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## Phase II Report and recommendations michigan education assessment test

Michigan Reading Association

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**PHASE II**  
**Report and recommendations**

**michigan education assessment test**

PREPARED BY  
MICHIGAN READING ASSOCIATION

**1975**



## INTRODUCTION

During 1975, the Michigan Reading Association has been involved with an analysis of the 1974 State Assessment Tests. This analysis has involved a large number of people. A conference was held in Flint and produced a report, focusing primarily upon the objectives and items of the test. A second conference was held at St. Mary's Lake and produced this report which focuses upon the following five issues: Dimensions of Reading, Evaluation of Reading Objectives, Evaluation of Test Construction, Use of Test Results, and Professional Program and Instructional Development.

Additional copies of this report are available for \$1.00 from Clarence Brock, St. Clair County ISD, 1111 Delaware Avenue, Marysville, Michigan 48040. Make check payable to the Michigan Reading Association. Those interested in the Phase I Report should send a check for \$2.00 to the above address.

The following MRA members were involved in the preparation of this Phase II Report:

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## ISSUE I: DIMENSIONS OF READING

The dimensions of reading presented in this document includes the following:

- 1) *theoretical*, the nature and function of the actual reading process;
- 2) *social-functional*, the actual act of reading;
- 3) *instructional*, teaching people to read.

*THEORETICAL* - Reading is a perceptual and conceptual process in which the individual with his experiences interacts with the thought, language, and symbols of the writer.

*SOCIAL-FUNCTIONAL* - Reading is a functional process in which the individual seeks, evaluates, and utilizes information for personal, economic, and social development.

*INSTRUCTIONAL* - Reading is a learned process in which instruction is specifically designed to enable the learner to effectively perform.

### *Findings:*

In examining the objectives for the Communications Skills, we found great inconsistencies in relationship to scope and competency. A frame of reference was missing that would have given the objectives cohesion and consistency.

### *Conclusion:*

Sufficient time and effort was not invested in developing a reading frame of reference prior to writing the reading objectives and developing the test items.

### *Recommendations:*

- 1) The Michigan Department of Education make a commitment to the need for a definition of reading.
- 2) The Michigan Department of Education commit themselves to apply the definition to the formulation of reading objectives and construction and interpretation of the Reading Assessment Tests.

## ISSUE II: EVALUATION OF STATE OF MICHIGAN MINIMAL COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES - READING

The issue of objectives is critical. The Phase I study analyzed the objectives in isolation and concluded that many of the objectives are minimal, meet an educational need, and are desirable. Further examination of the actual content of the test items posed a dilemma. The specific examination of comprehension, reading level, cultural bias, and other criteria raised the need for analyzing test objectives and test content simultaneously. Therefore, the Phase I single-factor study demonstrated the critical need for a more precise and comprehensive definition of reading. The definition, along with the multi-factor analysis, resulted in the decision that the original conclusions about isolated objectives reached in Phase I were inadequate.

Using the specified three dimensions of reading, the MRA Phase II study reveals that the Michigan Department of Education Assessment Program is based on objectives that reflect specific skills in *isolation*. However, the successful attainment of these specific objectives does not necessarily identify a person as a reader.

Further, the study finds:

- 1) The reading objectives are *incomplete* when compared with any of the three dimensions of reading.
- 2) The reading objectives do not represent a consensus based upon professional study.
- 3) The reading objectives are tested as if they are of equal importance to the analysis of reading achievement.
- 4) The validity of the reading objectives has not been established.



*Conclusions:*

- 1) The reading objectives do not reflect or fulfill the theoretical and social-functional dimensions of reading.
- 2) The reading objectives represent a fragmented instructional rationale.

*Recommendations:*

- 1) The reading objectives be revised and/or rewritten using the Michigan Reading Association's specified three dimensions of reading.
- 2) An ongoing evaluation program be set up for objectives revision.
- 3) The development and revision of the reading objectives involve national and state reading experts.

