

A Special State-Focused Supplement to Education Week's

# Quality Counts At 10

▶ Alaska

## A Decade of Standards-Based Education



**QUALITY COUNTS 2006**

With Support From  
THE PEW CENTER ON THE STATES

## About this Report

This year marks the 10th edition of Editorial Projects in Education's annual *Quality Counts* report. As always, *Quality Counts 2006* examines the state of state educational policymaking using a unique combination of original state data and in-depth journalistic case studies. This 10th edition – *Quality Counts at 10: A Decade of Standards-Based Education* – also takes a special look back at the standards movement in American education over the past 10 years. *Quality Counts 2006* features original analyses examining trends in both state policy and student achievement, case studies investigating seven states' unique experiences with the standards movement, and commentaries from five leading voices in educational reform and policy. In short, the report takes stock of the progress states have made on standards-based education as well as its promise for improving the nation's public schools moving into the next decade.

*Quality Counts 2006* continues to track key education information and grade the states on their policy efforts. This year's report examines more than 100 indicators in the areas of: standards and accountability, efforts to improve teacher quality, school climate, and resource equity and educational spending. But for the first time, the Editorial Projects in Education Research Center has produced detailed, individualized state-by-state reports to complement the 50-state perspective of *Quality Counts*. These new reports replace and expand on the state summaries that appeared in previous print editions of *Quality Counts*.

The new *State Highlights Reports* assemble key findings in an accessible format that allows readers to examine a particular state's performance on this year's indicators as well as the progress it has made over time. For most indicators, national results are also provided as a benchmark against which state performance can be gauged.

*Quality Counts* and the *State Highlights Reports* are produced with support from the Pew Center on the States.

Editorial Projects in Education

January 2006

### About Editorial Projects in Education

**Editorial Projects in Education (EPE)** is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization based in Washington. Our primary mission is to help raise the level of awareness and understanding among professionals and the public of important issues in American education. We cover local, state, national, and international news and issues from preschool through the 12th grade. Editorial Projects in Education Inc. publishes *Education Week*, America's newspaper of record for precollegiate education, *Teacher Magazine*, edweek.org, and the Agent K-12 employment resource. We also produce periodic special reports on issues ranging from technology to textbooks, as well as books of special interest to educators.

The **EPE Research Center** conducts annual policy surveys, collects data, and performs analyses that appear in the *Quality Counts* and *Technology Counts* annual reports. The center also produces independent research reports and contributes original data and analysis to special coverage in *Education Week*, *Teacher Magazine*, and edweek.org.

Cover Photograph: Victor Barajas for Education Week

**VITAL STATISTICS**

500	Public schools	\$1.3 billion	Annual pre-K–12 expenditures	11 %	Children in poverty
7,808	Public school teachers			13.3 %	Students with disabilities
133,933	Pre-K–12 students	41.1%	Minority students	14.8 %	English-language learners

**STATE POLICY REPORT CARD  
2006**

	Alaska	How did the average state score?
Standards and accountability	<b>C-</b>	B-
Efforts to improve teacher quality	<b>D</b>	C+
School climate	<b>D+</b>	C+
Resource equity	<b>D+</b>	C
Overall grade	<b>D+</b>	C+

**State Highlights**

Alaska scores lower than the average state for each of the four graded categories of education policy in *Quality Counts*.

The state loses points in **standards and accountability** because the American Federation of Teachers has not rated its English and social studies standards as clear and specific at any grade span. But the state fares better on the accountability indicators. For example, it provides assistance to all low-performing schools, not just those that receive federal Title I money.

Alaska ranks last among the 50 states and the District of Columbia for its efforts to improve **teacher quality**. The state does not require prospective high school or middle school teachers to major or minor in the subjects they will teach. Its teacher assessment requirements are equally sparse—it requires only basic-skills tests for aspiring teachers.

Alaska also falters in the area of **school climate**, where the state is ranked last in the nation. School report cards do not include school safety information, and the state lacks laws related to school bullying and harassment. But it earns points for school size because higher percentages of students attend small schools than in other states.

In **resource equity**, Alaska receives the best wealth-neutrality score in the nation, which indicates that poorer districts tend to receive more per-pupil funding than do wealthier districts. However, Alaska is also among the lowest-scoring states on the other two equity indicators, resulting in a low overall grade in this category.

**Quality Counts Grading Breakdown**

This table reports the detailed scoring behind the grades for the four major areas of state policy examined in *Quality Counts*.

