

National Assessment Governing Board

Reporting and Dissemination Committee

May 17, 2013
10:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

AGENDA

10:00 – 11:00 am	NAEP Testing and Reporting on Students with Disabilities and English-Language Learners <i>Grady Wilburn, NCES</i> [Joint meeting with COSDAM]	Attachment A
11:00 – 11:30 am	Review of Board Policy and Guidelines on Reporting, Release, and Dissemination of NAEP Results <i>Stephaan Harris and</i> <i>Larry Feinberg, NAGB Staff</i>	Attachment B
11:30 – 11:45 am	ACTION: Configuration of Fall Releases - NAEP 2013 Reading and Mathematics Report Cards <i>Larry Feinberg, NAGB Staff</i>	Attachment C
11:45 am – 12:10 pm	Parent Outreach Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach Plan • Parent Summit <i>Stephaan Harris, NAGB Staff</i> <i>Amy Buckley, Reingold Communications</i>	Attachment D
12:10 – 12:20 pm	ACTION: Release Plan for NAEP 2012 Long-Term Trend Report <i>Stephaan Harris, NAGB Staff</i>	Attachment E
12:20 – 12:30 pm	Information Items: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projected Schedule for Future NAEP Reports • Review of Recent NAEP Releases: Economics and Mathematics Course Content 	Attachment F



NAEP Testing and Reporting on SD and ELL Students

In 2010 the National Assessment Governing Board adopted policy that changed the guidelines for the inclusion of English Language Learners (ELL) and students with disabilities (SD) in the NAEP assessments. The purpose of the change was to make NAEP more inclusive as well as fully representative of all American students. In 2013, NCES fully implemented the changes to the ELL decision process and implemented most changes to the SD decision tree.

English Language Learners

Previous to the policy change on how ELL students were included in NAEP, the decision on whether a student was assessed or excluded depended on the accommodations that student received on the state test. If the student received accommodations that NAEP allowed, then the student was assessed with those accommodations; if the student received accommodations that NAEP did not allow, that student was eligible to be excluded. In an attempt to standardize the inclusion decision process across the nation, the basis of the inclusion decision has been changed from state accommodations to how long the student has been enrolled in a United States school.

Under the present policy, if a student sampled for NAEP has been enrolled for more than a year, then he or she is not eligible for exclusion. A student may use any accommodation used on the state test as long as NAEP also allows that accommodation; but in the event that the student has an accommodation(s) on the state test that NAEP does not allow, the policy indicates that they must take NAEP without that accommodation(s). If a student has been enrolled in U.S. school for less than a year, that student will take NAEP if the assessment is available in their primary language and/or the person at the school that knows that student best decides the student can participate. Otherwise, the student is eligible to be excluded.

This decision tree was piloted in 2011 with the Long Term Trend sample. Feedback from the field suggested no reason to adjust the decision tree as it was stated in the policy. Full implementation began in 2013 with the state, national, and TUDA samples for both mathematics and reading. In the presentation to the committees, NCES will review the new decision tree, highlighting the changes from previous years, as well as discuss feedback received from the field in its implementation.

Students with Disabilities

At the March 2013 NAGB meeting, NCES presented and discussed at length its concern as to how one aspect of the new NAGB policy about inclusion of students with disabilities might violate certain statistical principles. This concern centered on the conversion of the classification of students

whose accommodations NAEP does not allow from “excluded” to “refusal.” To further discuss this issue, NCES will present additional data around this topic. These data include details of how many students were classified as absent, refused, and excluded from the 2011 reading and mathematics assessment. These additional data will help facilitate continued discussion on the best way to carry out the NAGB policy of testing and reporting of SDs.

Reporting

Several suggestions were offered at the March 2011 meeting on reporting of exclusions in NAEP reports. These ideas include giving higher prominence to the full population estimates and adjusting the way participation rates are reported. Information will be provided to support the R&D and COSDAM committee discussion of these alternatives.



Review of Board Policy and Guidelines on Reporting, Release, and Dissemination of NAEP Results

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is a nationally representative, continuing evaluation of the condition of education in the United States that has served as a national yardstick of student achievement since 1969. NAEP informs the public about what American students know and can do in various subject areas and compares achievement between states, large urban districts, and various student demographic groups.

Two agencies are instrumental in the reporting, release and dissemination of NAEP results. The National Assessment Governing Board is an independent, bipartisan board created by Congress in 1988, to oversee and set policy for NAEP. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), within the Institute of Education Sciences, administers NAEP and its Commissioner of Education Statistics is responsible by law for carrying out the NAEP project.

NCES and its contractors assess the students, analyze the data, and use the findings to draft NAEP reports. The Governing Board coordinates the public release events, at which the NCES Commissioner releases the findings. Typically, the Governing Board Chair, selected members of the Reporting and Dissemination Committee, and Board program staff have provide edits and general feedback on report drafts.

The Reporting and Dissemination Committee seeks to begin a discussion on its role in the reporting, release, and dissemination of NAEP results. Specifically, the Committee has expressed interest in examining how their role might change, while preserving the distinct and legal roles and responsibilities of the Board and NCES. The Governing Board's NAEP reporting, release, and dissemination policy, which was adopted in 2006, can be used as a starting point for this discussion.

The Committee has discussed recently how it can have more influence and input into NAEP report development and content. Committee Chair Alonso asked members to propose strategies for how the Board can provide input at the beginning, or conception, phase of report development, rather than solely providing feedback on the late-stage draft report. The goal is to have input at a "big picture" level rather than to provide edits to text, graphics, and pictures on the final drafts of NAEP reports.

Being mindful of a changing and competitive media landscape and the need to make NAEP relevant and meaningful to a diverse group of audiences, the Committee will also explore how NAEP data can best be featured and distributed via Report Cards and electronic tools.

Governing Board staff proposes the following discussion questions to help guide the Reporting and Dissemination Committee's ongoing conversation:

1. For an upcoming focused NAEP report on black male achievement, NCES suggested a Committee member join a conference call with key NCES and NAGB staff in discussing report content. Could this be a possible model for future Board feedback on NAEP Report Cards? What additional strategies should be considered to provide "big picture" input into NAEP Report Cards?
2. What current features in NAEP Report Cards best represent data and trends that audiences can easily understand? Is there any information not profiled prominently that should be highlighted in future reports?
3. Because the NAEP website and reports are often data rich and technical, making it difficult for some members of the general public to penetrate, how can findings best be displayed to impart NAEP results in easily understandable ways?
4. Are there strategies for improving NAEP release events, which are now primarily webinars, to better reach various media and stakeholder audiences?
5. The Board's current Reporting Policy calls for special and supplementary publications and materials to accompany NAEP data and publications to inform the general public. Although the Board has created abridged frameworks, one-pagers, and videos on various assessments, are there electronic or printed materials that should be developed?

National Assessment Governing Board

Reporting, Release, and Dissemination of NAEP Results

Policy Statement

Adopted: August 4, 2006

The Nation's Report CardTM informs the public about the academic achievement of elementary and secondary students in the United States. Report cards communicate the findings of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the only continuing and nationally representative measure of achievement in various subjects over time. The Nation's Report Card compares performance among states, urban districts, public and private schools, and student demographic groups.

Introduction

NAEP collects data through representative-sample surveys and reports fair and accurate information on academic achievement to the American public. By law (P.L. 107-110, as amended by P.L. 107-279), NAEP is administered by the Commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) under policy set by the National Assessment Governing Board ("the Governing Board"), a bipartisan, independent policymaking body.

According to the statute, the Governing Board shall exercise "independent judgment, free from inappropriate influences and special interests" and in the exercise of its responsibilities, "shall be independent of the Secretary and the other offices and officers of the Department [of Education]." Among the responsibilities specifically delegated to the Governing Board are: (1) "develop guidelines for reporting and disseminating [NAEP] results"; (2) "take appropriate actions needed to improve the form, content, use, and reporting of [NAEP] results"; and (3) "plan and execute the initial public release of [NAEP] reports."

To carry out these responsibilities, the Governing Board hereby adopts policy principles and guidelines for the reporting, release, and dissemination of *The Nation's Report Card*.

As outlined in the appendix, this policy defines *The Nation's Report Card* as, and applies to, the initial reporting of NAEP results from national, state, and trial urban district assessments (TUDA), and to other special reports or studies authorized by the National Assessment Governing Board, including printed reports and the initial release Web site.

Delineation of NAEP Reporting, Release, and Dissemination Responsibilities

The NCES Commissioner, under Governing Board policy guidance, is responsible for administering the assessment, ensuring the technical soundness and accuracy of all released data, preparing NAEP reports, and presenting NAEP results.

In addition to setting policy, Governing Board is responsible for ensuring policy compliance of Governing Board-authorized NAEP reports, determining their respective dates of release, and planning and executing the initial public release of NAEP results.

Part I: Report Preparation and Content

Policy Principles

1. The primary means for the initial public release of NAEP results shall be a printed summary report, known as *The Nation's Report Card*, accompanied by a separate, dedicated Web site – <http://nationsreportcard.gov>.
2. The primary audience for *The Nation's Report Card* is the American public.
 - a. All reports shall be written in language appropriate for an audience of the interested general public, the majority of whom are unlikely to have a technical understanding of education statistics or assessment.
3. *The Nation's Report Card* shall report data objectively, accurately, clearly, and fairly, in accordance with NCES data quality standards. Results shall be insulated from ideological and other special interests.
 - a. *The Nation's Report Card* shall include straightforward presentations of data. Reports may suggest correlations, but should not conclude cause-and-effect relationships. Any interpretation of results must be strongly supported by NAEP data.
 - b. *The Nation's Report Card* and its Web site may include references and links to the National Assessment Governing Board Web site, NCES Web site, and the NAEP Validity Studies Panel. Non-NAEP materials and links to non-NAEP resources shall not be included in initial release documents, with the exception of relevant federal and state government information, such as NCES surveys and other district, state, national, or international testing programs.
 - c. To improve public understanding of results, *The Nation's Report Card* should contain information about Governing Board-approved NAEP contextual variables and subject-specific background information—as outlined in the *Background Information Framework for the National Assessment of Educational Progress* (adopted by the National Assessment Governing Board, 8/1/03)—when available and reliable. Reports may also contain other contextual information from trustworthy sources outside of the NAEP program, such as expenditures per pupil, student/teacher ratios, and student enrollment.

