

# The Assist

Helping Students Access and Make Progress in the General Curriculum

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## IEP and Section 504 Team Decision-Making for the Michigan Merit Examination

In a letter from the U.S. Education Department (USED) dated November 1, 2006, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) received feedback indicating that the Michigan Merit Examination (MME) is likely to be fully compliant with the assessment requirements of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). While the USED did request some additional evidence, the overall tone of the letter was quite positive, which led Michigan to administer it in spring 2007 in place of the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) High School Test (HST). Since the MDE anticipates that the MME will receive full approval as a component of the Michigan Educational Assessment System (MEAS), Individualized Education Program (IEP) and Section 504 Teams will need to continue making accommodations decisions for high school students who are eligible to participate in the MME.

Beyond accommodations decisions, IEP Teams will need to decide whether the MME is appropriate for their student, or if he or she should take MI-Access, which will continue to be available as an alternate. (Please note that students with Section 504 plans are not eligible for MI-Access.) However, IEP Teams must keep in mind that the percentage of students who should participate in MI-Access will continue to be very small, since those assessments are designed only for students who have, or function as if they have, a cognitive impairment.

### Components of the MME

Table 1 below shows how the MME will be organized. There will be three assessment booklets and three corresponding answer documents. Schools will administer a particular set of assessments in each of three test sessions when they are administered using standard time.

- On the first day, ACT Plus Writing (which includes English, mathematics, reading, science, and writing) will be administered in five parts.
- On the second day, WorkKeys (which includes reading for information and applied mathematics) and Michigan mathematics items will be administered in three parts.
- Schools may choose to give the Michigan science and social studies assessments in three back-to-back parts either on Day 2 p.m. or Day 3 a.m., but NOT both. (Please note that this is a major change for future test cycles.)

In addition to showing the MME's organization, the table includes information on the number of multiple choice (MC) items and prompts that will appear in each part of the assessment; the actual testing time; and the estimated time for administration, including check in, instruction, testing,

breaks, and the collection of materials. All parts of each assessment will be timed and must be administered at the same time of day to all students in a given high school. These assessment organization parameters are designed to provide consistent and high levels of test security, increase test validity, and minimize the interruption of instruction.

**Table 1**

Test Organization						
Day*	Assessment	Subject Session	Number of Parts	Total Items	Testing Time (minutes)	Estimated Time Required for Administration
Day 1	ACT Plus Writing	English	5	75 MC Items	45	Total test time - including check in, instructions, breaks, collection of materials - 5 hours
		Mathematics		60 MC items	60	
		Reading		40 MC items	35	
		Science		40 MC items	35	
		Writing		1 Prompt	30	
Day 1 Standard Testing Time: 205 minutes (3 hrs and 25 minutes)						
Day 2	WorkKeys	Reading for Info	3	33 MC Items	45	Total test time - including check in, instructions, breaks, collection of materials - 3 hours
		Applied Mathematics		33 MC Items	45	
	Michigan	Mathematics		15 MC items	20	
Day 2 Standard Testing Time: 110 minutes (1 hour and 50 minutes)						
Day 2 p.m. or Day 3 a.m.	Michigan	Science	3	53 MC items	50	Total test time - including check in, instructions, breaks, collection of materials - 3.5 hours
		Social Studies		26 MC items and 1 prompt	50	
				31 MC items and 1 prompt	50	
One additional test session on Day 2, 3, or 4 Standard Testing Time 150 minutes (2 hours / 30 minutes)						
*More detailed information about this schedule and the MME program is available on the MME Web page at <a href="http://www.mi.gov/mme">www.mi.gov/mme</a> .				TOTAL minutes	465	
				TOTAL hours	7.75	

IEP and Section 504 Teams should be aware that students are not allowed to take just one component of the MME or to be assessed in only one content area (e.g., mathematics, ELA, science, or social studies). Therefore, if they decide that the MME is appropriate for a student, he or she must participate in ALL portions of the assessment. This is an important consideration since the student may require different accommodations for different content areas. Table 2 below shows the components of the MME that contribute to each content-area MME score. It emphasizes the importance of considering appropriate accommodations for each content area so that students can access the assessments in order to show what they know and are able to do.

**Table 2**

				Components Contributing to MME Scores					
Day	Test	Subject Session	Parts	ELA	Reading	Writing	Mathematics	Science	Social Studies
Day 1	ACT Plus Writing	English	1	X		X			
		Mathematics	1				X		
		Reading	1	X	X				
		Science	1				X	X	
		Writing	1	X		X			
Day 2	WorkKeys	Reading for Information	1	X	X				
		Applied Mathematics	1				X		
	Michigan	Mathematics	1				X		
Day 2 p.m. or Day 3 a.m.	Michigan	Science	1					X	
		Social Studies	2	X		X			X

**Accommodations on the MME**

There are two categories of accommodations for the MME. The first is ACT-approved accommodations (for Day 1 only), which can be used by a student and will result in (1) college reportable ACT scores, (2) scores that can be used for making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and Education YES! calculations, and (3) scores that can be used to determine a student's eligibility for a Michigan Promise scholarship. ACT-approved accommodations apply to students with IEPs and students with Section 504 plans.

