

# **“Making a Difference” Discussion**

## **Introduction**

This tab includes materials in support of the full Board “Making a Difference” discussion on Friday, March 2, 2012 and includes:

1. A brief overview of the “Making a Difference” initiative,
2. A summary of the December 2011 meeting discussions, and
3. A list of the various Board discussions held on this topic.

### Other March 2012 “Making a Difference” materials:

- The minutes of the December 2011 meeting contain a full summary of the presentations and discussions which are summarized in this tab.
- The tab for the Ad Hoc Committee on NAEP Parent Engagement includes their draft report and recommendations. Their recommendations identify strategies the Governing Board and NAEP can use with parent groups to foster a sense of urgency and action about the need to improve achievement and reduce achievement gaps.
- The tab for the Reporting and Dissemination Committee includes, as Attachment B, brief reports on the status of Parent Outreach and Engagement, the Speaker’s Toolkit, and Focused Reports. It also includes a list of previously published (1994-98) topical NAEP reports, identifies planned focused reports, and suggests topics to be considered for future focused reports.

Please refer to these materials for additional details.

## **Overview of the “Making a Difference” Initiative**

At the May 2010 meeting, Governing Board Chair David Driscoll challenged the Board to think about what the Board and NAEP can do to foster improved student achievement and close achievement gaps. He said the NAEP data suggest a need for urgent action so we must consider what the Board and NAEP can do. At almost every meeting since that date, the Board has discussed ideas and strategies the Board can implement or has reviewed the ideas and strategies to identify priority areas in which the Board should work. Not only has the Board collectively generated ideas for action, but individual Board members have provided proposals and outside groups have made recommendations for actions the Board can take.

An issue discussed throughout the Board’s deliberations has been the scope of the actions that can be taken while remaining consistent with the laws governing NAEP. In particular, there have been concerns about activities that might be considered “prohibited” under Public Law 107-279 Sec. 303(b)(4) Prohibited Activities. While the Board has not attempted to develop a

list of prohibited activities, the discussions remain mindful of this concern. The law describes the following two prohibitions:

(A) In General – The use of assessment items and data shall not be used by an agent of the federal government ... to rank, or compare, or otherwise evaluate individual students or teachers, or to provide rewards or sanctions for individual students, teachers, schools or local educational agencies is prohibited.

(B) Special Rule – Any assessment authorized ... shall not be used by an agent of the federal government ... to establish, require, or influence the standards, assessments, curriculum, including lesson plans, text books, or classroom materials, or instructional practices of States or local educational agencies.

As a result of stimulating remarks by Secretary of Education Arne Duncan at the November 2010 Board meeting, Chair Driscoll and Board member Tonya Miles began exploring what the Board could do with a focus on parents. The official establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on Parent Engagement, chaired by Tony Miles, occurred at the March 2011 Board meeting along with the establishment of the committee’s mission: “to increase parent awareness about the urgency to improve levels of student achievement ... and reduce the size of achievement gaps” using NAEP data and resources. The Ad Hoc Committee will present its draft report at this March 2012 meeting.

Other meetings, as described in the last part of this section, have provided multiple opportunities to consider what the Board and NAEP can do to foster improved student achievement and close achievement gaps.

### **December 2011 “Making a Difference” Discussion Summary**

Several sessions at the December 2011 meeting served to stimulate Board member thinking about how the Board and NAEP can make a difference.

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan: After swearing in the new and reappointed Board members, Secretary Duncan remarked that he enjoys the current popular debate on education policy but he is of the viewpoint that two real challenges are complacency and accountability. He emphasized that stakeholders need to continue to develop solutions on how better to serve the nation’s students. He also emphasized that parents need to be challenged and they need to demand accountability in order to seek better outcomes for their children.

Kati Haycock and Ricki Price-Baugh: Kati Haycock, President, Education Trust and Ricki Price-Baugh, Director of Academic Achievement, Council of the Great City Schools, spoke to the issue of how NAEP can be used to foster improved student achievement and close achievement gaps.

**Ms. Haycock** made the following suggestions for the Board:

1. Work with state officials to use NAEP data in public conversations about what to expect with the results on the new Common Core assessments.
2. Highlight the importance of state level results as a reliable indicator of student performance until the Common Core is fully implemented and tested for a few years.

