Briefings: CCSSO and the Governing Board/CCSSO Policy Task Force

CCSSO Executive Director Chris Minnich will provide an update to the Board on CCSSO's work and Shelley Loving-Ryder, Chair of the Governing Board/CCSSO Policy Task Force, will update Governing Board members on the Task Force's recent discussions and concerns. Attached is an overview of the purpose and activities of the Task Force, along with discussion points from their 2016 meetings.

Chris Minnich
Executive Director, Council of Chief State School Officers

Chris Minnich was appointed Executive Director of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) in December, 2012. As Executive Director, Chris has ushered in a new strategic plan in which CCSSO is committed to making sure all students participating in our public education system - regardless of background - graduate prepared for college, careers, and life.

Chris first joined CCSSO in 2008 as part of the standards program. In 2009, he assumed the role of Strategic Initiative Director of Standards, Assessment and Accountability, where he facilitated the state-led Common Core State Standards Initiative resulting in 45 states and the District of Columbia voluntarily adopting the Common Core State Standards in English language arts and Mathematics. In 2010, Chris became the Senior Membership Director at CCSSO, serving as the lead contact for all 57 of CCSSO's members.

From 2005-2008, he held multiple positions at Harcourt, all focused on the advancement and improvement of assessments. Before joining Harcourt, Chris served as the Director of Test Design and Implementation at the Oregon Department of Education.

Shelley Loving-Ryder
Assistant Superintendent, Virginia Department of Education
Chair, Governing Board/CCSSO Policy Task Force

Shelley Loving-Ryder has been the assistant superintendent for student assessment since 2001. In 2007, she was given the additional responsibility of overseeing the office of school improvement and in 2014 she became responsible for the Program Administration and Accountability unit within the Department. She currently oversees staff in the offices of test administration, scoring, and reporting; test development; school improvement; and federal program administration and accountability. Prior to 2001, she worked in various capacities with the assessment unit, including serving as director, managing both criterion-referenced and norm-referenced testing programs, managing the development of tests in mathematics, reading and writing, and developing and implementing rubrics used to score open-ended items. During her tenure as assistant superintendent, she has led Virginia's transition from paper and pencil testing to one of the most extensive online testing programs in the country. Most recently, she has led an initiative to move Virginia's testing program to a computer adaptive testing model.

National Assessment Governing Board
Council of Chief State School Officers
Policy Task Force

Overview

The Task Force consists of 12 high-level state education agency staff members selected for their expertise and interest in assessment, and geographic representation of the nation. As part of the Board's continuing outreach efforts the Governing Board contracted with the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) to form this Task Force charged with providing state feedback and recommendations to the Board on NAEP policy areas and projects. This partnership continues to be important to the Board's work. The first contract was in 2007, and annual renewals provide ongoing support for the project.

Task Force members include:

- 1 chief state school officer
- 5 deputy superintendents
- 3 associate superintendents of accountability and assessment
- 3 public information officers

The Task Force convenes for two in-person meetings and four WebEx meetings annually. Beyond the Task Force meetings, periodically members address their peers on the group's purpose and activities, including briefings to state chiefs and assessment directors at conferences convened by CCSSO as well as panel presentations at the annual CCSSO National Conference on Student Assessment.

Policy Issues

During the Task Force's 51 meetings to date, they have addressed a number of key policy issues:

- NAEP reporting process
- Inclusion and accommodations
- NAEP schedule of assessments
- NAEP 12th grade preparedness
- NAEP contextual questions
- Common Core State Standards and Assessments
- Misuse and misinterpretation of NAEP data
- International benchmarking
- Future of NAEP initiatives
- Assessment literacy initiative
- NAEP digital-based assessment transition
- Strategic planning initiative
- NAEP Testing Time
- Research with NAEP Data
- NAEP Achievement Levels

Task Force members have provided important input on these NAEP topics and have made significant contributions in related areas.

In 2016, the Task Force addressed the following topics:

- Strategic Planning Initiative
- NAEP Reporting Process
- NAEP Testing Time
- NAEP Digital-Based Assessment Transition
- The June 2016 Task Force Session at the CCSSO Annual National Conference on Student Assessment, and Issues Prompted from the Discussion
- Research with NAEP Data
- NAEP Achievement Levels

The following pages provide a compilation of discussion points for each of these topics, summarizing Task Force input on topics addressed since their last briefing to the Board in November 2015. Task Force Vice Chair Shelley Loving-Ryder will brief the Board on March 3, 2017 to highlight key issues from the Task Force's recent discussions.

