



Spring 2017 State Assessment

Test Administration

Communication Toolkit

(For School and District Use)

Welcome

The future success of today's students depends on the education they receive. To be fully prepared for career and/or college—and to be ready to succeed—our students need world-class learning opportunities in our schools.

Here in Michigan, we are taking significant steps to improve education quality and student performance. Our goal is to make Michigan a Top 10 education state in 10 years.

In recent years, Michigan's State Board of Education has strengthened the learning standards that challenge students to develop a deeper understanding of subject matter, learn how to think critically, and apply what they are learning to the real-world skills needed to be successful in both college and the workplace. We appreciate educators' ongoing efforts to align local curriculum and student learning to Michigan's higher standards.

With the passage of the federal Elementary and Secondary School Act, we have a renewed opportunity to align our resources and focus our efforts even more strategically. Hundreds of individuals and dozens of organizations recently took part in writing Michigan's plan to implement the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The effort has involved a diverse group of stakeholders that includes educators, content experts, policy-makers, business leaders, parents, and more. You can learn more about the process and follow the progress at the [ESSA Web Page](#).

Michigan's ESSA plan will take advantage of the law's new flexibility around school accountability and assessment design. These plans will take time to develop and implement well. During the 2017-2018 school year, the Michigan Department of Education will continue to use the Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (M-STEP) to measure student proficiency on Michigan's standards. This consistency will allow schools to gauge the alignment of their curricula and success of their instruction, and detect trends in student learning. M-STEP is an engaging computer-adaptive test that tailors the level of questions to each student's ability. Students have the opportunity to demonstrate critical thinking, problem solving, and deeper knowledge through written responses. Starting in 2018-2019, Michigan intends to implement a new assessment vision as part of our Top 10 in 10 initiative. Stay informed at www.michigan.gov/mde,

Schools and districts have a vital role in helping students, parents, and their communities better understand assessment and its impact on student achievement, through timely, accurate, and well-planned communications.

This Toolkit contains a series of documents, recommendations, and resources to help schools lead healthy, constructive local discussions and provide clarity about Michigan's standards, assessments, and the release of assessment results.

Thank you for your leadership on these important issues. Please don't hesitate to contact the Michigan Department of Education's Office of Standards and Assessments if you have questions or need additional support at 877-560-8378.

Respectfully,









Brian J. Whiston
State Superintendent



Assessment Information for Educators, Parents & Community

*This toolkit is designed to assist you in providing meaningful information to staff, parents and families, and your community. The materials can be printed, emailed, posted on district and school websites, and included in newsletters, parent letters, etc. The PowerPoint presentation is considered a sample and may be used in whole or in part, and may be combined with other information and materials. The below materials are posted under the **What's New** on the **Parent/Student Information** sections of the [M-STEP \(www.michigan.gov/mstep\)](http://www.michigan.gov/mstep) and [MME \(www.michigan.gov/mme\)](http://www.michigan.gov/mme) web page.*

Print Materials

- ✓ [Parent Letter from Brian Whiston, State Superintendent for Public Instruction](#) 
State Superintendent Whiston's letter is designed for schools to give parents and is filled with valuable information on upcoming spring assessments, how testing is part of learning, why it is important, our future assessment vision, and "opt out" information.
- ✓ [2017 Michigan Assessment System: What it is, What it means - And What it Offers](#) 
This popular one-page handout has been updated. (Spanish and Arabic translations will be available soon.)
- ✓ [Student Testing: What Parents Can Do to Help Students Prepare](#) 
This NEW resource helps put state assessment into perspective and provides practical tips on how families can ease students' anxieties and foster success. (Spanish and Arabic translations will be available soon.)
- ✓ [Spring 2017 State Assessment Calendar](#) 
This calendar shows the testing window for Spring 2017 State Assessments.
- ✓ [Computer Adaptive Testing \(CAT\) Information](#) 
Computer Adaptive Testing provides students with a customized testing experience and has been used in M-STEP assessments since Spring 2016. This information outlines how it works and the benefits for students, teachers and schools.
- ✓ [Parent Guide to MI-Access: What it is, What it Means -- What it Offers](#) 
This guide provides valuable information for parents of students taking Michigan's alternate assessment.

Sample PowerPoint Presentation

- ✓ [2017 Michigan Assessment System: What it is, What it means - And What it Offers](#)
This companion PowerPoint presentation to the printed version provides an overview of Michigan's state assessment system and the upcoming Spring 2017 testing schedule.

