



School Accountability:

***Reforming education starting with
A, B, C, D and F school letter grades***

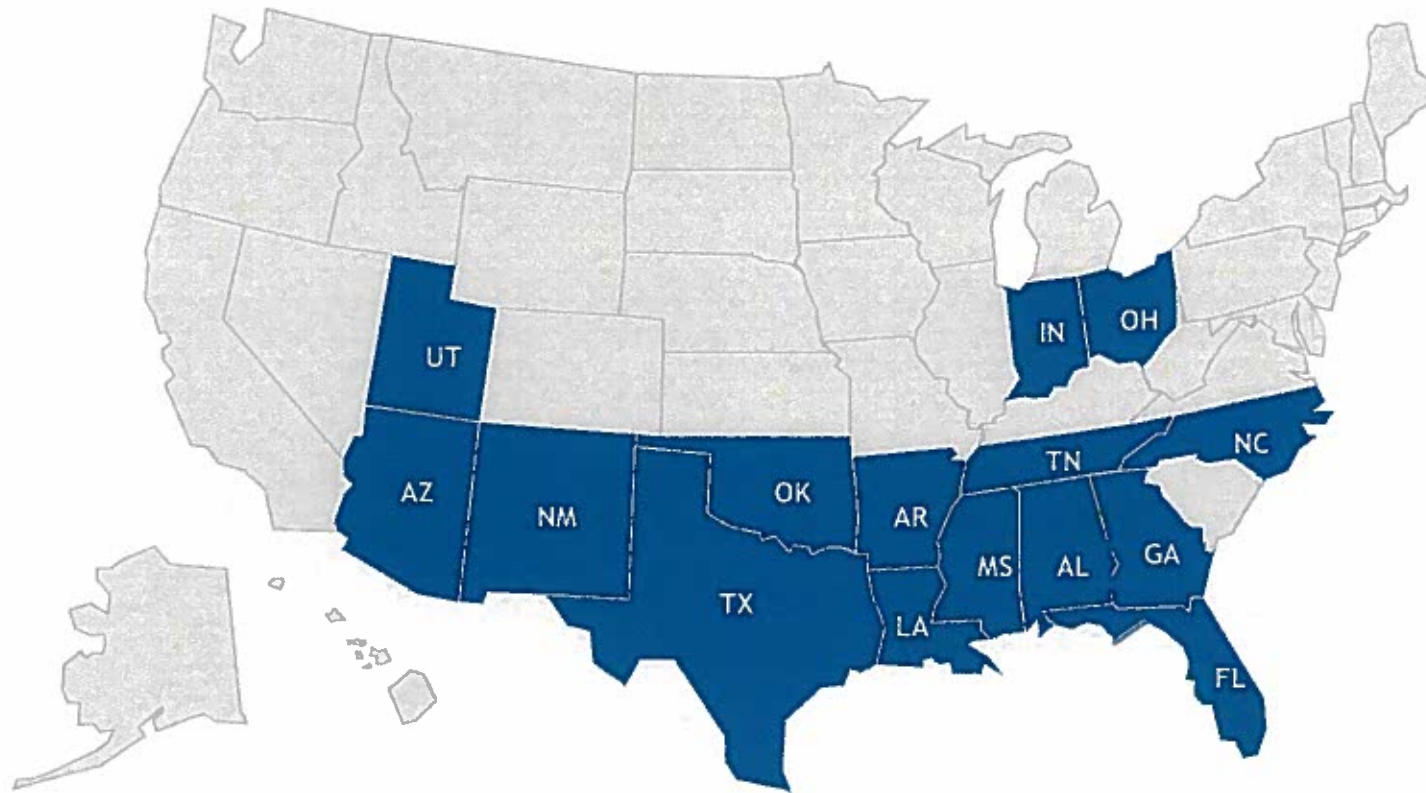
Thursday, November 9, 2017 at 9:00 am

Michigan Legislative Hearing on School Accountability

School Accountability



All states are required to have a school accountability system, but not many are transparent and built only on student learning outcomes.



15 States Use A-F School Grading



The **eight states** with multiple years of A-F implementation are making faster improvements on NAEP 4th and 8th grade reading and math than the Nation as a whole.



For example, since implementing A-F, **Florida has outpaced the Nation in Grade 4 Reading by 13 points.**

Over this time period the Nation increased 8.5 points **while Florida improved 21.5 points.**

It is also important to note that the ‘outpacing’ is underestimated because the improving A-F states cannot be backed out of the Nation.



School Grades: Fundamental Principles



A-F school grades provide transparent, objective, and easily understood data to parents, educators and the public to spur improvement among all schools.

