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**STATEMENT ON THE NATION'S REPORT CARD:
*NAEP Trial Urban District Assessment Reading 2009***

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I appreciate this opportunity to outline for you the approach Atlanta Public Schools has taken to raise student achievement across the curriculum, particularly in literacy, which is the foundation of all learning.

Our school system has undertaken a full court press that began in 1999, when we launched our comprehensive reform agenda. Every year since then, teachers, principals, and other professionals within and outside the system have been working together to refine and accelerate the work, resulting in Atlanta students posting the highest reading gains from 2002 to 2009—compared numerically to schools participating in the Trial Urban District Assessment, within large cities, and across the nation.

Here are a few key takeaways from the 2009 reading results on “The Nation’s Report Card,” or the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP):

- Trend data from 2002 to 2009 show that Atlanta’s students have realized a 14 point gain at the fourth grade level and a 14 point gain at the eighth grade level.
- In eighth grade, Atlanta is one of only 2 participating large urban districts in the nation to show a statistically significant increase in reading scores since 2007; student performance increased by 5 points.
- Since 2007, Atlanta’s fourth graders showed improved performance that, although slight, represents movement in the right direction.

Our students’ improvement on NAEP 2009 mirrors their gains on state standardized tests over the past 10 years. These results show clearly that while our work is far from finished, our comprehensive reform agenda continues to deliver consistent and meaningful results in student achievement.

Allow me to highlight just four of our improvement strategies. First, more than a decade ago, we implemented standards-based instruction. We know the best teacher in the school will still be ineffective if he or she lacks a curriculum of challenging and coherent academic standards. To help ensure a content-rich classroom, our school district aligned instruction with state standards, which have been revised into the more rigorous Georgia Performance Standards.

Second, each of our schools adopted a comprehensive reform model from a list of research-based, nationally proven designs. All of the designs, including our signature model called Project GRAD, incorporate a strong foundation of reading and language arts.

Third, we have made tremendous investments in job-embedded professional development and ongoing support for our teachers and principals. We deploy school-based instructional coaches and central office-based model teacher leaders. These professionals are subject matter experts who are skilled in best teaching practices. Their primary responsibilities are to assist principals in monitoring the delivery of instruction in our schools, and to work one on one with teachers to enhance their content knowledge and teaching strategies. We've been fortunate to place literacy coaches in most elementary and middle schools.

Fourth, the consistent use of data to determine students' strengths and needs is a major component of our work in Atlanta. At the school level, principals, teachers, and support staff are well versed in how to analyze students' progress using various assessments during the year and end-of-year or summative assessments. Staff members use the information strategically to intervene where improvement is needed. For example, data inform extra in-school support, such as double doses of literacy instruction; before- and after-school tutoring; and Saturday academies for students. Most of all, teachers use the data to differentiate or adjust classroom instruction.

Anyone who visits our schools will see that we look like most urban systems. Approximately 3 in 4 of Atlanta Public Schools students live close to or below the poverty line. More than 80 percent of our students are African-American. Visitors will also see evidence of the quality of our students' work, the effectiveness of our teachers, the instructional leadership of our principals, and the support of the broader community—all driven by the collective high expectations we have for every child.

Do the results announced today mean that Atlanta's students are outperforming students in the rest of the country? No. Our students' scores are still below the national and state averages. What the results show is that our students are digging out of a deep hole, and they're doing so at a significantly fast rate.

Our focus now is to maintain this trajectory of improvement, ensuring that our students are not only at the *Basic* levels of achievement, but also at the *Proficient* and *Advanced* levels. Only then will students be adequately prepared for college and career success. If we continue at our current pace, we believe our students will make even greater gains.