

# Reflections on Recommendations from the National Academies’ Committee on Developing Indicators of Educational Equity

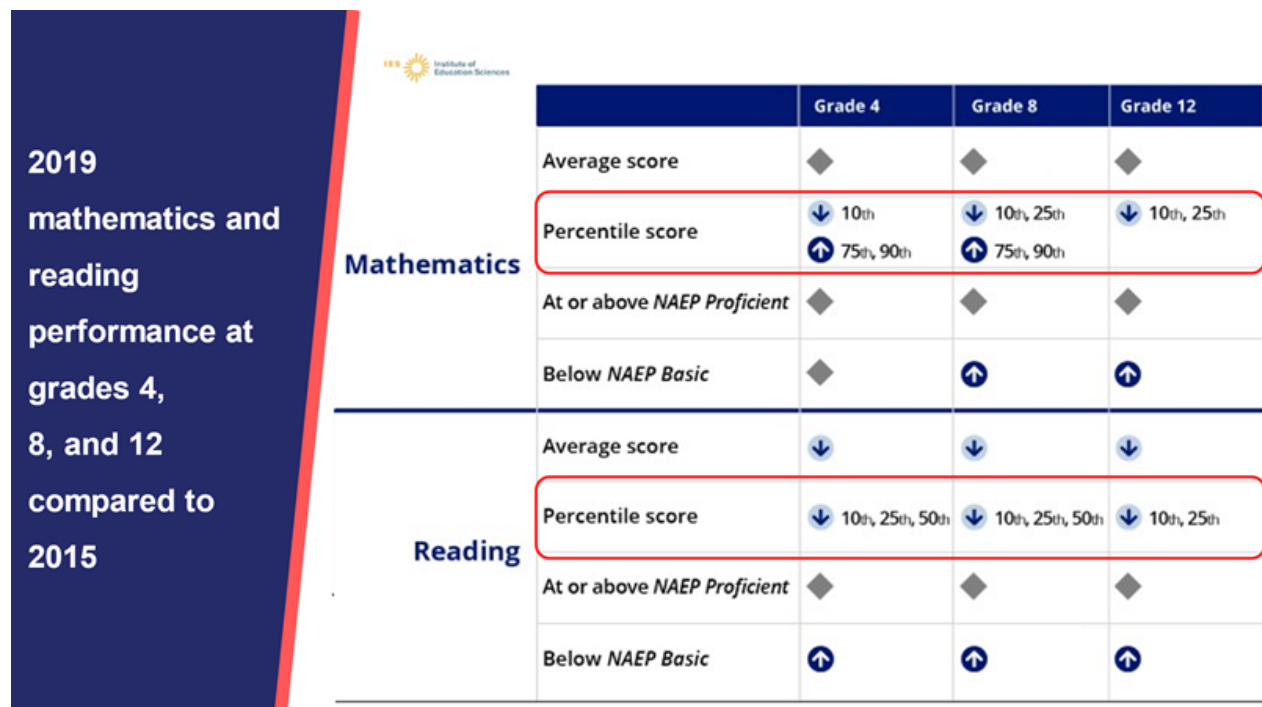
## Background

On Thursday afternoon, March 4<sup>th</sup>, the Governing Board will convene a plenary session to discuss if and how NAEP can play a role in national conversations and actions to create more equitable outcomes for students. This brief will describe the context and central focus of the session, enumerate the goals for the session, introduce the panelists, outline the session’s structure, and assign homework to prepare.

### Causes for Concern

For more than a decade, there is little progress in the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Compared to 2009, average grade 4 and grade 8 scores in 2019 in Reading and in Mathematics remain flat. Compared to 2013, average 2019 scores are lower in NAEP Reading and in NAEP Math, for grade 4 and grade 8.

Beyond this lack of progress, an even more disturbing pattern has emerged. Higher-performing fourth-graders and eighth-graders have made gains on NAEP Reading while lower-performing students’ performance have decreased. See the graphic below for specific details. Generally, higher-performing students have improved on NAEP while lower-performing students have made no significant progress or even declined. These distressing patterns in the results are termed ‘divergent trend lines.’



