

Bob Griffin

State Board of Education and Early Development

As I reported last year, I have reasons to be optimistic about student improvements – especially in early childhood literacy. I’m looking forward to continue to collaborate with all stakeholders on adopting and implementing public policy that continues our improving trends. Today I will give a very brief overview of improvements, concerns and some challenges and opportunities from my perspective during my last five years of service.

Key Improvements. As the Reading Committee Chair, we are seeing some positive results in this number one priority of the state board. With the first year of full implementation of the Alaska Reads Act, our early feedback from the beginning-of-year and mid-year measurements are very encouraging -- showing significant growth. In the 2022 NAEP cycle we were one of states with the [lowest Covid learning losses](#). We improved our standing in five out of the eight major NAEP measurements compared to 2019. That is the [first time that Alaska has improved our relative standing in the majority of NAEP measurements](#).

NAEP Test Results Alaska			2019	2022
Grade	Subject	Status	U.S. Ranking	
4th	Reading	Free or Reduced Lunch	51 st	51 st
4th	Math	Free or Reduced Lunch	50 th	48 th
4th	Reading	Non-Free or Reduced Lunch	51 st	50 th
4th	Math	Non-Free or Reduced Lunch	49 th	49 th
8th	Reading	Free or Reduced Lunch	50 th	51 st
8th	Math	Free or Reduced Lunch	46 th	42 nd
8th	Reading	Non-Free or Reduced Lunch	49 th	42 nd
8th	Math	Non-Free or Reduced Lunch	45 th	42 nd
Rankings are all 50 states and DC				

4th Grade Reading NAEP Scores US States and DC = Free or Reduced Lunch													
	2022	2019	2017	2015	2013	2011	2009	2007	2005	2003			
	FRL	FRL		FRL									
1	FL 215	FL 216	FL 219	FL 220	FL 218	MA 218	FL 217	ND 215	WY 216	VT 214			
2	MS 212	WY 215	MA 219	MA 220	NH 216	ND 216	ND 216	MT 215	DE 214	MN 213			
3	MA 209	MS 215	IN 215	KY 219	MD 216	NH 216	KT 215	MA 214	ND 214	WV 212			
4	OR 210	MA 213	WY 215	WY 217	WY 215	FL 216	VT 215	WY 214	WA 213	WY 212			
5	IN 209	KY 212	WV 215	IN 217	DE 215	KT 216	MA 215	DE 214	NH 213	DE 212			
6	NV 207	ID 211	KY 215	VT 217	IN 215	NJ 215	DE 214	MN 213	MN 213	ND 210			
7	KY 212	NV 211	NJ 214	NH 216	MN 214	MD 215	MT 214	FL 213	MT 212	MA 210			
8	SC 205	NJ 210	OH 213	NC 215	MA 213	WY 214	NY 214	VA 213	KT 212	SD 210			
9	HI 204	OH 210	VA 213	OK 214	KT 213	MT 214	NH 213	VT 212	MA 211	KY 209			
10	LA 204	IN 209	KS 212	GA 214	VT 213	DE 214	KS 213	IA 212	SD 210	IA 209			
11	ID 211	ME 209	NH 212	MN 214	ND 213	VT 213	WY 212	ID 212	VT 210	WA 208			
12	MT 204	NE 209	NC 211	NJ 213	MT 212	NY 212	MN 212	NH 212	NY 210	MT 208			
13	GA 204	ND 209	CT 211	UT 213	NJ 212	KS 212	NJ 211	KT 212	ID 210	NY 208			
14	NH 204	CO 208	VT 211	MT 213	PA 211	OH 212	ID 211	KS 212	VA 209	MO 208			
15	IA 204	OK 208	ID 211	NE 213	NY 211	PA 211	MO 210	OH 211	FL 209	ID 207			
16	RI 203	NH 208	NY 211	OH 212	NC 211	MN 210	IN 210	NJ 210	MN 209	CO 207			
17	NJ 203	UT 208	MO 211	ND 212	WV 211	ID 210	VA 210	WA 210	MO 209	NE 207			
18	CO 203	NC 208	DE 210	MO 211	GA 211	IN 210	MD 210	SD 209	KS 208	OH 206			
19	ID 203	MT 208	MT 210	WV 211	MO 211	GA 209	NE 210	NY 209	IA 208	KS 206			
20	TX 203	SD 208	PA 210	RI 211	CO 210	AL 209	TX 209	OK 209	CO 208	NH 206			
21	NY 202	VA 208	MD 210	AR 211	CT 210	TX 209	SD 209	TX 209	TX 208	UT 206			
22	VT 202	PA 207	UT 209	ID 211	KS 210	NE 209	IA 208	IN 209	UT 208	NC 206			
23	PA 202	AR 207	NE 209	PA 211	UT 209	NC 208	OH 208	MO 208	IN 207	OR 205			
24	NB 202	IA 207	RI 209	NY 211	NE 209	RI 208	WA 208	UT 208	AR 206	CT 205			
25	OH 202	MO 207	OK 209	VA 210	WA 209	OK 208	CT 207	NE 208	WV 206	W 205			
26	CA 201	GA 207	GA 209	WA 210	VA 209	AR 207	OK 207	GA 207	OH 206	IN 205			
27	AL 201	OR 207	AR 209	DE 210	MN 209	SD 207	GA 207	MD 207	OK 205	TX 205			
28	AZ 201	WA 206	MS 208	OR 210	AR 209	VA 207	AR 207	PA 207	NE 205	FL 205			
29	WI 201	NY 206	CO 208	IA 210	ID 208	MO 207	WV 206	CO 206	PA 205	VA 205			
30	OK 201	KS 206	SD 208	LA 209	OH 208	UT 206	PA 206	WV 206	WI 204	AR 204			
31	IL 201	TX 206	ND 208	CT 209	IA 208	WI 206	CO 206	MN 206	OR 204	OK 204			
32	CT 201	MI 206	ME 207	IL 208	OK 208	IA 206	RI 205	AR 205	NJ 203	NJ 203			
33	WA 201	RI 206	MN 207	TX 208	AL 207	CO 205	TN 205	WI 205	NC 202	MN 203			
34	ND 200	VT 206	OR 207	AL 208	OR 207	CT 205	UT 205	NC 205	CT 202	SC 202			
35	NC 200	HI 206	AL 207	CO 208	RI 206	MN 205	NC 205	MI 204	MI 201	MI 201			
36	AR 200	CT 205	TN 206	KS 208	TX 206	MI 205	SC 204	IL 204	GA 201	RI 200			
37	KS 200	IL 205	IL 206	TN 207	MI 206	WV 204	MI 204	AL 203	SC 200	GA 200			
38	UT 199	CA 205	IA 206	MS 207	WI 205	WA 204	AL 204	HI 203	LA 200	MD 199			
39	TN 199	MD 205	NV 206	MD 207	TN 205	OR 204	OR 204	NM 203	TN 200	PA 198			
40	MI 198	MN 205	WA 205	WI 207	NV 203	TN 204	MN 203	RI 202	NM 199	TN 198			
41	ME 198	WV 204	TX 205	SC 206	SD 203	IL 203	MS 203	TN 202	IL 198	IL 197			
42	SD 197	SC 204	DC 204	NV 205	LA 203	SC 202	IL 202	SC 201	MD 198	HI 197			
43	MO 197	WI 204	LA 204	MN 205	IL 202	LA 202	WI 202	CT 201	RI 197	MS 197			
44	MD 197	DC 203	MI 203	SD 205	SC 202	NV 202	LA 201	MS 200	HI 197	NM 195			
45	NM 195	DE 202	WI 203	MI 204	MS 201	MS 202	NV 200	OR 200	MS 196	LA 195			
46	MN 194	TN 202	CA 203	AZ 203	HI 201	AZ 202	NM 199	LA 200	AL 196	AZ 194			
47	WV 194	LA 202	HI 203	HI 203	AZ 201	HI 201	HI 198	AK 197	CA 193	AL 193			
48	DC 194	AZ 202	AZ 203	NM 201	CA 200	NM 200	AZ 197	NV 197	AK 193	NV 192			
49	VA 192	NM 201	SC 202	CA 201	NM 199	CA 198	CA 196	AZ 196	AZ 192	AK 192			
50	DE 189	AL 199	NM 200	DC 200	DC 195	AK 191	AK 194	CA 195	NV 192	CA 191			
51	AK 188	AK 189	AK 190	AK 197	AK 193	DC 191	DC 193	DC 188	DC 183	DC 182			
	203	208	208	208	210	208	207	207	207	204			203

