



2002 NAEP Writing Results

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Massachusetts Department of Education

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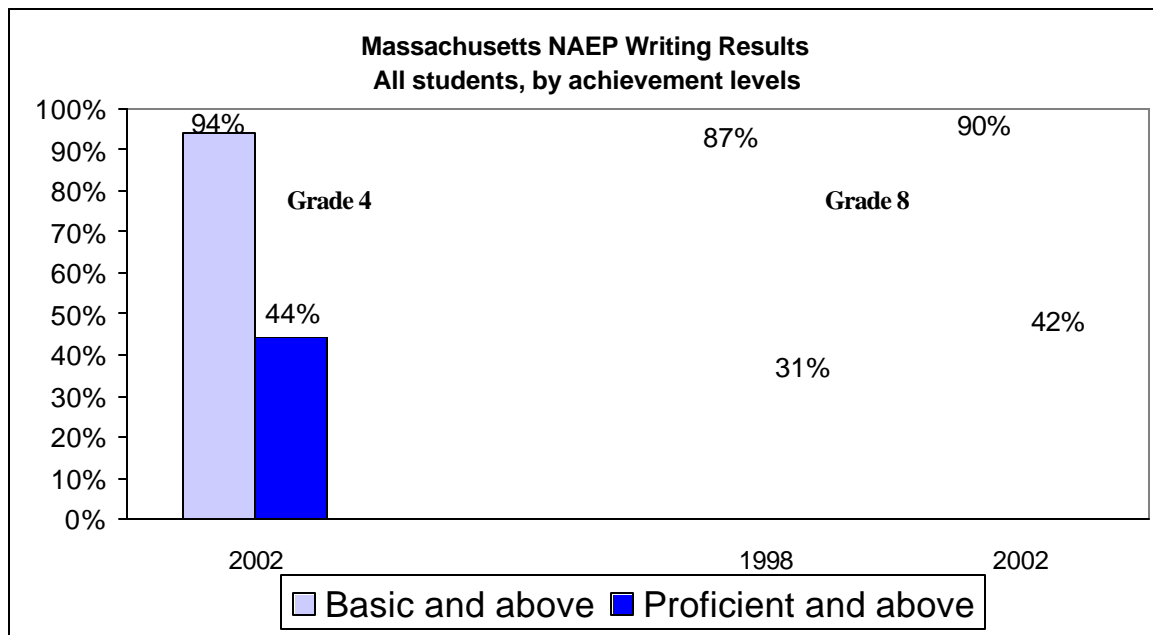
Executive Summary

NAEP 2002 Writing: Grade 4

- In Massachusetts, the average scaled score for students in 2002 was lower than in one state (Connecticut) and higher¹ than those in all other participating states and jurisdictions.
- In 2002, 44 percent of Massachusetts students performed at or above the *Proficient* level, compared to 27 percent nationwide.
- In 2002, Massachusetts female students outperformed male students.
- In Massachusetts, the average scaled scores for White and Black students in 2002 were higher than the corresponding scores for White and Black students across the nation.
- In 2002, no participating state's Black students had an average scale score that was higher than the score of Massachusetts Black students (151).

NAEP 2002 Writing: Grade 8

- Massachusetts students outperformed students in 41 other states and jurisdictions. Massachusetts performance was similar to student performance in the remaining 5 highest scoring states and jurisdictions.
- In 2002, the average scaled score for students in Massachusetts was 163. This was higher than students across the nation (152) and was higher than in 1998 (155).
- In 2002, 42 percent of Massachusetts students performed at or above the *Proficient* level, compared to 30 percent nationwide.
- In 2002, Massachusetts female students outperformed male students.
- In Massachusetts, White students scored higher in 2002 than in 1998. The performance of Black, Hispanic, and Asian/Pacific Islander students remained about the same from 1998 to 2002.



¹ Any difference noted as “higher” or “lower” in this report denotes a significant difference.

What is NAEP?

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as “The Nation’s Report Card,” is the only nationally representative and continuing assessment of what America’s students know and can do in various subjects. NAEP assesses representative samples of students in grades 4, 8 and 12 in core academic subjects. For more than 30 years, NAEP assessments have been conducted periodically in reading, mathematics, science, writing, U.S. history, civics, geography and the arts. NAEP is also developing assessments in world history, economics and foreign language.

NAEP is mandated by the U.S. Congress and is administered by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) at the U.S. Department of Education. Policies for NAEP are set by the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), whose members are appointed by the Secretary of Education.

NAEP collectively refers to national assessments, long-term trend assessments, and state assessments. For national assessments, NAEP samples students from grades 4, 8, and 12 in public and nonpublic schools. For long-term trend assessments, NAEP samples students at ages 9, 13, and 17.

