

National Assessment Governing Board

Reporting and Dissemination Committee

Report of March 5, 2010

Attendees: Committee Members – Chairman David Gordon, Vice Chair Mary Frances Taymans, David Alukonis, Warren Smith, Eileen Weiser, and representing Gov. Perdue, Eric Wearne; Other NAGB members – Chairman David Driscoll; NAGB Staff – Larry Feinberg, Ray Fields, and Stephaan Harris; NCES – Gina Broxterman, Grady Dilborn, Angela Glymph, Arnold Goldstein, Emmanuel Sikali, Bill Ward and Brenda Wolff; AIR – Sami Kitmitto; CCSSO – Alyssa Alston; NAGB High School Achievement Commission – Governor Ronnie Musgrove; CRP – Carina John; ETS – Amy Drescher and Walt MacDonald; HagerSharp – Lisa Clarke and Debra Silimeo; HumRRO – Steve Sellman; NAE – Greg Pearson; NESSI – Cadelle Hemphill; Ogilvy – Gayle Fishel and Vickie Jones; Reingold – Amy Buckley and Susan Headden; Westat – Chris Averett, Nancy Caldwell, and Kathy Rosenberger; Education Daily – Emily Brown.

1. NAEP High School Achievement Commission: Communications Plan

Ronnie Musgrove, former governor of Mississippi and chair of the Board's High School Achievement Commission, briefed the Committee on a communications plan for the upcoming report on NAEP preparedness research. The plan was written by Reingold Communications, a Board contractor, and was approved by the commission at a teleconference in late February 2010. It includes a series of goals, audiences, messages, and communications strategies.

Gov. Musgrove stressed that implementation of the plan is conditional on the success of the preparedness research in supporting NAEP's ability to indicate how well prepared 12th graders are for college and work. He noted that commission members had added the military to the list of target audiences for communications about the research report.

Committee members praised the Commission plan and said it might serve as a prototype for future communications efforts by the Board. Reingold is also serving as communications contractor for the Governing Board's general outreach and dissemination activities.

2. NAEP-NAGB Communications Audit

Amy Buckley, of Reingold, the Board's new communications contractor, presented the main findings of an audit her firm conducted to evaluate media coverage of Report Card releases and other Governing Board activities. The firm also made recommendations on how the Board can better promote itself and NAEP.

A major point was the need to clarify the Board's identity, given that the public sees many acronyms in connection with the National Assessment, such as NAGB, NAEP, NRC, NCES and IES, and is confused about the roles and responsibilities of the different organizations.

The audit also emphasized the importance of engaging more audiences through multiple channels and platforms, developing more stories from NAEP data, identifying NAEP's relevance to different audiences, and better informing them about the resources NAEP offers.

Ms. Buckley added that the Board should engage more widely in discussions about educational issues without stating an opinion. Committee member Warren Smith expressed concern about walking the fine line between expressing a viewpoint and maintaining an objective stance. He suggested that guidelines should be developed, but said there is a tremendous need for members to talk more frequently about NAEP and the Governing Board. Larry Feinberg, of the Board staff, noted that in the past Board members have expressed strong opinions even at NAEP releases, but made it clear that these were not official positions of the Board as whole. He said interesting comments by members added to the visibility of the Board.

Sister Mary Frances Taymans, Committee Vice Chair, said the Board could do much more to spark public discussion about NAEP and be more outgoing to the public. Committee members said many of the ideas in the audit and the plan for the High School Commission should be further developed and carried out. Member David Alukonis said that even in his state's legislature, many officials do not know much about the NAEP or the Board.

Vice Chair Taymans said a considerable challenge will be to coordinate NAEP outreach across the various organizations, activities, and web sites involved in the assessment because the different groups have different viewpoints and concerns. Chairman David Gordon requested clarification on role of the state NAEP coordinators, who are paid with NAEP funds and work with stakeholders on NAEP results but report to state superintendents. Arnold Goldstein, of NCES, said the federal grant for the coordinators mandates that they perform certain activities, including outreach to get NAEP data to the public. Gina Broxterman, of NCES, said NCES provides support to help the coordinators in identifying audiences, messaging, and using data tools to make comparisons with different states. Chairman Gordon said it would be important to include a range of people who work on NAEP, including the state NAEP coordinators, in outreach plans for the Board.

3. Release Plans for Upcoming Reports: NAEP 2009 Reading Report Card and NAEP 2009 TUDA Reading Report Card

Stephaan Harris, of the Board staff, presented a draft release plan for The Nation's Report Card: Reading 2009, which will present national and state results at grades 4 and 8. Chairman Gordon said the report would be released March 24. Mr. Harris said the plan provides for a press conference in Washington, D.C., including data presentation by the Commissioner of Education Statistics and comments by Governing Board members.

Mr. Harris said the Board would offer embargoed pre-release briefings to U.S. Congressional staff, representatives of governors, and as well as representatives from state education agencies both in Washington, DC and via teleconference. The report would be released online at nationsreportcard.gov. Shortly after the release event, NAGB's media contractor will arrange a national teleconference for journalists outside Washington, D.C.