The second category is state-allowed accommodations, which will result in scores that count for a Michigan Promise scholarship, Education YES!, and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) AYP, but may *not* result in college reportable ACT scores. The differences come primarily from the fact that ACT, in an effort to be consistent across all states, uses only the Americans with Disabilities Act to approve accommodations for college reportable ACT scores. Individual states like Michigan, however, must comply with *many* federal and state regulations and requirements, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, NCLB, Michigan State Board of Education (SBE) policies, and state laws requiring the provision of appropriate accommodations that enable students to access all state assessments. (State-allowed accommodations are available for students with IEPs, students with Section 504 plans, and English language learners.)

**MME Accommodations Summary Table**

In order to facilitate the provision of appropriate accommodations, the Office of Educational Assessment and Accountability (OEAA) has worked closely with ACT to develop an *MME Assessment Accommodation Summary Table*. This helpful document contains information on the MME component scores (for example, it lists all the pieces of the MME that contribute to the overall score for mathematics). The table also contains directions on how it should be read, details on requesting accommodations from ACT, a summary of the ACT review process, and information about local decisions for WorkKeys and the Michigan components of the examination. The table then lists all the accommodations in the same order as the State Board-approved OEAA

*Assessment Accommodation Summary Table* for MEAP and MI-Access. In that document, each accommodation contains comments from ACT and fields indicating whether it (1) is standard or nonstandard for MME scores; (2) may be requested for use on the ACT; and (3) will result in college reportable ACT scores. It is important to remember that only standard assessment accommodations will result in valid MME scores. If a student uses nonstandard accommodations, he or she will count as “not assessed.” The MME summary table is available on the MME Web page ([www.michigan.gov/mme](http://www.michigan.gov/mme)) under “MME Assessment of Special Populations,” and on the MI-Access Web page ([www.mi.gov/mi-access](http://www.mi.gov/mi-access)).

**Planning for 2007/2008**

There are two MME test cycles scheduled for the 2007/2008 school year: one in fall 2007 and another in spring 2008. Each test cycle has unique specifications that will impact IEP and Section 504 Team decisions related to accommodations. Table 3 below shows the accommodation options that were available in spring 2007, and those that will be available in fall 2007 and spring 2008. The information that follows the table explains major similarities and differences between the cycles.

**Table 3**

<b>Michigan Merit Examination - Accommodations Options</b>				
<b>Assessment Cycle</b>	<b>Day 1</b>		<b>Day 2</b>	<b>Day 3</b>
	ACT Plus Writing		WorkKeys Reading for Information, WorkKeys Applied Mathematics, Michigan Mathematics	Michigan Science and Social Studies
	<i>ACT-Approved Accommodations</i>	<i>State-Approved Accommodations</i>	<i>State-Allowed Accommodations</i>	<i>State-Allowed Accommodations</i>
<i>Spring 2007</i>	YES	YES	YES	YES
<i>Fall 2007</i>	YES	NO	YES	YES
<i>Spring 2008</i>	YES	YES	YES	YES

**Spring 2008 Assessment Cycle: Requesting Accommodations for MME Day 1**

If it is determined that a student needs accommodations for Day 1 of the MME (when ACT Plus Writing is administered), the accommodations must be officially requested. Each district is responsible for assigning a Test Accommodations Coordinator (TAC) to work with ACT to ensure that accommodations decisions and approvals are resolved before the assessment window opens. Prior to the window, ACT will send a mailing to each TAC (or school principal if no TAC has been designated) that includes two application forms customized for Michigan—one for ACT-approved accommodations and one for state-allowed accommodations. The TAC is responsible for obtaining information from IEPs or Section 504 plans regarding which students need which types of accommodations and submitting supporting documentation for ACT-approved accommodations. Differentiating between the types of accommodations that will be used (ACT-approved vs. state-allowed) is important because students receiving one type of approved accommodation will have different materials and be tested in a different room than students receiving the other.

The accommodations requesting process for MME Day 1 contains deadlines for application submission to ensure that ample time exists for each TAC to appeal any ACT-denied accommodations requests, and to request state-allowed accommodation materials if the appeal is denied. ACT will send information along with any denial indicating why the request was turned down. Reasons may include insufficient documentation, no justification for the accommodation documented in the student's IEP/Section 504 plan, or no history of the accommodation being used prior to planning for the ACT. Specific requirements for ACT-approved accommodations include documentation of initial diagnosis, reconfirmation of disability within the last three years, and a copy of the accommodations page from the student's current IEP or Section 504 plan. Sample spring 2007 accommodation request forms are currently posted on the MME and MI-Access Web pages under "MME Assessment of Special Populations." These forms will be revised slightly for fall 2007 and spring 2008, but they still should prove helpful to IEP and Section 504 Teams as they begin to plan for the next school year.

