



ABRIDGED —
**TECHNOLOGY
& ENGINEERING
LITERACY
FRAMEWORK**

for the 2018 NATIONAL ASSESSMENT
OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS





INTRODUCTION

We live in a world that is, to a large extent, shaped by technology: The computers and smartphones we use, the cars and planes we travel in, the homes and offices we inhabit; our food, clothes, entertainment, and medical care—all are created and driven by technology. Technology is also at the root of critical challenges we face as a society, such as the quest to link experts throughout the world, the search for sustainable energy, the ability to deal with global pandemics, and the development of environmentally friendly agriculture to feed a growing world population.

Until now, however, technology has not been a focus of instruction and assessment in our educational system, particularly at the elementary and secondary levels. Because of the growing importance of technology and engineering in the educational landscape, and to support America's ability to contribute to and compete in a global economy, the National Assessment Governing Board initiated development of the first NAEP Technology and Engineering Literacy Assessment. Relating to national efforts in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, the NAEP Technology and Engineering Literacy Assessment measures the “T” and “E” in STEM, augmenting long-standing NAEP assessments in science and mathematics.





NAEP TECHNOLOGY AND ENGINEERING LITERACY (TEL) ASSESSMENT

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), otherwise known as *The Nation's Report Card*, informs the public about the academic achievement of elementary and secondary students in the United States. Report cards communicate the findings of NAEP, a continuing and nationally representative measure of achievement in various subjects over time. For more than 35 years, NAEP has assessed achievement by testing samples of students most often in the 4th, 8th, and 12th grades. The results have become an important source of information on what U.S. students know and are able to do in a range of subject areas.

To create the new assessment, the National Assessment Governing Board sought a framework of technological literacy knowledge and skills that identifies the understandings and applications of technology principles that are important for all students. The framework defines “literacy” as the level of knowledge and competencies needed by all students and citizens. More than testing students for their ability to “do” engineering or produce technology, then, the assessment is designed to gauge how well students can apply their understanding of technology principles to real-life situations. At grade 4, for example, all students are expected to identify types of technologies in their world, design and test a simple model, explain how technologies can result in positive and negative effects, and use common technologies to achieve goals in school and in everyday life. By grade 12, stu-

dents are expected to select and use a variety of tools and media to conduct research, evaluate how well a solution meets specified criteria, and develop a plan to address a complex global issue. To learn more, see a [video clip](#) (“ecosystems”) in the interactive framework of a sample scenario for grade 8 showing a student investigation of how organisms in an ecosystem are affected by a pollutant.

Technological literacy at grades 4, 8, and 12 is a pathway promoting further study and occupational pursuits.

The Governing Board assembled a broad array of individuals and organizations to create a test of students’ abilities to grasp and apply technology principles. The resulting framework is the culmination of a long, complex process that drew on the contributions of thousands of individuals and organizations including technology experts, engineers, teachers, researchers, business leaders, testing experts, and policymakers.

The 2018 NAEP Technology and Engineering Literacy Assessment provides important results and information that can be used to determine whether our nation’s students have the essential knowledge and skills needed in the technology and engineering areas. Policymakers, educators, and the public can use data from the assessment as tools for monitoring certain aspects of student achievement in technology and engineering literacy over time.



DEFINITIONS OF TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, AND TECHNOLOGY AND ENGINEERING LITERACY

Any assessment of students' technology and engineering literacy must start with a clear idea of exactly what technology and engineering literacy means. That, in turn, requires clear definitions of technology and engineering.

“Technology” is any modification of the natural world done to fulfill human needs or desires.

This definition sees technology as encompassing the entire human-made world, from paper to the Internet. Technology also includes the entire infrastructure needed to design, manufacture, operate, and repair technological artifacts, from corporate headquarters and engineering schools to manufacturing plants and media outlets.

“Engineering” is a systematic and often iterative approach to designing objects, processes, and systems to meet human needs and wants.

This framework defines technology and engineering literacy in a broad fashion:

“Technology and engineering literacy” is the capacity to use, understand, and evaluate technology as well as to understand technological principles and strategies needed to develop solutions and achieve goals.

