

Update on TUDA Eligibility Criteria

Goal

The National Assessment Governing Board adopted a policy in 2007 (last updated in 2012) that sets forth the principles defining and supporting the Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA) program as well as the eligibility criteria and selection process for districts to join TUDA. This session will focus on the TUDA policy, discuss the principles and guidelines in the policy, and consider if and how the policy should be updated and/or changed.

Overview

The session will feature a discussion facilitated by Lesley Muldoon about the TUDA policy's principles and guidelines, addressing questions of what should be updated. The Board needs to finalize the district roster for TUDA by November 2026 at the latest to prepare for NAEP 2028. Any new policy should be approved by August 2026 and used for sampling purposes in Winter 2027.

Background

Large urban school districts volunteer to participate in TUDA, a program within NAEP which started in 2002 with six districts and expanded to more than 25 districts over the last two decades. These districts' students are sampled in sufficient number to provide district representative results in reading and mathematics, grades 4 and 8, every two years. The TUDA program provides a valuable source of objective assessment data that can drive efforts to improve student achievement.

The Council of the Great City Schools worked with the NAEP program and the Governing Board -- and requested funds from Congress -- to start TUDA, and the effort remains a close collaboration. The Board sets the eligibility criteria, NAEP staff and contractors determine which districts meet these requirements, and the Council explores which districts might be interested in volunteering to participate. The Board then decides which interested districts will be invited and extends a formal invitation.

Twenty-four TUDA districts are participating in 2026 NAEP. There is availability for additional districts to join 2028 NAEP, which led to a discussion at November's Executive Committee meeting about which districts are eligible. This prompted a

request to re-examine the TUDA policy and determine if and what updates are necessary.

Governing Board staff reviewed the policy, especially in light of the November discussion, and raised questions which should be covered in this upcoming discussion:

- Should the new policy be the first to remove the trial designation but retain the acronym brand as Trends in Urban District Achievement?¹
- If and how should regional representation be addressed by the policy? For example, there are no TUDAs in the Pacific Northwest or in the Great Plains north of Texas. The current policy makes no mention or priority of geographic representation in determining which districts are invited to participate, although the Governing Board recently has expressed interest in this as a priority.
- Two long-standing TUDA districts decided not to participate as TUDAs in 2026. Should the policy include a provision about the eligibility of districts whose participation is interrupted?
- The eligibility criteria specify that a district must enroll enough students to assess three subjects in each grade assessed. Should the enrollment requirements be eased to reflect that most administrations of NAEP include only reading and math at the TUDA level, not three subjects?
- Districts participating in TUDA must meet at least one of the following criteria:
(a) 50% or more minority students or (b) 50% or more eligible for the free- and reduced-price lunch program. Does implementing the requirement of 'at least one' of these criteria appropriately and accurately define the nature and intent of the TUDA program?
- Should the policy remove the definitions of minority groups in anticipation of the new race/ethnicity variable?
 - The new race/ethnicity variable comprises just one, not two, items and adds categories such as Middle Eastern/North African.
- The Application and Selection Process Procedures dictate that the Governing Board's Executive Director and staff review TUDA applications "in consultation with" the Governing Board Chair, the COSDAM chair, NCES staff, and the executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools. Are these the appropriate roles to collaborate on TUDA decisions?

¹ Congress appropriated funds for a district assessment on a trial basis. There is no language in the NAEP Law about TUDA specifically.



Adopted: March 3, 2007
Revised: August 4, 2012

National Assessment Governing Board

Eligibility Criteria and Procedures for Selecting Districts for Participation in the National Assessment of Educational Progress

Trial Urban District Assessment

Policy Statement

Purpose

To define the eligibility criteria and selection procedures for participation of urban school districts in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA).

Guiding Principles

Principle 1

Participation in TUDA shall be voluntary.

Principle 2

A primary goal of TUDA is to support the improvement of student achievement in the nation's large urban school districts and to focus attention on the specific challenges and accomplishments associated with urban education.

Principle 3

Districts participating in TUDA shall have the characteristics of large urban areas.

Principle 4

All districts that have participated in TUDA without interruption once included shall be deemed eligible and permitted to continue to participate.

Principle 5

The eligibility criteria for participation in TUDA shall promote (1) inter-district comparability, so that participating districts are reasonably similar with respect to key demographics and (2) efficiency in resources required of the NAEP program.

Principle 6

Increasing the total number of districts participating in TUDA shall be contingent on additional funding from Congress.

Principle 7

The Governing Board implements the selection procedures used to consider districts for participation in TUDA.

Principle 8

Districts applying for participation in TUDA should be committed to long-term participation.

Eligibility Criteria

1. Only cities having 250,000 or more population shall be represented in TUDA.
2. Districts participating in TUDA shall have a student enrollment large enough to support NAEP assessments in three subjects in each grade assessed. The enrollment requirement is a minimum of approximately 1,500 students per subject per grade level assessed.
3. Districts participating in TUDA shall have an enrollment district-wide or in the grade levels assessed that meets at least one of the following criteria:
 - a. 50% or more are minority students (i.e., African American, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian, Hispanic, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, and/or multi-racial).
 - b. 50% or more are eligible for participation in the free and reduced-price lunch program (or other appropriate indicator of poverty status).

Districts that are very near to meeting a particular eligibility requirement may be considered eligible if they request to participate in the program and if funds are sufficient to permit participation. Eligibility data shall be updated and verified periodically.

Application and Selection Process/Procedures

To provide time for consultation, notification, and operational planning for the conduct of the Trial Urban District Assessments, the steps described below should be sequenced to conclude approximately 14 months prior to the start of testing.

1. Prior to the assessment year in which TUDA is to be conducted, the Governing Board Executive Director, in consultation with the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), prepares a list of eligible districts and posts that list on the Governing Board website.
2. Prior to the assessment year in which TUDA is to be conducted, the Governing Board Executive Director sends a letter to each district that participated in the immediately preceding administration of TUDA to determine the district's interest in continuing as a participant in the upcoming administration of TUDA.
3. Based on funding from Congress and the decision of any previous TUDA participant not to continue, the Governing Board determines whether new districts can be considered for participation in the upcoming TUDA administration.
4. If the Governing Board determines that new districts can be considered for participation in the upcoming TUDA administration, the Governing Board Executive Director sends a letter notifying eligible districts of the opportunity to submit an application and the instructions for applying.
5. Eligible districts seeking to participate in TUDA submit an application to the Executive Director of the Governing Board. The application should be signed by the district superintendent or designee, include the most recent information documenting the district's enrollment and eligibility, and contain a commitment for long-term participation in TUDA if selected.
6. The Executive Director of the Governing Board and appropriate staff of the Governing Board shall review applications in consultation with the Chairman of the Governing Board, the Chairman of the Board's Committee on Standards, Design and Methodology, staff of the National Center for Education Statistics, and the Executive Director of the Council of the Great City Schools.
7. The Executive Director of the Governing Board shall recommend new districts for participation in TUDA to the Governing Board for final action.
8. The Executive Director of the Governing Board shall send notification of the Board's decision regarding district participation in TUDA to the district and to the Commissioner of Education Statistics.

Potential Pool of Eligible Districts

The list of eligible districts shall be posted on the website of the National Assessment Governing Board (www.nagb.org) and made publicly available through other appropriate means. The list of districts will change from time to time due to changes in the population of the district and the district setting.