

A Study of NAEP Reading and Writing Frameworks and Assessments in Relation to the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts

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This document is one of four reports by the NAEP Validity Studies Panel that explore the relationship between NAEP and the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and consider how NAEP can work synergistically with the CCSS assessments to provide the nation with useful information about educational progress. The complete volume with all four reports can be found at www.air.org/common_core_NAEP.

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Executive Summary

Since its first assessment in 1969, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has made a unique contribution to our understanding of American education. It is the only national source of information on the educational achievement of U.S. students, and it is the only vehicle by which states can compare the progress of their students against a common standard. Assessment results reported by NAEP complement the states' own reports of progress under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and track the status of achievement gaps for traditionally disadvantaged student groups.

NAEP is carried out under the guidance of the National Assessment Governing Board (Governing Board) and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Throughout the course of its history, NAEP has frequently sought to improve by studying its own processes, instruments, and procedures. In keeping with this tradition, in fall 2011, NCES asked the NAEP Validity Studies (NVS) Panel, which operates under contract to NCES, to undertake two inter-related studies, one in reading/writing and one in mathematics, to examine the content of the current NAEP frameworks and item pools at Grades 4, 8, and 12 in relation to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The primary question under investigation is whether NAEP can continue to serve as an independent monitor of student achievement and state assessments following the implementation of the CCSS.

This report addresses the relations between the NAEP reading and writing frameworks and the CCSS in English language arts (CCSS-ELA), and the relations between the NAEP reading and writing items and the CCSS-ELA. It does not address the relations between NAEP reading and writing items and items developed by the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (Smarter Balanced) to assess the CCSS-ELA because those items were not available at the time of this study.

The report concludes with recommendations to NCES regarding broader issues on the alignment between NAEP reading and writing and CCSS-ELA, including the extent of alignment that is appropriate to support NAEP's role as an independent monitor of student achievement.

Purpose and Methods

To address the broad charge to the NVS Panel to evaluate NAEP as a potential monitor of CCSS-ELA achievement, two expert panels were convened—one for reading and one for writing. Listening and speaking were not included in the analysis because there are no NAEP assessments in these areas.

The study directors were NVS Panel members Karen Wixson and Gary Phillips, and the subject area directors were Sheila Valencia (reading) and Sandra Murphy (writing). Additional content experts with extensive knowledge and experience with NAEP and/or CCSS-ELA were invited to participate in either the reading or writing analyses.

The following comparative analyses were designed by the study directors and carried out by the expert panels, separately for reading and writing:

NAEP Frameworks to CCSS-ELA Documents

The purpose of these analyses was to determine the similarities and differences between the conceptualization and content of the NAEP reading and writing frameworks and the CCSS-ELA documents. All CCSS-ELA documents and NAEP reading and writing framework documents were analyzed using a structured qualitative protocol. This method was used to accommodate the basic differences in the purposes of CCSS-ELA and the NAEP frameworks. The CCSS-ELA documents represent a detailed framework and exemplars for what should be taught and what students should know and be able to do in K–12 in English language arts and in literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. By contrast, the NAEP documents are assessment frameworks and do not expressly seek to influence curricular decisions. These differences in purpose translate into different aspects/elements included in each. With these basic differences in mind, the analyses enumerate the similarities and differences the panelists believe are important to consider in light of the charge to advise NVS regarding the potential of NAEP to serve as an independent monitor of CCSS-ELA.

NAEP Reading Passages/Writing Prompts, Scoring Guides, and Anchor Papers to CCSS-ELA Documents

The purpose of these analyses was to study the alignment between the NAEP reading passages and writing prompts, scoring guides, and anchor papers and the CCSS-ELA general guidelines for the types of reading and writing students should do. Reading analysis focused on three aspects of text as defined by both qualitative and quantitative criteria described in CCSS-ELA documents: (1) range of text types, (2) quality of text, and (3) text complexity. Writing analysis focused on three elements of the NAEP writing assessment in relation to the CCSS-ELA standards and sample papers: (1) NAEP scoring guides (criteria for valued dimensions of writing), (2) NAEP anchor papers (illustrations of performance levels), and (3) NAEP prompts (qualities, range of purposes, audiences).

NAEP Reading Items/Writing Prompts to CCSS-ELA Anchor/Grade-Level Standards

The purpose of the final analyses was a detailed examination of the NAEP reading items and writing prompts at Grades 4, 8, and 12 in relation to the specific anchor CCSS-ELA standards. These analyses were designed to evaluate more precisely the alignment between NAEP items and the standards and to determine whether there are CCSS-ELA standards that are not addressed by NAEP items/prompts. In total, the Reading Panel analyzed 146 reading items across Grades 4, 8, and 12, and the Writing Panel analyzed 80 prompts, 8 scoring guides, and 36 anchor papers.

Overall Conclusions of the Reading and Writing Panels

The Reading and Writing Panel members recognize the different purposes of NAEP and CCSS-ELA and feel strongly that NAEP should retain its independence from any particular curriculum and serve as a general assessment of reading and writing performance. Overall, the panels are cautiously optimistic that, with attention to the specific issues identified in this report and a systematic program of special studies to inform future assessments, NAEP could continue to serve as an independent monitor of student achievement in an era of CCSS. In the area of reading

assessment, NAEP should consider revisions related to reading and knowledge building in the disciplines, text selection (including digital texts) and complexity, integration of reading and writing, and assessment of academic vocabulary. In the area of writing, NAEP should consider revisions related to writing in response to text and research, integrating writing into discipline-specific assessments, expanding the use of technology, and providing more extended time for writing to accommodate different types of writing tasks and conditions.

The panels also judge that NAEP could serve as an intellectual tool to promote the design and use of quality assessments apart from CCSS. With attention to the recommendations in this report, NAEP could be in an excellent position to lead the way for forward-looking reading and writing assessment. Indeed, the panels encourage NAEP to consider the future and changes in literacy demands as they conceptualize literacy assessment. NAEP's ability to sample a wide variety of student performance on a range of texts and tasks through its matrix sampling design is consistent with the range of literacy performances expected by CCSS-ELA and places it in an excellent position to engage in the kind of special studies needed, both to assess these complex standards and to serve as an external point of comparison useful to future revisions of the CCSS-ELA.

Because of the timing of the study, the panels could not determine the degree of alignment between NAEP and new assessments under development by Smarter Balanced and PARCC. This is an important consideration because the ability of NAEP to serve as an independent monitor may be judged by a comparison of student achievement on NAEP with achievement on the new assessments; alternatively, it may be judged by the degree of alignment between NAEP assessments and the framing concepts in the CCSS-ELA documents rather than simply the new assessments. Furthermore, at this point in time, the potential impact of CCSS documents and specific standards on curriculum and assessment is unknown, most especially the integration of reading and writing, technology, and knowledge building in the disciplines. The CCSS documents integrate writing and reading across the disciplines, call for extended writing tasks that involve reading and research, and convey the expectation that students will use technology "strategically and capably." The extent to which these elements will be operationalized in the new assessments and/or in classroom instruction is not clear, but the panels believe these issues are integral to the next iterations of literacy assessment and to students' success in their careers and college. Consequently, there will need to be additional studies to evaluate the fit of new CCSS assessment items to CCSS standards and to compare CCSS assessment items to NAEP items. In cases in which NAEP and new CCSS assessment do not align, it will be important to look at the areas of nonalignment found in the studies reported here as a possible explanation for the nonalignment. Furthermore, it will be important to define the specific contribution NAEP should make and the role it should play. These issues will need to be addressed as new assessments are implemented and evaluated and as curricula and instruction change to reflect successful implementation of CCSS-ELA.

The panel advises that the CCSS-ELA reading and writing anchor standards, which are research based and consistent across grade levels, are most consistent with the NAEP reading and writing frameworks in contrast to the CCSS-ELA grade-level standards. Furthermore, the panel suggests that NAEP interpret the anchor

standards broadly and conceptually rather than specifically and procedurally. Because some of the anchor standards include multiple parts or specifics that could confound or constrain test development, the panel encourages NAEP to bring a “generous” reading to the anchor standards.

Specific Conclusions and Recommendations for NAEP Reading

1. Panel members find that many aspects of the current NAEP reading assessment are consistent with conceptualizations of the reading process found in the research and in CCSS-ELA documents:
 - Cognitive focus aligned with research
 - Broad range of text types
 - High quality and appropriate length of texts used in assessment
 - Attention to literary and informational comprehension
 - Use of text pairs
 - Attention to reader-text interactions in item development
 - Inclusion of writing in response to reading
 - Parsimony and elegance in crafting questions to align with specific texts
 - Thoughtful, meaningful items—well sequenced and crafted

Panelists also recognize the different purposes of NAEP and CCSS-ELA and feel strongly that NAEP should retain its independence from any particular curriculum and serve as a general assessment of reading comprehension. In addition, NAEP’s ability to sample a wide variety of student performance on a range of texts and tasks through its matrix sampling is consistent with the range of reading performances expected by CCSS-ELA and should be preserved.

The panel believes that NAEP could build upon these strengths as they consider several recommendations and issues to enhance its relevance to the CCSS-ELA and reflect emerging areas of reading assessment. These recommendations follow.

2. CCSS-ELA has made clear the expectation to increase the “rigor” and “complexity” of texts students read at each grade level as well as progressively across grade levels. In contrast, the NAEP approach is to use texts that are judged to be within the currently recognized range of difficulty for the targeted grade. Nevertheless, the panel finds that the NAEP reading selections at Grades 4 and 8 generally fall within (or above) the quantitative ranges called for in the CCSS-ELA, while the Grade 12 NAEP passages are consistently less difficult than called for by CCSS-ELA quantitative indexes. The panel suggests that NAEP consider passages that include more complexity at the upper grade levels in terms of perspective taking, bias, competing accounts, trustworthiness of the sources, craft, conceptual issues, etc., that might allow for assessing deeper, closer reading. The panel cautions, however, that text difficulty should not be judged solely on quantitative measures—a position supported by both CCSS-ELA and NAEP. The complex issue of text difficulty, including differences between assessment and instructional-level texts, the interplay of text and reading

items/tasks, and assessments that reliably measure across the ability range should be explicitly addressed as NAEP prepares for future assessments.

3. The panel finds that the NAEP framework for constructing items to align with cognitive targets is compatible with the CCSS-ELA anchor standards and should continue to be used for item development.
4. Panel members caution NAEP to be cognizant of the lack of research base, inconsistencies, and specificity of the “learning progressions” embodied by the K–12 grade-level standards in CCSS-ELA.
5. NAEP items align most often with CCSS-ELA Anchor Standards R1–5. Anchor Standards 6–9 are least well represented in the assessments. The panel suggests that NAEP examine how it might place additional focus on assessing point of view, bias, perspectives, and such (Standard R6) and explore strategies (including the use of special studies) for assessing standards related to building knowledge (Anchor Standards R6–9).
6. Many of the NAEP short-constructed and extended-constructed response reading items are aligned with both CCSS-ELA reading and writing anchor standards. Given the emphasis on writing in response to text in the CCSS-ELA writing standards, the panelists suggest that NAEP investigate the possibility of double scoring these items for both reading and writing.
7. An important area of difference between CCSS-ELA and NAEP is the manner in which disciplinary reading is addressed. The *conceptual framing* for CCSS-ELA positions disciplinary reading for the purposes of building new knowledge in the specific discipline. In contrast, the NAEP Reading Framework subsumes disciplinary texts under “informational texts,” sampled from varied content areas. Although these differences exist in the *framing sections* of CCSS-ELA and NAEP documents, the panel finds them to be far less evident when comparing of NAEP items and CCSS-ELA anchor standards or grade-level standards. As a result, the panel was uncertain about the degree to which specific disciplinary reading outcomes would be operationalized when the CCSS-ELA standards are implemented.