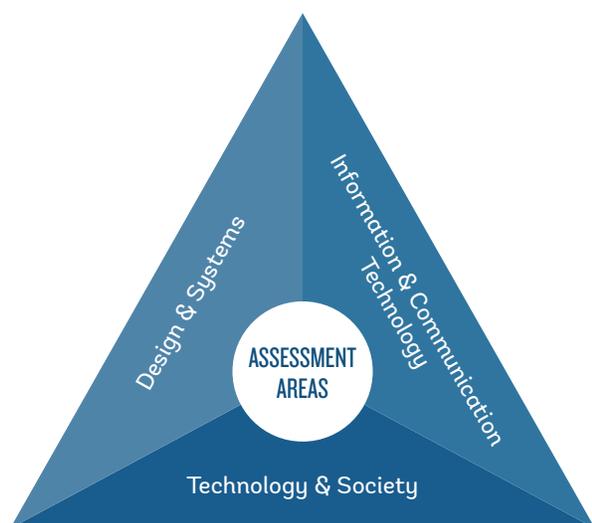
Thus—as with scientific, mathematical, and language literacy—technology and engineering literacy involves the mastery of a set of tools needed to participate intelligently and thoughtfully in society.





THREE AREAS OF TECHNOLOGY AND ENGINEERING LITERACY

Recognizing that it is not possible to assess every aspect of technology and engineering literacy, the TEL assessment framework targets the nature, processes, and uses of technology and engineering that are essential for 21st-century citizens. The assessment objectives are organized into three major areas: **Technology and Society**; **Design and Systems**; and **Information and Communication Technology (ICT)**. Each broad category is further broken down into discrete areas to be assessed.



The interconnected relationship among these three major assessment areas can be illustrated as a three-sided pyramid in which each side supports the other two. For example, in order to address an issue related to technology and society, such as clean water, energy needs, or information research, a person who is literate in technology and engineering must understand technological systems and the engineering design

process and be able to use various information and communication technologies to research the problem and develop possible solutions.

AREA 1 Technology and Society

deals with the effects that technology has on society and on the natural world and with the sorts of ethical questions that arise from those effects. The four sub-areas in which students are assessed include:

A. Interaction of Technology and Humans

concerns the ways in which society drives the improvement and creation of new technologies and how technologies serve society as well as change it. **Fourth graders** are expected to know that people's needs and desires determine which technologies are developed or improved. For example, cellphones were invented, produced, and sold because people found it useful to be able to communicate with others wherever they were. **Eighth graders** are expected to understand how technologies and societies coevolve over significant periods of time. For example, the need to move goods and people across distances prompted the development of a long series of transportation systems from horses and wagons to cars and airplanes. **By 12th grade**, students are expected to realize that the interplay between culture and technology is dynamic, with some changes happening slowly and others very rapidly. They should be able to use various principles of technology design—such as the concepts

of trade-offs and unintended consequences—to analyze complex issues at the interface of technology and society, and to consider the implications of alternative solutions.

B. Effects of Technology on the Natural World

is about the positive and negative ways that technologies affect the natural world. **Fourth graders** are expected to know that sometimes technology can cause environmental harm. For example, litter from food packages and plastic forks and spoons discarded on city streets can travel through storm drains to rivers and oceans where they can harm or kill wildlife. **Eighth graders** are expected to recognize that technology and engineering decisions often involve weighing competing priorities, so that there are no perfect solutions. For example, dams built to control floods and produce electricity have left wilderness areas underwater and affected the ability of certain fish to spawn. **By 12th grade**, students should have had a variety of experiences in which technologies were used to reduce the environmental impacts of other technologies, such as the use of environmental monitoring equipment.

C. Effects of Technology on the World of Information and Knowledge

focuses on the rapidly expanding and changing ways that information and communication technologies enable data to be stored, organized, and accessed, and how those changes bring about benefits and challenges for society. **Fourth graders** should know that information technology provides access to vast amounts of information, that it can also be used to modify and display data, and that communication technologies make it possible to communicate across great dis-

tances using writing, voice, and images. **Eighth graders** should be aware of the rapid progress in development of ICT, should know how information technologies can be used to analyze, display, and communicate data, and should be able to collaborate with other students to develop and modify a knowledge product. **By 12th grade**, students should have a full grasp of the types of data, expertise, and knowledge available online and should be aware of intelligent information technologies and the uses of simulation and modeling.



