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## **Vermont Student Score among Best in the Nation on the National Assessment of Educational Progress**

### **Scores on national, statewide science tests show little growth**

**BARRE** – Vermont’s fourth-and eighth-graders scored among the best of 46 states in the nation on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test of Science, the Agency announced today. However, the 2015 test scores have essentially remained unchanged since the last NAEP science assessment was administered in 2011. This is contrasted by results in many other states that have seen significant increases in test scores compared to previous years. Scores on the 2016 New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP), Vermont’s statewide science assessment, also show little improvement compared to the 2015 results.

Vermont’s 2015 NAEP science scores showed students continue to perform among the top 10 states in the nation. In fourth-grade, Vermont was among the three states with the highest scores. Compared to the rest of the country, Vermont students exceeded the national average by approximately 10 points in both fourth-grade and eighth-grade.

<b>NAEP Average Scale Scores</b>				
	<b>Vermont Scores</b>		<b>National Scores</b>	
<b>Assessment Area and Grade</b>	2011	2015	2011	2015
<b>Science Grade 04- all students</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>153</b>
FRL	NA	152	NA	140
Not FRL	NA	172	NA	169
<b>Science Grade 08- all students</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>153</b>
FRL	NA	152	NA	140
Not FRL	NA	172	NA	169

Vermont students demonstrated significant achievement gaps based on family income at both the fourth-and eighth-grade levels. The poverty achievement gap in Vermont was 20 points for fourth-grade science and the eighth-grade gap was 18 points. Scores for low-income eighth graders improved by two points over 2011, closing the income-based achievement gap by one point. Vermont’s lower-income students are among the highest achieving students in the nation for that demographic group.

“We are proud of how well our students are performing in science,” Secretary of Education Rebecca Holcombe said. “What I’m most proud of is in 2015 our students on free/reduced lunch are performing at the nearly the same level as the average student in the U.S. This is proof that strong outcomes can be achieved. I’m thankful for the hard work of our dedicated educators.”

An additional data point for science achievement are the results from the spring 2016 New England Common Assessment Program Science Assessment (NECAP-Science). The NECAP and NAEP science tests were designed to measure different standards, or frameworks, on separate scoring scales, but both assessments address similar skills and content areas. These assessments provide a way to reference national, state and local science achievement.

The NECAP-Science assessments were created in collaboration with Rhode Island and New Hampshire and have been administered annually to all students in grades four, eight, and 11 since 2008. These assessments, which include a hands-on inquiry section, are designed to specifically assess how well Vermont students have learned the skills and content contained in the “Vermont Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities” and “Grade Expectations.”

Similar to NEAP results, NECAP-Science results for 2016 did not differ much from 2015. The statewide average for fourth graders is near the scale score of 440, the beginning of the proficient range. What the NAEP results do not show is the wide variation of science achievement across Vermont’s highest and lowest achieving schools. On NECAP-Science the difference between the highest and lowest average scale scores was 21 points at grade four, 18 points at grade eight and 15 points at grade 11. Also similar to NAEP, results on NECAP-Science for higher and lower income students show a large achievement gap. Those gaps have remained open since 2015, and the gap for students in grade four increased by one point.

NECAP Average Scale Scores and Range Across Schools				
Assessment Area and Grade	2015		2016	
	Average	Range	Average	Range
<b>Science Grade 04- all students</b>	<b>439</b>	<b>428-449</b>	<b>439</b>	<b>426-450</b>
FRL	435		435	
Not FRL	441		442	
<b>Science Grade 08- all students</b>	<b>834</b>	<b>826-844</b>	<b>834</b>	<b>825-841</b>
FRL	830		830	
Not FRL	836		836	
<b>Science Grade 11- all students</b>	<b>1135</b>	<b>1126-1141</b>	<b>1135</b>	<b>1125-1140</b>
FRL	1131		1131	
Not FRL	1136		1136	

While Vermont’s high national standing on NAEP is welcome news, there is still considerable work that needs to be done, Secretary Holcombe said.

“High statewide averages are not enough,” she said. “Our mission is to achieve equity and these results show that we still have a long way to go both in terms of equity across schools and equity across student groups within schools.”

[NECAP-Science results for the state and individual schools can be found online.](#) [Released test questions and support materials](#) are also available for review.

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