



Ad Hoc Committee on NAEP Parent Engagement

Reaching Parents with NAEP Resources

March 2, 2012

Committee Members

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Ad Hoc Committee on NAEP Parent Engagement

Overview of Recommendations

1. Specify the Target Audience: National, State, and Local Parent Leaders and Parent Organizations
2. Establish Relationships with Recognized Parent and Community-based Organizations
3. Develop Presentations and Materials Targeted to Parents for Use by Governing Board Members and Others
4. Develop Parent Pages on the Governing Board and NAEP Websites
5. Conduct a Parent Education Summit in Late Summer/Early Fall 2012

Committee Activity Timeline

November 2010	Recognize Need to Address NAEP Parent Engagement
March 2011	Approve Mission Statement and Establish Ad Hoc Committee on NAEP Parent Engagement
April 2011	First Ad Hoc Committee Teleconference
May 2011	First Committee Meeting
August 2011	Second Committee Meeting
October 2011	Second Teleconference
December 2011	Third Committee Meeting
February 2012	Third Teleconference
March 2012	Final Committee Meeting; Present Recommendations to the Board

Foreword

The National Assessment Governing Board, in overseeing the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP or the Nation’s Report Card), is carrying out an initiative to raise public awareness about the status of student achievement in the United States.

The Governing Board believes that the low levels of student achievement and the persistent, large achievement gaps between student demographic subgroups are cause for alarm—for individuals, for families, for communities, and for the nation’s future.

Although the release of NAEP reports brings periodic public attention to this problem, this attention is not sustained for very long.

Consequently, the Governing Board is implementing an initiative to convey the urgency of improving achievement for all students and of closing achievement gaps between student subgroups by race, ethnicity and income levels, using NAEP data and resources.¹

One part of this initiative is aimed at reaching parents. In March 2011, the Governing Board established the Ad Hoc Committee on NAEP Parent Engagement, composed of Board members. The Ad Hoc Committee’s assignment was to study ways to reach parents with NAEP data and resources and to present the Committee’s recommendations to the Governing Board by March 2012.

The members of the Ad Hoc Committee have worked diligently over the past year and are pleased to present our report and recommendations on the following pages.

We would like to express appreciation for the important contributions of the National Center for Education Statistics in supporting the Ad Hoc Committee’s work and in embracing the objective of reaching more parents with NAEP data and resources. We also thank the Governing Board’s CCSSO² Policy Task Force members for their valuable comments and suggestions.

Tonya Miles
Chair
Ad Hoc Committee on NAEP Parent Engagement

¹ The authority for this initiative is found under the Governing Board’s duties in the NAEP legislation, Public Law 107-279. Specifically, Section 302(e)(1) authorizes the Board to “take appropriate actions needed to improve the form, content, use, and reporting of results” and “plan and execute the initial public release of National Assessment of Educational Progress reports.”

² The acronym CCSSO stands for Council of Chief State School Officers.

Introduction

The National Assessment Governing Board, recognizing that NAEP report releases were not conveying a sense of urgency, began an initiative in May 2010 to see what the Board could do to “make a difference” in fostering concern and action about the need to improve achievement and reduce achievement gaps, using NAEP data and resources. Toward this goal, the Governing Board established the Ad Hoc Committee on NAEP Parent Engagement. The Committee’s task was to develop recommendations on ways to reach parents with NAEP information. The purpose of this report is to document the work of the Ad Hoc Committee and present its recommendations.

Background

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan addressed the Governing Board on November 19, 2010. He focused on the urgent need to improve student achievement and reduce achievement gaps among student subgroups. He has said publicly that “our nation will pay the price socially and economically” if we fail to act with determination and dispatch and stressed to the Board that “we have to continue to awaken our country to the huge consequences” of inaction.

Secretary Duncan emphasized the important role of parents in improving student achievement. He told the story of President Obama meeting with the President of South Korea, Lee Myung-bak. President Obama asked him about education issues in South Korea. President Lee said his biggest challenge is that parents in South Korea are very assertive in demanding a good education from their schools and great effort from their children. He emphasized that this includes parents of all income levels.

Implicit in this story is the fact that South Korean students, as well as others in the world, outperform U.S. students in mathematics and science on TIMSS.³ Today’s students are tomorrow’s workers and leaders. It follows that failing to improve U.S. student achievement could have disastrous effects on the nation’s future work force and global competitiveness, and that parents have an important role to play in promoting improved student achievement.

