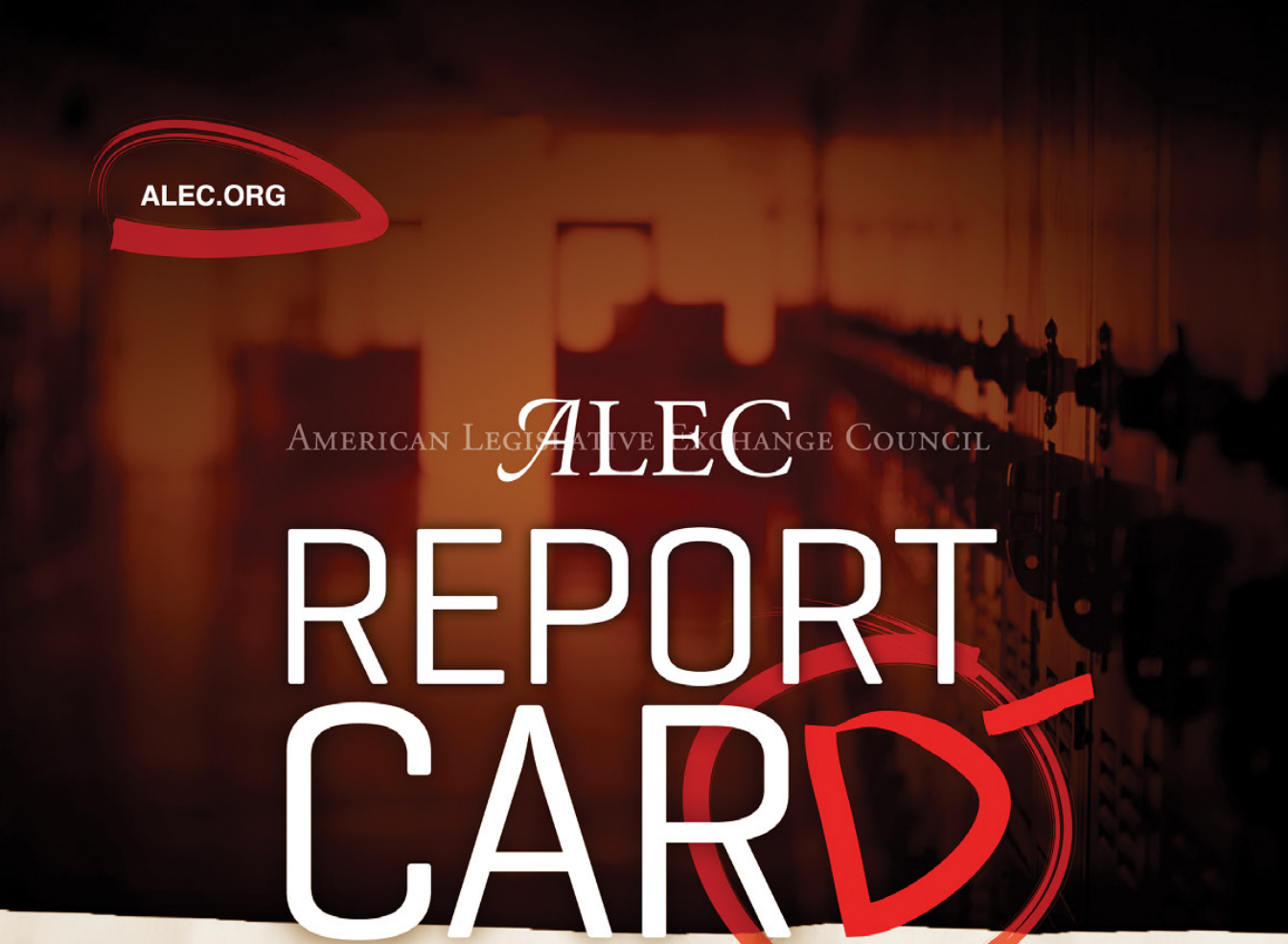

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-On-

AMERICAN EDUCATION

RANKING STATE K-12 PERFORMANCE, PROGRESS, AND REFORM

-By-

Dr. Matthew Ladner *and* ***Dan Lips***
Foreword by ***Gov. Mitch Daniels***

17TH EDITION

Report Card on American Education

Ranking State K-12 Performance, Progress, and Reform

Dr. Matthew Ladner
Dan Lips

American Legislative Exchange Council

Report Card on American Education:
Ranking State K-12 Performance, Progress, and Reform

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For more information, contact
the ALEC Public Affairs office.

Dr. Matthew Ladner and Dan Lips

David J. Myslinski, Director, Education Task Force

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About the Authors

DR. MATTHEW LADNER

Dr. Matthew Ladner is Senior Advisor for Policy and Research at the Foundation for Excellence in Education. Prior to this, Dr. Ladner was the Vice President of Research for the Goldwater Institute. He has also served Director of State Projects at the Alliance for School Choice, where he provided support and resources for state-based school choice efforts. Dr. Ladner has written numerous studies on school choice, charter schools and special education reform. Dr. Ladner has provided testimony to Congress, a number of state legislatures and the United States Commission on Civil Rights. Ladner is a graduate of the University of Texas at Austin and received both a Masters and a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Houston. Ladner is a Senior Fellow with the Foundation for Educational Choice and the Goldwater Institute. Dr. Ladner lives in Phoenix with his wife Anne and three children Benjamin, Jacob, and Abigail.

DAN LIPS

Dan Lips is a senior fellow with the Goldwater Institute. He was formerly a senior policy analyst at the Heritage Foundation specializing in education policy. His views and research have appeared in prominent media outlets including The Washington Post and National Review Online as well as in academic journals like the Georgetown Journal of Law and Public Policy and Education Next. Mr. Lips has testified before Congress and state legislative committees and appeared on CNN, MSNBC, and Fox News. He currently serves as the Chairman of the D.C. Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

Mr. Lips earned his bachelor's degree in politics from Princeton University and master's degree in national security affairs from the Institute of World Politics in Washington, D.C.

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Foreword

by Mitch Daniels, Governor of Indiana

Usually, contributing the foreword to ALEC's *Report Card on American Education* provides a welcome opportunity to remind readers of our crucial responsibility to guarantee America's youngest citizens access to a high quality education of their choice.

Instead, I am happy to report that this year here in Indiana, after years of only partial success, we are well on our way to fulfilling that promise. During the 2011 session, our legislature delivered a series of changes to K–12 education that we believe will result in a profound difference in the lives of Hoosier children while greatly improving the prospects of our state.

This breakthrough came in the form of four pieces of landmark legislation emphasizing teacher quality, administrative flexibility, school accountability, and parent and student choice.

Prior to this session, 99 percent of Indiana's teachers were annually rated "Effective." If that rating were actually true, 99 percent—not just one-third—of our students would be passing national tests. From this point on, because of the diligence and fortitude of our reform-minded legislators, teachers will be promoted and retained based on performance rather than seniority. Teacher evaluations, which will be locally formulated, will rely on student improvement. Successful educators will be rewarded, while those whose students lag behind will be asked to find work elsewhere. Additionally, schools will now be graded on an A–F scale and they, too, will be held accountable for student advancement; and the state will not hesitate to intervene in those schools that fail repeatedly.

While collective bargaining has its place, teacher contracts are too often filled with provisions that hinder learning. Some contracts, for example, stipulate that instructors can spend only a limited amount of hours with their students, while others mandate they can only be observed in the classroom with prior notice from principals. Collective bargaining will now be limited to wages and benefits and will no longer stand in the way of effective school leadership or student progress.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, we will now honor parents. We will trust them and respect them enough to decide when, where, and how their children can receive the best education, and therefore the best chance in life. To accomplish this, we are ending all restrictions on charter school creation, and increasing non-governmental school options through what is now the nation's largest voucher program. Beginning this year, no Hoosier family will be denied the opportunity to choose an appropriate school, including having the ability to direct government dollars toward their school's tuition.

Taken together, these changes place Indiana in the vanguard of education choice. But other states can and should follow suit. These are not partisan reforms: Our ultimate goals are shared by President Obama and find favor across a broad ideological and political spectrum. This, however, does not mean that they will be easy to accomplish and implement. As always, advocates for change in education should prepare to be misrepresented, maligned, or worse. But Indiana's historic breakthrough proves that change is within reach, if the debate is focused on the children. Each reform must be tested against the obvious—yet often overlooked—criteria of what is best for the child and most likely to lead to his or her progress, and ultimately, success.

We all have a shared reverence for our teachers

and a commitment to improving our schools, both public and private. In the interest of our children and their future, each and every one of our institutions of learning should be great, providing all of our students the opportunity to succeed. I am hopeful in the long-run, our accomplishments in Indiana will demonstrate these objectives can be achieved, and in the near-term, they can provide some measure of inspiration to reform-minded legislators across the country.

Best of Luck,
Mitch Daniels

CHAPTER 1

The End of the Beginning in the Battle for K–12 Reform

The End of the Beginning in the Battle for K–12 Reform

In World War II, Great Britain suffered a series of crushing defeats. From the conquest of her continental allies and an ignominious evacuation at Dunkirk to the loss of Singapore in the east, Great Britain was under attack. Germany stood as a colossus with its boot on the throat of Europe. Under the assumption there was no way to win, "realistic" members of the British aristocracy advised reaching an accommodation with Germany. Winston Churchill refused to surrender while the Royal Air Force successfully fought off the German Luftwaffe over the skies of England, deterring a German invasion.

Britain's enemies overreached, invading the Soviet Union and attacking the American fleet at Pearl Harbor. Finally, British forces defeated the German army in Egypt, securing their hold over the strategically vital Suez Canal. Prime Minister Churchill recognized the turning point:

> *Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning. Henceforth Hitler's Nazis will meet equally well armed and perhaps better armed troops. Hence forth they will have to face in many theatres of war that superiority in the air which they have so often used without mercy against others, of which they boasted all round the world, and which they intended to use as an instrument for convincing all other peoples that all resistance to them was hopeless.*
>
> *We mean to hold our own.*[1]

In 2011, America's struggle for education reform may have also reached a turning point—an end of the beginning.

Terry Moe and John Chubb evocatively described the history of American education reform since the publication of the *"A Nation at Risk"* report as a game of "whack a mole." Moe and Chubb's analogy has been quite apt: The teachers' unions rank among the nation's most powerful special interest groups, if they do not in fact represent *the* most powerful special interest group.

The budgets of the two large teacher unions range into the hundreds of millions of millions of dollars. The unions spend vast amounts on politics, both directly and indirectly. Organized in every state legislative district in the country, they put both paid and volunteer "boots on the ground" during election season. The unions hire legions of lobbyists around the nation, enlist academics to defend their positions, and have very clear goals.

For decades, it has not proven overly difficult for the education unions to defeat those with different policy preferences. Education reformers come from a variety of groups with varying interests and differing theories of how to improve schools. Coalitions of such groups have been sporadic and have always been completely financially outgunned by the unions, even under the best of circumstances. The teacher unions' hammer wielder hasn't whacked every mole every time, but they did whack most of the moles most of the time.[2]

In 2011, however, for the first time, the unions suffered major policy defeats in a large number of states across a wide array of policy issues.

The previous edition of the *Report Card on American Education* carefully ranked states' academic performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) by comparing the academic proficiency and gains for low-income students in the general education program. In

that edition, we concluded Florida's comprehensive approach to education reform over the past decade had achieved the elusive goal long sought by reforms: results at scale. This large Southern state with a majority-minority student population spends below the national average per student while leading the nation in academic gains.

We concluded Florida's then-Governor Jeb Bush had pulled the hammer away from the teachers unions by enacting a suite of reforms which the unions aggressively opposed, and which ended their dominance over K–12 education policy.

At the time of this writing, the smoke is only starting to clear from the legislative sessions of 2011, but his much is clear: Reformers scored unprecedented victories in the area of tenure reform, merit pay, public school transparency, charter schools, and school vouchers.

In 2011, at least one state in our estimation may have exceeded the Florida legislative session of 1999 in terms of scope, and many others made very bold reforms as well. Indiana, like Florida, wrested the hammer from the hands of the guardians of the K–12 status-quo. Reform leaders in several other states seem poised to pull the hammer away as well.

In the following pages, we detail the remarkable progress of education reformers through an examination of a few legislative sessions in detail, and then by policy area across the nation. Remember, however, that the unprecedented victories of 2010–2011 represent "the end of the beginning." Far more remains to be done than has been done.

As we discuss in Chapter 2, the nation continues to do a terrible job in educating disadvantaged students to grade-level proficiency. In fact, as you will see, many advantaged students fail to achieve above proficiency, as well. In Chapter 3, we review the NAEP—the Nation's Report Card—for all 50 states and the District of Columbia to document academic gains or losses by jurisdiction. The bad news: Most states have achieved only miniscule academic progress in recent years. Chapter 4 presents a state-by-state report card, and the book concludes in Chapter 5 with a discussion on the vast potential of online and blended learning models to update our still largely 19th Century factory model of schooling.

In a record number of states around the nation, K–12 reform bills became laws. Reforms advanced both in red and blue states and sometimes on a bipartisan basis. In many states, the debate has shifted from whether education reform was necessary to deciding just how far and how fast reforms should proceed. While some states engaged in reform at a breakneck pace, other states shocked education observers by enacting reforms at all.

Many battles and setbacks lie ahead. The opponents of reform have lost their supposed moral high ground and aura of invincibility, but none of their raw political power, which remains enormous. Nevertheless, we believe future chronicles of K–12 reform will identify 2011 as a turning point: the period when the reform-minded Davids began to defeat the status-quo Goliaths.

Race to the Top: A Sign of the Times

We could write at some length on whether the Obama administration's signature education initiative, the "Race to the Top" grant competition for states, represented good or bad policy. Some questioned the scoring of state grant applications (no continental state west of the Mississippi received a grant, for instance). The scoring mechanism rewarding states additional points for heavy levels of "buy in" from teachers' unions received a great deal of scorn, as well. Many criticized the fact that the federal government leveraged the competition to get states to agree to adopt the "Common Core" academic standards. Others noted that the administration passed a one hundred billion dollar education bailout in the 2009 stimulus package, only four billion dollars of which went to promote real reform.[3] The rest of the money bought nothing in the way of reform, and in fact likely prolonged some states' resistance to needed changes.

We leave all of that to others, and we sympathize with most of it. But all of this misses what we regard as the truly historic character of the Race to the Top competition: the Obama administration's embrace of charter schools and teacher evaluations, including the use of student test-score gains, marked a sweeping, symbolic victory for reforms across the country. Specifically, Race to the Top created an incentive for states to eliminate caps on the number of charter schools; to build data systems that measure student growth; and to develop strategies to recruit, develop, reward, and retain effective teachers and principals.

In essence, the most liberal administration since Woodrow Wilson explicitly endorsed greater parental choice in education and merit pay for teachers and principals. The Obama administration's endorsement of charter schools and merit pay provided political and intellectual protection for reformers of both parties for years to come.

Some of the reforms that followed came as a direct result of states seeking Race to the Top funding. The competition served as a clear signal of the emerging reform consensus, revealing the extent of intellectual isolation of the guardians of the status quo. Race to the Top proved to be a driver of the teacher-tenure reforms in many states.

Indiana Seizes the Hammer, Enacts Comprehensive Reform

With speculation concerning a possible run for the presidency swirling, Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels gave a speech at the American Enterprise Institute on May 4, 2011. Daniels, having just completed a hard-fought legislative session in Indiana, went to Washington to discuss something dearer to him than personal ambition; a few weeks later, Gov. Daniels announced that he would not seek the presidency. However, on that day at AEI, with the eyes of the political world focused on him, Gov. Daniels chose as his topic education reform in general, and the truly historic changes in Indiana K–12 policy in particular.

In many states, the dam holding back fundamental changes to education policy sprung leaks in 2011, as we will discuss below. Indiana's dam broke in a flood of reform. Gov. Daniels, Indiana Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Bennett, and a group of reform minded Indiana legislators had been active in the years prior to 2011. Together, they passed legislation to radically improve school transparency by grading schools A through F based upon student test scores and gains. Indiana had also taken action to require students to earn their advancement by demonstrating basic literacy skills. Daniels, Bennett, and the state legislators took the first steps towards increasing parental choice with the creation of the state's first private-school tax credit.

All of this served as a prelude to the 2011 session.

Gov. Daniels detailed the reforms to the American Enterprise Institute audience, describing how Indiana lawmakers limited collective bargaining to wages and benefits. Indiana law ended the illogical practice of LIFO (Last In, First Out) in layoffs, mandating a determination of merit—based in part on student test-score gains—rather than simply seniority be used as the basis for making layoffs. Indiana's reformers established an early graduation scholarship program, allowing students who have sufficient credits to graduate early and to carry over a portion of their K–12 funding to help pay higher education expenses.

Indiana law now allows the Indiana Department of Education to consider hiring private companies for schools with a five-year or longer record of academic failure. Indiana legislators vastly improved the state's charter-school law to include private nonprofit universities as authorizers and created a "parent trigger" for parents to convert poorly performing district schools into charter schools. In addition, Indiana will soon have a commission to hold charter-school authorizers accountable. Lawmakers also created a process by which charter schools can purchase unused district school buildings for $1. Given that the taxpayers paid for these buildings, a process to return them into public use is appropriate.

Indiana's reformers, recognizing digital learning as a key element for the future of education (see Chapter 5), eliminated the cap on the number of students who can attend virtual schools and increased funding for virtual education. Indiana lawmakers created a $1,000 tax deduction for private-school expenses, and expanded the scholarship tax-credit program that provides scholarships to low-income students.

Indiana's reformers also created the nation's most expansive school-voucher program. Known as the Indiana Choice Scholarship Program, this program will allow public school students whose family income falls at or below 150 percent of the level making a student eligible for a free or reduced-price lunch eligible to receive a voucher worth up to $4,500. The Indiana Choice Scholarship Program includes a first year cap of 7,500 students and a second year cap of 15,000 students, but starting in the third year of the program, there will be no limit to total student

participation starting—meaning that Indiana's voucher program will be the largest in the nation.

Indiana's school districts will also feel the pressure of competition much more quickly than before. Previous statute had compensated districts with declining enrollments by funding "ghost students" for up to three years after they had transferred out of that district. Going forward, the state will fund schools based upon the current student count.

Additional reforms are causing districts to change the way they do business as well. One such example is the state accountability testing process. Previously, testing took place in the fall, but as Gov. Daniels noted, testing children in the fall—after the summer break and before their current teacher has had a chance to make an impact—seemed quite baffling. That is, of course, unless the objective was to avoid ever rewarding teachers or holding them accountable for student learning or the lack thereof—in which case it makes perfect sense. Thanks to state legislators, Indiana students will now take their state accountability exams in the spring instead.

From a political stand-point, one of Indian's most interesting education reforms was to move school district elections to the fall. Gov. Daniels explained they took this action to increase voter turnout. In Indiana, spring elections are typically primaries, making voter turnout low and allow school-board elections to be easily dominated by special-interest groups. Voter turnout is typically better in the fall for general elections.[4]

In his speech at AEI, Gov. Daniels divided Indiana's reforms into three silos: teacher quality, administrative freedom, and parental choice. Addressing any one of those silos would have constituted radical reform, but the Indiana lawmakers addressed all three simultaneously in 2011. Gov. Daniels also noted the great importance of providing Indiana schools the flexibility to compete by eliminating collective bargaining outside of wage and benefits:

> *I've got several pages of examples of things—real world provisions—that are in Indiana contracts. They range from things as trivial as: what the humidity in the school shall be or what color the teachers' lounge shall be painted—I am not making this up—to more troublesome things like the principal can only hold staff meetings once a month or can only hold them on Mondays, to still more troublesome things like no teacher will be required to spend more than X hours with students, on to perhaps the most, I think, concerning of all to the bottom of this slide: In many of our schools, no teacher can be observed in the classroom by the principal without a pre-conference and two days', three days', five days' notice. That's all over.*[5]

Indiana's reformers modernized the teaching profession, fixed the testing system, expanded parental choice greatly, attempted to increase democratic participation, embraced technology-based learning, and provided school districts with the flexibility to compete through collective-bargaining reform. Indiana reformers removed counterproductive quirks, such as funding "ghost students" and testing students in the fall. In the previous legislative session, Indiana lawmakers embraced transparency by grading schools A through F and took action to curtail social promotion—the process of advancing kids to higher grades based solely on age. Most encouraging of all, Gov. Daniels described each of these reforms potentially contributing to the success of the other reforms in a symphonic fashion, saying, "So this package of four bills, we believe, we see as a mutually reinforcing whole. If one or more had failed we'd have obviously been happy about the ones that made it, but we think it was extremely important that each element of this pass."[6]

As an example of this mutual reinforcement, Gov. Daniels noted that the collective-bargaining reform legislation protects the teacher-quality provisions from attacks through a district contract. The collective-bargaining reform also frees public school administrators and staff to better respond to competition likely to emerge as a result of expanded charter options and school vouchers.

Gov. Daniels' description of the reforms as "mutually reinforcing" reveals a deep understanding of the reform process. If robust, transparency combined with parental choice can create a system of accountability whereby parents can vote with their feet. Fuzzy labels describing school performance leave parents without a sense of

scale, but everyone instantly understands A, B, C, D, and F grades.

Schools described as "meets expectations" or "performing" can and will more accurately be described as "D" and "F" schools under the school-grading system pioneered in Florida and adopted in Indiana. The system carefully balances overall achievement with student-learning gains, making it entirely possible to move up grades. The system weights the learning gains of the bottom-performing students from the previous year especially heavily.

Now add to this transparency Indiana's robust parental choice policies: charter schools, school vouchers, and tuition tax credits. With A–F school grading, the state will be providing truth in advertising to parents. Simultaneously, the state will be expanding school options. These policies will expand slowly but steadily. The voucher program, for instance, contains a statewide cap of 7,500 students in the first year, 15,000 in the second year, and then will be driven only by parental demand.

Indiana's liberalized charter school laws will not lead to a new school popping up on every corner overnight, either. It takes time for quality charter-school teams to organize, find facility space, and comply with state oversight requirements. These things take time, but every school district administrator in Indiana knows that they are on the way. The unmistakable message resounds: Shape up as quickly as possible; competition is on the way.

Gov. Daniels took pains to note that under the private-choice plans, the school districts still get the first shot at students. Only students transferring from an Indiana public school can apply for a school voucher. Unlike some of the claims of reform opponents, the clear aim of the Indiana strategy is to improve the performance of all schools, not to destroy them.

In essence, the state has made it much more difficult to "warehouse" children in Indiana. Crucially, legislators have enlisted the aid of parents in creating a bottom-up system of accountability (to parents) to reinforce the top-down system of accountability (of school officials to state officials).

Indiana's academic achievement, as measure by the NAEP, has flat-lined for almost two decades, but Indiana reformers have yelled "Clear!" and administered shock treatment to the patient. Of course, passing laws is only the beginning—myriad difficult battles lie ahead of implementing these new laws. Indiana reformers must anticipate both active and passive resistance.

Despite the inevitability of rear-guard resistance and difficulties, we predict the academic achievement of Indiana's students will steadily improve, with traditionally disadvantaged students realizing the largest gains.

The strategy is going to take time, but we believe it is going to work. ALEC recently adopted a model omnibus bill based upon the Indiana reforms in 2011. Reformers should study that model bill carefully.

The Roaring Comeback of Parental Choice

Writing in the April 2008 edition of Washington Monthly, Greg Anrig, vice president of the liberal Century Foundation, proclaimed the death of the school-choice movement. Anrig strung together the teachers' unions' reading of the research literature on parental choice with quotes from frustrated choice supporters and sunshine patriots to declare school vouchers to be "an idea whose time has gone." Amidst his clever but overreaching attempt to nail shut the school-choice coffin, Anrig did throw voucher supporters this compliment:

> *The conservative infatuation with vouchers did contribute to one genuine accomplishment. The past thirty years have been a period of enormous innovation in American education. In addition to charter schools, all kinds of strategies have taken root: public school choice, new approaches to standards and accountability, magnet schools, and open enrollment plans that allow low-income city kids to attend suburban public schools and participate in various curriculum-based experiments. To the extent that the threat of vouchers represented a "nuclear option" that educators would do anything to avoid, the voucher movement helped to prompt broader but less drastic reforms that offer parents and students greater educational choices.*[7]

This paragraph shows one of the few parts of the article Anrig got right, as events mere weeks

after the publication would begin to prove. Shortly after the publication of Anrig's article, the Florida legislature passed a far-reaching expansion of the Step Up for Students tax credit with large bipartisan support, Georgia lawmakers created a new scholarship tax credit, and Louisiana lawmakers created a new voucher program.

In 2009 and 2010, new parental-choice programs for special-needs children passed in Oklahoma and Louisiana. Further tax-credit expansions passed with bipartisan support in Florida, Iowa, and Pennsylvania.

And then came 2011.

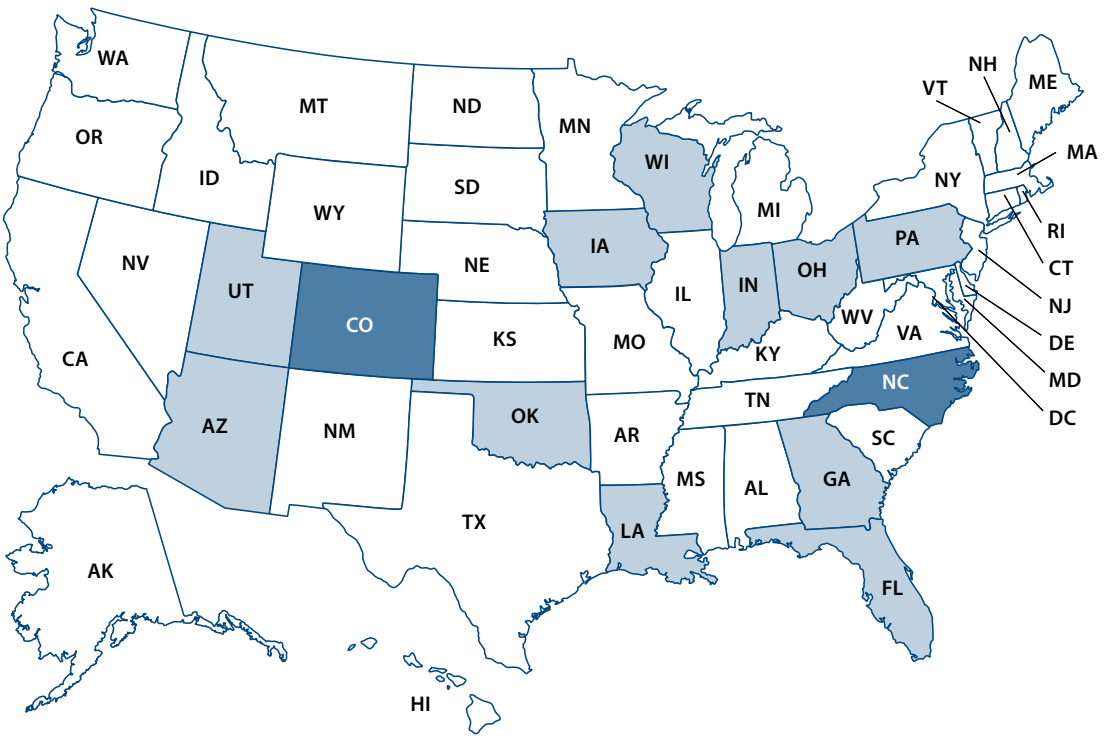
Not only did Indiana enact what will likely become the largest private choice program, but many other states also advanced parental choice. Parental-choice advocates achieved enormous victories during the 2011 legislative season. We can write with complete confidence that 2011 stands as the most successful year in the history of the parental choice movement, and whatever year would rank second ranks a distant second.

In 2009, school-choice opponents in Congress seized the opportunity afforded to them by the huge Democratic majority to eliminate the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program (DCOSP). Rather than an outright repeal, Congressional and administration opponents settled upon a strategy whereby they would continue the program, but only for currently participating students. This quieted the complaints of parents had the program been completely killed outright, while accomplishing their goal of eliminating the program. Opponents took this action despite an U.S. Department of Education evaluation of the program that showed significant academic benefits to program participants.

Dr. Patrick Wolf, the principal investigator who helped conduct the rigorous studies, testified to the U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Operations, which has jurisdiction over the DCOSP.

> *In my opinion, by demonstrating statistically significant experimental impacts on boosting high school graduation rates and generating*

FIGURE 1 | **STATES EXPANDING OR CREATING NEW PRIVATE CHOICE PROGRAMS, 2011**
(BLUE = NEW STATES WITH PRIVATE CHOICE PROGRAMS)



a wealth of evidence suggesting that students also benefited in reading achievement, the DC OSP has accomplished what few educational interventions can claim: It markedly improved important education outcomes for low-income inner-city students.[8]

Newspapers including the *Washington Post,* the *Chicago Tribune,* and *The Wall Street Journal* denounced the attempt to deprive low-income District children the opportunity to attend a school of their choosing. In 2011, due to the leadership of Speaker of the House John Boehner and the aid of several Democratic Senators, Congress and the Administration reauthorized and expanded the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program.[9]

The Midwest led the way on parental choice in 2011, with major legislative victories in Indiana, Ohio, and Wisconsin and smaller victories in Iowa and Pennsylvania. Ohio lawmakers created a fourth school voucher program—this one for children with special needs—to accompany three pre-existing programs for children in Cleveland, children in low ranking public schools statewide, and children with autism.[10] Ohio lawmakers named the new special-needs program for former state Representative (and ALEC member) Jon Peterson, creating the Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship Program for children with an Individualized Education Program (IEP). In addition to creating this new program, Ohio lawmakers quadrupled the number of Educational Choice Scholarships available to children in poorly performing public schools. Ohio lawmakers also made substantial improvements to the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program by increasing the maximum voucher amount and including high school students in the program for the first time.

Not to be outdone, Wisconsin lawmakers also made substantial changes to the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP) and created a new parental choice program for students in Racine, Wisconsin.[11] Improvements to the MPCP include:

- **Expansion of student eligibility by family income.** Previously, only children from families qualifying for the federal free and reduced-price lunch program could participate in the MPCP. Now, children from all families earning up to 300 percent of the federal poverty guidelines, or $67,000 for a family of four, will qualify to receive a private-school voucher.

- **Elimination of Participation Cap.** Previous law included a hard limit capping the number of MPCP vouchers to 22,500. The 2011 expansion eliminates the cap entirely.

- **Creation of once in, always in.** Previously, a student who received a voucher could lose eligibility for the program because his or her parents happened to increase their income in a given year. Students whose parents received a raise or whose single parents married could find themselves ineligible to continue in the program. The new law provides participating children with continuing eligibility.

- **Increased private-school options.** Previously, children receiving a voucher could attend private schools only in the city of Milwaukee. Now, they will be able to attend any participating private school in the state, making a number of suburban Milwaukee private schools eligible to participate in the program.

Wisconsin also created a choice program for students in the Racine Unified School District. This program will operate in a fashion similar to the MPCP after a cap on participation expires after the first two years. Iowa and Pennsylvania both had incremental increases in their tax-credit programs.[12]

Several other states also made improvements to preexisting programs. Florida lawmakers expanded eligibility for the McKay Scholarship programs to make more children with disabilities eligible to participate in the program.[13] Utah legislators appropriated more money in order to lower the waiting list for the Carson Smith program for children with disabilities.[14] Oklahoma legislators transferred the administration of their special-needs scholarship to the state after a small number of school districts unlawfully refused to administer the program.[15]

Oklahoma lawmakers also created a new choice program—the Education Scholarship Education Act—causing the state to join the growing number of states with scholarship tax-credit programs.[16] Also in 2011, North Carolina, with a Republican majority legislature and a Democratic governor, created a new special needs program. North Carolina's Tax Credits for Children with Disabilities program blazed a new trail in creating a personal use tax credit for special needs families to defray private school costs.

New Approaches: Education Savings Accounts and District-Led Vouchers

Two Western states—Arizona and Colorado—also broke new ground in the battle for parental choice. Years ago, the Colorado Supreme Court struck down a voucher program based upon a provision in the Colorado Constitution calling for the local control of schools.[17] In 2011, the Douglas County school board enacted a new voucher program on their own motion.[18] Under the program, students will be eligible to receive a voucher worth up to $4,575. The district will keep about 25 percent of state aid to pay for the administration of the program and to cover fixed costs. By expanding parental options while keeping money for students they no longer need to educate, Douglas County may prove to have enacted a financial and academic win-win for students and the district.

Arizona lawmakers also rose to the challenge of a state Supreme Court setback when Senator Rick Murphy and Representative Debbie Lesko sponsored a new type of parental choice program to enactment: public contributions to Education Savings Accounts (ESAs).[19] Shortly after the enactment of this program, ALEC adopted model legislation on this new type of parental choice program. ALEC's *Education Savings Account Act* allows a portion of state funds to be deposited into an ESA if a student withdraws from his or her assigned school.

In 2006, Arizona's then-Governor Janet Napolitano became the first Democratic governor to sign a new private choice program into existence. A coalition of groups opposed to private school choice, however, filed suit against the program. The Arizona Supreme Court ultimately ruled that a Blaine Amendment in the Arizona Constitution precluded the operation of a school voucher program (see text box). The ESA approach aims to allow parents to customize the education of their children, embracing customization over standardization while overcoming Blaine Amendments.

State-funded ESA contributions represent a substantial improvement over school vouchers as a parental choice mechanism. Rather than simply choosing among schools, parents should be free to choose from a growing array of education services from a variety of providers. Today, students can take classes online, seek private tutoring, or enroll in community colleges or universities for coursework.

Accounts for education and health care serve as important precedents upon which to build. Lawmakers must ensure strong systems of state financial oversight are in place and provide for the auditing of accounts. Near bankrupt states can save money by fashioning contractual agreements with parents to provide greater flexibility in return for smaller overall per-student subsidies.

With control over funding, parents could purchase full enrollment at public or private schools. Alternatively, parents might choose to have their children attend classes at a variety of providers: public, private, and virtual. Allowing parents to save funds for future college and university expenses provides a powerful incentive to consider cost-effectiveness from all types of providers, whether public or private.

Opponents of parental choice will likely challenge both of these programs in court. Nevertheless, they have innovatively addressed long-standing problems and represent new weapons in the battle for parental options. ALEC adopted a model ESA proposal in 2011; reformers should study the proposal carefully.

Sea Change in Teacher Tenure and Collective Bargaining

The Denver-based nonprofit, nonpartisan Education Commission of the States has been closely tracking tenure and collective bargaining legislation.[21] Jennifer Dounay Zinth, a senior policy analyst at the organization, told *Education Week* the 2011 legislative session changes amounted to a "sea change," saying, "It's hard to get your arms around—not just the number of bills being enacted but the breadth and depth of changes being

Blaine Amendments

Blaine Amendments such as Arizona's have an ugly history rooted in bigotry. The United States began as an experiment in freedom, but has at times struggled with intolerance. America's culture wars surrounding the assimilation of Catholic immigrants represented just such a struggle in the 19th and early 20th century.

In the 1920s, the Ku Klux Klan successfully abolished private schools in Oregon. The KKK, you see, wanted to standardize Oregon Catholics into "real Americans." If that thought frightens you, and it should, read on. The ESA approach aims to allow parents to customize the education of their children, embracing customization over standardization.

The KKK aimed to standardize Oregon Catholics through a public-school curriculum they approved and by banning private school attendance entirely. The U.S. Supreme Court struck down this measure in 1925, confirming a right for parents to choose private schools. By that time, however, these misguided Blaine Amendments had already been incorporated in a number of state constitutions, thereby banning aid to private schools.

In addition to the ugly religious discriminatory intent of the attempt to effectively ban private schools, this effort reflected a broader problem: It demonstrated a belief in "one true way" to educate children. Unfortunately, the KKK is not the only organization that has sought to control schools for its own purposes.

Milton Friedman proposed a solution to these problems in the 1950s: separating the school finance from the operation of schools. This would allow parents far greater freedom to choose the sort of education they want, and reflects a liberal "to each his own" system.

Over the years, advocates of greater parental choice have carried Friedman's concept forward in the form of school vouchers and tuition tax credits. Vouchers are state-funded coupons parents can redeem at public or private schools. Tax credits provide indirect aid for parents bearing the expense of a private education in addition to paying public school taxes. The first modern voucher program began in Milwaukee in 1990, and today, at least 26 voucher and tax-credit programs exist.[20]

made."[22] While so-called red states are in the lead, even deep blue states like Illinois have implemented teacher reform policies.

Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, seems to have noticed, as the New York Times reported in July that:

> *Ms. Weingarten, who has long opposed the cuts—both budgetary and rhetorical—made to teachers, told her audience that the current debate on education "has been hijacked by a group of self-styled reformers" from "on high" who want to blame educators' benefits and job security for states' notorious budget problems.*[23]

Every person reading this book had a teacher who did a fantastic job in sparking their interest in learning and made a difference in their life. You can picture that teacher in your head now. Every person reading this book has almost certainly encountered teachers who fell far below this standard. Now think of this person as well.

As a nation, we have embraced a system for teachers of recognition and reward that treats these two drastically different types of educators exactly the same, regardless of their effectiveness. In 2011, many state lawmakers began the process of moving away from lockstep salary schedules, and toward treating teachers as professionals—for example, by requiring teachers earn tenure rather than giving it to everyone automatically.

Ms. Weingarten may be comfortable with treating teachers as interchangeable widgets, but in so doing, she finds herself increasingly isolated.

Colorado lawmakers used the 2010 session to pass far-reaching teacher-effectiveness legislation on a bipartisan basis. Democrat Mike Johnston, a former teacher and first-year state senator, successfully guided the legislation through the process. Colorado Senate Bill 191 provides for annual teacher evaluations, with at least 50 percent based

on student learning gains.[24] The bill conditions tenure on effectiveness and allows for the dismissal of ineffective teachers. SB 191 is particularly strong on issues related to teacher placements, excessing teachers, and workforce reductions. It prohibits districts from assigning a teacher to a new position without the consent of the principal and two teachers in the receiving school.

The law requires districts to make workforce reductions based on effectiveness, rather than seniority. While most similar state laws apply only to district-wide layoffs or workforce reductions, SB 191 applies this standard at the building level, where most workforce reductions take place. Excessed teachers will no longer have the right to "bump" newer teachers at other schools. Instead, they are required to secure positions through mutual consent hiring as described above. Finally, SB 191 creates a process by which districts can remove from the payroll excessed teachers who fail to obtain new positions.[25]

Florida legislators also led a charge on tenure reform. In 2010, they passed Senate Bill 6, a far-reaching measure to reform tenure and to institute a system of merit pay. However, Florida's then-Governor Charlie Crist, who had publicly endorsed the measure several times, consequently vetoed the measure before leaving the Republican Party to pursue an unsuccessful bid for the U.S. Senate in 2010. Florida lawmakers reworked the measure, but the changes made proved nothing less than profound. The 2011 measure ties teachers' pay raises to student performance and eliminates tenure protection for new teachers. The law also empowers Florida districts to create higher salaries for teachers who relinquish traditional tenure for a merit pay system. The law also weakens the role of seniority in determining layoffs, increasing the role student performance plays in such decisions.[26]

The rancor in Florida, however, pales in comparison to Wisconsin's bitter battle to curtail collective bargaining. The Wisconsin war over collective bargaining included Democratic legislators fleeing the state to break quorum, massive protests at the state capitol, a contentious election for the state Supreme Court, efforts to recall a slate of Republican and Democratic legislators, and, as of writing, an effort to recall Gov. Walker.

