



## Mississippi Learning

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“Thank God for Mississippi” was something I heard a lot in my younger years, after moving to Arkansas. Friends from Alabama and Louisiana also know the saying well.

Back then, Mississippi was ranked 50th in so many categories by which the states were measured against each other that the Magnolia State saved those inhabiting states near the bottom from occupying that un-coveted *dead last* place.

This was still the case in 2005, when Mississippi [ranked](#) 50th in fourth-grade reading scores. In 2013, Mississippi students climbed one rung, to 49th. Then things started to [change](#).

“The transformation began in 2013 with the passage of the Literacy-Based Promotion Act, a controversial law that allows schools to hold back students who cannot

read by third grade,” WAPT, Jackson’s ABC-TV affiliate, recently [reported](#).

“The curriculum shifted from balanced literacy to a phonics-forward approach,” WAPT explained, “and the state invested millions into phonics-based instruction, strict accountability measures, and instructional coaches who work inside schools daily.”

*Imagine going back to the way generations were taught to read and, lo and behold, it still works!!!*

“Results from the 2024 National Assessment of Educational Progress showed Mississippi fourth graders ranked 9th in the nation for reading scores and 16th in the nation for math scores,” the TeachMS website [informs](#). “Since 2013, that same category of students ranks No. 1 nationally for *gains* in reading and math.”

“Mississippi has skyrocketed on national tests, while blue states lag,” acknowledged a *New York Times* [account](#) earlier this year, adding that “adjusted for poverty and other student demographics, Mississippi is No. 1 for fourth grade reading and math, and at or near the top in eighth grade, according to the Urban Institute, a left-leaning think tank.”

Thank God for Mississippi.

This is Common Sense. I’m Paul Jacob.