

## General Achievement Trends — New Jersey

*K-12 enrollment — 1,271,481*

The raw data used to develop these state profiles, including data for additional grade levels and years before 2002, can be found on the CEP Web site at [www.cep-dc.org](http://www.cep-dc.org). Click on the link on the left for No Child Left Behind. In the Document Library, look for the most recent report on student achievement since 2002. Below the name of the report, click on the link for View State Profiles and Worksheets. Scroll down the page, and click on the Worksheet links for any state.

### Overall Achievement — Key Findings

#### *General results*

The tables in this profile present state test results in reading and math at two achievement levels (proficient and advanced) and at one grade each at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. (None of New Jersey's three achievement levels is equivalent to the basic level, so trends at this level could not be determined.) These data are more complete than the percentage of students scoring proficient that is the main indicator used to determine adequate yearly progress under the No Child Left Behind Act.

In 2008, New Jersey implemented new reading and math tests in grades 5 through 8. As a result, New Jersey did not have three or more years of comparable data through 2007-08 at the middle school level, so trends could not be determined.

In general, New Jersey students made gains at the **proficient** and **advanced** achievement levels, although results at the advanced level in reading were mixed.

#### *Specific results*

- Since 2002, the percentage of students scoring at the **proficient** level and above in reading increased slightly at the elementary and high school grade levels analyzed. In math, the percentage proficient rose at a moderate-to-large rate at these grade levels.
- In reading, the percentage of students reaching the **advanced** level decreased slightly at the elementary and high school levels. In math, the percentage of advanced students went up at a moderate-to-large rate at the elementary school level and at a slight rate at the high school grade analyzed.

## Data Limitations

Years of comparable percentage proficient data

2004 – 2008: Grade 3  
 2001– 2008: Grade 4 reading  
 1999 – 2008: Grade 4 math  
 2006 – 2007: Grades 5–7 (new grades 5-7 tests implemented in 2008)  
 1999 – 2007: Grade 8 (new grade 8 test implemented in 2008)  
 2002 – 2008: Grade 11

Years of data needed to compute effect sizes

Available for the following years:  
 2001–2005: Grade 4 reading  
 1999–2005: Grade 4 math  
 1999–2005: Grade 8 reading and math  
 2002–2005: Grade 11 reading and math  
 Complete effect size data not available beyond 2005

Disaggregated data for all subgroups and comparison groups

Percentages proficient are not available until 2007 for comparison group of students who are *not* disabled and not available for any year for students who are *not* English language learners (ELL), so the students with disabilities and ELL subgroups are compared with all tested students in the state.  
 Percentage proficient data for comparison group of students who are *not* low-income not available until 2003 for grade 4.

Numbers of test-takers by subgroup

Not available until 2003 for most subgroups for grade 4

## Test Characteristics

The characteristics highlighted below are for the state reading and mathematics tests used for accountability under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

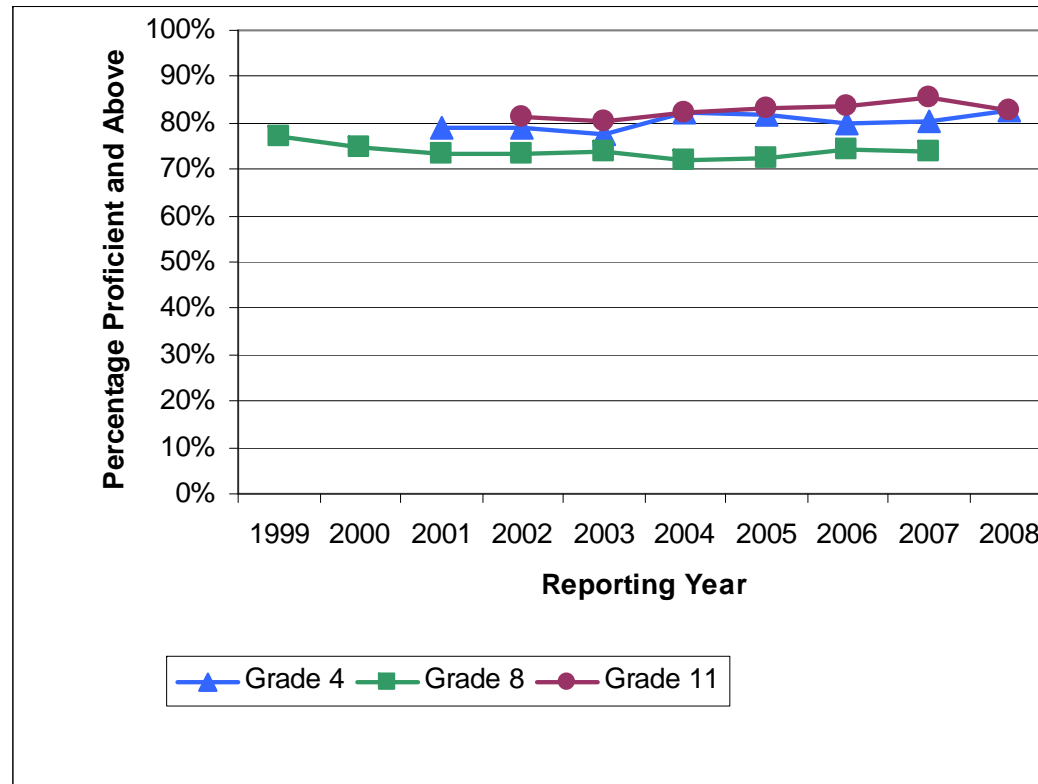
Test(s) used for NCLB accountability

New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge, grades 3–7 (NJ ASK 3, 4, 5, 6, 7; NJ ASK grade 8 implemented in 2008)  
 Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment (GEPA; last administered in 2006-07)  
 High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA), grade 11  
 Alternate Proficiency Assessment

