

# FairTest

## National Center for Fair & Open Testing

### INDEPENDENT TEST RESULTS SHOW NCLB FAILS

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was signed into law in 2002, the latest version of the long-standing Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Its provisions, such as testing grades 3-8 annually in reading and math and punitive sanctions, took effect over the next several years. The law is eight years overdue for reauthorization by Congress. In 2015, both the House and Senate approved reauthorization bills and as of October 2015 are working on a compromise.

NCLB provided that the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) should be the primary means for evaluating the success of NCLB. We can also consider evidence such as scores on the SAT and ACT college admissions exams and on the international PISA exams.

Here are key findings, comparing the rate of progress pre- and post NCLB for NAEP and recent trends on SAT and ACT tests:

- The rate of progress in math at grades 4 and 8 was faster in the decade before NCLB took effect than since, overall and for most groups. That includes Blacks, English Language Learners (ELLs), students with disabilities, and Hispanics at grade 4. There has been not gain at grade 4 since 2007. Grade 8 rose 15 points from 92-03, but only 5 points since.
- Reading scores have risen very slowly since about 1990.
- The closing of score gaps slowed since 2007 for most groups. Gaps widened for students with disabilities. Some closing in 2015 was due to greater declines in white scores.
- Score gains slowed after NCLB for English language learners, while score gaps increased between ELLs and non-ELLs.
- In three of four grades/tests, scores for students with disabilities grew faster prior to NCLB than under NCLB. Under NCLB, gaps with whites have generally widened.
- Scores for high school students have stagnated. NAEP scores were highest for blacks, and gaps the narrowest, in 1988. Hispanic scores and gaps have stagnated since NCLB.
- The slowing of progress is seen in average scores and in percentage of students attaining the “proficient” level.
- SAT scores declined from 2006 to 2015 for all demographic groups except Asians.
- ACT scores have been flat since 2010 for all demographic groups.
- PISA scores have declined from 2002 to 2012.

NCLB's failure even to raise scores on other standardized exams should be considered in light of widespread evidence of curriculum narrowing and extensive teaching to the test. Other serious problems, such as pushing low-scorers out of school and widespread cheating scandals, are also part of the steep price paid for NCLB's testing fixation.

Below, we present the evidence in detail.

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## NAEP Score Changes 1992-2003-2007-2013-2015

[http://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading\\_math\\_2013/#/gains-by-group](http://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_2013/#/gains-by-group)

NAEP “Main” reports scores in reading and math every two years, including national and state-level scores, as well as by demographic groups.

### ***Overall:***

Math results show an overall slowdown in growth under NCLB, while reading saw very modest increase in the rate of progress.

Gr 4 math: from 92 to 03 scores rose 18 points, while from 03 to 15 they rose 5 points, with no gain from 07-15, the period in which NCLB and then RTTT/waivers have been entrenched. Scores declined two points from 2013-15.

Gr 8 math: rose 18 points from 92 to 03, then 12 points from 03-13, though from 07-13 the gain was 4 points - again, indicator of a slowdown in rate of progress. Scores declined 3 points from 2013-15.

Gr 4 reading: rose 1 point from 92-03, then 4 points from 03-13. Scores rose 1 point from 2013-15.

Gr 8 reading: 92-03 saw a 3-point gain, then a 5-point gain from 03-13. Scores dropped 3 points from 201-15.

### ***Comparisons among White, Black and Hispanic Test-takers:***

Here are scores to compare Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics plus score gap changes with Whites in a table; size of gaps with whites are in parentheses, and size of the group’s score change since previous test listed in the chart is in brackets; with some notes especially looking back to 05, 07.

<b>Math grade 4</b>	White	Black	Hispanic	Disability
1992	227	193 (34)	202 (25)	204 (23) {1996}
2003	243	216 (27) [23]	222 (21) [20]	214 (29) [10]
2007	248	222 (26) [6]	227 (21) [5]	220 (28) [8]
2013	250	224 (26) [2]	231 (19) [4]	218 (32) [-2]
2015	248	224 (24) [0]	230 (18) [-1]	218 (30) [0]

Black: No gap closure since 03; black gain was 23 points pre-NCLB and 8 points under NCLB.

Hispanic: Gap closed 2 points since 03; gain was 20 points pre-NCLB and 9 points under NCLB.

Disability: The gap with whites has widened, while since 2007 scores have declined 2 points.

