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Randi Weingarten Flunks the Pandemic

National test results reveal the damage from school closures.

By The Editorial Board [Follow](#)

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The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores for 2022 were released Thursday, and by any standard they are a calamity. An unprecedented decline in reading and math scores is the first national measure of the damage done by school closures to America's children.

The 2020 NAEP tests were administered shortly before pandemic lockdowns and school closures, so this year's results provide a snapshot of how students have weathered those two years. It's not pretty. Average nine-year-old scores declined the most on record in math (seven points) and in reading since 1990 (five points). Two decades of progress have been erased in two years.

Results were even worse for lower-income and minority students. Math scores fell by 13 points for black students and eight points for Hispanics compared to five points for whites. Reading scores for low-income students fell twice as much as for others.

Higher achievers fared somewhat better but still did worse than two years ago. Scores for students at the 90th percentile fell two points in reading versus 10 points for those in the bottom 10th percentile. The gap between high and low performers had been growing before the pandemic, but now has widened even more, as have racial disparities.

The education website *The 74* offered the grim silver lining that the scores "remain higher than 1970s." Some comfort.

You'd think this would be cause for reflection by our education elites, but no such luck. Media headlines blamed "the pandemic," as if Covid-19 ran America's school districts and decided to force students to sit at home in front of screens for more than a year. Educators—as they call themselves—did that.

National Center for Education Statistics Commissioner Peggy Carr had a grab-bag of excuses for the tragic learning loss: "School shootings, violence, and classroom disruptions are up, as are teacher and staff vacancies, absenteeism, cyberbullying, and students' use of mental health services. This information provides some important context for the results we're seeing from the long-term trend assessment."

She missed the "classroom disruptions" of not being able to go to class at all.

American Federation of Teachers chief Randi Weingarten, who pushed shutdowns as long as she possibly could before parents revolted, tried to forget this ever happened with her statement on Twitter: "Thankfully after two years of disruption from a pandemic that killed more than 1 mil Americans, schools are already working on helping kids recover and thrive. This is a year to accelerate learning by rebuilding relationships, focusing on the basics." But she and her union were the chief disrupters.

America's teachers unions demanded that schools be kept shut even as they remained open in Europe. At the same time unions used the pandemic to extort money from Congress. Schools received some \$190 billion in federal Covid relief to safely reopen and address learning losses, but schools stayed closed and much of the money still hasn't been spent.

After the first months of Covid uncertainty, the school shutdowns had nothing to do with safety. You flunked the pandemic, Randi, and set back America's children for years.



American Federation of Teachers chief Randi Weingarten
PHOTO: LUIZ C. RIBEIRO/ZUMA PRESS

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