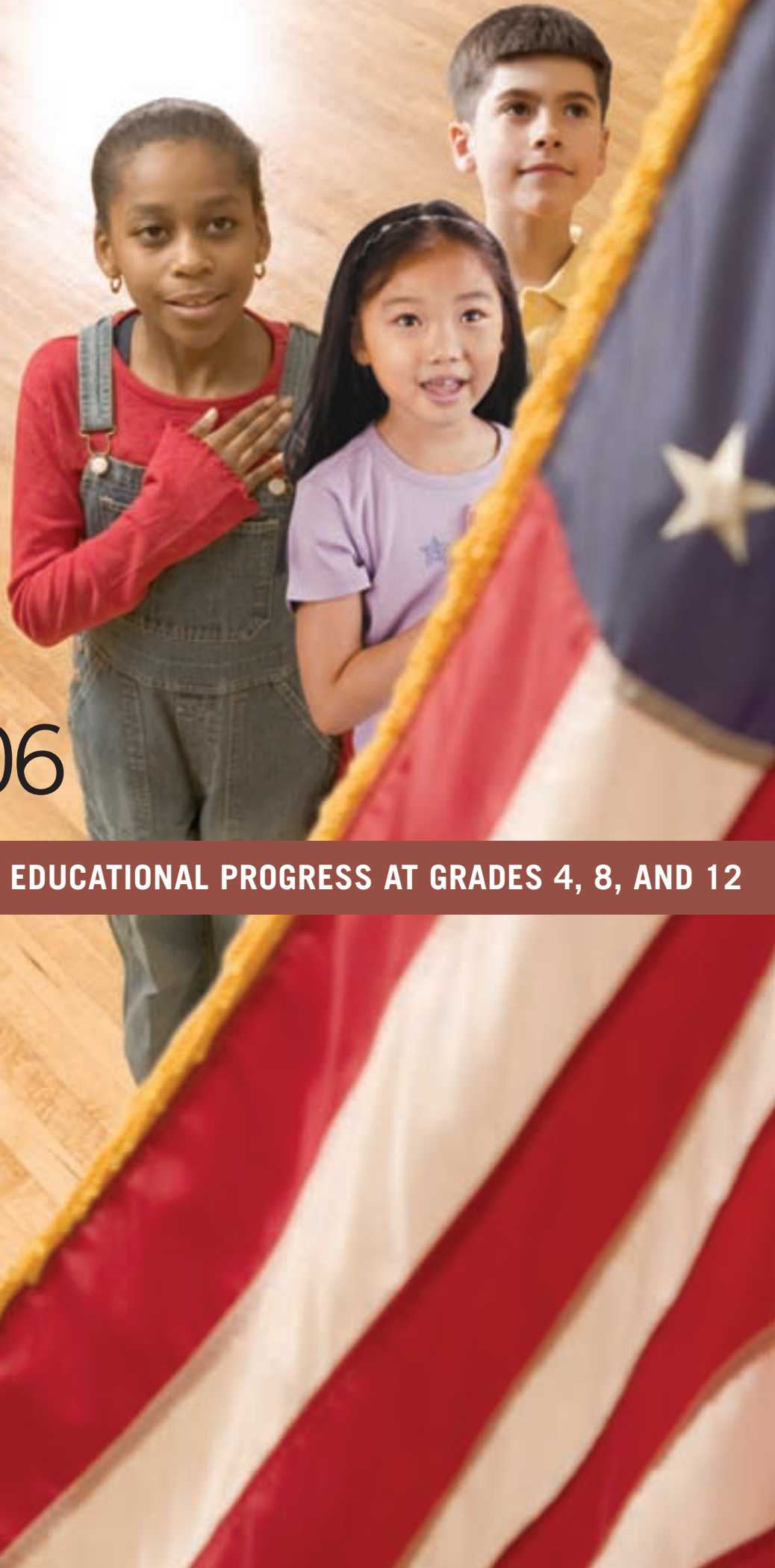


ies NATIONAL CENTER FOR
EDUCATION STATISTICS
Institute of Education Sciences

U.S. Department of Education
NCES 2007-476

The 
Nation's
Report Card
Civics 2006

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS AT GRADES 4, 8, AND 12



A young boy with a shaved head, wearing a blue and white striped button-down shirt, stands in a classroom holding an open book. He is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. In the foreground, the backs of two other students' heads are visible, one on the left and one on the right, both out of focus. The background shows a whiteboard and a chalkboard.

Contents May 2007

- 1 Executive Summary
- 2 An Introduction to the Civics Assessment
- 4 Reporting NAEP Results
- 6 Overall Results
- 10 Student Groups
- 16 Assessment Content
- 32 Technical Notes

What is The Nation's Report Card™?

The Nation's Report Card™ informs the public about the academic achievement of elementary and secondary students in the United States. Report cards communicate the findings of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a continuing and nationally representative measure of achievement in various subjects over time.

For over three decades, NAEP assessments have been conducted periodically in reading, mathematics, science, writing, U.S. history, civics, geography, and other subjects. By making objective information available on student performance at the national, state, and local levels, NAEP is an integral part of our nation's evaluation of the condition and progress of education. Only information related to academic achievement and relevant variables is collected. The privacy of individual students is protected.

NAEP is a congressionally mandated project of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) within the Institute of Education Sciences of the U.S. Department of Education. The Commissioner of Education Statistics is responsible for carrying out the NAEP project. The National Assessment Governing Board oversees and sets policy for NAEP.

Executive Summary

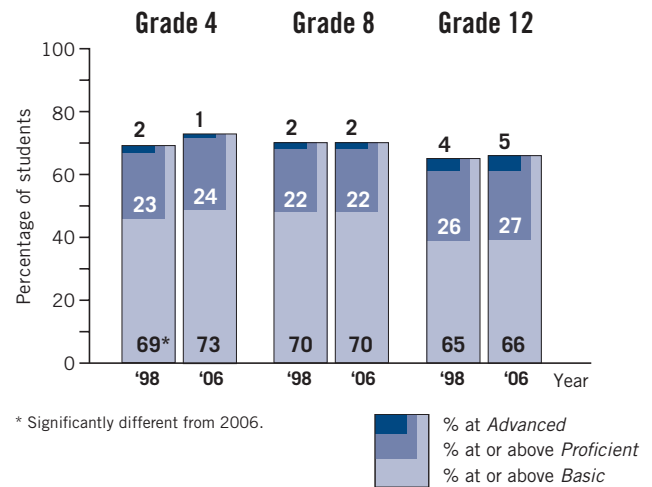
The 2006 NAEP civics assessment evaluated students' understanding of the democratic institutions and ideals necessary to become informed citizens in shaping America's future. Students demonstrated this knowledge in areas deemed important for citizenship in our constitutional democracy. A nationally representative sample of more than 25,000 students at grades 4, 8, and 12 was assessed in 2006. The results are compared with those of the 1998 civics assessment.

About two out of three American students at grades 4, 8, and 12 have at least a basic knowledge of civics according to the 2006 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Average scores improved from 1998 to 2006 only at grade 4. Most of this improvement was seen among lower-performing students.

Three of four students at grade 4, or 73 percent, scored at or above *Basic*, meaning they demonstrated at least a partial mastery of civics knowledge and skills fundamental for proficient work at their grade. About one in four students, or 24 percent, scored at or above

What students know about civics

Fourth-graders	
75%	knew that only citizens can vote in the U.S.
41%	identified the level of government that signs peace treaties
14%	recognized that defendants have a right to a lawyer
Eighth-graders	
80%	identified a notice for jury duty
63%	determined an instance of abuse of power
28%	explained the historical purpose of the Declaration of Independence
Twelfth-graders	
72%	analyzed a historical text on the importance of education
50%	identified the outcome when state and national laws conflict
43%	described the meaning of federalism in the U.S.



the *Proficient* level, meaning they demonstrated at least competency over challenging subject matter. Many fourth-grade student groups had higher scores in 2006.

- ▶ White, Black, and Hispanic students improved.
- ▶ Both male and female students improved.
- ▶ Lower-performing students made gains.
- ▶ The performance gap narrowed for Hispanic students compared to White students.

Overall, eighth-graders' knowledge of civics has not changed since the 1998 assessment. Of eighth-graders, 22 percent scored at or above the *Proficient* level, and 70 percent scored at or above *Basic*. White and Hispanic students showed score gains.

Twelfth-graders, tomorrow's voters, performed at about the same level in 2006 as they did in 1998. No student group showed a statistically significant increase. Twenty-seven percent of twelfth-graders scored at or above the *Proficient* level, and 66 percent scored at or above *Basic*.



An Introduction to the Civics Assessment

The U.S. civics assessment evaluates students' knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are critical to the responsibilities of citizenship in America's constitutional democracy. Civics instruction begins in grade school and continues into high school. Civics concepts, however, are primarily taught as part of social studies (for example, geography, economics, etc.), history, and government classes, rather than as a separate course such as reading or mathematics. NAEP assesses civics knowledge at grades 4, 8, and 12.

The Civics Framework

The civics assessment is based on a blueprint called a "framework," which specifies what should be assessed. Under the direction of the National Assessment Governing Board, the framework was developed in a comprehensive and inclusive process.

The development committees included subject experts, college faculty, school administrators, policymakers, teachers, parents, and interested members of the public. A new NAEP civics framework was developed for the 1998 assessment, as were all of the assessment questions. The same framework guided the development of the 2006 assessment, which used many of the same questions.

Three Components. As noted in the framework, the goal of the NAEP civics assessment is to measure

how well American youth are being prepared to meet their citizenship responsibilities. The framework specifies three interrelated components which, taken together, assess this broad civic competency: knowledge, intellectual and participatory skills, and civic dispositions. Each civics assessment question or exercise has a knowledge and an intellectual skills component. A portion of the questions also measures participatory skills and/or civic dispositions.

Civic Knowledge. The framework poses the knowledge component as questions, reflecting the position that civic knowledge encompasses not just factual knowledge, but a broader and deeper understanding of the meaning of citizenship. The five civics content areas and the percentage of assessment time allotted to them at each grade are shown in table 1.