The blue arrows above indicate the years that Florida and Mississippi adopted their version of the Alaska Reads Act.

According to information from the 3rd annual Alaska Science of Reading Symposium that was attended by over 1,400 educators and administrators. Alaska teacher training in the science of reading is occurring at a faster rate than the professional development for the science of reading that occurred in Mississippi during their amazing rise in early childhood literacy.

As Chair of the Tribal Compacting Committee, I'm excited that we are in the beginning stages of serving the desires of many of our families who are intensely interested preserving and promoting the native ways of knowing things, preserving native culture and reviving native languages. The great success in improving healthcare outcomes that Alaska has enjoyed had in healthcare compacting, makes me optimistic that we can have similar results in the education arena.

Though I'm optimistic for our future for student outcomes in Alaska -- over the last five years, I have accumulated some concerns:

1. Poorly allocated resources—

Between FY 2003 and FY 2023 statewide enrollment declined from [132,484 to 128,238](#), while state formula funding has increased from [\\$643m to \\$1.187b](#). That's an 84.6% increase in state formula funding since 2003, with 96.8% of the 2003 enrollment. That **results in a 90.6% increase in state formula funding per student while inflation in Alaska was 60.2%**. The actual percentage is much higher than 90.6% per student in neighborhood schools because of the quadrupling of students in very inexpensive correspondence programs. Currently correspondence programs cost the state \$5,364/year in formula funding. Compared over \$13,000 per student in state formula funding in neighborhood schools – after all the formula elements are applied. With combined state, local and highest- in-the-nation federal funding per student, Alaska currently invests an average of over \$22,000 per student per year in neighborhood schools.

The increase in spending between 2003 and 2023 didn't have a positive effect on outcomes-- with the exception of the current slight positive trends in the last NAEP cycle, during that 20-year period [NAEP scores dropped across the board](#). NAEP 4th grade reading scores dropped nearly a grade level (10 points roughly one grade level difference): -8 NAEP points. 4th grade math dropped by -7 points 8th grade reading dropped by -3 points 8th grade math dropped by -9 points

Contrasting Alaska and Florida in resource allocation. A recent [Rutgers study](#) ranked Alaska as #2 in the US for fiscal effort for K12, with of 95 out of 100 -- Rutgers listed Florida as the *least adequately funded* system and the with a fiscal effort score of 12 out of 100. And yet in 2022, Florida leads the nation in low-income 4th grade NAEP, reading and math test scores and is in the top 10 states in the US in five of the eight main NAEP measurements. In addition, Florida is 3rd in the US in the percentage of students graduating high school with an Advanced Placement test passed with a score of 3 or higher.

