Subgroup Achievement and Gap Trends — Nebraska

K-12 enrollment — 292,069

The raw data used to develop these state profiles, including data for additional grade levels and years before 2002, can be found on the CEP Web site at www.cep-dc.org. Click on the link on the left labeled State Testing Data. In the list of results that appears, look for the most recent report on student achievement since 2002. Below the name of the report, click on the link for State Profiles and Worksheets. Scroll down the page until you reach the list of states. Click on the Worksheet link for proficiency data or scale score data for a particular state.

Subgroup Achievement Trends and Gap Trends — Key Findings

Summary. In grade 8 (the only grade in which subgroup trends were analyzed by achievement level), Nebraska made gains across the board at the *proficient-and-above* level for all major racial/ethnic subgroups and low-income students in reading and math. Achievement gaps also narrowed across the board for all subgroups analyzed at grades 4, 8, and 11. Comparable data were available at the proficient level only for 2003-2009 in reading and 2002-2009 in math, so trends at the *basic-and-above* and *advanced* levels could not be determined.

- ***Gap trends.*** In both reading and math, gaps narrowed at grades 4, 8, and 11 for African American, Latino, and low-income students. In reading, the male-female gap also narrowed at these grades. Other racial/ethnic subgroups were too small to yield reliable trend data.

- ***Notable progress.*** African American, Latino, and low-income students made notable gains in grade 8 math at the proficient-and-above level. In addition, gaps narrowed at a notable rate for African American and Latino students at grades 8 and 11 in reading and math.

Data Limitations

Years of comparable percentage proficient data	2001 and 2003 through 2009 in reading 2002 through 2009 in math Data were not available to conduct analyses of achievement at the Basic and Advanced achievement levels prior to 2008
Years of comparable mean scale score data	Cannot compute effect sizes; no mean scale scores or standard deviations available
Disaggregated data for all subgroups and comparison groups	Limited proficient and above data disaggregated by subgroups available for 2002 in math and 2003 in both subjects No disaggregated data available for high school students in 2006; only disability and English language subgroups in 2007 Data are not available for comparison groups of students who are not low-income, not disabled, or not English language learners (ELLs) until 2008, so the subgroups of low-income students, students with disabilities, and ELLs are compared with all tested students in the state. No scale score data available for student subgroups.

Test Characteristics

The characteristics highlighted below are for the state reading and mathematics tests used for accountability under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

Test(s) used for NCLB accountability	School-based Teacher-led Assessment and Reporting System (STARS); these are tests developed by school districts and submitted to the state for approval. No unified state assessment system is in place. STARS Alternate Assessment Statewide Writing Assessment
Grades tested for NCLB accountability	3–8, grade 11
State labels for achievement levels	NE uses four achievement levels: Beginning, Progressing, Proficient, and Advanced. For our analyses, we treated Progressing as Basic, Proficient as Proficient, and Advanced as Advanced.
High school NCLB test also used as an exit exam?	No
First year test used	2000–01 for reading, 2001–02 for math

Time of test administration	Throughout the year, reported to state by June 30 each year
Major changes in testing system (2002–present)	2002–03: Annual state reporting of math and reading results begins 2005–06: Assessment and AYP calculation expanded to include all students in grades 3–8 and grade 11 Statewide reading test piloted in 2008-2009 to be implemented in 2009-2010. Math one year later.
Comments	Prior to 2003, NE alternated yearly testing between subjects. The state tested reading in 2001, math in 2002, then both subjects in 2003 and thereafter. So, percentage proficient data in reading is comparable between 2001 and 2003, but there is a gap in 2002.

Achievement by Subgroup — Trends at the Middle School Level

Note: The tables in this profile of subgroup achievement and gap trends begin with table 7. Tables 1 through 6 can be found in the companion state profile of general achievement trends.

