

# **National Assessment Governing Board**

## **Reporting, Release, and Dissemination of NAEP Results Policy Statement**

Adopted March 4, 2017

### **Introduction**

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) collects data through representative-sample surveys and reports fair and accurate information on academic achievement to the American public. By law (P.L. 107-110, as amended by P.L. 107-279), NAEP is administered by the Commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) with the advice of the National Assessment Governing Board (“the Governing Board”), a bipartisan, independent policymaking body. Among the statutory responsibilities specifically delegated to the Governing Board are: (1) “develop guidelines for reporting and disseminating [NAEP] results”; (2) “take appropriate actions needed to improve the form, content, use, and reporting of [NAEP] results”; and (3) “plan and execute the initial public release of [NAEP] reports.”

The primary means for the initial reporting of NAEP results is a report website. The report website presents key findings as well as composite and disaggregated results in a clear, jargon-free style with charts, tables, and graphics that are easily accessible, understandable, and attractive. This format is used to report key results for the nation, for the states, and for participating districts in the NAEP Trial Urban District Assessments.

To carry out its Congressionally-mandated responsibilities, the Governing Board provides input during both the development and review processes about the overall structure, accessibility, and content of report websites that present initial public releases of NAEP data. The policy principles described here and adopted by the Governing Board address the general requirements for report websites that present initial public releases of NAEP data. Content in this Policy Statement is subject to periodic review necessitated by technological advances, innovations in reporting, feedback from releases, and input from the Governing Board and NCES.

### **Delineation of NAEP Reporting, Release, and Dissemination Responsibilities**

The NCES Commissioner, with the advice of the Governing Board, is responsible for administering the assessment, ensuring the technical soundness and accuracy of all released data, preparing NAEP reports, and presenting NAEP results.

In addition to setting policy, the Governing Board is responsible for improving the form, content, use, and reporting of NAEP results, determining dates of initial public release of NAEP results, and planning and executing these initial public releases.

## Part I: Report Preparation and Content Policy

1. All current, previous, and archived subject-specific NAEP reports will be made available to the public.
2. The primary audience for initial releases of NAEP results is the American public, including, but not limited to, policymakers, educational administrators, educators, researchers, business leaders, parents, and the media. Thus, all reports will be written in language appropriate for this diverse array of stakeholders, the majority of whom may not have a technical understanding of education statistics or assessment.
3. Initial releases report NAEP results concisely, objectively, accurately, clearly, fairly, in accordance with NCES data quality standards, and are insulated from ideological and special interests.
  - a. Reports and any disseminated materials may present correlations but not suggest or imply causal relationships.
4. In accordance with the law, all initial releases include results for the nation; states and school districts; locality (both geographic region and urban/city); school types (i.e., public and non-public), all disaggregated by subgroup whenever reliable. Subgroup results are prominently positioned to facilitate public review but are not used to adjust findings.
  - a. Disaggregated subgroup data are accompanied by information about demographic changes in the student population assessed.
  - b. Results for states and school districts are accompanied by appropriate language to alert the public to any data comparison limitations.
  - c. Data on inclusion and accommodation rates for all NAEP samples, including national, state, district, and school type, are publicly released. Results for students with disabilities and English language learners are presented separately.
5. In order to present a comprehensive description of the level and variation in student achievement, initial releases of NAEP results report results by Governing Board-adopted achievement levels, average scale scores, and percentile distributions. Trend information is an important component to reports unless comparable and reliable data are not available.
6. Although subject to change based on technological and communications advances and input from the Governing Board and NCES, initial releases include:
  - a. Concise text, explaining key findings upfront, along with visual

artifacts, including videos, graphics, charts, pictorial representations, etc. illustrating those key findings.