	Points awarded	Points possible		Points awarded	Points possible
<b>Standards and accountability</b>			<b>School climate</b>		
Standards	28	/40	Engagement	10	/15
Assessment	20	/30	School safety	12	/20
School accountability	+ 24	/30	Parent involvement	12	/15
	<b>71</b>	<b>/100</b>	Choice and autonomy	12	/20
<b>Efforts to improve teacher quality</b>			Class size	6	/10
Teacher education and qualifications	23	/35	School size	8	/10
Teacher assessment	18	/30	School facilities	+ 8	/10
Professional support and training	13	/20		<b>67</b>	<b>/100</b>
Accountability for teacher quality	+ 9	/15	<b>Resource equity</b>		
	<b>63</b>	<b>/100</b>	Wealth-neutrality score	33	/33.3
			McLoone Index	17	/33.3
			Coefficient of variation	+ 17	/33.3
				<b>67</b>	<b>/100</b>

Note: Details may not sum to totals due to rounding.

**Grading Curve** A (93-100), A- (90-92), B+ (87-89), B (83-86), B- (80-82), C+ (77-79), C (73-76), C- (70-72), D+ (67-69), D (63-66), D- (60-62), F (0-59)

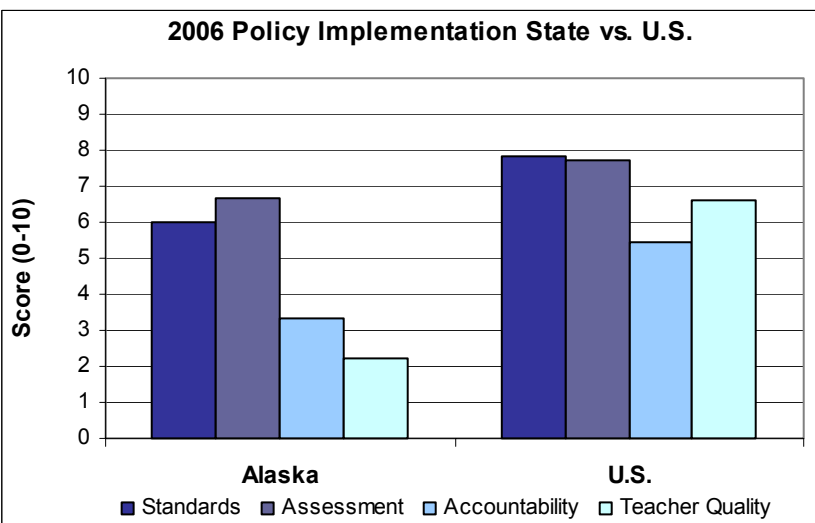
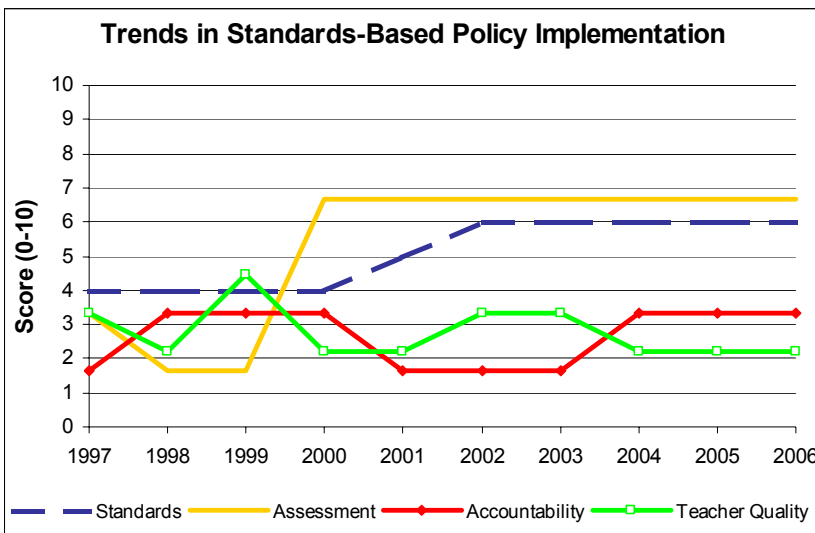
TRENDS IN STATE POLICY

Quality Counts 2006 tracked state policy efforts over the past decade in order to see what progress states have made in four core areas: standards, assessments, accountability, and efforts to improve teacher quality.

A total of 24 specific policy indicators were identified for this analysis (listed below). Generally, these indicators were taken directly from Quality Counts 2006 and earlier editions of the report. In cases where policies were not tracked in the earliest editions of the report, comparable information was obtained from additional sources.

