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On the way: Nation's first tech-literacy exam

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On the way: Nation's first tech-literacy exam
Tech literacy to be added to Nation's Report Card beginning in 2012
From staff and wire reports

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For the first time ever, technological literacy will become part of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as the Nation's Report Card, the test's governing board has announced.

Beginning in 2012, the test will measure students' proficiency with technology in addition to reading, math, science, history, writing, and other subjects. The new test will mark the first time students' technology literacy has been assessed on a national level.

The National Assessment Governing Board has awarded a \$1.86 million contract to WestEd—a nonprofit educational research, development, and service agency based in San Francisco—to develop the 2012 NAEP Technological Literacy Framework.

Under this new contract, awarded through a competitive bidding process, WestEd will recommend the framework and specifications for the 2012 NAEP Technological Literacy Assessment. Ultimately, WestEd's work will lead to ways to define and measure students' knowledge and skills in understanding important technological tools, the Governing Board said. Board members then will decide which grade level—fourth, eighth, or 12th—will be tested in 2012.

"We are delighted to have WestEd help us lay the groundwork for an assessment in such an important area," said Darwin Winick, chairman of the Governing Board, which sets policy for NAEP. "Technology is changing and moving very fast, so accurate evaluation of student achievement in this area is essential."

NAEP's Technological Literacy Assessment comes at a time when there are no nationwide requirements or common definitions for technological literacy.

The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) has developed a set of National Educational Technology Standards (NETS) for students, and the No Child Left Behind Act requires that students demonstrate technological literacy by the end of the eighth grade.

Yet only a handful of states have adopted separate tests in this area, even as a growing chorus of business representatives and policy makers voices concern about the ability of American students to compete in a global marketplace and keep up with quickly evolving technology.

Several groups will help WestEd on this 18-month project, including ISTE, the Council of Chief State School Officers, the International Technology Education Association, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, and the State Educational

Technology Directors Association.

With this assistance, WestEd plans to convene two committees that will include technology experts, engineers, teachers, scientists, business representatives, state and local policy makers, and employers from across the country. The committees will advise WestEd on the content and design of the national tech literacy assessment.

In addition, hundreds of experts in various fields—as well as the general public—will be able to participate in hearings or provide reviews of the framework document as it is developed. Ultimately, the collaboration will reflect the perspectives of a diverse array of individuals and groups, the Governing Board said.

"WestEd has assembled a highly qualified team [composed] of exceptional organizations and knowledgeable individuals that bring a broad perspective on what students should know and be able to do in the area of technological literacy," said Steve Schneider, senior program director of WestEd's Mathematics, Science, and Technology Program. "We look forward to this opportunity to develop a framework that will guide the nation to a high-quality assessment of how our students meet the demands in this important international domain."

The Governing Board is slated to review and approve the technological literacy framework in late 2009.

"We all know that engineering and technologies in all forms—including computers, communications, energy usage, agriculture, medicine, and transportation—affect everything we hear, see, touch, and eat," said Alan J. Friedman, a physicist and member of the National Assessment Governing Board's Executive Committee. "With this new framework and the tests it will guide, we'll discover how well students today are learning to understand and use these immensely powerful tools."

Links:

[National Assessment of Educational Progress](#)

[WestEd](#)

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