10–19	9	10	6
20–29	5	1	5
≥30	0	1	0

report a difference in pass rates between economically advantaged and disadvantaged students of less than 10 percentage points. In contrast, in Connecticut the achievement gap between white students and Hispanic students was 30 percentage points, and the gap between economically disadvantaged students and their economically advantaged peers was 25 percentage points.

There was remarkable consistency in the results on the elementary and middle school writing assessments in terms of which states had the lowest and which had the highest achievement gaps by race/ethnicity and poverty status. For example, Connecticut showed large subgroup differences in both grades, whereas Kentucky (which had the lowest pass rates overall among both elementary and middle school students) tended to report much lower differences between groups at both grade levels.

Performance of High School Students

This section briefly examines some of the results on high school tests that are part of the states' accountability systems. We report the data for high school tests required for graduation separately from student performance on the assessments that do not carry high stakes for students.

Student Performance on Graduation Assessments

On the high school tests that are required for graduation, first-time pass rates tended to be relatively high—68–95 percent for all students (Table 3.4).⁶ It is not surprising that these scores would be higher than those found in typical state assessments, because graduation tests tend to heavily test basic skills rather than advanced skills (Achieve, 2004). For the three states that tested students in both reading and English language arts, the pass rates were quite similar on the two assessments—within 0 to 5 percentage points of one another.

For the six states with a separate writing assessment, students in Ohio, South Carolina, and Virginia had very similar pass rates on the assessments for reading (1–2-percentage-point difference), while students in Minnesota and Alaska performed better on

⁶ In all states with graduation examinations, students who do not pass the exam have multiple opportunities to retake the exam so that they can graduate. Thus, first-time pass rates on these examinations do not determine who will and who will not graduate.

the writing assessment than on the reading assessment, and students in Georgia had higher language arts scores.

Table 3.4
Results for First-Time Test Takers: High School Tests Required for Graduation,
2002–2003

State	Average Performance in Reading	Average Performance in Writing	Average Performance in English Language Arts	Achievement Gaps
Alabama	All: 88%		All: 83%	SES: 12–14% W-AA: 14–18%
Alaska	All: 70%	All: 83%		W-AA: 17–35% W-AN: 22–37% W-H: 14–19%
Florida ^a	All: 68%			SES: 26% W-AA: 35% W-H: 24%
Georgia		All: 88%	All: 95%	SES: 7–14% W-AA: 5–12% W-H: 13–22%
Idaho**	All: 74%		All: 74%	SES: 19% W-H: 32–37%
Indiana			All: 69%	SES: 29% W-AA: 35% W-H: 31%
Louisiana ^a			All: 71%	W-AA: 32%
Massachusetts ^a			All: 89%	W-AA: 18% W-H: 28%
Minnesota ^b	All: 80%	All: 91%		SES: 18–29% W-AA: 32–40% W-H: 24–34%
New Jersey			All: 81%	W-AA: 25% W-H: 24%
New Mexico	Passing data not available		Passing data not available	SES: .4 standard deviation W-AA: .5 standard deviation W-H: .5 standard deviation
Ohio	All: 92%	All: 90%		W-AA: 15–16%
South Carolina	All: 84%	All: 83%		SES: 20–21% W-AA: 20–23%
Texas*	All: 72%			W-AA: 16% W-H: 17%
Virginia	All: 93%	All: 91%		W-AA: 8–11% W-H: 9–19%

NOTES:

All=all students; SES=achievement gap between non-economically disadvantaged students and economically disadvantaged students; W-AA=achievement gap between white students and African American students; W-AN=achievement gap between white students and Alaskan native students; W-NA=achievement gap between white students and Native American students; W-H: achievement gap between white students and Hispanic students.

* Required for graduation in 2004.

** Required for graduation in 2006.

^a Performance level required for graduation is lower than that required to meet the requirements under NCLB.

^b Minnesota reading data are from the basic-skills test that students must take in 8th grade. The writing basic-skills test is administered in 10th grade. The achievement gaps are larger in 8th-grade reading than in 10th-grade reading.

Similar to the elementary and middle school findings, there were large achievement gaps by socioeconomic status and by race/ethnicity. Economically disadvantaged students scored 7 to 30 percentage points below their peers. In New Mexico, these students scored .4 of a standard deviation below their more-advantaged peers. Differences based on race/ethnicity tended to be even larger. The achievement gap between white students and African American students ranged from 5 to 42 percentage points and 9 to 37 percentage points between white students and Hispanic students. In New Mexico, the achievement gaps equated to about half of a standard deviation.

Student Performance on High School Assessments Not Required for Graduation

On the high school reading, English language arts, and writing assessments that were not linked to graduation requirements, 13–93 percent of all students scored at the “proficient” level—a much wider range than what we found with required graduation tests (Table 3.5). For instance, for states that administered writing assessments, the proportion of students passing ranged from 24 percent in Rhode Island to almost all students in Mississippi and Colorado.

Again, there were significant achievement gaps by socioeconomic status, ranging from 2 percentage points (for the Mississippi writing assessment, which almost all students passed) to 36 percentage points. And similar to all other findings, the achievement gaps for race/ethnicity were even larger (2–72 percentage points).

Summary

There is considerable variability in proficiency rates among states, owing largely to differences in the content and rigor of the tests, the cut-scores used to determine achievement levels, and actual differences in student abilities. Given the great variability across states in the first two factors, one cannot make inferences regarding how well or how badly students in one state are doing relative to those in another.

However, these data are useful in highlighting how far states have to go to meet NCLB’s ambitious goal of bringing *all* students up to the “proficient” level (even based on their own standards). For example, the average reading pass rate was between 61 and 66 percent at the elementary and middle school grades, with a range of 21 to 88 percent. In seven states, less than half of the students passed the reading assessment at the elementary level, and this was true of 12 states at the middle school level. In both reading and writing, African American and Hispanic students trailed significantly behind white students—and the performance gap is often quite large (30 percentage points or higher). Economically disadvantaged students lagged behind their counterparts who were not economically disadvantaged, although, by and large, these performance gaps were somewhat smaller than those found among racial/ethnic groups. With some exceptions, the pass rates on the writing assessments were lower than the pass rates on the state reading assessments.

We now turn to data on the performance of 4th- and 8th-graders on the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

Table 3.5
High School Results Not Linked to Graduation Requirements, 2002–2003

State	Average Performance in Reading	Average Performance in Writing	Average Performance in English Language Arts	Achievement Gaps
Arkansas ^a	—	—	All: 37%	W-AA: 35% W-H: 29%
California			All: 33%	SES: 27% W-AA: 31% W-H: 33%
Colorado	All: 87%	All: 93%		SES: 10–16% W-AA: 7–12% W-H: 10–19%
Connecticut	All: 78%	All: 81%		SES: 30% W-AA: 33–37% W-H: 35–37%
Delaware	All: 67%	All: 73%		SES: 21–32% W-AA: 19–30% W-H: 20–32%
District of Columbia	All: 13%			SES: 12% W-AA: 70% W-H: 72%
Florida		Tested; no proficiency level set		
Hawaii	All: 40%			W-AA: 17% W-H: 21%
Illinois	All: 56%	All: 59%		SES: 31–36% W-AA: 34–37% W-H: 31–34%
Iowa	All: 77%			SES: 21% W-AA: 29% W-H: 25%
Kansas	All: 61%			SES: 23% W-AA: 31% W-H: 22%
Kentucky	All: 31%			SES: 23% W-AA: 18%
Maine	All: 46%	All: 37%		SES: 20–26% W-AA: 20–25%
Maryland	All: 61%			W-AA: 34% W-H: 30%
Michigan	All: 71%	All: 50%		SES: 21% W-AA: 20–21% W-H: 16–19%
Mississippi	All: 78%	All: 94–97%		SES: 2–18% W-AA: 2–22%
Missouri			All: 22%	SES: 14% W-AA: 18% W-H: 10%
Montana			All: 75%	W-NA: 31%
New Hampshire			All: 69%	SES: 20% W-H: 24%

Table 3.5—Continued

State	Average Performance in Reading	Average Performance in Writing	Average Performance in English Language Arts	Achievement Gaps
North Carolina	All: 64%			W-AA: 32% W-NA: 26% W-H: 31%
North Dakota	All: 52%			W-NA: 30%
Oklahoma ^c	All: 56%	All: 68%		SES: 15–22% W-AA: 21–31% W-NA: 11–15% W-H: 15–26%
Oregon			All: 52%	
Pennsylvania	All: 59%	All: 70%		SES: 28–32% W-AA: 31–38% W-H: 32–35%
Rhode Island ^d		All: 24%	All: 43%	W-AA: 24% W-H: 27%
South Dakota	All: 55%			W-NA: 24%
Utah	All: 74%			
Vermont	All: 49%	All: 60%		SES: 21–23%
Washington	All: 60%	All: 61%		W-AA: 27–28% W-H: 30–32% W-NA: 22%
Wisconsin	All: 71%		All: 70%	SES: 26–30% W-AA: 42% W-H: 33–34%
Wyoming	All: 47%	All: 62%		SES: 17–18% W-H: 17–18% W-NA: 25–27%

NOTES:

All=all students; SES=achievement gap between non-economically disadvantaged students and economically disadvantaged students; W-AA=achievement gap between white students and African American students; W-NA=achievement gap between white students and Native American students; W-H=achievement gap between white students and Hispanic students.

^a Arkansas administers a literacy exam that includes reading and writing.

^b Mississippi reports scores for reading and language convention, as well as two writing scores—narrative essay and informative essay.

^c Racial/ethnic and SES achievement gaps are for general-education students only.

^d Disaggregated data for the writing assessment were not available.

The Current State of Adolescent Literacy Achievement: Results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress

The advantage of the National Assessment of Educational Progress is that it allows us to compare the performance of states with one another and view the performance of the nation on a common metric. The weakness of NAEP is that it may not align well with state goals; therefore, students may not feel as much pressure to “do their best” on the assessment because it carries no consequences for students, teachers, or schools.¹ This chapter presents results from the NAEP for 4th- and 8th-graders and looks at the relative performance of groups of students disaggregated by race/ethnicity and poverty status.

Performance of 4th-Graders

Reading Assessment: Overall Proficiency Rates

Figure 4.1 shows the percentage of 4th-graders who scored “proficient” and above on the 2003 NAEP Reading Assessment. Proficiency rates ranged from a low of 10 in DC to a high of 43 in Connecticut. Three states had proficiency rates of less than 20 percent; 15 states had proficiency rates of 20–29 percent; 30 states had proficiency rates of 30–39 percent. In only three states—Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Connecticut—did the proportion of students scoring at the “proficient” level reach 40 percent and above.

Reading Assessment: Differences in Performance Among Students, Disaggregated by Race/Ethnicity and Poverty Status

Figure 4.2 shows the achievement gap between white and African American 4th-graders on the NAEP. The smallest difference was in Oregon (14 percentage points), and the largest difference was in DC (63 percentage points). Of the 42 states for which we had data, ten exhibited differences in performance of the two groups of between 20 and 29 percentage points; ten states exhibited a performance gap that was less than 20 percentage points; and another ten states exhibited a gap of 30 percentage points or higher.

¹ In the future, NAEP will be used to validate gains on state assessments under NCLB. As a consequence, schools, students, and teachers are likely to view it much more seriously than is currently the case.

Figure 4.1
Percentage of 4th-Grade Students Scoring “Proficient” and Above on the National Assessment of Educational Progress
2003 Reading Assessment

RAND TR180-4.1

Figure 4.2
Difference in Percentages of White and African American 4th-Grade Students Scoring “Proficient”
and Above on the National Assessment of Educational Progress 2003 Reading Assessment

NOTE: Data were not available for nine states—Idaho, Maine, Nebraska, New Hampshire, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, Vermont, and Wyoming.

RAND TR180-4.2

Figure 4.3 shows the difference in performance of white and Hispanic students at the 4th-grade level. In general, these differences were somewhat smaller than the ones shown above between white and African American students. In Tennessee, Missouri, and Indiana, Hispanic students trailed their white counterparts by 5–10 percentage points. Once again, the performance gap was the highest in DC (62 percentage points). Of the 40 states for which we had data, 22 exhibited differences in performance of the two groups of between 20 and 29 percentage points. In 15 states, the performance gap was less than 20 percentage points; in three states, the gap was 30 percentage points or higher.

The achievement gap between students from economically advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds ranged from a low of 16 percentage points in Hawaii to 36 percentage points in Connecticut (Figure 4.4). In about two-thirds (33 out of 51) of the states, the gap was between 20 and 29 percentage points; in 12 states, it was between 10 and 19 percentage points; and in the remaining six states, it was 30 percentage points or higher.

Writing Assessment

Forty-four states participated in the 2002 4th-grade writing assessment. The proficiency scores, shown in Figure 4.5, ranged from 10 percent (DC) to 49 percent (Connecticut). In 12 states, less than 20 percent of 4th-grade students scored at the “proficient” level and above; 21 states had proficiency scores of 20–29 percent; nine had scores of 30–39 percent; and only two (Massachusetts and Connecticut) had proficiency rates of 40 percent and higher.

The differences in proficiency scores between white and African American and Hispanic students and between economically advantaged and disadvantaged students are shown in Table 4.1.

A total of 36 states had data on the performance of white and African American students; 30 states had data on the performance of white and Hispanic students. All 44 states had data disaggregated by poverty status of students.

In three states—West Virginia, Hawaii, and Arizona—the achievement gap between the white and African American students was less than 10 percentage points; in 21 states, the gap was between 10 and 19 percentage points; in ten states, the gap was between 20 and 29 percentage points. In Connecticut, 58 percent of white students scored at the “proficient” level compared with 22 percent of African American students—a performance gap of 36 percentage points. In DC, the performance gap was even larger—56 percentage points.

The pattern is very similar for Hispanic students. In three states—Connecticut, Massachusetts, and DC—the difference in proficiency rates of white and Hispanic students was over 30 percentage points. In DC, the difference was 54 percentage points, similar to the difference in performance between white and African American students. Hawaii, Wyoming, and Florida exhibited the smallest differences in the relative performance of the two groups—6–9 percentage points.

In 24 states, the difference between the proficiency rates of the economically advantaged and disadvantaged students ranged from 10 to 19 percentage points, and in 16 states, the performance gap was between 20 and 29 percentage points. Two states—North Dakota and Wyoming—posted the smallest difference (8 percentage points), while Connecticut and Massachusetts showed the largest gap in the relative performance of the two groups of students—30 percentage points.

Figure 4.3
Difference in Percentages of White and Hispanic 4th-Grade Students Scoring “Proficient” and Above on the National Assessment of Educational Progress 2003 Reading Assessment

NOTE: Data were not available for 11 states—Alabama, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, Montana, New Hampshire, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont, and West Virginia.

RAND TR180-4.3

Figure 4.4
Difference in Percentages of Economically Advantaged and Disadvantaged 4th-Grade Students Scoring "Proficient" and Above on the National Assessment of Educational Progress 2003 Reading Assessment

RAND TR180-4.4

Figure 4.5
Percentage of 4th-Grade Students Scoring “Proficient” and Above on the National Assessment of Educational Progress
2002 Writing Assessment

NOTE: Data were not available for seven states—Alaska, Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, New Hampshire, New Jersey, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

RAND TR180-4.5

Table 4.1
Differences in Proficiency Rates of 4th-Grade Students, Disaggregated by Race/Ethnicity and Poverty Status: 2002 National Assessment of Educational Progress Writing Assessment

Range (percentage points)	Difference Between Proficiency Rates of White and African American Students (<i>n</i> =36)	Difference Between Proficiency Rates of White and Hispanic Students (<i>n</i> =30)	Difference Between Proficiency Rates of Economically Advantaged and Economically Disadvantaged Students (<i>n</i> =44)
	Number of States		
≤10	3	3	2
10–19	21	15	24
20–29	10	9	16
≥30	2	3	2

Performance of 8th-Graders

Reading Assessment: Overall Proficiency Rates

Overall, between 10 and 43 percent of 8th-graders scored at the “proficient” level on the 2003 NAEP Reading Assessment (Figure 4.6). DC was the only jurisdiction to have a proficiency rate of less than 20 percent; New Hampshire and Massachusetts were the only states to have proficiency rates of 40 percent or higher. In 17 states, 20–29 percent of students scored “proficient” and above on the 2002 assessment; in 31 states, 30–39 percent scored “proficient” and above.

There appeared to be little difference between the performance of 4th- and 8th-graders on the NAEP. In 12 states, the same percentage of 4th- and 8th-graders scored “proficient”; in 14 states, 4th-graders did a little better than 8th-graders; and in the remaining 25 states, they did a little worse. In all cases, the differences in proficiency rates were between –6 and +6 percentage points.

Reading Assessment: Differences in Performance Among Students, Disaggregated by Race/Ethnicity and Poverty Status

Differences between the proficiency rates of white and African American students on the NAEP were between 13 and 34 percentage points. The lowest differences were in West Virginia, and the highest were in New York (Figure 4.7). Four states posted differences of less than 20 percentage points; in seven states, the performance gap was 30 percentage points or higher. In the majority of the states (*n*=29), African American students lagged behind their white counterparts by 20–29 percentage points.

Figure 4.8 shows similar data for white and Hispanic 8th-graders. Data were available for only 36 states. The difference in the percentages of white and Hispanic students scoring at or above the “proficient” level on the 2003 NAEP was less than 10 percentage points in three states—Ohio, Hawaii, and Arkansas—and 30 percentage points or higher in

Figure 4.6
Percentage of 8th-Grade Students Scoring “Proficient” and Above on the
National Assessment of Educational Progress 2003 Reading Assessment

RAND TR180-4.6

Figure 4.7
Difference in Percentages of White and African American 8th-Grade Students Scoring “Proficient” and Above on the National Assessment of Educational Progress 2003 Reading Assessment

NOTE: Data were not available for 11 states—DC, Hawaii, Idaho, Maine, Montana, New Hampshire, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, Vermont, and Wyoming.

RAND TR180-4.7

Figure 4.8
Difference in Percentages of White and Hispanic 8th-Grade Students Scoring “Proficient” and Above on the National Assessment of Educational Progress 2003 Reading Assessment

NOTE: Data were not available for 15 states—Alabama, DC, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, New Hampshire, North Dakota, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Vermont, and West Virginia.

RAND TR180-4.8

three states—New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts. The range was between 2 and 35 percentage points. Of the 36 states, 22 had performance gaps of between 20 and 29 percentage points.

The proficiency rates of economically disadvantaged students were between 11 and 33 percentage points lower than those of their 8th-grade counterparts who were not from economically disadvantaged backgrounds (Figure 4.9). The smallest differences were in DC and Nevada; Massachusetts had the largest difference. In 21 states, the performance gap was between 10 and 19 percentage points; in 26 states, 20–29 percentage points; and in four states (Connecticut, Illinois, New York, and Massachusetts), 30–33 percentage points.

Writing Assessment

Forty-two states had reportable data for the 2002 8th-grade NAEP Writing Assessment. Of these, the lowest score was in DC, where only 10 percent of students scored at the “proficient” and above levels (Figure 4.10). Seven states had proficiency scores of less than 20 percent, and only three states—Vermont, Massachusetts, and Connecticut—had proficiency rates of between 40 and 45 percent. In 18 states, the proficiency rates were 20–29 percent; about 30–39 percent of students were judged proficient in writing in 14 states.

Table 4.2 shows differences in the relative performance of 8th-grade students, disaggregated by race/ethnicity and poverty status. Among the 31 states reporting data on white and African American students, 12 states showed a difference in relative proficiency rates of 10–19 percentage points, and 14 states showed a difference of 20–29 percentage points. In Hawaii and West Virginia, the difference in proficiency rates was 4 and 8 percentage points, respectively; these two states also had the smallest achievement gap among white and African American students on the 4th-grade writing assessment. Connecticut reported the largest performance gap: 40 percentage points. Pennsylvania and Massachusetts had performance gaps of 30 and 31 percentage points, respectively.

Among the 25 states with data on the performance of white and Hispanic students, 22 showed a difference of proficiency rates between the two groups of 10–29 percentage points. In three states—Texas, Connecticut, and Massachusetts—Hispanic students trailed white students by 30–39 percentage points.

Nineteen states reported differences in proficiency rates of economically advantaged and disadvantaged students of between 10 and 19 percentage points. In 21 states, the difference was larger: 20–29 percentage points. Connecticut and Massachusetts showed the largest difference in the relative performance of the two groups—30 and 32 percentage points, respectively.

Summary

Between 10 and 43 percent of 4th- and 8th-graders scored “proficient” on the NAEP reading assessments. DC had the lowest proficiency rates, and Connecticut and Massachusetts had the highest proficiency rates. The results were similar on the writing assessments.

As with the state assessments, there were large achievement gaps by race/ethnicity and poverty status on both the NAEP reading and writing assessments, some of which were quite significant. In the majority of states for which we had disaggregated data, minority students

Figure 4.9
Difference in Percentages of Economically Advantaged and Disadvantaged 8th-Grade Students Scoring “Proficient” and Above on the National Assessment of Educational Progress 2003 Reading Assessment

RAND TR180-4.9

Figure 4.10
Percentage of 8th-Grade Students Scoring “Proficient” and Above on the
National Assessment of Educational Progress 2002 Writing Assessment

NOTE: Data were not available for nine states—Alaska, Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

RAND TR180-4.10

Table 4.2
Differences in Proficiency Rates of 8th-Grade Students, Disaggregated by
Race/Ethnicity and Poverty Status: National Assessment of Educational
Progress 2002 Writing Assessment

Range (percentage points)	Difference Between Proficiency Rates of White and African American Students (<i>n</i> =31)	Difference Between Proficiency Rates of White and Hispanic Students (<i>n</i> =25)	Difference Between Proficiency Rates of Economically Advantaged and Economically Disadvantaged Students (<i>n</i> =42)
	Number of States		
≤10	2	0	0
10–19	12	10	19
20–29	14	12	21
≥30	3	3	2

trailed white students by 20–29 percentage points, and similar performance gaps existed between economically advantaged and disadvantaged students.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, NAEP standards of proficiency are considered to be challenging, so these fairly low levels of proficiency may not necessarily be cause for alarm in and of themselves. However, they become more troubling when we consider the kinds of skills that Achieve (2004) identified as necessary for high school graduates to succeed in post-secondary education or in high-performance, high-growth jobs. If our students—particularly minority and low-income students—are failing to achieve a high level of proficiency in reading and writing, then their post-secondary education and job opportunities may be severely curtailed.

The next chapter attempts to reconcile what the NAEP and state assessment data tell us about the state of adolescent literacy achievement.

The Current State of Adolescent Literacy Achievement: Reconciling Results from State and National Assessments

We begin this chapter by reiterating the caveat given in the Introduction: proficiency rates on the NAEP and the state assessments are not directly comparable. The tests differ in content and in how achievement levels are defined. However, the two data sources provide two data points for the level of adolescent literacy in the nation, measured by state and national standards. Therefore, it is useful to examine whether the two provide a consistent picture and also to understand what the differences imply for policymakers.

Overall Proficiency Rates

Fourth-grade state proficiency rates on the NAEP ranged from 10 to 43 percent; in marked contrast, proficiency rates on the state assessments ranged from 21 to 87 percent. Table 5.1 shows the distribution of scores on the 4th-grade reading state assessments and the NAEP.

All 29 states for which we had data for 4th-graders from both the state assessments and the NAEP had proficiency scores of less than 50 percent on the NAEP; this was true of only five states on the state assessment. Although no state had a proficiency score of over 43 percent on the NAEP, in 21 of the 29 states, between 60 and 90 percent of students scored at the “proficient” level on the state assessments.

The difference between proficiency rates of 4th-graders on the two assessments is shown in Figure 5.1. In no state were proficiency scores on the NAEP higher than those on the state assessment, and only South Carolina and Wyoming posted differences of 10 percent

Table 5.1
Distribution of States by Percentage of 4th-Grade Students
Scoring at the “Proficient” Level and Above on the State
Reading Assessments and National Assessment of Educational
Progress 2003 Reading Assessment

Range (percentage points)	NAEP “Proficient” and Above	State “Proficient” and Above
	Number of States	
10–19	3	0
20–29	7	1
30–39	17	2
40–49	2	2
50–59	0	3
60–69	0	7
70–79	0	7
80+	0	7

Figure 5.1
Differences in Proficiency Rates of 4th-Grade Students: State Reading Assessments – National Assessment of Educational Progress 2003 Reading Assessment

RAND TR180-5.1

or less. The largest difference between proficiency rates on the state assessment and the NAEP was in Mississippi—69 percentage points. While 87 percent of 4th-graders in Mississippi passed the state assessment by scoring at the “proficient” level and above, only 18 percent of them were judged “proficient” on the NAEP.

As with the 4th-grade scores, Table 5.2 shows the distribution of scores on the state assessments and the NAEP for 8th-graders for the 37 states for which we had data on both assessments. For these states, eighth-grade state proficiency rates on the NAEP were similar to those of fourth-grade students and ranged from 10 to 39 percent compared with 21 to 88 percent on the state assessments. The average proficiency rate of 8th-graders was 31 percent on the NAEP versus 61 percent on the state assessment. All 37 states had proficiency rates of less than 50 percent on the NAEP compared with 11 states on the state assessment. Over 60 percent of students scored at the “proficient” level on the state assessments in 23 of the 37 states.

The difference between proficiency rates of 8th-graders on the two assessments is shown in Figure 5.2. In one state—South Carolina—the proficiency rate on the NAEP was higher than that on the state assessment. The largest differences between proficiency rates on the state assessment and the NAEP were in North Carolina and Texas—57 and 62 percentage points, respectively. In 23 states, the difference in proficiency rates on the two assessments was 30 percentage points or larger.

Table 5.2
Distribution of States by Percentage of 8th-Grade Students
Scoring at the “Proficient” Level and Above on the State
Reading Assessments and National Assessment of Educational
Progress 2003 Reading Assessment

Range (percentage points)	NAEP “Proficient” and Above	State “Proficient” and Above
	Number of States	
10–19	1	0
20–29	12	2
30–39	24	3
40–49	0	5
50–59	0	4
60–69	0	10
70–79	0	7
80+	0	6

Differences in Performance of Subgroups

Both assessments showed large achievement gaps between subgroups of students, disaggregated by race/ethnicity and poverty status. Tables 5.3 and 5.4 show the average achievement gap between white and African American students, white and Hispanic students, and economically advantaged and economically disadvantaged students on the two assessments at the 4th- and 8th-grade levels, respectively.

Figure 5.2
Differences in Proficiency Rates of 8th-Grade Students: State Reading Assessments – National Assessment of Educational Progress 2003 Reading Assessment

RAND TR180-5.2

Table 5.3
Differences in Proficiency Rates of 4th-Grade Students, Disaggregated by Race/Ethnicity and Poverty Status: State Reading Assessments and National Assessment of Educational Progress 2003 Reading Assessment

Subgroups of Students	Average Difference in Proficiency Rates	
	State Assessments	NAEP
White and African American Students	27	27
White and Hispanic Students	27	24
Economically Advantaged and Economically Disadvantaged Students	23	25

Table 5.4
Differences in Proficiency Rates of 8th-Grade Students, Disaggregated by Race/Ethnicity and Poverty Status: State Reading Assessments and National Assessment of Educational Progress 2003 Reading Assessment

Subgroups of Students	Average Difference in Proficiency Rates	
	State Assessments	NAEP
White and African American Students	28	26
White and Hispanic Students	26	22
Economically Advantaged and Economically Disadvantaged Students	24	22

Despite the differences we had seen earlier with respect to overall proficiency scores on the two assessments, the overall distribution of the achievement gap is fairly similar on both assessments. Indeed, the average difference in proficiency rates is remarkably similar in magnitude. For example, at the 4th -grade level, the two assessments show, on average, a difference of 27 percentage points between the proficiency rates of white and African American students; 24–27 percentage points between white and Hispanic students; and 23–25 percentage points between economically advantaged and economically disadvantaged students. These trends are found at the 8th-grade level as well.

However, when examining individual states, we see both similarities and marked differences in some states about what the state assessments show about the relative performance of subgroups and what the NAEP shows. We selected a few examples to show the wide range of differences reported on the two assessments (Table 5.5):

- DC—Both assessments show large differences in achievement of African American and Hispanic 4th-grade students compared with white students (over 60 percentage points).
- California, Florida, and Washington—The performance gap is larger on the state assessments than on the NAEP.
- Mississippi and Texas—The performance gap is larger on the NAEP than on the state assessments.

Summary

This chapter has offered a look at the portraits of the condition of adolescent literacy that state assessments and the state NAEP offer. In general, the state assessments offer a much more optimistic picture of overall proficiency levels—and not necessarily an inaccurate picture. The two sets of assessments use different standards of proficiency and different

formats and test content. We believe that it is important to examine both sets of data to understand how students rank against others in the nation, using national literacy standards, and against others in their state.

Simply to elevate all student scores up to *state* proficiency standards remains a tremendous challenge. In particular, there is remarkable consistency across the state and national assessments in the magnitudes of the performance gaps between minority and economically disadvantaged students and their peers. On average, minority students and low-income students trail their peers by 22–28 percentage points.

Table 5.5

Differences in Proficiency Rates of 4th- and 8th-Grade Students, Disaggregated by Race/Ethnicity and Poverty Status: State Reading Assessments and National Assessment of Educational Progress 2003 Reading Assessment, Selected Examples

Selected States	White and African American Students		White and Hispanic Students		Economically Advantaged and Economically Disadvantaged Students	
	State Assessments	NAEP	State Assessments	NAEP	State Assessments	NAEP
	Percentage of Students Scoring at the “Proficient” Level and Above					
4th-grade level						
California	32	25	35	26	35	25
DC ^a	65	63	68	62	18	26
Florida	32	29	22	18	29	27
Texas	17	24	13	22	—*	—*
Washington ^a	21	15	32	22	—*	—*
8th-grade level						
California	30	23	32	24	28	20
Connecticut	32	33	37	32	31	30
Florida	35	26	24	18	30	19
Texas	12	26	11	24	—*	—*

NOTES:

—* Data not available.

^aNo data were available at the 8th-grade level.

The last chapter offers some thoughts on the policy implications of our findings.

Conclusions and Policy Implications

The NCLB Context

It is important to place the findings presented here in the larger context of NCLB. As discussed in Chapter Two, NCLB requires states to adopt standards-based accountability systems that set challenging content and performance standards for all students. To ensure that students are meeting these standards, states must annually test all children in reading and math in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8, and once in high school, by 2005–2006, and in science at least once in grades 3–5, 6–9, and grades 10–12 by 2007–2008. By the end of 12 years, all schools in the state should have reached 100-percent proficiency, meaning that all the children in the school pass the state test.

Schools that fail to meet adequate yearly progress for two years are identified as being “in need of improvement.” Schools that fail to make such progress for two or more years will be confronted with a number of escalating consequences.

To meet these requirements under federal law, states are currently changing and expanding state testing programs that will be used to hold schools accountable under the federal law. In addition, a growing number of states are holding students accountable by requiring that students pass high school assessments in order to graduate or to pass a given grade assessment for promotion to the next grade.

For the theory of action underlying NCLB to be realized, state standards and assessments need to be rigorous and well aligned, data from assessments need to be used to diagnose problems and to improve instruction, and effective interventions need to be known and widely disseminated.

Unfortunately, as research has shown, these conditions are difficult to meet. Previous research has shown a great variety in the depth and specificity of state standards among the states (Linn, 1998). And while state assessments tend to be aligned to standards, the collection of items included in a test tends to measure only a few of the less-challenging standards and objectives. As a result, few state tests can be said to be well-aligned assessments of challenging standards (Rothman et al., 2002). However, given the high stakes attached to student performance on these assessments, states face disincentives to maintain (let alone increase) the difficulty of their assessments or to set high standards for the definition of *proficiency*. Research also suggests that state assessment data may not be used in ways that effectively diagnose students’ difficulties and improve instruction. For example, Valencia and Buly (2003) found that a standard approach was used to provide assistance to students who performed poorly on Washington State’s assessment, despite the fact that the reasons why they failed the assessment were diverse. For example, some of the students they examined displayed the word-identification skills of a ninth-grader, yet they could not pass the fourth-

grade reading assessment. A uniform approach that emphasized word identification would miss the point. Such students would be better served by instruction that focused on meaning. Without combining state data with better diagnostic assessments, remedial instruction provided to students may fail to meet student needs.

Meeting State and National Literacy Goals: A Long Uphill Road

We used two different data sources to paint a broad-brush portrait of the condition of adolescent literacy achievement in the nation. Despite the caveats about the comparability of the two assessments, the data presented in this report lead to major concerns about the ability of states to meet the ambitious goal set by NCLB—100-percent proficiency for all students.

First, if we simply take the state assessment scores at face value, which in many states were much higher than scores on the NAEP, the majority of states are not even close to reaching 100-percent proficiency. In fact, at the middle school level, 11 states and the District of Columbia had proficiency rates under 50 percent. Further, in no state did even half the students meet the NAEP national literacy standard of proficiency.

Also, the wide disparity in the achievement of subgroups of students makes reaching the 100-percent-proficiency goal even more difficult, particularly for states, districts, and schools with large proportions of such subgroups. Both the NAEP and state assessments show large achievement gaps between subgroups of students, disaggregated by race/ethnicity and poverty status. For example:

- At the 4th-grade level, the two assessments show, on average, a difference of 27 percentage points between the proficiency rates of white and African American students; 24–27 percentage points between white and Hispanic students; and 23–25 percentage points between economically advantaged and economically disadvantaged students.
- These differences hold at the 8th-grade level as well, where we see a difference of 26–28 percentage points between the proficiency rates of white and African American students; 22–26 percentage points between white and Hispanic students; and 22–24 percentage points between economically advantaged and economically disadvantaged students.
- At both grade levels, students with limited English proficiency and students with disabilities trailed well behind their peers.

Second, it is clear that while states are operating under a common mandate for proficiency, there are large differences in the rigor of assessments and in how states define *proficiency* and set cut-scores, leading to quite disparate outcomes. Compare, for instance, South Carolina, Wyoming, North Carolina, and Texas. At the 8th-grade level, 21 percent of students in South Carolina and 39 percent of students in Wyoming passed the state assessment, compared with 86–88 percent of 8th-graders in North Carolina and Texas. However, when one looks at the 8th-grade NAEP scores, 24 percent of students in South Carolina and 34 percent of students in Wyoming scored at the proficient level, compared with 26 percent of students in Texas and 29 percent of students in North Carolina.

Clearly, even if each state were to meet its 100-percent proficiency goal for reading, students in those states would likely have strikingly different abilities, knowledge, and skills.

Multiple Sources of Data Regarding Literacy Achievement Help Provide a More Complete Picture

Simply looking at proficiency rates on state assessments may not provide the public and parents all the information they might want about student achievement. For example, when examining individual states, we see both similarities and marked differences in some states in what the state assessments show about the relative performance of subgroups and what the NAEP shows. If state assessments show small performance gaps between these subgroups of students, while the NAEP (arguably using a more challenging standard of literacy) shows large performance gaps, it is important for state policymakers and parents to reflect on what this information might imply for the likely future employment and education opportunities for these students. If we fail to give due attention to multiple sources of information regarding literacy achievement, we may fail to miss important problem areas and may end up shortchanging those most in need of assistance.

Overall, these are sobering statistics. It is clear that simply mandating standards and assessments is not going to guarantee success. Unless we, as a nation, are prepared to focus attention and resources on the issue of adolescent literacy, our schools are likely to continue producing students who lack skills and who are ill-prepared to deal with the demands of post-secondary education and the workplace. Policymakers, schools, and teachers need to step up and accept the “orphaned responsibility” of teaching students to read to learn. The costs of inattention are very high, both in personal and economic terms.

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PREFACE

The appendices contain individual state write-ups that describe the assessment systems; the content, format, and performance levels of reading, writing, and English language arts assessments between 4th and 12th grades; and student performance results on those assessments. Given that the report encompasses 50 states and the District of Columbia, the sheer volume of the readily available and public information on state standards and assessments required us to make choices about what to include in the report. We focus on the reading, writing, or language arts assessment used for accountability purposes and report results at the elementary (grades 4–5), middle (grades 6–8), and high school (grades 9–12) levels. Thus, for a state that tests students in grades 3–12 in reading, we present findings for only three grades (i.e., grades 4, 8, and 11). When a choice of grades needed to be made, we selected grades 4 and 8 whenever possible so that we could examine those results in combination with National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data. Consequently, our state write-ups are intended to be illustrative, not exhaustive. Specifically, each state summary contained in the appendices includes the following sections:

- **State Assessment System**—Information on the state’s assessment system as a whole, including what tests are used for accountability, and if they are intended to measure state content standards.
- **Assessment Format and Content**—Information regarding the format and content of the selected assessments.
- **Achievement-Level Descriptions**—An overview of the achievement levels set by each state and what is considered “proficient” (or passing) under NCLB.
- **Performance Results**—Data on student and school-level performance on the selected state reading and writing assessments.

The information presented in the appendices is based on publicly-available data from Web sites gathered in the winter and spring of 2003.

APPENDIX A. ALABAMA

State Assessment System

Like many states, Alabama is implementing a new student assessment system. For the 2002–03 school year, Alabama’s state assessment system consisted of three tests:

- The **Stanford Achievement Test, 10th edition (SAT10)** is a norm-referenced exam published by Harcourt, a national assessment company. All students in grades 3 through 8 take the reading, mathematics, and language subtests; in addition, students in grades 5 and 7 take the science subtest and students in grade 6 take the social studies subtest.
- The **Direct Assessment of Writing (DAW)** is a criterion-referenced assessment of student writing performance for students in grades 5 and 7.
- The **Alabama High School Graduation Exam (AHSGE)** is a criterion-referenced exam based on state standards in reading, mathematics, science, and social studies. Students have as many as six opportunities in grades 10, 11, and 12 to take and pass each subject-area test in order to graduate (for more information on state accountability, see <http://www.alsde.edu/html/sections/documents.asp?section=57&sort=1&footer=sections>).

The state is currently in the process of developing and implementing new criterion-referenced tests (CRTs) for grades 1–8 that will align with Alabama’s content standards and will attempt to reflect National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)-type rigor, format, and reporting. The K–2 reading CRTs were implemented in the fall of 2003; new reading/language arts and mathematics CRTs for grades 4, 6, and 8 will be introduced statewide in the spring of 2004, along with a new DAW for grade 10. CRTs in reading/language arts and mathematics for grades 3, 5, and 7 will be rolled out for the 2004–05 school year. The K–2 mathematics CRTs, science CRTs for grades 5 and 7, and a social studies CRT for grade 6 will be implemented in the following three school years.

Alabama has published content standards in English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and arts. The standards present minimum required content for each grade level in the areas of comprehension, which includes reading, listening, and viewing; and expression, which includes writing, speaking, and presenting. Each standard also presents skills and knowledge that students should be introduced to, but are not necessarily required to master, at that grade level. The state’s Pathways for Learning publications provide teachers with materials and resources, including creative classroom activities linked to each content standard and sample test items and item specifications for the student assessments.

Test Format and Content

As our focus is on adolescent literacy, the rest of this discussion focuses on the reading and language subtests of the SAT10, the AHSGE, and the DAW (for further assessment information, see http://www.alsde.edu/html/sections/section_detail.asp?section=54).

SAT10

The SAT10 is composed of multiple-choice questions, and the tests are untimed. The reading subtest measures a number of reading components, including sound recognition, word identification, vocabulary skills; and comprehension, including initial understanding, interpretation, critical analysis, and awareness and usage of reading strategies.

The SAT10 language subtest measures word- and sentence-level skills to whole composition. The language subtest measures proficiency in mechanics, including capitalization, punctuation, usage, language expression, and sentence structure.

DAW

The DAW consists of one writing prompt that students read and respond to during a 50-minute testing period. Students receive one of three prompts directing them to write in either a descriptive, narrative, or expository/persuasive mode. Student responses are scored using both a focused holistic rubric and analytic rubrics judging writing mechanics, sentence formation, and grammar and usage.

AHSGE

The AHSGE reading subject-area test includes 84 multiple-choice questions, while the language test consists of 100 multiple-choice questions. The test is untimed, but it takes approximately three hours.

For the AHSGE, the reading subject-area test measures students' ability to demonstrate literal understanding, interpret passages, apply critical analysis strategies, and utilize strategies that enhance comprehension. Passages include textual, functional, and recreational material, such as articles, poems, editorials, and manuals. The language subject-area test measures students' knowledge of mechanics and expression, including their ability to recognize and use correct grammar, demonstrate appropriate word choice, recognize correct sentence structure, use correct capitalization, and use appropriate organizational skills for writing and revising. Both the reading and language tests are written at the 11th-grade level. Although the standards and objectives for the AHSGE are not directly aligned one-to-one with the content standards identified in the

Course of Study, the state has produced assessment correlation tables mapping the two sets of standards against each other to illustrate linkages.

Achievement-Level Definitions

The SAT10 is reported in national percentile ranks. Student results on the DAW are divided into four achievement levels according to students' understanding of the writing task: Level I—Does not meet standard, Level II—Partially meets standard, Level III—Meets standard, and Level IV—Exceeds standard. Scoring rubrics include detailed descriptions of the four levels for each of the four scoring areas. For aggregate reporting purposes, Levels I and II are grouped together as “Not meeting standards,” while Levels III and IV are grouped as “Meeting standards.”

Alabama has defined minimum passing scores on the AHSGE, and scores are divided into two achievement levels: “passing” and “not passing.”

Performance Results

Student Performance

Table A1 provides data on student performance for all students, general education students, special education students, economically disadvantaged students, and racial/ethnic groups¹ for reading and language from the 2003 SAT10. Overall, Alabama's 4th- and 7th-grade students' average scores were at the 55th and 54th percentile on the SAT10 reading subtest, slightly above the national norm. On the language subtest, 4th-grade performance was even better, with an average score at the 63rd percentile; however, the average language score for 7th-graders was at the 55th percentile. White students outscored African American students in 4th- and 7th-grade reading and language by large margins, between 21 and 29 percentile points. Students who were not economically disadvantaged averaged scores between the 67th and 76th percentile, while economically disadvantaged students performed much lower—between the 39th and the 51st percentile on the tests. Special education students in the 4th-grade scored at the 23rd and 27th percentiles on the reading and language tests, respectively, while 7th-grade special education students scored only at the 18th percentile on both reading and language.

Table A2 shows results for 5th- and 7th-grade students on the DAW. In addition to providing the holistic score, which represents an overall score on the assessment, the table also provides scores

¹Approximately 61 percent of students in Alabama are white, and 37 percent are African American. No other racial/ethnic group accounts for 2 percent of the population. Almost half of students (49 percent) are eligible for the free or reduced-price lunch program, and 13 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

for skills tested, including grammar and usage, sentence formation, and writing mechanics. On the 5th- and 7th-grade DAW, only 41 percent of 5th-graders and 39 percent of 7th-graders met state standards. Fifth-grade students particularly struggled with their grammar and usage and sentence-formation skills; however, scores for these skills at the 7th grade were comparatively better. Only 10–13 percent of special education students passed the writing assessments. Again on the writing assessments, there was a substantial achievement gap between white students and African American students (17–21 percentage points) and non–economically disadvantaged students and economically disadvantaged students (21–23 percentage points).

Table A1. Performance of 4th- and 7th-Graders on 2003 Reading and Language SAT10, by Student Characteristics

	4 th Grade		7 th Grade	
	Reading	Language	Reading	Language
	Average Percentile Rank			
All students	55	63	54	55
General education students	60	68	59	61
Special education students	23	27	18	18
Economically disadvantaged students	41	51	39	42
Non–economically disadvantaged students	71	76	67	67
African American students	37	50	37	42
White students	66	71	64	63

Source:

<http://www.alsde.edu/Accountability/Accountability.asp?system=0&sch=0&SchoolYear=20022003&Rep=2&View=2>

Overall, the majority of 11th-grade students passed the AHSGE: 88 percent passed the reading section, and 83 percent passed the language section (Table A3). All students performed better in reading than in language, a situation that was particularly true for special education students: 59 percent passed the reading section, while only 46 percent passed in language. Again, similar to the other assessments, white students outperformed African American students by significant margins (14–18 percentage points) and non–economically disadvantaged students outperformed economically disadvantaged students (12–14 percentage points).

Also not surprisingly, students in special education scored well below students in general education. For example, on average, 4th-grade special education students scored 37 percentiles lower on the SAT10 than did general education students in reading, and 41 percentiles lower in language. This gap was slightly wider in 7th grade, where the average reading score for special

education students was 41 percentiles lower than the average for general education students, and the average language score was 43 percentiles lower.

Table A2. Performance of 5th- and 7th-Graders on 2003 Direct Assessment of Writing, by Student Characteristics

	Holistic (Overall Score)	Writing Mechanics	Sentence Formation	Grammar and Usage
Percentage Meeting Standard				
5 th Grade				
All students	41	42	35	33
General education students	45	46	39	36
Special education students	13	13	11	11
Economically disadvantaged students	31	33	26	23
Non-economically disadvantaged students	52	53	47	45
African American students	29	33	24	19
White students	48	47	42	41
7 th Grade				
All students	39	53	55	47
General education students	43	58	60	51
Special education students	10	16	18	15
Economically disadvantaged students	27	44	43	34
Non-economically disadvantaged students	50	62	66	59
African American students	26	45	41	32
White students	47	59	63	56

Source:
<http://www.alsde.edu/Accountability/Accountability.asp?system=0&sch=0&SchoolYear=20022003&Rep=2&View=2>

White students outscored African American students on all assessments. In 4th and 7th grade, this achievement gap was larger in reading than in language, but in 11th grade the gap was larger in language. For example, African American students scored 27 to 29 percentiles below white students on the 4th- and 7th-grade SAT10 reading subtest, but scored 21 percentiles lower on the language subtest. Economically disadvantaged students scored markedly lower than other students. For example, in 4th-grade reading, economically disadvantaged students scored 30 percentiles below full-price- lunch students, and in 7th grade they scored 28 percentiles lower. As we saw in the racial breakdown, economically disadvantaged students faced larger achievement gaps in reading than in language in 4th and 7th grades, but scored closer to their peers in language

than in reading on the 11th-grade AHSGE. On the DAW, the gap between the percentage of economically disadvantaged students passing the assessment and the percentage of non-economically disadvantaged students passing was 20–21 percentage points in 5th grade and 21–22 percentage points in 7th grade.

Table A3. Performance of 11th-Graders on 2003 Reading and Language AHSGE, by Student Characteristics

	Reading	Language
	Percentage Passing	
All students	88	83
General education students	90	85
Special education students	59	46
Economically disadvantaged students	80	73
Non-economically disadvantaged students	92	87
African American students	79	71
White students	93	89

Source:

<http://www.alsde.edu/Accountability/Accountability.asp?system=0&sch=0&SchoolYear=20022003&Rep=2&View=2>

School Performance

We are also able to report school-level data by urbanicity for the 2002 administration of the DAW and the AHSGE. Because 4th- and 7th-grade students took the SAT9 in 2002, which is normed differently than the SAT10, we do not report these scores, as they are not comparable to the 2003 scores.

Of schools in Alabama, 39 percent are suburban, 37 percent are rural, and 24 percent are urban. Suburban schools outperformed rural and urban schools on the 5th- and 7th-grade DAW by 6–14 percentage points (Table A4). Suburban schools also outperformed the rest on the 11th-grade AHSGE, but by slightly smaller margins, 4–7 percentage points (Table A5). These results are not surprising, as 66 percent of rural schools are high-poverty schools (defined as schools with 50 percent or more students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch), as are 68 percent of urban schools, while only 34 percent of suburban schools are high-poverty.

Table A4. Average Performance of Schools on 5th- and 7th-Grade 2002 Direct Assessment of Writing, by Urbanicity

	Holistic	Writing Mechanics	Sentence Formation	Grammar and Usage
	Average Passing Percentage			
Grade 5				
Rural schools	27	44	38	34
Suburban school	33	51	47	44
Urban schools	26	45	37	34
Grade 7				
Rural schools	33	55	56	41
Suburban schools	41	59	63	49
Urban schools	30	54	49	39

Table A5. Average Performance of Schools on 11th-Grade Reading and Language 2002 AHSGE, by Urbanicity

	Reading	Language
	Average Passing Percentage	
Rural schools	84	82
Suburban schools	88	86
Urban schools	83	79

APPENDIX B. ALASKA

State Assessment System

Alaska began implementing its statewide assessment system in 1998. Currently, the state administers three exams as part of its accountability system:

- The **Benchmark Tests** are criterion-referenced exams that the state reports as being linked to state performance standards. Students in grades 3, 6, and 8 take the tests in reading, writing, and mathematics.
- The **Terra Nova CAT/6** is a nationally norm-referenced assessment published by CTB/McGraw-Hill. Districts administer the Terra Nova reading, writing, and mathematics assessments in grades 4, 5, 7, and 9, and they have the option of testing in science and social studies as well.
- The **High School Graduation Qualifying Exam (HSGQE)** is a criterion-referenced exam linked to state performance standards in reading, writing, and mathematics. Students have five opportunities to take the exam in grades 10, 11, and 12 and must pass in order to graduate (for additional information on state accountability see <http://www.eed.state.ak.us/nclb/home.html>).

In 1994–95, Alaska adopted content standards that define what students should know and be able to do as a result of their public schooling. The state has content standards in English language arts, mathematics, science, geography, government and citizenship, history, arts, world languages, technology, information literacy, and skills for healthy living. In broad terms, the content standards for English language arts state that a student:

- A. should be able to speak and write well for a variety of purposes and audiences
- B. should be a competent and thoughtful reader, listener, and viewer of literature, technical materials, and other information
- C. should be able to identify and select from multiple strategies in order to complete projects independently and cooperatively
- D. should be able to think logically and reflectively in order to present and explain positions based on relevant and reliable information
- E. should understand and respect the perspectives of others in order to communicate effectively (www.eed.state.ak.us/contentstandards/English.html).

In 1999, the content standards in English language arts were linked with performance standards in reading and writing that lay out specific expectations for what students should know and be able to do in four age groups—5–7, 8–10, 11–14, and 15–17—and that are assessed in grades 3, 6,

8, and 10 on the aligned Benchmark Tests. The performance standards focus on content standards B, D, and E. For instance, writing performance standards for ages 11–14, which are assessed in grade 8, include:

- Write a coherent composition that includes a thesis statement, supporting evidence, and a conclusion.
- Select and use appropriate forms of fiction and non-fiction to achieve different purposes when writing for different purposes when writing for different audiences.
- Use the conventions of Standard English including grammar, sentence structure, paragraph structure, punctuation, spelling and usage in written work.
- Revise writing to improve organization, word choice, paragraph development, and voice appropriate to the purpose
- Form and explain own standards or judgments of quality writing.
- List and document sources using a given format
(<http://www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/PerformanceStandards/>).

Since 2003, the state has been working to develop grade-level expectations (GLEs) that will align with the performance standards and will use “assessable” language.² The GLEs will offer grade-by-grade standards rather than the age-group standards in the performance standards. Draft GLEs were released in February 2004 (see <http://www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/assessment/GLEHome.html>).

The state recently signed a new six-year contract with Data Recognition Corporation to develop and administer the statewide assessment program. In addition to continuing the HSGQE, the contract calls for new criterion-referenced exams for grades 3 through 9 that will be tied directly to the GLEs in English language arts, writing, and math, and will include both constructed-response and multiple-choice questions. The new assessment for grades 3–9 will be introduced in the spring of 2005. Discussions are still ongoing as to whether or not the state will continue to give a norm-referenced test once the new exam is in place. Alaska also hopes to eventually move the new assessments to electronic formats to allow remote testing and faster scoring.

Test Format and Content

Because the Terra Nova is not specifically linked to Alaska’s content and performance standards, the rest of the discussion will focus on the Benchmark Tests and the HSGQE. To examine trends

²For example, GLEs will use such words as “selects,” “identifies,” “locates,” or “restates” instead of such performance-standard words as “knows” and “understands.”

in adolescent literacy, we will concentrate on reading and writing for grades 6, 8, and 10 (more information on the assessments can be found at (<http://www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/assessment/>)).

Benchmark Test

The reading and writing portions of the Benchmark Test consist of 36 questions apiece: 29–30 multiple-choice questions, 5–6 short-response questions, and 1 extended-response question. Tests are not timed, but they are expected to take about two or three hours.

The questions on the reading exam cover all performance standards with similar emphasis, except those related to reading aloud and making cultural connections, which are not tested. The writing assessment places primary emphasis on short and extended writing tasks covering the first two performance standards (write about a topic and write for a variety of purposes and audiences); these five questions account for 38 percent of the available raw-score points. Writing and editing receive slightly less emphasis (36 percent), followed by revising writing (14 percent). Using resources and citing sources are not tested.

HSGQE

The HSGQE for reading consists of 50 questions: 35 multiple choice and 15 short response. The writing assessment includes 35 questions: 26 multiple choice, eight short response, and one extended response.

The HSGQE reading test places 24 percent of its emphasis on summarizing information and making connections, and it also assesses performance standards covering supporting main ideas and critiquing arguments, reading and applying multistep directions, making and supporting assertions, and analyzing and evaluating themes at 16 to 19 percent of emphasis each. Using contextual clues accounts for the remaining 6 percent. On the writing exam, short and extended writing tasks make up more than half the exam emphasis and assess students' ability to write compositions and demonstrate elements of discourse. Also tested are students' use of conventional English (27 percent of total) and their ability to revise writing (19 percent of total).

Achievement-Level Definitions

Scores on the Benchmark Tests are divided into four achievement levels: advanced, proficient, below proficient, and far below proficient. To pass the exam, students must score at the proficient or advanced levels. Scores on the HSGQE are reported in two levels: proficient and not proficient.

Performance Results

Student Performance

Alaska provides student-level data on student performance on the Benchmark Tests and the HSGQE for all students, students with disabilities, students with limited-English proficiency, and economically disadvantaged students. It also provides scores for racial/ethnic groups.³ Table B1 shows the reading and writing performance results from the 2003 administration of the 6th- and 8th-grade Benchmark Tests; Table B2 provides results from the HSGQE for 10th-grade students, disaggregated by these same student characteristics.

Overall, 68–70 percent of students scored proficient or better on the Benchmark reading assessments, and 74–75 percent did so in writing. With one exception (African American students), the percentage of students reaching proficiency on the Benchmark assessment was slightly lower in grade 8 than in grade 6.

Table B1. Performance of 6th- and 8th-Graders on 2003 Reading and Writing Benchmark Assessments, by Student Characteristics

	6 th Grade		8 th Grade	
	Reading	Writing	Reading	Writing
	Percentage Proficient and Advanced			
All students	70	75	68	74
Students with disabilities	32	32	26	27
Students with limited-English proficiency	39	51	34	49
Economically disadvantaged students	53	60	48	58
Alaska Native students	45	56	41	52
Asian/Pacific Islander students	63	75	62	73
African American students	62	66	63	70
Hispanic students	66	68	56	67
White students	82	84	81	83

Source: <http://www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/assessment/results.html>

Pass rates on the reading assessment were considerably lower among students with disabilities, students with limited-English proficiency, and economically disadvantaged students. Only 26–32 percent of students with disabilities, 34–39 percent of students with limited-English proficiency,

³Approximately 60 percent of students in Alaska are white; 26 percent are Alaska Native; 6 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander; 5 percent are African American; and 4 percent are Hispanic. One-fourth of students are eligible for the free or reduced-price lunch program; 15 percent are enrolled in limited-English-proficiency programs, and 13 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

and 48–53 percent of economically disadvantaged students scored proficient or better on the Benchmark Assessments for reading.

While students with disabilities scored marginally higher in writing than in reading at the 8th-grade level, students with limited-English proficiency had notably better success in writing (49–51 percent passing) than in reading at both grade levels. Between 58 and 60 percent of economically disadvantaged students scored proficient or better on the writing test.

Table B2. Performance of 10th-Graders on 2003 Reading and Writing High School Graduation Qualifying Examination, by Student Characteristics

	Reading	Writing
	Percentage Passing	
All students	70	83
Students with disabilities	24	39
Students with limited-English proficiency	32	62
Economically disadvantaged students	47	70
Alaska Native students	45	68
Asian/Pacific Islander students	58	83
African American students	47	73
Hispanic students	63	76
White students	82	90

Source: <http://www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/assessment/results.html>

Among the different racial/ethnic groups, white students scored notably higher than all other groups on both tests at all three grade levels. In reading, 81–82 percent of white students scored proficient or above, and in writing 83–84 percent were at the proficient level. Between 56 and 66 percent of African American, Hispanic, or Asian/Pacific Islander students scored at the proficient level in reading and between 67 and 75 percent did so in writing. Alaska Native students scored markedly below all other groups in both subjects, with proficiency levels of 41–45 percent in reading and 52–56 percent in writing.

We find similar results for 10th-grade students on the HSGQE. Seventy percent of students passed in reading and 83 percent passed in writing. While all groups of students passed writing at higher rates than reading, the difference was particularly large for students with limited-English proficiency (62 percent compared with 32 percent). On the HSGQE, white students had much higher pass rates than did other racial/ethnic groups, and Alaskan Natives performed far below other groups: only 45 percent passed in reading, and 68 percent passed in writing. Unlike trends for student performance on the Benchmark Assessment in the lower grades, African

American students performed more in range with Alaskan Native students on the HSGQE, rather than with Hispanic and Asian students.

School Performance

We are also able to report school-level data by urbanicity for the 2001–02 6th- and 8th-grade Benchmark Assessment (Table B3). Most of the schools in Alaska were in rural areas (74 percent), while 18 percent of schools were urban and 6 percent were suburban. Rural schools were more likely to be high-poverty schools: 35 percent of rural schools were high-poverty compared with 10 percent of suburban schools and 14 percent of urban schools.

Rural schools performed considerably worse than suburban or urban schools, with average proficiency levels in both reading and writing that are 20–25 percentage points lower in the 6th grade and 15–25 percentage points lower in the 8th grade.

Table B3. School Performance on 6th- and 8th-Grade 2002 Reading and Writing Benchmark Assessment, by Urbanicity

	Reading	Writing
	Average Percentage Proficient and Above	
6th Grade		
Rural schools	50	60
Suburban schools	75	81
Urban schools	75	80
8th Grade		
Rural schools	58	51
Suburban schools	81	62
Urban schools	83	66

APPENDIX C. ARIZONA

State Assessment System

In 2002–03, Arizona administered two assessments as part of its accountability system:

- **Arizona’s Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS)** is a criterion-referenced test that the state reports being aligned with state standards. Students in grades 3, 5, and 8 take the tests in reading, writing, and mathematics. High school students also take the AIMS in 10th grade, and, beginning with the class of 2006, must pass in order to graduate.
- The **Stanford Achievement Test 9th edition (SAT9)** is a nationally norm-referenced assessment published by Harcourt. Students take the SAT9 in language, mathematics, and reading in grades 2 through 9.

In response to No Child Left Behind (NCLB), Arizona is expanding the AIMS program to cover all grades from 3 through 8. Newly developed criterion-referenced AIMS tests for grade 4, 6, and 7 will be field-tested in the spring of 2004 and should be operational in the spring of 2005 (for additional information regarding state accountability, see <http://www.ade.state.az.us/azlearns/>).

The state introduced the Arizona Academic Standards in 1996, in language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, the arts, foreign language, technology, workplace skills, and comprehensive health and physical education. For the language arts, the four standards of reading, writing, listening and speaking, and viewing and presenting define what students should know and be able to do by the end of 12th grade. These standards are made more specific by providing specific examples of what students should know and be able to do in five grade clusters: Readiness (Kindergarten), Foundations (Grades 1–3), Essentials (Grades 4–8) Proficiency (Grades 9–12), and Distinction (Honors).

In 2003, the state published refined standards in reading that are articulated separately for all grade levels in accordance with the requirements of NCLB. These standards are divided into three content strands that include component concepts broadly describing what students should know and be able to do. The Reading Process strand includes six concepts (print concepts, phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension), the Comprehending Literary Text strand includes two concepts (elements of literature, and historical and cultural aspects of literature), and the Comprehending Informational Text strand includes three concepts (expository text, functional text, and persuasive text). Each concept is further defined by performance objectives, which describe specific knowledge and tasks appropriate to each grade.

Test Format and Content

Because the SAT9 is not specifically linked to Arizona's content and performance standards, the rest of the discussion will focus on the AIMS (additional information on the AIMS can be found through (<http://www.ade.state.az.us/standards/>). To examine trends in adolescent literacy, we concentrate on reading and writing for grades 5, 8, and 10.

For 2004, the AIMS reading assessment consists of approximately 40 multiple-choice questions and asks students to read and respond to both passages from fiction, such as stories and poems, and passages from nonfiction, such as informational articles, directions, user's guides, a map, or a chart. The tests are not timed but are expected to take one to two hours to complete.

The AIMS reading assessment covers five concepts at each grade level. Using comprehension strategies, analyzing literary elements, and identifying an author's persuasive techniques are tested at all grade levels. Evaluating an instructional manual is tested in grades 5 and 8, while evaluating technical and workplace documents is tested in grade 10. Students in grades 5 and 8 are tested on using structural-analysis skills to decode unfamiliar words, and students in grade 10 are tested on analyzing literary works. Table C1 shows the relative weight these concepts carry in the assessments across the grade levels. Decoding receives less emphasis in the 8th grade than in the 5th grade, while identifying an author's perspective carries a bit more weight in the later grades than in the 5th grade.

Table C1. Weights of Concepts Tested on AIMS in 5th, 8th, and 10th Grades

Concept	Grade 5	Grade 8	Grade 10
	Percentage of Available Points		
Using comprehension strategies	26–33	21–29	30–44
Analyzing literary elements	23–29	14–21	15–23
Evaluating an instructional manual (grades 5 and 8) or technical and workplace documents (grade 10)	14–21	21–29	9–21
Using structural-analysis skills to decode unfamiliar words	12–17	10–17	NT
Analyzing literary works	NT	NT	9–21
Identifying an author's persuasive techniques	9–14	12–21	13–21

Source: <http://www.ade.state.az.us/standards/aims/blueprints/default.asp>

NT = not tested.

The writing portion of AIMS, which has previously included multiple-choice and short-answer questions in addition to an extended writing exercise, will be changed to include only extended writing as of the 2004 test administration. Students have 2–3 hours to complete the test and are given time to plan, draft, revise, edit, and write a final copy of their composition.

For the 2003 AIMS writing assessment, the 5th-grade exam focused on writing personal-experience narrative or creative stories, allocating 38–41 percent of the available points to these exercises. Other concepts that were tested included using correct spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, and usage; demonstrating research skills using reference materials; writing formal communications; and writing reports that convey point of view and develop topics. The 8th-grade test placed the most emphasis on writing expository essays (31–37 percent of available points) and also tested correct spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, and usage; writing summaries; writing reports that convey point of view and develop topics; demonstrating research skills using reference materials; writing formal communications; and writing personal-experience narratives or creative stories. At the high school level, writing persuasive essays received the most emphasis, at 25–35 percent of the available points, but also tested crafting a cohesive research document, writing formal communications, writing a narrative or story, writing literary analyses, and using literary devices.

Extended responses on the AIMS writing assessment were judged using the Six Trait Analytical Rubric developed by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. The rubric applies for all grade levels and modes of writing, and defines six achievement levels in each of the six traits: ideas and content, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions. The overall score is an average of the scores on the six traits, with each trait receiving equal weighting.

Achievement-Level Definitions

Results on the AIMS are divided into four achievement levels: falls far below the standard, approaches the standard, meets the standard, and exceeds the standard. Students meeting or exceeding the standard are considered to be “proficient” for accountability purposes. The state has published general AIMS achievement-level descriptors that apply for all grade levels and all subjects. These descriptors are further detailed by grade- and subject-specific descriptors of general and specific essentials, which stipulate what students at each level should know and be able to do. Table C2 shows the general K–12 achievement-level descriptors; Table C3 presents grade-specific descriptors for 8th-grade reading, as an example.

Table C2. AIMS Achievement-Levels Grades K–12

Falls far below the standard	This level denotes insufficient evidence of the prerequisite skills to approach meeting the standards. Students who perform at this level have serious gaps in knowledge and skills. They, in all likelihood, require a considerable amount of additional work and remediation in the basic skills that are prerequisite to the challenging work expected at the current grade level.
Approaches the standard	This level denotes partial understanding of the knowledge and application of the skills that are fundamental for proficient work. Students who approach the standard demonstrate competency in the prerequisites necessary to begin working on challenging content required of students who meet the standards, but do not demonstrate full understanding of that challenging content.
Meets the standard	This level denotes demonstration of solid academic performance on challenging subject matter reflected by the content standards. This performance includes subject-matter knowledge, application of such knowledge to real-world situations, and content-relevant analytical skills. Students who perform at this level are well prepared to begin work on even more challenging material that is required for the next grade level. Attainment of at least this level is the goal for all students.
Exceeds the standard	This level denotes demonstration of superior academic performance evidenced by achievement substantially beyond the goal for all students.

Source: <http://www.ade.state.az.us/standards/aims/PerformanceStandards/performancelevels.asp>

Performance Results

Student Performance

The Arizona Department of Education provides data on student performance by categories that roughly correlate with English-language learners and non-English-language learners, and by racial/ethnic groups within those categories.⁴ Table C4 shows 2003 AIMS reading and writing results for students in grades 5, 8, and 10, disaggregated by student characteristics. Note that data for racial/ethnic groups are for those students with English-language proficiency.

More than half of Arizona's English-proficient 5th-grade students passed the AIMS reading and writing assessments in 2003 by scoring at or above the "meets standards" level. Eleven percent scored in the "exceeds standard" level in reading, and 8 percent did so in writing. Eighth-grade

⁴Approximately 51 percent of students in Arizona are white; 35 percent are Hispanic; 7 percent are American Indian; 5 percent are African American; and 2 percent are Asian. About 16 percent of students are enrolled in limited-English proficiency programs, and 11 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs). Arizona's Category 2 includes all students whose first language is not English and who are in the process of learning English, regardless of how long they have been classified as English Learners. Category 1 in grades 5 and 8 includes students whose first language is English *or* who have met the requirements needed to exit from an English Learner program *or* who have been identified as an English Learner for four years or more. For high school students, Category 1 includes all students who take AIMS without modifications. Note that the two categories are not mutually exclusive.

students scored similarly in reading, with 55 percent passing and 15 percent exceeding the standard, but they did not score as well as 5th-grade students in writing: Only 46 percent passed the test, and just 1 percent exceeded the standard. Tenth-graders did better than 5th-graders and 8th-graders at the “passing” level in both subjects—59 percent met or exceeded standards in reading, and 67 percent did so in writing—but while 10 percent of 10th-graders exceeded the standards in reading, none scored at this level on the writing exam.

Table C3. Achievement-Level Descriptors—Grade-8 Reading

	Approaches the Standard	Meets the Standard	Exceeds the Standard
General Reading Achievement-Level Descriptors			
	Students who are “Approaching the Standard” demonstrate a basic understanding of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. They are able to use basic reading strategies to identify the main ideas, to find supporting details, and to interpret meaning through context clues. Students are able to identify author’s purpose and to recognize some organizational patterns, including cause and effect and sequencing. Students are able to identify and locate details from informational sources.	Students who “Meet the Standard” are able to comprehend and respond to text both literally and inferentially. Students demonstrate an understanding of the use of figurative, idiomatic, and technical language. Students distinguish fact from opinion and draw conclusions from stated details. Students describe events and/or character motivations, apply prior knowledge in interpreting concepts, and draw conclusions based on stated information according to style and meaning. Students identify author bias, use details to support and explain author’s purpose or bias, and recognize persuasive strategies. Students identify details of instructional manuals or guides (e.g., business brochures, advertising, menus, work manuals).	Students who “Exceed the Standard” are able to identify theme and infer conclusions from challenging texts. At this level, students are able to apply structural-analysis skills to confirm meaning of complex language. Students are able to recognize literary elements such as theme, plot sequence, and word relationships. Students can analyze details from information sources and recognize when information is either extraneous or missing. Finally, students are able to interpret or explain an author’s use of persuasive strategies.

Table C3. (cont.)

Specific Reading Achievement-Level Descriptors			
	Approaches the Standard	Meets the Standard	Exceeds the Standard
Apply comprehension strategies	Predict outcome based on events. Identify main idea. Compare and contrast text ideas.	Draw conclusions from stated details. Identify cause-and-effect relationships. Support conclusions with evidence from text.	Infer conclusions from challenging texts. Make clear distinctions using comparisons. Distinguish fact from opinion.
Analyze literary elements	Interpret information from fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. Identify author's point of view.	Interpret events and/or character motivations. Apply prior knowledge in interpreting an idea. Draw conclusions based on stated information Identify critical details.	Identify theme in a challenging text. Recognize the relationship between two or more terms. Analyze elements of plot. Interpret events and character motivations. Explain interactions of characters
Use structural-analysis skills to decode unfamiliar words	Use context clues to determine figurative language.	Demonstrate an understanding of the use of figurative, idiomatic, and technical language.	Apply structural-analysis skills to confirm meaning of figurative, idiomatic, and technical language.
Identify the author's persuasive techniques			Interpret and explain an author's use of persuasive strategies, supported by evidence from text.
Evaluate an instructional manual	Identify components of informational source. Locate information from print and illustration.	Identify critical details in instructional guides.	Analyze details from informational sources. Recognize when information is either extraneous or missing.

Source:
<http://www.ade.state.az.us/standards/aims/PerformanceStandards/8thGradePerformanceStandards.pdf>

English-language learners scored substantially below English-proficient students in both subjects and at all grade levels. In fact, the percentage of English-proficient students passing the AIMS was 3–4.5 times as large as the percentage of English-language learners who met or exceeded the standards. The percentage of English-language learners who met the level “approaches the standard” ranged from 31–45 percent, meaning that the majority of English-language learners fell into the lowest achievement level.

Table C4: Performance of 5th-, 8th-, and 10th-Graders on the 2003 AIMS Reading and Writing, by Student Characteristics

	Reading			Writing		
	Approaches Standard and Above	Meets Standard and Above	Exceeds Standard	Approaches Standard and Above	Meets Standard and Above	Exceeds Standard
Percentage						
5th Grade						
English-proficient students (Category 1)	81	57	11	82	55	8
English-language learners (Category 2)	43	16	1	45	16	1
African American students ^a	72	44	5	74	43	4
American Indian students ^a	61	30	3	61	29	2
Hispanic students ^a	72	42	5	74	42	4
White students ^a	90	70	16	90	67	11
8th Grade						
English-proficient students (Category 1)	75	55	15	83	46	1
English-language learners (Category 2)	31	12	1	41	9	0
African American students ^a	62	38	7	75	31	0
American Indian students ^a	54	29	4	66	23	0
Hispanic students ^a	63	38	6	73	30	0
White students ^a	85	68	21	90	56	1
10th Grade						
English-proficient students (Category 1)	82	59	10	80	67	0
English-language learners (Category 2)	44	13	0	32	22	0
African American students ^a	75	44	4	74	61	0
American Indian students ^a	70	35	2	61	45	0
Hispanic students ^a	69	38	3	64	50	0
White students ^a	91	74	15	91	79	0

Source: <http://www.ade.state.az.us/profile/publicview>

Note: ^aResults for racial/ethnic groups are for English proficient students only.

White students were notably more successful on the AIMS than most other groups. On all assessments except 8th-grade writing, where only 56 percent passed the test, more than two-thirds of white students met or exceeded the standard. In contrast, only 30–50 percent of Hispanic students passed the assessments, and the achievement gap between white and Hispanic students ranged from 28 to 36 percentage points in reading and 25 to 29 percentage points in writing. The gap was slightly larger at higher grade levels in both subjects. While 3–6 percent of Hispanic students were able to exceed the standards in reading, and 4 percent exceeded the standards in writing in 5th grade, none scored at that level in 8th- or 10th-grade writing. It is important to note that this achievement gap is between English-proficient white students and English-proficient Hispanic students, so it tends to overstate the performance of all Hispanic students, since a substantial proportion are classified in Category 2.

The performance of African American students was similar to that of Hispanic students in 5th and 8th grades, but these students had considerably higher pass rates than did Hispanic students at the 10th-grade level—44 percent in reading and 61 percent in writing compared with 38 and 50 percent, respectively. The percentage of African American students passing the writing assessment in 10th grade was much higher than in 5th or 8th grade. The achievement gap between white and African American students was 26–30 percentage points in reading, but only 18–25 percentage points in writing.

American Indian students also trailed white students by a substantial margin. The achievement gap was 39–40 percentage points in reading, and 33–38 percentage points in writing. The gap was somewhat narrower in 10th grade than in 5th grade. As with Hispanic students, a sizable proportion of American Indian students are English-language learners, so these results for English-proficient students tend to overstate the performance of the overall group.

School Performance

Although Arizona does not report AIMS performance by poverty or urbanicity at the student level, school-level data are available for the 2002 AIMS administration for grades 5 and 8. However, over 20 percent of poverty data is missing on schools; as a result, we do not report these data. About 49 percent of Arizona's schools are urban, 33 percent are suburban, and 19 percent are rural.

Table C5 provides information about school performance for rural, suburban, and urban schools. The average 5th-grade passing rate in suburban schools was 8 percentage points higher than that of rural schools in reading and 12 percentage points higher in writing. Urban schools also scored lower than suburban schools by about 4–5 percentage points, but were very similar to suburban

schools in the percentage of students exceeding standards. At grade 8, there appears to be little difference among the different types of schools by urbanicity.

Table C5. Performance of Schools on 5th- and 8th-Grade 2002 AIMS Reading and Writing, by Urbanicity

	Reading			Writing		
	Approaches Standard and Above	Meets Standard and Above	Exceeds Standard	Approaches Standard and Above	Meets Standard and Above	Exceeds Standard
Average Percentage						
5th Grade						
Rural schools	73	51	10	78	47	11
Suburban schools	79	59	15	84	59	16
Urban schools	76	55	15	81	54	15
8th Grade						
Rural schools	73	50	12	82	35	1
Suburban schools	73	51	13	82	37	1
Urban schools	69	49	13	78	36	1

APPENDIX D. ARKANSAS

State Assessment System

The Arkansas Comprehensive Testing, Assessment & Accountability Program (ACTAAP) was adopted in 1999 in conjunction with the state's Smart Start and Smart Step initiatives. Through ACTAAP, Arkansas administers a set of assessments that includes two types of assessments:

- The **Benchmark Examination** is a criterion-referenced exam in mathematics and literacy that students take in grades 4, 6, and 8.
- The **End-of-Course Examinations** are criterion-referenced assessments in Algebra, Geometry, and Literacy that students take in high school. The literacy exam is given at the end of 11th grade.

Arkansas also administers a nationally norm-referenced exam to students in other grade levels; however, the Benchmark Examinations and the End-of-Course Examinations are the tests used to reward and sanction schools under the state accountability system. Arkansas is expanding testing to grades 3–8 in literacy and mathematics to meet testing requirements under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (for additional information regarding state accountability, see <http://arkedu.state.ar.us/accountability/index.html>).

The Benchmark and End-of-Course Examinations are meant to measure Arkansas' content standards. Arkansas' English Language Arts Curriculum Framework defines content standards and student expectations within four strands: oral and visual communications, writing, reading, and inquiring and researching. Table D1 shows the standards for each strand. Each standard is further divided into component domains. For example, the reading comprehension standard includes using prior knowledge to create meaning, using connections to make meaning, using visualization to make meaning, using questioning and monitoring to make meaning, using inferences to make meaning, determining importance to make meaning, and summarizing and synthesizing for meaning. Within each domain are listed a number of student learning expectations that outline what students should know and be able to do at each grade level (see [http://arkedu.state.ar.us/pdf/English language arts%20Framework%202003.pdf](http://arkedu.state.ar.us/pdf/English%20language%20arts%20Framework%202003.pdf)).

