



The Nation's Report Card Shows Declines in Reading, Some Progress in 4th Grade Math U.S. Students Not Back to Pre-Pandemic Achievement

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(Jan. 29, 2025 — Washington, D.C.) The Nation's Report Card released today shows continued declines in reading for U.S. students, compounding a decline in the nation's reading scores that started prior to the pandemic.

In 2024, average reading scores on The Nation's Report Card declined by 2 points for both 4th and 8th grade students compared to 2022. This steepens the 3-point decline seen in both grades between 2022 from 2019. Students took the National Assessment of Educational Progress, also known as The Nation's Report Card or NAEP, between January and March 2024.

No state saw gains on NAEP Reading in either grade compared to 2022; only one large urban school district that participates in the voluntary [Trial Urban District Assessment \(TUDA\)](#) program — Atlanta Public Schools — had gains in 4th grade reading, compared to 2022.

"Student academic achievement is the cornerstone of national success and security. This makes a lack of academic progress today a direct and urgent threat to our collective future." said Governing Board member Patrick Kelly, who teaches AP U.S. Government and Politics outside Columbia, S.C. ***"The continued declines in reading scores are particularly troubling. Reading is foundational to all subjects, and failure to read well keeps students from accessing information and building knowledge across content areas."***

The 2024 results show that fewer than a third of students nationwide are working at the *NAEP Proficient* level in reading at both grades. Scoring at the *NAEP Proficient* level means consistently understanding written text and interpreting its meaning.

Around 40 percent of 4th graders are working below the *NAEP Basic* level in reading, the largest percentage since 2002. Fourth graders scoring below *NAEP Basic* likely cannot recognize a reason for a character's action implied in a story. About a third of 8th graders nationwide are failing to hit the *NAEP Basic* benchmark in reading — the largest percentage ever.

The average math score increased in 4th grade by 2 points nationally compared to 2022. Thirteen states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and 14 TUDA districts also saw increases in 4th grade math scores.

States with increases in 4 th grade math scores	TUDA districts with increases in 4 th grade math scores
Alabama Delaware District of Columbia Hawaii	Atlanta Public Schools (GA) Baltimore City Public Schools (MD) Boston Public Schools (MA) Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (NC)

Kentucky	Clark County School District (NV)
Louisiana	DC Public Schools (DC)
Maryland	Detroit Public Schools (MI)
Massachusetts	Guilford County Schools (NC)
Mississippi	Houston Independent School District (TX)
Nevada	Los Angeles Unified School District (CA)
New York	Miami-Dade County Public Schools (FL)
Puerto Rico	New York City Public Schools (NY)
Rhode Island	School District of Philadelphia (PA)
South Carolina	San Diego Unified School District (CA)
West Virginia	

In math, nearly 40 percent of 4th graders are working at the *NAEP Proficient* and *NAEP Advanced* levels. Nearly a quarter, however, do not reach the *NAEP Basic* level, meaning they likely cannot identify odd numbers or solve a problem using unit conversions.

The average math score in 8th grade is flat in 2024 compared to 2022, which is of particular concern given [2022's historic 8-point drop in 8th grade math](#). No state or TUDA district made gains in 8th grade math in 2024.

A little more than a quarter of 8th graders nationwide are performing at or above the *NAEP Proficient* level in math. Nearly 40 percent of 8th graders are working below *NAEP Basic*. These students likely cannot use similarity to find the length of a side of a triangle.

No nationwide rebound from the impact of the pandemic on achievement

Nearly five years after the COVID-19 pandemic, the nation is below its 2019, or pre-pandemic, scores in both grades and subjects on The Nation's Report Card. Just two states have surpassed their pre-pandemic scores in a single grade and subject: Louisiana surpassed its 2019 4th grade reading score; and Alabama surpassed its 2019 4th grade math score.

No state surpassed its 2019 8th grade scores in either subject. No participating district surpassed its 2019 scores in any grade or subject.

"This is unacceptable especially for our lowest performing students. We need to invest more in the data-informed efforts that have been shown to work so that we lift up our students and accelerate their learning even further. It's imperative we ensure all young people have the academic foundation they need to succeed in school and in the careers of their choosing," said former North Carolina Gov. Beverly Perdue, who chairs the National Assessment Governing Board, which [sets policy for The Nation's Report Card](#).

This Nation's Report Card follows recent NAEP assessments in [U.S. history and civics for 8th graders](#), and long-term trend [math and reading for 9-](#) and [13-year-olds](#), all of which showed declines after the pandemic.

Decade-long average score drops; steep declines for lower-performing students

In reading, students in both grades score about where they were in the early 1990s. In math, national average scores are higher in 2024 than in the 1990s but significantly lower than their peak in 2013.

Across grades and subjects, declines in 2024 were generally driven by lower-performing rather than higher-performing students. Today the lowest-performing students score about 100 points below the highest-performing students.

Growing gaps between higher- and lower-performing students has been a persistent trend for about a decade.

"This growing achievement gap between high- and low-performing students is troubling," said Martin West, Vice Chair of the Governing Board, professor of education at Harvard University, and a member of the Massachusetts State Board of Education. "We made progress in closing this gap until around 2010, but it's been steadily widening since. Policymakers at all levels of government must understand and work to reverse this trend, starting by holding all students to a high standard and helping them reach that bar."

Among the NAEP student survey data, chronic absenteeism is improving but still not back to pre-pandemic levels.

For the full results of The Nation's Report Card, visit www.nationsreportcard.gov.

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The **National Assessment Governing Board (Governing Board)** sets policy for The Nation's Report Card, also called the National Assessment of Educational Progress or NAEP. Created by Congress in 1988, the Governing Board is an independent, nonpartisan board whose 26 members include governors, state legislators, local and state school officials, educators, business representatives, and members of the general public. For more information about the Governing Board, visit www.nagb.gov.