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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
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SUPERINTENDENT OF  
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

TO: State Board of Education

FROM: C. Philip Kearney, Chair, Accreditation Advisory Committee

DATE: October 22, 2002

SUBJECT: Interim Report of the Accreditation Advisory Committee

The State Board of Education approved *Education YES! – A Yardstick for Excellent Schools* on March 14, 2002, appointed members of the Accreditation Advisory Committee on April 11, 2002, and met with the Advisory Committee on May 9, 2002. The Advisory Committee was charged with advising the Board on:

- Initial Distribution of Schools in Grade Categories
- Measuring School Performance Indicators, and
- Alignment of *Education YES!* with Federal Legislation

An interim report from the Advisory Committee is included as Attachment A. The Committee is aware of the expectations and timelines. The Committee brings substantive recommendations to the Board on the basic metric for measuring student achievement, the change grade, use of achievement data at the high school level, and the calculation of the composite school score. These recommendations are included in the report.

The Committee had hoped to be able to recommend cut-scores for status and growth in mathematics and reading for the elementary and middle school levels at the October 24, 2002 meeting. The Department convened a standard setting panel, on the recommendation of the Committee. The Committee met on October 10-11, 2002, to review the report on the panel's work. The Committee requested additional documentation and analysis, which was provided by the Department. The Committee met by conference call on October 21 to discuss the issue. Technical questions remain regarding the analytic procedures used in the report. The Committee plans to meet again on October 31 and November 1 to resolve these issues and to finalize its cut-score recommendations.

The setting of cut-scores and letter grades for state accountability systems is new and uncharted water. Very few states have taken thoughtful approaches to setting accountability cut-scores and assigning letter grades. Many states have done it poorly, and many have had to go back to the drawing board because of weaknesses in their systems. To avoid a similar outcome, the committee is striving to take the steps necessary to ensure the technical soundness of the system, particularly with respect to setting the cut-scores and assigning the letter grades.

I look forward to discussing the report with the Board on October 24.

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**RECOMMENDATIONS  
OF THE MICHIGAN ACCREDITATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
TO THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**Introduction**

The recommendations set forth in the following pages are offered to the State Board of Education in fulfillment of the charge set before us on our appointment as the Michigan Accreditation Advisory Committee. The members of our committee are five in number and include:

Philip Kearney	University of Michigan – Ann Arbor
Sharon Johnson Lewis	Council of the Great Cities Schools – Washington, DC
Lawrence Lezotte	Effective Schools Products, Ltd - Okemos
Mark Reckase	Michigan State University – East Lansing
Edward Roeber	Measured Progress – Dover, NH

As noted in Superintendent of Public Instruction Thomas Watkins' memorandum to the State Board of Education dated April 29, 2002, each of us brought to the work of the committee some considerable expertise and experience in accountability, measurement, school improvement, and accreditation systems.

In that same memorandum, Superintendent Watkins laid out the committee's charge, namely to develop recommendations in three areas:

- Initial Distribution of Schools in Grade Categories
- Measuring School Performance Indicators
- Alignment of *Education YES!* with Federal Legislation

In fulfilling our charge, the committee met as a group on [six [to date] separate occasions:

May 8-9, 2002	Crowne Plaza, Ann Arbor & Monroe ISD, Monroe
June 10-11, 2002	Washtenaw ISD, Ann Arbor
July 15-16, 2002	Washtenaw ISD, Ann Arbor
August 1-2, 2002	State Library, Lansing
September 9-10, 2002	Washtenaw ISD, Ann Arbor
October 10-11, 2002	Washtenaw ISD, Ann Arbor
[add additional meetings]	

In addition, the committee met by telephone conference call on October 21, 2002.

On September 14, 2002, Philip Kearney, Chair of the Committee, met with the State Board of Education to provide an interim report summarizing the committee's work as of September 10, 2002. [Dr. Kearney will meet again with the State Board of Education on October 24, 2002 to provide an interim report summarizing the committee's work as of October 21, 2002.]

