

New Preparedness Research on 8th Grade NAEP Reading and Mathematics Released

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WASHINGTON — The National Assessment Governing Board released today new research that evaluates the extent to which 8th graders who took the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in reading and mathematics are on track for being academically prepared for college by the end of high school. This work extends the Governing Board’s 12th grade preparedness research program for NAEP.

“The Governing Board wanted to determine the percentage of students on track for being academically prepared for college earlier than 12th grade,” said Dr. William Bushaw, Governing Board executive director. “This information gives educators, researchers, and policymakers information they need.”

The research includes two types of studies—statistical relationship and content alignment.

[The statistical relationship](#) studies linked the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 2013 grade 8 reading and mathematics scores of students in three states—Tennessee, Kentucky and North Carolina—to their scores on the ACT EXPLORE[®] Reading and Mathematics assessments. These three states volunteered to participate in the study since each state administered EXPLORE[®] to all 8th graders. The EXPLORE[®] assessments were designed to assess a student’s academic progress at the 8th and 9th grade levels—especially with respect to college preparedness. The goal was to relate the two 8th grade assessments statistically, and identify a point or range on the NAEP scales that could be linked to the EXPLORE[®] College Readiness Benchmarks.

- Results of the statistical relationship studies showed that the EXPLORE[®] readiness benchmarks and the NAEP *Proficient* achievement level cut scores correspond well to each other.

Separate reports were released for each state: [Tennessee](#), [Kentucky](#), and [North Carolina](#). The research findings provide each state with an additional picture of the overall achievement of 8th graders.

[The content alignment studies](#) analyzed the degree of alignment between the 2013 NAEP Grade 8 Reading and Mathematics assessments and the 8th grade EXPLORE[®] assessments in the same subjects. Although perfect alignment between two different tests cannot be expected, a substantial overlap increases confidence that statistical links between the two assessments indicate similar performance in terms of student knowledge, skills, and abilities. Comparisons showed:

- Moderate content alignment, between **NAEP and EXPLORE® Mathematics** as the content and complexity on both were essentially the same.
- Moderate content alignment between **NAEP and EXPLORE® Reading**. The study also showed the content complexity of NAEP reading was higher on average than EXPLORE® reading.

“This vital research is a critical to the goal of ensuring that all students are on track for success well before they enter high school,” said ACT Chief Executive Officer Marten Roorda. “ACT is proud of its longtime partnership with the National Assessment Governing Board. Our organizations remain committed to working together in efforts to improve student achievement and better understand college and career readiness. ACT is pleased that our data, insights and expertise have made such a valuable contribution to this important NAGB research.”

The Governing Board worked with ACT on the content alignment studies and the three states on the statistical relationship studies, allowing for the input and reviews needed to conduct the study and finalize the reports. Although EXPLORE® has been replaced with ACT Aspire®, ACT’s grade 3 to early high school assessment system which is designed to measure and track student readiness for college and career, results of these in-depth studies paves the way for new reporting options for addressing the academic preparedness of 8th graders.

For the past decade, the Governing Board has been studying the use of NAEP as an indicator of whether students are academically prepared for education and job training opportunities after high school. The [Technical Report: NAEP 12th Grade Preparedness Research](#) includes findings from more than 30 studies conducted by the Board.

In 2013, the Board released [Towards the National Assessment of Educational Progress \(NAEP\) as an Indicator of Academic Preparedness for College and Job Training](#). This summary provided the rationale for pursuing 12th grade preparedness, the research results from studies conducted in connection with the 2009 administration of 12th grade NAEP, and the implications for NAEP 12th grade reporting.

A summary of research related to job training can be found in [Research on Academic Preparedness for Job Training Programs](#).

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The National Assessment of Educational Progress is the only nationally representative, continuing evaluation of the condition of education in the United States. It has served as a national yardstick of student achievement since 1969. Through the Nation's Report Card, NAEP informs the public about what American students know and can do in various subject areas and compares achievement between states, large urban districts, and various student demographic groups.

The National Assessment Governing Board is an independent, bipartisan board whose members include governors, state legislators, local and state school officials, educators, business representatives and members of the general public. Congress created the 26-member Governing Board in 1988 to oversee and set policy for NAEP. Follow the Governing Board on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is a congressionally authorized project sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education. The **National Center for Education Statistics**, within the Institute of Education Sciences, administers NAEP. The Commissioner of Education Statistics is responsible by law for carrying out the NAEP project.