Table 1. **Percentage of assessment time in NAEP civics, by grade and content area: 2006**

Content area	Percentage of assessment time		
	Grade 4	Grade 8	Grade 12
I. What are civic life, politics, and government?	24	13	10
II. What are the foundations of the American political system?	20	27	20
III. How does the government established by the Constitution embody the purposes, values, and principles of American democracy?	13	24	25
IV. What is the relationship of the United States to other nations and to world affairs?	13	14	21
V. What are the roles of citizens in American democracy?	30	21	25

NOTE: Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2006 Civics Assessment.

“Participatory skills enable citizens to monitor and influence public and civic life by working with others, clearly articulating ideas and interests, building coalitions, seeking consensus, negotiating compromise, and managing conflict.” ...Civics 2006 framework.





Civic Skills. This component involves the use of knowledge to think and act effectively and in a reasoned manner in response to the challenges of civic life in a constitutional democracy. The framework distinguishes three types of intellectual skills:

- ▶ Identifying and describing,
- ▶ Explaining and analyzing, and
- ▶ Evaluating, taking, and defending a position.

Students' participatory skills are assessed because, ultimately, civic knowledge and intellectual skills are most beneficial when applied to civic participation. Since NAEP cannot directly assess civic participation, the framework specifies that assessment questions be designed to measure whether students can identify participatory skills, recognize their purpose, explain how to use them, or specify how best to achieve desired results by using particular skills.

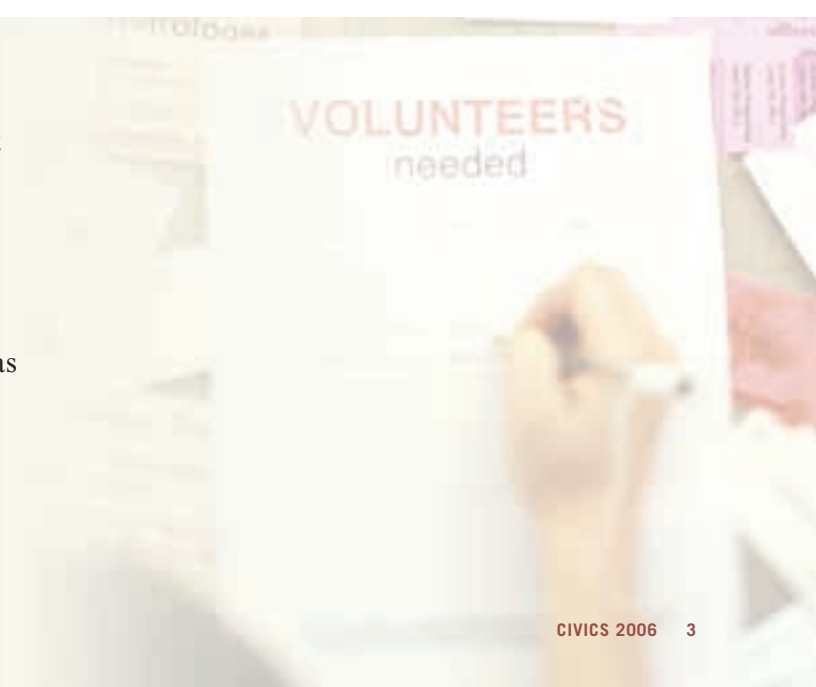
Civic Dispositions. As with civic skills, NAEP cannot assess students' civic dispositions directly. Therefore, certain assessment exercises were designed to measure students' knowledge and understanding of the importance of civic dispositions. The framework identifies five dispositions:

- ▶ Becoming an independent member of society;
- ▶ Assuming the personal, political, and economic responsibilities of a citizen;
- ▶ Respecting individual worth and human dignity;
- ▶ Participating in civic affairs in an informed, thoughtful, and effective manner; and
- ▶ Promoting the healthy functioning of American constitutional democracy.

More detailed information about the civics framework for 2006 can be found on the Governing Board website at http://www.nagb.org/frameworks/civics_06.pdf.

Assessment Design

Because of the breadth of content covered, each student took just a portion of the assessment, answering two 25-minute sections of test questions and a separate section of background questions. Students were asked multiple-choice and constructed-response questions. Results were combined to produce an average score for the nation overall and for various student groups (such as gender and race/ethnicity).



Reporting NAEP Results

The students who are selected to take NAEP assessments represent hundreds of other students like themselves across the U.S. The NAEP data can only be obtained with the cooperation of schools, teachers, and students nationwide. By participating, they play an important role in improving education in the country.

Representative samples of schools and students participated in the 2006 NAEP civics assessment at each grade (table 2). The results provide estimates of performance of all students in the target grades. The national results reflect the combined performance of samples of students in public schools, private schools, Bureau of Indian Affairs schools, and Department of Defense schools. Unlike the mathematics, reading, writing, and science assessments in NAEP, the civics assessment was not designed to report results by individual states.

Table 2. **Number of participating schools and students in NAEP civics assessment, by grade: 2006**

Grade	Schools	Students
Grade 4	420	7,000
Grade 8	510	9,200
Grade 12	590	9,100

NOTE: The numbers of schools are rounded to the nearest ten, and the numbers of students are rounded to the nearest hundred.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2006 Civics Assessment.

Scale Scores

NAEP civics results are reported on a 0–300 scale. Although the scale score ranges are identical across grades, the scale was derived independently for each grade. Therefore, scale scores cannot be compared across grades. In addition to reporting an overall composite score, results are reported at five percentiles (10th, 25th, 50th, 75th, and 90th), enabling the display of changes in performance between 1998 and 2006 for lower-, middle-, and higher-performing students.

Achievement Levels

Achievement levels reflect what students should know and be able to do. The Governing Board sets specific achievement levels for each subject area and grade, based on recommendations from policymakers, educators, and members of the general public. To provide a context for interpreting student performance, NAEP results are reported as percentages of students performing at or above the *Basic* and *Proficient* levels and at the *Advanced* level.

As provided by law, NCES, upon review of congressionally mandated evaluations of NAEP, has determined that achievement levels are to be used on a trial basis and should be interpreted with caution. NAEP achievement levels have been widely used by national and state officials. For more information on the civics achievement levels, visit <http://www.nagb.org/pubs/civicsbook.pdf>.

Item Maps

The test question or “item” maps are another way to interpret the scale scores and achievement-level results for each grade. As shown later in the Assessment Content section, the item maps are useful tools for showing student performance on questions at different levels on the scale.

NAEP achievement levels

Basic denotes partial mastery of the knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient work at a given grade.

Proficient represents solid academic performance. Students reaching this level have demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter.

Advanced signifies superior performance.

Accommodations in NAEP

Beginning with the new civics framework and the new trend line in 1998, testing accommodations (for example, extra time, one-on-one, or small group administration) were permitted. Accommodations were also offered in the 2006 assessment to those students for whom accommodations were permitted on their state assessments. Information on the percentages of students who received each accommodation type is available at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/civics/acctype.asp>. See the Technical Notes on page 32 for information on exclusion rates.

Interpreting Results

NAEP uses widely accepted statistical standards in analyzing data. This report discusses only findings that are statistically significant at the .05 level with appropriate adjustments for multiple comparisons. In the tables and graphics, the symbol (*) indicates that scores or percentages are significantly different from each other.

In addition to the overall results for the nation, student performance by different demographic characteristics is also presented (for example, by gender, race/ethnicity, income level, or student-reported highest level of parents' education). These results cannot be used to establish a cause-and-effect relationship between background characteristics and achievement. A complex mix of educational and socioeconomic factors may interact to affect student performance.

Score differences or gaps cited in this report are calculated based on differences between unrounded average scale scores. Therefore, the reader may find apparent discrepancies between a score difference cited in the text and a difference generated by comparing two rounded scores from tables or graphics.

Not all of the data for results discussed in the text are presented in corresponding tables or graphics, but they can be found on the NAEP website at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/nde/>. For additional information, see the Technical Notes on page 32 or visit <http://nationsreportcard.gov>.





Civics knowledge increasing for fourth-graders, but not for older students

Fourth-grade students scored higher in civics in 2006 than in 1998. Most of this improvement was seen among lower-performing students. Nearly three-fourths (73 percent) of America's fourth-graders performed at or above *Basic*—a larger percentage than in 1998. Nearly one in four (24 percent) scored at or above *Proficient*.

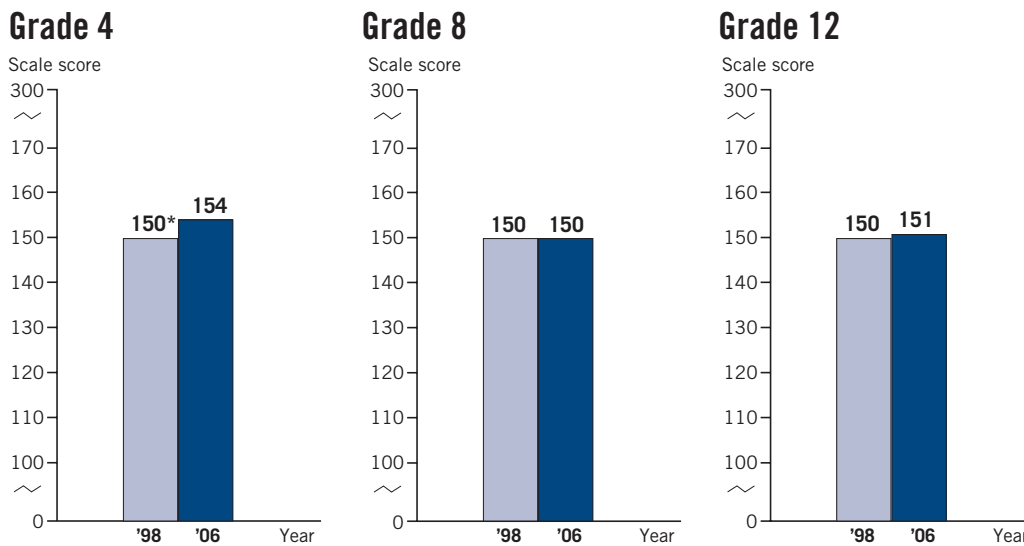
However, civics scores have remained essentially unchanged since 1998 for eighth- and twelfth-graders. In 2006, performance that is considered to be at or above the *Proficient* level was demonstrated by 22 percent of eighth-graders and by 27 percent of twelfth-graders.

