

The Nation's Report Card Results

Presenting L.A. Unified's Disaggregated Results and Survey Responses from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

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L.A. Unified's recently released scores from the 2022 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tell the story of a district that avoided steep academic declines during the COVID-19 pandemic and even saw some improvement. Consequently, District leaders would like to know what supports or interventions may be working to improve academic achievement so that they can be continued. Unfortunately, the NAEP assessment data alone cannot answer that question.

However, disaggregating the data can show how different groups of students scored on the tests and reveal where gains were highest. In reading, we find Black students, white students, and students with disabilities outpaced the District's average growth, and, in math, Black and Asian/Pacific Islander students experienced the greatest gains. To contextualize this achievement, we analyze responses on the NAEP student experience survey, which showed little difference between students in L.A. Unified and other large cities on technology access but differences within the District by subject for attitudes towards learning and access to teacher support.

Reading: Black students, white students, and students with disabilities outpaced the district average growth.

The students of L.A. Unified saw positive gains in reading at both grade levels. In 4th grade, average reading scores marginally increased (+2 points) since 2019, while in 8th grade average reading scores increased more

than any district in the nation (+9 points). Disaggregating NAEP reading scores reveals that since 2019:

- Average scores for Black students, white students, and students with disabilities increased far more than the District average in 4th and still more in 8th grade.

Table 1a. L.A. Unified NAEP Reading Scores, Grade 4

Student Group	2019 Score	2022 Score	Change
All students	204.9	207.1	+2 ▲
Black	189.2	202.1	+13 ▲
Latino/a/x ^a	201.3	198.9	-2 ▼
White	225.3	240.6	+15 ▲
Asian/Pacific Islander	238.4	241	+3 ▲
Students with Disabilities	158	171.4	+13 ▲
NSLP Eligible ^b	200.1	197.9	-2 ▼
English Learners	170.7	173.1	+2 ▲

Table 1b. L.A. Unified NAEP Reading Scores, Grade 8

Student Group	2019 Score	2022 Score	Change
All students	247.9	257.3	+9 ▲
Black	235.8	253.3	+18 ▲
Latino/a/x*	243.7	250	+6 ▲
White	272.1	284.2	+12 ▲
Asian/Pacific Islander	274.2	277.8	+4 ▲
Students with Disabilities	209.1	223	+14 ▲
NSLP Eligible	244.1	251.8	+8 ▲
English Learners	202.5	209.7	+7 ▲

^a While NAEP uses the term "Hispanic," we use the term "Latino/a/x" to be aligned with District practices.

^b National School Lunch Program (NSLP): Federal meal program

- Latino/a/x students' average reading scores decreased in 4th grade (-2 points), making them the only racial/ethnic group in L.A. Unified that saw a decline in reading scores at either grade level. However, Latino/a/x students did see growth in 8th grade reading (+6 points).
- Reading gains for students in the other two programs (English language development and National Student Lunch Program (NSLP)) were about the same as the District average, except for NSLP-eligible 4th graders, who saw a small decline in reading scores (-2 points).

Importantly, though the boost in reading scores for Black students at both grade levels is good news, **a 30-40-point difference between white and Black students remains**, depending on the grade level. In 4th grade, the gap between white and Black student reading scores increased slightly (2 points).

Math: Most notable gains from Black students and Asian/Pacific Islander (API) students.

The District also experienced success in mathematics achievement. In 4th grade, average math scores declined (-4 points), but less than the national or large city average, while in 8th grade average math scores marginally increased (+2 points).

- The performance of Black and white students in 4th grade mathematics, whose scores increased on average by 8 and 5 points, respectively, was a key factor in L.A. Unified's small decline overall in mathematics scores relative to other large districts.
- Among 8th graders, API students saw the largest increase with an improvement of 8 points, while every other racial/ethnic group experienced a decline of 1-2 points.

Table 2a. L.A. Unified NAEP Math Scores, Grade 4

Student Group	2019 Score	2022 Score	Change
All students	223.6	219.9	-4 ▼
Black	205.7	213.3	+8 ▲
Latino/a/x	220.5	212.8	-8 ▼
White	241.7	246.4	+5 ▲
Asian/Pacific Islander	N/A ^a	253.8	N/A
Students with Disabilities	193.6	193.5	0
NSLP Eligible	219.8	212.1	-8 ▼
English Learners	199.6	196.4	-3 ▼

^a The Asian/Pacific Islander subgroup did not meet the reporting criteria for 4th graders and thus is not reported.

