Subgroup Achievement and Gap Trends — Virginia

K-12 enrollment — 1,213,349

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 and Gap Trends — Key Findings

Summary. In grade 8 (the only grade in which subgroup trends were analyzed by achievement level), Virginia showed across-the-board gains—improvements in reading and math at the *proficient-and-above* and *advanced* levels for all racial/ethnic subgroups, low-income students, and boys and girls. (Trends were not available at the *basic* achievement level.) Progress was also made in narrowing achievement gaps between all available subgroups in both subjects at grades 4, 8, and high school. Comparable data were available for 2006-2009.

Data Limitations

Years of comparable percentage proficient data	2006 through 2009
Years of comparable mean scale score data	No mean scale score data available.
Disaggregated data for all subgroups and comparison groups	Data not available until 2008 for comparison groups of students who are *not* low-income, disabled, or English language learners, so the subgroups of low-income students, students with disabilities, and ELLs are compared with all students in the state Individual achievement-level data (i.e., Advanced, Proficient, Fail) not available for high school math end-of-course test Mean scale scores and standard deviations not available for subgroups Numbers of test-takers available for grades 3-8 for 2009 only.

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	Standards of Learning (SOL) Assessments Virginia Alternate Assessment Program
Grades tested for NCLB accountability	3–8; grades vary for high school end-of-course exams
State labels for achievement levels	VA uses four achievement levels: Fail, Fail-Basic, Proficient, and Advanced. For our analyses we treated Proficient as Proficient and Advanced as Advanced. Virginia combines Fail and Fail-Basic into one category, “Fail,” for its state report cards; therefore, no VA achievement level was treated as our Basic.
High school NCLB test also used as an exit exam?	Yes
First year test used	2006
Time of test administration	Fall, spring, and summer
Major changes in testing system (2002–present)	2005–06: Grades 4, 6, and 7 were tested in reading and math and included in AYP determinations for first time 2005–06: Tests for grades 3, 5, and 8 and high school end-of-course tests were revised; data not comparable to previous years Fall 2008: Race/Ethnicity field is now required. If this record is not

included test will be rejected. If student has a multiethnic background and does not identify with one of the racial groups or objects to providing this information 00-unspecified value is used.

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 VA-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					27%	30%	37%	42%	5.0
Proficient-and-above					78%	80%	83%	87%	3.0
Basic-and-above					NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
White									
Advanced					34%	38%	46%	50%	5.3
Proficient-and-above					85%	87%	89%	91%	2.0
Basic-and-above					NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
African American									
Advanced					13%	16%	20%	25%	4.0
Proficient-and-above					64%	68%	71%	78%	4.7
Basic-and-above					NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Latino									
Advanced					13%	15%	23%	29%	5.3
Proficient-and-above					63%	63%	75%	81%	6.0
Basic-and-above					NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Asian									
Advanced					34%	41%	51%	58%	8.0
Proficient-and-above					85%	87%	92%	94%	3.0
Basic-and-above					NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Native American[2]									
Advanced					28%	26%	35%	44%	5.3
Proficient-and-above					81%	86%	89%	88%	2.3
Basic-and-above					NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Table reads: The percentage of white 8th graders who scored at the advanced level on the state reading test increased from 34% in 2006 to 50% in 2009. During this period, the average yearly gain in the percentage advanced in reading for white 8th graders was 5.3 percentage points per year.

[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 VA-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					27%	30%	37%	42%	5.0
Proficient-and-above					78%	80%	83%	87%	3.0
Basic-and-above					NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Low-income students									
Advanced					13%	15%	19%	25%	4.0
Proficient-and-above					63%	65%	71%	78%	5.0
Basic-and-above					NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Students with disabilities[3]									
Advanced					14%	16%	21%	27%	4.3
Proficient-and-above					50%	50%	57%	67%	5.7
Basic-and-above					NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
English language learners[3]									
Advanced					10%	11%	21%	26%	5.3
Proficient-and-above					54%	52%	69%	78%	8.0
Basic-and-above					NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Female									
Advanced					29%	33%	39%	45%	5.3
Proficient-and-above					81%	83%	85%	89%	2.7
Basic-and-above					NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Male									
Advanced					25%	28%	36%	40%	5.0
Proficient-and-above					75%	76%	82%	86%	3.7
Basic-and-above					NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Table reads: The percentage of low-income 8th graders who scored at the advanced level on the state reading test increased from 13% in 2006 to 25% in 2009. During this period, the average yearly gain in the percentage advanced in reading for low-income 8th graders was 4.0 percentage points per year.