Knowledge of civics increases for only younger students

While a greater understanding of civics was demonstrated by fourth-graders in 2006 than in 1998, little or no change was seen among students at grades 8 and 12. As shown in figure 1, the average score for fourth-graders in 2006 was higher than in 1998, while the average scores at grades 8 and 12 were not significantly different. The scores of both male and female students increased at grade 4, but not at grades 8 and 12. Apparent differences between scores of male and female students were not statistically significant at any grade in 2006 (results not shown).



Figure 1. Average scores in NAEP civics, by grade: 1998 and 2006



* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2006.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1998 and 2006 Civics Assessments.

What Students Know

Fourth-graders

- 75 percent knew that only citizens can vote in the U.S.
- 47 percent identified the role of the Supreme Court
- 18 percent evaluated how certain actions can affect the community

Eighth-graders

- 80 percent identified a notice for jury duty
- 49 percent linked religious freedom to the Bill of Rights
- 15 percent interpreted a phrase from the Gettysburg Address

Twelfth-graders

- 72 percent could analyze a historical text on the importance of education
- 50 percent identified the President's role in foreign policy
- 5 percent explained checks on the President's power

See the NAEP Questions Tool for more information at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/itmrls/>.

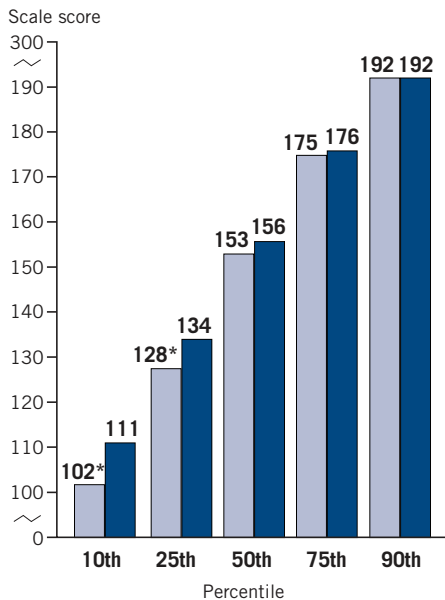
Scores up among lower-performing fourth-graders, no significant progress for others

Although the average fourth-grade score was higher in 2006 than in 1998, most of the improvement occurred among the lower-performing students. Figure 2 shows that fourth-grade scores at the 10th and 25th percentiles improved, but there was no significant change in higher percentile scores. The figure also shows that there was no significant change at grades 8 and 12 for lower-, middle-, or higher-performing students.

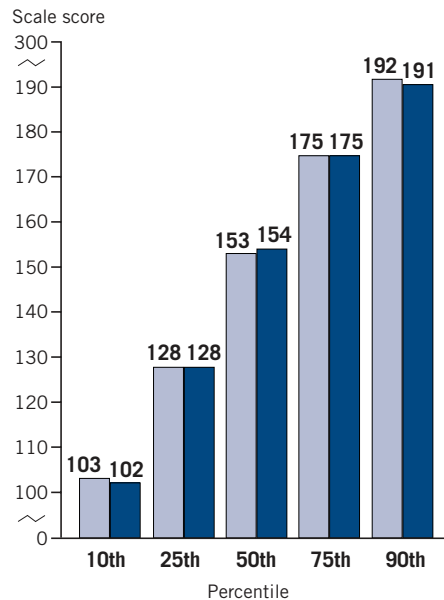


Figure 2. Percentile scores in NAEP civics, by grade: 1998 and 2006

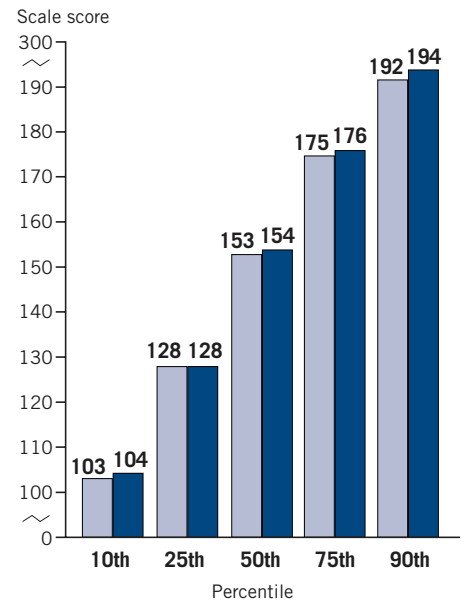
Grade 4



Grade 8



Grade 12



* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2006.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1998 and 2006 Civics Assessments.

'98 '06
 Year

Greater percentage of younger students demonstrates *Basic*-level knowledge of civics, no change for older students

Another example of increased performance among lower-performing fourth-graders is seen in achievement-level results. Performance at the *Basic* level represents partial mastery of fundamental skills and knowledge in civics. In 2006, seventy-three percent of fourth-graders performed at or above *Basic*—a higher percentage than in 1998 (figure 3). Twenty-four percent of students at grade 4 performed at or above *Proficient*, which was not significantly different from the percentage in 1998.

At grades 8 and 12, the percentages at or above *Basic* and *Proficient* in 2006 were not significantly different compared to the percentages in the same grades in 1998. Twenty-two percent of students at grade 8

performed at or above *Proficient* in 2006, and 27 percent of twelfth-graders performed at or above *Proficient*.

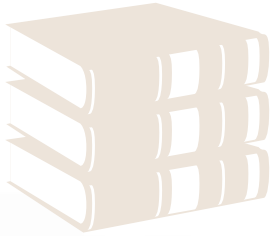
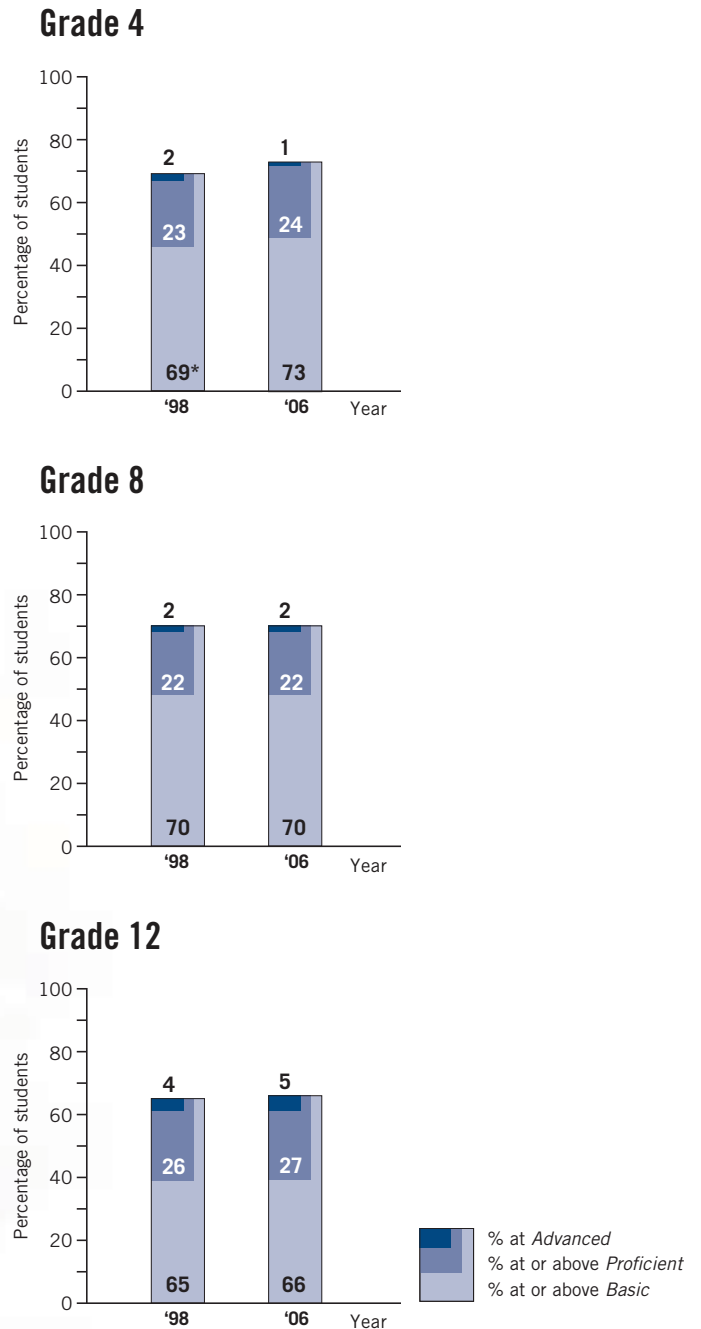


Figure 3. Achievement-level performance in NAEP civics, by grade: 1998 and 2006



* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2006.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1998 and 2006 Civics Assessments.



Many student groups make gains at grade 4

At grade 4, the following groups scored higher in 2006 compared to 1998: male and female students; and White, Black, and Hispanic students.

At grade 8, White and Hispanic students had higher scores in 2006 than in 1998.