Grades tested for NCLB accountability	3–8, 11
State labels for achievement levels	NJ uses three achievement levels: Partially Proficient, Proficient, and Advanced Proficient. For our analyses we treated Proficient as Proficient and Advanced Proficient as Advanced. No NJ achievement level was treated as our Basic.
High school NCLB test also used as an exit exam?	Yes
First year test used	1998: GEPA ( <i>last administered in 2006-07</i> ) 1999: NJ ASK 4 math 2001: NJ ASK 4 language arts 2002: HSPA 2004: NJ ASK 3 2006: NJ ASK 5, 6, 7 ( <i>last administered in 2006-07</i> ) 2008: NJ ASK 5-8 ( <i>implemented to replace GEPA and 2006 versions of the NJ ASK 5, 6, 7</i> ).
Time of test administration	Spring
Major changes in testing system (2002–present)	1999: Standards set for the Elementary School Proficiency Assessment (ESPA) and NJASK 4 in math 2001: Standards set for the ESPA and NJ ASK 4 in language arts March 2004: NJ ASK 4 replaced ESPA for accountability purposes (name changed but test content and structure remained the same) March 2005: NJ ASK 3 first used for accountability purposes 2005–06: Grades 5, 6, and 7 added to testing Spring 2007: HSPA science assessments began 2008: New NJ ASK grade 5-8 programs were implemented, new standard were set 2009: New grade 3-4 testing programs established in 2009, with standards to be set June 2009.

## Overall Achievement — Percentages Proficient

Figure NJ-1. Percentage of Students Scoring at the Proficient Level and Above in Reading

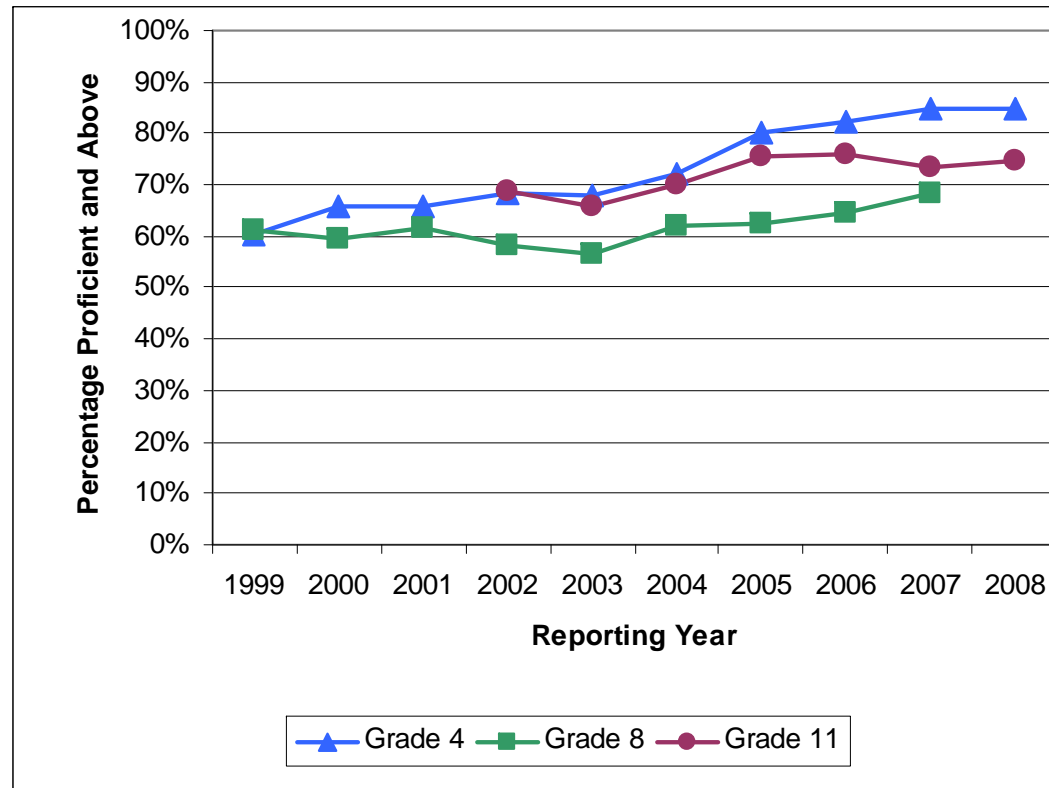


**Table NJ-1. Percentage of Students Scoring at the Proficient Level and Above in Reading**

Grade Level	Reporting Year										Pre-NCLB Average Yearly Percentage Point Gain 1999-2002 <sup>1</sup>	Post-NCLB Average Yearly Percentage Point Gain 2002-2008 <sup>1</sup>
	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008		
Grade 3						79%	83%	83%	83%	86%	NA	1.7
<b>Grade 4</b>			<b>79%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>0.6</b>
Grade 5								86%	89%		NA	NA
Grade 6								75%	76%		NA	NA
Grade 7								80%	80%		NA	NA
<b>Grade 8</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>74%</b>		<b>-1.4</b>	<b>NA</b>
<b>Grade 11</b>				<b>81%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>0.3</b>

Table reads: The percentage of 3<sup>rd</sup> graders who scored at the proficient level and above on the state reading test increased from 79% in 2004 to 86% in 2008. The average yearly gain in the percentage proficient in grade 3 reading was 1.7 percentage points per year after NCLB was enacted.

