

# **National Assessment Governing Board Reporting and Dissemination Committee Report of May 16, 2014**

**Attendees:** Committee Members – Chairman Andres Alonso, Vice Chair Terry Mazany, Rebecca Gagnon, Tonya Miles, Gov. Ronnie Musgrove and Father Joseph O’Keefe; Governing Board Staff – Stephaan Harris and Cornelia Orr; NCES – Peggy Carr, Ebony Walton Chester, James Deaton, and Arnold Goldstein; AIR – Cadelle Hemphill; ETS – Jonas Bertling and Amy Dresher; Fulcrum Co. – Saira Brenner; HagerSharp – David Hoff and Debra Silimeo; HumRRO – Monica Gribben; Reingold – Amy Buckley; Westat – Chris Averett

## **1. Plans for Contextual Modules: SES Index, Technology Use, and Additional Possibilities**

The committee continued the discussion of the development of contextual questions called modules that can be summarized into indices on important factors related to academic achievement. Jamie Deaton, of NCES, and Jonas Bertling, of ETS, discussed various modules and extensive research used in informing the process of their recommendation of the five modules for development questions to be administered and used for 2017 assessments: socio-economic status (a composite of parent education, occupation, and income or wealth); technology use (including access, familiarity, and interest in computers or other information technology equipment); school climate (which may include safety, discipline, absenteeism, and students' feelings toward their school); grit (which may include perseverance and self-control, and might be measured through responses to vignettes and self-reported behavior in different situations); and desire for learning (which seeks to measure curiosity and motivation to learn)

Mr. Deaton said that factors captured in each module should have a clear relationship with student achievement, be malleable and actionable in terms of possible interventions in and outside the classroom, and be amenable for measurement with contextual questionnaires. He added that modules suggested for inclusion in the Core Contextual Questionnaires should focus on factors that are domain-general and not subject-specific.

Mr. Deaton discussed schematic models and key factors related to student achievement, including desire for learning, grit, and attitudes toward and familiarity with technology, as well as SES and school climate (categorized as “Opportunity to Learn”—describes whether a student is exposed to opportunities to acquire relevant knowledge and skills, both at school and outside of school). Mr. Deaton and Mr. Bertling then gave an overview of a variety of research models they explored and how the proposed five modules fit into those frameworks, which included the key achievement predictors in PISA 2012 and a meta-analysis of 42 noncognitive factors relevant to student achievement from Richardson et al. (2012)

Mr. Deaton and Mr. Bertling then discussed challenges and next steps. NAEP contextual questionnaires for students are shorter than those used in international assessments: core and subject-specific questions are at the 15-minute mark (core – 5 minutes, subject-specific-10 minutes). They reported that states tested for NAEP do not want to go past the 15-minute mark. So there are limits to how many questions can be added, which creates several possible scenarios in module development, including restricting the number of modules, blending select questions with the cognitive assessment, changing the core/subject-specific split, and creating a spiraling design, which NCES recommended as a way forward. Mr. Deaton had said having multiple questions on the same topic would create broader, more meaningful indicators than the single items on which NAEP has reported in the past. Aggregating questions into an index also would minimize the effect of the wording of any single question. Modules and indices are widely used in reporting on contextual factors in international assessments, such as TIMSS and PISA.

They then presented the Committee with a timeline. Committee members will review existing item pool and draft items at the next meeting. There will then be a Committee review in spring 2015 of items for a pilot assessment following pre-testing of new and revised items in cognitive labs and an analysis of pre-testing data and decisions for the pilot questionnaires. After pilot assessment and administration, the Committee will review items for operational reporting and administration in 2017.

Chair Alonso asked how modules can be incorporated around findings and communication efforts in order to make the variables malleable, actionable, and relevant. Mr. Bertling said if we see, for example, that 20 percent of students don't apply themselves in learning, educators can see those results and be induced to foster more student interest and curiosity. He added that establishing a trend line for some of these factors can give NAEP an advantage over other assessments like PISA since it is given on a more regular basis.

Committee member Father O'Keefe asked about age-appropriate modifications to modules and if gender differences in behavior can be assessed, especially when it comes to attention and motivation. Mr. Deaton said cognitive labs can get at how a fourth-grader conceptualizes grit, as opposed to eighth- and 12<sup>th</sup>-graders. Mr. Bertling said that indices provide robust reporting and covers other factors so gender differences can be balanced out.

Committee member Gagnon asked that since out of school time is a factor that can be in more than one module and seen in different questions, can a question be added in if school climate research affects that variable. Mr. Bertling said that having a trend measure depends on having an overlap, but indices help with trend lines and allow replacing and updating questions and maintaining trend. He added that usually one question is classified into one factor, but there are items related to technology, for example, that can be used across modules.

Committee member Tonya Miles asked which audiences would be best to receive the information based on what NCES and ETS studied. Mr. Deaton said policymakers could be a

prime audience, although he added findings can be fitted to parents, teachers, principals, and statisticians. Mr. Bertling said that depending on the factor, audiences can be targeted differently. School districts, for example, may be more interested in school climate. Holly Spurlock, of NCES, said that the data coming out of the module research is analogous to the extended reporting data coming out of the Technology and Engineering Literacy assessment. She said communications goals could drive development of the modules.

Committee member Gov. Musgrove asked when the module research was started if there was any hope of what we wanted to report. Ms. Spurlock said a number of panels are steering the work, heavily guided by research, but there hasn't been a definitive statement from the reporting side of what should come out.

