

Adopted: March 3, 2022



National Assessment Governing Board

Assessment Framework Development

Policy Statement

It is the policy of the National Assessment Governing Board to conduct a comprehensive, inclusive, and deliberative process to determine and update the content and format of all assessments under the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The primary result of this process shall be an assessment framework (hereafter, “framework”) with objectives to guide development of NAEP assessments for students in grades 4, 8, and 12 that are valid, reliable, and reflective of widely accepted professional standards.

The Governing Board, through its Assessment Development Committee (ADC), shall monitor the framework development and update processes to ensure that the final Governing Board-adopted framework and specifications and their development processes comply with all principles and guidelines of the Governing Board Assessment Framework Development Policy.

Introduction

Since its creation by Congress in 1988, the Governing Board has been responsible for determining the content and format of all NAEP assessments. The Governing Board has carried out this important statutory responsibility by engaging a broad spectrum of stakeholders in developing recommendations for the knowledge and skills NAEP should assess in various grades and subject areas. From this comprehensive process, the Governing Board develops a framework to outline the content and format for each NAEP assessment at grades 4, 8, and 12. Development of a framework for a new assessment is guided by the schedule of NAEP assessments adopted by the Governing Board.

Under provisions of the National Assessment of Educational Progress Authorization Act of 2002 ([P.L. 107-279](#)), Congress authorized the Governing Board to continue its mandate for determining the content and format of valid and reliable assessments based on widely accepted technical and professional standards for test development and active participation of stakeholders. This mandate aligns with the purpose of NAEP, which is to provide fair and accurate measurement of student academic achievement.

Given this mandate, the Governing Board must ensure that the highest standards of test development are employed in framework development to support the validity of educational inferences made using NAEP data. The Governing Board Item Development Policy separately details principles and guidelines for NAEP assessment items, and the Governing Board has final authority on the appropriateness of all assessment items.

By law, NAEP assessments shall not evaluate personal beliefs or publicly disclose personally identifiable information, and NAEP assessment items shall be secular, neutral, and non-ideological and free from racial, cultural, gender, or regional bias.

NAEP framework development shall be informed by a broad, balanced, and inclusive set of factors. Frameworks shall reflect current curricula and instruction, research regarding cognitive development and instruction, and the nation’s future needs and desirable levels of achievement. This delicate balance between “what is” and “what should be” is at the core of the NAEP framework development process.

To develop the recommended framework for Board adoption, the Governing Board convenes stakeholders (via panels and broad outreach) to identify and/or provide feedback on the content and design for each NAEP assessment.

In this process, involved stakeholders shall include:

Teachers	Policymakers
Curriculum Specialists	Business Representatives
Content Experts	Parents
Assessment Specialists	Users of Assessment Data
State Administrators	Researchers and Technical Experts
Local School Administrators	Members of the public

This Policy complies with the National Assessment of Educational Progress Authorization Act of 2002 ([P.L. 107-279](#)) and the documents listed below which express widely accepted technical and professional standards for test development. These standards reflect the agreement of recognized experts in the field, as well as the policy positions of major professional and technical associations concerned with educational testing. A procedures manual shall provide additional detail about how this Policy is implemented.

The Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing. (2014). Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and National Council on Measurement in Education.

Code of Fair Testing Practices in Education. (2004). Washington, DC: Joint Committee on Testing Practices.

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Statistical Standards. (2012).

Principles for Framework Development

Principle 1: Elements of Frameworks

Principle 2: Development and Update Process

Principle 3: Periodic Framework Review

Principle 4: Elements of Specifications

Principle 5: Role of the Governing Board

Guidelines for the Principles

Principle 1: Elements of Frameworks

The Governing Board is responsible for developing a framework for each NAEP assessment. The framework shall define the scope of the domain to be measured by delineating the knowledge and skills to be tested at each grade, the format of the NAEP assessment, the achievement level descriptions, and recommendations for subject-specific contextual variables.

