



Frequently Asked Questions

2019 Main Study



What is TIMSS?

The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) is an international assessment and research project designed to measure trends in mathematics and science achievement at the fourth- and eighth-grade levels as well as school and teacher practices related to instruction. Since 1995, TIMSS has been administered every 4 years. TIMSS 2019, the seventh study in the series, will involve students from more than 60 countries, including the United States. In 2019, for the first time TIMSS will be administered digitally. The electronic version of TIMSS, sometimes called “eTIMSS,” will be on the same scale and directly comparable to the previous paper versions of TIMSS.

Why was my school selected for participation?

Schools of varying demographics and locations were randomly selected so that the overall U.S. sample is representative of the overall U.S. school population. The random selection process is important for ensuring that a country’s sample accurately reflects its schools and, therefore, can fairly be compared with samples of schools from other countries.

Why should my school and students participate?

TIMSS informs national discussions about student skills, education policy, and international competitiveness. It is important for selected schools to participate because they represent similar U.S. schools across the country. When students participate and give their best effort, TIMSS gets the most accurate measure possible of student achievement in the U.S. to compare with other countries.

Will all our fourth- or eighth-grade students be asked to participate?

It depends on the number of fourth- or eighth-grade classrooms in the school. In schools with only one or two such classrooms, all students will be asked to participate. In schools with more than two such classrooms, only students in two randomly selected classrooms will be asked to participate. In addition, some students with special needs or who are English language learners may be excused from the assessment.

Who conducts the TIMSS assessment?

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), within the U.S. Department of Education, is authorized to conduct this study under the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002, 20 U.S.C. §9543), and approval of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget under OMB# 1850-0695. The entire assessment process will be administered on behalf of NCES by trained staff from Westat, a research organization under contract with NCES.

How are the school and teacher questionnaires administered?

The teacher and school questionnaires are administered online from a secure website. Teacher questionnaires ask teachers about their experience, available resources, and instructional practices and take about 30 minutes to complete. School questionnaires ask about school practices and resources and take about 30 minutes to complete.

Do teachers need to help administer the assessment?

No, Westat TIMSS staff will visit the school on the day of the assessment, bringing with them all the materials required. The Westat TIMSS staff will administer the assessments to students.

Do schools need to provide computer equipment for the assessment?

No, Westat TIMSS staff will bring all the equipment needed for the assessment, including tablets, styluses, and keyboards.

When will the assessment be conducted?

The assessment will be conducted between April and May 2019. Each school will be notified of its scheduled assessment date in summer/fall 2018. Westat TIMSS staff will work with schools to identify an alternate date should there be a conflict on that date.

How long does the assessment take?

The assessment takes 72 minutes at fourth grade and 90 minutes at eighth grade, and there will be breaks between sections and a questionnaire that takes 30 minutes. The two classes will be assessed in sequential sessions, with one class assessed in the morning and the second class assessed in the afternoon.

What will happen with the collected data?

The data from the assessment will be used to evaluate how the knowledge and skills of U.S. students compare to those of their peers in other participating countries. All of the information provided by school staff and students may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as required by law (20 U.S.C. §9573 and 6 U.S.C. §151). Reports of the findings from the assessment will not identify participating districts, schools, students, or individual staff. Individual responses will be combined with those of other participants to produce summary statistics and reports.

Where can I find more information about TIMSS?

Visit the TIMSS website at <http://nces.ed.gov/timss>.

For additional information about the TIMSS 2019 assessment, contact the TIMSS information hotline at **855-445-5604** or email TIMSS@westat.com.

