

A BIG WIN FOR MICHIGAN STUDENTS



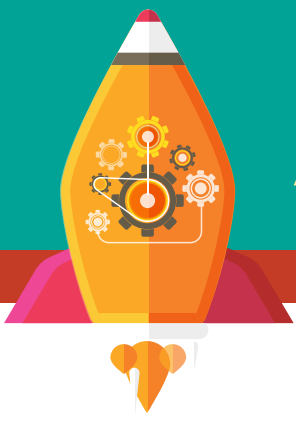
Michigan State Standards

Michigan students are facing a serious challenge. While 65% of Michigan jobs will require a postsecondary credential by 2020, only 36% of adults in the state meet this requirement today. What remains is a nearly 30% skills gap that threatens the growth and competitiveness of Michigan's economy. Additionally, 27% of college-bound seniors in Michigan's graduating class had to take at least one remedial course because they lacked the skills to successfully complete college-level work. Not only do these remedial courses mean an increased tuition burden for students to learn skills they should have mastered in high school, but they are also detrimental to on-time completion of a postsecondary degree. Continuing down this path could mean serious consequences for the economic health of the state.

Year	4th Math	4th Reading	8th Math	8th Reading
2003	27th	28th	34th	27th
2013	42nd	38th	37th	32nd

Clearly, it is critical that Michigan students graduate high school with the skills they need to succeed in college so that they are qualified to fill the jobs of the future—but too many students are not on track to do so. Over the past decade, on the Nation's Report Card (also known as the National Assessment of Educational Progress, or NAEP), student achievement in 4th and 8th grade reading and math has been declining. Recognizing this troubling regression, in 2010, the State Board of Education adopted a set of career- and college-ready standards in English language arts (ELA) and math to strengthen student preparation.

The previous state standards did not provide students with the skills they needed for success after high school. Although the math standards were high quality, they lacked a focus on the development of basic arithmetic skills. The ELA standards did not properly emphasize early reading skills and were difficult to measure, making them among the worst in the nation. On the U.S Chamber of Commerce's 2007 *Leaders and Laggards* report, Michigan received a C in both academic achievement and rigor of state standards.



A BIG WIN FOR MICHIGAN STUDENTS

Better Standards Deserve Better Assessments

Teachers across Michigan have been hard at work putting the higher academic goals in place since their adoption in 2010. It has been a significant undertaking involving countless hours of professional development, curricula alignment, and learning strategies to engage students more deeply than ever before.

The next phase of this work is to implement aligned assessments that are more meaningful to students, teachers, and parents in determining which skills a student has or has not yet mastered in order to be prepared for careers and college. The state needs a test that can measure the critical thinking and problem solving skills our students need to succeed—and previous state tests cannot evaluate this level of learning. Improved assessments are an opportunity to move beyond rote memorization “bubble tests” to ones that mirror the higher standards and provide teachers with valuable information on how effectively they are teaching and students are learning.

Putting better assessments in place is not enough. They need to be part of a larger system of accountability that supports student achievement and holds schools accountable for successfully teaching the content outlined in the standards. At the heart of accountability is the need to ensure that all students across Michigan receive the same high-quality education. Meaningful tests serve as schoolwide academic checkups that can identify struggling students and schools in need of extra support so interventions can be put in place. In addition, improved assessments can identify high-achieving students who require support to maintain their academic engagement and provide them with the resources necessary to continue to excel.

For the past four years, teams of academics, testing experts, and teachers have been working tirelessly

to create two new testing options aligned to these standards: PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness of College and Careers) and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. In spring 2014, these two assessment systems were field tested in 35 states, including Michigan, where students in multiple districts participated in the Smarter Balanced field test.

The tests aim to do the following:

- Accurately measure student progress toward career and college readiness.
- Assess a wide range of skills, including real-world critical thinking and writing skills.
- Provide real-time information on student progress to help guide teacher instruction and improve learning.

Michigan has been a governing member of the Smarter Balanced consortium since 2010. Last June, the State Department of Education was asked to develop a new state test that was unique to Michigan, and aligned to the higher standards. The decision was to implement a testing system known as the Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (M-STEP), which uses a combination of Smarter Balanced test items along with Michigan-developed field test items (field test items will not be scored). Students will take these summative assessments in ELA and math in grades 3–8 in spring 2015. Students in grade 11 will take the Michigan Merit Examination, which consists of the ACT Plus Writing, WorkKeys, and M-STEP end-of-course assessments in ELA and math.