3. Use NAEP data to confirm trends in student learning at the state and national levels.
4. Continue to use NAEP results to highlight performance and comparisons to international students.
5. Increase attention on NAEP assessments in subjects other than math, science and reading.
6. Continue to analyze data to highlight areas across the country where gains in student performance are being made, and identify what can be learned from those results.

**Ms. Price-Baugh** discussed a research project “Pieces of the Puzzle: Factors in the Improvement of Urban School Districts on NAEP” completed by the Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS) using NAEP trend data from the large city schools participating in the Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA). She noted that several study findings (below) are very encouraging because they suggest steps that CGCS could take to accelerate progress in urban schools.

1. Large city schools made statistically significant gains in reading and math at both fourth and eighth grade levels. These gains were significantly greater than those of the nation, thus narrowing the gap between NAEP and the nation by statistically significant margins in both content areas.
2. Large cities made significant gains with all student groups in all subjects and grades except for Asian-American and Pacific Islander students.
3. Fourth and eighth graders performed better in reading for literary experience than reading for information.
4. Eighth grade students performed better in life science versus chemistry and physics.
5. Eighth grade students performed better in geometry and algebra than in number sense data and measurement.

Ms. Price-Baugh stated that the omission rates in the NAEP data revealed that students were not being taught to deal with questions that required analysis or argument based on complex text. The data also indicated that while a number of states have standards that are as rigorous as the NAEP frameworks, students were not being taught at that level. The results of the CGCS study serve as a strong indicator of where the Council will need to focus its work in preparation for the Common Core State Standards assessments. In addition, the study findings point to more detailed studies of student performance which can help identify underlying practices and determine improvements that can be made to instructional programs.

Board Discussion: The focus of the “Making a Difference” discussions at the December 2011 Governing Board meeting was to prioritize next steps, in particular, what could be done immediately or during the next year. At the direction of the Board Chair, staff developed nine proposals which were discussed in detail during the Committee meetings.

Vice Chair, Mary Frances Taymans, began the full Board discussion by reminding the Board about the objectives of the initiative.

- To address the urgency of the need to improve achievement for all students and close achievement gaps.
- To use the means available and appropriate for Board members individually and the Governing Board as a whole.

She requested that the discussion of these priorities focus on three important criteria as well as the constraints for implementing the activity. Ms. Taymans asked Board members to consider if the idea is within Board’s purview, the most effective approach, and how the idea could be conveyed in a way so others will act.

Stage I – Committee Discussions: The results of the Committee discussions were shared with the full Board on Saturday and are summarized in the chart which follows the Committee priorities listed below.

**Lou Fabrizio**, chair, Committee on Standards, Design and Methodology (COSDAM), indicated the Committee ranked the proposals as follows:

1. Topic #6 – NAEP Presentations for Parents
2. Topic #4 – NAEP Speaker’s Tool Kit & Resources
3. Topic #9 – Focused Reports and Studies

Further, Mr. Fabrizio said that during the Committee’s discussion an additional initiative was considered (as suggested by Kati Haycock), to have NAEP provide support to the states in preparation for reporting results from the Common Core State Standards.

**Eileen Weiser**, chair, Reporting and Dissemination Committee (R&D) reported that the Committee ranked the proposals as follows:

1. Topic #4 – NAEP Speaker’s Tool Kit & Resources
2. Topic #6 – NAEP Presentations for Parents
3. Topic #7 – Tell about TEL
4. Topic #9 – Focused Reports and Studies

**Alan Friedman**, chair, Assessment Development Committee (ADC) stated that ADC placed a high priority on:

1. Topic #5 – NAEP Resources for Teachers
2. Topic #4 – NAEP Speakers Tool Kit
3. Topic #9 – Focused Reports and Studies

A table summarizing the Committee priorities appears on the next page.

