



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING

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GOVERNOR

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STATE SUPERINTENDENT

March 24, 2016

Dear Parent,

Beginning in mid-April, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) will administer for the second year the Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (M-STEP). Like last year, the M-STEP will be given online and will measure current student knowledge on Michigan's standards in English language arts (ELA), mathematics, science, and social studies.

This year, based on feedback from students, parents, and educators, we have made several enhancements to M-STEP:

- The test is now shorter for most students, who will spend no more than 4-8 hours *total* on 2016 state assessments.
- The PSAT is being offered to high school students in grades 9 and 10. The PSAT prepares students for the SAT taken in grade 11.
- High school 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.
- M-STEP will begin after most spring breaks are over 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 should be available to schools prior to the beginning of the next school year. This will include M-STEP parent reports to be distributed by districts.

We want your child's experience to be relaxed, healthy, enjoyable, and stress-free. Your positive outlook and supportive manner going into these assessments will also influence your child's experience.

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This week, the State House of Representatives budget subcommittee amended the Michigan Department of Education budget to discontinue M-STEP and redirected those funds to purchase a yet-to-be-determined computer adaptive interim solution for the state assessment. The bill also eliminated funding for the SAT. Obviously, the budget process is relatively long and has many steps. As the budget outcome won't be finalized until late May or June, it is very important that local districts administer the Spring 2016 M-STEP and SAT as planned, to ensure ongoing data and support for their students and teachers; and to comply with state and federal law.

In order for you to better understand and prepare your child for the M-STEP, here are some things you might like to know:

What tests will students take?

Grade Assessed:	Content Assessed:
3rd Grade	Mathematics, English Language Arts (ELA)
4th Grade	ELA, Mathematics, Science
5th Grade	ELA, Mathematics, Social Studies
6th Grade	ELA, Mathematics
7th Grade	ELA, Mathematics, Science
8th Grade	ELA, Mathematics, Social Studies
11th Grade	SAT with essay – Serves as both a college entrance and Michigan's English language arts and mathematics assessment; M-STEP science; M-STEP social studies; ACT WorkKeys™

The M-STEP is a 21st century test, meaning it has fewer multiple choice questions and more questions requiring problem solving and critical thinking skills. This year, the ELA and mathematics components will be computer adaptive tests (CAT). A CAT delivers a more individualized test experience for students. It also provides a more precise measurement of student learning.

Like last year's test, the 2016 M-STEP will feature other modern testing methods and components including:

- **Technology Enhanced (TE) items:** On the online tests, some items will ask students to drag and drop, select text in a passage, select spots on a graphic, match between two lists, fill in the blank, or select multiple answers to a test question.
- **Constructed Response (CR) items:** Students will be asked to produce a grade-appropriate written response to some test questions to demonstrate a clearer understanding of the content standard being assessed.

- Performance Task (PT) component: For mathematics (grades 3-8) and ELA (grades 5 and 8), students will experience a theme-based test component that asks them to answer more than one question related to a source, or several source(s)/document(s). PTs are specifically designed to assess students' depth of content knowledge.

Because of the technology-enhanced and written-response items, some questions on the online tests will require basic computer and keyboarding skills. Students will have had many opportunities to practice these online tools and skills before taking the tests.

Your child's school has the flexibility to give the M-STEP **online** tests anytime within a three-week time frame for each grade level. Schools will administer the subject area tests described above during the following windows:

Grades 5, 8, 11:	April 11 – April 29
Grades 3, 6:	April 25 – May 13
Grades 4, 7:	May 9 – May 27

High school students will take their additional required tests according to the following schedule:

Grades 9, 10 (PSAT):	April 12 or 13 (Makeup April 26 or 27)
Grade 11 (SAT):	April 12 (Makeup April 26)
Grade 11 (WorkKeys™):	April 13 (Makeup April 27)

While most schools will administer the M-STEP online, a paper/pencil version of the M-STEP is available for schools not yet technology ready.

The MDE respects parent choice. However, we also care deeply that students graduate ready to succeed in college or the workplace. State standardized tests allow us to measure student progress in learning Michigan's high academic standards and assess how well schools are teaching these standards in classrooms across the state. While we support parents in making choices for their children, there is no allowable way in state or federal law to "opt out" of assessment. Students who are not assessed will count against their schools' participation rate, leaving schools open to penalties.

For more information, please see the *Spring 2016 Guide to State Assessments* document, available at michigan.gov/baa.

Sincerely,



Brian J. Whiston
State Superintendent