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SUPERINTENDENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

To: State Board of Education
From: Tom Watkins
Date: March 29, 2004
Subject: Update on MEAP and Education YES! and NCLB AYP Reporting

Staff of the Michigan Department of Education has been working hard, in concert with their colleagues in the Center for Educational Performance Information (CEPI) and the Department of Informational Technology (DIT) to enhance and improve the MEAP and the school report card processes. The goal is to improve the data collection and reporting processes for our schools, teachers, and most importantly, our students. For example, MEAP staff will be displaying school demographics associated with the MEAP data file prior to the production of the MEAP results, thereby permitting schools to correct any inaccuracies before the results are released.

As has been shared with you in the past, schedules of activities for MEAP have been drawn up. The Winter, 2004 elementary and middle school results are due to be reported on May 7 and the Spring, 2004 high school results are due to be reported July 15.

Staff has also developed a production schedule for the school report cards (see Attachment A). As I am sure you are aware, the school report cards containing the EducationYES! and NCLB AYP results were delayed this year. NCLB requires that the school report cards be issued prior to the start of the school year so that parents of students in schools that fail to make "adequate yearly progress" for two or more years can elect to move their children to schools that did make progress.

As we look at the schedule, it will be possible to report the elementary/middle school report cards in August (permitting time for the report cards to be developed, for local districts to review them and file appeals, and for Department staff to resolve the appeals and issue the final reports prior to early August). At the high school level, it will not be possible to produce the report cards prior to the start of school. MEAP high school testing, which by law must occur in the final 30 days of the school year, prevents us from moving the dates of testing earlier in the school year so that school report cards can be prepared and distributed before the start of the school year.

Currently, the elementary and middle school tests are administered from late January to mid-February. The major administration time for the high school program is in the spring (last week of April to mid-May or the first three weeks of May). The elementary and middle school test results near the end of the school year, which is too late for schools to make much use of the results for helping students who do poorly on the assessments, while the high school results are to be released in the summer.

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The bottom line is that we have a mismatch currently (and on the way) between expectations, assessments, and school report cards. Adding complexity to this issue, the Grade Level Content Expectations (GLCE's) have been finalized specifying what students need to know and be able to do by the end of the school year in grades 3-8. MEAP test development is under way, but the committees are already experiencing issues surrounding the selection of mid-year GLCE's (trying to decide which GLCE's are first semester and which are second semester). The MEAP test development process needs to be keyed to the time of the year when the tests are given. Hence, a more or less immediate decision is needed.

Staff has proposed moving the time of testing for MEAP back to the fall (e.g., the first three weeks of October). Fall testing has several advantages and potential disadvantages, as noted below.

Advantages of Fall Testing

1. Testing early in the school year will permit local school districts to receive their results in the fall, when there is still several months left in the school year and would serve to encourage schools to use the MEAP results to improve the instructional opportunities for students (rather than serve just as a "scorecard" for schools).
2. The fall results can be returned to teachers by classroom so that there is no need to re-run the results for students' current teachers.
3. There is limited time to "prep" kids for the MEAP tests; hence, there will be less inappropriate test preparation activities taking place before testing.
4. The results can be used to compute the EducationYES! and NCLB AYP during the winter and spring, so that schools can review the results and corrections made to the report cards, before they are issued in the spring or summer.
5. The MEAP tests in grades 3-8 can be aligned to the GLCE's at the end of the previous grades (grades 2 through 7). Testing K-2 content at the start of 3rd grade would have the advantage of more accountability for student learning in the early grades.

Disadvantages of Fall Testing

1. One criticism of fall testing is that students forget material over the summer. This may well be true in some cases; however, it is my view that material forgotten over the summer is material that was not well-learned, so to conclude that the test should show that the skills were learned may well be misleading.
2. A disadvantage of fall high school testing is that juniors would have almost a full year less of learning content (that taught in grade 11). However, students would be able to re-test three times. It is not unusual for competency tests to test initially before the content is taught to all students.
3. All MEAP tests would be given at the same time; this reduces the number of occasions that MEAP intrudes in schools, but when it does (in the fall), the intrusion is massive (all students in seven grades). Pre-Identifying students could be a significant challenge.

MEAP staff is in the process of raising this issue with Michigan educational organizations via the newly created Office of Educational Assessment & Accountability Advisory Committee (which has representatives from organizations comprising the Education Alliance plus key educational research and curriculum organizations). The Advisory Committee members will be asked to review the issues with their organizations and to indicate their points of view by May.

If we wish to change the time of high school testing, the legislature would need to change the time of eleventh grade testing (at a time when they might substitute the ACT for MEAP, even though either program could be given in the fall or spring). Currently, the high school test is given in the spring and the fall, the latter serving as an opportunity for retakes. We propose that the initial testing of high school students occur in the fall, with retakes in the spring.

We believe that the change can be made administratively to the elementary and middle school assessment programs (grades 3-8), but would require legislative action for the high school program, since legally, the high school tests must be given within the final 30 days of the school year.

Staff and I recommend moving all MEAP testing to the fall, as MEAP used to be administered, beginning with the 2005-06 school year. Testing would occur in the first three weeks of October (following the Fourth Wednesday Count). High school testing should also occur in the fall of the junior year (during the current November time period), which could count for AYP purposes, while spring re-testing would be for those students who wish to continue to strive to attain the Merit award.

We will continue to keep you informed about the sentiment of educators and others as we gather input on the proposed changes in testing times, as well as our schedules to produce MEAP results and school report cards. I will be asking the State Board of Education for a decision on this matter at its meeting in May.

**Michigan School Report Card
2004 Timeline**

Elementary and Middle Schools

April 15	DIT makes Spring SRSD data available to CEPI for validation
May 7	Spring SRSD available through CEPI
May 7	MEAP Reports to Schools
May 25	MI-Access data to MDE
June 1	MI-Access Reports to Schools
June 10	Report Cards On-Line
June 30	Appeals and Corrections Deadline
August 1	Report Cards released to the public

High Schools

July 13	SRSD end-of-year data to CEPI
July 15	Data to Merit from Measurement Inc.
July 30	DIT makes end-of-year SRSD data available to CEPI for validation
August 1	Data available from Merit
August 15	End-of-year SRSD data available through CEPI
August 25	Report Cards On-Line
September 15	Appeals and Corrections Deadline
October 15	Report Cards released to the public