

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Questions and Answers



What is NAEP?

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is often referred to as the "Nation's Report Card" because it supplies a biennial benchmark that can be used by educators, parents, the public, and policymakers to track how the nation/states/trial urban districts perform when measured/assessed on the NAEP assessment frameworks developed by the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB). NAEP provides reliable "snapshots" of education at the time of each assessment and across time. NAEP also provides comparisons and identification of gaps between subgroups of students.

NAEP measures, compares, and reports changes in student achievement in states, a number of selected urban districts that participate in the Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA), and other jurisdictions based on national, state, and district (for TUDA districts only) representative samples of students at a representative sample of schools in Grades 4, 8, and 12. The results are widely reported by national and local media and are available on the NAEP website at <http://www.nationsreportcard.gov/>.

Why is NAEP administered?

NAEP is administered because it:

- monitors what students know and can do in various subject areas;
- serves as a benchmark based on national levels of proficiency;
- reports representative state-level results in selected subject areas;
- measures student achievement across selected urban districts; and
- enables states to monitor their progress over time and to compare results of their students with students within their region, in other states, and across the nation.

What is the basis for NAEP?

Each NAEP assessment is built around an organized framework that serves as a guide for the development of an assessment tool in a specific subject area and determines the content to be assessed. The frameworks are not meant to serve as a national curriculum, but rather as a broadly accepted outline of what the National Assessment should test. Frameworks are developed through a comprehensive, inclusive, and deliberative national consensus process involving hundreds of teachers, curriculum experts, policymakers, business representatives, members of the general public, and the latest advances in assessment methodology. Educational practices, the results of educational research, and changes in curricula are also considered.

Frameworks provide a basic conceptual structure or vision of how to capture data on what students should know and be able to do. They provide recommendations on the content to be assessed, the types of assessment questions, and the administration of the assessment. After a framework is approved by the National Assessment Governing Board

(NAGB¹), the framework is then used by the NAEP contractor to develop an assessment. This same procedure is followed for each of the subjects NAEP assesses.

Who participates in NAEP?

A representative sample of Grade 4, 8, and 12 students in 52 jurisdictions (the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Department of Defense Education Activity schools) and selected urban districts participate in NAEP. Each participating student takes only a small portion of the overall assessment. While student participation in NAEP is voluntary, and parents must be informed that students may decline to participate in NAEP in part or in its entirety, school participation is required as part of *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB).

How are schools and students selected to participate in NAEP?

NAEP selects a sample of students who adequately reflect the student population, resulting in a representative sample of students for each assessment given within the state. This is achieved through a three-stage process:

1. A representative sample of schools is selected.
2. Within each selected school, a sample of students is selected (although sometimes all students are tested).
3. When NAEP assesses more than one subject within a given assessment cycle, each sampled student is assigned to only one of these subjects and one booklet of that assessment.

The school sample is designed and selected with two related goals in mind. The first goal is to ensure that the sample is representative of the different kinds of schools within the state. The characteristics considered in this process are urban/rural status, the socioeconomic status of the students, the proportion of racial and ethnic minorities, and the school standing on statewide achievement tests. The relative emphasis on each characteristic varies by state, as some states are more diverse than others. The second goal is to ensure that the resulting sample of students contains a representative cross-section of the student population within the state. It is important to remember that NAEP samples schools as a vehicle to obtain a representative sample of students.

When is NAEP administered?

Main NAEP is administered biennially in odd-numbered-years, between the last week in January and the first week in March. Field tests and pilot studies are conducted during the same timeframe in the even-numbered years. Every four years, during even-numbered years, the Long-term Trend (LTT) assessment is administered to 13 year-old students in the fall, 9 year-old students in the winter, and 17 year-old students in the spring. The High School Transcript Study (HSTS) is conducted in August every four years.

How much time does it take to administer NAEP?

Students spend approximately 90 minutes participating in NAEP. Some of that time is spent answering background questions; the rest is spent on the actual assessment as well as assessment directions. The assessment **must** be completed in one day.