### ***Spring 2008 Assessment Cycle: Local Accommodation Decisions and Ordering for MME Day 2 and Day 2 and 3***

There is no form to request accommodations for the WorkKeys assessments or the Michigan components of the MME. ACT's approval of accommodations applies **only** to the administration of ACT Plus Writing. However, school personnel are advised to use ACT's approval as a guideline for ordering assessment materials related to accommodations, such as accommodated formats (e.g., audio or large print), reader scripts, or materials necessary for extended time. These materials must be ordered through the OEAA Secure Site ([www.mi.gov/oeaa-secure](http://www.mi.gov/oeaa-secure)), because they are *not* automatically ordered, even if a student has the same accommodation for MME Day 1. Since there is no issue of reporting scores to colleges, schools may provide accommodations on the WorkKeys and Michigan components of the MME consistent with the accommodations listed in the "Michigan Components" columns of the *MME Assessment Accommodation Summary Table* (even if the student tests without the accommodations used on the ACT).

### ***Special Notes on Accommodations***

For the MME, a reader is considered a standard assessment accommodation because ACT Plus Writing and WorkKeys both measure reading comprehension as opposed to decoding. If an IEP or Section 504 Team determines that a reader is an appropriate accommodation, scripts must be specially ordered from ACT and be used as directed during assessment administration. There are also scripts for the Michigan components of the MME and WorkKeys, which districts must order from the OEAA Secure Site ([www.mi.gov/oeaa-secure](http://www.mi.gov/oeaa-secure)). Please refer to accommodations 42 and 61 on the *Spring 2007 Michigan Merit Examination Assessment Accommodation Summary Table* (at [www.michigan.gov/mme](http://www.michigan.gov/mme)) when making decisions regarding reading the assessment aloud and/or using audio versions.

### ***Fall 2007 MME Assessment Cycle: Retesting***

Students are allowed two opportunities to take the MME to ensure that they have more than one chance to qualify for a Michigan Promise scholarship. Therefore, if they took the MME in spring 2007 and they want to retest, they may do so in fall 2007. (This also applies to new twelfth-grade students who are interested in qualifying for a Michigan Promise scholarship.) The Fall 2007 Testing Cycle is *not* available to eleventh-grade students.

**Fall 2007: MME Day 1 (ACT Plus Writing)**

In fall 2007, MME Day 1 (ACT Plus Writing) is scheduled for Saturday, October 27, which is a national ACT test date. Students will be administered the MME Day 1 assessments at a national test center, not at the student’s school building (unless, of course, the building is designated as a national test center). This is important to know since only ACT-approved accommodations will be allowed for MME Day 1. If a student has previously been approved to use ACT-approved accommodations, only the ACT approval letter, the MME *Request for ACT-Approved Test Accommodations* form, and documentation stating that the student’s IEP or Section 504 plan is current will need to be sent to ACT when scheduling the student for MME Day 1. However, if the accommodations in the student’s current IEP have changed, the school should consider applying for ACT approval of the new accommodations.

If a student has either a new IEP or Section 504 plan or is new to the district and has not previously been approved to use ACT-approved accommodations, the entire application will need to be completed. More details about the application process for fall will be sent to MME TACs in sufficient time to submit applications and appeal if needed. However, if the appeal is denied, the student will need to be scheduled for the Spring 2008 MME Testing Cycle since state-allowed accommodations are not permitted for MME Day 1 for fall 2007.

**Fall 2007 MME Day 2 and Day 3**

Accommodations for WorkKeys and the Michigan mathematics, science, and social studies components are locally determined by IEP and Section 504 Teams. State-allowed accommodations can be considered for MME Day 2 and Day 3. The dates for administering these assessments are listed in Table 4 below. All Day 2 and Day 3 assessments for students using accommodation(s) **must** be ordered through the OEAA Secure Site ([www.mi.gov/oeaa-secure](http://www.mi.gov/oeaa-secure)). The accommodated materials are *not* automatically ordered if a student has ACT-approved accommodations for MME Day 1.

**Table 4**

Fall 2007 MME Test Cycle			
MME Components	Initial Test Date(s)	Makeup Test Date(s)	Special Testing Test Dates*
MME Day 1 ACT Plus Writing	October 27 National Test Date Administered at National Centers	None	None
MME Day 2 ACT WorkKeys and Michigan Mathematics	October 30	None	October 30 – November 13 (At the local District)
MME Day 2 p.m. or Day 3 a.m. Michigan Science and Social Studies	October 30 p.m. or October 31 a.m.	None	October 30 – November 14 (At the local District)

\* “Special testing” may not begin before the initial test administration. For example, if the initial administration of the Michigan science and social studies assessments is scheduled for October 31, the special testing window for those assessments may not begin before October 31.

## Resources

For more information on the MME, please go to the MME Web page ([www.michigan.gov/mme](http://www.michigan.gov/mme)). There you will find the information and tools described in this article as well as more details on assessing special populations and updates on other issues related to the administration of the MME.