Table NE-7. Percentages of grade 8 students by racial or ethnic subgroup scoring at the advanced, proficient-and-above, and basic-and-above levels in reading

	Reporting year								Average yearly percentage point gain[1]
Subgroup	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	
All tested students									
Advanced		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	44%	43%	NA
Proficient-and-above		80%	83%	88%	87%	90%	94%	95%	2.5
Basic-and-above		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	99%	99%	NA
White									
Advanced		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	48%	47%	NA
Proficient-and-above		83%	85%	90%	88%	NA	95%	96%	2.2
Basic-and-above		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	99%	100%	NA
African American									
Advanced		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	27%	27%	NA
Proficient-and-above		62%	74%	82%	79%	NA	87%	91%	4.8
Basic-and-above		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	98%	98%	NA
Latino									
Advanced		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	31%	33%	NA
Proficient-and-above		62%	67%	77%	78%	NA	88%	92%	5.0
Basic-and-above		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	98%	98%	NA
Asian[2]									
Advanced		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	46%	44%	NA
Proficient-and-above		83%	89%	91%	90%	NA	95%	95%	1.9
Basic-and-above		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	98%	97%	NA
Native American[2]									
Advanced		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	32%	35%	NA
Proficient-and-above		62%	68%	76%	70%	NA	84%	88%	4.4
Basic-and-above		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	97%	98%	NA

Table reads: The percentage of white 8th graders who scored at the advanced level on the state reading test decreased from 48% in 2008 to 47% in 2009. The average yearly gain in the percentage advanced was not calculated because there were fewer than three years of comparable data, too few years to constitute a trend.

[1]Averages are subject to rounding error.

[2]The number of students tested in this subgroup at this grade level was fewer than 500 in 2009 or the most recent year with available data, so changes for this subgroup should be interpreted with caution.

Table NE-8. Percentage of grade 8 students by demographic subgroup scoring at the advanced, proficient-and-above, and basic-and-above levels in reading

Subgroup	Reporting year								Average yearly percentage point gain[1]
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	
All tested students									
Advanced		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	44%	43%	NA
Proficient-and-above		80%	83%	88%	87%	90%	94%	95%	2.5
Basic-and-above		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	99%	99%	NA
Low-income students									
Advanced		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	34%	35%	NA
Proficient-and-above		67%	72%	80%	79%	NA	89%	92%	4.2
Basic-and-above		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	98%	99%	NA
Students with disabilities[3]									
Advanced		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	17%	19%	NA
Proficient-and-above		42%	50%	61%	61%	72%	80%	82%	7.0
Basic-and-above		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	96%	96%	NA
English language learners[3]									
Advanced		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	16%	17%	NA
Proficient-and-above		44%	51%	65%	67%	73%	77%	84%	5.6
Basic-and-above		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	92%	94%	NA
Female									
Advanced		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	50%	48%	NA
Proficient-and-above		85%	87%	91%	89%	NA	96%	97%	2.0
Basic-and-above		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	99%	99%	NA
Male									
Advanced		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	39%	38%	NA
Proficient-and-above		75%	79%	86%	84%	NA	92%	94%	3.1
Basic-and-above		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	98%	99%	NA

Table reads: The percentage of low-income 8th graders who scored at the advanced level on the state reading test increased from 34% in 2008 to 35% in 2009. The average yearly gain in the percentage advanced was not calculated because there were fewer than three years of comparable data, too few years to constitute a trend.

[1]Averages are subject to rounding error.

[2]The number of students tested in this subgroup at this grade level was fewer than 500 in 2009 or the most recent year with available data, so changes for this subgroup should be interpreted with caution.

[3]Gap trends for students with disabilities and English language learners should be interpreted with caution because state and federal policy changes may have affected the year-to-year comparability of test results for these subgroups. Average yearly percentage point gains are based on 2006-2009 results.

