

Reporting and Dissemination Committee

Wednesday, February 23, 2022

1:00 – 2:30 pm

[Zoom](#)



AGENDA

1:00 – 1:05 pm	Welcome <i>Tonya Matthews, Chair</i>	
1:05 – 1:30 pm	Anticipating NAEP 2022 <i>Tonya Matthews</i>	<i>Attachment A</i>
1:30 – 2:30 pm	Framework for Contextual Variables: Redux <i>Marty West, Vice Chair</i>	<i>Attachment B</i>

Anticipating the Next NAEP Release: Lessons from State Assessments and Questions to Consider

The Reporting and Dissemination Committee meeting on February 23 will focus on anticipating how to prepare for the 2022 Nation's Report Card in reading and mathematics. Presumably, the public will compare 2022 results to 2019 results and will try to determine how COVID-19 shaped NAEP scores and trends.

Reporting and Dissemination Committee members know that NAEP should not be used to draw causal conclusions or to evaluate impacts of policies or disruptions to education. However, the data will provide valuable insights. Thus, the central question for the meeting will be: *How can we prepare now to help NAEP's stakeholders and the public effectively use and accurately interpret upcoming results?*

The discussion at R&D will be informed by the lessons shared at the November 4th R&D meeting by [Damian Betebenner from the Center for Assessment](#). He presented about his work interpreting state assessment data within the context of COVID, explaining potential pitfalls to anticipate with NAEP.

Lessons gleaned from Betebenner's presentation include:

- In considering how the Board's messaging can help NAEP audiences perceive the broader context, Betebenner advised drawing comparisons not only to 2019 but also to 2015 and perhaps earlier. NAEP serves as a thermometer check on the nation's education system, thus the NAEP trend line is essential to understanding what emerges in 2022.
- He also urged a thoughtful choice of metrics. States communicate their assessment results in terms of what parents understand about learning, e.g., six months of learning, grade equivalents, etc. For a parent, those metrics seem more familiar and accessible than effect sizes.
- Betebenner cautioned that audiences will attribute any declines to COVID, the obvious causal agent. However, other explanatory factors contribute to the shape of trajectories.
 - The pandemic may indicate more about how the education system failed students pre-pandemic than how the system supported students during the pandemic.
 - Side note: Recall the divergent trend lines in the NAEP results for reading, math, and science, across grades, between 2009 and 2019, that reflect lower-performing students' scores decreasing. And, the first-ever declines in scores among 13-year-

olds on the most recent Long-Term Trend assessment. Data indicate that performance was sliding prior to COVID.

- Betebenner warned the Board not to focus only on the average, which obscures the meaningful variability among sub-groups. States typically use assessment data for accountability, but the best use of NAEP data will lie in capturing the overall impact *and* understanding subgroup differences.
- Among the contextual variables available on NAEP, Betebenner suggested examining instruction mode as well as instructional supports associated with students in a specific group, noting that supports provided by districts vary widely.

This meeting's discussion will center on next year's reporting specifically. Yet, over the last two years, stakeholders have recommended ways to improve NAEP reporting generally. These ideas may hold relevance to NAEP 2022 reporting.

First, in March 2021, the [Governing Board hosted Gerunda Hughes to discuss equity and NAEP](#). Early indicators point to COVID's differential effects on student learning by subgroup and by prior performance. Delving into how [Dr. Hughes' recommendations](#) intersect with post-COVID results on NAEP may prove useful in 2022 reporting and beyond.

[Gerunda Hughes](#) asked the Governing Board to make each aspect of NAEP more equitable, including its reporting. Hughes urged the Board to:

- Expand NAEP's subgroup comparisons to capture and report differences created by societal inequity, cultural inequity, familial inequity, staffing and instructional inequity, and assessment inequity, among others.
- Report all comparisons between subgroups defined by race/ethnicity (as opposed to the current approach of using white students as the reference group). Highlight differences in new ways to help improve student achievement, not highlight already known disparities.
- Broaden the set of contextual variables which NAEP reports.
- Facilitate secondary analyses with contextual data.

In addition, the TUDA Task Force, a partnership with the Council of the Great City Schools which comprises leaders from districts participating in the Trial Urban District Assessment program (TUDA), emphasized the importance of setting expectations for NAEP 2022 results and raised critical questions about NAEP reporting:

- What are more useful and actionable ways of disaggregating data to understand how COVID shaped performance?

- How can reporting contextualize the importance of NAEP within the pandemic and consider the impact of *changed learning opportunities* on results?

The TUDA Task Force members counseled the Governing Board to ensure communications distinguish what NAEP results can say from what they cannot. The Task Force also urged the Board to publicize NAEP's track record in helping states and districts focus on skills where students are improving and where they need additional support. The Board should not offer policy solutions but should amplify facts and statistics.

