

Fall 2005 Administration Cycle a Success!

Dear Readers,

Congratulations on another successful MI-Access administration cycle! With such a challenging year due to new operational assessments and changing assessment windows, it is encouraging to again see the professionalism and dedication of Michigan educators come through for the students participating in MI-Access.

Fall Review

While you were busy administering assessments to students in grades 3 through 8, a great deal of other work was being done related to curriculum and assessment. For example, the MI-Access Assessment Plan Writing Teams (APWTs) were reconvened to continue the important work of extending the state's grade level content expectations and benchmarks for future MI-Access assessments. The article below, titled "The Future of MI-Access: An Assessment Development Update," provides details about the teams' progress. Many thanks are due to the APWT members for their diligent work on a difficult task.

Progress has also been made on the mathematics portion of the State Improvement Grant (SIG). The MDE and contracted staff have created numerous materials and professional development models, as well as alternative models showing how to apply state content expectations and benchmarks in new ways to improve curriculum and instruction. For more information on the SIG, see the article below called "State Improvement Grant Mathematics Project."

Furthermore, stakeholders from across the state have continued working diligently on developing a curriculum framework (or guide) for the Supported Independence student population. The article below, titled "Supported Independence Curriculum Framework Project," contains updated information on this important document.

Fall 2005 Results

This month, the Fall 2005 MI-Access results were released electronically. To review your district's reports (if you have not already done so), simply log on to the password-protected OEAA Secure Site, select "Student Test Scores" in the menu on the left-hand side, and select the "Fall 2005 MI-Access" assessment cycle. Hard copies of the reports will be provided by BETA/TASA, the MI-Access operational contractor. They will ship them in the order that assessment materials were received for scanning and scoring. If you have questions about the results

(electronic or print versions), please call the MI-Access Toll-free Hotline (1-888-382-4246).

Preparing for Spring

As usual, there is no time to rest on our past accomplishments. The spring MI-Access assessment window for grade 11 students has already started. During this assessment cycle, you may want to review the article below called “Notes from the Contractor for MI-Access Coordinators.” In it, BETA/TASA describes the many assessment materials that districts should have received. District MI-Access Coordinators will recall that last fall materials arrived in as many as four shipments; this spring there were only two shipments.

The Michigan Merit Exam (MME) is also fast approaching. The article titled “Planning for the Michigan Merit Exam” provides updated information on this important topic, including details about the various components of the MME, how it is being piloted during the 2005/2006 school year, and how students with disabilities will gain access to assessment accommodations.

As a last note, the OEAA Secure Site and the MI-Access Online System continue to play a critical role in the successful administration of state assessments. The article below, called “MI-Access Online System vs. the OEAA Secure Site,” contains a table and an accompanying explanation regarding the different functions of each system.

Thank you for your continued efforts to stay current with MI-Access activities. We at the Assessment for Students with Disabilities Program look forward to working with you throughout the remainder of the school year and appreciate your continuing support.

Sincerely,
Peggy Dutcher
Coordinator, Assessment for Students with Disabilities Program
dutcherp@mi.gov

MI-Access Fall 2005 Standard Setting Completed

In December 2005, the Office of Educational Assessment and Accountability (OEAA) hosted panels of educators, administrators, and parents who were charged with recommending performance standards for the various MI-Access assessments (Participation, Supported Independence, and Functional Independence). The meetings were held in Detroit, where stakeholders learned about the assessments, developed Performance Level Descriptors, reviewed performance data from the fall 2005 administration of MI-Access, and made judgments about cut scores—or where the lines should be drawn between the minimum number of points needed to achieve certain performance levels.

