

Adopted: August 4, 2006



## National Assessment Governing Board

### Reporting, Release, and Dissemination of NAEP Results

#### Policy Statement

**The Nation's Report Card<sup>TM</sup> informs the public about the academic achievement of elementary and secondary students in the United States. Report cards communicate the findings of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the only continuing and nationally representative measure of achievement in various subjects over time. The Nation's Report Card compares performance among states, urban districts, public and private schools, and student demographic groups.**

#### Introduction

NAEP collects data through representative-sample surveys and reports fair and accurate information on academic achievement to the American public. By law (P.L. 107-110, as amended by P.L. 107-279), NAEP is administered by the Commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) under policy set by the National Assessment Governing Board ("the Governing Board"), a bipartisan, independent policymaking body.

According to the statute, the Governing Board shall exercise "independent judgment, free from inappropriate influences and special interests" and in the exercise of its responsibilities, "shall be independent of the Secretary and the other offices and officers of the Department [of Education]." Among the responsibilities specifically delegated to the Governing Board are: (1) "develop guidelines for reporting and disseminating [NAEP] results"; (2) "take appropriate actions needed to improve the form, content, use, and reporting of [NAEP] results"; and (3) "plan and execute the initial public release of [NAEP] reports."

To carry out these responsibilities, the Governing Board hereby adopts policy principles and guidelines for the reporting, release, and dissemination of *The Nation's Report Card*.

As outlined in the appendix, this policy defines *The Nation's Report Card* as, and applies to, the initial reporting of NAEP results from national, state, and trial urban district assessments (TUDA), and to other special reports or studies authorized by the Governing Board, including printed reports and the initial release Web site.

## **Delineation of NAEP Reporting, Release, and Dissemination Responsibilities**

The NCES Commissioner, under Governing Board policy guidance, is responsible for administering the assessment, ensuring the technical soundness and accuracy of all released data, preparing NAEP reports, and presenting NAEP results.

In addition to setting policy, the Governing Board is responsible for ensuring policy compliance of Governing Board-authorized NAEP reports, determining their respective dates of release, and planning and executing the initial public release of NAEP results.

### **Part I: Report Preparation and Content**

#### **Policy Principles**

1. The primary means for the initial public release of NAEP results shall be a printed summary report, known as *The Nation's Report Card*, accompanied by a separate, dedicated Web site – <http://nationsreportcard.gov>.
2. The primary audience for *The Nation's Report Card* is the American public.
  - a. All reports shall be written in language appropriate for an audience of the interested general public, the majority of whom are unlikely to have a technical understanding of education statistics or assessment.
3. *The Nation's Report Card* shall report data objectively, accurately, clearly, and fairly, in accordance with NCES data quality standards. Results shall be insulated from ideological and other special interests.
  - a. *The Nation's Report Card* shall include straightforward presentations of data. Reports may suggest correlations, but should not conclude cause-and-effect relationships. Any interpretation of results must be strongly supported by NAEP data.
  - b. *The Nation's Report Card* and its Web site may include references and links to the Governing Board Web site, NCES Web site, and the NAEP Validity Studies Panel. Non-NAEP materials and links to non-NAEP resources shall not be included in initial release documents, with the exception of relevant federal and state government information, such as NCES surveys and other district, state, national, or international testing programs.

- c. To improve public understanding of results, *The Nation's Report Card* should contain information about Governing Board-approved NAEP contextual variables and subject-specific background information—as outlined in the *Background Information Framework for the National Assessment of Educational Progress* (adopted by the Governing Board, 8/1/03)—when available and reliable. Reports may also contain other contextual information from trustworthy sources outside of the NAEP program, such as expenditures per pupil, student/teacher ratios, and student enrollment.
4. In accordance with the law, *The Nation's Report Card* shall include results for the nation; states and school districts, when collected in conjunction with specific NAEP programs, respectively; and school types, disaggregated by subgroup whenever reliable. Subgroup results shall be prominently positioned to facilitate public review but shall not be used to adjust findings.
  - a. Disaggregated subgroup data should be accompanied by information about demographic changes in the student population assessed.
  - b. Results for states and school districts may be presented in alphabetical or rank order, accompanied by appropriate language to make the public aware of any data comparison limitations.
  - c. Data shall be publicly released on inclusion and accommodation rates for all NAEP samples, including national, state, district, and school type. Results for students with disabilities and English language learners shall be presented separately.
5. *The Nation's Report Card* shall report results by Governing Board-adopted achievement levels, average scale scores, and percentile distributions. Trend information shall be an important part of reports unless comparable and reliable data are not available.
  - a. Reports shall contain clear explanations of achievement levels, including item maps and sample test questions and answers to illustrate what students in each grade assessed should know and be able to do at each achievement level.
6. All NAEP data determined by the NCES Commissioner to be valid and reliable shall be made available on the World Wide Web at the time of initial public release, except for data from limited special purpose samples and pilot studies. A separate, dedicated Web site aimed at a broad public audience – <http://nationsreportcard.gov> – shall be utilized for initial public releases.
  - a. All released NAEP data shall be subject to NCES quality control procedures to ensure accuracy and completeness.
  - b. At least one block of released NAEP questions shall be posted on the World Wide Web for each subject and grade for which results have been collected.