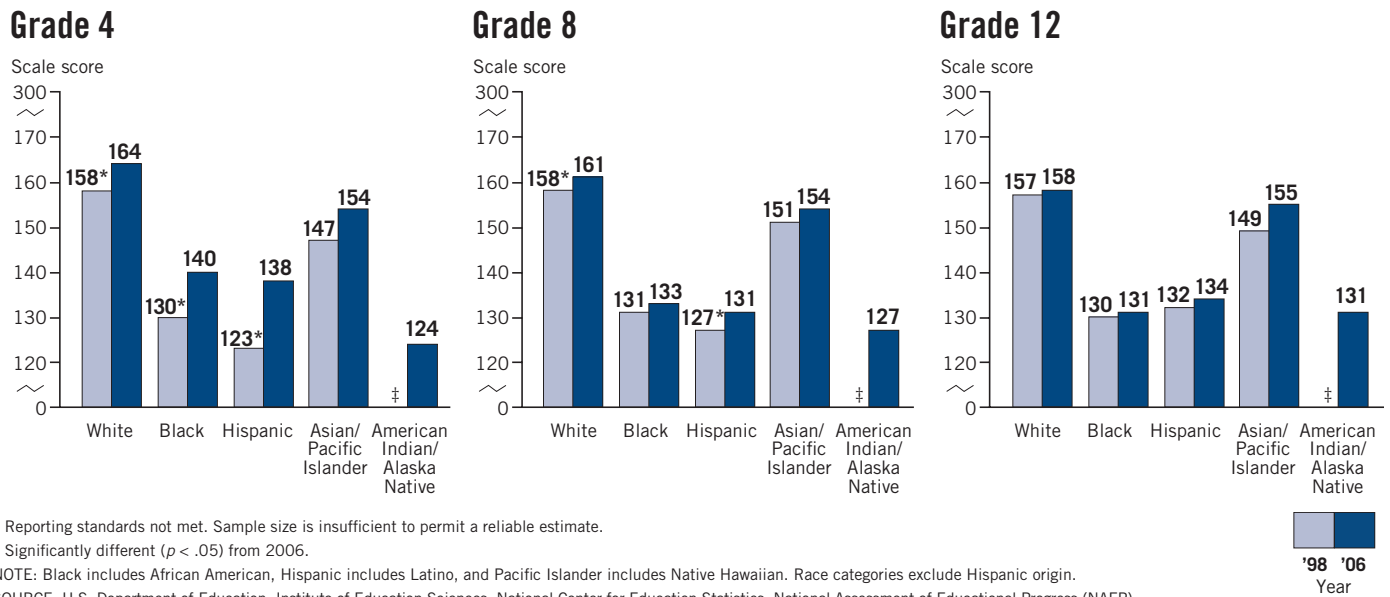


White and Hispanic students make gains at both grades 4 and 8

Score gains were made by White, Black, and Hispanic fourth-graders in 2006 compared with 1998 (figure 4). The gains were 15 points for Hispanic, 10 points for Black, and 6 points for White fourth-graders.

At grade 8, both White and Hispanic students scored higher in 2006 than in 1998. The apparent score gains for all other groups at grades 8 and 12 were not statistically significant.

Figure 4. Average scores in NAEP civics, by grade and race/ethnicity: 1998 and 2006

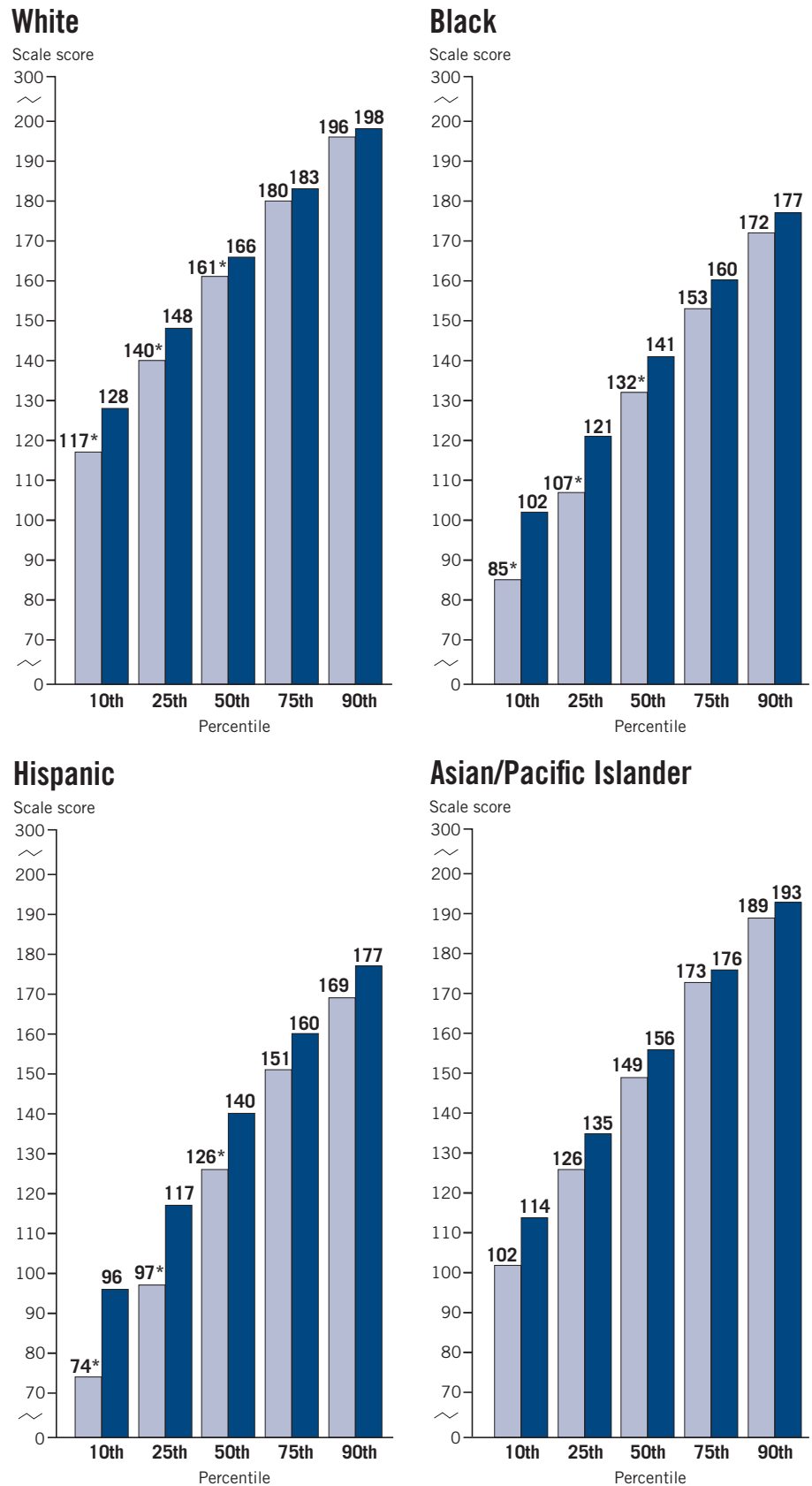


Lower-performing White, Black, and Hispanic students show gains

The improvement for lower-performing fourth-graders that was previously shown for all students together can be seen for racial/ethnic groups in figure 5. Scores for White, Black, and Hispanic fourth-graders increased at the 10th, 25th, and 50th percentiles. Apparent score changes at the 75th and 90th percentiles were not significant.

While not shown in this report, in general, scores for students at grades 8 and 12 showed no improvement across the five percentiles. Complete data for percentiles for the racial/ethnic groups are available at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/nde>.

Figure 5. Percentile scores in NAEP civics at grade 4, by race/ethnicity: 1998 and 2006



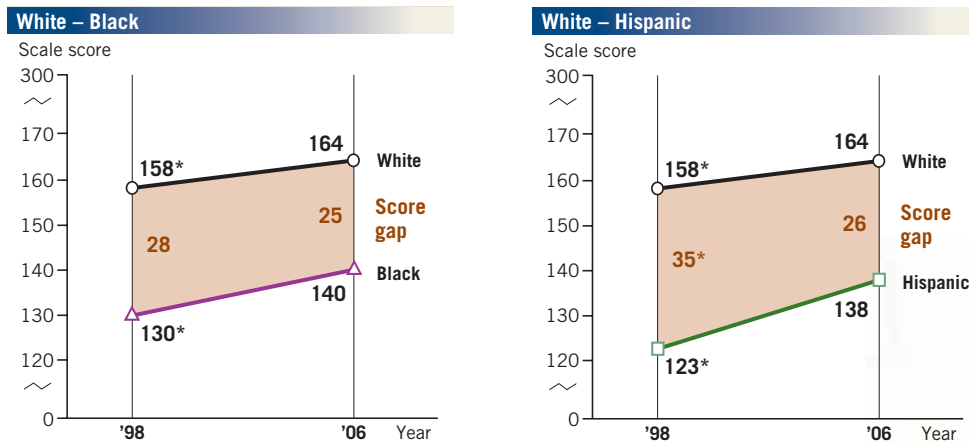
* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2006.
 NOTE: Black includes African American, Hispanic includes Latino, and Pacific Islander includes Native Hawaiian. Race categories exclude Hispanic origin.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1998 and 2006 Civics Assessments.

Gap narrows between White and Hispanic younger students

The 26-point gap in average scores between White and Hispanic fourth-graders in 2006 was narrower than the 35-point gap in 1998 (figure 6). The 25-point gap in average scores between White and Black fourth-graders in 2006 was not significantly different from the 28-point gap in 1998.

The score gaps between White and Black students and between White and Hispanic students at grades 8 and 12 were not significantly different when comparing 2006 with 1998 (table 3).

Figure 6. **White – Black and White – Hispanic average scores and score gaps in NAEP civics at grade 4: 1998 and 2006**



* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2006.

NOTE: Black includes African American, and Hispanic includes Latino. Race categories exclude Hispanic origin. Score gaps are calculated based on differences between unrounded average scores.

Table 3. **Average scores and score gaps in NAEP civics, by grade and race/ethnicity: 1998 and 2006**

Grade	Scale score		Score gap with White students	
	1998	2006	1998	2006
Grade 8				
White	158*	161	†	†
Black	131	133	26	28
Hispanic	127*	131	31	29
Grade 12				
White	157	158	†	†
Black	130	131	27	28
Hispanic	132	134	25	24

† Not applicable.

* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2006.

NOTE: Black includes African American, and Hispanic includes Latino. Race categories exclude Hispanic origin. Score gaps are calculated based on differences between unrounded average scores.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1998 and 2006 Civics Assessments.

Knowledge of civics differs by income levels

Fourth-graders from families in two lower-income levels (eligible for free lunch or eligible for reduced-price school lunch) had lower civics scores in 2006 than students from higher-income families, as well as students for whom information was not available (figure 7).

At grade 8, the pattern is similar. The average scores for students from both lower-income levels were lower than that of students from higher-income families. The score gaps between the lowest income level (eligible for

free lunch) and the highest level (not eligible) were 28 points¹ at grade 4 and 30 points at grade 8. At both grades, students eligible for reduced-price lunch had higher scores than those eligible for the free lunch. Information on income status was not available for about 7 percent of the students at each grade (table 4). This group also had higher scores than the eligible student groups at both grades.

¹ The score point gap is based on the difference between unrounded scores.