Table D1. English/Language Arts Curriculum Framework Strands and Standards

Oral and Visual Communications	
1. Speaking	Students shall demonstrate effective oral communication skills to express ideas and to present information.
2. Listening	Students shall demonstrate effective listening skills in formal and informal settings to facilitate communications.
3. Media literacy	Students shall demonstrate knowledge and understanding of media as a mode of communication.
Writing	
4. Process	Students shall employ a wide range of strategies as they write, using the writing process appropriately.
5. Purpose, topics, forms and audiences	Students shall demonstrate competency in writing for a variety of purposes, topics, and audiences, employing a wide range of forms.
6. Conventions	Students shall apply knowledge of Standard English conventions in written work.
7. Craftsmanship	Students shall develop personal style and voice as they approach the craftsmanship of writing.
Reading	
8. Foundations of reading	Students shall apply concepts of print, acquire knowledge of spoken words, and understand the relationship of speech to print as they develop a foundation for literacy.
9. Comprehension	Students shall apply a variety of strategies to read and comprehend printed material.
10. Variety of text	Students shall read, examine, and respond to a wide range of texts for a variety of purposes.
11. Vocabulary, word study, and fluency	Students shall acquire and apply skills in vocabulary development and word analysis to be able to read fluently.
Inquiring/Researching	
12. Research/inquiry process	Students shall engage in inquiry and research to address questions, to make judgments about credibility, and to communicate ideas in ways that suit the purpose and audience.

Source: <http://arkedu.state.ar.us/pdf/ELA%20Framework%202003.pdf>

Test Format and Content

To examine trends in adolescent literacy, the rest of the discussion will focus on the literacy Benchmark Examinations for grades 4 and 8 and the End-of-Course Examination in literacy for grade 11 (for more information regarding the assessments, see http://arkedu.state.ar.us/actaap/student_assessment/student_assessment_p1.htm).

Both the Benchmark Examination and the End-of-Course Examination literacy assessments consist of two sections, one on reading and one on writing. Each section takes approximately two hours to complete. The reading section on the Benchmark Examination features three reading passages—one literary, one content, and one practical—each followed by eight multiple-choice questions and one open-response item. The format of the End-of-Course Examination is identical, but there are twice as many reading passages and questions. The multiple-choice and

open-response portions receive equal weight, because the multiple-choice questions are worth two points apiece and the open-response items are worth 16 points apiece. The writing section consists of two extended-response writing tasks.

For the Benchmark Examination literacy test, 43 percent of the available points are allocated to the reading section and 57 percent to the writing section. On the 4th-grade exam, 30 percent of the reading questions test students' use of comprehension strategies, and 11 percent assess their use of strategies for visual organization. Items on print concepts, cuing systems, vocabulary, critical thinking, fluency, and textual purposes account for 7 percent each, while use of prior knowledge, use of textual relationships, selection of appropriate reading materials, and understanding of the purpose of reading are assessed on 4 percent of the questions in each.

In the 8th grade, analyzing main ideas and supportive details accounts for one-third of the reading questions, while analyzing literature for purpose and style makes up 15 percent. Using patterns of organization, following directions, and employing comprehension strategies each count for 11 percent apiece. Applying cues to decode, comparing literary elements, establishing purpose for reading, and using reference skills each account for 4 percent apiece.

In the writing section, the two writing tasks are weighted equally and are judged on five domains: content, style, sentence formation, usage, and mechanics. For each domain, students are scored from 1 (little or no control of the domain) to 4 (consistent control of the domain). Scores for style are weighted twice as heavily as scores for sentence formation, usage, and mechanics; scores for content count three times as much. In 2003, the 4th-grade prompts directed students to write an expository essay and a narrative story, while the 8th-grade prompts called for students to write two expository essays.

On the literacy End-of-Course Examination, the majority of the multiple-choice and open-response questions (53 percent) test students' ability to apply comprehension strategies. Other student-learning expectations addressed on the exam include articulating the theme of a text (11 percent of questions), applying critical-thinking skills (11 percent), integrating information from the text and other sources (9 percent), understanding different points of view (4 percent), using structures and features of the text (4 percent), analyzing a diversity of ideas (2 percent), and reading for a variety of purposes (2 percent). On the 2003 exam, the two extended-response writing prompts directed students to write a personal communication and a persuasive essay. As on the Benchmark Examination, student compositions are scored on five domains using a scale from one to four.

Achievement-Level Definitions

Results on the assessments are reported using four achievement levels:

- **Below Basic:** Below basic students fail to show sufficient mastery of skills in mathematics or reading and writing to attain the basic level.
- **Basic:** Basic students show substantial skills in mathematics or reading and writing; however, they only partially demonstrate the abilities to apply these skills. They demonstrate a need for some additional assistance, commitment, or study to reach the proficient level.
- **Proficient:** Proficient students demonstrate solid academic performance for the grade tested and are well prepared for the next level of schooling. They can use Arkansas' established mathematics or reading and writing skills and knowledge to solve problems and complete tasks on their own. Students can tie ideas together and explain the ways their ideas are connected.
- **Advanced:** Advanced students demonstrate superior performance well beyond proficient grade-level performance. They can apply Arkansas' established mathematics or reading and writing skills to solve complex problems and complete demanding tasks on their own. They can make insightful connections between abstract and concrete ideas and provide well-supported explanations and arguments.

Students must score at the “proficient” level or above to be considered “passing” under state accountability provisions.

Performance Results

Student Performance

The Arkansas Department of Education provides student-level data on performance for all students, general education students, students with limited-English proficiency, economically disadvantaged students, and groups of students categorized by race/ethnicity.⁵ Table D2 shows literacy results from the 2003 ACTAAP for students in grades 4 and 8, and Table D3 shows literacy results from the 2003 ACTAAP for students in grade 11.

⁵Approximately 71 percent of students in Arkansas are white; 24 percent are African American; and 4 percent are Hispanic. No other racial/ethnic group comprises 2 percent of the student population. About 47 percent of students are eligible for the free or reduced-price lunch program; 3 percent are in limited-English-proficiency programs; and 13 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

Table D2. Performance of 4th- and 8th-Graders on 2003 Literacy Benchmark Examination, by Student Characteristics

	Basic and Above	Proficient and Above	Advanced
	Percentage		
4th Grade			
All students	85	61	7
General education students	92	69	8
Special education students	36	11	0
Students with limited-English proficiency	75	39	2
Economically disadvantaged students	68	49	27
African American students	73	40	2
Hispanic students	84	56	3
White students	90	69	9
8th Grade			
All students	78	41	4
General education students	87	48	5
Special education students	24	3	0
Students with limited-English proficiency	57	18	0
Economically disadvantaged students	68	27	2
African American students	61	21	1
Hispanic students	71	31	2
White students	86	50	6

Source: www.as-is.org/indicators/search_actap.php

Table D3. Performance of 11th-Graders on 2003 Literacy End-of-Course Examination, by Student Characteristics

	Basic and Above	Proficient and Above	Advanced
	Percentage		
11th Grade			
All students	78	37	1
General education students	86	43	2
Special education students	23	2	0
Students with limited-English proficiency	39	10	0
Economically disadvantaged students	68	23	1
African American students	64	16	0
Hispanic students	66	22	1
White students	89	51	3

Source: www.as-is.org/indicators/search_actap.php

Overall, between 78 and 85 percent of all students scored at or above the basic level. However, these percentages were considerably higher for general education students. For example, 92 percent of general education students in 4th grade, 87 percent in 8th grade, and 86 percent in 11th grade scored at or above the basic level. The percentages of students reaching higher levels of performance were much lower: 43–69 percent at or above the proficient level, and just 2–8 percent at the advanced level. Students in higher grades had lower levels of performance than those in lower grades across all levels of performance. For example, while 61 percent of all students in the 4th grade scored at the proficient level, only 41 percent of 8th-graders and 37 percent of 11th-graders did so.

Students with limited-English proficiency and special education students scored well below general education students at all grade levels.

There was a large gap in achievement levels of African American students compared with both Hispanic and white students. The gap between African American and white students ranged from 17 to 25 percentage points at the basic level and 29 to 35 percentage points at the proficient level. The proportion of Hispanic students scoring at the basic level was between 10 and 11 percentage points higher than the percentages of African American students at the 4th and 8th grades but only 2 percentage points higher at the 11th grade. The gap was larger at the proficient level: 6–16 percentage points across the three grades.

School Performance

The data available for urbanicity on the 2002 ACTAAP are limited to 8th-grade scores (Table D4). Almost 60 percent of schools in Arkansas are located in rural areas, while the remaining 40 percent of schools are split fairly evenly among urban and suburban areas. These data show that rural and suburban schools are outperforming urban schools by 6–8 percentage points at the basic level and 2–5 percentage points at or above the proficient level.

Table D4. Average School Performance on 8th-Grade 2002 Literacy Benchmark Assessment, by Urbanicity

	Basic and Above	Proficient and Above	Advanced
	Average Percentage		
8th Grade			
Rural schools	85	30	3
Suburban schools	87	33	2
Urban schools	79	28	3

APPENDIX E. CALIFORNIA

State Assessment System

California's Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) program was adopted in 1997 as part of Senate Bill 376. Currently, the program consists of two assessments for general education students:

- The **California Standards Tests (CSTs)** are criterion-referenced assessments the state reports as aligned with state standards. Students in grades 3–11 take the tests in mathematics and English/language arts. In addition, students in grades 8, 10, and 11 are tested in history and social science, and students in grades 5, 9, 10, and 11 take tests in various fields of science.
- The **California Achievement Test, 6th edition (CAT/6)** is a nationally norm-referenced assessment published by CTB/McGraw-Hill. Students in grades 2–11 take the test in reading, language, and mathematics. Students in grades 2–8 also take the spelling assessment, while students in grades 9–11 take the science exam.

In addition, the state administers the California High School Exit Examination, a criterion-referenced assessment that the state reports as aligned with state standards, for students in grade 10 or higher. Beginning with the class of 2006, students must pass the exam in mathematics and English/language arts to earn a high school diploma. Students will be permitted five opportunities to retake the exam after the initial administration in 10th grade (for additional information on state accountability, see <http://www.cde.ca.gov/nclb/index.asp>).

California reports that CST exams are aligned with the content standards, and published CST blueprints trace items back to specific standards. California's adopted content standards outline the skills, knowledge, and abilities that all students should master at each grade level of their public schooling for a number of content areas, including (among others) English/language arts, mathematics, science, history and social science, and visual and performing arts. For instance, the English/language arts content standards are organized by grade level and are categorized under four skill areas: reading, writing, written and oral English-language conventions, and listening and speaking. Each standard is further defined by a number of component domains. For example, word analysis, fluency, and systematic vocabulary development may include concepts about print, phonemic awareness, decoding and word recognition, vocabulary, and concept development, depending on the grade level. Under these domains are listed specific skills and knowledge that students should have mastery of at each grade level. Table E1 provides an

example for the 7th-grade subdomain under reading comprehension, with a focus on informational texts.

Table E1. Skills and Knowledge for 7th-Grade Reading Comprehension, Focus on Informational Texts

Reading Comprehension: Students read and understand grade-level-appropriate material. They describe and connect the essential ideas, arguments, and perspectives of the text by using their knowledge of text structure, organization, and purpose. The selections in Recommended Readings in Literature, Kindergarten Through Grade Eight illustrate the quality and complexity of the materials to be read by students. In addition, by grade eight, students read one million words annually on their own, including a good representation of grade-level-appropriate narrative and expository text (e.g., classic and contemporary literature, magazines, newspapers, online information). In grade seven, students make substantial progress toward this goal.

Skills, Knowledge, and Abilities

Structural features of informational materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and analyze the differences in structure and purpose between various categories of informational materials (e.g., textbooks, newspapers, instructional manuals, signs). • Locate information by using a variety of consumer, workplace, and public documents. • Analyze text that uses the cause-and-effect organizational pattern.
Comprehension and analysis of grade-level-appropriate text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and trace the development of an author's argument, point of view, or perspective in text. • Understand and explain the use of a simple mechanical device by following technical directions.
Expository critique	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the adequacy, accuracy, and appropriateness of the author's evidence to support claims and assertions, noting instances of bias and stereotyping.

Source: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/index.asp>

Test Format and Content

To examine trends in adolescent literacy, the rest of the discussion focuses on the CST in English/language arts for grades 4, 8, and 11 (for additional information regarding the CST assessment, see <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sr/resources.asp>).

The English/language arts assessment in grades 4 and 8 includes two multiple-choice sections and a direct writing portion. The multiple-choice questions account for 90 percent of the English/language arts total score, while the writing assessment accounts for 10 percent. The 11th-grade English/language arts CST is entirely a multiple-choice examination. The tests are untimed, but the multiple-choice sections typically take 85 minutes; the writing portion generally takes an hour.

All CST English/language arts exams include 75 multiple-choice questions. The multiple-choice sections of the CST for all grade levels assess students' knowledge and skills around five standards in both reading and writing. On the 4th-grade exam, word analysis, fluency, and systemic

vocabulary development account for 24 percent of the multiple-choice items, and written and oral English-language conventions account for another 24 percent. Reading comprehension and writing strategies make up 20 percent each, while literary response and analysis account for the remaining 12 percent. For 8th-graders, the major focus is on reading comprehension, with a special emphasis on informational materials, which accounts for 24 percent of the multiple-choice questions. Writing strategies make up 23 percent of the test; written and oral English-language conventions, 21 percent; literary response and analysis, 20 percent; and word analysis, fluency, and systematic vocabulary development, 11 percent. The 11th-grade test places the most emphasis on writing strategies, which account for 27 percent of the questions. Reading comprehension makes up 24 percent of the points; literary response and analysis, 21 percent; written and oral English-language conventions, 17 percent; and word analysis, fluency, and systematic vocabulary development, 11 percent.

The direct writing exercise on the 4th- and 8th-grade tests requires students to compose a first draft of an essay on a specified topic. For 4th-graders, possible writing modes that may be tested include a narrative, a summary of information, or a response to literature. Eighth-graders may be asked to write a fictional or autobiographical narrative, a response to literature, a persuasive essay, or a summary of information. Student essays are judged using a four-point holistic rubric that includes general criteria related to writing strategies and conventions, as well as specific criteria for the particular mode of writing.

Achievement-Level Definitions

Results on the CST are reported in five achievement levels: Far Below Basic, Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, and Advanced. Students scoring at or above the proficient level are considered to be “proficient” under the state’s accountability system.

Performance Results

Student Performance

California’s STAR program provides data on student performance for all students and by a variety of student characteristics, including disability status, poverty status, English fluency, and racial/ethnic group.⁶ Table E2 shows results from the 2003 CST English/language arts exam for students in grades 4, 8, and 10.

⁶Approximately 45 percent of students in California are Hispanic; 35 percent are white; 11 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander; and 8 percent are African American. About 47 percent of students are eligible for the free or reduced-price lunch program; 25 percent are in limited-English-proficiency programs; and 11 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

Table E2. Performance of 4th-, 8th-, and 10th-Graders on 2003 English/Language Arts CST, by Student Characteristics

	Basic and Above	Proficient and Above	Advanced
	Percentage		
4th Grade			
All students	74	39	15
Students with no disabilities	78	42	17
Students with disabilities	38	14	5
English-language learner students	56	15	3
Fluent English-language students	83	50	21
Economically disadvantaged students	64	24	6
Non–economically disadvantaged students	87	59	28
African American students	66	27	8
Asian students	88	61	32
Hispanic students	64	24	6
White students	88	59	28
8th Grade			
All students	64	30	8
Students with no disabilities	70	33	9
Students with disabilities	21	5	1
English-language learner students	32	4	0
Fluent English-language students	73	37	10
Economically disadvantaged students	50	15	2
Non–economically disadvantaged students	77	43	13
African American students	51	17	3
Asian students	80	49	19
Hispanic students	51	15	2
White students	80	47	15
10th Grade			
All students	63	33	11
Students with no disabilities	68	36	12
Students with disabilities	19	5	1
English-language learner students	28	4	0
Fluent English-language students	71	39	13
Economically disadvantaged students	48	16	3
Non–economically disadvantaged students	73	43	16
African American students	49	19	4
Asian students	77	49	21
Hispanic students	50	17	3
White students	78	50	19

Source: <http://star.cde.ca.gov/star2003/viewreport.asp>

Overall, roughly two-thirds of students (63 to 74 percent) scored at the basic level or above on the CST English/language arts assessment. Between 30 and 39 percent scored at the “proficient” level or above, as required to pass the test, and only 9–15 percent scored at the “advanced” level.

Students with disabilities had the lowest percentages of students scoring at the basic level and above of any reporting group—19–38 percent. Only 5–14 percent of students with disabilities scored at the proficient level, and few reached the advanced level (1–5 percent).

Students who were economically disadvantaged scored lower on the CST English/language arts assessment than their non–economically disadvantaged counterparts. Between 48 and 64 percent of economically disadvantaged students scored at the basic level or above, 16–24 percent at the proficient level or above, and 2–6 percent at the advanced level. The gap at the basic level and above between economically disadvantaged students and other students was 23–27 percentage points across the three grades. The gap at the proficient level and above was somewhat larger than at the basic level: In the 4th grade, economically disadvantaged students trailed their peers by 35 percentage points; in the 8th grade, by 28 percentage points; and in the 10th grade, by 27 percentage points. Only 6 percent of economically disadvantaged students scored at the advanced level in the 4th grade compared with 28 percent of students who were not economically disadvantaged—a difference of 22 percentage points. The gap was smaller at the higher grades—11–13 percentage points.

The percentage of English-language learners scoring at the basic level and above declined markedly between the 4th and higher grades, from 56 percent to 28–32 percent. English-language learners scored much lower than their fluent English peers, and the gap in performance increased substantially across the grades. Few English-language learners passed the assessment by scoring at or above the proficient level—15 percent in 4th grade and 4 percent in 8th and 10th grades.

White students and Asian students outperformed all other racial/ethnic groups, with 78–88 percent scoring at the basic level, 47–61 percent scoring at the proficient level, and 15–32 percent scoring at the advanced level. African American and Hispanic students had similar performance to one another, but trailed their white and Asian counterparts by sizable margins. For example, 66 percent of African American students and 64 percent of Hispanic students scored at the basic level and above compared with 88 percent of white students in the 4th grade. The gap at the basic level between white students and African American and Hispanic students was somewhat larger in 8th and 10th grades—28–29 percentage points as opposed to 22–24 percentage points in 4th grade. While 47–59 percent of white students scored at the proficient level, only 17–27 percent of African American students and 15–24 percent of Hispanic students did so, an achievement gap of 30–35 points. Eight percent of African American students and 6 percent of Hispanic students

scored at the advanced level in 4th grade, and the percentage was even smaller in the higher grades—2–4 percent.

School Performance

School-level data on the CRT assessments were not available.

APPENDIX F. COLORADO

State Assessment System

The Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) has been in place since 1997. The CSAP assessments are criterion-referenced and are administered to students in the following subjects and grades:

- Reading and writing in grades 3–10
- Mathematics in grades 5–10
- Science in grade 8 (<http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeunified/nclb.htm>).

The Colorado Model Content Standards, on which CSAP is based, were developed by educators and community members and were adopted in 1995. The reading and writing content standards define what students should know and be able to do in order to read, write, and speak fluently; communicate effectively; recognize and use the power of language; and communicate in an increasingly technological world. The six standards state that students should:

1. read and understand a variety of materials
2. write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences
3. write and speak using conventional grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling
4. apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing
5. read to locate, select, and make use of relevant information from a variety of media, reference, and technological sources
6. read and recognize literature as a record of human experience.

Each standard is made more specific by a set of expectations outlining what students should know and be able to do to meet the content standard, along with a rationale that explains the standard's importance to learning and life outcomes. Specific expectations are given in three grade clusters (K–4, 5–8, 9–12). The expectations for grades 9–12 also include non-mandatory skills and knowledge for students who extend their English/language arts education beyond the standards. In 2000, the state published a further elaboration of the content standards in English/language arts that defines student expectations at each grade level. For instance, under standard 1 (students read and understand a variety of materials) 7th-grade students are expected to:

- compare and contrast texts with similar characters, plots, and/or themes
- summarize texts read, such as newspaper and magazine articles, technical writing, stories, and poetry
- determine the main idea or essential message in a text

- make reasonable inferences from information that is implied but not directly stated
 - infer by making connections between separated sections of a text
 - find support in the text for main ideas
 - use word-recognition skills to comprehend text (for example, roots, prefixes, and suffixes)
 - find the sequence of steps in a technical publication
- (<http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeassess/standards/pdf/reading.pdf>).

Test Format and Content

To examine trends in adolescent literacy, the rest of the discussion will focus on the CSAP reading and writing exams for grades 4, 8, and 10. Both the reading and writing assessments are administered over three testing sessions of approximately one hour apiece.

The reading portion of the CSAP tests students on content standards 1, 4, 5, and 6, which address reading comprehension, thinking skills, use of literary information, and literature, respectively. The test includes multiple-choice and constructed-response items. Multiple-choice questions count for one point each, while constructed-response items are worth between one and four points. The 4th-, 8th-, and 10th-grade assessments consist of 59–60 multiple-choice and 13–15 constructed-response items. The 4th-grade test emphasizes the content standards of reading comprehension, thinking skills, and literature equally, at 26–27 percent of points each. Use of literary information accounts for the remaining 20 percent. On the 8th grade test, reading comprehension is weighted most heavily, followed by use of literary information, literature, and thinking skills. At the 10th-grade level, the assessment places the most emphasis on reading comprehension and literature, each of which accounts for 27 percent of available points, thinking skills (20 percent), and using literary information (20 percent). Students at all grade levels are required to read fiction, poetry, and nonfiction passages and are also tested on vocabulary.

The CSAP writing assessment in grades 4, 8, and 10 includes one extended-writing task worth 11 points, three short paragraph-writing exercises worth four points each, one editing task worth six points, and 38–40 multiple-choice questions worth one point each. The assessment tests students on content standards 2 and 3: writing for a wide variety of purposes, and writing using conventions, which includes skills such as paragraph writing, extended writing, grammar and usage, and mechanics.

The majority of the multiple-choice items focus on grammar and usage. The short-paragraph items are scored on a four-point holistic rubric that includes criteria related to content and organization, and style and fluency. The extended-writing task is scored using a set of analytic rubrics. Content and organization, and style and fluency are scored on a scale of 0–4, language

and usage are scored together on a scale of 0–2, and planning is scored from 0–1 (additional information regarding the assessments can be found at http://www.cde.state.co.us/index_assess.htm).

Achievement-Level Definitions

Scores on the CSAP are reported using four achievement levels: unsatisfactory, partially proficient, proficient, and advanced. The state has published definitions of the achievement levels for each grade level and subject. Table F1 shows the achievement-level definitions for 4th-grade reading for the four tested reading standards as an example. Students scoring at or above the partially proficient level are considered to have met the academic requirements under NCLB.

Performance Results

Student Performance

Colorado provides data on student performance for all students and by a variety of student characteristics, including disability status, poverty, English proficiency, and racial/ethnic group.⁷ Table F2 shows results from the 2003 CSAP English/language arts exam for students in grades 4, 8, and 10 by most student characteristics, and Table F3 provides detailed results for students based on relative English-proficiency levels.

Overall, the vast majority of Colorado’s students passed the CSAP reading assessment by scoring at or above the partially proficient level—87 percent across all three grades. Between 63 and 67 percent of students scored at or above the proficient level, and 10 percent or less reached the advanced level. On the writing assessment, between 91 and 93 percent passed the test. However, the percentage scoring at the proficient level was only 49–53 percent, somewhat lower than on the reading test. Between 9 and 10 percent of students achieved the advanced level in writing.

Economically disadvantaged students scored well below non–economically disadvantaged students in reading and writing, particularly at the proficient level, at which the achievement gap was between 30 and 37 percentage points.

Between 44 percent and 52 percent of students with disabilities passed the reading assessment, and 63–70 percent passed in writing. However, this rate fell to 17–22 percent in reading and 7–14 percent in writing at the proficient level.

⁷Approximately 67 percent of students in Colorado are white; 23 percent are Hispanic; 6 percent are African American; and 3 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander. About 28 percent of students are eligible for the free or reduced-price lunch program, 10 percent are in limited-English-proficiency programs, and 10 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

Table F1. CSAP Fourth-Grade Reading Achievement Levels

	Read and Understand a Variety of Materials	Apply Thinking Skills to Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening and Viewing	Read to Locate, Select, and Make Use of Relevant Information from a Variety of Sources	Read and Recognize Literature as a Record of Human Experience
Unsatisfactory	May demonstrate evidence of minimal or very general comprehension (i.e., gist) of a text that has substantial textual or visual support or clues	May give inconsistent responses to specific tasks when predicting or drawing conclusions using text and/or visual clues	May demonstrate limited accuracy in the identification and use of facts presented in the text	May respond to simple story elements (e.g., character, setting, and plot) at a literal level
Partially Proficient	Demonstrates use of limited strategies to comprehend reading materials by: using context clues to comprehend word meanings, recalling details to answer questions, skimming to locate a limited number of details	Demonstrates analysis of a text by using a graphic organizer to categorize facts	Demonstrates accurate identification and use of information presented in the text	Demonstrates the ability to read and respond to literature by: classifying vocabulary in a basic way, understanding a text (e.g., poem) at a literal level, recalling details to answer questions
Proficient	Demonstrates comprehension of a variety of reading selections by using multiple strategies: context and visual clues; word parts (prefixes and suffixes); multiple word meanings and idiomatic expressions; factual recall and discrimination; sequencing; main idea; inference; written summary with factual support	Responds to a specific text by: understanding and following directions, recognizing the author's point of view and purpose, expressing a character's reactions or explaining a reaction to the text, locating relevant information, defining a problem or a solution, making predictions and drawing conclusions based on the information	Demonstrates accurate use of information from a variety of sources by: differentiating among printed materials, reading for information that contains multiple steps, analyzing and discriminating among various media, identifying details from relevant information, extracting information from a complex source (e.g., graph, chart, table, or text)	Demonstrates the ability to read and respond to literature by: identifying characters' reactions and motives for their actions, identifying sequence and several details to adequately answer a question, support an opinion with general ideas from text, classify familiar vocabulary in new ways, interpret poetry in a concrete manner with a limited understanding of figurative language (e.g., personification)
Advanced	Uses multiple strategies to read a variety of selections to demonstrate a deeper understanding (e.g., insight into text) by: writing a complete, thorough summary, completing complex non-linear sequencing; recalling details with inference (e.g., making connections between details or ideas); using context clues for words with unusual or abstract meanings	Responds to a specific text by: thoroughly categorizing facts and details using a graphic organizer, differentiating fact from opinion, evaluating the main idea, defining both a problem and a solution, defending and thoroughly supporting a reaction to a text, interpreting the author's style	Demonstrates skill in finding and using information from a complex variety of sources by: identifying and using the organizational features of a book (e.g., glossary, index, or table of contents), following a complex set of instructions, discriminating among a wide variety of reference materials, applying reasoning skills, interpreting factual material displayed in a non-traditional way	Demonstrates the ability to read and respond to literature by: generating character traits and motives for characters' actions, identifying many details from context to thoroughly answer a question, supporting an opinion with specific details from text, classifying vocabulary in abstract ways, interpreting poetry and folk tales in a more abstract manner with a more complete understanding of figurative language (e.g., personification, symbolism)

Source: www.cde.state.co.us/cdeassess/csap/2003/G3-8_GTI03.pdf

Table F2. Performance of 4th-, 8th-, and 10th-Graders on 2003 English/Language Arts CSAP, by Student Characteristics

	Reading			Writing		
	Partially Proficient and Above	Proficient and Above	Advanced	Partially Proficient and Above	Proficient and Above	Advanced
Percentage						
4th Grade						
All students	87	63	7	91	52	10
General education students	90	68	8	93	56	11
Students with disabilities	52	22	1	63	14	1
Economically disadvantaged students	75	41	2	81	31	3
Non-economically disadvantaged students	92	74	9	95	62	13
Asian/Pacific Islander students	89	65	9	95	59	14
African American students	77	43	2	85	35	3
Hispanic students	74	40	2	80	30	3
White students	92	74	9	95	62	13
8th Grade						
All students	87	66	10	92	49	9
General education students	91	72	11	95	54	10
Students with IEPs	49	19	1	66	7	0
Economically disadvantaged students	73	41	2	84	24	2
Non-economically disadvantaged students	92	76	13	95	58	11
Asian/Pacific Islander students	88	70	14	94	57	14
African American students	80	49	3	89	33	3
Hispanic students	70	39	2	82	23	2
White students	92	77	13	95	58	11

Table F2. (cont.)

	Reading			Writing		
	Partially Proficient and Above	Proficient and Above	Advanced	Partially Proficient and Above	Proficient and Above	Advanced
Percentage						
10th Grade						
All students	87	67	9	93	52	9
General education students	90	72	10	96	56	10
Students with disabilities	50	18	0	64	7	0
Economically disadvantaged students	73	42	3	85	27	2
Non–economically disadvantaged students	89	72	11	95	57	11
Asian/Pacific Islander students	91	67	11	94	53	11
African American students	79	48	3	88	31	3
Hispanic students	72	40	2	85	25	2
White students	91	76	12	95	61	11

Source: http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeassess/results/2003/as_results_CSAP03.htm

African American and Hispanic students scored below white students, and Hispanic students scored slightly below African American students. The differences ranged from 12–25 percentage points in reading at the passing level and from 28–39 percentage points in reading at or above the proficient level. The gap was much smaller in writing at the partially proficient level, ranging from 5 to 15 percentage points, but increased substantially at or above the proficient level (25–36 percentage points).

Colorado provides detailed scores by language background and proficiency (Table F3). As would be expected, non-English-proficient students scored lowest—9–20 percent passed in reading and 17–30 percent passed in writing. Non-English-proficient students scored lower in the later grades than in 4th grade. About 47–60 percent of students with limited-English proficiency passed in reading and 64–82 percent passed in writing. Students from non-English-language backgrounds who have reached English proficiency scored at almost the same levels as native English-speaking students (83–89 percent passing in reading and 89–96 percent passing in writing). However, an achievement gap still exists among these groups at or above the proficient level, at which native English speakers outscore non-native but proficient English students by 11–20 percentage points in reading and 8–21 percentage points in writing. This achievement gap is lower in the 4th grade than in the 7th and 10th grades.

Table F3. Performance of 4th-, 8th-, and 10th-Graders on 2003 English/Language Arts CSAP, by Language Background and Proficiency

	Reading			Writing		
	Partially Proficient and Above	Proficient and Above	Advanced	Partially Proficient and Above	Proficient and Above	Advanced
Percentage						
4th Grade						
English-language-background students	90	68	8	93	56	11
Non–English-Language Background						
Non–English-proficient students	20	5	0	30	3	0
Students with limited-English proficiency	60	19	0	71	13	0
Fluent English students	89	57	4	92	48	6
8th Grade						
English-language-background students	90	71	11	94	52	10
Non–English-Language Background						
Non–English-proficient students	11	1	0	30	1	0
Students with limited-English proficiency	57	17	0	80	9	0
Fluent English students	87	54	3	94	37	5
10th Grade						
English-language-background students	88	70	10	91	55	10
Non–English-Language Background						
Non–English-proficient students	12	1	0	17	0	0
Students with limited-English proficiency	57	14	0	64	7	0
Fluent English students	88	51	3	89	34	4

Source: www.cde.state.co.us/cdeassess/results/2003/as_results_CSAP03.htm

School Performance

School performance on the 4th-, 8th-, and 10th-grade 2002 English Language Arts CSAP is reported by urbanicity in Table F4. Forty-three percent of schools in Colorado are suburban; the remaining 57 percent of schools are relatively evenly split between urban and rural areas. On average, rural and suburban schools outperformed urban schools by about 6–8 percentage points

in reading at the passing level and 1–6 percentage points in writing. The gap was somewhat larger at or above the proficient level in both subjects, ranging from 3–11 percentage points. This is not surprising, because 41 percent of urban schools are high-poverty schools, compared with 26 percent of rural schools and 11 percent of suburban schools.

Table F4. Average School Performance for 4th-, 8th-, and 10th-Grade 2002 English/Language Arts CSAP, by Urbanicity

	Reading			Writing		
	Partially Proficient and Above	Proficient and Above	Advanced	Partially Proficient and Above	Proficient and Above	Advanced
Average Percentage						
4th Grade						
Rural schools	88	65	6	93	51	7
Suburban schools	87	64	7	92	53	9
Urban schools	80	55	6	87	45	7
8th Grade						
Rural schools	89	68	6	94	50	8
Suburban schools	87	67	8	93	51	8
Urban schools	81	60	9	89	46	8
10th Grade						
Rural schools	87	64	6	90	48	6
Suburban schools	85	63	6	89	47	6
Urban schools	79	53	5	84	39	6

APPENDIX G. CONNECTICUT

State Assessment System

Connecticut's state assessment system encompasses two examinations:

- The **Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT)** is a criterion-referenced test administered to students in grades 4, 6, and 8 in mathematics, reading, and writing.
- The **Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT)** is a criterion-referenced test administered to students in grade 10 in mathematics, reading across the curriculum, writing across the curriculum, and science.

These assessments are used for school accountability. In addition, starting with the class of 2006, local boards of education will be required to use CAPT results in developing criteria for graduation (although failure on the CAPT cannot be the sole reason for denying graduation to a student). The state also awards Certification of Mastery in each tested subject based on CAPT results, and scores are listed on students' high school transcripts. Students may retake the test in grades 11 and 12 to earn Certification of Mastery.

An optional version of the CMT for grades 3, 5, and 7 is also available at no cost to districts that wish to provide feedback to educators on student achievement. This version is not currently aligned with state standards, as standards have not been articulated for these grade levels. Scores on the optional CMT are currently not reported to the state. However, beginning in 2005–06, the mandatory state assessment system will be expanded to include grades 3, 5, and 7 (for additional information on state accountability, see <http://www.csde.state.ct.us/public/der/nclb/index.htm>).

Connecticut reports that the CMT reading and writing assessments are aligned with the Connecticut Curriculum Frameworks and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading and writing framework. Connecticut's Curriculum Frameworks provide guidance to schools and districts in thinking about the knowledge and skills that students should have. Frameworks have been developed for language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, the arts, world languages, technology education, learning resource and information technology, health and safety education, and physical education. Each Curriculum Framework consists of Program Goals that students should achieve by the end of grade 12. In language arts, the Curriculum Framework Program Goals state that by the end of grade 12, students will:

- read, write, speak, listen, and view to construct meaning of written, visual, and oral texts
- read with understanding and respond thoughtfully to a variety of texts
- write and speak English proficiently to communicate ideas clearly

- create works using the language arts in visual, oral, and written texts
- choose and apply strategies that enhance the fluent and proficient use of language arts
- understand and appreciate texts from many literary periods and cultures
- employ the language arts for lifelong learning, work, and enjoyment.

Content standards describe what students should know and be able to do by the end of grade 12 and identify the most important content domains within the subject. Finally, performance standards indicate how students should be able to demonstrate progress toward the content standards in grade clusters (K–4, 5–8, 9–12).

The language arts section of the curriculum framework is under revision. A draft of the new framework was circulated in 2003. If approved, the new framework will include grade-by-grade performance standards for grades 3 through 8, in addition to clustered performance standards for PK–2 and 9–12. The draft framework also updates the content standards and domains from the 1998 version. In addition, the state is developing guides to K–12 program development for each of the subject areas, with ideas for classroom activities, prototype assessments, exemplars of student work, and other resources.

Test Format and Content

To examine trends in adolescent literacy, the rest of the discussion will focus on the CMT and CAPT reading and writing exams for grades 4, 8, and 10 (<http://www.csde.state.ct.us/public/der/s-t/index.htm>).

CMT Reading and Writing Assessments

The CMT reading assessment is split into two tests: Reading Comprehension and Degrees of Reading Power®. Each test counts for 50 percent of the total reading score.

The Reading Comprehension test includes both multiple-choice and open-ended questions related to three reading passages. Fourth-grade students answer 19 multiple-choice and six short-answer questions, while 8th-grade students answer 14 multiple-choice and eight short-answer questions. Students are given 70 minutes to complete the test. The Reading Comprehension tests assess students on three strands of reading literacy: forming an initial understanding, developing an interpretation, and developing a critical stance. For 4th-graders, the passages contain 400–500 words, while the 8th-grade exam includes passages of 800–1,000 words. Passages include original works representing various types of literature, including fiction, poetry, nonfiction, and functional texts.

The Degrees of Reading Power® test is designed to assess students' ability to understand the meaning of a textual passage. The test consists of a number of informational passages of 325–350

words, with words deleted at varying intervals. Several word choices for each deletion are given in the margins of the passage, and students must select the best one. The sentences are written such that any of the choices makes sense if the sentence is taken in isolation; thus, students must read the sentence in the context of the whole paragraph or passage to be able to identify the best choice. In grade 4, students read eight passages and select words for 56 deletions in 70 minutes. In grade 8, students read 11 passages and select words for 77 deletions in 70 minutes.

The writing assessment also is split into two tests: the Direct Assessment of Writing, and Editing and Revising. The Direct Assessment of Writing counts for 60 percent of the total writing score, and Editing and Revising counts for the remaining 40 percent.

For the Direct Assessment of Writing, students have 45 minutes to create a first draft of a response to a prompt. Fourth-grade students are prompted to write in narrative prose, while 8th-grade students are prompted to write persuasive prose. Students' responses are judged holistically on a six-point scale that emphasizes students' ability to communicate a whole message, rather than their use of English-language conventions and grammar.

The Editing and Revising test assesses students' ability to proofread another students' writing. Students answer multiple-choice questions related to errors embedded in one-page texts. The items address both composing and revising, which include making appropriate and effective content choices, organizing for clarity, and revising for diction; and editing, which includes capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. Fourth-grade students answer 32 multiple-choice questions, while 8th-grade students answer 40 multiple-choice items. The test takes 60 minutes.

CAPT Reading and Writing Assessments

As with the CMT reading tests, the CAPT Reading Across the Curriculum assessment is split into two tests: the Response to Literature test and the Reading for Information test.

The Response to Literature test consists of four open-ended questions that students answer by responding to a four- to five-page short story. The four items assess students' ability to demonstrate basic understanding of the text, interpret or explain the text, connect to the text, and make judgments about the quality of the text. The student responses are scored holistically on a six-point scale. Students have 70 minutes to complete the test.

The Reading for Information test consists of three nonfiction passages that students respond to in 12 multiple-choice and six open-ended questions. The items assess students' ability to develop interpretation and to demonstrate a critical stance. The tests take 45 minutes.

As with the others, the CAPT Writing Across the Curriculum assessment is split into two tests: Interdisciplinary Writing, and Editing and Revising. On the Interdisciplinary Writing test, students complete two extended-writing tasks by reading three short informational articles on a controversial issue, and writing a first draft of a persuasive letter explaining and supporting their position on the issue. Students' responses are judged on five dimensions: taking a position, support, comprehensiveness, organization, and fluency. Responses are scored holistically on a six-point scale. Students have 25 minutes for reading and planning and 30 minutes for writing on each task.

The CAPT Editing and Revising test is similar to the CMT Editing and Revising test, with 18 multiple-choice items related to three reading passages that are samples of student writing and have errors embedded within them. Items assess composing and revising, which include content, organization and tone, syntax, and word choice; and editing, which includes capitalization, punctuation, usage, and spelling. The test takes 25 minutes.

Achievement-Level Definitions

Scores on the CMT and CAPT are reported in five achievement levels: below basic, basic, proficient, goal, and advanced. While the state is hoping to get students to goal and above, the achievement levels proficient and above are considered "passing" under NCLB.

Performance Results

Student Performance

Connecticut provides data on student performance for all students and by a variety of student characteristics, including disability status, economic disadvantage, English fluency, and racial/ethnic group.⁸ Table G2 shows results from the 2002 CMT English/language arts exam for students in grades 4 and 8.

Overall, 59 percent of 4th-grade students scored at or above the proficient level in reading, 46 percent met the goal, and 19 percent scored at the advanced level. Writing scores were higher at the first two levels, with 82 percent of students scoring at the proficient level and 62 percent meeting the goal. However, only 20 percent scored at the advanced level in writing, similar to the reading score.

⁸Approximately 69 percent of students in Connecticut are white; 14 percent are African American; 14 percent are Hispanic; and 3 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander. Only 4 percent of students are in limited-English-proficiency programs, and 13 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

Eighteen percent of students with limited-English proficiency reached the proficient level in 4th-grade reading. Only 30 percent of these students reached the basic level, meaning that approximately 70 percent of them fell into the lowest achievement level (not shown). However, scores for writing were higher—49 percent of 4th-graders were proficient and 73 percent reached the basic level.

About 42 percent of economically disadvantaged students in the 4th grade scored at the proficient level in reading, and only 27 percent of them met the goal compared with 79 and 67 percent, respectively, of non-economically disadvantaged students—a difference of 37–40 percentage points. In writing, the gap was smaller—22–30 percentage points. Very few economically disadvantaged students (4–6 percent) scored at the advanced level in reading and writing compared with 24–25 percent of non-economically disadvantaged students.

There were large differences in achievement by race/ethnicity, larger in reading than in writing. Asian and white students seemed to have similar scores in reading across the different levels, but African American and Hispanic students scored well below these two groups. For example, while 79–81 percent of Asian and white students scored at the proficient level, only 42 percent of African American students and 39 percent of Hispanic students did so. The achievement gap ranged from 37 to 42 percentage points at the proficient and met the goal levels in reading and from 21 to 39 percentage points in writing. Only about 4 percent of African American and Hispanic students scored at the advanced level in reading, and 6–7 percent did so in writing. In general, African American students scored somewhat higher than Hispanic students by about 2–4 percentage points.

At the 8th-grade level, 78–80 percent of students met the proficiency standard in reading and writing, and between 60 and 68 percent met the goal in the two subjects. Overall, 21–23 percent were at the advanced level, similar to the 19–20 percent in the 4th grade.

We find differences of similar magnitude in proficiency levels of 8th grade students disaggregated by poverty, special education, and limited-English proficiency status. For example, only 11 percent of limited-English-proficiency students, 39 percent of economically disadvantaged students, and 26 percent of special education students met the goal in reading compared with 69–75 percent of their counterparts. The differences by race/ethnicity are equally pronounced, with differences in proficiency levels between Asian and white students and African American and Hispanic students ranging from 23 to 40 percentage points in reading and 32 to 43 percentage points in writing at the proficient and met the goal levels.

Table G2. Performance of 4th- and 8th-Graders on 2002 English/Language Arts CMT, by Student Characteristics

	Reading			Writing		
	Proficient and Above	Goal and Above	Advanced	Proficient and Above	Goal and Above	Advanced
	Percentage					
4th Grade						
All students	69	56	19	82	62	20
General education students	73	60	21	85	65	21
Special education students	27	18	4	40	20	3
Students with limited-English proficiency	18	10	1	49	23	4
Students with English proficiency	71	58	20	83	63	20
Economically disadvantaged students	42	27	4	65	39	6
Non-economically disadvantaged students	79	67	25	87	69	24
Asian students	81	67	27	91	76	28
African American students	42	27	4	67	41	7
Hispanic students	39	25	4	64	37	6
White students	79	67	25	88	71	25
8th Grade						
All students	78	68	23	80	60	21
General education students	83	73	25	84	65	23
Special education students	38	26	3	35	15	2
Students with limited-English proficiency	20	11	1	32	16	2
Students with English proficiency	79	69	23	79	60	21
Economically disadvantaged students	53	39	5	59	34	6
Non-economically disadvantaged students	84	75	27	84	67	25
Asian students	87	79	35	89	76	37
African American students	55	39	5	63	37	7
Hispanic students	50	36	5	56	32	6
White students	87	79	29	86	69	26

Source: www.captreports.com/web2003/byGroup/ERG.html

Table G3 provides results from the 2003 CMT Degrees of Reading Power® test that give information regarding the types of texts students are able to read. While between 72 and 86 percent of 4th-graders were able to read books such as *Cat in the Hat* and *The Jungle Book*, only

53 percent were able to read a typical elementary school textbook, and only 42 percent could read such books as *James and the Giant Peach*. Eighth-graders did better than the 4th-graders in their ability to read grade-appropriate fiction books, and about 70 percent were able to read the typical high school textbook. However, only 59 percent could read an average article in the newspaper.

Table G3. Percentage of Students Who Can Read Specific Types of Materials at an Instructional Level, from 2003 CMT Degrees of Reading Power Scores

Students who can read. . .	Percentage
4th Grade	
Books like <i>Cat in the Hat</i>	86
Books like <i>The Jungle Book</i>	72
Typical elementary school textbook	53
Books like <i>James and the Giant Peach</i>	42
8th Grade	
Books like <i>Where the Red Fern Grows</i>	91
Books like <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i>	84
Typical high school textbook	70
Average article in a Connecticut newspaper	59

Source: <http://www.captreports.com/web02/byContent/ERG/C4OR.html>

The 10th-grade 2003 CAPT English-language results are shown in Table G4. About 80 percent (78–81 percent) of 10th-graders were at the proficient level in reading or writing across the disciplines, but only 47–53 percent met the goal. Between 19 and 21 percent were at the advanced level.

While only 28 percent of limited-English-proficiency students were scored at or above the proficient level in reading and 31 percent scored so in writing, 62–63 percent of these students did reach the basic level (not shown); thus, less than 40 percent of limited-English-proficiency students scored at the lowest achievement level, a substantial improvement over the earlier grades.

Similar to trends in the earlier grades, economically disadvantaged students scored below their peers (33–36 percentage points in reading and 28–36 percentage points in writing), and Asian and white students outperformed African American and Hispanic students by between 24 and 41 percentage points at the proficient and goal levels.

Table G4. Performance of 10th-Graders on 2003 English-Language CAPT, by Student Characteristics

	Reading Across the Disciplines			Writing Across the Disciplines		
	Proficient and Above	Goal and Above	Advanced	Proficient and Above	Goal and Above	Advanced
	Percentage					
10th Grade						
All students	78	47	19	81	53	21
General education students	82	51	21	85	57	22
Special education students	40	12	3	45	16	4
Students with limited-English proficiency	28	6	1	31	7	1
Students with English proficiency	79	48	20	82	54	21
Economically disadvantaged students	51	17	4	58	23	5
Non–economically disadvantaged students	84	53	23	86	59	24
Asian students	81	58	27	86	63	28
African American students	53	17	4	62	24	5
Hispanic students	51	18	5	58	24	5
White students	86	56	24	87	61	25

Source: <http://www.captreports.com/web2003/byGroup/ERG.html>

School Performance

Urbanicity data are available at the school level for the 2002 CMT English/language arts examination and are shown in Table G5. The majority of schools in Connecticut are suburban (69 percent), while 26 percent are urban and 5 percent are rural. The table shows that, on average, students in urban schools performed well below their peers at each grade level on both the reading and the writing assessments. For example, while 78–81 percent of 4th-graders in rural and suburban schools scored at the proficient level, only 47 percent of 4th-graders in urban schools did so. The differences were between 31 and 34 percentage points in reading at the proficient and the goal levels. In writing, while the average proficiency levels in urban schools were significantly below those in rural and suburban schools, the differences were smaller, ranging from 15 to 25 percentage points. Given the lower performance of economically disadvantaged students, compared with their peers, these results are not surprising, as urban schools were far more likely to be high-poverty schools—59 percent, compared with 5 percent of suburban and 0 percent of rural schools.

**Table G5. Average School Performance on 4th- and 8th-Grade 2002
English/Language Arts CMT, by Urbanicity**

	Reading			Writing		
	Basic and Above	Proficient and Above	Goal and Above	Basic and Above	Proficient and Above	Goal and Above
Average Percentage						
4th Grade						
Rural schools	89	81	67	96	84	62
Suburban schools	87	78	65	95	86	67
Urban schools	61	47	33	88	69	42
8th Grade						
Rural schools	90	84	75	93	82	61
Suburban schools	90	83	74	93	83	65
Urban schools	67	55	41	82	65	40

APPENDIX H. DELAWARE

State Assessment System

The Delaware Student Testing Program (DSTP) is Delaware’s statewide assessment system, which was initiated 1998, and tested students in grades 3, 5, 8, and 10 in reading, writing, and mathematics. Testing has been expanded and now students in grades 2 through 10 take the DSTP tests in reading and mathematics and students in grades 3-10 take the DSTP in writing. Students in grades 4, 6, 8, and 11 are also assessed in science and social studies. The tests include a mix of norm-referenced and criterion-referenced items aligned with the state content standards.

Student scores in reading and mathematics are used for school accountability, as well as to determine whether or not individual students are required to have an Individual Improvement Plan for the next school year, which may include attendance at summer school as a mandatory component (for additional information regarding state accountability, see http://www.doe.state.de.us/AAB/DSTP_School_Accountability.html).

The state reports that the DSTP measures Delaware’s content standards. Delaware adopted content standards in English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies in 1995. The four English/language arts standards are broad, end-point goals for what students in Delaware public schools should be able to do. The standards are:

1. Use written and oral English appropriate for various purposes and audiences.
2. Construct, examine, and extend the meaning of literary, informative, and technical texts through listening, reading, and viewing.
3. Access, organize, and evaluate information gained through listening, reading, and viewing.
4. Use literary knowledge accessed through print and visual media to connect self to society and culture.

Performance indicators linked to standards describe proficient student performance in four grade-level clusters—K–3, 4–5, 6–8, and 9–10. Table H1 shows the performance descriptors for content standard 2 for grades 6–8 as an example. The standards also include a number of “vignettes” for each standard and grade cluster, describing effective classroom activities used by Delaware teachers.

**Table H1. 6th–8th-Grade Performance Standards for English/Language Arts
Standard 2**

Content Standard 2: Students will construct, examine, and extend the meaning of literary, informative, and technical texts through listening, reading, and viewing.

By the completion of grade 8, using appropriate text, students will be able to:

1. select and apply efficient, effective decoding and other word-recognition strategies to comprehend printed texts
 2. develop an increasingly extensive vocabulary and actively seek the meaning of unknown words as an important facet of comprehending texts and messages by
 - using context clues to determine the meaning of words
 - using reference works, technology, and human resources to learn the meaning of unknown words (e.g., dictionaries, thesauruses, computer software)
 3. self-monitor comprehension while listening, reading, and viewing by
 - generating a purpose for reading, listening, or viewing
 - assimilating information with prior knowledge to revise predictions and understandings, and to make inferences
 - taking appropriate actions (e.g., rereading to make sense, adjusting rate of reading, seeking the meaning of unknown vocabulary) to enhance understanding of oral and written text
 4. demonstrate an overall understanding of oral and printed texts by
 - making and revising predictions as needed
 - identifying the story elements (e.g., characters, setting, plot)
 - identifying and interpreting figurative language and literary devices (e.g., simile, metaphor, allusion)
 - retelling a story or restating an informative text through speaking and/or writing
 - organizing the important points of the text via summaries, outlines, and/or graphic organizers
 - identifying the author's purpose
 - comparing information between texts and within text
 - discriminating between fact and opinion
 - drawing conclusions
 - accepting or rejecting the validity of the information and giving supportive evidence
 - relating the content of the text to real-life situations
 - critically analyzing and evaluating information and messages presented through print, speech, and mass media by
 - connecting and synthesizing information from many sources
 - formulating and expressing opinions
 - responding to questions requiring critical thinking
 - drawing conclusions
 - recognizing the impact of non-literal or figurative words or expressions
 - recognizing discrepancies between speaker's verbal and non-verbal messages
 - explaining ambiguity in words or expressions
 - acknowledging the possibility of a variety of interpretations of the same text
 - evaluating texts and media presentations for bias and misinformation
 - recognizing a variety of persuasive and propaganda techniques and how they are used in a variety of forms (e.g., advertising, campaigns, news formats)
 - evaluating expository and technical texts and media presentations for their completeness, accuracy, and clarity of communications
 - evaluating the literary merit of various texts and media presentations.
-

Table H1. (cont.)

-
5. extend meaning by:
 - offering a personal response to texts
 - applying information from printed, electronic, and oral texts to complete authentic tasks
 - using divergent thinking
 6. recognize the presence and role of the mass media in their lives by:
 - evaluating how the content, techniques, and form of electronic, print, and cinematic messages affect them
 - identifying the underlying purposes of media messages (e.g., profit, humanitarianism, support of artistry).
-

Source: http://www.doe.state.de.us/Standards/English/ELA_Standards.html

Test Format and Content

For the purposes of this document, we now turn our focus to the DSTP reading and assessments in grades 5, 8, and 10 (information regarding content of the assessments can be found through <http://www.doe.state.de.us/AAB/>).

The DSTP reading assessment tests students on content standards 2 and 4: constructing, examining, and extending the meaning of literary, informative, and technical texts through listening, reading, and writing; and using literary knowledge accessed through print and visual media to connect self to society and culture. The assessment includes literary, informative, and technical reading passages. Technical passages receive the least weight, accounting for 23 percent of the available points on the 5th-grade exam and 19 percent on the 8th- and 10th-grade exams. In grades 5 and 8, informative passages receive the most emphasis—42 and 46 percent of the available points in the two grades, respectively. Literary passages account for 35 percent of the points at both grade levels. In 10th grade, literary passages account for 48 percent of the score, and informative passages make up the remaining 33 percent. Questions ask students to determine, interpret, or extend meaning.

The test includes a mix of multiple-choice, short-answer, and extended-response questions. Several of the multiple-choice items are drawn from the Stanford Achievement Test, 9th edition (SAT9) reading subtest. Thirty of these items are used to create a national percentile-rank score for each student. Other SAT9 items that are aligned with the state content standards are combined with Delaware-created items to make up the standard-based score. The extended-response item requires students to respond to an attached reading passage. This essay counts for both the reading and writing scores. For reading, it is scored using the four-point Delaware General Reading Rubric.

The DSTP writing assessment tests students on content standard 1, using written and oral English for a variety of purposes and audiences. The assessment is composed of the text-based writing

prompt, described above, and a stand-alone writing prompt, which is administered separately from the reading exam. The stand-alone prompt may ask students to use any one of three discourses: expressive (author oriented), informative (subject oriented), or persuasive (audience oriented). Students have three hours to complete their essays, divided between 20 minutes for prewriting, 45 minutes for composing a first draft, and 60 minutes for revising and writing a second draft, in addition to time for directions and a break. Both the text-based and the stand-alone prompts are scored for writing using the Delaware General Writing Rubric. The stand-alone prompt response is scored by two readers, whose scores are summed and then added to the score from one reader for the text-based prompt; thus, the stand-alone prompt counts twice as much in the writing score as the text-based prompt.

Achievement-Level Definitions

DSTP reports student scores in five achievement levels: Well Below the Standard, Below the Standard, Meets the Standard, Exceeds the Standard, and Distinguished Performance. The state describes the levels as “needs significant improvement,” “needs improvement,” “good,” “very good,” and “exemplary performance,” respectively. Scores of meeting the standards and above are considered “proficient” under NCLB.

Performance Results

Student Performance

Delaware provides data on student performance for all students and by a variety of student characteristics, including disability, economic disadvantage, English fluency, and racial/ethnic group.⁹ Table H2 displays 5th- and 8th-grade 2003 DSTP English/language arts test results.

Between 70 and 78 percent of all 5th- and 8th-graders met the standard in reading. In writing, only 60 percent of 5th graders met the standard compared with 78 percent of 8th-graders. The percentages achieving higher proficiency levels (exceeds the standard, distinguished performance) tail off rather quickly. A little under one-quarter (23 percent) of 5th graders exceeded the standard in reading, and only 9 percent scored at the distinguished achievement level. A much smaller percentage (9 percent) of 8th-graders exceeded the standard in reading and very few (3 percent) achieved the distinguished performance category. In writing, the trend was reversed, with few 5th-graders exceeding standards (4 percent) compared with 15 percent of 8th-

⁹Approximately 60 percent of students in Delaware are white; 31 percent are African American; 7 percent are Hispanic; and 2 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander. About 35 percent of students are eligible for the free or reduced-price lunch program; 3 percent are in limited-English-proficiency programs; and 14 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

graders. No 5th-graders scored at the distinguished achievement level, and only 2 percent of 8th-graders did so.

Table H2: 5th- and 8th-Grade 2003 DSTP English/Language Arts Performance

	Reading			Writing		
	Meets the Standard or Above	Exceeds the Standard or Above	Distinguished Performance	Meets the Standard or Above	Exceeds the Standard or Above	Distinguished Performance
	Percentage					
5th Grade						
All students	78	23	9	60	4	0
General education students	82	25	9	67	5	0
Special education students	35	4	2	16	0	0
Economically disadvantaged students	65	10	3	46	1	0
Non-economically disadvantaged students	87	32	12	70	6	0
African American students	64	11	3	49	2	0
Asian students	91	43	24	79	12	2
Hispanic students	69	9	3	49	2	0
White students	87	31	12	67	5	0
8th Grade						
All students	70	9	3	78	15	2
General education students	76	10	3	85	17	2
Special education students	26	1	1	37	2	0
Economically disadvantaged students	54	2	1	65	7	0
Non-economically disadvantaged students	79	12	4	85	19	2
African American students	55	3	1	68	8	0
Asian students	86	27	13	91	42	9
Hispanic students	55	3	1	67	8	1
White students	79	12	4	84	18	2

Source: <http://dstp.doe.state.de.us/DSTPmart/default.asp>.

At the 5th grade, 35 percent of special education students met the standards in reading and 16 percent did so in writing. The percentage of these students reaching proficiency was higher in 8th-grade writing (37 percent), but lower in reading (26 percent).

Economically disadvantaged students scored well below their counterparts in both reading and writing, and the proportion meeting standards were 20–25 percentage points lower in both grades. For example, only 54 percent of economically disadvantaged 8th-grade students met the standard in reading compared with 79 percent of their advantaged counterparts. With the exception of 5th-grade reading, the performance gap was smaller at the “exceeds standards” achievement level, 5–12 percentage points.

Asian students scored the highest of all racial/ethnic groups, outperforming white students by between 4 and 12 percentage points in meeting the standards in both reading and writing in the 5th grade and between 2 and 12 percentage points at higher achievement levels. At the 8th-grade level, the proportion of Asian students who exceeded the standard was 15 percentage points higher in reading and 24 percentage points higher in writing than that of white students. For example, 42 percent of Asian students exceeded the standard in writing compared with 18 percent of white students and 8 percent of African American and Hispanic students. In general, the proportions of African American and Hispanic students who met standards in reading and writing were between 16 and 24 percentage points lower than those of white students. The gap was smaller at the higher proficiency levels, partly because much smaller percentages of students scored at those levels. For example, only 5 percent of white students exceeded the standard in writing in the 5th grade, as did 2 percent of African American and Hispanic students.

Table H3 shows the results for the 10th-grade English-language assessment. Overall, 67–73 percent of students met the standard in reading and writing across the disciplines; only 5 percent exceeded the standard in reading, and 22 percent did so in writing. Few students (1 percent in reading and 4 percent in writing) scored at the “distinguished” achievement level.

We see similar trends to those found on the 5th- and 8th-grade assessments: Economically disadvantaged students scored well below their peers who were not from economically disadvantaged households; small percentages of special education met the standard; Asian students outperformed all other racial/ethnic categories; and there were large differences (30–32 percentage points in reading and 19–20 percentage points in writing) between the proportions of African American and Hispanic and white students who met standards.

Table H3. 10th-Grade 2003 DSTP English-Language Performance

	Reading Across the Disciplines			Writing Across the Disciplines		
	Meets the Standard or Above	Exceeds the Standard or Above	Dis-tinguished Perform-ance	Meets the Standard or Above	Exceeds the Standard or Above	Dis-tinguished Perform-ance
	Percentage					
10th Grade						
All students	67	5	1	73	22	4
General education students	73	5	1	79	24	4
Special education students	13	0	0	24	1	0
Economically disadvantaged students	43	1	0	57	10	1
Non–economically disadvantaged students	75	6	1	78	26	4
African American students	46	1	0	60	13	1
Asian students	82	13	4	84	45	7
Hispanic students	44	2	0	59	15	1
White students	76	6	1	79	25	5

Source: <http://dstp.doe.state.de.us/DSTPmart/default.asp>

School Performance

School-level performance data are available by urbanicity for the 2002 DSTP administration. Delaware has 168 schools, 57 percent of which are suburban. The remaining 43 percent are fairly evenly split among rural and urban schools. While urban schools were most likely to be high-poverty schools (40 percent), 24 percent of rural schools were high-poverty, compared with 9 percent of suburban schools. Due to the small sample size of middle and high schools in rural and urban areas, Table H4 provides information about school performance for rural, suburban, and urban schools only for grade 5. Rural and suburban schools outperform urban schools by 8–10 percentage points at the “meets standards” level, with rural schools outperforming suburban schools by small amounts.

Table H4. Average School Performance on 5th-, 8th-, and 10th-Grade 2002 English/Language Arts DSTP, by Urbanicity

	Reading			Writing		
	Meets the Standard or Above	Exceeds the Standard or Above	Distinguished Performance	Meets the Standard or Above	Exceeds the Standard or Above	Distinguished Performance
Average Percentage						
5th Grade						
Rural schools	83	26	11	55	10	1
Suburban schools	82	24	11	52	9	1
Urban schools	73	18	8	45	6	0

APPENDIX I. DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

State Assessment System

The District of Columbia Public School system (DCPS) administers the Stanford Achievement Test, 9th edition (SAT9) in reading and mathematics twice each year (fall and spring administrations) to students in grades 1–11. The fall test is used only as a tool to measure where students are as they begin a new school year. The spring test measures how much they have learned during the year. DCPS is currently having criterion-referenced tests developed in order to meet requirements under NCLB (<http://www.ed.gov/about/contacts/state/dc.html>).

DCPS has developed content and performance standards in English/language arts, math, music, science, social studies, and visual arts for grades K–8 and for specific courses in those subjects (e.g., English I) for grades 9–12. These standards are linked to essential skills and technology tools that students should know and understand. In the written standards, DCPS indicates which standards are assessed through the SAT9.

The four major content standards for the secondary English language arts are:

1. Students comprehend and compose a wide range of written, oral, and visual texts in the process of making meaning.
2. Students respond in many ways to a rich variety of literary texts and relate them to their own lives and the lives of others.
3. Students use language and symbol systems (e.g., time lines, maps, graphs, and charts) to define indicated problems; retrieve, interpret, and organize information; and communicate that information to defined audiences.
4. Students use language in a variety of social contexts, participate in a number of language communities, and understand the social and cultural influences on text.

Table I1 provides an example from the grade 8 English language arts standards for content standard 2 that links to performance standards, essential skills, and technology.

Table I1. Performance Standards, Essential Skills, and Technology Integration for English Language Arts Content Standard Two, Grade 8

Content Standard 2: Students respond in many ways to a rich variety of literary texts and relate them to their own lives and the lives of others.		
Performance Standards	Essential Skills	Technology Integration
<p>The student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · responds to nonfiction, fiction, poetry, and drama · detects recurring themes across works · identifies the characteristics of literary forms and genres · evaluates literary merit · interprets the effect of point of view · analyzes the reasons for a character's actions · makes inferences and draws conclusions · distinguishes between stereotypical characters as opposed to fully developed characters · analyzes the effect of literary devices such as figurative language · relates texts to their own life and the lives of others · explores texts from different time periods · applies ideas from texts to illuminate problems in student's personal life · monitors his/her own responses to literary texts · formulates different levels of questions · uses journal writing as a response technique 	<p>The student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · recognizes devices such as metaphor, simile, personification, irony · applies thinking strategies in reading and responses to reading · recognizes points of view, major themes, and various cultures · identifies characteristics of various literary genres (folk literature, mythology) · identifies social context · makes and defends conclusions about text · explains author's purpose · draws comparisons between texts and own life · interprets the motive or actions of characters · makes generalizations or conclusions about events, circumstances, or characters 	<p>The student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · uses the Electronic Library CD-ROM (literature) · uses the Internet (links to specific literary selections) · uses Electronic Library (software for understanding literature) · uses the Internet to access information to enhance understanding of literature · uses Electronic Library CD-ROM (literature).

Source: <http://www.k12.dc.us/dcps/curriculum/content/English/s-rela-7.pdf>

Test Format and Content

For the purposes of this document, we focus on the reading/language arts section of the SAT9 taken by 4th-, 8th-, and 10th-graders. The SAT9 is a multiple-choice nationally normed test. Tested areas that relate to adolescent literacy in the SAT9 are reading, language, spelling, and vocabulary.

Achievement-Level Definitions

DCPS has defined four achievement levels—advanced, proficient, basic, and below basic. Students must score at or above the 40th percentile on the SAT9 in order to reach the proficient level. Scores of proficient or above are considered passing for accountability purposes.

Student Performance

DCPS provides data on student performance for all students and for students disaggregated by race/ethnicity, by English-proficiency status, disability status,¹⁰ and socio-economic status.¹¹ We present reading SAT9 data for grades 4, 8, and 10 in Table I2.

Only 29 percent of 4th-graders, 23 percent of 8th-graders, and 13 percent of 10th-graders, reached the proficient level. Very few student scores fell into the advanced category (2–8 percent). Sixty-nine percent reached the basic level or above in 4th and 8th grades, but only 45 percent reached the basic level in 10th grade.

Very small percentages of students with limited-English proficiency reached the proficient level in grades 4 and 8 (12 percent and 2 percent, respectively), and none did in the 10th grade. While 65 percent of students with limited-English proficiency scored at the basic level or above in 4th grade, this percentage was much lower in 8th grade (46 percent) and 11th grade (11 percent).

Small percentages of special education students with learning disabilities reached the proficient level in any grade (1–3 percent), and only between 9 and 25 percent of these students reached the basic level.

There were very large achievement gaps between white students and nonwhite students. White students outscored African American students by 66–70 percentage points and Hispanic students by 65–72 percentage points at the proficient level and above. These achievement gaps were larger in the 10th grade than in the 4th grade. There were persistent achievement gaps at the basic level and above as well. For example, at the basic level and above, white students outscored African American students by 30 percentage points in the 4th grade, 29 percentage points in the 8th grade, and 49 percentage points at the 10th grade.

¹⁰DCPS had disaggregated data for its special education population by disability. For the purposes of this report, we provide data about special education students with learning disabilities.

¹¹Approximately 85 percent of students in the District of Columbia are African American; 9 percent are Hispanic; 5 percent are white; and 2 percent are Asian. Sixty-one percent of students are eligible for the free or reduced-price lunch program, 11 percent are in limited-English-proficiency programs, and 17 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

Table 12. Performance of 4th-, 7th-, and 10th-Graders on 2003 Reading SAT9, by Student Characteristics

	Basic and Above	Proficient and Above	Advanced
	Percentage		
4 th Grade			
All students	69	29	8
Special education students with learning disability	23	3	0
Students who are not English proficient	37	6	3
Students with limited-English proficiency	65	12	1
Students with full English proficiency	96	59	16
Economically disadvantaged students	67	26	6
Non–economically disadvantaged students	80	44	19
African American students	68	26	6
Asian students	81	52	10
Hispanic students	68	23	5
White students	98	91	61
8 th Grade			
All students	69	23	3
Special education students with learning disability	25	2	0
Students who are not English proficient	15	3	0
Students with limited-English proficiency	46	2	0
Students with full English proficiency	93	43	4
Economically disadvantaged students	64	17	2
Non–economically disadvantaged students	77	34	6
African American students	68	20	1
Asian students	70	33	3
Hispanic students	63	21	1
White students	97	86	42
10 th Grade			
All students	45	13	2
Special education students with learning disability	6	1	0
Students who are not English proficient	9	0	0
Students with limited-English proficiency	11	0	0
Students with full English proficiency	74	22	2
Economically disadvantaged students	39	8	2
Non–economically disadvantaged students	55	20	4
African American students	44	10	1
Asian students	43	15	1
Hispanic students	34	8	0
White students	93	80	32

Source: <http://silicon.k12.dc.us/apds/APDSSummaryReports.asp>

There are also achievement gaps between economically disadvantaged and non–economically disadvantaged students, although these are not as large as those found by race/ethnicity—12–18 percent at the proficient level and 11–16 percent at the basic level across all three grades.

School Performance

Since all schools in the District of Columbia are urban schools, we do not report school-level urbanicity data.

APPENDIX J. FLORIDA

State Assessment System

The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) is Florida's primary test for student assessment and accountability. Florida introduced the FCAT in 1998 and expanded it to include additional grades in 2002 and additional subjects in 2003. Students take the FCAT in:

- Grades 3–10 in reading and mathematics
- Grades 4, 8, and 10 in writing
- Grades 5, 8, and 10 in science.

The FCAT is used to hold schools accountable. In addition, beginning with the class of 2003, high school students are required to earn a passing score on the reading and writing sections of the 10th-grade FCAT to graduate; students who do not pass in grade 10 are given multiple opportunities to retake the test before their 12th-grade graduation. Students in all grade levels may earn a certificate of achievement for scoring at the highest achievement level in reading and mathematics. Students in 4th and 8th grades may also earn certificates of achievement for outstanding performance on the writing exam (see <http://www.fldoe.org/NCLB/> for additional information regarding state accountability).

The FCATs are intended to measure student performance toward Florida's Sunshine State Standards (SSS), which identify what students should know and be able to do in language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, the arts, health and physical education, and foreign language. The SSS include benchmarks for developmental grade clusters (PK–2, 3–5, 6–8, 9–12), which have been further elaborated with student expectations at all grade levels from K–8. The language arts SSS are categorized under five content strands: reading; writing; listening, viewing, and speaking; language; and literature. Each content strand has two or three content standards that are elaborated by benchmarks and grade-level expectations. Table J1 provides an example of benchmarks for grades 6–8 for the content standards under the reading strand.

Florida has published a number of tools to aid schools and districts in implementing the SSS at the classroom level. The Florida Curriculum Frameworks provide sample performance descriptions and overviews of best practices in a variety of areas. The Curriculum Planning Tools is software to help teachers create learning activities related to the standards. The state also requires publishers to correlate instructional materials to the state standards, and it offers training programs for teachers and administrators to increase awareness of the standards initiative.

**Table J1. Florida Sunshine State Standards and Benchmarks for Reading Content
Strand, Grades 6–8**

Strand A: Reading	
Standard 1: The student uses the reading process effectively.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The student uses background knowledge of the subject and text structure knowledge to make complex predictions of content, purpose, and organization of the reading selection. 2. The student uses a variety of strategies to analyze words and text, draw conclusions, use context and word-structure clues, and recognize organizational patterns. 3. The student demonstrates consistent and effective use of interpersonal and academic vocabularies in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. 4. The student uses strategies to clarify meaning, such as rereading, note taking, summarizing, outlining, and writing a grade-level-appropriate report.
Standard 2: The student constructs meaning from a wide range of texts.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The student determines the main idea of the essential message in a text and identifies relevant details and facts and patterns of organizations. 2. The student identifies the author's purpose and/or point of view in a variety of texts and uses the information to construct meaning. 3. The student recognizes logical, ethical, and emotional appeals in texts. 4. The student uses a variety of reading materials to develop personal preferences in reading. 5. The student locates, organizes, and interprets written information for a variety of purposes, including classroom research, collaborative decisionmaking, and performing a school or real-world task. 6. The student uses a variety of reference materials, including indexes, magazines, newspapers, and journals, and tools, including card catalogs and computer catalogs, to gather information for research topics. 7. The student synthesizes and separates collected information into useful components, using a variety of techniques such as sources cards, note cards, spreadsheets, and outlines. 8. The student checks the validity and accuracy of information obtained from research in such ways as differentiating fact and opinion, identifying strong vs. weak arguments, and recognizing that personal values influence the conclusions an author draws.

Source: <http://www.firn.edu/doe/curric/prek12/pdf/langgle6.pdf>

Test Format and Content

To examine trends in adolescent literacy, the rest of the discussion will focus on the FCAT reading and writing exams for grades 4, 8, and 10.

The FCAT reading assessment combines a criterion-referenced section aligned with the state content standards, called the Sunshine State Standards Test, and a norm-referenced section based on a test by one of the major national testing companies—currently, the Stanford Achievement Test, 9th edition, from Harcourt. Students receive separate scores for the two sections. The reading assessment includes a variety of question types.¹² Students in grades 4, 8,

¹²The test for grades 3, 5, 6, 7, and 9 includes only multiple-choice questions.

and 10 answer 45–50 multiple-choice and 5–8 short-response items on the Sunshine State Standards Test, and 50–55 multiple-choice questions on the norm-referenced test. Short-response and extended-response items are scored using a two- or four-point reading rubric. Reading passages include both literary excerpts and informational texts, such as magazine or newspaper articles, editorials, and biographies. The 4th-grade test is split evenly, with 50 percent literary and 50 percent informational passages, while the 8th- and 10th-grade tests have 60 and 70 percent informational texts, respectively. Fourth-grade passages average 400 words; 8th-grade passages, 700 words; and 10th-grade passages, 900 words. The Sunshine State Standards section tests students on comprehension skills and processes related to standards 1 and 2 from the reading strand (using the reading process effectively and constructing meaning from a variety of texts) and standards 1 and 2 from the literature strand (understanding the common features of a variety of literary forms and responding critically to fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and drama).

Content on the norm-referenced test is intended to measure initial understanding, interpretation, critical analysis, and strategies. Types of materials used in this section include recreational, textual (e.g., classroom textbooks), and functional texts. On the 4th-grade test, 50 percent of the items are designed to measure students' knowledge and comprehension, while the other 50 percent measure skill at analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Sixty percent of the items on the 8th-grade test and 70 percent of the items on the 10th-grade test measure analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

The FCAT writing assessment asks students to write an essay in response to a specific prompt; 50 percent of students in the 4th grade are assigned either an expository or a narrative prompt; in the 8th and 10th grades, students are assigned either an expository or a persuasive essay. Student responses are scored using a six-point, grade-specific rubric that evaluates the students' use of focus, organization, support, and conventions, and also judges the essay holistically (additional information regarding the assessments can be found through <http://www.firn.edu/doe/sas/fcat/fcatpub1.htm>).

Achievement-Level Definitions

Student scores on the FCAT are reported using five achievement levels:

- Level 5: Performance at this level indicates that the student has success with the most challenging content of the Sunshine State Standards. A Level 5 student answers most of the test questions correctly, including the most challenging questions.
- Level 4: Performance at this level indicates that the student has partial success with the challenging content of the Sunshine State Standards. A Level 4 student answers most of the

questions correctly but may have only some success with questions that reflect the most challenging content.

- Level 3: Performance at this level indicates that the student has partial success with the challenging content of the Sunshine State Standards, but performance is inconsistent. A Level 3 student answers many of the questions correctly but is generally less successful with questions that are most challenging.
- Level 2: Performance at this level indicates that the student has limited success with the challenging content of the Sunshine State Standards.
- Level 1: Performance at this level indicates that the student has little success with the challenging content of the Sunshine State Standards
(<http://www.firn.edu/doe/sas/fcat/pdf/fcatlev1.pdf>).

Under NCLB, students scoring level 3 and above are considered to be “proficient.”

Performance Results

Student Performance

Florida provides data on student performance for all students and for students disaggregated by race/ethnicity, English-proficiency status, disability status, and poverty status.¹³ Table J2 shows results from the 2003 FCAT English reading exam for students in grades 4, 8, and 10 as the percentages of students scoring at Levels 2, 3, 4, and 5. Table J3 presents the results on the 2003 FCAT writing expository and narrative or persuasive assessments.¹⁴

We discuss the reading results first. Overall, about 68–75 percent of students scored at Level 2 or higher on the reading assessment. There was a substantial drop-off in the percentages of students scoring at Level 3 (the proficient level) in the higher grades. For example, in 8th grade, the proportion of students scoring at Level 3 was only 49 percent compared with 75 percent who scored at Level 2; the decrease was even larger in the 10th grade, in which the difference between students scoring at Level 2 was 32 percentage points higher than at Level 3. The percentages of

¹³Approximately 53 percent of students in Florida are white; 25 percent are African American; and 20 percent are Hispanic. No other racial/ethnic group comprises 2 percent of the student population. Forty-five percent of students are eligible for the free or reduced-price lunch program, 8 percent are in limited-English-proficiency programs, and 15 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

¹⁴On the state writing assessment, half of the students in the state are assigned a narrative or persuasive prompt and half are assigned an expository prompt.

students scoring at or above Level 4 ranged from 16 to 29 percent across the three grades. Few students scored at Level 5 (3–8 percent).

