How an Updated Assessment Framework is Implemented into a NAEP Assessment

After the National Assessment Governing Board approves a new NAEP assessment framework, another extensive process of development and review begins before assessment items reflect the new framework. Here are the main steps along that path:

1. Specifications
   The Governing Board provides guidance to inform the development of NAEP items – questions, tasks, and reading passages – by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

2. Comparison of Frameworks
   NCES compares the old and new frameworks to identify existing test questions, tasks, and passages that can be carried into future assessments and development needs for new content. Based on these analyses, NCES prepares a work plan for assessment design and development.

3. Items and Contextual Variables
   NCES develops a pool of NAEP items – including scoring rubrics for open response items – and surveys for school administrators, teachers, and students.

4. Pre-Pilot Testing
   Early in their development, NAEP items are tested with students in cognitive labs and tryout sessions to inform item revisions prior to pilot testing. These tests help determine how well students understand the items and what further refinements should be made to items’ wording or formatting.
Over the course of the development process, more than a dozen NAEP item reviews are conducted by NCES, the Governing Board’s staff and Assessment Development Committee, and outside experts, including teachers, researchers, and teacher educators. Items are reviewed for grade-level appropriateness, alignment to the framework concepts and topics, sensitivity and bias, psychometric integrity, and overall quality.

All NAEP items are pilot tested with a nationally representative sample of students.

NCES analyzes the pilots’ results to select a set of items to include in the NAEP assessment. They check for item clarity, difficulty, the length of time required for students to complete the item, and feasibility and logistical consideration for implementation. Items that do not meet standards for performance may be revised and re-piloted.

The final set of new NAEP items is reviewed by NCES and external expert reviewers. The Governing Board reviews any items that were identified for post-pilot review.

After NCES and Governing Board acceptance, new items are incorporated into the corresponding NAEP assessment.

Visit nagb.gov to learn more about NAEP frameworks.