D. Ethics, Equity, and Responsibility

concerns the profound effects that technologies have on people, how those effects can widen or narrow disparities, and the responsibility that people have for the societal consequences of their technological decisions. **Fourth graders** should recognize that tools and machines can be helpful or harmful. For example, cars are very helpful for going from one place to another quickly, but their use can lead to accidents in which people are seriously injured. **Eighth graders** should be able to recognize that the potential for misusing technologies always exists and that the possible consequences of such misuse must be taken into account when making decisions. **By 12th grade**, students should be able to take into account both intended and unintended consequences in making technological decisions.

AREA 2 Design and Systems

covers the nature of technology, the engineering design process by which technologies are developed, and basic principles of dealing with everyday technologies, including maintenance and troubleshooting.

The four sub-areas in which students are assessed include:

A. Nature of Technology offers a broad definition of technology as consisting of all the products, processes, and systems created by people to meet human needs and desires. **Fourth graders** are expected to distinguish natural and human-made materials, to be familiar with simple tools, and to recognize the vast array of technologies around them. **Eighth graders** should know how technologies are created through invention and innovation, should recognize that sometimes a technology developed for one purpose is later adapted to other purposes, and should understand that technologies are constrained by natural laws. **By 12th grade**, students should have an in-depth understanding of the ways in which technology coevolves with science, mathematics, and other fields; should be able to apply the concept of trade-offs to resolve competing values; and should be able to identify the most important resources needed to carry out a task.

B. Engineering Design is a systematic approach to creating solutions to technological problems and finding ways to meet people's needs and desires. **Fourth graders** should know that engineering design is a purposeful method of solving problems and achieving results. **Eighth graders** should be able to carry out a full engineering design process to solve a problem of

moderate difficulty. **By 12th grade**, students should be able to meet a complex challenge, weigh alternative solutions, and use the concept of trade-offs to balance competing values.

C. Systems Thinking is a way of thinking about devices and situations so as to better understand interactions among components, root causes of problems, and the consequences of various solutions. **Fourth graders** should know that a system is a collection of interacting parts that make up a whole, that systems require energy, and that systems can be either living or nonliving. **Eighth graders** should be able to analyze a technological system in terms of goals, inputs, processes, outputs, feedback, and control, and they should be able to trace the life cycle of a product from raw materials to eventual disposal. **By 12th grade**, students should be aware that technological systems are the product of goal-directed designs and that the building blocks of any technology consist of systems that are embedded within larger technological, social, and environmental systems. They should also be aware that the stability of a system is influenced by all of its components, especially those in a feedback loop.

D. Maintenance and Troubleshooting is the set of methods used to prevent technological devices and systems from breaking down and to diagnose and fix them when they fail. **Fourth graders** should know that it is important to care for tools and machines so they can be used when they are needed. Students should also know that if something does not work as expected, it is possible to find out what the problem is in order to decide if the item should be replaced or how to fix it. **Eighth graders** should be familiar



with the concept of maintenance and should understand that failure to maintain a device can lead to a malfunction. They should also be able to carry out troubleshooting, at least in simple situations. **By 12th grade**, students should know that many devices are designed to operate with high efficiency only if they are checked periodically and properly maintained. They should also have developed the capability to troubleshoot devices and systems, including those that they may have little experience with.

AREA 3 Information and Communication Technology

includes computers and software learning tools, networking systems and protocols, hand-held digital devices, and other technologies for accessing, creating, and communicating information and for facilitating creative expression.

The five sub-areas in which students are assessed include:

A. Construction and Exchange of Ideas and Solutions concerns an essential set of skills needed for using ICT and media to communicate ideas and collaborate with others. **Fourth graders** should understand what is expected from members working as part of a team and should realize that teams are better than individuals at solving many kinds of problems. **Eighth graders** should know that communicating always involves understanding the audience—the people for whom the message is intended. They should also be able to use feedback from others, and provide constructive criticism. **By 12th grade**, students are expected to have developed a number of effective strategies for collaborating with others and improving their teamwork. They should be able to synthesize

information from different sources and communicate with multiple audiences.

B. Information Research includes the capability to employ technologies and media to find, evaluate, analyze, organize, and synthesize information from different sources. **Fourth graders** should be aware of a number of digital and network tools that can be used for finding information, and they should be able to use these tools to collect, organize, and display data in response to specific questions and to help solve problems. **Eighth graders** should be aware of digital and network tools and be able to use them efficiently. They should be aware that some of the information they retrieve may be distorted, exaggerated, or otherwise misrepresented, and they should be able to identify cases where the information is suspect. **By 12th grade**, students should be able to use advanced search methods and select the best digital tools and resources for various purposes. They should also be able to evaluate information for timeliness and accuracy.

