

# National Assessment Governing Board

## Reporting and Dissemination Committee

**August 7, 2015**  
**10:15 am – 12:30 pm**

### AGENDA

10:15 – 10:20 am	Welcome and Opening Remarks <i>Andrés Alonso, Chair</i>	
10:20 – 10:30 am	Introduction of Website and Communications Contractors <i>Stephaan Harris, Public Affairs Specialist</i> <i>Merle Schwartz, Quotient</i> <i>Adam Clampitt, District Communications Group</i>	Attachment A
10:30 – 11:00 am	Media Embargo Guidelines <i>Stephaan Harris</i>	Attachment B
11:00 – 11:25 am	<b>ACTION:</b> Release Plans for 2015 NAEP Reading and Mathematics Assessments <i>Stephaan Harris</i>	Attachment C
11:25 am – 12:10 pm	Considering the Future: Changes to Core Contextual Variables and Efforts to Sustain Messaging <i>Stephaan Harris</i> <i>Laura LoGerfo, Assistant Director for Reporting and Analysis</i>	Attachment D
12:10 – 12:30 pm	Information Items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update on TEL Release</li> <li>• Update on Focused Reports</li> <li>• Upcoming Release Schedule</li> <li>• Other Issues and Questions</li> </ul>	Attachment E



**NEWS RELEASE**

**For Immediate Release: July 16, 2015**

**CONTACT:** Stephaan Harris, (202) 357-7504, [Stephaan.Harris@ed.gov](mailto:Stephaan.Harris@ed.gov)

**National Assessment Governing Board Awards Communications, Website Contracts to Two Small Businesses**

*The District Communications Group and Quotient Inc. Win Contracts Through 2018*

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The National Assessment Governing Board awarded new contracts to two local small businesses for communications and website services that will be instrumental in supporting the Board’s outreach and dissemination efforts for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) — otherwise known as The Nation’s Report Card.

The Board, which sets policy for NAEP, has contracted with both firms under three-year blanket purchase agreements that allow government agencies to fill anticipated and recurring needs for services. Both firms have extensive experience supporting federal government clients.

The District Communications Group (The DC Group), a specialized communications consultancy based in Washington, D.C., will assist in the Board’s various outreach efforts, including activities related to the release of NAEP report cards. The DC Group base contract year funding is \$1.2 million. The firm — a service-disabled veteran-owned small business — has subcontracted with Reingold, the Board’s current communications contractor.

Quotient Inc. has been the Board’s Web contractor since 2009 and will continue to provide website and related information technology services. The Quotient base contract year has been funded at just over \$692,000. Quotient is a woman-owned small business based in Columbia, Maryland.

These contract awards come as the Governing Board is engaging in a strategic planning initiative to expand the visibility and reach of NAEP — the country’s leading nationally representative measure of student achievement — and to implement stakeholder initiatives related to the Board’s activities and policies over the next several years. The initiative will complement the Board’s communications plan, which calls for a variety of outreach strategies, including the expansion of social media campaigns and national presentations and the development of multimedia websites and materials.

“These two firms have demonstrated the capacity required to assist Board members and staff in advancing the Governing Board’s goals to engage more stakeholders and make NAEP data and resources more relevant to a variety of audiences, including parents, educators, policymakers, business leaders and the media,” said Board Chair Terry Mazany.

The Board conducted extensive market research to find eligible small businesses on the General Services Administration (GSA) Schedule and invited more than a dozen firms for each potential contract to submit responses to a Request for Quotations (RFQ), which was also posted on the Board’s website. A panel convened by the Board comprehensively reviewed proposals and selected the awardees based on technical evaluation criteria and cost factors.

