

## Common Core fails: US test scores show no improvement despite billions of dollars thrown at education reform

Phil Shiver | December 3, 2019



Results from the latest international exam show U.S. high school students have made “no significant improvement” since the early 2000s and continue to trail students in Asian countries, despite billions of dollars invested in educational reform.

The exam, known as the Program for International Student Assessment, consists of testing exercises in math, reading, and science and is taken by 15-year-old students across the globe every three years. It seeks to measure how students apply knowledge to real-life scenarios and is considered to be a barometer of future economic success.

A report on the results, which were announced Tuesday, stated:

*Students in the United States performed above the OECD average in reading (505 score points) and science (502), and below the OECD average in mathematics (478). Their scores were similar to those of students in Australia, Germany, New Zealand, Sweden and the*

*United Kingdom in at least two of these three subjects. The trend lines of United States' mean performance in reading since 2000, mathematics since 2003 and science since 2006 are stable, with no significant improvement or decline.*

The report also highlighted a widening performance gap in reading between socio-economically advantaged and disadvantaged students: “Some 27% of advantaged students in the United States, but only 4% of disadvantaged students, were top performers in reading,” the report found.

China, in contrast to the U.S., continued to make gains, posting the highest scores in all three of the tested subjects. Students from China recorded an average reading score of 555, an average science score of 590, and an average math score of 591 — topping U.S. students by over 100 points in that category.

The results are devastating for comprehensive educational reform initiatives such as Common Core, No Child Left Behind, and Race to the Top, which have spent billions of taxpayer dollars aimed at helping U.S. students compete with students around the world. Many of the initiatives specifically focused on assisting disadvantaged students.

The Common Core Standards Initiative, in particular, has been the subject of contentious debate since its rollout in 2010. Its mission is to set unified standards for what K-12 students should know and be able to do in each grade in preparation for college and the workforce. In adopting the standards, states have integrated “Common Core-aligned” materials into their curricula.

Conservatives have long opposed government involvement in education and voiced strong opposition to Common Core for unnecessarily forcing government into the classroom, wresting educational control from families and local communities.

With the PISA results showing stagnant test scores and a widening performance gap, comprehensive educational initiatives like Common Core will likely face even more heat from critics.

Speaking with the New York Times, Daniel Koretz, an expert on testing and a professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, argued that even when government initiatives and curricular changes are adopted, improved teaching quality doesn't necessarily follow.

“It's really time to rethink the entire drift of policy reform, because it just isn't working,” he argued amid the recent test results.