NAEP State Assessment

Since 1990, NAEP assessments have also been conducted to give results for participating states. For the state assessments, NAEP samples students from grades 4 and 8 and administers assessments in reading, mathematics, writing, and science. According to the provisions of the *No Child Left Behind* Act of 2001, NAEP must assess fourth and eighth grade students every two years in reading and mathematics, beginning in 2003.

In its content, the state assessment is identical to the assessment conducted nationally. However, because the national NAEP samples were not designed to support the reporting of accurate and representative state-level results, separate representative samples of students were selected for each participating state and jurisdiction. Beginning with the 2002 assessments, a combined sample of public schools was selected for both state and national NAEP. The national sample is a subset of the combined sample of students assessed in each participating state, plus an additional sample from the states that did not participate in the state assessment. This additional sample ensures that the national sample is representative of the total national student population.

The 2002 NAEP Writing Assessment

According to the NAEP Writing Assessment framework, students should be able to write for a variety of purposes. The 2002 NAEP Writing Assessment assessed three types of writing – narrative, informative, and persuasive. Narrative writing involves the production of stories or personal essays. Informative writing communicates information to the reader to share knowledge or to convey messages, instructions, and ideas. Persuasive writing seeks to influence the reader to take some action or bring about change.

Each student in the state assessment was given two prompts and had 25 minutes to respond to each question. The prompts asked students to write essays, letters, and stories to a variety of audiences. See the Appendix to this report for samples of prompts from the 2002 state writing assessment.

The NAEP Writing State Assessment was first administered in 1998 to eighth-graders only. In 2002, both fourth and eighth-grade students participated in the state writing assessment.

NAEP Reporting

NAEP does not provide scores for individual students or schools; instead, it offers results regarding subject-matter achievement, instructional experiences, and school environment for national and state populations of students (e.g., fourth graders) and subgroups of those populations (e.g., female students, Hispanic students). NAEP results are based on a sample of student populations of interest.

Student performance was indicated in two ways – scaled scores and achievement levels. The NAEP Writing scale ranges from 0 to 300. The three NAEP achievement levels are: *Basic*, *Proficient*, and *Advanced*. The three achievement levels are broadly defined as follows:

Basic – Partial mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient work at each grade.

Proficient – Solid academic performance for each grade assessed. Students reaching this level have demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter, including subject-matter knowledge, application of such knowledge to real-world situations, and analytical skills appropriate to the subject matter.

Advanced – Superior performance.

To see how the achievement levels are used to describe writing performance at each grade level, please see the Appendix to this report.

NAEP Accommodations

Prior to 1996, NAEP had no policy of allowing assessment accommodations for students with disabilities or English language learners. However, subsequent research conducted by NAEP revealed that the results for accommodated students could be combined with the results for nonaccommodated students without compromising the validity of the NAEP scales in trend comparisons. Therefore, students who typically received accommodations in their classroom testing also received such accommodations in the NAEP writing assessments in 1998 and 2002, where appropriate.

Interpreting this Report

When reviewing this report, it is important to keep in mind that the NAEP results are based on a *sample* of students across Massachusetts and not the *population* of Massachusetts students. In analyzing the data, tests of significance were employed to

determine what differences in the data could be confidently characterized as *not occurring by chance*. This type of difference is commonly referred to as a *significant* difference. In this report, any comparison where one number is described as higher or above another indicates that the difference was significant at the $p < .05$ level. Tables denote significant differences using an asterisk.

The NAEP writing scale ranges from 0 to 300. Performance for each grade is scaled separately. Therefore, average scaled scores cannot be compared across grades.

Massachusetts' Participation in the 2002 NAEP Writing Assessment

Number of 4 th grade students tested in Massachusetts:	3,141
Number of participating schools at grade 4:	111
Number of 8 th grade students tested in Massachusetts:	2,679
Number of participating schools at grade 8:	104

History of Performance on NAEP Writing, Massachusetts and the Nation

NAEP Writing Assessment: 1998, 2002

Average scaled scores and percent of students at or above *Basic* and *Proficient*

All students, grades 4 and 8

		Average Scaled Score	Percent of students:	
			At or above <i>Basic</i>	At or Above <i>Proficient</i>
Grade 4				
2002	Massachusetts	170	94%	44%
	Nation	153	85%	27%
Grade 8				
2002	Massachusetts	163	90%	42%
	Nation	152	84%	30%
1998	Massachusetts	155*	87%	31%*
	Nation	148*	83%	24%*

* This notation signifies that the value is significantly different from the value for 2002.

