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## **Minnesota Science MCA-II Scores Remain Flat**

*High school students continue to make small gains*

Roseville - Science MCA-II online assessment results released by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) today show that student scores in science remained relatively flat compared to last year's results.

"The 2011 Science MCA-II results, like the NAEP scores and others we've seen over the past few months, reinforce our need to approach science and math education with a sense of urgency," Minnesota Education Commissioner Brenda Cassellius said. "While we see some slight gains among some groups of students, they are not enough to ensure all of our kids will be able to compete in a global economy."

### **On the 2011 online Science MCA-II:**

- About 54 percent of high school students were proficient, reflecting a consistent increase in the percentage of proficient scores each year since 2008.
- About 45 percent of eighth-grade students were proficient, representing a slight decline from 2010.
- The percentage of fifth-graders who were proficient remained consistent with 2010.

This spring, a total of 179,219 students in grades 5, 8 and high school took the Science MCA-II, which measures student performance on Minnesota's Academic Standards. The science standards define what students should know and be able to do in a particular grade and are developed in partnership with Minnesota educators.

According to Commissioner Cassellius, the mixed results may be a reflection of the transition from teaching the 2003 academic standards to teaching the new standards implemented in 2009. 2011 is the last year of administration of the Science MCA-II assessments based on the 2003 academic standards. The 2012 Science MCA-III assessments will be based on the 2009 academic standards.

As with other assessment results released this year, Cassellius noted the disparities in academic performance among various groups of students. She cited resources such as the STEM initiatives and Science/Math Teacher Academies as examples of best practice efforts that can be used more broadly to improve science instruction and overall student achievement.

"We continue to see a persistent disparity in achievement between students of color, students in poverty and their white counterparts," Cassellius said. "This achievement gap reflects Minnesota's urgent need to focus time, attention and resources to making sure all children achieve at high levels."

Currently, results from the science assessment do not impact Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Proficiency. Reading and Math MCA-II scores, which are used to calculate AYP under the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), will be released in mid to late September. Earlier this week, Governor Dayton directed Commissioner Cassellius to apply for a federal waiver from some NCLB requirements in order to allow Minnesota to focus on locally developed reform and improvement efforts, without the sanctions that come from the federal mandates. [View the summary and results on the MDE website.](#)

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