

Strength of State Proficiency Standards, 2003. (Figure 1)

Education Next has graded all states for which comparisons between state proficiency percentages and NAEP proficiency percentages are possible: 4th-grade reading, 4th-grade math, 8th-grade reading, and 8th-grade math. (Ten states and the District of Columbia did not administer the state-level tests and so comparisons were not available*.) Each state's grade is based on the difference between the percentage of a state's students who scored at the proficiency level on the NAEP and the percentage of students who scored proficient on the state's own exam, and this difference is compared with the differences observed in other states. For example, on the 4th-grade reading test, 26 percent of South Carolina's 4th graders scored at or above proficiency on the NAEP reading exam, whereas 31 percent were deemed to be at or above proficiency on the state's own reading exam. The small difference of 5 percent (31 percent minus 26 percent) was two standard deviations better than the average difference of 36 percent for all states in 4th-grade reading. Accordingly, South Carolina's standards for this test earned a solid A. The overall grade is based on the simple average of the available grades on the four relevant tests.

—Paul Peterson and Frederick Hess

* Note: Minnesota, New Hampshire, Iowa, Nebraska, Oregon, Utah, West Virginia, Nevada, Alabama, New Mexico, and Washington, D.C., did not receive grades because they did not administer a 4th- or 8th-grade state test in math or reading.

State	4th-Grade Reading	4th-Grade Math	8th-Grade Reading	8th-Grade Math	Overall Grade
South Carolina	A	A	A	A	A
Maine	A	A	A	A	A
Missouri		B+		A	A
Wyoming	A	A	A	B+	A
Massachusetts	A	A		B+	A
Hawaii			B	B+	B
California	B+	C+	A		B
Rhode Island	C+	B	B+	B-	B-
Arizona			C	B+	B-
Vermont	C	B	B+	C+	B-
Kentucky	C+			B	B-
Arkansas	C	C-	B	B+	C+
Maryland			C	B-	C+
Washington	C	C+			C+
Ohio		C+			C+
New York	C+	D	B+	C+	C
Florida	B-	C+	B-	D+	C
North Dakota	C-	C+	C	B	C
Illinois			C	C	C
Pennsylvania			C	C	C
New Jersey	C	C	C-	C	C
Delaware			C-	C	C
Michigan	C-	C		C	C
Kansas		C-	C-		C-
Indiana			C	D+	C-
Louisiana	C-	D+	C	D+	C-
Connecticut	B-	D+	D+	D	C-
Montana	C-	D	C	D+	C-
South Dakota	D-	D+	C-	C	C-
Idaho	D+	D	D+	C	D+
Alaska			D+	D+	D+
Virginia			C	D-	D+
Wisconsin	D	C-	D	D	D
Colorado	D		D-	D+	D
Mississippi	F	F	C-	D+	D-
Georgia	D-	D-	F	D-	D-
North Carolina	D	D-	F	F	D-
Oklahoma			D-	F	F
Texas	F	F	F	D-	F
Tennessee			F	F	F