NAEP Test Results Alaska			Florida	Alaska
Grade	Subject	Status	U.S. Ranking	
4th	Reading	Free or Reduced Lunch	1st	51st
4th	Math	Free or Reduced Lunch	1st	48th
4th	Reading	Non-Free or Reduced Lunch	3rd	50th
4th	Math	Non-Free or Reduced Lunch	7th	49th
8th	Reading	Free or Reduced Lunch	5th	51st
8th	Math	Free or Reduced Lunch	16th	42nd
8th	Reading	Non-Free or Reduced Lunch	29th	42nd
8th	Math	Non-Free or Reduced Lunch	32nd	42nd

Rankings are all 50 states and DC

Though probably the best indication of the quality of an education system is the percentage of students who graduate with success in Advanced Placement (AP) testing, [In Florida, 29% of high school graduates passed at least one Advanced Placement course with a 3 or higher \(3rd highest in the nation\)](#), compared to 12% in Alaska (45th).

Florida and Alaska are different.

Florida has the most ***inadequately*** funded K-12 system in the US according to recent [Rutgers](#) Study.

Florida has a [higher poverty rate than Alaska](#).

Florida has a slightly higher cost of living, according to [Bureau of Economic Analysis, Regional Price Parities](#)

Florida has [double percentage of students who speak English less than “very well”](#)

Florida has multiple charter school authorizers

Florida has 13% of students in public charter schools -- 5% in Alaska.

Florida has 13% of students in private schools – 4% in Alaska.

Florida allows parents of low-income and disabled kids to choose private school and receive public funding

Miami-Dade Public Schools (MDPS) 4th grade NAEP reading score are statically indistinguishable from upper/middle-income white 4th graders in Alaska. MDPS student body consists of 94% ethnic minorities, 60% are low-income and more than half of MDPS students have a home language other than English.

In 2023 Miami-Dade Public School achieved record graduation rate of 90.3% in 2023 (that includes an exit exam to graduate). In addition, Miami students passed [29,581 AP tests with 3 or higher in 2023](#), compared to a graduating class of 22,716 seniors.



2. Escalation in building costs that rob resources from classroom operations. During the last five years on the state board, I've seen price escalation in state school building projects increase to the point that I voted against a capital projects priority list. That list included a school project for 170 students listed at \$102M, or \$600,00 per student, or more than \$2,600/sf. That's equal to \$3.5m for a 1300 sf kindergarten classroom – or what Winterberry Charter School spent to build an entire campus from an undeveloped site for 260 K-8 students. For further context, the Dena'ina Center in Anchorage cost \$111m or \$555/sf (\$150m in 2023 inflation adjusted dollars).

3. Poor support for our very successful Public Charter Schools. Alaska has the best outcomes charter schools in the US according to a recent [Harvard University study](#) — despite having one of the

most poorly supported charter school systems US according the rankings by the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools --with a score of 83 out of possible 240. That's a great testament to the parents and staff who run these independent public charter schools for achieving such good results with such sub-standard support. Among the defects in Alaska charter school statutes are unequal funding, poor/nonexistent facilities and transportation support and the *lack of multiple charter authorities*. Today, the highest performing school in the state is Eagle Academy Charter School. They operate out of an undersized facility adapted from a building that was previously a roller rink and a used car lot.

Alaska is one of only five states that allows local districts sole authority over charter school renewals and authorizations. This gives districts a huge asymmetric power advantage over parents who are charter school applicants.

MEASURING UP TO THE MODEL

TABLE 1: 2022 STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL LAW RANKINGS

RANKING	STATE	SCORE
1	Indiana	181
2	Colorado	181
3	▲2 Alabama	180 ▲3
4	Minnesota	178
5	▲2 Florida	175 ▲6
6	▲3 Washington	173 ▲6
7	▲1 Mississippi	169
8	Louisiana	168
9	▲3 Nevada	168 ▲2
10	▲1 Maine	167
11	▲1 D.C.	166
12	▲12 Ohio	165 ▲12
13	▲1 Massachusetts	162
14	▲1 Arizona	160
15	▲1 North Carolina	160
16	▲1 Delaware	160
17	▲1 Georgia	158
18	▲23 Iowa	157 ▲68
19	▲3 Oklahoma	157 ▲4
20	▲3 New Hampshire	157 ▲4
21	▲4 Idaho	157
22	▲4 New York	156
23	▲4 South Carolina	155

RANKING	STATE	SCORE
24	▲4 California	154
25	▲4 Utah	154
26	▲1 Tennessee	153
27	Missouri	153 ▲6
28	▲4 West Virginia	152 ▲18
29	▲3 New Mexico	152
30	▲2 Michigan	149 ▲2
31	▲1 Hawaii	147 ▲4
32	▲3 Texas	145
33	▲2 Arkansas	141
34	▲8 Wyoming	136 ▲49
35	▲1 New Jersey	135 ▲4
36	▲3 Oregon	131
37	▲2 Pennsylvania	131
38	Illinois	127 ▲3
39	▲3 Connecticut	126
40	▲3 Rhode Island	126
41	▲2 Wisconsin	109
42	▲2 Virginia	94
43	Alaska	83
44	Kansas	69
45	Maryland	61

NOTE: THE TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE IS 240.

