



Testing in Nevada Public Schools

Background

Following several sessions of discussion, in 1977 the Legislature adopted a mandated student testing program—the Nevada Proficiency Examination—to provide a statewide measure of student accountability that was not previously available. Since 1977, the Legislature has required statewide testing.

Nevada Education Reform Act

The 1997 Nevada Education Reform Act (NERA) increased testing requirements as a part of the revised accountability program for public schools. A grade 10 standardized test was added, as was a writing test for grade 4. Science was added as a subject to be tested at grades 4, 8, 10, and 11. The NERA also established a policy linkage between the proficiency testing program and school accountability by creating a procedure for ranking schools on the basis of their average test scores. Schools designated “in need of improvement” were required to prepare plans for improvement and to adopt proven remedial education programs based upon needs identified using the average test scores. In the 1999 Session, the Legislature added a requirement for criterion-referenced tests (CRTs) linked to the academic standards for selected grades and required that the High School Proficiency Examination (HSPE) be revised to measure the performance of students on the newly adopted academic standards starting with the class graduating in 2003.

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

To comply with the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), the 2003 Legislature enacted Senate Bill 1 (Chapter 1, *Statutes of Nevada, 19th Special Session*). The measure modified the NERA to add tests aligned to the State academic standards in reading and mathematics for grades 3 through 8. Further, the 2003 Legislature made substantive revisions to the linkage between these tests and the State accountability system to meet federal requirements for making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and imposing sanctions on schools and school districts that are consistently unsuccessful in meeting their target increases in student progress.

The standards-based CRTs required by NCLB are linked to the school accountability program, and are considered “high stakes” for schools and districts. The standards-based CRTs have been expanded to include a science examination at grades 5 and 8.

Since 1979, the HSPE has been a “high stakes” test for individual students since a passing score is required as a condition for high school graduation and more recently for eligibility in the State’s Governor Guinn Millennium Scholarship Program. Historically, the HSPE has included math, reading, and writing examinations; however, beginning with the Class of 2010, a science test is included in the examination.

Chapter 8

The 2007 Legislature, through the passage of S.B. 312 (Chapter 289, *Statutes of Nevada*), now allows a pupil who has failed to pass the HSPE at least three times to pursue an alternative route to receive a standard high school diploma. To be eligible, a pupil must pass the mathematics and reading subject areas of the HSPE, earn an overall grade point average (GPA) of 2.75 on a 4.0 grading scale, and satisfy alternative criteria that demonstrate proficiency in the subject areas on the examination that the pupil failed to pass.

The following table presents the current statewide assessment system in Nevada:

Current System of Statewide Examinations for <i>All Students</i> (19 Tests) 2008-2009 Testing Schedule												
	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12		
Norm-Referenced Test (NRT)—currently Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) ¹ and Iowa Tests of Educational Development (ITED)		○			○			○				
National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) [sample only] ²		○				○				○		
Writing Exam ³			○			○			○	○		
High School Proficiency Examination (HSPE) (Reading, Math, and Science) ⁴								○	○	○		
Nevada Criterion-Referenced Tests (CRTs) (Reading, Math, and Science) ⁵		○	○	○	○	○	○					
Current System of Statewide Examinations for <i>Special Student Populations</i> 2008-2009 Testing Schedule												
Nevada Alternate Scales of Academic Achievement (NASAA) ⁶		○	○	○	○	○	○			○		
English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA) ⁷		○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○		

¹Due to budget reductions, administration of the NRT during School Year (SY) 2008-2009 has been eliminated.

²The NAEP is administered to 9-, 13-, and 17-year-old pupils.

³The Writing Examinations in grades 11 and 12 are part of the HSPE. Only those 12th graders who have failed the Writing Examination in grade 11 are required to take the examination.

⁴The Class of 2010 is the first class required to pass the science portion of the HSPE.

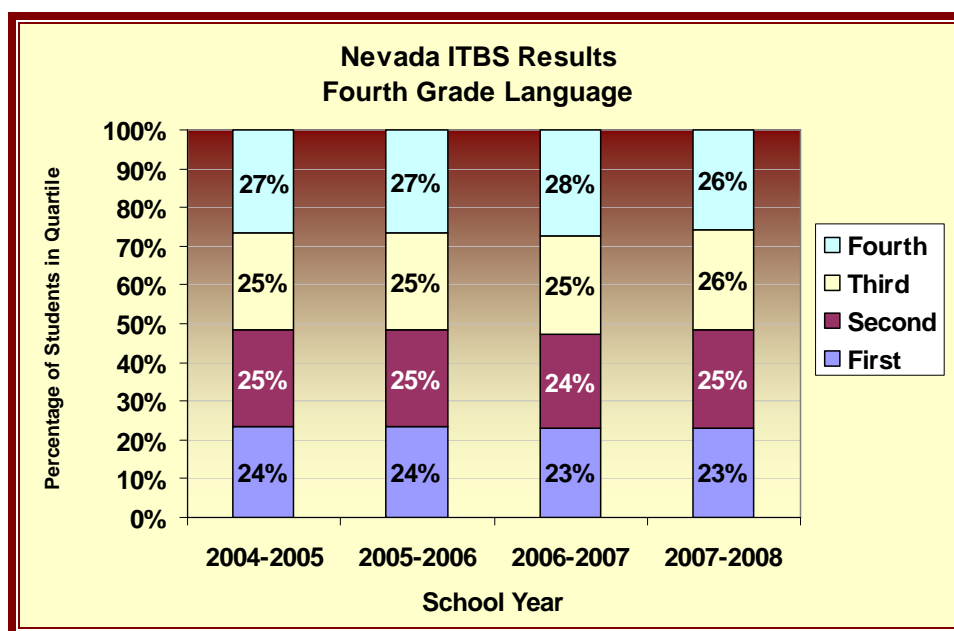
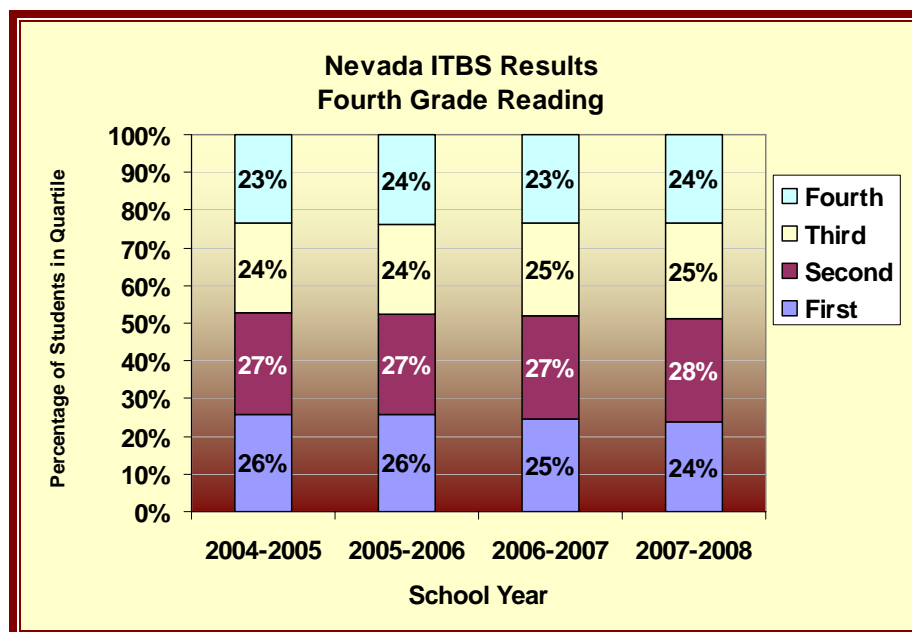
⁵In order to prepare students to take the science portion of the HSPE, pupils in grades 5 and 8 are now required to take a science CRT.

⁶Eligible students are only required to participate in the assessment once during high school; participation must occur during the 11th grade school year.

⁷All Limited English Proficient (LEP) students (K through 12) must take the ELPA to determine English proficiency.

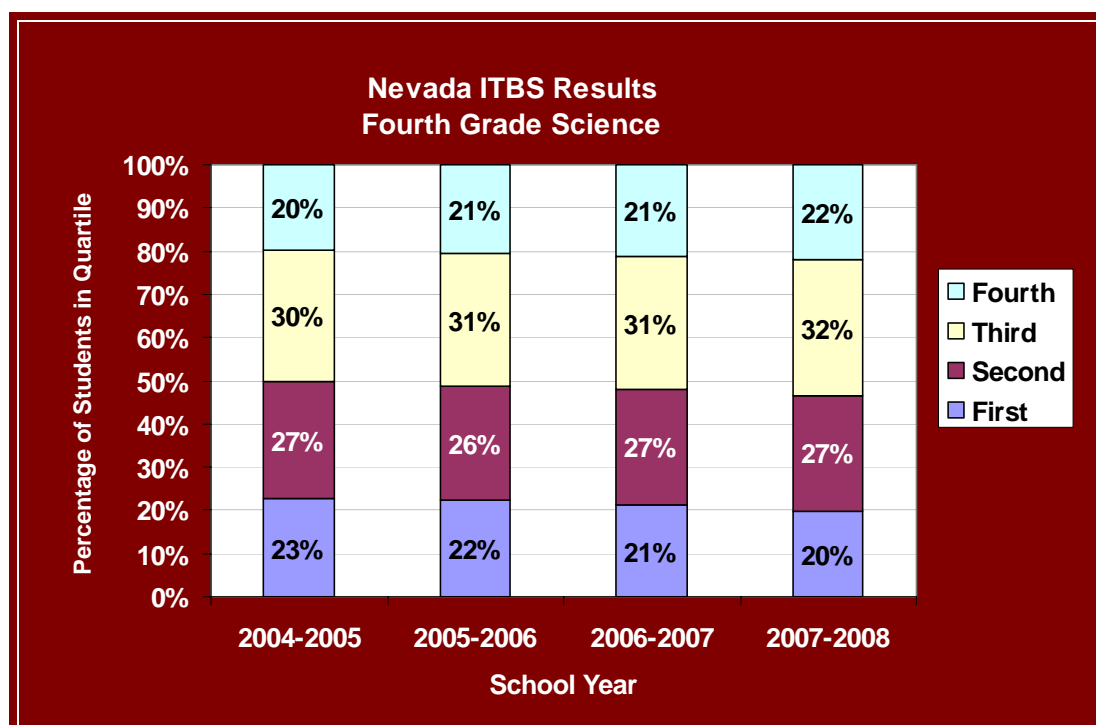
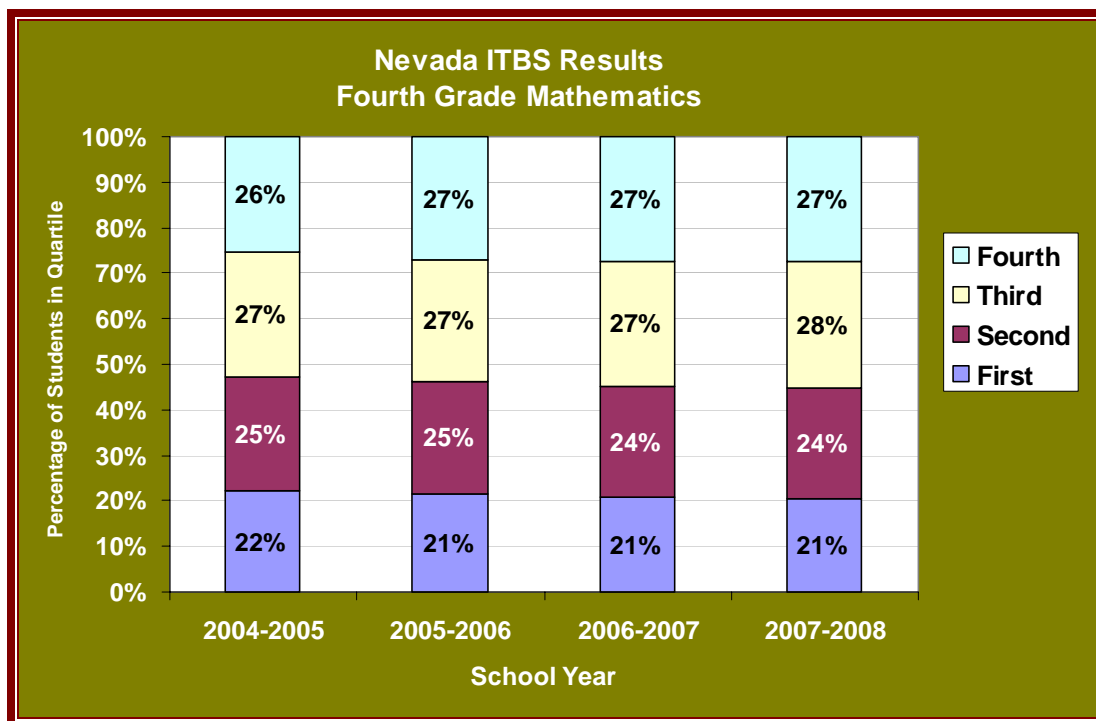
Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS)—Grade 4

The Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) is the State's norm-referenced test (NRT) for grades 4 and 7. Student performance is reported by a National Percentile Rank (NPR), which indicates a student's standing within a nationally representative group of students in the same grade who were tested at the same time of year. For purposes of the following graphs, student achievement is broken down into four quartiles: First Quartile: NPR from 1 to 25; Second Quartile: NPR from 26 to 50; Third Quartile: NPR from 51 to 75; and Fourth Quartile: NPR from 76 to 100.