Table J2: Performance of 4th-, 8th-, and 10th-Graders on 2003 Reading FCAT, by Student Characteristics

	Level 2 or Above	Level 3 or Above	Level 4 or Above	Level 5
Percentage				
4th Grade				
All students	75	60	29	6
General education students	82	67	34	7
Special education students (ESE)	42	28	9	1
Students with limited-English proficiency	38	22	6	1
Economically disadvantaged students	66	48	19	3
Non–economically disadvantaged students	88	77	45	11
African American students	60	41	14	2
Hispanic students	67	51	22	4
White students	85	73	40	9
8th Grade				
All students	75	49	19	3
General education students	80	54	21	3
Special education students (ESE)	36	15	3	0
Students with limited-English proficiency	30	9	1	0
Economically disadvantaged students	62	33	9	1
Non–economically disadvantaged students	86	63	27	4
African American students	57	27	7	1
Hispanic students	65	38	12	1
White students	85	62	26	4
10th Grade				
All students	68	36	16	8
General education students	73	40	18	9
Special education students (ESE)	33	10	3	1
Students with limited-English proficiency	18	4	1	0
Economically disadvantaged students	51	20	7	3
Non–economically disadvantaged students	77	44	21	11
African American students	45	15	5	2
Hispanic students	56	24	9	4
White students	80	47	22	11

Source: <http://www.fcatsresults.com/demog/>

Few students with limited-English proficiency reached the proficient Level 3 in reading, and the proportion was lower in 8th and 10th grades than in 4th grade (9 percent and 4 percent, compared with 22 percent). The majority of students with limited-English proficiency scored at the very bottom proficiency level—Level 1: 62 percent of students in 4th grade, 70 percent of students in 8th grade, and 82 percent of students in 10th grade did so. We find similar trends for special education students as well: 28 percent, 15 percent, and 10 percent scored at Level 3 or above in grades 4, 8, and 10, respectively; 33–42 percent scored at Level 2 or above.

There was a substantial gap between proficiency levels of African American and Hispanic students and those of white students. For example, at the 4th-grade level, 60 percent of African American students and 67 percent of Hispanic students scored at Level 2 compared with 85 percent of white students. The differences were even more pronounced at Level 3: 32 percentage points between African American and white students and 22 percentage points between Hispanic and white students. We find gaps of a similar size in the 8th and 10th grades. For example, 47 percent of white students scored at or above Level 3 in the 10th grade compared with 15 percent of African American and 24 percent of Hispanic students, a difference of 32 and 23 percentage points, respectively. In general, Hispanic students outperformed African American students.

The difference in proficiency levels of economically disadvantaged students and non–economically disadvantaged students ranged from 23 to 30 percentage points at Levels 2 and 3 across the three grades.

Florida also provides data for the mean percentage correct on the different content areas tested in the FCAT SSS reading test for all students (Table J3). Students in the three grades do equally well on words/phrases and comparisons, whereas the higher grades do better on recognizing the main idea/purpose. Eighth-graders do not fare well on the reference and research section, scoring only 45 percent correct compared with 60 percent for the 4th-graders and 56 percent for the 10th-graders.

Table J3. Performance of 4th-, 8th-, and 10th-Graders on FCAT Sunshine State Standards Reading Test, by Content

	4 th Grade	8 th Grade	10 th Grade
	Percentage Correct		
Words and Phrases	71	67	67
Main Idea and Purpose	57	68	64
Comparisons	56	60	54
Reference and Research	60	45	56

Source: <http://www.fcateresults.com/demog/>

Table J4 shows the performance on the writing assessment for the three grades. Almost all students in the three grades scored a 3 or higher in both the expository and the narrative and persuasive portions of the assessment. The percentage of 4th-graders who scored a 4 or better on the expository portion was considerably lower than the percentage of 8th- or 10th-graders (40 percent compared with 62 percent) and this was true for the higher proficiency levels as well. The 4th-graders did equally well on the narrative portion of the assessment as the 8th- and 10th-graders did on the persuasive. For example, between 54 and 60 percent received a 4 or higher on this section regardless of grade.

There are also much smaller differences on the writing FCAT than the reading FCAT in the relative performance of African Americans and Hispanics compared with whites. For example, on narrative writing, 94 percent of white 4th-graders scored a 3 or higher compared with 89 percent of African American and Hispanic students. The gap widens at higher proficiency levels but it is nowhere as large as on the reading assessment.

Economically disadvantaged students tended to score lower than their counterparts—the difference in proficiency rates at almost every level and across the three grades ranged from 10 to 20 percentage points, except for Level 6, where the percentage of any students scoring at this level was quite small.

School Performance

School-level data on relative performance by urbanicity are available for the 2002 FCAT administration for grades 4, 8, and 10 (Tables J5 and J6). Sixty-three percent of schools in Florida are suburban, 27 percent are urban, and 10 percent are rural. Approximately 59 percent of rural schools were high-poverty schools, as were 45 percent of suburban schools and 55 percent of urban schools.

There was relatively little difference in the percentages of students scoring at the different proficiency levels in the three types of schools in reading—generally on the order of 1–5 percentage points. In writing, rural schools seem to be somewhat behind urban and suburban schools at higher proficiency levels. For example, while 55–57 percent of 8th-graders in urban and suburban schools scored at or above level 4, the corresponding percentage in rural schools was 48 percent.

Table J4. Performance of 4th-, 8th-, and 10th-Graders on 2003 Writing FCAT, by Student Characteristics

	Expository				Narrative			
	3 or Above	4 or Above	5 or Above	6	3 or Above	4 or Above	5 or Above	6
	Percentage							
4 th Grade								
All students	88	40	5	0	91	55	10	1
General education students (not ESE)	93	44	5	0	96	62	12	2
Special education students (ESE)	63	17	1	0	70	27	3	0
Students with limited-English proficiency	71	23	1	0	78	35	3	0
Economically disadvantaged students	85	33	3	0	89	48	7	1
Non–economically disadvantaged students	94	51	9	1	96	66	16	2
African American students	86	33	3	0	89	46	6	1
Hispanic students	86	39	4	0	89	53	8	1
White students	90	44	6	0	94	61	14	2
	Expository				Persuasive			
8 th Grade								
All students	91	62	18	2	89	54	14	1
General education students (not ESE)	96	69	22	3	94	59	16	1
Special education students (ESE)	69	29	4	0	64	20	2	0
Students with limited-English proficiency	65	26	3	0	63	20	2	0
Economically disadvantaged students	86	52	12	1	84	43	8	0
Non–economically disadvantaged students	95	72	25	4	95	64	20	2
African American students	87	52	11	1	84	42	7	0
Hispanic students	87	56	13	1	87	49	11	1
White students	95	70	24	3	92	60	18	2

Table J4. (cont.)

	3 or Above	4 or Above	5 or Above	6	3 or Above	4 or Above	5 or Above	6
	Expository				Persuasive			
	Percentage							
10 th Grade								
All students	92	62	11	1	86	60	10	1
General education students (not ESE)	93	66	12	1	90	65	11	1
Special education students (ESE)	69	28	1	0	59	27	1	0
Students with limited-English proficiency	59	21	1	0	51	21	1	0
Economically disadvantaged students	85	49	5	0	78	47	5	0
Non–economically disadvantaged students	95	70	15	2	90	66	11	1
African American students	85	48	5	0	79	49	5	0
Hispanic students	88	57	9	1	81	53	5	0
White students	95	69	15	2	90	66	12	1

Source: <http://www.fcatresults.com/demog/>

Table J5. Average School Performance on 4th-, 8th-, and 10th-Grade 2002 Reading FCAT, by Urbanicity

	Level 2 or Above	Level 3 or Above	Level 4 or Above	Level 5
	Average Percentage			
4th Grade				
Rural schools	68	52	23	5
Suburban schools	69	54	27	6
Urban schools	67	51	25	6
8th Grade				
Rural schools	69	42	14	2
Suburban schools	67	41	15	3
Urban schools	65	40	15	3
10th Grade				
Rural schools	64	30	12	6
Suburban schools	63	31	13	6
Urban schools	59	29	12	6

Table J6. Average School Performance on 4th-, 8th-, and 10th-Grade 2002 Writing FCAT, by Urbanicity

	3 or Above	4 or Above	5 or Above	6
	Average Percentage			
4th Grade				
Rural schools	77	34	7	0
Suburban schools	81	39	10	1
Urban schools	79	37	9	1
8th Grade				
Rural schools	81	48	12	1
Suburban schools	86	55	15	2
Urban schools	86	57	16	2
10th Grade				
Rural schools	86	56	9	1
Suburban schools	87	60	12	1
Urban schools	85	58	11	1

APPENDIX K. GEORGIA

State Assessment System

Georgia's state assessment system includes the following components:

- The Criterion Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT), which are criterion-referenced exams that are intended to align with state content standards. Students in grades 1–8 take the CRCT in reading, English language arts, and mathematics, while students in grades 3–8 also take the CRCT in science and social studies. New promotion policies are being phased in that will require students to pass the CRCT before they can be promoted from third to fourth grade and from fifth to sixth grade.
- End-of-Course Tests (EOCT), which high school students take in a variety of subject areas, including Algebra, Geometry, United States History, Economics/Business/Free Enterprise, Biology, Physical Science, Ninth Grade Literature and Composition, and American Literature and Composition. All students enrolled in an EOCT course take the tests at the completion of the course, regardless of their grade level.
- The Georgia High School Graduation Tests (GHS GT), which are curriculum-based assessments of knowledge and skills that constitute a high school education. Students in grades 11 take the GHS GT in English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies, and they are required to pass all four sections, in addition to the writing exam described below, to graduate. They have four opportunities to retake the exam if they do not pass.
- A number of writing assessments, including the Grade Three Writing Assessment; the Grade Five Writing Assessment; the Middle Grades Writing Assessment (MGWA), given in grade 8; and the Georgia High School Writing Test (GHSWT), given in grade 11 (for additional information regarding state accountability, see <http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/support/plan/nclb.asp>).

Georgia's state standards are contained in the Quality Core Curriculum (QCC), which outlines skills and knowledge that students should possess in English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, foreign languages, fine arts, health, physical education, technology/career education, and agriculture. The QCC gives grade-by-grade standards for grades K–8 and grade cluster standards for 9–12. The English language arts standards are grouped under seven content strands: grammar and usage, listening, literature, reading, reference and study skills, speaking, and writing. Table K1 shows the standards under the reading strand for the 8th grade, as an example.

Table K1. Georgia 8th-Grade English Language Arts QCC Standards for the Reading Strand

Strand	Standards
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reads a variety of materials for information • Reads a variety of materials for pleasure • Expands reading vocabulary • Applies word-recognition strategies (e.g., roots, affixes, and compound words) to acquire new vocabulary • Uses context clues to determine meanings of unknown words • Interprets literal and nonliteral meanings of words and phrases • Recognizes semantic and syntactic relationships
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjusts reading speed according to purpose and rereads for comprehension • Interprets written instructions • Analyzes explicit and implicit main ideas, details, sequence of events, and cause-effect relationships • Makes comparisons, predictions, and generalizations and draws conclusions • Analyzes relevance of data • Analyzes fact and opinion, persuasion technique, bias, and stereotyping • Applies reading strategies (e.g., literal comprehension, context clues, and main ideas) to specific content material and subject matter • Analyzes differences between fiction and nonfiction.

Georgia released a draft version of a new revision of the English language arts QCC in January 2004. It is expected that the new QCCs will have fewer standards with more depth. The draft is currently under review, and the new QCCs are expected to be rolled out over a two-year period beginning in the fall of 2004. The draft standards include benchmarks as well as a number of aligned sample student tasks, a sample reading list, and more thorough paragraph-length descriptors of the overall QCC and each content strand.

Georgia has published sample lesson plans and student activities, and lists of Web resources to help teachers teach to the standards. In addition, the state's CRCT Item Banking System provides students and teachers access to sample test items online for self-assessment and/or the creation of customized classroom assessments.

Test Format and Content

To examine trends in adolescent literacy, the rest of the discussion will focus on the CRCT reading and English language arts exams for grades 4 and 8; the English language arts GHSGT for grade 11; and the writing assessment for grades 8 and 11.

The current CRCT reading and English language arts exams consist entirely of multiple-choice questions. Domains tested on the reading exam include reading for vocabulary improvement, reading for locating and recalling information, reading for meaning, and reading for critical

analysis. The English language arts exam covers sentence construction and revision, paragraph content and organization, grammar and mechanics, and research process.

The GHSGT English language arts exam consists entirely of multiple-choice questions that measure knowledge and recall, comprehension and interpretation, and problem solving and analysis. Almost half of the questions cover standards related to reading and literature, 37–39 percent cover critical thinking, and 14–16 percent cover writing, usage, and grammar.

The MGWA and GHSWT require students to respond to an assigned prompt. Eighth-grade students may be asked to write a narrative, persuasive, or expository essay, while all 11th-graders write a persuasive essay. Essays are judged using several four-point analytic scales that are weighted and summed to produce the final score. For the MGWA, students are judged on content/organization, style, sentence formation, usage, and mechanics. Content/organization counts three times as much as the other three domains and style counts twice as much. On the GHSWT, students are judged on content/organization, style, conventions of written language, and sentence formation. Content/organization counts twice as much as the other three domains (additional information regarding the assessments can be found through <http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/curriculum/testing/index.asp>).

Achievement-Level Definitions

Student scores on the CRCT are reported using three achievement levels: Exceeds the Standard, Meets the Standard, and Does Not Meet the Standard. Students scoring at the “meets the standard level” or above are considered “proficient” for accountability purposes. Achievement level descriptors are defined separately for each grade level and subject. Table K2 shows the descriptors for 8th-grade reading as an example.

Scores on the GHSGT and the GHSWT are reported as “passing” or “failing,” while scores on the MGWA are reported as Below Target, On Target, and Exceeds Target.

Table K2. CRCT Achievement-Level Descriptors, 8th-Grade Reading

Does Not Meet the Standard	The student's overall performance in reading a variety of eighth-grade-appropriate materials is below the standard set for students in this grade. Students performing at this level are inconsistent in the application of their reading skills. They typically have a limited understanding of text and tend to read at a literal level. They may find it difficult to locate and use information from the text to respond to questions. They demonstrate a limited ability to identify the text type and purpose. Students display a basic knowledge of literary elements and techniques. They demonstrate a basic ability to examine and interpret text. They are limited in their reading strategies and vocabulary skills.
Meets the Standard	The student's overall performance in reading a variety of eighth-grade-appropriate materials meets the standard set for students in the grade. Most of the students performing at this level apply reading skills appropriately. They typically understand what they read and go beyond the literal meaning of text. They use information from the text to correctly respond to questions. They locate and recall information from the text. They recognize many text types, identify the purpose of most text, and recognize some text organizational structures. Students can identify and use literary elements and techniques to aid comprehension. They examine and interpret text information. Students apply reading strategies and vocabulary skills while reading.
Exceeds the Standard	The student's overall performance in reading a variety of eighth-grade-appropriate materials exceeds the standards set for students in this grade. Most of the students performing at this level consistently apply their reading skills to a variety of texts, particularly to expository text. They have a clear understanding of what they read and go beyond the literal meaning of text. They understand text in which the meaning is implicit, synthesizing or making inferences from the text to accurately respond to questions. Students summarize, interpret, and analyze relevant information from a variety of texts. They recognize different text types, such as poetry and drama, and understand that text can be organized in a variety of ways and for different purposes. Students recognize and analyze literary elements, such as theme and point of view, and literary techniques, such as alliteration and metaphors, to enhance comprehension. They read critically by examining and interpreting text information in order to draw conclusions, make predictions and generalizations about text, analyze characters, and distinguish between facts and opinions. Students apply a variety of effective reading strategies and vocabulary skills while reading.

Source: http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/_documents/curriculum/testing/crct_score_interpretation.pdf

Performance Results

Student Performance

Table K3 shows results from the 2003 CRCT English language arts and reading exams for students in grades 4 and 8, disaggregated by selected characteristics: race/ethnicity, disability status, English-proficiency status, and economically disadvantaged status.¹⁵

¹⁵Approximately 54 percent of students in Georgia are white; 38 percent are African American; 6 percent are Hispanic; and 2 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander. About 44 percent of students are eligible for the free or

Overall, 75–81 percent of all 4th- and 8th-grade students met the standard in reading and English language arts. However, while 44–46 percent of students exceeded the standard in reading, only 18 percent did so in English language arts at the 4th-grade level and 28 percent at the 8th-grade level.

Less than half of students with limited-English proficiency met or exceeded standards in reading or language arts in the 4th or 8th grade. In general, most students with disabilities did not meet or exceed standards in these subjects either. At the 8th grade, 43 percent of students with disabilities met or exceeded the standards in reading, and 31 percent did so in language arts.

There were substantial differences between the proficiency levels of African American and Hispanic students and those of white students—15–23 percentage points in the 4th grade at the “meets standard” level to 26–30 percentage points at the “exceeds standard” level. The differences tended to be equally large or larger at the 8th-grade level. For example, while 88 percent of white students met the standard in reading, only 73 percent of African American students and 65 percent of Hispanic students did so. With one exception, African American students did better than Hispanic students at both proficiency levels, and in both grades and both subjects.

Students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds scored lower than their advantaged counterparts by between 18–19 percentage points in reading and English language arts. However, in reading, the differences were even larger at the “exceeds standard” level—28–29 percentage points.

Turning now to the 8th-grade writing assessment performance (Table K4), we see that 90 percent of all students, 94–95 percent of white and Asian students, 85 percent of African American students, and 79 percent of Hispanic students passed the test. However, the proportion who exceeded the target were quite low—18 percent overall, 25–30 percent of white and Asian students, and only 8–9 of African American and Hispanic students. Students with limited-English proficiency had pass rates of 64 percent and very few (4 percent) exceeded the target.

Almost all 11th-graders passed the English language arts test, and 63 percent scored at the “pass plus” level (Table K5). Unlike what we had seen in reading, white students outperformed Asian students at the higher proficiency level. African American students had pass rates very close to that of all students but were still behind all students at the “pass plus” level. For example, 47

reduced-price lunch program; 4 percent are in limited-English-proficiency programs; and 12 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

percent of African American students scored at the “pass plus” level compared with 73 percent of whites. Hispanic students scored lower than African American students.

Table K3. Performance of 4th- and 8th-Graders on 2003 Reading and English Language Arts CRCT, by Student Characteristics

	Reading		English Language Arts	
	Meets the Standard and Above	Exceeds the Standard	Meets the Standard and Above	Exceeds the Standard
Percentage				
4 th Grade				
All students	80	44	78	18
Students with disabilities	51	19	47	6
Students without disabilities	84	48	83	20
Students with limited-English proficiency	47	13	46	4
Economically disadvantaged students	71	30	69	10
Non–economically disadvantaged students	89	58	87	27
African American students	73	31	71	11
Asian students	87	56	87	32
Hispanic students	65	27	64	9
White students	88	57	86	25
8 th Grade				
All students	81	46	75	28
Students with disabilities	43	13	31	4
Students without disabilities	86	51	81	31
Students with limited-English proficiency	46	14	37	8
Economically disadvantaged students	71	30	64	15
Non-economically disadvantaged students	89	59	83	37
African American students	73	31	67	16
Asian students	88	60	86	47
Hispanic students	65	28	55	14
White students	88	59	83	37

Source: <http://reportcard.gaosa.org/k12/reports.asp?TestType=QCC&ID=ALL:ALL>

Students with disabilities and limited-English proficiency had much lower pass rates. Students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds had a high pass rate of 90 percent, but they fell

behind at the “pass plus” proficiency level: 44 percent scored at this level compared with 70 percent of students who did not come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Table K4. Performance of 8th-Graders on 2003 Middle Grades Writing Assessment, by Student Characteristics

	On Target or Above	Exceeds Target
	Percentage	
All students	90	18
Students with disabilities	61	3
Students without disabilities	94	20
Students with limited-English proficiency	64	4
Economically disadvantaged students	84	8
Non–economically disadvantaged students	95	25
African American students	85	8
Asian students	94	30
Hispanic students	79	9
White students	95	25

Source: <http://reportcard.gaosa.org/k12/reports.asp?TestType=QCC&ID=ALL:ALL>

Table K5: Performance of 11th-Graders on 2003 English Language Arts GHSGT, by Student Characteristics

	Passing	Passing Plus
	Percentage	
First-Time Test Takers		
All students	95	63
Students with disabilities	74	50
Students without disabilities	97	31
Students with limited-English proficiency	67	22
Economically disadvantaged students	90	44
Non–economically disadvantaged students	97	70
African American students	92	47
Asian students	93	62
Hispanic students	84	41
White students	97	73

Source: <http://reportcard.gaosa.org/k12/reports.asp?TestType=QCC&ID=ALL:ALL>

Pass rates on the Grade 11 writing assessment (Table K6) were also high—88 percent overall. Hispanic students had much lower pass rates of 72 percent, and fewer than half of the students with limited-English proficiency passed (44 percent).

Table K6. Performance of 11th-Graders on 2003 Georgia High School Writing Assessment, by Student Characteristics

	Percentage Passing
All students	88
Students with disabilities	56
Students without disabilities	91
Students with limited-English proficiency	44
Economically disadvantaged students	79
Non-economically disadvantaged students	93
African American students	82
Asian students	86
Hispanic students	72
White students	94

Source: <http://reportcard.gaosa.org/k12/reports.asp?TestType=QCC&ID=ALL:ALL>

School Performance

School-level data for the 2002 administration of the assessments for grades 4, 8, and 11 are available by urbanicity. Tables K7 through K9 provide information about school performance for rural, suburban, and urban schools. Almost half of schools in Georgia are located in suburban areas, 34 percent are rural, and 16 percent are urban. Over three-fourths (78 percent) of urban schools are high-poverty schools, compared with 64 percent of rural schools and 31 percent of suburban schools.

Urban schools scored lower than either rural or suburban schools at the 4th and 8th grades in reading, English language arts, and writing at both proficiency levels. For example, at the 4th grade, on average, 82 percent of students in suburban schools and 79 percent of students in rural schools met the standard in reading; the passing rate in urban schools was 73 percent. At the higher proficiency level, there was a difference between urban and suburban schools of 13 percentage points in the proportion of students exceeding the standard in reading. We see similar patterns in English language arts and in writing.

At the 11th-grade level, passing rates were uniformly high in English language arts—between 92 and 96 percent and somewhat lower in writing (82–87 percent). While suburban schools did

better than either rural or urban schools, the differences were small. At the 11th-grade level, there is little difference in the passing rates of urban and rural schools.

Table K7. Average School Performance on 4th- and 8th-Grade 2002 Reading and English Language Arts CRCT, by Urbanicity

	Reading		English Language Arts	
	Meets the Standard and Above	Exceeds the Standard	Meets the Standard and Above	Exceeds the Standard
	Average Percentage			
4th Grade				
Rural schools	79	35	75	13
Suburban schools	82	42	79	17
Urban schools	73	29	71	11
8th Grade				
Rural schools	76	36	69	20
Suburban schools	82	46	73	26
Urban schools	75	35	65	17

Table K8. Average School Performance on 2002 Middle Grades Writing Assessment, by Urbanicity

	On Target or Above	Exceeds Target
	Average Percentage	
Middle Grades		
Rural schools	83	8
Suburban schools	87	14
Urban schools	80	7

Table K9. Average School Performance on 11th-Grade English Language Arts GHSGT and High School Writing Assessment, by Urbanicity

	English Language Arts	Writing
	Average Passing Percentage	
11th Grade		
Rural schools	92	82
Suburban schools	96	87
Urban schools	92	83

APPENDIX L. HAWAII

State Assessment System

As part of its assessment system, Hawaii administers the Hawaii Content and Performance Standards, Second Edition (HCPS II) in grades 3, 5, 8, and 10 in reading, writing, and mathematics. The reading and mathematics assessments include two sets of test questions: the first set is based on an abbreviated version of the Stanford Achievement Test, 9th Edition (SAT9); the second set is a criterion-referenced section based on the state standards. The writing assessments are made up solely of criterion-referenced questions. Assessments are being developed in additional grades in order to meet the testing requirements under NCLB.

Performance on the HCPS II is used to hold schools accountable under the state system. In addition, students may be retained in grade based on their performance on the assessment (for additional information regarding state accountability, see <http://arch.k12.hi.us/school/NCLB/default.html>).

The assessments are intended to measure student progress on the state standards. Hawaii has established content and performance standards that describe what students should know and be able to do in 10 content areas: language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, career and life skills, educational technology, fine arts, health, physical education, and world languages. These content standards are further defined by grade-span benchmarks. The English language arts content standards are organized under three components: reading and literature, writing, and oral communications. As an example, Table L1 presents the 6–8 grade-span benchmarks for reading and literature.

Test Format and Content

For the purposes of examining what the HCPS II reveals about adolescent literacy, the rest of the discussion focuses on the reading and writing tests students take in grades 5, 8, and 10 (additional information on the HCPS II can be found at http://www.hawaiiassessmentmatters.org/HCPSII_parent.pdf).

HCPS II standards-based assessments contain three types of questions:

- Multiple-choice questions.
- Constructed-response questions, which require students to create a one- or two-paragraph response in writing or in the form of a narrative or a chart, table, diagram, illustration, or graph, as appropriate.
- Essay questions, which require students to respond by creating a written composition.

Table L1. Benchmarks for Language Arts Reading Literature, Grades 6–8

Content Standards	Benchmarks
Students will read a range of literary and informative texts for a variety of purposes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read a broad range of traditional contemporary and young-adult texts across genres. • Read to understand human experience and the range of choices and possibilities in life. • Read to research an inquiry question, theme, or hypothesis, using technological and traditional informational resources. • Read to solve problems and perform functional tasks (e.g., bus schedule, consumer information, instructions, directions).
Students will use strategies within the reading processes to construct meaning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use strategies for constructing meaning that include annotating, interpreting, connecting, and analyzing. • Revise interpretations in light of new information from reading, prior knowledge, and discussion with others. • Interpret text(s) from multiple perspectives (e.g., historical, cultural, gender, political). • Evaluate and synthesize information within a text and across texts.
Students will apply knowledge of the conventions of language and texts to construct meaning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply knowledge of genre conventions to analyze and interpret texts. • Apply knowledge of figurative language and symbols to analyze and interpret texts.
Students will respond to texts from a range of stances: initial understanding, personal, interpretive, and critical.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support own interpretation of imagery, plot, and character. • Support a conclusion or response based on facts, ideas, and/or arguments within the text and between texts. • Respond to text critically by analyzing the author's craft and message.
Students will demonstrate confidence as readers and find value and satisfaction in reading and sharing reading experiences with others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage intellectually with texts, think divergently, visualize characters or scenes, express opinions, and raise questions.
Students will interact thoughtfully and respectfully with texts that represent diversity in language, perspective, and/or culture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify stereotypes in texts. • Identify cultural values and multiple perspectives in texts.

Source:

[http://165.248.2.55/HCPs/L2/hcps6.nsf/d6824640c790e0d38a2569c40008cd78/259c19360bac98128a2569c80082de66/\\$FILE/Language%20Arts%20Content%20Std.pdf](http://165.248.2.55/HCPs/L2/hcps6.nsf/d6824640c790e0d38a2569c40008cd78/259c19360bac98128a2569c80082de66/$FILE/Language%20Arts%20Content%20Std.pdf)

The HCPS II reading test questions measure comprehension processes, conventions and skills, and response. The writing test measures conventions and skills, and rhetoric. The HCPS II Stanford 9 abbreviated reading assessment allocates 28 minutes to read six passages and answer 30 multiple-choice questions. The criterion-referenced reading section incorporates a variety of age-appropriate literary pieces, such as stories and poems, information pieces, such as textbook-like selections, and functional pieces, such as directions and consumer material; it allocates two hours for answering multiple-choice and constructed-response questions.

On the writing assessment, students write a response to a given prompt. The prompt specifies the type of essay a student should write. The writing segment allocates about two hours for students

to plan, draft, edit, and write one expository, narrative, or persuasive essay. Table L2 provides sample prompts from the 5th- and 10th-grade writing assessment.

Table L2. Sample 5th- and 10th-Grade HCPS II Writing Assessment Prompts

Grade 5 Writing Prompt	Imagine that one day you can trade places with someone you would like to be. This person, real or imaginary, can be from the past, present, or future. Tell who that person is and why you would like to trade places with him or her. Write about what you would do as that person for one day and how you would feel about it.
Grade 10 Writing Prompt	Imagine that your school needs some new computers. As president of the student council, you have been asked to write to the president of a local computer company and request a donation of computers to your school. Write a letter that will persuade the president of the company to grant your request.

Source: http://www.hawaiiassessmentmatters.org/HCPSII_parent.pdf

Achievement-Level Definitions

Test results are reported using four achievement levels:

- **Well below proficiency** — the student demonstrated little or no knowledge and skills in the content standards for this grade.
- **Approaches proficiency** — the student demonstrated some knowledge and skills in the content standards for this grade and, with more support and effort, the student should be able to reach the proficient level.
- **Meets proficiency** — the student demonstrated the knowledge and skills required to meet the content standards for this grade. The student is ready to work on higher levels of this content area.
- **Exceeds proficiency** — the student has demonstrated knowledge and skills that exceed the content standards for this grade. The student is ready for more-advanced work in the content area.

For NCLB accountability purposes, students scoring at or above the “meets proficiency” level are considered “proficient.”

Results

Student Performance

The Hawaii HCPS II provides student-level data on performance for all students, students with limited-English proficiency (designated as ESLL – English for Second Language Learner), students with disabilities, racial/ethnic groups, and economically disadvantaged students¹⁶. Table

¹⁶ Approximately 72 percent of students in Hawaii are Asian/Pacific Islander; 20 percent are white; 5 percent are Hispanic; and 2 percent are African American. About 42 percent of students are eligible for free or

L3 shows reading performance results from the 2003 HCPS II test for students in grades 5, 8, and 10.

Overall, 41 percent of 5th-graders, 39 percent of 8th-graders, and 40 percent of 10th-graders scored at the “proficient” level and a very small percentage—1 percent—exceeded proficiency standards. The percentage of students falling into the lowest achievement level (well below standards, not shown in table) was larger in 5th grade than in 8th or 10th grade for all student groups.

Among students with limited-English proficiency and students with disabilities, only a small percentage (4–7 percent) met proficiency standards, and none of them exceeded proficiency standards. Less than 30 percent of economically disadvantaged students scored at the “proficient” level across all three grade levels, and none of these students exceeded proficiency standards.

White 5th-, 8th-, and 10th-grade students outperformed Asian/Pacific Islander, African American, and Hispanic students at all three grade levels. A little over half of white 5th, 8th, and 10th graders met proficiency standards, compared with 31–40 percent of Asian/Pacific Islander, African American, and Hispanic students.

School Level Performance

School-level data by urbanicity are available for performance for 5th-, 8th-, and 10th-graders (Table L4) for the 2002 administration of the reading HCPS II. Approximately 38 percent of schools in Hawaii are suburban, 35 percent are rural, and 27 percent are urban. On average, rural schools were slightly more likely to be high-poverty schools--46 percent--compared with 43 percent of suburban schools and 38 percent of urban schools.

Between 84 and 88 percent of schools scored at the “approaches proficiency” level at all grade levels, and there was little difference among schools. However, at the “proficient” level, urban schools did better than either rural or suburban schools at all grade levels, and the difference in the average ranged from 4–8 percentage points.

reduced-price lunch; 9 percent are in limited-English-proficiency programs; and 12 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

Table L3. Performance of 5th-, 8th-, and 10th-Graders on 2003 Reading HCPS II, by Student Characteristics

	Approaches Proficiency and Above	Meets Proficiency and Above	Exceeds Proficiency
	Percentage		
5 th Grade			
All students	84	41	1
Students with disabilities	37	6	0
Students with limited-English proficiency	52	6	0
Economically disadvantaged students	77	28	0
African American students	88	40	1
Asian/Pacific Islander students	83	39	1
Hispanic students	83	39	1
White students	91	52	1
8 th Grade			
All students	90	39	1
Students with disabilities	54	5	0
Students with limited-English proficiency	63	4	0
Economically disadvantaged students	85	25	0
African American students	93	38	0
Asian/Pacific Islander students	89	36	1
Hispanic students	90	34	1
White students	93	52	1
10 th Grade			
All students	91	40	1
Students with disabilities	53	5	0
Students with limited-English proficiency	67	7	0
Economically disadvantaged students	85	26	0
African American students	91	35	0
Asian/Pacific Islander students	91	38	1
Hispanic students	87	31	1
White students	94	52	1

Source: <http://arch.k12.hi.us/pdf/NCLB/NCLB2003StateAssmtByGde.pdf>

Table L4. Average School Performance for 5th-, 8th-, and 10th-Grade 2002 Reading HCPS II, by Urbanicity

	Approaches Proficiency and Above	Meets Proficiency and Above	Exceeds Proficiency
	Average Percentage		
5th Grade			
Rural schools	86	39	2
Suburban schools	87	41	3
Urban schools	88	47	3
8th Grade			
Rural schools	84	37	3
Suburban schools	85	40	1
Urban schools	85	44	3
10th Grade			
Rural schools	87	39	1
Suburban schools	86	37	1
Urban schools	85	45	2

APPENDIX M. IDAHO

State Assessment System

The Idaho Comprehensive Assessment Plan includes:

- The K–3 Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI)
- The Direct Mathematics Assessment in grades 4, 6, and 8
- The Direct Writing Assessments in grades 5, 7, and 9. These assessments will be administered officially for the first time in 2004.
- Idaho Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) in grades 2–10 in reading, language usage (grades 2–9)/language arts (grade 10), and mathematics. The ISAT is administered in the fall and spring, allowing student progress to be measured during the school year.

The ISAT measures student progress toward state standards and carries consequences for schools and students. Beginning with the graduating class of 2006, students must pass the 10th-grade ISAT in order to graduate; however, students will be provided multiple opportunities to do so (for additional information regarding the state accountability system, see <http://www.sde.state.id.us/dept/testreports.asp>).

Idaho has developed Achievement Standards for students that are grade-specific for K–8 and for the grade-span 9–12 in language arts/communication (Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking, and Viewing), math, science, social studies, health, and the humanities. Each standard is more fully defined by a set of content knowledge and skills. For instance, for the 7th-grade content standard—read and respond to a variety of literature to compare and contrast the many dimensions of human experience—the content knowledge and skills delineated include:

- a. Describe characteristics of the following genres: fiction, nonfiction, poetry, biography/autobiography, legend, fable, myth, and reference materials.
- b. Activate and draw upon prior experiences to connect to reading selections.
- c. Relate social, cultural, and historical aspects of literature to reader's personal experience.
- d. Analyze narrative literature according to the following text elements: Character; Setting; Conflict; Plot structure; Theme; Point of view.
- e. Demonstrate an understanding of how reading can provide enrichment and information, as well as serve as a tool for lifelong learning.

(<http://www2.state.id.us/adm/adminrules/rules/idapa08/0203.pdf>)

While the state has developed these standards, districts are encouraged to develop additional, more rigorous local standards as well.

Test Format and Content

For the purposes of examining adolescent literacy, the rest of the discussion will focus on the grade 4, 8, and 10 spring 2003 reading and language usage ISAT (for additional information regarding the ISAT, see <http://www.sde.state.id.us/admin/standards/>).

The ISAT reading and language assessments are untimed and contain two types of questions:

- Selected-response questions
- Constructed-response questions, which require students to create a one- or two-paragraph response.

Students take the ISAT in a fixed format (pen and pencil test); an achievement format (computerized version that adapts questions based on student responses), or a blended format, which combines the preceding two formats. For the spring administration in 2003, students in grades 4 and 8 took the blended test; the fixed form was given to 10th-graders.

Student's skills are evaluated in six categories in the ISAT Reading assessment:

- Vocabulary
- Word analysis: the ability to understand relationships between words and use component structures and clues from context to decipher word meaning
- Literal comprehension: the ability to recall, identify, classify, and sequence details, facts, and stated main ideas from a variety of written materials and interpret directions
- Interpretive comprehension: the ability to make reasonable predictions before, during, and after reading; the ability to draw inferences necessary for understanding, recognize cause-effect relationships, and summarize and synthesize information from a variety of written materials
- Evaluative comprehension: the ability to understand fact, opinion, bias, assumptions, and elements of persuasion and evaluate the quality and validity of written material, ability to compare works, evaluate conclusions and apply what is learned to real life experiences
- Literary analysis: the ability to respond to stories based on well-know characters, themes, plots and settings.

Students' skills are evaluated in six different categories in the ISAT Language assessment: composition and the writing process (ability to use writing, drafting, revising, editing, and

proofreading skills), composition and structure (ability to work with sentences and paragraphs, use the correct writing form, and understand composition forms), grammar and usage (show understanding of basic sentence patterns, phrases and clauses, word forms, verb tenses, subject-verb agreement, and pronoun-antecedent agreement), punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

Achievement-Level Definitions

Test results reported across the state are broken into four achievement levels, which are consistent across grade levels:

- Advanced (exceeds standards)--demonstrate thorough mastery of skills and knowledge that allow them to function independently and above their current educational level.
 - Proficient (meets standards)--demonstrate skills and knowledge that allow them to function independently on all major skills and concepts related to their education level.
 - Basic (below standards)--demonstrate basic skills and knowledge, but cannot operate independently using grade-level skills and concepts. They require assistance and remediation to complete tasks without significant errors.
 - Below basic (critically below standards)--demonstrate significant lack of knowledge and skills and are unable to complete basic knowledge sets or skills without significant remediation.
- (<http://www.sde.state.id.us/admin/docs/isat/proficiency-levels-definitions.htm>)

Students scoring at the “proficient” level and above are considered to be “proficient” under accountability provisions of NCLB.

Performance Results

Student-Level Performance

The Idaho Department of Education (DOE) provides student-level data, disaggregated by English-proficiency status, disability status, socioeconomic status, and racial/ethnic groups¹⁷.

Table M1 provides reading and language assessment results from the spring 2003 ISAT administration for 4th, 8th, and 10th-grade students, by student characteristics.

Overall, 71–79 percent of 4th-, 8th-, and 10th-grade students met or exceeded proficiency standards in reading or language arts. The percentage of students scoring at the advanced level was lower in

¹⁷ Approximately 85 percent of students in Idaho are white, and 11 percent are Hispanic; no other racial/ethnic group comprises 2 percent of the population. About 36 percent of students are eligible for the free or reduced-price lunch program; 7 percent are in limited-English-proficiency programs; and 12 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

the upper grades. For example, in language arts, 30 percent of 4th-graders scored at the advanced level, compared with 17 percent of 8th-graders and 20 percent of 10th-graders.

About 19–44 percent of students with disabilities and 28–51 percent of students with limited-English proficiency reached the proficient level across subjects and grades. The percentage of students with disabilities and students with limited-English proficiency scoring at or above the proficient level was lower in the later grades. For example, the percentage of students with disabilities reaching proficiency levels in language arts was 44 percent in 4th grade, 20 percent in 8th grade, and 19 percent in 10th grade. Similarly, the percentage of students with limited-English proficiency scoring at or above the proficient level in language arts was 51 percent in grade 4, 38 percent in grade 8, and 35 percent in grade 10.

Economically disadvantaged students scored far below their peers. The achievement gap ranged between 12–21 percentage points at both the proficient and above level and the advanced level. For example, in 8th-grade reading, 60 percent of economically disadvantaged students reached the proficient level and 20 percent reached the advanced level, compared with 80 percent and 41 percent of students who are not economically disadvantaged.

White students outperformed Hispanic students at all three grade levels in both reading and language. The achievement gap ranged from 25–37 percentage points at the proficient and above level and from 15–31 percentage points at the advanced level.

School-Level Performance

Idaho implemented the ISAT in 2002–03. As a result, we do not report any school-level data from 2002.

Exhibit M1. Performance of 4th-, 8th-, and 10th-Graders on Spring 2003 Reading and Language ISAT, by Student Characteristics

	Reading		Language	
	Proficient and Above	Advanced	Proficient and Above	Advanced
	Percentage			
4 th Grade				
All students	75	39	79	30
Students with disabilities	34	9	44	7
Students without disabilities	80	43	84	32
Students with limited-English proficiency	38	8	51	6
Students with English proficiency	77	41	81	31
Economically disadvantaged students	64	27	70	19
Non–economically disadvantaged students	82	47	85	36
Hispanic students	49	14	58	11
White students	79	43	83	33
8 th Grade				
All students	73	34	71	17
Students with disabilities	26	4	20	1
Students without disabilities	78	37	76	18
Students with limited-English proficiency	35	7	38	4
Students with English proficiency	75	35	72	18
Economically disadvantaged students	60	21	57	9
Non–economically disadvantaged students	80	41	78	21
Hispanic students	43	10	45	4
White students	77	37	74	19
10 th Grade				
All students	74	27	74	20
Students with disabilities	23	3	19	1
Students without disabilities	78	29	78	22
Students with limited-English proficiency	28	3	35	3
Students with English proficiency	75	28	75	21
Economically disadvantaged students	59	16	59	11
Non–economically disadvantaged students	78	30	78	23
Hispanic students	40	6	45	5
White students	77	29	77	22

Source: <http://www.sde.state.id.us/ipd/aypassessment/>

APPENDIX N. ILLINOIS

State Assessment System

Illinois' statewide assessment system includes two main tests:

- The Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) is a criterion-referenced exam for students in grades 3–8. Students in grades 3, 5, and 8 take the ISAT in reading, writing, and mathematics, while students in grades 4 and 7 take the test in science, social studies, fine arts, and physical development and health.
- The Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE) is a criterion-referenced test in reading, writing, mathematics, social studies, and science for students in grade 11.

These assessments are used for school accountability. In addition, students who score well on the various portions of the exam may earn the Prairie State Achievement Award in each subject area. PSAE scores are also reported on student transcripts, and they may be used in the college-admissions process. Students who wish to improve their PSAE scores may retake the entire exam in the fall of their 12th-grade year.

Illinois is currently in the process of revamping its statewide assessment system. Beginning with the 2005–06 school year, students in grades 3–8 in reading and mathematics will take a newly revised ISAT assessment that will include both norm-referenced and criterion-referenced items. The writing assessment will expand to include grades 3, 4, 6, and 8. The science assessment will move to grades 3 and 7; the social studies and fine arts assessments, to grades 5 and 8; and the physical development and health assessment, to grades 4 and 7 (for additional state accountability information, see <http://www.isbe.net/nclb/default.htm>).

The ISAT and PSAE are intended to measure student progress toward mastering Illinois' content standards. Illinois has defined content standards in English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, foreign language, fine arts, and physical development and health, in the Illinois Learning Standards. The English language arts standards were adopted in 1997. They are organized under five broad goals: reading, literature, writing, listening and speaking, and research. Each goal encompasses up to four learning standards, which define what all students should know and be able to do as a result of their public school experience. Each learning standard is broken down into specific benchmarks for each of five levels of schooling: early elementary, late elementary, junior high/middle school, early high school, and late high school. Table N1 shows the learning standards for the reading goal and benchmarks for the early high school level, as an example.

Table N1. Illinois Learning Standards for English Language Arts, Reading Goal

Learning Standard	Early High School Benchmark
Apply word analysis and vocabulary skills to comprehend selections	Expand knowledge of words' origins and derivations and use idioms, analogies, metaphors, and similes to extend vocabulary development Compare the meaning of words and phrases and use analogies to explain the relationships among them
Apply reading strategies to improve understanding and fluency	Preview reading materials, clarify meaning, analyze overall themes and coherence, and relate reading to information from other sources Analyze, interpret, and compare a variety of texts for purpose, structure, content, detail, and effect Read age-appropriate materials with fluency and accuracy Use questions and predictions to guide reading Explain and justify an interpretation of a text
Comprehend a broad range of reading materials	Interpret, evaluate, and apply information from a variety of sources to other situations (e.g., academic, vocational, technical, personal) Summarize and make generalizations from content and relate them to the purpose of the material Analyze how authors and illustrators use text and art to express and emphasize their ideas (e.g., imagery, multiple points of view) Interpret tables, graphs, and maps in conjunction with related text

Source: <http://www.isbe.net/ils/ela/pdf/goal1.pdf>

Illinois has also defined a set of performance standards that complement the “what” of the content standards with descriptions of “how well” students should perform at each grade level. The five levels of schooling are further divided into ten stages with overlapping grade levels:

- Stage A – Grades 1 and 2
- Stage B – Grades 1, 2, and 3
- Stage C – Grades 2, 3, and 4
- Stage D – Grades 3, 4, and 5
- Stage E – Grades 4, 5, and 6
- Stage F – Grades 5, 6, and 7
- Stage G – Grades 6, 7, and 8
- Stage H – Grades 7, 8, and 9
- Stage I – Grades 8, 9, and 10
- Stage J – Grades 11 and 12

Each performance standard is linked to a content standard and is stage-specific. The performance standards are expressed through performance descriptors that describe how students can demonstrate the knowledge and skills they have acquired. Table N2 shows the

performance descriptors for the three learning standards in reading for stage I (grades 8, 9, and 10), as an example.

Table N2. Illinois Performance Standards for Learning Standards in Reading, Stage I (Grades 8–10)

Apply word analysis and vocabulary skills to comprehend selections

Students who meet the standard can apply word analysis and vocabulary skills to comprehend selections.

1. Expand knowledge of word origins and derivations.
2. Use idioms, analogies, metaphors, and similes to extend vocabulary development.
3. Apply knowledge of roots and affixes to comprehend the meaning of unfamiliar or difficult words, terms, or phrases.
4. Identify and analyze the meanings of specialized vocabulary/terminology
5. Analyze the structure and function of words in context.
6. Analyze and interpret word usage in traditional and contemporary sources (e.g., books, lyrics, speeches).
7. Interpret American idioms to strengthen comprehension.
8. Identify analogy in text and use analogy to explain a relationship.

Apply reading strategies to improve understanding and fluency

Students who meet the standard can apply reading strategies to improve understanding and fluency.

1. Use previewing and predicting before reading, and questioning during reading.
2. Relate reading to information from other sources (e.g., prior knowledge, personal experience, other reading) using a variety of strategies.
3. Analyze a variety of texts for purpose, structure, content, detail, and effect.
4. Interpret and compare a variety of texts for purpose, structure, content, detail, and effect.
5. Analyze overall themes and discover coherence.
6. Clarify meaning of text by focusing on the key ideas presented explicitly or implicitly.
7. Identify how different content areas require different organizational structures (e.g., science text, literary text).
8. Demonstrate fluency by reading aloud a variety of materials (e.g., dialogue, dramatizations).
9. Select and read books for recreation.

Comprehend a broad range of reading materials

Students who meet the standard can comprehend a broad range of reading materials.

1. Ask questions before, during, and after reading that demonstrate that understanding of the reading has progressed.
2. Use topic, theme, organizational patterns, context, and point of view to guide interpretation.
3. Interpret concepts or make connections through analysis, evaluation, inference, and/or comparisons.
4. Analyze how authors and illustrators use text and art to express and emphasize their ideas (e.g., imagery, multiple points of view).
5. Identify and use criteria for evaluating the accuracy of text information.
6. Summarize and make generalizations from content and relate them to the purpose of the material.
7. Recognize kinds of writing (e.g., expository, persuasive, narrative).
8. Explain and justify an interpretation of the text using relevant, accurate references.
9. Challenge ideas presented in a text through questions about specific parts of the text.
10. Interpret tables, graphs, diagrams, and maps in conjunction with related text by drawing conclusions to support text.

Source: http://www.isbe.net/ils/ela/stage_I/descriptor.htm

In addition to the performance descriptors, achievement levels describe how well students have achieved the standards in terms of the range, frequency, facility, depth, creativity, and quality of their knowledge and skills. Accompanying classroom assessment tasks linked to the performance standards describe specific activities that allow students to demonstrate that they have met the

standards and teachers to evaluate the levels of students' performance. Student work samples for the assessment tasks help to illustrate the different achievement levels.

Test Format and Content

To examine trends in adolescent literacy, the rest of the discussion will focus on the ISAT for reading and writing for grades 5 and 8, and the reading and writing portions of the PSAE for grade 11 (additional information regarding the assessments can be found through <http://www.isbe.net/assessment/default.htm>).

ISAT

The reading portion of the ISAT includes approximately 68 items, with a mix of both multiple-choice and extended-response items. The exam assesses students in five areas: comprehension of literary works; comprehension of informational sources; explicit ideas, application of strategies; inferences from text; and vocabulary. Reading passages include both literary and informational selections. The extended-response items are graded using a four-point rubric. The test is administered in three 40-minute sessions. The first features a longer passage followed by 20–25 multiple-choice questions; the other two each contain one shorter passage followed by 15–20 multiple-choice questions and one extended-response item.

The ISAT writing exam asks students to write two essays, one in response to an assigned prompt used statewide and one in response to a prompt selected by the student from a list of two.

Prompts may require expository, persuasive, or narrative modes of writing. Students' responses are scored using both a holistic rubric and a set of analytic rubrics, all of which are grade-specific. Three six-point rubrics judge essays' focus, support, and organization, and a two-point rubric is used for writing conventions. Finally, a six-point holistic rubric is used to assess the overall integration of the essays. The total score for each essay is the sum of the four analytic scores plus twice the holistic score. A student's score for the entire writing assessment is the average of the scores from the two essays, rounded up to the nearest whole number.

PSAE

The PSAE in reading consists of two distinct tests: the ACT college-entrance exam reading test and the WorkKeys Assessment in Reading for Information. Similarly, the PSAE writing assessment includes two tests: the ACT English language arts test and a separate writing exam developed by the Illinois State Board of Education. For each subject area, the two component tests count equally toward the final score in that subject. Scores on the ACT portion of the PSAE are accepted by nearly all colleges and universities as part of their application processes.

The ACT reading exam consists of four reading passages – one science content reading, one social studies content reading, one prose fiction selection, and one nonfiction humanities selection – each followed by ten multiple-choice items. Skills tested on the exam include determining main ideas, locating and interpreting details, understanding sequences of events, making comparisons, comprehending cause-effect relationships, determining the meaning of context-dependent material, generalizing, and analyzing authors' voice and methods. Students have 35 minutes to complete the 40-question exam.

The WorkKeys Reading for Information Assessment is part of a series of tests from the publishers of the ACT, which makes up a comprehensive job analysis and assessment system. The test consists of 15 reading samples from procedural texts, such as memos, letters, directions, signs, notices, bulletins, policies, regulations, and other materials that might be encountered in the workplace. Each passage is followed by one to three multiple-choice questions that assess students' ability to choose main ideas or details, understand word meanings, apply instructions, and apply information and reasoning. Students have 45 minutes to complete the 33-question exam.

The ACT English language arts exam consists of 75 multiple-choice items designed to assess writing usage/mechanics, including punctuation, grammar and usage, and sentence structure, and rhetorical skills, including strategies, organization, and style. The exam includes five reading passages followed by multiple-choice items that ask students to select the most appropriate alternative (if any) to the underlined portion of the preceding text. Students have 45 minutes to complete the test.

Finally, the Illinois State Board of Education-developed writing assessment asks students to respond to one writing prompt in either an expository or persuasive essay. The scoring categories and procedures are identical to those for the ISAT writing exam, except that the scoring rubrics are specific to 11th-grade writing.

Achievement-Level Definitions

Student scores on the ISAT and PSAT are reported using four achievement levels – Exceeds Standards, Meets Standards, Below Standards, and Academic Warning. Students scoring at the Meets Standards level or above are considered to have met academic requirements under NCLB. Table N3 shows the state's general performance descriptors, along with grade- and subject-specific descriptors for 8th-grade reading, as an example.

Table N3. Illinois Achievement-Level Descriptors, 8th-Grade Reading

	General Descriptor	8th-Grade Reading Descriptor
Exceeds Standards	Student work demonstrates advanced knowledge and skills in the subject. Students creatively apply knowledge and skills to solve problems and evaluate the results.	<p>The readers who exceed state standards comprehend a variety of types of literary and informational grade-appropriate texts. They can consistently understand and identify the important ideas in the text and can support their ideas with relevant information from the text and their own knowledge and experience.</p> <p>Readers in the “exceeds standards” level consistently use knowledge of text structure to recall and understand important information. They consistently identify explicit main ideas and supporting details, and infer logical conclusions using evidence in the text and their own knowledge.</p> <p>These readers consistently understand the broad meanings of a text, such as theme or author’s purpose, and are able to recognize multiple perspectives and interpretations. They consistently use clues in the text to understand basic and complex character traits and motives. “Exceeds standards” readers read grade-appropriate texts fluently, apply word analysis skills when needed to recognize words, and use a variety of strategies to determine the meaning of words in the text.</p> <p>Finally, readers at the “exceeds standards” level consistently understand and evaluate the use of a range of literary devices (e.g., word choice, language structure, figurative language, point of view)</p>
Meets Standards	Student work demonstrates proficient knowledge and skills in the subject. Students effectively apply knowledge and skills to solve problems.	<p>The readers who meet state standards comprehend a variety of types of literary and informational grade-appropriate texts. They can understand and identify a majority of the important ideas in the text and can frequently support their ideas with relevant information from the text and their own knowledge and experience.</p> <p>Readers in the “meets standards” level usually use knowledge of text structure to recall and understand important information. They usually identify explicit main ideas and several supporting details, infer implicit main ideas, and use details as supporting evidence. Readers at this level usually draw logical conclusions using evidence in the text and their own knowledge.</p> <p>These readers usually understand the broad meanings of a text, such as theme or author’s purpose, and use clues in the text to understand basic character traits and motives. “Meets standards” readers read grade-appropriate texts fluently, apply word-analysis skills when needed to recognize words, and use a variety of strategies to determine the meaning of words in the text.</p> <p>Finally, readers at the “meets standards” level usually understand and evaluate the use of a range of literary devices (e.g., word choice, language structure, figurative language, point of view)</p>

Table N3. (cont.)

	General Descriptor	8th-Grade Reading Descriptor
Below Standards	<p>Student work demonstrates basic knowledge and skills in the subject. However, because of gaps in learning, students apply knowledge and skills in limited ways.</p>	<p>The readers who do not meet state standards have difficulty comprehending a variety of types of literary and informational grade-appropriate texts. They can understand and identify some of the important ideas in the text and will inconsistently support their ideas with relevant information from the text and their own knowledge and experience. They frequently rely more on their own knowledge and ideas than on the text. Errors in comprehension and overgeneralizations are often the result of this overreliance on their own knowledge.</p> <p>Readers in the “below standards” level inconsistently use knowledge of text structure to recall and understand important information. They identify some explicit main ideas and some supporting details; however, they seldom infer implicit main ideas. They use few supporting ideas, and the supporting ideas they do use may be inappropriate or irrelevant. They often have difficulties distinguishing between main ideas and details, and rely too much on specific pieces of information, since they are easily misled by irrelevant details.</p> <p>Readers at this level occasionally draw logical conclusions using evidence in the text and their own knowledge. Readers at this level overgeneralize concepts and ideas or rely on specific episodes or details rather than extending these to understand themes or author’s purpose. They rely too much on their own knowledge and inconsistently use clues in the text to understand basic character traits and motives.</p> <p>“Below standards” readers seldom apply word-analysis skills to recognize words, but may occasionally use a variety of strategies to determine the meaning of words in the text. Finally, readers at this level generally lack awareness of literary devices (e.g., word choice, language structure, figurative language, point of view), but may occasionally understand and evaluate the use of a limited range of literary devices.</p>
Academic Warning	<p>Student work demonstrates limited knowledge and skills in the subject. Because of major gaps in learning, students apply knowledge and skills ineffectively.</p>	<p>The readers at the “academic warning” level have significant difficulty comprehending a variety of types of literary and informational grade-appropriate texts. They understand and identify few of the important ideas in the text and are rarely able to support their ideas with relevant information from the text and from their own knowledge and experience. They frequently rely more on their own knowledge and ideas than on the text.</p> <p>Readers at the “academic warning” level seldom use knowledge of text structure to recall and understand important information. They identify few explicit main ideas and supporting details, rely too much on specific pieces of information, are easily misled by irrelevant details, and rarely identify implicit main ideas. Readers at this level overgeneralize concepts and ideas. These readers rely on specific episodes or details, rather than extending these to understand themes or author purpose. They rely too much on their own knowledge and rarely use clues in the text to understand basic character traits and motives. “Academic warning” readers inconsistently apply word analysis skills to recognize words, and skip unfamiliar words or phrases essential to the understanding of the text. Finally, readers at this level lack awareness of literary devices (e.g., word choice, language structure, figurative language, point of view)</p>

Source: <http://www.isbe.net/assessment/readperfdef.html>

Performance Results

Student Performance

Illinois provides data on student performance on the ISAT and PSAE for all students and for students disaggregated by race/ethnicity, English-proficiency status, disability status, and socioeconomic status.¹⁸ Table N4 provides 5th- and 8th-grade reading ISAT performance for these groups of students.

Overall, in reading and writing, 59–65 percent of 5th- and 8th-grade students met or exceeded standards. Few students exceeded standards in writing (4 percent in 5th and 8th grades), and only 10 percent of 8th-grade students exceeded standards in reading. However, 23 percent of 5th-grade students exceeded standards. Few students fell into the lowest performance category (academic warning) – only 6 percent in grades 5 and 8 in writing and 1 percent or less in reading (not shown in table).

Less than 15 percent of students with limited-English proficiency (12 percent in 5th grade and 14 percent in 8th grade) met or exceeded standards in reading. However, their performance in writing was higher: 35 percent of 5th-graders and 24 percent of 8th-graders met or exceeded standards. One-fourth of 5th-grade students with Individual Education Programs (IEPs) met or exceeded the standards in reading, and almost a third (32 percent) met the standard in writing. Performance of 8th-graders with IEPs was a bit lower: 20 percent met or exceeded standards in reading, and 19 percent met this level in writing.

There was a large achievement gap between economically disadvantaged students and their peers: about 22–33 percentage points across subjects and grades at the meets or exceeds standards level.

White students outperformed African American and Hispanic students at all grade levels and in all subjects – by 24–38 percentage points for African Americans and 17–32 percentage points for Hispanics. Asian students outperformed all other racial/ethnic groups and outperformed white students by 5–12 percentage points.

¹⁸Approximately 59 percent of students in Illinois are white; 21 percent are African American; 16 percent are Hispanic; and 4 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander. About 35 percent of students are eligible for the free or reduced-price lunch program; 7 percent are in limited-English-proficiency programs; and 14 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

Table N4. Performance of 5th- and 8th-Graders on 2003 Reading and Writing ISAT, by Student Characteristics

	Reading		Writing	
	Meeting Standards or Above	Exceeding Standards	Meeting Standards or Above	Exceeding Standards
	Percentage			
5 th Grade				
All students	60	23	65	4
Students with IEPs	25	5	32	1
Non-disabled students	66	26	70	4
Students with limited-English proficiency	12	1	35	1
Economically disadvantaged students	40	9	50	1
Non–economically disadvantaged students	73	32	74	5
Asian/Pacific Islander students	79	38	81	9
African American students	36	7	47	1
Hispanic students	42	10	56	2
White students	74	32	73	5
8 th Grade				
All students	64	10	59	4
Students with IEPs	20	1	19	0
Non-disabled students	71	11	66	5
Students with limited-English proficiency	14	1	24	0
Economically disadvantaged students	46	3	44	1
Non–economically disadvantaged students	72	13	66	6
Asian/Pacific Islander students	80	20	78	10
African American students	45	3	42	1
Hispanic students	47	3	49	1
White students	73	13	66	6

Source: http://206.230.157.60/publicsite/reports/2003/state/English/2003_StateReport_E.pdf

On the PSAT, 56 percent of 11th-graders met or exceeded standards in reading and 59 percent did so in writing (Table N5). Only 12 percent and 9 percent of students exceeded standards in reading and writing, respectively. Just 17–19 percent of students with limited-English proficiency met or exceeded the standards, and 1–2 percent exceeded the standard. Students with IEPs also struggled on the PSAT: 14–15 percent met or exceeded the standards, and 1–2 percent reached the highest achievement level and exceeded the standards.

Similar to what we found on the ISAT, economically disadvantaged students scored far behind their peers – an achievement gap of 31–36 percent at the meets or exceeds standards level and 9–11 percent at the exceeds standards level. Whites outperformed African American and Hispanic students by large margins – 31–37 percentage points at the meets or exceeds standards level and 10–13 percent at the exceeds standards level. Asian students tended to outperform white students, but not by large margins – 0–5 percent at the meets or exceeds standards level and 2–6 percent at the exceeds standards level.

Table N5. Performance of 11th-Graders on the 2003 Reading and Writing PSAE, by Student Characteristics

	Reading		Writing	
	Meeting Standards and Above	Exceeding Standards	Meeting Standards and Above	Exceeding Standards
	Percentage			
11th Grade				
All students	56	12	59	9
Students with IEPs	15	2	14	1
Non-disabled students	61	13	64	10
Students with limited-English proficiency	17	2	19	1
Economically disadvantaged students	32	3	30	2
Non-economically disadvantaged students	63	14	66	11
Asian/Pacific Islander students	65	17	73	18
African American students	31	2	31	1
Hispanic students	34	3	34	2
White students	65	15	68	12

Source: http://206.230.157.60/publicsite/reports/2003/state/English/2003_StateReport_E.pdf

School Performance

Data are available at the school level for urbanicity for the 2002 ISAT and PSAE in reading and writing (Tables N6–7). Almost half of schools in Illinois are suburban (49 percent), 26 percent are rural, and 25 percent are urban. Urban schools are far more likely to be high-poverty schools (75 percent) than are rural or suburban schools (10 percent and 14 percent, respectively). Given the distribution of high-poverty schools, it is not surprising that the average performance in urban schools is far lower than it is in suburban and rural schools, across subjects and grade levels. For example, for 5th grade at the meets or exceeds standards level, suburban schools outperform urban schools by 24 percentage points in reading and 22 percentage points in writing.

Suburban schools also outperform rural schools by smaller margins. On the 11th-grade PSAE on average, suburban schools outperform rural schools by 4–9 percentage points.

Table N6. Average School Performance for 5th- and 8th-Grade 2002 Reading and Writing ISAT, by Urbanicity

	Reading		Writing	
	Meeting Standards or Above	Exceeding Standards	Meeting Standards or Above	Exceeding Standards
Average Percentage				
5th Grade				
Rural schools	65	23	57	3
Suburban schools	67	28	67	6
Urban schools	43	12	45	3
8th Grade				
Rural schools	70	8	58	4
Suburban schools	72	12	66	6
Urban schools	56	5	51	3

Table N7. Average School Performance for 11th-Grade 2002 Reading and Writing PSAE, by Urbanicity

	Reading		Writing	
	Meeting Standards or Above	Exceeding Standards	Meeting Standards or Above	Exceeding Standards
Average Percentage				
11th Grade				
Rural schools	57	10	54	5
Suburban schools	61	13	63	10
Urban schools	37	6	35	4

APPENDIX O. INDIANA

State Assessment System

In 2002–03, Indiana’s accountability system, ISTEP+, assessed students in the following grades and subjects:

- Students in grades 3, 6, and 8 took the ISTEP+ in English language arts and mathematics in the fall.
- Students in grade 10 took the ISTEP+ Graduation Qualifying Examination (GQE) in English language arts and mathematics. A passing score on the GQE is a requirement for graduation; however, students failing the GQE have multiple opportunities to retake the assessment.

In 2003–04, testing was expanded so that students in grades 3–9 will take the ISTEP+ in English language arts and mathematics. Also, Indiana plans to adopt science and social studies tests for grades 5, 7, and 9. The ISTEP+ is the state’s accountability test for NCLB; consequently, schools can be rewarded or sanctioned based on student performance on the assessment. In addition, as part of Indiana’s school-accountability system, students take Core 40 End-of-Course Assessments, which are final exams measuring what students know and are able to do upon completion of targeted Core 40 courses (additional information on state accountability can be found through <http://www.doe.state.in.us/asap/accountability.html>).

Indiana reports that the ISTEP+ and the GQE measure student performance on state standards. Indiana has adopted grade-specific standards in English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, music, business, visual arts, family and consumer science, and physical education (<http://www.doe.state.in.us/asap/academicstandards.html>). Table O1 shows the English language arts standards for 8th grade as an example. Indiana also makes available curriculum frameworks and classroom assessments to support implementation of the standards.

Test Format and Content

For the purposes of examining what Indiana assessments reveal about adolescent literacy, the rest of the discussion will focus on the English language arts sections of the ISTEP+ in grades 6 and 8 and the GQE (additional information regarding these assessments can be found through <http://www.doe.state.in.us/istep/welcome.html>).

Table O1. English Language Arts Standards, Grade 8

Standard	Definition
Standard 1 Reading: Word Recognition, Fluency, and Vocabulary Development	Students use their knowledge of word parts and word relationships, as well as context clues, to determine the meaning of specialized vocabulary and to understand the precise meaning of grade-level-appropriate words.
Standard 2 Reading: Comprehension	Students read and understand grade-level-appropriate material. They describe and connect the essential ideas, arguments, and perspectives of the text by using their knowledge of text structure, organization, and purpose. Students read a variety of grade-level-appropriate narrative and expository texts.
Standard 3 Reading: Literary Response and Analysis	Students read and respond to grade-level-appropriate historically or culturally significant works of literature that enhance their study of history and social science. They clarify the ideas and connect them to other literary works.
Standard 4 Writing: Writing Process	Students discuss and keep a list of writing ideas. They write clear, coherent, and focused essays. Students progress through the stages of the writing process and proofread, edit, and revise writing.
Standard 5 Writing: Writing Applications	Students write narrative, expository, persuasive, and descriptive texts of 500 to 700 words. Students are introduced to biographical and autobiographical narratives and to writing summaries of grade-level-appropriate reading materials. Student writing demonstrates a command of Standard English and uses the research, organizational, and drafting strategies outlined in Standard 4. Writing demonstrates an awareness of the audience and purpose for writing.
Standard 6 Writing: Written English Language Conventions	Students write using Standard English conventions appropriate to this grade level.
Standard 7 Listening and Speaking: Listening/Speaking Skills, Strategies, and Applications	Students deliver focused, coherent presentations that convey ideas clearly and relate to the background and interests of the audience. They evaluate the content of oral communication. Students deliver well-organized formal presentations using traditional speech strategies, including narration, exposition, persuasion, and description. Students use the same Standard English conventions for oral speech that they use in their writing.

Source: <http://www.doe.state.in.us/istep/2003/pdf/progman2003.pdf>

ISTEP+ assessments consist of two major components: the basic skills assessment, which is entirely multiple choice, and the applied skills assessment, which asks students to respond in essays or short answers.

The GQE was designed to measure students' mastery of Indiana Academic Standards and their applications in real-life situations; these skills are set to 9th-grade standards. The GQE covers basic and applied skills, including reading ability, reading comprehension, vocabulary, and writing skills.

Proficiency Levels

Grade 6 and 8 ISTEP+ results are reported in three categories of student achievement: Pass+, Pass, and Did Not Pass. Grade 10 GQE results are reported as “Above Standard” (passed) and “Below Standard” (did not pass). Students scoring at or above the passing level on the ISTEP+ and “above standard” on the GQE are considered to have met the academic requirements under NCLB.

Performance Results

Student Performance

Indiana provides student-level data disaggregated by disability status, English proficiency status, income status, and racial/ethnic groups.¹⁹ Table O2 shows performance results from the 2002–03 reading ISTEP+ for students in grades 6 and 8, broken down by these students’ characteristics, and Table O3 shows performance results for first-time test-takers on the 10th-grade GQE.

Sixty-nine percent of 6th-graders and 65 percent of 8th-graders passed the English language arts ISTEP+. Seven percent of students in both grades reached the pass- plus level. Students with disabilities had much lower pass rates—27 percent in 6th grade and 20 percent in 8th grade. Less than half of students with limited-English proficiency passed the assessment (47 percent and 40 percent, respectively).

Non–economically disadvantaged students outperformed economically disadvantaged students by 25–28 percentage points at the passing level. There were also large racial/ethnic achievement gaps. The achievement gap between white students and African American students was 31 percentage points; that between white students and Hispanic students was smaller but still substantial, ranging from 22 to 24 percentage points at the passing level.

The pass rate for first-time 10th-grade test-takers on the GQE was 69 percent. Again, we found large achievement gaps between economically disadvantaged students and their peers (29 percentage points), white students and African American students (35 percentage points), and white students and Hispanic students (31 percentage points).

¹⁹ Approximately 83 percent of students in Indiana are white; 12 percent are African American; and 4 percent are Hispanic. About 31 percent of students are eligible for the free or reduced-price lunch program; 4 percent are in limited-English-proficiency programs; and 16 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

Table O2. Performance of 6th- and 8th-Graders on 2003 English Language Arts ISTEP+, by Student Characteristics

	Pass	Pass+
	Percentage	
6th Grade		
All Students	69	7
General education students	76	8
Special education students	27	1
Students with limited-English proficiency	47	3
Students with English proficiency	70	7
Economically disadvantage students	53	3
Non–economically disadvantaged students	78	10
African American students	43	1
Hispanic students	50	3
White students	74	8
8th Grade		
All Students	65	7
General education students	72	8
Special education students	20	0
Students with limited-English proficiency	40	3
Students with English proficiency	65	7
Economically disadvantaged students	45	2
Non–economically disadvantaged students	73	9
African American students	38	1
Hispanic students	47	2
White students	69	8

Source: http://ideanet.doe.state.in.us/istep/2003/reports/F03_Disag_Sum.pdf

Table O3. Performance of 10th-Graders on 2003 English Language Arts GQE, by Student Characteristics

10 th Grade	Percentage Passing
All students	69
Economically disadvantaged students	48
Non–economically disadvantaged students	77
African American students	40
Hispanic students	44
White students	75

Source: http://ideanet.doe.state.in.us/istep/2003/reports/F03_Disag_Sum.pdf

School Performance

School-level data by urbanicity were available for the 2002 ISTEP+ and GQE administration (Table O4). Approximately 43 percent of schools in Indiana were located in suburban areas; 32 percent were rural; and 25 percent were urban. Urban schools were significantly more likely to be high-poverty than were suburban and rural schools (55 percent, compared with 11 percent and 9 percent).

While the average pass rates of suburban and rural schools were relatively similar at all grades (1–3-percentage-point difference), at all grades, the average pass rates at suburban and rural schools were higher than those at urban schools. The achievement gap between urban schools and their suburban and rural counterparts ranged between 14 and 20 percentage points.

Table O4. Average School Performance on the 2001–02 6th- and 8th-Grade ISTEP+ and the 10th-Grade GQE, by Urbanicity

	Percentage Passing
6th-Grade ISTEP+	
Rural	54
Suburban	57
Urban	40
8th-Grade ISTEP+	
Rural	70
Suburban	72
Urban	56
10th-Grade GQE	
Rural	70
Suburban	71
Urban	51

APPENDIX P. IOWA

State Assessment System

The Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) and the Iowa Tests of Educational Development (ITED) are the two norm-referenced achievement tests used as the primary academic assessments for Iowa students. The ITBS assesses K–8 students, and the ITED assesses 9–12 students. For the 2001–03 biennium,²⁰ students were tested in the following grades and subjects:

- Grade 4 – ITBS Reading Comprehension and Mathematics
- Grade 8 – ITBS Reading Comprehension, Mathematics and Science
- Grade 11 – ITED Reading Comprehension, Mathematics and Science.

The state allows districts to administer the ITBS and ITED any time during the year, but recommends that the assessments be administered in the fall in order to allow teachers to use the assessment data to inform their instruction.

In addition, Iowa administers the Iowa Writing Assessment (IWA) to students in grades 3–12. However, only the ITBS/ITED scores are used for school-accountability purposes (for additional information regarding state accountability, see <http://www.state.ia.us/educate/ecese/nclb/assessments.html>).

Iowa is expanding its assessment requirements to meet NCLB standards. Thus, the ITBS assessments will also be given in grades 3, 5, 6, and 7 starting in 2005–06. However, districts will be provided the option of administering a different assessment as long as they can demonstrate that the other tests are valid, reliable, aligned to the core content standards and benchmarks corresponding to the ITBS, and produce score scales that equate to the ITBS score scales (<http://www.state.ia.us/educate/ecese/nclb/doc/annualletter.doc>).

Iowa has established content standards for reading and mathematics. The state reports that these standards align with the ITBS and ITED. These standards include benchmarks for specific grade-spans (3–5, 6–9, and 10–12). For reading, Iowa’s content standard is that students must comprehend what they read in a variety of literary and informational texts. For example, benchmarks for grades 6–9 stipulate students can:

- understand stated information they have read

²⁰ Iowa combines scores for pairs of consecutive years for the biennium reporting. All Iowa schools have not always tested every year in each of the three grades used for reporting (4, 8, and 11); thus, annual data are subject to fluctuations due to these inconsistent annual testing patterns. Two-year averages help overcome this problem.

- determine the meaning of new words from their context
 - draw conclusions, make inferences, and deduce meaning
 - infer traits, feelings, and motives of characters
 - interpret information in new contexts
 - interpret nonliteral language
 - determine the main idea of a text
 - identify the author's views or purpose and analyze text style or structure
- (<http://www.state.ia.us/educate/ecese/nclb/doc/ccsb.html>).

Further, to meet NCLB requirements, each local school district will be required to have standards and benchmarks or grade-level expectations at grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 11 for reading and/or language arts, mathematics, and science. The state core-content standards and benchmarks must be incorporated into local standards and benchmarks.

Test Format and Content

For the purposes of examining what Iowa assessments reveal about adolescent literacy, the rest of the discussion will focus on the ITBS (grades 4 and 8) and ITED (grade 11) Reading Comprehension tests (additional information regarding ITBS and ITED can be found at <http://www.sde.state.id.us/admin/standards/>). ITBS and ITED Reading Comprehension assessments contain only multiple-choice/selected-response questions.

In grades 4 and 8, the reading comprehension ITBS section presents students with a variety of tasks, including using print, context, and picture cues to identify unfamiliar words; completing sentences that tell about a picture by choosing a word for filling in a blank; and answering multiple-choice questions after reading a brief story. The questions associated with pictures and stories often ask students to make inferences or to generalize about what they have read.

On the reading comprehension ITED, students read five types of passages taken from previously published materials: a fiction or narrative passage; an article about a social studies topic; an article about a science topic; another nonfiction passage, which may be from a biography or memoir, from an essay, or from the general-interest domain; and a poem. The prose passages range in length from 440 to 650 words. The questions associated with each passage require students to demonstrate factual understanding, inference and interpretation, and analysis and generalization. The greatest emphasis is on questions that address the higher-level objectives of inferring, analyzing, and generalizing.

Achievement-Level Definitions

Test results reported across the state are broken into three achievement levels: low, intermediate, and high. For accountability purposes, Iowa uses the national percentile rank scale from the ITBS and ITED: “low performance” is 1–40 percent; “intermediate” is 41–89 percent; and “high” is 90–99 percent. Scores in the intermediate and high levels are proficient; low performance is less than proficient.

Performance Results

Student Performance

Iowa reports ISAT and ITED student-level data for all students and by disability status, English-proficiency status, socioeconomic status, and race/ethnicity.²¹ Table P1 shows the reading comprehension performance results from the 2001–03 biennium for students in grades 4, 8, and 11, broken out by these students’ characteristics.

Table P1. Performance of 4th- and 8th-Graders on 2001–03 Reading Comprehension ITBS and 11th-Graders on the 2001–03 Reading Comprehension ITED, by Student Characteristics

	4 th Grade	8 th Grade	11 th Grade
	Percentage Proficient or Above		
All students	76	69	77
Students with disabilities	29	23	28
Students without disabilities	84	77	82
English-language-learner students	41	27	32
English-proficient students	77	70	78
Economically disadvantaged students	61	50	61
Non–economically disadvantaged students	82	75	80
African American students	48	36	50
Hispanic students	53	43	54
White students	79	72	79

Source: <http://www.state.ia.us/educate/fis/pre/coer/doc/stu03.pdf>

Overall, 76 percent of 4th-graders, 69 percent of 8th-graders, and 77 percent of 11th-graders performed at the proficient level and higher. Across the grades, fewer than 30 percent of students

²¹ Approximately 90 percent of students in Iowa are white; 4 percent are African American; and 4 percent are Hispanic. About 27 percent of students are eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program; 3 percent are in limited-English-proficiency programs; and 15 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

with disabilities reached the proficient level or above. In 4th grade, 41 percent of students with limited-English proficiency reached the proficient level or above; 27 percent of 8th-graders and 32 percent of 11th-graders did so.

Economically disadvantaged students performed much lower than their advantaged peers. For example, 50 percent of economically disadvantaged 8th-graders reached the proficient level, compared with 75 percent of non-economically disadvantaged 8th-graders. There were also significant achievement gaps between the three main ethnic groups at all grade levels. White students outperformed African American students by 29–36 percentage points and Hispanics by 25–29 percentage points.