<b>Making a Difference – Committee Priorities</b>			
	ADC	R & D	COSDAM
1-Item a Day	X		
2-Quiz			
3-Jeopardy			
4-Speaker's Kit	X	X	X
5-Teacher Res.	X		
6-Parent Info.	Underway	X	X
7-TEL	X 2nd tier	X later	
8-NAEP Apps	X 2nd tier		
9-Focus Reports	X	X	X
10-Common Core/NAEP Info			X

Stage II – Full Board Discussion:

Vice Chair Mary Frances Taymans reviewed each Committee’s response to the initiatives and noted that topic #4 – NAEP Speaker’s Tool Kit and Resources and topic #9 – Focused Reports and Studies received the strongest support among the three committees. Then, Ms. Taymans opened the discussion to all Board members. The full Board discussion is captured in the December 2011 meeting minutes. The discussion resulted in the following suggestions.

Next Steps

- Find creative ways to use existing NAEP data.
- Determine if there is a need for new data collection on topics such as suspensions and expulsions which are not currently tracked at the national level.
- Explore the collection of information on alternative learning initiatives such as digital learning.
- Consider the possibility of merging the Speakers Toolkit with the Teacher Resource Kit.
- Use the same type of printed collateral documents when Board members have speaking engagements with various audiences.
- Consider setting up a speaker’s bureau to schedule speaking engagements for members and others who are knowledgeable about NAEP.
- Explain the similarities and differences between NAEP and the Common Core State Standards.
- Explore linkages to other assessments to determine students’ ability to apply science.

- Provide advance notice to the states on how well students might perform on Common Core State Standards assessments based on NAEP results. If the Board compares NAEP data to Common Core State Standards, it could inform changes in the curriculum, tools, and training.
- Take advantage of the unique position and opportunity to connect NAEP and the Common Core State Standards, particularly with the international assessments such as PISA, PIRLS, and TIMSS.
- Provide opportunities to debate the topics to allow for more participation on different points of view and levels of expertise. A lengthy exchange could help clarify what is possible, and allow more time for discussion on the limitations of reporting.
- Form partnerships, like those developed through the work on the Ad Hoc Committee on Parent Engagement, to create new avenues to spread the Board's message.
- Explore NAEP's role in showing meaningful correlations without causation, in the context of policymaking decisions. The Focused Reports initiative would provide the opportunity to delve into the substantive issues such as areas where students show strengths and weaknesses.
- Consider NAEP's role in mining the wealth of data that is currently available and making it accessible and useful to the states.
- Hold a brainstorming session on the initiatives that are of the highest priority to the Board, and determine if it is possible to develop some strong statements supported by NAEP evidence.
- Have NCES staff compile a list of reports and activities that are currently available to provide context of what is possible in the future and share that information with the Board. (This is in the Reporting and Dissemination Tab.)
- Take advantage of the current conversations between teachers and principals about the Common Core State Standards and use the opportunity to make a connection with NAEP for greater visibility.
- Provide a high level overview of the assessment results.
- Revisit the initial charge to make sure the discussions stay focused and the exchange of ideas will lead to fulfilling the Chairman's "Making a Difference" charge.
- Continue to think of the "Making a Difference" initiative as a process, which involves peeling back layers that will reveal options and have the Board reevaluate next steps at each stage.

**Previous Board “Making a Difference” Discussions  
(in chronological order)**

- May 2010      Generating ideas for the future of the National Assessment Governing Board: Summary is in the August 2010 Governing Board briefing materials.
- Aug. 2010      Reviewing and prioritizing ideas for the future of the National Assessment Governing Board: Summary is in the November 2010 Governing Board briefing materials.
- March 2011    Approving the appointment of the Ad Hoc Committee on Parent Engagement, and reviewing previous ideas and implementation status report: Summary is in the March 2011 Governing Board briefing materials.
- May 2011      *Stretching NAEP—In A Diagnostic Direction*, W. James Popham, May 4, 2011; Materials included in the August 2011 Governing Board briefing materials.  
  
*Framework for a Charge to Governing Board Members*, David P. Driscoll, May 10, 2011: Materials included in the August 2011 Governing Board briefing materials.
- June 2011      *Stretching NAEP—But in Which Directions? Session Summary*, Cornelia S. Orr, June 21, 2011: Materials included in the August 2011 Governing Board briefing materials.
- July 2011      *Making a Difference – Time for Immediate Tasks*, David P. Driscoll, July 22, 2011: Materials included in the August 2011 Governing Board briefing materials.
- Dec. 2011      Prioritizing Immediate Tasks: Materials included in the December 2011 Governing Board briefing materials.