

NAEP 101: An Introduction to Long-Term Trend

Goal

The [NAEP Law](#) specifies the administration of the “trend assessment of academic achievement at ages 9, 13, and 17 for the purpose of maintaining data on long-term trends in reading and mathematics.” This session will (re)introduce the Long-Term Trend (LTT) assessment, defining what it is, outlining what and whom it assesses, and distinguishing it from the biennial National Assessment of Educational Progress (Main NAEP) to build greater understanding of the utility and value of both LTT and Main NAEP.

Overview

Nadia McLaughlin of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) will provide a primer on what the Long-Term Trend assessment is and the features which distinguish it from Main NAEP. Seeing leads to understanding, thus NCES will present current, secure LTT items, juxtaposing a few sample items from LTT with a few Main NAEP items. McLaughlin also will show an example of the printed test booklet LTT participants receive. Time will be allotted for questions.

Background

For over five decades, beginning in 1971, the Long-Term Trend (LTT) NAEP has assessed nationally representative cohorts of students age 9, 13, and 17 in reading and mathematics. LTT reading started in 1971, with mathematics following in 1973. The LTT assessments reflect mathematics and reading curricular expectations from an earlier era. While the assessments evolved in the 1970s and 1980s to reflect curriculum changes in the nation’s schools, it is possible to report trends back to the early 1970s. In the 2022-23 school year, the National Center for Education Statistics and the National Assessment Governing Board released both [LTT results](#) and [Main NAEP results](#).

The LTT, a paper-based assessment, primarily uses multiple-choice questions with a few short answer questions. On the reading LTT assessment, a few questions require an extended answer. No ancillary materials, e.g., calculators or manipulatives, are provided for LTT. Students with disabilities (SD) and English language learners (EL) take the assessment are included using the same participation guidelines and with the same accommodations (as needed) in Main NAEP. LTT results are reported at the national level only as average scores, score changes over time, and at five performance levels, i.e., 150 points vs. 200 points.

Main NAEP includes results that represent not only the nation but also 53 states/jurisdictions and 27 urban districts which volunteer to participate in the Trial Urban District Assessment program, or TUDA. Main NAEP is administered every two years to fourth- and eighth-graders in reading and mathematics and every four years (or less frequently) to the same grades in other academic subjects, such as civics, U.S. history, and science. Twelfth-graders take the reading and math assessments every four years, and their results are reported only at the national level. Main NAEP provides results in terms of average scores, score changes, and achievement levels, as set by the Governing Board, i.e., *NAEP Proficient*. The table below presents high-level differences between the two programs, with a more detailed comparison [here](#).

Key Differences Between LTT and Main NAEP

	NAEP Long-Term Trend	Main NAEP
First assessment years	Mathematics: 1973 Reading: 1971	Mathematics: 1990 Reading: 1992
Content	Relatively unchanged over time	Changes about every decade to reflect curricular changes
Student groups	Ages 9, 13, 17	Grades 4, 8, 12
Reporting	National only	Nation, States, Urban Districts (Grades 4 & 8)
Delivery mode	Paper-based	Digitally-based since 2017