

POINTS OF VIEW

Getting testy over MEAP

Don't use scores as only measure of progress

The Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) test results have recently been released. That means that the debates about what the scores mean, how they are used, and whether they should be compared are also about to begin — again.

For this year, I'd like to propose a cease-fire. Whether the students in your school scored well or poorly, whether the numbers are greater or smaller than last year — or greater or smaller than your neighbors, I'd like to spend less energy this year on the rhetoric about what the scores really mean.

Basing student progress on the results of one test is like basing the diagnosis of a serious illness solely on body temperature. Suffice to say, low scores indicate that there are educational

needs.

If that seems too obvious to be worthy of note, let me propose still another obvious fact: Before the advent of MEAP, it was possible to determine how well or poorly a school was serving students.

Parents will tell you that they place more weight on the daily, weekly and monthly assessments of progress done in the classroom by the teacher than they do on any one standardized test. And, any teacher will tell you that MEAP is only one of many standardized tests used regularly in classrooms to measure students' academic growth.

If you really want to know what's going on in the schools in your community, ask about those things that we know result in student growth.

For example, if you want a genuine indicator of student success, look for



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the amount of parent involvement. The greater the involvement of parents, the greater the academic achievement of students.

Find out if the principal and teachers in your school have high expectations of students. It's as true in the

classroom as it is in the workplace: people produce what we expect them to produce. If a school's staff has low expectations of their students, students will perform accordingly.

If you need numbers to tell you about student progress, ask how many are taking the tough academic subjects, how many are in advanced placement classes and how many participate in extracurricular activities.

You may be surprised by the number of high school students that are currently enrolled in college. These students are taking college level work in both academic and technical areas and are earning college credit while still in high school. You should know how many students are going on to college after graduation.

Do students in your school district gain practical work experience in coop-

erative education programs? Are there opportunities for job shadowing, mentoring and career exploration activities?

The MEAP test battery is an important assessment tool for parents, teachers and the general public; however, in 1994, it is essential that we all acknowledge that it is only one measure of progress. Those who are truly interested in whether our schools are changing to meet the changing needs of our students will take the time to look at more than one indicator before making judgments about the value of what is happening in our classrooms.

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Beware — overworked labor force nears a revolt

Smell a revolt. It will be a revolt like the labor movement of the 1930s, though this revolt may not manifest itself in unionization. Nor am I sure exactly when it will come — maybe next year, maybe 2005.

Item: Many fellow members of professional groups agree that it's tougher and tougher to get volunteers. We can't even get people to meetings where they don't have to do anything.

Their work hours seem longer. They go home more tired. In particular, their psychic energy seems used up. When I talk to those who are afflicted, they are still warmly interested in the ethics of the profession. They're just too pooped to participate. And the phenomenon seems to have spread to many groups.

Item: Ann Landers writes that "I don't know when I've read such depressing mail. . . the responses blew me out of the water." The topic was work in Corporate America. A Miami correspondent summed it up: "You're out of the loop if you don't know it's a buyer's job market. Any

employed person who is unwilling to do the work of two people and sacrifice all hope of a home life should be aware that there are five others who will jump at the chance. My husband and I . . . come home every night totally wiped out. There is no time or energy to work on our home. The place is falling apart. It's not just us. Everyone we know is overworked, overstressed, overextended and undercompensated."

Item: Doug Ross, the former state senator from Southfield and former state commerce director, is quoted: "As we're seeing, a growing economy doesn't automatically translate into a rising sense of individual security or a rising standard of living for a lot of Americans." He calls this group of Americans "the anxious class" because economic restructuring has made them feel perpetually vulnerable to economic trends.

Item: In President Bush's last year, nearly all economic statistics were looking good: the stock market was confident, price levels were steady, in-



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ed Clinton. See Doug Ross's remarks above.

Item: Kmart Corp. is downsizing. The gang on Big Beaver Road in Troy is trying to carve \$500 million or so out of an \$8.6 billion budget. It's planning to close 110 stores (out of more than 2,000), eliminate at least 6,000 jobs (out of 250,000) and throw 1,650 store-level managers onto the scrap heap — this in a firm that is already infamous for a 20-40-60 policy: Any male with 20 years seniority, age 40 or older, making \$60,000 or more is a target for demotion and degrading.

The irony is that in a newspaper survey taken at about the time of its annual meeting, Kmart shoppers were saying 100 percent the opposite: There were too few workers to help them locate things, too few checkout lanes, too many delays at checkout because the too few employees hadn't price-stamped too many goods.

They were results absolutely in line with my friends' and my own experiences. If there is one executive in

America who should be grabbed by the lapels and shaken until his teeth rattle in his obtuse head, it's Kmart's Joe Antonini.

Item: A Louisville printer shoots a bunch of people in a press room; a Royal Oak postal worker runs amok in a killing spree, a Dearborn postal worker does the same. . .

The standard management responses are: Work smarter. Compete against those Asians. Do more with less. Compete against those Mexicans. Use technology. Compete against those Bangladeshis. Work smarter. Do more with less. Compete, compete, compete.

One of these days, American workers will use their fabled Yankee ingenuity to revolt.

Killing a supervisor is no answer, at least for 99 percent of the work force, although rage in the workplace clearly is a trend that must be reckoned with. But forcing workers to do 70 hours of work in a 65-hour week isn't the answer, either.

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