¹ Information about NAGB is provided at the end of this document.

Do students with disabilities (SD) and/or English language learners (ELL) receive accommodations for NAEP?

Yes. Students with disabilities (SD) who participate in the FCAT are encouraged to participate in NAEP, unless NAEP does not allow accommodations specified in the students' Individual Education Plan (IEP) or Section 504 Plan.

An English language learner (ELL) is tested if the student has been receiving reading or mathematics instruction in English for more than one school year **and** the student can demonstrate his or her knowledge of reading or mathematics in English with or without allowed accommodations.

The most frequent accommodations used for NAEP include:

- extra testing time;
- individual or small group administrations;
- large print booklets; and/or
- mathematics questions read aloud.

NAEP does **not** allow the passages or questions on the NAEP reading assessment to be read aloud. There is an increased effort to include as many SD and ELL students in NAEP as possible; to decrease exclusions. Because percentages of students excluded from NAEP may vary considerably across states and within a state across years, comparisons of results across and within states should be interpreted with caution.

Do students receive individual NAEP results?

No. There are no individual student, school, or district results (unless the district is one of the 18 TUDA districts) because only a sample of Florida's Grade 4, 8, and 12 students participate in NAEP and each participating student takes only a small portion of the overall assessment. There are state-level results at Grades 4 and 8.

When are NAEP results released?

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is required to release the biennial NAEP results in reading and mathematics within six months of the assessment ending date in early March of the odd-numbered years. Those results are usually released by mid-October. National assessment results are usually not available until a year after the assessment.

Are the NAEP results available on the Internet?

Yes. The NAEP Data Explorer (NDE) analyzes the NAEP data and provides educators, researchers, government officials, parents, students, and the media access to detailed results. In addition, the NDE creates statistical tables and graphics that answer questions about the academic performance of the nation's students and factors that relate to student learning. This information is available at <http://www.nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/>.

How are NAEP scores reported?

NAEP scores are reported in two ways.

1. Scale Scores

Scale scores provide a comparison of student performance with regard to a group (e.g., the nation) or a subgroup (e.g., ELL) on a set of items. They indicate how much students *know and can do* in a particular subject. Scale score ranges

- for reading and mathematics is 0–500
- for science and writing is 0–300

NAEP scale scores, because they are reported as an average for groups of students, may obscure progress or problems related to student performance across a distribution of scores (Simpson's Paradox).

2. Achievement Levels

NAEP achievement levels seek to identify what *students should know and be able to do* at various achievement levels. Results show how different groups are performing in relation to each other and over time. The achievement level categories are *Advanced*, *Proficient*, and *Basic*. Each level is determined by cut points established by professional educators and the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB).

NAEP Achievement Level descriptions:

Advanced	Superior performance at each grade assessed
Proficient	Solid academic performance for each grade assessed. Students reaching this level have demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter, including subject-matter knowledge, application of such knowledge to real-world situations, and analytical skills appropriate to the subject matter.
Basic	Partial mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient work at each grade assessed

Below *Basic* is reported for those students whose scores fall below the cut score for *Basic*, but is not considered to be an achievement level.

Because NAEP scale scores and achievement levels are developed independently for each subject and each grade, student performance cannot be compared across subjects or grades. However, these reporting metrics facilitate performance comparisons within a subject from year to year and from one group of students to another in the same grade.

What are NAEP test items like?

Reading and mathematics assessments include multiple-choice, short-response, and extended-response items. Some of the math assessments include calculators or manipulatives such as rulers, geometric shapes, etc. The writing assessment has two prompts, and the science assessment includes multiple-choice, short-response, and extended-response items as well as a hands-on experiment for half of the participating students.

Have NAEP assessment items been released?

Yes. After every assessment cycle, NAEP releases a portion of the main assessment. The NAEP Questions Tool provides easy access to NAEP questions, student responses, and scoring guides. The tool also allows users to print selected questions and all their relevant information. The NAEP Questions Tool is available at <http://www.nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/itmrls/startsearch.asp>, and its purpose is to provide teachers, researchers, and educators greater access to NAEP assessment items to facilitate understanding of and preparation for the assessment.

