NAEP Civics Assessment Framework Update

November 2026

Goals

The goal of this session is for Board members to be briefed on initial work on the update of the 2032 NAEP Civics Framework. Board members can ask questions and provide feedback but there is no official action in November. Board action on the 2032 NAEP Civics Framework is planned for the August 2027 quarterly Board meeting.

Background

Since its creation by Congress in 1988, the National Assessment Governing Board oversees and sets policy for NAEP in several congressionally mandated areas, which include determining the content to be assessed by NAEP. For each NAEP assessment, the Board conducts a framework development process resulting in a NAEP assessment framework that outlines what is to be measured and how it will be measured. The framework development process also results in assessment and item specifications with more detailed guidance for NCES in operationalizing the assessment.

The 1998-2028 NAEP Civics Framework[1] was adopted by the Board in 1996 and implemented beginning in 1998; no updates (besides very minor editorial changes for accuracy) have been made since then. The framework covers grades 4, 8, and 12; grade 8 assessments have been administered approximately every 4 years through 2026, while grade 4 and 12 assessments were last administered in 2010. The 2028 NAEP Civics assessment will also be based on the existing framework; the updated framework will go into effect beginning with the 2032 NAEP Civics assessments. Additional details for operationalizing the framework are included in the NAEP Civics Assessment Specifications.

In accordance with the NAEP legislation, NAEP assessment frameworks are not intended to influence the standards, assessments, curricula, or instructional practices of states or local education agencies. In addition, NAEP assessments are focused on measuring academic achievement and are prohibited from evaluating or assessing personal or family beliefs and attitudes. The 1998-2028 NAEP Civics Framework is focused on measuring students' content knowledge and intellectual skills in civics, along with students' *understanding of* participatory skills and civic dispositions.

The Board policy on Assessment Framework Development describes the comprehensive, inclusive, and deliberative process to determine and update the content

[1] We are referring to the current framework as the 1998-2028 NAEP Civics Framework to indicate that this framework has guided all assessments during this time period.

and format of all NAEP assessments. The Board has discussed and refined this policy several times during the past decade, most recently in March 2025. All framework development activities are carried out in accordance with the Board policy, monitored by Board staff and the Assessment Development Committee (ADC). The full Governing Board has the sole authority to make decisions on the assessment frameworks. The official role of the Governing Board in the framework development process is summarized in the policy statement (See Principle 6: Role of the Governing Board).

The Board policy indicates that a Content Advisory Group (CAG) comprised of approximately 10 content and policy experts shall be established in each NAEP content area to maintain knowledge of current issues in the field and provide advice to the Board on whether and when updates to assessment frameworks are recommended. In spring 2024, a Social Studies Content Advisory Group was established to review and discuss issues related to the NAEP Civics and U.S. History Assessment Frameworks. ADC Chair Patrick Kelly facilitated and participated in most of the group's virtual meetings that took place between June 2024 and January 2025. This group was superseded by the Civics Content Advisory Group that was established in August 2026.

The Board policy calls for seeking public comment at the beginning of any anticipated process to make substantive updates to frameworks. The purpose of seeking initial public comment on whether and how a NAEP framework should be changed is to surface a wide range of perspectives and provide Board direction on important policy issues upfront to the extent feasible. The Board sought public comment on the current NAEP Civics Framework between February 13 – March 27, 2026. Thirty-eight submissions were received from a variety of organizations and individuals. All comments recommended some level of revision for the NAEP Civics Framework, although the extent of proposed changes varied. A summary of comments, along with the full set of comments, was included in the May 2026 Board materials.

The Board policy states: "With consideration of the policy and assessment issues in a content area, the Board shall develop a charge to articulate the need for an update to a framework and to specify policy guidance, constraints (including but not limited to those imposed by the NAEP legislation), and any specific tensions to resolve in the development of framework recommendations" (Principle 2e). The Board charge to the Civics Framework Development Panel was discussed and unanimously adopted during the May 2026 Board meeting.

Following adoption of the Board charge, a panelist nominations process took place from June 1-30 for individuals interested in serving on the Civics Framework Development Panel; 277 applications were received. The Board policy on Assessment Framework Development requires that the Assessment Development Committee (ADC) put forth recommendations of panelists for the Civics Content Advisory Group (a group of 10

experts to provide high level guidance for the Civics framework revision) and the Civics Framework Development Panel (a group of 20 experts who will propose the specific knowledge and skills to be assessed), and the Executive Committee then must approve those slates of panelists. The Assessment Development Committee recommended slates of panelists and the Executive Committee unanimously approved them during their meeting on August 6. Invitations were sent to selected panelists following the Board meeting; framework participants are listed on the Governing Board website.

