

National Assessment Governing Board

Reporting and Dissemination Committee

Report of August 3, 2012

Attendees: Committee Members – Chair Eileen Weiser, Andres Alonso, David Alukonis, Anitere Flores, Sonny Perdue, and Mary Frances Taymans; Assessment Development Committee Members – Chair Alan Friedman, Shannon Garrison, Brent Houston, Hector Ibarra, Dale Nowlin, Susan Pimentel, and Cary Sneider; Governing Board Staff – Executive Director Cornelia Orr, Mary Crovo, Larry Feinberg, and Stephaan Harris; NCES – Associate Commissioner Peggy Carr, James Deaton, Angela Glymph, Arnold Goldstein, Holly Spurlock, Bill Ward, and Brenda Wolff; ETS – Amy Dresher, Rebecca Moran, Mary Pitoniak, and Greg Vafis; Westat – Lauren Byrne and Keith Rust; Reingold Communications – Valerie Marrapodi and Erin Fenn; HagerSharp Communications–Joanne Lim and Debra Silimeo; Widmeyer Communications – Jacqui Lipson; HUMRRO – Wade Buckland and Steve Sellman; AIR – Kim Gattis, Cadelle Hemphill, and Sharyn Rosenberg ; Pearson – Brad Thayer; Optimal Solutions – Erin Twamley; Fulcrum IT – Jud Cole, Scott Ferguson, and Lon Rokus; CRP – Jasmine Fletcher and Sondra M. Gaines; CCSSO – Kirsten Taylor; DDED – Sofia Espailat; and Consultant – Alan Ginsburg

1. NAEP Background Questions [Joint Meeting with Assessment Development Committee]

The Reporting and Dissemination Committee met with members of the Assessment Development Committee to continue the Board’s review of the expert panel report on improving NAEP background questions and making better use of the contextual information they provide. The report, entitled, *NAEP Background Questions: An Underused National Resource*, was presented to the Board in March 2012.

Members of both committees expressed strong support for the expert panel’s central recommendation that use of contextual data based on background questionnaires should be increased in NAEP reporting, both in report cards for test results and in special focused reports on specific topics of interest. Sister Mary Frances Taymans, the vice chair of the Board, said providing greater context would improve public understanding of the academic results and permit more valid comparisons. Alan Friedman, chair of the Assessment Development Committee, said he hoped background questions would be treated with the same seriousness as the academic data NAEP collects. He said background information can be valuable in seeding important discussion and future research. Member Sonny Perdue said NAEP reporting would be greatly enriched by providing information on life experiences that affect children’s learning both in and out of school.

Member Andres Alonso said the contextual data provide a very powerful framework for interpreting achievement results and offer avenues for understanding how schools might go about their work. Although NAEP cannot support strong cause-and-effect conclusions, its background information can enrich the conversation about policy alternatives. Several members said it would be important to present data that is relevant to important policy issues without assuming the stance of policy advocate. Member Cary Sneider supported adding a tool for regression analysis to the NAEP Data Explorer.

The committees reviewed staff discussion questions and supported most of the specific recommendations in the expert panel report. However, rather than creating a single permanent Board committee responsible for both core and subject-specific background items, as the panel recommended, members indicated support for an ad hoc committee to serve for one year. This group would monitor implementation of the resolution, review the 2003 NAEP Background Information Framework, and recommend a permanent arrangement for Board consideration of background questions and the reporting of contextual data.

ACTION: After further discussion, the Committees voted unanimously to recommend Governing Board adoption of the Policy Statement on NAEP Background Questions and the Use of Contextual Data in NAEP Reports, subject of further slight changes approved by the Committee chairs. The resolution is appended as Attachment A to this report.

2. Review of Recent NAEP Release: Science in Action

Stephaan Harris, of the NAGB staff, reviewed the June 19 release of the NAEP Science in Action Report: Hands-On and Interactive Computer Tasks from the 2009 Science Assessment. A total of 226 persons attended in-person or via webcast, more than the audience for the Science 2009 and 2011 releases, and double the Science 2009 TUDA release audience. The report received considerable coverage in both traditional and social media even though it had no trend information. Valerie Marrapodi, of Reingold Communications, said 17 original stories appeared in print and online during the 24 hours after release. The stories by CNN and Associated Press received an additional 199 online placements.

3. Projected Schedule for Future NAEP Reports

Angela Glymph, of the NCES staff, provided the Committee with a listing of NAEP reports scheduled for release during the remainder of 2012. The major reports and projected months of release were:

- 2011 Writing Report Card in August
- 2011 Reading Vocabulary Report in October
- 2011 Mega-States and 2005 Math Course Content Analysis in November.