In the end, Gov. Scott Walker's curtailment of collective bargaining passed and the Wisconsin Supreme Court upheld it. Although the measure addressed a number of areas, including increased pension contributions for public employees and other measures, limiting the scope of collective bargaining stood at the core of the dispute.

To explain to Americans the significance of the protests in Madison, the Washington Examiner provided a concrete example from the small Hartland-Lakeside district, about 30 miles outside Milwaukee. Previously, the district's collective-bargaining agreement required the district to purchase health insurance from a corporation created by the Wisconsin Education Association. Hartland-Lakeside Superintendent Glenn Schilling told the Examiner the new law enabled the district to put the insurance contract out to bid:

> *"It's going to save us about $690,000 in 2011–2012," says Schilling. Insurance costs that had been about $2.5 million a year will now be around $1.8 million. What union leaders said would be a catastrophe will in fact be a boon to teachers and students.*[27]

Creative savings like what was realized in Hartland-Lakeside best reveals the benefits to reform: Teachers and students both win.

While the battle over collective bargaining reforms involved bitter partisanship in Wisconsin, Democrats in neighboring Illinois played a key role in reforming teachers' working conditions in their state. Gov. Pat Quinn (D), signed Senate Bill 7 to make tenure contingent on student achievement and to make it harder for teachers to strike.[28] Chicago's Public Schools, under the control of Mayor Rahm Emanuel, gained the ability to lengthen the city's school day, which was previously prohibited by collective-bargaining agreements. The landmark bill makes it easier for school administrators to dismiss teachers deemed ineffective based on student achievement. The decision is now based more on student performance than mere length of service.

Illinois wasn't the only deep blue Midwestern state to implement serious teacher quality reforms. On July 19, 2011 Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder signed a number of bills that also made far-reaching reforms to teacher tenure.[29] The Michigan reforms increased the default tenure qualification from four years to five years. Teachers who

earn the rating of "highly effective" for three years in a row can now earn tenure early.

Under the Michigan law, teachers must continue to earn their tenured status; they must earn at least the rating of "effective" in order to keep it. The law also requires school districts to notify parents in writing if their child is taught by a teacher rated "ineffective." The legislation removes layoffs and employee discipline from collective-bargaining agreements.

Lawmakers in other states, including Indiana and Tennessee, enacted significant teacher quality legislation in 2011 as well.

Grading School Performance A–F

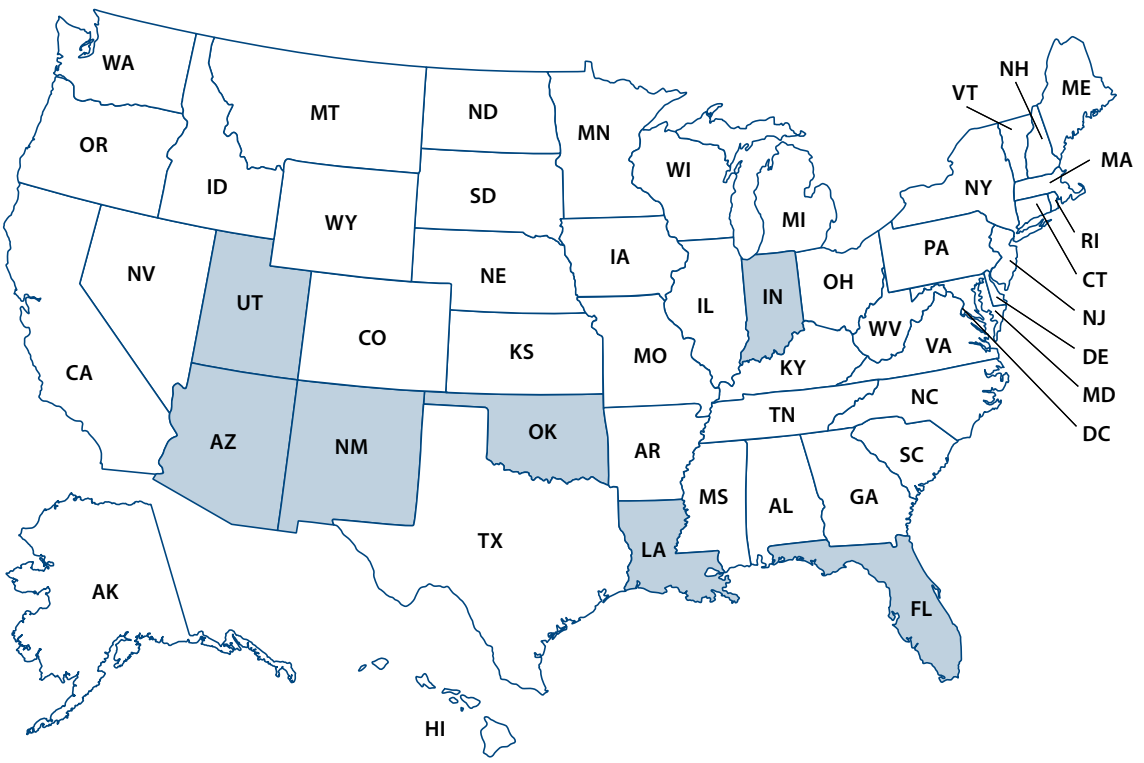
Florida pioneered the grading of school performance with A, B, C, D, and F labels in 1999. Carefully balancing overall student proficiency with student learning gains, the A–F grading system substantially improves public school transparency while affording even the most miserably performing schools the opportunity to earn better grades by heavily weighting gains.

Lawmakers around the country have taken notice of Florida's substantial gains in academic achievement, and a growing number of states have adopted the Florida system, as Figure 2 shows.

The use of letter grades helps spur school improvement for two broad reasons. First, many states use fuzzy labels to describe school academic performance. For instance, before Arizona lawmakers adopted the A–F methodology, schools received labels like "Performing," "Performing Plus," and "Excelling" to describe academic achievement in schools. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) finds that 44 percent of Arizona 4th graders score "Below Basic" in reading, but far fewer than 10 percent of schools get a rating worse than "Performing," which is the second-lowest label. Schools in Phoenix would proudly display a banner announcing that they are a "Performing" school when many schools with that rating would likely earn the far more accurate description of "D" or "F" under the letter grading system.

The second important aspect of the A–F system is that people instantly understand its scale.

FIGURE 2 | **STATES USING A–F LABELS TO GRADE SCHOOL PERFORMANCE, AUGUST 2011**



In Arizona, conversations over school quality would frequently generate questions about whether it was better to be labeled "Performing Plus" or "Exceling." Similarly, the Florida Department of Education graded schools 1–5 before adopting letter grades, but confusion reigned over which score—a 1 or a 5—represented the highest rank.

The ALEC Education Task Force adopted the omnibus *A-Plus Literacy Act* in 2010, which was based on the reforms in Florida. The act includes model language for grading schools A–F.

Charter School Movement Maintains Momentum

In fall 2010, more than 5,400 charter schools around the nation educated over 1.7 million children; 465 of these were new schools.[30] In 2011, a number of states, including Maine, whose lawmakers passed charter legislation for the first time, passed important pieces of charter legislation.

Florida lawmakers passed Senate Bill 1546, which created new charter-school authorizers and created a process for state recognition of high-performing charter schools and charter-school systems.[31] Under the new law, universities will be able to create and operate their own K–12 charter schools, and charter schools that meet high academic and financial requirements can increase enrollment, serve more grades, and qualify for extended contracting periods. Moreover, charter-management networks with sound financial practices and high-performing schools are now empowered to expand by opening new schools, unless their district can prove they should be denied.

Not to be outdone, Indiana's reform-minded legislature created a new state commission to authorize charter schools and allowed private universities to serve as authorizers as well. As mentioned earlier, Indiana's lawmakers now allow charter schools to buy unused school buildings for $1. Finally, Indiana lawmakers created a "parent trigger" mechanism whereby parents could convert a district school into a charter school. In 2010, ALEC adopted the *Parent Trigger Act,* which allows a school to be converted after a majority of parents sign a petition.

Lawmakers lifted statewide caps on charter schools in several states, including Tennessee, North Carolina, and Oregon. However, simply lifting a cap on the authorization of new charter schools can prove to be a hollow victory if a single central chokepoint for authorization remains. Instead, lawmakers should be sure to both lift caps and to provide multiple authorizers. While significant legislation passed in a number of states, the most recent ranking of state charter-school laws by the Center for Education reform gave only 12 charter laws an A or B grade, with only the first three listed earning an A: Washington D.C., Minnesota, California, Arizona, Michigan, Colorado, New York, Indiana, Missouri, Florida, Utah, and Pennsylvania.[32]

While exciting legislation passed in 2011, the most meaningful charter-school development may well prove to be the perfection of "hybrid learning" school models mixing traditional classroom instruction with technology-based learning. We address this exciting development in Chapter 5; for now, we simply note that charter schools are leading the way in developing these new learning models.

The Way of the Future: Digital Learning

In December 2010, the bipartisan team of former governors Jeb Bush of Florida (R) and Bob Wise of West Virginia (D) announced the publication of the *Digital Learning Now* report. The report represents the culmination of the Digital Learning Council, and outlines 10 elements of high-quality digital learning. The Digital Learning Council, on which ALEC staff was represented, consisted of stakeholders across the education industry, including legislators, online providers, technology companies, and content providers.

Florida, already the nation's leader in digital learning, expanded its lead in 2011 with the passage of House Bill 7197, the Digital Learning Now Act. Beginning with ninth grade students entering in fall 2011, all Florida students will be required to take an online course to graduate from high school. The Digital Learning Now Act removed restrictions on the full-time participation of elementary students in online learning. In addition, the law allows students to cross district lines to take virtual courses for courses otherwise unavailable and clears the way for blended learning models. The law also created a pathway for districts to certify qualified online teachers, and requires state accountability testing to occur entirely online by the 2014–15 school year.[33]

Utah lawmakers also passed a major piece of digital-learning legislation in 2011 with Senate

Bill 65—the Statewide Online Education Program. The authors of this law drew upon the Digital Learning Now's *10 Elements of High-Quality Digital Learning* to develop a very broad online-learning policy. The law funds academic success rather than just seat time, has no participation caps, and allows multiple public and private providers. The program starts for public high school students in grades 9–12, then phases in homeschool and private school students.[34]

Policymakers in other states are actively discussing broad digital-learning bills. Chapter 5 addresses digital learning's potential to transform education in depth.

The Next Steps

The past two years however have been crucial, however, in demonstrating that reform is not only necessary but in fact achievable. In the past, governors gave lip service to education reform but tended to simply increase spending and kick the can down the road. The 2010–2011 period witnessed something entirely different: lawmakers taking on the reactionary education establishment directly, and defeating them repeatedly.

States having passed reforms must move vigorously to implementation, given the huge difference between changing law and changing policy and opportunities for subversion. Reformers in other states should carefully study the comprehensive approaches of Florida and Indiana lawmakers. Dramatic improvement results from broad, rather than incremental, reform.

Lawmakers should heed Gov. Daniels' point about mutual reinforcement: the goal should be to start a virtuous cycle where transparency, choice and flexibility create sustained improvement. Florida has done it, Indiana has enacted the necessary legislation, several other states have enacted some but not all of the necessary tools. Still other states continue to wallow in stagnation, trapped in the tyranny of the failed status-quo.

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CHAPTER 2

A Thought Experiment on State Academic Achievement

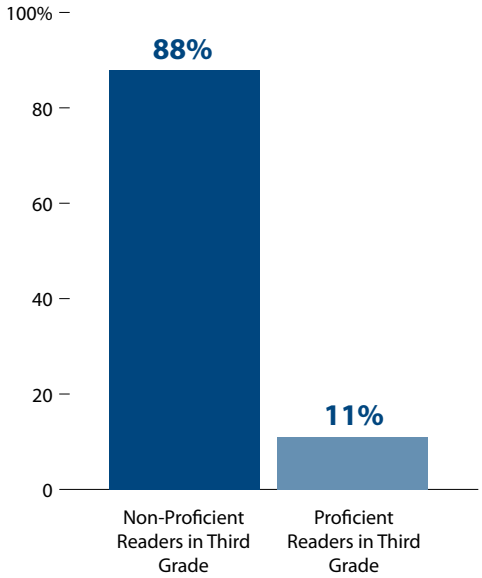
A Thought Experiment on State Academic Achievement

Imagine a scenario in which you learn that upon your death, you will be reincarnated as a young American. In this thought experiment, the "Powers that Be" tell you that the type of student you come back as will be entirely random, but they will allow you to choose the American state in which you will grow up. You instantly grasp that the quality of elementary and secondary education will prove crucial to you chances of success, and request time to research state-level academic results. The Powers generously grant you a week to research the question.

You quickly size up the profound differences in the life outcomes between students who graduate and those who drop out of school. Looking deeper, you find a study by the Annie E. Casey Foundation that finds that literacy in third grade—yes, third grade—strongly impacts the chances that a student will graduate from high school. Based on a longitudinal analysis of reading scores and graduation rates of 3,975 students over ten years, students who could not read by the end of the third grade were four times more likely to drop out of high school. In fact, 88 percent of students who failed to earn a high school diploma were struggling readers in third grade.[1]

The Annie E. Casey analysis also found that differences in reading achievement explain differences in graduation rates between students of different races and ethnicities. Proficient third grade readers of all races—white, black, and Hispanic—graduate at similar rates. Eighty-nine percent of economically disadvantaged students in the study, who achieved proficient reading skills by the third grade, graduated. Furthermore, your research informs you that 90 percent of welfare recipients are high school dropouts, 85 percent of kids in the juvenile justice system are functionally illiterate, 75 percent of food stamp recipients did not graduate from high school and 70 percent of prison inmates cannot read above a fourth-grade level.

Figure 3 | **19-Year-Old Dropouts by 3rd-Grade Reading Scores**
(Source: Casey foundation Longitudinal Study)



You decide, quite sensibly, that you would prefer to avoid all of that in the next life. Your frantic searches across the internet for a comparable set of third grade reading achievement data comparing states results in nothing. You do, however, discover the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has a great deal of information on fourth-grade reading going back a number of years. You decide that this will be as close as you are going to get to the data you want, and begin a frantic analysis of NAEP fourth-grade reading data, searching for the best states to educate you to a proficient level of reading.

You download a copy of the most recently available NAEP reading results (2011) and read the document from cover to cover. You notice that the NAEP included new inclusion standards for special education and English Language Learner students, and that Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, New Jersey, North Dakota, Tennessee, and Texas violated those standards for the 2011 NAEP reading exam. Non-compliance with these standards creates doubt as to whether the results in those states are truly comparable to those in the other states, so you decide to eliminate them from consideration. You do not want to get something as important as your next life wrong based on testing imperfections![2] Later, however, you discover a method for comparing all 50 states and the District of Columbia which avoids these problems entirely.

State Proficiency Achievement Based on Income

You begin your investigation by reasoning that you will either grow up in a low-income family or not. The most recent Digest of Education Statistics reveals that 44.6 percent of American students qualified for a free or reduced-priced lunch under the federal nutrition program for low-income students. Your investigation in K–12 policy informs you that wide variations in academic outcomes exist between high and low income students, and 44.6 percent sounds disturbingly close to a coin flip. Because you are slightly more likely to grow up in a family that earns too much to qualify for a free or reduced-price lunch than the other way around, you start your investigation looking for states that do a good job in educating middle- and high-income students (not eligible for a free or reduced-price lunch) to a proficient level of reading.

Your first run of the data fills you with unease: Growing up in a middle- to high-income family fails to come close to guaranteeing that you will learn to read in the early grades. Your squinting eyes refuse to tell you anything other than most states rate around a coin flip regarding whether their economically advantaged students learn to read at a proficient level. Many states rate significantly worse than a coin flip. Alaska, Arizona, Hawaii, Louisiana, Mississippi, Nevada, New

Figure 4 | **Middle- and High-Income Students Scoring "Proficient or Better" on the 2011 NAEP 4th-Grade Reading Exam**

Note: Not all states are represented due to failure to meet the 95% inclusion rate

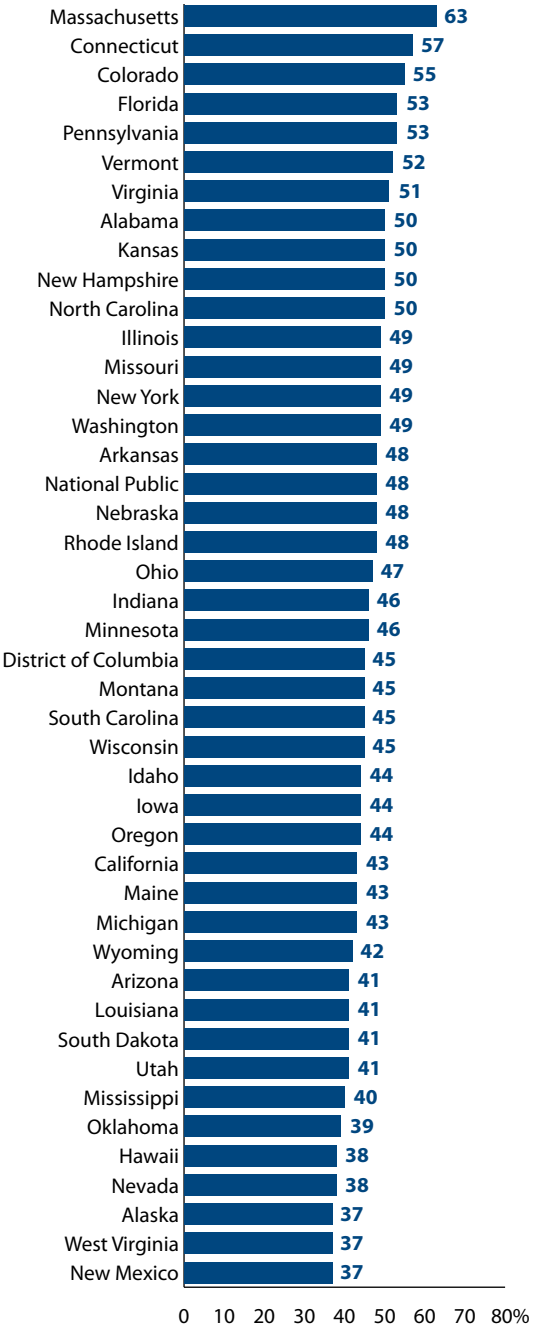
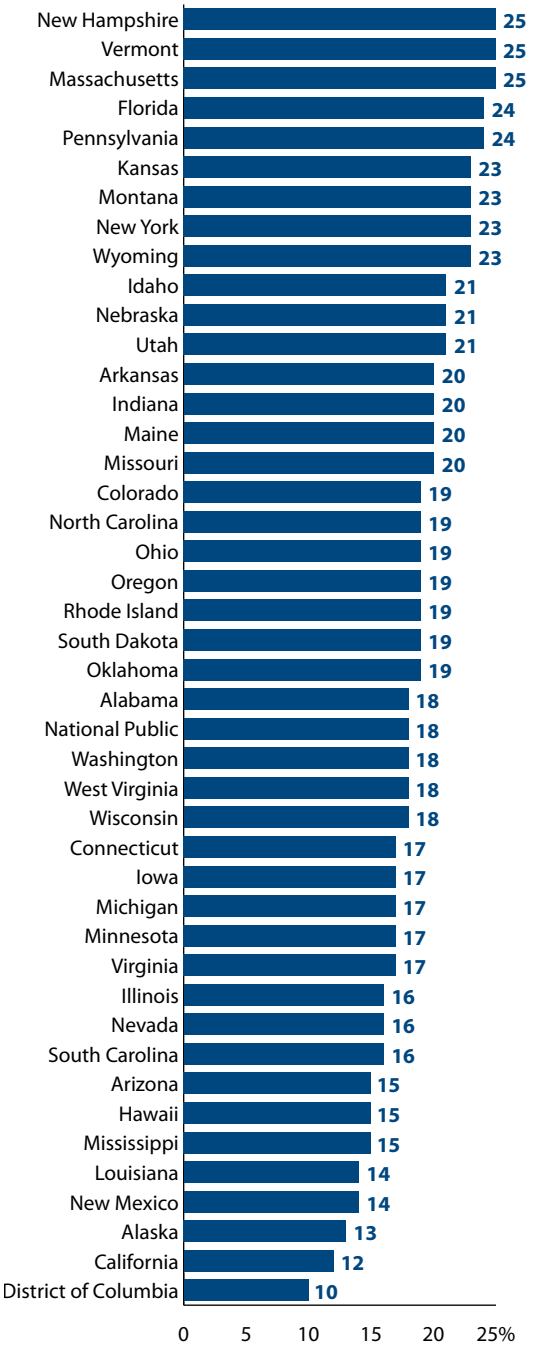


Figure 5 | **Free and Reduced-Price Lunch-Eligible Students Scoring "Proficient or Better" on the 2011 NAEP 4th-Grade Reading Exam**

Note: Not all states are represented due to failure to meet the 95% inclusion rate



Mexico, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Utah, and West Virginia make you feel very nervous indeed with their Proficient percentages in the high 30s and low 40s.

Even the states at the high end of the scale (Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Vermont) leave much to be desired for those even slightly risk averse. Somehow, the fact that 43 percent of middle- to high-income students in the very wealthy Connecticut failing to score at the Proficient level in reading seems unsettling. What, you wonder to yourself, will the numbers for low-income students look like? After all, it is almost as likely that you will be born as a child eligible for a free or reduced-price lunch as not.

As you can see in Figure 5, your fears were entirely justified. Even the best performing states (New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Florida, and Pennsylvania) succeed in teaching about a quarter of their free and reduced-price lunch-eligible students to become "Proficient or better" readers. A one-in-four chance of securing solid grade-level reading achievement or better sounds pretty awful, until you look at the bottom of the chart and see that your chances are only *one in ten* in our nation's capital, the District of Columbia.

Students with Disabilities

Your research indicates that 13.2 percent of students grapple with one or more learning disabilities. These can be physical in nature (like blindness) or neurological. You decide to check the proficiency profiles of each state for children with disabilities. The results are frightening, to say the least.

Massachusetts has 21 percent of their children with disabilities score proficient in reading. While very low, this rate is more than *ten times greater* than the lowest performer—the District of Columbia, at a mere 2 percent. Your research informed you that while some children with disabilities suffer from profound disabilities that would effectively prohibit learning to even a basic level, but that these cases make up only a small portion of the total student population with disabilities.

Your research further indicates that we are stuck with these results despite what many school district officials describe as a crushing level of spending per student with a disability. You read about a system

Figure 6 | **Students with Disabilities Scoring "Proficient or Better" on the 2011 NAEP 4th-Grade Reading Exam**

Note: Not all states are represented due to failure to meet the 95% inclusion rate

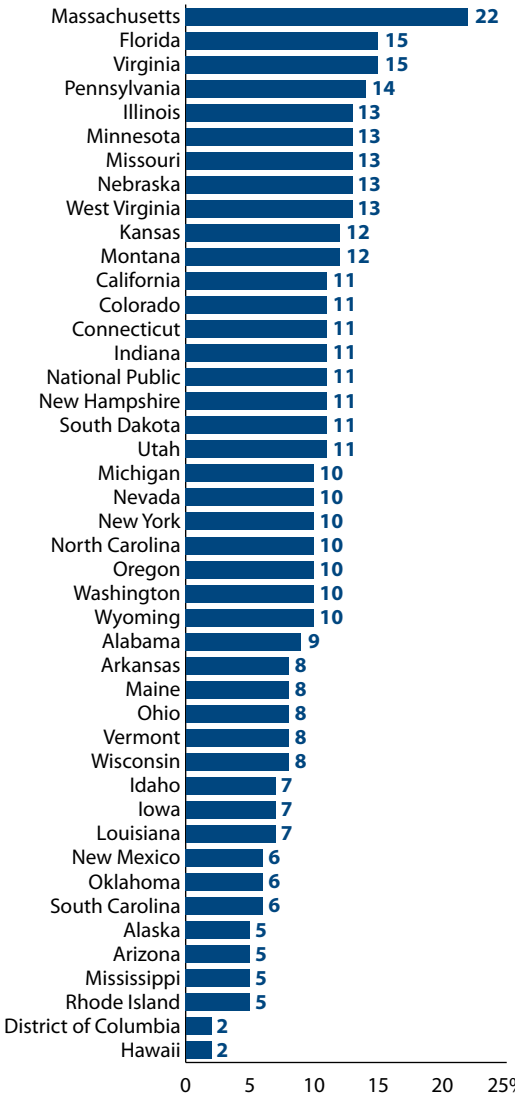
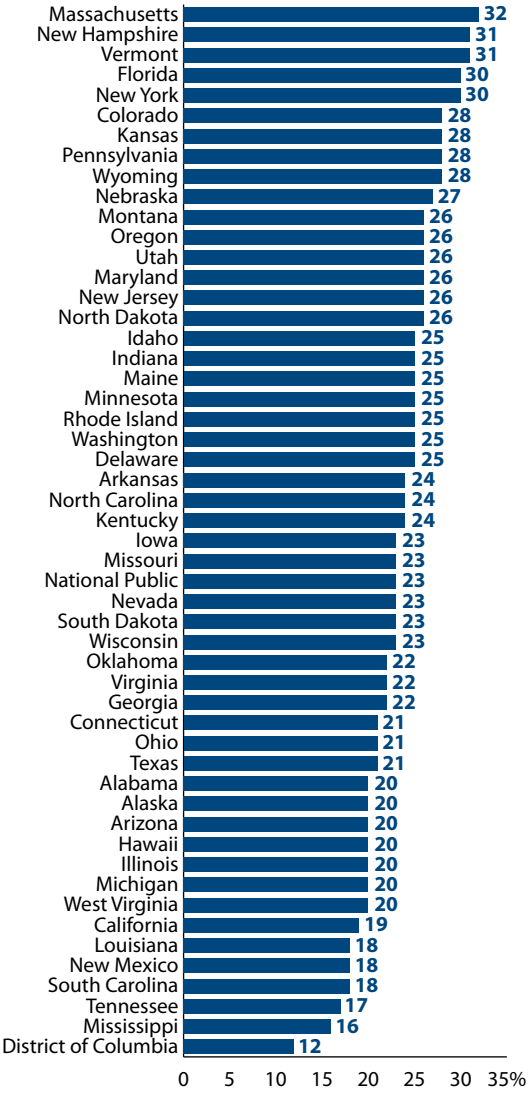


Figure 7 | **Free and Reduced-Price Lunch-Eligible General Education Students Scoring "Proficient or Better" on the 2011 NAEP 4th-Grade Reading Exam**

Note: Not all states are represented due to failure to meet the 95% inclusion rate



of education which leaves parents deeply dissatisfied from a purposely designed adversarial system between districts and parents. You read about runaway costs and a system more focused on bureaucratic outcomes than student achievement.[3]

You shudder at the thought of coming back as a child with a disability. If you come back as a lawmaker, you think to yourself, you would do something about this nightmare.

Ranking States by the General-Education Low-Income Student

At this point, your research leads you to the 16th edition of the American Legislative Exchange Council's *Report Card on American Education*, where you note the effort to rank states based upon the performance of general education students whose family incomes qualify them for a free or reduced-price lunch. The authors note

while this is not a perfect comparison between states (nothing can be), this strategy maximizes comparability among states.

You decide to emulate this strategy with regards to your early literacy strategy. Figure 7 presents the percentage of general education (non-ELL and non-IEP) students scoring Proficient or better on the fourth-grade reading exam.

None of these numbers strikes you as appealing, with the best performing states delivering approximately a 30 percent chance of making a low-income child "Proficient" in reading.

Note the strong role that race and ethnicity plays in these rankings. Nine out of the top ten states have majority white-student populations. Only Florida has a majority-minority student population. Seven of the bottom ten performing jurisdictions have majority-minority student populations, with only Tennessee, West Virginia, and Michigan serving as exceptions.

From Thought Experiment to State Policy

What can policymakers draw from this thought experiment?

The two states consistently appearing in the top 5 on these charts are Massachusetts and Florida. Both states pursued reform strategies that generated bitter opposition at the outset, but one suspects that the experiences of both states contain lessons for reformers around the country, and indeed, even for each other.

One sign of the success of Massachusetts is to compare their results to their New England neighbors. Vermont and New Hampshire fare well in the above comparisons, but they are extremely small states with overwhelmingly white (over 90 percent each) and middle- and high-income students. Both states have student populations smaller than a number of single school districts around the nation, making it difficult to generalize from their experience. We can, however, surmise that given the empirical evidence showing the existence of achievement gaps on standardized tests across race and income, being wealthy and overwhelmingly white and high-spending can come in handy in securing a top spot in comparisons such as these. Despite our efforts here to examine student subgroups to maximize comparability, it might be more applicable to compare Vermont and Maine to the wealthy suburbs in other states than to other states as a whole.

Notice, however, what happens to another high-spending New England state—Connecticut—when faced with the challenge of educating a sizeable population of low-income black students. Unlike their New England brothers Vermont and New Hampshire, Connecticut has minority population percentage that is larger than the low single digits—Hispanics make up almost 18 percent of students, while blacks comprise almost 14 percent of students in Connecticut. Hispanic and black students score below the national average when compared to their national peers, while white students in Connecticut score significantly higher than the national average. Connecticut scores poorly on the comparison of low-income general education children presented above precisely because it has thus far failed to meaningfully address racial achievement gaps. If we put a Hartford in Vermont or New Hampshire, then we would have a real test of the education policies of these demographically advantaged states.

Massachusetts, however, scores at the top of our general education list *despite* student demographic challenges almost identical to Connecticut. The Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993 created a multifaceted education reform program emphasizing rigorous statewide standards and a high-stakes test requirement for receiving a diploma. Prior to 1993, Massachusetts only required only history and physical education instruction, leaving the remainder to the discretion of districts. The Education Reform Act created statewide curriculum frameworks and learning standards in core academic subjects. National comparisons of state standards have consistently ranked the Massachusetts standards among the highest in the nation, and the state accountability exam, as being close to NAEP in quality.

The Education Reform Act of 1993 embraced a variety of reforms simultaneously—standards, high-stakes testing, charter schools, and increased spending. Policymakers in other states must sift through the evidence to discern what might apply to moving the academic needle in their states.[4]

As readers of the ALEC's 2010 *Report Card on American Education* know, Florida's reform efforts also featured standards and accountability but also very broad parental choice efforts. Florida's reform effort also created "accountability with

teeth" by: grading schools A,B,C,D, or F based on student proficiency and learning gains; curtailing social promotion; and incentivizing student success. Florida has a strong charter school law, the nation's largest scholarship tax-credit program (Step Up for Students), the nation's largest school voucher program (McKay Scholarships), and has led the nation in online learning through the Florida Virtual School and private online providers. Florida's success in producing academic gains for disadvantaged students inspired ALEC's first omnibus education reform bill, the *A-Plus Literacy Act*.

Massachusetts has done less than Florida to promote parental choice. Perhaps you might be thinking that this whole parental choice business is overdone, but as famous college football analyst Lee Corso likes to say: *"not so fast my friend."* Despite the fact that Massachusetts has not been as aggressive in pursuing public parental choice policies, public schools in Massachusetts face an even higher level of competition from private schools than public schools in Florida.

Private schools hold a larger market share of the total student population in Massachusetts than in Florida *despite* Florida's choice programs. Florida's public policy programs to promote parental choice have, in essence, have allowed the state to play catch-up in the parental choice arena to higher-income states such as Massachusetts.

Education reform discussions which cite Massachusetts as a model often lustily mention their high per-student spending ($14,478 in 2009–2010, well above the national average) and simply conclude that policymakers in other states should follow the example of Massachusetts in spending more on K–12. Such an analysis of course goes beyond the level of being simplistic, as it fails to account for a variety of other policies which may hold most of the explanatory power for the improvement in Massachusetts. Moreover, it fails to account distinguish between high spending and societal wealth.

Massachusetts is an atypical state, enjoying a distinct advantage in the area of wealth when compared to the national average. For instance, the median income for a family of four in that state is over $100,000, well above the national average. Only Connecticut, Maryland, and New Jersey join Massachusetts in the six-figure median income club for families of four.

Such a wealth advantage impacts a system of schools in a variety of ways—some subtle (such as the percentage of students attending private schools) and some more obvious (such as the percentage of students who qualify for a free or reduced-price lunch). With this wealth advantage, Massachusetts can and does spend above the national average for public school students. An average American state would require a much higher tax rate than Massachusetts if they wished to match the spending per pupil in these states.

We commend Massachusetts for extremely impressive academic gains. We lack any method to determine the role that increased spending played in the gains. Readers should note that it is not only possible to entirely squander wealth when it comes to public education; it has in fact been done. After a large increase in per-student funding, Jim McBride, Wyoming's Superintendent of Public Instruction, told the Associated Press in 2006:

> *"We probably will have the nation's No. 1 graduation rate, maybe college attendance rate. We probably will have the highest NAEP scores, which is the only national assessment that you can compare state to state," he said, referring to the National Assessment of Educational Progress.*[5]

McBride is probably a wonderful man who is certainly not alone in this world in having made a prediction that he might wish he could take back. Not only does Wyoming not have the highest NAEP scores in the country, the next chapter will show that Wyoming consistently demonstrate gains below the national average, and has one of the poorest records in moving achievement for low-income children (see Figure 17 in the next chapter).

Massachusetts, therefore, deserves credit for managing their generously funded public schools skillfully to produce strong gains. Massachusetts enjoys an advantage over Wyoming, however, in that their state has *wealth* whereas Wyoming schools have enjoyed a *windfall*. The median income in Maryland and Massachusetts is still about a quarter higher than Wyoming, despite the

gas and oil boom.

Now imagine a case even worse than Wyoming. Wyoming spent a great deal of money and received very little in the way of return on investment. In the end, however, they were simply misspending a windfall. Imagine if the natural resources explosion had never happened in Wyoming, and state lawmakers had attempted to tax the economy to the point of spending $16,000 per student in the public school system.

The academic results would not have been any better, but the strain of Wyoming's economy would have been enormous. Without the natural resources boom, Wyoming's per-capita income would be considerably lower, making the tax rates necessary to spend anything like $16,000 per child prohibitively high. Wyoming's private sector employers would have little choice but to consider the advantages of setting up shop in neighboring Colorado or Montana.

Policymakers have lessons to learn from both the Massachusetts and Florida experiences: There is no single path to the top of the mountain. Both states emphasized standards and accountability, both states attached high stakes to their tests, both states created additional options for parents. Massachusetts reformers got a six-year head start on Florida's reformers, put a relatively stronger emphasis on academic standards and less of one on parental choice, and achieved remarkable results.

Florida's reformers got a later start, had a far larger demographic challenge (far higher percentages of low-income and minority students) and, with less wealth, had less money to work with on a per-student basis. Despite these challenges, Florida produced remarkable gains. Our instinct is that Florida may have made even larger academic gains if they had adopted the Massachusetts academic standards, and Massachusetts may have made even larger gains if they had graded schools and expanded parental choice.

New York placing fourth on the final chart bears some mention. More than half of the state of New York's free and reduced-price lunch-eligible students attend New York City schools. Between 2002 and 2009 (the last date for reliable district level NAEP data at the time of this writing), New York City students nearly doubled the statewide reading gains among low-income students for the state of New York. If we had the ability to separate the NYC gains from the overall state gains in the NAEP data over this period (sadly unavailable), the discrepancy between NYC and the state of New York would appear even larger. Mayor Michael Bloomberg's reform effort, led by Chancellor Joel Klein, succeeded in improving the academic performance of disadvantaged students, and thus merits study by reform minded policymakers as well.

In the end, policymakers have no magic wand to make their states wealthy. The available evidence does suggest however that academic standards and parental choice can get schools moving in the right direction by focusing efforts on academic achievement. The goal of policymakers in every state, regardless if they fall on the low or high level of achievement, should be to maximize the academic impact of every public dollar invested in the public system. America needs our public school system to improve, with some parts of the nation simply needing it more than others.

"None of the Above" Is Not an Option

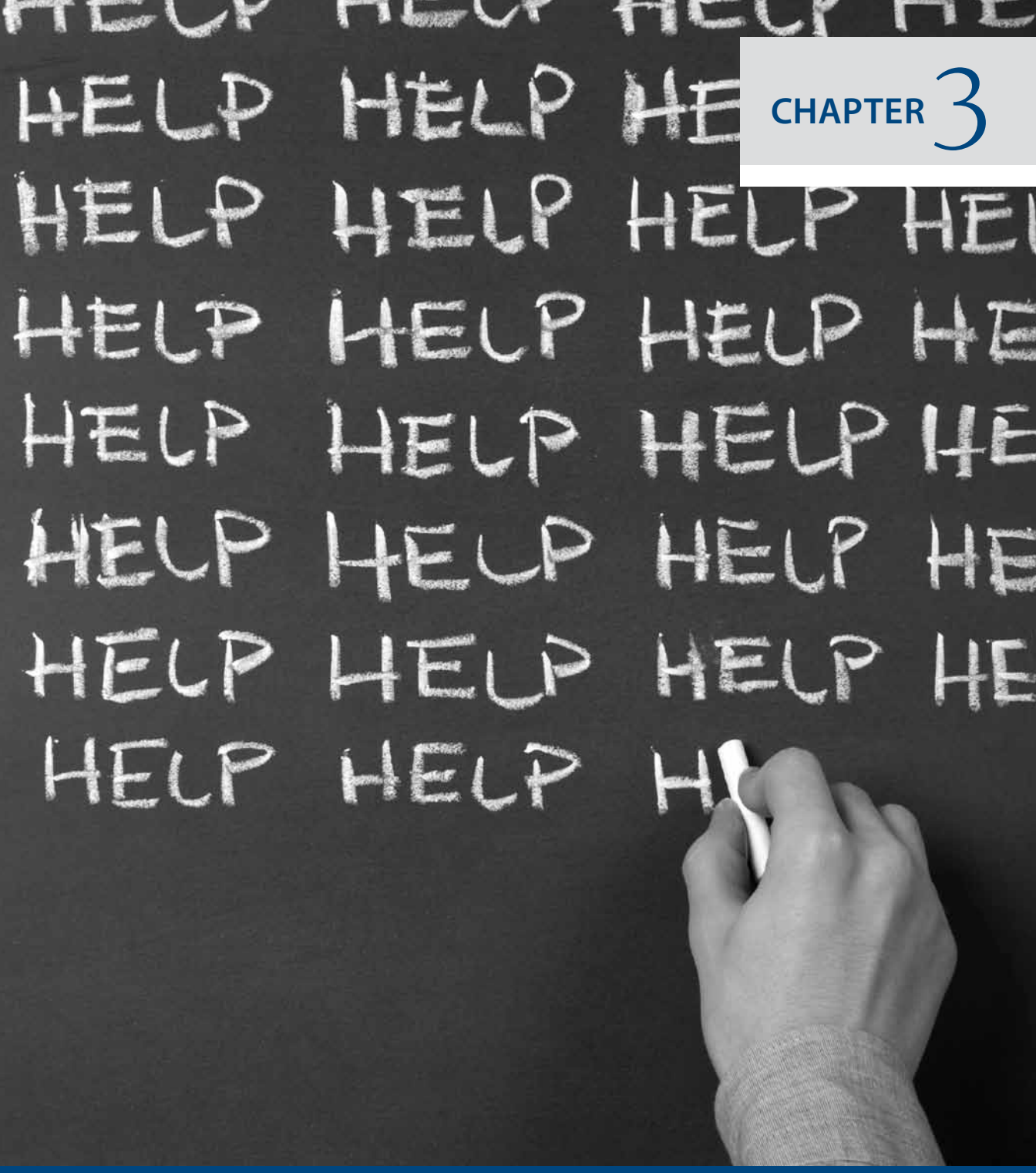
Students in even the best performing states face long odds in reaching early reading proficiency. The worst performing jurisdictions cannot be judged to be making a serious attempt at providing a public school system which equalizes opportunity. All states have tremendous room for improvement.

