

Arts 2008

Music & Visual Arts

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS AT GRADE 8

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What is The Nation's Report Card™?

The Nation's Report Card™ informs the public about the academic achievement of elementary and secondary students in the United States. Report cards communicate the findings of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a continuing and nationally representative measure of achievement in various subjects over time.

Since 1969, NAEP assessments have been conducted periodically in reading, mathematics, science, writing, U.S. history, civics, geography, the arts, and other subjects. NAEP collects and reports information on student performance at the national, state, and local levels,

making the assessment an integral part of our nation's evaluation of the condition and progress of education. Only academic achievement data and related background information are collected. The privacy of individual students and their families is protected.

NAEP is a congressionally authorized project of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) within the Institute of Education Sciences of the U.S. Department of Education. The Commissioner of Education Statistics is responsible for carrying out the NAEP project. The National Assessment Governing Board oversees and sets policy for NAEP.

Executive Summary

This report presents the results of the 2008 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in the arts, which was given to a nationally representative sample of 7,900 eighth-grade public and private school students. Approximately one-half of these students were assessed in music, and the other half were assessed in visual arts.

The **MUSIC** portion of the assessment measured students' ability to respond to music in various ways. Students were asked to analyze and describe aspects of music they heard, critique instrumental and vocal performances, and demonstrate their knowledge of standard musical notation and music's role in society. One question, for example, asked students to identify the instrument they heard in the beginning solo of "Rhapsody in Blue" that was played for them.

The average responding score for music was reported on a NAEP scale of 0 to 300. Scores ranged from 105 for the lowest-performing students to 194 for the highest-performing students.

The **VISUAL ARTS** portion of the assessment included questions that measured students' ability to respond to art as well as questions that measured their ability to create art. Responding questions asked students to analyze and describe works of art and design. For example, students were asked to describe specific differences in how certain parts of an artist's self-portrait were drawn. The average responding score for visual arts was reported on a NAEP scale of 0 to 300 with scores ranging from 104 for the lowest-performing students to 193 for the highest-performing students.

Creating questions, on the other hand, required students to create works of art and design of their own. For example, students were asked to create a self-portrait that was scored for identifying detail, compositional elements, and use of materials. The average creating task score for visual arts was reported separately as the average percentage of the maximum possible score from 0 to 100 with a national average of 52. In general, students who performed well on the responding questions also performed well on the creating questions.





Racial/ethnic and gender gaps evident in both music and visual arts

Although the results for music and visual arts are reported separately and cannot be compared, some general patterns in differences between student groups were similar in the two disciplines.

- Average responding scores in both music and visual arts were 22 to 32 points higher for White and Asian/Pacific Islander students than for Black and Hispanic students. The creating task scores in visual arts were also higher for White and Asian/Pacific Islander students than for their Black and Hispanic peers.
- Average responding scores for female students were 10 points higher than for male students in music and 11 points higher in visual arts. Female students also outperformed male students in creating visual art.

Frequency of arts instruction remains steady

In 2008, fifty-seven percent of eighth-graders attended schools where music instruction was offered at least three or four times a week, and 47 percent attended schools where visual arts

instruction was offered at least as often. There were no statistically significant changes since 1997 in the percentages of students attending schools offering instruction in music or visual arts with varying frequency.

There were also no significant differences found between the percentages of students in different racial/ethnic or gender groups attending schools with varying opportunities for instruction in either music or visual arts in 2008.

COMPARISONS BETWEEN 1997 AND 2008

Although the questions in the 2008 assessment were taken from those administered in the 1997 arts assessment, some of the scoring procedures could not be replicated in 2008. Therefore, comparisons cannot be made between students' scores in those two years. However, comparisons can be made for the percentages of students who responded correctly to the multiple-choice questions in the assessment, and the percentages of students based on responses to background questions that were asked in both years.

Examples of What Students Know and Can Do in the Arts

Music

- 71%** correctly identified a symphony orchestra as the type of ensemble that played a piece of music
- 52%** were able to identify Africa as the region of origin for a musical excerpt and could describe a characteristic of the music's style
- 20%** were able to identify the name of a piano dynamic marking and explain its meaning

Visual Arts

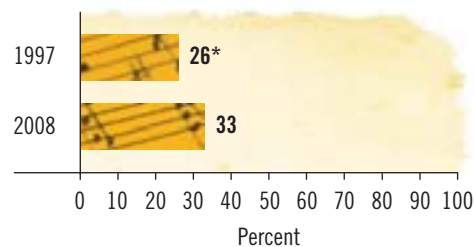
- 53%** were able to describe specific differences in how certain parts of an artist's self-portrait were drawn
- 34%** were able to describe two characteristics of the medium of charcoal as used in an artist's self-portrait
- 19%** were able to connect the formal characteristics of an artist's self-portrait with what the artist was trying to communicate

More students writing down music and writing about their artwork in arts classes

The percentage of eighth-grade students who reported being asked by their teacher to write down music in music class showed an increase from 26 percent in 1997 to 33 percent in 2008 (figure A). However, the percentages of students who reported engaging in other activities such as listening to music, singing, playing instruments, working on group assignments, and making up their own music in 2008 were not found to be significantly different from the percentages of students in 1997.

