

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1** Welcome to Winter 2005 MI-Access!
- 2** Notes from the Contractor to MI-Access Coordinators
- 4** Remember, MI-Access Functional Independence 2.1 Pilot Assessments Must Be Administered During the Winter 2005 Assessment Window
- 4** What Does One Percent Really Mean?
- 5** An Example of How the One Percent Cap Affects AYP Calculations
- 6** MI-Access Participation and Supported Independence to Undergo Changes
- 7** NAEP Testing Underway in Michigan and Across the Country
- 8** What Is the National Assessment of Educational Progress?
- 8** Changes to the MEAP That Affect IEP Team Decisions
- 9** The SBE Approves OEAA ... Practices for Educators
- 9** The MDE Again Reviews Draft Guidelines...
- 10** MI-Access Electronic Resources: Which One Do I Use for What?
- 11** Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE Online Learning Program...
- 11** Glossary

Back Cover

Important MI-Access Dates
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P.O. Box 30008, Lansing, MI 48909
Phone: (517) 335-0471

The Assist

Helping to Improve Access to and Progress in the General Curriculum

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Welcome to Winter 2005 MI-Access!

Dear Readers,

The Winter 2005 MI-Access assessment window is upon us (February 21 through March 31). District MI-Access Coordinators should have received their assessment materials in mid-January and passed them along to School MI-Access Coordinators who, in turn, will distribute them to assessment administrators.

If you do not have the materials needed to administer the MI-Access assessments, please use the proper channels to obtain them. Assessment administrators should contact their School MI-Access Coordinators who, in turn, should contact their District MI-Access Coordinators for assistance. If you do not know who your coordinators are, consult the "MI-Access Coordinator List" on the Web at www.mi.gov/mi-access.

Please note that, if District MI-Access Coordinators do not receive the correct materials and/or quantities of materials as indicated on the packing slip, they should notify BETA/TASA, the MI-Access contractor, using the MI-Access Toll-free Hotline (1-888-382-4246) or the MI-Access e-mail address (mi-access@tasa.com). However, if *additional* materials are needed (for example, there are new students who were not included in the

district's fall estimated counts), District MI-Access Coordinators must obtain them through the MI-Access Online System. (If you are a District MI-Access Coordinator and do not have or have misplaced the district's individualized link and password, which are required to access the system, contact BETA/TASA for assistance.)

Keep in mind that the MI-Access Participation, Supported Independence, and Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE (IP2B) assessments must all be administered during the MI-Access assessment window. (Districts also have the option of assessing students during the MEAP window, which runs from January 24 through February 11.) Districts will have until April 8, 2005 to ship the MI-Access materials (used and unused) back to BETA/TASA for scanning and scoring. Any materials postmarked after that date will NOT be scored.

For this year only, the MI-Access Functional Independence 2.1 Pilot assessments will also be administered during the Winter 2005 assessment window (although the IP2B assessments should be administered first). We understand that this

continued on page 2



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NOTES FROM THE CONTRACTOR TO MI-ACCESS COORDINATORS

Although the schools in your district have not yet completed the assessment process, BETA/TASA is already preparing for the return of materials. It is especially important that each district's materials (for MI-Access Participation, Supported Independence, Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE, and the Functional Independence 2.1 Pilot) are packed properly in the original boxes in order for BETA/TASA to process them efficiently. District MI-Access Coordinators can help by following these guidelines.

If you are returning MI-Access Participation, Supported Independence, and/or Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE materials:

1. Be sure that you receive from your schools all the materials you distributed. This year, everything except the manuals must be returned to BETA/TASA.

2. You can check totals using your *School Distribution/Inventory Sheets* (refer to the copies you made prior to distributing materials to each school) and the *District Overage Inventory*. The former shows what was distributed to each school, so you can use it to log in returns as well. The latter shows the amount of extra materials that were provided by the contractor due to shrink-wrapping requirements, but that were not needed to fulfill school requirements. If you provided any of the overage (or extras) to a school requesting additional materials, you need to add that quantity to the amount you are expecting back from that school.
3. When returning materials, be sure to check that the number of *Teacher Return Envelopes*

continued on page 3

Welcome to Winter 2005 MI-Access!

continued from page 1

will require careful scheduling and considerable testing for 2.1 students, but having a six-week window should help.

