



# East Grand Rapids Public Schools

August 29, 2011

Dear East Grand Rapids Public Schools Families,

Recently the State of Michigan released its second Top to Bottom ranking of public schools in the State of Michigan. Our elementary and middle schools were ranked at the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile or above. However, East Grand Rapids High School ranked at the 62<sup>nd</sup> percentile of all public schools in the state, a ranking that is not acceptable or consistent with our *Tradition of Excellence*.

Rankings come in all sorts of shapes and sizes. Some lists represent East Grand Rapids High School among the top and others, like the Top to Bottom list, show the high school at a level that is unacceptable. Each ranking must be understood for what it reflects and we must then focus on those aspects which need improvement and work toward that end.

A true assessment of a school comes from an examination of multiple measures of success. East Grand Rapids High School is very competitive in the state with regard to its achievement scores. Our students consistently score well above the state average and earn scores comparable to many of the high schools which ranked high on the 2011 Top to Bottom list (see [Attachment #1](#)). EGRHS ranks in the 99<sup>th</sup> percentile in the state with regard to the percentage of students who are college ready, as measured by the ACT test. Specifically, EGRHS is ranked 12<sup>th</sup> in the state among non-selective public high schools (those with no criteria for admission) in the percentage of students who are college ready in reading, writing, science, and math. In terms of growth, the number of EGRHS students who are college ready has increased over the past four years. We are encouraged by our progress with regard to college readiness as this will be a significant criterion that the state will begin to use in 2015 when the Michigan Merit Exam (MME) will be replaced by a new assessment (see [Attachment #2](#) and [here](#) for the state's complete ranking of public high schools in Michigan based on 2011 ACT college readiness).

In addition, East Grand Rapids High School consistently places among the top high schools in the state and country as indicated by recent rankings in national publications. *Newsweek* ranked EGRHS 162<sup>nd</sup> in the country and 3<sup>rd</sup> in the state using multiple measures. *The Washington Post*, in its High School Challenge, placed East Grand Rapids High School in the top 25 high schools in the state, while *U.S. News and World Report* awarded EGRHS a silver medal for its performance on Advanced Placement testing (see [Attachment #3](#)).

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Regardless of our success in other rankings, it is important for us to understand how the state's Top to Bottom ranking is determined, how we earned the ranking, and then how we will work to improve our achievement in the future. The Top to Bottom rankings are calculated through a complex mathematical formula. A simplified explanation of the ranking process is described below. A more detailed explanation of how the rankings are determined can be found [here](#).

The two variables that comprise the high school Top to Bottom ranking are the MME scores of 11<sup>th</sup> grade students in reading, writing, math, science, social studies, and the graduation rate. The following three criteria are used to calculate the Top to Bottom Ranking:

1. **2-year average achievement score:** Reflects the number of students who are proficient on the MME subject tests including reading, writing, math, science, and social studies.
2. **4-year achievement trend score:** Indicates if the number of students who are proficient on the MME is improving, stable, or declining over time.
3. **2-year average achievement gap score:** The degree of gap between the top 30% of students and the bottom 30% of students, which measures how well a school educates all students and not just the top performing students.

Unfortunately, East Grand Rapids High School's Top to Bottom ranking this year was significantly impacted by our performance on the MME social studies assessment. We declined from a 92% student proficiency level in 2010 to an 82% student proficiency level in 2011. This negatively impacted all three of the criteria in the Top to Bottom calculation: 2-year average achievement score, 4-year achievement trend score, and the 2-year average achievement gap score.

As disappointed as we are in our high school Top to Bottom ranking from the state, we refuse to let this single ranking deter us from maintaining and enhancing our *Tradition of Excellence*. As in the past, when we have not met expectations in a particular subject area, we identified the causes and worked collaboratively to address the deficiency. Today is no different. We will continue to focus our efforts on social studies and all subjects, for that matter, to further build upon our strong foundation of learning and teaching.

Sincerely,



Sara Magaña Shubel, Ph.D.  
Superintendent



Jennifer S. Fee  
East Grand Rapids High School Principal