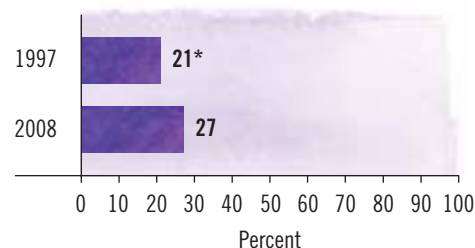
The percentage of eighth-grade students who were asked by their teacher to write about their artwork in visual arts class increased from 21 percent in 1997 to 27 percent in 2008 (figure B). The percentage of students whose teacher had them choose their own art project, on the other hand, decreased from 47 percent to 39 percent over the same period. Additionally, the percentage of students who reported visiting an art museum, gallery, or exhibit with their class decreased from 22 percent in 1997 to 16 percent in 2008. There were no significant changes for other activities such as painting or drawing, making things out of clay or other materials, or working in pairs or groups.

Figure A. Percentage of students at grade 8 who are asked to write down music at least once a month in music class: 1997 and 2008



* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2008.

Figure B. Percentage of students at grade 8 who are asked to write about their artwork at least once a month in art class: 1997 and 2008



* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2008.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1997 and 2008 Arts Assessments.

Introduction

The 2008 NAEP arts assessment measured students' knowledge and skills in the arts by asking them to observe, describe, analyze, and evaluate existing works of music and visual art and to create original works of visual art.

The Eighth-Grade Arts Assessment

The Arts Framework

The NAEP arts framework serves as the blueprint for the assessment, describing the specific knowledge and skills that should be assessed in the arts disciplines. Developed under the guidance of the National Assessment Governing Board, the framework reflects the input of arts educators, artists, assessment specialists, policymakers, representatives from the business community, and members of the public. The *National Standards for Arts Education*¹ also served as an important reference in the development of the NAEP arts framework.

The framework specifies that students' arts knowledge and skills be measured in four *arts disciplines*: dance, music, theatre, and visual arts. Additionally, three *arts processes*—responding, creating, and performing—are central to students' experiences in these disciplines. While the responding process refers to observing, describing,

analyzing, and evaluating works of art, the creating process refers to expressing ideas and feelings in the form of an original work of art. Due to budget constraints, only the responding process in music and both the responding and creating processes in visual arts were assessed in 2008.

To learn more about the arts framework, visit <http://www.nagb.org/publications/frameworks/arts-framework08.pdf>.

Assessment Design

Because of the breadth of content covered in the NAEP arts assessment, each student was assessed in only one arts discipline, either music or visual arts.

The responding process in music and visual arts was assessed with multiple-choice questions and constructed-response questions that required students to produce answers of a few words or sentences. The constructed-response questions that assessed the creating process included questions that required students to generate written answers and to create original works of visual art.

¹ *National Standards for Arts Education* (1994). Reston, Virginia: Music Educators National Conference.



Scoring Students' Work in the Arts

One of the challenges of the arts assessment was scoring students' work. Specific scoring guides were developed for the responding questions in music and the responding and creating questions in visual arts. Scorers were then trained to apply these criteria appropriately when evaluating students' responses that demonstrated a wide range of skill levels in music and visual arts.

The scoring guides for the sample questions presented in this report, and other released questions from the assessment, are available in the NAEP Questions Tool at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/itmrls/>.

Reporting Arts Results

The results in this report are based on a nationally representative sample of 7,900 eighth-grade students from 260 public and private schools. Approximately one-half of these students were assessed in music, and the other half were assessed in visual arts.

Because music and visual arts are two distinct disciplines, results are reported separately for

each area and cannot be compared. The average responding scores for music and visual arts are reported on two separate NAEP scales, each ranging from 0 to 300. The average creating task score for visual arts is reported as the average percentage of the maximum possible score ranging from 0 to 100. The arts assessment results cannot be reported in terms of the NAEP achievement levels (*Basic*, *Proficient*, and *Advanced*) given the complex and diverse nature of the assessment tasks both within and across the arts disciplines.

Comparisons Between 1997 and 2008

Although the questions in the 2008 assessment were taken from those administered in the previous arts assessment in 1997, not all of the results can be compared between the two years (see the Technical Notes for more information). While comparisons across years cannot be made for the average responding and creating task scores, the percentages of students' correct responses to the multiple-choice questions in 2008 can be compared to those in 1997. These results are provided in appendix table A-3 for music and table A-4 for visual arts.

Accommodations and Exclusions in NAEP

Testing accommodations (for example, providing students with extra testing time or administering the assessment to students individually rather than in a group) are made available for students with disabilities and for English language learners participating in NAEP. Even with the availability of accommodations, a portion of these students was excluded from the NAEP arts assessment by their schools. In the 2008 arts assessment, overall exclusion rates for students with disabilities and/or English language learners were 2 percent of all students for music and for visual arts (see appendix table A-6).

More information about NAEP's policy on the inclusion of special-needs students is available at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/about/inclusion.asp>.



Interpreting Results

NAEP uses widely accepted statistical standards for presenting and discussing results. Findings are reported based on statistical significance at the .05 level using *t*-tests with appropriate adjustments for multiple comparisons (using the False Discovery Rate procedure). Results that are reported to be “higher” or “lower” have been found to be statistically significant.

In addition to the overall results for eighth-graders in the nation, performance is presented for different student groups. These results should not be used to establish a cause-and-effect relationship between background characteristics and achievement. A complex mix of education and socioeconomic factors may affect student performance.

For additional information about interpreting results, see the Technical Notes section of this report or visit <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/tdw/analysis/infer.asp>.