



Frequently Asked Questions

2018 Field Test



What is TIMSS?

The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) is an international assessment and research project designed to measure trends in mathematics and science achievement at the fourth- and eighth-grade levels as well as school and teacher practices related to instruction. Since 1995, TIMSS has been administered every 4 years. TIMSS 2019, the seventh study in the series, will involve students from more than 60 countries, including the United States. In 2019, for the first time TIMSS will be administered digitally. The electronic version of TIMSS, sometimes called “eTIMSS,” will be on the same scale and directly comparable to the previous paper versions of TIMSS.

What is the field test for?

Field tests are a critical part of the development of assessments like TIMSS. Field tests (small-scale, trial runs of an assessment) allow assessment developers to try out new questions to determine their performance when administered to students around the world. The results of the U.S. field test will help assessment developers determine specific wording or content that may put U.S. students at a disadvantage relative to students in other countries. It will also allow the United States to fine tune operational procedures for the 2019 assessment.

Why was my school selected for participation?

Your school was randomly selected so that the U.S. field test will be representative of the overall U.S. school population. Field-testing with a diverse sample of students from a variety of schools, locations, and backgrounds ensures that the assessment wording and concepts are not regionally, culturally, or socially biased, and to evaluate performance among students with a variety of digital skills.

Why should my school and students participate?

TIMSS informs national discussions about education policy as well as international competitiveness. By participating, students ensure fairness in the questions that will be used in the main study in 2019. Field-testing the assessment questions will identify specific wording and content that could disadvantage U.S. students in the main study. Their participation helps ensure that students in schools like theirs are represented in our evaluation of the transition to eTIMSS. Students' efforts in the field test help ensure that the achievement of our nation's grade 4 and 8 students can be accurately and fairly reported.

Will all our fourth- or eighth-grade students be asked to participate?

It depends on the number of fourth- or eighth-grade classrooms in the school. In schools with only one or two such classrooms, all students will be asked to participate. In schools with more than two such classrooms, only students in two randomly selected classrooms will be asked to participate. In addition, some students with special needs or who are English language learners may be excused from the assessment.

Who conducts the TIMSS assessment?

The entire assessment process will be administered on behalf of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), within the U.S. Department of Education, by trained staff from Westat, a research organization under contract with NCES. NCES is authorized to conduct this study under the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002), 20 U.S. Code, §9543 and 6 U.S.C. §151, and approval of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget under OMB # 1850-0695.

How are the school and teacher questionnaires administered?

The teacher and school questionnaires are administered online from a secure website. Teacher questionnaires ask teachers about their experience, available resources, and instructional practices and take about 30 minutes to complete. School questionnaires ask about school practices and resources and take about 30 minutes to complete.

Do teachers need to help administer the assessment?

No, Westat TIMSS staff will visit the school on the day of the assessment, bringing with them all the materials required. The Westat TIMSS staff will administer the assessments to students.

Do schools need to provide computer equipment for the field test?

No, Westat TIMSS staff will bring all the equipment needed for the field test, including tablets, styluses, and keyboards.

When will the field test be conducted?

The field test will be conducted between March and April 2018. Each school will be notified of its scheduled assessment date in summer/fall 2017. Westat TIMSS staff will work with schools to identify an alternate date should there be a conflict on that date.

How long does the field test take?

The assessment takes 72 minutes at fourth grade and 90 minutes at eighth grade, and there will be breaks between sections and a questionnaire that takes 30 minutes. The two classes will be assessed in sequential sessions, with one class assessed in the morning and the second class assessed in the afternoon.

What will happen with the collected data?

The field test data will be used to evaluate how the knowledge and skills of U.S. students compare to those of their peers in other participating countries. All of the information you provide may only be used for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as required by law (20 U.S.C. §9573 and 6 U.S.C. §151). Reports of the findings from the assessment will not identify participating districts, schools, students, or individual staff. Individual responses will be combined with those of other participants to produce summary statistics and reports.

Where can I find more information about TIMSS?

Visit the TIMSS website at <http://nces.ed.gov/timss>.

For additional information about the TIMSS 2018 field test, contact the TIMSS information hotline at **855-445-5604** or email TIMSS@westat.com.

