

Reading for fun declines for teens

POLITICO Pro's Morning Education <newsletter@email.politicopro.com>

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BY MACKENZIE WILKES

QUICK FIX

— **The nation's 13-year-olds are reading for fun on their own time less frequently, new findings from a national assessment found.**

What's more, is that students who performed lower on the federal assessment reported reading for fun less often.

— **Breath in. Breath out.** That's what all New York City public school students will be required to do (or something like it) next school year. The city is requiring school officials to facilitate meditative breathing exercises for students.

— **"Women's Bill of Rights" have picked up steam in state legislatures around the country.** Kansas became the first state to define what it means to be "female" in state law.

IT'S WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28. WELCOME TO MORNING EDUCATION. Got something I should see? Drop your host a line at mwilkes@politico.com. Please send tips to my colleagues Bianca Quilantan at bquilantan@politico.com, Juan Perez Jr. at jperez@politico.com and Michael Stratford at mstratford@politico.com. And follow us on Twitter: [@Morning_Edu](https://twitter.com/Morning_Edu) and [@POLITICOPro](https://twitter.com/POLITICOPro).



Only 14 percent of 13-year-olds reported reading for fun on their own time almost every day, according to the new long-term trend NAEP assessment results. | AP

WHAT THE RESULTS SAY: Teens are reading less on their own time. At least, not for fun.

— **That’s what new data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress shows.** Looking beyond the [topline numbers on overall scores](#), results from the long-term trend assessment test for 13-year-olds also showed a decline in the percentage of the age group reading for fun on their own time. It’s associated with worse test scores.

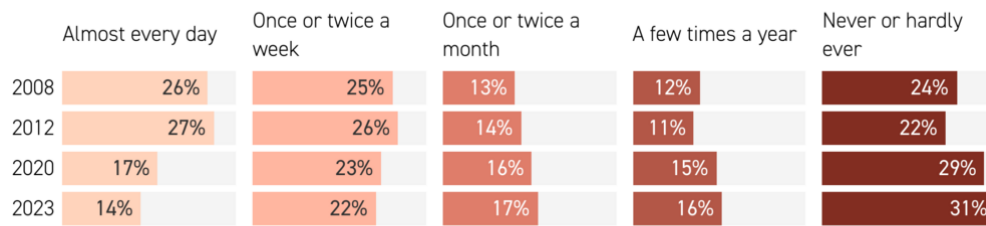
— **Yes, the data shows dips in reading following the pandemic,** but the decline in reading for fun has been happening since 2012. Along with that trend is a decline in reading scores on the Nation’s Report Card long-term trend assessment for 13-year-olds. Overall, there was a 7-point decline in reading scores since 2012 with scores dropping from 263 in 2012 to 256 in 2023 (the highest available points are 500).

— **What’s more, is that students who scored below 25th percentile** reported reading for fun on their own time less frequently. A plurality of lower-performing students, 42 percent, reported never or hardly ever reading for fun on their own time. On the other end, 51

percent of students who performed at or above 75th percentile reported reading for fun on their own time at least once a week.

Teens reading for fun has declined since 2012

Percentage of 13-year-olds who read for fun on their own time



Source: National Assessment of Educational Progress long-term trend assessment
Mackenzie Wilkes/POLITICO

— **What’s to blame?** It could be several factors, says Carol Jago, a former board member of the National Assessment Governing Board that sets NAEP policy. It could be social media, it could be the lack of encouragement or community, but it could also be the lack of access to reading materials.

“We’re not doing enough to demonstrate to them ... the pleasure that can come from a book,” Jago said. “You need easy access to books, you need lots of books, you need varieties of books to help students see the pleasure that can be found in a book.”