4. In accordance with the law, *The Nation's Report Card* shall include results for the nation; states and school districts, when collected in conjunction with specific NAEP programs, respectively; and school types, disaggregated by subgroup whenever reliable. Subgroup results shall be prominently positioned to facilitate public review but shall not be used to adjust findings.
 - a. Disaggregated subgroup data should be accompanied by information about demographic changes in the student population assessed.
 - b. Results for states and school districts may be presented in alphabetical or rank order, accompanied by appropriate language to make the public aware of any data comparison limitations.
 - c. Data shall be publicly released on inclusion and accommodation rates for all NAEP samples, including national, state, district, and school type. Results for students with disabilities and English language learners shall be presented separately.
5. *The Nation's Report Card* shall report results by Governing Board-adopted achievement levels, average scale scores, and percentile distributions. Trend information shall be an important part of reports unless comparable and reliable data are not available.
 - a. Reports shall contain clear explanations of achievement levels, including item maps and sample test questions and answers to illustrate what students in each grade assessed should know and be able to do at each achievement level.
6. All NAEP data determined by the NCES Commissioner to be valid and reliable shall be made available on the World Wide Web at the time of initial public release, except for data from limited special purpose samples and pilot studies. A separate, dedicated Web site aimed at a broad public audience – <http://nationsreportcard.gov> – shall be utilized for initial public releases.
 - a. All released NAEP data shall be subject to NCES quality control procedures to ensure accuracy and completeness.
 - b. At least one block of released NAEP questions shall be posted on the World Wide Web for each subject and grade for which results have been collected.
 - c. Concise information on test content, methodology, performance standards, and scoring shall be included in all NAEP reports. More extensive material on these topics should be readily accessible on the World Wide Web.
7. Results of special studies authorized by the Governing Board will be reported after careful review of information quality and statistical validity. These shall be treated as initial public releases of *The Nation's Report Card*, and shall be subject to NCES quality control procedures and Governing Board policies.

8. The Governing Board shall adopt general guidelines to inform the development of *The Nation's Report Card* and its Web site, and may set additional specifications for particular reports.
9. The Governing Board shall review the format and content of initial releases, including Web pages, to ensure compliance with Governing Board policy.
 - a. *The Nation's Report Card* shall contain a description of the policymaking roles and responsibilities of the National Assessment Governing Board, including a list of current Governing Board members, their affiliations, and regional locations.

Part II: Public Release of NAEP Results

Policy Principles

1. Release activities shall be planned and executed by the National Assessment Governing Board. The Governing Board shall determine the release date, time, embargo policies, and manner of release for *The Nation's Report Card*, as covered by this policy.
 - a. After the Governing Board has approved the final draft of *The Nation's Report Card*, including the pages that will be made available through the initial release Web site, the Chairman of the Reporting and Dissemination Committee, on behalf of the Governing Board, shall determine the date of the initial public release, in consultation with the Chairman and Executive Director of the National Assessment Governing Board and the NCES Commissioner.
 - b. The initial release shall be completed within 30 days of approval of the final draft of *The Nation's Report Card*. In setting that release date, attention will be paid to balancing the priorities of an expeditious release with provision for adequate planning time, given the scheduling circumstances of the various parties involved.
 - c. Prior to the initial public release, NAEP results may be provided on an embargoed basis to federal, state, and TUDA-district officials and members of the press.
2. The Governing Board shall be responsible for organizing and conducting the release event and related activities.

- a. A release plan shall be adopted by the Governing Board for each report. Elements of the plan may include issuance of a press release, a press conference and/or Web-based announcement, distribution of summary findings and graphics, time period for the initial public release phase of <http://nationsreportcard.gov>, and other related activities.
 - b. The official press release announcing NAEP results shall be issued by the Governing Board. Accompanying statements from the Governing Board's Executive Director or Governing Board members may also be issued.
 - c. At the press conference or other event for release of NAEP results, the NCES Commissioner or his/her designee shall present major data findings, accompanied by a written statement. The National Assessment Governing Board shall select members to provide individual commentary on the meaning of results. In addition, the Governing Board may invite other officials or experts to comment on the significance of the results in accordance with the approved release plan.
 - d. At press conferences, questions from the audience shall be limited to accredited members of the media. At other public release events, the Governing Board shall determine who may attend and ask questions or comment.
3. *The Nation's Report Card* shall seek to encourage wide public attention to NAEP results and clear understanding of their meaning and significance.
 - a. Video materials may be prepared to accompany the release. These shall be clearly identified as having been provided by the Governing Board or NCES of the U.S. Department of Education. The video materials may only contain sound bites, background footage, and other information for journalists to develop their own stories.
4. Release procedures shall underscore the credibility of *The Nation's Report Card* and encourage the participation of schools, school districts, and states in NAEP.
 - a. NAEP data in statements distributed at *The Nation's Report Card* initial public release events shall be checked for accuracy by NCES.
5. *The Nation's Report Card* releases shall be clearly separated from any ideological or other special interests.
 - a. Activities related to the initial public release of *The Nation's Report Card* shall not be used to disseminate any materials unrelated to NAEP. No materials of

any kind may be distributed at an initial release event without the prior approval of the Governing Board.

6. The National Assessment Governing Board will cooperate with the NCES Commissioner in the release of technical reports, working papers, and secondary analyses not covered by the policy.
7. The Governing Board will develop a reporting schedule each year for upcoming NAEP assessments based on data review and report production plans that are provided and updated by NCES.

Part III: Dissemination and Outreach

Policy Principles

1. Information from *The Nation's Report Card* shall be disseminated through the media, the World Wide Web, and special publications and materials. Efforts shall be made to develop widespread public awareness of NAEP data and their meaning and of the value of *The Nation's Report Card* to the nation and participating jurisdictions.
 - a. NAEP results shall be available in both printed and electronic form, including on *The Nation's Report Card* Web site, at the scheduled time of release and in the permanent record.
 - b. To build public awareness of *The Nation's Report Card*, the home page of the initial release Web site shall remain on-line and include links to previous releases. This homepage shall link to respective pages found on the NAEP Web site.
2. To build understanding of *The Nation's Report Card* and the data it reports, other information about NAEP may be disseminated at the time of the initial release and on a continuing basis.
 - a. Informational materials accompanying results shall explain the mission and value of *The Nation's Report Card* in clear and compelling terms.
3. *The Nation's Report Card* and supplementary NAEP materials shall be made available through a wide network of education, business, labor, civic, and other interested groups and to policy makers and practitioners at all levels of education and government.
 - a. *The Nation's Report Card* shall be distributed promptly to governors and chief state school officers, as well as to superintendents of TUDA districts. The reports shall be posted on the World Wide Web immediately at the time of

initial release, with printed copies available to the public upon request.

- b. Notification of upcoming releases shall be widely disseminated. Schools and school districts participating in NAEP samples shall be provided with information on how to access reports electronically and obtain printed copies upon release.
 - c. NCES and Governing Board staff shall encourage national and state organizations that are interested in education to disseminate NAEP results to their members.
 - d. The NCES Commissioner and staff, Governing Board members and staff, and NAEP State Coordinators are encouraged to increase awareness and understanding of NAEP among the public, educators, and government officials. They are encouraged to speak about the NAEP program to a variety of audiences; at meetings and conferences of national, state, and local organizations; on radio and television; and to writers for magazines and newspapers and other members of the media.
 - e. Talking points on key data findings shall be developed for each release and distributed to Governing Board members.
4. A variety of materials shall be developed, appropriate to various audiences, to carry out NAEP dissemination. Key audiences for these materials shall include the interested general public, policymakers, teachers, administrators, and parents.
5. Detailed data on cognitive results, Governing Board-approved contextual variables, and subject-specific background information (as outlined in Part I, Policy Principle 3, Item C) shall be made readily available through the World Wide Web to all those wishing to analyze NAEP findings, subject to privacy restrictions. Additional restricted data shall be available for scholarly research, subject to NCES licensing procedures.
- a. The limitations on interpretations, conclusions, and recommendations in official NAEP reports (as outlined in Part I, Policy Principle 3) shall apply fully to any materials disseminated as part of the NAEP program by NCES and the Governing Board.
 - b. Researchers receiving secondary analysis grants from NCES may analyze data and provide commentary. Their reports may be disseminated by NCES if they meet NCES standards.

Appendix

NAEP Initial Release Reporting Covered by this Policy

***The Nation's Report Card*[™]**

The primary means for the initial public release of NAEP results shall be a summary report in each subject, known as *The Nation's Report Card*[™] and intended for the interested general public. The reports shall be made available in both print and electronic (Web-based) form. These reports shall present key findings and composite and disaggregated results. The printed reports shall be relatively brief, and written in a clear, jargon-free style with charts, tables, and graphics that are understandable and attractive. Data tables may be included in an appendix, either bound into the report or printed separately. This format shall be used to report key results for the nation and the states and of NAEP Trial Urban District Assessments.

A separate, dedicated Web site for the initial release of NAEP results shall be focused on a broad public audience, including less sophisticated users of the technology. The URL – <http://nationsreportcard.gov> – should be readily located via Internet search engines. Key NAEP findings will be available, clearly organized and prioritized. World Wide Web pages shall provide key findings, including composite and disaggregated results, as well as access to more extensive data sets.

Individual State and School District Reports

Relatively brief reports of key results shall be prepared for individual states, as well as for TUDA-participating school districts. All reports shall contain composite and disaggregated data, and may include an appendix with data tables.

Special Studies and Reports

Special studies and reports authorized by the National Assessment Governing Board and based on NAEP data collections will focus on specific topics of public interest and educational significance. They are aimed at policymakers and interested members of the public. They may include newly released data as well as data previously released that are analyzed to address issues identified by the Governing Board.

Briefing Paper on the Configuration of Fall 2013 NAEP Releases

The 2013 reading and mathematics results are likely to generate more public attention than any other NAEP reports this year. How their release is configured will have a substantial impact on how the data are reported by the press and discussed by the public.

The assessments conducted by NAEP in 2013 were:

- **in two subjects**—reading and mathematics
- **at three grades**—4, 8, and 12
- **for three levels**—nation, the states, and 21 large urban school districts.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is planning to issue **five separate reports**:

NAEP 2013 Report Cards	Expected Release
Mathematics Grades 4 and 8—National and State (trends from 1990)	October 2013
Reading Grades 4 and 8—National and State (trends from 1992)	October 2013
Mathematics Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA) Grades 4 and 8 (trends from 2003)	December 2013
Reading Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA) Grades 4 and 8 (trends from 2002)	December 2013
Grade 12 Mathematics and Reading—National and 11 Pilot States (trends: national math from 2005, reading from 1992; states from 2009)	April 2014

At the time of each release a massive amount of detailed data from both cognitive and background questions will be posted on the Internet via the NAEP Data Explorer.

THE ISSUE: Determine the configuration of releases for the Mathematics and Reading Report Cards for grades 4 and 8. What should be emphasized—the subject assessed or the general pattern of achievement in the states?

OPTION ONE (Recommended by Board Staff): Separate releases of math and reading results, as published in the national and state Report Cards. The first release would be for mathematics, the second for reading, about two to three weeks apart in October or early November.

OPTION TWO: A combined release of the reading and mathematics Report Cards for the nation and the states. This would be held in mid to late October.

