



NEWS RELEASE

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**New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP)
Test Results Released
For Elementary, Middle and High School Students (Grades 3-8 & 11)**

The results of the Fall 2008 New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) for grades three through eight and high school were released today by Commissioner of Education Lyonel Tracy. Commissioner Tracy was pleased to note that New Hampshire schools have again made strong progress in helping students meet challenging standards in reading, mathematics, and writing. This is the fourth year that New Hampshire's third through eighth grade students have taken the NECAP but it is only the second year the NECAP test has been administered at the high school level. These results show that our schools are making substantial progress at all grade levels in all three content areas when compared to the first year of each of these tests. These data provide a comprehensive view of performance in mathematics, reading and writing based on the New Hampshire Grade-Level Expectations. These expectations are our NH academic standards and are embedded in the New Hampshire Curriculum Frameworks for Reading, Writing, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. The NECAP results provide the opportunity for districts, schools, and the Department to examine how effective we are in helping students achieve these standards.

Annual NECAP testing also supports New Hampshire's Follow The Child initiative, which emphasizes personalized learning, timely interventions, and following each child's progress over time. Commissioner Tracy stated that, "not only can we measure the effectiveness of our schools by examining the progress we are making in delivering the curriculum at each grade level, our schools and parents can also follow the growth each child is making as they progress through the grades. School success is measured by the success of each and every student."

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How is our state doing over time? In the 2005 NECAP assessment, 62,919 (or about 65%) students in grades 3-8 demonstrated proficiency in reading out of a total enrollment of 96,304. In mathematics, 58,567 students (or about 61%) demonstrated proficiency. In October 2008, there were 91,129 students in grades 3-8. Despite the decrease in student population, the total number of students proficient in reading and mathematics has risen: 66,952 (or about 73%) proficient in reading, and 62,173 (or about 68%) proficient in mathematics.

How are our schools doing over time? Preliminary analysis of program trends across the history of NECAP testing (4 years for elementary and middle grades, and 2 years for high school) helps us to see how schools are doing over time. Reading tests at all grades show reading performance increases ranging from 5 to 11 percentage points per grade level in the proportion of students demonstrating proficiency. Likewise in mathematics, all grades have shown increases ranging from 3 to 10 percentage points in the proportion of students who are scoring proficient or better. New Hampshire also tests writing in grades 5, 8 and 11. In writing, the state has seen increases ranging from 2 to 9 percentage points in the percentage of students scoring proficient or better at each of the three grades tested. It is important to note when looking at writing scores and trends, that the test results are more difficult to compare due to the nature of the test. There are fewer questions on the test and it includes a long writing sample. The sample of writing changes each year in order to assess different types of writing (narrative, informational, and persuasive). (see charts: Program Trend Graphs for reading, mathematics, and writing available at www.ed.state.nh.us/necap)

How are our students doing over time? At grades three through eight, the current results also allow us to follow the same group or cohort of students for four years. For example, 74% of this year's grade 6 students demonstrated proficiency in reading. This same cohort of students has improved from 71% proficient in grade 3. They also improved in mathematics, starting with 68% proficient as 3rd graders and now, in grade 6, we find that 69% of these students have become proficient in mathematics at the more difficult standards of the higher grade. (see chart: NECAP Cohort Comparison available at www.ed.state.nh.us/necap)

Local Trends: Over the next few weeks, schools and districts will be examining their own data and paying particular attention to the growth of individual students and groups of students.

Administrators, local school improvement teams, and teachers can also use these results to measure the effectiveness of program changes and instructional strategies they have implemented based on previous results and analyses.

There are four achievement levels of student performance on the NECAP tests. These levels describe a student's proficiency on the content and skills taught in the previous grade. Performance at Proficient (level 3) or Proficient with Distinction (level 4) indicates that the student has a level of proficiency necessary to begin working successfully on current grade content and skills. Performance at Partially Proficient (level 2) or Substantially Below Proficient (level 1) suggests that additional instruction and student practice is needed on the previous grade's content and skills.

NECAP is a collaborative partnership among New Hampshire, Vermont, and Rhode Island, established in response to the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) which requires that all states annually measure achievement of students in grades 3-8, and in one high school grade. Beginning in the fall of 2009, Maine will administer the NECAP tests in reading, mathematics, and writing test at grades 3-8. Commissioner Tracy commented: "This is a win-win situation for New Hampshire. Not only does it reduce the cost for the state, but it also brings additional expertise to the development of our assessment. We are very pleased to welcome Maine into our assessment collaborative." "One of the biggest concerns for parents is the education of their children," Tracy went on to say, "and as families move within the four NECAP states, they can be assured of a consistent standard of excellence in both curriculum and assessment."

While the Commissioner indicates that he is pleased with the information that the NECAP assessment provides, he offered the reminder that while the "NECAP is an important measure of academic progress, it is only one of many ways that schools measure the progress our students. Schools must be accountable for the growth of each child personally, physically, socially, and academically." In evaluating the success of students and schools, it is essential that parents, educators, and community leaders consider multiple forms of assessment, community involvement, attendance, and graduation rates, the number of children pursuing further education after high school, school safety, discipline records, and other relevant information.

All public NECAP reports for schools, districts, and the state, as well as The Guide to Interpreting the 2008 NECAP Reports can be accessed directly through the NH School District Profile site on the NH DOE Web site (www.ed.state.nh.us).



Additional resources, information, and comparative graphs and charts can be found at www.ed.state.nh.us/necap.