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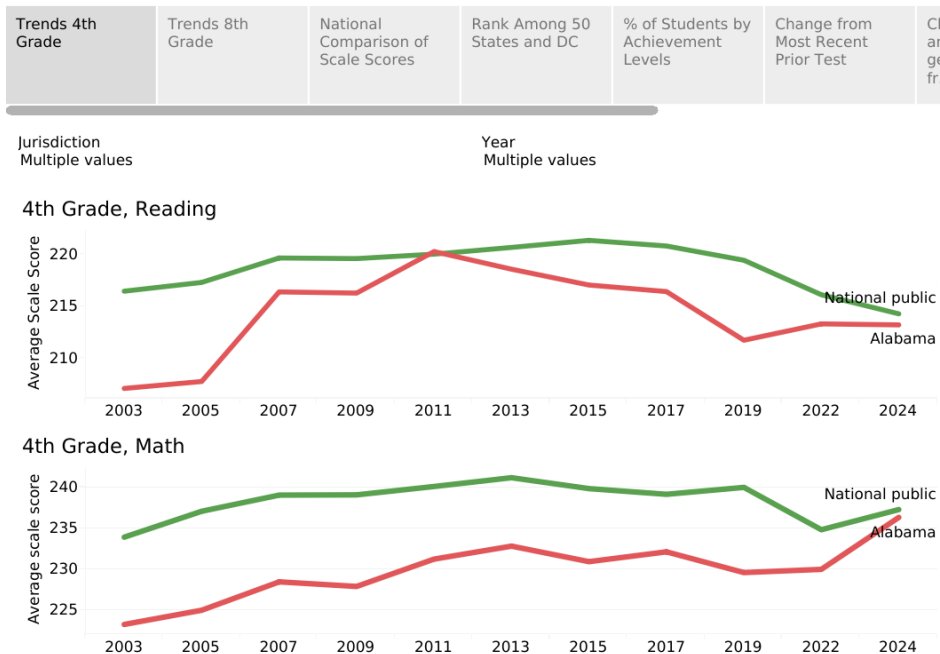
Alabama Makes Notable Early Grade Gains on Nation’s Report Card

By Thomas Spencer, February 3, 2025

Alabama public school fourth graders are scoring higher in both reading and math than they did prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. Alabama and Louisiana are the only two states where that is true, according to an analysis of the results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

In fact, in both reading and math, Alabama fourth graders scored close to the national average in 2024. That’s a remarkable turnaround from 2019, when Alabama 4th graders ranked at or near the bottom in both subjects. Only three states posted more improvement in 4th-grade math than Alabama in 2024.

Alabama has shown more growth in 4th grade math than any other state since 2019. The vast majority of states have lost ground. Alabama and Louisiana are the only states in which 4th-grade reading performance is higher than in 2019.



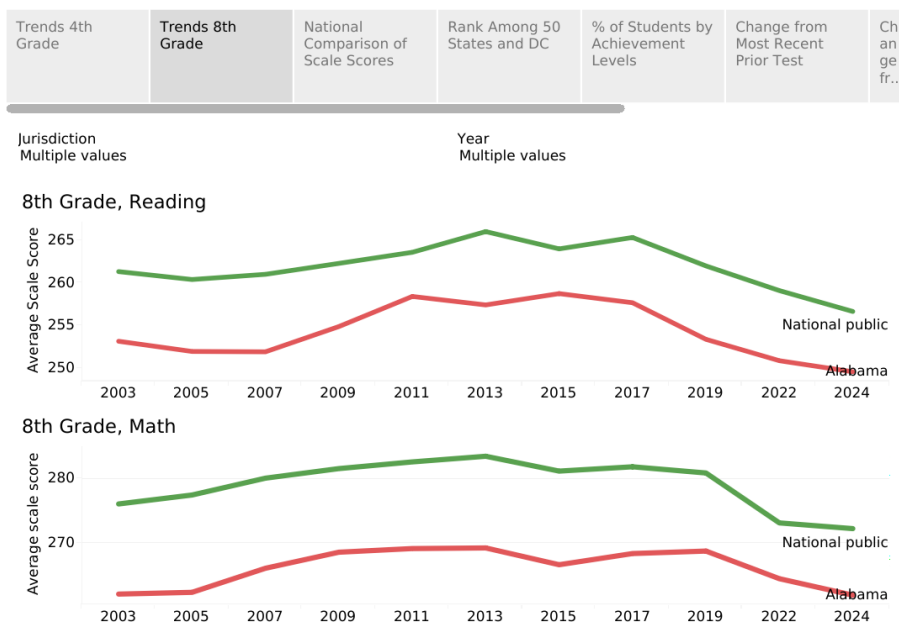
NAEP scores are based on standardized tests taken by a sample of students in every state. NAEP scores are known as the nation’s report card. In 2024, Alabama 4th graders’ performance ranked 33rd in reading and 31st in math.

