

National test scores show Texas students still lag in math and reading

By Jaden Edison | THE TEXAS TRIBUNE



(EDUCATION) - Texas' fourth- and eighth-grade students' overall reading and math scores dropped in 2024, though Texas children learning English and Black fourth-graders ranked near the top of the country in some of those areas, according to national test results released on Wednesday.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress, or NAEP, tests a sample of fourth- and eighth-grade public school students every two years, measuring how children across different states perform in core subjects. Nearly 240,000 students took the exam nationwide, with Texas students making up roughly 5% of the test takers.

Unlike the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness, better known as the STAAR test, the NAEP exam — often referred to as the Nation's Report Card — does not track student progress on subject standards set by the Texas State Board of Education.

A decline in math scores continued for many Texas students who took the NAEP test last year. Texas' lower-income students scored worse than their wealthier peers in reading and math. The state's Black and Hispanic students also lagged behind white students.

Texas' overall eighth-grade math scores plummeted by 4 points, continuing a decline dating back to 2011, according to a Texas Tribune data analysis. Math scores nationwide have also collapsed over a similar period. Texas' fourth-grade math scores, on the other hand, climbed by 2 points and rose six spots in national rankings.

In reading, fourth-grade students in Texas experienced a 2-point drop in scores compared to 2022, while eighth-grade reading scores decreased by 3 points. No state in the country saw gains on the reading exam in either grade compared to the 2022 results, according to the exam's governing board.

"These results highlight the continued challenges our students face in literacy and numeracy and should sound the alarm for school leaders and policymakers alike," Gabe Grantham, an education policy adviser for Texas 2036, said in a statement. "While we are encouraged by slight gains in fourth-grade math, the overall picture is clear — Texas students need more support from both schools and the state to build strong reading and math foundations."

The nationwide test results have raised significant worries among public education advocates across the country about the profound difficulty in helping students rebound from learning loss caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Still, the picture wasn't completely bleak in Texas.

Texas students learning English ranked among the top five in the nation in fourth- and eighth-grade reading and math, respectively, compared to their peers, according to a snapshot of data from the Texas Education Agency.

In addition, Black fourth graders in Texas led the way in math scores when compared to other Black students in the same grade across the country. Asian students who took the fourth-grade math exam ranked second among their counterparts, as did low-income fourth-grade students.

Merit vs DEI

By April Ryan | NNPA NEWSWIRE

(NNPA) - "He [President Trump] is sanctioning...employment discrimination," says Marc Morial the President and CEO of the National Urban League. Morial said he has talked to McDonald's executives who recently dropped their DEI efforts as well as Walmart and he stepped off an unofficial board of Facebook as they moved to end DEI without consulting with that board. Morial made these statements on the Black Press USA show Make it Plain. Make it Plain He spoke on the cancellation of diversity equity and inclusion through a new executive order signed in the first days of this new Trump administration.

The Trump EO focuses on the word "merit" as the new hiring protocol. The definition of merit the administration is adhering to is people selected based on their ability. For the companies and federal agencies embracing the executive order Morial expressed "we have to judge you on your results." According to the Urban League stats the current American workforce of those under the age of 40 is made up of more women than it is men. Also, the workforce under the age of 40 is half white and the other half is made up of nonwhite workers. "When you start excluding people from these businesses who will do the work," questioned the head of the rights group.

The National Urban League this week led a roundtable discussion with other heads of civil rights groups and leaders from other racially diverse communities on the challenge of DEI in governmental departments and private sector businesses. The leaders particularly Morial were anticipating the cancellation of DEI in the federal government and private sector business is not a surprise as "Project 2025 telegraphed all these things would happen." Morial has talked to companies who have publicly



Businesspeople, teamwork and fist of hands in circle for collaboration, synergy and motivation of global equality from above (Photo By Jacob Wackerhausen)

said they are walking away from DEI. "Some are trying to have it both ways... as some have stepped away [from DEI] completely. "When asked if the coalition of leaders would meet with President Trump, Morial emphasized substance over a photo op saying, "we are not opposed to a meeting with the president, but it has got to be real." Meanwhile, when it comes to Black buying power, Morial told Black Press USA Thursday that the black buying power in this nation is close to "\$2 trillion" and combined with other minority groups it is \$5 trillion" the Urban League also tallied the most purchased item by Black consumers in this country, GRITS.

