

A Profile of State Assessment Programs 2009

Since 2003, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has supported research that compares the proficiency standards of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) with those of individual states. State assessments are placed onto a common scale defined by NAEP, which allows states' proficiency standards to be compared not only to NAEP, but also to each other.¹ While the mapped NAEP equivalent scores of state standards are useful in determining the relative rigor of states' 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 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) standards, and the standard-setting process.

In 2007, in collaboration with the Education Information Management Advisory Consortium (EIMAC)—Task Force on Assessment of the Council of Chief State School Officers—NCES conducted a survey of state assessment programs to gain contextual information about the states' assessment programs in 2006–07 and to note changes in their assessments between the 2004–05 and 2006–07 school years that could affect the interpretation of the mapping results. The NAEP State Coordinator in every state was asked to provide information about the state's testing program through an online survey. After this information was verified and confirmed by the NAEP State Coordinator of each state, it was summarized in individual state profiles.² These profiles were designed in collaboration with a panel of NAEP State Coordinators.

In support of the 2009 Mapping Study, NAEP State Coordinators were asked by NCES to update the information collected on their state assessment program in 2007. Following similar verification steps, the information was summarized into profiles to provide a concise snapshot of all state assessment programs in the 2008–09 school year. Each profile presents information on the grades and subjects tested during the 2008–09 year, state performance levels and performance level descriptors, the composition of main state assessments, and changes to the state assessments between 2006–07 and 2008–09.

A sample profile is shown below. Information on the state assessment programs is presented in nine blocks. The first block combines all subjects. The remaining blocks (2–9) are presented twice, once for Reading/Language Arts and then for Mathematics. The example that follows is for Reading/Language Arts only. Some answers may have been edited for consistency or for space limitations; however, the substance of all answers is unchanged from what states provided to the NAEP State Coordinators. All web addresses in these profiles were verified on May 15, 2011. In any block, the symbol “—” indicates that a state's information was either not provided (for example, if there is no information on performance level descriptors of an alternate assessment for meeting AYP) or not applicable (for example, if the information relates to the proportion of the test score from short constructed response items, but the test does not use short constructed response items).

¹ Documents that discuss the research on NAEP and state proficiency standards are available at: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/statemapping/>.

² The 2007 State Profiles are available at: http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/statemapping/profile_standards_2007.asp.

Block 1 summarizes information about each state’s testing program: the name of the program, the different tests, the type and format of each test, the grades and subjects tested, and the tests’ purpose. States were asked to enter up to four tests in Mathematics, English Language Arts, Reading, and Science. Response options for test type were: regular, alternate, modified, and portfolio assessments.³ Response options for test format were: criterion-referenced (CRT), norm-referenced (NRT), combination CRT/NRT, and other formats. Response options for test purpose were: instructional, student accountability, school accountability, staff accountability, and other. Additional information provided by NAEP State Coordinators summarizing their states’ tests and test purposes is included at the end of the block. An accessible table containing the information in this block can be found at: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/statemapping/block1.asp>.

Block 1	Example State																			
	State Assessment and Accountability Program (SAAP)																			
	Component	Test		Grades Tested												Test Purpose ¹				
Type		Format	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Instructional	Student Accountability	School Accountability	Staff Accountability	Other
Language Arts																				
Comprehensive Assessments of State Students (CASS)	Regular	CRT		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√			√		√		
CASS - Alternate (CASS-Alt)	Alternate	CRT	√			√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√			√		√		
Mathematics																				
CASS	Regular	CRT		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√			√		√		
CASS-Alt	Alternate	CRT	√			√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√			√		√		
Science																				
CASS	Regular	CRT						√		√				√		√		√		
CASS-Alt	Alternate	CRT						√		√				√		√		√		

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.

³ For reference, definitions of different types of assessments are available at the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) website, at: <http://www.cehd.umn.edu/NCEO/TopicAreas/AlternateAssessments/altAssessTopic.htm>.

Block 2 summarizes information about the composition of the main state assessments in 2008–09 for grades 4 and 8 in Reading/Language Arts and Mathematics. It shows the number of items for each type of question and each type’s respective weight in the final score. If the state indicated that an item type was not used, the type’s weight is indicated by “—.” An accessible table containing the information in this block can be found at:

<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/statemapping/block2.asp> .