The panel suggests that NAEP adopt a more systematic treatment of discipline-specific texts in the text selection process. However, at the same time, it is unclear what the focus should be for assessing these texts—general understanding or disciplinary knowledge building, especially given the difficulties of attending to issues of prior knowledge and topic familiarity in an assessment like NAEP. Overall, the issue of disciplinary text—the purpose, outcomes, and text selection—needs to be addressed and clarified in future NAEP frameworks and assessments.

8. There is a general sense that NAEP’s practice of restricting text selection to material written for general audiences may have had the overall effect of constraining the texts that appear on NAEP more than intended. The panelists suggest that NAEP would be more consistent with the CCSS-ELA if it were to consider inclusion of more dense text and texts that are representative of textbook or workplace reading—these are typically less explicit and controlled than texts currently used in NAEP. At the same time, NAEP needs to accommodate a wide range of reading abilities, including students performing at and below the *Basic* achievement level, especially at fourth grade.

9. The CCSS-ELA documents include attention to classic literature, well-known documents, and popular texts. Attention to these sorts of texts may be appropriate in an instructional setting; however, issues of familiarity (prior knowledge) and length are likely to make these types of texts inappropriate for inclusion in NAEP. NAEP might want to clarify for CCSS-ELA consumers how and why texts used for assessment must necessarily differ in some respects from those used in school and the workplace.
10. NAEP should consider using digital text and information displayed in graphs and charts. These text types are called for in CCSS-ELA, and panelists generally feel that a current (and forward looking) assessment of 21st century literacy should include online reading and research. They suggest that NAEP consult existing research regarding the similarities and differences between “traditional” and Internet/online reading to inform future assessment development. Some panelists also feel that NAEP should reconsider the role and nature of more procedural/functional texts both in the real-world and academic contexts as well as more 12th-grade passages that align with the types of texts typically assigned in college.
11. There are differences in how NAEP and CCSS-ELA address vocabulary. NAEP focuses on a particular type of vocabulary and format for assessment purposes—word meaning in the context of a given passage; CCSS-ELA takes a much broader perspective on vocabulary as an essential element of ELA with a definite emphasis on discipline-specific and academic vocabulary. The panel recommends that NAEP consider both the reading anchor standards and the language anchor standards as it evaluates its existing approach and possible new approaches to vocabulary assessment.
12. The CCSS-ELA include K–5 standards for foundational skills, while NAEP assessments target comprehension beginning at Grade 4. The panelists caution that fourth-grade assessments developed specifically to measure CCSS-ELA may include items testing foundational skills as well as literature/informational standards. Because foundational skills are not part of NAEP, comparisons of fourth-grade performance across different assessments may need to take this into account.

Specific Conclusions and Recommendations for NAEP Writing

1. Panel members find much to commend in the current NAEP writing assessment, reflecting as it does a conceptualization of writing found in both research and in the CCSS-ELA documents. Both NAEP and CCSS-ELA present writing as a social, communicative activity; emphasize the importance of audience, purpose, and task; and treat rhetorical flexibility as an important component of skilled performance. NAEP and CCSS-ELA are aligned in other important ways as well. They address similar broad domains of writing and identify and discuss essentially the same valued characteristics of effective writing—development of ideas, organization, and language facility and conventions.

In light of these strengths, the panel concludes that NAEP should continue to serve as an independent monitor of student achievement in writing in an era of CCSS. The panel also concludes that NAEP should build upon these strengths as it considers ways to reflect emphases in writing curricula in current practice, research, and the CCSS that are not well addressed by the current assessment. These issues and recommendations follow.

2. The CCSS-ELA clearly emphasizes integration of the language arts, while NAEP does not. In particular, CCSS-ELA emphasizes writing about reading and writing from sources (writing based on research). NAEP assessment tasks rely primarily on background knowledge and personal experience. Panelists recommend that NAEP consider including writing in response to print and/or nonprint texts and writing based on research (writing from sources) in future assessments.
3. The CCSS-ELA is explicit in acknowledging that the teaching of writing is a shared responsibility across disciplines and that writing activities within the disciplines are integrated with content learning. While the NAEP Writing Framework acknowledges the situated nature of writing and its importance in all disciplines, it does not address the special skills, strategies, or domain-specific vocabulary associated with writing in the disciplines. Panelists recommend that NAEP consider including writing tasks, especially those that are structured around deep knowledge of subject matter, in NAEP's discipline-specific assessments, either as part of the regular NAEP assessment or as a probe study. Furthermore, NAEP should consider tracking domain-specific vocabulary along with general vocabulary.
4. At present, NAEP limits the role that technology plays in assessment to students' use of a computer for composing and editing with a limited set of commonly available tools. CCSS-ELA, on the other hand, conveys a portrait of college- and career-ready students who "use technology and digital media strategically and capably." Panelists recommend that NAEP consider expanding the use of technology in writing, either as part of the regular NAEP assessment or as a probe study. They also note, however, that if students are to have a wider range of technology-enabled options in the regular NAEP assessment, they would need to have more time to compose as well as to understand the options presented in whatever platform is used in the assessment.
5. NAEP assesses on-demand writing in an abbreviated time frame, while CCSS-ELA emphasizes writing under a variety of conditions and conveys specific expectations for students' use of writing processes such as planning, revising, editing, and rewriting. Panelists recommend that NAEP consider investigating ways to allow different amounts of time for different kinds of tasks. Providing more extended time frames could encourage revising and/or accommodate some of the more complex reading/writing tasks found in the CCSS-ELA. Panelists also suggest that NAEP consider conducting special studies of extended tasks as they are being used in schools.

In Closing

The Reading and Writing Panels appreciate the opportunity to analyze NAEP in light of the CCSS-ELA and the literacy demands of the 21st century. The hope is that the detailed analyses and recommendations contained in the full report will provide the NVS with both information and perspectives that will help it move forward.

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Introduction

Since its first assessment in 1969, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has made a unique contribution to our understanding of American education. It is the only national source of information on the educational achievement of U.S. students, and it is the only vehicle by which states can compare the progress of their students against a common standard. Assessment results reported by NAEP complement the states' own reports of progress under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and track the status of achievement gaps for traditionally disadvantaged student groups.

NAEP is carried out under the guidance of the National Assessment Governing Board (Governing Board) and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Throughout the course of its history, NAEP has frequently sought to improve by studying its own processes, instruments, and procedures. In keeping with this tradition, in fall 2011, NCES asked the NAEP Validity Studies (NVS) Panel, which operates under contract to NCES, to undertake two interrelated studies, one in reading/writing and one in mathematics, to examine the content of the current NAEP frameworks and item pools at Grades 4, 8, and 12 in relation to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The primary question under investigation is whether NAEP can continue to serve as an independent monitor of student achievement and state assessments following the implementation of the CCSS.

This report addresses the relations between the NAEP reading and writing frameworks and the CCSS in English language arts (CCSS-ELA), and the relations between the NAEP reading and writing items and the CCSS-ELA. It does not address the relations between NAEP reading and writing items and items developed by the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (Smarter Balanced) to assess the CCSS-ELA because those items were not available at the time of this study.

The report concludes with recommendations to NCES regarding broader issues on the alignment between NAEP reading and writing and CCSS-ELA, including the extent of alignment that is appropriate to support NAEP's role as an independent monitor of student achievement.

NAEP Frameworks and Common Core State Standards

Policy for NAEP is set by the Governing Board, an independent, bipartisan group whose members include governors, state legislators, local and state school officials, educators, business representatives, and members of the general public. The Governing Board's legislated responsibilities include selecting the subject areas to be assessed and developing assessment objectives and specifications.

To fulfill this mandate, the Governing Board, working through its contractors, produces an assessment framework for each subject area. These frameworks are replaced or updated periodically, balancing the need to stay current with the field against an interest in measuring trends over time.

The framework documents are intended to portray the NAEP assessments to a broad audience of educators and the general public as well as to inform the test developers. The frameworks explicate the structure of the knowledge domain to be assessed, describe the broad outlines of the assessment, define the achievement levels that will be used to report the assessment, and present a set of sample questions.

Reading Framework

The Reading Framework employed in this study has been operational since 2009. It is the second Reading Framework approved by the Governing Board and replaces the framework that was used in NAEP from 1992 to 2007. As noted above, the framework is intended for a broad audience. A more detailed technical document, the *Reading Assessment and Item Specifications for the National Assessment of Educational Progress*, provides information to guide passage selection, item development, and other aspects of test development. Both the framework and the specifications documents are available to the public at <http://www.nagb.org/publications/frameworks.html>.

Through the framework, the Governing Board has defined several parameters for the reading assessment. First, the assessment will measure reading comprehension in English. On the assessment, students will be asked to read passages written in English and to answer questions about what they have read. Second, because this is an assessment of reading comprehension and not listening comprehension, the assessment does not allow passages to be read aloud to students as a test accommodation. Third, under Governing Board policy, the framework “shall not endorse or advocate a particular pedagogical approach, but shall focus on important, measurable indicators of student achievement...” (National Assessment Governing Board, 2010a, p. iii). Although broad implications for instruction may be inferred from the assessment, NAEP does not specify how reading should be taught, nor does it prescribe a particular curricular approach to teaching reading.

The NAEP Reading Framework results from the work of many individuals and organizations involved in reading and reading education, including researchers, policymakers, educators, and other members of the public. Their work was guided by

scientifically based literacy research that conceptualizes reading as a dynamic cognitive process as reflected in the following definition of reading:

“Reading is an active and complex process that involves:

- Understanding written text.
- Developing and interpreting meaning.
- Using meaning as appropriate to type of text, purpose, and situation” (National Assessment Governing Board, 2010a, p. iv).

This definition applies to the assessment of reading achievement on NAEP and is not intended to be an inclusive definition of reading or to describe a reading curriculum.

Writing Framework

The Writing Framework employed in the study became operational in 2011 for Grades 8 and 12. (Grade 4 was assessed on a pilot basis only, using the new framework, in 2011.) The framework describes, for a general audience, how the assessment should measure students’ writing at Grades 4, 8, and 12. Both the framework and the more technical specifications document are available to the public at <http://www.nagb.org/publications/frameworks.html>. This is the second Writing Framework approved by the Governing Board; it replaces the framework that was used in the NAEP from 1998 to 2007.

Given expanding contexts for writing in the 21st century, the NAEP Writing Framework is designed to support the assessment of writing as a purposeful act of thinking and expression used to accomplish many different goals. Although NAEP cannot assess all contexts for student writing, the framework defines an assessment that offers opportunities to understand students’ ability—in an “on-demand” writing situation—to make effective choices for their writing in relation to a specified purpose and audience. In this respect, the assessment reflects writing situations common to both academic and workplace settings, in which writers are often expected to respond to on-demand writing tasks.

In addition, the assessment is designed to provide important information about the impact of new technologies on writing in K–12 education—including the impact of word processing software—and about the extent to which students at Grade 12 are prepared to meet postsecondary expectations.

