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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

National Assessment Governing Board; Information Collection Request

AGENCY: National Assessment Governing Board; Department of Education.

ACTION: Notice of Information Collection Activity; Request for Comment.

SUMMARY: In compliance with the Paperwork Reduction Act (44 U.S.C. 3501 *et seq.*), this notice announced a proposed information collection request (ICR) of the National Assessment Governing Board (the Governing Board, or NAGB). The information collection is to conduct two research and validation support studies related to test development for the proposed Voluntary National Test (VNT) during Spring 2000. Before submitting the ICR to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the Governing Board is soliciting comments on the information collection as described below.

DATES: Comments must be submitted on or before February 17, 2000.

ADDRESSES: Submit written comments identified by "ICR: VNT Research and Validation Support Studies (Option Year 2)" by mail or in person addressed to: Ray Fields, Assistant Director, National Assessment Governing Boards, Suite 825, 800 North Capitol Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20002.

Comments may also be submitted electronically by sending electronic mail (e-mail) to Ray__@FieldsED.GOV. Electronic comments must be identified by the title of the ICR. No confidential business information should be submitted through e-mail. Comments sent by e-mail must be submitted as an ASCII file avoiding the use of special characters in any form of encryption.

Information submitted as a comment concerning this document may be claimed confidential by marking any part or all of that information as confidential business information (CBI). Information so marked will not be disclosed except in accordance with procedures set forth in 40 CFR Part 2. A copy of the comment that does not contain CBI must be submitted for inclusion in the public record. Information not marked confidential may be disclosed publicly by NAGB without prior notice.

All written comments will be available for public inspection at the address given above from 8 a.m. to 4:30

p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding legal holidays.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ray Fields, Assistant Director, National Assessment Governing Board, Suite 825, 800 North Capitol Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20002. Telephone (202) 357-0395; e-mail: Ray__Fields@ED.GOV.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Copies of this ICR may be obtained from the contact person listed above.

I. Information Collection Request

The National Assessment Governing Board is seeking comments on the following Information Collection Request (ICR).

Title: Voluntary National Tests (VNT): Research and Validation Support Studies (Option Year 2)

Affected Entities: Parties affected by this information collection are individuals and State, local, or Tribal SEAs or LEAs.

Abstract: In order to comply with the mandates of PL 105-78, the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) proposes to conduct two research and validation support studies. Congress vested exclusive authority in the Governing Board for test development for the proposed VNT. At the same time, Congress prohibited pilot testing and field testing of questions developed for the proposed VNT. No test question developed for the proposed VNT will be used in these research studies. Instead, test questions used for the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) will be employed. This is to ensure that the prohibition on pilot and field testing is not violated, while still providing for research needed to answer questions related to test development.

The data collected will serve two purposes: (a) Provide information on the feasibility of a calibration linkage between the proposed Voluntary National Test (VNT) and the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) (more specifically—between a test designed to give individual results and a survey designed to report group results); and (b) provide information needed to inform policy and practice related to test accommodations for students with limited English proficiency, specifically, to help guide the development of an 8th grade mathematics test booklet in two languages (*i.e.*, a "dual language" booklet in this case in English and Spanish).

The two research studies will also assist NAGB in making three of the four determination required by Congress: (1) The extent to which test items selected for use on the tests are free from racial,

cultural or gender bias; (2) whether the test development process and test items adequately assess student reading and mathematics comprehension in the form most likely to yield accurate information regarding student achievement in reading and mathematics; and (3) whether the test development process and test items take into account the needs of disadvantaged, limited English proficient and disabled students.

The first study is directed toward establishing the feasibility of a calibration linkage between a test form resembling an individual test and a survey of group results—the National Assessment. Research questions to be answered include the following: What are the effects on the measurement of student performance of an individually administered test that shares a framework with NAEP but which differs somewhat from NAEP in content coverage, administration, and unit of analysis? It is possible to establish a strong link between the group-focused results of NAEP and such an individually administered test? What inferences can be supported by such a link?

4800 students from Grade 4 and 4800 students from Grade 8 are expected to participate in this study. The 9600 students will be divided equally across three conditions.

Students in the first condition will take a "NAEP Special Form" booklet, consisting of NAEP items constructed to be as parallel as possible to the proposed VNT forms. This parallelism would include content coverage, timing, and shape of the test information function (TIF), which has been proposed to be flatter than the TIF for NAEP. Because empirical information on each item is needed to construct a form with a specified TIF, the items would come from the previous NAEP administration in the respective subjects.

Students in the second condition would take "Extended NAEP" booklets, which are based on blocks of items from the 2000 NAEP administration and would be constructed to be representative of the content and statistical specifications (TIF) of NAEP. The forms for Grade 8 mathematics would consist of six intact 15-minute blocks administered in two 45-minute sessions. The forms for Grade 4 reading would consist of four NAEP reading blocks, also administered in two 45-minute sessions. (Because the reading blocks are timed at 25 minutes each, some items will have to be deleted to fit into the reduced testing time.) The administration of these forms would be

under conditions proposed for the VNT. To avoid the circularity of linking the same items to themselves, the items used in the extended-NAEP forms should be distinct from those used in the NAEP Special Forms.

