

# **“Ensuring All Children Learn to the Best of Their Ability”**

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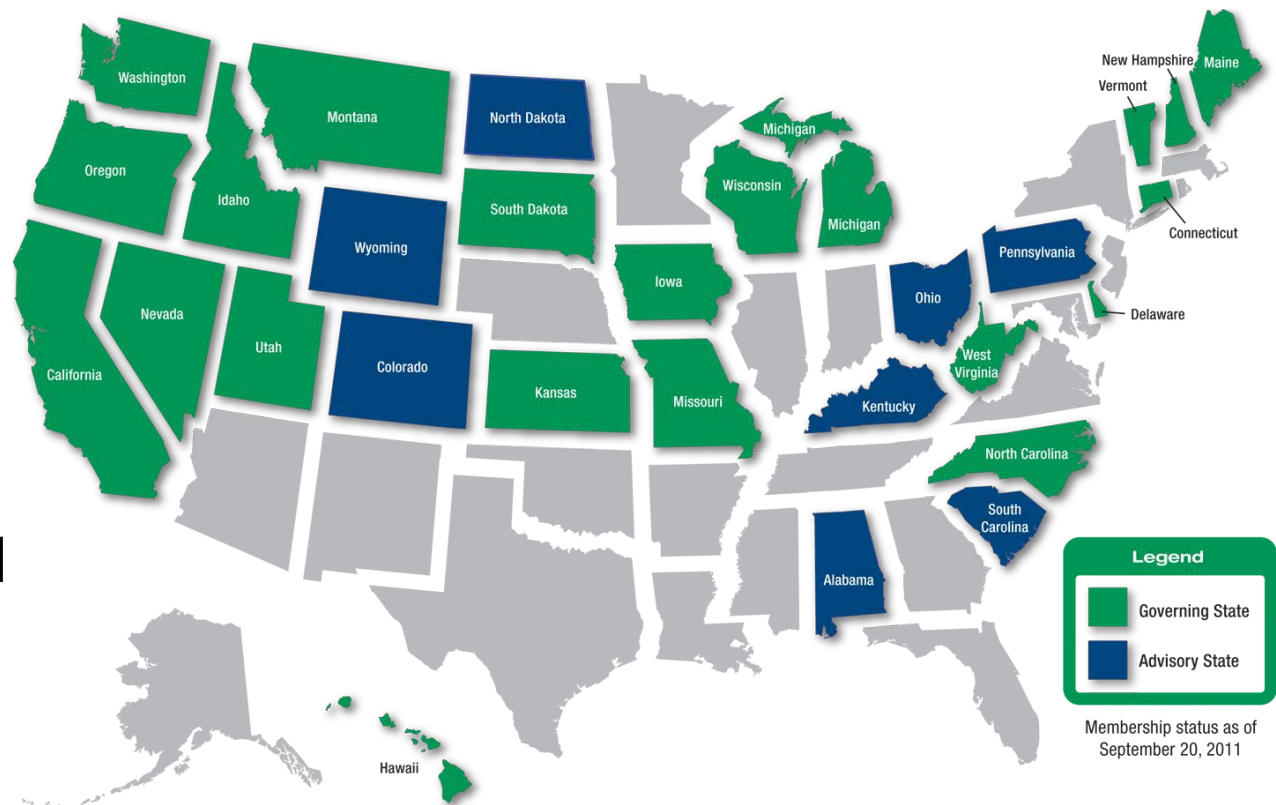
**Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium**



Mayor's Education Summit  
Anchorage, Alaska  
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# What is the “Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium”?

A state-led consortium of 29 states developing next-generation assessments in English language arts/literacy and mathematics aligned to the Common Core State Standards



# The Challenge

How do we get from here...

High-quality  
learning  
standards for all  
K-12 students



...to here?

All students  
learn to the best  
of their ability

...and what can an  
assessment system  
do to help?

# Three Purposes of Assessments

- To help make decisions for placement or certification
- To help make day-to-day instructional decisions
- To help make decisions about program effectiveness

*(Testing in America's Schools, US Office of Technology Assessment, 1992)*

# Different Purposes => Different Designs

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- Do we need to test all students, or would a random sample do?
- How important is quick turn-around?
- Should the focus be narrow or broad?
- How important is precision and accuracy?

# Pssst.....What about validity?

- Test validity asks this question:

Does the use of assessment results lead to better-informed decisions?

*(Educational Measurement, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., National Council on Measurement in Education & American Council on Education, 2002)*

# The Swiss Army Knife Problem



- Would you want to use a Swiss Army Knife as your everyday can opener?
- When tests are used for multiple purposes, they end up not being quality instruments for any purpose.

