Technical Advisory Panel on Uniform National Rules for NAEP Testing of English Language Learners

Report to the National Assessment Governing Board
August 2009

Charge to the Expert Panel

Propose a set of uniform national rules, which

- Provide that students with a similar level of English proficiency are tested on NAEP the same way, regardless of where they live.
- Maximize student access and meaningful participation.
- Ensure that the constructs in NAEP frameworks are measured and that all students may be placed on the same scale.

Charge to the Expert Panel

- Permit only accommodations or translations that maintain the validity, reliability, and comparability of NAEP data.
- Are feasible, logistically and financially, and without detrimental consequences.

Recommend follow-up studies on the implementation and impact of recommended procedures.

Expert Panel Members

- **Sharif Shakrani** (Chair)
  Professor of Measurement and Quantitative Methods, Michigan State University
- **Jamal Abedi**, Professor of Education
  University of California, Davis
- **Diane August**, Senior Research Scientist
  Center for Applied Linguistics
  Washington, DC

Expert Panel Members

- **Robert Linquanti**, Senior Research Associate
  Project Director for English Learner Evaluation and Accountability Support
  WestEd, Oakland, CA
- **Phil Morse**, Coordinator, Student Testing Unit
  Los Angeles Unified School District
  President, National Assn. of Test Directors
- **Charlene Rivera**, Executive Director
  Center for Equity and Excellence in Education, George Washington University
  Washington, DC

Expert Panel Members

- **Maria Santos,** Executive Director
  Office of English Language Learners
  New York City Department of Education
- **Josefina Tinajero**, Dean
  College of Education
  Professor of Bilingual Education
  University of Texas at El Paso

Meetings

- In-person meeting May 1, 2009
- Five teleconferences during May, June, and July

Recommendations

1. All English language learners selected for the NAEP sample who have been in United States schools for one year or more should be included in the National Assessment.
    - This policy should be implemented with the disaggregated reporting of ELL test results by detailed information on English language proficiency and the availability of accommodations that maximize meaningful participation.

Recommendations

2. Students should be offered ELL-responsive accommodations that maintain the constructs in the NAEP framework, including
   - Items and directions in plain language.
   - Side-by-side Spanish-English test booklets.
   - Word-to-word bilingual glossaries without definitions.
   - Extra time.
   - Other accommodations currently allowed by NAEP.

Recommendations

- Accommodations should be selected by qualified school personnel with knowledge of the student's level of English proficiency.
- Reading assessment passages should not be modified, but directions should be in plain language without unnecessary complexity unrelated to the constructs assessed.

Recommendations

3. Prompts, directions, and items in all NAEP assessments should be written in plain language.
    - Such material should be free of unnecessary linguistic complexity irrelevant to the construct being tested.
    - But the level of item difficulty should not be changed.
    - All NAEP assessments should undergo a plain language review.

Recommendations

4. Develop test blocks at the low and high ends of difficulty. Low-end blocks should be offered to ELL students who would otherwise be excluded.
    - Such targeted testing would reduce standard errors, provide more information about low and high-achieving students, and reassure local decision-makers that ELLs can meaningfully participate in NAEP.

Recommendations

5. Disaggregate and report NAEP results for English language learners by the best available standardized test data on the level of English language proficiency.
    - Although existing state English language proficiency assessments are not consistent, data obtained from them should be used for research and analysis purposes.
    - As soon as possible, NAEP should develop its own brief test of English language proficiency to report ELLs as advanced, intermediate, or beginner/low.

Recommendations

6. Collect additional background information on English language learners tested, including
    - Number of years living in the United States.
    - Years attending schools in the United States.
    - Years receiving instruction primarily in English.

Recommendations

7. Report results for former English language learners who have been reclassified as English proficient.
    - Collect data on number of years since student exited ELL services or was reclassified.
    - Encourage states to maintain this data to provide a more complete picture of the long-term success of English language learners in U.S. schools.

Recommendations

8. To obtain high and comparable participation rates across states and districts, make special efforts to solicit the cooperation of officials deciding participation of individual students.
    - Establish a high common goal of 95% participation among all ELLs in U.S. schools for one year or more.
    - Jurisdictions that do not reach this policy goal should be designated in NAEP reports as falling below the desired participation rate.

Recommendations

9. Adopt an aggressive timeline for innovation and research, including
    - Test items written in plain language.
    - A short test of English language proficiency.
    - Targeted testing with blocks of items at low and high levels of difficulty.
    - Computerized administration when feasible.