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ABSTRACT

Civics education in the nation's schools informs students about the structures, functions, and processes of government and about the meaningful ways in which citizens can make decisions about public issues and participate in governance. This report, part of the Nation's Report Card program and based on findings from the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), provides a view of student achievement in civics over a 10-year period from 1988 to 1998. In 1998, NAEP conducted two national assessments of student civics knowledge in grades 4, 8, and 12. One assessment employed a set of new test specifications, while the other assessment was a special study that repeated a number of multiple-choice test questions used in 1988. The special study results are reported here as a summary of trends in student knowledge and classroom teacher practices over the 10-year period. Results are based on the assessment of a student sample at each grade that is statistically representative of the entire nation. Student performance is described in terms of average percentage correct, rather than the traditional NAEP scaled scores. The report provides results for subgroups of students defined by various background and contextual characteristics. Analysis focuses on differences between 1988 and 1998, rather than differences among groups within each year. To illustrate the civics knowledge that was assessed, numerous samples of test questions are provided. The report also explores trends in the classroom coverage of civics topics from 1988 to 1998, as well as trends in classroom instructional

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activities over the decade. Four appendices are included: (1) "Overview of Procedures Used in the 1988 and 1998 NAEP Civics Special Study"; (2) "Standard Errors"; (3) "Average Percentage Correct"; and (4) "Members of the NAEP Civics Standing Committee." (Contains approximately 95 tables and figures.) (BT)

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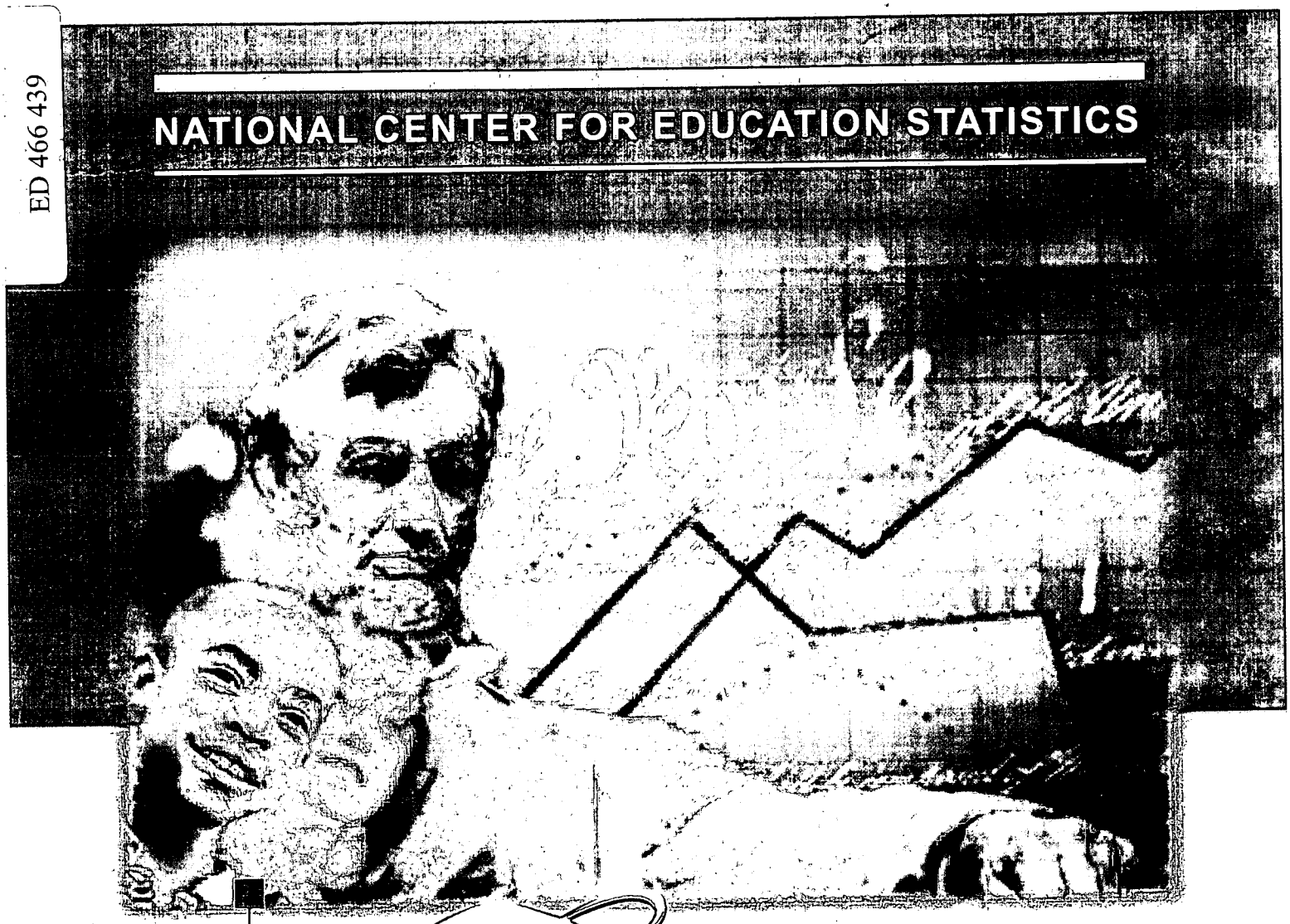

# The Next Generation of Citizens

## NAEP CIVICS ASSESSMENTS–1988 AND 1998

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# The Next Generation of Citizens

## NAEP CIVICS ASSESSMENTS–1988 AND 1998


Andrew R. Weiss
Anthony D. Lutkus
Wendy S. Grigg
Richard G. Niemi

In collaboration with

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**June 2001**


U.S. Department of Education
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The work upon which this publication is based was performed for the National Center for Education Statistics by Educational Testing Service.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As we move into the twenty-first century, our nation looks to its youth for confirmation that the government established over 200 years ago will remain relevant, vital, and strong. We expect that today's students are being prepared to understand and maintain the values of our democratic society. Civics education in our nation's schools informs students about the structures, functions, and processes of government and about the meaningful ways in which citizens can make decisions about public issues and participate in governance. This report, based on findings from the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), provides a view of students' achievement in civics over the ten-year period from 1988 to 1998. The data and information provided give some indication as to whether there have been changes in students' understanding of civics and whether civics education has changed during the last decade of the twentieth century.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress is the nation's only ongoing survey of what students know and can do in various academic subject areas. Authorized by Congress and administered by the National Center for Education Statistics in the U.S. Department of Education, NAEP regularly reports to the public on the educational progress of students in grades 4, 8, and 12. In 1998, NAEP conducted two national assessments of students' civics knowledge in each of these grades. One assessment employed a set of new test specifications (or "framework").

The other civics assessment (based on the 1988 civics objectives) was a special study that repeated a number of the multiple-choice test questions used in 1988. The results of the new assessment were reported in the fall of 1999 as the *NAEP 1998 Civics Report Card for the Nation.*[1] The results of the special study are reported here as a summary of trends in students' knowledge and teachers' classroom practices over the ten-year period.

The results are based on the assessment of a sample of students at each grade that is statistically representative of the entire nation. Students' performance is described in terms of average percentage correct, rather than the traditional NAEP scaled scores. The reason for this departure is that the relatively small set of test questions repeated from 1988 in grades 8 and 12 did not allow comprehensive coverage of the 1988 test objectives, nor did it allow the reliable development of scaled scores parallel to those used in 1988.

This report provides results for subgroups of students defined by various background and contextual characteristics. The analyses focus on differences between 1988 and 1998, rather than differences among groups within each year.

[1] Lutkus, A.D., Weiss, A.R., Campbell, J.R., Mazzeo, J., & Lazer, S. (1999). *NAEP 1998 civics report card for the nation.* Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

To illustrate the civics knowledge that was assessed, numerous samples of the test questions are provided. The report also explores trends in the classroom coverage of civics topics from 1988 to 1998, as well as trends in classroom instructional activities over the decade. A summary of the major findings from the NAEP 1998 special study is presented below.

## Overall Assessment Results

- In both 1988 and 1998, students at each of the three grade levels answered about two-thirds of the assessment questions correctly.
- Fourth-grade students in 1998 answered more questions correctly, on average, than did fourth-grade students in 1988.
- Eighth-grade students in 1998 answered fewer questions correctly, on average, than their counterparts in 1988.
- The performance of twelfth-grade students in 1998 was not significantly different from their counterparts in 1988.

## Results for Student Subgroups

### Gender

- Fourth-grade males had a higher percentage of correct responses in 1998 than in 1988, while twelfth-grade males had a lower percentage correct in 1998.
- The percentage of correct responses for female students at grades 4, 8, and 12 did not change significantly between 1988 and 1998.

### Race/Ethnicity

- In 1998, the percentage of correct responses increased for white students in grade 4 and decreased for Hispanic students in grade 12.
- At all three grades in both 1988 and 1998, white students consistently achieved a higher percentage correct than either black or Hispanic students.

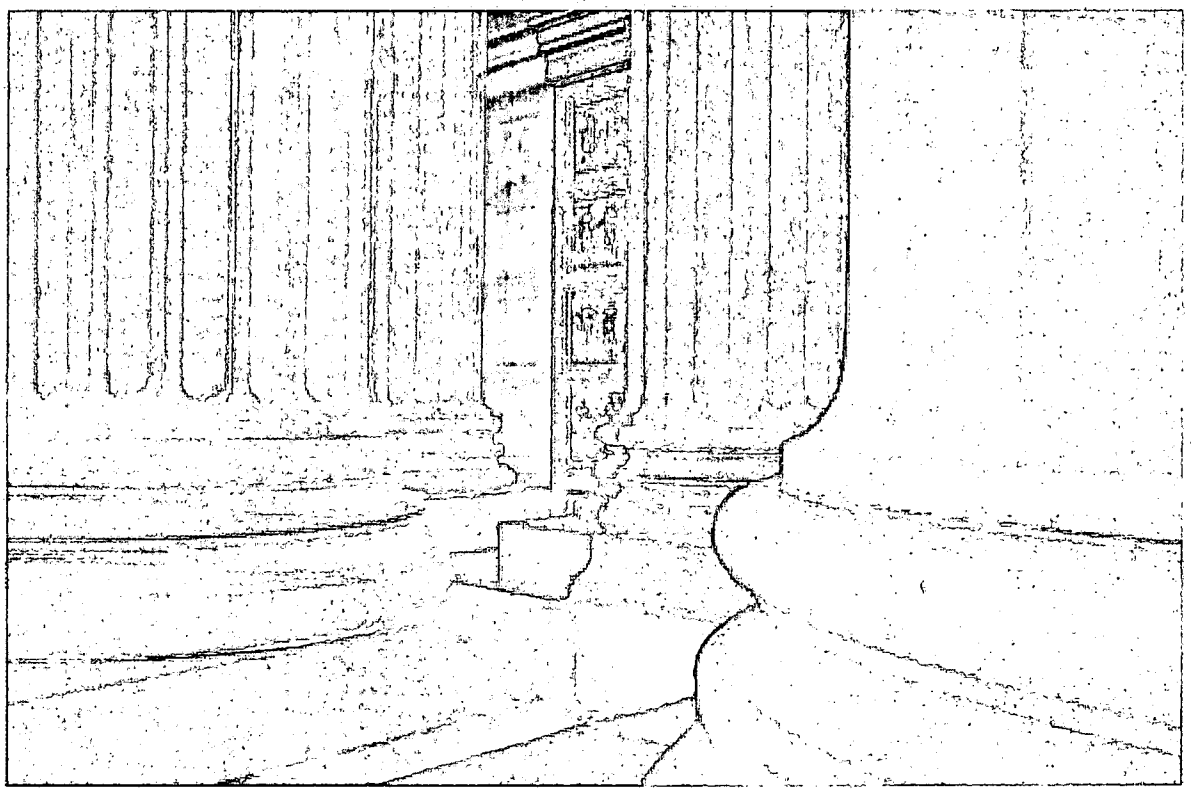
## Trends in Civics Topics Studied

- A trend was noted toward less frequent social studies classes in grade 4, with 49 percent of students in 1988 reporting daily classes compared to 39 percent in 1998.
- The percentage of eighth-graders who reported having studied civics or American government in grades 5, 6, and 7 rose between 1988 and 1998.
- The percentage of twelfth-graders who said they were studying civics or American government in their current grade rose between 1988 (61 percent) and 1998 (71 percent).
- Fourth-graders in 1998 reported spending more time studying three of the six civics curriculum topics surveyed (*elections and voting*, *President/leaders of the country*, and *judges and courts*) than did fourth-graders in 1988.
- For both eighth- and twelfth-graders, the *U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights* is the one curriculum topic, of all those surveyed, that was studied "A lot" by the majority of students in both 1988 and 1998.

- The amount of time spent studying the various civics topics surveyed at grades 8 and 12 is similar and has not changed between 1988 and 1998.

## Trends in Contexts for Learning Civics

- The frequency with which students at grades 8 and 12 were assigned extra reading material by their civics or American government teachers increased between 1988 and 1998.
- The percentage of eighth- and twelfth-graders assigned to work on group projects at least once or twice a week rose substantially from 1988 to 1998.
- The percentage of fourth-graders discussing current events in social studies class at least once a week increased from 29 percent in 1988 to 39 percent in 1998.
- The amount of civics homework twelfth-graders were doing did not change significantly between 1988 and 1998.
- Between 1988 and 1998, the percentage of eighth-graders whose families regularly got a newspaper fell from 77 percent to 71 percent. For twelfth-graders, the percentage dropped from 82 percent to 75 percent.



# INTRODUCTION

If today's youth are to become successful civic leaders of tomorrow, they need to be both engaged in and knowledgeable about civic matters. There is some concern that they may not be up to the task. Is this concern well founded?

## Civic Engagement

Political engagement in the United States is low. Most notably, voter turnout has fallen dramatically. Only a generation ago, in 1960, turnout in presidential elections reached a modern-day high, with over 65 percent of the eligible electorate going to the polls. By 1996, that percentage had dropped to less than 51. Two other measures of democracy—political and interpersonal trust—fell sharply over the same period. In the early 1960s, more than three quarters of Americans said that the federal government could usually or just about always "be trusted to do the right thing"; in the 1990s, that figure was closer to one quarter.[1] More broadly, participation in numerous forms of politics and civil society is reportedly down sharply.[2]

Moreover, lack of engagement is especially noticeable among America's youth. Among 18–24-year-olds, less than one-third voted in 1996, which is considerably less than among both older Americans and young people in earlier election years. In surveys of college freshmen, the numbers who claim to discuss politics, keep up-to-date on politics, and vote in student elections are all at record lows.[3] "Being a good American who cares about the good of the country" has come to rank relatively low among young people's priorities.[4] Overall, young adults are said to be indifferent, distrustful, and politically disengaged, thus raising the prospect of even greater attrition in political and civic involvement in the future.

While it is true that participation in many kinds of civic activities has declined, civic volunteerism is high and, by some accounts, is on the rise. In the 1996 National Household Education Survey, for example, just over half of young people in grades 9 through 12 said they participated in community service activity or volunteer work at school or in the community during that school year.[5] In another study,

[1] National Commission on Civic Renewal. (1997). *A nation of spectators: How civic disengagement weakens America and what we can do about it.* Washington, DC: Author.

[2] Putnam, R. (1995). Bowling alone. *Journal of Democracy (9)*, 65–78.

[3] Astin, A.W., Parrott, S.A., Korn, W.S., & Sax, L.J. (1997). *The American freshman: Thirty year trends.* Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute, University of California at Los Angeles.

[4] National Association of Secretaries of State. (1999). *New Millennium Project, Part I: American youth attitudes on politics, citizenship, government and voting.* Washington, DC: Author.

[5] Nolin, M.J., Chaney, B., & Chapman, C. (1997). *Student participation in community service activity.* (NCES 97–331). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

which asked teenagers about 15 different areas of activity, 60 percent of 14–17-year-olds claimed to have performed volunteer activity in the past twelve months.[6] Among college freshmen, the percentage reporting that they had performed volunteer work during the past year reached an all-time high of 75 percent in 1998, after ranging between 62 and 73 percent over the prior 14 years. However, these same students' commitment to broader forms of civic involvement—community leadership, improving racial understanding, helping those in difficulty, and cleaning up the environment—is static or trending lower.[7]

The growing evidence of a decline in citizen participation and commitment has led to a call for a "civic renewal." High on the list of recommendations for such a renewal is a revitalization of civic education, including teaching more civics in schools, instituting character education, and encouraging or requiring community service.[8]

## Political Knowledge Among Youths

Advocates of more civic education in the schools point out that the problem is deeper than a lack of political participation: young people are also uninformed. The results of a number of studies, including recent NAEP assessments in geography, history, and civics, all seem to point to deficiencies in young people's knowledge of the social and geopolitical world.[9] For example, based on a nationally representative survey of 18–24-year-olds, a report from the National Association of Secretaries of State concluded that young people "lack any real understanding of citizenship..., information and understanding about the democratic process..., and information about candidates and political parties."[10] Likewise, an extensive analysis of more than 50 questions covering governmental structure, historical persons and events, and contemporary politics showed that young people (post-baby boomers) were often the least knowledgeable of the people surveyed.[11] Furthermore, the Secretaries of State report noted that most young people do not seek out political information and that they are not very likely to do so in the future.[12]

Despite evidence of low political engagement, low levels of political and interpersonal trust, and relatively low levels of civic knowledge, there is little to suggest that today's youths are less knowledgeable than their predecessors.

---

[6] Hodgkinson, V.A. and Weitzman, M.S. (1996). *Giving and volunteering in the U.S.* Washington, DC: Independent Sector.

[7] Sax, L.J., Astin, A.W., Korn, W.S., & Mahoney, K. (1999). *The American freshman: National norms for fall 1999.* Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute, UCLA.

[8] National Commission on Civic Renewal. (1998). *A nation of spectators.* Washington, DC: Author.

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National Association of Secretaries of State. (1999). *New millennium project, part I: American youth attitudes on policies, citizenship, government, and voting.* Washington, DC: Author.

[9] National Assessment of Educational Progress. (1990). *The geographic learning of high school seniors.* Washington, DC. Author.

Anderson, L., Jenkins, L.B., Lerning, J., MacDonald, W.B., Mullis, I.V.S., Turner, M.J., & Wooster, J.S. (1990). *The civics report card–trends in achievement from 1976 to 1988 at ages 13 and 17–achievement in 1988 at grades 4, 8, and 12.* Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

Lutkus, A.D., Weiss, A.R., Campbell, J.R., Mazzeo, J., & Lazer, S. (1999). *NAEP 1998 civics report card for the nation.* Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

[10] Brown University. (1999). *Presidents' Fourth of July declaration on the civic responsibility of higher education.* Providence, RI: Brown University, Campus Compact.

National Association of Secretaries of State. (1999). *New millennium project, part I: American youth attitudes on policies, citizenship, government, and voting.* Washington, DC: Author, 34–38.

[11] Delli Carpini, M.X. and Keeter, S. (1996). *What Americans know about politics and why it matters.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

[12] Brown University. (1999). *Presidents' Fourth of July declaration on the civic responsibility of higher education.* Providence, RI: Brown University, Campus Compact.

National Association of Secretaries of State. (1999). *New millennium project, part I: American youth attitudes on policies, citizenship, government, and voting.* Washington, DC: Author, 35–36.

One recent study did find that the knowledge gap between people aged 18–29 and those aged 45–54 increased dramatically between mid-century and 1989, but the comparison was based on an extremely small number of questions and cannot be considered conclusive.[13] Moreover, major changes in student demographics over this period—for example, a twelfth-grade population that is far more diverse today than it was half a century ago—make such comparisons and interpretations even more difficult than they would be otherwise.

NAEP itself has examined changes in civics knowledge levels over time for 13- and 17-year-olds using studies conducted in 1976, 1982, and 1988.[14] This type of comparison has the advantage of "holding constant" the education level of the students taking the assessment. The results show that changes in knowledge levels were small and inconsistent. On a 0–100 "proficiency scale," 13-year-olds performed as well as or better in 1988, but 17-year-olds performed less well (declining by 2 points) between 1976 and 1988. However, on a constructed-response (open-ended) question about the role of community newspapers, 13-year-olds gave acceptable answers less often in 1988 than in 1976, while the change was insignificant among 17-year-olds. Finally, on a constructed-response question on the definition of democracy asked only of 17-year-olds, there was a significant increase in acceptable answers.

Finally, it appears that changing trends in the way information about government and politics is obtained—less newspaper reading, more television watching, and the growth of new technologies like the Internet—do not necessarily lead to decreased awareness of political subjects. A frequently cited example is that "cop shows" on television could be one of the reasons that students in the 1988 NAEP civics assessment were often able to answer questions about civil and criminal rights.[15]

The relationship between civic knowledge and civic participation is not simple and direct. The trend toward political disaffection and disengagement among young people seems quite clear, but has not been accompanied by a parallel trend in decreased civic knowledge. Educational policymakers, however, do believe that enhancing civic knowledge—with a particular stress on civic responsibility—will, in time, lead to greater participation. In the meantime, NAEP will continue to monitor the progress American schools make towards teaching young people the fundamental concepts of government and civic life. Toward that goal, this report compares the results of civics assessments administered in 1988 and 1998.

