

# National Assessment Governing Board

## Executive Committee

August 2, 2012

### AGENDA

4:30 pm	Welcome, Introductions, and Agenda Overview <i>David Driscoll, Chair</i>	
4:35 pm	Continuation of the NAEP 12 <sup>th</sup> Grade Preparedness Commission <i>David Driscoll</i>	
4:40 pm	Committee Issues and Challenges <i>Committee Chairs</i>	
4:50 pm	<b>ACTION ITEM</b> Nomination of the Board Vice Chair for the Term October 1, 2012 to September 30, 2013 <i>David Alukonis, Member, Executive Committee</i>	Attachment A
5:00 pm	Governing Board 25th Anniversary Planning <i>Mary Crovo, Deputy Executive Director</i>	
5:05 pm	Plans for an Executive Committee Retreat in September 2012 Updating Governing Board Policy: Reviewing the Past, Looking to the Next 25 Years <i>David Driscoll</i>	
5:10 pm	Committee Discussion: NAEP and Common Core State Standards and Assessments <i>Cornelia Orr, Executive Director</i>	Attachment B
5:20 pm	Committee Discussion: Considerations in Assessing 8th and 12th Grade Civics and U.S. History at the State Level <i>Cornelia Orr</i>	Attachment C
5:30 pm	Committee Discussion: Making a Difference and Parent Engagement <i>David Driscoll</i> <i>Tonya Miles, Chair, Ad Hoc Committee on NAEP Parent Engagement (established March 2011 through March 2012)</i>	
5:40 pm	Status of FY 2013 Appropriation for NAEP and the Governing Board <i>Ray Fields, Assistant Director for Policy and Research</i>	
5:45 pm	NAEP Contracts, Budget and Schedule for 2013 and Beyond <i>Cornelia Orr</i> <i>Peggy Carr, Associate Commissioner, NCES</i>	
6:00 pm	Adjourn	

## **Nomination of Governing Board Vice Chair for the Term October 1, 2012 through September 30, 2012**

### **ACTION ITEM**

While the Governing Board Chair is appointed by the U.S. Secretary of Education, the Vice Chair is elected annually by the Governing Board from among its current members. The practice of the Board electing its Vice Chair has been in effect since the Board's inception in 1988 and is incorporated in the Board's By-laws.

Because Governing Board terms begin each October 1, the Governing Board elects the Vice Chair annually at the quarterly Board meeting conducted the preceding August. The Executive Committee is responsible for nominating a candidate for consideration by the full Board. The nomination process is set in motion each year at the May Board meeting.

At the May 17, 2012 Executive Committee meeting, Chairman Driscoll asked David Alukonis to lead the process for nominating the Vice Chair for the term beginning October 1, 2012.

At the August 2, 2012 Executive Committee meeting, Mr. Alukonis will report on the results of the nominations process. He will present a candidate for Vice Chair for consideration by the Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee will act on that recommendation and decide on the individual to be nominated for election by the Governing Board. The election will occur before the conclusion of the Board meeting on August 4, 2012.

## **NAEP and Common Core Standards and Assessments**

At the May 2012 meeting, the Governing Board began a discussion of the similarities, differences, and potential relationship between NAEP and the Common Core State Standards and Assessments. The Governing Board requested that a one-page paper be prepared on this topic that could be shared with the public.

A discussion draft follows on the next page.

## Discussion Draft: NAEP and Common Core Standards and Assessments

Ray Fields

The National Assessment of Educational Progress is a congressionally authorized federal project, reporting to the public on K-12 student achievement since 1969. Common Core State Standards and Assessments (CCSS) is a recent K-12 education reform initiative led by the states through the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association. NAEP has been one among many factors that helped prompt CCSS and has been a resource to it.

The rise of CCSS followed a NAEP special study, now a series, on state performance standards, starting with those in use in 2005. This study series documented wide variability across states in the rigor of performance standards.

The first step of the CCSS initiative was to develop K-12 content standards for mathematics and English language arts (ELA). The NAEP reading and writing assessment frameworks are cited explicitly as the foundation for the CCSS ELA content standards, and the NAEP mathematics framework was used as a resource in developing the CCSS mathematics content standards.

Two multi-state consortia—PARCC and SMARTER BALANCED—are developing separate sets of tests to measure individual student performance in relation to the CCSS content standards. Performance standards will be set after the tests are operational—scheduled for 2014-15. Their plans for computer-based testing may result in common state-based platforms that could benefit and possibly hasten the pace of computer-based testing for NAEP.

NAEP has been, is, and can continue to be a resource for the CCSS and have a complementary role. As a resource, NAEP will be available as a common measure to calibrate the results across the two separate assessment programs and examine the comparability of the respective performance standards. NAEP 12<sup>th</sup> grade results and research on academic preparedness for college and job training can be a source of external information in setting the “college and career ready” performance standards planned for the CCSS assessments. Other NAEP and CCSS research (e.g., on inclusion) can be mutually beneficial.