Pilot materials will arrive in districts about one week later than the Winter 2005 assessment materials and the shipping boxes will have green, as opposed to yellow, labels. The pilot materials should be shipped back to BETA/TASA in the boxes with green labels, not mixed in with the standard Winter 2005 assessment materials. Complete instructions for returning pilot

assessment materials are included in the *Winter 2005 MI-Access Functional Independence 2.1 Pilot Coordinator and Assessment Administrator Manual*.

If you have any questions related to ordering, receiving, packaging, and/or returning standard and/or pilot assessment materials, please do not call my office. Instead, call the MI-Access contractor at the MI-Access Toll-free Hotline (1-888-382-4246) or send an e-mail message to mi-access@tasa.com. If you have questions related to the content and/or

scheduling of the standard and/or pilot assessments, you may send me an e-mail message at dutcherp@mi.gov.

Thank you for your continued involvement with MI-Access. We appreciate all that you do to make this program possible and wish you good luck as you administer the MI-Access assessments.

Peggy Dutcher
Coordinator, Assessment
for Students with Disabilities Program
dutcherp@mi.gov

NOTES FROM THE CONTRACTOR TO MI-ACCESS COORDINATORS

continued from page 2

from each school matches what is written on the *School Identification Sheet*. Then transfer the number of *Teacher Return Envelopes* to the *District Identification Sheet*. Also verify and transfer the number of completed student scan documents for each school from the *School Identification Sheet* to the *District Identification Sheet*, and total the columns. (Detailed instructions on how to complete these tasks are included in the *Winter 2005 MI-Access Coordinator and Assessment Administrator Manual*.)

4. Spot check the *Teacher Return Envelopes* to make sure they have been filled out correctly and contain the proper materials (one *Teacher Identification Sheet* per envelope on top of one or more student scan documents); then, seal the envelopes.
5. When you are ready to put the materials into the original boxes (the ones with yellow labels) for return shipment, refer to the graphic and the instructions on page 19 of the *Winter 2005 MI-Access Coordinator and Assessment Administrator Manual*. Packing the materials properly will speed up the scanning and scoring process.
6. Next, open the yellow *Return of Materials Packet* to retrieve the paper strips, the UPS RS label(s), and the divider sheet. Layer the materials as instructed in the manual. If you do not have the manual available, you may use the graphic and instructions on the outside of the packet.

If you are returning Functional Independence 2.1 Pilot materials:

1. Be sure that you receive from your schools all the materials you distributed. This year, everything except manuals and rulers must be returned to BETA/TASA.
2. You can check totals using your *School Distribution/Inventory Sheets* (refer to the copies you made prior to distributing materials to each school) and the *District Overage Inventory*. The former shows what was distributed to each school, so you can use it to log in returns as well. The latter shows the extra materials that were provided by the contractor due to shrink-wrapping requirements, but that were not needed to fulfill school requirements. These "extras" should be retained by District MI-Access Coordinators (school coordinators and assessment administrators have been instructed not to ask for additional materials for the pilot) and returned along with the other pilot assessment materials.
3. When returning materials, be sure to check that the number of *Teacher Return Envelopes* from each school matches what is written on the *School Identification Sheet*. Then transfer the number of *Teacher Return Envelopes* to the *District Identification Sheet*. Also verify and transfer the number of completed student scan documents for each school from the *School Identification Sheet* to the *District Identification Sheet*, and total the columns. (Detailed instructions on how to complete these tasks are included in the *Winter 2005 MI-Access Functional Independence*

2.1 Pilot Coordinator and Assessment Administrator Manual.)

4. Spot check the *Teacher Return Envelopes* to make sure they have been filled out correctly and contain the proper materials (one *Teacher Identification Sheet* on top of one or more student scan documents); then, seal the envelopes.
5. When you are ready to put the materials into the original boxes (the ones with green labels) for return shipment, refer to the instructions on page 13 of the *Winter 2005 MI-Access Functional Independence 2.1 Pilot Coordinator and Assessment Administrator Manual*.
6. Next, open the green *Return of Materials Packet* to retrieve the paper strips, the UPS RS label(s), and the divider sheet. Layer the materials as instructed in the pilot manual. If you do not have the manual available, use the graphic and instructions on the outside of the packet.

The last day for returning materials (standard and pilot) to BETA/TASA is April 8, 2005. If you have any questions, please call the Toll-free MI-Access Hotline at 1-888-382-4246 or send an e-mail message to mi-access@tasa.com.

Thank you for your cooperation. Returning the materials in an organized manner will help the contractor process your district's assessments in a timely and efficient manner.

