

Mapping State Proficiency Standards Onto the NAEP Scales

Since 2003, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has compared each state's standard for proficient performance in grades 4 and 8 reading and mathematics by placing the state standards onto common scales from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The latest report, which is scheduled for release in September 2024 and is the ninth in the series, highlights the mapping results from the 2021–2022 school year.

Since the reauthorization of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 2002, states have been required to define and report the percentage of students in grades 3 to 8 who meet the state performance standards in reading and mathematics. However, since each state independently develops or chooses assessments to measure its students' knowledge and skills, and sets their own standards for reaching different achievement levels, it is not possible to compare state standards unless they are placed on a common metric. Given that all states participate in the NAEP grades 4 and 8 reading and mathematics assessments, NAEP can be used as the common metric to compare the relative rigor of states' proficiency standards.

The NCES process of "state mapping," a form of equipercentile equating, shows where each state's standards fall on the NAEP scales and in relation to the NAEP achievement levels: *NAEP Basic*, *NAEP Proficient*, and *NAEP Advanced*. The mapping analyses allow each state to compare the relative stringency of its proficiency standard with that of other states.

This study contributes to the conversation on national education policy by informing each state where its standards for proficient performance fall on the NAEP scales and allowing each state to compare its proficiency standards with those of other states. NCES mapping study results, however, are not indicative of the quality of state achievement standards; state and NAEP assessments are developed for different but related purposes and can vary in format and administration. The results of this study do not suggest that NAEP achievement levels are more valid or that states should emulate NAEP standards.