

The Beat Goes On:

The Latest NAEP Scores Disappoint but Don't Surprise

John Merrifield
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We haven't addressed the [roots](#) of the current system's performance deficit, and yet hope triumphs over experience that changes in funding, or changes in personnel in positions of authority, will yield noteworthy improvement; that is, it triumphs until there is [more evidence to report](#). Then we wring our hands, make symbolic changes that give the low information voters the impression that something helpful will be done, and hope, again, that this time it will make a difference. Yes, the latest National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP - "the nation's report card") scores are out. Those new scores show, again, what we've [seen for years](#). Overall, we're not seeing any of the improvement from a very low '[Nation at Risk](#)' starting point that we desperately need.

Unfortunately, a related, persistent hope triumphing over experience dominates the menu of proposals to improve school system performance. There are no central planning success stories, anywhere, period. When experts, and I mean real experts, command/plan what will be produced, how it will be produced, where, and for whom, disaster quickly ensues. What experts know is just a fraction of what needs to be known on a continuous changing basis for their commands to not seriously mess things up. We see that mess in education, worldwide, where the best school systems are [not much better than the 51 U.S. school systems](#), and that's pretty bad. Some true leaders, and some supporters, need to recognize that [decentralized planning](#) – producer and consumer freedom orchestrated by changing market prices - does produce efficient outcomes, which we can tweak a bit to pursue other objectives. Proposals that do not recognize that have a [low upside](#).