Remember, MI-Access Functional Independence 2.1 Pilot Assessments Must Be Administered During the Winter 2005 Assessment Window!

This year, the MI-Access Functional Independence 2.1 Pilot assessments will be administered during the same window as the standard MI-Access assessments (Participation, Supported Independence, and Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE [IP2B])—from February 21 through March 31, 2005. Districts also have the option of starting assessment administration during the MEAP assessment window, which runs from January 24 through February 11.

If you are assessing 2.1 students, be sure to administer the IP2B assessments first. Then, administer the pilot assessments. The pilot materials will arrive in a separate shipment with green, as opposed to yellow, labels. They should be returned in a separate shipment using the boxes with the green labels, even though the return date—April 8, 2005—is the same for all MI-Access assessments (standard and pilot).

Please note that, unlike last year's Tryout, schools will administer only ONE pilot assessment to their students—either ELA or mathematics (but not both). The decision as to which assessment a school will administer is being made by BETA/TASA, the MI-Access contractor, in order to ensure statistically accurate samples. It will say on the district's packing slip which schools will administer which assessments.

If you have questions about the pilot, please do not call the MI-Access office at the Michigan Department of Education (unless they are related to scheduling or the content of the assessments). Instead, call the MI-Access contractor at the MI-Access Toll-free Hotline (1-888-382-4246) or send an e-mail message to mi-access@tasa.com.

WHAT DOES ONE PERCENT REALLY MEAN?

In December 2003, the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) issued the final regulation regarding the use of alternate assessment scores in calculating Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The release of the regulations triggered a great deal of uncertainty about assessing students with disabilities and how their scores count when making No Child Left Behind (NCLB) calculations. Unfortunately, despite being in effect for one full year, the regulation continues to confuse many of those involved with assessment and accountability. This article attempts to address some of the key questions raised by the regulation, using the USDOE's December 18, 2003 publication, titled "Title 1 Regulation on Alternate Achievement Standards: Questions and Answers."

Does the final regulation limit the number of students who can participate in alternate assessment?

No. Since it is up to IEP Teams to determine how students should be assessed, the federal government cannot limit the number of students participating in alternate assessment. The law does, however, restrict the number of alternate assessment scores that can be used to calculate AYP. The cap has been set at one percent. (Please note that the cap does NOT apply to participation rate calculations, only AYP calculations.)

Why is a cap needed?

The purpose of the cap is to limit the use of alternate achievement standards to only those students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. It is designed to ensure that there is not an incentive to assess a student based on alternate achievement standards if it is not appropriate for that student.

At what level does the one percent cap apply for AYP purposes?

The one percent restriction, or cap, applies to districts and the state, NOT schools. It does, however, affect the number of proficient scores that can be counted at the school level. (See example on page 5 for details.)

Are exceptions allowed?

Yes. Districts and states can apply for an exception to the cap. For example, if a district has a center program that bumps the number of students participating in alternate assessment to unusually high levels, the district can make a case, using sound documentation, that the state should make an exception. The state then has the flexibility to allow that district to use a higher percentage of its proficient alternate assessment scores in its AYP calculations.

Does the one percent cap apply to all special education students or only those taking alternate assessments with alternate achievement standards?

According to the final regulation, states may use alternate achievement standards for students with the most "significant cognitive disabilities." Each state that uses alternate achievement standards, however, must establish clear and appropriate guidelines for IEP Teams to use when determining which state-level assessment its students will take.

Who are the students with the most significant cognitive disabilities?

The regulation acknowledges that, while all children can learn challenging content, there is a small percentage within one or more of the existing categories of disabilities whose cognitive impairments may prevent them from attaining grade-level achievement standards, even with the best instruction. For these students, the regulation allows learning to be evaluated through "alternate" achievement standards. The regulation leaves it up to the states to define significant cognitive disabilities.

What is an alternate achievement standard?

An alternate achievement standard is an expectation of performance that differs in complexity from a grade-level achievement standard.

continued on page 5

WHAT DOES ONE PERCENT REALLY MEAN?

continued from page 4

Conclusion

The decision of which state-level assessment a student should take still resides with the IEP Team. In Michigan, teams make

assessment decisions by looking at a student's curriculum, instruction, and the level of independence he or she is expected to achieve as an adult. IEP Teams need to

know, however, that their assessment decisions may have potential ramifications—all of which should be weighed carefully before finalizing a student's plan.

An Example of How the One Percent Cap Affects AYP Calculations

District XYZ has four elementary schools. In those schools, a total of four hundred students are enrolled in the fourth grade.

