

Get to Know the National
Assessment Governing Board

Patrick Kelly

Twelfth-Grade Teacher



Patrick Kelly joined the National Assessment Governing Board in 2019, filling the twelfth-grade teacher role. Mr. Kelly works in a hybrid role teaching AP U.S. Government and Politics at Blythewood High School and serves as coordinator of professional learning for Richland School District 2 outside of Columbia, S.C. Through prestigious fellowships in Washington, D.C., Mr. Kelly has worked on a range of education policy topics, including assessment, diversity, teacher leadership, and systems of support for educators. On the Governing Board, Mr. Kelly serves as a member of the assessment development committee.

Below he answers a few questions for fellow educators and others considering nominating themselves or others to the Governing Board.


1. Why did you join the Governing Board?

It's a really unique opportunity for classroom teachers in the United States to have a direct voice in the policymaking process. Rarely are teachers at the table where policies and decisions are being crafted, and I think that's in the best interest of students [that they are].

2. What is the most interesting thing you've learned about the Governing Board and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) that you didn't know before joining the Board?

That NAEP is a highly respected, valid assessment that lacks all of the things that drive teachers crazy about standardized assessments. It's not high stakes, there's no pressure on students – it's simply an opportunity for students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. And NAEP is not highly disruptive of school operations.





That's something that's really appealing to me as an educator because we do need evidence and we do need data on student performance. NAEP hits the sweet spot of giving us actionable, meaningful, valid data without completely derailing what school should be all about, which is driving student learning and growth.

3. How has what you've learned from the Governing Board impacted your role outside of the Board?

It's shaped the way I approach my job as a teacher. I think so often, as classroom teachers, we allow ourselves to get boxed into the idea that, "I'm only responsible for the students that are in my classroom." But the reality is, as a professional educator, I have an obligation to all students. That's the burden and that's the joy of this profession. And serving on the Governing Board has given me a new lens and a new opportunity to serve students beyond just my classroom.


4. How has your perspective as a teacher, especially one who has worked on a range of policy topics, informed your work on the Governing Board?

I think one of the beautiful things about the Governing Board is we are encouraged to bring our perspectives and expertise to the table. Everyone is an equal and everyone is respected equally. While I don't know a great deal about psychometrics and I've never had to balance a state budget, I do have 17 years of experience on how to instruct students and how to use data meaningfully within the classroom to inform instruction. And that perspective is respected and valued on the Board. The Board is truly a table where everyone is level with each other, and, as a result, I think that leads to much better policy outcomes for our students.

5. As a Governing Board member, what impact have you had on education in the United States?

Number one, NAEP exposes what our students know and can do, so we can drive educational equity. You don't know where to improve until you know where your weaknesses are. And we need to identify those weaknesses so that we can shift policies and shift instruction in order to better serve those students.

Two, NAEP sets a standard for how we go about the business of instructing our students by informing our practices. A good example of this is that recently, the Board spent almost two years revising the framework for the NAEP reading assessment. That was a really powerful process that brought in academic professionals, community feedback, and provided us with an opportunity to really dive deep on what reading comprehension is and how we measure it.



6. What are you most proud of achieving during your time on the Governing Board?

Number one, the reading framework revision process. There were a lot of passions around the reading framework revision and the Board took its time and listened to input from multiple, diverse stakeholders. In a process that took place during a really polarized political moment in our country, the Board was able to reach unanimous consensus on a document that drives NAEP forward as a tool that can be used by researchers, policymakers, and practitioners.

The other thing I'm proud of is that our Board has been able to shepherd NAEP through the COVID-19 pandemic. I think the Board has done a good job being respectful of the challenges that our students and educators are facing, but we haven't short-changed NAEP, the gold standard of assessment. We've made sure that we would only move forward if we could ensure the data provided by NAEP was valid, reliable, and useful in the field. And I'm proud of the Board for having the foresight to do that and to really look at the long game instead of just getting caught in the passions of the moment.

7. Why is it important for teachers to serve on the Governing Board?

I think any classroom teacher that's been in the profession for a number of years reaches that point where they realize that teachers need to have a seat at the table when it comes to policy creation. The Governing Board provides a powerful, nationally recognized, and respected path for doing so for any teacher that's ever wanted to have input on how we measure student achievement. The Governing Board provides you an opportunity to not only have your voice heard, but to actually lend your voice to the policy creation process.

And so, I'd encourage all classroom teachers across the United States to consider lending their voice and expertise to this work because the Governing Board shows that having teachers at the table results in better policies and we can only benefit from that.



Read Mr. Kelly's full professional bio [here](#).



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