The NAEP Writing scale ranges from 0 to 300. The achievement levels correspond to the following points on the NAEP writing scale - at grade 4: Basic, 115-175; Proficient, 176-224; and Advanced, 225 and above; at grade 8: Basic, 114-172; Proficient, 173-223; and Advanced, 224 and above.

On the 2002 NAEP Writing Assessment, How did Massachusetts Compare to Other Top Performing States?

Grade 4

- Students' scaled scores in Massachusetts were lower than in one state (Connecticut) and higher than those in all other 46 participating states and jurisdictions.

Grade 8

- Students' scaled scores in Massachusetts were higher than in 41 states and jurisdictions and not found to differ significantly from those in the remaining 5 highest performing states and jurisdictions (Connecticut, Department of Defense Domestic Schools, Vermont, Department of Defense Overseas Schools, and Ohio).

Grade 4: Top Ranking States, by scaled scores

	Average Scaled Score	Percent of students:			
		<i>Below Basic</i>	At or Above <i>Basic</i>	At or Above <i>Proficient</i>	<i>Advanced</i>
Grade 4					
1. Connecticut	174	6%	94%	49%	8%
2. Massachusetts	170	6%	94%	44%	4%
3. Delaware	163	8%	92%	35%	3%
4. New York	163	9%	91%	37%	3%
5. North Carolina	159	12%	88%	32%	4%
6. Vermont	158	13%	87%	32%	3%
NATION	153	15%	85%	27%	2%

Grade 8: Top Ranking States, by scaled scores

	Average Scaled Score	Percent of students:			
		<i>Below Basic</i>	At or Above <i>Basic</i>	At or Above <i>Proficient</i>	<i>Advanced</i>
Grade 8					
1. Connecticut	164	13%	87%	45%	7%
2. Massachusetts	163	10%	90%	42%	4%
3. Vermont	163	11%	89%	41%	5%
4. Ohio	160	11%	89%	38%	3%
5. Delaware	159	10%	90%	35%	2%
6. Maine	157	14%	86%	36%	3%
NATION	152	16%	84%	30%	2%

Note: The comparisons above do not include participating jurisdictions such as the Department of Defense Schools, Guam, the Virgin Islands, and American Samoa.

How did the Scores of Female Students Compare to Those of Male Students in Massachusetts and Across the Nation?

Grade 4

- In Massachusetts, the average scaled score of female students was 178 in 2002. This was higher than that of male students (162).
- In 2002, the average scaled score of male students in Massachusetts (162) was higher than that of male students across the nation (144). The average scaled score of female students in Massachusetts (178) was higher than that of female students across the nation (162).
- In Massachusetts, 54 percent of female students performed at or above *Proficient*, compared to 34 percent of male students.

2002 NAEP Writing Assessment

Average scaled scores and percent of students at or above *Basic* and *Proficient*

By gender, grade 4

		Percent of Students	Average Scaled Score	% At or Above <i>Basic</i>	% At or Above <i>Proficient</i>
Male					
2002	Massachusetts	52%	162	92%	34%
	Nation	51%	144	80%	18%
Female					
2002	Massachusetts	48%	178	96%	54%
	Nation	49%	162	90%	35%

* This signifies that the value is significantly different from the value for 2002.

The NAEP writing scale ranges from 0 - 300.

Grade 8

- In Massachusetts, the average scaled score of female students was 173 in 2002. This was higher than that of male students (155).
- In 2002, the average scaled score of male students in Massachusetts (155) was higher than that of male students across the nation (141). The average scaled score of female students in Massachusetts (173) was higher than that of female students across the nation (166).
- In Massachusetts, the average scaled scores of both male and female students in 2002 were higher than in 1998.
- In Massachusetts, 53 percent of female students performed at or above *Proficient*, compared to 32 percent of male students.

2002 NAEP Writing Assessment

Average scaled scores and percent of students at or above *Basic* and *Proficient*

By gender, grade 8

		Percent of Students	Average Scaled Score	% At or Above <i>Basic</i>	% At or Above <i>Proficient</i>
Male					
2002	Massachusetts	53%	155	87%	32%
	Nation	50%	141	77%	20%
1998	Massachusetts	51%	144*	81%	20%*
	Nation	51%	138*	76%	15%*
Female					
2002	Massachusetts	47%	173	94%	53%
	Nation	50%	162	91%	40%
1998	Massachusetts	49%	166*	93%	44%*
	Nation	49%	158*	90%	34%*

* This signifies that the value is significantly different from the value for 2002.

The NAEP writing scale ranges from 0 - 300.

How did Students in Massachusetts from Each Racial/Ethnic Category Perform on the 2002 NAEP Writing Assessment?