For each year, an implementation score was calculated in each of the four policy areas. In general, states received 1 point for each year that they had a policy indicator in place. For indicators marked with an asterisk (\*), states received 2 points if they implemented the policy fully (for example, if state standards were clear and specific at all three grade spans) and 1 point if they did so in part (for example, if a state had adopted clear and specific standards only at the elementary level).

Point tallies in each policy area were then converted to a 10-point scale. A score of 10 indicates that a state implemented all of the policies in the respective area. A score of zero was awarded if none of those policies were implemented.



### Policy-Trend Indicators

**Standards**

- State has adopted standards in the core academic subjects of English, mathematics, science, and social studies.\*
- English standards at all grade spans – elementary, middle, and high school – are clear, specific, and grounded in content.\*
- Mathematics standards at all grade spans are clear, specific, and grounded in content.\*
- Science standards at all grade spans are clear, specific, and grounded in content.\*
- Social studies standards at all grade spans are clear, specific, and grounded in content.\*

**Assessments**

- State tests go beyond multiple-choice items to include short-answer and extended-response questions.\*
- State English tests are aligned with state content standards.
- State mathematics tests are aligned with state content standards.
- State science tests are aligned with state content standards.
- State social studies tests are aligned with state content standards.

**Accountability**

- State provides report cards for all public schools.
- State imposes sanctions on low-performing schools.
- State provides rewards to high-performing or improving schools.
- State took part in the most recent cycle of the state-level National Assessment of Educational Progress.
- Student promotion is contingent on performance on statewide exams.
- High school graduation is contingent on performance on statewide exit or end-of-course exams.