The information below shows which subject test items, in which grades were released between 1996 and 2008.

- 1996—Mathematics, Grades 4, 8, and 12
- 1998—Civics, reading, and writing, Grades 4, 8, and 12
- 2000—Science, Grades 4, 8, and 12
Reading, Grade 4
- 2001—Geography and history, Grades 4, 8, and 12
- 2002—Reading and writing, Grades 4, 8, and 12
- 2003—Mathematics and reading, Grades 4 and 8
- 2004—Reading and mathematics, ages 9, 13, and 17
- 2005—Mathematics, reading, and science, Grades 4, 8, and 12
- 2006—Economics, Grade 12
Civics and U.S. history, Grades 4, 8, and 12
- 2007—Mathematics, reading, and writing, Grades 4, 8, and 12
- 2008—Reading and mathematics, ages 9, 13, and 17

How many times has NAEP been administered?

Prior to 1990, NAEP was administered as a national assessment. The chronology of National NAEP from its inception in 1969 until 1988 is as follows:

1969-70	Citizenship, science, writing
1970-71	Literature, reading
1971-72	Music, social studies
1972-73	Mathematics, science
1973-74	Career/occupational development and writing
1974-75	Art, index of basic skills, reading
1975-76	Citizenship/social studies, mathematics
1976-77	Basic life skills, science
1977-78	Consumer skills, mathematics
1978-79	Art, music, writing
1979-80	Reading, literature, art
1981-82	Mathematics, science, citizenship, social studies
1984	Reading, writing
1986	Computer competence, U.S. history, literature, mathematics, science, reading
1988	Civics, document literacy, geography, U.S. history, reading, writing

NAEP state assessments began in 1990. There are national results for all of the assessments noted in the table below. The grade numbers with an asterisk indicate the years Florida received state-level results. Florida did not participate in state NAEP in 2000 because that was the first year FCAT was administered in Grades 3 through 10.

	Reading	Math	Science	Writing	Civics	Geography	U.S. History
1990		Grades 4, 8*, 12					
1992	Grades 4*, 8, 12	Grades 4*, 8*, 12					
1994	Grades 4*, 8, 12					Grades 4, 8, 12	Grades 4, 8, 12
1996		Grades 4*, 8*, 12	Grades 4, 8*, 12				
1998	Grades 4*, 8*, 12			Grades 4*, 8*, 12	Grades 4, 8, 12		
2000	Grade 4	Grades 4, 8, 12	Grades 4, 8, 12				
2001						Grades 4, 8, 12	Grades 4, 8, 12
2002	Grades 4*, 8*, 12			Grades 4*, 8*, 12			
2003	Grades 4*, 8*	Grades 4*, 8*					
2005	Grades 4*, 8*, 12	Grades 4*, 8*, 12	Grades 4*, 8*, 12				
2006					Grades 4, 8, 12		Grades 4, 8, 12
2007	Grades 4*, 8*, 12	Grades 4*, 8*		Grades 8*, 12			
2009	Grades 4*, 8*, 12*	Grades 4*, 8*, 12*	Grades 4*, 8*, 12				

Also, in 1997 and 2008, the arts assessment was administered at Grade 8, and in 2006, an economics assessment was administered at Grade 12. The Long-term Trend assessment was administered in reading and mathematics in 1990, 1992, 1994, 1996, 1999, 2004, and 2008.

What is the schedule for future administrations of NAEP?

The schedule below was approved by the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) on May 16, 2009. The asterisks indicate the years Florida will receive state-level results.

