



250 East 500 South
P.O. Box 144200
Salt Lake City, UT 84114-4200
801.538.7500

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

schools.utah.gov

November 1, 2011

For Immediate Release

Contact: Mark Peterson, public relations director
(801) 538-7635 · mark.peterson@schools.utah.gov

Utah Students Hold Steady in Fourth, Eighth Grade Math, Reading

SALT LAKE CITY – Utah fourth and eighth graders held steady academic performance in math and reading in 2011, according to data released today by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as the Nation’s Report Card.

In math, Utah fourth graders scored an average of 243 in 2011 which is slightly higher than the 240 scored in 2009, but not statistically an improvement. Nationally, fourth graders had an average score of 240 in 2011. Utah eighth graders scored an average of 283, the same score as the national average, and which again was not statistically different from Utah’s score of 284 in 2009, NAEP figures show.

In reading, Utah and national fourth graders scored an average of 220, which was not a statistical improvement from the Utah score of 219 in 2009. Eighth graders had an average score of 267 in 2011 and 266 in 2009. Utah’s eighth grade math score is statistically better than the 264 national average, NAEP said.

“Utah public schools have been able to hold on to their core academic performance levels despite increasing poverty, increasing demographic diversity and decreased funding,” said State Superintendent of Public Instruction Larry K. Shumway. “This is not

great news, but it's not bad news and we intend to increase performance as the economy improves and Utah schools obtain new resources to increase academic achievement.”

Utah State Office of Education statistics show that the percentage of Utah students receiving free or reduced price school lunches (one measure of poverty in schools) rose from 32.76 percent in October 2008 to 37.21 percent in October 2010. During that same time period, Utah added nearly 16,000 new non-white students to its school population. At the same time, Utah per-pupil funding dropped from \$6,564 to \$6,255, much of it attributable to a drop in the economy which translated into lower state income tax revenues, the primary funder of Utah public schools.

Achievement gaps between white and Asian students and other minority groups continue to persist as Utah public schools continue to work on remediation for those students who do not meet proficiency standards.

Because the NAEP reading and math tests are given to a sampling of students rather than all students, there is no individual district or school data available.

Read more about the NAEP tests at www.nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard.

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