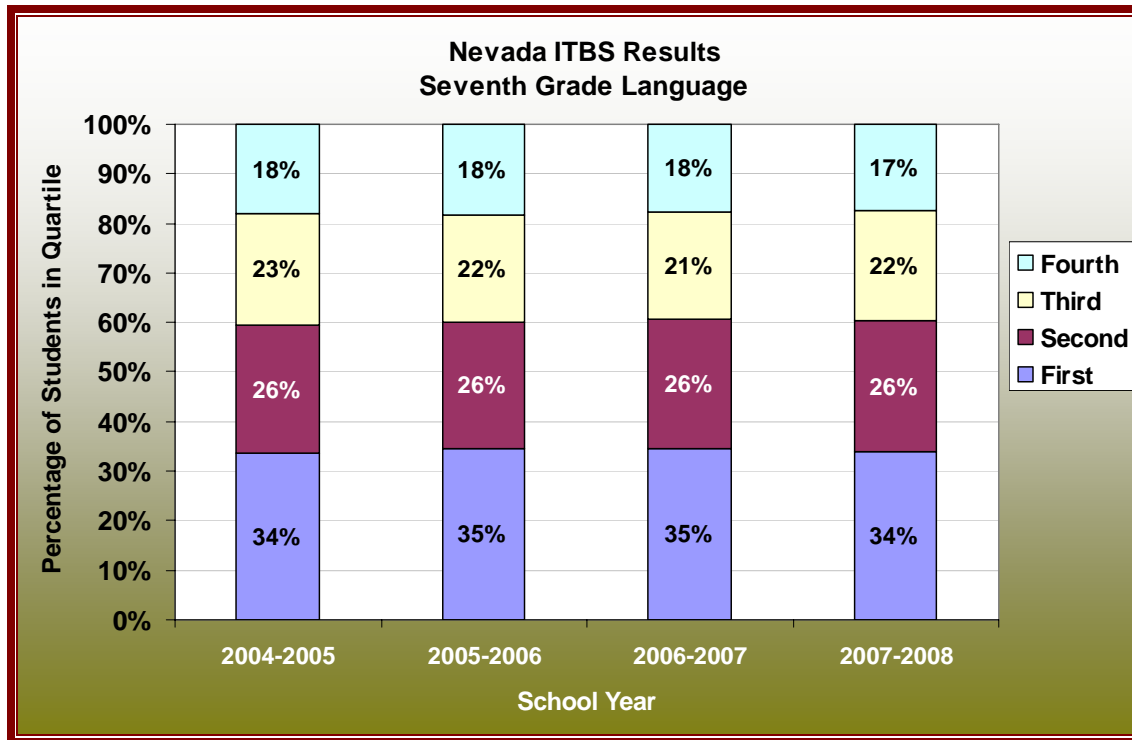
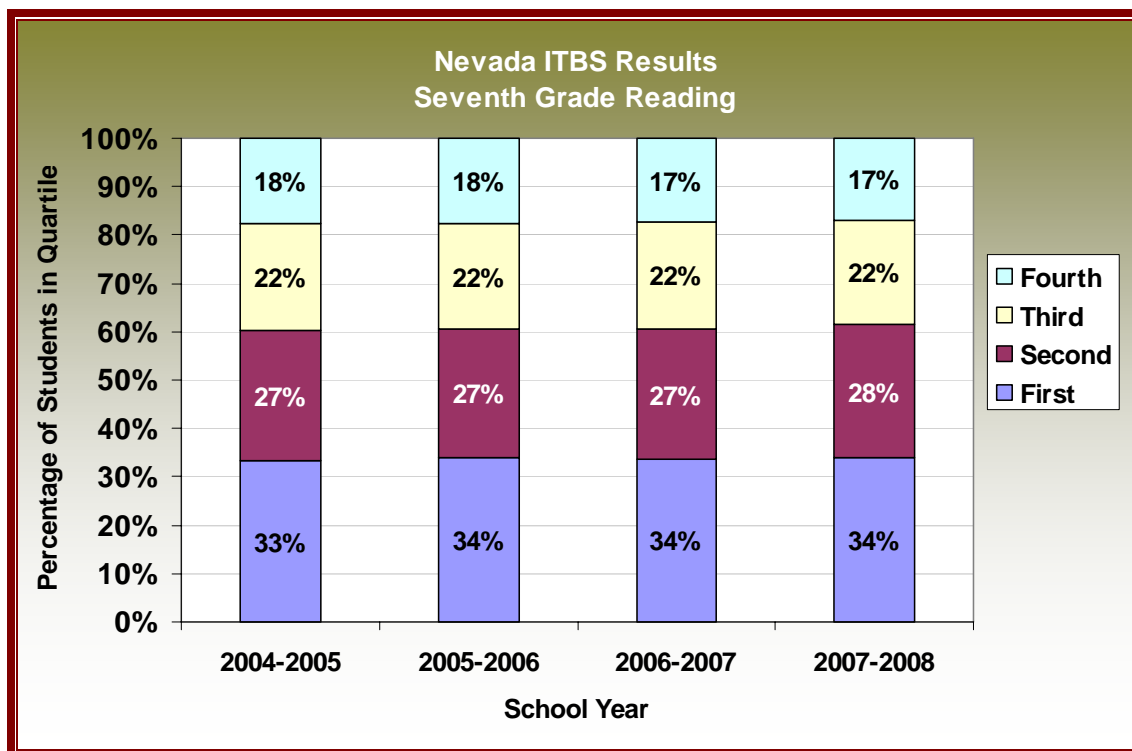
Source: Nevada's Department of Education, *Nevada Report Card Database: State Profile*, various years.

Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS)—Grade 4 (*continued*)



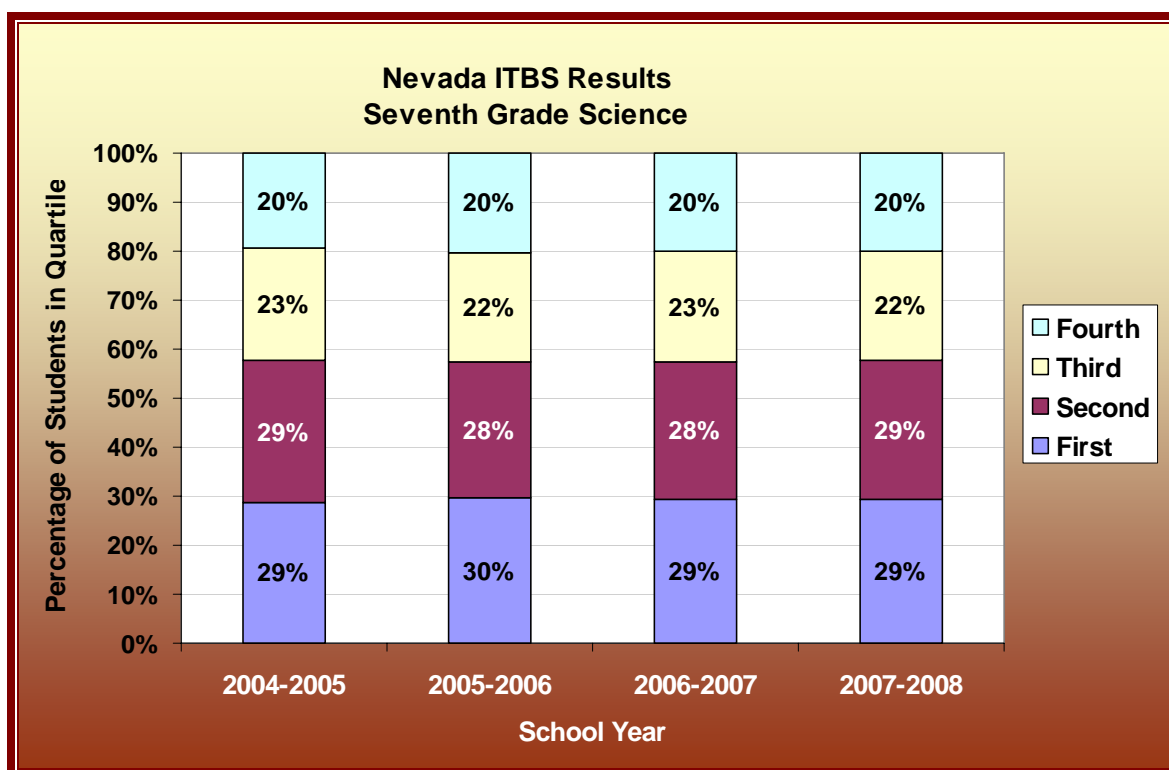
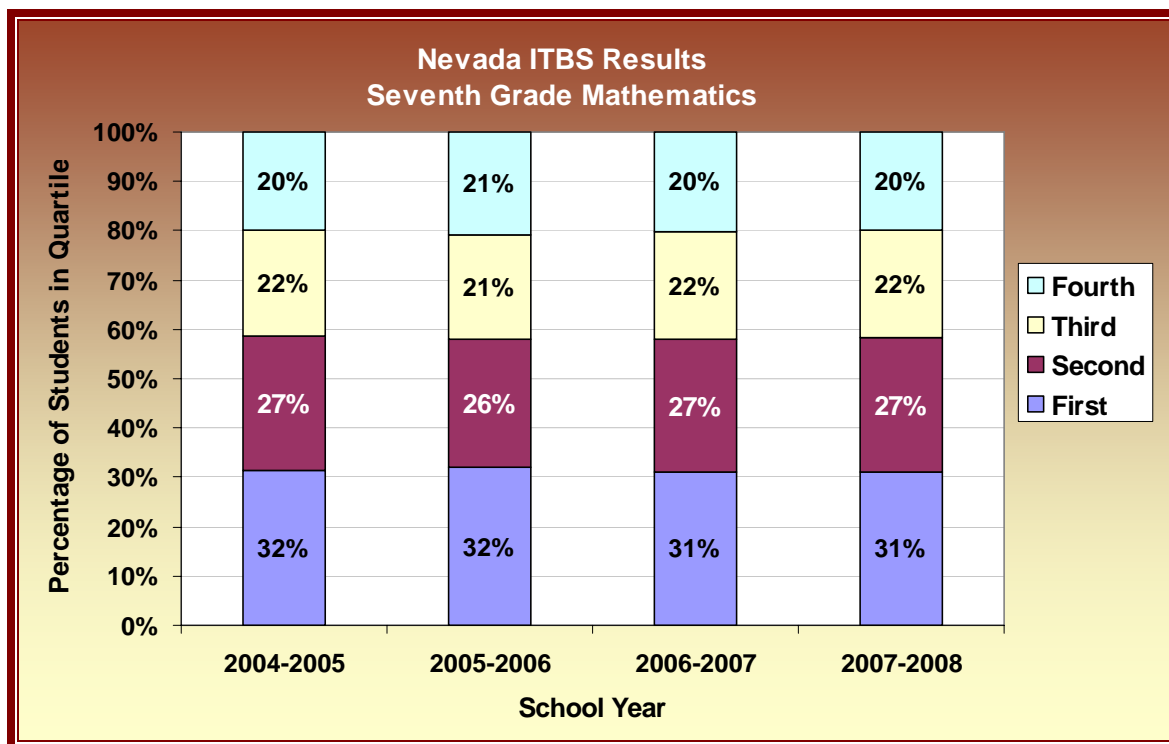
Source: Nevada's Department of Education, *Nevada Report Card Database: State Profile*, various years.

Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS)—Grade 7



Source: Nevada's Department of Education, *Nevada Report Card Database: State Profile*, various years.

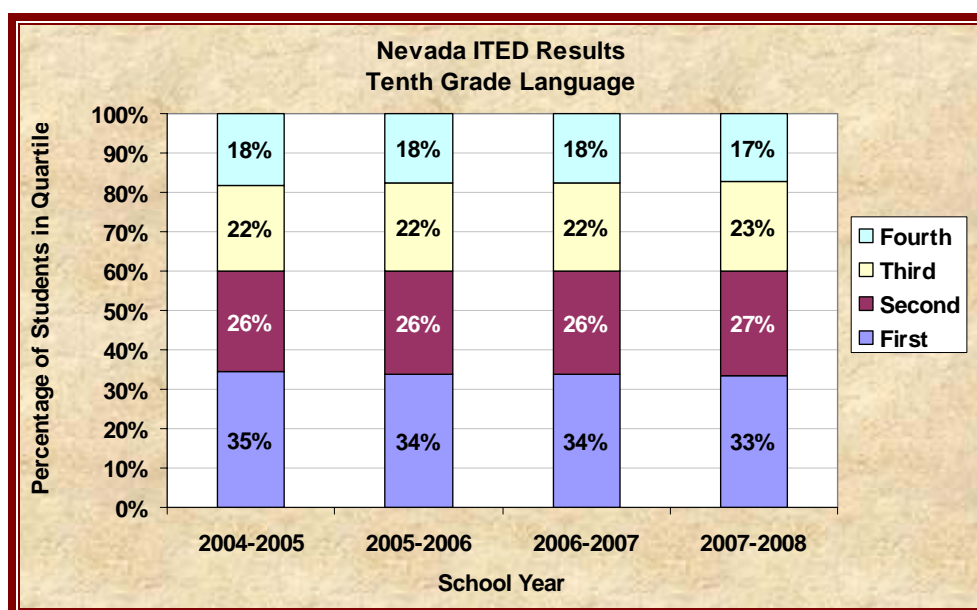
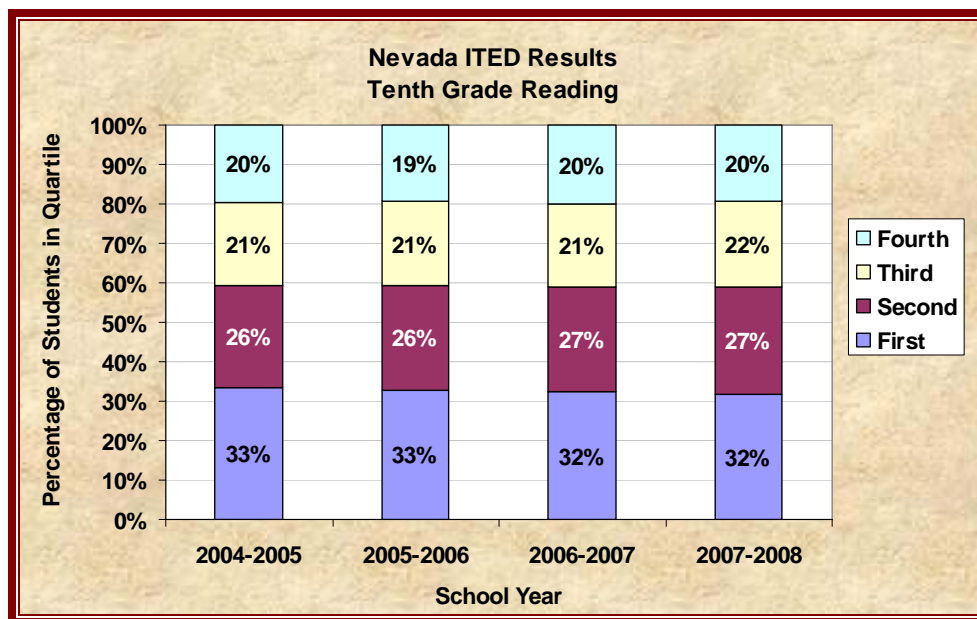
Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS)—Grade 7 (*continued*)



Source: Nevada's Department of Education, *Nevada Report Card Database: State Profile*, various years.

