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NAEP Long-Term Trend Assessments Show Different Trends for 9- and 13-Year-Olds
Scores increase for younger students; No change in scores for older students

June 10, 2026 — (Washington, DC) The nation's nine-year-olds are making progress in reading and math, while 13-year-olds are showing stagnant scores on the [Long-Term Trend assessments \(LTT\)](#), compared to peers who took the same assessment four years ago.

LTT is an age-based assessment within the National Assessment of Educational Progress program, also known as NAEP or The Nation's Report Card, that has measured student learning since the 1970s.

Average scores for 9-year-olds on the 2025 LTT assessments increased by 4 points in both math and reading compared to 2022, the last time these tests were administered. Lower-performing students also saw gains, while higher-performing students did not see significant score changes in 2025.

Average reading scores for 9-year-olds are back to where they were before the pandemic in 2020. Reading scores were at a plateau prior to the pandemic and then dropped after the pandemic disrupted education globally.

In math, despite the uptick in average scores in 2025, scores for 9-year-olds are still down compared to 2020 and 2012 except for the highest-performing 9-year-olds, those working in the 90th percentile. They saw no significant score changes compared to 2020 and 2012.

"It's a relief to see that 9-year-olds have rebounded in reading and are working at previous levels in this critical subject. Now we need to build on that progress since reading is vital to students' overall success," National Assessment Governing Board Member and Tennessee State Rep. Mark White said. "In math, elementary students are on the right path, but policymakers and educators must accelerate efforts to help them make up lost ground."

The LTT assessments have remained largely unchanged over time and provide a look at how students today are doing compared to their 1970s counterparts. Today's 9-year-olds are outperforming students who took those initial assessments in both math and reading.

The picture looks different for the nation's 13-year-olds.

Scores in 2025 for 13-year-olds remain unchanged in math and reading from 2023, the last time this age group took the LTT assessments.

In both subjects, average scores for 13-year-olds remain lower than they were in 2020. Math and reading scores are also down compared to 2012, which was a high point, except for students working at the highest performance level. That subset of students is performing about the same as they were in 2012.

Looking back to the initial 1970s assessments, the average math scores of 13-year-olds are higher today than they were back then. Average scores in reading are about the same.

"These latest results show we need to bring more attention to middle school. Average scores for 13-year-olds are down since the pandemic—almost 10 points in math and 4 points in reading," said National Assessment Governing Board Executive Director Lesley Muldoon. "As a nation we have to get to work helping adolescent learners achieve at much higher levels so they can be ready for high school and what comes next, whether that's college or careers."

LTT cannot be directly compared to the main NAEP assessments given every two years. LTT is a national, age-based, rather than grade-based, assessment. The questions assess fundamental skills and have remained largely unchanged. The main NAEP measures what students know and can do based on updated content and includes state and some district data. The latest reading and math results for the main NAEP will be released in early 2027.

However, the Long-Term Trend assessments and main NAEP results show similar patterns. There have been achievement declines since 2012, and those sharpened after the pandemic. Younger students are now experiencing academic gains (in math and reading on LTT; and for 4th graders in math on NAEP). There is little to no progress for older students.

Survey questions accompanying the LTT assessments provide information about student experiences in and outside of school.

Among those findings, just 37 percent of 9-year-olds report reading for fun almost every day in 2025. That's not significantly different from 2022. However, it's well below 53 percent of 9-year-olds who said they read for fun almost every day in 1984.

Only 14 percent of 13-year-olds report reading for fun almost every day in 2025, the same percentage as in 2023 and down from 35 percent in 1984.

In math, students report changes in course taking. Just 23 percent of 13-year-olds reported taking algebra in 2025, which is not significantly different from 2023, but is below the 34 percent taking algebra in 2012.

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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.naqb.gov.*