



DATE: June 13, 2025

RE: NAEP 2026 Participation

During the 2025-2026 school year, Montana will participate in the 2026 administration of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The NAEP assessment is the only national perspective on American education, and is often referred to as "The Nation's Report Card." From January 26 to March 20, 2026, NAEP will administer two operational assessments: mathematics and reading for Grades 4, 8 and 12 and civics and U.S. history for Grade 8. In 2026, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) will continue the program's commitment to ensure that NAEP digitally based assessments provide a reliable, meaningful, and efficient measure of student achievement as NAEP explores the transition to the use of school-managed devices and their Wi-Fi.

This memorandum is intended to provide you with early notification of the upcoming assessment for inclusion in your district and school calendars. As of 2003, participation in mathematics and reading became a requirement in all states and school districts receiving Title I funding. It is important that we all work together to meet this requirement and ensure that schools receive the monies to which they are entitled. This is a great opportunity for Montana to demonstrate our students' progress and showcase the excellent work of our teachers.

Please note the following key features of NAEP:

- The assessment is based on a representative sample of Montana's student population where about 2,200 students are assessed at each NAEP-tested grade and subject.
- NAEP Assessment Teams are hired and supervised by Westat under contract with NCES. The Assessment Teams consist mainly of retired Montana educators and administrators to minimize the time taken from instruction and to reduce the need for school staff participation.
- The assessment takes about 120 minutes of students' time including transition time and instructions.
- Students do not need to prepare for the assessment. They will not know in advance which subject they will be given. Each student is assessed in only one subject.
- Parents must be notified in writing that the assessment is occurring, that student participation is voluntary, and that students are not required to complete every item on the assessment.
- The assessment protects the anonymity of the participating students and school staff. Data may only be used for statistical purposes; it may not be disclosed or used in identifiable form for any other purpose except as required by law (20 U.S.C. § 9573). Contractors must protect and destroy all personally identifiable information and ensure that data security and privacy agreements have been obtained.
- The assessment provides results for student groups, including gender, racial/ethnic origin, students with disabilities, English learners, and National School Lunch Program eligibility.

Shantel Niederstadt, Montana's NAEP State Coordinator, will contact principals shortly to provide additional information and details on the assessment. If you have further questions, please contact her at (406) 444.3450 or by e-mail at sniederstadt@mt.gov. You may also visit the NAEP website at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard> for additional information. Thank you in advance for supporting this important assessment.

Sincerely,

Susan Hedalen
Superintendent of Public Instruction