- Given the one percent cap, only four alternate assessment student scores can count toward the district's AYP ($400 \times .01 = 4$).
- A total of eight students in the district participated in MI-Access—three at Elementary A, one at Elementary C, and four at Elementary D. (Elementary B did not have any students participating in MI-Access.)
- All eight students who participated in MI-Access were proficient—they either Surpassed or Attained the Performance Standard.
- Because of the one percent cap at the district level, only four of the eight MI-Access proficient student scores can count toward the district's AYP.
- The state counts two scores from Elementary A and two scores from Elementary D.
- While not every school building is limited to the one percent cap, it does impact the calculation of AYP at the school level. How? The state counts the same four proficient scores when calculating each school's AYP as it does when calculating the district's AYP. The following graphic shows how that plays out for each school.

DISTRICT XYZ

Total fourth-grade enrollment = 400

1% cap = 4 proficient scores

Elementary A	Elementary B	Elementary C	Elementary D
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This school has 100 students in the 4th grade. 97 take the MEAP. 3 take MI-Access. All 3 MI-Access scores are "proficient." The state counts 2 "proficient" scores from this school when calculating the district's AYP at the fourth-grade level. Therefore, of the 3 MI-Access scores in this building, the state must count 2 as "proficient" and 1 as "not proficient" when calculating the school's AYP. In effect, this school was allowed to count 2% of its total grade 4 enrollment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This school has 100 students in the 4th grade. 100 took MEAP. The one percent cap is irrelevant, since no fourth-grade students in this school participated in alternate assessment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This school has 100 students in the 4th grade. 99 take the MEAP. 1 takes MI-Access. The 1 MI-Access score is "proficient." The state did not count this one score when calculating the district's AYP at the fourth-grade level. Therefore, the score must be counted as "not proficient" when calculating the school's AYP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This school has 100 students in the 4th grade. 96 take the MEAP. 4 take MI-Access. All 4 scores are "proficient." The state counts 2 "proficient" scores from this school when calculating the district's AYP at the fourth-grade level. Therefore, of the 4 MI-Access scores in this building, the state must count 2 as "proficient" and 2 as "not proficient" when calculating the school's AYP. In effect, this school was allowed to count 2% of its total grade 4 enrollment.

MI-ACCESS PARTICIPATION AND SUPPORTED INDEPENDENCE TO UNDERGO CHANGES

When the MI-Access Participation and Supported Independence assessments were developed, the MDE was advised by its committee of experts to assess the target student population by age instead of grade. They also recommended that, to keep the assessments to a manageable length, students of odd ages (9, 13, and 17) should be administered half of the Performance Expectations in MI-Access and students of even ages (10, 14, and 18) should be administered the other half.

When the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) was passed, it became clear that both of these recommendations presented challenges. First, NCLB requires states to calculate participation rates and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) by grade. Therefore, those students who are assessed by age may or may not show up in the grade calculations even though they were assessed at the state level. Furthermore, students who were in

a grade assessed but were not of an assessment age, would be counted as zeros in participation rates. Therefore, in response to this challenge, a decision was made in 2003 to convert MI-Access Participation and Supported Independence assessments from age to grade.

Second, the practice of assessing only half of the students on half of the Performance Expectations will not allow the state to demonstrate student progress from one year to the next—another requirement of NCLB and the state's own accountability system, Education YES!. Therefore, the MI-Access staff is now proposing that, effective 2005/2006,

1. all of the Performance Expectations would be assessed at each grade,
2. the number of observations of an activity would be reduced from 2 to 1,
3. sub-scores would be reported by Performance Expectation, and

4. there would be one overall performance score, which could be used for both English language arts and mathematics (for NCLB reporting purposes).

The table below shows what the assessment booklet blueprint would look like under the proposed plan.

The changes proposed for MI-Access Participation and Supported Independence are being reviewed by the Office of Educational Assessment and Accountability's staff and its national Technical Advisory Committee.

The new configuration of these assessments, if approved, will be used until assessments based on Michigan's extended grade level content expectations and benchmarks for English language arts and mathematics are developed.

Look for updates on the status of the plan in future issues of *The Assist*.