### ISSUE III: EVALUATION OF TEST CONSTRUCTION

When examining the components of the Assessment Tests, the Phase I study analyzed the test passages and items in isolation. That study revealed that many of the items test mastery of isolated objectives, measure comprehension, and do not require changes. Further examination of the actual content of the test items and passages compared with the findings on cultural bias, comprehension, and readability raised other issues. Therefore, the Phase I single-factor study of test items demonstrated the great need for a multi-factor analysis and resulted in the decision that the original conclusions about isolated test items reached in Phase I were inadequate.

*Findings of the Phase I study include:*

- 1) A narrow-range test (both in difficulty levels and in content of passages) is given to the student population with a known-wide range of reading abilities.
- 2) Test items are more difficult to read than the passages.
- 3) Passages reflect cultural and sexual biases.
- 4) The test items are not valid measures of the objectives.
- 5) A balance of difficulty of reading material is not present between the fourth and seventh grade tests. A balance of content is absent in the tests.
- 6) The passing score for each objective is determined in a statistical sense to account for a component of measurement error (guessing). If individual objectives scores (pass or fail) are to be used, what constitutes passing an objective should be determined empirically. A difference in reading performance, as determined by external criteria, should exist between those readers who pass the objective and those readers who fail the objective.
- 7) Only one procedure for determining face validity is utilized — that of having teachers write items for the identified objectives.

*Conclusion:*

Criterion Referenced Tests written with a narrow range of difficulty cannot provide data on reading achievement where the student population has demonstrated a wide range of reading abilities.

*Recommendations:*

- 1) The State Department reassess the value of a criterion-referenced test versus a norm-referenced test for gathering information concerning student reading achievement.
- 2) The test be revised in order that cultural and sexual biases be eliminated.
- 3) The test be a valid measure of the reading objectives.
- 4) The passages and related test items be of similar reading difficulty.
- 5) Reading selections include a more representative sample of reading material contained throughout the school curriculum.
- 6) Reading authorities categorize each test item for its corresponding objectives.
- 7) Teachers be asked to identify objectives essential to effective reading prior to the preparation of test items for those objectives.



## ISSUE IV: USE OF TEST RESULTS

In order to analyze this issue, it was necessary to review the 1974-75 MEAP documents provided by the Michigan Department of Education describing the major purposes of the Michigan Educational Assessment Program. The major purposes were listed by the State as "objectives" in the document *First Report - Objectives and procedures 1974-75 - Michigan Department of Education*. The word "objective" used in this context by the State refers to purpose and should not be confused with the use of the same word referring to the State's minimal objectives. The three purposes (objectives) following are taken directly from the MDE First Report, 1974-75, pages 7, 8, and 10.

The *first purpose* of the MEAP is to provide the State Board of Education, the Executive Office, the Legislature, and citizens with data describing the levels of basic skills attainment and other relevant descriptive data about each of Michigan's schools and school districts.

The *second purpose* of the MEAP is to provide local educators with specific information about the levels of basic skills, educational attainment of students and of other relevant descriptive data for their own school districts.

The *third purpose* of the Michigan Educational Assessment Program is to provide information regarding the progress of its school districts and schools over a period of years to the State Board of Education, the Executive Office, and the Legislature, and citizens.

To determine the usefulness of the MEAP test results, the following criteria were applied to each of the three above purposes: (1) the audience served; (2) decisions to be made by the audience; (3) information necessary for the making of these decisions; (4) the value of the MEAP test in making these decisions; and (5) our rationale as to the appropriateness of the use of the MEAP test results in the decision-making process.

*Purpose I* states that the audience is the State Board of Education, the Executive Office, the Legislature, and citizens. The decisions this audience is required to make are basically financial. The types of information needed by this audience include: (1) the level of attainment of minimal objectives; (2) descriptive data of K-12 population on human and financial resource variables; and (3) the identification of students qualifying for special programs. This study purports that the MEAP test supplies limited information about pupil achievement of certain minimal objectives and human and financial resource information.