1 Use clear and transparent descriptors of A, B, C, D, and F

2 Include objective, concise student learning outcome measures

3 Balance measures of student performance and progress

4 Calculate student progress toward grade level and advanced achievement

5 Focus on the progress of the lowest performing students in each school

6 Report results as close to the end of the school year as possible

7 Communicate clearly to parents

8 Establish rigorous criteria, with automatic increases, in order to earn A, B, C, D or F grades

9 Use grades to identify schools for recognition, intervention, and support

School Grades: Fundamental Principles



1

Use clear and transparent descriptors of A, B, C, D, and F

Fully Accredited
Provisionally Accredited
Accredited with Warning
Accreditation Denied
Conditionally Accredited-New
Conditionally Accredited-Reconstituted

Red
Orange
Yellow
Lime Green
Dark Green



Florida School Classifications

1995

Florida began
“grading” schools
High Performing
Performing
Low Performing
Critically Low
Performing

1998

Moved to
Performan
ce Levels
I, II, III, IV, V

1999

Adopted
Letter
Grades
A, B, C, D, F

2015

Florida has
raised the
rigor of A-F
eight times
since 1999

Grading Schools Promotes Accountability and Improvement: Evidence from NYC, 2013-15



Marcus A. Winters. Education: Pre K-12. Urban Policy EducationNYC. May 24, 2016.

During 2007-13, NYC Mayor Michael Bloomberg evaluated schools using A-F; Bill de Blasio became the new mayor on January 1, 2014, and his administration has moved sharply away from the information-collection and accountability metrics. Winters' paper explores the effects of the Bloomberg era's school letter grades on NYC's lowest-performing schools; it also estimates the effect of removing these grades after the first year of the new de Blasio accountability system.

- The decision to stop reporting summary letter grades removed an instrument that had led to positive changes at NYC's lowest-performing schools.**
- A positive, meaningful F-grade impact was detected in the final year (2013) of the original policy, six years after it was first adopted.**
- Schools that would have earned an F in fall 2014—the first year of the de Blasio system—showed no improvement relative to schools that would have earned higher grades.**

Feeling the Florida Heat? How Low-Performing Schools Respond to Voucher and Accountability Pressure



By Cecilia Elena Rouse, Jane Hannaway, Dan Goldhaber and David Figlio
***American Economic Journal: Economic Policy* Vol. 5, No. 2 (May 2013), pp. 251-281**

[American Economic Association](#)

“While numerous studies have found that school accountability boosts test scores, it is uncertain whether estimated test score gains reflect genuine improvements or merely ‘gaming’ behaviors. This paper brings to bear new evidence from a unique five-year, three round survey conducted of a census of elementary schools in Florida that is lined with detailed administrative data on student performance.

We show that schools facing accountability pressure changed their instructional practices in meaningful ways, and that these responses can explain a portion of the test score gains associated with the Florida school accountability system.”

Public Opinion Favors A-F Grading Schools



May 2014 National Survey Conducted by McLaughlin & Associates

- **84% support assigning schools a letter grade regarding how well they educate students.**

2013 Public Opinion Strategies of likely Tennessee voters

- **77% Favor an A-F grading scale for each school so parents can more easily identify where the good schools are instead of the current rating system.**

2015 Georgia statewide poll Conducted by McLaughlin & Associates

- **80% favor an A -F school grading policy, while just 14% oppose. Support for this policy is broad across key sub-groups.**



2

Include objective, concise student learning outcome measures

School accountability measures need to be based on what is important and what measures student success. Measures also need to be consistent across schools so accurate comparisons can be made.

Strong school accountability models include measures such as:

- ❖ Proficiency on statewide assessments
- ❖ Growth on statewide assessments
- ❖ Proficiency and Progress on English Language Assessments
- ❖ Graduation rates
- ❖ College & career readiness performance measures. Passing AP, IB, dual credit, industry certification or scoring ready on ACT/SAT

Input measures such as attendance, parental satisfaction or school climate surveys do not ensure that students are learning and reduce local control. Inputs should be reported but not part of a school's grade.

Selecting School Accountability Indicators



- ❖ Is the indicator valid, reliable and accurate?
- ❖ Does it relate to improved student achievement?
- ❖ Does the indicator differentiate among schools?
- ❖ What perverse incentives might result from including the indicator?
- ❖ Will adding the indicator dilute the emphasis on student outcome measures?
- ❖ Does the indicator measure something that is actually under the school's control?
- ❖ Does the value of the indicator outweigh the administrative budget of collecting and verifying the accuracy of data for that indicator?
- ❖ Is the indicator aligned to the overall policy goals of the state's education system?



3 Balance measures of student performance and progress

All students have the ability to learn and grow, and a strong accountability system must capture measures of that growth.

The ultimate goal is that all students will be performing on grade level but focusing on both proficiency and growth provides a true picture of how a school is doing.

Proficiency and growth should be equally weighted in an accountability system.

- Weighting growth more than proficiency provides less incentive to ensure students are on grade level.
- Weighting proficiency more than growth creates an uneven playing field.

The growth component requires schools to demonstrate that all students, high achieving and low achieving, have made progress.

Example Elementary and Middle School Grade



English/ Language Arts	Math	Social Studies	Science
Proficiency 83%	Proficiency 78%	Proficiency 81%	Proficiency 63%
Progress (all students) 90%	Progress (all students) 85%	800 Points Total Each component has 100 possible points The percent equals the points earned 648 points earned / 800 points possible 81% = B	
Progress (lowest 25%) 86%	Progress (lowest 25%) 82%		

A high school grade includes additional components for graduation rate and college and career readiness.