PROPOSED BOOKLET BLUEPRINTS FOR MI-ACCESS PARTICIPATION AND SUPPORTED INDEPENDENCE ASSESSMENTS	
Participation	Supported Independence
PE 1 x 4 unique activities observed one time PE 2 x 4 unique activities observed one time PE 3 x 4 unique activities observed one time PE 4 x 4 unique activities observed one time PE 5 x 4 unique activities observed one time Embedded activities needed to maintain the item pool are under discussion.	PE 1 x 4 unique activities observed one time PE 2 (not assessed at state level) PE 3 x 4 unique activities observed one time PE 4 (not assessed at state level) PE 5 x 4 unique activities observed one time PE 6 x 4 unique activities observed one time PE 7 x 4 unique activities observed one time PE 8 x 4 unique activities observed one time Embedded activities needed to maintain the item pool are under discussion.
20 items	24 items

NAEP TESTING UNDERWAY IN MICHIGAN AND ACROSS THE COUNTRY

In addition to administering the MEAP and MI-Access assessments, some Michigan schools are also administering the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) assessments in reading and mathematics.

Which Michigan schools are participating? In October 2004, superintendents and principals across the state were notified if their districts and/or schools had been selected to be a part of NAEP 2005. The districts and schools were asked to prepare lists of enrolled students for sampled grades; then student samples were drawn and parents were notified of their child's selection. The

NAEP assessment will be administered in February, although each participating school has been assigned its own specific test administration date within that period. Scoring and scaling of NAEP results will take place from March through August, and state-level NAEP data will be released in fall 2005.

If a student with disabilities is enrolled in a school participating in NAEP and is taking the MEAP, he or she should also participate in NAEP. (Students taking MI-Access assessments do not participate in NAEP.) The table below shows which assessment accommodations are permitted by NAEP for students with disabilities as well as English Language Learners.

For more information about NAEP, go to <http://nces.ed.gov/nation-sreportcard/>. Once there, you may obtain Michigan-specific data from past years as well as national data. You may also access Michigan's own NAEP Web page at www.mi.gov/oeaa (click on "National Assessment of Educational Progress") or request information from Jim Griffiths, MEAP Test Administration and Reporting Coordinator, at NAEP@michigan.gov. For background information on NAEP, see the article titled "What Is the National Assessment for Educational Progress?" on page 8.

Accommodation	Permitted by NAEP?	Accommodation	Permitted by NAEP?
Presentation format		Response Format	
Explanation of directions	Yes	Braille writers	Yes
Oral reading in English	Yes (except for reading)	Word processors or similar assistive devices	Yes
Oral reading in native language	No	Write directly in test booklet	Yes
Person familiar to student administers test	Yes	Tape recorders	No
Translation of directions into native language	No	Scribes	Yes
Translation of test into native language	No	Answer orally, point or sign an answer	Yes
Bilingual (Spanish) version of test	Yes (mathematics only)	One-on-one administration	Yes
Repeat directions	Yes		
Large print	Yes	Other Accommodations Provided for Some State Assessments but not for NAEP	
Bilingual dictionary	Yes (except for reading)	Braille edition of assessment	No ¹
		Audio tape administration of assessment	No
Setting format		Calculator	No
Alone in study carrel	Yes	Abacus	No
Administer test in separate room	Yes	Arithmetic tables	No
With small groups	Yes	Graph paper	No
Preferential seating	Yes	Responses in native primary language	No
Special lighting	Yes	Thesaurus	No
Special furniture	Yes	Spelling and grammar checking software and devices	No
		Signing directions or answers	No ¹
Timing/Scheduling			
Extended testing time (same day)	Yes		
More breaks	Yes		
Extending sessions over multiple days	No		

¹ Not provided by NAEP, but school, district, or state may provide after fulfilling NAEP security requirements.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 2003 Reading and Mathematics Assessments.

What Is the National Assessment of Educational Progress?

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which is often referred to as the "Nation's Report Card," is an ongoing national assessment of what America's students know and can do in various subject areas, including (but not limited to) reading, writing, mathematics, science, world geography, U.S. history, civics, and art. Since 1969, NAEP assessments have been administered voluntarily to students across the nation in an effort to generate data showing what students are learning at critical junctures in their school experience. Those data are then used by policymakers at the national and state level to formulate education policy.

NAEP has two primary goals: (1) to measure student achievement in the context of instructional experiences, and (2) to track change in the achievement of fourth-, eighth-, and twelfth-grade students over time in selected content areas. Unlike many standardized assessments, NAEP assessment results are not reported by individual students or schools, but instead by populations of students (e.g., fourth- or eighth-graders) and subgroups of those populations (e.g., female students or Hispanic students). The results are based on representative samples of students pulled from across the country or from across a specific state.