Board staff awarded contract number 91995926F0006 to Democracy International (as the result of a competitive bidding process) in August 2026 to support the work of the Civics Content Advisory Group (CAG). The role of the Civics CAG is to provide feedback to the Framework Development Panel throughout the process, including initial guidance on how to implement the Board charge, review of draft documents prior to public comment, and ongoing feedback on the development and finalization of framework documents. The Civics Content Advisory Group met virtually several times in September and October and worked asynchronously to reach consensus on initial guidance to the Framework Development Panel (attached).

Board staff awarded contract number 91995926F0007 to WestEd (as the result of a competitive bidding process) in August 2026 to support all other aspects of the process to update the 2032 NAEP Civics Framework, including convening of the Framework Development Panel, the Educator Advisory Committee (EAC), and the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The TAC began meeting on October 15, and the EAC attended an orientation on November 2. Orientation sessions were held on several dates in late October for the Framework Development Panel, and the first Development Panel meeting is taking place on November 9-10 (the week prior to the quarterly Board meeting) in Washington, DC.

Overview of the November Board meeting session

ADC Chair Patrick Kelly will provide an overview of the Board's framework development process, including the timeline for key milestones in the update of the 2032 NAEP Civics Framework. Civics Content Advisory Group Co-Chairs Paul Carrese and Peter Levine will present that group's initial guidance (attached). Framework Development Panel Leadership Team members David Campbell and Emma Humphries will share initial takeaways from the first Framework Development Panel meeting taking place the week prior to the Board meeting.

Next Steps

The Framework Development Panel will meet again in-person in mid-December and late January, in addition to engaging in virtual and asynchronous work, to develop a substantive outline of the 2032 NAEP Civics Framework (what is to be assessed and how). The substantive outline is intended to be the basis for public comment (starting with the update of the NAEP Science Framework, the primary public comment period was moved earlier in the process to make it easier to incorporate feedback and avoid wasting time finalizing a document that could need substantial changes). The public comment period is scheduled to take place from mid-March to mid-April, but the framework recommendations first will be shared with the Board at the March 2027 quarterly Board meeting. Plans for public comment outreach also will be shared during this meeting.

During the May 2027 quarterly Board meeting, the Board will discuss a summary of the public comments received and determine whether any policy guidance is needed to inform revisions to the framework. The Framework Development Panel will meet in person in mid-June, in addition to engaging in virtual and asynchronous work, to incorporate revisions and finalize the framework document. A virtual Board session will take place in late June or early July to discuss the proposed revisions and offer any other feedback in advance of planned Board action on the 2032 NAEP Civics Framework at the August 2027 quarterly Board meeting.

Throughout the process, the Framework Development Panel (with support from WestEd measurement staff and the TAC) will also be working on the accompanying 2032 NAEP Civics Assessment Specifications. Finalization of this document typically lags the framework, and Board action may take place in a virtual session during September 2027 (for previous framework updates, the Board has delegated authority to ADC and COSDAM for the adoption of assessment specifications documents).

Presenter Biographies

David Campbell, Panel Leader, NAEP Civics Framework Development Panel

David Campbell is the Packey J. Dee professor of American democracy at the University of Notre Dame, the director of the Notre Dame Democracy Initiative, and a member of American Academy of Arts and Sciences. His research focuses on civic and political engagement, with particular attention to religion and young people. He is the author of multiple books and his work has appeared in multiple scholarly journals and newspapers, including *Why We Vote: How Schools and Communities Shape Our Civic Life, Secular Surge: A New Fault Line in American Politics* (with Geoff Layman and John Green), which received the Distinguished Book Award from the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, and *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (with Robert Putnam), winner of the American Political Science Association's for award for Best Book on Government, Politics, or International Affairs.

Paul Carrese, Co-Chair, NAEP Civics Content Advisory Group

Paul Carrese is the founding director of the Center for American Civics and a professor in the School of Civic & Economic Thought and Leadership at Arizona State University. He previously served as a professor at the U.S. Air Force Academy. He is a Rhodes Scholar, Fulbright Scholar, James Madison Program Fellow, and fellow at the Civitas Institute. He served on the advisory board of the Program on Public Discourse at UNC Chapel Hill, co-led Educating for American Democracy, and served on the Civic Education Committee for the American Political Science Association.

Carrese also serves on the Academic Council of the Jack Miller Center, on advisory boards at University of South Carolina and Georgia Institute of Technology, and on the APSA Council. He is a Senior Fellow with the Jack Miller Center and a Visiting Scholar at the Hoover Institution and previously served on the NAEP Social Studies Content Advisory Group for the Governing Board.

Emma Humphries, Panel Leader, NAEP Civics Framework Development Panel

Emma Humphries, PhD, is the chief education officer for iCivics, leading their research agenda and ensuring that all instructional materials are accurate, objective, and non-partisan via iCivics' Independent Review Council. She received a James Madison

Fellowship in recognition of her potential to be an outstanding educator of the American constitution.

