Idaho Reading and Mathematics Trends 2003-2013
NAEP vs. ISAT, All Students, Grades 4 and 8[1]

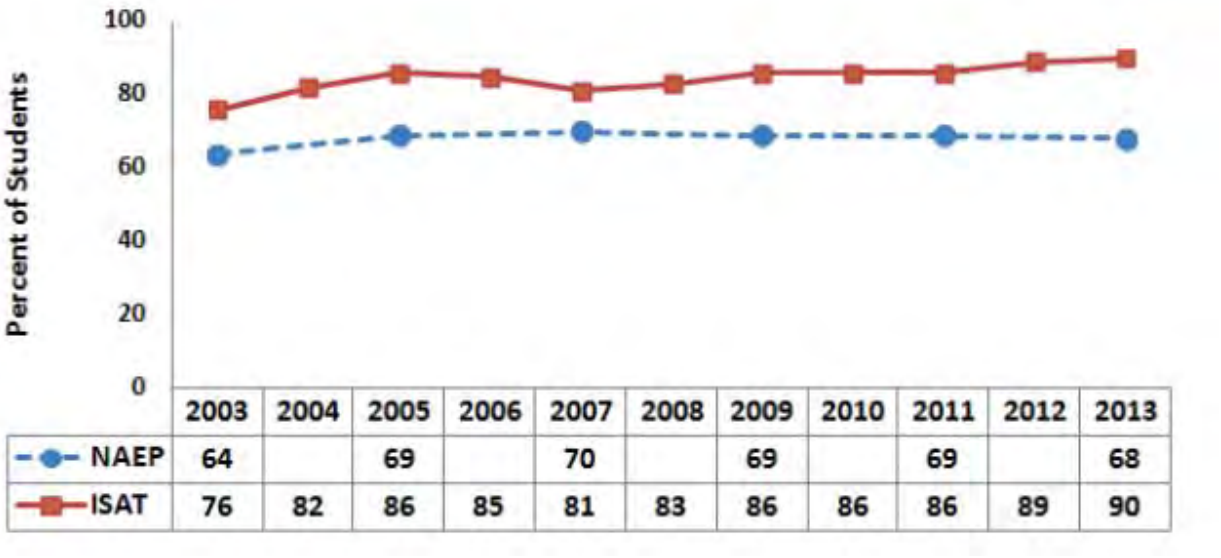
NAEP and ISAT reported achievement levels results for below basic, basic, proficient, and advanced. NAEP and ISAT, unfortunately, used different definitions for the achievement levels. For example, NAEP's *Basic* achievement level and the ISAT's proficient achievement level were both estimations for grade-level expectations. [Note that in 2007 after federal sanctions, Idaho employed a new testing vendor to develop and implement an updated version of the ISAT test that conformed to current assessment standards.]

To avoid confusion inherent with using different definitions for achievement levels with the same name, the percent "at or above NAEP *Basic*" and "at or above ISAT proficient" were displayed in this paper as the percent of students "meeting or exceeding grade-level expectations."

Reading, Grade 4

From 2003 to 2013, as Exhibit 1 illustrates, ISAT reported a percentage of fourth graders who met or exceeded grade-level expectations that consistently was more than 10 percentage points above that which NAEP reported. This consistency may have been related, at least in part, to differences between the NAEP and ISAT reading tests in content and format. NAEP had a single reporting category (i.e., reading comprehension), while ISAT had two reporting categories (i.e., the reading process, and comprehension and interpretation).

Exhibit 1. Percentage of Idaho's fourth graders who met or exceeded grade-level expectations for reading as measured and reported by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and the Idaho Standards Achievement Tests (ISAT) from 2003 through 2013.



	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
NAEP	64		69		70		69		69		68
ISAT	76	82	86	85	81	83	86	86	86	89	90

In grade 4 reading, 25 to 37 percent of ISAT items measured concepts about text, decoding skills using word parts, and vocabulary and concept development. In grade 8, the portion of the test devoted to the reading process dropped to somewhere between 20 to 27 percent.

