

REVISION OF FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT POLICY

According to the NAEP statute (P.L. 107-279), the Governing Board is responsible for developing assessment objectives and test specifications for each NAEP subject area. Since 1989 the Governing Board has developed assessment frameworks and specifications in 11 subjects through comprehensive, inclusive, and deliberative framework projects.

Framework update processes have prompted much recent Board discussion, reflecting the emphasis of the Board's Strategic Vision to develop framework update approaches that address evolving expectations for students along with rigorous reporting of student achievement trends. In two teleconferences of the Working Group on Framework Update Processes, for example, Board members explored interest in a proactive approach that would simultaneously preserve student achievement trends reported by NAEP while also ensuring NAEP frameworks remain up to date. The Working Group's discussions have highlighted that the current Framework Development Policy focuses primarily on developing new frameworks. With a higher number of existing NAEP frameworks now compared to when the policy was first established, more policy guidance is needed for processes to update existing frameworks.

At the May 2017 Board meeting, the ADC agreed to begin revision of the Framework Development Policy. The Committee noted that this revision is an opportunity to clarify the processes involved in framework development and updating, while also including provisions for regularly monitoring the content of frameworks. In July 2017, the Committee began discussion of the policy revision via videoconference with a plan to continue deliberation at the August 2017 Board meeting.

In this session, ADC Chair Shannon Garrison will provide an overview of revisions being considered for the Board policy on framework development and solicit Board member feedback. The current policy is attached for reference.



Adopted: May 18, 2002

National Assessment Governing Board

Framework Development

Policy Statement

It is the policy of the National Assessment Governing Board to conduct a comprehensive, inclusive, and deliberative process to determine the content and format of all subject area assessments under the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Objectives developed and adopted by the Governing Board as a result of this process shall be used to produce NAEP assessments that are valid and reliable, and that are based on widely accepted professional standards. The process shall include the active participation of educators, parents, and members of the general public. The primary result of this process shall be an assessment framework to guide NAEP development at grades 4, 8, and 12.

The Governing Board, through its Assessment Development Committee, shall carefully monitor the framework development process to ensure that all Governing Board policies are followed; that the process is comprehensive, inclusive, and deliberative; and that the final Governing Board-adopted framework, specifications, and background variables documents are congruent with the Guiding Principles, Policies, and Procedures that follow.

Introduction

Since its creation by Congress in 1988, the Governing Board has been responsible for determining the content and format of all NAEP subject area assessments. The Governing Board has carried out this important statutory responsibility by engaging a broad spectrum of educators, policymakers, business representatives, and members of the general public in developing recommendations for the knowledge and skills NAEP should assess in various grades and subject areas. From this comprehensive process, the Governing Board develops an assessment framework to outline the content and format for each NAEP subject area assessment.

Under provisions of the National Assessment of Educational Progress Authorization Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-279), Congress has authorized the Governing Board to continue its mandate for determining the content and format of NAEP assessments by requiring that:

- “the purpose [of NAEP] is to provide...a fair and accurate measurement of student academic achievement;”
- “[NAEP shall]...use widely accepted professional testing standards, objectively measure academic achievement, knowledge, and skills, and ensure that any academic assessment authorized...be tests that do not evaluate or assess personal or family beliefs and attitudes or publicly disclose personally identifiable information;”
- “[NAEP shall]...only collect information that is directly related to the appraisal of academic achievement, and to the fair and accurate presentation of such information;”
- “the Governing Board shall develop assessment objectives consistent with the requirements of this section and test specifications that produce an assessment that is valid and reliable, and are based on relevant widely accepted professional standards;”
- “the Governing Board shall have final authority on the appropriateness of all assessment items;”
- “the Governing Board shall take steps to ensure that all items selected for use in the NAEP are free from racial, cultural, gender, or regional bias and are secular, neutral, and non-ideological;” and
- “the Governing Board shall develop a process for review of the assessment which includes the active participation of teachers, curriculum specialists, local school administrators, parents, and concerned members of the public.”

Given the importance of these mandates it is incumbent upon the Governing Board, in the design, conduct, and final action on the assessment framework, to ensure that the highest standards of test development are employed. The validity of educational inferences made using NAEP data could be seriously impaired without high standards and rigorous procedures for framework development.