NAEP will be complementary to CCSS. NAEP covers reading, writing, and mathematics, as well as other parts of the core curricula: science, civics, U.S. history, geography, the arts, foreign language and technology and engineering literacy. CCSS will provide student, classroom, school, district, and state data. NAEP will provide nationally representative data, state to nation comparisons, and state-to-state comparisons for all states.

NAEP also will provide state longitudinal data in reading and mathematics going back to the early 1990’s and student achievement data at the 12th grade. NAEP will be able to translate international assessment scores onto the NAEP scale (and vice versa) through special statistical studies linking NAEP national level results with national results from the international assessments. Thus, through participation in NAEP, states will be able to compare their student results with student results in other nations.

Whether NAEP’s complementary roles in the assessment of reading, writing, and mathematics will continue to be needed in an era in which all states participate in Common Core Assessments in English language arts and mathematics is an open question that will be answered in the course of time.

## **Considerations in Assessing 8th and 12th Grade Civics and U.S. History at the State Level**

Since 2004, there has been consistent interest in Congress for NAEP to conduct state-level assessments of civics and U.S. history at grades 8 and 12. Bills authorizing NAEP to conduct such state-level assessments have been introduced in the House or Senate in 2004 (S. 2721), 2005 (S. 860), 2007 (S.1414), 2008 (H.R. 6525) and 2009 (S.659). NAEP first measured achievement in Citizenship/Social Studies in 1975-76 and U.S. history in 1986. These initial NAEP assessments, as well as all subsequent testing in these subjects, have been at the national level only.

In June 2005, then Executive Director Charles Smith was invited to testify on S. 860 before the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee (HELP), chaired at the time by Senator Lamar Alexander (Attachment C1). Mr. Smith shared the opinion that, based on the experience of voluntary participation in state NAEP, there was reason to believe that states would sign up for civics and U.S. history. He concluded his testimony with the following statement

Mr. Chairman, it is commendable that you and Senator Kennedy have introduced the American History Achievement Act...As the bill so eloquently states: "...the strength of American democracy and our standing in the world depend on ensuring that our children have a strong understanding of our Nation's past."

Regrettably, the NAEP results, especially at the 12th grade and by race/ethnicity, give cause for concern about the state of knowledge of American students about U.S. history and civics. We ignore at our own peril the implications of these results for our nation's future.

Drawing from her remarks about the NAEP U.S. history and civics results, I would like to close with these quotes made by former Governing Board member Diane Ravitch: "Preparing our youth to be responsible members of a democratic society is one of the most important missions of American education." "Our ability to defend—thoughtfully and intelligently—what we as a nation hold dear depends on our knowledge and understanding of what we hold dear." "We cannot be content when so many...are so poorly prepared."

The FY 2006 appropriation conference report contained a request to the National Assessment Governing Board to prepare a report on the feasibility of conducting NAEP state-level assessments in civics and U.S. history. In addressing this request, the Board surveyed the states to determine the degree of interest in participating in such assessments. Of 26 respondents, 20 indicated interest in participating at 8<sup>th</sup> grade and a sub-group of 13 at 12<sup>th</sup> grade as well. The Board's June 20, 2006 report to Congress (Attachment C2) concluded that with adequate additional funding and sufficient advance notice, state-level assessments in civics and U.S. history are feasible to conduct.

In 2011, H.R. 3564, The Sandra Day O'Connor Civic Learning Act of 2011 was introduced with a "sense of the Congress" provision asking that NAEP's sample size be increased "...to improve disaggregation and analysis of data regarding progress in history and civics." We understand the intent of this provision to include state-level reporting.

Various versions of the bills cited above contain this statement in the respective Finding sections

"America's past encompasses great leaders and great ideas that contribute to our shared heritage and to the principles of freedom, equality, justice, and opportunity for all."

Referring to this finding, Charles Smith in his June 2005 appearance before the HELP Committee said that "... the [NAEP civics and U.S. history] data cited [in my testimony] raise serious questions about how well these noble principles are being transmitted to and absorbed by rising generations of young adults. The disparate performance between minority and non-minority students in U.S. history and in civics is egregious and poses challenges to our nation's progress in achieving those very principles."

Charles Smith's and Diane Ravitch's statements were true in 2005 and never more true than today. The presentations at the May 2012 Board meeting on the changing demographic patterns of the U.S. population underscore the importance of ensuring that knowledge about U.S. history and civics is transmitted effectively to students. Monitoring student achievement in civics and U.S. history, especially at the state level, brings attention to the value inherent in these subjects. However, the federal budget outlook for NAEP is more likely to contract than to provide increased funds in support of state-level assessments in civics and U.S. history.

With all of the preceding in mind, Governing Board staff asked the Executive Committee during the June 27, 2012 teleconference for approval to explore the feasibility of obtaining foundation funding for state-level assessments in civics and U.S. history at 8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade for the 2014 assessment cycle, when these subjects are next scheduled for assessment at the national level. The Executive Committee indicated that Governing Board staff could proceed. Governing Board staff will provide a report at the August 2012 Board meeting.



# *National Assessment Governing Board*

National Assessment of Educational Progress

**Testimony of Charles E. Smith  
Executive Director  
National Assessment Governing Board**

**Before the  
Senate Subcommittee on  
Education and Early Childhood Development  
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions**

**June 30, 2005**

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Chairman Alexander and Members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the American History Achievement Act.

