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ANNUAL EDUCATION REPORT CARDS; SINGLE RECORD STUDENT DATA BASE FOR MEIS DATA WAREHOUSE

House Bill 5212 (Substitute H-2) First Analysis (4-13-00)

Sponsor: Rep. Charles LaSata
Committee: Education

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

Under the Revised School Code, school districts are required to prepare annual education reports and to share the information contained in the reports with the community in a public meeting. Some districts also distribute the reports, either sending them home with school students, or mailing them to parents and other taxpayers. The annual reports summarize a school district's effectiveness, and increase its accountability to the taxpayers who support it. The districts' education reports are newsworthy, and serve as a kind of self-evaluation, so that citizens can learn how their tax dollars are spent, and also get some idea of how the districts measure their success. Customarily the annual reports include a prominent display of the district's standardized MEAP test scores as one indicator of the district's success. (See *BACKGROUND INFORMATION*, "Measuring Growth vs. Current Status", below.)

Although the annual education reports are customized to the particular school district, all districts are required by law to report at a minimum several indicators: for example, the percentage of parents who attend parent-teacher conferences; a report about the curricular core subjects; the MEAP scores by grade and subject area for three years to allow comparison; each school's accreditation status; each school's special programs; an introduction to the districts' school improvement committees; the results of the high school proficiency tests; and the drop-out and attendance rates.

Customized reports are full of important information for citizens in a school district; however, the reports vary, district by district. If parents relocate to a new school district and send their children to the schools of that community, they will find some variation when they compare the two school districts' annual reports. The variation also is noticed by state-level or national-level policymakers who wish to collect the "snapshots"

that exhibit the students' current status in several school districts.

In order to make school reports more uniform, in the hope that parents will shop for schools with greater ease, some have suggested that a law be passed to standardize the annual education reports. Further, it is suggested that the new standardized annual report correspond both in its format and substance to the reporting requirements of the Department of Education's "Single Record Student Data Base," a reporting system that has been under design since 1996. The new data base will make public considerably more scores and records about each student, school, and school district, and allow comparisons within a district and between districts. (See *BACKGROUND INFORMATION*, "MEIS Data Warehouse," below.) The database, expected to be fully operational by November 2001 within the Michigan Education Information System, will build on individual student data elements, and is intended to increase schools' accountability to their customers. In addition, those who propose more uniform reporting also suggest that new kinds of information be added to the reporting requirements, so that the annual education reports would include ACT scores and graduation rates, the class size for developmental kindergarten through grade 3, the amount of money spent on instructional services, and information about the composition of the school staff such as the level of the teachers' education.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

House Bill 5212 (H-2) would amend the Revised School Code to add reporting requirements and to set new deadlines for a school district's annual educational report. In the preparation of the reports, the bill specifies new responsibilities for schools, school districts, intermediate school districts, the state board,

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and the Department of Education. The bill also would require school districts to submit some of their reports electronically and in a format that would conform with the Michigan Education Information System when the department has that system fully implemented.

Annual school district educational report. Currently the board members of a school district must prepare and, before September 1, submit to the state board an educational report for each school that it wants accredited. Then the school district must distribute its annual educational report to the public before October 15. The report must contain information about each public school's accreditation status, the status of the district's school improvement plan, a copy of and information about the district's core academic curriculum (either its own, or the model core curriculum recommended by the state board of education), a report about aggregate student achievement based upon certain kinds of test results, the district's retention report, the number of parents who participate in parent-teacher conferences, and other information about students who are enrolled in college level equivalent courses. These components of the educational report would continue to be required, although the school district could choose to report its test scores only as they pertain to students who had been enrolled in the school district for at least two years before the test date. In addition, a few new requirements would be added by the bill, as noted below.