<sup>1</sup>Averages are subject to rounding error.

**Figure NJ-2. Percentage of Students Scoring at the Proficient Level and Above in Mathematics**

**Table NJ-2. Percentage of Students Scoring at the Proficient Level and Above in Mathematics**

Grade Level	Reporting Year										Pre-NCLB Average Yearly Percentage Point Gain 1999-2002 <sup>1</sup>	Post-NCLB Average Yearly Percentage Point Gain 2002-2008 <sup>1</sup>
	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008		
Grade 3						77%	83%	87%	87%	87%	NA	2.5
<b>Grade 4</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>2.7</b>
Grade 5								82%	84%		NA	NA
Grade 6								71%	79%		NA	NA
Grade 7								64%	66%		NA	NA
<b>Grade 8</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>68%</b>		<b>-1.0</b>	<b>NA</b>
<b>Grade 11</b>				<b>69%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>1.0</b>

Table reads: The percentage of 3<sup>rd</sup> graders who scored at the proficient level and above on the state math test increased from 77% in 2004 to 87% in 2008. The average yearly gain in the percentage proficient in grade 3 math was 2.5 percentage points per year after NCLB was enacted.

<sup>1</sup>Averages are subject to rounding error.

## Overall Achievement — Percentages Advanced, Proficient, and Basic

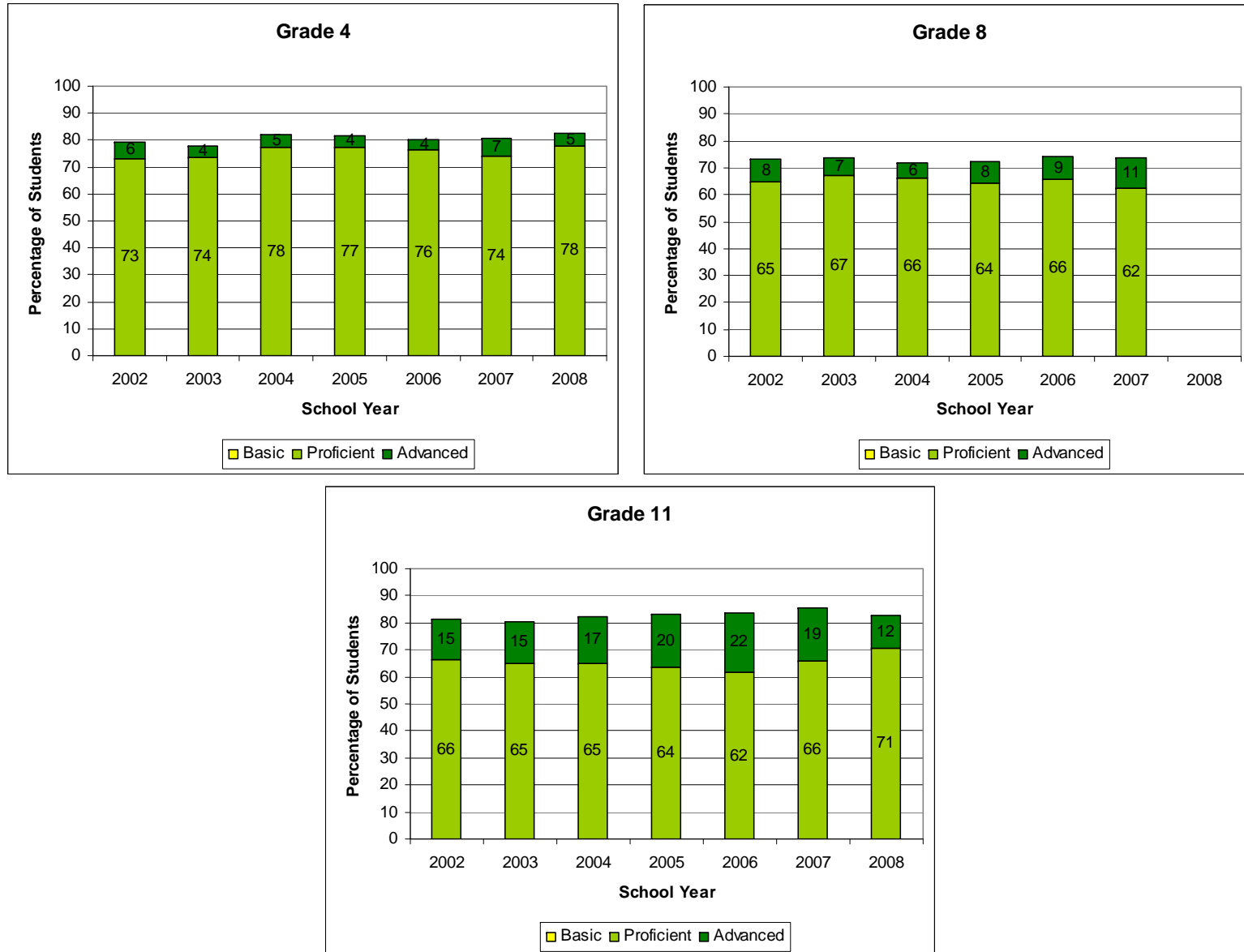
### *How to read figures 3 and 4 and tables 3 and 4*