	Reading	Math	Science	Writing	Civics	Geography	U.S. History
2010		Grades 4, 8		Grades 8, 12	Grades 4, 8, 12	Grades 4, 8, 12	Grades 4, 8, 12
2011	Grades 4*, 8*	Grades 4*, 8*		Grades 4*, 8, 12			
2013	Grades 4*, 8*, 12	Grades 4*, 8*, 12	Grades 4*, 8*, 12				
2014					Grades 4, 8, 12	Grades 4, 8, 12	Grades 4, 8, 12
2015	Grades 4*, 8*	Grades 4*, 8*		Grades 4*, 8*, 12			
2017	Grades 4*, 8*, 12	Grades 4*, 8*, 12	Grades 4*, 8*, 12				

Other upcoming assessments include the arts at Grade 8 in 2016, economics at Grade 12 in 2012, and the Long-term Trend in 2012 and 2016.

What is the history of the NAEP program?

- National assessments began in 1969 with science for 9-, 13-, and 17-year-old students.
- Since 1969, NAEP assessments have been conducted in reading, mathematics, science, writing, U.S. history, civics, geography, economics, and the arts.
- State-by-state assessments began in 1990 with Grade 8 mathematics, in 1992 with Grade 4 reading, in 1996 with Grade 8 science, and in 1998 Grade 8 writing.
- Congress created the 26-member National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) in 1988 to set policy for NAEP. Since 1990, NAGB has set levels of achievement—*Basic*, *Proficient*, and *Advanced*—to provide a gauge of how well student achievement matches what students are expected to know and be able to do at different grade levels.
- NAEP began offering accommodations to students with disabilities (SD) and English language learners (ELLs) in 1998.
- In 2001, the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) was passed, requiring states to participate in biennial state NAEP in reading and mathematics at Grades 4 and 8, beginning with the 2002–2003 academic year. The Act also specified that NAEP science and writing would be administered alternately, every four years.
- In 2002, NAEP began district-level assessments, the Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA), in selected large urban school districts on a trial basis. Five large urban districts participated that year, and the group was expanded to nine in 2003, ten in 2005, and 18 in 2009. TUDA assessments occur in the same years

and at the same time as the state NAEP assessments (biennially in odd-numbered years).

What is the legislative authority for NAEP?

NAEP is a federally authorized assessment that is also mandated in Florida Statute. The **No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001** reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The exact wording of the legislation can be found in Public Law 107-110 Title I Part A, section 1111 at <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/index.html>. Additional information can be found at <http://www.ed.gov/nclb>. The exact wording of the **National Assessment of Educational Progress Authorization Act** can be found in the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002, Public Law 107-219 Title III, section 303, available at <http://www.nagb.org/about/plaw.html>.

In the State of Florida, participation in NAEP is mandated by Florida Statute, Section 1008.22(2). The exact wording can be found at http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=Ch1008/SEC22.HTM&Title=-%3e006-%3eCh1008-%3eSection%2022#1008.22

What is the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001?

The *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)*, reauthorized as the *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)*, is to provide an independent insight into each child's progress, as well as each school's. To that end, the Act requires states to administer a state-wide standardized test annually to all students in Grades 3 through 8 and once in high school. The Act also requires states to participate in NAEP, which provides an independent measure of state-level achievement when compared to that of the nation and to the other states.

What is required by NCLB legislation?

NCLB legislation requires that:

- NAEP mathematics and reading assessments be used as national indicators of student mathematics and reading achievement in Grades 4 and 8;
- NAEP reading and mathematics assessments be administered biennially in Grades 4 and 8, beginning in 2003;
- districts with schools included in the sample be required to participate in NAEP if they receive Title I funding; and
- states receiving federal educational funds use the NAEP assessments as a complement to the state assessments.

NCLB also states that:

- the federal government will pay for the administration of all state NAEP assessments;
- a state participating in the biennial reading and mathematics assessments is deemed to have given its permission for the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) to release its results and data;
- there will be no rewards or sanctions to states, local education agencies, or schools based on state NAEP results;

- participation in NAEP is not a substitute for a state's own assessment of its students in Grades 3–8 in reading and mathematics, as required by NCLB; and
- participation in NAEP is voluntary for students, but not schools.

How does NAEP compare with the FCAT?