Multi-Media Materials

*These videos can be shared with educators, students, parents, and community members, and placed on school and district websites. They are posted under **Parent/Student Information** on the [M-STEP](http://www.michigan.gov/mstep) (www.michigan.gov/mstep) and [MME](http://www.michigan.gov/mme) (www.michigan.gov/mme) web pages. Videos are also posted on the [Michigan Department of Education's YouTube](#) web page under *Assessment Playlist*.*

Video Assessment Overviews

- ✓ [M-STEP: What students can expect? \(video\)](#) 2:13

This video provides an overview of what students can experience when taking the online M-STEP assessments. The video is rich with images of the assessment's user-friendly navigation tools and interactive technology-enhanced (TE) items that students will encounter. Students with special needs and the adults who support them can learn more about the accommodations that are built into the assessments—accommodations such as the ability to choose background and text colors, cover up or mask areas of the screen, play audio using a screen reader, and view translations in Spanish.

- ✓ [M-STEP Video, Featuring Computer Adaptive Testing](#) 4:20 (Available April 6, 2017)

This high quality video was first produced in 2016 and has been updated for Spring 2017. It provides the viewer with an understanding on the connection between state standards, career- and college-readiness and state assessments. The video also explains Computer Adaptive Testing (CAT) and how it provides more precise information on student learning and growth.

- [Michigan Early Literacy and Mathematics Benchmark Assessments Video](#) 5:17

Early literacy and mathematics are critical milestones in a child's path to success. This video provides an overview of these benchmark assessments to ensure our youngest learners are on track and have the learning foundation to be ready to read by the end of third grade.

Videos for Educators

- ✓ [English Language Arts \(ELA\) M-STEP Overview](#) 19:00 – 20:00
- ✓ [Navigating the M-STEP Mathematics Computer Adaptive Test](#) 5:00 – 7:00
- ✓ [Navigating the M-STEP English Language Arts Computer Adaptive Test](#) 5:25
- ✓ [M-STEP Test Administration Videos and PowerPoints](#)

Practice Tools for Students

To help familiarize and prepare students to take state assessments, students have access to online M-STEP sample test item sets and PSAT and SAT practice tools.

Online Practice for M-STEP ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies

The online Sample Item Sets are a select group of test items in English language arts (ELA), Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies that encompass different item types, such as multiple choice, constructed response, and various kinds of technology-enhanced items. These sets provide students, teachers, and parents practice in solving grade-level and content-specific test items aligned to Michigan's academic content standards.

There are two ways to get to the online Sample Item Sets:

1. Anyone can access the Sample Item Sets through the Chrome browser at <https://wbte.drctdirect.com/MI/portals/mi/>.
2. Schools that have installed the updated INSIGHT software can access the Sample Item Sets by opening INSIGHT.

The directions to access the sample items are the same for both methods:

- a) M-STEP is on the left side
- b) Select "Online Tools Training"
- c) Select "Sample Item Sets"
- d) Select the grade
- e) Select the content area
- f) Login with the Username and Password *provided to all users* on the login screen

High School PSAT and SAT Practice

Free PSAT and SAT practice tools are available through Khan Academy to prepare students for these tests.

- ✓ [PSAT practice](https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/psat-nmsqt-psat-10/practice) information is available at: <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/psat-nmsqt-psat-10/practice>
- ✓ [SAT practice](https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/practice) can be found at <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/practice>



Spring Assessment

Administration Communication Tools

For School and District Use Spring 2017



Sample Communication Option Timeline

M-STEP assessments are given in the spring and measure current-year student achievement. Recognizing the importance of parent engagement, the following communication options and supporting documents have been designed for your potential use.