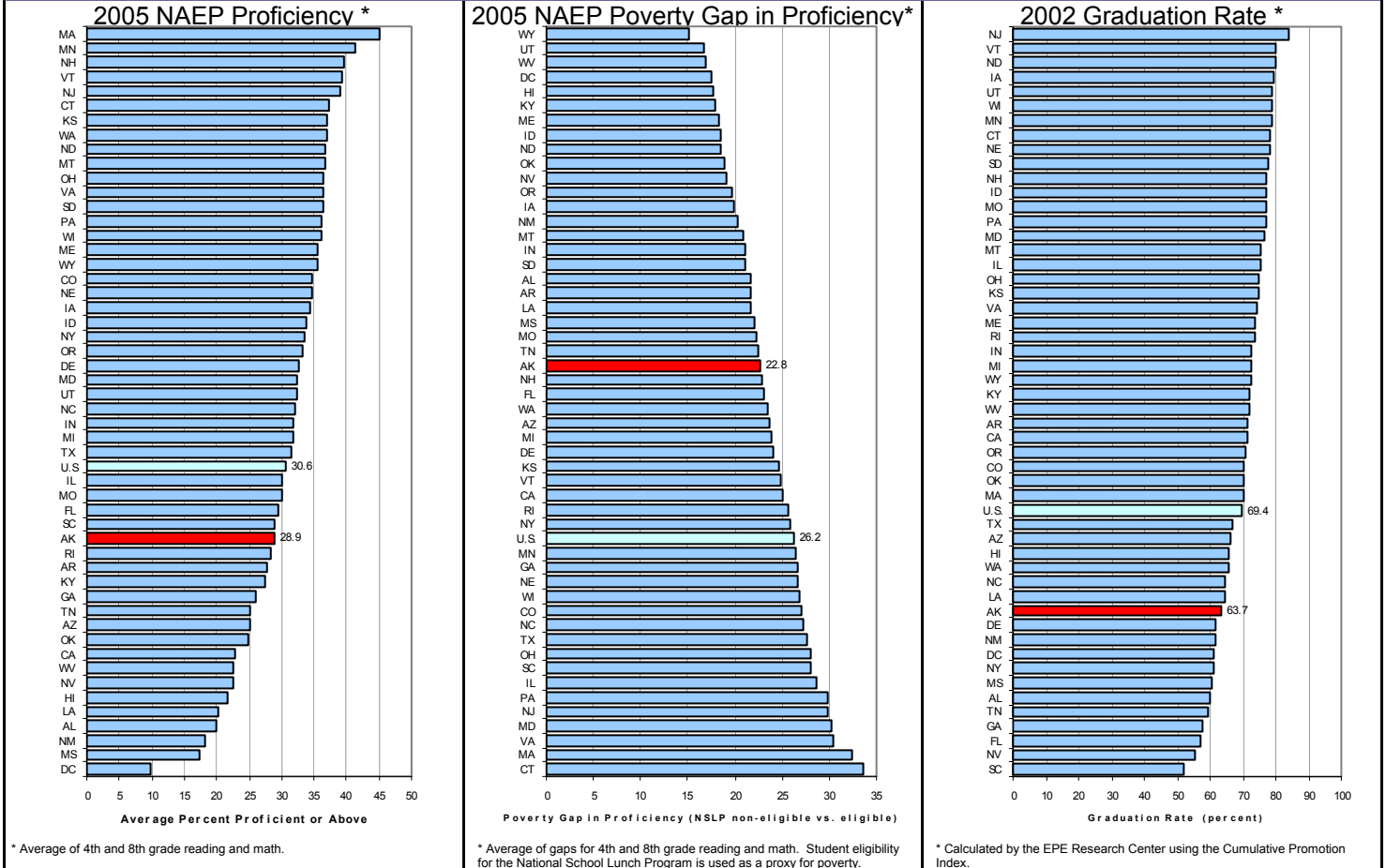
**Efforts to Improve Teacher Quality**

- State requires a college major in the subject taught for initial teacher licensure at the high school level.
- Teachers must pass a basic-skills test for initial licensure.
- Teachers must pass a test of subject-matter knowledge for initial licensure.
- Teachers must pass a test of subject-specific pedagogy for initial licensure.
- State provides licensure incentives for teachers who earn certificates from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS).
- State provides financial incentives for teachers who pursue or earn certificates from the NBPTS.
- State requires and finances mentoring for all novice teachers.
- Prospective educators must complete 11 or more weeks of student teaching.\*

## STATE ACHIEVEMENT REPORT CARD 2006

Assessments		Percent of students scoring at or above proficient	
		NAEP (2005)	State's Assessment (2004-05)
Mathematics	Grade 4	34%	Grade 3 <span style="color: blue;">76%</span>
	Grade 8	29%	<span style="color: blue;">62%</span>
Reading	Grade 4	27%	Grade 3 <span style="color: blue;">79%</span>
	Grade 8	26%	<span style="color: blue;">80%</span>
High school graduation rate (2002)		EPE Research Center <span style="color: blue;">64%</span>	State Reported <span style="color: blue;">85%</span>
Advanced course-taking		Percent of high school students taking upper-level classes (2004)	
		Mathematics <span style="color: blue;">N/A</span>	Science <span style="color: blue;">N/A</span>

### How does your state rank on key achievement indicators?



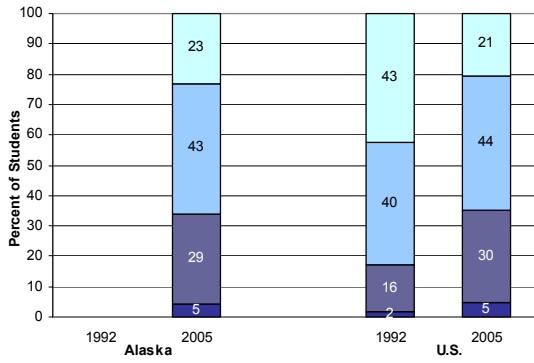
# Mathematics Achievement

Note: Testing accommodations for students with disabilities and English-language learners were not permitted for the 1992 and 1996 NAEP assessments.

## NAEP Achievement Levels

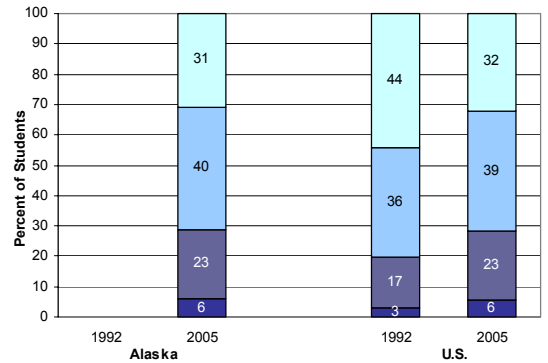
The following charts show the percent of students achieving at the specified NAEP achievement levels for public schools in your state and the nation as a whole.

Grade 4



Note: Alaska did not participate in the 1992 NAEP assessment.