<b>Math grade 8</b>	White	Black	Hispanic	Disability
1992	277	237(40)	249 (28)	231 (46){1996}
2003	288	252 (36) [15]	259 (29) [10]	242 (46) [11]

2007	291	260 (32) [8]	265 (26) [6]	246 (45) [4]
2013	294	263 (31) [3]	272 (22) [7]	249 (45) [3]
2015	292	260 (32) [-3]	270 (22) [-2]	247 (45) [-2]

Black: Gap has closed only one point since 2007; gains were 15 points pre-NCLB and 11 points under NCLB.

Hispanic: Gaps closed 1 point pre-NCLB and 7 points under NCLB; gains were 10 points pre-NCLB and 13 points under NCLB.

Disability: Rate of gain slowed under NCLB, gap did not close. A look in further detail shows students with disabilities scored 249 in both 2009 and 2013, indicating zero gain during the ‘waiver’ period.

<b>Reading grade 4</b>	White	Black	Hispanic	Disability
1992	224	192 (32)	197 (27)	176 (48) {1998}
2003	229	198 (31) [6]	200 (29) [3]	185 (44) [9]
2007	231	203 (27) [5]	205 (26) [5]	191 (40) [6]
2013	232	206 (26) [3]	207 (25) [2]	184 (48) [-7]
2015	232	206 (26) [0]	208 (24) [1]	187 (45) [+3]

Black: Closure was 1 point pre-NCLB and 5 points under NCLB; gains were 6 points pre NCLB and 8 points post NCLB, 3 since 2007.

Hispanic: Closed 2 points pre-NCLB and 4 points under NCLB, but 07 to 13 a 1-point closure; gains were 3 points pre-NCLB and 7 points under NCLB, but 2 from 07-13.

Disability: Scores declined markedly under NCLB after an initial rise so the 2013 scores are back to 2003 levels (just at start of NCLB). Gap is back to 1992 level.

<b>Reading grade 8</b>	White	Black	Hispanic	Disability
1992	267	237 (30)	241 (26)	224 (43) {1998}
2003	272	244 (28) [7]	245 (27) [4]	225 (47) [1]
2007	272	245 (27) [1]	247 (25) [2]	227 (45) [2]
2013	276	250 (26) [5]	256 (20) [9]	232 (44) [5]
2015	274	248 (26) [-2]	253 (21) [-3]	230 (44) [-2]

Black: Gap narrowed 2 points pre-NCLB and 6 points under NCLB; 7 point gain pre-NCLB and 6-point gain under NCLB, but note data shows 1 point improvement from 2011 to 2013.

Hispanic: Gap widened 1 point pre-NCLB, narrowed 7 points under NCLB. Gains were 4 points pre-NCLB, 11 points under NCLB, with largest gain 07-13.

Disability: Unlike grade 4 or both grades in math, scores rose more under NCLB while gap closed very slightly. Scores went up 1 point in 2009 and 2011, indicated only very small gains in later NCLB period.

## NAEP Long Term Trend Scores For 17-Year Olds

Scores and gaps are largely stagnant overall for 17-year olds on the long-term NAEP. Long-term trend is a separate test from NAEP main. It has scores back to 1971 in reading. The most recent report covers the 2012 assessment administration.

### *Reading:*

- Black students high score was in 1988 (274), 5 points higher than in 2012 (269). 1988 saw the narrowest score gap with Whites (20 points), vs 26 points in 2012.
- Hispanics' high score was in 1990 (275), 1 point higher than in 2012 (274). The gap was 22 points in 1990, the narrowest until it was 21 points in 2012.

### *Math:*

- Blacks' highest score was 289 in 1990, compared with 288 in 2012. The gap was 21 points in 1990 compared with 26 points in 2012.
- Hispanics' highest score was 294 in 2012, but scores have been essentially stagnant since reaching 292 in 1992. The gap was 21 points in 1992 and 19 points in 2004 and 2012, again showing stagnation.

## English Language Learner (ELL) NAEP Main Results 1998 Reading/1996 Math through 2015\*

[http://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading\\_math\\_2013/#/gains-by-group](http://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_2013/#/gains-by-group)

Overall, we see stronger gains for ELLs and greater gap closings with those who are not ELLs prior to NCLB starting to take effect.

Note: as of Oct 28, 2015, the gap calculating charts on the NAEP website did not function.