Figure 7. **Average scores in NAEP civics, by grade and eligibility for National School Lunch Program: 2006**

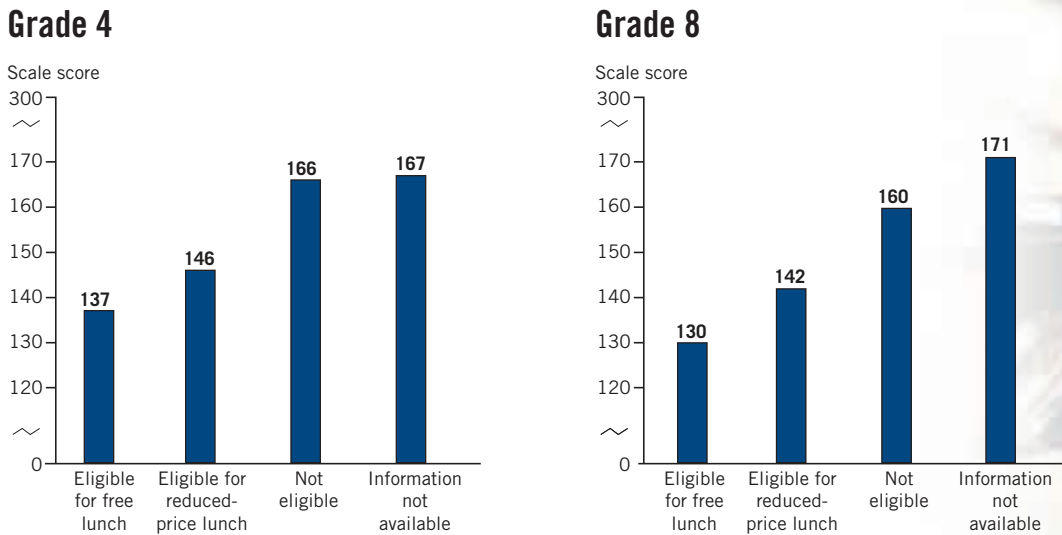


Table 4 shows the percentages of fourth- and eighth-graders in the population by eligibility status for the National School Lunch Program in 2006. Percentages are also given for the students for whom information was not available.

Table 4. **Percentage of students in NAEP civics, by grade and eligibility for National School Lunch Program: 2006**

Eligibility status	Grade 4	Grade 8
Eligible for free lunch	36	31
Eligible for reduced-price lunch	7	7
Not eligible	49	55
Information not available	7	7

NOTE: Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2006 Civics Assessment.

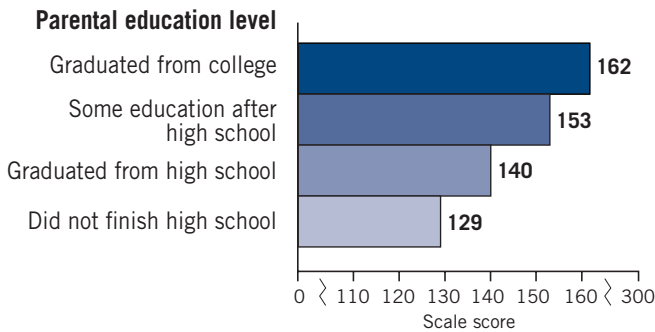
More parental education associated with higher scores

Looking just at the data for 2006, there was a positive association between student-reported parental education and student performance. The average civics scores for the student-reported parental education levels shown in figure 8 indicate that the higher the reported level of parental education, the higher the student's average civics score.

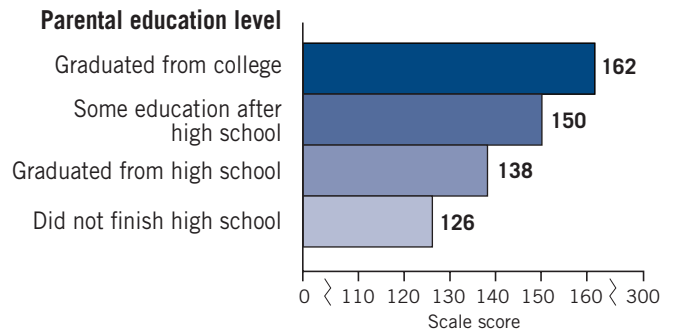
Students at grades 8 and 12 were asked to indicate the highest level of their parents' education. The highest level of education reported for either parent was used in the analysis of this question. The text of the question on parental education differed between 2006 and 1998. Therefore, a comparison across years is not available.

Figure 8. Average scores in NAEP civics, by grade and student-reported highest level of parental education: 2006

Grade 8



Grade 12



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2006 Civics Assessment.





Grade 4

The content of the assessment varies at each grade to reflect what students should know and be able to do. The percentage of the assessment dedicated to each civics content area and each category of intellectual skills is specified for each grade by the civics framework.

Fourth-graders were presented with two 25-minute sections, each containing multiple-choice and constructed-response questions with 15 questions per section. Each student took just a portion of the assessment. The entire assessment at grade 4 included 90 items, 22 of them constructed response and 68 multiple choice.

Civics Achievement Levels at Grade 4

The civics achievement levels at grade 4 represent what fourth-graders should know and be able to do at each level. The following are excerpts from the civics achievement-level descriptions with the corresponding cut scores noted in parentheses. The full descriptions can be found at http://www.nagb.org/pubs/civics_06.pdf.

Basic (136): Fourth-grade students performing at the *Basic* level should have an understanding of what government is and what it does, and they should be able to identify some things that government is not allowed to do. These students should have some understanding of the foundations of the American political system. In the context of their school and community, they should understand rules and laws, rights and responsibilities, and ways to participate in governing. These students should know that the world is divided into many countries.

Proficient (177): Fourth-grade students performing at the *Proficient* level should have a good understanding of what the American Government does and of why it is not allowed to act in certain ways. These students should have an age-appropriate understanding of the foundations of the American political system. They

should understand purposes of laws, ways shared beliefs unify Americans, what it means to be a citizen, rights and responsibilities of citizens, and the idea of public participation in governing. These students should be able to describe ways in which countries interact with one another.

Advanced (215): Fourth-grade students performing at the *Advanced* level should understand and be able to explain some purposes of government. When given age-appropriate examples, they should recognize differences between power and authority and between limited and unlimited government. They should be able to explain the importance of shared values in American democracy, to identify ways citizens can participate in governing, and to understand that with rights come responsibilities. They should be able to explain how nations benefit when they resolve conflicts peacefully.

Question on the Fact That Only Citizens Can Vote in the U.S.

The following multiple-choice question from the grade 4 civics assessment requires the skill of “identifying and describing” in the content area, “What are the roles of citizens in American democracy?”

The percentages below the question indicate how students performed on the question. In addition to the overall percentage of students who answered the question correctly, the percentage of students at each achievement level who answered the question correctly is presented.

As an example of how to interpret these percentages, 75 percent of the students overall answered the question below correctly. When only students at the *Proficient* level are considered, 94 percent answered correctly.

In the United States, you have to be a citizen in order to

- A drive a car
- B own a business
- C vote in a presidential election
- D write letters to newspaper editors

Percentage correct in 2006

Overall	Below <i>Basic</i>	At <i>Basic</i>	At <i>Proficient</i>	At <i>Advanced</i>
75	48	79	94	‡

‡ Reporting standards not met. Sample size is insufficient to permit a reliable estimate.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2006 Civics Assessment.

Question on the Importance of a Rule or Law

The following constructed-response question requires the intellectual skill of “explaining and analyzing” in the content area, “What are civic life, politics, and government?” Student responses were rated according to a three-point scale as “Complete,” “Partial,” or “Unacceptable.” Overall, 48 percent of the students were rated as having a “Complete” response. The “Complete” plus “Partial” rating categories, though not shown, summed to 65 percent. When only students at the *Proficient* level are considered, 65 percent were rated as “Complete.” The sample student response shown on the right was rated as “Complete.”



Give an example of one rule or law you think is important for your community.

I think we should not litter

Explain why this rule or law is important for your community.

So our community won't look so dirty and people may not come to our community

Percentage rated as “Complete” in 2006

Overall	Below Basic	At Basic	At Proficient	At Advanced
48	23	51	65	‡

‡ Reporting standards not met. Sample size is insufficient to permit a reliable estimate.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2006 Civics Assessment.

Question on How Citizens’ Actions Can Affect the Community

The following is an example of a longer (extended) constructed-response question that requires the intellectual skill of “evaluating, taking, and defending a position” in the content area, “What are the roles of citizens in American democracy?” Student responses were rated according to a four-point scale as “Complete,” “Acceptable,” “Partial,” or “Unacceptable.”

Overall, 18 percent of students were rated as having a “Complete” response. The “Complete” plus “Acceptable” rating categories, though not shown, summed to 45 percent. When only students at the *Proficient* level are considered, 40 percent were rated as “Complete,” as illustrated by the example on the right.

Percentage rated as “Complete” in 2006

Overall	Below Basic	At Basic	At Proficient	At Advanced
18	2	15	40	‡

‡ Reporting standards not met. Sample size is insufficient to permit a reliable estimate.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2006 Civics Assessment.

Think about what you have learned about being a good citizen. Now read the list below. For each of the three actions, tell how it would affect other people in your community.

- 1) Not returning library books

Other people might want to get the same book out and you would be stopping them from doing that.

- 2) Volunteering to help senior citizens with chores

I would help other people in the community because then they do not have to use their time to do that.