Peter Levine, Co-Chair, NAEP Civics Content Advisory Group

Peter Levine is the associate dean and the Lincoln Filene professor of citizenship and public affairs at Jonathan Tisch College of Civic Life at Tufts University. He is a political philosopher and political scientist who specializes in civic life. He was a co-organizer and co-author of *The Civic Mission of Schools (2003)*, *The College, Career & Civic Life Framework for State Social Studies Standards (2013),* and *The Educating for American Democracy Roadmap (2021)*. Levine was a long-time member of the NAEP Civics Standing Committee and previously served on the NAEP Social Studies Content Advisory Group for the Governing Board.

Initial Guidance from the Civics Content Advisory Group

In accordance with the **Governing Board policy on Assessment Framework Development for NAEP**, the role of the Civics Content Advisory Group (CAG) is to provide feedback to the Civics Framework Development Panel throughout the process of updating the 2032 NAEP Civics Framework, including initial guidance on how to implement the Board charge and approach the update. The work of the Civics CAG is supported by Governing Board contract number 91995926F0006 to Democracy International. The Civics CAG met virtually several times in September and October 2026 and worked asynchronously to develop and refine the consensus recommendations. Initial takeaways from a previous Social Studies CAG (convened under a separate Governing Board contract in June 2024 – January 2025) served as the starting point for the recommendations. The Civics CAG consists of the following 10 members, half of whom also served on the previous Social Studies CAG:

- **Paul Carrese** (Co-Chair), Director, Center for American Civics; Professor, Arizona State University
- **Peter Levine** (Co-Chair), Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Lincoln Filene Professor of Citizenship & Public Affairs, Tisch College at Tufts University
- **Louise Dubé**, Chief Executive Officer, iCivics
- **Terri Susan Fine**, Professor Emerita and Associate Director Emerita, Lou Frey Institute of Politics and Government, University of Central Florida
- **Chester E. Finn, Jr.**, President Emeritus, Fordham Institute; Senior Fellow, Hoover Institution
- **Laura Hamilton**, Senior Associate, National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment
- **Francis O'Malley**, Policy Scientist, Institute for Public Administration, University of Delaware
- **Joseph Schmidt**, Executive Director, K–12 Education at Colonial Williamsburg Foundation; President, National Council for the Social Studies
- **Sharon Thorne-Green**, Secondary Social Studies Coordinator, Katy Independent School District, Texas
- **Geoffrey Wingard**, Interdisciplinary Instruction Specialist, Maine Department of Education

Initial Guidance from the Civics Content Advisory Group: Introduction

The following recommendations for revisions to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Civics Framework reflect the Civics Content Advisory Group's (CAG) agreement with the National Assessment Governing Board's (NAGB) view that the 1998-2028 NAEP Civics Framework requires updating and refining rather than major structural revision. Three further general points should be noted regarding the general intentions embedded in this entire set of recommendations. First, the Civics Content Advisory Group is cognizant that each recommendation for greater detail in, or emphasis upon, one content area must be balanced against the space and priority devoted to other important topics and concepts—both in the framework and across these recommendations. Second, consistent with the NAEP legislation and the 1998-2028 NAEP Civics Framework, the intent of the 2032 NAEP Civics Framework is to assess students' civic knowledge and its application, not students' personal beliefs, dispositions, advocacy, political preferences, or actual participation. Finally, there is no implicit ranking of priority in the order of the recommendations and these recommendations are not intended to be exhaustive.

Recommendation 1: Elevate Specifications language

The 1998-2028 NAEP Civics Assessment and Exercise Specifications should be used in conjunction with the 1998-2028 NAEP Civics Framework as a starting point for the Development Panel's task to consider what should be retained, revised, deleted, or added to produce the updated 2032 NAEP Civics Framework.

The Board charge indicates that the NAEP Civics Framework should be updated to reflect the current structure of other NAEP frameworks. The 1998-2028 NAEP Civics Framework document contains much less detail about what should be assessed than recently updated NAEP frameworks for Mathematics, Reading, and Science. The content outlines for grades 4, 8, and 12 that are included in Appendices A-D of the 1998-2028 NAEP Civics Assessment and Exercise Specifications are the closest approximation to the level of detail included in recently updated NAEP assessment frameworks. It will not be sufficient for the 1998-2028 NAEP Civics Framework by itself to serve as a starting point for the Development Panel's work.

When evaluating the large volume of content in Appendix A of the Specifications, however, the Development Panel should clearly differentiate between content that should be elevated to framework objectives (elements that *should* be assessed) and content that serves as examples (elements that *could* be assessed without the expectation that they *should* be assessed). The current volume of content in Appendix A of the Specifications is too large for everything to serve as framework objectives that should be assessed. Further, the Development Panel should prioritize elevation of any content that matches or reinforces the other recommendations provided herein.