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*The National Assessment Governing Board is an independent, nonpartisan board whose members include governors, state legislators, local and state school officials, educators, business representatives, and members of the general public. Congress created the 26-member Governing Board in 1988 to set policy for the National Assessment of Educational Progress. For more information about the Governing Board, visit [www.nagb.org](http://www.nagb.org).*



## **Embargo Guidelines and Discussion**

At the Board’s August 2015 meeting, the Reporting and Dissemination Committee will discuss possible criteria or process changes in the Governing Board’s guidelines (see Appendix A) regarding embargo media access for NAEP Report Cards, although formal action will not be taken at this meeting. Currently, guidelines forbid access to writers and others affiliated with any outlet that is not an established print, broadcast, or online news organization. And thus, requestors who are affiliated with outlets that are part of other organizations—such as advocacy groups, unions, think tanks, foundations, and associations—as well as independent bloggers—have been denied access to embargoed NAEP results.

However, with the rapidly changing media landscape, there has been a proliferation of online outlets that have fallen into a “gray area”. Typically, these outlets are linked to one or more organizations, financially or otherwise, but they operate similarly to an established news outlet by producing news stories on various issues, rather than just framing news items within the context of the affiliated group’s mission, principles, and/or politics. Several of these outlets have requested access in the past and have been most frequently denied.

In early July, the Committee convened a conference call with Board staff to discuss thoughts on this issue to facilitate a productive discussion for August. Members agreed that the most important aspect of the embargo process was ensuring the confidentiality of the results and that those granted access abide by the rules, rather than trying to define “acceptable” or “legitimate” media or making other specific language changes in the guidelines that may be perceived as arbitrary. A few members pointed out, for example, that changes in the media landscape make the concept of “traditional media” archaic. Others said trying to revise guidelines to single out those who conduct only objective reporting, in the effort, is faulty because offering a point of view in coverage should not be a basis for access decisions and journalists from traditional media, such as newspapers and TV stations, can display bias in coverage.

During the call, Committee members discussed potential criteria to grant access to embargoed material, such as the media outlet’s duration of operation, audience size, frequency of posts, etc. Additionally, some members believed there must be a discussion of internal steps and strategies to make the embargo process run smoothly and prevent an exponential overload of access requests or permissions to media outlets with whom Board members and staff would not be comfortable granting access.

Committee Chair Andrés Alonso requested Board staff to investigate how comparable large-scale assessments handle embargo requests. Public Affairs Specialist Stephaan Harris spoke to communications departments at ACT and the College Board (which release SAT and other data). ACT stance is more about ensuring that the early release of embargoed information is honored and less about who receives access to that early release. ACT uses a service that sends notifications to a variety of media, including blogs, and does not differentiate how that outlet is connected to a group. ACT sends a message announcing that embargoed data are available and containing a URL to a “dark” page on their website that clearly spells out the date and time of the embargo. So implicitly, by clicking on the link ACT provides, respondents are “opting in” to the restrictions of the embargo.

A College Board spokesman said in general the organization does not pose limits or restrictions on media outlets, but they receive relatively few requests from bloggers and “gray area” outlets. Recipients of embargoed data must sign an agreement and the board requires the requesting organization provide clear language on how they respond to and uphold embargo rules. He added trying to define media has proven a difficult task.

Below is background on the discussion and steps taken by Committee members on this topic over the last few years.

### **Background**

In August 2011, the Reporting and Dissemination Committee approved guidelines (Appendix A) for handling news media requests for embargoed access to NAEP reports to help prepare accurate news stories before the time set for an official release. The guidelines pertain only to embargoed pre-release access to NAEP materials by news media personnel and provide for equal treatment of all news organizations, regardless of how their news product is disseminated, whether published, broadcast, or posted on the Internet. Recipients must agree not to make any information public until the time set by the Board for public release.

However, the guidelines do not allow embargoed access to the vast majority of blogs or outlets connected to education constituency groups or non-profit think tanks that offer commentary and analysis. Several outlets in these two categories who sought embargo access and were denied by Board staff publicly criticized the guidelines during the Report Card releases of 2013 NAEP Reading and Mathematics (national/state and TUDA).

