

National Assessment Governing Board

Reporting and Dissemination Committee

Report of March 4, 2011

Attendees: Committee Members – David Gordon (chair), Eileen Weiser (vice chair), David Alukonis, Anitere Flores, Warren Smith, and Mary Frances Taymans. NAGB Staff – Executive Director Cornelia Orr, Larry Feinberg, and Stephaan Harris. NCES – Commissioner Jack Buckley, Associate Commissioner Peggy Carr, Arnold Goldstein, and Brenda Wolff. ETS – Amy Drescher. HagerSharp – Debra Silimeo. HumRRO – Steve Sellman. Kentucky Department of Education – Lisa Gross. NESSI – Cadelle Hemphill. Reingold – Amy Buckley. Westat – Chris Averett, Christine Nord, and Dianne Walsh.

1. Review of Recent NAEP Releases: Science and TUDA Science Report Cards

Stephaan Harris, of the NAGB staff, described the release events for the NAEP 2009 Science Report Card, released online January 25, 2011, and the NAEP 2009 TUDA Science Report Card, released February 24, 2011 at the University of Massachusetts-Boston. The panel for the NAEP Science release consisted of Board Vice Chair Mary Frances Taymans; member Alan Friedman; NCES Commissioner Jack Buckley; and Bruce Alberts, editor-in-chief of Science Magazine and former president of the National Academy of Sciences. The panel for NAEP Science TUDA included Mr. Friedman; Mr. Buckley; Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools; Boston Schools Superintendent Carol Johnson; and Arthur Eisenkraft, professor of science education and Director of U. Mass-Boston's Center of Science and Math in Context.

Amy Buckley, of Reingold Communications, the Board's communications contractor, reviewed general media coverage and analysis of both reports. For NAEP Science, 228 people (outside of staff affiliated with NAEP) watched the live webinar and dozens of questions were submitted. Ms. Buckley said that there was coverage by nearly 260 print, broadcast, and online media outlets with more than 13.2 million impressions for daily print and broadcast media, including *Education Week*, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The Washington Post*. Ms. Buckley added that the release efforts included social media outreach, with Twitter posts reaching an audience of more than 100,000. Various stakeholder groups promoted the event to their memberships. Ms. Buckley added that although media coverage was extensive and featured numerous quotes from Mr. Friedman, there was little discussion on achievement gaps, the new science framework, and background variables.

For the release of the TUDA Science Report, Ms. Buckley said there were about 30 press conference attendees (excluding NAEP-related staff) and 90 webcast participants. Ms. Buckley said the report was covered by 95 print, broadcast, and online media outlets, mostly in TUDA districts. There were more than 12.7 million print and broadcast media impressions. Those

carrying stories included *Reuters*, *The Boston Globe*, and *ABC News Radio*. She said Twitter posts reached an audience of more than 100,000.

Ms. Buckley said NAEP release events no longer function as press conferences since they are attended primarily by stakeholder groups and very few media representatives participate or ask questions. Members of the press obtain the information they need from the written releases and embargoed reports and from teleconferences or telephone interviews either before or after the event. She said webinars are effective release events, but should be accompanied by separate opportunities for media to create and shape their stories.

Board Vice Chair Taymans suggested preparing pre-recorded video and audio materials for broadcast media in order to provide a boost in exposure. Executive director Cornelia Orr said any willing Board members, not just those on the release panel, could submit brief comments on a new report that could be circulated by Board staff and contractors to encourage media coverage in their local areas. Chairman Gordon said there should be better message coordination among panelists so they know the focus of each other's remarks and similar comments are not repeated.

2. Projected Schedule for Future NAEP Reports and Related Releases

Arnold Goldstein, of NCES, discussed the projected release schedule for NAEP-related reports over the next several months. Chairman Gordon expressed concern that he and the Committee's vice chair had yet not been able to review the High School Transcript Study, which is the next report scheduled for release in March 2011. Mr. Goldstein said the report was still under review by agency staff. He said NCES did not want to send it to Board members until all staff changes had been incorporated in the text. Peggy Carr, of NCES, estimated that the report could be sent to Board members on March 10.

Chairman Gordon said the time needed to finalize the report would prevent a release during March, a concern echoed by Ms. Buckley and Mr. Harris. Sister Taymans said in general Board members should have more time to review and comment on reports.