# What's a school district to do?

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- Decide on the important issues
- Ask the validity question: Do our assessments contribute to better decisions?
- Move towards improvement



# Two Important Questions...

...to help “ensure all children learn to the best of their ability”

1. Do we really know how well our children are performing?
2. Are there assessment approaches that can help improve learning?

# What do we know about student performance?

Percent Proficient on SBA -- 2011			
	Gr. 4	Gr. 8	Gr. 10
Reading	76%	83%	75%
Writing	80%	78%	75%
Math	78%	67%	65%

But what does “Proficient” mean in Alaska?

# National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) provides some clues

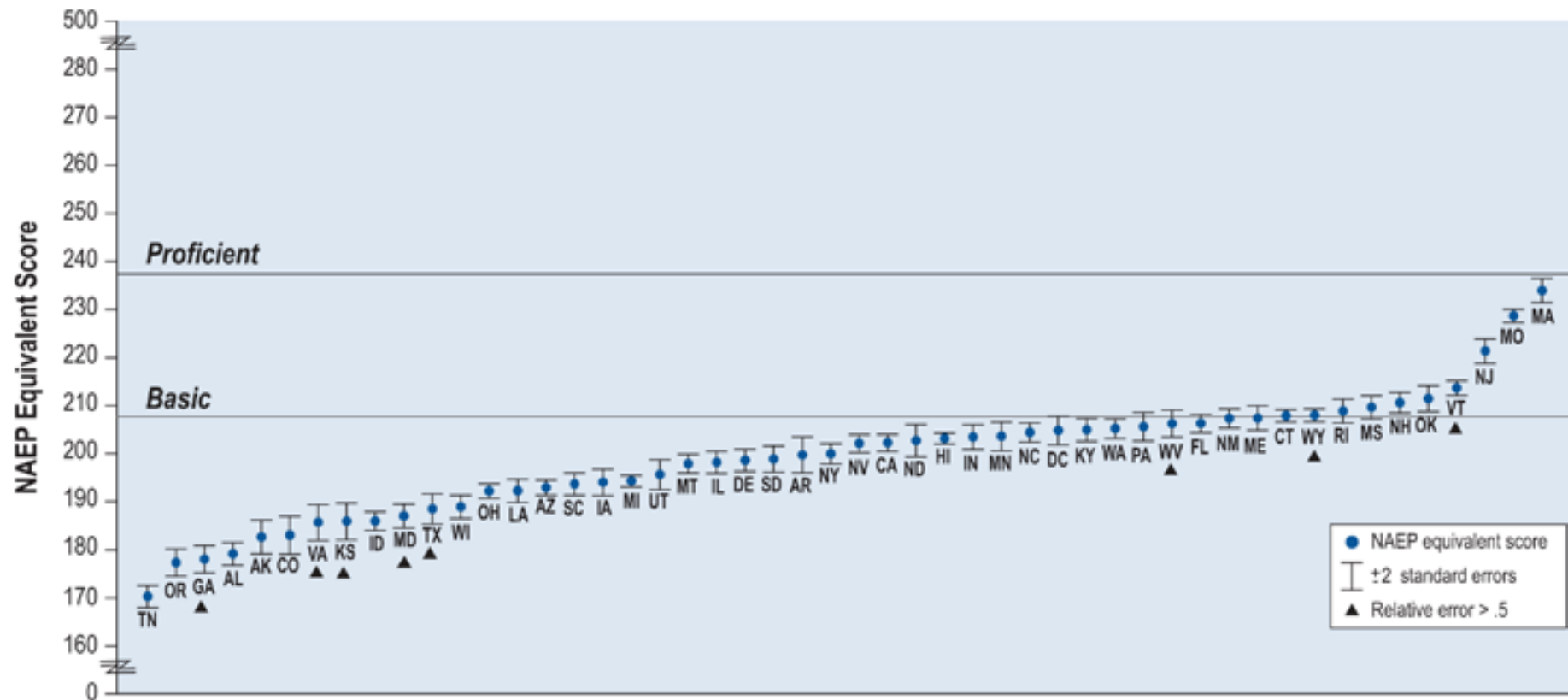
- Given to random sample of students in each state
- Every other year for Reading and Math, Gr. 4 & 8

- On NAEP, Proficient means...

