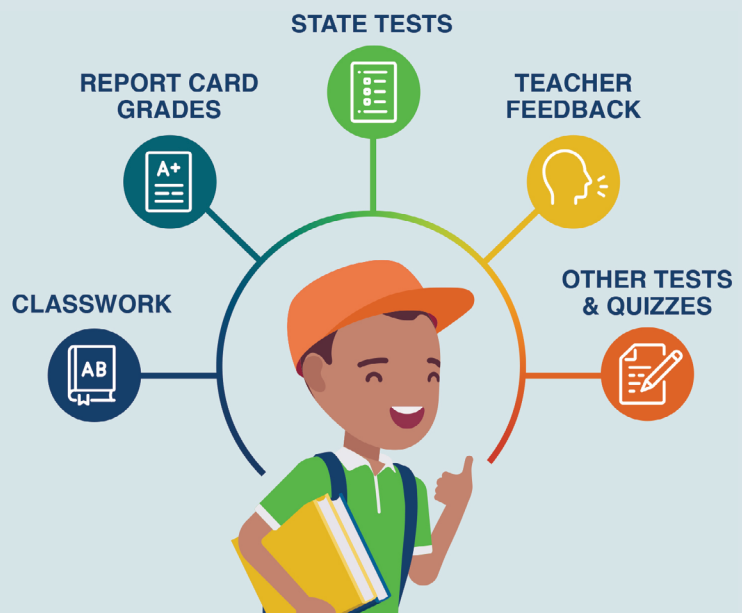




A FAMILY GUIDE TO ANNUAL STATE TESTS IN MICHIGAN: One of Many Measures of Student Learning

There are many ways to measure academic performance, and annual state tests are only one of them. These tests are not meant to tell the whole story. They are meant to be combined with other measures, including teacher feedback, classwork and projects, and report card grades. Together, these measures can give families a more complete picture of a student's performance so they can better support learning at home and advocate for their child.



State Assessments 101

The Every Student Succeeds Act or ESSA, requires students to take state tests in reading and math every year in third through eighth grade and once in high school. In Michigan, students in third through seventh grade take the Michigan State Test of Educational Progress (M-STEP) in English language arts and math. Students in fifth, eighth and 11th grade also take the M-STEP in science and social studies. In eighth through 10th grade, students take the PSAT.

High school students take the Michigan Merit Exams (MME) in 11th grade. The MME consists of two separate tests—the SAT which tests reading, writing and math skills; and the M-STEP in science and social studies.

Studies show that third grade is a critical year for students to learn fundamental reading skills that will help them understand and think critically. As a result, Michigan requires all third grade students to achieve a score

of proficient (at least 1300) in English language arts on the M-STEP to move onto fourth grade. There are options for students to be promoted without being proficient on M-STEP. Students can receive certain scores on other reading tests, or complete a portfolio project to demonstrate they are reading at grade level.

A Focus on Grade Level Skills

Unlike other tests, M-STEP is focused on grade level material and is aligned to the state standards. The test questions match what students do and learn in the classroom everyday throughout the year, which are the skills that are most important for students to learn in order to move on to more challenging content.

The M-STEP is taken online and is computer adaptive, which means it adjusts the difficulty of the questions based on the student's responses. The test includes a variety of different types of questions, including traditional multiple choice as well as questions that ask students to analyze text and write well-developed essays explaining their thinking. Michigan teachers have worked closely with the state to write and review test questions.

Grade 6: Math

Select **all** the expressions that are equivalent to $8(t + 4)$.

- ☐ $2(4t + 2)$
- ☐ $8t + 32.$
- ☐ $4t + 4 + 4t.$
- ☐ $(8 + t) + (8 + 4)$
- ☐ $(8 \times t) + (8 \times 4)$

Grade 3: ELA

This question has two parts. First, answer part A. Then, answer part B.

Part A

Which sentence **best** describes the lesson of the passage?

- A Animals should be protected.
- B Birds should only nest in trees.
- C Movers should listen to children.
- D Children should stay away from birds.

Part B

Which sentence from the passage **best** supports your answer in Part A?

- A "A bird's nest sat right in the middle of Mrs. Baxter's wreath."
- B "Jessie and Mrs. Baxter talked about the birds for a while."
- C "One morning, Jessie saw a pink head poking out of the nest."
- D "'You can't use this door,' Jessie said, holding her arms out stiff."



Useful Information for All

FAMILIES: Understanding Grade Level Performance

The M-STEP report gives families information on how well their child performed on different sets of skills in each subject. Families can use this information to identify where their child is doing well and where they may need support or practice. This helps families better support learning at home. It can also help them start meaningful conversations with teachers, to set goals for each student's areas of improvement and to identify resources and strategies that can be used at home and in school to help students make progress.

Questions to Ask the Teacher about Your Child's M-STEP Report:

- What does this mean about my child's learning?
- Is my child on grade level?
- Where does my child need more support or improvement?
- What short-term learning goals should my child meet to show progress?
- How can I support learning at home?



TEACHERS: Informing Instruction

Students also take benchmark tests throughout the year, such as MAP Growth, i-Ready, STAR or Smarter Balanced interims. These are taken several times a year and measure mastery of important concepts and skills in reading and math. Students take a test at the beginning of the year to identify their “starting point” and again throughout the year to measure their progress. Benchmark tests help teachers identify and address learning gaps early on so students can stay on track to meet grade level expectations. While M-STEP is only given at the end of the school year, it is one way of showing how much progress students made from the beginning of the year and how well they met grade level expectations.

While teachers use M-STEP results to understand each student's unique needs and support them in the areas where they need extra help, they also help teachers to improve their instruction. Teachers can use the results to look for trends in their students' learning to see what skills or concepts students learned and what content they struggled with. This helps teachers identify what they taught effectively and where they need to improve or change their instructional strategies.

SCHOOL & DISTRICT LEADERS: Informing Decisions

M-STEP results are critical for school and district leaders to make informed decisions about schools and students. School and district level test scores show leaders how students across a school or district are performing and indicate if a certain group of students or schools need more support. This allows them to target additional support or resources to help those schools improve. District leaders can also use M-STEP scores to understand what strategies and changes are working.



STATE LEADERS: Helping Schools Improve

State leaders use M-STEP results to identify schools and districts that need more support and resources. They identify the schools with the lowest performance in the state, as well as schools with certain groups of students that performed much lower on the test than the rest of the students in that school. These schools receive additional funding and resources from the state to support students and teachers. For example, schools may hire more teachers or tutors or they may purchase additional instructional materials and programs, depending on the needs of their students.

Where Can I Go for More Information?

- For more information, visit Michigan.gov/MDE/0,4615,7-140-22709---,00.html Michigan.gov/documents/mde/Guide_to_State_Assessments_622260_7.pdf
- To see sample test questions and resources to support learning at home, including a sample score report, visit MI.StartingSmarter.org/
- To see a practice test, visit Wbte.DrceDirect.com/MI/portals/MI
- For ideas on how to support your child's learning at home, visit PTA.org/FamilyGuides
- For more information about the Michigan PTA visit MichiganPTA.org/