Block 3 includes additional information about the timing of the assessments and whether assessments measured skills acquired only in prior grades. An accessible table containing the information in this block can be found at: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/statemapping/block3.asp>.

Block 4 summarizes information about the assessments and performance levels used by the state in 2008–09 for state accountability for grades 4 and 8 in Reading/Language Arts and Mathematics, as well as the assessments and performance levels used to determine AYP. The symbol “—” indicates that the information was not provided (e.g., if the state did not provide additional information about performance levels used during the 2008–09 academic year). An accessible table containing the information in this block can be found at: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/statemapping/block4.asp>.

Example State		Reading/Language Arts									
Block 2	Composition of the Main Reading/Language Arts Test in 2008–09										
	Multiple Choice		Short Constructed Response		Extended Constructed Response		Performance Tasks		Other		
	Number of Items	Proportion of Score	Number of Items	Proportion of Score	Number of Items	Proportion of Score	Number of Items	Proportion of Score	Number of Items	Proportion of Score	
Grade 4	24	50%	0	—	3	50%	0	—	0	—	
Grade 8	24	50%	0	—	3	50%	0	—	0	—	
Block 3	Administration of the Main Reading/Language Arts Test in 2008–09										
	Were any of the 2008–09 assessments used for AYP reporting for grades 4 or 8 administered in the fall 2008?						No.				
Block 4	Performance Levels and AYP										
	Performance levels used during the 2008–09 year						Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, and Advanced				
	Test used for AYP determination						Comprehensive Assessments of State Students (CASS)				
	Performance level used for AYP						Proficient				
	Other tests used for AYP determination						CASS-Alt assessments are used in AYP determination.				
	Test used for state accountability						CASS				
	Performance level used for state accountability						Proficient				
	First implementation of performance standards for the 2008–09 assessments						2005–06 school year				
Additional information about performance levels used during the 2008–09 academic year						—					

Block 5 provides the performance level descriptors used for meeting AYP in 2008–09 assessments for grades 4 and 8 in Reading/Language Arts and Mathematics. The descriptors correspond to the proficient performance level as it is defined by each state. A web address is included if the state provided a link. An accessible table containing the information in this block can be found at: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/statemapping/block5.asp>.

Block 6 lists the performance level descriptors used for meeting AYP in 2008–09 alternate assessments for grades 4 and 8 in Reading/Language Arts and Mathematics. The descriptors correspond to the proficient performance level as it is defined by each state. A “—” indicates that the state did not provide performance level descriptors. A web address is included if the state provided a link. An accessible table containing the information in this block can be found at: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/statemapping/block6.asp>.

	Example State	Reading/Language Arts
Block 5	<p>Performance Level Descriptors for Meeting Adequate Yearly Progress</p> <p>Grade 4: Students performing at the Proficient level demonstrate a fundamental understanding of what they read by applying various strategies when reading textual/informational, functional, and literary/recreational materials. To some degree these students use various skills and strategies, including demonstrating a knowledge of sentence structure, making inferences, and distinguishing fiction from nonfiction. They recognize some literary elements and devices including characters, similes, and important details as they read literary/recreational text. As a part of understanding informational/textual and functional materials, students at this level are beginning to locate information, identify important details, use sentence structure, and distinguish fact from fiction. Their vocabulary knowledge includes recognition of some antonyms, synonyms, and some use of structural analysis skills.</p> <p>Performance level descriptors are available online at http://www.STDOE.st.gov/pdf/AchievementLevelsGrade4.pdf</p>	<p>Grade 8: Students performing at the Proficient level utilize strategies to make inferences to determine bias or theme and use specific context clues to determine some word meanings. They can distinguish among characteristics of some types of poetry such as ballads, epics, haikus, limericks, and lyrics. They often identify literary elements and can describe their impact on setting, mood, characterization, or theme. These students also are able to identify the elements of plot.</p>
Block 6	<p>Performance Level Descriptors of Alternate Assessment for Meeting Adequate Yearly Progress</p> <p>Grade 4: A fourth-grade student performing at the Proficient level on the Example State Extended Standards in Reading demonstrates fundamental knowledge that meets the extended standards in multiple phoneme words, reading simple sentences, synonyms, literary elements (main characters and details), and letter blends. This knowledge might be demonstrated at different complexity levels and with varying degrees of assistance.</p> <p>Performance level descriptors are available online at: http://www.STDOE.st.gov/pdf/AchievementLevels.pdf</p>	<p>Grade 8: —</p>

Block 7 presents changes to the main state assessment in Reading/Language Arts and Mathematics between the 2006–07 and 2008–09 school years. Each state self-reported whether the changes to its assessment were significant or not. For many states, additional information about the changes is included in a note below the block. An accessible table containing the information in this block can be found at: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/statemapping/block7.asp>.