For the assessment, students at all three grades complete two 30-minute on-demand writing tasks. Students have the flexibility to make rhetorical choices that help shape the development and organization of ideas and the language of their responses. Using age- and grade-appropriate writing tasks, the assessment evaluates writers’ ability to achieve three purposes common to writing in school and in the workplace: to persuade; to explain; and to convey experience, real or imagined.

The scoring guides for each of these three purposes focus on three broad features of writing (development of ideas, organization of ideas, and language

facility/conventions) and describe six levels of performance. Anchor papers (selected pieces of student work) illustrate expectations for performance at each of the six levels. Taken together, the tasks, scoring guides, and anchor papers define the assessment.

The NAEP Writing Framework results from the work of a diverse array of individuals and organizations involved in writing and writing education, including researchers, policymakers, educators, and other members of the public. Their work was guided by scientifically based research that conceptualizes writing as a relationship or negotiation between the writer and reader to satisfy the aims of both parties. As a result, the Writing Framework focuses on writing for communicative purposes and on the relationship of the writer to his or her intended audience, as reflected in the following definition of writing:

“Writing is a complex, multifaceted and purposeful act of communication that is accomplished in a variety of environments, under various constraints of time, and with a variety of language resources and technological tools” (National Assessment Governing Board, 2010b, p. 3).

Common Core State Standards

The Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects (CCSS-ELA), like most content standards, are designed to provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to be taught and, thus, to learn. They are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that young people need for success in college and careers. The concept of college and career readiness is a driving force behind the CCSS-ELA. College and career readiness (CCR) standards for the end of 12th grade were developed first. They then served as the basis for the development of the K–12 grade-level standards, which are intended to be learning progressions that lead to achievement of the CCR.

The development of the CCSS was led by the states, not a federal agency, under the auspices of the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). As a state-led initiative, the CCSS are designed to improve on current state standards by creating fewer, clearer, and higher level standards. The CCSS-ELA are also reported to be internationally benchmarked to help ensure that all students are prepared to succeed in a global economy and society.

It is also worth noting what the CCSS-ELA do not define. First, the CCSS-ELA are not intended to define all that can or should be taught; they are not intended to be a curriculum. Rather, they are intended to provide specification of the goals that should be achieved through curriculum. Second, the CCSS-ELA do not define how teachers should teach. Third, they do not define the nature of advanced work beyond the CCSS or the interventions needed for students well below grade level. Finally, they do not define the full range of supports for English language learners and students with special needs.

The CCSS-ELA are the culmination of an extended, broad-based effort to create the next generation of K–12 standards in order to help ensure that all students are college and career ready in literacy no later than the end of high school. The CCSS-ELA consists of several documents. The main body of the CCSS-ELA includes introductory material and the standards themselves. The standards are presented separately for each area of the language arts—reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language. Within each of these areas, there are two types of standards. First, there are the CCSS college and career readiness anchor standards. These standards are the same for all grades, K–12. Second, there are grade-level standards, which “unpack” the CCSS anchor standards at each grade level. A unique feature of the standards in Grades 6–12 is the addition of CCSS anchor and grade-level standards in reading and writing in the subject areas—history/social studies, science, and technical subjects.

In addition to the introductory materials and standards, the CCSS-ELA documents include three appendixes. Appendix A elaborates on text complexity, foundational reading skills, and a skills progression for language development. Appendix B provides sample reading texts and performance tasks, and Appendix C provides samples of quality writing at each grade level. These appendixes are integral to understanding and implementing the standards.

The CCSS-ELA documents build on the foundation laid by states in their decades-long work on crafting high-quality education standards. The introductory material states that the standards also draw on the most important international models as well as research and input from numerous sources, including state departments of education; scholars; assessment developers; professional organizations; educators from kindergarten through college; and parents, students, and other members of the public. In their design and content, refined through successive drafts and numerous rounds of feedback, the standards represent an effort to synthesize the best elements of standards-related work to date and represent an advance over that previous work.

The CCSS-ELA standards provide an integrated view of English language arts. There is integration of all of the areas of the language arts (reading, writing, listening/speaking, and language) across Grades K–12 and integration between two areas of the language arts (reading and writing) across the subject areas of history/social studies, science, and technical subjects at Grades 6–12. It is important to note that the 6–12 reading and writing standards in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects are not meant to replace content standards in those areas but rather to supplement them. States may incorporate these reading and writing standards into their standards for those subjects or adopt them separately as content area literacy standards.

In addition to the integrated and disciplinary focus of the CCSS-ELA Grade 6–12 standards, the Grade 12 standards are intended to define the English language arts skills and understandings required for college and career readiness. As a natural outgrowth of meeting this intent, the standards also lay out a vision of what it means to be a literate person in the 21st century. Therefore, the skills and understandings that students are expected to demonstrate are intended to have wide applicability outside the classroom or workplace.

- “Students who meet the Standards readily undertake the close, attentive reading that is at the heart of understanding and enjoying complex works of literature.
- They habitually perform the critical reading necessary to pick carefully through the staggering amount of information available today in print and digitally.
- They actively seek the wide, deep, and thoughtful engagement with high-quality literary and informational texts that builds knowledge, enlarges experience, and broadens worldviews.
- They reflexively demonstrate the cogent reasoning and use of evidence that is essential to both private deliberation and responsible citizenship in a democratic republic” (National Governors Association & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010, p. 3).

In short, students who meet the standards are expected to develop the skills in reading, writing, listening/speaking, and language that are the foundation for any creative and purposeful use of language.

Purpose and Methods

To address the broad charge to the NVS Panel to evaluate NAEP as a potential monitor of CCSS-ELA achievement, two expert panels were convened—one for reading and one for writing. Listening and speaking were not included in the analysis because there are no NAEP assessments in these areas.

The study directors were NVS Panel members Dr. Wixson and Dr. Phillips, and the subject area directors were Dr. Valencia (reading) and Dr. Murphy (writing). Additional content experts with extensive knowledge and experience with NAEP and/or CCSS-ELA were invited to participate in either the reading or writing analyses. All agreed. The names of these content experts are listed in the appendix.

The following comparative analyses were designed by the study directors and carried out by the expert panels, separately for reading and writing:

1. **NAEP Frameworks to CCSS-ELA Documents**—to analyze the similarities and differences between the conceptualization and content of the NAEP reading and writing frameworks and the CCSS-ELA documents
2. **NAEP Reading Passages/Writing Prompts, Scoring Guides, and Anchor Papers to CCSS-ELA Documents**—to analyze the alignment between the NAEP reading passages and writing prompts, scoring guides, and anchor papers and the CCSS-ELA general guidelines for the types of reading and writing students should do
3. **NAEP Items/Writing Prompts to CCSS-ELA Anchor/Grade-Level Standards**—to analyze the alignment of the actual NAEP reading items and writing prompts at Grades 4, 8, and 12 with specific anchor CCSS-ELA standards

Activity 1. NAEP Frameworks to CCSS-ELA Documents

This activity was a qualitative analysis of the similarities and differences between the NAEP reading and writing frameworks and the CCSS-ELA documents to determine how the domains are conceived, defined, organized, and parsed. All CCSS-ELA documents (including the CCSS-ELA Appendixes A, B, and C) and NAEP reading and writing framework documents were used for this analysis. The analyses were conducted by five expert panel members for each subject area, including study director Dr. Wixson and either Dr. Valencia (reading) or Dr. Murphy (writing).

The choice of a qualitative, descriptive set of procedures for making the comparisons, as opposed to a traditional alignment methodology, was primarily driven by the nature of the NAEP reading and writing frameworks. The methods used in traditional alignment studies would require that the NAEP frameworks be parsed into standards/objectives that do not reflect the basic intent of these documents.

After considering several different approaches to this comparative analysis, the study directors agreed to ask expert panel members to respond individually to the five questions listed below and then hold several conference calls to deliberate and come to a consensus. In conducting Activity 1 of this study, the panelists were cognizant

of the basic differences that exist in the purposes of CCSS-ELA and the NAEP frameworks. As crafted, CCSS-ELA documents represent a detailed framework, with exemplars, for what should be taught and what students should be able to do in K–12 in English language arts and in literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. By contrast, the NAEP documents are assessment frameworks and do not expressly seek to influence curricular decisions. These differences in purpose translate into different aspects/elements being included in each. With these basic differences in mind, the analyses enumerated the similarities and differences that the panelists believed are important to consider in light of the charge to advise NCES regarding the potential of NAEP to serve as an independent monitor of student achievement under CCSS-ELA. The questions driving this analysis were:

1. What similarities and differences are important to consider in the conceptualization of reading or writing (depending on your group) as reflected in the NAEP framework and the CCSS-ELA documents?
2. Starting with the NAEP framework, what aspects/elements of NAEP reading or writing (depending on your group) are addressed in the overview of the CCSS-ELA, the appendixes, and the standards for Grades 4, 8, and 12? Where are the NAEP elements addressed in the CCSS-ELA documents? What, if anything, is in the NAEP framework that is not in CCSS-ELA overview and other documents?
3. Starting with CCSS-ELA documents, including the overview, the grade-level standards for Grades 4, 8, and 12, and the appendixes, what aspects of reading or writing are not addressed in the NAEP framework?
4. What elements identified as present in CCSS-ELA standards and associated documents, but not in the NAEP framework, do you consider important for the purposes of assessment? Where, or in what ways, might they be addressed in a NAEP assessment?
5. What additional issues, beyond those identified above, do you think are important to address as NAEP considers alignment with CCSS-ELA? Please help us understand the issues and why they are important to a national assessment.

Once the panel members had been contacted and had agreed to participate in this activity, separate conference calls were held with the Reading and Writing Panels to go over the task and address panelists' questions. The panelists then submitted individual written responses to the five questions. The study directors prepared a draft summary of the comparisons for review and discussion by the panelists in subsequent conference calls. Information from the individual panelists' analyses and the conference calls was synthesized and then shared with panelists for their review and comment.

Activity 2. NAEP Reading Passages/Writing Prompts, Scoring Guides, and Anchor Papers to CCSS-ELA Documents

Once Activity 1 was concluded, Activities 2 and 3 were conducted concurrently. A total of nine reading experts and nine writing experts, including the study directors (Dr. Wixson, Dr. Valencia/Dr. Murphy) participated in Activity 2 and Activity 3 (see

the appendix). The Reading Panel met on September 11–12, 2012, and the Writing Panel met on October 26–27, 2012. Several observers from NCES and AIR also attended these meetings.

Activity 2 focused on the relations between aspects of the NAEP assessments (specifically, the reading passages, and the writing prompts with their associated scoring guides and anchor papers) and the CCSS-ELA documents. The study directors developed the methods used for comparing specific dimensions of the NAEP assessments to the CCSS-ELA documents. Each panel member conducted individual analyses with an emphasis on one of the three grade levels—4, 8, or 12 (approximately three to four panelists per grade level)—prior to the face-to-face meetings. The following describes the processes specific to each subject area panel.

Analysis of NAEP Reading Passages

CCSS-ELA documents place a major emphasis on describing the types of texts students should read. Therefore, prior to the face-to-face meeting, panelists evaluated each of the reading passages in the pool of NAEP passages at their assigned grade level and a selected sample of passages from the other grade levels. Across grade levels, a total of 28 reading blocks (20 containing a single reading selection and 8 containing two reading selections) from the 2009 and 2011 NAEP reading assessments were used for this analysis. All blocks were analyzed by three to six panelists to establish a consensus.