I am Charles E. Smith, Executive Director of the National Assessment Governing Board. The Governing Board was created in legislation introduced in 1988 by Senator Kennedy, developed to reauthorize the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The legislation also provided for the first-ever state-by-state NAEP results and for standards-based reporting by NAEP. Senator Kennedy's bill implemented recommendations made in 1987 by a national study group charged with improving NAEP's usefulness. The study group, comprised of highly respected leaders in education, was chaired by then Tennessee governor Lamar Alexander. One of the members of the study group was the First Lady of Arkansas at the time, Hillary Rodham Clinton.

It is with a profound sense of appreciation for your and Senator Kennedy's continuing support for NAEP's role in providing information useful to educators and policymakers, that I appear before you today.

Mr. Chairman, you have asked that my testimony address the provisions of S. 860—the American History Achievement Act—and results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress in U.S. history and civics. I will provide selected NAEP results first. The Findings section of the American History Achievement Act already includes a listing of data drawn from the 2001 U.S. history assessment and I will augment those results. The remainder of my testimony will address the provisions of S. 860.

### **NAEP Results in U.S. History and Civics**

Recent events remind us that our ability to survive as a nation depends on our belief in the value of our purposes as a nation. Schools are the primary means for transmitting these purposes to each new generation—through instruction in U.S. history and civics. It is essential that students leave school with a deep understanding of the ideas, traditions, and democratic values that bind us with our fellow citizens and that serve as a compass that guides our societal and individual decisions.

Likewise, it is essential to shine a light on the outcomes of teaching and learning in U.S. history and civics and on successful or promising instructional practices. Mr. Chairman, you and the subcommittee are to be commended for the light that will be shined on these topics by conducting this important hearing today.

### **Achievement in U.S. History**

The NAEP results in U.S. history for 1994 and 2001 and in civics for 1998 present a somewhat mixed but troubling portrait of student achievement in these subjects. The NAEP achievement results listed in the Findings section of the American History Achievement Act indicate that U.S. students have significant deficiencies in the knowledge of our nation's history. Of particular concern is the finding from the 2001 U.S. history assessment that 57 percent of 12<sup>th</sup> graders scored below the Basic level in U.S. history and that this was unchanged from the 1994 assessment.

There are three achievement levels reported by NAEP: Basic, Proficient, and Advanced. The Basic level represents partial mastery of the knowledge and skills prerequisite for the Proficient level. The Proficient level denotes competency over challenging subject matter. The Advanced level signifies superior performance.

The results in U.S. history in 2001 by achievement level and grade are displayed in Table 1:

**Table 1.**  
**Percentage at Achievement Levels by Grade**  
**NAEP U.S. History Assessment 2001\***

	Below Basic	Basic	Proficient	Advanced
Grade 4	33	49	16	2
Grade 8	36	48	15	2
Grade 12	57	32	10	1

\*Totals by grade may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Please note that, as the student grade level increases, the percentage below Basic increases and the percentage at Proficient decreases. At 4<sup>th</sup> grade, 33 percent are below Basic; at 8<sup>th</sup> grade, 36 percent; and at 12<sup>th</sup> grade, 57 percent. At the Proficient level, the percentages are 16, 15, and 10, respectively, for 4<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

To illustrate the meaning of these results, please consider what it means for 57 percent of 12<sup>th</sup> graders not to have reached the Basic level on the U.S. history assessment. At the Basic level in U.S. history at the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, student responses indicate the ability to:

- identify the significance of many people, places, events, dates, ideas, and documents in U.S. history
- recognize the importance of unity and diversity in our social and cultural history
- understand America's changing relationships with the rest of the world
- relate relevant experience from the past in understanding contemporary issues
- understand the role of evidence in making an historical argument

This means that the majority of 12<sup>th</sup> graders did not know, for example: (1) that the Monroe Doctrine expressed opposition to European colonization in the Americas at the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; (2) how government spending during the Great Depression affected the economy; and (3) that the Soviet Union was an ally of the U.S. in World War II.

However, there were some positive signs in the NAEP results. The average score of 4<sup>th</sup> graders increased from 205 to 209 and of 8<sup>th</sup> graders from 259 to 262 between 1994 and 2001. The gains for 4<sup>th</sup> graders between 1994 and 2001 were for the lowest performing students, that is, those at the 10<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> percentiles. At 8<sup>th</sup> grade, gains were found for students at the 25<sup>th</sup>, 75<sup>th</sup> and 90<sup>th</sup> percentiles. However, at the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, there were no differences in achievement between 1994 and 2001 at any point along the performance distribution.

Other positive signs were in the narrowing of differences in average score by race/ethnicity. At the 4<sup>th</sup> grade there was a 7 point narrowing of the average score between white and African-

American students between 1994 and 2001. At the 12<sup>th</sup> grade there was a 7 point narrowing of the average score between white and Hispanic students. But at the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, the achievement gap between these groups was unchanged.

