

July 29, 2005

## **ISAT SCORES SHOW KIDS DOING BEST IN READING, SOME ACHIEVEMENT GAPS NARROWING**

BOISE - More Idaho students are performing at or above grade level in math and reading and the achievement gap in 10th grade is shrinking, according to 2005 Spring Idaho Standards Achievement Tests (ISAT) results released by the Idaho State Board of Education.

The test results also revealed a significant change: for the first time in ISAT's three-year history, reading scores accounted for the highest overall proficiency rates followed by math and language usage. This was a striking change from 2003 and 2004 where language usage had been the highest proficiency rate subject followed by reading and math. Overall results mirrored national trends with scores steadily increasing in grade 3, peaking at grade 4, declining in middle school and rebounding slightly by 10th grade.

"The ISAT tracks student achievement at an individual student, school, district and state level. With three years of data, we can see that many of our efforts are paying off, particularly in reading," said Rod Lewis, President of the State Board of Education. "More Idaho students are performing on grade level than ever before and some achievement gaps are actually narrowing."

Approximately 174,000 Idaho students in grades 2-10 took the ISAT in Spring 2005. Each student's scores in grades 3-8 and 10 are translated into four categories: below basic, basic, proficient and advanced. Below basic and basic categorization indicates the student has deficiencies in the subject tested. A proficient categorization indicates the student is performing on-grade level. The advanced category means the student has a comprehensive understanding of the subject that is above the grade level. The goal is for students to score proficient or advanced. The proficiency rates are calculated using the results for every student in grade 3-8 and 10 who obtained a valid test score. Results released by the State Board are not Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), determinations as guided by "No Child Left Behind."

### **2005 Statewide Proficiency Results:**

Grade	READING*	MATH*	LANGUAGE USAGE*
3	84.2	82.3	81.5
4	86.5	90.3	82.9
5	75.9	81.4	79.1

6	81.0	71.4	79.3
7	80.8	75.5	77.9
8	82.1	69.4	74.0
10	84.5	69.7	78.4

\*These numbers are percentages of all students with a valid test score.

**10th Grade and Graduation:**

According to State Board of Education rule, 10th graders must score at least “proficient” on the ISAT as one of their graduation requirements. Students can take the test up to nine times. Students graduating in 2007 must score at a ninth grade level. Using the lower graduation requirement scores, 89.8% of 10th graders were proficient or advanced in reading, 78% in math, and 85.8% in language usage. Overall, 73.3 percent passed all three tests on the first attempt and only 2.3 percent failed all three. Students who do not pass the ISAT in their senior year can appeal to their local school district for an alternative mechanism to fulfill the requirement. Three subgroups saw increases in the percent of students passing reading from 2004 to 2005, even with a more difficult requirement: American Indian/Alaska Native, Black/African American and Hispanic.

**Achievement Gaps Closing:**

Past ISAT results have highlighted significant achievement gaps between minority and white students. This year’s testing showed statistically significant decreases in achievement gaps particularly in grade 10. For instance, in grade 10 reading results, the achievement gap decreased between Native American students and White students and Hispanic and White students. Economically disadvantaged students closed the gap between non-economically disadvantaged students in grade 10 reading as well. In grade 10 math, Hispanic students also showed significant gains to close the achievement gap.