

Students with Disabilities and NAEP (Closed Session)

Goal

The purpose of this session is to present Board members with information on the policy and operational realities of NAEP accommodations and exclusions for students with disabilities, and to hear from experts in federal and state policies regarding accommodations for students with disabilities regarding legal and practical considerations that may have implications for NAEP policy.

Overview

This session will describe the Governing Board's [policy](#) for assessing students with disabilities and how the policy is operationalized. It will include preliminary 2026 data and trends from prior years to illustrate current rates of accommodations and exclusions and how these may have changed over time. Next, a panel of experts will share information on federal rules and regulations and state accommodations policies that may have implications for NAEP accommodations. The panel will consist of:

- Andrew Hinkle, the Co-Director of the National Center for Education Outcomes (NCEO)
- Representative from Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE) (invited)
- Representative from Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) (invited)

This session is closed to allow presentation of preliminary 2026 accommodations and exclusions data.

Background

At the May quarterly Board meeting, Governing Board members expressed a desire to explore the current landscape of accommodations and exclusions on large-scale assessments as it pertains to NAEP. The Governing Board policy states that as many students as possible should be assessed to have a representative sample of the U.S. population of students, including those with disabilities and English learners. NAEP offers [accommodations and universal design features](#) designed to increase the accessibility of the assessment. Universal design features are available to all students and include tools like zooming, text-to-speech for instructions and some content (when not related to the construct), and volume adjustment. Accommodations are provided for students who need them, as identified by school staff and often included in an

individualized education program (IEP) or a 504 plan. Accommodations offered by NAEP include extended time, breaks during the assessment, and directions translated to Spanish. For a full list of universal design features and accommodations refer to the NCES website [Digitally Based Assessments UDE and Accommodation Descriptions](#).

New assessment technologies have allowed testing programs to offer different accommodations than what had been possible in the past. In addition, there has been an increase in students receiving accommodations. Each individual state sets their own accommodation policies for their state assessments. The National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) summarizes state policies through their [Accommodations Toolkit](#).

Though NAEP is low-stakes for students, i.e., it does not provide scores at the student or school level, there is an expectation that students with disabilities participate in NAEP reading and math assessments. The Governing Board's [policy](#) requires 85 percent participation for these students. If this is not met, NCES includes a note in NAEP reporting that the state did not meet the inclusion threshold for students with disabilities. In addition, the [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\)](#) requires states and local education agencies that receive Title I funds to participate in NAEP for reading and math at grades 4 and 8, and to report participation rates for children with disabilities ([§ 200.11](#)). The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) stipulates rules for assessing students with disabilities on state and district assessments ([§ 300.160](#)), though the act does not focus on national assessments.