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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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TO: LEA and ISD Superintendents, Authorizers and Directors of Public School Academies

FROM: Jeremy M. Hughes, Ph.D.
Chief Academic Officer/Deputy Superintendent

DATE: January 13, 2005

SUBJ: CURRENT AND FUTURE HIGH SCHOOL TESTING

With the publicity surrounding the adoption of the Michigan Merit Examination (MME) several weeks ago, questions have arisen as to the status of the current Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) High School Test (HST). There is some confusion about when the MME begins and what happens to the MEAP HST in the interim. Please share this information with high school administrators, staff, high school students, and their parents.

First, the MEAP HST will continue to be offered this school year (2004-2005) and next school year (2005-2006). This means that tenth, eleventh, and twelfth graders will continue to be assessed with MEAP and that the scores will be used for dual enrollment, accountability (NCLB and Education YES!), as well as the award of the Merit Award for two more years.

This means that all high school students should take the MEAP HST this year and next year. Educators should continue to teach the skills assessed by the HST, not only because the test will continue to be administered for two more years, but also because these are skills essential to the future plans of high school students. In addition, the Michigan standards and benchmarks will form the basis of the new MME in the future.

During the next few months, staff of the Office of Educational Assessment and Accountability, working with the Department of Management and Budget's Purchasing Office, will develop an Invitation to Bid and conduct a competitive bidding process involving the major college entrance testing organizations. The goal is to determine no later than this coming fall which program will be used as the basis of the MME.

During the 2005-2006 school year, a statistical alignment study will be conducted. In this study, a random sample of eleventh graders will take the MEAP HST (the test that will

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count) and the test(s) selected for the MME. This study will assist the state to set cut scores on the new tests equivalent to the current MEAP HST passing levels.

These data, along with curriculum alignment information, will be used to apply to the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) to shift the basis for the high school program to the MME. If the USDOE approves by December 31, 2006, then in the 2006-2007 school year, several activities will occur:

- Tenth graders will take a college entrance readiness test for purposes of dual enrollment. This will be the only test to be used for dual enrollment purposes. Participation will be voluntary and at student or school expense;
- All eleventh graders will participate in the MME in the Spring, 2007;
- Twelfth graders who have not yet qualified for a Merit Award may try to do so by retesting in the Fall 2006 and Spring 2007 using the MEAP HST if desired (or they may take the MME in the Spring, 2007).
- Beginning with the 2006-2007 school year, students will continue to qualify for a Merit Award based on the MME assessments.

The following school year, 2007-2008, twelfth graders who did not pass the MME as eleventh graders will have two additional chances to do so (only one of which will be paid by the State). Thus, the MME will be given in the Fall 2007 (for seniors only) and in the Spring 2008, for all eleventh graders and the seniors retesting.

As you can see from this tentative schedule of activities, it is important that you communicate to faculty, parents, and students that students need to continue to participate in the high school assessments, whether MEAP or MME. The results and participation rates will continue to be used to determine whether each high school is making Adequate Yearly Progress. Merit Awards will continue as well, and based on the assessments.

We will provide much more information on the transition activities and progress we make in transitioning from the MEAP HST to the MME as activities occur. I wanted to share this information in an attempt to correct some of the misperceptions that are being shared with us.