Guidelines

- a) The framework shall determine the extent of the domain and the scope of the construct to be measured for each grade level in a NAEP assessment. The framework shall provide information to the public and test developers on three key aspects of the assessment:
 - *What* is to be measured, including definitions of the constructs being assessed and reported upon and descriptions of the purpose(s) of the assessment;
 - *How* that domain of content is most appropriately measured in a large-scale assessment, including the format requirements of the items and the assessment, the content and skills to be tested at each grade, sample items for each grade to be tested, the weighting of the item pool in terms of content and cognitive process dimensions, and any additional requirements for the assessment administration unique to a given subject area, such as provision of ancillary materials and uses of technology; and
 - *How much* of the content domain, in terms of knowledge and skills, should students know and be able to do at the *NAEP Basic*, *NAEP Proficient*, and *NAEP Advanced* levels in achievement level descriptions for each grade to be tested. The achievement level descriptions shall be based on the Governing Board's policy definitions for *NAEP Basic*, *NAEP Proficient*, and *NAEP Advanced* achievement and shall incorporate the content and process dimensions of the assessment at each grade.
- b) The framework shall inform the development of subject-specific contextual questionnaires for students, teachers, and school administrators by identifying variables that may help contextualize the assessment results (See the Governing Board Policy on Collecting and Reporting Contextual Data).
- c) The framework shall focus on important, measurable indicators of student achievement to inform the nation about what students know and are able to do without endorsing or advocating a particular instructional approach.
- d) Content coverage in each subject and grade shall be broad, inclusive of content valued by the public as important to measure, and reflect high aspirations for student achievement.
- e) Frameworks shall be written to be clear and accessible to educators and the general public. The framework shall use clear language, accessible to educators and to the general public, and contain information about the nature and scope of the given assessment. Following Governing Board adoption, the framework shall be widely disseminated.

Principle 2: Development and Update Process

The Governing Board shall develop and update frameworks through a comprehensive, inclusive, and deliberative process that involves active participation of stakeholders listed in the Introduction section.

Guidelines

- a) When the Board reviews a framework for potential updates (see *Principle 3*), Board deliberations shall begin by discussing major policy and assessment issues in the content area. Such issues may be identified through seeking and collecting public comment, as well as through engaging relevant content experts.
- b) After considering the policy and assessment issues in the content area, the Board shall develop a charge to articulate the need for an update to the framework and to specify policy guidance, constraints (including but not limited to those imposed by the NAEP legislation), and any specific tensions to resolve in the development of framework recommendations. The Board charge shall explicitly address whether maintaining trends with assessment results from the previous framework should be prioritized above other factors.
- c) Framework development and update processes shall be executed primarily via two panels: a Steering Panel with a subset of members continuing as the Development Panel. This process shall result in two documents for Board consideration: a recommended framework and recommended assessment and item specifications. For each framework,
 - *The Framework Steering Panel* shall formulate high-level guidance about the state of the field and how to implement the Board charge to inform the process. The major part of the Steering Panel work will be at the beginning to provide initial guidance for developing a recommended framework. The Steering Panel shall be comprised of the stakeholders referenced in the Introduction section. Twenty percent of this panel (6 members) shall be current classroom teachers in the subject areas under consideration. This panel may include up to 30 members with additional members as needed.
 - *The Framework Development Panel* shall develop drafts of the two project documents and engage in the detailed deliberations about how issues outlined in the Board charge and Steering Panel discussion should be reflected in a recommended framework. As a subset of the Steering Panel, the Development Panel shall have a proportionally higher representation of content experts and educators, whose expertise collectively addresses all grade levels designated for the assessment under development. Fifteen percent of this panel (3 members) shall be current classroom teachers in the subject areas under consideration. Educators shall be drawn from schools across the nation, including individuals who work with students from high-poverty and low-performing schools, as well as public and private schools. This panel may include up to 20 members, with additional members as needed.
- d) The scope and size of a framework development project shall determine the size of framework panels and the number of panel meetings needed. A framework update project

may require smaller panels and fewer meetings if a smaller scope is anticipated for recommended revisions.

