

National Assessment Governing Board Reporting and Dissemination Committee

Friday, March 2, 2018
10:00 am – 12:30 pm

AGENDA

10:00 – 10:05 am	Welcome <i>Rebecca Gagnon, Chair</i>	
10:05 – 11:10 am	Results from Communications Audit <i>Stephaan Harris, Assistant Director for Communications</i> <i>Robert Johnston, Hatcher Group</i>	Attachment A
11:10 – 11:40 am	The Nation's Report Card: Dissemination Plan <i>Stephaan Harris, Assistant Director for Communications</i> <i>Robert Johnston, Hatcher Group</i>	Attachment B
11:40 am – 12:10 pm	The Nation's Report Card: Data Preparation <i>Robert Finnegan, Educational Testing Service</i> <i>Dan McGrath, National Center for Education Statistics</i>	
12:10 – 12:30 pm	NAEP High School Transcript Study <i>Linda Hamilton, National Center for Education Statistics</i>	Attachment C
12:30 pm	Information Items	Attachment D



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COMMUNICATIONS OUTREACH PLAN AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a comprehensive analysis of the National Assessment Governing Board's core communications resources and recommendations for how they can be improved. In addition to examining communications tools controlled by the Board, it includes recommendations drawn from interviews with key individuals and a review of relevant media coverage.

The goal of this audit is to provide the Governing Board with recommendations on strategies and tactics that will help the Board achieve the goals in its Strategic Vision. Expanding partnerships by broadening awareness and use of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and related resources, expanding the availability and use of NAEP resources, and promoting sustained dissemination and use of NAEP information can be achieved by taking a more coordinated, integrated approach to communications activities.

This document contains five sections. Each one analyzes a different aspect of the Governing Board's communications landscape, explains our findings, and presents recommendations. The sections are:

1. Varied interviews with 10 influential stakeholders who use NAEP data and are familiar with the Governing Board
2. An audit of the Governing Board's website
3. An audit of the Governing Board's social media accounts
4. An audit of the Governing Board's email marketing
5. A review of one year of media coverage related to the Governing Board and NAEP

Overall, the Governing Board's communications efforts are robust, strategic, and creative, particularly around social media and video. Building on this "deep dive" into the Governing Board's communications resources and interviewing key stakeholders, this report identifies challenges, suggests ways to build on existing strengths, and offers new directions to support communications strategies and activities.

BIG PICTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

After stepping back and reviewing the lessons learned from the different sections of this audit, The Hatcher Group offers the following advice to frame and guide all future communications work.

Plan. The Governing Board can raise its profile, connect to more conversations, and expand its reach by being more intentional about anticipating and planning for new material, events, presentations and other opportunities to share and showcase its work. Each new product should be accompanied by a communications plan.

Align. Communications activities should be aligned to optimize efficiency and visibility across communications platforms. New materials can be supported with consistent branding in the Governing Board's newsletter, on its website, in social media, and with segmented outreach to targeted audiences.

Repurpose. The Governing Board has a wealth of information that could easily be lost or forgotten if it is not referred to and shared repeatedly. We suggest identifying popular and relevant materials and continuing to share and refer to them frequently. Further, understanding their success can guide the creation of new materials.

Create. There is an appetite for materials that refine the presentation of NAEP data for target audiences, explaining its relevance and utility in more-contemporary graphics and with accessible stories.

Define. The Governing Board does not need to be a household name to be successful. But by more regularly branding its work, clarifying its mission, and explaining what it does, the Governing Board can help to bring clarity to the education field around assessment, measurement, and student progress.

Promote. By working more closely with partners in the field, and making more personal connections, the Governing Board can further expand its reach and encourage the widespread use of NAEP resources.

KEY FINDINGS

Influencer Interviews

The Hatcher Group conducted telephone interviews with 10 key influencers about their use of NAEP materials, awareness of the Governing Board, and ideas for improving communications and partnerships. Interviewees reflected a diverse group of experts who use NAEP data and are familiar with the Governing Board; they were eager to participate and share their ideas for expanding the visibility and utility of NAEP material. Top insights from the interviews include:

The Governing Board's Strategic Vision for communications is right on the mark.

