



# PARENT GUIDE TO STATE ASSESSMENTS IN MICHIGAN

During the 2014-15 school year, Michigan rolled out a new assessment program called the Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (M-STEP), aligned to the state's rigorous academic standards. M-STEP is given primarily online each spring and is designed to gauge how well students are mastering the standards—and ultimately how ready they are for the next grade and for college and careers after graduation.

The M-STEP English language arts (ELA) and mathematics assessment questions were developed by educators from many states, including Michigan. Science and social studies assessments continue to be developed entirely by Michigan educators.

## Elementary and Middle School Students

The spring 2016 M-STEP will be given to elementary and middle school students in the following grades and subjects:

- English language arts (ELA) and mathematics (Grades 3-8)
- Science (Grades 4 and 7)
- Social studies (Grades 5 and 8)

## High School Students

### 9TH AND 10TH GRADE ASSESSMENTS

State law requires schools to administer a state summative assessment in ELA and mathematics to 9th and 10th grade students. The Michigan Department of

Education will administer the PSAT (preliminary SAT) to students in these grades in April.

### 11TH GRADE ASSESSMENTS

The Michigan Merit Examination (MME) is the general assessment for students in 11th grade and includes:

- A free SAT with Essay college entrance exam. SAT is the nation's most widely used college admission test and is aligned with Michigan's academic standards. The SAT replaces the M-STEP ELA and mathematics assessment components, thereby reducing testing time for 11th grade students by up to eight hours.
- A work skills assessment (ACT WorkKeys).
- M-STEP science assessment and M-STEP social studies assessment.

Michigan state assessments require on average four to eight hours, taking less than 1% of student instructional time to complete. All other assessments are determined at the local district or building level.

### THIS GUIDE INCLUDES:

- Overview of Michigan assessments, which measure student proficiency against more rigorous standards
- Overview of accountability for students, teachers and schools
- Additional resources for parents



### ASSESSMENTS FOR SPECIAL POPULATIONS

An alternate assessment called MI-Access is available to students with disabilities whose Individualized Educational Program (IEP) team has determined that general assessments, even with accommodations, are not appropriate. More information about MI-Access is available at [mi.gov/mi-access](http://mi.gov/mi-access).

An English language proficiency assessment called World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) is provided for students who are learning the English language. Additional information about WIDA can be found at [mi.gov/wida](http://mi.gov/wida).

### WHY NEW ASSESSMENTS?

Teachers and principals talk a lot about assessments, which are used to measure students' academic achievement. This document highlights the end-of-year summative assessments, which (1) measure student progress toward mastering state standards, and (2) provide information on program and school effectiveness. There are three main types of assessments (see box at right).

The M-STEP summative assessments address concerns that parents, educators and employers have had about state assessments in the past—namely that they measured ability to memorize facts, rather than the skills to think critically and apply knowledge.

### Types of assessments

**Classroom-based:** Individual tests given by teachers as needed throughout the year to assess knowledge and skills in specific areas

**Benchmark:** The same test repeated at set intervals to measure student growth over time

**Summative:** End-of-year assessments administered by the state to measure student performance against a common set of standards

*This document addresses summative assessments.*

## What is different about the M-STEP summative assessments?

M-STEP has fewer multiple-choice questions and more questions that require problem-solving and critical thinking skills.

The assessments will enable educators to deepen their understanding of student progress from grade to grade—and, just as importantly, identify instructional supports **well before students enter college or the workforce.**

### ELA assessments:

- Students read more complex fiction and non-fiction texts, and use evidence from these texts to answer questions, make inferences and present persuasive arguments.
- Literacy is emphasized across all subjects, not just English language arts.
- Writing is tested at every grade level.

### Math assessments:

- Going beyond multiple-choice questions, students are presented with multi-step problems, conceptual questions, and real-world applications.
- Students are expected to solve mathematics questions and are asked to not only get answers correct but explain how they arrived at their answer.
- Fewer topics are covered in greater depth.



# Benefits of Michigan's State Assessments:

- Scores provide students, parents and teachers with insight into career and college readiness early enough to address issues and provide extra support where needed.
  - New in 2016, M-STEP ELA and mathematics assessments will be “computer-adaptive assessments,” which adjust the difficulty of questions based on student responses. A student who answers correctly will receive a more challenging subsequent item while an incorrect answer generates an easier question. This method provides students with a more engaging test experience, is more time-efficient and produces more accurate results than traditional methods, particularly for low- or high-achieving students.
- NOTE:** While taking advantage of technology, assessments are designed to work with the technology resources available in schools today. Most school districts in Michigan will be administering state assessments online. A paper-and-pencil option remains available upon request.
- The assessments provide accurate measures of achievement and growth for all students—including those with disabilities and English language learners—allowing these students to perform to their potential. The goal is to make the assessments more accessible and to produce results that are valid for all students.
  - For students with disabilities, the online assessments address visual, auditory and physical access barriers. Students are able to take a test individualized to meet their needs at the same time as other students in their class.
  - Helpful tools have been developed for English language learners to demonstrate their knowledge, regardless of their level of proficiency in English.