In addition, wide performance differences persist between lower-income students and their higher-income peers (based on eligibility for the National School Lunch Program), between Black students and White students, between Hispanic students and White students (though Hispanic students have improved markedly over the last decade).

Within this context, this year—when the NAEP program will not administer assessments—offers a unique opportunity to explore ways to understand these troubling trends.

### Paths Forward

NAEP provides rich, valid information about what needs exist and what resources are available to schools, teachers, and students. This information could be more effectively used by researchers, advocates, policymakers, and administrators to affect positive change.

There are several efforts underway that provide context for the Governing Board's initial discussion on March 4<sup>th</sup>. First, in September 2019, the National Academies released the Monitoring Educational Equity Consensus Study Report, which includes recommendations relevant to NAEP. Second, in 2020, the [NAEP Validity Studies panel](#) initiated a study (currently ongoing) to determine how NAEP can address these recommendations—what is possible and what is not. Third, since December 2020, NCES has begun to delve into the characteristics of students who score below *NAEP Basic*. At this point, there is scant information about the experiences of these students, yet there is a substantial percentage of students who persistently score below *NAEP Basic*.<sup>1</sup>

### Session Goals

The March 4<sup>th</sup> plenary session is designed to fulfill two important goals: (1) Inform the Governing Board about efforts to leverage NAEP as a tool to improve educational equity; (2) Determine appropriate next steps for the Board to lead, facilitate, and/or support such efforts.

To accomplish these goals, the session will raise and address two primary questions:

- 1) How can NAEP most effectively spotlight score differences among student groups?

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<sup>1</sup> Note that this nascent work will be shared at a subsequent quarterly meeting this year.

- 2) How can NAEP more effectively communicate score differences to facilitate insights and support actions by key stakeholders that improve outcomes for all students, especially low-income students, students of color, and low-performers?

### Session Structure

The 90-minute plenary session will begin with an introduction by Tonya Matthews, chair of the Reporting and Dissemination Committee. First to speak among the panelists, [Rucker Johnson](#), the Chancellor's Professor of Public Policy in the Goldman School of Public Policy at the University of California, Berkeley and faculty research associate at the National Bureau of Economic Research, will illuminate current research into the causes, consequences, and remedies of inequality from multiple disciplines.

Against the backdrop of this broad perspective, [Christopher Edley, Jr.](#), the Honorable William H. Orrick, Jr. Distinguished Professor of Law at UC Berkeley School of Law, former dean of the UC Berkeley School of Law, and co-founder of the Opportunity Institute and the Harvard Civil Rights Project, will present three NAEP-specific recommendations for a system of educational equity indicators. The purpose of such a system is to highlight disparities, provide a way to explore potential causes, and point toward possible improvements. Mr. Edley also will share current work deriving from the findings of this National Academies' committee.

After Mr. Edley's presentation, [Gerunda Hughes](#), a member of the NAEP Validity Studies panel and Professor Emerita at Howard University, will discuss her efforts to learn how NAEP can address the committee's recommendations.

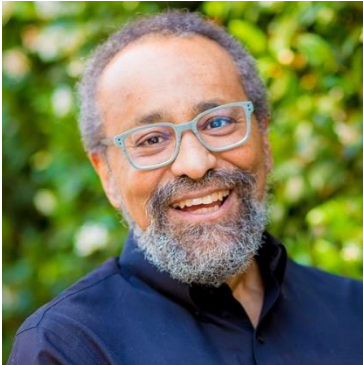
In his coda to these presentations, Alberto Carvalho, superintendent of Miami-Dade County Public Schools and Governing Board member, will share his insights from his expertise as a district leader, a member of the Committee on Developing Indicators of Educational Equity, and a contributor to the Governing Board's Reporting and Dissemination Committee. Subsequent to his remarks, Carvalho will facilitate a question-and-answer session and a discussion in reaction to the presentations.

### Prepare for the Session

An additional document by one of the panelists, Christopher Edley, Jr., outlines the three NAEP-specific recommendations from the Committee on Developing Indicators of Educational Equity which his presentation will describe. Before the March 4<sup>th</sup> meeting, please read [highlights from the committee's report](#) and/or [watch a forum](#) from December 15, 2020 which summarizes the work.

