



The Education Trust

THE STATE OF EDUCATION FOR

NATIVE STUDENTS



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In recent years, we as a nation have taken the critical step of acknowledging the gaps in opportunity and achievement that have for far too long consigned too many young people — particularly low-income students and students of color — to lives on the margins of the American mainstream. And with this acknowledgment has come some real progress. Although we still have a long way to go, national assessment data show that in both fourth and eighth grades, students in most ethnic groups are reading and doing math better today than they were in the early 2000s, and long-standing gaps separating different groups of students are narrowing.

Amidst all this progress, though, one group stands apart: Native students, a group that includes American Indian and Alaska Native youth.¹ Unlike achievement results for every other major ethnic group in the United States, those for Native students have remained nearly flat in recent years, and the gaps separating these students from their white peers have actually widened. Indeed, while Native students performed above black and Latino students in both fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math in 2005, by 2011, that lead had all but disappeared.

In this fact sheet, we have collected the best available national data on the schools Native students attend, their achievement, and their educational attainment. We hope that these data will help spark much needed conversation and action to ensure that we, as a nation, reverse these trends.

¹ In addition to American Indian and Alaska Native students, the Native student group includes Native Hawaiian youth. Because data for Native Hawaiian students are generally captured under the Hawaiian/Pacific Islander or Asian/Pacific Islander categories in the sources used in this fact sheet, we were unable to include Native Hawaiian students in the Native student group. As such, in this fact sheet, "Native students" refers to American Indian and Alaska Native students only.



Where do Native students go to school?

About **607,000 Native students** attend public and Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools.

Many people assume that most Native students attend Bureau of Indian Education schools.

In reality, however, only **7 percent** of Native students attend BIE schools.



The vast majority — **93 percent** — attend regular public schools.

In fact, Oklahoma, Arizona, and California each educate more Native students than BIE does.

STATES WITH THE **LARGEST NUMBERS** OF NATIVE STUDENTS

| State | Number of Native students |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Oklahoma | 116,597 |
| Arizona | 55,312 |
| California | 43,546 |
| Bureau of Indian Ed | 41,962 |
| New Mexico | 34,530 |
| Alaska | 30,433 |
| Texas | 23,607 |
| North Carolina | 22,199 |
| Washington | 17,570 |
| Minnesota | 16,296 |

While Native students are more likely than their peers to attend rural schools, about **one-third** of students do attend urban or suburban schools.

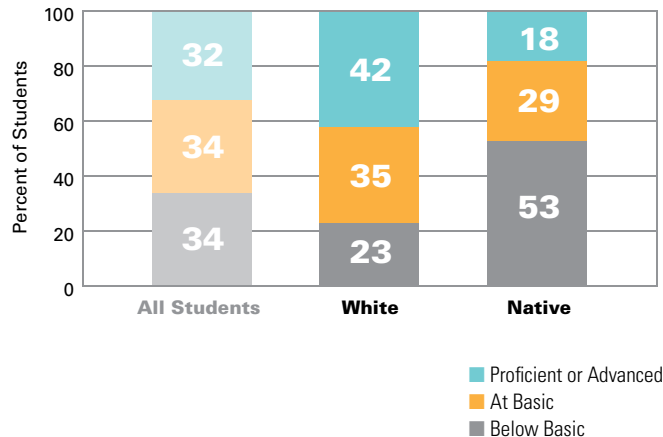
How are schools performing for Native students?

In 2011, only **18 percent** of Native fourth-graders were **proficient or advanced** in reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), as compared with **42 percent** of white fourth-graders.