In response, the Committee began discussion at their December 2013 meeting on how or if those guidelines should be adjusted, given the proliferation of “non-traditional” media. Committee members generally felt that giving access to outlets affiliated with an advocacy group was not a good idea. The Committee requested Board staff to research how some national journalism organizations define who are considered journalists in the changing media landscape and determine their own criteria for membership, and share that feedback for discussion.

At the May 2014 meeting, Stephaan Harris presented feedback he gathered from two federal agencies and five major journalism groups, and their perspectives on how journalism can and/or should be defined in the context of the Board's own embargo guidelines. There was no consensus and members had varying opinions and guidelines. But the committee members all agreed on one recommendation: the Board should isolate its goals and objectives for embargo access and NAEP coverage in media to effectively determine embargo guidelines, as opposed to attempting to create criteria for defining journalism or journalists.

Committee discussion also centered on the changing definition of media and potential impacts of greater inclusion. There was agreement that some traditional outlets, like newspapers, were on the decline and audiences were increasingly receiving news from online sources. There was also concern that too much broadening of the embargo guidelines could invite a plethora of blogs and constituency organizations with some media mechanism—like a blog, website or newsletter—to request access and both dilute the privilege of the embargo and make the process burdensome to maintain if dozens or even hundreds of more requests than usual are received. The Committee discussed this issue but did not take further or official action.

## **Appendix A**

# **National Assessment Governing Board News Media Embargo Guidelines**

**Approved by the Reporting and Dissemination Committee in August 2011**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Under law, the National Assessment Governing Board has the responsibility to “plan and execute the initial public release of National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reports.” The NAEP authorizing statute continues that NAEP data “shall not be released prior to the release of [such] reports.”

As part of pre-release activities, information is provided to the media in order to facilitate news coverage that reaches the general public. The practice for many years has been to grant access to confidential information to media representatives who have signed an embargo agreement, promising not to print or broadcast news of a report before the scheduled time of release. With the rapid evolution of the media industry bringing new and influential voices through the Internet, more requests for embargoed access are being received from those outside traditional print and broadcast news organizations.

In order for staff to make fair decisions about who should receive embargoed access, objective guidelines are needed. These guidelines establish the criteria and procedures to be used.

### **FUNCTION AND BENEFIT OF NEWS MEDIA EMBARGOES**

Under a longstanding tradition, organizations that release news and research findings to the public have used embargoes as a way to give reporters advance access to the information while retaining control of the timing and nature of their releases. Government officials and agencies, scientific and medical journals, corporate and consumer businesses, and financial institutions often use embargoes, particularly for lengthy or complex information that requires time for thorough review and analysis before news stories are completed.

Embargo agreements can be beneficial to the releasing organization, journalists, and the public that reads the news and can lead to broad-based dissemination and fuller coverage. Embargoed access may achieve the following:

- Give reporters the time to read and analyze reports, to do further research on complex information, to conduct interviews, and to write more complete, nuanced stories before the time set for release. This reduces the chances that a reporter will “dash off” a story quickly and as a result make errors in interpreting data.
- Permit news organizations to print or broadcast a story or place it on the Internet as soon as an embargo is lifted, promptly spreading news of the report or research findings to their audiences.

- Create interest and buy-in among journalists who are granted access, which may increase coverage. The additional time provided before stories must be written may help journalists appreciate the significance of the information and how newsworthy it is.

## **RISKS OF EMBARGOES**

Embargo breaks may be committed by a news organization or individual seeking to scoop the competition, or they may happen through accident or carelessness.

For most media outlets and individual reporters, the risks of damaging a relationship with a source or attracting negative attention heavily outweigh the possible benefits of violating an embargo agreement. Such cases do happen, but they are rare.

While journalists do not take a formal oath, and need no license, journalistic ethics demand that embargoes—once agreed to—be respected. If a journalist working outside of the traditional media practices ethical journalism, he or she will not knowingly break an embargo.

