

Council for American Private Education

CAPE outlook

Voice of America's private schools

Math Scores Continue Upward Trend; Reading Remains Flat

Fourth and eighth graders across the nation achieved their highest scores ever on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in math, continuing an upward march in scores since 1990, according to results from the 2011 administration of the test. For the past two decades, math scores have increased 28 points for students in fourth grade and 21 points for those in eighth grade.

By contrast, performance in reading has remained relatively flat, growing just 4 points since 1992 in fourth grade and 5 points in eighth grade.

Trends since 2009 show an uptick of 1 point in both math and reading for eighth graders, and, for fourth graders, a 1-point gain in math and no gain in reading.

Commenting on the trend, David P. Driscoll, chair of the National Assessment Governing Board, which establishes policy for NAEP, said, "We applaud all students and teachers for their impressive and consistent gains in math achievement. And while we are encouraged by the continued progress in eighth-grade reading, we remain concerned about the stalled performance in fourth-grade reading."

Private School Performance

Students in religious and independent schools showed a substantial performance advantage over their counterparts in government schools (see tables). As the NAEP reading report put it, "In 2011, the average reading score for eighth graders attending public schools was 19 points lower than the overall score for students attending private schools." Private school

eighth graders had a mean reading score of 282, compared to 264 for public school students (the one-point discrepancy from the quote is due to rounding). Ten points on the 500-point scale represent roughly

one full grade level. In fourth grade, the public/private differential in reading was 14 points (234 vs. 220). In math, the private school advantage was 13 points for

eighth graders (296/283) and 7 points for fourth graders (247/240).

Achievement Levels

NAEP results are also reported as percentages of students performing at or above three achievement levels: basic, which denotes "partial mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills"; proficient, representing "solid academic performance," and advanced, or "superior performance."

Among eighth graders in 2011, 75 percent of public school students and 90 percent of private school students performed at or above basic in reading;

32 percent of public school students and 54 percent of private school students performed at or above proficient, while students at the advanced level included 3 percent of public school students and 8 percent of private school students.

In eighth-grade math, the pattern was

similar, with 72 percent of public school students and 85 percent of private school students scoring at or above basic; 34 percent of public school students and 48 percent of private school students performing at or above proficient, and 8 percent of public school students and 13 percent of private school students reaching the advanced level.

Gains in Proficiency

Performance at the proficient level has taken on new significance in the past decade. The *No Child Left Behind Act* calls for 100 percent of public school students to be at or above their state's definition of proficient by the year 2014. Since the early 1990's significant progress has been made in the percentage of students scoring at or above the NAEP levels of proficiency. In eighth-grade reading, for example, in 1992, 27 percent of public school students and 48 percent of private school students scored at the proficient level; this year, 32 percent of public school students and 54 percent of private school students did so, representing gains of 5 percentage points in the public sector and 6 in the private.

In eighth grade math, the gains were more dramatic, with the percentages of public school students at the proficient level increasing 19 points since 1990 (from 15

to 34 percent) and those of private school students climbing 31 points (from 17 to 48 percent). Worth noting is that the private school gains came without those schools being subjected to the same sweeping federal school improvement efforts as public schools over the past 20 years.

NAEP Reading 2011 Average Scores by Type of School

Grade	Public Schools	Private Schools
Fourth Grade	220	234
Eighth Grade	264	282

Source: National Center for Education Statistics

NAEP Mathematics 2011 Average Scores by Type of School

Grade	Public Schools	Private Schools
Fourth Grade	240	247
Eighth Grade	283	296

Source: National Center for Education Statistics

CAPE

CAPE member organizations:

- Agudath Israel of America
- American Montessori Society
- Association Montessori International—USA
- Association of Christian Schools International
- Association of Christian Teachers and Schools
- Association of Waldorf Schools of N.A.
- Christian Schools International
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
- Friends Council on Education
- Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
- National Association of Episcopal Schools
- National Association of Independent Schools
- National Catholic Educational Association
- National Christian School Association
- Oral Roberts University Educational Fellowship
- Seventh-day Adventist Board of Education
- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
- Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod Schools
- 33 Affiliated State Organizations

a coalition of national associations serving private schools K-12
Executive Director: Joe McTigue

Outlook is published monthly (September to June) by CAPE.
An annual subscription is \$35.
ISSN 0271-1451

13017 Wisteria Drive #457
Germantown, MD 20874
(tel) 301-916-8460
(fax) 301-916-8485
(email) cape@capenet.org

www.capenet.org



Duncan Supports Amending BRS Provisions in Senate Bill

At an awards luncheon November 15 honoring Blue Ribbon Schools, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan decisively supported the continued participation of private schools in the national recognition program.

The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee recently approved an overhaul of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* that would limit the Blue Ribbon Schools program to public schools only.

For nearly 30 years, the program has recognized excellence in American education by honoring exemplary public *and* private schools. In the 2011 cycle, 315 schools were given the award, including 266 public schools and 49 private schools. Since the program's start, over 6,000 schools have been honored.