In the first two conditions of this proposed study, the two types of forms would be spiraled together and administered to equivalent samples of students. Because the NAEP Special Forms and the Extended-NAEP forms would be administered under the same conditions, issues of administration, timing, and motivation become moot. If the content match between the NAEP Special forms and the simulated VNT forms could be made sufficiently close, a linking study between the two types of forms would approximate a linkage study between actual VNT forms and Extended-NAEP. If a calibration were successful, the resulting linkage interpretations would be in terms of student performance on NAEP when NAEP is given under VNT conditions.

Students in the third condition differ from the other two in that they would be taking the "NAEP Special Form" under motivated circumstances. It is quite plausible that the same student would perform at a higher level under a motivated situation such as the VNT, where individual scores are obtained under a low motivation situation such as the NAEP. This differential effect of motivation could impact achievement level cut-points (among other things) in ways that cannot be assessed in the two conditions described above.

Consequently, the third condition of this study involves paying students \$1 for every item they answer correctly. This procedure is directly modeled after research conducted on motivational interventions for the NAEP. A comparison of item parameters and test characteristic curves for the NAEP Special Forms under motivated and unmotivated conditions would provide information on the differential impact of motivation and how to adjust results for any subsequent linking study between the VNT and NAEP.

The second study involves a series of subtasks directed toward informing NAGB's inclusion and accommodation policies regarding LEP students. These tasks are:

Subtask A. Writing an issues paper covering theory and research related to the development of a dual language test. This paper would inform procedures to be used in the translation of items into the second language (*i.e.*, Spanish) (Subtask B).

Subtask B. Using released and secure NAEP 8th grade mathematics items to construct simulated VNT-M test

booklets (dual language and English-only versions). The English language version of this booklet will be the same as the one for the "NAEP Special Form" described earlier.

Subtask C. Evaluating the psychometric equivalence of the dual language and English-only booklets via traditional quantitative analyses. Six hundred bilingual and LEP students will be recruited and randomly assigned to complete either the dual language or English-only version of the test booklet. Quantitative analyses will be conducted to examine the psychometric equivalence of the two test versions (mean differences; differential item functioning; correlations).

Subtask D. Conducting focus groups of students immediately after they take the VNT-M to document students' overall experience with the two types of booklets. Sixty students will be recruited to do these focus groups, in order to obtain their insights and general reactions to the booklets.

Subtask E. Conducting cognitive laboratory studies to obtain in-depth information on the validity of the translation and about how students use the dual language test. An additional nine LEP and nine English-speaking students will be asked to participate in this study, in order to explore the performance of both Anglo and Hispanic LEP students to identify solution pathways that students choose to use.

Subtask C through E will allow for a thorough investigation into the cognitive processes that bilingual and limited English proficient (LEP) students employ when using the dual language version of the VNT-M. In addition, they will provide information about factors other than mathematical knowledge and problem-solving ability that may have an effect on their performance on the test.

The five subtasks listed above will offer answers to the following research questions to examine the quality of the dual language test, taking into account several features of the items:

Cognitive: Do students understand the native language version of the test questions as a vehicle for assessing mathematics? (Subtasks C, D, E)

Content: Is the content of the native language version of the test questions the same as the English version? (Subtasks B, C, D, E)

Format: What considerations should be given to how the test questions appear on the pages of the test booklet? (Subtasks A, B)

Cultural: Is the native language version clear and acceptable to the various communities in the United

States for whom this is the native language? (Subtasks A, B, C, D, E)

Academic: Are the grammar and language structure used in the native language version correct? (Subtasks B, D, E)

Scoring: What considerations need to be made for scoring dual language test booklets?

(Subtask A)

Psychometric Equivalence: Is there a psychometric equivalence between the dual language version and the English-only versions of the test? (Subtask C)

A total of 10,128 students is expected to participate in the two studies (4800 4th graders and 4800 8th graders in the calibration linkage feasibility study; 510 LEP and bilingual students taking the dual language or English-only math test (from which there will be 60 focus group participants); and 18 cognitive laboratory participants). These students will be recruited from 300 schools. Students in the motivated condition of the calibration linkage study, focus group participants and cognitive laboratory participants will receive a token monetary incentive. Also under consideration is a modest monetary incentive for each participating school.

Burden Statement: Assuming a 2 hour burden for each of the 10,128 students expected to participate in the two studies, a total of 20,376 hours is estimated. An additional 300 hours of school burden (one hour per participating school) is expected, reflecting the time it would take to collect student background data for our research purposes. Participation in this study is voluntary. State, local, and non-public education agencies will not be mandated or required to participate.

II Request for Comments

The National Assessment Governing Board solicits comments to assist it:

(a) Evaluate whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the Governing Board, including whether the information will have practical utility;

(b) Evaluate the accuracy of the Governing Board's estimates of the burden of the proposed collection of information;

(c) Enhance the quality, utility and clarity of the information to be collected;

(d) Minimize the burden of the collection of the information on those who are to respond, including through the use of appropriate automated, mechanical or other technological collection techniques or other forms of

information technology, e.g., permitting electronic submission of responses.