Table NE-9. Percentages of grade 8 students by racial or ethnic subgroup scoring at the advanced, proficient-and-above, and basic-and-above levels in mathematics

	Reporting year								Average yearly percentage point gain[1]
Subgroup	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	
All tested students									
Advanced	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	41%	41%	NA
Proficient-and-above	72%	75%	81%	85%	85%	88%	92%	92%	2.8
Basic-and-above	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	98%	98%	NA
White									
Advanced	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	45%	46%	NA
Proficient-and-above	NA	79%	83%	87%	87%	NA	94%	94%	2.5
Basic-and-above	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	99%	99%	NA
African American									
Advanced	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	20%	21%	NA
Proficient-and-above	NA	55%	61%	73%	74%	NA	80%	84%	4.8
Basic-and-above	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	97%	97%	NA
Latino									
Advanced	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	28%	29%	NA
Proficient-and-above	NA	53%	66%	74%	77%	NA	86%	87%	5.7
Basic-and-above	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	98%	98%	NA
Asian[2]									
Advanced	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	46%	42%	NA
Proficient-and-above	NA	85%	89%	92%	91%	NA	96%	92%	1.2
Basic-and-above	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	99%	98%	NA
Native American[2]									
Advanced	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	26%	22%	NA
Proficient-and-above	NA	51%	63%	70%	68%	NA	82%	83%	5.3
Basic-and-above	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	96%	97%	NA

Table reads: The percentage of white 8th graders who scored at the advanced level on the state math test increased from 45% in 2008 to 46% in 2009. The average yearly gain in the percentage advanced was not calculated because there were fewer than three years of comparable data, too few years to constitute a trend.

[1]Averages are subject to rounding error.

[2]The number of students tested in this subgroup at this grade level was fewer than 500 in 2009 or the most recent year with available data, so changes for this subgroup should be interpreted with caution.

Table NE-10. Percentage of grade 8 students by demographic subgroup scoring at the advanced, proficient-and-above, and basic-and-above levels in mathematics

	Reporting year								Average yearly percentage point gain[1]
Subgroup	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	
All tested students									
Advanced	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	41%	41%	NA
Proficient-and-above	72%	75%	81%	85%	85%	88%	92%	92%	2.8
Basic-and-above	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	98%	98%	NA
Low-income students									
Advanced	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	29%	29%	NA
Proficient-and-above	NA	60%	68%	74%	76%	NA	85%	86%	4.4
Basic-and-above	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	98%	98%	NA
Students with disabilities[3]									
Advanced	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	16%	17%	NA
Proficient-and-above	41%	36%	44%	55%	57%	67%	74%	73%	5.3
Basic-and-above	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	93%	92%	NA
English language learners[3]									
Advanced	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	17%	17%	NA
Proficient-and-above	43%	37%	54%	67%	71%	71%	74%	75%	1.4
Basic-and-above	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	95%	94%	NA
Female									
Advanced	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	41%	43%	NA
Proficient-and-above	NA	77%	82%	86%	86%	NA	92%	93%	2.6
Basic-and-above	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	99%	99%	NA
Male									
Advanced	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	40%	40%	NA
Proficient-and-above	NA	74%	79%	84%	84%	NA	91%	91%	2.9
Basic-and-above	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	98%	98%	NA

Table reads: The percentage of low-income 8th graders who scored at the advanced level on the state math test remained the same from 2008 to 2009 at 29%. The average yearly gain in the percentage advanced was not calculated because there were fewer than three years of comparable data, too few years to constitute a trend.

[1]Averages are subject to rounding error.

[2]The number of students tested in this subgroup at this grade level was fewer than 500 in 2009 or the most recent year with available data, so changes for this subgroup should be interpreted with caution.

[3]Gap trends for students with disabilities and English language learners should be interpreted with caution because state and federal policy changes may have affected the year-to-year comparability of test results for these subgroups. Average yearly percentage point gains are based on 2006-2009 results.

Achievement by Subgroup — Gap Trends (Percentages Proficient)

Table NE-11. Subgroup achievement trends in reading by percentages proficient

NOTE: L = larger gain than comparison group. S = smaller gain than comparison group. E = equal gain to comparison group.
If the average annual gain for the subgroup of interest, such as African American students, is larger than the average annual gain for the comparison group, such as white students, this indicates that the achievement gap has narrowed. If the average gain for the subgroup of interest is smaller, this means the gap has widened.