Vice Chair Mazany and Ms. Gagnon discussed the importance of using the eventual contextual variables in public engagement. Vice Chair Mazany said NAEP can make an impact on education if we formulate a story on findings through the process and before the release, so that audiences understand the content and make connections. Ms. Gagnon said contextual questions are a goldmine and the Board and NCES have to be purposeful to use the questions in a viable way that keeps the long-term trend.

Mr. Deaton and Mr. Bertling said an advisory group meeting in April and another meeting in June or July will look at the impact of proposed topics and questions, and how to get better responses from items. So when the Committee sees the items at the next meeting, they will have gone through a comprehensive review.

## **2. Draft Communications Plan**

The Committee discussed again the communications plan, slated for formal approval by both the Committee and the full Board at the August meeting. Chairman Alonso focused the conversation around what our purpose is and what matters most in our work in relationship to make NAEP information actionable and relevant to the public. He said there needs to be a clear theory of action around solving the problem of not using NAEP data and resources in making connections for people, adding that generalizing the audience misses a needed level of specificity that can make a difference in developing effective strategies.

Father O'Keefe said that developing partnerships for outreach—a goal expressed by Board Chairman David Driscoll—was good but the Board shouldn't have so many partnerships that focus is scattered. He said outreach initiatives need to follow through to see if the intended audiences are using NAEP. He added there is a tremendous opportunity to promote NAEP questions, for example, as many schools don't know about NAEP or realize how useful it is.

Chair Alonso isolated four concerns for further discussion: the need for actionable tools, especially for parents; outreach follow-through; absence of general awareness and instrumental use of NAEP information; and targeting outreach in order to magnify results and inform the public. He said that because each of those concerns can generate multiple streams of action, we need to concentrate efforts and move in one direction, and keep building on those efforts.

Gov. Musgrove said that we do not have a designated person, entity, or group to explain the data within the limitations of the law, while Vice Chair Mazany said that going beyond repeating the data at releases could shift us into advocacy mode, which takes the Board over the line. Ms. Gagnon added that we need to connect the dots in our outreach and put different pieces of information together, giving the example of the graduation rate report that came out right around the findings of the NAEP preparedness research. NAGB Executive Director Cornelia Orr believed the most successful release event was for NAEP Civics, in which former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor was a panelist and brought attention to how and if civics was taught. She added the Board needs champions beyond release events.

Various members expressed various obstacles that needed to be overcome in communications. Chair Alonso said the public is weary of numbers, and said the Board needs to tell a story and build a narrative with the data so audiences can better relate. He added that NAEP data and contextual variables had a wealth of information that we are not communicating, such as the fact that the NAEP Grade 12 report showed children of non-educated parents in Massachusetts do better than students in Louisiana with college-educated parents. Ms. Gagnon added that exclusion rates, for example, are a big story and special education organizations can be reached with a compelling narrative

Committee member Tonya Miles said that some policymakers don't want to deal with failures that are revealed by some reports. Gov. Musgrove said few media do investigative stories on education issues and prefer quick sound bites. Ms. Gagnon, citing conversations from the Board's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary event, said that many people are frozen in action because the problem seems bigger than they are. Committee member Tom Luna said most people don't care about news on scores unless it concerns their child or their school, and then they pay most attention to what their child's teacher says. To this point, Chair Alonso said that many parents tend to think other schools are lousy but never their school. He pointed to the fact that when he took over the troubled Baltimore school system, it had received an 83 percent approval rate.

Chair Alonso recommended that the three key audiences for the communications plan be teachers and administrators, parents, and policymakers. Partnerships, including presenting at key, influential groups, were endorsed by several members. Ms. Miles said perhaps a slogan or model is needed and agreed with the idea of using champions. Vice Chair Mazany said members could use their expertise and align themselves with relevant groups, such as Ms. Gagnon presenting at National School Board Association, Ms. Miles presenting at the PTA, and Governors Musgrove and Geringer presenting at the National Governors' Association.

Stephaan Harris, NAGB staff, and Amy Buckley, Reingold staff, will take the feedback and revise the communications draft that will incorporate further feedback from the Committee via a conference call, as well as NCES, before it is presented for review and approval at the next meeting.

### **3. Embargo Policy Review for NAEP Reports**

The committee briefly discussed the embargo policy on NAEP reports, continuing a discussion on how to classify media outlets in the “gray area” – new, online media and media connected to organizations – that have lobbied for embargo access to NAEP reports in the past and have been denied. Mr. Harris, who provided the Committee with research on how various national journalism groups define who media are, said the consensus is that there are no set best practices – different groups have their own definitions for their own reasons.

Chairman Alonso asked what potential harm was of expanding the Board’s policy to include media now denied access. Mr. Harris said that an overriding past and current Board concern was widening access to where many more groups, potentially dozens or hundreds more, would make the embargo process more difficult to manage and ensure embargo agreements would not be broken.

Chairman Alonso and Father O’Keefe expressed concern that an embargo rejection could alienate those outlets with large and influential audiences. Mr. Harris pointed out that many blogs and outlets denied access in the past still covered NAEP.

Vice Chair Mazany suggested that Board staff look into an informal advisory committee of media experts that can be consulted for requesting outlets that are in the gray area.

I certify the accuracy of these minutes.



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Andrés Alonso, Chair

6-17-14

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Date