The report linking 8th grade NAEP in mathematics and Science to the 2011 Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), which had been scheduled for release in

December with the international TIMSS release, may be delayed. Arnold Goldstein, of the NCES staff, said the Mega-States report on the nation's five largest states had been postponed because of other release priorities and a redesign that includes new online data displays with interactive graphics. He said new model pages and graphics would be submitted shortly for Board review with an intended release in November.

4. Release Plan for NAEP 2011 Reading Vocabulary Report

The Committee reviewed the online webinar release plan prepared by Governing Board staff for the October 2012 release of the NAEP 2011 Reading Vocabulary Report. Mr. Harris said the release would be preceded by an embargoed briefing or mailing to Congressional staff, depending on interest. Embargoed access would be offered to news media and to representatives of state education departments and governors through the Council of Chief State Officers and the National Governors Association. There would be a post-release stakeholder event. The Board website will have an interactive release page with audio-visual components for the press release, statements, and other materials.

ACTION: The Committee approved the proposed release plan for the NAEP 2011 Reading Vocabulary Report, as appended in Attachment B to this report, and recommended its adoption by the Governing Board.

5. Governing Board Reporting on 12th Grade Preparedness

The Committee reviewed materials provided by staff on the proposed reporting of Governing Board research on the preparedness of 12th graders for college and job training. The materials included draft outlines for a policy report with research summaries and findings aimed at a broad policy audience, and for an online-only technical report with the full texts of all research studies.

Also included for Board feedback were initial drafts of three key chapters of the policy report: brief summaries of the research conducted so far, including the 2009 NAEP-SAT linking study; a section with alternatives for placing preparedness reference points on the NAEP scale; and a discussion of whether the Proficient achievement level might be a reasonable standard for reporting college preparedness. The report would be termed a progress report and include research plans for the 2013 NAEP. Based on the Board discussion in May 2012, the report has been reconceptualized. Because not enough evidence has been assembled to date, there will be no firm conclusions about preparedness reference points and no extended presentation of the percentage of students reaching them.

Continued research plans call for a 2013 NAEP-ACT linkage study and efforts to link NAEP with ASVAB, the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery, which has extensive research data relating test scores with success in military occupations (many with civilian counterparts).

Committee members felt that the evidence gathered so far by the Board's research is limited and incomplete; it would be unwise to issue a report for policy-makers until clear findings can be reported. Issuing a weak report this fall could cause the public to conclude that preparedness cut scores cannot be developed and undercut the impact of a much stronger report with additional evidence on preparedness from the 2013 NAEP.

The Committee felt, however, that all completed research studies should be released. These would show the important questions being addressed and may be helpful to others involved with the same issues, such as the Common Core assessment consortiums and state education departments. Staff should consider releasing this information in mid-November or December 2012 without a release event. The Committee decided not to approve the release plan proposed by staff for the release to serve as a culminating 12th Grade Preparedness Commission symposium at which the final report of the preparedness research is shared with key stakeholders and the media.

Member David Alukonis suggested that, depending on its development, a report for the general public on the 12th grade preparedness research might be timed for release at the Board's 25th anniversary event, expected in December 2013 or March 2014.

Members agreed to the following:

Any policy or general public report on 12th grade preparedness—and attendant release activities and promotion—should be delayed until further research is conducted based on the 2013 NAEP.

Completed research studies should be released as a package on the Internet, accompanied by brief summaries of their methodology and key findings without a public event by the Board or its 12th Grade Preparedness Commission. The release should be accompanied by a statement on the status of the Board's preparedness research and future plans.

6. Implementation of Policy on NAEP Testing and Reporting on Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners

In March 2010, after work by an ad hoc committee and extensive public input, the Governing Board adopted a new policy on NAEP Testing and Reporting on Students with Disabilities (SD) and English Language Learners (ELL). The policy was based on recommendations by two expert panels and aimed to increase participation and reduce the variations in exclusion rates among the states and urban districts in NAEP.

Keith Rust, of Westat, the sampling and data collection contractor for NAEP, briefed the Committee on problems that may arise in implementing the policy and decisions made by NCES for the 2013 NAEP administration.

Under the policy, the only students that schools may exclude from NAEP are those with the most significant cognitive disabilities and English language learners who have

been in United States schools for less than one year. Where accommodations are permitted on state tests but not on NAEP—most frequently read-aloud for reading and calculators for all sections of math—students are to be urged to take NAEP without them, but may use NAEP-allowable accommodations as needed.

By law, student participation in NAEP is voluntary. Under the new policy students refusing to take NAEP because a particular accommodation is not allowed will be classified as refusals rather than exclusions. A score would be imputed for them, according to NAEP analysis procedures, that is the same as that of students with similar characteristics who took the exam. On the other hand, no scores are imputed for excluded students, which tends to raise state and district averages since non-SD students score higher on average than those with disabilities.

