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2004 STAR and CAHSEE Results: Some Progress Is Not Enough Progress

(OAKLAND) – Today the Education Trust - West released a short report examining the latest STAR and CAHSEE data also released today by the California Department of Education. Results of the 2004 STAR and CAHSEE show that overall reading and math achievement is slowly climbing, but that large achievement gaps between groups of students still persist.

"Two stories can be told about California's progress. One gives us hope, the other reminds us how far we have left to go," said Russlynn Ali, director of the Education Trust - West.

Some highlights from the report:

- The percentages of 4th graders reaching proficiency slightly increased in reading and stayed the same in math. California's 8th graders posted the highest gains: 33% are proficient in reading compared to 30% last year. About 60% of California's 4th graders, and 66% of California's 8th graders, score basic or below.

- Wide achievement gaps continue to separate California's Latino, African American and low-income students from their peers. White, Asian and middle class 4th graders are twice as likely as their Latino, African American and low-income peers to score proficient or above in reading. Patterns are similar in math. By the 11th grade, Latino and Black 11th graders read below White 7th graders.

- There hasn't been much improvement in closing the achievement gap since last year. The Latino - White gap closed by one point in 4th and 8th grade English, and the Poor - Non Poor gap closed by 2 points in 11th grade English. But the reading gap separating California's African American 11th graders from their White peers increased by 2 points.

- Progress in Algebra came to a halt. Eighteen percent (18%) of Algebra test takers reached proficient, down from 22% in 2002.

"We've seen slight improvement at most grade levels, especially in reading and math. But progress is too slow, and we've lost ground in the crucial skills students need to succeed
in life after high school graduation," Ali said.

The report also points to high poverty and high minority schools across California that are dispelling myths by surpassing state averages: Garden Grove Elementary in Los Angeles Unified, Farb Middle School in San Diego Unified and Cuyama Valley High School in Cuyama Joint Unified.

"Despite the need for statewide improvement, there are schools throughout the state educating low-income students and students of color to high levels. They are proof positive that demography does not determine achievement," said Ali. "There is enough evidence from high performing schools and districts here in California and across the nation to show what needs to be done. The real question is whether we have the civic and political will to close achievement gaps in California, and to confront the opportunity gaps that produce them," Ali concluded.

The EdTrust West report examining the 2004 STAR and CAHSEE data, "Achievement in California: Where Are We Now?" is attached and can be found at www.edtrustwest.org.

Achievement in California: Where Are We Now (PDF)

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