Recommendation 2: Use current consensus terminology

The 1998-2028 NAEP Civics Framework has a brief glossary but does not address a number of key terms, including some that have become sources of contemporary debate. The 2032 NAEP Civics Framework needs to take pains in this realm because of the possible contentiousness of some words, phrases and terms related to civics. The Framework Development Panel should, wherever possible, use terminology accepted by a wide consensus of citizens and experts. The 2032 NAEP Civics Framework should also include a glossary to define key terms. These terms should be used consistently throughout the 2032 NAEP Civics Framework and across all of the recommendations provided. This recommendation governs the language of the framework and the items to be developed based on the framework; it does not by itself require that students be assessed on the definitions.

The key word "democracy" benefits from a modifier today more than ever. The 1998-2028 NAEP Civics Framework uses "American democracy," "constitutional democracy" and "American constitutional democracy." The 2032 NAEP Civics Framework should use "constitutional democracy," "American constitutional democracy," "democratic republic" and "constitutional republic" and treat them as synonyms. "Democracy" as a stand-alone term should not be used in the 2032 NAEP Civics Framework.

Where the word "patriotism" is used, the Framework Development Panel should apply Tocqueville's term "reflective patriotism," often defined as a civic virtue that combines a foundational love and gratitude for one's country with a rational, clear-eyed willingness to examine and question its shortcomings. Rather than demanding blind loyalty or uncritical sentimentality, "reflective patriotism" treats dissent, self-examination, and active reform as essential patriotic duties necessary for the nation to live up to its founding ideals.

The Framework Development Panel should use consensus terminology (in both the framework narrative and assessment objectives) throughout, and an expanded glossary incorporating the consensus definitions of key terms. An important source for such terminology is the *Educating for American Democracy* report and roadmap, which emerged from a diverse group of civics experts. Here are examples of widely used consensus definitions:

- *American*: The word "American" has many valid uses, including the names of the continents of the Western Hemisphere and their inhabitants. However, since the American Revolution, the United States of America has evolved a rich and powerful tradition of using the words "American" and "Americans" to describe and evaluate—whether positively, critically, or both—the United States and its culture, inhabitants, and institutions. The term also enfolds Indigenous Americans whose relationship to the polity is often defined not only by the Constitution but also by treaties between tribal governments and the U.S. government.
- *Checks and Balances*: A system that allows each branch of government to amend or block acts of another branch to prevent any one branch from holding supreme power.
- *Civic Agency*: The capacity of citizens to act independently as individuals or in groups and to make their own free choices concerning public life and community problem-solving.

- *Civic Friendship*: Regarding one another as fellow Americans capable of sharing ideals, principles, and constitutional forms of self-government even as we vigorously debate our philosophical or policy differences.
- *Civic Virtues*: The dispositions needed by informed and active citizens in America's constitutional democracy; three such qualities are civil disagreement, civic friendship, and reflective patriotism.
- *Civil Disagreement*: Listening to and acknowledging diverse perspectives and exchanging views in a reasonable manner, focusing on the substance of those views and being informed by mutual respect among fellow citizens.
- *Civil Discourse*: Engagement in open, constructive, and reasoned discussion about public issues among people who may hold diverse viewpoints.
- *Common Good*: The benefit or interest of all members of a community, balancing individual liberties with collective responsibility.
- *Constitutional Democracy*: A system of government through elected representatives that is based on a constitution that limits the powers of government and protects the fundamental rights of citizens.
- *Limited Government*: A conception of constitutional government and the rule of law holding that legitimate government must be limited in its powers, purposes, and authorities so as to protect particular rights of individuals—encompassing both individual and communal liberty—as well as to protect privileges of individuals and communities, and procedures for exercising governmental power, as initially brought from Great Britain by the Anglo-American colonists of the 17th century.
- *Natural Rights*: The conception of rights embedded in the Declaration of Independence is that a divine creator endows all human beings with several fundamental rights that serve as safeguards against other individuals and any government— "among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," but also private property rights. The related concepts of fundamental rights, basic rights, or human rights emphasize a basis in universal human reason rather than a divine origin.
- *Pluralism*: A condition or system where multiple groups with diverse beliefs, backgrounds, and interests coexist and compete peacefully to influence public policy and other political processes.
- *Popular Sovereignty*: The principle that the power and authority of the government are created and sustained by the consent of its people.
- *Public Service*: Action or work done for the benefit of the public or a community, through volunteer efforts, military service, or elected and appointed civic leadership.
- *Reflective Patriotism*: Uniting love of country with clear-eyed wisdom about America's successes and failures in order to chart a forward path as fellow citizens.
- *Rule of Law*: The legal principle that law governs a nation, rather than arbitrary decisions by individual government officials, and applies equally to all.
- *Separation of Powers*: A system of government that divides governmental powers among separate branches, typically the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, so that no

single branch has all the power, and so that each branch can focus on core functions and authorities.