Trump Administration Rescinds Federal Funding Freeze After Court Ruling and Backlash



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(NNPA) - President Donald Trump's administration on Wednesday rescinded a Project 2025-inspired order that had abruptly frozen most federal grants and loans, a sweeping directive that threw social service programs like Head Start, student loans, and Medicaid into disarray. The initial order, issued earlier in the week, sparked widespread confusion and disruption, prompting a swift legal challenge. On Tuesday evening, a federal judge temporarily blocked the freeze, and by Wednesday, the White House pulled back the directive altogether. The order's reversal came after mounting pressure from lawmakers, advocacy groups, and affected organizations. The White House insisted the move was intended to "end any confusion" following the court's injunction, but critics called it a political miscalculation. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said the administration backed down only because of public outcry. "Americans fought back, and Donald Trump backed off," Schumer said in a statement. "Though the Trump administration failed in this tactic, it's no secret that they will try to find another, and when they do, it will again be Senate Democrats there to call it out, fight back, and defend American families."

However, the administration made clear that its broader policies on federal funding remain intact. White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt wrote on X that this was "NOT a rescission of the federal funding freeze," but rather a rollback of the memo itself to "end any confusion" created by the court's ruling. "The President's executive orders on federal funding remain in full force and effect and will be rigorously implemented," she added. The initial freeze caused immediate uncertainty, particularly in Washington, D.C., and Republican-leaning states heavily reliant on federal funds. Throughout Tuesday, the White House attempted to clarify exemptions—such as Medicaid—but the damage had already been done. Reports surfaced by people and organizations unable to access critical federal resources, heightening concerns about the real-world impact of the freeze.

The legal challenge that led to the order's reversal was filed by Democracy Forward, a progressive nonprofit, which argued that the directive was

an unconstitutional overreach that endangered millions of Americans. "While we hope this will enable millions of people in communities across the country to breathe a sigh of relief, we condemn the Trump-Vance administration's harmful and callous approach of unleashing chaos and harm on the American people," said Skye Perryman, the organization's CEO. "Our team will continue to bring swift legal actions to protect the American people and will use the legal process to ensure that federal funding is restored." The uncertainty caused by the administration's actions drew sharp criticism from organizations that rely on federal assistance. Melicia Whitt-Glover, executive director of the Council on Black Health, warned that the confusion threatens health programs serving historically marginalized communities. "While the Council on Black Health is not fully reliant on federal funding, many of our partners are, and they now face disruptions that threaten their ability to continue their vital work. This impacts the communities we serve and exacerbates health inequities," she said.

The administration's actions have drawn scrutiny given the financial reliance of Republican-leaning states on federal aid. A MoneyGeek analysis found that seven of the 10 states most dependent on federal funding lean Republican, receiving an average of \$1.24 for every dollar contributed, while blue states receive \$1.14. New Mexico, a Democratic-leaning state, saw the highest return on federal spending at \$3.42 per dollar contributed, while Delaware had the lowest at \$0.46. Public Citizen, a government watchdog group, called the original freeze an unnecessary crisis that harmed vulnerable Americans. "The incompetence and cruelty of this order caused nationwide confusion and anxiety, as across the country regular Americans spoke out about the human impacts—the loss of jobs, essential services, and harms to children among many other vulnerable populations," said Lisa Gilbert, co-president of the organization. "The White House overplayed their hand as they levied this Project 2025-inspired order and made it clear that they want to sow chaos and gut programs that help families. We will keep up the fight to make sure that does not happen."