Secretary Duncan continued by saying “I wish my biggest problem, my biggest challenge, was parents knocking down my door saying, ‘Get better faster!’” He said that there are good examples in the U.S. of parent initiatives that impact student achievement. But Secretary Duncan wanted to “scale up” parent engagement programs that “are really showing the ability to drive student achievement.”

³ The acronym TIMSS stands for the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study.

The Secretary's remarks and the Board's initiative to make a difference served as the backdrop to Board member Tonya Miles asking what can the Board do to make NAEP data available to parents and guardians⁴ about student achievement, especially about the urgency of addressing achievement gaps by race, ethnicity, and income levels.

The question—"What can the Board do?"—is pertinent and important. Parents have a significant stake in the quality of their local schools and, most immediately, in their own children's achievement.

Governing Board Chair David Driscoll recognized the opportunity and value of reaching parents with NAEP data. Therefore, at the conclusion of the November 2010 Governing Board meeting, he asked Ms. Miles, and she agreed, to lead a Board initiative to increase parent awareness about and access to NAEP data. The goal was to bring attention to the unacceptably low levels of student achievement in the U.S. and the disgraceful size of the achievement gaps.

The Mission

At the March 2011 Board meeting, the Executive Committee approved the mission statement for and established the Ad Hoc Committee on NAEP Parent Engagement (Appendix A). The Committee would be composed of Board members and chaired by Ms. Miles. The Ad Hoc Committee's task was to present recommendations to the Governing Board by March 2012. The recommendations would describe steps and strategies the Governing Board and representatives of the NAEP program can take directly, and/or support the efforts of others

to increase parent awareness about the urgency to improve the levels of student achievement in the U.S. and the urgency to reduce the size of achievement gaps by race, ethnicity, and income levels, using NAEP data and resources.

The mission statement indicated that the recommendations were to be clear about the limits on the Board's role under the law. This was to ensure the Committee considered all appropriate options without exceeding the Board's authority.

The recommendations were to help reach parents in feasible, innovative, and meaningful ways, across all income levels, and whether residing in urban, rural, or suburban areas. Finally, the recommendations were to include strategies to make NAEP parent engagement an ongoing part of the work of the Board and the NAEP program.

⁴ The term "parents" as used throughout this report is intended to refer to parents and guardians of school children.

Committee Activities

Members of the Ad Hoc Committee have met four times during the May 2011, August 2011, December 2011, and March 2012 Board meetings. The agendas for these meetings are in Appendix B.

The Ad Hoc Committee also has met three times in between Board meetings via conference calls:

- April 15, 2011 - reviewed the Committee's mission statement and a timeline for completing their work (Appendix C)
- October 12, 2011 - focused on formulating the Committee's preliminary recommendations for discussion at the December 2011 Board meeting (Appendix D)
- February 8, 2012 - reviewed the Committee's initial draft report

In addition, Chair Tonya Miles and Ray Fields conducted meetings with leaders of three nationally recognized parent-related organizations. The purpose was to brief them on the Board's initiative to reach parents with NAEP data, to receive their input and feedback, and to determine their interest in supporting this initiative. The three organizations are the National PTA, the Public Education Network, and the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships at Johns Hopkins University.

In connection with the August 2011 meeting in Washington, D.C., the Board conducted an outreach event with parent leaders and national and local parent organizations. The discussion with meeting participants, led by Ms. Miles and Governing Board Chair Driscoll, resulted in valuable feedback and input on the Board's parent initiative. A summary of the discussion at this parent outreach meeting is in Appendix E.

Concluding Comment

Parents are the primary advocates for the quality of their children's education. Having solid information about education achievement improves their ability to advocate and ask the right questions. NAEP can be one potentially valuable source of such information. Therefore, it is appropriate to seek ways to reach parents with NAEP data and resources. Some progress already has been made, in a small way, as will be seen in the activities and relationships described below. The recommendations that follow are offered as a set of feasible next steps, all within the Governing Board's authority. All have the potential to reach parents in meaningful ways. Recommendations that the Governing Board decides to adopt should be assigned to appropriate Board committees and staff for implementation.

Recommendations

1. Specify the Target Audience: National, State, and Local Parent Leaders and Parent Organizations

The target audience needs to be defined. Approximately 55 million students are enrolled in public and private K-12 schools in the U.S. It is not feasible to reach the parents of all these children with NAEP data, nor is it within NAEP or the Governing Board's scope to do so.

