

# **National Assessment Governing Board**

## **Reporting and Dissemination Committee**

### **Report of December 2, 2011**

**Attendees:** Committee Members –Eileen Weiser (chair), Tom Luna (vice chair), Andres Alonso, David Alukonis, Anitere Flores, Sonny Perdue, and Blair Taylor. NAGB Staff – Larry Feinberg, Stephaan Harris, and Michelle Blair; NCES – Commissioner Jack Buckley, Jonathan Beard, Gina Broxterman, Samantha Burg, James Deaton, Angela Glymph, Arnold Goldstein, Emmanuel Sikali, Grady Wilburn, and Brenda Wolff; AIR – Fran Stancavage; ETS – Amy Drescher, Dave Freund and Steve Lazer; HagerSharp – Lisa Jacques and Debra Silimeo; HumRRO – Steve Sellman; NESSI – Kim Gattis and Cadille Hemphill; Reingold – Amy Buckley and Valerie Marrapodi; Westat – Keith Rust and Dianne Walsh; Widmeyer Communications – Jason Smith and Jacqui Lipson.

#### **1. Making a Difference Proposals**

The Committee had an extensive discussion of the nine Making a Difference proposals prepared by Governing Board staff and included in the agenda materials. Most of the proposals are communications activities.

The Committee chair, Eileen Weiser, asked Amy Buckley, a vice president of Reingold, the Board's communications contractor, how well each proposal fit with the Board's existing communications strategy. The Committee asked Brenda Wolff, of NCES, whether the agency, which administers NAEP operations, had similar products and activities or was developing them. The Committee also considered whether the proposals support NAEP's role in measuring and reporting on student achievement; whether they advance national or NAEP goals and priorities; and whether they might cause confusion or conflict that would adversely impact NAEP and the Board.

The Committee endorsed the following proposals:

#4 - NAEP speakers tool kit and resources

#6 - NAEP presentation for parents

#7 - Tell about TEL, but this should wait until assessment administration nears in 2014.

#9 Focused reports and studies

The speaker's tool kit and presentation for parents would be helpful for Board and NAEP communications activities. Some resources have already been developed for speeches, presentations, and op ed articles, including work being done for the Board's 12th Grade

Preparedness Commission. The presentation for parents is already under development as part of the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on NAEP Parent Engagement.

The Committee believes the assessment of Technology and Engineering Literacy (TEL), with its many non-traditional elements, should be explained to a wide public audience. However, this activity should take place near the time the assessment is being administered and reported to have a substantial impact.

Focused reports are a highly desirable effort to increase the usefulness of NAEP data and reporting, and extend NAEP's public mission and role. These special-issue reports could analyze or repackage existing data or may be based on new studies with background question modules on particular topics and possibly special research samples. The reports could help NAEP play a more important role in public discussions of important education issues.

Potential topics might include school discipline, using data on suspensions and expulsions; a follow-up to NAEP's 2003 report on charter schools, which have grown considerably since then; and digital learning in its many varieties.

The Committee spent substantial time thinking through how all the proposals fit with the primary purpose of NAEP: to provide sound, timely information on the academic achievement of American students.

Discussion points included:

1. Committee member David Alukonis noted that because NAEP is a representative sample assessment which does not give results for individual students and schools, the program operates at the wholesale level rather than retail. NAEP could prepare an app for mobile computing devices, such as smartphones and tablets, that would allow teachers to use released items and assessment frameworks for planning and testing instruction. But NAEP cannot provide usable data for individual classrooms, and it cannot train teachers to use data.
2. As an assessment giving only large-group results, NAEP cannot provide data for individual schools or districts except for large districts in the Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA). Member Andres Alonso noted that teachers and principals are mainly interested in state test results because those impact them directly. NAEP data cannot have a direct impact on individual students and schools and is unlikely to gain the close and continuing attention of parents and schools. However, by providing an independent measure of achievement in states and districts and by spotlighting important education issues and trends, NAEP can make an enormous difference in which issues gain public attention and action, and in how these issues are framed and perceived.
3. Developing major efforts to gain public attention for NAEP would conflict with the launch of the Common Core state standards and tests. This might create a wasteful competitive situation, and could cause public confusion. Most states are already preparing to implement the Common Core standards. Two large groupings of states are

developing new assessments based on the standards that are scheduled to be used in the 2014-2015 school year.

