

Understanding NAEP Achievement Levels

Citation: Loomis, S.C. and Bourque, M.L. (Eds.) *National Assessment of Educational Progress Achievement Levels, 1992–1998 for Mathematics*, Washington, DC: **National Assessment Governing Board**, 2001.

The purpose of this report is to increase understanding of the achievement levels for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP): what they are, and what they are not. The report is a reference for the American public, especially educators, parents, students, and policymakers. [snip] The information in this report will be helpful in interpreting accurately the meaning of the Mathematics NAEP achievement levels and student performance relative to the levels. [This] information will also aid in understanding the NAEP reports, commonly known as The Nation's Report Card.

How Should Achievement Levels Be Interpreted?

Unlike most assessments, there are no individual scores on NAEP. Achievement levels define performance, not students. Notice that there is no mention of “at grade level” performance in these achievement goals. In particular, it is important to understand clearly that [NAEP's] Proficient achievement level does not refer to “at grade” performance. Nor is performance at the Proficient level synonymous with ‘proficiency in the subject’. That is, students who may be considered proficient in a subject, given the common usage of the term, might not satisfy the requirements for performance at the NAEP achievement level. Further, Basic achievement is more than minimal competency. Basic achievement is less than mastery but more than the lowest level of performance on NAEP. Finally, even the best students you know may not meet the requirements for Advanced performance on NAEP.

What Do NAEP Scores Mean?

by Diane Ravitch (May 14, 2012)

Since I served on NAGB (National Assessment Governing Board) for seven years, I can explain what the board's "achievement levels" mean.

There are four levels.

- **Advanced** is superb performance, which is like getting an A+.
- **Proficient** is akin to a solid A.
- **Basic** is akin to a B or C level performance.
- **Below Basic** is where we really need to worry. These are the students who really don't understand math or read well at all.

Source: <https://dianeravitch.net/2012/05/14/what-do-naep-scores-mean/>