Mr. Rust said NCES is concerned that there may be a large increase in student and parent refusals in the 2013 NAEP because of the new policy. He presented a worst-case scenario, using 2011 data, under which all students excluded because NAEP did not offer an accommodation given on state tests became refusals. Although differences were slight for most states and districts, the additional refusals lowered the reported averages by 2 to 4 points in about a half dozen cases. The changes would be much greater in NAEP reading than in math.

Mr. Rust said NCES has decided that in 2013, contrary to the new policy, a school as well as a parent or student may decide not have a student tested by NAEP because of non-allowable accommodations. These students will be treated as exclusions in order not to disrupt trend. Data will be collected on whether schools, parents, or students made the decision, and will be used to evaluate whether to treat similar students as exclusions or refusals in the future.

Several Board members and staff asked clarifying questions.

7. Information Item

The briefing materials for the Committee contain information from NCES on plans for testing and reporting on Puerto Rico in 2013. There will a presentation and discussion of this item at the next Committee meeting in December 2012.

I certify the accuracy of these minutes.



Eileen Weiser, Chair

8-24-12

Date

Policy Statement on NAEP Background Questions and the Use of Contextual Data in NAEP Reporting

INTRODUCTION

By statute, the purpose of the National Assessment of Educational Progress is to provide a “fair and accurate” measure of student achievement and achievement trends. Academic or cognitive questions are its primary focus; the American public is its primary audience. However, in addition to reporting on what American students know and can do, NAEP has collected data for more than 40 years that provide a context for reporting and interpreting achievement results. According to the statute, such factors, both in and out of school, must be “directly related to the appraisal of academic achievement.”

In each assessment NAEP administers background questionnaires for students, their teachers, and schools. The questionnaires deal with educational experiences and other factors, such as teacher training or out-of-school learning activities, that are related to academic achievement. Data on several hundred background or noncognitive variables are available on the Internet through the NAEP Data Explorer. However, for more than a decade, little use has been made of this information in NAEP reports. The data have received minimal attention and had little impact despite the considerable efforts expended in developing and approving questionnaires and collecting and tabulating responses.

In October 2011 the National Assessment Governing Board convened an expert panel to recommend how to make better use of existing NAEP background questions and to propose an analytic agenda for additional topics and questions that would be useful in developing education policy and of value to the public. The panel report, entitled, *NAEP Background Questions: An Underused National Resource*, was presented to the Board in March 2012 by Marshall Smith, former U.S. Under Secretary of Education, who chaired the six-member panel.

Many of the panel recommendations build on the *Background Information Framework for the National Assessment of Educational Progress*, adopted by the Governing Board after it received final authority from Congress over non-cognitive items on the assessment. The framework was adopted in 2003, but has not been fully implemented.

The following policies are based on recommendations by the expert panel. The Board has also taken into consideration a wide range of public comment and the analysis provided by the National Center for Education Statistics.

It is important to understand that the National Assessment is not designed to show cause-and-effect relationships. Its data should not be used to “prove” what schools should do. But, as the *Background Information Framework* declares, NAEP’s “descriptions of the educational circumstances of students..., considered in light of research from other sources, may provide important information for public discussion and policy action.” The Board believes the National Assessment should improve upon its efforts to collect contextual information and present it clearly to the public, which will add to NAEP’s value to the nation.

POLICY PRINCIPLES

1. NAEP reporting should be enriched by greater use of contextual data derived from background or non-cognitive questions asked of students, teachers, and schools. Such data will be used both in regular Report Cards and in special focused reports.
2. Reporting of background data will describe patterns and trends, including the educational experiences of different groups of students. Care should be taken not to suggest causation.
3. Detailed frameworks will be published with the theoretical rationale and research evidence that support the selection of topics and questions in background questionnaires and their connection to student achievement. Such frameworks should be updated for each assessment cycle and provide the basis for new topics and questions.
4. An ad hoc committee of the Board will be established for one year to monitor implementation of this resolution, review the *NAEP Background Information Framework*, and recommend a permanent arrangement for Board consideration of background questions and the reporting of contextual data in NAEP.

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

For Questions and Questionnaires

1. Clusters of questions will be developed on important topics of continuing interest, such as student motivation and control over the environment, use of technology, and out-of-school learning, which could be used regularly or rotated across assessment cycles.
2. Modules will be prepared for special one-time studies to provide descriptive information on issues of current policy interest.
- 3.
4. A thorough review will be conducted to eliminate duplicative or low-priority questions. Unproductive topics and questions will be dropped.

5. NAEP will include background questions from international assessments, such as PISA and TIMSS, to obtain direct comparisons of states and TUDA districts to educational practices in other countries.
6. Because of the value of preserving trends, consistent wording of questions should be maintained on topics of continuing interest. Changes in wording must be justified. However, as practices and circumstances change, new questions will be introduced in a timely manner to gather data on topics of current interest.
7. The development and use of improved measures of socio-economic status (SES) will be accelerated, including further exploration of an SES index for NAEP reporting.