## **CRITERIA FOR ACCESS**

A requestor must meet one of the criteria below in order to receive embargoed access to NAEP reports:

### **1) The requestor is an editor, reporter, columnist, or blogger affiliated with a print, broadcast, or online news organization.**

*Print and broadcast news organizations for which qualifying employees may receive access would include newspapers, magazines, news services, and radio and television news outlets. Some examples: Associated Press, the Bozeman Daily Chronicle, the New York Times, MSNBC, Fox 5 NY, the New Yorker, National Review, the Nation, WTOP, Education Week.*

*Examples of online general-interest news organizations that would receive access:*

Huffington Post, Daily Kos, the Texas Tribune, the Daily Caller.

*Examples of print and online education trade publications and news providers that would receive access: Education Daily, Hechinger Report of Columbia University's Hechinger Institute for Education Journalism, Alexander Russo's This Week in Education, Inking and Thinking on Education by Joanne Jacobs.*

### **2) The requestor is a freelance reporter working on a story for a news organization in one of the categories above.**

Requestors may be asked to provide documentation of their employment or freelance assignment.

**PROCEDURE FOR REQUESTS**

Information about the requirements for embargoed access to NAEP reports and embargo agreement forms shall be made available to news media prior to NAEP releases. A separate agreement form must be signed by each person receiving embargoed information before each release.

**DENIAL OF ACCESS**

Reporters shall be denied embargoed access to NAEP information if they are not in one of the categories above or refuse to sign the embargo agreement. Those who knowingly break the embargo shall not be granted embargoed access to subsequent NAEP reports for up to two years.

Appeals regarding denial of access shall be determined by the Commissioner of Education Statistics in consultation with the Executive Director of the Governing Board.



**NATIONAL ASSESSMENT GOVERNING BOARD  
RELEASE PLAN FOR THE  
NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS (NAEP)  
IN MATHEMATICS AND READING**

***The Nation's Report Card: Mathematics and Reading 2015***

The 2015 NAEP Mathematics and Reading Report Cards will be released together to the general public on an interactive website during Fall 2015 (likely October) in conjunction with one event, as approved by the Board at the August 2015 meeting. Following a review and approval of the report's results, the release event will be arranged as an online webinar. The 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 and a panelist with a background in mathematics education or assessment, and another panelist with a background in reading education or assessment. Full accompanying data will be posted on the Internet at the scheduled time of release.

The 2015 NAEP Report Cards in mathematics and reading will present findings from a representative sample of 4<sup>th</sup>-graders and 8<sup>th</sup>-graders nationwide—about 165,000 students per grade and subject (and about 2,200 per jurisdiction). Results, which will be presented in terms of scale scores, percentiles, and NAEP achievement levels, will be for the nation and the states (including the District of Columbia and the Department of Defense Education Activity schools). The report will focus on changes from 2013 and from the earliest assessment (1990 for math; 1992 for reading), featuring data on achievement gaps and sample questions and allowing users to do deeper dives into state level data and run data by different contextual variables.

Data will be presented for all students and by subgroups, race/ethnicity, gender, school type and location, and eligibility for the National School Lunch Program. Contextual information (i.e., student, teacher, and school survey data) with findings of interest will also be reported.

**DATE AND LOCATION**

The release event for the media and the public will occur in Fall 2015. 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 at least one expert in the field of reading assessment or education
- Comments by at least one expert in the field of mathematics assessment or education
- Questions from the webinar audience
- Program will last approximately 75-80 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](http://www.nagb.org).

## **ACTIVITIES BEFORE RELEASE**

In the days preceding the release, the Governing Board and NCES can offer access to embargoed data via a special website to approved U.S. Congressional staff in Washington, DC; approved senior representatives of the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers; and appropriate media as defined by the Governing Board's Embargo Policy. Additional activities could include a remote or electronic briefing, such as a conference call, for any of these stakeholders in order to provide them with comprehensive overview of findings and data to help ensure accurate reporting to the public and understanding of results.