Historically, the task of developing the framework for a NAEP assessment has been conducted by the Governing Board through competitive procurements. It is imperative that contractors be fully informed of the Governing Board’s policy regarding framework development, so that all deliverables under the contract meet statutory requirements and are acceptable to the Governing Board. The purpose of the Policy on Framework Development, therefore, is to articulate the Guiding Principles, Policies, and Procedures that will direct the framework development process.

Each of the following Guiding Principles is accompanied by Policies and Procedures. Full implementation of this framework development policy will require the appropriate framework contractor(s), to provide assurances to the Governing Board, through the Governing Board staff, that all aspects of the Policies and Procedures for which they are responsible have been successfully completed. These assurances will be in writing, and may require supporting information prepared by the contractor and/or the Governing Board staff.

This policy complies with the documents listed below which express widely accepted technical and professional standards for test development. These standards reflect the agreement of recognized experts in the field, as well as the policy positions of major professional and technical associations concerned with educational testing.

Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing. (1999). Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and National Council on Measurement in Education.

Code of Fair Testing Practices in Education. (2004). Washington, DC: Joint Committee on Testing Practices.

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Statistical Standards, September 2002.

Guiding Principles – Framework Development

Principle 1

The Governing Board is responsible for developing an assessment framework for each NAEP subject area. The framework shall define the scope of the domain to be measured by delineating the knowledge and skills to be tested at each grade, the format of the NAEP assessment, and preliminary achievement level descriptions.

Principle 2

The Governing Board shall develop an assessment framework through a comprehensive, inclusive, and deliberative process that involves the active participation of teachers, curriculum specialists, local school administrators, parents, and members of the public.

Principle 3

The framework development process shall take into account state and local curricula and assessments, widely accepted professional standards, exemplary research, international standards and assessments, and other pertinent factors and information.

Principle 4

The Governing Board, through its Assessment Development Committee, shall closely monitor all steps in the framework development process. The result of this process shall be recommendations for Governing Board action in the form of three key documents: the assessment framework; assessment and item specifications; and background variables that relate to the subject being assessed.

Principle 5

Through the framework development process, preliminary achievement level descriptions shall be created for each grade being tested. These preliminary descriptions shall be an important consideration in the item development process and will be used to begin the achievement level setting process.

Principle 6

The specifications document shall be developed during the framework process for use by NCES and the test development contractor as the blueprint for constructing the NAEP assessment and items in a given subject area.

Principle 7

NAEP assessment frameworks and test specifications generally shall remain stable for at least 10 years.

Policies and Procedures for Guiding Principles

Principle 1

The Governing Board is responsible for developing an assessment framework for each NAEP subject area. The framework shall define the scope of the domain to be measured by delineating the knowledge and skills to be tested at each grade, the format of the NAEP assessment, and preliminary achievement level descriptions.

Policies and Procedures

1. The assessment framework shall determine the extent of the domain and the scope of the construct to be measured for each grade level in a NAEP assessment. The framework shall cover grades 4, 8, and 12, where applicable, in a given subject area. The framework shall provide information to the public and test developers on three key aspects of the assessment: a) what should be measured; b) how that domain of content is most appropriately measured in a large-scale assessment; and c) how much of the content domain, in terms of knowledge and skills, should students know and be able to do at the basic, proficient, and advanced levels.

2. More specifically, the framework shall: a) articulate the purpose and scope of the assessment; b) define the content and skills to be tested at each grade; c) define the weighting of the item pool in terms of the content and process dimensions; d) describe the format requirements of the items and the assessment; e) include preliminary achievement level descriptions for each grade at the basic, proficient, and advanced levels; and f) contain sample items for each grade to be tested.

3. The primary audience for the assessment framework shall be the general public. Technical and subject-specific terminology should be used only when necessary, and shall be defined in the body of the framework or in a glossary. Where appropriate, the framework should use tables, charts, and graphics to clearly and concisely communicate necessary information pertaining to the various assessment elements. The framework shall contain sufficient information to inform policymakers, educators, and others about the nature and scope of the assessment in a given subject area.

