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‘Nation’s Report Card’ shows Idaho students compare well to peers in other states

(BOISE) – Idaho’s latest scores in the National Assessment for Education Progress (NAEP) provide some encouraging news as the state continues work to improve student performance in reading and mathematics.

“Once again, our students debunked the myth that Idaho education lags near the bottom of state rankings,” Superintendent of Public Instruction Sherri Ybarra said. “This is the only assessment that measures what U.S. students know and can do in every state, and Idaho students performed better than the national average in all four tested cohorts.”

The results, released nationwide Oct. 30 as “the Nation’s Report Card,” track reading and math performance among a statewide sampling of fourth- and eighth graders in all 50 states plus the District of Columbia.

NAEP math and reading tests are administered every two years, and most of Idaho’s 2019 scores held steady with those from 2017: The average scores in fourth- and eighth grade math each went up by two points, reaching 242 and 286. The average score in fourth grade reading remained the same at 223, and the average eighth grade reading score declined by four points, from 270 to 266. That downturn in eighth grade reading scores was seen nationwide.

Still, Idaho’s eighth grade readers outperformed their counterparts elsewhere, with only three states averaging higher scores, 29 posting lower average scores and 19 scoring about the same. In fourth grade reading, four jurisdictions averaged higher scores, 21 had lower average scores and 26 were about the same. In eighth grade math, four jurisdictions had higher average scores, 30 lower and 17 about the same. In fourth grade math, seven jurisdictions had higher average scores, 22 lower and 22 about the same.

Idaho students also compare favorably with their counterparts in the percentages who scored at NAEP Basic or above:

- 82 percent in fourth grade math, lower than seven jurisdictions and higher than 18
- 77 percent in eighth grade reading, lower than only three jurisdictions and higher than 31
- 74 percent in eighth grade math, bested by only two jurisdictions and higher than 29

- 69 percent in fourth grade reading, lower than only three jurisdictions and higher than 21

One area in the 2019 NAEP where Idaho lags behind most counterparts is in the performance gap between students with disabilities and other students.

“Educators throughout Idaho are working hard to prepare students for success, and it is encouraging to see positive results,” Superintendent Ybarra said. “But our mission is to help all students succeed, and we clearly have significant room to improve for students with disabilities.”

“We know we have a shortage of special education teachers, especially in small rural districts,” Superintendent Ybarra said. “This has a direct impact on student achievement.”

Additional statistics from Idaho’s 2019 NAEP scores:

- Hispanic fourth-graders’ average math scores rose five points from 2017 scores
- The performance gap for English learners in fourth grade reading shrank by 19 points since 2017, going from a 52-point gap two years ago to a 33-point gap this year.
- The percentage of students who scored in the highest category, advanced, went up from 2017 levels in three cohorts and came in at the same level, 9 percent, in fourth grade reading.

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For more detail: See a full array of graphics depicting 2019 NAEP results at <http://www.sde.idaho.gov/assessment/naep/>