[Ian Rowe, a scholar at the American Enterprise Institute and advocate for using NAEP data](#), has implored the education community to change the reporting of disparities in academic outcomes. Rowe questions why reports frame outcomes primarily through performance gaps by poverty and race. Even if gaps between black students and white students narrow by a few points, the majority of black students and the majority of white students remain below *NAEP Proficient* on reading and mathematics. The gap shrinks; the deficit persists. If NAEP collects and reports different data—disaggregating results so that racial and income categories are no longer viewed as monolithic—stakeholders may arrive at a more nuanced and accurate understanding of academic disparities, which may lead to change.

In an email to the Board, committee member Tyler Cramer praised recent examples of the Board's efforts to highlight ways that NAEP data inform conversations on educational equity. He urged the Board to extend this work by connecting NAEP data to school finance data and/or to civil rights data, clarifying what NAEP can and cannot do, especially when compared to state assessments.

In sum, as the committee deliberates on how to report and message NAEP 2022 results, stakeholders from within and beyond the Board urge NAEP reporting to:

1. Highlight all subgroup comparisons
2. Disaggregate data beyond monolithic categories of race/ethnicity and NSLP-eligibility
3. Report on differences created by other types of inequity - societal, cultural, familial, financial (i.e., school resources, school instructional supports), etc.
4. Consider how *changed learning opportunities* may shape results
5. Clarify NAEP's unique contributions, specifying what NAEP can and cannot do, to enable accurate interpretations of results

In addition, the Board, with its communications contractor, The Hatcher Group, is developing a communications plan to raise awareness of trends on NAEP that emerged prior to the pandemic, equipping policymakers to use NAEP 2022 data as a means to improve student outcomes.

In the February 23rd discussion, committee members will consider how these recommendations can be incorporated within NAEP 2022 reporting, messaging, and outreach activities and discuss whose perspectives the board should seek to broaden and diversify the potential audience for these messaging efforts.

Framework for Contextual Variables: Redux

Congress (P.L. 107-110) gave the National Assessment Governing Board “final authority” to approve “all cognitive and noncognitive assessment items.” The Reporting and Dissemination Committee assumes the non-cognitive side of the Board’s responsibility, including reviewing and approving items that identify students in NAEP’s required reporting categories and other information that provides a context for results and relate to academic achievement.

NAEP questionnaires comprise both general, or core, questions as well as questions related to the subject on which students are assessed. For example, core questions may ask students how often they discuss schoolwork with their friends or family, and contextual questions on the math assessment may ask students how frequently they participate in math-related activities outside of school. Selected teachers and school administrators also complete questionnaires which ask about professional experience, curriculum and instructional approaches, school organization and structure, resources, and learning opportunities.

The assessment frameworks, discussed often over the last few years, focus on NAEP’s cognitive content and only briefly refer to contextual questions as part of reporting. The assessment frameworks provide some direction about how specific assessment content should inform subject-specific contextual variables, but the assessment frameworks do not provide general guidance about subject-specific contextual variables.

General guidance about contextual data (both core and subject-specific) is found elsewhere, specifically in the Board’s *Contextual Information Framework* and *Policy Statement on NAEP Background Questions and Use of Contextual Information*. The Reporting and Dissemination Committee led the drafting and revising of these documents. Both documents follow in this .pdf.

The Board’s contextual information framework receives little attention among the Board and within the greater NAEP space. Both the framework and the policy statement are about ten years old and merit a review and a refresh, if not a full revision. Policies referenced in the documents no longer exist or have been revised since then. It is time for a review.

Note: The Board’s documents on contextual data must be understood in parallel with the *Core White Paper* (also found in the pages to follow), a paper produced and regularly updated by the National Center for Education Statistics that outlines the goals, priorities, and foci of NAEP’s contextual variables. The NAEP team originally drafted this paper when revising the contextual questionnaires in 2017, the year in which NAEP shifted from paper-and-pencil to digitally-based administration.

This February 23rd meeting of the Reporting and Dissemination Committee will serve as an orientation to what documentation exists about contextual data and how that fits with current practice on NAEP. *What has the Board generated and approved to inform the contextual questionnaires' design and content?*

A subsequent session on this topic will delve into what these documents “get right” and what is missing from these documents. Has the Board articulated the appropriate priorities? Does the stated guidance reflect best practice for questionnaire development and implementation? Those future conversations will include input from the Assessment Development Committee to discuss policy guidance for subject-specific contextual variables. However, the Reporting and Dissemination Committee will lead the overall effort to review and possibly revise the policy and framework.

For the purposes of this meeting, the Committee will learn about the foundations for the contextual questionnaires. The background materials appended to this cover memo include:

1. The Governing Board’s Policy Statement on NAEP Background Questions and Use of Contextual Information in NAEP Reporting
2. Contextual Information Framework – The materials include only the framework’s Executive Summary, which usefully summarizes the framework’s purposes, priorities, and policies. The complete framework encompasses 53 pages and is found [here](#).
3. NCES Core White Paper – Please **do not share**. You may recognize this from the IMS system, where it is posted whenever a contextual data review is underway. It is a roadmap for the NAEP team and not to be shared outside the NAEP and Governing Board ‘family.’