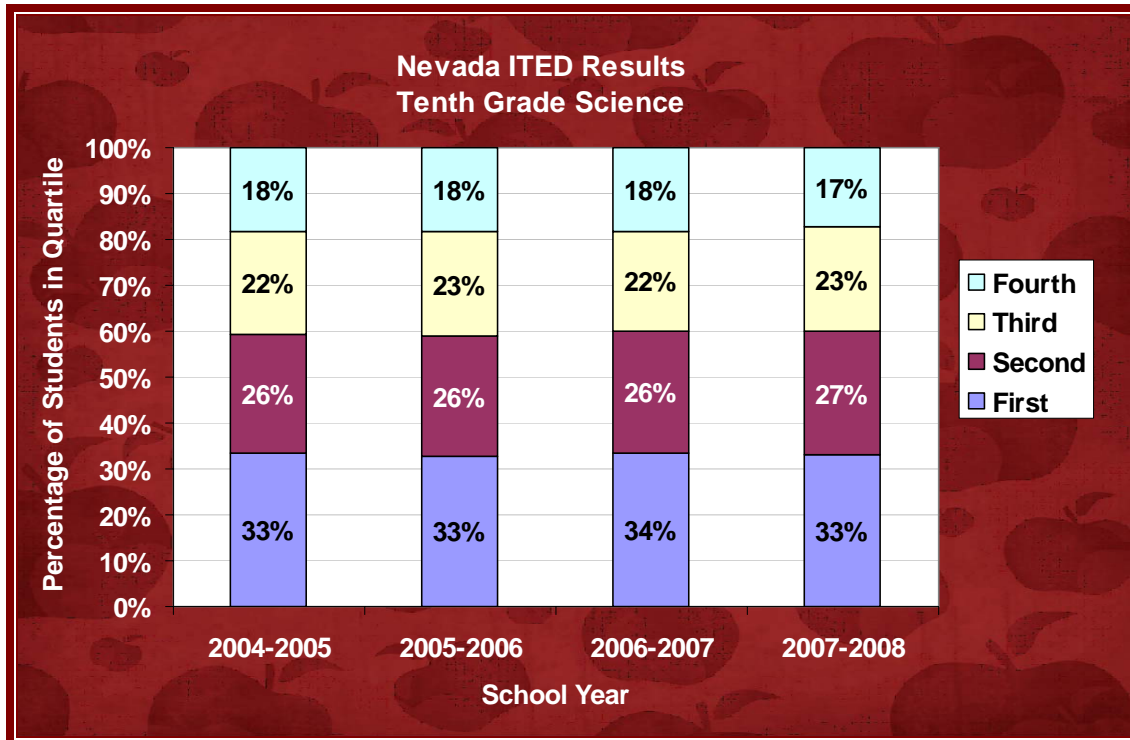
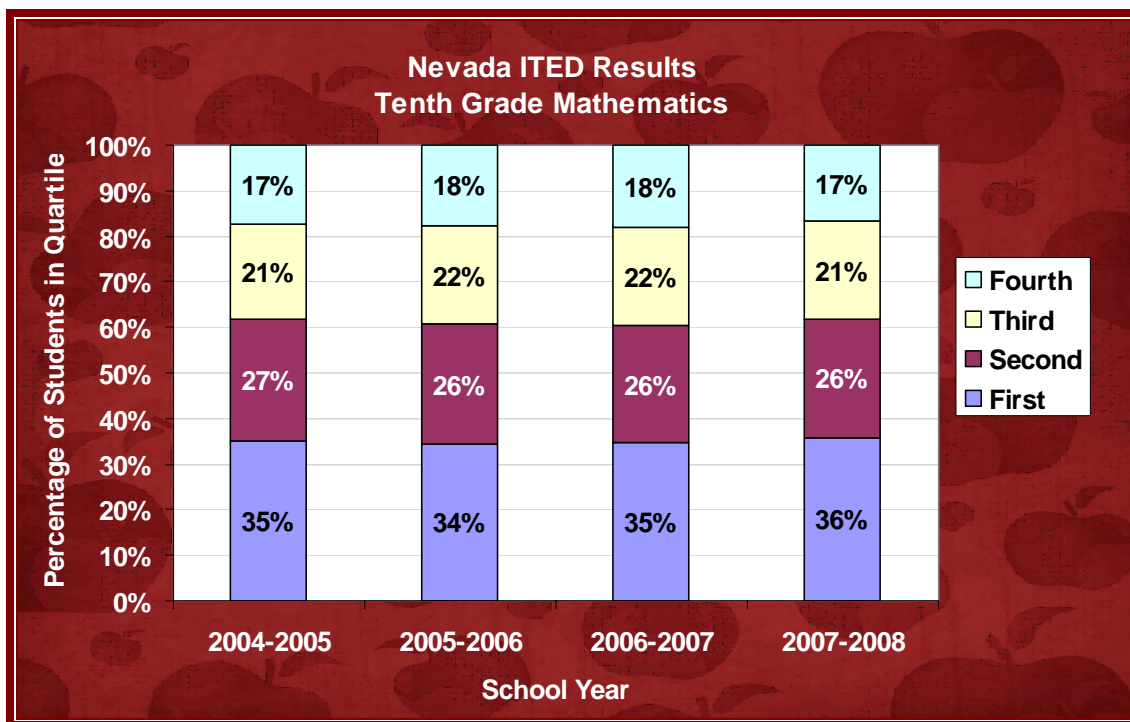
Iowa Tests of Educational Development (ITED)—Grade 10

The Iowa Tests of Educational Development (ITED) is the State's norm-referenced test (NRT) for grade 10. Student performance is reported by a National Percentile Rank (NPR), which indicates a student's standing within a nationally representative group of students in the same grade who were tested at the same time of year. For purposes of the following graphs, student achievement is broken down into four quartiles: First Quartile: NPR from 1 to 25; Second Quartile: NPR from 26 to 50; Third Quartile: NPR from 51 to 75; and Fourth Quartile: NPR from 76 to 100.



Source: Nevada's Department of Education, *Nevada Report Card Database: State Profile*, various years.

Iowa Tests of Educational Development (ITED)—Grade 10 (*continued*)



Source: Nevada's Department of Education, *Nevada Report Card Database: State Profile*, various years.

Criterion-Referenced Tests (CRTs)

Criterion-referenced tests are intended to measure how well a student has learned the State's academic standards. Student achievement is broken down into four standards:

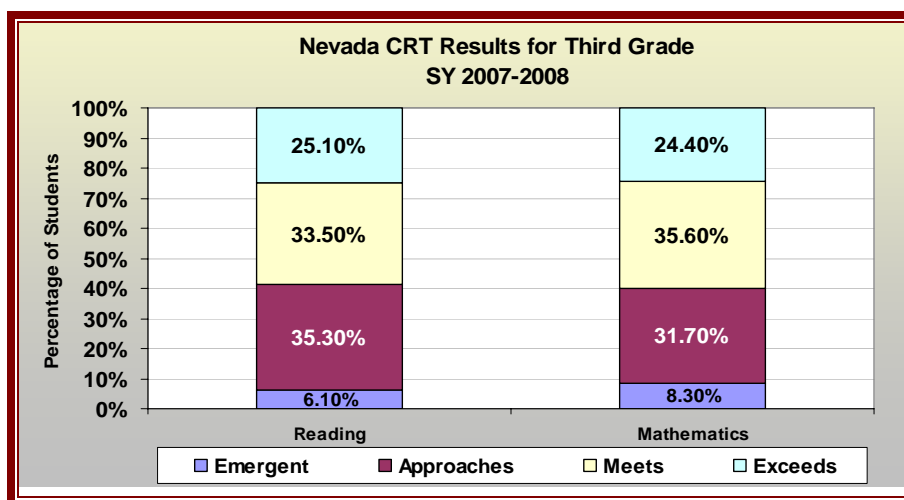
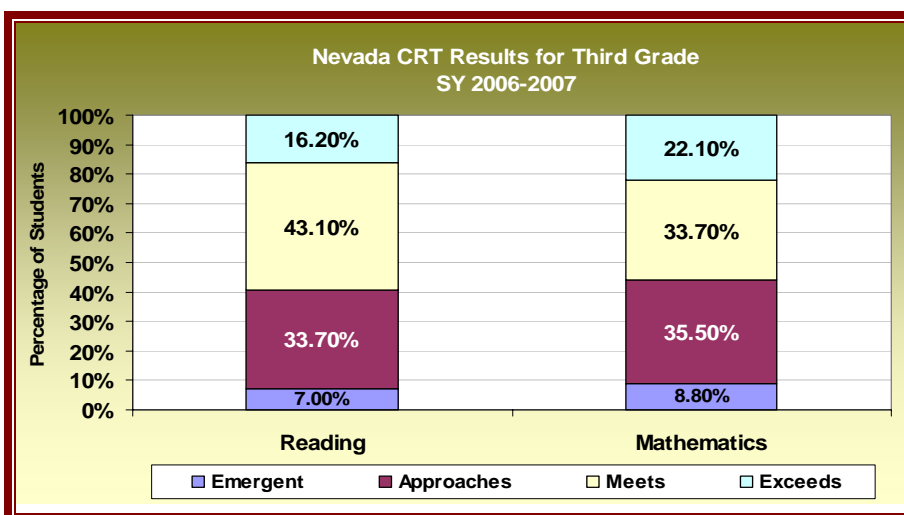
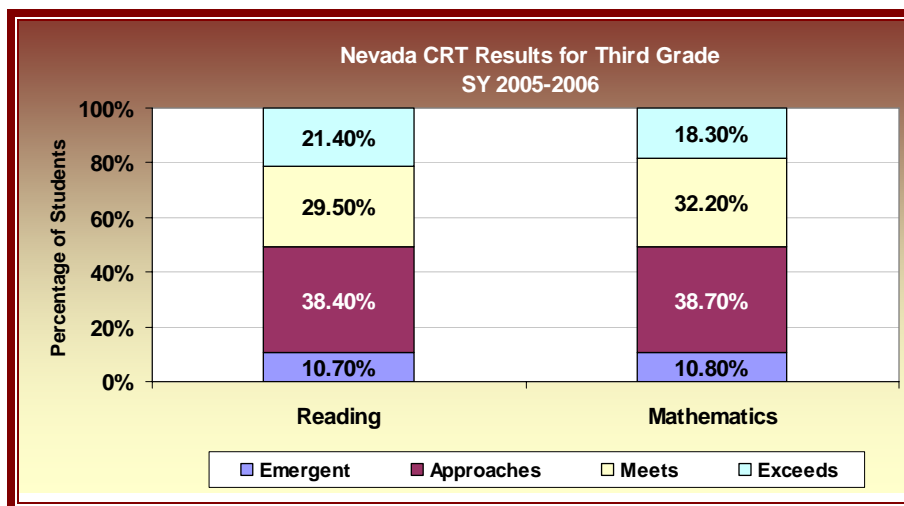
1. Emergent/Developing—Student occasionally/does not apply skills/strategies and requires extensive remediation.
2. Approaches Standard—Student inconsistently/incompletely applies skills/strategies and requires targeted remediation.
3. Meets Standard—Student consistently applies skills/strategies without need for remediation.
4. Exceeds Standard—Student comprehensively/consistently applies and generalizes skills/strategies in a variety of situations.



“I like the kind of tests that I don’t have to study for.”

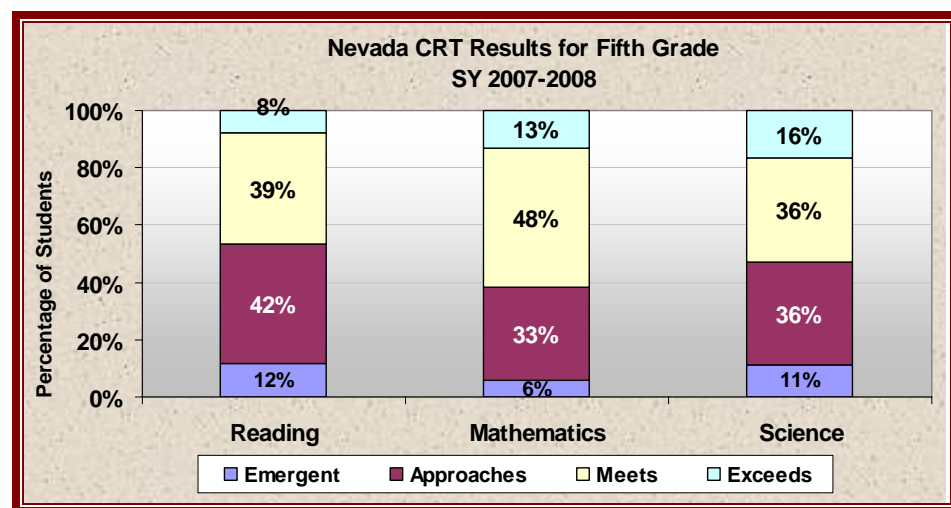
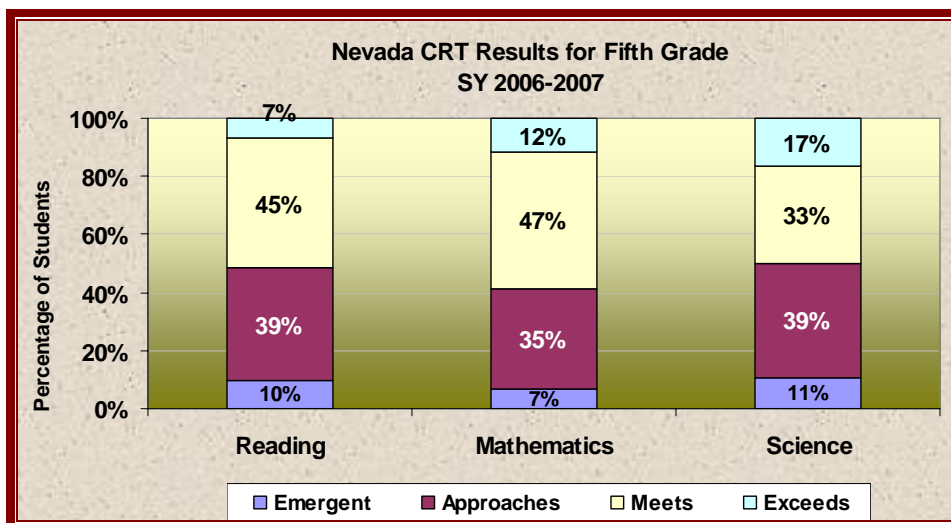
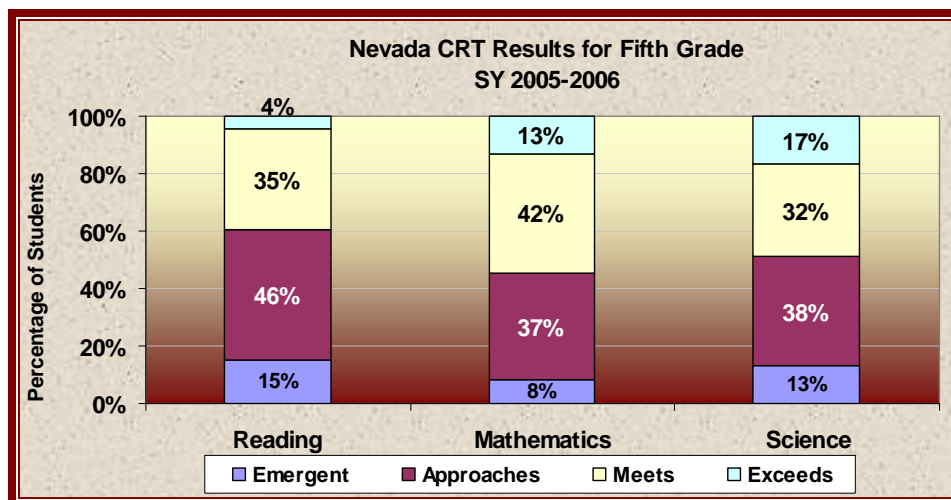
Nevada Fourth Grade Student

