Revisions to the Grade 4 and 8 Math and Reading Reporting Achievement Level Descriptions

November 20, 2026

Goal

This session will be an opportunity for the Board to learn about the purpose and process for revising the grade 4 and 8 reading and math Reporting Achievement Level Descriptions (ALDs) for 2026, and to consider an action to adopt the changes.

Overview

Scott Marion, Chair of the Committee on Standards, Design and Methodology (COSDAM), will explain the changes to the NAEP Reading and Math Frameworks that prompted revisions to the Reporting ALDs ahead of the 2026 data release. He will also outline the process used by the Board's contractor, Quality Information Partners (QIP), to anchor assessment items to achievement levels and engage content experts in reviewing the items and frameworks and recommending revisions. Board members will receive the revised Reporting ALDs before the meeting and will be asked to take action to adopt the changes.

Background

One of COSDAM's key tasks is around the development and maintenance of the three official NAEP Achievement Levels – *NAEP Basic*, *NAEP Proficient,* and *NAEP Advanced*. The achievement levels are intended to provide meaning beyond NAEP Scale Scores, by describing what students performing at each level know and can do. Achievement level descriptions (ALDs) specify knowledge and skills for each achievement level specific to each grade and assessment. For those interested in learning more, the executive summary of the NAEP Achievement Levels Validity Argument provides an overview of the achievement levels and their intent.

In 2020, the Governing Board updated its achievement level policy to include the development of ALDs for use in Reporting (i.e., Reporting ALDs). Reporting ALDs are developed after an assessment has been administered and describe knowledge and skills of students performing at each achievement level based on assessment data. These are intended to help aid in the interpretation of what it means to perform at each level. They were first developed for the 2022 NAEP Reading and Math data release, based on 2019 assessment results. The Board's achievement level policy indicates that the Reporting ALDs should be updated when a new framework is implemented to

ensure they remain valid. New frameworks have been implemented for the 2026 NAEP Reading and Math assessment administrations for grades 4 and 8.

The 2026 update intended to maintain the current content of the Reporting ALDs as still relevant and focused on incorporating key framework changes. For reading, the revision focused on the Reading for Information subscale splitting into two subscales – Reading to Engage in Science and Reading to Engage in Social Studies. For math, the revision focused on framework's increased focus on processes through the addition of Mathematical Practices.