## Origins of the 1988 and 1998 Civics Special Study

The publication of *A Nation at Risk*[16] in 1983 led to many changes in education, including a movement toward standards-based education, greater use of portfolios and other such means of assessment, and an increased visibility of state and national assessments. Each of these developments had an effect in the area of civics.

[13] Delli Carpini, M.X. and Keeter, S. (1996). *What Americans know about politics and why it matters.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

[14] Anderson, L., Jenkins, L.B., Lerning, J., MacDonald, W.B., Mullis, I.V.S., Turner, M.J., & Wooster, J.S. (1990). *The civics report card–trends in achievement from 1976 to 1988 at ages 13 and 17–achievement in 1988 at grades 4, 8, and 12.* Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. (Note that the sample for this trends assessment was based on age rather than grade.)

[15] Niemi, R.G. and Junn, J. (1998). *Civic education: What makes students learn?* New Haven: Yale University Press.

[16] National Commission on Excellence in Education. (1983). *A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform: A report to the nation and the Secretary of Education.* Washington, DC: Author.

A major effort by the Center for Civic Education, with the assistance of numerous individuals and organizations, resulted in the 1994 publication of the voluntary *National Standards for Civics and Government.*[17] The *Standards* volume was premised on the belief that civic instruction was often overlooked due to a false belief that civic knowledge and skills "emerge as by-products of the study of other disciplines or as an outcome of the process of schooling itself."[18] It identified five major themes that defined the content of civics knowledge and provided detailed descriptions of "not only the content to be mastered in civics and government, but also what students should be able to do in relation to that content."[19]

The NAEP Civics Consensus Project relied heavily on the *Standards* when it constructed the *Civics Framework for the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress.* A decision was made very early to construct an entirely new test rather than repeating or simply revising the 1988 instrument. The new assessment would include questions about topics that received little or no attention in the previous assessment, but were regarded as vital to a proper education for democracy. These included, among many other examples, more emphasis on the gap between the goals and reality of American democracy, the skills needed by citizens for monitoring government, and the place of the United States in world affairs. Also, at the specific direction of the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) which sets policy for NAEP, there was an emphasis on civil society, that is, voluntary associations and nongovernmental organizations.[20] In addition, it was decided that the format of the assessment should differ from that used in 1988. Nearly half of the new assessment would be devoted to short- or extended-constructed-response questions rather than multiple-choice questions, and much more use would be made of stimulus material such as political cartoons and major historical documents.

Because the 1998 assessment was to be based upon a new framework, its results would not be comparable to those from 1988. The Steering and Planning committees for the assessment thus strongly recommended that the 1998 assessment include a special study that would look back to assess change in student performance between 1988 and 1998. This was to be accomplished by using a limited-sized sample and by readministering a portion of the 1988 assessment under the same conditions as those used in 1988. This report presents the results of that special study. Details of the 1988 and 1998 assessment and the procedure used in implementing it are summarized below and explained more fully in Appendix A.

## The Assessment Instrument

The questions used in the special study were written for the NAEP 1988 civics assessment and were based on the 1988 *Civics Objectives.*[21] The *Objectives* used a three-dimensional matrix to represent the interrelated components of the assessment questions: content, cognitive skills, and the context in which questions were asked. Although all three components were taken into account in developing the assessment

[17] Center for Civic Education. (1994). *National standards for civics and government.* Calabasas, CA: Author.

[18] Ibid., p.2.

[19] Center for Civic Education. (1994). *National standards for civics and government.* Calabasas, CA: Author.

[20] National Assessment Governing Board. (1998). *Civics framework for the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress,* Washington, DC: Author.

[21] National Assessment of Educational Progress. (1987). *Civics objectives: 1988 assessment.* Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.

Table i.1

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**Distribution of questions and percentage of total assessment by content area, grades 4, 8, and 12: 1988 and 1998**

| | Democratic principles and the purpose of government | | Political institutions | | Political processes | | Rights, responsibilities, and the law | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Grade 4** | **1988** | **1998** | **1988** | **1998** | **1988** | **1998** | **1988** | **1998** | **1988** | **1998** |
| Number | 9 | 9 | 26 | 26 | 5 | 5 | 11 | 11 | 51 | 51 |
| Percentage of total questions‡ | 18 | 18 | 51 | 51 | 10 | 10 | 22 | 22 | 100 | 100 |
| **Grade 8** | | | | | | | | | | |
| Number | 21 | 8 | 49 | 24 | 39 | 21† | 43 | 24 | 152 | 77 |
| Percentage of total questions‡ | 14 | 10 | 32 | 31 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 31 | 100 | 100 |
| **Grade 12** | | | | | | | | | | |
| Number | 19 | 7 | 46 | 28 | 49 | 18 | 35 | 21† | 149 | 74 |
| Percentage of total questions‡ | 13 | 9 | 31 | 38 | 33 | 24 | 23 | 28 | 100 | 100 |

†One question was deleted from the analysis for technical reasons (see Appendix A).

‡Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

questions, only the content component has been used in analyzing the trend results.[22]

The objectives outlined four content areas:

- ▷ *Democratic principles and the purpose of government*
- ▷ *Political institutions (structures and functions)*
- ▷ *Political processes*
- ▷ *Rights, responsibilities, and the law*

Table i.1 shows the distribution of questions across the four content areas.

For the special study, NAEP administered three 1988 test booklets, one at each of grades 4, 8, and 12. The booklets contained a block of general background questions, a block of background questions related to social studies or civics instruction, and three blocks of cognitive (or "content") questions. The three test booklets were administered intact; that is, they were identical in content and appearance to the booklets administered in 1988.

In 1988 there was only one test booklet developed at grade 4; it contained three ten-minute blocks of multiple-choice questions. Consequently, fourth-grade students in the special study received all of the 51 questions from 1988. The 1988 assessments at grade 8 and grade 12 were each comprised of seven fifteen-minute blocks of cognitive questions (six blocks of multiple-choice questions and one block containing a single open-ended question), with each participating student receiving three blocks. The test booklets chosen for administration in the special study contained three

[22] Because of discrepancies in the data records concerning the content classifications assigned to the assessment questions in 1988, all questions used for the trend study were reclassified and the new classifications were used for the analyses in this report.

blocks of multiple-choice questions. As a result, at grades 8 and 12, the study included approximately half of the total pool of questions from the original assessment, 77 questions for eighth-graders, and 74 questions for twelfth-graders.

For each grade level, Table i.1 displays the number of test questions used in each assessment year, as well as the percentage of the total assessment that was devoted to each content category. Because the entire set of test questions was repeated for grade 4, the percentages in the "Percentage of total questions" row are identical for 1988 and 1998. For grades 8 and 12, inspection of the within category pairs in the "Percentage of total questions" row indicates that the percentages of the total assessment from each content category were quite similar in the 1988 assessment and the 1998 special study, even though the special study employed only about half as many test questions as the 1988 assessment.

## Description of School and Student Samples

The NAEP 1998 civics special study was conducted nationally at grades 4, 8, and 12. The assessments were administered between January and the end of March 1998 in the same schools that hosted the 1998 civics national assessment (and provided the data for the *NAEP 1998 Civics Report Card for the Nation*). A representative sample of public and nonpublic school students, selected through stratified random sampling procedures, was assessed. Thus, the results presented in this report are based on representative samples of students.

As with the main NAEP assessments, schools were permitted to exclude students with disabilities (SD) and limited English proficient students (LEP) if they were unable to participate meaningfully in the assessment. Details on the numbers and percentages of students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency who were excluded from the assessment are given in Appendix A. In order to preserve the accuracy of the 1988 and 1998 comparison, testing accommodations or adaptations were not offered to students with disabilities or limited English proficiency because these were not available in the 1988 assessment.

Table i.2 presents the data on student sample sizes and on the number of schools that participated in the civics special study. Each selected school that participated in the assessment, and each student assessed, represents a portion of the target population.

Table i.2

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**Number of students assessed and participating schools, grades 4, 8, and 12, civics trend: 1998**

| | Number of assessed students | Number of schools |
|---|---|---|
| **Grade 4** | 2,088 | 111 |
| **Grade 8** | 2,055 | 104 |
| **Grade 12** | 2,193 | 102 |

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

## Reporting the Civics Special Study Results

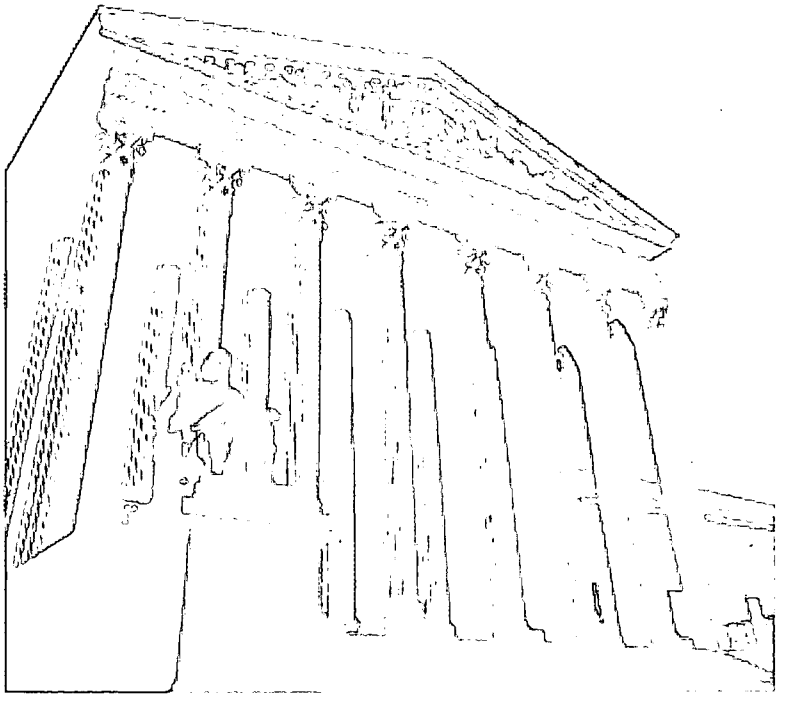
The results from the 1988 and 1998 assessments are presented in this report in two ways. First, student and subgroup performance is shown as the average percentage correct achieved on the assessment as a whole, and then on individual questions illustrative of a content category. This presentation is a departure from the traditional use of a NAEP scale and achievement levels by which to chart performance. Scaled scores were

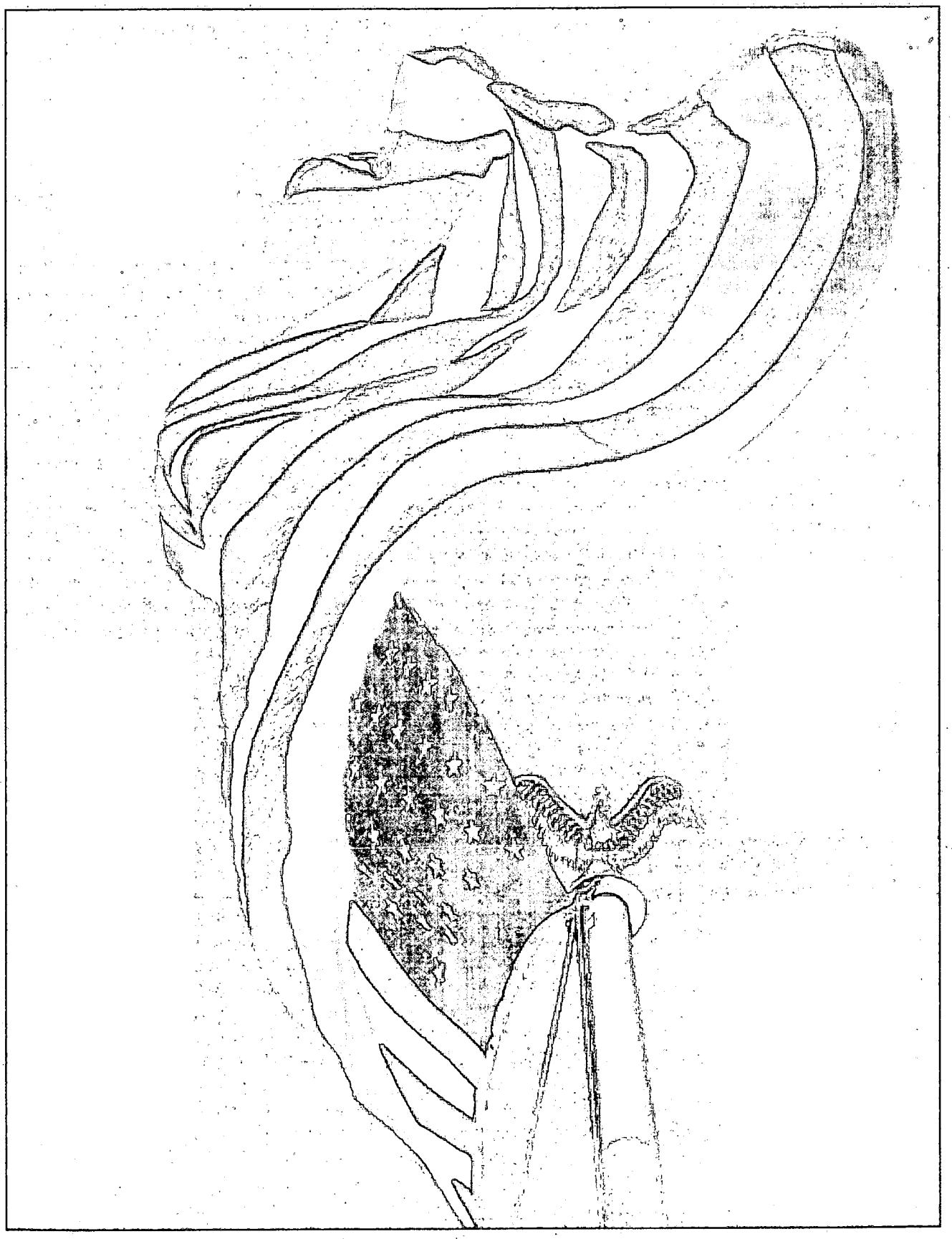
not used because the reduced number of test questions given at grades 8 and 12 both limited coverage of the test objectives and made it difficult to create reliable scales comparable to those from 1988. The three levels of achievement—*Basic*, *Proficient*, and *Advanced*—now commonly used in reporting NAEP results were not in use in 1988. There were four levels of proficiency defined in 1988, but they were derived from that assessment's scale. Since the special study assessment is not scaled, the proficiency levels are not relevant.

Second, the results of contextual variables, discussed in chapters 2 and 3, are presented as student response percentages, typically with no associated student performance data. Chapters 2 and 3 focus on trends in frequency of classes, curriculum topics covered in civics, and instructional activities. Changes in these areas over a decade are of interest to educators and curriculum developers even when not connected to shifts in student performance.

## Cautions in Interpretation

The reader is cautioned against using the NAEP results in this report to make simple causal inferences related to subgroup performance, to the relative effectiveness of public and nonpublic schools, or to other educational variables discussed in this report. A relationship that exists between performance and another variable does not reveal the underlying cause of that relationship, which may be influenced by a number of other variables. Differences in civics performance may reflect a range of socioeconomic and educational factors not discussed in this report or addressed by the NAEP program. Finally, differences in civics performance may reflect not only the effectiveness of educational programs, but also the challenges posed by economic constraints and student demographic characteristics.





CHAPTER 1

# 1988 and 1998 Civics Assessment Results for the Nation and Sample Questions

How do students in today's fourth, eighth, and twelfth grades compare in knowledge of civics topics to their counterparts in 1988? To find out, a portion of the 1988 civics assessment questions from grades 8 and 12, and the whole set of questions from grade 4, were readministered to students in the same grades in the winter of 1998. A new civics "trend line" will commence with the test questions from the 1998 national assessment, and will next be reported after the 2003 civics assessment.

Overall, the civics special study revealed that students in both 1988 and 1998 correctly answered about two-thirds of the test questions. There were small but significant changes between 1988 and 1998.

Table 1.1

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**Average percentage of correct responses to civics questions by grade: 1988 and 1998**

| | 1988 | | 1998 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Grade 4** | 62 | < | 64 |
| **Grade 8** | 64 | > | 62 |
| **Grade 12** | 68 | | 66 |

> 1988 significantly greater than 1998.
< 1988 significantly less than 1998.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

Table 1.1 presents the overall 1988 and 1998 results, by grade, for the nation. Between 1988 and 1998, the average percentage of correct responses rose for fourth-graders, but declined for eighth-graders. Twelfth-graders in 1998 also had a lower overall percentage correct than in 1988, but the difference was not statistically significant. It should be noted that the observed changes were relatively small.

## Results for Selected Subgroups

Tables 1.2 and 1.3 present results for two major subgroups: gender and ethnicity. In addition to reporting the percentage of students in each subgroup, the tables include the average percentage of correct responses, as an estimate of the students' overall performance in 1988 and 1998.

In reviewing the results in these tables, the reader is cautioned against making simple or causal inferences about the relationship between subgroup membership and performance.

### Gender

The 1988 and 1998 average percentage correct data for males and females are presented in Table 1.2. Looking at differences in performance within gender groups across years, males at grade 4 answered a higher percentage of items

Table 1.2

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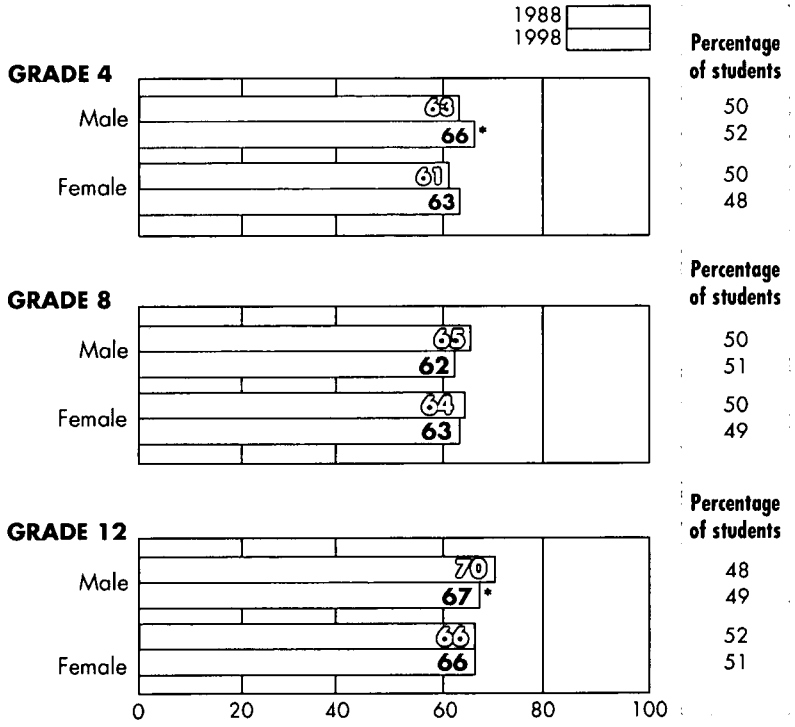
**Average percentage of correct responses to civics questions by gender: 1988 and 1998**




* 1998 is significantly different from 1988.

NOTE: Percentages of students may not add to 100 due to rounding.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

correctly in 1998 than in 1988. At grade 12, however, the percentage of correct responses for males decreased from 70 percent in 1988 to 67 percent in 1998. The percentages correct for female students at grades 4, 8, and 12 did not vary significantly between 1988 and 1998.

Twelfth-grade males had a higher average percentage of correct responses than females in 1988 (70 percent and 66 percent respectively). This gap closed between 1988 and 1998 as a result of the decrease in the average number of correct responses by males from 70 percent to 67 percent.

## Race/Ethnicity

The results for students in various racial/ethnic subgroups are summarized in Table 1.3. Results are included for white, black, and Hispanic students in 1988 and 1998. Although both Asian/Pacific Islander and American Indian students were assessed in 1988 and 1998, the sample sizes were too small to provide reliable estimates for these subgroups.