- **TUDA results** would be released in December with the two subjects combined.
- **Grade 12 results** would be released in spring 2014 with the two subjects combined.
- **Fall releases would be conducted via online webinars** preceded by embargoed teleconference briefings for the press. The release event for grade 12 results will be determined later, in part on the basis of preparedness statements and research.

PRO AND CON CONSIDERATIONS for reading and mathematics results at grades 4 and 8:

SEPARATE RELEASES

Pro: The release statements and webinars would focus on patterns and trends in each subject in some detail. State-to-state comparisons would be made, and may be featured in some news coverage, but the emphasis in Board-produced materials would be on data and developments in each subject-area, including contextual information on school practices and student interests and behaviors, and released items. At least two subject-matter experts included in each webinar. Two occasions for news coverage and public discussion of state NAEP results.

Con: Second subject released may get less attention than the first. Additional expense and staff time required.

COMBINED RELEASE

Pro: The Board press release would probably emphasize comparisons of the two subjects; news coverage would probably emphasize comparisons of the states or the overall standing of particular states and comparisons with state test results. Release and subsequent news articles would have less detailed material on each subject, but articles could make a clearer case—and probably get more attention—for overall patterns of state performance. Release webinar would probably include one expert in each subject. One release would be less expensive than two.

Con: Only one occasion for news coverage and discussion of state NAEP results. Would diminish attention paid to subject-specific trends, released items, and contextual variables.

BACKGROUND: All states have been required to participate in NAEP reading and math at grades 4 and 8 every two years since 2003 as a condition for receiving federal aid under the No Child Left Behind law. Grade 12 state NAEP is voluntary and conducted every four years.

Until 2003, individual NAEP releases focused on particular subjects. In almost all cases there were separate releases, just as there were separate reports, for reading, mathematics, science, and the other subjects NAEP assesses. The separate reports for different subjects have continued. However, since the advent of required state-NAEP testing, the reading and math reports for the nation and the states have usually been released together. The emphasis in press coverage has been on comparisons between the states and with the results of state testing programs.

TUDA reading and math results have been released together about four to six weeks after national and state data, which keeps the focus on district-to-district comparisons rather than district-to-state. Long-term trend results for reading and math (for national samples only) are combined in one report and released together. NAEP results for other subjects, such as science, economics, the arts, and U.S. history, are in separate reports and have been released separately, which draws more public attention to each discipline and is preferred by the subject-matter groups involved.



At the Governing Board's March 2013 meeting, Reporting and Dissemination Committee members discussed aspects of a draft parent outreach plan submitted by Reingold, the Board's communications contractor. The Board seeks to expand its outreach to parent groups and leaders to inform and educate them about the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). An updated draft, provided in these materials, reflects feedback given by Committee members at the previous meeting and on a conference call in late March.

At this meeting Committee members will further discuss strategies listed below and their feedback will inform a final parent outreach plan to be submitted for action by the Committee and then the full Board in August 2013. Below are some discussion questions suggested by Board staff to continue the conversation.

1. Which strategies listed in the draft plan should be prioritized for implementation over the next 6-9 months?
2. Are there any strategies that the Board should not pursue or any strategies with scopes and actions that should be refined if they are included in the plan?
3. Which areas most effectively address the focus of the Board's parent outreach initiative, which is: "Asking the right questions—what parent leaders can do to improve achievement and close achievement gaps."
4. Does the combination of electronic outreach (e.g., website enhancements, blog postings) and in-person outreach (e.g. conferences) provide an effective blend that can maximize reaching the largest audience?

PARENT ENGAGEMENT OUTREACH STRATEGY

DEVELOPED BY REINGOLD, APRIL 22, 2013

The National Assessment Governing Board recognizes that parents have a vital interest in the quality of our students' education and can be an influential force to effect change. The Board also understands that parents have a fundamental personal interest in the education of their children. Although the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) does not report on individual schools or students, it is the gold standard in measuring academic achievement that is representative of students across the nation, and at the state and urban district levels. The challenge, therefore, is to communicate messages that emphasize the overall and critical importance of NAEP to America's education, and instill a concern for increasing the achievement of *all* children, not just your own.

To focus outreach efforts where they will have maximum impact, the Governing Board plans to engage parent leaders—that is, organizations and their leaders that are in a position to have an impact on education policy and can act as conduits to their networks of parents. It is not practical to assume that all parents can be reached effectively, nor is it sufficient to communicate only with parents of children participating in NAEP. Parent leaders, therefore, are a key audience for using the valuable information NAEP provides.

The Governing Board and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) both seek to inform parent leaders about NAEP and encourage them to use its numerous resources. The organizations should coordinate outreach activities to minimize duplication of effort or potential gaps in outreach. To maximize resources and target specific parent leader groups, it will be important to focus initial outreach efforts on a specific set of 50 priority parent leader groups, which can then reach many parents through their networks.

To accomplish those goals, Reingold has developed this plan for the Board's review and approval, and for implementation in collaboration with NCES activities.

I. GOALS

The Governing Board's parent leader outreach efforts should clearly convey how the Board believes parent leaders can use NAEP. Initiatives should inspire parent leaders to take the following actions:

1. Learn about NAEP and the data and resources available.
2. Understand NAEP's applicability to their organization and mission.
3. Access and use NAEP tools to inform their work.
4. Inform and empower parents in their networks to learn about, understand, and use NAEP data.
5. Have discussions and ask questions about improving student achievement and narrowing achievement gaps.

II. AUDIENCES

Parent leaders are defined as organizations and individuals whose work and interests involve education, and that see the connection between system performance and the potential for impact on individual students. Although their memberships engage parents and provide them with information and resources, the ways in which they carry out their work to fulfill their missions differ. Given these organizations' work, we believe they may be interested in NAEP and how it can be put to use to enhance their efforts.

There are many ways in which parent leaders play and can play a role in supporting efforts to improve student achievement and close achievement gaps. To help guide our actions in this outreach plan, Reingold has divided the parent leader audience into the following subgroups:

1. **K-12 education parent leaders.** These groups are directly involved with a focused section of the student population within a state or area of education. Members have most likely chosen to be active and are invested in helping students in the school. Such groups work in close collaboration with school districts.
Examples: State and local PTAs, public school district Parent Advisory Councils, InSync Education, International Association for K-12 Online Learning
2. **Minority/underrepresented populations parent leaders.** Minority and underrepresented population groups are focused on issues relating to their demographic, and have a strong understanding of the relevant cultural, political, and socio-economic factors. Increasingly, they are using digital and social media channels to connect with these harder-to-reach populations.
Examples: Latino Parental Engagement Initiative, Urban League chapters, Excelencia in Education, National Council of La Raza
3. **Community (faith-based, cultural, charitable or volunteer, literary, youth groups) parent leaders.** These groups are active in cause-based initiatives, and members are likely to be passionate about helping the community and have strong ties with families and parents to help accomplish their goals. Community groups can include religious organizations, volunteer groups, and youth-focused groups like the YMCA. These groups have strong relationships with leaders in the community, and there is often overlap among various community groups and other sectors—business, schools/education—in their day-to-day efforts. Their ties with the community and positions as go-to groups for community efforts should be used to strengthen the outreach effort.
Examples: Christian Community Development Association, Boys & Girls Clubs of America, YMCA, P'TACH Jewish Special Education, Islamic Schools League of America
4. **Parent-focused media and online influencers.** The media are conduits for reaching and influencing parent leaders. Parent-focused media, including parent bloggers, have dedicated readerships that rely on them as trusted sources for information and news.

They are able to offer perspectives that the Board cannot, and help shape NAEP's relevance and utility for parent leaders.

Examples: ParentNet Unplugged blog, Education Week's K-12 Parents and the Public blog, Sacramento Parent Magazine, PTO Today Blog, Greatschools.net, HuffPost Parents page bloggers

5. **General education parent leaders.** Parent leaders in groups focused primarily on education are typically well-versed in the education landscape and are more likely to be aware of or using NAEP. They frequently attend or host education events, and have established networks.

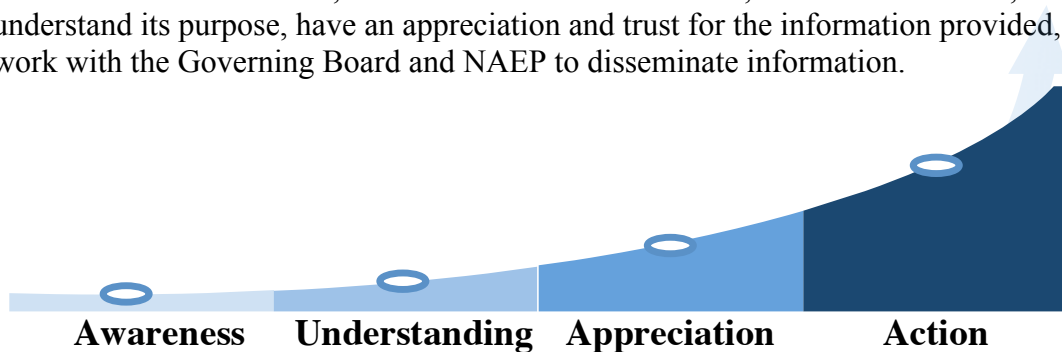
Examples: Alliance for Excellent Education, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, local Parent Education Network groups, National Rural Education Association, Stand for Children

The Stakeholder Engagement Continuum

The extent to which the parent leader groups are engaged with NAEP can be depicted on a continuum that shows different levels of stakeholder engagement. Because parent leader groups have varying levels of knowledge of and experience with NAEP, the Governing Board cannot use a one-size-fits-all approach. It will be important to create a targeted strategy for engaging the 50 priority parent leader groups, after evaluating where they are located on the engagement continuum, what communications assets they have, and what channels and activities they are already using to communicate to their networks. From there, the Governing Board can best prioritize those outreach activities that are most likely to move each parent leader group farther along the continuum and maximize its potential engagement with NAEP.

For example, based on Reingold's assumptions and to be confirmed through additional research, a cursory example of parent leader groups may fall on the continuum as follows:

- **Awareness:** The YMCA and P'TACH have minimal awareness of NAEP, its mission, purpose, and goals.
- **Understanding:** The Los Angeles Urban League and the International Association for K-12 Online Learning are aware of NAEP and understand its purpose and what NAEP provides.
- **Appreciation:** The Houston A+ Challenge and Strive Together are aware of NAEP, understand what NAEP provides, and have an appreciation and trust for the information provided.
- **Action:** The National PTA, and its state and local affiliates, are aware of NAEP, understand its purpose, have an appreciation and trust for the information provided, and work with the Governing Board and NAEP to disseminate information.



Once each of the 50 priority parent leader groups is mapped on the continuum, priorities can be set to maximize overall reach into the parent leader audience, while also including those groups that may often be overlooked.

III. PRE-OUTREACH: DEFINING MATERIALS AND MESSAGES

Before executing its outreach campaign to parent leaders, the Governing Board must confirm which 50 parent leader groups should be considered top priority, and also finalize the messages and materials by which to reach them.