School Performance

No school-level data were available for the 2002 administration of the ITBS or ITED in Iowa.

APPENDIX Q. KANSAS

State Assessment System

The Kansas Assessment Program (KAP) is a criterion-referenced system that aims to link curriculum, standards, and assessments. Under KAP, students are tested in the following grades and subjects:

- Grade 4 – Mathematics, Science
- Grade 5 – Reading
- Grade 6 – Social Studies
- Grade 7 – Mathematics, Science
- Grade 8 – Reading, Social Studies
- Grade 10 – Mathematics, Science
- Grade 11 – Reading, Social Studies.

In addition, every two years student in grades 5, 8, and 11 take a writing assessment. The next administration of the writing assessment will be in 2003–04. Kansas will be expanding its testing in mathematics and reading to grades 3–8 to meet the requirements of NCLB. While performance on the KAP assessments is used to hold schools accountable, these assessments currently do not carry consequences for individual students or teachers (for additional information regarding state accountability, see <http://www.ksbe.state.ks.us/Welcome.html>).

Kansas has standards in ten content areas: communication arts (reading and writing), foreign language, environmental education, library media, mathematics, music, physical education, science, social studies, and visual arts. The general standards are broad statements outlining what students should know and be able to do at different grade levels, including benchmarks and indicators that further define the content standard. The indicators note whether the skill is to be assessed at the state or local level. Kansas is revising its curriculum standards so that they will map to the new assessments. Table Q1 lists the 8th-grade benchmarks and performance indicators for one of the reading standards as an example.

Table Q1. 8th-Grade Reading Benchmarks and Indicators for Standard 1

Standard 1 – Reading: Learners demonstrate skill in reading a variety of materials for a variety of purposes.		
Benchmark	Indicators: The Students. . .	
The proficient reader comprehends whole pieces of narration, expository, persuasion, and technical writing.	* 1.	make inferences from the text.
	* 2.	differentiate between main ideas and supporting details.
	* 3.	identify text structures, such as cause and effect, comparison and contrast, sequence, description, problem and solution, and narration, to aid in comprehension.
	* 4.	identify facts and opinions from a list of statements.
	* 5.	follow directions explained in technical writing.
	** 6.	summarize the text.
	** 7.	choose a purpose for reading a given text.
	** 8.	identify the author's point of view.
	** 9.	understand techniques used to convey viewpoint, such as word choice, language structure, and context.
	** 10.	adjust reading strategies, such as reread, pause, consult another source, when they are confused by a section of text.
	** 11.	compare and contrast ideas and concepts from multiple sources.
	** 12.	skim and scan large pieces of text to identify a specific part they want to read in depth.
	** 13.	evaluate the accuracy of expository texts.
	* 14.	identify concepts explained in technical writing.
	* 15.	use text organizers, such as headings, topic and summary sentences, and graphic features, to locate information within a text.
The proficient reader decodes accurately and understands new words in reading materials.	* 1.	use context clues, such as definition, restatement, example, comparison and contrast, to determine meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary.
	* 2.	infer word meanings by the use of relationships, such as analogies, similes, and metaphors.
	** 3.	use word origins to determine the meaning of unknown words.
	* 4.	apply thesaurus, glossary, and dictionary skills to determine the appropriateness of word meaning.
	* 5.	identify and/or use multiple meanings of words.
	** 6.	use roots and affixes to determine meanings of unknown words.
The proficient reader reads fluently.	** 1.	utilize natural speech rhythms with oral readings.
	** 2.	adjust silent reading rate to comprehend extended text.
	** 3.	use their understanding of vocabulary, punctuation, and sentence structure to assist in reading fluently.
	** 4.	use expressive oral reading to communicate meaning.
The proficient reader uses what he/she already knows about the topic and the type of text to understand what is read.	** 1.	use knowledge of structural elements to assist in understanding various genres, such as drama, poetry, novel, and short story.
	** 2.	apply prior knowledge gained from a wide range of experiences, such as individual experience, research, interview, reading, and nonprint source, to make connections to the text.
	** 3.	use knowledge of structural elements to assist in understanding various informational texts, such as essay, news story, historical document, periodical, and catalog.
The proficient reader draws conclusions supported by the text.	* 1.	identify a theme in a narrative text.
	* 2.	identify a topic in an expository text.
	* 3.	locate evidence that supports conclusions drawn from a single text.
	** 4.	determine whether or not their purposes for reading, such as to understand, interpret, enjoy, solve problems, predict outcomes, answer specific questions, form opinions, skim for facts, have been met.

Notes: *Recommendation for state assessment; **Recommendation for local assessment.

Test Format and Content

For the purposes of examining what the Kansas Assessments reveal about adolescent literacy, we focus on the reading tests that students take in grades 5, 8, and 11.²²

The Kansas reading assessments contain a maximum of 60 multiple-choice and yes/no questions that students answer in response to given reading passages. However, there are plans to add performance and other types of questions to the assessments in 2005–06. There is no set time limit for the test; however, four 45-minute sessions are recommended. The test includes narrative, expository, technical, and persuasive texts. Approximately 25 percent of the questions on the test come from each type of text (http://www.ksde.org/pre/assessmentpp_11_14.pdf).

Achievement-Level Definitions

Test results are reported on five general achievement levels that apply across subject areas and grade levels:

- Exemplary – Consistently demonstrates high performance. These students have well-developed ability to apply knowledge and skills in all situations. Their work is superior.
- Advanced – Frequently demonstrates high performance. These students effectively demonstrate the ability to apply knowledge and skills in most situations. They have a command of difficult, rigorous, and challenging material.
- Proficient – Demonstrates a mastery of core skills. These students exhibit competence in applying knowledge and skills in problem situations. They show evidence of solid performance.
- Basic – Shows partial mastery of fundamental skills. These students have a basic knowledge of content, but struggle in applying knowledge and skills in problem situations.
- Unsatisfactory – Demonstrates a lack of core knowledge, skills, and concepts. These students' command of the contents is very limited, and their ability to apply knowledge or demonstrate understanding is minimal

(http://online.ksde.org/rcard/definitions.aspx?org_no=%&rpt_type=3).

Students scoring at or above the proficient level are considered to have met the academic requirements for proficiency under NCLB.

²² We do not report on the writing assessment because administration and grading of this assessment differ across the state. As a result, test scores are not comparable across districts.

Performance Results

Student Performance

Kansas provides student-level data disaggregated by disability status, English-proficiency status, socioeconomic status, and racial/ethnic groups.²³ Table Q2 shows the performance results from the 2003 reading assessment for students in grades 5, 8, and 11, disaggregated by these student characteristics.

Sixty-nine percent and 71 percent of 5th- and 8th-graders passed the reading assessment, respectively, and 42–46 percent scored at the advanced level. The percentages of 11th-graders who scored at or above the proficient and advanced levels were somewhat lower, 61 percent and 36 percent, respectively. Nineteen percent of the 5th-graders and 11–12 percent of students in the higher grades scored at the exemplary level.

About 50 percent of students with disabilities performed at or above the proficient level in 5th grade; however, the proportion of students with disabilities performing at this level was much lower in 8th and 11th grades—39 percent and 28 percent, respectively.

About half of English-language learners reached the proficient level in all grades; and 30–34 percent scored at the advanced or above level. The scores of English-language learners at the proficient and above level was less than the passing rate of all students by between 10 and 19 percentage points. However, the differences were much smaller at the advanced level and in the higher grades. For example, 29 percent of 5th-graders who were English-language learners scored at the advanced level compared with 46 percent of all students; at the 11th-grade level, 34 percent of English-language learners scored at the advanced level compared with 36 percent of all students—a difference of only 2 percentage points. At the exemplary level, we see a remarkable reversal, with English-language learners scoring higher than all students in the 8th and 11th grades. For example, 16 percent of English-language learners scored at the exemplary level compared with only 11 percent of all students in the 8th grade. While we can hypothesize regarding what might be driving this unusually high performance, we are unable to know for certain.

²³ Approximately 78 percent of students in Kansas are white; 10 percent are Hispanic; 9 percent are African American; and 2 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander. About one-third (34 percent) are eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program; 4 percent are in limited-English-proficiency programs; and 13 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

Table Q2. Performance of 5th-, 8th-, and 11th-Graders on 2003 Reading Assessment, by Student Characteristics

	Proficient and Above	Advanced and Above	Exemplary
	Percentage		
5 th Grade			
All students	69	46	19
Students without disabilities	72	49	20
Students with disabilities	49	29	12
Students who are English-language learners	51	30	10
Economically disadvantaged students	55	31	10
Non–economically disadvantaged students	77	55	24
African American students	45	24	7
Hispanic students	53	28	9
White students	74	51	21
8 th Grade			
All students	71	42	11
Students without disabilities	75	45	11
Students with disabilities	39	18	5
Students who are English-language learners	53	33	16
Economically disadvantaged students	55	26	6
Non–economically disadvantaged students	78	50	13
African American students	47	19	4
Hispanic students	53	25	7
White students	75	47	12
11 th Grade			
All students	61	36	12
Students without disabilities	64	38	13
Students with disabilities	28	15	6
Students who are English-language learners	51	34	17
Economically disadvantaged students	43	21	7
Non–economically disadvantaged students	66	40	14
African American students	33	15	3
Hispanic students	42	22	8
White students	64	39	13

Source: <http://online.ksde.org/rcard/>

African American and Hispanic students tended to score well below white students at all grade levels, with differences ranging between 17 and 31 percentage points in the proportion of students scoring at or above the proficient and advanced achievement levels. Hispanic students scored higher than African American students by between 4 and 9 percentage points. For example, 42 percent of Hispanic 11th-graders passed the reading assessment compared with 33 percent of African American 11th-graders.

School Performance

School-level data disaggregated by urbanicity are available for the 2002 Reading Assessment administration. Table Q3 provides information about school performance for rural, suburban, and urban schools. Approximately 58 percent of Kansas' schools are rural, 24 percent are suburban, and 18 percent are urban. Urban schools were far more likely to enroll high proportions of economically disadvantaged students. Fifty-two percent of urban schools were high-poverty schools, compared with 19 percent of rural schools and 8 percent of suburban schools.

Table Q3. Average School Performance on 5th-, 8th-, and 11th-Grade 2002 Reading Assessment, by Urbanicity

	Satisfactory and Above	Proficient and Above	Advanced
	Average Percentage		
5th Grade			
Rural schools	62	38	13
Suburban schools	69	46	18
Urban Schools	55	33	12
8th Grade			
Rural schools	67	37	8
Suburban schools	70	41	11
Urban schools	56	30	7
11th Grade			
Rural schools	54	29	9
Suburban schools	57	32	10
Urban schools	41	22	7

Note that the achievement-level classifications for the school-level urbanicity data are different from those for the student-level data because the achievement-level names changed from the 2001–02 to the 2002–03 assessments. In 2001–02, the five achievement levels were as follows:

Below Basic, Basic, Satisfactory, Proficient, and Advanced, compared with Unsatisfactory, Basic, Proficient, Advanced, and Exemplary for the 2002–03 school year.

The average percentage of students scoring at the satisfactory level declined across grade levels and was much lower in urban schools than in rural or suburban schools. For example, on average, 62–69 percent of students in rural and suburban schools scored at the satisfactory level in the 5th grade compared with 55 percent of students in urban schools; at the 11th grade, the average proportions scoring at the satisfactory level declined to 54–57 percent in rural and suburban schools and 41 percent in urban schools. The difference in the average proportion of students scoring at the proficient level in urban versus suburban schools ranged from 10 to 13 percentage points. Rural schools also scored lower than suburban schools at the satisfactory and proficient levels in all three grades, with differences ranging between 3 and 8 percentage points. The proportions of students scoring at the exemplary level declined between 5th and 8th grades but remained fairly stable between grades 8 and 11.

APPENDIX R. KENTUCKY

State Assessment System

The Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS) is designed to improve teaching and student learning in Kentucky. CATS includes the Kentucky Core Content Test (KCCT), a nationally norm-referenced test, the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS)/5 Survey Edition, writing portfolios, on-demand writing assessments, and the alternate portfolio for students with severe to profound disabilities. Specifically, students take the following tests:

- CTBS in reading, language arts, and mathematics in grades 3, 6, and 9
- KCCT in reading and science in grades 4, 7, and 10
- KCCT in mathematics, social studies, and arts and humanities in grades 5, 8, and 11
- KCCT in practical living and vocational studies in grades 5, 8, and 10
- On-demand writing assessment in grades 4, 7, and 12.

In addition, students submit writing portfolios in grades 4, 7, and 12. The CTBS, KCCT, and on-demand writing test are used for state accountability purposes in Kentucky. To fulfill the testing requirements under NCLB, Kentucky plans to administer an augmented version of the CTBS to students in grades and subjects not covered by the KCCT (for additional information regarding state accountability, see <http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Administrative+Resources/Testing+and+Reporting+/default.htm>).

The goal of the KCCT²⁴ is to measure students' performance against the state standards. Kentucky outlines six general learning goals that are further defined by academic indicators. Each academic indicator has an attached list of demonstrators at the elementary, middle, and high school levels that describe how students would demonstrate achieving the academic indicator. In addition, Kentucky has developed a program of studies for communication arts (reading and writing), mathematics, science, social studies, arts and humanities, and practical living and vocational studies that further defines content standards and describes skills that students should acquire as they progress through primary, intermediate, middle, and high school levels.
(<http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Instructional+Resources/Curriculum+Documents+and+Resources/default.htm>)

²⁴ A matrix design is used to ensure that the test provides complete coverage of the Core Content each year. Six different, equivalent test forms are administered each year, which limits test time for students and provides maximum instructional program feedback to schools.

Test Format and Content

To see what the KCCT reveals about adolescent literacy, the rest of the discussion focuses on the reading tests students take in grades 4, 7, and 10 and on the on-demand writing assessments students take in grades 4, 7, and 12 (for additional information regarding assessment content, see <http://www.education.ky.gov/NR/rdonlyres/epspsvkn4t66ypkz2oi2bp7dv7dzmqksjxjqxp7vybag6csqswfwd4x405zvrw33nbsutbaia6phqg3x2c47rfcy4c/2002TestinginKyPt1.pdf>).

The reading assessment is untimed and includes 24 multiple-choice items and six open-response questions (limited to one-page responses) that follow reading passages. Students are tested on reading skills, literary reading, persuasive reading, and practical or workplace reading. Table R1 outlines the grade 7 KCCT reading assessment content related to these reading areas, as an example.

Reading skills are tested more heavily in the early grades; reading for information gets more weight in the later grades.

The on-demand writing assessment requires students to produce one response to a prompt, which defines an audience, the purpose, and the writing form (narrative, persuasive, or descriptive). Two writing prompts are provided in each test booklet, and students respond to the prompt of their choice. Grade 4 students respond in the form of a letter or article; grade 7 students respond by writing a letter, article, or editorial; and grade 12 students write a letter, article, editorial, or speech.

Table R1. KCCT Reading Assessment Content for 7th Grade

Description	
Reading skills (assessed across all reading types)	<p>Reading Skills enable students to comprehend all types of reading materials.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify an author's purpose in literary, informational, persuasive, and practical/workplace materials. • Use knowledge of synonyms, antonyms, and homonyms to comprehend a passage. • Identify words that have multiple meanings and select the appropriate meaning for the context. • Know the meanings of common prefixes and suffixes to comprehend unfamiliar words. • Formulate questions to guide reading. • Scan to find key information. • Skim to get the general meaning of a passage. • Make predictions, draw conclusions, and make generalizations about what is read. • Reflect on and evaluate what is read. • Connect information from a passage to students' lives and/or real-world issues.
Literature	<p>Literary Reading includes whole texts and excerpts from materials such as short stories, novels, essays, poetry, plays and scripts. The reading materials represent various historical and cultural perspectives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the meaning of a passage taken from texts appropriate for middle-level students. • Identify characteristics of short stories, novels, poetry, and plays. • Describe literary elements (e.g., characterization, setting, plot, theme, point of view) in a passage. • Analyze the relationship between events in a story and a character's behavior. • Explain how a conflict in a passage is resolved. • Identify literary devices such as foreshadowing, imagery, and figurative language (e.g., similes, metaphors, personification, hyperbole).
Information	<p>Informational Reading includes whole texts and excerpts from materials such as journals, magazines, newspaper articles, letters, brochures, reference materials, essays, nonfiction books, and electronic texts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use text features (e.g., lists, charts, graphs, tables of contents, indexes, glossaries, captions, diagrams, headings) to understand a passage. • Apply knowledge of organizational patterns (e.g., cause and effect, comparison, contrast, sequence) to understand a passage. • Identify supporting details and explain their importance in a passage. • Summarize information from a passage.
Persuasion	<p>Persuasive Reading includes whole texts and excerpts from materials such as magazine and newspaper articles, brochures, letters, proposals, speeches, editorials, electronic texts, essays, opinion columns, and advertisements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinguish between informative and persuasive passages. • Identify an author's opinion about a subject. • Apply knowledge of organizational patterns (e.g., cause and effect, comparison, contrast, sequence) to understand a passage. • Distinguish between fact and opinion. • Identify the argument and supporting evidence. • Identify commonly used persuasive techniques (e.g., expert opinion, statistics, testimonial, bandwagon). • Identify bias and/or misinformation.
Practical or workplace	<p>Practical/Workplace Reading includes whole texts and excerpts from materials such as articles, letters, memos, brochures, electronic texts, warranties, recipes, forms, consumer texts, manuals, schedules, and directions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locate and apply information for a specific purpose (e.g., following directions, completing a task). • Identify the sequence of activities needed to carry out a procedure. • Explain how organizational patterns and/or text features (e.g., pictures, charts, graphs, format) relate to the content of a practical/workplace passage. • Interpret the meaning of specialized vocabulary.

Source:
<http://www.education.ky.gov/NR/rdonlyres/epspsvkn4t66ypkz2oi2bp7dv7dzmqksjxjqxip7vybag6csqswfwd4x4o5zvrw33nbsutbaia6phqg3x2c47rfcy4c/2002TestinginKyPt1.pdf>

Achievement-Level Definitions

Students are categorized into one of four achievement levels according to their test results:

- Novice
- Apprentice
- Proficient
- Distinguished

Students scoring at or above the proficient level are considered to have met proficiency requirements under NCLB.

Performance Results

Student Performance

Table R2 shows student performance on the 2002–03 reading assessment for students in grades 4, 7, and 10, and Table R3 shows student performance on the 2002–03 writing assessment for students disaggregated by disability status, socioeconomic status, and racial/ethnic groups.²⁵

Looking first at the reading assessment, we find that the percentage of students achieving proficiency falls sharply across grades. For example, 63 percent of 4th-graders scored at or above the proficient level on the reading assessment, compared with 57 percent of 7th-graders and only 31 percent of the 10th-graders. Few reached the distinguished level (7–8 percent) in any grade.

Among students with disabilities, 43 percent scored at the proficient level in the 4th grade, 19 percent in 7th grade, and 8 percent in the 10th grade.

There was a 23–26-percentage-point gap in the proficiency levels of economically disadvantaged students and those not economically disadvantaged in the three grades, but a much smaller gap of between 6 and 8 percentage points at the distinguished level. The differences between African American and white students scoring at the proficient level ranged from 18 percentage points in the 10th grade to 25 percentage points in the 7th grade. Again, the differences in the proportions achieving at the distinguished level were considerably smaller—4–6 percentage points.

²⁵ Approximately 88 percent of students in Kentucky are white, and 10 percent are African American. No other racial/ethnic group comprises 2 percent of the student population. Almost half of students (49 percent) are eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program; less than 1 percent are in limited-English-proficiency programs; and 15 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

Table R2. Performance of 4th-, 7th-, and 10th-Graders on 2002–03 Reading KCCT, by Student Characteristics

	Proficient and Above	Distinguished
	Percentage	
4th Grade		
All students	63	7
Students with disabilities	43	6
Students without disabilities	65	7
Economically disadvantaged students	51	4
Non–economically disadvantaged students	74	10
African American students	43	3
White students	65	7
7th Grade		
All students	57	7
Students with disabilities	19	2
Students without disabilities	63	8
Economically disadvantaged students	43	3
Non–economically disadvantaged students	69	11
African American students	35	2
White students	60	8
10th Grade		
All students	31	8
Students with disabilities	8	3
Students without disabilities	34	9
Economically disadvantaged students	16	3
Non–economically disadvantaged students	39	11
African American students	15	3
White students	33	9

Source: http://apps.kde.state.ky.us/secure_cats_reports_03/index.cfm?action=display_regionstate.

Scores on the writing assessment were much lower than on the reading assessment, with only 9 percent of 4th-graders and 17–18 percent of 7th- and 12th-graders scoring at or above the proficient level. Overall, only 1 percent of 4th-graders and none of the 7th- or 12th-graders reached the distinguished level. The gap between the proficiency levels of economically disadvantaged students and others was 5 percentage points in the 4th grade, 12 percentage points in the 7th grade, and 9 percentage points in the 12th grade. The differences between African American and white students were much smaller than those seen earlier in reading, ranging from 3–6 percentage points.

Table R3. Performance of 4th-, 7th-, and 12th-Graders on 2002–03 On-Demand Writing KCCT, by Student Characteristics

	Proficient and Above	Distinguished
	Percentage	
4th Grade		
All students	9	1
Students with disabilities	11	3
Students without disabilities	8	0
Economically disadvantaged students	6	1
Non–economically disadvantaged students	11	1
African American students	6	1
White students	9	1
7th Grade		
All students	17	0
Students with disabilities	7	2
Students without disabilities	19	0
Economically disadvantaged students	11	0
Non–economically disadvantaged students	23	0
African American students	12	0
White students	18	0
12th Grade		
All students	18	0
Students with disabilities	9	4
Students without disabilities	20	0
Economically disadvantaged students	12	1
Non–economically disadvantaged students	21	0
African American students	13	1
White students	19	0

Source: http://apps.kde.state.ky.us/secure_cats_reports_03/index.cfm?action=display_regionstate.

School Performance

School-level data on urbanicity are available for the 2002 administration of the reading KCCT. Data on the writing assessment were not available. Table R4 reports the average school performance of rural, suburban, and urban schools. Approximately 58 percent of schools in Kentucky are rural, 28 percent are suburban, and 12 percent are urban. Over half of rural schools and urban schools were high-poverty schools (69 percent and 55 percent, respectively), while a little over a third (36 percent) of suburban schools were high-poverty schools.

There is little difference (between 1 and 3 percentage points) in the average proficiency levels of students in rural, suburban, and urban schools at both the proficient and distinguished levels for grades 4 and 7.

Table R4. Average School Performance on 2001–02 4th-, 7th-, and 10th-Grade KCCT Reading Assessment, by Urbanicity

	Proficient and Above	Distinguished
	Average Percentage	
4th Grade		
Rural schools	63	7
Suburban schools	65	8
Urban schools	63	7
7th Grade		
Rural schools	56	6
Suburban schools	59	7
Urban schools	59	8
10th Grade		
Rural schools	26	6
Suburban schools	30	8
Urban schools	*	*

Note: * Grade 10 results for urban schools are not reported because of the small sample size.

APPENDIX S. LOUISIANA

State Assessment System

The Louisiana School and District Accountability System is a standards-based accountability system that aims to link standards, curriculum, and assessments and carries consequences for schools and students. The Louisiana Educational Assessment Program for the 21st Century (LEAP 21) and the Graduation Exit Examination for the 21st Century (GEE 21) make up Louisiana's Criterion-Referenced Testing (CRT) program. For the 2003–04 school year, students are tested in the following grades and subjects:

- Grade 4 – LEAP 21 English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies
- Grade 8 – LEAP 21 ELA, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies
- Grade 10 – GEE 21 ELA and Mathematics
- Grade 11 – GEE 21 Science and Social Studies

The LEAP 21 and GEE 21 are high-stakes assessments that carry consequences for students (e.g., students must pass the exams to be promoted from grades 4 to 5 and 8 to 9²⁶ and to graduate²⁷) and for schools (for additional information on state accountability, see <http://www.doe.state.la.us/lde/ssa/home.html>).

The LEAP 21 and GEE 21 are intended to measure student progress toward mastering Louisiana's content standards. Louisiana approved standards in English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, arts, health, physical education, and foreign languages in May 1997. In March 2004, the Louisiana Department of Education revised its English language arts standards for curriculum development. Louisiana has defined five foundation skills that apply to students in all disciplines (see <http://www.doe.state.la.us/lde/uploads/4331.doc>). There are seven ELA content standards:

²⁶ Starting in spring 2000, 4th- and 8th-grade students could not be promoted if they did not receive an Approaching Basic or above score on both the LEAP 21 ELA and Mathematics tests. Starting in spring 2004, 4th-grade students must score Basic or above on either the ELA or the Mathematics test and Approaching Basic or above on the other test to advance to the 5th grade. Students in the 8th grade must achieve Approaching Basic or above on both the ELA and Mathematics LEAP 21 tests until the 2005-2006 school year, at which time they must score a combination of at least Basic or above and Approaching Basic or above on both the ELA and Mathematics test. Students that fail these tests have the opportunity to take intensive summer remediation and to retest after remediation ends.

²⁷ High school students take the GEE 21 and have test-score requirements to graduate. To be eligible to graduate and obtain a standard high school diploma, students who were first-time 10th-graders in 2000-2001 were required to score Approaching Basic or above on only the ELA and Mathematics tests, while first-time 10th-graders in 2001-2002 and thereafter are required to score Approaching Basic or above on the ELA and Mathematics tests and on either the Social Studies or Science test. If they fail, students are given additional chances to retake the test in the summer and fall.

1. Students read, comprehend, and respond to a range of materials, using a variety of strategies for different purposes.
2. Students write competently for a variety of purposes and audiences.
3. Students communicate using Standard English grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and handwriting.
4. Students demonstrate competence in speaking and listening as tools for learning and communicating.
5. Students locate, select, and synthesize information from a variety of texts, media, references, and technological sources to acquire and communicate knowledge.
6. Students read, analyze, and respond to literature as a record of life experiences.
7. Students apply reasoning and problem-solving skills to reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and visually representing (<http://www.doe.state.la.us/lde/uploads/4331.doc>).

These standards are further defined by grade-span benchmarks. Table S1 contains the grade 5–8 benchmarks for standard 1, as an example.

Table S1. Grades 5–8 English Language Arts Benchmarks for Content Standard 1

Standard One: Students read, comprehend, and respond to a range of materials, using a variety of strategies for different purposes.

- Using knowledge of word meaning and developing basic and technical vocabulary using various strategies (e.g., context clues, idioms, affixes, etymology, multiple-meaning words).
 - Using the conventions of print (e.g., left-to-right directionality, top-to-bottom, one-to-one matching, sentence framing). Conventions of print are enhanced through application across grade levels.
 - Adjusting speed of reading (e.g., appropriate pacing, intonation, expression) to suit the difficulty of materials and the purpose for reading (e.g., enjoying, learning, problem solving). Speed of reading is enhanced through application across grade levels.
 - Interpreting story elements (e.g., mood, tone, style) and literary devices (e.g., flashback, metaphor, foreshadowing, symbolism) within a selection.
 - Reading, comprehending, and responding to written, spoken, and visual texts in extended passages (e.g., ranging from 500-1,000 words).
 - Interpreting (e.g., paraphrasing, comparing, contrasting) texts with supportive explanations to generate connections to real-life situations and other texts (e.g., business, technical, scientific).
 - Adjusting reading rate according to texts and purposes for reading (e.g., problem solving, evaluating, researching).
-

Source: <http://www.doe.state.la.us/lde/uploads/4331.doc>

Test Format and Content

For the purposes of examining trends in adolescent literacy, the rest of the discussion will focus on the ELA tests that students take in grades 4, 8, and 10 (see <http://www.doe.state.la.us/lde/uploads/3779.pdf> for additional assessment information).

The LEAP 21 and GEE 21 assessments contain four types of questions:

- Multiple-choice questions
- Short-answer questions, which require students to write a word or phrase or to create a one- or two-sentence response
- Open-response questions, requiring students to create a one- or two-paragraph response in writing
- Writing prompts, requiring students to respond by creating a written composition.

The LEAP 21 and GEE 21 ELA tests contain four parts: writing, using information resources, reading and responding, and proofreading:

- The writing section requires students to produce one composition about an assigned topic. Grade 4 students are given a minimum of one hour to write either a narrative or descriptive essay, and grade 8 students are given a minimum of an hour and a half to write one narrative or expository essay. The GEE 21 allocates a minimum of 90 minutes for 10th-grade students to write a persuasive or expository essay. This is the only test session during which students are allowed to use dictionaries and thesauruses.
- The using information resources section requires students to locate, evaluate, and synthesize information from four to six texts, media, references, or technological sources to answer multiple-choice and short-answer questions. Fourth-grade students are given no more than 40 minutes to answer five multiple-choice and two short-answer items. Eighth-grade students are given no more than 40 minutes to answer eight multiple-choice and short-answer questions. Tenth-grade students are given 40 minutes to answer five multiple-choice questions and two short-answer questions.
- The reading and responding section requires students to read, compare, and contrast four grade-appropriate, complete, authentic reading passages (fiction, nonfiction, poem, and a fourth passage of any genre or form) and respond to multiple-choice and short-answer questions. Grade 4 students are given at least one hour to complete 20 multiple-choice questions and eight short-answer items. Grade 4 students have fiction passages of 450–1000 words and nonfiction passages of 450–850 words. Poems and the fourth passage may be no more than 450 words. Grade 8 students are given a minimum of an hour and a half to answer 20 multiple-choice questions and eight short-answer items and write one essay in response to two reading passages. Grade 8 students have fiction and nonfiction passages of 500–1000 words and a maximum 500-word poem and fourth passages. Grade 10 students are given 90 minutes to answer 20 multiple-choice, eight short-answer, and one essay question. Grade 10 fiction and nonfiction passages are 600–1500 words, and the final two passages (e.g. poems, letter to editor) are a maximum of 600 words each.

- The proofreading section utilizes a multiple-choice format to test student's ability to read a text (letter, narrative, editorial, or expository piece) and correct grammar, usage, and mechanics errors. The grade 4 reading passage is 100–150 words long; the grade 8 and grade 10 students' reading passage is 100–250 words. Grade 4, 8, and 10 students are given a minimum of 30 minutes to answer multiple-choice questions pertaining to eight sentences with underlined items.

The reading and responding section is weighted most heavily—55–58 percent of the total score. Writing accounts for 17–18 percent of the total score, while the proofreading and using information resources sections account for 12–14 percent of the score each.

Achievement-Level Definitions

Test results reported across the state are broken into five achievement levels:

- Advanced – Superior performance beyond the proficient level of mastery
- Mastery (exceeding the standard) – Competency over challenging subject matter and is well prepared for the next level of schooling
- Basic (meeting the standard) – Only fundamental knowledge and skills needed for the next level of schooling
- Approaching Basic (approaching the standard) – Only partially demonstrated the fundamental knowledge and skills needed for the next level of schooling
- Unsatisfactory – Did not demonstrate fundamental knowledge and skills needed for the next level of schooling.

Students scoring at or above the basic level on the LEAP are considered to have met the academic requirements under NCLB. However, students need to score only at or above the approaching basic level on the GEE21 in order to graduate.

Performance Results

Student Performance

Table S2 shows the spring 2003 ELA LEAP performance results for students in grades 4 and 8, disaggregated by disability status and race/ethnicity; student-level data by poverty were not available.²⁸

²⁸ Approximately 49 percent of students in Louisiana are white and 48 percent are African American. No other racial/ethnic group comprises 2 percent of the population. About 59 percent of students are eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program; less than 2 percent are in limited-English-proficiency programs; and 13 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

Fifty-nine percent of 4th-grade students and 52 percent of 8th-grade students performed at or above the basic level on the English language arts LEAP21. About 14–15 percent achieved at or above the mastery level, and only 1 percent reached the advanced level. Only 30 percent of 4th-grade and 13 percent of 8th-grade special education students achieved at or above the basic level, and only 2–4 percent reached the mastery level.

There was a large achievement gap at both grade levels. White students scored 29–38 percentage points higher than African American students at the basic level and 17–19 percentage points higher at the mastery level.

Table S2. Performance of 4th- and 8th-Graders on 2003 English Language Arts LEAP21, by Student Characteristics

	Basic and Higher	Mastery and Higher	Advanced
	Percentage		
4 th Grade			
All students	59	14	1
General education students	67	17	1
Special education students	30	4	0
African American students	45	6	0
White students	74	23	2
8 th Grade			
All students	52	15	1
General education students	58	17	1
Special education students	13	2	0
African American students	32	5	0
White students	70	24	1

Source: <http://www.doe.state.la.us/lde/uploads/3779.pdf>

Table S3 presents 2003 ELA GEE 21 results for 10th-graders. To pass the test for graduation, students must score at or above the approaching basic level. Seventy-one percent of all students passed the assessment upon the first attempt. However, initial pass rates were very low for special education students (18 percent), and African American students had much lower pass rates than did white students (55 percent compared with 87 percent). About 47 percent of all students achieved at or above basic, 10 percent achieved at or above mastery, and 0 percent reached the advanced level.

Table S3. Performance of 10th-Graders on 2003 English Language Arts GEE 21, by Student Characteristics

	Approaching Basic and Above	Basic and Above	Mastery and Above	Advanced
	Percentage			
10th Grade				
All students	71	47	10	0
General education students	79	54	12	1
Special education students	18	6	1	0
African American students	55	27	3	0
White students	87	66	17	1

Source: <http://www.doe.state.la.us/lde/uploads/3779.pdf>

School Performance

Table S4 presents school-level data for the 2002 administration of the English language arts LEAP 21 and GEE 21 for urbanicity and for poverty (since these data were not available at the student level). Forty percent of schools in Louisiana were suburban, 32 percent were rural, and 28 percent were urban. Approximately 70 percent of schools were high-poverty schools. Suburban schools were slightly less likely to serve high proportions of economically disadvantaged students than were urban and suburban schools (62 percent compared with 75 percent and 78 percent, respectively).

At all grade levels, high-poverty schools' performance was lower than that of the low- and medium-poverty schools—19 percentage points lower for 8th and 11th grades and 25 percentage points lower for 4th grade at or above the basic level.

Suburban schools outperformed rural and urban schools at all grades and achievement levels, except at the advanced level in 10th grade. However, rural schools also outperformed urban schools at the basic and above level. For instance, at grade 8, an average of 50 percent of students in suburban schools scored at or above the basic level compared with 49 percent in rural schools and 29 percent in urban schools.

Table S4: Average School Performance on 2001–02 4th- and 8th-Grade English Language Arts LEAP21 and 10th-Grade English Language Arts GEE 21, by Poverty Status and Urbanicity

	Basic and Above	Mastery and Above	Advanced
Average Percentage			
4th Grade			
High-poverty schools	52	14	2
Low- and medium-poverty schools	77	32	7
Rural schools	58	17	2
Suburban schools	64	21	4
Urban schools	48	15	3
8th Grade			
High-poverty schools	38	12	1
Low- and medium-poverty schools	57	22	2
Rural schools	49	16	1
Suburban schools	50	17	2
Urban schools	29	10	1
10th Grade			
High-poverty schools	42	8	1
Low- and medium-poverty schools	61	17	2
Rural schools	53	12	1
Suburban schools	56	14	1
Urban schools	40	12	1

APPENDIX T. MAINE

State Assessment System

As part of Maine's Comprehensive Assessment System (MeCAS), which includes local- and state-level measures to ensure accountability, the Maine Education Assessment (MEA) tests students in grades 4, 8, and 11 in reading, writing, mathematics, and science/technology.²⁹ Maine is working to expand its assessment system so that it meets the federal requirement for all students to be tested in grades 3–8 in reading and mathematics by 2005-06. While the MEA carries consequences under state and federal accountability systems for schools, it does not have consequences for students or teachers (for more information regarding the state accountability system, see <http://www.maine.gov/education/lsalt/compassess.htm>).

The MEA is intended to measure student progress toward mastery of the state content standards. Maine has established standards in English language arts, health and physical education, mathematics, science and technology, social studies, career preparation, modern and classical languages, and visual and performing arts. There are eight English language arts standards across four content areas: writing, reading, speaking, and listening:

- A. Students will use the skills and strategies of the reading process to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate what they have read.
- B. Students will use reading, listening, and viewing strategies to experience, understand, and appreciate literature and culture.
- C. Students will demonstrate an understanding of how words and images communicate.
- D. Students will apply reading, listening, and viewing strategies to information texts across all areas of curriculum.
- E. Students will demonstrate the ability to use the skills and strategies of the writing process.
- F. Students will write and speak correctly, using conventions of standard written and spoken English.
- G. Students will use stylistic and rhetorical aspects of writing and speaking to explore ideas, to present lines of thought, to represent and reflect on human experience, and to communicate feelings, knowledge, and opinions.

²⁹ Before 2003–04, MEA testing also included the visual and performing arts, health, physical science, and social studies. However, these content areas will now be tested at the local level.

- H. Students will work, write, and speak effectively in connection with research in all content areas.

For each of the eight standards, performance indicators are identified by grade spans (<http://www.state.me.us/education/lres/ela.htm>). Table T1 shows the grade 5–8 English language arts performance indicators for content standard D, as an example.

Table T1. 5th–8th-Grade English Language Arts Learning Results Standards and Performance Indicators

Standard D. Informational Texts: Students will apply reading, listening, and viewing strategies to informational texts across all areas of curriculum.

When reading, listening, and viewing critically, students will ask pertinent questions, recognize assumptions and implications, and evaluate information and ideas. In a world that surrounds them with information, they have to be able to connect with this information and make sense of it.

Performance Indicators:

1. Seek appropriate assistance when attempting to comprehend challenging text.
 2. Identify useful information-organizing strategies.
 3. Identify both the author's purpose and the author's point of view when reading expository information.
 4. Identify different ways in which informational texts are organized.
 5. Produce and support generalizations acquired from informational text.
 6. Describe new knowledge presented in informational texts and how it can be used.
 7. Identify common technical terms used in informational texts.
 8. Use the various parts of a text (index, table of contents, glossary) to locate specific information.
-

Source: <http://www.state.me.us/education/lres/ela.htm>

Test Format and Content

For the purposes of examining what the MEA reveals about adolescent literacy, the rest of the discussion will focus on the English language arts (Reading and Writing) tests that students take in grades 4, 8, and 11 (see <http://www.state.me.us/education/mea/tdmenu.htm> for additional detail).

MEA English language arts assessments contain three types of questions: multiple-choice, constructed-response, and writing prompts. All MEA test items are released to the public after administration. In addition, sample MEA tests items reference the standards, indicating which standards correspond with the questions asked on the tests.

The English language arts writing assessment includes three writing tasks (formerly two) divided into one 45-minute test session and one 40-minute test session. In the first session, students respond to a long writing prompt. The second session is dedicated to two writing tasks.

The English language arts reading test includes four sessions. A total of 42 multiple-choice questions (10 of which are field-test items, and therefore do not count towards the final score)

and ten constructed-response questions (two of which are field-test items) are administered, for a total of 64 points. Standards A (Process of Reading), B (Literature and Culture), and D (Informational Texts) are tested in the MEA common items (not including field-test items) in grades 4, 8, and 11, as follows: Standard A (12, 31, and 19 percent, respectively), Standard B (47, 33, and 41 percent respectively), and Standard D (41, 36 and 41 percent respectively). Students at all grade levels read fiction, short stories, and informational reading selections (e.g., newspaper articles, informational essays, textbook passages). Students' constructed-response answers are judged on their comprehension of the text as well as their use of reading strategies, language, and analysis.

Achievement-Level Definitions

Test results are reported for four achievement levels:

- Exceeds Standards – exemplary accomplishment in understanding and application skills.
- Meets Standards – consistency in understanding and application skills.
- Partially Meets the Standards – inconsistent understanding and application skills.
- Does Not Meet Standards – limited understanding and application skills.

Scores at or above the meets standards level are considered proficient for the accountability provisions of NCLB.

Performance Results

Student Performance

Table T2 provides student-level data for 4th-, 8th-, and 11th-grade reading and writing, disaggregated by disability status and racial/ethnic groups.³⁰ It also provides disaggregated results by whether a student had Internet access at home, which Maine used as a proxy for poverty.³¹

³⁰ Approximately 96 percent of students in Maine are white, and 2 percent are African American; less than 1 percent are Hispanic, Asian, and Native American. About 30 percent of students are eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program; 1 percent are in limited-English-proficiency programs; and 16 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

³¹Eligibility for the free and reduced-price lunch program will be a student poverty category in the future.

Table T2. Performance of 4th-, 8th-, and 11th-Graders on 2003 Reading and 2002 Writing MEA, by Student Characteristics

	Reading	Writing
	Percentage Meeting Standards and Above	
4th Grade		
All students	49	15
Students with disabilities	10	1
Non-disabled students	55	14
Students with Internet access at home	54	14
Students with no Internet access at home	39	8
African American students	30	3
White students	50	12
8th Grade		
All students	45	40
Students with disabilities	7	6
Non-disabled students	50	46
Students with Internet access at home	48	44
Students with no Internet access at home	27	25
African American students	26	24
White students	45	42
11th Grade		
All students	46	37
Students with disabilities	5	4
Non-disabled students	51	36
Students with Internet access at home	51	36
Students with no Internet access at home	25	16
African American students	22	13
White students	47	33

Source: Results for student characteristics other than "All" were obtained from the Maine Department of Education.

Overall, between 45 and 49 percent of all students met standards on the reading assessment. Very few students exceeded standards, less than 1–2 percent (not shown in table). Passing rates on the writing assessment were lower, particularly at the 4th-grade level, at which only 15 percent of students met the standards. Only 5–10 percent of students with disabilities met standards in reading, and 1–6 percent met standards in writing.

Students with Internet access at home clearly had an advantage over students without such access. With one exception (4th-grade writing), the passing rates of students with Internet access

at home were between 15 and 26 percentage points higher on both the reading and writing assessments across the grade levels.

There was a substantial gap between the passing rates of African American students and those of white students. For example, only 30 percent of African American students met standards in 4th-grade reading compared with 50 percent of white students. The gap in achievement was largest at the 11th grade in both reading and writing (25 percentage points and 20 percentage points, respectively).

School Performance

Table T3 presents school-level data disaggregated by urbanicity for the 2002 MEA administration for grades 4, 8, and 11. Approximately three-fourths of schools in Maine are rural; 19 percent are suburban; and 6 percent are urban. About 29 percent of rural and urban schools are high-poverty schools, compared with 3 percent of suburban schools.

Table T3. Average School Performance on 4th-, 8th-, and 11th-Grade 2002 Reading and Writing MEA, by Urbanicity

	Reading	Writing
	Average Meeting Standards and Above Percentage	
4th Grade		
Rural schools	44	12
Suburban schools	55	16
Urban schools	48	16
8th Grade		
Rural schools	41	36
Suburban schools	45	42
Urban schools	*	*
11th Grade		
Rural schools	50	34
Suburban schools	53	39
Urban schools	*	*

Note: *No results are reported for grade 11 because of small sample sizes: There are only eight middle schools and five high schools in urban areas.

On average, the passing rates in suburban schools on the reading assessment were higher than those in rural schools by about 11 percentage points in grade 4 and 3–4 percentage points in the higher grades. On the writing assessment, the passing rates were between 4 and 6 percentage points higher in suburban schools than in rural and urban schools.

We report data at the 4th-grade level for urban schools. Suburban schools had higher passing rates than urban schools in 4th-grade reading but there was no difference in writing.

APPENDIX U. MARYLAND

State Assessment System

Maryland currently administers the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) and the High School Assessments (HSAs) in order to track student and school progress. The MSA was implemented in 2002–03 in response to NCLB requirements. Previously, Maryland used the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP) to fulfill the 1994 reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act. However, the MSPAP produced scores for schools rather than for individual students; thus, it needed to be replaced to meet the new federal testing requirements.

For the 2003–04 school year, students in grades 3–8 took the MSA in reading and mathematics and students in grade 10 took it in reading.³² The MSA is an augmented form of the Stanford Achievement Test - 10 (grades 3–8) or the Terra Nova (grade 10). Thus, the MSA produces norm-referenced scores and criterion-referenced scores. The criterion-referenced scores are what the state uses to measure student progress toward standards and to hold schools accountable (see http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/testing/testing_overview.htm for additional information regarding the state assessment system).

In addition, Maryland administers the HSAs, which are end-of-course tests that students take as they complete the appropriate high school-level course. All students, including middle school students taking any one of the five high school-level courses, must take the HSA after they complete the appropriate course. These courses include English I, government, algebra/data analysis, geometry, and biology. These scores are reported on students' transcripts.

These assessments are used to track student progress toward mastering state standards. Maryland has standards in reading/English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies for preK–8 students and for 10th-grade students. Maryland is developing a voluntary statewide curriculum that will detail what should be taught at each grade in relation to the content standards. The English language arts curriculum framework is based on six Content Standards: Reading Processes (Fluency and Vocabulary), Reading Comprehension, Comprehension of Information Text, Comprehension of Literary Text, Writing, and Listening. (see <http://mdk12.org/instruction/curriculum/reading/index.html>). Indicator statements and

³² In 2002–03, only students in grades 3, 5, 8 and 10 were given the MSA Reading assessment. In 2003–04 all students in grades 3–8 and 10 are given the MSA Reading assessment, however only scores for students in grades 3, 5, 8 and 10 will be available in the spring 2004. Scores for grades 4, 6 and 7 will be given after performance standards are set in the summer 2004. Starting as early as March 2008, science assessments will be added to grades 3, 5 and 8.

objectives detail what students should be able to do to achieve/meet the content standards at each grade level. Table U1 contains an example from the Grade 8 indicators and objectives for fluency.

Table U1. Maryland 8th-Grade Reading Indicators and Objectives for Fluency

General Reading Processes:	
Fluency: Students will read orally with accuracy and expression at a rate that sounds like speech.	
Indicator Statement:	Read orally at an appropriate rate
Objective(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read familiar and independent-level text at a rate that is conversational and consistent. • Read instructional-level text that is challenging yet manageable.
Indicator Statement:	Read grade-level text with high accuracy and appropriate pacing, intonation, and expression.
Objective(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply knowledge of word structures and patterns to read automatically • Demonstrate appropriate use of phrasing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Adjust intonation and pitch (rise and fall of spoken voice) appropriately. o Attend to sentence patterns and structures that signal meaning in text. o Use punctuation cues to guide meaning and expression. o Use pacing and intonation (emphasis on certain words) to convey meaning and expression.

Source: <http://www.mdk12.org/mspp/vsc/reading/bygrade/grade8.html>

Test Format and Content

For the purposes of examining about adolescent literacy, the rest of the discussion will focus on the reading MSA. For the reading MSA, students are asked to read informational and literary texts and respond to selected-response or brief constructed-response questions that pertain to the text. The MSA assesses word study, vocabulary, and reading comprehension (<http://msde.state.md.us/testing/MSAReading.pdf>).

Achievement-Level Definitions

Maryland reports tests results by three achievement levels:

- **Advanced** – Students at this grade level can regularly read above-grade-level text and demonstrate the ability to comprehend complex literature and informational passages.
- **Proficient** – Students at this level can read appropriate text and demonstrate the ability to comprehend literature and informational passages.
- **Basic** – Students at this level are unable to read and adequately comprehend grade-appropriate literature and informational passages.

Scores at or above the “proficient” level are considered proficient under the accountability provisions of NCLB.

Performance Results

Student Performance

The Maryland Department of Education (DOE) provides student-level data, disaggregated by disability status, English-proficiency status, income status, and racial/ethnic groups.³³ Table U2 shows performance results from the 2002–03 reading MSA for students in grades 5, 8, and 10, broken down by these students’ characteristics.

Sixty percent or more of students in grades 5, 8, and 10 achieved at or above the proficient level on the MSA reading assessment; and 26 percent of 5th- and 8th-graders scored at the advanced level, as did 30 percent of 10th-grade students. A low percentage of special education students reached the proficient level in all grades; however, the percentage was much lower in 8th and 10th grades (20 percent and 22 percent, respectively), compared with 5th grade (35 percent). We find this same trend for students with limited-English-proficiency as well: 24 percent reach the proficient level in 5th grade, compared with 12 percent and 15 percent in 8th grade and 10th grade, respectively.

Asian students and white students outperformed African American and Hispanic students by large margins—28–34 percentage points at the proficient level and 25–34 percent at the advanced level. Hispanic students outperformed African American students by small margins (3–5 percentage points at the proficient level and 2–4 percent at the advanced level). For instance, in grade 8, 74 percent of Asian and white students reached the proficient level, compared with 45 percent of Hispanic students and 40 percent of African American students. While white students performed at the same level as Asian students at the proficient level, a lower percentage of white students reached the advanced level (3–5 percentage points).

³³ Approximately 52 percent of students in Maryland are white; 38 percent are African American; 5 percent are Hispanic; and 5 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander. About 30 percent of students are eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program; 4 percent are in limited-English-proficiency programs; and 13 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

Table U2. Performance of 5th-, 8th-, and 10th-Graders on 2003 Reading MSA, by Student Characteristics

	Proficient and Above	Advanced
	Percentage	
5th Grade		
All students	66	26
Special education students	35	7
Students with limited-English proficiency	24	3
Economically disadvantaged students	45	9
Asian/Pacific Islander students	80	43
African American students	48	11
Hispanic students	51	13
White students	79	38
8th Grade		
All students	60	26
Special education students	20	4
Students with limited-English proficiency	12	2
Economically disadvantaged students	36	8
Asian/Pacific Islander students	74	40
African American students	40	10
Hispanic students	45	12
White students	74	37
10th Grade		
All students	61	30
Special education students	22	5
Students with limited-English proficiency	15	1
Economically disadvantaged students	38	10
Asian/Pacific Islander students	75	46
African American students	41	12
Hispanic students	45	16
White students	75	42

Source: http://www.mdk12.org/data/msa_data/index.asp?K=99AAAA

School Performance

We do not report school-level performance by urbanicity because the MSA was not administered in 2002.

APPENDIX V. MASSACHUSETTS

State Assessment System

The Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) is Massachusetts' standards-based accountability system. For the 2003–04 school year, students took MCAS assessments in the following grades and subjects:

- Grade 3 – reading
- Grade 4 – English language arts composition, English language arts language and literature, mathematics
- Grade 5 – science and technology/engineering
- Grade 6 – mathematics
- Grade 7 – English language arts composition, English language arts language and literature
- Grade 8 – mathematics, science and technology/engineering
- Grade 9 – High School End of Course, science and technology/engineering (also introductory physics and technology/engineering)
- Grade 10 – English language arts composition, English language arts language and literature, mathematics, High School End of Course assessments for biology, chemistry, introductory physics and technology/engineering.

Performance on the MCAS is used to measure school progress for accountability purposes. In addition, students must pass the 10th-grade mathematics and English Language Arts tests in order to graduate. Students may retake the 10th-grade MCAS assessments until they pass (see <http://www.doe.mass.edu/Assess/> for additional information regarding state accountability and assessment).

The MCAS is intended to measure student progress toward mastering state content standards. Massachusetts has standards in English language arts, mathematics, science and technology/engineering, history and social science, arts, comprehensive health, and foreign languages.

Educators, consultants, and staff at the Massachusetts Department of Education (DOE) developed the current English Language Arts Curriculum Framework in 2001. English language arts standards are based on ten guiding principles (see <http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/ela/0601.pdf>). The 27 general content standards follow the guiding principles across four content areas: language, reading and literature, composition, and media. The general standards provide broad statements outlining what students should know and be able to do. These standards are explicated by learning standards that detail what students in various grade ranges —PreK–2, 3–4, 5–6, 7–8, 9–10, and 11–12—should master. In

addition, standards for vocabulary, reading and composition have been further divided into PreK–K and 1–2 clusters. Table V1 presents an example of these grade-level expectations for grades 7–8 around content standard 8, which focuses on understanding text.

Table V1. Grade-Level Expectations for 7th- and 8th-Grade English Language Arts for Standard 8: Understanding Text

Students will identify the basic facts and main ideas in a text and use them as the basis for interpretation.	
(Continue to address earlier standards as needed and as they apply to more difficult texts.)	
For imaginative/literary texts:	
8.23	Use knowledge of genre characteristics to analyze a text.
8.24	Interpret mood and tone, and give supporting evidence in a text. For example, students read excerpts from <i>A Gathering of Days</i> , by Joan W. Blos, a novel written in diary form of the last year a fourteen-year-old girl lived on the family farm in New Hampshire. Students write in their own journals and then discuss in groups how the difficulties of the year—her best friend’s death, for instance—are reflected in the writing’s tone, and the extent to which detail in the writing helps the reader to understand and relate to the text.
8.25	Interpret a character’s traits, emotions, or motivation and give supporting evidence from a text.
For informational/expository texts:	
8.26	Recognize organizational structures and use of arguments for and against an issue.
8.27	Identify evidence used to support an argument.
8.28	Distinguish between the concepts of theme in a literary work and author’s purpose in an expository text.

Source: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/ela/o601.pdf>

Massachusetts’ English language arts curriculum framework also provides examples that demonstrate how teachers might address standards in their classrooms.

Test Format and Content

For the purposes of examining what the MCAS reveals about adolescent literacy, the rest of the discussion will focus on the English language arts tests that students take in grades 4, 7, and 10 (see <http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/> for further details on test format and content).

The MCAS English language arts tests contain two parts: the English language arts composition test and the English language arts language and literature test. In 2001, approximately 8 percent of the total score was from the language strand; 64 percent was from the literature strand; and 28 percent was from the composition strand.

The English language arts composition test includes two 45-minute test sessions. During the first session, students respond to a writing prompt by preparing a first draft of their writing. During the second session, students revise the first draft into a second draft, which is submitted for scoring. At grade 4, students write a narrative account that chronicles or describes an event or experience. At grade 7, the test assesses students’ skill at persuasive writing, writing in an informative mode that shares knowledge and conveys messages, instructions, and ideas. At the 10th-grade level, the test assesses literary analysis—knowledge of literary elements, themes, and

structures to analyze an excerpt from a literary text. Students' responses are judged on their focus and development and use of Standard English conventions.

The English language arts language and literature test includes multiple-choice and open-response questions. It is administered in three 45-minute test sessions. During these sessions, developmentally appropriate reading passages are followed by either a small set (3–4 multiple-choice and 1 open-response) or a large set (6–8 multiple choice and 1 open-response) of related questions. A range of literary and nonliterary texts are used as reading passages, to include short stories, novel excerpts, poetry, plays, myths/legends/fables, biographies/autobiographies, essays, speeches, editorials, interviews, letters, diary entries, newspaper articles, reviews, instructions, and advertisements. Students' answers are judged on their comprehension of the text and their familiarity and understanding of literary genres, techniques, structures, and elements.

Achievement-Level Definitions

Test results reported across the state are broken into four achievement levels. For grades 4 through 8, the achievement levels are: Advanced, Proficient, Needs Improvement, and Warning. Students scoring at or above the proficient level are considered to have fully met the academic requirements under NCLB. For grade 10, MCAS results are reported by: Advanced, Proficient, Needs Improvement, and Failing. Students scoring at or above the needs improvement level are considered to have passed the exam, which is required for graduation.

Massachusetts has created general descriptions for each achievement level that apply across subject areas and grade levels. The subject-specific descriptions of each level are provided for English Language Arts in Table V1. (Note that the levels are not further defined by grade level.)

Table V1. MCAS English Language Arts Achievement Levels, by Subject Area

	Needs Improvement On MCAS, a student at this level:	Proficient On MCAS, a student at this level:	Advanced On MCAS, a student at this level:
Language/ vocabulary	Demonstrates a modest reading vocabulary and partial understanding of word parts and word relationships (e.g., prefixes, roots, suffixes, synonyms, antonyms)	Demonstrates a solid reading vocabulary and general understanding of word parts and word relationships (e.g., prefixes, roots, suffixes, synonyms, antonyms)	Demonstrates a comprehensive reading vocabulary and in-depth understanding of word parts and word relationships (e.g., prefixes, roots, suffixes, synonyms, antonyms)
Comprehension	Demonstrates an understanding of concrete ideas, but only partial understanding of abstract or implied ideas, in grade-appropriate texts Connects some ideas within texts	Demonstrates an understanding of many concrete ideas, and most abstract and implied ideas, in grade-appropriate texts Connects ideas within texts and provides supporting evidence	Demonstrates an in-depth understanding of concrete and abstract ideas and complex meanings in grade-appropriate texts Connects complex ideas within texts and provides well-reasoned and well-supported arguments
Text elements and techniques	Shows partial understanding of how structure and genre enhance the author's purpose or theme Identifies obvious examples of some techniques authors use (e.g., repetition, exaggeration, and figurative language)	Shows clear understanding of structure and elements of genre and how they support the author's purpose or theme Identifies more subtle examples of techniques authors use in a variety of texts (e.g., repetition, exaggeration, and figurative language) as grade-appropriate	Critically evaluates how structure and elements of genre support the author's purpose or theme Identifies and critically evaluates techniques authors use in a wide variety of texts (e.g., repetition, exaggeration, and figurative language)
Composition	Writes partially organized compositions with modestly developed ideas, some supporting detail, and some demonstration of focus Uses simplistic language and sentence structure	Writes well-organized compositions with logically developed ideas, adequate detail, and clear focus Engages reader's interest through use of a variety of language choices and sentence structures	Writes well-organized, richly developed compositions with ideas that are clearly expressed and supported by extensive detail Provokes and sustains the reader's interest through effective and precise language, sentence structure, and vocabulary
Writing conventions	Writes compositions with partial control of the Standard English conventions of grammar, spelling, punctuation, and usage	Writes compositions with solid control of the Standard English conventions of grammar, spelling, punctuation, and usage	Writes compositions with sophisticated control of the Standard English conventions of grammar, spelling, punctuation, and usage

Source: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/mcaspld.html>

Performance Results

Student Performance

The Massachusetts DOE provides student-level data disaggregated by disability status, English-language-proficiency status, and race/ethnicity.¹ Table V2 shows the English language arts performance results from the 2003 MCAS administration for students in grades 4, 7, and 10, disaggregated by these students' characteristics.

Overall, 56 percent of 4th-grade students and 66 percent of 7th-grade students scored at or above the proficient level. Far fewer, 10 percent and 8 percent, respectively, scored at the advanced level. Eighty-nine percent of 10th-grade students passed the English language arts tests by scoring at or above the needs improvement level; 61 percent scored at or above the advanced level; and 20 percent scored at the advanced level.

About 5 percent of students in Massachusetts are classified as limited-English proficient. Sixteen percent of students with limited-English proficiency met proficiency standards on the English language arts MCAS in 4th grade, and 19 percent did so in 7th grade. While only 12 percent of 10th-grade students with limited-English proficiency scored at or above the proficient level, 42 percent reached or exceeded the needs improvement level and passed this section of the MCAS on the first attempt.

White students outperformed African American and Hispanic students at all three grade levels. At the 7th-grade level, 75 percent of white students scored at the proficient level, compared with 39 percent of African American students (36-percentage-point gap) and 31 percent of Hispanic students (44-percentage-point gap).

The same trends exist at the 4th and 10th grades. For example, only 76 percent of African American students and 66 percent of Hispanic students passed the 10th-grade English language arts test, compared with 94 percent of white students, an achievement gap of 18 and 28 percentage points, respectively. At the advanced level, the gap is the largest at the 10th-grade level, 18–20 percentage points, compared with 8–11 percentage points at grades 4 and 7.

¹ Approximately 76 percent of students in Massachusetts are white; 11 percent are Hispanic; 9 percent are African American; and 5 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander. About one-fourth of students are eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program; 5 percent are in limited-English-proficiency programs; and 15 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

Table V2. Performance of 4th-, 7th-, and 10th-Graders on 2003 English Language Arts MCAS, by Student Characteristics

	Needs improvement and above	Proficient and above	Advanced
	Percentage		
4th Grade			
All students	90	56	10
General education students	95	64	13
Students with disabilities	76	26	2
Students with limited-English proficiency	57	16	1
African American students	79	30	2
Asian/Pacific Islander students	91	58	14
Hispanic students	73	26	2
White students	95	65	13
7th Grade			
All students	94	66	8
General education students	98	75	10
Students with disabilities	80	29	1
Students with limited-English proficiency	63	19	1
African American students	87	39	2
Asian/Pacific Islander students	94	69	14
Hispanic students	79	31	1
White students	97	75	10
10th Grade			
All students	89	61	20
General education students	95	69	24
Students with disabilities	70	26	3
Students with limited-English proficiency	42	12	1
African American students	76	35	6
Asian/Pacific Islander students	88	58	24
Hispanic students	66	26	4
White students	94	69	24

Source: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/results.html?yr=03>

School Performance

Although Massachusetts does not report MCAS performance by poverty status or urbanicity at the student level, school-level data are available for the 2002 MCAS administration (Table V3).

About 24 percent of schools in Massachusetts were high-poverty schools. The majority of schools (64 percent) were located in suburban areas; 30 percent were urban; and 6 percent were rural. Urban schools were significantly more likely to be high-poverty than were suburban or rural schools (71 percent compared with 4 percent and 6 percent, respectively).

Without exception, low- and medium-poverty schools outperformed high-poverty schools at all achievement levels and all grade levels. For example, at the 7th grade, on average 72 percent of students in low- and medium-poverty schools scored at or above the proficient level on the English language arts MCAS, compared with 37 percent of students in high-poverty schools (35-percentage-point difference). At the needs improvement level, the differential is 24 percentage points in the 10th grade.

Suburban schools outperformed urban schools at all grade and achievement levels. For instance, at grade 7, 73 percent of students scored at or above the proficient level, and 12 percent scored at the advanced level, compared with 42 percent and 2 percent, respectively, in urban schools.

Table V3. Average School Performance on 4th-, 7th-, and 10th-Grade English Language Arts 2002 MCAS, by School Poverty and Urbanicity

	Needs Improvement and Above	Proficient and Above	Advanced
	Average Percentage		
4th Grade			
Low- and medium-poverty schools	95	62	10
High-poverty schools	79	29	2
Rural schools	93	51	7
Suburban schools	95	63	10
Urban schools	81	33	3
7th Grade			
Low- and medium-poverty schools	95	72	11
High-poverty schools	80	37	2
Rural schools	94	65	6
Suburban schools	96	73	12
Urban schools	81	42	2
10th Grade			
Low- and medium-poverty schools	89	63	21
High-poverty schools	65	28	4
Rural schools	88	59	18
Suburban schools	92	66	22
Urban schools	70	37	8

APPENDIX W. MICHIGAN

State Assessment System

Michigan administers the Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP) to students in the following grades and subjects:

- Grade 4—English language arts³⁵ and mathematics
- Grade 5—science and social studies
- Grade 7—English language arts
- Grade 8—mathematics, science, and social studies
- Grade 11—mathematics, science, social studies, and English language arts

Grade 11 assessments are administered in the spring, while all other grades are tested in the winter (late January to mid-February). The MEAP assessments are used to track school performance for state accountability purposes. While the MEAP assessment does not carry sanctions for individual teachers or students, the MEAP high school tests are used by students to qualify for the Michigan Merit Award, which provides scholarship money for students to attend state colleges and universities.³⁶ In addition, students receive an endorsement level on their diploma based on their MEAP assessment scores. This endorsement is designed to give colleges and businesses an idea of a diploma's worth (see <http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-22709---,00.html> for additional information on state accountability and assessment).

The MEAP assessments are designed to determine student progress toward mastering specific content in the Michigan Curriculum Framework. Recently, Michigan adopted grade-level content expectations.

Test Format and Content

We now focus on the required assessments related to adolescent literacy: grades 4, 7, and 11 combined English language arts writing and reading from knowledge and experience (see http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-22709_31168_31773-97184--,00.html for additional information on test format and content).

MEAP English language arts assessments contain three types of questions: multiple-choice or selected response, constructed-response, and a written response to a prompt. All sections of the

³⁵Winter 2003 was the first year that grade 4 and grade 7 students took a new, combined English language arts test that includes reading, writing, and a voluntary listening component.

³⁶Details of the Merit Award Program are available at <http://www.meritaward.state.mi.us>.

MEAP tests are student-paced: There are established testing time frames, which are given below, but students are given as much time as needed during the same continuous session to complete each section of a test.

The Writing from Knowledge and Experience section requires students to write one essay in response to a theme-related prompt. Students may choose to answer in one of five styles, either narrative, descriptive, persuasive, expository, or their own form. Students in grades 4 and 7 take this assessment in two sessions (approximately 45 minutes per session); grade 11 students have one 80-minute session. At all grade levels, the writing section assesses students' skill at clear, engaging, focused writing with precise word choice, strong content organization, and smooth flow through the text, with a six-point rubric.

The Reading from Knowledge and Experience section has two parts. One requires students to read two selections and respond to multiple-choice questions regarding the texts. Students in 4th and 7th grades are given approximately 50 minutes to answer ten multiple-choice questions about two reading selections, five multiple-choice cross-text questions, and an additional 25 multiple-choice items. For the second part of the reading section, grade 4 students answer one direct question about the theme of the reading selection and 7th-grade students write about a scenario in response to a question related to the theme. Approximately 50 minutes are allocated to this section. Eleventh-grade students are given approximately 60 minutes to answer nine multiple-choice questions about two reading selections, seven multiple-choice cross-text questions, an additional 25 multiple-choice items, and one question related to a themed scenario.

At all grade levels, for the constructed-response items, students are expected to clearly and effectively choose key ideas from the reading that support their position on the question and make a clear connection between the reading selections. Students must demonstrate a mastery of language, strong relationships among ideas, and have no misconceptions about the reading selections, and they must provide appropriate examples and details that thoroughly support their position and the connection between the two.

In 2002–2003, the total scores for the 4th- and 7th-grade mandatory English language arts sections included approximately 28 percent from Writing from Knowledge and Experience and 72 percent from Reading from Knowledge and Experience.

Achievement-Level Definitions

MEAP assessment results are reported using four achievement levels for elementary and middle school grades:

- Level 1—Exceeded Michigan standards

- Level 2—Met Michigan standards
- Level 3—At Basic level
- Level 4—Apprentice.

High school scores are reported along four levels, as well:

- Level 1—Endorsed exceeded Michigan standards
- Level 2—Endorsed at met Michigan standards
- Level 3—Endorsed at basic level
- Level 4—Not Endorsed.

Students scoring at or above level 2 are considered to have met the academic requirements under NCLB.

Performance Results

Student Performance

Table W1 presents the reading, writing, and combined English language arts performance for the 4th, 7th, and 11th grades, disaggregated by disability status, English-proficiency status,³⁷ socioeconomic status, and race/ethnicity.³⁸

Higher percentages of all 4th-, 7th-, and 11th-grade students met and exceeded reading standards (75, 61, and 71 percent, respectively) than met and exceeded writing standards (47, 57, and 50 percent, respectively). Approximately 60 percent met and exceeded the combined English language arts standards.

Not surprisingly, students with limited-English proficiency scored far below their peers in all three grades in the reading assessment and the combined English language arts assessments. The differences in the relative percentages of students meeting or exceeding standards ranged from 20 to 41 percentage points and increased substantially in the higher grades. In writing, there was a small achievement gap of 5–7 percentage points for grades 4 and 7, but the gap increased to 22 percentage points in grade 11.

The percentage of special education students who met or exceeded the standard decreased as the grade levels increased. For instance, on the combined English language arts assessment, 31

³⁷In 2003, limited-English-proficiency students were offered an alternate MEAP; however, starting in 2004, all limited-English-proficiency students will take the standard MEAP with accommodations.

³⁸Approximately 73 percent of students in Michigan are white; 20 percent are African American; 4 percent are Hispanic; and 2 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander. About 31 percent of students are eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program; 3 percent are in limited-English-proficiency programs; and 13 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

Table W1. Performance of 4th-, 7th-, and 11th-Graders on 2003 Reading, Writing, and Combined English Language Arts MEAP, by Student Characteristics

	Reading	Writing	Combined
	Percentage Meeting or Exceeding Standards		
4th Grade			
All students	75	47	60
General education students	78	49	62
Special education students	48	27	31
Students with limited-English proficiency	55	42	43
Students with English proficiency	75	47	60
Economically disadvantaged students	61	37	44
Non–economically disadvantaged students	82	52	67
African American students	56	33	39
Hispanic students	64	40	48
White students	81	51	66
7th Grade			
All students	61	57	58
General education students	65	60	62
Special education students	24	23	18
Students with limited-English proficiency	32	50	31
Students with English proficiency	62	57	58
Economically disadvantaged students	41	44	37
Non–economically disadvantaged students	69	62	66
African American students	35	41	31
Hispanic students	47	49	43
White students	69	61	66
11th Grade			
All students	71	50	63
General education students	75	53	67
Special education students	25	12	16
Students with limited-English proficiency	31	28	27
Students with English proficiency	72	50	64
Economically disadvantaged students	53	32	43
Non–economically disadvantaged students	74	53	67
African American students	54	33	44
Hispanic students	56	37	47
White students	75	53	67

Source: The 2003 MEAP test results used in this report were found at: <http://tres-secure.state.mi.us/meritaward/mma/results/win03/StatewideDemographicsSummary.pdf>. The 11th-grade test results were not available online and were obtained from the MEAP office.

Note: Operational test results were used in this report. Alternate limited-English-proficiency student tests were administered in 2003; those results are not compiled in this report.

percent met or exceeded standards in 4th grade, compared with 18 percent in 7th grade and 16 percent in 11th grade.

White students had higher scores than African American and Hispanic students at all grade levels. In the 7th grade, 69 percent of white students met or exceeded standards in reading, 61 percent did so in writing, and 66 percent did so on the combined English language arts score, compared with 31–41 percent of African American students. The proficiency levels of Hispanic students were higher than those of African American students in all three subjects by between 7 and 12 percentage points at the 4th- and 7th-grade levels. The difference in performance shrank to 2–4 percentage points by grade 11.

Students who did not come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds had higher proficiency levels than economically disadvantaged students in reading. At the 4th-grade level, the gap in proficiency rates was 21–23 percentage points in reading and the combined English language arts and 15 percentage points in writing. The performance gap widens in the higher grades. For example, for the 7th grade, the gap was 28–29 percentage points in reading and the combined English language arts and 18 percentage points in writing.

School Performance

School-level performance data by urbanicity are available for the 2002 MEAP administration for grades 4, 7, and 11. Table W2 provides information about school performance for rural, suburban, and urban schools. Fifty-six percent of Michigan schools are suburban, 23 percent are rural, and 21 percent are urban. The majority of urban schools are high-poverty schools (72 percent), compared with 23 percent of rural schools and 12 percent of suburban schools.

The pass rates (percentage of students who met or exceeded standards) in reading in urban schools were significantly lower than those of suburban and rural schools. The difference in the pass rate was 22–24 percentage points at the 4th and 7th grades and 12–16 percentage points at the 11th grade. The proportion of 11th-graders who met or exceeded standards in writing in urban schools was 35 percent--12 percentage points lower than the 47 percent who did so in suburban schools.

Table W2. Average School Performance on the 4th-, 7th-, and 11th-Grade 2002 Reading and Writing MEAP, by Student Characteristics³⁹

	Reading	Writing
	Average Percentage Meeting or Exceeding Standards	
4th Grade		
Rural schools	61	*
Suburban schools	62	*
Urban schools	39	*
7th Grade		
Rural schools	54	*
Suburban schools	53	*
Urban schools	30	*
11th Grade		
Rural schools	49	41
Suburban schools	53	47
Urban schools	37	35

*The school-level performance database does not include writing data for 4th- or 7th-grade students for 2002.

³⁹Recall that the combined English language arts test was not administered until Winter 2003. The school-level results are for the 2002 administration of the test and therefore do not have combined English language arts data.

APPENDIX X. MINNESOTA

State Assessment System

Under the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) system, students are assessed in the following grades and subjects:

- Grade 3—Reading and mathematics
- Grade 5—Reading, writing, and mathematics
- Grade 7—Reading and mathematics

By 2006, reading and mathematics MCAs will also be administered in grades 4, 6, and 8, and a science MCA will be operational in 2008 in order to meet the requirements under NCLB.

In addition, the state administers the Basic Skills Test (BST) in reading and mathematics at grade 8 and in writing at grade 10. Students must pass the BST assessments in order to graduate.

Those failing the assessment have multiple opportunities to retake it (see http://education.state.mn.us/html/intro_testing.htm for additional information regarding the state assessment system).

Minnesota adopted academic standards in language arts, mathematics, and the arts in 2003, and the 2006 MCAs will be the first tests to assess and report on the new reading and mathematics standards. Michigan has also drafted standards in science and social studies, which are under review. The Language Arts curriculum framework articulates standards in reading and literature, writing, and speaking, listening, and viewing. For each of these areas, Minnesota has created broad statements regarding what students should know and do (e.g., The student will read and understand grade-appropriate English-language text.) These statements are further defined by grade (though grades 9–12 are treated as a grade-span), with standards and benchmarks. Table X1 provides an example of these standards and expectations for 7th-grade reading and literature.

Test Format and Content

For the purposes of examining adolescent literacy, the rest of the discussion will focus on the reading tests that students take in grades 5 and 7 and the writing assessments they take in grades 5 and 10.

The MCA reading assessments are untimed and incorporate multiple-choice and constructed-response questions. Students are required to read fiction and nonfiction works such as poems, recipes, short stories, directions, or a textbook passage. Students are then asked to answer questions about concepts and skills, such as the main idea, the sequence of events, chart or graph

details, retelling a story in their own words, fact and opinion, the author's bias, analysis or evaluation of the text, and specialized vocabulary in context.

Table X1. 7th-Grade Language Arts Standards for Reading and Literature

I. READING AND LITERATURE: The student will read and understand grade-appropriate English-language text.	
<p>A. Word Recognition, Analysis and Fluency</p> <p><u>Standard:</u> The student will read with accuracy and fluency.</p>	<p>The student will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. read unfamiliar complex and multi-syllabic words using cueing systems, advanced phonetic analysis, and structural analysis 2. read narrative and expository text with fluency, accuracy, and comprehension at an appropriate silent-reading rate 3. apply correct word pronunciation and inflection.
<p>B. Vocabulary Expansion</p> <p><u>Standard:</u> The student will use a variety of strategies to expand reading, listening, and speaking vocabularies.</p>	<p>The student will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. acquire, understand and use new vocabulary through explicit vocabulary instruction and independent reading 2. analyze word structure and use context clues to understand new words 3. recognize and interpret words with multiple meanings 4. recognize the influences of other languages on the English language 5. apply knowledge of Greek and Latin roots, prefixes, and suffixes to understand content-area vocabulary and assist pronunciation 6. identify and explain analogies, similes, and metaphors 7. determine pronunciation, meanings, and alternate choices through the use of dictionaries, thesauruses, and electronic tools.
<p>C. Comprehension</p> <p><u>Standard:</u> The student will understand the meaning of texts, using a variety of strategies, and will demonstrate literal, interpretive, inferential, and evaluative comprehension.</p>	<p>The student will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. comprehend, interpret, and evaluate text by asking and answering questions 2. recall and use prior learning and preview text to prepare for reading 3. use knowledge of narrative and expository text structures and subject specific texts to summarize content 4. make inferences and draw conclusions based on explicit and implied information from texts 5. create outlines, logical notes, and summaries across content areas 6. use texts' structural organizers, such as graphics, illustrations, references, notes, introductions, boldface type, and subheadings to aid comprehension 7. distinguish statements of fact from opinion and give examples from text 8. critically read and evaluate to determine the author's purpose, point of view, audience, and message 9. follow written directions in technical reading 10. Scan a passage to determine relevant information and skim the text to locate specific information 11. identify devices used in persuasive text.

Table X1. (cont.)

D. Literature	The student will:
<u>Standard:</u> The student will actively engage in the reading process and read, understand, respond to, analyze, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate a wide variety of fiction, poetic, and nonfiction texts.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. read a variety of high-quality, traditional, classical, and contemporary literary works specific to America, as well as significant works from other countries2. identify and analyze various genres and sub-genres as forms with distinct characteristics and purposes3. identify and analyze the relationships among elements of fiction, including setting, character, plot, conflict/resolution, theme, and tone4. identify and analyze the effect of characters' traits on the plot and resolution of the conflict5. analyze how figurative language and literary devices contribute to the meaning of a text6. identify and discuss the effect of the speaker and recognize the difference between first- and third-person point of view7. relate a given literary work to historical events (place, time, and custom)8. explain how form and stylistic devices convey the meaning of a poem9. identify and understand recurring themes across literary works, citing evidence from the texts10. respond to literature using ideas and details from the text to support reactions and make literary connections11. read from and respond to a variety of fiction, poetic, and nonfiction texts of increasing complexity for personal enjoyment.