Criterion-Referenced Tests (CRTs)—Grade 3



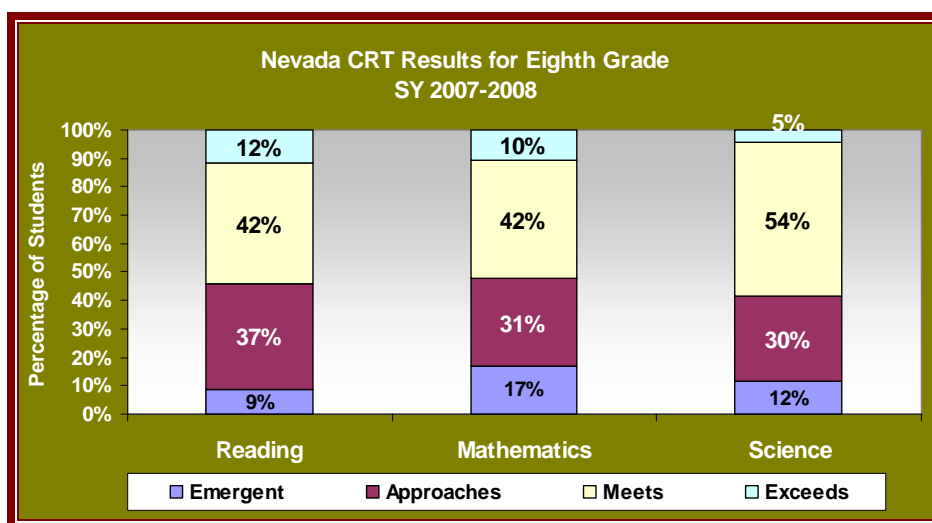
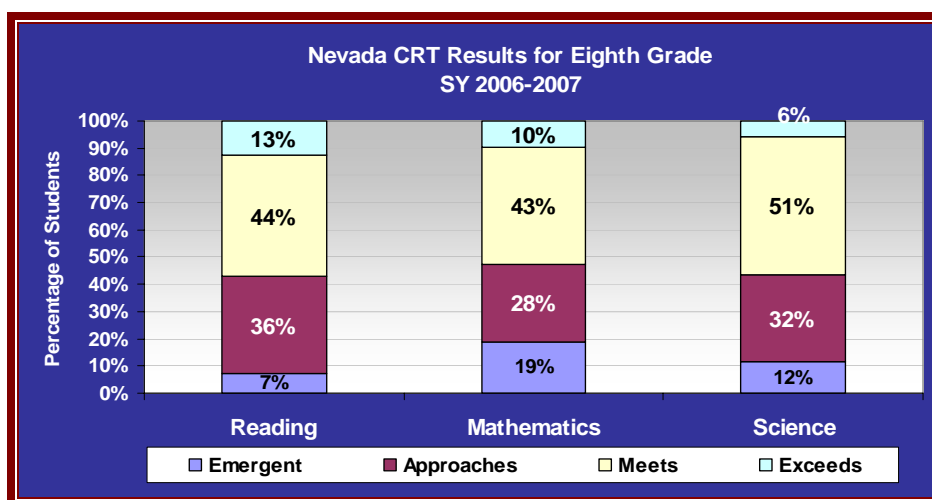
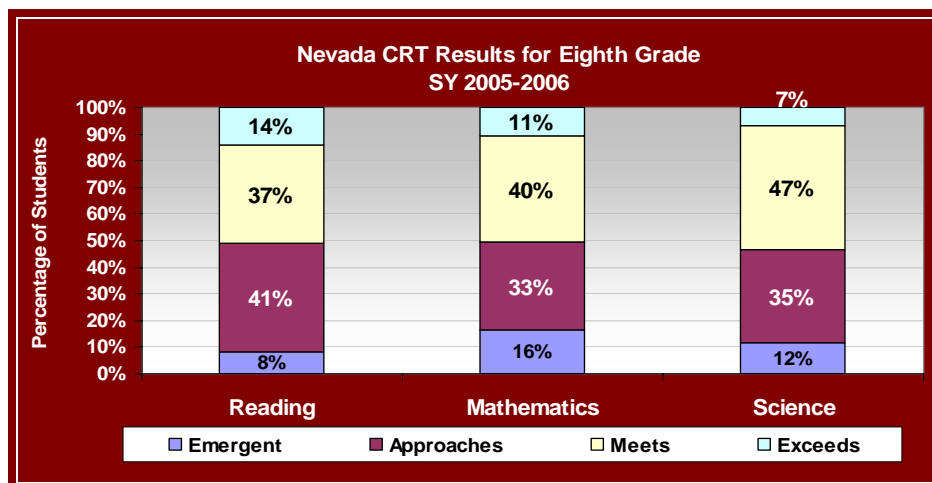
Source: Nevada's Department of Education, *Nevada Report Card Database: State Profile*, various years.

Criterion-Referenced Tests (CRTs)—Grade 5



Source: Nevada's Department of Education, *Nevada Report Card Database: State Profile*, various years.

Criterion-Referenced Tests (CRTs)—Grade 8



Source: Nevada's Department of Education, *Nevada Report Card Database: State Profile*, various years.

High School Proficiency Examination (HSPE)

The Nevada High School Proficiency Examination (HSPE) is aligned to Nevada's Content Academic Standards. The HSPE has four sections: reading, writing, mathematics, and science. The following provides information concerning each section of the HSPE:

Note: In order to receive a standard high school diploma in Nevada, students must pass all portions of the HSPE and meet all other State and district requirements.

Reading—Students demonstrate reading proficiency by responding to a variety of text types and lengths based on:

- Word analysis;
- Literacy text; and
- Expository text.

Writing—The writing portion of the HSPE requires students to demonstrate writing proficiency by responding to two topics:

- Narrative or descriptive; and
- Persuasive or expository.

Mathematics—Students demonstrate math proficiency by responding to questions concerning:

- Numbers and computation;
- Patterns, functions, and algebra;
- Measurement;
- Spatial relationships, geometry, and logic; and
- Data analysis.

Science—Students demonstrate science proficiency by responding to questions based on knowledge and skills pertaining to:

- Physical science;
- Life science;
- Earth/space science; and
- The nature of science.

Note: The first administration of the science portion of the HSPE will be in SY 2008-2009.

High School Proficiency Examination (HSPE) (*continued*)

Student Achievement Under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)

For purposes of utilizing the results of the HSPE under the NCLB, student achievement is broken down into the same four standards as the State CRTs:

1. Emergent/Developing—Student occasionally/does not apply skills/strategies and requires extensive remediation.
2. Approaches Standard—Student inconsistently/incompletely applies skills/strategies and requires targeted remediation.
3. Meets Standard—Student consistently applies skills/strategies without need for remediation.
4. Exceeds Standard—Student comprehensively/consistently applies and generalizes skills/strategies in a variety of situations.

Source: Nevada's Department of Education, *2008-2009 Nevada High School Proficiency Examination Program Brochure*.



“I nailed the HSPE on my first try.”

Nevada Eleventh Grade Student

High School Proficiency Examination (HSPE) (*continued*)

States with Mandatory Exit Examinations 23 States

Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi, **NEVADA**, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and Washington

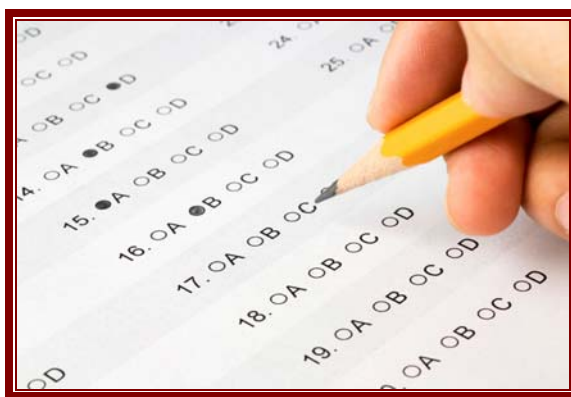
States Phasing in Exit Examinations by 2012 but Not Yet Withholding Diplomas 3 States

Arkansas (2010), Maryland (2009), and Oklahoma (2012)

States with No Mandatory Exit Examinations 24 States and District of Columbia

Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming

Source: Center on Education Policy, *State High School Exit Exams: A Move Toward End-of-Course Exams*, August 2008.



High School Proficiency Examination (HSPE) *(continued)*

Gaps Between Subgroups in Pass Rates on State High School Exit Exams—2006

Percentage of White and Black Students Passing in Math and Percentage Point Gap

Western State*	White	Black	Gap
Arizona	78%	51%	27
California	88%	57%	31
Idaho	73%	46%	27
Nevada	81%	47%	34
New Mexico	90%	67%	23
Washington	59%	26%	33

*Western States—Colorado, Montana, Oregon, Utah, and Wyoming do not have an exit exam.

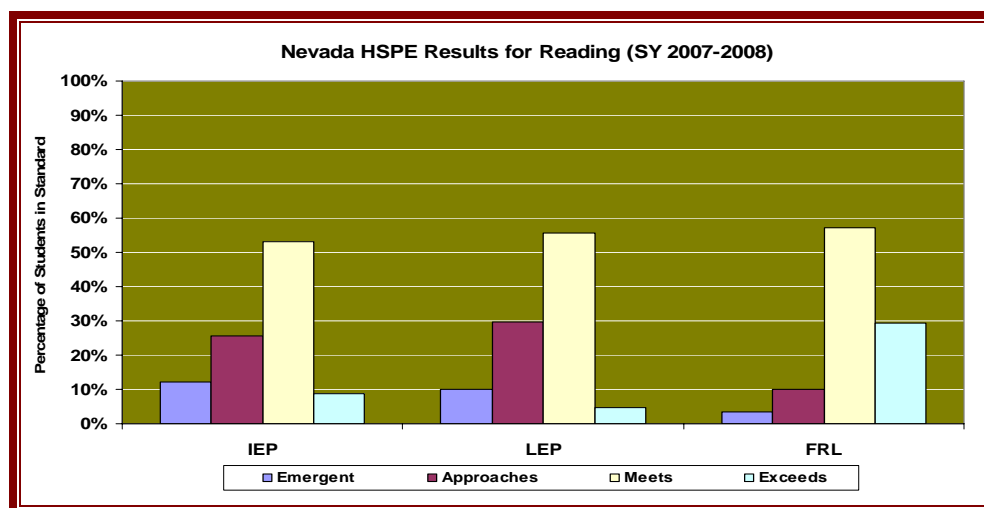
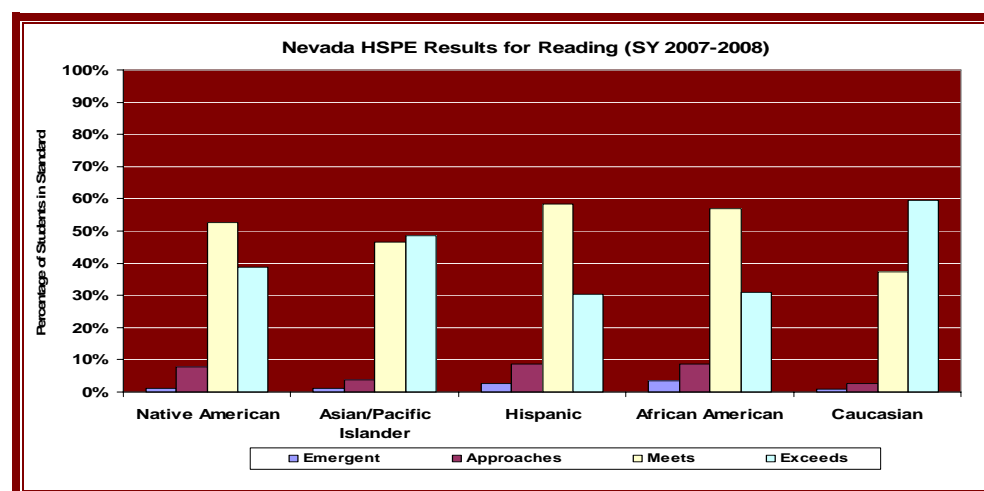
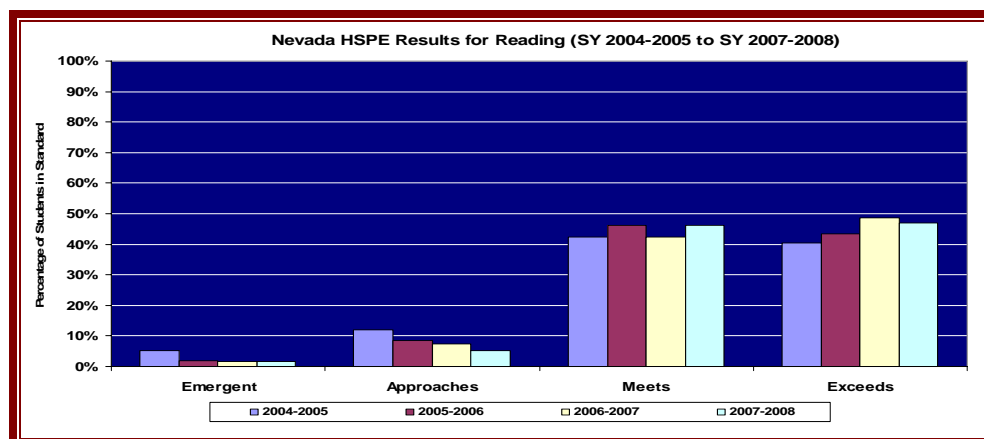
Percentage of White and Latino Students Passing in Reading/Language Arts and Percentage Point Gap

Western State*	White	Latino	Gap
Arizona	85%	56%	29
California	90%	66%	24
Idaho	88%	59%	29
Nevada	94%	82%	12
New Mexico	88%	72%	16
Washington	89%	67%	22

*Western States—Colorado, Montana, Oregon, Utah, and Wyoming do not have an exit exam.

Source: Center of Education Policy, *State High School Exit Exams: Patterns in Gaps in Pass Rates*, February 2008.

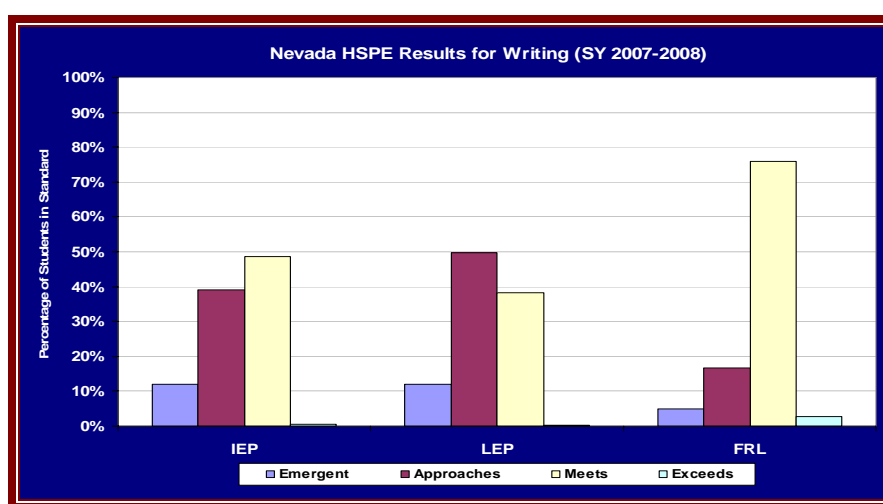
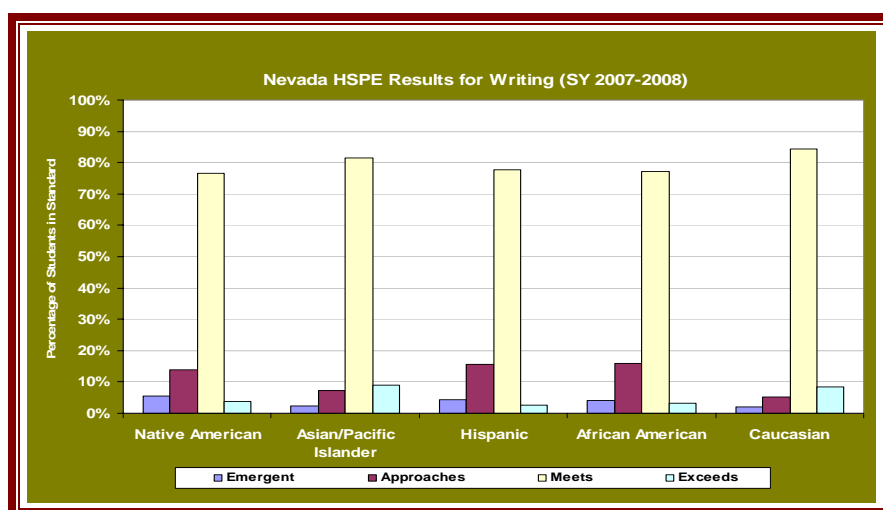
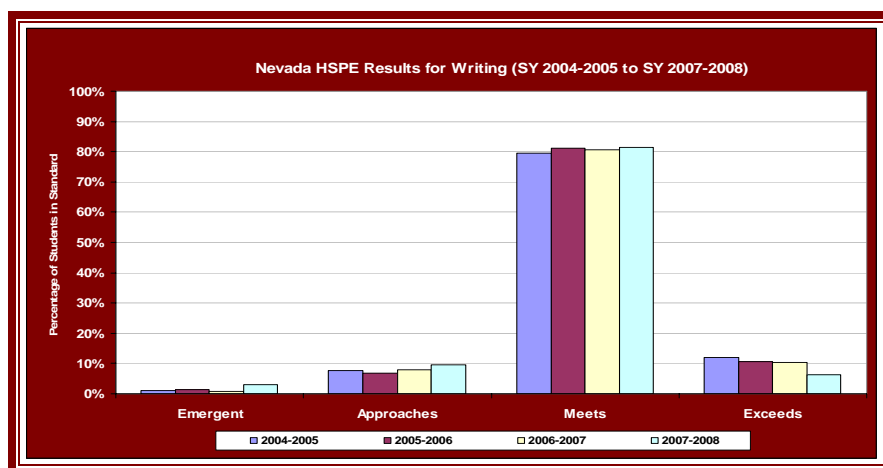
High School Proficiency Examination (HSPE)—Reading



Source: Nevada's Department of Education, *Nevada Report Card Database: State Profile*, various years.