### **The Committee's Recommendations**

As called for in its charge, the Committee has developed and offers recommendations in the following three areas:

- Criteria for Assigning Scores/Grades
- Measuring School Performance Indicators
- Alignment of *EducationYES!* with Federal Legislation

In addition, the committee offers recommendations in a fourth area:

- The Initial Year of Statewide Implementation

The recommendations in all four areas are set forth below.

#### **I. Criteria for Assigning Scores/Grades**

- A. The Committee recommends the following cut scores/letter grades for School Status, School Change, and Student Growth.

##### **For School Status**

The School Status score/grade is an index score that reflects a school's success vis-à-vis academic achievement, taking into account the school's success in serving sub-populations. The method of calculating the individual index scores for Michigan schools is set forth in Appendix A.

The committee recommends the following assignments of cut scores/grades for School Status. Following each recommended assignment, the distributions of cut scores/grades for School Status for 2002-03 are also provided:

##### **Grade 4 Reading**

[TO BE INSERTED]

Grade 4 Math

[TO BE INSERTED]

Grade 7 Reading

[TO BE INSERTED]

Grade 7 Math

[TO BE INSERTED]

Grade 7 Social Studies

[TO BE INSERTED]

Grade 7 Science

[TO BE INSERTED]

Grade 11 Reading

[TO BE INSERTED]

Grade 11 Writing

[TO BE INSERTED]

Grade 11 Math

[TO BE INSERTED]

Grade 11 Science

[TO BE INSERTED]

Grade 11 Social Studies

[TO BE INSERTED]

Grade 11 Reading

[TO BE INSERTED]

**NOTE:** The committee recommends that, at the high school level, the State Board of Education consider using the MEAP scores in the place of the percent who qualify for the Michigan Merit Award (which currently can be earned via MEAP, ACT, SAT or Work Keys). The committee makes this recommendation because it anticipates that the *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)* requires states to assess all students at one high school grade. Since NCLB Title I uses mathematics, reading/language arts scores to gauge Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), we recommend that the MEAP tests be used to accredit/grade Michigan high schools. This may necessitate change in the MEAP testing policies.

The percent qualifying for the Michigan Merit Award could still be reported, but not included in the school's grades.

**For School Change**

The School Change score/grade is based on a school's target slope, i.e., a slope line depicting the change in percent proficient from one year to the next. The method of calculating the individual target slopes for Michigan schools is set forth in Appendix A.

The committee recommends the following assignment of cut scores/grades for School Change:

- A -- to a school that exceeds target (slope)
- B -- to a school that meets target
- C -- to a school that almost meets target
- D -- to a school that demonstrates no change
- F -- to a school that declines in performance (i.e., % proficient)

Based on this recommendation, the distributions of cut scores/grades for School Change for 2002-03 are as follows:

Grade 4 Reading

*[TO BE INSERTED]*

Grade 4 Math

*[TO BE INSERTED]*

Grade 7 Reading

*[TO BE INSERTED]*

Grade 7 Math

*[TO BE INSERTED]*

Grade 7 Social Studies

[TO BE INSERTED]

Grade 7 Science

[TO BE INSERTED]

Grade 11 Reading

[TO BE INSERTED]

Grade 11 Writing

[TO BE INSERTED]

Grade 11 Math

[TO BE INSERTED]

Grade 11 Science

[TO BE INSERTED]

Grade 11 Social Studies

[TO BE INSERTED]

### For Student Growth

In order to validly and reliably measure student growth three requirements are necessary: (1) the domain is specified; (2) there are measures at adjacent grade levels; and (3) these measures are equated with one another and reported on a vertically equated scale.

Since these requirements have not yet been met, and likely will not be met until the implementation of testing for *No Child Left Behind* begins, the Student Growth cut scores/grades for 2002 are based on the interim solution set forth in Appendix A.

The single cut score/grade is assigned to both the feeder and receiving schools (i.e., the 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade pair, or 7<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade pair) since one cannot validly attribute student growth to either school separately.

In keeping with that interim solution, the committee recommends the following assignment of cut scores/grades for Student Growth. Following each recommended assignment, the distributions of cut scores/grades for Student Growth for 2002-03 are also provided.