	Grade 4					Grade 8					Grade 11				
Subgroup	Year span	Starting PP	Ending PP	Average annual gain[1]	Gain larger or smaller than comparison group	Year span	Starting PP	Ending PP	Average annual gain[1]	Gain larger or smaller than comparison group	Year span	Starting PP	Ending PP	Average annual gain[1]	Gain larger or smaller than comparison group
All tested students	03-09	83%	95%	2.0		03-09	80%	95%	2.5		03-09	77%	92%	2.5	
White	03-09	86%	96%	1.7		03-09	83%	96%	2.2		03-09	80%	94%	2.3	
African American	03-09	66%	88%	3.6	L	03-09	62%	91%	4.8	L	03-09	53%	83%	5.0	L
Latino	03-09	71%	92%	3.4	L	03-09	62%	92%	5.0	L	03-09	51%	84%	5.6	L
Asian	03-09	84%	95%	1.9[2]	L	03-09	83%	95%	1.9[2]	S	03-09	74%	91%	2.8[2]	L
Native American	03-09	70%	88%	3.1[2]	L	03-09	62%	88%	4.4[2]	L	03-09	59%	81%	3.7[2]	L
All tested students	03-09	83%	95%	2.0		03-09	80%	95%	2.5		03-09	77%	92%	2.5	
Low-income	03-09	72%	92%	3.3	L	03-09	67%	92%	4.2	L	03-09	60%	86%	4.3	L
All tested students	06-09	87%	95%	2.6		06-09	87%	95%	2.7		07-09	87%	92%	2.4	
Students with disabilities[3]	06-09	64%	84%	6.5	L	06-09	61%	82%	7.0	L	07-09	66%	74%	4.1	L
All tested students	06-09	87%	95%	2.6		06-09	87%	95%	2.7		07-09	87%	92%	2.4	
English language learners[3]	06-09	72%	85%	4.5	L	06-09	67%	84%	5.6	L	07-09	59%	67%	3.8[2]	L
Female	03-09	87%	96%	1.5		03-09	85%	97%	2.0		03-09	82%	94%	2.0	
Male	03-09	80%	94%	2.3	L	03-09	75%	94%	3.1	L	03-09	72%	90%	3.0	L

Table reads: In 2003, 86% of white 4th graders and 66% of African American 4th graders scored at the proficient level on the state reading test. In 2009, 96% of white 4th graders and 88% of African American 4th graders scored at the proficient level in reading. Between 2003 and 2009, the percentage proficient improved at an average rate of 1.7 percentage points per year for white students and 3.6 percentage points per year for African American students, indicating a larger rate of

gain and a narrowing of the achievement gap for African American 4th graders.

[1]Numbers in these columns are subject to rounding error.

[2]The number of students tested in this subgroup at this grade level was fewer than 500 in 2009 or the most recent year with available data, so changes for this subgroup should be interpreted with caution.

[3]Gap trends for students with disabilities and English language learners should be interpreted with caution because state and federal policy changes may have affected the year-to-year comparability of test results for these subgroups.

Table NE-12. Subgroup achievement trends in mathematics by percentages proficient

NOTE: L = larger gain than comparison group. S = smaller gain than comparison group. E = equal gain to comparison group.
If the average annual gain for the subgroup of interest, such as African American students, is larger than the average annual gain for the comparison group, such as white students, this indicates that the achievement gap has narrowed. If the average gain for the subgroup of interest is smaller, this means the gap has widened.