Policy Task Force Members (2016-2017)

Shelley Loving-Ryder
Task Force Chair
Assistant Superintendent,
Student Assessment and School Improvement
Virginia Department of Education

Nate Olson,
Task Force Vice Chair
Communications Manager
Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

Kim Benton
Chief Academic Officer,
Deputy State Superintendent
Mississippi Department of Education

Michelle Center
Director,
Assessment Development & Administration
California Department of Education

Joy Hofmeister
State Superintendent of Public Instruction
Oklahoma State Department of Education

Venessa Keesler
Deputy Superintendent
Michigan Department of Education

Abe Krisst
Assessment Bureau Chief
Connecticut Department of Education

Paul Leather
Deputy Commissioner
New Hampshire Department of Education

Michael Sibley
Director of Communications
Alabama Department of Education

Michael Thompson
Deputy State Superintendent
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Joyce Zurkowski
Executive Director, Student Assessment
Colorado Department of Education

Governing Board CCSSO Policy Task Force

TIMELINE OF PREVIOUS TASK FORCE DISCUSSION TOPICS*

Topic #	TOPICS ADDRESSED	STATUS
1.	NAEP Reporting Process	Addresses reporting NAEP results, including initial releases. In April 2016, the Task Force discussed the NAEP Technology and Engineering Literacy (TEL) release activities and new NAEP Report Card features.
2.	NAEP Inclusion and Accommodations	Addresses NAEP inclusion policies, covering reporting and assessment administrations. In February 2015, the Task Force to discussed the assessment of English Language Learners.
3.	NAEP Schedule of Assessments	Provides periodic opportunities for Task Force feedback on the NAEP Schedule of Assessments.
4.	Grade 12 NAEP	Covers the grade 12 NAEP assessment, including the Board's research on academic preparedness for college and job training. The Task Force's last discussions in 2013 centered on preparedness research.
5.	NAEP Reading Trend Line	Addressed policy and reporting issues from updates to the NAEP Reading Assessment Framework. This initiative's discussion finished in 2008.
6.	NAEP Contextual Questions	Examines implications of changes to NAEP student survey questionnaires and related policies and initiatives, such as producing "focused reports" on NAEP contextual data. The Task Force's 2015 discussions addressed reporting and usage of NAEP contextual data.
7.	Common Core State Standards and Assessments	Examines the role of NAEP assessments with consortia assessments coming online. Latest focused Task Force discussion was in 2014.
8.	Misuse and Misinterpretation of NAEP Data	Addresses the issue of misuse and misinterpretation of NAEP data. The Task Force last addressed this topic in February 2015, while it considered the Board's assessment literacy discussions.
9.	International Benchmarking	Addresses what NAEP can report in terms of international comparisons. The Task Force has not discussed this for several years.
10.	Board Initiatives on Raising Achievement and Closing Gaps	Addressed initiatives led by former Board Chair David Driscoll to target achievement gaps and the policy context. Task Force members discussed these initiatives several years ago, during implementation.
11.	Future of NAEP Initiatives	Addressed recommendations from the January 2012 NCES summit on NAEP's future role and potential advances for the assessment. The Task Force provided feedback in 2012.
12.	Assessment Literacy Initiative	Addresses a Board initiative to increase the assessment literacy of parents, students, and policymakers about assessment in general, including the role of NAEP. The Task Force provided feedback on key planning documents in draft form.

* Shaded topics have been completed.

13. NAEP Digital-Based Assessment Transition	Addresses policy and reporting issues related to the DBA transition's implementation, and maintaining NAEP's trends. In April 2016, the Task Force provided NAEP DBA issues.
14. Strategic Planning Initiative	Addresses the Strategic Planning Initiative led by Governing Board Chair Terry Mazany and related initiatives. In February 2016, the Task Force discussed state perspectives on this strategic plan.
15. NAEP Testing Time	Addresses national trends in testing time and state feedback on NAEP testing time. In April 2016, the Task Force first discussed this issue of NAEP Testing Time, with emphasis on NAEP DBA.
16. Research with NAEP Data	This is a new topic, started at the October 11, 2016 meeting.
17. NAEP Achievement Levels	This is also a new topic, started at the December 9, 2016 meeting.

* Shaded topics have been completed.

