



## NEWS RELEASE

**Embargoed for Release: 12:01 a.m. ET, October 28, 2020**

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### **In Reading, Grade 12 Students' 2019 NAEP Score Declined; Mathematics Score Unchanged Since 2015**

*For lower-performing students, scores on The Nation's Report Card decrease in both subjects;  
Reading scores also decreased for lower performers at grades 4 and 8 in 2019*

WASHINGTON – Average scores for grade 12 students across the country declined in reading and did not change in mathematics compared to 2015 results, according to the 2019 Nation's Report Card.

The average reading score dropped 2 points since 2015 on the 2019 administration of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), and the percentage of students at or above *NAEP Proficient* held steady at 37 percent. The average mathematics score did not differ significantly from 2015, and 24 percent of students performed at or above *NAEP Proficient* in 2019.

In both subjects, scores declined for lower-performing students since 2015. The decline in grade 12 reading scores resembles declines seen for lower-performing students at grades 4 and 8 in 2019.

"No matter the path students take after high school, a strong foundation in math and reading is essential," said Gov. Haley Barbour, chair of the National Assessment Governing Board, which sets policy for NAEP. "These results demonstrate that far too many of our nation's high school seniors do not have sufficient math and reading skills for postsecondary endeavors."

Results for NAEP are reported in several ways, including as percentages of students performing at or above three NAEP achievement levels (*NAEP Basic*, *NAEP Proficient*, and *NAEP Advanced*). Students performing at or above *NAEP Proficient* demonstrate solid academic performance and competency over challenging subject matter.

In addition, NAEP reports scores at five selected percentiles to show the progress made by lower- (10th and 25th percentiles), middle- (50th percentile), and higher- (75th and 90th percentiles) performing students. In both reading and mathematics, scores for lower-performing students declined compared to 2015 results, whereas scores for middle- and higher-performing students did not change.

"Not only are the students who are most at risk not catching up to their higher-performing peers, the gaps appear to be widening," said Paul Gasparini, principal of Jamesville-DeWitt High

School in DeWitt, N.Y., and member of the National Assessment Governing Board. “That should concern all of us, including educators and policymakers, who are committed to building a more equitable education system, economy, and society.”

In 2013, the Governing Board began using NAEP to estimate the percentage of grade 12 students who possess the knowledge and skills in reading and mathematics that would make them academically prepared for first-year college coursework. For 2019, the NAEP results show that an estimated 37 percent of grade 12 students are prepared for college-level coursework in each subject, which is about the same percentage as in 2015.

NAEP also surveys students on factors inside and outside the classroom, including course-taking and postsecondary plans. Sixty-one percent of students reported applying to or being accepted to a four-year college in 2019—37 percent of these students performed at or above *NAEP Proficient* in mathematics, and 50 percent of these students performed at or above *NAEP Proficient* in reading.

Forty-three percent of students reported that their teachers often, always, or almost always asked them to evaluate, analyze, and critique when reading in 2019. Compared to lower-performing students, a larger percentage of higher-performing students reported engaging in these activities.

### **Trends Over Time**

Compared to the first 12th grade NAEP mathematics administration in 2005, the average mathematics score has not changed. However, scores have increased among several racial and ethnic groups, including Hispanic, White, Asian/Pacific Islander, and students of two or more races.

Compared to the first 12th grade NAEP reading administration in 1992, the average reading score was lower in 2019 for students overall, but higher for Asian/Pacific Islander students.

For those twelfth graders who performed below *NAEP Basic* in mathematics, the percentage of students who reported algebra II/trigonometry, pre-calculus, or calculus as their highest-level class has significantly increased since 2005. That year, 62 percent of lower-performing students reported taking such classes; in 2019, 81 percent said they had taken them.

Also known as The Nation’s Report Card, NAEP is the country’s only ongoing, nationally representative assessment of education. It provides objective, independent data about the progress of American education in a variety of subjects and grade levels as well as insights into the contexts in which students learn and educators work. Results in reading and mathematics are provided for grade 12 students across the nation every four years.

The assessments were administered from January to March 2019 to a nationally representative sample of twelfth graders from about 3,500 schools. Students took the assessments on paper and on tablets, which marked the first time grade 12 NAEP used a digitally based administration.

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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, visit [www.nagb.gov](http://www.nagb.gov).*