#### Grade 4 to Grade 7 Reading

[TO BE INSERTED]

#### Grade 4 to Grade 7 Math

[TO BE INSERTED]

#### Middle School to High School Growth in Reading

[TO BE INSERTED]

#### Middle School to High School Growth in Mathematics

[TO BE INSERTED]

## B. The Use of a Standard Setting Panel in Setting the Cut Scores/Grades

Standard-setting is the term used to label the judgmental process that leads to establishment of cut scores or grades in certain assessments. Standard-setting is always, in every field of endeavor, a judgmental process. There is no one correct or "safe" way to do it.

The committee chose to recommend a formal standard-setting process for several reasons. First, the wide variety of variables on which schools are to be graded (achievement and school performance variables) suggests that weighting among these variables would need to be considered. Second, the grading of schools is controversial. Third, there is relatively little experience in setting overall grades for schools based on such variables. Finally, it is the committee's desire that attention shift from the process of determining the grades to helping schools improve their performance. One way to do this is to try to set standards for schools through the most inclusive process possible.

Careful conceptualization and implementation of the process requires that the judges examine actual score/grade profiles. The role of the judges is not to set the standard but rather to recommend cut scores/grades to the policy makers, whose responsibility it is to decide the actual cut scores/grades, considering the recommendations from the judges as well as other factors that may legitimately influence their final decisions.

Consequently, the committee, to fulfill its charge in a responsible way, asked Department staff to convene a standard-setting panel broadly representative of teachers, administrators, parents, and members of the business community. The panel, in a two-day work session in late September and following a carefully guided procedure, examined actual score profiles and, based on that examination, offered its recommendations on cut scores/grades for School Status and Student Growth to the Accreditation Advisory Committee for its review. In the view of the committee, this process is a sound one, one that adheres to the standards of the measurement community, and one that will ensure the validity as well as the acceptability of the scores/grades to be assigned to Michigan schools.

The process of developing performance standards usually includes three phases: (1) defining the standards with descriptive language that communicates the differences among the performance levels; (2) setting *weights* for the individual components (or scores/grades) that make up the aggregate performance standard; and (3) making *judgments* about the cut scores/grades to be assigned to different levels of performance in the individual components, and for aggregate performance.

Using grades to report school performance, the State Board may decide whether to use typical school definitions of the grades to be assigned. For example, an "A" means that a school did outstanding, while a "B" designates a school that is above average, a "C" a school that is average, a "D" a below-average school, and an "F" a failing school. Standard setters might embellish these definitions with other aspects of these schools, depending, for example, on a school's performance on the school performance indicators.

In *Education Yes!*, the second phase was done by policy fiat, i.e., the State Board set the weights to be assigned to the individual components that would make up a school's aggregate score/grade. On a total weighting of 100 points, 33 points were assigned to the eleven indicators of performance that aggregate into three major areas (engagement, instructional quality, and learning opportunities); the remaining 67 points were assigned to the three achievement measures: School Status, School Change, and Student Growth.

The third phase was assigned to our committee, i.e., the five-member Accreditation Advisory Committee appointed by the State Board. The committee, to ensure the soundness, validity, and acceptability of the cut scores/grades that would be assigned to different levels of performance in the individual components, and for aggregate performance, chose to follow the path identified above. This path, as noted above, calls for a process that is carefully conceptualized and implemented, and that includes examination of actual school score/grade profiles.

The accreditation committee, based on its review of the work of the standard-setting panel (and on its own judgments with respect to the School Change cut scores/grades), recommends the set of School Status, School Change, and Student Growth scores/grades identified above to the State Board of Education. The State Board, of course, has final responsibility to set the actual cut scores/grades to be assigned to schools.

A complete description of the standard-setting process is set forth in Appendix B.

## II. Measuring School Performance Indicators

The committee recommends that a three-year developmental process be undertaken for the generation, refinement and eventual adoption of the performance indicators to ensure that valid and reliable measures are established as an integral part of *Education YES!*

This developmental process should include a large-scale pilot in Year 1, the results of which will guide needed modifications for Year 2, and again for Year 3, with the understanding that, if analyses of Year 1 results warrant it, scores/grades—provisional or actual—could be reported. These could be partial scores for sub-components and/or one or more of the three areas, i.e., *Engagement, Instructional Quality, and Learning Opportunities*.