The average percentage correct for white students in grade 4 increased from 64 percent in 1988 to 67 percent in 1998. Fourth-grade black students also showed a higher percentage

Table 1.3

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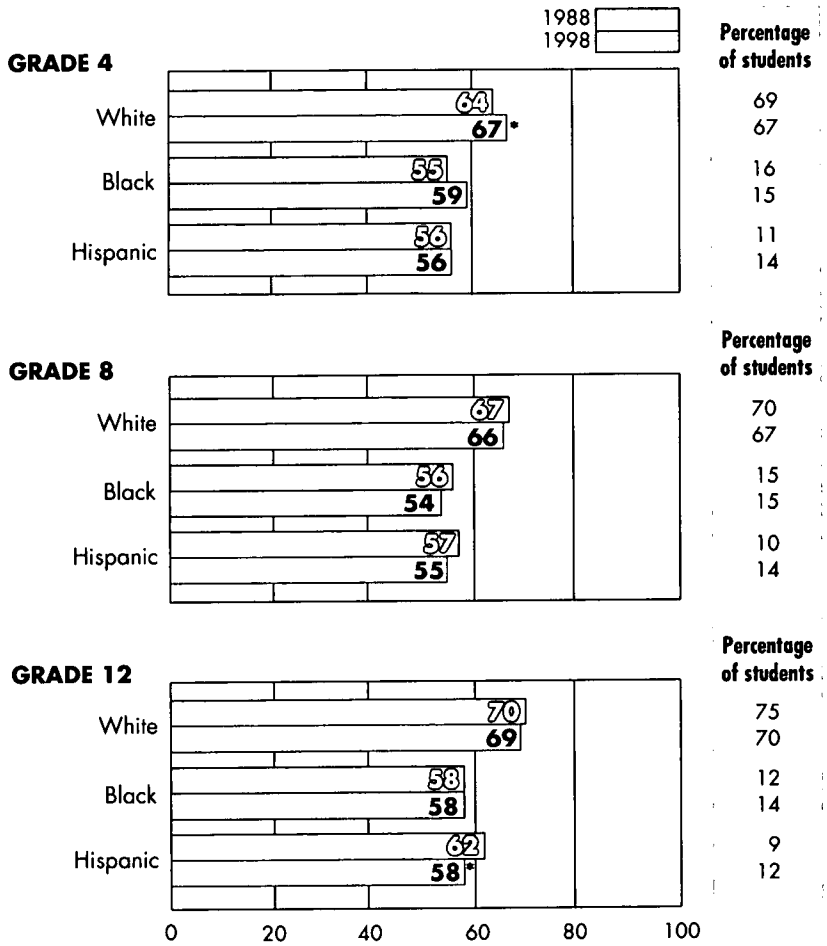
**Average percentage of correct responses to civics questions by race/ethnicity: 1988 and 1998**




* 1998 is significantly different from 1988.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

correct in 1998 compared to 1988, although this difference was not statistically significant. The average percentage correct for twelfth-grade Hispanic students decreased from 62 percent in 1988 to 58 percent in 1998.

In 1988 and 1998, white students had a higher percentage of questions correct than either black or Hispanic students at all three grade levels. While both black and Hispanic students averaged more than half of the questions correct (between 54 and 62 percent), white students averaged closer to two-thirds of the questions correct (between 64 and 70 percent).

## Sample Questions by Civics Content Area

The test questions in the special study were categorized by type of content according to the specifications in the 1988 *Civics Objectives.*[1] The four content areas were: *Democratic principles and the purpose of government; Political institutions (structures and functions); Political processes;* and *Rights, responsibilities, and the law.* The following section presents sample test questions, by grade, for each of the content areas. Student performance data for each question are also displayed, showing the percentage of students choosing each option.

[1] Educational Testing Service. (1987). *Civics: United States government and politics objectives: 1988 assessment.* Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service, National Assessment of Educational Progress.

Due to the limited number of questions in some of the content areas and the fact that the special study included only a subset of the entire pool of questions for grades 8 and 12, the performance results are not aggregated by content area. The data reflect the change or consistency in performance over time for the individual test questions.

## Democratic Principles and the Purpose of Government

This content area covers the principles and ideas expressed in the country's core documents and laws, the origins of the United States political system and the purposes served by governments, changes in constitutional values over time, and the differences between the U.S. political system and those in other countries. (Brief descriptions

### Figure 1.1

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**Grade 4 sample questions, 1988 and 1998**
**Content area: *Democratic principles and the purpose of government***

| | Percentage of students | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 1988 | | 1998 |
| Does a member of Congress ALWAYS have to obey the laws of the United States? | | | |
| ● Yes | 63 | < | 72 |
| Ⓑ No | 11 | | 9 |
| Ⓒ I don't know. | 25 | > | 19 |
| Which of the following is a major purpose of government in the United States? | | | |
| Ⓐ To print newspapers | 4 | | 4 |
| ● To make laws | 82 | | 84 |
| Ⓒ To make speeches | 11 | | 10 |
| Ⓓ To choose all reading materials | 3 | | 2 |

> 1988 significantly greater than 1998.
< 1988 significantly less than 1998.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

of the repeated questions and student performance in 1988 and 1998 are displayed in Appendix C, under content code "1").

The first question in Figure 1.1 measures students' understanding of a fundamental principle of the rule of law. Fewer than two-thirds of students answered it correctly in 1988, rising to nearly three-fourths in 1998. One possible explanation for the increase in performance on this item is that events at the time the assessment was administered in 1998 contributed to an increased awareness among students of issues related to this topic. It should be noted that the percentage of correct responses increased and the percentage of responses in the "I don't know" category decreased. In the second question in Figure 1.1, better than four out of five fourth-graders could identify that making laws is a major function of government. Performance was consistent over time.

In the first question in Figure 1.2, shown below, approximately 6 out of 10 eighth-graders in both 1988 and 1998 knew that the Constitution is the document that sets forth the basic rights of United States citizens.

In the next question, less than half of eighth-graders knew that countries other than the United States have written constitutions. Performance did not differ significantly over the decade on either question.

## Figure 1.2

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Grade 8 sample questions, 1988 and 1998**
**Content area: *Democratic principles and the purpose of government***

| | Percentage of students | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1988 | 1998 |
| If citizens of the United States want to find a statement of their civil rights, in which one of the following should they look? | | |
| Ⓐ In the Bible | 3 | 2 |
| ● In the Constitution | 61 | 62 |
| Ⓒ In the Articles of Confederation | 12 | 11 |
| Ⓓ In the Declaration of Independence | 17 | 19 |
| Ⓔ I don't know. | 7 | 6 |
| Is the United States the only country which has a written constitution? | | |
| Ⓐ Yes | 32 | 28 |
| ● No | 43 | 45 |
| Ⓒ I don't know. | 25 | 27 |

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

In the first question in Figure 1.3 below, twelfth-grade students were asked to identify which historical document was the source of the quote. Fifty-nine percent of students in 1988 correctly chose the Declaration of Independence, but only half of the students in 1998 knew the answer.

The second question measured whether students could define the term "bicameralism," which describes the structure of the U.S. Congress as well as most of the nation's state legislatures. Approximately one-third of students in either year scored correctly, with nearly as many thinking that bicameralism referred to a government with two branches.

## Figure 1.3

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Grade 12 sample questions, 1988 and 1998**
**Content area: *Democratic principles and the purpose of government***

| | Percentage of students | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 1988 | | 1998 |
| "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." | | | |
| This quotation is taken from the | | | |
| ● Declaration of Independence | 59 | > | 50 |
| Ⓑ United States Constitution | 19 | | 21 |
| Ⓒ Bill of Rights | 17 | < | 21 |
| Ⓓ Articles of Confederation | 5 | < | 8 |
| Bicameralism is best defined as a | | | |
| Ⓐ government composed of two principal branches | 31 | | 30 |
| Ⓑ multilevel judicial system containing a higher court for appeals | 14 | | 12 |
| Ⓒ system of checks and balances between two branches of government | 21 | | 21 |
| ● legislative system composed of two houses or chambers | 34 | | 38 |

> 1988 significantly greater than 1998.
< 1988 significantly less than 1998.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

## Political Institutions (Structures and Functions)

The *Political institutions (structures and functions)* content area covers basic historical information about the development of the United States political system, the organizational principles of the government, and the structures and operations of both the federal government and state and local governments. (Brief descriptions of the repeated questions and student performance in 1988 and 1998 are displayed in Appendix C, under content code "2").

Student knowledge of important national symbols falls within the political institutions content area, and questions asking students to identify symbols such as the flag and holidays such as July 4 are appropriate for fourth-graders. In the first question in Figure 1.4, we see a rather large 15 percentage point gain between 1988 and 1998 in the ability of fourth-graders to identify why Americans observe July 4.

Another type of question focused on fourth-graders' ability to distinguish things done by the government from things done by private individuals. The second question in Figure 1.4 is an example. Although students in 1998 were better able than their 1988 counterparts to identify gas stations as nongovernmental, fewer than half answered correctly.

### Figure 1.4

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Grade 4 sample questions, 1988 and 1998**
**Content area: *Political institutions (structures and functions)***

| | Percentage of students | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 1988 | | 1998 |
| July 4 is a national holiday because it observes the day that | | | |
| ● the American colonies declared their independence | 64 | < | 79 |
| Ⓑ the Pilgrims arrived in the New World | 9 | > | 5 |
| Ⓒ slaves won their freedom | 20 | > | 11 |
| Ⓓ women won the right to vote in elections | 6 | | 4 |
| In the United States, is a gas station usually owned and run by some level of government? | | | |
| Ⓐ Yes | 29 | > | 24 |
| ● No | 39 | < | 45 |
| Ⓒ I don't know. | 32 | | 31 |

> 1988 significantly greater than 1998.
< 1988 significantly less than 1998.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

Eighth-graders, like fourth-graders, were asked to identify the proper functions of government. Some questions focused on the functions of the different levels or branches of government while others, like the first question below in Figure 1.5, compared what was within to what was beyond the scope of government responsibility. About three quarters of eighth-graders knew that the federal government is not responsible for providing jobs for everyone, although performance dropped from 1988 to 1998.

The next question in Figure 1.5 was a straightforward attempt to determine whether students knew the meaning of the term "separation of powers." About 6 out of 10 students answered correctly in each year. Twelfth-graders were expected to be able to identify the structures and functions of various units of government, though generally with a greater emphasis on the federal level than was expected of fourth- and eighth-graders. The samples below cover both aspects of this category.

## Figure 1.5

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Grade 8 sample questions, 1988 and 1998**
**Content area: *Political institutions (structures and functions)***

| Does the U.S. Federal Government provide jobs for everyone? | Percentage of students 1988 | | 1998 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ⓐ Yes | 14 | < | 19 |
| ● No | 77 | > | 71 |
| Ⓒ I don't know. | 9 | | 10 |
| **The term "separation of powers" refers to the** | | | |
| Ⓐ state powers and duties that are not given to the central government | 12 | | 15 |
| ● division of authority among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government | 58 | | 61 |
| Ⓒ division of the legislature into two houses | 25 | > | 19 |
| Ⓓ creation of a national capital that is not a part of any state | 4 | | 5 |

> 1988 significantly greater than 1998.
< 1988 significantly less than 1998.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

The first question in Figure 1.6 asked students about the basic structure of Congress. About three-fourths knew the answer, but performance declined by 5 percentage points from 1988 to 1998.

Students found the second question in Figure 1.6 to be quite difficult both years but especially in 1998, when only 25 percent identified the Department of State as being most concerned with foreign affairs. This represented a 10 percentage point drop in performance. In 1998 twice as many students incorrectly answered Department of Commerce as chose the right answer.

## Political Processes

The *Political processes* content category covered a wide area of knowledge, including the range and importance of decisions made by the federal government and by state and local governments, limits on the power of government, the legislative process, the resolution of conflicts in law and principles, political parties and interest groups, and the electoral process. (Brief descriptions of the repeated questions and student performance in 1988 and 1998 are displayed in Appendix C, under content code "3").

### Figure 1.6

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Grade 12 sample questions, 1988 and 1998**
**Content area: *Political institutions (structures and functions)***

| The U.S. Congress is made up of which of the following? | Percentage of students 1988 | | 1998 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ⓐ The House of Representatives and the Supreme Court | 8 | | 10 |
| ● The House of Representatives and the Senate | 77 | > | 72 |
| Ⓒ The Senate and the Cabinet | 5 | | 6 |
| Ⓓ The President and the Cabinet | 3 | < | 5 |
| Ⓔ I don't know. | 7 | | 7 |
| **Which of the following departments is MOST concerned with foreign affairs?** | | | |
| ● Department of State | 35 | > | 25 |
| Ⓑ Department of Commerce | 45 | | 50 |
| Ⓒ Department of Agriculture | 6 | | 8 |
| Ⓓ Department of the Treasury | 5 | | 5 |
| Ⓔ I don't know. | 9 | < | 13 |

> 1988 significantly greater than 1998.
< 1988 significantly less than 1998.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

In Figure 1.7, the first grade 4 question deals with the qualifications for voting in the United States. It was a fairly easy question, with about 7 of 10 students answering correctly in 1988 and again in 1998.

The second question sought to find out whether students knew who in the government makes decisions about the constitutionality of laws. Fourth-graders were not asked many questions about the federal government, a topic of which they have limited knowledge. In this case, less than 20 percent in either year were able to answer correctly.

## Figure 1.7

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Grade 4 sample questions, 1988 and 1998**
**Content area: *Political processes***

| | Percentage of students | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1988 | 1998 |
| To vote in a national or state election in the United States, a person must usually be a | | |
| ● citizen | 69 | 70 |
| Ⓑ parent | 16 | 16 |
| Ⓒ worker | 11 | 8 |
| Ⓓ homeowner | 5 | 5 |
| What person or group has the authority to decide whether a law is constitutional? | | |
| Ⓐ The President | 36 | 40 |
| Ⓑ A governor | 15 | 15 |
| Ⓒ The Congress | 31 | 28 |
| ● The Supreme Court | 18 | 17 |

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

The first question in Figure 1.8 below is about the electoral process. Eighth-grade students performed well in both years, but there was a large decline in the percentage giving the correct answer, as well as a large increase in the percentage choosing option A.

As can be seen, the second question is identical to one given to fourth-graders (shown in Figure 1.7). A number of questions in the assessment were asked of students at more than one grade but, of course, performance expectations differed by grade. In this question, 4 out of 10 students knew that the Supreme Court has the authority to decide the constitutionality of laws. About as many students thought Congress decided constitutionality as chose the correct answer.

**Figure 1.8**

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Grade 8 sample questions, 1988 and 1998**
**Content area: *Political processes***

| | Percentage of students | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 1988 | | 1998 |
| People in the United States elect their government officials by | | | |
| Ⓐ public surveys | 13 | < | 23 |
| Ⓑ television newscasts | 4 | | 4 |
| Ⓒ telegrams | 3 | | 2 |
| ● secret ballots | 81 | > | 70 |
| What person or group has the authority to decide whether a law is constitutional? | | | |
| Ⓐ The President | 12 | < | 16 |
| Ⓑ A governor | 6 | | 5 |
| Ⓒ The Congress | 41 | | 38 |
| ● The Supreme Court | 40 | | 41 |

> 1988 significantly greater than 1998.
< 1988 significantly less than 1998.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

Twelfth-graders were expected to know that the Constitution is the fundamental document upon which the Supreme Court relies to decide cases. In both 1988 and 1998 nearly 8 out of 10 did, as seen in the first question in Figure 1.9 below.

Students were also expected to understand the interdependence of decisions made by the various branches and levels of government. The second question asks about the interdependence between state and national governments in the building of interstate highways. Just over half of twelfth-grade students in each year knew the answer.

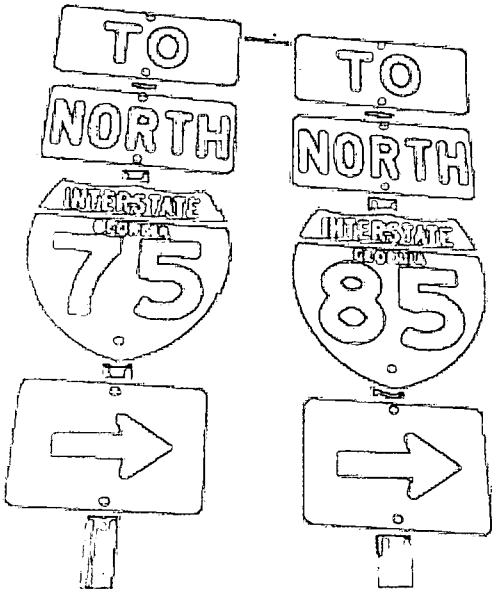
## Figure 1.9

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Grade 12 sample questions, 1988 and 1998**
**Content area: *Political processes***

| | Percentage of students | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1988 | 1998 |
| Which of the following documents is a major basis for Supreme Court cases? | | |
| Ⓐ Declaration of Independence | 10 | 11 |
| ● United States Constitution | 78 | 79 |
| Ⓒ Mayflower Compact | 3 | 4 |
| Ⓓ Emancipation Proclamation | 8 | 6 |
| Which of the following activities is an example of cooperation between state and national governments? | | |
| Ⓐ Printing money | 8 | 10 |
| ● Building interstate highways | 54 | 54 |
| Ⓒ Collecting and delivering mail | 23 | 20 |
| Ⓓ Making treaties | 15 | 15 |

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.



## Rights, Responsibilities, and the Law

The fourth content area, *Rights, responsibilities, and the law*, covers such topics as the rights and liberties guaranteed by the Constitution, the judicial process, the purposes of laws, the responsibilities of citizens to obey the law and to participate in civic affairs, and the right to dissent. (Brief descriptions of the repeated questions and student performance in 1988 and 1998 are displayed in Appendix C, under content code "4").

In the first sample question in Figure 1.10 below, most fourth-graders in both 1988 and 1998 knew that a judge is in charge of a courtroom. But as the next question shows, only about one-third of the students understood the due process right to a jury trial for all criminal defendants, even if there were eyewitnesses to the crime. There was a significant increase in the percentage of students who thought that the defendant need not be given a jury trial.

### Figure 1.10

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Grade 4 sample questions, 1988 and 1998**
**Content area: *Rights, responsibilities, and the law***

| The person who is in charge of a courtroom is called a | Percentage of students 1988 | | 1998 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ⓐ juror | 3 | | 3 |
| Ⓑ lawyer | 5 | | 4 |
| Ⓒ defendant | 3 | | 2 |
| ● judge | 89 | | 91 |
| Suppose you are walking down the street and you see a man run up to a woman and take her purse. Just then a police officer rushes up, arrests the man, and takes him off to jail. Since you and the police officer both saw this man rob the woman, should the man be given a trial by jury if he wants it? | | | |
| Ⓐ No, he is guilty and should not be given a trial by jury. | 25 | < | 33 |
| ● Yes, he should be given a trial by jury if he wants one. | 34 | | 31 |
| Ⓒ It depends on whether or not he hurt the woman. | 10 | | 10 |
| Ⓓ It depends on how much he stole. | 5 | | 4 |
| Ⓔ I don't know. | 25 | | 21 |

< 1988 significantly less than 1998.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

The first three questions shown in Figure 1.11 were part of a 10-question set for grade 8 on the legality of different forms of dissent. Three quarters of eighth-graders knew that it is legal to write letters of protest to authorities. An even higher percentage knew that it is illegal not to pay part of their taxes, but there was a slight decline between 1988 and 1998. More eighth-graders in 1998 were familiar with the idea that participating in a boycott is a legal activity than were their counterparts in 1988.

## Figure 1.11

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Grade 8 sample questions, 1988 and 1998**
**Content area: *Rights, responsibilities, and the law***

| Questions 15–17 are based on the following. | Percentage of students | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 1988 | | 1998 |
| There are many ways that U.S. citizens can legitimately oppose laws or actions they believe to be unjust. Which of the following are legal ways for U.S. citizens to oppose laws or the actions of officials and which are not legal? | | | |
| 15. Writing letters of protest to authorities | | | |
| ● Legal | 78 | | 77 |
| Ⓑ NOT legal | 11 | | 11 |
| Ⓒ I don't know. | 11 | | 12 |
| 16. Not paying a portion of their taxes | | | |
| Ⓐ Legal | 6 | < | 11 |
| ● NOT legal | 87 | > | 84 |
| Ⓒ I don't know. | 6 | | 6 |
| 17. Participating in a boycott | | | |
| ● Legal | 51 | < | 60 |
| Ⓑ NOT legal | 31 | > | 24 |
| Ⓒ I don't know. | 18 | | 16 |
| Does Congress have the right to pass a law to establish a national church? | | | |
| Ⓐ Yes | 19 | | 23 |
| ● No | 63 | > | 58 |
| Ⓒ I don't know. | 17 | | 19 |

> 1988 significantly greater than 1998.
< 1988 significantly less than 1998.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

The fourth question in Figure 1.11 tested whether eighth-graders were familiar with the fundamental First Amendment freedom of religion. As shown, just under two-thirds of the 1988 sample answered correctly. The number slipped five percentage points, to 58 percent, in 1998.

Judging by the questions given in the special study, twelfth-graders have a very good sense of their constitutional rights. A glance at Table C.3 in Appendix C of this report reveals that 80 percent or more of twelfth-graders in both 1988 and 1998 knew the answers to 14 of the 20 questions in the *Rights, responsibilities, and the law* content area. Eight of the 20 questions were answered correctly by 90 percent or more of the students. Moreover, performance was fairly consistent over time. On two of the fourteen questions, both related to criminal rights, performance declined by a statistically significant amount between 1988 and 1998, but on one of these the drop was less than 3 percentage points.

The two questions in Figure 1.12 were both designed to measure students' understanding of the Constitution and individual rights. In the first, students were asked to identify the fact that the first 10 amendments to the Constitution focus on individual liberties. Over 90 percent of students answered correctly in both 1988 and 1998. The second question was the most difficult, dealing with individual rights. Just under two-thirds of students recognized that the guarantee of freedom of religion is found in the First Amendment to the Constitution. In neither question was there any significant change over time.

