

Data Spotlight

Is the Hispanic-White Performance Gap in Washington Narrowing?

Staff member Andrew Parr made a presentation to the State Board of Education on January 8, 2015 on changes to the performance gap between White and Hispanic students. The questions being considered here are:

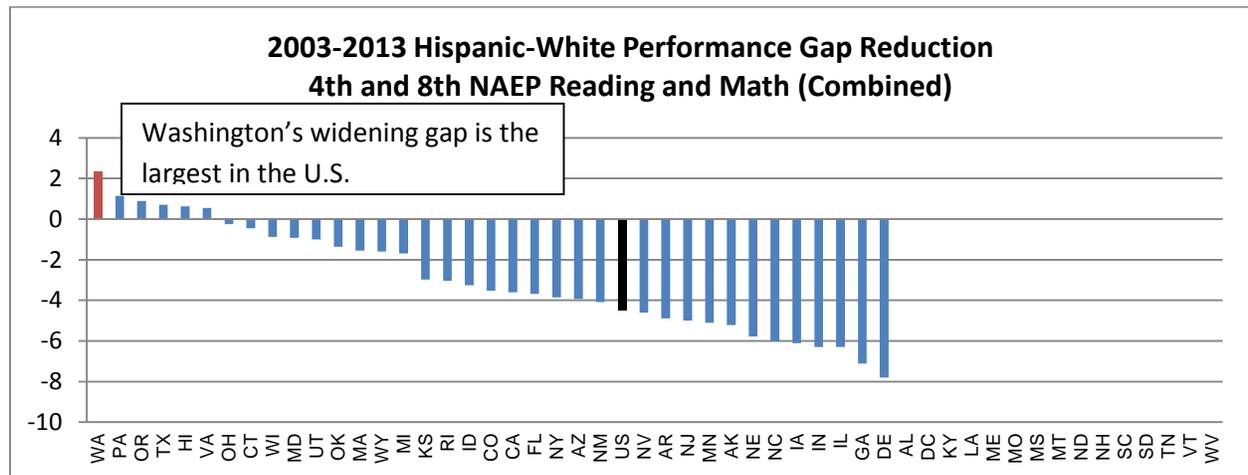
1. Is the performance gap between Hispanic and White students in Washington narrowing or widening?
2. How does the increasing or decreasing Hispanic-White performance gap for Washington students compare to the other states?

Methodology

To answer the study questions, the NAEP 4th and 8th grade reading and math assessment data from the 2003 and 2013 administrations were analyzed. The NAEP State Comparison online tool found at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/statecomparisons/> computes the average scaled score differences for a NAEP assessment between two administrations for the groups being compared; in this case, Hispanic and White students. The gap differences for each of the four NAEP assessments were computed separately, averaged, and are summarized in the table and chart shown below. In this analysis a positive value means that the average scaled score difference (performance gap) showed an increase in 2013 as compared to 2003, but a positive value is undesirable as we would hope to see gaps decrease over time.

	4 th Grade Reading		8 th Grade Reading		4 th Grade Math		8 th Grade Math		Average Change
	Gap*	Change	Gap	Change	Gap	Change	Gap	Change	
2003	24.8	1.6	21.9	3.7	18.9	2.9	21.5	1.2	2.3
2013	26.4		25.6		21.8		22.7		

*Note: average scaled score difference on the NAEP between Hispanic and White student groups.



Findings

For each of the four NAEP assessments, the Hispanic-White performance gap was larger in 2013 as compared to the performance gap in 2003. The average performance gap increase for Washington students was 2.3 scaled score points (the largest in the United States), while the U.S. average was a 4.5 scaled score point decrease.

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More about this Analysis

Even though the Hispanic-White performance gap as measured by the NAEP assessments widened for the years analyzed, the average scaled scores for both groups mostly increased on all measures. The data show that for each of the NAEP measures, the gain by the White student group is greater than the gain of the Hispanic student group and this causes the performance gap to widen for the years in question. For the White-Hispanic performance gap to narrow, the gains by the Hispanic student group must exceed the gains made by the White student group.

The NAEP assessment program provides an excellent database from which to monitor student progress but the conclusions drawn from these data should be tempered for two important reasons:

1. Data for 15 of the United States are not included in this analysis because the NAEP reporting standards were not met for one or both of the student groups on one or more of the NAEP assessments. The most common cause for this type of omission is an insufficient sample size from which to generalize to the population. It would be more accurate to characterize Washington's gap widening as the greatest of the states with reportable data.
2. Almost certainly, the disaggregation into additional student groups (including the Two or More student group) in 2011 has an impact on this gap analysis. Without question, the White and Hispanic student groups are not formulated on the same criteria in 2003 as compared to 2013, which means that the Hispanic student group formulated in 2003 is not perfectly comparable to the Hispanic student group formulated in 2013. The same can be said of the White student groups for the same years.

Even considering the limitations of the data, the Hispanic-White performance gap is unacceptably large and has not narrowed.

Watch the full presentation to the Board at

<http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/BoardMeetings/2015/Jan/NAEPGaps50States.pdf>.