

# Frequently Asked Questions About the Fall 2010 Grades 3-9 MEAP Assessment Results

## **1) Since the assessments were taken in the fall, at the beginning of the school year, what content was tested?**

Mathematics and Reading assessments are administered in each grade from Grade 3 to Grade 8. These tests cover content taught during the previous school year. Writing assessments are administered in grades 4 and 7; science in grades 5 and 8; social studies assessments in grades 6 and 9. The writing, science, and social studies assessments cover content from the previous two to three grade levels.

## **2) Why are the MEAP assessments given in fall instead of winter or spring?**

MEAP assessments are given in fall for several reasons. Fall testing allows assessment of the full previous year of instruction and measures student learning that was retained over the summer break. Fall MEAP administration ends early in the school year and encourages teachers to proceed quickly into teaching the current year curriculum.

## **3) Can MEAP Fall 2010 scores be compared to scores from previous years for the same grade and subject?**

Beginning with Fall 2005, MEAP assessments are based on new content standards for both reading and mathematics, and the assessment period was moved from winter to fall. While comparisons may be made from the Fall 2005 MEAP test cycle through the Fall 2010 test cycle, it would be inappropriate to make comparisons to scores from test cycles previous to Fall 2005. With the exception of the writing assessment, summary Reports for Fall 2010 show results for the past three years, for Fall 2008 through Fall 2010.

## **4) The State Board of Education approved a study to determine the best methodology to increase cut scores to ensure they reflect student career and college readiness. Have the cut scores been changed for fall 2010?**

No. This summer the Office of Educational Assessment and Accountability (OEAA) will study this issue and make recommendations to the State Board. Fall of 2011 would be the first time cut scores may reflect career and college readiness.

## **5) What is the Performance Level Change information that is reported?**

In reading and mathematics, the four performance levels have each been subdivided into three ranges for each performance level (low, mid, and high). Using these new ranges, each student's change in performance from the previous year can now be categorized as a Significant Decline (SD), a Decline (D), Maintaining (M), an Improvement (I), or a Significant Improvement (SI). These categories reflect whether students are changing in their performance relative to the increasing expectations across grades.

**6) Was the writing test new this year?**

Yes. The writing test administered at fourth and seventh grades was new this year. The test included a narrative writing prompt, an informational writing prompt, two student writing samples with 8 multiple choice questions per sample and a brief written response asking students to describe how to improve one of the student writing samples. This new test format was designed to provide more opportunities for students to demonstrate their writing proficiencies than the previous writing tests provided. Test results' reporting reflects these changes also.

**7) Can Fall 2010 MEAP scores be used to get a preview of the school's status in terms of accountability and accreditation?**

Not precisely. The process for determining the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status for a school or district is very complex, involving data from many sources and including calculations regarding the full academic year status of students and taking into account feeder school attribution. AYP status will be reported separately by the state. MEAP, MI-Access and ELPA are all used for most schools. To help schools understand changes in student performance over time, the Fall 2010 Summary Reports include a set of tables that track the changes in student performance from year-to-year in reading, total ELA, and mathematics. These tables delineate each of the transitions a student can demonstrate from year to year. The first table provides the number of students making each transition from year to year, a second table provides the percentage of students who made each type of transition, and the third table provides the percentage of students who started out in one performance range that ended up in each of the performance ranges the next year. These transition tables provide schools with preliminary information on patterns of growth experienced by their students, but do not convey an accurate picture of how these scores translate into AYP designations.

**8) My school's fourth graders learned the content assessed in October 2010 at the K-3 school that they attended last year. Will the October 2010 scores be attributed to the school attended this year (2010-2011) or to the school attended last year (2009-2010)?**

Because the fall assessments are based on content taught during the previous year, student performance for the determination of adequate yearly progress (AYP) and school accreditation is attributed to the school where instruction occurred the previous school year.

**9) Some of the students assessed at our school were not enrolled at the school last year. Their scores do not reflect learning that occurred at our school. Why are these scores included in the public release?**

The public MEAP results report on the performance of all students who were assessed at the building. MEAP has a 35-year history of including all students in the public reports. However, the scores of students enrolled less than a full academic year prior to testing will be excluded from the data used to determine if the school meets Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) or state accreditation standards.

**10) Do these scores reflect the Grade Level Content Expectations (GLCEs) in reading and mathematics?**

Yes. The scores are based on assessments which were built specifically to measure the content standards (the GLCEs).

**11) How can students with disabilities be held to the same standards as other students?**

If students with disabilities took the MEAP, they are indeed held to the same standards as all other students. There are accommodations provided to assist students with specific disabilities (for example, a Braille version), but the students are all held to the same standards. However, if students with disabilities took MI-Access (Michigan's alternate assessments for students with cognitive disabilities), these students are assessed using alternate achievement standards that reflect the cognitive levels of these students. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) or Section 504 plans are developed for each student with disabilities by stakeholders in that student's education (e.g., parents, teachers, counselors, etc.). These teams of stakeholders have the responsibility of determining which assessment test is the most appropriate for each student with disabilities.