



Frequently Asked Questions Regarding the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as "The Nation's Report Card", has been administered as a national assessment since 1969 and Maine has participated in NAEP state-by-state testing, in which results are provided for participating states since 1990. Maine's NAEP average scale scores in reading, mathematics, and science tend to be above the national public school average scores. Please note that NAEP does not report any results for individual students, schools, or school districts in Maine.

What is new for the NAEP 2026 Administration?

As always, NAEP is changing and adapting with each administration. The NAEP 2026 administration window is slightly longer than the customary window. *In 2026, NAEP will be administered across the United States from January 26, 2026 – March 20, 2026.* Other updates and new aspects of NAEP for the upcoming administration year include:

- Continuing the transition to administration of NAEP on school owned devices
- The use of school Wi-Fi is now the expectation
- New assessment frameworks and items for Mathematics and Reading
- The subjects for the operational assessments are Mathematics, Reading, Civics, and History.
- The subjects for the pilot assessments are Mathematics and Reading. These pilot assessments are field test sessions for the evaluation of new items for future operational assessments.

How often is NAEP administered?

NAEP is typically scheduled to be administered every other year to grades 4 and 8, and 12th grade every four years. The postponement of the 2021 NAEP assessment to 2022 resulted in changes to the NAEP schedule. On even numbered years starting in 2022, NAEP will administer Math and Reading to samples of students at the state-level, as well as other subjects such as civics, U.S. History, science, and writing at to a national-level sample of students. A long term-trend study is also administered to students by ages 9, 13, and 17 in odd numbered years starting in 2025. The long term-trend studies have a greater focus on basic skills and are conducted every four years.

How are schools selected for NAEP?

Schools are selected by statistical selection survey methodology called probability sampling proportional to size. The goal of this sampling procedure is to ensure a representative sample of students across the nation and/or a state. NAEP uses this procedure to ensure that

demographic and achievement characteristics of the sample are consistent and representative of each state as well as the nation. To achieve the most accurate representation of the state during state sampling years, some schools with larger numbers of students may be selected more frequently than others.

Is participation in NAEP state testing required?

YES. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 requires local school districts receiving Title 1 funding to participate in state NAEP testing at grades 4 and 8 in reading, and mathematics if they are selected for the NAEP Assessment.

The following assurances are listed in the documentation for any state to receive Title 1 funding:

The LEA agrees, if selected, to participate in the State National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in 4th and 8th grade reading and mathematics carried out under section 303(b)(3) of the National Assessment of Educational Progress Authorization Act (ESSA section 1112(c)(3)).

What are the requirements for participation in NAEP?

Every state that receives Title I, Part A funds must participate in NAEP's biennial state academic assessments of reading and mathematics in grades 4 and 8. Further, all LEAs that receive Title I, Part A funds and the schools within those LEAs are required to participate in these biennial State assessments of grades 4 and 8 reading and math if selected as part of a state's NAEP sample.

State, LEA, and school participation in NAEP assessments, other than reading and mathematics assessments at grades 4 and 8, is voluntary.

Parents of children selected to participate in NAEP assessments must be informed before the administration of the assessment that their child may be excused from participation. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), which administers the NAEP assessments, will assist schools, school districts, and states in notifying parents of students selected for NAEP samples.

Does the federal government provide assistance to SAUs and schools for their participation in NAEP assessments?

Starting in 2002, NAEP shared the responsibility for the administrative support with participating states, districts, and schools. NAEP has established the Assessment Management System website to notify schools and districts about its assessment activities.

Further, NAEP supports a NAEP State Coordinator in each state who serves as the liaison between the State Education Agency and NAEP. In Maine, the state coordinator is referred to as the Coordinator of NAEP and International Assessments. The coordinator reviews NAEP assessment items and processes, coordinates the NAEP administration in the state, analyzes and reports NAEP data, and coordinates the use of NAEP results for policy and program planning. In addition, NAEP established a NAEP State Service Center to provide ongoing support, technical assistance, and training for the NAEP State Coordinators, answer information requests regarding NAEP, conduct

meetings with the NAEP State Coordinators and the State Testing Directors, and maintain a NAEP Information Center.

How are the results used?

The results are released in the [Nations Report Card](#) after the assessment period. These results are used to improve state and federal education policy. A great deal of educational research is conducted with NAEP data.

How do NAEP results compare to state assessment results?

The methodology of sampling, the methods of testing, the [assessment frameworks](#), and the criteria for performance levels of each subject are different than the Maine Educational Assessments, therefore there is no direct method for comparing results. The results are considered as one factor in the larger picture of student achievement measures.

How are the NAEP tests different than the Maine Educational Assessments?

In each administration, students are matrix sampled to take only one subject. Within the subject area, they are given a sample of questions. The test is timed and the total actual time on the test is about an hour. About half of the test items are constructed response (mostly short answer fill-in the blank). NAEP also includes a background questionnaire which asks the students research-based questions regarding their studying and learning activities. A questionnaire is also administered to the teaching and administrative staff.

Who participates in the assessments?

Depending on the test and subjects, students are selected from grades 4, 8, 12 or for the long term trends study ages 9, 13, and 17. Depending on the size of the school, all students may be selected, or if the school is large, NAEP may take a smaller probabilistic sample (this is defined by NAEP statisticians and depends on the study but usually around 50-100 students).

How does NAEP handle accommodations?

NAEP encourages the participation of students with some limited English proficiency and students with disabilities. NAEP has a policy to provide for as many accommodations as reasonably possible. Many of the available universal tools and accommodations are similar to those available for the Maine Educational Assessments. An accommodation crosswalk is provided by the Maine DOE to the school coordinators within the NAEP Assessment Management System. When School Coordinators are making accommodation decisions, they are expected to include students if they participate in the state general assessments with or without accommodations. School Coordinators should discuss each student needing accommodations with the NAEP Assessment Coordinator and are especially invited to seek further assistance from the coordinator at Maine DOE if they have any questions.

How long does the NAEP assessment take?

The entire NAEP assessment process takes approximately two hours, including transition time, instructions, and completion of survey questions.

Are the data confidential?

Federal law dictates complete privacy for all test takers and their families. Under the National Assessment of Educational Progress Authorization Act (Public Law 107-279 III, section 303), the Commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is charged with ensuring that NAEP tests do not question test-takers about personal or family beliefs or make information about their personal identity publicly available.

Prior to publication of all NAEP reports, student responses are anonymized. NCES makes a great of data collected available to researchers but withholds students' names and other identifying information. The names of all participating students are not allowed to leave the schools after NAEP assessments are administered. Because it might be possible to deduce from data the identities of some NAEP schools, researchers must promise, under penalty of fines and jail terms, to keep these identities confidential.