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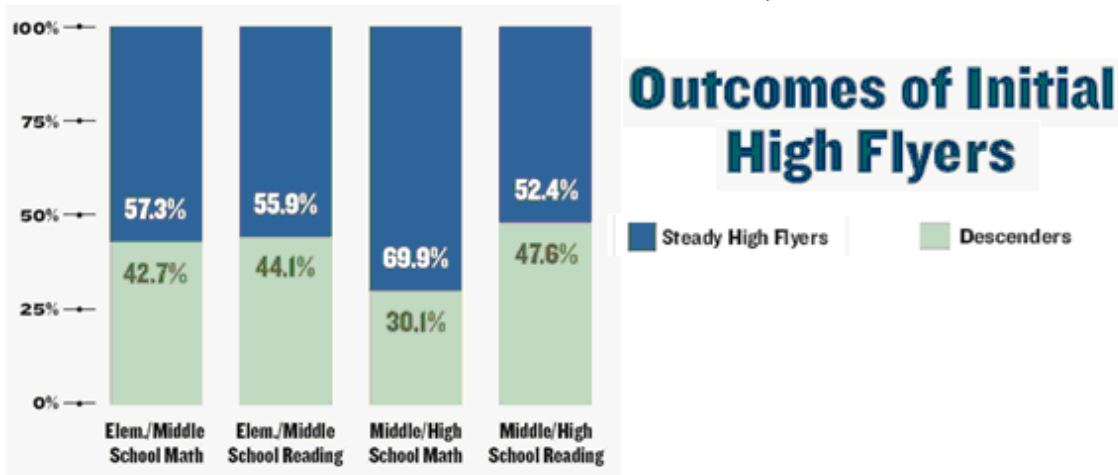
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**MANY TOP STUDENTS LOSE THEIR EDGE**

*High achievers also make lesser gains in reading than their lower-performing peers*

WASHINGTON—A new Thomas B. Fordham Institute study released today finds that 30 to 50 percent of America’s best students fail to maintain their elite performance over time. Analysts also find that high-achieving students fail to improve as quickly in reading as their low-achieving and average peers.

Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) analysts Yun Xiang, Michael Dahlin, John Cronin, Robert Theaker, and Sarah Durant authored the study, *Do High Flyers Maintain Their Performance: Performance Trends of Top Students*. They examined more than 120,000 students in 1,500+ schools located in most states. By following individual pupil progress in math and reading from third to eighth grade in one cohort, and from sixth to tenth grade in another, they were able to gauge the academic growth of the country’s highest achievers. The study sought to determine whether these “high flyers”—originally scoring at or above the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile—“maintain their altitude” over time? The answer? While most did, almost half did not.



“If America is to remain internationally competitive, secure and prosperous,” said Chester E. Finn, Jr., Fordham’s president, “we need to maximize the potential of all our children, including those at the top of the class. Today’s policy debate largely ignores this ‘talented tenth.’ This study shows that we’re paying a heavy price for that neglect, as so many of our high flyers drift downward over the course of their academic careers.”

The study builds on [previous research](#) by the Fordham Institute and Tom Loveless that showed stagnant performance by high-achieving students during the No Child Left Behind era. “We can’t allow up to half of our nation’s brightest students to fall from the high-achieving ranks. Their academic plight is no less critical to America’s future than the plights of their struggling peers,” said Fordham vice president Michael J. Petrilli.

Funding for the study was made possible by the Kern Family Foundation and the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation. For further information about this study, and the Fordham Institute, please visit us online at [www.edexcellence.net](http://www.edexcellence.net). To contact NWEA, call or email Elizabeth Partoyan at (202) 422-6627 or [partoyan@collaborativecommunications.com](mailto:partoyan@collaborativecommunications.com).