Table 2b. L.A. Unified NAEP Math Scores, Grade 8

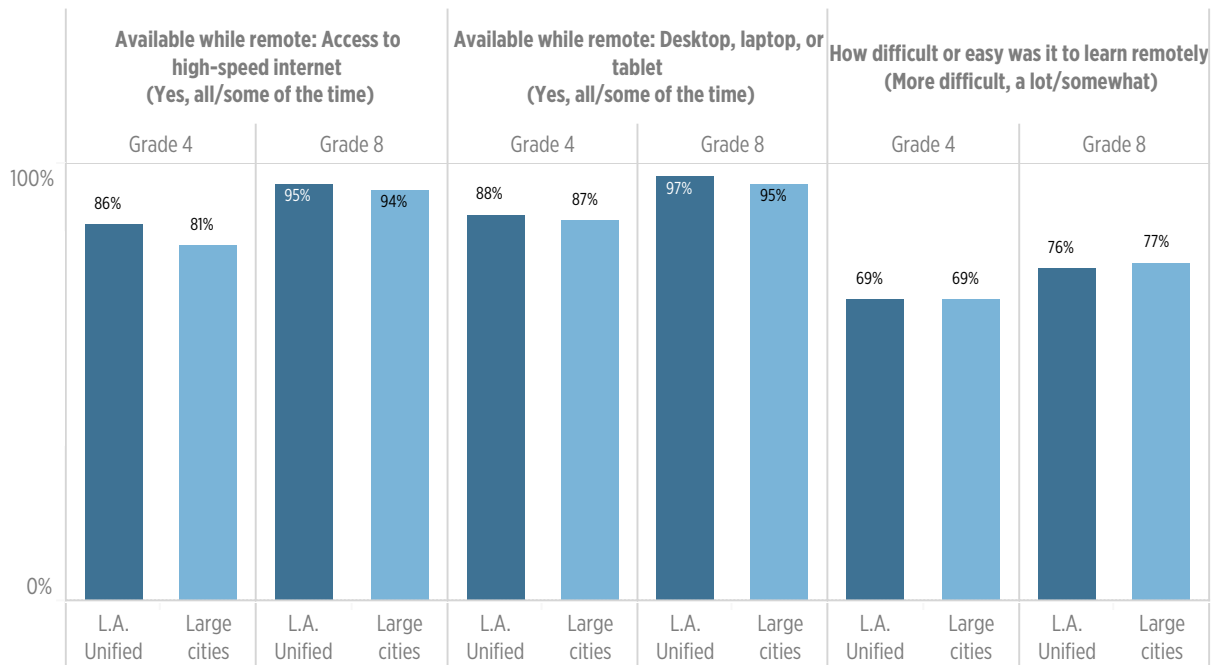
Student Group	2019 Score	2022 Score	Change
All students	260.7	262.4	+2 ▲
Black	248.1	246.8	-1 ▼
Latino/a/x	255.1	254.3	-1 ▼
White	287.0	285.3	-2 ▼
Asian/Pacific Islander	295.4	303.7	+8 ▲
Students with Disabilities	226.4	227.8	+1 ▲
NSLP Eligible	255.5	256.1	+1 ▲
English Learners	217.4	220.1	+3 ▲

- Latino/a/x students in 4th grade experienced a sharp decline, with their math scores decreasing 8 points since 2019.
- For students eligible for NSLP, the decline in 4th grade math scores (8 points) was substantial.
- Math scores for with disabilities were a bright spot: 4th grade SWDs saw no decline in math scores (compared to a 4-point decline District-wide), and 8th grade SWDs increased scores by 1 point.

Survey reveals that tech access between District and big cities is similar.

Included in the NAEP was a student survey, allowing for nationwide comparison of student experiences during facilities closures to

Figure 1. L.A. Unified vs. Large City Student Responses to COVID-Related Survey Questions



Note: Survey results reported separately for math and reading. Student responses above are from those who took the math assessment.
Source: NAEP Data Service API

assess whether varied test results might reflect students' varied experiences with remote learning (Figure 1).

While remote learning devices were a necessary condition for learning growth during the school facilities closures, the lack of differences in access between L.A. Unified and other large cities suggests that greater access to Wi-fi and hardware may not be the primary driver of the District's greater growth on the NAEP assessment. Specifically:

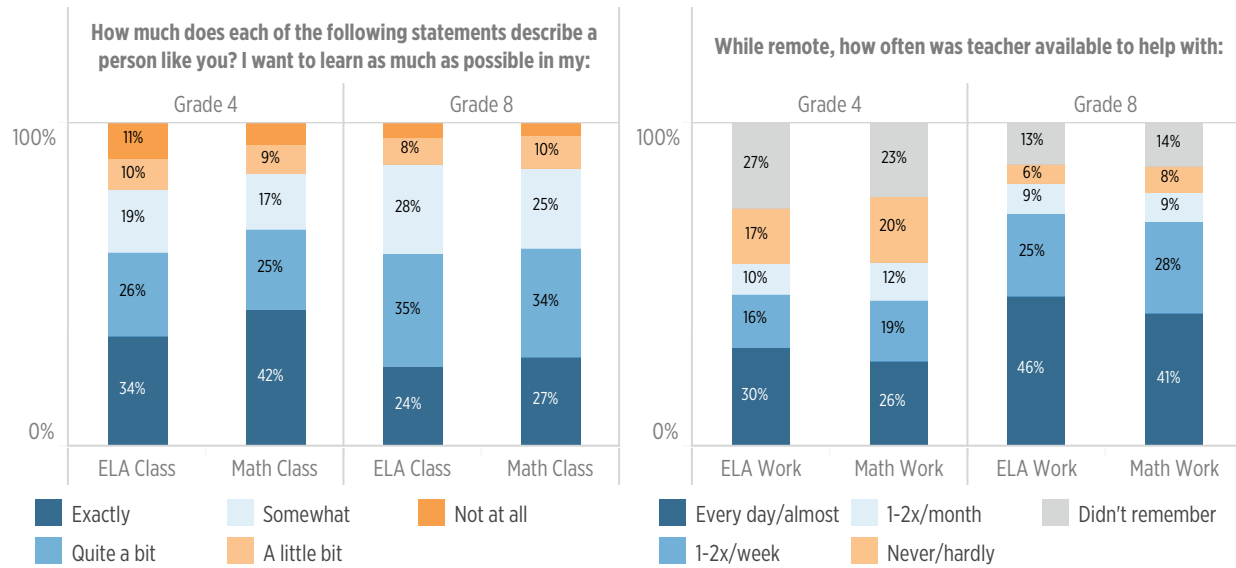
- Like students in other large city districts, nearly all of L.A. Unified students surveyed (86%-97%) reported having access to high-speed internet and a device all or some of the time.
- Most L.A. Unified students (76% of 8th graders and 69% of 4th graders) reported that remote schooling made learning somewhat or a lot more difficult, again mirroring students in large city districts.