The analysis focused on three aspects of text as defined by both the qualitative and quantitative criteria described in CCSS-ELA documents: (1) range of text types, (2) quality of text, and (3) text complexity. All panelists provided a written analysis of each NAEP passage they were assigned in response to the following questions:

- How does this passage fit within the range of types of texts called for by the CCSS-ELA at the designated grade level?
- How does this passage fit with the dimensions of passage quality (i.e., levels of meaning or purpose, structure, language conventions and clarity, knowledge demands) called for by the CCSS-ELA at this grade level?
- How are the passage qualities similar to/different from the passage qualities called for in CCSS-ELA?
- How does the complexity of the passage fit with both the qualitative and quantitative criteria called for by CCSS-ELA at the designated grade level?

In addition, panelists wrote summary reports for the passages they evaluated in response to the following question: “How well does the pool of NAEP passages at your target grade level reflect what is called for in CCSS-ELA in terms of range, quality, and complexity? Explain your reasoning and indicate what, if any, changes NAEP should consider making in its passage selections.” These written analyses were reviewed and assembled by the study directors. At the face-to-face meetings, panelists met in grade-level subgroups to develop a consensus analysis for each grade level that was then shared and discussed with the entire panel.

Analysis of NAEP Writing Prompts, Scoring Guides, and Anchor Papers

CCSS-ELA documents prioritize adapting writing to purpose and audience as well as dimensions of writing such as clarity, coherence, development, organization, and use of language and conventions. Evidence of attention to these elements can be found in particular artifacts associated with the assessment: the prompts, focused holistic scoring guides (one for each purpose), and sets of anchor papers (each set illustrating performance levels 1 through 6) that, taken together, define the assessment.

Therefore, prior to the face-to-face meeting, panelists were asked to conduct individual analyses of these artifacts. Panelists read all of the prompts, the three scoring guides, and two sets of anchor papers (one for each of two prompts) at one assigned grade level (4, 8, or 12). Each anchor set contained six papers, one for each score level, 1–6. In addition, to give panelists some background for discussions with the panel as a whole and a sense of the progression of expectations across the three grade levels, panelists were asked to read two prompts along with their corresponding scoring guides and anchor sets at the other two grade levels. At the face-to-face meetings, panelists worked in grade-level groups to establish a consensus. All prompts, scoring guides, and anchor papers were read and discussed by three to six panelists. Each panelist completed three individual summary sheets, one for the scoring guide analysis, one for the prompt analysis, and one for the anchor set analysis. A total of 80 prompts, 8 scoring guides, and 6 sets of anchor papers were used for these analyses.

Scoring Guide Analysis. For the scoring guide analysis, panelists wrote responses to three questions about the extent to which the NAEP scoring guides for their assigned grade levels were consistent with the emphasis in the CCSS-ELA standards and accompanying documents on (1) particular types/purposes for writing; (2) particular dimensions of writing (development, organization, language facility and conventions); and (3) adapting writing to purpose, audience, and task. Panelists were asked: “Explain your reasoning and discuss the implications, if any, for the design of the NAEP scoring guides.”

Anchor Paper Analysis. Appendix C of the CCSS-ELA documents includes sample papers that portray the level of quality that students would be expected to achieve in order to meet (or exceed) grade-level expectations. In the NAEP assessment, scores of 4 are characterized as “sufficient,” scores of 5, “skillful,” and scores of 6, “excellent.” For the anchor paper analysis, individual panelists provided written responses to the question, “How do the NAEP writing samples at score level 4 and above from your assigned anchor sets compare with the writing samples at this grade level in Appendix C of the CCSS-ELA? Explain your reasoning and discuss the implications, if any, for the design of the NAEP writing assessment.”

Prompt Analysis. For the prompt analysis, panelists wrote responses to three questions about how well the pool of NAEP prompts for their assigned grade level fit with the information in the CCSS-ELA standards and accompanying documents with regard to particular text types and purposes; range of tasks, purposes, and audiences; and the emphasis on adapting writing to task, audience, and purpose. For all three questions, panelists were asked: “Explain your reasoning and indicate what, if any changes NAEP should consider making in its prompts.”

The panelists' written analyses were reviewed and assembled by the study directors. At the face-to-face meetings, panelists met in grade-level subgroups to develop consensus analyses for writing prompts, scoring guides, and anchor papers that were then shared and discussed with the entire panel.

Activity 3. NAEP Reading Items/Writing Prompts to CCSS-ELA Anchor/Grade-Level Standards

Panelists examined reading items and writing prompts at Grades 4, 8, and 12 and identified the anchor standard(s) and grade-level standard(s) with which each item/prompt was most closely aligned. These analyses were designed to evaluate more precisely the alignment of NAEP items and prompts to the standards and to determine whether there are CCSS-ELA standards that are not addressed by NAEP items/prompts. For this analysis, actual NAEP items as well as scoring guides were used. Because NAEP reading items often require readers to draw on multiple sources of information, interpret text, and use a variety of skills and strategies, and because writing prompts sometimes elicit more than one type of writing, reading items and writing prompts sometimes aligned with multiple CCSS-ELA standards. Therefore, based on their expert judgment, panelists rated each item as *strongly aligned*, *moderately aligned*, or *weakly aligned* with specific standards. This provided an opportunity for panelists to go beyond a simple matching to indicate alignment; it permitted them to evaluate the strength of alignment across multiple standards.

During each of the face-to-face meetings (reading and writing), panelists first worked as an entire group to complete the task using one set of reading items or one writing prompt for each of the three grade levels. The goal here was to clarify and revise the task as needed and to reach agreement on panelists' alignment judgments across different types of assessment tasks. After working through these initial sets of items/prompts, panelists completed additional sets of items/prompts individually for their assigned grade levels. Individual ratings were then compared in grade-level groups. Grade-level groups created consensus ratings, which were shared and discussed with the entire group in an effort to examine trends and unique attributes across the grade levels. In total, the Reading Panel analyzed 146 reading items (including scoring guides for constructed response questions) across Grades 4, 8, and 12, and the Writing Panel analyzed 80 prompts, 8 scoring guides, and 36 anchor papers.

Both the Reading and Writing Panels found this task very challenging, largely because of highly variable levels of specificity found in the grade-level standards. As a result of difficulties in matching NAEP items/prompts to grade-level standards, both panels decided to use only the anchor standards for this analysis. The panels judged the anchor standards to best represent the content and intent of the CCSS-ELA. Although this was challenging, too, both panels felt this analysis resulted in a fair description of which standards are/are not covered by NAEP items and prompts. We further discuss this decision to use anchor standards rather than grade-level standards in the Results section for Activity 3 that follows.

Results

This section includes the results for reading, followed by those for writing. Within each subject area, summaries of the findings from each of the separate analyses are presented first, followed by overall conclusions and recommendations for that subject area.

The paper concludes with an overall set of conclusions and recommendations that span the two subject areas.

Reading Findings

Summary of Comparison Between NAEP Reading Framework and CCSS-ELA Documents (Activity 1)

The following describes similarities and differences between the NAEP Reading Framework and the CCSS-ELA in the areas of definition/conceptualization, cognitive processes, text types, text difficulty, vocabulary, and foundational skills. The focus is on similarities and differences with implications for NAEP's role as an independent monitor, after acknowledging that there are important differences in the *purposes* of these documents that are reflected in differences in the scope and specificity of the documents.

Definition/Conceptualization. Both NAEP and CCSS-ELA consider reading to be a complex, interactive process that is influenced by the reader, text, and context of reading. NAEP does so explicitly with its definition of reading, and CCSS-ELA does so implicitly as it describes a “vision” of what it means to be a literate person in the 21st century.

Despite the basic similarities in the conceptualization of reading in the CCSS-ELA and the NAEP Reading Framework, the Reading Panel identified some differences that could have implications for NAEP. One difference arises from the extent to which a focus on disciplinary reading is integral to the conceptual framing of English language arts in the standards documents. The CCSS-ELA documents have dedicated standards for reading in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects that are not matched within the NAEP framework. For CCSS-ELA, disciplinary reading is related to knowledge in two ways: (1) reading in the discipline serves as a way for readers to build new knowledge from text related to specific subject matter, and (2) background knowledge in the discipline or specific subject matter is necessary for deep comprehension. Disciplinary knowledge, therefore, is both the outcome of deep reading in a specific content area and a requirement to enable deep reading. In contrast, the NAEP Reading Framework subsumes disciplinary texts under “informational texts” and samples from “varied content areas.” NAEP's approach to disciplinary reading is more one of assessing general comprehension, aligned with the cognitive targets, rather than specific knowledge building. This is not surprising given an assessment context that is not tied to curriculum and in which differential levels of prior knowledge and familiarity could confound the interpretation of students' performance.

A second issue that emerged as a result of this analysis focused on the CCSS-ELA grade-level standards. The panel raised concerns about the validity and specificity of the grade-level standards that might influence Activity 3 (comparing NAEP items to CCSS-ELA anchor/grade-level standards). They recommended more in-depth attention to this issue in the design and implementation of Activity 3 (see below).

Cognitive Processes. The NAEP Reading Framework explicitly defines “the mental processes or kinds of thinking that underlie reading comprehension” (National Assessment Governing Board, 2010a, p. 39) in terms of three cognitive targets—locate/recall, integrate/interpret, critique/evaluate. The CCSS-ELA anchor standards make no mention of the cognitive processes that readers might engage in when reading to achieve particular standards, although it could be argued that they might be inferred from the wording of the anchor or grade-level standards. In contrast to NAEP’s emphasis on cognitive processes, the CCSS-ELA documents focus on the outputs/behaviors (i.e., what students should know and be able to do) to demonstrate their performance of the standards.

An important difference between NAEP and CCSS-ELA from the standpoint of assessment is the matter of what “develops” across grade levels. Specifically, within NAEP, the same cognitive targets are specified across grades, and the level of text complexity varies. In contrast, the complexity of both the texts *and* the grade-level standards (outputs/behaviors) is designed to increase across grades within the CCSS-ELA. If NAEP is aligned at the level of the anchor standards, rather than the grade-level standards, this is not an issue because those standards remain the same across grades.

Text Types. Both NAEP and CCSS-ELA identify two general types of text—literary and informational—and both assert that proficient readers must be able to demonstrate reading processes across a range of text types/subtypes, with an increasing presence of informational texts as students move up the grade levels. However, NAEP provides a much more elaborate system for specifying both genre and text elements than does the CCSS-ELA. Although it is likely that the more detailed NAEP specifications would fulfill the general text type categories identified in CCSS-ELA, the exemplar texts provided in the CCSS-ELA Appendix B and the list of text types of texts recommended in the main body of the CCSS-ELA standards document include additional text types (e.g., classic and traditional texts) that are not typically included in NAEP. Another area specifically noted in the CCSS-ELA that is not addressed in the NAEP framework is students’ ability to read digital text.

Text Difficulty. Both NAEP and CCSS-ELA attend to a range of factors that influence “comprehensibility” of text or “text complexity.” NAEP attends to text difficulty primarily through a set of qualitative factors (National Assessment Governing Board, 2010a, pp. 29–32) applied by “expert judgment,” as well as the use of story/concept maps and “at least two research-based readability formulas.” CCSS-ELA addresses text difficulty through guidelines for measuring text complexity provided in Appendix A, in which the importance of both quantitative and qualitative factors is acknowledged.