Refine and Expand Parent Leader Database

- Review the stakeholder database to make sure that all relevant individuals and groups across subgroups have been included.
- Determine the core list of 50 priority parent leader groups across the subgroups that will be the focus of initial outreach efforts and included in message and material testing.
- Analyze the 50 priority parent leader groups to identify where they exist on the NAEP engagement continuum and how their current initiatives, assets, and focus affect how the Board should conduct its outreach.
- Develop a relationship map that connects Board members, Board alumni, and other NAEP champions with the 50 priority parent leader groups.

Develop and Finalize Existing and New Materials

Existing and new materials will be at the core of the parent leader outreach effort and, wherever appropriate, will be customizable and/or downloadable. Materials will be developed with the goal of demonstrating NAEP's relevance and applicability for each particular parent leader audience, making use of state and Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA) data and achievement trends by race/ethnicity, and highlighting important information and messages. For example, a piece directed at the Latino Parental Engagement Initiative might focus on Hispanic student data and achievement gap trends. In addition, because many of the strategies encourage parent leaders to visit the Board website, it is critical that user-friendly materials are prominent on the parent Web pages to reinforce the outreach efforts. Materials (and their messages) will be presented to a core group of parent leaders to confirm effectiveness.

Understanding that all materials cannot be developed at once, Reingold has listed below the materials needed in order of importance. These priorities are based on what Reingold believes their overall impact would be and their value and integration with the outreach strategies outlined in the following section.

Tier I

High-priority materials to be finalized include:

- **Parent PowerPoint.** To use at Governing Board events, conferences, and other stakeholder activities, and for use by parent leader groups. The presentation features the core messages for parent leaders, illustrating how NAEP materials can help parent leaders engage their networks and learn which questions to ask about student achievement.

- **State and district profiles.** Parent-friendly versions of the NAEP state and TUDA district profiles, with a focus on achievement-level data and key background variable findings. They also include brief explanations of what the data show, including trend lines.

High-priority materials to be developed include:

- **High-standards one-pager.** A summary of the overall student achievement challenge and the need to narrow achievement gaps in the United States, with NAEP tools, item map examples to illustrate what *Proficient* on NAEP means, other information parent leaders can use to get involved, and a call to action to direct their next steps.
- **Parent leader discussion guide.** Talking points to be used by parent leaders to engage policymakers and administrators and learn how a school, school system, or state compares with others nationwide, and to discuss what is being done to increase academic rigor and achievement for all students.
- **Data infographics.** Report card results and/or information from the high-standards one-pager shaped into infographics that are visually appealing and engaging to parent leaders.

Tier II

Lower-priority materials to be developed include:

- **Parent leader testimonials.** Stories from parent leaders who have used NAEP data as resources to address education issues will be made into a video or a PDF document for print distribution.
- **Background variables one-pager.** Information on the wealth of background variable data collected with each NAEP assessment, and how parent leaders can access these data.
- **NAEP and the Common Core.** Frequently asked questions about the differences between NAEP and the Common Core State Standards, covering areas such as subjects and grade levels measured, skills assessed, and the development of standards and achievement levels.

Revise Parent Web Pages

Many of the strategies encourage parent leaders to visit the Board website; therefore, it is critical that the Web pages are user-friendly and encourage parent leaders to learn more. The Governing Board's website will be a primary destination for parent leaders, who may visit it directly as a result of an outreach activity or organically through search engines, word of mouth, and other communications channels. Next steps include:

- **Streamline the parent Web pages.** To make the parent pages more accessible for parent leaders and reinforce messages tailored for this audience, reduce the amount of text and employ designs that use visuals and links to more clearly convey and categorize information add audio and visual components.
- **Add more web audiovisual components.** Use videos, podcasts, and other technology that can present NAEP-related data and events in an engaging way that can be easily shared.
- **Perform search engine optimization (SEO) to capitalize on search terms parent leaders use.** Determine priority keywords the Governing Board can use to make its parent pages show up higher and more often in search engines, and create or refine website content to help raise the website's ranking in search engine results, increasing the chance that parent leaders will find the website.

IV. PRIORITY OUTREACH STRATEGIES

To reach and engage parent leaders wherever they are on the stakeholder engagement continuum, the Governing Board should pursue an integrated approach that spans communications channels. Below are Reingold's recommended priority strategies to engage parent leaders, ranked by how likely they are to engage the largest percentage of parent leaders, and their potential impact. Strategies include both traditional channels, such as in-person events, media relations, and direct marketing, as well as emerging channels, such as online and social media outreach.

- **Speak at education-related conferences.** Representatives of the Board can present the parent PowerPoint and discuss the ways parent leaders can use NAEP as a tool, focusing on opportunities such as the conferences of parent, education, and civil rights organizations.

Examples of impact: Conference participant asks to have Governing Board member speak at another upcoming conference; host organizations upload NAEP materials to their websites for downloading following the conference

Possible metrics of actions: Number of conference participants and/or groups that link to or upload NAEP materials

- **Share NAEP digital content with targeted parent leader groups.** Provide timely and relevant NAEP content to a list of high-priority parent groups in a variety of formats, such as social media posts, a website paragraph, or a newsletter blurb. Content could also include the infographics, or graphs from the state or district profiles or from the PowerPoint, as applicable. The newly produced Governing Board video on the Technology and Engineering Literacy Assessment (TEL) could also be provided, with accompanying text on how TEL ties in with STEM and the importance of measuring everyday TEL skills.

Examples of impact: Speakers start tweeting about NAEP/data during a high-profile national education conference or summit; celebrity spokesperson for education sees tweets and starts retweeting to his or her audience

Possible metrics of actions: Number of Tweets and posts sent by speakers (and the number of followers on their respective social media pages); number of viewers downloading video content; increase in visitor traffic to the event Web page;

- **Develop editorial pieces for parent leaders, such as an article to appear in a newsletter or blog on www.nagb.org for parent leaders.** Engage parent leaders with a regularly updated, timely communications tool for connecting NAEP with topical education issues, with links back to the parent pages of the website.

Examples of impact: Parent leader group places the article in its monthly newsletter and causes a spike in the number of parent leaders registering for a report card release; a reader shares the newsletter item with several new parent leader contacts that follow up with the Board's email address; the content is shared over social media and sparks a conversation thread

Possible metrics of actions: Numbers of articles or blogs placed; number of impressions and viewership of audience; number of click-throughs to the website

- **Co-sponsor panels, forums, or workshops.** The Board can work with groups like Achieve or Council of the Great City Schools to host conversations about NAEP data releases and other NAEP efforts of interest to parent leaders, and use the parent discussion guide to encourage parent leaders to continue the conversation.

Examples of impact: Parent leader group includes a panel on NAEP tools at its next conference to educate its network of parents; parent leader group uses the Governing Board panel as a springboard for developing a series of monthly sessions for parents on using NAEP data

Possible metrics of action: Number of sessions and gathering groups hold on NAEP data; number of new attendees added to parent leader database; number of requests from attendees for follow-up on using data tools and sharing information with colleagues and parent communities

- **Pitch parent-focused articles or newsletters to education journalists or publications.** Use the ongoing relationships the Board has developed with the media to distribute targeted, parent-focused messages and encourage them to publish, post, and share content tailored for the parent leader audience.

Examples of impact: Parent leader group shares an article with its organization, and then calls a meeting to discuss it at an upcoming education panel; webinar parent leader participant cites a media article as his or her source for the introduction to NAEP and the Board's work

Possible metrics of actions: Number of articles placed; number of impressions; number of links back to the website

- **Initiate topics on discussion portals where parent leaders share best practices and for engaging in education.** Provide content to an existing parent-focused site or forum, and work with the site managers to promote topics, questions, or conversations on some of the many other sites where parent leaders often share information and engage with one another.

Examples of impact: Portal puts a direct banner advertisement or application that links through to the Governing Board or NAEP website; parent leader uses a conversation thread as fodder for his or her next presentation to his group

Possible metrics of actions: Number of post views, replies, and quality of engagement of the thread; increased traffic back to the website; shared NAEP links and resources on the thread for users to click through

As noted, parent leaders will be at different places along the stakeholder engagement continuum, so the Board will consider each group individually before pursuing specific outreach strategies. However, Reingold has made preliminary recommendations below that it believes will most effectively match the ways the varying parent leader subgroups are already organizing, working,

and communicating with their audiences. Reingold will work with the Governing Board to determine and confirm metrics to measure success prior to starting outreach, and will then monitor activities across those metrics during execution.

General Education Parent Leaders

- **Speak at education-related conferences.**

Example: Board member Tonya Miles presents the parent leader PowerPoint at an annual National Education Association conference

- **Co-sponsor panels, forums, or workshops with local and national parent education-focused groups.**

Example: DC Parents for School Choice and the Governing Board host a webinar following a TUDA report card release to look at D.C.'s district data, and how parents can learn more about the data

- **Develop editorial pieces on a regular basis for parent leaders, such as an article to appear in a newsletter or blog on www.nagb.org for parent leaders.**

Example: Co-author an article with a Governing Board member and Gov. Bob Wise, the president of the Alliance for Excellent Education, in the alliance's "Straight A's," a biweekly newsletter on 12th-grade preparedness, and include a data infographic from the Economics 2012, Grade 12 Report Card

K-12 Education Parent Leaders

- **Co-sponsor panels, forums, or workshops with local and national parent education-focused groups.**

Example: The National PTA and Governing Board host a panel discussion with state PTAs before the start of the school year; leaders to discuss the parent discussion guide and mobilize parent leaders to use the guide to drive conversations at their school about student achievement and priorities for the school year

- **Develop editorial pieces on a regular basis for parent leaders, such as an article to appear in a newsletter or blog on www.nagb.org for parent leaders.**

Example: The International Association for K-12 Online Learning includes in its newsletter an infographic to highlight NAEP mathematics results, with a link back to the parent Web pages or latest report card release data

Minority and Underrepresented Populations Parent Leaders

- **Share NAEP digital content with targeted parent leader groups.**

Example: The Greater Washington Urban League posts content on its website and social media sites on Washington, D.C.'s racial/ethnic achievement gaps from the mathematics TUDA assessment

- **Initiate topics on discussion portals where parent leaders share ways for parents to get involved in education.**

Example: Board member begins a topic thread on the education forum Hispanically Speaking News (www.hispanicallyspeakingnews.com/forums/viewforum/9) about persisting white-Hispanic achievement gaps

- **Speak at education-related conferences.**

Example: Governing Board and NCES staff and a Board member host a parent leader workshop at the annual National Council of La Raza conference to provide insight into the depth and breadth of NAEP racial/ethnic data and distribute a NAEP reading and mathematics racial/ethnic achievement gap infographic and the parent leader discussion guide

