



MEMORANDUM  
Administration

**TO:** Macomb Superintendents  
**FROM:** Michael R. DeVault, Superintendent  
**DATE:** May 24, 2011  
**RE:** College and Career Readiness

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. DeVault', is written over the 'FROM' line of the memorandum.

Please find enclosed a research document that disputes three statements being communicated by the Michigan Department of Education related to the current state of education and student college readiness in Michigan. The statements, which have been repeated by the Governor and media, are misleading and lack the breadth to form the basis of a valid discussion of student readiness for college and careers. The information in the document includes specific analyses related to the percentage of Michigan students who are 'college and career' ready; the number of schools with zero percent of students who are 'college and career' ready, and the percent of students needing remedial classes as freshman entering community colleges.

The purpose of this document is to support the goal of making certain every student in the state is prepared for post-secondary achievement, and show how the statements noted above are not reliable indicators describing students and their college readiness. Continuing to use these figures as the only indicators of readiness for college or careers does not accurately represent our students, local school districts, colleges, universities, parents and communities.

Leaders need to be responsible in reporting this type of information; otherwise they may further jeopardize our communities and the economic recovery of our state. The information presented is meant to frame the discussion about educational reform using multiple indicators and not rely on figures that are misleading. We would suggest starting with individual student data and analyze multiple assessments to determine the best course of instruction for each student.

After reviewing the document, please contact our office or the Chief Academic Officer for the MISD, Dr. Judith Pritchett (586-228-3470), for further dialogue about the information. Thank you in advance for assisting us in making certain Michigan citizens have balanced information regarding education in this state.

## College and Career Readiness

### Another Viewpoint

May 23, 2011

In recent weeks, the Michigan Department of Education has been referencing three statements related to the current state of education and student college readiness in Michigan. The statements, which have been repeated by the Governor and media, are misleading and lack the breadth to form the basis of a valid discussion of student readiness for college and careers. The first statement is “*Only 16% of the graduates from the Class of 2010 from Michigan High Schools are college and career ready.*” Secondly, “*238 schools in the state have zero percent of the students who are proficient in college and career readiness benchmarks.*” And finally, “*Between 61%- 70% college freshman in Michigan need remedial classes.*”

The purpose of this document is to support the goal of making certain every student in the state is prepared for post-secondary achievement. However, we have researched the above statements and find all of them misrepresent the college readiness of students in Michigan. Further, these figures do not present a fair and accurate report to parents about their students’ ability to succeed beyond high school.

First, the term ‘college and career readiness’, according to the American College Test (ACT), is based on a limited study from 2005 that is outlined in Appendix A. Based on this study, the ACT ‘college and career benchmarks’ represent ACT scores that reflect students who score as well or better on a particular benchmark. When individuals incorrectly state only 16% (according to the ACT publication entitled, *The Condition of College and Career Readiness, Class of 2010* the percentage for Michigan is actually 19%) of the 2010 graduates in Michigan are college and career ready, they are referring to the percentage of students who took the ACT (120,930 students tested in Michigan in 2010) and scored at or above the four benchmark scores as determined by ACT.

(<http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/cccr10/pdf/ConditionofCollegeandCareerReadiness2010.pdf>)

Michigan is only one of six states in the nation that requires all students to take the ACT during their junior year. Illinois tested 145,520 students in 2010 resulting in 23% of their students reaching proficiency in all four subtests of the ACT. Of the six states that test 100% of their students on the ACT, Michigan (at 19%) is higher than Kentucky, Wyoming, and Tennessee. All juniors in Michigan have been required to take the ACT since 2008. Previous to that, in 2006 (72,751 students) and 2007 (78,135 students) the percentage of students meeting or exceeding all four ACT ‘college and career readiness’ benchmarks, was 25% and 26%. Those percentages would exceed the national average in 2010. In examining the national data provided by ACT, and comparing the highest ACT results from the Class of 2011 in Macomb County, with a proportionally similar group of students in Massachusetts (of which 41% met all four College and Career Benchmarks – the highest in the nation), 60% of the Macomb students reach a proficient level for meeting or exceeding all four benchmarks. Furthermore, 61% of Macomb County high school students five years beyond graduation have completed an associate or four year degree.

Dr. Ernie Bauer, Director of Research Evaluation and Assessment Programs from Oakland Schools states, “[t]o announce that only [16%] of Michigan students are ‘college-ready’ is misleading [and incorrect] – unless one begins by explaining that if Michigan students’ ACT scores were just like those of other U.S. students, the percentage deemed to be ‘college-ready’ could be at a level such that 20% would meet or exceed one of the benchmarks, but 80% would not meet that level since one of the four Benchmarks is at the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile rank nationally.”

