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2017 Nation’s Report Card Shows Improvements in Eighth-Grade Reading

***No change from 2015 in average scores for grades 4 and 8 mathematics and grade 4 reading***

WASHINGTON (April 10, 2018)—The average reading score for American eighth-graders increased between 2015 and 2017, according to The Nation's Report Card, released today by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The average scores for fourth- and eighth-grade mathematics and fourth-grade reading were unchanged over the two-year period. At both grade levels, national mathematics and reading scores were higher in 2017 than when the first assessments were conducted in the early 1990s.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)—also known as The Nation's Report Card—is the largest nationally representative​ and continuing assessment of what students in the United States know and can do in various subject areas and is frequently referred to as the “gold standard” of student assessments.

“The increase in the average score for eighth-grade reading was driven by improvement among the higher-performing students; their scores improved between 2015 and 2017, while the performance of lower-performing students stayed about the same,” said Peggy G. Carr, the associate commissioner of assessment at NCES. “In eighth-grade math, the average score of higher-performing students increased, but those gains were offset by similar declines among lower-performing students.

“There was a different pattern at grade four,” Carr continued. “Lower-performing fourth-graders’ scores declined in both mathematics and reading, while higher-performing students held steady. But the score decline of lower-performing students wasn’t large enough to reduce the national average in either subject.”

The 2017 assessment results are the first for mathematics and reading reported based on NAEP’s new digital assessment platform.

“This is a state-of-the-art report that carries The Nation’s Report Card's valuable trend lines into the future,” said James L. Woodworth, the NCES commissioner. “These digitally based assessments will greatly expand what we will be able to learn about what students know and are able to do.”

**National Results**

In eighth-grade reading, the average scale score in 2017 was 267, an increase of one point from 2015 and 7 points since the reading assessment was first administered in 1992. In fourth-grade reading, the average scale score was 222, which was not significantly different from 2015. The fourth-grade reading score was 5 points higher in 2017 than in 1992.

In fourth-grade mathematics, the average scale score in 2017 was 240—the same as in 2015, and 27 points higher than in the first administration in 1990. In eighth-grade mathematics, the average scale score in 2017 was 283, which was not significantly different from 2015.

The NAEP reading and mathematics scales range from 0 to 500.

Student performance on NAEP also is reported by the percentages of students reaching three achievement levels: *Basic, Proficient*,and*Advanced*.

* In grade 4 reading, 37 percent of students scored at or above *Proficient* (no significant change from 2015, and 8 percentage points higher than in 1992).
* In grade 4 mathematics, 40 percent of students scored at or above *Proficient* (no significant change from 2015, and 27 percentage points higher than in 1990).
* In 2017, the percentage of students scoring at or above *Proficient* in eighth-grade reading increased from 34 percent to 36 percent. It was the only grade and subject combination with a significant change for the national overall percentage at or above the *Proficient* level since 2015, and it was 7 percentage points higher than in 1990.
* In grade 8 mathematics, 34 percent of students scored at or above *Proficient* (no significant change from 2015, and 19 percentage points higher than in 1990).

Over the course of the assessments, there has been an increase in the percentage of students reaching at least the *Basic* level of achievement. Fifty percent of fourth-graders were at or above *Basic* in mathematics in 1990; in 2017, 80 percent of fourth-graders were at or above *Basic* in mathematics. Fifty-two percent of eighth-graders were at or above *Basic* in mathematics in 1990; in 2017, 70 percent of eighth-graders were at or above *Basic* in mathematics.

Sixty-two percent of fourth-graders were at or above *Basic* in reading in 1992; in 2017, 68 percent of fourth-graders were at or above *Basic* in reading. Sixty-nine percent of eighth-graders were at or above *Basic* in reading in 1992; in 2017, 76 percent of eighth-graders were at or above *Basic* in reading.

The Nation’s Report Card also reports data by different demographic groups, such as White, Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian/Alaska Native students. There were no changes in the achievement gaps between White students and students of other races and ethnicities from 2015 to 2017.

**State Results**

Average scores for most states were unchanged from 2015 in both subjects and at both grades.

Florida and Puerto Rico were the only jurisdictions in the nation whose fourth-graders’ average mathematics scores increased between 2015 and 2017. Florida and the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) were the only jurisdictions to improve in eighth-grade mathematics. Ten states saw declines in fourth-grade mathematics, and three states saw declines in eighth-grade mathematics. Ten states had increases in eighth-grade reading, while none increased in fourth-grade reading.

|  | MATHEMATICS | MATHEMATICS | READING | READING |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **GRADE 4** | **GRADE 8** | **GRADE 4** | **GRADE 8** |
| ▲INCREASE | **▲2**Florida, Puerto Rico | **▲2**Florida, DoDEA | **▲0** | **▲10**California, DoDEA, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Indiana, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Jersey, Washington |
| ▼DECREASE | **▼10**Alaska, Arizona, Delaware, Louisiana, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Vermont | **▼3**Alaska, Rhode Island, Vermont | **▼9**Alaska, Kentucky, Louisiana, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Vermont, Wisconsin | **▼1**Montana |

**Urban District Results**

The Nation’s Report Card also shows progress in some of America’s urban school districts through the Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA) program. Fourth- and eighth-graders in 27 urban districts participated in the mathematics and reading assessments in 2017, which is the highest number since the program began in 2002. In 2017, five new districts—Clark County (NV), Denver, Fort Worth (TX), Guilford County (NC), and Shelby County (TN)—participated for the first time, and Milwaukee participated for the first time since 2013.

A useful benchmark for comparing the progress of the urban districts participating in NAEP is the average score for the "large city" group—NAEP's classification for cities with populations of 250,000 or more. The large city average score has not changed since the last assessment in either grade or subject, except grade 4 mathematics, which decreased by two points.

Average scores did not change in most of the 21 districts that participated in 2015 and 2017.

* Average scores for San Diego increased in both subjects at grade 4.
* Average scores for Duval County (FL), Fresno, and Miami-Dade increased in fourth-grade mathematics.
* Average scores for Charlotte, Cleveland, Dallas, and Detroit declined in grade 4 mathematics.
* Average scores for Albuquerque and Boston increased in eighth-grade reading.
* The average score for Philadelphia decreased in grade 8 mathematics.
* No district showed declines in either fourth-grade or eighth-grade reading.

**About the Assessment**

The 2017 mathematics and reading assessments were given to fourth- and eighth-graders in public and private schools in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Department of Defense schools, Puerto Rico (mathematics only), and in 27 school districts. Results for states and districts are for public schools only. In 2017, 298,200 fourth-graders and 286,800 eighth-graders participated in the assessment. Samples of schools and students are drawn from each state and from the District of Columbia and Department of Defense schools.

Visit https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading\_math\_2017\_highlights/ to view the report.

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*The National Center for Education Statistics, a principal agency of the U.S. Federal Statistical System, is the statistical center of the U.S. Department of Education and the primary federal entity for collecting and analyzing data related to education in the U.S. and other nations. NCES fulfills a congressional mandate to collect, collate, analyze, and report complete statistics on the condition of American education; conduct and publish reports; and review and report on education activities internationally.*

*The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is a congressionally authorized project sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education. The National Center for Education Statistics, within the Institute of Education Sciences, administers NAEP. The Commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics is responsible by law for carrying out the NAEP project. Policy for the NAEP program is set by the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), an independent, bipartisan board whose members include governors, state legislators, local and state school officials, educators, business representatives and members of the general public. Since 1990, NAGB has been developing achievement levels, which are being used on a trial basis.*