### *Math*

#### Grade 4

1996 - 2003 +13; gap closed 1

2003 - 2013 +5; gap widened 2

No ELL gain 2011-13

2013-15 -1; gap closed by one point due to greater score decline by whites

#### Grade 8

1996- 2003 + 16; gap closed 9 points

2003 - 2013 +4; gap widened 4 points

2013-15 no change; gap closed 2 points due to greater decline by whites

**Reading**

Grade 4

1998 – 2003 +12; gap closed 8 points

2003 – 2013 +1; gap widened by 4, erasing half the earlier gain

2015 +2; gap closed two points as white scores did not change

Grade 8

1998 – 2003 + 6; gap closed 3 points

2003 – 2013 +3; gap widened 2 points

2015 -2; no gap change

**ELL Grade 12 Long Term Trend, 2004 to 2012 (most recent long-term trend)**

Reading fell 7 points from 2004 to 2012

Math scores fell 9 points 2004-12.

\* The earliest dates for ELL trends in NAEP main are 1996 in math and 1998 in Reading.

**2014 COLLEGE-BOUND SENIORS SAT SCORES -- with score changes from 2006\***

	<b>READING</b>	<b>MATH</b>	<b>WRITING</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>ALL TEST-TAKERS</b>	<b>497 (- 6)</b>	<b>513 (- 5)</b>	<b>487 (- 10)</b>	<b>1497 (-21)</b>
Female	495 (- 7)	499 (- 3)	492 (-10)	1486 (- 20)
Male	499 (- 6)	530 (- 6)	481 (- 10)	1510 (- 22)
Asian, Asian Amer. or Pacific Islander	523 (+13)	598 (+20)	530 (+18)	1656 (+51)
White	529 (+ 2)	534 (- 2)	513 (- 6)	1576 (- 6)
African American or Black	431 (- 3)	429 ( 0)	418 (- 10)	1278 (- 13)
Amer. Indian or Alaskan Native	483 (- 4)	484 (- 10)	461 (- 13)	1428 (- 27)
Mexican or Mexican American	450 (- 4)	461 (- 4)	443 (- 9)	1354 (- 17)
Puerto Rican	456 (- 3)	450 (- 6)	443 (- 5)	1349 (- 14)
Other Hispanic or Latino	451 (- 7)	459 (- 4)	443 (- 7)	1353 (- 18)

\* High school graduates in the class of 2006 were the first to take the SAT “Writing” Test. The “No Child Left Behind” mandate to test every child in grades 3-8 and at least once in high school went into effect in the 2005-2006 academic year.

**2014 COLLEGE-BOUND SENIORS SAT SCORES BY FAMILY INCOME**

	<b>READING</b>	<b>MATH</b>	<b>WRITING</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
\$ 0 - \$20,000	436	459	429	1324
\$20,000 - \$40,000	467	481	455	1403
\$40,000 - \$60,000	489	500	474	1463
\$60,000 - \$80,000	504	512	487	1503
\$80,000 - \$100,000	516	526	501	1543
\$100,000 - \$120,000	527	539	513	1579
\$120,000 - \$140,000	531	542	518	1591
\$140,000 - \$160,000	539	552	527	1618
\$160,000 - \$200,000	544	558	534	1636
More than \$200,000	569	588	565	1722

Calculated by FairTest from: College Board, *College-Bound Seniors 2014: Total Group Profile Report* and *College-Bound Seniors 2006: Total Group Profile Report*

**2014 COLLEGE-BOUND SENIORS AVERAGE ACT SCORES**

1,845,787 million test takers

	<b>COMPOSITE SCORE</b>	<b>FIVE-YEAR SCORE TREND</b> (2010 – 2014)
<b>ALL TEST-TAKERS</b>	<b>21.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>
African-American	17.0	+ 0.1
American Indian	18.0	- 1.0
Asian	23.5	+ 0.1
Hispanic	18.8	+ 0.2
White	22.3	0.0
Female	20.9	0.0
Male	21.1	- 0.1

Source: ACT, *The Condition of College & Career Readiness 2014*

## **Comparative Rates of Improvement and Achievement Gaps for Black and Hispanic Students vs. White Students on NAEP ‘Proficient’ Standard Before and After NCLB**

If one looks at the NAEP “Proficient” scores before NCLB (1992 -2002)and during NCLB (2002- 2013), the percent “Proficient” went up at a faster rate for blacks and Hispanics in math and for blacks in reading before NCLB than during it, while it went up a little faster for Hispanics in reading in the NCLB period.