- c. Concise information on test content, methodology, performance standards, and scoring shall be included in all NAEP reports. More extensive material on these topics should be readily accessible on the World Wide Web.
- 7. Results of special studies authorized by the Governing Board will be reported after careful review of information quality and statistical validity. These shall be treated as initial public releases of *The Nation's Report Card*, and shall be subject to NCES quality control procedures and Governing Board policies.
- 8. The Governing Board shall adopt general guidelines to inform the development of *The Nation's Report Card* and its Web site, and may set additional specifications for particular reports.
- 9. The Governing Board shall review the format and content of initial releases, including Web pages, to ensure compliance with Governing Board policy.
  - a. *The Nation's Report Card* shall contain a description of the policymaking roles and responsibilities of the Governing Board, including a list of current Governing Board members, their affiliations, and regional locations.

## **Part II: Public Release of NAEP Results**

### **Policy Principles**

1. Release activities shall be planned and executed by the Governing Board. The Governing Board shall determine the release date, time, embargo policies, and manner of release for *The Nation's Report Card*, as covered by this policy.
  - a. After the Governing Board has approved the final draft of *The Nation's Report Card*, including the pages that will be made available through the initial release Web site, the Chairman of the Reporting and Dissemination Committee, on behalf of the Governing Board, shall determine the date of the initial public release, in consultation with the Chairman and Executive Director of the Governing Board and the NCES Commissioner.
  - b. The initial release shall be completed within 30 days of approval of the final draft of *The Nation's Report Card*. In setting that release date, attention will be paid to balancing the priorities of an expeditious release with provision for adequate planning time, given the scheduling circumstances of the various parties involved.
  - c. Prior to the initial public release, NAEP results may be provided on an embargoed basis to federal, state, and TUDA-district officials and members of the press.

2. The Governing Board shall be responsible for organizing and conducting the release event and related activities.
  - a. A release plan shall be adopted by the Governing Board for each report. Elements of the plan may include issuance of a press release, a press conference and/or Web-based announcement, distribution of summary findings and graphics, time period for the initial public release phase of <http://nationsreportcard.gov>, and other related activities.
  - b. The official press release announcing NAEP results shall be issued by the Governing Board. Accompanying statements from the Governing Board's Executive Director or Governing Board members may also be issued.
  - c. At the press conference or other event for release of NAEP results, the NCES Commissioner or his/her designee shall present major data findings, accompanied by a written statement. The Governing Board shall select members to provide individual commentary on the meaning of results. In addition, the Governing Board may invite other officials or experts to comment on the significance of the results in accordance with the approved release plan.
  - d. At press conferences, questions from the audience shall be limited to accredited members of the media. At other public release events, the Governing Board shall determine who may attend and ask questions or comment.
3. *The Nation's Report Card* shall seek to encourage wide public attention to NAEP results and clear understanding of their meaning and significance.
  - a. Video materials may be prepared to accompany the release. These shall be clearly identified as having been provided by the Governing Board or NCES of the U.S. Department of Education. The video materials may only contain sound bites, background footage, and other information for journalists to develop their own stories.
4. Release procedures shall underscore the credibility of *The Nation's Report Card* and encourage the participation of schools, school districts, and states in NAEP.
  - a. NAEP data in statements distributed at *The Nation's Report Card* initial public release events shall be checked for accuracy by NCES.
5. *The Nation's Report Card* releases shall be clearly separated from any ideological or other special interests.
  - a. Activities related to the initial public release of *The Nation's Report Card* shall not be used to disseminate any materials unrelated to NAEP.

No materials of any kind may be distributed at an initial release event without the prior approval of the Governing Board.

6. The Governing Board will cooperate with the NCES Commissioner in the release of technical reports, working papers, and secondary analyses not covered by the policy.
7. The Governing Board will develop a reporting schedule each year for upcoming NAEP assessments based on data review and report production plans that are provided and updated by NCES.

