

HOW STATES USE AND VALUE

The Nation's Report Card



The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as The Nation's Report Card, is the only nationally representative assessment of what our nation's students know and can do.

For more than 50 years, NAEP results have helped the public and policymakers understand student progress over time, across subjects, and throughout the nation.

For states, **NAEP is a valuable tool for measuring trends in student achievement and for comparing performance and progress with other states.** NAEP results also serve as a catalyst for policy change. States use NAEP and its frameworks to revise their own academic standards and assessments and to make data-based decisions about improving education.

Below, we outline **five distinct ways states have used NAEP.**

► **Validate and measure educational progress over time.**

NAEP allows states to measure student achievement and progress over time. Unlike state assessments which often change, NAEP is a consistent measure of student performance, allowing policymakers to evaluate how their state's scores have changed over time and set points of comparison for future performance.



Alabama has used NAEP to set and measure statewide education goals. In 2023, the governor set a goal for the state to rank among the top 30 jurisdictions on NAEP reading and mathematics by 2026.

► **Compare and learn from other states.** NAEP is the only assessment that allows comparisons of student performance across 53 states and jurisdictions, including the District of Columbia and Department of Defense schools. State leaders can compare their performance to that of similar states and learn from other states with notable gains.



For many years, **Mississippi's** NAEP reading scores ranked among the lowest in the nation. In 2013, these results spurred sweeping changes to the state's approach to reading instruction and teacher training. Since then, Mississippi's reading scores have risen significantly, inspiring other states (including **North Carolina, Ohio, Tennessee, and Kentucky**) to adopt some of the same reading policies.

► **Revise state standards and assessments.** State policymakers use NAEP to evaluate their academic standards and state assessments. When standards or assessments drastically differ from NAEP frameworks, states may make changes to ensure their standards and assessments become more rigorous.



Arizona looked to NAEP as state leaders wrote and adopted new academic standards for grades K-12 in English language arts and mathematics. Those who led the revision of these standards aligned them with NAEP frameworks—the foundations for what knowledge and skills NAEP measures—and by doing so, raised the rigor of Arizona's standards.

► **Promote greater transparency about student performance.**

Results from The Nation's Report Card can be used to provide families, community members, and policymakers with greater insight into what students know and can do.

In 2022, **Virginia** drew attention to differences between student proficiency rates on state tests and the rate of *NAEP Proficient* in the commonwealth. Just over a third of Virginia's fourth-graders scored *NAEP Proficient* or above on the 2019 NAEP Reading assessment, compared to 75% scoring proficient or above on the state test. By making these differences transparent, Virginia's leaders raised concerns about education in Virginia, compelling action to improve instruction and learning.



► **Galvanize policy change to improve teaching and learning.**

In 2022 and 2023, The Nation's Report Card provided the first nationally representative measures of the pandemic's toll on reading, math, U.S history, and civics achievement. Many states are using insights from these data to drive efforts to support learning recovery in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

After results from NAEP and state assessments showed a decline in math skills, a bipartisan coalition of policymakers in **Colorado** approved new investments in math tutoring programs and teacher training.



Similarly, score declines among 4th and 8th-grade students in **Florida** prompted lawmakers to pass legislation requiring evidence-based reading instruction and early intervention for students struggling in math.



We view NAEP as a baseline for aligning those standards to be nationally and globally competitive. This was something everyone in our state could agree upon because NAEP was not new – it's trusted and has been in our state for decades."

Joy Hofmeister

Former Oklahoma state superintendent of public instruction



When you have an external measure like NAEP that further validates that reforms are taking root, that's really important."

Kim Benton

Former chief academic officer of the Mississippi Department of Education

