

## A Profile of State Assessment Programs

Since 2003, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has been sponsoring research which focuses on comparing the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and state proficiency standards. Documents which discuss the research on NAEP and state proficiency standards are available at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/statemapping.asp>. As part of this research, NCES developed methodology to show where states' Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) standards fit on the NAEP scale. This methodology offers an approximate, but credible, indication of the relative stringency of the states' AYP standards. While the mapped NAEP equivalent scores are useful in determining the relative rigor of state proficiency standards, the results of the studies should be interpreted with caution. Variations among states can be due to many factors, including differences in assessment frameworks, test specifications, the psychometric properties of the tests, the definition of AYP standards, and the standard-setting process.

In collaboration with the Education Information Management Advisory Consortium (EIMAC)—Task Force on Assessment, of the Council of Chief State School Officers, and in conjunction with the release of the 2007 results of the mapping study, NCES conducted a survey of state assessment programs to provide contextual information to document general state assessment program information. The NAEP State Coordinator in every state was asked to gather information from relevant sources about the state's unique testing program and to input this information into an online system for analysis and summary. Information regarding the grades and subjects tested during the 2006-07 year, state performance levels and performance level descriptors, the composition of main state assessments, and changes to the state assessments between 2004-05 and 2006-07 was compiled. After this information was verified and confirmed by the NAEP State Coordinator of each state, it was summarized in individual state profiles and tabulated in the eight-block format described below. The first block combines all subjects. The remaining blocks (2-8) are presented twice, first for Reading/Language Arts and then for Mathematics. The example that follows is for Reading/Language Arts only.

**Block 1** summarizes information about each state’s testing program: the name of the program, the different assessments, the type and format of each assessment, the grades and subjects tested, and the purpose of each assessment. With regard to the assessment purpose, response options were: instructional, student accountability, school accountability, staff accountability, and other. Additional information provided by NAEP State Coordinators summarizing their states’ testing programs and the purposes of the assessments is included at the end of the block.

## State

### Proficiency Assessments for State Students

1

Component	Test		Grades Tested												Test Purpose <sup>1</sup>					
	Type	Format	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Instructional	Student Accountability	School Accountability	Staff Accountability	Other
<b>Reading</b>																				
Proficiency Assessments for State Students (PASS)	Regular	CRT				√	√	√	√	√	√			√		√		√		[2]
Proficiency Assessments for State Students- Alternate (PASS-Alt)	Alternate	CRT				√	√	√	√	√	√			√		√		√		[2]
<b>Writing</b>																				
PASS	Regular	CRT				√	√	√	√	√	√			√		√		√		[2]
PASS-Alt	Alternate	CRT				√	√	√	√	√	√			√		√		√		[2]
<b>Mathematics</b>																				
PASS	Regular	CRT				√	√	√	√	√	√			√		√		√		[2]
PASS-Alt	Alternate	CRT				√	√	√	√	√	√			√		√		√		[2]
<b>Science</b>																				
PASS	Regular	CRT					√							√		√				[2]
PASS-Alt	Alternate	CRT					√							√		√				[2]

1 Example purposes: Instructional: student diagnosis, student placement, instructional planning, program evaluation, improvement of instruction for groups of students, etc.  
 Student Accountability: student awards/recognition, honors diploma, student promotion/retention, required remediation, exit requirement, etc.  
 School Accountability: monetary awards/penalties, school accreditation, school performance reporting, high school skills guarantee, school improvement plans, etc.  
 Staff Accountability: staff awards/recognition, salary increases, staff dismissal, staff evaluation or certification, staff monetary penalties, etc.

2 LEAs have the option and discretion on whether or not to include state assessment results as input to their secondary level body of evidence systems, diploma endorsements, etc.

**Block 2** summarizes information about the composition of the main state assessments in 2006-07 for grades 4 and 8 in Reading/Language Arts and Mathematics. The percentages displayed are based on the types of items, unless otherwise noted. Additional information about the timing of the assessments and whether assessments measured skills acquired only in prior grades is included in this section.

**Block 3** summarizes information about the assessment(s) and performance levels used by the state in 2006-07 for state accountability in Reading/Language Arts and Mathematics in grades 4 and 8, as well as the assessment(s) and performance levels used to determine Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

**State**

**Reading/Language Arts**

**2**

**Composition and Administration of the Main Reading/Language Arts Test in 2006-07**

	Multiple Choice	Short Constructed Response	Extended Constructed Response	Performance Tasks	Other
Grade 4 Test	85%	10%	5%	0%	0%
Grade 8 Test	85%	10%	5%	0%	0%
During the 2006-07 academic year:					
a. When was the assessment administered?		Spring 2007			
b. Did any of the assessments measure skills from the previous grade?		No.			