The stacked bars in figures 3 and 4 show the percentages of students scoring at the proficient and advanced levels on the state tests used for NCLB accountability. Because none of New Jersey's three achievement levels is equivalent to the NCLB basic achievement level, no analyses could be conducted of performance at the basic level and above.

The following information may be helpful in interpreting the figures:

- The percentage proficient and above—the benchmark used to determine adequate yearly progress under NCLB—is the sum of the middle and top segments of the bars (percentage proficient plus percentage advanced). The resulting sum corresponds with the percentage proficient and above shown in tables 3 and 4. In a few instances, however, the sums in the figures may differ from those in the tables by a percentage point due to rounding.
- The bars do not total 100% because students who score at the basic or *below* basic levels are not displayed.
- By looking at the percentages in each segment of the bars, one can see how achievement trends at different levels interact. Ideally, one would want to see increases at all three levels, as more students move from below basic to basic achievement, from basic to proficient, and from proficient to advanced. But other scenarios may also be illuminating. For example, if the percentage proficient has grown while the percentages advanced has shrunk, this suggests most of the academic attention was focused on moving “bubble kids” from the basic to proficient levels, with little or no attention to the highest-performing students.
- Some states use different labels for their achievement levels instead of basic, proficient, and advanced. The specific state labels are listed in the Test Characteristics section at the beginning of this profile.



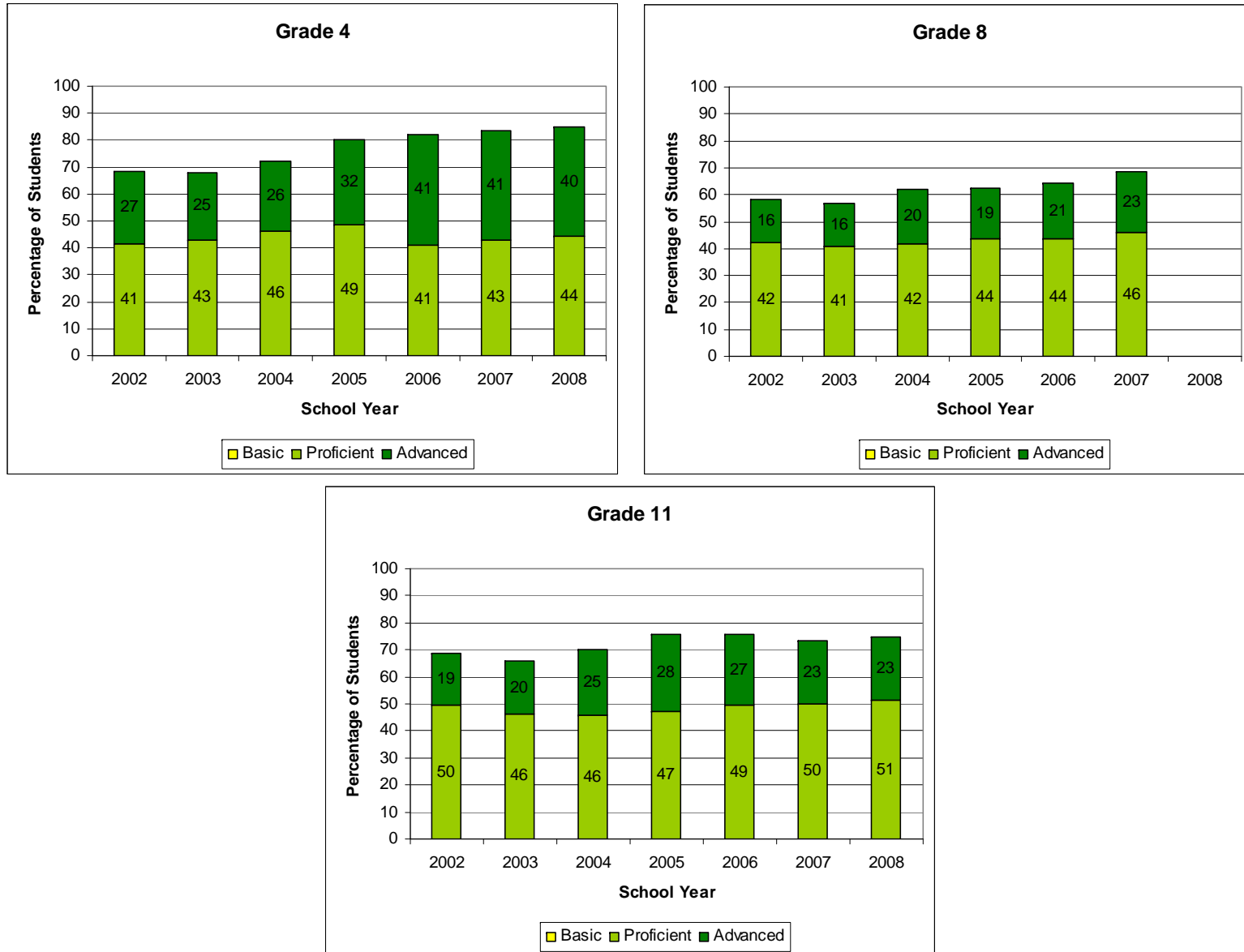
**Figure NJ-3. Percentages of Students Scoring at the Advanced, Proficient, and Basic Levels in Reading**