The recommendations made by the panelists were presented to the State Board of Education (SBE) in January 2006 and approved unanimously. They are now being applied to the Fall 2005 MI-Access assessment results for students in grades 3 through 8, and will be used for future assessment results as long as the grade 3 through 8 assessment booklet formats and assessed content expectations remain the same. The MI-Access assessment results are one of the measures used by the state to calculate Adequate Yearly Progress for No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

Performance standards need to be formally set for two reasons. First, NCLB requires that eligible students in grades 3 through 8 be assessed in each state's assessment system. Since new grade levels were included for the first time this year in MI-Access Participation and Supported Independence (previously only students in grades 4, 7, 8, and 11 were assessed), performance standards for each grade level had to be developed. Second, the Functional Independence English Language Arts and Mathematics assessments were administered for the first time statewide and therefore required the development of performance standards in order to report results. Other panels will be convened following the spring MI-Access assessment window to develop performance standards for the grade 11 assessments.

The Future of MI-Access: An Assessment Development Update

Throughout the 2005/2006 school year, the MI-Access team has continued to engage in the assessment development process first described in the August 2005 edition of *The Assist*. The Assessment Plan Writing Teams (APWTs) met in September and October specifically to carry on their efforts related to developing sets of extended grade level content expectations (EGLCEs) and extended benchmarks (EBs). These sets of EGLCEs and EBs will form the basis for new MI-Access assessments in the content areas of English language arts and mathematics (for Participation and Supported Independence) and science (for Participation, Supported Independence, and Functional Independence).

To help broaden APWT members' perspectives on the Participation and Supported Independence student populations, a field trip to Wing Lake Developmental Center (www.winglake.bloomfield.org) was taken. Wing Lake is a center-based program in Oakland County that serves many students, the majority of whom have severe cognitive impairments (SCI) or are severely multiply impaired (SXI). Students from fifteen districts attend Wing Lake, which provides year-round, full day programs for students ages three through twenty-five.

Following is an update on the progress the APWTs have made in each content area.

English Language Arts and Mathematics

Draft sets of EGLCEs and EBs were completed for both the Participation and Supported Independence student populations. For alternate assessments, states may choose to develop content standards or expectations by grade level or by grade clusters. After hearing input from the APWT regarding the various student populations and considering the current observational format of the Participation and Supported Independence assessments, it was decided that grade clusters would be most appropriate. Therefore, the draft EGLCEs and EBs for Participation and Supported Independence were compiled into elementary (grades 2-5), middle school (grades 6-8), and high school (grade 11) sets. Due to budget constraints, item writing and finalization of the drafts will not begin until fall 2006.

Science

A draft set of science EBs was completed for the Functional Independence student population, and work on a set for Participation and Supported Independence students has begun. Once that work is completed, the APWT will look across the extensions for all three populations to ensure consistency of content and appropriateness of complexity for each group.

Assessment Development Table

The table below shows where the MI-Access program is currently and what assessments are on the horizon. It is organized by the grade level at which the assessments are or will be administered. The column labeled “Currently Administered” lists the MI-Access assessments that are operational at this time; the column labeled “Under Development” includes the English language arts, mathematics, and science assessments described in the preceding paragraphs; and the column labeled “Future Development” indicates the assessments that need to be developed at some point in the future.

Assessment Development Table

Grade	Currently Administered				Under Development								Future Development		
	P	SI	FI-ELA	FI-M	SI-ELA	SI-M	P-ELA	P-M	P-SC	SI-SC	FI-SC	P-SS	SI-SS	FI-SS	
3	X	X	X	X	U	U	U	U							
4	X	X	X	X	U	U	U	U							
5	X	X	X	X	U	U	U	U	U	U	U				
6	X	X	X	X	U	U	U	U				F	F	F	
7	X	X	X	X	U	U	U	U	U	U	U				
8	X	X	X	X	U	U	U	U	U	U	U				
9												F	F	F	
11	X	X	X	X	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	F	F	F	

KEY
P - Participation
SI - Supported Independence
FI - Functional Independence
ELA - English Language Arts
M - Mathematics
SC - Science
SS - Social Studies
X - Currently Administered
U - Under Development
F - Future Development

Several APWT members provided comments on their meeting evaluation forms from September and October. In general, they indicated satisfaction with the quality of the meeting facilitation, and found the discussions professionally beneficial. Several mentioned feeling highly challenged and somewhat overloaded by the task they were asked to accomplish and with the large amount of documentation they were asked to consider in their decision-making efforts.