The interviews revealed strong support for efforts to make NAEP resources more useful and available and for the expansion of partnerships **with** NAEP users. Particularly given the existing skepticism around the value of large-scale assessments, those interviewed thought NAGB would be wise to provide the public with clear, concise information about its role. Several of those interviewed said they would definitely share one-pager explainers, short videos, and infographics on social media.

Expand and target the audience for NAEP-related material.

Many of the respondents shared visions for the Governing Board and NAEP material that would serve their respective needs and make it more useful. For example, one suggested ways to get NAEP questions in the public domain in front of parents. Others suggested sharing materials with state-level advocacy organizations that use data on student achievement.

Partnerships require a personal approach.

Many interviewees said that having Governing Board staff or members make presentations at conferences, where people can interact face-to-face, should not be overlooked as a key strategy for building partnerships and greater awareness about the use of NAEP material.

Connect NAEP results to the current policy environment.

Policy leaders urged the Governing Board to emphasize its role and the role of NAEP data in the context of policy conversations. For example, the nation's governors are focused on workforce issues and the global economy. Said one: "To the extent it could be framed as 'this is getting students on the road to college and career,' it is a much more accessible data point, and frames it in the way governors are thinking about it."

Website Audit

The Hatcher Group reviewed the Governing Board's redesigned website, including taking a critical look at the home page, other important pages, and site navigation. Overall, the website is modern, responsive, and relatively well laid-out and organized. Areas for improvement range from simple technical fixes to more conceptual suggestions that likely will require further conversation. The recommendations include:

Make it easier to find the engaging and useful information on the site.

The website contains a wealth of effective, engaging and informative material that is either not featured or difficult to find. To address this, we recommend organizing the home page to prioritize information and simplify navigation by using hierarchies and clear visuals to guide users. Moving away from generic stock photography will make the site more engaging and give it a more professional look.

Make the site mobile-friendly.

The site failed Google's Mobile-Friendly Test. That means the website does not display properly on tablets, phones, and other mobile devices, even as users are increasingly using these devices to visit websites. This should be a high-priority fix.

Examine the decline in search engine traffic since the relaunch.

Search engine traffic to the Governing Board site has fallen by half since the site relaunched. The site should be examined for possible technical problems that could be causing this drop.

Rephrase terminology to be more specific and useful to visitors.

Users need clear language to draw them into different sections of the website, and then need the material that is promised. There is room for improvement on the new site. We suggest reworking the site navigation to make critical items easier to find. For example, changing "News Releases" to "Latest News" feels more urgent and promises specific information to the visitor.

Social Media Audit

The Hatcher Group reviewed the Governing Board's Twitter and Facebook performance data from Feb. 1, 2014 through July 31, 2017, along with more recent data provided by Facebook and Twitter. Our key findings include:

The Governing Board is a strong producer of social content.

Social media can be an effective way to strengthen and expand partnerships and to expand the use of NAEP resources. The Governing Board is well on its way to using social media to support both goals. Over the period examined, Twitter and Facebook saw slow but steady growth. Some months saw significant upticks in activity and engagement. Facebook fans grew from 366 to 888; Twitter followers increased from 1,056 to 2,086. In 2017, the Governing Board sent 522 tweets, an average of 43 per month, and added 269 followers. Over the same period, the Governing Board posted 167 times on Facebook, an average of about 14 times per month, and added 85 new fans.

The Governing Board must improve social engagement with partners.

Although the Governing Board posts frequently on social media, most of its partners are *not* regularly engaging with the Governing Board's social media content. In particular, the audit found limited engagement with the Governing Board's content on Facebook.

The Governing Board should update its overall approach to social media.

The audit recommends increasing the number of messages shared, particularly on Twitter, to reflect best practice of tweeting four or more times a day during high-volume hours. Investing in social media sponsorships should be explored. On Facebook, this is crucial to ensure posts are seen by target audiences and is very inexpensive. The Governing Board could significantly increase its monthly website traffic from social media for less than \$100 per month.