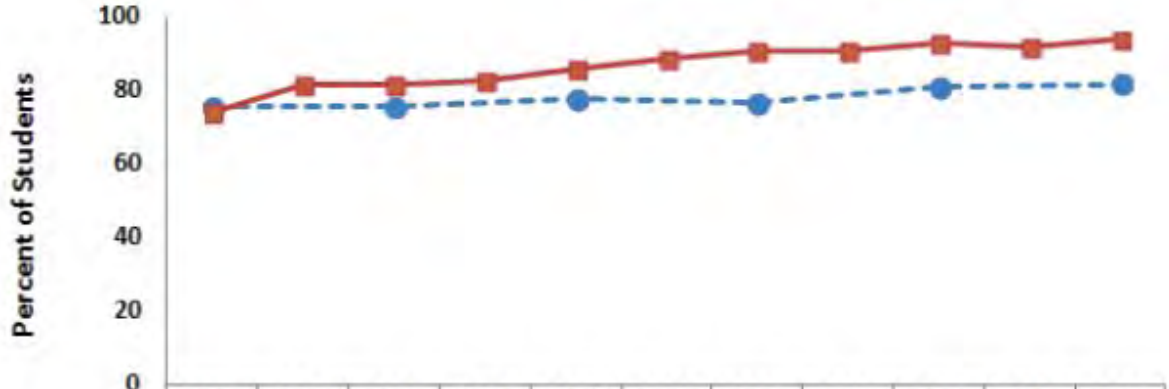
NAEP used multiple-choice and constructed-response items for the reading test, while ISAT used only multiple-choice items. In grade 4, 50 percent of a student's NAEP testing time was spent on multiple-choice items and 50 percent on constructed-response items. In grade 8, students used 40 percent of their time for multiple-choice items and 60 percent for constructed-response items.

NAEP was a pencil-and-paper test for reading and mathematics, while ISAT was computer delivered.

Reading, Grade 8

In Exhibit 2, the difference in the percentage of Idaho eighth grade students who met or exceeded grade-level expectations on NAEP and ISAT generally increased over time, from 2003 to 2013, typically favoring the ISAT.

Exhibit 2. Percentage of Idaho's eight graders who met or exceeded grade-level expectations for reading as measured and reported by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and the Idaho Standards Achievement Tests (ISAT) from 2003 through 2013.



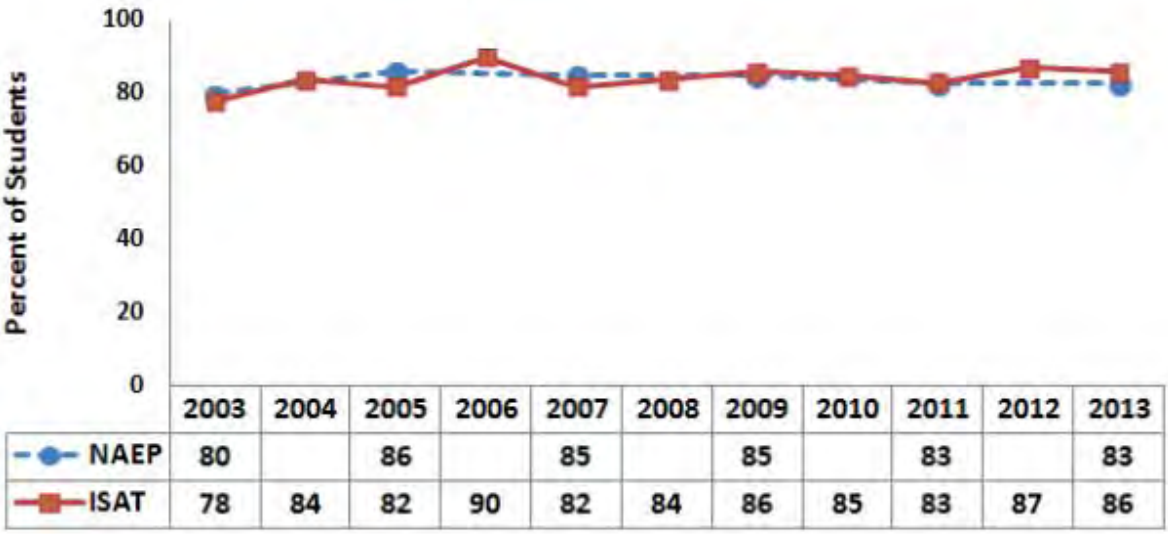
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
NAEP	76		76		78		77		81		82
ISAT	74	82	82	83	86	89	91	91	93	92	94

Mathematics, Grade 4

Unlike reading, the NAEP and ISAT mathematics tests shared the same reporting categories (i.e., number properties and operations, measurement, geometry, data analysis and statistics, and algebra and functions). However, two important differences did exist between the NAEP and ISAT mathematics tests. NAEP used multiple-choice and constructed-response items, while ISAT used only multiple-choice items. NAEP was a pencil-and-paper test, while ISAT was computer delivered.