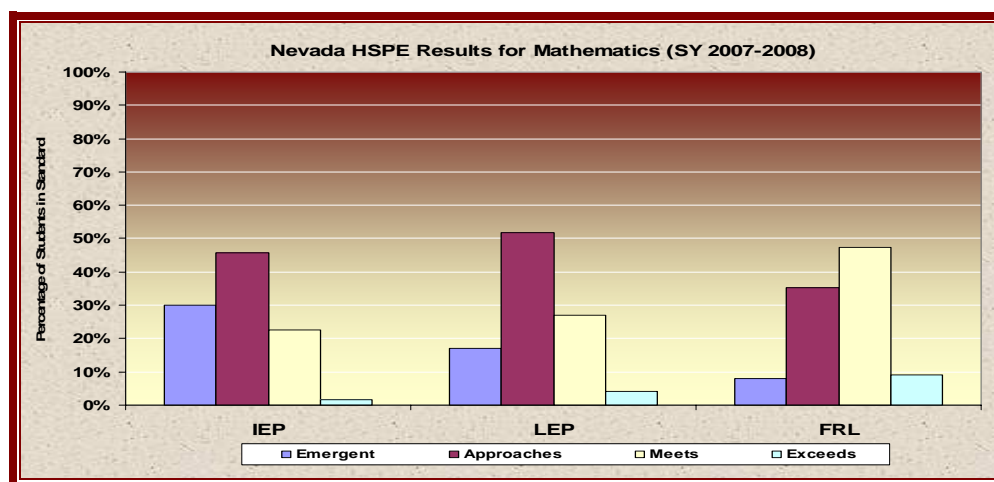
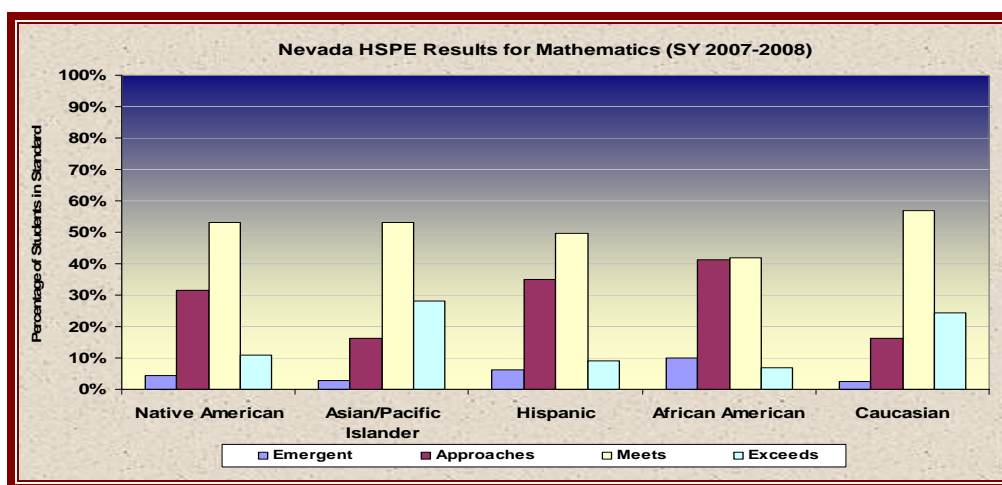
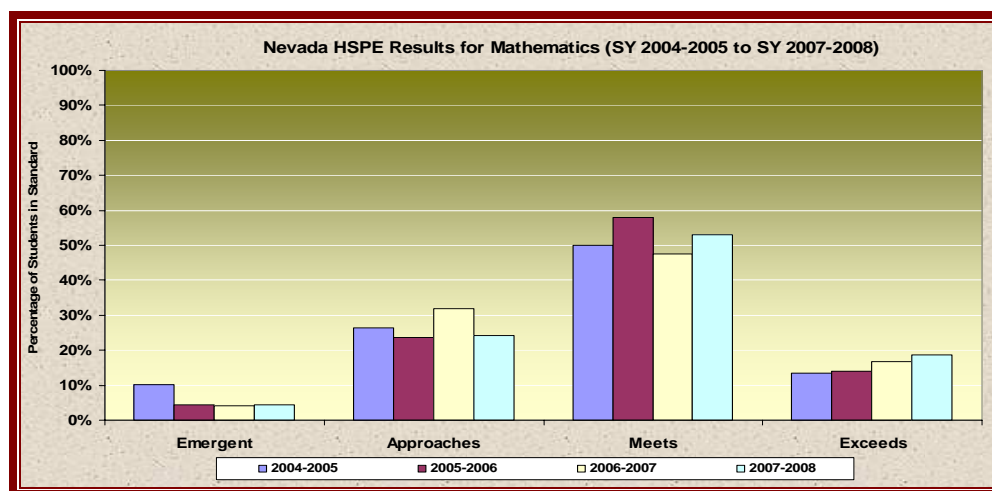
Note: The proficiency rates for the HSPE in reading represent cumulative data from a student's first opportunity to pass the assessments in grade 10 through the student's second opportunity in grade 11.

High School Proficiency Examination (HSPE)—Writing



Source: Nevada's Department of Education, *Nevada Report Card Database: State Profile*, various years.

High School Proficiency Examination (HSPE)—Mathematics



Source: Nevada's Department of Education, *Nevada Report Card Database: State Profile*, various years.

Note: The proficiency rates for the HSPE in mathematics represent cumulative data from a student's first opportunity to pass the assessments in grade 10 through the student's second opportunity in grade 11.

Nevada Analytical Writing Examination (NAWE)

The Nevada Analytical Writing Examination (NAWE) is administered at grades 5 and 8.

Grade 5 Writing Assessment—The purpose of the NAWE grade 5 is to provide information for students, teachers, parents, and administrators to use to focus on specific areas for individual assistance in writing instruction that will lead to practice with and attainment of the statewide writing standards. This test is also used in determining Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for schools because it measures three of the English Language Arts Content Standards.

Grade 8 Writing Assessment—The purpose of the NAWE grade 8 is to provide administrators, teachers, parents, and students with information about student proficiency in writing. Specifically, Nevada law mandates that a student who fails to demonstrate adequate achievement in writing may be promoted to the next grade, but the results of this examination must be evaluated to determine what remedial study is appropriate (*Nevada Revised Statutes* 389.015). The analytic trait format of the test is designed to give information that will assist with specific guidance for further writing instruction. The results of this test are used in determining AYP for schools.

Method of Scoring—Each student’s writing is read by two trained teachers and scored on each of four writing traits:

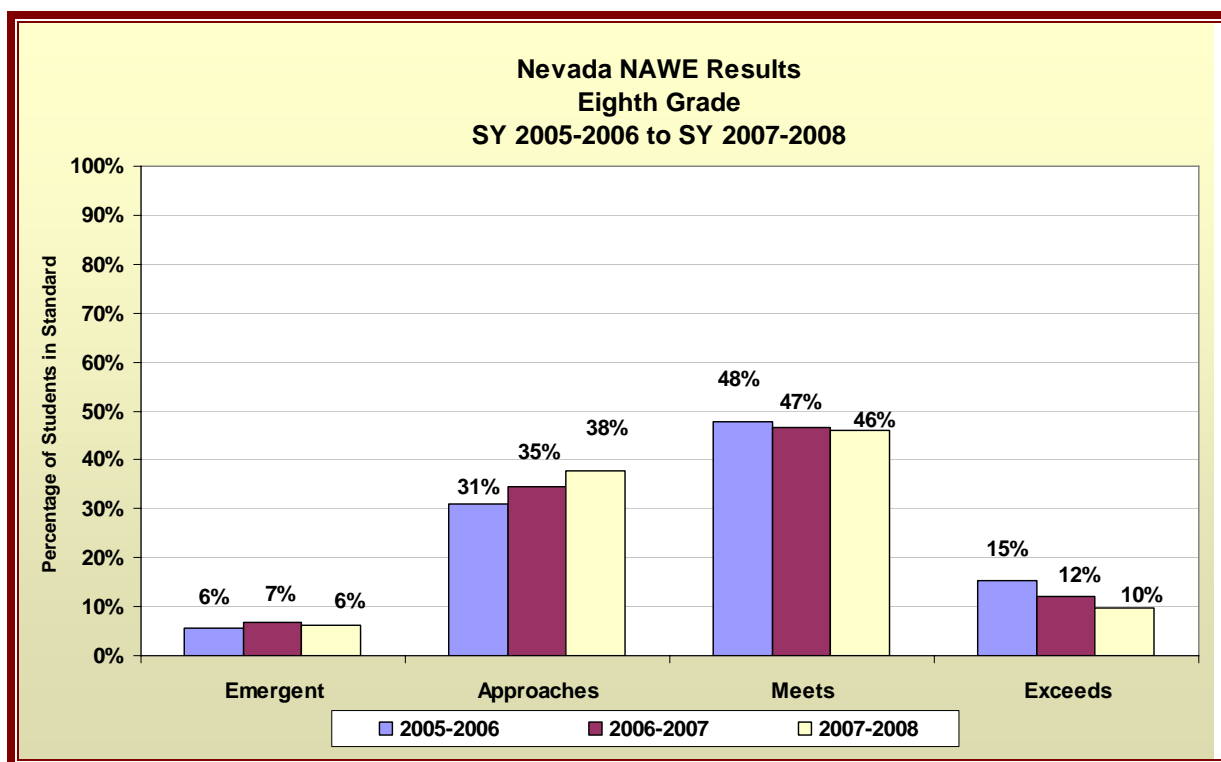
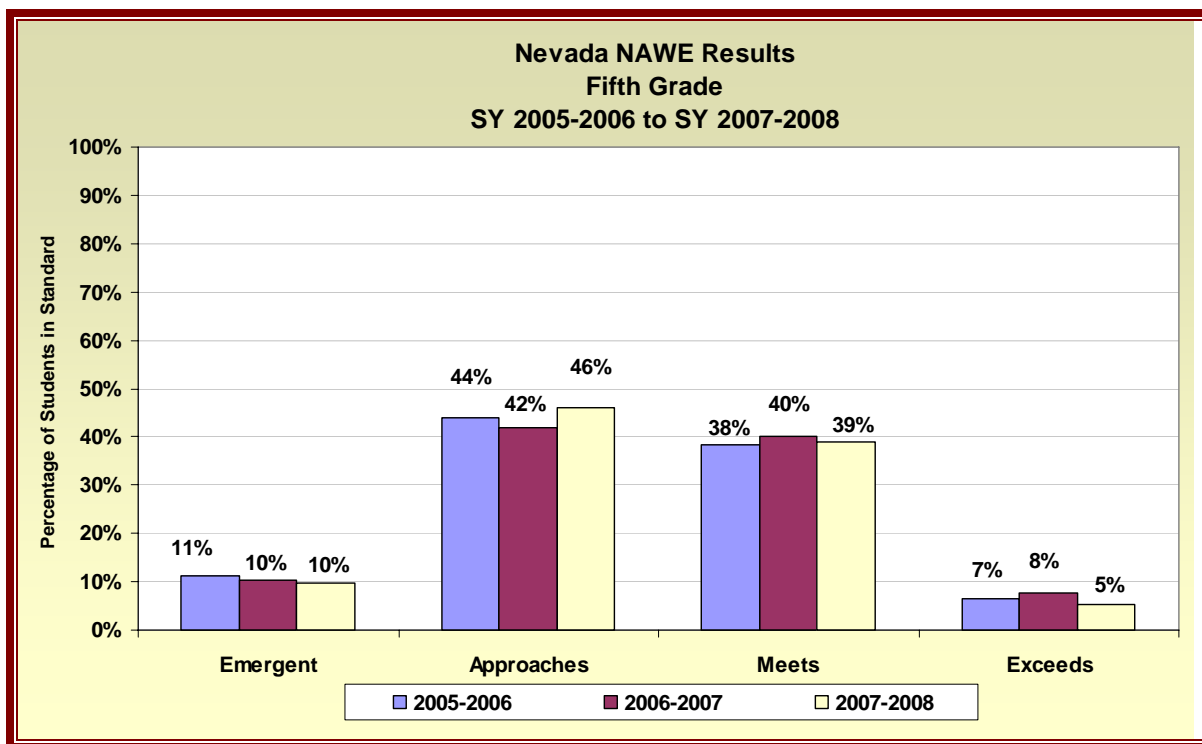
- Ideas and content (development);
- Organization;
- Voice; and
- Conventions.

Each student receives a score of 1 to 5 (5 being the highest score possible) for each trait. The scores received on each trait are added together to determine the composite score. The following score ranges are used to determine achievement levels:

ACHIEVEMENT STANDARDS	Composite Scores
Emergent/Developing: Student does not apply skills/strategies and requires extensive remediation.	0 to 7.5
Approaches Standard: Student inconsistently and/or incompletely applies skills/strategies and requires targeted remediation	8 to 11.5
Meets Standard: Student consistently applies skills without need for remediation	12 to 15.5
Exceeds Standard: Student comprehensively and consistently applies and generalizes skills/strategies in a variety of situations.	16 to 20

