

The Assist

Helping Students Access and Make Progress in the General Curriculum

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NAEP Update for Students with Disabilities

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is an ongoing national assessment of what America's students know and can do in various subject areas, including (but not limited to) reading, writing, mathematics, science, world geography, U.S. history, civics, and art. Since 1969, NAEP assessments have been administered to students across the nation—including students with disabilities—in an effort to generate data showing what they are learning at critical junctures in their school experience.

The NAEP has two primary goals: (1) to measure student achievement in the context of instructional experiences, and (2) to track change in the achievement of fourth-, eighth-, and twelfth-grade students over time in selected content areas. Unlike many standardized assessments, NAEP results are not reported by individual students or schools, but instead by populations of students (e.g., fourth- or eighth-graders) and subgroups of those populations (e.g., female or Hispanic fourth- or eighth-grade students). The results are based on representative samples of students pulled from across the country or from across a specific state.

This year in Michigan, the NAEP assessments in reading, writing, and mathematics were administered from January 22 through March 1, 2007. Stratified random samples of schools from across the state were chosen, with considerable emphasis on encouraging more seniors and students with disabilities to take part.

While full participation in the NAEP has always been voluntary for every student, the Michigan School Code requires that districts participate in NAEP administration if selected. Therefore, it is assumed that students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) will participate unless they specifically "opt out." They can do that by (1) participating in the notification/opt out process, (2) indicating in the IEP that the student will not take part, or (3) showing that the accommodations required by a student's IEP do not match accommodations allowed for the NAEP. (See the *OEAA Assessment Accommodation Summary Table* at www.mi.gov/mi-access for more information on permitted and not permitted NAEP accommodations.)

IEP Teams that have students who are in grades 4, 8, and 12 (or who will be in those grades in the next school year) need to be aware of the NAEP and specifically address if and how their students will participate. By doing so, they can prevent having to hold an additional meeting or amending a student's IEP if a district learns it has been selected to participate *after* the student's IEP is written. This year (2006/2007) a number of schools incorrectly assumed it was not a NAEP testing year and, therefore, did not address the national assessment during the IEP process, which made it extremely difficult to go back and obtain parental permission so that students could participate. To prevent this from happening in the future, districts and schools need to inform IEP Teams about the

NAEP test cycles, its inclusion practices, and its accommodation procedures; that way, decisions can be made as a standard part of the IEP process.

Another step IEP Teams can take to further encourage the participation of students with disabilities in the national assessment is to be more open-minded and flexible when considering accommodations. For example, many IEPs call for the use of audio CDs but the NAEP is not available in that form. Instead of opting out, however, IEP Teams could require that, for the NAEP, a student will use a reader instead of an audio CD, which is allowed.

Along the same lines, this year, for the first time ever, the NAEP was made available in Spanish, which allowed a greater number of students who receive a significant portion of their instruction in Spanish, and/or who take the Spanish version of the MEAP, to participate in the NAEP. These are the kinds of choices and changes that IEP Teams need to be aware of to encourage greater participation of students with disabilities in the national assessment.

If you would like more information about the NAEP and how students with disabilities can participate, please go to www.michigan.gov/naep, or contact Paul Stemmer, Michigan's NAEP coordinator, at stemmerp@michigan.gov.