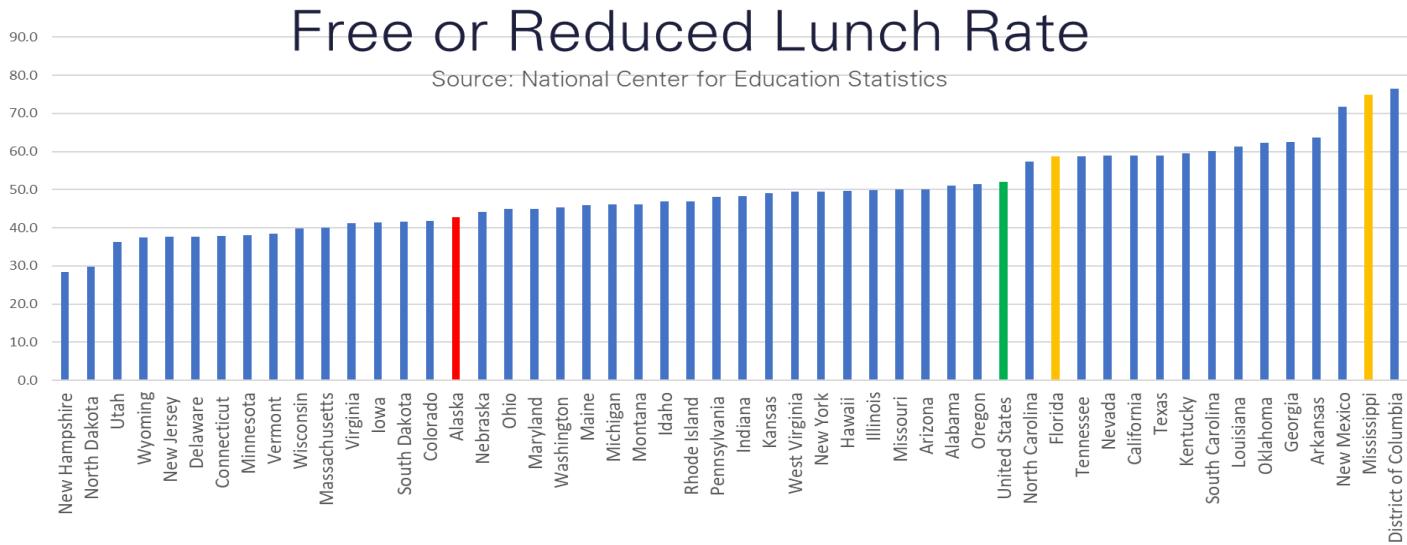
4. Why are so many families not choosing neighborhood schools? The easy thing to do is send your kid to the bus stop for local neighborhood school. But between correspondence schools, charter schools, alternative programs and private schools, 1 in 3 parents in Alaska are choosing a more difficult path. I'm very curious to understand why parents are voting with their feet.

5. Chronic Absenteeism—Even though 17% of our kids are in correspondence programs and are technically never absent from school, Alaska leads the nation in chronic absenteeism. The chronic absentee rate in Anchorage, Kenai, and MatSu twice as high as Los Angeles. That is closely related to how we fund our schools. Alaska is unique in our technique funding based on a three-week enrollment period. [California and five other states, fund schools based on attendance average.](#)

6. Gender Gap. Although Alaska has some of the lowest achievement gaps in the US between white and Black student and white and Hispanic students but we have the [highest gender achievement gap in the US](#) between female and male students.

Challenges and Opportunities

Poverty -- Alaska is 38th in Free or Reduced Lunch rate, despite having a qualification income threshold 25% higher than every state in the Lower-48. Anchorage 9th lowest poverty rate among 100 largest cities — Miami 16th highest poverty rate.



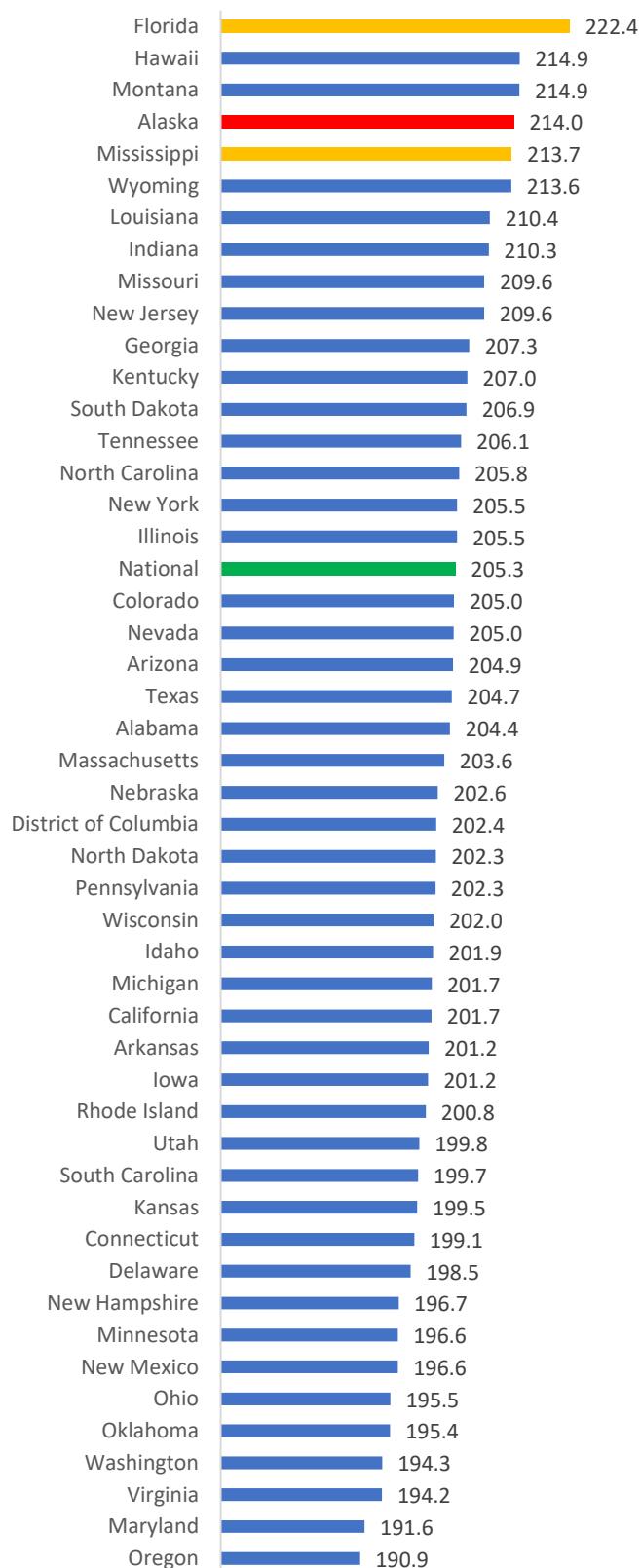
World Languages— According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2.5% of Alaskan students speak English less than very well — lowest rate of any west coast state. A rate well below the US average of 4.5%. [Alaska ranked 28th in the US, between the midwestern states of Kansas and Wisconsin in the percentage of kids who speak English less than “very well”](#). Anchorage, with over 100 languages spoken in the school district, is very near the US [average in the percentage of students who speak English less than “very well”](#).