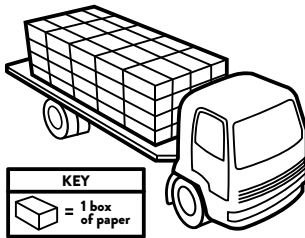
# Sample Questions by Grade Level

The following questions are representative of those found on the M-STEP assessments. For more examples, visit the Michigan Department of Education's Online Practice for M-STEP English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies at [michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-22709\\_70117-350540--,00.html](http://michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-22709_70117-350540--,00.html)

## FIFTH-GRADE MATHEMATICS

### SAMPLE QUESTION

The bed of a truck is stacked with boxes of paper. The boxes are stacked 5 boxes deep by 4 boxes high by 4 boxes across, as shown in the picture.



- When the driver is in the **empty** truck, the mass is 2948.35 kilograms.
- The mass of 1 box of paper is 22.5 kilograms.
- The driver delivers some of the boxes of paper at his first stop.
- The truck has to drive over a bridge on the way to the next stop.
- Trucks with a mass greater than 4700 kilograms are not allowed to drive over the bridge.

Enter the **minimum** number of boxes of paper the driver must deliver at the first stop to be allowed to drive over the bridge.

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# Sample Questions by Grade Level

## SIXTH-GRADE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE ARTS

### SAMPLE QUESTION

A student is writing a report about sleep. Read both sources and the directions that follow.

#### Source 1: "During Sleep" by Dr. Howard Dell

If you are like some people, you may think that sleep is a process during which the body and brain shut off, but this is not the case. The body goes through a series of stages during sleep in which body and brain activity change. Most of these changes are not noticed nor remembered. However, sleep does usually follow a pattern. Muscle activity and breathing slow in the initial stages of sleep. The body's temperature also decreases. Sometimes during sleep, the heart can begin to beat more quickly, blood pressure can rise, and many muscles experience small movements. These changes often happen during dreams.

#### Source 2: What Happens While You Sleep

SLEEP STAGE	DESCRIPTION
Stage 1 Light Sleep	The muscles relax, eye movement slows and thoughts begin to fade. A person may be easily awakened.
Stage 2 Light Sleep	Eye movement stops, and a person can experience brief dreams. Body temperature begins dropping and heart rate slows.
Stage 3 Moderate-Deep Sleep	The body temperature lowers, and a person is difficult to awaken.
Stage 4 Deep Sleep	The brain uses less energy. The body temperature lowers more than in moderate-deep sleep. A person may sleepwalk.
REM Sleep (REM = rapid eye movement)	Most dreams occur during this stage. The brain uses energy as eyes move quickly, even though the eyelids are closed. Heart rate and blood pressure increase, but many of the large body muscles are inactive.

The student took notes about information in the sources. Select **two** notes that correctly paraphrase, or restate, information from **both** sources.

- We dream several times each night.
- People can be easily awakened from sleep.
- We do not remember what happens during sleep.
- People can sleepwalk during a stage of deep sleep.
- Our bodies and brains continue to work during sleep.
- During some stages of sleep, our bodies decrease in activity.

## ELEVENTH GRADE SAT INFORMATION AND SAMPLE TEST ITEMS

Beginning in spring 2016, Michigan will administer the SAT college entrance exam as part of the Michigan Merit Examination for students in Grade 11. For more information and practice test items, visit the Michigan SAT website at [collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/state-partnerships/michigan](http://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/state-partnerships/michigan).

# What Parents Can Expect

**The M-STEP is designed to measure rigorous content expectations of the state standards. Because the tests measure complex skills, which are different from the skills measured by previous state tests, scores may look lower. In many cases, students aren't doing worse—it's just that the bar is higher.**

As students and teachers gain the skills and knowledge needed to meet higher standards, performance is also expected to improve over time. In other states where higher standards are taught and assessments have been aligned to those standards, student performance has improved.

State assessments require less than 1% of student instructional time during a school year. All other assessments are determined at the local district or school level.

## **M-STEP Parent Reports**

The M-STEP parent report provides a snapshot of how your child is progressing and shows where he or she excels or needs more support. This information, along with classroom grades, teacher feedback and scores on other tests, will help give a more complete picture of how well your child is performing academically.

The score reports describing students' results on the tests may be very different from what parents have seen in the past.

More information on M-STEP and what a parent report contains is available at [youtube.com/watch?v=AM55xZ-ZuNU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AM55xZ-ZuNU).