4. NAEP frameworks shall continue to be developed with the active participation of states. Content coverage in each subject and grade shall be broad, inclusive of content valued by states as important to measure, and reflect high aspirations for student achievement.

5. The framework shall not endorse or advocate a particular pedagogical approach to the subject area being assessed, but shall focus on important, measurable indicators of student achievement to inform the nation about what students know and are able to do. While the framework shall not endorse pedagogy, it may facilitate reporting on various types of skills essential to achievement in the grade and subject area.

6. Where appropriate, the framework shall describe additional requirements of the assessment and administrative conditions which may be unique to a given subject area. For example, this may include a brief discussion of ancillary materials, use of technology, and other conditions.

7. Special studies, if any, to be conducted as part of the assessment in a given subject area shall be described in the framework. This description shall provide an overview of the purpose and rationale for the study, the nature of the student sample(s), and a discussion of the instrument and administration procedures.

8. Following Governing Board adoption, the framework shall be widely disseminated in print and electronic versions.

Principle 2

The Governing Board shall develop an assessment framework through a comprehensive, inclusive, and deliberative process that involves the active participation of teachers, curriculum specialists, local school administrators, parents, and concerned members of the public.

Policies and Procedures

1. The guiding statute calls for the “active participation” of various NAEP audiences in the framework development process. Because this is a public endeavor it is important that all major constituents are represented in a fair and open process. The Governing Board’s framework development process shall be comprehensive in its scope and outreach; inclusive in its involvement of broad-based panel members and reviewers; and deliberative in considering all viewpoints and debating all pertinent issues in formulating the content and design of a NAEP assessment.

2. The framework development committees shall be constituted in such a way as to be representative in terms of gender, race/ethnicity, region of the country, and viewpoints regarding the content of the assessment under development. In addition, many different views shall be sought from various segments of the population in the review of materials and in soliciting public input and feedback. The level of “active participation” shall be documented in a report of the framework development process.

3. The framework development environment shall be open, balanced, and even-handed. To the greatest extent possible, the project deliberations will be protected from inappropriate influences of various interest groups. All issues and agendas shall be considered in a careful, objective, and respectful manner by all project committees and the Governing Board.

4. Prior to implementation of the framework development process, the contractor shall identify procedures that will be used to clarify positions and views, roles and responsibilities of all project staff and committees, as well as how the process will work toward reaching an understanding of the scope, content, and design of the framework.

5. While the NAEP statute no longer requires a “national consensus process,” the Governing Board will develop frameworks through involvement of broadly representative groups and individuals with diverse viewpoints, open discussion and deliberation of issues, and careful consideration, and revision when necessary, of framework recommendations prior to final Governing Board action. The Governing Board shall make the final decision on a framework and shall not delegate decisions on the content and format of NAEP assessments.

6. It is a requirement throughout the framework development process to obtain reviews of draft materials and general public input from a wide audience of stakeholders, including content experts (outside of the framework committees), curriculum and assessment staff of state and local education agencies, users of assessment data, those who are employed in the specific content area under consideration, policymakers, parents, and the general public. The constituency of “users and consumers” mentioned above may include scientists, mathematicians, journalists, civic leaders, authors, and others.

7. Written summaries of all hearings, forums, surveys, and committee meetings shall be made available to the framework committees in a timely manner, so that such information can best inform the decisionmaking process. The Assessment Development Committee and the Governing Board shall receive written documentation and regular briefings on all project activities at their quarterly meetings.

8. Framework development panels shall consist of a policy oversight or steering committee comprised of representatives from key policy groups, business and industry, content experts, educators at the state and district level, users and consumers, parents, and the general public. At least 30 percent of this committee shall be composed of users and consumers in the subject area under consideration. Both public and private schools shall be represented on this committee.

9. The steering committee will receive the project charge directly from the Governing Board, and shall formulate guidelines for the conduct of the framework development process, consistent with statutory requirements and Governing Board policy. This oversight committee shall monitor the progress of the development work via meetings, teleconferences, and electronic communication. The final recommended documents from the project shall be reviewed by the oversight panel for recommendation to the Governing Board at the completion of the deliberative process.