Although the narrowing of average score differences between minority and non-minority student demographic groups is positive, the differences when looking at the percentage below Basic in 2001 are stark and worrisome.

**Table 2.**  
**Percentage of Students Below Basic by Grade and Race**  
**NAEP U.S. History Assessment 2001**

	White	African American	Hispanic	Native American	Asian/Pacific Islander
Grade 4	21	56	58	47	29
Grade 8	25	62	60	50	32
Grade 12	51	80	74	66	47

There are important observations to share about the data in Table 2. First, at grades 4 and 8, the percentage below Basic is much higher in general for minority students than for white students, and twice as high or more for African American, Hispanic, and Native American students than for white students. As with the overall results displayed in Table 1, the percentage below Basic increases as the grade increases for each respective group. At grade 12, the percentage below Basic for any group should be viewed as unacceptable, but the results for African American, Hispanic, and Native American students, respectively, at 80 percent, 74 percent, and 66 percent below Basic should be viewed as devastating.

### **Achievement in Civics**

I will now turn to the NAEP civics results. The results from the civics assessment in 1998 also indicate that improvement is needed. About these findings, the well-known scholar R. Freeman Butts observed, "These findings are...disturbing...for our citizenship itself is at stake."

**Table 3.**  
**Percentage of Students at Achievement Levels by Grade**  
**NAEP Civics Assessment 1998\***

	Below Basic	Basic	Proficient	Advanced
Grade 4	31	46	21	2
Grade 8	30	48	21	2
Grade 12	35	39	22	4

\*Totals by grade may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Although the percentage below Basic in civics is lower than in U.S. history at all three grades, and the percentage at proficient is higher, the results of the 1998 civics assessment are still troubling.

It is important to point out that 35 percent of 12<sup>th</sup> graders did not reach the NAEP Basic level and that the percentage below Basic is higher at the 12<sup>th</sup> grade than at the 4<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade. These young citizens, approaching or at voting age, do not demonstrate an understanding of the principles of American government, its structure of checks and balances, and the roles of political parties and interest groups in our democracy. Students at or above the NAEP Proficient level in civics have a good understanding of how governments and constitutions work and the ability to apply what they've learned to concrete situations. However, it is worrisome that only 26 percent of 12<sup>th</sup> graders were at or above the Proficient level.

At the Basic level in civics at the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, student responses indicate:

- understanding that constitutional government can take many forms
- knowledge of the fundamental principles of American constitutional government and politics
- familiarity with both rights and responsibilities in a democratic society
- recognition of the value of political participation

This means that 35 percent of 12<sup>th</sup> graders in 1998, for example, (1) could not list two ways in which the American system of government is designed to prevent absolutism and arbitrary power; (2) did not know that the President and the State Department have more authority over foreign policy than either Congress or the courts; and (3) did not know that the Supreme Court used the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution to invalidate state laws that segregate public schools.

As with U.S. history, the results show, generally, that the percentage below Basic increases as students progress through the grades and that much larger percentages of minority students are below Basic than white students. At all three grades, differences in the percentage below Basic between white students and African American, Hispanic, and Native American students are more than two to one.

**Table 4.**  
**Percentage of Students Below Basic by Grade and Race**  
**NAEP Civics Assessment 1998**

	White	African American	Hispanic	Native American	Asian/Pacific Islander
Grade 4	21	52	57	46	29
Grade 8	20	50	55	51	29
Grade 12	27	58	56	56	34

Finding 3 of the American History Achievement Act states that

“America’s past encompasses great leaders and great ideas that contribute to our shared heritage and to the principles of freedom, equality, justice, and opportunity for all.”

Mr. Chairman, the data cited above raise serious questions about how well these noble principles are being transmitted to and absorbed by rising generations of young adults. The disparate

performance between minority and non-minority students in U.S. history and in civics is egregious and poses challenges to our nation's progress in achieving those very principles. Aristotle said, "If liberty and equality...are chiefly to be found in democracy, they will be attained when all persons alike share in the government to the utmost." Are not the chances of all our citizens sharing equally in government lessened if the knowledge about the core principles and history of that government is unequal?

### **The American History Achievement Act**

The American History Achievement Act consists of amendments to the current authorizing legislation for the National Assessment of Educational Progress. It amends the authorizing legislation by:

- (1) calling for assessments in history at least once every four years;
- (2) authorizing trial state assessments in U.S. history and civics in grades 8 and 12, with priority given to conducting assessments in U.S. history;
- (3) assigning the National Assessment Governing Board the responsibility for identifying and selecting participating states, in consultation with the Commissioner for Education Statistics;
- (4) authorizing appropriations for these purposes for NAEP operations and the Governing Board.

### **Schedule of U.S. History and Civics Assessments**

The current NAEP legislation makes the Governing Board responsible for determining the schedule of subjects and grades to be assessed by NAEP. The Governing Board maintains a schedule of assessments with a minimum 10-year outlook to allow advance notice to NAEP participants and sufficient time to plan for NAEP operations.

I am pleased to report that the Governing Board, just a few weeks ago at its quarterly meeting of May 19-21, 2005, adopted a schedule of assessments that provides for the assessment of U.S. history and civics once every four years. The newly adopted assessment schedule revises and extends the current schedule through the year 2017.

