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NEWS RELEASE

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Rhode Island Writing Scores Improve on Nation's Report Card, Surpass National Average

About one of three Rhode Island students attained proficiency on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 2007 Grade 8 writing test, according to results released today (April 3) by the National Center for Education Statistics of the U.S. Department of Education.

These results marked a steady improvement in writing scores since the current form of the test, sometimes referred to as "The Nation's Report Card," was first administered in 1998. The results show that 32 percent of Rhode Island students achieved proficiency, up by 7 percentage points since 1998 and up by 3 points since the previous administration of the test, in 2002.

Rhode Island has moved from 1 point below the national average to 1 point above the national average, and it is one of 19 states to show significant improvement since 2002.

The results showed that 85 percent of the students achieved the "basic" level, up by 1 point since 2002 and up by 2 points since 1998.

NAEP defines "proficient" as representing "solid academic performance" and "competency over challenging subject matter." It defines "basic" as demonstrating "partial mastery" of the knowledge and skills "that are fundamental for proficient work."

"These 8th-grade writing-test results show that the newly instituted education standards and assessments — developed jointly with Vermont and New Hampshire — are beginning to show results," said Governor Donald L. Carcieri. "This is due to the hard work of our students and teachers. We are beginning to move education scores in the right direction, especially in the lower grades. But the results of our recent high-school tests show that we still have many challenges ahead of us."

"The results released today are further evidence that we are progressing in many subject areas and at many grade levels," said Peter McWalters, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education. "We still, however, see gaps in performance that affect many student groups. We must work on resolving these issues through targeted resources and interventions."

When broken down by ethnic group and gender, the NAEP writing results show widening gaps between various groups of students. Though no group showed a decline in score, the performance gaps widened between white and Hispanic students, white and black students, students not living in poverty and students living in poverty, and female and male students.

Statewide results were released at the Grade 8 level only. The test was also administered in Grade 12, but results were released at the national level only.

Further information on the NAEP results, for this test and others, is available at:

<http://nationsreportcard.gov>