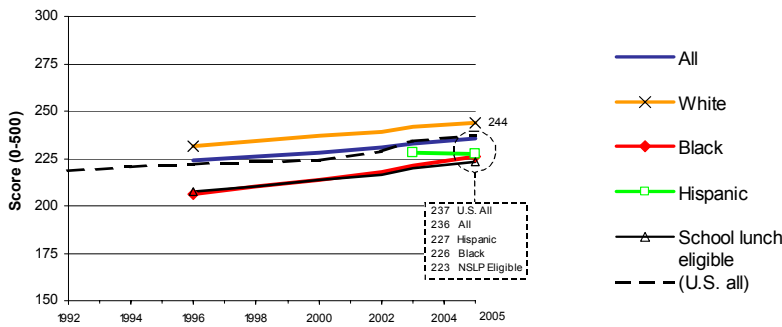
Grade 8



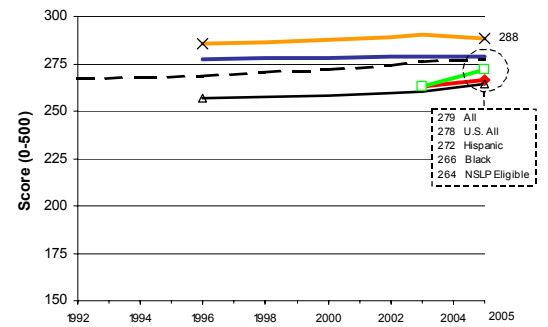
## Trends in NAEP Scale Scores

The following charts show trends in NAEP scale scores for public schools in your state and the nation as a whole. NAEP scale scores range from 0 to 500.

Grade 4



Grade 8



## Mathematics Achievement at a Glance

This table summarizes NAEP scale-score patterns for the state's public schools and compares those results with the nation's as a whole. Analyses were conducted to identify statistically significant differences and trends. Nonsignificant results are labeled "same." Trend data for the National School Lunch Program categories begin in 1996.

		Student Groups						Achievement Gaps		
		All Students	White	Black	Hispanic	School Lunch Program		Black vs. White	Hispanic vs. White	School Lunch Noneligible vs. Eligible
						Noneligible	Eligible			
<b>2005 state vs. U.S.</b>										
How does the state score or gap in 2005 compare with the U.S. average?	grade 4	same	same	same	same	lower	same	same	same	same
	grade 8	same	same	higher	higher	same	same	smaller	smaller	smaller
<b>Trends within the state</b>										
How did the group score or gap within the state change from 1992 to 2005?	grade 4	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	up	up	n/a	n/a	same
	grade 8	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	same	same	n/a	n/a	same
<b>State trends vs. U.S.</b>										
How does the state's trend between 1992 and 2005 compare with the U.S. average?	grade 4	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	weaker gains	same	n/a	n/a	same
	grade 8	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	same	same	n/a	n/a	same

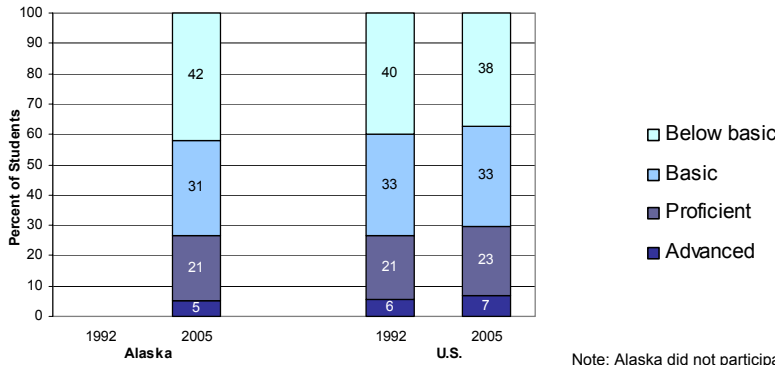
Reading Achievement

Note: Testing accommodations for students with disabilities and English-language learners were not permitted for the 1992 and 1996 NAEP assessments.

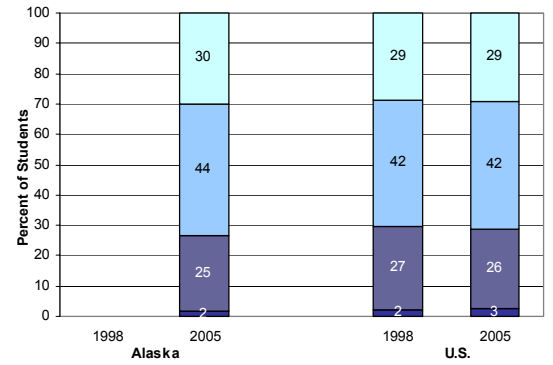
NAEP Achievement Levels

The following charts show the percent of students achieving at the specified NAEP achievement levels for public schools in your state and the nation as a whole.

