



NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release: July 31, 2020

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Governing Board Resolves to Continue Preparations for NAEP in 2021 While Monitoring Health and Safety Concerns, School Operations

Voluntary Grade 8 civics, U.S. history assessments postponed until 2022

WASHINGTON — Members of the National Assessment Governing Board voted today to advise the commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to continue with preparations to safely administer the Nation’s Report Card in reading and mathematics in 2021.

A [resolution](#) approved by the 26-member board, which sets policy for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), calls for the Board to continue to work with NCES, which administers the assessments. The agencies will monitor the evolving status of the ability of states, schools, and students to participate in the assessments based on school operations and health factors related to the coronavirus pandemic.

States are required to participate in the reading and mathematics assessments in grades 4 and 8 by the federal Every Student Succeeds Act. The agencies will determine whether it becomes necessary to seek a waiver from Congress to postpone these assessments to 2022.

The U.S. Congress is considering appropriating additional funding to allow NCES to implement plans for administering NAEP in 2021. NCES is identifying critical milestones that will inform whether to proceed with data collection and the commissioner of NCES could determine that it is not possible to administer NAEP and report results in a valid and reliable manner consistent with NCES’ statistical standards.

“The Governing Board’s top priority is the safety and health of everyone involved in NAEP,” said Gov. Haley Barbour, the chairman of the Board. “The global pandemic is likely to exacerbate longstanding educational inequities, and if at all possible, we would like to administer NAEP to provide the information that policymakers and the public will need to address these disparities in this unprecedented time.”

In related action at the meeting, the Board decided to postpone the administration of voluntary assessments for grade 8 scheduled for 2021 in civics and U.S. history to 2022. Moving these assessments to 2022 would return them to the four-year cycle on which they had previously been given. The long-term trend assessment for 17-year-olds also was rescheduled for 2022.

Contingency plans to administer NAEP are being developed by NCES to mitigate the risk to health and safety and to preserve the quality of the data that the assessments would yield. It would not be possible to administer NAEP and report results in a valid and reliable manner if a representative sample of schools and students are not physically in session in early 2021.

“NAEP is the gold standard of large-scale assessment and if it’s possible to go forward, the data will provide invaluable information on student achievement that can support effective policy, research, and resource allocation,” Barbour added. “In the coming weeks, we will continue to consult with stakeholders and work with Congress and NCES to determine if it’s feasible to administer NAEP safely and produce fair and accurate results.”

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The National Assessment Governing Board is an independent, nonpartisan board whose members include governors, state legislators, local and state school officials, educators, business representatives, and members of the general public. Congress created the 26-member Governing Board in 1988 to set policy for the National Assessment of Educational Progress. For more information, visit www.nagb.gov.