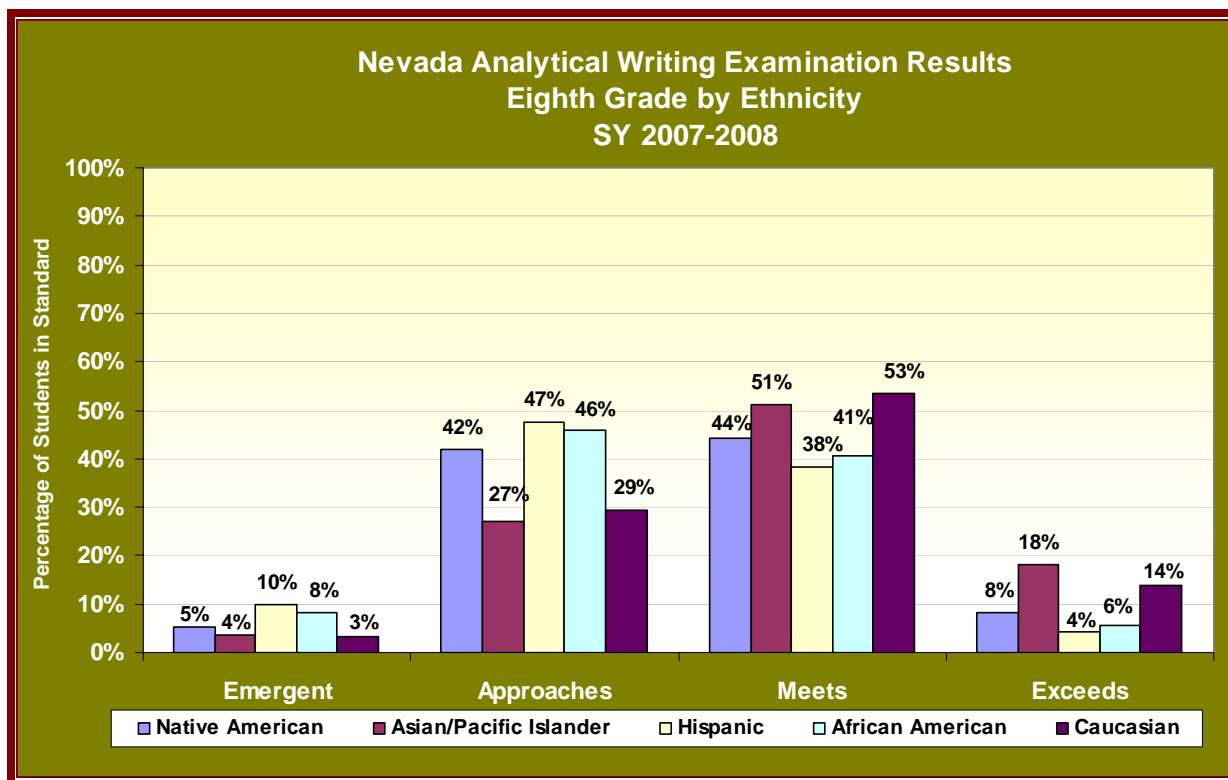
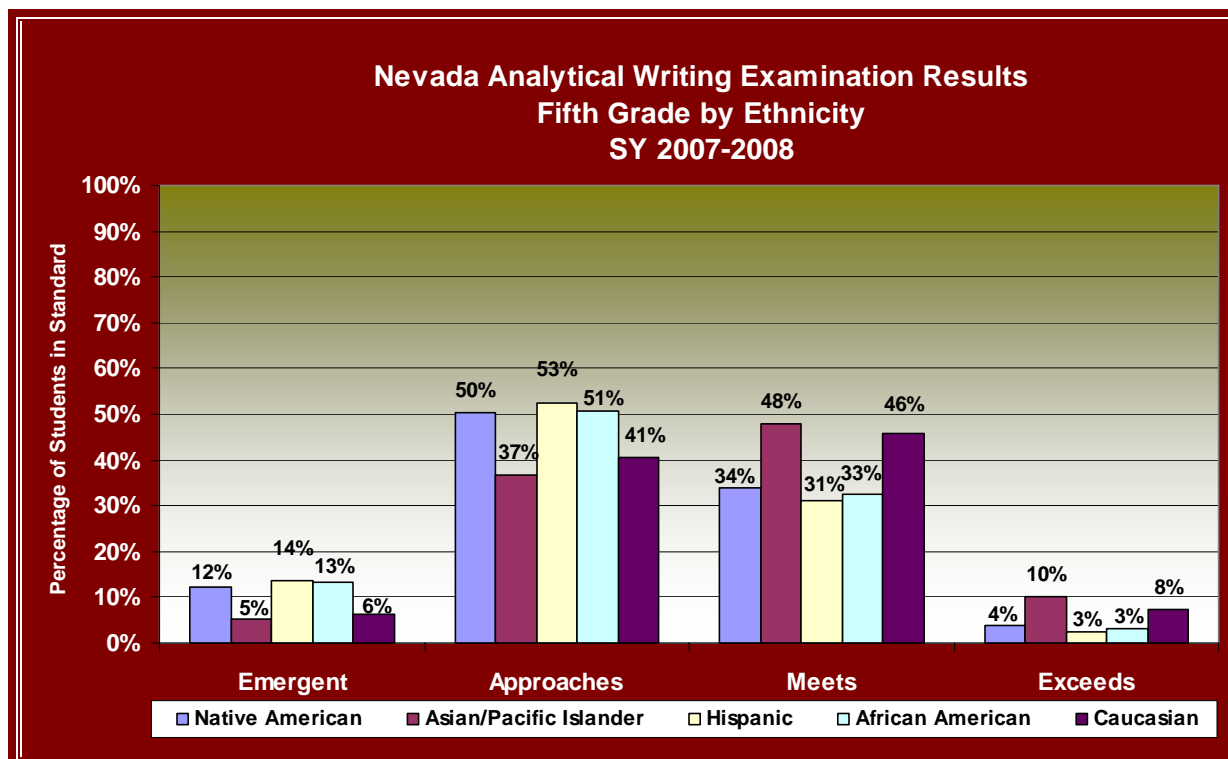
Source: Nevada’s Department of Education, 2008.

Nevada Analytical Writing Examination (NAWE)—By Year



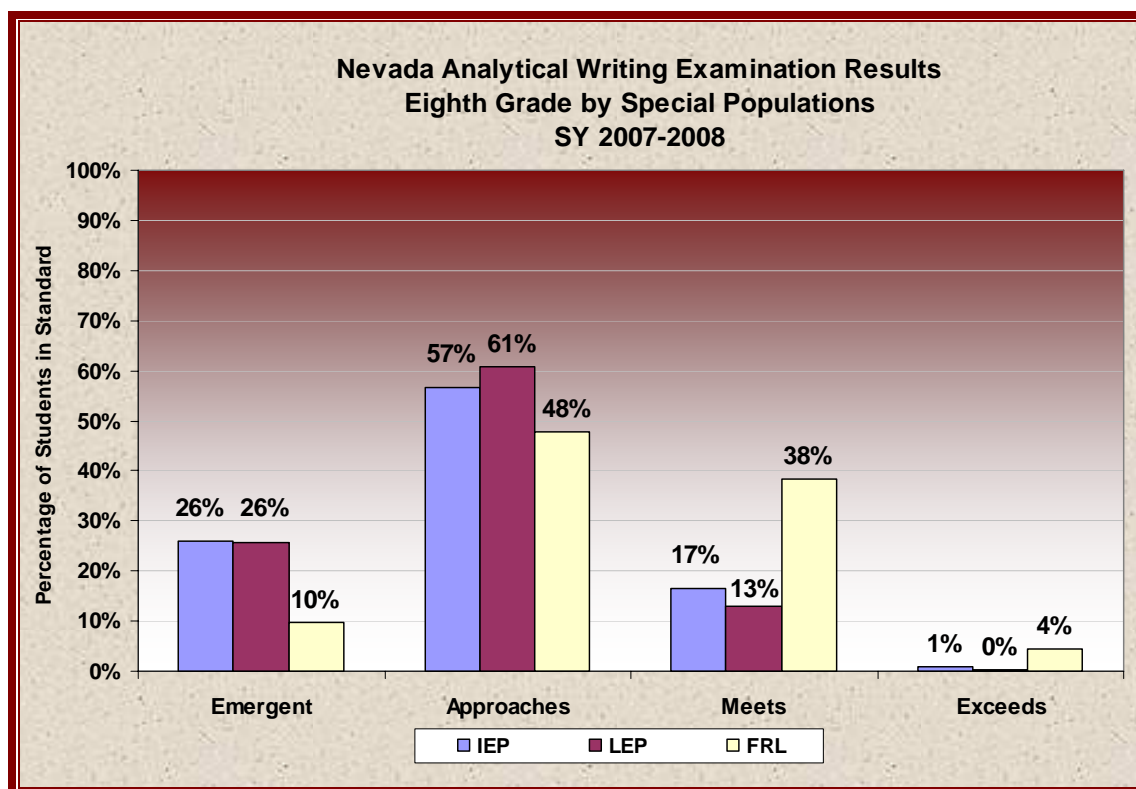
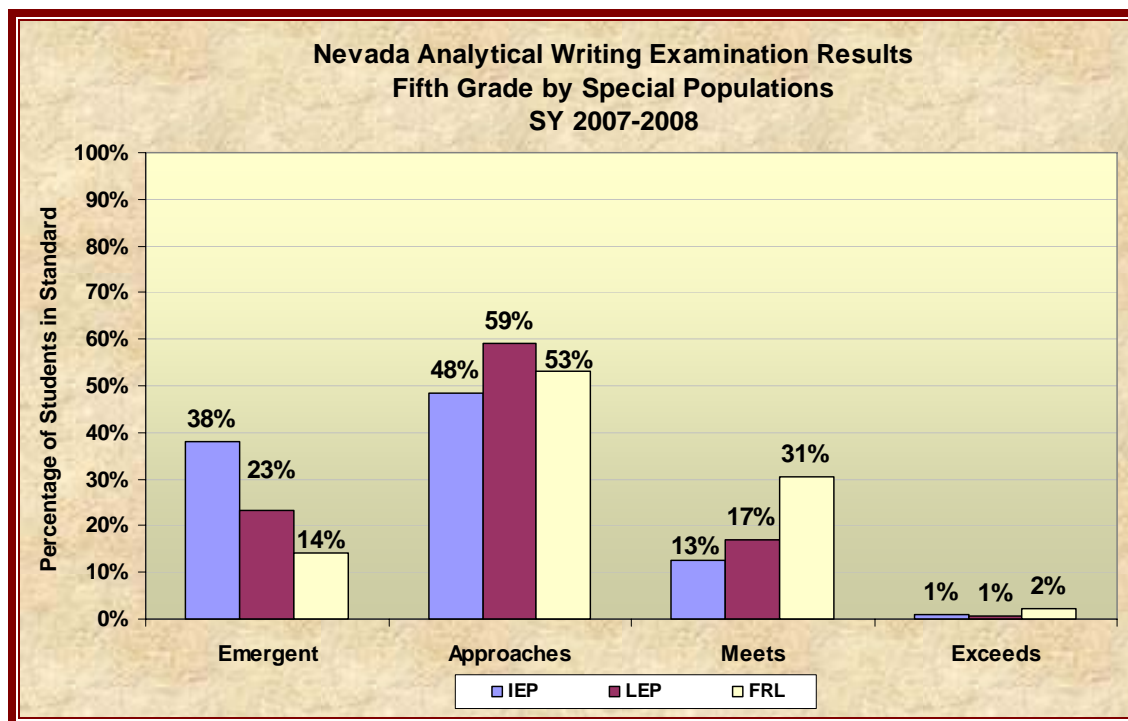
Source: Nevada's Department of Education, *Nevada Report Card Database: State Profile*, various years.

Nevada Analytical Writing Examination (NAWE)—Ethnicity



Source: Nevada's Department of Education, *Nevada Report Card Database: State Profile*, 2007-2008.

Nevada Analytical Writing Examination (NAWE)—Special Populations



Source: Nevada's Department of Education, *Nevada Report Card Database: State Profile*, 2007-2008.

National Assessment of Educational Progress (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 subject areas. Assessments are conducted periodically in mathematics, reading, science, writing, the arts, civics, economics, geography, and United States history. Assessments in world history and in foreign language are anticipated in 2012. The assessment results presented in this publication are for reading and mathematics.

Results for the NAEP are based upon four achievement levels: Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, and Advanced. The term "Proficient" represents solid academic mastery for grade 5 students and grade 8 students. 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.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, The Nation's Report Card website.

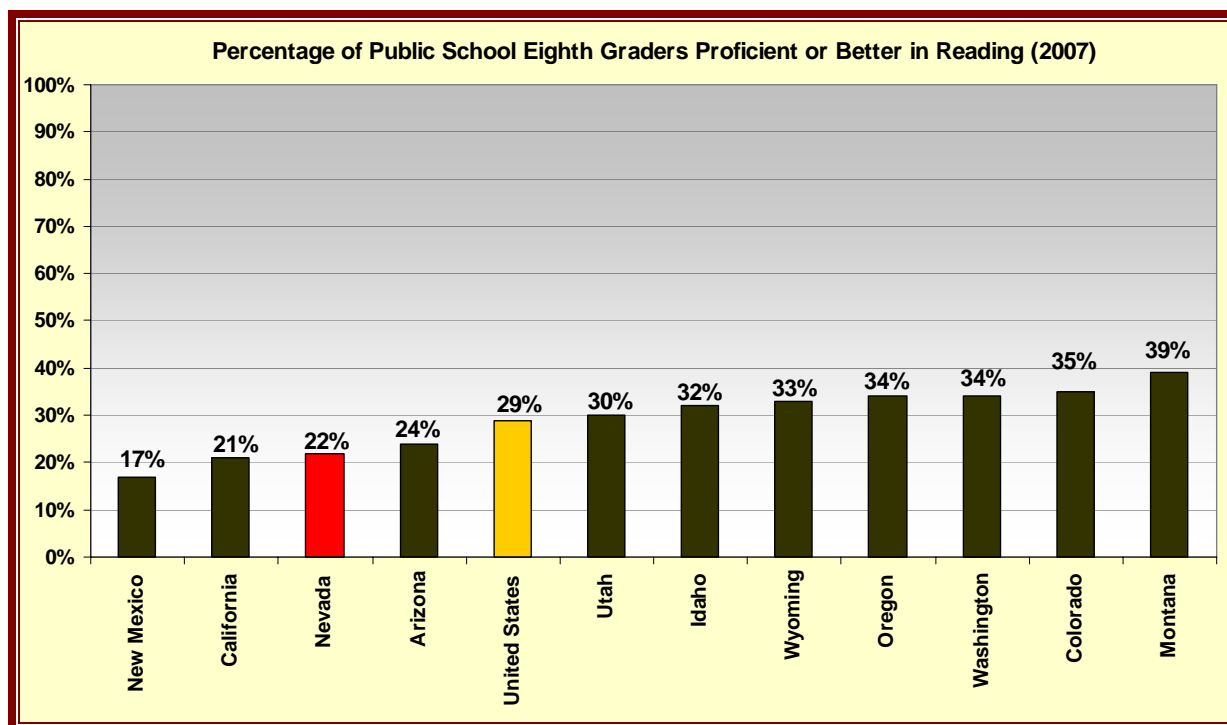
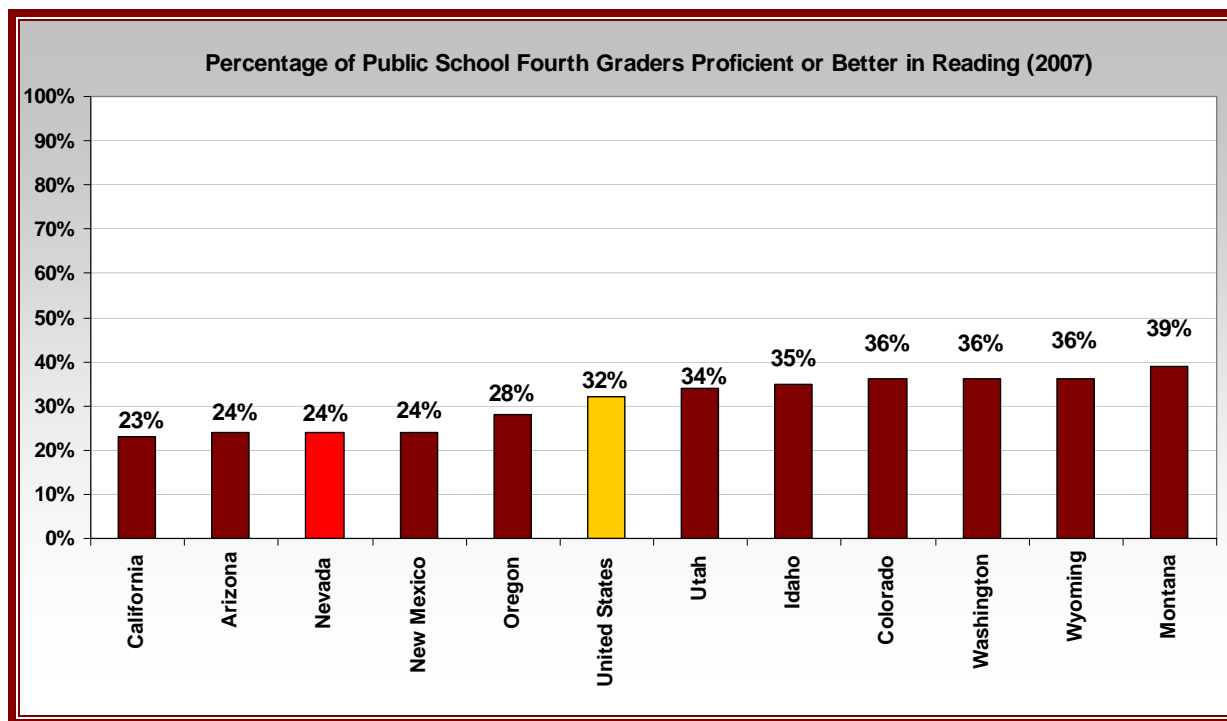
Note: The NAEP does not provide scores for individual students or schools.