Grade 4



Grade 8

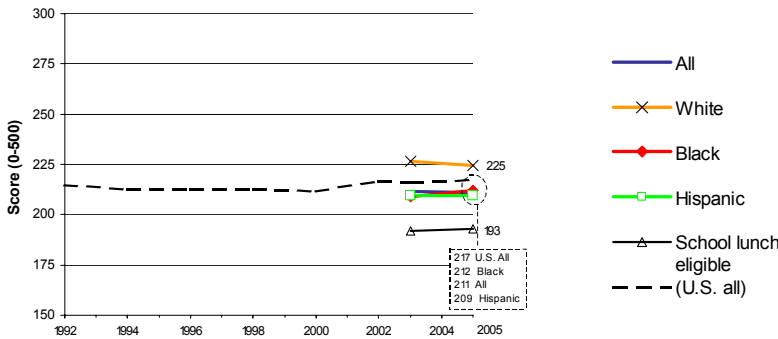


Note: Alaska did not participate in the 1992 or 1998 NAEP assessments.

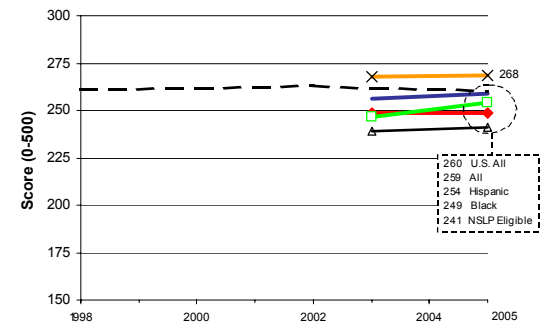
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Grade 4



Grade 8



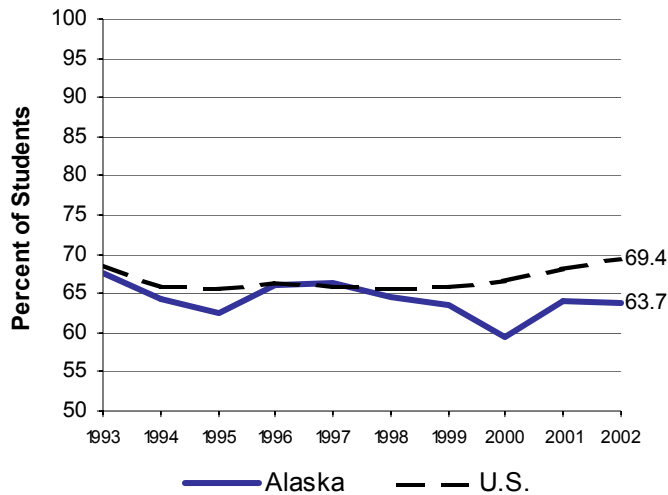
Reading Achievement at a Glance

This table summarizes NAEP scale-score patterns for the state's public schools and compares those results with the nation's as a whole. Analyses were conducted to identify statistically significant differences and trends. Nonsignificant results are labeled "same." Trend data for the National School Lunch Program categories begin in 1998.

	Student Groups							Achievement Gaps		
	All Students	White	Black	Hispanic	School Lunch Program		Black vs. White	Hispanic vs. White	School Lunch Noneligible vs. eligible	
<b>2005 state vs. U.S.</b>										
How does the state score or gap in 2005 compare with the U.S. average?	grade 4	lower	lower	higher	same	lower	lower	smaller	smaller	same
	grade 8	same	same	same	same	lower	lower	same	same	same
<b>Trends within the state</b>										
How did the group score or gap within the state change from 1992 to 2005?	grade 4	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	grade 8	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>State trends vs. U.S.</b>										
How does the state's trend between 1992 and 2005 compare with the U.S. average?	grade 4	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	grade 8	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

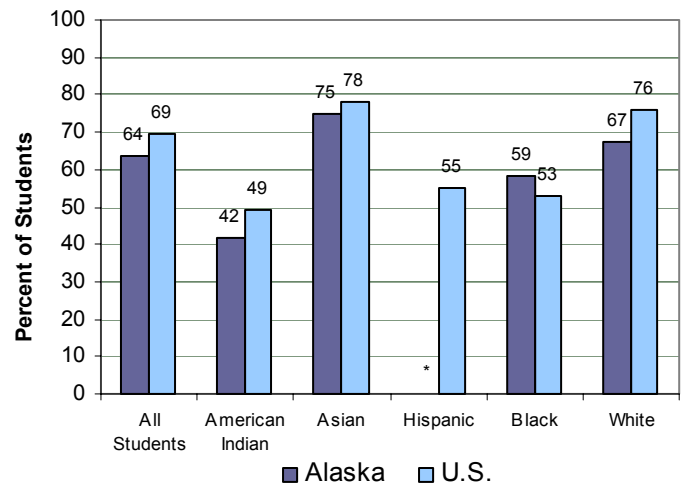
## High School Graduation Rates

10-Year Graduation-Rate Trend\*  
(All Students)



\* Graduation rates are calculated by the EPE Research Center using the Cumulative Promotion Index.