The visit to Wing Lake seemed particularly helpful. One member indicated that it was “the most useful step in the process. That visit made things very clear and gave us a great, fresh understanding of the level of functioning that Participation students are working on.” Another member echoed that sentiment, indicating that it was valuable “both as an individual and for the group.”

The science APWT met in January and again in March. Look for updates on the progress made at these two meetings in the next issue of *The Assist*.

State Improvement Grant Mathematics Project

The Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services (OSE/EIS) has been providing much needed professional development through a State Improvement Grant (SIG). The mathematics portion of the SIG project has resulted in the development of materials and resources focused primarily on special education populations, but employs principles that apply in important ways to all teachers. In 2004 and 2005, special education and mathematics experts conducted a pair of week-long in-services, follow-up consultations, and regional conferences to train staff, support teachers during implementation, and provide additional materials based on feedback from the initial presentations.

A particular focus of the mathematics group has been on developing assessments to answer questions about where, in a realistic scope and sequence, students are performing. The group wrestled with the idea that the state's grade level content expectations (GLCEs) have never claimed to be a comprehensive sequence of mathematics skill acquisition, but many teachers believe their instruction must follow them since statewide assessment is based on the GLCEs.

SIG staff members maintain that by looking at a valid sequence and using assessment to identify where students are, two goals can be accomplished. First, the GLCEs can be brought into instruction in an orderly, logical fashion after they are matched to where the student is performing on the instructional sequence. Second, having a clearly defined sequence allows for more accurate measurement of such things as a "year's worth of growth," something that many IEP teams struggle with in setting and monitoring their student's goals and objectives.

Based on these goals, the SIG mathematics group has developed pilot assessments and administered them to a variety of students who attend districts served by Wayne County RESA. The assessments are not considered achievement tests, but inventories to help teachers determine where students are on the sequence and what types of error patterns are made. Analysis of these errors is intended to inform teachers about where instructional resources should be spent to move students along the sequence. Through this process and the time invested on professional development, SIG staff members hope to

- build capacity at the Intermediate School District (ISD), local district, and classroom levels for teachers to become more adept at blending of general and special education, and promote understanding of conceptual and instructional processes involved with teaching mathematics;
- provide districts and teachers guidance about what they should be trying to accomplish with mathematics instruction;

- encourage the building of teams to support each other in order to sustain the learning about sequence and instruction and encourage participants to act as colleagues in the SIG development process rather than passive recipients;
- align the SIG mathematics inventories with state-wide assessments, such as the MEAP and MI-Access, to promote more valid measurement and increased use of assessment results in the classroom; and
- close the achievement gap for at-risk and special education students in an effort to improve instruction and help districts in making Adequate Yearly Progress.

Feedback from in-service and regional conference participants has been highly positive and encouraging. For example, this year's Office of Educational Assessment and Accountability fall conferences featured presentations on the various activities with which the mathematics SIG staff have been involved and are developing, and how they might be applied to students with disabilities. Teachers and administrators expressed gratitude and excitement about learning new strategies to enhance student performance, improve relationships between general and special education staff, and promote greater understanding about how mathematics instruction theory can and should be applied. Materials used in this project can be found at the Michigan Council of Teachers of Mathematics Web site (www.mictm.org) Michigan Council of Teachers of Mathematics Web Site in the "Publications" section.

Supported Independence Curriculum Framework Project

The Michigan Association of Administrators of Special Education (MAASE) has sponsored the development of a model curriculum framework, or guide, for the Supported Independence student population. The Supervisors of Low Incidence Programs (SLIP), a subcommittee of MAASE, pulled together many stakeholders and curricula from various districts across the state to develop a comprehensive framework representing best practices and high standards for students functioning in the Supported Independence range. This work was a continuation of the curriculum framework developed and distributed in 2004 for the Participation (P) student population.