An important element of the CCSS-ELA documents with regard to text difficulty is the intention to increase the “rigor” and “complexity” of texts students read at each grade level as well as progressively across grade levels. In contrast, the NAEP approach is to use texts that are judged to be within the currently recognized range of difficulty for the targeted grade. This issue of text difficulty and what counts as grade-level text must be carefully analyzed as NAEP explores its role as a monitor of CCSS-ELA.

The wording for some grade-level standards in CCSS-ELA includes explicit references to supports for lower performing students—for example, “with prompting and support” (National Assessment Governing Board, 2010a, p. 11) or “with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the [text complexity] range” (National Assessment Governing Board, 2010a, p. 37). This wording makes sense from a developmental perspective and from an instructional perspective. However, in an assessment, where students’ reading abilities vis-à-vis the CCSS-ELA standards are being tested, the level of prompting or support is irrelevant because students must function independently. Consequently, the issue of the difficulty level of the texts selected for NAEP comes back into play. Panelists discussed this issue especially given that NAEP has been concerned about the reliability and validity of data for low-performing students. The panelists were also aware that some of the new CCSS-ELA assessments might integrate adaptive testing strategies that could provide students with texts of varying difficulty levels.

Vocabulary. There is a noticeable distinction between the NAEP and CCSS-ELA in the treatment of vocabulary. NAEP focuses on a particular type of vocabulary for assessment purposes—word meaning in the context of a given passage—while CCSS-ELA takes a much broader perspective on vocabulary as an essential element of ELA and also places a definite emphasis on discipline-specific and academic vocabulary.

Foundational Skills. An obvious difference between CCSS-ELA and the NAEP framework is attention to foundational skills for K–5 in the CCSS-ELA. Although it is not common practice to assess foundational skills above Grade 3 in large-scale assessments, it is possible that newer assessments of the CCSS-ELA may include foundational skills. If that happens, NAEP will need to revisit issues of alignment with CCSS-ELA for its fourth-grade assessment.

Summary of Comparison Between NAEP Reading Passages and Descriptions of Texts and Exemplars in CCSS-ELA Documents (Activity 2)

The following section provides a summary of the panelists’ evaluation of the pool of 28 NAEP passages at Grades 4, 8, and 12 in relation to the CCSS-ELA descriptions of the range, quality, and complexity of texts that students are expected to encounter in instruction at different grade levels. Some NAEP passages are administered only at one grade level (4, 8, or 12), and others are administered at two grades (4 and 8 or 8 and 12).

Range. Range is defined in CCSS-ELA documents as the types of texts students should encounter within literature and informational reading (e.g., stories, poems, myths, and disciplinary texts in history and science). There was general agreement among the panelists that at Grades 4 and 8 the pool of NAEP passages reviewed was fairly representative of the kinds of texts called for in the CCSS-ELA. At Grade 12, some differences were noted, such as the inclusion of documents in the CCSS-ELA that were more focused on academic content than are found in NAEP.

Although there was general agreement that there is reasonably good alignment between NAEP passages and the text types called for in CCSS-ELA, panelists were concerned that there was limited variability among the pool of NAEP passages representing each text type. It was also observed that while canonical texts are emphasized in the CCSS-ELA, they are not as present in the NAEP passages, although some do exist at Grades 8 and 12.

Panelists further noted that there are several types of texts included in CCSS-ELA that were not included in the NAEP item pool for 2009–2011 or called for in the Reading Framework. At Grade 4, there was no representation of drama, forms (documents) or information displayed in charts and graphs, or digital texts. At Grade 8, there was no representation of drama, and there were no examples of document reading, although some of the passages did include charts, tables, and other graphic elements. Furthermore, there was no Web-based or media-like information represented in NAEP, although these types of texts are called for in the CCSS-ELA documents. At Grade 12, it was noted that the NAEP passages had no instances of drama or of digital or online texts. Although documents were present in NAEP at Grade 12, there were questions about the relevance of the selected documents for “college and career readiness.” It was also noted that NAEP seemed to be missing the kinds of texts college freshmen and sophomores are expected to read, including philosophical treatises, texts from times and contexts greatly dissimilar to our own, research reports, and, above all, textbooks.

At the same time, NAEP includes some types of passages not referenced in CCSS-ELA. Specifically, NAEP passages draw from a broader range of text types that readers interact with in everyday life, such as popular magazines and newspapers. The CCSS-ELA exemplars do not include as broad an array of reading material found in various contexts of life, including career, college, and citizenship.

Panelists also considered the issue of how well NAEP passages address the CCSS-ELA emphasis on subject-matter reading at Grades 8 and 12. This seems to be an area of difference. For example, at Grade 8 it was noted that the science texts in NAEP did not include scientific explanations but relied heavily on passages from sources like *Highlights*, with little attention paid to the actual science, but more to the social/political/health implications. However, the panelists also noted that, compared to the attention reading in the disciplines receives in CCSS-ELA documents, the actual treatment of disciplinary texts in CCSS-ELA standards appears to be quite generic and does not explicitly address the manner in which texts should be read and evaluated differently from one discipline to another. Based on this observation, the panelists concluded that, even though NAEP does not

specifically privilege reading in the disciplines, NAEP’s treatment of informational/disciplinary texts might not be all that different from the CCSS-ELA.

Quality. “Quality” of texts as described in CCSS-ELA relates to “literary merit and value,” “rich content,” and “cultural and historical significance.” Quality is also defined in CCSS-ELA through lists of “quality” texts and through excerpts in CCSS-ELA Appendix B from “exemplar” texts. NAEP seeks texts that are characterized by “high quality literary and informational material,” and “evidencing the characteristics of good writing, coherence and appropriateness for each grade level.” The NAEP text selection criteria intended to lead to the use of quality texts are numerous and detailed. NAEP also provides citations to documents that further define the facets of text quality.

In general, the panel judged that the “quality” of the NAEP texts is similar to that of the CCSS-ELA exemplars. The literary texts in NAEP are comparable to the literary exemplars in CCSS-ELA Appendix B, although the CCSS-ELA exemplars include multiple excerpts from canonical texts at all grade levels, and NAEP has none at Grade 4 and few at Grades 8 and 12. Similarly, the quality of the informational texts in NAEP is comparable to the informational exemplars in CCSS-ELA Appendix B.

Complexity. Appendix A of the CCSS-ELA provides a description of how to evaluate text *complexity* using three broad dimensions: quantitative measures, qualitative criteria, and reader and task factors. Quantitative dimensions focus on various readability formulas, and Appendix A includes a chart showing the computer-generated numeric Lexile levels appropriate for different grade bands. Qualitative dimensions are described in terms of levels of meaning, structure, language conventionality and clarity, and knowledge demands. CCSS-ELA documents suggest that reader and task factors be determined locally with reference to variables such as student motivation and knowledge, as well as the purpose and complexity of the reading task. Because NAEP and CCSS-ELA deal with reader and task factors differently, the panelists attended only to quantitative and qualitative dimensions of complexity called for in CCSS-ELA in their analysis of NAEP reading passages.

The panel found that NAEP fourth- and eighth-grade passages are appropriately complex according to CCSS-ELA *quantitative* criteria. Using the quantitative criteria in CCSS-ELA Appendix A, the overwhelming majority of the Grade 4 passages fall in the fourth- to fifth-grade complexity band, and several Grade 4 passages could be placed in the sixth- to eighth-grade band. Similarly, the quantitative measures of eighth-grade NAEP passages are solidly within the revised quantitative Lexile guidelines in CCSS-ELA. As might be expected, the cross-grade NAEP passages designated for inclusion in both the Grade 4 and Grade 8 assessments are generally below the intended eighth-grade range, but this seems appropriate given NAEP’s purposes for cross-grade administration.

At Grade 12, however, the NAEP passages are consistently less difficult than the CCSS-ELA quantitative criteria called for at Grade 12; the cross-grade passages designed to be administered to both Grades 8 and 12 fall within the quantitative guidelines for Grade 8. The difference in 12th-grade passage difficulty between the

two frameworks begs the question as to whether CCSS-ELA texts are too challenging, NAEP passages are too easy, or whether other factors account for the discrepancy. It may be that more complex or challenging texts can be used when instructional support is provided, but that text difficulty may need to be reconsidered within CCSS-ELA when associated assessments are developed. Furthermore, text difficulty needs to be considered alongside the demands of specific assessment items about the text in order to determine *comprehension* difficulty. As described in the CCSS-ELA appendixes, some texts that appear easy using quantitative measures can be quite difficult to understand at a deep level, and, conversely, some texts that appear to be difficult can be easy to understand when more surface-level comprehension is expected. One panelist, with many years of experience as a college-level ELA expert, expressed the view that many of the 12th-grade exemplars from the CCSS-ELA are inappropriately difficult for 12th grade and would challenge many college students even near the end of their undergraduate programs.

Although the NAEP passages appear to be largely within the quantitative guidelines provided by CCSS-ELA, there are some qualitative differences in complexity that are apparent across all grade levels when the NAEP passages are compared to the CCSS-ELA exemplars. In general, NAEP appears to employ literature that does not include many complex literary devices, whereas CCSS-ELA exemplars tend to include more texts with this characteristic. When NAEP literary passages do contain some metaphorical language and literary devices, they do not seem to be as complex as CCSS-ELA calls for, and related comprehension items do not seem to require sophisticated interpretation. Turning to informational texts, panelists found that the NAEP informational passages have relatively simple levels of meaning and require less in terms of conceptual understanding. In general, the language of the NAEP passages is syntactically and semantically less complex and includes less technical vocabulary than CCSS-ELA exemplars.

NAEP passages have reader-friendly structures and a conversational style, which often includes an engaging introduction. The narratives often follow simple story grammar; the nonfiction texts are typically chronological or problem/solution. As with many authentic texts, visuals (e.g., photos, charts, graphs, etc.) are sometimes ornamental and sometimes functional in delivering information. In addition, the level of prior knowledge needed to read NAEP passages is generally low, and references to other texts are generally not present. Although it might be helpful to know “a little bit” about the topic, topical knowledge does not seem essential to the comprehension of important ideas.

Finally, the panel noted several cautions for NAEP as it considers issues of text complexity in light of the CCSS-ELA recommendations. First, the CCSS-ELA includes reference to students reading independently as well as with scaffolding and support. The fact that assessments do not provide reading support has implications for how difficult assessment texts should be at various grade levels. Second, data do not yet exist to determine whether an assessment that is aligned with the CCSS-ELA recommendations for complexity would be able to provide estimates of achievement across the proficiency span. Third, the panel noted that NAEP should consider the text-task-reader interaction as it evaluates complexity and not rely solely on quantitative alignment with CCSS-ELA; for individual students, particular NAEP

items (or CCSS-ELA tasks) can require complexity of thinking that may or may not be indicated by an analysis of text complexity alone.

Summary of Alignment Between NAEP Reading Items and CCSS-ELA Anchor and Grade-Level Standards (Activity 3)

Anchor Standards and Grade-Level Standards. As indicated previously, the panelists raised concerns about the validity and consistency of grade-level standards following Activity 1. Nevertheless, they tried to use grade-level standards to examine a sample set of items from each grade level. After the grade-level standard exercise and considerable discussion, the panel unanimously agreed that aligning NAEP items with grade-level standards was so problematic that it did not make sense to continue with this part of the analysis. Two issues are relevant here.

