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Mayor Emanuel and CPS Announce Record Scores by Students on 2016 NWEA Exam

Students Outpace their Peers Nationwide; Attainment and Growth in Math and Reading Exceed Last Year’s High Marks

CHICAGO — Mayor Emanuel, CPS CEO Forrest Claypool and CPS Chief Education Officer Dr. Janice K. Jackson today announced CPS students achieved record scores on the 2015-2016 Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA MAP) exam, which measures academic achievement in grades 2-8. This past school year, CPS students achieved record attainment levels on math and reading and exceeded national averages of student growth, continuing the exceptional progress our students have made in recent years.

“Today, for the first time, more than 60 percent of CPS students are reading at or above the national average – and more than half are beating the national average in math,” said Mayor Emanuel. “These and other recent record setting achievements are a testament to the hard work by our teachers, students and principals in our classrooms, and a demonstration of what’s possible when we invest in our children’s future. And 30 years after President Reagan's education secretary called Chicago's schools the worst in the country, we can all be proud that today’s CPS students will have a brighter tomorrow.”

In 2016, the percentage of CPS students who met or exceeded national achievement averages in reading in math improved to all-time highs for the District.

“NWEA growth data shows us that even after raising the bar for achievement in the District, students continue to learn and grow at levels beyond their peers throughout the country,” said CPS CEO Claypool.

In 2016, 59.1 percent of students met or exceeded the national testing average in reading and 54.6 percent of students met or exceeded the average in math. These scores represent a 5.1 percentage point increase in reading and a 2.4 percentage point increase in math compared to 2015. Compared to 2013, when 45.6 percent of CPS students achieved at or above the national testing average in reading and 45.1 percent achieved at or above the average in math, the percentage of students meeting and exceeding the national reading and math average has
increased by 13.5 percentage points and 9.5 percentage points, respectively, in just three years. These are significant increases, which show that the average CPS student is now scoring higher in reading and math than their national peers.

“The NWEA results released today are the latest in a long list of data that shows CPS achievement is on the rise and students are making gains on their peers across the nation,” said CPS Chief Education Officer Jackson. “There is no doubt that our students and their teachers are on a positive path that is producing better academic outcomes, and we are fully committed to cultivating this positive trend.”

“At UIC, we have been tracking Chicago's achievement gains for several years and have found sustained growth that surpasses national and state averages,” said Steve Tozer, Director of the Center for Urban Education Leadership at the University of Illinois at Chicago. “In terms of raw achievement, all three of Chicago's largest ethnic groups, Black, Latino and White, now outperform their counterparts in the rest of the state, which was emphatically not true ten years ago.”

"The essential measure of academic progress is growth, and Chicago's young people and their teachers have demonstrated strong, steady improvement. We should celebrate the progress made, and continue challenging and investing in our students and teachers since we know they can excel.” Timothy F.C. Knowles, Chairman, Urban Education Institute, University of Chicago

The advances made by students throughout the city are due to a variety of efforts to improve the quantity and quality of instruction. The transition in 2012 to the Full School Day has ensured that students in all schools receive high levels of daily math and literacy instruction. In addition to increasing instruction time, the quality of instruction has also improved in recent years. By adopting and emphasizing Common Core standards in 2011, CPS has delivered more effective and rigorous math and literacy instruction, which is better preparing our students for success and allowing them to make gains on their peers across the nation. And while the gains made by our students have been significant, we are in the process of instituting new efforts to further improve educational outcomes, including: new high-quality Common Core instructional materials; K-5 professional learning communities to assist educators; university partnerships to bring more elementary math specialists to the District; and the implementation of the District's Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS), which will help educators rapidly identify and address unique student needs.

In addition to topping District records for NWEA achievement in math and reading, CPS students continue to exceed national averages in growth. Growth measures student achievement from spring testing over a one-year period, and the growth metric captures students who met or exceeded national averages for growth over a one-year period.

In 2016, 61.8 percent of students met or exceeded national averages for reading growth, and 56.4 percent of students met or exceeded averages for math growth. Growth in 2016 exceeded growth in 2015, when 56.1 percent of students met or exceeded growth averages in reading, and 54.7 percent of students met or exceeded growth averages in math. Since the growth metric effectively resets every year to a new baseline, any rate above 50 percent indicates that CPS students have exceeded the national average for growth, and we are proud of the significant progress our students continue to make.

NWEA calculates the average rate of achievement and growth through calculations known as “norms,” which are set by NWEA every three years as new data on national performance becomes available. 2016 represents the
adoption of a new set of norms, which were identified for schools prior to the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year. The new set of NWEA-established norms resulted in a slight upward shift for the District on average, but some schools did experience a downward shift. While the norms did change, District attainment levels still increased over 2015 when the 2016 scores are calculated using the prior norms. Additionally, District growth still exceeds 50 percent in 2016 when using the prior set of norms. Regardless of which set of norms are used, CPS student achievement is still on the rise, and the new norms, which reflect a more precise representation of national test takers, further confirms the remarkable gains students are making in classrooms throughout Chicago.

In the coming days, CPS will finalize and release new student achievement data that shows continued academic growth and progress throughout the District. Recently, CPS finalized its School Year 2015-2016 attendance data, which showed that district-wide attendance hit a record high of 93.4 percent.

The full 2016 NWEA data set can be found at www.cps.edu/schooldata.