



Michigan Report

Information Pertinent to Legislative and State Department Activities Since 1906

Volume #43, Report #221, Article #04 --Tuesday, November 16, 2004

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PARENTS NOT SEEING VALUE IN M.E.A.P.

Few parents understand the purpose of the Michigan Educational Assessment Program and other high stakes standardized tests, and fewer still see how the results of those tests reflect the education their child is receiving, according to a survey released Tuesday by the Great Lakes Center for Education Research and Practice.

The survey found about a third of Michigan parents felt the tests measured their child's abilities but only 1 percent indicated the tests were a good measure of the education their child was receiving. And only 20 percent knew what the results were used for.

"Educators and parents need to sit down together and talk about what the tests are," said Teri Moblo, director of the [Center](#). "There seems to be a disconnect between policy and what parents think is important."

The survey was conducted by Lansing-based [EPIC-MRA](#) of some 1,7000 parents in Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin. Ed Sarpolus, vice-president of EPIC-MRA, said responses were similar in all of the states.

Ms. Moblo said state and school officials need to show parents how the test scores will help their children. "They don't think these tests are used to help their individual children," she said of parents. "Standardized tests alone don't meet the needs of parents and students."

"What this study suggests is that while parents don't reject standardized tests, they don't seem to be in agreement on how useful the tests are or how they benefit their individual children," Mr. Sarpolus said. "Parents are concerned that time and energy spent on tests ought to directly benefit their children today instead of children in the future."

He also noted that, despite years of discussions and debate over the MEAP, parental awareness of and feelings toward the test have not changed.

"After all these years of debating, discussion and using the tests to measure schools and the public still doesn't get it," he said. "The public, if it goes, is not really going to care because they don't see the benefits to themselves or their kids."

Martin Ackley, spokesperson for the Department of Education, said the department has already heard the concerns from parents and has been working since the MEAP was moved back into its fold last December to provide parents more useful information from the test results.

"When they get these reports back from MEAP, they don't know how to read them, they don't know what they mean, they don't know how they're used," Mr. Ackley said of the current results report.

He said new reports to be released next school year will provide parents not only raw score information, but also more details about how their child's performance compares to state expectations.

Moving the test to the fall will also help in providing more timely information to parents and teachers because they will have results during the school year and be able to address concerns the test results raise.

Ms. Moblo said legislators at the state and federal levels also need to see that standardized tests cannot be the sole measure of a student's, or a school's, performance.

"Not all children can be assessed in the same way," she said. "For policy makers it's really important that we stress to legislators these cannot be the only way we measure student performance. ... The policy makers seem to think this is an accurate assessment of how kids are doing."

Mr. Ackley said that is why the Education YES! accreditation system uses more than just the MEAP results to measure school improvement.

But federal standards are based solely on the MEAP and other state standardized tests.

Ms. Moblo said the survey also had one disturbing result: those parents who said they did not do well on standardized tests in school were twice as likely to not go on to college. She said a similar pattern among current students could mean children not getting the education they need to enter the job market.

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