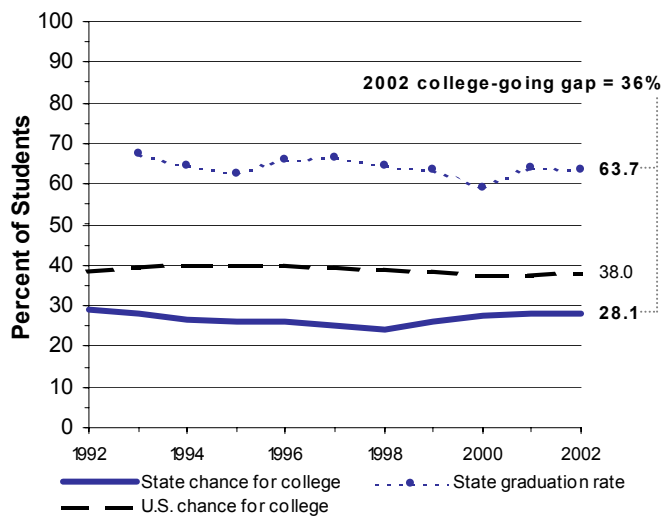
State vs. U.S. Comparison (2002)



\* State data not available

## Chance for College

10-Year Trend



### What does “chance for college” mean?

This indicator estimates the percent of students entering public high schools who graduate with a regular diploma four years later and enroll in degree-granting two- or four-year institutions of higher education.

### What is the college-going gap?

This indicator is calculated by subtracting the chance-for-college index from the high school graduation rate:

$$\text{Graduation rate} - \text{Chance for college} = \text{College-going gap}$$

The college-going gap estimates the percent of public high school students who earn a diploma but do not continue on to higher education the fall after graduating from high school.



## Notes and Sources

**Quality Counts 2006**

This year's 10th edition of *Quality Counts* reports on states' implementation of policies related to standards-based education and grades the states in the areas of standards and accountability, efforts to improve teacher quality, school climate, and resource equity. The report also shows the progress states have made on a core set of policy indicators over the past decade. *Quality Counts 2006* provides an extensive analysis of student performance on the 2005 state-level National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in 4th and 8th grade reading and mathematics as well as trends in state achievement since 1992. *Quality Counts 2006* can be accessed online at [www.edweek.org/qc06](http://www.edweek.org/qc06).

The *State Highlights Reports* provide state-specific summaries of key findings from *Quality Counts 2006*. The reports also contain original expanded analyses of state achievement and policy trends. Individualized *State Highlights Reports* for the 50 states and the District of Columbia are available on the Web at [www.edweek.org/qc06/SHR](http://www.edweek.org/qc06/SHR).

**State Policy Indicators, 2006**

Most of the state policy indicators reported in *Quality Counts* are obtained through an original policy survey conducted annually by the Editorial Projects in Education Research Center. The research center sent surveys to the chief state school officers in all 50 states and to the superintendent of the District of Columbia public schools. Respondents provided information on policy indicators related to standards and accountability, assessment, efforts to improve teacher quality, and school climate. Every state response was carefully verified using additional evidence provided by the state, such as documentation describing a state statute or administrative rule.

For a subset of indicators, the EPE Research Center obtained information from outside organizations, such as the National Center for Education Statistics, the National Center for Educational Accountability, the Center for Education Reform, and the American Federation of Teachers.

**Grading the States**

For *Quality Counts 2006*, the EPE Research Center graded state policies in the areas of standards and accountability, efforts to improve teacher quality, school climate, and resource equity based on data compiled for more than 100 policy indicators. Each indicator was evaluated and assigned a certain number of points, with some indicators receiving greater weight than others. States were not awarded

credit for an indicator unless they were able to document that the respective policy was in place.

