



**STATEMENT ON *THE NATION'S REPORT CARD*:
*2013 Mathematics and Reading, Grades 4 and 8***

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Just as The Nation's Report Card website has undergone major changes in how it presents data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), our country is undergoing major changes in regard to testing sentiments.

If you are keeping up with testing in America, you are aware of the broad anti-testing movement sweeping our country today—even here in my home state, Texas, the birthplace of No Child Left Behind. This movement is being fueled by parents who are fatigued with high-stakes testing—testing that is given in the name of accountability but is the most punitive to our children. While I support reducing, if not eliminating, high-stakes testing, I like many others still know the importance of accountability—for where we are heading as well as where we came from.

It is important to have a measuring stick that gives us the data we need to guide leaders who make important decisions on educational resources and funding. NAEP is that measuring stick. It is not high-stakes; it doesn't reveal a particular student's or school's scores; and it is completely independent of politics and education reform efforts. NAEP is also the only yardstick that can reveal student achievement nationally, by state, and by urban district. This is why NAEP is more important now than ever.

What other assessment can tell you about dynamics in gaps in achievement among students of different racial/ethnic groups in the nation, for example? Of keen interest to me are the achievement trends for Hispanic students, who make up a significant portion of the school population in my district. This NAEP report shows that white-Hispanic score gaps did not change significantly from 2011 to 2013. And looking long range, from when we first started collecting state data, even as the scores of Hispanic students increased over time, the white-Hispanic gap only narrowed at grade 8 reading in comparison with 1992 statistics.

In Texas, we see a similar story in white-Hispanic score gaps. Scores for Hispanic students were at least numerically higher in 2013 than in the early '90s in Texas at both grades and in both subjects—especially noteworthy are grade 8 math scores from 1990 to 2013, during which time the white-Hispanic gap narrowed by 9 points. However, these gaps did not narrow across fourth-

and eighth-grade math and reading between 2011 and 2013; in fact, when you look at grade 4 reading, it appears Hispanic students lost a little ground. While white students' scores stayed consistent—with an average scale score of 233 those two years—Hispanic students' scores went from 210 in 2011 to 206 in 2013 (although the change was not statistically significant).

Results like these are very beneficial. They allow us to look at performance trends and investigate what is working when it comes to boosting achievement. They also show us weak points that challenge us to think of ways to address academic concerns. I'm hoping even more education and policy leaders here in Texas and across the country understand the value of NAEP. I am reminded of No Child Left Behind, and so many states asking for waivers. NAEP results provide us with so much useful, but not high-stakes, information. NAEP is the test everyone should want to be a part of.