### **Part III: Dissemination and Outreach**

#### **Policy Principles**

1. Information from *The Nation's Report Card* shall be disseminated through the media, the World Wide Web, and special publications and materials. Efforts shall be made to develop widespread public awareness of NAEP data and their meaning and of the value of *The Nation's Report Card* to the nation and participating jurisdictions.
  - a. NAEP results shall be available in both printed and electronic form, including on *The Nation's Report Card* Web site, at the scheduled time of release and in the permanent record.
  - b. To build public awareness of *The Nation's Report Card*, the home page of the initial release Web site shall remain online and include links to previous releases. This homepage shall link to respective pages found on the NAEP Web site.
2. To build understanding of *The Nation's Report Card* and the data it reports, other information about NAEP may be disseminated at the time of the initial release and on a continuing basis.
  - a. Informational materials accompanying results shall explain the mission and value of *The Nation's Report Card* in clear and compelling terms.
3. *The Nation's Report Card* and supplementary NAEP materials shall be made available through a wide network of education, business, labor, civic, and other interested groups and to policymakers and practitioners at all levels of education and government.
  - a. *The Nation's Report Card* shall be distributed promptly to governors and chief state school officers, as well as to superintendents of TUDA districts. The reports shall be posted on the World Wide Web

- immediately at the time of initial release, with printed copies available to the public upon request.
- b. Notification of upcoming releases shall be widely disseminated. Schools and school districts participating in NAEP samples shall be provided with information on how to access reports electronically and obtain printed copies upon release.
  - c. NCES and Governing Board staff shall encourage national and state organizations that are interested in education to disseminate NAEP results to their members.
  - d. The NCES Commissioner and staff, Governing Board members and staff, and NAEP State Coordinators are encouraged to increase awareness and understanding of NAEP among the public, educators, and government officials. They are encouraged to speak about the NAEP program to a variety of audiences; at meetings and conferences of national, state, and local organizations; on radio and television; and to writers for magazines and newspapers and other members of the media.
  - e. Talking points on key data findings shall be developed for each release and distributed to Governing Board members.
4. A variety of materials shall be developed, appropriate to various audiences, to carry out NAEP dissemination. Key audiences for these materials shall include the interested general public, policymakers, teachers, administrators, and parents.
  5. Detailed data on cognitive results, Governing Board-approved contextual variables, and subject-specific background information (as outlined in Part I, Policy Principle 3, Item C) shall be made readily available through the World Wide Web to all those wishing to analyze NAEP findings, subject to privacy restrictions. Additional restricted data shall be available for scholarly research, subject to NCES licensing procedures.
    - a. The limitations on interpretations, conclusions, and recommendations in official NAEP reports (as outlined in Part I, Policy Principle 3) shall apply fully to any materials disseminated as part of the NAEP program by NCES and the Governing Board.
    - b. Researchers receiving secondary analysis grants from NCES may analyze data and provide commentary. Their reports may be disseminated by NCES if they meet NCES standards.

## **Appendix**

### **NAEP Initial Release Reporting Covered by this Policy**

#### ***The Nation's Report Card™***

The primary means for the initial public release of NAEP results shall be a summary report in each subject, known as *The Nation's Report Card™* and intended for the interested general public. The reports shall be made available in both print and electronic (Web-based) form. These reports shall present key findings and composite and disaggregated results. The printed reports shall be relatively brief, and written in a clear, jargon-free style with charts, tables, and graphics that are understandable and attractive. Data tables may be included in an appendix, either bound into the report or printed separately. This format shall be used to report key results for the nation and the states and of NAEP Trial Urban District Assessments.

A separate, dedicated Web site for the initial release of NAEP results shall be focused on a broad public audience, including less sophisticated users of the technology. The URL—<http://nationsreportcard.gov>—should be readily located via Internet search engines. Key NAEP findings will be available, clearly organized, and prioritized. World Wide Web pages shall provide key findings, including composite and disaggregated results, as well as access to more extensive data sets.

#### **Individual State and School District Reports**

Relatively brief reports of key results shall be prepared for individual states, as well as for TUDA-participating school districts. All reports shall contain composite and disaggregated data, and may include an appendix with data tables.

#### **Special Studies and Reports**

Special studies and reports authorized by the Governing Board and based on NAEP data collections will focus on specific topics of public interest and educational significance. They are aimed at policymakers and interested members of the public. They may include newly released data as well as data previously released that are analyzed to address issues identified by the Governing Board.