Community Parent Leaders

- **Share NAEP digital content with targeted parent leader groups.**

Example: Christian Community Development Association posts content on its social media sites about an upcoming NAEP report card release webinar, and includes the high-achievement one-pager and parent discussion guide for download on the website

- **Co-sponsor panels, forums, or workshops with local and national community groups.**

Example: For National Boys & Girls Club Week, the Board hosts a webinar, moderated by a Governing Board member, featuring a parent leader panel to discuss how parents have used NAEP data and resources to support or improve student achievement in their communities

- **Develop editorial pieces on a regular basis for parent leaders, such as an article to appear in a newsletter or blog on www.nagb.org for parent leaders.**

Example: The Intercultural Development Research Association includes an article authored by a Governing Board member in its Graduation for All monthly e-letter on 12th-grade preparedness and includes a data infographic from the Economics 2012, Grade 12 Report Card

Media and Online Influencers

- **Pitch parent-focused articles or newsletters to education and parent-focused journalists or publications.**

Example: The Governing Board works with Parents magazine to develop an article on the latest NAEP report card results on economics; the article focuses on influential background variables related to parental education and sources of economic information and their implications for student achievement

- **Share NAEP digital content with targeted parent leader groups.**

Example: Board provides reading and vocabulary report card infographics to the ParentNet Unplugged blog, and it tweets or shares Facebook posts to its followers on the National ParentNet Association page

- **Co-sponsor panels, forums, or workshops with local and national community groups.**

Example: Work with the Education Writers Association to speak at its national conference or participate in a panel discussion to distribute state and district profiles, the high-standards one-pager, and data infographics

V. SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS FOR PARENT ENGAGEMENT OUTREACH

Phase I

- Finalize database of parent leader contacts and connect contacts to any existing Board relationships.
- Determine list of core parent leaders, representative of all parent leader subgroups.
- Map core parent leader groups on engagement continuum, and perform an audit of their current activities, assets, and priorities to determine best outreach approach.

Phase II

- Develop and finalize Tier I materials tailored to the core parent leader groups.
- Finalize website and SEO implementation.

Phase III

- Begin executing outreach strategies.

National Assessment Governing Board
Resolution on Report of Ad Hoc Committee on NAEP Parent Engagement
Adopted May 19, 2012

Whereas, the National Assessment Governing Board is implementing an initiative to make a difference in fostering the improvement of student achievement in the United States and of closing achievement gaps by race, ethnicity, and income levels using NAEP data and resources; and

Whereas, the National Assessment Governing Board established the Ad Hoc Committee on NAEP Parent Engagement in March 2011 to

“present recommendations...the Governing Board and representatives of the NAEP program can take directly, and/or support the efforts of others to increase parent awareness about the urgency to improve the levels of student achievement in the U.S. and the urgency to reduce the size of achievement gaps by race, ethnicity, and income levels, using NAEP data and resources”; and

Whereas, the Ad Hoc Committee on NAEP Parent Engagement presented its recommendations to the National Assessment Governing Board on March 2, 2012; and

Whereas, the Ad Hoc Committee on NAEP Parent Engagement recommended that the National Assessment Governing Board

- Specify National, State, and Local Parent Leaders and Parent Organizations as the Target Audience
- Establish Relationships with Recognized Parent and Community-based Organizations
- Develop Presentations and Materials Targeted to Parents for Use by Governing Board Members and Others
- Develop Parent Pages on the Governing Board and NAEP Websites
- Conduct a Parent Education Summit in Late Summer/Early Fall 2012; and

Whereas, adoption of the Ad Hoc Committee recommendations will be valuable, feasible, and consistent with the Governing Board’s authority to “develop guidelines for reporting and disseminating results” and “...improve the form, content, use, and reporting of [NAEP] results...”; and

Whereas, implementation of the Ad Hoc Committee recommendations will require staff and financial resources and oversight by one or more standing committees of the National Assessment Governing Board;

Therefore, the National Assessment Governing Board hereby

1. adopts the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee on NAEP Parent Engagement presented on March 2, 2012;
2. approves the use of appropriate staff and financial resources to implement the recommendations; and
3. authorizes the assignment of oversight of these activities to Governing Board standing committees.

**NATIONAL ASSESSMENT GOVERNING BOARD
RELEASE PLAN FOR
NAEP 2012 LONG TERM TREND REPORT**

The Nation's Report Card: Long Term Trend 2012

The 2012 Long Term Trend Report Card will be released to the general public during June 2013. Following a review and approval of the report's results, the release will be arranged as an online webinar. The release event will include a data presentation by the Commissioner of Education Statistics, with moderation and comments by at least one member of the National Assessment Governing Board. Full accompanying data will be posted on the Internet at the scheduled time of release.

The 2012 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Long Term Trend Report Card describes trends in 9-, 13- and 17-year-olds' achievement in mathematics and reading over the last four decades. The Report Card presents findings from a representative sample of 50,000 public and private school students at the national level. There were 12 previous reading assessments dating back to 1971, and 11 previous mathematics assessments dating back to 1973. The report summarizes trends in average scale scores for all students and also by categories of gender and race/ethnicity, along with background variables.

DATE AND LOCATION

The release event for the media and the public will occur in June 2013. The release date will be determined by the Chair of the Reporting and Dissemination Committee, in accordance with Governing Board policy, following acceptance of the final report.

EVENT FORMAT

- Introductions and opening statement by a National Assessment Governing Board representative
- Data presentation by the Commissioner of Education Statistics
- Comments by at least one Governing Board member
- Comments by a representative of the reading community and a representative of the mathematics community
- Questions from the webinar audience
- Program will last approximately 75 minutes
- Event will be broadcast live over the Internet, and viewers will be able to submit questions electronically for panelists. An archived version of the webinar, with closed captioning, will be posted on the Governing Board website at www.nagb.org.

EMBARGOED ACTIVITIES BEFORE RELEASE

In the days preceding the release, the Governing Board and NCES will offer access to embargoed data via a special website to approved U.S. Congressional staff in Washington, DC; representatives of governors and state education agencies; and appropriate media as defined by the Governing Board's embargo policy. A conference call for journalists who signed embargo agreements will be held to give a brief overview of findings and data and to answer questions.

REPORT RELEASE

The Commissioner of Education Statistics will publicly release the report at the NAEP website—<http://nationsreportcard.gov>—at the scheduled time of the release event. An online copy of the report, along with data tools, questions, and other resources, will be available at the time of release on the NAEP site. An interactive version of the release with panelists' statements, a Governing Board press release, publications and related materials will be posted on the Board's web site at www.nagb.org. The site will also feature links to social networking sites and audio and/or video material related to the event.

ACTIVITIES AFTER THE RELEASE

The Governing Board's communications contractor, Reingold, will work with Board staff to coordinate a communications effort, which could include a webinar, seminar, commentary, or social media initiative, to extend the life of the results and provide value and relevance to stakeholders with an interest in student achievement and assessment.



EVENT DEBRIEF

The Nation's Report Card: Economics 2012, Grade 12

Overview

The National Assessment Governing Board's webinar to release *The Nation's Report Card: Economics 2012, Grade 12* took place on April 24, 2013, at 11 a.m. EDT. Reingold executed activities related to the event in cooperation with staff and contractors of the Governing Board and National Center for Education Statistics.

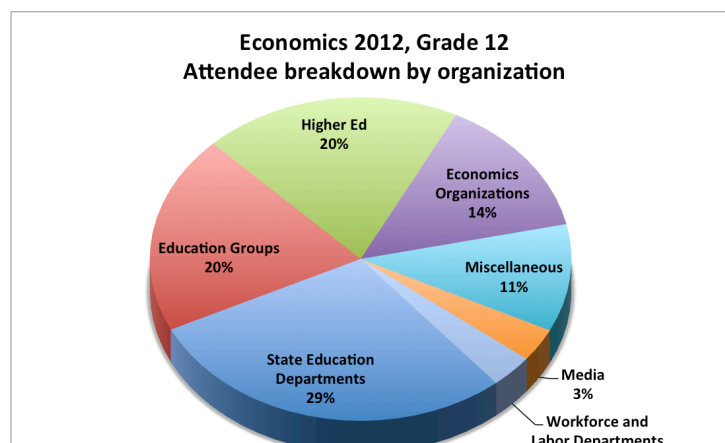
Release Event Panelists

- **Jack Buckley**, Commissioner, National Center for Education Statistics
- **Terry Mazany**, President and CEO, The Chicago Community Trust; Member, National Assessment Governing Board
- **Nan J. Morrison**, President and CEO, Council for Economic Education
- **Edward Alvarez**, Assistant Principal, Thomas A. Edison Career & Technical Education High School, Jamaica, N.Y.
- **Cornelia Orr**, Executive Director, National Assessment Governing Board (moderator)

Webinar Attendance

This release resulted in a total of **137 attendees** from **121 unique organizations**. (Internal staff and contractors are not included in those totals.) The audience included:

- High representation from **state education departments**, which made up 29 percent of those participating—the largest percentage of the total in attendance
- A good turnout from **economics-focused organizations**, which constituted 14 percent of the turnout and included groups such as Econ Illinois, Florida Council on Economic Education, and Council for Economic Education



Traditional Media Coverage

Highlights include:

- 21 reporters registered for access to embargoed report card data
- Seven journalists or publications had an economics focus

Media pre-call

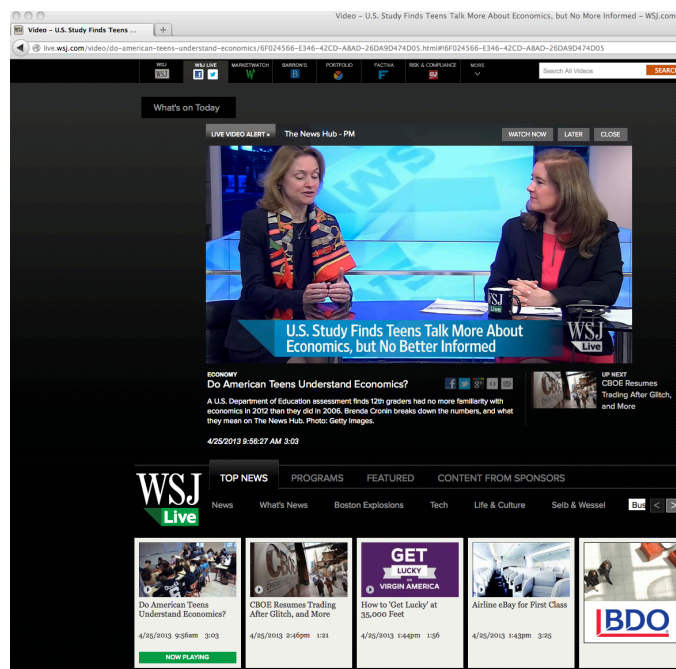
Five reporters attended the embargo media pre-call on April 23 and all of their outlets published articles.

