



Written by [Beverly K. Eakman](#) on November 3, 2011

New Education Dept. Statistics Beg Questions on Race, Ethnicity

The U.S. Department of Education's statistical and testing arm, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), released its latest "progress" report November 1st: The survey measuring fourth- and eighth-grade scores on the controversial National Assessment of Educational Progress, or NAEP, was billed as having found "significant" improvement for both grades in math and a slight improvement in reading — until one examines the numbers. The *Washington Times* piece by Ben Wolfgang, reported that reading scores among fourth-graders "remained flat on the study's 500-point scale," results that overall fall far short of the proficiency standards set for 2014 in math, reading and science by the No Child Left Behind Act. This Act is currently being rewritten to provide waivers and other changes to accommodate its failure without admitting so outright.



But a graph depicting the just-released NAEP scores, published by Associated Press as percentage figures in the print edition of the *Washington Times* piece, shows at most, a two-percent change in both subjects between 2009 and 2011. Note that there is always at least a three-percent margin of error for such statistics, which tells us these numbers mean precisely — nothing.

And what of Asian minorities, which have historically done considerably better than whites, blacks or Hispanics? Scores for Asians were not broken out; the only mention from the NCES site is that they were unchanged — indicating that Asians are still doing better at the same comparative rate.

A New York Times report by journalist Sam Dillon cited the scores, too, showing the average fourth-grade math score as 241 on a scale of 500, up from 240 in 2009, when the last federal math and reading results were released. The average eighth-grade math score was 284, up from 283 two years ago. In reading, the average fourth-grade reading scores were unchanged from 2009, at 221. Eighth-grade reading scores this year came in at 265, compared with 264 in 2009.

According to the NCES' own website: At grade eight, the average reading score in 2011 (on the 500-point scale), was a mere 5 points higher than in 1992. At grade four, the average reading score in 2011 was four points higher than in 1992.

Now, couple these varied comparisons of the statistics to the fact that, less than a month ago, it was reported that our nation's college entrance scores for the [SAT](#) (an acronym which in 2005, after several scoring, content and name changes to accommodate political correctness, finally became a virtual



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brand name with connection to no actual words at all) plummeted to their lowest level, while educational costs experienced an approximate 300 percent increase for K-12 between 1970-2011, according to the same NCES agency. Former Education Secretary William J. Bennett (1985-1988) wrote a blistering op-ed for CNN, stating: “The 2011 budget for the Department of Education is estimated to top \$70 billion, while overall spending on public elementary and secondary education is about \$600 billion a year. By comparison, in 1972, before the Department of Education even existed, SAT-critical reading scores for college-bound seniors were above 525, more than 20 points higher than they are today, while today’s math scores are only slightly better than in 1972. As the United States increases education spending, our students’ scores should not be getting worse.”

So, why does NCES keep putting out documents and press releases advertising education’s failings? One reason is funding: The more documents any government agency puts out, the more likely congressional appropriation committee members will increase funding for a federal agency the next fiscal year.

The other reason may be to deflect attention from the kind of data NCES is really collecting under the umbrella of education statistics. As detailed in both a [2009 article](#) and, at even greater length, in a December 2008 PowerPoint presentation/speech, “Education’s Role: Prelude to Molding Public Opinion” — one has to see the graphics to believe it — NCES revealed itself to be much more involved in surreptitiously gathering statistics on pupils’ personal and family life than anything academic. From its own website (before it was designated “Restricted Data,” as more people became aware of its existence and logged on) NCES posted the kinds of information it was collecting and analyzing:

- students’ friendships by race and grade (complete with diagrams);
- the relative proportion of liberal-versus-conservative reading materials in pupils’ homes as determined from online bookstore purchases (again, diagramed);
- an “electronic cookbook” (for lack of a better term) going all the way back to birth and pre-school to gauge social skills on psychologists’ official Social Rating Scale;
- parent-child “sensitivity” and “interactions” on a long-term basis (under NCES’ Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, technically called the ELCS-B Child Assessment);
- anything that could be interpreted as “emotional disturbance” in order to provide expensive “supplemental services”;
- every child’s physical status, including teeth, gums and ongoing dental work, gestational age at birth and weight;
- any one of some 29 religious designations for religious belief (right down to “Calvinist” and “Nazarene”), questions supposedly off-limits to educators;
- and covert, pre-assigned ID coding, using the states as “fall guys” for assigning each child a school-state number, which is then linked with a federal ID number, usually the Social Security Number (SSN). (As of 2005 the SSN became a *de facto* national identification required of all children that comes with the application for a birth certificate.)

This is why the National Assessment, or NAEP, is controversial — the Education Department is doing more assessing than testing. The “assessing,” based on multiple analyses by behavioral psychologists, have determined, for the most part, that “high religiosity” is akin to “intolerance” and “inflexibility,” both alleged “markers” for mental illness. Thus, the invasive data-collecting.



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As for race and ethnicity, it is not an overstatement to say that NCES is fixated on the topic. But what government created in a purported effort to avoid the kinds of “racial gaps” detailed in NCES’ November 1 report, has turned out to be self-segregation, massive truancy and violence rates, and negative attitudes toward learning, especially by [blacks](#).

Had educators simply maintained pre-1950s standards, as opposed to lowering expectations in a thinly veiled “no confidence” vote for the then-pending *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision that launched integration; then made it worse by mainstreaming defiant and violent delinquents (under a mental illness caveat added to the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act), the U.S. today might be somewhere on the international scale besides near the bottom.

Beverly K. Eakman began her career as a teacher in 1968-1974. She left to become a science writer for a NASA contractor, and became editor-in-chief of NASA’s newspaper in Houston. She later served as a speechwriter and research-writer for the director of Voice of America and two other federal agencies, including the U.S. Dept. of Justice and the late Chief Justice Warren E. Burger. She has since penned six books and scores of feature articles and op-eds covering education policy (including two award winners), data-trafficking, science, privacy, mental-health, and political strategy. Her detailed bio, speaking appearances, e-mail, and links to her books all can be found on her website: www.BeverlyEakman.com.



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