News...News... Council of the Great City Schools News...News...

Council of the Great City Schools
1301 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. • Suite 702 • Washington, D.C. • 20004
http://www.cgcs.org

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE
March 21, 2006

CONTACT: Henry Duvall
(202) 393-2427
hduvall@cgcs.org

Study Shows Urban School Progress on Two Fronts

Trends in Math and Reading on State and Federal Assessments Examined

WASHINGTON, March 21 – Urban school achievement in reading and mathematics on state-mandated tests continues to climb, with evidence showing a parallel upward trend of big-city school districts that volunteered to take the often more rigorous federal test -- the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

That is the conclusion of a new annual study released today by the Council of the Great City Schools called *Beating the Odds,* which shows students in 66 major city school systems in 38 states posting new gains in fourth- and eighth-grade mathematics and reading on state assessments in 2005.

And for the first time, the study compares state and NAEP test scores to determine if there is progress among urban public school students on two distinctly different assessment tracks. The report shows parallel upward achievement, generally corroborating that the gains are solid.

Increases in Percentages of 4th and 8th Grade Urban Students Scoring at or above Proficiency in Reading and Math*

	2002	2003	2004	2005	Change
4th Grade Reading	43.3%	47.9%	50.5%	54.4%	+11.1
4th Grade Math	44.5%	50.9%	55.4%	58.5%	+14.0
8th Grade Reading	36.1%	37.7%	38.6%	39.7%	+3.6
8th Grade Math	37.3%	39.3%	43.1%	45.7%	+8.4

***Percentages reflect student performances on differing state assessments in cities that administered the same test in each of four consecutive years**

"The data suggest that improvement can be attained and sustained in the nation's inner cities," says Council Executive Director Michael Casserly. "Evidence from two completely different assessments indicates that the progress in urban schools is indeed real."

Data reveal that 58.5 percent of urban school students in the study scored at or above proficiency in fourth-grade math, a 14 percentage point increase from 44.5 percent in 2002 on state tests. For eighth graders, the percentage climbed to 45.7 percent compared from 37.3 percent in 2002

In reading, urban schoolchildren also posted gains, but not as fast as in math. From 2002 to 2005, the percentage of fourth graders scoring at or above proficiency in reading/language arts on state

tests rose to 54.4 percent from 43.3 percent in 2002 – an 11.1 percent gain. For eighth graders, the percentage increased to 39.7 percent from 36.1 percent in 2002.

NAEP Scores

In examining fourth-grade math and reading scores on the NAEP, data show that the gains coincide with the state trends, but at lower percentages of students scoring at or above proficiency on what is generally considered a more rigorous exam than most state tests.

Some 24 percent of fourth graders in math scored at or above proficiency in 2005 on NAEP, a 4 percentage point hike from 20 percent in 2003, the first year of urban NAEP math results. In reading, 20 percent reached or went beyond the proficiency level in 2005, a 3 percentage point increase from 17 percent in 2002.

"The urban NAEP gains mirror the gains we are seeing on state tests; NAEP does not negate them," says Casserly. "One sees significant gains in math in grades four and eight, and in reading in grade four – no matter which assessment one uses."

The Council's sixth annual report on *Beating the Odds* gives city-by-city analysis of how inner-city schools are performing on the academic goals and standards set by their respective states to measure student achievement and to hold districts and schools accountable for results.

The study also includes, for the first time, how student test scores of 11 big-city school districts that volunteered for the Trial Urban District Assessment, a special project in NAEP, compare with scores resulting from their respective state tests. Among the 11 cities are New York, Chicago and Los Angeles, the nation's largest school systems. **(Two charts attached show Trends in State vs. NAEP Proficiency Levels.)**

State Math Trends

Beating the Odds VI shows that 93.8 percent of urban districts increased their math scores on state tests in grade four between 2000 and 2005 school years, and 70.7 percent improved at a rate equal to or faster than their respective states. In grade eight, 93.3 percent of districts saw an increase during the same school years, with 71.1 percent improving at a rate equal to or faster than their states.

