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## **New Jersey Students Continue to Outperform the National Average on 2011 NAEP Science Exam, But Substantial Achievement Gap Remains**

### **Results Reaffirm Christie Administration's Call for Creation of New Science Standards to Strengthen Student Performance**

**For Immediate Release**

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**Trenton, NJ** - According to results released today for the 2011 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) science exam, New Jersey students continue to outperform the national average in science but have the 9th highest achievement gap between low- and high-income students in the country. Based on these results, the Christie Administration is reaffirming the need for new science standards for the state, which are already being developed with New Jersey's participation through a state-led partnership.

"As these results today demonstrate, New Jersey students continue to do well by nearly every objective measure compared to the rest of the country, but we still have more work to do to ensure that every student in New Jersey has the knowledge and skills necessary to be ready for the demands of the 21st century," said Acting Commissioner Chris Cerf. "New Jersey is a lead partner in developing the Next Generation Science Standards along with 25 other states to ensure that we set high standards and help all of our schools implement those standards in the crucial area of science."

The NAEP science exam was last offered in 2009 but, because of changes in the test, NAEP has stated that pre-2009 comparisons are not possible. According to NAEP, New Jersey's performance at both the aggregate and subgroup level have not statistically changed since 2009. The average score for eighth grade students in 2011 in New Jersey was 155, compared to the national average of 151.

In spite of these overall trends, there exists a 29 point achievement gap between high- and low-income students, which gives New Jersey the 9th highest achievement gap in the country in 8th grade science on the NAEP exam.

"Last week, we announced a new high school testing plan that was focused not only on increasing the overall number of graduates to make sure every student in New Jersey attains a high school degree, but also to make sure that when students do receive a degree, they are truly ready for college and career," said Acting Commissioner Cerf. "That testing regime is just one part of the Governor's broader commitment to pursue comprehensive reform and deliver a quality education to every child in New Jersey, regardless of their economic circumstances or zip code."

New Jersey is currently a lead partner in the development of the Next Generation Science Standards. Currently 26 states are working together with Achieve to develop new K-12 science standards that will be rich in content and practice and arranged in a coherent manner across disciplines and grades to provide all students an internationally benchmarked science education. The NGSS will be based on the Framework for K-12 Science Education developed by the National Research Council. The new standards are expected at the end of 2012.

The Commissioner of Education Statistics, who heads the National Center for Education Statistics in the U.S. Department of Education, is responsible by law for carrying out the NAEP project. The National Assessment Governing Board, appointed by the Secretary of Education, but independent of the Department, sets policy for NAEP and is responsible for developing the framework and test specifications that serve as the blueprint for the assessments. The Governing Board is a bipartisan group whose members include governors, state legislators, local and state school officials, educators, business representatives, and members of the general public. Congress created the 26-member Governing Board in 1988.