Grade 4

- In 2002, White students in Massachusetts had an average scaled score (175) that was higher than those of Black (151) and Hispanic students (142), but did not differ significantly from that of Asian/Pacific Islander students (168).
- In 2002, no participating state's Black students had a scaled score higher than Massachusetts Black students (151).
- In Massachusetts in 2002, the percent of White students performing at or above the *Proficient* level (50 percent) was greater than those of Black (21 percent) and Hispanic students (14 percent), but was not found to differ significantly from that of Asian/Pacific Islander students (43 percent).
- In Massachusetts, the percent of White and Black students performing at or above the *Proficient* level was greater than similar students nationwide. The percent of Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander students in Massachusetts performing at or above the *Proficient* level in 2002 was not found to differ significantly from similar students nationwide.

2002 NAEP Writing Assessment

Average scaled scores and percent of students at or above *Basic* and *Proficient*

By race, grade 4

		Percent of students	Average scaled score	% At or Above <i>Basic</i>	% At or Above <i>Proficient</i>
White students					
2002	Massachusetts	78%	175	97%	50%
	Nation	60%	159	90%	32%
Black students					
2002	Massachusetts	8%	151	87%	21%
	Nation	18%	139	77%	14%
Hispanic students					
2002	Massachusetts	8%	142	80%	14%
	Nation	17%	140	76%	17%
Asian/Pacific Islander students					
2002	Massachusetts	5%	168	95%	43%
	Nation	4%	166	93%	40%

* Value is significantly different from the value for 2002.

Grade 8

- In 2002, White students in Massachusetts had an average scaled score (171) that was higher than those of Black (139) and Hispanic students (132), but did not differ significantly from that of Asian/Pacific Islander students (167).
- In Massachusetts, White students scored higher in 2002 than in 1998. The differences in the average scaled scores of Black, Hispanic, and Asian/Pacific Islander students in Massachusetts between 2002 and 1998 were not found to be significant.
- In Massachusetts in 2002, 49 percent of White students performing at or above the *Proficient* level, which was greater than that of Black students (18 percent) and Hispanic students (10 percent), but not found to differ significantly from that of Asian/Pacific Islander students (45 percent).

2002 NAEP Writing Assessment

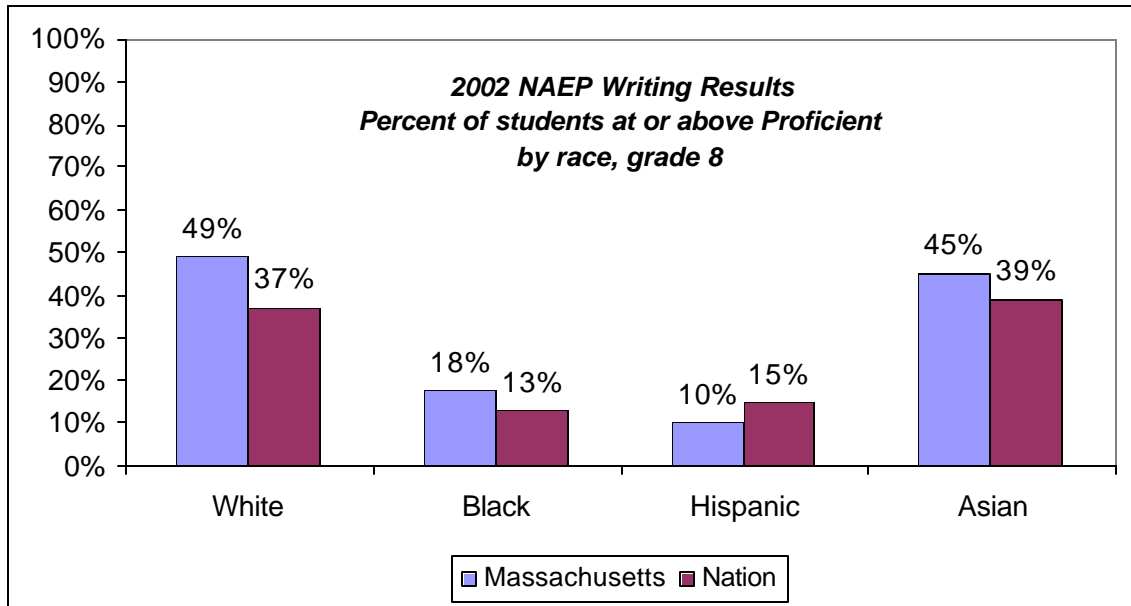
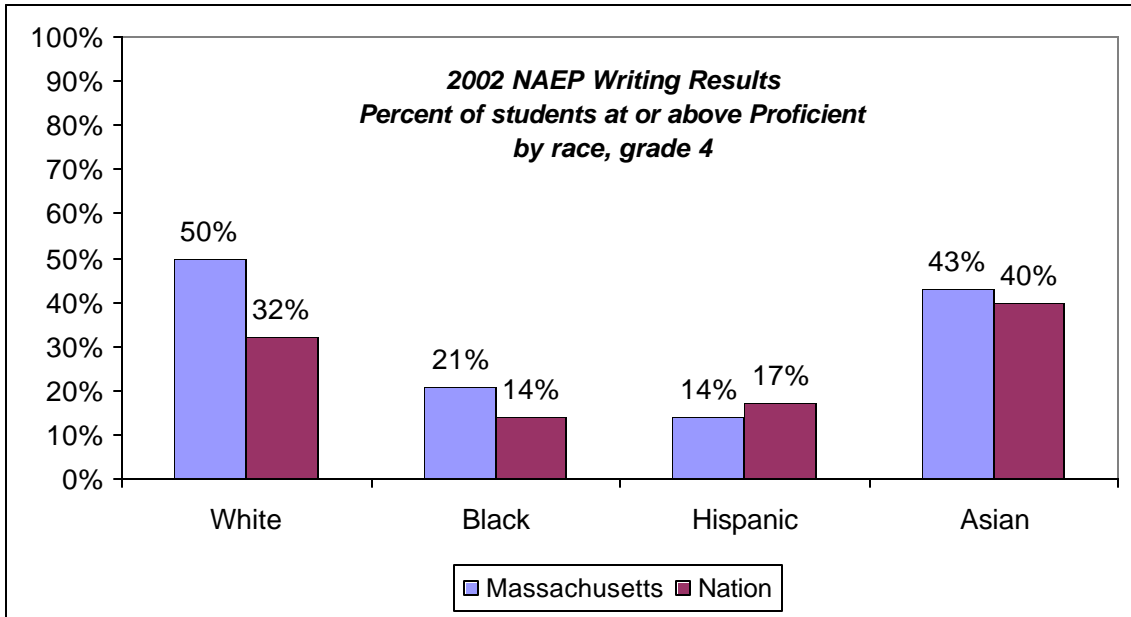
Average scaled scores and percent of students at or above *Basic* and *Proficient*