4

Calculate student progress toward grade level and advanced achievement

There are two widely used methods for calculating student growth - “criterion-based” and “norm-referenced.”

- Criterion-based methods determines whether or not the student has the demonstrated growth towards the mastery of a certain set of skills.
- Norm-referenced growth models compare a student’s performance to the performance of other students.

Criterion-based growth models are the fairest, because they measure what matters - whether each student is learning each year - not how well a student did compared to their peers, on an ever-changing scale.

It is also important that “enough” growth is made to ensure students are going to achieve proficiency or advance performance at a certain time.

Reasons to Measure Growth to Proficient and Advanced

- ❖ Individual student learning expectations are set and measured
- ❖ All students could demonstrate growth
- ❖ Criteria for determining individual student growth is set, and expectations are known by students, parents, educators, policymakers, and the public before testing
- ❖ Consistent expectations from year to year allows for longitudinal comparisons
- ❖ Expectations, if met each year, will result in proficient or advanced student achievement
- ❖ Educators can compute and replicate growth calculation



5

Focus attention on the progress of the lowest performing students in each school

Effective school accountability systems place more focus on students most in need, without ignoring those that are proficient or advanced.

- All schools have low performing students.
- By focusing on the lowest performing students the accountability system will focus on the students that need the most attention, and guarantees that all schools have a focus group of lowest performing students.



6

Report results in a timely manner as close to the end of the school year as possible

Timely reporting has many benefits:

- Gives parents enough time to make decisions about where to send their child to school
- Allows teachers and students in schools with a high grade to celebrate success
- Ensures that administrators and educators in schools with a low grade have ample time over the summer to analyze where and how to improve.



7

Communicate clearly to parents

- Parents need access to school grades and the underlying data for the underlying measures.
- Information should be easy to navigate and explained in simple language and graphics, including on the state website.
- Schools and districts should be required to notify parents of the school's grade and provide information to parents who cannot access the site.

Federal law requires a school report card to be issued.