First, there were multiple instances in which the grade-level standards associated with a particular anchor standard did not appear to form learning progressions that clearly build across grade levels or are more developmentally complex at the higher grade levels. Moreover, panelists could not identify research that supported the placement of specific knowledge/skills at specific grade levels or the developmental progression of a specific anchor standard across the grades.

For example, the grade-level standards developed for Anchor Standard R1 emphasize different skills across Grades 3–5, and there is no clear sequence of complexity or difficulty across the grades.

Anchor Standard R1—Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Grade 3—Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

Grade 4—Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

Grade 5—Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inference from the text.

In other cases, such as Anchor Standard R9 (analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare approaches authors take), the associated grade-level standards remain identical across several grades (Grades 6, 7, and 8).

Second, sometimes the grade-level standards include so much specificity (which is also not consistent across grade levels) that it was difficult, if not impossible, to reliably identify a standard that closely aligned with each NAEP item. For example, the grade-level standards for reading Anchor Standard 3 focus on identifying and describing characters, settings, and major events in stories at kindergarten and Grades 1, 4, and 5; however, the standards for Grades 2 and 3 focus only on characters.

Similarly, some of the grade-level standards associated with Anchor Standards 4 and 9 identify a particular genre or specific types of texts only at specific grades:

Anchor Standard R4 (Grade 4)—Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including those that allude to significant characters found in mythology (e.g., Herculean).

Anchor Standard R9 (Grades 9–10)—Analyze seminal U.S. documents of historical and literary significance (e.g., Washington’s Farewell Address, the Gettysburg Address, Roosevelt’s Four Freedoms speech, King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail”), including how they address related themes and concepts.

As a result of efforts to try to align NAEP reading items with grade-level standards, the panelists determined that it would be most appropriate to examine reading items in relation to the anchor standards for reading (National Governors Association & Council of Chief State School Officers, p. 10) that apply to all grades, K–12. Furthermore, the panel determined that it was necessary to interpret the anchor standards broadly and conceptually rather than specifically and procedurally. As several of the examples above demonstrate, even at the anchor standards level, the standards often include multiple parts or specifics that would be difficult to find in a single NAEP reading item. For example, Anchor Standard R2 states, “Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details.” Often, a NAEP reading item addresses either the first or second part of this standard but not both.

Item Alignment. Across the pool of items at all three grade levels, the majority of items were identified through consensus as “*strongly aligned*” to one of the first five anchor standards for reading. Although there was some variability across grade levels, the overall percentage of items that was determined to be strongly aligned with each of the first five standards is listed below:

Key Ideas and Details

R1—Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text. (36 percent of NAEP items strongly aligned)

R2—Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas. (13 percent of NAEP items strongly aligned)

R3—Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text. (8 percent of NAEP items strongly aligned)

Craft and Structure

R4—Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone. (19 percent of NAEP items strongly aligned)

R5—Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole. (10 percent of NAEP items strongly aligned)

In addition, the majority of reading items (75 percent) was judged to be related to more than one of these five anchor standards; these were double or triple coded to indicate they were also *moderately* or *weakly* aligned with multiple standards. Considering the nature of the NAEP reading assessment, the alignment with these five reading anchor standards seems appropriate.

The reading anchor standards that are least, or not at all, aligned with the NAEP reading assessment fall under the category of integration of knowledge and ideas and specifically address using and evaluating multimedia texts (Anchor Standard R7), evaluating arguments and claims (Anchor Standard R8), and using multiple texts to build knowledge (Anchor Standard R9). The panel suggested that NAEP might consider new strategies for addressing some aspects of these standards but was mindful of the challenges that would be introduced in the NAEP context by the role of prior knowledge in these standards, especially in relation to disciplinary reading.

The panel also found that a small number of reading items could be aligned with one or more of the language and writing anchor standards. Specifically, vocabulary items that are integrated into the main reading NAEP are often aligned with:

L4—Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.

The panel also noted instances in which short-constructed response and extended-constructed response items in the NAEP reading assessment are aligned with both writing and reading standards. Writing Anchor Standards W1 and W9 are most likely to be assessed as part of NAEP reading and to offer the possibility of double scoring (for reading and writing).

W1—Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

W9—Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Overall Reading Conclusions and Recommendations

1. Panel members find that many aspects of the current NAEP reading assessment are consistent with conceptualizations of the reading process found in the research and in CCSS-ELA documents:
 - Cognitive focus aligned with research
 - Broad range of text types
 - High quality and appropriate length of texts used in assessment
 - Attention to literary and informational comprehension

- Use of text pairs
- Attention to reader-text interactions in item development
- Inclusion of writing in response to reading
- Parsimony and elegance in crafting questions to align with specific texts
- Thoughtful, meaningful items—well sequenced and crafted

As a result, the panel is cautiously optimistic that, with attention to the specific issues identified in this report and a systematic program of special studies to inform future assessments, NAEP could continue to serve as an independent monitor of student achievement in an era of CCSS.

Panelists also recognize the different purposes of NAEP and CCSS-ELA and feel strongly that NAEP should retain its independence from any particular curriculum and serve as a general assessment of reading comprehension. In addition, NAEP's ability to sample a wide variety of student performance on a range of texts and tasks through its matrix sampling is consistent with the range of reading performances expected by CCSS-ELA and should be preserved.

The panel believes that NAEP could build upon these strengths as they consider several recommendations and issues to enhance its relevance to the CCSS-ELA and reflect emerging areas of reading assessment. These recommendations follow

2. CCSS-ELA has made clear the expectation to increase the “rigor” and “complexity” of texts students read at each grade level as well as progressively across grade levels. In contrast, the NAEP approach is to use texts that are judged to be within the currently recognized range of difficulty for the targeted grade. Nevertheless, the panel finds that the NAEP reading selections at Grades 4 and 8 generally fall within (or above) the quantitative ranges called for in the CCSS-ELA, while the Grade 12 NAEP passages are consistently less difficult than called for by CCSS-ELA quantitative indexes. The panel suggests that NAEP consider passages that include more complexity at the upper grade levels in terms of perspective taking, bias, competing accounts, trustworthiness of the sources, craft, conceptual issues, etc., that might allow for assessing deeper, closer reading. The panel cautions, however, that text difficulty should not be judged solely on quantitative measures—a position supported by both CCSS-ELA and NAEP.

Three issues should be considered in regard to text complexity: (1) differences in the level of complexity that students can handle in texts used for *instruction* versus texts used for *assessment*, (2) NAEP's historical difficulty obtaining valid data for low-performing students, and (3) the interplay of reading items/task and text in determining reading comprehension difficulty. NAEP should explicitly consider each of these three issues as it deals with text complexity in future assessments.

3. The panel finds that the NAEP framework for constructing items to align with cognitive targets is compatible with the CCSS-ELA anchor standards and should continue to be used for item development. There is not a one-to-one alignment of cognitive targets to anchor standards because CCSS-ELA standards describe what students should be able to do rather than articulate the mental processes or thinking that underlie these competencies. In general, however, the locate and

recall items align with reading Anchor Standard 1 and the integrate/interpret and critique/evaluate items fall across all of the other anchor standards (2–9).

4. Panel members caution NAEP to be cognizant of the lack of research base, inconsistencies, and specificity of the “learning progressions” embodied by the K–12 grade-level standards in CCSS-ELA. The panel advises NAEP to use the reading anchor standards, which are research based and consistent across grade levels, to determine alignment, rather than the grade-level standards. Furthermore, the panel suggests that NAEP interpret the anchor standards broadly and conceptually rather than specifically and procedurally. Because some of the anchor standards include multiple parts or specifics that could confound or constrain test development (and instruction), we encourage NAEP to bring a “generous” reading to the anchor standards as they consider issues of alignment.
5. NAEP items align most often with CCSS-ELA Anchor Standards 1–5. Anchor Standards 6–9 are less well represented. The panel suggests that NAEP examine how it might place additional focus on assessing point of view, bias, perspectives, and such (Anchor Standard 6), which may require selecting different types of texts as well as crafting new types of items. In addition, the panel suggests that NAEP explore possible strategies and limitations for expanding coverage of Anchor Standards 7–9 (which represent integrating of knowledge and ideas), even though these standards may be difficult to assess in NAEP because they require students to draw on prior knowledge and build new knowledge using text.
6. Many of the NAEP short-constructed and extended-constructed response reading items are aligned with both CCSS-ELA reading and writing anchor standards. Given the emphasis on writing in response to text in the CCSS-ELA writing standards, the panelists suggest that NAEP investigate the possibility of double scoring these items for both reading and writing.
7. An important area of difference between CCSS-ELA and NAEP is the manner in which disciplinary reading is addressed. The *conceptual framing* for CCSS-ELA positions disciplinary reading for the purposes of building new knowledge in the specific discipline. In contrast, the NAEP Reading Framework subsumes disciplinary texts under “informational texts,” sampled from varied content areas. The treatment of these texts in NAEP assumes little prior knowledge and relies on general comprehension questions rather than more subject-matter specific comprehension. Although these differences exist in the *framing sections* of CCSS-ELA and NAEP documents, the panel finds them to be far less evident when comparing NAEP items and CCSS-ELA anchor standards or grade-level standards. As a result, the panel was uncertain about the degree to which specific disciplinary reading outcomes would be operationalized when the CCSS-ELA standards are implemented.

The panel suggests that NAEP adopt a more systematic treatment of discipline-specific texts in the text selection process. However, at the same time, it is unclear what the focus should be for assessing these texts—general understanding or disciplinary knowledge building, especially given the difficulties of attending to issues of prior knowledge and topic familiarity in an assessment like NAEP. One suggestion might be to use cross-text blocks to assess

knowledge building across disciplinary texts (minimizing prior knowledge) and to use other informational texts to assess more general comprehension. Overall, the issue of disciplinary text—the purpose, outcomes, and text selection—needs to be addressed and clarified in future NAEP frameworks and assessments.

8. There is a general sense that NAEP’s practice of restricting text selection to material written for general audiences may have had the overall effect of constraining the texts that appear on NAEP more than intended. The panelists suggest that NAEP would be more consistent with the CCSS-ELA if it were to consider inclusion of more dense text and texts that are representative of textbook or workplace reading—these are typically less explicit and controlled than texts currently used in NAEP. At the same time, NAEP needs to accommodate a wide range of reading abilities, including students performing at and below the *Basic* achievement level, especially at fourth grade.
9. The CCSS-ELA documents include attention to classic literature, well-known documents, and popular texts. Attention to these sorts of texts may be appropriate in an instructional setting, however, issues of familiarity (prior knowledge) and length are likely to make these types of texts inappropriate for inclusion in NAEP. NAEP might want to clarify for CCSS-ELA consumers how and why texts used for assessment must necessarily differ in some respects from those used in school and the workplace.
10. NAEP should consider using digital text and information displayed in graphs and charts. These text types are called for in CCSS-ELA, and panelists generally feel that a current (and forward looking) assessment of 21st century literacy should include online reading and research. They suggest that NAEP consult existing research regarding the similarities and differences between “traditional” and Internet/online reading to inform future assessment development. Some panelists also feel that NAEP should reconsider the role and nature of more procedural/functional texts both in the real-world and academic contexts as well as more 12th-grade passages that align with the types of texts typically assigned in college.
11. There are differences in how NAEP and CCSS-ELA address vocabulary. NAEP focuses on a particular type of vocabulary and format for assessment purposes—word meaning in the context of a given passage; CCSS-ELA takes a much broader perspective on vocabulary as an essential element of ELA with a definite emphasis on discipline-specific and academic vocabulary. The panel recommends that NAEP consider both the reading anchor standards and the language anchor standards as it evaluates its existing approach and possible new approaches to vocabulary assessment.
12. The CCSS-ELA include K–5 standards for foundational skills, while NAEP assessments target comprehension beginning at Grade 4. The panelists caution that fourth-grade assessments developed specifically to measure CCSS-ELA may include items testing foundational skills as well as literature/informational standards. Because foundational skills are not part of NAEP, comparisons of fourth-grade performance across different assessments may need to take this into account.

