



News Release

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Governing Board Releases Brief Showing Economic Impact of Pandemic Gaps Kicks off Powered by NAEP Campaign

Washington, D.C. — The National Assessment Governing Board, which sets policy for The Nation's Report Card, [released a research brief today](#) examining the economic impact of pandemic-related achievement declines.

The research brief highlights work by leading economists who forecast that the nation will see significant drops in student earnings and other later-life outcomes and a decline in economic competitiveness due to lower achievement levels resulting from the pandemic.

According to the brief:

- Achievement declines on The Nation's Report Card, or the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), could cost the average student in the COVID-cohort 6% lower lifetime earnings than those not in this cohort.
- One economist projects \$31 trillion in losses to the nation's economy over the rest of the century, an estimated 17 times the losses suffered from unemployment, business closures, and other aspects of the pandemic downturn.
- Using another model, economists note that, between 2019 and 2022, students lost 40% of a decades-long increase in math achievement, projecting a total \$900 billion in lost earnings for the 48 million students in public schools during the 2020-21 school year.
- States with steep academic declines also are expected to experience declines in high school graduation rates and college enrollment and increases in teen motherhood and criminal arrests, according to the research.

"Our ability to ameliorate the pandemic learning losses is quickly disappearing. More than 17 million students have already completed their K-12 schooling without being substantially brought up to the learning levels of the school as seen prior to the pandemic," said Stanford University economist and former Governing Board member Eric Hanushek whose research is cited.

Harvard economist Tom Kane, whose work is also cited in the brief, noted that academic recovery is happening unevenly around the country, with lower-income communities in many areas recovering more slowly than wealthier communities. He said that will have an impact on the projected earnings declines. ***"They'll be much larger in districts that are serving lower-income students,"*** he said.

Governing Board members share their reactions and ideas for recovery in the brief. Rhode Island Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Instruction Angélica Infante-Green says it's vital that policymakers nationwide take steps to overhaul and improve teaching and learning in light of the score declines on the Nation's Report Card as well as on state assessment data across the country and international assessments. ***"The purpose of collecting data is to take action. These results show us that we need to pivot as a nation. This isn't about one state; this is about the entire nation,"*** she said.

It's the first in a series of briefs by the Governing Board highlighting research, policies, and practices fueled by data from NAEP, the only nationally representative assessment of what our nation's students know and can do.

"The Nation's Report Card is the only common yardstick used to assess student achievement nationwide, and the most recent results showed [historic declines](#) that will have a long-lasting impact on our students and our country," said Governing Board Executive Director Lesley Muldoon. ***"This is an opportunity for those in the K-12, higher education, and policy arenas to better understand the achievement declines and solutions to address them."***

To read the brief, please visit the [Powered by NAEP resource page](#).

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The National Assessment Governing Board is an independent, nonpartisan board whose members include governors, state legislators, local and state school officials, educators, business representatives, and members of the general public. Congress created the 26-member Governing Board in 1988 to set policy for the National Assessment of Educational Progress. For more information, visit www.nagb.gov.