By race, grade 8

		Percent of students	Average scaled score	% At or Above <i>Basic</i>	% At or Above <i>Proficient</i>
White students					
2002	Massachusetts	75%	171	95%	49%
	Nation	64%	159	89%	37%
1998	Massachusetts	81%	160*	91%	36%*
	Nation	69%	155*	88%	31%*
Black students					
2002	Massachusetts	9%	139	75%	18%
	Nation	15%	134	73%	13%
1998	Massachusetts	6%	134	75%	9%
	Nation	16%	130*	70%	7%*
Hispanic students					
2002	Massachusetts	10%	132	73%	10%
	Nation	14%	135	72%	15%
1998	Massachusetts	9%	122	61%	6%
	Nation	11%	130*	69%	9%*
Asian/Pacific Islander students					
2002	Massachusetts	5%	167	90%	45%
	Nation	4%	159	87%	39%
1998	Massachusetts	4%	159	91%	36%
	Nation	3%	152	84%	30%

* Value is significantly different from the value for 2002.

Percent of Students At or Above Proficient, Massachusetts and the Nation, By Race



How did Students Attending Schools Located in Different Types of Communities Perform on the 2002 NAEP Writing Assessment?

Grade 4

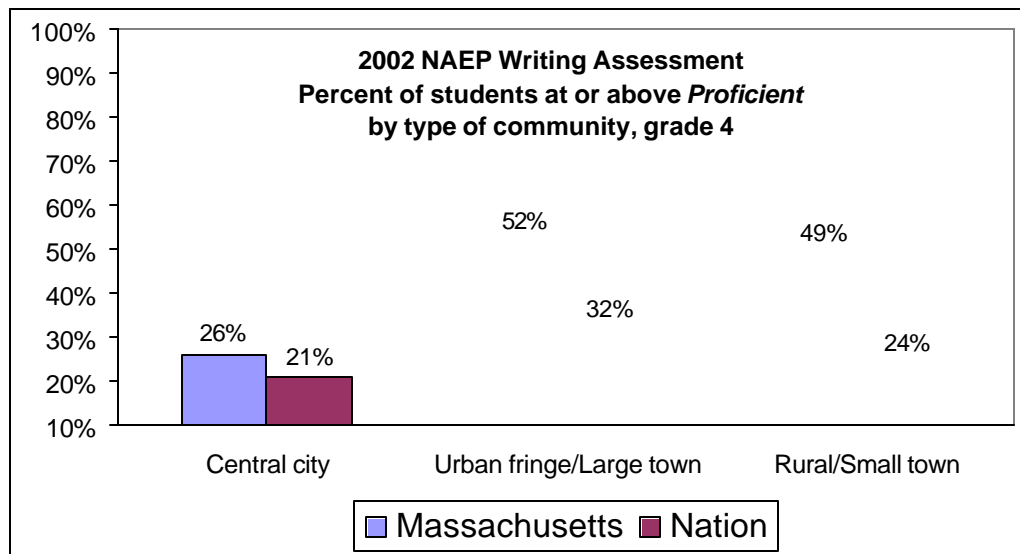
- In 2002 in Massachusetts, the average scaled score of students attending schools in central cities (154) was lower than those of students in urban fringes/large towns (177) and rural areas/small towns (174).
- The average scaled scores of students attending schools in all three types of locations were higher in Massachusetts than in similar types of communities across the nation.
- In 2002, 26 percent of students attending schools in central cities in Massachusetts performed at or above *Proficient*, which was smaller than the corresponding percentages for students in urban fringes/large towns (52 percent) and rural areas/small towns (49 percent).