The next chapter focuses on the rate of academic improvement in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Some states have achieved gains far faster than others, and some actually have been backsliding among disadvantaged students. If more states emulated the success of the best performing states we would see far more progress in national achievement problems, such as racial and economic achievement gaps.

"None of the above" is not an option in our thought experiment or for disadvantaged children in the real world. Policymakers in our top performing states should redouble their efforts, and those in the rest of the nation need to get started on reform. If the performance of the states at the bottom of the above charts is not good enough for you in a theory, it certainly is not good enough for actual disadvantaged students in practice.

ENDNOTES

1. Donald J. Hernadez, 2011. How Third-Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation. Publication of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, available on the internet at http://www.aecf.org/~/media/Pubs/Topics/Education/Other/DoubleJeopardyHowThirdGradeReadingSkillsandPovery/DoubleJeopardyReport040511FINAL.pdf.
2. The next chapter contains a more complete discussion of the NAEP inclusion standards.
3. You can read about all of these things and (more) in a joint publication by the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation and the Progressive Policy Institute: Chester E. Finn Jr., Andrew J. Rotherham, and Charles R. Hokanson Jr. (eds.) 2001. Rethinking Special Education for a New Century. (Washington, D.C.: Thomas B. Fordham Foundation).
4. Paul E. Peterson and Carlos Xabel Lastra-Anadón, 2010. State Standards Rise in English, Fall in Math. Article appearing in the Fall 2010 edition of Education Next, available online at http://educationnext.org/state-standards-rising-in-reading-but-not-in-math/
5. See Mead Gruver, 2006. Wyoming schools, flush with cash, go on spending binge. Article in the Caspar Star Tribune, available on the internet at http://trib.com/news/state-and-regional/article_1e231c84-e532-5841-9447-744d2088287f.html#ixzz1eMipf5wC.



CHAPTER 3

The Desperate Need for Academic Gains in America

The Desperate Need for Academic Gains in America

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) began measuring student K–12 achievement in member nations during the late 1990s through the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). The 2009 PISA gave random student samples academic exams in 74 countries. The PISA data below focuses on 15-year-old students (tenth graders in America) as this is often the minimum age of mandatory school attendance around the world. In short, this data is as close to a comparable finished academic product as possible when making international achievement comparisons.

The U.S. Department of Education performed an additional analysis of the American data to break down the American results by both income and racial and ethnic subgroups.[1] Figure 8 presents the data for American subgroups by income compared to PISA averages. The chart divides the American sample into quartiles based upon the percentage of students at the school level who qualify for a free or reduced-price lunch under federal guidelines. In 2009, a family of four could earn a maximum of just over $40,000 to qualify for a reduced price lunch, but approximately 80 percent of these students qualify for a free lunch, which has a maximum family income for a family of four of just over $28,000.[2] Figure 8 compares American income subgroups against the performance of the lowest and highest OECD performers.[3]

The wealthiest American schools achieve quite well—higher than the average of the highest performing nation. This however is far less impressive than it might seem, as it compares only the highest scoring American students to the *average* student in other nations. It would be more appropriate to see how the wealthiest schools in American schools compare to the wealthiest schools in other nations.

Figure 8 | **PISA Combined Literacy Scores for 15-year-olds American income subgroups (percentage of school eligible for FRL) vs. the highest and lowest OECD scores (OECD Average = 493)**

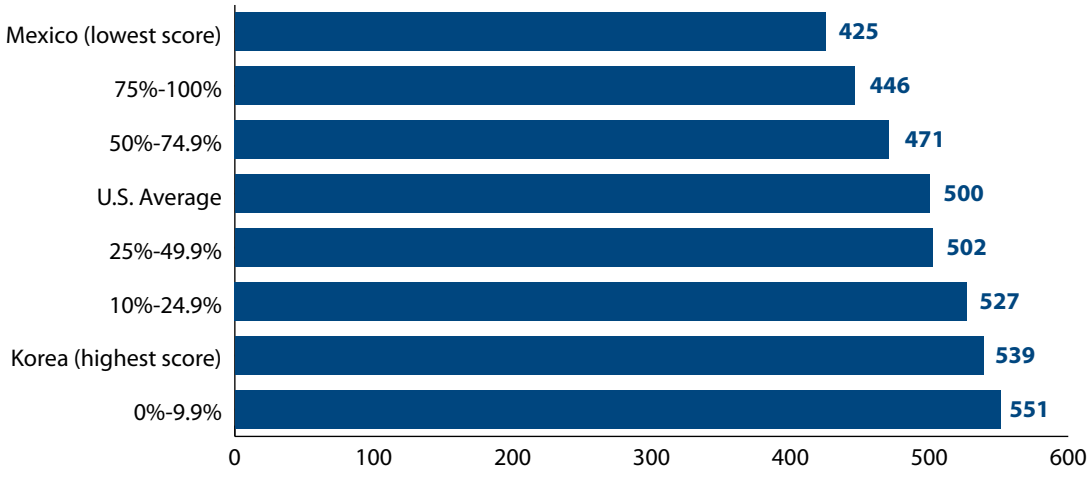
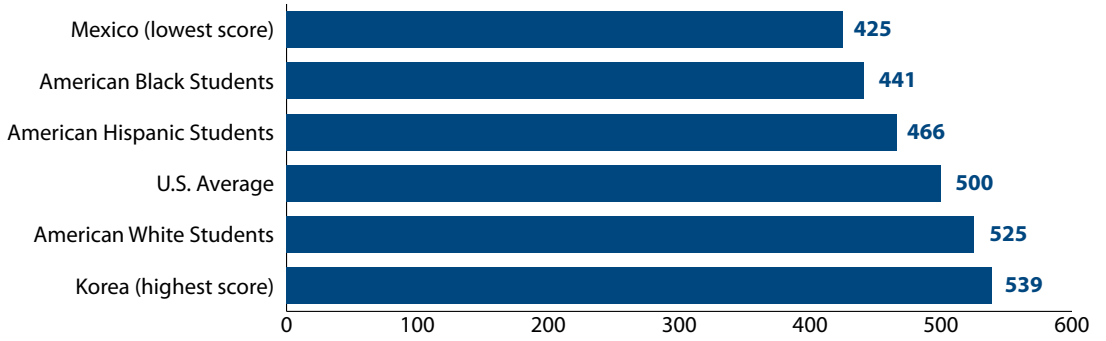


Figure 9 | **PISA Combined Literacy Scores for 15-year-olds American racial subgroups vs. the highest and lowest OECD scores (OECD Average = 493)**



More importantly, notice how badly things slip by income in the American scores: Students attending schools with a majority of low-income students score closer to the average of the lowest scoring OECD country (Mexico) than to the highest scoring nation (South Korea). This is a disappointing result to say the least, given that American schools spend approximately four times as much per student on a purchasing power-adjusted basis as schools in Mexico.[4]

Figure 9 shows the same disappointing pattern by racial and ethnic subgroups.

White American 15-year-old students score at an internationally competitive level, but one can only describe the results for black and Hispanic students as catastrophic. Mexico's schools may produce the lowest scores in the OECD, but on a point-produced per dollar basis, they easily outshine American schools serving black and Hispanic students, despite having far lower average family incomes.

American schools, in short, desperately need to improve academic performance, especially for our most disadvantaged students.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) gives regular exams in reading and mathematics to random samples of students. Highly respected, the NAEP exam is certainly the truest—and many would say the only reliable—way to compare academic achievement across states. The academic tests given by states themselves vary widely in terms of rigor, whereas the students who take tests such as the SAT and ACT represent a self-selected group.[5]

In this chapter, we will again make use of NAEP data on all four major NAEP exams (fourth-grade reading and math and eighth-grade reading and math). We will utilize the entire period for which all 50 states and the District of Columbia participated in the NAEP, 2003 to 2011 (the most recent tests available at the time of writing).

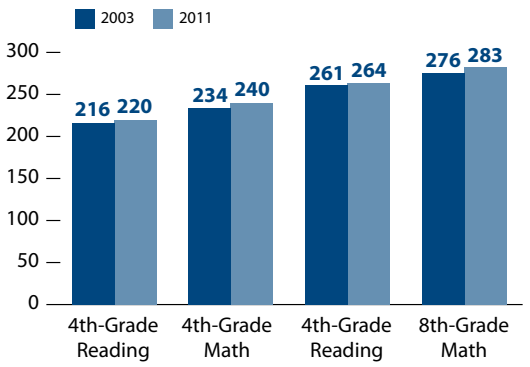
We will document the academic gains of student subgroups in each state, and rank each state and the District of Columbia according to their academic progress. Along the way, we will be putting states into the Gains Hall of Fame (for gains which at least double the national average) and the Gains Hall of Shame (for achieving gains below half the national average) for various student subgroups.

Finally, we will conduct an analysis designed to maximize comparability among states by measuring the gains and overall achievement of general education children low-income children.

Academic Gains: National Results

Figure 10 presents the scores on the four main NAEP examinations: fourth-grade reading, fourth-grade mathematics, eighth-grade reading, and eighth-grade mathematics. All 50 states

Figure 10 | **National Public School NAEP Reading and Math Scores, 2003 and 2011**



participated in the NAEP starting with the 2003 exams, and the 2011 results constitute the latest available at the time of this writing.

The good news: Academic attainment among American public school students shows improvement. The bad news: It is happening at a glacial pace. As a rough rule of thumb, ten points on the NAEP exam equals approximately one grade level worth of academic progress.[6] Thus, all else being equal, we would assume that a group of fifth-grade students would score about 10 points higher than a group of fourth-grade students if they took the fourth-grade reading NAEP exam, for example.

In 2011, fourth graders scored six points higher on math than their predecessors had achieved in 2003. Reading improved by a smaller four points for fourth graders. We see the same pattern in the eighth-grade scores: a seven point gain in math and only a three point gain in reading.

Moving the needle on academic performance represents one of the greatest challenges facing America, so this progress is nothing to take for granted. America however has substantial gap to close with the highest performing countries, some of whom are making gains of their own. Incremental gains simply will not suffice: American students need to perform at much higher levels and at an accelerating rate.

NAEP Inclusion Standards and Measuring State-Level Academic Gains

Disappointing results at the national level mask enormous variation among the states: Some states have been performing far better than the national average and others far worse. In the section below, we track the same gains data for all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Again, we utilize all four main NAEP exams given on a regular basis (fourth-grade reading, fourth-grade math, eighth-grade reading, and eighth-grademMath) for the entire period in which all 50 states and the District of Columbia took the exams.

The reader should keep in mind that the NAEP calculates their scores based upon a random sample of students in each jurisdiction rather than giving their tests to every last student. Sampling involves certain measurable amounts of sampling error, meaning that the "real" scores could be either somewhat higher or lower than the given score. The combining of multiple tests, however, leads to the possibility that random sampling errors will cancel each out (some tests could fall on the high side while others fall on the low side). Nevertheless, it is better to focus on where a state falls in the rankings (High, Medium, or Low) rather than exact point estimates. It would be best in other words to not have anyone look at these rankings and say, "If only we had one more point, we would overtake Georgia!" A better use of these data is to examine the trend in your state and the neighborhood which it inhabits in terms of performance.

An issue far more serious than random sampling error which we can feel reasonably sure will often cancel out between tests however is the possibility of systematic error in the NAEP scores. The process of selecting a random sample of students in a state can be complicated, and possibly even compromised, if the state systematically excludes certain types of students from testing. NAEP has long included information concerning the inclusion rates of students with disabilities and students in English Language Learner programs in the NAEP samples of each state. If states systematically exclude high numbers of students who tend to score lower on average, it could create an artificial inflation of average NAEP scores.

In 2011, the NAEP created standards for the inclusion of students in the NAEP sample for both the math and reading exams. NAEP's first standard holds that at least 95 percent of students randomly selected for NAEP testing should be included in the sample. The second NAEP standard holds that at least 85 percent of students with disabilities selected for testing should be included in the sample, and at least 85 percent of students in English Language Learners should be included. After promulgating these standards, NAEP included an appendix in both the math and reading reports identifying states that failed to meet the new inclusion standards.

Unfortunately, there are a number of states that failed to meet the standards. Some states did not fall a bit under the standards, but rather committed violence against them. The methodology employed here to measure state gains is far more sensitive to systematic inflation than random error, and we take the issue quite seriously.

TABLE 1 | **STATES FAILING TO MEET THE NAEP 95% OVERALL INCLUSION GOALS IN 2011, BY EXAM**

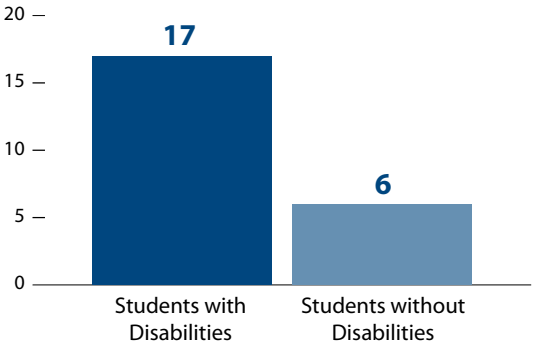
	4th-Grade Reading	4th-Grade Math	8th-Grade Reading	8th-Grade Math
Delaware	X			
Georgia	X			
Kentucky	X		X	
Maryland	X		X	X
Massachusetts			X	
New Jersey	X		X	
New Mexico			X	
North Dakota	X		X	
Oklahoma		X		X
Tennessee	X		X	
Texas	X		X	

The obvious question to ask at this point: Do these varying rates of inclusion for special needs and ELL students have an impact on NAEP scores? NAEP itself published an analysis of inclusion rates between the 2003 and 2005 exams, and found that exclusions had an impact on the overall gains in scores between those years in a number of states.[7]

More worrying still, the gain scores of subgroups of students as presented below will be profoundly more sensitive to exclusion rates. For example, the NAEP reading report reveals that not only did Maryland fail to meet the overall inclusion standards for three out of the four exams; they missed the 85 percent of ELL and special education standards by a very wide margin. On the 2011 4th-grade reading exam, only 31 percent of special education students in Maryland were included in the sample. On the 8th-grade reading sample, only 30 percent were included in the Maryland sample. Maryland's inclusion of ELL students also fell far below the standards on both exams.

Kentucky was state that fell far below the NAEP inclusion standards in 2011. On the 2011 4th-grade reading exam, Kentucky's 4th-grade reading inclusion rate for children with disabilities amounted to only 45 percent. Figure 11 presents the learning gains by disability status on the NAEP 4th-grade reading exam between 2003 and 2011.

Figure 11 | **Kentucky's Point Gain on NAEP 4th-Grade Reading Exam, 2003-2011, by Student Disability Classification**



It is possible that the schools in Kentucky developed a strong reading intervention that works wonders with children with disabilities, but not with regular education students. It is also possible that Kentucky's sky-high exclusion rate had next to nothing to do with the NAEP gains shown above. Stranger things may have happened in the past.

We, however, find it profoundly unlikely that this is actually the case. While a gain for children with disabilities almost three times as large as for children without disabilities does not by itself constitute a smoking gun, coupled with the extremely high exclusion rates, it gets close. Very close.

NAEP created inclusion standards for a reason: They matter. As we proceed to examine state learning gains, we will therefore pursue a dual strategy. In the presentation of gains among student subgroups (such as students with disabilities, Hispanic students, black students, and so on) we will exclude those states which failed to meet the overall 95 percent inclusion standard on one or more NAEP exam. With evidence that exclusion rates had significant impacts on prior overall scores, we can scarcely imagine that the scores for Hispanic students, for instance, will not be profoundly distorted by a high exclusion rate of ELL children. High exclusion rates for special education students can be expected to impact a variety of subgroups, in addition to utterly warping the subgroup gains for special education students themselves. High rates of exclusion of both special education and ELL students should be expected to distort a variety of subgroups.

The second part of our analysis, however, will be to compare the gains for all 50 states and the District of Columbia according to the gains of a very particular subset of students: low-income general education students. As we explain below—and as was done in the 16th edition of the *Report Card on American Education*—this approach not only maximizes the comparability between jurisdictions, it also completely sidesteps the inclusion issue and allows us to rank the gains of all 50 states and D.C.

State Rankings of Low-Income Student Gains

The U.S. Department of Agriculture provides free and reduced-price lunches for students from low-income families. Figure 12 tracks the combined academic progress for all free and reduced-price lunch-eligible students in all 50 states and the District of Columbia on the combined NAEP tests: fourth-grade reading, fourth-grade mathematics, eighth-grade reading, and eighth-grade mathematics. The gains scores constitute a simple calculation: subtracting the 2003 scores from the 2011 scores for free and reduced-price lunch-eligible students.

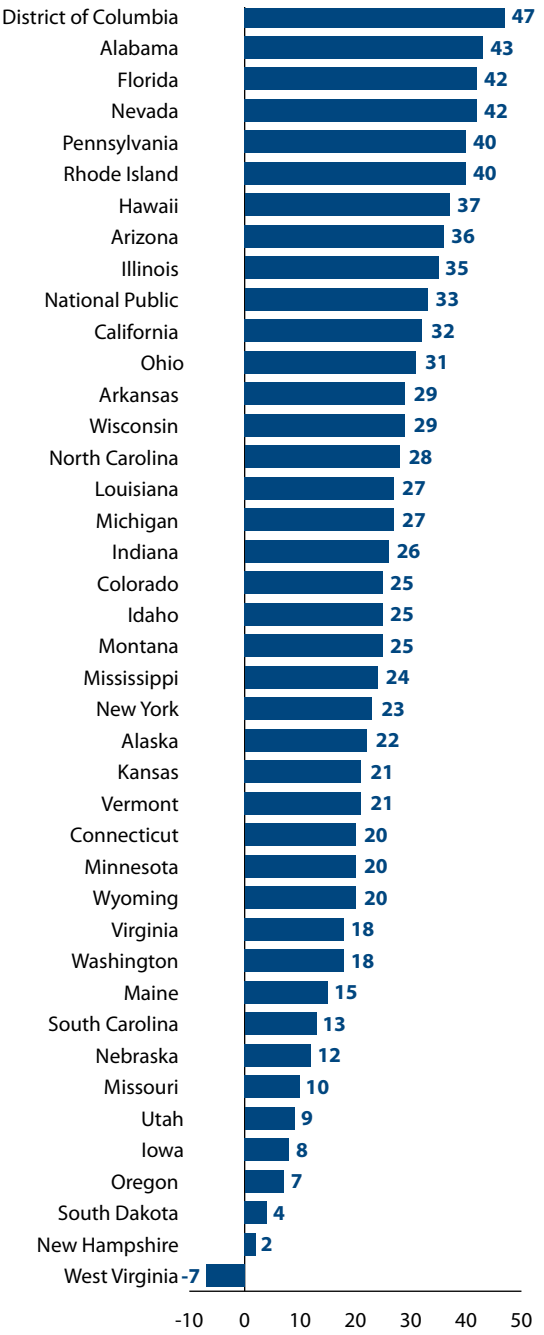
There is much of note in Figure 12. The District of Columbia scores the largest gains among low-income students, with a combined point increase of 47 points. Averaged across four different tests, D.C. students achieved at a level more than one grade level higher per exam in 2011 than in 2003. While the scores in the District of Columbia are still low, they are moving in the right direction at a rapid clip.

Since the 1990s, the District of Columbia has engaged in a multifaceted reform project. Most prominently, the District of Columbia has the nation's strongest charter school law (as rated by the Center for Education Reform).[8] Congress passed the D.C. charter school law in 1996, and in 2011, 40 percent of the District's children attended charter schools.

The steady loss of District of Columbia Public School students to charter schools (and more recently, to a much smaller voucher program) advanced steadily for years before and after the tumultuous tenure of Michelle Rhee DCPS Chancellor. These gains should embolden the districts reformers to continue pursuit on strong reforms.

Figure 12 | **Size of Gains for Free and Reduced-Price Lunch-Eligible Students on the Combined NAEP 4th- and 8th-Grade Reading and Math Exams, 2003-2011**

Note: Not all states are represented due to failure to meet the 95% inclusion rate



Maine, South Carolina, Nebraska, Missouri, Utah, Iowa, Oregon, South Dakota, New Hampshire, and West Virginia meanwhile all earn "Hall of Shame" status by notching combined gains for low-income children one half the size or less of the national average. Notice that low-income children regressed in absolute terms in only one jurisdiction: West Virginia.

An in-depth investigation of what has gone wrong with K–12 performance in West Virginia lies outside of the scope of this book. Note, however, that if we were parents, taxpayers or lawmakers from the Mountain State that we would start looking for answers right away.

Black Student Academic Gains

Academic gains among black students have long been a priority for the country for very compelling reasons (see Figures 8 and 9). Figure 13 charts the combined NAEP academic gains for black students during the 2003–2011 period. Note that Hawaii, Idaho, Maine, Montana, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Vermont, and Wyoming all had black-student populations too small for NAEP to reliably sample, and thus are not included.

A number of southwestern and southern states populate the top 10 for black-student gains—including Nevada, Arkansas, Florida, California, Arizona, Alabama, and Colorado. Some of these states, like Florida, have relatively high scores for black students, and others are playing catch up from very low scores. The large gains in the District of Columbia are obviously critical given the predominance of black students in the district.

On the other end of the scale, a number of states made practically no progress among their black students. North Carolina, Alaska, Michigan, Iowa, Washington, West Virginia, South Carolina, Missouri, and Oregon all receive "Hall of Shame" status for gains among black students less than half of the national average. Oregon shamefully saw a 13 point regression between 2003 and 2011. This should be cause for alarm in the Beaver State.

Figure 13 | **Size of Gains for Black Students on the Combined NAEP 4th- and 8th-Grade Reading and Math Exams, 2003-2011**

Note: Not all states are represented due to failure to meet the 95% inclusion rate
Note: Not all states are represented due to insufficient sample sizes

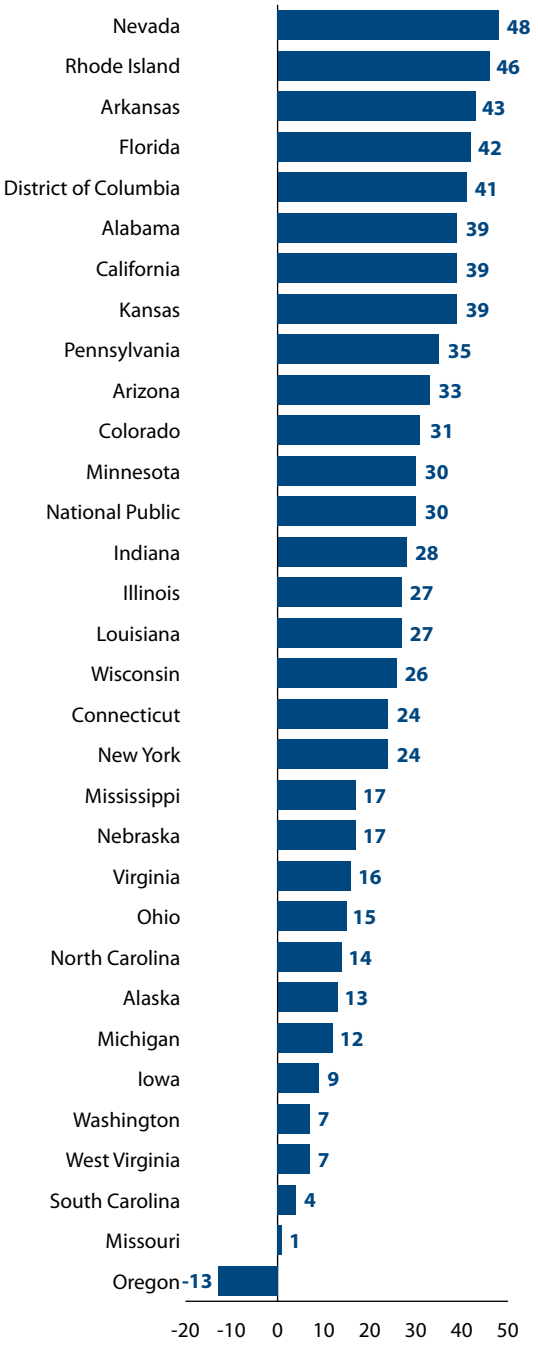


Figure 14 | **Size of Gains for White Students on the Combined NAEP 4th- and 8th-Grade Reading and Math Exams, 2003-2011**

Note: Not all states are represented due to insufficient sample sizes
Note: Not all states are represented due to failure to meet the 95% inclusion rate

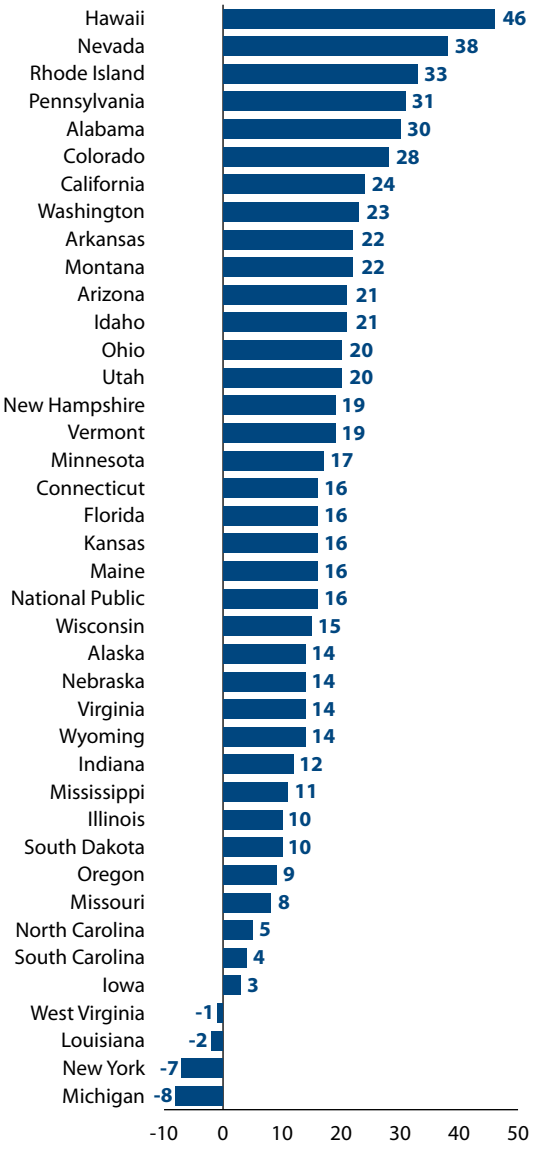
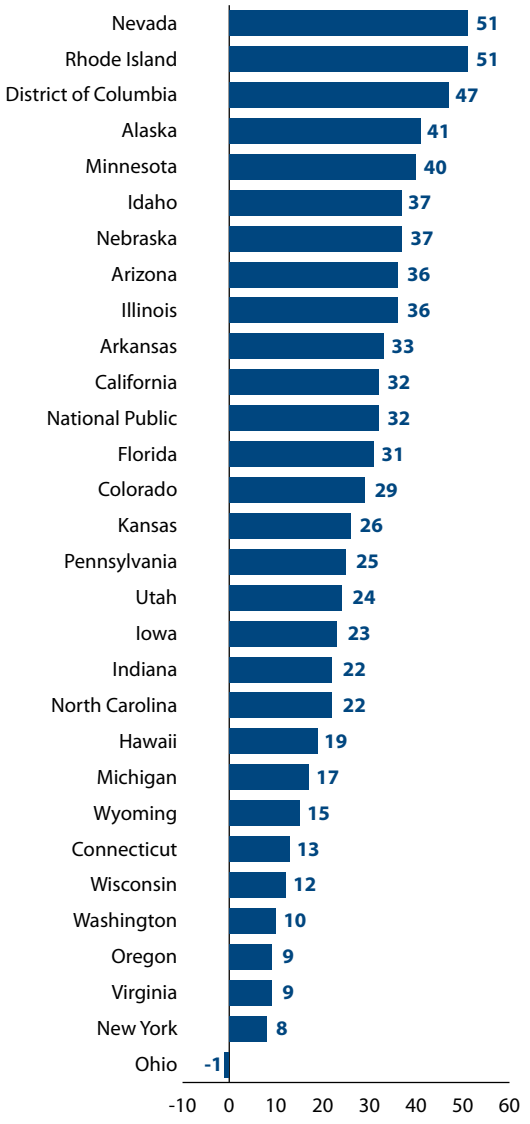


Figure 15 | **Size of Gains for Hispanic Students on the Combined NAEP 4th- and 8th-Grade Reading and Math Exams, 2003-2011**

Note: Not all states are represented due to failure to meet the 95% inclusion rate
Note: Not all states are represented due to insufficient sample sizes



White Student Academic Gains

Figure 14 contains the combined NAEP learning gains for white students in all 50 states. The population of white students in the District of Columbia lacked the necessary size for reliable sampling for some tests, and thus is not included.

The Hall of Fame is populated by Hawaii, Nevada, and Rhode Island, which all made progress greater than twice the national average. The Hall of Shame for academic progress for white students (less than half of the progress of the national average) includes North Carolina, South Carolina,

Iowa, West Virginia, Louisiana, New York, and Michigan. Scores for West Virginia, Louisiana, New York, and Michigan fell in absolute terms.

Hispanic Student Academic Gains

Figure 15 presents the combined NAEP gains for Hispanic students. Alabama, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, New Hampshire, North Dakota, South Carolina, South Dakota, Vermont, and West Virginia had Hispanic populations too small for reliable NAEP sampling.

States scoring above the national average for gains among Hispanic students include Nevada, Rhode Island, the District of Columbia, Alaska, Minnesota, Nebraska, Idaho, Arizona, Illinois, and Arkansas. Wyoming, Connecticut, Wisconsin, Washington, Oregon, Virginia, New York, and Ohio fall into "Hall of Shame" territory with respect to Hispanic gains, with Ohio experiencing a slight decline between 2003 and 2011.

Disabled Student Academic Gains

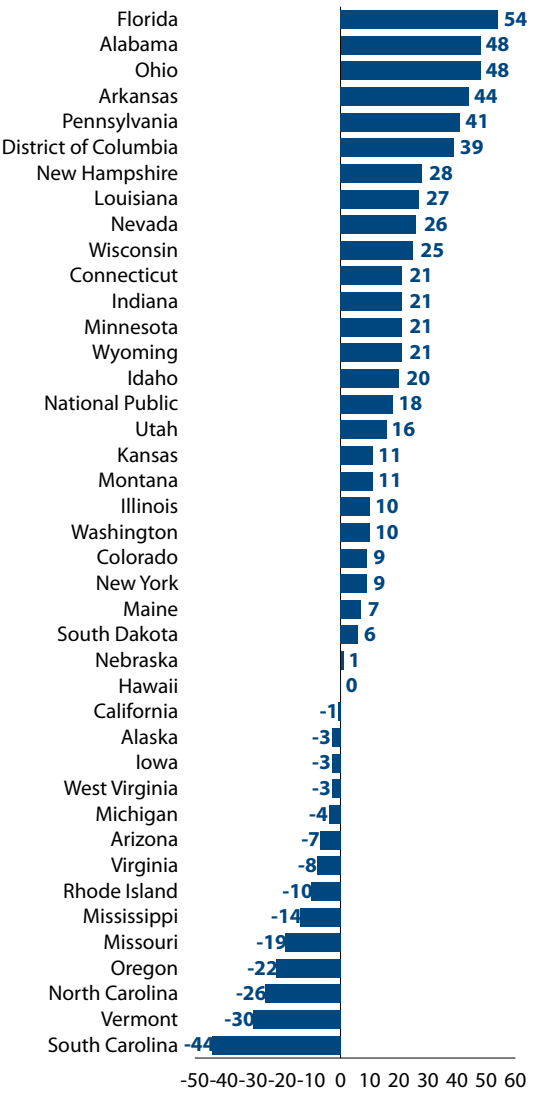
Figure 16 presents state gains for children with disabilities. The widest variation in gains among states comes with students with disabilities. Between 2003 and 2011, children with disabilities the highest gaining state (Florida) enjoyed combined NAEP gains of 54 points. On the other end of the scale, a number of states experienced catastrophic declines in scores among children with disabilities, paced by the Carolinas and Vermont. Children with disabilities made a 30 point decline in North Carolina and a crushing 44 point decline in South Carolina.

Florida has adopted two broad policies to contribute to their leading gains among children with disabilities. First, Florida's formula for grading schools and districts (A–F) counts twice the learning gains of children in the bottom quartile of the previous year's accountability testing. Florida schools and districts therefore have a powerful incentive to get low-performing students moving in the right direction academically.

Second, Florida passed the nation's first choice program for children with disabilities, the McKay Scholarship Program, in 1999. After many years of operation, only around 5 percent of Florida students with disabilities utilize the McKay program to transfer from a public to a private school. Note that all parents of students with disabilities in Florida have the option of leaving if their parents feel that the needs of their children are not being met.

Figure 16 | **Size of Gains for Students with Disabilities on the Combined NAEP 4th- and 8th-Grade Reading and Math Exams, 2003-2011**

Note: Not all states are represented due to failure to meet the 95% inclusion rate
Note: Not all states are represented due to insufficient sample sizes



The "Hall of Shame" list for students with disabilities is long: Colorado, New York, Maine, South Dakota, Nebraska, Hawaii, California, Alaska, Iowa, West Virginia, Michigan, Arizona, Virginia, Rhode Island, Mississippi, Missouri, Oregon, North Carolina, Vermont, and South

Carolina. The spread between the top performer and bottom performer in terms of gains and losses almost constitutes 100 points—by far the largest of any subgroup examined.

Maximizing Comparability: Gains for General-Education Low-Income Students

Earlier we discussed the challenges regarding the comparability of NAEP scores due to the different treatment of children with disabilities and English Language Learners regarding subgroup gains. Here, however, we employ a method of comparison which will allow us to sidestep these inclusion issues entirely while maximizing comparability between all 50 states and the District of Columbia. We do so by employing the methodology developed in ALEC's 16th edition of the *Report Card on American Education*: by comparing the student learning gains of low-income general education students.

This method maximizes comparability by narrowing the income range of students under consideration. For the 2011–2012 school year, a family of four could earn a maximum of $41,348 and retain eligibility for a reduced-price lunch under federal guidelines. An estimated 80 percent of free and reduced-price lunch-eligible students, however, qualify for free lunch, and the maximum income for a family of four for free lunches amounted to only $29,055 for the 2011–2012 school year.[9]

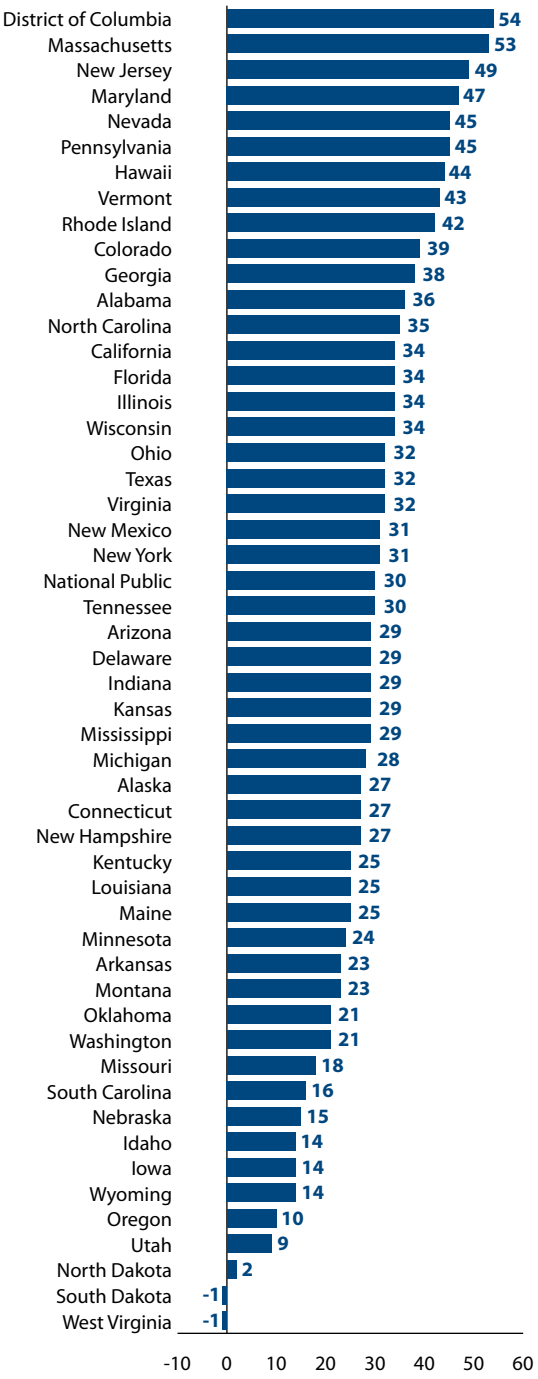
The variation in income for the free and reduced-price lunch program constitutes a far narrower band than that for students whose families earn too much to qualify for the program. The non-eligible population literally varies from children whose parents earned $41,349 to the children of billionaires. States vary enormously in family income and wealth, so isolating the progress of the low-income children helps to level the playing field for the sake of comparison among rich and poor states.

The next step in the comparison is to only examine the general education low-income students. Some states have very high numbers of students learning the English language as a non-native speaker, and states vary considerably in the percentages of special education students. Moreover, states deal with the testing of ELL and special education students in different ways when it

Figure 17 | **Size of Gains for Free and Reduced-Price Lunch-Eligible General Education Students on the Combined NAEP 4th- and 8th-Grade Reading and Math Exams, 2003-2011**

Note: Not all states are represented due to failure to meet the 95% inclusion rate

Note: Not all states are represented due to insufficient sample sizes



comes to NAEP testing—leading some, including your authors, to suspect the comparability of certain subgroup scores.

By measuring the gains of students outside of the ELL and special education programs, we neatly sidestep these problems. In the 16th edition of the *Report Card on American Education* we decided to make no control for student ethnicity or race, and we do so again here. In that earlier edition, we provide a lengthy justification for this position which we will summarize briefly here.

We reject any and all attempts at genetic explanations for achievement gaps, leaving differences in education policy and culture as possible sources for achievement gaps, and for variation in achievement of similar groups between states. We note, however, that the control of culture is precisely the mission of schools. The school staff controls the school culture and keeps the focus of students on academic achievement. Ineffective schools fail to control school culture. In the worst cases, students seize control of school culture and stigmatize academic achievement through peer pressure and/or violence.

We do not believe anyone has ever seen evidence of a "racial combat effectiveness" gap in the United States Marine Corps *because it doesn't exist*. The United States Marine Corps enlists people from all states, races, and classes of American society, but because it is an organization with a strong culture and mission, it transforms people of all backgrounds into Marines. Likewise, the job of schools is to transform ignorant children into numerate and literate young people with at least the minimum skills to succeed in the world.

To be certain, some states face a much more difficult task than others. Our methodology aims to maximize comparability among states, but we make no claim regarding the fact that some states face greater cultural challenges than others. Gains among general education low-income students reflect success in overcoming these challenges, and may also reflect the relative ease or difficulty of the challenge. Referencing the thought experiment from the previous chapter, if you had to be reincarnated as a general education poor child, you might reasonably choose to chance the rough parts of Bangor, Maine over Dallas, Detroit, Los Angeles, or Miami that have more to do with issues such as crime and drug use than schools.