C. Investigation of Problems concerns the use of information and communication technology to define and solve problems in core school subjects and in practical situations. **Fourth graders** should be able to use a variety of information and communication technologies to investigate a local or otherwise familiar issue and to generate, present, and advocate for possible solutions. **Eighth graders** should be able to use digital tools to identify and research a global issue and to identify and compare different possible solutions. **By 12th grade**, students should be able to use digital tools to research global issues and to fully investigate the pros and cons of differ-



ent approaches. They should be able to design and conduct complex investigations in various subject areas using a variety of digital tools to collect, analyze, and display information and be able to explain the rationale for the approaches they used in designing the investigation as well as the implications of the results.

D. Acknowledgment of Ideas and Information involves respect for the intellectual property of others and knowledge of how to credit others' contributions appropriately, paying special attention to the misuse of information enabled by rapid technological advances. **Fourth graders** should understand that it is permissible to use others' ideas as long as appropriate credit is given. They should also know that copyrighted materials cannot be shared freely. **Eighth graders** should be aware of general principles concerning the use of other people's ideas and know that these principles are the basis for such things as school rules and federal laws governing such use. They should know about the limits of fair use of verbatim quotes and how to cite sources. **By 12th grade**, students should understand the fundamental reasons for intellectual property

laws and should know acceptable practices for citing sources when incorporating ideas, quotes, and images into their own work.

E. Selection and Use of Digital Tools includes both knowledge and skills for choosing appropriate tools and using a wide variety of electronic devices, including networked computing and communication technology and media. **Fourth graders** should know that different digital tools have different purposes and they should also be able to use a variety of digital tools that are appropriate for their age level. **Eighth graders** should be familiar with different types of digital tools and be able to move easily from one type of tool to another—for example, creating a document or image with one tool and then using a second tool to communicate the result to someone at a distant location. **By 12th grade**, students should be competent in the use of a broad variety of digital tools and be able to explain why some tools are more effective than others that were designed to serve the same purpose, based on the features of the individual tools.

Although these elements are central to the design of the NAEP Technology and Engineering Literacy Assessment, they are not sufficient to describe the kinds of reasoning to be expected from students, the context or subject matter that will be used to construct test items, or the overall shape of the entire assessment. The assessment targets, and the subareas within each describing what students should be able to do, foreshadow the crosscutting practices—ways of thinking and reasoning—for which the TEL assessment is designed.



PRACTICES AND CONTEXTS FOR TECHNOLOGY AND ENGINEERING LITERACY

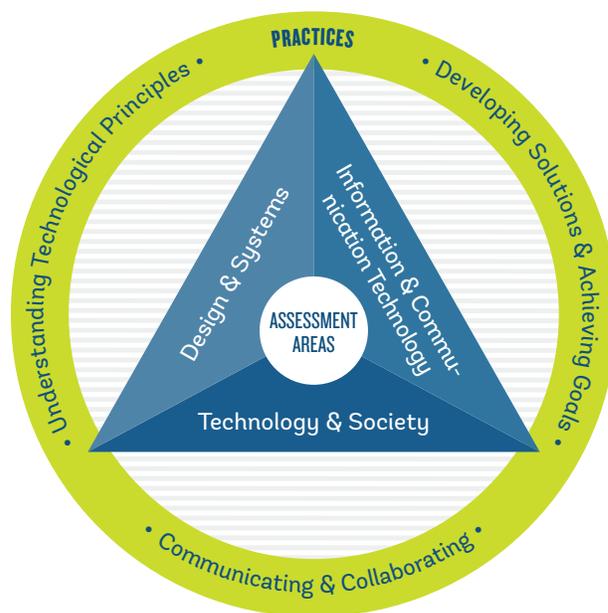
In all three areas of technology and engineering literacy, students are expected to be able to apply particular ways of thinking and reasoning when approaching a problem, and they are expected to do so in various contexts.

The practices can be grouped into three broad categories: Understanding Technological Principles; Developing Solutions and Achieving Goals; and Communicating and Collaborating.

Understanding Technological Principles focuses on students' knowledge and understanding of technology and their capability to think and reason with that knowledge.

