



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING



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PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

TO: Members of the State Board of Education

FROM: Tom Watkins, Superintendent

DATE: January 3, 2005

SUBJ: RESPONSE TO SOCIAL STUDIES TASK FORCE

The Social Studies Task Force commissioned by the State Board of Education submitted its recommendations at the State Board meeting on October 12, 2004. The Board accepted the recommendations and requested a review by the Department, with a report and Department recommendations at a future State Board meeting.

Department staff have studied the Task Force recommendations and are submitting their response in the attached memorandum.

The Task Force report was lengthy in nature. For background information purposes, pages 10 and 11 of the report are reproduced as an attachment. These two pages summarize the Task Force's conclusions and recommendations.

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Staff Recommendations for Implementation of Social Studies Task Force Report

The Office of School Improvement and the Office of Educational Assessment and Accountability would like to summarize our positions on the following recommendations made by the Social Studies Task Force:

Include Social Studies in the Merit Scholarship (Support)

Cost Factor: None anticipated.

Explanation: The Department of Treasury and the Merit Award Board would need to make the final decision on this recommendation. We recommend obtaining prior agreement from Treasury and Merit before requesting any action by the State Board of Education. A statutory change will also be necessary since the Merit Award legislation specifies the subject areas to be included for the award.

- ✓ **Establish appropriate cut scores for elementary, middle, and high school. Review the previous five years of social studies data and report to Superintendent of Public Instruction. (Support)**

Cost Factor: \$75,000 for each cycle of resetting of scores (\$25,000/grade level). The total cost for five cycles would be \$375,000. the Office of Educational Assessment and Accountability (OEAA) has already budgeted \$75,000 for setting cut scores for the 2005 fall testing cycle. Current funding does not exist for the other four cycles.

Explanation: Questions were raised about the timeline for doing this. There is an expectation that new cut scores would be set this winter for elementary and middle school, and this spring for the high school. This would be difficult in light of the multitude of changes needed to prepare for the assessment requirements of the 2005-06 school year. OEAA is already planning to establish new cut score in the fall (due to the move of the testing window from winter to fall) and again in fall of 2006 if the recommended grade level content expectations for are approved for social studies and the assessments redesigned by this time. The cost for doing this is approximately \$25,000 per grade each time standards are reset.

Conducting a study of past social studies scores at the state level would take about two full days of Dr. Joseph Martineau's (our psychometrician in OEAA) time. It could potentially raise expectations that MDE would recalculate scores for schools and students. This would also be much more costly in terms of time, given the status of our data.

Grade Level Content Expectations for Social Studies (Support)

Cost Factor: \$150,000

Not in current spending plan. Some costs to be incorporated in Title II and Microsoft Grants.

Explanation: The GLCE's for Social Studies have been in development since before the Task Force was convened. There is a cost associated with their development and dissemination, estimated at approximately \$150,000.

Collaborative *communication plan*. (Support)

Collaborative *professional development plan*. (Support)

Cost Factor: \$30,000

Not in current spending plan. Some costs to be incorporated into Title II and Microsoft Grants.

Explanation: The Office of School Improvement is convening a "Curriculum Advisory Committee" to address issues related to all the content areas. Social Studies will fall into a larger plan for both communication and professional development. Facets of this plan include: advisory committee, identification of communication routes through professional associations and intermediate school districts, identification of publications (new and current) that could be utilized to disseminate information to the field about curricular issues, a formal MEAP data analysis by curriculum consultants that would drive decisions about professional development focus on an annual basis, and identification of support activities.

- ✓ **Design of MEAP test will follow Policy on Learning Expectations. (Support)**
- ✓ **OEAA explore ways in which to maintain inquiry and persuasive essay on the MEAP test as per original assessment plan. (Support)**

Cost Factor: \$1,200,000 for maintaining constructed response items. Although this cost is included in the current OEAA budget, developing plans for the 2006 budget may necessitate change.

Explanation: OEAA has continued to support this policy in its test development. For the 2006 budget year OEAA faces a ten million dollar deficit. Among the cuts proposed to avoid the deficit, the Department may need to eliminate constructed response items for all state assessments.

Make available annotated list of social studies content materials that are provided to the item writers, reaffirming that MEAP testing items are based on content standards and benchmarks. (Support)

Cost Factor: None anticipated

Explanation: OSI staff will list two kinds of content materials: 1) those materials that are used by item writers to better understand the context of content so as to be able to write more appropriate items; and, 2) those materials that are used to write a test item and are tied directly to a benchmark. The publication will contain a caveat explanation as to how better to understand the materials being used by item writers and will go through an internal OSI review before being posted on the MDE website.

✓ **Creating grade level classroom assessments aligned to the GLCE. (Support)**

Cost Factor: \$150,000

Not in current spending plan. No anticipated funding.

