

## 4TH GRADE TEST SCORES DOWN IN NY

### Declines in math, reading exceed US pandemic averages

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Test scores in math and reading for New York's fourth graders declined by far more than national averages during the pandemic, said a report released Monday by New York State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli.

DiNapoli's report stressed that for school districts to address pandemic-induced "learning loss," they must properly allocate federal stimulus aid by the deadline of September 2024.

"This could be problematic if a significant portion of the pandemic relief funds to address learning loss is left unspent or is dedicated to programs with recurring expenses, or if significant progress in academic recovery has not occurred," the report said.

Districts should adjust their plans to ensure the money goes to assisting students most in need, the report said, and the state Education Department should provide best practices on using the funds and track how the money is spent.

The report was based on test results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress, known as "the nation's report card." It looked at changes in students' scores from 2019 to 2022.

Highlights of the report's findings include:

- New York's fourth grade math scores dropped 10 points, double any declines over the past two decades. Nationally, fourth grade math scores dropped five points.
- In reading, New York's fourth grade scores dropped six points, while the nation's dropped three.
- Eighth graders in New York fared better with a six-point drop in math compared to the nation's eight-point decline. In reading, New York saw no change, while national scores dropped three points.
- In fourth grade math, Asian and Pacific Islander students saw the steepest decline in scores, a 14-point drop in proficiency. White students declined by 8 points, Hispanic students by six points and Black students by 3 points.
- Female fourth graders saw a bigger drop in their proficiency in math, 11 points, than male students, seven points.

DiNapoli's report also noted an analysis of NAEP results by McKinsey & Company, a global consulting firm, that estimated it could take decades for scores to return to pre-pandemic levels.

According to the state Comptroller Office's COVID-19 Relief Program Tracker, New York districts have so far spent 40% of \$14 billion allotted to them in federal relief funds.

The state Education Department administers its own annual assess-

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ments of students in grades 3 to 8, but the tests were canceled in 2020 and given to a limited number of students in 2021.

### **Measuring what students know**

So the state doesn't have good data of its own to measure so-called learning loss, said Marianne Perie, an expert on educational testing, who addressed the state Board of Regents on Monday morning.

"Now we're watching the kids and saying, 'How do we get you to move forward?'" said Perie, director of assessment research and innovation for WestEd, a national nonprofit that often works with the state Education Department.

The state is now looking at alternative ways to assess what students know – including how to assess whether high school seniors are qualified to graduate.

"There is more to a student than the standardized test," said Regent Frances Wills, who represents Westchester, Rockland, Putnam, Dutchess and Orange counties on the board, which makes statewide education policy.

Jason Harmon, a deputy education commissioner, said the state needs an assessment strategy that considers the assessments that school districts give to their students throughout the school year.

At the same time, the federal government does require the states to administer annual standardized tests, which Chancellor Lester Young, head of the board, said is something many parents want.

"All across New York state," he said, "there are parents who want to know, 'If my child is in eighth-grade, how are they doing and how are they doing compared to all the other people in eighth grade?'" Young said it is "unconscionable" for parents to be told that their children are doing well in school only for them to get poor results on standardized tests.

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***"There is more to a student than the standardized test."***

***Frances Wills***

*Member of State Board of Regents*



**A report released Monday looked at changes in New York student test scores from 2019 to 2022 and called for schools to address pandemic-induced “learning loss” by properly allocating federal aid.**  
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