College and Career readiness' has been prevalent in educational research for years, and is one of the major issues at the national level. The College Board has published numerous articles on 'college and career readiness' indicators. One of those articles states, "Comprehensive assessment should involve the use of multiple measures, and data should be collected from multiple sources. Indices based on only one metric are convenient and easily understood [or misunderstood], yet thousands of students with poor admission test scores or poor grades succeed at college each year. Likewise, thousands of students with high test scores or grades fail to complete their first year, are placed on academic probation or do not succeed at college based on other outcomes" (Mattern, Shaw and Kobrin, 2010; Milewski, Kobrin and Camara, 2002, p. 147).

The second statement related to the 238 schools in the state where students did not reach one of the ACT 'college and career readiness' benchmarks again misrepresents the state of education in Michigan. An analysis of these schools is included in the chart found in Appendix B. The majority of the schools on this list are drop-out recovery programs or alternative high schools with small populations. 18% are charters and only 900 students (less than 1%) from our state are enrolled in comprehensive High Schools. Therefore, continuing to reference the 238 number paints all Michigan High Schools with a negative broad brush and is misleading to say the least.

And finally, the figure that between 61% - 70% of the students entering college needing remedial classes is inaccurate. According to a report in May, 2009 from the Michigan Office of the Auditor General, 22% of the students at community colleges in Michigan enroll in at least one developmental (remedial) education course. This rate is better than the situation across the nation, as the report also states nationwide 42% of community college freshmen are enrolled in remedial classes.

(<http://www.audgen.michigan.gov/comprpt/docs/r032065107.pdf>)

The final conclusion of this document is not to oppose the goal of making certain every student in the state is prepared for post-secondary achievement. The purpose is to dispute these numbers as unreliable in describing students and their college readiness. Continuing to use these figures as the only indicators of readiness for college or careers does not represent our students, local school districts, colleges, universities, parents and communities in this state. Leaders must be responsible in reporting this type of information otherwise they may jeopardize our communities and the economic recover of the state. The information presented is, rather, meant to frame the discussion about educational reform using multiple indicators and not draw inaccurate conclusions. Therefore, extreme caution should be used in referring to the figures of 16%; 238 schools and a 61%-70% remediation rate to describe the students in Michigan. If we want to know how well we are preparing our children for college, Michigan should track student success in college four and five years after High School graduation.

We would also suggest starting with individual student data and analyze multiple assessments to determine the best course of instruction for each student. We need to make certain the data we are analyzing are a reflection of all of the qualities that deem a student to be ready for the next test, the next grade, and post-secondary education.

"College readiness metrics can inform educational policy and even inform educational decisions, yet we must recognize the limitations of projections and predictions, especially as they could result in unintended negative consequences for students and schools." (Wiley, A., Wyatt, J., Camara, W.J. *The Development of a Multidimensional College Readiness Index*, The College Board, 2010, p. 14). We all agree on the ultimate goal of making sure each student is successful – let's make sure we are using multiple data points from a comprehensive assessment system to determine a students' readiness. The last thing we want to do is tell a student, "they aren't college ready" based on one index.

On behalf of the Macomb County Superintendent Association

Submitted by the Macomb Intermediate School District

Anchor Bay Schools

Armada Area Schools

Center Line Public Schools

Chippewa Valley Schools

Clintondale Community Schools

East Detroit Public Schools

Fitzgerald Public Schools

Fraser Public Schools

Lake Shore Public Schools

Lakeview Public Schools

L'Anse Creuse Public Schools

Mount Clemens Community Schools

New Haven Community Schools

Richmond Community Schools

Romeo Community Schools

Roseville Community Schools

South Lake Schools

Utica Community Schools

Van Dyke Public Schools

Warren Consolidated Schools

Warren Woods Public Schools

## **Appendix A**

### **ACT Study**

‘College and Career Readiness Benchmarks’ were developed in 2005 by the American College Test (ACT) organization. A study that included about 50 colleges and 50 community colleges and totaled 75,000 students was used to determine the benchmarks. Based on this study, the ACT ‘college and career benchmarks’ represent ACT scores that reflect students who score as well or better on a particular benchmark. Those students, according to the study, have at least a 50% chance of earning a B or higher and a 75-80% chance of earning a C or higher in specific entry-level college courses. The benchmarks (ACT scores on sub-tests on the ACT exam) are: English 18; Reading 21; Math 22; and Science 24.

**Appendix B**  
**Analysis of the 238 Schools in Michigan**  
**With Zero Percent Students Reaching**  
**College and Career Readiness Benchmarks**

<b>Type of School</b>	<b>State-wide Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Dropout, Recovery/Alternative High Schools</b>	153	64%
<b>Charter Schools</b>	43	18%
<b>Comprehensive Public High Schools (All)</b>	37 (3 closed since report issued)	16%
<b>Comprehensive Public High Schools beyond Detroit area</b>	21	9%
<b>Special Education Centers</b>	5	2%
<b>Number of students served in comprehensive High schools (All)</b>	3699	.007% of entire High School population in Michigan
<b>Number of students served in comprehensive High Schools beyond Detroit area</b>	992	.002% of entire High School population in Michigan