Further, the achievement of their own children is the most pressing and immediate interest of parents. Because NAEP does not provide individual student results, this interest of parents is not served by NAEP.

A unique aspect of NAEP is its ability to report patterns of overall and subgroup student performance within and across education systems. These patterns may reflect education system strengths and weaknesses that can affect the achievement of individual students. The NAEP data for the states and 21 urban districts⁵ provide ample evidence of differences in achievement across comparable groups at points in time and differences in gains in achievement over time. The NAEP data also document persistent and unacceptable achievement gaps between groups. This NAEP information does have potential interest for parents.

Also of potential interest to parents is how their education systems compare internationally. The linking studies the Board has endorsed, beginning in 2011, between NAEP and the international assessments (TIMSS and PIRLS⁶) will provide a way to compare student achievement at the state level in the U.S. with achievement in other nations.

State and local education policymakers use NAEP data to ask fundamental questions about the levels of student achievement in schools under their authority. For example, Tennessee Commissioner of Education Kevin Huffman discussed how he uses NAEP at a November 2011 meeting in Nashville on NAEP 12th grade academic preparedness. Commissioner Huffman said that he analyzes student subgroup results in his state (e.g., students on free and reduced lunch) in comparison to other states. Raising questions about how subgroup performance compares across jurisdictions can help highlight where state or local policies may or may not be working. Asking thoughtful questions about the implications of NAEP results can be a positive way for parents to begin a productive conversation with state education leaders seeking to improve

⁵ The 21 participants in the NAEP Trial Urban District Assessment Program are: Albuquerque, Atlanta, Austin, Baltimore City, Boston, Charlotte, Chicago, Cleveland, Dallas, Detroit, Fresno, Hillsborough County, Houston, Los Angeles, Louisville, Ky. (Jefferson County), Miami (Dade County), Milwaukee, New York City, Philadelphia, San Diego, and Washington, DC.

⁶ The acronym PIRLS stands for the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study.

achievement and close achievement gaps. Of course, while NAEP can be used as a source of information to help parents identify important questions to ask about the status of student achievement locally, the answers about what to do must be made by state and local officials with authority for the schools.

The Ad Hoc Committee believes there are groups of active parents and parent organizations who see the connection between system performance and the potential for impact on individual students. These include local and state leaders, often members of recognized parent and community organizations, who regularly work with the leaders of education systems, examine data, and ask fundamental questions to support and foster improved achievement and the closing of achievement gaps. These parent leaders and parent organizations should be the initial target audience for NAEP data and resources.

More specifically, because NAEP provides data for each of the 50 states and 21 urban districts, the initial target audience should be state and local parent leaders and parent organizations associated with these jurisdictions.

2. Establish Relationships with Recognized Parent and Community-based Organizations

To reach the target audience with NAEP data, it is important to work collaboratively with existing parent and community-based organizations. Many of these organizations have state affiliates and/or affiliates associated with local school districts. These organizations have direct access to parent and community leaders through email networks, social media, newsletters, and websites. These mechanisms are potentially effective, viable avenues for the dissemination of NAEP data and resources. In addition, these organizations often conduct national and state conferences, which could afford opportunities for presenting NAEP data and resources.

The Ad Hoc Committee has initiated conversations with the National PTA (NPTA), with positive results (see Appendix F). For example, the NPTA has begun announcing NAEP release events through its email networks and social media. In addition, Tonya Miles has been invited to make a presentation on March 7, 2012 at the NPTA Legislative Conference and on June 21, 2012 at the NPTA Annual Conference. Further, the NPTA assisted in recruiting parents for a meeting on February 16, 2012 to help review the NAEP presentation and materials for parents described in Recommendation 3.

Likewise, collaborative activity has occurred with the Public Education Network (PEN). Cornelia Orr, Governing Board Executive Director, made a presentation on NAEP and 12th grade academic preparedness at the PEN annual conference in November 2011. PEN also helped recruit experts from among its member organizations for a one-day meeting held on February 14,

2012 to provide input and feedback on the NAEP presentation and materials for parents described in Recommendation 3. PEN already transmits information about NAEP data and NAEP releases to its members and newsletter subscribers.

The Governing Board should continue to develop the relationships with the NPTA and PEN, and develop similar collaborative relationships with other organizations.