The research center tallied points within each of the four policy categories. This produced a policy score on a 100-point scale, which was then converted to a letter grade. The overall state policy grade presented in this *State Highlights Report* places equal weight on each of the four policy areas. A detailed explanation of this grading methodology appears in the full edition of *Quality Counts 2006*.

**Trends in State Policy**

*Quality Counts 2006* includes a special analysis of policy trends over the past decade. The EPE Research Center examined state policy adoption in four key areas of standards-based education: standards, assessment, accountability, and efforts to improve teacher quality. In addition, the research center analyzed the relationship between state policy implementation and changes in student achievement on the NAEP assessments.

The policy trend analyses focus on a selected set of 24 indicators that can be tracked consistently over time. For most years, these policy indicators are drawn directly from previous editions of *Quality Counts*. In cases where an indicator was not tracked in the earliest editions of the report, comparable data were obtained from other sources.

Detailed descriptions of the 24 indicators, year-by-year data for each state, and an analysis of the connection between state policy and achievement can be found in a January 2006 report by the EPE Research Center, *Linking State Standards and Achievement*, available online at [www.edweek.org/rc](http://www.edweek.org/rc).

**Student Achievement****State Test Data**

The Editorial Projects in Education Research Center gathered information on state tests from state department of education Web sites and [www.schoolmatters.com](http://www.schoolmatters.com). Because there are differences in state assessments and criteria for defining student proficiency, results from such tests are not comparable across states.

**NAEP Data**

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is the only continuing source of representative and comparable data on student achievement for the nation and the states. Data were obtained from the NAEP Data Explorer (NDE), a tool developed by the U.S. Department of Education accessible online at [www.nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/nde](http://www.nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/nde). This resource provides the public with

information on student achievement for various years, grade levels, subjects, and subgroups. The EPE Research Center examined both NAEP scale scores and achievement-level data to chart state performance and progress in student achievement.

The NDE allows users to identify statistically significant differences in some NAEP results. For example, this tool can determine whether assessment scores for the nation as a whole or a particular state have changed significantly over time. Certain kinds of analyses, however, are not currently available through the NDE.

The Educational Testing Service of Princeton, N.J., conducted a series of special NAEP analyses for *Quality Counts 2006*. These analyses include tests of statistical significance for comparisons not supported by the NDE (e.g., analyses that examine differences between the size of state achievement gains and national gains). The results of these special analyses are reported in the reading and mathematics Achievement at a Glance sections of the *State Highlights Reports*.

**Graduation Rates**

State-reported graduation rates were obtained from "Getting Honest About Grad Rates: How States Play the Numbers and Students Lose," a June 2005 report by the Education Trust. The EPE Research Center calculated graduation rates using the Cumulative Promotion Index method. For detailed information on this methodology, see: "Who Graduates? Who Doesn't? A Statistical Portrait of Public High School Graduation, Class of 2001," 2004, [www.urban.org/ChristopherBSwanson](http://www.urban.org/ChristopherBSwanson).

**Chance for College**

The chance-for-college indicator comes from "Postsecondary Education Opportunity, Number 149: Chance for College by Age 19 by State – 1986 to 2002," November 2004. Information can be found online at [www.postsecondary.org](http://www.postsecondary.org).

**Vital Statistics**

Vital statistics were derived primarily from the Common Core of Data 2002-03 and 2003-04, a database maintained by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Annual Pre-K-12 Expenditures data come from an April 2005 report by the NCES: "Revenues and Expenditures for Public Elementary and Secondary Education: School Year 2002-03." Statistics for the percent of children in poverty for the year 2001 are from the Annie E. Casey Foundation's "Kids Count 2004 Data Book Online," available at [www.aecf.org/kidscount](http://www.aecf.org/kidscount).



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## Quality Counts at 10: A Decade of Standards-Based Education

- **Quality Counts 2006** – This year’s full report investigates standards-based reform during the past decade and features a special analysis of the impact of the improvement efforts on student achievement and a series of state case studies exploring experiences with standards on the ground. The annual State of the States update grades state policy in the areas of standards and accountability, efforts to improve teacher quality, school climate, and resource equity.
- **State Highlights Reports** – Individualized reports featuring state-specific findings from the 2006 *Quality Counts* report are available for all 50 states and the District of Columbia.
- **Education Counts** – This online database contains hundreds of state-level indicators on K-12 education collected over the past decade for *Education Week’s* annual *Quality Counts* and *Technology Counts* reports. Use the Custom Table Builder feature to create graphs, tables, or maps for specific indicators.

You can access *Quality Counts* online at  
[www.edweek.org/qc06](http://www.edweek.org/qc06)