However, until such time as valid and reliable scores/grades for the three areas are produced, no performance indicator scores/grades would enter into the calculation of the composite school score/grade.

[*ADDITIONAL TEXT IS YET TO BE DETERMINED AND INSERTED*]

### III. Calculating the School's Composite Score

*Education YES!*, through its fore-ordained weighting scheme, sets forth the method of calculating the composite score for any given school. Under that weighting scheme, from a total weighting of 100 points, 33 points are assigned to the eleven indicators of performance that aggregate into three major areas (engagement, instructional quality, and learning opportunities); the remaining 67 points are assigned to the three achievement measures: School Status, School Change, and Student Growth. The components to which grades are to be assigned and their weights are:

<u>Component</u>	<u>Weight</u>
Achievement	
School Status	23
School Change	22
Student Growth	22
Performance Indicators	
Engagement	9
Instructional Quality	12
Learning Opportunities	<u>12</u>
Total:	100

In calculating a school's composite score, first the subject area scores for each of the achievement measures for the school are averaged to produce a single score/grade; for example, the index scores for *4<sup>th</sup> grade Reading* and *4<sup>th</sup> grade Math* are averaged to produce a single score/grade for *School Status*. The process is repeated for *School Change* and *Student Growth*. Then the components of each of the three performance indicator areas are averaged to produce a single score/grade; for example, *performance management systems*, *continuous improvement*, and *curriculum alignment* are averaged to produce a single score/grade for *Engagement*. The process is repeated for *Instructional Quality* and *Learning Opportunities*. These six single scores/grades for the six components listed above are then multiplied by their respective weights, totaled, and divided by 100 to give a single score/grade for the school, e.g., 2.65 or a C+.

A complete description of the method for calculating the composite school score is set forth in Appendix C.

## IV. Alignment of Education Yes! with Federal Legislation

### A. Setting the Baseline for AYP

At its June meeting, the Committee met with Department staff and, following a review and discussion, supported the staff's initial recommendations for the 2002-03 school year, namely:

- Use total scores on only Reading and Math for triggering sanctions
- Use NCLB target of the 20<sup>th</sup> percentile for the baseline
- Report all results under the AYP format
- Urge schools to disaggregate and review/analyze their data in anticipation of using sub-populations as sanction triggers for 2002-03

A baseline set at the 20<sup>th</sup> percentile school (20<sup>th</sup> percentile of the State's total student population) seemed appropriate and reasonable to us – on average about a 40% proficiency level, i.e., some 60% are not proficient.

Templates of school results could be overlaid on a graph of the state AYP (irrespective of where the state baseline is eventually set), thus relating or referencing a school's Change score/grade to the AYP "score."

### B. Tying *Education Yes!* to NCLB

The committee also considered an approach advanced by Department staff to tie the two systems even closer together. Essentially the approach would use the School Status score, and its assigned grades, to set the bar for proficiency e.g., a grade of E or F on Education Yes!' School Status score would trigger the AYP sanction unless the School Change grade was B or better (the federal "safe harbor"). The bar would be raised from year to year, or from a block of years to a block of years, so that a D, then a C, then a B, and on to an A, in effect, would become the bar - gearing all of this to the expectation of 100% proficiency at the end of 12 years.

The committee is in general agreement with linking Education Yes! and AYP. It is not of a single mind about how tight the link ought to be. On the one hand, two members argue that, while closely related, *Education YES!* and NCLB are separate systems serving similar but somewhat different purposes. To too tightly link Education Yes! to NCLB would mean that Education Yes!' success would become very closely intertwined with NCLB's success (and lasting power?). On the other hand, two members argue that this tight link is in accord with a major purpose of *Education YES!*, namely ensuring that all students reach proficiency—and in a set period of time, i.e., the 12 years of NCLB.

At root, how tight the link ought to be is a policy decision and one that the SBE is best able to consider and make. Department staff certainly can, and will present, the particulars for the State Board of Education.

## **V. The Initial Year of Statewide Implementation**

The committee recommends that 2002-03 be viewed as “the first year of statewide implementation” of Education YES!, subject to further study and refinement, especially in terms of identifying measures, indicators, areas that will need particular attention.