2002 NAEP Writing Assessment

Average scaled scores and percent of students at or above *Basic* and *Proficient*

By type of community, grade 4

		Percent of students	Average Scaled Score	% At or Above <i>Basic</i>	% At or Above <i>Proficient</i>
Central city					
2002	Massachusetts	29%	154	88%	26%
	Nation	28%	147	81%	21%
Urban fringe / large town					
2002	Massachusetts	53%	177	97%	52%
	Nation	42%	158	87%	32%
Rural / small town					
2002	Massachusetts	18%	174	97%	49%
	Nation	30%	151	86%	24%



Grade 8

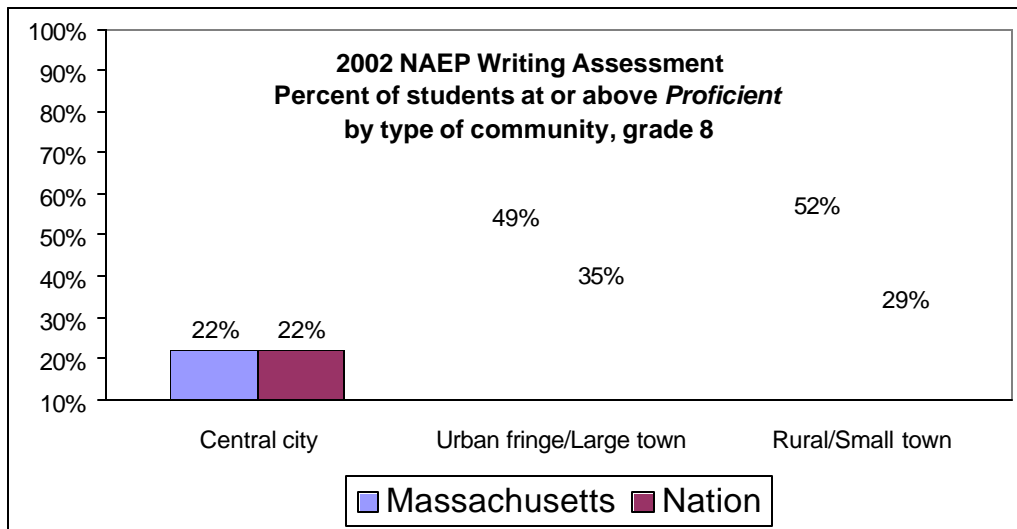
- In 2002 in Massachusetts, the average scaled score of students attending schools in central cities (144) was lower than those of students in urban fringes/large towns (170) and rural areas/small towns (174).
- The average scaled scores of students attending schools in urban fringes/large towns and rural areas/small towns were higher in Massachusetts than in similar types of communities across the nation. The difference in average scaled score of students attending schools in central cities in Massachusetts and similar communities nationwide was not found to be significant.
- In 2002, 22 percent of students attending schools in central cities in Massachusetts performed at or above *Proficient*, which was smaller than the corresponding percentages for students in urban fringes/large towns (49 percent) and rural areas/small towns (52 percent).

2002 NAEP Writing Assessment

Average scaled scores and percent of students at or above *Basic* and *Proficient*

By type of community, grade 8

		Percent of students	Average Scaled Score	% At or Above <i>Basic</i>	% At or Above <i>Proficient</i>
Central city					
2002	Massachusetts	28%	144	80%	22%
	Nation	27%	143	77%	22%
Urban fringe / large town					
2002	Massachusetts	51%	170	94%	49%
	Nation	42%	157	87%	35%
Rural / small town					
2002	Massachusetts	20%	174	96%	52%
	Nation	31%	152	85%	29%



How did Students Classified by Their School as Having a Disability Perform on the 2002 NAEP Writing Assessment?