Source: <http://education.state.mn.us/content/009200.pdf>

Grade 5 tests may include up to 8 selections (with at least one of the following: fictional story, poem, nonfiction text, nonfiction informative selection, and one chart, table, or graph) ranging from 250 to 1,000 words in length. The test includes 46 multiple-choice questions and three constructed-response questions worth 4 points each, for a total of 58 points. An additional ten multiple-choice questions and one constructed-response question are included in the test as field-test items. The field-test questions are not part of the student's test scores (<http://education.state.mn.us/content/G5RSspecs.pdf>).

Grade 7 tests include six reading selections (two nonfiction, three fiction, and one technical), with a total of 3,600 to 4,200 words and a maximum of 850 words per selection. There are 40 multiple-choice questions and a total of 12 points of open-response questions, for a total of 52 raw-score points (<http://education.state.mn.us/content/G7RSspecs.pdf>).

On the BST, the 10th-grade reading test includes 5 to 7 passages (one technical, one or two expository passages, one to three contemporary intellectual essays, and one or two historical essays); each passage includes 400–1,000 words (no length requirement for technical selections), with a total test word count of 3,000–4,000. There are 42 multiple-choice questions with 12

points of open-response questions, for a total of 54 raw-score points (<http://education.state.mn.us/content/G10RSpecs.pdf>).

The writing assessments require students to write one narrative, clarification, problem solution, or descriptive composition based on a prompt. Students respond to only one of four possible prompts. The writing assessments are scored on a six-point rubric based on clarity of central idea, coherent focus, organization, detail support or elaboration of ideas, and correct language conventions (spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc.).

The 2003 grade 5 prompts were

- **Descriptive**—Describe a favorite town or city to someone who has never been there.
- **Narrative**—Imagine that you go to school and see a character from your favorite book sitting at a desk in your classroom. Write a story about what happens.
- **Problem Solution**—The students in your school are unhappy with the time that school begins. Write a letter to your principal describing the problem and suggesting ways to solve it.
- **Clarification**—If you could live any place in the world, where do you think the best place would be? Explain your choice. (<http://education.state.mn.us/content/010662.pdf>)

Achievement-Level Definitions

Test results reported across the state are broken into five achievement levels.⁴⁰

- Level I (below basic)—Scores indicate that the student has significant gaps in the knowledge and skills necessary for satisfactory grade-level work.
- Level IIa (basic)—Scores represent partial knowledge and skills required for successful grade-level achievement.
- Level IIb (proficient)—Scores represent state expectations for achievement of all students. Students at this level are working successfully on grade-level material.
- Level III (advanced)—Scores represent successful work with challenging, above-grade-level material.
- Level IV (beyond advanced)—Scores represent superior, advanced academic performance, well beyond what is expected at the grade level.

Scores at or above the proficient level are considered proficient under NCLB accountability requirements.

⁴⁰The 2003 and previous grade 5 Writing MCAs were graded on a scale of Level I, Level IIa, Level IIb, Level III, and Level IV. In 2004, the achievement levels became 1-5: I=1, IIa = 2, IIb = 3, III = 4, and IV = 5.

Performance Results

Student Performance

Tables X2 and X3 presents data on student performance, disaggregated by disability status, English-proficiency status, socioeconomic status, and racial/ethnic groups for the 5th-grade 2002 MCA in reading and writing.⁴¹ Table X4 shows the 2002 8th-grade reading and 10th-grade writing BST results for students, broken down by these characteristics.⁴²

Overall, 75 percent of 5th-grade students reached the proficient level, 64 percent scored at or above the advanced level, and 25 percent reached the highest level of proficiency—beyond advanced. Almost 40 percent of special education students scored at or above the proficient level, as did 25 percent of students with limited-English proficiency.

Economically disadvantaged students scored far below their peers—30 percentage points at or above the proficient level, 34 percentage points at or above the advanced level, and 22 percentage points at the beyond advanced level. There were also large achievement gaps between white students and African American students (40 percentage points), Asian students (33 percentage points), and Hispanic students (36 percentage points) at the proficient level or above. These gaps persisted at the advanced and beyond advanced levels as well.

Minnesota reports data for student performance on each of the four writing prompts. Overall, 74–87 percent of students performed at or above the proficient level on the various prompts. Between 44 and 62 percent of special education students reached the proficient level on the various writing assessments, as did 43–69 percent of students with limited-English proficiency. Overall, students performed best on the problem solution prompt and not quite as well on the narrative and descriptive prompts. Similar to what we found in reading, there were large achievement gaps between economically disadvantaged students and their peers and between white students and Asian students, Hispanic students, and African American students.

Eighty percent of 8th-graders passed the reading BST, and 91 percent of 10th-graders passed the writing BST. Forty percent of special education students passed the 8th-grade reading test, and 63 percent passed the 10th-grade writing test, as did 31 percent and 48 percent of students with limited-English proficiency, respectively. There were achievement gaps of 18–29 percentage

⁴¹Approximately 82 percent of students in Minnesota are white; 7 percent are African American; 5 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander; and 4 percent are Hispanic. About 26 percent of students are eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program; 6 percent are in limited-English-proficiency programs; and 13 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

⁴²Test results for 2003 were not available because of concerns about data accuracy.

points between non–economically disadvantaged students and economically disadvantaged students, and even larger achievement gaps by race/ethnicity (in most cases). White students outperformed African American students by 32–40 percentage points, Hispanic students by 24–34 percentage points, and Asian students by 15–25 percentage points.

Table X2. Performance of 5th-Graders on 2002 Reading MCA, by Student Characteristics

	Proficient and Above	Advanced and Above	Beyond Advanced
	Percentage		
5th Grade			
All students	75	64	25
General education students	80	69	28
Special education students	39	29	8
Students with limited-English proficiency	25	15	2
Students with English proficiency	78	67	27
Economically disadvantaged students	54	40	10
Non–economically disadvantaged students	84	74	32
African American students	42	29	6
Asian/Pacific Islander students	49	38	12
Hispanic students	46	34	9
White students	82	71	29

Source: http://education.state.mn.us/html/intro_mde_analysis.htm

Table X3. Performance of 5th-Graders on 2002 Writing MCA, by Student Characteristics

	Writing Narrative	Writing Problem Solution	Writing Descriptive	Writing Clarification
	Percentage Proficient or Above			
5th Grade				
All students	74	87	74	78
General education students	79	90	78	82
Special education students	44	62	44	49
Students with limited-English proficiency	50	69	43	56
Students with English proficiency	76	88	76	79
Economically disadvantaged students	60	77	57	64
Non–economically disadvantaged students	80	91	81	84
African American students	48	72	46	56
Asian/Pacific Islander students	68	85	63	72
Hispanic students	56	70	53	62
White students	78	89	79	81

Source: http://education.state.mn.us/html/intro_mde_analysis.htm

Table X4. Performance of 8th-Graders on 2002 Reading BST and 10th-Graders on 2002 Writing BST, by Student Characteristics

	8 th -Grade Reading	10 th -Grade Writing
	Percentage Passing	
All students	80	91
General education students	86	94
Special education students	40	63
Students with limited-English proficiency	31	48
Students with English proficiency	83	93
Economically disadvantaged students	59	77
Non–economically disadvantaged students	88	95
African American students	46	62
Asian/Pacific Islander students	61	79
Hispanic students	52	70
White students	86	94

Source: http://education.state.mn.us/html/intro_mde_analysis.htm

School Performance

Data on student performance on the MCA/BST by urbanicity are available for the 2002 administrations of the MCA and the BST (Tables X5 and X6). Forty-one percent of schools in Minnesota were suburban, 40 percent were rural, and 18 percent were urban. Urban schools were far more likely to be high-poverty schools—65 percent, compared with 16 percent of rural schools and 4 percent of suburban schools. The average performance of students in rural and suburban schools was quite similar, although suburban schools did outperform rural schools by small margins in 5th-grade reading (3–6 percentage points across achievement levels). However, the average performance of students in urban schools was far below that of rural and suburban schools—26 to 29 percentage points across grade levels at the passing or proficient level.

Table X5. Average School Performance on 5th-Grade 2002 Reading MCA, by Urbanicity

	Proficient and Above	Advanced and Above	Beyond Advanced
Average Percentage			
Rural schools	76	65	23
Suburban schools	79	69	29
Urban schools	50	39	14

Table X6. Average School Performance on 8th-Grade 2002 Reading BST and 10th-Grade 2002 Writing BST, by Urbanicity

	8th-Grade Reading	10th-Grade Writing
Average Percentage Passing		
Rural schools	79	91
Suburban schools	80	90
Urban schools	52	68

APPENDIX Y. MISSISSIPPI

State Assessment System

Mississippi's assessment system consists of a number of assessments:

- The Mississippi Curriculum Tests (MCT) in reading, language, and mathematics in grades 2 through 8.
- Writing assessment in grades 4 and 7.
- A norm-referenced test in reading/language arts and mathematics in grade 6.
- Subject Area Test Program (SATP) assessments, which are end-of-course tests in Algebra I, Biology, English II, and U.S. History from 1877.

In addition, Mississippi is developing science assessments in grades 5 and 8 (see <http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/account/SAM/SAM.htm> for additional information on the state assessment and accountability system).

Mississippi's criterion-referenced tests aim to measure the state's content standards and curriculum frameworks. The language arts framework describes what students in grades K–12 should be able to do in English, language arts, and reading.. The framework is grade-specific and links competencies with suggested objectives, teaching strategies, and assessment methods. Table Y1 presents an example of one competency—communicating through writing—for grade 8.

Table Y1. Language Arts Framework for Communicating through Writing, 8th Grade

Communicate for a variety of purposes through different forms of writing, using processes of reading, writing, listening, and viewing for an expanding audience.	
Objectives:	Suggested Teaching Strategies:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accomplish a writing process through planning, drafting, revising, editing, publishing, and self-reflecting on written communications, such as various short papers (narrative, descriptive, expository, persuasive), essay test questions and responses, character analysis, for different audiences and purposes, with increasing independence. (Each teacher will determine the appropriate number of products to be taken through a writing process.)• Write with increasing complexity in various forms, such as poetry, anecdotes, fables, tall tales, myths, skits, plays, stories.• Write a reaction to, interpretation of, or summary of what has been read or heard.• Revise to ensure effective introductions, wording, topic sentences, supporting details, and conclusions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students will write persuasive compositions, trying to alter a school rule, schedule, course offerings, etc. (e.g., trying to get music and art included in the junior high curriculum). (Assessment uses rubric instrument.)• At the beginning of a new calendar year, students will construct calendars listing not only months, days, holidays, but also original poems, anecdotes, etc., for each month. (Assessment uses rubric instrument.)

Source: http://marcopolo.mde.k12.ms.us/downloads/lang_arts/la_o8.pdf

Test Format and Content

Below we discuss the tests that assess literacy skills in adolescents – the MCTs in reading and language; the writing assessments; and the English II subject-area test (see <http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/acad/osa/> for additional information regarding test content and format).

MCT

The reading and language tests contain 45 multiple-choice questions and four open-ended questions. Each multiple-choice item is worth 1 point. The value of each open-ended item depends upon the item: most are worth one or two points, and a few are worth three points.

The following curriculum objectives are measured by the MCT:

Reading

- Context Clues – Items in this category assess students’ ability to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words by utilizing picture and context clues; decode unknown words using the three-cueing system; and use multiple meanings of words in context.
- Word Structure – Items in this category assess students’ ability to recognize and comprehend prefixes, suffixes, compound words, root words, and contractions; distinguish between contractions and possessives; and extend syntactic patterns.
- Word Patterns – Items in this category assess students’ ability to recognize vowel sounds; decode words using phonetic generalizations; and extend phonetic patterns.
- Vocabulary – Items in this category assess students’ ability to recognize and comprehend synonyms, antonyms, homonyms, and homographs.
- Main Idea – Items in this category assess students’ ability to comprehend the meaning of text by identifying main ideas, details, stated cause and effect, and story elements; distinguishing fact and opinion; and summarizing main ideas.
- Expanded Comprehension – Items in this category assess students’ ability to expand the meaning of text by drawing conclusions and making inferences; determining implied cause and effect; making predictions; comparing and contrasting; identifying author’s purpose and tone; analyzing and describing story elements; connecting literature to real-life situations; and recognizing and interpreting figurative language.
- Workplace Data – Items in this category assess students’ ability to utilize text features, such as visual aids, maps, graphs, charts, captions, headings, and subheadings; utilize parts of books; identify a sequence of steps or activities; follow directions; locate and apply information; identify information that provides additional clarity; and interpret specialized vocabulary.

Language

- Capitalization and Punctuation – Items in this category assess students’ ability to recognize the correct use of grade-level-appropriate punctuation marks and capitalization in sentences, paragraphs, and letters. Constructed-response items also have students proofread a given sentence or paragraph and correct a specified number of errors.
- Spelling – Items in this category assess students’ ability to recognize and correct spelling of grade-level spelling words given in context by means of a sentence or a phrase.
- Sentence Structure – Items in this category assess students’ ability to recognize sentences that are complete and that follow Standard English conventions. Students distinguish complete sentences from fragments and run-on sentences; recognize subject/verb and pronoun agreement, correct adjective and adverb forms, appropriate verb tense, and general common syntax; and concisely and accurately combine related sentences. Constructed-response items also have students write simple and compound sentences.
- Meaning – Items in this category assess students’ ability to identify the elements of a cohesive paragraph. Students identify appropriate topic sentences, choose relevant information to include in a paragraph, put sentences in order, and choose traditional words to relate sentences to one another. In constructed-response items, students also write sentences or paragraphs in response to prompts, short sets of instructions, letters, and information to fill in a form or application (<http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/acad/osa/mctobj.pdf>).

Writing Assessments

In grades 4 and 7, students respond to a prompt designed to elicit either narrative, informative, or persuasive responses. The writing assessments are scored using a four-point holistic rubric.

English II Subject Area Test

The English II Subject Area Test measures knowledge of language conventions, reading comprehension, and effective writing skills according to competencies found in the Language Arts Curriculum Framework. The assessment consists of two separately administered tests: English II Multiple-choice and English II Writing. For the writing section, students write an informative essay and a narrative essay. Students have approximately two hours for the assessment; however, students needing additional time will be accommodated.

Achievement-Level Definitions

Proficiency levels for the English language arts MCTs and the English II component of the SATP are advanced, proficient, basic, and minimal. Definitions of these levels on these assessments are

provided in Table Y2. Scores at or above the proficient level are considered “passing” for accountability purposes.

Table Y2. Achievement-Level Definitions for the English Language Arts MCTs and English II SATP

Achievement Level	MCT	SATP English Test II
Advanced	Students at the advanced level consistently perform in a manner clearly beyond that required to be successful at the next grade.	Students at the advanced level consistently perform in a manner clearly beyond that required to be successful in a more advanced course in the content area.
Proficient	Students at the proficient level demonstrate solid academic performance and mastery of the content-area knowledge and skills required for success at the next grade. Students who perform at this level are well prepared to begin work on even more challenging material than is required at the next grade.	Students at the proficient level demonstrate solid academic performance and mastery of the knowledge and skills required for success in a more advanced course in the content area.
Basic	Students at the basic level demonstrate partial mastery of the content-area knowledge and skills required for success at the next grade. Remediation may be necessary for these students.	Students at the basic level demonstrate partial mastery of the knowledge and skills in the course and may experience difficulty in a more advanced course in the content area.
Minimal	Students at the minimal level are below basic and do not demonstrate mastery of the content-area knowledge and skills required for success at the next grade. These students require additional instruction and remediation in the basic skills that are necessary for success at the grade tested.	Students at the minimal level are below basic and do not demonstrate mastery of the knowledge and skills required for success in the course.

Source:
http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/acad/osa/MCT_Proficiency_Levels.pdf; <http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/acad/osa/English2.html>

Performance Results

Student Performance

Student test results are reported for all students, and for students disaggregated by disability status, race/ethnicity, and economic disadvantage status.⁴³ Table Y3 provides 5th- and 8th-grade results for these groups of students on the English language arts MCT.

⁴³Approximately 51 percent of students in Mississippi are African American; 47 percent are white; and no other racial/ethnic group comprises 1 percent of the student population. About 65 percent of students are eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program; less than 1 percent are in limited-English-proficiency programs; and 13 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

The large majority of students—over 90 percent—scored at the basic level in grade 4 reading and language, and there were relatively small differences among students grouped by disability status, race/ethnicity, and economic disadvantage status. In what follows, we focus on those scoring at the proficient level and above.

Table Y3. Performance of 4th-and 8th-Graders on 2003 English Language Arts MCT, by Student Characteristics

	Reading		Language	
	Basic and above	Proficient and above	Basic and above	Proficient and above
	Percentage			
4 th Grade				
All students	94	87	90	68
Students without disabilities	95	87	91	69
Students with disabilities	92	83	87	62
Economically disadvantaged students	92	82	87	59
Non–economically disadvantaged students	96	94	95	81
African American students	91	80	86	57
White students	96	95	96	81
8 th Grade				
All students	81	57	93	53
Students without disabilities	82	57	93	54
Students with disabilities	64	42	77	33
Economically disadvantaged students	73	43	90	41
Non–economically disadvantaged students	89	70	95	65
African American students	71	40	89	39
White students	91	73	96	67

Source: <http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/account/RC3A/HTML/S00000000.HTM>

Note: Mississippi reports scores of 96–100 percent together in their report. We report the lower bound in this range in the table (96 percent).

About 87 percent of all 4th-graders scored at the proficient level in reading, and 68 percent did so in language. There were small differences between the performance of students with and without disabilities (4–7 percentage points). The achievement differences by race were larger: 15 percentage points in reading and 24 percentage points in language. Economically disadvantaged students also had proficiency rates that were significantly lower than those of other students, by 12 percentage points in reading and 22 percentage points in language.

While the percentage of students scoring at the basic level was also quite high at the 8th grade, the percentage of those scoring at the proficient level was much lower: 57 percent in reading and 53

percent in language. The differences in proficiency rates among different groups of students were much larger in the 8th grade: 15–21 percentage points between students with and without disabilities; 28–33 percentage points between African American and white students; and 24–27 percentage points between economically disadvantaged students and other students.

Table Y4 shows the 4th- and 7th-grade writing scores for the same groups of students. While between 93 and 96 percent of students scored at the basic level and above, the proportions who were judged proficient were considerably smaller—24 percent of 4th-graders and 31 percent of 7th-graders. The differences between African American and white students were smaller than those seen in reading and language and ranged from 11 percentage points in grade 4 to 18 percentage points in grade 7. Similarly, differences in proficiency rates of economically disadvantaged students and their counterparts were smaller than those reported earlier—10–14 percentage points.

Table Y4. Performance of 4th- and 7th-Graders on 2003 MWA, by Student Characteristics

	4 th Grade		7 th Grade	
	Basic and above	Proficient and above	Basic and above	Proficient and above
	Percentage			
All students	96	24	93	31
Students without disabilities	96	24	94	32
Students with disabilities	94	20	87	25
Economically disadvantaged students	96	20	92	25
Non-economically disadvantaged students	96	30	96	39
African American students	96	19	91	22
White students	96	30	96	40

Source: <http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/account/RC3A/HTML/S00000000.HTM>

Note: Mississippi reports scores of 96–100 percent together in their report. We report the lower bound in this range in the table (96 percent).

Table Y5 presents the percentage of high school students passing the English II SATP in the first attempt for 2003. The reading and language-convention test appeared to be more difficult than the narrative and informative essay for students to pass—78 percent passed the former in the first attempt compared with the 94–97 percent who passed the essay portions of the test. Less than half of students with disabilities passed the reading and language-convention section compared with 80 percent of students without disabilities; the difference in pass rates was much smaller for the two essay sections. There was a 22-percentage-point gap in the pass rates of African

American and white students in the reading and language-convention section compared with a 2–5-percentage-point gap in the essay sections. Similarly, there was a difference of 18 percentage points in the pass rates of economically disadvantaged and other students in the reading and language-convention section, compared with 2–4 percentage points in the two essay sections.

Table Y5. Student Performance on 2003 English II SATP, by Student Characteristics

	Reading and language convention	Narrative essay	Informative essay
	Percentage Passing First Attempt		
All students	78	94	97
Students without disabilities	80	94	97
Students with disabilities	45	88	90
Economically disadvantaged students	68	92	96
Non–economically disadvantaged students	86	96	98
African American students	67	92	96
White students	89	97	98

Source: <http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/account/RC3A/HTML/S0000000.HTM>

Note: Mississippi reports scores of 96–100 percent together in their report. We report the lower bound in this range in the table (96 percent).

School Performance

School-level data by urbanicity are available for the 2002 MCT administration for grades 5 and 8 for English language arts and the 2002 MWA for grades 4 and 7 (Tables Y6 and Y7).

Approximately 64 percent of schools in Mississippi were rural; 24 percent were suburban; and 12 percent were urban.⁴⁴ Over 80 percent were high-poverty schools: Almost all rural and urban schools were high-poverty (95 percent and 100 percent, respectively), while 43 percent of suburban schools were high-poverty schools.

In reading, language, and writing, at all grades and achievement levels, average school scores in suburban schools were higher than those in urban and rural schools--with one exception (performance of suburban and urban schools was equal at the basic level for 4th grade). For instance, for grade 8 reading at the proficient level, suburban schools outperformed rural schools by an average of 8 percentage points and urban schools by an average of 10 percentage points.

⁴⁴ Data for urbanicity and poverty status were missing for approximately 6 percent of schools.

Table Y6. Average School Performance on 5th- and 8th-Grade 2002 English Language Arts MCT, by Urbanicity

	Reading		Language	
	Basic and Above	Proficient and Above	Basic and Above	Proficient and Above
	Average Percentage			
5 th Grade				
Rural schools	86	75	87	59
Suburban schools	91	82	90	66
Urban schools	89	79	91	64
8 th Grade				
Rural schools	73	45	90	40
Suburban schools	79	53	92	46
Urban schools	70	43	86	39

Table Y7. Average School Performance on 4th- and 7th-Grade 2002 MWA, by Urbanicity

	4 th Grade		7 th Grade	
	Basic and Above	Proficient and Above	Basic and Above	Proficient and Above
	Average Percentage			
Rural schools	90	41	91	29
Suburban schools	93	49	94	35
Urban schools	93	41	93	29

APPENDIX Z. MISSOURI

State Assessment System

The Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) is designed to measure student progress in meeting the Show-Me Standards. The 73 Show-Me Standards, adopted by the State Board of Education in 1996, describe what Missouri students must know and be able to do.

As of spring 2003, Missouri required that districts administer assessments in communication arts for grades 3, 7, and 11 and in mathematics for grades 4, 8, and 10. Districts may also voluntarily administer the science assessment in grades 3, 7, and 10 and the social studies assessment in grades 4, 8, and 11. The department uses the information obtained through MAP to monitor the progress of Missouri's students in meeting the state standards, to inform the public and the state legislature about students' performance, to help make informed decisions about educational issues, and, now, to hold schools accountable under NCLB (see <http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/assess/for> additional assessment and accountability information).

In future years, Missouri will be adding to and revising assessments so that all students in grades 3–8 are tested annually in reading/language arts and mathematics in order to meet the testing requirements of NCLB.

Missouri's academic standards in all subjects are grouped around four goals:

- Goal 1—Students in Missouri public schools will acquire the knowledge and skills to gather, analyze, and apply information and ideas.
- Goal 2—Students in Missouri public schools will acquire the knowledge and skills to communicate effectively within and beyond the classroom.
- Goal 3—Students in Missouri public schools will acquire the knowledge and skills to recognize and solve problems.
- Goal 4—Students in Missouri public schools will acquire the knowledge and skills to make decisions and act as responsible members of society
(<http://dese.mo.gov/standards/process.html>).

Standards, then, provide an overview of what knowledge and skills Missouri public school students should acquire. These are not grade-specific. For example, the standards for communication arts specify that students in Missouri public schools will acquire a solid foundation, which includes knowledge of and proficiency in:

1. Speaking and writing Standard English (including grammar, usage, punctuation, spelling, capitalization).
2. Reading and evaluating fiction, poetry, and drama.
3. Reading and evaluating nonfiction works and material (such as biographies, newspapers, technical manuals).
4. Writing formally (such as reports, narratives, essays) and informally (such as outlines, notes).
5. Comprehending and evaluating the content and artistic aspects of oral and visual presentations (such as storytelling, debates, lectures, multi-media productions).
6. Participating in formal and informal presentations and discussions of issues and ideas.
7. Identifying and evaluating relationships between language and culture
(<http://dese.mo.gov/standards/comarts.html>).

To help districts determine what students should learn and be able to do in accordance with these standards in various grades, the state has developed grade-level expectations or curriculum frameworks for students in three grade spans: 1–4, 5–8, and 9–12. The curriculum frameworks for each of the six content areas include:

- An overview of education in Missouri in that content area
- A listing of what students should know and be able to do at the elementary, middle, and high school levels
- Suggested learning activities to develop pertinent knowledge and skills
- Discussion of relevant educational issues and practices
(<http://dese.mo.gov/standards/comarts.html>).

Table Z1 presents an example from the communication arts grades 5–8 expectations for goal 3 of Missouri Education—Recognizing and Solving Problems.

Table Z1. Grade-Level Expectations and Sample Learning Activities, Communication Arts 5–8, Goal 3—Recognizing and Solving Problems

By the end of 8 th grade, all students should know how to: Apply communication strategies to identify, understand, and solve problems.	
What All Students Should be Able to Do	Sample Learning Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and state problems and solutions clearly Ask questions to determine causes of problems Listen and respond politely to others Collect information and determine its reliability Focus on the important aspects of the problem Generate possible solutions Summarize the problem and suggested solutions Predict possible results of proposed solutions Develop a plan for solving the problem under discussion Revise plans when necessary Evaluate effectiveness of communication strategies used Facilitate problem solving by using appropriate technologies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research a school or community problem and propose solutions; then write a persuasive letter to the appropriate audience, requesting specific action. Design a desired school improvement or project with classmates; brainstorm possible problems that might arise. Devise strategies to counter these problems or alter plans to avoid certain problems. Identify at least three groups who have different opinions concerning a current issue or problem. Write a feature story that presents how each group might solve the problem. Create a pamphlet, poster, or other visual display to inform others and present ideas for solving or avoiding a specific problem by recommending health, safety, or technological procedures. Create a multimedia presentation to persuade a specific audience to take action to avoid, prevent, or help solve a problem. Write a real or simulated letter to a company, explaining a problem with a product or service and requesting action; then evaluate the response to decide whether the action taken will resolve the problem satisfactorily. If not, decide what follow-up steps must be taken.

Source: <http://dese.mo.gov/standards/comarts.html>

Test Format and Content

For purposes of examining adolescent literacy, the remainder of the discussion focuses on the communication arts MAP that students take in grades 7 and 11. The communication arts assessment contains multiple-choice and constructed-response questions, and a writing-performance event. The multiple-choice section of the communication arts assessment is taken from the TerraNova. The constructed-response questions typically ask students to write a paragraph or two to answer a question regarding a reading passage. The writing prompt is an open-ended item that requires students to demonstrate their writing proficiency. Writing is scored holistically, using a four-point scoring guide. Students complete the assessment, which consists of four sessions over three days. The tests are not timed, but are expected to take about 60 minutes per section (<http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/assess/ca.html>).

Proficiency Levels

Missouri currently reports state assessment results in terms of five achievement levels: step 1, progressing, nearing proficiency, proficient, and advanced. Table Z2 presents the definitions of these proficiency levels for communication arts in grades 7 and 11.

For purposes of NCLB, a passing score is set at the proficient level, which Missouri considers rigorous. Missouri's starting points for determining annual Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets are based on 2002 MAP scores and the overall student proficiency rate in the school at the 20th percentile of total public school enrollment. Thus, for example, the AYP goal for schools in communication arts in 2003 was set at 19.4 percent of all students being proficient. Missouri notes that it will likely adjust and realign the proficiency level when the new annual tests are implemented, starting in 2005–06.

Performance Results

Student Performance

Missouri provides student-level data on student performance on the MAP for all students, students with individual education plans, students with limited-English proficiency, and economically disadvantaged students. It also provides scores for racial/ethnic groups.⁴⁵ Table Z3 shows the communication arts performance of all students in grades 7 and 11 on the 2003 MAP administration, disaggregated by various student characteristics.

About 64–65 percent of 7th and 11 graders scored at the nearing proficiency and above level; however, only 33 percent of 7th-graders and 22 percent of 11th-graders scored at or above the proficient level, and very few (2 percent of 7th-graders and none of the 11th-graders) scored at or above the advanced level.

About a quarter (23–26 percent) of students with limited-English proficiency scored at or above the nearing proficiency level in 7th and 11th grades, and less than 10 percent (8 percent and 2 percent, respectively) reached the proficient level. Few students with disabilities scored at the proficient level (1–6 percent), and 27 percent scored at or above the nearing proficient level in 7th grade, while 16 percent did so in 11th grade.

⁴⁵Approximately 79 percent of students in Missouri are white; 18 percent are African American; and 2 percent are Hispanic. About 35 percent of students are eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program; less than 1 percent are in limited-English proficiency programs; and 15 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

Table Z2. Proficiency Levels for Communication Arts, 7th and 11th Grades

Proficiency Level	7 th Grade	11 th Grade
Step 1	<p>Reading—Students comprehend literal information in fiction and nonfiction and attempt to use context clues to determine meaning.</p> <p>Writing—Students minimally address the topic; attempt to write complete sentences; and demonstrate minimal knowledge of Standard English.</p>	<p>Reading—Students extract main ideas from fiction and nonfiction; recognize basic patterns and organize information in a provided form; and use context clues to determine literal meaning and recognize problems.</p> <p>Writing—Students address a topic; show evidence of purpose; respond in generalities; and display a limited vocabulary and knowledge of Standard English.</p>
Progressing	<p>Reading—Students comprehend main ideas in fiction and nonfiction; recognize obvious similarities, simple cause-effect relationships, literary elements, and author's purpose; organize information; and use text to initiate research.</p> <p>Writing—Students use simple sentences with minimal details and organization; and demonstrate knowledge of Standard English.</p>	<p>Reading—Students comprehend simple fiction and nonfiction; initiate research; compare source accuracy and reliability; identify author's purpose, main idea, and basic literary elements; organize information; and recognize consequences.</p> <p>Writing—Students write for intended purpose and audience; generally support main idea; demonstrate organization; and begin to use proper sentence structure and Standard English.</p>
Nearing proficiency	<p>Reading—Students comprehend a variety of fiction and nonfiction works; support conclusions; use context clues; compare and contrast; create graphic organizers; understand literary elements; recognize figurative language; explain cause and effect; and recognize problem-solving processes.</p> <p>Writing—Students use complete sentences, supporting details, basic transitions, and apply rules of Standard English.</p>	<p>Reading—Students comprehend a variety of fiction and nonfiction; develop research ideas; identify author's techniques; question accuracy; discover relationships within and between texts; create graphic organizers; identify strategies, solutions and consequences; and explain reasoning.</p> <p>Writing—Students write for variety of purposes and audiences; support main idea with general details; and apply rules of Standard English.</p>
Proficient	<p>Reading—Students interpret and explain fiction and nonfiction works, figurative language, mood, and theme; identify implied cause and effect; infer and predict; evaluate problem-solving strategies and solutions; develop research ideas.</p> <p>Writing—Students use precise language, supporting details, varied sentences; write for a variety of purposes, audiences; and demonstrate control of Standard English.</p>	<p>Reading—Students analyze fiction and nonfiction; create organizers; explain research ideas; evaluate accuracy and relationships; predict; use details to support inferences; and identify multiple perspectives and effectiveness of strategies and solutions;</p> <p>Writing—Students use organization, specific support, precise language, transitions, individual style and voice; demonstrate control of sentences and Standard English.</p>
Advanced	<p>Reading—Students analyze fiction and nonfiction, literary elements, techniques, theme, mood, author's purpose and perspective, and characters' motivation; apply information to new situations; explain reliability of sources; and identify and evaluate alternative solutions.</p> <p>Writing—Students use vivid language and clearly demonstrate a command of Standard English.</p>	<p>Reading—Students evaluate fiction and nonfiction; analyze literary elements; evaluate reliability of sources; make complicated inferences; analyze and evaluate strategies and solutions from multiple perspectives; and create organizers for analysis and presentation.</p> <p>Writing—Students use vivid details; advanced stylistic techniques; and clearly demonstrate a command of sentence structure and Standard English.</p>

Source: http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/assess/Descriptors/Abbreviated/Communication_Arts.html

Table Z3. Performance of 7th- and 11th-Graders on 2003 Communication Arts MAP, by Student Characteristics

	Progressing and Above	Nearing Proficient and Above	Proficient and Above	Advanced
	Percentage			
7 th Grade				
All students	86	64	33	2
Student with individual education plans	60	27	6	0
Students with limited-English proficiency	50	23	8	0
Economically disadvantaged students	76	47	18	1
Non–economically disadvantaged students	91	73	38	3
African American students	67	36	11	0
Hispanic students	82	56	24	1
White students	90	70	35	2
11 th Grade				
All students	83	65	22	0
Student with individual education plans	41	16	1	0
Students with limited-English proficiency students	47	26	2	0
Economically disadvantaged students	72	48	10	0
Non–economically disadvantaged students	86	69	24	1
African American students	63	37	6	0
Hispanic students	78	57	14	0
White students	86	69	24	0

Source: <http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/assess/spring03modisaggregatemaptotals.html>

African American students scored considerably below white students and Hispanic students. For example, at the 7th-grade level, 35 percent of white students and 24 percent of Hispanic students scored at the proficient level, compared with only 11 percent of African American students. The differences were even larger at the nearing proficient level: 34 percentage points between African American and white students and 20 percentage points between African American and Hispanic students. The achievement gap between white and Hispanic students was smaller—10–14 percentage points across the two achievement levels and the two grades.

A little less than half of economically disadvantaged students scored at the nearing proficient level compared with 69–73 percent of their counterparts who were not economically disadvantaged. The difference in the percentage of economically disadvantaged and other students scoring at the

proficient level was 20 percentage points in the 7th grade and 14 percentage points in the 11th grade.

School-Level Performance

School-level data by urbanicity are available for the 2002 MAP administration for grades 7 and 11 (Table Z4). Approximately 44 percent of schools in Missouri are rural, 38 percent are suburban, and 19 percent are urban. Urban schools were far more likely to be high-poverty schools—62 percent, compared with 40 percent of rural schools and 13 percent of suburban schools.

Despite having a higher percentage of high-poverty schools, rural schools tended to perform as well or, in some cases, slightly better than suburban schools. Urban schools performed substantially below rural and suburban schools. For example, the average percentage of 7th-graders scoring at the nearing proficient level in urban schools was 44 percent compared with 64 percent in rural and suburban schools, and the differences were somewhat larger at the 11th-grade level (22–25 percentage points). At the proficient and above level, the differences were somewhat smaller, ranging from 10–12 percentage points in the 7th grade to 7–9 percentage points in the 11th grade.

Table Z4. Average School Performance on 7th- and 11th-Grade 2002 Communication Arts MAP, by Urbanicity

	Progressing and Above	Nearing Proficient and Above	Proficient and Above	Advanced
	Average Percentage			
7th Grade				
Rural schools	88	64	29	2
Suburban schools	87	64	31	2
Urban schools	71	44	19	1
11th Grade				
Rural schools	83	64	19	0
Suburban schools	81	61	21	1
Urban schools	59	39	12	0

APPENDIX AA. MONTANA

State Assessment System

Montana administers the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) to students in grades 4 and 8 and the Iowa Test of Educational Development (ITED) to students in grade 11, during one week in the spring, in reading, language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science. The ITBS and ITED are norm-referenced tests published by the University of Iowa.

As in many states, Montana's assessment system is in flux. Starting in spring 2004, Montana will also administer the Progress Towards Standards (PTS), criterion-referenced tests that will meet the assessment requirements under NCLB. PTS is an off-the-shelf test that will also contain Montana-specific items. The PTS assessments will be explicitly linked to Montana's content and performance standards and will be phased in over time. By spring 2008, students in grades 3–8 will be tested in reading and mathematics, and students in grades 4–8 and grade 10 will be tested in science:

- In spring 2004, students in grades 4, 8, and 10 start taking the PTS in reading and mathematics.
- In spring 2006, students in grades 3, 5, 6, and 7 will start taking the PTS in reading and mathematics.
- In spring 2008, students in grades 4–8 and 10 will start taking the PTS in science.

As of spring 2004, Montana had not yet decided whether it would continue to use the norm-referenced exams after the PTS assessments are implemented.

Schools' assessment scores on the ITBS and ITED were used as the basis for determining adequate yearly progress under NCLB through 2002–03; once the new criterion-referenced tests are administered in 2003–04, those scores will be used to compute adequate yearly progress for all schools in Montana. Performance on the assessment does not carry consequences for individual teachers or students (see <http://www.opi.state.mt.us/> for additional information regarding assessment and accountability).

Montana has content standards in communications arts, which includes reading, literature, media literacy, speaking and listening, and writing; mathematics; science; social studies; technology; arts; career and vocational–technical education; health enhancement; library media; world languages; and workplace competencies. These standards are general statements of what children should know, and they contain end-of-grade benchmarks in grades 4, 8, and 12. In addition, Montana has recently created grade-level learning expectations in reading and

mathematics in grades 3–8, 10, and 12. These expectations define levels of performance at the advanced, proficient, nearing proficient, and novice levels. Table AA1 provides an example from the reading learning expectations about making predictions and inferences in grades 4, 8, and 10, by achievement level (<http://www.opi.state.mt.us/Standards/index.html>).

Table AA1. Learning Expectations About Making Predictions and Inferences for 4th, 8th, and 10th Grades, by Achievement Level

	4th Grade	8th Grade	10th Grade
Advanced	Makes predictions, describes complex connections between new material and previous information/experiences	Consistently makes and revises predictions and articulates complex and inferred connections between new material and prior knowledge	Makes, confirms, and revises predictions, compares and contrasts inferences, and articulates complex and inferred connections between new material and prior knowledge
Proficient	Makes predictions and connections between new material and previous information/experiences	Makes predictions and connections between new material and prior knowledge	Makes and revises predictions and identifies relationships when reading
Nearing Proficient	Makes obvious predictions and simple connections between new material and previous information/experiences	Makes obvious predictions and simple connections between new material and prior knowledge	Makes and revises predictions and identifies relationships when reading
Novice	Sometimes makes obvious predictions and simple connections between new material and previous information/experiences	Usually makes obvious predictions and simple connections between new material and prior knowledge	Makes simple predictions and inferences, but often does not grasp the meaning of causal relationships when reading material appropriate to twelfth grade

Source: <http://www.opi.state.mt.us/Standards/index.html>

Test Format and Content

For the purposes of this report, we now turn to discussing reading and language arts ITBS (grades 4 and 8) and ITED (grade 11) (see http://www.education.uiowa.edu/itp/site_index.htm for more information regarding the ITBS and ITED).

ITBS/ITED

The ITBS and ITED are multiple-choice assessments. The ITBS and ITED are vertically scaled and co-normed with one another, providing schools the opportunity to trace student achievement growth across the grades.

In grades 4 and 8, the reading and English Language Arts sections of the ITBS include:

- **Vocabulary.** Approximately equal numbers of nouns, verbs, and modifiers are tested at all levels.
- **Word Analysis.** These questions assess how well students can recognize letters and letter-sound relationships.
- **Reading Comprehension:** The Reading test presents students with a variety of tasks, including using print, context, and picture cues to identify unfamiliar words; completing sentences that tell about a picture by choosing a word for filling in a blank; and answering multiple-choice questions after reading a brief story. The questions associated with pictures and stories often ask students to make inferences or to generalize about what they have read.
- **Listening.** Short oral scenarios are presented, and then one or more multiple-choice questions are read. Since all response options are pictorial, the scores from this test do not depend on students' reading abilities. Students' abilities to demonstrate literal and inferential understanding, follow directions, understand sequences, and predict outcomes are measured.
- **Language.** A major portion of the test deals with skills in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and skills in usage and expression in writing.

The reading and English language arts sections of the ITED test students on:

- **Vocabulary.** The words tested represent a cross section of vocabulary encountered in reading, writing, and listening. Technical words and specialized vocabulary are not included.
- **Reading Comprehension.** Students read five types of passages taken from previously published materials: a fiction or narrative passage; an article about a social studies topic and one about a science topic; another nonfiction passage, which may be from a biography or memoir, from an essay, or from the general-interest domain; and a poem. The prose passages range in length from 440 to 650 words. The questions associated with each passage require students to demonstrate factual understanding, inference and interpretation, and analysis and generalization. The greatest emphasis is on questions that address the higher-level objectives of inferring, analyzing, and generalizing.
- **Language: Revising Written Materials.** This asks students to make revision choices concerning focus, organization, diction and clarity, sentence structure, usage, mechanics, and spelling. All test questions are based on four relatively long, complete texts (ranging from 125 to 450 words) that are patterned after student writing in content and style. The corresponding questions pose alternatives that may correct or improve the underlined portions. In some cases, there is a clear-cut error in mechanics or usage, sometimes the consideration is one of fluency or clarity, and occasionally it is the appropriateness of the content for the task that is at issue.

- **Spelling.** This is a 10-minute, 30-question test. Each question presents four words, one of which may be misspelled, and a fifth option, *No mistakes*, allowing students to indicate that they believe all four words are spelled correctly.

PTS

The reading PTS will consist of 3 sessions. Each asks students to respond to approximately 24 multiple-choice questions and one constructed-response question. The sessions are not timed, but are expected to take 45 minutes. The PTS contains literary and information passages (<http://www.opi.state.mt.us/assessment/crt.html>).

Achievement-Level Definitions

Montana has developed four achievement categories: advanced, proficient, nearing proficiency, and novice. It will use these categories for the PTS. The scores for the ITBS/ITED are percentile ranks, and cut-scores are used to map the percentile ranks into the achievement categories:

- Novice: 1st–23rd percentile
- Nearing proficiency: 24th–40th percentile
- Proficient: 41st–89th percentile
- Advanced: 90th–99th percentile

Scores at or above the proficient level are considered “passing” for accountability purposes under NCLB.

Performance Results

Student Performance

The Montana Office of Public Instruction provides student-level data on student performance for all students and for students disaggregated by various characteristics: disability status, limited-English-proficiency status, major racial/ethnic groups, and socioeconomic status.⁴⁶ Table AA2 shows the English language arts performance results from the 2003 ITBS/ITED administration for students in grades 4, 8, and 10, for these various groups of students. It provides the national percentile rank for these groups, as well as the percentage of students scoring at different achievement levels.

⁴⁶ Approximately 86 percent of students in Montana are white and 11 percent are American Indian. No other racial/ethnic group comprises 2 percent of the student population. About 32 percent of students are eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program; 5 percent are in limited-English- proficiency programs; and 13 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

Table AA2. Performance of 4th-, 8th-, and 11th-Graders on 2003 Language Arts ITBS/ITED, by Student Groups

	National Percentile Rank	Nearing Proficiency and Above	Proficient and Above	Advanced
	Percentile		Percentage	
4th Grade				
All students	68	89	76	18
Students without disabilities	71	92	80	19
Students with disabilities	35	61	37	4
Students with limited-English proficiency	31	56	35	3
Economically disadvantaged students	56	82	64	9
Native American students	46	74	52	6
White students	70	91	80	20
8th Grade				
All students	57	85	68	12
Students without disabilities	61	90	73	13
Students with disabilities	22	43	17	0
Students with limited-English proficiency	25	49	22	1
Economically disadvantaged students	44	75	52	5
Native American students	38	68	43	3
White students	60	88	71	13
11th Grade				
All students	61	91	75	16
Students without disabilities	64	94	80	18
Students with disabilities	28	54	25	1
Students with limited-English proficiency	35	71	36	2
Economically disadvantaged students	50	83	61	8
Native American students	42	77	48	4
White students	64	92	79	18

Source: [http:// www.opi.state.mt.us](http://www.opi.state.mt.us)

Overall, students in Montana performed above the national average. Fourth-graders scored at the 68th percentile; 8th- and 11th-graders are at the 57th and 61st percentiles, respectively. Between 68–76 percent of students scored at the proficient level, and only 12–18 percent scored at the advanced level. Scores of 8th-graders were generally lower than those of 4th- and 11th-graders.

As would be expected, students with disabilities scored lower than students without disabilities — 22nd–35th percentile, compared with 61st–71st percentile. While 37 percent of 4th-grade students

with disabilities scored at the proficient level, only 17 percent of 8th-grade and 25 percent of 11th-grade students with disabilities did so.

Students with limited-English proficiency scored at the 31st percentile in 4th grade, 25th percentile in 8th grade, and 35th percentile in 11th grade, and only 22–36 percent obtained a proficient score. A much higher percentage of 11th-graders scored at the near proficient level compared with 4th- and 8th-graders (71 percent versus 49–56 percent). However, it is unclear whether this result was due to increased proficiency in reading or English or an effect of higher dropout rates among these students.

White students outperformed Native American students by large margins. While the average white students scored between the 60th and 70th percentile, depending on grade, on average, Native American students scored between the 38th and 46th percentile. The gap between white and Native American scores at or above the proficient level was quite large as well: 28 percentage point at the 4th grade, 28 percentage points at the 8th grade, and 31 percentage points at the 11th grade. Overall, only about half of Native American students were considered proficient or above. Only 3–6 percent of Native American students across the grade levels reach advanced status, compared with 13–20 percent of white students.

Economically disadvantaged students scored at the 56th percentile in 4th grade, 44th percentile in 8th grade, and 50th percentile in 11th grade, far below the average for all students. In the 4th grade, 64 percent of economically disadvantaged students received a proficient score or better compared with 76 percent of all students. We find similar achievement gaps in the 8th and 11th grades.

School Performance

Data on performance on the ITBS/ITED by urbanicity are available for the 2002 administration of the test at the school level. However, the vast majority of schools (85 percent) in Montana are rural, while only 8 percent are suburban and 7 percent are urban. Table AA3 reports student performance for 4th-grade language arts for rural, suburban, and urban schools. The sample sizes of schools in the urban and rural categories at the secondary level were too small to report.

Urban elementary schools outperformed rural and suburban elementary schools at all levels, but the differences were only between 1 and 6 percentage points. For instance, on average urban schools had 79 percent of students at or above the proficient level and 23 percent at the advanced level, compared with 76 percent and 17 percent of students in rural schools, respectively.

Table AA3. Average School Performance on 4th-Grade 2002 Language Arts ITBS/ITED, by Urbanicity

	Nearing Proficiency and Above	Proficient and Above	Advanced
	Average Percentage		
4th Grade			
Rural schools	89	76	17
Suburban schools	87	75	19
Urban schools	90	79	23

APPENDIX BB. NEBRASKA

State Assessment System

During the 2000 session, Nebraska's legislature established the School-based Teacher-led Assessment and Reporting System (STARS) to implement standards, assessment, and accountability reporting for public school districts in Nebraska. Under this system, the state required that each public school district 1) adopt measurable, quality academic content standards in reading, writing, mathematics, science, social studies, and history that are equal to or more rigorous than the state standards; 2) assess students using a local assessment in reading and mathematics; and 3) administer a statewide writing assessment to students in grades 4, 8, and 11.

As part of STARS, the state measures the quality of district assessments and the performance of students in the district. The Nebraska Department of Education rates the assessment systems on the following: their ability to measure the standards; students' opportunity to learn the content; reliability; absence of bias; appropriateness of mastery levels; and age appropriateness. Districts either receive an Exemplary, Very Good, Good, Acceptable but Needs Improvement, or Unacceptable rating on each of these factors. Many districts use standardized achievement tests in combination with locally developed tests for their assessments. In addition to this state system, Nebraska is meeting the federal accountability provisions set under NCLB and is tracking the performance of student subgroups on the assessments as well (<http://www.nde.state.ne.us/stars/pdf/STARSbooklet.pdf>).

While Nebraska has state K–12 standards with sample indicators of mastery for reading and writing, mathematics, science, social studies, and history (among others), districts and schools may develop and use their own local standards, as long as the state board agrees that the standards are equal to or more rigorous than the state standards. Table BB1 provides an example of state reading and writing standards for grade 4.

Table BB1. Nebraska End-of-Grade Reading/Writing Standards, 4th Grade

Standard	Sample Indicators
By the end of 4th grade:	
Students will demonstrate the use of multiple strategies in reading unfamiliar words and phrases.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use phonics and word structure to read. • Use context clues to confirm the accuracy of their reading.
Students will identify the main idea and supporting details in what they have read.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and use meanings associated with common prefixes, suffixes, and roots. • Identify and use antonyms, synonyms, compounds, homophones, and homographs. • Use a dictionary to learn and confirm word meanings.
Students will identify the main idea and supporting details in what they have read.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify purpose for reading, recall prior knowledge, and preview illustrations and headings to make predictions. • Interpret information from diagrams, charts, and graphs. • Answer literal, inferential/interpretive, and critical questions.
Students will identify the resource appropriate for a specific purpose, and use the resource to locate information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use general reference materials (dictionary, thesaurus, encyclopedia, atlas, telephone book, almanac). • Use electronic resources (CD-ROM, software programs, online resources). • Use library resources (card or electronic catalog). • Identify and use parts of a book (title page, table of contents, glossary, index).
Students will identify and use characteristics to classify different types of text.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinguish among common forms of literature, such as fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and drama. • Identify characteristics of different types of fiction (folktales, fairytales, tall tales, realistic fiction, science fiction, historical fiction). • Identify characteristics of different types of nonfiction (autobiography, biography, informational text).
Students will identify and apply knowledge of the structure, elements, and literary techniques to analyze fiction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the structure (e.g., beginning, middle, end). • Identify the elements (e.g., characters, plot, setting, problem, events, solution). • Identify the literary techniques (e.g., simile, metaphor, onomatopoeia, alliteration, idioms, hyperbole).
Students will identify and apply knowledge of the text structure and organizational elements to analyze nonfiction or informational text.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the structure of nonfiction (e.g., question/answer, cause/effect, sequence, comparison/contrast, problem/solution, description). • Identify organizational elements of nonfiction texts (e.g., headings, subheadings, italics, bold print, captions). • Ask how, why, and what-if questions in interpreting nonfiction text. • Distinguish between fact and opinion. • Follow written directions.
Students will identify similarities and differences between two fourth-grade-level reading selections.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare and contrast reading selections across geographic regions, cultures, and time periods. • Compare and contrast reading selections to students' present-day lives.
Students will write using Standard English (conventions) for sentence structure, usage, punctuation, capitalization and spelling.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and use correct capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and paragraph indentation. • Identify and use nouns, verbs, and personal pronouns.

Table BB1. (cont)

Students will write paragraphs/reports with focus, related ideas, and supporting details.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use a variety of strategies to generate and organize ideas.• Write several paragraphs on the same topic.• Write compositions with a beginning, middle and end.
Students will revise and edit narrative compositions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Revise to improve organization, content, word choice, voice, and sentence fluency.• Edit using Standard English conventions.• Use legible cursive writing and/or a word processor when publishing written work.• Use established criteria to evaluate their own writing.
Students will demonstrate the use of multiple forms to write for different audiences and purposes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Write descriptive and narrative compositions about experiences, stories, people, objects, and events.• Write poems of varied forms.• Write letters.
Students will demonstrate the use of self-generated questions, note taking, and summarizing while learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Generate questions in exploration of a topic.• Record important ideas from information provided by others.• Use summarization methods including outlining and webbing.
Students will participate in group discussions by asking questions and contributing information and ideas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contribute information and ask questions relevant to the topic discussed.• Use subject-related vocabulary in discussions.• Provide accurate directions.• Stay on topic or create appropriate transitions to new topics.• Gain the floor in appropriate ways.
Students will deliver organized oral presentations using complete sentences, clear enunciation, adequate volume, and eye contact.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Give oral presentations of prose and poetry with fluency and expression.
Students will identify information gained and complete tasks through listening.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listen to and follow multiple-step oral directions.• Use active listening, showing consideration of others' contributions to discussions.

Source: <http://nelinks.nde.state.ne.us/ViewReports.aspx>

Test Content and Format

Because districts administer local assessments in reading, we cannot describe the content of a statewide test in reading. However, a statewide writing assessment was given to students in grade 4 in 2001–02 and to students in grade 8 in 2002–03. In these assessments, students wrote in response to one prompt. Students in grade 4 wrote in a narrative mode, and students in grade 8 wrote in a descriptive mode. In 2003–04, students in grade 11 will write in the persuasive mode. Students completed the writing assessment during a timed session on two consecutive days. On the first day, students were allocated 40 minutes for prewriting activities, such as note taking, outlining, or mapping, and generating preliminary drafts. On the second day, students had 40 minutes to revise, edit, and write the final draft. Student responses were assessed on Nebraska's six traits of writing: ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and

conventions (see Table BB2). Two readers scored students' writings holistically. The scores from the two readers were added together to determine the final score (<http://www.nde.state.ne.us/stars/updates/update7.pdf>; <http://www.nde.state.ne.us/stars/updates/update9.pdf>).

Table BB2. Writing-Assessment Scoring Criteria

Ideas	Has clarity, fresh perspective, important details that go beyond the obvious
Organization	Has order and logic, clear connections to the main idea, inviting, attention-getting lead, graceful ending
Voice	Is appropriate for the topic, audience, and purpose; brings topic to life, has the mark of a particular writer
Word Choice	Creates word pictures, relies on strong verbs and precise nouns; does not try to impress with jargon or overblown language; avoids redundancy
Sentence Fluency	Is easy to read aloud, inviting; has varied sentence length and structure, purposeful sentence beginnings
Conventions	Looks clean, edited, proofread; has no glaring errors that distract the reader; specifically: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - spelling correct on simple words, correct or close on difficult words - ending punctuation correct; internal punctuation not misleading - paragraphs for new topics, new speakers - quotation marks to denote dialogue - capital letters to begin all proper nouns and all sentences - noun-verb agreement - no arbitrary shifts in tense

Source: <http://www.nde.state.ne.us/stars/updates/update10.pdf>

Achievement-Level Definitions

On the writing assessment, each rater gives a score ranging from 1 to 4 (including plus and minus score points), with 1 being the lowest and 4 being the highest. A minimum combined score from the two raters of 4.33 (out of a possible 8 points) is considered proficient (<http://www.nde.state.ne.us/stars/writing/statewidesummary03.pdf>).

Performance Results

Student Performance

Nebraska did not provide writing scores broken down by student characteristics.⁴⁷ In 2001–02, 73 percent of 4th-grade students met or exceeded standards on the state writing assessment. In

⁴⁷ Approximately 82 percent of students in Nebraska are white; 8 percent are Hispanic; and 7 percent are African American. No other racial/ethnic group comprises 2 percent of the population. About 31 percent of students are eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program; 4 percent are in limited-English-proficiency programs; and 16 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

2002–03, 75 percent of 8th-grade students met or exceeded standards on the state writing assessment

(http://reportcard.nde.state.ne.us/DownloadFiles/ReportCard20022003_Inside_4.pdf).

School Performance

School-level scores are not available for Nebraska.

APPENDIX CC. NEVADA

State Assessment System

Nevada's system for assessing students, the Nevada Proficiency Examination Program (NPEP), includes criterion-referenced and norm referenced tests, diagnostic assessments, and a high school proficiency examination. Specifically, Nevada's assessments include:

- Criterion-Referenced Tests (CRT) in Reading and Mathematics in grades 3, 5, and 8 and Science in grades 5 and 8
- Writing Assessments in grades 4 and 8
- Norm-Referenced Tests (NRT): Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) in grades 4 and 7, and Iowa Tests of Educational Development (ITED) in grade 10
- High School Proficiency Examination (HSPE) in Reading, Mathematics, and Writing
- The Skills and Competencies Alternative Assessment of Nevada (SCAAN), alternate assessment system (manual and electronic format) in grades 3–8 and grade 10
- English Language Development Assessment (ELDA) in grades 3–12
- Pre-Language Assessment Scales (Pre-LAS) in grades K–2

During the 2003–04 school year, the Nevada Department of Education is expanding its testing program by developing and piloting math and reading tests for grades 4, 6, and 7. Test scores from the CRTs, the writing assessments, and the HSPE will be used to track Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under No Child Left Behind, because these are the assessments that measure students' progress in meeting the state's content and performance standards. Students must pass the HSPE in reading, mathematics, and writing in order to earn a high school diploma (see <http://www.doe.nv.gov/sca/testing/index.html> for additional details regarding assessment and accountability).

Nevada has set content and performance standards for English language arts for grades 1–8 and grade 12. Each of the 11 broad content standards in Table CC1 have sub-standards, delineated by grade, which further define the standard. Table CC2 provides an example of these sub-standards for Content Standard 4 in grades 4, 8, and 12. In addition, Nevada has established performance standards for the broad content standards by grades (see example in Table CC3) (<http://www.doe.nv.gov/sca/standards/standardsfiles/ela/index.html>).

Table CC1. English Language Arts Content Standards

Content Standard 1.0: Students know and use word-analysis skills and strategies to comprehend new words encountered in text.

Content Standard 2.0: Students use reading process skills and strategies to build comprehension.

Content Standard 3.0: Students read to comprehend, interpret, and evaluate literature from a variety of authors, cultures, and times.

Content Standard 4.0: Students read to comprehend, interpret, and evaluate informational texts for specific purposes

Content Standard 5.0: Students write a variety of texts that inform, persuade, describe, evaluate, or tell a story and are appropriate to purpose and audience.

Content Standard 6.0: Students write with a clear focus and logical development, evaluating, revising, and editing for organization, style, tone, and word choice.

Content Standard 7.0: Students write using Standard English grammar, usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

Content Standard 8.0: Students listen to and evaluate oral communications for content, style, speaker's purpose, and audience appropriateness.

Content Standard 9.0: Students speak using organization, style, tone, voice, and media aids appropriate to audience and purpose.

Content Standard 10.0: Students participate in discussions to offer information, clarify ideas, and support a position.

Content Standard 11.0: Students formulate research questions, use a variety of sources to obtain information, weigh the evidence, draw valid conclusions, and present findings.

Source: <http://www.doe.nv.gov/sca/standards/standardsfiles/ela/index.html>

Table CC2. Sub-standards for Content Standard 4: Students Read to Comprehend, Interpret, and Evaluate Informational Texts for Certain Specific Purposes, by 4th, 8th, and 12th Grades

4th Grade	8th Grade	12th Grade
Use information from titles, tables of contents, chapter headings, glossaries, indexes, diagrams, charts, and maps to comprehend text.	Use knowledge of text features and common expository structures such as cause/effect and comparison/contrast to comprehend text.	Analyze text features and rhetorical strategies of different types of primary sources
Compare main ideas and important concepts of various tests.	Locate, interpret, organize, and synthesize information from texts to answer specific questions and support ideas.	Locate, organize, interpret, and synthesize information in multiple primary and secondary sources to support ideas and positions.
Develop hypotheses based upon prior knowledge and information from text.	Identify and assess the validity, accuracy, and adequacy of evidence that supports an author's ideas.	Critique the power, logic, reasonableness, and audience appeal of arguments advanced in texts.
Draw conclusions about text and support them with evidence from a variety of sources.	Summarize authors' ideas and information in texts, including advertisements and public documents.	Analyze how historical and cultural contexts influence the content and validity of informational texts.
Identify authors' purposes for writing.		
Read and follow multistep directions to complete a task.	Read and follow multistep directions to complete a complex task.	Read and apply multistep directions to perform complex procedures and tasks

Source: <http://www.doe.nv.gov/sca/standards/standardsfiles/ela/index.html>

**Table CC3. Achievement-Level Descriptors for English Language Arts, 8th Grade,
Content Standard 4.0**

Content Standard 4.0. Students read to comprehend, interpret, and evaluate informational texts for specific purposes.	
Exceeds Standard	<p>Consistently apply knowledge of text features and complex expository structures to a variety of materials to comprehend text.</p> <p>Independently locate, interpret, organize, and synthesize information from a variety of texts.</p> <p>Evaluate and critique authors' arguments.</p> <p>Concisely analyze and summarize information from a variety of texts, including advertisements and public documents.</p> <p>Read and follow multistep directions effectively to complete an increasingly complex task.</p>
Meets Standard	<p>Use knowledge of text features and common expository structures to comprehend text.</p> <p>Locate, interpret, organize, and synthesize information in text to answer specific questions and support ideas.</p> <p>Evaluate the validity, accuracy, and adequacy of evidence behind authors' ideas and cite supporting evidence.</p> <p>Summarize ideas and information in text, including advertisements and public documents.</p> <p>Read and follow multistep directions to complete a complex task.</p>
Approaches Standard	<p>Have knowledge of some text features and expository structures, but may not use them to comprehend text.</p> <p>Locate and interpret information in text, but may not be able to organize and synthesize information.</p> <p>Identify the authors' arguments, but do not assess validity, accuracy, and adequacy of supporting evidence.</p> <p>Restate information from text.</p> <p>Require assistance to read and follow multistep directions to complete a complex task.</p>
Below Standard	<p>Have little or no knowledge of text features and/or expository structures.</p> <p>Have difficulty locating information in a text.</p> <p>Sometimes identify authors' arguments, but fail to identify supporting evidence.</p> <p>Restate minimal information from text.</p> <p>Do not read and/or follow multistep directions to complete a complex task.</p>

Source: <http://www.doe.nv.gov/sca/standards/standardsfiles/ela/index.html>

Test Content and Format

Below we describe the criterion-referenced assessments that provide information about adolescent literacy levels: the reading CRTs in grades 5 and 8; the writing assessments in grades 4 and 8; and the High School Proficiency Exams in reading (<http://www.doe.nv.gov/sca/testing/crt/>).

CRT and High School Proficiency Examination

The CRT and HSPE reading assessment measures word-analysis skills and both comprehension and interpretation of literary and informational text of varying difficulty. The CRT and HSPE are

primarily multiple-choice items; however, the CRTs in grades 4 through 8 also include at least two constructed-response items. Readings may be literary, informational, or functional text. Passage length will range from 500 to 690 words for grade 5; 900 to 1,080 words for grade 8; and 1,000 to 1,200 words for grade 10/11. Poems may be shorter than the minimum number of words designated, and pairing of two short passages may occur.

The items that are used to evaluate understanding of these passages fall into three cognitive domains—form an initial understanding; develop an interpretation; and demonstrate a critical stance—and three content clusters—word analysis and skills; comprehend, interpret, and evaluate literature; and comprehend, interpret, and evaluate informational texts. Table CC4 describes how much emphasis the assessments place on each of the cognitive domains and content clusters. The percentage of items that test demonstrating a critical stance increases a bit by grade level as does the emphasis on comprehending and evaluating information text, while forming an initial understanding and word analysis and skills are emphasized a bit less in the later grades.

Table CC4. Assessed Content Clusters and Cognitive Domains

	5 th Grade	8 th Grade	HSPE
	Percentage of Items		
Content Cluster			
Word analysis and skills	29	20	24
Comprehend, interpret, and evaluate literature	24	35	32
Comprehend, interpret, and evaluate informational text	37	45	44
Cognitive Domains			
Form an initial understanding	37	33	30
Develop an interpretation	48	48	46
Demonstrate a critical stance	15	19	24

Source: <http://www.doe.nv.gov/sca/testing/crt/>

Writing Assessment

In Nevada, the 4th- and the 8th-grade writing prompts assess narrative/descriptive writing. These writings are assessed on analytic trait scoring for ideas, organization, voice, and convention. The 4th-grade writing assessments consist of three sessions: prewriting, first draft, and revision. The 8th-grade assessment consists of two sessions: first draft and final draft.

The 11th-/12th-grade writing assessment uses two prompts; one is narrative/descriptive and the other is expository/persuasive. This assessment is scored using a holistic rubric that reflects the

overall impression of the writing with a balance of the strengths and weaknesses (<http://www.doe.nv.gov/sca/standards/writing/index.html>).

Achievement-Level Definitions

Nevada reports scores by four achievement levels: emerging/developing, approaching standard, meeting standard, or exceeding standard. Scores that meet or exceed standards are considered “proficient” for accountability under NCLB.

Performance Results

Student Performance

Table CC5 provides performance results disaggregated by disability status, English-proficiency status, socioeconomic status, and racial/ethnic groups for 5th-graders on the 2003 NCRT reading assessment.⁴⁸ Because 2003 was the field test for the grade 8 NCRT reading assessment, these results are not available. Writing results were considered diagnostic and are not available.

Forty-six percent of students scored at or above meeting standards level, but only 8 percent reached the exceeding standards level. Over half (56 percent) of students with disabilities scored at or above the approaching standards level; only 16 percent met standards; and only 2 percent scored at the exceeding standards level.

While almost one-fourth of students with limited-English proficiency scored at or above the meeting standards level, 77 percent scored at or above the approaching standards level. Thus, only 23 percent scored at the lowest achievement level.

Economically disadvantaged students scored far below their peers. The achievement gap was 27 percentage points at the meeting standards level and 8 percent at the exceeding standards level. African American and Hispanic students scored far below white and Asian students at all achievement levels. For example, only 30 percent of African American and Hispanic students scored at or above the meeting standards level, compared with 56 percent of Asian students and 59 percent of white students.

⁴⁸ Approximately 55 percent of students in Nevada are white; 27 percent are Hispanic; 10 percent are African American; and 6 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander. About 30 percent are eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program; 11 percent are in limited-English-proficiency programs; and 11 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

**Table CC5. Performance of 5th-Graders on 2003 NCRT Reading,
by Student Characteristics**

	Approaching Standard and Above	Meeting Standard and Above	Exceeding Standard
	Percentage		
5th Grade			
All students	88	46	8
Students with disabilities	56	16	2
Students with limited-English proficiency	77	24	3
Economically disadvantaged students	82	31	3
Non–economically disadvantaged students	93	57	11
African American students	83	30	3
Asian students	94	56	9
Hispanic students	81	30	3
White students	94	59	12

Source: <http://www.nevadatestreports.com/>

School Data

School-level data on the 2002 NRCT were not available.

APPENDIX DD. NEW HAMPSHIRE

State Assessment System

Under the New Hampshire Educational Improvement and Assessment Program (NHEIAP), students in grades 3, 6, and 10 take criterion-referenced end-of-grade assessments in English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Results provide information on how students are progressing in gaining the knowledge and skills outlined in New Hampshire's curriculum frameworks. While the tests are used to evaluate school performance under NCLB, assessment results do not have consequences for individual students or teachers.

In 2002, New Hampshire entered into the New England Compact with Rhode Island and Vermont to work on cross-state collaborative initiatives focused on the implementation of the NCLB. As part of the compact's federally funded Enhanced Assessment Project, Rhode Island, New Hampshire and Vermont have developed a set of common grade-level expectations (GLEs) – the Tri-State GLEs – that identify the content knowledge and skills expected of students for large-scale assessment. The GLEs will be reviewed for alignment with the states' own standards and for quality, and will be used as the basis for a new large-scale assessment to be developed collaboratively by the three states. A draft version of the GLEs and draft test specifications were posted on the compact's Web site in early 2004 (<http://www.ed.state.nh.us/Assessment/GradeLevel/GLE.htm>).

Test Content and Format

The English language arts NHEIAP assessments consist of multiple-choice and open-response items that require students to use higher-order thinking skills, such as evaluation, analysis, and summarization. While there are suggested time limits for the assessments, students are provided additional time to complete the test if needed.

The tests include both common and matrix-sampled items. However, beginning with the May 2002 administration, the test design was modified so that student, school, and district scores were based on common items only. Prior to that time, results were based on both common and matrix-sampled items.

In grades 6 and 10, the English language arts assessment includes a reading section, a writing section, and a videotaped section that tests listening and viewing.

Approximately one-third of the possible points for reading are based on each of the three passage types: literary and narrative works, informational or content pieces, and practical sources:

- Literary passages are represented by a variety of genres, including fiction, fantasy, poetry, drama, fables, folktales, legends, and historical fiction.
- Informational or content passages include nonfiction, essays, biographies, autobiographies, informational articles, and factual presentations.
- Practical passages are functional materials that instruct or advise the reader, including directions and how-to-do-it books.

Reading passages on the assessment include both long and short texts. None of the passages is written specifically for the assessment; passages are collected from published works. Passages are selected to be grade-appropriate, with the ideas expressed becoming increasingly complex in the later grades. The items related to these passages require students to demonstrate their skills in both literal comprehension (where the answer is stated explicitly in the text) and inferential comprehension (where the answer is implied by the text and/or the text must be connected to relevant prior knowledge to determine an answer). In addition, some questions require students to use the skills and strategies of reading to answer items—for example, how to identify the author’s principal purpose, such as to persuade, entertain, or to inform—and to demonstrate their understanding of how words and images communicate to readers.

The writing portion of the English language arts assessment includes writing prompts and multiple-choice items. The writing prompts are scored on a scale of 1–6 points; the final writing score is the sum of two independent readers’ ratings. Multiple-choice items are worth 1 point each and assess editing and grammar.

The prompts used in the 2001–02 NHEIAP were:

- Grade 6 prompt: If you could travel anywhere, where would you go and why? Describe what you would do when you got there.
- Grade 10 prompt: Choose a book or a movie that you think other people should read or view. Explain your choice.

Listening and viewing are assessed through the use of videotaped programs. The subject matter of the videotaped programs varies from year to year and includes literary and informational programs. These programs are approximately 10–15 minutes long. Each student responds to six multiple-choice items and one open-response item based on a common videotaped selection for that grade level. One common multiple-choice item about the cover art on the test booklet is also included (http://www.ed.state.nh.us/Assessment/2002/Tech%20Report_02.pdf).

Achievement-Level Definitions

New Hampshire defines four performance categories: advanced, proficient, basic, and novice. For accountability purposes, students performing at basic and above are considered to be moving forward toward appropriate learning goals. Table DD1 provides achievement-level definitions for grades 6 and 10.

Table DD1. Achievement-Level Definitions, 6th and 10th Grades

Achievement Level	6th Grade	10th Grade
Advanced	Students at this level demonstrate a thorough understanding of literary, narrative, factual, informational, and practical works. They extract main and subordinate ideas, supporting details, and information from materials they read, hear, and view. They draw conclusions, make critical judgments, and develop meaningful connections between and among ideas and concepts. They explain and support their inferences and interpretations. Their writing is clear, effective, and fluent. They organize ideas, develop a topic, add supporting details, and vary both sentence structure and vocabulary. They make few, if any, mechanical errors.	Students at this level demonstrate a broad and in-depth understanding of a wide range of literary, narrative, factual, informational, and practical works. They make complex connections between and among ideas and concepts in materials they read, hear, and view. They analyze text and make critical judgments. They provide extensive evidence for inferences and interpretations. They persuasively present, explain, and defend positions. Their writing shows logic, clarity, organization, fluency, and style. They use language to communicate effectively.
Proficient	Students at this level demonstrate an overall understanding of literary, narrative, factual, informational, and practical works. They extract main ideas, analyze text, evaluate and organize information, draw conclusions, and make inferences and interpretations. They critically evaluate materials they read, hear, and view. They effectively organize, develop, and support ideas so that a reader can easily understand the intent of their writing. They demonstrate a firm grounding in the mechanics of written expression; however, they may still make some errors.	Students at this level demonstrate a solid understanding of a wide range of literary, narrative, factual, informational, and practical works. They make meaningful connections between and among ideas and concepts in materials they read, hear, and view. They evaluate and organize information, make and communicate informed judgments, and provide evidence for inferences and interpretations. Their writing is clear, logical, and shows evidence of fluency and style. They effectively control the mechanics of language, including spelling, capitalization, grammar, and punctuation.

Table DD1. (cont.)

Basic	Students at this level demonstrate a reasonable understanding of literary, narrative, factual, informational, and practical works. They recognize main ideas and identify supporting details. They gather information from materials they read, hear, and view and use it to make obvious conclusions. Their responses often include appropriate examples. They employ sufficient organization, development, and support of ideas to satisfactorily communicate the intent of their writing. While they demonstrate a fundamental control of the mechanics of written expression, they may make errors in spelling, capitalization, grammar, and/or punctuation.	Students at this level demonstrate a general understanding of literary, narrative, factual, informational, and practical works. They form reasoned conclusions and make straightforward connections among ideas and concepts. They use information obtained by reading, viewing, and listening to solve problems and complete tasks. Their writing successfully communicates straightforward ideas, but is limited in organization, focus, and details. They may make errors in the mechanics of language.
Novice	Students at this level demonstrate some understanding of literary, narrative, factual, informational, and practical works. They recognize clearly stated topics and details in materials they read, hear, and view. For the most part, their responses to questions are literal. Their writing shows rudimentary organization, development, and use of detail. Errors in capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and/or grammar may interfere with a reader's ability to understand the text.	Students at this level demonstrate some understanding of literary, narrative, factual, informational, and practical works. They recognize clearly stated information in materials they read, hear, and view. They display a rudimentary ability to use language to solve problems and complete well-defined tasks. Their writing shows limited focus, organization, and development and may contain errors in the use of conventional language, mechanics, and sentence structure.

Source: <http://www.ed.state.nh.us/Assessment/grade6-2003.pdf>;
<http://www.ed.state.nh.us/Assessment/grade10-2003.pdf>

Performance Results

Student Performance

The New Hampshire Department of Education provides student-level data on student performance for all students, students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, and major racial/ethnic⁴⁹ groups by two achievement levels – basic and above and proficient and above. Table DD2 presents scores for 6th and 10th-graders on the NHEIAP English Language Arts assessment.

Seventy-one percent of 6th-graders and 69 percent of 10th-graders scored at or above the basic level, and 30 percent and 33 percent, respectively, scored at the proficient and above level. There

⁴⁹ Approximately 95 percent of students in New Hampshire are white, and 2 percent are Hispanic. No other racial/ethnic group comprises more than 2 percent of the student population. About 15 percent of students are eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program; less than 2 percent are in limited-English-proficiency programs; and 14 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

were large differences in the passing rates of students with and without disabilities—over 50 percentage points at the basic level and over 30 percentage points at the proficient level.

Hispanic students scored well below white students, with passing rates at the basic level that were between 18 and 24 percentage points lower. About 16–17 percent of Hispanic students scored at the proficient level compared with 31–35 percent of white students. Economically disadvantaged students also tended to score below their counterparts by 20–23 percentage points in the 6th grade at the two achievement levels and by 16–20 percentage points in the 10th grade. A little over half of economically disadvantaged students scored at the basic level compared with over 70 percent of students who were not economically disadvantaged. Only 14–19 percent of them scored at the proficient level, compared with 34–35 percent of their peers.

Table DD2. Performance of 6th- and 10th-Graders on 2003 English Language Arts Performance NHEIAP, by Student Characteristics

	Basic and Above	Proficient and Above
	Percentage	
6th Grade		
All students	71	30
Students with disabilities	26	4
Students without disabilities	80	35
Economically disadvantaged students	53	14
Non-economically disadvantaged students	76	34
Hispanic students	54	16
White students	72	31
10th Grade		
All students	69	33
Students with disabilities	25	5
Students without disabilities	77	38
Economically disadvantaged students	51	19
Non-economically disadvantaged students	71	35
Hispanic students	47	17
White students	71	35

Source: <http://www.ed.state.nh.us/Assessment/grade6-2003.pdf>;
<http://www.ed.state.nh.us/Assessment/grade10-2003.pdf>

School-Level Performance

School-level data disaggregated by urbanicity are available for the 2002 NHEIAP administration for grades 6 and 10 reading (Table DD3). Over half (53 percent) of schools in New Hampshire are rural, 36 percent are suburban, and 11 percent are urban. Only 3 percent of schools in New

Hampshire are high-poverty schools. About 10 percent of urban schools served such high proportions of economically disadvantaged students, as did 3 percent of rural schools. No suburban schools were classified as being high-poverty.