During the first year of implementation, we recommend that several actions be taken:

1. A small set of schools be randomly-selected to be visited in person to review their school performance indicator information and MEAP scores to determine how accurately they described the school and whether the grades that the school received are accurate in the eyes of the community, school board, administrators, teachers, and parents.
2. These visits include an exploration of what technical support might be helpful to the school in their continuing efforts to raise proficiency levels.
3. An appeals process should be established so that any school or person who receives the school’s grades or receives reports of them may appeal them and provide a rationale for the appeal. Such appeals might be based on a contention that the grade(s) assigned are too high or too low, given what the appellant knows of the school situation. Individual instances should be reviewed, and the areas of potential inaccuracy tracked, to determine whether there are broader issues that need to be reviewed and possibly modified.
4. Research studies using the assigned grades to investigate the quality of the scales used for the school performance indicators should be undertaken. Since some of these are new and, in some cases, provide measures of school attributes not previously measured, the scales used to collect the data need to be further investigated.
5. In addition, research should be carried out on the manner in which the school performance indicators are combined to yield school grades, since the set of variables used is unique and has not been used for such purposes in the past.
6. If time does not permit a comprehensive standard-setting process to be conducted prior to first year reporting, we suggest a more complete process be carried out. It is our belief that the more care that is taken in how the various school performance measures and the student achievement measures are combined into an overall school grade(s), the greater will be the support provided by educators and the public for the

grades that are assigned, and the less time will be spent in squabbles over the grades and more time on improving building-level performance.

7. Once these steps have been taken, recommendations for appropriate modifications in the accreditation system be presented to the State Board of Education, for implementation in the 2003-04 school year. Periodically following the year 2003-04 (e.g., every three to five years), we recommend the State Board of Education re-visit the system to make sure that it continues to work well and that no further modifications are needed.

## APPENDIX A

### Methods for Calculating Cut Scores/Grades For School Status, School Change, and Student Growth

The Committee's bases for calculating the cut scores/letter grades for School Status, School Change, and Student Growth follow.

- A. **The basic premise** for scores/grades for the categories of **School Status & School Change** should be that they reflect a school's success vis-à-vis academic achievement, taking into account the school's success in serving sub-populations.

Scores/grades for **Student Growth** should be limited to one score/grade reflecting the success of both the feeder and receiving school until such time as the state develops a cross-grade scale in grades 3-8 in response to the requirements of *No Child Left Behind, Title I*. The development of a cross-grade scale will allow valid and reliable measurement of student growth. It is our understanding that a cross-grade scale will first be implemented in 2004-05.

- B. **The basic metric for School Status** should be an index score calculated as follows:

- The score(s)/grade(s) for a given year for a given school will reflect a 3-year MEAP score average.
- The categories will follow the MEAP categories, i.e.:
  - **For Math:**
  - **Exceed expectations ) Advanced**
  - **Meets expectations ) Proficient Basic (1)**
  - **Less than Basic**
  
  - **For Reading (until 2003-04, then identical to above)**
  - **Satisfactory ) Proficient**
  - **Moderate**
  - **Low**
- Weights will be applied to the 3-year score averages of the selected MEAP assessments (Reading and Math at grades 4 and 7, science and social studies at grade 7, social studies at grade 11 to produce the measures of School Status).
- The following weights will be used:

4, 3, 2, 1

- For any given grade level, average the separate index scores/grades to produce a single (or total) index score/grade. For example: (Grade 4 Reading index score + Grade 4 Math index score)/2 = Total School Status score/grade). If two subjects, 50/50; if three subjects, 33/33/33.
- Report school scores (with letter grades) for Total School Status score, School Reading index score(s), School Math index score(s), etc., and scores but no grades for all sub-populations, flagging those groups that did poorly relative to the entire school.

