

General Achievement Trends — Nebraska

K-12 enrollment — 290,767

The raw data used to develop these state profiles, including data for additional grade levels and years before 2002, can be found on the CEP Web site at www.cep-dc.org. Click on the link on the left for No Child Left Behind. In the Document Library, look for the most recent report on student achievement since 2002. Below the name of the report, click on the link for View State Profiles and Worksheets. Scroll down the page, and click on the Worksheet links for any state.

Overall Achievement — Key Findings

General results

Between 2003 and 2008 in reading, and between 2002 and 2008 in math, the percentage of students scoring at the **proficient** level and above showed a moderate-to-large increase in both subjects at all three grade levels analyzed. Information on the percentages of students performing at the basic and advanced levels is not available.

Data Limitations

Years of comparable percentage proficient data

2001 and 2003 through 2008 in reading
2002 through 2008 in math

Years of data needed to compute effect sizes

Cannot compute effect sizes; no mean scale scores or standard deviations available

Disaggregated data for all subgroups and comparison groups

Limited data disaggregated by subgroups available for 2002 in math and 2007 in both subjects
No disaggregated data available for high school students in 2006 or 2007
Data are not available for comparison groups of students who are not low-income, not disabled, or not English language learners (ELLs), so the subgroups of low-income students, students with disabilities, and ELLs are compared with all tested students in the state.

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Numbers of test-takers by subgroup | Not available, so it cannot be determined which subgroups are small |
| Other data limitations | Data were not available to conduct analyses of achievement at the Basic and Advanced achievement levels |

Test Characteristics

The characteristics highlighted below are for the state reading and mathematics tests used for accountability under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

| | |
|--|--|
| Test(s) used for NCLB accountability | School-based Teacher-led Assessment and Reporting System (STARS); these are tests developed by school districts and submitted to the state for approval. No unified state assessment system is in place. STARS Alternate Assessment Statewide Writing Assessment |
| Grades tested for NCLB accountability | 3–8, high school |
| State labels for achievement levels | NE uses four achievement levels: Beginning, Progressing, Proficient, and Advanced. We were not able to obtain achievement level data for NE. However, if we had, our analyses would have treated Progressing as Basic, Proficient as Proficient, and Advanced as Advanced. |
| High school NCLB test also used as an exit exam? | No |
| First year test used | 2000–01 for reading, 2001–02 for math |
| Time of test administration | Throughout the year, reported to state by June 30 each year |
| Major changes in testing system (2002–present) | 2002–03: Annual state reporting of math and reading results begins 2005–06: Assessment and AYP calculation expanded to include all students in grades 3–8 and one high school grade |
| Comments | Prior to 2003, NE alternated yearly testing between subjects. The state tested reading in 2001, math in 2002, then both subjects in 2003 and thereafter. So, percentage proficient data in reading is comparable between 2001 and 2003, but there is a gap in 2002 |

Overall Achievement — Percentages Proficient

Figure NE-1. Percentage of Students Scoring at the Proficient Level and Above in Reading

