



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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State Board Discusses Key Education YES! Issues

Three members of the State Board Education's Accreditation Advisory Committee discussed key issues of the state's recently established school accreditation system with Board members during the Board's meeting in Monroe County today.

The Committee includes five nationally recognized experts in accountability, measurement, school improvement, and accreditation systems. Philip Kearney, Sharon Lewis, and Edward Roeber listened carefully to the Board's direction and concerns regarding the Board's Education YES! accreditation system. Two of the Committee members - Lawrence Lezotte and Mark Reckase - were unable to attend the Board's meeting.

State Board Vice President Sharon L. Gire shared her concerns regarding timelines for implementation of the system, the viability of the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) test as an assessment tool, and the use of letter grades for individual school buildings.

"We need to be about the business of ensuring that teachers are teaching and that children are learning," Gire said. "These issues will be critical as we establish cut scores and letter grading systems for our schools. Our goal is to develop a system based on multiple measures that truly assesses school quality and I am confident that our experts can help us develop a substantive and meaningful system."

The State Board has charged its Accreditation Advisory Committee with ensuring that Education YES! is aligned with federal legislation, setting distribution of scores for schools in Michigan, and establishing school performance indicators. The Board approved Education YES! in March.

The Board also received word today that the four chairs of the State Legislature's education and school aid appropriations subcommittees have accepted Education YES! - the State Board of Education's recently adopted schools accreditation system. According to state law, any new accreditation system must also be accepted by the Legislature.

"We are very pleased with the leadership shown today by the four chairs of the House and Senate Education and School Aid Committees to affirm Education YES! as it was approved in March because they are recognizing, as the Board has, that Michigan students are more than a single test on a single day," said State Board of Education President Kathleen N. Straus. "The Department of Education will continue to move aggressively and implement our system by year's end."

In other business, the Board adopted a set of policies supporting service learning for Michigan's schools.

The policies encourage public schools to integrate service learning components into the classroom learning environment, to research and utilize service learning as a powerful teaching method to help enhance learning, and to select and integrate academic lessons from service learning to enrich student understanding of democracies.

Finally, the Board listened to a report regarding the State Board of Education's and Michigan Department of Education's public effort to support teaching as a profession and to enhance the image of teachers.

The Department of Education has conducted an analysis of current recognition programs, and has created a strategic plan to improve the profile of Michigan's teachers, through the State Board of Education's Ensuring Excellent Educators Task Force. The program's overall objective is to lift up teaching as a profession and to optimize the value that teachers bring to neighborhood public schools - the bedrock of our democracy.

Members of the State Board spent much of Wednesday touring schools in Monroe County as part of their visit. The State Board also hosted a public forum Wednesday evening to discuss its recently developed report regarding school financing issues in Michigan's schools.

The next meeting of the State Board of Education is scheduled for Thursday, June 13 in Lansing.

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