## Figure 1.12

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Grade 12 sample questions, 1988 and 1998**
**Content area: *Rights, responsibilities, and the law***

| Most of the first ten amendments to the United States Constitution deal with | Percentage of students | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1988 | 1998 |
| ● individual rights | 92 | 94 |
| Ⓑ the method of electing the President | 3 | 2 |
| Ⓒ the taxing powers of the federal government | 2 | 2 |
| Ⓓ the powers of the Supreme Court | 3 | 2 |
| **The First Amendment to the Constitution guarantees** | | |
| Ⓐ the right of all citizens to vote | 23 | 22 |
| Ⓑ the right to education | 6 | 4 |
| ● freedom of religion | 63 | 66 |
| Ⓓ freedom from slavery | 8 | 7 |

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

## Summary

This chapter presented the overall performance of students at grades 4, 8, and 12, and the performance of students by gender and by race/ethnicity. Sample questions from each of the four content areas defined by the 1988 *Civics Objectives* were presented.

- Overall, there was a small increase in the performance of fourth-graders between 1988 and 1998, a small decrease in the performance of eighth-graders, and no significant difference in the performance of twelfth-graders.
- Fourth-grade males had a higher percentage of correct responses in 1998 than in 1988, while twelfth-grade males had a lower percentage correct in 1998 than in 1988.
- The percentage of correct responses increased in 1998 for white students in grade 4 and decreased for Hispanic students in grade 12. White students consistently achieved a higher percentage correct than either black or Hispanic students in both 1988 and 1998 at all three grade levels.

# CHAPTER 2

# Trends in Civics Topics Studied

## Overview

Student performance in most academic subject areas is generally associated with the amount of time spent on the topic.[1] Has the amount of time students indicated spending on various civics topics changed over 10 years? Has the amount of coursework taken in civics topics changed for high school students? Are there differences by grade or type of school? Information bearing on these questions is presented in this chapter. The chapter that follows examines trends in instructional practices and out-of-school contexts for learning. Students sampled for both the 1988 and 1998 assessments responded to a student questionnaire in addition to answering the civics content questions. Using the same questionnaire makes possible comparisons across the 10-year time span.

[1] For evidence specifically about civics education, see Niemi, R.G., & Junn, J. (1998). *Civic education: What makes students learn.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

### Trends in the Frequency of Social Studies/Civics Classes and Years of Study

Table 2.1 displays the frequency of social studies classes reported by fourth-grade students in both 1988 and 1998. Almost half of the fourth-graders in 1988 reported having social studies instruction every day, compared to 39 percent

**Table 2.1**

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**Percentage of students reporting the frequency of social studies class by type of school, grade 4: 1988 and 1998**

| How often do you usually have social studies class in school? | Percentage of students | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Daily | | 3–4 times a week | | 1–2 times a week | | Less than once a week | | Never/hardly ever | |
| | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 |
| Total | 49 > | 39 | 23 < | 30 | 15 | 18 | 5 | 5 | 9 | 8 |
| Public | 47 | 37 | 23 | 30 | 15 | 19 | 5 | 6 | 10 | 8 |
| Nonpublic | 61 | 54 | 21 | 29 | 11 | 13 | 6 | 2 | 0 | 2 |

>1988 significantly greater than 1998.
<1988 significantly less than 1998.

NOTE: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

## Table 2.2

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**Percentage of students reporting they studied American government or civics by grade levels, grades 8 and 12: 1988 and 1998**

| *Studied American government or civics in the following grades:* | Yes 1988 | | Yes 1998 | No 1988 | | No 1998 | Don't know 1988 | | Don't know 1998 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Grade 8** | | | | | | | | | |
| 5th grade | 27 | < | 35 | 51 | > | 39 | 22 | < | 26 |
| 6th grade | 35 | < | 42 | 46 | > | 38 | 18 | | 20 |
| 7th grade | 54 | < | 60 | 35 | > | 27 | 12 | | 13 |
| 8th grade | 78 | | 81 | 12 | | 9 | 10 | | 10 |
| **Grade 12** | | | | | | | | | |
| 9th grade | 44 | | 36 | 50 | | 57 | 6 | | 7 |
| 10th grade | 31 | | 35 | 64 | | 59 | 5 | | 6 |
| 11th grade | 51 | | 50 | 45 | | 45 | 4 | | 5 |
| 12th grade | 61 | < | 71 | 35 | > | 25 | 4 | | 3 |

>1988 significantly greater than 1998.
<1988 significantly less than 1998.

NOTE: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

of the fourth-graders in 1998. Thirty percent of the fourth-graders in 1998 indicated having social studies three to four times a week, compared to 23 percent in 1988. This difference indicates a trend over the decade toward less frequent social studies instruction at grade 4. Note that despite this trend, the results in Chapter 1 indicated that fourth-graders in 1998 had higher percentages of correct responses on the assessment than did fourth-graders in 1988.

There was little difference in the percentages of fourth-grade students in 1988 and 1998 who indicated that they had social studies less than once a week (5 percent) or never/hardly ever (9 and 8 percent in 1988 and 1998, respectively). Daily instruction in social studies was indicated by higher percentages of students attending nonpublic schools than public schools in both 1988 and 1998.

For grades 8 and 12, students were asked how frequently they studied American government or civics in terms of the number of previous grades in which they had been instructed in the subject.[2] Table 2.2 presents the results of these survey questions for grades 8 and 12. For the students in grade 8, about the same percentage (approximately 80 percent) were taking civics in grade 8 in 1988 as in 1998. Some differences emerged, however, for the eighth-graders in terms of previous years in which they took civics. Higher percentages of eighth-graders in 1998 reported

[2] For high school only, data on the amount of coursework in civics and American government can be found in Legum, S., Caldwell, N., Davis, B., Haynes, J., Hill, T.J., Litavecz, S., Rizzo, L., Rust, K., & Vo., N. (1998). *The 1994 high school transcript study tabulations: Comparative data on credits earned and demographics for 1994, 1990, 1987, and 1982 high school graduates* — REVISED (NCES 98-532). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

having studied civics or American government in grades 5, 6, and 7 than did their counterparts in 1988. In general, the percentages of students who answered "yes" to having studied civics increased at each grade, from 35 percent in the fifth grade to 60 percent in the seventh grade within the 1998 group.

With respect to grade 12, Table 2.2 indicates that a higher percentage (71 percent) of twelfth-graders in 1998 said they were studying American government or civics in their current grade than did their 1988 counterparts (61 percent). However, the frequency of studying civics topics in grades 9, 10, and 11 did not differ between the 1988 and 1998 groups. For both groups, for example, about half of the students reported studying civics in their junior year of high school, and about one-third reported studying civics in their sophomore year. The assessment results in Chapter 1 indicated no significant performance difference between twelfth-graders in 1988 and 1998.

The larger numbers of students reporting that they had studied civics or American government in a number of grades is consistent with transcript data from a study[3] that showed that an increased number of high school graduates had taken civics coursework. Although large numbers of grade school and high school students do volunteer community service, various individual authors and national commissions have argued that Americans, especially youths, have become disengaged from public life. More and improved civic education is often cited as one of the appropriate responses.[4]

## Trends in Amount of Study of Selected Topics in American Government or Civics

Students in grades 4, 8, and 12 were asked to indicate whether they studied a series of civics topics "A lot," "Some," or "Not at all." The topics listed in the survey differed for fourth-, eighth-, and twelfth-graders. The topics for grade 4 are presented in Table 2.3, along with the percentages of students from 1988 and 1998 who selected each option for amount studied.

In grade 4, none of the six topics was studied "A lot" by a majority of students. Almost half of the students in 1988 and 1998 studied their community "A lot," and about a third of the students in both cohorts indicated studying "A lot" about the President/leaders of the country and about the rights and responsibilities of citizens. Judges and the courts were studied least.

Comparing fourth-graders' responses in 1988 and 1998, a significant increase in the amount of study devoted to several topics in civics is evident. A greater percentage of students in 1998 reported studying three topics "A lot": judges and courts, the President and leaders of our country, and elections and voting. In addition, a smaller percentage of students in 1998 than in 1988 indicated that they did not study the rights and responsibilities of citizens. The finding that fourth-graders were devoting more time to studying these topics in 1998 than in 1988 may be seen as congruent with fourth-graders' better performance overall on the civics assessment in 1998.

[3] Ibid.

[4] National Commission on Civic Renewal. *A nation of spectators: how civic disengagement weakens America and what we can do about it.* College Park, MD: Author.

## Table 2.3

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**Percentage of students who reported how much they studied selected civics topics, grade 4: 1988 and 1998**

| *How much have you studied the following topics in American government or civics?* | Percentage of students | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | A lot | | | Some | | | Not at all | | |
| | 1988 | | 1998 | 1988 | | 1998 | 1988 | | 1998 |
| How laws are made | 21 | | 24 | 52 | | 54 | 27 | | 23 |
| About judges and courts | 7 | < | 13 | 33 | < | 38 | 60 | > | 49 |
| President and leaders of our country | 33 | < | 37 | 48 | | 49 | 19 | > | 14 |
| Elections and voting | 13 | < | 19 | 47 | < | 54 | 39 | > | 27 |
| Your community | 47 | | 48 | 40 | | 42 | 12 | | 10 |
| The rights and responsibilities of citizens | 27 | | 33 | 47 | | 48 | 25 | > | 20 |

>1988 significantly greater than 1998.
<1988 significantly less than 1998.

NOTE: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

Topics studied by students in grade 8 are presented in Table 2.4 and those for students in grade 12 are presented in Table 2.5. Students in grade 12 were asked to include topics studied since the ninth grade.

Of the 10 topics offered to eighth-graders, shown in Table 2.4, the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights were studied "A lot" by a majority (56 percent) in both the 1988 and 1998 groups. Three topics were studied "A lot" by 40 to 49 percent of eighth-graders in both assessment years: rights and responsibilities of citizens; political parties, elections and voting; and Congress. The topic students indicated they studied least for both 1988 and 1998 was principles of democratic government.

The student data for grade 8 displayed striking consistency in the amount of study each topic received in 1988 compared with 1998. Across the 10 curriculum topics, only one in the 30 comparisons in Table 2.4 showed any difference across years.

Table 2.5 displays the percentage data for topics studied by students in grade 12. The pattern of topics studied is similar to that of grade 8. The U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights is the single topic studied "A lot" by the majority of students in both 1988 and 1998. Topics studied "A lot" by 40 to 47 percent of twelfth-graders included: Rights and responsibilities of citizens, political parties, elections, and voting; how laws are made; and Congress. The percentages of students in grade 12 who selected the "Not at all" option were very low (10 percent or lower) across all topics.

Similar to the patterns in the grade 8 data, there is no difference noted for grade 12 between the 1988 and 1998 students in terms of amount of time studying any of the 10 civics topics in the table.

## Table 2.4

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**Percentage of students who reported how much they studied selected civics topics, grade 8: 1988 and 1998**

| *How much have you studied the following topics in American government or civics?* | Percentage of students | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | A lot | | Some | | Not at all | |
| | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 |
| U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights | 56 | 56 | 39 | 40 | 5 | 5 |
| Congress | 41 | 42 | 50 | 50 | 9 | 8 |
| How laws are made | 36 | 40 | 53 | 50 | 11 | 10 |
| The court system | 28 | 29 | 51 | 54 | 21 | 17 |
| President and the cabinet | 37 | 35 | 49 | 50 | 15 | 15 |
| Political parties, elections, and voting | 42 | 46 | 48 | 45 | 10 | 9 |
| State and local government | 30 | 35 | 54 | 52 | 16 | 13 |
| Principles of democratic government | 21 | 19 | 50 | 54 | 30 | 27 |
| Other forms of government | 21 | 24 | 60 | 60 | 19 | 17 |
| Rights and responsibilities of citizens | 45 | 48 | 42 | 42 | 13 > | 10 |

> 1988 significantly greater than 1998.

NOTE: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

## Table 2.5

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Percentage of students who reported how much they studied selected civics topics, grade 12: 1988 and 1998**

| *Since the beginning of ninth grade, how much have you studied the following topics in American government or civics?* | Percentage of students | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | A lot | | Some | | Not at all | |
| | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 |
| U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights | 52 | 53 | 45 | 45 | 3 | 3 |
| Congress | 43 | 46 | 53 | 51 | 4 | 4 |
| How laws are made | 40 | 43 | 54 | 52 | 6 | 5 |
| The court system | 36 | 39 | 56 | 56 | 8 | 5 |
| President and the cabinet | 39 | 42 | 56 | 53 | 6 | 5 |
| Political parties, elections, and voting | 44 | 46 | 51 | 50 | 5 | 4 |
| State and local government | 35 | 39 | 58 | 55 | 7 | 6 |
| Principles of democratic government | 31 | 35 | 59 | 57 | 10 | 8 |
| Other forms of government | 26 | 30 | 65 | 64 | 9 | 7 |
| Rights and responsibilities of citizens | 45 | 47 | 50 | 48 | 5 | 5 |

NOTE: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

Thus there was little change between 1988 and 1998 in the amount of time spent studying the various civics topics at either grade 8 or grade 12. In addition, the same topics are studied in almost the same amounts, although coverage is more complete by grade 12 (note the generally low percentages in the "not at all" column in Table 2.5). This pattern was evident in the 1988 national civics assessment and the cautionary note sounded in the report card published in 1990 bears repeating:

> ...it is important for educators to examine what is being taught and how it is being taught. Repetitious instruction from one grade to the next may reduce the benefits of civics instruction—or, even worse, diminish students' interest in the subject. As an alternative, instructional approaches that build on students' existing knowledge and understandings from grade to grade, and that incorporate increasingly challenging analytic tasks, are more likely to sustain students' interest and maximize what they have studied in previous grades.[5]

The framework specifications for the 1998 NAEP civics assessment also recognized this point by suggesting changes in the distribution of assessment time by grade. In addition, while it is difficult to make precise comparisons between the 1988 and 1998 main civics assessments because they were organized differently, the 1998 assessment had a considerably different topical emphasis. Most readily apparent is the emphasis in 1998 on the relationship of the United States to other nations and to world affairs.[6]

## Trends in the Amount of Civics Coursework Completed

Twelfth-grade students were asked to indicate the total number of years of coursework they had completed in American government or civics since ninth grade. The results appear in Table 2.6. Sixty-two percent of twelfth-graders in 1988 reported having taken one or more years of American government or civics in high school. A similar percentage (60 percent) of twelfth-graders in 1998 had taken one or more years of the subject. The course-taking pattern is basically the same for 1998 as it was in 1988 with one exception: a lower percentage of students in 1998 (5 percent) reported having taken no civics or American government compared to the 1988 figure of 8 percent.

**Table 2.6**

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Percentage of students by number of years of civics studied, grade 12: 1988 and 1998**

| *Since the beginning of ninth grade, how much American government or civics coursework have you completed up to now?* | Percentage of students | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **1988** | | **1998** |
| None | 8 | > | 5 |
| Less than one-half year | 6 | | 5 |
| One-half year | 16 | | 19 |
| Between one-half and one year | 9 | | 11 |
| One year | 21 | | 24 |
| More than one year | 41 | | 36 |

>1988 significantly greater than 1998.
NOTE: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.
SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

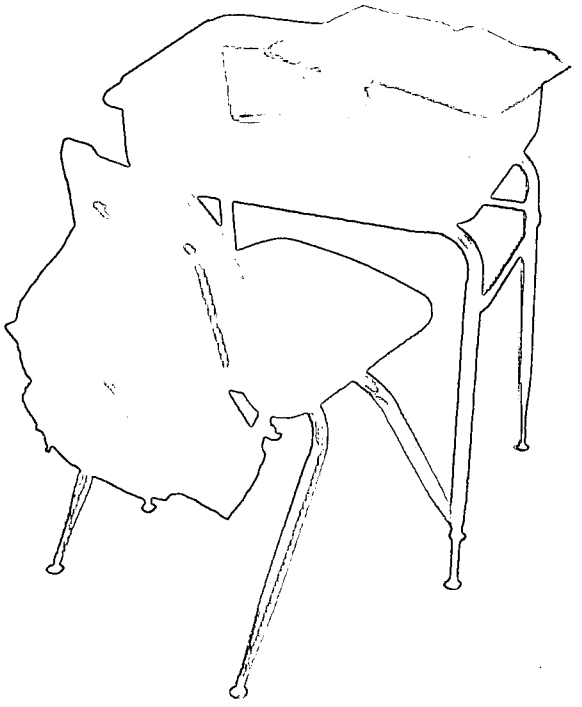
[5] Anderson, L., Jenkins, L.B., Lerning, J., MacDonald, W.B., Mullis, I.V.S., Turner, M.J. & Wooster, J.S. (1990). *The civics report card—trends in achievement from 1976 to 1988 at ages 13 and 17—achievement in 1988 at grades 4, 8, and 12.* Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

[6] In 1998, this area was intended to be 10, 14, and 20 percent of the assessment time at grades 4, 8, and 12 respectively. In 1988, there was little emphasis on these topics.

## Summary

This chapter focused on civics topics studied and courses taken, comparing the populations assessed in 1988 with those assessed in 1998. The main findings included:

- A trend was noted toward less frequent social studies classes in grade 4, with 49 percent of students in 1988 reporting daily classes compared to 39 percent in 1998. Despite this trend, the 1998 grade 4 students outperformed the 1988 grade 4 students on the assessment.
- Higher percentages of eighth-graders in 1998 reported having studied civics or American government in grades 5, 6, and 7 than did their counterparts in 1988.
- A higher percentage (71 percent) of twelfth-graders in 1998 said they were studying American government or civics in their current grade than did their counterparts (61 percent) in 1988. About half of the students in both 1988 and 1998 reported studying civics or American government in their junior year of high school, and about a third reported studying these fields in their sophomore year.
- In three of the six civics curriculum topics surveyed (elections and voting, President/leaders of the country, and judges and courts), the fourth-graders in 1998 reported studying these topics more than their counterparts did in 1988.
- For both eighth- and twelfth-graders, the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights is the single topic studied "A lot" by a majority of students in both 1988 and 1998.
- The amount of time spent studying the various civics topics surveyed at both grades 8 and 12 is similar and has not changed between 1988 and 1998.



CHAPTER 3

# Instructional Practices and Out-of-School Contexts

## Overview

Student learning in civics, as in other subjects, is influenced by many factors both in and out of school. Within school, instructional practices directly affect student interaction with civics content. Beyond the classroom, students' home environment and extracurricular activities can support or detract from civics learning. Bridging the two environments, especially at the lower grades, is homework. Assigning homework is an instructional practice used by many teachers to enhance learning, yet the effective completion of homework assignments often can rest most heavily upon the home environment.

This chapter examines the results of a selection of student background questions addressing instructional practices and out-of-school contexts for learning civics. Students who participated in the 1988 and 1998 assessments answered the same set of background questions. As in the previous chapter, the results reported here compare student responses to the questions in 1988 with student responses in 1998, but they do not include associated performance data.[1] Nevertheless, the information should be of use to those interested in whether and how civic education has changed over the span of a decade.

[1] For a study that does relate instructional practices and the home environment to student performance on the 1988 NAEP civics assessment, see Niemi, R.G. and Junn, J. (1998). *Civic education: What makes students learn?* New Haven: Yale University Press.

## Civics Instructional Practices

One approach to improving achievement scores across all curricular areas focuses on instructional methods. Whatever the content, it is argued, learning will be enhanced if certain kinds of instructional approaches are used in preference to others. Recently, more active and "authentic" approaches have been emphasized in preference to passive methods.[2] Cooperative learning methods, which involve teachers working with small groups of students and students working with each other in groups, have frequently been promoted.[3] Higher order thinking skills, which include analyzing and organizing material and presenting it both orally and in writing, have been advocated for use in the classroom and for homework.[4]

Instructional practices have sometimes been classified along four dimensions: individual versus group instruction; kinds of materials used; activities undertaken; and methods of assessment.[5] All four of these dimensions were addressed by background questions in the NAEP

[2] Newmann, F.M., and Wehlage, G.G. (1995). *Successful school restructuring: A report to the public and educators.* Madison, WI: Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools.

[3] Slavin, R.E. (1996). Research on cooperative learning and achievement: What we know, what we need to know. *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 21(1), 43–69.

[4] Murnane, R.J., and Levy, F. (1996). *Teaching the New Basic Skills: Principles for Educating Children to Thrive in a Changing Economy.* New York: Free Press.

[5] Henke, R.R., Chen, X., & Goldman, G. (1999). What happens in classrooms: Instructional practices in elementary and secondary schools: 1994–95. *Education Statistics Quarterly* 1(2), 7–13.

trend study. An additional question inquired about discussing current events, a topic of special interest for civics instruction.

Students in grades 8 and 12 were asked to report how often their civics teachers engaged them in 10 activities. The 10 activities plus the results of students' responses about the frequency of each activity are presented in Table 3.1 for grade 8 and Table 3.2 for grade 12. Fourth graders were not asked this series of questions.

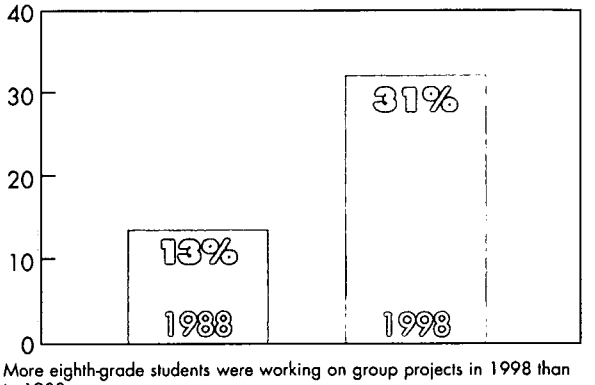
As seen in Tables 3.1 and 3.2, the frequency with which students performed most of these activities did not change significantly between 1988 and 1998. There were, however, a few changes of note. Most notably, it would seem that, at both grades, there was an increase in the assignment of extra reading material and in having students work on group projects.

