

Planning for the Michigan Merit Examination

by Ed Roeber

Planning is well under way for the Michigan Merit Examination (MME), the revised state assessment program to be administered at the high school level.

Full implementation of the MME in 2006-2007 depends on obtaining federal approval by November 2006. If the U.S. Department of Education has not approved the revisions to the high school assessment program by November 2006, then the current MEAP High School Assessment will remain in place as the state high school assessment until the MME is approved.

The MME will be based on the ACT college entrance exam, WorkKeys – an ACT work skills assessment, plus several Michigan components developed to assess Michigan curriculum that is not assessed by the ACT college entrance exam or WorkKeys assessments. The state pays for this testing. These assessments will be used to comply with the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law on state assessments and to provide parents with information about the quality of education in Michigan schools.

In Spring 2006, a sample of 37 high schools piloted the ACT and WorkKeys assessments while also taking the current MEAP high school tests. Students that participated in this pilot will receive ACT test results that can be used for college entrance applications. This data along with other analyses will be used to seek federal approval.

The state will administer the full MME for the first time in Spring 2007, to all high school juniors. The ACT will be administered on one common day statewide, followed the next day by the administration of the WorkKeys and Michigan mathematics assessments. Then, school districts will administer the Michigan science and social studies assessments on the one day selected by the school district from the next five week-days. Make-up testing will be scheduled exactly two weeks later.

Students who wish to re-test may do so in October or again in the spring of their senior year. One re-test will be paid for by the state. MME scores will be used for school accountability purposes, and most students will also receive ACT and WorkKeys scores that they can use to apply to college, to qualify for work training, or to obtain a job. The goal is to help students as they transition to further schooling or work after graduating from high school.

A number of assessment accommodations will be provided for students with disabilities and English language learners, (see list of MME Assessment Accommodations on the MME web site). Students can anticipate that most of the accommodations will result in college-reportable scores. IEP teams will need to identify the accommodations needed for both MEAP assessments and MME assessments separately. Based on the IEP, each student requiring an accommodation will need to apply to ACT for approval prior to the MME assessment. The MI-Access assessments will still be an option for students unable to participate in MME or MEAP.

The best ways to prepare for both the MEAP and the MME are to make sure your high school curriculum covers the state defined content and encourage students to take rigorous high school courses and study hard. While test-prep courses have some benefit, your students' best way to prepare is to study a rigorous curriculum under good teacher direction.

Students and parents will receive some valuable benefits for participation in MME. They will have a score to use for application to college or other technical training. Students will also obtain information about the skills they need for a challenging job, technical training or college success.

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