- e) A nominations process shall be used to seek broad input on recommendations for well-qualified individuals who represent diverse demographic characteristics, stakeholder groups, and perspectives on the key issues identified in the Board charge to the panels.
- f) From the pool of nominees, the Board will select those with the most outstanding content and education credentials to represent multiple perspectives on the key issues identified in the Board charge to the panels. The ADC shall review panelist nomination materials and recommend a slate of panelists, which shall be subject to Executive Committee approval.
- g) The process that panels employ to develop recommendations for new or updated frameworks shall be comprehensive in approach and conducted in an environment that is open, balanced, and even-handed. Panels shall consider all viewpoints and debate all pertinent issues in formulating consensus recommendations on the content and design of a NAEP assessment, including findings from research. Reference materials shall represent multiple views.
- h) For each new or updated framework, protocols shall be established to support panel deliberations and to develop a unified proposal for the content and design of the assessment. Written summaries of all hearings, forums, surveys, and panel meetings shall be made available in a timely manner to inform Board deliberations.
- i) The framework panels shall consider a wide variety of resources during deliberations, including but not limited to relevant research, trends in state and local standards and assessments, use of previous NAEP results, curriculum guides, widely accepted professional standards, scientific research, other types of research studies in the literature, key reports having significant national and international interest, international standards and assessments, other assessment instruments in the content area, and prior NAEP frameworks, if available.
- j) A Technical Advisory Committee shall be convened to uphold the highest technical standards for development of the NAEP framework and specifications. As a resource to the framework panels, these experts shall respond to technical issues raised during panel deliberations.
- k) An Educator Advisory Committee shall be convened to include additional practitioners in the framework development process. As a resource to the framework panels, these practitioners shall provide meaningful consultation on issues raised during panel deliberations that need input from those in the field teaching the subjects being assessed.
- l) Public comment shall be sought from a broad array of stakeholders and interested members of the public to reflect multiple perspectives on the draft framework recommendations that have been developed. Outreach efforts should directly engage all stakeholder groups identified in the Introduction section.

- m) If the Development Panel or the Board cannot reach consensus on key issues in the framework, the Board may decide to seek further stakeholder input such as through additional public comment and/or independent reviews by content experts on a framework that has been significantly revised following an earlier public comment period. The Board shall determine whether and how any further revisions to a framework shall be made.
- n) The final framework and specifications documents are subject to full Board approval.

Principle 3: Periodic Framework Review

Reviews of existing frameworks shall determine whether an update is needed to continue valid and reliable measurement of the content and cognitive processes reflected in evolving expectations of students.

Guidelines

- a) At least once every 10 years, the Governing Board, through its ADC, shall review the relevance of assessments and their underlying frameworks. In the review, the ADC shall solicit input from experts to determine if changes are warranted, making clear the potential risk to trends and assessment of educational progress posed by changing frameworks. The Board may decide based on the input that the framework does not require revision, or that the framework may require minor or substantive updates. To initiate updates, the ADC shall prepare a recommendation for full Board approval. Minor updates include clarifications or corrections that do not affect the construct defined for the assessment. Substantive updates shall include the convening of a Steering Panel (see *Principle 2*). Framework revisions shall also be subject to full Board approval.
- b) Within the 10-year period for an ADC review, major changes in the states' or nation's educational system may occur that relate to one or more NAEP frameworks. In this instance, the ADC will deliberate on whether such changes warrant an accelerated schedule of updates to a framework and may recommend that the Governing Board convene a Steering Panel to revise or replace the framework. Before framework panels are convened, special research and analysis may also be commissioned to inform the updates to be considered.
- c) If the Board charge directs a Steering Panel to recommend framework updates, then a subset of Steering Panel members shall continue as the Development Panel to develop the draft framework and assessment and item specifications, in accordance with *Principle 2*. Regular reports will be provided to the ADC and the recommended framework update shall be subject to full Board approval.
- d) When a framework update is conducted, framework Steering and Development Panel recommendations shall describe the extent to which adjustments in the achievement level descriptions (see *1.a*) and contextual variables (see *1.b*) are needed. (See the Governing Board [Policy on Achievement Levels](#) and the Governing Board [Policy on Collecting and Reporting Contextual Data](#) for additional details.)