Among eighth-graders, there was a rise from 1988 to 1998 in the frequency with which their teachers assigned extra reading material. In 1998, they were more likely to assign extra reading at least once or twice a week, and less likely to assign it once or twice a month.

Figure 3.1

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Percentage of students doing group projects at least once a week**




More eighth-grade students were working on group projects in 1998 than in 1988.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

Table 3.1

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Percentage of students reporting how often their teachers use various classroom practices, grade 8: 1988 and 1998**

| *How often has your American government or civics teacher asked you to do each of the following?* | Percentage of students | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Almost every day | | | Once or twice a week | | | Once or twice a month | | | A few times a year | | Never |
| | 1988 | | 1998 | 1988 | | 1998 | 1988 | | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 |
| Read material from textbook | 57 | | 52 | 35 | | 37 | 5 | | 7 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Read extra material not in regular textbook | 10 | < | 13 | 28 | < | 34 | 29 | > | 25 | 15 | 14 | 17 | 14 |
| Memorize the material you have read | 21 | | 22 | 27 | | 26 | 21 | | 24 | 14 | 13 | 17 | 15 |
| Discuss and analyze the material you have read | 58 | | 53 | 28 | | 30 | 7 | < | 10 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 4 |
| Write short answers to questions | 29 | | 31 | 43 | | 43 | 17 | | 17 | 5 | 4 | 6 | 5 |
| Write a report of three or more pages | 3 | | 4 | 7 | | 8 | 31 | | 32 | 35 | 36 | 25 | 20 |
| Work on a group project | 3 | < | 8 | 10 | < | 23 | 28 | < | 37 | 28 | > 21 | 31 | > 11 |
| Give talks about what you are studying | 44 | | 45 | 20 | | 24 | 14 | | 14 | 10 | 8 | 12 | 9 |
| Discuss current events | 30 | | 29 | 39 | | 37 | 18 | | 20 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 6 |
| Take a test or quiz | 13 | | 12 | 56 | > | 49 | 28 | < | 37 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |

> 1988 significantly greater than 1998.
< 1988 significantly less than 1998.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

The shift in the popularity of group projects was even more pronounced. In 1988, 13 percent of students were assigned to work on group projects at least once a week and less than one-half of students were assigned to work on group projects at least once or twice a month. In 1998, nearly one-third of students worked on group projects at least once a week and more than two-thirds worked on them at least once a month.

Finally, eighth-graders were given tests or quizzes less often in 1998 than in 1988. The percentage of students whose teachers gave them quizzes once or twice a week declined from 56 percent to 49 percent, while the percentage getting tests or quizzes once or twice a month increased from 28 percent to 37 percent.

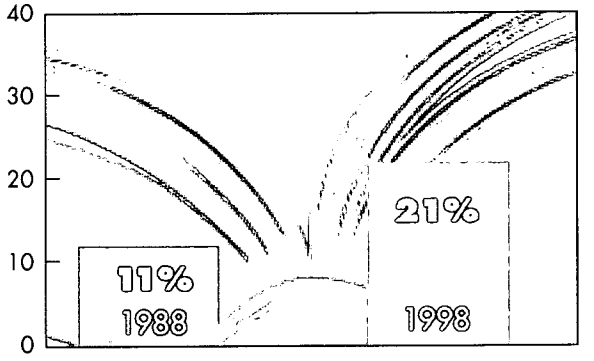
At the twelfth-grade level, nearly twice as many students in 1998 than in 1988 reported being assigned extra reading material almost every day. The percentage having extra reading only once or twice a month or a few times a year decreased from 43 percent to 31 percent.

As at the eighth-grade level, the percentage of twelfth-graders reporting having group project

Figure 3.2

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Percentage of students reading extra material**




Nearly twice as many twelfth-grade students in 1998 as in 1988 reported being assigned extra reading material almost every day.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

Table 3.2

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Percentage of students reporting how often their teachers use various classroom practices, grade 12: 1988 and 1998**

| *How often has your American government or civics teacher asked you to do each of the following?* | Percentage of students: Almost every day | | | Once or twice a week | | | Once or twice a month | | | A few times a year | | | Never | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1988 | | 1998 | 1988 | | 1998 | 1988 | | 1998 | 1988 | | 1998 | 1988 | | 1998 |
| Read material from textbook | 49 | | 48 | 39 | | 37 | 7 | | 8 | 2 | | 3 | 3 | | 5 |
| Read extra material not in regular textbook | 11 | < | 21 | 33 | | 37 | 27 | > | 21 | 16 | > | 10 | 13 | | 11 |
| Memorize the material you have read | 17 | | 20 | 29 | | 31 | 22 | | 22 | 14 | | 12 | 18 | | 16 |
| Discuss and analyze the material you have read | 57 | | 60 | 28 | | 26 | 9 | | 8 | 3 | | 3 | 3 | | 3 |
| Write short answers to questions | 23 | | 27 | 45 | | 43 | 20 | | 20 | 6 | | 5 | 6 | | 6 |
| Write a report of three or more pages | 4 | | 4 | 7 | | 10 | 30 | | 33 | 36 | > | 30 | 23 | | 22 |
| Work on a group project | 5 | < | 11 | 13 | < | 25 | 31 | | 30 | 28 | > | 19 | 23 | > | 15 |
| Give talks about what you are studying | 33 | < | 41 | 18 | | 21 | 17 | | 16 | 14 | > | 11 | 18 | > | 11 |
| Discuss current events | 43 | < | 54 | 37 | > | 28 | 12 | | 11 | 5 | | 3 | 3 | | 3 |
| Take a test or quiz | 13 | | 14 | 66 | | 60 | 19 | | 24 | 1 | | 2 | 1 | | 1 |

> 1988 significantly greater than 1998.
< 1988 significantly less than 1998.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

## Table 3.3

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Percentage of students reporting how often they discuss current events, grade 4: 1988 and 1998**

| *How often do you discuss current events in social studies class?* | Percentage of students | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Almost every day | | Once or twice a week | | | Once or twice a month | | A few times a year | | | Never | |
| | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 |
| | 22 | 26 | 29 | < | 39 | 17 | 15 | 12 | > | 8 | 20 | > 13 |

> 1988 significantly greater than 1998.
< 1988 significantly less than 1998.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

assignments almost every day or once a week rose, while the percentage fell among those never doing group projects or doing them a few times a year. The percentage of twelfth-graders having such assignments almost every day increased from 5 to 11, while the percentage having such assignments once or twice a week rose from 13 to 25. Meanwhile, the percentage never doing group projects or doing them a few times a year fell from 51 to 34. Two other shifts in twelfth-grade instructional practice are also worth noting. Students reported that their teachers were more likely to have them talk about what they were studying and to discuss current events in 1998 than in 1988.

Fourth-grade students were not asked about all the classroom practices shown in Tables 3.1 and 3.2. However, they were asked how often they discussed current events in their social studies class. The results, presented in Table 3.3, show an increase in the frequency of such discussions. Students reported they were more likely to discuss current events once or twice a week in 1998 than in 1988 (39 vs. 29 percent), and were less likely to discuss them only a few times a year (8 vs. 12 percent).

## Out-of-School Contexts

This section will focus on two variables of interest to civics educators: civics homework trends and the availability of newspapers in the home.

Although homework is an integral part of instruction in most schools, its contribution to student learning depends on many factors, including the quality and appropriateness of the assignments, the amount of homework assigned, and the attention given to completed assignments by teachers. Studies indicate that, in general, increased time spent on homework is associated with higher achievement among high school students, with somewhat higher achievement among middle school students, and with no difference in achievement among grade school students. Specifically, assignments of more than one hour of homework per day have been seen to raise achievement among high school students, but not among elementary or junior high school students.[6]

[6] Black, S. (1996). The truth about homework. *American School Board Journal*, 183(10), 48–51.

## Table 3.4

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Percentage of students reporting the amount of time they spend weekly on civics or government homework, grade 12: 1988 and 1998**

| *How much time do you spend weekly on civics or government homework?* | Percentage of students | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Don't do | | None, < 1 hour | | 1–2 hours | | 3–4 hours | | 5+ hours | |
| | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 |
| | 5 | 5 | 43 | 50 | 36 | 33 | 11 | 9 | 3 | 4 |

NOTE: Some of the data in this table are the result of collapsing the original response options in the question. The question contained the following choices: I usually haven't had homework assigned; I have had homework but I usually haven't done it; less than 1 hour; 1 hour; 2 hours; 3 hours; 4 hours; 5 hours or more.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

Grade 12 students were asked how much time they spent on civics or government homework each week. These results are presented in Table 3.4.

According to the reports of twelfth-graders, there were no significant changes in the amount of time spent on civics homework between 1988 and 1998.

The availability of reading materials in the home is related to student literacy and may be related to academic achievement generally.[7] Students participating in the civics assessment at grades 4, 8, and 12 were asked about the types of reading materials available in the home. Of particular interest to the civics and current events discussions in the classroom are the results of the question: Does your family get a newspaper regularly? The percentages of students responding "yes," "no," and "I don't know" to this question are shown in Table 3.5.

The data show a decline in the percentage of families of eighth-and twelfth-graders receiving newspapers. Between 1988 and 1998, the percentage of eighth-graders reporting getting a newspaper fell from 77 percent to 71 percent, and the percentage of twelfth-graders fell from 82 to 75.[8]

## Table 3.5

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Percentage of students reporting receiving newspapers in the home, grades 4, 8, and 12: 1988 and 1998**

| *Does your family get a newspaper regularly?* | Percentage of students | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Yes | | | No | | | I don't know. | | | |
| | 1988 | | 1998 | 1988 | | 1998 | 1988 | | 1998 |
| Grade 4 | 69 | | 68 | 24 | | 24 | 7 | | 9 |
| Grade 8 | 77 | > | 71 | 22 | | 25 | 2 | < | 5 |
| Grade 12 | 82 | > | 75 | 17 | < | 24 | 1 | | 1 |

> 1988 significantly greater than 1998.
< 1988 significantly less than 1998.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

[7] Greenwald, E.A., Persky, H.R., Campbell, J.R., & Mazzeo, J. (1999). *The NAEP 1998 writing report card for the nation and the states.* Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

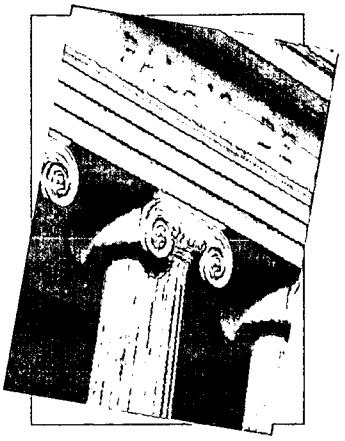
[8] This parallels a national decline in newspaper circulation that has been underway since the late 1940s, and continued unabated between 1988 and 1998. See Stanley, H.W. and Niemi, R.G. (2000). *Vital statistics on American politics 1999–2000.* Washington, DC: CQ Press.

## Summary

This chapter contains data from student background questionnaires covering classroom practices and home contexts related to civics learning. The variables discussed might also be related to student performance in civics, but due to the narrowed range of test questions used in 1998 compared to 1988, performance data comparing 1988 with 1998 have not been included. Highlights of the findings include the following:

- **Extra Reading Material:** The frequency with which students at grades 8 and 12 reported being assigned extra reading material increased between 1988 and 1998.
- **Group Projects:** The percentage of eighth- and twelfth-graders who reported being assigned to work on group projects at least once or twice a week rose substantially between 1988 and 1998.
- **Discussing Current Events:** The percentage of fourth-graders who indicated discussing current events in their social studies class at least once a week increased.
- **Homework:** The amount of civics homework twelfth-graders reported doing did not change significantly over the period.
- **Newspapers in the Home:** Between 1988 and 1998, the percentage of eighth-graders and twelfth-graders who reported their families regularly got a newspaper fell.

# APPENDIX A



# Overview of Procedures Used in the 1988 and 1998 NAEP Civics Special Study

This appendix provides information about the methods and procedures used in NAEP's 1988–1998 civics assessment.

This NAEP report is based on results from nine civics exercise blocks, three each at grades 4, 8, and 12. These blocks of questions came from the 1988 civics assessment and were based on the framework used to develop that assessment. They were readministered to a subsample of students at each grade in 1998, making possible a 10-year comparison of performance on certain of the 1988 items.

The 1988 tasks required students to read and answer multiple-choice questions based on a variety of materials. The assessment was designed to evaluate students' ability to locate specific information, make inferences based on an information passage or graphical stimulus (e.g., a political cartoon), or perform more analytical or evaluative tasks such as distinguishing opinion from fact or defending a position. The assessment administered at grade 4 included 51 questions, at grade 8, 77 questions, and at grade 12, 74 questions. The number of unique questions administered is less than the sum from the three grades because some questions appeared at more than one grade. Specifically, 16 questions were shared by the grade 4 and grade 8 assessments, and 27 questions were shared by the grade 8 and grade 12 assessments. This overlap is a function of the design of the 1988 assessment in which a number of cross-grade blocks were developed.

The 1988 civics assessment was administered in two waves, winter and spring, in order to provide data to bridge both backward and forward in time to the new assessment schedule. Because the 1998 assessment was offered only in the winter, only half of the 1988 data (the winter portion) could be used for comparison with the 1998 results. This led to smaller than optimal samples for the comparisons.

## The Design of the 1988 and 1998 Civics Special Study

To obtain the 1998 data for the special study, NAEP re-administered three test booklets—one at each grade—that had been given as part of the 1988 civics assessment. Following normal NAEP practices, the 1988 test booklets had been assembled using blocks of questions. In 1988, three 10-minute blocks of questions were developed for grade 4. These three blocks were used to construct a single test booklet, and it was this booklet that was used again in 1998. Seven 15-minute blocks of questions were developed for each of grades 8 and 12. The blocks, in various combinations, were used to assemble seven grade 8 test booklets and seven grade 12 test booklets. Each booklet contained three blocks of questions for a total

of 45 minutes of testing time. With the advice of the 1998 civics standing committee (Appendix D), one of the grade 8 booklets and one of the grade 12 booklets were selected for use in the study. Thus, although the special study blocks had appeared in different positions in different 1988 test booklets, they appeared in only one position in 1998 because of the use of a single test booklet. Analysis of 1988 block-position effects in grades 8 and 12 suggested that combining blocks that had originally appeared in different positions in different booklets would not distort the 1988–1998 civics comparisons. Another administration difference between the two assessments could have affected results as well. The booklets at all three grades also included one block of general background questions and one block of background questions related to social studies (grades 4 and 8) or civics (grade 12). For the special study, the test booklets were administered intact for fourth graders, that is, exactly as they appeared in 1988.[1]

## Sampling and Data Collection

Sampling and data collection activities for the 1998 civics assessment were conducted by Westat, Inc. The data collection for all three grades was carried out in the winter and spring of 1998 (January–March). The data collection activities for the 1988 assessment occurred during the winter and spring (January 4–May 13) of 1988. However, only the winter (January 4–March 11) 1988 data were used in the special study.

As with all NAEP national assessments, the 1988 and 1998 samples included both public and nonpublic school students. The sample was selected using a stratified, three-stage sampling plan. The first stage included defining geographic primary sampling units (PSUs), which are typically groups of contiguous counties, but sometimes a single county; classifying the PSUs into strata defined by region and community type; and then selecting PSUs with probability proportional to size. In the second stage, both public and nonpublic schools were selected within each PSU that was selected at the first stage. The third stage involved randomly selecting students within a school for participation. A small number of students selected for participation was excluded by school personnel because of limited English proficiency or severe disability.

The student sample sizes for the civics special study are presented in Table A.1. The differences in the sample sizes in 1988 are accounted for by the fact that one test booklet was used in grade 4 in 1988, whereas grade 8 and 12 had seven booklets and the blocks used in the special study appeared in six of them (not necessarily together). Therefore the total numbers of students are greater in grades 8 and 12 than in grade 4.

Table A.1

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**NAEP civics special study sample sizes, grades 4, 8, and 12: 1988 and 1998**

| | Grade 4 | Grade 8 | Grade 12 |
|---|---|---|---|
| ***Trend assessment*** | | | |
| 1998 assessed sample size | 2,088 | 2,055 | 2,193 |
| Excluded | 176 | 93 | 103 |
| 1988 assessed sample size | 1,059 | 2,416 | 2,465 |
| Excluded | 71 | 135 | 95 |

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

[1] For additional information on the design of the 1988 civics assessment, see Johnson, E.G., Zwick, R., et.al. (1990). *Focusing the new design: The NAEP 1988 technical report.* Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service, National Assessment of Educational Progress.

Table A.2

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Weighted participation rates (percentages) by grade and subject type, 1998 NAEP civics special study reporting samples**

| Participation | Percentage |
|---|---|
| **Grade 4** | |
| School participation before substitution | 81 |
| School participation after substitution | 90 |
| Student participation | 95 |
| Overall participation rate before substitution | 77 |
| Overall participation rate after substitution | 86 |
| **Grade 8** | |
| School participation before substitution | 77 |
| School participation after substitution | 91 |
| Student participation | 92 |
| Overall participation rate before substitution | 71 |
| Overall participation rate after substitution | 84 |
| **Grade 12** | |
| School participation before substitution | 68 |
| School participation after substitution | 83 |
| Student participation | 82 |
| Overall participation rate before substitution | 56 |
| Overall participation rate after substitution | 68 |

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

## Participation Rates

Student and school participation rates are given in Table A.2. Sampled schools that refused to participate were substituted with similar schools, usually from the same PSU. School cooperation rates are shown both before and after replacement. The student participation rates represent the percentage of students assessed of those invited to be assessed and includes those assessed in follow-up sessions when necessary. In NAEP, there has been a consistent pattern of lower participation rates for older students. The participation rate in the 1998 special study for grade 12 students was 82 percent, compared with 95 percent for grade 4 students and 92 percent for grade 8 students. School participation rates (the percentage of sampled schools that participated in the assessment) have also typically been lowest at grade 12. As is shown in Table A.2, the school participation rate was 90 percent for the fourth grade, 91 percent for the eighth grade, and 83 percent for the twelfth grade.

The overall response rate before substitution (the product of the weighted school participation rate before substitution and the weighted student participation rate) for grade 12 fell below the NCES reporting target of 70 percent. As a result, the background characteristics of both responding schools and all schools in the writing, national civics, and civics trend target set were compared to determine whether there was bias evident. The similarities in the distribution lend support to the conclusion that the data are not seriously biased by these low response rates.

The effect of participation rates on student performance, however, is unclear. Students may choose not to participate in NAEP for many reasons, such as a desire to attend regular classes so as not to miss important instruction, or fear of not doing well on NAEP. Similarly, there are a variety of reasons for which various schools do not participate. The sampling weights and nonresponse adjustments, described later in this appendix in the section "Weighting and Variance Estimation," provide an approximate statistical adjustment for nonparticipation. However, the effect of some school and student nonparticipation may have an undetermined effect on results.

## Students with Disabilities (SD) and Limited English Proficient (LEP) Students

It is NAEP's intent to assess all selected students from the target population. Therefore, every effort is made to ensure that all selected students who are capable of participating in the assessment are assessed. Some students sampled for participation in NAEP can be excluded from

## Table A.3

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Students with disabilities and limited English proficient students excluded from the NAEP civics special study: National sample, public and nonpublic schools combined: 1998**

| Students who are: | Grade 4 | | Grade 8 | | Grade 12 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number of students | Weighted percentage of students sampled | Number of students | Weighted percentage of students sampled | Number of students | Weighted percentage of students sampled |
| | SD and LEP students | | | | | |
| Excluded | 176 | 6.7 | 93 | 4.4 | 103 | 3.7 |
| | Students with disabilities | | | | | |
| Excluded | 123 | 5.3 | 72 | 3.6 | 91 | 3.5 |
| | Limited English proficient students | | | | | |
| Excluded | 60 | 1.6 | 27 | 0.9 | 15 | 0.4 |

NOTE: The combined SD/LEP portion of the table is not a sum of the separate SD and LEP portions because some students were identified as both SD and LEP. Such students would be counted separately in the bottom portions, but counted only once in the top portion. Within each portion of the table, percentages may not sum properly due to rounding.

Data for students with disabilities and limited English proficient students were not collected in 1988.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

the sample according to carefully defined criteria. These criteria were revised in 1996 to more clearly communicate a presumption of inclusion except under special circumstances. According to these criteria, students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) were to be included in the 1998 NAEP national assessment except in the following cases:

1. The school's IEP team determined that the student could not participate, OR
2. The student's cognitive functioning was so severely impaired that she or he could not participate.

All LEP students receiving academic instruction in English for three years or more were to be included in the assessment. Those LEP students receiving instruction in English for fewer than three years were to be included unless school staff judged them incapable of participating in the assessment in English.