Although urban schools show gains in math performance, the big cities still lag behind state and national averages in fourth and eighth grades. However, 14.3 percent of urban districts had math scores in grades four and eight that were equal to or greater than their respective states.

Four major urban school districts – Albuquerque, Anchorage and Florida's Broward County (Fort Lauderdale) and Palm Beach County – had both fourth- and eighth-grade math scores that were equal to or greater than their respective states.

Other urban school systems that had average math scores in the fourth grade equal to or greater than their states were Charleston, S.C., San Diego and San Francisco. In eighth grade, the cities were Greensboro, N.C.; Omaha, Neb.; and Portland, Ore.

State Reading Trends

Reading trends show that 89.7 percent of urban school districts increased their fourth-grade scores, and 59.3 percent improved at a rate equal to or faster than their respective states since 2000.
In eighth grade, 87.5 percent of the urban districts increased their scores, and 73.3 percent improved at a rate equal to or faster than their states.

Similar to math, reading scores in urban schools were generally below state and national averages. But some 16.1 percent of urban districts had reading scores in grade four that were equal to or greater than their respective states, and about 16.2 percent in eighth-grade reading.

Three urban districts – Albuquerque, Anchorage and Palm Beach County – showed reading scores, like in math, that were equal to or greater than their respective states.

Other urban districts – Charlotte and Florida's Duval County (Jacksonville) -- had fourth-grade reading scores matching or exceeding their states. In eighth-grade reading, Florida's Broward County (Fort Lauderdale), Hillsborough County (Tampa) and Portland, Ore. had scores equal to or greater than their states.

Achievement Gaps

Beating the Odds also presents data on racially identifiable achievement gaps, language proficiency, disability and income, as well as urban school demographic conditions and funding.

Academic achievement gaps by race and ethnicity appear to be narrowing, but the results are still preliminary, according to *Beating the Odds.* In math, 55.6 percent of fourth grades tested in urban school districts narrowed between white and African American students, while 56.4 percent of eighth grades. The gap between white and Hispanic students in fourth-grade math narrowed by 71.4 percent, and about 56.8 percent of eighth grades tested.

In reading, the gaps reduced by 84.6 percent in fourth grades tested in urban school districts between white and African American students, and 63.3 percent in eighth grades. Between Hispanic and white students, the fourth-grade reading gap narrowed by 76 percent, and about 75.9 percent of eighth grades tested.

Urban Environment

America's big-city school systems are generally different from their suburban and rural counterparts. Demographically, urban public schools enroll students who are twice as likely as their peers nationwide to be eligible for a free or reduced priced lunch and to be an English language learner. They enroll about one-third of all students of color in the country.

Yet, more than three million urban school youngsters (over 40 percent) attend schools in city districts where average per pupil expenditures are below statewide averages, *Beating the Odds* points out.

The report attributes the standards movement as the catalyst that triggered change in urban schools. "The public reminded educators – particularly those in cities – why they were in business in the first place and what we were being held responsible for delivering," says Casserly, noting that urban educators "are working harder and smarter than ever before."

"With a combination of NAEP and state gains, it is clear that urban schools have established a solid beachhead on the rocky shoals of school reform," he stresses. "It is now time to determine how the pace of improvement can be accelerated."

The Council of the Great City Schools is a national coalition representing 66 of the largest urban public school systems in the United States.

City-by-city profiles of the sixth edition of *Beating the Odds* can be found on the Council's web site at http://www.cgcs.org.