10. Development of the project documents shall be the responsibility of a project planning committee composed of content experts, educators at the state and district level, curriculum specialists, university professors, policymakers, users and consumers, business representatives, and members of the public. Classroom teachers shall be well represented on this committee at all grade levels designated for the assessment under development. Teachers, administrators, and curriculum specialists shall be drawn from schools across the nation, including individuals who work with students from high-

poverty and low-performing schools. Both public and private schools shall be represented on this committee.

11. The planning committee shall carefully consider the charge from the Governing Board and guidelines set forth by the project oversight committee in developing the assessment framework. The committee shall carry out its work through meetings, conference calls, and electronic communication. It shall be responsible for developing the major deliverables of the project: the framework, specifications, and background variables documents, under the direction of project staff.

12. Where appropriate, a third committee of technical experts shall be involved in the framework development process. This committee shall consist of psychometricians, state testing experts, and individuals involved in developing assessments in the content area under consideration. It shall be this panel's responsibility to uphold the highest technical standards for development of the NAEP framework and specifications. The committee shall respond to technical issues raised during the process and provide guidance to project staff and the project committees on technical aspects of the assessment specifications. As with the steering and planning committees, the technical panel will meet in-person, via teleconference, and through electronic communication.

13. The preceding Policies and Procedures for conducting the framework development process constitute one model of committee structure. A prospective contractor may propose an alternative plan; however, the committees must be broad-based and representative of the type of groups and individuals identified above.

Principle 3

The framework development process shall take into account state and local curricula and assessments, widely accepted professional standards, exemplary research, international standards and assessments, and other pertinent factors and information.

Policies and Procedures

1. The NAEP framework development process shall be informed by a broad, balanced, and inclusive set of factors. The framework shall maintain a balance between curriculum reform in a field, exemplary research regarding cognitive development and instruction, and the nation's future needs and desirable levels of achievement. This delicate balance between "what is" and "what should be" is the essence of the NAEP framework development process.

2. The framework development process shall begin by thoroughly identifying major policy and assessment issues in the content area, to be summarized in an issues paper. The primary audiences for the issues paper are the Governing Board and the project committees. Designed to serve as a springboard for committee deliberations and framework development, this paper shall elaborate on major issues providing both pros and cons, summarize the research, and cite trends in state standards and assessments.

3. The framework panels shall consider a wide variety of resources as the deliberations proceed, including but not limited to curriculum guides and assessments developed by states and local districts, widely accepted professional standards, scientific research, other types of exemplary research studies in the literature, key reports having significant national and international interest, international standards and assessments, other assessment instruments in the content area, and prior NAEP frameworks, if available.

4. In considering the relative importance of these sources of information in developing the framework, the project committees shall consider the charge as delivered by the Governing Board, the role and purpose of NAEP in informing the public about student achievement, constraints of a large-scale assessment, technical assessment standards, issues of burden and cost-effectiveness in designing the assessment, and other factors unique to the content area.

Principle 4

The Governing Board, through its Assessment Development Committee, shall closely monitor all steps in the framework development process. The result of this process shall be recommendations for Governing Board action in the form of three key documents: the assessment framework; assessment and item specifications; and background variables that relate to the subject being assessed.

Policies and Procedures

1. When the framework development process is conducted for the Governing Board by an outside contractor, the process shall be managed in an efficient, cost-effective manner, shall be completed in a timely fashion, and shall adhere to sound measurement practice.

2. The Governing Board's Assessment Development Committee (ADC) shall be responsible for monitoring the framework development process that results in recommendations to the Governing Board on the content and format of each NAEP assessment. Direction will be provided to the framework development contractor by the ADC and the Governing Board, via Governing Board staff, to assure compliance with the NAEP law, Governing Board policies, Department of Education and government-wide regulations, and requirements of the framework contract.

3. The performance of work for the framework development process shall be subject to the technical direction of a Governing Board staff member, designated as the Contracting Officer's Representative. This individual shall work under the guidance of the ADC and the Governing Board during all phases of the framework process.

4. During the framework process, the Governing Board shall review work-in-progress and make modifications as necessary. The Governing Board shall receive regular updates on the framework development process at its quarterly meetings. Updates

shall be provided to the ADC as necessary during the framework development process via in-person meetings, teleconferences, printed material, and electronic communication.