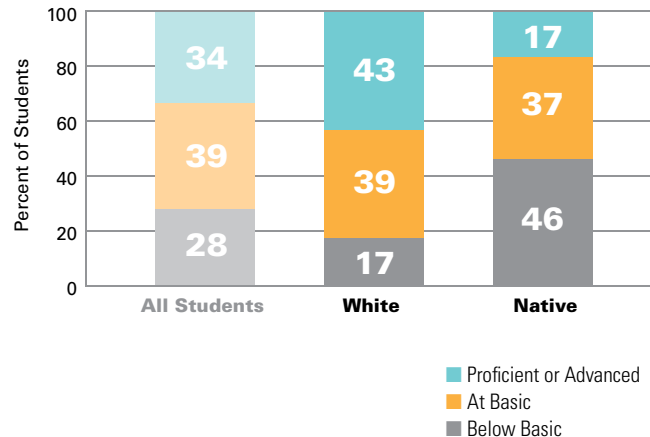


In 2011, only **17 percent** of Native eighth-graders were **proficient or advanced** in math, and nearly half — **46 percent** — were **below the basic level**. The numbers for white students were exactly the opposite — **17 percent** of white eighth-graders were **below basic**, and **43 percent** were **proficient or advanced**.

2011 Performance: Fourth-Grade Reading



2011 Performance: Eighth-Grade Math



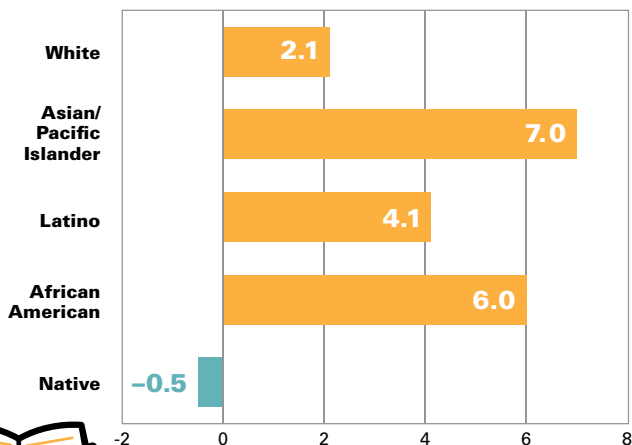
Have schools improved over time for Native students?



Performance for Native students has not improved over time. While fourth-grade reading performance of every other major ethnic group on NAEP rose between 2005 and 2011, results for Native students have been virtually flat.

In fact, Native students were performing better in fourth-grade reading than African American and Latino students in 2005, but that lead had disappeared by 2011.

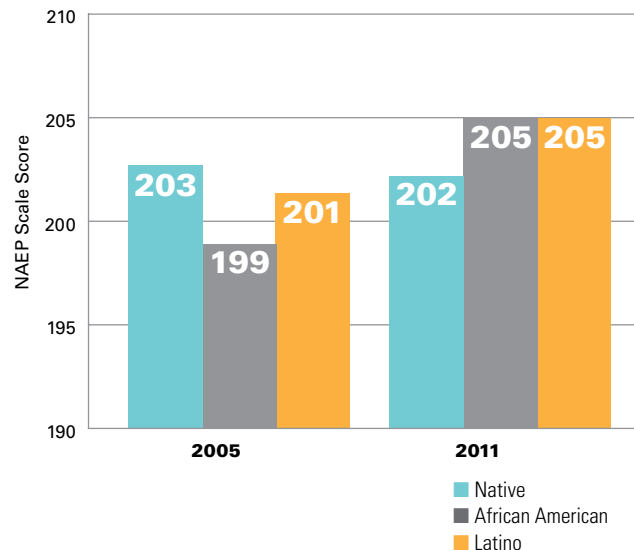
2005–2011 Improvement: Fourth-Grade Reading



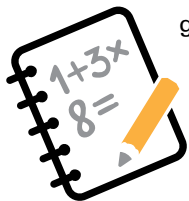
2005–2011 Change in NAEP scale scores (scale score points)



