

TO: Members of the State Board of Education

FROM: Tom Watkins, Superintendent

DATE: September 30, 2004

SUBJ: SCHOOL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (SCHOOL SELF ASSESSMENT)

Background

At the September 14 State Board of Education meeting the revision of the school performance indicators was discussed. In the course of that discussion, it was mentioned that Kent Intermediate School District had been commissioned to study and recommend improvements in the indicators that would align them even better with what is known about effective school improvement.

The Board requested a brief summary of the Kent recommendations. Summary pages from the Kent report are attached. The recommendations are categorized as short-term, intermediate, and long-term recommendations.

A major recommendation was that the Department of Education:

“Form a study group to review the current indicators for appropriateness and priority, (i.e. review alignment with current effective schools research and demonstrated impact on student achievement). In addition, the group should study and act on the following:

- A) Add and remove indicators as needed and pare the system down to a more manageable set of truly relevant indicators.
- B) Organize the indicators under *Educational Leadership, Core Academic Processes* (directly concerned with teaching and learning) and *Supporting Processes* (those concerned with school culture and climate).
- C) Prioritize the indicators (adjust their weighting within the non-MEAP portion of EducationYES!).”

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Response

The Office of School Improvement has moved immediately to form the recommended study group, which has been commissioned to develop its recommendations by the school districts' winter break in December.

Issue

The goal of the study group is to recommend improvements in the School Performance Indicators that will align them even more tightly with research based school improvement, and which will increase the public's confidence that there is a relationship between a school's self-assessment and its success in improving student achievement.

There remains the question, however, of whether the study group's recommendations, once approved by the State Board, can be fully implemented and revisions made in time to be included in the Spring 2005 self assessment data collection from the schools. In this respect, another recommendation of the Kent study speaks loudly to the need to inform schools well in advance if changes are going to be made:

“Districts need to be notified as soon as possible of any changes that occur in the indicators as a result of this study. This will help them to identify needs and begin to adapt processes and determine evidence.” (“Evidence” here refers to evidence for the self-ratings schools submit.)

Possible Responses

Until revisions can be approved by the State Board and fully implemented, with proper advance notice to schools:

Option 1 – Temporarily adjust the weight the indicators carry in the report card, from the current 33%, to 25% or 20% or 15%. This would increase the weight carried by the Achievement grade to 75%, 80%, or 85%.

Option 2 – If a school receives an “F” or a “D” in the overall Achievement report card grade, a higher grade for the School Performance Indicators would only allow the Achievement grade to be increased by one grade level category (that is, from “F” to “D,” or from “D” to “C”). (Note: this option would be similar, but in reverse, to the revision the State Board approved earlier for the Achievement “Change” grade.)

Option 3 – If a school received an “F” or a “D” in the overall Achievement report card grade, a higher grade for the School Performance Indicators would not allow the Achievement grade to be any higher than a “C.”

Department staff are not at this time recommending that one of the above, or any other possible options, be chosen, only that the Board be aware that mechanisms such as the above can be used in the next report card if revisions cannot be made, completely or with

proper notice to schools, and the Board is interested in taking steps to increase public confidence in the next report card grades.

As part of our continuous improvement process, staff have been instructed to bring forth to the State Board of Education final recommendations that will address perceived weaknesses in the original performance indicator design. We remain committed to ensuring that Michigan's educational accountability assessment system is more than a single test given on a single day and is one that engenders confidence that it paints an accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses of our schools.

With your continued support and the active engagement of educators, parents, business leaders, and other stakeholders, we will continue to strengthen our educational accountability system.