

*The Reading Framework for the National Assessment of Educational Progress:*

**Recommendations**

**Doretha Allen, NBCT**

This paper will be organized into four major sections: (a) what works with the NAEP Reading Framework, (b) questions/wonderings about the framework, (c) changes needed to the framework, and (d) responses to committee questions.

**What Works with the NAEP Reading Framework**

The framework layout is logical and easy to follow. This is extremely helpful as the framework is written for a wide audience ranging from practitioners to policy makers. The executive summary provides basic knowledge of text types, vocabulary assessment, and reporting. The body of the framework is in three chapters.

The primary focus for this commentary will be chapter 2: Content and Design of NAEP in Reading. Exhibits 1-10 are informative and accessible for the wide audience providing data and information about genres, text structures/features, and author's craft. In isolation, practitioners can use these tools instructionally. Policy makers can become informed on a basic level about supports school districts need based on the information from the figures. The context surrounding the exhibits provides a detailed explanation for the exhibit itself. For example, Exhibit 7 on page 35 lists considerations for selecting vocabulary items and distractors. The far-right column is considerations for distractors. This is valuable information for a wide audience. Practitioners create classroom-based assessments regularly and this information can increase the

rigor of those assessments. Policy makers can also use this as a point of reference when considering products from varied publishers for adoption by states. In either case, the audience's knowledge base is enhanced by the information in exhibit 7.

The framework accounts for current federal law and connects Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) with NAEP. ESSA states vocabulary and comprehension are two of the five essential components to reading. NAEP assesses vocabulary and comprehension. This connection between the reading framework and federal law is clearly defined and demonstrates the value of NAEP.

NAEP serves as a bridge between policy and practice. The aforementioned examples are paramount. My recommendation is for these portions of the reading framework to be maintained.

### **Questions/Wonderings About the Framework**

The framework states the focus is on “important, measurable indicators of student achievement.” Reading as a skill encompasses so many skills that happen simultaneously that focusing on what can be measured is critical. What are the measurable indicators? Over my career in education as a reading teacher, coach, and most recently as a meta coach, this question is at the forefront of teachers' minds. Although I did not make suggestions regarding the subject content of the test (i.e., science or social studies), another panelist did. The transfer and application of reading skills requires demonstrable higher-order thinking skills. If social studies and science texts were to be used on NAEP, field tested first of course, I wonder how that will change the landscape of education. Reading is reading, regardless of the context. This perhaps could be a show of solidarity with other subject areas. However, I heard another panelist, who was passionate about background knowledge. My wonderings are vast in these areas. It is probably easier to stay with the current genres for NAEP reading assessment and maintain the status quo, but should NAEP

maintain the status quo? This is an opportunity to change the trajectory for higher-order thinking across education by incorporating other literacies. Nevertheless, I am aware this may not be the goal of NAEP. Staying on message is equally important. If NAEP informs the nation about what students should know and be able to do, what is it that NAEP is expecting students to know and do in the next 10 years?

### **Changes Needed to the Framework**

Reading is not a set of isolated skills but a culmination of complex processes of metacognition. Knowing this, how then are the measurable indicators selected? This issue, I believe, needs to be updated. The framework, in the current state, references research from 1980 to the 2000s. If these are seminal works, can the reading framework acknowledge the research as seminal in the discussions? Is there current research that can be identified to reflect the advancement of reading research? At the most basic level, the latest definition of reading should be used.

There is at least one contradiction in the reading framework. On page 1, the framework reads “reading passages are selected to be ... free from bias.” Is that possible? Conversely, on page 30, paragraph 4 states “passages will be thoroughly reviewed for potential bias and sensitivity.” How can these statements be aligned for a uniform message?

Advances in technology since the most recent publication show the reading framework to be dated. For instance, an example on page 27 is about directions to set up a VCR. Consideration should be given to update types of procedural texts that students encounter to garner information to include media, websites, and other online texts. The framework must be kept current to be void of examples that date the document.

The recommendations I am suggesting, I believe, are revisions and updates. The structure of the framework is relevant and is a valuable resource.

### **Responses to Committee Questions**

This section will address the questions raised by the committee. Bulleted items are committee questions. My responses are not bulleted.

- What are the trends related to integrated assessments? To what extent is it appropriate to include fictional texts that connect with science or social studies?
- To what extent should reading be a bridge to other subject areas, such as geography and economics?

Connections to other text, I believe, will make the assessment richer and perhaps more rigorous.

- Given that states have not included school performance metrics for ESSA that address social emotional learning (SEL), is it appropriate for NAEP to integrate SEL considerations into frameworks?

I do not believe that NAEP should include social emotional learning on assessments.

- How could the current research regarding reading for surface, deep, and transfer knowledge influence the reading framework?

Research for surface, deep, and transfer knowledge may greatly impact the work of the reading framework. NAEP must be intentional about the judicious application of research to its assessment focus. Is that not one of the foci for research – to improve practice?

- Which parts of reading comprehension have remained stable over the years? Is there enough continuity to allow for the possibility of continued reporting of NAEP trends in students' reading achievement?

In my experience, the complexity of assessments has changed over the years, not necessarily reading. Students are required to do more thinking. Students in my state are asked to make their learning visible by providing textual evidence. This is a necessity because most of the assessments are measuring metacognition, such as inference, drawing conclusions, and summarizing.

- With state assessments focused on English language arts (ELA), to what extent should NAEP consider assessing ELA as one assessment, as one assessment with subscores for reading and writing, or as separate assessments for reading and writing?

In my opinion and based on my experience, as reading and writing are assessed separately they will be taught separately. Assessing them together could change the landscape for literacy instruction, bringing the two back together.

- To what extent should reading comprehension include video or visual texts?

I am a fan of visual text, not so much of the video. If NAEP is assessing reading comprehension and vocabulary, students should read and encounter challenging words.

- Regarding the prior knowledge readers bring to various texts, the Assessment Development Committee (ADC) inquired:

What are strategies to address the dilemma of a “cold” read versus a “warm” read?

Are videos or avatars helpful to introduce a text and create the sense of a warm read?

I am not sure if videos or avatars would be helpful in creating the sense of a warm read. I suppose previous exposure with the text to create a sense of a warm read.

- Considering the accessibility and use of the framework document, the Committee asked:

How does this document support educators in considering how they can improve the practice of reading instruction?

Previously addressed in the section above, *What Works with the NAEP Reading Framework*.