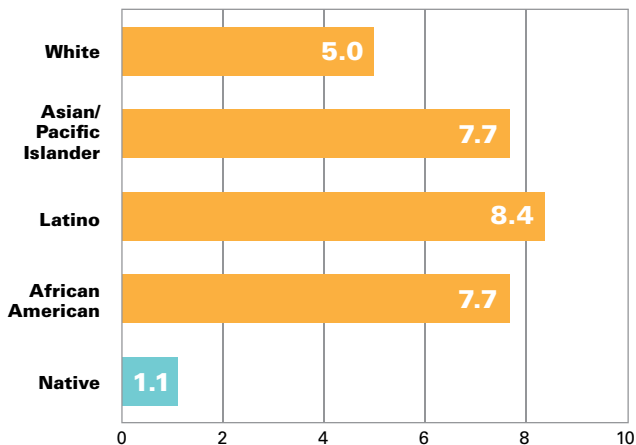
NAEP Performance: Fourth-Grade Reading



In eighth-grade math, the trends are nearly the same: Once again, results for Native students improved more slowly than those for every other ethnic group. Rather than catching these students up, our education system is letting them slip further and further behind.



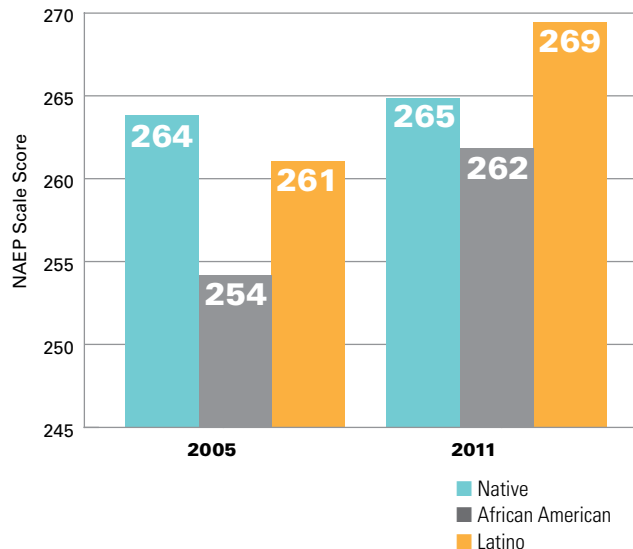
2005–2011 Improvement: Eighth-Grade Math



2005–2011 Change in NAEP scale scores (scale score points)

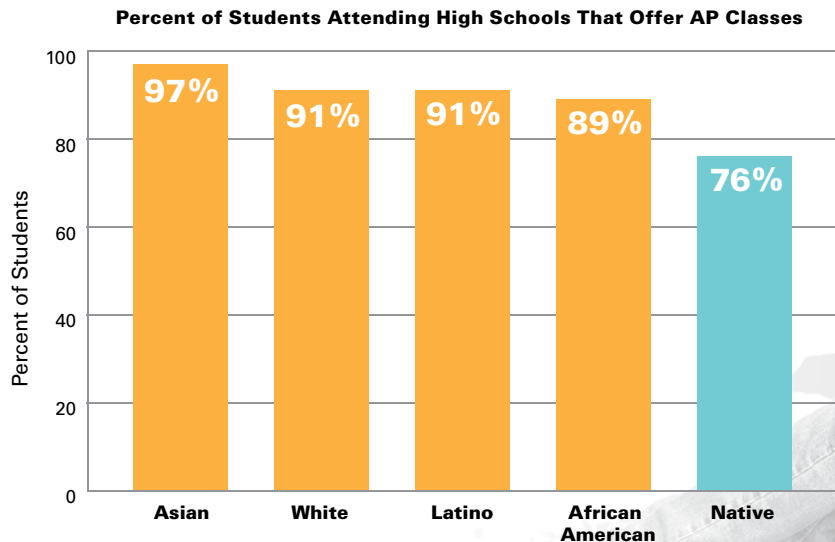
As was the case with fourth-grade reading, Native students were outperforming African American and Latino students in eighth-grade math in 2005. By 2011, however, Latino eighth-graders had surpassed Native students, and African American students had nearly caught up.