Students' attitudes towards learning relatively similar between ELA and Math for 8th grade, not 4th grade

The survey also allows us to compare differences between grade levels and between subject areas within L.A. Unified (Figure 2). The IAU wanted to see if students reported different attitudes towards math versus English/language arts (ELA). This information could help contextualize the relatively larger growth in reading compared to math on the NAEP assessment. We found that for each of the subject-specific questions, the results were relatively similar for math and ELA in 8th grade, but 4th graders report slightly more positive attitudes towards math than ELA:

- Both grades had 4-5% more students who reported having access to their teacher "Every day or almost" for help with ELA schoolwork, compared to math.

Figure 2a + 2b. L.A. Unified Student Responses to Subject Survey Questions



Source: [NAEP Data Service API](#)

- Comparing 4th grade responses, 8% more students reported that the statement “I want to learn as much as possible in my math class” sounded exactly like them (42% versus 34% in ELA). It is encouraging to see a high degree of interest in mathematics for the District’s younger learners. L.A. Unified students appear just as, if not more, eager to learn as much as they can in math as in ELA.

Discussion

In sum, the disaggregation of NAEP scores provides more detail about student learning during the pandemic, revealing that **three student groups outperformed the District’s average growth on the majority of the NAEP assessments: Black students, white students, and students with disabilities.**

Further, **Latino/a/x students and students participating in the National Student Lunch Program underperformed the District’s average growth** on all the NAEP assessments.

To contextualize the academic gains, we

analyze student survey data and find that L.A. Unified’s students’ access to remote learning devices mirrored national and big city trends. Within the District, access to teacher support and attitudes towards learning varied slightly across grade levels and by subject.

Though NAEP scores are useful for comparing groups of students, they cannot tell us which programs or interventions were responsible for academic gains because the students who took the tests may not be the students who received the supports, participated in the programs, or utilized the resources that we think may have led to success. To evaluate the effectiveness of District initiatives, we would need to analyze student-level data for those who we know were affected by those initiatives and then compare them to students who were not. The NAEP data do not allow this level of analysis.

Recommendations

As the Board considers priorities for the FY 2024 budget, it should be careful not to interpret the NAEP results as support for any

given program. Instead, we recommend the Board consider the NAEP results to be a positive and encouraging sign that the ongoing programs and initiatives in the District, enumerated in the Superintendent's strategic plan, may be producing good results for some groups of students. At the same time, the NAEP results point to groups that may require additional attention to share in academic gains.

Moving forward, to determine allocation priorities in coming years, we recommend the Board work with the Superintendent to:

- **Continue to fund programs that follow theories of action for achieving desired outcomes.** Until results from impact evaluations are available, decisions on budget priorities should consider if program planning includes a logic model for how inputs lead to outputs, then intermediate and final outcomes.
- **Study SBAC scores and other measures to gain more complete picture of student success/need.** Other measures could include district interim assessments and educators' observations of students and would allow assessment of students at grade levels not included in the NAEP. Consistent results from multiple measures would allow the identification of student successes/needs with confidence in grade levels not included in the NAEP/SBAC.
- **Strengthen monitoring of program implementation:** The District needs reliable implementation data to identify what works and what programs are making use of District resources to improve student outcomes. While the data warehouse holds an array of information tracking student outcomes (i.e., grades, test scores), flags for student exposure to interventions are not always available. Having flags for a student who participated in one of the District's targeted interventions would allow correlation of achievement with program participation. Additionally, data on the frequency/duration of intervention would enable analysis of whether dosage matters. And staffing/vacancy information for programs would enable comparison of schoolwide interventions for those schools that have had varied success filling funded positions (e.g., BSAP, HEET, Reed).
- **Strengthen evaluation of targeted initiatives and other program implementation:** If students who participate in programs can be identified, their scores can be compared to similar students who did not participate to evaluate the impact of certain programs. The District has begun to build capacity for impact evaluation, which could be strengthened further, supported with internal data infrastructure, and used to inform budget decisions.