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knowledge, to make sure he or she knows the material? How many three digit multiplication problems would a student have to do correctly, for example, before a teacher was confident the student had mastered that math skill?

"When you look at the different assessments we use, there are different ways of dipping, of sampling the different information," Fouchey said.

■ What were the testing conditions? Was there something like a fire drill that caused a distraction when students were being tested?

"Another could be we were depending on this on-line program this year to teach this curriculum but we had a lot of network problems," Fouchey said.

"It's anything which prevents you from getting a good sample."

■ Can the results be used to give an accurate picture of student achievement? Fouchey said the MEAP has two broad purposes: to tell about individual student achievement and to tell the district about the effectiveness of its instructional program.

"Mom and Dad are looking at it saying, 'My kid is doing good.' Real estate agents are looking at the scores saying, 'These schools are doing better than these schools,'" he said.

While the core curriculum at all grade levels includes what's covered in the MEAP tests, that's not all that's offered to students, Fouchey said. Students

can also choose from a range of "elective" courses that range from band to automotive skills.

The Farmington school district has chosen to administer the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), given in the third and sixth grades and the Iowa Test of Educational Development, ninth grade.

Eighth graders take the Differentiated Aptitude Test (DAT), part of which Career Interest Inventory, assessments and evaluation administrator Kris Gekiere said. The same district-wide tests aren't given at every school district.

"We're thinking about moving from DAT to ACT Explore, which has a career component," Gekiere said. "It's more an achievement rather than an aptitude test."

Districts differ

The Clarencoville School District doesn't give the Iowa test, but one which is comparable to the Iowa, Gekiere said. "Different districts give the Iowa at different levels. West Bloomfield and Troy give the Iowa, but they may not give it at the same levels that we do."

The Iowa Tests, while available across the country, are the most expensive to administer, at a cost of \$7,000. "Some districts can't afford it," Gekiere said.

Every Michigan school district has to administer the MEAP and everybody tests in core subjects at the same levels: fourth, fifth,

seventh, eighth and 11th grades. The test can also be given to 10th and 12th graders, she added. The district also mandates testing of math and reading in grades one through five, which helps monitor student performance in math and literacy.

Different districts have different needs and they have different ways of conceptualizing that, Fouchey said.

School officials may need to compile specific data or may have a program in place which they need to gather data about over a period of time.

"The DAT which we do at the eighth grade level is a decision we made because we knew we needed to gather data about kids before they went to high school to help them plan their high school experience," Gekiere said. "Every district may not do it that way. They may choose to have students make more individual decisions. The DAT doesn't measure anything that is useful for the district to know but is useful for the student to plan for the future."

Students who plan to attend college take the American College Test (ACT) or the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). "Different colleges require different ones, or sometimes they want both of them," Fouchey said. "The ACT is required more often than the SAT. I can't tell you why over the years it has shifted."

Checklist helps with evaluations

Educators who evaluate textbooks and materials in the Farmington Public School District use a checklist to help determine characteristics of resources students use.

Checklist items are:
■ Curriculum correlation — matches up well with the curriculum
■ Format — inviting visually

and is appropriate in reading difficulty, layout is well-organized.

■ Supports materials — individualizes instruction and assessment

■ Problem solving — infuses higher order thinking and problem solving

■ Gender/Multicultural Awareness — enables students to approach the content from

various cultural perspectives and does not convey ethnic, gender, or racial

■ Technology — infuses the use of various technologies in its presentation

■ Ease of implementation — the potential benefits to be gained from this material justifies the investment of time and money required to use it

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supports the district-designed student profile, meets building and district initiative goals, promotes excellence and equity and integrates with other curricular areas.

It asks whether assessment is both varied with pencil/paper, performances, projects and demon-

strations, and is tied to life beyond school.

Members look for diversity in culture, gender, ethnicity, teaching strategies and learning style and whether there is evidence of higher order thinking and problem solving. Evidence of research and best practices are also part of the picture.

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