Block 8 provides information about the comparability of the state assessments between 2006–07 and 2008–09. Specifically, it is the answer given to the survey question “Are the reported 2008–09 state assessment results for grades 4 and 8 Reading or Mathematics directly comparable with the 2006–07 reported results?” Each state self-reported whether its 2006–07 and 2008–09 assessments were comparable or not. An accessible table containing the information in this block can be found at: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/statemapping/block8.asp>.

Block 9 provides additional information about changes to the state assessment, inclusion policies, or administration of the state assessment between 2006–07 and 2008–09 that would have an impact on the ability to compare outcomes over time. An accessible table containing the information in this block can be found at: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/statemapping/block9.asp>.

Example State
Reading/Language Arts

Block 7

Changes to State Assessments Between 2006–07 and 2008–09

	No Significant Changes	Changed Cut Scores	Changed The Period 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	Other Changes
Grade 4	√									•	
Grade 8	√									•	

Block 8

Are the reported 2008–09 state assessment results for grades 4 and 8 directly comparable with the 2006–07 reported results?

Yes, they can be compared. The testing contractors changed but the test and scales did not change.

Block 9

Are there differences in the administration of assessments or in the reporting of outcomes between 2006–07 and 2008–09 due to policy or legislative changes having an impact on the ability to compare outcomes over time?

None.

Source

U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2009 Survey of State Assessment Program Characteristics.

Glossary

AYP	Adequate Yearly Progress
CRT	Criterion-Referenced Test
ECA	End-of-Course Assessments
ELA	English Language Arts
ELP	English Language Proficiency
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/10	Stanford Achievement Test – Tenth Edition
SEA	State Education Agency

New Jersey

New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK)

Component	Test		Grades Tested												Test Purpose ¹					
	Type	Format	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Instructional	Student Accountability	School Accountability	Staff Accountability	Other
Language Arts [2]																				
NJ Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK)	Regular	CRT				√	√	√	√	√	√	√				√		√		
Alternate Proficiency Assessment (APA)	Alternate	CRT				√	√	√	√	√	√					√		√		
Mathematics																				
NJ Assessment of Skills and Knowledge	Regular	CRT				√	√	√	√	√	√					√		√		
Alternate Proficiency Assessment	Alternate	CRT				√	√	√	√	√	√					√		√		
Science																				
NJ Assessment of Skills and Knowledge	Regular	CRT					√				√					√		√		
Alternate Proficiency Assessment	Alternate	CRT					√				√					√		√		

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 Information provided about the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge for Language Arts Literacy pertains to only the reading items on the assessment.

Composition of the Main Reading/Language Arts Test in 2008–09

	Multiple Choice		Short Constructed Response		Extended Constructed Response		Performance Tasks		Other	
	Number of Items	Proportion of Score	Number of Items	Proportion of Score	Number of Items	Proportion of Score	Number of Items	Proportion of Score	Number of Items	Proportion of Score
Grade 4	27	69%	0	—	3	31%	0	—	0	—
Grade 8	36	69%	0	—	4	31%	0	—	0	—

Administration of the Main Reading/Language Arts Test in 2008–09

Were any of the 2008–09 assessments used for AYP reporting for grades 4 or 8 administered in the fall of 2008?	No.
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Performance Levels and AYP

Performance levels used during the 2008–09 year	Partially Proficient, Proficient, and Advanced
Test used for AYP determination	New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge
Performance level used for AYP	Proficient
Other tests used for AYP determination	—
Test used for state accountability	New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge
Performance level used for state accountability	Proficient
First implementation of performance standards for the 2008–09 assessments	Grade 4: 1998–99; Grade 8: 1999–00
Additional information about performance levels used during the 2008–09 academic year	—

Performance Level Descriptors for Meeting Adequate Yearly Progress

Grade 4: A student performing at the Proficient level constructs meaning by employing a variety of strategies to synthesize, analyze, and critique text. As a proficient reader, the student recognizes the central idea, supporting details, purpose, and organization of the text. The proficient reader demonstrates the ability to comprehend a variety of texts literally and inferentially, make connections to the text, and understand the function of some literary devices. The student is able to use relevant details to support opinions and conclusions and to use these to analyze ideas and extend the meaning of the text in written responses.