We, however, have no way to reliable method to judge such things, and given the high level of spending enjoyed in the United States relative other (often more successful) nations, our sympathies lie with underserved children rather than with excuse-making adults. Taxpayers provide generous levels of funding to American schools under the hope and belief that those schools will provide basic skills and opportunity for students.

Readers should regard the data of Figure 17 therefore as quite important: Every state has plenty of general-education students whose parents or guardians do not make a great deal of money. The scores are a snapshot, and they actually fail to capture the gains of states that have been making large gains among students with disabilities and English Language Learners. Moreover, the 2003–2011 period is simply the period in which all 50 states participated in NAEP. Some states experienced considerable gains before 2003, and other may simply be bouncing back from academic losses which occurred before 2003. Such imperfections are unfortunate, yet unavoidable.

Readers should also bear in mind that state K–12 policy is simply only one of the thousands of factors that influence these scores. While a variety of sophisticated organizations rank the quality of state policy, moreover, almost none of them measure the quality of implementation of those policies. In the end, student learning happens through classroom time and homework projects. In the best case scenarios, state education reform policies will simply nudge this process in the right direction, but it is simply one factor among a great many. Even helpful policies should be expected to have sometimes long lags between passage of laws and actual implementation, and we know of no policy in education or otherwise poor implementation cannot substantially undermine.

With these caveats in mind, we believe that the comparison presented below represents a more defensible comparison of gains than the examination of mere statewide NAEP scores. Any reasonable person would desire to see their state above the national average in Figure 17, and would certainly want to avoid the bottom of the rankings.

Readers should notice that there is no one policy path to achieving gains. The District of Columbia, the nation's leader in general education low-income gains, pursued reform paths that

included heavy doses of parental choice. Examining the District's 4th grade reading scores over a long period of time, you will find that the catastrophically low score of 188 in 1992 fell to an even more pathetic 179 in 1994. That's almost a full grade-level drop from an already low base.

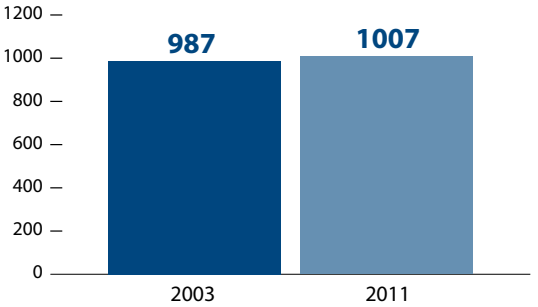
A score of 179 is low enough to make your authors wonder what the score would be if District officials had decided to shutter the schools and simply gave every child in D.C. a library card and hoped for the best. Mind you, that would not have worked well either, but it could not work that much worse than DCPS circa 1994. Since 1994, however, scores have climbed substantially. The percentage scoring basic or better increased from 24 percent in 1994 to 44 percent in 2011. Math improvement has also been impressive and shows the same trend-progress after the mid-1990s.

Shortly after D.C.'s scores hit rock bottom, a trend began that would lead to a decreasing percentage of District children attending the District of Columbia Public Schools. Today, more than 100 charter schools operate in the District and educate over 30,000 children. D.C.'s charter law passed in 1996 (near the bottom of D.C.'s performance) and the opening of schools has been very strong. In 1996–1997, DCPS had 78,648 students enrolled. In 2007–2008, enrollment had dropped to 58,191. The Opportunity Scholarship Program also contributed to the decline in DCPS enrollment.

The rise of charter schools and the shrinking enrollment of DCPS served as a crucial backdrop for a number of other policy changes—most notably under the chancellorship of Michelle Rhee between 2007 and 2010. Rhee closed multiple schools, revamped the contract with teachers to recognize merit, and terminated the employment of a large number of principals. Rhee's ultimate impact on student learning will only become completely clear with the passage of time and subsequent NAEP data.

At the opposite end of the scale, we find Nebraska, Iowa, Idaho, Wyoming, Oregon, Utah, North Dakota, South Dakota, and West Virginia constituting the "Hall of Shame" for producing academic gains for general education low-income students. A greater than 50 point difference stands between top performers such as the District of Columbia and Massachusetts and the bottom dwelling Dakotas and West Virginia. While factors other than state policy doubtlessly help to drive trends in these numbers, we are willing to boldly walk out on a limb to proclaim that the District of Columbia and Massachusetts have been doing some things right to gather their gains, and that Hall of Shame members ought to rethink their improvement strategies.

Figure 18 | **National Average of Combined NAEP Scores on 4th- and 8th-Grade Reading and Math Exams for All Students, 2003 and 2011**



Not Because It is Easy, But Because It is Hard

The most important number in this book is presented in Figure 18. That was the national average gains across the four National Assessment of Educational Progress exams for the 2003–2011 period. Averaged across four different tests, American students performed approximately 5 points better on each exam in 2011 than they had in 2003.

Figure 18 presents this information graphically. Each of the four NAEP exams has a 0–500 point scale, making the scale for the combined tests 0–2000.

Figure 18 is frustrating and underwhelming. One can simultaneously describe an average advance of between three and four points per test as "better than nothing" and "disappointing." Figure 18 must be viewed as a preliminary evaluation of the only major national education reform of the last decade—No Child Left Behind. Chester Finn summarized the "meh" results of NCLB quite well:

> *Bush took for granted that the standards-based education reforms that had worked pretty well back home, particularly for poor and black and brown kids (as even the RAND*

Corporation attested back in 2000), would work for America. They entailed standards in core subjects, plenty of testing, reams of (disaggregated) data, lots of transparency regarding school outcomes, and accountability measures tied to those outcomes.

With the benefit of hindsight, however, we can see that Bush didn't fully appreciate how much the tools available to the federal government differ from those wielded by state leaders. That's the main reason NCLB has been a . . . well, choose your own term, any from "damaging flop" to "less than complete success." (I'm somewhere in the middle, myself.)

Washington simply has no capacity to compel states and districts to follow the Texas model—or any other model. Yes, it can make them go through the motions, submit plans, and report data. It can dole out and (rarely) withhold money. But it cannot make anyone set rigorous standards, select good tests, establish reasonable "cut scores" (part of the Texas formula involved slowly raising those targets), or successfully intervene in failing schools or districts. Nor can it guarantee decent school choices or competent teachers.

NCLB tried. It tried harder than any federal-education law in history. Its shortcomings are due in large measure to its architects' failure to distinguish between what a state government in a place like Austin can make happen in K–12 education and what Uncle Sam can bring about.[10]

Finn correctly notes that the federal government is incredibly limited—Constitutionally and politically—in its ability to force states, districts, or schools to engage in truly meaningful reform. State and local leaders and educators must lead the drive to meaningful reform. NCLB prevented neither large gains in some jurisdictions nor stagnation in others. The lesson for state lawmakers and educators is clear: They should take ownership for the academic gains in their states.

Note the enormous variations found in the data: Washington, D.C. students gained 54 points while West Virginia and South Dakota each lost a point on the combined NAEP exams. A 55-point swing between worst and first tells us that substantial improvement is possible at the state and local level.

State lawmakers should focus on aligning the incentives of the adults in the system to match the interests of children and taxpayers. Rather than bemoan a lack of parental involvement, for example, strong policies can promote more of it. Strong transparency policies, academic instead of social promotion policies, and parental choice, for example, encourage greater levels of parental involvement.

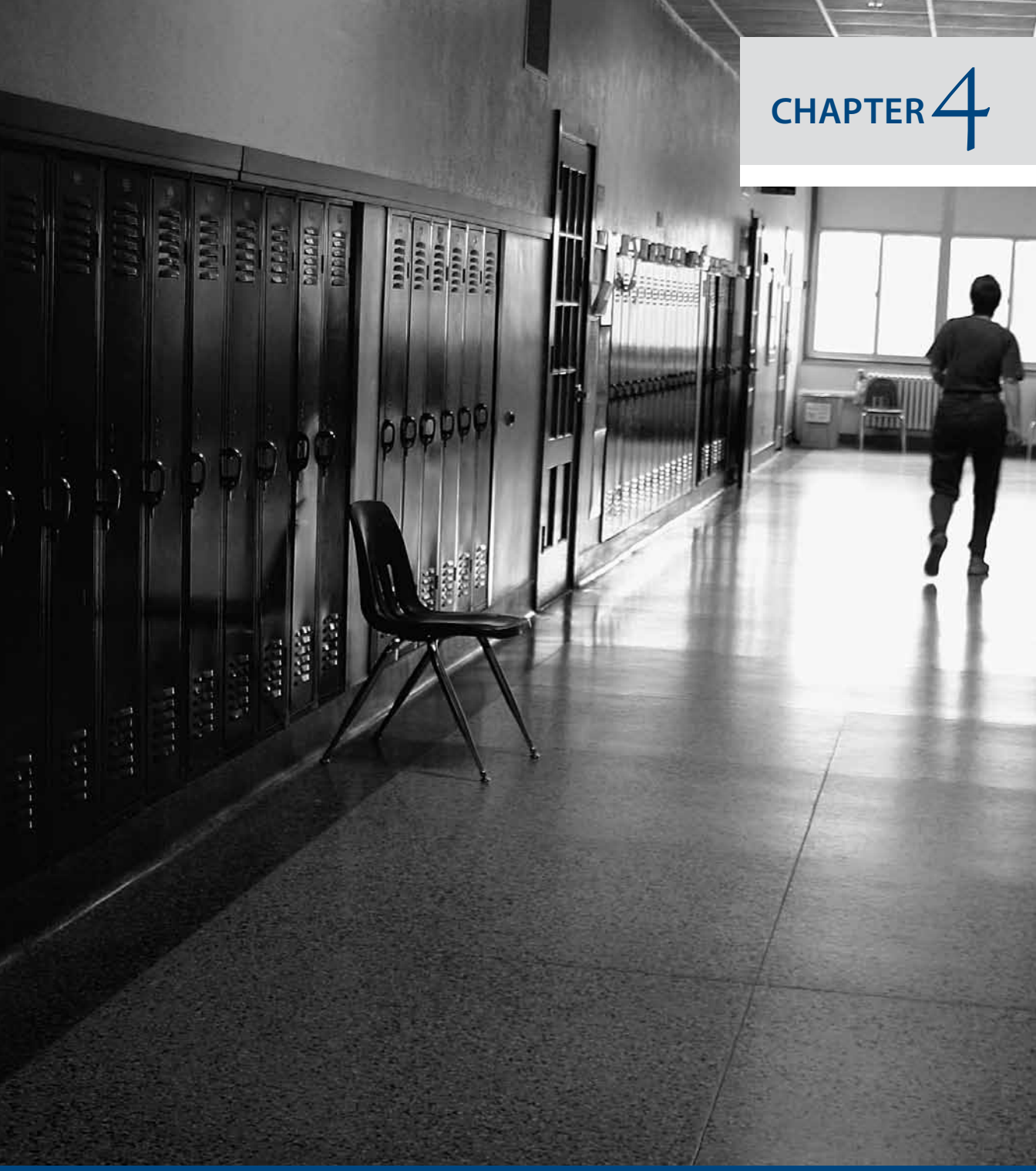
Focusing on aligning the interests of adults with the interests of children while increasing parental involvement in a variety of ways will produce improvement. Our efforts should be focused on thoughtful management of incentives to produce improvement. This is mostly going to involve sustained hand to hand combat in state capitals—a long hard slog.

Let's get on with it. Sometimes the hard way is the only way.

ENDNOTES

1. H.L. Fleischman, P.J. Hopstock, M.P. Pelczar, and B.E. Shelley, 2010. Highlights From PISA 2009: Performance of U.S. 15-Year-Old Students in Reading, Mathematics, and Science Literacy in an International Context (NCES 2011-004). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Available on the internet at http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2011/2011004.pdf.
2. See United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service Income Guidelines at http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/governance/notices/iegs/IEGs09-10.pdf.
3. U.S. Department of Agriculture, "Food and Nutrition Service Income Guidelines: Child Nutrition Programs—Income Eligibility Guidelines," Federal Register 74, no. 58 (March 27, 2009): p. 13,410, available at http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/governance/notices/iegs/IEGs09-10.pdf.
4. See OECD, PF1.2: Public spending on education at http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/45/48/37864432.pdf.

5. The providers of the SAT and ACT warn vigorously against using their tests to compare states, due to the problem of the self-selected sample. Average SAT and/or ACT scores can drop or rise based upon the percentage of students choosing to take the test.
6. On both the NAEP reading and math exams, eighth-grade scores are approximately 40 points higher than fourth-grade scores, leading education researchers to use 10 points of progress as approximately equal to an average year's worth of academic gains.
7. See NAEP Investigating the Potential Effects of Exclusion Rates on Assessment Results http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/about/2005_effect_exclusion.asp.
8. See the Center for Education Reform's rankings of the nation's charter school laws at http://www.edreform.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/ranking_chart-1.pdf.
9. To examine the income eligibility guidelines for the Free and Reduced-Price Lunch program, see http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/governance/notices/iegs/IEGs11-12.pdf.
10. Chester E. Finn Jr., 2011. "Good for Texas. Good for America?" Article appearing on National Review Online, available at http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/269607/good-texas-good-america-chester-e-finn-jr.



CHAPTER 4

2011 ALEC Report Card Education Policy Grading

2011 ALEC Report Card Education Policy Grading

In last year's edition of the *Report Card on American Education*, we created a new system to rank the education reform policies of each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia. These grades are based on whether states have enacted policies to reform their education systems through quality testing and accountability mechanisms, improving teacher quality, and expanding parents' ability to choose the best learning environment for their children. We derived these grades based on measures and grading systems from education organizations or experts that analyzed various aspects of education reform. For this Report Card, we updated our rankings to include new measures and, wherever possible, to reflect new reform and policies that have been enacted.

We calculated states' education policy grades in the following manner. First, we converted all rankings into letter grades where possible. For example, we converted homeschooling regulation burden levels as such: none = A, low = B, moderate = C and high = D. Next all letter grades were converted to a numerical score (A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, F=0), tallied, and divided by the number of categories in which a score was present. (In some states, grades were awarded with pluses and minuses, and numerical conversions were altered appropriately. A grade of B-, for example, was converted to a numeric score of 2.666, while a C+ was converted to 2.333.) In addition to the letter grades in four main reform categories, states could earn extra credit of 0.25 points for each "Yes" answer in four possible categories.

Policy Categories

Following the original education policy rankings that were used in the 16th *Report Card on American Education*, these policy grades were based on the updated analysis and rankings of education reform groups for four reform categories.

Academic Standards (Compared to 2009 NAEP): State's academic standards compared to the 2009 NAEP measures how rigorous a state's academic proficiency standards are when compared to the U.S. Department of Education's NAEP exam. These grades were drawn from an analysis by Professor Paul Peterson and Carlos Xabel Lastra-Anadón of Harvard University in the Fall 2010 Education Next journal article "State Standards Rise in Reading, Fall in Math."[1] To provide context about the direction of state standards, each state's reform grade also includes Peterson and Lastra-Anadón's analysis of whether the state's academic standards were being raised or lowered between their last comparison with the 2007 NAEP exams.

Charter School Law: The charter school rankings analyze whether a state has a charter school law and, if so, how strong the law is in supporting the success of charter schools. The Center for Education Reform provides this information in their annual charter school law grades.[2] Charter schools are innovative public schools that agree to meet performance standards set by governing authorities but are otherwise free from most regulations governing traditional public schools. This autonomy allows for new teaching methods, special curricula and academic programs, and flexible governance policies, such as holding longer school days.

Homeschooling Regulation Burden Level: The homeschooling regulation burden level indicates the reporting and regulatory requirements parents face when deciding to home school their children. The Home School Legal Defense

Association rates the states' oversight of homeschooling in four categories (none, low, moderate, and high).[3] As many as 2 million students are home schooled each year.[4]

Teacher Quality Policies: Grades for whether states are identifying high quality teachers, retaining effective teachers, and removing ineffective teachers are obtained from the National Council on Teacher Quality's 2009 State Teacher Policy Yearbook (with 2010 updates). Academic research shows that the greatest determining factor regarding a student's academic success within school walls is teacher effectiveness.

Additional Categories

Some education reform policies do not lend themselves to being graded based on a traditional grading scale. Moreover, some education reforms we believe should be included in a state's education reform grades have not been "graded" or analyzed based on a scale that can be easily converted to an A–F grade. For this reason, we included four extra credit opportunities for states:

1) Does the state have a private school choice program?
2) Does the state have multiple private school choice programs?
3) Does the state have a statewide virtual school?
4) Does the state offer full-time virtual schooling?

Private School Choice: A growing body of empirical evidence suggests that private school policies that allow families to choose the best school for their children yield positive outcomes, including improved family satisfaction, higher academic achievement, and improved graduation rates.[5] For this reason, each state is evaluated based on whether it has a private school choice program (such as vouchers or scholarships, tuition or scholarship tax credits, or education savings accounts). In addition, states could earn extra credit if they have multiple school choice programs. This analysis was based on our own review of state's school choice policies and analysis from organization such as the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice and the Alliance for School Choice.

Virtual or Digital Learning: Looking to the future, we expect the debate about choice in education to shift to a conversation about how best to customize learning to suit a child's specific needs. As we discuss in Chapter 5, digital or virtual learning programs are a likely focus for future education reform efforts, as policymakers seek to provide students with the opportunity to benefit from the innovative digital or virtual learning programs. For the purpose of our state education reform grades, states could earn extra credit depending on their policies for virtual or digital learning based on the analysis of the Evergreen Education Group in their 2011 report: "Keeping Pace with K–12 Online Learning: An Annual Review of Policy and Practice."[6] States could earn 0.25 points as extra credit if they have a statewide virtual school or state-led virtual initiative. They could also earn an extra 0.25 points if they have multi-district, full-time virtual school programs.

Education Policy Grading Changes from Last Year

We have made a few minor changes in the education policy grades from last year's *Report Card*. First, the 16th *Report Card* included rankings for whether or not a state had a genuine alternative teacher certification program, based on an important *Education Next* article from 2009. Providing alternative pathways for high-quality teachers to enter the classroom is valuable, but we decided this year to base our teacher quality rankings

Table 2 | **Letter Grade Key**

Grade	Low Score	High Score
A	3.834	4.166
A-	3.5	3.833
B+	3.167	3.499
B	2.834	3.166
B-	2.5	2.833
C+	2.167	2.499
C	1.834	2.166
C-	1.5	1.833
D+	1.167	1.499
D	0.834	1.166
D-	0.5	0.833
F	0.00	0.499

solely on the National Countil on Teacher Quality's (NCTQ) overall teacher-quality grades, in part because there has not been a follow-up to the 2009 Education Next analysis.

Second, last year's *Report Card* included a factor measuring whether states had an inter- or intra-district open enrollment policy. We believe that giving families the option to choose within the traditional public school system is an important policy because it both expands students' options and encourages healthy competition within the traditional public school system. However, these policies vary greatly in their utility based on how strongly school districts enforce these mechanisms and whether families have a real opportunity to transfer to better public schools. We chose not to include this factor in our state education reform grades because the mere existence of an open enrollment policy does not mean that families have real public school choice. Nevertheless, policymakers should work to expand choice within the public school system, and can review their state's open enrollment polices at the National Center for Education Statistics' "State Education Reforms" page.[7]

Is the Investment in State Per-Student Public Education Spending Paying Off?

Each state's education reform page also includes a snapshot of the state's current average per-student

Table 3 | **State Education Policy Grades**

Jurisdiction	Letter Grade	Jurisdiction	Letter Grade
Alabama	D+	Montana	C
Alaska	B-	Nebraska	D+
Arizona	B	Nevada	C+
Arkansas	C	New Hampshire	C+
California	B	New Jersey	B-
Colorado	B	New Mexico	B
Connecticut	C+	New York	C-
Delaware	C+	North Carolina	C
District of Columbia	B	North Dakota	D+
Florida	B+	Ohio	B
Georgia	B	Oklahoma	B
Hawaii	C+	Oregon	C
Idaho	B-	Pennsylvania	C+
Illinois	C+	Rhode Island	C
Indiana	B	South Carolina	C+
Iowa	C-	South Dakota	C-
Kansas	C-	Tennessee	C
Kentucky	C	Texas	C+
Louisiana	B-	Utah	B
Maine	C-	Vermont	D+
Maryland	C-	Virginia	C-
Massachusetts	B-	Washington	C
Michigan	B-	West Virginia	D+
Minnesota	B+	Wisconsin	B-
Mississippi	C	Wyoming	C+
Missouri	A-		

expenditure for every child enrolled in public school. This figure is drawn from the National Center for Education Statistics' 2010 Digest of Education Statistics; specifically, from the Digest's table for per-student spending based on "fall enrollment" for the 2007–08 school year.[8] In the 2007–2008 school year, the national average was $11,950 per student.

To provide some context for how well taxpayers' investments in public education are paying off in terms of students' academic achievement, each state's reform page presents an analysis of how much each state has spent, on average, by the time a child reaches fourth grade, along with the percentage of students scoring "Proficient" on the NAEP reading examination.

For example, in the state of Illinois, taxpayers spend $11,874 per student, or approximately $47,000 between first and fourth grade. Yet according to the 2011 NAEP, only 32 percent of the state's fourth graders scored "Proficient" (or are reading on grade level). There are about 104,000 fourth graders in the Land of Lincoln who are unable to read despite having nearly $50,000 spent on their educations.

Grading States on the Performance of General-Education Low-Income Students

High-income children score better, on average, than children from low-income families. In 2009, the Census Bureau reports that the per-capita income of the wealthiest state (Connecticut) was almost 88 percent higher than that of the poorest state (Mississippi).[9] Unsurprisingly, in Connecticut, 27 percent of children qualify for a free or reduced-price lunch under federal standards, while in Mississippi 68 percent qualify. Because Connecticut schools brim with middle- and high-income children, whereas Mississippi schools have far more low-income children, one should not be surprised to find that Connecticut has higher NAEP scores than Mississippi. Low-income students can learn, mind you, but higher-income children tend to learn much more at home, and generally enter school with an advantage over their peers.

When ranking states' academic performance, we ought not to simply congratulate Connecticut schools for the good fortune of having relatively wealthy student bodies. Nor should we castigate Mississippi schools for the poverty levels of their students. Instead, our rankings seek to make as much of an "apples to apples" comparison as possible by grading states based on similar students.

States also vary in the number of children identified for special education services and in the percentage of students who are not native English speakers. In New Mexico, schools have designated more than 18 percent of their students as English Language Learners (ELL) while in West Virginia less than 1 percent of students are ELL. The fact that New Mexico has a rate of non-native English speakers more than 18 times higher than West Virginia's makes a straightforward comparison of states' academic performance problematic.

In order to maximize comparability, our ranking system judges each state based on the NAEP performance of children eligible for free or reduced-priced lunches based on their family income that are not enrolled in either special education or English Language Learner programs. By tracking the absolute performance and progress (or lack thereof) of general education program students of families with low incomes, we hope to minimize the vast differences between state K–12 populations to a relatively common metric.

Every state has sizeable populations of low-income students. If one were to focus on, say, racial and ethnic achievement gaps, he or she would have to accept that many states' samples of black or Hispanic students are too small for the NAEP to reliably report.

For example, the 2011 NAEP fourth-grade reading exam did not report black-student subgroups' scores for Idaho, Maine, Montana, New Hampshire, Utah or Wyoming. The NAEP simply cannot give a solid estimate of black student's scores in these states because there are too few of them in the population, and thus in the sample. Similarly, NAEP gave no Hispanic subgroup results for Maine, Vermont, or West Virginia on the same exam. At the beginning of our comparison (2003) even more states lacked black and Hispanic subgroups.

The NAEP does however have reliable scores for low-income children in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. In addition to the fact that low-income children are ubiquitous, there is also less economic variation between such students from state to state.

High-income states, of course, will have school systems relatively flush with students far above the FRL income limits. Both the family headed by a modestly successful manual laborer and that headed by a billionaire will be included in the "Not Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch" category. The wider variation, therefore, limits the utility of the non-FRL category for purposes of ranking the quality of state education efforts. Lower-income children are on average more academically reliant on their schools. Higher-income children, on the other hand, have greater prospects to overcome deficits in their education through learning at home or private tutoring.

This is not to say that the education of middle- and higher-income children, special education children, and non-native English speakers is unimportant. Let us be clear: All children matter. For the purposes of this study, we can most readily compare low-income children outside special programs across jurisdictions, and that such children are more reflective of the relative success and/or failure of public policy. We make no claim that these comparisons are perfect. In fact, we are confident that no perfect comparisons exist. Rather we merely claim that the comparisons made here are much more equitable than a simple comparison of state scores. While there will be variation among mainstream low-income students, the variation will be dramatically lower than the usual presentation of statewide average scores.

Our methodology does not control for race. In some states, the typical poor child will be white. In many, the average poor child will be black. In some, the typical poor child will be a Latino. Does this make our rankings unfair?

In our view, it does not.

We view differences among racial and ethnic groups as a cultural and policy-related issue rather than genetic. Further, we believe strongly that the difference between effective and ineffective schools lies almost entirely in the extent to which the adult leadership controls school culture. Effective schools have strong adult-led cultures focusing on academic achievement. Ineffective schools have cultures led by students and focused on things other than academics.

In the most dysfunctional schools, the students control the school culture. With the inmates running the proverbial asylum, students stigmatize academic achievement. Students displaying academic acumen are ridiculed and even bullied. One can say the same for the staff. In these worst cases, the students strike an implicit bargain with the students: Don't require us to learn anything if you want to be safe.

Policymakers can throw any amount of money at such a school with no apparent academic impact.

The first duty of every school staff should be to control the culture of the school. Schools with strong leadership can and have succeeded in improving academic achievement despite a challenging student demographic profile. High-quality charter schools such as the Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP), Amistad Academies, Green Dot Schools, Yes Academies, and others have proved that this task is achievable. "No Excuses"-type public schools have proved that low-income minority children can achieve at high levels.

We judge states by the academic performance of white children who qualify for a free or reduced-price lunch. We, nevertheless, refuse to do so explicitly because we believe that schools *can* and *must* overcome both policy and cultural barriers to academic achievement. Our nation's future depends upon this.

Research on student learning gains show public schools tend to match the most disadvantaged students with the least effective teachers.[10] Likewise, the poorest students typically exercise the least amount of choice between schools—priced out of high performing suburban and private schools. These facts are not products of fate or genetics, but of policy that policymakers can and should change.

Taxpayers in every state provide funds for a general diffusion of knowledge and skills, and states should accomplish this task regardless of the ethnicity of the students. Successful inner-city educators refuse to use race as an excuse for poor performance. We will do the same in ranking the performance of state school systems.

Our grade of state academic performance equally weights the four main NAEP exams (fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics) for the entire period all 50 states participated

(2003 to 2011). We examine the performance of low-income children in the general education program, and weight equally the overall performance and the gains over time. The District of Columbia falls in the middle of our rankings, for example, because the District had the largest gains but the lowest overall scores (despite the recent gains).

All of the caveats regarding NAEP tests discussed in the previous chapter still apply here: NAEP is given to random samples of students with measurable ranges of sampling error (similar to an opinion poll). Sampling error should however be random in nature, thus often cancelling itself out (if one test is randomly a bit on the high end, it can be mitigated by another test being on the low end, and vice-versa). Fortunately this comparison methodology sidesteps known sources of systematic error from exclusion rates of children with disabilities and English Language Learners (see pages 30-32 in the previous chapter).

The reader should overall take greater note of whether their state falls on the high, middle or low end of the rankings, rather than to fixate on an exact numerical ranking. Small changes in test scores can make large differences in rankings, but will not move you to the penthouse from the cellar.

Student demographics clearly play a much stronger role in our rankings than spending per pupil. All of the top ten states have majority white-student populations, most by a wide

Table 4 | **Ranking States by Achievement and Gains of Free and Reduced-Price Lunch-Eligible General Population Students on the NAEP 4th- and 8th-Grade Reading and Math Exams, 2003-2011**

Jurisdiction	Rank	Jurisdiction	Rank
Massachusetts	1	Georgia	27
Vermont	2	Illinois	28
New Jersey	3	Idaho	29
Colorado	4	California	30
Pennsylvania	5	Iowa	31
Rhode Island	6	Alaska	32
North Carolina	7	North Dakota	33
Kansas	8	Alabama	34
New Hampshire	9	New Mexico	35
New York	10	Arizona	36
Texas	11	Kentucky	37
Florida	12	South Dakota	38
Hawaii	13	Connecticut	39
Maine	14	Oregon	40
Nevada	15	Utah	41
Montana	16	Nebraska	42
Indiana	17	Oklahoma	43
Minnesota	18	Tennessee	44
Wisconsin	19	Arkansas	45
Maryland	20	Michigan	46
Ohio	21	Missouri	47
Delaware	22	Mississippi	48
Wyoming	23	Louisiana	49
District of Columbia	24	South Carolina	50
Washington	25	West Virginia	51
Virginia	26		

margin. The average low-income general education student benefit from the favorable end of racial achievement gaps in these states. Notice however that Texas and Florida stand just outside the top 10 at the 11th and 12th spots, with very few points to separate them from the top 10.

Similar to the discussion in Chapter 2, we find a number of Northeastern states do well in our rankings. Some may feel the temptation to attribute these scores simplistically to high levels of spending in the state. This would be a mistake. First notice that Connecticut, a high spending Northeastern state with a large urban district, falls to 39th in our rankings. Ponder for a moment as to what might happen to Vermont's ranking if we moved the Hartford district north.

Also note that Massachusetts ranks first overall in our rankings despite the fact that it has urban districts. Massachusetts spends less per student than Vermont, has a more challenging student demographic profile than Vermont (Vermont students are 93 percent white, while white students comprise 69 percent of Massachusetts students). Massachusetts has done an admirable job in producing gains even relative to other New England states, especially when compared to Connecticut the neighboring state facing similar demographic challenges.

In Texas and Florida, the average general education low-income child will be a black or Hispanic student. The ability of these states to fall in the high range of this ranking is therefore quite admirable, especially considering the fact that both states realized considerable academic gains before the period studied here (2003–2011).

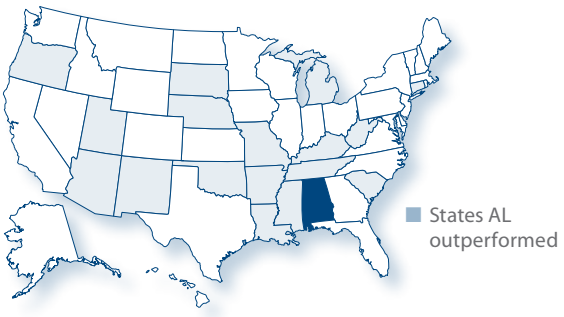
The states at the bottom of the rankings can console themselves with this: if they can find ways to achieve Texas/Florida/Massachusetts/District of Columbia sized gains, they can move up the rankings.

ENDNOTES

1. These grades were drawn from Paul E. Peterson and Carlos Xabel Lastra-Anadón, "State Standards Rise in Reading, Fall in Math," Education Next 10, no. 4 (Fall 2010), available at http://educationnext.org/state-standards-rising-in-reading-but-not-in-math.
2. The Center for Education Reform, "Charter School Laws Across the States 2011," data and legislation as of December 1, 2010, available at http://www.edreform.com/download/charterlawdl.cfm.
3. Home School Legal Defense Association, "Home School Laws," available at http://www.hslda.org/laws/default.asp (accessed July 2011).
4. Dan Lips and Evan Feinberg, "Homeschooling: A Growing Option in American Education," The Heritage Foundation, April 3, 2008.
5. See Greg Forster, A Win-Win Solution: The Empirical Evidence on School Vouchers. (Indianapolis: The Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, March 23, 2011), available at http://www.edchoice.org/Research/Reports/A-Win-Win-Solution--The-Empirical-Evidence-on-School-Vouchers.aspx.
6. Evergreen Education Group, "Keeping Pace with K¬12 Online Learning: An Annual Review of Policy and Practice," 2011.
7. National Center for Education Statistics, "Table 4.2 Numbers and Types of State Open Enrollment Policies, by State: 2010," in State Education Reforms (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 2010) available at http://nces.ed.gov/programs/statereform/tab4_2.asp.
8. This figure is drawn from National Center for Education Statistics, "Table 191. Total and Current Expenditures Per Pupil in Fall Enrollment in Public Elementary and Secondary Education, by Function and State or Jurisdiction, 2007-08," in Digest of Education Statistics 2010 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 2010), available at http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d10/tables/dt10_191.asp?referrer=list.
9. "State Rankings – Statistical Abstract of the United States. Personal Income per Capita in Current Dollars, 2007." Report of the United States Census Bureau. March, 2008, http://www.census.gov/statab/ranks/rank29.html.
10. See for instance Sanders and Horn, "Research Findings from the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVASS) Database." p. 6. Available online at http://www.mccsc.edu/~curriculum/cumulative%20and%20residual%20effects%20of%20teachers.pdf.

Alabama

The Cotton State

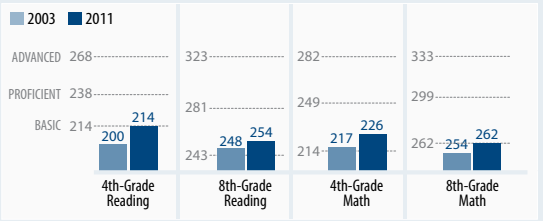


Student NAEP Performance Rank 34

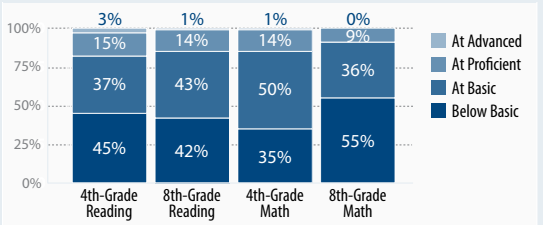
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 40*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade D+

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: C*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	F
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Lowered

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	No
Charter School Law Grade	—

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	B

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	—
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	C-
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	C-
Expanding the Teaching Pool	C+
Identifying Effective Teachers	D
Retaining Effective Teachers	C-
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	C-

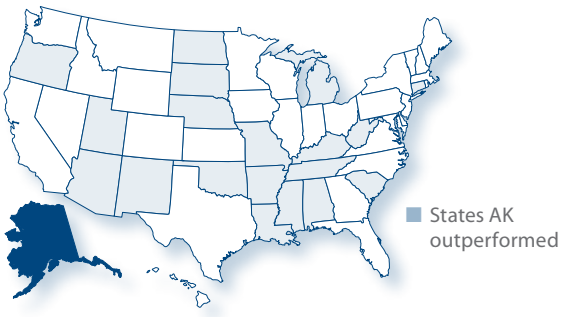
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	No

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$10,481 *(Rank: 37)*	$41,924	58,593	28% *(Rank: 37)*	$83,848	57,809	24% *(Rank: 42)*

Alaska

The Last Frontier

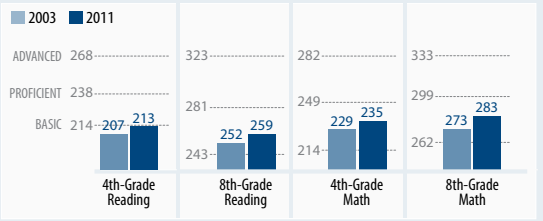


Student NAEP Performance Rank 32

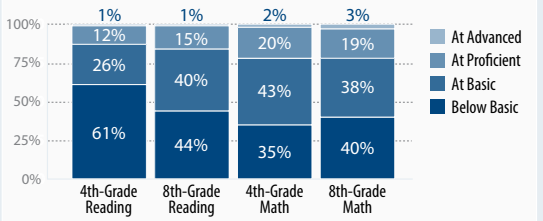
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 11*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade B-

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: C*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	C
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Raised

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	Yes
Charter School Law Grade	D

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	A

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	—
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	D
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	F
Expanding the Teaching Pool	C-
Identifying Effective Teachers	D-
Retaining Effective Teachers	C
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	D+

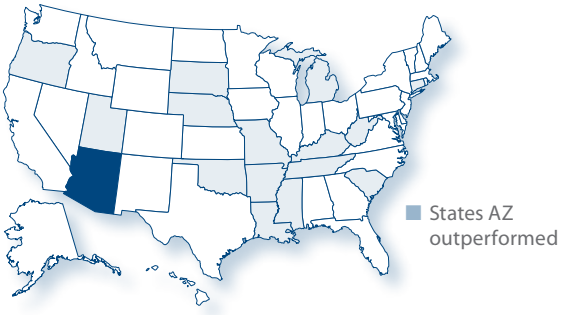
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	Yes

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$17,299 *(Rank: 5)*	$69,196	9,756	27% *(Rank: 42)*	$138,392	9,673	27% *(Rank: 36)*

Arizona

The Grand Canyon State

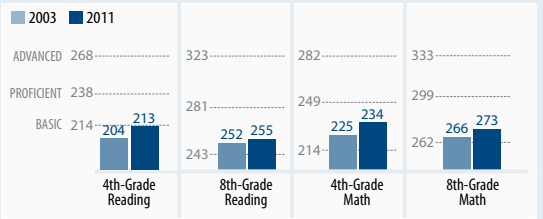


Student NAEP Performance Rank 36

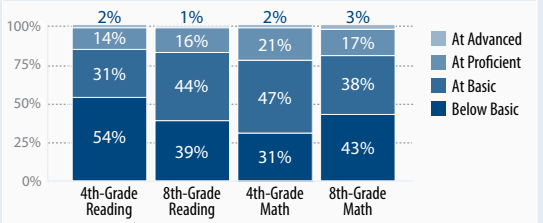
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 45*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade B

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: B-*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	D+
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Lowered

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	Yes
Charter School Law Grade	B

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	B

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	Yes
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	Yes

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	D+
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	D
Expanding the Teaching Pool	C-
Identifying Effective Teachers	D
Retaining Effective Teachers	D+
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	C-

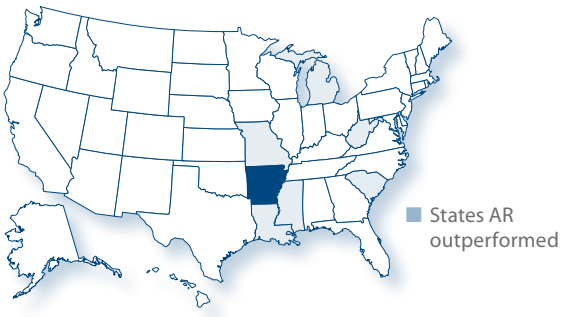
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	No
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	Yes

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$9,641 *(Rank: 45)*	$38,564	83,793	25% *(Rank: 45)*	$77,128	81,576	27% *(Rank: 36)*

Arkansas

The Natural State

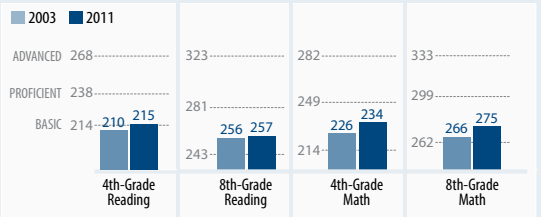


Student NAEP Performance Rank 45

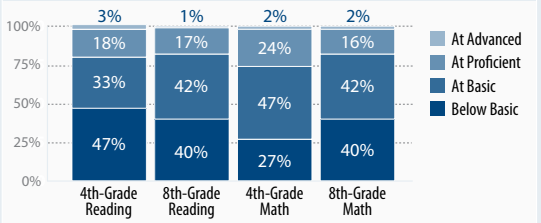
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 44*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade C