While full participation in NAEP assessments has always been voluntary for every student, school district, and state, federal law requires that all states that receive Title I funds and are selected for the NAEP sample, must, at a minimum, participate in NAEP reading and mathematics assessments at fourth and eighth grades.

CHANGES TO THE MEAP THAT AFFECT IEP TEAM DECISIONS

The Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) is undergoing several changes that will affect Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team decisions. The following article summarizes some of those changes. It should be shared widely with IEP Team members so they can make informed choices about how their student will participate in state-level assessment.

Nonstandard Accommodations on the MEAP

Last year, a student using a nonstandard assessment accommodation on the MEAP counted as being assessed in the state's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) participation rate, but his or her score counted as "not proficient" when calculating Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Starting with the 2004/2005 school year, the U.S. Department of Education has indicated that if a student uses a nonstandard assessment accommodation, he or she will no longer count as being assessed (i.e., he or she will no longer be included in the state's NCLB participation rate).

This is an important change because a school cannot make AYP if it does not have, at a minimum, a participation rate of 95 percent—for the entire school and for each subgroup. (Special education is one subgroup.) Therefore, it is highly recommended that districts check to see how many IEPs indicate the use of nonstandard assessment accommodations. In light of the new consequence of using them, IEP Teams may want to review their decisions. Remember, this is an IEP Team decision; therefore, if a change needs to be made to a student's IEP, his or her IEP Team must reconvene to make that determination.

Science and Social Studies

At its November 2004 meeting, the State Board of Education (SBE) approved a proposal to administer the MEAP science assessments to students in grades 5 and 8 and the MEAP social studies assessments to students in grades 6 and 9. Moving the social studies tests to different grades will enable the sixth-grade assessment to cover the entire 3-5 elementary content standards (including the Revolutionary War period) and the ninth-grade assessment to cover the entire middle school content standards (including the Civil War period). It also will reduce the number of content areas assessed, particularly at 8th grade, and give schools the flexibility to administer the social studies test either during the middle school MEAP cycle or the high school MEAP cycle, depending on the school's configuration. This change will go into effect in fall 2005.

IEP Teams must keep in mind that, at present, there are no state-level alternate assessments in the content areas of science and social studies. Until they are developed, teams that have indicated that their students should take an alternate must determine how else their students will be assessed in these content areas.

College Entrance Exams

The Michigan Legislature passed five bills allowing the MEAP high school assessments to be replaced with a new assessment called the Michigan Merit Exam. This exam will be based either on the ACT or the College-Board SAT and supplemented with components of existing Science and Social Studies assessments. The first step toward

continued on page 9

THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION APPROVES OEAA PROFESSIONAL ASSESSMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY PRACTICES FOR EDUCATORS

At its November 9, 2004 meeting, the State Board of Education (SBE) approved the "OEAA Professional Assessment and Accountability Practices for Educators." The purpose of the practices document is to (1) establish uniform standards for educators who administer state-level assessments, and (2) encourage appropriate and ethical assessment administration. As the document notes, "For assessments to yield accurate results, they must be given under standardized conditions."

These are not the state's first test administration guidelines. According to the November 12, 2004 "MEAP Coordinator Update," when the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) was transferred back to the Michigan Department of Education, the guidelines to direct ethical practice pertained only to the MEAP and had not been approved by the SBE. The new guidelines have been expanded to include (1) other Office of Educational Assessment and Accountability (OEAA) programs, such as MI-Access and the English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA); (2) the accreditation activities for Education YES!; and (3) NCLB Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) accountability. They also have been approved by the SBE.

The new OEAA practices document is available at the OEAA Web page (www.mi.gov/oeaa) and is intended for use during the 2004/2005 school year. The OEAA notes that any questions or concerns about the practices will be taken back to the OEAA Advisory Committee for review and input.

THE MDE Again Reviews Draft Guidelines for Determining Participation in State Assessment for Students with Disabilities

When MI-Access was first implemented statewide, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) developed draft guidelines (posted at www.mi.gov/mi-access) to help Individualized Education Program (IEP) Teams determine which state-level assessment their students should take. The draft guidelines were distributed to educators across the state, feedback was obtained through an online survey, and the feedback was incorporated, as appropriate, into the draft guidelines.