Table DD3. Average School Performance, 6th- and 10th-Grade 2002 NHEIAP English Language Arts Performance (Reading Only), by Urbanicity

	Basic and above	Proficient and above
	Average Percentage	
6th Grade		
Rural schools	68	27
Suburban schools	72	31
Urban schools	61	24
10th Grade		
Rural schools	77	36
Suburban schools	77	38
Urban schools	*	*

Note: * There are 6 high schools in urban areas; thus, the sample size is too small for us to report.

On average, for 6th grade, 68–72 percent of students in rural and suburban schools scored at the basic and above level compared with 61 percent of students in urban schools. About 31 percent of students in suburban schools scored at the proficient level, compared with 27 percent of students in rural schools and 24 percent of students in urban schools. With one exception, rural schools scored below suburban schools, and the difference ranged from 2 to 4 percentage points.

APPENDIX EE. NEW JERSEY

State Assessment System

As of 2003, New Jersey's assessment system consisted of:

- The NJ ASK 4 in grade 4 in language arts literacy and mathematics
- The Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment (GEPA) in language arts literacy, mathematics, and science
- The High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) in grade 11, which tests language arts literacy and mathematics.

These assessments are used to hold schools accountable. In addition, students must pass all sections of the HSPA in order to obtain a diploma. Students failing the first time have up to three chances to pass this assessment. New Jersey is currently expanding its assessment system in order to meet the requirements under NCLB. In spring 2004, New Jersey will add NJ ASK 3 and a science portion to NJ ASK 4. By 2005–2006, New Jersey will have a testing program for grades 3–8 as required by federal law (<http://www.nj.gov/njded/assessment/history.shtml>).

The assessments are designed to align with New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS), which enumerate what all New Jersey students should know and be able to do by the end of the 4th and 8th grades, and upon completion of a New Jersey public school education. These standards, along with their Cumulative Progress Indicators (CPIs), define expected achievement in seven core content areas: visual and performing arts, comprehensive health and physical education, language arts literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, and world languages. In addition, all areas of instruction include the cross-content workplace readiness standards.

There are five language arts literacy standards:

1. Reading—All students will understand and apply the knowledge of sounds, letters, and words in written English to become independent and fluent readers, and will read a variety of materials and texts with fluency and comprehension.
2. Writing—All students will write in clear, concise, organized language that varies in content and form for different audiences and purposes.
3. Speaking—All students will speak in clear, concise, organized language that varies in content and form for different audiences and purposes.
4. Listening—All students will listen actively to information from a variety of sources in a variety of situations.

5. Viewing and media literacy—All students will access, view, evaluate, and respond to print, nonprint, and electronic texts and resources
(http://www.state.nj.us/njded/cccs/s3_lal.htm#31).

Each standard is further defined through content strands. For example, the reading content standard is divided into the following strands: concepts about print, phonological awareness, decoding and word recognition, fluency, reading strategies, vocabulary and concept development, comprehension skills and response to text, and inquiry and research. For each of these standards and strands, New Jersey has developed CPIs around concepts for each grade level in grades K–8, as well as a combined cluster for grades 9–12. Table EE1 provides an example of cumulative progress indicators for the grade 8 English language arts reading content standard in the area of comprehension skills and response to text.

Table EE1. Grade-Level Expectations for 8th Grade for Reading Comprehension Skills and Response to Text

Building upon knowledge and skills gained in the preceding grades, by the end of 8th Grade, students:

1. differentiate between fact, opinion, bias, and propaganda in newspapers, periodicals, and electronic texts
2. compare and analyze several authors' perspectives of a character, personality, topic, setting, or event
3. analyze ideas and recurring themes found in texts, such as good versus evil, across traditional and contemporary works
4. locate and analyze the elements of setting, characterization, and plot to construct understanding of how characters influence the progression and resolution of the plot
5. read critically by identifying, analyzing, and applying knowledge of the purpose, structure, and elements of nonfiction and providing support from the text as evidence of understanding
6. read critically by identifying, analyzing, and applying knowledge of the theme, structure, style, and literary elements of fiction and providing support from the text as evidence of understanding
7. respond critically to text ideas and the author's craft by using textual evidence to support interpretations
8. identify and analyze literary techniques and elements, such as figurative language, meter, and rhetorical and stylistic features of text
9. identify and analyze recurring themes across literary works
10. read critically and analyze poetic forms (e.g., ballad, sonnet, couplet)
11. identify and understand the author's use of idioms, analogies, metaphors, and similes in prose and poetry
12. understand perspectives of authors in a variety of interdisciplinary works
13. interpret text ideas through journal writing, discussion, and enactment
14. demonstrate the use of everyday texts (e.g., train schedules, directions, brochures) and make judgments about the importance of such documents
15. compare and analyze the various works of writers through an author's study.

Source: http://www.state.nj.us/njded/cccs/s3_lal.htm#31

Test Format and Content

For purposes of examining adolescent literacy, we now focus on the language arts ESPA, GEPA, and HSPA (see <http://www.nj.gov/njded/assessment> for additional information).

The tests assess students' skills in writing, speaking, reading, listening, viewing, extending understanding of text, working with or interpreting text, and analyzing and critiquing text. On the ESPA, students read everyday text and narrative text. On the GEPA and HSPA, students read narrative and persuasive texts. For writing, 4th-grade students are asked to explain a poetry-linked prompt and to speculate for a picture prompt. Students in 8th and 11th grades are also asked to speculate based on a picture prompt, to analyze a poetry-linked prompt, and to persuade. They are also assessed on revising and editing.

In all three assessments, students encounter multiple-choice and open-ended items for reading, listening, and viewing. Most open-ended items will ask students to write a paragraph or more in response. However, for fourth-grade students, at least one open-ended question requires students to work with a graphic organizer. For all three tests, students' responses to open-ended items are scored using a rubric designed to measure students' levels of understanding.

The speaking section is administered separately from the paper-and-pencil portion of the test. Students are given 60 minutes to prepare a speech on a given topic. Students are allowed to create notes for their speaking and/or to construct viewing materials to support their presentations. Student speeches are scored on a holistic rubric.

The section on extending understanding of the text is designed as an integrated unit based on a central idea or theme. Students taking the ESPA read an informational article, respond to multiple-choice and open-ended items, and complete a writing project. Students taking the GEPA and the HSPA are given both informational and everyday texts. For all three assessments, students will be expected to use information from the reading selection(s) to complete a text-linked writing project. As they work on their project, students will make decisions, solve problems, and create original work that may include visual materials as well as their own written text. Students' writing projects will be scored using a zero-to-five-point rubric (<http://www.njpep.org/assessment/TestSpecs/LangArts/TOC.html>).

Achievement-Level Definitions

New Jersey has adopted three performance categories—partial, proficient, and advanced. Proficient scores are considered “passing” under NCLB.

Performance Results

Student Performance

The New Jersey Department of Education provides student-level data on performance for all students, students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, and major racial/ethnic⁵⁰ groups; however, at the writing of this report, only 2002 data were available. Table EE2 presents scores for 4th-, 8th-, and 11th-graders on the 2002 language arts assessments (ESPA, GEPA, and HSPA, respectively).

About 79 percent of 4th-grade students passed the examination by scoring at or above the proficient level, and about 6 percent scored at the advanced level. Less than half of 4th-grade students with disabilities (43 percent) or students with limited-English proficiency (45 percent) reached the proficient level. Only 62 percent of economically disadvantaged 4th-grade students reached the proficient level.

Asian students outperformed white students by small margins (3 percentage points at the proficient level) and African American students and Hispanic students by much larger margins (29 percentage points and 23 percentage points, respectively, in the 4th grade).

We find similar trends for 8th-graders on the GEPA; however, achievement gaps among groups of students were greater. While 73 percent of all students reached the proficient level, only 26 percent of students with disabilities and 21 percent of students with limited-English proficiency did so. Asian students outperformed white students by small margins (3 percentage points at the proficient level); however, Asian students outscored African American and Hispanic students by very large margins at the proficient level—41 percentage points and 33 percentage points, respectively.

Eighty-one percent of students passed the HSPA, and 15 percent scored at the advanced level. Trends for student group performance were consistent with those found on the ESPA and GEPA.

⁵⁰Approximately 60 percent of students in New Jersey are white; 18 percent are African American; 16 percent are Hispanic; and 7 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander. About 28 percent of students are eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program; 4 percent are in limited-English-proficiency programs; and 16 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

Table EE2. Performance of 4th-, 8th-, and 11th-Graders on Language Arts 2002 Assessments, by Student Characteristics

	Proficient and Above	Advanced
	Percentage	
4th Grade (ESPA assessment)		
All students	79	6
General education	86	7
Students with disabilities	43	1
Students with limited-English proficiency	45	0
Economically disadvantaged students	62	1
African American students	61	1
Asian/Pacific Islander students	90	12
Hispanic students	67	2
White students	87	8
8th Grade (GEPA assessment)		
All students	73	8
General education	83	10
Students with disabilities	26	0
Students with limited-English proficiency	21	0
Economically disadvantaged students	47	1
African American students	46	1
Asian/Pacific Islander students	87	19
Hispanic students	54	2
White students	84	11
11th Grade (HSPA assessment)		
All students	81	15
General education	90	17
Students with disabilities	38	1
Students with limited-English proficiency	21	0
Economically disadvantaged students	59	3
African American students	63	4
Asian/Pacific Islander students	87	26
Hispanic students	64	5
White students	88	18

Source: <http://education.state.nj.us/rc/2002/index.html>

School Performance

School-level data, disaggregated by urbanicity, are available for the 2002 reading ESPA and GEPA administrations for grades 4 and 8 in reading (Table EE3). Eighty-eight percent of schools in New Jersey are suburban, and 12 percent are urban; none is rural. Urban schools are

disproportionately high-poverty schools: 84 percent of urban schools are high-poverty, compared with 16 percent of suburban schools. Due to the small number of rural schools in New Jersey, we do not report scores for these schools.

The average percentage of students reaching proficiency in suburban schools is substantially higher than in urban schools—a 22–30-percentage-point difference at the proficient level and a 5–8-percentage-point difference at the advanced level.

Table EE3. Average School Performance on 4th- and 8th-Grade 2002 Language Arts ESPA and GEPA, by Urbanicity

	Proficient and Above	Advanced
	Average Percentage	
4th Grade (ESPA)		
Suburban schools	81	7
Urban schools	59	2
8th Grade (GEPA)		
Suburban schools	76	9
Urban schools	46	1

APPENDIX FF. NEW MEXICO

State Assessment System

In 2000, the State Board of Education implemented a statewide accountability program for public schools, testing students in grades 3–9 in mathematics, language arts, science, and social studies, using a norm-referenced test. However, New Mexico is transitioning from this norm-referenced system to a criterion-referenced system in order to comply with NCLB. The transition to the criterion-referenced assessment will occur over school years 2003–04 and 2004–05. In 2002–03 and 2003–04, New Mexico administered norm-referenced tests in grades 3, 5, 6, 7, and 9 and a criterion-referenced assessment in grades 4 and 8 in mathematic, language arts, science, and social studies. (The criterion-referenced test used in 2002–03 and 2003–04 will be phased out.) A criterion-referenced assessment for grade 11 was field-tested in 2002–03 as well. By 2004–05, new criterion-referenced tests will be fully implemented in grades 3–9 and 11 in English and Spanish (<http://www.ped.state.nm.us/resources/downloads/2003.annual.report.pdf>).

In addition, New Mexico administers a high school competency examination (NMHSCE) that tests student in reading, language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and writing. Students take the tests for the first time in the 10th grade and must pass all subject areas in order to receive a high school diploma. Sophomores who fail any part of the NMHSCE have another chance to take the exam in their junior year and two chances in their senior year.

New Mexico's new criterion-referenced examinations are designed to measure state standards. New Mexico has developed content standards, benchmarks, and performance standards for language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and a number of other subject areas. Each general standard is divided into grade-span benchmarks, which are further delineated by grade-level-specific performance standards. For example, Table FF1 presents the benchmark and performance standards for grades 5–8 for the content standard: Students will apply strategies and skills to comprehend information that is read, heard, and viewed.

Table FF1. 5th–8th-Grade Benchmark and Performance Standards for Content Standard: Students Will Apply Strategies and Skills to Comprehend Information That Is Read, Heard, and Viewed

5–8 Benchmark: Gather and use information for research and other purposes	
Grade	Performance Standards
5	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understand concept of primary source. 2. Research multiple sources to deepen understanding and integrate information and ideas across varied sources and content areas by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conducting research (with assistance) from a variety of sources for assigned or self-selected projects (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people, libraries, databases, Internet, computer networks) • evaluating the usefulness and quality of information and ideas based on purpose, experiences, text(s), and graphics 3. Make connections between print and nonprint texts by recognizing similarities and differences, using a variety of resources that contribute to informed decisions
6	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Interpret and synthesize information from a variety of sources by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reviewing the characteristics of informational works • restating and summarizing information • determining the importance of information • making connections to related topics and information • monitoring comprehension • drawing inferences • generating questions 2. Use multiple sources of print and nonprint information in developing informational materials, such as brochures, newsletters, and advertisements, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exploring a variety of sources that provide information (e.g., books, newspapers, Internet, electronic databases, CD-ROMs) • distinguishing between primary and secondary sources 3. Organize information gathered for a research topic into major components based on appropriate criteria
7	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use a variety of resources to express individual perspectives in response to personal, social, cultural, and historical issues. 2. Interpret and synthesize information by responding to information that is read, heard, or viewed. 3. Develop informational products and/or presentations that cite multiple print and nonprint sources by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identifying and using appropriate primary and secondary sources • comparing, contrasting, and evaluating information from different sources about the same topic • evaluating information for extraneous details, inconsistencies, relevant facts, and organization 4. Examine critical relationships between and among elements of a research topic
8	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use information for specific tasks by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyzing and evaluating information to extend ideas • analyzing and evaluating themes and central ideas in relation to personal and societal issues • creating a research product in both written and presentation form 2. Use images, videos, and visual representations as informational research tools

Source: http://164.64.166.11/cilt/downloads/standards/stand_la.doc

Test Format and Content

We now turn to a discussion of the criterion-referenced tests in grades 4 and 8 and the NMHSCE in reading, language arts, and writing.

CRTs

The language arts assessments in grades 4 and 8 consist of multiple-choice and constructed-response items; each of these categories counts for approximately 50 percent of the assessment score. Constructed-response items are either short responses, which take approximately three to five minutes to answer, or extended-response items, which require anywhere from five to 15 minutes to answer. The language arts test also contains three writing prompts that require students to write a minimum of one paragraph for each. Reading passages on the assessment include literary, informational, and functional passages (<http://www.ped.state.nm.us/div/ais/assess/dl/reading.test.and.item.specifications.3.17.03.draft.pdf>).

The tests sample the performance standards that are appropriate for inclusion on a statewide, paper-and-pencil test. All other performance standards are tested at the classroom level. For instance, for grade 8, students may be tested on reading comprehension; gathering and using information for research and other purposes; applying critical-thinking skills to analyze information; communicating effectively through writing; applying grammatical and language conventions to communicate; demonstrating competence in the skills and strategies of the writing process; using literature to develop an understanding of people, societies, and the self and to understand various social and cultural perspectives; and identifying ideas and making connections among literary works (<http://www.ped.state.nm.us/div/ais/assess/dl/crt.descriptors.pdf>).

NMHSCE

The NMHSCE includes reading and language arts tests with both multiple-choice and constructed-response questions. For the writing section, students answer one writing prompt that is scored on a six-point rubric.

Achievement-Level Definitions

For the CRTs, New Mexico established four achievement levels—beginning step, nearing proficiency, proficient, and advanced. Scores of proficient and above are considered “passing” under New Mexico’s new accountability program and NCLB. Table FF2 provides definitions of these achievement levels for grade-8 language arts.

Table FF2. 8th-Grade Language Arts Achievement-Level Definitions

Beginning Step	<p>Students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• can comprehend forms, simple poems, and narratives• demonstrate reading strategies, including recalling details and interpreting story characters' feelings• can interpret meaning of vocabulary from context• use commas and quotation marks correctly• can combine simple sentences and identify sentences with correct verb tense• identify some correctly spelled words• can read map legends• identify major reference materials for information• identify supporting details for an outline.
Nearing Proficiency	<p>Students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• use context clues to predict or draw conclusions regarding events and/or feelings of a character• demonstrate reading strategies, including identifying main idea, conclusion, cause and effect, identifying author's mood in short and long narratives, poems and interviews• understand some idiomatic and figurative language• derive the meaning of some words in context• can read forms and charts for details• identify sentences with correct use of commas, quotation marks, and capitalization• can sequence events and ideas in a paragraph• can determine correct capitalization and punctuation in letters• can identify correct spelling of double-consonant words.
Proficient	<p>Students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• can generalize, extend, and apply author's meaning• demonstrate reading strategies, including main idea and prediction• show understanding of descriptive language, literary genres, text types, story structure, author's style, and paragraph development• can explain their answers and strategies• identify multi-meaning words for different contexts• select appropriate use of pronouns• choose appropriate synonyms and antonyms in context and in isolation• can determine correct use of apostrophes and appropriate punctuation in addresses• recognize faulty sentence construction• can complete an outline.
Advanced	<p>Students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• demonstrate reading strategies, including inferential reasoning, analogy, and application• identify plot, theme, and outcome in a narrative• define more difficult words, and edit writing for grammar, punctuation, capitalization.

Source: <http://www.ped.state.nm.us/div/ais/assess/dl/grade468.pdf>

For the NMHSCE, performance is reported as a scale score, with a mean of 200 and a standard deviation of 40. A scale score of 175 represents adequate performance on the reading and language arts tests. For the writing section, a score of three on the six-point rubric is considered passing.

Performance Results

Student Performance

Table FF3 presents data on student performance on the 4th- and 8th-grade language arts assessments, disaggregated by disability status, English-proficiency status, socioeconomic status, and racial/ethnic groups.⁵¹ Data for the standardized administration of the assessments are presented.

A little over half of 4th-grade students (53 percent) passed the examination by reaching the proficient level. Eight percent scored at the advanced level, while 82 percent scored at or above the nearing proficiency level. Scores of 8th-grade students were a bit higher—85 percent scored at or above the nearing proficiency level, 58 percent reached proficiency, and 14 percent scored at the advanced level. However, 4th-grade special education students were a bit more likely to reach the proficient level than were the 8th-grade special education students—42 percent compared with 34 percent.

In 4th and 8th grades, 65 percent of English-language learners scored at or above the nearing proficiency level, while 28–30 percent scored at the proficient level, and 2 percent scored at the advanced level. Economically disadvantaged students scored far below their peers—about 21–22 percentage points lower at the proficient level. White students scored 20–26 percentage points above Hispanic students and African American students at the proficient level.

Table FF4 presents scale scores for student groups on the reading and language arts NMHSCE, as well as the percentage of students who passed all of the tests in the NMHSCE battery in spring 2003. The mean scale scores on the tests were 200, with a standard deviation of 40. A scale score of 175 represents adequate performance on the reading and language arts tests.

⁵¹Approximately 51 percent of students in New Mexico are Hispanic; 34 percent are white; 11 percent are American Indian; and 2 percent are African American. About 55 percent of students are eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program; 21 percent are in limited-English-proficiency programs; and 20 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

About 69 percent of all students passed the battery of NMHSCE tests. However, only 27 percent of special education students, 36 percent of English-language learners, and 51 percent of economically disadvantaged students did so.

Table FF3. 4th- and 8th-Grade Language Arts 2003 Standards-Based Assessment (SBA), by Student Characteristics

	Nearing Proficiency and Above	Proficient and Above	Advanced
	Percentage		
4th Grade			
All students	82	53	8
General education students	82	53	8
Special education students	69	42	10
English-language learners	65	30	2
Non-English-language learners	78	50	8
Economically disadvantaged students	69	36	4
Non-economically disadvantaged students	83	58	11
African American students	76	45	4
Hispanic students	78	45	5
White students	91	69	14
8th Grade			
All students	85	58	14
General education students	86	59	14
Special education students	63	34	9
English-language learners	65	28	2
Non-English-language learners	81	55	13
Economically disadvantaged students	72	40	6
Non-economically disadvantaged students	84	61	17
African American students	82	55	11
Hispanic students	81	49	8
White students	93	75	24

Source: <http://www.ped.state.nm.us/div/acc.assess/assess/dl/sba.executive.summary.pdf>

Note: The table reports scores from standardized administrations of the assessments.

Table FF4. Performance of 10th-Graders on 2003 NMHSCE, by Student Characteristics

	Reading Average Scale Score	Language Arts Average Scale Score	Percentage Passing All Tests
All students	209	201	69
General education students	211	203	72
Special education students	180	166	27
English-language learners	185	175	36
Economically disadvantaged students	195	186	51
Non–economically disadvantaged students	210	202	71
African American students	202	192	58
Hispanic students	203	195	61
White students	221	213	85

Source: <http://www.ped.state.nm.us/div/acc.assess/assess/dl/nm.exec.summary.2003.pdf>

Note: Standardized score results presented.

Turning to the reading and language arts scale scores, we can see that economically disadvantaged students perform about .4 of a standard deviation below their non–economically disadvantaged peers, and Hispanic and African American students perform about half a standard deviation below white students.

School Performance

No school-level data are available for New Mexico.

APPENDIX GG. NEW YORK

State Assessment System

New York assesses students in English, mathematics, and science in grades 4 and 8, social studies in grade 5, and technology education in grade 8. At the high school level, students must complete a series of Regents examinations that test students in English, mathematics, social studies, science, the arts, and languages other than English. High school students must pass the high school examinations in order to graduate from high school. Students have multiple testing opportunities to pass the high school examination. New York is planning to expand its series of assessments to meet requirements under NCLB and plans to administer assessments in grades 3–8 in English language arts and mathematics in 2005–2006 (additional information can be found through <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/nyc/accountability.html>).

New York's assessments are intended to measure state standards. New York established four content standards in English language arts:

- Standard 1: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding. As listeners and readers, students will collect data, facts, and ideas; discover relationships, concepts, and generalizations; and use knowledge generated from oral, written, and electronically produced texts. As speakers and writers, they will use oral and written language to acquire, interpret, apply, and transmit information.
- Standard 2: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for literary response and expression. Students will read and listen to oral, written, and electronically produced texts and performances, relate texts and performances to their own lives, and develop an understanding of the diverse social, historical, and cultural dimensions the texts and performances represent. As speakers and writers, students will use oral and written language for self-expression and artistic creation.
- Standard 3: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for critical analysis and evaluation. As listeners and readers, students will analyze experiences, ideas, information, and issues presented by others using a variety of established criteria. As speakers and writers, they will present, in oral and written language and from a variety of perspectives, their opinions and judgments on experiences, ideas, information, and issues.
- Standard 4: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for social interaction. Students will use oral and written language for effective social communication with a wide variety of people. As readers and listeners, they will use the social communications of others to enrich their understanding of people and their views (<http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/ciai/pub/standards>).

In addition, New York has published performance indicators by school levels for the standards; each standard is linked to a key idea that defines the standard, along with performance indicators that describe the required expectations for students at the elementary, intermediate, and commencement levels (see Table GG1 for example).

Table GG1. Performance Indicators and Evidence for Listening and Reading, by School Level

Listening and reading to acquire information and understanding involve collecting data, facts, and ideas; discovering relationships, concepts, and generalizations; and using knowledge from oral, written, and electronic sources.			
	Elementary	Middle	Commencement
Performance indicator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather and interpret information from children’s reference books, magazines, textbooks, electronic bulletin boards, audio and media presentations, and oral interviews, and from such forms as charts, graphs, maps, and diagrams • Select information appropriate to the purpose of their investigation and relate ideas from one text to another • Select and use strategies they have been taught for note taking, organizing, and categorizing information • Ask specific questions to clarify and extend meaning • Make appropriate and effective use of strategies to construct meaning from print, such as prior knowledge about a subject, structural and context clues, and an understanding of letter-sound relationships to decode difficult words • Support inferences about information and ideas with reference to text features, such as vocabulary and organizational patterns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpret and analyze information from textbooks and nonfiction books for young adults, as well as reference materials, audio and media presentations, oral interviews, graphs, charts, diagrams, and electronic databases intended for a general audience • Compare and synthesize information from different sources • Use a wide variety of strategies for selecting, organizing, and categorizing information • Distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information and between fact and opinion • Relate new information to prior knowledge and experience • Understand and use the text features that make information accessible and usable, such as format, sequence, level of diction, and relevance of details. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpret and analyze complex informational texts and presentations, including technical manuals, professional journals, newspaper and broadcast editorials, electronic networks, political speeches and debates, and primary source material in their subject-area courses • Synthesize information from diverse sources and identify complexities and discrepancies in the information • Use a combination of techniques (e.g., previewing, use of advance organizers, structural cues) to extract salient information from texts • Make distinctions about the relative value and significance of specific data, facts, and ideas • Make perceptive and well-developed connections to prior knowledge • Evaluate writing strategies and presentational features that affect interpretation of the information.

Table GG1. (cont.)

Evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students accurately paraphrase what they have heard or read• Students follow directions that involve a few steps• Students ask for clarification of a classmate's idea in a group discussion• Students use concept maps, semantic webs, or outlines to organize information they have collected.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students produce a summary of the information about a famous person found in a biography, encyclopedia, and textbook• Students use facts and data from news articles and television reports in an oral report on a current event• Students compile a bibliography of sources that are used in a research project• Students take notes that record the main ideas and most significant supporting details of a lecture or speech.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students incorporate information from several noted experts to support a thesis in a research paper• Students assemble notes for historical and artistic tables• Students use an electronic database and other graphic presentations to find evidence of trends for a sociological study• Students produce flow charts and diagrams to show the relationships among information from different sources• Students determine the relative value of different reference materials for a particular research question.
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Source: <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/ciai/ela/pub/elalearn.pdf>

Test Format and Content

The 2002 4th-grade English language arts test consists of three sessions. In the first session, students answer 28 multiple-choice items. Session 2 contains a listening passage, followed by two short-response items and one extended-response item, and an independent writing prompt linked thematically with the listening prompt. Session 3 contains two linked passages (one informational and one literary, or two literary), accompanied by three short-response items and one extended-response item.

The 8th-grade English language arts test has two sessions. The first consists of 25 multiple-choice items and three short-response items and one extended-response item. The four open-response items follow a listening passage. Session 2 contains linked information stimuli, accompanied by three short-response items and one extended-response item, and an independent writing prompt that is followed by an extended-response item.

The High School Regents Comprehensive Examination in English assesses student achievement of the learning standards at the commencement level. The examination is administered in two three-hour sessions on separate days. In Session 1, students are required to:

- listen to a speech, answer six multiple-choice questions, and use information from the speech to write a response for a specific purpose and audience
- read a text and a related graphic, answer ten multiple-choice questions, and use information from both documents to write a response for a specific purpose and audience.

In Session 2, students are required to:

- read two literary texts, answer ten multiple-choice questions, and write an essay discussing a controlling idea and the authors' use of literary elements and techniques
- interpret a written statement given to them about some aspect of literature (<http://emsc32.nysed.gov/osa/inform/DET%20541E%200604.pdf>).

Achievement-Level Definitions

New York measures achievement at four levels:

- Level 4—exceeds the standards
- Level 3—meets all the standards
- Level 2—meets some of the standards or partially meets the standards
- Level 1—shows serious academic difficulties.

Performance at or above level 3 is considered “proficient” under NCLB.

Performance Results

Student Performance

Student-level data were not publicly available for New York.

School Performance

Table GG2 presents data on the 2002 administration of the 4th- and 8th-grade reading section of the English language arts tests by school urbanicity, poverty, and racial/ethnic demographics. Forty-nine percent of schools in New York were suburban, 38 percent urban, and 13 percent rural. About 38 percent of schools were high-poverty. Urban schools were disproportionately high-poverty schools.⁵² Eighty-four percent of urban schools are high-poverty, compared with 15

⁵²Approximately 55 percent of students in New York are white; 20 percent are African American; 19 percent are Hispanic, and 6 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander. About 43 percent of students are eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program; 7 percent are in limited-English-proficiency programs; and 15 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

percent of rural schools and 11 percent of suburban schools. Forty-six percent of schools are high-minority schools, defined as 50 percent minority students and above.

For all schools, on average, 63 percent of students passed the 4th-grade reading assessment by scoring at or above level 3, compared with 43 percent of students on the 8th-grade assessment. For both grades, average performance in high-poverty schools was lower than in low-poverty schools (30–31 percentage points at level 3 and above); and high-minority schools trailed low-minority schools (22–25 percentage points at level 3 and above). Average student performance in suburban schools was higher than in rural or urban schools, and rural schools outperformed urban schools. For instance, on the 8th-grade assessment, average performance at level 3 or above was 54 percent in suburban schools, compared with 47 percent in rural schools and 27 percent in urban schools.

Table GG2. Average School Performance on 4th- and 8th-Grade 2002 Reading Assessment, by Urbanicity, Poverty Status, and Minority Status

	Level 2 and Above	Level 3 and Above	Level 4
	Average Percentage		
4th Grade			
All schools	92	63	21
High-poverty schools	85	45	11
Low-poverty schools	97	75	27
High-minority schools	87	51	15
Low-minority schools	97	73	26
Rural schools	95	64	17
Suburban schools	97	75	28
Urban schools	85	47	13
8th Grade			
All schools	92	43	10
High-poverty schools	83	23	4
Low-poverty schools	97	54	13
High-minority schools	85	29	6
Low-minority schools	97	54	12
Rural schools	96	47	9
Suburban schools	96	54	13
Urban schools	84	27	5

APPENDIX HH. NORTH CAROLINA

State Assessment System

Under its testing program, North Carolina administers a number of assessments, including:

- End-of-grade assessments to students in grades 3–8 in reading and mathematics
- Writing assessments to students in grades 4, 7, and 10
- High school comprehensive tests to students in grade 10 in reading and mathematics (reinstated in 2002–2003 for compliance under NCLB)
- End-of-course assessments for a variety of mathematics, English, science, and history courses taken in high school (grades 9–12), including: English I; Algebra I; Algebra II; Geometry; Physical Science; Biology; Chemistry; Physics; Economic, Legal, and Political Systems; and World History
- Computer-skills test to students in grade 8
- Competency test in reading and mathematics to students in grade 9
- High school exit exam that measures communication, problem solving, processing information, and using numbers and data to students in grade 11.⁵³

The end-of grade tests and the high school comprehensive tests are used for measuring adequate yearly progress under NCLB; all the end-of-grade tests, end-of-course tests, computer-skills test, and writing assessments are used for North Carolina’s accountability system, which tracks schools’ absolute performance and performance growth. Schools can receive rewards or sanctions for performance on the assessments. In addition, North Carolina public school students are required to meet statewide standards, as measured by the end-of-grade assessments in grades 3, 5, and 8, to be automatically promoted to the next grade. For high school graduation, students will need a passing score on an exit exam of essential skills (additional information on assessment and accountability can be found through <http://abcs.ncpublicschools.org/abcs/>).

North Carolina’s assessments are intended to measure the competency goals and objectives of the Standard Course of Study, which are delineated by discipline and grade level. Table HH1 presents an example for one competency goal for 8th-grade students in English language arts.

⁵³The test was field-tested in 2002–2003 and is expected to replace the current competency tests in reading and mathematics, once implemented in 2004 for the graduates of 2005.

Table HH1. Competency Goal 1 in Standard Course of Study for 8th-Grade English Language Arts

Competency Goal 1: The learner will use language to express individual perspectives through analysis of personal, social, cultural, and historical issues.

- 1.01 Narrate a personal account which:
 - creates a coherent, organizing structure appropriate to purpose, audience, and context
 - establishes a point of view and sharpens focus
 - uses remembered feelings
 - selects details that best illuminate the topic
 - connects events to self and society
 - 1.02 Explore expressive materials that are read, heard, and viewed by:
 - generating a learning log or journal
 - maintaining an annotated list of works that are read or viewed, including personal reactions
 - taking an active role in and/or leading formal and informal book and media talks
 - 1.03 Interact in group activities and/or seminars in which the student:
 - shares personal reactions to questions raised
 - gives reasons and cites examples from text in support of expressed opinions
 - clarifies, illustrates, or expands on a response when asked to do so, and asks classmates for similar expansion
 - 1.04 Reflect on learning experiences by:
 - evaluating how personal perspectives are influenced by society, cultural differences, and historical issues
 - appraising changes in self throughout the learning process
 - evaluating personal circumstances and background that shape interaction with text
-

Source: <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/curriculum/languagearts/gradeeight.htm>

Test Format and Content

We now turn to a discussion of assessments that speak to adolescent literacy—the end-of-grade tests, the high school comprehensive test in reading, and the writing assessments. We selected 4th and 8th grades as our examples for the end-of-grade reading tests (see <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/accountability/testing/eog/TIS.htm> for additional details on the assessments).

End-of-Grade Reading Comprehension Assessments

For 4th grade, the reading comprehension test consists of 50 multiple-choice questions administered during a 115-minute block. The test consists of eight reading selections with three to nine associated questions for each selection. Each student is asked to read five literary selections (two fiction, one nonfiction, one drama, one poem) and three informational selections (two content and one consumer). The variety of selections allows for the assessment of reading for various purposes: for literary experience, to gain information, and to perform a task.

Students in 8th grade answer 56 multiple-choice questions in the 115-minute block, based on six literary selections (two fiction, one nonfiction, one drama, two poems) and three informational selections (two content and one consumer).

The end-of-grade tests are organized by category, with each item falling into one of four categories: cognition, interpretation, critical stance, or connections. A description of each category and the average percentage of items per form for each category are shown in Table HH2. We see that developing a critical stance is weighted more heavily in the 8th grade than in the 4th, while cognition is given less weight in the higher grade. While making connections (a higher-level skill) is tested, it is given little weight, only 5–6 percent, in either grade.

Table HH2. Descriptive Information for the North Carolina End-of-Grade Test of Reading Comprehension—4th and 8th Grades

Category	Description of Category	4 th Grade Average Percentage of Score	8 th Grade Average Percentage of Score
Cognition	Refers to the initial strategies a reader uses to understand the selection. It is about purpose and organization of the selection. It considers the text as a whole or in a broad perspective. Cognition includes strategies such as using context clues to determine meaning or summarizing to include main points.	38	29
Interpretation	Requires the student to develop a more complete understanding. It may ask students to clarify, explain the significance of, extend, and/or adapt ideas and concepts.	39	40
Critical stance	Refers to tasks that ask the student to stand apart from the selection and consider it objectively. It involves processes such as comparing, contrasting, and understanding the impact of literary elements.	18	25
Connections	Refers to connecting knowledge from the selection with other information and experiences. It involves the student being able to relate the selection to events beyond or outside the selection. In addition, the student will make associations outside the selection and between selections.	5	6

Source: <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/accountability/testing/eog/TIS.htm>

High School Comprehensive Reading Comprehension Assessment

The high school comprehensive reading comprehension test requires students to answer 72 multiple-choice questions based on eight passages students read—three passages are literary texts; three are content-based (e.g., science, history); and two are practical (e.g., form, brochure, recipe). Students have 115 minutes to complete the assessment (http://www.ncpublicschools.org/student_promotion/raisebar.html).

Writing Assessments

In March 2003, North Carolina piloted new writing assessments in grades 4, 7, and 10. Students in grades 4 and 7 were provided 75 minutes to respond to a prompt, while students in grade 10 received 100 minutes. Students in grade 4 wrote an extended narrative response (personal or imaginative); students in grade 7 wrote an extended argumentative response (problem solution or evaluative); and students in grade 10 wrote an extended information response (definition, cause and effect, or problem solution). These responses were graded using a four-point rubric (http://www.ncpublicschools.org/student_promotion/mgwriting.html).

Achievement-Level Definitions

North Carolina has established four achievement levels for its end-of-grade and high school comprehensive assessments:

- Level I: Students performing at this level do not have sufficient mastery of knowledge and skills in the subject area to be successful in the next grade.
- Level II: Students performing at this level demonstrate inconsistent mastery of knowledge and skills in the subject area and are minimally prepared to be successful at the next grade level.
- Level III: Students performing at this level consistently demonstrate mastery of the grade-level subject matter and skills and are well prepared for the next grade level.
- Level IV: Students performing at this level consistently perform in a superior manner clearly beyond that required to be proficient at grade-level work.

Students performing at or above Level III are considered to be achieving at or above grade level, and this level is used as the proficiency level for adequate yearly progress (AYP) under NCLB.

Performance Results

Student Performance

North Carolina provides student-level data disaggregated by disability status, English-proficiency status, socioeconomic status, and racial/ethnic groups.⁵⁴ Table HH3 provides data on student performance on the 4th- and 8th-grade reading comprehension assessment for these student groups.

**Table HH3. Performance on the 4th- and 8th-Grade Reading Comprehension 2003
End-of-Grade Assessment, by Student Characteristics**

	4 th Grade	8 th Grade
	Percent Proficient and Above	
All students	81	86
Students with disabilities	48	50
Students with no disabilities	87	91
Students with limited-English proficiency	48	41
Students with English proficiency	83	87
Economically disadvantaged students	70	74
Non-economically disadvantaged students	91	93
African American students	71	76
Asian/Pacific Islander students	83	87
Hispanic students	64	65
White students	89	92

Source: <http://disag.ncpublicschools.org/2003/>

Eighty-one percent of 4th-graders and 86 percent of 8th-graders reached the proficient level on the reading comprehension end-of-grade assessment. About half (48–50 percent) of students with disabilities did so, and 41–48 percent of students with limited-English proficiency reached this level. Over 90 percent of non-economically disadvantaged students scored at the proficient level, compared with 70–74 percent of economically disadvantaged students.

A larger percentage of white students scored at or above the proficient level than did any other racial/ethnic group. The achievement gap between white and Asian students was small—only 5–6 percentage points; however, it was much larger between white and African American students (16–18 percentage points) and white and Hispanic students (25–27 percentage points).

⁵⁴Approximately 60 percent of students in North Carolina are white; 31 percent are African American; 5 percent are Hispanic; and 2 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander. About 38 percent are eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program; 4 percent are in limited-English-proficiency programs; and 14 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

Table HH4 provides data on the 10th-grade reading-comprehension HSCA. About 64 percent of all students reached the proficient level. However, only 25 percent of students with limited-English proficiency and 21 percent of students with disabilities reached this level. Similar to what we found on the end-of-grade tests, economically disadvantaged students scored lower than their peers (29 percentage points) and white students outperformed Asian students (9 percentage points), African American students (32 percentage points), and Hispanic students (31 percentage points).

Table HH4. Performance on the 10th-Grade Reading Comprehension 2003 High School Comprehensive Assessment, by Student Characteristics

	Percentage Proficient and Above
10th Grade	
All students	64
Students with limited-English proficiency	25
Students with English proficiency	65
Students with disabilities	21
Students with no disabilities	69
Economically disadvantaged students	43
Non-economically disadvantaged students	72
American Indian/Alaskan Native students	49
Asian/Pacific Islander students	66
African American students	43
Hispanic students	44
White students	75

Source: <http://disag.ncpublicschools.org/2003/>

School Performance

School-level data disaggregated by urbanicity are available for the 2002 administration of the 5th- and 8th-grade reading end-of-course assessments (Table HH5). Approximately 37 percent of schools in North Carolina were rural, 35 percent were suburban, and 28 percent were urban. A larger proportion of rural and urban schools were high-poverty schools, compared with suburban schools (58 percent, 48 percent, and 26 percent, respectively).

Suburban schools outperformed rural schools by 3 percentage points, and urban schools by 6 percentage points in 5th and 8th grades at level III. For the school level, we also have data on performance at the highest performance category. Again, suburban schools outperformed their rural and urban counterparts. However, urban schools at level IV perform slightly better than

rural schools did in both grades. For instance, on average, suburban schools in the 5th grade had 42 percent of students performing at level IV, compared with urban schools with 38 percent of students performing at this level, and rural schools with 36 percent of students performing at this level.

Table HH5. Average School Performance on 5th- and 8th-Grade 2002 Reading Comprehension End-of-Grade Assessment, by Urbanicity

	Level III and Above	Level IV
	Average Percentage	
5th Grade		
Rural schools	83	36
Suburban schools	86	42
Urban schools	80	38
8th Grade		
Rural schools	81	35
Suburban schools	84	39
Urban schools	78	36

APPENDIX II. NORTH DAKOTA

State Assessment System

The North Dakota State Assessment (NDSA) is a criterion-referenced exam designed to align with state content standards in English language arts and mathematics. Currently, students in grades 4, 8, and 12 take the assessment, although the state plans to expand the assessment to include students in grades 3, 5, 6, and 7 in 2005–06 (for additional information regarding the state assessment system, see <http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/grants/NCLB.shtm>).

The North Dakota Curriculum Frameworks lay out the state's content standards. The framework lists seven content standards that apply across all grade levels:

- Standard 1: Students gather and organize information
- Standard 2: Students engage in the reading process
- Standard 3: Students comprehend literature
- Standard 4: Students engage in the writing process
- Standard 5: Students write for a variety of purposes and audiences
- Standard 6: Students engage in speaking and listening processes
- Standard 7: Students understand and use principles of language.

Each standard is further broken down into a set of benchmarks that describe what students should know and be able to do to meet the standard in grades 4, 8, and 12. Each benchmark is augmented by examples of specific supporting knowledge and performance activities. The content standards are supplemented by the state's achievement standards, which provide four-point rubrics describing levels of performance for each benchmark. Table II1 shows one content standard, with associated benchmarks and achievement standards for grade 8, as an example (<http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/standard/content/english96.pdf>).

The state department of education has released professional-development materials, called calibration packets, which help teachers learn about the standards and how to assess students' progress on them.

North Dakota released a draft version of a revision of the state English language arts content standards in January 2004. The six standards in the draft are engaging in the research process, engaging in the reading process, engaging in the writing process, engaging in the speaking and listening process, understanding media, and understanding and using principles of language. Benchmarks for the new standards are defined for all grades levels, K–12.

Table II 1. North Dakota English Language Arts Curriculum Framework, 8th Grade

Standard 3: Students Comprehend Literature	
Benchmark	Achievement Standards
Understand that events and themes in literature parallel and often impact events in their lives	Level 4: The student identifies and relates to multiple themes and clearly expresses and creatively uses these themes through writing or speaking. Level 3: The student makes connections between his/her own life and literature and expresses these connections through writing or speaking. Level 2: The student sees a connection, but vaguely expresses it through writing or speaking. Level 1: The student is unable to understand the connection.
Use specific aspects of literature to better understand their own and/or others' thoughts and actions	Level 4: The student thoroughly describes the protagonist, antagonist, point of view, and type of characterization used. Level 3: The student describes the protagonist, antagonist, and other characters. Level 2: The student identifies and describes characters, but cannot describe their function. Level 1: The student shows little or no understanding of characterization.
Understand that a single text may elicit a wide variety of reactions	Level 4: The student thoughtfully elicits, discusses, and acknowledges other viewpoints. Level 3: The student acknowledges a variety of viewpoints in addition to his/her own. Level 2: The student expresses his/her own opinion, but is unaware of other viewpoints. Level 1: The student is unable to express any point of view.
Understand the characteristics of a wide variety of genres	Level 4: The student identifies and understands several specific literary elements of different genres. Level 3: The student identifies and understands some elements of different genres. Level 2: The student identifies limited elements of different genres. Level 1: The student is unable to identify specific elements of different genres.

Source: <http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/standard/content/english96.pdf>

Test Format and Content

The NDSA is produced by CTB/McGraw-Hill and features the company's TerraNova exam augmented with uniquely aligned state test items. The reading/language arts assessment uses both multiple-choice and constructed-response items. Reading standards tested on the exam include gathering and organizing information, engaging in the reading process, comprehending literature, and understanding and using language; language arts standards tested include engaging in the writing process, writing for a variety of purposes, and understanding and using language (<http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/testing/index.shtm>).

Achievement-Level Definitions

Student scores on the NDSA are reported in four categories: advanced, proficient, partially proficient, and novice. Students scoring at the proficient level or higher are considered to have met academic requirements under NCLB.

In addition to defining the achievement levels broadly and setting cut scores, the state has also published grade-by-grade achievement-level descriptors for both reading/language arts and mathematics. Table II2 shows the descriptors for 8th-grade reading/language arts as an example.

Table II2. NDSA Achievement-Level Descriptors, 8th-Grade English Language Arts

Advanced	Students identify story elements, interpret context clues, and explain abstract ideas in complex texts. They transfer information from one format to another. Students read critically, making inferences about characters and main ideas, analyzing information to draw conclusions, and interpreting point of view, style, and tone. They scan and reread for clarification. Students distinguish between different types of texts, rationalize the effects of persuasive techniques, and determine the meaning of cultural slang.
Proficient	Students interpret multiple context clues to determine word meaning, analyze texts to determine main idea, and scan to locate specific information. They follow detailed directions and identify appropriate resources. Students read critically to determine setting and to draw conclusions. They analyze characters' development, make predictions, and draw conclusions based on characters' thoughts and actions. Students distinguish main idea from specific details. They interpret simile, metaphor, and slang in different types of texts.
Partially Proficient	Students sort events in chronological order, use context clues to determine word meaning, follow directions, draw conclusions based on evidence in the text, and scan to locate information. They use plot to understand characters' actions.
Novice	Students use context clues to determine word meaning in simple texts. They identify the narrator, read for detail, and identify persuasive techniques in simple texts.

Source: <http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/testing/assess/120602.pdf>

Performance Results

Student Performance

North Dakota provides data on student performance for all students and by a variety of student characteristics, including disability, economic disadvantage, English fluency, and racial/ethnic group.⁵⁵ Table II3 shows results from the 2003 NDSA reading/language arts exam for students in grades 4, 8, and 12

⁵⁵Approximately 89 percent of students in North Dakota are white, and 8 percent are American Indian. No other racial/ethnic group comprises 2 percent of the student population. About 28 percent of students are eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program, and 13 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

Table II3. Performance of 4th-, 8th-, and 12th-Graders on 2003 Reading/Language Arts NDSA, by Student Characteristics

	Partially Proficient and Above	Proficient and Above	Advanced
	Percentage		
4th Grade			
All students	93	74	21
Students with IEPs	74	38	4
Students without IEPs	95	79	24
English-language-learner students	75	39	3
Non-English-language-learner students	93	75	22
Economically disadvantaged students	88	64	13
Non-economically disadvantaged students	95	79	26
Native American students	81	50	5
White students	94	77	23
8th Grade			
All students	88	69	15
Students with IEPs	57	22	1
Students without IEPs	93	75	17
English-language-learner students	40	22	2
Non-English-language-learner students	89	69	16
Economically disadvantaged students	80	55	8
Non-economically disadvantaged students	92	75	19
Native American students	68	34	3
White students	90	72	17
12th Grade			
All students	79	52	18
Students with IEPs	30	9	1
Students without IEPs	83	56	19
English-language-learner students	24	7	2
Non-English-language-learner students	80	53	18
Economically disadvantaged students	66	36	9
Non-economically disadvantaged students	82	56	20
Native American students	54	24	6
White students	81	54	19

Source: <http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/dpi/reports/profile/index.shtml>

Fourth-grade students performed at higher levels on the reading NDSA than did 8th-grade or 12th-grade students. For example, at the 4th grade, 74 percent of students scored at or above the proficient level, compared with 69 percent of 8th-graders, and 52 percent of 12th-graders. While 38 percent of students with disabilities reached the proficient level in 4th grade, only 22 percent did so in 8th grade, and only 9 percent did so in 12th grade. Results for English-language learners were similar.

At all grades and achievement levels, economically disadvantaged students performed below their peers. Across the three grades, the achievement gap ranged from 15 to 20 percentage points at the proficient level and 11–13 percentage points at the advanced level. An even larger achievement gap exists between white students and Native American students. Across the grades, white students scored 27–38 percentage points higher than did Native American students at the proficient level and 13–18 percentage points higher at the advanced level.

North Dakota also provides information regarding how all students progressed, broken down by the four reading standards (not shown in table). Interestingly, there was little or no difference within grade regarding how students performed on the standards. For instance, 74–75 percent of 4th-grade students reached standard in gathering and organizing information, engaging in reading process, comprehending literature, and understanding and use of language principles.

School Performance

School-level data are not available for North Dakota.

APPENDIX JJ. OHIO

State Assessment System

As of the 2001–02 school year, Ohio’s state assessment system consisted of the Ohio Proficiency Tests (OPT) exams in reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies, defined by the state’s learning outcomes. The tests are given in 4th, 6th, and 9th grades. Students must pass all sections of the 9th-grade exam to graduate, and they are given two opportunities to do so each year from 8th grade through 12th grade (<http://www.ode.state.oh.us/Accountability/default.asp>).

The learning outcomes in the OPT are based on the state’s Model Competency-Based Programs, adopted in the early 1990s. However, in 2001 the state adopted academic content standards in reading, writing, and mathematics. Paragraph-length descriptions of each standard define what all students should know and be able to do. The ten standards in English language arts for grades K–12 are related to:

- Phonemic awareness, word recognition, and fluency
- Acquisition of vocabulary
- Reading process, concepts of print, comprehension strategies, and self-monitoring strategies
- Reading applications, literary text
- Writing process
- Writing applications
- Writing conventions
- Research
- Communication, oral and visual.

For each standard, a set of benchmarks defines key checkpoints to help monitor students’ progress at various grade clusters (K–3, 4–7, 8–10, and 11–12 in reading; and K–2, 3–4, 5–7, 8–10, and 11–12 in writing). Finally, grade-level indicators describe what all students should know and be able to do at each grade level

(http://www.ode.state.oh.us/academic_content_standards/acsenglish.asp?#Draft%20of%20the%20Academic%20Content%20Standards).

The state is developing and phasing in new state assessments, which will be aligned with the new academic content standards. The Ohio Graduation Test is a criterion-referenced exam in reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies for students in grade 10. Beginning with the class of 2007, students must pass all sections of the test in order to graduate. Students in grades 3–8 will take the new Ohio Achievement Tests in reading and mathematics. Students in grades 4

and 7 will also take the test in writing, and students in grades 5 and 8 will take the test in science and social studies. Subject areas not tested on the achievement test at a given grade level will be assessed using the state's diagnostic test to help teachers check on students' progress and adjust their instruction. Students in grades 1 and 2 will also take the diagnostic test in reading, writing, and mathematics.

Test Format and Content

To examine recent trends in adolescent literacy, in the rest of the discussion we will focus on the OPT in reading and writing for grades 4, 6, and 9 (additional information can be found through <http://www.ode.state.oh.us/proficiency/default.asp>).

The 4th- and 6th-grade reading assessments consist of 41 and 35 items, respectively, including 20–28 multiple-choice questions, five to nine short-answer questions, and two extended-response questions. Multiple-choice questions count for 1 point each, short-answer items are scored on a two-point scale, and extended-response items are scored on a four-point scale. The questions are divided evenly between those based on fiction and poetry selections and those based on a nonfiction selection. Approximately half the items on the 4th-grade exam assess students' ability to construct meaning (e.g., summarize the text), while the other half assess their ability to examine and extend meaning (e.g., infer from the text). The 6th-grade exam emphasizes extending meaning (e.g., critique or evaluate aspects of the text) approximately twice as much as constructing and examining meaning.

The 9th-grade reading assessment consists of 40 multiple-choice questions, of which 16 relate to fictional passages, 16 to nonfiction passages, and eight to everyday functional passages. The questions address both constructing and extending meaning.

The writing assessment for all three grade levels consists of two writing tasks that require students to respond to prompts in specified modes. Modes for 4th- and 6th-grade students include summaries, fictional narratives, personal-experience narratives, informational pieces, or communications. Prompts on the 9th-grade test elicit expository, narrative, or descriptive writing. Student responses are scored using grade-specific four-point holistic rubrics that address the state's learning outcomes related to content, organization, language, and writing conventions.

Achievement-Level Definitions

Student scores on the 4th- and 6th-grade Ohio Proficiency Tests are reported using four achievement levels: advanced, proficient, basic, and below basic, while scores on the 9th-grade test are reported as proficient or not proficient. Students scoring at the proficient level or above are considered to have met academic requirements under NCLB.

Performance Results

Student Performance

Ohio provides data on student performance for all students, for the two major racial/ethnic groups (white and African American), and for students with disabilities, although only the proficient level and above is reported.⁵⁶ Table JJ1 shows results from the 2002 Ohio Proficiency Tests for students in grades 4, 6, and 9.

Table JJ1. Performance of 4th-, 6th-, and 9th-Graders on 2002 Reading and Writing Ohio Proficiency Test, by Student Characteristics

	Reading	Writing
	Percent Proficient and Above	
4th Grade		
All students	68	81
Students with disabilities	48	64
African American students	38	63
White students	75	84
6th Grade		
All students	58	87
Students with disabilities	31	64
African American students	26	74
White students	65	90
9th Grade		
All students	92	90
Students with disabilities	70	66
African American students	79	78
White students	95	93

Source: <http://www.ode.state.oh.us/proficiency/default.asp>

Sixty-eight percent of 4th-graders and 58 percent of 6th-graders scored at the proficient level and above in reading, but over 81 percent of them did so in writing. There were large differences in the proficiency rates of white and African American students, particularly in reading. For example, while 75 percent of white 4th-graders scored at the proficient level in reading, only 38 percent of African American students did so. There was a 39-percentage-point difference at the 6th-grade level. The differences in performance for these two groups of students were much

⁵⁶About 80 percent of students in Ohio are white; 17 percent are African American; and 2 percent are Hispanic. About 27 percent are eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program; 1 percent are in limited-English-proficiency programs; and 12 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

smaller in writing—21 percentage points in the 4th grade and 16 percentage points in the 6th grade. About 48 percent of 4th-grade students with disabilities were judged proficient in reading; the number was much smaller in the 6th grade, 31 percent. About 64 percent of these students passed the writing test in both grades.

At the 9th-grade level, between 90 and 92 percent of students passed in both reading and writing. The difference in the passing rates of African American and white students was smaller than in lower grades, particularly in reading—16 percentage points compared with 37–39 percentage points in the lower grades. Seventy percent of students with disabilities passed the reading test at the 9th-grade level, and 66 percent did so in writing.

School Performance

School-level data disaggregated by urbanicity are available for the 2002 Ohio Proficiency Test administration for grades 4, 6, and 9 (Table JJ2). Approximately 53 percent of schools in Ohio were suburban, 25 percent rural, and 22 percent urban. A much larger proportion of urban schools were high-poverty schools, compared with rural and suburban schools (66 percent, 14 percent, and 10 percent, respectively). Given these demographics, it is not surprising that urban schools performed far below suburban and rural schools in reading and writing across all three grade levels, particularly for 4th- and 6th-grade reading, at which the achievement gap ranges between 24 and 28 percentage points.

Table JJ2. Average School Performance for 4th-, 6th-, and 9th-Grade 2002 Reading and Writing Ohio Proficiency Test, by Urbanicity

	Reading	Writing
	Average Proficient and Above Percentage	
4th Grade		
Rural schools	72	83
Suburban schools	74	84
Urban schools	48	69
6th Grade		
Rural schools	62	90
Suburban schools	65	90
Urban schools	37	79
9th Grade		
Rural schools	95	93
Suburban schools	95	93
Urban schools	82	82

APPENDIX KK. OKLAHOMA

State Assessment System

As of 2002–03, the Oklahoma School Testing Program consisted of two sets of student assessments:

- The Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests (OCCT) are criterion-referenced exams designed to measure the state content standards in mathematics, reading, writing, science, and social studies for students in grades 5 and 8. Students are required to pass the 8th-grade reading assessment in order to be issued a driver's license or instructional permit before the age of 18.
- The Oklahoma End of Instruction Tests are criterion-referenced exams designed to measure state content standards for several high school courses, including Algebra, Biology, English II, and U.S. History. All students who take these courses are required to take the tests in order to graduate, and scores are reported on students' transcripts.

The state is developing and phasing in new criterion-referenced state assessments in reading and writing for all grades from 3 through 8 to meet testing requirements under NCLB. Tests will be introduced for grades 3 and 4 in 2004–05, and for grades 6 and 7 in 2005–06 (for additional information on state accountability and assessment, see <http://www.sde.state.ok.us/NCLB/>).

Oklahoma's Priority Academic Student Skills (PASS) contain the state content standards in language arts; mathematics; science; social studies; the arts; languages; health, safety, and physical education; information literacy; instructional technology; and technical education. The language arts PASS addresses reading and literature; writing, grammar, usage, and mechanics; oral language, listening, and speaking; and visual literacy. The standards define broad goals for all students in these areas and are shown in Table KK1.

Each standard is further defined by a set of performance objectives for each grade level from K through 12. For example, at the 8th-grade level, the reading comprehension standard includes performance objectives related to literal understanding, inferences and interpreting, summary and generalization, analysis and evaluation, and monitoring and correction strategies. The PASS document designates with an asterisk those standards and objectives that should be assessed by the local school district; all other standards and objectives will be assessed by the state assessment program.

Table KK1. Oklahoma Priority Academic Student Skills, Language Arts

Strand	Standards
Reading and literature	<p>Print awareness—The student will develop and demonstrate knowledge of print awareness.</p> <p>Phonological and phonemic awareness—The student will develop and demonstrate knowledge of phonological/phonemic awareness.</p> <p>Phonics decoding—The student will apply sound-symbol relationships to decode unknown words.</p> <p>Vocabulary—The student will develop and expand knowledge of words and word meanings to increase vocabulary.</p> <p>Fluency—The student will identify words rapidly so that attention is directed at the meaning of the text.</p> <p>Comprehension and critical literacy—The student will interact with the words and concepts in a text to construct an appropriate meaning.</p> <p>Literature—The student will read to construct meaning and respond to a wide variety of literary forms.</p> <p>Research and information—The student will conduct research and organize information.</p>
Writing, grammar, usage, and mechanics	<p>Writing process—The student will use the writing process to write coherently.</p> <p>Modes and forms of writing—The student will communicate through a variety of written forms and for various purposes and to a specific audience or person.</p> <p>Grammar, usage, and mechanics—The student will demonstrate appropriate practices in writing by applying Standard English conventions to the revising and editing stages of writing.</p>
Oral language, listening, and speaking	<p>Listening—The student will listen for information and for pleasure.</p> <p>Speaking—The student will express ideas and opinions in a group or individual situation.</p> <p>Group interactions—The student will use effective communication strategies in pair and small-group contexts.</p>
Visual literacy	<p>Interpret meaning—The student will interpret and evaluate various ways visual image-makers, including graphic artists, illustrators, and news photographers, represent meaning.</p> <p>Evaluate media—The student will evaluate visual and electronic media such as film as compared with print messages.</p>

Source: <http://sde.state.ok.us/acrob/pass/languagearts.pdf>

Test Format and Content

We now turn to a discussion of the OCCT reading assessments in grades 5 and 8 and the English II assessment (for additional information, see <http://title3.sde.state.ok.us/studentassessment>).

The OCCT reading assessment for grades 5 and 8 consists of 55 multiple-choice questions, five of which are field-test items that do not count toward students' scores. The reading and literature section of the English II End-of-Instruction Test consists of approximately 60 multiple-choice

items, ten of which are field-test items. The items are distributed among different depth-of-knowledge levels, with 20–25 percent assessing recall and reproduction, 60–65 percent testing skills and concepts, and 10–15 percent assessing strategic and extended thinking. Table KK2 shows the percentage of items for each standard and achievement level for both tests.

Passages on the OCCT exam are divided evenly between authentic literary selections and expository selections; the end-of-instruction test contains primarily authentic literature selections. One passage on the OCCT is task-oriented, and there is at least one set of paired passages on both exams to allow comparisons and connections. The reading/literature tests are given in one session lasting approximately 90–95 minutes.

Table KK2. Percentage of Items by Standard, Reading and Literature OCCT and End-of-Instruction Exams

	5 th -Grade OCCT	8 th -Grade OCCT	English II EOI
Vocabulary	24	12	13
Words in context	8		
Affixes, roots, and stems	8		
Synonyms, antonyms, and homonyms	8		
Comprehension and critical literacy	42	42	33
Literal understanding	8	8	8
Inferences and interpretation	10–14	8–12	8
Summary and generalization	12–16	10–14	8
Analysis and evaluation	12–16	12–16	8
Literature	22	30	42
Literary genres		8	8
Literary elements	12–16	12–10	13
Figurative language and sound devices	10–14	10–14	10
Literary works			10
Research and information	12	16	13
Assessing information	12	8	
Interpreting information		8	

Source: <http://title3.sde.state.ok.us/studentassessment/#blueprints>

For the 5th- and 8th-grade OCCT writing test, students respond to specific topics, using any appropriate writing mode. Students' responses are scored using a set of six four-point analytic rubrics that judge them on word choice; organization, unity, and coherence; ideas and development; mechanics; grammar and usage; and sentences and paragraphs. These scores are

combined into a weighted score that helps determine the composite score—ideas and development are 30 percent of the weighted score; organization, unity, and coherence are 25 percent; word choice is 15 percent; sentences and paragraphs are 15 percent; mechanics are 10 percent; and word choice is 5 percent. A linear transformation is applied to the weighted score to arrive at a final composite score on a scale of 1–6, with 1 corresponding to unsatisfactory performance, 2 and 3 to limited knowledge, 4 to satisfactory performance, and 5 and 6 to advanced performance. The writing section of the English II end-of-instruction exam is administered and scored similarly to the OCCT writing test, except that students write two essays, and receive composite scores that combine both responses and range from 1–12.

Achievement-Level Definitions

Student scores on the OCCT and the End of Instruction test are reported using four achievement levels: advanced, satisfactory, limited knowledge, and unsatisfactory. Achievement levels are defined separately for each grade level and subject area. Table KK3 shows the achievement-level descriptors for 8th-grade reading as an example. For the purposes of the state accountability system under the NCLB, students scoring at the satisfactory or advanced levels are considered “proficient.”

Table KK3. Oklahoma 8th-Grade Reading Achievement Levels

Advanced	Students consistently demonstrate a thorough understanding of the knowledge and skills expected of all students at this grade level. These skills are broadly demonstrated in reading processes, response to text, and in acquisition of information through research. In addition to demonstrating a broad and in-depth understanding of the application of all skills at the satisfactory achievement level, students scoring at the advanced level typically: use a wide range of strategies to interpret and evaluate texts; regularly demonstrate a thorough and comprehensive understanding of literary forms; and consistently apply many different strategies for assessing, organizing, analyzing, synthesizing, and paraphrasing information.
Satisfactory	Students demonstrate a general understanding of the reading knowledge and skills expected of students at this grade level. Students scoring at the satisfactory level typically read and comprehend grade-level reading material, using the following skills: determine literal and nonliteral word meanings using a variety of strategies; analyze informational text, poetry, short stories, novels, dramas; determine main idea and themes (stated or implied) and recognize relevance of details; interpret figurative language and elements of poetry; infer, predict, and generalize ideas; judge author’s purpose or point of view, accuracy of text, fact and opinion; and use appropriate strategies to organize and summarize information.
Limited Knowledge	Students demonstrate a partial understanding of the reading knowledge and skills expected of all students at this grade level. Students scoring at the limited knowledge level are inconsistent in demonstrating satisfactory level competencies and typically demonstrate reading skills within more explicit and concrete contexts.
Unsatisfactory	Students do not demonstrate at least a limited knowledge level of the skills expected of all students at this grade level. Students scoring at the unsatisfactory level should be given comprehensive reading instruction.

Source:
<http://title3.sde.state.ok.us/studentassessment/perf%20level%20descriptors/Grade%208%20Reading%20Performance.pdf>

Performance Results

Student Performance

Oklahoma provided data on student performance for all students and by student poverty, language proficiency, disability, and race/ethnicity.⁵⁷ Table KK4 shows results from the 2003 Oklahoma Core Curriculum Test for students in grades 5 and 8, by a variety of student characteristics.

In 5th grade, 64 percent of students passed the reading exam by scoring at or above the satisfactory level, as did 71 percent of 8th-grade students, and 5–6 percent of students scored at the advanced level. Student scores in writing were a bit higher: 77 percent of students scored at or above the satisfactory level, and 13–22 percent reached the advanced level.

Only 19–21 percent of students with disabilities reached the satisfactory level in reading, and 36–37 percent did so in writing. About half of students with disabilities scored at the unsatisfactory level (the lowest proficiency level, not shown in table).

In reading, 38–42 percent of students with limited-English proficiency scored at or above the satisfactory level; however, 55–65 percent did so in writing. Approximately 30 percent of these students scored at the lowest level of proficiency (not shown).

Among general education students across both grades, the achievement gap between economically disadvantaged students and non-economically disadvantaged students was much larger in reading than in writing, 17–19 percentage points compared with 7–10 percentage points at the satisfactory level. White students performed better than African American, Hispanic, and American Indian students. In reading, these gaps were relatively large, particularly between white students and African American students (28 percentage points at the satisfactory level) and white students and Hispanic students (21–22 percentage points at the satisfactory level). The achievement gaps by race/ethnicity were far smaller in writing—between 2 and 9 percentage points at the satisfactory level.

⁵⁷Approximately 64 percent of students in Oklahoma are white; 18 percent are American Indian; 11 percent are African American; and 7 percent are Hispanic. Almost half (49 percent) of students are eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program; 6 percent are in limited-English-proficiency programs; and 14 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

Table KK4. Performance of 5th-and 8th-Graders on 2003 Reading and Writing Oklahoma Core Curriculum Test, by Student Characteristics

	Reading		Writing	
	Satisfactory and Above	Advanced	Satisfactory and Above	Advanced
	Percentage			
5th Grade				
All students	64	5	77	13
General education students	74	6	84	15
Students with IEPs	19	1	37	2
English-language learners	38	1	65	7
Non—English-language learners	65	5	77	13
Economically disadvantaged students ¹	64	3	79	11
Non—economically disadvantaged students ¹	83	9	89	20
African American students ¹	52	2	79	12
American Indian students ¹	69	4	80	11
Hispanic students ¹	59	2	81	12
White students ¹	80	8	86	17
8th Grade				
All students	71	6	77	22
General education students	79	6	85	26
Students with IEPs	21	0	36	4
English-language learners	42	3	55	11
Non—English-language learners	72	6	79	23
Economically disadvantaged students ¹	68	3	81	19
Non—economically disadvantaged students ¹	85	8	88	30
African American students ¹	57	2	78	17
American Indian students ¹	75	4	84	22
Hispanic students ¹	63	3	78	19
White students ¹	85	8	86	28

Note: ¹Scores for these groups are for regular education students only.

Source: State Summary Reports from Oklahoma Department of Education

Table KK5 presents results for the English II End-of-Instruction exam for the two sections of the exam—reading and literature, and writing. Over half of students reached the satisfactory level on the reading and literature section, and 28 percent reached the advanced level of the End-of-Instruction exam; 68 percent and 49 percent, respectively, did so on the writing section. Few students with disabilities or English-language learners reached the satisfactory level in reading (11

percent and 20 percent, respectively) or writing (23 percent and 37 percent, respectively). Because the End-of-Instruction examination tests English literature content as well as general reading and writing proficiency, it is unclear what proportion of these scores can be attributed to lack of content skills and what proportion can be attributed to lack of literacy skills.

Table KK5. Performance of High School Students on 2003 English II End-of-Instruction Exam, by Student Characteristics

	Reading and Literature		Writing	
	Satisfactory and Above	Advanced	Satisfactory and Above	Advanced
	Percentage			
All students	56	28	68	49
General education students	62	31	74	54
Students with IEPs	11	3	23	10
English-language learners	20	7	37	18
Non-English-language learners	57	28	68	49
Economically disadvantaged students	41	16	58	37
Non-economically disadvantaged students	63	33	73	54
African American students	32	11	52	32
American Indian students	48	21	62	41
Hispanic students	37	14	58	36
White students	63	33	73	54

Source: State Summary Reports from Oklahoma Department of Education

As with the 5th- and 8th-grade assessments, we find that achievement gaps exist among students by economic status and race/ethnicity.

Oklahoma also provided data on student performance, broken down by skills. On the writing section, students generally tend to score less well on mechanics and sentences and paragraphs, and do better on ideas and development and word choice (not shown in table).

School Performance

School-level data are not available for Oklahoma.

APPENDIX LL. OREGON

State Assessment System

The Oregon Statewide Assessment System consists of three assessment tools: state knowledge and skills tests, which are criterion-referenced exams designed to measure state content standards in mathematics, reading and literature, science, and social studies; state performance tests, which are criterion-referenced exams linked to state performance standards in mathematics and writing; and work samples in writing, speaking, and mathematics. Students take the knowledge and skills tests in reading and literature and in mathematics at three benchmark grades—3, 5, and 8—and in grade 10 to receive a Certificate of Instructional Mastery (CIM). Students in grades 5, 8, and 10 also take the writing and mathematics state performance tests and the science and social studies knowledge and skills tests. Tenth-grade students who pass all portions of the CIM-level exams may receive the Certificate of Advanced Mastery (additional information on assessment and accountability can be found through <http://www.ode.state.or.us/nclb/>).

Oregon's state content standards were adopted in 1996 and revised in 1998. The English standards cover four broad strands: reading, literature, writing, and communication. Standards within each strand define what all students should know and be able to do, and are linked to the state's Common Curriculum Goals. Each standard is accompanied by progressive expectations for each of the three benchmarks and CIM. Table LL1 shows the reading content standards and the Benchmark 3 (grade 8) expectations, as an example.

Table LL1. Oregon State English Content Standards, Reading Strand

Content Standard	Benchmark 3 (8th Grade)
Recognize, pronounce, and know the meaning of words in text by using phonics, language structure, contextual clues, and visual clues	<p>Determine meanings of words using contextual and structural clues and other reading strategies</p> <p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use context clues to choose the correct meaning for words or phrases • use prefixes and suffixes to help define words in context • use grammatical elements--e.g., conjunctions, referent pronouns, prepositional phrases, dependent clauses, modifying words such as adjectives and adverbs that may be more commonly recognized in the noun or verb form--to determine the meaning of words used in the passage • recognize how figurative language--e.g., colloquial expressions, idioms, metaphors--expresses implied meanings • use punctuations and print conventions that signal specific meanings or significant situations--e.g., question and exclamation marks or punctuation such as parentheses, underlining, and/or italicized print that indicate titles or emphases • use knowledge of contractions and possessives to help determine the meaning of words in the passage.
Locate information and clarify meaning by skimming, scanning, close reading, and other reading strategies	<p>Locate information and clarify meaning by using tables of contents, glossaries, indexes, headings, graphs, charts, diagrams, and/or tables</p> <p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use tables of contents and indexes to locate specific information • use information in illustrations, graphs, charts, diagrams, and tables to help understand a reading passage • use a glossary to locate words and/or help clarify meaning • use headings to locate where needed information is likely to be found.
Demonstrate literal understanding of a variety of printed materials	<p>Identify sequence of events, main ideas, facts, supporting details, and opinions in literary, informative, and practical selections.</p> <p>Students will identify or summarize:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the order of events or a specific event from a sequence of events • a statement or sentence that best indicates the main ideas of the selection • directly stated facts--e.g., actions or events; directions for an experiment or problem-solving exercise; information from charts and graphs; names of characters, places, or things in the selection; special circumstances relevant to the story • details such as key words, phrases, or sentences that explicitly state important characteristics, circumstances, or similarities and differences in characters, times, or places • directly stated opinions, including those introduced by transitional phrases.

Table LL1. (cont.)

Demonstrate inferential comprehension of a variety of printed materials	<p>Examine relationships, images, patterns, or symbols to draw conclusions about their meanings in printed materials</p> <p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • examine implicit relationships, such as cause and effect, sequence-time relationships, comparisons, classifications, and generalizations • predict probable future outcomes or actions • infer an author's meaning by drawing conclusions based on facts, events, images, patterns, or symbols in the text • infer the main idea of a selection when it is not explicitly stated • identify unstated reasons for actions or beliefs based on explicitly stated information.
Demonstrate evaluative comprehension of a variety of printed materials	<p>Analyze and evaluate whether a conclusion is validated by the evidence in a selection.</p> <p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • draw conclusions about the author's motivation or purpose for writing a passage or story based on evidence in the selection • draw a conclusion that is validated by the evidence in the selection • determine whether the information used by the author to support a conclusion is accurate and/or credible • differentiate between conclusions that are based on fact and those that are based on opinion • draw parallels between the selections and issues and situations relevant to the text.
Draw connections between reading selections and other texts, experiences, issues, and events	<p>Extend and deepen comprehension by relating text to other texts, experiences, issues, and events</p>

Source: <http://www.ode.state.or.us/teachlearn/subjects/elarts/standards/contentstandards.pdf>

Oregon adopted new content standards for English language arts in January 2003. These standards are also grouped into four content strands: reading, literature, writing, and speaking and listening. Within each strand, grade-level standards are listed under a set of domains common to all grade levels. In reading, for example, the domains are

- Decoding and word recognition
- Listen to and read informational and narrative text
- Vocabulary
- Read to perform a task
- Informational text: demonstrate general understanding
- Informational text: develop and interpret
- Informational text: examine content and structure.

Specific standards in each domain are defined by grades 4–10. In its standards documents, Oregon notes those standards that may be assessed on the state exams and how the new

standards align with the old standards and the Common Curriculum Goals. Although the new standards have been in place since January 2003, students will not be assessed on them until the 2005–06 school year.

Test Format and Content

Oregon’s state assessments are somewhat unique, because they consist of “level tests” as opposed to single grade-level exams. At each benchmark grade, the state administers three different level tests that overlap in difficulty but are tailored to the achievement level of the student. The academic content on all three tests is similar, and each test allows students the opportunity to meet the standards for the benchmark. Level A has the least-difficult questions, Level C has the most-difficult questions, and Level B falls between the two. Classroom teachers determine which level test to give each student, based on classroom work, the student’s history, and a short pre-test. The level tests are intended to both refine the precision of the statewide assessment and to extend the range of achievement that can be measured.

The reading and literature Knowledge and Skills Test consists of 60–70 multiple-choice questions. For grades 5–10, approximately 16 percent of the items are related to each of word meaning, literal comprehension, inferential comprehension, evaluative comprehension, and literary elements and devices. Eleven percent relates to finding information, and 9 percent to literary forms. Reading selections on the tests include passages serving different purposes, including reading for literary experience, reading to gain information, and reading to perform a task. Each selection will have three to ten related questions. The scoring procedure takes into account the difficulty of the questions on each level test, and produces a scale score for each student (<http://www.ode.state.or.us/asmt/>).

Achievement-Level Definitions

Student scores from the Oregon Statewide Assessment System are reported in three categories: Does Not Meet Standard, Meets Standard, and Exceeds Standard. Students scoring at the Meets Standard level or higher are considered to have met academic requirements under the NCLB. The state has defined performance standards that specify the minimum scores on the state assessments to meet or exceed the standards in each subject area for each grade level. Since reading/language arts scores are reported on a continuous scale for all four grades, the cut-scores overlap somewhat; the standard for exceeding the standard at each benchmark level is the same as the standard for meeting the standard at the next higher benchmark. Table LL2 shows the reading and literature performance standards for the four grade levels.

Table LL2. Oregon State Reading and Literature Performance Standards

	Benchmark 1 (3rd Grade)	Benchmark 2 (5th Grade)	Benchmark 3 (8th Grade)	CIM (10th Grade)
Meets the Standard	201	215	231	239
Exceeds the Standard	215	231	239	249

Source: <http://www.ode.state.or.us/asmt/results/2002/reports/readmath2002.pdf>

Performance Results

Student Performance

Overall, 76 percent of 5th-graders met the standard, as did 61 percent of 8th-graders (Table LL3). About one-fourth of 5th-graders exceeded the standard, as did 29 percent of 8th-graders. The percentage of students reaching both these achievement levels was lower in 10th grade, in which only 52 percent of students met the standard and only 17 percent exceeded it. Data disaggregated by student characteristics were not available.⁵⁸

Table LL3. Performance of 5th-, 8th-, and 10th-Graders on 2003 Oregon Reading and Literature Knowledge and Skills Test Performance

	Meets Standard or Above	Exceeds Standard
	Percentage	
All 5 th -grade students	76	25
All 8 th -grade students	61	29
All 10 th -grade students	52	17

Source: <http://www.ode.state.or.us/asmt/results/2003/downloads/distcores2002%202003.xls>

School Data

School-level performance data for the 2002 administration of the reading/language arts Knowledge and Skills Test for reading and writing were available by school poverty level and by urbanicity (Table LL4). Overall, 31 percent of schools in Oregon were high-poverty schools; 43 percent were suburban; 36 percent were rural; and 21 percent were urban. Urban and rural schools were more likely than suburban schools to be high-poverty schools – 41 percent and 39 percent, respectively, versus 20 percent.

