




## EDUCATION

# Iowa scores in 50-state education rankings decline from years past

BY: JACK O'CONNOR - JUNE 17, 2024 1:53 PM



 Iowa once again ranked high in state education rankings, but the state has fallen from the highs of past years thanks in part to declining test scores. (Photo by Jon Cherry/Getty Images)

Iowa scored relatively well in education rankings among the states, but with declining test scores and on-time high school graduation rates decreasing, the state has fallen from its highs of previous years, according to a [new report](#) from the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Sixty-seven percent of Iowa fourth-graders in 2022 were not proficient in reading, which is two percentage points worse than the 2019 pre-COVID rates, according to the Kids Count report. Among eighth-graders, 72% were proficient in math, five percentage points worse than the 2019 rates.

Having good foundational reading skills by fourth grade prepares students for future analytical reading, and having foundational math skills by eighth grade prepares students for more complicated math, said Anne Discher, executive director of Common Good Iowa, which helped with the report.

“We’re really looking at an incredible educational challenge where we’ve got kids going through their school careers hitting important milestones and probably not having the skills we wish they would,” Discher said.

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Iowa, which has ranked first in on-time high school graduation rate since the 2010-11 school year, fell to No. 3, according to the report.

[Chronic absenteeism](#) rates are also on the rise, with more than 1 in 4 Iowa students chronically absent, according to the report.

The report gave Iowa an overall rank of 13th out of the 50 states in education. This rank puts Iowa behind neighboring states like Nebraska, Illinois and Wisconsin.

Discher said to reverse these trends the state needs to go beyond just investing more in Iowa schools. Tackling [childhood food insecurity](#), improving kids’ home internet connections and increasing Medicaid accessibility for young children should lead to better test scores, Discher said.

“When you think about the fact that suddenly we’re not first in high school graduation, that our test scores aren’t that far off national averages, it feels like we’re starting to maybe see in data a real change in priorities in our state,” Discher said.



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