

Top 10 Tips

for communicating about your

Education

YES!

Report Card

The Michigan School Public Relations Association (MSPRA) www.mspra.org wants your district to be prepared to communicate about your Education YES! Report Card results with your staff, parents, community, and the media. In the short time remaining before the Report Cards are made public—if you haven't done so already—see how many of these “Top 10 Tips” you can implement. **(Be sure to include the person responsible for your district communication in these discussions.)**

1. **Identify the spokesperson for your district, for each school building and your resource person(s) for Education YES! and meet together to discuss the Report Card rollout.**
2. **Develop two or three key messages** with your spokesperson(s) and Education YES! resource person(s) about your district's student achievement and your plans to improve it.
3. **Identify one or more areas in which your district did well** and incorporate these areas into your key messages.
4. **Meet with your staff first to inform them about the Report Card rollout.** Give them your key messages, so that everyone has the same information.
5. **After you have informed your staff, meet with key groups in your community** – school board members, parent/booster groups, community organizations, and the media (local outlets first!). Share your key messages with them.
6. **Use examples from your district to tell your audience about your schools,** Michigan Educational Assessment Program scores, trends, and what your community can do to help.
7. **Don't make promises to staff, the media or your community that you cannot keep.**
8. **Allow your audience to draw their own conclusions.** Present the data clearly and without bias. **Whining, denying or discrediting the process only makes you look bad.**
9. **Let your results – and your improvement plans – speak for themselves.** Your constituents will be more forgiving of a less-than-top grade if they can see you have plans for improvement.
10. **If you need help communicating about this issue, ask for it.** Call upon your intermediate school district, your state organizations, or the Michigan Department of Education.
11. **(Bonus!)** Start preparing today for next year's Report Card!

For more information:

- See page 2 of this document for “*Basic Questions & Answers about Education YES! Report Cards.*” Use this Q & A to help explain Education YES! Report Cards to your community.
- Visit these online resources:
 - Education YES!, Michigan Department of Education, <http://www.michigan-achieves.org>
 - Leading Change, Michigan Department of Education, <http://www.michigan.gov/mde> (click on the Leading Change icon)
 - Center for Educational Network, <http://www.cenmi.org>
 - Report Card Guide and Toolkit, Michigan Department of Education, http://www.michigan.gov/documents/Education_YES!_Report_Card_Guide_and_Tool_Kit_71572_7.doc
 - A Toolkit for Communicating About Adequate Yearly Progress, Michigan School Public Relations Association, <http://www.mspra.org> (click on the AYP Toolkit icon).



Basic Questions & Answers about Education YES! Report Cards

-Provided as a service of the Michigan School Public Relations Association (MSPRA), www.mspra.org-

Q. What is the Education YES! Report Card?

A. In the next few weeks, you'll see or hear about a letter grade given to the public school in your neighborhood. Your school might get an A, B, C or D/Alert under this new grading system known as the Education YES! Report Card—the state's latest way to gauge how schools are doing. While it's not the only way to measure a school's success, it is the newest way.

Q. Why do we have it?

A. Education YES! is required by state law and was created, in part, to be Michigan's answer to the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act that requires each state to have an approved accountability system. Developed by Michigan experts, the Education YES! system was recently approved by the federal government, so that eligible Michigan schools can receive federal funding for children in need of extra help and schools in need of improvement can be identified.

Q. How often will the schools be graded?

A. The Education YES! grades will be given once every school year. The single letter grade will be computed using students' scores on Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) tests, a comparison of those MEAP scores over time, and some other factors like parent involvement in the schools.

Q. What does it measure?

A. The Report Card's single letter grade is a shorthand way to show how our schools are doing. Just as a child's report card is an accounting of how he or she did on tests and assignments throughout the year, Education YES! is an accounting of how students in specific grades did on selected tests at a given time during a school year. But a school—like a student—is much more than a letter grade. A student's report card is just one way we assess his or her progress. Likewise, the Education YES! Report Card is just one way we assess each school's progress.

Q. What doesn't it measure?

A. The Report Card doesn't tell about the hundreds of success stories that happen everyday within the school walls. It misses the thousands of exciting learning moments each day when the "light goes on" for a student and he finally understands about fractions or when she "sees" how the human heart works or when he plays a perfect trumpet solo or when she gives a convincing performance in the school play. It can't adequately reflect the quality of interaction between teachers and students. It doesn't measure the valuable lessons learned each day that don't fall under the statewide, pre-determined test items. In other words, just like it's impossible to know a child's whole nature by a single grade, it's impossible to judge a school's whole essence by a single grade. That's why we will continue to report our progress in many different ways.

Q. How else are we accountable to you?

A. We believe you're entitled to know the entire story about how our schools are doing. That's why we report on them regularly through our annual reports, school newsletters and school website. And, that's what we will continue to do, even after the Education YES! Report Cards are issued.

Q. How can you get more information about how our schools are doing?

- A.**
- Call the superintendent's office.
 - Come to Parent Teacher Conferences.
 - Contact your child's teacher.
 - Read our North Central Association Accreditation Report.
 - Review our curriculum materials.
 - Visit our website at _____.
 - Read our annual report.
 - Come to our Science Fair on _____.
 - Come to our Curriculum Night on _____.
 - Come to our school play on _____.
 - Come in for a tour.
 - Talk to a recent graduate.
 - Give other local examples.....

Q. How can you help us do better?

A. We're always working to improve achievement for our students. And, we can do even better with your help. Please join us in our continuing efforts to be the best schools we can be. Contact _____ at _____ for more information. -end-