The reporting samples in the main 1998 national civics assessment used these criteria, with provisions made for accommodations.[2] Specifically, in cases where a student's IEP required that the student be tested with an accommodation or adaptation and stated that the student could not demonstrate his or her knowledge without that accommodation, the student was provided with the appropriate accommodation. The 1998 special study samples reported here used the same inclusion/exclusion criteria as were used for the main assessment. However, in order to keep the 1998 test administration conditions consistent with those of 1988, no accommodations or adaptations were provided for the special study samples.

The 1998 exclusion rates for the students with disabilities (SD) and LEP samples in the

[2] Lutkus, A.D., Weiss, A.R., Campbell, J.R., Mazzeo, J., & Lazer, S. (1999). *NAEP 1998 civics report card for the nation.* Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

civics special study are presented in Table A.3 for all three grades. For calculation of the percentages in Table A.3, the denominator used was the total number of all students who were identified for the assessment, including assessed and excluded students. The columns then show the raw numbers and weighted percentages of SD and LEP students who were excluded from the assessment. The percentages of assessed students who were in the students with disabilities and the limited English proficient categories were not collected for the 1998 special study because the test administration procedures used from the 1988 assessment did not call for the collection of these data. However, the civics special study was conducted in the same schools as the 1998 civics main assessment. Consequently, the identification rates and the percentages of special needs students assessed without accommodations are likely to be comparable to those in Table A.3 of the *1998 Civics Report Card for the Nation.*

## Data Analysis

After the assessment information had been compiled in the NAEP database, the data were weighted according to the sample design and the population structure. The weighting for the samples reflected the probability of selection for each student as a result of the sampling design, adjusted for nonresponse. Through post-stratification, the weighting assured that the representation of certain subpopulations corresponded to figures from the U.S. Census and the Current Population Survey.

Analyses were then conducted to determine the percentage of students who gave various responses to each cognitive and background question for the nation and various subgroups of interest within the nation, and the mean percentage correct score across all questions in a grade. Subtotals were formed separately within each grade level for each of the four civics content areas.

Tables C.1, C.2, and C.3 give the percentage correct for each question by content area in 1988 and 1998 (see Appendix C).

As is the case in most NAEP assessments, the 1998 main NAEP civics assessment was reported in terms of item-response theory (IRT) scale scores. IRT scaling was not employed for the civics special study, however, partly because of the small sample sizes, but more centrally because the questions, at least in the upper grades, were not completely representative of the entire 1988 assessment specifications. The analysis was motivated by a desire to avoid creating a potentially misleading "second scale" for 1988.

The NAEP percentage correct scores for the civics special study and IRT scale scores for most of the remaining subject areas make it possible to examine relationships between students' performance and a variety of background factors measured by NAEP. The fact that a relationship exists between achievement and another variable, however, does not reveal the underlying cause of the relationship, which may be influenced by a number of other variables. Similarly, the civics assessment does not capture the influence of unmeasured variables. The results are most useful when they are considered in combination with other information about the student population and the educational system, such as changes in instruction, changes in the school-age population, and societal demands and expectations.

## Adjustments to the Assessment

One test question each in grade 8 and grade 12 was administered but subsequently excluded from the statistical analyses. In grade 8, a question on the legality of impeachment was excluded because of possible ambiguities in the wording. In grade 12, a question on the "most recent amendment" was excluded because an

amendment passed in the interim invalidated the answer that was correct in 1988.

The content classifications of all the 1988 test questions used in the special study were reviewed for currency and accuracy. The content classifications of some items were changed from those used in the 1988 report card. Comparisons of percentages correct within a content category for 1988 vs 1998 in this report consistently use the most recent classification code.

## NAEP Reporting Groups

This report contains results for the nation and for groups of students within the nation defined by shared characteristics. The subgroups defined by race/ethnicity and gender are defined below.

### Race/Ethnicity

Results are presented for students in different racial/ethnic groups according to the following mutually exclusive categories: white, black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian (including Alaskan Native). Some racial/ethnic results are not reported separately because there were too few students in the group. The data for all students, regardless of whether their racial/ethnic group was reported separately, were included in computing the overall national results.

Two questions from the set of general student background questions were used to determine race/ethnicity:

If you are Hispanic, what is your Hispanic background?

Ⓐ I am not Hispanic.
Ⓑ Mexican, Mexican American, or Chicano
Ⓒ Puerto Rican
Ⓓ Cuban
Ⓔ Other Spanish or Hispanic background

Students who responded to this question by filling in the second, third, fourth, or fifth oval were considered Hispanic. For students who filled in the first oval, did not respond to the question, or provided information that was illegible or could not be classified, responses to the following question were examined to determine their race/ethnicity:

Which best describes you?

Ⓐ White (not Hispanic)
Ⓑ Black (not Hispanic)
Ⓒ Hispanic ("Hispanic" means someone who is Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or from some other Spanish or Hispanic background.)
Ⓓ Asian or Pacific Islander ("Asian or Pacific Islander" means someone who is from a Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, Vietnamese, Asian American, or some other Asian or Pacific Island background.)
Ⓔ American Indian or Alaskan Native ("American Indian or Alaskan Native" means someone who is from one of the American Indian tribes, or one of the original people of Alaska.)
Ⓕ Other (What?) Write your answer on the line in your answer book.

### Gender

Results are reported separately for males and females. Gender information was taken from school records.

## Weighting and Variance Estimation

A complex sample design was used to select the students who were assessed. The properties of a sample selected through a complex design could be very different from those of a simple random sample, in which every student in the target population has an equal chance of selection, and in which the observations from different sampled students can be considered to be statis-

tically independent of one another. Standard errors calculated as though the data had arisen from a simple random sample would generally underestimate sampling error. Therefore, the properties of the sample for the complex data collection design were taken into account during the analysis of the assessment data.

One way that the properties of the sample design were addressed was by using sampling weights to account for the fact that the probabilities of selection were not identical for all students. All population and subpopulation characteristics based on the assessment data used sampling weights in their estimation. These weights included adjustments for school and student nonresponse.

The statistics presented in this report are estimates of group and subgroup performance based on samples of students, rather than the values that could be calculated if every student in the nation answered every assessment question. It is therefore important to have measures of the degree of uncertainty of the estimates. Accordingly, in addition to providing estimates of percentages of students and their average percentage correct for test questions, this report provides information about the uncertainty of each statistic.

Because NAEP uses complex sampling procedures, conventional formulas for estimating sampling variability that assume simple random sampling are inappropriate. For this reason, NAEP uses a jackknife replication procedure to estimate standard errors due to sampling from means of paired primary sampling units (PSUs).

The reader is reminded that, like results from all surveys, NAEP results are also subject to other kinds of errors, including the effects of necessarily imperfect adjustments for student and school nonresponse and other largely unknowable effects associated with the particular instrumentation and data collection methods used. Nonsampling errors can be attributed to a number of sources: inability to obtain complete information about all selected students in all selected schools in the sample (some students or schools refused to participate, or students participated but answered only certain questions); ambiguous definitions; differences in interpreting questions; inability or unwillingness to give correct information; mistakes in recording, coding, or scoring data; and other errors of collecting, processing, sampling, and estimating missing data. The extent of nonsampling errors is difficult to estimate. By their nature, the impact of such errors cannot be reflected in the data-based estimates of uncertainty provided in NAEP reports.

## Drawing Inferences from the Results

### Confidence Intervals Around Means and Percentages

The use of confidence intervals, based on the standard errors, provides a way to make inferences about the population averages and percentages in a manner that reflects the uncertainty associated with the sample estimates. An estimated band of ±2 standard errors from a sample represents about a 95 percent confidence interval for the corresponding population quantity. This means that with 95 percent certainty, the average performance of the entire population of interest is within about ±2 standard errors of the sample average.

As an example, suppose that the average percent correct scores of students in a particular group was 60, with a standard error of 2.0. A 95 percent confidence interval for the population quantity would be as follows:

Average ± 2 standard errors =
60 ± 2 (2) = 60 ± 4 =
60 − 4 and 60 + 4 = (56, 64)

Thus, one can conclude with close to 95 percent certainty that the average percent correct score for the entire population of students in that group is between 56 and 64.

Confidence intervals can be constructed for percentages, provided that the percentages are not extremely large or extremely small. For percentages, confidence intervals constructed in the manner above work best when sample sizes are large, and the percentages being tested have magnitude relatively close to 50 percent. Statements about group differences should be interpreted with caution if at least one of the groups being compared is small in size and/or if "extreme" percentages are being compared. By convention, percentages, $P$, were treated as "extreme" in NAEP if:

$P < P_{lim} = \frac{200}{N_{EFF}+2}$, where the effective sample size is

$N_{EFF} = \frac{P(100-P)}{(SE_{jk})^2}$, and $SE_{jk}$ is the jackknife standard error of $P$.

This "rule of thumb" cutoff leads to flagging a large proportion of confidence intervals that would otherwise include values less than 0 or greater than 100. In either extreme case, the confidence intervals described above are not appropriate, and procedures for obtaining accurate confidence intervals are quite complicated. In this case, the value of $P$ was reported, but no standard error was estimated and, hence, no tests were conducted.

For some of the subgroups of students for which results were reported, student sample sizes could be quite small. For results to be reported for any subgroup, a minimum student sample size of 62 was required. If students in a particular subgroup were clustered within a small number of geographic primary sampling units (PSUs), the estimates of the standard errors might also be inaccurate. So, subgroup data were required to come from a minimum of five PSUs, in order for results to be reported.

## Comparing Means and Percentages of Different Groups

How large does a numeric difference in NAEP data have to be in order for a reader to conclude that it is not merely chance occurrence? Drawing appropriate and justifiable inferences from the data gathered in the NAEP assessment is a particularly complex statistical endeavor because: 1) a sampling design is used for data collection, and 2) no single student takes more than a section of the entire question pool. (Civics trend was an exception to this general NAEP practice.) Judging the statistical significance of differences between subgroups in the NAEP data requires an understanding of the following: confidence intervals (as noted above) and standard errors in the sampling design; the application of the t-test paradigm; the notion of degrees of freedom as applied in a stratified sample; and the application of the concepts of statistical family size in the context of making multiple comparisons. Each of these topics will be touched upon in the following sections. Because of these complexities, quick "rule of thumb" estimates of the significance of differences among, for example, percentage correct in NAEP subgroups in the data tables in this report cannot be relied upon to be accurate.

**T-tests.** Among the major findings reported for NAEP assessments are mean differences between groups, for example, comparisons of public and private school students. Such comparisons are assessed for statistical significance by a t-test of the form:

$$\frac{|m_i - m_j|}{\sqrt{S^2_{m_i} + S^2_{m_j}}}$$

Where:
$m_i$ and $m_j$ are the means for groups i and j, and $S^2_{m_i}$ and $S^2_{m_j}$ are the jackknife estimates of sampling variance for groups i and j.

The reader should note that this procedure uses a conservative estimate of the standard error of the difference (i.e., one that may overstate sampling variability), since the estimates of the group averages or percentages will be positively correlated to an unknown extent due to the sampling plan. However, since sources of survey error other than sampling are not accounted for in the standard errors, using these conservative estimates has been considered advisable. Moreover, direct estimation of the standard errors of all reported differences would involve too heavy a computational burden to be implemented in practice.

In some cases, the differences between groups were not discussed in this report. This happened for one of two reasons: (a) if the comparison involved an extreme percentage (as defined above); or (b) if the standard error for either group was subject to a large degree of uncertainty (i.e., the coefficient of variation is greater than 20 percent, denoted by "**" in the tables).[3] In either case, the results of any statistical test involving that group needs to be interpreted with caution, and so the results of such tests are not discussed in this report.

**Effective degrees of freedom.** Because of the clustered nature of the sample, the "effective degrees of freedom" for this T-test is considerably less than the number of students entering into the comparison, and, indeed, less than the number of PSU pairs that go into its computation. (See the forthcoming *NAEP 1998 Technical Report* for more details.) The degrees of freedom of this t-test are estimated by an approximation given by Johnson & Rust[4] as follows:

$$df = \frac{\left(\sum_{k=1}^{N} S^2_{m_k}\right)^2}{\sum_{k=1}^{N}\left(\frac{S^4_{m_k}}{df_k}\right)}$$

where the summation is over the two groups being compared. The item, $df_k$, is the degree of freedom estimate for the variance of the mean $m_k$ and is defined by Satterthwaite[5] with a correction term suggested by Johnson and Rust. The correction term was derived by matching estimates of the first two moments of the variance to those of a chi-square random variable.

$$df_k = \left(3.16 - \frac{2.77}{\sqrt{L}}\right)\frac{\left(\sum_{j=1}^{L}\left(m_{jk} - m_k\right)^2\right)^2}{\sum_{j=1}^{L}\left(m_{jk} - m_k\right)^4}$$

Here, j stands for jackknife replicate $j$, and the summations are over all replicates, usually 62 in NAEP. The $L$ term is the number of replicate pairs (usually 62) in the the sample. The $m_{jk}$ term is the mean of subgroup k for the jth jackknife replicate. The term $m_k$ is the overall mean for subgroup $k$, using the overall weights and the first plausible value.

The number of degrees of freedom for the variance equals the number of independent pieces of information used to generate the variance. In the case of data from NAEP, the pieces of information are the 62 squared differences

[3] Estimates of standard errors that are subject to a large degree of uncertainty are designated "**." In such cases, the standard error—and any confidence intervals or significance tests among these standard errors—should be interpreted with caution.

[4] Johnson, E. and Rust, K. (1992). Effective degrees of freedom for variance estimates from a complex sample survey. *Proceedings of the Section on Survey Research Methods,* American Statistical Association, 863–866.

[5] Satterthwaite, F.E. (1941). Synthesis of variance. *Psychometrika (16)* 5, 309–316.

$(m_{jk} - m_k)^2$, each supplying at most one degree of freedom (regardless of how many individuals were sampled within PSUs). If some of the squared differences $(m_{jk} - m_k)^2$ are much larger than others, the variance estimate of $m_k$ is predominantly estimating the sum of these larger components, which dominate the remaining terms. The effective degrees of freedom of $S^2_{m_k}$ in this case will be nearer to the number of dominant terms. The estimate, $df_k$, reflects these relationships.

The two formulae above show that when $df_k$ is small, the degrees of freedom for the t-test, $df$, will also be small. This will tend to be the case when only a few PSU pairs have information about subgroup differences relevant to a t-test. It will also be the case when a few PSU pairs have subgroup differences much larger than other PSU pairs. With a clustered sample and a practical sample size, it is not possible to stratify over every group of potential interest. It is thus inevitable that in a particular assessment for some groups, some pairs within some PSUs will be less well matched than others. Because this depresses the estimate of effective degrees of freedom, it has a conservative effect on declaring significance for comparisons involving those groups.

**Conducting multiple tests.** In many applications of significance testing, the t-test value is compared to a t-distribution with effective degrees of freedom, as given in the previous section, and is assessed at a nominal level of .05/2 for a two-tailed test. However, in most sections of this report, many different groups are compared (i.e., multiple sets of means are being analyzed). In sets of comparisons, statistical theory indicates that the certainty associated with the entire set of comparisons is less than that attributable to each individual comparison from the set. To hold the significance level for the set of comparisons at a particular level ($\propto$ = .05), adjustments (called "multiple comparison procedures"[6]) must be made to the methods described in the previous section. One such procedure, the Benjamini and Hochberg False Discovery Rate (FDR) procedure,[7] was used to control the certainty level.

Unlike the other multiple comparison procedures, such as the Bonferroni procedure, that control the familywise error rate (i.e., the probability of making even one false rejection in the set of comparisons), the FDR procedure controls the expected proportion of falsely rejected hypotheses. In other words, rather than holding the probability, $\propto$, of even one true null hypothesis being rejected at some level, the Benjamini and Hochberg False Discovery Rate controls the expected proportion of true null hypotheses declared significant. The FDR = Expectation (V/R), where V = Number of true null hypotheses declared significant, and R = Total number of hypotheses declared significant. This is accomplished by ordering the contrasts from most probable to least probable, and testing sequentially, with a systematically decreasing value of $\propto$, until a null hypothesis is rejected. That hypothesis and all subsequent hypotheses, which have smaller probability, are declared significant. Familywise procedures such as Bonferroni are considered conservative for large families of comparisons.[8] Therefore, the FDR procedure is more suitable for multiple comparisons in NAEP than other procedures. A detailed description of the FDR procedure

[6] Miller, R.G. (1966). *Simultaneous statistical inference.* New York: Wiley.

[7] Benjamini, Y. & Hochberg, Y. (1995). Controlling the false discovery rate: A practical and powerful approach to multiple testing. *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, Series B, No. 1*, pp. 298–300.

[8] Williams, V.S.L., Jones, L.V., & Tukey, J.W. (1994, December). *Controlling error in multiple comparisons with special attention to the National Assessment of Educational Progress.* Research Triangle Park, NC: National Institute of Statistical Sciences.

appears in the forthcoming *NAEP 1998 Technical Report.*

Prior to the 1996 assessment, the Bonferroni procedure was used for multiple comparisons. Beginning in the 1996 assessment, the Bonferroni procedure was used for multiple comparisons involving small sets of intervals, and the FDR for large sets. The 1998 assessment was the first time NAEP used the Benjamini-Hochberg procedure for all multiple comparisons.

The Benjamini and Hochberg FDR application consists of arranging the $m$ significance tests in order, from lowest to highest probability $P(1) \leq P(2) \ldots \leq P(m)$. To obtain an overall control of the False Discovery Rate at .05, compare $P(m)$ — the largest probability with .05. If $P(m) \leq .05$, declare all $m$ comparisons significant. If not, compare $P(m-1)$ with $\frac{m-1}{m} \cdot (.05)$. If less than or equal to this criterion, declare $P(1) - P(m-1)$ significant. If not, follow the same procedure with $P(m-2)$ down through $P(1)$. Note that

$$P(1) \leq \frac{1}{m} \cdot (.05)$$

is the level used in the Bonferroni procedure for all comparisons.

When we conduct multiple comparisons, the family size, or number of comparisons in a set, is a crucial issue. The investigator has a choice between prespecifying a limited number of comparisons, and thus maintaining power, or looking at many contrasts, sacrificing power for the chance of finding additional significant contrasts. For example, the parents' highest level of education variable has five categories:

Did not finish high school
Graduated from high school
Some education after high school
Graduated from college
I don't know.

If we choose "graduated from college" as the target category for the set, and contrast mean proficiency of each of the other four categories with the target, our family size is four, and under FDR, any mean difference with probability $\leq .05/4 = .0125$ will certainly be declared significant. If, on the other hand, we want to test all possible contrasts, family size becomes ten, and significance in the lowest probability category is guaranteed only if its probability $\leq .005$. This tension between conserving power and identifying a larger number of significant comparisons at the risk of not finding any requires careful thought and balancing. After much discussion, it has been determined that NAEP should use all possible comparisons within a set in conducting multiple comparisons.

## Cautions in Interpretations

As described earlier, the NAEP civics average percentage correct summaries make it possible to examine relationships between students' performance and various background factors measured by NAEP. However, a relationship that exists between achievement and another variable does not reveal the underlying cause of the relationship, which may be influenced by a number of other variables. Similarly, the assessments do not capture the influence of unmeasured variables. The results are most useful when they are considered in combination with other knowledge about the student population and the educational system, such as trends in instruction, changes in the school-age population, and societal demands and expectations.

## Grade 12 Participation Rates and Motivation

NAEP has been described as a "low-stakes" assessment. That is, students receive no individual scores, and their NAEP performance has no effect on their grades, promotions, or graduation. There has been continued concern that this lack of consequences affects participation rates of students and schools, as well as the motivation of students to perform well on NAEP. Of particular concern has been the performance of twelfth-graders, who typically have lower student participation rates than fourth-and eighth-graders, and who are more likely to omit responses compared to the younger cohorts.

### Motivation

To the extent that students in the NAEP sample are not perhaps trying their hardest, NAEP results may underestimate student performance. The concern increases as students get older and is particularly pronounced for twelfth-graders. The students themselves furnish some evidence about their motivation. As part of the background questions, students were asked how important it was to do well on the NAEP civics assessment. They were asked to indicate whether it was very important, important, somewhat important, or not very important to them. The percentage of students in the 1998 main civics assessment indicating they thought it was either important or very important to do well was 88 percent for fourth-graders, 59 percent for eighth-graders, and 33 percent for twelfth-graders.

Several factors may contribute to this pattern. NAEP was administered in the late winter, when high school seniors often have other things on their minds. As with participation rates, however, the combined effect of these and other factors is unknown.

It is also interesting to note that students who indicated it was very important for them to do well on NAEP did not have the highest average scores. These data further cloud the relationship between motivation and performance on NAEP.

### Need for Future Research

More research is needed to delineate the factors that contribute to nonparticipation and lack of motivation. To that end, NCES has commissioned a study of high school transcripts to learn more about the academic performance of twelfth-grade students who do not participate in the assessment. In addition, NCES is currently investigating how various types of incentives can be effectively used to increase participation in NAEP.

