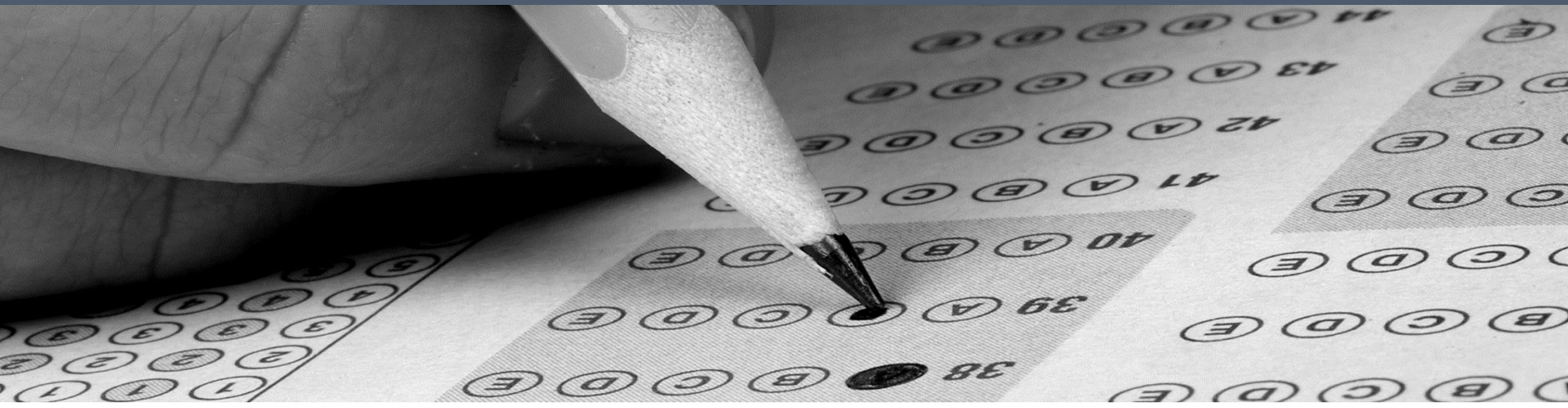


RAISING EXPECTATIONS

*Understanding and Communicating About
New Performance Standards on
Michigan's Standardized Tests*



Background

Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP)

- Each year, public school students in grades 3-9 are required to take the MEAP test
- Students are tested in Mathematics, Reading, Writing, Science and Social Studies

Michigan Merit Exam (MME) and American College Test (ACT)

- Eleventh graders take the MME and the ACT with an additional writing component
- The MME assesses students in English Language Arts (reading and writing), Mathematics, Science and Social Studies
- These tests are used to track whether students are learning what they need to know in order to be career and college ready

Background

Purpose of Standardized Tests

- To assess a student's level of proficiency at the time of the test

Meaning of Proficient

- Students that meet or exceed Michigan standards on the MEAP and MME meet Michigan's definition of *proficient*

Meaning of a Cut Score

- A “cut score” is the lowest score a student can achieve on a test (or multiple tests) to be considered “proficient” or “passing” at their respective grade level
- A cut score on a test is the score that separates test takers into various categories, such as advanced proficient, proficient, partially proficient and not proficient

Michigan's New Performance Standard

State Board Action

- The State Board recently adopted new, higher MEAP and MME cut scores in Mathematics, Reading, Science and Social Studies
- Previously, Michigan's cut scores were based on whether students showed a basic understanding of what was taught. On some tests, students could have answered as few as 40 percent of the questions correctly to be considered proficient
- The new cut scores represent a significantly higher standard for student achievement and are intended to ensure that all students are on track to be successful in an increasingly "global" economy

Impact of Cut Score Changes

In the short term...

- Fewer students will be deemed “proficient” on state tests
- This could result in some criticism of the District’s past efforts or previous standards

In the long term....

- Higher standards will likely result in improved achievement over time
- Parents will have a more realistic picture of their student’s progress toward career and college readiness
- Students will be more likely to achieve their post-secondary goals
- Michigan schools and students will be better prepared for transition to common state standards and assessments, scheduled for implementation in 2014-15

District Communication Plan



- Communication to Staff
- Letter to Parents
- “5 Things” List for Parents
- “5 Things” Folder (Parent-Teacher Conferences)
- Newsletter Article
- List of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
- Communication to Larger Community and Business Leaders

Key Messages

- The new cut scores are higher and “raise the bar” for our students - they are intended to be a better measure of student progress toward career and college readiness
- The District maintains 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
- Any drop in student proficiency 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 is falling behind - it means that on the day of the test, the student was not **yet** proficient on the material being tested
- Several other measures are used in our district throughout the year to ensure that students are making academic progress

District Efforts to Meet New Standards



- Highlight district efforts

What Staff Can Do to Help Parents and Students

- Proactively communicate with parents about the change in cut scores
- Use consistent messages when communicating with parents and students
- Express confidence in students' ability to meet higher standards
- Avoid using “education lingo” – keep it simple
- Provide suggestions to parents on how they can help support their child's learning
- Provide reassurance to students if they express concerns
- Use established district protocols and processes for any media inquiries