**3**

**Performance Levels and AYP**

Performance levels used during the 2006-07 year	Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, Advanced
Test used for AYP determination	State CRTs (PASS and PASS-Alt)
Performance level used for AYP	Proficient
Other tests used for AYP determination	PASS-Alt results. The Proficient performance level is determined by alternate achievement standards.
Test used for state accountability	State CRTs (PASS and PASS-Alt)
Performance level used for state accountability	Proficient
First implementation of performance standards for the 2006-07 assessments	July 2003
Additional information about performance levels used during the 2006-07 academic year	—

**Block 4** provides the performance level descriptors used for meeting AYP in 2006-07 for the main Reading and Mathematics assessments in grades 4 and 8. The descriptors correspond to the *proficient* performance level as it is defined by each state.

**Block 5** summarizes differences in testing accommodations between the state’s assessment and NAEP during the 2006-07 testing year. The first section of this block lists accommodations allowed on the state assessment but not on NAEP, and the second section lists accommodations allowed on NAEP which were not allowed on the state assessment.

**Block 6** presents changes to the main state assessment in Reading and Mathematics between the 2004-05 and 2006-07 school years. For many states, additional information about these changes is included in a note below the block.

**State** **Reading/Language Arts**

**Performance Level Descriptors for Meeting Adequate Yearly Progress**

**4**

Grade 4 Proficient: Students at the proficient level read a variety of grade-appropriate texts; make relevant connections within texts; cite appropriate evidence for inferences; and demonstrate the ability to extend connections beyond the obvious. Students read a variety of grade-appropriate text; show an accurate understanding of the text; explain the relevance of ideas and details to commonly understood concepts; explain the relevance of literary elements to a story’s plot; select sufficient examples to support claims about main idea; select sufficient examples to support claims about a story’s use of literary elements; explain a conclusion with a sufficient amount of information drawn from the text.

Grade 8 Proficient: Students at the proficient level read a variety of texts; demonstrate understanding of organization; make complex connections between the text and themselves, the text and the world, and between other sources; provide explanations regarding an author’s purpose; explains how story elements are utilized in text; predict outcomes; and cites appropriate evidence as it relates to consequences. Students read a variety of grade-appropriate text; demonstrate an accurate understanding of the text; explain author’s purpose; explain the relevance of ideas and details to the text’s organization; explain the relevance of ideas and details to commonly understood concepts; explain the relevance of literary elements to a story’s plot and theme; select sufficient examples to support claims about the relevance and importance of information; select sufficient examples to support claims about main idea and organization; select sufficient examples to support claims about a story’s use of literary elements and structure; explain a conclusion with a sufficient amount of information drawn from the text.

**Accommodation Differences between NAEP and the Main State Test**

**5**

State accommodations not on NAEP	Student uses color overlays to reduce glare or enhance text. Student uses a computer monitor screen cover. Student uses tactile graphics. Student uses audio amplification devices including and/or in addition to hearing aids to increase clarity. Student uses speech-to-text conversion or voice recognition during the Reading, Mathematics, or Science subtests. Student uses a tape recorder to record test responses rather than writing on a paper during the Reading, Mathematics, or Science subtests. Student takes the tests at the time of day when he or she is most likely to demonstrate peak performance. A subtest must be completed in single testing session. URL: <a href="http://www.k12.ss.us/PASS/docs/AccommodationsManual.pdf">http://www.k12.ss.us/PASS/docs/AccommodationsManual.pdf</a>
NAEP accommodations not on state assessment	—

**Changes to State Assessments between 2005 and 2007**

**6**

Added grades	Eliminated grades	Changed cut scores	Changed the time of administration	Changed assessment items	Used entirely different assessment	Realigned to new content standards	Changed proficiency standards	Changed accommodation policy	Changed re-test policy	Changed test contractors	No significant changes
√		√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√	

**Block 7** provides information about the comparability of the state assessments between 2004-05 and 2006-07. Specifically, it is the answer given to the survey question “Are the reported 2006-07 state assessment results for grades 4 and 8 Reading or Mathematics directly comparable with the 2004-05 reported results?”