Email Marketing Audit

The Hatcher Group reviewed the Governing Board's email analytics to gauge the effectiveness of e-marketing efforts. We also reviewed the content and design of email newsletters, release campaign emails, and Governing Board nomination emails. Our key findings include:

There is room to improve open and click-through rates of Governing Board outreach.

As part of the audit, The Hatcher Group compared newsletter open and click-through rates to Constant Contact's industry report for government agencies. While the Governing Board's open rates are average, click-through rates have remained relatively low. By improving the design and sharpening the copy, we hope to improve both of those numbers.

The Governing Board outreach lists generally target the right audiences.

The open rates demonstrate that the Governing Board's list is the right audience. The number of unsubscribes is low and the average bounce rate is below the average for government agencies. That said, there is natural churn to the list, and steps must be taken to continually grow the list and update outdated contacts.

The Governing Board should take immediate steps to improve e-marketing outreach.

Relatively easy steps can be taken to better optimize e-marketing efforts. First, the Governing Board should ensure that the design of the newsletter and other emails aligns with recommendations to improve usability and drive more clicks. Second, audiences should be segmented based on behavior, with lists of “super-engaged” users, and dormant users who can be asked to opt-in to continue to receive emails or to be removed. Finally, we recommend regular testing to see which emails are most successful.

Media Audit

We analyzed a year’s worth of coverage in select media outlets from across the country by searching their websites with key terms. This provides a snapshot of the kinds of stories that are being written about the Governing Board and NAEP. Our key takeaways include:

NAEP data drives most coverage that mentions the Governing Board.

Media outlets cover the release of NAEP data and use the data in stories about the state of American education.

NAEP coverage is heavily driven by Report Card releases.

Not surprisingly, coverage of NAEP spikes around release dates. It was somewhat surprising that the Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA) received so few mentions in our sample, given that many of the cities participating in that assessment are in major media markets. However, this could be because there was no TUDA release in 2017.

The Governing Board itself receives very little coverage.

Most coverage referring to the Governing Board and its staff or Board members reflected changes in leadership or other news of a transactional nature.

2018 Plan for Communicating and Disseminating NAEP Results

The results from the national, state, and Trial Urban District Assessment of the 2017 National Assessment of Educational Progress will be released in April during two live events in Washington, D.C. The two releases will be promoted and framed as #NAEP Day. While extensive media coverage is anticipated immediately following the release, several activities are planned to heighten and extend the profile and utility of the results and related materials.

Phase I: After #NAEP Day (April, May, June)

Create Support Collateral: To help more audiences access NAEP results, The Hatcher Group will collaborate with the Governing Board to:

- Produce a two-minute video on contextual variable data; research and identify key partners to tag once content of videos is determined.
- Produce two data visualizations (for social media posts) on NAEP contextual variables.
- Produce narrative case study on how Tennessee has used NAEP to improve schools.
- Create a series of “Did You Know?” infographics for online and social media sharing. These will incorporate the new results to show state improvement on NAEP, in reading and math in grades 4 and 8, over the past 10 years.
- Produce a #NAEP Day highlights video.
- Produce and share four short videos of TUDA speakers on social media; work with districts to support dissemination.

Strategically Disseminate Materials: Each new piece of communications collateral will have a brief but strategic plan to optimize outreach. Each plan will include steps to raise the profile of the materials on social media, by sharing with partners, on the Governing Board website, and as part of presentations when appropriate.

Expand Social Media and Digital Outreach: To extend interest in and access to the findings, there will be more focused and strategic dissemination of NAEP materials via the Governing Board newsletter, Facebook and Twitter sites, and its Board website. Activities will include:

- Using monthly social media calendars to highlight and repurpose graphics created for the release event.
- Strategically targeting influencers and partners with social media content.
- Highlighting key takeaways and visuals in monthly newsletters, drawing attention to different aspects of the reports.

Engage Partners: There is an appetite for in-person and audience-specific presentations about NAEP. To help meet this demand, the following actions will be taken:

- Offer partners opportunities for personalized presentations of NAEP results, highlights.
- Plan and execute post-release stakeholder event, likely a webinar, with new findings.
- Create and share “toolkit” for key partners (CCSSO, NGA, NCSL, CGCS) with links, sample newsletter copy, suggested tweets, and existing social media graphics.