Writing Findings

Summary of the Comparison Between NAEP Writing Framework and CCSS-ELA Documents (Activity 1)

The following describes similarities and differences between the NAEP Writing Framework and the CCSS-ELA in the areas of definition/conceptualization, domains of writing, dimensions of writing, incorporation of technology, writing processes, and range of writing. The focus is on similarities and differences with implications for NAEP’s role as an independent monitor, after acknowledging that there are important differences in the purposes of these documents.

Definition/Conceptualization. Both NAEP and CCSS-ELA emphasize the situated, social nature of writing. NAEP, for example, defines writing as “...a complex, multifaceted and purposeful act of communication...” (National Assessment Governing Board, 2010b, p. 3) and explains that “Writing is a social act—not only do writers always write for a purpose, but they usually write to communicate ideas to others” (National Assessment Governing Board, 2010b, p. 4). In keeping with this view of writing, both documents emphasize the importance of audience, purpose, and task in writing, and both documents treat rhetorical flexibility as an important component of skilled performance.

An important difference in conceptualization is that while the CCSS-ELA standards are integrated in multiple ways, the treatment of ELA in NAEP is not integrated. Reading and writing are treated in separate frameworks in NAEP, and there is little integration across the modes in NAEP assessments with the exception of the use of some “constructed response” writing in the NAEP assessment of reading. In contrast, integration of the modes is a “key design” consideration in the CCSS-ELA. CCSS-ELA integrates reading, writing, speaking, and listening, and the individual standards reflect this integration. For example, as articulated in Anchor Standard W9, students are expected to “Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.” Because the standards are integrated, most of the sample writing tasks in the CCSS-ELA are integrated as well, requiring students to read (or view or listen) and then write in response to a text or set of texts. NAEP does not assess these sorts of integrated tasks. Although brief reading passages may accompany some writing prompts in the NAEP assessment of writing, they serve primarily as stimuli for writing rather than as material for analysis or as sources of information. CCSS-ELA, in contrast, emphasizes writing about reading and writing from sources.

CCSS-ELA also integrates writing across the disciplines. Although the NAEP framework deals with very broad domains of writing, it does not address the special skills and strategies of writing in the disciplines. While the NAEP framework is confined to writing in ELA, CCSS-ELA spans writing in the content areas of history/social studies, science, and technical subjects as well. In the writing standards for literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects for Grades 6–12, students are expected to write about discipline-specific content, be aware of the norms and conventions of each discipline, and acquire and use discipline-specific vocabulary.

Domains of Writing. Both NAEP and CCSS-ELA describe similar, broad domains of writing, although they describe them in different terms. NAEP defines the domains in terms of three broad purposes for writing: *to persuade, to explain, and to convey experience*. CCSS-ELA describes them as types of writing: *arguments, informative/explanatory texts, and narratives*. Both NAEP and CCSS-ELA acknowledge that the identified domains subsume a wide range of products, genres, and forms. Both also acknowledge that the borders of the domains are porous; that is, that writers create texts that blend types using strategies such as embedding narrative elements within a largely expository structure or employing narrative structures for informational, explanatory, or persuasive purposes. Finally, both NAEP and CCSS-ELA identify similar domains of writing when describing how relative emphasis should change across the grade levels. Both recommend increased emphasis in the upper grades on writing *to explain (informational/explanatory writing in CCSS-ELA terms)* and *to persuade (argument in CCSS-ELA terms)*.

Dimensions of Writing. Both NAEP and CCSS-ELA identify and discuss essentially the same valued dimensions of effective writing: development, organization, language facility, and conventions. These dimensions are articulated in the NAEP Writing Framework as criteria for evaluating responses and are threaded throughout the CCSS-ELA documents, in the anchor standards for writing and language, as well as the annotated samples of student writing in CCSS-ELA Appendix C.

Incorporation of Technology. Both NAEP and CCSS-ELA address the integral role that technology now plays in writing. However, in the NAEP framework, the role played by technology is currently limited to students' use of a computer "to compose and construct their responses using word processing software...with the option to use commonly available tools" (National Assessment Governing Board, 2010b, p. 7). CCSS-ELA conveys a more expansive and comprehensive view of the role played by technology and digital tools—one that cuts across reading, writing, speaking, listening, and includes its use in research along with the expectation that students will "use technology and digital media strategically and capably" (National Governors Association & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010, p. 7).

Writing Processes. NAEP and CCSS-ELA both acknowledge the role that writing processes play in the improvement of writing. However, while NAEP provides computer tools for drafting, revising, and editing, there are constraints on NAEP procedures that privilege first-draft writing and make time for significant planning and revision unlikely. CCSS-ELA, on the other hand, treats the management of writing processes, including collaboration with others, as an important component of writing ability that develops over time (see Anchor Standards W5 and W6). Performance expectations for what students are expected to be able to do in regard to writing processes are further elaborated in the CCSS in the K–12 grade-level standards. By Grades 11–12, students are expected to be able to "Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience..." (National Governors Association & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010, p. 46).

Range of Writing. NAEP assessments collect on-demand writing samples, and students have only 30 minutes to complete each writing sample. In contrast, the CCSS-ELA explicitly calls for students to write in both short and extended time frames (Anchor Standard W10). Extended time frames are more appropriate for the kinds of complex, integrated reading/writing tasks that CCSS-ELA emphasizes, and extended time frames can also accommodate more attention to writing processes such as planning, revising, and editing.

Summary of Comparison Between NAEP Writing Scoring Guides, Anchor Papers, and Prompts and CCSS-ELA Documents (Activity 2)

The following summarizes the results of analyses of the NAEP scoring guides, anchor papers, and prompts for writing in relation to the CCSS-ELA. A total of 80 prompts, 8 scoring guides, and 6 sets of anchor papers from the 2011 assessment (Grades 8 and 12) and pilot test (Grade 4) were used for this analysis.

Scoring Guides. NAEP provides focused holistic scoring guides for each of the three writing purpose assessed by NAEP. Panelists observed that these three types of scoring guides aligned well with expectations for the text types described in the CCSS-ELA anchor standards for writing. Although the labels are sometimes different, the features emphasized in the three dimensions of the NAEP scoring guides correspond very closely to those identified in CCSS-ELA as characterizing particular text types. The NAEP scoring guides for *persuade*, for example, evaluate text on the same features that CCSS highlights as required for a well-constructed *argument* (clear position, logical reasoning, strong evidence). Similarly, the *explain* scoring guides emphasize clarity and accuracy of *explanation*; and the *convey* scoring guides mirror the emphasis in CCSS *narrative* on effective, well-chosen details to convey experiences. Furthermore, the scoring guide analysis revealed an emphasis on audience and purpose that aligns well with CCSS-ELA Anchor Standard W4: “Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose and audience.” Audience is explicit in all three types of guides in reference to both development of ideas and language facility: “Voice and tone are well controlled, showing an awareness of purpose and audience.”

However, the panelists also observed that: (1) CCSS-ELA specifies narrative structures, while the NAEP scoring guides leave the *To Convey* organization open; (2) CCSS-ELA requires the development of discipline-specific stances under explanation, while the NAEP scoring guides for *To Explain* appear less rigorous because they do not; and (3) CCSS-ELA specifies more sophisticated techniques of argument at the upper grades (such as counterclaims and careful evaluation of evidence) than are apparent in the NAEP scoring guides for *To Persuade*. While the NAEP scoring guides reflect dimensions of writing valued in the CCSS-ELA, and while they emphasize audience and purpose, they do not align well to the integrated academic, disciplinary, and evidence rich stances and tasks that CCSS-ELA emphasizes, particularly in the upper grades (11–12).

Anchor Papers. Panel members observed that NAEP anchor papers—all of which were produced “on demand” under timed and supervised testing conditions—are

considered “first-draft” writing by NAEP. CCSS-ELA sample grade-level papers, on the other hand, were not produced consistently in uniform “testing/assessment” environments. Some of the CCSS-ELA sample papers were produced in extended time frames and benefited from feedback from teachers and peers. Other papers were produced under testing conditions that may have been different from those of NAEP. This made it somewhat difficult to compare the CCSS-ELA samples directly with the NAEP anchor papers. While there are some individual papers in the CCSS-ELA samples that are similar in quality to NAEP anchors, there are others that are widely divergent, particularly the CCSS-ELA samples at the upper grades that were produced in extended time frames. This finding suggests a lack of alignment between NAEP and part of the CCSS-ELA standard for range, W10: “Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two). . . .”

Prompts. Panelists observed that the pool of writing prompts for the three purposes assessed by NAEP are broadly representative of the text types and purposes described in the CCSS-ELA anchor standards. In addition, the prompt coding revealed that the pool of prompts incorporates a wide variety of audiences (ranging from familiar to more distant), a range of publication types (websites, newspapers, online forums, books), a variety of genres and forms (letters, essays, reviews, reports, speeches), and a variety of topics and tasks. This finding suggests a relatively close alignment between NAEP and part of Anchor Standard W10: “Write . . . for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.”

However, the panel also observed, and the coding of the prompts confirmed, that the pool of NAEP prompts relies primarily on personal experience or general background knowledge. The pool of prompts does not include the more extended kinds of tasks that would require “short as well as more sustained research projects” (Anchor Standard W7) or tasks that would require students to “integrate information” gathered “from multiple print and digital sources” (Anchor Standard W8). As pointed out in earlier sections, the range of the NAEP pool of tasks is limited by the constraints of the testing situation (30 minutes).

Summary of Alignment Between NAEP Writing Prompts and CCSS-ELA Anchor and Grade-Level Standards (Activity 3)

After some discussion, and in light of the concerns about the validity and consistency of grade-level standards raised by the Reading Panel, the Writing Panel decided that trying to locate NAEP prompts in relation to the grade-level standards would not be a useful activity. Instead, they decided to analyze the prompts in relation to the CCSS-ELA anchor standards and to gather information about the knowledge demands and range of audiences associated with the NAEP prompts reported previously.

As noted above, because NAEP reading items often require readers to draw on multiple sources of information, interpret text, and use a variety of skills and strategies, and because writing prompts sometimes appear to elicit more than one type of writing, reading items and writing prompts sometimes aligned with multiple CCSS-ELA standards. Therefore, based on their expert judgment, panelists rated

each item/prompt as *strongly aligned*, *moderately aligned*, or *weakly aligned* with specific standards. This provided an opportunity for panelists to go beyond a simple matching to indicate degree of alignment; it permitted them to evaluate the strength of alignment across multiple standards.