On the other Making a Difference proposals the Committee concluded as follows:

- #1 and # 3 – These ideas, question-a-day and Jeopardy, are general public awareness efforts that are not likely to be productive. They would not be an efficient use of NAEP resources and staff.
- #2 – The grade 12 quiz is unlikely to be used much, particularly because of the development of Common Core assessments. Also, as proposed, the quiz would allow only item-by-item comparisons with NAEP results and give no overall score (which would not be meaningful because of how NAEP is constructed).
- #5 – NAEP resources for teachers would be limited by significant legal and practical concerns about the role of NAEP in shaping classroom instruction. Existing resources, such as assessment frameworks and released questions, are helpful to those who wish to use them and could be further improved.
- #8 - NAEP apps might only be worthwhile for particular content. It is unlikely that the general public, business leaders, or policymakers would use apps to access material that is already available on the NAEP Data Explorer. NCES has prepared a prototype app, and the Board should track how that is used and develops. An app is not valuable in itself but only as a means to convey particular information to an interested audience. Holding a focus group to determine the audience would be the next necessary step.

## **2. Update on 12th Preparedness Reports**

The Committee received an update on plans for the Governing Board's reports on the preparedness of 12th graders for college and job training. Widmeyer Communications has been awarded a contract to provide design, data presentation, and publication assistance for the two reports anticipated. The first report will present highlights of the preparedness studies, based on the 2009 NAEP in reading and mathematics. It will include the proportion of 12th graders, both overall and in various demographic subgroups, who attain one or more preparedness reference points on the NAEP scale. How many reference points to report on is an important issue that the Board will have to determine in the next few months. The second report will provide full technical documentation of all the studies conducted.

Jason Smith, director of Widmeyer's K-12 education programs, discussed his firm's role in conceptualizing and designing the reports. The highlights report will be available both in print and on line and include attractive graphics and data displays, aimed at making the findings available to a wide public audience. The technical report will be online only, and will be organized to permit ready access to the complex information involved.

Larry Feinberg, of the Governing Board staff, will be author of the general public report. Michelle Blair, of the Board staff, will supervise preparation of the technical report. It is anticipated that the reports will be released in early summer of 2012.

The Committee asked for a joint meeting with the Committee on Standards, Design and Methodology (COSDAM) to discuss 12th grade preparedness reporting either in March or May 2012, depending when major issues must be considered and resolved.

### **3. Update on Previously-Discussed Reports**

Arnold Goldstein, of NCES, presented an update on plans for three NAEP reports that have been discussed by the Committee at a number of previous meetings.

He said a new draft of the mega-states report, which the Committee initiated two years ago, will be available by March 2012. The report will provide NAEP data and trends across the curriculum in the nation's five largest states--California, Texas, New York, Florida, and Illinois. Data from the 2011 National Assessment in reading, mathematics, and science will be added to the report, and other changes in design and content requested by the Board will be incorporated. NCES expects the report to be available for release in early summer of 2012. The report will largely be presented on the Internet with a fairly short highlights document in print.

Mr. Goldstein said the report on the rigor of the Algebra I and Geometry courses taken by various subgroups of students is now undergoing external review for the Institute of Education Sciences. Even though information for the report was collected in 2005, the most recent transcript study in 2009 showed the same striking pattern--major differences in the average NAEP score of different student subgroups taking courses with the same title, which may be explained by differences in course content that the study is examining. NCES expects the report to be ready for release in the spring of 2012.

Mr. Goldstein presented a PowerPoint showing design highlights of the report on Hands-on and Interactive Computer Tasks from the special study in the 2009 NAEP science assessment. This report will be entirely online. All the tasks administered will be released with considerable detail about how students answered them. Release is expected in spring of 2012.

### **4. Release of 2011 NAEP Reading and Mathematics Report Cards**

Stephaan Harris, of the Governing Board staff, and Amy Buckley of Reingold, Inc., the Board's communications contractor, reviewed the release of NAEP 2011 Reading and Mathematics Report Cards. These reports were made public together on November 1, 2011. The release was conducted entirely by webinar with no in-person event. There was a briefing for reporters the day before the release with information embargoed until the webinar began.

Ms. Buckley said press coverage was extensive, including newspapers across the country and television news. However, by far the largest potential audience was via online newspapers and websites. The websites using the NAEP story have an audience of 229.5 million people, compared to an audience of 50.5 million for broadcast stations and print daily newspapers.

Blogs mentioning the NAEP release have an audience of 12 million. In the first week after the release, NAEP results received coverage in 1,365 print, broadcast, and online media outlets.

A record number of reporters--112 from 25 states--were given access to embargoed materials before the release. A record 37 reporters took part in the pre-release briefing in a telephone conference call. The embargo was broken by five hours by two news websites, one operated by a newspaper, the other by a television station. In both cases, Mr. Harris said the breaches were inadvertent when embargo codings of the Associated Press were ignored. He said in the future the Associated Press has agreed not to transmit stories on NAEP results to its clients until the time set for release instead of sending the stories earlier with codings on when the embargo is to be lifted.