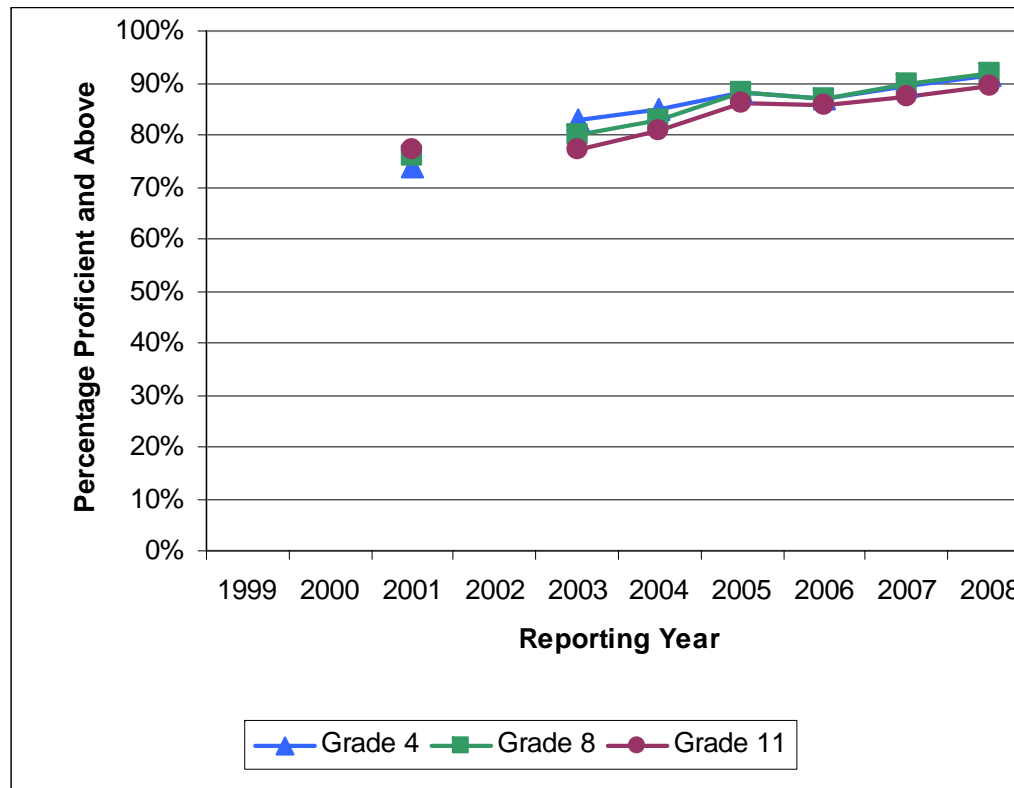


Table NE-1. Percentage of Students Scoring at the Proficient Level and Above in Reading

| Grade Level | Reporting Year | | | | | | | | | | Pre-NCLB Average Yearly Percentage Point Gain 1999-2002 ¹ | Post-NCLB Average Yearly Percentage Point Gain 2002-2008 ¹ |
|-----------------|----------------|------|------------|------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|---|--|
| | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | | |
| Grade 3 | | | | | | | | | | 89% | NA | NA |
| Grade 4 | | | 74% | | 83% | 85% | 88% | 87% | 89% | 91% | NA | 1.7 |
| Grade 5 | | | | | | | | | | 88% | NA | NA |
| Grade 6 | | | | | | | | | | 89% | NA | NA |
| Grade 7 | | | | | | | | | | 88% | NA | N |
| Grade 8 | | | 76% | | 80% | 83% | 88% | 87% | 90% | 92% | NA | 2.3 |
| Grade 11 | | | 77% | | 77% | 81% | 86% | 86% | 87% | 89% | NA | 2.5 |

Table reads: The percentage of 4th graders who scored at the proficient level and above on the state reading test increased from 74% in 2001, to 83% in 2003, to 91% in 2008. The average yearly gain in the percentage proficient in grade 4 reading was 1.7 percentage points per year after NCLB was enacted.

¹Averages are subject to rounding error.

Figure NE-2. Percentage of Students Scoring at the Proficient Level and Above in Mathematics