*Purpose II* states that the audience is the local educators (local boards, administrators, teachers, and specialists). This audience makes decisions about curriculum, personnel, and expenditure of appropriations. The MEAP test provides limited instructional information.

*Purpose III* states that the audience is the State Board of Education, the Executive Office, the Legislature, and the citizens. The decisions this audience is required to make are basically financial. The type of information is the degree of longitudinal progress in the state's educational system. The MEAP test is partially adequate for this purpose.

### *Summary and/or Conclusions:*

1. The test is useful in determining the districts' level of mastery of some of the minimal objectives, providing the local school's curriculum accepts the sequence of the objectives tested and the test is valid.
2. The classroom teacher can quickly identify the tested reading and math objectives of individual students on the Classroom Listing Report.
3. The test provides limited data to determine mastery of isolated objectives, but it



does not pinpoint individual reading needs; hence, it could not be used as a diagnostic instrument for word attack skills, speed, accuracy, vocabulary, and instructional levels.

4. It provides comparative information on the status of the human and financial resources in the local community and the state.
5. The test is limited in its use because there is no information to correlate the MEAP with other standardized tests which local schools may be using. Without this correlation, confusion and discrepancies are generated for local educators.

*Recommendations:*

1. The SBE recognize the extent of testing and assessment currently conducted by local districts to determine if a need exists for administration of MEAP Test.
2. If there is a need for statewide assessment, the State Board of Education should move to a random sampling of schools in order to satisfy the requirements of Purpose No. 1.
3. The objectives be revised to conform with a definition of reading established by in-depth professional study of reading experts.
4. The Michigan Department of Education add to their staff a reading expert to coordinate rewriting the objectives and assist with the revision of the State Assessment Test in Reading.
5. The State Board of Education not conduct Reading Assessment Tests until more effective assessments be developed.

## ISSUE V: PROFESSIONAL PROGRAM AND INSTRUCTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As one studies the state objectives, three concerns arise. These concerns pertain to the comprehensiveness and completeness of the objectives, the consistency of state objectives with local reading programs and materials, and the dilemma created by any conflict between local and state objectives.

This document reports no evidence to support either the comprehensiveness nor completeness of the state objectives.

Only a local district staff can answer the other concerns. There is overlapping between the state objectives and objectives of any local program and materials.

School districts can identify many reasons for establishing reading objectives. However, two critical considerations are defining the reading skills and knowledge local districts want students to learn and prioritizing reading instruction needs for the district to improve the quality of decision making. Before objectives can legitimately be developed, a number of major decisions need to be made by the local board of education and other appropriate people. These major decisions include the following:

- 1) Establishing district goals for reading,
- 2) Establishing district policies for reading,
- 3) Determine staff training,
- 4) Identifying reading expectations placed on students,
- 5) Identifying teaching expectations,

Whenever a school district attempts a major task such as developing reading objectives, a well designed implementation plan is necessary. Planning for implementation assumes key people are included in the task.

A suggested organizational and planning format for the development of reading objectives would include a representative committee to design a local plan of action. The objective writing committee's responsibilities would include investigating the degree of need for development of local reading objectives; building commitment within the district for development of objectives; and identifying alternatives for developing objectives. When formulating reading objectives at the local level, many representative groups

should and must be used. Teacher-involvement is critical if there is to be total operational commitment.

*Conclusions:*

- 1) Local programs depend on commitment, study, and planning.
- 2) Resources, both human and financial, are the key factors in influencing reading improvement.

*Recommendations:*

A formal statement of involvement and commitment be identified that will define how objectives be used; determine who will use objectives; create staff development programs in use of objectives; provide a feedback process on changing of objectives; provide a trial period for use of the objectives; establish an evaluation process of program objectives; and provide a vehicle for community awareness.

THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION AND/OR LEGISLATURE DECLARE A MORATORIUM ON READING ASSESSMENT UNTIL THE OBJECTIVES ARE REVISED AND A NEW TEST IS DEVELOPED