## **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 also 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, subject frameworks, and related materials will be posted on the Board's web site at [www.nagb.org](http://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 will work with Board staff to coordinate two separate post-release communications efforts—which could include an online chat, major presentation, webinar, social media campaign—one targeted for the larger mathematics community, and one targeted for the larger reading community. The creation of infographics and dissemination of data and contextual variables through social media and website posts will also be employed. The goal of these activities is to extend the life of the results and provide value and relevance to stakeholders with an interest in student achievement and assessment in these subject areas.

**Considering the Future:  
Changes to Core Contextual Variables and Efforts to Sustain Messaging**

This August meeting represents the last meeting of Reporting and Dissemination Committee Chair, Andrés Alonso. Part of Mr. Alonso's accomplishments as Chair is urging a more active role for the Reporting and Dissemination Committee in the review processes under the Committee's purview. This meeting serves as an appropriate time to take stock of progress and to anticipate the transition this fall to new Committee leadership.

As mandated by Congress, the Governing Board is granted policy-setting responsibilities for NAEP, and within these responsibilities, the Reporting and Dissemination Committee (R&D) members work on developing guidelines for reporting and disseminating results, approving NAEP's core contextual items, and improving the form, content, use, and reporting of results. As such, R&D members review and approve releases of the Nation's Report Card as well as the core contextual variables that add substantive meaning to those releases. R&D also considers how to disseminate NAEP results broadly and extend the message of NAEP reports.

There are two primary questions to drive this session's discussion:

- 1) Does the current review process address R&D's concerns about providing meaningful input?
- 2) What are the best approaches to sustain and extend NAEP's message between releases?

**Review of Core Contextual Variables**

In previous years, there were concerns from R&D members that there were too few opportunities for their item reviews to have actual impact. In 2014, NCES responded to these concerns by adding a third opportunity for R&D review, earlier in the development process. Thus the current review process occurs at three time points:

- 1) Prior to cognitive labs: This stage of reviewing the existing item pool represents the best opportunity for major revisions—when R&D comments can facilitate substantive changes to questions.
  - Note: Once items enter the cognitive lab process, it is difficult to add or revise questions due to the Office of Management and Budget's clearance process.
- 2) Prior to pilot testing: Before pilot testing, NCES briefs R&D on findings from the cognitive labs, with a focus on feedback offered by R&D at the previous review stage. At this point, R&D may recommend only minor changes, suggest adding previously tested items, and advise deleting items.
  - For example, at the May 2015 meeting, R&D members reviewed cognitive lab results for core contextual questions proposed for the 2016 pilot. The Committee concluded that many of the items about households do not accurately reflect

contemporary American students' lives and may exclude students who live within non-traditional family structures. In response, NCES added a previously tested question to the pilot that will allow students to provide more accurate information about their family context.

- 3) Prior to operational assessment: After the pilot test occurs, R&D is briefed by NCES on any changes prior to the operational assessment. No major changes can be made at this point.
  - At the May 2016 meeting, R&D members will review the findings from the pilot test and approve the slate of questions for the operational assessment in 2017.

Improvements to the process continue. Beginning in May 2016, after *every* stage of review, NCES will draft a formal response to the Committee's summative review memo that will outline what Committee recommendations can be taken or not and why. Also, future online reviews will present previous Committee comments about specific questions. This should help ensure that past Committee suggestions, when applicable, can be identified for subsequent review.

#### Considering the Future

Because R&D Committee membership changes annually, revisiting a process that optimizes the input of the Committee at opportune times in the item development process is paramount. To start the conversation, consider generally: *Does the three-step review process adequately address R&D's concerns about avenues to provide meaningful input?* More specifically:

Trend. The need to develop new items or revise current items must be balanced with the need to maintain trend. To strike this balance, questions to consider emerge:

- 1) What changes in the cultural and social landscape compel sacrifices of trend?
- 2) If change requires altering trend, then that change must be of sufficient critical contribution to the mission of the survey and of NAEP to warrant the shift. If and how should this level be decided?