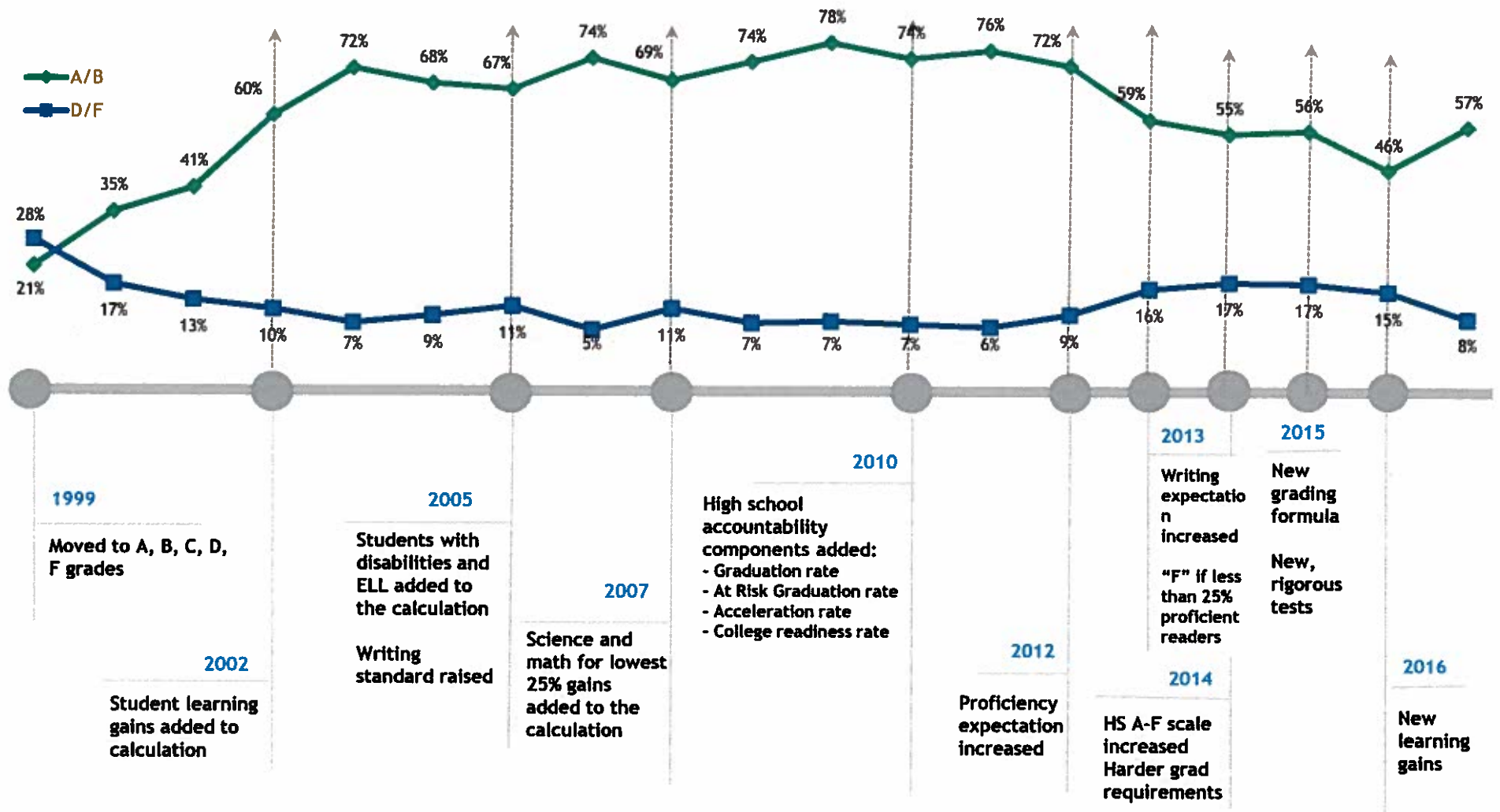
8

Establish rigorous criteria, with automatic increases, to earn A, B, C, D or F grades

- Setting the grading scale for earning an A, B, C, D, and F is critical to the success of school accountability.
- The scale should be aspirational, yet attainable
- Automatic increases in the scale should occur when most schools are experiencing success.

For example, the grading scale will increase by five percentage points the year after 65% or more schools earn an A or B until the grading scale is: 90-100% = A, 80-89% = B, 70-79% = C, 60-69% = D, and <60% = F.

Florida A-F Increased in Rigor and Improved Student Achievement Dramatically Since 1999





9

Use grades to identify schools for recognition, intervention, and support

Regardless of the nuances of method states use to meaningfully differentiate schools, a key factor is identification of schools that should be rewarded or provided extra support and resources for schools that are consistently failing to serve students.

- Schools that improve a letter grade or earn an A, should be recognized as Reward Schools with financial awards for educators and publicity.
- The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires states to identify Comprehensive and Targeted Support and Improvement Schools. Using A-F, these schools could be identified as:
 - Schools with a D or F letter grade.
 - High schools that have graduation rates below 67 percent.
 - A, B and C schools with the lowest performing and consistently low performing subgroups or not meeting the needs of their students learning English.

Impact of A-F

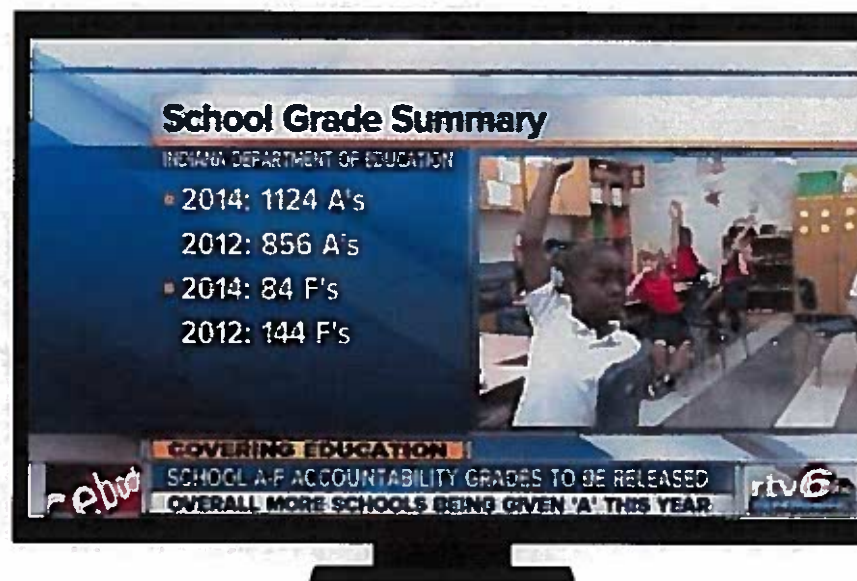


Increased Transparency

- A, B, C, D, F vs. . . .
- Reward, Celebration Eligible, Continuous Improvement, Focus, Priority

Improved Student Achievement*

- Schools facing accountability under A-F change their instructional policies and practices in meaningful ways.
- Evidence supports that improvement in student achievement and test scores in low-performing schools are because of the pressure to improve.



Increased Parent Involvement

- In Oklahoma, first year of issuing grades, 25,000 more hits on the A-F website than number of students in Oklahoma schools.

Command Focus on Learning

- Leon County (Tallahassee, FL) School board dedicated entire meeting on how to be the first district in the state with no “C” schools.

**National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research*



Thank You!

Christy Hovanetz, Ph.D.

Senior Policy Fellow

Christy@ExcelinEd.org | 850.212.0243

Join ExcelinEd to learn more about the education reform in America.

