



## FAQs:About

### What subjects does NCES assess with NAEP?

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Since 1969, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has informed the public about what elementary and secondary students in the United States know and can do in various subjects areas, including the [arts](#), [civics](#), [economics](#), [geography](#), [mathematics](#), [reading](#), [science](#), [technology and engineering literacy](#), [U.S. history](#), and [writing](#).

The National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) is an independent, bipartisan board whose members set policy for the NAEP program. The board is responsible for determining when each subject will be assessed. It also develops the [frameworks](#) that provide the blueprint for the content and design of each assessment. The frameworks are developed for each subject area through a collaborative development process among teachers, curriculum specialists, subject-matter specialists, school administrators, parents, and members of the public.

### Why has NAEP transitioned to digitally based assessments instead of remaining paper-and-pencil based?

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As computers and digital tools play an increasingly important role in today's classrooms, NAEP is transitioning to digital assessments. These innovative assessments will expand and enrich our understanding of what students know and are able to do while also informing the development of future assessments. Beginning in 2017, the NAEP [mathematics](#), [reading](#), and [writing](#) assessments were administered to students throughout the nation on NAEP-provided tablets. Additional subjects will be administered on tablets in 2018 and 2019.

### What is the difference between NAEP and standardized state assessments?

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Most state tests measure student performance on the state's own curriculum standards. Curriculum standards are what policymakers and citizens consider important for students to know and be able to do. State tests allow comparison of results over time within the state, and in most cases, give individual student scores to allow parents to track their child's progress. State tests do not provide comparisons of results with other states or the nation. NAEP is the only assessment that allows comparison of results from one state with another, or with results nationwide.

It is important to note that the term "proficiency" used in relation to performance on state tests does not have the same meaning as the term [Proficient](#) on the NAEP [achievement levels](#) because the criteria used to determine proficiency are different.

While the two assessment types differ in substantial ways, state achievement tests and NAEP help educators and policymakers develop a comprehensive picture of student performance.

The NAEP program helps states answer questions such as these:

- How does the performance of students in my state compare with the performance of students in other states with similar resources or students?
- How does my state's performance compare with the region's?
- Are my state's gains in student performance keeping up with the pace of improvement in other states?

## How are the questions on the assessment developed?

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Using the framework developed by the National Assessment Governing Board, NAEP assessment questions (or items) are collaboratively developed and then reviewed by educators, parents, and experts for feedback and revision. Learn more about the question development phase of the Assessment Process. For technical details on developing the assessments, see [NAEP Instruments](#).

## How are schools and students selected to participate in NAEP?

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NAEP measures the academic performance of the nation's students at grades 4, 8, and 12 by assessing a representative sample of the nation's students. To ensure that a representative sample of students is assessed, NAEP is given in a sample of schools whose students reflect the varying demographics of a specific jurisdiction, be it the nation, a state, or a district. Within each selected school and grade to be assessed, students are chosen at random to participate in NAEP. Every student has the same chance of being chosen—regardless of race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, status as an English language learner, or any other factors.

Learn more about the [selection process](#). For technical details, read about the [NAEP Assessment Sample Design](#).

## How many students participate in each assessment?

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The size of the sample of students varies based on whether the assessment is intended to report results for the nation as a whole or the nation, states, and districts that participate in the Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA). For assessments to report national results, the sample is between 10,000 and 20,000 students. For assessment reporting results for states and the TUDA districts, the sample includes approximately 3,000 students from approximately 100 schools in each participating jurisdiction.

The [numbers of participating schools and students](#) for each recent assessment are available on the website for The Nation's Report Card. You can find technical information about this in the [Study Design and the Data Collection Plan](#).

## Why is participation in NAEP important?

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NAEP is not administered in all schools. The schools and students selected to participate in NAEP represent the demographic and geographic composition of the nation as a whole. The participation of selected schools and students is critical to ensuring accurate performance estimates for different groups of students in states and

districts across the country.

Teachers, principals, parents, policymakers, and researchers all use NAEP results to assess progress and develop ways to improve education in the United States. NAEP can help provide answers to such important questions as:

How has student performance in academic subjects changed over time?

Is the performance gap closing between demographic groups (e.g., between White students and Black students, or between National School Lunch Program eligible students and noneligible students)?

How do students in your state compare with students across the nation in their performance on NAEP assessments?

## How are students with disabilities and English language learners included in the assessment?

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Accommodations in the testing environment or administration procedures are available for SD and ELL students. Some accommodations are actually built-in features—or Universal Design Elements—of the digitally based assessments that are available to all students. Other accommodations are available upon request. Every jurisdiction decides what accommodations the students in that jurisdiction are eligible to receive.

The [percentages of students identified, excluded, and assessed in recent NAEP assessments](#) is available on The Nation's Report Card website.

## Do students require specific instruction for taking an assessment on a tablet?

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Each assessment begins with a short tutorial that teaches students about the system and introduces the on-screen interactive tools for students to use during the assessment. Some of the tools may be familiar to the students, while others may be unique to the NAEP assessment.

Some parts of the tutorials are the same across subjects, while other parts are specific to each subject. For example, because mathematics uses different tools at each grade, there are different tutorials for each grade in mathematics.

You can now experience the same tutorial, either by tablet or computer, shown to students at the beginning of a NAEP assessment.

## How is my state or district performing?

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The following are a variety of tools available to further explore NAEP state results:

- The [state profiles](#) tool provides data for each state and links to one-page, printable summaries of state performance (known as “snapshots”).
- The [district profiles](#) tool provides data for each district and generates “district snapshots,” or a summary of district performance.
- The [NAEP Data Explorer](#) allows users to search for state results by student demographic groups and hundreds of other variables. Trend data in mathematics and reading are available for all 50 states back to 2003, and for most states back to the first state assessment in the 1990s at grades 4 and 8, and back to 2009 for 11 states at grade 12.

## Are the data confidential?

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Under the [National Assessment of Educational Progress Authorization Act](#) (Public Law 107-279 III, section 303), the Commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is charged with ensuring that NAEP tests do not question test takers about personal or family beliefs or make information about their personal identity publicly available.

After publishing NAEP reports, NCES makes data available to researchers but withholds students' names and other identifying information. The names of all participating students are not allowed to leave the schools after NAEP assessments are administered. Because it might be possible to deduce from data the identities of some NAEP schools, researchers must promise under penalty of fines and jail terms to keep these identities confidential.

## Are results for individual students and schools reported?

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No. By design, information is not available at the individual student or school levels. Reports traditionally disclose state, regional, and national results. In 2002, NAEP began to report (on a trial basis) results from several large urban districts ([Trial Urban District Assessments](#)) after the release of state and national results. Because NAEP is a large-group assessment, each student takes only a small part of the overall assessment. In most schools, only a small portion of the total grade enrollment is selected to take the assessment, and these students may not reliably or validly represent their total school population. Only when the student scores are aggregated at the state or national level are the data considered reliable and valid estimates of what students know and can do in the content area.

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