Communication Options	When	By Whom
Meet with district/building leaders for issue briefing, discussion of potential concerns.	April 2017	Superintendent
Meet with parents to show a PowerPoint presentation on Michigan's State Assessment System: What it is, What it Means, and What it Offers. A one-page front- and back-printed document under the same title can also be distributed.	April 2017	District & Building Leaders
Make district assessment practices and M-STEP an agenda item for board members and staff meetings. Distribute talking points, FAQs, elevator speech, and other materials.	April-May 2017	District & Building Leaders
Identify parents, staff, and local business and community leaders willing to support and speak out on district's behalf when asked.	April 2017	District & Building Leaders
Add state assessment timeline and overview article to newsletters and appropriate parent publications.	April-May 2017	District & Building Leaders
Ensure building, district, and board leaders discuss district assessments (including state assessments) and anticipated timeline during spring school events, as appropriate.	April-May 2017	Board, District & Building Leaders, Staff
Provide State Superintendent parent letter; How Parents Can Help; 2017 MI Assessment System: What it is, What it Means, and What it offers; and other information in school communications.	April-May 2017	District & Building Leaders

Assessment Talking Points (overview)

Many parents are still learning about state and local assessments, and why they are important to students. The messages below can serve as a guide for talking about assessment and the M-STEP in a clear and accurate way.

Background on Assessment

- ✓ Testing and other forms of assessment can provide valuable information to parents, educators, and policy leaders about students' growth and learning.
- ✓ School districts with a balanced assessment system use a variety of assessment practices that measure progress toward a student's mastery of content standards and inform classroom instruction.

State Tests Measure Progress

- ✓ Taking tests is a part of life. Enlistees are required to take a summative test to get into the military, as are students applying to most four-year colleges or universities. Many professionals — from plumbers to doctors — have to take tests to earn licenses. These end-of-the-school-year “summative” tests help prepare students for what lies ahead: tests for technical schools, college, the military, and many professions.
- ✓ State standardized assessments like M-STEP are a type of “summative” assessment that measures student progress toward mastering a rigorous set of state standards.
- ✓ M-STEP is Michigan's summative assessment and is the only state test given to all students each year. This is required under both state and federal law, to ensure all children are learning and receiving a high-quality education. Completion of the M-STEP takes an average of four to eight hours, depending on grade level.
- ✓ An alternate assessment called MI-Access is given to a small number of students with disabilities who, even with accommodations, are unable to meet the general academic content standards and whose participation in the regular grade-level state assessment has been determined by an Individualized Educational Program (IEP) team to be inappropriate.
- ✓ Each year, students identified as English Learners (ELs) take a federally required summative test called the WIDA ACCESS for ELLs 2.0. This assessment is designed to measure K–12 EL students on their progress in learning the English language. This assessment includes a status of their development of reading, listening, writing, and speaking skills. WIDA ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 is aligned to the WIDA English Language Development (ELD) standards that Michigan adopted in 2013.
- ✓ More detailed assessment overviews can be found on the [M-STEP](#), [MME](#), [MI-Access](#), and [WIDA](#) web pages.

District Assessments

Yellow =district customizable placeholder

- ✓ Other assessments are determined by local districts to guide classroom instruction and inform those who make school-level decisions. Two other types of assessments are commonly given to students by districts throughout the school year:
 - Formative assessment practices and processes are used by teachers continuously in the classroom in order to help students and teachers check learning progress. Formative assessment gives teachers and students quick feedback so that they can adjust teaching to better meet students' needs. **[CITE EXAMPLES USED AT PRESENT IN YOUR DISTRICT: LEARNING LOGS, PORTFOLIOS, GOAL SETTING, ETC.]**
 - Interim or Benchmark assessments are district-developed or standardized assessments given occasionally throughout the school year. These are chosen and administered by schools and districts to monitor progress and inform those who make decisions at the school level. **[CITE EXAMPLES USED AT PRESENT IN YOUR DISTRICT: COMMON COURSE EXAMS, NWEA MAP, SCANTRON ASSESSMENTS, ETC.]**
- ✓ State Superintendent Brian Whiston has directed the Michigan Department of Education to work with local districts and assessment experts to audit the assessments that schools administer annually, in order to align and balance assessments so the amount of student testing can be reduced and ultimately used to inform instruction and improve student learning. Since M-STEP began, state assessments for most students have been significantly shortened by up to eight hours.

Background on M-STEP:

- ✓ The M-STEP is a 21st century test given primarily online each spring. M-STEP is designed to gauge how well students are mastering Michigan's standards. These state standards, developed for educators by educators, broadly outline what students should know and be able to do, by subject and grade level. Ultimately, M-STEP results will show how ready students are to enter the workplace, career education training, and college.
- ✓ M-STEP also asks students to demonstrate critical thinking, problem solving, and deeper knowledge through written responses.
- ✓ The M-STEP is administered to students in the following grades and subjects:
 - English language arts and Mathematics in grades 3–8
 - Science in grades 4, 7 and 11
 - Social studies in grades 5, 8 and 11
- ✓ High school students in grades 9 and 10 take the Preliminary SAT (PSAT), which helps prepare them for the SAT they will take in grade 11.

