

An Alphabet of the Michigan Educator
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MME, MMC, MEAP, NCLB, AYP – a barrage of letters thrown around by Michigan educators and politicians with general ease but without general understanding by many educators, let alone by the parents of Michigan students. As educators, many times we forget that everyone does not speak the same code language of the “educator alphabet.” What do all these letters mean and how do they affect our students and our school districts?

In January of 2002, President George W. Bush signed a law called No Child Left Behind or NCLB. It stated six basic principles: all students must be at grade level for reading and math by 2014, mandated higher expectations for all students and more accountability for every school in the country, required annual state assessments and timely data/information reported to parents and districts for progress updates, highly qualified teachers in every classroom, and freedom for states to determine how to accomplish those goals. NCLB simply states that all of our students must be taught by instructors who are qualified in their subject areas, given tests each year in reading and math (and recently added science), and the states have the opportunity to create the best plan for achieving those lofty goals. Showing progress on those goals is where AYP or Adequate Yearly Progress comes into the picture. Each state must show that its students are closer to 100% being at grade level in reading and math. Simply stated, if your school has an increase in scores, then AYP has been met for the school year. This is a challenging goal for all states.

Michigan has chosen to meet the challenge by mandating the MMC or Michigan Merit Curriculum for our high school students and specific grade-level expectations for kindergarten through eighth grade in all subject areas, with the focus being on reading, math, science, and social studies. The MMC, required for all students graduating after 2011, creates the specifics on what credits high school students must achieve in order to graduate from a Michigan high school. The MEAP or Michigan Education Assessment Program, given to students in grades 3-9, and the MME or Michigan Merit Exam, given to high school juniors, are the two assessments given in our state to show the progress of our students. These tests are extremely important, as they help educators and districts assess not only what improvements need to be made in our classrooms but where we are achieving successes.

An “educator alphabet” made up of letters that reach beyond the school building and straight into the home of all Michigan students, as each letter means more standards, expectations, and testing for our students. As educators, our primary focus has always been to help our students gain academic success and maybe a new “alphabet” needed to be invented to help us accomplish that goal.