Developing Solutions and Achieving Goals refers to students' systematic application of technological knowledge, tools, and skills to address problems and achieve goals presented in societal, design, curriculum, and realistic contexts.

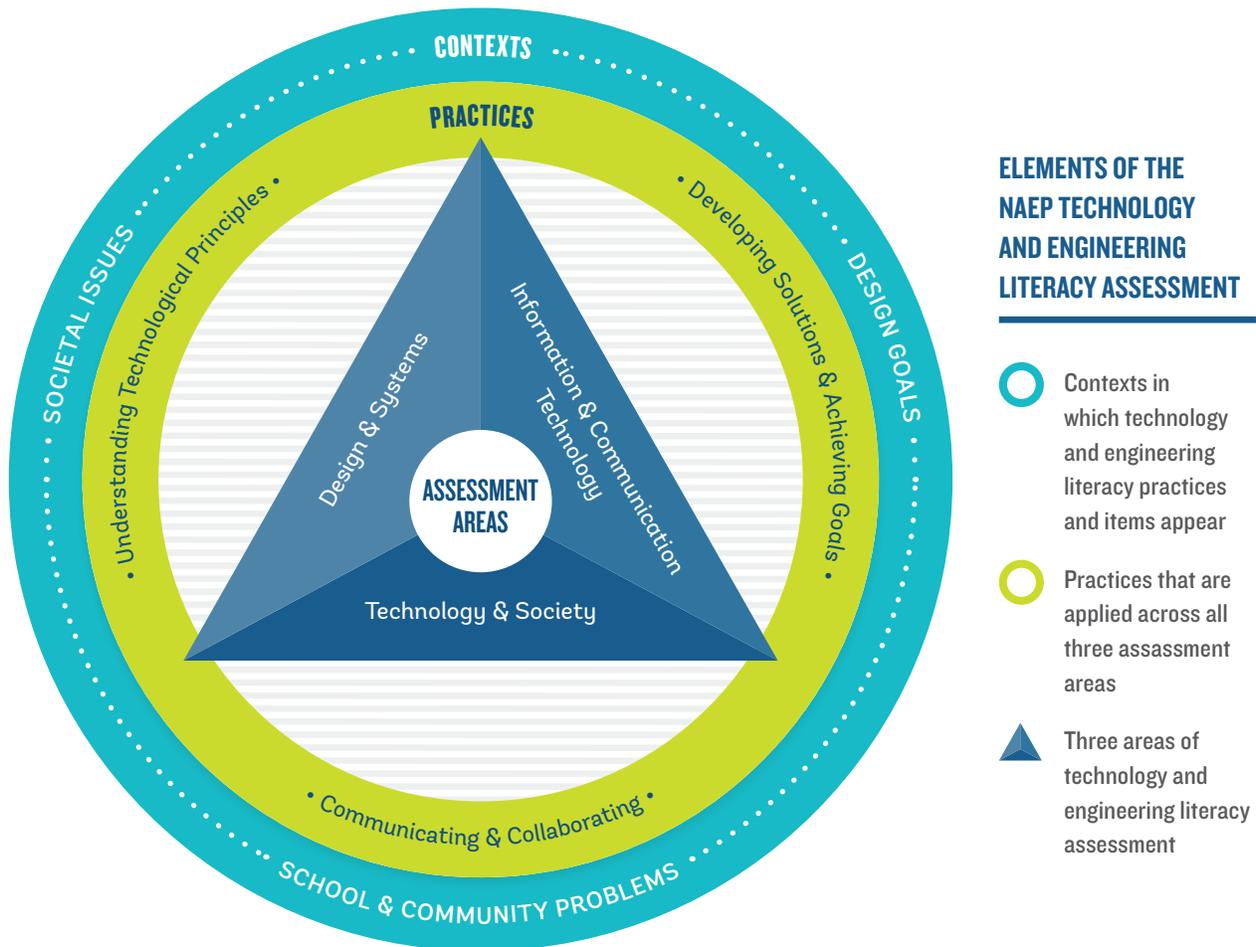
Communicating and Collaborating centers on students' capabilities to use contemporary technologies to communicate for a variety of purposes and in a variety of ways, working individually or in teams.



These practices are applied across all three major assessment areas. For example, communicating effectively and collaborating with others are necessary skills for understanding the effects of technology on the natural world, designing an engineering solution to a technological problem, and achieving a goal using information and communication technologies.



