



LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Dr. Peggy C. Carr
Acting Commissioner
National Center for Education Statistics
Potomac Center Plaza
550 12th Street, SW
Room 4061
Washington, DC 20202

March 23, 2018

Dear Dr. Carr,

I am writing in reference to the 2017 administration of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in mathematics and reading, the results of which will be made public April 2018. Specifically, I am writing to urge that additional information related to the results be made available to state chiefs as soon as possible.

Under your leadership, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has both maintained the nation's high level of trust in NAEP and conducted unprecedented levels of engagement with state education leaders. Your willingness to explain openly the mechanics and results within the Nation's Report Card has been a welcome approach.

The 2017 NAEP administration marked a significant transition from paper-based testing to computer-based testing. NCES found that, consistent with research on the NAEP (Bennett et al., 2008; Horkay, Bennett, Allen, Kaplan, & Yan, 2006), this shift in the mode of testing contributed to lower performance on NAEP forms among the general U.S. sample population. Using the small sample of paper-based testers, NCES calculated a baseline level of performance and adjusted nationwide scores to maintain the longitudinal NAEP trend. Based on this mode effect adjustment, NCES has preserved the integrity of its effort to report trends in nationwide math and reading over time.

I understand that NCES may have found disparities in the mode effect on different subgroups of students. However, any disparate effect found was not significant. Thus NCES did not include any difference from one group of students to the next in its calculation of the mode effect. The adjustment NCES made in order to preserve the national trend is the same for every student.

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It is my understanding that, though NCES maintained a consistent longitudinal trend at the national level, there remains the possibility that the mode effect in a given state may have been greater than the nationwide mode effect. This could be attributable to a disproportionately large population of a subgroup that experienced a greater mode effect than the national effect. It also could be attributable to the relative capacity of 4th and 8th grade students in a given state to use computers.

As a potential illustration of this point, no Louisiana student in 4th grade or 8th grade had ever been required to take a state assessment via a computer or tablet as of the 2017 NAEP administration. This fact, coupled with a variety of social indicators that may correspond with low levels of technology access or skill, may mean that computer usage or skill among Louisiana students, or students in any state, is not equivalent to computer skills in the national population.


I would like to be assured, as soon as possible, that when NCES reports math and reading results on a state-by-state basis over a two-year interval, the results and trends reported at the state level reflect an evaluation of reading and math skill rather than an evaluation of technology skill. I am therefore writing to request that the following information be made available to state chiefs as soon as possible:

1. The mode effect adjustment applied to each grade and subject nationally
2. The average mean scores for students taking the paper-based test and for students taking the tablet-based test, at the state level and at the national level, in each grade, subject, and subgroup
3. Evidence of the random equivalence of the groups of students taking the paper-based tests and students taking the tablet-based tests, at the state level and at the national level
4. National subgroup performance trends, reported by performance quintile, quartile, or decile.

Having this information as soon as possible will allow state chiefs the comfort to know that NAEP's state-level reporting possesses the integrity in this transition year that NCES has rightly taken pains to assure exists at the national level.

I thank you for your continued partnership with our state and others, and I look forward to your response

Sincerely,



John C. White
Louisiana State Superintendent of Education

CC:

Hon. James Blew, U.S. Department of Education
Dr. William Burshaw, National Assessment Governing Board
Carissa Miller, Council of Chief State School Officers

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References

Horkay, N., Bennett, R.E., Allen, N., Kaplan, B., & Yan, F. (2006). Does it matter if I take my writing test on computer? An empirical study of mode effect in NAEP. *The Journal of Technology, Learning, and Assessment* (5)2. Retrieved March 23, 2018 from <http://www.jtla.org>

Bennett, R.E., Braswell, J., Oranje, A., Sandene, B., Kaplan, B. & Yan, F. (2008). Does it matter if I take my mathematics test on computer? A second empirical study of mode effect in NAEP. *The Journal of Technology, Learning, and Assessment* (6)9. Retrieved March 23, 2018 from <http://www.jtla.org>