Principle 4: Elements of Specifications

The specifications document shall be developed for use by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) as the blueprint for constructing the NAEP assessment and items.

Guidelines

- a) The assessment and item specifications shall produce an assessment that is valid, reliable, and based on relevant widely accepted professional standards. The specifications shall also be consistent with Governing Board policies regarding NAEP design, such as groupings of items, test administration conditions, and accommodations for students with disabilities and English language learners. (See the Governing Board [Policy on NAEP Testing and Reporting on Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners](#)). The specifications shall be reviewed by technical experts involved in the process, prior to submission to the Governing Board.
- b) The primary audience for the specifications, or assessment blueprint, shall be NCES and the contractor(s) responsible for developing the assessment and the test questions.
- c) The specifications shall evolve from the framework and shall be written in sufficient detail so that item writers can develop high-quality questions based on the framework objectives for grades 4, 8, and 12, where applicable. The specifications shall include, but not be limited to detailed descriptions of:
 - the content and process dimensions, including the weighting of those dimensions in the pool of questions at each grade;
 - types of items;
 - guidelines for stimulus material;
 - types of response formats;
 - scoring procedures;
 - achievement level descriptions;
 - administration conditions;
 - ancillary or additional materials, if any;
 - considerations for special populations;
 - sample items, including a substantial number and range of sample items with scoring guidelines for each grade level; and
 - any unique requirements for the given assessment.
- d) Special studies, if any, to be recommended in support of the framework shall be described in the specifications. This description shall provide an overview of the purpose and rationale for the study.

Principle 5: Role of the Governing Board

The Governing Board, through its ADC, shall monitor all framework development and updates. The result of this process shall be recommendations for Governing Board action in the form of two key documents: the framework and assessment and item specifications.

Guidelines

- a) The ADC shall be responsible for monitoring framework development and updates that result in recommendations to the Governing Board on the content and format of each NAEP assessment. The ADC will provide direction to the framework panels, via Governing Board staff. This guidance shall ensure compliance with the NAEP law, Governing Board policies, Department of Education and government-wide regulations, and requirements of the contract(s) used to implement the framework project.
- b) In initiating a framework update, the Governing Board shall balance needs for stable reporting of student achievement trends against other Board priorities and requirements. Regarding when and how an adopted framework update will be implemented, the Board may consider the NAEP Assessment Schedule, cost and technical issues, and research and innovations to support possibilities for continuous trend reporting.
- c) When a framework Steering Panel is to be convened, the ADC shall develop a charge for the panel, and the charge shall be subject to full Board approval (See *2.b.*).
- d) The ADC shall review panelist nomination materials and develop a recommended slate of panelists, and the panelist recommendations shall be subject to Executive Committee approval.
- e) The ADC shall receive regular reports on the progress of framework development.
- f) The full Board shall receive periodic updates about how the Board charge is being implemented and any additional policy considerations that arise during the development process, including from public comment.
- g) At the conclusion of the framework development or update process, the Governing Board shall take final action on the recommended framework and specifications. The Governing Board shall make the final decision on the content and format of NAEP assessments. In addition to the panel recommendations, the Board may take into account other pertinent considerations on the domain and scope of what should be assessed, such as the broader policy context of assessment in the subject area under consideration.
- h) Following adoption by the Governing Board, the final framework and specifications shall be provided to NCES. These documents, which include the achievement level descriptions for *NAEP Basic*, *NAEP Proficient*, and *NAEP Advanced* and recommendations for contextual variables in the subject area, are provided to NCES to guide development of NAEP test questions and questionnaires.