

National Assessment Governing Board

Reporting and Dissemination Committee

Report of August 7, 2015

Reporting and Dissemination Committee Members: Andrés Alonso (Chair), Rebecca Gagnon (Vice Chair), Anitere Flores, Tonya Matthews, Tonya Miles, Gov. Ronnie Musgrove, Father Joseph O’Keefe.

Governing Board Staff: Bill Bushaw, Stephaan Harris, Laura LoGerfo, and Anthony White.

NCES Staff: Peggy Carr, James Deaton, Linda Hamilton, Shawn Kline, and Grady Wilburn.

Other Attendees: AIR: Cadelle Hemphill and Yan Wang. CRP: Shaunice Bailey. District Communications Group: Adam Clampitt, Meredith Davis, Chelsea Radler, and Lyn Schultes. ETS: Nicole Beaulieu, Jonas Bertling, and Lisa Ward. Hager Sharp: James Elias, David Hoff and Debra Silimeo. HumRRO: Hillary Michaels and Steve Sellman. Quotient: Merle Schwartz Reingold: Sarah Johnson, Valerie Marrapodi, and Shannon Tucker. Westat: Chris Averett.

1. Introduction of Website and Communications Contracts

Stephaan Harris of NAGB staff updated the Committee on two new contracts the Board awarded earlier in the summer to small businesses for services related to website and communications services. He said the web contract was awarded to Quotient, the Board’s web contractor since 2009, and the communications contract went to the District Communications Group (DCG).

Mr. Harris said the awards were three-year blanket purchase agreements preceded by an extensive period of market research to identify good candidates and chosen through a careful review process. He mentioned that Reingold is DCG’s subcontractor; the contract Reingold won in 2013 had to be re-bid because it no longer qualifies as a small business on the GSA schedule. Mr. Harris then asked the principals from each firm to say a few words.

Adam Clampitt with DCG said he was passionate about education and that his firm has extensive work experience with federal agencies related to outreach and social media. Merle Schwartz from Quotient said the firm has a long history supporting education work and looks forward to working with the Board.

2. Media Embargo Guidelines

Mr. Harris introduced the discussion on media embargo guidelines. He recapped Committee discussion at previous meetings about how to treat “gray area” outlets—including blogs, outlets backed by groups, and other online operations—when deciding which media may gain access to embargoed data for NAEP Report Cards. Mr. Harris also summarized the highlights of a conference call which Board staff convened in July with Committee members on this topic. On that call, a consensus emerged that maintaining the confidentiality of the data was the most important aspect of media embargo guidelines, not necessarily the definition of the requestor.

Chairman Alonso noted how this conversation on media embargo guidelines had evolved during his tenure as R&D Chair and amidst changes in Committee membership while also, simultaneously, the media landscape has changed rapidly. Chairman Alonso said that the current policy is geared toward established media outlets to set a maximum level of protection to ensure confidentiality. But he added that it is clear that being an “established media outlet” is no longer sufficient in the changed landscape. For example, if a teachers’ union asks for data in advance and vows to protect confidentiality, why not give it to them?

Committee member Governor Musgrove favors getting information out to media quickly, as long as requestors meet the confidentiality requirements. He added that a blogger with 1 million readers has more audience than most newspapers, so if he or she complies with confidentiality agreements, why should they not receive access?

Chairman Alonso said that the members need to shift emphasis from defining the receiver to setting a process of ensuring confidentiality or criteria around the nature of data use. The point of the Committee’s current embargo process is to provide time for reporters to review the data, ask questions, and create accurate stories with proper context.

In addition, citing his experience as a superintendent in Baltimore, Chairman Alonso expressed the importance of access to NAEP data granted to district and state chiefs before release to understand the results and communicate accurate messages about the results, especially as local results often produce a different picture from national results. And he said it was important for reporters to have that extra time to get smart about data, especially with more emphasis on subgroups. Ultimately, the embargo is designed to give key communicators time to construct the proper context for results.

Committee member Matthews agreed and asked if the point of granting media access was to gain more exposure. If so, perhaps a different approach should be conceived for stakeholders. She added that we must know what the purpose of the release is as the concept of embargo is deciding who is special.

Vice Chair Gagnon explained that if NAEP data are released without a pre-release process, then people rush to produce reports first. Because Board staff has limited capacity and cannot

address each embargo request solo, perhaps the Committee should establish a process to handle more requests, such as only granting access to the first ten “gray area” outlets, for example.