Media coverage

Within 24 hours of the release event, five news organizations published original stories about the economics report:

- Associated Press
- Education Week
- The Huffington Post
- The Wall Street Journal
- The Washington Post

The Wall Street Journal also featured a three-minute segment on the WSJ Live website in which Economics News Editor Brenda Cronin reported the economics results and their implications.



Social Media Coverage

Social media mentions of the release event or data posted in the 24 hours after the event included representation from numerous organizations including The Chicago Community Trust, Council for Economic Education, Education Week, the Kentucky Department of Education, and Texas Parents Union.



***The Nation's Report Card:
Economics 2012, Grade 12***

News media 24-hour coverage

Recession doesn't change students' econ savvy

Associated Press – Philip Elliott

NAEP Economics Results Reveal Proficiency Woes

Education Week – Erik Robelen

National Assessment Of Educational Progress In Economics Finds Less Than Half Of 12th Graders 'Proficient'

Huffington Post – Joy Resmovits

Teens Talk More About Economics, but No Better Informed (with video)

Wall Street Journal – Brenda Cronin

High school seniors show little improvement on economic issues

Washington Post – Lyndsey Layton

Recession doesn't change students' econ savvy

Associated Press – Philip Elliott

Published April 24, 2013

WASHINGTON - The Wall Street meltdown of 2008 and the ensuing recession did little to help make high school seniors financially savvy and less than half of them have a solid understanding of economics, according to an Education Department report released Tuesday.

In real terms, that might mean that students might have difficulty understanding the impact of a poor credit rating, the relationship between consumer spending and higher unemployment or how inflation can eat away at pay raises.

Students' scores of economic literacy changed little between 2006 and 2012, suggesting that the national discussion about the millions of jobs that were lost and homes that were foreclosed didn't translate to higher academic achievement. During that period, several states added an economics course to high school offerings and some started requiring it to earn a diploma.

"It is astonishing that high school seniors do not know more about how economics affects their wallets, their country and the world at a pivotal time in their lives, whether they choose to enter the workforce or pursue higher education," said David Driscoll, chair of the National Assessment Governing Board, which runs the federal tests. "We need to do more to educate all students in economics so they can make informed decisions, whether they are negotiating a car loan, voting or reading financial news."

The findings show that more than half of students leave high school without an economic knowledge that federal officials consider proficient. In 2012, 39 percent of students had a basic understanding of economics while 18 were considered below basic.

"This is exactly what I would have expected," said Annamaria Lusardi, a distinguished scholar at George Washington University who on Wednesday testified to a Senate subcommittee about students' economic skills.

"Financial literacy is like every topic; they don't learn by osmosis. Just because you read The Wall Street Journal, you're not going to learn about interest compounding," Lusardi said, noting headlines were no substitute for instruction.

About 10,900 high school seniors at 480 public and private schools took the economics test as part of the 2012 National Assessment of Educational Progress, more commonly called "the nation's report card."

Overall achievement on the tests was flat since 2006, when the economic questions were first asked. For all students, the average performance shifted from 150 to 152 on a 300-point scale.

"The overall scores for the two assessments were not significantly different," said Jack Buckley, commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics, part of the Education Department's research arm.

But among Hispanic students, performance rose, narrowing the gap between their scores and those of their white classmates.

Buckley suggested Hispanic students' uptick might be due to higher reading skills that are documented in other part of the national exams.

Students from private schools performed better than those at public schools, while males scored higher than females.

Since the 2008 economic crisis, education officials have added economic instruction to their classrooms. In 2004, only 16 states required economics to be offered to high school students. That number rose to 25 in 2011, according to the Council for Economic Education's survey of states.

And in 2004, only 14 states required students to take such a class. That number jumped to 22 in 2011.

During the 2011-12 academic year, all 50 states and the District of Columbia included some form of economics in their curriculum between kindergarten through high school graduation, the same survey from the professional organization found.

Just because the requirement is on paper doesn't mean it's reaching the classrooms, cautioned Nan Morrison, president and CEO of the Council for Economic Education.

"It's not just being taught widely enough and deeply enough," she said.

Morrison said much of the education that followed the 2008 meltdown focused on helping students calculate interest payments and other real-world examples but didn't address the broader theories that move economies.

"With the financial crisis, people have become very focused on mechanics. But it's a bigger story than that about making decisions," she said. "The pendulum swung toward helping people fix a few specific things but not the big picture."

That's been a major focus of Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke.

"Financial education supports not only individual well-being, but also the economic health of our nation," Bernanke told a town hall-style meeting with teachers in 2012. "As the recent financial crisis illustrates, consumers who can make informed decisions about financial products and services not only serve their own best interests, but, collectively, they also help promote broader economic stability."

And earlier this month, he told an audience in Dayton, Ohio: "Among the lessons of the recent financial crisis is the need for virtually everyone, both young and old, to acquire a basic knowledge of finance and economics. Such knowledge is necessary for anyone who will be faced with managing a household budget, making financial investments, finding reliable information about buying a car or house and preparing financially for retirement and other life goals."

NAEP Economics Results Reveal Proficiency Woes

Education Week – Erik Robelen

Published April 24, 2013

More than half of American 12th graders lack proficiency in economics, according to new results from "the nation's report card," with no overall change in performance when compared with results from 2006, when the assessment was last administered.

In all, 43 percent of high school seniors scored "proficient" or above on the National Assessment of Educational Progress in economics, which covers such topics as personal finance, business, government policy, and international trade. For African-American students, the figure was just 17 percent and for Hispanics 26 percent.

"It is astonishing that high school seniors do not know more about how economics affects their wallets, their country, and their world at a pivotal time in their lives, whether they choose to enter the workforce or pursue higher education," said David P. Driscoll, the chairman of the governing board for NAEP, in a press release.

Although the average score of 12th graders did not change, the data reveal some improvements from 2006, when the economics exam was launched. For instance, the percentage of students scoring below the "basic" level decreased from 21 percent in 2006 to 18 percent six years later. In addition, the percentage of Hispanic students scoring at or above basic grew from 64 percent to 71 percent over that time period. (But the proficiency rate for Hispanics did not change by a statistically significant margin.)

In a conference call with reporters, the commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics, Jack Buckley, suggested that the improvement for Hispanic students may be explained by improved literacy skills rather than better understanding of economics.

The data show a persistent gender gap in economics, with males on average scoring 6 points higher than females on the NAEP scale of 0 to 300.

The results also show substantial gaps by race, ethnicity, and income, consistent with the patterns in evidence across NAEP subjects. For example, the 2012 data show that 53 percent of white students scored proficient or above, compared with 17 percent of black students and 26 percent of Hispanic students. Looked at another way, four out of 10 black students scored "below basic," as did about 30 percent of Hispanics. For white students, the figure was just one in 10.

"I am particularly troubled about the NAEP economics findings when viewed by race/ethnicity," said Terry Mazany, the president and CEO of the Chicago Community Trust and a member of the National Assessment Governing Board, in a statement. "This achievement gap is compounded by the parents' education level."

He notes, for example, that only 8 percent of black 12th graders whose parents did not finish high school scored at or above the proficient level. This figure jumps to 24 percent proficient or above for black students whose parents graduated from college.

Meanwhile, a scant 3 percent of U.S. students tested reached the "advanced" level.

Sample Question: Price of Grapes

The report provides some examples of questions included in the NAEP in economics. One asks: "Suppose that the price of grapes increased by a large amount. What will happen in the short term to the quantity of grapes demanded? Explain why."

Another question asked: Which of the following best describes an opportunity cost for a student who chooses to quit a full-time job to go to college? It offered four answers:

- (A) Paying state and federal income tax
- (B) Having a higher level of education
- (C) Giving up current wages and benefits
- (D) Paying for housing and meals

Only 45 percent of students selected the correct answer, C.

Students fared better on a question on the national economy: Which of the following changes is most likely to cause an increase in employment?

- (A) An increase in consumer spending
- (B) An increase in interest rates
- (C) A decrease in business investment
- (D) A decrease in income

In this case, 74 percent selected the correct answer (A).

Mazany suggests that one big challenge to economics education is that it rarely gets sufficient attention in schools.

"Economics and financial-literacy components [of the school curriculum] have largely gone the way of health or driver education—often not available as an elective class and certainly not considered mandatory," he said. "This is unfortunate, considering that everybody—regardless of status and background—is shaped by economic forces and policies. ... At a local level, we all have to pay monthly bills, keep a budget, manage loans, and figure out how to save for a car, house, and other big purchases."

The new economics data come just a week after the Council of Economic Education issued a set of national standards for financial literacy at the K-12 level.

National Assessment Of Educational Progress In Economics Finds Less Than Half Of 12th Graders 'Proficient'

Huffington Post – Joy Resmovits

Published April 24, 2013

Fewer than half of high school seniors are proficient in economics, according to the results of the 2012 National Assessment of Educational Progress exam released Wednesday. This statistic is causing alarm among educators and advocates, especially in an era marked by economic crisis.

"I was shocked," said Edward Alvarez, an assistant principal at Thomas A. Edison Technical Education High School in Queens, in New York City. "We're not even proficient in some areas. The breakdown between ethnic groups, between urban and suburban, I was shocked."

Last year marked the second administration of the NAEP economics test, following the first one in 2006, and average performance stagnated. Between 2006 and 2012, the average score increased by two points from 150 to 152 out of 300 -- a change that is not statistically significant, according to the test's administrators. The test was administered by the research arm of the U.S. Education Department, and assessed 11,000 students in 480 public and private schools.

Forty-two percent of students performed at or above proficient, 3 percent performed at advanced, 82 percent performed between basic and proficient, and 18 percent performed below basic. The only real movement was at the tail end: fewer students performed in the lowest category in 2012 than they did in 2006.

"It illustrates that we are barely adequate in our overall understanding," said Terry Mazany, who heads the Chicago Community Trust and sits on the National Assessment Governing Board. "Of particular concern is the gap between races because we know that the majority of the workforce in decades to come will be African American and Latino."

Mazany spoke to The Huffington Post by phone from a conference about pensions, and said that context in particular worries him in light of the scores. "In Illinois, a state that has an underfunded pension, there's a tendency to point the finger: is it the greedy employees ... or irresponsible elected officials?" he said. "That's the world that most young people are going to grow up in ... with very real economic consequences."

The release of the test results coincides with a Wednesday Senate hearing on financial literacy on financial literacy held by Sen. Kay Hagan (D-N.C.). Annamaria Lusardi, global director for financial literacy at George Washington University, will testify there. Men outscored women by an average of six points on the NAEP in 2012, revealing a significant gender gap in economics. "Women answer in the same way to financial literacy questions," she said, referring to her own research. "And their answer is usually, 'I don't know.' Women aren't confident. ... Men might be more likely to guess, but if you force women to give you an answer, they are pretty much similar to the men."

