

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

1. Student Proficiency and Improvement

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

- Proficiency (elementary, middle, and high schools)
- Percent change index (in reading and mathematics, grades 4-8) or four year improvement slope (writing, science, social studies, and 11th grade reading and mathematics).

In order to align the accreditation system with new federal accountability measures and state reform law, the calculations for student proficiency and improvement are the same as those used to determine the Persistently Lowest Achieving schools list, with the addition of calculations for writing, science, and social studies.

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 reading and math for students in grades 3-8. Performance level change is used to calculate the percent change index, a measure of student improvement. For content areas and/or

grades that do not have adjacent grade testing, the four-year improvement slope is used to measure improvement over time.

State standards for proficiency in core curriculum subjects are used to determine the accreditation status for all elementary, middle, and high schools. Based on a school's Statewide Top to Bottom ranking as determined by performance and improvement on five core subject areas (reading, mathematics, writing, 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 INITIAL accreditation status:

- ACCREDITED: Rank at or above 20th percentile on Statewide Top to Bottom ranking.
- INTERIM: Rank greater than or equal to 6th percentile but less than 20th percentile on Statewide Top to Bottom ranking.
- UNACCREDITED: Rank less than or equal to the 5th percentile on the Statewide Top to Bottom ranking.

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.

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~~ NINE statutory/policy requirements appear below.

The MI-SAAS will measure compliance by evaluating schools on the following ~~eight~~ NINE 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?
- Is a fully compliant Annual Report published?
- 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 five- or six-year high school graduation rate 80% or above (if the school has a graduation rate) or is the attendance rate 90% or above (if the school does not have a graduation rate?) (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. Failure to make AYP can only lower a school's accreditation status to interim.

Determination of Accreditation Status in MI-SAAS

Statewide Percentile Rank	Not On PLA List	Made AYP	Met Target on Nine Additional Factors	Accreditation Result
High	Y	Y	Y	Accredited
High	Y	N	Y	Interim
High	Y	Y	N	Interim
Mid	Y	N	Y	Interim
Mid	Y	Y	Y	Interim
High	N	N	N	Unaccredited
High	N	N	Y	Unaccredited
High	N	Y	N	Unaccredited
High	N	Y	Y	Unaccredited
High	Y	N	N	Unaccredited
Low	N	N	N	Unaccredited
Low	N	N	Y	Unaccredited
Low	N	Y	N	Unaccredited
Low	N	Y	Y	Unaccredited
Low	Y	N	N	Unaccredited
Low	Y	N	Y	Unaccredited
Low	Y	Y	N	Unaccredited
Low	Y	Y	Y	Unaccredited
Mid	N	N	N	Unaccredited
Mid	N	N	Y	Unaccredited
Mid	N	Y	N	Unaccredited
Mid	N	Y	Y	Unaccredited
Mid	Y	N	N	Unaccredited
Mid	Y	Y	N	Unaccredited

Low = ranking less than 5th percentile

Mid = ranking greater than or equal to 5th percentile, but less than 20th percentile

High = ranking greater than or equal to 20th percentile

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 does not 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 three areas: District Context, People/Programs, AND Success Indicators—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.