Performance level descriptors are available online at:
<http://www.nj.gov/education/assessment/descriptors/>

Grade 8: Eighth grade students performing at the Proficient level show an overall understanding of a variety of texts at literal and inferential levels. They make connections while interpreting and analyzing text. Proficient students recognize the author’s purpose and respond critically to central themes, supporting details, and organizational structures of text. They interpret, extrapolate and synthesize information. Students support opinions and conclusions with evidence from the text.

Performance level descriptors are available online at:
<http://www.nj.gov/education/assessment/descriptors/>

Performance Level Descriptors of Alternate Assessment for Meeting Adequate Yearly Progress

Grade 4: Students performing at the Proficient level may require prompting to demonstrate basic knowledge and skills of vocabulary and concept development; comprehension skills; response to text; writing as a product; and mechanics with a moderate level of performance using modified and supported materials. Proficient students typically:

- Identify the meaning of words given choices.
- Identify contextual clues for word meaning.
- Locate words in a dictionary.
- Answer questions about text, such as drawing conclusions or identifying evidence to support given conclusions.
- Sequence multi-step directions.
- Match traits to types of literature.
- Generate details about a topic.
- Write a topic sentence.
- Edit and revise sentences to include one or more of the following: dialogue, details, order of ideas, opening and closing statements, ending punctuation, commas, quotation marks, and capitalization.

Grade 8: Students performing at the Proficient level may require prompting to demonstrate basic knowledge and skills in vocabulary and concept development; comprehension skills and response to text; writing as a product; and mechanics with a moderate level of performance using modified and supported materials. Proficient students typically:

- Choose dictionary definitions that best define new words in text, given choices.
- Make connections between new words and known vocabulary based on context clues.
- Identify connotative and denotative meanings of words.
- Identify propaganda in advertisements and its type or purpose.
- Identify and analyze the use of fiction elements such as characters, character traits, plot sequence and mood in text.
- Write prose with appropriate textual elements, such as: setting, plot and characters for fiction; biographical details in chronological order for a biography or autobiography, or essays with a clear purpose and supporting details.
- Write using some mechanics appropriately such as paragraphs, grammar, transitional words, punctuation, and capitalization.

Changes to State Assessments Between 2007 and 2009

	No Significant Changes	Changed Cut Scores	Changed The Period 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	Other Changes
Grade 4		√	√	√	√		√			√	
Grade 8		√	√	√	√		√			√	

Are the reported 2008–09 state assessment results for grades 4 and 8 directly comparable with the 2006–07 reported results?

No.

Are there differences in the administration of assessments or in the reporting of outcomes between 2006–07 and 2008–09 due to policy or legislative changes having an impact on the ability to compare outcomes over time?

None.

Composition of the Main Mathematics Test in 2008–09

	Multiple Choice		Short Constructed Response		Extended Constructed Response		Performance Tasks		Other	
	Number of Items	Proportion of Score	Number of Items	Proportion of Score	Number of Items	Proportion of Score	Number of Items	Proportion of Score	Number of Items	Proportion of Score
Grade 4	35	70%	6	12%	3	18%	0	—	0	—
Grade 8	35	67%	8	16%	3	17%	0	—	0	—

Administration of the Main Mathematics Test in 2008–09

Were any of the 2008–09 assessments used for AYP reporting for grades 4 or 8 administered in the fall of 2008?	No.
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Performance Levels and AYP

Performance levels used during the 2008–09 year	Partially Proficient, Proficient, and Advanced
Test used for AYP determination	New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge
Performance level used for AYP	Proficient
Other tests used for AYP determination	—
Test used for state accountability	New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge
Performance level used for state accountability	Proficient
First implementation of performance standards for the 2008–09 assessments	Grade 4: 1998–99; Grade 8: 1999–00
Additional information about performance levels used during the 2008–09 academic year	—

