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State test scores remain steady

PIERRE, S.D. – South Dakota’s fourth grade and eighth grade scores for math and reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress have remained steady since the test was first administered in the state in 2002.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress, or NAEP, is based on a scale of 0 to 500. It is administered nationwide every other year to students in grades four and eight in all 50 states as well as the District of Columbia and Department of Defense schools. The test was most recently administered January through March 2013.

South Dakota’s eighth grade math and reading scores on the recently released 2013 National Assessment of Educational Progress remain above the national average.

The state’s average math score at eighth grade was 287, compared to a national average of 284. Over the past ten years, the score has varied from 285 to 291. The state’s average reading score at eighth grade was 268, compared to a national average of 266. That score has varied from 268 to 270 in the past ten years.

A recently released study comparing performance on the 2011 NAEP to performance on the 2011 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study, or TIMSS, found similar results for South Dakota’s eighth grade students. That study indicated that South Dakota’s eighth grade NAEP scores in math, when aligned to the TIMSS, would rank higher than 38 education systems across the world, comparable to two systems, and lower than seven.

In the fourth grade, South Dakota’s average NAEP score for math is 241, which is also the national average. That score has varied between 237 and 242 in the past decade. The fourth grade reading score is 218, which is three points lower than the national average of 221. In the past ten years, that score has varied between 218 and 223.

“Although we have much to be proud of, I am concerned that we are just below the average in fourth grade reading,” said South Dakota Secretary of Education Dr. Melody Schopp. “This is just one data point, but I hope it will be a call for us to help our students at the early grade levels to develop the knowledge and skills that will lay the foundation for all future learning.”