U.S. history and civics assessments in grades 4, 8, and 12 at the national level were already scheduled for 2006. Under the new schedule, assessments in U.S. history and civics in grades 4, 8, and 12 at the national level will also be conducted in 2010 and 2014. In addition to monitoring progress within grades over time, the once every four-year schedule provides the added advantage of aligning with the cohort progression from grades 4 to 8 and grades 8 to 12. These assessments will continue a trend line of assessments in U.S. history conducted in 1994 and 2001. In civics, these assessments will continue a trend line with a base year of 1998.

### **Trial State Assessments in Grades 8 and 12**

The American History Achievement Act provides for the conduct of trial state assessments in at least 10 states that are geographically diverse. Because a number of prerequisite steps are required to be carried out in the year before a state level assessment is conducted, funding must be provided both in the year before and the year of the assessment. These prerequisite steps

include identification of participating states, drawing the sample of schools and students, working directly with the schools to provide an orientation to the assessment, and printing test booklets.

In contrast to the requirement under Title I that states receiving funding must participate in NAEP reading and mathematics assessments in grades 4 and 8 every two years, state participation in NAEP U.S. history and civics assessments at grades 8 and 12 would be voluntary. Eliciting voluntary state participation at grade 12 would pose new challenges for NAEP that will be discussed in detail below.

The American History Achievement Act provides that only grades 8 and 12 will be assessed at the state level. This appears to recognize that significant variation exists from state-to-state in U.S. history and civics curricula by grade 4, making this grade less appropriate as an object of state level assessment. On the other hand, by grades 8 and 12, it is likely that students have been exposed to instruction in U.S. history and civics. These grades are also important for assessment purposes because they represent important transition points in schooling in the U.S. Grade 8 generally represents the transition point to high school, and grade 12 marks the end of K-12 schooling in the U.S. and the transition point to adult pursuits—college, training for employment, and entrance into the military.

While grades 8 and 12 are important points in American education, NAEP's experience at the state level at the respective grades is vastly different. From 1990 to 2002, state level participation in NAEP was strictly voluntary, was limited to grades 4 and 8, and involved only the subjects of reading, mathematics, science, and writing. Mandatory state level participation in grades 4 and 8 in reading and mathematics became a legislated requirement in 2003 under Title I. State level participation in science and writing assessments at grades 4 and 8 remains voluntary. Voluntary state level participation at grades 4 and 8 from 1990 to the present across the four subjects offered has been solid, generally reaching between 40 and 44 states per assessment.

Therefore, there is reason to believe that, with adequate notice, appropriate outreach, and targeted follow up, achieving the voluntary participation of 10 states at grade 8 is a reasonable goal. However, in contrast to NAEP's fifteen-year experience eliciting participation for state-level assessments at grades 4 and 8, NAEP has never conducted state level assessments at grade 12. We know that, at the national level, obtaining the cooperation of high schools to participate in 12<sup>th</sup> grade NAEP is more challenging than at grades 4 and 8, and that participation rates are much lower at grade 12 than at grades 4 and 8.

Mr. Chairman, the Governing Board's primary role is to oversee and set policy for NAEP, in accordance with legislative guidance. I want to assure you that, upon enactment of the American History Achievement Act and provision of appropriations that are sufficient and timely, the Governing Board will commit to doing its utmost to elicit the voluntary participation of 10 states in assessments of U.S. history and civics at grade 8 and at grade 12.

**Conclusion**

Mr. Chairman, it is commendable that you and Senator Kennedy have introduced the American History Achievement Act and that you are conducting this hearing. As the bill so eloquently states: "...the strength of American democracy and our standing in the world depend on ensuring that our children have a strong understanding of our Nation's past."

Regrettably, the NAEP results, especially at the 12<sup>th</sup> grade and by race/ethnicity, give cause for concern about the state of knowledge of American students about U.S. history and civics. We ignore at our own peril the implications of these results for our nation's future.

Drawing from her remarks about the NAEP U.S. history and civics results, I would like to close with these quotes made by former Governing Board member Diane Ravitch: "Preparing our youth to be responsible members of a democratic society is one of the most important missions of American education." "Our ability to defend—thoughtfully and intelligently—what we as a nation hold dear depends on our knowledge and understanding of what we hold dear." "We cannot be content when so many...are so poorly prepared."