- *Social Movement*: An organized, sustained, grassroots effort by a large number of people to bring about or resist social, economic, or political change.

The glossary should also define key terms used across the Civics CAG recommendations so that each is used consistently, including citizen, citizenship, civic virtue, patriotism, deliberation, consensus, compromise, and the norms of constitutional democracies listed in *Recommendation 5*.

Recommendation 3: U.S. Constitution and its governmental forms

The 2032 NAEP Civics Framework should address the balance between an (a) appropriate focus on the U.S. Constitution (including amendments), its founding principles and its governmental forms – including separation of powers, checks and balances, federalism, natural rights, equality of rights, consent of the governed – and (b) understanding the contemporary complexity of American politics and government, both federal and states, after centuries of social, political, and legislative change. The latter includes, for example, many new state and federal offices and agencies, and continual debates about how these new governmental functions fit with founding and constitutional principles; new technologies and the challenges they pose for the meaning of First Amendment "speech" and "press;" etc. NAEP should assess student understanding of both of these dimensions of American civic life.

The 2032 NAEP Civics Framework should continue to appropriately emphasize the U.S. Constitution and foundational American principles as the anchor of the content, but students also need to understand how governmental institutions and civic processes operate in practice in the current era. The 2032 NAEP Civics Framework should include assessment objectives that focus on both (a) whether students know the structures and forms established by the Constitution and the principles informing them and (b) whether they can use that knowledge to understand contemporary institutions, issues, and civic situations.

This revision provides an important opportunity to increase cognitive rigor without sacrificing content knowledge. The larger principle of civic knowledge is to understand the American story of a free people, self-understood as having equal political rights, continually deliberating about how to interpret its first principles in new circumstances and how to adapt its governing forms.

The 2032 NAEP Civics Framework thus should intentionally connect foundational knowledge to contemporary applications; for example, applying constitutional principles to many new state and federal offices and agencies, emerging technologies, modern communications; and addressing the continual debates about how these new government functions fit with founding and constitutional principles and over evolving interpretations of rights, such as the meaning of First Amendment "speech" and "press." Where possible, the Development Panel should illustrate these connections using content already in the Specifications. Contemporary examples should be selected for longevity and civic significance (e.g., a Supreme Court case such as Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission) rather than because they are prominent in a given news cycle.

This revision must be undertaken in a grade appropriate and non-partisan manner that can remain accurate decades from now. An emphasis on this balance, on the deeper complexity of American self-government, is most appropriate for grade 12, but the understanding and capacity should be assessed at earlier grades because the civic knowledge foundation must be developed prior to grade 12.

Recommendation 4: Federal structure of government and role of the states

Ensure a balance between national governance and distributed authority through federalism, with greater attention to state, local, and tribal governments, including state constitutions, tribal sovereignty and treaties, and the diverse ways that government authority is distributed, shared, and exercised.

Emphasis should be placed on:

- **The roles and responsibilities of federal, state, local, and tribal governments**
- **The ways these governments relate to one another**
- **The constitutional principles underlying the distribution of government authority**
- **How state, local, and tribal governments work and what they do, emphasizing common features, since this is a national assessment and these entities differ**

This recommendation calls for a more comprehensive treatment of American federalism that includes the importance of all levels of government and relationships with tribal nations. It emphasizes relationships among federal, state, local, and tribal governments within a national framework. It can further explore the importance of treaties with Native American nations, state constitutions, as well as federal institutions, to American governance; how the federal government uses spending power to influence state, local, and tribal governments; and how judicial rulings have shaped the evolution of federal and state sovereignty over time. The Development Panel should identify where the 1998-2028 NAEP Civics Framework and Specifications fall short on these topics and provide grade-appropriate examples.

Recommendation 5: Norms of constitutional democracies

Update the 1998-2028 NAEP Civics Framework by including "Norms of Constitutional Democracies" across all three grade levels in the Knowledge section of the framework under the question "*What Are the Foundations of the American Political System?*" Additionally, elevate content described below as norms that are currently in the 1998-2028 NAEP Civics Assessment Specifications into this section of the 2032 NAEP Civics Framework. Note that people may bring multiple perspectives to their understanding of these terms.

The following norms should be imported into a Norms of Constitutional Democracies section under the Knowledge section of the 2032 NAEP Civics Framework:

- Accountability
- Checks and Balances
- Citizen Participation
- Civilian Control of the Military
- Civic Responsibility
- Civility and Respect
- Compromise
- Consent of the Governed
- Ethical Public Service
- Free, Fair, and Secure Elections
- Freedom of the Press
- Freedom of Religion
- Government Transparency
- Independent Civil Society
- Independent Institutions
- Judicial Independence
- Mutual Toleration
- Peaceful Transfer of Power
- Political Tolerance
- Protection of Individual Rights
- Respect for Constitutional Limits
- Respect for Minority Rights
- Respect for Rule of Law

While some norms may not be familiar to students at grades 4 and 8, students in grade 12 are expected to possess a knowledge of all the norms. The Development Panel should indicate which norms should be prioritized for assessment at each grade. Norms should be assessed as knowledge and understanding—what each norm means and why it matters in a constitutional democracy—rather than students' personal endorsement of them.