NAEP Performance: Eighth-Grade Math

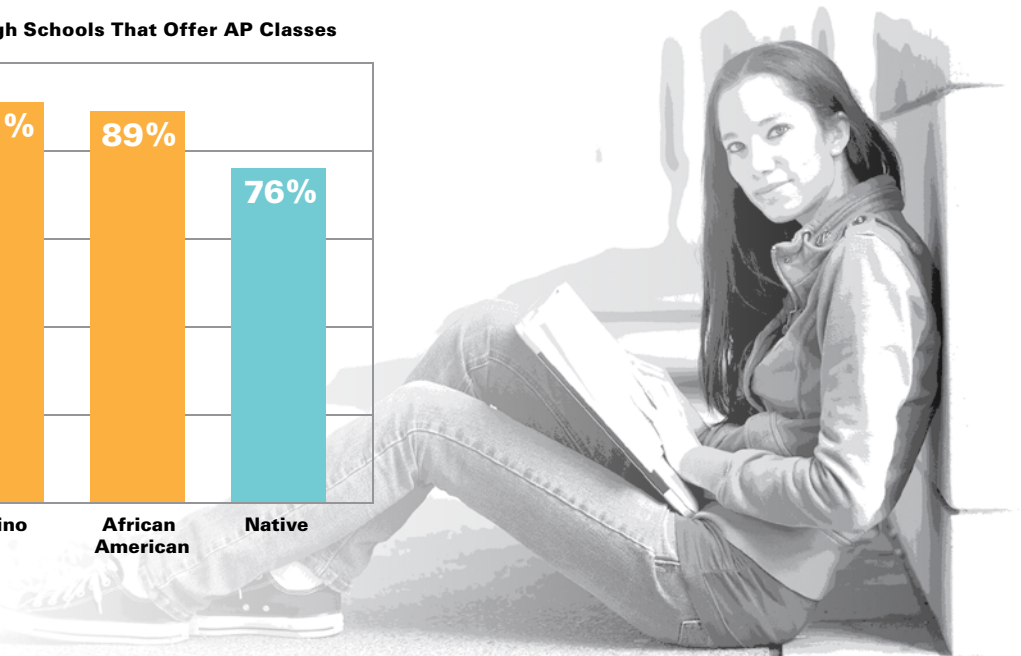


Do Native students have access to high-level courses in high school?

Native students are less likely to attend a high school that offers Advanced Placement courses than their peers.*

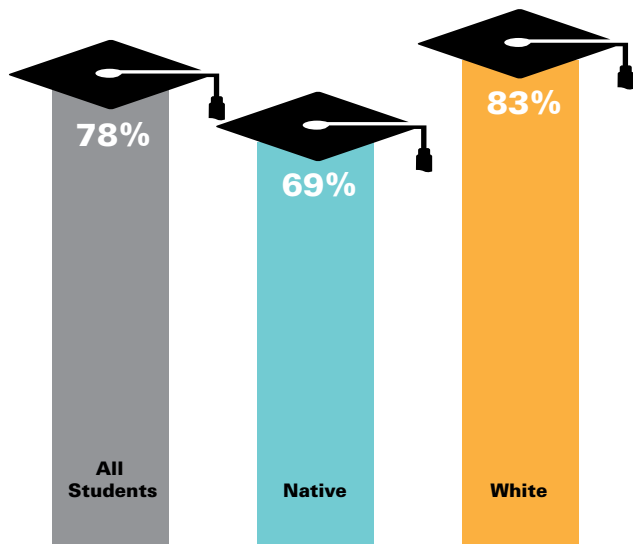


*High schools were considered to offer AP courses if at least one student took an AP exam in 2009–10.