Task Force Discussion Points from 2016 Meetings

Executive Summaries from Each Meeting

February 9, 2016 WebEx Meeting

Topic #14: Strategic Planning Initiative

The first phase of the Governing Board Strategic Planning Initiative (now complete) was to identify the top priorities for the Board. The Board unanimously agreed to the following priorities: (1) Develop messaging strategies to improve understanding of NAEP within the context of high-quality assessments generally; (2) Increase efficiencies to effectively use NAEP funds; (3) Innovate assessment design to keep NAEP on the forefront of measuring student achievement; and (4) Strengthen external partnerships to promote and support the resources NAEP offers. The Board has now begun the second phase of the Strategic Planning Initiative – development of a strategic plan centered on the identified four Board priorities, and collecting input from key stakeholders, including the Task Force.

Task Force Discussion

Considering current and prospective Board activities, the Task Force expressed support for:

- Convening a panel of NAEP State Coordinators to discuss how states have used NAEP data for initiatives.
- Maintaining the Long-Term Trend NAEP assessment to provide the public with the long-view of educational progress and decline for the nation. The Task Force also supports NAEP trend results generally.
- Maintaining periodic assessment of a broad range of subjects beyond Reading and Mathematics, given that NAEP is the only nationally representative measure in these subject areas.
- State-level results, NAEP assessments with state-by-state comparisons, are more useful for state-level initiatives.
- Caution in steps to expand communications to parents and teachers because such communications may stretch beyond the primary purpose of NAEP, e.g., resulting in the possible misinterpretation that teachers should be teaching to the NAEP assessment.

Considering possible new activities, the Task Force suggested that the Governing Board:

- Expand efforts to communicate what NAEP results mean, e.g., having a gallery of infographics and informational videos on how NAEP can be helpful. This will help make NAEP data releases more meaningful and accessible.
- Produce infographics presenting alignment information on how NAEP relates to other assessments.

- Provide a high school measure that is useful for states, e.g., a NAEP benchmark aligned to college and career readiness or an assessment administered before grade 12.
- Create more NAEP materials that states could use in their own communications to emphasize the importance of NAEP as an external reference and to explain why NAEP and state assessments may differ in what they measure.
- Link international assessments with NAEP to assure the continued relevance of the NAEP program and to provide states with additional useful benchmarks.

April 5, 2016 In-Person Meeting

Topic #1: NAEP Reporting Process

Mary Crovo reviewed the NAEP Technology and Engineering Literacy (TEL) assessment and described events for the upcoming release of the results on May 17, 2016 to be held at the Michigan Science Center in Detroit. TEL assesses an array of skills and a broad definition of technology in a digital-based assessment composed largely of scenario-based tasks. The TEL release will include four scenario-based tasks from the assessment and webcast panel discussions with industry representatives and stakeholders.

Task Force Discussion

The Task Force suggested the May 17, 2016 release of initial results from the NAEP Technology and Engineering Literacy (TEL) assessment should emphasize:

- *Problem-solving skills.* It would be helpful to emphasize the way TEL assessment addresses skills that can be applied across disciplines and how these skills relate to college and career readiness.
- *Student engagement.* The level of engagement of the students who took the assessment is newsworthy.
- *TEL content.* Because the assessment is about a broad set of skills, providing specific examples will prevent inaccurate assumptions, which are based only on the title of the assessment.
- *TEL task demos.* Conduct demonstrations of the tasks, to show the uniqueness of the assessment.
- *Policy relevance.* Provide guidance on how to use the results, for actionable policy decisions from the TEL release.

Topic #15: NAEP Testing Time

The Task Force discussed national trends in testing time and state feedback on NAEP testing time. Evidence to date has indicated students did not have an issue with NAEP testing time, but school administrators were impacted.

Task Force Discussion

The Task Force noted the following concerns on testing time in relation to NAEP:

- *Perception of burden.* The perception of NAEP assessments as increasing the burden on students appears to mostly come from administrators in response to the increased amount of time for assessments.

- *Testing time increases with DBA.* Digital-based assessments are more disruptive to a school schedule versus paper and pencil assessments, in terms of the administration logistics.
- *Timing of NAEP administrations.* Timing of NAEP administrations impacts state assessments, i.e., overlap or closeness of state testing to NAEP testing in the school year.
- *Communication of selection.* A suggestion from the Task Force is to explain why some districts are routinely selected and to work to increase understanding around the sampling selection process.

Topic #13: NAEP Digital-Based Assessment Transition

NAEP is committed to maintaining trend throughout the DBA transition. The 2017 NAEP Reading and Mathematics assessments will be given on both digital platforms and paper and pencil to conduct bridge studies. NAEP digital-based assessments were designed to capitalize on the interactive features of digital platforms. NAEP is considering an eventual transition to using school-based equipment, or a combination of school and NAEP equipment.

