



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November 1, 2011
Contact: Charlene Briner, (651) 582-1145

Nation's Report Card Shows Minnesota Still Leading Nation in Overall Math Achievement

Students post strong math scores, reading levels stay flat and achievement gap persists as other states make greater strides

Roseville, Minnesota – Even as Minnesota remained a national achievement leader in overall reading and math scores, several states made larger gains according to “The Nation’s Report Card,” released today by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

The report, released every two years, compares student achievement from different states. This year’s results show Minnesota fourth- and eighth-grade students again achieved above the national average in reading and math; however, scores remained flat compared to 2009 results. Scores also revealed a continued achievement gap between various groups of students.

“These scores reinforce the sense of urgency we feel around making sure every student is achieving at high levels,” said Minnesota Education Commissioner Brenda Cassellius. “While we’re delighted that Minnesota students lead the nation in “above proficient” math scores, other states are making greater strides in reading. The good news is that in the last 10 months, we’ve engaged in a strategic approach to improvement in this area that includes the Governor’s 7-Point Plan’s focus on early learning and reading well by third grade and new bi-partisan, incentive-based early literacy initiatives enacted this session. Those efforts will help ensure Minnesota’s schools continue to lead the nation and the world.”

Highlights of the Nation’s Report include:

Mathematics – Grade Four

- Minnesota students scored significantly higher than nation’s public school average
- Two states (Massachusetts and New Hampshire) were significantly higher than Minnesota in 2011. In 2009, no states were significantly higher.
- Achievement gap remained large between white students and students of color.

Mathematics – Grade Eight

- Minnesota students scored significantly higher than nation’s public school average
- One state (Massachusetts) was significantly higher than Minnesota in 2011. This was the same as 2009.
- Achievement gap remained large between white students and students of color.

Reading – Grade Four

- Minnesota students achieved higher than the national level, but not significantly higher.
- Ten states were significantly higher than Minnesota in 2011. In 2009, only six states were significantly higher.
- Achievement gap remained large between white students and students of color.

Reading – Grade Eight

- Minnesota students scored significantly higher than Nation’s Public school average

- Five states were significantly higher. In 2009, only three states were higher.
- Achievement gap remained large between white students and students of color.

“For decades Minnesota has enjoyed an economic edge due in large measure to the fact that our education system was considered one of the nation’s best,” said Cassellius. “We are still ahead of the curve, but that won’t be the case for long if other states continue to gain ground while we simply hold steady. Today’s report underscores the need to redouble our commitment to ensure all Minnesota students – regardless of race, socio-economic status or region of the state in which they live – have the opportunity to succeed and achieve at the highest level.”

In the ten months since being appointed as Commissioner, Cassellius has set an innovative agenda to improve education for all students in Minnesota. She has worked with Governor Dayton to form the 7-Point Plan for Better Schools, which focuses on excellence and opportunity for all students, closing achievement gaps, and improved support for the profession of teaching. Key reforms have included funding for performance-based early literacy initiatives, new bi-partisan teacher and principal evaluation and alternative teacher licensure laws enacted during the 2011 special session, and the creation of a new website and data center that will provide a better system of reporting achievement data to parents and stakeholders due to launch in early December.

###