Components of the annual report modified or eliminated. Under the bill, a model core academic curriculum could be developed by the state board, or by the superintendent of public instruction. Under current law, the model core academic curriculum is developed only by the state board of education, and it may be adopted or adapted by a school district. In addition, the bill would eliminate the requirements to describe in the annual educational report both the process by which students are assigned to particular schools, and the description of each specialized school. Further, it would eliminate the requirement that participation in parent-teacher conferences be reported by elementary, middle, and secondary school level, and require instead the number and percentage of parents who participate in each school.

School district reporting requirements by school. Under the bill, a school district would be required to prepare and submit its annual educational report to the intermediate school district to which it is constituent, and to the Department of Education by July 1 (rather

than only to the state board by September 1 as the law now requires), and that report would include the information described above for each school in the district. Further, for each of its high schools, the district also would be required to report four new kinds of information: a) the number and percentage of students who were enrolled in a career and technical preparation program or course in the immediately preceding school year, disaggregated by grade level; b) the total number of students who took the American College Test (ACT) and the average composite score, as well as the percentage of those in grade 12 who took the ACT (although a school district could choose to report these data only as they pertain to students who had been enrolled in the school district for at least two school years before taking the test); c) the number of students who took the ACT Work Keys Test, the average composite score, and the percentage of students in grade 12 who had taken the test; and, d) the graduation rate for students in grade 12 calculated as directed by the department.

In addition, a school district would be required to report for each school actual class size and average class size for grades DK-3, with the average expressed as a single average for all classes rounded to one decimal place. Further, the annual educational report also would be required to include a) the proportion of school operating funds allocated to the school that would be used for instructional services; b) the composition of the school's staff (expressed as total numbers and percentages to distinguish instructional, administrative, and support and other noninstructional staff); c) the number and percentage of teachers with a master's, doctorate, or specialist's degree; and, d) the number and percentage of teachers with a valid teaching certificate. (Under the bill, "instructional services" means services reported as instructional services in the annual comprehensive financial report, known as 'Form B', submitted to the department.)

School district reporting requirements for district as a whole. In addition to the information about each school described above, the board of a school district would be required to submit at the same time to the intermediate school district and to the Department of Education all of the following information concerning the school district as a whole: a) the total amount of the school district's total school operating budget and the amount and percentage of that total that is used for teacher salaries and benefits; b) the amount and percentage of the school district's total school operating budget used for administrative salaries and benefits; c) the amount of the school district's

foundation allowance or per pupil payment for the corresponding state fiscal year as specified in section 20 of the State School Aid Act; and d) a comparison of these figures with the immediately preceding school year.

Finally, the board of a school district would be required to ensure that a copy of the annual educational report card for each school were available at the school and at the board office, and to provide a copy of the report without charge to any interested person upon request.

Department of Education requirements. Not later than July 15 each year, and using the information described above, the Department of Education would be required to compile and provide to each intermediate school district a report of the statewide averages, and also the intermediate school district's average, for each category of information required in the educational report for which a statewide and intermediate school district average can be calculated. Under the bill, the Department of Education (rather than the state board) would be required to prepare and make available to school districts and to intermediate schools districts suggested methodology for accumulating the information required for annual educational reports, and also a model annual educational report card for a school district or intermediate school district to consider as it implements these requirements.

Intermediate school district requirements. Not later than August 15 each year, an intermediate school district would be required to do all of the following: a) compile all of the information submitted by the school districts; b) develop an annual educational report card for each constituent school district that contains all of the information submitted by the school district, and that contains intermediate school district and statewide averages for each category of information for which those averages can be calculated (and when appropriate compiled both by individual school and by school district); and, c) provide a copy of the report card to the constituent school district, the department, and to each newspaper of general circulation in the school district. Not later than August 15 each year, the intermediate school district also would be required to provide a copy of the report card to the parent or legal guardian of each student enrolled or registered in the constituent school district. However, beginning in 2003 or upon notification from the department that the Michigan Education Information System (MEIS) had been implemented, whichever was earlier, an intermediate school district could satisfy this notice requirement by providing a copy of the annual education report card to

parents and legal guardians by making the report available on the Internet.