The review process, however, took place before the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), which introduced new terminology and parameters for using alternate assessment scores. For example, NCLB stipulated that states could use alternate achievement standards for students with the most "significant cognitive disabilities," but it left it up to the states to define that term. In addition, NCLB placed a one percent cap on the number of alternate assessment scores that could be included in a district's or state's Adequate Yearly Progress calculations.

In light of these requirements, the MDE is now reviewing its draft guidelines for a second time. During the review process, it will

- define what "significant cognitive disability" means for Michigan;
- compare the new definition with the current MI-Access student characterizations (which vary according to a student's curriculum, instruction, and expected level of independence in adulthood);
- revisit the concept and definitions of Functional Independence 2.1 and 2.2 students (with which educators and staff continue to struggle); and
- revisit the MEAP standard and nonstandard assessment accommodations.

It is anticipated that the review process will take place during the winter and spring of 2005. Look for updates on this topic in future issues of *The Assist*.

CHANGES TO THE MEAP THAT AFFECT IEP TEAM DECISIONS

continued from page 8

implementing these laws is to have the Governor sign them. Then, the state will begin the process of selecting a college entrance exam through the competitive bid process, obtain approval for the use of the new exam from the

U.S. Department of Education, and conduct a statistical alignment study and standard setting in spring 2006. The new program, if adopted, will affect all high school students in the 2006/2007 school year. More details on this effort will be included in future issues of *The Assist*.

MI-Access Electronic Resources: Which One Do I Use for What?

The good news is that MI-Access has a number of electronic resources to help District MI-Access Coordinators do their work. The bad news is that—until you understand what each one is designed to do—it can be difficult telling them apart. This article is intended to clarify what the MI-Access Online System, the MEAP Secure Site, the MI-Access Web page, and the MI-Access Information Center are, and how coordinators can use them to complete a variety of important tasks.

MI-Access Online System

The MI-Access Online System is the BETA/TASA secure Web site used to collect and store information for MI-Access assessment administration. The system—which may be accessed only by District MI-Access Coordinators using the district’s individualized link and password—contains the most up-to-date contact information for District and School MI-Access Coordinators. The system also is used to

- order training materials,
- order assessment materials,
- enter estimated teacher and student counts,
- enter information for pre-identifying students,
- access additional resources (such as the MI-Access Web page, the MI-Access Information Center, and so forth), and
- provide districts with secure downloadable student data files with score results.

In addition, the MI-Access Online System allows District MI-Access Coordinators to view shipment histories—a particularly useful but not often used feature. Once an order for materials of any kind is placed, coordinators can click on “View MI-Access Shipment History,” then click on the order number and find the date the

materials were ordered, the date they were shipped, and the UPS tracking number. Then, by clicking on the UPS tracking number, coordinators can see a complete shipping history, including when the materials were delivered, who signed for them, the time they were signed for, and any other relevant tracking information.

The MI-Access Online System has other useful features, including “Help” information for each heading on the home page, a direct link to the MI-Access e-mail address, the ability to “bookmark” the system (which is extremely useful for coordinators who have trouble remembering their district’s individualized link), and the ability to change passwords.

Many of the questions coordinators refer to the MI-Access Toll-free Hotline are addressed by the MI-Access Online System; therefore, coordinators may want to use this resource before picking up the phone.

MEAP Secure Site

The MEAP Secure Site is the MEAP office’s password-protected online system. It has a number of functions, including pre-identifying students participating in the MEAP and updating student demographic information. For District MI-Access Coordinators, this is the site where demographic information for students participating in MI-Access is entered. Only District MEAP Coordinators have the password to this site; therefore, District MI-Access Coordinators will need to collaborate with them during the period designated for updating MI-Access student demographics.

MI-Access Web Page (www.mi.gov/mi-access)

The MI-Access Web page is the com-



ponent of the Michigan Department of Education’s (MDE) Web site that deals with state-level assessment for students with disabilities. It contains information on federal requirements (primarily IDEA and No Child Left Behind), state requirements, and assessment accommodations for the MEAP. It also contains a plethora of information specifically related to MI-Access.