## **Accountability**

Michigan's MI School Data website, [mischooldata.org](http://mischooldata.org), provides the public with a wide variety of information, including school, district and state assessment results.

During Michigan's assessment transition, diagnostic accountability scorecards will not be released until fall 2016. School rankings also will resume in fall 2016, after a hiatus during 2014-15 due to the assessment transition.

Under legislation passed in 2015, student growth will account for 25% of educator evaluations during the 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18 school years. The law also will allow school districts to use their own evaluation tool, or modify one recognized by the state. Each school district is required to provide training in its selected evaluation tool(s) to teachers, administrators and other observers and evaluators.

## **How will schools support struggling students?**

Schools have created a variety of models to assist struggling students. Check with your school for the type of supports available.



# Take Action

**Parents are their child's best advocates. As a parent and your child's first teacher, you should be informed about the local district and building assessments, as well as the State of Michigan assessment and accountability system. Parents and families must be at the table with school leaders and school districts to ensure that testing is implemented well and with enough resources to ensure success.**

For additional details on the state assessment and accountability system, please visit the Michigan Department of Education's Division of Accountability Services website at [mi.gov/DAS](https://mi.gov/DAS). The M-STEP testing calendar is available online at [michigan.gov/documents/mde/S16\\_Testing\\_Schedule\\_498529\\_7.pdf](https://michigan.gov/documents/mde/S16_Testing_Schedule_498529_7.pdf)

Here are some questions you might want to consider asking your local school:

- How many local assessments will my child take this school year, and where can I access/view the assessment calendar?
- What will happen if my child does not meet proficiency on the new assessments?
- How will the results of tests be used to support my child's learning?
- What can I do, as a parent, to help my child do his or her best?
- How will school evaluations be affected, based on results of the new assessments?

Also, be sure to speak with your local school administrators! Ask them to host a parent night in the spring to explain the tests, and in the fall to explain test results.

Below is the list of policies and practices that National PTA supports.

- National PTA believes that valid assessment does not consist of only a single test score, and that at no time should a single test be considered the sole determinant of a student's academic or work future.
- National PTA supports nationally agreed-upon voluntary standards if they are derived by consensus at the state and local levels. Parents must be involved in this process.
- National PTA believes that assessments provide valuable information to parents, teachers and school leaders about the growth and achievement of their students. Furthermore, having annual data on the performance of students can help inform teaching and learning, as well as identify achievement gaps among groups of students within a school and among a school district. National PTA believes assessments are essential to ensure that all students receive a high-quality education.



# Preparing and Supporting Your Child

- Review the Michigan Department of Education's Guide to M-STEP: What it means – And What it Offers at [http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-22709\\_70117-350540--,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-22709_70117-350540--,00.html), which includes valuable information on the test and the spring 2016 testing calendar.
- Encourage your child to practice online sample test items for M-STEP English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies at home if possible to become familiar with the test layout and types of questions on the test. Sample test items can be found at [michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-22709\\_70117-350540--,00.html](http://michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-22709_70117-350540--,00.html)
- Encourage your child to practice online sample test items for the PSAT and SAT. PSAT and SAT sample test items can be found at [collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/state-partnerships/michigan](http://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/state-partnerships/michigan).
- Work with your child's school and teachers to ensure there will be regular and clear communications from the school on the assessments, test preparation that could be done at home, and how the results will be used.
- Discuss the tests with your children. Make sure they feel comfortable and understand why they are taking a test.
- With older children, explain that the assessments were created to make sure they are on track to succeed after graduation, and to identify any issues early enough to give them more support.
- Explain to your child that the M-STEP test is challenging. Tell your child you have high expectations and that you and the teachers are there to help every step of the way.
- Watch the M-STEP Parent Report Video at [youtube.com/watch?v=AM55xZ-ZuNU](http://youtube.com/watch?v=AM55xZ-ZuNU), which explains the report you will be receiving from your child's school with his or her test results.
- Make sure your child has a comfortable place for studying and is prepared mentally and physically for a test—getting plenty of rest and nutritious food.
- Review test results with your child and his or her teacher.

## Staying informed and involved

- Become familiar with Michigan's standards that are the basis for classroom instruction and state assessments, visit [Michigan.gov/academicstandards](http://Michigan.gov/academicstandards).
- Monitor your child's progress and regularly communicate with your child's teachers. If your child needs extra help or wants to learn more about a subject, work with his or her teacher to identify opportunities for tutoring, after-school clubs, or other resources.
- Read all comments written by the teacher. Ask teachers to explain anything that is unclear, and discuss how you can best work together to address areas of improvement for your child.
- Meet with your child's teacher as often as possible to discuss his or her progress. Ask for activities to do at home to help prepare for tests and improve your child's proficiency.
- Remember, tests are a snapshot of student performance on a given day and are not the only measures of what a child can do.