Recommendation 6: Mechanics of elections and election systems

The 2032 NAEP Civics Framework should strengthen the content on the mechanics of elections that is included in the 1998-2028 NAEP Civics Framework, including such core topics as the roles of citizens and parties, and differences in election systems across jurisdictions and institutions.

As the Development Panel considers how the existing content on the mechanics of elections should be retained, revised, deleted, or added, they should ensure that the key concepts described below are included in the 2032 NAEP Civics Framework. The text below is not intended to be exhaustive on this topic. The primary change recommended is greater focus on the roles of citizens and political parties and on how election systems differ across jurisdictions and institutions, including state-level initiatives, referendums, and recall elections. Much of the detail below already appears in the 1998-2028 NAEP Civics Framework or Specifications and is offered as illustrative context rather than as required content. This level of detail regarding elections is most appropriate for grade 12; some general concepts from this topic area would be appropriate for grade 8; only the most general and basic of concepts, e.g., consent of the governed and elections to offices, are appropriate for grade 4.

The U.S. Declaration of Independence states that governments derive their "just powers from the consent of the governed." The government secures public consent by and through elections where citizens decide who will seek public office (nominations) and who will hold public office (elections). There are public offices, such as judicial and executive branch positions, which may be appointed or elected, depending on the jurisdiction. Election-related requirements for voters, parties and candidates, as well as election procedures, vary between the national and the state governments and across the states.

Sources for understanding and applying election mechanics include the U.S. Constitution and later amendments, as well as federal and state laws. Federal and state courts have also impacted elections and election mechanics through their interpretation of the U.S. Constitution and state constitutions, as well as federal and state laws.

Role of citizens and parties in elections:

Citizen roles: Citizens' central roles in elections include running for office and voting for candidates. Voting for candidates includes selecting nominees for office, most of whom are running to represent a political party in an upcoming election. Citizens may also be involved in elections by working to support candidates such as through election-related participation and providing financial support.

Political party roles: Political party roles in elections include supporting and conducting campaigns, training and nominating candidates through primaries and caucuses. Parties also adopt platforms, which serve to mobilize voters to support party-nominated candidates for legislative and executive positions and by supporting party-nominated candidates. Citizen initiatives, referendums and recall elections are also impacted by political parties.

Differences in election systems across institutions:

Differences between legislative institutions: The U.S. Constitution provided for the direct election of U.S. representatives and the election of U.S. senators by state legislatures although the 17th Amendment (1913) led to the direct election of U.S. senators. U.S. representatives

represent congressional districts for two-year terms while U.S. senators serve statewide for six-year terms. In lower-population states with only one congressional district, U.S. representatives serve statewide.

Differences in election systems between legislative and executive institutions: The U.S. Constitution requires that the president be elected by the Electoral College. Each state is allocated a number of electors based on the size of the state's congressional delegation. The 12th Amendment (1804) modified the selection of president and vice president so that they are separately elected. While not a state, Washington, D.C. has three electoral votes resulting from the 23rd Amendment (1961). All but two states employ a "winner-take-all" system to designate the candidates for whom their electors will vote. A candidate must receive a majority of the total votes in the Electoral College to be elected president or vice president.

National and state election systems:

National election systems: Various forces shape national election systems such as the U.S. Constitution, later amendments and federal law. Presidential and congressional election laws, requirements and procedures may vary across states. Congress uses results from the U.S. Census to determine how many seats represent each state in the House of Representatives and how many electors represent each state in the Electoral College. Procedures for congressional and presidential elections are primarily determined by states according to the U.S. Constitution (although Congress may legislate in this area).

State election systems: State governments and state constitutions determine requirements and procedures for state elections within the context of the U.S. Constitution and federal law. State-level processes determine whether nominations, constitutional amendments and referendums are decided by majorities or pluralities. State election procedures may be challenged in state and federal courts.

Recommendation 7: Role of non-governmental entities in civic life

The 2032 NAEP Civics Framework should include significant content about organizations and groups outside government, including but not limited to voluntary associations, companies, unions, religious institutions, political parties, media platforms, and social movements. It should assess student understanding of how these entities function and differ, and why some people join them.

The 2032 NAEP Civics Framework should assess students' knowledge and understanding of how civil society functions, not whether students participate in particular organizations or forms of service. NAEP can appropriately assess students' knowledge of how nongovernmental organizations influence communities, public policy, and civic life without assessing students' personal civic behavior or attitudes.