**Block 8** provides additional information about changes to the state assessment, inclusion policies, or administration of the state assessment between 2004-05 and 2006-07 that would have an impact on the ability to compare outcomes over time.

State	Reading/Language Arts
7	<b>Are the reported 2006–07 state assessment results for grades 4 and 8 directly comparable with the 2004–05 reported results?</b>
	No, because the 2004-05 test was a matrix sampling design and the 2006-07 test was a single core-form design administered to each student.
8	<b>Differences in the administration of assessments or in the reporting of outcomes between 2004–05 and 2006–07 due to policy or legislative changes having an impact on the ability to compare outcomes over time</b>
	The state assessments changed significantly between the 2004-05 and 2006-07 administrations. The 2004-05 assessment employed a matrix sampling scheme to assess students for school accountability decisions and produce school, district and state results. However, individual student results were not comparable to each other. In contrast, the PASS 2006-07 administration forms were each built to the same specifications, ensuring the comparability of individual student scores. The single core-form design was an intentional design to facilitate the technical work (psychometrics) necessary to generate results that can be compared from year to year.

A panel of NAEP State Coordinators, under the guidance of NCES and in collaboration with the American Institutes for Research (AIR), developed the format and content of these profiles, which were then revised in collaboration with state assessment directors and NAEP State Coordinators from each state. Some answers may have been edited for consistency or for space limitations. All web addresses in these profiles were verified on July 1, 2008.

## Source

U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 2007 Survey of State Assessment Program Characteristics.

## Glossary

AYP	Adequate Yearly Progress
CRT	Criterion-Referenced Test
CTBS/5	Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills – Fifth Edition
ECA	End-of-Course Assessments
ELA	English Language Arts
EOC	End-of-Course exams
EOG	End-of-Grade exams
IEP	Individualized Education Program
LEA	Local Education Agency
LEP	Limited English Proficiency
NAEP	National Assessment of Educational Progress
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
NRT	Norm-Referenced Test
PLD	Performance Level Descriptor
SAT/9	Stanford Achievement Test – Ninth Edition
SAT/10	Stanford Achievement Test – Tenth Edition
SEA	State Education Agency

# Nebraska

## School-based Teacher-led Assessment and Reporting System (STARS)

Component	Test		Grades Tested												Test Purpose <sup>1</sup>					
	Type	Format	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Instructional	Student Accountability	School Accountability	Staff Accountability	Other
<b>Writing [2]</b>																				
Statewide Writing Test	Regular	CRT					√				√			√		√				
<b>Language Arts [3]</b>																				
STARS Local Criterion Referenced Assessment	Regular	CRT/NRT				√	√	√	√	√	√			√		√		√		
STARS Alternate Standards and Assessment [4]	Alternate	CRT				√	√	√	√	√	√			√		√		√		
<b>Mathematics [3]</b>																				
STARS Local Criterion Referenced Assessment	Regular	CRT/NRT				√	√	√	√	√	√			√		√		√		
STARS Alternate Standards and Assessment [4]	Alternate	CRT				√	√	√	√	√	√			√		√		√		
<b>Science [3]</b>																				
STARS Local Criterion Referenced Assessment	Regular	CRT					√	√			√			√		√		√		
STARS Alternate Standards and Assessment [4]	Alternate	CRT				√	√	√	√	√	√			√		√		√		

(Continued)

# Nebraska

## School-based Teacher-led Assessment and Reporting System (STARS)

Component	Test		Grades Tested												Test Purpose <sup>1</sup>					
	Type	Format	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Instructional	Student Accountability	School Accountability	Staff Accountability	Other
<b>Social Studies [3]</b>																				
STARS Local Criterion Referenced Assessment	Regular	CRT					√	√			√			√		√		√		

- Example purposes: Instructional: student diagnosis, student placement, instructional planning, program evaluation, improvement of instruction for groups of students, etc.  
 Student Accountability: student awards/recognition, honors diploma, student promotion/retention, required remediation, exit requirement, etc.  
 School Accountability: monetary awards/penalties, school accreditation, school performance reporting, high school skills guarantee, school improvement plans, etc.  
 Staff Accountability: staff awards/recognition, salary increases, staff dismissal, staff evaluation or certification, staff monetary penalties, etc.
- The state has developed a statewide process to measure writing performance. Each student in grades 4, 8, and 11 takes the assessment in the middle of the year and receives results before the end of the year. The performance assessment is graded at a central location over a nine day period with over 600 teachers involved. (The assessment is a performance based assessment scored with a Writing rubric based on the six traits of writing. Each assessment is scored twice by teachers. The students are allowed two 40 minute periods to respond to a prompt with an essay that is descriptive, narrative, and persuasive. Therefore this assessment is not a NRT but a CRT.)
- Each district in Nebraska has developed quality assessments to measure state standards and reports the results to the state for accountability purposes. The districts use the assessment results to improve instruction in the classroom and impact student achievement.
- The STARS Alternate Standards and Assessment Rubrics is a performance based assessment with the teacher observing students to ascertain skill achievement. This assessment is for "students with significant cognitive disabilities" who are participating "in a functional curriculum." This determination is made by the IEP team. Therefore this assessment is not a NRT but a CRT.