Phase II Activities to Extend Release (July-December)

Maintain Momentum and Respond to Demand: While activities during this phase likely will shift per partner requests and based on updated communications strategies, the following activities are anticipated:

- Release and promote second narrative on use of NAEP data for improvement. The theme and format will be determined after the April release.
- Continue to share Governing Board-branded “Did You Know?” infographic series on states that show improvement on NAEP.
- Consider webinars for: NGA’s roster of governors’ education advisors; NCSL new members after fall election; members of Education Writers Association.
- Pursue research presentation opportunities: American Educational Research Association conference in spring 2019; NCSL Capitol Forum in December 2018.



Overview of the NAEP High School Transcript Study and Middle School Transcript Feasibility Study

In addition to data from the NAEP contextual questionnaires administered to students, teachers, and school administrators, NAEP also collects valuable contextual information through the Transcript Studies program. Currently there are two NAEP transcript collections either scheduled or active: (1) the High School Transcript Study (HSTS) and (2) the Middle School Transcript Study (MSTS) feasibility/pilot study.

The HSTS is a NAEP special study that collects transcripts of high school graduates in schools sampled for NAEP. It was most recently conducted in 2009 and is scheduled to be conducted again in 2019. HSTS provides information on school curricula, the types of courses graduates take, how many credits they earn, their grade point averages, and the relationship between coursetaking patterns and achievement, as measured by the NAEP assessments. Researchers have used HSTS data to examine 12th grade achievement and preparedness for postsecondary education.

The MSTS feasibility study is a new NAEP special study of 8th grade student transcripts designed to evaluate the feasibility of collecting transcripts electronically. By Fall 2017, MSTS researchers received approximately 130,000 student transcripts from 11 Trial Urban districts selected for the 2017 NAEP grade 8 mathematics and reading assessments. These selected districts agreed to participate in the feasibility study and could transmit their transcripts digitally. This feasibility study may pave the way for future NAEP middle school transcript studies, which may allow comparisons of student coursetaking information within and across TUDAs, as well as research on the trajectories of students through secondary education.

At this NAGB R&D session the following topics will be presented:

- An overview of the NAEP HSTS and description of HSTS contextual variables;
- HSTS activities in preparation for the scheduled 2019 data collection, including preliminary surveys of states' and districts' capacities to transmit electronic transcripts;
- MSTS feasibility study status and activities, including:
 - Current activities and timeline for completing study,
 - Middle school contextual variables, and
 - Future MST studies.

Strategic Vision – Activities for Reporting and Dissemination Committee						
		Responsibility	Action	Measurable Outcomes	Start Date	Current Status
Inform #1: Strengthen and expand partnerships by broadening stakeholders' awareness of NAEP and facilitating their use of NAEP resources						
1.	Develop and Sustain Partnerships // Identify What Partners Need to Expand Use and Utility of NAEP	Board staff	Meet with ongoing and new partners	Increased number of partners and meetings	Summer 2015	Ongoing
		Board staff; Communications contractor	Send newsletters to partners	Newsletters opened by recipients; Increased website traffic	October 2016	Ongoing
		Communications contractor – Client Relationship Management tool (CRM)	Audit and maintain database of contacts	Contact lists of partners current and error free; Increased partnerships	October 2017	Governing Board met with contractors to learn about CRM use in November 2017
2.	Work with Partners to Increase Awareness and Use of NAEP	Board members; Board staff; NCES staff; Communications contractor	Submit proposals to annual meetings	Increased representation at events/meetings; Increased number of conference presentations	August 2016	Increases in partners retweeting our work through social media, e.g., rural graphics
3.	Focused Reporting of NAEP Results	Board staff; CRP contractor; Communications contractor	Four tasks that will produce content to disseminate through partners	Increased traffic to website and social media; Views of artifacts; Numbers of posts and re-posts	October 2016	Rural videos and graphics released in December 2017 & January 2018; TUDA task ongoing