**Foundation for Excellence in Education
P.O. Box 10691
Tallahassee, FL 32302**

 **850.391.4090**

 **info@ExcelinEd.org**

 **ExcelinEd.org**

 **/ExcelinEd**

 **@ExcelinEd**

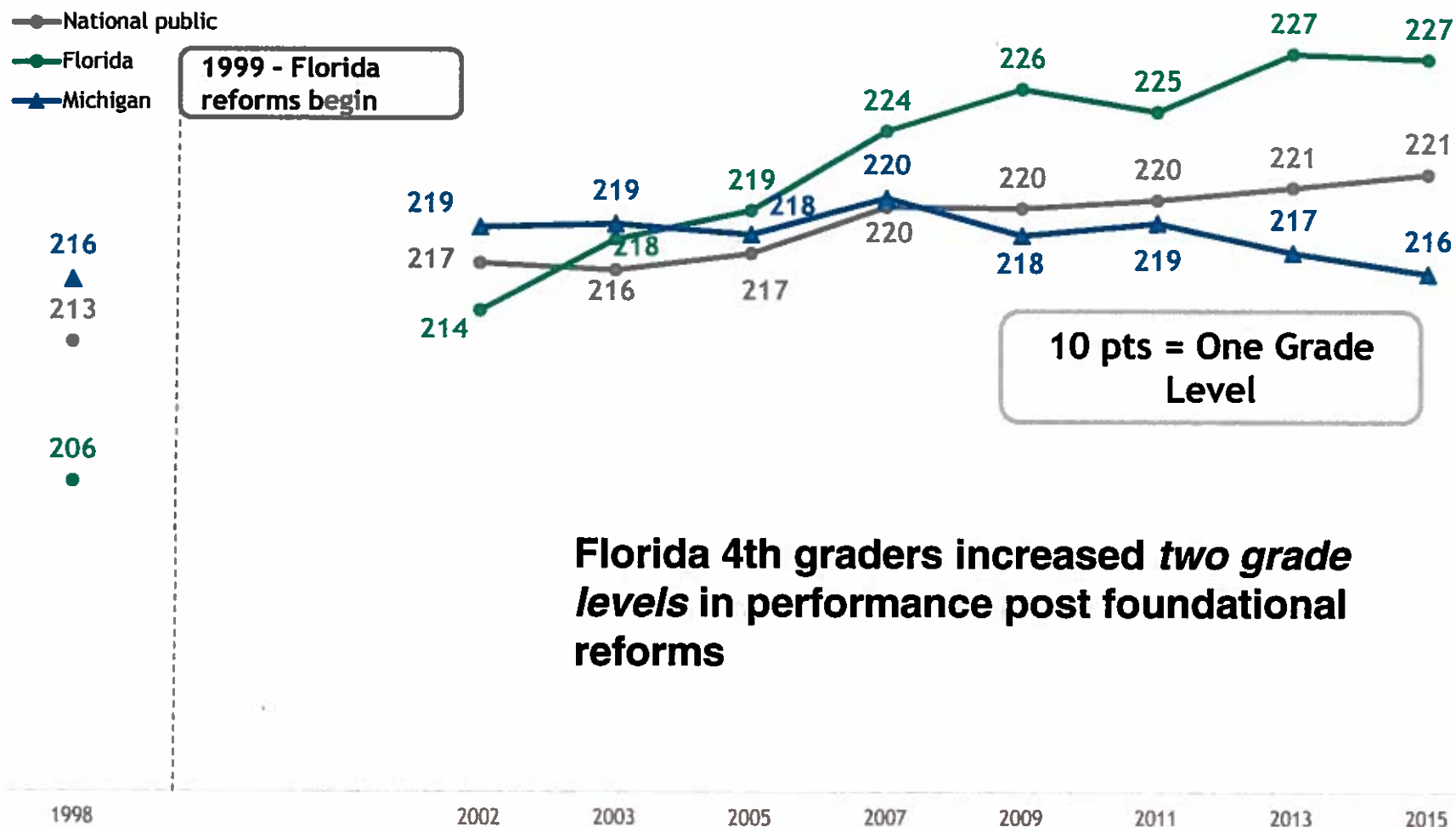
 **/ExcelinEd**

Data

NAEP: National Assessment of Educational Progress



