

“PROFICIENCY” ON STATE –REQUIRED TESTS HAS A NEW DEFINITION

North Muskegon Public Schools is taking a proactive approach to communicating with parents and the community concerning scoring changes to the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) and Michigan Merit Exam (MME) tests this year.

Each year, North Muskegon Public Schools’ students along with all other Michigan public school students in grades 3-9 are required to take the MEAP and eleventh graders are required to take the MME. If you haven’t already, you will soon begin hearing news reports about new cutoff scores, or “cut scores” that the Michigan State Board of Education recently adopted for these tests. Rather than rely on the news media, we encourage parents to use North Muskegon Public Schools and the Michigan Department of Education for the most accurate and current information.

So, what are cut scores and why has the Michigan State Board of Education changed them? MEAP and MME cut scores separate test takers into various categories, such as advanced, proficient, partially proficient and not proficient. Michigan’s previous cut scores for these state tests were set at a very basic level. Raising the cut scores will give Michigan parents and students a much better sense of whether they are adequately prepared for the next step in their education and a future career in a global economy.

The new cut scores represent a significantly higher standard for student achievement and are intended to more accurately reflect a student’s progress toward college and career readiness. On some tests, students previously could have answered as few as 40 percent of the questions correctly to be considered proficient. Under the new scoring system, students will have to correctly answer a much higher percentage of questions. Michigan is one of only three states in the nation (along with New York and Tennessee) to move to this top tier level of test scoring.

Like school districts across the state, North Muskegon Public Schools’ MEAP and MME proficiency results are expected to decline when publicly released next spring. While we anticipate an initial drop in the number of students reported as “proficient,” we are confident this change will be temporary due to ongoing school improvement efforts and student support.

If a student is reported as “not proficient,” it does not mean that he or she isn't gaining academic skills or knowledge expected for his or her grade level. It means that on the day of the test, this student was not **yet** proficient on the material being tested. Many students may require additional help and/or time to master these skills. Actually, by the time parents and the school receive the MEAP/MME results from the state, many students identified as “not proficient” will have closed the gap.

The MEAP and MME tests are only two of several measures used in our district throughout the year to insure that students are making academic progress. We maintain high standards for our students and their test scores are consistently among the highest in the state. We anticipate this trend will continue even with the new cut scores.

We will be examining our curriculum to respond to this more challenging level of test scoring. In addition, our staff will focus our professional development efforts on enhancing our abilities to rise to the challenge presented to these recent changes.

Undoubtedly, parents will have many questions about the scoring changes. We will continue to provide information through a variety of communication channels such as newsletters, email, our website, parent-teacher conferences, and more.

For more information, contact North Muskegon or visit www.oaisd.org/statetests or <http://1.usa.gov/statetests>.