



# Alabama Education News & Notes

A monthly publication from the Alabama State Department of Education

## ALABAMA HOLDS ITS OWN ON THE “NATION’S REPORT CARD”

*Alabama Moves from 52nd to 40th in 4th Grade Math, and 49th to 39th in 4th Grade Reading as the Nation Uniformly Declines*

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results have been released, with Alabama’s standing either moving upwards, or holding its own against a backdrop of national decline. The NAEP is the only test administered that assesses what America’s students know and can do in various subjects. What educational officials consider to be the combined effort of educators, parents, and lawmakers to endure the COVID crisis has begun to yield results as Alabama students move in both Math and Reading.

From 2019 to 2022:

- Alabama went from **52nd** to **40th** in **4th Grade Math**.
- Alabama went from **49th** to **39th** in **4th Grade Reading**
- Alabama went from **52nd** to **47th** in **8th Grade Math**
- Alabama maintained **49th** in **8th Grade Reading**, as it was in 2019.

However, considering the avalanche of downward scores across the nation, maintaining the same score indicates a strong effort.

“Our teachers and students have worked hard, but clearly, we still have a lot of work to do. Although we are on a good trajectory, we have historically underperformed and there is plenty of ground to make up. I am not as concerned about placement as I am about every student in the state of Alabama receiving a quality education that prepares them for life after high school,” said **Dr. Eric Mackey, State Superintendent of Education**. “We have a strategic plan, Alabama Achieves, that highlights our key priority areas. We are constantly working to improve performance in each of these areas. These results indicate we are making significant progress.”

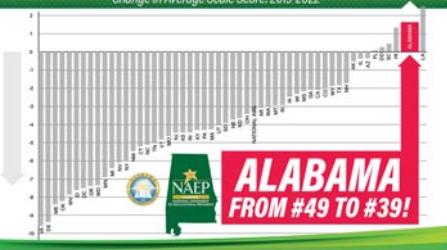
“We have strong state leadership, committed educators, hardworking communities, the support of our Governor and lawmakers, a consistent state assessment in the Alabama Comprehensive Assessment Program (ACAP), effective initiatives, and educational frameworks more aligned with expected educational outcomes. We feel like we are poised to continue to make strong gains in education.”

[View the full Nation’s Report Card results HERE!](#)

**The Nation’s Report Card**  
National Assessment of Educational Progress

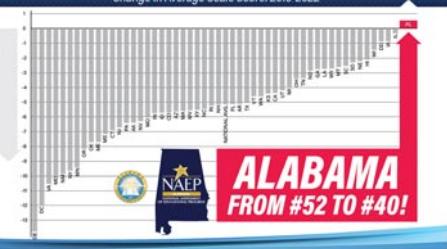
### NAEP READING GRADE 4 - OVERALL

Change in Average Scale Score: 2019-2022



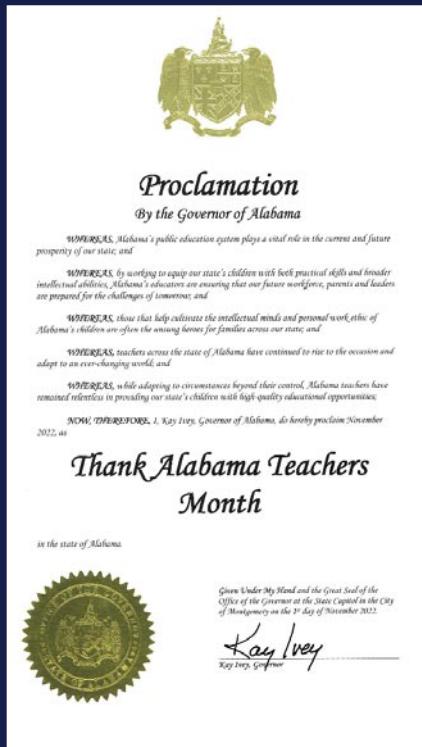
### NAEP MATHEMATICS GRADE 4 - OVERALL

Change in Average Scale Score: 2019-2022



# THANK ALABAMA TEACHERS MONTH

There's no wrong way to thank a teacher.



They're more than just teachers. They're counselors, coaches, mentors, and friends.

They deserve a full month of gratitude from all of us. Give your own heartfelt thanks to the special teachers in your life or share some kind words on social media with #ThankALTeachers.

Alabama Teachers truly make a difference in the lives of our students – and together with the Alabama State Board of Education Members, we want everyone across the state to let teachers know they are appreciated. Earlier, Governor Kay Ivey kicked off #ThankALTeachers month with a [press conference](#) and a [proclamation](#)! Join us in celebrating teachers this month!