These computer-based tests will include performance-based tasks that better measure career and college readiness through problems involving research and complex analysis, which cannot be measured through multiple choice items. Along with summative assessments, schools have the option to give interim and formative assessments at various points throughout the year so teachers can determine whether students are on track to mastering the necessary skills for the year. In later years, Michigan will also transition to

computer adaptive testing (CAT). CAT bases the difficulty of questions on students' previous answers, which provides a more accurate measure of student achievement, particularly for high- and low-performing students.

During this transition, it is important to ensure that Michigan's state tests provide a reliable measure of how students are doing on the path to careers and college at the state and national levels. Leaders continue to be enthusiastic about the M-STEP tests because they meet so many of the criteria that make up a high-quality aligned test. As advocates, we need to ensure that the state tests accurately measure career and college readiness and serve as a useful tool to help students improve.

A High-Quality Assessment

- Is developed with input from academic and testing experts, as well as teachers.
- Is field tested and reviewed before full implementation.
- Assesses a wide range of real-world skills using a variety of question formats.
- Includes formative or interim assessments that act as academic checkups to ensure students are keeping pace.
- Provides detailed and timely feedback that sends an early warning signal to teachers if students are not on track so interventions can be put in place.
- Identifies high-achieving students so they can receive the support necessary to continue to excel.
- Is comparable across states.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the difference between standards and curriculum?

- Standards are a set of guidelines for what students are expected to know and be able to do at specific points in their education. Standards provide the foundation for key components of the education system, including curricula, instructional materials, teacher training, and assessments.
- A curriculum is the course of study covering the standards. It is set by local school districts and includes the lesson



The Michigan State Standards

- Are more rigorous academic standards that prepare all students for success after high school.
- Emphasize real-world skills like critical thinking and problem solving.
- Are comparable across states.

Better Assessments

- Give us an honest, objective report of how our students are doing.
- Ensure all students are held to the same expectations.
- Identify struggling students so they can get the help they need.
- Identify high-achieving students so they can receive the resources they need to continue to excel.

The M-STEP

- A test unique to Michigan that includes summative assessments designed to effectively measure student growth.

plans, programs, and textbooks that teachers use to teach the content and skills outlined in the standards.

2. If students are learning with different curricula, how can they take the same test?

- Although teachers use different materials and curricula, students still learn the same skills outlined in the standards. Teachers can be creative in their instruction, designing lessons to best reach their students and establishing a classroom where all students can achieve.

3. Will the new test replace the old state test?

- The M-STEP tests will replace the 44 year-old MEAP. It will include Michigan-developed content as well as content developed by the Smarter Balanced consortium.

4. Will high school juniors still be taking the ACT?

- This year, students will still take the ACT. Beginning in 2016, Michigan high school juniors will take the SAT as their state-provided, free college entrance exam. The SAT will be better aligned with Michigan standards and will include a variety of item types, beyond multiple choice.

5. Will test scores impact schools and districts?

- For the first year of testing, scores will not be used for accountability purposes.
- Schoolwide test results will be used as one measure for school accountability. Just as teachers use tests as academic checkups for individual students, they are also checkups for schools. Districts need to identify schools in need of extra support so that interventions can be put in place so all students across a district and in the state will receive a high-quality education.

6. What kind of data will be collected? Will it be released?

- *The state will not release any personally identifiable student information.* Under the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Michigan is required to collect data on school performance. Aggregate data collected includes student test scores and information such as attendance, support services, and

academic growth. Only individuals who interact with students on a daily basis, such as teachers and parents, are allowed to see student-specific information.

- Federal law protects the privacy of student information and education records through the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The only information that will be publicly available will contain aggregate data for schools, districts, and subgroups.

7. How were teachers involved in the test development process?

- Michigan teachers reviewed Smarter Balanced test items and assisted in developing the state-specific field test items for the spring 2015 test. They also helped develop materials in the Digital Library, an online collection of aligned resources to support teachers as they adjust to teaching the standards.

8. Do students need to be computer literate?

- Students need to be computer literate. Paper and pencil versions will be available during the first three years of testing for schools that cannot meet the technology requirement.
- To prepare for this transition to computer-based assessments, nearly 1,900 Michigan schools have performed pilot online testing over the past three and a half years. The state legislature has invested more than \$100 million over the past two years to help get local districts technology-ready for the Smarter Balanced assessments.
- Eighty-six percent of schools covering 82% of Michigan students have opted to administer the M-STEP assessments online in spring 2015.
- While it may take time to ensure that every school has the hardware necessary and meets the technology requirements, this is a smart investment. Technology is not going away. Ensuring that all students, regardless of geography or household income have equal access to technology is critical to preparing students for a 21st century competitive workforce.

9. Where can I go for more information?

- M-STEP website: www.mi.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-22709_70117---,00.html
- www.smarterbalanced.org
- www.BusinessForCore.org