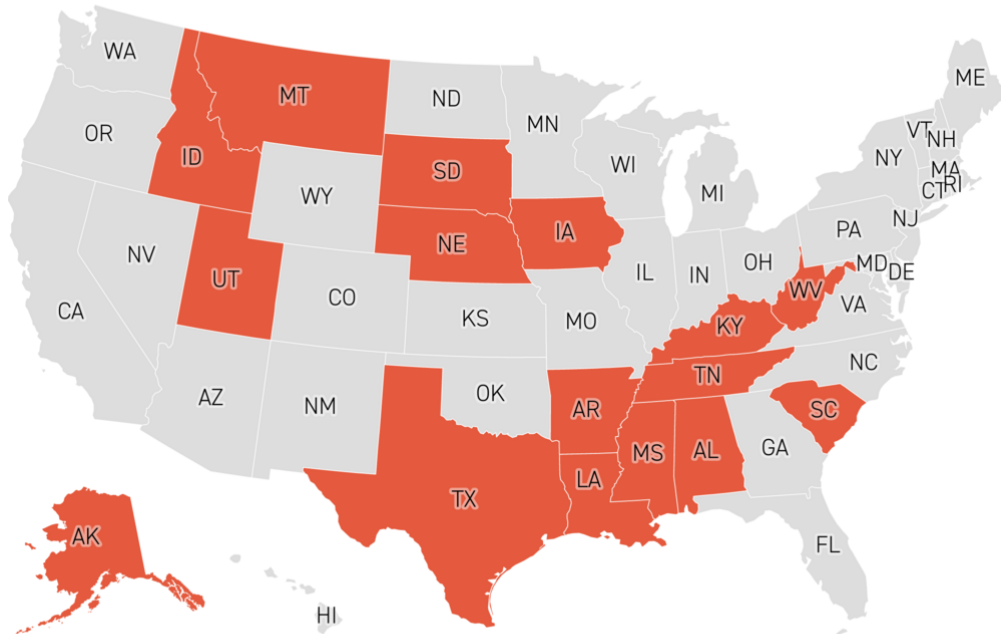
— **What will help?** Jago points to teachers. Jago, who taught English at the middle and high school level for over 30 years, said teachers are a key part in encouraging their students to read outside of the classroom. While parents play a role in encouraging students to read, Jago says at the end of the day it’s up to teachers.

“The kids who come from families where reading books is just what everybody does in the house have a huge step up but the job of a school, of educators, is not to depend on them,” Jago said.

“We can’t blame parents,” Jago said. “It really is the job of the school to help kids.”

16 Republican AGs signed on to a campaign supporting "women's bill of rights" laws

Attorneys general who want to define gender by biological characteristics



Source: Women's Bill of Rights
Taylor Miller Thomas/POLITICO

Women's Bill of Rights Taylor Miller Thomas/Politico

WOMEN'S BILL OF RIGHTS — States have moved to define what it means to be “female” and “male” in state law this past legislative session. Kansas became the first state to pass one of the broadest restrictions on transgender people in the country, with a law that defines a “woman” by a person’s reproductive biology at birth. Tennessee and Montana followed with similar laws and attorney generals across 16 states have committed their support for “Women’s Bill of Rights” legislation.

— **At the federal level, congressional Republicans** introduced a resolution in May 2022 by the same name as a direct rebuke of the Biden administration’s efforts to codify protections for transgender students, though advocates in favor of the proposal say it is not meant to eliminate anyone’s rights. The resolution, which has since been reintroduced this Congress, would define “sex” in federal law as a person’s “biological sex (either male or female) at birth.”

[Bianca and Taylor Miller Thomas have more details.](#)

BREATH IN. BREATH OUT. — Required meditative breathing exercises are coming to NYC schools. Teachers across New York City public schools (and schools around the nation) are already leading their students in meditative breathing practices, but the practice will soon be required.

— **Next school year**, all public school officials, from pre-K through 12th grade, will lead two to five minutes of mindful breathing practices in schools every day, [POLITICO's Madina Touré reports](#).

— **The directive comes as New York City Mayor Eric Adams** follows up on a goal outlined in his State of the City address to push for a “whole-child approach to education.” He said the city would initiate a new program centered on daily breathing exercises and mindfulness exercises.

— **What this looks like in schools:** “Some schools will do it in their advisory periods, many of them will be doing it in their physical education classes, some will do it at their town halls in the morning before the kids go to class,” Schools Chancellor David Banks said. “We’re not mandating when, we’re making some suggestions but we’re leaving it up to the leadership at the school to determine the best place to make it fit.”

HIGHER EDUCATION

ON NAME, IMAGE AND LIKENESS — The NCAA is reiterating its assertion that its college athletics rules on NIL should supersede state laws if they’re in conflict, per a new memo sent to its member schools on Tuesday [obtained by The Athletic](#). NIL rights of college athletes have long been a point of contention for the organization.

— **From NCAA executive vice president of regulatory affairs Stan Wilcox's memo:** “The Association has been clear and maintains that schools must adhere to NCAA legislation (or policy) when it conflicts with permissive state laws. In other words, if a state law permits certain institutional action and NCAA legislation prohibits the same action, institutions must follow NCAA legislation.”

— **It's about fairness:** In Wilcox's memo, he asserts that since NCAA rules are adopted by member schools it's “not fair” to schools that

follow the rules that other schools may flout those rules.

REPORT ROUNDUP

ICYMI: A new [report from the Council of Chief State School Officers](#) details how states are using their K-12 federal Covid-19 relief funds on teacher recruitment and retention.

ON THE CALENDAR

Looks quiet out there.

Did we miss anything? Email educalendar@politicopro.com.

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