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: B-*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	C-
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Lowered

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	Yes
Charter School Law Grade	D

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	C

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	—
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	C-
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	C-
Expanding the Teaching Pool	B
Identifying Effective Teachers	D
Retaining Effective Teachers	C
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	C-

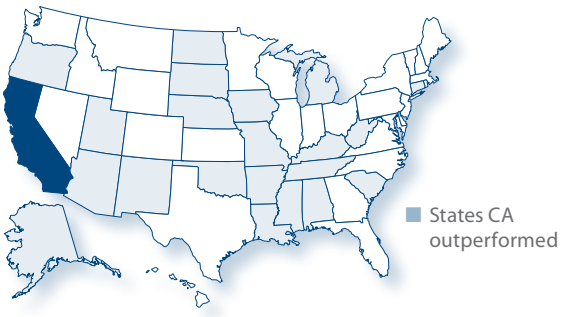
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	Yes

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$9,966 *(Rank: 43)*	$39,864	36,345	29% *(Rank: 35)*	$79,728	35,387	27% *(Rank: 36)*

California

The Golden State

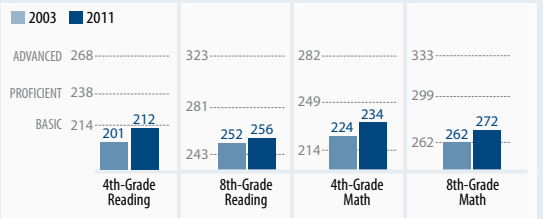


Student NAEP Performance Rank 30

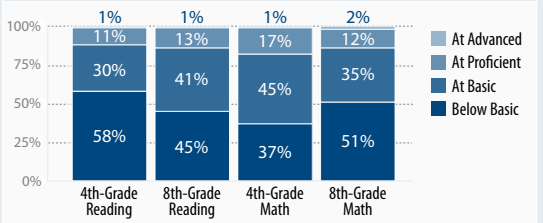
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 30*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade B

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: C*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	C
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Lowered

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	Yes
Charter School Law Grade	A

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	B

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	—
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	D+
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	C
Expanding the Teaching Pool	D+
Identifying Effective Teachers	D-
Retaining Effective Teachers	C+
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	D-

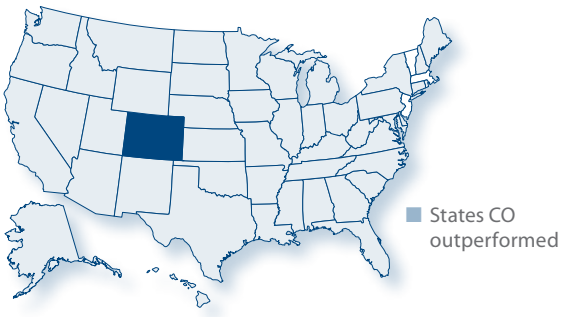
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	Yes

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$11,458 *(Rank: 24)*	$45,832	463,904	24% *(Rank: 46)*	$91,664	486,390	22% *(Rank: 44)*

Colorado

The Centennial State

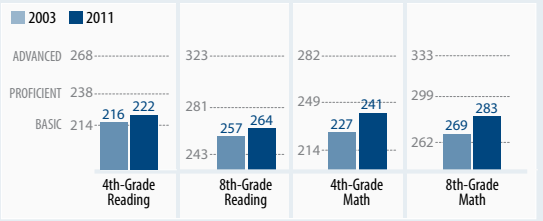


Student NAEP Performance Rank 4

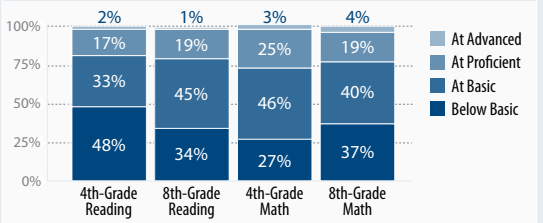
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 17*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade B

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: B*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	B-
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Raised

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	Yes
Charter School Law Grade	B

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	C

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	Yes
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	D+
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	D-
Expanding the Teaching Pool	D+
Identifying Effective Teachers	D-
Retaining Effective Teachers	C-
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	B-

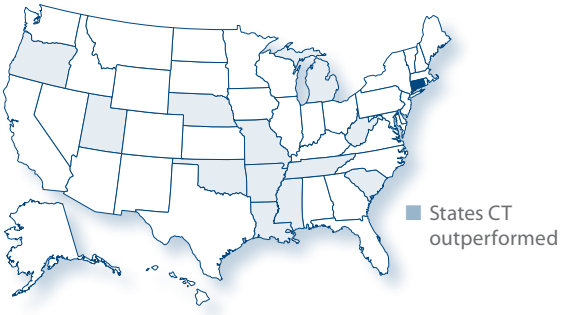
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	Yes

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$11,061 *(Rank: 32)*	$44,244	61,058	40% *(Rank: 5)*	$88,488	58,733	32% *(Rank: 26)*

Connecticut

The Constitution State

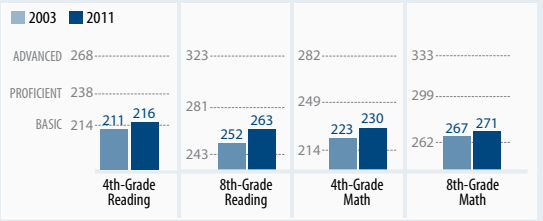


Student NAEP Performance Rank 39

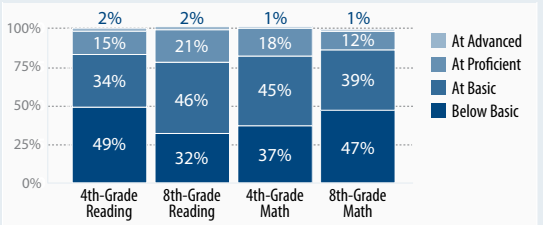
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 29*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade C+

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: C-*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	C
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Raised

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	Yes
Charter School Law Grade	D

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	A

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	—
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	D+
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	C
Expanding the Teaching Pool	B-
Identifying Effective Teachers	D+
Retaining Effective Teachers	F
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	C-

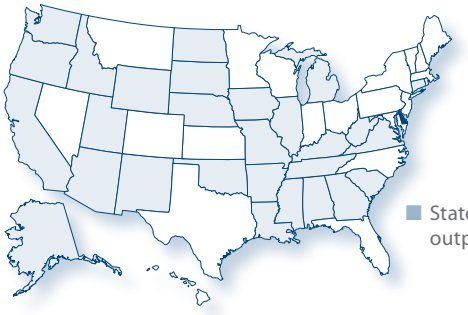
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	No

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$16,530 *(Rank: 6)*	$66,120	41,792	42% *(Rank: 2)*	$132,240	43,027	43% *(Rank: 1)*

Delaware

The First State

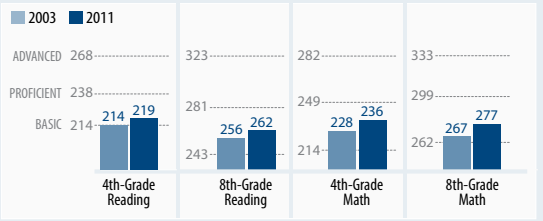


Student NAEP Performance Rank 22

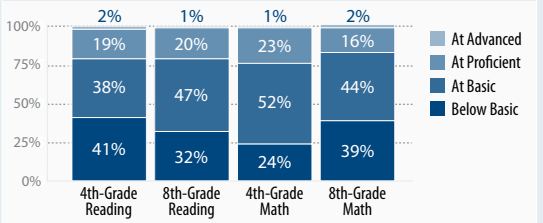
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 19*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade C+

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: C*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	C-
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Lowered

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	Yes
Charter School Law Grade	C

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	B

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	—
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	D
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	F
Expanding the Teaching Pool	C+
Identifying Effective Teachers	D
Retaining Effective Teachers	C-
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	D

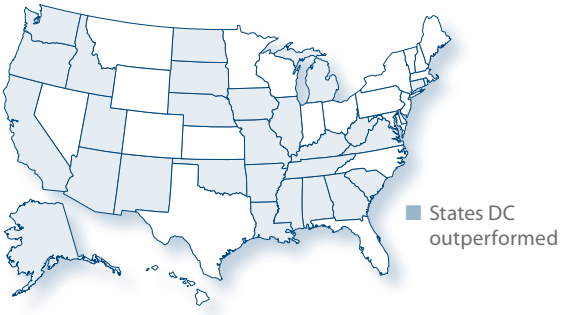
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	No
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	No

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$14,481 *(Rank: 10)*	$57,924	9,521	35% *(Rank: 17)*	$115,848	9,908	31% *(Rank: 30)*

District of Columbia

The Federal City

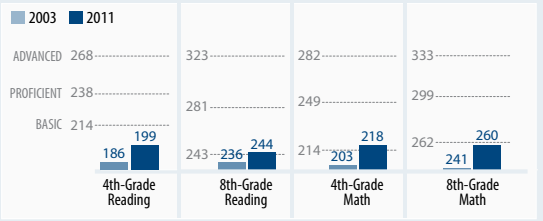


Student NAEP Performance Rank 24

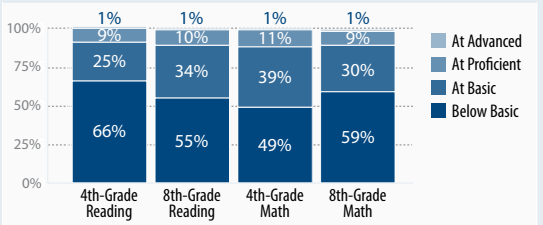
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 26*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade B

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: C*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	C
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Raised

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	Yes
Charter School Law Grade	A

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	C

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	Yes
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	D-
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	D
Expanding the Teaching Pool	D+
Identifying Effective Teachers	F
Retaining Effective Teachers	D-
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	D+

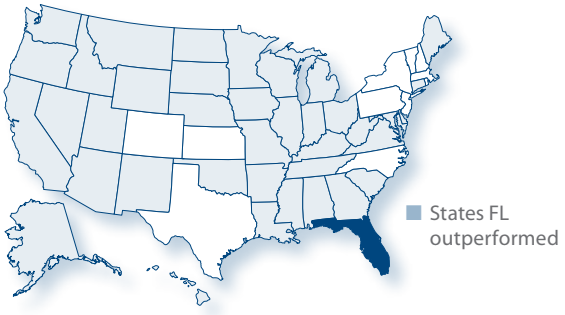
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	Yes

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$20,066 *(Rank: 1)*	$80,264	4,595	17% *(Rank: 51)*	$160,528	4,540	14% *(Rank: 51)*

Florida

The Sunshine State

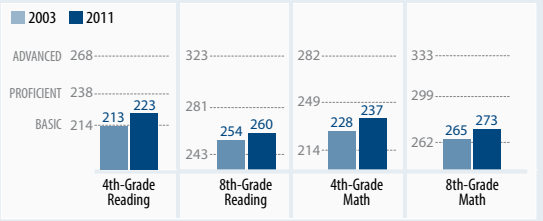


Student NAEP Performance Rank 12

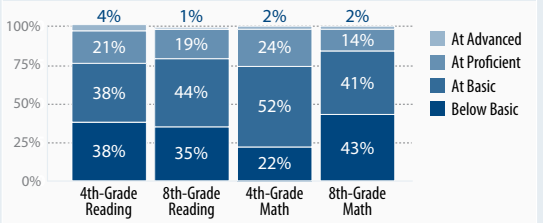
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 3*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade B+

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: B+*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	C
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Lowered

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	Yes
Charter School Law Grade	B

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	C

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	Yes
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	Yes

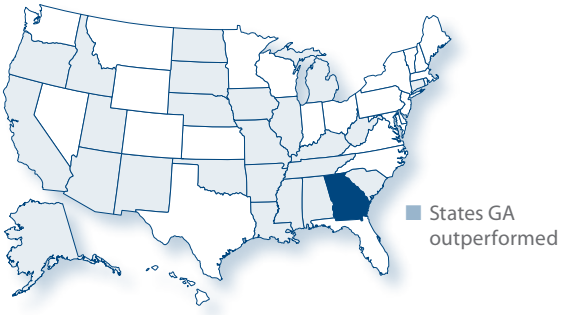
Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	C
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	C
Expanding the Teaching Pool	B-
Identifying Effective Teachers	C-
Retaining Effective Teachers	C
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	C

Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	Yes

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$11,626 *(Rank: 22)*	$46,504	198,129	36% *(Rank: 11)*	$93,008	200,736	32% *(Rank: 26)*

Georgia
The Peach State

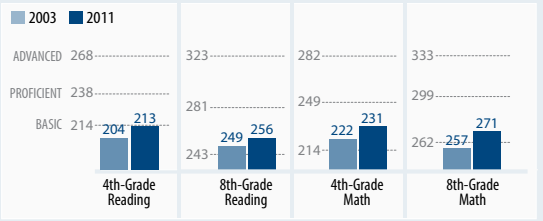


Student NAEP Performance Rank 27

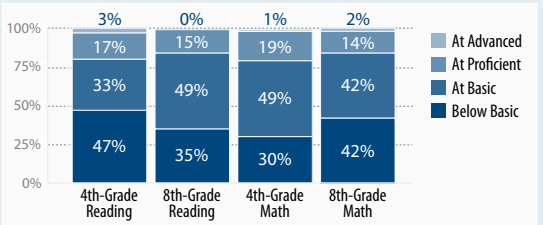
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 27*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade B

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: C*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	C-
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Raised

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	Yes
Charter School Law Grade	C

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	C

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	Yes
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	Yes

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	C-
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	C-
Expanding the Teaching Pool	B-
Identifying Effective Teachers	D+
Retaining Effective Teachers	D
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	C

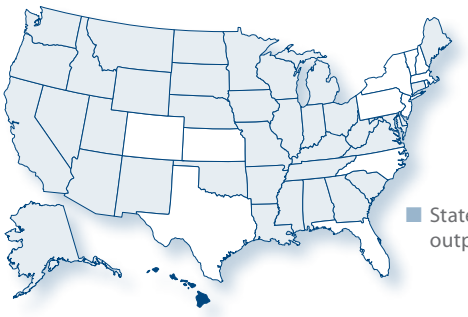
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	Yes

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$11,498 *(Rank: 23)*	$45,992	127,285	29% *(Rank: 35)*	$91,984	123,857	27% *(Rank: 36)*

Hawaii

The Aloha State



States HI outperformed

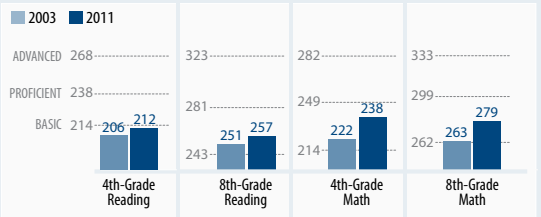
13

Student NAEP Performance Rank

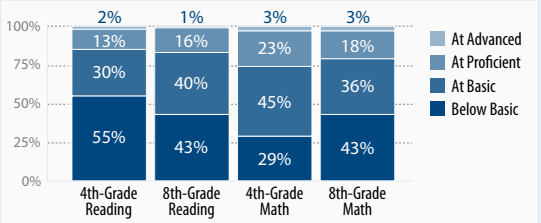
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 15*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade **C+**

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: C*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	A
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Raised

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	Yes
Charter School Law Grade	D

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	C

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	—
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	D-
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	D-
Expanding the Teaching Pool	F
Identifying Effective Teachers	D
Retaining Effective Teachers	D
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	D

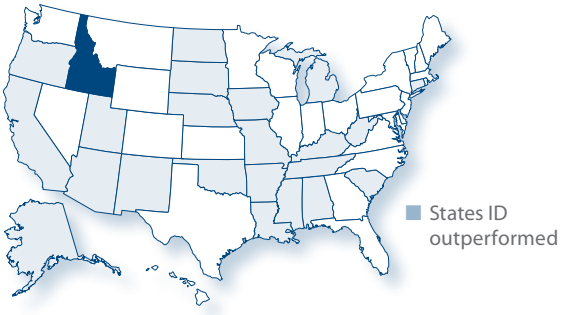
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	Yes

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	**Cumulative Investment Per Student**	**Statewide Enrollment**	**Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher**	**Cumulative Investment Per Student**	**Statewide Enrollment**	**Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher**
$12,877 *(Rank: 14)*	$51,508	13,739	26% *(Rank: 43)*	$103,016	12,665	22% *(Rank: 44)*

Idaho

The Gem State

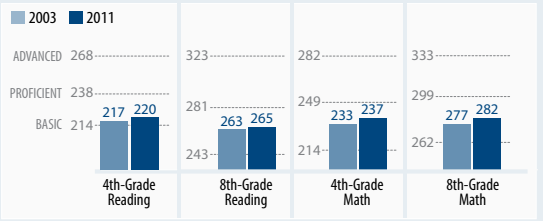


Student NAEP Performance Rank 29

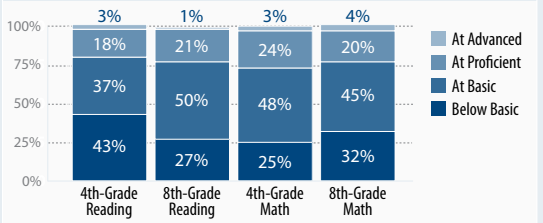
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 22*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade B-

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: B-*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	D+
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Lowered

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	Yes
Charter School Law Grade	C

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	A

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	—
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	D-
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	D
Expanding the Teaching Pool	D
Identifying Effective Teachers	D-
Retaining Effective Teachers	D+
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	F

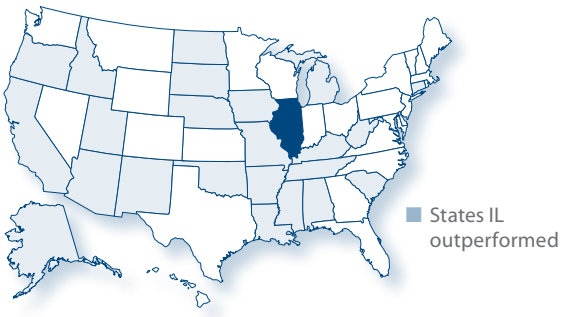
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	Yes

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$8,525 *(Rank: 49)*	$34,100	21,450	32% *(Rank: 28)*	$68,200	20,623	33% *(Rank: 19)*

Illinois

The Prairie State

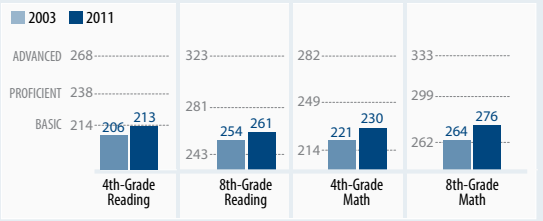


Student NAEP Performance Rank 28

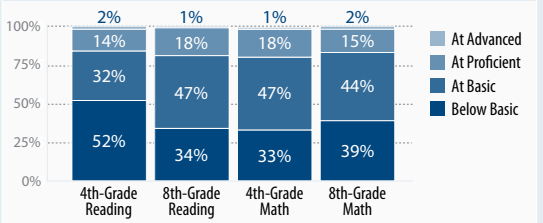
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 38*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade C+

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: C*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	D
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Lowered

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	Yes
Charter School Law Grade	D

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	A

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	Yes
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	D+
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	D
Expanding the Teaching Pool	D+
Identifying Effective Teachers	D
Retaining Effective Teachers	D
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	B-

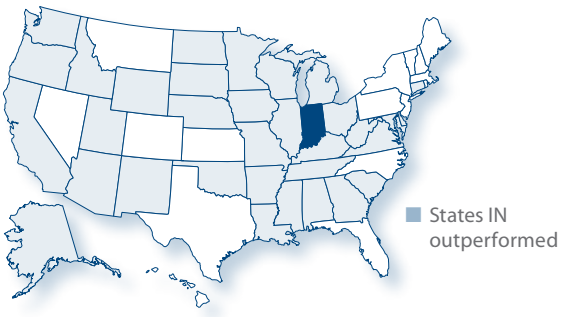
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	No

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$11,874 *(Rank: 21)*	$47,496	152,951	32% *(Rank: 28)*	$94,992	159,272	33% *(Rank: 19)*

Indiana

The Hoosier State

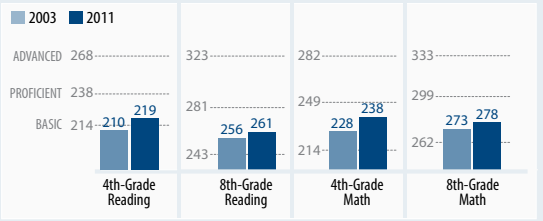


Student NAEP Performance Rank 17

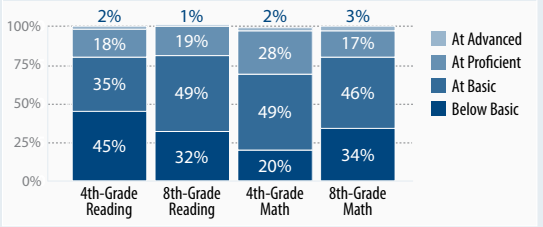
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 13*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade B

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: C+*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	C
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Raised

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	Yes
Charter School Law Grade	B

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	A

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	Yes
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	Yes

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	D
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	D
Expanding the Teaching Pool	D+
Identifying Effective Teachers	D
Retaining Effective Teachers	D+
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	F

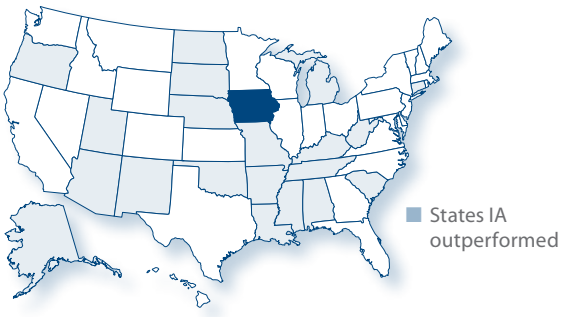
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	No
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	Yes

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$10,040 *(Rank: 42)*	$40,160	78,842	32% *(Rank: 28)*	$80,320	80,874	31% *(Rank: 30)*

Iowa

The Hawkeye State

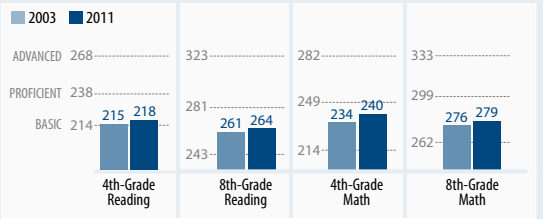


Student NAEP Performance Rank 31

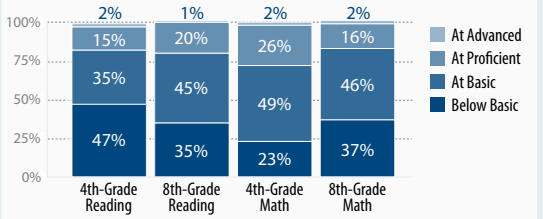
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 31*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade C-

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: C*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	C-
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Raised

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	Yes
Charter School Law Grade	F

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	C

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	Yes
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	Yes

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	D
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	D
Expanding the Teaching Pool	D
Identifying Effective Teachers	D
Retaining Effective Teachers	C-
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	D+

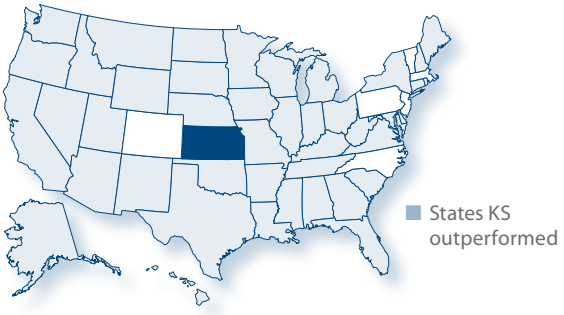
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	No

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$11,126 *(Rank: 30)*	$44,504	35,031	34% *(Rank: 23)*	$89,008	35,324	32% *(Rank: 26)*

Kansas

The Sunflower State

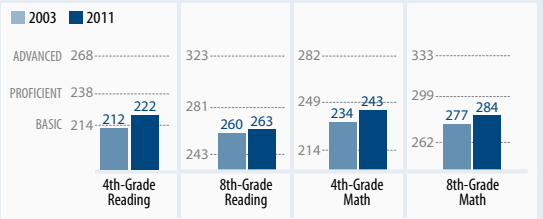


Student NAEP Performance Rank 8

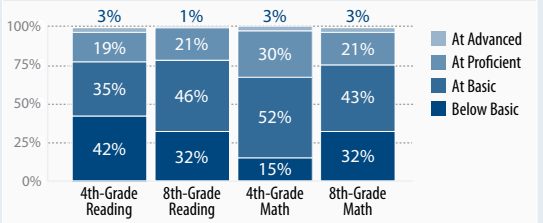
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 7*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade C-

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: D+*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	C-
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Lowered

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	Yes
Charter School Law Grade	F

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	B

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	—
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	D-
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	D+
Expanding the Teaching Pool	F
Identifying Effective Teachers	D
Retaining Effective Teachers	C-
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	F

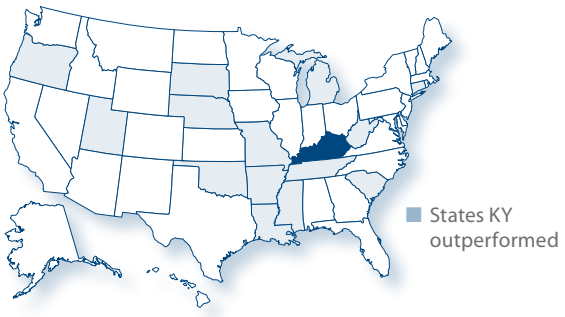
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	No
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	Yes

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$11,009 *(Rank: 33)*	$44,036	34,965	35% *(Rank: 17)*	$88,072	34,366	33% *(Rank: 19)*

Kentucky

The Bluegrass State

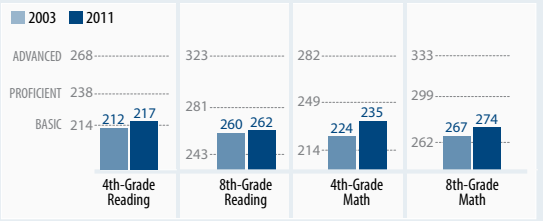


Student NAEP Performance Rank 37

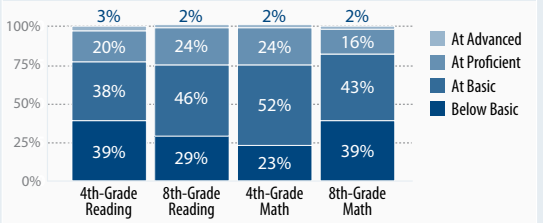
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 37*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade C

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: C+*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	C
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Lowered

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	No
Charter School Law Grade	—

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	B

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	—
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	D+
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	D+
Expanding the Teaching Pool	C
Identifying Effective Teachers	D+
Retaining Effective Teachers	C-
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	F

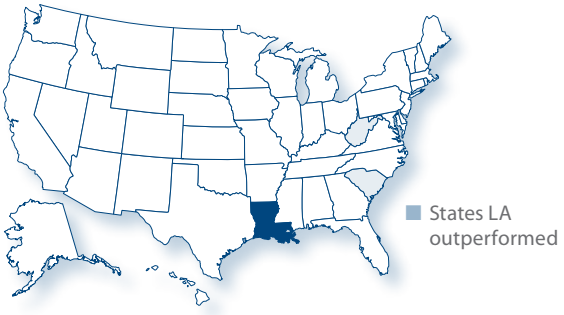
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	No

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$10,076 *(Rank: 41)*	$40,304	49,875	36% *(Rank: 11)*	$80,608	49,668	33% *(Rank: 19)*

Louisiana

The Pelican State

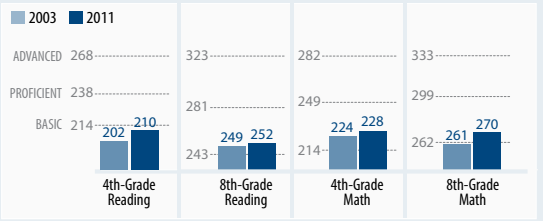


Student NAEP Performance Rank 49

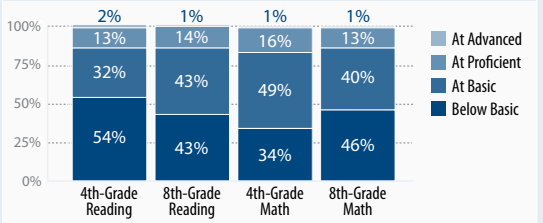
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 47*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade B-

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: B*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	C-
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Lowered

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	Yes
Charter School Law Grade	C

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	C

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	Yes
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	Yes

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	C-
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	C+
Expanding the Teaching Pool	C
Identifying Effective Teachers	D+
Retaining Effective Teachers	C
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	C-

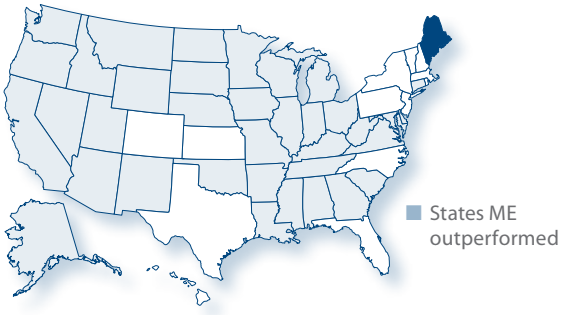
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	Yes

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$11,329 *(Rank: 26)*	$45,316	57,165	18% *(Rank: 50)*	$90,632	51,910	20% *(Rank: 49)*

Maine

The Pine Tree State

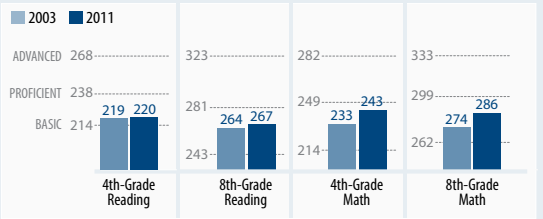


Student NAEP Performance Rank 14

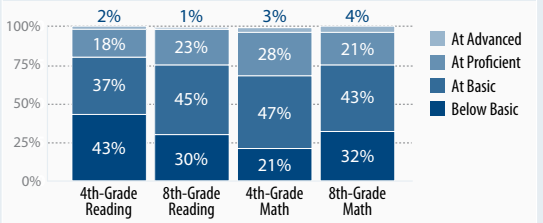
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 14*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade C-

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: D+*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	B
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Lowered

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	No
Charter School Law Grade	—

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	C

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	Yes
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	F
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	F
Expanding the Teaching Pool	F
Identifying Effective Teachers	F
Retaining Effective Teachers	C-
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	F

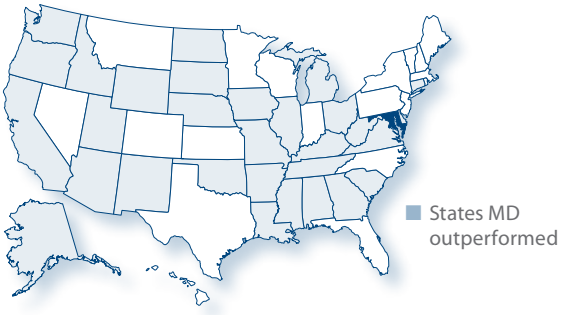
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	No

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$12,696 *(Rank: 15)*	$50,784	13,860	35% *(Rank: 17)*	$101,568	14,886	35% *(Rank: 13)*

Maryland

The Old Line State

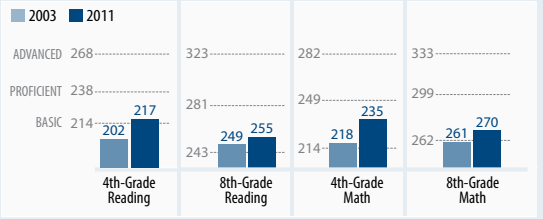


Student NAEP Performance Rank 20

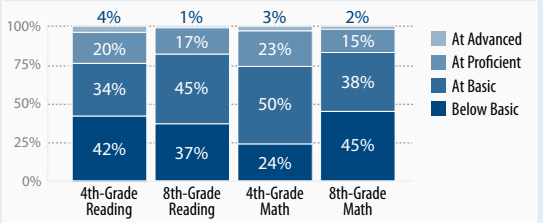
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 20*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade C-

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: C*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	D+
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Lowered

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	Yes
Charter School Law Grade	D

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	C

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	—
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	D
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	D-
Expanding the Teaching Pool	C+
Identifying Effective Teachers	D-
Retaining Effective Teachers	C-
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	F

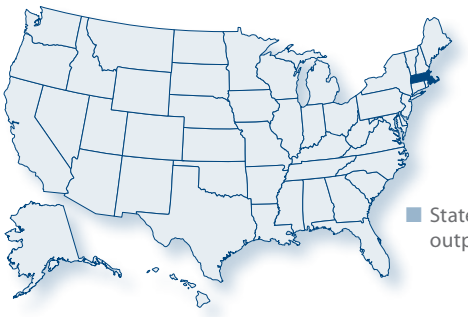
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	No

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$15,032 *(Rank: 8)*	$60,128	59,512	37% *(Rank: 8)*	$120,256	63,639	36% *(Rank: 11)*

Massachusetts

The Bay State



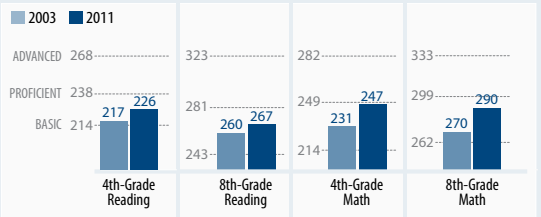
Student NAEP Performance Rank

1

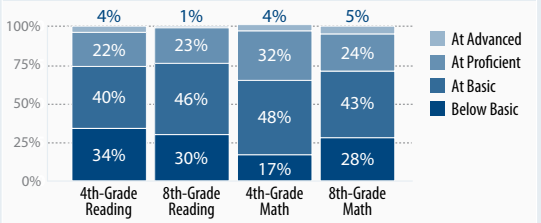
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 2*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade

B-

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: C*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	A
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Raised

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	Yes
Charter School Law Grade	C

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	D

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	—
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	D+
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	C+
Expanding the Teaching Pool	C
Identifying Effective Teachers	D-
Retaining Effective Teachers	D+
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	D

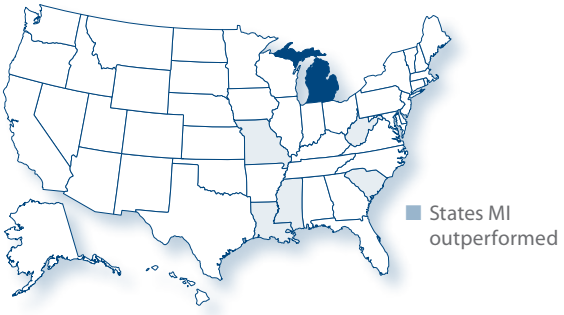
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	Yes

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$14,240 *(Rank: 11)*	$56,960	70,666	47% *(Rank: 1)*	$113,920	73,170	43% *(Rank: 1)*

Michigan

The Great Lakes State

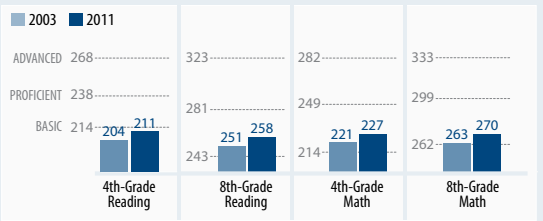


Student NAEP Performance Rank 46

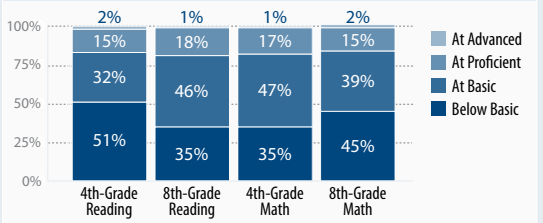
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 49*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade B-

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: B-*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	D-
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Lowered

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	Yes
Charter School Law Grade	B

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	A

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	—
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	D-
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	D
Expanding the Teaching Pool	F
Identifying Effective Teachers	D-
Retaining Effective Teachers	C-
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	D

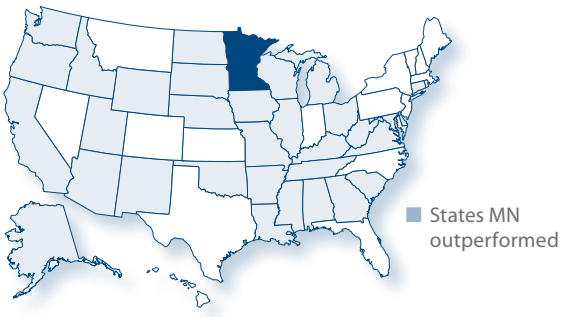
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	Yes

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$11,445 *(Rank: 25)*	$45,780	117,432	30% *(Rank: 34)*	$91,560	123,823	31% *(Rank: 30)*

Minnesota

The North Star State

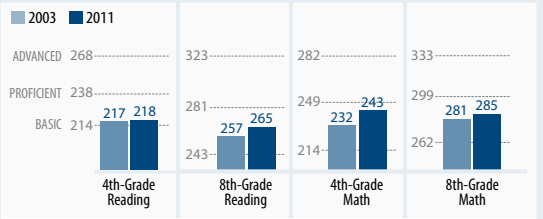


Student NAEP Performance Rank 18

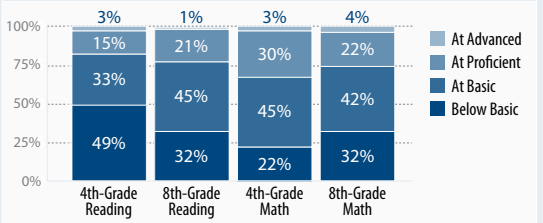
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 23*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade B+

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: B*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	B
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	(New)

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	Yes
Charter School Law Grade	A

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	C

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	Yes
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	D-
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	D
Expanding the Teaching Pool	D-
Identifying Effective Teachers	D
Retaining Effective Teachers	C-
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	F

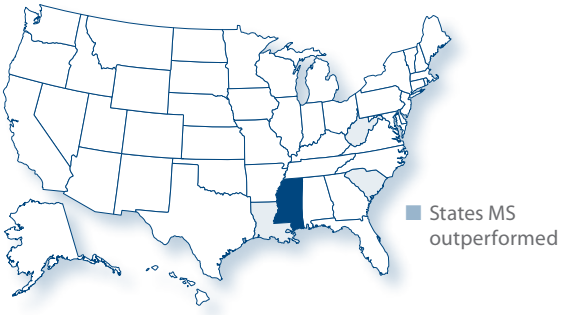
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	Yes

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$11,943 *(Rank: 20)*	$47,772	59,822	37% *(Rank: 8)*	$95,544	62,080	38% *(Rank: 7)*