## Say Thank You With Iron Bowl Tickets!



As an addition to this year's program, Mrs. Terry Saban, along with Nick's Kids Foundation, will be giving away [two Iron Bowl tickets](#) to one lucky teacher during the month of November. Nominations will be accepted through [weteachalabama.com](http://weteachalabama.com) and by responding to the #ThankALTeachers post on our [@alabamaachieves](#) Instagram page. Do you have a football-obsessed teacher in your life? [Nominate them on Instagram](#) for a chance to win Iron Bowl tickets!

# Montgomery Principal Surprised with \$25,000 Milken Educator Award!

Dr. Bryan Cutter among up to 40 recipients nationwide to be recognized for excellence in education and outstanding leadership!

The schoolwide assembly Dr. Bryan Cutter, Principal of Dalraida Elementary helped organize took a surprising turn when he became the guest of honor! Cutter received a **\$25,000 Milken Educator Award given by the Milken Family Foundation** – a fitting way to celebrate National Principals Month. Cutter was recognized for his innovative leadership style and implementation of technology throughout the school. He helped establish the first STEM lab in the region at the elementary level after just one year as principal.

“Successful students thrive with successful educators, and Dr. Bryan Cutter epitomizes effective and creative leadership,” said Dr. Jane Foley, Senior Vice President of the Milken Educator Awards and a 1994 Indiana Milken Educator. “As a former student in Montgomery Public Schools himself, Bryan acutely understands the unique challenges within the community.”

Hailed as the “Oscars of Teaching,” Milken Educator Awards inspire and uplift with the unique stories of educators making a profound difference for students, colleagues and communities. The specific states and schools on this year’s winners’ list remain a closely guarded secret until each Award is announced.

“Today’s announcement is a great opportunity to celebrate the field of education overall,” said Dr. Eric Mackey, State Superintendent of Education. “Dr. Cutter and his team at Dalraida Elementary School are an excellent example of the good work occurring in schools and classrooms across Alabama every day. The level of commitment and excellence exhibited here is invaluable, but it is not unique. Educators and administrators statewide are going the extra mile to create safe environments that are conducive to learning,” Mackey said. “Milken’s recognition of Dr. Cutter is a testament to his leadership as a principal and his ability to help increase academic achievement for the students he serves.”



[LEARN MORE ABOUT MILKEN HERE!](#)



## Alabama Educators Needed!

Each year, the success of the ACAP Summative and ACAP Alternate depends on the participation of Alabama educators. We rely on subject matter experts in English Language Arts (ELA), math, and science, as well as special education, ESL, and visually/hearing-impaired specialists, to write and review items and to review ELA passages. Please consider joining Student Assessment and Data Recognition Corporation's team of specialists to participate on one of these important committees. Your active involvement ensures the assessment process is informed by educators and content experts who know our students, our standards, and what is needed to set each student up for future success.

**How to Apply:** Applications are accepted throughout the year and notification of your selection will be made well in advance of the meeting dates. The only requirements are an Alabama teaching certificate, experience in the classroom in the tested grades and content areas, and approval from your supervisor to participate. Details are provided within the application.

**LEARN HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED [HERE!](#)**

## 2023 Military Child of the Year® Awards!

Nominations are open for Operation Homefront's 2023 Military Child of the Year® Awards, deadline of Dec. 4. The prestigious award will recognize 7 outstanding young people ages 13 to 18. Each of them will represent a branch of the Armed Forces – the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, National Guard, and Space Force – recognizing them for their achievements while facing the challenges of military family life.

Nominate a Military Child today [HERE](#). Recipients of the MCOY awards will receive \$10,000, a laptop computer, and a trip to DC for the special awards gala. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact [Jenny Valderas](#), Senior Director of Family Support Services, 210-760-7366. Find more [HERE!](#)

### Did You Hear?

An Auburn High School teacher has been named the 2022 Alabama History Teacher of the Year? [Read all about it HERE!](#)

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# Community Counts!

*By: Will Edmonds  
2022-2023 Alternate State Teacher of the Year  
and Secondary Teacher of the Year*

The amazing Ona Larkin, one of my 9th graders, wrote a letter to me during Thank Alabama Teachers Week in November 2021. I was flattered, encouraged, and truly moved by her expression of gratitude. What stood out the most were Ona's words thanking me for creating, "our classroom to be more than just a room with desks and a teacher, but an actual place for learning and the very essence of experience with the language, culture, and real life ... more like a community and a place where we enjoy coming every day." It was the reminder that I needed for students, families, faculty, and staff – Community Counts!