Review by superintendent of public instruction. At least once every five years, the superintendent of public instruction would be required to review and evaluate the categories of information required, and the ways that information would be collected and disseminated to ensure that parents and the general public were being provided with the information necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of the public schools. If the superintendent determined that additional information would be desirable, then he or she would be required to recommend statutory changes to the legislature.

In conducting the review of information categories contained in the annual school report, the superintendent would be required to consult with a) the Michigan Chamber of Commerce, b) the Michigan Association of Realtors, c) the Michigan Association of School Boards, d) the Michigan Association of School Administrators, e) the Michigan Parent-Teacher Association, f) the Michigan Education Association, and g) the Michigan Federation of Teachers and School-Related Personnel.

Michigan Education Information System (MEIS). House Bill 5212 also specifies that upon notification from the department that it had implemented the Michigan Education Information System, both of the following would apply: a) school districts would be required to submit the information required under the bill to the department electronically in a format as it prescribed; and b) the department, instead of the school districts, would be required to calculate the percentages and averages pertaining to students enrolled in career and technical preparation programs, students who took the ACT Work Keys Test, the graduation rate, class sizes, the proportion of school operating funds used for instructional services, staff composition, teachers' educational levels, and information about the districts operating budget. A school district also would be required to continue reporting the other information under those provisions.

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Measuring growth vs. current status. Meaningful measures of student learning--the kind of accountability that matters most--must attend to the ways that student work improves over time. An ideal accountability measure is, then, an assessment design

that allows for higher quality content and higher quality instruction--a design that holds a learner accountable in humane ways that promote even more learning. The assessments and the assessment system must be able to chart human growth.

Educational policy researcher and university teacher Dick Elmore points out in the *American Educator* (Winter 1999-2000), that it is fashionable for public schools, and for market schools (whether based on vouchers, charters, or capitation grants in which schools get public money based on the number of students they attract), to operate as though they believe that quality and performance in education are strictly matters of personal taste. He notes that this underlying presumption implies nothing about either the content or the quality of instruction. In contrast, when a school attends to content and the quality of instruction, it moves beyond snapshots of school effectiveness, and attends to student and teacher work. When a school does that, its assessment practices must change; it must move beyond standardized test measures.

Elmore also co-edited the most recent report published by the Board on Testing and Assessment of the National Research Council entitled "Testing, Teaching, and Learning: A Guide for States and School Districts" issued in September 1999. In that report (prepared to evaluate the ambitious goals of the \$8 billion 1994 Title I Compensatory Education Act before it is reauthorized by the U.S. Congress this year), the council notes that "the construction of assessment and accountability systems cannot be isolated from their purposes, which are to improve the quality of instruction and ultimately the learning of students." The report then proposes "a framework that assumes the purpose of assessment and accountability systems is to improve the quality of instruction in schools and school systems, rather than simply to measure and report school effectiveness."

The February 2000 issue of *Educational Leadership*, a journal for teachers, is devoted to assessments that chart student growth. The issue explores the need to move beyond one-dimensional state accountability systems, the kind in which only a student's current status matters. As the journal notes, standards-based reform is about setting higher standards and measuring the attainment of those standards in criterion-referenced, rather than norm-referenced, ways. But the reform also has (or used to have) two larger goals: First, as students progress through the school system, the standards for their performance will rise steadily until these standards describe what young adults need

to be family members, citizens, and workers; and second, through the process, educators will find ways to support students who do not yet perform at the standard. Thus, the reform is (or once was) a social compact to promote growth over time in all segments of the population. The authors of this special issue worry that these goals, which constitute a pledge of support for longitudinal growth, have been replaced with the technologies of standard-based testing, analysis, and public reporting, when instead the two assessment approaches--longitudinal and snapshot--should have been joined.

