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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Education

FROM: Michael P. Flanagan, Chairman 

SUBJECT: Presentation on Changes to the Michigan School Accreditation and Accountability System

Executive Summary

In May 2009, the State Board of Education approved the "Michigan School Accreditation System" (MI-SAS) as the state's new accreditation system to provide a means of setting standards for continuous school improvement. Since that time, the United States Department of Education (USED) provided guidelines for identifying persistently low achieving schools and School Improvement Grant funds to support significant reform to improve student achievement in those schools. In addition, state education reform legislation was passed, creating a School Reform Office for low achieving schools. In order to align the MI-SAS with the new federal accountability measures and state reform legislation, staff renamed the system to the "Michigan School Accreditation and Accountability System" (MI-SAAS) and made the following changes:

1. Schools in the lowest 5% in the state ranking are automatically unaccredited.
2. Schools in the lowest 6-20% in the state ranking are automatically interim accredited.
3. Schools in the lowest 5% for the School Improvement Grant or School Reform Office are automatically unaccredited.
4. To be fully accredited, schools must assess at least 95% of students in every tested subject.

Staff are analyzing potential duplications or unnecessary requirements in existing law that are now obsolete. Staff will then work with the Legislature to make appropriate changes. These will then be incorporated into MI-SAAS.

In compliance with MCL 380.1280(3), staff will distribute the MI-SAAS and hold public hearings to receive testimony regarding the new system. After review of the testimony and any appropriate revisions, the MI-SAAS will be presented to the State Board for its approval at its September 14 meeting and then submitted to the Legislature for its review.

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Michigan's School Accountability and Accreditation System: From Education YES! To MI-SAAS

Background

In March, 2002, the State Board of Education approved "Education YES!—A Yardstick for Excellent Schools" as the state's accreditation system to provide a means of setting standards for continuous school improvement and measuring the need for support and intervention for schools. Michigan's initiation of this accreditation system was concurrent with passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), which required states to have an accountability system. As a result, Education YES! has been Michigan's method to align state and federal requirements by blending state accountability and adequate yearly progress (AYP) reporting for NCLB.

Since 2002, the Board has made significant policy changes that resulted in the Michigan Merit Exam, expanded indicators for the School Improvement Framework self-assessment, MI-Access for students with special needs, testing in grades 3-8, and inclusion of a growth model. In addition to policy changes, educators, parents, and employers have identified concerns with the system and made numerous recommendations to make it more understandable and transparent.

As a result, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) staff determined a major redesign of the current system was needed. A stakeholder group was convened to evaluate the current system, review the statutory basis for school accreditation, and make recommendations for a redesigned system of state school accreditation.

The redesign team, which met regularly for over a year to complete its work, analyzed the current system and identified the following concerns with Education YES!:

- Consequences of Michigan accreditation and NCLB AYP are not aligned.
- It shifts emphasis from Michigan to federal requirements.
- Its grading structure uses the federal Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status to lower the Michigan accreditation status.
- It needs additional clarity, usefulness, and credibility.
- Educators, parents, and employers want and deserve an understandable one-stop information system.

In analyzing NCLB requirements, the team determined that Education YES! failed to distinguish between schools making progress but missing one or two of the 40-plus requirements from those not making progress and missing many or most of the requirements. The team concurred that Michigan needed a system that could make such distinctions as a means to identify schools most in need of interventions and support services.

The proposed redesign, the Michigan School Accountability and Accreditation System (MI-SAAS), addresses these concerns. It makes Michigan standards the primary determinants for the state's accreditation system. It recognizes academic progress in all core subjects, recognizes five and six year graduation rates as

successes, and enables schools to calculate their accreditation status. Using a “dashboard” display rather than a single letter grade, MI-SAAS provides greater credibility, more transparent accountability, and increased usefulness to those interested in the continuous improvement of Michigan schools. The MI-SAAS will report a school’s accreditation status, as well as its AYP status and subgroup data as required by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). This will provide both state and federal data to identify those schools that merit the highest priority for support and intervention.

PROPOSED REDESIGN: MICHIGAN SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY AND ACCREDITATION SYSTEM (MI-SAAS)

The MI-SAAS is based on student achievement and compliance with Michigan statute and policy. These components are combined to assign an Annual State Accreditation Status to each school. To provide educators, parents, and employers with a complete picture of the school, additional information about the school and its district, community, and the state is included as part of the “dashboard” display.

Each of these four elements is described below:

- 1) Student Achievement,
- 2) Compliance with Michigan statute and policy,
- 3) Annual State Accreditation Status, and
- 4) Additional School, District, Community, and State Information.