Diversity is a strength. In NAEP results, [Black and Hispanic students in Alaska, achieve far above the average for the same demographic](#) in the lower-48. [Anchorage, the 71st largest US city, was 117th most ethnically diverse and 194th most language diverse in the US, in 2023 Wallet Hub survey](#).

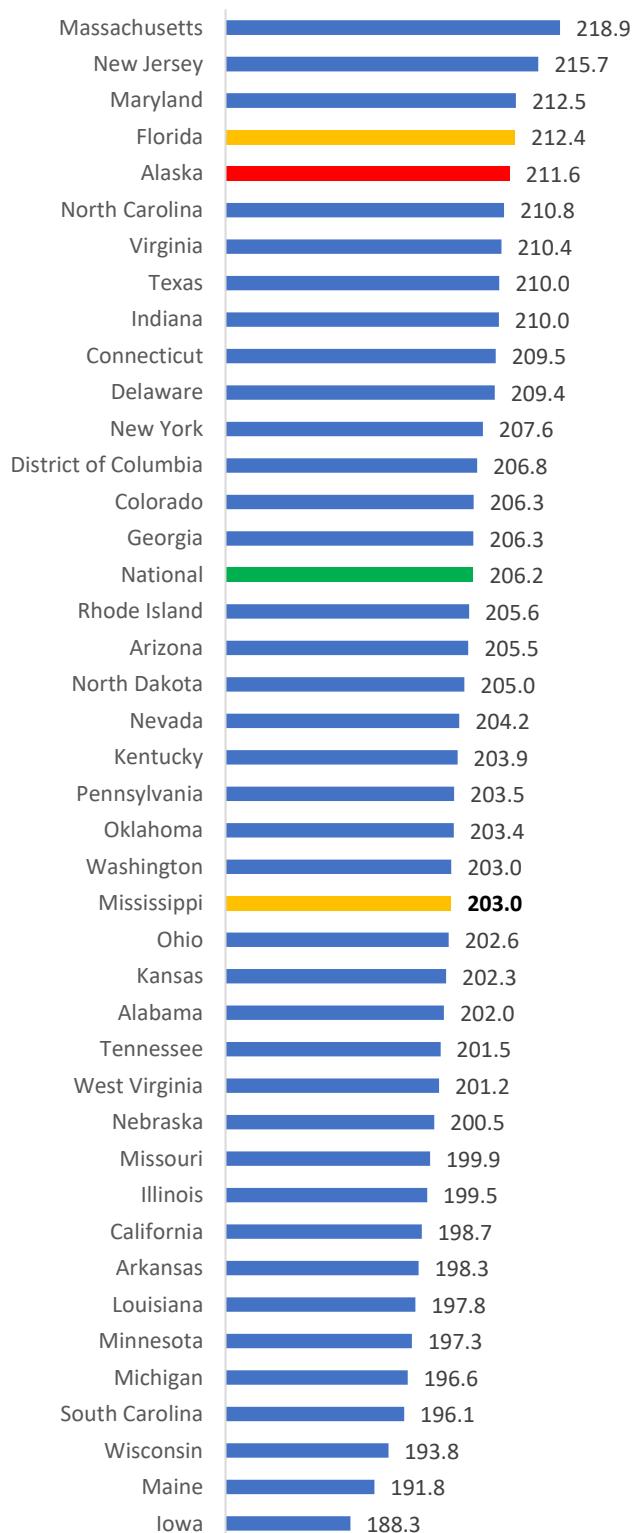
Cost of living is differential has improved. According to 2022 data from the US Commerce Department's Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) Regional Price Parities (RPP), [Alaska is now the 16th highest cost of living of all 50 states and the District of Columbia](#). The RPP covers all consumption goods and services including housing rents. Alaska's recent change in affordability ranking has been driven by efficiency of modern supply chains and housing costs that have risen much more slowly than many areas in the US. The [RPP does not account for a personal tax burden in Alaska that is the lowest in the US at \\$2,943 per capita per year in 2022, compared to \\$7,165 for the US average](#).

Rural districts continue to be the highest performing (and lowest). In the latest AKSTAR results the five big urban districts ranked between 11th and 20th out of 53 districts in English Language Arts proficiency rates and between 15th and 23rd in Math proficiency rates. The five largest districts are closer to the state average than they are to the highest performing districts in AK STAR proficiency rates.