MICHIGAN NAEP 4th Grade Reading Scores, 1998-2015

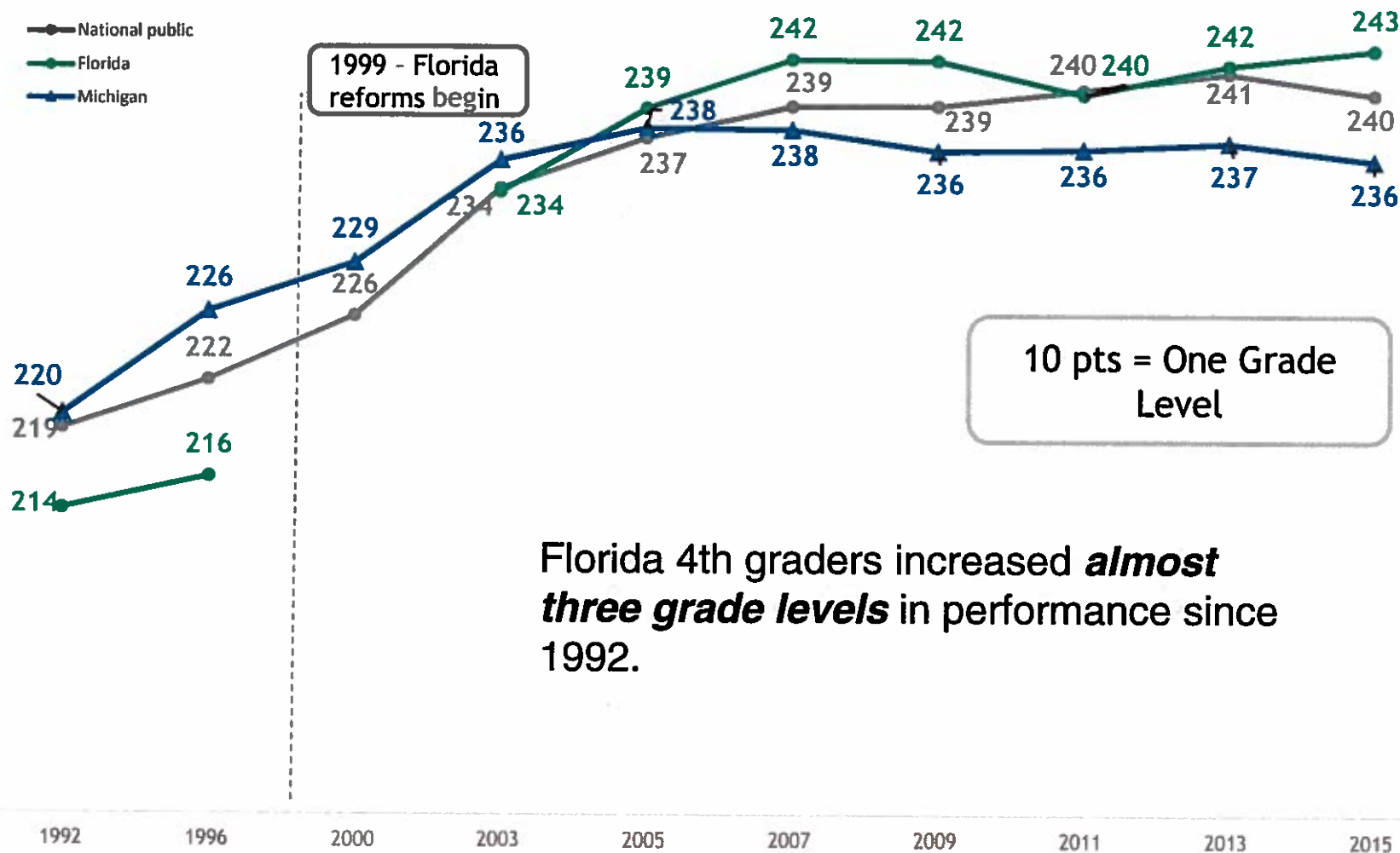


Florida 4th graders increased *two grade levels* in performance post foundational reforms

NAEP: National Assessment of Educational Progress



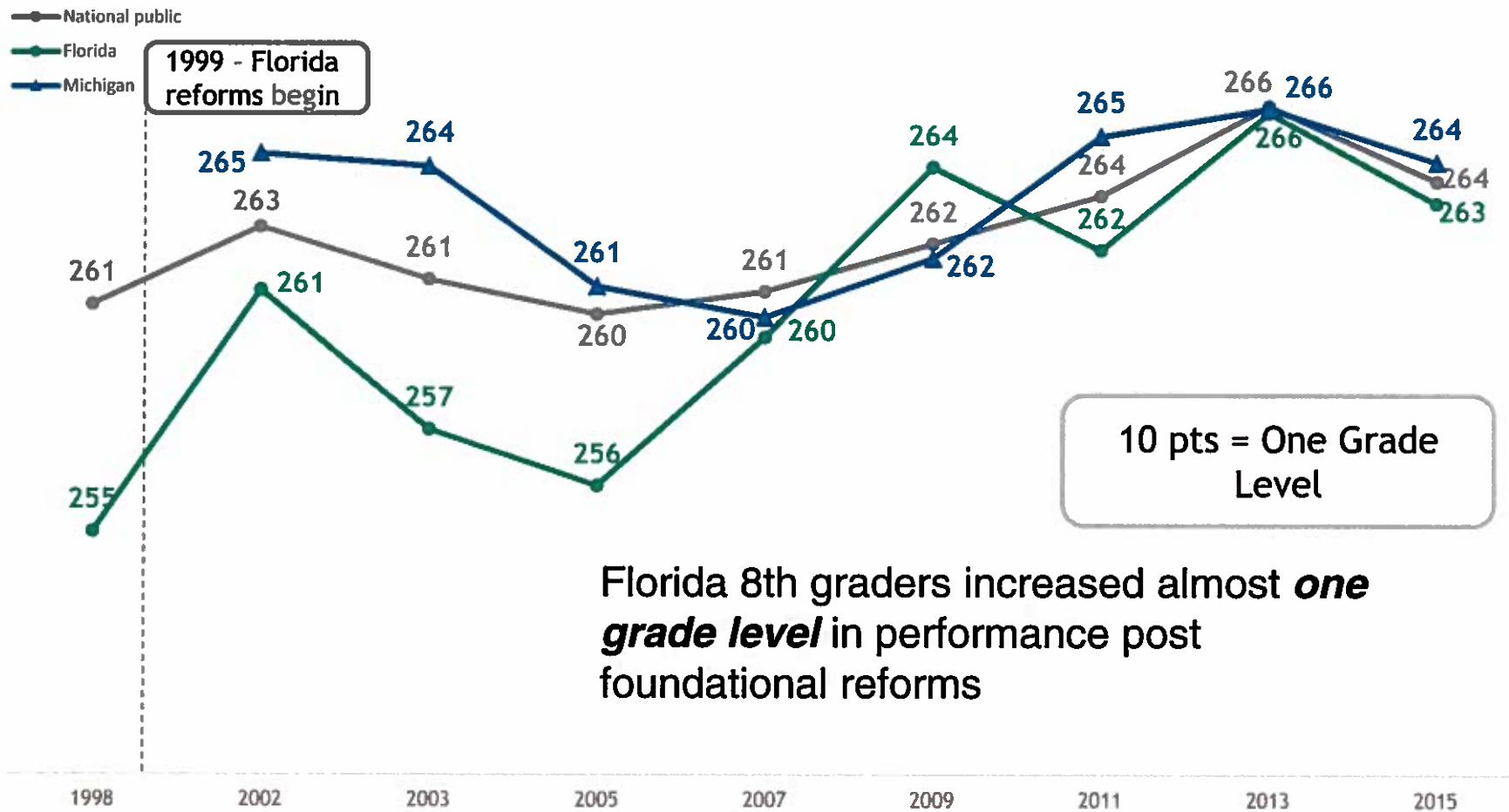
MICHIGAN Average NAEP 4th Grade Math Scores, 1992-2015