“I don’t like others cheating or copying off my paper.”

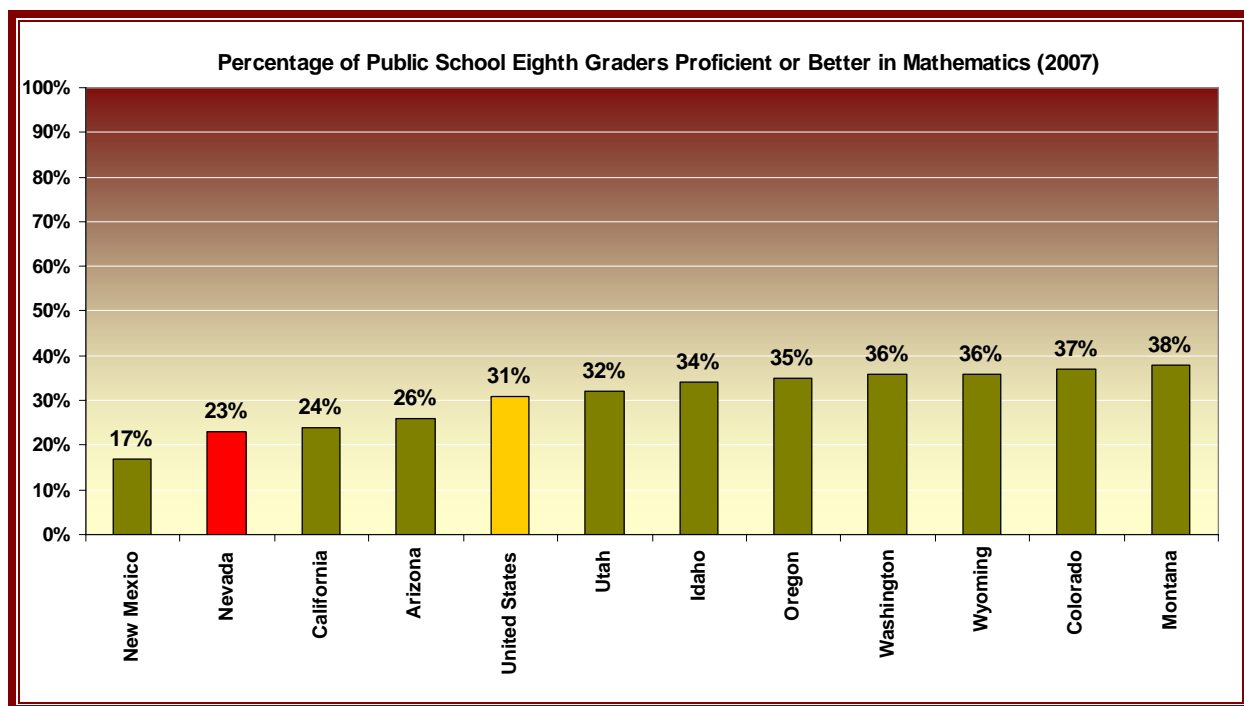
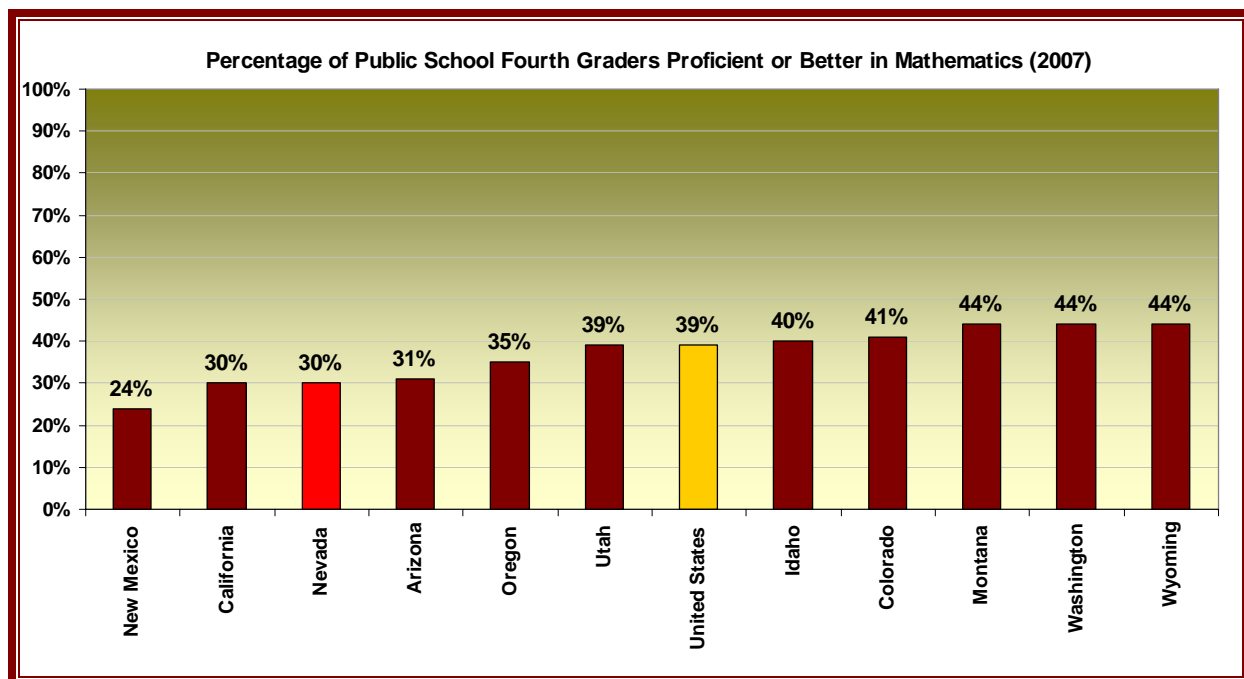
Nevada Fourth Grade Student

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)—Reading



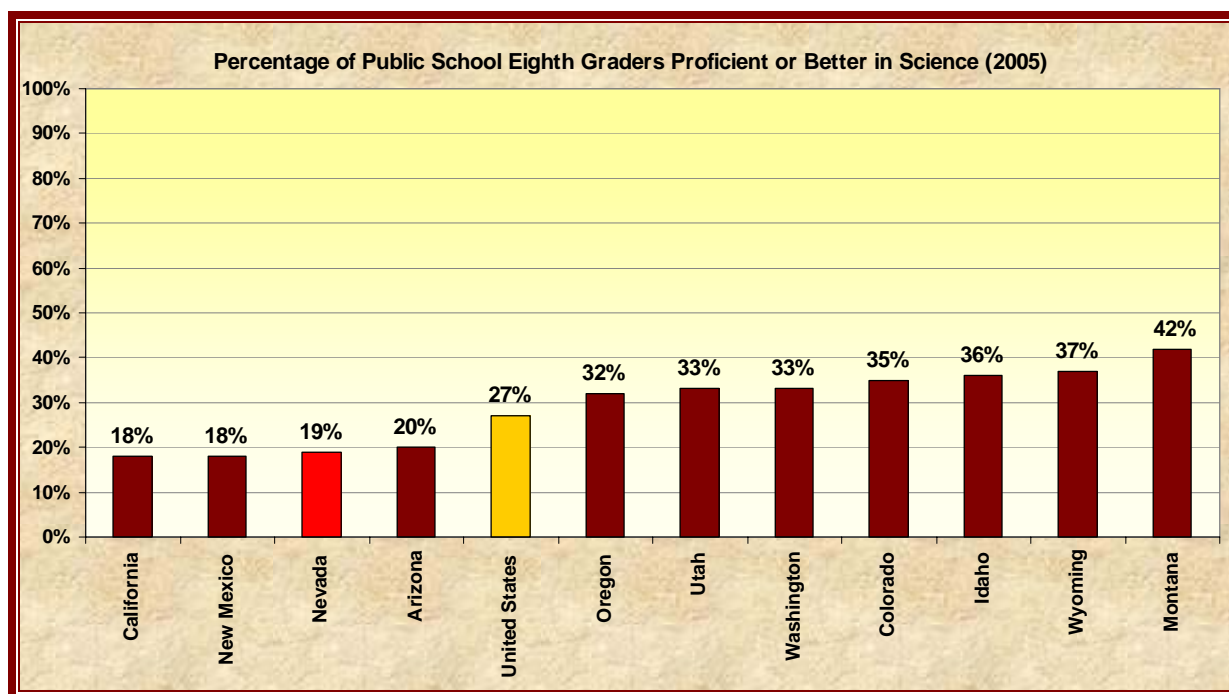
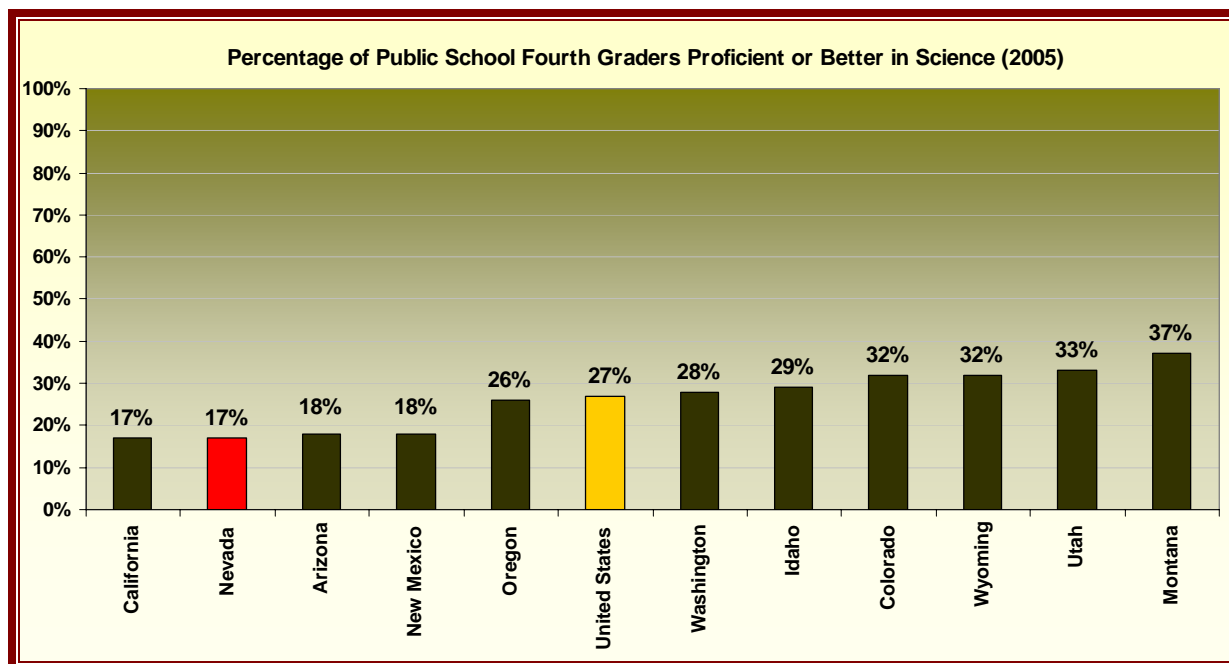
Source: *Education State Rankings 2008-2009*, CQ Press, 2009.

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)—Mathematics



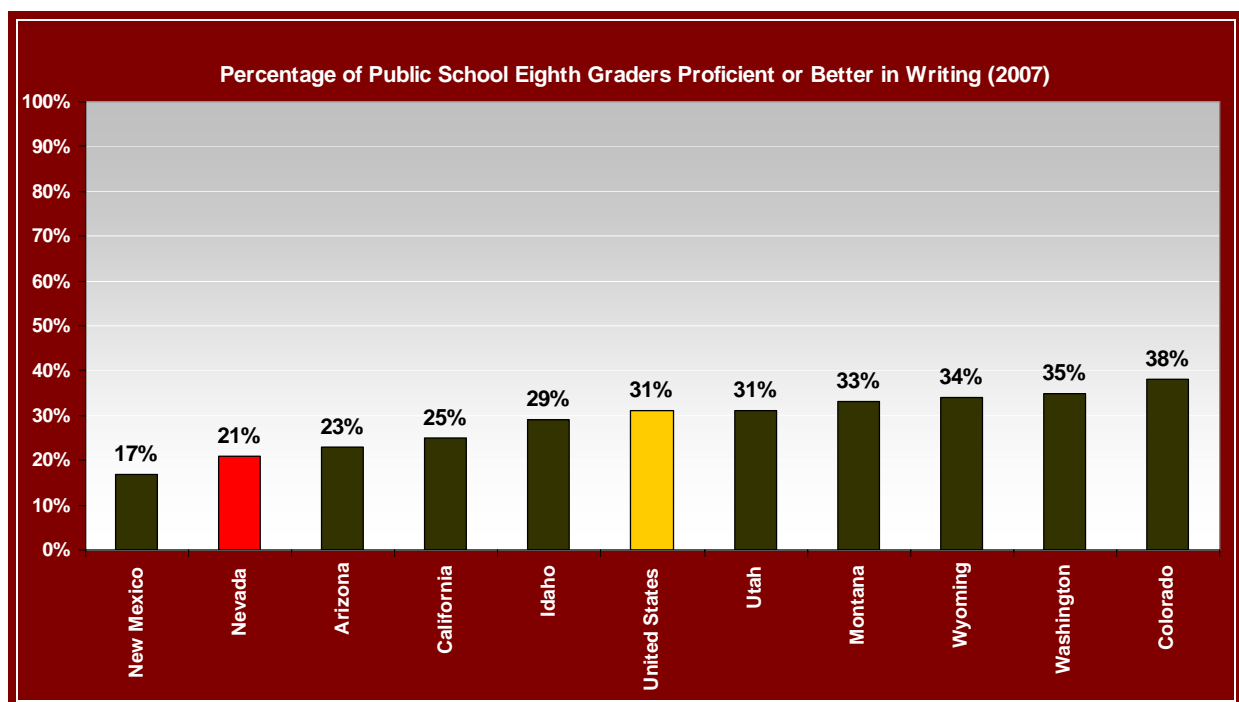
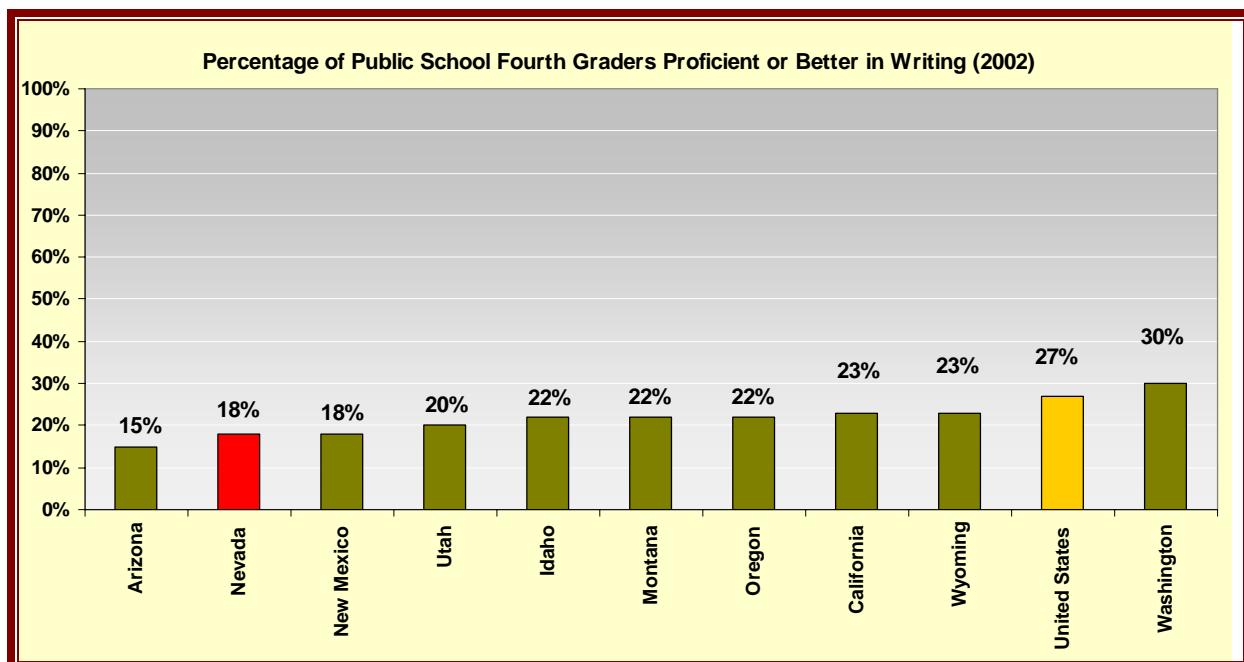
Source: *Education State Rankings 2008-2009*, CQ Press, 2009.