- 3) Littering

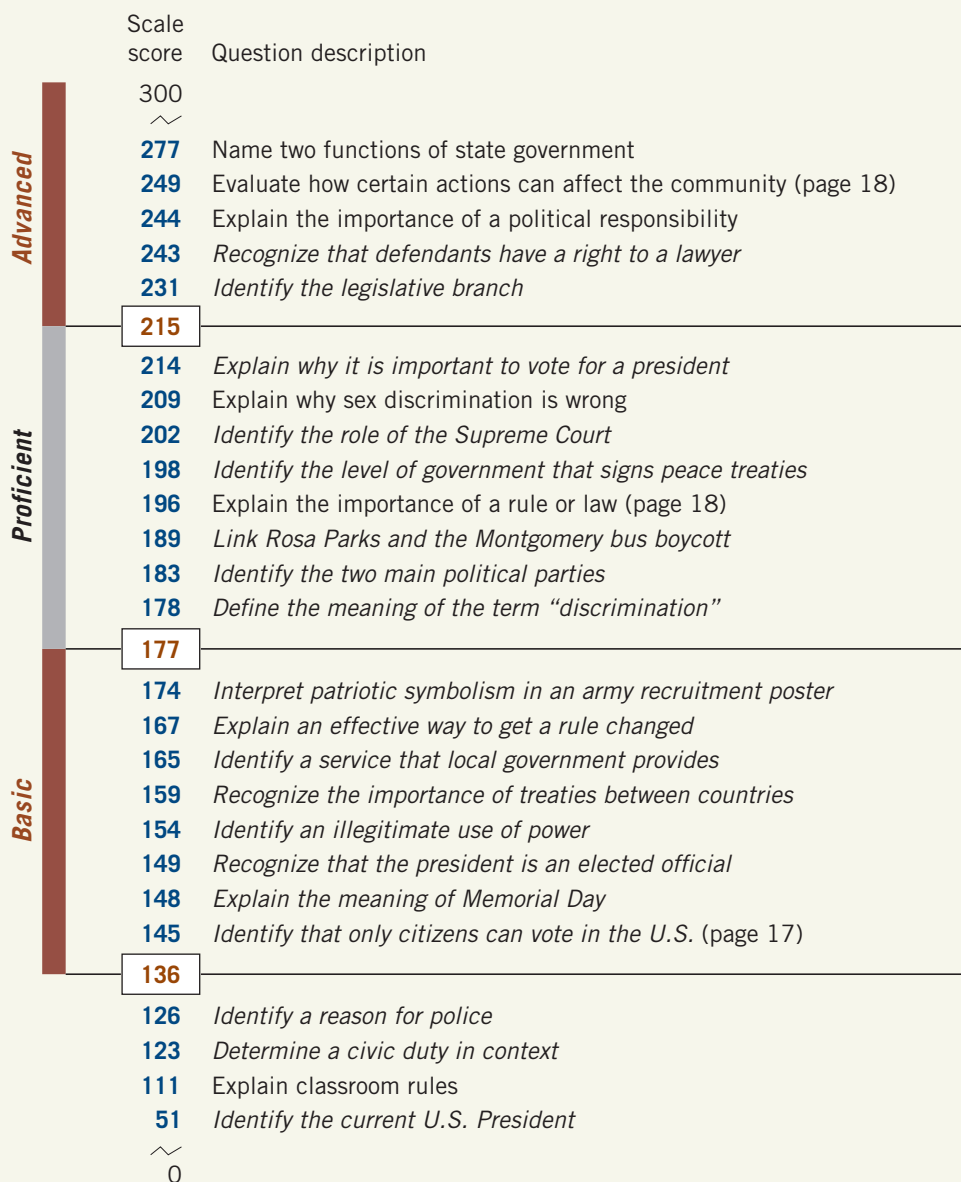
I could make the ground dirty, make animals sick, and pollute water and kill fish.

What Fourth-Graders Know and Can Do in Civics

The item map below provides another way to interpret the scale score and achievement-level results for fourth-graders. The left side of the item map shows the scores that define the lower boundaries of the *Basic*, *Proficient*, and *Advanced* achievement levels. The right side lists descriptions of some selected assessment questions that fall at various levels of difficulty on the 0–300 scale.

The map is a useful tool for understanding what it means to perform at different levels on the scale. For example, the map shows that students performing toward the lower end of the *Basic* achievement-level range (145) were likely to be able to identify that citizenship is required for one to vote in the United States. Students performing at the upper end of the *Proficient* achievement-level range (214) were likely to be able to explain why voting in a presidential election is important.

Grade 4 NAEP Civics Item Map



The position of a question on the scale represents the average scale score attained by students who had a 65 percent probability of correctly answering a constructed-response question, or a 74 percent probability of correctly answering a four-option multiple-choice question. Scale score ranges for civics achievement levels are referenced on the map. For constructed-response questions, the question description represents students' performance rated as completely correct.

NOTE: Regular type denotes a constructed-response question. *Italic* type denotes a multiple-choice question.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2006 Civics Assessment.



Grade 8

Compared with grade 4, there is a shift in content area emphasis at grade 8, with less time spent on definitions of civic life, politics, and government, and on the role of citizens. More time is spent on the foundations of the American political system, and the purposes, values, and principles of American democracy.

Eighth-graders were presented with two 25-minute sections, each containing multiple-choice and constructed-response questions with about 20 questions per section. Each student took just a portion of the assessment. The entire assessment at grade 8 included 154 questions, 29 of them constructed response and 125 multiple choice.

Civics Achievement Levels at Grade 8

The civics achievement levels at grade 8 represent what eighth-graders should know and be able to do at each level. The following are excerpts from the civics achievement-level descriptions with the corresponding cut scores noted in parentheses. The full descriptions can be found at http://www.nagb.org/pubs/civics_06.pdf.

Basic (134): Eighth-grade students performing at the *Basic* level should have some understanding of competing ideas about purposes of government, and they should be able to describe advantages of limited government. They should be able to define government, constitution, the rule of law, and politics. They should be able to identify the fundamental principles of American democracy and the documents from which they originate, and they should understand the importance of a shared commitment to the core values of American democracy. They should recognize the components of the political process and understand personal, political, and economic rights and responsibilities. They should be able to describe the purposes of some international organizations.

Proficient (178): Eighth-grade students performing at the *Proficient* level should understand and be able to explain purposes that government should serve. These students should have a good understanding of differences between government and civil society and of the importance of the rule of law. They should recognize discrepancies between American ideals and

reality and be able to describe continuing efforts to address them. They should understand the separation and sharing of powers among branches of government and between federal and state governments, and they should be able to explain how citizens influence government. They should be able to describe events within the United States and other countries that have international consequences.

Advanced (213): Eighth-grade students performing at the *Advanced* level should have a developed understanding of how civil society helps to maintain limited government and why the rule of law is important. These students should have a clear understanding of issues in which democratic values are in conflict and of past efforts to address the discrepancies between American ideals and reality. They should understand how citizens can monitor and influence government and how responsible citizens support democracy. They should recognize the impact of American democracy on other countries, as well as other countries' impact on American politics and society.

Question on the Historical Purpose of the Declaration of Independence

The following multiple-choice question addresses the skill of “explaining and analyzing” in the content area, “What are the foundations of the American political system?” The percentages below indicate how students performed on the question. In addition to the overall percentage of students who answered the question correctly, the percentage of students at each achievement level who answered the question correctly is presented.

As an example of how to interpret these percentages, 28 percent of the students overall answered the question on the right correctly. When only students at the *Proficient* level are considered, 61 percent answered correctly.

Percentage correct in 2006

Overall	Below Basic	At Basic	At Proficient	At Advanced
28	11	22	61	‡

‡ Reporting standards not met. Sample size is insufficient to permit a reliable estimate.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2006 Civics Assessment.

The following question refers to the passage below from the Declaration of Independence.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

The Declaration of Independence was written to

- (A) appeal to other countries for help in fighting Great Britain
- (B) convince Great Britain to repeal the Stamp Act
- (C) make laws for a new form of government
- (D) explain why the colonies were breaking away from Great Britain



Question on How Public Protests Can Achieve Political Goals

The following question requires the intellectual skill of “explaining and analyzing” in the content area, “What are the roles of citizens in American democracy?” Student responses were rated according to a three-point scale as “Complete,” “Partial,” or “Unacceptable.”

Overall, 25 percent of eighth-graders’ responses were rated as “Complete,” and, though not shown, 61 percent were rated as either “Partial” or “Complete.” When only students at the *Proficient* level are considered, 48 percent of responses were rated as “Complete.” The sample student response shown below was rated as “Complete.”

Percentage rated as “Complete” in 2006

Overall	Below <i>Basic</i>	At <i>Basic</i>	At <i>Proficient</i>	At <i>Advanced</i>
25	5	26	48	†

† Reporting standards not met. Sample size is insufficient to permit a reliable estimate.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2006 Civics Assessment.



The following question refers to the photograph below of the 1963 March on Washington.



Bruce Davidson/Magnum

What are two specific ways in which marches and demonstrations such as the one illustrated can achieve political goals?

- 1) It could possibly make the other party see your point and vote for your cause.
- 2) It also shows you stand up for what you believe in and won't give up no matter what.

Question on Decision-Making in a Foreign Policy Scenario

The following is an example of a longer (extended) constructed-response question that requires the intellectual skill of “evaluating, taking, and defending a position” in the content area, “What is the relationship of the United States to other nations and to world affairs?” Student responses were rated according to a four-point scale as “Complete,” “Acceptable,” “Partial,” or “Unacceptable.”

Overall, 3 percent of students were rated as having a “Complete” response, and the “Complete” plus “Acceptable” rating categories summed to 13 percent (data not shown) for this difficult question. When only students at the *Proficient* level are considered, 10 percent were rated as “Complete.” The sample student response shown on the right was rated as “Complete.”

Percentage rated as “Complete” in 2006

Overall	Below Basic	At Basic	At Proficient	At Advanced
3	0.00	2	10	‡

‡ Reporting standards not met. Sample size is insufficient to permit a reliable estimate.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2006 Civics Assessment.

The following question is based on the situation described below.

Teresia is a small country that has been invaded by its neighbor Corollia. The king of Teresia is a long-standing United States ally who has been living in exile since the Corollian invasion. Teresia is an important exporter of uranium; it sends most of its supply to members of the European Union. The king appeals to the United States and the United Nations for military help in driving Corollia from his country.

Identify two pieces of information NOT given above that you would need before you could decide whether or not the United States military should help Teresia. Explain why each piece of information would be important.

