

## EDUCATION

### Math up, reading the same ... laying the blame

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Who's to blame for little to no increase in reading skills among America's youngsters?

Federal officials say students across the U.S. are doing better at math, but reading skills have stagnated for the past 20 years. The National Assessment of Educational Progress hypothesizes the reading deficiencies may be a result of parents not reading enough to their children and students not reading much outside the classroom.

Adam Schaeffer, an education policy analyst with [The Cato Institute's](#) Center for Educational Freedom, says that hypothesis is absurd, noting parents over the past decades have gained greater educations and economic security.

"For all we know, the increase in parental education could be responsible entirely for an increase in math and reading scores that we've gotten -- and schools might be doing worse," he suggests. "There's just really no way to tell."



Fourth-grade math scores have improved but only slightly. The average is only 241 on a scale of 500, up just one percent from the previous year. Schaeffer says those improved scores are not nearly good enough.

"And yet we're spending around \$12,000 or \$13,000 per student," he points out. "So something is deeply wrong."

Siding with the feds, Sharon Darling, founder of the National Center for Family Literacy, also blames parents, saying they are not good readers themselves and are passing illiteracy on to their children.