Strategic Vision – Activities for Reporting and Dissemination Committee						
		Responsibility	Action	Measurable Outcomes	Start Date	Current Status
		Board staff; Communications contractor	Produce quick graphics, videos, artifacts for dissemination	Traffic to web page; Views of artifacts; Number of posts and re-posts	January 2018	
4.	Highlight Contextual Data in Reporting	Board members; Board staff; NCES staff; Communications contractor	Review contextual data for messaging / dissemination, including new indicators; Use contextual data in graphics, videos, toolkits	Increased number of artifacts with contextual data; Increased number of partners posting and re-posting artifacts; Traffic to social media posts with NAEP contextual data	Ongoing	<i>Nation's Report Card</i> release in April 2018 will emphasize new contextual indices
Inform #2: Increase opportunities to connect NAEP to administrative data and state, national, and international student assessments						
5.	Identify Opportunities to Promote Use of NAEP Data with Federal Datasets	Board members; Board staff; NCES staff	Determine what data would be feasible, useful, and of similar quality to NAEP to promote	Launch site with NAEP results and connections to other data; Traffic to website	September 2017	Learning about NAEP High School Transcript Study at March 2018 meeting
		Board members; Board staff; NCES staff	Collaborate with COSDAM about connecting NAEP with other data	Joint meeting of COSDAM and R&D to develop decisions to present to Board	March 2018	

Strategic Vision – Activities for Reporting and Dissemination Committee						
		Responsibility	Action	Measurable Outcomes	Start Date	Current Status
6.	Learn from Reporting of International Assessments (<i>Also, SV #8</i>)	Board members; Board staff; NCES staff; Communications contractor	Learn about international assessments			November 2017 Board meeting
		Board members; Board staff; NCES staff	Invite OECD staff to present on reporting approaches	Discussions about what reporting practices to apply to NAEP		Future R&D meeting focused on international reporting
			Meet with NCES staff to consider crossover of reporting approaches	Board meeting plenary session re: feasible options; Possible incorporation of elements of international work in 2019 Nation's Report Card	Spring 2018	
Inform #3: Expand the availability, utility, and use of NAEP resources, in part by creating new resources to inform education policy and practice						
7.	Add Meaning to NAEP Achievement Levels	Technical support contract with HumRRO (COSDAM lead)	Use findings from HumRRO study to develop guides	Graphic and/or video instructing how to use and interpret achievement levels	October 2017	Released infographic in January 2018; One-pager to explain achievement levels to be released with 2017 data

Strategic Vision – Activities for Reporting and Dissemination Committee						
		Responsibility	Action	Measurable Outcomes	Start Date	Current Status
8.	Research Effective Uses of NAEP	Technical contract with HumRRO;	Learn where and how NAEP is used effectively	Report on best practices—where, what, under what conditions	October 2017	
		Communications contractor	Develop graphics and/or videos to support correct interpretation of NAEP results	Review NAEP mentions in sampling of reports and in media; Fewer reports of mis-NAEPery compared to TBD baseline		
9.	Develop New Tools for Audiences	Board members; Board staff; NCES staff; Communications contractor	Ideas for tailored reports shared with NCES	Uses of new tool on website post-release; User feedback	August 2016	NCES incorporating elements in 2017 reporting
		Board members; Board staff; NCES staff; Communications contractor	Construct custom portals for different subjects and/or types of users	Uses of portals; User feedback	January 2019	
10.	Identify More User-Friendly Approaches to Presenting NAEP Results	Board staff	Invite partners / stakeholders to Board meetings to share needs, interests for using NAEP data	Number of plenary and R&D sessions; Posts of panel summaries; Traffic to social media posts of	November 2016	Ongoing

