

Summary of the National Assessment Governing Board's Development of the Strategic Vision Draft —August 2016—

The National Assessment Governing Board began its Strategic Planning Initiative (Initiative) by developing a framework to set priorities and goals. The Strategic Planning Framework was unanimously approved by the Board on August 8, 2015, concluding Phase I of the Initiative. At the August 2015 meeting, the Board met in small cross-committee groups to develop an initial list of activities the Board could accomplish within five years to achieve its priorities specified in the Strategic Planning Framework. These conversations formed the basis for the first draft of the Strategic Plan.¹

Upon approval of the Framework, Chair Mazany asked Vice Chair Lucille Davy to lead Phase II of the Initiative to guide the Board's development of its Strategic Plan. At the Board's November 2015 meeting, Vice Chair Davy led the Governing Board in its first plenary discussion of the Draft Strategic Plan Activities document.

The Board's plan for Phase II includes soliciting feedback from external education stakeholders to inform the Strategic Plan. The Board hired a consultant, Jim Kohlmoos, to conduct conversations with 22 individuals who are respected education leaders, familiar with NAEP, and represent a diverse range of perspectives to generate ideas for the Strategic Plan. In addition, the staff discussed the priorities and Draft Strategic Plan Activities document with the Board's joint Policy Task Force with the Council of Chief State School Officers, representing state assessment experts. The external feedback was prepared for the Board's consideration at its March 2016 meeting in a plenary session where Jim Kohlmoos participated.²

At the May 2016 meeting, the Governing Board engaged in a detailed discussion of the revised draft Strategic Plan. The Board met first in small, cross-committee groups and then as the full Board in a plenary session. What emerged from the May 2016 meeting was a call for a significantly revised strategic document that would focus purely on the Board's work and be an inspiring, succinct, and effective public communications tool.

Chair Mazany tasked the Executive Committee to revise the draft for discussion at the August 2016 Board meeting. The Executive Committee members were highly engaged in its June and July teleconference meetings. As a result, the May 2016 draft has transformed into the now-called "Strategic Vision" draft. In addition to the Executive Committee's work, the draft Strategic Vision also went through numerous rounds of Board staff review and reflects feedback from NCES.

At the August 2016 meeting, Board members are asked to review the Strategic Vision draft with a focus on ensuring the draft comprehensively includes all of the initiatives the Board wants to pursue.

The August 2016 meeting agenda is organized to provide Board members the opportunity to discuss the draft in small, cross-committee groups prior to the plenary session. It is the Board's expectation that the Strategic Vision will be ready for action at the November 2016 meeting. Upon approval of the Strategic Vision, the Board will conclude Phase II of the Initiative. Phase III is the final stage to implement the vision.

¹An overview of the Strategic Planning Initiative and the Strategic Planning Framework are available here:
<https://www.nagb.org/content/members/assets/documents/meetings/board-meetings/2015/2015-11/15-strategic-planning-initiative-update.pdf>

² A summary of the feedback provided for the March 2016 meeting is available here:
<https://www.nagb.org/content/members/assets/documents/meetings/board-meetings/2016/2016-03/10-strategic-planning-initiative.pdf>



STRATEGIC VISION

DISCUSSION DRAFT

August 5, 2016

Overview

The Nation's Report Card is the largest nationally representative, continuing evaluation of the condition of education in the United States and has served as a national yardstick of student achievement since 1969. Through the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), The Nation's Report Card informs the public about what America's students know and can do in various subject areas, and compares achievement data over time and among student demographic groups. The assessment provides objective information on student performance to policymakers, educators, and the public at the national, state, and urban district levels. It has served an essential role in evaluating the condition and progress of American education for more than four decades.