**Table NJ-3. Percentages of Students Scoring at the Advanced, Proficient and Above, and Basic and Above Levels in Reading**

Achievement Level	Reporting Year							Average Yearly Percentage Point Gain <sup>1</sup>
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	
Grade 4								
Advanced	6%	4%	5%	4%	4%	7%	5%	-0.2
Proficient and Above	79%	78%	82%	82%	80%	81%	83%	0.6
Basic and Above	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Grade 8								
Advanced	8%	7%	6%	8%	9%	11%		NA
Proficient and Above	73%	74%	72%	72%	74%	74%		NA
Basic and Above	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA		NA
Grade 11								
Advanced	15%	15%	17%	20%	22%	19%	12%	-0.4
Proficient and Above	81%	80%	82%	83%	84%	85%	83%	0.3
Basic and Above	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Table reads: The percentage of 4<sup>th</sup> graders who scored at the advanced level on their state reading test decreased from 6% in 2002 to 5% in 2008. During this period, the average yearly loss in the percentage advanced was 0.2 percentage points per year in grade 4 reading.

<sup>1</sup>Averages are subject to rounding error.

**Figure NJ-4. Percentages of Students Scoring at the Advanced, Proficient, and Basic Levels in Mathematics**

**Table NJ-4. Percentages of Students Scoring at the Advanced, Proficient and Above, and Basic and Above Levels in Mathematics**

Achievement Level	Reporting Year							Average Yearly Percentage Point Gain <sup>1</sup>
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	
Grade 4								
Advanced	27%	25%	26%	32%	41%	41%	40%	2.2
Proficient and Above	69%	68%	72%	80%	82%	85%	85%	2.7
Basic and Above	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Grade 8								
Advanced	16%	16%	20%	19%	21%	23%		NA
Proficient and Above	58%	57%	62%	62%	65%	68%		NA
Basic and Above	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA		NA
Grade 11								
Advanced	19%	20%	25%	28%	27%	23%	23%	0.7
Proficient and Above	69%	66%	70%	76%	76%	73%	75%	1.0
Basic and Above	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Table reads: The percentage of 4<sup>th</sup> graders who scored at the advanced level on their state math test increased from 27% in 2002 to 40% in 2008. During this period, the average yearly gain in the percentage advanced was 2.2 percentage points per year in grade 4 math.

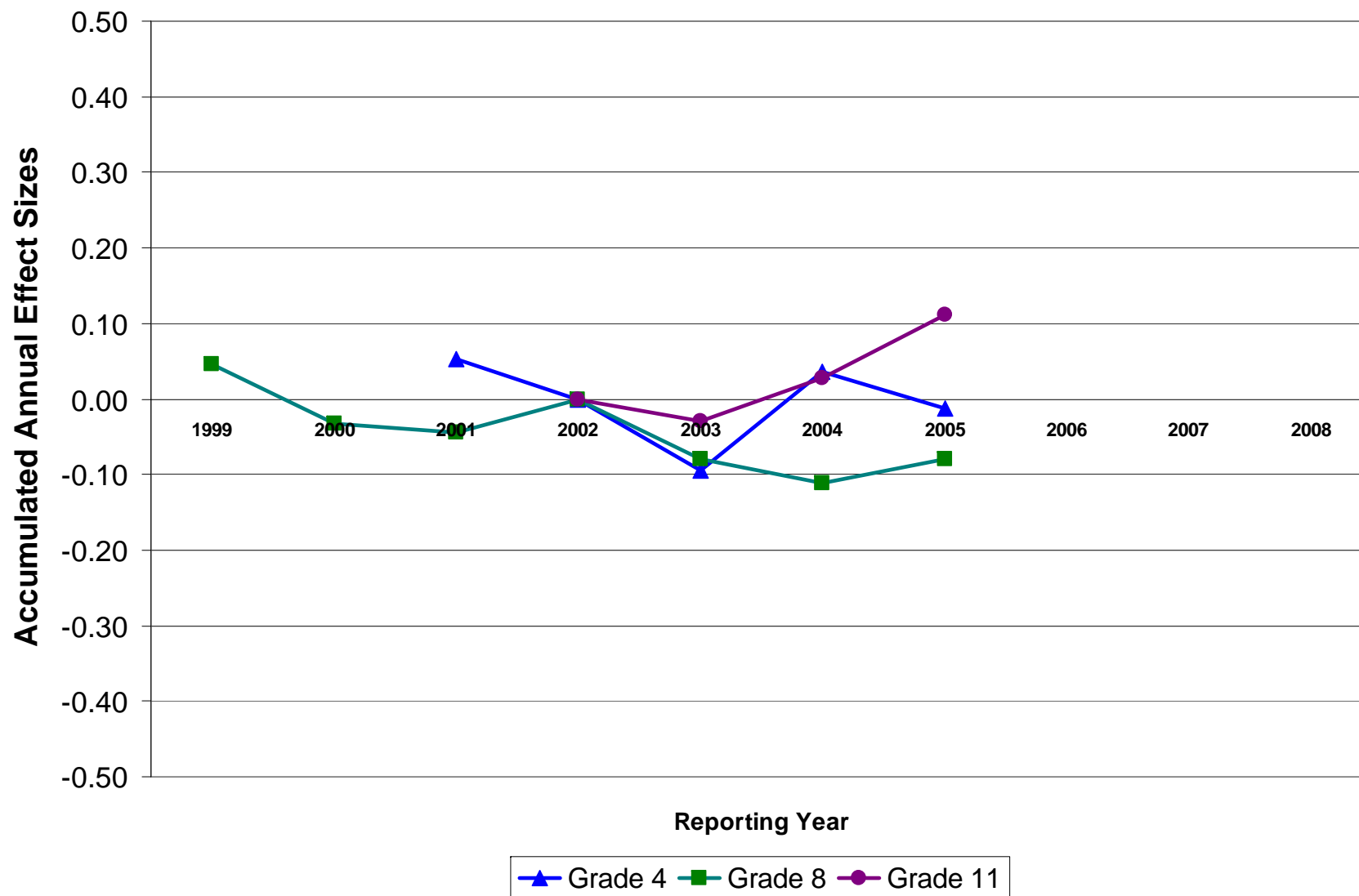
<sup>1</sup>Averages are subject to rounding error.