⁵⁸ Approximately 79 percent of students in Oregon are white; 12 percent are Hispanic; 4 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander; 3 percent are African American; and 2 percent are American Indian/Alaskan Native. About 36 percent of students are eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program; 8 percent are in limited-English-proficiency programs; and 13 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

At all grade and achievement levels, low- and medium-poverty schools outperformed high-poverty schools. For instance, in 5th and 8th grades, on average, high-poverty schools scored 11–12 percentage points lower than low- and medium-poverty schools at or above the meets standards level and 13 percentage points lower at the exceeds standards level.

Suburban schools did outperform rural and urban schools at all grade and achievement levels (typically by small margins), with two exceptions: At the 8th grade, the average percentage exceeding standards was 3 percentage points higher in urban schools than in suburban schools, and at the 10th grade, the average performance of suburban and urban schools at the exceeds standards level was the same.

Table LL4. Average School Performance on 5th-, 8th-, and 10th-Grade 2002 Oregon Reading and Literature Knowledge and Skills Test Performance, by Poverty Level and Urbanicity

	Meets Standard or Above	Exceeds Standard
Average Percentage		
5 th Grade		
Low- and medium-poverty schools	83	30
High-poverty schools	72	17
Rural schools	78	21
Suburban schools	81	27
Urban schools	77	28
8 th Grade		
Low- and medium-poverty schools	66	35
High-poverty schools	53	22
Rural schools	60	27
Suburban schools	64	33
Urban schools	62	36
10 th Grade		
Low- and medium-poverty schools	53	16
High-poverty schools	34	8
Rural schools	50	14
Suburban schools	52	16
Urban schools	43	16

APPENDIX MM. PENNSYLVANIA

State Assessment System

The Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) consists of criterion-referenced exams designed to align with state content standards in reading, mathematics, and writing. Students in grades 5, 8, and 11 take the PSSA in reading and mathematics; students in grades 6, 9, and 11 take the PSSA in writing. Students in 11th grade who score well on the PSSA may receive special seals on their diplomas to signify that they have met levels of excellence on the state assessment. Pennsylvania is currently expanding its assessment system to meet the testing requirements under NCLB (<http://www.pde.state.pa.us/pas/site/default.asp?g=0&k12Nav=|1141|>).

Pennsylvania's academic standards define what students should know and be able to do in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and mathematics in grades 3, 5, 8, and 11. The reading, writing, speaking, and listening standards are grouped into eight standards categories:

- Learning to read independently
- Reading critically in all content areas
- Reading, analyzing, and interpreting literature
- Types of writing
- Quality of writing
- Speaking and listening
- Characteristics and function of the English language
- Research

Within each category, specific standards define what students should know and be able to do at each grade level (3, 5, 8, and 11). For most standards, grade-specific content descriptors define specific expectations related to the broader standard. Table MM1 shows the standards for 8th grade under the categories related to reading, as an example (<http://www.pde.state.pa.us/k12/lib/k12/Reading.pdf>).

Table MM1. Pennsylvania 8th-Grade Reading Standards

Learning to Read Independently
Locate appropriate texts (literature, information, documents) for an assigned purpose before reading. Identify and use common organizational structures and graphic features to comprehend information. Use knowledge of root words as well as context clues and glossaries to understand specialized vocabulary in the content areas during reading. Use these words accurately in speaking and writing. Identify basic facts and ideas in text, using specific strategies (e.g., recall genre characteristics, set a purpose for reading, generate essential questions as aids to comprehension and clarify understanding through rereading and discussions). Expand a reading vocabulary by identifying and correctly using idioms and words with literal and figurative meanings. Use a dictionary or related reference. Understand the meaning of and apply key vocabulary across the various subject areas. Demonstrate, after reading, understanding and interpretation of both fiction and nonfiction texts, including public documents. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make, and support with evidence, assertions about texts• Compare and contrast texts using themes, settings, characters, and ideas• Make extensions to related ideas, topics, or information• Describe the context of a document• Analyze the positions, arguments, and evidence in public documents. Demonstrate fluency and comprehension in reading. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read familiar materials aloud with accuracy• Self-correct mistakes• Use appropriate rhythm, flow, meter, and pronunciation• Read a variety of genres and types of texts• Demonstrate comprehension.
Reading Critically in All Content Areas
Read and understand essential content of informational texts and documents in all academic areas. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Differentiate fact from opinions, utilizing resources that go beyond traditional text (e.g., newspapers, magazines, and periodicals) to electronic media• Distinguish between essential and nonessential information across texts and going beyond texts to a variety of media; identify bias and propaganda where present• Draw inferences based on a variety of sources• Evaluate text organization and content to determine the author's purpose and effectiveness according to the author's theses, accuracy, and thoroughness. Use and understand a variety of media and evaluate the quality of material produced. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Compare and analyze how different media offer a unique perspective on the information presented• Analyze the techniques of particular media messages and their effect on a target audience• Use, design, and develop a media project that expands understanding (e.g., authors and works from a particular historical period). Produce work in at least one literary genre that follows the conventions of the genre.
Reading, Analyzing, and Interpreting Literature
Read and understand works of literature. Analyze the use of literary elements by an author, including characterization, setting, plot, theme, point of view, tone, and style. Analyze the effects of various literary devices: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sound techniques (e.g., rhyme, rhythm, meter, alliteration)• Figurative language (e.g., personification, simile, metaphor, hyperbole, allusion). Identify poetic forms (e.g., ballad, sonnet, couplet). Analyze drama to determine the reasons for a character's actions, taking into account the situation and basic motivations of the character. Read and respond to nonfiction and fiction, including poetry and drama.

Table MM1. (cont.)

Characteristics and Functions of the English Language
Describe the origins and meanings of common, learned, and foreign words used frequently in English language (e.g., carte blanche, faux pas).
Analyze the role and place of standard American English in speech, writing, and literature.
Identify new words that have been added to the English language over time.
Select and refine a topic for research.
Source: http://www.pde.state.pa.us/k12/lib/k12/Reading.pdf

Test Format and Content

To examine trends in adolescent literacy, the rest of the discussion will focus on the PSSA reading exams for grades 5, 8, and 11, and the writing assessment for grades 6, 9, and 11 (for additional information on assessment format and content, see

http://www.pde.state.pa.us/a_and_t/site/default.asp?g=0&a_and_tNav=|630|&k12Nav=|1141|).

The reading portion of the PSSA includes both multiple-choice and open-response items, called performance tasks. The six reading passages are divided evenly between informational or nonfiction texts and narrative or fiction passages. Multiple-choice questions for all the passages assess the same five standard categories: reading independently; reading critically in all content areas; reading, analyzing, and interpreting literature; identifying characteristics and function of the English language; and performing research. The 11th-grade test contains an equal percentage of items for each standard, while the 5th- and 8th-grade tests place slightly less emphasis on characteristics and functions of the English language and research.

Three of the reading passages have associated performance tasks, which are scored using a four-point rubric that considers students' understanding, comprehension level, and ability to make connections to the text. The tests use both census testing, in which all students answer the same questions, and matrix sampling, in which a large set of test items is divided into several different test forms. Students in 5th grade complete 54 census items and 27 matrix items. The 8th-grade test includes 74 census items and 37 matrix items, and the 11th-grade test includes 82 census items and 41 matrix items. The PSSA reading test is administered over three sessions and lasts a total of four hours.

The writing portion of the PSSA consists of a number of writing tasks that require students to respond to specific prompts. Prompts may ask students to write in an informational, narrative, or persuasive mode. Students in grades 6 and 9 respond to two prompts, while 11th-grade students respond to three prompts, one for each mode of writing. Students have one hour to complete

each essay. Students' essays are judged in the domains of focus, content, organization, style, and conventions, using a set of four-point analytic rubrics. Students also fill out a questionnaire about writing-process strategies as part of the assessment. The questionnaire does not count toward individual student scores, but schools receive summary information about their students' responses. The state content standards for writing are for grades 5, 8, and 11, but the assessment is administered in grades 6, 9, and 11. Students in 6th and 9th grades take the PSSA writing assessment in the fall, while students in 11th grade take the PSSA in the early spring.

Achievement-Level Definitions

Student scores on the PSSA are reported using four achievement levels: advanced, proficient, basic, and below basic. Pennsylvania has also published detailed grade- and subject-specific achievement-level descriptors that define what students should know and do at each level for each standard. Table MM2 shows the performance-level descriptors for the 8th-grade standards related to reading independently, as an example. Students scoring at the proficient level or higher are considered to have met academic requirements under NCLB.

Table MM2. PSSA Achievement-Level Descriptors, 8th-Grade Reading, Reading Independently

Standard	Below Basic	Basic	Proficient	Advanced
Locate appropriate texts (literature, information, documents) for an assigned purpose before reading.	Identify limited types of text for an assigned purpose	Find some different types of text for an assigned purpose	Locate appropriate text for an assigned purpose	Examine and evaluate texts for an assigned purpose
Identify and use common organizational structures and graphic features to comprehend information.	Recognize limited text formats	Identify some text formats and retell information	Identify and use common organizational structures and graphic features to comprehend information	Combine text and graphic formats to synthesize information
Use knowledge of root words as well as context clues and glossaries to understand specialized vocabulary in the content areas during reading. Use these words accurately in speaking and writing.	Use strategies, with assistance, to understand content area vocabulary	Use limited strategies to understand specialized vocabulary in content areas	Use knowledge of root words as well as context clues and glossaries to read, write, and understand specialized vocabulary in the content areas	Use multiple strategies to understand vocabulary in the content areas
Identify basic facts and ideas in text using specific strategies (e.g., recall genre characteristics, set a purpose for reading, generate essential questions as aids to comprehension, and clarify understanding through rereading and discussion.	Recall basic facts and ideas and predict, with assistance	Restate basic facts to make limited predictions	Identify the basic ideas and facts in text and information from other sources to make predictions about text	Connect basic ideas and facts in text with information from other sources to make predictions about text
Expand a reading vocabulary by identifying and correctly using idioms and words with literal and figurative meanings. Use a dictionary or related reference.	Recognize a reading vocabulary that includes idioms and words with literal meanings	Develop a reading vocabulary that includes idioms and words with literal meaning; use a dictionary or related reference	Expand a reading vocabulary by identifying and correctly using idioms and words with literal and figurative meanings; use a dictionary or related resource	Establish an extensive reading vocabulary of literal and figurative words, and understand their relationship to other words
Understand the meaning of and apply key vocabulary across the various subject areas.	Recognize a minimal number of key vocabulary words from across subject areas	Identify and understand key vocabulary in various subject areas	Understand the meaning of and apply key vocabulary across the various subject areas	Analyze and appropriately use a variety of key vocabulary words across subject areas
Demonstrate, after reading, understanding and interpretation of both fiction and nonfiction texts, including public documents.	Retell the major ideas of the text; Compare ideas within a text; Restate ideas through rereading and discussion; Recognize that there are different contexts in documents; Recognize a position, argument, or evidence in a public document	Summarize the major ideas of a text; Compare and contrast texts using some literary elements; Clarify ideas through rereading and discussion; Identify, with assistance, the context of a document; Identify and cite evidence or position or arguments in public documents	Make assertions about text and support with evidence; Compare and contrast text using themes, characters, settings, and ideas; Make extensions to related ideas, topics, or information; Describe the content of a document; Analyze the positions, arguments, and evidence in public documents	Analyze assertions about text and support with evidence; Evaluate themes, setting, characters, and ideas in text; Synthesize related ideas, topics, or information to make extensions; Compare and contrast the context of several documents; Defend the positions and arguments in public documents, using evidence
Demonstrate fluency and comprehension in reading.	Read familiar materials aloud, with minimal accuracy; Self-correct with prompts; Use rhythm, flow, meter, and pronunciation with prompting; Read at least one genre; Demonstrate minimal comprehension	Read familiar materials aloud, with marginal accuracy; Self-correct some mistakes; Use rhythm, flow, meter, and pronunciation; Read a limited number of genres; Demonstrate marginal comprehension	Read familiar materials aloud, with accuracy; Self-correct mistakes; Use appropriate rhythm, flow, meter, and pronunciation; Read a variety of genres and types of text; Demonstrate comprehension	Read familiar materials with superior accuracy; Self-correct independently; Use exemplary rhythm, flow, meter, and pronunciation; Read sophisticated texts; Demonstrate superior comprehension

Performance Results

Student Performance

Pennsylvania provides data on student performance for all students and by race/ethnicity, disability status, and economic status.⁵⁹ Table MM3 shows results from the 2002 PSSA reading exam for students in grades 5, 8, and 11, by a variety of student characteristics.

About 57–59 percent of 5th-, 8th-, and 11th-graders scored at or above the proficient level on the reading test, and between 16 and 20 percent were categorized as advanced. The lowest percentage of students scoring at the advanced level was in the 11th grade.

There were marked differences in the performance of students with different racial/ethnic backgrounds. For example, while 66 percent of white 5th-graders scored at the proficient level, only 22 percent of African American students and 29 percent of Hispanic students did so—differences of 44 and 37 percentage points, respectively. Very few of these students scored at the advanced level—3–6 percent—compared with 22 percent of white students and 24 percent of Asian students. There were equally large differences at the 8th- and 11th-grade levels at the proficient and advanced levels in the relative performance of different racial/ethnic groups. At the 11th grade, the proportion of white students scoring at the advanced level was smaller than in the lower grades: 17 percent compared with 22–24 percent.

Students from low-income households tended to perform at a lower level than their counterparts. For example, in 5th grade, only 32 percent of them passed the reading test compared with 67 percent of those who were not economically disadvantaged. The differences were similar across the higher grades (35–37 percentage points at the proficient level and 14–19 percentage points at the advanced level).

Not surprisingly, the percentage of students with disabilities scoring at the proficient level was much lower than that of students without disabilities, with differences between 48 and 52 percentage points. For example, 15 percent of 5th-grade students with disabilities passed the reading test compared with 63 percent of students without disabilities.

Table MM4 presents results from the 2002 PSSA writing performance for grades 6, 9, and 11. Data disaggregated by student groups were available for only the 11th grade. Overall, 56–61 percent of 6th and 9th-graders passed the writing test by scoring at the proficient and higher level,

⁵⁹Approximately 78 percent of students in Pennsylvania are white; 15 percent are African American; 5 percent are Hispanic; and 2 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander. About 28 percent of students are eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program and 13 percent have IEPs.

Table MM3. Performance of 5th-, 8th-, and 11th-Graders on 2002 Reading PSSA, by Student Characteristics

	Basic and Above	Proficient and Above	Advanced
	Percentage		
5 th Grade			
All students	80	57	18
Students with IEPs	37	15	4
Students without IEPs	86	63	20
Economically disadvantaged students	60	32	6
Non–economically disadvantaged students	88	67	23
African American students	51	22	3
Asian students	83	60	24
Hispanic students	57	29	6
White students	87	66	22
8 th Grade			
All students	80	59	20
Students with IEPs	32	13	2
Students without IEPs	86	65	23
Economically disadvantaged students	58	31	6
Non-economically disadvantaged students	87	68	25
African American students	52	24	4
Asian students	83	63	29
Hispanic students	56	30	6
White students	86	67	24
11 th Grade			
All students	80	59	16
Students with IEPs	31	14	2
Students without IEPs	85	63	17
Economically disadvantaged students	56	29	4
Non–economically disadvantaged students	84	64	18
African American students	53	26	3
Asian students	80	61	22
Hispanic students	55	29	4
White students	85	64	17

Source: <http://www.pde.state.pa.us/pas/lib/pas/correctachievement012604.pdf>

a passing rate that was comparable to that on the reading test. The proportion of students in the 11th grade who passed the writing test was higher than on the reading test—70 percent versus 59 percent. Fourteen percent of 11th-grade students scored at the advanced level on the writing test, 2 percentage points more than on the reading test.

Table MM4. Performance of 6th-, 9th-, and 11th-Graders on 2002 Writing PSSA, by Student Characteristics

	Basic and Above	Proficient and Above	Advanced
	Percentage		
6th Grade			
All students	87	56	11
9th Grade			
All students	79	61	15
11th Grade			
All students	86	70	14
Students with IEPs	42	21	2
Students without IEPs	90	75	15
Economically disadvantaged students	67	43	4
Non-economically disadvantaged students	89	75	15
African American students	69	44	4
Asian students	87	74	23
Hispanic students	67	43	5
Multiracial students	83	65	13
White students	89	75	15

Source: <http://www.pde.state.pa.us/pas/lib/pas/correctachievement012604.pdf>;

http://www.pde.state.pa.us/a_and_t/lib/a_and_t/stateaverage6&9writing2002.pdf

Note: Scores were not disaggregated by student groups for grades 6 and 9.

The remainder of the discussion focuses on the 11th-grade results. The differences in pass rates between white students and Hispanic and African American students were 31–32 percentage points at the proficient level and 10–11 percentage points at the advanced level (a little smaller than the 35–44 percentage points that we had seen on the reading test). There was a similar gap between the achievement levels of economically disadvantaged students and those who were not disadvantaged. Only 21 percent of students with disabilities passed the writing test compared with 75 percent of students without disabilities.

School Performance

School-level data disaggregated by urbanicity are available for the 2002 PSSA reading administration for grades 5, 8, and 11 (Table MM5) and for the 2002 grade-11 writing assessment (Table MM6). Writing data for grades 6 and 9 were not available. Approximately 60 percent of schools in Pennsylvania were suburban, and the remaining 40 percent were split evenly between rural and urban locales. Urban schools were far more likely to be high-poverty than were rural or suburban schools, 64 percent compared with 11 percent and 8 percent, respectively.

Table MM5. Average School Performance on 5th-, 8th-, and 11th-Grade 2002 Reading PSSA, by Urbanicity

	Basic and Above	Proficient and Above	Advanced
	Average Percentage		
5th Grade			
Rural schools	82	57	15
Suburban schools	86	65	22
Urban schools	59	31	7
8th Grade			
Rural schools	80	57	16
Suburban schools	83	63	23
Urban schools	59	33	8
11th Grade			
Rural schools	81	57	12
Suburban schools	81	60	16
Urban schools	56	33	6

Table MM6. Average School Performance on 11th-Grade 2002 Writing PSSA, by Urbanicity

	Basic and Above	Proficient and Above	Advanced
	Average Percentage		
Rural schools	84	65	9
Suburban schools	86	70	13
Urban schools	67	45	6

Suburban schools outperformed rural schools by small margins—3–8 percentage points at the proficient level—and urban school by large margins—30–34 percentage points at the proficient level. Differences in performance persisted at the advanced level. Similar differences are found for 11th-grade writing. For instance, on average, suburban schools had 70 percent of students performing at or above the proficient level, compared with rural schools with 65 percent of students performing at this level and urban schools with 45 percent of students performing at this level.

APPENDIX NN. RHODE ISLAND

State Assessment System

Rhode Island currently administers the New Standards Reference Exam (NSRE) to students in grades 4, 8, and 10 in English language arts and mathematics. NSRE is a criterion-referenced exam, published by Harcourt Educational Measurement and referenced to the New Standards Performance Standards and aligned with state standards. Both the exam and the reference standards were developed by the New Standards Project, a collaborative initiative between the National Center for Education and the Economy and the Learning Research and Development Center at the University of Pittsburgh that promoted standards-based reform in the 1990s. The NSRE is used as a supplemental assessment in numerous districts and schools nationwide, especially as part of the America's Choice comprehensive school-reform model.

Scores from the NSRE are used for school accountability in Rhode Island. In addition, the Rhode Island Skills Commission issues Certificates of Initial Mastery to high school students based in part on their scores on the NSRE.

Rhode Island also administers the Rhode Island Writing Assessment in grades 3, 7, 10, and 11 and the Rhode Island Health Education Assessment in grades 5 and 9. Neither of these assessments is used in the state accountability system (<http://www.rido.net/schoolimprove/Default.htm>).

Rhode Island's Common Core of Learning defines what students should know and be able to do at all grade levels and in all subject areas. A set of curriculum frameworks in English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, arts, health education, and family-consumer science refine these broad competencies into specific content and performance standards for the various subject areas. The state also has standards for early childhood education and for school libraries and information literacy. The English language arts framework outlines nine broad standards that define general areas of competency for all grade levels:

- Standard 1: Communication—All students will be effective communicators in varied settings and for varied purposes.
- Standard 2: Response to Text—All students will demonstrate the ability to understand and respond to a wide variety of texts.
- Standard 3: Creation and Presentation of Text—All students will compose clear text in a variety of forms for many purposes.
- Standard 4: Student Voice—All students will demonstrate the power and effectiveness of voice through the language arts.

- Standard 5: Awareness and Evaluation of the Learning Process—All students will know the processes used to construct and convey meaning through text and will develop and apply criteria for the evaluation and appreciation of their own and others’ texts.
- Standard 6: Inquiry and Technology—All students will investigate issues and problems using a variety of current and emerging technologies in school and work settings.
- Standard 7: Enduring Themes—All students will use themes and topics from text to make connections and demonstrate an understanding of commonalities and diversity through exploration of universal issues.
- Standard 8: Literacy and the Community—All students will develop and apply their language skills, using the community as a learning laboratory.
- Standard 9: Language Arts and Citizenship—All students will use language effectively and responsibly as members of a democratic society.

Each standard is further defined by a set of descriptors, and specific expectations related to each descriptor are identified for four grade clusters--K–4, 5–8, 9–10, and 11–12

(<http://www.ridoe.net/standards/frameworks/english/default.htm>). Table NN1 shows the descriptors and expectations for the “Response to Text” standard at the 9th–10th-grade level, as an example.

Table NN 1. Rhode Island English Language Arts Curriculum Framework Standards, 9th–10th-Grade Expectations for Response to Text

Standard 2: Response to Text	
Descriptors	Level 3 (9th–10th Grades)
Students will demonstrate comprehension of a variety of texts, utilizing word-identification skills and strategies	Expand and use a repertoire of strategies for comprehension of a variety of print and nonprint materials
Students will respond to a varied text	Demonstrate multiple responses to a wide range of content-area text, integrating language arts with other disciplines
Students will select text for a variety of informational purposes	Independently access, select, and use information from print and nonprint sources for particular research purposes
Students will identify and evaluate varied text	Evaluate varied text for making decisions and solving intellectual problems

Source: <http://www.ridoe.net/standards/frameworks/english/default.htm>

Within the framework document, each standard is followed by a vignette submitted by a Rhode Island teacher that illustrates model classroom instruction on the standard. Additional chapters discuss assessment and professional development within the scope of the framework.

In 2002, Rhode Island entered into the New England Compact with New Hampshire and Vermont to work on cross-state collaborative initiatives focused on the implementation of the NCLB. As part of the compact's federally funded Enhanced Assessment Project, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Vermont have developed a set of common grade-level expectations (GLEs)--the Tri-State GLEs--that identify the content knowledge and skills expected of students for large-scale assessment. The GLEs will be reviewed for alignment with the states' own standards and for quality, and will be used as the basis for a new large-scale assessment to be developed collaboratively by the three states. A draft version of the GLEs and draft test specifications were posted on the compact's Web site in early 2004. According to Rhode Island's NCLB workbook, the new assessment will be ready for statewide use in the 2005–2006 school year.

Test Format and Content

To examine trends in adolescent literacy, the rest of the discussion will focus on the NSRE in English language arts for grades 4, 8, and 10, and the Rhode Island Writing Assessment for grades 7 and 10 (see <http://www.ridoe.net/standards/stateassessment/default.htm> for additional detail).

The NSRE includes multiple-choice, short-answer, extended-response, and essay items. Areas tested include basic understanding, analysis and interpretation, writing effectiveness, and English-language conventions. Extended-response and essay items are scored using a number of four-, five-, and six-point rubrics. The exam is administered over three 55-minute testing sessions.

The Rhode Island Writing Assessment consists of one assigned-writing prompt that students respond to in an essay composition. Students in 7th grade write expository essays, and students in 11th grade write persuasive essays. Students in 7th grade take the assessment in two 50-minute sessions on consecutive days, with the first session devoted to prewriting and drafting and the second to revising and editing. Students in 11th grade complete all steps of the writing process in a single 85-minute testing session. Students are provided with an editing checklist and a list of questions to guide reflection and revision. Only the final composition is handed in at the end of the test. Student responses are scored by two readers, using a holistic six-point rubric that focuses on ideas and development, organization, use of language, sentence structure, and grammar. For the 11th-grade test, students' use of supporting details and awareness of audience are also considered. If the two readers' scores differ by more than one point, the chief reader settles the discrepancy. Scores from the two readers are added together to reach a final score.

Achievement-Level Definitions

Student scores on the NSRE are reported using five achievement levels: little evidence of achievement, below the standard, nearly achieved the standard, achieved the standard, and achieved the standard with honors. Students scoring at the achieved the standard level or higher are considered to have met academic requirements under NCLB.

Performance Results

Student Performance

Rhode Island provides data on student performance on the NSRE for all students and for students disaggregated by race/ethnicity, by English-proficiency status, disability status, and poverty status.⁶⁰ Table NN2 shows the results from the 2003 NSRE English language arts assessment for students in grades 4, 8, and 10, disaggregated by student characteristics.

A much larger percentage of 4th-graders scored at or above the achieved the standard level, compared with 8th- and 10th-graders—62 percent compared with 41 percent and 43 percent, respectively--although more than three-quarters of students in all three grades reached the nearly achieved the standard level. Few students—3–8 percent—reached the achieved the standard with honors level. There were marked differences in the pass rates of different racial/ethnic student groups, and this was true across all grade levels—23–29 percentage points between white and African American students and 27–31 percentage points between white and Hispanic students. For example, while 50 percent of white 10th-graders passed the test, only 26 percent of African American and 23 percent of Hispanic students did so.

About 22 percent of students with limited-English proficiency scored at or above the achieved the standard level in 4th grade, and only 10 percent and 7 percent did so in 8th grade and 10th grade, respectively. The proportion of students with limited-English proficiency scoring at or above the nearly achieved the standard level ranged from 28 percent in 10th grade to 43 percent in 4th grade.

The pass rates of students with disabilities were between 26 and 32 percentage points lower than those of all students at the achieved the standard level. About half of students with disabilities in all three grades scored at or above the nearly achieved the standard level.

Economically disadvantaged students achieved below their peers in all grade levels. This achievement gap was 18–20 percentage points at the achieved the standard level.

⁶⁰Approximately 73 percent of students in Rhode Island are white; 15 percent are Hispanic; 8 percent are African American; and 3 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander. About 34 percent of students are eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program; 6 percent are in limited-English-proficiency programs; and 20 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

Table NN2. Performance of 4th-, 8th-, and 10th-Graders on 2003 English Language Arts NSRE, by Student Characteristics

	Nearly Achieved the Standard and Above	Achieved the Standard and Above	Achieved the Standard with Honors
	Percentage		
4th Grade			
All students	78	62	8
Students with disabilities	50	30	2
Students with limited-English proficiency	43	22	1
Economically disadvantaged students	65	44	3
African American students	64	42	2
Hispanic students	61	40	2
White students	85	71	11
8th Grade			
All students	78	41	3
Students with disabilities	50	14	1
Students with limited-English proficiency	37	10	0
Economically disadvantaged students	62	23	1
African American students	64	26	1
Hispanic students	59	22	1
White students	86	49	3
10th Grade			
All students	76	43	5
Students with disabilities	48	17	1
Students with limited-English proficiency	28	7	0
Economically disadvantaged students	60	23	1
African American students	63	26	1
Hispanic students	59	23	1
White students	84	50	7

Source: <http://131.109.26.242/reportcard/03/rcSchools.asp?rcType=stateRC>

Table NN3 presents the results of the 2003 writing assessment for students in the 7th and 11th grades. Disaggregated data were not available. The proportion of students reaching the achieved the standard level in writing was 34 percent in 7th grade and 24 percent in 11th grade. These pass rates were lower than those seen earlier in the English language arts test. However, similar to English language arts scores, about three-fourths of students achieved at or above the nearly achieved the standard level.

Table NN3. Performance of 7th- and 11th-Graders on 2003 Rhode Island Writing Assessment

	Below the Standard and Above	Nearly Achieved the Standard and Above	Achieved the Standard and Above	Achieved the Standard with Honors
	Percentage			
7 th Grade	91	73	34	4
11 th Grade	89	76	24	3

Source: <http://infoworks.ride.uri.edu/2004/state/assessments.pdf>

School Performance

School-level performance data by urbanicity are available for the 4th- and 8th-grade administration of the English language arts NSRE⁶¹ (Table NN4) and the 7th- and 11th-grade writing assessments (Table NN5). Because of the small number of rural schools in Rhode Island, scores for these schools are not reported. Sixty-one percent of schools in Rhode Island were suburban, 35 percent urban, and 4 percent rural. While the majority of urban schools were high-poverty (63 percent), only 7 percent of suburban schools and no rural schools were high-poverty.

Table NN4. Average School Performance on 4th- and 8th-Grade 2002 English Language Arts NSRE, by Urbanicity

	Average Percentage at the Nearly Achieved the Standard Level and Above
4th Grade	
Rural schools	*
Suburban schools	70
Urban schools	52
8th Grade	
Rural schools	*
Suburban schools	52
Urban schools	27

*Scores for rural schools are not reported due to small sample size.

⁶¹Data were available only at the nearly achieved the standard level.

Table NN5. Average School Performance on 7th- and 11th-Grade 2002 Rhode Island Writing Assessment, by Urbanicity

	Percentage at the Achieved the Standard Level and Above
7th Grade	
Rural schools	*
Suburban schools	33
Urban schools	10
11th Grade	
Rural schools	*
Suburban schools	35
Urban schools	17

*Scores for rural schools are not reported due to small sample size.

Suburban schools outperformed urban schools by large margins in all grades and subjects—anywhere from 18 to 25 percentage points. For example, on average, suburban schools had 52 percent of students nearly meeting the standard on the 8th-grade English language arts assessment, compared with 27 percent in urban schools.

APPENDIX OO. SOUTH CAROLINA

State Assessment System

For the 2002–03 school year, South Carolina’s statewide assessment system included two components:

- The Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT) is a criterion-referenced test that aims to measure state content standards in English language arts, math, science, and social studies. The test is administered annually to students in grades 3–8.
- The Basic Skills Assessment Program (BSAP) is a criterion-referenced high school exit exam designed to measure state content standards in reading, writing, and mathematics. Students take the BSAP in 10th grade and must pass the exam in order to graduate. Students have four opportunities to retake portions they do not pass in their first attempt.

South Carolina recently adopted a new high school exit exam, the High School Assessment Program, which replaced the BSAP for the 2003–04 school year. Beginning with the class of 2006, students will be required to pass both the English language arts and math sections of the HSAP to graduate. South Carolina is also introducing new End-of-Course Examinations over the next several years for high school students enrolled in certain courses, including English I, Algebra I, Math for Technologies II, Physical Science, Biology I, Applied Biology II, and U.S. History and Constitution. The English I exam was administered for the first time in the spring of 2004 (for additional information on assessment and accountability, see <http://www.myschools.com/nclb/>).

South Carolina has defined state curriculum standards in English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, foreign language, physical education, health and safety education, and visual and performing arts. The English language arts standards are organized under four broad content strands—reading, writing, communication, and research—and by more specific topics within each strand. Standards for each topic are defined separately by grade level from PK through grade 8, and for courses taken in the 9–12 grade-span. Each standard begins with one of three descriptors—“begin,” “continue,” or “demonstrate”—that indicate progression through the standards at different grade levels. Table OO1 shows the standards for 8th grade under the reading strand.

Table OO1. South Carolina English Language Arts Curriculum Standards, 8th-Grade Reading Strand

	Standards for Reading
Reading process and comprehension The student will integrate various cues and strategies to comprehend what he or she reads.	<p>Demonstrate the ability to read a variety of texts fluently</p> <p>Demonstrate the ability to read independently for extended periods of time to derive pleasure and gain information</p> <p>Demonstrate the ability to make connections between a text read independently and his or her prior knowledge, other texts, and the world</p> <p>Demonstrate the ability to summarize, paraphrase, analyze, and evaluate what he or she read</p> <p>Demonstrate the ability to identify the details that support the thesis of a particular text</p> <p>Demonstrate the ability to make predictions about stories</p> <p>Demonstrate the ability to analyze the main idea of a particular text</p> <p>Demonstrate the ability to draw conclusions and make inferences</p> <p>Demonstrate the ability to describe and analyze cause and effect and their impact on the plot, character, and theme</p> <p>Demonstrate the ability to recognize when statements of fact are not documented and when opinions are not adequately supported</p> <p>Demonstrate the ability to follow multistep directions, such as those for preparing applications and completing forms</p> <p>Demonstrate the ability to use graphic representations, such as charts, graphs, pictures, and graphic organizers, as information sources and as a means of organizing information and events logically</p> <p>Demonstrate the ability to use skimming and scanning techniques</p> <p>Demonstrate the ability to compare and contrast his or her findings on a particular topic after having extracted that information from two or more pieces of graphic or written material</p> <p>Demonstrate the ability to detect bias and identify propaganda techniques</p>
Analysis of texts The student will use knowledge of the purposes, structures, and elements of writing to analyze and interpret various types of texts.	<p>Demonstrate the ability to analyze an author's use of static, dynamic, round, and flat characters; the structural elements of plot; flashback and foreshadowing; and point of view and tone</p> <p>Demonstrate the ability to compare and contrast conflict in a variety of literary works</p> <p>Demonstrate the ability to identify the speaker in a literary work and recognize the difference between first- and third-person narration and between the omniscient and the limited omniscient point of view and explain how they affect the overall theme of the work</p> <p>Demonstrate the ability to compare and contrast theme in a variety of texts</p> <p>Demonstrate the ability to identify elements of style, such as word choice and sentence structure (syntax), in a variety of texts</p> <p>Demonstrate the ability to identify imagery and symbolism</p> <p>Demonstrate the ability to identify the characteristics of genres, such as fiction, poetry, drama, and informational texts</p> <p>Demonstrate the ability to identify elements of poetry, such as rhyme scheme, stanza, and refrain</p> <p>Demonstrate the ability to identify the author's purpose in texts in a variety of genres</p> <p>Demonstrate the ability to develop and apply objective criteria for evaluating texts in a variety of genres</p>
Word study and analysis The student will use knowledge of semantics, syntax, and structural analysis to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words and to read texts with understanding.	<p>Demonstrate the ability to determine pronunciations, meanings, alternate word choices, the parts of speech, or the etymologies of words by using a dictionary and thesaurus</p> <p>Demonstrate the ability to use knowledge of roots and affixes to analyze the meaning of complex words</p> <p>Demonstrate the ability to use sentence structure (syntax) and context to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words and multiple-meaning words</p> <p>Demonstrate the ability to make simple and complex analogies</p> <p>Begin distinguishing between denotation and connotation of words and interpreting the connotative power of words</p>

Source: <http://www.myschools.com/offices/cso/standards/ela/documents/standards.pdf>

South Carolina publishes bridge documents for each grade level to help teachers and students understand the relationship between the standards and the PACT. The document specifies PACT measurement guidelines (e.g., direct or indirect assessment, possible item and text types), as well as the eligible cognitive domains (e.g., factual, conceptual, analytical).

Test Format and Content

To examine trends in adolescent literacy, the rest of the discussion will focus on the PACT in English language arts for grades 5 and 8, and the reading and writing portions of the BSAP for grade 10 (for additional information regarding test format and content, see <http://www.myschools.com/offices/assessment/>).

The English language arts PACT includes a mix of constructed-response items, worth 2–4 points each; extended-response items, worth 15 points in 5th grade and 30 points in 8th grade; and multiple-choice items, worth 1 point each. The 5th-grade exam consists of three to four constructed-response, one extended-response, and 23–33 multiple-choice questions, while the 8th-grade exam includes four to five constructed-response, one extended-response, and 43–55 multiple-choice items. On the 5th-grade exam, 54–57 percent of the available points are for reading, 33–37 percent are for writing, and 7–11 percent are for research. For the 8th-grade exam, 49–52 percent of the points are for reading, 39–41 percent are for writing, and 9–11 percent are for research. Skills and knowledge tested include applying knowledge of vocabulary; completing and/or interpreting graphic organizers; comprehending classical and contemporary literature; evaluating real-world text, such as charts, signs, advertisements, schedules, and brochures; editing samples of writing; and writing essays when given a topic. Constructed-response items are scored using a three-point rubric, and the extended-response items are scored using three four-point and one three-point analytic rubrics (<http://www.myschools.com/offices/assessment/PACT/Rubrics.htm>).

The reading portion of the BSAP consists entirely of multiple-choice items, focused on objectives including decoding and word meaning, details, main idea, reference usage, inference, and analysis of literature. The test is not timed, but should take approximately two and a half hours. The writing portion of the exam requires students to compose an essay in response to an assigned topic. The writing portion is also not timed, but is estimated to take approximately an hour and 20 minutes.

Achievement-Level Definitions

Student scores on the PACT are reported using four achievement levels—below basic, basic, proficient, and advanced. Table OO2 shows the state’s descriptor for each achievement level.

Scores on the BSAP are reported as “meeting standards” or “not meeting standards.” Students scoring at the proficient level and above on the PACT and at the meeting standards level on the BSAP are considered to have met academic requirements under NCLB.

Table OO2. PACT Achievement-Level Descriptors

Advanced	A student who performs at the “Advanced” level on the PACT has exceeded expectations for student performance based on the curriculum standards approved by the state board of education. The student is very well prepared for work at the next grade.
Proficient	A student who performs at the “Proficient” level on the PACT has met expectations for student performance based on the curriculum standards approved by the state board of education. The student is well prepared for work at the next grade. The “Proficient” level represents the long-term goal for student performance in South Carolina
Basic	A student who performs at the “Basic” level on the PACT has met minimum expectations for student performance on the curriculum standards as approved by the state board of education. The student is minimally prepared for work at the next grade level.
Below Basic	A student who performs at the “Below Basic” level on the PACT has not met expectations for student performance on the curriculum standards approved by the state board of education. The student is not prepared for work at the next grade.

Source: <http://www.myschools.com/offices/assessment/Publications/Usersguide2003.pdf>

Performance Results

Student Performance

South Carolina provides data on student performance on the PACT and BSAP for all students and for students disaggregated by race/ethnicity, by English-proficiency status, disability status, and poverty status.⁶² Table OO3 presents the results of the 2003 PACT English language arts assessment for students in grades 4 and 8, disaggregated by these students’ characteristics.

Although 67–76 percent of students in the 4th and 8th grades scored at the basic level, only 33 percent of 4th-graders reached the proficient level, as did 21 percent of 8th-graders. Only 2 percent of 4th- and 8th-graders scored at the advanced level.

Only 2–18 percent of students with disabilities scored at the proficient level, and 50 percent of 4th-graders and 72 percent of 8th-graders with disabilities scored at the lowest level of proficiency, below basic.

There was a 21–28-percentage-point difference in the pass rates of white and African American students in the two grades. At the 4th-grade level, only 18 percent of African American students

⁶²Approximately 55 percent of students in South Carolina are white; 42 percent are African American; and 2 percent are Hispanic. About 49 percent of students are eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program; 1 percent are in limited-English-proficiency programs; and 15 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

scored at the proficient level or higher in both grades, compared with 45 percent of white students. There also were large differences in the pass rates of economically disadvantaged students and their counterparts who were not economically disadvantaged—21–30 percentage points at the proficient level.

Table OO4 presents figures for the percentages of students meeting the standard in reading and writing on the 10th-grade 2003 BSAP. Overall, 83–84 percent of 10th-graders met the standards in both subjects. A little over half of the students with disabilities met the reading and writing standards (52–53 percent). While 92 percent of white students met the reading and writing standards, the pass rate for African American students was much lower—72 percent in reading and 69 percent in writing. There was a 19–20-percentage-point difference in the performance of students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and their counterparts.

Table OO3. Performance of 4th- and 8th-Graders on 2003 English Language Arts PACT, by Student Characteristics

	Basic and Above	Proficient and Above	Advanced
	Percentage		
4th Grade			
All students	76	33	2
Students with IEPs	56	18	1
Students without IEPs	79	35	2
Economically disadvantaged students	66	19	1
Non-economically disadvantaged students	88	49	4
African American students	65	18	1
White students	86	45	4
8th Grade			
All students	67	21	2
Students with IEPs	28	2	0
Students without IEPs	70	22	3
Economically disadvantaged students	52	9	1
Non-economically disadvantaged students	79	30	4
African American students	51	8	0
White students	79	30	4

Source: <https://www.myschools.com/tracks/testscores/pact/2003/#StateD>

Table OO4. Performance of 10th-Graders on 2003 Reading and Writing BSAP

	Reading	Writing
	Percentage Meeting the Standard	
All students	84	83
Students without IEPs	86	85
Students with IEPs	53	52
Economically disadvantaged students	71	69
Non–economically disadvantaged students	90	89
African American students	72	69
White students	92	92

Source: <https://www.myschools.com/reports/exitexam/2003/Exit2003.PDF>

Note: *Economically disadvantaged students* refers solely to students receiving free lunch.

School Data

School-level performance data by urbanicity are available for the 5th- and 8th-grade administration of the English language arts PACT (Table OO5) and the 10th-grade BSAP (Table OO6). Forty-nine percent of schools in South Carolina were suburban, while 36 percent were rural and 15 percent were urban. Almost half of all schools were high-poverty schools, and three-fourths of rural schools were high-poverty schools, compared with 53 percent of urban schools and 44 percent of suburban schools.

Table OO5. Average School Performance on 5th- and 8th-Grade 2002 English Language Arts, by Urbanicity

	Basic or Higher	Proficient or Higher	Advanced or Higher
	Average Percentage		
5th Grade			
Rural schools	68	18	1
Suburban schools	77	27	1
Urban schools	71	23	1
8th Grade			
Rural schools	63	19	3
Suburban schools	73	29	5
Urban schools	68	27	5

**Table OO6. Average School Performance on 10th-Grade 2002 Reading and Writing
BSAP, by Urbanicity**

	Reading	Writing
	Average Percentage Meeting the Standard	
Rural schools	77	79
Suburban schools	82	84
Urban schools	81	83

Suburban and urban schools outperformed their rural counterparts at all grade levels and in all subjects. For instance, at the 8th grade, on average, 19 percent of students in rural schools reached the proficient level, compared with 73 percent in suburban schools and 68 percent in urban schools.

APPENDIX PP. SOUTH DAKOTA

State Assessment System

For the 2002–03 school year, South Dakota’s statewide assessment system included two mandatory components for regular education students:

- The Dakota State Test of Educational Progress (STEP) is a norm- and criterion-referenced test that intends to link to state content standards in reading, math, science, social science, and language arts. The test is administered annually to students in grades 3–8 and 11.
- The Stanford Writing Assessment is a performance-based writing exam for students in grades 5 and 9 (see <http://www.state.sd.us/deca/NCLB/index.htm> for additional information regarding state assessment and accountability).

South Dakota has defined state content standards in reading, communication arts, mathematics, science, social studies, world language, physical education, health education, fine arts, family and consumer science, technology education, business and marketing, trade and industrial education, and agriculture education. The reading standards are organized around one broad state goal: students will read at increasing levels of complexity for a variety of purposes. Four indicators define important components of the goal. For each indicator, the state has defined benchmarks for grade clusters—K–2, 3–5, 6–8, 9–12—as well as grade-by-grade standards in grades K–8. The indicators, benchmarks for grades 6–8, and standards for 8th-grade reading are shown in Table PP1, as an example.

South Dakota recently revised its reading and communication arts standards, and the new standards will be in place beginning with the 2004–05 school year. The goals and indicators are very similar to the previous version, but they have been elaborated and retooled slightly. The grade-cluster benchmarks have been removed, and the grade-level standards have been rewritten and reorganized. Each standard has been filled out with supporting skills and examples. Finally, the new standards document includes grade-specific performance descriptors for both regular education students and for English-language learners (<http://www.state.sd.us/deca/OCTA/contentstandards/reading/standards/68.htm>).

Table PP1. South Dakota Reading Standards, 8th Grade

Indicator	Benchmarks	Grade-Level Standards
Students will use various reading cues and strategies to comprehend text (e.g., context, semantic, syntactic, and graphophonic cues) .	<p>Use specific cues and strategies to make connections with, predict meaning of, and comprehend information within a text</p> <p>Determine when a specific cue or strategy can be used most effectively to read for comprehension</p> <p>Use prior knowledge and experience to interpret and construct meaning from various texts</p>	<p>Recognize and use direct, implied, and inferential meaning to extend understanding of materials read (e.g., denotation, connotation, and reasoning)</p> <p>Use context clues to determine the meanings of unfamiliar words (e.g., antonyms, homonyms)</p> <p>Make reasonable predictions about the content or message of various reading materials before reading</p>
Students will evaluate the patterns of organization, literary elements, and literary devices within various texts.	<p>Compare and contrast various organizational techniques authors use to create reader interest (e.g., sequence, cause and effect)</p> <p>Explain literary elements and/or devices used in various texts (e.g., plot, setting, character, imagery, alliteration)</p> <p>Describe the effects authors create by using a combination of literary elements and devices (e.g., theme, imagery, point of view, anecdote)</p>	<p>Evaluate the structural elements of plot development and how conflicts are addressed and resolved (e.g., subplot, parallel episodes)</p> <p>Compare and contrast the use of poetic elements of word choice, dialogue, rhyme, rhythm, and voice</p>
Students will interpret and respond to a diversity of works representative of a variety of cultures and time periods.	<p>Examine various literary works to understand how authors present different perspectives</p> <p>Compare and contrast a variety of literary works to confirm or refute personal interpretations</p> <p>Use personal criteria to defend the choice of independent-reading materials</p>	<p>Compare and contrast literature from different eras or cultures that deal with similar situations or conflicts</p> <p>Analyze the relationship between a work of literature and the context in which it was created (e.g., period, ideas, customs, and outlooks of a people)</p>
Students will access, synthesize, and evaluate information from a variety of sources	<p>Select and use suitable information sources for a variety of purposes (e.g., Internet, CD-ROM, print and video materials, library)</p> <p>Analyze the validity and/or appropriateness of various technical and practical materials</p> <p>Collect and summarize information to make reasonable and informed decisions</p>	<p>Analyze and synthesize information to make informed decisions</p> <p>Compare original text to summary for accuracy (e.g., inclusion of main ideas and critical details, extent to which it conveys the original meaning)</p> <p>Determine the appropriate technology to gather, organize, and retrieve information (e.g., computer software, Internet)</p>

Source: <http://www.state.sd.us/deca/OCTA/contentstandards/reading/standards/68.htm>

Test Format and Content

To examine trends in adolescent literacy, the rest of the discussion will focus on the Dakota STEP in language arts and reading for grades 5 and 8, and the Stanford Writing Assessment for grades 5

and 9 (see <http://www.state.sd.us/deca/OCTA/testing/index.htm> for additional test information).

The Dakota STEP is based on the Stanford Achievement Test, 10th edition (SAT10), with additional items on the reading and mathematics portions that are aligned with state content standards. The test consists entirely of multiple-choice items. Each of the 5th-, 8th-, and 11th-grade exams includes 45–56 reading-comprehension items, of which approximately one-third on the 5th-grade exam and half on the 8th- and 11th-grade exams are augmentation components geared specifically toward the state content standards. The exam also includes 20 reading vocabulary items at all three grade levels. The language arts exam consists of 30 multiple-choice items. Neither section is timed, but the reading portion takes approximately one hour and the language section approximately 20 minutes.

For the Stanford Writing Assessment, students respond to a prompt in one of four modes—descriptive, narrative, expository, or persuasive—in an extended essay. Students are provided with a writer’s checklist to guide them through the writing process. Students’ responses are scored using both a six-point holistic rubric and a set of four-point analytic rubrics that judge ideas and development; organization, unity, and coherence; word choice; sentences and paragraphs; grammar and usage; and mechanics.

Achievement-Level Definitions

Student scores on the Dakota STEP are reported in several ways. Students receive scaled scores and national percentiles based on the norm-referenced portion of the test, and are also assigned one of four achievement levels:

- **Advanced**—Signifies superior performance beyond grade-level mastery
- **Proficient**—Represents solid academic performance, indicating that students are prepared for the next grade or responsible adulthood
- **Basic**—Denotes partial mastery of the knowledge and skills that are fundamental for satisfactory work
- **Below Basic**—Denotes little (if any) mastery of the most elementary knowledge and scores.

The state has defined cutoffs for the achievement levels in terms of both raw and scaled scores. Students scoring at the proficient level or higher are considered to have met academic requirements under NCLB.

Performance Results

Student Performance

South Dakota provides data on student performance on the Dakota STEP for all students and for students disaggregated by race/ethnicity, -English-proficiency status, disability status, and poverty status.⁶³ Table PP2 shows the results of the 2003 Dakota STEP reading assessment for students in grades 5, 8, and 11, disaggregated by a variety of student characteristics.

Table PP2. Performance of 5th-, 8th-, and 11th-Graders on 2003 Reading Dakota STEP, by Student Characteristics

	Basic and Above	Proficient and Above	Advanced
	Percentage		
5th Grade			
All students	90	51	3
Students with disabilities	63	15	1
Students with limited-English proficiency	64	10	0
Economically disadvantaged students	84	37	1
Native American students	77	22	0
White students	94	57	4
8th Grade			
All students	99	78	23
Students with disabilities	90	26	0
Students with limited-English proficiency	98	34	0
Economically disadvantaged students	98	64	12
Native American students	98	52	5
White students	99	81	25
11th Grade			
All students	89	55	0
Students with disabilities	46	8	0
Students with limited-English proficiency	29	8	0
Economically disadvantaged students	84	43	0
Native American students	49	32	0
White students	89	56	0

⁶³Approximately 86 percent of students in South Dakota are white, and 10 percent are American Indian/Alaska Native. No other racial/ethnic group comprises 2 percent of the population. About 30 percent are eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program; 3 percent are in limited- English-proficiency programs; and 13 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

Source: <http://sis.ddncampus.net:8081/nclb/index.html>

The performance across grades varied considerably. Although 89–100 percent of students in grades 5, 8, and 11 scored at the basic level, only 51 and 55 percent of 5th- and 11th-graders passed the reading assessment by scoring at or above the proficient level. The proportion passing the test was much higher in the 8th grade—78 percent. Only 3 percent of 5th-graders and none of the 11th-graders scored at the advanced level compared with 23 percent of 8th-graders.

There was a 35-percentage-point difference in the pass rates of white and Native American students in the 5th grade (57 percent versus 22 percent), but this gap decreased in magnitude across the grades. By the 11th grade, the performance gap decreased to 24 percentage points (56 percent versus 32 percent). In contrast to the very small numbers in the 5th and 11th grades (0–4 percent), 25 percent of white students in 8th grade scored at the advanced level. Students with disabilities scored 36 percentage points lower in pass rates compared with all students in the 5th grade; in the 8th and 11th grades, this gap increased to between 47 and 52 percentage points.

Economically disadvantaged students scored 12–14 percentage points lower than all students at the proficient level across all three grade levels. Students with limited-English proficiency trailed well behind all students. For example, only 8–10 percent of these students passed the reading assessment in the 5th and 11th grades. The percentage was much higher in the 8th grade, 34 percent, but the gap in relative performance was large (41–47 percentage points) and increased across the grades.

Table PP3 presents the percentage of students who scored at or above the proficient level on the 2003 writing assessment for grades 5 and 9. The pass rate of 5th-graders was markedly lower than that of the 9th-graders (29 percent versus 64 percent). Students with disabilities scored lower than all students, with pass rates of 14 percent in the 5th grade and 21 percent in the 9th grade. As seen earlier, the difference in performance was larger in the higher grade. South Dakota also provides data on student performance on the content areas of writing that are assessed—ideas and development; organization, unity, and coherence; word choice; sentences and paragraphs; grammar and usage; and mechanics (not shown in table). While the performance of 9th-graders was relatively uniform across these areas, 5th-graders tended to score higher on ideas and development and lower on organization, unity, and coherence.

Table PP3. Performance of 5th- and 9th-Graders on 2003 Stanford Writing Assessment

	Percentage Proficient and Advanced
5th Grade	
All students	29
Students with disabilities	14
9th Grade	
All students	64
Students with disabilities	21

Source: <http://www.state.sd.us/deca/Finance/Data/03digest/02-03StateProfile.pdf>

School Data

Comparable school-level data were not available for South Dakota.

APPENDIX QQ. TENNESSEE

State Assessment System

The Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment System (TCAP) consists of the TCAP Achievement Test, the End-of-Course tests, and the Direct Writing Assessments.

The TCAP Achievement Test is a norm- and criterion-referenced test designed to measure state content standards in various subject areas. Students take the test in the following subject areas at each grade level:

- Kindergarten – reading, language arts, mathematics
- 1st Grade – reading, language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, word analysis, vocabulary, math computation
- 2nd Grade – reading, language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, word analysis, vocabulary, language mechanics, math computation, spelling
- 3rd Grade – reading, language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, word analysis
- 4th–8th Grades – reading, language arts, mathematics, science, social studies.

The End-of-Course Tests are criterion-referenced exams the state reports as linked to state content standards for various high school courses in mathematics, science, English, and history. Students enrolled in each of the ten courses that are part of the assessment program--Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry, Math Foundations I, Biology I, Physical Science, Chemistry, English I, English II, and U.S. History--take the test in the spring. A student's score on the End-of-Course test counts as at least 15 percent of his or her semester grade for the course. Of the ten End-of-Course Tests, three—English II, Algebra I, and Biology I—have been designated as Gateway Tests: Students are required to pass each of these three gateway tests in order to graduate, and are given additional opportunities to retake any that they do not pass on their first attempt. The English II Gateway Test was administered for the first time in 2002–03.

The Tennessee Writing Assessment is a performance-based test of writing skills for students in grade 5, 8, and 11 (additional assessment and accountability information can be found through <http://www.state.tn.us/education/mnclb.htm>).

Tennessee has defined state curriculum standards in English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, foreign language, dance, music, theatre, visual arts, physical education and lifetime wellness, and computer technology. The state also has specific Gateway Test and End-of-Course standards for each of the courses in these assessment programs. Three broad content standards communicate the state's vision of literacy:

- Reading – The student will develop the reading and listening skills necessary for word recognition, comprehension, interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and appreciation of print and nonprint text.
- Writing – The student will develop the structural and creative skills of the writing process necessary to produce written language that can be read, presented to, and interpreted by various audiences.
- Elements of Language – The student will use Standard English conventions and proper spelling as appropriate to speaking and writing.

A set of learning expectations identify the core of learning for each standard within three grade clusters—K–3, 4–5, and 6–8—while grade-specific accomplishments define the knowledge and skills needed in each grade to master the learning expectations

(<http://www.state.tn.us/education/ci/cistandards2001/la/cilag8all.htm>). Table QQ1 shows the learning expectations and accomplishments for the reading standard in grade 8, as an example.

Table QQ1. 8th-Grade Learning Expectations for the Reading Standard

Learning Expectations	Accomplishments
Continue to develop oral language and reading skills	Continue to model active listening in both formal and informal settings Continue to adhere to rules for public conversations Continue to formulate and respond to questions from teachers and classmates Continue to organize and share information, stories, experiences, ideas, and feelings with others in both formal and informal settings Participate in creative responses to text (e.g., debates, dramatizations, speeches) Deliver a focused, well-organized oral presentation, using multiple sources of information from any content areas, utilizing visual aids for contextual support Incorporate into oral reading, discussions, and presentations the use of correct stress, pitch, and juncture Analyze a variety of nonverbal communication techniques and how they impact the audience and speaker
Develop an understanding of the concepts of print	Recognize the defining characteristics of a variety of texts (e.g., identify differences between poetry and narration, between plays and essays, between biography and historical fiction) Approach texts according to their type, using appropriate skills and prior knowledge (e.g., read poetry aloud, determine how the form/genre informs meaning) Recognize the structure and organization of various text features to locate information (e.g., sidebars, questions at the end of chapter/unit, footnotes, endnotes)
Expand reading skills through phonemic awareness	Continue to develop an awareness of sounds of language through repeated exposure to a variety of auditory experiences (e.g., poems, music lyrics, books on tape, read-alouds) Evaluate patterns of rhyme and rhythm and how they affect understanding Evaluate the effects of sound in language (e.g., alliteration [assonance and consonance], onomatopoeia, slant rhyme, internal rhyme, accent, repetition)
Use decoding strategies	Recognize and identify the base/root from words having affixes Determine the meaning of prefixes and suffixes through identification and usage Use context clues to determine multiple-meaning words Decode unknown grade-level words utilizing previously learned strategies and verify the word's meaning within the context of the selection

Table QQ1. (cont.)

Read to develop fluency, expression, accuracy, and confidence	<p>Demonstrate the ability to read with expression, accuracy, and poise from a variety of texts (e.g., paired reading, choral reading, and read-alongs)</p> <p>Continue to participate in guided reading</p> <p>Continue to read using appropriate pronunciation, expression, and rate</p> <p>Continue to adjust speed based on the purpose for reading</p> <p>Continue to read independently on a daily basis</p>
Expand reading vocabulary	<p>Build vocabulary by listening to literature, viewing films and documentaries, participating in class discussions, and reading self-selected and assigned texts</p> <p>Build vocabulary by reading and viewing from a wide variety of print and nonprint texts, and literary and media genres and modes</p> <p>Analyze word meanings, using roots, prefixes, and suffixes</p> <p>Continue to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words, using context clues, dictionaries, electronic sources, glossaries, and other resources</p> <p>Evaluate the use of synonyms, antonyms, homonyms, and multiple-meaning words, and determine how their use assists with understanding</p> <p>Continue to foster word consciousness (e.g., word play, word walls, graphic organizers, nuances of words, power words)</p> <p>Analyze and use useful mnemonic devices (e.g., rhyming words, vocabulary cartoons, kinesthetic) to acquire new vocabulary</p> <p>Select the correct word or phrase to complete an analogy</p> <p>Recognize the historical influences on and changes to the English language</p> <p>Consider word etymology and semantic change as part of vocabulary study</p> <p>Recognize and interpret widely used foreign phrases (e.g., e pluribus unum, c'est la vie)</p> <p>Use connotation and denotation for vocabulary studies</p> <p>Recognize that word choices create a mood to set a tone</p> <p>Discover ways by which a language acquires new words (e.g., brand names, acronyms)</p> <p>Identify words and phrases that serve as clues to reveal time periods, cultures, and regions represented (e.g., use of vocabulary associated with a particular time period, region, or country)</p>
Develop independent pre-reading strategies to facilitate comprehension	<p>Continue to establish a purpose for reading and viewing (e.g., to understand, to interpret, to enjoy, to solve problems, to answer specific questions, to discover information/facts, to discover models of writing)</p> <p>Continue to utilize reference sources to build background knowledge for reading</p> <p>Continue to use previously learned strategies to front-load text (e.g., skimming and scanning, connecting to prior knowledge)</p> <p>Preview text, using supports such as illustrations/pictures, captions, graphs, diagrams, headings, subheadings, and footnotes</p> <p>Relate the importance and the significance of the reading, listening, and viewing selections to learning and life</p> <p>Analyze significant words to be encountered in the text</p> <p>Make predictions about print and nonprint text</p> <p>Relate print and nonprint text to prior personal experiences or opinions, historical knowledge, current events and cultural background, as well as to previously read print and nonprint texts</p>

Table QQ1. (cont.)

Use active comprehension strategies to derive meaning while reading and check for understanding after reading	<p>Derive meaning while reading by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continuing to formulate clarifying questions• Evaluating predictions made in prereading and making adjustments• Continuing to predict outcomes, state reasonable generalizations, and draw conclusions based on prior knowledge and information gained while reading• Using metacognitive and self-monitoring strategies while reading (e.g., pausing, rereading, consulting other sources, reading ahead, asking for help)• Engaging in reading between the lines (i.e., changing perspective among characters to determine thoughts, imagining parallel events, stating implied information)• Continuing to create mental pictures from abstract information• Continuing to relate text to prior personal experiences or opinions, as well as to previously read print and nonprint texts• Making inferences and recognizing unstated assumptions• Verifying or modifying pre-reading purpose as additional information is obtained• Exploring ways to interact with text (e.g., mark the text, use Post-It notes, ask questions, and make comments within the text) <p>Derive meaning after reading by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Indicating, analyzing, and evaluating the sequence of events• Recognizing and stating the main idea/central element in a given reading selection, noting details that support the main idea/central element• Identifying the author's purpose and analyzing to determine whether the purpose is met• Discussing similarities and differences in events and characters, using evidence cited from the text or various texts• Analyzing and evaluating the text to find contextual support for responses to questions, for assistance in formulating ideas and opinions, and for supporting personal responses• Assessing the accuracy and appropriateness of an author's details to support claims and assertions, noting instances of bias and stereotyping• Evaluating cause-and-effect relationships• Evaluating statements as fact or opinion• Analyzing the use of figurative language (idioms, similes, metaphors, personification, imagery, puns)• Analyzing themes, whether stated or implied• Evaluating and reflecting upon comprehension strategies utilized to make meaning from texts• Making connections among print and nonprint texts• Making connections among the various literary genres and themes with personal, historical, and cultural experiences• Evaluating reading selections for their application to daily life (e.g., extend and apply meaning derived from text to different situations)
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Table QQ1. (cont.)

Refine study skills and develop methods of research to enhance learning	<p>Determine appropriate reference sources in various formats (e.g., encyclopedias, card/electronic catalogs, almanacs, periodicals, Internet)</p> <p>Use media (e.g., films, videos, the visual and performing arts, on-line catalogs, nonfiction books, encyclopedias, CD-ROMs, references, Internet) to view, read, and represent information</p> <p>Use current technology (e.g., the Internet, CD-ROMs, on-line catalogs) as a research and communication tool</p> <p>Analyze a variety of reference sources (e.g., biographical sketches, letters, diaries, encyclopedias, periodicals)</p> <p>Distinguish between and use primary- and secondary-source documents</p> <p>Evaluate resources for validity and reliability</p> <p>Continue to refine skimming and scanning skills</p> <p>Retrieve, organize, represent, analyze, and evaluate information to demonstrate knowledge effectively acquired</p> <p>Develop and use notes that include important concepts, summaries, and identification of reference sources</p> <p>Investigate and evaluate the impact of bias/persuasive devices on daily life</p> <p>Recognize and identify a statement as an example of persuasive and/or propaganda techniques (e.g., false generalizations, loaded words, snob appeal, name-calling, bandwagon, testimonials, and inconsistencies of logic)</p> <p>Use and evaluate a variety of sources to prepare a research paper that includes a title page, outline, notes, and a bibliography</p> <p>Define and apply internal (subjective) and external (objective) criteria in making critical evaluations of given statements</p>
Apply vocabulary-development and -comprehension skills to facilitate reading to learn in content areas	<p>Expand and maintain vocabulary specific to content areas and to current events</p> <p>Continue to locate information, using available text features (e.g., maps, charts, timelines, graphics, indexes, glossaries, footnotes, author's biography, and table of contents)</p> <p>Apply, analyze, and evaluate comprehension skills and strategies used to obtain meaning from informational text in the content areas</p> <p>Continue to use self-correction strategies while reading (e.g., pausing, rereading, consulting other sources)</p> <p>Continue to interact with the text and analyze its effectiveness</p> <p>Determine the reliability of sources by exploring the author's background, intentions, and motives</p>
Read independently for a variety of purposes	<p>Read for literary experience</p> <p>Read to gain information</p> <p>Read to perform a task</p> <p>Read for enjoyment</p> <p>Read to expand vocabulary</p> <p>Read to build fluency</p>

Table QQ1. (cont.)

Experience and explore the elements of various literary and media genres	Continue to read, view, and recognize various literary (e.g., novels, science fiction, plays, suspense, poetry, autobiographies, nonfiction of high interest) and media (e.g., music, films, videos)
	Recognize and analyze the elements of various literary and media genres
	Explore the elements that determine types of fiction (e.g., suspense/mystery, comedy/humor, drama, historical fiction, romance, legends and myth)
	Identify and evaluate stated or implied themes and connect recurring themes to previously read materials and current readings
	Evaluate how the author develops characters (e.g., through words, speech, action, thoughts, narrator, interaction, motivation) and evaluate whether the characters are stereotypical or realistic
	Evaluate words, phrases, and other devices used by authors to create mood to establish a tone
	Determine the elements of the plot and trace them, using graphic organizers (i.e., exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution, denouement)
	Distinguish among varying types of conflict (i.e., man v. man, man v. nature, man v. himself)
	Explore subplots in literary selections and films
	Compare and contrast between or among stories/events/the elements of the plot
	Determine the narrator's/author's point of view (i.e., first person, third person, limited, or omniscient)
	Explore and explain how a story changes or an event is perceived if the point of view is changed
	Summarize, paraphrase, and evaluate selected passages for discussion and/or written assignments or presentations
	Make inferences about print and nonprint text
	Use deductive reasoning to facilitate and to extend understanding of texts
	Determine the differences among nonfiction materials (e.g., letters, memoirs, diaries, journals, documentaries, autobiographies, biographies, and educational, informational, and technical texts)
	Demonstrate knowledge of similes, metaphors, personification, symbolism, idioms, puns, hyperbole, flashback, foreshadowing, and irony
	Explore the concept of allusion
Develop and sustain a motivation for reading	Visit libraries/media centers, book fairs, bookstores, and other print-rich environments to explore books
	Use personal criteria to select reading material (e.g., personal interest, knowledge of authors, text difficulty, text genres, recommendation of others)
	Read daily from self-selected materials
	Relate literary experiences (e.g., book discussions, literary circles, writing, oral presentations, artistic expressions)
	Experience and develop an awareness of literature that reflects a diverse society
	Maintain a personal reading list/reading log/journal to reflect reading gains and accomplishments

Source: <http://www.state.tn.us/education/ci/cistandards2001/la/cilag8all.htm>

Each of the content standards is also broken down into benchmark performance indicators, which define the specific skills and knowledge expected of students at different levels of achievement within each grade cluster. The performance indicators include both state-assessed and teacher-observed indicators, and are divided into three levels: Below Proficient, Proficient, and Advanced.

For English I End-of-Course and English II Gateway Tests, there are four broad content standards: writing, reading, viewing and representing, and speaking and listening. Similar to the K–8 standards, each of these four is broken down into learning expectations for the course, and is accompanied by performance indicators for the three levels of achievement.

Test Format and Content

The TCAP Achievement Test consists entirely of multiple-choice items. The test includes both norm-referenced and criterion-referenced items. Table QQ2 shows the objectives and sub-skills tested by the norm-referenced items, and their approximate relative emphasis on the 2004 exam, as an example.

Table QQ2. TCAP Reading and Language Arts Achievement Test Objectives and Sub-skills, by Relative Weight

	5 th Grade	8 th Grade		5 th Grade	8 th Grade
Basic Understanding	18	21	Evaluate and Extend Meaning	10	13
Stated information	5	9	Generalize	0	3
Sequence	3	4	Author purpose	4	1
Vocabulary	6	9	Author point of view/Bias	1	1
Initial understanding	4	0	Critical assessment	1	3
Analyze Text	19	20	Predict/Hypothesize	1	3
Main idea/Theme	4	3	Extend/Apply meaning	0	3
Conclusions	6	5	Fact/Opinion	3	0
Story elements/Character	5	3	Identify Reading Strategies	12	6
Story elements/Plot	1	0	Summarize	3	1
Supporting evidence	1	0	Apply genre criteria	0	1
Literary techniques	1	1	Vocabulary strategies	5	3
Cause/Effect	0	3	Self-monitor	1	1
Compare/Contrast	0	1	Make connections	1	0
Story elements/Setting	0	3	Synthesize across texts	1	0
Nonfiction elements	0	3	Sentence Structure	12	9
Writing Strategies	16	16	Complete/Fragment/Run-on	6	4
Topic Sentence	3	1	Sentence combining	3	4
Relevance	5	8	Misplaced modifier	3	1
Supporting sentences	6	5	Editing Skills	13	15
Connective/Transitional words	0	1	Punctuation		1
Information sources	1	1	Usage	13	14

Source: <http://www.state.tn.us/education/tsachtimechart.htm>

The criterion-referenced items on the TCAP Achievement Test assess students on content, grammar conventions, meaning, techniques and skills, vocabulary, writing/organization, and

writing process. The exam is broken into three tests, one of which has two parts, which take between 20 and 60 minutes each.

The Tennessee Writing Assessment consists of one extended-writing task. Students compose an essay in response to an assigned prompt. On the 5th-grade exam, the prompt asks for a narrative essay, while 8th-grade students write an expository essay and 11th-graders compose a persuasive essay. Fifth- and 8th-grade students have 35 minutes to complete their response, and 11th-grade students have 25 minutes. The essays are scored holistically using a six-point rubric.

The Language Arts Gateway Test consists of 62 multiple-choice items that assess grammar conventions, content, meaning, word choice, organization, and technique.

Achievement-Level Definitions

Tennessee is in the process of developing achievement levels and setting standards for the state assessment. Student test scores for the TCAP Achievement Test will be reported in three levels: Basic, Proficient, and Advanced. Students scoring at or above the proficient level will be considered to have met academic requirements under NCLB. The state will set standards for the TCAP Achievement Test during the summers of 2003 and 2004, based on the previous school year's test results; these achievement levels will be fully operational for all grade levels for the 2005 assessment. However, at the time of this report, assessment data were available through only the 2002–03 school year, when test scores were reported as national percentiles.

Scores on the writing assessment are reported in six achievement levels that correspond to the six-point rubric. Scores at the “competent” level (4 points) or above are considered “passing.”

Performance Results

Student Performance

Table QQ3 presents data on student performance on the TCAP Achievement Test and Writing Assessment for all students and for students disaggregated by race/ethnicity, disability status, and eligibility for the free- or reduced-price lunch program (proxy for poverty).⁶⁴ Although the Writing Assessment is currently administered in grades 5, 8, and 11, it was administered in grades 4, 7, and 11 until 2002–03. As the most recent test score data available are for the 2001–02 administration, we report scores for grades 4, 7, and 11 rather than for 5, 8, and 11 (Table QQ4).

⁶⁴Approximately 72 percent of students in Tennessee are white; 25 percent are African American; and 3 percent are Hispanic. Forty-two percent were eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program; 2 percent were enrolled in limited-English-proficiency programs; and about 16 percent of students have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

In 5th and 8th grades, on average, all students scored slightly above the national average in reading and language arts (54th percentile to 61st percentile), and students with disabilities scored at the 12th–16th percentile. Economically disadvantaged students scored substantially below their non–economically disadvantaged peers across all grades and subjects. For example, in reading, economically disadvantaged 5th-grade student performance averaged at the 37th percentile, compared with that of peers whose average score was at the 66th percentile. Large achievement gaps also existed between white and African American students (24–31-percentile-rank difference) and white and Hispanic students (20–30-percentile-rank difference) in all grades and subjects.

Table QQ3. Performance of 5th- and 8th-Graders on 2003 Reading TCAP Achievement Test, by Student Characteristics

	5 th Grade		8 th Grade	
	Reading	Language Arts	Reading	Language Arts
	National Percentile Rank			
All students	54	56	56	61
Students with disabilities	12	15	16	12
Students without disabilities	58	63	60	66
Economically disadvantaged students	37	42	41	41
Non–economically disadvantaged students	66	70	66	73
African American students	31	39	38	38
Hispanic students	35	44	37	39
White students	62	64	62	69

Source: <http://www.state.tn.us/education/testing/02tstcapstatewide.pdf>

On the writing assessment, 72 percent of 4th-graders, 82 percent of 7th-graders, and 70 percent of 11th-graders reached the competent level. Similar to the performance of all students, 7th-grade students with disabilities performed the better, with 37 percent reaching the competent level, than did those in either 4th grade, 27 percent, or in 11th grade, 24 percent. Similar to the language arts and reading assessments, achievement gaps exist across the grades between non–economically disadvantaged students and economically disadvantaged students (15–18 percentage points); white and African American students (10–11 percentage points); and white and Hispanic students (8–15 percentage points).

Table QQ4. Performance of 4th-, 7th- and 11th- Graders on 2002 TCAP Writing Assessment, by Student Characteristics

	4 th Grade	7 th Grade	11 th Grade
	Percentage Competent		
All students	72	82	70
Students with disabilities	27	37	24
Students without disabilities	77	88	74
Economically disadvantaged students	62	73	56
Non-economically disadvantaged students	79	88	74
African American students	64	74	62
Hispanic students	66	72	58
White students	74	85	73

Source: <http://www.state.tn.us/education/testing/o2tswastatewide.pdf>

School Performance

School-level data by urbanicity are available for the 2002 TCAP administration for grades 5 and 8 for reading and language arts (Table QQ5). Schools in Tennessee are relatively evenly distributed across rural, suburban, and urban area—36 percent of schools are located in rural areas, 34 percent in suburban areas, and 30 percent in urban areas. A much higher percentage of urban schools are high-poverty schools—31 percent—compared with 11 percent of rural schools and 5 percent of suburban schools.

In all grades and subjects, suburban schools had average test scores that were higher than those of students in rural schools (4–6-percentile-rank points) and substantially higher than those of urban schools (12–16-percentile-rank points). Given the distribution of these schools by poverty, these findings are not surprising.

Table QQ5. Average School Performance on 5th- and 8th-Grade 2002 TCAP Achievement Test Reading and Language Arts, by Urbanicity

	5 th Grade		8 th Grade	
	Reading	Language Arts	Reading	Language Arts
	Average National Percentile Rank			
Rural schools	55	55	54	58
Suburban schools	61	59	59	64
Urban schools	45	47	43	48

APPENDIX RR. TEXAS

State Assessment System

The Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) was first administered in the 2002–03 school year. The TAKS is a new testing program that replaced the state’s previous assessment program, the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). Grades and subjects are currently tested as follows:

- Grade 3 – Reading, Mathematics
- Grade 4 – Reading, Writing, Mathematics
- Grade 5 – Reading, Mathematics, Science
- Grade 6 – Reading, Mathematics
- Grade 7 – Reading, Writing, Mathematics
- Grade 8 – Reading, Mathematics, Social Studies
- Grade 9 – Reading, Mathematics
- Grade 10 – English Language Arts (English language arts), Mathematics, Science, Social Studies
- Grade 11 – English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies

Spanish TAKS tests are administered for all subjects in grades 3 through 6 (for English-language learners).

The TAKS tests more of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), the state standards, than did the TASS (<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/taks/booklets/index.html>). Texas has developed TEKS in 18 subject areas, including English language arts and reading; mathematics; science; and social studies. The TEKS are grade-specific for K–8 and are course-specific at the high school level. Many of the TEKS student expectations are written in similar language from grade to grade, although the expected level of student performance increases across grades.

Test Format and Content

For the purposes of examining trends in adolescent literacy, the rest of the discussion will focus on the TAKS reading and English language arts tests administered in grades 4, 7, and 10 (additional information on the assessments can be found through <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/taks/booklets/index.html>).

The TAKS reading assessments evaluate a subset of the TEKS, the state-mandated curriculum. The TEKS student expectations for the 3rd- through 8th-grade TAKS reading assessments are grouped under four TAKS objectives:

- Objective 1: The student will demonstrate a basic understanding of culturally diverse written texts.
- Objective 2: The student will apply knowledge of literary elements to understand culturally diverse written texts.
- Objective 3: The student will use a variety of strategies to analyze culturally diverse written texts.
- Objective 4: The student will apply critical-thinking skills to analyze culturally diverse written texts.

The items on the fourth-grade and the seventh-grade reading tests are all multiple-choice, requiring students to demonstrate their mastery of each of the above objectives. Four kinds of reading selections are utilized by the TAKS: narrative selections, expository selections, mixed selections (combining two types of writing into a single passage), and paired selections (two selections to be read together). Word counts for the reading selections vary according to grade level. Selections for third and fourth grades are approximately 500 to 700 words, and selections for the middle grades (6th, 7th, and 8th grades) are approximately 700 to 1,000 words.

The fourth-grade and seventh-grade writing tests assess the following TEKS objectives:

- Objective 1: The student will, within a given context, produce an effective composition for a specific purpose.
- Objective 2: The student will produce a piece of writing that demonstrates a command of the conventions of spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure.
- Objective 3: The student will recognize appropriate organization of ideas in written text.
- Objective 4: The student will recognize correct and effective sentence construction in written text.
- Objective 5: The student will recognize standard usage and appropriate word choice in written text.
- Objective 6: The student will proofread for correct punctuation, capitalization, and spelling in written text.