Organizations in civil society differ in important ways, but there may also be common features. For example, students could be asked about budgets, boards or bylaws as general features of organizations.

This topic is appropriate at all grade levels. It is consistent with a traditional emphasis on "neighborhood helpers" in the early grades. Relevant content already appears in the 1998-2028 NAEP Civics Specifications (e.g., grade 8, pp. 70–72; grade 12, beginning on p. 102) and should be included in the 2032 NAEP Civics Framework.

This recommendation speaks to the need to correct an undue emphasis on the role of government relative to civil society, given the role of the Constitution as limiting federal power.

Recommendation 8: Context, historical perspective, and continuing debates

With regard to the foundational ideas and national civic infrastructure of the United States (e.g., the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, the balance of powers and Congress), the 2032 NAEP Civics Framework should prioritize ensuring that the assessment measures not only students' understanding of the facts but also their understanding of the intellectual origins, fundamental tensions outlined in the founding documents, and the evolution of civic infrastructure in the United States.

This must be done without testing for historical knowledge or turning the assessment into a history test, since NAEP has a separate framework and assessment for U.S. history.

This can be accomplished in three ways:

(1) By updating the intellectual skills in the 1998-2028 NAEP Civics Assessment Specifications to include an understanding of the intellectual origins, fundamental tensions outlined in the founding documents, and the evolution of civic infrastructure over time.

(2) By adapting the language in the 1998-2028 NAEP Civics Assessment Specifications related to foundational ideas and documents to ensure the measurement of conceptual understanding:

- At grade 12, the 1998-2028 NAEP Civics Assessment Specifications require students to, "Evaluate, take and defend positions on what the fundamental values and principles of American political life are and their importance to the maintenance of constitutional democracy," including the objective to, "explain the importance of constitutional democracy of the following principles...[including] popular sovereignty..." (p. 95). As an example, the objective could be revised to "Compare how the concept of popular sovereignty has manifested in American political life at specific inflection points, such as the adoption of constitutional amendments, the expansion of the right to vote, or the civil rights movements." Similarly, at grade 12, the Specifications include the following example: "Explain the central ideas of American constitutional government such as the Constitution as legitimizing majority rule in certain key areas of decision making, while limiting the power of these majorities to protect the rights of individuals" (p.89-90). This could be revised to: "Explain how and why the Constitution puts limits on majority rule."
- At grade 8, the 1998-2028 NAEP Civics Assessment Specifications require students to, "Explain the essential ideas of American constitutional government" (p. 60). Students could also be required to: "Explain the evolution of the essential ideas of American constitutional government."
- At grade 4, the 1998-2028 NAEP Civics Assessment Specifications include the objective, "Explain that the United States Constitution is a written document" (p. 48). It could be augmented with an objective to explain the origins of the United States Constitution.

(3) By using authentic context—in some cases historical—in the design of the items. Historical context should support civic reasoning, with necessary background supplied in the items. Students should explain how constitutional principles operate and change through amendments, legislation, and judicial interpretation, without requiring recall of historical chronology unrelated to the civic construct.

Recommendation 9: Understanding how Americans have worked, and continue to work, toward a more perfect union

Update the 1998-2028 NAEP Civics Framework to strengthen the connection between two complementary dimensions of civic knowledge: (a) understanding constitutional principles, forms of government, and institutions; and (b) understanding how Americans have worked, and continue to work, toward a more perfect union by seeking to realize those principles and ideals. Center substantive civic knowledge and assess its application to institutional functions, public problems, and civic change.

This must be done without testing for historical knowledge or turning the assessment into a history test, since NAEP has a separate framework and assessment for U.S. history.

Give more explicit attention to the importance of constitutional ideals as goals, discrepancies between ideals and political and social realities, and efforts to narrow those gaps. Include grade-appropriate historical and contemporary examples, such as abolition, expansion of suffrage, and civil rights movements. Connect these efforts to constitutional principles and mechanisms for change, including amendments, legislation, judicial decisions, and individual, social, and political action. Students should examine evidence, competing arguments, accomplishments, and limitations associated with these efforts.

Elevate substantive, grade-specific content from the 1998-2028 NAEP Civics Assessment Specifications into the 2032 NAEP Civics Framework's civic knowledge descriptions. Establish a coherent progression, such as: at grade 4, identify foundational ideals and describe how people and government help put them into practice; at grade 8, explain institutional functions and describe efforts to address discrepancies between ideals and realities; and at grade 12, analyze how constitutional structures, institutional decisions, and civic efforts have shaped the realization of American ideals over time.

Use primary and authentic sources to assess civic understanding and evidence-based reasoning in a nonpartisan manner. Assess knowledge of institutions and civic change without assessing students' personal or family beliefs, political preferences, patriotism, or willingness to participate in civic action. Build on existing content and achievement expectations, with attention to assessment feasibility and preservation of NAEP trend continuity to the extent feasible.