NCES Commissioner Buckley said that with so many NAEP reports coming out in close succession, he was worried the media would become tired of NAEP, and the resulting fatigue would lead to less press coverage. He said NCES was looking into the idea of combining the release of the U.S. History and Civics reports because they cover related material and would be ready within a few weeks of each other. However, Chairman Gordon said Civics should have a separate release because of the importance of the subject at a time of national concern about civility in public debate. He said there was the potential for great visibility for the NAEP findings in Civics, and suggested that U.S. History and Geography might have a combined release instead. Mr. Goldstein cautioned, however, that while History and Civics would be ready for release soon, Geography would not be ready until June. Thus, the History results would have to be delayed for several months to accommodate a joint release.

Committee members and staff discussed the issue of holding up the release of data, and whether this should be done to maximize publicity. Ms. Buckley said that when a report is

declared “ready for release” is not necessarily when it should be made public. She and Chairman Gordon argued that the release of reports should be timed to take advantage of external events to maximize coverage. Committee member Anitere Flores suggested the idea, which she had mentioned earlier to the full Board, of releasing the White-Hispanic Achievement Gaps report in late June at the annual conference of the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO). Both Ms. Flores and member Leticia Van de Putte belong to this organization. Ms. Carr said NCES and IES are rated on timeliness in releasing public data. She said holding a report after it is ready for release may produce a negative evaluation by the Office of Management and Budget. Vice Chair Weiser said the goals of tying data to external factors and producing a timely release do not have to be mutually exclusive.

Ms. Flores said combining reports for release when feasible should be explored to better manage the large number of reports slated for 2011. Larry Feinberg, of the NAGB staff, said individual releases promote more attention and discussion for each subject. Mr. Harris cautioned since it takes several weeks to plan an effective release it may not be feasible to mount an individual event for every NAEP report.

In the agenda prepared for the meeting, the Committee was to consider release plans for two upcoming reports—Civics and Mega-States. However, in light of the discussion and the adjusted timeframe for the transcript study, Chairman Gordon suggested that the Committee request a delegation of authority from the full Board to hold a teleconference meeting within the next few weeks to approve release plans for five upcoming reports: Civics, Mega-States, U.S. History, Geography, and White-Hispanic Achievement Gaps.

ACTION: After further discussion, the Committee approved a motion to request the delegation of authority, which is appended in Attachment 1 to this report.

3. Update on Reporting Socio-Economic Status

Amy Dresher, of Educational Testing Service, described efforts to improve the measures of socio-economic status (SES) used in NAEP reports. She said the chief measure of poverty currently used, participation in the federal program providing free or reduced-priced lunch, has become unreliable. Participation rates vary widely in different grades because high school students are much less likely to file the required documentation than children in elementary grades. Also, in schools with a large proportion of low-income students, federal rules now allow all students to participate in order to reduce administrative costs and remove stigma.

Other SES factors used in NAEP reporting have been the number of books in the home, access to the Internet, and the highest level of parent education. All of these show a correlation with academic achievement, but have not been sufficient to construct a meaningful index of SES, as provided for in the NAEP Background Information Framework, adopted by the Governing Board in 2003. An SES index is prominently used in the reporting of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) conducted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

Ms. Drescher said one possibility for providing richer SES measures for NAEP would be to use data on family structure, income, occupations and education collected by the U.S. Census Bureau. She said studies have been conducted using the home address of students to link NAEP to Census small-area block information (geo-coding) and using student or school zip codes to link to information on the larger zip-code areas, which is often used by marketers and demographers. She said the zip codes provided as good information as the more detailed and expensive geo-coding.

In a special study in 2010, students were asked to write in their home zip code. This was compared to the student's home zip code in school records. The two matched in almost 80 to 90 percent of cases. However, only slightly more than half of fourth graders could give a five-digit zip, compared to almost all eighth and twelfth graders. Among fourth graders 72 percent of home zip codes were the same as that of their school, but this dropped to 61 percent in 8th grade and 52 percent in grade 12. The differences primarily reflect the larger attendance zones of middle and high schools, but several Committee members noted that the growth of school choice programs means that increasing numbers of elementary students are also living in areas outside the zip code area of the school. Members said home zip codes would be a better link to SES data from the Census. Ms. Drescher said it might be reasonable to ask fourth grade students for their home zip, and then use the school zip code if they are unable to provide it. Chairman Gordon suggested that students might know their addresses more easily than their zip codes and that asking of addresses should be explored as an alternative.

In 2010 NAEP also piloted an enhanced student background questionnaire at grade 12 with additional items on parent education and family resources. A similar questionnaire was piloted in 2009 at grades 4 and 8.