For Data Collection

7. The maximum time for students to answer the background questionnaire will be increased from 10 to 15 minutes on new computer-based assessments. Consideration should be given to a similar increase in paper-and-pencil assessments.
8. Whenever feasible, assessment samples should be divided (spiral sampling) and background questions rotated in different years in order to cover more topics without increasing respondent burden. These practices will be initiated in the assessments of reading and mathematics, which are conducted frequently, and considered for other subject areas if the frequency of testing permits.

For Reporting

9. Special focused reports with data through the 2013 assessment will be issued on the following topics: private schools, charter schools, gender gaps, and black male students. Reports shall include significant contextual information as well as cognitive results. Advisory committees, composed of a range of knowledgeable persons, may be appointed to provide input on reporting issues.
10. Exploratory analyses will be carried out to determine if existing background questions may form the basis for additional focused reports. Such reports may be issued by the Governing Board as well as by the National Center for Education Statistics.
11. The NAEP Data Explorer should be further improved to make data more accessible to general, non-specialist users. Tables and very simple-to-construct charts will be prepared to present data on important topics of wide public interest. Additional means of disseminating information, using new technology such as simple apps that would allow parents, teachers, and others to access background and achievement data, will be explored.

**NATIONAL ASSESSMENT GOVERNING BOARD
RELEASE PLAN FOR
NAEP MEANING VOCABULARY 2011 REPORT**

The Nation's Report Card in Meaning Vocabulary 2009 and 2011

The Nation's Report Card in Meaning Vocabulary 2009 and 2011 will be released to the general public during October 2012. Following a review and approval of the report's results, the release will be arranged as an online webinar. The release event will include a data presentation by the Commissioner of Education Statistics, with moderation and comments by at least one member of the National Assessment Governing Board. Full accompanying data will be posted on the Internet at the scheduled time of release.

With the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Reading Framework, NAEP introduced a more systematic assessment of vocabulary, in which students were tested on their ability to use words to comprehend the sentence or paragraph in which the word occurs. These meaning vocabulary questions measure students' ability to apply word knowledge to develop and interpret meaning. This Report Card explains the new focus on meaning vocabulary and how it fits with the comprehension assessment and illustrates what students were asked to do with specific examples. It also shows the relationship of performance on meaning vocabulary to performance on reading comprehension.

Results are presented for all three grades, for the nation and the states, and for student groups including gender and race/ethnicity and span two years – 2009 and 2011. Vocabulary results for 2009 are based on nationally representative samples of 178,800 fourth-graders, 160,900 eighth-graders, and 51,700 twelfth-graders. Results for 2011 are based on samples of 213,100 fourth-graders and 168,200 eighth-graders. (There was no twelfth-grade assessment in 2011.)

DATE AND LOCATION

The release event for the media and the public will occur in October 2012. The exact date and location will be determined by the Chair of the Reporting and Dissemination Committee, in accordance with Governing Board policy, following acceptance of the final report.

EVENT FORMAT

- Introductions and opening statement by a National Assessment Governing Board member
- Data presentation by the Commissioner of Education Statistics

- Comments by at least one Governing Board member
- Questions from members of the press and then the general audience
- Program will last approximately 60 minutes
- Event will be broadcast live over the Internet, and viewers will be able to submit questions electronically for panelists. An archived version of the webinar, with closed captioning, will be posted on the Governing Board website.

EMBARGOED ACTIVITIES BEFORE RELEASE

In the days preceding the release, the Governing Board and NCES will offer embargoed briefings or mailings to U.S. Congressional staff in Washington, DC. Representatives of governors, state education agencies, and appropriate media will have access to a special website with embargoed data after signing the Governing Board's embargo agreement.

REPORT RELEASE

The Commissioner of Education Statistics will publicly release the report at the NAEP website—<http://nationsreportcard.gov>—at the scheduled time of the release event. An online copy of the report, along with data tools, questions, and various other resources, will be available at the time of release on the NAEP site. An interactive version of the release with panelists' statements, a Governing Board press release, publications and related materials will be posted on the Board's web site at www.nagb.org. The site will also feature links to social networking sites, key graphics, and audio and/or video material related to the event.

ACTIVITIES AFTER THE RELEASE

The Governing Board's communications contractor, Reingold, will work with Board staff to coordinate an in-person or online event designed to extend the life of the NAEP Meaning Vocabulary results by featuring current topics that would be of great interest and relevance to stakeholders with an interest in student achievement in reading and vocabulary. The event would be designed for organizations, officials, and individuals in the fields of education and policy whose work involves reading education and assessment.