Grade 4

- In Massachusetts, the average scaled score of students classified as having a disability was 139 in 2002. This was lower than the average scaled score of students without a disability (174).
- In 2002, students in Massachusetts with a disability scored higher than students with a disability across the nation.
- In Massachusetts, 11 percent of students classified as having a disability performed at or above the *Proficient* level in 2002, compared to 49 percent of students without a disability.

Grade 8

- In 2002 in Massachusetts, the average scaled score of students classified as having a disability was 129. This was lower than the average scaled score of students without a disability (170).
- In 2002, students in Massachusetts with a disability scored higher than students with a disability across the nation.
- In Massachusetts, 12 percent of students classified as having a disability performed at or above the *Proficient* level in 2002, compared to 47 percent of students without a disability.

2002 NAEP Writing Assessment

Average scaled scores and percent of students at or above *Basic* and *Proficient*

By students with a disability, grades 4 and 8

		<i>Was the student classified by the school as having a disability (SD, IEP)?</i>							
		Yes				No			
		% of students	Average Scaled Score	% At or Above		% of students	Average Scaled Score	% At or Above	
				<i>Basic</i>	<i>Proficient</i>			<i>Basic</i>	<i>Proficient</i>
Grade 4									
2002	Massachusetts	13%	139	79%	11%	87%	174	97%	49%
	Nation	9%	121	56%	6%	91%	156	88%	29%
Grade 8									
2002	Massachusetts	15%	129	66%	12%	85%	170	95%	47%
	Nation	11%	112	46%	4%	89%	156	88%	33%
1998	Massachusetts	12%	122	60%	5%*	88%	160*	91%	35%*
	Nation	8%	109	42%	2%*	92%	151*	87%	26%*

* Value is significantly different from the value for 2002.

How did Students Who are Eligible for Free/Reduced-Price School Lunch Perform on the 2002 NAEP Writing Assessment?

Grade 4

- In 2002, students in Massachusetts eligible for free/reduced-price lunch had an average scaled score of 151. This was lower than that of students not eligible for this program (177).
- In 2002, the average scaled score of students in Massachusetts eligible for free/reduced-price lunch (151) was higher than similar students across the nation (141).
- In Massachusetts, the percent of students eligible for free/reduced-price lunch who performed at or above *Proficient* (22 percent) was higher than the percent of similar students across the nation (15 percent).

2002 NAEP Writing Assessment

Average scaled scores and percent of students at or above *Basic* and *Proficient*

By school lunch eligibility, grade 4

		Percent of students	Average Scaled Score	% At or Above <i>Basic</i>	% At or Above <i>Proficient</i>
Eligible					
2002	Massachusetts	27%	151	87%	22%
	Nation	43%	141	77%	15%
Not eligible					
2002	Massachusetts	67%	177	97%	52%
	Nation	49%	163	92%	36%
Information not available					
2002	Massachusetts	6%!	174!	96%!	49%!
	Nation	7%	155	86%	29%

* Value is significantly different from the value for 2002.

! Nature of sample does not allow accurate determination of the variability of the statistic.

Grade 8

- In 2002, students in Massachusetts eligible for free/reduced-price lunch had an average scaled score of 141. This was lower than that of students not eligible for this program (173).
- In 2002, the average scaled score for students in Massachusetts eligible for free/reduced-price lunch (141) was significantly higher than in 1998 (131).
- In Massachusetts, 20 percent of students eligible for free/reduced-price lunch performed at or above *Proficient* in 2002, which was higher than in 1998 (8 percent).

2002 NAEP Writing Assessment

Average scaled scores and percent of students at or above *Basic* and *Proficient*

By school lunch eligibility, grade 8

		Percent of Students	Average Scaled Score	% At or Above <i>Basic</i>	% At or Above <i>Proficient</i>
Eligible					
2002	Massachusetts	29%	141	78%	20%
	Nation	34%	136	73%	15%
1998	Massachusetts	23%	131*	72%	8%*
	Nation	30%	131*	71%	10%*
Not eligible					
2002	Massachusetts	69%	173	95%	52%
	Nation	56%	161	90%	38%
1998	Massachusetts	73%	162*	92%*	39%*
	Nation	58%	156*	89%	32%*
Information not available					
2002	Massachusetts	2%!	161!	94%!	30%!
	Nation	10%	154	85%	32%
1998	Massachusetts	5%!	153!	83%!	31%!
	Nation	12%	150	83%	27%

* Value is significantly different from the value for 2002.

! Nature of sample does not allow accurate determination of the variability of the statistic.