# APPENDIX B

## Standard Errors

The comparisons presented in this report are based on statistical tests that consider the magnitude of the difference between group averages or percentages and the standard errors of those statistics. This appendix contains the standard errors for the estimated averages and percentages in all the tables and figures throughout this report. Because NAEP scores and percentages are based on samples rather than the entire population(s), the results are subject to a measure of uncertainty reflected in the standard errors of the estimates. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that, for each population of interest, the value for the whole population is within plus or minus two standard errors of the estimate for the sample.

### Table B1.1

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Standard errors for average percentage of correct responses to civics questions by grade: 1988 and 1998**

| | 1988 | 1998 |
|---|---|---|
| Grade 4 | 0.8 | 0.6 |
| Grade 8 | 0.4 | 0.6 |
| Grade 12 | 0.5 | 0.7 |

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

### Table B1.2

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Standard errors for average percentage of correct responses to civics questions by gender: 1988 and 1998**

| | 1988 | | 1998 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Percentage of students | Percentage correct | Percentage of students | Percentage correct |
| **Grade 4** | | | | |
| Male | 1.6 | 1.0 | 1.2 | 0.7 |
| Female | 1.6 | 1.0 | 1.2 | 0.6 |
| **Grade 8** | | | | |
| Male | 1.2 | 0.6 | 1.1 | 0.7 |
| Female | 1.2 | 0.5 | 1.1 | 0.7 |
| **Grade 12** | | | | |
| Male | 1.8 | 0.8 | 1.7 | 1.0 |
| Female | 1.8 | 0.5 | 1.7 | 0.7 |

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

## Table B1.3

**Standard errors for average percentage of correct responses to civics questions by race/ethnicity: 1988 and 1998**

| | 1988 | | 1998 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Percentage of students | Percentage correct | Percentage of students | Percentage correct |
| **Grade 4** | | | | |
| White | 1.3 | 0.9 | 0.6 | 0.7 |
| Black | 1.2 | 1.6 | 0.4 | 1.2 |
| Hispanic | 0.7 | 1.5 | 0.5 | 1.2 |
| **Grade 8** | | | | |
| White | 0.8 | 0.5 | 0.3 | 0.8 |
| Black | 0.7 | 1.0 | 0.2 | 1.1 |
| Hispanic | 0.6 | 0.8 | 0.2 | 0.8 |
| **Grade 12** | | | | |
| White | 1.0 | 0.7 | 0.9 | 0.7 |
| Black | 0.7 | 1.1 | 0.7 | 1.9 |
| Hispanic | 0.5 | 1.1 | 0.4 | 1.1 |

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

## Figure B1.1

**Standard errors for grade 4 sample questions, 1988 and 1998**
**Content area: *Democratic principles and the purpose of government***

| Responses | Percentage of students | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1988 | 1998 |
| ● | 1.6 | 1.3 |
| Ⓑ | 0.9 | 0.7 |
| Ⓒ | 1.6 | 1.1 |

| Responses | Percentage of students | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1988 | 1998 |
| Ⓐ | 0.9 | 0.4 |
| ● | 1.5 | 1.1 |
| Ⓒ | 1.1 | 0.9 |
| Ⓓ | 0.5 | 0.3 |

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

## Figure B1.2

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Standard errors for grade 8 sample questions, 1988 and 1998**
**Content area: *Democratic principles and the purpose of government***

| Responses | Percentage of students | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1988 | 1998 |
| Ⓐ | 0.5 | 0.4 |
| ● | 1.4 | 1.6 |
| Ⓒ | 0.9 | 0.8 |
| Ⓓ | 1.1 | 1.3 |
| Ⓔ | 1.0 | 0.6 |

| Responses | Percentage of students | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1988 | 1998 |
| Ⓐ | 1.6 | 1.5 |
| ● | 1.5 | 1.4 |
| Ⓒ | 1.6 | 1.2 |

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

## Figure B1.3

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Standard errors for grade 12 sample questions, 1988 and 1998**
**Content area: *Democratic principles and the purpose of government***

| Responses | Percentage of students | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1988 | 1998 |
| ● | 1.8 | 1.3 |
| Ⓑ | 1.5 | 1.1 |
| Ⓒ | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| Ⓓ | 0.9 | 0.6 |

| Responses | Percentage of students | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1988 | 1998 |
| Ⓐ | 1.9 | 1.3 |
| Ⓑ | 1.1 | 0.8 |
| Ⓒ | 2.1 | 1.0 |
| ● | 1.7 | 1.4 |

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

## Figure B1.4

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Standard errors for grade 4 sample questions, 1988 and 1998**
**Content area: *Political institutions (structures and functions)***

| Responses | Percentage of students | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1988 | 1998 |
| ● | 1.6 | 1.4 |
| Ⓑ | 0.9 | 0.6 |
| Ⓒ | 1.4 | 1.0 |
| Ⓓ | 0.8 | 0.6 |

| Responses | Percentage of students | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1988 | 1998 |
| Ⓐ | 1.5 | 1.0 |
| ● | 2.1 | 1.3 |
| Ⓒ | 1.3 | 1.2 |

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

## Figure B1.5

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Standard errors for grade 8 sample questions, 1988 and 1998**
**Content area: *Political institutions (structures and functions)***

| Responses | Percentage of students | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1988 | 1998 |
| Ⓐ | 0.9 | 0.9 |
| ● | 1.3 | 1.2 |
| Ⓒ | 1.1 | 0.9 |

| Responses | Percentage of students | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1988 | 1998 |
| Ⓐ | 1.1 | 0.8 |
| ● | 1.5 | 1.3 |
| Ⓒ | 1.4 | 1.0 |
| Ⓓ | 0.8 | 0.5 |

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

## Figure B1.6

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Standard errors for grade 12 sample questions, 1988 and 1998**
**Content area: *Political institutions (structures and functions)***

| Responses | Percentage of students | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1988 | 1998 |
| Ⓐ | 1.0 | 0.6 |
| ● | 1.2 | 1.2 |
| Ⓒ | 0.8 | 0.5 |
| Ⓓ | 0.6 | 0.5 |
| Ⓔ | 1.0 | 0.8 |

| Responses | Percentage of students | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1988 | 1998 |
| ● | 2.6 | 1.2 |
| Ⓑ | 2.1 | 1.3 |
| Ⓒ | 0.8 | 0.6 |
| Ⓓ | 0.9 | 0.6 |
| Ⓔ | 0.8 | 1.1 |

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

## Figure B1.7

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Standard errors for grade 4 sample questions, 1988 and 1998**
**Content area: *Political processes***

| Responses | Percentage of students | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1988 | 1998 |
| ● | 1.8 | 1.5 |
| Ⓑ | 1.2 | 1.2 |
| Ⓒ | 1.2 | 0.7 |
| Ⓓ | 0.8 | 0.6 |

| Responses | Percentage of students | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1988 | 1998 |
| Ⓐ | 1.4 | 1.5 |
| Ⓑ | 1.4 | 1.1 |
| Ⓒ | 1.4 | 1.3 |
| ● | 1.2 | 1.2 |

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

## Figure B1.8

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Standard errors for grade 8 sample questions, 1988 and 1998**
**Content area: *Political processes***

| Responses | Percentage of students | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1988 | 1998 |
| Ⓐ | 1.0 | 0.8 |
| Ⓑ | 0.7 | 0.3 |
| Ⓒ | 0.5 | 0.3 |
| ● | 1.4 | 1.1 |

| Responses | Percentage of students | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1988 | 1998 |
| Ⓐ | 1.2 | 0.8 |
| Ⓑ | 0.9 | 0.6 |
| Ⓒ | 2.1 | 1.2 |
| ● | 1.8 | 1.6 |

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

## Figure B1.9

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Standard errors for grade 12 sample questions, 1988 and 1998**
**Content area: *Political processes***

| Responses | Percentage of students | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1988 | 1998 |
| Ⓐ | 1.2 | 0.8 |
| ● | 1.9 | 1.2 |
| Ⓒ | 0.7 | 0.4 |
| Ⓓ | 0.9 | 0.7 |

| Responses | Percentage of students | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1988 | 1998 |
| Ⓐ | 0.9 | 0.7 |
| ● | 1.8 | 1.4 |
| Ⓒ | 1.5 | 1.0 |
| Ⓓ | 1.0 | 1.1 |

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

## Figure B1.10

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Standard errors for grade 4 sample questions, 1988 and 1998**
**Content area: *Rights, responsibilities, and the law***

| Responses | Percentage of students | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1988 | 1998 |
| Ⓐ | 0.6 | 0.4 |
| Ⓑ | 0.9 | 0.6 |
| Ⓒ | 0.6 | 0.3 |
| ● | 1.1 | 0.8 |

| Responses | Percentage of students | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1988 | 1998 |
| Ⓐ | 2.1 | 1.3 |
| ● | 1.6 | 1.4 |
| Ⓒ | 1.0 | 0.8 |
| Ⓓ | 0.7 | 0.5 |
| Ⓔ | 1.4 | 1.3 |

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

## Figure B1.11

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Standard errors for grade 8 sample questions, 1988 and 1998**
**Content area: *Rights, responsibilities, and the law***

| Responses | Percentage of students | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1988 | 1998 |
| 15. ● | 1.6 | 1.1 |
| Ⓑ | 1.1 | 0.6 |
| Ⓒ | 1.5 | 0.9 |
| 16. Ⓐ | 0.8 | 0.8 |
| ● | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| Ⓒ | 0.6 | 0.6 |
| 17. ● | 2.1 | 1.0 |
| Ⓑ | 1.6 | 0.8 |
| Ⓒ | 1.5 | 1.0 |

| Responses | Percentage of students | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1988 | 1998 |
| Ⓐ | 1.5 | 1.0 |
| ● | 1.8 | 1.2 |
| Ⓒ | 1.3 | 0.8 |

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

## Figure B1.12

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Standard errors for grade 12 sample questions, 1988 and 1998**
**Content area: *Rights, responsibilities, and the law***

| Responses | Percentage of students | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1988 | 1998 |
| ● | 1.1 | 0.8 |
| Ⓑ | 0.5 | 0.4 |
| Ⓒ | 0.5 | 0.4 |
| Ⓓ | 0.7 | 0.4 |

| Responses | Percentage of students | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1988 | 1998 |
| Ⓐ | 1.5 | 1.5 |
| Ⓑ | 0.6 | 0.6 |
| ● | 1.5 | 1.7 |
| Ⓓ | 0.8 | 0.6 |

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

## Table B2.1

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Standard errors for percentage of students reporting the frequency of social studies class by type of school, grade 4: 1988 and 1998**

| *How often do you usually have social studies class in school?* | Percentage of students | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Daily | | 3–4 times a week | | 1–2 times a week | | Less than once a week | | Never/hardly ever | |
| | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 |
| Total | 3.2 | 2.5 | 1.5 | 2.1 | 1.6 | 1.4 | 0.7 | 0.7 | 1.9 | 1.0 |
| Public | 3.6 | 2.6 | 1.6 | 2.1 | 1.8 | 1.5 | 0.7 | 0.8 | 2.2 | 1.1 |
| Nonpublic | 8.9[1] | 7.7[1] | 8.4[1] | 5.7[1] | 4.4[1] | 4.4[1] | 3.7[1] | 1.0[1] | ** | 0.7[1] |

** Sample size is insufficient to permit a reliable estimate.

[1] The nature of the sample does not allow accurate determination of the variability of this value.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

## Table B2.2

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Standard errors for percentage of students reporting they studied American government or civics by grade levels, grades 8 and 12: 1988 and 1998**

| *Studied American government or civics in the following grades:* | Yes | | No | | Don't know | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 |
| **Grade 8** | | | | | | |
| 5th grade | 0.9 | 1.2 | 1.1 | 1.2 | 0.9 | 1.0 |
| 6th grade | 1.1 | 1.5 | 1.3 | 1.4 | 0.9 | 0.8 |
| 7th grade | 1.8 | 1.7 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 0.7 | 0.8 |
| 8th grade | 1.8 | 1.4 | 1.3 | 0.9 | 0.8 | 0.9 |
| **Grade 12** | | | | | | |
| 9th grade | 2.6 | 2.5 | 2.4 | 2.8 | 0.5 | 0.8 |
| 10th grade | 1.6 | 2.1 | 1.6 | 2.0 | 0.6 | 0.7 |
| 11th grade | 2.3 | 1.6 | 2.3 | 1.7 | 0.6 | 0.5 |
| 12th grade | 2.5 | 3.3 | 2.5 | 3.2 | 0.4 | 0.5 |

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

## Table B2.3

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Standard errors for percentage of students who reported how much they studied selected civics topics, grade 4: 1988 and 1998**

| *How much have you studied the following topics in American government or civics?* | A lot | | Some | | Not at all | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 |
| **Grade 4** | | | | | | |
| How laws are made | 1.3 | 1.6 | 2.0 | 1.5 | 2.1 | 1.5 |
| About judges and courts | 1.0 | 1.5 | 2.1 | 1.5 | 1.7 | 2.2 |
| President and leaders of our country | 1.4 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.6 | 1.5 | 1.2 |
| Elections and voting | 1.6 | 1.3 | 2.1 | 1.3 | 2.5 | 1.6 |
| Your community | 1.6 | 1.9 | 1.2 | 1.5 | 1.3 | 1.1 |
| The rights and responsibilities of citizens | 1.8 | 1.6 | 1.8 | 1.5 | 1.4 | 1.0 |

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

## Table B2.4

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Standard errors for percentage of students who reported how much they studied selected civics topics, grade 8: 1988 and 1998**

| *How much have you studied the following topics in American government or civics?* | Grade 8 | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | A lot | | Some | | Not at all | |
| | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 |
| U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights | 1.8 | 2.2 | 1.9 | 2.0 | 0.7 | 0.7 |
| Congress | 1.9 | 2.3 | 1.5 | 1.8 | 0.8 | 1.1 |
| How laws are made | 1.8 | 2.0 | 1.4 | 1.5 | 0.9 | 1.2 |
| The court system | 1.7 | 1.6 | 1.1 | 1.2 | 1.5 | 1.5 |
| President and the cabinet | 1.4 | 1.9 | 1.2 | 1.5 | 1.0 | 1.5 |
| Political parties, elections, and voting | 1.6 | 1.6 | 1.2 | 1.3 | 1.0 | 0.9 |
| State and local government | 1.5 | 1.7 | 1.2 | 1.4 | 1.1 | 1.2 |
| Principles of democratic government | 1.2 | 0.9 | 1.0 | 1.4 | 1.3 | 1.6 |
| Other forms of government | 1.1 | 1.2 | 1.2 | 1.2 | 1.2 | 1.0 |
| Rights and responsibilities of citizens | 1.1 | 1.4 | 1.1 | 1.1 | 0.8 | 0.7 |

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

## Table B2.5

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Standard errors for percentage of students who reported how much they studied selected civics topics, grade 12: 1988 and 1998**

| *Since the beginning of ninth grade, how much have you studied the following topics in American government or civics?* | Grade 12 | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | A lot | | Some | | Not at all | |
| | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 |
| U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights | 2.0 | 1.7 | 1.9 | 1.6 | 0.4 | 0.6 |
| Congress | 1.6 | 1.9 | 1.6 | 1.8 | 0.5 | 0.7 |
| How laws are made | 1.6 | 1.8 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 0.6 | 0.7 |
| The court system | 1.5 | 1.8 | 1.2 | 1.7 | 0.7 | 0.8 |
| President and the cabinet | 1.4 | 1.6 | 1.3 | 1.2 | 0.6 | 0.8 |
| Political parties, elections, and voting | 1.3 | 1.7 | 1.3 | 1.4 | 0.4 | 0.7 |
| State and local government | 1.4 | 1.5 | 1.4 | 1.6 | 0.6 | 0.9 |
| Principles of democratic government | 1.4 | 1.6 | 1.4 | 1.2 | 0.6 | 1.0 |
| Other forms of government | 1.2 | 1.4 | 1.3 | 1.3 | 0.8 | 0.9 |
| Rights and responsibilities of citizens | 1.2 | 1.5 | 1.2 | 1.5 | 0.4 | 0.7 |

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

## Table B2.6

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Standard errors for percentage of students by number of years of civics studied, grade 12: 1988 and 1998**

| *Since the beginning of ninth grade, how much American government or civics coursework have you completed up to now?* | Percentage of students | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1988 | 1998 |
| None | 0.9 | 0.8 |
| Less than one-half year | 0.7 | 0.7 |
| One-half year | 1.6 | 1.4 |
| Between one-half and one year | 0.6 | 0.9 |
| One year | 1.1 | 1.2 |
| More than one year | 1.9 | 1.8 |

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

## Table B3.1

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Standard errors for percentage of students reporting how often their teachers use various classroom practices, grade 8: 1988 and 1998**

| *How often has your American government or civics teacher asked you to do each of the following?* | Percentage of students | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Almost every day | | Once or twice a week | | Once or twice a month | | A few times a year | | Never | |
| | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 |
| Read material from textbook | 1.9 | 2.1 | 1.8 | 1.5 | 0.6 | 0.8 | 0.3 | 0.4 | 0.4 | 0.3 |
| Read extra material not in regular textbook | 0.8 | 1.1 | 1.3 | 1.5 | 1.2 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.6 | 1.3 |
| Memorize the material you have read | 1.1 | 1.4 | 1.1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.2 | 0.9 | 0.9 | 1.1 | 0.9 |
| Discuss and analyze the material you have read | 1.7 | 1.5 | 1.4 | 1.2 | 0.8 | 0.6 | 0.4 | 0.4 | 0.6 | 0.6 |
| Write short answers to questions | 1.8 | 1.5 | 1.3 | 1.4 | 1.2 | 0.9 | 0.6 | 0.4 | 0.6 | 0.7 |
| Write a report of three or more pages | 0.4 | 0.5 | 0.6 | 0.6 | 0.9 | 1.6 | 1.4 | 1.3 | 1.8 | 1.9 |
| Work on a group project | 0.5 | 0.7 | 1.1 | 1.5 | 1.3 | 1.6 | 1.3 | 1.3 | 1.8 | 1.3 |
| Give talks about what you are studying | 1.6 | 1.3 | 0.9 | 0.9 | 0.8 | 0.8 | 0.7 | 0.6 | 1.0 | 0.8 |
| Discuss current events | 1.9 | 1.6 | 1.7 | 1.3 | 1.4 | 1.0 | 0.6 | 0.7 | 0.7 | 0.8 |
| Take a test or quiz | 1.3 | 1.2 | 1.7 | 1.8 | 1.6 | 1.9 | 0.2 | 0.3 | 0.3 | 0.2 |

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

## Table B3.2

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Standard errors for percentage of students reporting how often their teachers use various classroom practices, grade 12: 1988 and 1998**

| *How often has your American government or civics teacher asked you to do each of the following?* | Percentage of students | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Almost every day | | Once or twice a week | | Once or twice a month | | A few times a year | | Never | |
| | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 |
| Read material from textbook | 2.1 | 2.2 | 1.6 | 1.8 | 0.8 | 0.9 | 0.4 | 0.6 | 0.6 | 1.1 |
| Read extra material not in regular textbook | 0.9 | 1.7 | 1.3 | 1.9 | 1.0 | 1.5 | 0.8 | 0.9 | 1.0 | 0.7 |
| Memorize the material you have read | 1.3 | 1.3 | 1.2 | 1.4 | 1.5 | 1.2 | 0.9 | 0.9 | 0.9 | 1.5 |
| Discuss and analyze the material you have read | 2.1 | 1.6 | 1.6 | 1.3 | 0.8 | 0.9 | 0.4 | 0.5 | 0.4 | 0.5 |
| Write short answers to questions | 1.4 | 1.6 | 1.3 | 1.6 | 0.9 | 1.1 | 0.5 | 0.7 | 0.6 | 1.0 |
| Write a report of three or more pages | 0.5 | 0.6 | 0.7 | 1.1 | 1.4 | 1.9 | 1.7 | 1.4 | 1.9 | 2.0 |
| Work on a group project | 0.5 | 1.0 | 0.9 | 1.9 | 1.5 | 1.3 | 1.0 | 1.5 | 1.8 | 1.7 |
| Give talks about what you are studying | 1.7 | 1.9 | 0.8 | 1.7 | 1.2 | 1.1 | 1.2 | 0.9 | 1.4 | 1.5 |
| Discuss current events | 1.9 | 2.5 | 1.7 | 1.8 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 0.8 | 0.5 | 0.3 | 0.7 |
| Take a test or quiz | 1.0 | 1.3 | 1.6 | 2.1 | 1.4 | 1.7 | 0.3 | 0.4 | 0.3 | 0.3 |

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

## Table B3.3

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Standard errors for percentage of students reporting how often they discuss current events, grade 4: 1988 and 1998**

| *How often do you discuss current events in social studies class?* | Percentage of students | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Almost every day | | Once or twice a week | | Once or twice a month | | A few times a year | | Never | |
| | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 |
| | 1.2 | 1.7 | 1.7 | 1.3 | 1.4 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 0.8 | 1.6 | 1.0 |

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

## Table B3.4

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Standard errors for percentage of students reporting the amount of time they spend weekly on civics or government homework, grade 12: 1988 and 1998**

| *How much time do you spend weekly on civics or government homework?* | Percentage of students | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Don't do | | None, < 1 hour | | 1–2 hours | | 3–4 hours | | 5+ hours | |
| | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 |
| | 0.5 | 0.7 | 1.7 | 2.2 | 1.1 | 1.5 | 1.1 | 1.1 | 0.4 | 0.6 |