The independent, bipartisan National Assessment Governing Board was created by Congress in 1988 to set policy guidelines for The Nation's Report Card. In overseeing The Nation's Report Card, the Governing Board identifies subjects to be tested, determines the content and achievement levels for each assessment, approves all test questions, and takes steps to improve the form, reporting, and use of results. The Governing Board also informs the public about The Nation's Report Card by communicating its results to a wide range of stakeholders including policymakers, educators, researchers, the media, and the general public. The Governing Board partners with the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), which administers the NAEP program, to accomplish this work. By law, The Nation's Report Card is expressly prohibited from influencing state and local curriculum or instruction and from reporting individual student or school results. Therefore, the program maintains its reputation as an independent, low stakes assessment providing valuable and trustworthy information to the country.

The Nation's Report Card provides the country with the tools to measure student progress in achieving the knowledge and skills necessary for success as citizens in a democratic society and a rapidly changing world. This allows the nation to learn where more work must be done to improve learning among all students. NAEP was established to answer the important question: “How are our nation's students doing?” to which we add a second question: “How can NAEP provide information about how our students are doing in the most innovative, informative, impactful ways?” Through NAEP, the Governing Board seeks to answer these questions by creating the following Strategic Vision to guide its work through the year 2020.

The Governing Board will increase the value of The Nation's Report Card as a resource to impact student achievement by continuing to innovate the form and content of NAEP and expand its use and dissemination.

INFORM

The National Assessment Governing Board will increase stakeholders' awareness of The Nation's Report Card's wealth of information (such as results, contextual variables, items, measurement innovations, frameworks, studies, etc.) and will facilitate stakeholders' uses of NAEP in appropriate and meaningful ways.

1. Strengthen and expand partnerships to promote awareness and use of NAEP results and other resources.
2. Increase opportunities to link NAEP to other assessments and data sources, including state, national and international student assessments.
3. Expand the availability, utility, and use of NAEP resources, in part by creating new resources targeted to stakeholders' needs and promoting research to inform education policy initiatives.
4. Promote sustained dissemination and use of NAEP information beyond Report Card releases and for multiple audiences.

INNOVATE

The National Assessment Governing Board will keep The Nation's Report Card at the forefront of measuring student achievement—both in its form and content—through implementation of the following strategies.

1. Use flexible approaches to update NAEP subject area frameworks to support the Board's duties to both measure the changing expectations and requirements for students and maintain trend to report on educational progress.
2. Continue improving the content, analysis, and reporting of NAEP contextual variables by considering the relevance and sensitivity of the questions; highlighting meaningful context in the data; and enhancing the reporting of these data.
3. Research policy and technical implications related to the future of NAEP Long-Term Trend assessments in reading and mathematics.
4. Develop policy approaches to ensure the NAEP Assessment Schedule matches the Board's policy priorities based on the nation's evolving needs and NAEP's funding.
5. Explore the feasibility of developing new approaches to measuring the complex skills required for transition to postsecondary education and career.

IMPACT

The National Assessment Governing Board will pursue all of the strategies identified under the Inform and Innovate priorities to increase the impact of The Nation’s Report Card. Together, these strategies form the focus of the Governing Board’s work to inform and influence educational progress. This Strategic Vision will guide Board decisions about which initiatives must be continued, ceased, or commenced in response to new opportunities and the ever-changing external environment.

Conclusion

The Governing Board seeks for The Nation’s Report Card to be used as a resource to prepare students for their future and will continually improve it to deliver on this commitment. An essential role of the Governing Board is to safeguard public trust in NAEP’s measurement of our nation’s elementary and secondary students’ academic achievement. The Nation’s Report Card provides our country with information to understand the opportunities, challenges, and trends in our decentralized system of education. When there are discussions about student achievement, NAEP is often relied upon as a trusted source of information.

The educational landscape of the 21st century demands increased academic rigor, greater technological sophistication, improved civic participation, and expanded global perspectives for all students. In this time of rapid and accelerating change, it is essential for The Nation’s Report Card to propel innovation to ensure NAEP’s leadership role and to address the challenges of improving student achievement, while maintaining its timeless promise to serve as the constant and unassailable measure of student achievement for our nation.