

# NM math, reading scores low

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BY SHELBY PEREA / JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

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Students take a break in a fourth grade classroom at Columbus Elementary School in 2017. New Mexico's test scores in math and reading remain below the national average. (Rodrigo Abd/Associated Press)

**ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. —** New Mexico remains behind national proficiency rates in math and reading based on the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

But the state Public Education Department says there has been some progress, noting students with disabilities and English language learners in the fourth grade showed improvements in the otherwise stagnant report.

Known as the “Nation’s Report Card,” the data is based on a sampling of fourth and eighth graders’ testing results.

New Mexico’s 2019 reading scores show that 24% of fourth graders are proficient or above, which isn’t significantly different from 2017’s 25%.

“In 2019, the average score of fourth grade students in New Mexico was 208. This was lower than the average score of 219 for students in the nation,” New Mexico’s NAEP results state.

A similar amount – 23% – of eighth graders were proficient or above in reading. In 2017, about 24% were at this level.

The average score for eighth-grade students in New Mexico was 252, compared with the average nationwide score of 262.

National reading scores were over 10 percentage points higher in both grade levels: 35% of fourth graders were at or above proficiency in reading and 34% of eighth graders were at or above reading proficiency, according to the 2019 report.

For math, 29% of fourth graders in the state were at or above proficient with 21% of eighth graders performing at that level.

The average score of fourth grade students in New Mexico was nine points lower than the nationwide average. And the state’s eighth graders were 12 points lower than the nationwide average.

National math averages tower over New Mexican’s scores with 41% of fourth graders proficient or above in math and 34% of eighth graders at or above proficiency.

The PED narrowed in on fourth graders’ average scores for English language learners and students with disabilities, emphasizing gains in these areas.

For fourth grade students learning English, average math scores increased by 12 points and average reading scores increased by 17 points, compared to 2017.

Also for fourth grade students with disabilities, average reading scores increased by five points compared to 2017, according to PED.

“We know New Mexico educators are working hard for our students,” PED Secretary-designate Ryan Stewart wrote in a statement. “We have made unprecedented investments in our educators and in our academic programs. These investments are making a difference that will accelerate students’ academic achievement and social and emotional well-being.”

And statewide union National Education Association-New Mexico rallied behind the scores.

“With 68 percent of our state’s students being in poverty, compared to the national average of 51 percent, that is a 17 percent gap. Our students deserve praise and additional support for rising above their circumstances by being only

12 and 11 percent behind the national proficiency average scores,” Charles Goodmacher, NEA-NM spokesman, wrote in an email, referencing fourth grade scores.

PED said that earlier this year about 11,000 of fourth and eighth graders in New Mexico participated in the NAEP assessment, a test that is administered every two years.

NAEP is a congressionally-mandated project administered by the National Center for Education Statistics.