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### Panelist Biographies



**Christopher Edley, Jr.** has spent 40 years influencing public policy and teaching law at Harvard and Berkeley.

He is also the Honorable William H. Orrick, Jr. Distinguished Professor of Law at UC Berkeley School of Law, after serving as dean from 2004 through 2013. Before Berkeley, Chris was a professor at Harvard Law School for 23 years, where Professor Gary Orfield and he co-founded the Harvard Civil Rights Project.

Chris co-chaired the congressionally chartered National Commission on Education Equity and Excellence (2011-13). He served in White House policy and budget positions under presidents Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton. Chris also held senior positions in five presidential campaigns: policy director for Michael Dukakis (1988); and senior policy adviser for Al Gore (2000), Howard Dean (2004), Barack Obama (2008), and Hillary Clinton (2016). In 1993, he was a senior economic adviser in the Clinton Presidential Transition, responsible for housing and regulation of financial institutions. In 2008, he was a board member for the Obama presidential transition, with general responsibility for healthcare, education, and immigration.

Chris is a fellow or member of: the American Academy of Arts & Sciences; the National Academy of Public Administration; the Council on Foreign Relations; the American Law Institute; the Advisory Board of the Hamilton Project, the Brookings Institution; and the board of Inequality Media. He is a National Associate of the National Research Council, the operating arm of the National Academies of Science, for which he recently chaired a committee to evaluate NAEP performance standards, and a committee to design a national system of education equity indicators.

Chris is a graduate of Swarthmore College (mathematics), Harvard Kennedy School (public policy), and Harvard Law School.



**Gerunda B. Hughes** is Professor Emerita, Howard University. During her tenure at the University, Hughes served as Director of the Office of Institutional Assessment and Evaluation and Professor of Mathematics Education in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction in the School of Education. As Director, Hughes oversaw the collection, analyses, and interpretation of student learning and other institutional-level data to provide information to senior administrators to use in their decision-making processes.

In her faculty position, she served as coordinator of secondary education programs and taught courses in mathematics, mathematics pedagogy, assessment and measurement, and research methodology. Hughes served as a Principal Investigator of the “Classroom Assessment Project” (CAP) at Howard University’s Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk (CRESPAR) and as Principal Investigator or Co-Principal Investigator on grants funded by the National Science Foundation, the United States Department of Education, and the Thurgood Marshall College Fund.

She is an inaugural and former member of the Board of Directors of the Howard University Middle School for Mathematics and Science. Hughes served as Co-Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Negro Education* (1996-2001); Associate Editor of *Review of Educational Research* (2005-08); and a member of the editorial boards of the *American Educational Research Journal* and the *Mathematics Teaching-Research Journal*. She has presented numerous papers and published several articles and book chapters on issues related to mathematics teaching and learning and educational assessment and evaluation. Hughes currently serves on several technical advisory committees for state and national testing and assessment programs.

She received a bachelor’s degree in mathematics from the University of Rhode Island, a master’s degree in mathematics from the University of Maryland-College Park, and a Ph.D. in educational psychology from Howard University.



**Rucker C. Johnson** is the Chancellor's Professor of Public Policy in the Goldman School of Public Policy at the University of California, Berkeley, and faculty research associate at the National Bureau of Economic Research. As a labor economist who specializes in the economics of education, Johnson's work considers the role of poverty and inequality in affecting life chances.

Johnson was one of 35 scholars to receive the prestigious 2017 Andrew Carnegie Fellowship. His research has appeared in leading academic journals and featured in mainstream media outlets. Johnson has given policy briefings at the White House and on Capitol Hill. He is the author of the book ***Children of the Dream: Why School Integration Works***.

Johnson is committed to advance his scholarly agenda of fusing insights from multiple disciplinary perspectives to improve our understanding of the causes, consequences, and remedies of inequality in this country. Johnson earned his Ph.D. in economics at the University of Michigan. At UC-Berkeley since 2004, he has taught graduate and undergraduate courses in applied econometrics and topical courses in race, poverty, and inequality.