Strategic Vision – Activities for Reporting and Dissemination Committee						
		Responsibility	Action	Measurable Outcomes	Start Date	Current Status
				summaries		
		Board members; Board staff; Communications contractor	Create “menu of engagement” list of speakers, graphics, videos, artifacts that Board staff can offer partners	Artifacts developed for and posted by partners; Number of requests by partners; Number of activities	January 2018	
11.	Create “Brief Case” Studies	Board staff; Communications contractor	Learn how NAEP used effectively by states and districts to serve as guide via compelling narratives in graphics, videos, two-pagers	Increased social media traffic; Number of “brief case studies” posted and re-posted	January 2018	Tennessee case study underway by Hatcher Group
12.	Facilitate Teacher Preparation Program Toolkit to Increase Access and Use of NAEP by Teachers	Board staff; Communications contractor	Meet with teacher educators to learn needs and interests	Develop tools and resources; Use of toolkits; User feedback	September 2018	Met with AACTE Executive Director to initiate this idea
		Communications contractor	Support development of toolkit by partners	Webpage on Governing Board website for teacher educators and preservice teachers	January 2019	

Strategic Vision – Activities for Reporting and Dissemination Committee						
		Responsibility	Action	Measurable Outcomes	Start Date	Current Status
Inform #4: Promote sustained dissemination and use of NAEP information beyond Report Card releases with consideration for multiple audiences and ever-changing multi-media technologies.... <i>Note: SV #4 permeates throughout the entire list of planned tasks and activities, so is not presented in separate rows.</i>						
Innovate #6: Continue improving the content, analysis, and reporting of NAEP contextual data by considering the questions' relevance, sensitivity, and potential to provide meaningful context and insights for policy and practice						
13.	Review Contextual Variables	Board members; Board staff	Review contextual variables to ensure relevance and importance	Greater use of contextual data; Updated variables	Ongoing	Will provide feedback on how contextual data presented in 2017 <i>Nation's Report Card</i>

FOCUSED REPORTING WITH DATA FROM NAEP: PROJECT UPDATE

The two-year Focused Reporting project addresses topics on which NAEP collects data, but which do not receive much exposure in Report Cards or secondary reports. Three topics constitute the scope of the project:

- Rural education
- Large urban districts that participate in the NAEP Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA)
- Inclusion of English language learners and students with disabilities in NAEP

The first product was a video on aspects of education in rural areas. Introduced on the Governing Board's website in November 2017, the video, approximately 3 minutes in length, compared performance of rural students on the NAEP reading and mathematics assessments to that of students in city, suburban, and town locations, as well as in highly rural states. It also noted NAEP data on "actionable" variables, i.e., those characteristics from the student, teacher, and school survey questionnaires relating to factors under the control of educators. Short excerpts from the video were posted on the Governing Board's Twitter site and received strong engagement from those invested in rural education.

Currently, the project is focusing on a report, due in May 2018, that will concentrate on less well-known information about the TUDA districts that NAEP collects in its survey questionnaires. While the format of the final visual presentation has not yet been determined, one possibility that the contractor, CRP, Inc., and their subcontractor, Mind & Media, are considering is a web page that summarizes data on achievement gaps and actionable factors in large cities and in the various TUDA districts. Several "memes," short engaging visuals highlighting specific characteristics amenable to posting on social media sites, will also be produced.

Work is in the early stages on the final topic, the implementation of the Governing Board's policy on inclusion of students with disabilities and English language learners. The report, which will also be of a graphical nature, will briefly review the history of inclusion in the NAEP program and the progress the program has made, especially since the adoption of the inclusion policy in 2010 and updated in 2014. Completion is scheduled for late summer 2018.



Upcoming NAEP Reports as of February 2018

Initial NAEP Releases

<i>Mapping State Proficiency Standards Onto the NAEP Scales: Results From the 2015 NAEP Reading and Mathematics Assessments</i>	March 2018
<i>2017 Reading and Mathematics Report Card</i>	April 2018
<i>2017 Reading and Mathematics TUDA Report Card</i>	April 2018

Other NAEP Reports

<i>Student Questionnaires: Student Views</i>	March 2018
<i>Student Questionnaires: Computer Access and Usage in Mathematics and Reading</i>	April 2018
<i>Paths Through Mathematics and Science: Patterns and Relationships in High School Course Taking</i>	April 2018
<i>Student Questionnaires: Classroom Instruction for Mathematics Reading and Science</i>	May 2018