**Feasibility of Conducting State-level Assessments in  
U.S. History and Civics at Grades 8 and 12 under  
The National Assessment of Educational Progress**

**A Report to The**

**Committee on Appropriations, U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Appropriations, U.S. Senate  
Committee on Education and the Workforce, U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, U.S. Senate  
Secretary of Education, U.S. Department of Education**

**Prepared by  
The National Assessment Governing Board  
June 20, 2006**

On December 30, 2005, the FY 2006 appropriation for the U.S. Department of Education was enacted (P.L.109-149). The Conference Report accompanying the FY 2006 appropriation legislation included the following request to the National Assessment Governing Board:

The conferees concur with the language included in the House report that a key purpose of public education is being neglected: the civic mission of schools to educate our young people for democracy and to prepare them to be engaged citizens. The National Assessments of Educational Progress in civics and history are the best way we have to measure how well schools are doing in fulfilling this purpose. **Therefore, the conferees request that the National Assessment Governing Board, in consultation with the Commissioner, National Center for Education Statistics, prepare a report on the feasibility of the National Assessment of Educational Progress conducting State-level assessments in the subjects of U.S. history and civics at grades 8 and 12 and, if feasible, the earliest schedule under which such assessments could be administered (emphasis added).** The Governing Board shall, within 180 days of enactment of this Act, submit the feasibility report to the House and Senate Appropriations Committees, the House Education and the Workforce Committee, the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, and the Secretary of Education.

The report that follows, prepared by the Governing Board in consultation with the Commissioner for Education Statistics, is in response to this request.

### **Introduction**

The National Assessment Governing Board recognizes the important role of U.S. history and civics instruction in the education of our nation's students. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has been reporting on these and related social studies subjects for more than thirty years (please see Appendix A for the NAEP schedule of assessments from inception through 2004). At its quarterly meeting of May 19-21, 2005, the Governing Board adopted a schedule of assessments through the year 2017 (please see Appendix B). The schedule provides for assessments in U.S. history and civics at the national level in grades 4, 8, and 12 in the years 2006, 2010, and 2014. This action by the Governing Board increased the frequency of assessments in these subjects from about once every six years to once every four years. The 2006 assessments in U.S. history and civics were conducted January through March, 2006. The report of results is expected during 2007.

On June 30, 2005, Charles Smith, Governing Board Executive Director, testified in the Senate on the feasibility of state-level assessments in U.S. history and civics and on student achievement in these subjects (please see Appendix C). Mr. Smith testified before the Subcommittee on Education and Early Childhood Development of the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions. His testimony on student achievement was drawn from the National Assessment results in U.S. history and civics. Mr. Smith noted that the results, especially at the 12<sup>th</sup> grade overall and disaggregated by race/ethnicity, give cause for concern about the state of knowledge of American students about U.S. history and civics. He said that

“We ignore at our own peril the implications of these results for our nation's future... [O]ur ability to survive as a nation depends on our belief in the value of our purposes as a nation. Schools are the primary means for transmitting these purposes to each new generation—through instruction in U.S. history and civics. It is essential that students leave school with a deep understanding of the ideas, traditions, and democratic values that bind us with our fellow citizens and that serve as a compass that guides our societal and individual decisions.”

## **Aspects Of “Feasibility” To Be Considered In This Report**

Several aspects of feasibility will be addressed in this report: technical feasibility, operational feasibility, and cost. Technical feasibility will address whether valid, reliable state-level results can be produced in U.S. history and civics in grades 8 and 12. Operational feasibility will address the non-technical aspects of the assessment, particularly test administration. Most importantly, operational feasibility will address what is known about whether states would agree to participate on a voluntary basis in these subjects and grades. Information about the additional costs of state-level assessments in these subjects and grades will be discussed. The NAEP legislation permits the conduct of state assessments in U.S. history and civics at grades 8 and 12; therefore, new legislative authority is not required.

### **Technical Feasibility**

The Governing Board and the Commissioner for Education Statistics have concluded that it is technically feasible for the National Assessment to conduct state-level assessments in U.S. history and civics at grades 8 and 12. The first state-level assessment was conducted in 1990 in 8<sup>th</sup> grade mathematics. Subsequent state-level assessments have been conducted at grade 8 in reading, writing, and science and at grade 4 in mathematics, reading, and science.

From 1990 through 1994, state-level assessments were conducted on a trial basis and were subject to rigorous, congressionally required evaluations. The purpose of the evaluations was to “assess the feasibility and validity of [the trial state] assessments and the fairness and accuracy of the data they produce.”<sup>1</sup> The evaluation of the trial state assessments was overseen by a panel of the National Academy of Education (NAE). A partial listing of the topics addressed by the evaluation include: the quality and representativeness of the state samples, the content validity of the assessments, the field administration of the assessments, the comparability of state to national results, and the utility of the results. The NAE evaluation panel produced four major reports, each of which supported the feasibility, validity, fairness, and accuracy of the data produced under NAEP state assessments. In its fourth report, the panel concluded as follows:

“Based on [the evaluation]...state NAEP has been shown to be a valid, reliable, and useful measure of student achievement, [aligning] favorably with the Panel’s *quality, utility, and state indicator principles*. For these reasons, the Panel recommends that state NAEP be continued, and that it be [given]...permanent status when NAEP is next reauthorized.”<sup>2</sup>

With consideration given to the NAE evaluations, Congress changed the “trial” designation for state assessments to “developmental” in 1994. The “developmental” designation was removed with the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002 and state assessments are now a well established, trusted component of the NAEP program.

The National Assessment has fifteen years of experience implementing state assessments. State assessments have been conducted in four subjects—reading, mathematics, science, and writing—using the same test instruments as are used to obtain national results. This experience supports the contention that representative state samples can be drawn for assessments in U.S. history and

civics, that the test instruments used with the national sample for U.S. history and civics can be used with representative state samples of schools and students, and, accordingly, that valid state-level NAEP results can be produced.