The Supported Independence curriculum guide contains instructions on its use and interpretation, an outline for quickly finding a desired topic, and lists of activities and skills sorted by the Performance Expectations (PEs) outlined in Addressing Unique Educational Needs of Students with Disabilities (AUEN). The framework also contains a new section that includes skills and activities from the general education curriculum that have been adapted for students who have, or function as if they have, this level of cognitive impairment. The new section includes mathematics, English language arts, technology, science, and social studies content. The new section was developed after the SLIP team reached consensus that these concepts should be taught to Supported Independence students, albeit in real life contexts. Quite a few of the ideas in the new section are already represented in the eight PEs in AUEN.

The focus on academic content areas within each PE is related to how the grade level content expectations and benchmarks were extended for MI-Access. Several of the SLIP members participated in the development of MI-Access assessments, and some of the information compiled for the Supported Independence curriculum framework was presented and considered by the MI-Access Assessment Plan Writing Teams (APWTs), the members of which were assembled over the past several months to develop extended expectations and benchmarks for the Participation and Supported Independence populations in English language arts, mathematics, and science. This collaboration is important since consistency in efforts coming from the field, such as the Supported Independence curriculum guide, and efforts coming from the Office of Educational Assessment and Accountability (OEAA), such as alternate assessments, need to align to the greatest extent possible.

The Supported Independence curriculum framework's content and design should prove useful to Individualized Education Program (IEP) Teams as they develop short-term goals, annual goals, and performance objectives for their students. This very thorough document is cross-referenced so that teachers can find objectives related to similar content across multiple PEs. Each skill or activity can be customized for an individual student's IEP by adding appropriate qualifiers—such as frequency and duration—to make them measurable.

To obtain more information on the SLIP subcommittee and the development of this document—including how interested parties may participate in the next steps—contact Marcia O'Brien at mobrien@inghamisd.org.

Notes from the Contractor to MI-Access Coordinators

Greetings from BETA/TASA, the MI-Access contractor. We are looking forward to another successful assessment administration cycle in spring 2006.

By the time you read this, districts will have already received the grade 11 Participation, Supported Independence, and Functional Independence assessment materials and scan documents. These materials will be used during the spring 2006 assessment window for grade 11 students, which started February 27th and ends April 14th.

Shipment Contents

This spring, there were two separate shipments. The first shipment contained materials for the District MI-Access Coordinator and boxes for individual schools. This time, both standard versions and accommodated versions of the assessment booklets were included in the first shipment.

As always, a district packing slip was secured to the outside top of the district's box or boxes. It listed the district materials and school boxes enclosed in the shipment. Copies of each school packing slip (which can be used to inventory school materials) and a *Spring 2006 Assessment Booklet Security Serial Numbers* list (which includes the serial numbers of all assessment booklets shipped to the district) were attached to the district packing slip. School packing slips were secured to the top of each school box and should be passed along to School MI-Access Coordinators to use in inventorying their own materials.

Unlike the fall, this time each school box included some overage to help reduce the need for additional material orders. Please note that if there is a discrepancy between the district and/or school packing slips (for example, if the packing slip says the district or school should have received 8 of something but only 6 were included), District MI-Access Coordinators need to call the MI-Access Toll-free Hotline immediately (1-888-382-4246) to report the discrepancy.

The first shipment to District MI-Access Coordinators included

- a fluorescent yellow *Return of Materials Packet* with a UPS return shipment label(s), a divider sheet, a checklist, and paper strips for bundling the returned materials;
- *Spring 2006 MI-Access Security Compliance Forms* (one for the District MI-Access Coordinator to complete and sign and multiple copies to be distributed to School MI-Access Coordinators); and
- *Spring 2006 MI-Access Coordinator and Assessment Administrator Manuals* (one for the District MI-Access Coordinator to keep and

multiple copies for School MI-Access Coordinators and assessment administrators).

Please note that large and small MI-Access calendars were shipped along with the fall 2005 assessment materials. Sufficient quantities were included for those participating in the spring administration. District MI-Access Coordinators should distribute the calendars now to the appropriate personnel if they have not already done so.

In addition, District MI-Access Coordinators received the following materials in each school box:

- standard print versions of the Participation, Supported Independence, and Functional Independence assessment booklets (the quantities of which were based on the counts submitted in the MI-Access Online System plus a 10 percent overage);
- specially-packaged accommodated versions of the Functional Independence assessment booklets (the quantities of which were based on the counts submitted in the MI-Access Online System); and
- acetate rulers (if applicable).