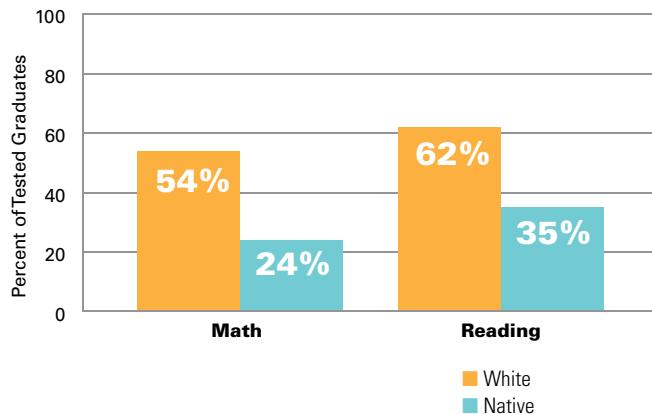
Are Native students graduating from high school? Are graduates ready for college and the workforce?

About **69 percent** of Native high school students graduate in four years, compared with about **83 percent** of white students.



Only **1 in 4** Native graduates who took the ACT scored at the college-ready level in math, and about **one-third** scored at the college-ready level in reading. Among white graduates who took the ACT, **more than half** scored at the college-ready level in math, while nearly **two-thirds** scored college ready in reading.

Percent of Graduates Meeting ACT College-Readiness Benchmarks



Are Native students enrolling in college?

Only **52 percent** of Native students who graduated in 2004 enrolled in college immediately after high school, as compared with **74 percent** of white students.

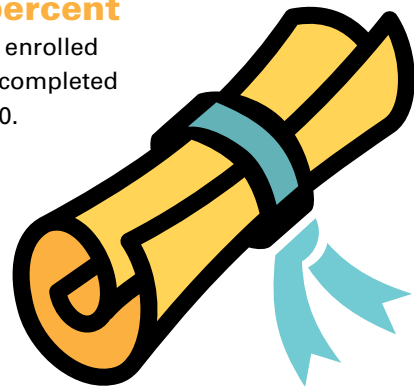


Are they graduating from college?

Of all Native students who enrolled in a four-year institution in the fall of 2004, only **39 percent** completed a bachelor's degree by 2010.



In comparison, **62 percent** of white students who enrolled in the fall of 2004 had completed their bachelor's by 2010.

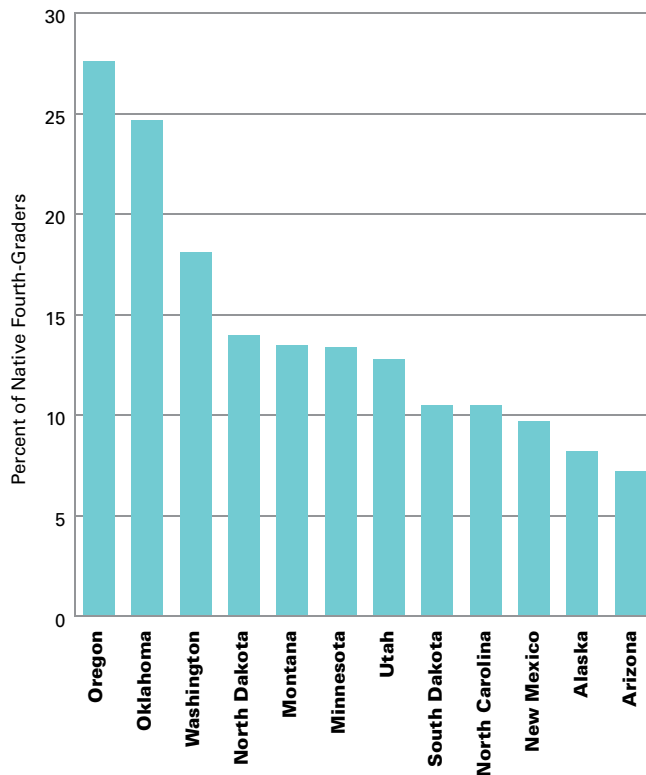


Are these trends inevitable? No! Some schools and systems are doing better.