## Overall Achievement — Effect Sizes

### *How to read figures 5 and 6 and tables 5 and 6*

An **effect size** is a statistical tool that conveys the amount of difference between test results using a common unit of measurement which does not depend on the scoring scale for a particular test. An effect size is computed by subtracting the **mean scale score** (the average score) on a test for one year, such as 2006, from the mean scale score for another year, such as 2007, then dividing the result by the average standard deviation. (The **standard deviation** is a measure of how much test scores tend to deviate from the mean—in other words, how spread out or bunched together scores are.) If the mean score has not changed, then the effect size is 0. An effect size of +1 indicates an increase of 1 standard deviation from the previous year's mean score. Effect sizes can also be used to calculate differences in scores between two subgroups of students.

Tables 5 and 6 show mean scale scores, standard deviations, and the **accumulated annual effect size** (AAES), which is the cumulative gain in effect size over a range of years. For example, to determine the accumulated annual effect size between 2006 and 2008, one would calculate the change in effect size from 2006 to 2007, and from 2007 to 2008, then add the results together. In figures and tables 5 and 6, 2002 (or the closest year with comparable data) was used as a starting point (0.00) to calculate accumulated annual effect sizes after NCLB was enacted (and before, if available). Steady gains in AAES are represented by negative numbers before 2002 rising to positive numbers after 2002, so that pre- and post-NCLB trends can be shown on the same trend line. A positive AAES before 2002 or a negative AAES after 2002 indicates a decline in performance over time.

**Figure NJ-5. Reading Achievement Trends in Terms of Effect Sizes**

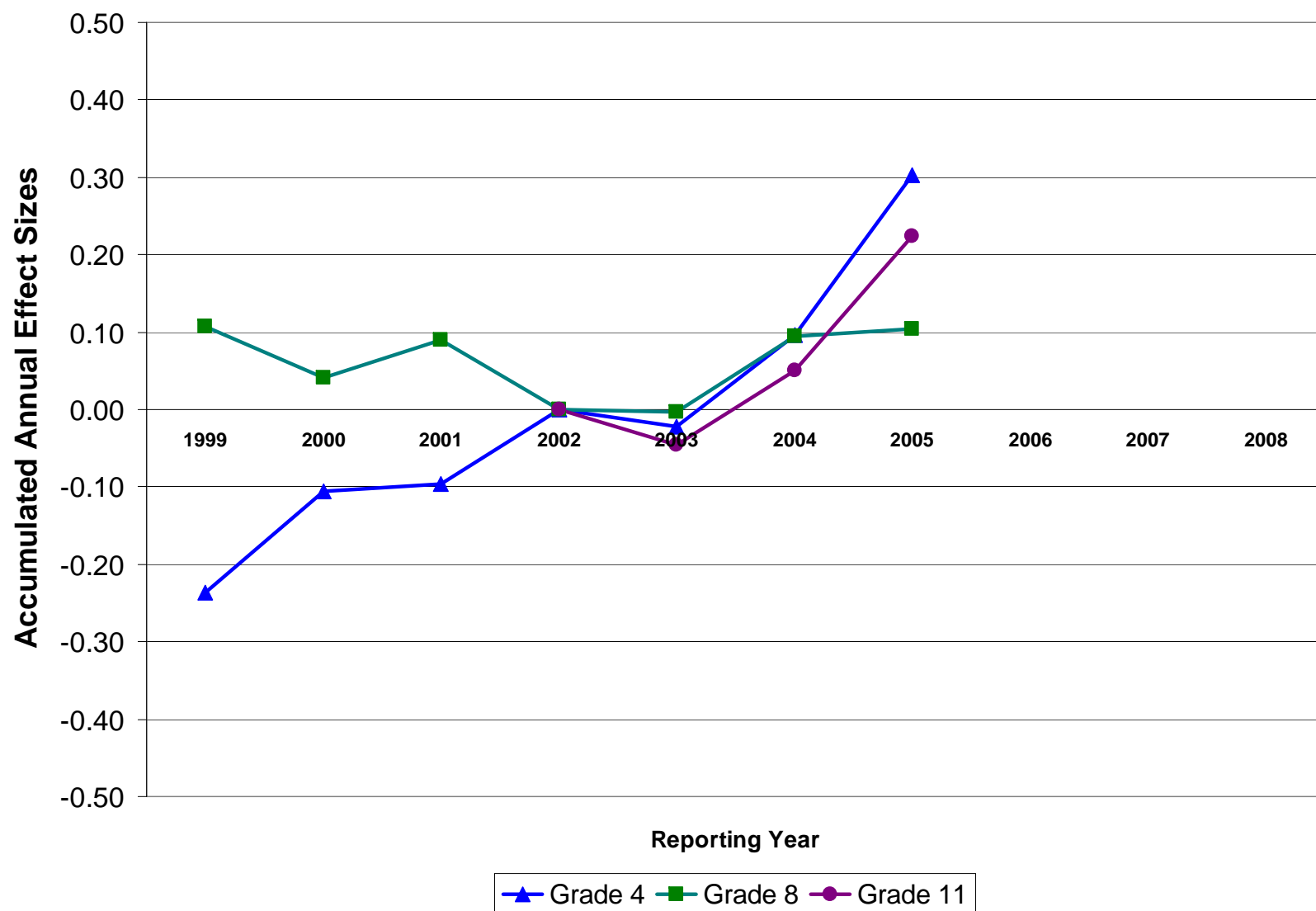
**Table NJ-5. Reading Achievement Trends in Terms of Effect Sizes**

