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Thursday, November 18, 2004

Parents unhappy with MEAP

Study shows they believe standardized testing is not a true indication of learning.

By Delores Patterson / The Detroit News

BLOOMFIELD HILLS -- Michigan parents don't believe that standardized tests such as the MEAP are a good measure of what their children are learning, according to a study released this week.

A study of 1,700 parents from six states including, Illinois, Indiana and Ohio, found that only about 1 percent of parents say standardized test scores are an important indicator of whether a child is getting a good education. Twenty percent don't believe the results are used to help their children improve and, as a result, two-thirds don't discuss the test in parent-teacher conferences.

The study was commissioned by the Great Lakes Center for Education Research and Practices based in Lansing. It was conducted by EPIC-MRA in October as part of a look into parental involvement in education.

Bloomfield Hills parent Liz Fellows agrees that too much emphasis is put on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program test as a measure of how well a school educates children.

"I have one kid that is a great test taker and another who is a really poor standardized test taker, but I don't find that alarming," said Fellows, who said she places more value on the grades her four children receive and their teachers' assessment of weekly and monthly progress.

Parent Ingrid Day, who also has children in the Bloomfield Hills School District said MEAP is unreliable because every couple of years the test changes.

"It raises too many problems," she said.

Like Fellows, parents in the study said report cards and classroom tests provide a better picture of education quality.

Teri Moblo, director of Great Lakes Center, said standardized tests have value.

"Standardize testing is not a bad thing if it is one of many ways that student progress is assessed," Moblo said. "But we must find better ways to use such tests to help individual children, and we must address the other things that parents believe are even more important for their kids."

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