



Baltimore math, reading scores stay relatively flat on national exam, below other major cities

By [Todd Karpovich](#) | tkarpovich@baltsun.com

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Students in Baltimore City have shown some small improvements in math and reading over the past two years, but they are still lagging behind the national average, according to results from the 2024 National Assessment of Educational Progress, also known as the Nation's Report Card.

In addition, Baltimore students are performing at lower levels than their peers in other large, metropolitan cities, says the report, released Wednesday.

The NAEP is mandated by Congress and the largest nationally representative test of student learning. The assessments in math and reading are given every two years to students in the fourth and eighth grades, with the highest score being 500.

Science and writing are scored on a scale of 300, but the writing test wasn't administered last year. Science results will be released later this year.

Scores were only reported for Baltimore City and the state Wednesday, not the other Maryland districts.

The Maryland State Board of Education set an aspirational target for Maryland to rank among the top 10 states in reading on the fourth and eighth grade NAEP exams by 2027. Although results have not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels, Maryland has improved its ranking among other states in every category.

"We still have a long way to go, but there's reason to feel hopeful about our results," Maryland State Superintendent of Schools Carey Wright said in a statement.

Fourth grade math

Officials with Baltimore City Public Schools highlighted several areas of progress on the NAEP, especially in the fourth grade, where economically disadvantaged students increased their math performance by 10 points and Black students boosted their math performance by eight points.

“Our fourth-grade math performance is encouraging,” Sonja Santelises, the district’s CEO, said. “We know our approaches are working, our families are supporting the work, and our staff continue to push boundaries for our young people to reach their potential. Our focus is to continue the momentum of our acceleration efforts to reach more students.”

The average math score for fourth graders in Baltimore City was 209, compared to 231 for students in large cities overall. However, City Schools beat its average score in that category from 2022 (201), which was down from 2009 (222), before the pandemic.

“Notably, Baltimore City Public Schools made significant improvement in fourth grade mathematics, recovering faster than Maryland and significantly faster than public schools nationally,” Ray Hart, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools, said in a statement. “Their gain of 8.4 points was the third largest improvement in fourth grade mathematics among large city districts. The district also maintained performance trends in all other tested areas.”

In the same subject, Maryland had an average score of 234, bringing it up to 39 from 42 in the state rankings. The state improved its results since 2022 (229), but the national average score was 237.

Eighth grade math

The average eighth grade math score for students in Baltimore City last year (245) was the same as in 2022 but lower than in 2009 (257). Students in large cities scored an average of 266, Marylanders 268 and Americans 272.

Maryland moved up to 38 from 42 in the state rankings. Nationally, scores on this assessment showed no significant change over the previous tested year.

“We’re not seeing the progress we need to regain the ground our students lost during the pandemic, and where we are seeing signs of recovery, they’re mostly in math and largely driven by higher-performance students,” Peggy Carr, commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics within the U.S. Department of Education, said during a media call Tuesday.

Fourth grade reading

Literacy has been a big push in Maryland since Wright took over as superintendent and made the [change last year to the “science of reading” method](#) of teaching, which is based on neuroscience and phonics.

On the NAEP, Baltimore fourth graders had an average reading score of 186, lower than the average score of 208 for students in large cities. The average score for students in Baltimore City was not significantly different from their average score in 2022 (185) but a drop from 2009 (202).

The average reading score of fourth grade students in Maryland was 216, slightly higher than the national of 214. The average state score was 212 in 2022.

Eighth grade reading

The average NAEP score of 2024 eighth grade students in Baltimore City was 240, slightly down from 2022 (241) and in 2009 (245). Students in large cities scored an average of 252 last year.

City Schools officials said the district is investing in tutoring and professional learning to support the science of reading to improve its literacy outcomes.

The average score of eighth graders in Maryland was 258, beating students in the nation at 257 and making the state 21st in the nation. Maryland lost a point since 2022.