



EMBARGOED RELEASE: Tuesday, August 9, 2011, 12:01 a.m. EDT

CONTACT: Libby May, (301) 656-0348 or libby@thehatchergroup.com

Students Served by Title I Make Test Score Gains, Report Finds

Achievement Gaps Are Narrowing in Many States

WASHINGTON, D.C. (August 9, 2011) Achievement on state reading and math tests has improved in recent years for students participating in the Title I program in most of the states analyzed in a new study by the Center on Education Policy (CEP). For some grades and subjects, more than 90 percent of the 19 states showed gains for Title I students.

The largest of the federal aid programs for K-12 schools, Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 supports extra instructional services for low-performing students at schools with high rates of poverty and for all students at schools with the highest poverty rates.

Gaps between Title I participants and other students have also narrowed more often than they have widened since 2002, according to the CEP study, although trends were more positive at 8th grade and in high school than at 4th grade.

Students participating in Title I are by definition among the lowest achieving or attend a very poor school, so rising test scores and narrowing gaps suggest progress is being made toward the program's goals, said Nancy Kober, a CEP consultant and co-author of the study. This is encouraging news at the right time, with Congress working on reauthorizing Title I.

The report, *State Test Score Trends Through 2008-09, Part 4: Is Achievement Improving and Are Gaps Narrowing for Title I Students?*, compares achievement trends since 2002 (or a more recent year in some states) on state reading and math tests for Title I students and those not participating in Title I in each state. The study focused on grades 4, 8 and the high school grade tested for No Child Left Behind, usually grade 10 or 11. Although states are not required to report test results for Title I students, many do. Nineteen states, representing various geographic regions and enrolling more than half of the nation's Title I students, had sufficient test data to be included in the CEP study: Arizona, California, Colorado, Delaware, Idaho, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, Utah and Washington.

For most of the grades and subjects analyzed, more states showed gains for Title I students than for those not participating in Title I. The only exception was in grade 8 reading. Overall, Title I students continue to perform below non-Title I students.

Gaps in average, or mean, test scores narrowed between Title I and non-Title I students in both reading and math in a majority of the states with sufficient data at grade 8 and high school. In grade 4 reading, gaps narrowed in 47 percent of these states and widened in 40 percent; in the remainder of the states analyzed, the gap showed no change. In grade 4 math, gaps narrowed in 44 percent of the states with sufficient data, widened in 31 percent, and showed no change in the remainder.

Gaps in the proportion of Title I and non-Title I students scoring proficient on state tests narrowed at all three grades in a majority of the states analyzed. For reasons explained in the report, however, average scores are considered a better measure of changes in gaps than proficiency proportions.

When gaps narrowed, achievement usually improved for both Title I and non-Title I students but increased at a greater rate for Title I students. Even when gaps widened, however, achievement still went up for Title I students in most cases, but not as fast as for non-Title I students, said Jennifer McMurrer, CEP research associate and co-author of the study. So while Title I students have often made progress, there is still a need for more comprehensive approaches in the reauthorization that could lead to greater gains for these students.

The size of the gaps in proficiency between Title I and non-Title I students varied greatly among states, the report found, ranging from less than 10 percentage points in several states to more than 30 points in a few cases. Much of this variation stems from differences among states in the difficulty of their tests and their cut scores for proficient performance. More noteworthy, perhaps, is that gaps between Title I and non-Title I students were often smaller than gaps between low-income and more affluent students, or between African American and white students or Latino and white students.

The report includes summary tables with data supporting the study's findings. In addition, a one-page profile of state-specific performance trends for Title I and non-Title I students is available online for each state included in the study. The report and the profiles can be accessed free of charge at www.cep-dc.org.

###

Based in Washington, D.C., and founded in 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 special interests. Instead, it helps citizens make sense of conflicting opinions and perceptions about public education and create conditions that will lead to better public schools.