3. Develop Presentations and Materials Targeted to Parents for Use by Board Members and Others

Recognizing that the scope and depth of NAEP data and resources can be overwhelming, the Governing Board is working to develop a model PowerPoint presentation and associated materials for parents. Consistent with the information needs of the target audience in Recommendation 1, the presentation and materials can be customized for particular states and urban districts. The materials will include easy-to-understand charts and graphs and avoid the use of technical terms and jargon. In addition to explaining what NAEP is, the presentation will highlight NAEP data regarding the levels of achievement and the gaps between subgroups in ways that convey urgency.

The presentation and materials should be designed to help the audience understand the role of NAEP in the context of state and local assessments. Sample test items can be used to illustrate what content NAEP measures and how it is measured; consideration can be given to how this information about NAEP may complement state assessments. As noted in Recommendation 2, conducting input and feedback meetings with parent leaders and representatives of parent organizations is important to ensure that the level of detail and amount of information is appropriately tailored for the target audience.

The intent is for these resources to be available for use by Governing Board members invited to make presentations to the public and by interested parent and community-based organizations in making presentations specific to their locale.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is currently developing a general publication for parents. This publication will inform parents about what NAEP is, how it fits into the education landscape, and options to learn or do more. This publication will be debuted at the NPTA conference in June and displayed at the NAEP booth at the conference.

4. Develop Parent Pages on the Governing Board and NAEP Websites

Currently, the Governing Board website has no pages aimed at parents as the target audience. The NAEP website, managed by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) does have pages for parents whose child has been selected to take NAEP, but not for parents in general.

The Ad Hoc Committee invited NCES to examine what it can do to make NAEP information on the website more accessible to parents. As a first important step, NCES made the “parent” navigation button more prominent on the NAEP website landing page. NCES is exploring additional changes to make the NAEP data more accessible to parents. As they develop the parent publication mentioned in Recommendation 3, NCES will update the NAEP web pages to ensure consistency. This will help expand the NAEP website audience from just parents of students selected for the NAEP sample to all interested parents.

The Ad Hoc Committee asked the Board’s communications and website contractors, Reingold, Inc. and Quotient, to develop page mockups for parent pages on the Governing Board website (Appendix G). These should be further developed and incorporated as components of the Governing Board’s website redesign, which is currently underway. The model PowerPoint presentation and materials in Recommendation 3 should be available for easy downloading from the Governing Board website.

In addition, the Governing Board should seek ways to leverage mass communications (e.g., TV, radio, public service announcements, and social media) to reach parents with NAEP data and resources.

5. Conduct a Parent Education Summit in Late Summer/Early Fall 2012

The Ad Hoc Committee proposes a one-day parent summit on education for the late summer or early fall of 2012. The summit would be conducted in Washington, D.C. and available across the nation via live-streaming internet video, with the potential for live TV and radio coverage via C-SPAN.

The objective of the summit would be to convey the urgency of improving student achievement in the United States for all children and the urgency of reducing achievement gaps between student subgroups.

In addition to Governing Board members, the audience of 150-300 would consist primarily of parent and community leaders, parent organizations, and leaders in education, business, civil rights, the religious community, and legislative policy.

To help convey the non-partisan, universal interest in achieving the summit objective, as well as to focus on its importance for the nation's future, First Lady Michelle Obama and former First Lady Laura Bush would be invited to share the podium in delivering the keynote address.

A distinguished journalist or media representative, acknowledged for intellect and freedom from bias, would be invited to moderate and provide a concluding summary.

A respected education advocate, with a strong reputation for compelling presentations on student achievement would be invited to present the NAEP data as evidence of the need to address the summit objective.

Individual and panel presentations would be made to address the national imperative for achieving the summit objective, from a wide range of perspectives which, taken together, would provide a compelling, unassailable argument for the urgent need to take action.

For example (not listed in priority order):

- Religious leaders would provide the moral perspective
- Economists would provide the national economic perspective
- Civil rights leaders would provide the equity perspective
- Military leaders would address the national security imperative
- Business leaders would address the human capital and employment imperative
- Scholars from nationally recognized policy institutions and foundations, representing a diverse range of philosophical orientations, would provide societal perspectives
- Demographers would address the implications from the perspective of a changing population
- Parent leaders would address the imperative for families and students
- Educators would describe actions that are needed to improve academic achievement overall and close achievement gaps