While gaps in performance on the NAEP in economics remained stagnant from 2006 to 2012 between most ethnic groups, Hispanic students' scores increased from 133 to 138, a statistically significant difference that decreases the gap in scores between white and Hispanic students from 25 to 22. Jack Buckley, commissioner for the National Center for Education Statistics, guessed that's because "these students are arriving in 12th grade better equipped to comprehend this area through their reading." Students whose parents did not graduate from high school also saw a score increase from 129 in 2006 to 134 in 2012.

(Of course, the results are not longitudinal -- NAEP tests different groups of students, so it could possibly be measuring changes in population between then and now, since there are only two data points available.)

the short term to the quantity of grapes demanded? Explain why." Only nine percent of students answered the question entirely correct, but 70 percent got it partially correct.

Nan Morrison, who leads the Council for Economic Education, said her group has found more states are educating students in economics, but fewer are testing them in the subject. "There's been a flattening or watering down to make sure it gets taken," she said. "But enrollment is up."

Teens Talk More About Economics, but No Better Informed

Wall Street Journal – Brenda Cronin

Published with video April 24, 2013

Since the financial crisis and recession, American teenagers have become more aware of economics but not more informed about the subject.

The nation's "Report Card in Economics," released Wednesday, found no improvement in high-school seniors' economics knowledge from six years ago, on the eve of the crisis. The U.S. Department of Education project surveyed and tested nearly 11,000 12th-graders in 480 American public and private schools.

"More students say they're talking about economics with their friends and family," than before the downturn, said Jack Buckley, commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics. "Economics is more a part of their lives than it was in 2006."

While more students reported receiving some kind of economics instruction — in classes such as history or civics or government — than six years ago, that knowledge isn't yet reflected in test results. Researchers found almost no difference between the average score in 2012 — 152 out of a possible 300 points — and the 150 average score recorded in 2006, when the first such assessment was made.

That near-unchanged score "may reflect that the students may be talking about economics more but not learning the theoretical concepts," Mr. Buckley said.

Edward Alvarez, assistant principal at Thomas A. Edison Career & Technical Education High School in Jamaica, N.Y., has taught economics and finance for more than seven years. "Unfortunately, high-school students nationwide are still well short of where they should be," he said in a conference call about the Report Card.

Students in the project were asked to answer written and multiple-choice questions about concepts in personal finance, business and government policy.

Researchers also found few differences in the distribution among the three levels of students' economics knowledge: basic, proficient or advanced. Basic knowledge means a student can identify and recognize concepts such as gross domestic product; proficient entails a more comprehensive set of concepts, including opportunity costs and interest rates. Advanced translates into an understanding of fiscal and monetary policy as well as exchange rates. In both the 2006 and 2012 assessments, only 3% of students were advanced. The other two levels inched up: 39% of students were at the basic level in 2012, from 38% in 2006; the percentage of proficient students rose to 40% in 2012 from 39% in 2006.

Officials at organizations that helped prepare the Report Card emphasized the need to raise the scores.

"This isn't great news... I'm not jumping up and down on this one," said Nan J. Morrison, president and chief executive of the Council for Economic Education, which advances economic and financial literacy.

However, she cited "glimmers of hope" in the results, such as gains by Hispanics as well as advancement from the below-basic level to basic level by students whose parents had less than a high-school education.

The Report Card's findings mesh with other recent research exposing a lack of financial and economic literacy among young people. Scholars at George Washington University this week published a paper concluding that many young adults who tap high-cost borrowing options, such as payday loans and pawnshops, are unfamiliar with basic financial concepts. The research comes as federal regulators are said to be readying a crackdown on payday lending.

Annamaria Lusardi, of the George Washington University School of Business, who wrote “Financial Literacy and High-Cost Borrowing in the United States,” with her colleague Carlo de Bassa Scheresberg, said relying on payday loans isn’t a “fringe” practice. “Young people are getting used to alternate financial services” and those who use them often have a lower level of financial literacy, she said.

The national report card’s findings on high school seniors was unsurprising, said Dr. Lusardi, who emphasized that reading media reports on the economy was no substitute for classroom learning. News articles and television programs might spark interest in the subject, she said, but financial and economic literacy “is really learned at school.”

High school seniors show little improvement on economic issues

Washington Post – Lyndsey Layton

Published April 24, 2013

Despite the Great Recession of 2008 — which focused the nation’s attention on the economy — high school seniors on average showed no significant improvement in their understanding of economic issues between 2006 and 2012, according to new testing data released Wednesday by the federal government.

In 2012, about 10,900 12th-grade students in 480 public and private schools took the economics exam as part of the National Assessment of Educational Progress, known as the “nation’s report card.” Their scores were compared with those from 2006, the first year that economics was tested as part of NAEP.

The exam was designed to test knowledge and understanding of markets and national and international economies.

While overall achievement was flat, federal officials saw gains in scores of Hispanic high school seniors and students performing at the lowest levels. The average score for Hispanic students on the 300-point test rose from 133 in 2006 to 138 in 2012. The average score for students in the lowest-scoring group rose from 104 to 109.

There was a persistent gender gap in performance, with boys consistently scoring higher than girls. And students attending private high schools consistently outscored those attending public schools.

In 2012, students reported getting more of their information about the economy from the Internet and less from newspapers and magazines than they did in 2006.



The Nation's Report Card: Economics 2012, Grade 12


Social media 24-hour coverage





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Release Event Debrief Report
***Inside America's Math Courses – Algebra I and Geometry Curricula:
Results of the 2005 Mathematics Curriculum Study***

Overview

The public release of *Algebra I and Geometry Curricula: Results of the 2005 Mathematics Curriculum Study* took place on March 12, 2013, at 11 a.m. EDT as a live and webcast event at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. NCES Associate Commissioner Peggy Carr served as the event's moderator and the release panel included NCES Commissioner Jack Buckley; University of Maryland, Baltimore County President Freeman A. Hrabowski; Change the Equation CEO Linda Rosen; Assistant Director of the National Science Foundation's Directorate for Education and Human Resources Joan Ferrini-Mundy; and Governing Board member Dale Nowlin. Governing Board Chairman David P. Driscoll also provided impromptu commentary on the study.

Unlike typical NAEP releases, *Inside America's Math Courses* was structured around an extended roundtable discussion among panelists. This event configuration facilitated a more thorough conversation of the report's findings and its significance. Roundtable accounted for more than half of the event's total running time. Panelist statements were kept brief in order to accommodate this event design.

In another first, NCES convened a panel of distinguished mathematics experts prior to the release to discuss the report's findings. Input from this panel helped shape the structure of the event and also informed the direction of the discussion that followed prepared remarks from the release panelists.

A video of students and parents was also shown at the release. Initially we had planned to solicit student or parent panelists to provide commentary from those directly affected by the content and challenge of mathematics courses. However, given the mid-day start time, we decided to incorporate student and parent voices via pre-recorded video. This video was shown at the release, and the roundtable discussion began with release panelists responding to student and parent concerns.

In addition to the ordinary ancillary release materials, we developed an infographic that quickly and clearly communicated the report's dense findings. The infographic proved to be quite popular on social media. Hager Sharp conducted all release activities in concert with NCES staff. For this release the participants included a total of 35 in-person release attendees (excluding internal staff) and 83 webcast participants.

Media Outreach Results

Advisories on the release were sent to thousands of print, broadcast, and online journalists. Embargoed materials were distributed 24 hours prior to embargo lift. Significant coverage included stories on the **Associated Press** and **Reuters** wires; *USAToday*; and *Education Week*.

Select Media Clips

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Titles don't much matter for high school math

BY PHILIP ELLIOTT
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON -- Advanced or intermediate algebra? Honors or basic geometry?

When it comes to high school math, the labels may not really matter - or necessarily predict what's in the textbook.

Those revelations are part of the Education Department's new study of high school math courses, released Tuesday. During their review of almost 18,000 high school students' records and textbooks, the investigators found as many as a third of the textbooks weren't about the subject printed on the cover. And within the subjects, the course titles were subjective and didn't really reflect the courses' difficulty.

"We have heard about grade inflation. Now we have course title inflation," said Linda Rosen, chief executive officer of Change the Equation, a coalition of business leaders pushing higher math and science standards. "Learning the course titles doesn't have much meaning in terms of high expectations and rigor is quite problematic. It's counterproductive if we provide impressive names but rather meaningless transcripts."

The findings have consequences for college-bound students. Admissions counselors look not just at grades but also at coursework on students' transcripts.

The findings also suggest that many elementary teachers are not preparing students for high school-level math and that many students who complete Algebra I and Geometry courses are not prepared for future classes, either during later high school years or in college. Educators at all levels are being forced to leave students behind or spend time on remedial material.

Parents and school administrators alike also should read the findings carefully. Simply enrolling students in the most difficult-sounding course is no guarantee they are receiving the most rigorous instruction or even using a textbook appropriate for their level. And schools, which spend millions on textbooks each year, might not be making the best investments during a time of limited resources.

The report graded textbooks on three different levels: beginner, intermediate and rigorous. But those labels didn't always match up with how schools labeled their classes.

The study found that 73 percent of students who took an Algebra I course labeled "honors" were actually using a curriculum that would be appropriate for one called "intermediate" course. And students who signed up for a "regular" course were more likely to receive a rigorous curriculum than those who enrolled in one called "honors" by an almost 2-to-1 margin.

"You want the course title to reflect reality," said Freeman Hrabowski, president of the University of Maryland-Baltimore County and chairman of the President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for African Americans. "If it's going to be honors, it should have some special meaning."

The researchers found that 65 percent of algebra courses focused on that subject while about 35 percent focused on elementary- and middle-school math skills or other topics that would typically be taught in other high school courses.

Similarly, about 66 percent of geometry courses covered that subject while 34 percent focused on other math topics, such as elementary- or middle-school math skills or algebra.

Part of it is because students are arriving in classrooms unprepared.

"The reality is: not all kids we get in high school are ready for algebra," said Dale Nowlin, a math teacher from Columbus North High School in Columbus, Ind. "You fill the gaps as you can."

The National Center for Education Statistics, the Education Department's data arm, based their results on looking at 17,800 students at 550 public schools in 2005 and then their 12th grade math assessment years later. The researchers also examined about 120 different textbooks and curriculum during that period.

"We had a very detailed picture of what the students had to do to pass those courses," Jack Buckley, National Center for Education Statistics chairman.

But the picture, he acknowledged, was incomplete.

The results were only representative for students who earned diplomas. Those who did not complete a traditional high school program in four years were not included in this study, nor were students who took Algebra I or Geometry courses while in the eighth grade.

In 2005, 78 percent of all high school graduates took an Algebra I class in high school and 20 percent took it before entering high school. In that same year, 83 percent of students took geometry courses in high school but just 1.5 percent took the class before high school.

