

# The Nation's Report Card™

## Reading 2009 Trial Urban District Assessment

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### **What is the NAEP Trial Urban District Assessment?**

The Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA) is a special project of the National Center for Education Statistics, the National Assessment Governing Board, and the Council of the Great City Schools to determine the feasibility of reporting district-level results for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The 2009 assessment marks the fifth assessment in reading since 2002.

#### **How many districts participate each year, and how are they chosen?**

A total of 18 urban districts participated in the 2009 reading assessment, including 11 districts that also participated in earlier assessment years, and 7 districts participating for the first time in 2009 (listed below in italics).

Atlanta Public Schools	<i>Fresno Unified School District</i>
Austin Independent School District	<i>Jefferson County Public Schools (Louisville, KY)</i>
<i>Baltimore City Public Schools</i>	Houston Independent School District
Boston Public Schools	Los Angeles Unified School District
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	<i>Miami-Dade County Public Schools</i>
Chicago Public Schools	<i>Milwaukee Public Schools</i>
Cleveland Metropolitan School District	New York City Department of Education
<i>Detroit Public Schools</i>	San Diego Unified School District
District of Columbia Public Schools	<i>School District of Philadelphia</i>

Districts are invited by the National Assessment Governing Board to participate in the assessment based on a selection process that considers a number of factors including the district's size and racial/ethnic diversity. The maximum number of districts participating in a given assessment year is based on the level of Congressional funding for the program.

#### **Are the districts included in the recently released national and state NAEP results?**

Yes. Students in the TUDA samples are also included as part of the state and national samples. For example, the results reported for students in Boston also contribute to the results reported for Massachusetts and to the results for the nation. The districts' results are weighted so that their contribution to the state results reflects the actual proportion of students in the population.

#### **What are "large cities" and why are they used as a point of comparison?**

Just as the national public sample is used as a benchmark for comparing results for states, results for urban districts are compared to results from large cities nationwide. Referred to as "large central cities" in previous TUDA reports, results for large cities are for public schools located in the urbanized areas of cities with populations of 250,000 or more. Large city is not synonymous with "inner city." Schools in participating TUDA districts are also included in the results for large cities, even though some districts (Atlanta, Austin, Charlotte, Cleveland, Fresno, Houston, Jefferson County, Los Angeles, and Miami-Dade) include some schools that are not located in

NAEP defined ‘large cities.’ Students in the 18 TUDA districts represent nearly half of the students who attend schools in large cities nationally. The comparison to students in large cities is made because the demographic characteristics of those students are most like the characteristics of students in the urban districts. Both the districts and large cities overall generally have higher concentrations of Black or Hispanic students, lower-income students, and English language learners than in the nation as a whole.

### **How is the assessment developed?**

Like every NAEP assessment, the reading assessment is based on a framework for the assessment. Frameworks are developed by the National Assessment Governing Board through a process that incorporates input from subject experts, school administrators, policymakers, teachers, parents, and others and are revised periodically to reflect what students are learning in schools.

### **How has the 2009 reading framework changed?**

Frameworks define the knowledge and skills to be tested on NAEP. In 2009, the National Assessment Governing Board developed a new framework for the reading assessment. The previous reading framework was used from 1992 until the most recent assessment in 2007. The new framework includes more emphasis on literary and informational texts, a new definition of reading processes, a new systematic assessment of vocabulary knowledge, and the addition of poetry to grade 4.

Results from special analyses determined the 2009 reading assessment results could be compared with those from earlier assessment years. A summary of these special analyses and an overview of the differences between the previous framework and the 2009 framework are available on the Web at [http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/reading/trend\\_study.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/reading/trend_study.asp).

### **What types of questions do students answer?**

In the reading assessment, students read selected literary and informational texts and responded to a series of multiple-choice and constructed-response questions about what they had read. In addition to a selection of sample questions highlighted in the Reading Report Card, other questions from the 2009 assessment and prior assessments are available on the NAEP Questions Tool (<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/itmrlsx/>). The tool includes sample student responses and scoring guides for constructed-response questions, and the percentages of students in each response/scoring category. NAEP questions can be used by teachers to create classroom quizzes and compare the performance of their students to the performance of students in the nation or their state.

### **How can a score change be significant for one group, but a similar or larger change not be significant for another group?**

The average scores and percentages in this report all have a margin of error associated with them. These margins of error are called standard errors, and the sizes of the standard errors influence the results of statistical tests. Comparisons over time or between groups are based on statistical tests that consider both the size of the differences between estimates and the standard errors of the two estimates being compared. Estimates based on smaller groups are likely to have larger standard errors. When an estimate has a large standard error, a numerical difference that

seems large may not be statistically significant. For example, a 3-point change in the average score in Los Angeles may be statistically significant while a 3-point change in Boston may not be. The sample size in Boston is about one-half of the sample size in Los Angeles, contributing to larger standard errors for the estimates in Boston. Standard errors for the district results are available in the NAEP Data Explorer at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/naepdata/>

### **What testing accommodations does NAEP offer?**

NAEP allows students with disabilities and English language learners to use most of the testing accommodations that they receive for state or district tests. Accommodations are adaptations to standard testing procedures that remove barriers to participation in assessments without changing what is being tested. Examples of such accommodations are extended time and small-group or one-on-one administration. While test directions may be read aloud in Spanish, NAEP does not allow reading passages to be read aloud to the student, as that accommodation would alter what is being tested (the student's ability to read the printed word in English). For the same reason, NAEP does not allow translation of the reading assessment.

### **How should high exclusion rates be interpreted? What is the potential impact of these rates on scores?**

When making comparisons across districts or within districts over time, it is always important to consider variations in exclusion rates because of a wide range of proportions of students with disabilities (SD) and/or English language learners (ELL) among districts. Districts follow the accommodation policies set by their state. Although every effort is made to include as many students as possible, different jurisdictions have different exclusion policies, and those policies may have changed over time. Because SD and ELL students typically score lower than students not categorized as SD or ELL, jurisdictions that are more inclusive—that is, jurisdictions that assess greater percentages of these students—may have lower average scores than if they had a less inclusive policy. Exclusion rates for SD and/or ELL fourth- and eighth-graders in reading ranged from 2 to 19 percent across the participating districts in 2009. In large cities, the exclusion rate was 7 percent at grade 4 and 5 percent at grade 8. More information on the inclusion and accommodation rates in each district is available in appendix tables A-2 through A-5 in the report.

### **About the National Assessment of Educational Progress**

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), first administered in 1969, is the largest nationally representative assessment of what the nation's students know and can do in core subjects such as mathematics, reading, science, and writing. Teachers, principals, parents, policymakers, and researchers all use NAEP results to assess progress and develop ways to improve education in America. The results of NAEP are published as The Nation's Report Card™, and are available for the nation, states, and in some cases, urban districts. NAEP is administered by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), within the Institute of Education Sciences of the U.S. Department of Education.

### **Find information on individual district performance**

- Browse highlights of the 2009 reading results for participating districts on The Nation's Report Card website at <http://nationsreportcard.gov>.
- View individual snapshots of districts' performance at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pubs/dst2009/2010461.asp>
- Use the NAEP Data Explorer to create statistical tables and charts summarizing district results at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/naepdata>.
- See how districts performed on released questions from the reading assessment in the NAEP Question Tool at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/itmrlsx>.
- Read the *Reading Framework for the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress and Assessment and Item Specifications for the NAEP 2009 Reading Assessment* on the Governing Board website at <http://www.nagb.org/publications/frameworks.htm>.