State seeks comment about letter grades

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Unless citizens protest in
droves, the state Department of
Education will likely establish a
letter grade system for schools,
based on a two-point rationale.
"Grades are a clear, transparent indicator. The public understands them," said DOE
spokesperson T.J. Bucholz. "We
grade all kinds of things. Bond
ratings. Cars. We grade consumer products every day."
'Scrapped by State Supt. Dr.

Tom Watkins when he took office in April, the old system was largely based on standardized test scores, and the levels of accreditation were unclear, he said. "If schools can grade students, why can't the state grade schools?"

The second part has to do with a concept often utilized at parent-teacher conferences.

"I've heard from a lot of educations that as long as you can justify the letter grade, they don't have a problem with it, Bucholz said.

He likened that process to a teacher having to explain to a

parent why a student receives a low grade. "If my child gets a "C" in algebra, and they're able to show me that he missed assignments... that's okay.

It's the justification and education process state officinis will tackle in January, with a series of public hearings. They will also rely on public comment as they craft the final structure for determining building grades.

"I think what we need to be able to do is explain to communities, whether your child's school gets an A or an F, what does

that menn?" Bucholz said.
In addition to six public hearings, he said the Department welcomes comments and questions from purents, He said correspondence may be sent directly to Supt. Tom Watkins, rospondence may be sent directly to Supt. Tom Watkins Department of Education, P.O. Box 30008, Lansing, MI 48009 or through the electronic suggestion box on the DOE's Web site: www.mdc.attat.mi.us

"We are under no illusion that we have all the answers," Bucholz said. What we're interested in its getting comment from communities."

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asked that his client be released

on a personal bond.

Pape-Starnes said the e-mail
message scared the woman/and
her husband enough to move
away from their home.
Quinn has a preliminary hearing set for 8:46 a.m. Thursday,
Dec. 27, before Judge Edward
Ayadenka in 48th District Court.
If convicted of the charces.

If convicted of the charges, Quinn faces up to 10 years in

prison and/or a \$20,000 fine on the felony charge. The misdemeanor charge carries up to one year in prison and/or \$1,000 in

fines and five years' probation.
Pope-Starnes said licensing agencies for dentists are investigating the case to determine whether Quinn can continue with his dental practice.

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ing accreditation system.

"The accreditation system under discussion is mainly a MEAP-based performance measurement system — and that is simply not good enough for our children," he said in June.

Both Maxfield and Tattan befive the new system will give their communities and educators a good look at what's going on with students.

"If you just simply say our kids test well, we end up looking pretty good," Maxfield said. "It's a broader brush on school quality."

"The part where I flinch a little bit," he added, "is they're going to establish a letter grade for ench school."

Buchols said the MEAP aspect of the grading system will actually be divided into three components: the test scores themselves, change from one year to the next and whether kids in lower grades continue to perform as they climb the education ladder.

He said letter grades are quality indicators easily understood

He said letter grades are qual-

He said letter grades are qual-ity indicators easily understood by parents and communities. In a press release issued by the state Board of Education, an advisor to Gov. John Engler indicated his support for the pro-gram and the letter grades. Sott Jackies, who nytwests Engler in the Board table, said, "Our kits are graded in dessume stoy thus, so wour nuto-

the Bondtable, said, "Our kids nee graded in describe savely day, as no our national indescribe savely day, as no our national said before the said said before and said before an use for schools, because excrypte understands them."

Maxfield and Tattan both question whether that understanding will go deep enough to address the real issues in failing schools.

Because the state is notice the

standing will go deep enough to address the real issues in failing schools.

Because the state is paying the lions share of the costs for education. Maxfield said, "The state has the right to demand that kind of accountability. There are sections where schools are struggling." Do they need a D minus to know that? I don't think they do, he added.

Tattan wonders what effect a very public failing grade will have on the children and staff in a troubled duction in the children and staff in a troubled the initing grade will have on the children and staff in a troubled the trouble — basically. Think the staff is the control of the con





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