The second shipment of MI-Access materials followed shortly after the first and contained all of the scan documents needed for assessment administration, including *District, School, and Teacher Identification Sheets*, preprinted student scan documents (if appropriate), blank student scan documents (if appropriate), *Teacher Return Envelopes*, and Pre-ID student barcode labels (if appropriate).

The materials in the second shipment were organized by school and included a *School Distribution/Inventory Sheet* explaining what materials should be distributed in what quantities. Some overages were included to help reduce the need for additional material orders.

Quantities of Materials

Please note that the contractor uses the counts submitted in the MI-Access Online System to determine the quantities and types of assessment materials to ship to each district. If a District MI-Access Coordinator did not submit counts in the MI-Access Online System, the district will NOT receive assessment materials.

In addition, if a district has students or teachers who were not accounted for in the original counts, additional materials will need to be ordered. Again, that request must be made by District MI-Access Coordinators in the MI-Access Online System.

Pre-Identification

This spring, all Pre-ID functions took place in the OEAA Secure Site. The time at which the Pre-ID process was completed determined whether the student scan documents shipped by the MI-Access contractor were pre-printed, had Pre-ID student barcode labels printed by the contractor, or were blank.

- Districts received preprinted student scan documents if (1) the District MI-Access Coordinator entered the OEAA Secure Site between January 3 and January 27, 2006, *and* (2) indicated the type of MI-Access assessment each student would take.
- Districts received Pre-ID student barcode labels printed by the MI-Access contractor if the District MI-Access Coordinator entered the OEAA Secure Site between January 3 and January 27, 2006, but did *not* record which MI-Access assessments the students would take.
- If District MI-Access Coordinators did *not* enter the OEAA Secure Site between January 3 and January 27, 2006, they did not receive preprinted scan documents or Pre-ID labels from the MI-Access contractor. They do, however, have the option of printing their own Pre-ID labels from the OEAA Secure Site.

Please note that the MI-Access contractor provided blank student scan documents whenever the total student count entered in the MI-Access Online System exceeded the number of students pre-identified by the district.

Questions

If District MI-Access Coordinators have any questions about the assessment materials they received, they should call the MI-Access Toll-free Hotline at 1-888-382-4246 or send an e-mail message to mi-access@tasa.com.

We hope that organizing the materials in the manner described above will help you administer the Spring 2006 MI-Access assessments more efficiently.

Planning for the Michigan Merit Examination

Planning is underway for the Michigan Merit Examination (MME), the new assessment to be used at the high school level in the 2006/2007 school year if it is approved by the U.S. Education Department. If approval is not forthcoming, the current MEAP High School Assessment will be used until such time that approval is granted. Regardless of which assessment is administered next year, there are some implications for special educators and parents of special education students—primarily as they deliberate about appropriate assessment accommodations for their students.

Background

The MME will be based on three things: (1) the American College Testing Program's (ACT) college entrance exam; (2) WorkKeys, a work skills assessment offered by ACT; and (3) additional Michigan-developed items, which are needed to comply with the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirement that any assessment used at the high school level be aligned with Michigan's high school content standards and benchmarks. The MME scores will be used for school accountability purposes, but more importantly, many students will receive scores that also can be used to apply to college, to qualify for work training, or to obtain a job. The goal is to create one assessment that will help Michigan students as they transition to further schooling or work after graduating from high school.

During the 2005/2006 school year, a statistically representative sample of thirty-six high schools will pilot test the ACT and WorkKeys assessment components in order to link them with the existing MEAP High School Assessment. This data, along with content alignment studies, will be used to seek federal approval.

Assessment Accommodations

During testing, a number of assessment accommodations will be available for students with disabilities. At present, the Office of Educational Assessment and Accountability (OEAA) is working to include information on those accommodations in the State Board of Education-approved Assessment Accommodations Summary Table already developed for the MEAP and MI-Access. (The table is available on the MI-Access Web Page (www.mi.gov/mi-access)). It is anticipated that the use of most assessment accommodations will result in college-reportable test scores; however, those that do not may well be considered "standard" for the Michigan-developed items, which is important for NCLB accountability purposes.