**C. The basic metric for School Change** be calculated as follows:

- The score(s)/grade(s) for a given year for a given school will reflect three 3-year MEAP score average, e.g., 98-99-00; 99-00-01; 00-01-02.
- The score(s)/grade(s) will be tied to the end-point of NCLB Title I Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) by virtue of setting the goal that all schools will achieve 100 percent proficient, i.e., Exceeds Expectations plus Meets Expectations on the MEAP within 12 years.
- Each school will be given its own target (slope) from a base year annually to achieve 100% proficiency in 12 years, so that each school's annual Change grade will depend on whether it exceeded, met, or did not meet its desired target (slope).
- Calculation:

For each school:

- identify the percent proficient in Year 1;
  - set the slope from Year 1 to Year 12;
  - in Year 2 determine if the school exceeded, met, almost met, or did not meet its target (slope);
  - assign grade of A to school which exceeds target (slope), B to meets target, C to almost meets, D to no change, or E to a school that declines in performance;
  - provide a slope for the sub-groups but without a grade, for interpretative purposes (did each sub-group meet its target or not);
  - in Year 3 and subsequent years, recalculate the slope and repeat the process. Therefore, if a school fails to improve in Year 3, it will have an even higher Change score target for Year 4; this keeps all schools on track for achieving 100% proficiency in 12 years.
- Note: This is different from how NCLB Title I defines AYP. The Federal definition is tied to whether schools' scores exceed, match or fall below a common slope defined for the entire state at each grade and in each subject area leading to 100% proficiency in 12

years. We believe that by providing each school with its own target, each school will be encouraged to improve, whether or not it exceeds the state's Federal target. This should also increase the likelihood that the state and schools make the 100% proficiency target in twelve years.

- Constant monitoring and reporting of results will be necessary to determine if adjustments are needed.

#### **D. The basic metric for Student Growth:**

- The committee is of the view that to validly and reliably measure growth three requirements are necessary: (1) the domain is specified; (2) there are measures at adjacent grade levels; and (3) these measures are equated with one another and reported on a vertically equated scale. Since these requirements have not yet been met, and likely will not be met until the implementation of testing for *No Child Left Behind* begins, currently set for 2004-05, the committee developed the following two-part recommendation:

- Long-term Solution

The committee recommends that the state create a cross-grade MEAP score scale as an integral part of the new assessment system being developed to comply with No Child Left Behind (NCLB). This will permit growth from grade-to-grade to be measured in a valid and reliable manner, e.g., from grade 3 to grade 4; grade 4 to grade 5; grade 5 to grade 6; and so on. In order to do this, the following steps are necessary:

1. Create grade-level benchmarks for the assessment of grades 3-8 plus high school in each subject area to be assessed;
2. Create a MEAP testing system that measures these grade-level benchmarks in such a manner that a cross-grade scale can be developed;
3. Implement a system to track students across grades within districts, including demographic variables such as racial-ethnic data and length of time in the school. Students who have been enrolled in the building for less than one year will not be included in growth reporting at the building level; and
4. Report Student Growth at the building level across the multiple grade comparisons within schools at each level, reporting each feeder school and the school it feeds as a pair of schools.

- Interim Solution

Since current plans call for first implementing such a system in 2004-05, student growth measures will not be available until after the 2005-06 school year, it will not be possible to fully implement the system outlined

above until the new MEAP system has been used for two years (since current plans call for implementing this system for the first time in 2004-05, it will be after the 2005-06 school year). We therefore recommend the following interim solution:

1. Create a common scale for MEAP mathematics scores at grades elementary, middle school, and high school; create another common scale for the reading assessments;
2. Using an expected-growth scale from a nationally-available norm-referenced test (NRT), determine an anticipated "growth" score starting from the base line.
3. Anchor this expected gain in a baseline year;
4. Calculate the average gain for the state from the lower to the higher grade level of an assessed subject area (e.g., from 4<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> grade mathematics);
5. Use this expected gain to calculate the extent to which local schools exceeded, matched, or did not meet this expected gain; and report Student Growth scores by assigning a single score/grade to both the feeder and receiving schools, i.e., the pair, since, until the new system is implemented, one cannot validly attribute student growth to either school separately.

**APPENDIX B**

**The Standard-Setting Process**

*[TO BE INSERTED]*

**APPENDIX C**

**The Method for Calculating  
the Composite School Score**

*[TO BE INSERTED]*