

THE RELATIONSHIP OF SOCIOECONOMIC FACTORS AND
DISTRICT SCORES ON
THE MICHIGAN EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT PROGRAM TESTS:
AN ANALYSIS

by
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Dissertation

Submitted to the Department of Leadership and Counseling
Eastern Michigan University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

June 24, 2002
Ypsilanti, Michigan

APPROVAL

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author expresses appreciation to the following individuals for their invaluable assistance and advice: Dr. Silvia von Kluge, Joel Devonshire, Brian Filipiak, Dr. Ellen Hoffman, and committee members Dr. Charles Achilles, Dr. James Berry, Dr. Gary Evans, and Dr. John Pappas. A special note of thanks goes to committee chair Dr. Helen Ditzhazy for her consistent support and guidance.

ABSTRACT

The continuing development of public education policy at the state and national levels is at an important juncture, with an increased focus on school accountability. Federal education policy emphasizes higher standards, accountability, and consequences for failure, and consistently equates educational progress, success, and achievement with student test scores. Annual testing in reading and mathematics for all students, grades three-through-eight, is now law.

Policymakers appear to be operating under the assumption that student scores on standardized tests provide valid and reliable indicators of the quality of schools and school districts. If district socioeconomic factors act as reliable predictors of school or district test scores, the legitimacy of that assumption is called into question, in that a factor beyond the schools' control (SES) is associated with student test scores.

The objective of this quantitative, correlational study was to answer two questions: "How do Michigan public school district SES factors correlate with aggregate district MEAP scores?" and "Can individual correlation coefficients be combined to form an equation strongly predictive of district MEAP scores?" Using archival databases, the researcher discovered several SES factors strongly associated with aggregate district MEAP scores, including Percent of District Students Receiving Free or Reduced Priced Lunches, Percent of District Lone Parent Households, and Annual Mean District Household Income. Multiple regression produced an equation based on SES factors predictive of district MEAP scores.

The chief implication of the findings is that public policies that decrease child poverty may hold more potential toward increasing

student academic achievement than do high stakes testing and accountability plans.

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