



Responding to the Change in MEAP Writing Administration

**A Statement from the Michigan Reading Association,
Co-Signed by the Michigan Council of Teachers of English, the Michigan Department of
Education, the Michigan State University Literacy Achievement Research Center, and the
National Writing Project of Michigan**

The Michigan Department of Education has eliminated the MEAP Writing Assessment in all but grades 4 and 7. This decision was driven largely by logistical, financial, and measurement quality concerns, not a judgment about the value of writing (Flanagan, 2009).

With all the many curricular pressures we face, it is tempting to respond to this change in the MEAP administration schedule by reducing time spent on writing and devoting that time to reading instruction or other areas.

The Michigan Reading Association strongly discourages districts, schools, and teachers from reducing attention to writing in light of the changes in MEAP administration. Please consider the following:

- According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and other assessments, many U.S. students do not attain target levels of writing proficiency (e.g., National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges, 2003; Persky, Daane, & Jin, 2003; Salahu-Din, Persky, & Miller, 2008) or high levels of writing self-efficacy and motivation (Parajes, 2003).
- Writing proficiency is central to success in later schooling, to active citizenship, and to many 21st Century jobs (Freedman, Dyson, Flower, & Chafe, 1987; Kirsch, Jungeblut, Jenkins, & Kolstad, 1993; National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges, 2003; Smith, 2000).
- Due to the interrelated nature of reading and writing (Shanahan, 2006), writing improves reading (Bangert-Drowns, Hurley, & Wilkinson, 2004; Berninger, Abbot, Abbot, Graham, & Richards, 2002; Collins, Lee, Phelps, Kim, & Fox, 2008; Tierney & Shanahan, 1996).
- Many promising or highly effective approaches to reading comprehension instruction involve considerable writing (e.g., Guthrie et al., 2009; Klingner, Vaughn, & Schumm, 1998; Raphael, Pardo, Highfield, & McMahon, 1997; Saunders & Goldenberg, 1999).
- Writing can play important roles across the curriculum (e.g., Bangert-Drowns et al., 2004; Hand, Wallace, & Yang, 2004; Keys, Hand, Prain, & Collins, 1999).
- Teachers who are more effective have students writing much more of the time than teachers who are less effective (e.g., Allington & Johnston, 2002; Pressley, Allington, Wharton-McDonald, Block, & Morrow, 2001; Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, & Rodriguez, 2005; Taylor, Peterson, Pearson, & Rodriguez, 2002).

The Michigan Reading Association urges all districts, schools, and teachers in the State of Michigan to continue to devote the time to writing instruction that this important area richly deserves.

Related Statements

- National Council of Teachers of English. (2008). *Writing now: A policy research brief*. www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Resources/PolicyResearch/WrtgResearchBrief.pdf
- National Council of Teachers of English Executive Committee Writing Study Group. (2004). *NCTE Beliefs about the teaching of writing*. <http://www.ncte.org/positions/statements/writingbeliefs>
- National Writing Project. (2008). Research brief: Writing Project professional development for teachers yields gains in student writing. <http://www.nwp.org/cs/public/print/resource/2668>
- Graham, S., & Perin, D. (2007). *Writing next: Effective strategies to improve writing of adolescents in middle and high schools – A report to Carnegie Corporation of New York*. Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education. http://www.all4ed.org/publication_material/reports/writing_next

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