

Next Generation NAEP

Goal

This goal for this session is for members to share their reactions to the objectives and core assumptions for this proposed project.

Overview

Executive Director Lesley Muldoon will discuss plans for this proposed project, respond to questions, and invite feedback and discussion.

Background

In August 2024, the Board approved Strategic Vision 2030, emphasizing its continued commitment to working with the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to “refine NAEP’s design, content, and reporting to optimize its quality, relevance, efficiency, and utility to inform K-12 and postsecondary education in the next decade and beyond.” The Board began working to implement its vision, eager to see how it would be impacted by the next round of NAEP contracts to be awarded in late 2024.

In 2025, the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) program was impacted by changes at the U.S. Department of Education including reductions in force, budget reductions, and modifications and terminations to contracts. Working together, NCES and the Governing Board, along with NAEP contractors, ensured the release of three report cards in September 2025 and the preparation necessary to stay on track for the 2026 NAEP administration, to begin in January 2026.

This experience, combined with the rapid advancements in generative artificial intelligence (AI), has compelled the Board and NCES to think differently about how the program delivers on NAEP’s legislative mandate and about the need for new approaches to ensure that the program is more agile, efficient and actionable.

Because changes to NAEP design and implementation pose risks to maintaining the 30+ year trendlines in 4th and 8th grade reading and mathematics, prospective changes require rapid, strategic prototyping and testing so that specific innovations can be evaluated before the next contracting cycle and built into a roadmap for implementation—what we are referring to as “NextGen NAEP”. This process and timeline will ensure program leadership at NCES and NAGB can effectively implement changes to the NAEP program while continuing to meet its legislative mandates, in

consultation with leadership in Congress and at the U.S. Department Education where necessary.

Working together and engaging key partners, stakeholders and end-users, the Governing Board and NCES plan to engage in a human-centered design process to (1) maintain the integrity of NAEP assessment development, administration, and reporting, and NAEP's sterling credibility as an independent, non-partisan source of "truth" while improving efficiency and cost-effectiveness, and (2) generate prototypes for how advancements including AI can transform NAEP processes and tools, expedite development and reporting timelines, and make NAEP data and reporting more useful and actionable. Changes we pursue through this initiative will be in service of maximizing the likelihood that NAEP can catalyze improvements in student achievement.

Project Deliverable:

The project objective is to produce tangible, evidence-based recommendations for NAGB, NCES, and the broader field of summative assessment. At the conclusion of the one-year project, NAGB and NCES will have an updated roadmap to guide policymaking and future NAEP test design and implementation in time to prepare for the next round of NAEP contracting which will begin with internal, preliminary steps in 2027.

Core Assumptions:

State-level NAEP results can drive changes that help improve student outcomes.

- Because only 4th and 8th grade reading and math are mandatory for states, we need more incentives for states to participate in other subjects and grades.
- We should investigate how to reduce burden for students and schools and to make results more accessible and user-friendly.
- Cost efficiencies are required to maintain a regular schedule of assessments with state-level results outside of 4th and 8th grade reading and math.

NAEP's 30+ year trendlines in reading and math have unique and crucial value.

- Current approaches to maintaining trend constrain innovation and lead to increased costs.
- We must investigate novel approaches to maintaining trend lines while keeping NAEP up-to-date, relevant, and responsive to key changes in technology.