2022 NAEP 4th Grade Reading Hispanic



*2017 NAEP 4th Grade Reading Black

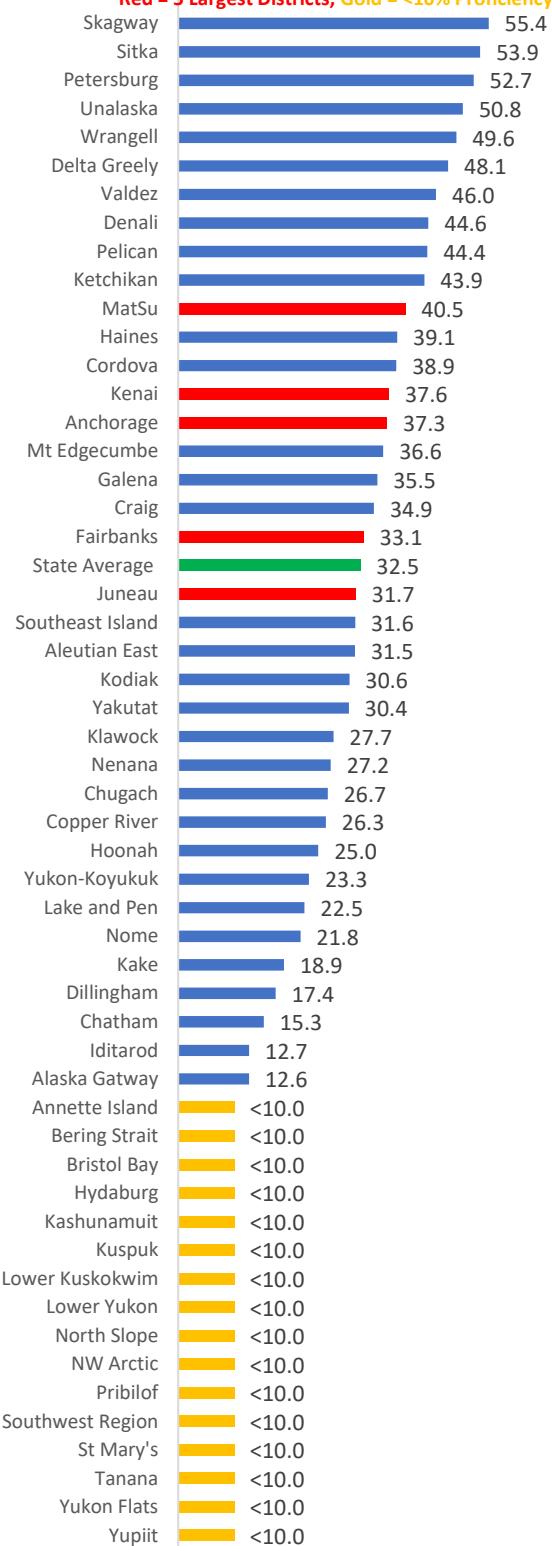


* 2017 was the last year Alaska had a large enough percentage sample size of Black students to post NAEP results.