5. At the conclusion of the framework development process, the Governing Board will take final action on the recommended framework, specifications, and background variables documents. This action may result in modifications to one or more of the documents, which will be incorporated prior to dissemination.

6. The framework process shall also result in recommendations to the Governing Board on background variables to be collected from students, teachers, and schools related to a particular subject area. Such variables shall be related to academic achievement and to the fair and accurate presentation of achievement information. Background variables shall meet criteria for being secular, neutral, and non-ideological, as stated in the Governing Board's Policy on NAEP Item Development and Review, and will not assess personal or family beliefs and attitudes, or publicly disclose personally identifiable information. In recommending background variables, the Governing Board's Policy on Collecting and Reporting Background Data shall also be followed. Recommendations on background variables shall take into account burden, cost, quality of the data to be obtained, and other factors.

7. Following adoption by the Governing Board, the final framework, specifications, and background variables documents shall be provided to NCES at least 12 months prior to pilot or field testing, except in the case of unforeseen circumstances related to congressional action, budget limitations, or other extraordinary events.

Principle 5

Through the framework development process, preliminary achievement level descriptions shall be created for each grade being tested. These preliminary descriptions shall be an important consideration in the item development process and will be used to begin the achievement level setting process.

Policies and Procedures

1. The framework panels shall draft preliminary descriptions for basic, proficient, and advanced performance for all applicable grades in the content area under development. The panels shall use the Governing Board's policy definitions for basic, proficient, and advanced achievement in developing the preliminary descriptions. The descriptions shall provide statements of what students should know and be able to do, as derived from the content and process dimensions of the assessment at each grade.

2. The preliminary descriptions shall be included in the framework draft that is widely circulated for public review and comment, to obtain broad input on the draft descriptions prior to Governing Board action on the framework.

3. Once the Governing Board has approved the framework document, NCES shall be provided with the preliminary achievement levels descriptions so that these definitions can guide development of NAEP test questions.

4. The preliminary descriptions approved by the Governing Board shall also be provided to the achievement levels contractor to begin the level-setting process.

Principle 6

The specifications document shall be developed during the framework process for use by NCES and the test development contractor as the blueprint for constructing the NAEP assessment and items in a given subject area.

Policies and Procedures

1. The assessment and item specifications shall produce an assessment that is valid and reliable, and based on relevant widely accepted professional standards. The specifications shall also be consistent with Governing Board policies regarding NAEP design such as booklet and block (item sets within a booklet) structure, test administration conditions, and accommodations for special needs students.

2. The primary audience for the specifications, or assessment blueprint, shall be the contractor(s) responsible for developing the assessment and test questions. The specifications shall be written in sufficient detail so that item writers can develop high-quality questions based on the framework objectives for grades 4, 8, and 12, where applicable, in a given subject area.

3. The specifications shall include, but not be limited to: a) detailed descriptions of the content and process dimensions, including the weighting of those dimensions in the pool of questions at each grade; b) types of items; c) guidelines for stimulus material; d) types of response formats; e) scoring procedures; f) preliminary achievement level descriptions; g) administration conditions; h) description of ancillary or additional materials, if any; i) considerations for special populations; j) detailed information on special studies, if any; k) a substantial number and range of sample items with scoring guidelines for each grade level; and l) any unique requirements for the given subject area.

4. The specifications shall evolve from the framework document, and be carefully reviewed by technical experts involved in the process, prior to submission to the Governing Board.

Principle 7

NAEP assessment frameworks and test specifications generally shall remain stable for at least 10 years.

Policies and Procedures

1. Development of a new subject area framework shall be guided by the schedule of NAEP assessments adopted by the Governing Board.

2. In deciding when to conduct a new framework development process for an existing NAEP assessment, the Board shall consider factors such as exemplary research, curriculum and assessment reform, widely accepted professional standards, implications for existing trendlines, cost and technical issues, and other factors.

3. In rare circumstances, such as where significant changes in curricula have occurred, the Governing Board may make changes to assessment frameworks and specifications before 10 years have elapsed.

4. In those subjects and grades for which NAEP would provide confirmatory evidence about progress in achievement on state tests, the Governing Board shall revise frameworks only when the rationale for doing so is compelling.