	Grade 4					Grade 8					Grade 11				
Subgroup	Year span	Starting PP	Ending PP	Average annual gain[1]	Gain larger or smaller than comparison group	Year span	Starting PP	Ending PP	Average annual gain[1]	Gain larger or smaller than comparison group	Year span	Starting PP	Ending PP	Average annual gain[1]	Gain larger or smaller than comparison group
All tested students	03-09	82%	96%	2.3		03-09	75%	92%	2.8		03-09	65%	90%	4.1	
White	03-09	84%	97%	2.1		03-09	79%	94%	2.5		03-09	69%	91%	3.7	
African American	03-09	68%	90%	3.6	L	03-09	55%	84%	4.8	L	03-09	36%	83%	7.8	L
Latino	03-09	70%	94%	4.0	L	03-09	53%	87%	5.7	L	03-09	38%	85%	7.8	L
Asian	03-09	88%	96%	1.4[2]	S	03-09	85%	92%	1.2[2]	S	03-09	66%	93%	4.5[2]	L
Native American	03-09	73%	89%	2.7[2]	L	03-09	51%	83%	5.3[2]	L	03-09	48%	78%	5.0[2]	L
All tested students	03-09	82%	96%	2.3		03-09	75%	92%	2.8		03-09	65%	90%	4.1	
Low-income	03-09	71%	93%	3.6	L	03-09	60%	86%	4.4	L	03-09	48%	84%	5.9	L
All tested students	06-09	88%	96%	2.5		06-09	85%	92%	2.3		07-09	85%	90%	2.6	
Students with disabilities[3]	06-09	68%	87%	6.5	L	06-09	57%	73%	5.3	L	07-09	58%	68%	5.1	L
All tested students	06-09	88%	96%	2.5		06-09	85%	92%	2.3		07-09	85%	90%	2.6	
English language learners[3]	06-09	79%	90%	3.5	L	06-09	71%	75%	1.4	S	07-09	58%	77%	9.5[2]	L
Female	03-09	82%	96%	2.3		03-09	77%	93%	2.6		03-09	66%	91%	4.1	
Male	03-09	81%	96%	2.4	L	03-09	74%	91%	2.9	L	03-09	65%	89%	4.0	S

Table reads: In 2003, 84% of white 4th graders and 68% of African American 4th graders scored at the proficient level on the state math test. In 2009, 97% of white 4th graders and 90% of African American 4th graders scored at the proficient level in math. Between 2003 and 2009, the percentage proficient improved at an average rate of 2.1 percentage points per year for white students and 3.6 percentage points per year for African American students, indicating a larger rate of gain and a narrowing of the achievement gap for African American 4th graders.

[1]Numbers in these columns are subject to rounding error.

[2]The number of students tested in this subgroup at this grade level was fewer than 500 in 2009 or the most recent year with available data, so changes for this subgroup should be interpreted with caution.

[3]Gap trends for students with disabilities and English language learners should be interpreted with caution because state and federal policy changes may have affected the year-to-year comparability of test results for these subgroups.

