

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.