

# NAEP AND STATE ASSESSMENTS

## Understanding the Differences and Similarities

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and state assessments are both used to measure the academic progress of the nation’s students. Understanding the similarities and differences between these assessments and their purposes is critical for policymakers, researchers, and educators as they work to improve education in the United States.

NAEP is the largest nationally representative and continuing assessment of what students across the United States know and can do. Since 1969, NAEP has measured the academic progress of students nationwide. NAEP assesses fourth-, eighth-, and twelfth-grade students in various subjects such as mathematics, reading, and science. The results of NAEP are released as The Nation’s Report Card and include information on student performance for the nation, states, and, in some cases, urban districts. Since NAEP asks the same questions nationwide and is administered the same way in every state, it provides a common yardstick for measuring student progress and makes state comparisons possible.

	NAEP	State Assessments
PURPOSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Measures what students in the U.S. know and can do in various subjects over time</li> <li>Provides results for the nation and, in most cases, for states, as well as for select urban districts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Track progress toward state, district, school, teacher, and student education goals</li> <li>Provide results for the state, districts, schools, and individual students</li> </ul>
CONTENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Based on content frameworks developed by the National Assessment Governing Board, in coordination with subject-area experts, school administrators, policymakers, teachers, parents, and others</li> <li>Not aligned to any particular grade or content standards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set and defined by each state based on grade and content standards</li> <li>Developed by a diverse group of stakeholders, including state policymakers and education leaders</li> </ul>
PARTICIPATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A representative sample of grade 4 and 8 students from states and select urban districts must participate in mathematics and reading every other year</li> <li>National, some state, and select urban district samples of fourth-, eighth-, and twelfth-graders are periodically assessed in other subjects such as the arts, civics, economics, geography, science, technology and engineering literacy, U.S. history, and writing</li> <li>Students are only assessed in one subject area</li> <li>Designed to ensure selected schools and students represent the nation’s geographic, racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity</li> <li>Student participation is voluntary, but highly encouraged</li> <li>Allows a broad range of accommodations, and students with disabilities and English language learners are encouraged to participate               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not offer alternate or modified assessments</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mathematics and reading/language arts must be assessed every year in grades 3–8 and once in grades 9–12</li> <li>Science must be assessed at least once in grades 3–5, once in grades 6–9, and once in grades 10–12</li> <li>Participation may be required for all students in public schools</li> <li>Beyond the required assessments, states can choose to assess students in other grades and subjects</li> <li>Offer accommodations and modified assessments, when necessary, to students with disabilities and English language learners</li> </ul>

The state assessment points in this document do not account for all testing specifics in each state.

	NAEP	State Assessments
ADMINISTRATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Administered digitally, on tablets or laptops, or in paper-and-pencil format and includes a variety of item types—multiple-choice, short constructed-response, extended-response, scenario-based tasks, and hands-on tasks</li> <li>Students spend between 90 and 120 minutes taking the assessment on NAEP-provided equipment</li> <li>Administered by NAEP representatives during regular school hours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Administered digitally or in paper-and-pencil format and include a variety of item types—multiple-choice, constructed-response, performance events, and portfolios</li> <li>Administration time ranges from a few hours to multiple sessions over a number of days</li> <li>Administered by school and district personnel during regular school hours</li> <li>Some states have optional interim assessments available that provide teachers with information about student progress throughout the year</li> </ul>
RESULTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reports trends in student achievement over time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is not designed to report performance for individual schools, students, or most school districts</li> </ul> </li> <li>Results are reported using NAEP achievement levels—<i>Basic</i>, <i>Proficient</i>, and <i>Advanced</i>—and scale scores</li> <li>Provides contextual information about educational experiences and other factors that relate to student learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participating students, teachers, and principals complete questionnaires</li> </ul> </li> <li>Released online as The Nation’s Report Card</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report students’ progress toward, and attainment of, required knowledge and skills as defined by each state based on its content standards</li> <li>Results are reported in terms of achievement levels and scale scores, which vary by state</li> </ul>
USES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Used by elected officials, policymakers, and educators to monitor the condition of education in the United States</li> <li>Used to evaluate and report trends in student achievement over time for the nation, states, some urban districts, and demographic groups</li> <li>Used to make comparisons of student achievement between states</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Used by governors, state policymakers, and district staff for setting education policy, examining school and group performance, and making local decisions about curriculum and instruction</li> <li>Used to provide data to help teachers customize teaching and learning to meet student needs</li> <li>May be used as a measure of accountability for districts, schools, teachers, and students</li> <li>May be used for promotion/retention decisions and/or graduation requirements for students</li> <li>May be used to inform state accreditation</li> </ul>

NAEP is a congressionally mandated program of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) within the Institute of Education Sciences of the U.S. Department of Education. For more information, visit:

- National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress**  
<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard>
- The Nation’s Report Card**  
<http://www.nationsreportcard.gov>
- National Assessment Governing Board**  
<http://www.nagb.org>

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