Recommendation 10: Information literacy

Given the important role of digital information in our society, including artificial intelligence (AI), update the 1998-2028 NAEP Civics Framework to explicitly address media and information literacy in a civics context as an application of civic knowledge within the intellectual skills dimension.

Students should demonstrate grade-appropriate ability to locate and evaluate information about civic and political issues; verify claims through relevant evidence and independent sources; distinguish factual reporting, opinion, and persuasion; compare multiple perspectives; identify bias, purpose, and missing context; evaluate AI-generated content for accuracy and bias; describe factual differences in how media work (e.g., between a social media post and an article published by a news organization); understand how social media platforms are designed and engineered to influence the information people see and how this can shape their understanding of public issues; and explain responsible approaches to communicating or sharing information. Include print, broadcast, and digital examples, including AI-generated content, connecting these practices to informed citizenship, freedom of speech and press, and public deliberation. Some of these skills are currently covered in the intellectual skills categories of the 1998-2028 NAEP Civics Framework; others are not. If the skill exists in the 1998-2028 NAEP Civics Assessment Specifications, the 2032 NAEP should use digital information contexts in the assessment items. Items should assess knowledge and its application in civic contexts that NAEP can measure reliably, rather than students' everyday media habits.

One option is to add a new skill category in the intellectual skills: understanding, evaluating, and applying civic digital information. Civic digital literacy is defined as the ability to find, evaluate, create, and communicate civic/political information using digital technologies.

Another option is to modify and add to the existing intellectual skills to incorporate digital media and information skills mentioned above.

Recommendation 11: Civic reasoning and discourse

Update the 1998-2028 NAEP Civics Framework to explicitly address how students should demonstrate an understanding of how constitutional principles, deliberation, consensus, and compromise are an integral part of the civic infrastructure of our nation, and how citizens communicate with one another about public issues to build understanding and reach decisions through consensus, compromise, or, in some cases, principled dissent.

The intellectual skills in the 1998-2028 NAEP Civics Assessment Specifications include discrete components of civic reasoning and discourse, such as:

- assessing students' abilities to analyze public issues in authentic scenarios through evaluating evidence;
- examining multiple perspectives;
- weighing competing claims; and
- defending evidence-based positions by explaining points of agreement and disagreement, responding to counterarguments.

However, the framework should reflect that the intellectual skills must be assessed in connection with one another as evaluating these skills in isolation is insufficient for measuring civic reasoning and discourse. In addition, any part of the 1998-2028 NAEP Civics Specifications that is integrated into the 2032 NAEP Civics Framework should ensure that students are assessed on their understanding of how constitutional principles and the goal of enhancing understanding guide negotiation, deliberation, consensus, and compromise, including the legitimate role of principled disagreement and when compromise is and is not appropriate. (See, for example, page 79. D1s.10.)

Recommendation 12: Knowledge and understanding of participatory skills

The NAEP Civics assessment should assess students' *understanding of* participatory skills. Students should demonstrate that they know what various participatory skills are and how and why citizens use them. The NAEP assessment is not designed to measure whether students have or can employ participatory skills. Thus, NAEP results should be interpreted as an assessment of students' civic knowledge and their understanding of participatory skills, but not as an indication of students' participatory skills. And NAEP items should be developed to measure students' understanding of skills rather than the students' own skills.

Revisit the participatory skills in the 1998-2028 NAEP Civics Framework to ensure that they reflect the current societal and technological context. Consider these categories: (1) civic inquiry and monitoring (e.g., using online resources to gather and exchange information; questioning government officials); (2) analyzing institutions (e.g., understanding how institutions function and how individuals and groups interact with them); and (3) deliberation, communication, and influencing (e.g., exercising the civic virtue of civil disagreement: listening to and acknowledging diverse perspectives and exchanging views, focusing on the substance and informed by mutual respect among fellow citizens).

The specific skills in each category should be modernized to the extent possible, while being framed in sufficiently general terms to avoid becoming outdated. For example, an understanding of how to use social media in a manner reflecting a commitment to informed citizenship is relevant to all three categories (evaluating the credibility of news received via social media; understanding how individuals and groups interact with civic institutions using social media; communicating with policymakers via social media). But the skills should not be framed around specific, current social media platforms, which change quickly.

In addition, the Framework Development Panel should add more civil society skills, such as forming groups, recruiting members, and obtaining resources for nongovernmental groups.

Approaches to assessing skills in each category should be consistent with the Board charge that skills are assessed in the context of, or as applications of, content knowledge. Avoiding content that assesses advocacy, personal opinions, or overly generic skills that are not connected to content knowledge is also important.

This recommendation applies across all grades and performance levels, though the specific skills that are emphasized, and how they are defined, will vary across grades.