

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Gerard Robinson
Commissioner of Education

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January 10, 2012

Chair David Driscoll
National Assessment Governing Board
800 North Capitol Street, NW
Suite 825
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Chair Driscoll:

As the Chair of the Executive Board of the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), we know you understand how important it is to include as many students with disabilities (SDs) and English language learners (ELLs) as possible in the NAEP sample. Unfortunately, in recent years, there have been substantial variations in inclusion rates among states that have led us to be concerned about the validity of state-level comparisons to the nation, as well as other states.

On March 6, 2010, NAGB adopted a Policy Statement based on input from panels of experts in the field as well as consideration of the views expressed by a wide range of public comments and in the detailed analyses provided by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the agency responsible for conducting NAEP under the policy guidance of NAGB. As the policy states, the goal is to maximize participation of sampled students in NAEP, reduce variation in inclusion rates for SD and ELL students across states and districts, develop uniform rules for including students in NAEP, and ensure that NAEP is fully representative of SD and ELL students.

The Policy Statement defines specific inclusion goals for NAEP samples at the national, state, and district levels: 95 percent of all students selected for NAEP samples and 85 percent of those in a NAEP sample who are identified as SD or ELL.

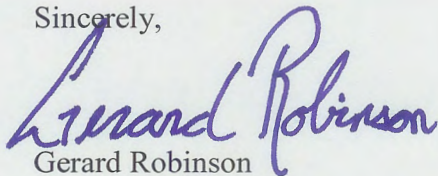
In 2011, the percentage of identified SD and ELL students participating in the grade 4 NAEP reading sample for the nation was 77 percent. Similarly, the grade 8 NAEP reading inclusion rate for the nation was 76 percent. Of course, the national percentage is reflective of a large variation in state inclusion rates, with Maryland having the lowest inclusion rates—including only 31 percent of their identified SD students in grade 4, and 30 percent of their identified SD students in grade 8. While the national inclusion rates of identified ELL students met the minimum standards, there still remained much variation at the state level.

For many years, NAEP has been identified as the “gold standard” to which all state-level results should be compared. Because of the importance of NAEP results, it is imperative that NAGB seek ways to ensure all states meet the minimum requirements. To continue reporting results, despite significant variations in state inclusion rates, calls into question the validity of any conclusions drawn from state-level comparisons to the nation or to other states.

As you prepare for the Future of NAEP Summit, as well as any potential Congressional actions, I propose that you consider a policy of only reporting or using state-level results if the minimum standards are met. This would ensure the validity of the reported results for the nation and for the participating states. States not meeting the minimum standards should face funding sanctions.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Gerard Robinson

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