AK STAR 2023

Math Proficiency Rates

Red = 5 Largest Districts, Gold = <10% Proficiency



AK STAR 2023

English Language Arts Proficiency Rates

Red = 5 Largest Districts, Gold = <10% Proficiency

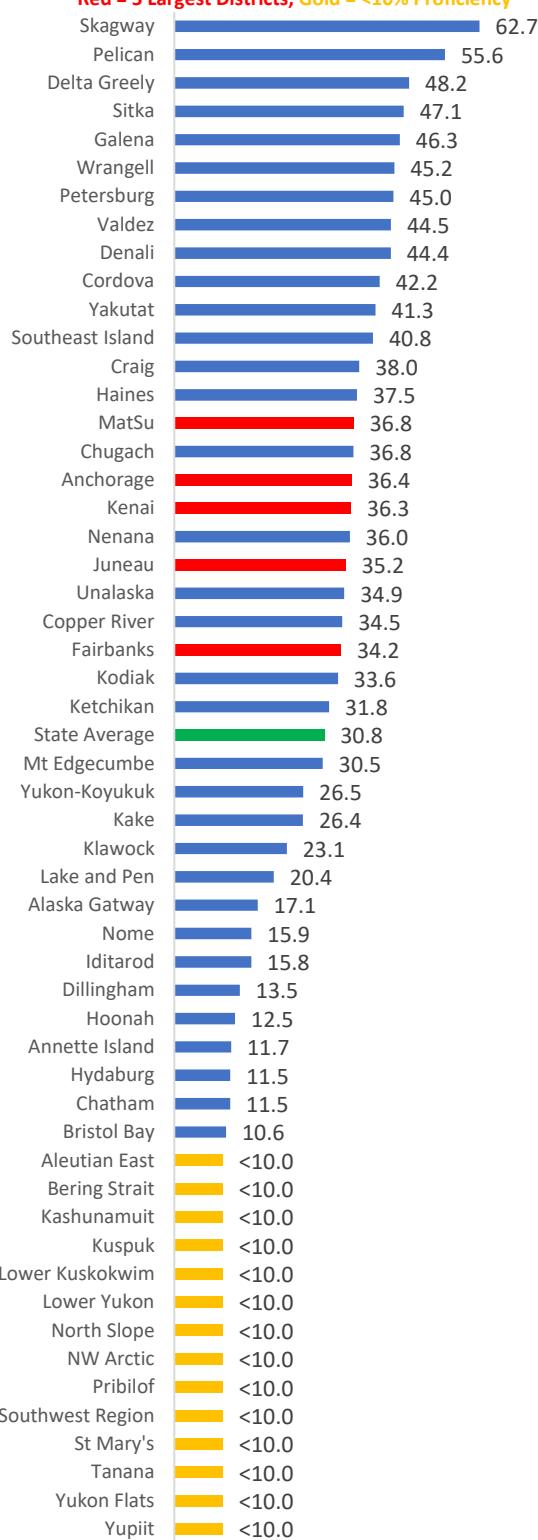
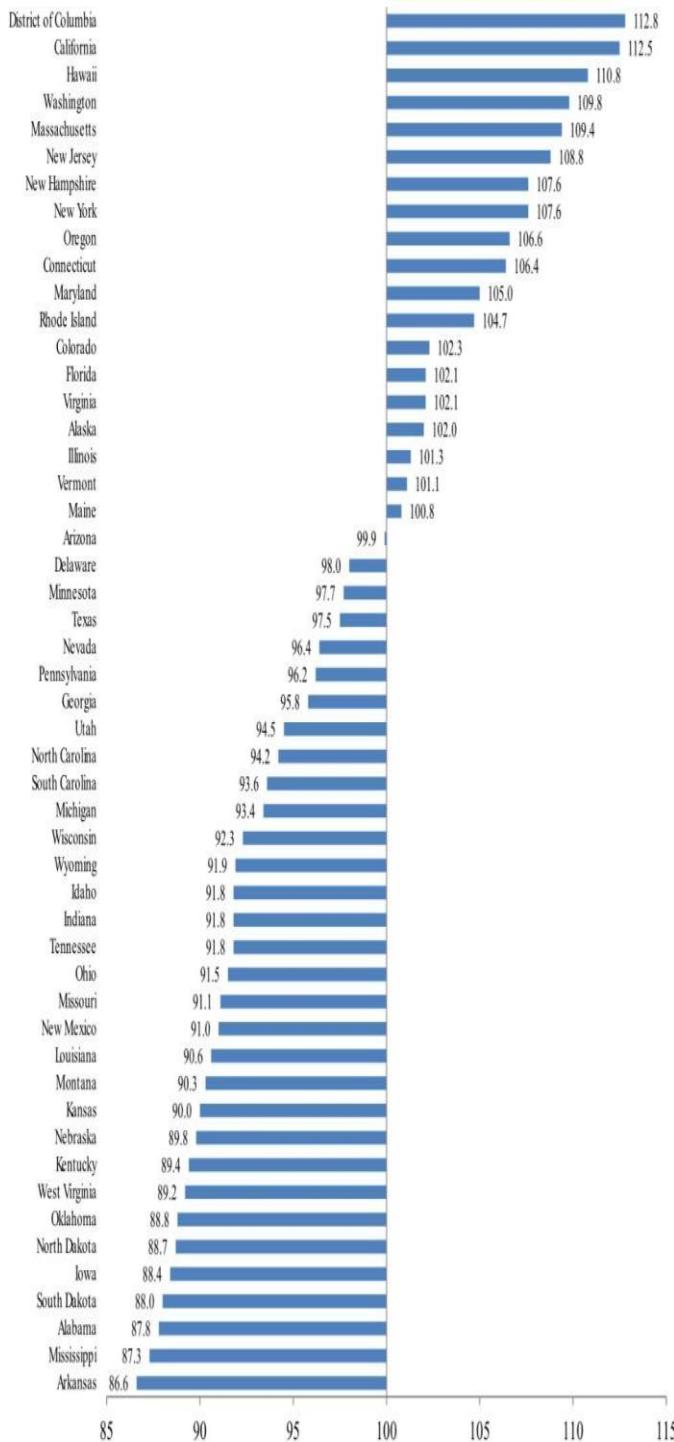


Chart 1. Regional Price Parities for States, 2022 (U.S. = 100)