Table NE-13. Numbers of test-takers

Subgroup	Subject	Grade 4					Grade 8					Grade 11				
		Year span	# of test-takers start year	# of test-takers end year	Change in # of test-takers over time	% of test-takers in subgroup in end year	Year span	# of test-takers start year	# of test-takers end year	Change in # of test-takers over time	% of test-takers in subgroup in end year	Year span	# of test-takers start year	# of test-takers end year	Change in # of test-takers over time	% of test-takers in subgroup in end year
All tested students	Reading	08-09	20,308	20,779	2.3%	100.0%	08-09	20,675	20,759	0.4%	100.0%	08-09	22,838	21,259	-6.9%	100.0%
	Math	08-09	20,286	20,775	2.4%	100.0%	08-09	20,537	20,691	0.7%	100.0%	08-09	20,616	20,549	-0.3%	100.0%
White	Reading	08-09	15,125	15,164	0.3%	73.0%	08-09	15,886	15,750	-0.9%	75.9%	08-09	18,981	17,170	-9.5%	80.8%
	Math	08-09	15,109	15,174	0.4%	73.0%	08-09	15,777	15,708	-0.4%	75.9%	08-09	17,049	16,712	-2.0%	81.3%
African American	Reading	08-09	1,644	1,678	2.1%	8.1%	08-09	1,641	1,677	2.2%	8.1%	08-09	1,283	1,370	6.8%	6.4%
	Math	08-09	1,638	1,668	1.8%	8.0%	08-09	1,627	1,663	2.2%	8.0%	08-09	1,172	1,281	9.3%	6.2%
Latino	Reading	08-09	2,814	3,060	8.7%	14.7%	08-09	2,395	2,635	10.0%	12.7%	08-09	1,888	2,050	8.6%	9.6%
	Math	08-09	2,814	3,061	8.8%	14.7%	08-09	2,389	2,620	9.7%	12.7%	08-09	1,808	1,959	8.4%	9.5%
Asian	Reading	08-09	418	**483**	15.6%	2.3%	08-09	408	**396**	-2.9%	1.9%	08-09	410	**421**	2.7%	2.0%
	Math	08-09	416	**478**	14.9%	2.3%	08-09	405	**396**	-2.2%	1.9%	08-09	335	**381**	13.7%	1.9%
Native American	Reading	08-09	307	**394**	28.3%	1.9%	08-09	345	**301**	-12.8%	1.4%	08-09	276	**248**	-10.1%	1.2%
	Math	08-09	309	**394**	27.5%	1.9%	08-09	339	**304**	-10.3%	1.5%	08-09	252	**216**	-14.3%	1.1%
Low-income	Reading	08-09	8,537	9,099	6.6%	43.8%	08-09	7,667	8,109	5.8%	39.1%	08-09	5,894	6,212	5.4%	29.2%
	Math	08-09	8,536	9,094	6.5%	43.8%	08-09	7,594	8,061	6.1%	39.0%	08-09	5,572	5,894	5.8%	28.7%
Students w/ disabilities	Reading	08-09	3,754	3,721	-0.9%	17.9%	08-09	2,902	2,931	1.0%	14.1%	08-09	2,499	2,503	0.2%	11.8%
	Math	08-09	3,757	3,729	-0.7%	17.9%	08-09	2,830	2,891	2.2%	14.0%	08-09	2,299	2,357	2.5%	11.5%
English language learners	Reading	08-09	1,473	1,593	8.1%	7.7%	08-09	677	772	14.0%	3.7%	08-09	455	**462**	1.5%	2.2%
	Math	08-09	1,473	1,580	7.3%	7.6%	08-09	668	769	15.1%	3.7%	08-09	433	**430**	-0.7%	2.1%
Female	Reading	08-09	9,890	10,080	1.9%	48.5%	08-09	10,075	10,085	0.1%	48.6%	08-09	11,199	10,453	-6.7%	49.2%
	Math	08-09	9,882	10,067	1.9%	48.5%	08-09	10,028	10,058	0.3%	48.6%	08-09	10,164	10,055	-1.1%	48.9%
Male	Reading	08-09	10,418	10,699	2.7%	51.5%	08-09	10,600	10,674	0.7%	51.4%	08-09	11,639	10,806	-7.2%	50.8%
	Math	08-09	10,404	10,708	2.9%	51.5%	08-09	10,509	10,633	1.2%	51.4%	08-09	10,452	10,494	0.4%	51.1%

Table reads: In 2008, 15,125 students in the white subgroup took the state 4th grade reading test. By 2009, the number of white test-takers had risen to 15,164 students, an increase of 0.3%. In 2009, the white subgroup made up 73.0% of the 20,779 4th graders taking the reading test that year.

Note: **Bold** type indicates that the number of students tested in this subgroup at this grade level was fewer than 500 in 2009 or the most recent year with available data.

Key Terms

Percentage proficient (and above) — The percentage of students in a group who score at or above the cut score for "proficient" performance on the state test used to determine progress under NCLB. The Act requires states to report student test performance in terms of at least three achievement levels: basic, proficient, and advanced. Adequate yearly progress determinations are based on the percentage of students scoring at the proficient level and above.

Percentage basic (and above) — The percentage of students in a group who score at or above the cut score for "basic" performance on the state test used to determine progress under NCLB.

Percentage advanced — The percentage of students in a group who reach or exceed the cut score for "advanced" performance on the state test used to determine progress under NCLB.

Moderate-to-large gain — For the percentage basic, proficient, or advanced, an average gain of 1 or more percentage points per year. For effect size, an average gain of 0.02 or greater per year.