The analysis also did not look at teachers' tests, but merely questions included in the end-of-chapter review questions. There is no way of telling if teachers used those textbooks as a roadmap or how their lessons mirrored their texts.

The researchers, none the less, used their analysis of course materials to check student performance on standardized tests during students' senior years.

There was no significant difference in test results between those students who took intermediate and rigorous Algebra I sections. But students who had rigorous instruction in Algebra I were likely to perform better on their exams than those in beginner courses.

Students who received a truly rigorous curriculum scored statistically significantly better than their peers in geometry on achievement tests, as well.

"As students take more rigorous material, they score higher," said Buckley, the Education Department's statistics chief.

He noted, however, it was difficult to determine the level of instructions based solely on the course's title.

"One of the issues going on in our high school is course mislabeling," he said.

Most algebra classes mislabeled as rigorous: study

By Ian Simpson

WASHINGTON | Tue Mar 12, 2013 4:36pm EDT

(Reuters) - Most U.S. high school introductory algebra courses labeled "honors" actually are no more rigorous than regular courses in the same school, according to a government curriculum survey released on Tuesday.

The study of high school algebra and geometry classes shows that mislabeling of math courses as tougher than they are is widespread, the survey authors told a news conference.

The report raises questions about mathematics instruction as U.S. employers complain about a shortage of qualified workers. Despite improvements, U.S. students trail leaders from other advanced economies in mathematics, science and reading.

"If we're accepting a watered-down ... course, call it anything, we are in effect suggesting that we haven't met these students' needs," said Peggy Carr, associate commissioner of assessment for the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

The survey showed that of high school graduates who took an algebra I, or introductory, class labeled "honors" by their school, about 73 percent were taught material analysts ranked as intermediate.

Eighteen percent of the students actually received a rigorous curriculum, the survey said.

But 34 percent of graduates who took an algebra I class labeled "regular" at the same school instead got a rigorous curriculum.

For geometry, among graduates who took classes labeled "honors," 33 percent got a rigorous curriculum and 62 percent were taught intermediate material.

Nineteen percent of graduates who took a "regular" geometry course received a rigorous curriculum.

The study was based on 17,800 transcripts of graduates from about 550 public high schools in 2005. Analysts compared more than 120 different textbooks and their review questions and interviewed teachers to find the results.

NCES Commissioner Jack Buckley, who oversaw the study, said an examination of textbooks used in 2009 showed they had remained unchanged since 2005.

Most graduates took an intermediate level algebra I course. There were no major differences among white, black and Hispanic graduates who took intermediate and rigorous algebra I courses.

(Reporting by Ian Simpson. Editing by Andre Grenon)



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'Honors' math classes often don't add up

Study finds many courses are advanced in name only.

Greg Toppo, USA TODAY 1:56p.m. EDT March 12, 2013



(Photo: Mykal McEldowney, The Greenville (S.C.) News)

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Few students in honors algebra take rigorous work**
 - **Scores on 12th grade math and science tests are not improving despite increase in "advanced" work**
-
- **Parents advised to question school board members about coursework**

If your child's school says she's enrolled in "Honors Algebra," here's a bit of advice: Check the work she's doing.

A new analysis of textbooks, curriculums and transcripts of nearly 18,000 students nationwide suggests that millions of kids in so-called "honors" algebra and geometry classes are actually getting intermediate-level work — or worse.

"It's a lot of kids that are obviously getting courses that are called one thing, but difficulty-wise look like they're something else," said Jack Buckley, commissioner of the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics. There's "little truth-in-labeling" for high school math courses, he said.

The agency's analysis, out Tuesday, began as an attempt to solve a mystery: Researchers were trying to find out why more students were taking "advanced" classes in 2005 than in 1990 but weren't turning in better results on nationally administered 12th-grade math and science tests.

Tuesday's findings suggest that their course offerings were often "advanced" in name only: Fewer than one in five high school graduates who took an "honors" Algebra I class in high school got "rigorous" work in the course. A full 73% got what researchers called "intermediate" level work, while 9% in honors classes got "beginner" level work. In fact, a greater proportion of students enrolled in regular algebra classes got advanced work, the study found — 34% vs. 18% in "honors" courses.

Results in geometry were similar, if less stark: Only one in three "honors" students got rigorous work. The study has a few limitations, Buckley said. For one thing, researchers didn't observe classes, so they don't know exactly what material teachers covered. Also, the sample comprises only about 80% of high school students, since 20% take algebra in middle school. He said results would likely be similar for those kids if researchers looked at their middle-school classes.

But the findings, extracted from 2005 school transcripts, would likely hold up now, Buckley said, since the courses "haven't changed very much."

Buckley cautioned against judging schools too harshly, saying the mislabeling is "almost certainly not an intentional thing." They're likely not trying to puff up their academic reputations. Rather they're relying on mislabeled textbooks and curriculums. Parents, he said, should query school board members or, in big districts, math committees, on how they make decisions about textbooks.

"The only way to do this is to pay attention," he said.

EDUCATION WEEK

Education Week

Algebra, Geometry Classes Vary in Rigor, Says Study

By Sarah D. Sparks

March 12, 2013

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2013/03/12/26math.h32.html?r=1130505412>

Washington

The drive to get every student to take so-called college gateway courses has succeeded, a new federal study finds, but students taking Algebra I and Geometry classes are getting considerably less substance than their course titles would suggest.

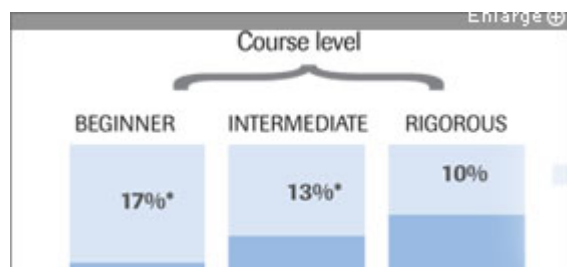
Nearly all of the Class of 2005 graduated having taken Algebra I, according to the [latest iteration of the National Assessment of Educational Progress's high school transcript study](#), released this morning by the National Center for Education Statistics. Yet if their course materials are any indication, fewer than one in four of those students studied the kind of challenging topics needed to prepare them for college-level mathematics.

During the 2005 National Assessment of Educational Progress in mathematics, NCES researchers also collected course transcript data from a representative sample of 17,800 students who graduated with a regular or honors diploma that year. They also analyzed 120 Algebra I, Geometry, and integrated math textbooks used at the 550 public schools those students attended.

Education watchers hoping to close persistent achievement gaps among students of different racial and ethnic groups long have pushed for all students to take "college-ready" class schedules, including at least four years of high school math, including Algebra I and II, Geometry, and Calculus. Here, at least, the transcript study shows this push has paid off: Graduates in 2005 earned on average 3.8 credits in math, significantly more than the average of 3.2 credits earned by graduates in 1990. Moreover, from 1990 to 2005, black graduates closed a six-percentage-point gap with white graduates in the percentages of students earning at least three math credits, including in algebra and geometry.

What's Covered in Algebra I?

Education Statistics. The chart breaks down the types of topics actually covered in Algebra I courses that researchers classified as beginner-, intermediate-, and rigorous-level classes.



SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, High School Transcript

The study found that, on average, two thirds of Algebra I and Geometry courses covered core content topics in each of those subjects, while the other third covered topics in other math areas. Researchers also gauged the rigor of classes based on the topics and questions covered in each book. A course categorized by researchers as beginner-level algebra had more than 60 percent of its material on elementary and middle school math topics such as basic arithmetic and pre-algebra problems such as basic equations. By contrast, a rigorous Algebra I course includes more than 60 percent of material on advanced topics such as functions and advanced number theory, as well as other higher-level math subjects such as geometry, trigonometry, and precalculus.

“We found that there is very little truth-in-labeling for high school Algebra I and Geometry courses,” said Sean P. “Jack” Buckley, the NCES commissioner, in a statement on the study.

Breaking Down Content

Of graduates who took a course identified by the school as Algebra I, 32 percent had a rigorous course and 14 covered beginner-level material. In classes identified as Geometry, 21 percent of graduates took a class covering rigorous material, while 12 percent covered beginner-level material.

For example, a student taking a rigorous Algebra I course covered 11 topics in advanced number theory, compared with only six for students in courses with the same name that researchers classified as beginner- and intermediate-level classes. A student in an Algebra I class ranked by the study as beginner-level had no exposure to advanced functions, and more than a quarter of the class was devoted to basic arithmetic and pre-algebra. A student in a rigorous Geometry class likewise covered significantly more topics in coordinate and vector geometry, and significantly fewer topics in basic arithmetic and pre-geometry, than a student in a beginner-level Geometry class.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating: Mr. Buckley said students who took classes that covered more rigorous topics in algebra and geometry scored significantly higher on the NAEP than those who studied beginner topics, regardless of the course’s title. In fact, more graduates who took Algebra I courses considered “regular” by their schools actually covered rigorous algebra courses than graduates in honors classes, 34 percent versus 18 percent. In geometry, at least, honors classes tended to be more challenging than regular classes: A third of honors geometry classes were rigorous, compared with 19 percent of regular geometry classes. Fewer than one in five students who took an Algebra I course considered “honors” by their school actually learned rigorous coursework, including advanced functions and number theory; nearly three out of four students were taught intermediate-level material, with higher proportions of pre-algebra and basic equations.

Some Disparities

There were no significant differences in the proportion of students of different racial groups who took rigorous Algebra I courses—roughly a third of each group—though Hispanic and Asian and Pacific Islander students were more likely than other groups to take beginner-level algebra courses. However, NCES found that more white students in honors Geometry classes, 37 percent, covered rigorous topics, compared with 21 percent of black and 17 percent of Hispanic students in similarly titled classes.

“It’s not surprising there’s such variation, because there’s not been uniformity among various states with what is meant by rigorous algebra or introductory algebra,” said J. Michael Shaughnessy, a mathematics professor at Portland State University in Oregon and the immediate past-president of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, based in Washington.

“That’s really one of the reasons the [Common Core State Standards] came about. That’s certainly one of the goals put out by the common core, to balance off across states the mathematics experience that students will get,” he said, adding that the NAEP transcript study may provide a baseline from which to compare how algebra and geometry classes evolve in response to the common core.

But Mr. Shaughnessy warned that the study’s focus on course materials provides a limited perspective on what students really learn in these classes. “It’s all based on the textbook analysis and the type of questions being asked,” he said. “There’s no question about what the teacher is doing, what supplemental materials are being used, how faithfully it’s being implemented. The study didn’t look at any of that, so we have to be very cautious about it.”

In addition, the transcript study includes only the materials of high school Algebra I and Geometry courses, though 20 percent of all 2005 graduates—30 percent of Asian/Pacific Islander students, 23 percent of white students, 10 percent of Hispanic students, and 8 percent of black students—took Algebra I in middle school. The transcript study did not evaluate any middle school courses, though some of these may have used the same textbooks as high school courses.