# # #

Trends in State vs. NAEP Proficiency Levels in Math—4th Grade[1]

		State Tests[2]					NAEP			
		2002	2003	2005	Δ		2002	2003	2005	Δ
National										
	% Proficient +	--	--	--	--		--	31	35	+4*
	% Below Basic	--	--	--	--		--	24	21	-3*
Urban										
	% Proficient +	--	51	59	+8		--	20	24	+4*
	% Below Basic	--	--	--	--		--	37	32	-5*
Atlanta										
	% Proficient +	--	67	70	+3		--	13	17	+4
	% Below Basic	--	32	30	-2		--	50	43	-7*
Austin										
	% Proficient +	--	67	78	+11		--	--	40	--
	% Below Basic	--	--	--	--		--	--	15	--
Boston										
	% Proficient +	--	16	21	+5		--	12	22	+10*
	% Below Basic	--	38	32	-6		--	41	28	-13*
Charlotte										
	% Proficient +	--	95	93	-2		--	41	44	+3
	% Below Basic	--	0.8	0.7	-0.1		--	16	14	-2
Chicago**										
	% Proficient +	--	49	55	+6		--	10	13	+4
	% Below Basic	--	19	16	-3		--	50	48	-2
Cleveland										
	% Proficient +	--	50	53	+3		--	10	13	+3
	% Below Basic	--	40	37	-3		--	49	40	-9*
D.C. **										
	% Proficient +	--	35	41	+6		--	7	10	+3*
	% Below Basic	--	25	20	-5		--	64	55	-9*
Houston										
	% Proficient +	--	63	69	+6		--	18	26	+8*
	% Below Basic	--	--	--	--		--	30	23	-7*
LA										
	% Proficient +	--	40	43	+3		--	13	18	+5*
	% Below Basic	--	34	32	-2		--	48	42	-6*
New York										
	% Proficient +	--	67	78	+11		--	21	26	+5*
	% Below Basic	--	9	5	-4		--	33	27	-6*
San Diego										
	% Proficient +	--	39	52	+13		--	20	29	+9*
	% Below Basic	--	29	23	-6		--	34	26	-8*

[1] City scores on state tests cannot be compared with one another and NAEP scores cannot be compared with state scores
[2] Trends from 1999-00 through 2004-05 can be found in the Profiles section of the report.
* Statistically Significant change from 2003. (Source: National Center for Education Statistics.)
** Grade 3 data

Trends in State vs. NAEP Proficiency Levels in Reading/Language Arts—4th Grade[3]

		State Tests[4]					NAEP			
		2002	2003	2005	Δ		2002	2003	2005	Δ
National										
	% Proficient +	--	--	--	--		30	30	30	0
	% Below Basic	--	--	--	--		38	38	38	0
Urban										
	% Proficient +	43	48	54	+11		17	19	20	+3*
	% Below Basic	--	--	--	--		56	53	51	-5*
Atlanta										
	% Proficient +	71	76	83	+12		12	14	17	+5*
	% Below Basic	29	24	17	-12		65	63	59	-6*
Austin										
	% Proficient +	--	75	78	+3		--	--	29	--
	% Below Basic	--	--	--	--		--	--	39	--
Boston										
	% Proficient +	24	27	25	+1		--	16	16	0
	% Below Basic	26	28	27	+1		--	52	49	-3
Charlotte										
	% Proficient +	74	83	84	+10		--	31	33	+2
	% Below Basic	--	5	4	-1		--	36	35	-1
Chicago*										
	% Proficient +	35	36	42	+7		11	14	14	+3
	% Below Basic	17	20	17	0		66	60	60	-6
Cleveland										
	% Proficient +	40	59	59	+19		--	9	10	+1
	% Below Basic	27	13	22	-5		--	65	63	-2
D.C.*										
	% Proficient +	29	31	39	+10		10	10	11	+1
	% Below Basic	35	33	25	-10		69	69	67	-2
Houston										
	% Proficient +	--	69	70	+1		18	18	21	+3
	% Below Basic	--	--	--	--		52	52	48	-4
LA										
	% Proficient +	24	28	34	+10		11	11	14	+3*
	% Below Basic	38	34	32	-6		67	65	63	-4
New York										
	% Proficient +	47	52	54	+7		19	22	22	+3
	% Below Basic	15	9	9	-6		53	47	43	-10*
San Diego										
	% Proficient +	36	40	51	+15		--	22	22	0
	% Below Basic	28	23	19	-9		--	49	49	0

[3] City scores on state tests cannot be compared with one another.
[4] Trends from 1999-00 through 2004-05 can be found in the Profiles section of the report.
* Grade 3 data