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Minnesota Department of Education Releases 2016 MCA Scores

ROSEVILLE – Today, the Minnesota Department of Education released scores for the 2016 Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs). The statewide proficiency data show reading scores increased slightly when looking at all grades. Math scores declined slightly, while science scores increased. The results over time show that while scores have slowly increased, achievement gaps between white students and students of color persist.

“It is disappointing to see the slow pace of progress,” said Education Commissioner Brenda Cassellius. **“But those of us who do this work every day remain undeterred in our goal, which is to guarantee an excellent and equitable education for every Minnesota student.”**

Sixty percent of students in grades 3-8 and 10 who took the reading MCA scored proficient, up 1 percentage point from last year, and up 2 percentage points since 2013 when the new reading test aligned to college- and career-ready standards was implemented. Results for students of color show that while all racial-ethnic groups have improved in reading since 2013, achievement gaps remain largely unchanged since 2013.

In math, 61 percent of students in grades 3-8 scored proficient, down 1 percentage point since last year, but up 3 percentage points from 2011 when the new math test was implemented. Similarly, gaps between students of color and their white peers remain unchanged, or grew slightly since 2011. In grade 11 math, scores dropped by 2 percentage points over last year. Here, achievement gaps closed slightly, but only because white students' scores dropped more significantly than those of students of color.

“Closing achievement gaps is possible, but I am becoming increasingly convinced that we cannot do it alone. The only way we will close these stubborn gaps is if we address with equal urgency the opportunity gaps outside of school that impact children’s likelihood of school success,” said Cassellius. **“That means paying attention to and supporting families from birth, ensuring they have access to high-quality childcare and early education, stable housing, economic opportunity, fair wages that support families and health care when they need it.”**

A closer look at the high school results show a steep increase in the number of parents opting their students out of taking the state assessments. This spring 2,227 11th graders were opted out of taking the math MCA, up from 694 last year. In 2013, only 19 students were opted out of the grade 11 math test statewide. In reading, 1,404 students were opted out this spring, compared to 763 in 2015 and only 11 in 2013. Schools currently only have a method for reporting formal parental opt-outs. These numbers do not include student refusals, which will be counted beginning in 2017.

“The record number of students opting out of tests this year reflects the growing sentiment by teachers, parents and students that one single test is not an effective measure of student knowledge. Even though the new Every Student Succeeds Act requires that we continue testing, I will be working with teachers and parents on their appropriate place in our new accountability system,” said Cassellius.

Science, tested in grades five and eight and once in high school, is currently not factored into state or federal accountability systems. Fifty-five percent of tested students scored proficient on the science exam, up 2 percentage points from last year and 5 points from 2012.

The data released today show student performance on state tests at one point in time. On September 1, the department will release the Multiple Measurements Ratings (MMR), a more comprehensive measure of a school’s performance. The MMR expands beyond proficiency, by factoring in student growth on tests over time, progress towards reducing achievement gaps, and graduation rates for high schools. The MMR is Minnesota’s system of accountability to the federal government. The department is currently engaging the community and stakeholders in a discussion about the state’s plan for a new accountability system under the Every Student Succeeds Act, which replaces the federal No Child Left Behind law.

MCA results will be found on the [Minnesota Report Card](http://rc.education.state.mn.us/) beginning Thursday, July 28 at <http://rc.education.state.mn.us/>.

[View the 2016 MCA Results Presentation.](#)