Performance Level Descriptors for Meeting Adequate Yearly Progress

Grade 4: Students performing at the Proficient level demonstrate recall, recognition and application of mathematical concepts, skills, and vocabulary to solve problems involving real world situations. Proficient students understand and perform numerical operations of whole numbers and can use a specified procedure with accuracy. These students demonstrate number sense by using place value concepts, fractions, and decimals. Proficient students can compute sums and differences of fractions and decimals. These students determine the appropriate operation for a given situation and can use estimation appropriately. Proficient students understand and apply concepts of geometry and measurement. These students demonstrate a working knowledge of spatial sense, geometric properties and geometric relationships. Proficient students can use appropriate measurement tools accurately to solve problems involving perimeter, area and volume. These students understand and apply concepts of coordinate geometry as well as identify lines of symmetry. Proficient students demonstrate an understanding of how quantities are related to one another and how to represent and analyze those relationships using algebraic concepts. These students can recognize, describe, extend, and create patterns as well as solve functions for a given variable, including inverse relationships. Proficient students can understand, name, and apply properties of operations and numbers. Proficient students have an understanding of how to apply the concepts and techniques of data analysis, probability, and discrete mathematics. These students can read, interpret and construct graphs, tables and/or charts as well as predict or make an informed decision based on information retrieved from a variety of sources. Proficient students demonstrate skills using tools and strategies for representing, organizing, and interpreting data as well as solve problems involving mean, median, and mode. Proficient students use various forms of representation to illustrate steps to a solution and effectively communicate a variety of reasoning methods to solve multi-step problems. These students can explain steps and procedures for finding solutions as well as check the reasonableness of their results.

Performance level descriptors are available online at:

<http://www.nj.gov/education/assessment/descriptors/>

Grade 8: Eighth grade students performing at the Proficient level demonstrate evidence of conceptual and analytical understanding of mathematical knowledge, procedures, skills and processes across and within the four content standards. Proficient students identify, recognize and compare different representations of numbers and demonstrate an understanding of the meanings and uses of numerical operations and number systems. Proficient students apply geometrical concepts; identify, describe, and classify two- and three-dimensional shapes; and solve problems involving geometry, spatial sense and measurement. Proficient students will represent and analyze relationships among variable quantities and solve problems involving patterns, functions, and algebraic concepts and processes. Students will model situations algebraically, symbolically and graphically. Proficient students analyze, interpret, and make predictions based on appropriate representations for sets of data. They apply and interpret the concepts of probability and discrete mathematics to solve problems. Proficient students are mathematically literate in their ability to comprehend vocabulary, understand appropriate context and communicate their reasoning within and among the mathematical content areas.

Performance level descriptors are available online at:

<http://www.nj.gov/education/assessment/descriptors/>

Performance Level Descriptors of Alternate Assessment for Meeting Adequate Yearly Progress

Grade 4: Students performing at the Proficient level may require prompting to demonstrate a basic knowledge of number sense, coordinate geometry, properties of operations and use of symbols, and systematic listing and counting at a moderate level of performance. In general, proficient students order and compare fractions and decimals; apply numbers to real world situations; model fraction/decimal/whole number equivalents; use coordinates to locate and label points in the first quadrant; identify the commutative, associative, identity and zero properties; use symbols ($<$, $>$, $=$) to compare numbers; organize objects in a Venn diagram according to attributes; and list all possibilities for a counting situation.

Grade 8: Students performing at the Proficient level may require prompting to demonstrate a basic knowledge of number sense, measuring geometric objects, number patterns, and vertex edge graphs at a moderate level of performance. In general, proficient students convert numbers to scientific notation; order rational numbers (fraction, decimals, integers); find the area and perimeter of combined shapes; find the surface area of various prisms and pyramids; match surface area and volume to the appropriate model; describe and extend a number pattern; and identify a vertex edge graph and its parts.

Changes to State Assessments Between 2007 and 2009

	No Significant Changes	Changed Cut Scores	Changed The Period 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	Other Changes
Grade 4		√	√	√	√		√			√	
Grade 8		√	√	√	√		√			√	

Are the reported 2008–09 state assessment results for grades 4 and 8 directly comparable with the 2006–07 reported results?

No.

Are there differences in the administration of assessments or in the reporting of outcomes between 2006–07 and 2008–09 due to policy or legislative changes having an impact on the ability to compare outcomes over time?

None.