



MEDIA STATEMENT

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Governing Board Statement on Postponement of NAEP 2021

WASHINGTON – Haley Barbour, the chair of the National Assessment Governing Board, and Alice Peisch, the vice chair, today issued the following statement in support of the decision by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to reschedule the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading and mathematics assessments to 2022:

“We are in full agreement with the decision by the commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics to cease preparation for the NAEP 2021 assessments in reading and mathematics for grades 4 and 8, scheduled to start in January 2021, and to reschedule the assessment to 2022.

“The timing of this decision will allow NCES to begin preparations to conduct NAEP in the next possible year (2022), when it should be feasible to collect and report valid and reliable data. All avenues to support the administration of NAEP in 2021 were explored. Due to those additional COVID-related costs, NCES will require additional resources to ensure a full and complete administration in 2022—with results for the nation, all 50 states, and the 27 large urban districts that participate in the Trial Urban District Assessment program.

“Since the global pandemic began in early spring, NCES and the Governing Board consulted public health experts, Congressional staff, representatives of state departments of education, and school district administrators, among other experts, to monitor how COVID-19 is affecting students and teachers as well as assessment programs. We have closely followed the trajectory of the virus to determine whether NAEP could be administered in 2021 in ways that would accurately report student achievement and progress.

“Given the important data NAEP provides to the public, we waited as long as possible to make a final decision, but the spread of COVID across our communities is getting worse—not better. Unfortunately, it is now clear that we cannot fulfill the mandate to assess reading and mathematics, given NAEP’s unique design and methodology.

“At the Governing Board’s Nov. 19-20 meeting, NCES presented compelling data, which convinced Board members that COVID-19 related conditions prevent NCES from administering NAEP safely to a sufficient and representative sample, and reporting results in a valid and reliable manner consistent with NCES’ statistical standards and the NAEP Authorization Act.

“Thus, the Governing Board believes a 2022 administration of NAEP reading and mathematics at grades 4 and 8 would be more likely to provide valuable—and valid—data about student achievement in the wake of COVID-19 to support effective policy, research, and resource allocation.”