Each student requiring an assessment accommodation will need to apply individually to ACT for approval. A standard form will be used to request accommodations. The application procedure, as well as the documentation that needs to accompany each request, will be spelled out by ACT.

Implications for IEP Teams

Because MME implementation is dependent on federal approval, which has not yet been granted, IEP teams will need to use the table of MME accommodations, as well as the table of accommodations for the current MEAP High School Assessment, to determine how their high school students will participate in assessment during the 2006/2007 school year. The MI-Access assessments are also an option for students whose IEP Teams determine it is inappropriate for them to participate in either the MME or the MEAP.

It is anticipated that the OEAA will develop a table of accommodations and descriptions of the various assessments in winter 2006 for IEP Teams to use when planning for the 2006/2007 school year. The OEAA also has plans to conduct a statewide teleconference about the MME, which, in addition to other important details, will address available assessment accommodations (including those that will or will not result in college-reportable scores) and the appropriate procedures for requesting accommodations.

More information about the content and the manner in which the MME will be implemented will be forthcoming as decisions are made by the Michigan Department of Education's OEAA. For further information, contact Ed Roeber at roebere@michigan.gov or at 517-373-0739.

MI-Access Online System vs. OEAA Secure Site

The OEAA Secure Site and the MI-Access Online System were developed to help increase the accuracy of data and to improve the efficiency of procedures related to state assessment. As the two password-protected systems continue to evolve, there most likely will be confusion about which system to use to perform which critical assessment functions. The following table was developed to help alleviate the confusion for District MI-Access Coordinators who need to enter and/or monitor information in both systems.

System/Site Functionality Reference Table

Functions	OEAA Secure System	MI-Access Online System
Submit Teacher/Student Counts (which determines how many and what types of assessment materials are shipped)	NO	YES
Pre-ID Students	YES	NO
Locally Print Pre-ID Barcode Labels	YES	NO
Update Student Demographics	YES	NO
Review Tested Roster	YES	NO
Order Additional Materials	NO	YES
View Shipment History	NO	YES
Update MI-Access Coordinator Information	NO	YES
Access Electronic Reports	YES	NO
Access Electronic Data Files for Districts/Schools	YES	NO

Any questions regarding the MI-Access functions should be directed to the MI-Access Hotline at 1-888-382-4246 or the MI-Access e-mail address at mi-access@tasa.com.

Glossary

MI-Access Online System: The BETA/TASA password-protected Web site used to collect and store information for MI-Access assessment administration. The system—which can be accessed only by District MI-Access Coordinators using the district’s individualized link and password—contains the most up-to-date information for coordinators and is used to enter estimated student and teacher counts for assessment materials, order additional assessment materials, obtain shipping histories, and access additional resources.

OEAA Secure Site: Formerly referred to as the MEAP Secure Site, this password-protected online site is used, in part, to pre-identify and update demographic information on students participating in the state’s assessment system. District MI-Access Coordinators collaborate with MEAP Coordinators to use this site.

Performance Standard: A statement or description that may be used to guide judgments about the location of a cut score on a score scale. The term often implies a desired level of performance.

Standard Assessment Accommodation: The goal of an assessment accommodation is to minimize the impact of a student’s disability on his/her performance on an assessment. The assessment accommodation is considered “standard” if it does not change what a specific assessment is measuring. The score received by a student using a standard assessment accommodation will count when calculating No Child Left Behind participation rates. A “nonstandard” assessment accommodation—which does change what a specific assessment is measuring—results in an invalid score.

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Important MI-Access Dates

MI-Access Spring 2006 Assessment Window Grade 11

February 27, 2006 – April 14, 2006

MI-Access Assessment Materials Shipped Back to BETA/TASA

No later than April 21, 2006

Bookmark These Web Sites

www.mi.gov/mi-access

www.mi-access.info

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