NAEP: National Assessment of Educational Progress



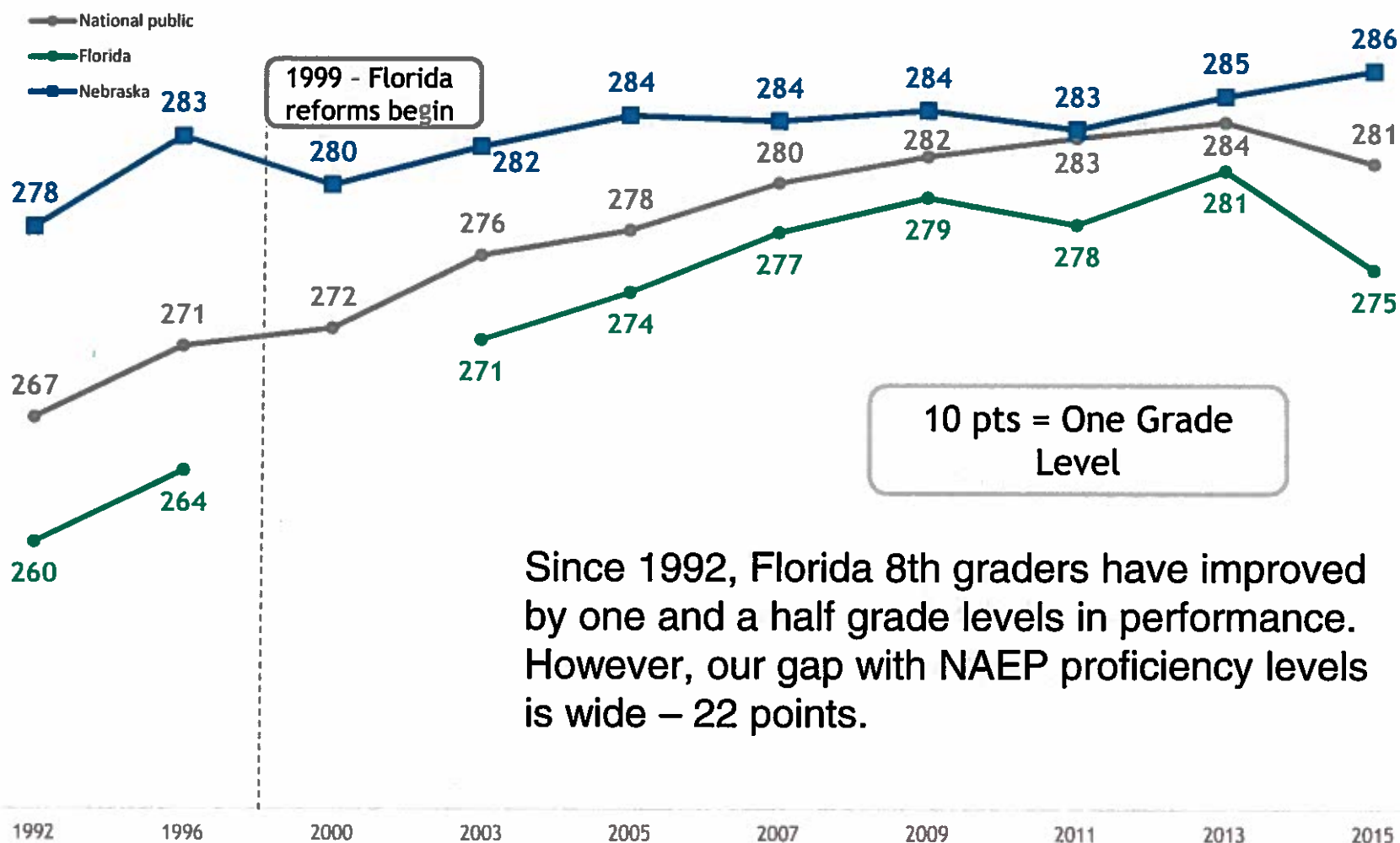
MICHIGAN Average NAEP 8th Grade Reading Scores, 1992-2015