Alabama has made large and targeted investments in early grades reading and math instruction, retraining teachers in research-based instructional techniques, stocking schools with dedicated reading and math coaches, and sending higher levels of support and resources to schools that have struggled academically. Results indicate that the investments may be paying off. Considering the timing and nature of the investment, results should continue to improve if results are sustained. The state is still increasing the percentage of its elementary teachers and administrators who have received reading instruction training. Additionally, the Alabama Literacy Act has highlighted the importance of learning to read since students are required to have demonstrated grade-level reading in order to be promoted to fourth grade. In Math, waves of instructional coaches authorized by the Alabama Numeracy Act continue to be trained and deployed.

The NAEP news is not all positive. Alabama’s progress toward the national average is partly due to declining performance in other states. The national average scale score is down in both subjects and both grades compared to 2019, prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2024, scores were down again, except for 4th-grade math, where there was an improvement nationally.

8th Grade Results

For 8th grade, the news was not good for the nation or for Alabama. And Alabama 8th graders fared poorly, performing worse in 2024 in both subjects. Compared to other states, Alabama 8th graders ranked No. 46 in reading and 48 in math.



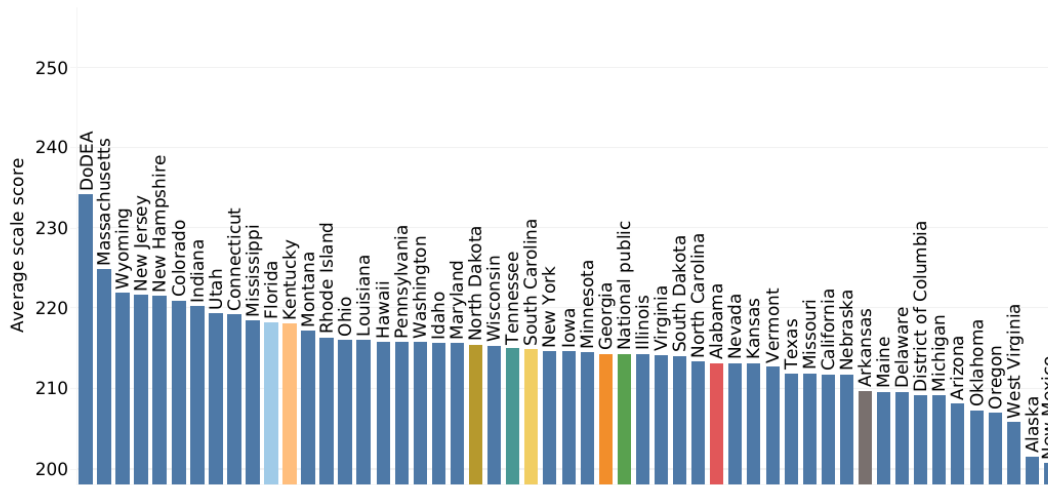
In both reading and math Alabama 8th graders are scoring lower than Alabama 8th graders did in the early years of the 21st Century, giving up gains that had been made over the past decade.

Alabama still trails most Southeastern states in both subjects and both grades. That includes Mississippi, where students outscored Alabama students in both grades and both subjects.

Trends 4th Grade	Trends 8th Grade	National Comparison of Scale Scores	Rank Among 50 States and DC	% of Students by Achievement Levels	Change from Most Recent Prior Test	Change fr..
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Year of Year 2024
 Jurisdiction Multiple values
 Grade ● 4 ○ 8
 Subject ○ Math ● Reading

