

NCSS Response to the NAEP 2022 Grade 8 Assessment Results

Silver Spring, MD -- On May 3, 2023, results from the 2022 administration of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Grade 8 Assessments in both Civics and U.S. History were released. The percentage of Grade 8 students who demonstrated proficiency in content knowledge and skills was 22% in Civics and 14% in U.S. History. Overall scores in 2022, while not significantly different from the first year of these assessments in 1998 and 1994, respectively, still indicated a decline from gains achieved in recent assessments.

National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) is deeply concerned by the 2022 NAEP results and contends that these results point to the continued, devastating effects that reducing or fully eliminating social studies courses and programs from schools — especially at the elementary-level — have on student achievement and preparation for college, career, and civic life. While the COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated these results, the continued trend of lost instructional time, the lack of a solid and daily foundation in social studies learning beginning in early childhood and elementary education, and the lack of investment in curriculum and teacher professional development all point toward a well-rounded education being out of reach for many children. As it did when the 2018 NAEP results were released, NCSS continues to call upon policy makers and educational leaders to stop this cycle of curricular neglect and make a long-term financial commitment to support social studies educators in teaching social studies in all grades, in all schools, and to all students. NCSS calls for action to ensure that all students — no matter where they attend school — have access to deep, rich subject-area content and exposure to relevant, powerful social studies instruction.

“If our social studies classrooms are laboratories for democracy where students are learning the content knowledge and skills necessary to be responsible community members and engaged citizens, we should be greatly troubled,” said Shannon M. Pugh,

NCSS president. “This data suggests that students are not receiving a comprehensive program of social studies education in our nation’s classrooms, and we are especially underserving students from diverse and traditionally marginalized and minoritized backgrounds. If we want to leave our representative democracy in the hands of the next generation, we must ensure that they are receiving a high-quality social studies education that includes daily social studies instruction at all grade levels and that in our younger grades we are not pulling students from social studies instruction for remediation in other subjects. Democracy is important. Our republic is important. Social studies education is important because it supports and protects our nation’s ideals and values. To continue to marginalize social studies and not invest in our students and teachers is a threat to our future as a nation and our role as a leader within the global community.”

“Today’s NAEP results continue to demonstrate the urgent need for immediate attention to restore social studies education in the daily school experience of every child, from early learning to high school graduation,” said Lawrence M. Paska, NCSS executive director. “We have within our power the ability to turn these results around for every student. Just as we began to cut social studies programs, funding, and instructional time from the curriculum years ago, we can just as easily start to restore them now. Invest in social studies every day for all students. Invest in standards-based curriculum. Invest in rigorous assessments. Invest in teacher professional development. These investments alone would be a major step that our children at every grade level, in every school, deserve from our education system.”

Complete information on the NAEP assessment program may be found at <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/>.

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Founded in 1921, National Council for the Social Studies is the largest professional association in the country devoted solely to social studies education. NCSS engages and supports educators in strengthening and advocating social studies. With members in all the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and 35 countries, NCSS serves as an umbrella organization for elementary, secondary, and college teachers of history, civics, geography, economics, political science, sociology, psychology, anthropology, and law-related education. The NCSS membership represents K-12 classroom teachers, college and university faculty members, curriculum designers and specialists, social studies supervisors, and leaders in the various disciplines that constitute the social studies.