



STATE OF ALABAMA  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



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State Superintendent of Education

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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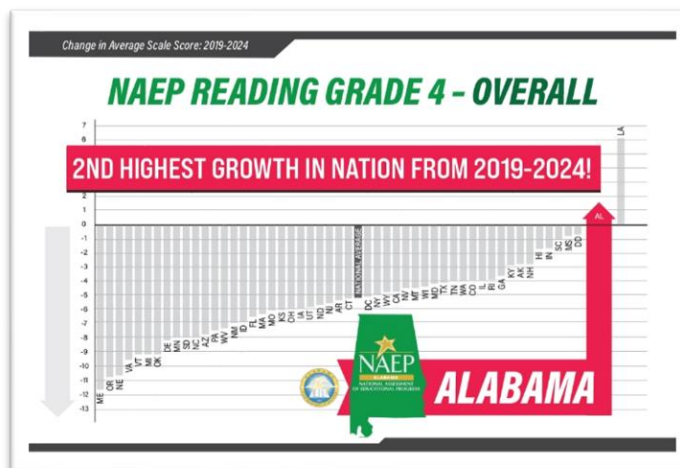
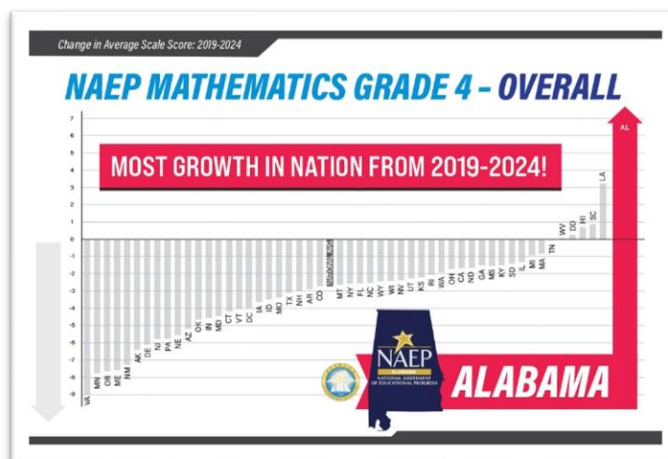
**Alabama's Rank in 4th Grade Math moves from 52nd in 2019 to 32nd in 2024;  
Rank in 4th Grade Reading moves from 49th in 2019 to 34th in 2024**

*Alabama one of only five states to climb back to pre-COVID levels in 4th Grade Math*

**Montgomery, AL**— Results just released from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), commonly known as America's Report Card, show Alabama students are leading the charge in post-COVID academic recovery. In **4th grade math** **Alabama climbed to 32nd in 2024**, from a low point of 52nd in 2019, the last NAEP administered pre-COVID.

Alabama's 6-point scale score increase was the largest increase in the nation when it comes to 4th grade math. Notably, Alabama's gains in COVID recovery comparisons surpass those of every other state. This places Alabama among a small group of five states—including Louisiana, South Carolina, Hawaii, and West Virginia, and—to show recovery to pre-COVID levels in 4th grade math.

State Superintendent, Dr. Eric Mackey, said he was very pleased with elementary math progress in the state and looks forward to pushing forward with even more reforms and improvements in upcoming years. "From day one—actually when I interviewed for this position—I have said that math improvement has to become a priority for our state. With the backing of our State School Board and Governor Kay Ivey to initiate new, higher academic standards and a more rigorous state test to go along with those standards, we set in motion the foundation



*The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)*

for growth. But it is our teachers who make—and have made the difference. They have gone above and beyond to get us to the next level, even amid the unprecedented challenges presented by the pandemic. Our teachers and school leaders deserve all the praise for a job well done.”

*During the press briefing today, Governor Kay Ivey stated, “Today we celebrate students, teachers and parents, because we are making significant progress in education in our state. Alabama is an education state. Our students’ education is everything, and clearly, it was one of our state’s most pressing areas to address when I took office. Strong students will lead to a strong Alabama. And while there is more work ahead, I am confident our forward momentum will continue.”*

Alabama’s place in **4th grade reading has moved dramatically over the past five years, moving up to 34th in 2024**. This after hitting a low point of 49th in 2019.

Alabama is one of only two states (along with Louisiana) to exceed pre-COVID levels in 4th grade reading. Even though reading growth was substantially less than math, with a scale score increase of only about 1.5 points during this period, the State Superintendent said he is very pleased with the work of the Alabama Reading Initiative to make even incremental gains, especially considering the enormous challenges facing the nation during and after an unprecedented pandemic.

“This group of fourth graders were Kindergarteners when COVID hit. Both their Kindergarten and first grade years were severely disrupted. Our lower elementary teachers, reading coaches, and interventionists have done yeoman’s work to maintain growth—however small—during this unprecedented upheaval in schooling. As we look at lower grades today, we are seeing student reading level rebound, and we believe this will lead to even greater gains as these students move into upper elementary grades and beyond.”

While Alabama’s most notable gains are in 4th grade, the news for 8th grade students is mixed. The state’s ranking in **8th grade reading rose from 49th in 2019 to 47th in 2024**. Similarly, in **8th grade math, Alabama improved from 52nd in 2019 to 49th in 2024**.

However, scale scores remained relatively flat over this period, prompting a reaction from State Superintendent Mackey: “Absolutely, there is still a lot of work to do. Focusing on middle school progress is a major concern. Just this year, the Legislature responded to our request to fund a new middle grades initiative focused on our struggling readers. We have asked for increased funding to expand that effort in 2025-2026, and we will also be reviewing middle-level math to see what we need to adjust. However, we are incrementally heading in the right direction in many areas,” Mackey said. “Our State School Board has set new, higher expectations for everyone from Kindergarten through graduate education; our legislature has invested more in education than ever before; and Governor Ivey, a former educator herself, values the importance of strong state leadership and effective instructional programs. With that kind of support and the outstanding efforts made by our teachers and school leaders, we expect to see continued progress.”

Dr. Mackey noted that efforts to incorporate the NAEP framework into Alabama’s Course of Study and laws like the *Alabama Literacy and Numeracy Acts* place Alabama on good footing for continued academic success. But, he cautioned that “Implementation is the key.

*The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)*

We can pass all the laws and policies in the world, but high-quality implementation by each and every teacher and principal is the key to growth. Even as the state celebrates its achievements, we must dig into these data over the coming year and acknowledge areas where more improvements are needed.

**Subgroup successes:**

Dr. Mackey said that he was, “especially pleased to see that Alabama students with special needs saw substantial growth in 4th grade math and reading. These students have seen consistent growth in math since 2019, with scale scores increasing from 196 in 2019, to 212 in 2024 (exceeding the national average). In reading, our students with disabilities moved up 12 points on their scale score, from 164 in 2019 to 176 in 2024.

**Other Context:**

Nationally, students continue to struggle to get back to pre-COVID levels on scale scores in 4th and 8th grade reading, and 4th and 8th grade math. In Grade 4 Reading, the nation is down five points from 219 in 2019 to 214 in 2024. In Grade 8 Reading, the nation is down from 262 in 2019 to 257 in 2024.

Nationally Grade 8 Math is down from 281 in 2019 to 272 in 2024. Nationally Grade 4 Math went from 240 in 2019 to 237 in 2024.

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