Grade Level		Reporting Year									Pre-NCLB Average Yearly Effect Size Gain 1999-2002 <sup>1</sup>	Post-NCLB Average Yearly Effect Size Gain 2002-2008 <sup>1</sup>	
		1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007			2008
Grade 4	MSS (SD)			218.1 (26.1)	216.8 (22.5)	214.6 (24.0)	217.7 (23.2)	216.6 (22.1)					
	AAES			0.05	0.00	-0.09	0.04	-0.01				NA	0.00
Grade 8	MSS (SD)	216.2 (26.0)	214.1 (26.7)	213.8 (27.8)	215 (26.9)	212.8 (28.3)	211.9 (28.2)	212.8 (28.0)					
	AAES	0.05	-0.03	-0.04	0.00	-0.08	-0.11	-0.08				-0.02	-0.03
Grade 11	MSS (SD)				220.7 (32.2)	219.7 (34.3)	221.6 (32.4)	224.3 (31.4)					
	AAES				0.00	-0.03	0.03	0.11				NA	0.04

Table reads: The mean scale score (MSS) of 4<sup>th</sup> graders on the state reading test decreased from 218.1 in 2001, to 216.8 in 2002, to 216.6 in 2005. The standard deviation (SD) for the mean scale score in 2002 was 22.5. Using 2002, the year NCLB was enacted, as a starting point (0.00), the accumulated annual effect size (AAES) for grade 4 reading totaled -0.01 by 2005. For the post-NCLB period, the average yearly gain in effect size at grade 4 was 0.00.

Note: The NJASK and HSPA are scored on a scale of 100-300.

<sup>1</sup>Averages are subject to rounding error.

**Figure NJ-6. Mathematics Achievement Trends in Terms of Effect Sizes**



**Table NJ-6. Mathematics Achievement Trends in Terms of Effect Sizes**

Grade Level		Reporting Year									Pre-NCLB Average Yearly Effect Size Gain 1999-2002 <sup>1</sup>	Post-NCLB Average Yearly Effect Size Gain 2002-2008 <sup>1</sup>	
		1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007			2008
Grade 4	MSS (SD)	209.4 (36.3)	214.2 (37.1)	214.6 (36.3)	218.1 (37.0)	217.3 (36.7)	221.4 (32.9)	228.0 (31.1)					
	AAES	-0.24	-0.11	-0.10	0.00	-0.02	0.10	0.30				0.08	0.10
Grade 8	MSS (SD)	213 (34.6)	210.7 (35.0)	212.4 (35.2)	209.3 (33.9)	209.2 (34.2)	212.6 (35.0)	212.9 (28.2)					
	AAES	0.11	0.04	0.09	0.00	0.00	0.10	0.10				-0.04	0.03
Grade 11	MSS (SD)				216.4 (32.5)	214.9 (34.0)	218.2 (35.2)	224.1 (33.0)					
	AAES				0.00	-0.05	0.05	0.22				NA	0.07

Table reads: The mean scale score (MSS) of 4<sup>th</sup> graders on the state math test increased from 209.4 in 1999, to 214.2 in 2002, to 228.0 in 2005. The standard deviation (SD) for the mean scale score in 2002 was 37.0. Using 2002, the year NCLB was enacted, as a starting point (0.00), the accumulated annual effect size (AAES) for grade 4 math totaled 0.30 by 2005. Working backward from 2002, the AAES for 1999 was -0.24. For the pre-NCLB period, the average yearly gain in effect size at grade 4 was 0.08; for the post-NCLB period, it was 0.10.