Slight gain — For the percentage basic, proficient, or advanced, an average gain of less than 1 percentage point per year. For effect size, an average gain of less than 0.02 per year.

Moderate-to-large decline — For the percentage basic, proficient, or advanced, an average decline of 1 or more percentage points per year. For effect size, an average decline of 0.02 or greater per year.

Slight decline — For the percentage basic, proficient, or advanced, an average decline of less than 1 percentage point per year. For effect size, an average decline of less than 0.02 per year.

Effect size — A statistical tool that conveys the amount of difference between test results using a common unit of measurement which does not depend on the scoring scale for a particular test.

Accumulated annual effect size — The cumulative gain in effect size over a range of years.

Mean scale score — The arithmetical average of a group of test scores, expressed on a common scale for a particular state's test. The mean is calculated by adding the scores and dividing the sum by the number of scores.

Standard deviation — A measure of how much test scores tend to deviate from the mean—in other words, how spread out or bunched together test scores are. If students' scores are bunched together, with many scores close to the mean, then the standard deviation will be small. If scores are spread out, with many students scoring at the high or low end of the scale, then the standard deviation will be large.

Cautions and Explanations

Different labels for achievement levels — For consistency, all of the state profiles developed for this report use a common set of labels (basic, proficient, and advanced) for the main achievement levels required by NCLB. In practice, however, some states may use different labels, such as "meets standard" instead of proficient, and some states have established additional achievement levels beyond those required by NCLB.

Different names for subgroups — For the sake of consistency and ease of data tabulation, all of the state profiles developed for this report use a common set of names for the major student subgroups. In practice, however, states use various names for subgroups that may differ from those used here (such as using "Hispanic" instead of "Latino," or "special education students" instead of "students with disabilities"). Moreover, a few states separately track the performance of subgroups not included in the analyses for this report.

Special caution for students with disabilities and English language learners — Trends for students with disabilities and English language learners should be interpreted with caution because changes in federal guidance and state accountability plans may have altered which students in these subgroups are tested for accountability purposes, how they are tested, and when their test scores are counted as proficient under NCLB. These factors could affect the year-to-year comparability of test results.

Inclusion of former English language learners — In many states, the subgroup of English language learners (also known as limited English proficient students) includes students who were formerly English language learners but who have achieved English language proficiency or fluency in the last two years. Federal NCLB regulations permit states to include these formerly ELL students (sometimes referred to as "redesignated fluent English proficient" students) in the ELL subgroup for up to two years for purposes of NCLB accountability.

Limitations of percentage proficient measure — The percentage proficient, the main gauge of student performance under NCLB, can be easily understood and gives a snapshot of how many students have met their state's performance expectations. But it also has several limitations as a measure of student achievement. Users of percentage proficient data should keep in mind these limitations, particularly the following:

* "Proficient" means different things across different states. States vary widely in curriculum, learning expectations, and tests, and state tests differ considerably in their difficulty and cut scores for proficient performance.
* Although this study has taken steps to avoid comparing test data where there have been "breaks" in comparability resulting from new tests, changes in content standards, revised cut scores, or other major changes in testing programs, the year-to-year comparability of test results in the same state may still be affected by less obvious policy and demographic changes.
* Changes in student performance may occur that are not reflected in percentage proficient data, such as an increase in the number of students reaching performance levels below and above proficient (such as the basic or advanced levels).
* The size of the achievement gaps between various subgroups depends in part on where a state sets its cut score for proficiency. For example, if a proficiency cut score is set so high that almost nobody reaches it or so low that almost everyone reaches it, there will be little apparent achievement gap. By contrast, if the cut score is closer to the mean test score, the gaps between subgroups will be more apparent.

Difficulty of attributing causes — Although the tables in this profile show trends in test scores since the enactment of NCLB, one cannot assume that these trends have occurred *because* of NCLB. It is always difficult to determine a cause-and-effect relationship between test score trends and any specific education policy or program due to the many federal, state, and local reforms undertaken in recent years and due to the lack of an appropriate "control" group of students not affected by NCLB.