In Exhibit 3, NAEP and ISAT reported similar percentages of fourth grade students who met or exceeded grade-level expectations in mathematics from 2003 to 2013, especially after the new vendor implemented an updated, improved ISAT in 2007.

Exhibit 3. Percentage of Idaho's eight graders who met or exceeded grade-level expectations for mathematics as measured and reported by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and the Idaho Standards Achievement Tests (ISAT) from 2003 through 2013.



	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
NAEP	80		86		85		85		83		83
ISAT	78	84	82	90	82	84	86	85	83	87	86

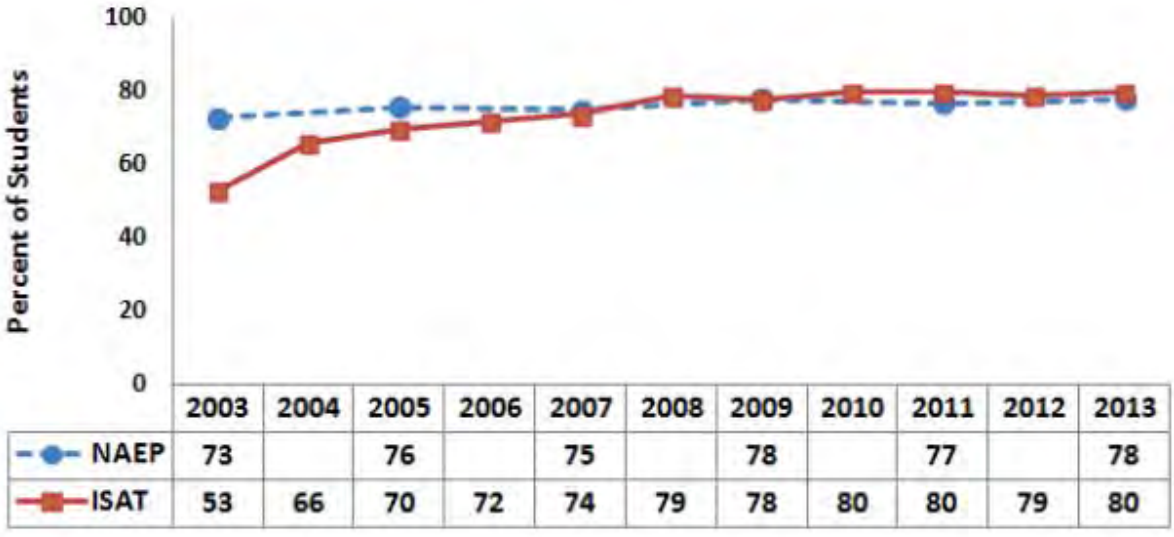
Observation:

Though the NCLB years, Idaho has been under attack from foundations and "think tanks" pushing their market-orientated agendas for educational reform. For example, in 2005 the Fordham Foundation labeled Idaho as one of the worst offenders in the "race to the bottom" by lowering standards and making state tests easier. In 2013, the Albertson Foundation conducted a "Don't Fail Idaho" media blitz to convince Idaho citizens that 60 percent of Idaho's students were "not proficient" in reading and mathematics. Their NAEP vs. ISAT comparisons were mis-founded in the confusion following two federal definitions for proficient – one for NAEP, a different one for state NCLB tests. Additional errors were made when they failed to realize that NAEP Proficient (achievement level name" was different than NAEP's "proficiency in a subject." For more information about this, see ---------- http://pareonline.net/pdf/v12n5.pdf

Mathematics Grade 8

In Exhibit 4, NAEP and ISAT percentages of eighth grade students who met or exceeded grade-level expectations in mathematics changed with the implementation of the new ISAT in 2007. Before the new ISAT, the ISAT percentages were struggling to catch up with the NAEP percentages. After the new ISAT, the ISAT and NAEP percentages seemed to trend together.

Exhibit 4. Percentage of Idaho's eight graders who met or exceeded grade-level expectations for mathematics as measured and reported by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and the Idaho Standards Achievement Tests (ISAT) from 2003 through 2013.



	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
NAEP	73		76		75		78		77		78
ISAT	53	66	70	72	74	79	78	80	80	79	80

Idaho reading & mathematics trends 2003-2013: NAEP vs. ISAT, all students, grades 4 and 8.

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Author Note

Bert Stoneberg was Idaho's NAEP State Coordinator from 2002 to 2012. Now retired he keeps busy with independent research and consulting in educational measurement and evaluation. He maintains a website to make his findings public. Visit http://k12researchidaho.com

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