# Superintendent’s Memo #317-20

  
**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA   
Department of Education**

DATE: December 4, 2020

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: James F. Lane, Ed.D., Superintendent of Public Instruction

## SUBJECT: *NAEP 2021 Postponement*

On November 24, 2020, states were informed that the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Commissioner, with the support of the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), has decided to postpone the administration of the mandated 2021 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) mathematics and reading assessments in grades 4 and 8. The decision to postpone NAEP 2021 was made after careful consideration of the increasing impact of COVID-19 on educational systems across the country. Challenges such as variable instructional models, health and safety concerns, and restrictions on access to schools are expected to reduce NAEP’s ability to validly, reliably, and safely collect and report NAEP data in 2021. Both NCES and NAGB believe that a 2022 administration of NAEP reading and mathematics at grades 4 and 8 would be more likely to provide valuable–and valid—data about student achievement within the context of COVID-19.

NCES believes the examination of educational experiences within the context of COVID-19 could be valuable to states and divisions for the 2020–2021 school year. As a result, NCES is exploring the option of administering to administrators and teachers NAEP questionnaires which contain questions related to the impact of COVID-19 on educational administration, operations and instruction during the 2020—2021 school year. If a decision to administer these questionnaires is made, additional information will be provided to school divisions.

The information that school divisions sampled for the 2021 NAEP administration provided to prepare for the 2021 assessment has proven to be valuable in understanding the educational context of this school year and in helping with the final decision to reschedule the assessment. Please ensure that staff involved in these efforts are aware that their work was used in making the decision to postpone and that their efforts are very much appreciated.

Thank you for your continued support of NAEP during these challenging times. If you have any questions please contact our NAEP State Coordinator, Latosha Branch at [Latosha.Branch@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:Latosha.Branch@doe.virginia.gov).