Both data from the enhanced questionnaire and the links to Census are being evaluated by an expert panel convened by NCES. Mr. Goldstein said the panel is expected to make its recommendations by the end of 2011. New items would be piloted in 2012, and additional data would be collected in 2013, but he said he was not certain when NCES might be able to recommend an SES index for Board approval.

Member Warren Smith expressed concern that reporting NAEP with a clear measure of socio-economic status might encourage the belief that low SES students were low achievers. But Mr. Gordon said it could also be used to show that there is considerable variation in student achievement in different areas with the same demography. He said NAEP could indicate which areas had been more successful in teaching low SES students, and successful practices could be studied and replicated.

4. Embargo Policy for NAEP Reports

Mr. Harris said NAGB staff asked Reingold to conduct research on how various federal agencies and education policy groups release embargoed data and who has access to those data. He said the changing media landscape from more traditional newspapers, magazines, and broadcasters to a proliferation of blogs and other online outlets has made it difficult to decide

who is a journalist and who should be granted embargoed access to reports before general public release. Additionally, over the past several years an increasing number of policy organizations and education groups have requested embargoed access to NAEP data. Board staff felt it would be helpful to see how similar requests are handled by other federal agencies and non-government testing organizations.

Ms. Buckley said most groups, like NAGB and NCES, have no written embargo policy, but instead follow a common practice of granting embargoed access to journalists and affected public officials (such as state superintendents and governors for state NAEP results) but not to advocacy groups. She said Reingold recommends broadening embargoed access to key stakeholder groups and online media to cultivate relationships, influence stories, and increase coverage. Ms. Buckley recommended eliminating or streamlining NAGB's current practice of requiring signed embargo agreements by e-mail or fax before access to data is granted. She said some media and groups are offended by the requirement.

Lisa Gross, public information officer for the Kentucky Department of Education, said her agency releases test scores on an embargoed basis to media and some stakeholder groups but without a formal embargo agreement. She said there has only been one embargo break since 1992. Ms. Gross is a member of the National Assessment Governing Board/Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) Policy Task Force. She said that explaining to recipients the importance of adhering to the embargo, and giving them time to review a report, improves the quality and accuracy of news stories.

Commissioner Buckley said that the broader access becomes, the more likely it is for a breach to happen. Mr. Harris said increasing pre-release access to NAEP results might reduce attendance at online and in-person release events. Debra Silimeo, of Hager Sharp, agreed with need to modernize the embargo process. She noted that the current practice of offering embargoed NAEP briefings to Congressional staff, as well as to CCSSO and the National Governors' Association (NGA) was an example of stakeholder outreach.

Chairman Gordon said that providing embargoed data to CCSSO and NGA was already a case of NAGB choosing stakeholders. Sister Taymans asked if the NAGB embargo policy should be adjusted depending on the release. Committee member Eileen Weiser questioned whether NAGB should extend pre-release access only to "friendly" organizations and asked Ms. Gross how Kentucky handled this issue. Ms. Gross said that in the past, Kentucky groups critical of public education had not been given embargoed access in advance of the public data release, but the department is re-thinking this policy.

Chairman Gordon requested that Reingold and NAGB staff provide an embargo policy recommendation for the Committee to consider at its May 2011 meeting.

5. Topics for Future Meetings

Two topics on the meeting agenda were not addressed because of insufficient time: (1) changes in racial categories and their impact on trends, and (2) PISA reporting on school policies

and practice, which might provide ideas for NAEP. Both topics will be discussed at the May 2011 meeting of the Committee. In addition, a teleconference will be held during April 2011 to review core background questions and the charter school questionnaire for the 2012 pilot of the National Assessment.

Sister Mary Frances Taymans suggested that at its meeting in May the Committee should discuss whether state-level reporting on reading and mathematics ought to be reduced from every two years to every four years. This would free up funds for NAEP reporting in other important subject areas.

I certify the accuracy of these minutes.



David W. Gordon, Chairman

March 15, 2011

Date

DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY

The National Assessment Governing Board hereby grants a delegation of authority to the Reporting and Dissemination Committee to approve release plans for the following NAEP reports:

- Civics 2010
- U. S. History 2010
- Geography 2010
- Mega-States
- Hispanic-White Achievement Gaps 2009

The Committee shall plan to take action within the next several weeks after receiving firm information from NCES on when the reports will be ready for release.

All of the reports shall be released during the spring and summer of 2011. Because of the large number of NAEP reports to be issued during this period, the U.S. History and Geography reports may be released at the same time.

Board staff will work with NCES in developing a release plan for the report on Hispanic-White achievement gaps, which is not an initial NAEP release for which the Board has responsibility.