

**NAEP results show HISD students outperforming peers across the country in math**

*April 10, 2018 —* Houston Independent School District fourth- and eighth-graders from all demographic groups outperformed their peers across the nation in math, according to results released from the 2017 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

The math results show that African-American, Hispanic, English Language Learners (ELL), economically disadvantaged and white HISD students in both grades outperformed their national counterparts, which means they are doing better than their respective peers across the country. However, the results also indicate that overall, there was a slight decline in HISD students’ math scores from 2015 to the 2017 assessment. Fourth and eighth grade reading scores, in general, also dropped from the previous NAEP assessment.

“Our goal is, and will always be, to put students first,” Interim Superintendent Grenita Lathan said. “The results of the 2017 NAEP tell us that we have to dig down deeper, work a little bit harder, and make some adjustments to our curriculum and our professional development for teachers and principals.”

The results of the NAEP assessment, known as the “Nation’s Report Card,” are released every two years. The NAEP exams in math and reading are given to a random sample of schools and students in each state to assesses student progress at the national and state level. The Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA) uses larger samples to measure student performance on the NAEP in 27 participating urban districts. Participation in the NAEP TUDA is voluntary. HISD is one of the six original districts who joined the program upon its inception in 2002. About 7,100 HISD students — half from fourth grade and half from eighth grade — from 137 schools took the test in spring 2017.

Due to the transition from paper-and-pencil exams to digitally-administered exams in spring 2017, the results of the NAEP assessment were released several months later than usual. The National Center for Education Statistics implemented a rigorous process from beginning to end to maintain the content being assessed, to standardize assessment conditions, to implement the design, and to evaluate the results.

“Houston did not show any significant change between 2015 and 2017 on the new National Assessment of Educational Progress results, but the city school system continues to show long-term improvements, especially in math, since it started taking the nation’s toughest test,” said Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools. “The new results will constitute an important baseline for the district’s new superintendent when he or she is selected.”

Overall**,** fourth- and eighth-grade math students in HISD scored higher than most other TUDAs, and when separated by student group, HISD had even higher results. The decline in fourth- and eighth-grade math scores in Houston from 2015 to 2017 is a trend that is also true for students across the state and the nation.

Among African-American students, HISD had the fifth-highest average fourth-grade math score among all TUDAs and the second-highest average eighth-grade math score. Eighth-grade math students in Houston outperformed their cohorts in Austin, Dallas and Fort Worth, as well as the national public school and large city average.

Fourth grade math results among Hispanic and ELL students in Houston have remained stable but are significantly higher than both National Public and Large City results. Of all jurisdictions, HISD was in the top 20 percent for the highest percentage of Hispanic students – 64 percent – selected to participate in the NAEP. Among Hispanic students, HISD ranked sixth in fourth-grade math and fifth in eighth-grade math among all TUDAs.

Of all jurisdictions, HISD had the fourth-highest percentage of ELL students – 29 percent – who took the NAEP assessment. Nationally, the highest-performing ELL fourth grade math students are from Texas, with those from Houston obtaining the second-highest score among all TUDAs – just under Dallas and tied with Austin. Among ELL eighth grade math students, HISD ranked third and outperformed Fort Worth, Austin and the national public average. For the most part, fourth- and eighth-grade ELL math scores held steady from 2015 to 2017.

HISD was in the top 25 percent for the highest percentage of students eligible for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). Students eligible for the NSLP are considered economically disadvantaged. With 76 percent of tested students considered economically disadvantaged, HISD has a higher poverty rate than the national public school sample, which is 52 percent.

The NAEP report finds that fourth- and eighth-grade math scores for economically disadvantaged students at HISD are higher than the national average. Among economically disadvantaged eighth-grade math students, HISD ranked second, just below Boston. Although economically disadvantaged eighth-grade reading students were below the national public average, they performed the same as their counterparts in Fort Worth and Dallas, and slightly higher than Austin.

White students in HISD scored significantly higher in eighth-grade math than white students in Texas, Large City or National Public samples. In addition, an upward trend can be seen in the results for white HISD students across the prior eight years.

For fourth-grade reading, Houston’s scale score of 205 was better than eight other districts including Dallas. For eighth-grade reading, Houston’s scale score of 249 was better than 10 other districts, including Dallas and Fort Worth.

Although eighth-grade reading results for ELL students show a decline in recent years, HISD’s score of 219 for 2017 was slightly higher than the 2015 average scale score of 218. Nearly all student groups in HISD show a downward trend from 2009 through 2017.  The only exception is among ELL students, who showed a slight rise in scores. It should be noted that HISD fourth-grade ELL reading students from Houston, many of whom take the Texas STAAR reading test in Spanish, took the NAEP reading assessment in English and maintained the same average score of 192 while the average score for the state of Texas dropped from 198 to 194. HISD had an ELL exclusion rate of just 2 percent on the 2017 fourth-grade reading NAEP assessment.