As crucial to the assessment as the practices are the contexts—the situations and types of problems in which assessment tasks and items will be set.



The practices expected of students are general, crosscutting reasoning processes that students must use in order to show that they understand and can use their technological knowledge and skills. The contexts in which technology and engineering literacy tasks and items appear will include typical issues, problems, and goals that students might encounter in school or practical situations. Together, the assessment targets, practices, and contexts provide a structure for the generation of tasks and items.

The table on the next page shows examples of the types of tasks and items that result when these three elements are combined. The table shows how the three practices—Understanding Technological Principles, Developing Solutions and Achieving Goals, and Communicating and Collaborating—can be used to classify the general types of thinking and reasoning intended by the assessment targets in the three major assessment areas of Technology and Society, Design and Systems, and Information and Communication Technology.

Classification of Types of Assessment Targets in the Three Major Assessment Areas According to the Practices for Technology and Engineering Literacy

	Technology and Society	Design and Systems	Information and Communication Technology
Understanding Technological Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze advantages and disadvantages of an existing technology • Explain costs and benefits • Compare effects of two technologies on individuals • Propose solutions and alternatives • Predict consequences of a technology • Select among alternatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe features of a system or process • Identify examples of a system or process • Explain the properties of different materials that determine which is suitable to use for a given application or product • Analyze a need • Classify the elements of a system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe features and functions of ICT tools • Explain how parts of a whole interact • Analyze and compare relevant features • Critique a process or outcome • Evaluate examples of effective resolution of opposing points of view • Justify tool choice for a given purpose
Developing Solutions and Achieving Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select appropriate technology to solve a societal problem • Develop a plan to investigate an issue • Gather and Organize data and information • Analyze and Compare advantages and disadvantages of a proposed solution • Investigate environmental and economic impacts of a proposed solution • Evaluate trade-offs and impacts of a proposed solution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and Build a product using appropriate processes and materials • Develop forecasting techniques • Construct and Test a model or prototype • Produce an alternative design or product • Evaluate trade-offs • Determine how to meet a need by choosing resources required to meet or satisfy that need • Plan for durability • Troubleshoot malfunctions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select and Use appropriate tools to achieve a goal • Search media and digital resources • Evaluate credibility and solutions • Propose and Implement strategies • Predict outcomes of a proposed approach • Plan research and presentations • Organize data and information • Transform from one representational form to another • Conduct experiments using digital tools and simulations
Communicating and Collaborating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present innovative, sustainable solutions • Represent alternative analyses and solutions • Display positive and negative consequences using data and media • Compose a multimedia presentation • Produce an accurate timeline of a technological development • Delegate team assignments • Exchange data and information with virtual peers and experts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display design ideas using models and blueprints • Use a variety of media and formats to communicate data, information, and ideas • Exhibit design of a prototype • Represent data in graphs, tables, and models • Organize, Monitor, and Evaluate the effectiveness of design teams • Request input from virtual experts and peers • Provide and Integrate feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan delegation of tasks among team members • Provide and Integrate feedback from virtual peers and experts to make changes in a presentation • Critique presentations • Express historical issues in a multimedia presentation • Argue from an opposing point of view • Explain to a specified audience how something works • Address multiple audiences • Synthesize data and points of view



CONTENT AND DESIGN

To identify what students know and can do with regard to technology and engineering, the NAEP TEL framework calls for the assessment to be totally computer-based. In 2018 the NAEP TEL assessment was conducted at grade 8 with a national sample of students in public and private schools. The assessment includes tasks and items sampled from the domain of technology and engineering literacy achievement identified by the intersection of the three major areas of technology and engineering literacy and the crosscutting practices at grades 4, 8, and 12—grades that will participate in the TEL assessment in future years.

Allowing students to demonstrate the wide range of knowledge and skills detailed in the NAEP Technology and Engineering Literacy Assessment targets requires a departure from the typical assessment designs used in other NAEP content areas. Thus, students are asked to perform a variety of actions using a diverse set of tools in the process of solving problems and meeting goals within rich, complex sce-

narios that reflect realistic situations. Consequently, this assessment relies primarily on scenario-based assessment sets that test students through their interaction with multimedia tasks. These include conventional item types, such as selected-response items, and also monitor student actions as they manipulate components of the systems and models that are presented as part of the task.