However, it is important to note that the National Assessment has experience producing state-level results only at grades 4 and 8. The National Assessment has never conducted a state assessment at grade 12, although it has conducted numerous national assessments at that grade. The expectation is that it is feasible to draw a technically representative state sample at the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, administer the U.S. history and civics assessments planned for the national level under standardized conditions at the state level, analyze the data, and report valid, accurate state-by-state results. Although insurmountable technical issues with respect to conducting state-level assessments at grade 12 are not expected, neither should the possibility of unforeseen technical issues arising be foreclosed. Given the knowledge that has accrued through NAEP's 15 years of experience conducting state-level assessments at grades 4 and 8 and the absence of experience at grade 12, cautious optimism is the appropriate stance regarding the technical feasibility of producing state-level results in U.S. history and civics at the 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

### **Operational Feasibility**

Among the non-technical assessment operations associated with the National Assessment are: printing of test booklets, contacting schools selected for the sample to prepare for testing, distributing test booklets to and collecting them from participating schools, conducting test administration within the schools, assuring test security, scanning and scoring answer sheets, analyzing data, and managing the report preparation process. The National Assessment has many years of experience carrying out these types of operational activities at the national level at grades 4, 8, and 12 and at the state level at grades 4 and 8. The Governing Board and the Commissioner for Education Statistics conclude that these aspects of non-technical assessment operations are feasible with respect to the conduct of state-level assessments in U.S. history and civics at grades 8 and 12.

However, there is one aspect of operational feasibility at the 12<sup>th</sup> grade that gives concern: whether states would volunteer to participate at grade 12 in U.S. history and civics. As mentioned previously, NAEP has experience at the state level at grades 4 and 8, but none at grade 12. On the basis of this experience, we believe that it is likely that at least some states would volunteer to participate in U.S. history and civics at grade 8.

Prior to the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002, state participation in NAEP was voluntary in all four subjects offered. Beginning in 2003, participation was mandatory in reading and mathematics at grades 4 and 8, and voluntary in the other subjects offered—8<sup>th</sup> grade writing and 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade science. Voluntary participation from the outset to the present has ranged from about 75 percent of the states in 1990 to 88 percent of the states in 2005. It is not possible to predict with absolute certainty what the degree of participation would be, but this track record suggests that voluntary participation at the 8<sup>th</sup> grade in U.S. history and civics could be substantial.

However, it is much more uncertain whether states would volunteer to participate at grade 12. As noted previously, the National Assessment has never conducted a state-level assessment in any subject at the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Therefore, there is no record of decisions made by state officials from which to extrapolate.

In recent years, the National Assessment has experienced a decline in school and student participation at grade 12 from about 65 percent overall to about 55 percent overall. The Governing Board has been studying the roots of this problem and is working with the Commissioner to reverse this decline.

As a part of this examination, a national commission recommended in March 2004 that the National Assessment provide all states 12<sup>th</sup> grade results in reading and mathematics.<sup>3</sup> State response to this recommendation was mixed. While some states indicated support and some objection, there was widely expressed concern that the results would underestimate 12<sup>th</sup> grade student performance. Several reasons were cited for this concern.

Chief among the reasons given is the fact that the National Assessment is a low stakes test for the students. Individuals representing the state viewpoint expressed doubt that seniors in their last semester (i.e., when NAEP is administered—the last week of January through the first week of March) would “try hard” on a test for which they receive no results and that has no direct bearing on their future. The NAEP legislation requires students to be informed that their participation in NAEP is voluntary. Needless to say, high school seniors are the most likely among students from the three sampled grades to act on this provision and fail to show up for testing.

With concern that the results might not be an accurate measure of 12<sup>th</sup> grade student achievement in their state, reluctance about participation was expressed. This may have been due in part because NAEP state-level 12<sup>th</sup> grade results could be perceived as an outcome measure of the performance of the K-12 system within the participating state. It should be noted, too, that the state respondents were considering the recommendation as set forth by the national commission, which addressed reading and mathematics, not U.S. history and civics.

To determine the likelihood that states would volunteer to participate in state-level assessments in U.S. history and civics at grades 8 and 12, the Governing Board asked the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) to conduct a brief survey on the Board’s behalf. CCSSO graciously lent its good offices to this effort, forwarded the following question to the chief state school officers, and received the responses as indicated in Table 1 below.