Task Force Discussion

The Task Force suggested the following strategies for the NAEP DBA transition:

- *Explain advantages and differences of DBA.* Items used in digital based assessments measure learning in a different way and NAEP could explain why this is helpful and important. For instance, DBA items are designed to more closely match instructional practice and provide easier access to accommodations. Messaging around the DBA roll-out is important.
- *Provide training for administrators in trouble-shooting*. Provide directions, instructions, and training for administrators for more troubleshooting of technology glitches on site
- *Consider concerns related to using school-based devices*. Comparability across devices and security of data might become an issue with the move to school-based equipment.
- *Keep NAEP trends as a high priority.* Continue the current focus of maintaining NAEP trends during the digital conversions in reading and math.

August 24, 2016 WebEx Meeting

The June 2016 Task Force Session at the CCSSO Annual National Conference on Student Assessment

The Task Force members Nate Olson, Michele Walker, and Joyce Zurkowski presented at CCSSO's National Conference on Student Assessment (NCSA) in June 2016 to gather information on state concerns regarding NAEP, via several discussion questions for the audience. The Task Force will continue to gather feedback in other forums with state agency peers.

Task Force Discussion

The Task Force noted issues raised by the NCSA session:

- *Interaction between the NAEP State Coordinator and the state assessment director*. There are varying degrees of interaction between NAEP State Coordinators and state assessment directors. NCES communicates directly with NAEP State Coordinators, engaging them in workshops to ensure assessment directors are updated about NAEP information.
- *Communication on information and tools provided by NCES to schools*. The Task Force discussed NAEP tools and information provided by NCES that are potentially beneficial at the school level and ways to communicate the information to schools and throughout state education agencies. In the past, NCES sponsored workshops and collaboration efforts between NAEP coordinators and various state agency staff, ensuring staff have access and gathering feedback.

Prioritizing Issues for Future Discussion

The Task Force suggested several areas for additional discussion at future meetings, and for Board consideration.

- *Increased connection to on-going research*. The Task Force suggested exploring how more can be done to share what NAEP data researchers are analyzing and the findings from their research. This will help to identify best practices and communicate these best practices to state education agency staff, such as state assessment directors.
- *Support for schools selected for NAEP*. The Task Force discussed whether support could be provided to schools selected for the NAEP assessment without giving an impression of favoritism or test prep. For example, there could be professional development to understand the importance of the NAEP assessment. This could help with securing participation from schools, which has been difficult for some states.
- *Increased pushback against NAEP testing*. The Task Force suggested it would be helpful to discuss the extent of pushback to NAEP testing, e.g., due to increased testing time and more schools being selected because of NAEP digital-based assessment logistics.
- *Communicating the importance of NAEP*. In considering whether there has been increased resistance from schools to participate in NAEP, the Task Force suggested further discussion in a future meeting on how to help districts and schools understand the importance and role of NAEP, and how to encourage appropriate student engagement.
- *Including research findings in initial NAEP releases.* The Task Force supported one of the suggestions from the August 2016 Board meeting research panel discussion: providing researchers early access to NAEP data so that they can do analyses and determine research findings. These findings could be released at the same time as NAEP results. Sharing more insights from research on NAEP data

assists the press and states to interpret the results, while also helping states see the importance and role of NAEP, which can address some of the school and student engagement issues noted above.

- *Extending 8th grade academic preparedness research.* The Task Force suggested the Governing Board consider a future content alignment study between NAEP and the ACT Aspire assessment. This would extend the Board's previous work in this area with the ACT Explore assessment.

October 11, 2016 In-Person Meeting

Topic # 14: Strategic Planning Initiative

After establishing priorities and extensive deliberative processes, the Board is slated to approve a Strategic Vision centered on identified Board priorities. The processes involved input from key stakeholders, including the Task Force, regarding the needs of the states in accessing NAEP information and the ways NAEP data are disseminated. The discussions resulted in two main areas of for activity, to either inform or innovate. The Task Force expressed support for the latest draft of the Board's Strategic Vision.

Task Force Suggestions

- *Use insights to build anticipation for the next release.* Help audiences make the right connections informed by evidence, especially in the off-years between NAEP data releases to create interest. This will help build anticipation on how to properly use and interpret the data for the next NAEP release, and support the field with richer and more useful insights.
- *Use simple powerful graphics.* Provide concise, clear, and creative graphics presenting information from the data.
- *Make practical connections with the results.* Connect the results to the real world, e.g., highlighting the collaboration skills students demonstrated in the NAEP Technology and Engineering Literacy and noting the relevance to career readiness.
- *Highlight the story suggested by the data.* Create a story with the data to garner interest from the public.
- *Retain NAEP as an engine for innovation.* Recognize the role NAEP plays in helping states pursue innovative assessments and item types. NAEP provides helpful information as well as a helpful forum for state leaders to compile best practices, when gathered to discuss NAEP issues.