These trends are not inevitable. Although no state is doing as well as it should for Native students, some states are doing far better than others. Consider, for example, the range of NAEP performance for Native fourth-graders in reading. **The percent of students reaching the proficient or advanced levels was at least three times higher in Oregon and Oklahoma than in Alaska and Arizona.** While way too few students are reaching proficiency in Oregon and Oklahoma, it's worth inspecting what's going on in these higher performing states.



Percent of Native Fourth-Graders Proficient or Advanced in Reading on NAEP



And some schools prove what's possible. Calcedeaver Elementary is a pre-K–6 school in Alabama where more than 80 percent of students are American Indian, and 80 percent are low income. In 2012, **61 percent** of Calcedeaver's sixth-graders scored at the advanced level in math on Alabama's state assessment, as compared with only **35 percent** of all sixth-graders statewide. Schools like Calcedeaver show that, with the right instruction and supports, Native students — like all other students — can achieve at high levels.



Classroom instruction at Calcedeaver Elementary School in Mt. Vernon, Alabama.

Data Sources

Where do Native students go to school?

- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, “Public Elementary and Secondary School Student Enrollment and Staff Counts From the Common Core of Data: School Year 2010–11,” Table 2 (Washington, D.C.: April 2012), <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2012/snf201011/index.asp>.
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, “Condition of Education 2012,” Table A-13-2 (Washington, D.C.: 2012), <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2012/2012045.pdf>.

How are schools performing for Native students? Have schools improved over time for Native students?

- **NAEP results for American Indian and Alaska Native students:** U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Indian Education Study NAEP Data Explorer, <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/naepdata/> (Results include public and BIE schools).

- **NAEP results for all other student group:** U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Main NAEP Data Explorer, <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/naepdata/>.

Do Native students have access to high-level courses in high school?

- Christina Theokas and Reid Saaris, *Finding America’s Missing AP and IB students* (Washington, D.C.: The Education Trust and Equal Opportunity Schools, June 2013), http://www.edtrust.org/sites/edtrust.org/files/Missing_Students.pdf.

Are Native students graduating from high school? Are graduates ready for college and the workforce?

- **Graduation Rates:** U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, “Public School Graduates and Dropouts from the Common Core of Data: School Year 2009–10” (Washington, D.C.: January 2013), <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2013/2013309rev.pdf>. The National Center for Education Statistics report provides estimates of the percentages of high school students who graduate on time using the Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate method. For more information, please see the report cited above. Results do not include BIE schools.

- **College-Readiness:** ACT, “The Condition of College and Career Readiness: National” (Iowa City, Iowa: ACT, 2012), <http://www.act.org/research-policy/college-career-readiness-report-2012/>.

Are Native students enrolling in college? Are they graduating from college?

- **College enrollment:** National Center for Education Statistics, “Higher Education: Gaps in Access and Persistence Study” (Washington, D.C.: April 2012), <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2012/2012046.pdf>.
- **Graduation Rates:** U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. 2012. Enrollment in Postsecondary Institutions, Fall 2010; Financial Statistics, Fiscal Year 2010; and Graduation Rates, Selected Cohorts, 2002–07, <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2012/2012280.pdf>. Graduation rates are for first-time, full-time students enrolling in four-year institutions and seeking a bachelor’s degree.

Some schools and systems are doing better

- **Percent proficient/advanced on NAEP by State:** U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Indian Education Study NAEP Data Explorer, <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/naepdata/> (Results include public and BIE schools where available).
- **Calcedeaver Elementary School demographics:** U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, 2009–10.
- **Calcedeaver Elementary School proficiency rates:** Alabama State Department of Education, 2012, Alabama Reading and Mathematics Test (ARMT) Results, <http://www.alsde.edu/Accountability/preAccountability.asp>.

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1250 H Street, N.W.

Suite 700

Washington, D.C. 20005

202.293.1217

www.edtrust.org