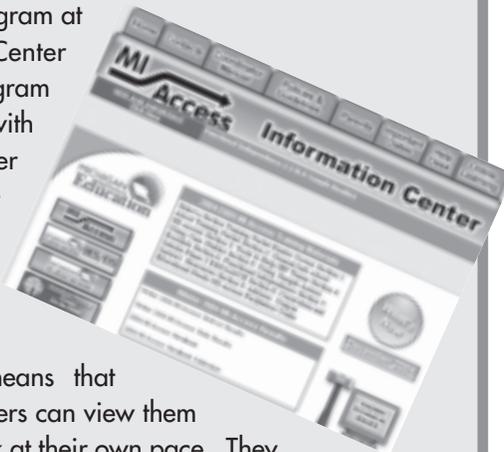
MI-Access Information Center (www.mi-access.info)

The MI-Access Information Center contains much of the same information and resources as the MI-Access Web page, but it has two different and very important features. The first is that the Center, because of its unique design, houses the MI-Access online learning programs. These programs are a critical part of the MI-Access professional development process, because they make information available to educators across the state at any time of the day or night. For example, in 2004 this feature allowed the MI-Access staff to quickly and efficiently educate more than one thousand teachers on how to administer the Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE assessments without ever leaving the office.

The second feature unique to the Center is its “What’s New” tab. Here information is posted quickly and accurately without the delays typically encountered with most Web sites. A “What’s New” feature is imperative to programs, like MI-Access, that are trying to inform broad, highly dispersed audiences under tight deadlines and in fast-changing policy climates.

INTERIM PHASE 2 BRIGANCE ONLINE LEARNING PROGRAM AVAILABLE FOR NEWCOMERS

If you did not administer the Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE assessments last year and have questions about the assessments and the administration process, please complete the Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE Online Learning Program at the MI-Access Information Center (www.mi-access.info). The program contains ten narrated modules with pictures and graphics that cover everything from how the assessments are designed to how to fill out and return assessment materials.



The use of discrete modules means that assessment administrators and others can view them any time—day or night—and work at their own pace. They also can revisit specific modules as often as necessary until they are ready to administer the assessments.

The modules contain information on

- what MI-Access is,
- why the BRIGANCE® was chosen as an interim assessment,
- what materials are provided,
- how the assessments are designed,
- the question formats that are used, and
- where to go for additional information.

They also explain how to

- prepare for assessment administration,
- record answers,
- assess visually impaired students, and
- return materials.

Before leaving the program, users are asked to complete an exit survey to provide the MI-Access staff with feedback on their learning experience. The feedback is being used to develop additional online professional development programs.

Please note that, unlike the annual MI-Access conferences, which are geared for District and School MI-Access Coordinators, the online program is designed specifically for assessment administrators. It can, however, be used by coordinators in face-to-face training sessions.

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GLOSSARY



MI-Access Online System: The BETA/TASA secure Web site used to collect and store information for MI-Access assessment administration. The system—which can be accessed only by District MI-Access Coordinators using the district’s individualized link and password—contains up-to-date contact information for coordinators and is used to order training materials, order assessment materials, enter estimated teacher and student counts, enter information for pre-identifying students, obtain shipping histories, provide secure downloadable student data, and access additional resources.

MEAP Secure Site: The MEAP office’s password-protected online system used, in part, to pre-identify and update demographic information on students participating in the MEAP. District MI-Access Coordinators collaborate with MEAP Coordinators to use this site when updating information on MI-Access student demographics.

MI-Access Web Page: The page on the MDE Web site that provides general information on state-level assessment for students with disabilities as well as information and resources related specifically to MI-Access.

MI-Access Information Center: The Web site that contains MI-Access information and resources, houses the MI-Access online learning programs, and provides users with time-sensitive information regarding the alternate assessment program.

The Assist

Important MI-Access Dates

MEAP Winter 2005 Assessment Window

January 24 – February 11, 2005

MI-Access 2005 Assessment Window

February 21 – March 31, 2005

Return MI-Access Materials to BETA/TASA

April 8, 2005



Bookmark these Web sites:

<http://www.learningpt.org>

<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/>

www.mi.gov/oeea

www.mi.gov/meap

www.mi.gov/mi-access

2003/2004 State Board of Education Strategic Goal

Attain substantial and meaningful improvement in academic achievement for all students/children with primary emphasis on high priority schools and students.

Revised at the October 23, 2003 Board Meeting.

This newsletter related to the assessment of students with disabilities is distributed to local and intermediate superintendents, directors of special education, MI-Access Coordinators, MEAP Coordinators, SEAC, Special Education monitors, MDE staff, school principals, Parent Advisory Committees, and institutes of higher education. *The Assist* may also be downloaded from the MI-Access Web page at www.mi.gov/mi-access.

If you receive multiple copies of this newsletter, please share them with:

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Parents
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Michigan Department of Education
MI-Access, Michigan's Alternate Assessment Program
P.O. Box 30008 Lansing, MI 48909