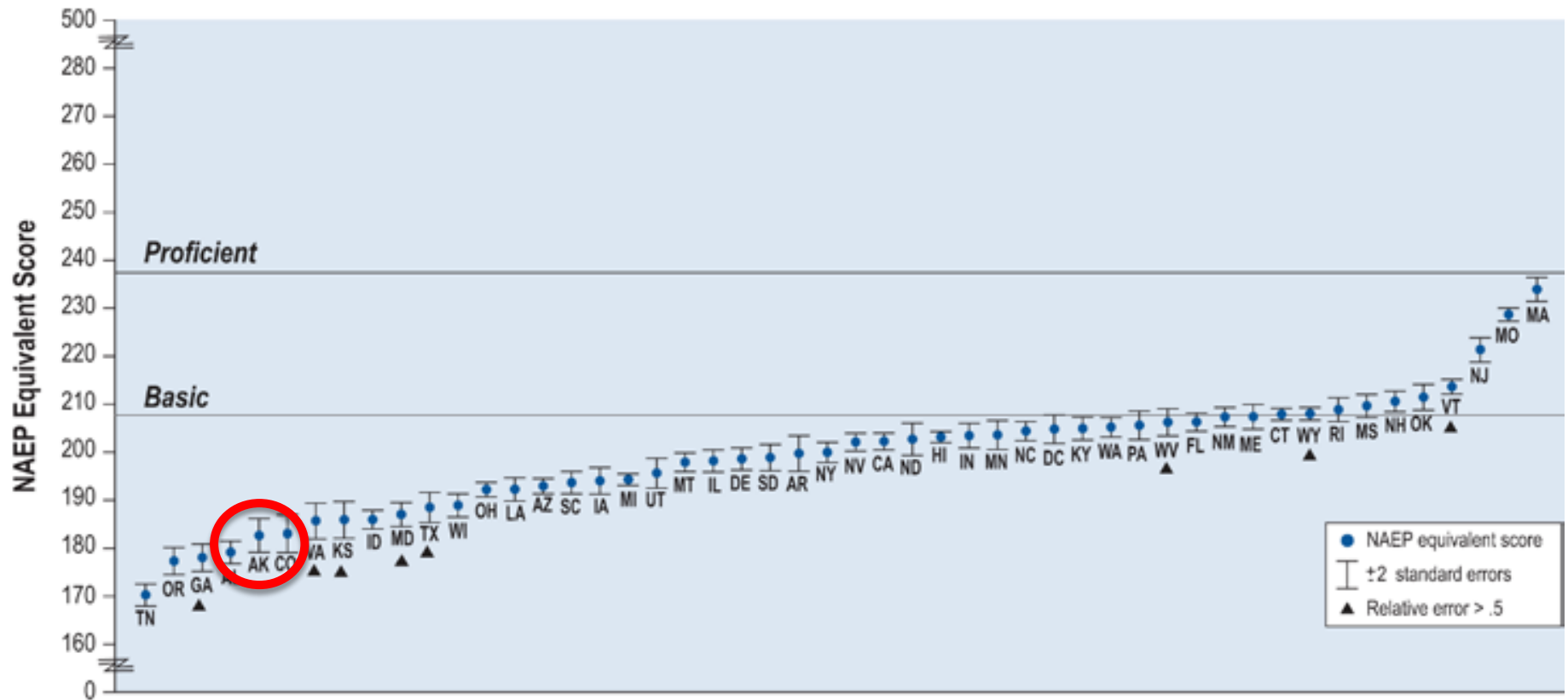
*"...solid academic performance for each grade assessed. Students reaching this level have demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter, including subject-matter knowledge, application of such knowledge to real world situations, and analytical skills appropriate to the subject matter."*