Chairman Gordon, referring to themes in the Reingold audit, suggested that the NAEP reading release include some reference to the common core standards effort by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association. He said this would help to keep NAEP part of the discussion of a major national education issue and also bring added attention to NAEP results. He added that, as Reingold suggested, the Board should begin incorporating social media into its outreach. Member Eileen Weiser said that in future releases, members might wish to comment on NAEP data in online discussion venues, such as the Education Week blogs.

For this release, Reingold, with staff guidance, will take extra steps in its outreach efforts, including a summary version of the new reading framework, a one-pager that presents important facts and graphs for easy consumption, and follow-up contact with Hill staff, education groups, and media on how they use NAEP and how we can better communicate report results to them.

ACTION: After further discussion, the Committee voted unanimously to recommend Board approval of the release plan for The Nation's Report Card in Reading 2009, as appended in Attachment A to this report.

Mr. Harris presented a draft release plan for The Nation's Report Card in Reading 2009 Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA), which would include fourth and eighth grade results for 18 large urban school districts. Mr. Harris said the proposed release would be a webcast, including comments by several TUDA school officials in cities across the country. He said the proposal was for an online, virtual event instead of a traditional in-person press conference.

The format would be similar to previous NAEP releases, but rather than having speakers and reporters gather in one place, participants would speak from their home cities, and all could be seen and respond via the Internet. The event could be viewed online throughout the country as it is being conducted and would be recorded for access later. Mr. Harris noted that over the past few years attendance by reporters at NAEP press conferences has substantially decreased.

Chairman Gordon said there still is value in an in-person event not only for the press but also to give some attention and recognition to officials whose school districts participated in NAEP. Ms. Weiser said it might be best to have a well-developed Internet component integrated with a traditional release, adding that a physical presence can make a difference. Chairman Gordon said the plan should be revised to grant the committee flexibility to choose the exact release method depending on the results, so it could be a virtual release, an in-person release in Washington, D.C. or a TUDA city, or a combination of the two.

ACTION: The Committee voted unanimously to recommend that the Governing Board approve the release plan for The Nation's Report Card in Reading TUDA 2009 with revisions, as appended in Attachment B to this report.

4. Review of Recent NAEP Release: TUDA Mathematics Report Card

Mr. Harris reviewed the release of The Nation's Report Card in Mathematics 2009: TUDA, which was held in Washington, D.C., on December 8, 2009 at the National Press Club. The report described student performance at grades 4 and 8 in the 18 urban school districts that

participated in TUDA. The release event included Board Chairman David Driscoll, Board member and Reporting and Dissemination Chairman David Gordon, NCES Deputy Commissioner Stuart Kerachsky, D.C. Schools Chancellor Michelle Rhee, and Council of the Great City Schools Executive Director Michael Casserly. Pre-release embargoed briefings were held for members and staff of the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives education committees, and, by webinar, with the Council of Chief State School Officers. A post-release webinar was conducted for members of the Association of Mathematics Teacher Educators, which appreciated the outreach effort.

Mr. Harris said media coverage was substantial, including major national outlets, such as the New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, Education Week, and CNN, as well as broadcast and print media in the TUDA cities. All together, stories on the TUDA results appeared in more than 200 print, broadcast, and online media outlets the week of the release. Mr. Harris added that more than a dozen radio stations in TUDA cities called for interviews – the largest number of original radio interview requests in over two years.

5. Projected Schedule for Future NAEP Reports and Related Releases

Arnold Goldstein, of NCES, reviewed the tentative release schedule for future NAEP reports and related NCES releases. He said the NAEP 2009 Science Report Card would probably be ready for release in June 2010, followed by the TUDA science report a month later. The 12th grade Report Card on Reading and Mathematics, including results for 11 volunteering states, would be ready in the fall, followed by the high school transcript study.

Mr. Feinberg noted that the 12th grade preparedness report, to be prepared by the Governing Board, would probably be ready for release in late winter or early spring of 2011.

Vice Chair Taymans expressed concern that NCES was giving Board and Committee officers less and less time to review reports before release. Mr. Goldstein said NCES would try to increase the time available.

6. Update on NAEP Mega-States Report

Mr. Goldstein discussed materials in the briefing book on the upcoming NAEP mega-states report, which NCES has targeted for release in February 2011. The report will cover achievement in NAEP reading, mathematics, and science in the five states with the largest public school enrollment—California, Texas, Florida, New York, and Illinois. It will include a highlights report of 8 to 12 pages, available both in print and on-line, plus much more extensive material on the Internet.

In addition to 2009 results, there would be substantial emphasis on trends. Detailed state profiles would be available, and additional contextual data could be displayed. Among data elements available would be information on TUDA districts in each state and on achievement

and demographic changes since 2003, the first year that all states were required to participate in NAEP reading and mathematics at 4th and 8th grades under the No Child Left Behind law.

Chairman Gordon asked NCES to provide templates of the data displays for the Committee to review at its next regular meeting in May 2010.

7. Update on Reporting NAEP Mathematics for Puerto Rico

This issue has been before the Board for several years because the performance of public school students in Puerto Rico has been so low that NAEP, as currently designed, cannot report accurately on student achievement there and cannot show changes reliably. In 2009 there was no operational NAEP assessment in the commonwealth but a range of studies were conducted.