Chairman Alonso said he heard a consensus emerging around purpose, and a realization that R&D should expand the types of organizations that receive the information prior to official release. So the next step is to examine the embargo process and consider how the Committee can ensure confidentiality, especially if there are more requests given limited time and staff.

NCES Commissioner Peggy Carr added that embargoed access is given to state chiefs’ staff and TUDA superintendents through NAEP coordinators. Even if a group has a legitimate need to the data, the Board should not simply acquiesce. She reminded the Committee that guidelines the Board approves must be consistent with the OMB-issued federal guidelines to which NCES must adhere as a statistical agency. Chairman Alonso concurred with this last point.

3. Release Plans for 2015 NAEP Reading and Mathematics Assessments

The Committee reviewed a release plan for the 2015 NAEP Math and Reading Report Cards, which will provide results for 4th and 8th graders nationally and by state. Mr. Harris said the plan calls for a webinar release and comprehensive post-release activities, which may include webinars and online chats or presentations, to extend the life of the report and further connect with stakeholders.

Committee member Miles, inspired by the groups who attended the Board’s outreach dinner the previous evening and by the potential partnerships the Board could develop with them, suggested an in-person release event that would draw stakeholders in the audience.

Mr. Harris indicated many of the last several releases moved from press conferences to webinars because it was harder to get a substantial turnout for live events, and webinars were more time and cost-effective.

Committee member Miles, however, felt hosting a big in-person event could net the Board a significant audience. Committee member Sen. Flores said perhaps the event could be hosted at the site of an influential stakeholder, such as the National PTA, which already enjoys a substantial following to populate the audience, and by hosting at their site, can reduce costs. Both Vice Chair Gagnon and Committee member Matthews said the follow-up events suggested would be instrumental to elicit and sustain interest from stakeholder communities.

ACTION: The Committee approved the release plan with the modification that a live in-person element be included in the initial release.

4. Considering the Future: Changes to Core Contextual Variables and Efforts to Sustain Messaging

This agenda item focused on taking stock of R&D's progress in providing input on core contextual variables and on releases—both successes and persistent challenges. Chairman Alonso said when he became chair, there was too limited an ability for the Board to change the content about what is being communicated about results. Now there is far more interaction with the items earlier as well as more collaboration with the other committees to contribute R&D input at more appropriate times.

Chairman Alonso echoed the message from outreach event participants who requested more emphasis on the contextual variables, which drive conversations about what NAEP's meaning is. Importantly, he said, the Board needs to present meaning, facts, and content, not just numbers and results, to disseminate actionable messages. He added that this requires presenting disaggregated information at all levels and communicating this information more succinctly and more accessibly, e.g., infographics, heat maps, and YouTube videos. This also implies that reporting should transcend the typical, conservative approach to releases, which often hides important analyses and buries critical meaning to the data.

Committee members agreed with Ms. Miles' suggestion to develop reporting on contextual variables by themselves and carefully choosing such items to highlight that can lead to action and/or respond to hot conversations among the public.

Vice Chair Gagnon said some topics that garner lots of attention in the media or among the public have been studied by NAEP for years, why should the Board not join that ongoing conversation?

Committee member Matthews added that these conversations should be pursued through external partners to leverage those organizations' established relationships to magnify the dissemination. She also encouraged the use of infographics and cautioned that they should not be ends onto themselves; they should be sufficiently substantive to exist as stand-alones but also stimulate curiosity and drive people to the website to dig through analyses and data, to teach them how to fish as it were.

Chairman Alonso told the Committee members that the external partners at the outreach event requested the fish. Vice Chair Gagnon clarified that not everyone can use the high-grade whaling equipment; not everyone wants to delve into the NAEP Data Explorer. The Governing Board needs to provide a variety of fishing poles that differ for different stakeholders' expertise and interests, he said.

Committee member Father O’Keefe suggested that Committee members all return to reviewing some of the more fundamental documents that introduce NAEP and develop language both about what NAEP is and what NAEP is not. The current introduction to NAEP work seems outdated (pictures of pencils and erasers), which does not help improve the accessibility of NAEP.