Topic #1: NAEP Reporting Process

The 2015 NAEP Science Report Card will be released on October 27, 2016 at the National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C. The events preceding the release of the results include an embargoed webinar and a briefing on Capitol Hill.

Task Force Suggestions

- *Highlight results via the release event site.* Consider the stage craft or environment of the release in order to tell a story of the results.

- *Involve students in unpacking the results.* Involve students in the release, e.g. have a student walk the public through an item from the assessment.
- *Help states draw connections with other standards.* Note the connections between state and national science standards and alignment studies.
- *Use aspects of science instruction to unpack the results.* Highlight the current hands-on instructional practice for science instruction.
- *Publicize the results via social media.* Utilize social media to inform the public on the release, e.g., a Twitter chat around the release of the results.
- *Partner with other organizations for post-release events.* Utilize the relationship with the National Science Teachers Association to emphasize the results after the initial release.

Topic #16: Research with NAEP Data

At the Governing Board's August 2016 meeting, a panel of distinguished academic researchers suggested examining causal inference possibilities with NAEP and linkages with administrative data sets. In a separate initiative, the Board awarded a contract in late September 2016 for focused reporting to produce informational documents accessible in social media, e.g., infographics, shareable video clips, and other types of visual artifacts.

Task Force Suggestions

For General Research Initiatives with NAEP Data:

- *Exercise caution on the collection of types of data and the purpose of collecting the data.* The Task Force expressed caution in terms of contextual data collection, and suggested clearly articulating which data are collected and for what purpose. Consider in advance of the assessment what information is needed to be collected to ensure surveys reflect that.
- *Examine lessons learned from international assessments.* The Task Force suggested looking at potential lessons learned from international assessments in terms of contextual variables. They have established best practices in gathering contextual information that are useful for NAEP.

For Additional Focus Reporting Topics:

- *Examine NAEP scores relative to hands-on instructional opportunities*. The Task Force suggested examining the patterns and variations in NAEP scores, and using infographics and other resources to learn how to highlight best practices and policies that convey the importance of hands-on instruction.
- *Examine student achievement patterns for rural areas.* Present focused reporting on rural states and areas.

December 9, 2016 WebEx Meeting

Topic #17: NAEP Achievement Levels

The authorizing legislation for NAEP calls for achievement levels to be used on a trial basis until the Commissioner for Education Statistics determines, as a result of an

evaluation, that the trial status can be removed. The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) recently completed an Evaluation of the Achievement Levels for the NAEP Mathematics and Reading Assessments, and NAS briefed the Governing Board on the Evaluation findings at the November 2016 quarterly Board meeting, shortly after releasing the report. Legislation requires the Board to submit a formal response to the Evaluation to Congress. The Board and NCES will then conduct several follow-up activities.

Task Force Discussion

The Task Force noted the following recommendations and considerations from the Evaluation:

- *Prioritize intended uses and interpretations of NAEP*. States welcome having more clarity around how to use the information from NAEP. This also echoes previous Task Force recommendations for the Board to examine and clarify differences in the definition of proficient on NAEP in comparison to states' definitions of proficient.
- *Engage discussion on differences in aspirational and grade-level standards*. With many states adopting benchmarks that target college and career readiness which tend to be more aspirational compared with previous grade-level benchmarks, the Task Force noted the importance of having more policy conversations around how different these types of benchmarks are supposed to be.
- *Support more routine reviews between frameworks and standards.* In agreement with Evaluation recommendations 1 and 2, changes in frameworks and test items should require a review of achievement level descriptions and cut scores to determine if a new standard setting is required. This supports states in taking appropriate interpretations from NAEP data.
- *Connect to external measures important to states.* The Task Force supported the Evaluation recommendation to connect the meaning of NAEP results with external measures, including information about whether 8th grade students are on track to college and career readiness by the end of high school. The Task Force supported looking at how NAEP aligns with the ACT Aspire assessment, as well as other national and international assessments.
- *Explore connection between NAEP and career readiness.* The Task Force expressed interest in determining the appropriate external referents that exist for career readiness. Bringing more information to the discussions of the issue of how career and college readiness relate is valuable to states.
- *Provide guidance around scale scores.* There is confusion with the general public's understanding of scale scores partly because scale scores do not have the linear interpretations available from metrics like percentage-correct scores. More models are needed for good communication of performance level descriptors generally and their connection to student performance in terms of scale scores.