Presenting evidence that standardized tests fall short, the authors of the special issue point out that when a state's tests are designed to signal, rather than to portray or to explain, teachers cannot get information from the assessment system about whether their work is producing student growth. This thwarts the teachers' fundamental challenge, which is to contribute added value for each year of schooling to what a student knows, can do, and will do.

To establish the kind of assessment system that portrays or explains growth over time, policy makers would need to alter some of the most ingrained assessment habits. For example, it would be necessary to move from cross-sectional to longitudinal designs; to move from sampling the domain and instead concentrate on valued performances; to move from achievement levels and instead agree about developmental scales; and, to move from league tables to growth curves.

One Michigan school district that has moved beyond standardized tests as accountability measures, in order to experiment with the kind of assessment system that portrays and explains growth, is Hillsdale Public Schools. Hillsdale educators call their efforts authentic assessment, and they succeed in measuring students' growth in ability over time, not simply showcasing their students' current status. Teachers in Hillsdale, in collaboration with a faculty member at Adrian College and with the support Lenawee Intermediate School District, recently published a book that explains their approach. The book, entitled "The Portfolio Guidebook: Implementing Quality in an Age of Standards", explains their three-year teacher research project. During their project, they designed systematic and analytic rating scales for literacy portfolios that yield scores for groups of students at early elementary, middle school, and high school levels by examining the writing in three school districts. The assessment system that results is one that attempts to balance

student, teacher, and school purposes for those who use portfolio approaches to teach and assess writing.

More specifically, the portfolios of writing the Hillsdale teachers collect contain a maximum of five pieces of writing, including all of the parts and drafts that are available. The student chooses two pieces, and writes a letter of review of those writings. The review letter also is placed in the portfolio, serving as a kind of introduction to it. Then the teacher in consultation with the student but with the teacher making the final selection, determines three pieces. These include pieces the teacher judges to be a representative early, middle, and late samples of the student's writing and accomplishment during a year. The teacher, too, writes a letter of review and introduction, explaining observed strengths, weaknesses, and next steps in coaching that might be productive for students.

During their authentic assessment research and design project, the teacher researchers decided not to use a holistic score (one score for each writing sample) because it explains too little. Instead, they developed an analytic rating instrument that has six terms or categories. The areas they review are fluency, development, organization, style/voice, revision, and editing. In order to be precise in their definitions of each category, they use either a five- or six-point scale. To learn how to use their rating system, the teachers engaged in a series of six, three-hour meetings which allowed for practice rating and much discussion.

Now, after practice, the teachers can gather during rating week--the week after school recesses each summer--to evaluate writing portfolios. They do not focus on students' final standing for the year, but rather more on growth and development in different categories over the year's time. They also chose not to focus on reporting individual student scores, but rather to report the development of the grade level group. To achieve their group focus, they developed an "Amount of Change" statistical reporting chart. The chart displays the six categories, and allows them to array the number of points each student has improved, and then also to tabulate the results for that grade.

In concluding their book, the teacher researchers argue that schools should develop a sufficient variety of rich assessment methods so that all of the stakeholders in the educational experience are accommodated with helpful communications. They observe that state-required or district-mandated tests and one-time writing assessments have profoundly influenced school practice, reducing much of a student's school

experience to drill and memorization in order to, supposedly, perform well on such tests. Instead of working over time on relatively more authentic reading and writing tasks in relation to more real-world standards of quality, the students practice narrowly for the testing moment. They conclude that the damage this has done to students--to their potential as learners and human beings--and to the national level of literacy, is incalculable.

MEIS data warehouse. According the working draft (dated 8-3-99) of a report entitled a "Technical Manual and Data Dictionary", the Michigan Education Information System (MEIS) is a process that was begun by the Michigan Department of Education in 1996. (The manual itself was developed through the cooperative efforts of 12 pilot sites that included local and intermediate school districts, the Michigan Department of Education, the organization of Michigan School Business Officials, and the Michigan Pupil Accounting and Attendance Association.) The purpose of the information system, MEIS, is to develop an infrastructure for the educational community that would gather school data via the Internet, store the data in a warehouse that is secure, and make the data accessible for decision makers. The goal is to establish the essential student data elements that must be maintained and reported by districts on each public school student in Michigan. This goal--to establish student data elements--is referred to as the Single Record Student Database.

