

Facts for Districts

"NAEP is the only assessment providing half a century of performance data to measure what students know and can do. The state and national trends inform local, state, and national program and policy discussions that improve teaching and learning."

—David Atherton, EdD, Principal, Clear Creek Middle School, Gresham, OR

What is NAEP?

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is an integral measure of academic progress across the nation and over time. It is the largest nationally representative and continuing assessment of what our nation's students know and can do in various subjects such as civics, mathematics, reading, science, and U.S. history. The program also provides valuable insights into students' educational experiences and opportunities to learn in and outside of the classroom.

NAEP is a congressionally mandated program administered by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), within the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences.

Why should my district participate in NAEP?

Your district's participation is vitally important for several reasons.

- Results from the 2026 assessments will provide much needed information about the academic achievement and continued recovery of students whose elementary school experiences were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Schools and students selected to participate in NAEP represent schools and students across the country. Each school's participation is critical and contributes to the understanding of students' educational progress across the U.S.

Do teachers need to prepare students for the assessment?

Teachers do not need to prepare their students to take the assessment but should encourage them to do their best.

What assessments will be administered in 2026?

The 2026 administration will be between January 26 and March 20, 2026, and include three programs:

- **Main Program:** assessments in mathematics and reading at grades 4 and 8. State- and national-level results will be released.
- **National Program:** assessments in civics and U.S. history at grade 8. National-level results will be released.
- **Pilot Program:** pilot testing, in mathematics and reading at grades 4, 8, and 12, to evaluate new questions for the new NAEP Mathematics and Reading Frameworks. Results will not be released but will be used to inform future NAEP assessments.

In addition to subject-matter questions, NAEP assessments include survey questionnaires that provide a better understanding of factors that may be related to students' learning. Students, teachers, and principals participating in the 2026 administration will be asked to complete survey questionnaires.

What administration changes are occurring in 2026?

NCES remains committed to modernizing NAEP to provide students with more flexible and authentic assessment experiences. A significant strategic step in this modernization is fully integrating the use of school devices for administering the NAEP Mathematics and Reading assessments.

For NAEP 2026, schools selected for the main and pilot programs will be assigned to an administrative model—school device or NAEP device.

If a school is assigned to the school device administrative model, the district and/or school staff will need to prepare their district-owned devices for the NAEP administration. Preparation includes downloading and verifying the NAEP Assessment Application and completing bandwidth and safelisting checks.

How are parents/guardians notified?

By law, parents/guardians of students selected to participate in NAEP must be notified, in writing, before the assessment day. Notifying parents/guardians is one of the preassessment activities schools are required to complete.

What will students in my district do?

Using either school devices or NAEP devices, students will respond to questions in civics, mathematics, reading, or U.S. history and each student will answer questions in only one subject. Students will also complete a survey questionnaire about factors related to student learning, such as their educational experiences and opportunities to learn both in and outside the classroom.

The administration will take approximately 2 hours. This estimation includes responding to the subject-matter questions and the survey questionnaire as well as time for directions, a tutorial, and transition time to and from class.

There are a broad range of accommodations provided for students with disabilities and English learners.

Who will administer NAEP? What support do schools need to provide on the assessment day?

NAEP representatives will administer the NAEP assessment and provide significant support to schools leading up to and on assessment day.

Schools will need to provide an assessment location that has enough space for students to take the assessment, desks or tables, and an adequate number of electrical outlets. In addition, NAEP recommends schools provide a staff member to observe the administration to assist with classroom management and student motivation.

- In schools where the assessment will be administered using school devices, school and/or district staff who have experience with the devices and technology used by the school may be required to be available during the testing session(s).
- In schools where the assessment will be administered using NAEP devices, NAEP representatives will bring all necessary materials and equipment to assess the students.

How can school administrators and teachers use NAEP data to help our students?

Questions from previous NAEP assessments can be used as a helpful educational resource in the classroom. Teachers can use the [NAEP Questions Tool](#) (<https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/nqt/>) to see how their students' performance compares to peers in your state and across the nation. Released NAEP questions come with a scoring guide, sample student responses, and performance data.

The [Nation's Report Card](#) (<https://www.nationsreportcard.gov>) allows you to examine the relationship between student performance and factors such as instructional practices, school resources, and more.

How are schools selected for NAEP?

Schools were selected as part of a carefully designed sampling process that ensures NAEP-selected schools and students are representative of your district, state, and the nation.

Under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, districts and states that receive Title I funds are required to participate in the mathematics and reading assessments at grades 4 and 8.

How are NAEP results reported?

The results of NAEP are released as The Nation's Report Card. NAEP results are available for the nation and may be available for states and select urban districts that participate in the Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA), depending on the assessment. Additionally, results are reported for different student groups, based on factors such as race/ethnicity, gender, school location, and more. NAEP is not designed to report results for individual students, classrooms, or schools.

How is NAEP different from our state assessment?

NAEP serves a different role than state assessments. While states have their own unique assessments to measure student achievement against specific Academic Standards, NAEP is designed to provide a common measure of student achievement and progress across the country.

How long has NAEP been around? And how often is it administered?

NAEP was first administered in 1969 to measure student achievement nationally. In 1990, NAEP was administered at the state level for the first time. The NAEP TUDA program, which measures student achievement in some of the nation's large urban districts, began in 2002.

Every two years, NAEP administers mathematics and reading assessments to students in grades 4 and 8 at the state and national levels. Other subjects and grades are assessed periodically.

Where can I find more information?

To learn more about NAEP, visit the [NAEP program](#) website (<https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard>). And to explore the latest NAEP results, visit [The Nation's Report Card](#) (<https://www.nationsreportcard.gov>).