



## NAEP ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL DESCRIPTION EXCERPTS

Based on recommendations from policymakers, educators, and members of the general public, the National Assessment Governing Board sets specific achievement levels for each subject area and grade that the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests. Achievement levels are performance standards showing what students should know and be able to do at a particular grade, and NAEP results are reported as percentages of students performing at or above the three achievement levels: **Basic** (partial mastery), **Proficient** (solid academic performance), and **Advanced** (superior work).

The achievement levels, required by federal law, help users better understand NAEP results. It should be noted that levels are cumulative, so the knowledge and skills from lower levels are subsumed by the higher levels. Below are summary descriptions and brief examples of the achievement levels for reading and mathematics by grade. Full descriptions of the achievement levels can be found in the *2013 NAEP Mathematics and Reading Frameworks* on the [Governing Board site](#).

### NAEP Reading – Grade 4

**Basic:** Students should be able to locate relevant information, make simple inferences, and use their understanding of the text to identify details that support a given interpretation or conclusion. For example, students should be able to make simple inferences about characters, events, plot, and setting in literary texts such as fiction, poetry, and literary nonfiction. When reading informational texts such as articles and excerpts from books, students should be able to identify the main purpose and an explicitly stated main idea.

**Proficient:** Students should be able to integrate and interpret texts and apply their understanding of the text to draw conclusions and make evaluations. In reading literary texts, this includes judging elements of the author's craft and providing support for their judgment; for informational texts, this includes locating relevant information, integrating information across texts, and evaluating the way an author presents information.

**Advanced:** Students should be able to make complex inferences and construct and support their inferential understanding of the text. Students should also be able to apply their understanding of a text to make and support a judgment. For literary texts, this includes recognizing characters' perspectives and evaluating character motivation. For informational texts, this includes identifying the most likely cause given an effect, explaining an author's point of view, and comparing ideas across two texts.

### NAEP Reading – Grade 8

**Basic:** Students should be able to locate information; identify statements of a main idea, theme, or author's purpose; and make simple inferences from texts. They should be able to interpret the meaning of a word as it is used in the text. This includes stating and providing some support for judgments about the way an author presents content and about character motivation for literary texts, and about the way an author presents information for informational texts.

**Proficient:** Students should be able to provide relevant information and summarize main ideas and themes. They should be able to make and support inferences about a text, connect parts of a text, and analyze text features. Students should also be able to fully substantiate judgments about content and the presentation of content. This includes recognizing characters' actions and inferring and supporting characters' feelings in literary texts, and recognizing rhetorical devices in informational texts.

**Advanced:** Students should be able to make connections within and across texts and to explain causal relations. They should be able to evaluate and justify the strength of supporting evidence and the quality of an author's presentation. They also should be able to manage the processing demands of analysis and evaluation by stating, explaining, and justifying. This includes explaining the effects of narrative events for literary texts and justifying judgments about text features, choice of content, and the author's use of evidence and rhetorical devices for informational texts.

#### **NAEP Mathematics – Grade 4**

**Basic:** Students should be able to estimate and use basic facts to perform simple computations with whole numbers; show some understanding of fractions and decimals; and solve some simple real-world problems in all NAEP content areas. Students at this level should be able to use—although not always accurately—four-function calculators, rulers, and geometric shapes. Their written responses are often minimal and presented without supporting information.

**Proficient:** Students should be able to use whole numbers to estimate, compute, and determine whether results are reasonable. They should have a conceptual understanding of fractions and decimals; be able to solve real-world problems in all NAEP content areas; and use four-function calculators, rulers, and geometric shapes appropriately. They should be able to employ problem-solving strategies such as identifying and using appropriate information. Their written solutions should be organized and presented with both supporting information and explanations.

**Advanced:** Students should be able to solve complex, nonroutine real-world problems in all NAEP content areas. They should display mastery in the use of four-function calculators, rulers, and geometric shapes. They are expected to draw logical conclusions and justify answers and solution processes by explaining why, as well as how, they were achieved. They should go beyond the obvious in their interpretations and communicate thoughts clearly and concisely.

#### **NAEP Mathematics – Grade 8**

**Basic:** Students should complete problems correctly with the help of structural prompts such as diagrams, charts, and graphs. They should be able to solve problems in all NAEP content areas through the appropriate selection and use of strategies and technological tools—including calculators, computers, and geometric shapes. Students also should be able to use fundamental algebraic and informal geometric concepts in problem-solving; determine which of the available data are necessary and sufficient for correct solutions; and use them in problem-solving.

**Proficient:** Students should be able to conjecture, defend their ideas, and give supporting examples. They should understand the connections among fractions, percents, decimals, and other mathematical topics such as algebra and functions. Quantity and spatial relationships in problem-solving and reasoning should be familiar to them, and they should be able to convey underlying reasoning skills beyond the level of arithmetic. These students should make inferences from data and graphs; apply properties of informal geometry; and accurately use the tools of technology.

***Advanced:*** Students should be able to probe examples and counterexamples to shape generalizations from which they can develop models. They should use number sense and geometric awareness to consider the reasonableness of an answer. They are expected to use abstract thinking to create unique problem-solving techniques and explain the reasoning processes underlying their conclusions.