## Composition and Administration of the Main Reading/Language Arts Test in 2006–07

	Multiple Choice	Short Constructed Response	Extended Constructed Response	Performance Tasks	Other
Grade 4 Test	75%	10%	5%	10%	[1]
Grade 8 Test	75%	10%	5%	10%	[1]

During the 2006–07 academic year:

a. When was the assessment administered?	In 2006-07, the Reading local assessments were administered at different times throughout the school year (September 2006 to May 2007). Each standard has an aligned assessment that is administered after instruction.
b. Did any of the assessments measure skills from the previous grade?	No.

1 Each local district has a combination of the item types on its assessments; item percentages can be as high as listed above.

## Performance Levels and AYP

Performance levels used during the 2006–07 year	Beginning, Progressing, Proficient, Advanced
Test used for AYP determination	Local District CRT
Performance level used for AYP	Proficient and Advanced
Other tests used for AYP determination	In this state each district develops a local assessment to report on standards for Reading in grades 3 through 8 and once in high school. Their assessment process has to meet the six Quality Criteria of Alignment, Opportunity to Learn, Bias, Appropriateness, Reliability, and Consistency in Scoring.
Test used for state accountability	Local District CRT
Performance level used for state accountability	Proficient and Advanced
First implementation of performance standards for the 2006-07 assessments	Reading performance standards were adopted in September 2001.
Additional information about performance levels used during the 2006–07 academic year	Only the top two performance levels indicate that the student has met the standard.

**Performance Level Descriptors for Meeting Adequate Yearly Progress**

Grade 4 Proficient and Advanced: Each district develops Performance Level Descriptors to be used for AYP as part the Local Assessment Process.	Grade 8 Proficient and Advanced: Each district develops Performance Level Descriptors to be used for AYP as part the Local Assessment Process.
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**Accommodation Differences between NAEP and the Main State Test**

State accommodations not on NAEP	Presentation: use of tactile graphics, audiotape or CD, screen reader, and audio amplification devices. Response: speak into tape recorder, use graphic organizers, visual organizers, use spelling or grammar assistive devices, or speak to word processor, write in test booklet, use augmentative devices for single or multiple messages, highlight key words in directions, and have student repeat or explain directions to check understanding. Setting: change location to increase physical access or to access special equipment and change location so student does not distract others, and sit in front of room. Time and Scheduling: schedule tests in the morning, cue student to begin working and stay on task, and change testing schedule or order of tests, and test over multiple days. Direct Linguistic Support: Side-by-side bilingual versions of the test provided. Bilingual word lists, customized dictionaries provided. Directions are read aloud. Directions explained/clarified in English or the native language. Both oral and written directions in native language provided.
NAEP accommodations not on state assessment	—

**Changes to State Assessments between 2005 and 2007**

Added grades	Eliminated grades	Changed cut scores	Changed the time of administration	Changed assessment items	Used entirely different assessment	Realigned to new content standards	Changed proficiency standards	Changed accommodation policy	Changed re-test policy	Changed test contractors	No significant changes
√		√		√							

Note: Local school districts revised their assessments in Reading to include a sufficient number of items to measure reading comprehension. For each revision, the assessment process had to be reviewed for the six quality criteria. Additional CRT testing was added for grades 3, 5, 6, and 7. When items were added to standard assessments, new cut scores were determined using an approved process such as Modified Contrasting Group Method, Modified Angoff Method, or Modified Analytical Judgment with Exemplars as described in the state's Guidelines and Requirements for STARS.

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## **Are the reported 2006–07 state assessment results for grades 4 and 8 directly comparable with the 2004–05 reported results?**

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No, because some districts made significant changes to their assessments based on the portfolio review and additional requirements from the State Department of Education.