Explanation: OSI is currently working with the Microsoft Corporation and Michigan Virtual University on a grant collaborative to develop classroom assessments in the areas of English Language Arts and Mathematics. Social Studies could be included in the grant proposal as long as it is tied to Career Preparation and digital literacy. If not part of the grant, it would require a full-time staff equivalent to work with several teams of teachers to develop appropriate annual classroom assessments. Pilot work could start with K – 2.

Continuing the Social Studies Task Force. (Support with Modifications)

Cost Factor: Incorporated in larger effort.

Not in current spending plan. Costs to be included in broader curricular efforts.

Explanation: It is suggested that 2–3 Task Force members volunteer to join the Curriculum Advisory Committee mentioned earlier. In this way, Social Studies can become integrated in a more broad-based conversation related to curriculum and instruction.

Final Recommendations:

After reviewing all Task Force recommendations, estimating costs, and discussing support for the recommendations, the two offices (OSI and OEAA) realize that it is not feasible to implement all of the recommendations. Staff members recommend the following actions:

1. Establish new cut scores for Fall of 2005.
2. Establish Grade Level Content Expectations (\$150,000).
3. Create a Curriculum Advisory Committee to develop both a communication plan and professional development plan for all core content areas (\$30,000).
4. Continue to adhere to the Policy on Learning Expectations when designing future MEAP test items (\$1,200,000 for constructed response items).
5. Make available a list of resources, both content contextual and item specific, that are used by test developers.
6. Invite two or three volunteers from the Social Studies Task Force to join the Curriculum Advisory Committee.

If the State Board of Education wishes, staff will be prepared to present a progress report on these actions at the June, 2005 Board meeting.

8. The Michigan Department of Education makes available to the public an annotated list of the social studies content materials provided to the item writers; and reaffirms that the content standards and benchmarks and the content expectations are used as the basis for MEAP testing.

Based on the data and the oral and written comments, The Task Force supports

- Transparency about test development procedures, including materials used by test development contractors and teacher involvement are need.
- **The social studies test is perceived by some teachers as constantly changing.**
- **Providing teachers with a steady target.**

9. The Michigan Department of Education investigates and makes a recommendation to the State Board of Education by July 1, 2005 on creating a set of grade level tests to be administered by local districts to evaluate yearly student achievement in social studies.

Based on the data and the oral and written comments, the Task Force believes it is necessary to address:

- Social studies being seen as a “stepchild to other subjects”
- The negative affect of “pitting one subject against another” for importance in the curriculum.

10. The Michigan Department of Education requests the Task Force on Social Studies Assessment to continue their work on behalf of the MDE, providing leadership and serving as advisors for the implementation of all adopted recommendations.

Based on the advice of the Task Force:

The adopted recommendations must have a formally constituted group that will oversee and report on a regular basis to the State Board of Education on the progress towards reaching each of the adopted recommendations.

Conclusion

Based on the data presented by the Office of Assessment and Accountability and the recommendations and comments presented to the Task Force in writing and orally at the public forums held throughout the state of Michigan in July of 2004, we submit these recommendations with the hopes of your timely approval and implementation.

The Task Force recommends that the State Board of Education adopt the following policies:

- 1 Social studies will be *included in the Merit scholarship.*
- 2 The Michigan Department of Education conducts the process to establish appropriate MEAP *test cut scores* for elementary, middle, and high school social studies. The department will also review the last five years of social studies data and report back to the Superintendent of Public Instruction on the accuracy of the reporting of student achievement.

3. The Michigan Department of Education completes the development of *Grade Level Content Expectations for Social Studies*.
4. In consultation with ISD's, local school districts, public school academies, and professional organizations, the Michigan Department of Education develops and implements a comprehensive *communication plan* for reaching all teachers of social studies and their administrators with information about assessment and instruction, and availability of resources for teaching the social studies curriculum framework upon which the MEAP is built.
5. In conjunction with the ISD's, local school districts, public school academies, professional organizations, and universities, the Michigan Department of Education develops, facilitates funding, and monitors the implementation of a *professional development plan* for all administrators and teachers of social studies state wide.
6. Whenever changes are made to the MEAP, the design of the tests will follow the Policy on Learning Expectations as approved by the State Board of Education for Michigan students.
7. Pursuant to the SBE Policy on Learning Expectations for Michigan Students, the Task Force recommends that the inquiry and persuasive essay questions remain in the Social Studies MEAP Test, and that the MEAP office explore ways to weight those strands more equally with the four disciplinary strands, as recommended in the original MEAP Assessment Plan.
8. The Michigan Department of Education makes available to the public an annotated list of the social studies content materials provided to the item writers; and reaffirms that the content standards and benchmarks and the content expectations are used as the basis for MEAP testing.
9. The Michigan Department of Education investigates and makes a recommendation to the State Board of Education by July 1, 2005 on creating a set of grade level tests to be administered by local districts to evaluate yearly student achievement in social studies.
10. The Michigan Department of Education requests the Task Force on Social Studies Assessment to continue their work on behalf of the MDE providing leadership and serving as advisors for the implementation of all adopted recommendations.