*The conference report accompanying the FY 2006 appropriation for Education asks the National Assessment Governing Board to submit a report to Congress on the feasibility of conducting state-level assessments in **U.S. history and civics** at grades 8 and 12 under the **National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)**.*

*The Governing Board is drafting the report and has asked CCSSO for your assistance by providing your response to the following short survey:*

*If the U.S. Congress were to appropriate funds for NAEP to administer state-level assessments in civics and U.S. history at grades 8 and 12, please indicate below the state-level assessments in which you would be interested in having your state participate.*

*It is understood that your responses are speculative in nature and **do not constitute a commitment** to participate should funding be appropriated. Only overall group results will be included in the report to Congress. **Individual state responses** will be kept confidential.*

**Table 1. State Responses to CCSSO Survey on Their Likely Participation in NAEP State-Level Assessments in Civics and U.S. History, By Grade Level Offered**

	YES	NO	NO RESPONSE
<b>8th Grade Civics</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>6</b>	
<b>12th Grade Civics</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>8th Grade U.S. History</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>6</b>	
<b>12th Grade U.S. History</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1</b>

Source: Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)

Twenty-six states responded. Of these twenty-six states, thirteen (50 percent) indicated an interest in participating in both subjects at grade 12 and twenty (77 percent) indicated an interest in participating in both subjects at grade 8.

The Center for Democracy and Citizenship of the Council for Excellence in Government (CDC) conducted a similar survey in collaboration with the Center for Civic Education and the National Council for the Social Studies. Although the responses represented slightly less than 25 percent of the states, the results tend to confirm those of the CCSSO survey (see Table 2).

There are a few caveats that must be considered regarding these responses. First, only slightly more than half of the states responded to the CCSSO survey. Therefore, the inclination of the remaining states to participate in NAEP state-level assessments in these subjects and grades should not be inferred from these responses. Second, the results reflect the respondent's speculation about a decision in the future in reaction to a hypothetical scenario; they do not represent absolute certitude. Third, it is possible that some of the respondents who currently are Chief State School Officers may not be occupying those positions at such time as a decision would have to be made and that a different set of decision makers facing different conditions might well decide differently. Given these caveats, it is not prudent to rely on the survey results to project the specific number of states that would volunteer to participate. However, the responses do indicate that it is reasonable to assume that at least some states would volunteer to

participate in NAEP state assessments in U.S. history and civics at grade 8 and at grade 12 if Congress authorized funding to conduct such assessments.

**Table 2. State Responses to CDC Survey on Their Likely Participation in NAEP State-Level Assessments in Civics and U.S. History, By Grade Level Offered**

	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>UNSURE</b>
<b>8th Grade Civics</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>12th Grade Civics</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>8th Grade U.S. History</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>12th Grade U.S. History</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>

Source: Center for Democracy and Citizenship of the Council for Excellence in Government (CDC)

### **Budget Considerations**

Conducting state-level assessments in U.S. history and civics at grades 8 and 12 would require additional funds. An appropriation of funds for this purpose would be required both in the year prior to the assessment and in the year the assessment is conducted, in approximately equal amounts each year. The American History Act, S. 860, introduced by Senators Alexander and Kennedy in 2005, provides for a pilot in ten states in U.S. history and civics at grades 8 and 12 and authorizes \$7 million in each of two years. Although the responses of the states to the CCSSO survey indicate that a ten-state pilot may be a reasonable strategy to pursue to start, should Congress appropriate funds for this purpose, experience under NAEP suggests that ten states need not necessarily be considered a ceiling in terms of participation over time.

The authorization level in S. 860 provides a reasonable order of magnitude of the costs for a ten-state pilot, with three provisos:

- First, that the state-level assessments are conducted in the same year as national assessments in the same subjects and grades;
- Second, that the estimate of costs will be higher in the future due to inflation;
- Third, that there are cost efficiencies associated with conducting assessments in two subjects in two grades in each participating state and that departures from this as a standard approach would increase unit costs significantly.

The first proviso is particularly important. Nationally representative samples in each subject and grade to be tested at the state level are essential for state comparisons to be meaningful. State-level results would have very limited interpretability without comparisons to national results. Consequently, this has implications for the reply to the part of the congressional query about “the earliest schedule under which such assessments could be administered,” to be discussed in the following section. And of course, additional funds would be needed if Congress decided to support the participation of more than 10 states.

### **Considerations Related to the NAEP Assessment Schedule**

As noted above, the Governing Board has scheduled national assessments in U.S. history and civics at grades 4, 8, and 12 for 2006, 2010, and 2014. The 2006 assessments were conducted from the last week of January through the first week in March. It is not feasible to conduct state-level assessments in 2006.

Therefore, January through March 2010 is the earliest time period during which state-level assessments in U.S. history and civics at grades 8 and 12 could be scheduled.

### **Conclusion**

The National Assessment Governing Board and the Commissioner for Education Statistics conclude that it is feasible to conduct state-level assessments in U.S. history and civics at grades 8 and 12 in 2010 if Congress appropriates sufficient additional funds in both FY 2009 and FY 2010.

### **Endnotes**

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<sup>1</sup> Public Law 100-297, Part C, Section 3403(a).

<sup>2</sup> “Quality and Utility: The 1994 Trial State Assessment in Reading. The Fourth Report of the National Academy of Education Panel on the Evaluation of the NAEP Trial State Assessment: 1994 Trial State Assessment in Reading.” The National Academy of Education, 1996.

<sup>3</sup> “12<sup>th</sup> Grade Student Achievement in America: A New Vision for NAEP”; National Commission on NAEP 12<sup>th</sup> Grade Assessment and Reporting. National Assessment Governing Board; 2004.