

NAEP 2026

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.

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.

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.

What NAEP assessments will be administered in 2026?

The 2026 program will include

- assessments in mathematics and reading at grades 4 and 8;
- assessments in civics and U.S. history at grade 8;
- pilot testing in mathematics and reading at grades 4, 8, and 12, to help improve future NAEP assessments; and
- survey questionnaires for participating students, teachers, and principals to provide a better understanding of factors that may be related to students' learning.¹

The assessments will be administered between January 26 and March 20, 2026.

National, state, and select urban district results will be released for the mathematics and reading assessments at grades 4 and 8. National results will be released for the civics and U.S. history assessments at grade 8. Results from the pilot testing will not be released but will be used to inform future assessments.

What will students in my district do?

Participating students will complete

- assessment items in civics, mathematics, reading, or U.S. history; and, if applicable,
- survey questionnaires that provide valuable information about their educational experiences and opportunities to learn both in and outside of the classroom.

Students are given approximately 2 hours to complete the assessments unless accommodations are provided. This includes transition time, directions, and completion of survey questionnaires. A broad range of accommodations are provided for students with disabilities and English learners.

Students will take assessments using school devices or NAEP devices. NAEP representatives will contact your district in the coming months with more information.

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.

¹ There is no teacher questionnaire at grade 12.

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

NAEP representatives will administer the NAEP assessment and provide significant support to schools on assessment day. Schools will need to provide space for students to take the assessment, desks or tables, and an adequate number of electrical outlets in the assessment location.

- 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 were schools in my district 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 biennial assessments.

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

The NAEP Data Explorer (<https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/ndecore>) is a powerful tool that allows you to examine the relationships between student performance and factors such as instructional practices, school resources, and more.

Questions from previous NAEP assessments can also be used as a helpful educational resource in the classroom. Teachers can use the NAEP Questions Tool (<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/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.

How long has NAEP been around?

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.

Where can I find more information?

Learn more about the NAEP program at nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard, and explore the latest NAEP results at nationsreportcard.gov.

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) conducts the National Assessment of Educational Progress to evaluate federally supported education programs. All of the information you provide may be used only 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). By law, every NCES employee as well as every NCES agent, such as contractors and NAEP coordinators, has taken an oath and is subject to a jail term of up to 5 years, a fine of \$250,000, or both if he or she willfully discloses ANY identifiable information about you in any unauthorized manner. Electronic submission of your information will be monitored for viruses, malware, and other threats by Federal employees and contractors in accordance with the Cybersecurity Enhancement Act of 2015.

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