5. Conclusion

Chairman Alonso delivered some parting words to the Committee. He summarized lessons from his experience and expertise with four main points:

- 1) When discussing trend, we are necessarily conservative, because by definition we are communicating what we communicated previously.
- 2) When engaging NAGB and NCES staff over the provision of information, we need to receive everything upfront to facilitate follow-up questions in a timely manner.
- 3) Consider the content of what we communicate. The public is interested in only 2-3 foci, one of which is trend, so the Committee must choose to highlight what should be within the scope of their interest.
- 4) There are questions from stakeholders that should be anticipated. For example, TUDAs analyze NAEP data to determine how their curriculum and instruction map to NAEP, to learn how their state assessment maps to NAEP. What data and information does the Board have that can feed the technical work of what occurs in classrooms? He implored the Board to help new members learn the nature of the information that is available.

Andrés Alonso

Chair of Reporting and Dissemination Committee

September 17, 2015

Date



**NATIONAL ASSESSMENT GOVERNING BOARD
UPDATED RELEASE PLAN FOR THE
NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS (NAEP)
IN MATHEMATICS AND READING**

The Nation’s Report Card: Mathematics and Reading 2015

The 2015 NAEP Mathematics and Reading Report Cards—both national/state and urban district data—will be released together to the general public at an in-person event in October 2015. Following a review and approval of the report’s results, the release event will be arranged at a Washington, DC, school as an in-person event with closed-captioned livestreaming to allow remote attendance by viewers nationwide. The event will include a data presentation by the Acting Commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES); moderation and comments by Governing Board Chair Terry Mazany; comments from Council of the Great City Schools Executive Director Michael Casserly and Council of Chief State School Officers Executive Director Chris Minnich; and comments by Chancellor of DC Public Schools Kaya Henderson. The event will also include a conversational Q&A session that would include questions submitted via livestream. Full accompanying data will be posted on the Internet at the scheduled time of release. This is an amendment to the release plan approved by the full Board in August 2015, which called for a release event for only national and state data with an in-person component. This amended plan will be effective upon approval by the Governing Board’s Reporting and Dissemination Committee.

The 2015 NAEP Report Cards in mathematics and reading will present findings from a representative sample of 4th-graders and 8th-graders nationwide. Results, which will be presented in terms of scale scores, percentiles, and NAEP achievement levels, will be for the nation, states (including the District of Columbia and the Department of Defense Education Activity schools), and 21 school districts that are part of the Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA). The report will focus on changes from 2013 and from the earliest assessment (1990 for math; 1992 for reading), featuring data on achievement gaps and sample questions and allowing users to do deeper dives into state level data and run data by different contextual variables.

Data will be presented for all students and by subgroups, race/ethnicity, gender, school type and location, and eligibility for the National School Lunch Program. Contextual information (i.e., student, teacher, and school survey data) with findings of interest also will be reported.

DATE AND LOCATION

The release event will occur in October 2015. The release date 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

- Moderation and remarks by National Assessment Governing Board Chair
- Introduction by the DC Public Schools Chancellor
- Presentation of results by the Acting Commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics
- Comments from the executive directors of the Council of the Great City Schools and the Council of Chief State School Officers
- Questions from the in-person and livestream audience
- Program will last approximately 75-90 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 at www.nagb.org.

ACTIVITIES BEFORE RELEASE

In the days preceding the release, the Governing Board and NCES will offer briefings to U.S. Congressional staff in Washington, DC; a conference call for appropriate media as defined by the Governing Board's Embargo Policy; and an embargoed data website available to Congressional staff, approved senior representatives of the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers, and approved media. The goal of these activities is to provide these stakeholders with a comprehensive overview of findings and data to help ensure accurate reporting to the public and deeper understanding of results.

REPORT RELEASE

The Acting Commissioner of Education Statistics will publicly release the report at the NAEP website—<http://nationsreportcard.gov>—and at the scheduled time of the release event. An online copy of the report, along with data tools, questions, and other resources, will also 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, subject frameworks, 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 and audio and/or video material related to the event.

ACTIVITIES AFTER THE RELEASE

The Governing Board's communications contractor will work with Board staff to produce a series of infographics that would highlight important contextual variables and data and be easily distributed via social media to media and other stakeholders for dissemination for weeks following the release. The Board will also coordinate three separate post-release communications efforts—which could include such strategies as an online chat, major presentation, webinar, or social media campaign—that would target the mathematics, reading, and urban education and assessment communities. The goal of these activities is to extend the newsworthiness of the results and provide value and relevance to stakeholders with an interest in student achievement and assessment in these areas.