



## NEWS RELEASE

**EMBARGOED:** Not for release before 12:01 a.m. EDT, March 17, 2010

Contact: Chloe Louvouezo at 202-955-9450 ext. 314 or [clouvouezo@communicationworks.com](mailto:clouvouezo@communicationworks.com)  
Kari Hudnell at 202-955-9450 ext. 318 or [khudnell@communicationworks.com](mailto:khudnell@communicationworks.com)

### **Center on Education Policy's New Research Findings Examine Male-Female Performance Gaps in Reading and Math** *State Trends Show Boys and Girls Performing Similarly in Math, But Boys Lagging Behind in Reading*

WASHINGTON. March 17, 2010. A new study from the Center on Education Policy (CEP) that analyzes state assessment data by gender finds good news for girls but troubling news for boys. According to CEP's study, the lagging performance by boys in reading is the most pressing gender-gap issue facing our schools. In some states, the percentage of boys performing at proficient in reading is more than 10 percentage points below that of girls. And that trend is consistent at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, the study finds.

The story is different in math, however. At the proficient level, the number of states in which girls outperformed boys was roughly equal to the number of states in which boys outperformed girls. At the advanced level, 4<sup>th</sup>-grade boys outperformed girls in most states.

The study, *State Test Score Trends Through 2007-08: Are There Differences in Achievement Between Boys and Girls?*, analyzed trend lines that began in 2002, where available, and ended in 2008. Trend data were included only where at least three years of comparable test data for a particular subject, grade, and achievement level were available. The study includes data for all 50 states and is the fifth in a 2009-10 series of CEP reports on student achievement results.

"Our analysis suggests that the gap between boys and girls in reading is a cause for concern," said Jack Jennings, CEP's president and CEO. "Much greater attention must be paid to giving boys the reading skills they need to succeed in early grades and throughout their education."

Overall in reading, the CEP study finds that many states have made progress in narrowing gaps between male and female students. For example, gaps in elementary school reading have narrowed in 24 states though they have widened in 14 states. The findings in grade 4 reading also find that while both boys and girls have made progress since 2002, more girls than boys reached all three achievement levels—basic, proficient, and advanced—in 2008.

In math, there was no significant gender gap in 2008. Rather, there was rough parity in the percentage of boys and girls reaching proficiency at all three grade levels and no state had a difference in math between girls and boys of more than 10 percentage points. In grade 4 math, states tended to have greater shares of girls reaching the basic level and greater shares of boys reaching the advanced levels.

Individual state profiles allow for closer analysis of results. For example, in Indiana, girls led boys in the percentage reaching proficiency in reading at all three grade levels in 2008. The gaps between girls and boys was 9 percentage points in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, 13 percentage points in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, and 10 percentage points in 11<sup>th</sup> grade. Mirroring national results, roughly equal percentages of boys and girls performed at proficient on Indiana's math assessments in all three grades.

Looking at the results since the 2002 enactment of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) for both boys and girls at all three grade levels, more states had gains in reading and math proficiency between 2002 and 2008 than had declines. Across all states and grade spans, 84 percent of trend lines for male students showed an increase in performance on state reading tests. A similar trend was found for female performance on state math tests at 83 percent.

Although the gaps, particularly in reading, are not nearly as large as those found between racial/ethnic and income subgroups, they are telling and have serious implications for the futures of all our students. Jennings said. The college attendance and completion rate for males continues to decline, and these data strongly suggest that those patterns could be altered with a greater focus on male reading skills at the earliest stages of education.

The full national report as well as individual state profiles of achievement trends for males and females are available on CEP's Web site, [www.cep-dc.org](http://www.cep-dc.org).

###

*Based in Washington, D.C. and founded in January 1995 by Jack Jennings, the Center on Education Policy is a national, independent advocate for public education and for more effective public schools. The Center works to help Americans better understand the role of public education in a democracy and the need to improve the academic quality of public schools. The Center does not represent any special interests. Instead the Center helps citizens make sense of the conflicting opinions and perceptions about public education and create conditions that will lead to better public schools.*