Mississippi

The Magnolia State

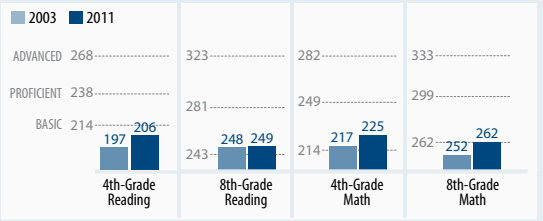


Student NAEP Performance Rank 48

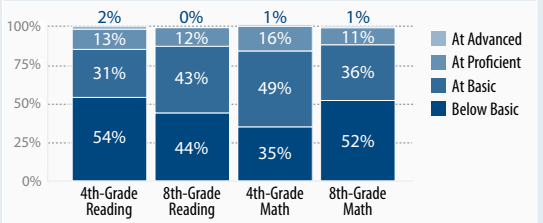
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 46*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade C

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: D+*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	C
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Raised

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	Yes
Charter School Law Grade	F

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	B

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	—
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	D+
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	C
Expanding the Teaching Pool	C
Identifying Effective Teachers	D
Retaining Effective Teachers	D
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	C

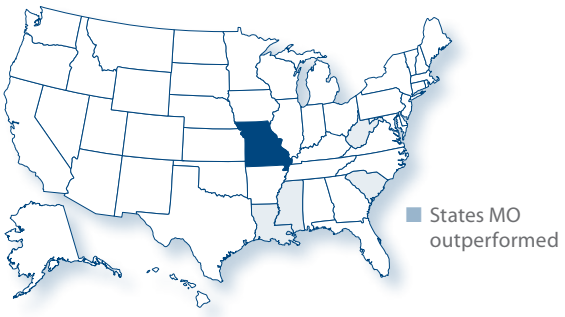
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	No

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$8,587 *(Rank: 48)*	$34,348	38,159	22% *(Rank: 48)*	$68,696	37,889	19% *(Rank: 50)*

Missouri

The Show-Me State

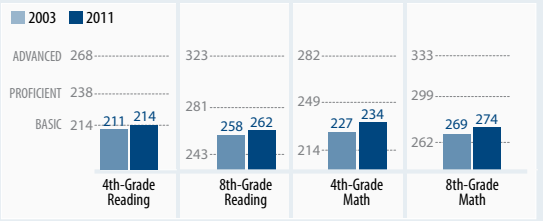


Student NAEP Performance Rank 47

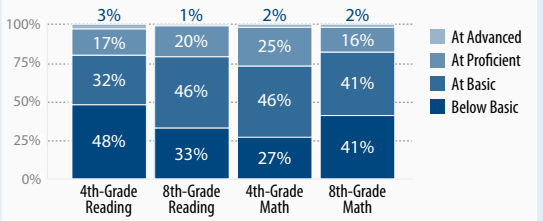
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 34*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade A-

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: B*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	A
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Raised

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	Yes
Charter School Law Grade	B

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	A

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	—
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	D
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	C-
Expanding the Teaching Pool	D-
Identifying Effective Teachers	D+
Retaining Effective Teachers	D
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	D-

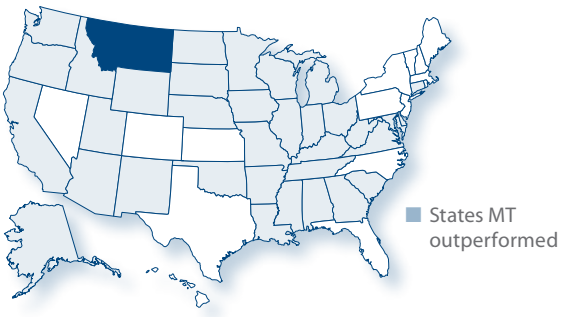
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	Yes

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$11,070 *(Rank: 31)*	$44,280	67,620	36% *(Rank: 11)*	$88,560	68,030	34% *(Rank: 15)*

Montana

The Treasure State



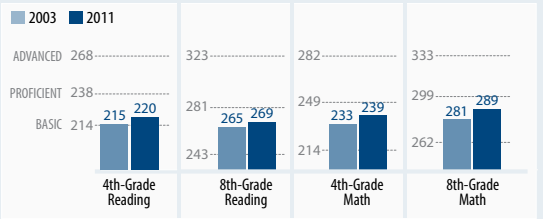
Student NAEP Performance Rank

16

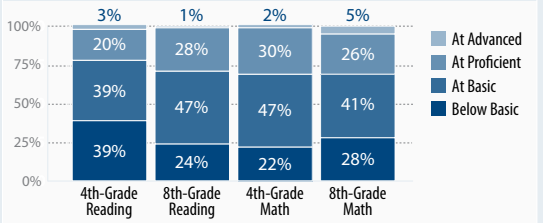
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 9*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade

C

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: D+*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	B
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Raised

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	No
Charter School Law Grade	—

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	B

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	—
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	F
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	D-
Expanding the Teaching Pool	D-
Identifying Effective Teachers	F
Retaining Effective Teachers	D
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	F

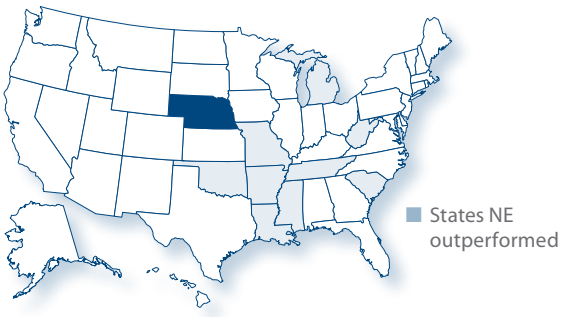
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	No

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$10,941 *(Rank: 34)*	$43,764	10,558	35% *(Rank: 17)*	$87,528	10,890	38% *(Rank: 7)*

Nebraska

The Cornhusker State

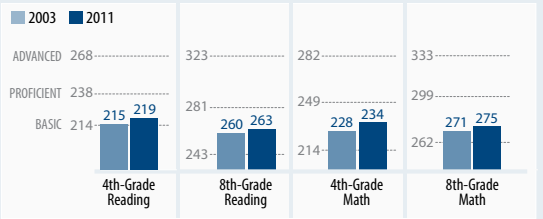


Student NAEP Performance Rank 42

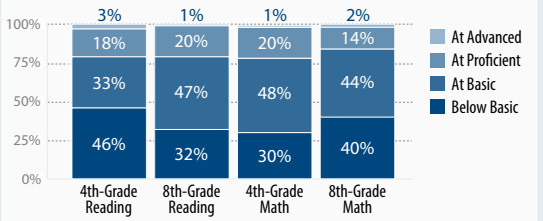
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 33*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade D+

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: D*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	F
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Lowered

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	No
Charter School Law Grade	—

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	B

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	—
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	D-
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	D
Expanding the Teaching Pool	F
Identifying Effective Teachers	D
Retaining Effective Teachers	C-
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	F

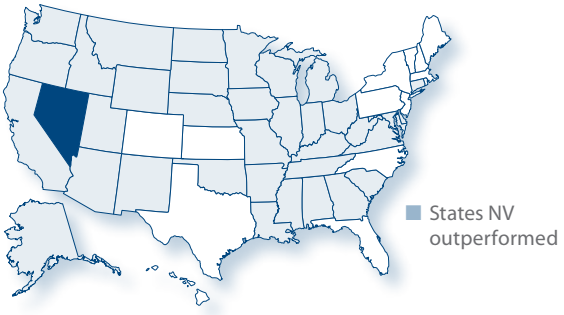
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	No

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$12,287 *(Rank: 17)*	$49,148	20,939	35% *(Rank: 17)*	$98,296	20,958	35% *(Rank: 13)*

Nevada

The Silver State

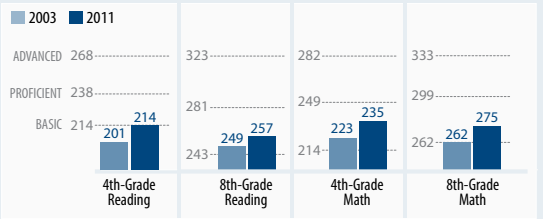


Student NAEP Performance Rank 15

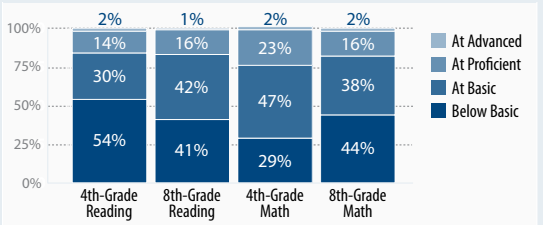
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 18*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade C+

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: C*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	C
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Raised

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	Yes
Charter School Law Grade	C

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	B

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	—
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	D-
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	D-
Expanding the Teaching Pool	D-
Identifying Effective Teachers	D-
Retaining Effective Teachers	D
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	D+

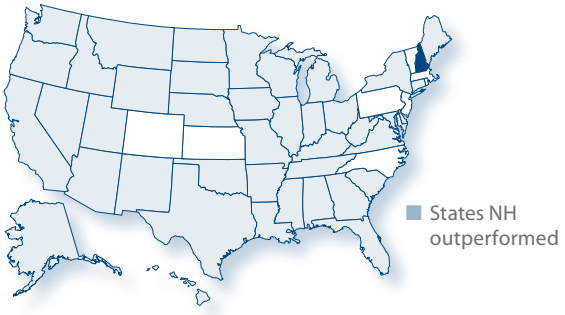
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	No
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	Yes

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$10,377 *(Rank: 39)*	$41,508	34,099	24% *(Rank: 46)*	$83,016	34,394	22% *(Rank: 44)*

New Hampshire

The Granite State

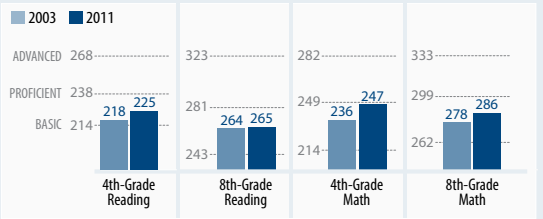


Student NAEP Performance Rank 9

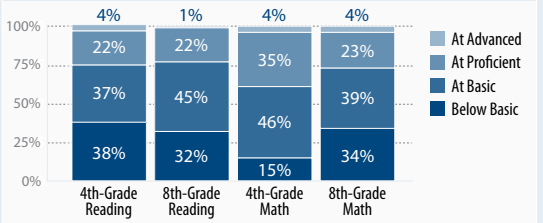
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 4*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade C+

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: C*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	B+
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	(New)

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	Yes
Charter School Law Grade	D

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	C

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	—
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	D-
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	D
Expanding the Teaching Pool	D
Identifying Effective Teachers	F
Retaining Effective Teachers	D-
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	D-

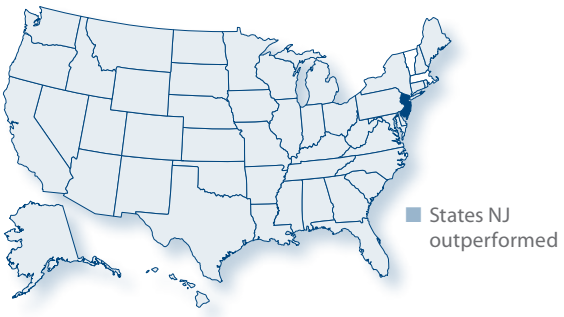
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	Yes

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$13,007 *(Rank: 13)*	$52,028	14,613	41% *(Rank: 3)*	$104,056	15,783	39% *(Rank: 6)*

New Jersey

The Garden State

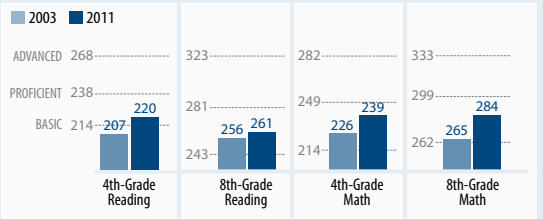


Student NAEP Performance Rank 3

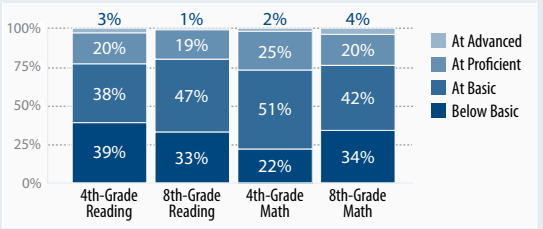
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 10*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade B-

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: C*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	B
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Raised

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	Yes
Charter School Law Grade	C

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	A

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	—
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	D+
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	D
Expanding the Teaching Pool	B-
Identifying Effective Teachers	D+
Retaining Effective Teachers	C-
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	D+

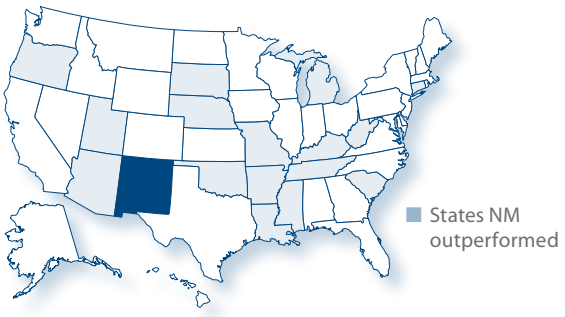
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	No
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	No

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$18,971 *(Rank: 2)*	$75,884	99,242	40% *(Rank: 5)*	$151,768	100,894	42% *(Rank: 3)*

New Mexico

The Land of Enchantment

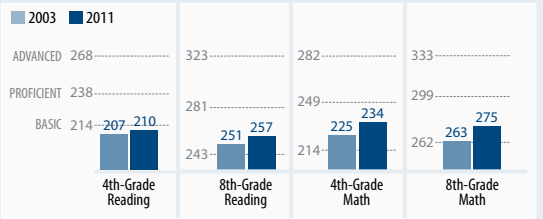


Student NAEP Performance Rank 35

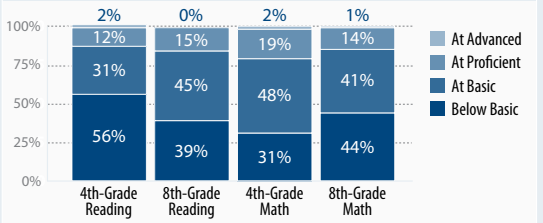
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 48*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade B

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: B*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	A
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Raised

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	Yes
Charter School Law Grade	C

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	B

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	—
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	D+
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	D+
Expanding the Teaching Pool	D
Identifying Effective Teachers	C-
Retaining Effective Teachers	D
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	B-

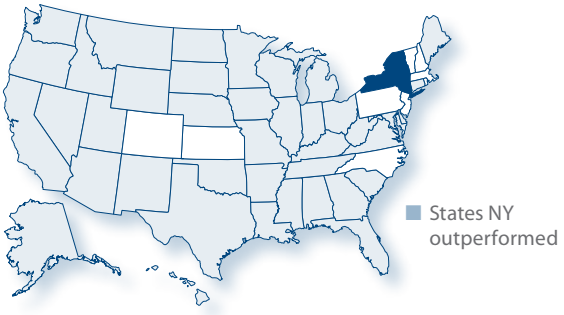
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	No

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$10,798 *(Rank: 35)*	$43,192	25,119	20% *(Rank: 49)*	$86,384	24,366	22% *(Rank: 44)*

New York

The Empire State



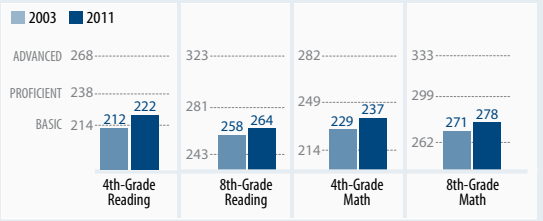
Student NAEP Performance Rank

10

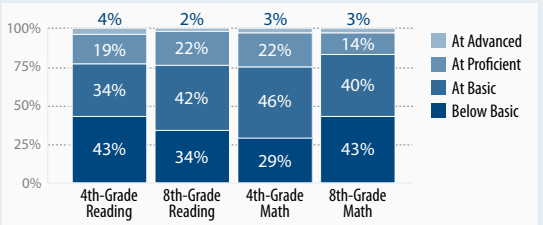
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 5*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade

C-

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: D+*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	D
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Lowered

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	Yes
Charter School Law Grade	B

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	D

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	—
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	D+
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	D+
Expanding the Teaching Pool	C
Identifying Effective Teachers	D-
Retaining Effective Teachers	C-
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	D

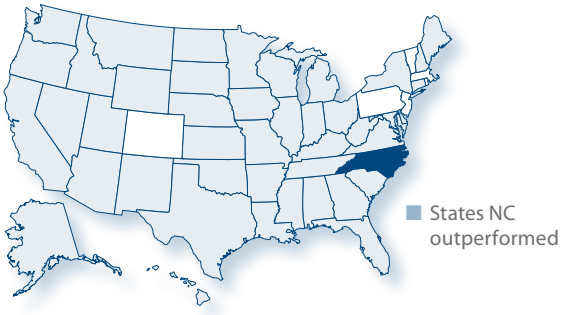
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	No
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	No

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$18,073 *(Rank: 3)*	$72,292	190,067	36% *(Rank: 11)*	$144,584	201,895	33% *(Rank: 19)*

North Carolina

The Old North State

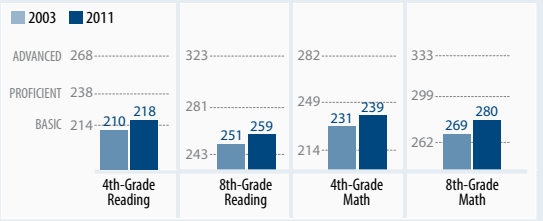


Student NAEP Performance Rank 7

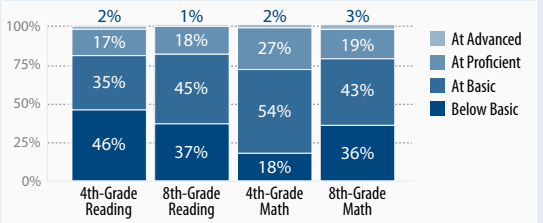
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 41*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade C

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: C*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	C
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Raised

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	Yes
Charter School Law Grade	D

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	C

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	—
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	D+
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	D
Expanding the Teaching Pool	D+
Identifying Effective Teachers	C-
Retaining Effective Teachers	C
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	D

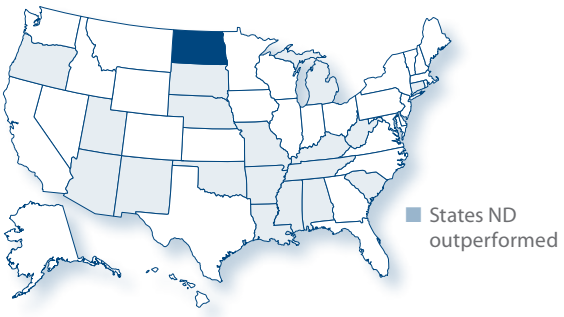
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	No

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$9,045 *(Rank: 46)*	$36,180	114,909	32% *(Rank: 28)*	$72,360	111,050	29% *(Rank: 33)*

North Dakota

The Peace Garden State

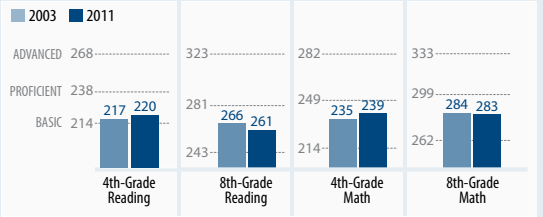


Student NAEP Performance Rank 33

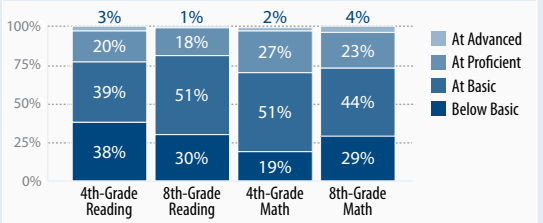
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 24*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade D+

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: D*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	C
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Lowered

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	No
Charter School Law Grade	—

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	D

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	—
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	D-
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	D
Expanding the Teaching Pool	F
Identifying Effective Teachers	D-
Retaining Effective Teachers	D
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	D+

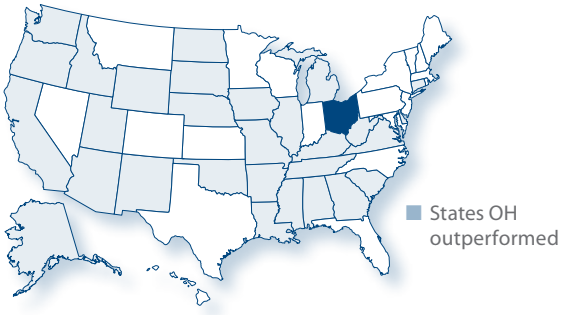
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	No

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$10,378 *(Rank: 38)*	$41,512	6,812	35% *(Rank: 17)*	$83,024	7,364	34% *(Rank: 15)*

Ohio

The Buckeye State

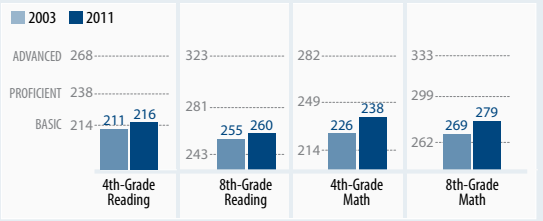


Student NAEP Performance Rank 21

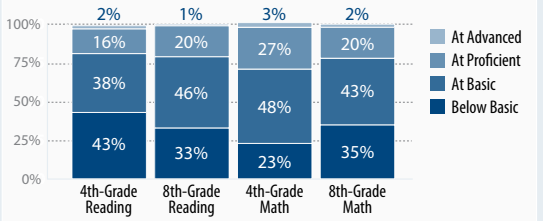
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 35*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade B

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: B-*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	C
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Lowered

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	Yes
Charter School Law Grade	C

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	C

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	Yes
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	Yes

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	D+
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	D
Expanding the Teaching Pool	D
Identifying Effective Teachers	C-
Retaining Effective Teachers	C
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	D

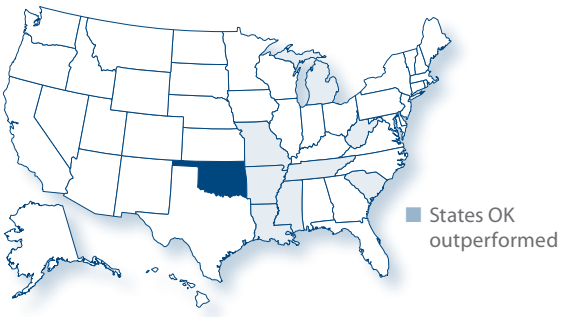
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	Yes

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$11,982 *(Rank: 19)*	$47,928	132,680	36% *(Rank: 11)*	$95,856	137,479	37% *(Rank: 9)*

Oklahoma

The Sooner State

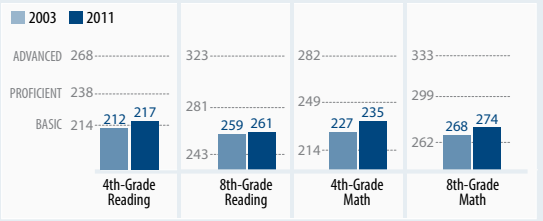


Student NAEP Performance Rank 43

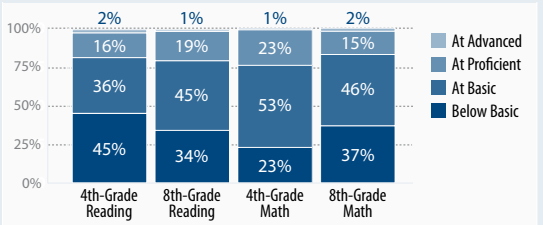
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 43*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade B

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: C*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	C
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Raised

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	Yes
Charter School Law Grade	C

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	A

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	Yes
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	D+
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	C-
Expanding the Teaching Pool	C-
Identifying Effective Teachers	D+
Retaining Effective Teachers	C-
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	D+

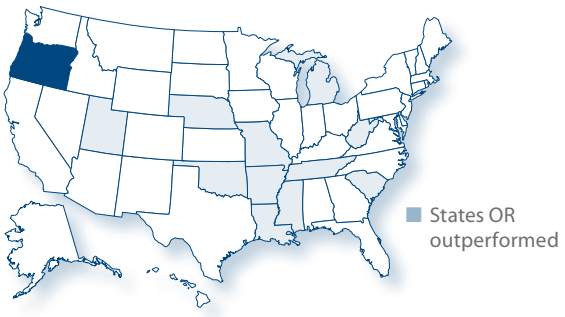
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	No
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	Yes

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$8,372 *(Rank: 50)*	$33,488	47,245	28% *(Rank: 37)*	$66,976	45,149	26% *(Rank: 41)*

Oregon

The Beaver State

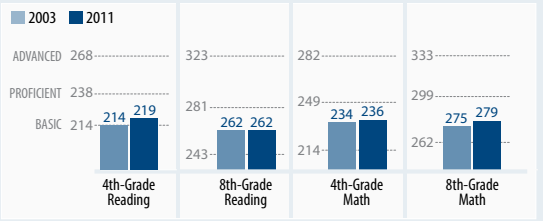


Student NAEP Performance Rank 40

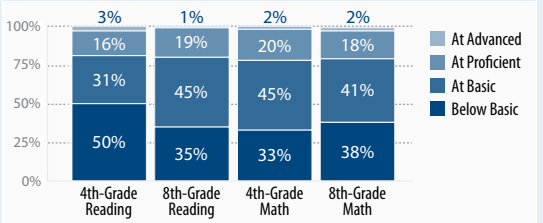
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 32*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade C

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: C*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	C-
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Lowered

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	Yes
Charter School Law Grade	C

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	C

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	—
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	D-
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	D+
Expanding the Teaching Pool	F
Identifying Effective Teachers	F
Retaining Effective Teachers	D+
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	D-

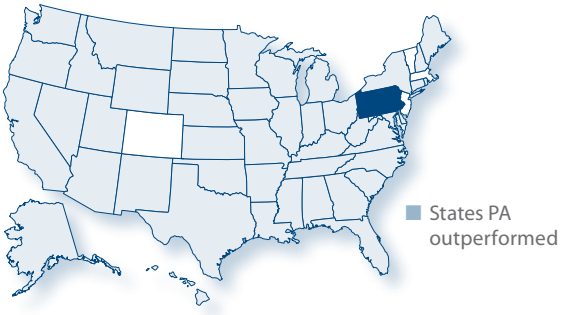
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	Yes

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$11,156 *(Rank: 28)*	$44,624	43,272	31% *(Rank: 32)*	$89,248	43,339	33% *(Rank: 19)*

Pennsylvania

The Keystone State

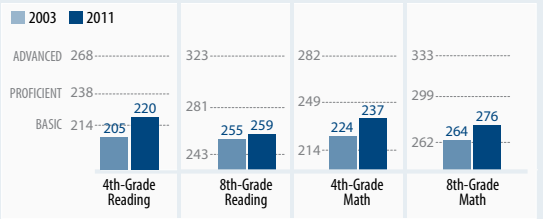


Student NAEP Performance Rank 5

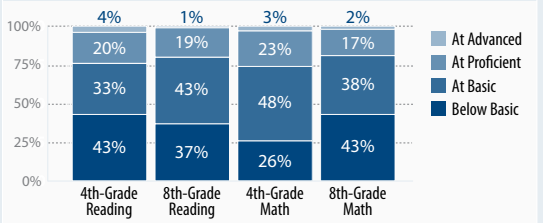
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 6*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade C+

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: C*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	C
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Lowered

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	Yes
Charter School Law Grade	B

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	D

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	Yes
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	D
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	D+
Expanding the Teaching Pool	C-
Identifying Effective Teachers	D
Retaining Effective Teachers	D+
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	D-

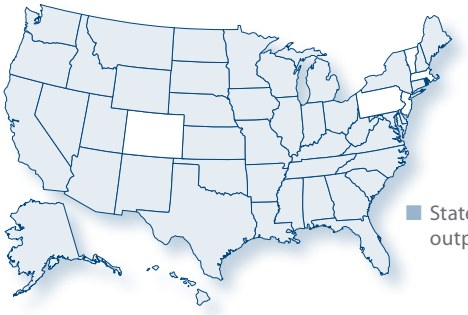
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	No
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	Yes

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$13,712 *(Rank: 12)*	$54,848	130,592	37% *(Rank: 8)*	$109,696	139,173	40% *(Rank: 5)*

Rhode Island

The Ocean State

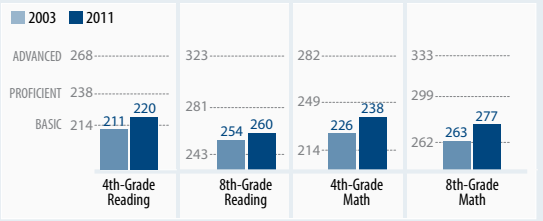


Student NAEP Performance Rank 6

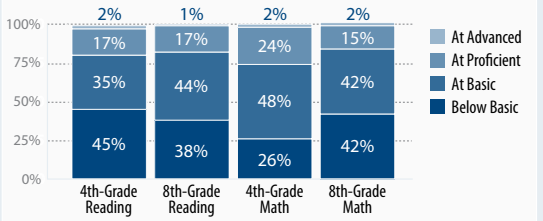
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 25*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade C

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: D*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	B
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Raised

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	Yes
Charter School Law Grade	D

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	D

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	Yes
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	D
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	D
Expanding the Teaching Pool	C
Identifying Effective Teachers	D
Retaining Effective Teachers	D
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	F

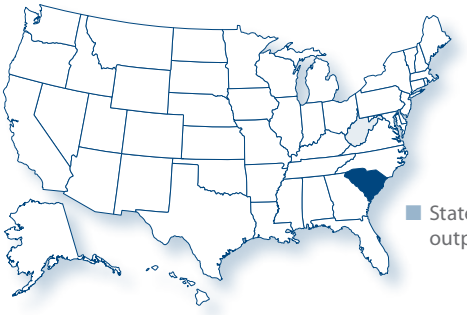
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	No

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$14,897 *(Rank: 9)*	$59,588	9,752	36% *(Rank: 11)*	$119,176	11,422	28% *(Rank: 34)*

South Carolina

The Palmetto State

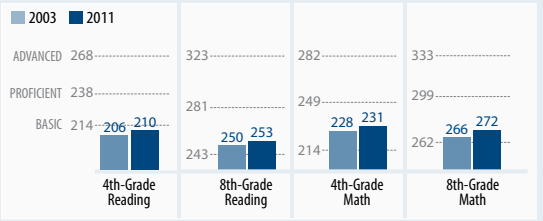


Student NAEP Performance Rank 50

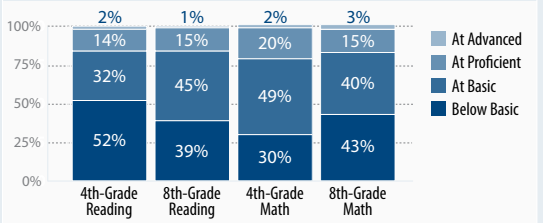
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 51*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade C+

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: B*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	C-
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Lowered

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	Yes
Charter School Law Grade	C

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	C

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	—
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	C-
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	D+
Expanding the Teaching Pool	D
Identifying Effective Teachers	C
Retaining Effective Teachers	C
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	C+

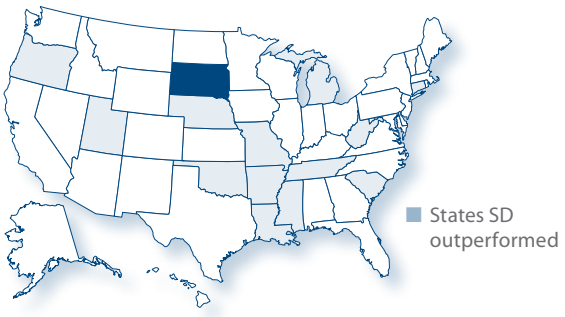
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	Yes

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$11,128 *(Rank: 29)*	$44,512	53,996	28% *(Rank: 37)*	$89,024	53,446	24% *(Rank: 42)*

South Dakota

The Mount Rushmore State

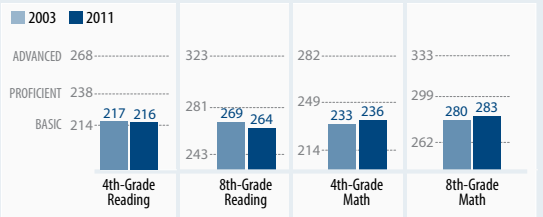


Student NAEP Performance Rank 38

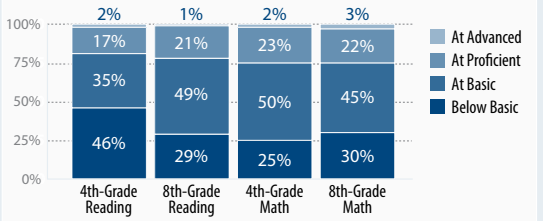
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 39*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade C-

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: C*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	C
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Raised

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	No
Charter School Law Grade	—

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	C

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	—
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	D
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	D
Expanding the Teaching Pool	C-
Identifying Effective Teachers	F
Retaining Effective Teachers	C
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	F

Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	No

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$9,684 *(Rank: 44)*	$38,736	9,234	33% *(Rank: 24)*	$77,472	9,446	37% *(Rank: 9)*

Tennessee

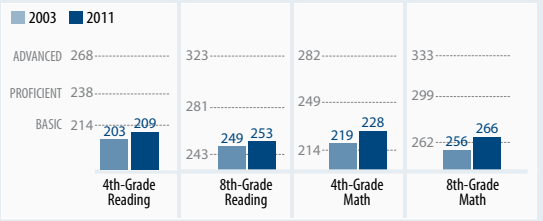
The Volunteer State

Student NAEP Performance Rank 44

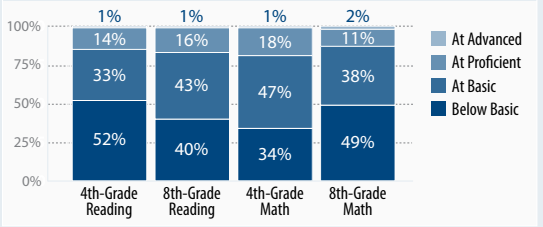
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 36*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade C

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: D*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	F
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Lowered

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	Yes
Charter School Law Grade	C

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	C

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	—
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	C-
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	B-
Expanding the Teaching Pool	C
Identifying Effective Teachers	C
Retaining Effective Teachers	C
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	F

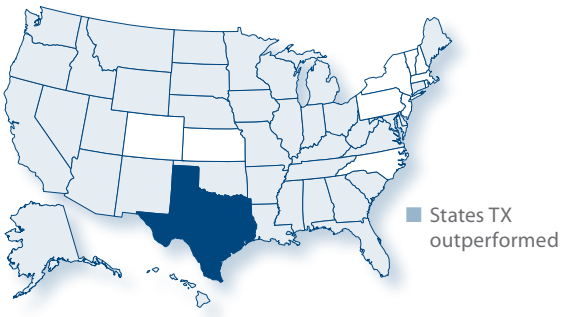
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	Yes

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$8,746 *(Rank: 47)*	$34,984	75,091	28% *(Rank: 37)*	$69,968	72,255	28% *(Rank: 34)*

Texas

The Lone Star State

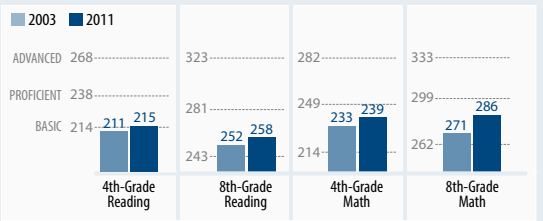


Student NAEP Performance Rank 11

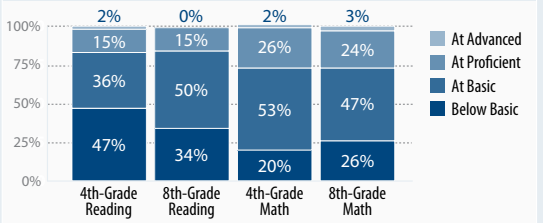
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 8*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade C+

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: C*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	D
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Raised

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	Yes
Charter School Law Grade	D

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	A

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	—
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	C-
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	C
Expanding the Teaching Pool	B-
Identifying Effective Teachers	D
Retaining Effective Teachers	C-
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	D

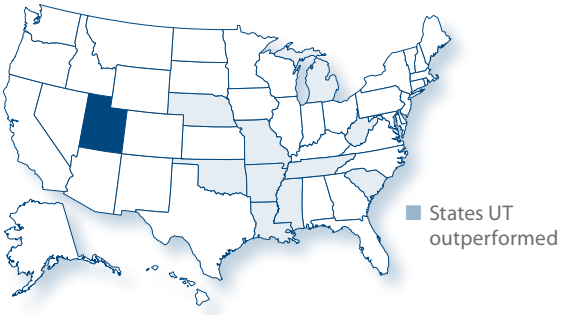
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	Yes

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$10,596 *(Rank: 36)*	$42,384	355,578	28% *(Rank: 37)*	$84,768	343,548	27% *(Rank: 36)*

Utah

The Beehive State

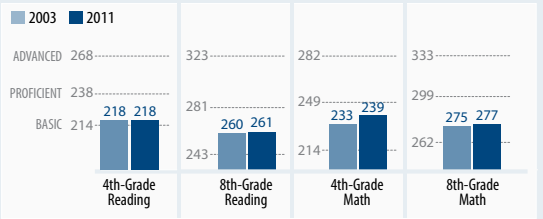


Student NAEP Performance Rank 41

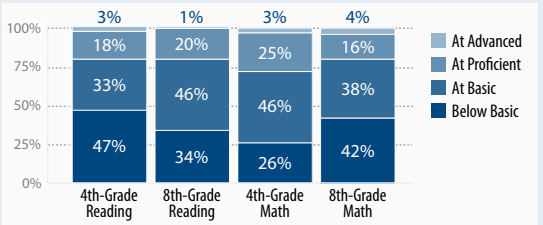
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 42*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade B

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: C+*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	C+
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Raised

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	Yes
Charter School Law Grade	B

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	B

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	Yes
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	D
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	D-
Expanding the Teaching Pool	D
Identifying Effective Teachers	D
Retaining Effective Teachers	C
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	D-

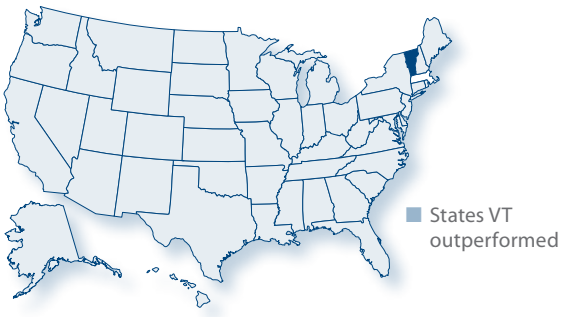
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	Yes

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$7,756 *(Rank: 51)*	$31,024	44,546	31% *(Rank: 32)*	$62,048	40,261	33% *(Rank: 19)*

Vermont

The Green Mountain State

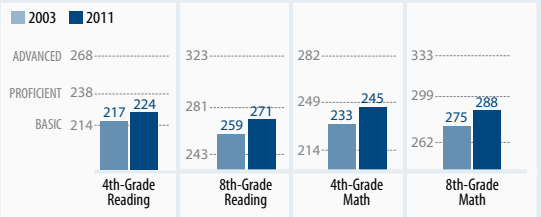


Student NAEP Performance Rank 2

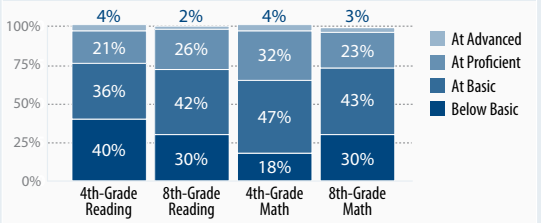
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 1*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade D+