The tests consist of a written composition and a revising and editing multiple-choice section. The first two objectives are assessed through the written composition, and the remaining objectives are assessed through the multiple-choice section. On that section, students read passages

designed to resemble students' writing. Passages at fourth grade are approximately 175 to 225 words, while passages at seventh grade are 250 to 300 words in length.

At the high school level, the ninth-grade reading test, tenth-grade English language arts test, and eleventh-grade exit-level English language arts test all share the same TAKS objectives:

- Objective 1: The student will demonstrate a basic understanding of culturally diverse written texts.
- Objective 2: The student will demonstrate an understanding of the effects of literary elements and techniques in culturally diverse written texts.
- Objective 3: The student will demonstrate the ability to analyze and critically evaluate culturally diverse written texts and visual representations.

The three objectives are assessed through multiple-choice items based on a set of three thematically linked reading pieces, called a "triplet." The components of a triplet include the following: a published literary section, a published expository (informational) section, and a one-page viewing and representing piece. Objectives 2 and 3 are assessed through several short-answer (open-ended) items. The short-answer items test two skills. Students must be able to generate clear, reasonable, thoughtful ideas or analyses about some aspect of the published literary and expository selections. They must also be able to support these ideas or analyses with relevant, strongly connected textual evidence. The open-ended items focus on the literary or expository pieces only.

The tenth-grade English language arts test also includes a writing component, which tests the following objectives:

- Objective 4: The student will, within a given context, produce an effective composition for a specific purpose.
- Objective 5: The student will produce a piece of writing that demonstrates a command of the conventions of spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure.
- Objective 6: The student will demonstrate the ability to revise and proofread to improve the clarity and effectiveness of a piece of writing.

Objectives 4 and 5 are assessed through students' response to a writing prompt, thematically linked to the triplet. To assess Objective 6, students read passages designed to represent student writing and respond to multiple-choice questions that require students to indicate how a particular sentence might be corrected or improved or how the organization of a paragraph might be improved.

Achievement-Level Definitions

In November 2002, the State Board of Education adopted three performance standards for the TAKS: Commended Performance, Met Standard, and Did Not Meet Standard. Students scoring at or above the met standard level are considered to have met the requirements for academic performance under NCLB. However, the state is in the process of developing four achievement levels – exemplary, recognized, academically acceptable, and academically unacceptable/low-performing, where academically acceptable will be considered having met the standard.

Because the new TAKS is, by design, more challenging than its predecessor, the TAAS, the state is phasing in the “met standard” level over three years. Thus, in 2002, the number of questions a student needs to correctly answer to have met the standard will be lower than the number of questions a student will need to get correct in 2005 to have met the standard

(<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/aeis/2003/glossary.html>).

Performance Results

Student Performance

Table RR1 reports performance data for all students, economically disadvantaged students, students with limited-English proficiency, and students from different racial/ethnic backgrounds⁶⁵ on the 4th- and 8th-grade reading TAKS, while Table RR2 presents 4th- and 7th-grade student performance on writing TAKS, and Table RR3 presents student performance data on the 10th-grade English language arts TAKS.

Overall, 85–88 percent of students in grades 4 and 8 met the standard in reading, while 17–25 percent reached the commended achievement level. Special education students had fairly high pass rates: 64–79 percent reached the met standard level across both grades and subjects. Students with limited-English proficiency had the lowest performance of the student groups—65–69 percent met the standard in 4th-grade reading and writing, but only 43–47 percent did so in the 7th grade. The percentage of economically disadvantaged students meeting the standard was 5–6 percentage points below that of all students meeting the standard.

⁶⁵ About 42 percent of students in Texas are Hispanic; 41 percent are white; 14 percent are African American; and 3 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander. About 45 percent of students are eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program; 15 percent are in limited-English-proficiency programs; and 12 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

Table RR1. Performance of 4th- and 8th-Graders on 2003 Reading TAKS, by Student Characteristics

	4 th Grade		8 th Grade	
	Met Standard and above	Commended Performance	Met Standard and above	Commended Performance
	Percentage			
All students	85	17	88	25
Special education students	79	11	71	8
Students with limited-English proficiency	65	3	45	2
Economically disadvantaged students	79	8	82	14
African American students	76	8	82	13
Hispanic students	80	9	83	15
White students	93	27	94	37

Source: <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/reporting/results/swresults/taks/2003/index.html>

Table RR2. Performance of 4th- and 7th-Graders on 2003 Writing TAKS, by Student Characteristics

	4 th Grade		7 th Grade	
	Met Standard and above	Commended Performance	Met Standard and above	Commended Performance
	Percentage			
All students	86	13	85	13
Special education students	76	6	64	3
Students with limited-English proficiency	69	3	43	0
Economically disadvantaged students	81	7	79	6
African American students	80	6	80	6
Hispanic students	83	8	80	7
White students	91	19	92	20

Source: www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/reporting/results/swresults/taks/2003/index.html

White students outperformed African American students by 11–15 percentage points and Hispanic students by 12–13 percentage points across grades and subjects at the met standard level; there are similar gaps at the commended level as well.

On the 10th-grade English language arts assessment, 72 percent of student met the standard and 3 percent obtained a score at the commended achievement level. The proportion of special education students meeting the standard was 32 percent, and the proportion of students with

limited-English proficiency meeting the standard was 23 percent. None of these students scored at the commended achievement level.

Table RR3. Performance of 10th-Graders on 2003 English Language Arts TAKS, by Student Characteristics

	Met Standard and Above	Commended Performance
	Percentage	
10th Grade		
All students	72	5
Special education students	32	0
Students with limited-English proficiency	23	0
Economically disadvantaged students	61	2
African American students	64	2
Hispanic students	63	2
White students	80	8

Source: www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/reporting/results/swresults/taks/2003/index.html

Economically disadvantaged students scored 11 percentage points below all students, and African American and Hispanic students scored 16–17 percentage points below white students.

Texas also reports statewide information on the average percentage of items that students answer correctly in the four reading objectives and writing objectives for grades 4 and 7 (Basic Understanding; Applying Knowledge of Literary Elements; Using Strategies to Analyze; and Applying Critical-Thinking Skills) (Table RR4). The performance results on the reading objectives show that both 4th- and 7th-grade students perform worst on questions that ask them to apply their critical-thinking skills. This gap was larger at the 7th-grade level than it is at the 4th-grade level. In writing, 4th- and 7th-grade students had comparative difficulty with correct and effective sentence construction; however, 7th-grade students scored a bit lower on appropriate organization of ideas, as well.

School Performance

Because the TAKS was first administered in 2002–03, no school-level urbanicity data for 2001–02 were available.

Table RR4. Performance of 4th- and 7th-Graders, by TAKS Reading and Writing Objectives

	4 th Grade	7 th Grade
	Average Percentage of Items Correct	
Reading		
Basic understanding	77	82
Applying knowledge of literary elements	77	83
Using strategies to analyze	79	75
Applying critical-thinking skills	75	66
Writing		
Appropriate organization of ideas	80	71
Correct and effective sentence construction	76	72
Standard usage and appropriate word choice	86	78
Proofreading for punctuation, capitalization, and spelling	84	77

Source: www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/reporting/results/summary/sum03/taks/index.html

APPENDIX SS. UTAH

State Assessment System

The Utah Performance Assessment System for Students (U-PASS) consists of a number of state assessments, including:

- Core Assessment Criterion-Referenced Tests in reading/language arts for grades 1–11; mathematics for grades 1–10 (through geometry); and science for grades 4–11 (through biology).
- Reading Diagnostic Instruments (used in conjunction with CRTs to determine grade-level performance)
- Direct Writing Assessment (DWA) in grades 6 and 9
- A Norm-Referenced Achievement Test (currently the Stanford Achievement Test, 9th Edition) in reading, language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies in grades 3, 5, 8, and 11.
- Utah Basic Skills Competency Test in reading, writing, and mathematics for high school. Beginning with the class of 2005, students must pass every section of the Basic Skills Competency Test, as well as complete all other graduation requirements, in order to receive a basic high school diploma. Tenth-graders will take the test for the first time in the spring of their tenth-grade year; however, students may retake sections they do not pass as many times as they need to.

The Core Assessment Criterion-Referenced Tests are designed to measure progress toward state content and performance standards and are used for school accountability purposes (for additional assessment information, see <http://www.usoe.k12.ut.us/eval/>). Utah has established content standards and objectives for many subjects including language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, and fine arts. For language arts, Utah has established grade-specific standards for grades 3–12. As an example, the objectives for grade 8 for the first reading content standard—students use comprehension strategies before reading—are presented in Table SS1.

Table SS1. Students Use Comprehension Strategies Before Reading, Objectives for 8th Grade

Establish a purpose prior to reading.

- a. Read to learn.
- b. Read for enjoyment.
- c. Read to gather information for decisionmaking.
- d. Read to perform a task.

Preview the text.

- a. Identify the author's purpose.
- b. Skim the text for general understanding.
- c. Scan for specific information.
- d. Determine text format by noting key features--e.g., headlines, captions, bold-faced print.
- e. Choose strategies to suit identified purpose—e.g., functional, informational, literary.

Activate and build upon prior knowledge.

- a. Access and review prior knowledge of content.
- b. Build interest or understanding by relating prior knowledge to the main topic.

Source: <http://www.uen.org/core/core.do?courseNum=4080>

Test Format and Content

For the purposes of examining trends in adolescent literacy, we now turn to discussing the Core Assessment Test in reading/language arts and the direct writing assessment.

The reading/language arts tests include multiple-choice and constructed-response questions and are untimed. The tests are constructed in a multiple-choice format. Passages at all grade levels include three types of reading: literary, informational, and functional.

The writing assessment requires students to write an essay in response to a writing prompt that focuses on a school or social issue of interest to students their age. There are separate topics for the sixth- and ninth-grade students, to address their different developmental levels. A writing checklist is provided to help students compose their response. The DWA is scored using a five-point analytic scoring rubric upon which student responses are scored along six writing traits: ideas and content, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions (<http://www.usoe.k12.ut.us/eval/SecondaryLA2003/default.dwt>).

Proficiency Levels

The Core Assessment Criterion Referenced Test in reading/language arts has set four proficiency levels:

- **Mastery.** A student at this level is prepared to be successful at the next grade level (or sequential course) in this subject.

- Near Mastery. A student at this level is prepared to be successful at the next grade level (or sequential course) in this subject, with some additional tutoring or practice with the few concepts or skills that have not been mastered.
- Partial Mastery. A student at this level may be prepared to be successful at the next grade level (or sequential course) in this subject, with significant and specific tutoring/remediation with the concepts or skills that have not been mastered.
- Minimal Mastery. A student at this level will not be prepared to be successful at the next grade level (or sequential course) in this subject without extensive intervention with most or all of the concepts or skills (<http://www.usoe.k12.ut.us/eval/UPASSLink/UPASSexpln.htm>).

Students scoring at or above the Near Mastery level are considered to have met academic requirements under NCLB.

Performance Results

Student Performance

Student-level data by different student characteristics was not available for the Core CRTs, so Table SS2 presents performance data for all students on the reading/language arts assessment in grades 4, 8, and 10 for the 2002 administration.⁶⁶ Eighty percent of 4th-grade students passed the reading/language arts assessment by scoring at or above the near mastery level, as did 62 percent of 8th-graders, and 74 percent of 10th-graders. The percentage of 8th-grade students scoring at the mastery level also was lower than in the other grades, 17 percent compared with 47 percent of 4th-graders and 46 percent of 10th-graders.

School Performance

No school-level data were available for the Core Assessment Criterion-Referenced Tests.

⁶⁶ Approximately 85 percent of students in Utah are white; 10 percent are Hispanic; and 3 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander. About 29 percent of students are eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program; 9 percent are in limited-English-proficiency programs; and 11 percent have Individual Educational Programs (IEPs).

Table SS2. Performance of 4th-, 8th-, and 10th-Graders on the 2002 Reading/Language Arts Core Assessment Criterion-Referenced Test

	Partial Mastery and Above	Near Mastery and Above	Mastery
	Percentage		
4 th Grade	98	80	47
8 th Grade	90	62	17
10 th Grade	88	74	46

Source: <http://www.usoe.k12.ut.us/eval/CRT/2002a/crt2002schoolsDB001.HTM>

APPENDIX TT. VERMONT

State Assessment System

Established in 1996, the Vermont Comprehensive Assessment System (CAS) evaluates student performance in the state's schools, based on Vermont's Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities. Statewide assessments include:

- Vermont Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), administered in grade 2
- New Standards Reference Exams (NSRE) in English language arts and mathematics, administered in grades 4, 8, and 10
- VT-PASS (science assessment), administered in grades 5, 9, and 11.

Schools also assess student performance in additional subject areas and at additional grade levels, using portfolios (collections of student work), norm-referenced standardized tests, and locally developed assessments (http://www.state.vt.us/educ/new/html/pgm_assessment.html).

Vermont's Framework for Standards and Learning Opportunities provides a structure from which curriculum can be developed, organized, implemented, and assessed. Vermont has established standards for three grade ranges—PreK–4, 5–8, and 9–12—for the following subjects: communication (listening, expressing, reading, and writing), mathematics, personal development civic/social responsibility, arts, language, literacy, history and social sciences, mathematics, science, and technology. Table TT1 presents an example of standards for reading strategies.

Table TT1. Standards for Learning Opportunities, Communications, Reading Strategies

Students use a variety of strategies to help them read. This is evident when students use a combination of strategies including:		
PreK–4	5–8	9–12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sounds, syllables, and letter patterns (e.g. phonological, phonic, and graphic knowledge); • Syntax • Meaning in context • A range of cueing systems to discover pronunciation and meaning; • Self-correcting when subsequent reading indicates an earlier miscue; • Questioning; and • Prior knowledge of the topic and sense of story. 	Evidence PreK–4 applies, plus-- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predicting; • Skimming; • Following themes; • Previewing for book selection (e.g., for content, format, style); • Synthesizing across sources; • Using knowledge of word structure to extend vocabulary • Identifying transition words to help understand organization of text; and • Adjusting rate of reading and strategy use according to purpose of reading and type of text. 	Evidence PreK–8 applies, plus-- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using knowledge of word origins and other resources to extend vocabulary development across all content areas.

Source: <http://www.state.vt.us/educ/new/html/pubs/framework.html>

To meet the new testing requirements under NCLB, in 2002, Vermont entered into the New England Compact with New Hampshire, Maine, and Rhode Island to work on cross-state collaborative initiatives. As part of the Compact's federally funded Enhanced Assessment project, Rhode Island, New Hampshire and Vermont have developed a set of common grade-level expectations (GLEs)—the Tri-State GLEs—that identify the content knowledge and skills expected of students for large-scale assessment. The GLEs will be reviewed for alignment with the states' own standards and for quality, and will be used as the basis for a new large-scale assessment to be developed collaboratively by the three states. A draft version of the GLEs and draft test specifications were posted on the Compact website in early 2004. The new assessment will be ready for statewide use in the 2005–06 school year (http://www.state.vt.us/educ/new/html/pgm_assessment.html).

Test Format and Content

To examine trends in adolescent literacy, the rest of the discussion will focus on the NSRE in English language arts for grades 4, 8, and 10. The NSRE includes multiple-choice, short-answer, extended-response, and essay items. Areas tested include the following:

- Reading: Basic Understanding: Students must demonstrate the ability to comprehend a variety of materials of varying length and complexity.
- Reading: Analysis and Interpretation: Students must demonstrate the ability to analyze and interpret what they read in the process of becoming critical readers.
- Writing Effectiveness: Students must demonstrate the ability to write effectively in a variety of formats for a variety of purposes, audiences, and contexts.
- Writing Conventions: Students must demonstrate control of the conventions (usage, spelling, and punctuation) of the English language according to current standards of correctness.

Proficiency Levels

Student scores on the NSRE are reported using five achievement levels:

- **Achieved the Standard with Honors**: A student who “Achieved the Standard with Honors” performs at a higher level than the standard on a consistent basis.
- **Achieved the Standard**: A student who “Achieved the Standard” performs at the level of the standard on a consistent basis.
- **Nearly Achieved the Standard**: A student who “Nearly Achieved the Standard” shows some evidence of performing at the level of the standard, but overall the performance does not consistently meet the standard.

- Below the Standard. A student who is “Below the Standard” shows some attempt to respond, but the number of responses is minimal and, all too often, the responses are incomplete.
- Little Evidence of Achievement: A student who shows “Little Evidence of Achievement” shows almost no attempt to respond, as evidenced by numerous blank answers, entirely unsuccessful answers, and incomplete answers.

Students scoring at or above the Achieved the Standard level are considered to have met academic requirements under NCLB.

Performance Results

Student Performance

Table TT2 reports performance data disaggregated by special needs status and socioeconomic status on the reading NSRE, which includes an analysis score and a basic-understanding score.⁶⁷ Due to the small percentages of racial/ethnic groups other than white students and the small percentage of students with limited-English proficiency, these scores are not reported.

In 4th grade, 70 percent of students scored at or above the achieved the standard level, and 10 percent scored at the honors level in reading analysis. Students performed better on the reading basic understanding section, on which 81 percent of 4th-graders scored at or above the achieved the standard level and 23 percent scored at the honors level.

While students also scored higher on the basic understanding section in 8th and 10th grades, overall achievement on both reading sections was lower than that of 4th-grade students. For instance, 62 percent of 8th-graders and 54 percent of 10th-graders achieved the standard in reading basic understanding, and 36 percent of 8th-graders and 44 percent of 10th-graders did so in reading analysis.

Thirty-two percent of 4th-grade students with special needs achieved the standard in reading analysis, and 48 percent did so in reading basic understanding. These percentages were far lower in 8th grade (6 percent and 24 percent, respectively) and 10th grade (6 percent and 14 percent, respectively). The percentage of students with special needs scoring at or above the nearly achieving the standards level was lower in the higher-grade levels than in 4th grade as well, particularly in reading analysis.

⁶⁷ Approximately 96 percent of students in Vermont are white; no other racial/ethnic group comprises 2 percent of the student population. About 24 percent are eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program; 1 percent are in limited-English-proficiency programs; and 13 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

Table TT2. Performance of 4th-, 8th-, and 10th-Graders on 2003 NSRE, English and Language Arts Reading Analysis and Basic Understanding NSRE, by Student Characteristics

	Reading: Analysis			Reading: Basic Understanding		
	Nearly Achieved the Standard and Above	Achieved the Standard and Above	Honors	Nearly Achieved the Standard and Above	Achieved the Standard and Above	Honors
Percentage						
4th Grade						
All students	93	70	10	92	81	23
Special needs students	72	32	1	71	48	6
Non-special needs students	95	74	11	94	84	25
Economically disadvantaged students	87	55	4	86	70	12
Non-economically disadvantaged students	95	77	12	94	85	28
8th Grade						
All students	84	36	7	91	62	2
Special needs students	46	6	0	67	24	0
Non-special needs students	87	39	7	94	66	2
Economically disadvantaged students	70	20	3	84	46	1
Non-economically disadvantaged students	88	42	8	94	67	2
10th Grade						
All students	82	44	1	89	55	4
Special needs students	38	6	0	60	14	0
Non-special needs students	86	47	1	92	59	5
Economically disadvantaged students	68	24	0	81	36	1
Non-economically disadvantaged students	85	48	1	91	59	5

Source: http://data.ed.state.vt.us/performance/03/STATE_03.pdf

Table TT3. Performance of 4th-, 8th-, and 10th-Graders on 2003 English and Language Arts Writing Conventions and Effectiveness NSRE, by Student Characteristics

	Writing Conventions			Writing Effectiveness		
	Nearly Achieved the Standard and Above	Achieved the Standard and Above	Honors	Nearly Achieved the Standard and Above	Achieved the Standard and Above	Honors
Percentage						
4th Grade						
All students	74	63	4	77	60	3
Special needs students	38	24	0	43	25	0
Non–special needs students	77	66	5	80	63	4
Economically disadvantaged students	62	49	1	66	45	1
Non–economically disadvantaged students	78	68	6	81	66	4
8th Grade						
All students	88	52	4	95	66	2
Special needs students	53	12	0	78	25	0
Non–special needs students	91	56	5	97	70	2
Economically disadvantaged students	78	35	2	91	49	1
Non–economically disadvantaged students	91	58	5	97	72	3
10th Grade						
All students	94	77	24	87	43	5
Special needs students	74	35	2	54	10	0
Non–special needs students	96	81	26	90	47	5
Economically disadvantaged students	89	62	10	77	24	1
Non–economically disadvantaged students	95	80	27	89	47	5

Source: http://data.ed.state.vt.us/performance/03/STATE_03.pdf

There was an achievement gap between non–economically disadvantaged students and economically disadvantaged students that ranged from 15–24 percentage points.

On the writing sections, 63 percent of 4th-grade students achieved the standard in writing conventions and 60 percent achieved the standard in writing effectiveness. Few students scored at the honors level (3–4 percent). About one-fourth of students with special needs met the standard, and 38–43 percent scored at or above the nearly achieving standards level.

In 8th grade, 52 percent of students achieved the standard in writing conventions and 66 percent did so in writing effectiveness. Students with special needs did better on writing effectiveness: 25 percent achieved the standard and 78 percent nearly achieved the standard, compared with 12 percent and 53 percent, respectively, on writing conventions.

Unlike 8th-graders, 10th-graders performed better in writing effectiveness than in writing conventions (77 percent compared with 43 percent at or above the achieved standards level). Students with special needs also scored better on writing conventions (35 percent achieved the standard, and 74 percent scored at or above the nearly achieved the standard level) than on writing effectiveness (10 percent achieved the standard, and 54 percent scored at or above the nearly achieved the standard level).

Similar to what we found in reading, there were large achievement gaps between economically disadvantaged students and their peers (19–21 percentage points in 4th grade, 23 percentage points in 8th grade, and 18–23 percentage points in 10th grade).

School Performance

School-level data by urbanicity are available for the 2002 administration of the NSRE in reading and writing (Table TT4). The majority of schools in Vermont were rural (83 percent); 14 percent were suburban; and 3 percent were urban. While only 11 percent of schools in Vermont were high-poverty, urban schools were far more likely to be high-poverty than rural and suburban schools, 22 percent compared with 12 percent and 2 percent, respectively. Because of the small number of urban schools in the state (there were only nine in the entire state), we do not report school-level data for this group of schools.

Table TT4. School Performance on 4th-, 8th-, and 10th-Grade 2002 English and Language Arts NSRE, by Urbanicity

	Reading		Writing	
	Analysis	Basic Understanding	Conventions	Effectiveness
		Average Percentage		
4 th Grade				
Rural schools	67	80	59	55
Suburban schools	74	84	65	63
Urban schools	*	*	*	*
8 th Grade				
Rural schools	39	65	52	60
Suburban schools	43	64	55	65
Urban schools	*	*	*	*
10 th Grade				
Rural schools	45	51	73	41
Suburban schools	47	52	76	42
Urban schools	*	*	*	*

* Sample size too small to report.

In general, suburban schools outperformed rural schools; however, the differences among the average school scores were only 4–8 percentage points at the 4th grade, 1–5 percentage points at the 8th grade, and 1–3 percentage points at the 10th grade.

APPENDIX UU. VIRGINIA

State Assessment System

Virginia's student assessment system consists of a number of tests, including the Stanford Achievement Test - 9 in grades 4, 6, and 9; the Literacy Passport Test, a basic-skills test that examines competence in reading, writing, and mathematics that students must pass in order to advance to the ninth grade or above and be awarded a regular or advanced diploma; and the Standards of Learning (SOL) tests, which are criterion-referenced tests Virginia developed to measure student progress in achieving the state standards. Students take the SOL tests in English, mathematics, science, and history/social science in grades 3, 5, and 8 and computer technology in grades 5 and 8. In addition, Virginia administers a number of end-of-course SOL tests at the high school level:

- English: reading, literature, and research, which measures performance on the 9–11 English SOLs; and writing
- Mathematics: Algebra I; Algebra II; and Geometry
- History/Social Science: World History to 1000 A.D. plus World Geography; World History from 1000 A.D. to Present plus World Geography; U. S. History; and World Geography
- Science: Earth Science; Biology; and Chemistry
- Computer technology.

SOL assessment scores are used for school accountability. In addition, the state requires that a student's test performance on the SOL tests for grades 3, 5, and 8 be considered as one factor for determining whether a student should be retained in grade. For the SOL end-of-course tests, a student who takes the course must also take the test. Virginia does not require that schools use the end-of-course test performance data for promotion or retention decisions. The state allows but does not require that students' SOL test performance be considered in grading at the high school level. However, beginning with the graduating class of 2003–04, students need to pass a specific number of SOL tests in order to receive a standard or advanced studies diploma (<http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Parents/parentshandbook.pdf>).

According to the state, the SOL test program is based on the revised 1995 Standards of Learning, which describe Virginia's expectations for student learning and achievement in grades K–12 in English, mathematics, science, history/social science, technology, the fine arts, foreign language, health and physical education, and driver education. In English, mathematics, science, and history/social science, Virginia also provides a curriculum framework that details the specific knowledge and skills students must possess to meet the standards for these subjects. Standards

for kindergarten through 8th grade are organized in three related strands: oral language, reading, and writing. Standards for 9th through 12th grades are organized in four related strands: oral language, reading analysis, writing, and research. Table UU1 provides an example of English language arts standards for grade 8.

Table UU1. English Language Arts Standards of Learning, 8th Grade

The eighth-grade student will learn and apply interviewing techniques. The student will demonstrate correct use of language, spelling, and mechanics by applying grammatical conventions in writing and speaking. The student will plan, draft, revise, and edit writing, with emphasis on exposition and persuasion. The student will apply reading and writing skills in all subjects, as well as respond critically to literature. The student will continue development of vocabulary, with attention to connotations and figurative language. The student will become a skillful interpreter of the persuasive strategies used in print and mass media. The student will continue to develop an appreciation for literature through a study of a wide variety of selections. The student will describe themes or inferred main ideas, interpret cause-effect relationships, and draw conclusions from a variety of literary and informational selections.

Oral Language

- 8.1 The student will use interviewing techniques to gain information:
 - a) Prepare and ask relevant questions for the interview.
 - b) Make notes of responses.
 - c) Compile and report responses.
 - d) Evaluate the effectiveness of the interview.
- 8.2 The student will develop and deliver oral presentations in groups and individually:
 - a) Choose topic and purpose appropriate to the audience.
 - b) Choose vocabulary and tone appropriate to the audience, topic, and purpose.
 - c) Use appropriate verbal and nonverbal presentation skills.
 - d) Respond to audience questions and comments.
 - e) Use grammatically correct language.
 - f) Critique oral presentations.
- 8.3 The student will analyze mass-media messages:
 - a) Evaluate the persuasive technique being used.
 - b) Describe the possible cause-effect relationships between mass-media coverage and public-opinion trends.
 - c) Evaluate sources, including advertisements, editorials, and feature stories, for relationships between intent and factual content.

Reading

- 8.4 The student will apply knowledge of word origins, derivations, inflections, analogies, and figurative language to extend vocabulary development:
 - a) Identify simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, and analogy.
 - b) Use context, structure, and connotations to determine meaning of words and phrases.
 - 8.5 The student will read and analyze a variety of narrative and poetic forms.
 - a) Explain the use of symbols and figurative language.
 - b) Describe inferred main ideas or themes, using evidence from the text as support.
 - c) Describe how authors use characters, conflict, point of view, and tone to create meaning.
 - d) Compare and contrast the use of the poetic elements of word choice, dialogue, form, rhyme, rhythm, and voice.
 - e) Compare and contrast authors styles.
 - 8.5 The student will read and analyze a variety of narrative and poetic forms:
 - a) Explain the use of symbols and figurative language.
 - b) Describe inferred main ideas or themes, using evidence from the text as support.
 - c) Describe how authors use characters, conflict, point of view, and tone to create meaning.
 - d) Compare and contrast the use of the poetic elements of word choice, dialogue, form, rhyme, rhythm, and voice.
-

Table UU1. (cont)

-
- e) Compare and contrast authors styles.
 - 8.6 The student will read, comprehend, and analyze a variety of informational sources:
 - a) Draw on background knowledge and knowledge of text structure to understand selections.
 - b) Analyze the author's credentials, viewpoint, and impact.
 - c) Analyze the author's use of text structure and word choice.
 - d) Analyze details for relevance and accuracy.
 - e) Read and follow instructions to complete an assigned task.
 - f) Summarize and critique text.
 - g) Evaluate and synthesize information to apply in written and oral presentations.
 - h) Draw conclusions based on explicit and implied information.
 - i) Make inferences based on explicit and implied information.
 - Writing**
 - 8.7 The student will write in a variety of forms, including narrative, expository, persuasive, and informational:
 - a) Use prewriting strategies to generate and organize ideas.
 - b) Organize details to elaborate the central idea.
 - c) Select specific vocabulary and information.
 - d) Revise writing for word choice, sentence variety, and transitions among paragraphs.
 - e) Use available technology.
 - 8.8 The student will edit writing for correct grammar, capitalization, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, and paragraphing.
 - a) Use a variety of graphic organizers, including sentence diagrams, to analyze and improve sentence formation and paragraph structure.
 - b) Use and punctuate correctly varied sentence structures to include conjunctions and transition words.
 - c) Choose the correct case and number for pronouns in prepositional phrases with compound objects.
 - d) Maintain consistent verb tense across paragraphs.
 - e) Use comparative and superlative degrees in adverbs and adjectives.
-

Source: <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Superintendent/Sols/2002/EnglishK-12.pdf>

Test Format and Content

For the purposes of examining trends in adolescent literacy, the remainder of this section will focus on the English SOLs in grades 5 and 8 and the end-of-course English SOL that students take in high school. All of these English SOL tests consist of a reading, literature, and research section, and a writing section. Sections of the test are not timed (see <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Assessment/soltests/> for additional format and content information).

For the reading, literature, and research section, the tests consist of reading passages followed by multiple-choice questions. Tests include a variety of types of reading selections, including fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. Fiction selections may be contemporary fiction, historical fiction, folklore, science fiction, or mysteries. Nonfiction selections may be biographies, autobiographies, history-related articles, or science-related articles. On this section, four primary skills are assessed: use

of word-analysis strategies; understanding a variety of printed materials; understanding elements of literature; and use of information from a variety of resource materials (Table UU2).. Use of word-analysis strategies is tested only at the fifth grade, and use of information from a variety of resource materials is tested only at the high school level. The eighth-grade test is split evenly between testing on understanding elements of literature and understanding a variety of printed materials.

Table UU2. Skills Tested in the English Standard of Learning Assessments, 5th-, 8th-, and High School Grades

Skills	5th Grade	8th Grade	High School
Use word-analysis strategies	14%	NT	NT
Understand a variety of printed materials/resource materials.	48%	50%	29%
Understand elements of literature.	38%	50%	57%
Use information from a variety of resource materials	NT	NT	14%

Source: <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Assessment/soltests/english.html>

NT = not tested.

As part of the English language arts SOL in grades 5, 8, and high school, students take a two-part writing test. The first section of the test requires students to answer multiple-choice questions about a given writing sample; the second asks students to construct a writing sample in response to a given prompt. The papers are scored on a four-point rubric for three domains: composition; written expression (style); and usage/mechanics (<http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Instruction/English/writing/vasolwti.pdf>).

Proficiency Levels

Virginia reports scores using three proficiency levels: advanced; passing; and not passing. Students scoring at or above the passing level are considered to have met the academic requirements under NCLB. Table UU3 presents the percentage of items students must get correct in order to pass or be considered advanced for the reading, literature, and research portion and the writing portion. The percentage correct needed to pass is a bit lower in 8th grade and high school than it is in 5th grade.

Table UU3. Proficiency Levels for English SOL Assessment Sections, Grades 5, 8, and High School

	Reading/literature and Research		Writing	
	Passing	Advanced	Passing	Advanced
	Percentage of Items Correct			
Grade 5	67	93	73	93
Grade 8	64	88	68	93
High School	57	88	69	91

Source: <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/News/solpass.html>

Performance Results

Student Performance

Virginia provides results for all students and for students disaggregated by race/ethnicity, disability, and limited-English proficiency.⁶⁸ Table UU4 presents the results for the 2003 SOL reading and writing assessments given in grades 5 and 8 and at the end of grade in high school. The table shows the percentage of students who passed the test and those who scored at the advanced level.

Overall, 82–85 percent of 5th-graders passed the reading and writing SOL tests. The pass rates of 8th-graders were lower: 67 percent in reading and 74 percent in writing; the pass rates of high school students were higher: 91–93 percent. The percentage of students scoring at the advanced level in reading was higher in the higher grades, rising from 9 percent in grade 5 to 34 percent in high school. In writing, 21–25 percent of 5th-graders and high school students scored at the advanced level compared with 10 percent of 8th-graders.

The pass rates of students with limited-English proficiency were lower than those of all students in both reading and writing, but the gap was much higher in the 8th grade. For example, 65–66 percent of limited-English-proficiency students in the 5th grade passed the reading and writing tests compared with 82–85 percent of all students. In the 8th grade, the difference in pass rates increased to 32 percentage points in reading (35 percent versus 67 percent) and 26 percentage points in writing (48 percent versus 74 percent). At the high school level, the gap had narrowed to 13 percentage points in reading and 19 percentage points in writing.

⁶⁸ Approximately 63 percent of students in Virginia are white; 27 percent are African American; 6 percent are Hispanic; and 4 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander. About 29 percent of students are eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program; 4 percent are in limited-English-proficiency programs; and 14 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

Students with disabilities scored below all students by 19–39 percentage points. For example, 28 percent of them passed the 8th-grade reading test compared with 67 percent of all students, and there was a similar gap in writing. However, the difference in passing rates was somewhat smaller at the 5th and 11th grades. Generally, the gap was larger in writing than in reading.

Asian students' scores were very close to those of white students. For example, 88 percent of both these groups passed the 5th-grade reading test and 89–91 percent of them passed the writing test. Between 20 and 25 percent of Asian and white students scored at the advanced level in reading, and 26–30 percent of them did so in writing.

African American and Hispanic students trailed students from other racial/ethnic groups, especially in the lower grades. For example, the differences in pass rates of Hispanic and white students ranged from 15 to 26 percentage points in reading and 13 to 27 percentage points in writing in grades 5 and 8. The performance gap between African Americans and whites was slightly smaller (18–19 percentage points in reading and 14–23 percentage points in writing). However, by high school, the difference in passing rates was considerably reduced. For example, 83–85 percent of Hispanic and African American students passed the high school writing exam compared with 94 percent of white students. However, at the higher achievement level, there were still differences of 20–25 percentage points in reading and 17–21 percentage points in writing.

School Performance

Table UU5 presents school-level data for urbanicity and school poverty (since they were not available at the student level) for the 2002 5th- and 8th-grade reading and writing SOLs.⁶⁹ Approximately 49 percent of schools in Virginia were suburban; 27 percent were rural; and 24 percent were urban. About a quarter (26 percent) of Virginia schools were high-poverty schools. Almost half of urban schools (48 percent) were high-poverty schools, as were 35 percent of rural schools and only 10 percent of suburban schools.

On average, the proportion of students in high-poverty schools who passed the SOLs in both grades and subjects was 6–16 percentage points lower than that in low- and medium-poverty schools. The differences by urbanicity were a bit smaller—suburban schools outperformed urban schools by 6–10 percentage points, and rural schools by 7–8 percentage points.

⁶⁹ High school scores were not available.

Table UU4. Performance of 5th-, 8th-, and High School Grade Students on the 2003 English SOL Assessments, by Student Characteristics

	Reading		Writing	
	Passing and Above	Advanced	Passing and Above	Advanced
	Percentage			
5 th Grade				
All students	82	9	85	21
Students with disabilities	58	6	56	5
Students with limited-English proficiency	65	5	66	8
African American students	70	7	75	10
Asian/Pacific Islander students	88	20	91	30
Hispanic students	73	9	76	13
White students	88	25	89	26
8 th Grade				
All students	67	16	74	10
Students with disabilities	28	3	35	2
Students with limited-English proficiency	35	3	48	2
African American students	49	5	58	3
Asian/Pacific Islander students	74	19	84	18
Hispanic students	50	7	62	5
White students	76	21	81	13
High School				
All students	93	34	91	25
Students with disabilities	74	10	61	6
Students with limited-English proficiency	80	9	72	5
African American students	88	16	83	10
Asian/Pacific Islander students	95	37	94	29
Hispanic students	77	21	85	14
White students	96	41	94	31

Source: <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/src/SOLassessments.shtml>

Table UU5. Average School Performance on 5th- and 8th-Grade 2002 English SOL Assessments, by Urbanicity

	Reading	Writing
	Average Passing Percentage	
5th Grade		
High-poverty schools	66	75
Low- and medium-poverty schools	82	87
Rural schools	74	79
Suburban schools	81	86
Urban schools	71	80
8th Grade		
High-poverty schools	54	58
Low- and medium-poverty schools	60	74
Rural schools	55	66
Suburban schools	63	74
Urban schools	57	65

APPENDIX VV. WASHINGTON

State Assessment System

Washington State's assessment system consists of two state assessments. The Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL), a set of standards-based tests, is at the center of the program. The WASL tests students in mathematics, reading, and writing in grades 4, 7, and 10 and in science in grade 5 and 8.⁷⁰ The state also administers a norm-referenced test (the ITBS or ITED) in reading/language arts and mathematics to students in grades 3, 6, and 9. However, most school districts also select and administer exams beyond those provided by the state. In addition to standardized tests, the state provides teachers with classroom-based assessments for use throughout the school year that can be tailored to the varying developmental needs and learning styles of students and enable teachers to measure student progress over time.

The WASL is used for school and district accountability. Beginning with the graduating class of 2006, the highest scale score and level achieved in each content area on the high school WASL will be displayed on a student's transcript. In addition, successful completion of the reading, writing, and mathematics assessments will become a statewide graduation requirement in 2008 (<http://www.k12.wa.us/assessment/default.aspx>).

The WASL is intended to measure achievement on the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs), which are Washington's content standards. Washington has developed EALRs for reading, writing, mathematics, science, communications, social studies, the arts, and health fitness. Table VV1 provides the EARLs for reading. The EARLs are further defined by grade-level expectations (GLEs) for each grade level for grades K–8 and for the 9–12 grade range. Table VV2 provides an example of the GLE for grade 7 for EARL 1.

⁷⁰ The grade-5 science assessment will be required in 2004–05. It was optional in 2003–04.

Table VV1. Essential Academic Learning Requirements, Reading

1. The student understands and uses different skills and strategies to read:
1.1 Uses word recognition skills and strategies to read and comprehend text.
1.2 Uses vocabulary (word-meaning) strategies to comprehend text.
1.3 Builds vocabulary through wide reading.
1.4 Applies word-recognition skills and strategies to read fluently.
2. The student understands the meaning of what is read:
2.1 Demonstrates evidence of reading comprehension.
2.2 Understands and applies knowledge of text components to comprehend text.
2.3 Expands comprehension by analyzing, interpreting, and synthesizing information and ideas in literary and informational text.
2.4 Thinks critically and analyzes author's use of language, style, purpose, and perspective in informational and literary text.
3. The student reads different materials for a variety of purposes:
3.1 Reads to learn new information.
3.2 Reads to perform a task.
3.3 Reads for career application.
3.4 Reads for literary/narrative experience in a variety of genres.
4. The student sets goals and evaluates progress to improve reading:
4.1 Assesses reading strengths and need for improvement.
4.2 Develops interests and shares reading experiences.

Source: <http://www.k12.wa.us/curriculumInstruct/reading/ealrs.aspx>

Table VV2. 7th-Grade Expectations for EARL 1: The Student Understands and Uses Different Skills and Strategies to Read

Uses vocabulary (word-meaning) strategies to comprehend text.	Understands and applies dictionary skills and other reference skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Uses dictionaries, thesauruses, and glossaries to find or confirm word meanings, pronunciations, syllabication, synonyms, antonyms, parts of speech, and/or to clarify shades of meaning.• Uses text evidence to verify meaning from reference source. Applies a variety of strategies to comprehend words and ideas in complex text: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Uses word origins to determine the meaning of unknown words.• Uses abstract, derived root words, prefixes, and suffixes from Greek and Latin to analyze the meaning of complex words (e.g., expose, exposition).• Uses structural analysis and concept-building vocabulary strategies to understand new words and concepts in informational/expository text and literary/narrative text.• Uses prior knowledge, the text, context clues, and graphic features of text to predict, clarify, and/or expand word meanings and concepts.• Self-corrects, re-reads, reads on, and/or slows down to gain meaning when encountering unknown words in literary/narrative and informational/expository text.
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Table VV2. (cont.)

Builds vocabulary through wide reading.	<p>Understands and applies new vocabulary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrates new vocabulary from <u>informational/expository text</u> and <u>literary/narrative text</u>, including text from a variety of cultures and communities, into written and oral communication. <p>Understands and applies <u>content/academic vocabulary</u> critical to the meaning of the text.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies and defines content/academic vocabulary critical to the meaning of the text and uses that knowledge to interpret the text. Identifies words that have different meanings in different content areas and determines the correct meaning from the context (e.g., property in science or social studies). Selects, from multiple choices, the meanings of words or phrases identified in the text. <p>Uses new vocabulary in oral and written communication.</p>
Applies word-recognition skills and strategies to read fluently.	<p>Applies <u>fluency</u> to enhance comprehension:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reads aloud grade-level informational/expository text and literary/narrative text accurately, using appropriate pacing, phrasing, and expression. Reads aloud unpracticed grade-level text with fluency in a range of 145–155+ words correct per minute. <p>Applies different reading rates to match text.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adjusts reading rate by speeding up or slowing down based on purpose (e.g., pleasure, informational reading, task-oriented reading), text level of difficulty, form, and style.

Source: http://www.k12.wa.us/curriculuminstruct/reading/pubdocs/GLE_01-09-04_Version.doc

Test Format and Content

We now turn our focus to the reading and writing WASL assessments administered in grades 4, 7, and 10.

Reading

The WASL reading assessments incorporate three item types: selected response (multiple choice); short constructed response; and extended constructed response. For the three grades, approximately 50 percent of the total score comes from multiple-choice questions. None of the WASL assessments is timed. On every reading WASL, there are five passages: two literary passages, two informational passages, and one linked pair, comprising a literary passage and an informational passage (the pair counts as one passage due to its linked content). The passages vary in length; however, the total word count is about 1,500 words for 4th grade, 2,200 words for 7th grade, and 2,500 words for 10th grade. Literary passages may be poems, stories, biographies, autobiographies, or literary essays. Informational passages may be textbook entries, informational essays, instructional tasks, charts, graphs, maps, and/or timelines. Each reading

WASL typically includes a “science-like” passage and a “social studies-like” passage (<http://www.k12.wa.us/assessment/WASL/testspec.aspx>).

Writing

The writing assessment administered in grades 4, 7, and 10 asks students to respond to two writing prompts. Students in grade 4 respond to a narrative and an expository prompt, while students in grades 7 and 10 respond to one expository prompt and one persuasive prompt. On each essay, students can earn four points for content, organization, and style and two points for convention, for a total of 12 possible points. Students must earn 9 points in order to meet the standard (<http://www.k12.wa.us/assessment/WASL/testspec.aspx>).

Proficiency Levels

Washington set four achievement levels for the WASL assessments: above standard, met standard, below standard, and well below standard. Students scoring at or above the met standard level are considered to have met the academic requirements under NCLB.

Performance Results

Student Performance

Washington reports student performance for all students and for students grouped by selected characteristics: special education status, limited-English proficiency, low income, and race/ethnicity.⁷¹ Table VV3 presents the results of the 2003 WASL Reading Assessment for students in grades 4, 7, and 10, disaggregated by the above characteristics.

The discussion focuses on the percentage at or above the meeting the standard level. Two-thirds of 4th-grade students and 60 percent of 10th-graders met the standard compared with only 48 percent of students in grade 7. The proportion scoring above standard rose dramatically, from 19–24 percent in the lower grades to 43 percent in grade 10.

Students with limited-English proficiency trailed far behind all students with passing rates that were 41–48 percentage points lower than those of all students. For example, while 60 percent of 10th-graders met the standard, only 12 percent of limited-English-proficiency students were able

⁷¹Approximately 74 percent of students in Washington are white; 11 percent are Hispanic; 8 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander; and 5 percent are African American. About 31 percent are eligible for the free or reduced-price lunch program; 7 percent are in limited-English-proficiency programs; and 12 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

to do so, and only 1–5 percent of them scored above the standard. There were equally large differences between the proficiency rates of special education students and all students, and the

Table VV3. Performance of 4th-, 7th-, and 10th-Graders on 2003 Reading WASL, by Student Characteristics

	Below Standard and Above	Met Standard and Above	Above Standard
Percentage of Students			
4 th Grade			
All students	92	67	24
Special education students	70	31	7
Students with limited-English proficiency	72	24	3
Low-income students	88	52	14
African American students	88	52	13
American Indian students	87	52	12
Asian students	94	68	26
Hispanic students	82	41	9
White students	94	73	28
7 th Grade			
All students	84	48	19
Special education students	45	10	2
Students with limited-English proficiency	42	7	1
Low-income students	72	30	10
African American students	73	28	8
American Indian students	72	30	8
Asian students	87	53	24
Hispanic students	67	24	7
White students	88	53	22
10 th Grade			
All students	79	60	43
Special education students	35	12	5
Students with limited-English proficiency	36	12	5
Low-income students	67	43	27
African American students	61	37	21
American Indian students	66	43	25
Asian students	83	64	47
Hispanic students	60	35	21
White students	83	65	47

Source: <http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/Reports/WASLTrend.aspx?&schoolId=1&reportLevel=State>

difference increased across the grades, from 36 percentage points in grade 4 to 48 percentage points in grade 10. Low-income students also scored below all students, but the performance gap was smaller, 15–18 percentage points. For example, 30 percent of low-income students met the standard in grade 7 compared with 48 percent of all students.

Among the racial/ethnic groups, white and Asian students scored the highest and Hispanic students scored the lowest. About 68–73 percent of white and Asian students met the standard in grade 4, 53 percent in grade 7, and 64–65 percent in grade 10. The passing rate for Hispanic students was 41 percent in grade 4, 24 percent in grade 7, and 35 percent in grade 10—29–32 percentage points below the passing rate of whites. The performance gap between African American and white students ranged from 21 percentage points in grade 4 to 28 percentage points in grade 10, somewhat smaller than the gap between Hispanic and white students. American Indian students ranked in the middle, with passing rates of 52 percent in grade 4, 30 percent in grade 7, and 43 percent in grade 10. About 26–28 percent of white and Asian students scored above standard in grade 4, increasing to 47 percent in grade 10. The percentages of African American and Hispanic students who scored above standard were 14–19 percentage points lower in the lower grades and 26 percentage points lower in grade 10.

Table VV4 shows the percentage of students in grades 4, 7, and 10 on the 2003 WASL writing assessment that met the standard. Overall, between 54 and 61 percent of students passed the writing test, and these passing rates were, with one exception, generally lower than those on the reading test.

Table VV4. Performance of 4th-, 7th-, and 10th-Graders on 2003 Writing WASL, by Student Characteristics

	4 th Grade	7 th Grade	10 th Grade
	Percentage Meeting Standard		
All students	54	55	61
Special education students	24	12	12
Students with limited-English proficiency	22	15	11
Low-income students	41	37	45
American Indian students	37	35	41
Asian students	64	65	66
African American students	44	41	39
Hispanic students	34	33	34
White students	58	59	66

Source: <http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/Reports/WASLTrend.aspx?&schoolId=1&reportLevel=State>

Limited-English-proficiency and special education students had very low passing rates, comparable with those on the reading test. For example, the passing rate for limited-English-proficiency students was 22 percent in grade 4, 15 percent in grade 7, and 11 percent in grade 10. The performance gap between these students and all students increased across the grades, from 32 percentage points in grade 4 to 50 percentage points in grade 10. Between 37–45 percent of low-income students met the writing standard; the gap between their passing rates and those of all students was the largest in grade 7—18 percentage points, compared with 13–16 percentage points in the other grades.

Between 39 and 44 percent of African American students met the writing standard, as did 33–34 percent of Hispanic students and 35–41 percent of American Indian students. The rates were lower than the 58–66 percent passing rate of white and Asian students, and the performance gap ranged from 14–27 percentage points for African American students to 24–32 percent for Hispanic students.

School Level Performance

School-level data by urbanicity are available for student performance on the 2002 WASL in reading and writing for 4th, 7th, and 10th grades (Tables VV5 and VV6). Approximately 54 percent of schools in Washington were suburban; 24 percent were rural; and 21 percent were urban. Urban schools and rural schools were significantly more likely to be high-poverty schools than suburban schools, 37 percent compared with 15 percent.

In reading and writing, suburban schools outperformed rural and urban schools (with one exception). For instance, on the 4th- and 7th-grade reading WASL, the average performance of rural schools was 7–8 percentage points lower than that of suburban schools at the met standard level and an average of 4–7 percentage points lower at the above standard level. The gap between suburban schools and urban schools was smaller, an average 3–4 percentage points at the met standard level and 0–3 percentage points at the above standard level.

At the 10th-grade level in reading, schools performed at about the same level (1–2-percentage-point difference at the met standard level); however, at the above standard level, the gap was quite large--30 percentage points between suburban and rural schools and 19 percentage points between suburban and urban schools.

Table VV5. Average School Performance on 4th-, 7th-, and 10th-Grade 2002 Reading WASL, by Urbanicity

	Met Standard and Above	Above Standard
	Average Percentage	
4th Grade		
Rural schools	60	22
Suburban schools	68	29
Urban schools	64	26
7th Grade		
Rural schools	39	11
Suburban schools	46	15
Urban schools	43	15
10th Grade		
Rural schools	56	10
Suburban schools	55	40
Urban schools	53	39

Table VV6. Average School Performance on 4th-, 7th-, and 10th-Grade 2002 Writing WASL, by Urbanicity

	4 th Grade	7 th Grade	10 th Grade
	Average Meeting Standard Percentage		
Rural schools	41	47	48
Suburban schools	52	54	50
Urban schools	49	50	46

APPENDIX WW. WEST VIRGINIA

State Assessment System

West Virginia's Statewide Assessment Program consists of a number of assessments. Included in the 2002–03 Statewide Assessment Program are the following:

- The Metropolitan Readiness Test (MRT) is used to evaluate the progress of students in kindergarten.
- The Stanford Achievement Test, Ninth Edition (SAT-9) in grades 1–11 in reading, mathematics, language, spelling, listening, study skills, science, and social studies. However, 2002–03 was the last administration of the SAT-9.
- A writing assessment in grades 4, 7, and 11.
- WESTEST, a criterion-referenced test in reading, mathematics, science, and social studies for students in grades 3–8 and 10. WESTEST was field-tested in spring 2003 and will be fully operational in spring 2004 (<http://osa.k12.wv.us/index.html>).

WESTEST was developed specifically to meet the requirements of NCLB and will be used for state and federal accountability. WESTEST is intended to measure student progress toward mastery of West Virginia's Content Standards and Objectives (CSOs). West Virginia has developed CSOs in 15 subject areas, including reading and language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, health, foreign languages, and technology. The CSOs are further defined by performance standards, which define indicators of levels of mastery. The three broad reading and language arts standards are

- Standard 1. Reading: Students will use skills to read for literacy experiences, read to inform, and read to perform a task by
 - identifying and using the dimensions of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, background knowledge/vocabulary, high-frequency words/fluency, comprehension, writing, and motivation to read)
 - employing a wide variety of literature in developing independent readers.
- Standard 2. Writing: Students will employ a wide range of writing strategies to communicate effectively for different purposes by developing the writing process; applying grammatical and mechanical properties in writing; and gathering and using information for research purposes.
- Standard 3. Listening, Speaking, and Viewing: Students will apply their use of spoken, written, and/or visual language to communicate with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

Table WW1 provides the grade-level expectations for the reading standard for 9th grade, as an example.

Table WW1. Reading Objectives for 9th Grade

Reading Objectives
<p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify historical, cultural, and biographical influences of literary works. • recognize literary styles according to genre. • increase the amount of independent reading, with emphasis on fiction and nonfiction. • use various reading skills for literary experience, information, and/or performing a task (e.g., skimming; scanning; note taking; SQ3R). • locate specific information in text (e.g., main and supporting ideas; specific facts; statistics; definitions). • expand the use of various strategies to establish word meanings (e.g., context clues; affixes; multiple meanings). • recognize and explain the purpose of illustration within a specific text (e.g., pictures; artwork; graphic organizers such as maps, charts, lists, and graphs). • recognize literary devices (e.g., personification; symbolism; imagery; metaphor; simile; humor; rhythm; rhyme; meter; alliteration; assonance). • identify literary elements within specific genre (e.g., point of view; theme; conflict; characterization; voice). • recognize the elements, structures, and tone of various genres (e.g., novels; short stories; poetry; drama). • form supportable predictions, opinions, inferences, and conclusions based upon text. • expand vocabulary through various literary works. • identify word etymologies to determine meaning.

Source: http://wvde.state.wv.us/policies/p2520.1_ne.doc

Test Format and Content

We now turn to examine the test format and content of the WESTEST reading/language arts assessment⁷² and the writing assessment.

WESTEST contains multiple-choice and short-answer/constructed-response items. The WESTEST reading/language arts test measures vocabulary, reading-comprehension skills for gaining information, performing tasks, and reading for literary experience. Additionally, the test measures writing skills to include language mechanics and language expression. About 35–40 percent of the total reading/language arts score is from the writing section.

For the writing assessment, students in 4th, 7th, and 10th grades respond to a given prompt. Students in the 4th grade write a first draft within a 60-minute period during the morning. Later in the morning, students are given another 60-minute period to edit, revise, and write a final

⁷² While the SAT-9 was administered to students in 2003, we do not have data to report on this administration. As a result, we present information regarding the new state test that has been developed.

draft. In grades 7 and 10, students are asked to plan, write, revise, edit, and proofread a first draft before writing a final draft within 60 minutes. A modified holistic scoring based on a 4-point rubric is used to judge the writing samples (<http://westest.k12.wv.us/>).

Proficiency Levels

West Virginia has defined five achievement levels for the WESTEST: distinguished, above mastery, mastery, partial mastery, and novice. Students scoring at or above the mastery level are considered to have met the academic requirements under NCLB.

Performance Results

In 2003, West Virginia did not report student scores by grade level. As a result, performance results are not reported.

APPENDIX XX. WISCONSIN

State Assessment System

Wisconsin administers the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE) each year to students in grades 4, 8, and 10. The assessment measures student achievement in reading, language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. The WKCE is a commercially developed test (the TerraNova), which includes questions specifically developed for Wisconsin in order to improve coverage of Wisconsin's academic standards and to meet the requirements of NCLB. For the 2002–03 school year, Wisconsin administered the WKCE in late fall to ensure that the state could meet the reporting requirements for NCLB. To meet testing requirements under NCLB, Wisconsin will be expanding annual assessments in mathematics and reading to grades 3–8. In addition, Wisconsin has developed a customized writing assessment that will be administered at grades 4, 8, and 10; it was included in the WKCE starting in the fall of 2002 (http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/oea/wsas_intro.html).

WKCE scores are used for school and district accountability. Further, WKCE scores are used as one of several criteria for advancing students from fourth to fifth grade and from eighth to ninth grade.

Wisconsin has developed academic standards for its tested content areas—English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies—and for a number of subject areas, such as foreign languages, technology, business, and the arts. Academic standards specify what students should know and be able to do, what they might be asked to do to give evidence of standards, and how well they must perform. They include content, performance, and proficiency standards. Content standards refer to *what* students should know and be able to do; performance standards define *how* students will show that they are meeting a standard; and proficiency standards indicate *how well* students must perform. Wisconsin has established six major content areas for English language arts: reading and literature; writing; oral language; language; media and technology; and research and inquiry. Table XX1 provides an example of grade-8 performance standards for reading/literature.

Table XX1. Performance Standards for Reading and Literature, Grade 8

<p>By the end of 8th grade, students will:</p> <p>Use effective reading strategies to achieve their purposes in reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use knowledge of sentence and word structure, word origins, visual images, and context clues to understand unfamiliar words and clarify passages of text• Use knowledge of the visual features of texts, such as headings and boldface print, and structures of texts, such as chronology and cause and effect, as aids to comprehension• Establish purposeful reading and writing habits by using texts to find information, gain understanding of diverse viewpoints, make decisions, and enjoy the experience of reading• Select, summarize, paraphrase, analyze, and evaluate, orally and in writing, passages of texts chosen for specific purposes <p>Read, interpret, and critically analyze literature:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify the defining features and structure of literary texts, such as conflict, representation of character, and point of view• Analyze the effect of characters, plot, setting, language, topic, style, purpose, and point of view on the overall impact of literature• Draw on a broad base of knowledge about the genres of literature, such as the structure and conventions of essays, epics, fables, myths, plays, poems, short stories, and novels, when interpreting the meaning of a literary work• Develop criteria to evaluate literary merit and explain critical opinions about a text, either informally in conversation or formally in a well-organized speech or essay <p>Read and discuss literary and nonliterary texts in order to understand human experience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide interpretive responses, orally and in writing, to literary and nonliterary texts representing the diversity of American cultural heritage and cultures of the world• Identify common historical, social, and cultural themes and issues in literary works and selected passages• Draw on a broad base of knowledge about the themes, ideas, and insights found in classical literature while reading, interpreting, and reflecting on contemporary texts• Evaluate the themes and main ideas of a work considering its audience and purpose <p>Read to acquire information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interpret and use technical resources, such as charts, tables, travel schedules, timelines, and manuals• Compare, contrast, and evaluate the relative accuracy and usefulness of information from different sources• Identify and explain information, main ideas, and organization found in a variety of informational passages• Distinguish between the facts found in documents, narratives, charts, maps, tables and other sources and the generalizations and interpretations that are drawn from them.
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Source: <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/standards/elaa8.html>

Test Format and Content

The remainder of this discussion focuses on the WKCE reading and writing assessments.

Reading

The reading WKCE is a version of the TerraNova that includes additional state-specific items.

Students respond to selected response and short constructed-response items

(<http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/oea/kce.html>).

Writing

In the writing portion of the WKCE, students plan, write, and edit a composition on a specific topic within a specified time frame. Beginning in fall 2002, students' essays will be scored using anchor and training papers written by Wisconsin students under standardized testing conditions.

The writing prompts that may be used on the WKCE include the following purposes and modes: expressive writing (narrative or descriptive); informative or expository writing; and persuasive writing. The writing sample is scored with two holistic rubrics. A six-point composing rubric evaluates students' ability to control purpose/focus, organization/coherence, development of content, sentence fluency, and word choice. A three-point conventions rubric evaluates students' ability to control punctuation, grammar, capitalization, and spelling. Points received on these two rubrics are combined to produce a single score, with a maximum of nine points possible. During the fall 2002 administration of the WKCE, the points earned on the impromptu essay at grade 10 were incorporated into the same scoring scale as all other points earned on the reading/language arts portion of the examination. At grades 4 and 8, however, the points earned on the impromptu essay were not incorporated into the same scoring scale as the other points on the reading and language arts assessment (<http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/oea/kcwriting.html>).

Proficiency Levels

Scores from the WKCE are reported using proficiency categories of advanced, proficient, basic, and minimal, based on standards for mastery of academic content. Scores in the advanced category show in-depth understanding in the academic content area tested. Proficient scores show evidence that students have the skills necessary to progress in the academic content area tested. Students who score in the basic category are considered somewhat competent, but their scores show evidence of at least one major flaw in understanding the academic content area tested. Scores that are in the minimal category indicate major misconceptions or gaps in the knowledge and skills tested (<http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/oea/kce.html>).

Wisconsin also further defines each achievement level by grade and subject. Table XX2 delineates the achievement levels for grade-8 reading.

Students obtaining scores at or above the proficient level are considered to have met the academic requirements under NCLB.

Table XX2. Achievement Levels for 8th-Grade Reading on WKCE

Proficiency Level	WKCE Proficiency-Level Descriptions and Scale-Score Ranges
Advanced 698 and above	Students at the Advanced level demonstrate in-depth understanding of academic knowledge and skills tested on the WKCE by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• extracting and organizing essential information from text• interpreting and inferring from figurative and descriptive language• interpreting, explaining, or comparing information in text and using text-based information to support interpretations
Proficient 654–697	Students at the Proficient level demonstrate competency in the academic knowledge and skills tested on the WKCE by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• interpreting and analyzing figurative and descriptive language• interpreting idiomatic expressions• making inferences or predictions based on information in a text• analyzing plot structure in a narrative text• demonstrating literal understanding of complex text by inferring, predicting, or restructuring• interpreting and explaining imagery in poetry• interpreting informational text and identifying relationships among ideas presented• identifying essential information in technical or other informational text and evaluating the usefulness of information in different sources• analyzing characters in literary text by making inferences from text or connections with prior knowledge• drawing conclusions and making inferences from text information, including cause-effect relationships• using contextual information to understand text• evaluating the appropriateness or likely effectiveness of reading strategies to aid comprehension• using prior knowledge and context clues to determine the meaning of words used in grade-level reading passages
Basic 633–653	Students at the Basic level demonstrate some academic knowledge and skills tested on the WKCE by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• using context clues to identify synonyms for familiar words and using context clues to determine which word best completes a sentence• using information in text to make inferences or draw conclusions• reading and interpreting informational text, and using text features to aid comprehension• identifying the main idea of a text and recalling specific details• understanding imagery used in poetry• using contextual information to understand text• organizing information in a text• demonstrating literal understanding of complex text by recalling specific details
Minimal Performance 632 and below	Students at the Minimal Achievement level demonstrate very limited academic knowledge and skills tested on the WKCE.

Source: <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/oea/doc/kce8reading.doc>

Performance Results

Student Performance

Wisconsin reports scores on the reading and language arts assessments for students, disaggregated by several characteristics including English-proficiency status, disability status, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.⁷³ Table XX3 presents the results from the 2002–03 Reading and Language Arts WKCE assessment for various groups of students. The discussion that follows focuses on the percentages of students scoring at or above the proficient level.

Seventy-eight percent of 4th-graders scored at or above the proficient level in language arts, and 80 percent did so in language arts. While 83 percent of 8th-graders were at the proficient level in reading, only 62 percent of them scored at the proficient level in language arts. At the 10th grade, 70–71 percent of students passed both the reading and language arts assessment by scoring at the proficient level. The percentages scoring at the advanced level were somewhat higher in reading than in language arts. For example, 39–40 percent of 4th- and 8th-graders and 52 percent of 10th-graders were judged as advanced in reading, compared to 35 percent of 4th-graders, 20 percent of 8th-graders, and 21 percent of 10th-graders in language arts.

There were large differences in the pass rates of students with limited-English proficiency and English-proficient students. For example, 46–51 percent of 4th-graders with limited-English proficiency were judged proficient compared with 79–82 percent of English-proficient students—a difference of 31–33 percentage points. The performance gap between the two groups increased across the grades, and in the 10th grade the difference in pass rates was between 53 and 54 percentage points. Very few of these students—between 1 and 9 percent—scored at the advanced level.

Not surprisingly, we find equally large or larger differences in proficiency levels of students with disabilities and students without disabilities, ranging from 44 to 54 percentage points in the two subjects. The proportion of students with disabilities who scored at the advanced level was between 2 and 12 percent.

⁷³ Approximately 80 percent of students in Wisconsin are white; 10 percent are African American; 5 percent are Hispanic; and 3 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander. About 26 percent of students are eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program; 3 percent are in limited-English-proficiency programs; and 14 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

Table XX3. Performance of 4th-, 8th-, and 10th-Graders on Fall 2002–03 Reading and Language Arts WKCE, by Student Characteristics

	Reading			Language Arts		
	Basic and Above	Proficient and Above	Advanced	Basic and Above	Proficient and Above	Advanced
	Percentage					
4th Grade						
All students	92	80	40	93	78	35
Students with disabilities	69	44	10	67	39	8
Nondisabled students	96	86	45	97	84	39
Students with limited- English proficiency	76	51	9	74	46	8
English-proficient students	94	82	42	93	79	36
Economically disadvantaged students	87	67	22	86	62	18
Non–economically disadvantaged students	96	87	49	95	84	42
African American students	85	61	17	82	54	14
Asian/Pacific Islander students	90	69	22	91	67	22
Hispanic students	81	62	19	79	57	17
White students	95	86	47	95	83	40
8th Grade						
All students	92	83	39	85	62	20
Students with disabilities	65	43	6	47	16	2
Students with limited- English proficiency	63	39	6	54	20	2
English-proficient students	93	85	40	87	64	21
Nondisabled students	97	90	44	92	70	23
Economically disadvantaged students	82	65	18	71	39	7
Non–economically disadvantaged students	96	90	46	91	71	25
African American students	75	54	10	62	29	4
Asian/Pacific Islander students	86	69	22	82	48	12
Hispanic students	77	60	17	67	36	6
White students	95	89	45	91	70	24

Table XX3. (cont.)

	Reading			Language Arts		
	Basic and Above	Proficient and Above	Advanced	Basic and Above	Proficient and Above	Advanced
	Percentage					
10th Grade						
All students	85	71	52	88	70	21
Students with disabilities	52	27	12	58	22	2
Nondisabled students	91	78	58	91	76	23
Students with limited-English proficiency	41	20	8	44	17	1
English-proficient students	87	73	53	89	71	21
Economically disadvantaged students	71	50	30	73	46	7
Non-economically disadvantaged students	88	76	57	92	76	24
African American students	60	36	19	62	34	4
Asian/Pacific Islander students	77	55	36	80	52	11
Hispanic students	64	45	27	66	42	7
White students	91	78	58	92	76	24

Source: <http://www2.dpi.state.wi.us/wsas/statewkce.asp>

Among racial/ethnic groups, white students scored the highest and African American students the lowest. Somewhat surprisingly, Asian students' scores (which in other states tended to be comparable with those of white students) were lower than those of white students in every grade and at both the proficient and advanced levels. For example, 67–69 percent of Asian students scored at the proficient level in the 4th grade in reading and language arts compared with 83–86 percent of white students. Twenty-two percent scored at the advanced level in the two subjects compared with 40–47 percent of white students. The differences ranged from 17–25 percentage points across the grades. The passing rates of African American and Hispanic students declined across the grades in reading, falling from 61–62 percent in the 4th grade to 36–45 percent in the 10th grade. The gap in the performance of African American and Hispanic and white students also increased, from 24–25 percentage points in the 4th grade to 33–42 percentage points in the 10th grade. This pattern held true in language arts as well. The proportions of African American and Hispanic students scoring at the advanced level were between 28 and 39 percentage points lower than those of white students in reading and 17–26 percentage points lower in language arts.

Economically disadvantaged students trailed their more advantaged peers by 20–27 percentage points in the 4th grade at the two achievement levels. However, at the 8th grade, the differences in performance became even more marked at the proficient level, increasing to 32–35 percentage points. At the 10th grade, 46–50 percent of economically disadvantaged students passed both assessments, compared with 76 percent of their counterparts.

School Performance

School year 2002–03 was the first year the WKCE was administered; thus, we do not report school year 2001–02 school-level scores disaggregated by urbanicity for Wisconsin.

APPENDIX YY. WYOMING

State Assessment System

The Wyoming Comprehensive Assessment System (WyCAS) tests students in the following grades and subjects:

- Grade 4—Reading, writing, and mathematics
- Grade 8—Reading, writing, and mathematics
- Grade 11—Reading, writing, and mathematics.

The WyCAS assessments are intended to measure student performance toward mastering state content standards. The English language arts (ELA) curriculum framework is based on a single standard in each of three content areas:

- Reading: Students use the reading process to demonstrate understanding of literary and informational texts.
- Writing: Students regularly use the writing process and use appropriate strategies to write a variety of expressive and expository pieces.
- Speaking and Listening: Students use listening and speaking skills for a variety of purposes and audiences.

The standards are further articulated by grade-level benchmarks and achievement-level descriptions, which define how well students must perform to meet those benchmarks in K–8 and 11 (<http://www.k12.wy.us/eqa/nca/pubs/standards/lang.pdf>). Table YY1 presents the 8th-grade benchmarks for reading, as an example.

Test Format and Content

For the purposes of examining what the WyCAS reveals about adolescent literacy, the rest of the discussion will focus on the reading and writing tests that students take in the spring in grades 4, 8, and 11.

The WyCAS contains two tests: the standards-based test developed specifically for the WyCAS program and the norm-referenced CTB TerraNova test. The standards-based tests include three reading sessions and two writing sessions; the TerraNova test includes one reading session.

There are eight possible tests forms, each including common items, matrix-sampling items, and field-test items. The reading test requires students to read a total of six passages: three common and three matrix-sampled passages. Students are given 50 minutes to answer 46 multiple-choice questions and 25 minutes to answer five constructed-response items.

The writing test allocates 60–90 minutes and requires each student to respond to a total of two writing prompts. One prompt is common by grade, one prompt is matrix-sampled, and there are no field-test writing prompts.

Table YY1. Reading Benchmarks, Grade 8

-
- I. Students use the reading process to apply a variety of comprehension strategies before, during, and after reading:
 - A. Students use word origins, context clues, and personal connections to develop vocabulary and understand grade-level-appropriate technical and subject-specific terms.
 - B. Students comprehend main idea and supporting details in grade-level-appropriate text.
 - C. Students use strategies, such as setting a purpose, predicting, cause and effect, comparing and contrasting, drawing conclusions, visualizing, and inferring, to interpret and analyze text.
 - II. Students read and interpret a variety of literary texts:
 - A. Students make inferences about events, setting, style, tone, mood, and meaning.
 - B. Students understand and identify significant literary elements, such as author's purpose and style, point of view, symbolism, dialect, figurative language (metaphor, simile, personification), flashback, foreshadowing, and common themes.
 - C. Students understand the historical, social, and cultural influences on literary works, such as how a text reflects the period ideas, customs, and outlook of a particular group of people in history.
 - III. Students read and demonstrate understanding of informational texts:
 - A. Students conduct research using multiple resources.
 - B. Students analyze data or make generalizations based on explicitly stated information.
 - C. Students support conclusions with facts and/or citations.
 - D. Students are familiar with a variety of informational texts modes, such as documentaries, essays, interviews, speeches, newspapers, and Internet Web sites.
 - E. Students summarize and paraphrase information in chronological, sequential, or logical order.
-

Source: <http://www.k12.wy.us/eqa/nca/pubs/standards/lang.pdf>.

Achievement-Level Definitions

Scores for the standards-based assessments are reported in terms of achievement levels—advanced, proficient, partially proficient, and novice. Definitions for the reading levels are

- **Advanced**—Students demonstrate the ability to extend applications and connections beyond the obvious. These students understand complex ideas and are insightful. They make strong, complex, and sophisticated connections among a variety of texts and themselves, other texts, and the world. They cite extensive, appropriate evidence for their inferences.
- **Proficient**—Students demonstrate an accurate understanding of a variety of grade-appropriate texts. Their comprehension extends beyond the literal level. They make relevant connections among texts, themselves, and other sources. They support inferences with textual evidence.

- Partially Proficient—Students demonstrate a better understanding of some types of texts than others. Comprehension is mostly at the literal level. They make some obvious personal connections.
- Novice—Students demonstrate minimal understanding of the text. They restate phrases from questions or text, making no connections or generalizations.

Definitions for the writing levels are

- Advanced—Students write with a clearly intended purpose and audience, successfully integrating voice and format. Their writing shows logical and sophisticated organization. Ideas are presented clearly and supported by specific and precise details. Sentence structure is varied and complex, the language is rich and engaging, and the writer uses sophisticated control of conventions.
- Proficient—Students write with an intended purpose and audience, with evidence of voice and format. Their writing shows logical organization. Ideas are supported with sufficient, relevant details. Sentence structure is varied and correct, language is effective throughout and the student demonstrates reasonable control of conventions.
- Partially Proficient—Students write with limited evidence of intended purpose and audience. Their writing shows some organization, with minimal awareness of voice. Ideas are evident, but supporting details may be minimal or irrelevant. Sentences have some variety, with few errors in structure. Word choice is generally correct, and the student demonstrates some control of conventions.
- Novice—Students write with an inconsistent development and focus. Their writing shows lack of awareness of purpose, audience, format, and/or voice.

Students scoring at or above the proficient level are considered to have met the academic requirements under NCLB.

Performance Results

Student Performance

Table YY2 presents data on student performance, disaggregated by disability status, English-proficiency status, and racial/ethnic groups for the 4th-, 8th-, and 11th-grade reading WyCAS.⁷⁴

About 44 percent of 4th-grade students were proficient in reading, and 37 percent were proficient in writing. While results in reading were relatively similar in 8th and 11th grade (39 percent and 47

⁷⁴Approximately 87 percent of students in Wyoming are white; 7 percent are Hispanic; and 3 percent are American Indian/Alaska Native. About 3 percent of students are in limited-English-proficiency programs, and 13 percent have Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

percent, respectively), there was a much greater proportion of students at these grade levels that reached the proficient level in writing—48 percent in 8th grade and 62 percent in 11th grade.

Table YY2. Performance of 4th-, 8th-, and 11th-Graders on 2003 Reading and Writing WyCAS, by Student Characteristics

	Reading	Writing
	Percentage Proficient and Above	
4th Grade		
All students	44	37
Students with disabilities	13	9
Students with limited-English proficiency	13	11
Economically disadvantaged students	31	25
Non–economically disadvantaged students	51	44
American Indian students	18	12
Hispanic students	30	30
White students	47	39
8th Grade		
All students	39	48
Students with disabilities	5	7
Students with limited-English proficiency	8	13
Students with English proficiency	40	49
Economically disadvantaged students	23	32
Non–economically disadvantaged students	44	53
American Indian students	15	22
Hispanic students	23	31
White students	42	52
11th Grade		
All students	47	62
Students with disabilities	7	15
Students with limited-English proficiency	15	36
Students with English proficiency	47	62
Economically disadvantaged students	31	47
Non–economically disadvantaged students	49	64
American Indian students	22	39
Hispanic students	31	47
White students	49	64

Source: https://wdesecure.k12.wy.us/stats/wde.esc.show_menu?school_year=2002-03

Only a small percentage of students with disabilities reached the proficient level across grade levels and subjects—5 to 15 percent. In 4th and 8th grades, only a small proportion of students with limited-English, 8–13 percent, were proficient in reading or writing. In 11th grade, reading

results for this group of students were similar (15 percent proficient), but the percentage at the proficient level in writing was much larger—36 percent.

There were large achievement gaps between economically disadvantaged students and their peers, ranging from 17 to 21 percentage points. The achievement gap between white students and Hispanic students ranged from 9 to 21 percentage points across grades and subjects. The achievement gap between white students and Native American students was even larger—25–30 percentage points.

School Performance

Data for school performance by urbanicity is available for the 2002 administration of the WyCAS (Table YY3). Approximately 76 percent of schools in Wyoming were rural; 16 percent were urban; and 8 percent were suburban. Twenty-six percent of urban and suburban schools were high-poverty schools, as were 12 percent of rural schools.

Table YY3. Average School Performance on the 4th-, 8th-, and 11th-Grade 2002 Reading and Writing WyCAS, by Student Characteristics

	Reading		Writing	
	Proficient and Above	Advanced	Proficient and Above	Advanced
Average Percentage				
4th Grade				
Rural schools	45	15	43	8
Suburban schools	42	9	39	7
Urban schools	42	13	45	8
8th Grade				
Rural schools	40	7	54	9
Suburban schools	*	*	*	*
Urban schools	43	8	53	11
11th Grade				
Rural schools	44	11	55	10
Suburban schools	*	*	*	*
Urban schools	*	*	*	*

*Represents a data point for which there are fewer than seven schools.

There were no consistent trends in the relative performance of rural and urban schools, when compared to one another. In some grades and subjects, rural schools outperformed urban schools; in others, urban schools outperformed rural schools, but all these differences were relatively small (0–3 percentage points). Suburban schools tended to perform a bit lower than

rural and urban schools at the 4th-grade level. Because of the small number of suburban schools for grades 8 and 11, we do not report data for suburban schools at these grade levels.