[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 VA-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					36%	41%	45%	51%	5.0
Proficient-and-above					76%	77%	83%	85%	3.0
Basic-and-above					NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
White									
Advanced					43%	48%	53%	58%	5.0
Proficient-and-above					83%	84%	89%	90%	2.3
Basic-and-above					NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
African American									
Advanced					20%	24%	27%	35%	5.0
Proficient-and-above					63%	64%	72%	77%	4.7
Basic-and-above					NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Latino									
Advanced					24%	28%	34%	41%	5.7
Proficient-and-above					64%	65%	74%	78%	4.7
Basic-and-above					NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Asian									
Advanced					59%	65%	71%	76%	5.7
Proficient-and-above					89%	90%	94%	95%	2.0
Basic-and-above					NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Native American[2]									
Advanced					33%	39%	46%	48%	5.0
Proficient-and-above					76%	78%	88%	88%	4.0
Basic-and-above					NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Table reads: The percentage of white 8th graders who scored at the advanced level on the state math test increased from 43% in 2006 to 58% in 2009. During this period, the average yearly gain in the percentage advanced in math for white 8th graders was 5.0 percentage points per year.

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

Subgroup	Reporting year								Average yearly percentage point gain[1]
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	
All tested students									
Advanced					36%	41%	45%	51%	5.0
Proficient-and-above					76%	77%	83%	85%	3.0
Basic-and-above					NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Low-income students									
Advanced					20%	24%	29%	36%	5.3
Proficient-and-above					62%	64%	72%	77%	5.0
Basic-and-above					NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Students with disabilities[3]									
Advanced					16%	19%	25%	34%	6.0
Proficient-and-above					45%	47%	58%	69%	8.0
Basic-and-above					NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
English language learners[3]									
Advanced					21%	28%	35%	41%	6.7
Proficient-and-above					58%	62%	72%	76%	6.0
Basic-and-above					NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Female									
Advanced					37%	41%	46%	53%	5.3
Proficient-and-above					79%	80%	85%	88%	3.0
Basic-and-above					NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Male									
Advanced					36%	40%	45%	50%	4.7
Proficient-and-above					74%	75%	81%	83%	3.0
Basic-and-above					NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Table reads: The percentage of low-income 8th graders who scored at the advanced level on the state math test increased from 20% in 2006 to 36% in 2009. During this period, the average yearly gain in the percentage advanced in math for low-income 8th graders was 5.3 percentage points per year.

[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 VA-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					High School EOC				
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	06-09	86%	89%	1.0		06-09	78%	87%	3.0		06-09	90%	95%	1.7	
White	06-09	90%	92%	0.7		06-09	85%	91%	2.0		06-09	94%	97%	1.0	
African American	06-09	78%	81%	1.0	L	06-09	64%	78%	4.7	L	06-09	83%	91%	2.7	L
Latino	06-09	80%	86%	2.0	L	06-09	63%	81%	6.0	L	06-09	83%	93%	3.3	L
Asian	06-09	92%	94%	0.7	E	06-09	85%	94%	3.0	L	06-09	91%	97%	2.0	L
Native American	06-09	86%	88%	0.7[2]	E	06-09	81%	88%	2.3[2]	L	06-09	88%	96%	2.7	L
All tested students	06-09	86%	89%	1.0		06-09	78%	87%	3.0		06-09	90%	95%	1.7	
Low-income	06-09	77%	81%	1.3	L	06-09	63%	78%	5.0	L	06-09	82%	90%	2.7	L
All tested students	06-09	86%	89%	1.0		06-09	78%	87%	3.0		06-09	90%	95%	1.7	
Students with disabilities[3]	06-09	72%	76%	1.3	L	06-09	50%	67%	5.7	L	06-09	69%	79%	3.3	L
All tested students	06-09	86%	89%	1.0		06-09	78%	87%	3.0		06-09	90%	95%	1.7	
English language learners[3]	06-09	79%	85%	2.0	L	06-09	54%	78%	8.0	L	06-09	73%	88%	5.0	L
Female	06-09	88%	90%	0.7		06-09	81%	89%	2.7		06-09	92%	96%	1.3	
Male	06-09	85%	87%	0.7	E	06-09	75%	86%	3.7	L	06-09	89%	95%	2.0	L