Note: The NJASK and HSPA are scored on a scale of 100-300.

<sup>1</sup>Averages are subject to rounding error.

## Key Terms

*Percentage proficient (and above)* — The percentage of students in a group who score at and above the cut score for “proficient” performance on the state test used to determine progress under NCLB. The Act requires states to report student test performance in terms of at least three achievement levels: basic, proficient, and advanced. Adequate yearly progress determinations are based on the percentage of students scoring at the proficient level and above.

*Percentage basic (and above)* — The percentage of students in a group who score at and above the cut score for “basic” performance on the state test used to determine progress under NCLB.

*Percentage advanced* — The percentage of students in a group who reach or exceed the cut score for “advanced” performance on the state test used to determine progress under NCLB.

*Moderate-to-large gain* — For the percentage basic, proficient, or advanced, an average gain of 1 or more percentage points per year. For effect size, an average gain of 0.02 or greater per year.

*Slight gain* — For the percentage basic, proficient, or advanced, an average gain of less than 1 percentage point per year. For effect size, an average gain of less than 0.02 per year.

*Moderate-to-large decline* — For the percentage basic, proficient, or advanced, an average decline of 1 or more percentage points per year. For effect size, an average decline of 0.02 or greater per year.

*Slight decline* — For the percentage basic, proficient, or advanced, an average decline of less than 1 percentage points per year. For effect size, an average decline of less than 0.02 per year.

*Effect size* — A statistical tool that conveys the amount of difference between test results using a common unit of measurement which does not depend on the scoring scale for a particular test.

*Accumulated annual effect size* — The cumulative gain in effect size over a range of years.

*Mean scale score* — The arithmetical average of a group of test scores, expressed on a common scale for a particular state’s test. The mean is calculated by adding the scores and dividing the sum by the number of scores.

*Standard deviation* — A measure of how much test scores tend to deviate from the mean—in other words, how spread out or bunched together test scores are. If students’ scores are bunched together, with many scores close to the mean, then the standard deviation will be small. If scores are spread out, with many students scoring at the high or low ends of the scale, then the standard deviation will be large.

## Cautions and Explanations

*Different labels for achievement levels* — For consistency, all of the state profiles developed for this report use a common set of labels (basic, proficient, and advanced) for the main achievement levels required by NCLB. In practice, however, some states may use different labels, such as “meets standard” instead of proficient, and some states have established additional achievement levels beyond those required by NCLB.

*Different names for subgroups* — For the sake of consistency and ease of data tabulation, all of the state profiles developed for this report use a common set of names for the major student subgroups. In practice, however, states use various names for subgroups that may differ from those used here (such as using “Hispanic” instead of “Latino,” or “special education students” instead of “students with disabilities”). Moreover, a few states separately track the performance of subgroups not included in the analyses for this report.

*Special caution for students with disabilities and English language learners* — Trends for students with disabilities and English language learners should be interpreted with caution because changes in federal guidance and state accountability plans may have altered which students in these subgroups are tested for accountability purposes, how they are tested, and when their test scores are counted as proficient under NCLB. These factors could affect the year-to-year comparability of test results.

*Inclusion of former English language learners* — In many states, the subgroup of English language learners (also known as limited English proficient students) includes students who were formerly English language learners but who have achieved English language proficiency or fluency in the last two years. Federal NCLB regulations permit states to include these formerly ELL students (sometimes referred to as “redesignated fluent English proficient” students) in the ELL subgroup for up to two years for purposes of NCLB accountability.

*Limitations of percentage proficient measure* — The percentage proficient, the main gauge of student performance under NCLB, can be easily understood and gives a snapshot of how many students have met their state’s performance expectations. But it also has several limitations as a measure of student achievement. Users of percentage proficient data should keep in mind these limitations, particularly the following:

- \* “Proficient” means different things across different states. States vary widely in curriculum, learning expectations, and tests, and state tests differ considerably in their difficulty and cut scores for proficient performance.
- \* Although this study has taken steps to avoid comparing test data where there have been “breaks” in comparability resulting from new tests, changes in content standards, revised cut scores, or other major changes in testing programs, the year-to-year comparability of test results in the same state may still be affected by less obvious policy and demographic changes.
- \* Changes in student performance may occur that are not reflected in percentage proficient data, such as an increase in the number of students reaching performance levels below and above proficient (such as the basic or advanced levels).
- \* The size of the achievement gaps between various subgroups depends in part on where a state sets its cut score for proficiency. For example, if a proficiency cut score is set so high that almost nobody reaches it or so low that almost everyone reaches it, there will be little apparent achievement gap. By contrast, if the cut score is closer to the mean test score, the gaps between subgroups will be more apparent.

*Difficulty of attributing causes* — Although the tables above show trends in test scores since the enactment of NCLB, one cannot assume that these trends have occurred *because* of NCLB. It is always difficult to determine a cause-and-effect relationship between test score trends and any specific education policy or program due to the many federal, state, and local reforms undertaken in recent years and due to the lack of an appropriate “control” group of students not affected by NCLB.