1. Student Achievement.

MI-SAAS sets standards for accreditation that demonstrate students are achieving at appropriate levels. Measurement of student achievement includes three components:

- Proficiency (elementary, middle, and high schools)
- Performance Level Change (elementary and middle school with annual grades 3-8 assessments)
- Provisionally proficient on the Michigan Merit Exam (high schools with 11th grade assessment)

Proficiency.

State standards for proficiency in core curriculum subjects are used to determine the accreditation status for all elementary, middle, and high schools. Based on assessment data for the four core subject areas of English language arts (reading and writing), mathematics, science, and social studies, a school’s accreditation status is determined to be “summary accredited,” “interim status,” or “unaccredited” (Section MCL 380.1280 of the Revised School Code).

MI-SAAS establishes the following proficiency standards to determine a school’s accreditation status:

- ACCREDITED: No more than one subject below 60% proficient and no subjects below 35% proficient.
- INTERIM (Proficiency): Two or more subjects lower than 60% proficient but not lower than 35% proficient; school is identified in the lowest 20% in the state's top to bottom ranking. NOTE: A school may also fall into Interim if it meets all standards for accreditation but does not make AYP. Such a school will be designated INTERIM (AYP).
- UNACCREDITED: One or more subjects lower than 35% proficient; school is in the lowest 5% in the state's top to bottom ranking; school is identified as persistently lowest achieving (a Tier 1 or Tier 2 school for the School Improvement Grant/State Reform Redesign Office list).

Because of the use of all core curriculum areas, a school that desires full accreditation must assess at least 95% of students in every tested subject. This metric is included in the Compliance with Michigan Statute and Policy section. At least every two years the MI-SAAS proficiency standards will be evaluated by the State Board of Education so that the cut-off percentages may be adjusted upward as student achievement increases statewide or to meet new state or federal legislative requirements. The measures of student achievement include the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP), the Michigan Merit Examination (MME), and MI-Access (Michigan's alternate assessments for students with disabilities). The assessment data used to determine a school's accreditation status will use only the scores of students at the school for a full academic year prior to the assessment. Since the MEAP assessment (elementary and middle school) is given in the fall and covers content learned the previous year, feeder codes will be used to attribute the students' scores to the school attended during the prior school year. In contrast to federal AYP requirements, MI-SAAS does not cap the number of students with proficient scores on the MI-Access assessments. All proficient scores on MI-Access will be included in the achievement calculation.

Performance Level Change

Performance Level Change (PLC) is a new component for assessing student achievement that was approved for Michigan's use by the United States Department of Education for compliance with NCLB. PLC is important because it provides information about increases in student academic achievement that are greater than expected for one year of school. Because achievement "growth" can be calculated only for subject areas where students are tested in consecutive years, PLC is calculated only for English language arts and math for students in grades 3-8.

Students are counted as proficient if they show more than the expected improvement in their achievement level. This measure is based on the PLC model using scores that fall into the Improvement or Significant Improvement range. Performance Level Change allows schools to demonstrate increases in pupil achievement, the result of intensive efforts of students and staff, even though a student is not yet scoring in the proficient range on the MEAP assessment.

PLC enables schools to show their students may not yet be proficient, but achievement is improving. To determine the PLC for elementary and middle schools, the achievement levels (Not Proficient, Partially Proficient, Proficient and Advanced) for all grades for the four core subjects are totaled and students in the top two levels (proficient and advanced) are counted as proficient. Then for English language arts (ELA) and math, the following number of students is totaled:

- Students testing proficient but not improving
- Students improving but not proficient
- Students who are both proficient and improving.

Since social studies, science, and writing are not tested annually, the PLC calculation cannot be used for these subjects. The totals of students in each category of proficient or not proficient are divided by the total number of students tested to arrive at the percentage of students proficient in each subject area.

Proficient or Provisionally Proficient on the Michigan Merit Exam

At the high school level, no subject area is tested at consecutive grade levels. Therefore, PLC cannot be measured for high schools. Instead, the MI-SAAS determines the number of students, based on the Michigan Merit Exam (which includes the ACT, Michigan Content Expectations, and WorkKeys), who are proficient or provisionally proficient. Provisional proficiency uses a standard error measurement to provide greater reliability and to eliminate any false negatives. This is similar to polling data that makes reference to “a margin of error of + or – 4%.” The margin of error is applied to student scores that are just below the cut score.

Student achievement is based on the total of achievement levels for English language arts, math, science, and social studies. Then, for each subject, the following number of students is totaled:

- Students testing proficient
- Students provisionally proficient (within a margin of error).

These totals are divided by the total number of students tested to determine the percent proficient.