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: D*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	B+
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Raised

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	No
Charter School Law Grade	—

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	D

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	Yes
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	F
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	D
Expanding the Teaching Pool	D-
Identifying Effective Teachers	F
Retaining Effective Teachers	D
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	F

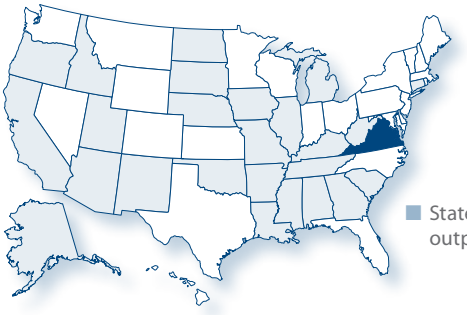
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	No

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$15,465 *(Rank: 7)*	$61,860	6,471	41% *(Rank: 3)*	$123,720	7,004	41% *(Rank: 4)*

Virginia

The Old Dominion

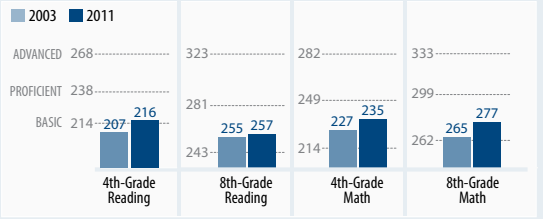


Student NAEP Performance Rank 26

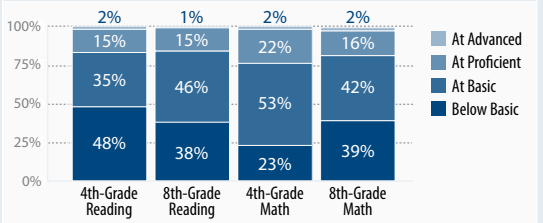
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 12*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade C-

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: C-*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	D+
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Raised

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	Yes
Charter School Law Grade	F

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	C

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	—
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	D+
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	C
Expanding the Teaching Pool	C
Identifying Effective Teachers	D-
Retaining Effective Teachers	C
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	D+

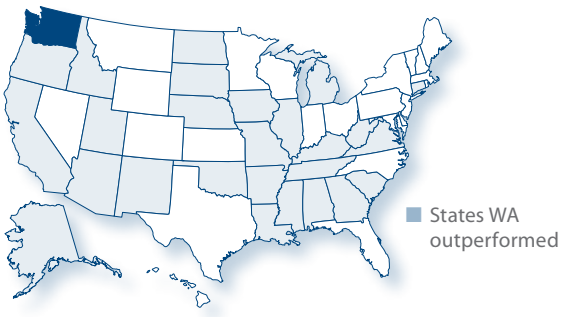
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	Yes

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$12,030 *(Rank: 18)*	$48,120	91,133	38% *(Rank: 7)*	$96,240	92,881	32% *(Rank: 26)*

Washington

The Evergreen State

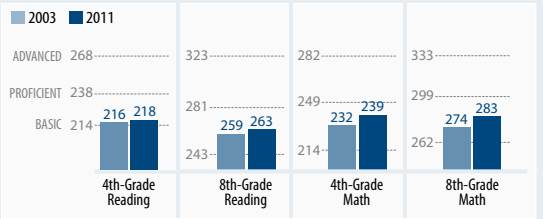


Student NAEP Performance Rank 25

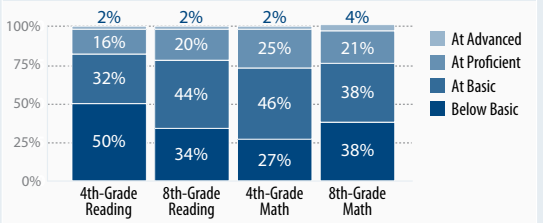
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 16*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade C

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: C+*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	A
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Raised

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	No
Charter School Law Grade	—

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	C

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	—
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	D+
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	D+
Expanding the Teaching Pool	C-
Identifying Effective Teachers	D
Retaining Effective Teachers	C
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	D+

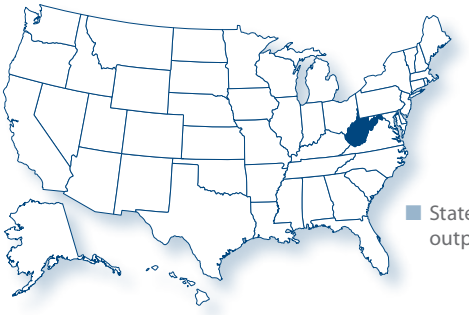
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	No

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$11,200 *(Rank: 27)*	$44,800	77,999	33% *(Rank: 24)*	$89,600	78,902	36% *(Rank: 11)*

West Virginia

The Mountain State

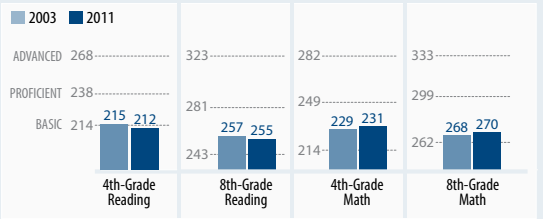


Student NAEP Performance Rank 51

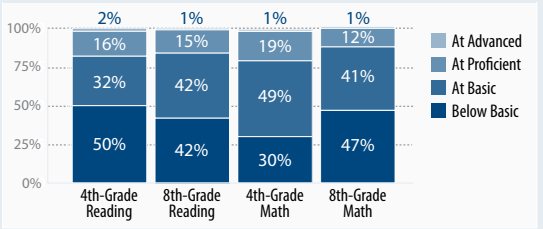
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 50*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade D+

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: C*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	C
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Raised

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	No
Charter School Law Grade	—

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	C

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	—
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	D+
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	C-
Expanding the Teaching Pool	C
Identifying Effective Teachers	D
Retaining Effective Teachers	D
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	C-

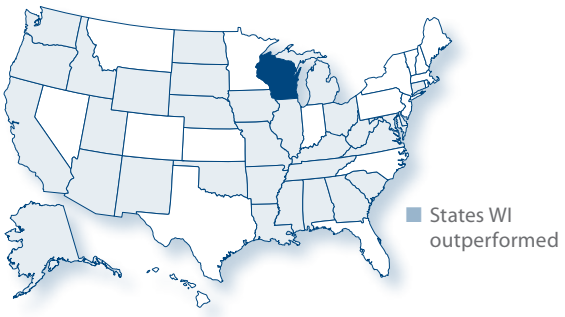
Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	No

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$10,341 *(Rank: 40)*	$41,364	20,162	26% *(Rank: 43)*	$82,728	21,268	22% *(Rank: 44)*

Wisconsin

America's Dairyland

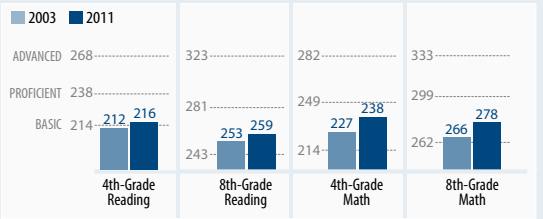


Student NAEP Performance Rank 19

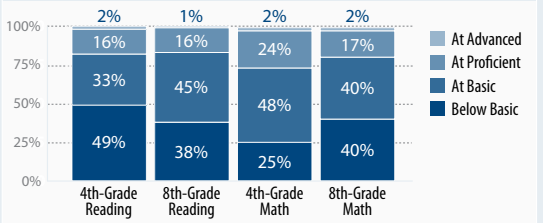
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 21*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade B-

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: C*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	C
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Raised

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	Yes
Charter School Law Grade	C

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	B

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	Yes
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

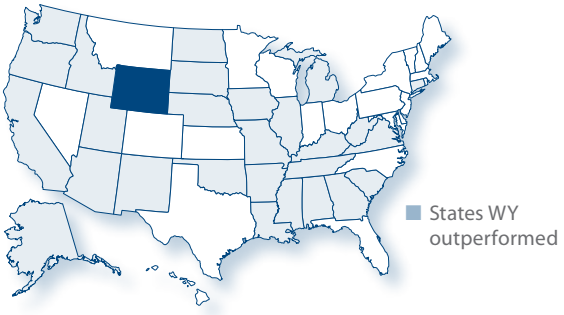
Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	D
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	D-
Expanding the Teaching Pool	D-
Identifying Effective Teachers	D-
Retaining Effective Teachers	C
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	D

Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	Yes

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$12,312 *(Rank: 16)*	$49,248	60,319	33% *(Rank: 24)*	$98,496	62,317	34% *(Rank: 15)*

Wyoming
The Equality State

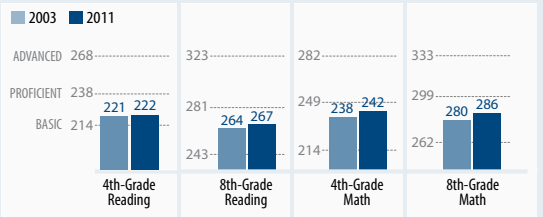


Student NAEP Performance Rank 23

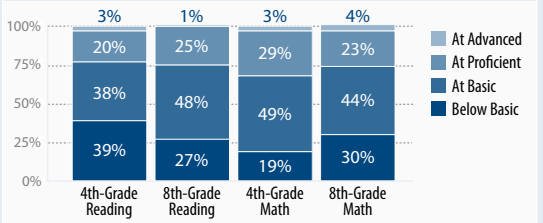
ALEC Historical Ranking *2010: 28*

Measures the overall 2011 scores for low-income students (non-ELL and non-IEP) and their gains/losses on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and mathematics exams from 2003 to 2011

NAEP Scores for Low-Income Children (2003-2011)



NAEP Score Distribution (2011)



Education Policy Grade C+

ALEC Historical Grading *2010: C*

Contains scores and grades for policies that allow the state's education system to make available high-quality education through accountability, high standards, public- and private-school choice, high-quality teachers, and innovative delivery mechanisms

State Academic Standards	
2009 State Academic Standards	C
Change in State Standards (2003-2009)	Lowered

Charter Schools	
Charter Schools Allowed	Yes
Charter School Law Grade	D

Home School Regulation Burden *(A=None, B=Low, C=Moderate, D=High)*	B

Private School Choice Programs	
Private School Choice	—
"A" Grade or Multiple Programs	—

Teacher Quality and Policies: Overall Grade	D-
Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	D-
Expanding the Teaching Pool	D
Identifying Effective Teachers	D
Retaining Effective Teachers	D
Exiting Ineffective Teachers	D-

Online Learning	
State Virtual School or Online-Learning Initiative	Yes
Multi-District Full-Time Online School	Yes

Spending Levels and Achievement: 4th- and 8th-Grade NAEP Reading Exams Results and Costs

	4th Grade			8th Grade		
Annual Cost Per Student	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher	Cumulative Investment Per Student	Statewide Enrollment	Percent of Students Scoring "Proficient" or Higher
$17,478 *(Rank: 4)*	$69,912	6,608	33% *(Rank: 24)*	$139,824	6,456	34% *(Rank: 15)*

CHAPTER 5

Raising Academic Quality for All Students by Customizing Education with Digital Learning

Raising Academic Quality for All Students by Customizing Education with Digital Learning

Many of the preceding pages have focused on a question of key concern to American leaders and policymakers over the past quarter century: What can we do to ensure that all children have access to a high-quality education?

For everyone who believes all children deserve an equal opportunity to pursue the American dream, this is a critical question to ask, and the achievement gap remains an important problem to solve. Policymakers and reformers should not rest until we reach a point in American education when a child's opportunity to learn and take advantage of the many opportunities in 21st-century life is not shaped by socioeconomic status and background.

Most parents probably approach the education debate with very different yet equally important questions. They ask: How can I ensure my child gets the education she deserves and reaches her potential? And, what more can the school system do to ensure she has the best chance to learn and attain the knowledge she will need to thrive when she reaches adulthood?

These are very different questions and, in the past, they have created competing goals for policymakers. Those focused on closing the achievement gap have worked primarily to address and eliminate inequities, while those most concerned with eliminating every child's "potential gap" have focused their energies on ensuring that their children get access to the best possible learning environment. This competition has created a notion that education reform debates are a zero-sum game.

This is a false choice. Moving forward, policymakers have an opportunity both to close the achievement gap and to eliminate the potential gap by harnessing the power of innovative technologies to transform the way children are able to learn.

American Education: Finally Going "Back to the Future"

For too long, American students have felt like Marty McFly.

In the classic 1980s movie "Back to the Future," Michael J. Fox portrays a teenager (Marty McFly) who uses a time machine to travel back to 1955. During his journey, Marty sees what it was like to live and attend school with his parents' generation.

Every day, when youngsters across American go back to school, they experience a very similar journey. They leave the high-tech world of 2012, where information and technology are integrated into nearly every aspect of life, and return to schools that are largely unchanged since the 1950s.

If a modern day Rip Van Winkle had gone to sleep during the Eisenhower administration and awoke today, the typical public school classroom would be one of the few areas of everyday life where he would probably feel right at home.

What is the typical public-school classroom like? Fifteen to twenty students sit in rows of desks. A teacher stands at the front of the class and presents the lesson on blackboards while students open heavy textbooks. While some computer may be present in the classroom, most instruction occurs the old fashioned way. Learning occurs mostly during school hours and depends on the talent of their teacher.

Once the school-bell rings, the typical American student returns to a "powered-on" world where information and technology are omnipresent. Most children have a computer at home and have access to a world of information where the answer to just about every question can be found with the click of a mouse. Children can choose among myriad forms of entertainment, and they control how and when they receive information.

The good news is that the gap between the "powered-off" school day and the everyday 21st-century experience is starting to close. Technological innovations are finally beginning to transform the way students learn. The various forms of digital learning—including online courses, so-called "virtual schools," and blended-learning computer-based instructions—are providing new and innovative ways for students to learn.

Today, 1.5 million American students are participating in digital (including online or virtual) learning programs.[1] This number is expected to grow dramatically in the years ahead. Clayton M. Christensen and Michael Horn, the authors of *Disrupting Class: How Disruptive Innovation Will Change the Way the World Learns,* predict 50 percent of all courses for students in grades 9–12 will be taken online by the end of the decade.[2]

Schools of the Future:
Changing Education for the Better Today

This prediction of widespread online learning might sound like a distant fantasy. While you may have trouble envisioning what a digital future would mean for American education, in some communities, the digital schools of the future are already here. They are proving to be a highly effective and popular option with a growing number of students. Consider a few examples of how technology is helping students and communities today:

Carpe Diem: Yuma, Arizona, the home of Carpe Diem, lies in the southwest corner of the state, close to the California and Mexico borders. It is the birthplace of Mexican-American civil rights leader Cesar Chavez. But Yuma may soon become known for being the birthplace of one of the model schools for the 21st century.

True to its name, Carpe Diem proudly claims to have seized the day by using the best technology available to educate its 280 students from grades 6 through 12.[3] The public charter school employs a blended-learning technique. Its "rotational" approach involves students spending a class period at a computer-desk receiving virtual instruction, and later rotating those students to traditional classrooms where they review live instruction from one of the schools "master teachers."[4] The school hires only one master teacher for each subject and relies on technology and teaching assistants to support the main instructor. The school's students are primarily low-income, yet Carpe Diem's students earned the top reading and math test scores on Arizona's state examination.[5] In 2011, Carpe Diem Academy is listed as one of *US News and World Report's* best high schools in Arizona and the nation.[6] The Innosight Institute, a nonprofit organization that analyzes innovation, reports that Carpe Diem operates at a significantly lower cost than similar schools that do not use blended-learning, thanks to both reduced labor and lower school-building costs.[7]

Khan Academy: Proponents of digital or virtual education have theorized about how the effective use of technology will enable one terrific teacher to educate millions of students across the world. Salman Khan, a Harvard educated former hedge-fund manager, is doing just that—and he may very well be the most influential teacher in the world. The man who has become known as "Bill Gates' favorite teacher" did not plan to become the world's teacher. Khan was simply trying to tutor his cousins who lived in other cities by posting short video tutorials on YouTube. His video tutorials quickly gained a following and were soon watched by thousands of students. Khan quit his finance job and launched Khan Academy.

The Academy does not have a playground, a cafeteria, or any of the frills that we typically associate with a school. But it is fast becoming one of the most popular learning websites in the world. KhanAcademy.org now offers more than 2,100 free video tutorials that, on average, attract 70,000 viewers per day. The subjects range from arithmetic to calculus, from elementary history to American government. Khan Academy also offers self-paced lessons and tracking systems for students and self-learners to track their progress. Like McDonald's boasting of its billions of hamburgers served, the Khan Academy site boasts that it has delivered 62 million lessons and counting.

Some schools around the country are beginning to use Khan Academy video tutorials to supplement or replace traditional classroom instruction. In fact, some public schools have even moved to flip the order of lessons and homework. Students are assigned to watch Khan's lectures at home, and, when they return to class, they work on problem sets to ensure that they have mastered the lesson. Unlike a traditional teacher lesson, if students do not understand it the first time, they

can simply rewind and repeat the tutorial. In this flipped lesson model, teachers—as well as students—can devote their time to providing extra instruction to students who are struggling with the lesson. The Khan Academy's tracking system provides teachers with a real-time tracking system to measure students' progress, ensuring that everyone stays on track.

Wired magazine wrote a feature story on district schools that have used Khan Academy to flip the classroom. The piece begins by introducing the reader to Matthew Carpenter, a 10-year-old student deep in the process of mastering Trigonometry.[8]

Florida Virtual School: Zach Bonner is not your typical teenager. When he was seven years old, he started a charity to help homeless children. To raise awareness, he walked from his home in Tampa to Tallahassee, Florida. He later trekked more than 1,200 miles from Florida to Washington, D.C. In 2010, he walked from Tampa to Los Angeles—covering nearly 2,500 miles! He has received presidential awards for his philanthropic efforts and has been featured on national news. With all this walking, surely more than one truancy officer has wondered whether young Zach has been keeping up with his schoolwork. But Zach does his philanthropic work during the day and completes his schoolwork in the afternoons and evenings—thanks to the Florida Virtual School (FLVS).

Launched in 1997 FLVS is the nation's largest statewide virtual school. The school's motto is "any time, any place, any path, any pace."[9] During the 2009–2010 school year, 97,000 students took courses from FLVS.[10] The school's mission is to supplement a students' traditional education by offering expanded curriculum options. The school currently offers more than 100 courses and has 1,200 staff members located in Florida and beyond. All Florida students, including homeschoolers and private school students, are eligible to attend.

FLVS is designed to provide students with a flexible and customized learning experience, while maintaining regular interaction with teachers.[11] Though instruction occurs online and students have little to no face-to-face interaction with teachers, teachers are required to engage students and facilitate interactions regularly. Teachers are also required to be on-call from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. on weekdays and weekends to provide feedback to students working at their own pace. While no control-group study has been conducted evaluating FLVS, a comparison of average test scores on advanced placement exams found FLVS students outperformed the Florida average.[12]

Common Forms of Digital Learning

Statewide Virtual Schools. Statewide virtual schools currently exist in 39 states.[13] These programs are generally supplementary, serving students by offering additional courses to supplement their coursework in traditional schools. The Evergreen Education Group reports that statewide virtual schools had 450,000 course enrollments during the 2009–2010 school year.[14] The Florida Virtual School—widely considered the national model for state virtual schools—accounted for nearly half of these courses, with a total of 214,000 course enrollments and 97,000 students enrolled in at least one course.[15]

Full-Time Online Schools. Another growing form of virtual education is full-time online schools, where students learn almost entirely from home without attending a traditional brick-and-mortar school. According to the Evergreen Education Group, 27 states and Washington, D.C., offer full-time online schools.[16] Approximately 200,000 students are now enrolled in these full-time virtual schools.[17]

Blended-Learning Schools. According to the Innosight Institute, most of the growth occurring in the online learning sector is through blended-learning like at Carpe Diem Academy in Yuma, Arizona.[18] The Innosight Institute defines blended-learning as: "any time a student learns at least part at a supervised brick-and-mortar location away from home *and* at least in part through online delivery with some element of student control over time, place, path, and/or pace."[19]

Digital Learning: An Emerging Education Reform Success Story

Carpe Diem, Khan Academy, and FLVS are three examples of the innovative educational models using digital learning to improve the way that children learn. Across the country, a growing number of states, school districts, and schools are enacting digital-learning programs.

A majority of states, school districts, and many schools are beginning to introduce policies and programs that create new online-learning options for students. As of October 2010,

the International Association for K–12 Online Learning (iNACOL) reported that students in 48 states and Washington, D.C., can take advantage of supplemental or full-time online learning programs.[20] Thirty-eight states have virtual schools or state online learning initiatives.[21] Twenty-seven states and the District of Columbia offer full-time online schools serving students statewide and 20 states provide both supplemental and full-time virtual learning options to students statewide.[22] In addition to these statewide programs, a majority of school districts now have one or more students participating in some form of online learning.[23]

It's easy to understand why online, virtual, or digital learning programs are spreading so quickly across the country. They are proving effective in boosting students' academic achievement. They are providing students with a flexible, and more enjoyable and motivating learning environment. These programs are also creating new opportunities for teachers, and have the promise to transform the teaching profession. And they are accomplishing this at a significant cost savings to taxpayers, a fact worth underscoring in this age of widespread government budget deficits.

Improving Academic Achievement. Empirical evidence, as well as the practical experience with success stories like those mentioned above, is showing that digital learning programs can be effective in improving students' academic achievement. For example, the U.S. Department of Education published in 2009 a meta-analysis of evidence-based studies of online-learning programs. The meta-analysis included a review of 44 studies evaluating post-secondary students and seven studies of K–12 students. The Department of Education report concluded that, "students who took all or part of their class online performed better, on average, than those taking the same course through traditional face-to-face instruction."[24]

We emphasize that the findings of this meta-analysis need to be interpreted with caution because many of the studies evaluated higher education programs, rather than K–12 education, which is the focus of this book. But with this emerging empirical evidence, as well as the many examples of terrific virtual schools and digital learning programs, policymakers should be confident that creating new online learning options for students can enable new learning models and boost academic achievement.

Practical Benefits for Students. Improving the Learning Experience. Digital learning also offers many potential practical benefits to students that go beyond just boosting test scores. Technology gives students the opportunity to learn in a more flexible, customized setting that supports the unique learning style of the individual student. They also make it possible for students to have the chance to learn from better teachers than those at their public schools and to explore new subjects that may not be offered in their local school system. Students who have fallen behind in school have the chance to catch up without the social stigma of repeating a grade by taking courses they have missed or failed to master. Online-learning opportunities can be particularly critical for students struggling at the local school—such as those who face safety or social challenges—giving them the chance to learn from home without the worries that otherwise might affect their regular school experience.

Digital or online learning also could help change the basic structure of the grade system, which currently dictates how students proceed through school to higher levels. Instead of having the pace of learning dictated by twenty other kids assigned to a child's classroom based on birthdates that qualify for a given grade, students would advance to higher levels as they master subjects, potentially learning far more than they otherwise would. Similarly, customized learning programs can allow for real-time monitoring and tracking of a student's progress, so we move beyond monitoring seat time to mastery and knowledge attainment. This will help ensure that students who are not learning necessary skills repeat lessons or coursework, and, if necessary, receive additional instruction. Again, this repetition will be a personal process sparing students any negative association with the idea of failing or being held back.

Perhaps most importantly from a student perspective, online learning has the potential to make school and learning a more enjoyable and fulfilling experience for many. As the authors of *Disrupting Class* explain in their report, "Rethinking Student Motivation: Why Understanding the Job is Crucial for Improving Education," students' mission with

school and learning diverges from adults.[25] Adults want schools to teach students needed skills; children want to have fun with their friends and feel successful. As the authors explain, digital learning is a promising model for accomplishing the important goal of helping children feel successful. They write that "by the very nature of software, achievement can be integrated with the delivery of content in ways that help students feel successful while they learn, every day. Often this comes in the form of reviews or examinations that are built into the software, which require students to demonstrate mastery before they can move to the next body of material. Feedback can be delivered frequently and in bite-sized pieces, as necessary, to help each student feel successful."[26]

Making learning fun is more than just a way to make kids happier in the short-term; it is also key to encouraging more learning. Customized learning will enable kids to find ways to get needed skills in ways that make sense for them, and without false competition with their peers. With more confidence, they should be inspired to try more and learn more, which can cascade into higher educational attainment.

Benefits for Teachers. Online-learning programs can be structured to benefit teachers, by creating more flexible, and potentially rewarding, career paths. Technology can be harnessed in such a way that allows teachers to focus on the reason they are put in classrooms: to teach. As Terry M. Moe and John E. Chubb write in *Liberating Learning,* online learning frees teachers "from their tradition-bound classroom roles, employed in more differentiated paths and productive ways, and offered new career paths."[27]

This new flexibility could also improve teacher quality—which research shows is critical to student achievement. By using virtual learning programs to supplement or replace some traditional instruction, schools can reduce the number of teachers, and increase pay for remaining teachers—ideally retaining those who are most effective. Also by creating new paradigms for teaching, online-learning programs have the potential to attract new teachers to the workforce who may otherwise not choose teaching. Salman Kahn, for example, did not have a teaching degree, yet he has proven to be a highly effective, popular teacher. Online learning could open the door for more education entrepreneurs with the potential to make a significant impact and to be justly compensated when they succeed in improving student learning.

Improving Efficiency and Lowering Government Costs. Around the country, states and localities are trying to do more with less. Many lament the need to cut spending on education, wrongly assuming that more money is the key to student achievement. The good news is that increasing the use of information technology to support or provide instruction can significantly improve efficiency and lower governments' costs for teaching students.

As Moe and Chubb write, "schools can be operated at lower cost, relying more on technology (which is relatively cheap) and less on labor (which is relatively expensive)."[28] Moe and Chubb estimate the fiscal impact of replacing some traditional instruction with technologies like online learning, they write: "If elementary students spend but one hour a day learning electronically, certified staff could be reduced by a sixth. At the middle school level, two hours a day with computers would reduce staff requirements by a third. High schools, with three hours of usage, could reduce staff by up to a half."[29] In addition to relieving budget pressures, these savings could be reinvested to improve teacher quality through higher pay and more training or through other mechanisms.

The potential for savings is not a theoretical concept anymore. There are already real-world examples of how online learning reduces costs for public education. An analysis of FLVS reveals the government spends $1,048 less per FLVS student than on each student attending a traditional school. This is a significant underestimate of the savings created for taxpayers because the analysis did not consider the additional costs for school facilities and maintenance that support brick-and-mortar public schools.[30]

Digital Learning and Narrowing Achievement Gaps

For policymakers, digital learning is a promising reform strategy for many reasons, including those outlined above. But what is particularly exciting is digital-learning models can help all children, and can be a win-win for two of the key education reform assignments on our elected representatives' homework list.

Frequently Asked Questions about Digital Learning

1. What is digital learning? Digital learning is any program that harnesses technology to help kids learn. The primary vehicle for digital learning is the computer, which allows students to access a variety of curriculum, skill building applications, and teachers.

2. How do digital programs work? Programs can be comprehensive—replacing traditional classrooms entirely—or supplemental to a child's traditional classroom experience. Some students attend full-time online or virtual schools. These students do not attend traditional brick-and-mortar schools and learn almost entirely online. Supplemental programs offer students the chance to take individual courses in an online setting to complement their traditional coursework. For example, a high school student who wants to take a class unavailable at his or her school could enroll in an online learning program in that subject. Some online learning programs are called hybrid or blended-learning programs; these use technology to provide instruction within the traditional school setting. In a blended-learning program, a student typically spends several hours each day learning by sitting at a computer (with a teacher supervising the children and providing instruction when needed). The rest of the school day is spent in a traditional classroom with traditional teacher instruction.

3. Do children interact with live teachers? Is there a set schedule? There are a variety of arrangements that can be used in distance learning programs. Students can participate in online learning through either synchronous or asynchronous instruction. In the former, students receive instruction and interact with their teacher in real time. In asynchronous instruction, students learn at their own pace and on their own schedule, while teachers provide regular feedback by grading their assignments and answering questions. In both settings, online learning programs generally require consistent communication between students and teachers via email, phone, instant messaging, and video conferencing. In blended-learning, students learn using a computer while a teacher serves as a coach or advisor, physically present and monitoring each student's progress.

4. Where do children go for digital learning programs? Online-learning programs can be based entirely at home, partially at home, or take place in a traditional brick-and-mortar school, as in the case of a blended-learning school setting. Similarly, online-learning programs vary in their geographic reach—ranging from school-based programs unique to an individual school to statewide (or even national or global learning programs) that allow students from many different locations to learn in the same setting. The vast reach of online learning programs raises interesting jurisdictional questions. While American schools are traditionally governed primarily by localities or school districts, and secondarily by state governments, online-learning programs have the potential to supersede these traditional jurisdictional lines.

5. Can children of all ages participate? Online-learning program can serve students of all ages and backgrounds. However, most full time online learning programs focus on serving older students and high schoolers. A 2008 survey of school district administrators reported that an estimated 64 percent of students participating in full-time online learning programs were in high school, compared to 21 percent in elementary school and 15 percent in middle school (grades 6–8).[31] But online learning programs can be tailored to serve specific student populations of all ages.

6. Why do schools offer digital or online learning programs? Besides serving students of all ages, online learning programs can be tailored to students of all levels, from students seeking coursework more advanced than is provided at the local school to students who are at risk of dropping out and who need online-learning programs to catch up and recover missed credits. This diversity was evident in a 2008 survey of school district administrators that found each of the following reasons for offering online learning was important for their school system: "Offering courses not otherwise available at the school;" "Meeting the needs of specific groups of students;" "Offering Advanced Placement or college-level courses;" and "Permitting students who failed a course to take it again."[32]

This chapter began with a discussion of how narrowing the achievement gap between certain student groups and eliminating every child's potential gap—ensuring all children reach their potential—can at times be competing objectives. Consider perhaps the best-known education reform law of our time—No Child Left Behind or NCLB as it is often called.

NCLB focused on the admirable goal of ensuring that all children reach grade-level on reading and mathematics tests. The law focused the most attention on those needing the greatest assistance, but NCLB was not geared to significantly improving the achievement of those kids who were never at risk of being left behind.

What is particularly exciting about digital-learning programs and reforms is that they can benefit children across the learning spectrum. They can simultaneously work to narrow and eliminate the achievement gap, while also helping more children reach their learning potential.

First, blended-learning and digital-learning schools can provide a customized educational experience—teaching students at their own pace,

allowing students to advance as they learn, and providing teachers with ongoing and immediate opportunities to provide remediation by assisting students who are not passing their lessons.

Second, customizing each child's learning experience can make a much more effective use of time—using more hours of the school day and increasing the "time on task" for students learning at their own pace.

Third, since blended-learning schools increase efficiency (educating students at lower costs since they use computer technology to provide a large portion of the instruction), schools like Rocketship charter schools and Carpe Diem Academy are in the position to dramatically increase teacher quality by doing things like hiring "master teachers" and attracting more exceptionally talented people into the classroom. Education researchers have identified strengthening teacher quality as a key factor affecting student achievement. School models designed to reduce costs by effectively using technology while dramatically increasing teacher pay to hire extremely effective instructors surely holds promise for dramatically improving teacher quality.[33]

Digital Learning and Eliminating Children's Potential Gaps

We education policy "wonks" get excited about reforms that offer promise for solving critical national challenges, like the achievement gap, and creating a more equitable society where all children get the opportunity to learn. But surely most parents—and probably most voters—have more practical considerations in their mind when their thoughts turn to education and the condition of schools in their communities. Thoughts like: Is my daughter getting the education that she deserves? Is her teacher doing a good job? Is she getting ahead, or is she at risk of falling behind? How can I do more to ensure that she has everything she needs to succeed in life?

In short, parents are rightly concerned about their children and whether or not they are being given the opportunity to reach their potential. Digital learning and the effective use of technology to improve learning offers tremendous promise for benefitting every child—and ensuring that all children have the opportunity to reach their potential. Consider just three reasons why this is the case.

First, the various forms of digital learning offers a more customized educational experience—one tailored to a child's knowledge level and unique learning style. While the traditional instructional model requires a teacher to address classroom lessons to an audience of 15–20 students, digital-learning programs—from computer-based, blended-learning to home-based virtual courses—can provide lessons customized to an individual student's level and learning style. Computer-based instruction can also provide teachers with more time to provide one-on-one instruction, supplementing digital learning.

Second, digital learning provides a more immediate monitoring system and safety-net to ensure students stay on track and reach their potential in each class or grade level. In the past, standardized tests have been used on a semi-annual or annual basis to track students' performance and ensure they remain on grade level. While valuable, standardized-tests often provide feedback too late for teachers to correct problems in a child's education. Digital learning programs are generally designed to provide much more frequent, and in some cases, real-time monitoring of a child's progress. An immediate diagnosis of a problem allows teachers and parents to work quickly to fix problems before they create real setbacks or roadblocks for a child's future learning.

Third, digital-learning programs remove the artificial limits that geography and calendars have placed on learning. Historically, the quality and scope of a child's education has been largely dictated by the quality and population of the teachers at the school, which all too often has been decided by a child's ZIP code and whether their parents had the financial means to enroll them in a good school.

Thanks to digital learning, practical geographical constraints will no longer artificially limit students' opportunities. Students will be able to learn essentially anything from anyone anywhere. Teenagers attending high schools that previously lacked a physics teacher will be able to learn from the best physics teachers in the country. Students wanting to learn a foreign language will no longer be limited by the choices offered at school. You can imagine the many ways removing these practical constraints will dramatically

improve students learning opportunities and allow more children to reach their potential.

Similarly, digital-learning programs end the tyranny of seat-time and the school calendar. For too long, the process of American schooling has been to move children from point A to point B, based on their age and grade-level. By ending the focus on seat-time—potentially even grade-levels as the markers tracking students' progress—digital-learning programs can allow students to chart and follow an educational journey based on individual progress. This progress can happen basically anytime (including after the last school bell of the day rings, and after summer vacation begins). It is easy to envision how a more customized educational experience could provide students with greater opportunities to progress and learn than the old-fashioned factory approach to schooling.

On the "Digital Learning Now" Initiative

We share a vision for education in America.

Our vision is an education that maximizes every child's potential for learning, prepares every child with the knowledge and skills to succeed in college and careers, and launches every child into the world with the ability to pursue his or her dreams.

Digital learning can customize and personalize education so that all students learn in their own style at their own pace, which maximizes their chances for success in school and beyond. With digital learning, every student—from rural communities to inner cities—can access high quality and rigorous courses in every subject, including foreign languages, math, and science.

—Former Governors Jeb Bush and Bob Wise, December 1, 2010

Homework for Policymakers: Accelerating Digital Learning

Despite the growing number of success stories, and growing popularity, digital learning remains a relatively new phenomenon in American education. Fortunately, policymakers who wish to accelerate the arrival of the exciting digital learning future of American education have a detailed roadmap to follow.

In 2010, a bipartisan coalition of education reformers—led by former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush and former West Virginia Gov. Bob Wise—formed the Digital Learning Council, an advocacy organization with the mission of promoting high-quality digital learning programs across the country. Their white paper, *Digital Learning Now,* provides the following policy guidelines for "10 Elements of High-Quality Digital Learning."[34]

Expanding Access to Digital Learning: Growing Supply, Creating Demand

To summarize the Digital Learning Now reform recommendations, policymakers should push a two-pronged approach to transform their states' education systems to facilitate high-quality digital learning. First, they must work to expand the supply of high-quality digital-learning programs.

10 Elements of High-Quality Digital Learning

1. **Student Eligibility:** All students are digital learners
2. **Student Access:** All students have access to high quality digital content and online courses.
3. **Personalized Learning:** All students can customize their education using digital content through an approved provider.
4. **Advancement:** Students progress based on demonstrated competency.
5. **Content:** Digital content, instructional materials and online and blended learning courses are high quality.
6. **Instruction:** Digital instruction and teachers are high quality.
7. **Providers:** All students have access to multiple high quality providers.
8. **Assessment and Accountability:** Student learning is the metric for evaluating the quality of content and instruction.
9. **Funding:** Funding creates incentives for performance, options, and innovation.
10. **Delivery:** Infrastructure supports digital learning.

Second, they must create demand by giving families the power to choose the best education possible, including digital learning options.

The former can be accomplished by reforming state policies to facilitate more digital learning programs. For example, every state should enact a statewide virtual school or digital learning initiative to give students the opportunity to take advantage of online learning. FLVS, which currently serves the most students in the country, could be a model for other successful statewide online-learning initiatives. Yet policymakers should think broader and work to eclipse the FLVS' success by creating even better statewide virtual-school initiatives with expansive course options for students.

In addition, every state should establish multidistrict, full-time virtual-school options. Successful virtual schools, like PA Cyber, have proven to be a very popular option for families. Policymakers in each state should reform their policies to ensure that high-quality full-time virtual schools are an option for students across their states.

Creating the supply of virtual learning, while critical, is only a part of the battle. To expedite the transition to an American education system where all students have the opportunity to benefit from a digital, customized education, policymakers will need to empower parents to choose the best learning environment for their children.

Within the traditional framework of digital-learning policies, reforms focusing on the demand-side of the digital-learning equation should work to expand access to digital learning or virtual school programs and break down artificial barriers that hinder students' access.

For example, state education funding formulas should be reformed to ensure that students have the option of enrolling in a virtual school. In too many states, the decision regarding whether a child can enroll in a virtual school is not in the hands of parents. Instead, school and school district officials make these decisions. This must change.

Looking to the future, policymakers should explore new approaches to funding education, and consider how best to give parents the maximum freedom and power to control and customize their children's education to provide the best learning environments. This can be done bytransferring real control over how a student's share of public education spending is spent on his or her behalf, including by securing access to high-quality digital learning programs. Ultimately, giving parents real power to choose their children's learning environment is the key to creating real demand and ensuring access to virtual learning.

Readers of this book are surely familiar with the various student-centered funding mechanisms that can be used to give parents this power: such as, school vouchers or scholarship programs for private schools, tuition or scholarship tax credits for private schools, strong charter school laws, and "follow-the-child" school funding formulas to enable choice within the traditional public school system. We think all of these policies offer great promise for expanding choice and, ultimately, facilitating real demand and widespread access to high-quality digital learning.

In our view, however, a new policy mechanism may offer an even better approach to giving parents real control of their children's public education dollars and create real demand for high-quality digital learning: state-funded education savings accounts (ESAs).

In 2011, Arizona became the first state in the nation to offer a state-funded ESA program. Specifically, Gov. Jan Brewer signed into law SB1553, legislation that will require the state to deposit 90 percent of the state aid that would be spent on a child's education in an "Arizona Empowerment Account."[35] To be eligible, students must be eligible for special education services and, to receive an account, families must agree to not enroll their child in public school, therefore taking control over the responsibility for their child's education. Online education programs constitute one of the allowable uses for the program, which also includes private school tuition, tutoring, and saving money for college as allowable uses. The goal of the ESA program is to give parents full control over the education of their children—down to the last penny.

