



NEWS RELEASE

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Reading Scores on The Nation's Report Card Lower Than in 2017, While Math Results Vary

Since 2009, lower-performers stall on NAEP; higher-performers see gains

WASHINGTON — Average reading scores for the nation in 2019 were lower for students in both fourth and eighth grade than in 2017, while average mathematics scores were higher by 1 point for fourth graders and lower by 1 point for eighth graders. Results on *The Nation's Report Card: 2019 Mathematics and Reading* for states and urban districts were varied, with a greater proportion of districts than states showing increases in mathematics performance.

Also known as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), *The Nation's Report Card* provides results for the nation, states/jurisdictions, and 27 urban school districts that volunteer to participate in the Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA). In addition to reporting scale scores and percentages of students at or above three NAEP achievement levels, NAEP reports scores for students at five selected percentiles to show progress made by lower- (10th and 25th percentiles), middle- (50th percentile), and higher-performing students (75th and 90th percentiles).

Compared to 2009, the 2019 national results in mathematics were lower for grade 4 and grade 8 students in the lowest-performing percentile, while scores increased for students in grade 4 at the 75th and 90th percentiles and in grade 8 at the 90th percentile. National results show lower scores in reading compared to 2009 for students at the 10th and 25th percentiles in grades 4 and 8, while scores for higher performers increased.

"The fact that students who need to make the *most* academic progress are instead making no progress or are falling further behind is extremely troubling," said Tonya Matthews, vice chair of the National Assessment Governing Board and an associate provost at Wayne State University in Detroit. "We need to see *all* students make progress if we are going to achieve our shared goals of an equitable society where everyone can contribute to our knowledge-based economy."

In mathematics and reading for both grades, a little more than one-third of students nationally scored at or above the *NAEP Proficient* level in 2019. Compared to 2017, the average mathematics score was higher at grade 4, where 41 percent of fourth graders scored at or above the *NAEP Proficient* level. Students reaching this level have demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter, including subject-matter knowledge, application of such knowledge to real-world situations, and analytical skills appropriate to the subject matter.

At grade 4 for the nation, average mathematics scores by race/ethnicity show that Hispanic students had a higher average mathematics score in 2019 compared to 2017. Reading scores were lower for White and Black students at grade 4 and for all racial/ethnic groups, except Asian/Pacific Islanders at grade 8 compared to 2017. Mathematics scores increased in nine states/jurisdictions at grade 4, and in three at grade 8. Mississippi was the only state to show an

increase in grade 4 reading. The District of Columbia was the only jurisdiction to show an increase in grade 8 reading.

Average grade 4 mathematics scores increased in five TUDA districts, while average grade 8 math scores increased in four districts. The fourth-grade 2019 overall average reading scores in Clark County (NV), Detroit, and the District of Columbia Public Schools were not significantly different from 2017, but scores for Hispanic fourth graders in these districts were higher. Hispanic fourth graders also scored higher in mathematics in Clark County (NV) and Detroit, which each saw overall score increases in 2019 compared to 2017; Hispanic fourth graders also scored higher in mathematics in Los Angeles, which did not have a significant change in its overall score compared to 2017. At grade 8, the average mathematics scores in Guilford County (NC) were higher for Hispanic students and students overall in 2019 than in 2017.

The assessment includes surveys—taken by students, teachers, and school administrators—that shed light on the contexts for student learning at the various levels of NAEP performance, illuminating differences in educational resources and opportunities.

In grade 8, students at or above the 75th percentile were more likely than students below the 25th percentile (54 percent versus 36 percent) to report that their teachers asked them to “always” or “almost always” report the main idea of a reading passage.

In mathematics, compared to lower-performing students, a larger percentage of higher-performing students at grade 4 had teachers who reported placing “heavy emphasis” on measurement (32 percent versus 28 percent), geometry (36 percent versus 31 percent), and algebra and functions (60 percent versus 57 percent).

And at grade 8, a larger percentage of higher-performing students compared to lower-performing students reported taking Algebra I (56 percent versus 14 percent), Geometry (13 percent versus 2 percent), or Algebra II (3 percent versus 1 percent).

“The insight into students’ experiences that NAEP provides is invaluable in shining a light on access to resources and opportunities that can focus efforts to improve outcomes for students,” said Rebecca Gagnon, chair of the Governing Board’s Reporting and Dissemination Committee.

Highlights for student performance in each subject appear below:

State Findings in Mathematics	Urban District Findings in Mathematics
<p>Compared to 2017,</p> <p>In nine states/jurisdictions, average scores at grade 4 were higher</p> <p>In three states, average scores at grade 4 were lower</p> <p>In three states/jurisdictions, average scores were higher at grade 8</p> <p>In six states, average scores were lower at grade 8</p>	<p>Compared to 2017,</p> <p>In five districts, average grade 4 scores increased</p> <p>In one district, average grade 4 scores decreased</p> <p>In four districts, average grade 8 scores increased</p> <p>In three districts, average grade 8 scores decreased</p>

State Findings in Reading	Urban District Findings in Reading
<p>Compared to 2017,</p> <p>In 17 states, average reading scores were lower at grade 4.</p> <p>In 31 states, average reading scores were lower at grade 8.</p> <p>Mississippi was the only state to show an increase in grade 4 reading. The District of Columbia was the only jurisdiction to show an increase in grade 8 reading.</p>	<p>Compared to 2017,</p> <p>In three districts, average reading scores were lower at grade 4</p> <p>In 11 districts, average reading scores were lower at grade 8.</p> <p>The District of Columbia Public Schools was the only district with an increase at grade 8.</p>

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The National Assessment Governing Board is an independent, nonpartisan board whose members include governors, state legislators, local and state school officials, educators, business representatives, and members of the general public. Congress created the 26-member Governing Board in 1988 to set policy for the National Assessment of Educational Progress. For more information about the Governing Board, visit www.nagb.gov.