The primary focus of the Single Record Student Database is the accurate accounting of student information which, when stored in the MEIS warehouse, will be relationally linked to teacher, fiscal, and performance data. The system is expected to replace the current paper driven method which captures aggregate information by school. It will require that 1) the educational community move from multiple data elements and different definitions to a common language, 2) school districts move from multiple collections to single student records, 3) the department move from multiple databases to a single relational data model, and 4) the state move from several reporting dates to three reporting dates.

The data system builds from individual student records including test scores. Each student will be assigned a ten-digit unique identification code (UIC). The creation of the UIC allows relations to be created and linked with achievement, fiscal, and teacher databases; allows tracking of students from the fall to the end of year count as well as longitudinal studies; and, provides

the flexibility of merging data from different files to promote richer analysis without threatening exposure to personally identifiable information. According to the report, each school district would be responsible for the accuracy and completeness of its student data, while the intermediate school district would use a cooperatively developed error checking process to validate district data. Student data would be entered and exported from a school district only through acceptable channels and by staff with appropriate clearance. Data would be transmitted from intermediate school districts to the department using a file transfer protocol at the department transfer site: FTP://mde.state.mi.us.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

The House Fiscal Agency notes the bill would have no state fiscal impact. There would be an indeterminate cost increase at the school district and intermediate school district levels for compiling data, submitting it to the state, and distributing the report cards to the public free of charge. (3-10-00)

The House Fiscal Agency also notes that funding in the amount of \$750,000 is included for the MEIS data warehouse in the fiscal year 1999-2000 Department of Education budget. Although design of the system began in 1996, this is the system's first year of funding in the state budget. The MEIS Warehouse will comprise five components: single student records, finance, student performance, building infrastructure, and personnel. At a later date the warehouse will expand to include other data sets such as the census or employment information. Ultimately, the warehouse will integrate with the Geographic Informational System (GIS) being developed by the Department of Management and Budget. It is the intent that the GIS will link MEIS data with information from the state police, hospitals, and other entities throughout the state.

Of the \$750,000 appropriated in the current fiscal year, the department has expended \$297,800 to contract with Bull Information Systems to design the physical and logical layout of the warehouse. This phase will be completed in spring 2000. The single student records, finance, and the personnel data sets will be implemented during this phase. Then the second phase of the project will incorporate the two remaining data sets: building infrastructure and personnel. Both components will be ready for data population by late summer 2000. A portion of the \$750,000 is also being

used to hire three staff to manage the warehouse. The estimated completion date of the warehouse is November 2001.

For fiscal year 2000-2001, the proposed funding level as passed the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee is \$426,000 for ongoing administrative costs. That appropriations appears in the Department of Education's budget within the data and technology appropriation unit. (3-13-00)

ARGUMENTS:

For:

Some states, including Texas, provide to parents a lot of information about the schools their children attend using a single statewide reporting system. Michigan should adopt the same approach. Already Michigan school districts report indicators of their success, but their reports are not uniform in either style or substance. The lack of uniformity can confuse parents as they select a school within a school district that is best for their children.

For:

The Single Record Student Database will give parents and policymakers a more accurate account of student information which, when stored in the MEIS warehouse, will allow linkages between teacher, fiscal, and performance data. The single system will replace many reports, and move the state from several reporting dates to three. The new system will build on and report individual student records, while the current system captures only aggregate information by school. The MEIS Single Record Student Database will guide the educational community from multiple data elements and different definitions to a common language. It requires changes in record-keeping and reporting protocols at three levels of the educational system: within and between local school districts; intermediate school districts; and, the state department.