# NAEP Mapping Study -- 2009

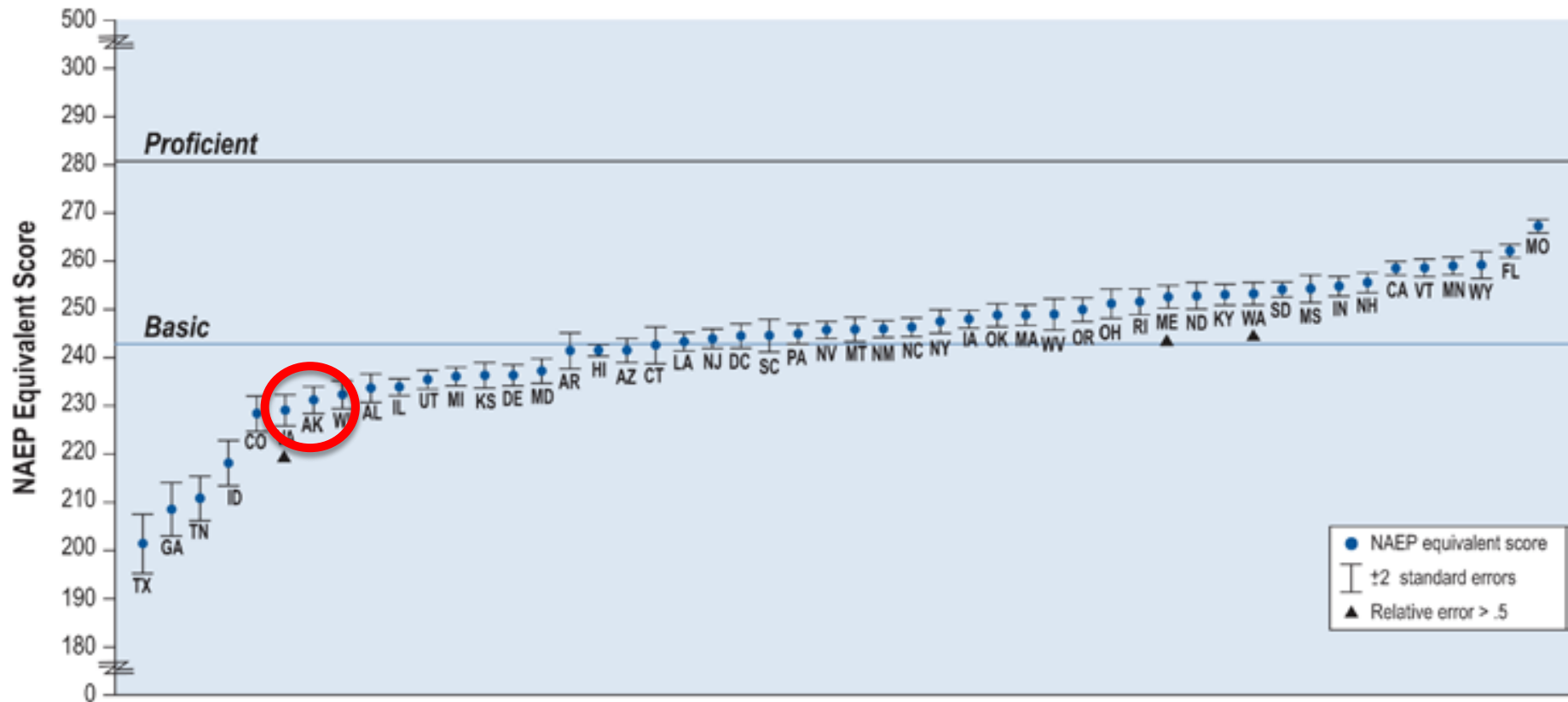
Each State's "Proficient" score on its state assessment is placed on the NAEP scale



# Grade 4 Reading



# Gr 8 Reading



# Grade 4 Math



# Grade 8 Math





# Suggestions for Question 1

- Consider participation in NAEP's Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA)
- Systematically use NAEP released items
- Investigate PISA-in-the-classroom

# The Second Question...

2. Are there assessment approaches that can help improve learning?

Yes...

Improving teacher capacity for making informed instructional decisions

# A Limited Knowledge Base

Research consistently shows teachers spend 25-35% of their time in assessment activities.

However, most Colleges of Education require no or minimal training in assessment practices

(Stiggins / Lissitz & Schafer)

# Formative Assessment

“Formative assessment is a planned process in which assessment-elicited evidence of student status is used by teachers to adjust their ongoing instructional procedures or by students to adjust their current learning-tactics.”

(Jim Popham / Margaret Heritage)

# Formative Assessment: What It Isn't

- It is not a test.
- It is not an interim test (also referred to as a benchmark or periodic test) administered every few months by schools or districts.
- It is not the unplanned, serendipitous use of student cues to adjust teaching.

# Formative Assessment: What It Can Do

In a research review based on 250 empirical studies of classroom assessment that had been drawn from more than 680 published investigations, Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam concluded:

*“The research reported here shows conclusively that formative assessment does improve learning.”*

*(Assessment in Education, 1998)*

# Formative Assessment: What It Can Do

Two Other Quotes from the Research Review...

- The student gains in learning triggered by formative assessment were “amongst the largest ever reported for educational interventions.”
- “Significant gains can be achieved by many different routes, and initiatives here are not likely to fail through neglect of delicate and subtle features.”

# And, More Recently . . .

“Five reviews of the research in this area synthesized a total of more than 4,000 research studies undertaken during the last 40 years. The conclusion was clear: When implemented well, formative assessment can effectively double the speed of student learning.”

(William, *Educational Leadership*, 2007-2008)



# Suggestions for Question 2

- Develop and implement a strategy

For example...

- Establish professional development capacity for Formative Assessment
- Include both teachers and administrators in capacity-building
- Develop resources and Professional Learning Communities for teachers

# Questions / Discussion