



EMBARGOED UNTIL:  
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## **Minnesota Students Make Small Gains in Math, Steady in Reading on 2011 MCAs**

*Despite gains, achievement gap still persists*

Roseville – Minnesota students made small gains on the 2011 Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs). However, significant achievement gaps remain between the state's white students and students of color.

Student proficiency on the Graduation-Required Assessments for Diploma (GRAD) remained steady in both Reading and Math statewide, and showed a slight decrease in Writing. The GRAD is embedded within the Math and Reading MCAs.

"Any time we see growth, it's a positive step," said Education Commissioner Brenda Cassellius. "The forward movement reflects the good work schools and districts are doing to align curriculum and instruction to improve student achievement."

According to results announced today by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), student proficiency in Grade 11 MCA Math increased six percentage points over last year to 49 percent, with gains ranging from three to eight percentage points in student subgroups. Overall Grade 10 Reading MCA student performance remained unchanged at 75 percent, with slight gains in student subgroups from one to four percentage points. Only 17 percent of Minnesota's African-American students were proficient in the MCA Math assessment compared to 56 percent of Minnesota's white students.

"The bad news is that we are still seeing significant gaps between our white students compared to our students of color and poor kids," said Commissioner Cassellius. "It's hard to cheer when only half of kids are scoring proficient in math, and only 17 percent of black kids are scoring proficient despite a four-percentage-point gain."

Cassellius continued, "When fewer than half of our students are proficient on math standards that have been in place since 2003, we need to be doing something different. The standards have not changed, the test has not changed, but unfortunately our strategies for improving achievement for all students have not changed, either. We need to be doing something different, including taking a good, hard look at our math standards."

Statewide, 79 percent of Minnesota 10th-graders met the state's reading graduation requirement on the first attempt, a one-percentage-point increase from 2010, by earning a proficient score on MCA or by earning a passing score on the GRAD.

In Math, 59 percent of Minnesota 11th-graders met the state's math graduation requirement on the first attempt, a one-percentage-point increase from 2010, by earning a proficient score on the MCA or by earning a passing score on the GRAD.

### **2011 Reading and Math MCAs**

The MCAs measure student performance on the Minnesota Academic Standards. Those standards, developed in partnership with Minnesota educators, define what students should know

and be able to do in a particular grade. Students who meet or exceed standards on the MCA are considered proficient.

Complete Reading and Math MCA data, including school and district data, is scheduled to be released during the week of August 15, 2011. Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) results will be released in September.

### Reading, Math and Writing Graduation Requirements

Students must meet the math and reading graduation requirements in order to graduate. Multiple GRAD retest opportunities are available to students who did not meet the graduation requirement. Schools provide remediation to those students prior to taking the GRAD retest online. Under legislation passed in 2009, for the next four years, students who do not meet the math graduation requirement can still graduate if they:

- Complete all coursework and credits required for graduation.
- Participate in district-prescribed academic remediation in math.
- Participate in at least two retests of the math GRAD exam or pass the math GRAD exam, whichever happens first.

Schools must also place a student's pass/not pass status for the Math MCA, Reading MCA, Writing GRAD, Math GRAD (if applicable) and Reading GRAD (if applicable) on a student's transcript.

Eighty-nine percent of Minnesota 9th-graders met the writing graduation requirement by passing the Writing GRAD, a one-percentage-point decrease over last year. The Writing GRAD assessment, which is not embedded into an MCA-II, is designed to measure whether or not a student has attained basic writing skills before graduation. Those skills include the ability to formulate and communicate a written message in English to an adult reader. Taking into account several factors, including composition, style, sentence formation, grammar, mechanics and spelling, the assessments are graded as passing or not passing. Students who do not pass the Writing GRAD assessment will have opportunities to retest.

**10<sup>th</sup>-Grade Reading Graduation Requirement**

	Reading Meeting Graduation Requirement		
	2009	2010	2011
<b>All Students</b>	78	78	79
<b>White</b>	84	84	85
<b>Black</b>	48	50	54
<b>Hispanic</b>	52	54	59
<b>Asian</b>	62	64	67
<b>American Indian</b>	57	58	64
<b>Free/Reduced Price Lunch</b>	57	60	63
<b>Students with Disabilities</b>	37	39	43
<b>English Language Learners</b>	31	29	33

**11<sup>th</sup>-Grade Math Graduation Requirement**

	Math Meeting Graduation Requirement		
	2009	2010	2011
<b>All Students</b>	57	58	59
<b>White</b>	63	64	67
<b>Black</b>	21	23	24
<b>Hispanic</b>	31	29	32
<b>Asian</b>	52	54	53
<b>American Indian</b>	30	27	32
<b>Free/Reduced Price Lunch</b>	34	35	38
<b>Students with Disabilities</b>	14	15	21
<b>English Language Learners</b>	26	15	14

### 9<sup>th</sup>-Grade Writing Graduation Requirement

	Writing Meeting Graduation Requirement		
	2009	2010	2011
All Students	89	90	89
White	93	94	93
Black	72	74	75
Hispanic	75	78	77
Asian	83	82	87
American Indian	77	79	79
Free/Reduced Price Lunch	78	80	81
Students with Disabilities	60	62	60
English Language Learners	57	58	53

### 10<sup>th</sup>-Grade Reading MCA-II

	Percent Proficient 2008	Percent Proficient 2009	Percent Proficient 2010	Percent Proficient 2011	Percentage Point Change	Trend Percent Change
All Students	71	74	75	75	0	+4
White	78	81	82	83	+1	+5
Black	36	42	45	49	+4	+13
Hispanic	42	47	50	54	+4	+7
Asian	58	59	60	62	+2	+4
American Indian	48	50	55	59	+4	+11
Free/Reduced Price Lunch	48	52	56	58	+2	+10
Students with Disabilities	26	31	36	38	+2	+12
English Language Learners	23	27	25	27	+2	+4

### 11<sup>th</sup>-Grade Math MCA-II

	Percent Proficient 2008	Percent Proficient 2009	Percent Proficient 2010	Percent Proficient 2011	Percent Change	Trend Percent Change
All Students	34	42	43	49	+6	+15
White	38	47	48	56	+8	+18
Black	8	11	13	17	+4	+9
Hispanic	14	17	18	23	+5	+9
Asian	31	36	40	43	+3	+12
American Indian	11	18	17	23	+6	+12
Free/Reduced Price Lunch	16	20	22	28	+6	+12
Students with Disabilities	5	7	8	14	+6	+9
English Language Learners	3	12	8	9	+1	+6

“Moving student achievement forward doesn’t happen overnight – it happens a little at a time” said Commissioner Cassellius. “However, the pace of the gains we’re seeing does not reflect the sense of urgency we should be feeling. These scores will serve as a baseline for this

administration to measure our own performance based on student academic growth. We anticipate the reforms measures outlined in Governor Dayton's 7-Point Plan will serve as the blueprint for improved achievement for all students."

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