



San Diego Unified Schools Outperform California, Large Cities Across U.S.

by [Kira Caspers • Times of San Diego](#) Jan. 30, 2025, 10:30 p.m.

Math and reading test scores for students in the San Diego Unified School District either stayed the same or improved since 2022, despite national reading score declines and pre-pandemic score deficiencies, according to a [federal report](#).

SDUSD students had top reading scores, the second highest eighth grade math scores, and the sixth highest fourth grade math scores compared to other large cities, according to [Raymond C. Hart, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools](#).

These results align largely with districts across California, where math scores improved much more than reading scores.

The [National Assessment of Educational Progress](#) report measures the math and reading scores of fourth and eighth grade students nationwide and is widely considered as the nation's report card.

"I couldn't be prouder of progress we have made as a team, but there is more work to be done," said Fabi Bagula, SDUSD interim superintendent.

Nationally, the 2024 NAEP results showed that fourth and eighth grade reading and math scores are not progressing enough to regain ground lost during the pandemic.

Fourth grade math scores improved across the nation, while eighth grade math scores stayed the same. Reading scores for both grades dropped, continuing the decline first reported before the pandemic in 2019.

In 2024, the percentage of eighth grade students reading below the [NAEP Basic level](#) was the largest in the assessment's history, and the percentage of fourth grade students who scored below NAEP Basic was the largest in 20 years.

"Where there are signs of recovery, they are mostly in math and largely driven by higher-performing students," said Peggy Carr, commissioner for the National Center for Education Statistics. "Lower-performing students are struggling, especially in reading."

[Absenteeism](#), typically defined as missing 10% or more of total school days in a year, has declined since the 2022 NAEP assessment, but not to pre-pandemic levels.

Last year, 21% of SDUSD students were [chronically absent](#), down from about 34% during the pandemic.