

SECTION 3 — FEDERAL AND STATE INFLUENCES ON MI-ACCESS

Federal Influences

Several federal legislative initiatives helped spur the development of MI-Access. The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 (IDEA), for example, required that students with disabilities be included in all state assessments with assessment accommodations as necessary. In addition, it mandated that an alternate assessment be developed for students whose IEP Teams determined it was not appropriate for them to take the general state assessment. MI-Access, Michigan's Alternate Assessment Program, is what the MDE developed to comply with that legislation.

Other federal requirements also influenced, and continue to influence, the development of MI-Access. Those laws include Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), Title 1 of the

Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1994 (ESEA), and most recently the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) and the 2004 reauthorization of IDEA. In different ways, these laws maintain that assessments are an integral part of the educational accountability system because they provide valuable information that can benefit students by regularly measuring their progress against agreed-upon standards. They also maintain that all students—including those with disabilities—should be part of each state's accountability system and should not be treated separately.

State Influences

MI-Access also was developed to help achieve various State Board of Education (SBE) policies, priorities, and goals. For example, SBE *policies* related to statewide assessment at the time MI-Access was developed asked that the state (1) coordinate and focus all resources on improving student performance, (2) set performance expectations and measure progress, and (3) base accreditation on high levels of pupil achievement and continuous improvement. SBE *priorities* at that time asked that the state also (1) raise student achievement in Michigan, and (2) promote options designed to improve student achievement (such as assessment).



General Information



Finally, and perhaps most important, the SBE had two goals at that time that related specifically to MI-Access. They asked the state to (1) increase the participation and performance of students with disabilities on statewide assessments, and (2) develop guidelines for participation in alternate assessment for students with disabilities for whom participation in the MEAP, even with assessment accommodations, was inappropriate.

Furthermore, in November 2001, when the SBE adopted a policy creating the MEAS, it stated that:

It shall be the policy of the State Board of Education that each local and intermediate school district and public school academy will ensure the participation of all students in the Michigan Educational Assessment System (the MEAP/MME, the MEAP/MME with assessment accommodations, MI-Access, and ELL-Access).

MI-Access helps to achieve all of these policies, priorities, and goals in a number of ways. It provides (1) access to the high standards reflected in Michigan's Model Content Standards for the general curriculum, (2) access to the statewide assessment system, which many students with disabilities have not had, and (3) access to meaningful results showing student progress.