Teaching in the early stages of the Pandemic certainly lacked the benefit of learning communities in the traditional sense and led me to feel insecure in many ways. Was I an "old dog" with only a few tricks? What are parents going to think if they listen to this online lesson? Should I feel guilty for thinking that virtual teaching feels easier in many ways than face-to-face instruction? Does that mean I am doing it wrong? Like my colleagues, the concerns dissipated out of necessity as we trudged forward creating a new community culture through online breakout sessions, conversation threads, and virtual icebreakers.

When we returned to in-person learning, teaching students how to speak French while wearing a mask was somewhat ineffective so I used videos of people speaking French (slowly and up close!) so that students could see how to form the sounds correctly. With the new protocols, I lost my go-to engagement strategy of using food like crepes and baguettes. So, I found COVID-safe packaged foods and treats (even Belgian waffles!) for students to try at home. While different, I believe that the contributions by my colleagues and me to the learning experience for students during the Pandemic are just as important and effective as they were prior. I believe that our learning communities are emerging from the pandemic stronger and more interconnected as our stories have been woven together over the last few years.

Community is built through shared experiences, challenges, and successes. As educators, we have the opportunity to establish and nurture communities through the creation of classroom culture for our students, connections between our families and the school, and collegiality among our faculty and staff. I believe the wounds from this season of constant pivoting, facing employee shortages, and searching for harmony among discord, will be soothed as we find new ways to fully engage with our communities.

Community counts, and we can count on our communities! As we move forward in our post-pandemic world, I have faith that we can re-establish and promote the learning communities that offer the opportunity to heal from the past and solidify the foundations that are vital for the future of our students and teachers.

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# Awesome Professional Development!

**Alabama Teachers Can Now Enroll in Micro Certificate Programs from the National Institute for STEM Education to Earn TEAMS Act Credit for Professional Development**

Alabama educators seeking to improve their STEM knowledge and skills now have new options for professional development (PD) activities that meet the qualifications of the Teacher Excellence and Accountability for Mathematics and Science (TEAMS) Act. The National Institute for STEM Education (NISE) has announced that its Micro Certificates and online courses have been approved by the Alabama State Department of Education and can be applied toward the four PD days required under TEAMS contracts.

The NISE STEM Essentials and Teaching Online Essentials Micro Certificates and online courses are uniquely designed to meet teachers' needs with highly targeted professional development.

Priced at \$39, each three-hour online course can be completed anytime, anywhere. Teachers who complete two paired courses in an area of practice earn a Micro Certificate and digital badge. Teachers may also choose to complete any individual online course to refine their practice and learn new strategies for teaching.

For complete information about NISE programs, click below.

**LEARN MORE HERE!**



## Alabama Schools Celebrate National School Lunch Week!

Alabama celebrated National School Lunch Week (NSLW) October 10-14, 2022! The State of Alabama officially recognized the [National School Lunch Program](#) (NSLP), serving nearly 30 million children each day with a Proclamation from Governor Kay Ivey. This year's fun and creative campaign theme, "Peace, Love & School Lunch," highlights the importance of healthy school lunches to student success, both in and out of the classroom.

Research shows children are getting their healthiest meals at school. National School Lunch Week will highlight the nutritious foods available daily in Alabama schools.

Students who have lunch are better able to learn and retain information with less classroom absenteeism, health concerns, hunger symptoms, and psychosocial problems.

"School lunches offer students fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and milk -many of these items have been grown locally by Alabama farmers- and meet federal nutrition standards limiting fat, calories, and sodium. National School Lunch Week helps us educate parents and students about all the wonderful benefits of our lunch program." said **Angelice Lowe, State Child Nutrition Programs Director**.

The federally funded National School Lunch Program (NSLP) has been fueling students for success for 75 years.

During the 2021-2022 school year, the Alabama School Lunch Program served over 83 million lunch meals via 1,456 school sites statewide. In addition to the Governors Proclamation, the Alabama State Board of Education will also present a signed resolution later this month acknowledging NSLW.

The "Peace, Love & School Lunch" campaign is made possible by the nonprofit School Nutrition Association and Kellogg's. Parents and students can follow the fun on social media using the hashtags #NSLW22, #PeaceLoveSchoolLunch and #SchoolLunch.



Alabama State Department of Education, Eric G. Mackey, State Superintendent of Education

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**LEARN ABOUT ALSDE CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAM HERE!**