Prompt Alignment. Across the pool of prompts coded at all three grade levels, all of the prompts were identified through consensus as *strongly aligned* to at least one of the first three anchor standards for writing. The overall percentage of prompts coded as strongly aligned with each of the first three standards is listed below:

W1—Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence. (32 percent of NAEP prompts strongly aligned)

W2—Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content. (35 percent of NAEP prompts strongly aligned)

W3—Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences. (33 percent of NAEP prompts strongly aligned)

Three of the prompts (4 percent) were coded as strongly aligned to more than one of these first three CCSS-ELA anchor standards and 23 of the prompts (29 percent) were coded as strongly aligned to one and weakly aligned to another. Panelists' comments indicated that prompts were double coded when they were viewed as being likely to elicit more than one type of writing. Some *To Convey* prompts, for example, appeared as likely to elicit some combination of description and explanation as to elicit narrative, particularly when the prompt asked students to convey what something was like. Some *To Persuade* prompts appeared as likely to elicit explanation as persuasion.

All of the prompts (100 percent) were coded as moderately aligned with another five of the CCSS-ELA anchor standards: writing Anchor Standards W4 and W5 and language Anchor Standards L1, L2, and L3. During whole-group discussion, these five writing and language standards were grouped by consensus into what the panel called a “bundle” and recorded as moderately aligned because the standards applied to all types of writing, more or less equally.

W4—Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

W5—Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

L1—Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

L2—Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

L3—Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

Finally, a few of the prompts were also coded as weakly aligned to Anchor Standard L5 and aspects of Anchor Standard L6 related to vocabulary use.

L5—Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

L6—Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

More specifically, in these cases, the prompts appear especially likely to elicit particular kinds of language specified in the standards, such as figurative language (Anchor Standard L5) or general academic and domain-specific words and phrases (Anchor Standard L6).

Several of the writing anchor standards are not aligned with the NAEP prompts because they refer to competencies not addressed by the NAEP writing assessment:

W6—Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.

W7—Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

W8—Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.

W9—Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

W10—Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

As noted above, in general, most of the panelists did not find trying to locate NAEP prompts in relation to the grade-level standards to be a useful activity. However, the Grade 12 group did attempt to code some of them, and the attempt informed the later deliberations of the panel. The Grade 12 group observed that, when judged against the grade-level standards, some of the NAEP 12th-grade prompts, in particular the *To Explain* and *To Persuade* prompts, appear more appropriate for lower grade levels (i.e., Grades 6, 7, and 8) than for Grade 12. They also observed that some of the prompts could be considered “on grade” only if the limitations of the test situation itself were taken into account. For example, to fulfill the expectations of the grade-level standard for argument at Grades 11–12, students would have to

“Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claim(s), and create an organization that logically sequences claims(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.” Students would also have to “Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience’s knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.” The panelists questioned whether it would be possible for students to fulfill these expectations in the 30 minutes allotted for writing to a prompt with access only to remembered evidence.

Overall Writing Conclusions and Recommendations

1. Panel members find much to commend in the current NAEP writing assessment, reflecting, as it does, a conceptualization of writing found in both research and in the CCSS-ELA documents. Both NAEP and CCSS-ELA present writing as a social, communicative activity; emphasize the importance of audience, purpose, and task; and treat rhetorical flexibility as an important component of skilled performance. NAEP and CCSS-ELA are aligned in other important ways as well. They address similar broad domains of writing, and identify and discuss essentially the same valued characteristics of effective writing: development of ideas, organization, and language facility and conventions. The NAEP scoring guides emphasize adapting writing to purpose, task, and audience (CCSS-ELA Anchor Standard W4), and the features highlighted in the three separate NAEP guides for *To Persuade*, *To Explain*, and *To Convey* are generally parallel to the features emphasized in the three broad types of writing described in CCSS-ELA writing standards 1, 2, and 3 (argument, informational/explanatory and narrative). The NAEP pool of prompts is also generally aligned with the CCSS-ELA “text types and purposes” described in the first three CCSS-ELA writing anchor standards. As noted above, panelists also observed that the pool of prompts contains a broad range of audiences and forms, an aspect of range described in CCSS-ELA Anchor Standard W10. The panel concludes that NAEP should build upon these features as they consider ways to enhance NAEP’s alignment with CCSS-ELA, including measuring aspects of CCSS-aligned curricula not well addressed by the current assessment.

The standards-to-framework and standards-to-assessment analyses also reveal several gaps in alignment between NAEP and CCSS-ELA. The panel concludes that NAEP should consider several recommendations to enhance its alignment with CCSS-ELA. These recommendations follow.

2. The CCSS-ELA clearly emphasizes integration of the language arts, while NAEP does not. In particular, CCSS-ELA emphasizes writing about reading and writing from sources (writing based on research). These emphases are threaded throughout the standards and featured prominently in Anchor Standard W9: “Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.” Many of the example tasks and standards in the CCSS-ELA documents involve writing (or speaking) about what has been read. Tasks that require writing about reading and/or writing based on research are currently not included in the NAEP assessment. Instead, NAEP tasks rely primarily on background knowledge and personal experience. Panelists recommend that

NAEP consider including writing in response to print and/or nonprint texts and writing based on research (writing from sources), either by including such items in the assessment itself or by conducting a systematic collection of samples of such tasks that students have done in school or in curriculum embedded assessments to compare with students' performances on other sorts of tasks.

3. The CCSS-ELA is explicit in acknowledging that the teaching of writing is a shared responsibility across disciplines, assuming a single teacher of all subjects through Grade 5, and separate subjects (with separate writing standards) from Grade 6 on. In the CCSS-ELA, writing activities within the disciplines are integrated with content learning. Furthermore, the CCSS-ELA language standards, which apply to writing as well as reading, speaking, and listening, distinguish between general, academic, and domain-specific vocabulary (e.g., technical vocabulary within the disciplines). While the NAEP Writing Framework acknowledges the situated nature of writing and its importance in all disciplines, and while the NAEP writing assessment deals with purposeful writing skills and general and academic vocabulary, it does not address the special skills, strategies, or domain-specific vocabulary associated with writing in the disciplines. Writing from substantive disciplinary content is an important literacy skill not presently addressed in NAEP. Panelists recommend that NAEP consider including writing tasks, especially those that are structured around deep knowledge of subject matter, in NAEP's discipline-specific assessments, either as part of the regular NAEP assessment or as a probe study. Furthermore, NAEP should consider tracking domain specific vocabulary along with general vocabulary.
4. At present, NAEP limits the role that technology plays in assessment to students' use of a computer "to compose and construct their responses using word processing software...with the option to use commonly available tools." CCSS-ELA, on the other hand, conveys a portrait of college- and career-ready students who "use technology and digital media strategically and capably..." who "are familiar with the strengths and limitations of various technological tools and mediums" and who "can select and use those best suited to their communication goals." Panelists recommend that NAEP consider expanding the use of technology in writing, either as part of the regular NAEP assessment or as a probe study. They also note that if students are to have a wider range of technology-enabled options in the regular NAEP assessment, they would need to have more time to compose as well as to understand the options presented in whatever platform is used in the assessment.
5. At present, NAEP allows students 30 minutes to respond to a prompt. While NAEP thus assesses on-demand writing in an abbreviated time frame, CCSS-ELA emphasize writing under a variety of conditions and convey specific expectations for students' use of writing processes such as planning, revising, editing, and rewriting. While the NAEP Writing Framework acknowledges the roles played by writing processes in the improvement of writing, actually allowing time for significant revising and editing in the NAEP regular assessments would mean extending the current time frames. Similarly, tasks that require substantial reading before writing would require more time than currently allowed. Panelists recommend that NAEP consider investigating ways to allow different amounts of time for different kinds of

tasks. Providing more extended time frames could encourage revising and/or accommodate some of the more complex reading/writing tasks found in the CCSS-ELA. Panelists also suggest that NAEP consider conducting special studies of extended tasks as they are being used in schools.

Summary Conclusions by the Reading and Writing Panels

The Reading and Writing Panel members recognize the different purposes of NAEP and CCSS-ELA and feel strongly that NAEP should retain its independence from any particular curriculum and serve as a general assessment of reading and writing performance. Overall, the panels are cautiously optimistic that, with attention to the specific issues identified in this report and a systematic program of special studies to inform future assessments, NAEP could continue to serve as an independent monitor of student achievement in an era of CCSS. In the area of reading assessment, NAEP should consider revisions related to reading and knowledge building in the disciplines, text selection (including digital texts) and complexity, integration of reading and writing, and assessment of academic vocabulary. In the area of writing, NAEP should consider revisions related to writing in response to text and research, integrating writing into discipline-specific assessments, expanding the use of technology, and providing more extended time for writing to accommodate different types of writing tasks and conditions.

The panels also judge that NAEP could serve as an intellectual tool to promote the design and use of quality assessments apart from CCSS. With attention to the recommendations in this report, NAEP could be in an excellent position to lead the way for forward-looking reading and writing assessment. Indeed, the panels encourage NAEP to consider the future and changes in literacy demands as they conceptualize literacy assessment. NAEP's ability to sample a wide variety of student performance on a range of texts and tasks through its matrix sampling design is consistent with the range of literacy performances expected by CCSS-ELA and places it in an excellent position to engage in the kind of special studies needed, both to assess these complex standards and to serve as an external point of comparison useful to future revisions of the CCSS-ELA.

Because of the timing of the study, the panels could not determine the degree of alignment between NAEP and new assessments under development by Smarter Balanced and PARCC. This is an important consideration because the ability of NAEP to serve as an independent monitor may be judged by a comparison of student achievement on NAEP with achievement on the new assessments; alternatively, it may be judged by the degree of alignment between NAEP assessments and the framing concepts in the CCSS-ELA documents rather than simply the new assessments. Furthermore, at this point in time, the potential impact of CCSS documents and specific standards on curriculum and assessment is unknown, most especially the integration of reading and writing, technology, and knowledge building in the disciplines. The CCSS documents integrate writing and reading across the disciplines, call for extended writing tasks that involve reading and research, and convey the expectation that students will use technology "strategically and capably." The extent to which these elements will be operationalized in the new assessments and/or in classroom instruction is not clear but, the panels believe these

issues are integral to the next iterations of literacy assessment and to students' success in their careers and college. Consequently, there will need to be additional studies to evaluate the fit of new CCSS assessment items to CCSS standards and to compare CCSS assessment items to NAEP items. In cases in which NAEP and new CCSS assessment do not align, it will be important to look at the areas of nonalignment found in the studies reported here as a possible explanation for the nonalignment. Furthermore, it will be important to define the specific contribution NAEP should make and the role it should play. These issues will need to be addressed as new assessments are implemented and evaluated and as curriculum and instruction change to reflect successful implementation of CCSS-ELA.

The Reading and Writing Panels appreciate the opportunity to analyze NAEP in light of the CCSS-ELA and the literacy demands of the 21st century. Several of our findings may provide the basis for immediate changes, and others may provide the impetus for special studies that could inform future NAEP assessments and issues of alignment with CCSS-ELA. We hope that the detailed analyses and recommendations will provide the NVS Panel with both information and perspectives that will help it move forward.

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Appendix A. Reading and Writing Panelists

Reading Panelists

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Note: All panelists participated in Activities 2 and 3.

* Also participated in Activity 1.

** Study Leads