The release webinar had a record attendance of 480 participants. About 75 percent of attendees were affiliated with state education departments, education organizations, or higher education institutions. Journalists accounted for 11 percent, including television networks and news magazines. In addition, there were more than 1,000 mentions of NAEP reading and math results on the day of release via social media, such as Facebook and Twitter.

## **5. Projected Schedule for Future NAEP Reports and Related Releases**

Angela Glymph, of NCES, reviewed that schedule of future NAEP releases included in the briefing materials for the Committee meeting. She said the expected release of the NAEP 2011 Science Report Card for grade 8, including state and national results, has been moved up a month to April 2012 in order to meet the NCES performance plan goal of 12 month reporting. The report on meaning vocabulary, based on special samples in 2011 reading assessment, has been delayed three months until June 2012.

The Committee noted that two interesting reports will be released by NCES later this month that are related to the National Assessment though outside the NAEP program. Arts Education in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools compares classroom data from 1999-2000 and 2009-10. The other, America's Youth: Transitions to Adulthood, analyzes information on youths aged 14-24 from 1980, 1990, 2000, and 2010.

## **6. Update on Expert Panel on NAEP Background Questions**

In response to a Committee request, Governing Board staff has convened a six-member expert panel on improving NAEP background questions. The panel held an all-day meeting in Washington on November 16, 2011, and will continue its work over the next three months by teleconference and the Internet. The group's report is due February 15, 2012.

The panel chair, Marshall (Mike) Smith, former U.S. Under Secretary of Education and former dean of the Stanford Graduate School of Education, will present the report to the Reporting and Dissemination Committee at its March meeting. The Board may wish to have him address the plenary session.

Larry Feinberg, of the NAGB staff, reviewed the charge to the expert panel, which notes that non-cognitive or background questions have been asked by NAEP for more than 25 years but little use has been made of them in NAEP reports for the past decade. Responses to all background questions are available through the NAEP Data Explorer on the Internet.

The panel has been asked to recommend how to make better use of existing background questions, and to propose an analytic agenda or framework for additional topics and questions that would be useful in developing education policy, and of value to the public.

Two examples of the use of background questions in the 2011 NAEP Report Cards are included in the briefing materials for the Committee meeting. One shows that 4th graders who read for fun almost every day score higher in reading than those reading less and that female students read for fun much more frequently than males. The second reports that more 4th graders have teachers not permitting calculators during math lessons in 2011 than in previous years.

Both examples involve factors related to academic achievement, and allow the public to consider educational change. Showing more such relationships would enrich NAEP reports. Because it is a cross-sectional survey, NAEP must be careful not to attribute causation through single-factor correlations of its data. However, it can usefully report on how widely different practices and resources are used among different groups of students in national, state, and district-level samples.

## **7. NAEP in Puerto Rico: Research and Planning for 2013**

The Committee received a briefing from Emmanuel Sikali, of NCES, on research conducted on targeted blocks of questions for low-scoring students that will have an important bearing on whether the NAEP assessment of mathematics will be resumed in Puerto Rico in 2013.

Puerto Rico students were tested by NAEP in 2003, 2005, and 2007, but average results were so low that changes over time could not be reported accurately on the NAEP scale. To deal with this problem, NCES has developed four blocks of items at both 4th and 8th grades that are targeted at the lower end of the scale while conforming to the content specifications of the NAEP framework. These were administered in a special study in 2011 both in Spanish translation in Puerto Rico and in English to a special-purpose national sample on the U.S. mainland. Results should be analyzed in the next few months.

The targeted blocks are called KaSA for Knowledge and Skills Appropriate assessment. If they can be placed on the regular NAEP scale, they could be used for an operational assessment in Puerto Rico in 2013 and might also be used with other groups of students to gain more definition at the lower-end of the scale. This would reduce the extent of testing error or uncertainty and by providing more differentiation at the lower portion of the scale allow NAEP to more accurately report whether achievement has changed.

Member Andres Alonso stressed that it would be important that any targeted blocks of questions allow the students taking them to be compared to NAEP's full national sample with no change in standards or expectations. He also questioned why the Puerto Rico students in the research study were given 35 minutes to answer each block of questions instead of the standard 25 minutes allowed elsewhere.

**8. Additional Item**

Because of lack of time the Committee deferred discussion of Private School Participation and Reporting to the March 2012 meeting.

I certify the accuracy of these minutes.



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Eileen Weiser, Chair

12-13-11

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Date