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## **Differences in the administration of assessments or in the reporting of outcomes between 2004–05 and 2006–07 due to policy or legislative changes having an impact on the ability to compare outcomes over time**

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Some districts made significant changes to their assessments based on the portfolio review and additional requirements from the State Department of Education. Some districts raised their standard cut scores for meeting proficiency performance level.

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## Composition and Administration of the Main Mathematics Test in 2006–07

	Multiple Choice	Short Constructed Response	Extended Constructed Response	Performance Tasks	Other
Grade 4 Test	75%	15%	5%	5%	[1]
Grade 8 Test	75%	15%	5%	5%	[1]

During the 2006–07 academic year:

a. When was the assessment administered?	In 2006-07, the Mathematics local assessments were administered at different times throughout the school year (September 2006 to May 2007). Each standard has an aligned assessment that is administered after instruction.
b. Did any of the assessments measure skills from the previous grade?	No.

1 Each local district has a combination of the item types on their assessments; item percentages can be as high as listed above.

## Performance Levels and AYP

Performance levels used during the 2006–07 year	Beginning, Progressing, Proficient, Advanced
Test used for AYP determination	Local District CRT
Performance level used for AYP	Proficient and Advanced
Other tests used for AYP determination	In this state each district develops a local assessment to report on standards for Mathematics in grades 3 through 8 and once in high school. Their assessment process has to meet the six Quality Criteria of Alignment, Opportunity to Learn, Bias, Appropriateness, Reliability, and Consistency in Scoring.
Test used for state accountability	Local District CRT
Performance level used for state accountability	Proficient and Advanced
First implementation of performance standards for the 2006-07 assessments	Mathematics standards were adopted in December 2000.
Additional information about performance levels used during the 2006–07 academic year	Only the top two performance levels indicate that the student has met the standard.

**Performance Level Descriptors for Meeting Adequate Yearly Progress**

Grade 4 Proficient and Advanced: Each district develops Performance Level Descriptors to be used for AYP as part the Local Assessment Process.	Grade 8 Proficient and Advanced: Each district develops Performance Level Descriptors to be used for AYP as part the Local Assessment Process.
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**Accommodation Differences between NAEP and the Main State Test**

State accommodations not on NAEP	Presentation: use of tactile graphics, audiotape or CD, screen reader, and audio amplification devices. Response: speak into tape recorder, use calculation devices, use graphic organizers, use visual organizers, use mathematics tables and formula sheets, write in test booklet, use augmentative devices for single or multiple messages, highlight key words in directions, have student repeat or explain directions to check understanding, and use graph paper to keep numbers in proper columns. Setting: change location to increase physical access or to access special equipment and change location so student does not distract others, and sit in front of room. Time and Scheduling: schedule tests in the morning, cue student to begin working and stay on task, and change testing schedule or order of tests, and test over multiple days. Direct Linguistic Support: Side-by-side bilingual versions of the test provided. Bilingual word lists, customized dictionaries provided. Directions read aloud. Directions explained/clarified in English or the native language. Both oral and written directions in native language provided. Test items read aloud in English. Test items read aloud in simplified/sheltered English.
NAEP accommodations not on state assessment	—

**Changes to State Assessments between 2005 and 2007**

Added grades	Eliminated grades	Changed cut scores	Changed the time of administration	Changed assessment items	Used entirely different assessment	Realigned to new content standards	Changed proficiency standards	Changed accommodation policy	Changed re-test policy	Changed test contractors	No significant changes
√		√		√							

Note: Local school districts revised their assessments in Mathematics to include a sufficient number of items to measure mathematics problem solving. For each revision, the assessment process had to be reviewed for the six quality criteria. Additional CRT testing was added for grades 3, 5, 6, and 7. When items were added to standard assessments, new cut scores were determined using an approved process such as Modified Contrasting Group Method, Modified Angoff Method, or Modified Analytical Judgment with Exemplars as described in the state's Guidelines and Requirements for STARS.

## **Are the reported 2006–07 state assessment results for grades 4 and 8 directly comparable with the 2004–05 reported results?**

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No, because some districts made significant changes to their assessments based on the portfolio review and additional requirements from the State Department of Education.

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## **Differences in the administration of assessments or in the reporting of outcomes between 2004–05 and 2006–07 due to policy or legislative changes having an impact on the ability to compare outcomes over time**

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Some districts made significant changes to their assessments based on the portfolio review and additional requirements from the State Department of Education. Some districts raised their standard cut scores for meeting proficiency performance level.

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