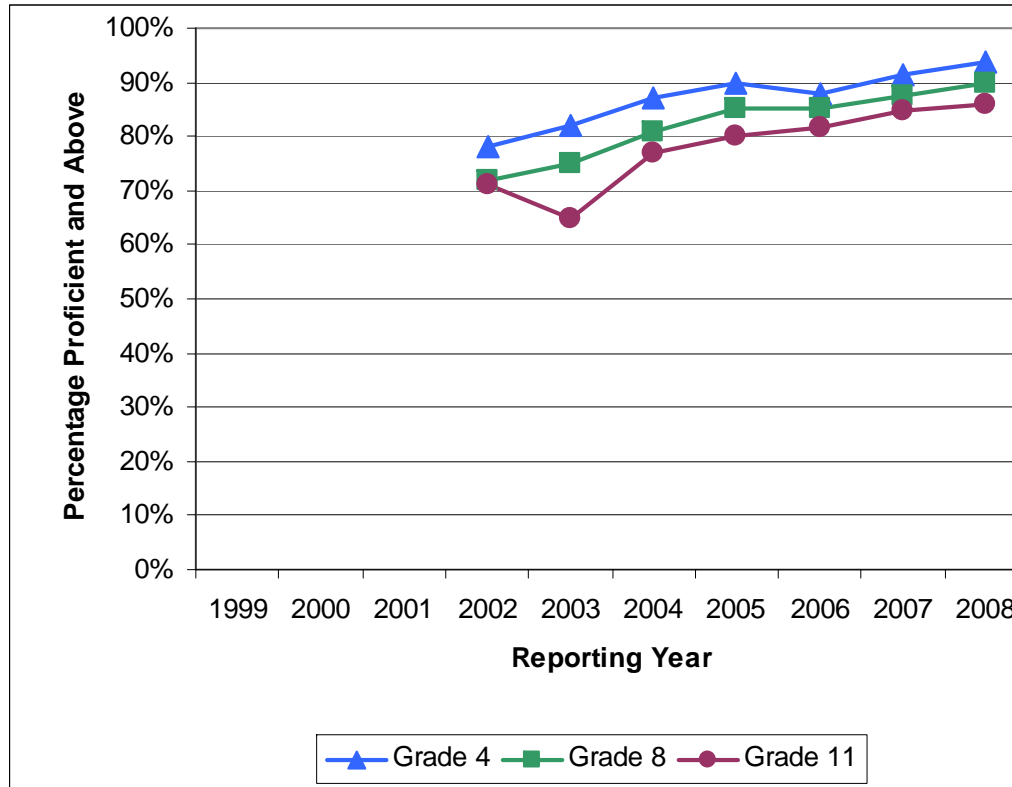


Table NE-2. Percentage of Students Scoring at the Proficient Level and Above in Mathematics

| Grade Level | Reporting Year | | | | | | | | | | Pre-NCLB Average Yearly Percentage Point Gain 1999-2002 ¹ | Post-NCLB Average Yearly Percentage Point Gain 2002-2008 ¹ |
|-----------------|----------------|------|------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|---|--|
| | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | | |
| Grade 3 | | | | | | | | | | 92% | NA | NA |
| Grade 4 | | | | 78% | 82% | 87% | 90% | 88% | 91% | 94% | NA | 2.3 |
| Grade 5 | | | | | | | | | | 90% | NA | NA |
| Grade 6 | | | | | | | | | | 88% | NA | NA |
| Grade 7 | | | | | | | | | | 89% | NA | NA |
| Grade 8 | | | | 72% | 75% | 81% | 85% | 85% | 88% | 90% | NA | 3.0 |
| Grade 11 | | | | 71% | 65% | 77% | 80% | 82% | 85% | 86% | NA | 4.2 |

Table reads: The percentage of 4th graders who scored at the proficient level and above on the state math test increased from 78% in 2002 to 94% in 2008. The average yearly gain in the percentage proficient in grade 4 math was 2.3 percentage points per year after NCLB was enacted.

¹Averages are subject to rounding error.

Key Terms

Percentage proficient (and above) — The percentage of students in a group who score at and above the cut score for “proficient” performance on the state test used to determine progress under NCLB. The Act requires states to report student test performance in terms of at least three achievement levels: basic, proficient, and advanced. Adequate yearly progress determinations are based on the percentage of students scoring at the proficient level and above.

Percentage basic (and above) — The percentage of students in a group who score at and above the cut score for “basic” performance on the state test used to determine progress under NCLB.

Percentage advanced — The percentage of students in a group who reach or exceed the cut score for “advanced” performance on the state test used to determine progress under NCLB.

Moderate-to-large gain — For the percentage basic, proficient, or advanced, an average gain of 1 or more percentage points per year. For effect size, an average gain of 0.02 or greater per year.

