



MEAP Scoring System Changing Again

In our schools, the use of relevant and timely assessment data is instrumental to determining our success in helping each and every student learn and grow. This assessment data includes information we gather informally from conversations with our students, their daily assignments, teacher created assessments, report cards, as well as data from more formal state and nationally normed tests. The combination of these data points help paint a picture of how our students are progressing and how effective we are in helping them grow. From the classroom teacher, to the principal, to our central office staff, student assessment data helps steer our efforts to ensure that we continue to develop students who will reach individual potential, exiting our K-12 program with the skills and knowledge needed to be successful in college and/or their career path.

The idea of “college and career readiness” is not new to us in Forest Hills. We have a proven track record for providing our students with the necessary knowledge and skills needed for college and career as indicated by our students’ performances on the national American

ACT Composite Scores				
	State of Michigan		Forest Hills Public Schools	
Year	# of Students Tested	Score	# of Students Tested	Score
2008	123,918	19.6	727	23.0
2009	121,982	19.6	749	23.3
2010	120,293	19.7	735	24.0
2011	116,823	20.0	750	24.2

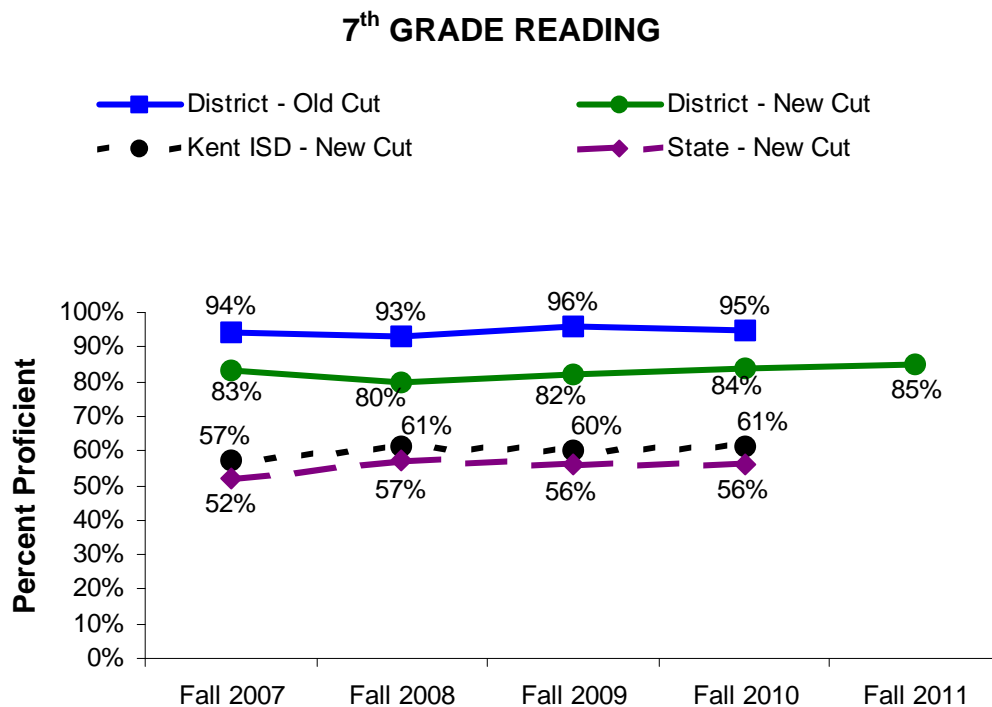
College Testing (ACT) assessment. ACT is a nationally normed test, developed as a measure of college and career readiness. Scores in recent years illustrate that our FHPS students continue to earn increasingly higher scores on the ACT, an important indication that we are indeed preparing our students for success after graduation.

The Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) tests are another indicator of student learning achievement. MEAP assessments were created to assess the Michigan curriculum standards. Historically, our students have earned among the highest scores across the state on the complex set of skills assessed on MEAP tests. This year it is important to note, that although the MEAP assessments have not changed, nor have the raw scores that our students have earned changed, what has changed is how these tests are being scored.

In an effort to increase the rigor of these assessments in preparation for a new generation of nationally normed assessments to be implemented in 2014-2015, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) has significantly adjusted the “cut scores” on the MEAP assessments. The term “cut score” refers to the number of items a student must correctly answer to reach a level that is considered *proficient*. This year, the number of items a student needed to answer correctly to be rated proficient is as many as twice the number needed to be considered proficient in the past. Therefore, when MEAP scores are publicly released, it will appear that our students are performing at levels much lower than they have in the past. This is simply not the case.

Consider the confusion that would occur if our local weather forecasters suddenly began to report the temperature in Celsius rather than Fahrenheit. The dramatic change in the reported temperature would be the result of the scale being used, not the result of a huge fluctuation in the actual temperature. We expect the change of scale used to score the MEAP tests to lead to a great deal of confusion, especially if not reported in the context of historical performances based on raw scores. If we were to compare the raw scores our students have typically earned in years past to those earned this year, there would be little discernable difference, and in fact, upward trends in achievement would be noted in several areas.

To illustrate this point, please refer to the following graph which shows how our seventh grade students have performed in the past with the old cut scores, and how those scores would appear with the new cut scores imposed. Without such an illustration, it would be easy to misunderstand the actual achievement trend: our students are doing as well as they have in the past.



This is far greater an explanation than is typically necessary to report when MEAP scores are released. However, it is important that the changes related to the scoring of these assessments are fully explained to avoid the certain confusion that would otherwise occur. Rest assured, we will never cease in our efforts to strengthen teaching and deepen students' learning to provide every child with a world-class education that is foundational to lifelong success.

For more information, please visit the Michigan Department of Education website at www.michigan.gov/mde or Forest Hills Public Schools website at <http://fhps.us/news/>