During a Q&A session at the awards ceremony, Duncan was asked about the Senate legislation. Mrs. Elizabeth Hamilton, principal of St. Jane de Chantal School in Bethesda, MD, reminded the secretary of the Senate HELP Committee's recent vote to exclude private schools from the program and asked, "Would you be willing to work to restore an inclusive BRS program in the Senate bill?"

Duncan responded without hesitation. "I'd be happy to," he said. He went on to say that from his perspective there has been a false sense of competition among schools. "To me it's not public versus private versus parochial. We just need more great schools in this country of all forms and fashion." That line was greeted with loud applause. Duncan added that when every child in the country has a chance to attend an excellent school, the nation would be in a great place. But in the meantime, he said he worries that there are entire communities in which children do not have quality educational options.

Example for Others

During his formal address at the gala luncheon, which was held at the Omni Shoreham Hotel in Washington,

DC, Duncan said, "America's long-term economic prosperity and civic engagement depends on our children receiving a world-class education." He added, "National Blue Ribbon Schools are committed to accelerating student achievement and preparing students for success in college and careers. Their success is an example for others to follow."



U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan at the 2011 Blue Ribbon Schools awards ceremony November 15 in Washington, DC. (USDE Photo)

ESEA Changes Stall in Congress, Move Through Waivers

The reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*, already four years overdue, seems to have hit a few more roadblocks in Congress, but the Obama administration is moving full steam ahead in implementing its own ESEA reforms through waivers.

The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee held a hearing in November on an ESEA bill it had passed in October. The hearing revealed dissension between Republicans and Democrats over the bill, suggesting that passage by the full Senate was still a long way off. CAPE has serious concerns about provisions relating to equitable services for students and teachers in religious and independent schools.

Meanwhile, the House Education and the Workforce Committee has reported three legisla-

tive components of ESEA renewal, but has yet to tackle the thorny components of accountability and teacher evaluation.

Absent a bipartisan breakthrough, it does not appear that President Obama will be holding an ESEA bill-signing ceremony any time soon. And that's precisely the reason the administration is moving apace with its waiver plan, inviting states to request exemptions from certain requirements of ESEA in exchange for an agreement to implement some of the administration's favored reforms. The U.S. Department of Education has published extensive guidance on implementing the program, some of which relates to equitable services for private school students and teachers. Details are available at www.capenet.org/ESEAflex.html.

Melinda Gates Recalls How Teacher Inspired Success

The co-chair of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation recently recounted how a teacher at her all-girls Catholic high school taught her computer programming and inspired her to succeed.

In prepared remarks for the National Summit on Education Reform in San Francisco October 13, Melinda French Gates said: “I would bet that each of us here owes a huge debt to a favorite teacher. I grew up in Dallas, Texas, and attended high school at Ursuline Academy, where I was deeply blessed to have a math teacher by the name of Mrs. Bauer.”

Apple II Computers

Gates recalled that her teacher came upon the new Apple II computers at a math conference and thought, “This is going to be huge; we have to get them for the girls.” Bauer told the school’s administration, “If you buy the computers, I’ll figure out how to teach computer science.” She then took on a 70-mile round-trip nighttime commute to the University of North Texas to prepare herself to teach the high school computer course. Said Gates, “She was a single mom, raising three boys, working full time as a teacher, and getting her degree in computer science on the side—so that I could learn it, too. That’s the kind of teacher I had.”

With great fondness, Gates described Mrs. Bauer’s comfortable approach to instruction: “What was really neat about her teaching was that as we learned, we actually outpaced her at times, and she let us outpace her. And at times she outpaced us. But she inspired me to know that I could be a really great female student of math, and I went on to study computer science because of her instruction in high school.”

From Volunteer to Philanthropist

Because the school encouraged students to do volunteer work, Gates served in her senior year as a math tutor in a nearby public school. “So I had a chance to see education from two sides—from the front row at a great private school and from the back row at a crowded

public school,” she recalled. “Every week, I saw how a short stretch of road separated the students who were getting ahead from the students who were falling behind.”

Gates credits the volunteer experience as formative in her work as a philanthropist: “The lesson that I absorbed in the back row of that classroom is the moral core of our philanthropy. Every life has equal value. Everyone deserves a chance to live a healthy and productive life.”



Melinda French Gates at the World Economic Forum in 2009. (Copyright by World Economic Forum. Photo by Remy Steinegger.)

Ursuline Academy

Valedictorian for the class of 1982 at Ursuline Academy, her foundation’s multi-million dollar grants to the school helped establish the school’s French Family Science, Math, and Technology Center, dedicated in 2010. It was the first classroom facility in the Southwest

to be certified LEED Gold by the U.S. Green Building Council. According to the school’s Web site, the center is designed “to inspire creativity, collaboration, and motivation” and to accommodate the school’s laptop technology.

In remarks at the center’s dedication, Gates said, “Since I graduated from Ursuline, I have been passionate about getting girls and women involved in science, math and technology.” She added, “My vision is for this building to be an equalizer in the sciences. That is what my Ursuline education was for me.”

