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Where stories lead to action.



**Hey Shawnta! NAEP Scores
Are a Disaster. How Do We
Improve Students' Academic
Outcomes?**

[*BY SHAWN TA S. BARNES*](#)

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The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is frequently called the Nation’s Report Card. In 2022—from January to March—NAEP was given to a representative section of 4th and 8th graders in all 50 states, D.C., Bureau of Indian Education schools, Department of Defense schools, and Puerto Rico. Students in both public and private schools participated in the assessment.

The last time NAEP was given was in 2019—before the pandemic occurred. The pandemic forced many school buildings to close for an extended period, with students learning remotely.

It is no surprise that the 2022 NAEP scores are alarming.

- Every state saw **declines** on at least one exam.
- Black fourth- and eighth-grade students scored the lowest overall in comparison to all other racial groups for reading and math.
- Overall, the greatest academic drops were in math.
- Reading saw some decline, but not as bad as math.

U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona called the results “appalling and unacceptable.” But words like “appalling and unacceptable” have been bandied about every time assessment results have been released since the pandemic began.

At some point, the narrative must shift from complaining about how bad it is to tangible actions to improve academic outcomes.

Some states are taking action.

- The Indiana Department of Education plans to use a **\$111 million literacy grant** to train teachers in the science of reading and phonics-based literacy instruction. IDOE also aims to increase the number of literacy instructional coaches in elementary schools.

- Alaska’s Department of Education and Early Development recently **announced a literacy grant** to help districts purchase literacy curriculum that aligns with the science of reading. As we know from journalism like **Emily Hanford’s** new podcast, **Sold A Story**, too many children aren’t getting research-based curriculum that helps them crack the code of written English.
- The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) is targeting both literacy and math through a **grant where some schools were able to obtain both math and literacy curricula**. Additionally, CDE provided a list of approved curricula selected schools had to choose from.

State-level action should only be one component of the response. District-level, school-level, and classroom-level actions matter as well.

Parents need to reach out to see what actions their children’s schools are taking. And ask what specific recommendations the schools have for parents to support academic growth at home. For guidance on how parents can better connect with their children’s teachers, check out **this guide** from Learning Heroes.

Parents, from the survey data I've seen, it looks like you're holding it together. Stay the course—now is not the time to panic—it's time to push!

Shawnta