

## Fourth Grade Math and Reading Assessment

### DEFINITION

This indicator reports the percent of fourth grade students scoring at or above proficient in math or reading on the October 2009 New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) test.

### CONTEXT

Since 2005 New Hampshire students have taken the NECAP test annually. The federal No Child Left Behind Act imposed student testing mandates. As part of its response to this mandate, the New Hampshire Department of Education tests students annually in math and reading in grades 3-8 and again in grade 11 (NH Department of Education 2011a).

New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont departments of education collaborated to create the NECAP test to measure students' knowledge and skills relative to grade level expectations (Maine joined the assessment program in 2009). These tests assess performance with four achievement levels: proficient with distinction, proficient, partially proficient or substantially below proficient. Performance at or above proficient indicates the student has sufficient mastery of content and skills from the previous grade to successfully begin working on current grade content and skills.

NECAP results can be used to compare student knowledge and skills by school or school district within New Hampshire. Those who want to compare New Hampshire students to students in other states, however, must rely on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which tests a sample of students in each state. In 2009, New Hampshire fourth grade students ranked second among the states in the percent scoring at or above basic in both math and reading on the NAEP (U.S. Department of Education 2010). National Center for Education Statistics research finds most state proficiency standards for state assessment tests are substantially lower than NAEP assessment standards.

The majority of states, including New Hampshire, have adopted the Common Core State Standards in Mathematics and Literacy K-12. This means that New Hampshire will develop and adopt new assessments that will replace the NECAP beginning in 2014 (NH Department of Education 2011b).

**Fourth Grade NECAP Test Scores**  
By County, 2009

	Percent at or above Proficient and Rank			
	MATH		READING	
	Percent	Rank	Percent	Rank
<b>STATE TOTAL</b>	<b>75%</b>		<b>75%</b>	
Belknap County	75%	6	72%	6
Carroll County	81%	1	82%	1
Cheshire County	77%	4	78%	2
Coos County	67%	10	61%	10
Grafton County	78%	2	77%	4
Hillsborough County	75%	6	72%	6
Merrimack County	77%	4	75%	5
Rockingham County	78%	2	78%	2
Strafford County	74%	8	71%	8
Sullivan County	73%	9	70%	9



## NEW HAMPSHIRE FINDINGS

Seventy-five percent of New Hampshire's fourth grade students scored at or above proficient on the math NECAP exam and 75 percent scored at or above proficient on the reading exam. This is an improvement since the first year of the exam in 2005, when 65 percent of fourth graders scored at or above proficient in math and 69 percent scored at or above proficient in reading.

**Achievement differs markedly by county, however. While 81 percent of fourth graders scored at or above proficient in math in Carroll County, the highest scoring county, only 67 percent of fourth graders scored at or above proficient in math in Coos County, the lowest scoring county. The disparity in reading scores between Carroll County and Coos County was even greater: 82 percent vs. 61 percent. (see chart on previous page)**

A comparison of New Hampshire's NAEP scores to other states reveals both good news and bad news. The good news is that the reading proficiency of New Hampshire's fourth graders places the state in the highest scoring group of states. The bad news is that according to the NAEP only 41 percent of fourth graders exhibit reading proficiency, not 75 percent as indicated on the NECAP (Voices for America's Children 2010). Furthermore, the NAEP shows a gap between white and non-white students, with 42 percent of New Hampshire's white students scoring proficient or above but only 35 percent of New Hampshire's non-white students scoring at that level (New Hampshire Department of Education 2010a).

## SOURCE OF DATA FOR ILLUSTRATION/METHODOLOGY

The New Hampshire Department of Education reports test scores by school district. The following methodology was used to estimate test scores by county. First, we identified school districts with grade four students by county. Seven districts with fourth grade students crossed county borders, and special estimates were computed for those districts (see methodology in Appendix). Then district average test scores or estimated district average test scores were used to derive county average test scores by weighting each district by its enrollment or estimated enrollment.

New Hampshire Department of Education. 2010. [www.education.nh.gov/instruction/assessment/necap](http://www.education.nh.gov/instruction/assessment/necap)

## REFERENCES

New Hampshire Department of Education. 2011a. New England Common Assessment Program. [www.education.nh.gov/instruction/assessment/necap](http://www.education.nh.gov/instruction/assessment/necap)

New Hampshire Department of Education. 2011b. Common Core State Standards/New Assessment Systems. [www.education.nh.gov/spotlight/ccss](http://www.education.nh.gov/spotlight/ccss).

New Hampshire Department of Education. 2010a. *Grade 12 Reading and Mathematics Results Released for 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)*. November 18.

New Hampshire Department of Education. 2010b. *New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) Fall 2009 Test Results Released for Elementary, Middle and High School Students (Grades 3-8 and 11)*. January 28. [www.education.nh.gov/news/2010/20100128.htm](http://www.education.nh.gov/news/2010/20100128.htm).

U.S. Department of Education. 2010. National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), NAEP Data Explorer. [www.nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/naepdata](http://www.nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/naepdata)

Voices for America's Children. 2010. *Are All America's Children Really Above Average? A Comparison of State and National Reading Assessments*. [www.voices.org](http://www.voices.org). June.