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‘Nation’s Report Card’ results are in for Idaho students

(BOISE) – The latest scores in the National Assessment for Education Progress (NAEP) provide some encouraging news for Idaho as schools continue working to boost student achievement in mathematics and reading.

Nationwide, student scores have dropped since the NAEP assessments were last administered to fourth- and eighth-graders in 2019. While Idaho scores also declined since 2019, they remain above national averages for eighth-graders and near the national average for fourth-graders.

“We knew the pandemic would take a toll on student performance, especially for our youngest students,” Superintendent of Public Instruction Sherri Ybarra said. “But because of our teachers’ tremendous efforts and because Idaho returned to in-person learning more quickly than most other states, we maintained solid footing and, in some cases, improved our standing nationwide.”

“Idaho eighth-graders performed better than any of their peers across the nation in mathematics, and well above the national average in reading,” Superintendent Ybarra said. “No other state topped Idaho’s average eighth-grade math score, which is a tremendous sign since middle school is a key time to master the mathematical concepts and skills that set the stage for future success. Thirty-nine states posted significantly lower average scores than Idaho’s.”

In eighth-grade reading, only two states performed significantly better than Idaho, while 30 scored significantly lower. Those results were very similar to those in 2019, the last time NAEP was administered. In math, four states posted higher eighth-grade scores than Idaho’s in 2019.

Among fourth-graders, Idaho lost some ground in both math and reading, posting scores around the national average. In 2019, Idaho students exceeded the national average in math and reading at both grade levels.

“Our 2022 scores for fourth-grade reading are in the middle of the pack, with just seven states scoring significantly higher than Idaho and five scoring significantly lower,” Superintendent Ybarra said. “But our average score declined, which means our focus on early literacy is more important now than ever as we address pandemic learning loss.”

“In fourth-grade math, seven states scored significantly higher than Idaho, and 15 scored significantly lower,” the superintendent said. “That’s very similar to our ranking in 2019. When comparing grade-level test scores from year to year, we need to remember that the scores represent different cohorts of students.”

Student scores are sorted into four NAEP categories – below basic, basic, proficient and advanced -- which are similar to the labels used in state and district assessments but represent a higher level of performance, Idaho NAEP Coordinator Paul Kleinert said. For example, he said, a “proficient” rating is generally interpreted in state assessments as performing at grade level, but NAEP proficient is above grade level.

Idaho students compare favorably with their national counterparts in the percentages who scored at NAEP Basic or above in 2022:

- Fourth grade math -- 76 percent in Idaho, 74 percent nationally
- Eighth grade reading -- 74 percent in Idaho, 68 percent nationally
- Eighth grade math -- 71 percent in Idaho, 61 percent nationally
- Fourth grade reading -- 61 percent in Idaho and nationally

One concern is the continuing performance gap between students with disabilities and other students, Superintendent Ybarra said, adding that the gap is exacerbated by the pandemic and an acute shortage of special education teachers, especially in small rural districts.

“This fall, 68 percent of Idaho school districts responding to a survey on the teacher shortage cited difficulty filling special education jobs, significantly more than for any other category,” the superintendent said.

State Department of Education staff are studying NAEP results, including those for student demographic groups, to help detect patterns and inform strategies.

“NAEP, known as ‘the Nation’s Report Card,’ is a valuable tool to gauge our students’ progress because it is the only apples-to-apples assessment that measures what U.S. students know and can do in every state,” Superintendent Ybarra said.

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For more detail: Visit the National Center for Education Statistics’ Idaho page.

<https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/stateprofile/overview/ID>

See a full array of graphics depicting 2022 NAEP results at <http://www.sde.idaho.gov/assessment/naep/>
Those graphics will be posted by mid-morning Monday, Oct. 24.