



# News Release

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## **Michigan ACT Numbers Stable In Face of National Decline Thinking To Replace Lifting For a Living in Michigan**

Although level when compared to a national decline, state officials today called for a gentle push on the part of schools, communities, and families to improve the state's composite score on ACT assessments.

The Michigan Department of Education, through its local educational partners, has several initiatives in place to support and improve schools as they endeavor to educate children.

"We believe these initiatives would lead to higher test scores for those students that take the ACT," said Michigan Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Watkins. "It is important to frame these scores in an appropriate context - students are more than a single test on a single day."

The state's new accreditation system, titled Education YES!, will require that all Michigan high schools help their students prepare plans for life after high school. Department officials anticipate releasing the first report card of Michigan schools in December. This report card will also directly align with the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act, the new package of federal education requirements.

The Department of Education also is working to implement the No Child Left Behind Act to provide schools with additional resources. Last week, Michigan became one of the first states in the country to receive \$11.5 million for the Act's Reading First initiative.

Further, the State Board of Education has completed initial reports from five educational task forces, which support its overall strategic goal of improving academic achievement in all schools, especially those that have chronically underperformed. The ongoing implementation of the task force recommendations will be critical as Michigan works to stay the nation's educational leader.

"The status quo is good - but we can be even better. In a global society, we must prepare our children to become creative thinkers," said Kathleen Straus, State Board of Education President. "Education is far too important to be the sole responsibility of educators. It is incumbent upon all of us to play an active role in improving our schools, through involvement, tutoring, and mentoring."

Michigan citizens need to recognize that state academic standards are among the highest in the country, and that schools are held to a much higher standard.

"We want to trumpet the success of our schools, but at the same time rally to the challenge of doing more to improve our ACT assessment scores. Our expectations are very high," Watkins said. "We want to ensure that all of our high school students will be ready for their next phase of life, whether that be university or community college, or the world of work."

The national average composite score for the ACT assessment is 20.8 for the high school graduating class of 2002, a year that included a record number of ACT test-takers. In 2001, the nation's composite score on the ACT was 21.0, a number that had been level since 1998. More than 1.1 million members of the class of 2002 took the ACT assessment nationwide.

In Michigan, the average composite score again was 21.3. Approximately 68 percent of all high school graduates in Michigan, or 71,882 students took the assessment in 2002, down slightly from 72,450 in 2001. Michigan's score has remained stable at 21.3 since 1998.