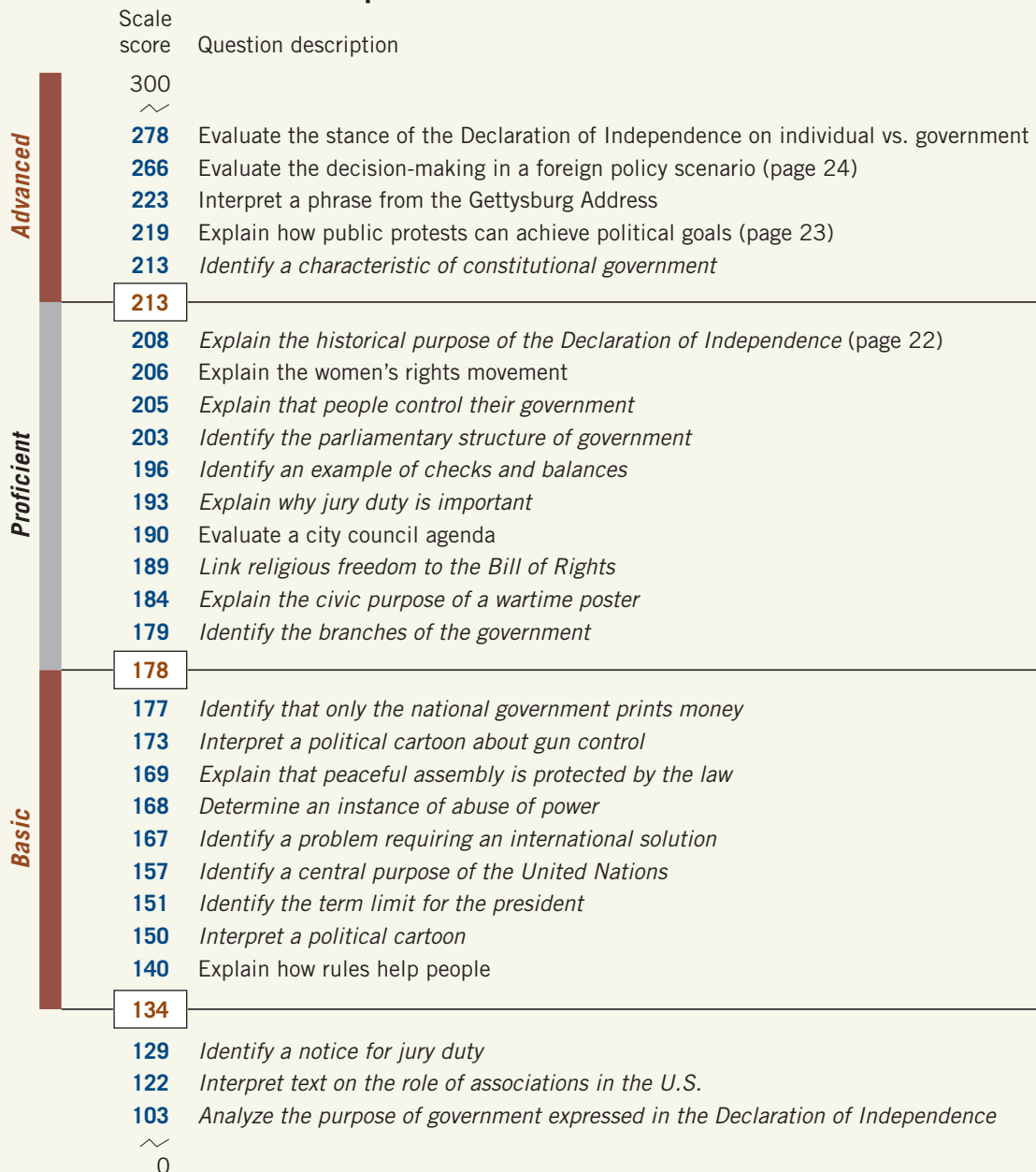
- 1) I would need to know Corollia's incentive to attack Teresia. This is important because maybe Corollia responded to an attack from Teresia making Teresia the aggressor.
- 2) I also need to know Corollia's allies and military strength. This is important because if I don't know this I might start another World War.

What Eighth-Graders Know and Can Do in Civics

The item map below provides another way to interpret the scale score and achievement-level results for eighth-graders. The left side of the item map shows the scores that define the lower boundaries of the *Basic*, *Proficient*, and *Advanced* achievement levels. The right side lists descriptions of some selected assessment questions that fall at various levels of difficulty on the 0–300 scale.

The map is a useful tool for understanding what it means to perform at different levels on the scale. For example, students performing in the middle of the *Basic* achievement-level range (157) are likely to be able to identify a central purpose of the United Nations. Students performing toward the upper end of the *Proficient* achievement-level range (203) are likely to be able to identify a schematic representation of the structure of a parliamentary government.

Grade 8 NAEP Civics Item Map



The position of a question on the scale represents the average scale score attained by students who had a 65 percent probability of correctly answering a constructed-response question, or a 74 percent probability of correctly answering a four-option multiple-choice question. Scale score ranges for civics achievement levels are referenced on the map. For constructed-response questions, the question description represents students' performance rated as completely correct.

NOTE: Regular type denotes a constructed-response question. *Italic* type denotes a multiple-choice question.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2006 Civics Assessment.



Grade 12

Compared with grade 8, more assessment time at grade 12 was devoted to the relationship of the United States to other nations and world affairs and to the roles of citizens in American democracy. Somewhat less time was devoted to the definitions of civic life, politics, and government, and the foundations of the American political system.

Twelfth-graders were presented with two 25-minute sections, each containing multiple-choice and constructed-response questions with 19 questions per section. Each student took just a portion of the assessment. The entire assessment at grade 12 included 152 questions, 30 of them constructed response and 122 multiple choice.

Civics Achievement Levels at Grade 12

The civics achievement levels at grade 12 represent what twelfth-graders should know and be able to do at each level. The following are excerpts from the civics achievement-level descriptions with the corresponding cut scores noted in parentheses. The full descriptions can be found at http://www.nagb.org/pubs/civics_06.pdf.

Basic (139): Twelfth-grade students performing at the *Basic* level should have an understanding of what is meant by civil society, constitutional government, and politics. They should know that constitutional governments can take different forms, and they should understand the fundamental principles of American constitutional government and politics, including functions of political parties and other organizations. They should understand both rights and responsibilities in a democratic society, and they should recognize the value of political participation. They should be familiar with international issues that affect the United States.

Proficient (174): Twelfth-grade students performing at the *Proficient* level should have a good understanding of how constitutions can limit the power of government and support the rule of law. They should be able to describe similarities and differences among constitutional systems of government, and they should be able to explain fundamental American democratic values, their applications, and their contribution to expanding political participation. They should understand the

structure of American government and be able to evaluate activities of political parties, interest groups, and media in public affairs. They should be able to explain the importance of political participation, public service, and political leadership. They should be able to describe major elements of American foreign policy and the performance of major international organizations.

Advanced (204): Twelfth-grade students performing at the *Advanced* level should have a thorough and mature understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of various forms of constitutional democracy. They should be able to explain fully the structure of American government and the political process. They should understand differences between American ideals and realities, and they should be able to explain past and present responses to those differences. They should understand why civic dispositions and individual and collective political actions sustain democracy. They should be able to explain objectives and consequences of American foreign policy.



Question on Analyzing Text and Explaining the Parliamentary System

The following multiple-choice question addresses the skill of “explaining and analyzing” in the content area, “What are civic life, politics, and government?” The percentages below indicate how students performed on the question. In addition to the overall percentage of students who answered the question correctly, the percentage of students at each achievement level who answered the question correctly is presented.

As an example of how to interpret these percentages, 53 percent of the students overall answered the question on the right correctly. When only students at the *Proficient* level are considered, 78 percent answered correctly.

Percentage correct in 2006

Overall	Below <i>Basic</i>	<i>At Basic</i>	<i>At Proficient</i>	<i>At Advanced</i>
53	31	51	78	94

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2006 Civics Assessment.

The following question is based on the quotation below.

We have a constitutional system that so fragments and divides power that it's impossible to give this country effective, long-run leadership. . . . The system has led to an inability to plan and get on top of problems ahead of time. Even at best, this country has always been twenty to sixty years behind other industrial democracies in dealing with tough problems.

—James MacGregor Burns, 1988

Parliamentary systems might not show the same fragmentation that Burns finds in the American system because in parliamentary systems

- (A) more real power is given to local governments
- (B) power is not divided among three branches of government
- (C) governments do not try to play an active role in the economy
- (D) political parties do not differ over important issues

Question on Evaluating a Domino Theory Political Cartoon

The following question requires the intellectual skill of “evaluating, taking, and defending a position” in the content area, “What is the relationship of the United States to other nations and to world affairs?” Student responses were rated according to a three-point scale as “Complete,” “Partial,” or “Unacceptable.”

Overall, 24 percent of twelfth-graders’ responses were rated as “Complete,” and, though not shown, 38 percent were rated as either “Partial” or “Complete.” When only students at the *Proficient* level are considered, 53 percent of responses were rated as “Complete.” The sample student response shown below was rated as “Complete.”

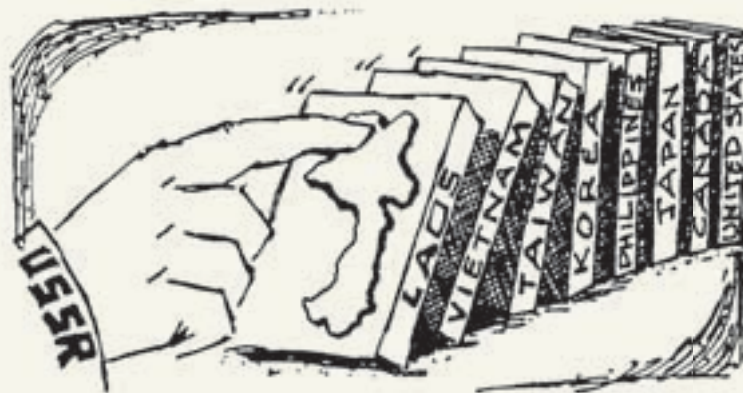
Percentage rated as “Complete” in 2006

Overall	Below Basic	At Basic	At Proficient	At Advanced
24	4	22	53	81

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2006 Civics Assessment.



The following question refers to the cartoon below, which was drawn in the 1960s.



Reprinted by permission.

Describe the foreign policy concern pictured in the cartoon.

During this time period the United States was fighting with the U.S.S.R. and trying to prevent the spread of communism. The domino effect showed the necessity to pay attention to all countries.

Do you think this concern was valid? Explain why or why not.

Yes. Because if one country was to fall under communism that would mean it would gain more power to go up against stronger countries and eventually could become a threat to the U.S.