NAEP: National Assessment of Educational Progress



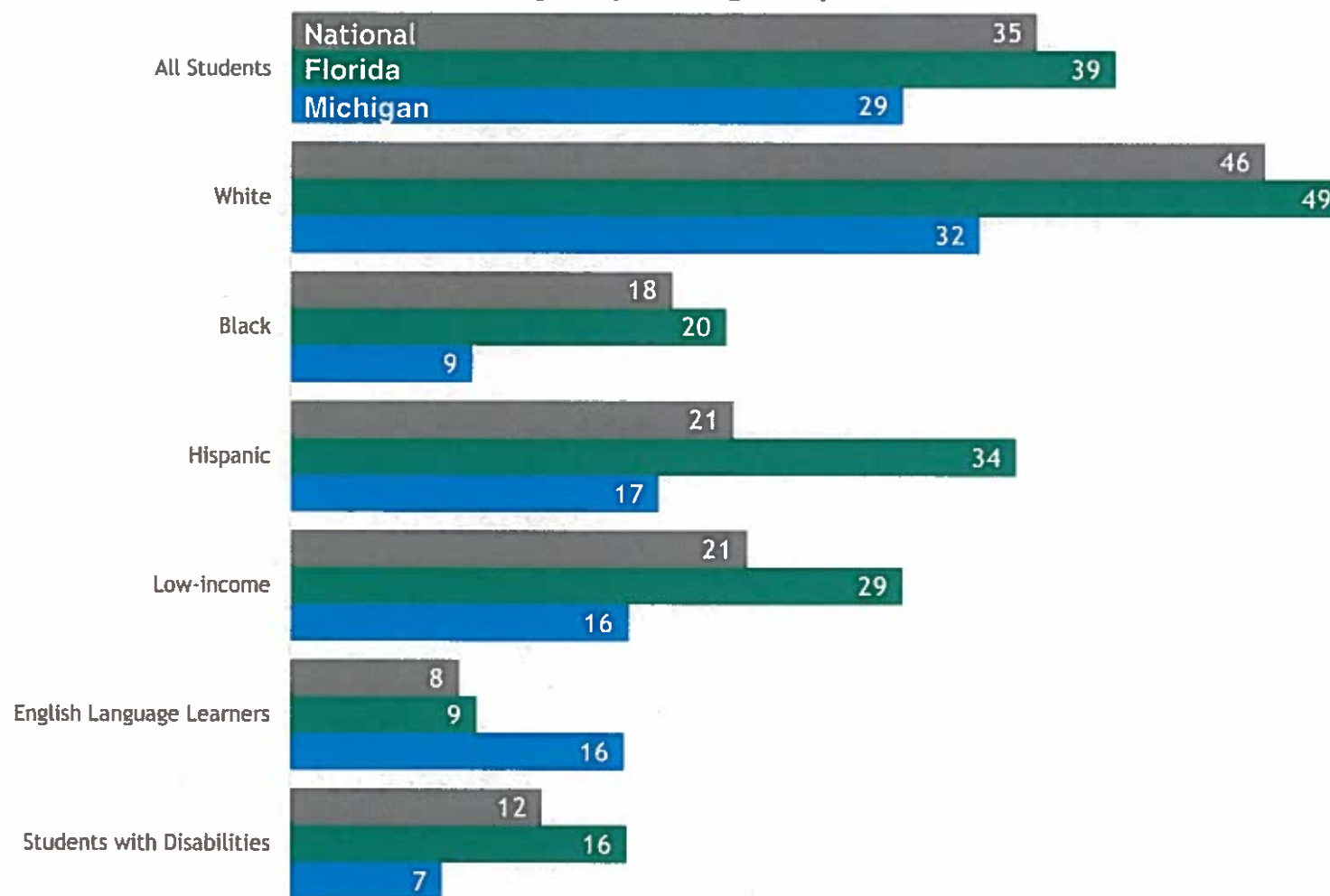
MICHIGAN Average NAEP 8th Grade Math Scores, 1992-2015



Since 1992, Florida 8th graders have improved by one and a half grade levels in performance. However, our gap with NAEP proficiency levels is wide – 22 points.



National, **Florida**, and **Michigan** Students Scoring “Proficient or Above” on 2015 NAEP Grade 4 Reading, by subgroup.





Percentage of Students in the Nation, Florida and **Michigan** Scoring Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, and Advanced on NAEP 4th Grade Reading in **2003** and **2015**