Emmanuel Sikali, of NCES, said these indicated that NAEP translations into Spanish were largely correct and that the limited translation errors could not explain the low scores. Overall, the average percent correct in Puerto Rico was about 25 percent, which is at the level of chance on the many four-choice multiple-choice questions on the assessment.

Mr. Sikali said that in 2011 NCES will conduct a field test in both Puerto Rico and the mainland United States of a two-stage, adaptive mathematics assessment. Students would first take a diagnostic block of items, and then, based on their answers, would be routed to a second block targeted at the low, medium, or high part of the achievement distribution.

Each student in NAEP takes only a sampling of test questions. At present all students have the same probability of getting any particular question in their test booklets. Since the largest proportion of NAEP is aimed at the middle range of difficulty, students at the bottom or top of the distribution get relatively few items that can be used to show what they know and can do with precision. Mr. Sikali said an adaptive test would improve NAEP's ability to measure achievement by giving students an assessment that is appropriate to the knowledge and skills they have attained.

Ms. Weiser expressed concern that this might be perceived as lowering the level of NAEP even though all results would be placed on the same NAEP scale. Member Warren Smith said it is important for NAEP to measure well wherever students are so that steps can be taken to improve learning and education.

The Committee felt that the Board should send a letter to Congress and to officials in Puerto Rico, explaining what studies have been conducted and what plans have been made for NAEP to report on math achievement in Puerto Rico in the future. The Committee would also like to raise the possibility that the NAEP assessment in Puerto Rico include private schools as well as public schools since the private schools enroll more than a quarter of the students on the island, a much higher proportion than in any state.

8. Grade 12 State Refusals and Private School Participation

The Committee was briefed on state refusals to participate in 12th grade NAEP and on private school participation in the assessment, two issues that became apparent in information received at the Committee's last meeting in November 2009.

William Ward, of NCES, noted that five state education departments refused to allow NAEP to test any 12th graders in their states in 2009—Maryland, Nebraska, Rhode Island, Utah, and Washington. In the smaller NAEP in 2010 there were three states that refused at 12th grade—Kansas, Maryland, and Nebraska, and one of these Kansas has already said its 12th graders will not participate in 2011.

On private schools, Kathy Rosenberger, of the NAEP State Services Center, said school participation rates went down in 2008 and 2009 and seem disappointing again this year. In 2007 there had been a major improvement in these rates after extensive efforts at outreach and recruiting, which have continued. Rosenberger said several major national organizations of private schools have refused to give endorsement letters. She said private school participation, which is voluntary, had also been harmed by a NAEP analytical report, which said achievement in public and private schools was about the same, when adjusted for student background

Sister Mary Frances Taymans said the Board should take the initiative and try to make arrangements for a Board member and a representative of NCES to make a presentation at a board meeting of the overall umbrella group for private schools, the Council for American Private Education (CAPE) and to the boards of other private school groups. She said sharing professional information might be helpful

The Committee said it wants procedures put into place for Board members to be notified promptly of state refusals and private school recruitment problems so members can make contacts with people and organizations they know to try to turn things around.

9. Review of Core Background Questions

The Committee began a review of core background questions for students, teachers and schools at a teleconference February 24 and a special work session March 4. So far it has only reviewed the questions for students.

NCES has told the Committee that it could not approve questions that have not been field-tested but could delete some of the items planned for the 2011 assessments. However, planning can begin now for changes on future assessments.

Under a standing delegation of authority from the full board, the Committee decided to delete three questions because they are outdated or unproductive:

- Does your family get a newspaper at least four times a week? The answer choices are yes, no, and I don't know. This question has been asked of all 4th, 8th, and 12th graders taking NAEP for more than ten years but with the newspaper business in decline the Committee believes the question has become outmoded by technological change. The

proportion answering no and don't know climbed to 73 percent of 8th graders in 2009, making the newspaper a feeble indicator of literacy materials in the home.

- How much education do you think you will complete?
- What do you expect that your main activity will be in the year after you leave high school?

The two questions, asked on grade 12 assessments only, seem to elicit answers that are aspirational, not factual, and do not give a good picture of what students intend to do after they graduate or are prepared to do as a result of their high school studies. In 2009, some 62 percent of 12th graders said they expect to attend a four year college or university, which is about double the actual proportion that does so. Some 57 percent said they expect to graduate from college which is about double the proportion who actually graduate.

The Committee also looked at drafts of replacement questions submitted by NCES, but asked that further work be done to try to indicate what students have been prepared for when they graduate high school. NCES was also asked to prepare new questions that might provide better measures of socio-economic status, based on research conducted over the past three years. The Committee expects to receive materials from NCES during April so it might hold another teleconference toward the end of the month to approve new questions on which there might be a small pilot in 2011. These would then be ready for a field test and possibly operational use in 2013.

I certify the accuracy of these minutes.



David W. Gordon, Chairman

March 12, 2010

Date

I certify the accuracy of these minutes.

David W. Gordon, Chairman

Date