Grade 11 students take a series of general assessments, which together are known as the Michigan Merit Examination (MME). The MME includes:

- A free SAT with Essay (college entrance exam and English language arts and mathematics)
- M-STEP (science and social studies)
- ACT WorkKeys (real-world career skills)
- ✓ M-STEP and MME provide important snapshots of student progress at a state, district, and building level. When combined with classroom work, report cards, local district assessments, and other tools, M-STEP results offer a comprehensive view of student progress and achievement.
- ✓ As the only statewide student academic measurement, M-STEP provides valuable information to parents on the academic progress of their child, school, and district in relation to statewide results. M-STEP also provides teachers and schools with important data to identify struggling students and determine what kinds of academic supports they need.
- ✓ For additional general information on M-STEP click [Michigan's State Assessment System: What It Is, What It Means - And What It Offers](#)

Future of Michigan's State Assessment System

Michigan's assessment vision, designed to promote our goal to become a top 10 education state within 10 years, calls for the assessments outlined above to remain in place during the 2017-18 school year. MDE staff are currently planning for new tests and processes called for in the new assessment vision and anticipate having them in place for the 2018-19 school year.

Information on Michigan's assessment vision has been described in the [Michigan's Assessment Vision](#) document on MDE's [ESSA Assessment Implementation page](#).

M-STEP School/District Talking Points—SPRING

The messages below can serve as a guide for talking about the assessment and student scores in a clear and accurate way.

- ✓ Our students in grades 3-8 will take the Michigan Test for Education Michigan (M-STEP), administered for the third time in Spring 2017.
- ✓ The 2017 M-STEP will have the same modern features as last year's M-STEP.
- ✓ Most students take M-STEP assessments online, with a paper-pencil option available in schools whose technology is not yet ready for online testing.
- ✓ Depending on grade, M-STEP requires on average a total of 4-8 hours, or less than one percent of student instructional time, to complete.
- ✓ Students in grades 9 and 10 will take the PSAT, which prepare them for the SAT taken in grade 11.
- ✓ Students in grade 11 will take the SAT, which will serve as both a college entrance *and* the state English language arts (ELA) and mathematics assessment. They will also take Science and Social Studies M-STEP tests and the ACT WorkKeys work skills assessment.
- ✓ M-STEP will begin after most spring breaks and end before Memorial Day.
- ✓ Schools will have flexibility in scheduling the amount of time students spend in a single test session.
- ✓ Schools will have access to preliminary student test results within a few days after testing is complete. This preliminary data is a first look for school use only until final results are available.
- ✓ Final results—including M-STEP parent reports—should be available to schools prior to the beginning of the next school year.
- ✓ The M-STEP uses Computer Adaptive Testing (CAT) for the ELA and mathematics assessments given in grades 3 through 8.
- ✓ CAT provides a more customized testing experience for students and a more precise measurement of what students know.
- ✓ The CAT adjusts the difficulty of grade-level questions throughout the assessment based on the student's responses. If a student answers a question correctly, the next question will be harder; if a student answers incorrectly, the next question will be easier.
- ✓ Balancing questions this way ensures students are engaged and challenged, but not overwhelmed. CAT also improves test security, since all students don't all get the same questions.

School Newsletter Article – SPRING

NOTE: Written at 8th grade level, to connect with a diverse array of community members.

[BUILDING NAME] students to take M-STEP starting April **[DATE]**, 2017.

Our students in grades **[X-X]** will be taking the 2017 M-STEP (Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress) over a testing window that stretches from mid-April through the end of May. Different grade level students will be tested at different times.

[INSERT DISTRICT SCHEDULE OR LINK TO ONLINE SCHEDULE]

What is M-STEP testing like for students?

Most students in grades 3-8 take the M-STEP on a computer instead of using bubble answer sheets and multiple-choice tests. This allows students to show critical thinking, problem solving, and deeper understanding.

English language arts (ELA) and Mathematics assessments use online Computer Adaptive Testing (CAT), which helps reduce the time students spend testing. In fact, each student is expected to spend no more than 4-8 hours on state assessments, depending on grade level. This represents less than one-half of one percent of our district's annual instructional time. CAT also provides a more customized testing experience for students and a more precise measurement of what students know.