Timing. As NAEP has shifted both to digital test administration and to modules for measuring concepts, the review process may be more amenable to change. These shifts raise questions:

- 1) How often should NAEP review and/or change core items?
- 2) Does changing a few variables which need updating, such as the family structure and household roster items, require a full and complete review of all the core contextual variables?

#### Proposed Plans to Extend the Message

Beyond item development, spurred by clarion calls from the Board Chair, NAEP's message should extend beyond initial releases "to keep NAEP in the national conversation," e.g., digging deeper into the data to produce other analyses of interest. The R&D Committee should consider the best media and approaches to report on findings subsequent to initial releases.

- 1) How soon after initial releases should supplemental reports be timed? And how often?
- 2) Blogs, Twitter feeds, sites that accept long-form writing and float the most clicked-on contributions to the top (e.g., Medium <http://isource.com/2014/03/10/medium-iphone-app/>), virtual 'index cards' with vital findings, short reports no more than a page or two in length that dig more deeply on a specific graph, etc. What approaches seem most viable and potentially valuable?



## Upcoming NAEP Reports as of July 2015

Report	Expected Release Date
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### Initial NAEP Releases

<i>2015 Mathematics and Reading National &amp; State</i>	October 2015
<i>2015 Mathematics and Reading TUDA</i>	December 2015
<i>2014 Technology &amp; Engineering Literacy</i>	March 2016**

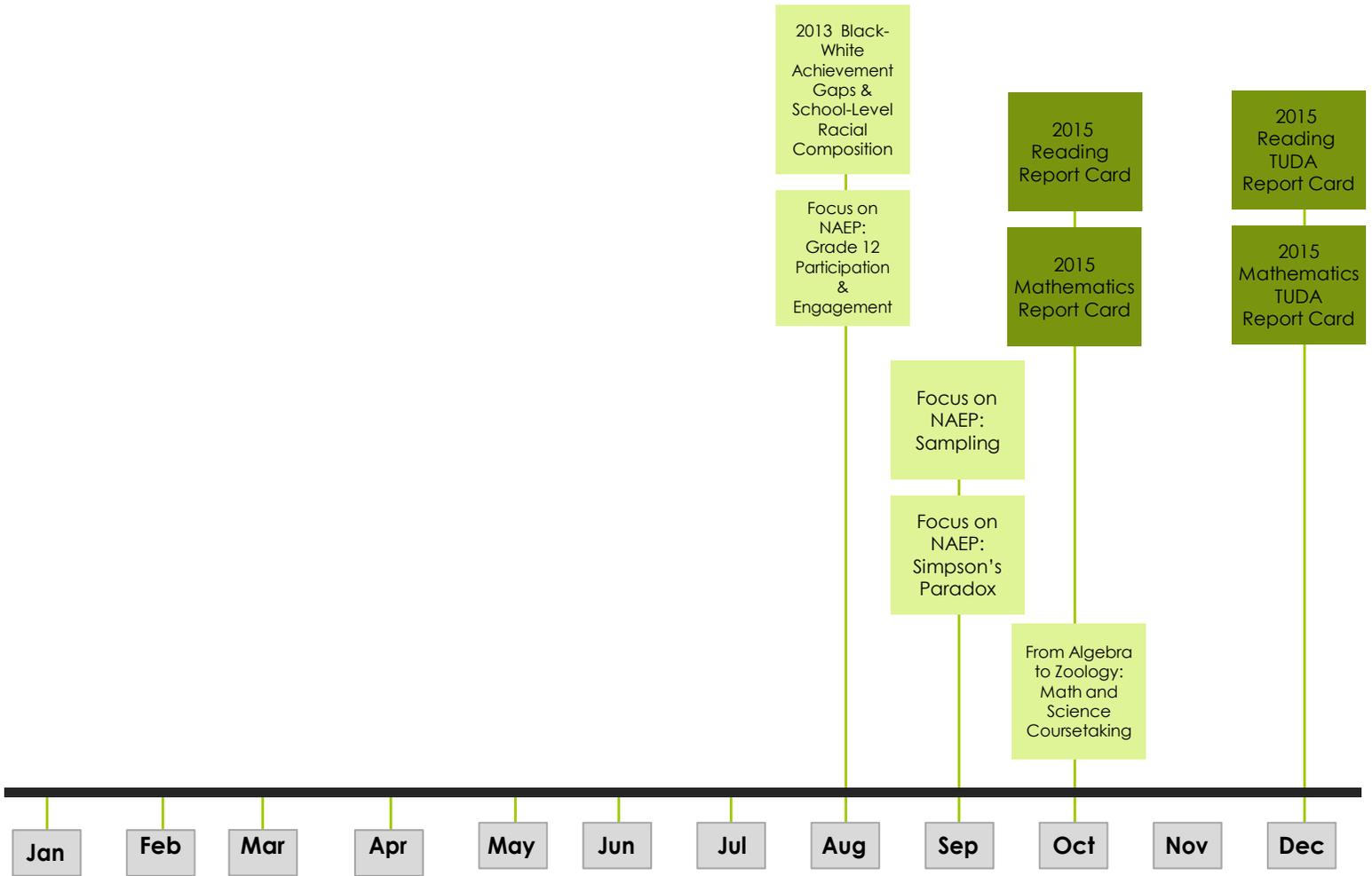
\*\* Pending approval of achievement levels