III. Public Record

A record has been established for this action. A public version of this record, including printed, paper versions of electronic comments, is available for inspection from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding legal holidays. The public record is maintained at the National Assessment Governing Board, 800 North Capitol Street NW, Suite 825, Washington DC, 20002.

Dated: January 12, 2000.

Roy Truby,

Executive Director, National Assessment Governing Board.

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BILLING CODE 4000-01-M

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Recognition of Accrediting Agencies, State Agencies for Approval of Public Postsecondary Vocational Education, and State Agencies for Approval of Nurse Education

AGENCY: National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity, Department of Education (The Advisory Committee).

What Is the Purpose of This Notice?

The purpose of this notice is to invite written comments on accrediting agencies whose applications to the Secretary for initial or renewed recognition will be reviewed at the Advisory Committee meeting to be held on May 24-26, 2000. The notice also invites written comments on agencies submitting interim reports that will be reviewed at the May meeting.

Where Should I Submit My Comments?

Please submit your written comments by March 3, 2000, to Karen Kershenstein, Director, Accreditation and State Liaison. You may contact her at the U.S. Department of Education, 1990 K Street, NW, 8th Floor, Room 8131, Washington, DC 20006, telephone: (202) 708-7417. Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339 between 8 a.m. and 7 p.m., Eastern time, Monday through Friday.

What Is the Authority for the Advisory Committee?

The National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity is established under Section 114 of the Higher Education Act (HEA), as

amended, 20 U.S.C. 1011. One of the purposes of the Advisory Committee is to advise the Secretary of Education on the recognition of accrediting agencies and State approval agencies.

Will This Be My Only Opportunity To Submit Written Comments?

Yes, this notice announces the only opportunity you will have to submit written comments. However, a subsequent **Federal Register** notice will announce the meeting and invite individuals and/or groups to submit requests to make oral presentations before the Advisory Committee on the agencies that the Committee will review. That notice, however, does not offer a second opportunity to submit written comment.

What Happens to the Comments That I Submit?

We will review your comments, in response to this notice, as part of our evaluation of the agencies' compliance with the Secretary's Criteria for Recognition of Accrediting Agencies. The Criteria are regulations found in 34 CFR Part 602.

We will also include your comments in the staff analyses that we present to the Advisory Committee at its May 2000 meeting. Therefore, in order for us to give full consideration to the comments we receive, it is important that we receive your comments on all agencies by March 3, 2000. In all instances, your comments about agencies seeking initial or continued recognition must relate to the Criteria for the Recognition. In addition, your comments for any agency whose interim report is scheduled for review must relate to the issues raised and the Criteria for Recognition in the Secretary's letter that requested the interim report.

What Happens to Comments Received After the Deadline?

We will review comments received after the deadline as complaints. If such comments upon investigation reveal that the accrediting agency is not acting in accordance with the Criteria for Recognition, we will take action either before or after the meeting, as appropriate. We will notify the commentors of the disposition of those comments.

What Agencies Are on the Agenda for the Meeting?

The Secretary of Education recognizes accrediting agencies and State approval agencies for public postsecondary vocational education and nurse education if he determines that they meet the Criteria for Recognition.

Recognition means that the Secretary considers the agency to be a reliable authority as to the quality of education offered by institutions or programs that are encompassed within the scope of recognition he grants to the agency. The following agencies will be reviewed during the May 2000 meeting of the Advisory Committee:

Nationally Recognized Accrediting Agencies

Petition for Initial Recognition

1. Midwifery Education Accreditation Commission (Requested scope of recognition: to accredit and preaccredit direct-entry (non-nurse) midwifery certificate and undergraduate and graduate degree educational programs and institutions).

Petitions for Renewal of Recognition

1. American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (Requested scope of recognition: the accreditation of clinical training programs in marriage and family therapy at the master's, doctoral, and postgraduate levels. The agency also requests that its recognition include its preaccreditation status ["Candidacy"])

2. American Bar Association, Council of the Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar (Requested scope of recognition: The accreditation of programs in legal education that lead to the first professional degree in law, as well as freestanding law schools offering such programs).

3. Accreditation Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (Requested scope of recognition: the accreditation of first-professional master's degree and professional master's level certificate and diploma programs in acupuncture and Oriental medicine).

4. Accrediting Commission on Education for Health Services Administration (Requested scope of recognition: The accreditation of graduate programs in health services administration).

5. American Osteopathic Association, Bureau of Professional Education (Requested scope of recognition: The accreditation and preaccreditation ["Provisional Accreditation"] of freestanding institutions of osteopathic medicine and programs leading to the degree of Doctor of Osteopathy or Doctor of Osteopathic medicine)

6. American Podiatric Medical Association, Council on Podiatric Medical Education (Requested scope of recognition: The accreditation and