

Get to Know the National
Assessment Governing Board

Alberto Carvalho

Local School Superintendent



Since 2015, Alberto Carvalho has served as the local superintendent on the National Assessment Governing Board. Carvalho has served as superintendent of Los Angeles Unified School District since February 2022. Prior to that, he was the superintendent of Miami-Dade County Public Schools for 14 years. He also serves as a committee member for the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine and as an advisory committee member to the Harvard Program on Education Policy and Governance. Carvalho is a dedicated member of the national boards of directors for Common Threads and the Posse Foundation. His honors include Florida's 2014 Superintendent of the Year; the 2014 National Superintendent of the Year; the 2016 winner of the Harold W. McGraw Prize in Education; the 2018 National Urban Superintendent of the Year; the 2019 National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE) Superintendent of the Year Award; and recognition by Scholastic Administrator as one of "The Fantastic Five" educators making a difference in America.

Below he answers a few questions for local superintendents considering nominating themselves or interested individuals to the Governing Board.

1. What have you learned from serving on the Governing Board for seven years?

I've learned there is a direct correlation between our nation's performance and its educational viability. Regarding performance, I'm referring particularly to reading and mathematics in fourth through eighth grade, evident through the assessment that's conducted every other year. Regarding viability, I'm referring to progress when you look at the long-term trends and engage in the equally important exercise of comparing states and, in the case of TUDA, districts that are demographically similar but may reflect different performance. For a practitioner, it's the ability to say, "All right, here you have two systems that demographically are similar with significantly different performance. Let's look at the practices. Let's look at the theory of action and see if any of that can be amplified or imported to different settings."



2. How has your perspective as a superintendent informed your work on the board?

One thing my colleagues always say is that I bring the truth from the field. As a former teacher, a school building administrative principal, and now superintendent of two of the largest school systems in America, I bring a practitioner's perspective. On the board I advocate for and advance the perspectives of practitioners of education – not theoretical thinkers, not philosophers, not politicians. I am a professional educator that has dedicated 30 years of my life to this. I always try to use my voice to reflect the benefits of assessment data to the practitioners but also sometimes the dangers of misinterpreting data absent the contextually important information that should go with it.

3. How has Board service influenced how you think about education and assessment?

Experiencing the diversity of opinion and watching the sausage being made as far as national assessment, policy, timelines, implementation, budget considerations, and analysis of the data itself – being a participant in all of this allows me to be a better local superintendent. Having firsthand awareness and knowledge of how different states are performing, being able to analyze the policies those states or districts adopt, doing research on that data to understand what curricular strategies or resources they are deploying, what personnel strategies they are utilizing, what types of supports and interventions – none of that would be possible unless I actually have a seat at the table.

4. Why do you think it's important for local superintendents to serve on the Board?

Local superintendents bring the lens of local leadership and the education space to the policy discussion. Good governance, good government, good policy decisions are made with expert stakeholder input at the level that is closest to the room where everything happens – and that happens to be the classroom. Equally important is the researcher, the governor, or the state representative. But without the practitioner's voice, there's a vacuum that cannot be filled by any other mind or voice.

5. What impact does the Board have on education and how do you see its role evolving with the unprecedented challenges to schools?

The role is a clear one. For decades, the Board has allowed the nation to have eyes on educational attainment, progress, and variance over time. NAEP is the gold standard of national assessment. Without it, we are under the cloak of a curtain that does not allow us to see how students are doing and how America is doing in multiple subject areas. So, beyond the policy importance, beyond the schedule of assessments, beyond the budget considerations is the truth telling responsibility that this board carries. This responsibility has now been accentuated in light of the devastating,



historic impact of the pandemic. Why? We are very soon going to know what the short-term as well as long-term implications are of unfinished, interrupted learning. Without having that information, I do not think that as a nation, or as states or districts, we can develop the strategies necessary to accelerate all students towards their full academic potential. Now more than ever, the relevance of NAGB cannot be equaled.

6. The NAEP 2022 results will provide the most comprehensive picture to date of COVID's impact on students. How do you see Board members ensuring NAEP's utility and relevance in this era?

The Governing Board will help disseminate the information in a timely way and make it accessible to policymakers, governors, state legislative bodies, and, importantly, to superintendents and principals. I dispute those who believe that the work of NAGB is solely of interest to legislative or federal governing entities. This is information that needs to be democratized, needs to be publicized, published, and disseminated in a pluralistic way so the level of understanding of the community itself increases. The responsibility is on NAGB to package the information so that it is digestible by all in our communities. If we do that, the relevance of our work increases significantly.

7. What has being on the Board meant to you and can you share any insight, recommendations, or encouragements with those who might consider nominating themselves or others?

In the realm of public education, you have two choices: be at the table or be on the plate. I don't want to be on the plate. I don't want to be a victim of other people's decisions, commentary, or judgments. Being at the table has afforded me an opportunity to use judgment, practice, and experience to help fashion good public policy that informs our nation as far as assessments are concerned, with the goal of elevating the potential of a better democracy through education. Ultimately, that's the goal for me. As an American by choice and not by chance, I believe that public education and democracy are two sides of the same coin. It is a privilege to be able to serve this country in a way that benefits millions of American kids.



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