Table reads: In 2006, 90% of white 4th graders and 78% of African American 4th graders scored at the proficient level on the state reading test. In 2009, 92% of white 4th graders and 81% of African American 4th graders scored at the proficient level in reading. Between 2006 and 2009, the percentage proficient improved at an average rate of 0.7 percentage points per year for white students and 1.0 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 VA-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					High School EOC				
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	06-09	77%	86%	3.0		06-09	76%	85%	3.0		06-09	85%	91%	1.9	
White	06-09	84%	91%	2.3		06-09	83%	90%	2.3		06-09	89%	94%	1.7	
African American	06-09	64%	78%	4.7	L	06-09	63%	77%	4.7	L	06-09	75%	83%	2.7	L
Latino	06-09	65%	79%	4.7	L	06-09	64%	78%	4.7	L	06-09	79%	87%	2.4	L
Asian	06-09	87%	94%	2.3	E	06-09	89%	95%	2.0	S	06-09	92%	96%	1.2	S
Native American	06-09	78%	84%	2.0[2]	S	06-09	76%	88%	4.0[2]	L	06-09	82%	92%	3.4	L
All tested students	06-09	77%	86%	3.0		06-09	76%	85%	3.0		06-09	85%	91%	1.9	
Low-income	06-09	63%	78%	5.0	L	06-09	62%	77%	5.0	L	06-09	78%	85%	2.2	L
All tested students	06-09	77%	86%	3.0		06-09	76%	85%	3.0		06-09	85%	91%	1.9	
Students with disabilities[3]	06-09	59%	73%	4.7	L	06-09	45%	69%	8.0	L	06-09	65%	75%	3.4	L
All tested students	06-09	77%	86%	3.0		06-09	76%	85%	3.0		06-09	85%	91%	1.9	
English language learners[3]	06-09	63%	79%	5.3	L	06-09	58%	76%	6.0	L	06-09	80%	87%	2.4	L
Female	06-09	77%	86%	3.0		06-09	79%	88%	3.0		06-09	86%	91%	1.9	
Male	06-09	78%	87%	3.0	E	06-09	74%	83%	3.0	E	06-09	85%	90%	1.9	E

Table reads: In 2006, 84% of white 4th graders and 64% of African American 4th graders scored at the proficient level on the state math test. In 2009, 91% of white 4th graders and 78% of African American 4th graders scored at the proficient level in math. Between 2006 and 2009, the percentage proficient improved at an average rate of 2.3 percentage points per year for white students and 4.7 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 VA-13. Numbers of test-takers

Subgroup	Subject	Grade 4					Grade 8					HS EOC				
		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	2009	NA	90,386	NA	100.0%	2009	NA	92,296	NA	100.0%	2009	NA	NA	NA	NA
	Math	2009	NA	90,320	NA	100.0%	2009	NA	84,415	NA	100.0%	2009	NA	NA	NA	NA
White	Reading	2009	NA	51,092	NA	56.5%	2009	NA	53,660	NA	58.1%	2009	NA	NA	NA	NA
	Math	2009	NA	51,005	NA	56.5%	2009	NA	47,773	NA	56.6%	2009	NA	NA	NA	NA
African American	Reading	2009	NA	22,896	NA	25.3%	2009	NA	23,869	NA	25.9%	2009	NA	NA	NA	NA
	Math	2009	NA	22,834	NA	25.3%	2009	NA	22,765	NA	27.0%	2009	NA	NA	NA	NA
Latino	Reading	2009	NA	8,099	NA	9.0%	2009	NA	7,501	NA	8.1%	2009	NA	NA	NA	NA
	Math	2009	NA	8,124	NA	9.0%	2009	NA	7,208	NA	8.5%	2009	NA	NA	NA	NA
Asian	Reading	2009	NA	5,014	NA	5.5%	2009	NA	4,905	NA	5.3%	2009	NA	NA	NA	NA
	Math	2009	NA	5,096	NA	5.6%	2009	NA	4,418	NA	5.2%	2009	NA	NA	NA	NA
Native American	Reading	2009	NA	265	NA	0.3%	2009	NA	318	NA	0.3%	2009	NA	NA	NA	NA
	Math	2009	NA	256	NA	0.3%	2009	NA	265	NA	0.3%	2009	NA	NA	NA	NA
Low-income	Reading	2009	NA	33,701	NA	37.3%	2009	NA	29,430	NA	31.9%	2009	NA	NA	NA	NA
	Math	2009	NA	33,695	NA	37.3%	2009	NA	28,161	NA	33.4%	2009	NA	NA	NA	NA
Students w/ disabilities	Reading	2009	NA	12,387	NA	13.7%	2009	NA	13,054	NA	14.1%	2009	NA	NA	NA	NA
	Math	2009	NA	12,376	NA	13.7%	2009	NA	12,996	NA	15.4%	2009	NA	NA	NA	NA
English language learners	Reading	2009	NA	8,907	NA	9.9%	2009	NA	6,065	NA	6.6%	2009	NA	NA	NA	NA
	Math	2009	NA	9,105	NA	10.1%	2009	NA	6,073	NA	7.2%	2009	NA	NA	NA	NA
Female	Reading	2009	NA	44,036	NA	48.7%	2009	NA	44,885	NA	48.6%	2009	NA	NA	NA	NA
	Math	2009	NA	44,000	NA	48.7%	2009	NA	40,484	NA	48.0%	2009	NA	NA	NA	NA
Male	Reading	2009	NA	46,350	NA	51.3%	2009	NA	47,411	NA	51.4%	2009	NA	NA	NA	NA
	Math	2009	NA	46,320	NA	51.3%	2009	NA	43,931	NA	52.0%	2009	NA	NA	NA	NA

Table reads: In 2009, 51,092 students in the white subgroup took the state 4th grade reading test. In 2009, the white subgroup made up 56.5% of the 90,386 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.