### Other NAEP Reports

<i>2013 Black-White Achievement Gaps &amp; School Racial Density Report</i>	August 2015
<i>Focus on NAEP 12th Grade Participation &amp; Engagement</i>	August 2015
<i>Focus on NAEP: Sampling</i>	September 2015
<i>Focus on NAEP: Simpsons Paradox</i>	September 2015
<i>From Algebra to Zoology: How Well Do Students Report Mathematics and Science Course Taking?</i>	October 2015
<i>NAEP Grade 8 Black Male Students Through The Lens of the National Assessment of Educational Progress</i>	March 2016
<i>Focus on NAEP: Grade 12 Black Male Students</i>	July 2016

2015

# NCES Assessment Data Release Timeline

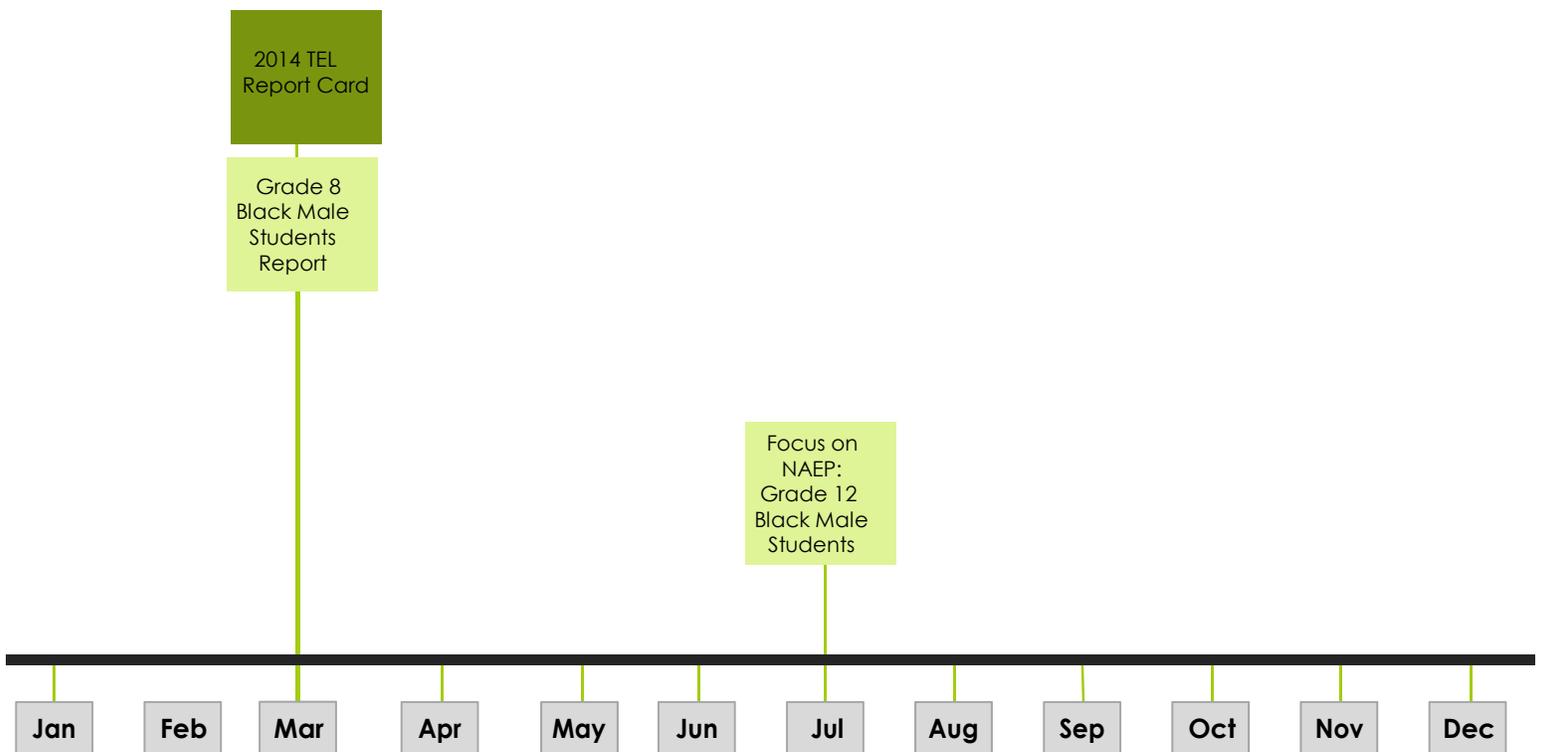


Legend:

- NAEP Report Cards
- Other NAEP Reports
- International Reports

# 2016

## NCES Assessment Data Release Timeline



### LEGEND

-  NAEP Report Cards
-  Other NAEP Reports
-  International Reports

## Releases in 2015

- 2013 Black-White Achievement Gap and School-Level Racial Composition
- Focus on NAEP: 12<sup>th</sup> Grade Participation & Engagement
- Focus on NAEP: Sampling
- Focus on NAEP: Simpson's Paradox
- From Algebra to Zoology: How Well Do Students Report Mathematics and Science Coursetaking?
- 2015 Reading National and State Report Card
- 2015 Mathematics National and State Report Card
- 2015 Reading TUDA Report Card
- 2015 Mathematics TUDA Report Card

## Releases in 2016

- NAEP Grade 8 Black Male Students Through the Lens of the National Assessment of Educational Progress
- 2014 Technology & Engineering Literacy Report Card
- Focus on NAEP: Grade 12 Black Male Students

# Assessment Data Collection Schedule 2015

- **NAEP 2015:** Mathematics, Reading, and Science: Grades 4 and 8
- **NAEP 2015:** Mathematics, Reading, and Science Pilot Technology-Based Assessments: Grades 4 and 8
- **PIRLS 2016:** Reading Field Test: Grade 4
- **TIMSS 2015:** Mathematics and Science: Grades 4 and 8
- **TIMSS 2015:** Advanced Mathematics and Physics: Grade 12