Improvement of Student Achievement

Performance Level Change (PLC) is used in cases where achievement is measured at adjacent grade levels in the same subject on the same state assessment. Improvement of student achievement (non-cohort growth) will be measured in the following cases:

- Science, Social Studies and Writing for each grade level in which it is tested; and
- Mathematics and Reading at the high school level.

A school in which achievement improves ten or more percentage points from year to year in a subject will be considered as having achieved the next higher threshold for classification as interim or accredited in that subject.

2. Compliance with Michigan Statute and Policy.

The second core element for accountability in the MI-SAAS is a school's compliance with Michigan statute and policy. For schools to be accredited, they must comply with basic accreditation requirements in MCL 380.1280 and with the requirement to employ only teachers who hold a valid teaching certificate (MCL 380.1233). The eight statutory/policy requirements appear below.

The MI-SAAS will measure compliance by evaluating schools on the following eight questions.

- Do 100% of the school's staff hold the necessary Michigan certification? (MCL 380.1233)
- Is the school's annual School Improvement Plan published? (MCL 380.1204a)
- Are required curricula offered (MCL 380.1204a):
 - Grade Level Content Expectations in grades K-8?
 - Michigan Merit Curriculum in grades 9-12?
- Have the Performance Indicators or equivalent been submitted through the School Improvement Framework or AdvancED Standards and Assessment Report? (MCL 380.1204a)
- Are literacy and math tested annually in grades 1-5? (MCL 380.1280b)
- If the school was designated for participation in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), did the school participate? (MCL 380.1280b)
- Is the high school six-year graduation rate 80% or above? (MCL 380.1280b and MCL 388.1619)
- Did the school test at least 95% of eligible students in every subject tested? (Board Policy 10/18/2001)

If the answer to **any** one of these questions is "no" for two consecutive years, the school's accreditation status is lowered one level even if the "no" is for a different question each year.

3. Annual State Accreditation Status.

Student achievement and compliance with Michigan statute and policy are combined to annually assign a state accreditation label for each school. A school cannot be fully accredited if it does not make AYP or if it is among the lowest quintile in the state's top to bottom school ranking as illustrated below.

Preliminary Accreditation Status	Final Accreditation Status			
	Makes AYP	Does not make AYP	Lowest 20%	Lowest 5% or Persistently Low Achieving (PLA)
Accredited	Accredited	Interim (AYP)	Interim (School Rank)	Unaccredited
Interim	Interim (Proficiency)	Interim (Proficiency)	Interim	Unaccredited
Unaccredited	Unaccredited	Unaccredited	Unaccredited	Unaccredited

Note that state accreditation status is not related to federal Title I funding. A school in need of support and intervention should be treated the same regardless, whether:

- It receives Title I funds or not.
- The standards it doesn't meet are federal or state.

4. ADDITIONAL SCHOOL, DISTRICT, COMMUNITY, AND STATE INFORMATION.

In the same way that a car's dashboard provides gauges with a variety of helpful information, MI-SAAS displays various data elements to create a more complete picture of the school. These data elements are clustered into four areas: District Context, People/Programs, Success Indicators, and NCLB Performance. These elements are not included in the accreditation status calculation in the interests of credibility and transparency. That is, when a school is unaccredited, it is because of achievement and compliance with statute, not due to other variables. MI-SAAS also includes space for the school or school district to report its own "points of pride."

The District Context can display financial data comparing the district's per pupil funding with the state average, the average teacher salary, the percent of funds spent on instruction as a percent of operating costs and other data already collected by MDE. Enrollment trends for both the building and district may be displayed, along with the percentage of students in the building from various feeder schools in the district and their annual state accreditation status.

People/Programs section may display the teacher/student ratio and percent of teachers receiving professional development. The percentage of students enrolled and participating in Career and Technical Education programs is displayed, as well as the percentage of students who are "concentrators" (i.e., a secondary student who has completed at least six of the twelve segments and is enrolled in the next segment). Finally, the different student populations served in the building are reported: English Language Learners, students eligible for Free and Reduced Price meals, and students with Special Needs.

The Success Indicators may include post-secondary readiness (for high schools) to report the percentage of students who applied to post-secondary institutions, the percent who achieved a college ready score on the ACT, and the percent who achieved a workforce ready score on the WorkKeys assessment. Completion-success rates for high schools are reported for the percentage of students dually enrolled, graduated within six years, or dropped out of school. Schools also show the percentage of students making progress as English Language Learners and the 9th grade promotion rate. Schools may choose other data to report, such as Title I Distinguished Award, or Teacher of the Year. If a school is accredited through AdvancED (parent organization of North Central Accreditation), the accreditation logo appears in this section.