Creating widespread access to state-funded ESAs could provide families with real control over their children's education and offer valuable flexibility to customize a learning program for their children. In essence, a system of

state-funded ESAs would let parents control their children's share of education funding (approximately $10,000 annually across the country) and allow the family to purchase the best possible programs and learning environments to suit a child's specific needs.

State-funded ESAs would be particularly well suited to the quickly approaching world of digital learning by providing families with an incentive to shop for competing education programs and enroll their children in those programs that provide the most value, since ESA programs allow families to save unspent resources in their child's account for use in later years (or ultimately to pay for their children's college tuition).[36]

Why Online Learning is a Political Winner

However policymakers choose to move forward in providing access to more high-quality digital learning programs (by expanding supply and creating demand by empowering parents), they should be confident they are pursuing a potentially game-changing reform that should appeal to a broad and diverse coalition of parents and constituents.

What supporters of digital learning are offering, quite simply, is to modernize our system of educating children and bring it into the 21st- century where technology is being used to improve most aspects of everyday life. While teachers unions and other special interest groups have succeeded in blocking other parent-centered reforms in the past, the digital learning revolution will force them to try to prevent American schooling from benefitting from the technological innovations we see in nearly every other aspect of our lives.

By advocating for digital learning, reformers will be championing progress, innovation, and ultimately a better system of learning that, in ways large or small, are likely to improve ever child's educational opportunities. History should judge advocates of digital learning as the visionaries who delivered a better future. We cannot imagine a better side of an education policy debate to be on.

Conclusion: Once More to the Breach, Dear Friends

While the 2010–2011 legislative sessions marked the most exciting period in the history of education reform, any triumphalism must be resisted. We must remember that the average low-income student in America still sits in a school determined by their ZIP code, and with teachers who are neither rewarded for excellence nor dismissed for ineffectiveness. The state "accountability" system overseeing the average child's school is using a test far below international benchmarks, and using fuzzy labels to obscure academic reality. America still suffers appalling gaps and low levels of achievement despite spending levels which are the envy of our European and Asian rivals. Far more remains undone than has been done to date.

The victories of 2010 and 2011 demonstrate that reformers can win, but hardly guarantee victories in the future. The school reform movement has nothing to offer you but toil, sweat, tears and *now* the prospect of victory for students, parents and taxpayers.

With your help, we mean to hold our own.

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35. Arizona State Legislature, SB1553, "Education Arizona Empowerment Accounts," available at http://www.azleg.gov/DocumentsForBill.asp?Bill_Number=SB1553&Session_ID=102 (accessed April 18, 2011).
36. See Matthew Ladner and Nick Dranias, "Education Savings Accounts: Giving Parents Control of Their Children's Education," The Goldwater Institute Policy Brief, January 28, 2011, available at http://goldwaterinstitute.org/article/5643. Ibid.

TABLE 5 | **Ranking States by Achievement and Gains of Free and Reduced-Price Lunch-Eligible General Population Students on the NAEP 4th- and 8th-Grade Reading and Math Exams, 2003-2011**

Rank	Jurisdiction
1	Massachusetts
2	Vermont
3	New Jersey
4	Colorado
5	Pennsylvania
6	Rhode Island
7	North Carolina
8	Kansas
9	New Hampshire
10	New York
11	Texas
12	Florida
13	Hawaii
14	Maine
15	Nevada
16	Montana
17	Indiana
18	Minnesota
19	Wisconsin
20	Maryland
21	Ohio
22	Delaware
23	Wyoming
24	District of Columbia
25	Washington
26	Virginia
27	Georgia
28	Illinois
29	Idaho
30	California
31	Iowa
32	Alaska
33	North Dakota
34	Alabama
35	New Mexico
36	Arizona
37	Kentucky
38	South Dakota
39	Connecticut
40	Oregon
41	Utah
42	Nebraska
43	Oklahoma
44	Tennessee
45	Arkansas
46	Michigan
47	Missouri
48	Mississippi
49	Louisiana
50	South Carolina
51	West Virginia

TABLE 6 | **State Education Policy Grades**

Grade	Jurisdiction	Numeric Score
A-	Missouri	3.500
B+	Florida	3.250
B+	Minnesota	3.167
B	Arizona	2.917
B	California	3.083
B	Colorado	3.000
B	District of Columbia	2.917
B	Georgia	2.833
B	Indiana	3.000
B	New Mexico	2.833
B	Ohio	2.833
B	Oklahoma	2.917
B	Utah	2.917
B-	Alaska	2.500
B-	Idaho	2.500
B-	Louisiana	2.583
B-	Massachusetts	2.583
B-	Michigan	2.667
B-	New Jersey	2.583
B-	Wisconsin	2.750
C+	Connecticut	2.333
C+	Delaware	2.167
C+	Hawaii	2.417
C+	Illinois	2.333
C+	Nevada	2.167
C+	New Hampshire	2.250
C+	Pennsylvania	2.250
C+	South Carolina	2.333
C+	Texas	2.417
C+	Wyoming	2.167
C	Arkansas	2.083
C	Kentucky	1.833
C	Mississippi	1.833
C	Montana	2.000
C	North Carolina	2.083
C	Oregon	2.083
C	Rhode Island	2.000
C	Tennessee	1.917
C	Washington	1.917
C-	Iowa	1.667
C-	Kansas	1.583
C-	Maine	1.750
C-	Maryland	1.583
C-	New York	1.583
C-	South Dakota	1.500
C-	Virginia	1.500
D+	Alabama	1.417
D+	Nebraska	1.167
D+	North Dakota	1.167
D+	Vermont	1.333
D+	West Virginia	1.417

TABLE 7 | **2011 NAEP Scores for Low-Income Students**
(Non-IEP, Non-ELL) Average scores (0-500) and rank (1-51)

Jurisdiction	4th-Grade Reading Score	Rank	4th-Grade Math Score	Rank	8th-Grade Reading Score	Rank	8th-Grade Math Score	Rank
Alabama	214	35	226	49	254	46	262	50
Alaska	213	40	235	33	259	33	283	14
Arizona	213	39	234	37	255	43	273	38
Arkansas	215	34	234	35	257	39	275	33
California	212	42	234	39	256	41	272	41
Colorado	222	7	241	8	264	11	283	12
Connecticut	216	31	230	44	263	13	271	43
Delaware	219	16	236	27	262	20	277	25
District of Columbia	199	51	218	51	244	51	260	51
Florida	223	4	237	22	260	27	273	39
Georgia	213	38	231	41	256	42	271	42
Hawaii	212	44	238	21	257	38	279	18
Idaho	220	15	237	24	265	7	282	16
Illinois	213	41	230	45	261	26	276	30
Indiana	219	19	238	17	261	23	278	22
Iowa	218	24	240	9	264	10	279	19
Kansas	222	8	243	5	263	15	284	9
Kentucky	217	25	235	32	262	18	274	35
Louisiana	210	47	228	46	252	49	270	45
Maine	220	10	243	4	267	5	286	5
Maryland	217	27	235	34	255	44	270	47
Massachusetts	226	1	247	2	267	4	290	1
Michigan	211	45	227	48	258	35	270	44
Minnesota	218	23	243	6	265	6	285	8
Mississippi	206	50	225	50	249	50	262	49
Missouri	214	37	234	40	262	19	274	37
Montana	220	14	239	11	269	2	289	2
National Public	216		235		259		276	
Nebraska	219	17	234	38	263	16	275	34
Nevada	214	36	235	30	257	36	275	31
New Hampshire	225	2	247	1	265	8	286	7
New Jersey	220	12	239	15	261	22	284	10
New Mexico	210	46	234	36	257	37	275	32
New York	222	6	237	25	264	9	278	24
North Carolina	218	21	239	13	259	30	280	17
North Dakota	220	9	239	16	261	24	283	11
Ohio	216	32	238	19	260	29	279	21
Oklahoma	217	26	235	31	261	25	274	36
Oregon	219	18	236	28	262	17	279	20
Pennsylvania	220	13	237	23	259	31	276	29
Rhode Island	220	11	238	18	260	28	277	28
South Carolina	210	48	231	42	253	48	272	40
South Dakota	216	30	236	26	264	12	283	13
Tennessee	209	49	228	47	253	47	266	48
Texas	215	33	239	12	258	34	286	4
Utah	218	20	239	10	261	21	277	26
Vermont	224	3	245	3	271	1	288	3
Virginia	216	29	235	29	257	40	277	27
Washington	218	22	239	14	263	14	283	15
West Virginia	212	43	231	43	255	45	270	46
Wisconsin	216	28	238	20	259	32	278	23
Wyoming	222	5	242	7	267	3	286	6

TABLE 8 | **Change in NAEP Scores for Low-Income Students from 2003 to 2011**
(Non-IEP, Non-ELL) Average scores (0-500) and rank (1-51)

Jurisdiction	Change in 4th-Grade Reading Scores	Improvement Rank	Change in 4th-Grade Math Scores	Improvement Rank
Alabama	14.4	3	8.8	25
Alaska	5.7	26	5.3	43
Arizona	8.7	15	9.7	18
Arkansas	4.7	32	8.8	27
California	11.2	7	9.9	17
Colorado	5.2	29	13.9	5
Connecticut	5.3	28	7.1	35
Delaware	5.5	27	7.6	33
District of Columbia	12.6	5	14.8	4
Florida	10.2	8	9.7	20
Georgia	9.1	13	8.9	23
Hawaii	6.0	25	15.6	3
Idaho	2.8	42	4.2	45
Illinois	6.7	23	8.8	24
Indiana	8.5	16	9.9	16
Iowa	2.1	44	6.2	39
Kansas	9.7	10	8.3	30
Kentucky	5.0	31	11.3	12
Louisiana	8.4	17	4.4	44
Maine	1.4	46	9.7	19
Maryland	14.7	2	16.9	1
Massachusetts	9.6	11	15.9	2
Michigan	7.3	20	6.1	40
Minnesota	1.1	48	10.5	15
Mississippi	8.4	18	8.6	28
Missouri	2.3	43	7.1	34
Montana	4.4	35	6.3	38
National public	7.9		9.0	
Nebraska	4.3	36	5.4	42
Nevada	12.7	4	12.3	8
New Hampshire	7.0	21	10.9	14
New Jersey	12.3	6	12.4	7
New Mexico	3.6	40	9.0	21
New York	10.1	9	7.6	32
North Carolina	7.9	19	7.9	31
North Dakota	3.3	41	3.7	47
Ohio	5.2	30	11.6	11
Oklahoma	4.2	38	8.6	29
Oregon	4.6	34	1.2	51
Pennsylvania	15.3	1	13.6	6
Rhode Island	9.3	12	12.3	9
South Carolina	4.2	37	2.7	49
South Dakota	-1.5	50	3.2	48
Tennessee	6.8	22	8.9	22
Texas	4.6	33	6.0	41
Utah	-0.7	49	6.4	37
Vermont	6.1	24	11.9	10
Virginia	9.1	14	8.8	26
Washington	1.7	45	7.1	36
West Virginia	-2.3	51	1.8	50
Wisconsin	3.9	39	10.9	13
Wyoming	1.3	47	3.8	46

Jurisdiction	Change in 8th-Grade Reading Scores	Improvement Rank	Change in 8th-Grade Math Scores	Improvement Rank
Alabama	5.6	22	7.6	31
Alaska	6.7	9	9.7	23
Arizona	3.4	32	7.5	32
Arkansas	0.4	48	8.8	26
California	3.6	30	9.7	22
Colorado	6.6	10	13.5	9
Connecticut	11.1	2	4.0	44
Delaware	5.4	23	10.1	21
District of Columbia	7.4	7	19.7	2
Florida	6.2	19	8.1	29
Georgia	6.1	20	13.9	6
Hawaii	6.2	18	16.6	4
Idaho	1.6	44	5.3	41
Illinois	6.5	11	12.0	15
Indiana	5.1	24	5.8	39
Iowa	3.2	33	2.9	47
Kansas	3.0	36	7.7	30
Kentucky	1.7	43	7.0	35
Louisiana	3.1	34	8.6	27
Maine	2.3	38	12.0	13
Maryland	6.3	16	9.0	24
Massachusetts	6.7	8	20.5	1
Michigan	7.5	6	7.5	33
Minnesota	8.2	4	3.7	45
Mississippi	1.3	45	10.4	19
Missouri	3.7	29	4.4	42
Montana	4.5	25	7.4	34
National public	4.9		10.1	
Nebraska	2.3	39	3.1	46
Nevada	7.9	5	12.6	10
New Hampshire	0.6	46	8.1	28
New Jersey	5.7	21	18.7	3
New Mexico	6.3	15	11.8	16
New York	6.4	12	6.7	36
North Carolina	8.3	3	11.0	17
North Dakota	-4.9	50	-0.4	51
Ohio	4.3	26	10.6	18
Oklahoma	1.8	41	6.5	37
Oregon	0.5	47	4.2	43
Pennsylvania	4.0	27	12.0	14
Rhode Island	6.3	14	13.8	7
South Carolina	2.9	37	6.2	38
South Dakota	-4.9	51	2.7	48
Tennessee	3.7	28	10.3	20
Texas	6.3	17	15.5	5
Utah	1.9	40	1.9	49
Vermont	11.5	1	13.6	8
Virginia	1.8	42	12.1	12
Washington	3.6	31	8.8	25
West Virginia	-1.9	49	1.3	50
Wisconsin	6.4	13	12.6	11
Wyoming	3.0	35	5.6	40

TABLE 9 | **Education Policy Grade Components**

Jurisdiction	State Academic Standards	Change in State Academic Standards	Charter School Law	Charter School Grade	Home-school Regulation Burden	Private School Choice	"A" Grade or Multiple Programs
Alabama	F	Lowered	No		B		
Alaska	C	Raised	Yes	D	A		
Arizona	D+	Lowered	Yes	B	B	Yes	Yes
Arkansas	C-	Lowered	Yes	D	C		
California	C	Lowered	Yes	A	B		
Colorado	B-	Raised	Yes	B	C	Yes	
Connecticut	C	Raised	Yes	D	A		
Delaware	C-	Lowered	Yes	C	B		
District of Columbia	C	Raised	Yes	A	C	Yes	
Florida	C	Lowered	Yes	B	C	Yes	Yes
Georgia	C-	Raised	Yes	C	C	Yes	Yes
Hawaii	A	Raised	Yes	D	C		
Idaho	D+	Raised	Yes	C	A		
Illinois	D	Lowered	Yes	D	A	Yes	
Indiana	C	Raised	Yes	B	A	Yes	
Iowa	C-	Raised	Yes	F	C	Yes	
Kansas	C-	Lowered	Yes	F	B		
Kentucky	C	Lowered	No		B		
Louisiana	C-	Lowered	Yes	C	C	Yes	Yes
Maine	B	Lowered	No		C	Yes	
Maryland	D+	Lowered	Yes	D	C		
Massachusetts	A	Raised	Yes	C	D		
Michigan	D	Lowered	Yes	B	A		
Minnesota	B	(New)	Yes	A	C	Yes	
Mississippi	C	Lowered	Yes	F	B		
Missouri	A	Raised	Yes	B	A		
Montana	B	Raised	No		A		
Nebraska	F	Lowered	No		B		
Nevada	C	Raised	Yes	C	B		
New Hampshire	B+	(New)	Yes	D	C		
New Jersey	B	Raised	Yes	C	A		
New Mexico	A	Raised	Yes	C	B		
New York	D	Lowered	Yes	B	D		
North Carolina	C	Raised	Yes	D	C	Yes	
North Dakota	C	Lowered	No		D		
Ohio	C	Lowered	Yes	C	C		Yes
Oklahoma	C	Raised	Yes	C	A	Yes	Yes
Oregon	C-	Lowered	Yes	C	C		
Pennsylvania	C	Lowered	Yes	B	D	Yes	
Rhode Island	B	Raised	Yes	D	D	Yes	
South Carolina	C-	Lowered	Yes	C	C		
South Dakota	C	Raised	No		C		
Tennessee	F	Lowered	Yes	C	C		
Texas	D	Raised	Yes	D	A		
Utah	C+	Raised	Yes	B	B	Yes	
Vermont	B+	Raised	No		D		
Virginia	D+	Raised	Yes	F	C		
Washington	A	Raised	No		C		
West Virginia	C	Raised	No		C		
Wisconsin	C	Raised	Yes	C	B	Yes	
Wyoming	C	Lowered	Yes	D	B		

Jurisdiction	Overall Teacher Quality and Policies Grade	Delivering Well Prepared Teachers	Expanding the Teaching Pool	Identifying Effective Teachers	Retaining Effective Teachers	Exiting Ineffective Teachers	State Virtual School or State Online Learning Initiative	Multi-District Full-Time Online School
Alabama	C-	C-	C+	D	C-	C-	Yes	No
Alaska	D	F	C-	D-	C	D+	Yes	Yes
Arizona	D+	D	C-	D	D+	C-	No	Yes
Arkansas	C-	C-	B	D	C	C-	Yes	Yes
California	D+	C	D+	D-	C+	D-	Yes	Yes
Colorado	D+	D-	D+	D-	C-	B-	Yes	Yes
Connecticut	D+	C	B-	D+	F	C-	Yes	No
Delaware	D	F	C+	D	C-	D	No	No
District of Columbia	D-	D	D+	F	D-	D+	Yes	Yes
Florida	C	C	B-	C-	C	C	Yes	Yes
Georgia	C-	C	B-	D+	D	C	Yes	Yes
Hawaii	D-	D-	F	D	D	D	Yes	Yes
Idaho	D-	D	D	D-	D+	F	Yes	Yes
Illinois	D+	D	D+	D	D	B	Yes	No
Indiana	D	D	D+	D	D+	F	No	Yes
Iowa	D	D	D	D	C-	D+	Yes	No
Kansas	D-	D+	F	D	C-	F	No	Yes
Kentucky	D+	D+	C	D+	C-	F	Yes	No
Louisiana	C-	C+	C	D+	C	C-	Yes	Yes
Maine	F	F	F	F	C-	F	Yes	No
Maryland	D	D-	C+	D-	C-	F	Yes	No
Massachusetts	D+	C+	C	D-	D+	D	Yes	Yes
Michigan	D-	D	F	D-	C-	D	Yes	Yes
Minnesota	D-	D	D-	D	C-	F	Yes	Yes
Mississippi	D+	C	C	D	D	C	Yes	No
Missouri	D	C-	D-	D+	D	D-	Yes	Yes
Montana	F	D-	D-	F	D	F	Yes	No
Nebraska	D-	D	F	D	C-	F	Yes	No
Nevada	D-	D-	D-	D-	D	D+	No	Yes
New Hampshire	D-	D	D	F	D-	D-	Yes	Yes
New Jersey	D+	D	B-	D+	C-	D+	No	No
New Mexico	D+	D+	D	C-	D	B-	Yes	No
New York	D+	D+	C	D-	C-	D	No	No
North Carolina	D+	D	D+	C-	C	D	Yes	No
North Dakota	D-	D	F	D-	D	D+	Yes	No
Ohio	D+	D	D	C-	C	D	Yes	Yes
Oklahoma	D-	D+	F	F	D+	D-	No	Yes
Oregon	D-	D+	F	F	D+	D-	Yes	Yes
Pennsylvania	D	D+	C-	D	D	F	No	Yes
Rhode Island	D	D	C	D	D	F	Yes	No
South Carolina	C-	D+	D	C	C	C+	Yes	Yes
South Dakota	D	D	C-	F	C	F	Yes	No
Tennessee	C-	C-	C	C	C	F	Yes	Yes
Texas	C-	C	B-	D	C-	D	Yes	Yes
Utah	D	D-	D	D	C	D-	Yes	Yes
Vermont	F	D	D-	F	D	F	Yes	No
Virginia	D+	C	C	D-	C	D+	Yes	Yes
Washington	D+	D+	C-	D	C	D+	Yes	No
West Virginia	D+	C-	C	D	D	C	Yes	No
Wisconsin	D	D-	D-	D-	C	D	Yes	Yes
Wyoming	D-	D-	D	D	D	D-	Yes	Yes

Listed below are summaries for relevant pieces of ALEC model legislation. For more information on these or other bills, or for the full text of these bills, contact a staff member for ALEC's Education Task Force.

A-Plus Literacy Act

The *A-Plus Literacy Act* is inspired by a comprehensive set of K–12 reforms implemented by Florida lawmakers in 1999, and supplemented over the next decade. The chapters of this bill are: School and District Report Cards and Grades; School Recognition Program; Opportunity Scholarship Program; Special Needs Scholarship Program Act; Great Schools Tax Credit Program Act; Alternative Teacher Certification Act; Student Promotion to a Higher Grade; and School and Teacher Bonuses for Advanced Placement Exam Success.

Alternative Certification Act

Teacher quality is crucial to the improvement of instruction and student performance. However, certification requirements that correspond to state-approved education programs in most states prevent many individuals from entering the teaching profession. To obtain an education degree, students must often complete requirements in educational methods, theory, and style rather than in-depth study in a chosen subject area. Comprehensive alternative certification programs improve teacher quality by opening up the profession to well-educated, qualified, and mature individuals. States should enact alternative teacher certification programs to prepare persons with subject area expertise and life experience to become teachers through a demonstration of competency and a comprehensive mentoring program.

Autism Scholarship Act

The *Autism Scholarship Program Act* would create a scholarship program that provides students with autism the option to attend the public or private elementary or secondary school of their parents' choice.

Career Ladder Opportunities Act

The *Career Ladder Opportunity Act* requires school districts to adopt extraordinary performance pay plans for elementary and secondary public school teachers who demonstrate success in the classroom. The local school district must design the plan in consultation with teachers and administrators. Because reward systems in the past have often failed because of premature abandonment, the district must keep the plan for three years and make improvements on it when necessary.

Charter School Growth with Quality Act

The *Charter School Growth with Quality Act* intends to expand quality public education opportunities for all children by establishing a state public charter school commission to serve as an independent statewide charter authorizer.

Education Savings Account Act

The *Education Savings Account Act* allows parents to use the funds that would have been allocated to their child at their resident school district for an education program of the parents' choosing.

Family Education Tax Credit Program Act

The *Family Education Tax Credit Program Act* would create a family education tax credit for payment of tuition, fees, and certain other educational expenses and a tax credit for individual and corporate contributions to organizations that provide educational scholarships to eligible students so they can attend the public or private schools of their parents' choice.

Foster Child Scholarship Program Act

The *Foster Child Scholarship Program Act* would create a scholarship program that provides children who have been placed in foster care the option to attend the public or private elementary or secondary school of their guardians' choice.

Great Schools Tax Credit Act

The *Great Schools Tax Credit Act* would authorize a tax credit for individual and corporate contributions to organizations that provide educational scholarships to eligible students so they can attend qualifying public or private schools of their parents' choice.

Great Teachers and Leaders Act

The *Great Teachers and Leaders Act* reforms the practice of tenure, known as nonprobationary status in some states. Teachers can earn tenure after 3 years of sufficient student academic growth; tenure is revocable following 2 consecutive years of insufficient growth. The Act requires principals to be evaluated annually with 50 percent of the evaluation based on student achievement and their ability to develop teachers in their buildings and increase their effectiveness. The Act eliminates the practice of forced teacher placement and replaces it with mutual consent hiring. The Act allows school districts to make reduction in force decisions based on teacher performance rather than on seniority.

Indiana Comprehensive Reform Package

The *Indiana Education Reform Package* is inspired by their comprehensive set of K–12 education reforms adopted by the Indiana Legislature in the spring of 2011 and signed by Gov. Mitch Daniels. This act incorporates several of the key reforms the Indiana Legislature passed, including Charter Schools Act, School Scholarships Act, Teacher Evaluations and Licensing Act, Teacher Collective Bargaining Act, Turnaround Academies Act, Early Graduation Scholarship Act, and Textbooks and Other Curricular Material Act.

Longitudinal Student Growth Act

The *Longitudinal Student Growth Act* would require the state department of education to implement a state data management system for collecting and reporting student assessment data and identifies the duties and responsibilities of the state department of education and the school districts in implementing the data management system. The legislation instructs the state board of education to adopt a mixed-effects statistical model to diagnostically calculate students' annual academic growth over the periods between the administration of the statewide assessments, based on the students' assessment scores. The legislation next requires the department to provide to each school district and each charter school an academic growth information report for each student enrolled in the school district or charter school, and requires the school district or charter school to adopt a policy for using the information in the report and communicating the information in the report to students and their parents.

Next Generation Charter Schools Act

The *Next Generation Charter Schools Act* recognizes charters schools are a necessity to improve the opportunities of all families and that charter schools serve a distinct purpose in supporting innovations and best practices that can be adopted among all public schools. Further, this act recognizes that there must be a variety of public institutions that can authorize the establishment of charter schools as defined by law, and recognizes that independent but publicly accountable multiple authorizing uthorities, such as independent state commissions or universities, contribute to the health and growth of strong public charter schools. This act establishes that existing or new public entities may be created to approve and monitor charter schools in addition to public school district boards. This act also removes procedural and funding barriers to charter school success.

Online Learning Clearinghouse Act

The *Online Learning Clearinghouse Act* creates a clearinghouse through which school districts may offer their computer-based courses to students of other school districts.

Open Enrollment Act

The *Open Enrollment Act* stipulates that a student may, with the assistance of the state, attend any public school in the state. The legislation allows the parents of the student to apply for attendance in any nonresident school. The nonresident school district would advise the parent within an established time whether the application was accepted or rejected. The nonresident school district would be obligated to adopt standards for consideration of such applications. State aid follows the transferring student from the resident to the nonresident district. State funds are thus used to facilitate the expansion of educational choice available to the student and the parent.

Parent Trigger Act

The *Parent Trigger Act* places democratic control into the hands of parents at school level. Parents can, with a simple majority, opt to usher in one of three choice-based options of reform: (1) transforming their school into a charter school, (2) supplying students from that school with a 75 percent per pupil cost voucher, or (3) closing the school.

Parental Choice Scholarship Program Act

The *Parental Choice Scholarship Program Act* creates a scholarship program that provides all children the option to attend the public or private elementary or secondary school of their parents' choice.

Public School Financial Transparency Act

The *Public School Financial Transparency Act* would require each local education provider in the state to create and maintain a searchable expenditure and revenue Web site database that includes detailed data of revenues and expenditures. It also would require each local education provider to maintain the data in a format that is easily accessible, searchable, and downloadable.

Resolution Adopting the 10 Elements of High-Quality Digital Learning for K-12

This resolution adopts the Digital Learning Council's 10 Elements of High-Quality Digital Learning. This states the 10 Elements should be incorporated as necessary through future legislation as well as immediate state regulation, strategic planning, guidelines and/or procedures on the part of the state education agency, local education agencies, and any other relevant public or private bodies.

Special Needs Scholarship Program Act

The *Special Needs Scholarship Program Act* creates a scholarship program that provides students with special needs the option to attend the public or private elementary or secondary school of their parents' choice.

Student-Centered Funding Act

The *Student-Centered Funding Act* would create a student-centered finance model based on a weighted student formula in which money "follows" a child to his or her school. Funds follow students to whichever public school they attend, both district and charter, which better ensures that funding can be more accurately adjusted to meet the real costs to schools of all sizes and locations of educating various students based on their unique characteristics. Parents, regardless of income or address, have a greater array of education options for their children based on their unique, individual needs.

Teacher Choice Compensation Act

The *Teacher Choice Compensation Act* would create a program where by teachers may be eligible for performance-based salary stipends if they opt out of their permanent contract and meet measurable student performance goals based on a value-added test instrument developed by the state department of education.

Teacher Quality and Recognition Demonstration Act

The need for quality teachers in improving student achievement is generally recognized as one of the most crucial elements of state reform efforts. A primary concern in the quality of the performance of teachers is the forecast for an increasing need for more teachers. This bill is directed toward creating a new structure of the current teaching system that will promote the retention and reward of good teachers and attract new talent to the profession. This bill establishes teacher quality demonstration projects wherein local education agencies are exempt from education rules and regulations regarding teacher certification, tenure, recruitment, and compensation, and are granted funding for the purpose of creating new models of teacher hiring, professional growth and development, compensation and recruitment.

Virtual Public Schools Act

The *Virtual Public Schools Act* would allow the use of computer- and Internet-based instruction for students in a virtual or remote setting.

Alliance for School Choice
www.allianceforschoolchoice.org
The Alliance for School Choice is a national leader in promoting school vouchers and scholarship tax credit programs. The Alliance works to improve K-12 education by advancing public policy that empowers parents, particularly those in low-income families, to choose the education they determine is best for their children.

American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence
www.abcte.org
The American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence recruits, prepares, certifies, and supports dedicated professionals to improve student achievement through quality teaching.

American Enterprise Institute
www.aei.org
The American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research is a private, nonpartisan, not-forprofit institution dedicated to research and education on issues of government, politics, economics, and social welfare.

Black Alliance for Educational Options
www.baeo.org
The Black Alliance for Educational Options works to increase access to high-quality educational options for Black children by actively supporting parental choice policies and programs that empower low-income and working-class Black families.

Cato Institute
www.cato.org
The Cato Institute's education research is founded on the principle that parents are best suited to make important decisions regarding the care and education of their children. Cato's researchers seek to shift the terms of public debate in favor of the fundamental right of parents.

Center for Digital Education
www.centerdigitaled.com
The Center for Digital Education is a resource on K-12 and higher education technologies. The Center provides dynamic and diverse opportunities for private- and public-sector leaders to succeed in 21st century education.

Center for Education Reform
www.edreform.com
The Center for Education Reform drives the creation of better educational opportunities for all children by leading parents, policymakers and the media in boldly advocating for school choice, advancing the charter school movement, and challenging the education establishment.

Center on Reinventing Public Education
www.crpe.org
The Center on Reinventing Public Education engages in independent research and policy analysis on a range of K-12 public education reform issues, including choice and charters, finance and productivity, teachers, urban district reform, leadership, and state and federal reform.

Connections Academy
www.connectionsacademy.com
Connections Academy provides a new form of free public school that students attend from home. Connections' unique program combines strong parental involvement of homeschooling; expertise and accountability of public funded education; and flexibility of online classes.

Education|Evolving
www.educationevolving.org
Education|Evolving is a kind of "design shop" working to help public education with the difficult process of change. Education|Evolving is involved with the architecture and redesign of schooling.

Evergreen Education Group
www.evergreenedgroup.com
The Evergreen Education Group seeks to understand the national landscape of K-12 online learning and apply its understanding to the challenges that schools, agencies, legislators, and others face.

Foundation for Excellence in Education
www.excelined.org
The mission of the Foundation for Excellence in Education is answer the pivotal questions of what motivates students to exceed expectations, what are the secrets to successful teaching, and how do we replicate academic achievement?

The Freedom Foundation
www.myfreedomfoundation.com
The Freedom Foundation's mission is to advance individual liberty, free enterprise, and limited, accountable government. Its primary research areas are budget and taxes, education, labor, elections, and citizenship and governance.

Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice
www.edchoice.org
The Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice plays a critical and unique role in the school choice movement. As the only national organization dedicated solely to advancing Milton and Rose Friedman's vision of an education system where all parents are free to choose, the Foundation brings an unsurpassed clarity of purpose to the education reform debate.

Goldwater Institute
www.goldwaterinstitute.org
The Goldwater Institute is an independent government watchdog supported by people who are committed to expanding free enterprise and liberty. The Institute develops innovative, principled solutions to pressing issues facing the states and enforces constitutionally limited government through litigation.

Heartland Institute
www.heartland.org
Heartland's mission is to discover, develop, and promote free-market solutions to social and economic problems. Such solutions include parental choice in education, choice and personal responsibility in health care, privatization of public services, and deregulation in areas where property rights and markets do a better job than government bureaucracies.

Heritage Foundation
www.heritage.org
The Heritage Foundation is the nation's most broadly supported public policy research institute. Heritage works to formulate and promote conservative public policies based on the principles of free enterprise, limited government, individual freedom, traditional American values, and a strong national defense.

Hispanic Council for Reform and Educational Options
www.hcreo.com
The Hispanic Council for Reform and Educational Options works to improve educational outcomes for Hispanic children by empowering families through parental choice. It achieves this by providing parents with free information and resources.

Home School Legal Defense Association
www.hslda.org
The Home School Legal Defense Association is a nonprofit advocacy organization established to defend and advance the constitutional right of parents to direct the education of their children and to protect family freedoms.

Hoover Institution
www.hoover.org
The Hoover Institution seeks to secure and safeguard peace, improve the human condition, and limit government intrusion into the lives of individuals by collecting knowledge, generating ideas, and disseminating both.

Insight Schools
www.insightschools.net
Insight Schools works to ensure online learning is delivering significant improvements in our educational system: helping to reduce the nation's high school dropout rate; bringing students back into public schools; providing new opportunities for students; and helping prepare them for college and life after high school.

Independence Institute
www.i2i.org
The Independence Institute is established upon the eternal truths of the Declaration of Independence dedicated to providing timely information to concerned citizens, government officials, and public opinion leaders.

Institute for Justice
www.ij.org
The Institute for Justice challenges the government when it stands in the way of people trying to earn an honest living, when it unconstitutionally takes away individuals' property, when bureaucrats instead of parents dictate the education of children, and when government stifles speech.

International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL)
www.inacol.org
The International Association for K-12 Online Learning works to ensure all students have access to world-class education and quality online learning opportunities that prepare them for a lifetime of success.

Innosight Institute
www.innosightinstitute.org
Innosight Institute is a not-for-profit, non-partisan think tank whose mission is to apply Harvard Business School Professor Clayton M. Christensen's theories of disruptive innovation to develop and promote solutions to the most vexing problems in the social sector.

John Locke Foundation
www.johnlocke.org
The John Locke Foundation employs research, journalism, and outreach programs to transform government through competition, innovation, personal freedom, and personal responsibility. The Foundation seeks a better balance between the public sector and private institutions of family, faith, community, and enterprise.

K12, Inc.
www.k12.com
K12, Inc.'s mission is to provide any child access to exceptional curriculum and tools that enable him or her to maximize his or her success in life, regardless of geographic, financial, or demographic circumstance.

Mackinac Center for Public Policy
www.mackinac.org
The Mackinac Center for Public Policy is a nonpartisan research and educational institute that promotes sound solutions to Michigan's state and local policy questions. The Center assists policymakers, business people, the media, and the public by providing objective analysis of Michigan issues.

Maine Heritage Policy Center
www.mainepolicy.org
The Maine Heritage Policy Center is a research and educational organization whose mission is to formulate and promote conservative public policies based on the principles of free enterprise; limited, constitutional government; individual freedom; and traditional American values.

National Alliance for Public Charter Schools
www.publiccharters.org
The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools works to increase the number of high-quality charter schools available to all families, particularly in disadvantaged communities that lack access to quality public schools.

National Association of Charter School Authorizers
www.qualitycharters.org
The National Association of Charter School Authorizers works with local experts to create the conditions needed for quality charter schools to thrive. The Association pushes for high standards for authorizers and the environments in which they work.

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards
www.nbpts.org
National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan and nongovernmental organization. It was formed in 1987 to advance the quality of teaching and learning by developing professional standards for accomplished teaching, creating a voluntary system to certify teachers who meet those standards and integrating certified teachers into educational reform efforts.

National Coalition for Public School Options
www.publicschooloptions.org
The National Coalition for Public School Options is an alliance of parents that supports and defends parents' rights to access the best public school options for their children. The Coalition supports charter schools, online schools, magnet schools, open enrollment policies, and other innovative education programs.

National Council on Teacher Quality
www.nctq.org
The National Council on Teacher Quality is a nonpartisan research and advocacy group committed to restructuring the teaching profession, led by its vision that every child deserves effective teachers.

National Heritage Academies
www.heritageacademies.com
National Heritage Academies works with school boards that are looking to bring parents in their community another educational option for their children. NHA invests resources into its schools to ensure that in every classroom, in every school, it is challenging each child to achieve.

Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs
www.ocpathink.org
Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs (OCPA) was founded in 1993 as a public policy research organization focused primarily on state-level issues. OCPA has been part of an emerging, national trend of free-market, state-based think tanks. Throughout its 16 years of existence, OCPA has conducted research and analysis of public issues in Oklahoma from a perspective of limited government, individual liberty and a free-market economy.

Pacific Research Institute
www.pacificresearch.org
The Pacific Research Institute champions freedom, opportunity, and personal responsibility for all individuals by advancing free-market policy solutions. The Institute's activities include publications, legislative testimony, and community outreach.

State Policy Network
www.spn.org
The State Policy Network is dedicated solely to improving the practical effectiveness of independent, nonprofit, market-oriented, state-focused think tanks. SPN's programs enable these organizations to better educate local citizens, policy makers and opinion leaders about market-oriented alternatives to state and local policy challenges.

Texas Public Policy Foundation
www.texaspolicy.com
The Texas Public Policy Foundation's mission is to promote and defend liberty, personal responsibility, and free enterprise in Texas by educating and affecting policymakers and the Texas public policy debate with academically sound research and outreach.

Thomas B. Fordham Institute
www.edexcellence.net
The Thomas B. Fordham Institute believes all children deserve a high quality K-12 education at the school of their choice. The Institute strives to close America's vexing achievement gaps by raising standards, strengthening accountability, and expanding education options for parents and families.

Washington Policy Center
www.washingtonpolicy.org
Washington Policy Center improves the lives of Washington citizens by providing accurate, highquality research for policymakers, the media, and the public. The Center provides innovative recommendations for improving education.

About the American Legislative Exchange Council

The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) is the nation's largest, nonpartisan, individual membership association of state legislators. With 2,000 members, ALEC's mission is to advance the Jeffersonian principles of limited government, federalism, and individual liberty through a nonpartisan public-private partnership of state legislators, the business community, the federal government, and the general public.

Founded in 1973, ALEC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that promotes free-market principles through model legislation, developed by its public- and private-sector members in nine Task Forces:

CIVIL JUSTICE

To promote systematic fairness in the courts by discouraging frivolous lawsuits, fairly balancing judicial and legislative authority, treating defendants and plaintiffs in a consistent manner, and installing transparency and accountability in the trial system.

COMMERCE, INSURANCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

To enhance economic competitiveness, to promote employment and economic prosperity, to encourage innovation, and to limit government regulation imposed upon business.

EDUCATION

To promote excellence in the nation's educational system, to advance reforms through parental choice, to support efficiency, accountability, and transparency in all educational institutions, and to ensure America's youth are given the opportunity to succeed.

ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT, AND AGRICULTURE

To operate under the principles of free-market environmentalism, that is to promote the mutually beneficial link between a robust economy and a healthy environment, to unleash the creative powers of the free market for environmental stewardship, and to enhance the quality and use of our natural and agricultural resources for the benefit of human health and well-being.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

To reduce governmental involvement in health care, to support a consumer-driven health care system, and to promote free-market, pro-patient health care reforms at the state level.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

To promote the core ALEC principles of free markets and limited government beyond our shores, to support final ratification of free trade agreements that create American jobs and grow our economy, and to protect the intellectual property rights of U.S. companies doing business overseas.

PUBLIC SAFETY AND ELECTIONS

To develop model policies that reduce crime and violence in our cities and neighborhoods, while also developing policies to ensure integrity and efficiency in our elections and systems of government.

TAX AND FISCAL POLICY

To reduce excessive government spending, to lower the overall tax burden, to enhance transparency of government operations, and to develop sound, free-market tax and fiscal policy.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

To advance consumer choice in the dynamic and converging areas of telecommunications and information technology by furthering public policies that preserve free-market principles, promote competitive federalism, uphold deregulation efforts, and keep industries free from new burdensome regulations.

American Legislative Exchange Council

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American Legislative Exchange Council
1101 Vermont Ave., NW, 11th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20005
ALEC.ORG

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