

Betsy DeVos laments lack of progress seen in US students (Update)

April 10 2018, by Maria Danilova

The results of the latest Nation's Report Card are in and the news isn't good.

Fourth-graders made no improvements in math or reading, while eighth-graders' scores were flat in math and only slightly improved in reading, according to results released Tuesday on the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

Overall, only roughly a third of American eighth-graders are proficient in reading and math along with about 40 percent of fourth-graders.

The figures are in line with recent trends. Students made big gains in the 1990s and early 2000s, but there have been no major improvements since then.

The results show that racial disparities persist. African-American students were out-performed by their white peers at both grade levels.

Education Secretary Betsy DeVos says the country needs to do better for its students, citing the stagnating reading and math scores.

"More alarmingly, the gap between the highest and lowest performing students is widening," DeVos added.

She singled out Florida's results for praise. Fourth-graders there improved in math, and eighth-graders had gains in both math and

reading.

DeVos said Florida has a strong publicly funded charter and private school program—a strong priority for the Trump administration.

"Florida's results show what is possible when we focus on individual students," DeVos said.

In eighth grade, the average U.S. reading score was 267 out of 500, 1 point higher than in 2015, but 7 points higher than when the reading test was first administered in 1992. For math, the average score was 283, similar to two years before.

Peggy Carr, associate commissioner at the National Center for Education Statistics, said the increase for eighth-grade reading was due to improvement among higher-performing students. Lower-performing students had similar results in 2017 as in 2015.

The picture was different for fourth-graders. Low-performing students did worse in math and reading, while higher-performing students stayed at the same level.

"There is still much work to be done to close achievement gaps and ensure that our young people are ready for success in college, careers and life," said Carissa Miller, executive director of the Council of Chief State School Officers. "It is clear we as a country must do better by all of our students, especially our lowest-performing kids."

The results were the first since the test was changed from paper to computer-based.

States that saw improvements in eighth-grade reading included California, Florida, Georgia, Indiana and Washington. Meanwhile,

Alaska, Arizona, Delaware, Louisiana, among others, saw lower results for fourth-grade math.

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