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Education Policy Research Unit

******NEWS RELEASE******

**from the Education Policy Research Unit (EPRU)
and the Education Policy Studies Laboratory (EPSL)
at Arizona State University**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, October 7, 2004

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<http://www.asu.edu/educ/eps1/EPRU/articles/EPRU-0410-75-OWI.pdf>

The Education Policy Studies Laboratory (EPSL) would like to call your attention to:
"Children's Reading Scores Stalled in Many States" released October 7, 2004, by Bruce Fuller.

**STUDENT TEST SCORES FALTERING, FALLING IN MAJOR STATES, NEW
GOVERNMENT DATA REVEAL**

Sacramento, Calif.—Children's reading scores have stalled or declined in the nation's largest states since Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001, according to new data released by governors and state school chiefs.

Traveling the campaign trail, President Bush frequently reiterates support for his controversial "No Child" school accountability reforms. In King of Prussia, Pa. last month, Mr. Bush said, "We're making progress. We're closing the achievement gap."

Yet many states have now released trend data, tracking children's progress in acquiring basic reading skills through last spring's exams. Since passage of Mr. Bush's signature education policy, student performance leveled-off or fell in 11 of the 15 states participating in the study, according to researchers at Stanford University and the University of California.

Tracking achievement trends is proving difficult as state education officials switch to new tests and alter definitions of student "proficiency" to conform to new federal rules. But the university team compiled test results for the biggest states which have successfully tracked reading achievement over several years.

"We could not detect any consistent gains in children's reading scores since passage of Washington's No Child Left Behind reforms," said Aimee Scribner, spokesperson for the university team.

Children's reading scores in elementary schools have remained unchanged or declined in California, Colorado, Iowa, Massachusetts, Missouri, New York, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and Wisconsin, according to the data released by each state's education department.

"Important gains in children's reading performance were observed through the 1990s, as many governors advanced their own school accountability initiatives," Scribner said.

These new findings will likely fuel debate over whether Mr. Bush's more aggressive regulation of local schools, along with new funding, is sparking gains in teacher effectiveness and student performance.

Mr. Bush's education secretary, Rod Paige, speaking before the Republican National Convention in New York City, said, "All across America, test scores are rising, students are learning, the achievement gap is closing."

"We hope the Administration's claims some day come true," Scribner said. "But the new state data simply do not support such broad assertions."

National testing and policy experts provided independent review of the study, including Dr. Joan Herman, UCLA (310-206-1532); Prof. Luis Huerta, Columbia University (212-531-1638); and Prof. Robert Linn, University of Colorado (303-492-8280).

The Education Policy Research Unit (EPRU) conducts original research, provides independent analyses of research and policy documents, and facilitates educational innovation. EPRU facilitates the work of leading academic experts in a variety of disciplines to help inform the public debate about education policy issues.

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The Education Policy Studies Laboratory (EPSL) at Arizona State University offers high quality analyses of national education policy issues and provides an analytical resource for educators, journalists, and citizens. It includes the Arizona Education Policy Initiative (AEPI), the Commercialism in Education Research Unit (CERU), the Education Policy Analysis Archives (EPAA), the Education Policy Research Unit (EPRU), and the Language Policy Research Unit (LPRU). The EPSL is directed by Professor Alex Molnar.

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