Under state and federal law, all student are required to take a state assessment annually each spring. Most students in grades 3-8 take the M-STEP, which is our state's summative evaluation, meaning that its primary use is to tell us how well our district's curriculum and instruction align to Michigan's rigorous standards. The state also uses the data from the M-STEP in their efforts to hold schools accountable.

Where does M-STEP fit in our teaching and assessment system?

The M-STEP is just one of the types of assessment tools our district uses to inform classroom teaching and measure progress toward preparing our students to be college- and career-ready.

In the classroom, teachers use FORMATIVE assessment practices to continually monitor learning and adjust instruction. For example, **[CITE FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT EXAMPLES IN USE: self-assessment, feedback, goal setting, learning logs, portfolios, etc.]**

Our district also occasionally administers INTERIM/BENCHMARK assessment(s) to monitor progress and inform instructional decisions. In our district, we measure progress using **[CITE INTERIM/BENCHMARK ASSESSMENT(S) IN USE: District Common Course Exams, NWEA MAP, Scranton, etc.]**

FAQ for Teachers to Answer Parent Questions: Taking the M-STEP

These suggested responses to frequently asked questions are intended to help teachers address many of the concerns that parents are likely to raise in regards to taking the M-STEP.

What is M-STEP and why is Michigan using it?

The M-STEP is an online “summative” test, meaning that it is administered once a year to measure students’ progress toward mastering Michigan’s rigorous, grade-level content standards. State standards broadly outline what students need to know and be able to do in each subject and grade level to be career- and college-ready upon high school graduation.

Why does this test matter for my child?

The M-STEP is designed to help parents understand how their child is progressing toward career- and college-readiness. It is also a tool to help parents understand where their child needs more support or additional challenges.

What will my child experience during M-STEP testing?

The M-STEP is an online test that uses various types of questions to assess real-world skills, such as critical thinking and problem solving. M-STEP tests for English language arts and mathematics use Computer Adaptive Testing (CAT) for students in grades 3 through 8. CAT adjusts the difficulty of grade-level questions throughout the assessment based on the student’s responses. If a student answers a question correctly, the next question will be harder; if a student answers incorrectly, the next question will be easier.

I’m concerned that my child spends too much time being stressed out by testing.

Depending on their grade level, students will spend no more than 4-8 hours taking state assessments. This represents less than one percent of the district’s annual instructional time. Plus, new innovations like online testing and computer adaptive testing (CAT) give students a more personalized experience. CAT customizes the questions based on your child’s responses. This means that your child stays engaged and challenged, but is not likely to be overwhelmed.

When can I expect to see results from the 2017 M-STEP?

Preliminary student results on machine-scored questions will be available to *schools* within 48 hours after a student completes all parts of a subject area. Final results include hand-scored test items; these should be released to schools just prior to the beginning of the next school year. Districts will also receive M-STEP parent reports that will be distributed to families. Student scores are communicated to parents through four achievement levels that indicate if the child is proficient for the subject and grade level.

How can I support my student in being more successful on the M-STEP?

The best preparation for M-STEP comes through classroom instruction and coursework aligned with state standards throughout the year. Test questions are developed by Michigan educators to reflect what students are supposed to know and be able to do in the classroom, so there is no need to cram for the M-STEP. For added support, the MDE has posted testing tutorials, practice sessions, and helpful tips at www.michigan.gov/mstep. Using these tools before test days might ease some students’ anxiety around testing and boost their confidence.

Community Partners

Community partners form a group of people who are willing to promote an activity, project, event, or a message. In this context, community partners can be valuable in the effort to help you communicate accurately about the importance of educational assessment and the ways your district uses the results to help improve instruction for students. Community partners can be your biggest fans and advocates, able to communicate *en masse* about the value of your goals, strategies, and practices. These are people you can trust to convey their enthusiasm and stay motivated to spread the word.

Each partner should have a key communicator—someone who can be reached quickly, and then work directly with their constituents to support district activities [or messages] and report back.

Your partner team should include:

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Parents | Youth advocates |
| Business leaders | Alumni |
| Local government leaders | Friends |
| Civic organizations | |

Use the above list, plus a chart that resembles the one below, to identify and organize community partners.

Team Member	Role	District Liaison
Jane Doe	Parent & Volunteer	Principal Jones
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
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10		
11		
12		
13		
14		