



# NAEP Reading Framework Updates for the 2026 Assessment

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The National Assessment Governing Board is an independent, nonpartisan organization whose 26 members include governors, state legislators, local and state school officials, educators, business representatives, and members of the general public. Congress created the Governing Board in 1988 to set policy for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

An important responsibility includes drafting and adopting frameworks, the map for each assessment's content and design. Here are highlights of our work.

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### **Why** is the Board updating the NAEP Reading Assessment Framework?

The Framework was last updated in 2004. Given NAEP's transition to digital-based administration in 2017 and changes in the testing and education landscape, it was time for an update.

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### **How** does the Board update a framework?

The iterative process takes about two years. It starts with the Governing Board's recommendation that an update is necessary. Once determined, the Governing Board convenes experts from research, policy, and practice to establish what content the assessment should cover and with what types of questions.

The experts on the Visioning Panel develop high-level recommendations for the update. Then, the experts on the Development Panel draft the framework.

Next, the Governing Board offers their feedback on the draft framework. The Board also posts the draft framework in public forums to elicit feedback (i.e., through official federal channels for public comment as well as through outreach to stakeholder organizations). As part of this process, the Board conducted several webinars in Summer 2020 for a variety of audiences. In the case of this reading framework, hundreds of stakeholders submitted feedback, and an iterative process of review and revision resulted in several changes.

Most recently, the Board reviewed a revised draft and discussed outstanding issues at the May quarterly meeting. Following that meeting, the Board Chair, Haley Barbour, convened a working group of members from across the Board’s standing committees who represent a cross-section of views expressed on the framework. The goal was to address remaining concerns, consider additional stakeholder feedback the Board actively sought out, and reach consensus to create a final revised draft to address remaining issues.

The chart below highlights key milestones in the process to date.

Date	Completed Milestone
March 2019	Board begins process to develop NAEP Reading Framework update
August – October 2019	Develop issues papers and resource compilation
October 2019	Visioning Panel convenes
November 2019	Development Panel begins process to draft recommendations
June 2020	Panel finalizes initial draft recommendations for public comment
June 22, 2020	Public comment period opens
July 2020	Webinars for state chiefs, state assessment directors, other SEA officials, and other stakeholders (e.g., district superintendents and their staff, disciplinary associations, researchers, policy organizations, etc.) <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> There were 8 webinars hosted by Governing Board contractor WestEd during the summer of 2020 for the following audiences: 1) stakeholders whose day-to-day work is directly affected by the Framework update (i.e., teachers, school administrators, teacher preparation). Co-hosted by the International Literacy Association (ILA); 2) stakeholders who are concerned with how reading is defined, taught, and assessed (i.e., reading/content experts, assessment experts, curriculum experts). Co-hosted by the Literacy Research Association (LRA); 3) For stakeholders who analyze or use NAEP data to inform their work (i.e., policy makers, researchers). Co-hosted by the National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME); 4) Assessment Directors, Assessment English language arts (ELA) specialists, Chief Academic Officers, and ELA Collaborative. Co-hosted by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO); 5) Communication Directors, Deputies, and Chiefs. Co-hosted by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO); 6) stakeholders whose day-to-day work is directly affected by the Framework update (i.e., teachers, school administrators, teacher preparation). Co-hosted by the National Council of Teachers of English; 7) stakeholders who are impacted by NAEP outcomes (i.e., employers, parents, general public). Co-hosted by the National School Boards Association; 8) all audiences, focusing on updates to the NAEP Reading Assessment Framework.

Date	Completed Milestone
July 23, 2020	Public comment period closes
October 2020	Review and analysis of public comment complete
November 2020	Board discusses public comment and provides feedback to the panel on draft recommendations; panel incorporates feedback into revised draft recommendations
March 2021	Board reviews and discusses revised draft recommendations; panel incorporates additional feedback into another revision
May 2021	Board reviews and discusses revised draft recommendations
May 2021	Chair Haley Barbour forms Working Group of Board members representing various viewpoints and the Board's standing committees to suggest revisions to address concerns
June 2021	Working Group meets to discuss recommendations and create an initial "Chair's Draft" of revised framework recommendations
June 2021	The Board's Assessment Development Committee, which oversees framework development, reviews draft and makes additional recommendations
June 2021	Board releases "Chair's Draft" of the revised framework recommendations
June-July 2021	Board conducts webinars and creates a special web page to collect stakeholder feedback for consideration to further revise framework
August 2021	Board unanimously approves the 2026 NAEP Reading Framework

### Which parts of NAEP does the update change?

We see the update as an evolution from the current framework. For more information, see the [comparison chart](#) on the differences between the current NAEP Reading assessment and the new 2026 framework.

The initial update more significantly departed from the current NAEP. Feedback from the Board, from the public, and from stakeholders steered the revised update to reflect more modest changes.

## What about trend?

Gradual changes from the current assessment to the updated assessment (see comparison chart) should allow trend to be maintained. There is no guarantee, of course, but there is a good likelihood of preserving trend. (Maintaining NAEP's trend lines is always an empirical question and can only be confirmed after each test administration.)

The update reflects NAEP's emphasis on rigor, quality, and ability to chart trend.

## Why care about trend?

The nearly thirty-year trend lines for NAEP Reading allow the public and the education field to understand how students' knowledge and skills in reading comprehension change over time. This points to where students are improving and performing well, which can help districts and states implement effective policy so all students can improve.

## What's next?

The Board will vote on the final version of the 2026 NAEP Reading Framework at its August 2021 meeting. If the new framework is adopted, the Board will then consider detailed specifications to guide assessment and item development at its November 2021 meeting.

## When do changes take effect?

Once approved by the Board, the update will initiate a multi-year effort that will involve development of specifications and then implementation of new item development and pilot testing before items are approved for use on NAEP. NAEP's reputation as the "gold standard" relies on a careful, methodical approach to implementing any changes to the assessments.

Throughout this assessment development process, the Board and the National Center for Education Statistics enact multiple stages of review from many stakeholders.

Finally, the update will take effect with the 2026 NAEP Reading assessment.