- b. The required elements as specified by law and described above in Part I. 4 and Part I. 5.
  - c. Highlighted information important to the audience and to Governing Board policy: (1) findings from both core and subject-specific contextual variables; and (2) information about what NAEP is and how and why it is conducted.
  - d. Clear explanations of NAEP achievement levels that illustrate what students in each grade assessed should know and be able to do at each achievement level, as noted in the National Assessment of Educational Progress Authorization Act, Section 303(5) and in compliance with Governing Board policy.
7. All NAEP data determined by the NCES Commissioner to be valid and reliable are made available through NAEP data tool(s) at the time of initial public release, except for data from limited special purpose samples and pilot studies.
- a. At least one block of released NAEP questions is posted for each subject and grade for which results have been collected. Special exceptions may be made to protect item security and/or for technical and/or policy considerations as approved by the Governing Board.
8. The Governing Board reviews initial releases and will provide timely feedback on draft releases presenting the results as early in the development process as feasible.
- a. The Governing Board and NCES will coordinate to reach agreement on how to address Board feedback in the initial release.
9. The Governing Board will provide feedback to NCES periodically to inform and improve initial releases of NAEP results and will receive comments back from NCES in a timely manner.

## **Part II: Public Release of NAEP Results Policy**

1. Initial release activities are planned and executed by the Governing Board, which determines the release date, time, and manner for initial public releases. NCES sets embargo policies in collaboration with the Governing Board.
  - a. As stated in Part I, Principle 8, the Governing Board reviews the draft initial release as early in the development process as possible. Preliminary approval of the form, use, and reporting of results may be granted by the Chair of the Reporting and Dissemination Committee based on these early

reviews to allow for advanced planning and execution of a comprehensive public release. The Chair of the Reporting and Dissemination Committee, on behalf of the Governing Board and in consultation with the Chair and Executive Director of the Governing Board and the NCES Commissioner, sets a tentative date for initial release so the Board may plan release-related events. The Reporting and Dissemination Chair affirms that date upon Board review of the final release.

2. The Governing Board is responsible for organizing and conducting the initial release event and other related events.
  - a. An initial release plan will be adopted by the Governing Board for each report. Elements of the plan may include issuance of a press release, a press conference, a release event, distribution of summary findings and graphics, time period for the initial public release phase, and other related activities.
  - b. The Governing Board will issue a press release that will include an announcement of the results and commentary on the results. NCES will issue a media summary announcing the results.
  - c. At the initial release event for NAEP results, the NCES Commissioner or his/her designee will present major data findings. The Governing Board may select members as well as invite other officials or experts to comment on the meaning and significance of the results.
  - d. At initial release events, the Governing Board will moderate and allow appropriate questions raised by members of the online or in-person audience, including accredited media.
  - e. The Governing Board will make every effort to widely disseminate information about initial release activities to a variety of audiences, encouraging interest in and attention to NAEP results.
  - f. The Governing Board will conduct additional activities to extend the life of NAEP reports beyond the initial release and encourage discussion of NAEP data in context of relevant issues and trends.
3. All initial releases of NAEP results encourage wide public attention to NAEP results and clear understanding of their meaning and significance.
  - a. Materials such as videos, infographics, and podcasts may be prepared to accompany the release. NAEP data in statements and such materials will be checked for accuracy by NCES.
  - b. Every initial release of NAEP results will be comprehensible and easy to use across different devices (i.e., mobile devices) and different operating systems.

4. The Governing Board will cooperate with the NCES Commissioner in the release of technical reports, working papers, and secondary analyses not covered by the policy.

### **Part III: Dissemination and Outreach Policy**

1. Information from and about initial releases are disseminated through traditional and social media, through a wide network of national, state, and local education, government, business, labor, and civic organizations as well as to policymakers and practitioners. This is intended to develop widespread public awareness of NAEP data and their meaning.
  - a. Schools and school districts participating in NAEP will be instructed on how to access reports.
  - b. Talking points on key data findings will be developed for each release and distributed to Governing Board members who are encouraged to increase awareness of NAEP.
2. Key findings and graphics will be amenable to posting by media representatives and to social media. Graphics with clear branding of NAEP and/or *The Nation's Report Card* that can be exported easily for inclusion in online media, blog posts, web articles, and other media will be readily accessible.
3. Relatively brief reports of key results will be prepared for individual states, as well as for urban districts participating in the Trial Urban District Assessment. All reports will contain composite and disaggregated data along with clear, compelling graphic representations of the data.
4. Detailed data on cognitive results and Governing Board-approved contextual data will be accessible online to all those wishing to analyze NAEP findings, subject to privacy restrictions. Additional restricted data will be available for scholarly research, subject to NCES licensing procedures.