



EDUCATION

Study: Reading, Math Test Results Greatly Fell During Pandemic

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A new study found that math and reading test results for America's nine-year-olds greatly fell during the first two years of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is part of the U.S. Education Department. It found that reading test results saw their largest decrease in 30 years. It also found that math test results had their first decrease in the history of the kind of testing under study.

The study found that in math, the average test result for nine-year-old students fell seven percentage points between 2020 and 2022. The average reading test result fell five points.

The decreases hit all areas of the country and affected students of most races. But students of color saw some of the greatest decreases, widening the differences in test results between races.

Much of the nation's **standardized** testing did not happen during the early days of the pandemic. So, the findings released Thursday gave an early look at the effects the pandemic had on learning. More data is expected to be released later this year as part of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as the Nation's Report Card.

Daniel McGrath of NCES said these are some of the largest decreases they have observed in a single testing period in 50 years. McGrath added, "Students in 2022 are performing at a level last seen two **decades** ago."

The study shows the difficulties in education as U.S. schools shut down for months at a time during the pandemic. Many students spent a year or more learning from home. And virus outbreaks among school workers and students continued to interfere with learning as students returned to the classroom.

More difficulties for students of color

The pandemic's difficulties especially hurt students of color. Math test results dropped by five percentage points for white students, compared with 13 points for Black students and eight points for Hispanic students. The divide between Black and white students widened by eight percentage points during the pandemic.

Decreases were more equally spread in reading: test results dropped six points for white, Black, and Hispanic students.

For Asian American students, Native American students, and students of two or more races, the study found there was little change in reading or math between 2020 and 2022.

Across the U.S., all areas saw decreases in math. But decreases were a little worse in the Northeast and Midwest compared with the West and South. Outcomes were similar for reading, except that the West had no measurable difference compared with 2020.

Although the results mark a sharp drop since the pandemic, the study found that the average reading and math **scores** are still higher than the ones from the 1970s.

I'm Gregory Stachel.

Collin Binkley reported this story for The Associated Press. Gregory Stachel adapted it for VOA Learning English.

Words in This Story

standardize – *v.* to change (things) so that they are similar and consistent and agree with rules about what is proper and acceptable

decade – *n.* a period of 10 years

score – *n.* the number of points that someone gets for correct answers on a test or exam

What do you think of education during the pandemic?

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