

California 8th-graders the worst in U.S. in science

By Richard Perez-Pena, Washington Post

American eighth graders have made modest gains in national science testing, with Hispanic and black students narrowing the gap between them and their white and Asian peers, the federal government reported Thursday.

Students tested last year scored an average of 152 out of a possible 300, up from 150 in 2009, a small but statistically significant improvement. The latest results are based on a representative sampling of 122,000 students in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, part of the Department of Education's National Assessment of Educational Progress.

Hispanic students made the largest gain, to 137 from 132, while the average score for black students increased to 129 from 126. For whites, the average went to 163 from 162.

Among Asians, the average dropped from 160 to 159, and for American Indians, it rose to 141 from 137, but in both cases the changes were not judged statistically significant because of smaller sample sizes.

Looking at results by state, for public schools only, lagging states made some of the biggest improvements. South Carolina had the biggest increase, 6 points, to 149; Mississippi, the lowest-scoring state, rose 5 points, to 137.

The top-scoring state was North Dakota, at 164, followed by Vermont and Montana at 163. After Mississippi, the lowest averages were in Alabama and California, at 140.

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