NOTE: Some of the data in this table are the result of collapsing the original response options in the question. The question contained the following choices: I usually haven't had homework assigned; I have had homework but I usually haven't done it; less than 1 hour; 1 hour; 2 hours; 3 hours; 4 hours; 5 hours or more.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

## Table B3.5

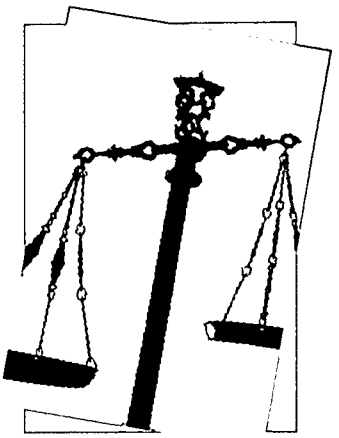
THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Standard errors for percentage of students reporting receiving newspapers in the home, grades 4, 8, and 12: 1988 and 1998**

| *Does your family get a newspaper regularly?* | Percentage of students | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Yes | | No | | I don't know. | |
| | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 | 1988 | 1998 |
| **Grade 4** | 2.4 | 1.7 | 1.9 | 1.7 | 1.0 | 0.7 |
| **Grade 8** | 1.1 | 1.4 | 1.1 | 1.3 | 0.3 | 0.5 |
| **Grade 12** | 1.0 | 1.4 | 1.0 | 1.3 | 0.2 | 0.3 |

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

# APPENDIX C



# Average Percentage Correct

## Table C.1

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Average percentage of correct responses to each test question in the civics special study, grade 4: 1988 and 1998**

| Question description | Content code[1] | 1988 | | 1998 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| People of the U.S. vote for President | 2 | 97.0 | | 97.0 |
| The White House is the home of President | 2 | 91.4 | < | 94.4 |
| Judge is person in charge of courtroom | 4 | 89.2 | | 90.6 |
| There are 50 states in the United States | 2 | 88.5 | | 90.0 |
| Vice President becomes President if President of U.S. dies | 2 | 88.1 | | 91.9 |
| Crosswalk laws help people cross safely | 4 | 84.6 | | 88.5 |
| Local governments do not clean family's house | 2 | 82.3 | | 81.8 |
| Making laws is major purpose of government in U.S. | 1 | 81.8 | | 83.7 |
| Local governments catch lawbreakers | 2 | 79.2 | | 78.4 |
| Local governments take care of parks | 2 | 76.9 | | 74.3 |
| Judge must always obey laws of U.S. | 1 | 76.8 | < | 81.4 |
| Madison is a candidate for tax collector | 3 | 75.3 | | 75.8 |
| Arrested person has no right to escape | 4 | 74.5 | | 77.8 |
| Local governments clean streets | 2 | 74.5 | > | 70.1 |
| Local governments do not grow vegetables for food | 2 | 73.3 | | 76.4 |
| Local government does not fix family's car | 2 | 72.1 | | 71.7 |
| Local governments put up stop signs | 2 | 70.7 | | 66.7 |
| In U.S. a farm is not owned and run by government | 2 | 69.5 | | 73.3 |
| Laws can be changed | 4 | 68.7 | | 73.7 |
| In U.S. police station is owned and run by government | 2 | 68.6 | | 70.2 |
| Must be citizen to vote in national or state election | 3 | 68.5 | | 70.5 |
| Army general must always obey U.S. law | 1 | 65.7 | | 68.5 |
| Laws in U.S. do not say adults must vote | 4 | 64.8 | | 69.3 |
| Courts decide whether someone has broken the law | 2 | 64.3 | | 63.9 |
| Bill of Rights; first 10 amendments to Constitution | 4 | 64.0 | > | 54.3 |
| 3 people will be elected to town council | 3 | 63.9 | | 63.4 |
| July 4 observes Independence Day | 2 | 63.6 | < | 78.6 |

[1] The items were categorized as follows: 1 = Democratic principles and the purpose of government; 2 = Structures and functions of political institutions; 3 = Political processes; 4 = Rights, responsibilities, and the law

> 1988 significantly greater than 1998

< 1988 significantly less than 1998

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

## Table C.1 continued

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Average percentage of correct responses to each test question in the civics special study, grade 4: 1988 and 1998**

| Question description | Content code[1] | 1988 | | 1998 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Member of Congress must always obey laws | 1 | 63.1 | < | 72.3 |
| President can't order someone else to break law | 1 | 61.2 | < | 68.6 |
| Local governments do not run restaurants | 2 | 60.0 | | 63.9 |
| Most democratic; class makes list and votes | 1 | 59.9 | < | 69.0 |
| In U.S. roads are owned and operated by government | 2 | 59.7 | | 58.7 |
| FBI agent must always obey the law | 1 | 58.8 | < | 65.2 |
| In U.S. individual citizen has right to vote | 4 | 58.5 | | 62.1 |
| All 3 levels of government try to prevent crime | 2 | 57.3 | | 54.3 |
| National government makes laws for whole country | 2 | 52.3 | | 51.6 |
| In U.S. movie theater is not owned and run by government | 2 | 49.9 | | 52.2 |
| Mayor is usually head of city government | 2 | 49.6 | | 46.5 |
| President has no right to stop radio, newspapers | 4 | 48.5 | | 50.8 |
| President can't break law even if thinks it's for good | 1 | 46.5 | < | 56.0 |
| "Justice for all" means everybody treated equally | 1 | 46.5 | < | 61.6 |
| Local government checks parking meters | 2 | 44.6 | | 49.8 |
| People in U.S. elect government officials by secret ballot | 3 | 44.2 | | 45.0 |
| President of U.S. is elected for a term of 4 years | 2 | 42.1 | < | 62.2 |
| In U.S. gas station is not owned and operated by government | 2 | 39.0 | < | 44.7 |
| Man should be given trial by jury if he wants it | 4 | 34.1 | | 30.8 |
| Separation of powers; division of authority among 3 branches | 2 | 33.4 | | 31.5 |
| All 3 levels of government do not have army/navy/air force | 2 | 31.4 | < | 38.4 |
| Workers' action called striking | 4 | 31.0 | | 33.0 |
| Supreme Court decides constitutionality | 3 | 17.8 | | 17.1 |
| Workers get people to boycott | 4 | 17.7 | | 22.5 |

[1] The items were categorized as follows: 1 = Democratic principles and the purpose of government; 2 = Structures and functions of political institutions; 3 = Political processes; 4 = Rights, responsibilities, and the law

< 1988 significantly less than 1998

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

## Table C.2

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Average percentage of correct responses to each test question in the civics special study, grade 8: 1988 and 1998**

| Question description | Content code[1] | 1988 | | 1998 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Crosswalk laws help people cross safely | 4 | 96.3 | | 95.4 |
| Vice-President becomes President if President of U.S. dies | 2 | 95.8 | | 94.0 |
| Accused person has right to a lawyer | 4 | 94.9 | | 92.5 |
| Madison is a candidate for tax collector | 3 | 94.5 | > | 91.5 |
| Accused person has right to know what accused of | 4 | 94.2 | | 93.2 |
| Local governments take care of parks | 2 | 92.9 | | 91.0 |
| Local governments clean streets | 2 | 92.0 | > | 89.2 |
| Local governments do not clean family's house | 2 | 91.0 | | 88.3 |
| Refusing to obey laws is not legal | 4 | 88.8 | > | 84.4 |
| Must be citizen to vote in national or state election | 3 | 87.4 | | 89.9 |
| Not paying portion of taxes is illegal | 4 | 87.3 | > | 83.5 |
| Picking neighbors is not a constitutional right | 4 | 86.3 | | 82.3 |
| State governors are usually elected | 3 | 86.0 | > | 78.1 |
| In U.S. individual citizen has right to vote | 4 | 85.6 | | 83.8 |
| Accused person has right to remain silent | 4 | 85.4 | | 82.5 |
| Accused can't go free if returns money | 4 | 83.3 | | 82.0 |
| 3 people will be elected to town council | 3 | 83.2 | | 80.9 |
| Presenting views to media is legal | 4 | 80.8 | | 80.4 |
| President of U.S. is elected for a term of 4 years | 2 | 80.8 | | 83.9 |
| People in U.S. elect government officials by secret ballot | 3 | 80.8 | > | 69.8 |
| "Justice for all" means everybody treated equally | 1 | 79.8 | | 81.8 |
| Writing letters of protest is legal | 4 | 77.7 | | 76.8 |
| Drawing c; poll tax is illegal | 4 | 76.8 | | 73.5 |
| Local governments do not run restaurants | 2 | 76.8 | > | 72.8 |
| Federal government does not provide jobs for everyone | 2 | 76.7 | > | 71.3 |
| U.S. court can decide if sex discrimination on job | 3 | 75.6 | | 78.7 |
| Rights in Constitution protect individual freedom | 1 | 74.1 | | 73.0 |
| U.S. is not only country with elected leaders | 1 | 74.0 | | 77.1 |
| Accused has right to lawyer and jury trial (I & II) | 4 | 73.9 | | 74.7 |
| Police can't jail person until collect evidence | 4 | 73.3 | > | 67.7 |
| Two candidates for election good: provides choice | 1 | 73.1 | | 70.3 |
| U.S. is not only country with political parties | 1 | 72.4 | | 70.4 |
| Police do nothing unless law is broken | 4 | 71.6 | > | 65.3 |
| Suing in court is legal | 4 | 70.7 | | 70.0 |
| Bill of Rights; first 10 amendments to Constitution | 4 | 70.7 | | 75.1 |
| Congress has no right to curtail freedom of press | 4 | 68.7 | | 66.5 |
| Local governments operate public schools | 2 | 67.9 | | 67.4 |
| Court can decide whether one's idea taken | 3 | 67.5 | | 68.0 |
| Regulating foreign trade is function of federal government | 2 | 66.7 | | 64.9 |

[1] The items were categorized as follows: 1 = Democratic principles and the purpose of government; 2 = Structures and functions of political institutions; 3 = Political processes; 4 = Rights, responsibilities, and the law

> 1988 significantly greater than 1998

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

## Table C.2 continued

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Average percentage of correct responses to each test question in the civics special study, grade 8: 1988 and 1998**

| Question description | Content code[1] | 1988 | | 1998 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bill of Rights prohibits cruel and unusual punishment | 4 | 66.3 | | 65.8 |
| Court in U.S. cannot declare war | 3 | 65.8 | | 62.9 |
| Congress cannot establish national church | 4 | 63.5 | > | 57.6 |
| Local governments do not make laws about military service | 2 | 63.1 | | 62.5 |
| Issue in headlines concerns local government | 2 | 62.7 | | 61.9 |
| Statement of Civil Rights in Constitution | 1 | 60.7 | | 61.9 |
| U.S. senators are part of legislative branch | 2 | 60.4 | | 60.1 |
| Federal government regulates food and drug quality | 2 | 60.0 | | 59.5 |
| Secretary of Defense is appointed | 3 | 59.8 | | 61.8 |
| Separation of powers; division of authority among 3 branches | 2 | 57.6 | | 61.1 |
| Engaging in hunger strike is legal | 4 | 57.2 | > | 51.5 |
| U.S. Congress is House of Representatives and Senate | 2 | 54.8 | > | 45.8 |
| Powers of Congress set forth in Constitution | 1 | 53.4 | > | 47.8 |
| In U.S. senator is elected to office | 3 | 52.1 | | 50.7 |
| Governor is chief executive of a state | 2 | 51.4 | | 47.5 |
| Participating in boycott is legal | 4 | 50.8 | < | 59.9 |
| Federal government helps farmers with money and services | 2 | 49.1 | > | 27.6 |
| Local governments do not issue passports | 2 | 46.6 | | 47.9 |
| Supreme Court stops war by declaring act unconstitutional | 3 | 45.2 | > | 40.8 |
| Organizing a recall election is legal | 3 | 44.9 | | 39.4 |
| Laws for marriage are not a function of federal government | 2 | 44.4 | | 46.0 |
| Representatives are elected to office | 3 | 43.9 | | 49.0 |
| Secretary of State is member of President's cabinet | 2 | 43.8 | > | 36.5 |
| Lobbying for votes is legal | 3 | 43.5 | | 43.7 |
| U.S. is not only country with written constitution | 1 | 42.6 | | 45.0 |
| Chart 4; legislative process for bill | 3 | 41.9 | | 46.7 |
| Supreme Court decides constitutionality | 3 | 40.3 | | 41.2 |
| Library needed support of former city council | 3 | 38.8 | | 35.3 |
| Congress can pass law to double income tax | 3 | 34.3 | | 30.1 |
| NRA activity called lobbying | 3 | 32.5 | > | 22.2 |
| Local governments do not license lawyers | 2 | 31.2 | | 33.0 |
| Federal government helps buy homes and start businesses | 2 | 31.2 | | 35.9 |
| Effect of laws; prevented some groups from voting | 4 | 29.9 | < | 40.4 |
| Senate approves appointments to Supreme Court | 2 | 29.4 | | 28.7 |
| Appeal case means refer to higher court | 4 | 28.3 | | 27.1 |
| Department of State most concerned with foreign affairs | 2 | 20.7 | > | 14.3 |
| Presidential candidate nominated by national convention | 3 | 15.8 | | 18.1 |

[1] The items were categorized as follows: 1 = Democratic principles and the purpose of government; 2 = Structures and functions of political institutions; 3 = Political processes; 4 = Rights, responsibilities, and the law

> 1988 significantly greater than 1998

< 1988 significantly less than 1998

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

Table C.3

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Average percentage of correct responses to each test question in the civics special study, grade 12: 1988 and 1998**

| Question description | Content code[1] | 1988 | | 1998 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Accused person has right to a lawyer | 4 | 98.1 | | 97.5 |
| Accused person has right to know what accused of | 4 | 97.4 | | 95.4 |
| Picking neighbors is not a constitutional right | 4 | 96.0 | | 93.9 |
| Accused person has right to remain silent | 4 | 96.0 | > | 93.3 |
| State governors are usually elected | 3 | 92.8 | | 91.6 |
| Accused can't go free if returns money | 4 | 92.8 | | 90.8 |
| First 10 amendments deal with individual rights | 4 | 92.0 | | 94.1 |
| Not required to vote in national election; poll tax | 4 | 91.6 | | 92.1 |
| Right to counsel means representation by lawyer | 4 | 90.9 | | 90.9 |
| Police can't jail person until collect evidence | 4 | 90.3 | > | 84.1 |
| Duty of jury; determine if guilt proven | 4 | 89.8 | | 88.5 |
| National government prints money | 2 | 87.2 | | 87.6 |
| Regulating foreign trade is function of federal government | 2 | 85.3 | | 81.2 |
| Police do nothing unless law is broken | 4 | 85.3 | | 86.4 |
| Legal way to change law; lobby | 4 | 84.0 | | 81.9 |
| Congress has no right to curtail freedom of press | 4 | 83.9 | | 84.1 |
| Congress cannot establish national church | 4 | 82.8 | | 82.5 |
| Federal government does not provide jobs for everyone | 2 | 82.4 | > | 78.3 |
| Federal government regulates food and drug quality | 2 | 82.3 | | 81.7 |
| Local governments do not make laws about military service | 2 | 81.1 | | 79.1 |
| Secretary of Defense is appointed | 3 | 80.8 | | 76.5 |
| Highest level of local government is county | 2 | 80.3 | | 78.6 |
| U.S. Constitution; major basis for Supreme Court cases | 3 | 78.5 | | 79.0 |
| U.S. Congress is House of Representatives and Senate | 2 | 76.9 | > | 72.1 |
| Not freedom of speech to yell 'fire' in a theater as joke | 4 | 76.6 | | 82.1 |
| Both groups allowed to speak | 4 | 76.5 | | 73.9 |
| Invoke 5th Amendment; not answer to avoid self-incrimination | 4 | 74.9 | | 76.3 |
| In U.S. senator is elected to office | 3 | 74.6 | | 72.3 |
| Governor is chief executive of a state | 2 | 73.8 | > | 66.3 |
| Conflict between order vs. freedom of speech | 1 | 73.7 | | 75.5 |
| Constitution divides power between states and national gov. | 2 | 73.3 | | 76.3 |
| Local governments operate public schools | 2 | 73.2 | | 74.4 |
| Party members choose candidates in primary election | 3 | 72.4 | | 68.8 |
| Federal government helps farmers with money and services | 2 | 71.5 | > | 59.6 |
| Member elected to preside over house is Speaker | 2 | 71.1 | | 70.3 |
| Most likely to vote; middle-aged professionals | 4 | 69.8 | < | 77.5 |
| Statement says citizens of democracy need to be informed | 1 | 69.3 | | 67.0 |

[1] The items were categorized as follows: 1 = Democratic principles and the purpose of government; 2 = Structures and functions of political institutions; 3 = Political processes; 4 = Rights, responsibilities, and the law

> 1988 significantly greater than 1998

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SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

## Table C.3 continued

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep

**Average percentage of correct responses to each test question in the civics special study, grade 12: 1988 and 1998**

| Question description | Content code[1] | 1988 | | 1998 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Declaration of war approved by Congress | 2 | 68.6 | | 64.5 |
| Brown V. Board of Ed.; segregated schools unconstitutional | 2 | 68.0 | | 65.5 |
| Supreme Court can declare an act unconstitutional | 3 | 67.9 | | 65.8 |
| Separation of powers; prevent too much power in one body | 2 | 67.4 | | 66.3 |
| Government of U.S. is representative democracy | 1 | 65.8 | | 65.3 |
| Laws for marriage are not a function of federal government | 2 | 65.6 | | 60.9 |
| Attorney General heads Department of Justice | 2 | 64.4 | > | 57.7 |
| Chief Justice appointed by President, consent of Senate | 3 | 64.0 | | 59.0 |
| Lobbyists called third house because they influence law | 3 | 64.0 | | 64.4 |
| First Amendment guarantees freedom of religion | 4 | 63.0 | | 66.5 |
| Number of representatives varies according to state population | 2 | 62.5 | | 63.1 |
| Table shows more educated are more politically active | 4 | 62.2 | | 62.8 |
| Criticism of Electoral College; win does not reflect popular vote | 3 | 61.5 | | 62.6 |
| Each state has two senators in the U.S. Senate | 2 | 59.6 | | 58.1 |
| Quote is from Declaration of Independence | 1 | 59.2 | > | 50.3 |
| Secretary of State is member of presidential cabinet | 2 | 58.4 | > | 50.7 |
| Local governments do not issue passports | 2 | 57.0 | | 55.7 |
| National conventions nominate presidential candidates | 3 | 55.3 | > | 47.7 |
| Judicial review; decide constitutionality of government's acts | 3 | 54.4 | | 52.5 |
| Interstate highways; cooperation state and federal government | 3 | 54.2 | | 53.9 |
| Checks and balances; Congress investigates agency | 2 | 53.9 | | 51.9 |
| Supreme Court least influenced by lobbying | 3 | 53.3 | | 55.8 |
| Federal judges appointed by President, confirmed by Senate | 2 | 49.7 | > | 41.7 |
| Referendum; vote yes or no to question on ballot | 3 | 48.3 | | 43.6 |
| Power to tax belongs to Congress | 2 | 47.6 | | 50.8 |
| Voters with party affiliation vote in closed primary | 3 | 44.0 | > | 35.9 |
| Treaty must be ratified by the Senate | 2 | 43.0 | | 38.9 |
| Local governments do not license lawyers | 2 | 40.5 | | 37.9 |
| Nomination procedure for President set by political party | 3 | 40.3 | | 43.1 |
| Congress can pass law to double income tax | 3 | 37.7 | | 40.1 |
| Department of State most concerned with foreign affairs | 2 | 35.2 | > | 24.8 |
| Federal government helps buy homes and start businesses | 2 | 34.9 | < | 42.4 |
| Bicameralism is legislative branch with 2 houses | 1 | 34.1 | | 37.6 |
| Authors of quote delegates to Seneca Falls convention | 1 | 33.4 | | 33.1 |
| PAC set by special interests to raise money for candidate | 3 | 32.7 | | 34.2 |
| Statement reflects theory of social contract | 1 | 26.4 | | 31.9 |

[1] The items were categorized as follows: 1 = Democratic principles and the purpose of government; 2 = Structures and functions of political institutions; 3 = Political processes; 4 = Rights, responsibilities, and the law

> 1988 significantly greater than 1998

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SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Civics Assessments–1988 and 1998.

# APPENDIX D

## Members of the NAEP Civics Standing Committee

The NAEP civics standing committee provided advice on the scope and content of the *NAEP 1998 Civics Report Card for the Nation* and the report on the civics 1988 and 1998 assessments, *The Next Generation of Citizens.*

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The design and production of the report were overseen by Rod Rudder. Kelly Gibson designed the cover. Carol Errickson led the considerable production efforts with assistance from Barbette Tardugno, Kelly Gibson, and Sharon Davis-Johnson. Data checking was done by Wendy Grigg, Alice Kass, and Barbette Tardugno. Editorial assistance was provided by Shari Santapau.

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