For:

This legislation is much improved, having been amended in committee. During its deliberations, the committee added a far-reaching amendment that makes school reporting much fairer. That amendment allows a school district to include information only on students who have been enrolled in the school district for at least two school years before taking the applicable tests or examinations.

In addition, the committee amended the bill so that the annual education report acknowledges the fact that college admission is not the only way to measure the success of an effective school. Some schools send many of their graduates to vocational technical schools. As amended, this bill would require a district to inform parents about its tech prep programs, and to report the average aggregate score of those who take the ACT Work Keys test.

Against:

Until the year 2003, this bill would require that each ISD provide the annual education reports from their constituent school districts to the parents of students. It is likely these reports will have to be mailed. This requirement is too costly. Indeed, some have argued that it is a mandate that violates the Headlee amendment to the state constitution since it would impose a costly new notice requirement on regional school districts without appropriating the funds to cover those costs.

What's more, the parental notice requirement by the ISD is unnecessary. Already annual education reports are shared by school districts with their citizens at an annual public meeting. The annual meeting is a better way to report the information, since it allows for a policy conversation about school effectiveness among those who attend.

Response:

According to committee testimony, a survey of Michigan school parents indicates that more than 60 percent are unaware that school districts compile annual education reports. Neither are the parents aware that the districts are required by law to present the reports to the community in a public meeting. Better ways to report school effectiveness are needed, and mailing the reports directly to parents, while costly, better ensures that citizens are knowledgeable about their public schools. There are, however, other ways to distribute reports; mailing is not the only option. In fact, this bill allows the parental notice requirement to be satisfied by publication on the Internet, once the Michigan Education Information System is operational, or by 2003, whichever comes first.

Reply:

A monthly subscription to an Internet service provider is costly. Some parents will not have access to the annual education reports when they are electronically conveyed, if the parents are unable to use, or do not have access to, a computer.

Against:

The annual education reports do not tell parents about student learning over time. They opt instead to report standardized test scores. In contrast, meaningful measures of student learning--the kind of accountability that matters most--must attend to the ways that student work improves over time. An ideal accountability measure is, then, an assessment design that allows for higher quality content and higher quality instruction--a design that holds a learner accountable in humane ways that promote even more learning. Effective assessments and meaningful assessment systems must be able to chart human growth. These are the kinds of indicators that are helpful to learners, their teachers, and their parents.

Teacher researchers have argued that schools should develop a sufficient variety of rich assessment methods so that all of the stakeholders in the educational experience are accommodated with helpful communications. They have observed that state-required or district-mandated tests and one-time writing assessments have profoundly influenced school practice, reducing much of a student's school experience to drill and memorization in order to, supposedly, perform well on such tests. Instead of working over time on relatively more authentic reading and writing tasks in relation to more real-world standards of quality, the students practice narrowly for the testing moment. Some teachers have concluded that the damage this has done to students--to their potential as learners and human beings--and to the national level of literacy, is incalculable.

This legislation does not enable schools to report the intellectual growth of their learners. Indeed, standardized test scores cannot do so. Instead of a one-dimensional assessment program that reports a cross-section of some students' current status, a truly effective school must focus on improvement in teaching and learning for both the adults and children in them. That kind of development and intellectual growth cannot be measured by snap-shot assessments. Instead, meaningful and more authentic assessments must be developed to measure growth and development within the learning discipline; these assessments would portray and describe growth rather than merely showcase current status.

POSITIONS:

The Department of Education supports the bill. (4-11-00)

The Michigan Federation of Teachers and School Related Personnel supports reporting information to the community but is concerned about costs the school districts would incur. (4-11-00)

The Michigan Education Association opposes the bill. (4-11-00)

The Michigan Association of School Administrators and the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators support reporting information to parents but are concerned about the unfunded costs that local and intermediate school districts would incur. (4-11-00)

The Michigan Association of School Boards has concerns regarding funding for the bill. (4-11-00)

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■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.