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Measuring Up: A National Report Card

(NAPSA)—*This article is an excerpt from a position paper by Educational Testing Service (ETS), the world's largest testing and measurement organization, one that is committed to providing teachers with everything they need to help improve education.*

Some educational professionals feel that America is not doing a good enough job at educating students. Far too many of our children are not learning what they will need to succeed either in the workplace or college. The public knows it and is demanding better schools.

Twenty years ago, *A Nation at Risk* served as a call to action for policy makers, parents and practitioners. Today, there is an unprecedented national commitment to high academic standards and achievement for all our children.

But education in America remains a decidedly local enterprise. It is up to states and local school districts to determine what students are taught, what they have to know and be able to do to graduate from high school or to move from third grade to fourth. Each state determines how student progress will be measured, how high students must score on a test to be called "proficient."

There is no national requirement for what students must learn. But there is the "nation's report card," which gives us a benchmark for how we are doing. For nearly 35 years, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has been periodically assessing students across the nation.

No student gets an individual score, but the nation clearly gets a grade. So far, we're not passing. In 2000, NAEP revealed that only about one in four students in



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fourth and eighth grades were proficient in mathematics. At high school, it is even worse—only one in every six 12th graders reached the proficient level.

The federal No Child Left Behind Act has put considerable pressure on states and school districts to improve student performance. Each state will measure progress somewhat differently, but we will continue to have NAEP sampling to provide that national benchmark. Policy makers—and taxpayers—at every level are investing a great deal of money in schools. We need good data to know how that investment is paying off.

As one of the contractors that works with the United States Department of Education to administer NAEP, ETS is committed to providing good data and analysis.

To share your thoughts and questions on this subject, visit www.ets.org.