



R.E.A.D.®

ON!

Continuing Education for R.E.A.D. Teams

VOL. X ~ No. 11

November 2025

R.E.A.D.: Needed More Than Ever

Here is a brand new report (September 2025) about the deteriorating state of education here in the U.S. The problem now goes way beyond the learning of basic reading skills. The decline since COVID has not been repaired, and is now compounded by serious absenteeism as well as the obsession with screens and devices.

Remember that even absenteeism is reduced for kids who get to read with dogs. Every moment that you spend with a child is going to make a life-changing difference for them in more ways than we can even count.

Please keep R.E.A.D.ing, everyone!

Reading skills of 12th graders hit a new low

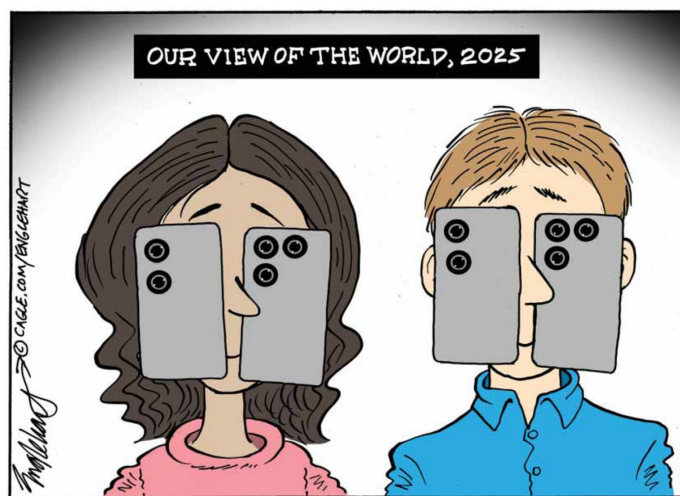
By DANA GOLDSTEIN - The New York Times

The reading skills of American high school seniors are the worst they have been in three decades, according to new federal testing data, a worrying sign for teenagers as they face an uncertain job market and an information landscape challenged by artificial intelligence.

In math, 12th graders had the lowest performance since 2005.

The results, from the National Assessment of Educational Progress, long regarded as the nation's most reliable, gold-standard exam, showed that about a third of the 12th graders who were tested last year did not have basic reading skills.

It was a sign that, among other skills, they may not be able to determine the purpose of a political speech. In math, nearly half of the test takers scored below the basic level, meaning



they may not have mastered such skills as using percentages to solve real-world problems.

The test scores are the first of their kind to be released since the COVID-19 pandemic upended education. They are yet another sign that adolescents are struggling in the wake of the virus, when schools were closed for months or more. They also arrive at a time when Americans overall are abandoning printed text for screen time and video-dominated

(continued on page 2)

INTERMOUNTAIN THERAPY ANIMALS / R.E.A.D. ~ www.therapyanimals.org

4050 South 2700 East, Salt Lake City, UT 84124 (or) PO Box 17201, Salt Lake City, UT 84117 • 801.272.3439

social media, which experts have linked to declining academics.

The NAEP test results indicate “a stark decline” in performance, said Matthew Soldner, the acting commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics, the arm of the Federal Education Department that administers the tests.

Only about a third of 12th graders are leaving high school with the reading and math skills necessary for college-level work, he added.

The findings echo grim statistics on the recent achievement of younger children.

For about 10 years, declines have been most pronounced among low-performing students, indicating that the floor of academic achievement has fallen. NAEP scores among top 12th graders — those at the 90th percentile or above — have not changed significantly over the decades these exams have been given, in either reading or math.

Test score drops were probably caused in part by the disruptions of the pandemic, including illness, school closures and remote learning. The seniors included in the new federal data were in eighth grade when the virus transformed daily life in March 2020. Millions of teenagers spent a year or more learning online.

Even so, data from previous testing shows that learning declines — especially among struggling students — began several years before the pandemic. Experts have pointed to a wide range of possible explanations.

Over the last decade, both adults and children began to replace reading time with screen time, social media and, increasingly, streaming video. And over the same period, the federal government and many states relaxed policies that were intended to hold schools and teachers accountable for student learning.

**Act as if what you do makes
a difference.
It does.**

- William James