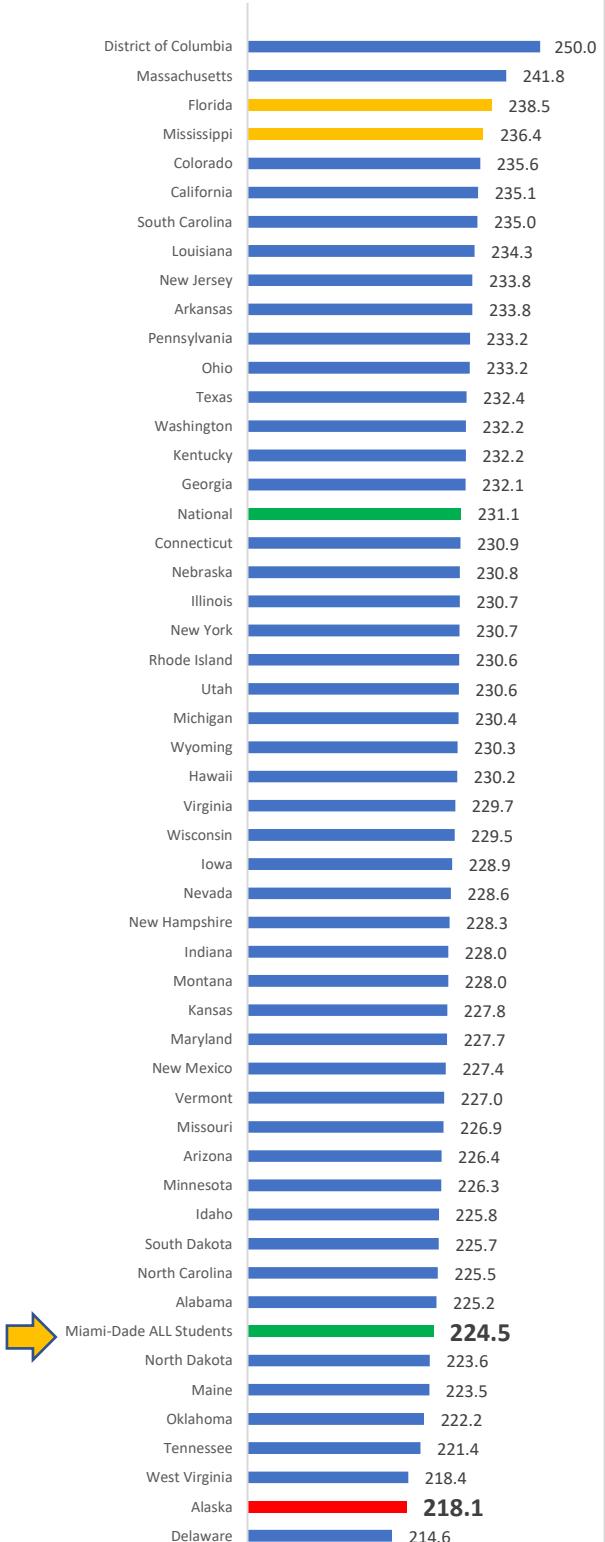


S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

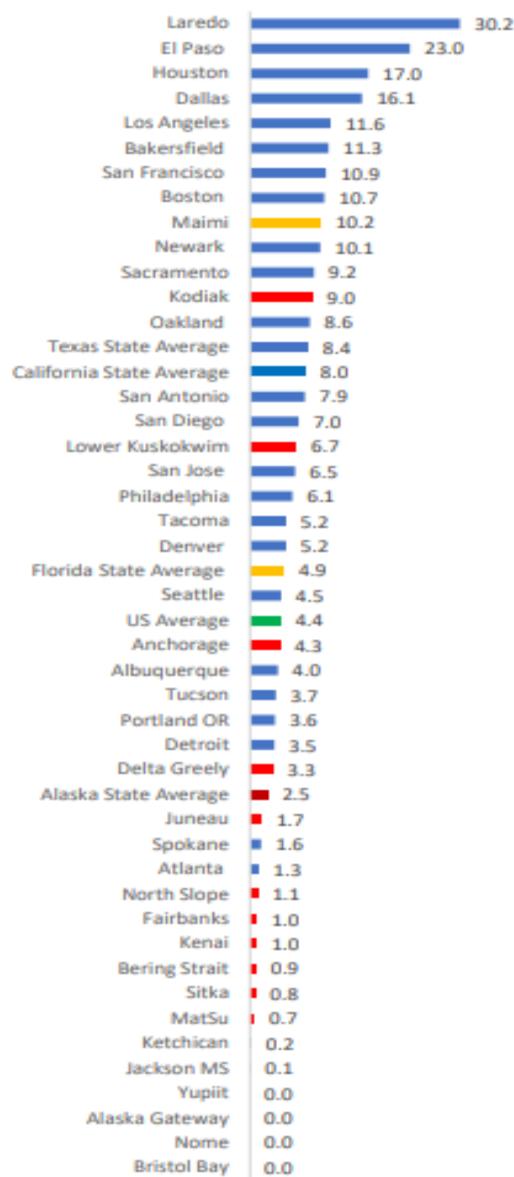
2022 NAEP 4th Grade Reading

Miami vs Upper/Middle-Income

Does Not Qualify for Free or Reduced Lunch

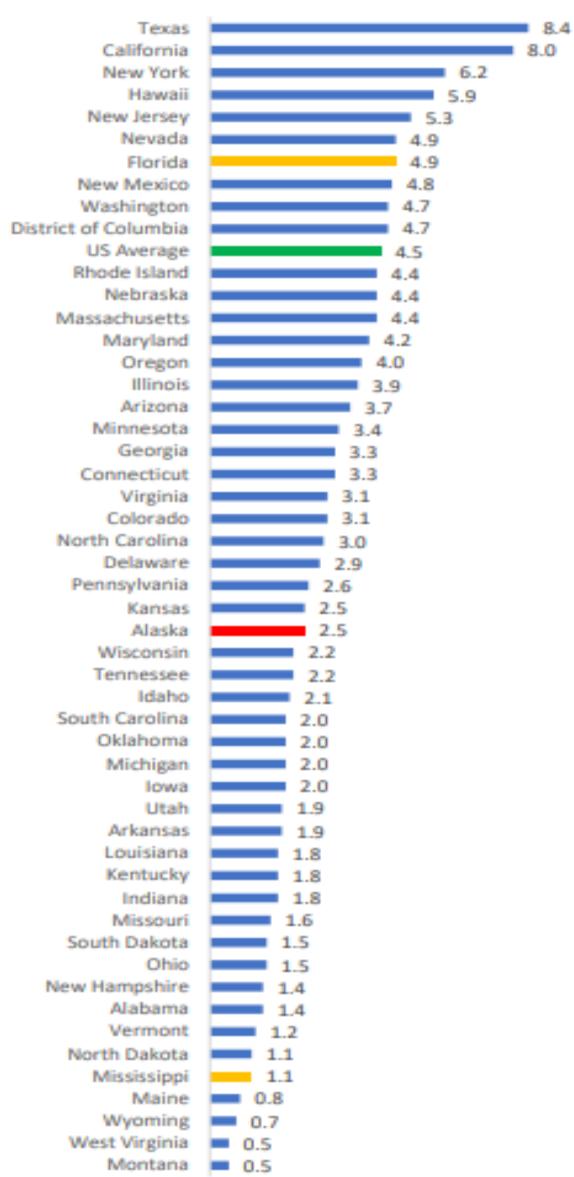


Percentage K12 Students
Who Speak English
Less than "Very Well"



Source: [ACS School District Profile 2016-20 \(ed.gov\)](https://www.acs.gov)

Percentage K12 Students
Who Speak English
Less than "Very Well" by State



Source: [ACS School District Profile 2016-20 \(ed.gov\)](https://www.acs.gov)