**2002 NAEP Writing Assessment
Sample of Released Prompts**

Grade 4 – Informative Prompt “Lunchtime”

Describe what lunchtime is like for you on a school day. Be sure to tell about your lunchtime so that someone who has never had lunch with you on a school day can understand where you have lunch and what lunchtime is like.

Grade 4 – Persuasive Prompt “Library Book”

Imagine this situation:

Your favorite library book is missing from your school library. It might be a book that you like to read over and over again. Or it might be a book that your teacher or parent has read to you. Some of your friends also like to read this book. The school librarian is not sure she wants to buy the book again.

Write a letter to convince your school librarian to buy the book again. In your letter, give lots of reasons why the book should be in your school library.

Grade 8 – Narrative Prompt “President for a Day”

Imagine that you wake up one morning to discover that you have become the President of the United States. Write a story about your first day as President.

Grade 8 – Informative Prompt “Save a Book”

A novel written in the 1950’s describes a world where people are not allowed to read books. A small group of people who want to save books memorize them so that the books won’t be forgotten. For example, an old man who has memorized the novel *The Call of the Wild* helps a young boy memorize it by reciting the story to him. In this way, the book is saved for the future.

If you were told that you could save just one book for future generations, which book would you choose?

Write an essay in which you discuss which book you would choose to save for future generations and what it is about the book that makes it important to save. Be sure to discuss in detail why the book is important to you and why it would be important to future generations.

NAEP Writing Achievement Levels²

Grade 4

Basic – Grade 4

Fourth-grade students performing at the *Basic* level should be able to produce a somewhat organized and detailed response within the time allowed that shows a general grasp of the writing task they have been assigned. Their writing should include some supporting details. Its grammar, spelling, and capitalization should be accurate enough to communicate to a reader, although there may be mistakes that get in the way of meaning.

Proficient – Grade 4

Fourth-grade students performing at the *Proficient* level should be able to produce an organized response within the time allowed that shows an understanding of the writing task they have been assigned. Their writing should include details that support and develop the main idea of the piece, and its form, content, and language should show that these students are aware of the audience they are expected to address. The grammar, spelling, and capitalization in the work should be accurate enough to communicate to a reader; there may be some mistakes, but these should not get in the way of meaning.

Advanced – Grade 4

Fourth-grade students performing at the *Advanced* level should be able to produce an effective, well-developed response within the time allowed that shows a clear understanding of the writing task they have been assigned. Their writing should be clearly organized, making use of techniques such as consistency in topic or theme, sequencing, and a clearly marked beginning and ending. It should make use of precise and varied language to speak to the audience the students are expected to address, and it should include details and elaboration that support and develop the main idea of the piece. Their writing may also show signs of analytical, evaluative, or creative thinking. The grammar, spelling, and capitalization in the work should be accurate enough to communicate clearly; mistakes should be so few and so minor that a reader can easily skim over them.

Grade 8

Basic – Grade 8

Eighth-grade students performing at the *Basic* level should be able to produce an effective response within the time allowed that shows a general understanding of the writing task they have been assigned. Their writing should show that these students are aware of the audience they are expected to address, and it should include supporting details in an organized way. The grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization in the work should be accurate enough to communicate to a reader, although there may be mistakes that get in the way of meaning.

² Source: *The Nation's Report Card*, National Assessment of Educational Progress, National Assessment Governing Board, U.S. Department of Education.

Proficient – Grade 8

Eighth-grade students performing at the *Proficient* level should be able to produce an effective response within the time allowed that shows an understanding of both the writing task they have been assigned and the audience they are expected to address. Their writing should be organized, making use of techniques such as sequencing or a clearly marked beginning and ending, and it should make use of details and some elaboration to support and develop the main idea of the piece. Their writing should include precise language and some variety in sentence structure, and it may show analytical, evaluative, or creative thinking. The grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization in the work should be accurate enough to communicate to a reader; there may be some errors, but these should not get in the way of meaning.

Advanced – Grade 8

Eighth-grade students performing at the *Advanced* level should be able to produce an effective and fully developed response within the time allowed that shows a clear understanding of both the writing task they have been assigned and the audience they are expected to address. Their writing should show some analytical, evaluative, or creative thinking, and should demonstrate precise word choice and varied sentence structure. Their work should include details and elaboration that support and develop the main idea of the piece, and it may make use of strategies such as analogies, illustrations, examples, anecdotes, or figurative language to clarify a point. At the same time, the writing should show that these students can keep their work clearly and consistently organized. Writing by eighth-grade students performing at the *Advanced* level should contain few errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and sentence structure. These writers should demonstrate good control of these elements and may use them for stylistic effect in their work.