



## **FAQ About Michigan's New "Cut Scores"**

### **Q: What is a "cut score?"**

A: The cut score on a test (or on multiple tests) is the score that separates test takers into various categories, such as a passing score and a failing score, or a selected score and a rejected score. For example, if the cut score on an exam is 70 percent, that means that anything below that score is a failing grade and anything above that score is a passing grade.

### **Q: Who is making the changes to the cut scores?**

A: The State Board of Education approved raising the standard (cut scores) for passing the MEAP and MME exams. Local districts or boards of education don't determine cut scores.

### **Q: When will the new cut scores be applied?**

The new cut scores will be applied this school year (2011-12) to the MEAP exam, given to third- through eighth-graders, and to the MME exam given to 11<sup>th</sup>-graders.

### **Q: Why is Michigan changing its cut scores?**

A: Previously, Michigan's cutoff score was based on whether students showed a basic understanding of the materials. Students on some tests could have answered as little as 40 percent of the questions correctly to be considered proficient. The new plan will make the cut scores consistent with the skills students need for college and careers. This change means fewer students will be considered proficient, or college and career ready. Other states have lower cut scores, which create a perception of proficiency that's actually better than reality. As other states are required to change their scores to become "more truthful" about their academic progress, Michigan schools will benefit from the early implementation of cut scores.

### **Q: How does raising the cut scores impact the requirements of No Child Left Behind?**

A: Because Michigan has raised their cut scores, or raised standards that make it more difficult for students to reach the mark; a waiver has been requested to postpone the 100 percent proficiency requirement of No Child Left Behind. The waiver is requesting a 10-year postponement.

### **Q: What are the benefits of higher cut scores?**

A: The new cut scores will create a more realistic picture of student success and an environment of high expectations and standards for students.

### **Q: What are the possible detriments of higher cut scores?**

A: The confusion of explaining the changes to parents and citizens may be a challenge, but the initial detriment is that test scores and proficiency levels will show a decline. Students may still see academic growth on an annual basis, but test scores and proficiency levels will decrease with higher cut scores. This dip in test scores will be significant, but only temporary.

### **Q: What's the impact of raising the cut scores?**

A: It won't be uncommon for some schools to see a decline of students testing proficient by as much as 60 percent the first year the new cut scores are applied. For instance, if the new cut scores were in place in 2009, just 34 percent of third graders would pass the math exam, compared to 95 percent that passed under the old guidelines. Another scenario to consider is that if the waiver for No Child Left Behind isn't granted, only 34 percent of students would meet NCLB goals with new cut scores, but when using the old cut scores about 86 percent of schools would meet the academic goals.

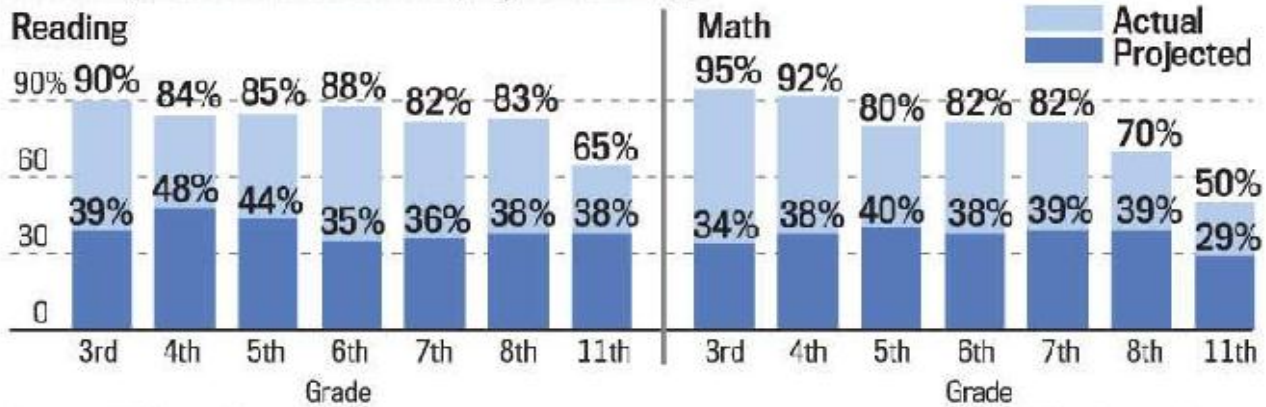
## Tougher test standards

The state Board of Education is recommending that cutoff scores on the MEAP (given to third-through eighth-graders) and the MMF (given to 11th graders) be raised. The change likely will lower the number of students considered proficient in reading and math.

Grade	Current cut scores*	Projected	
		Math	Reading
3rd	300	336	337
4th	400	435	435
5th	500	530	534
6th	600	629	633
7th	700	729	733
8th	800	822	831
11th	1100	1113	1120

### Percent proficient in 2009 and projected change

\*Both math and reading



Source: Michigan State Board

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