The primary purpose of the FCAT is to improve classroom instruction, to serve as an accountability tool for assessing student achievement of the Sunshine State Standards (SSS), and to measure annual progress for individual students, schools, districts, and the state. The primary purpose of NAEP is to enable states to monitor their progress over time and to compare the results of their students with students in other states and with the national average. NAEP does not report scores for individual students, schools, or districts (except for the 18 TUDA districts).

In reading and mathematics, FCAT uses a 100–500 scale, and NAEP uses a 0–500 scale to determine scale scores. For science and writing, FCAT uses a 100–500 scale, and NAEP uses a 0–300 scale.

Below is a chart showing the relationship between NAEP and the FCAT achievement levels:

FCAT Achievement Levels	NAEP Achievement Standards
5	<i>Advanced</i>
4	<i>Proficient</i>
3	<i>Basic</i>
1–2	below <i>Basic</i> *

*reported for students whose scores fall below the cut score for *Basic*, but is not considered to be an achievement level

What is TUDA?

The NAEP Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA) was developed to promote education reform in support of the large number of challenged populations enrolled in the schools of our largest urban school districts and to focus attention on the specific challenges associated with urban education. TUDA is designed to explore the feasibility of using NAEP to report on the performance of Grade 4 and 8 public school students at the district level. Only large cities having 250,000 or more population are represented in TUDA. The cities must have a majority (50 percent or more) of students meeting at least one of the following criteria:

- Either African American or Hispanic
- Eligible for participation in the free and reduced-price lunch program

There are presently 18 TUDA districts: Atlanta, Austin, Baltimore, Boston, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Fresno (CA), Houston, Los Angeles, Louisville (KY), Miami (FL), Milwaukee, New York City, Philadelphia, and San Diego. The District of Columbia participates as a TUDA district as a result of its inclusion in the NAEP state assessment program.

What is NAGB?

The National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) is an independent, bipartisan group whose members include governors, state legislators, local and state officials, educators, business representatives, and members of the general public. Congress created the 26-member Governing Board in 1988 to set policy for NAEP—commonly known as “The Nation’s Report Card.” The Secretary of Education appoints NAGB board members, but the board is independent of the U.S. Department of Education. Since 1990, NAGB has set levels of achievement—*Basic*, *Proficient*, and *Advanced*—to provide a gauge of how well student achievement matches what students are expected to know and be able to do at different grade levels.

NAGB develops policies regarding the NAEP assessment and is responsible for the following:

- guiding the development of NAEP frameworks and determining the content to be assessed;
- selecting subject areas to be assessed;
- setting appropriate student achievement levels—*Basic*, *Basic*, *Proficient*, and *Advanced*—to provide a measure of how well students’ achievement matches what they are expected to know and be able to do at Grades 4, 8, and 12;
- developing assessment objectives and test specifications that produce a valid and reliable assessment, and are based on widely accepted professional standards;
- developing assessment methodology;
- developing guidelines for reporting and disseminating results;
- developing standards and procedures for interstate and national comparisons;
- determining appropriateness of assessment items and ensuring that they are free from bias; and
- taking actions to improve the form, content, and use of the national assessment.

NAGB members are appointed by the Secretary of Education. The Board is composed of the following:

- two governors, or former governors, who shall not be members of the same political party;
- two state legislators, who shall not be members of the same political party;
- two chief state school officers;
- one superintendent of a local educational agency (LEA);
- one member of a state board of education;
- three classroom teachers representing the grade levels at which the National Assessment is conducted (Grades 4, 8, and 12);
- one representative of business or industry;
- two curriculum specialists;
- three testing and measurement experts;
- one nonpublic school administrator or policymaker;
- one elementary school principal;
- one secondary school principal;
- two parents who are not employed by a local, state, or federal educational agency;
- two additional members who are representatives of the general public, and who may be parents, but may not be employed by a local, state, or federal educational agency; and

- the Director of the Institute of Education Sciences who serves as an ex officio, nonvoting member.

Where can I find a glossary of assessment terms?

The NAEP Glossary of Terms at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/glossary.asp> provides additional definitions related to assessment.