Question on Explaining Checks on the President's Power

The following is an example of a longer (extended) constructed-response question that requires the intellectual skill of “explaining and analyzing” in the content area, “How does the government established by the Constitution embody the purposes, values, and principles of American democracy?” Student responses were rated according to a four-point scale as “Complete,” “Acceptable,” “Partial,” or “Unacceptable.”

Overall, 5 percent of students were rated as having a “Complete” response, and the “Complete” plus “Acceptable” rating categories summed to 16 percent for this difficult question (data not shown). When only students at the *Proficient* level are considered, 13 percent were rated as “Complete.” The sample student response shown below was rated as “Complete.”

Percentage rated as “Complete” in 2006

Overall	Below Basic	At Basic	At Proficient	At Advanced
5	0.15	1	13	43

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2006 Civics Assessment.



Explain three ways in which the power of the President can be checked by the legislative or the judicial branch.

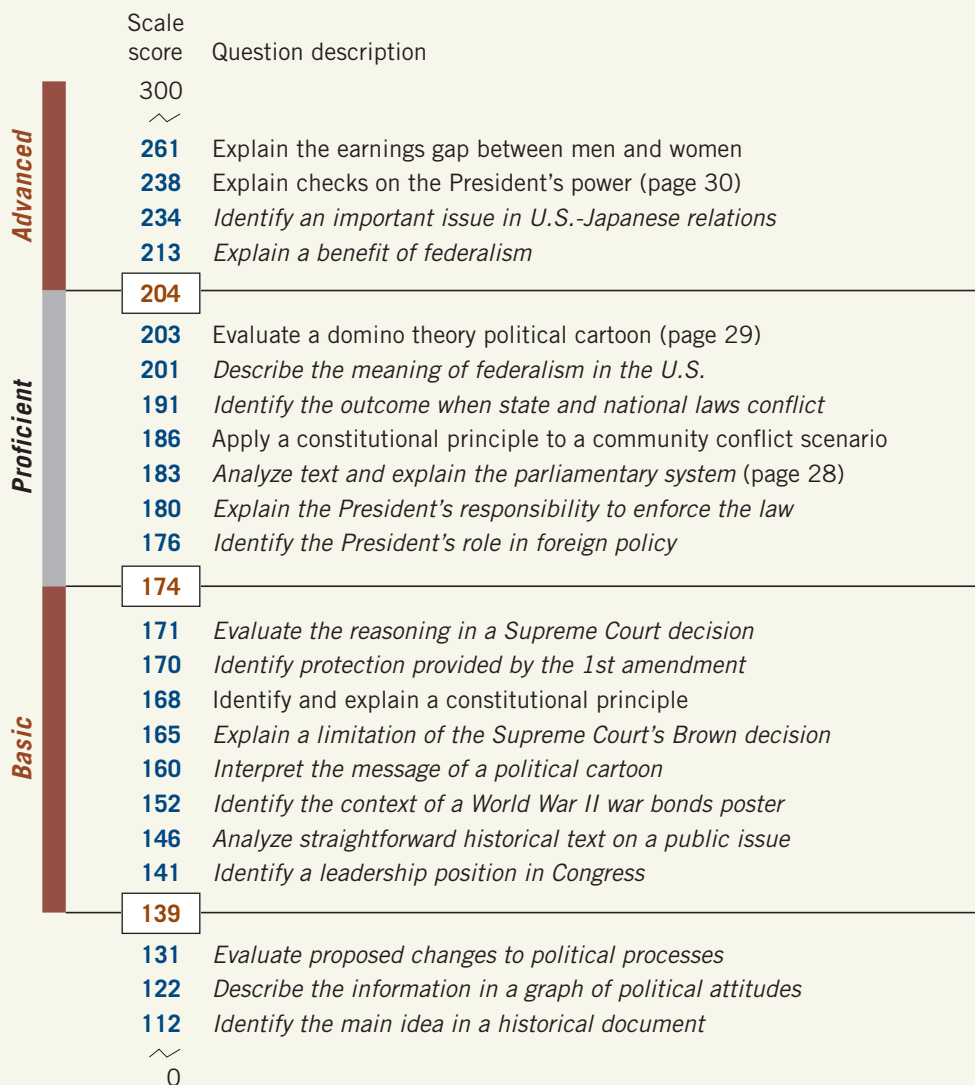
- 1) A president's veto of a law can be overridden by $\frac{2}{3}$ of the vote of ~~the~~ Congress.
- 2) Any treaty, etc. the President proposes/enters into must be approved by Congress
- 3) A president may be impeached by charges brought up by Congress and forced to leave office by the Senate's ruling on the charges

What Twelfth-Graders Know and Can Do in Civics

The item map below provides another way to interpret the scale score and achievement-level results for twelfth-graders. The left side of the item map shows the scores that define the lower boundaries of the *Basic*, *Proficient*, and *Advanced* achievement levels. The right side lists descriptions of some selected assessment questions that fall at various levels of difficulty on the 0–300 scale.

The map is a useful tool for understanding what it means to perform at different levels on the scale. For example, students performing toward the middle of the *Basic* achievement-level range (152) were likely to be able to identify the context of a “Buy War Bonds” poster from World War II. Students performing at the upper end of the *Proficient* achievement-level range (203) were likely to be able to understand a political cartoon depicting the domino theory and to evaluate its validity.

Grade 12 NAEP Civics Item Map



The position of a question on the scale represents the average scale score attained by students who had a 65 percent probability of correctly answering a constructed-response question, or a 74 percent probability of correctly answering a four-option multiple-choice question. Scale score ranges for civics achievement levels are referenced on the map. For constructed-response questions, the question description represents students' performance rated as completely correct.

NOTE: Regular type denotes a constructed-response question. *Italic* type denotes a multiple-choice question.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2006 Civics Assessment.

Technical Notes

Sampling and weighting

The schools and students participating in NAEP assessments are chosen to form a sample representative of the nation. This sample was selected using a stratified, two-stage design that involved sampling students from selected schools (public and nonpublic) across the country. More information on sampling can be found at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/about/nathow.asp>.

Each school that participated in the assessment, and each student assessed, represents a portion of the population of interest. Results are weighted to make appropriate inferences between the student samples and the respective populations from which they are drawn. Sampling weights account for the disproportionate representation of the selected sample and for the oversampling of students who attend schools with high concentrations of minority students, as well as for the lower sampling rates of students who attend very small nonpublic schools.

Reporting race/ethnicity

The scores presented in this report for 1998 and 2006 are based on school reports of students' race/ethnicity. The numbers in this report differ from those in the NAEP civics report for 1998. The categorization of race/ethnicity for the earlier report was based on student self-identification.

National School Lunch Program

Under the guidelines of the National School Lunch Program, children from families with incomes below 130 percent of the poverty level are eligible for free meals. Those from families with incomes between 130 and 185 percent of the poverty level are eligible for reduced-price meals. (For the period July 1, 2005 through June 30, 2006, for a family of four, 130 percent of the poverty level was \$25,155, and 185 percent was \$35,798.)

Accommodations

In the 1998 civics assessment, testing accommodations, such as extra time or individual administration, were provided to students with disabilities and English language learners who required accommodations to participate. For the 2006 civics assessment, accommodations were also provided, and the reported results include the performance of students who received accommodations. In the 2006 civics assessment, 3 percent of the sample was excluded from testing at grade 4, and 2 percent at each of grades 8 and 12, because they could not meaningfully participate even with the accommodations NAEP allows. The percentages of the assessed sample that received accommodations in 2006 were 11 percent at grade 4, 10 percent at grade 8, and 7 percent at grade 12. The results presented in this report reflect the performance of students who could be assessed. No attempt was



made to infer or include performance estimates for students who could not be assessed due to a disability or because they were still learning English. Additional information on exclusion rates can be found at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/about/inclusion.asp>.

School/student participation rates

To ensure unbiased samples, participation rates for the original sample need to be at least 85 percent for schools to meet reporting requirements established by NCES and the Governing Board. The school participation rates for grades 4, 8, and 12 were 92, 93, and 79 percent, respectively. Student participation rates were 95, 92, and 72 percent, respectively, for each of the three grades. Because the participation rate for grade 12 public schools was below 85 percent, an analysis was performed examining the potential for nonresponse bias introduced through school nonresponse. The results showed that school substitution and nonresponse adjustments were effective in reducing the observable nonresponse bias.

A NAEP/Governing Board reporting rule requires a 70 percent initial school participation rate in order to report data separately for the public/private sectors. While participation rate standards were met for public schools at grades 4, 8, and 12, they were not met for private schools at any of the three grades (61, 62, and 41 percent, respectively); therefore, data for these schools are not reported separately. Participation rates for Catholic schools, which are included with the private category, did meet reporting standards at grades 4 (92 percent) and 8 (83 percent). Performance data for Catholic schools at grades 4 and 8 are available at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/nde/>.

Results by region of the country

Prior to 2003, NAEP results were reported separately for four NAEP-defined regions of the nation: Northeast, Southeast, Central, and West. As of 2003, NAEP analyses and reports have used the U.S. Census Bureau's definition of "region" to align NAEP with other federal data collections. The four regions defined by the U.S. Census Bureau are Northeast, South, Midwest, and West. More information on reporting for regions in NAEP can be found at http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/nde/help/qs/NAEP_Reporting_Groups.asp#5.

Data for region of the country are not reported for two reasons. First, the change in the definition of region from 1998 to 2006 prevents the calculation of trend data. Second, in 2006, the participation rate of twelfth-graders in the West region fell below the reporting requirement of 70 percent. Data for the other three regions can be found at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/nde/>.

Interpreting statistical significance

Comparisons over time or between groups are based on statistical tests that consider both the size of the differences and the standard errors of the two statistics being compared. Standard errors are margins of error, and estimates based on smaller groups are likely to have larger margins of error. The size of the standard errors may also be influenced by other factors such as how representative the students assessed are of the entire population. When an estimate has a large standard error, a numerical difference that seems large may not be statistically significant. Differences of the same magnitude may or may not be statistically significant depending upon the size of the standard errors of the statistics. For example, a 3-point difference between male and female students may be statistically significant, while a 4-point difference between Black and Hispanic students may not be. Standard errors for the NAEP scores and percentages presented in this report are available at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/nde/>.



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CIVICS 2006

May 2007

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