The 4th and 8th grade average percent of black students who scored “Proficient” in reading went up at a rate more than two times as fast - 56% before NCLB [from 9% to 14%, 1992-2002] vs. only 22% during NCLB [from 14% to 17%, 2002-2013]. The same comparison in math shows that the percent of black students “Proficient” in math increased at a rate of 350% before NCLB [from 2% to 9%] vs. only 89% during NCLB [from 9% to 17%.]

The 4th and 8th grade average percent of Hispanic students who scored “Proficient” in reading went up at a rate of 23% before NCLB [from 13% to 16%] compared to a slightly higher rate of 31% during NCLB [from 16% to 21%]. However, the same comparison in math shows that the percent of Hispanic students “Proficient” in math increased at a rate almost two times higher before NCLB – 133% - [from 6% to 14%] vs. only 71% during NCLB [from 14% to 24%].

The absolute gap between the percent of whites and blacks who were “Proficient” and the gap between the percent of whites and Hispanics who were “Proficient” stayed almost exactly the same in reading and math in the pre-NCLB period and during NCLB. That is, the “gap” did not shrink during NCLB compared to what it had been before: as the percentage of black and Hispanic students who became “Proficient” increased, so did the percentage of white students who were “Proficient.”

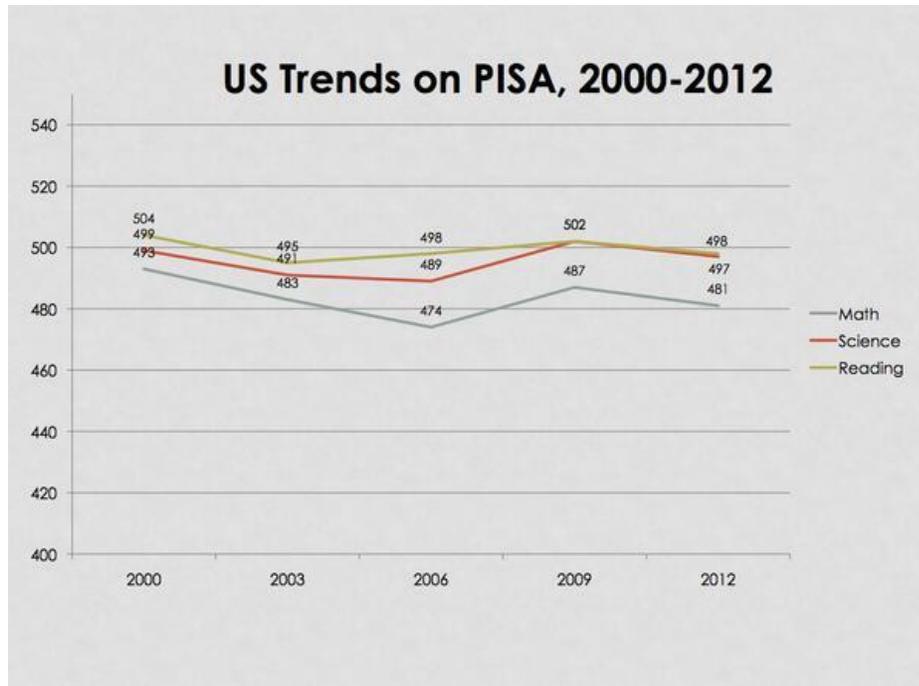
Thus, the gap between the 4th and 8th grade average percent of white students who were “Proficient” in reading vs. black students “Proficient” in reading was 27% in 2002 before NCLB [41% white vs. 14% black] and 28% in 2013 during NCLB [45% white vs. 17% black]. The same comparison in math shows that the gap between white and black students was 31% in 2003 before NCLB [40% white vs. 9% black] and 32% in 2013 during NCLB. So, for black students, the gap not only failed to improve but increased marginally in reading and math during NCLB.

For Hispanics, the gaps remained essentially the same before and after NCLB, decreasing marginally during NCLB. The gap between the 4th and 8th grade average percent of white students who were “Proficient” in reading vs. Hispanic students “Proficient” in reading was 25% in 2002 [41% white vs. 16% Hispanic] and 24% in 2013 [45% white vs. 21% Hispanic]. The same comparison in math shows that the gap between white and Hispanic students was 26% in 2003 [40% white vs. 14% Hispanic] and 25% in 2013 [49% white vs. 25% Hispanic.]

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## PISA Results Show Declines in Reading, Math and Science from 2002-2012

Researcher Linda Darling-Hammond circulated a chart showing the decline of scores on the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) exams, given periodically to students in dozens of nations.



Source: <http://dianeravitch.net/2015/03/04/a-stunning-graphic-on-the-failure-of-test-based-accountability/>