

# **National Assessment Governing Board**

## **Executive Committee**

### **Report of May 12, 2016**

**Executive Committee Members:** Terry Mazany (Chair), Lucille Davy, Shannon Garrison, Rebecca Gagnon, Andrew Ho, Joseph O’Keefe, Fielding Rolston, Cary Sneider.

**Other Board Members:** Mitchell Chester, Frank Fernandes, Jim Geringer, Jim Popham, Linda Rosen, Joe Willhoft.

**Governing Board Staff:** Bill Bushaw (Executive Director), Mary Crovo (Deputy Executive Director), Michelle Blair, Lily Clark, Laura LoGerfo, Tessa Regis, Sharyn Rosenberg.

**NCES Staff:** Peggy Carr (Acting Commissioner), Pat Etienne, Eunice Greer, Lauren Harrell, Dan McGrath, Michael Moles.

**Other Attendees:** AIR: George Bohrnstedt, Kim Gattis, Fran Stancavage, Kyle Stickles. ETS: Jay Campbell, Amy Dresher, Karen Wixson. HumRRO: Hillary Michaels, Laress Wise. Pearson: Scott Becker. Westat: Chris Averett.

#### **1. Welcome and Agenda Overview**

Chair Mazany called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. Mr. Mazany provided an overview of the agenda. He observed that the entire Executive Committee meeting would occur in open session, as the recent NAEP appropriations increase relieved the Committee from needing a closed session to review the NAEP budget and Assessment Schedule at this meeting. He noted that the next quarterly Board meeting will occur in Chicago and commented on the value of the Board meeting in locations throughout the country to achieve the Board’s outreach vision identified in the draft Strategic Plan.

#### **2. Nomination Process for Board Vice Chair**

Mr. Mazany began the Governing Board’s nomination process for its Vice Chair for the term extending from October 1, 2016 – September 30, 2017. He praised Vice Chair Lucille Davy for her substantive role in guiding the Board’s Strategic Planning Initiative over the past year.

Chair Mazany provided the Committee with an overview of the Vice Chair nomination process, which is conducted annually. Per Board tradition, he recused himself from the selection process and appointed outgoing Board member Anitere Flores to poll members individually to determine the nominee. Mr. Mazany requested that this informal polling be completed in time for the Governing Board to vote on the nominee at the August 2015 Board meeting.

### **3. Governing Board Updates**

#### *Educational Policy Updates*

Lily Clark provided the Executive Committee with education policy updates since the last meeting. She noted that while Secretary John King was confirmed by the Senate faster than expected on March 14, 2016, it was looking unlikely for passage of the NAEP reauthorization bill (i.e. the Strengthening Education Through Research Act) during this Congress. Federal education policy discussions have focused on the Department of Education's regulations for the Every Student Succeeds Act, which Secretary King anticipates finalizing in the fall even with the ongoing scrutiny from Congress.

#### *Evaluation of NAEP Achievement Levels*

Mary Crovo and Sharyn Rosenberg provided the Committee with an overview of the Governing Board's 26-year history of achievement levels setting. They noted the initial controversy of what now has become commonplace in educational assessment: using multiple achievement levels to report student performance. Over the years the Board has modified its methodology to determine NAEP achievement levels. By statute, the NAEP achievement levels are considered "trial" until the Commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics removes the trial status, upon consideration of an independent evaluation of the achievement levels commissioned by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES). Multiple evaluations have been conducted since the achievement levels were put in place, and the trial status has remained.

In 2014, IES's National Center for Education Evaluation contracted with the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) to conduct an independent evaluation of the NAEP achievement levels for reading and mathematics in grades 4, 8, and 12. The Governing Board and NCES presented factual information and historical documents to NAS to inform their evaluation but otherwise were not involved in the evaluation process. The Governing Board is statutorily required to provide a response to the report's recommendations within 90 days to the Secretary, the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions and the House Committee on Education and the Workforce.

Once the NAS evaluation is published, the Governing Board will develop its required response to Congress with leadership from the Committee on Standards, Design and Methodology. Ms. Crovo noted that the Board should anticipate more discussion on this topic at its August 2016 quarterly meeting.

### **4. Strategic Planning Initiative**

Vice Chair Lucille Davy provided an overview of the Strategic Plan discussions scheduled for this May Board meeting, noting the cross-committee breakout sessions on Friday to be followed by a plenary discussion on Saturday. She emphasized the importance of Board members engaging in the substance of the draft Strategic Plan to determine if the Board will be ready to approve the plan in August and, if not, what changes the Board desires for the document.

Chair Mazany underscored the intention to focus on the goals, strategies, and actions in the draft Strategic Plan and identify any points that need to be clarified (as opposed to wordsmithing the document).

Shannon Garrison commented that she remained confused about the categories of Goals, Strategies, and Actions used in the draft Strategic Plan. She recommended defining those levels to distinguish them and ensure that the labels are being applied consistently in the document.

The Executive Committee engaged in a brief discussion of Ms. Garrison's comment and noted that all Board members will have the opportunity to discuss this feedback in depth during Friday's breakout group sessions.

## **5. NAEP Research Grants**

Acting NCES Commissioner Peggy Carr provided the Executive Committee with an overview of her draft proposal to reinstate a NAEP research grants program. For 20 years, NAEP had secondary research grants and one full-time employee to run the program. The research resulting from these grants has offered successful new strategies for the NAEP program (e.g. one study resulted in a method to reduce measurement error that is still in use by NAEP) and important findings to improve education (e.g. the Council of the Great City Schools' first analyses of the Trial Urban District Assessment data). Following the model of IES, NCES is hoping to develop training programs on using NAEP data.

Ms. Carr proposed three components of the program: 1) *NAEP Secondary Analysis Grants* to do advanced research with NAEP data; 2) *Pre-Doctoral Fellowship Grants* to conduct exploratory analyses to improve NAEP methods; and 3) *NAEP Internship Program* to support short-term studies linking NAEP to other administrative data sets.

In response to a question from Joseph O'Keefe, Ms. Carr explained that these research grant programs would be funded through the NAEP program to ensure relevance of the research activities and likelihood of benefit to improve the NAEP program. She noted that the program would be administered through the National Center for Education Research, a separate component of IES, though NCES would have a Grants Director involved.

The Executive Committee and Board members present were enthusiastic about Ms. Carr's proposal and offered several points for her consideration. Board members expressed a desire to have a role in identifying research topics for the grants. They recommended structuring the grants to ensure there is a final reporting/feedback loop for the Department and the public. The Committee discussed the benefit of the grants promoting awareness and use of the public and restricted NAEP datasets by education researchers.

Chair Mazany identified the potential opportunity to use the grants program to diversify the field of education research by exploring how other fields, such as data analytics, could inform NAEP.

Ms. Garrison suggested that the NAEP Research Grants be branded as a prestigious and distinguished awards program. She noted that the internship program might appeal to a broader audience than students, as teachers may also be interested in a summer program to develop new skills.

Ms. Carr was receptive to the Board member feedback, noting that she would continue to consult with the Board on the design of the NAEP research grants program, including providing input on the Requests for Applications (RFA) and the grant priorities.

Mr. Mazany adjourned the Executive Committee meeting at 6:00 p.m.

I certify the accuracy of these minutes.

  
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Terry Mazany, Chair

June 15, 2016  
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Date