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2008 MATH AND READING MCA-II RESULTS UP SLIGHTLY

Roseville – Math and Reading MCA-II assessments were up slightly in 2008, according to results released today by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE). Minnesota students made the biggest gains in 10th-grade reading, with a 9 percent increase.

“Improvement is always welcome when measuring our students’ educational progress,” Minnesota Education Commissioner Alice Seagren said. “Yet, true to Minnesota’s tradition of education excellence, we must make every effort to prepare every Minnesota student for success in a world that will challenge them in ways that preceding generations could scarcely have imagined.”

MCA-II results

The Math and Reading MCA-IIs meet the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which requires that all students be proficient by 2014. The assessments are administered in Reading in grades 3-8 and 10, and in Math in grades 3-8 and 11.

This spring, approximately 556,000 students took the Math and Reading MCA-IIs, which measure student performance on the Minnesota Academic Standards. Those standards define what students should know and be able to do in a particular grade and are developed in partnership with Minnesota educators. On the MCA-IIs, each student earns a score in one of four achievement levels: Does Not Meet Standards, Partially Meets Standards, Meets the Standards or Exceeds the Standards. Students who Meet or Exceed standards on the MCA-II are considered proficient.

In 2008, the biggest increase on the MCA-II was in 10th-grade reading, with a 9 percent increase. Fifth-grade math and sixth-grade reading both increased by around 3 percent. All other results increased slightly or remained constant when compared to 2007. (A grade-by-grade breakdown comparing 2007 and 2008 results can be found at the bottom of the news release.) This year’s results continue to reflect a persistent achievement gap among student subgroups.

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MDE attributes the dramatic increase in 10th-grade to the new reading graduation requirement, which provided additional incentive to perform well. Next year, 11th-graders will have a math requirement for graduation, which will likely lead to similar increases in the 11th-grade Math MCA-II.

The number of schools and districts that will not be making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in 2008 will increase. This increase will be the result of only slight improvements in proficiency and the required increases in the reading and math AYP targets to meet the federal government's requirement of 100 percent proficient by 2014. MDE is scheduled to release AYP results in early August.

Results highlight the need for reform

Minnesota is currently implementing several initiatives to improve student achievement. One of those initiatives, the Math and Science Teacher Academy, which begins this year, will focus on improving teacher effectiveness.

During the last legislative session, Governor Pawlenty introduced several additional initiatives designed to improve student achievement and teacher effectiveness, which the legislature chose not to take up.

“During next year’s legislative session, I hope that legislative leaders will work with us to implement the changes, innovations and reforms needed to prepare every Minnesota student for success,” Commissioner Seagren said.

New tool for parents and educators

Later this summer, school districts will be sending MCA-II individual student reports to parents explaining their child’s scores.

The reports will include information on how parents can access the updated Pearson Perspective, which is a tool to help parents and educators understand the skills their child has mastered and the skills that still need to be practiced. On Perspective, parents can explore a wide range of online learning activities with their child designed to enrich and improve the child's knowledge and skills.

“I encourage parents and educators to utilize Perspective to help individual students build on their successes and improve in areas where they are struggling to make progress,” said Commissioner Seagren.

Science MCA-II assessment

This spring, a total of 184,570 students in grades 5, 8 and high school took the first Science MCA-II online. The Science MCA-II is interactive and allows students to observe experiments online. Results from the Science MCA-II, which do not currently impact AYP, are scheduled to be released later this summer.

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Math MCA-II							
Grade	3	4	5	6	7	8	11
2007	79.3	70.9	63.2	63.0	61.4	58.8	32.3
2008	81.4	71.6	66.0	64.6	61.4	58.2	34.4
Reading MCA-II							
Grade	3	4	5	6	7	8	10
2007	79.6	71.5	73.2	66.6	63.2	63.3	61.8
2008	79.0	72.2	73.4	69.6	64.7	65.7	70.7

(Beginning at 12:01 a.m. on Monday, June 30, state and local data will be available to the public at www.education.state.mn.us)

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