The school’s mission is “the total development of the individual student through spiritual formation, intellectual growth, service to others, and building of community.”

Before enrolling at Ursuline, Gates attended St. Monica Catholic School in North Dallas. After Ursuline, she earned a bachelor’s degree in computer science and economics from Duke University and an MBA from Duke’s Fuqua School of Business. She joined Microsoft in 1987 and married Bill Gates in 1994.

Just before her wedding, Melinda’s future-mother-in-law wrote her a letter with a line that was to become a driving principle in Melinda’s life and in her work at the Gates Foundation: “To whom much is given, much is expected.”

School Crime

Whenever students are the victims of crime at school, it grabs the headlines and rightly so. Schools are supposed to be places of safety and security. But when instances of school crime decrease, media attention seems to do the same.

That could be why you don’t know that a government report last month on school crime indicated that 3.9 percent of U.S. students ages 12 through 18 in school year 2008-09 reported being the victim of any crime at school. That figure represents a drop from the 9.5 percent school victimization rate in 1995 and the 4.3 percent rate in 2005.

As defined in the report, victimization at school includes “incidents that occurred inside the school building, on school property, on the school bus, or on the way to or from school.” The term “any crime” can range from rape and robbery to simple assault and pickpocketing.

Among the report’s findings:

- “The percentage of public school students who reported being victims of any crime (4.1 percent) was higher than that of private school students (1.8 percent).”
- About 2.8 percent of students across the nation “reported being victims of theft, 1.4 percent reported a violent victimization, and 0.3 percent reported a serious violent victimization.”
- “A larger percentage of males were victims of any crime at school (4.6 percent) than were females (3.2 percent).”
- “A higher percentage of students in grade 9 reported theft victimization (4.9 percent) than did students in grades 7 or 8 (2.1 percent and 2.0 percent, respectively).”

Issued by the National Center for Education Statistics, the report *Student Victimization in U.S. Schools* is available at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2012314>.

Return service requested

CAPE notes

★ How well do school districts stack up in offering parents school choice? The Brown Center on Education Policy at the Brookings Institution has come up with a measure, the **Education Choice and Competition Index (ECCI)**, that “scores large school districts based on thirteen categories of policy and practice.” The measure includes a count of certain students attending religious and independent schools.

ECCI’s purpose is “to create public awareness of the differences among districts in their support of school choice, provide a framework for efforts to improve choice and competition, and recognize leaders among school districts in the design and implementation of choice and competition systems.”

One of the 13 categories used to score school districts is the percentage of students enrolled in alternative schools, a count that includes students in charter schools, magnet schools, affordable private schools, as well as students attending any private school through tuition scholarships or vouchers. According to the scoring guidelines, affordable private schools are identified using “private school data from the 2007-2008 Private School Survey and an expected family contribution based on median income within each district. Expected family contributions were based on the 2008 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study.”

The report makes a clear case for increasing the number of quality educational options for students: “Expanding school

choice and competition is desirable not only because parents want to exercise choice and schools respond to competitive pressure, although those are compelling reasons. It also provides an alternative to top-down efforts to improve schools through regulation.”

★ Philanthropist Theodore J. Forstmann, co-founder and co-chair of the Children’s Scholarship Fund, died November 20 of brain cancer. He was 71.

In June of 1998, Forstmann and Walmart director John T. Walton announced plans to establish a \$200 million fund to help poor children in cities across the country attend private schools. The project was the nation’s largest privately funded K-12 scholarship program. The two founders contributed \$100 million of their own money to the fund and sought another \$100 million in matching contributions from local communities. Soon after the program’s launch, parents of over 1.25 million students applied for some 40,000 scholarships.

At the program’s announcement in New York City, Forstmann said, “John and I and all our partners across the country are thrilled to be helping out children who have so far been deprived of equal opportunity in education. We have found that there is a huge demand for access to quality education, and we hope that our support will help encourage a more competitive educational environment to benefit all of America’s children.”

At a memorial mass for Forstmann November 29 at St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York, Harvard professor and *Newsweek* columnist Niall Ferguson, called Forstmann “the most American of Americans,”—“financier, fun lover, philanthropist,” the “quintessential doer,” and also “a thinker.”

Regarding Forstmann’s involvement in the scholarship fund, Ferguson said: “With Ronald Reagan, he also passionately believed that enlarging the government was not the answer to the problem; often, it was the problem. That was why he wanted to see more disadvantaged kids going to private schools. His ideal was social mobility, not state-mandated equality. In this, as in so many ways, Ted was very wise.”

Forstmann himself once summed up his commitment to school choice this way: “Every child, regardless of their parents’ income, should have access to a quality education—an education that will not only prepare them for successful private lives, but help them to build cohesive communities and a strong democracy. We believe if you give parents a choice, you will give their children a chance.”

Since its start, the scholarship fund has distributed almost \$500 million to allow nearly 123,000 disadvantaged children to attend religious and independent schools.

Christy Walton, current co-chair of CSF, said of Forstmann, “He was a powerful force for good for children who got a ‘raw deal’ in life, as he put it, and he will be greatly missed.”