2024: 4th Grade, Reading

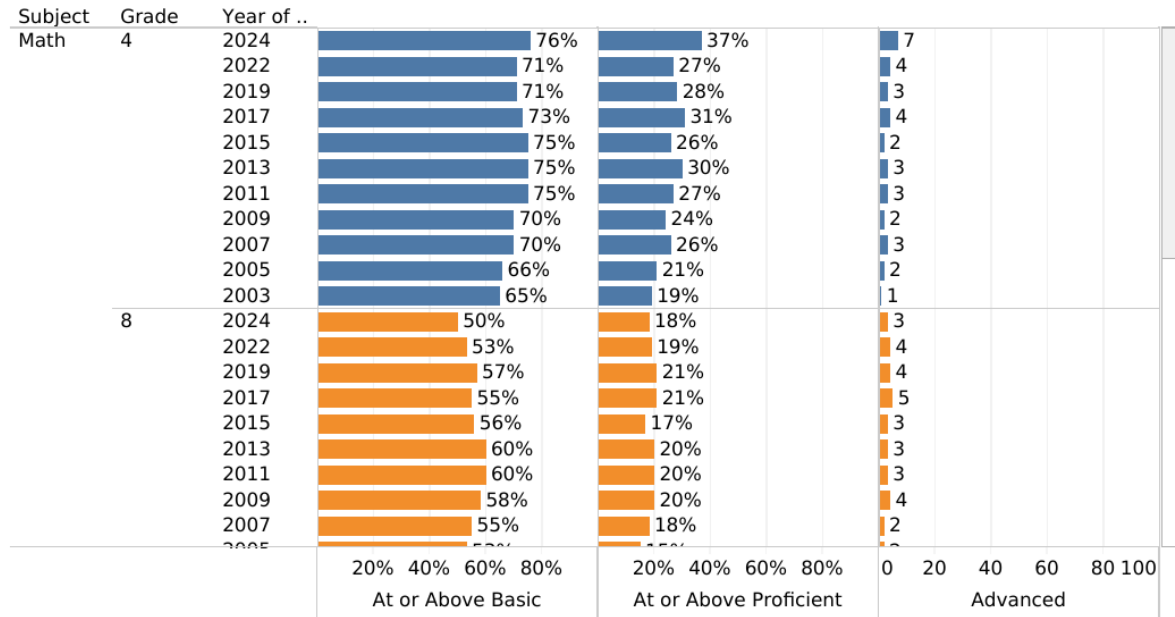


According to the 4th grade results, Alabama made gains not only in the percentage of students reaching the basic level and the proficient level but also in the percentage of students scoring at the advanced level.

Unfortunately, the trend is running in the opposite direction for 8th graders, with smaller percentages of students scoring at the proficient or advanced level.

Trends 8th Grade	National Comparison of Scale Scores	Rank Among 50 States and DC	% of Students by Achievement Levels	Change from Most Recent Prior Test	Change from Prior to Pandemic 2019	Average Scale Scores
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Percentage of Students by Achievement Level



Nationally and in Alabama, there remains a stubborn score gap between racial and ethnic subgroups of students. Among Alabama fourth graders, white students exceeded the national average for the first time in both subjects. Black fourth graders are also closing the gap with the national average for black students in both subjects. Hispanic students made gains toward the national Hispanic average in math but saw a drop in reading performance.

Na tio nal C..	Rank Among 50 States and DC	% of Students by Achievement Levels	Change from Most Recent Prior Test	Change from Prior to Pandemic 2019	Average Scale Scores	Subgroups
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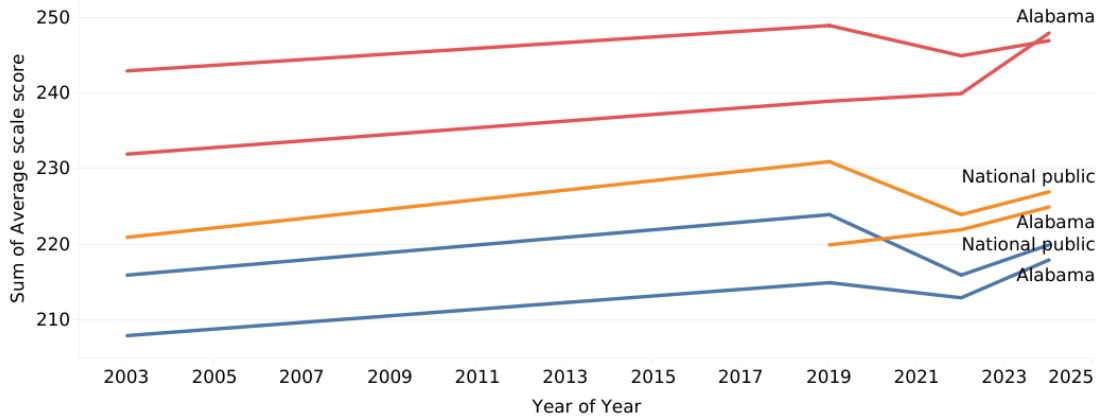
Jurisdiction
Multiple values

Grade
● 4
○ 8

Subject
● Math
○ Reading

Race/ethnicity used to report trends, school-reported
■ Black ■ Hispanic ■ White

Subgroups



Using the menu options, you can explore the data further, toggling between grades and subjects to examine changes by year in Alabama and other states and relative ranks among states.

Na tio nal C..	Rank Among 50 States and DC	% of Students by Achievement Levels	Change from Most Recent Prior Test	Change from Prior to Pandemic 2019	Average Scale Scores	Subgroups
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Subject
● Math
○ Reading

Grade
● 4
○ 8

Change since 2019 (Pre Pandemic), Math, Grade 4