Because of their capability to replicate authentic situations examinees may encounter in their lives, scenarios have the potential to provide a level of authenticity other types of assessment tasks cannot provide. At the same time, the choice to use these complex tasks reduces the number of measures that can be included in any one test and causes many of the measures to be interdependent because they are related to the same scenario. To counteract this interdependency and ensure reliability, the NAEP assessment of technology and engineering literacy also includes sets of discrete items that produce independent measures.



Scenario-Based Assessment Sets

There are two types of scenario-based assessment sets, one long and one short. The long scenarios take students approximately 25 minutes. The short scenarios take students about 12 to 15 minutes to respond. The two types of scenarios have common characteristics, but they differ in the complexity of the scenario and the number of embedded assessment tasks and items to which a student is asked to respond.

A set of sample [video clips](#) demonstrates the types of interactivity and functionality of tools that students might be expected to use as they respond to short and long scenarios that were developed for the NAEP Technology and Engineering Literacy Assessment.

Discrete Item Sets

Discrete item sets include conventional selected-response items and short constructed-response items. The discrete item sets comprise approximately 10-15 stand-alone items in either selected- or constructed-response format to be completed within a 25-minute block. Each discrete item provides a stimulus that presents enough information to answer the particular question posed in the stem of the item. Items in discrete sets are selected-response items (for example, multiple choice) or short constructed-response items in which a student writes a text-based response.





CONTEXTUAL VARIABLES

Contextual data on students, teachers, and schools are needed to fulfill the statutory requirement that NAEP include information, whenever feasible, for various subgroups of students at the national level including gender, race/ethnicity, eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch, English language learners, and students with disabilities. Therefore, students, teachers, and school administrators participating in NAEP are asked to respond to questionnaires designed to gather demographic information. Information is also gathered from non-NAEP sources, such as state, district, or school records. For the 2018 NAEP Technology and Engineering Literacy Assessment, only student and school information was collected as many students have

not taken a separate course in technology and engineering literacy taught by a specific teacher.

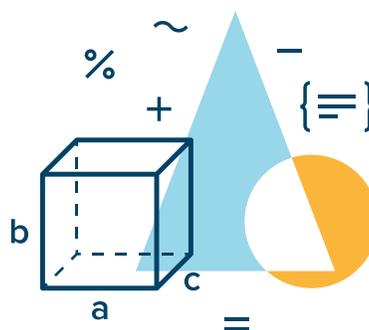
In addition to demographic information, contextual questionnaires include questions about variables related to opportunities to learn and achievement in technology and engineering literacy. The variables are selected to be of topical interest, to be timely, and to be directly related to academic achievement and current trends and issues in technology and engineering literacy. Questions do not solicit information about personal topics or information irrelevant to the collection of data on technology and engineering literacy achievement.



ACHIEVEMENT LEVELS

The Governing Board uses student achievement levels of *NAEP Basic*, *NAEP Proficient*, and *NAEP Advanced* to report results of NAEP assessments. The achievement levels represent an informed judgment of “how good is good enough” in the various subjects that are assessed. Technology and engineering literacy achievement levels specific to the *2018 NAEP Technology and Engineering Literacy Framework* elaborate on the generic policy definitions of *NAEP Basic*, *NAEP Proficient*, and *NAEP Advanced* achievement. Achievement level definitions have been developed for each

of the three areas to be reported separately in the assessment and are used to guide item development and standard setting for the *NAEP Technology and Engineering Literacy Assessment*.





CONCLUSION

For generations, students have been taught about technology and have been instructed in the use of various technological devices, but there has been no way to know exactly what students understand about technologies and their effective uses. The exploding growth in the world of technology led the Governing Board to sponsor the development of a framework for a NAEP Technology and Engineering Literacy Assessment. The Governing Board hopes that this *NAEP Technology and Engineering Literacy Framework* serves as a significant national

measure of what students know and can do in technology and engineering, and supports improvements in student achievement.

To view the complete 2018 NAEP Technology and Engineering Literacy Framework, or to view an interactive version of the framework, please visit <https://nagb.gov/2018-technology-framework.pdf> or call us at (202) 357-6938.



The National Assessment Governing Board is an independent, nonpartisan board whose members include governors, state legislators, local and state school officials, educators, business representatives, and members of the general public. Congress created the 26-member Governing Board in 1988 to set policy for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).



For more information on the National Assessment Governing Board, please visit www.nagb.gov or call us at **202-357-6938**.