

Fact Sheet

What is the *Nation's Arts Report Card*? Commonly referred to as the Nation's Report Card, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is the only continuing, national measure of the academic achievement of America's public and private schools. For 40 years student performance has been measured in the following subjects: reading, math, writing, science and geography. The 2008 NAEP Arts Assessment, or the 2008 Nation's Arts Report Card, is the fifth NAEP assessment in the arts. The next NAEP arts assessment is scheduled to take place in 2016.

How was the information collected? The 2008 NAEP Arts Assessment was given to a nationally representative sample of 7,900 eighth-grade students from 260 public and private schools. The 2008 NAEP Arts Assessment was conducted in music and the visual arts. Approximately one-half of these students were assessed in music, and the other half were assessed in visual arts.

The NAEP Arts Framework serves as the blueprint for the assessment, describing the specific knowledge and skills that should be assessed in the four arts disciplines: music, visual arts, theater and dance. Additionally, three arts processes – responding, creating, and performing – are central to students' experiences in these disciplines.

In 2008, due to budget constraints, only the responding process in music and both the responding and creating processes in visual arts were assessed. Theater and dance were not assessed. The responding process in music and visual arts was assessed with multiple-choice questions and constructed response questions that required students to produce answers of a few words or sentences. Creating questions required students to create works of art and design of their own.

Although the questions in the 2008 assessment were taken from those administered in the previous arts assessment in 1997, not all of the results can be compared between the two years. Only the percentages of students' correct responses to the multiple-choice questions in 2008 can be compared to those in 1997.

What were the key findings? For both music and visual arts, on average among the 8th graders assessed:

Students eligible for reduced or free lunch scored lower than students ineligible Black and Hispanic students scored lower than White and Asian/Pacific Islander students Public school students scored lower than private school students Students in urban schools scored lower than students in suburban schools.

The overall average responding score for 8th graders assessed was set at

150 on a scale of 300 for both music and visual arts, with a wide variance in scores between the lowest- and highest-achieving students. Scores for music ranged from 105 for music and 104 for visual arts for the lowest-performing students to 194 for music and 193 for visual arts for the highest-performing students. Because music and visual arts are two distinct disciplines, results are reported separately for each area and cannot be compared. The average creating task score for visual arts was reported separately as the average percentage of the maximum possible score from 0 to 100 with a national average of 52. In general, students who performed well on the responding questions also performed well on the creating questions. Compared to 1997, the average reported frequency of arts instruction for 8th graders remained about the same. However, according to data collected from school administrators, 8% of 8th graders attended schools where no music instruction was offered, and 14% of 8th graders attended schools where no visual arts instruction was offered. These findings show a slight improvement from 1997.

NAEP Arts Toolkit Over the next days and weeks, more information about the Nation's Arts Report Card will be posted to this site. We hope that these additional resources and documents will be helpful not only in understanding the NAEP, but also as a guide to communicating about it. The existence of the NAEP arts assessment is an important acknowledgment that the arts are a core subject and that they can be rigorously assessed; moreover, results of the arts assessment portray the current levels of opportunity for American children to learn important knowledge and skills essential to being an educated person. The current NAEP results graphically demonstrate that our nation still has a long way to go in ensuring that every child has access to a high quality arts education. Let's use this opportunity to start and continue important conversations about learning in the arts!