

Measuring the MEAP

Here's a school-by-school breakdown of the Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP) scores for the Farmington Public Schools. Results for 1993 are shown in bold. Last year's figures are italicized. The MEAP numbers represent the percentage of students who have at least a satisfactory mastery of the subject. "Satisfactory" is defined as achieving 75% or more of the subject.

FARMINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS			
ELEMENTARY	READING (Grade 4)	MATH (Grade 4)	SCIENCE (Grade 5)
Bechtview	62.5 (93) 54.3 (92)	63.9 (93) 60.5 (92)	85.7 (93) 87.2 (92)
Eagle	61.9 50.0	75.2 67.2	88.1 81.0
Flanders	41.7 51.4	70.8 65.7	88.4 97.0
Forest	47.4 47.7	73.7 61.4	82.6 72.5
Gill	66.2 37.7	73.5 39.6	80.6 91.3
Gill year-round school	40.0 40.0	72.0 33.3	85.7 N/A
Highmeadow Common Campus	73.1 80.8	88.5 86.5	98.1 98.7
Hillside	68.5 61.3	80.2 73.3	91.0 83.3
Kentbrook	57.7 62.5	67.6 80.4	87.1 85.7
Larkshire	59.3 59.0	70.9 59.0	84.8 91.7
Longacre	53.3 51.9	66.7 61.1	88.0 91.2
William Grace	46.4 38.5	42.9 51.3	81.8 92.9
Wood Creek	62.6 55.1	61.5 60.9	97.2 90.5
ELEMENTARY (CONTINUED)			
Wooddale	73.1 55.6	76.9 68.7	88.6 88.9
District averages	61.0 54.6	71.2 63.8	87.9 88.6
MIDDLE SCHOOL	READING (Grade 7)	MATH (Grade 7)	SCIENCE (Grade 8)
East	48.0 (93) 39.4 (92)	61.8 (93) 47.9 (92)	68.7 (93) 70.6 (92)
O.E. Dunkel	63.3 54.0	70.0 61.4	77.7 75.9
Power	55.7 57.4	66.0 54.7	74.6 78.1
Warner	51.6 45.4	66.8 62.3	72.6 67.7
District averages	54.6 48.8	66.1 56.6	73.3 73.3
HIGH SCHOOL	READING (Grade 10)	MATH (Grade 10)	SCIENCE (Grade 11)
Farmington	56.8 (93) 49.2 (92)	36.6 (93) 36.8 (92)	62.1 (93) 67.0 (92)
Harrison	55.9 56.6	39.3 45.3	60.5 52.7
North Farmington	67.3 66.0	47.5 45.6	60.9 61.0
District averages	60.1 57.3	41.2 42.6	61.1 60.6

Source: Farmington Public Schools

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achieving a satisfactory score and 36 percent a moderate one. The school had higher scores in math and science.

White didn't have a reason for the Gill reading scores. She said district officials will look at other information and see if the results point to a trend.

"You can't just take one score, one snapshot, and say, 'Uh oh, we have a major problem here,'" she said.

School officials are careful to keep a lid on any gloom or gloom when it comes to the MEAP.

"Classroom performance, that's probably the most important component of assessment," said Carolyn Mahalak, coordinator for evaluation/assessment and special projects.

"It's a single number. There's many other considerations for a quality program."

White echoed those sentiments. She said the MEAP gets media attention because it's the only test administered statewide.

"It means more to you than it does to us," White said.

Other assessments
In addition to the MEAP, Farmington students are also assessed on standardized tests and portfolios at the high school level.

All students in grades three, five and eight take the Comprehensive Test for Basic Skills. Eighth graders are also administered Differential Aptitude Tests, which indicate strengths or weaknesses in verbal, number and mechanical reasoning and language use.

Experts say MEAP scores are not intended to reflect the overall quality of a district. Mahalak also urges caution when comparing scores among schools.

She points out smaller schools of choice such as Highmeadow Common Campus and the Gill Year-Round program are "more sensitive" to disparity in scores as compared to larger, boundary schools.

For example, 25 fourth graders in the year-round program took the reading test, whereas 111 fourth graders did so at Hillside.

Reasons for success

White attributed Farmington's success on the MEAP to a variety of factors.

"Once the tests quit changing and students get more used to the format, students get more familiar with the format," she said. "That has an impact."

"We also have made a real effort to make curricular changes

that I think better match what's being tested."

The test has drawn some controversy.

This is the first year high school students will receive a state-endorsed diploma for achieving 50 percent or higher on math and science and a "category 2" score on reading. The provision was tacked on to an appropriations bill and passed as part of the 1991 school aid act without knowledge of the state school board.

Lawmakers subsequently did away with a requirement that would've started in 1997 where only state-endorsed diplomas would be handed out.

MEAP tests are still going through changes.

The science portion is being revised to better reflect the state's core curriculum and advances in assessment. Also, students in grades five and eight will be tested on writing samples in the future.

According to Mahalak, a proficiency test will be given to 11th graders starting in 1995 that would include writing.

We're in the age of change," Mahalak said. "Assessment is one of the areas affected. We just have to keep updated."

Welday's bid to help friend campaign creates a minor stir in U.S. House

By BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

What started as a gesture to help a friend in his campaign for national office has turned into something of an embarrassment for Farmington Hills resident Paul Welday, U.S. Rep. Joe Knollenberg's chief of staff.

Paul Welday "One of my friends from my days in Omaha, when I was chief of staff for the mayor (P.J. Morgan), said he was asked to run for Congress and going to run for Congress and asked for my help," said Welday. "I told Brad (Ashford) I'd be happy to do what I could."

But the announcement that Welday, who runs Knollenberg's Washington and Farmington Hills offices, could help in a campaign in Nebraska "after 5 O'clock and on weekends" raised a few political eyebrows.

Bernie Raimo, the counsel for the House Ethics Committee, said congressional staff members earning more than \$79,000 may earn another \$20,000 a year on the side. But the outside work must be separate from their government work.

"How's he going to do it?" said Mike Casey, communications director for the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee in Washington and former press secretary for U.S. Sen. Donald Riegle.

"Is he doing the campaign on taxpayer money? Is he not going to get a single fax at Knollenberg's office? Is he going to get a phone call there? What if there's something urgent in Omaha and he's in Washington?"

In the wake of the furor, the Farmington High and Michigan State University graduate said he has withdrawn the offer rather than cause his boss embarrassment.

"This is just something the Democrats are trying to make a big issue of," he said. "But it was becoming a distraction. So I've told him (Ashford) 'good luck, but I can't help.'"

Welday, 35, has himself run for state office and managed the campaigns of several state and national candidates. But the political fallout of helping his longtime friend Ashford became too much last week, he said.

"Joe (Knollenberg) is doing great things," Welday said. "It's not worth it to take away from that."

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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