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)—Science



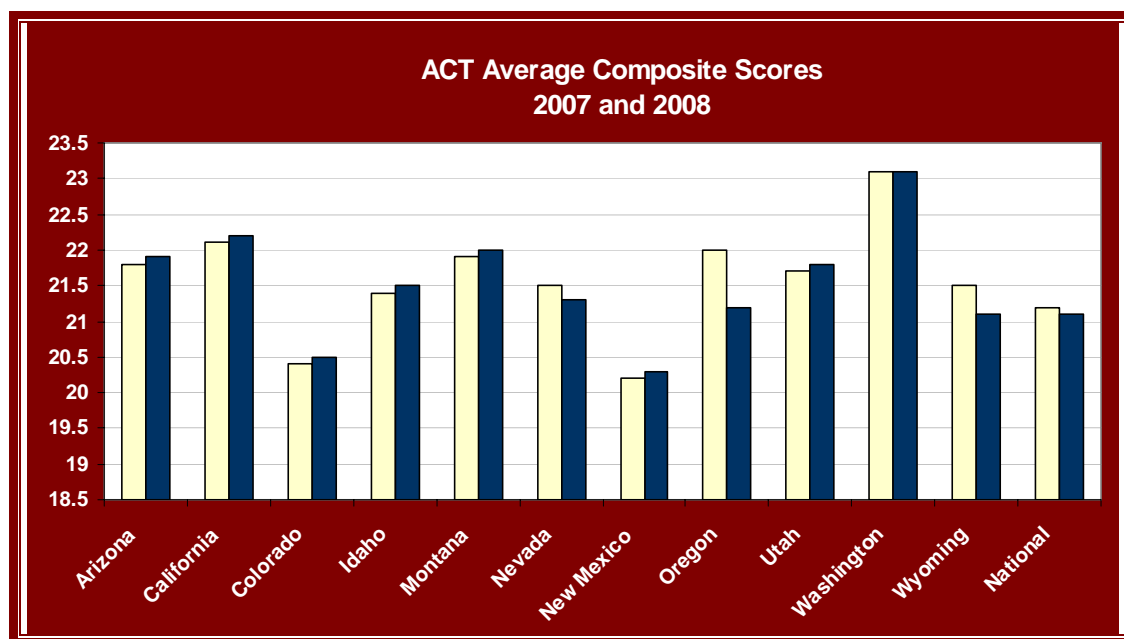
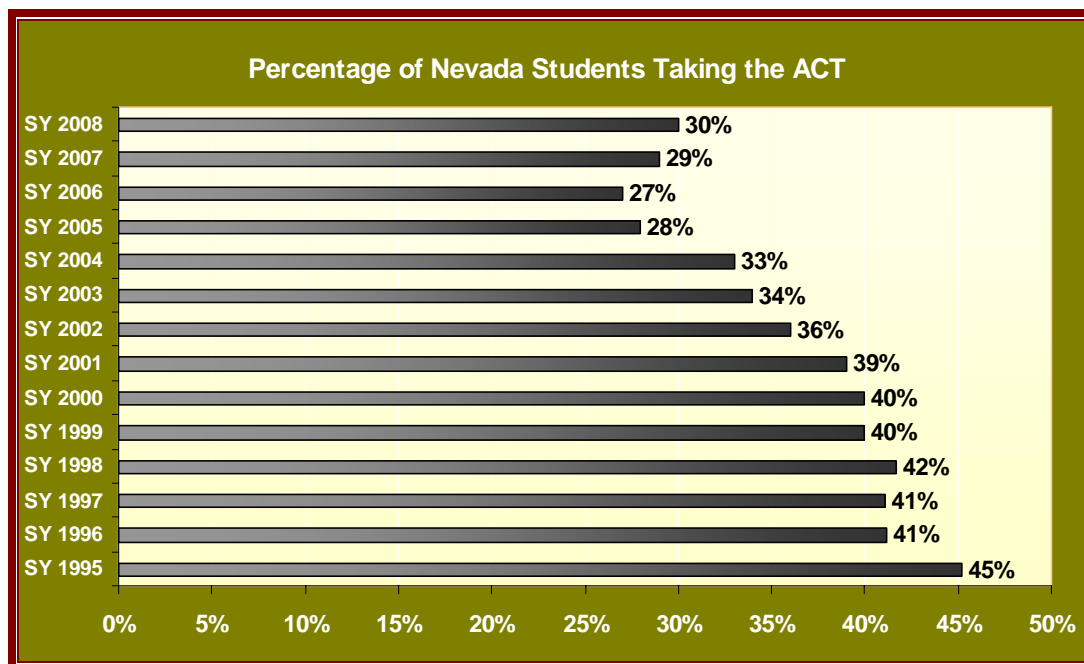
Source: *Education State Rankings 2008-2009*, CQ Press, 2009.

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)—Writing



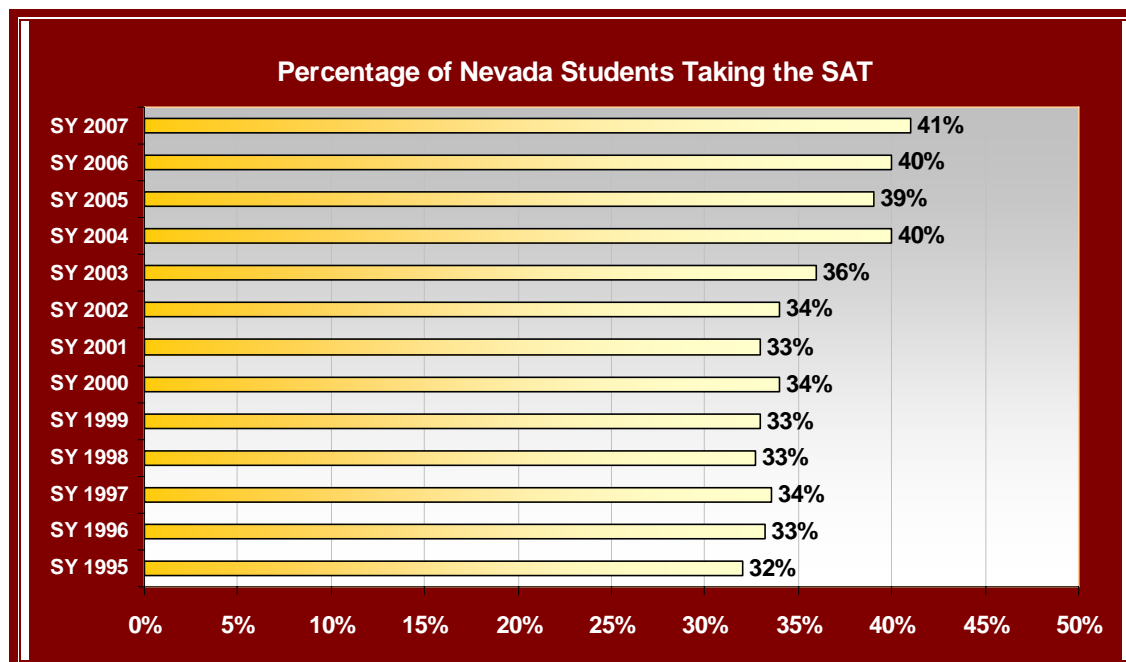
Source: *Education State Rankings 2008-2009*, CQ Press, 2009.

American College Test (ACT)



Source: ACT, Inc. 2009 *ACT National and State Scores*.

Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT)



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *The Digest of Education Statistics*, 2007.

SAT Scores for Reading, Mathematics, and Writing Western States 2007

State	Reading	Mathematics	Writing
Arizona	519	525	502
California	499	516	498
Colorado	560	565	549
Idaho	541	539	519
Montana	538	543	522
Nevada	500	506	480
New Mexico	555	546	540
Oregon	522	526	502
Utah	558	556	544
Washington	526	531	510
Wyoming	565	571	544
National	502	515	494

Source: *Education State Rankings 2008-2009*, CQ Press, 2009.

Testing Irregularities

Nevada's Department of Education establishes test security and administration protocol for the purpose of upholding the integrity of State-mandated assessments. During SY 2007-2008, approximately 300,000 students participated in multiple assessments that were administered in grades 3 through 8, 10 through 12, and in adult programs. Although more than 600,000 separate tests were administered in more than 600 locations, a total of 125 reported testing irregularities occurred.

Testing irregularities include:

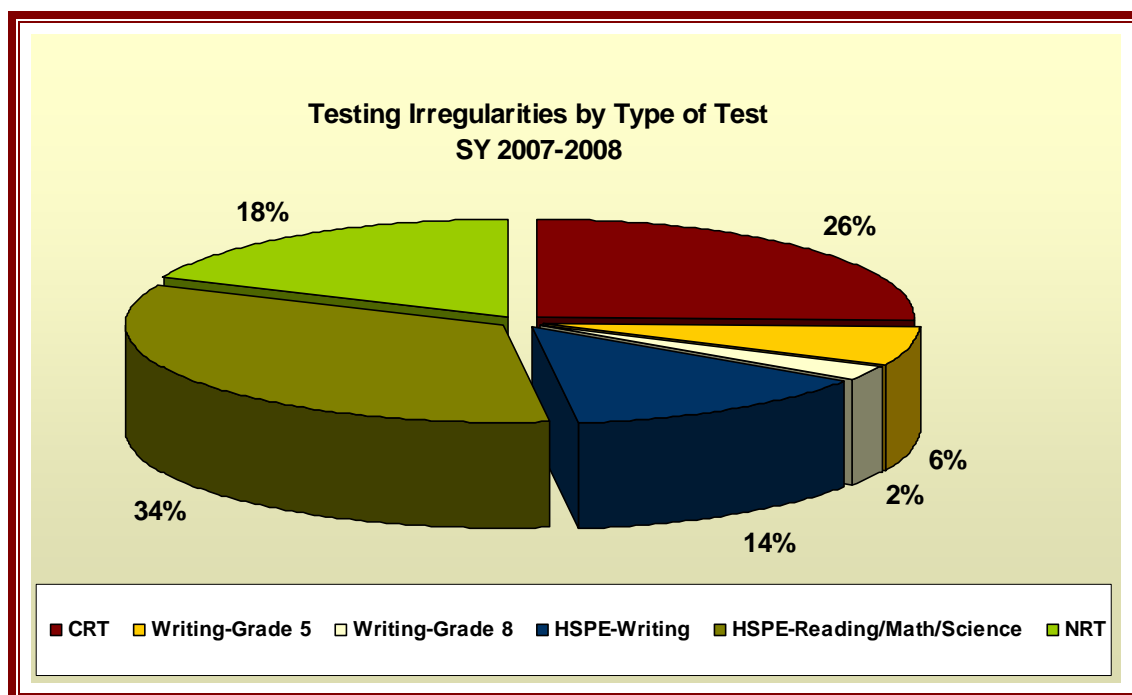
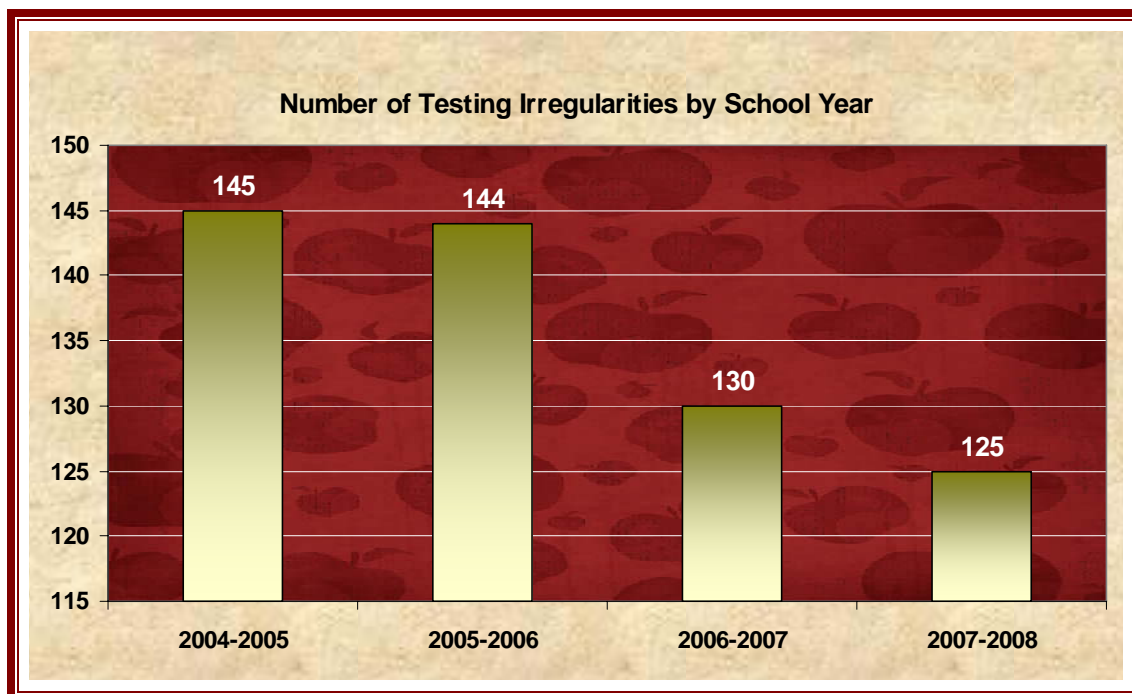
- Improper test administration;
- Student cheating or misconduct;
- Testing ineligible students;
- Improper storage or distribution of materials;
- Missing test materials;
- Multiple-answer documents;
- Late return of test materials;
- Multiple irregularities;
- Unauthorized disclosure of test content;
- Failure to administer tests or subtests; and
- Miscellaneous, such as fire alarms.



“Test day always means pancakes for breakfast.”

Nevada Sixth Grade Student

Testing Irregularities (*continued*)



Source: Nevada's Department of Education, *Report of Test Security for Nevada Public Schools, School Year 2007-2008*.

Testing Irregularities (*continued*)

Type of Testing Irregularity	Number
Improper Test Administration	42
Student Cheating or Misconduct	49
Testing Ineligible Students	6
Late Return of Materials	6
Miscellaneous (e.g., fire alarm)	6
Improper Storage or Distribution of Materials	5
Missing Test Materials	4
Multiple Answer Documents	2
Multiple Irregularities	2
Student Unsupervised with Test Materials	1
Unauthorized Disclosure of Test Content	1
Failure to Administer Tests or Subtests	1
TOTAL	125

Source: Nevada's Department of Education, *Report of Test Security for Nevada Public Schools, School Year 2007-2008*.



“I plan to go to college, but I don’t know what I’ll study, just that it’s something easy.”

Nevada Fifth Grade Student