Slight gain — For the percentage basic, proficient, or advanced, an average gain of less than 1 percentage point per year. For effect size, an average gain of less than 0.02 per year.

Moderate-to-large decline — For the percentage basic, proficient, or advanced, an average decline of 1 or more percentage points per year. For effect size, an average decline of 0.02 or greater per year.

Slight decline — For the percentage basic, proficient, or advanced, an average decline of less than 1 percentage points per year. For effect size, an average decline of less than 0.02 per year.

Effect size — A statistical tool that conveys the amount of difference between test results using a common unit of measurement which does not depend on the scoring scale for a particular test.

Accumulated annual effect size — The cumulative gain in effect size over a range of years.

Mean scale score — The arithmetical average of a group of test scores, expressed on a common scale for a particular state’s test. The mean is calculated by adding the scores and dividing the sum by the number of scores.

Standard deviation — A measure of how much test scores tend to deviate from the mean—in other words, how spread out or bunched together test scores are. If students’ scores are bunched together, with many scores close to the mean, then the standard deviation will be small. If scores are spread out, with many students scoring at the high or low ends of the scale, then the standard deviation will be large.

Cautions and Explanations

Different labels for achievement levels — For consistency, all of the state profiles developed for this report use a common set of labels (basic, proficient, and advanced) for the main achievement levels required by NCLB. In practice, however, some states may use different labels, such as “meets standard” instead of proficient, and some states have established additional achievement levels beyond those required by NCLB.

Different names for subgroups — For the sake of consistency and ease of data tabulation, all of the state profiles developed for this report use a common set of names for the major student subgroups. In practice, however, states use various names for subgroups that may differ from those used here (such as using “Hispanic” instead of “Latino,” or “special education students” instead of “students with disabilities”). Moreover, a few states separately track the performance of subgroups not included in the analyses for this report.

Special caution for students with disabilities and English language learners — Trends for students with disabilities and English language learners should be interpreted with caution because changes in federal guidance and state accountability plans may have altered which students in these subgroups are tested for accountability purposes, how they are tested, and when their test scores are counted as proficient under NCLB. These factors could affect the year-to-year comparability of test results.

Inclusion of former English language learners — In many states, the subgroup of English language learners (also known as limited English proficient students) includes students who were formerly English language learners but who have achieved English language proficiency or fluency in the last two years. Federal NCLB regulations permit states to include these formerly ELL students (sometimes referred to as “redesignated fluent English proficient” students) in the ELL subgroup for up to two years for purposes of NCLB accountability.

Limitations of percentage proficient measure — The percentage proficient, the main gauge of student performance under NCLB, can be easily understood and gives a snapshot of how many students have met their state’s performance expectations. But it also has several limitations as a measure of student achievement. Users of percentage proficient data should keep in mind these limitations, particularly the following:

- * “Proficient” means different things across different states. States vary widely in curriculum, learning expectations, and tests, and state tests differ considerably in their difficulty and cut scores for proficient performance.
- * Although this study has taken steps to avoid comparing test data where there have been “breaks” in comparability resulting from new tests, changes in content standards, revised cut scores, or other major changes in testing programs, the year-to-year comparability of test results in the same state may still be affected by less obvious policy and demographic changes.
- * Changes in student performance may occur that are not reflected in percentage proficient data, such as an increase in the number of students reaching performance levels below and above proficient (such as the basic or advanced levels).
- * The size of the achievement gaps between various subgroups depends in part on where a state sets its cut score for proficiency. For example, if a proficiency cut score is set so high that almost nobody reaches it or so low that almost everyone reaches it, there will be little apparent achievement gap. By contrast, if the cut score is closer to the mean test score, the gaps between subgroups will be more apparent.

Difficulty of attributing causes — Although the tables above show trends in test scores since the enactment of NCLB, one cannot assume that these trends have occurred *because* of NCLB. It is always difficult to determine a cause-and-effect relationship between test score trends and any specific education policy or program due to the many federal, state, and local reforms undertaken in recent years and due to the lack of an appropriate “control” group of students not affected by NCLB.