

# What PARENTS SHOULD Know About Assessments

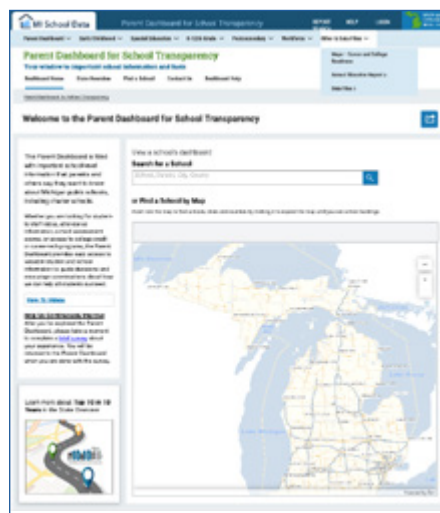
Have you ever wondered why students are given so many types of tests in school? You're not alone. Just like each subject provides students with different content and information, each type of assessment measures student learning in different ways for different purposes.

**For example:**

**Formative Assessment** is a process used by classroom teachers and students on a regular basis to confirm, adjust, and support teaching and learning.

**Interim or Benchmark Assessments** are given to students multiple times throughout the school year to monitor student learning toward meeting learning goals over time.

**Summative Assessments** are given at the end of a learning cycle to certify that learning has occurred. End-of-chapter tests are one example of summative tests given at a local level. State and federal law require all students be tested in specific grades and subjects once a year to measure student progress in learning state content standards or other career- or college-ready goals. Our elementary and middle school assessment is called the Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress or M-STEP. Students in grade 8 also take the PSAT™ 8/9. The Michigan Merit Exam, or MME, is the state high school exam. Some students with disabilities take an alternative state assessment called MI-Access; English language learners are given an assessment called WIDA. Schools also have the option to use Michigan's Early Literacy and Mathematics Benchmark Assessment in grades K-2.



**Reporting Assessment Results**

A Parent Report of your child's assessment results is available from his or her school each fall. Statewide assessment results are reported at MI School Data through the state's new Parent Dashboard for School Transparency. In addition to test scores, the [Dashboard](http://www.mischooldata.org/parentdashboard) (www.mischooldata.org/parentdashboard) is filled with important school-level information that parents and others say they want to know about Michigan public schools, including charter schools.

Families and others can use the Dashboard to get a more complete picture of how their child's school is serving students. They also can use the Dashboard to compare a school's performance with the average performance of other similar Michigan schools. Your ideas can make the Parent Dashboard even better! Send feedback to [MDE-ParentDashboard@michigan.gov](mailto:MDE-ParentDashboard@michigan.gov).

**Where to Find Assessment Resources**

To provide parents with information on student testing, state assessments, and how you can help your child prepare, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) has developed several print and video communication tools (see back page for descriptions).

You can find parent resources on the following pages:

- [M-STEP web page](http://www.michigan.gov/mstep) (www.michigan.gov/mstep)
- [PSAT web page](http://www.michigan.gov/psat) (www.michigan.gov/psat)
- [MME web page](http://www.michigan.gov/mme) (www.michigan.gov/mme)
- [MI-Access web page](http://www.michigan.gov/MI-Access) (www.michigan.gov/MI-Access)
- [Early Literacy and Mathematics Benchmark web page](http://www.michigan.gov/earlylilandmath) (www.michigan.gov/earlylilandmath)
- [WIDA web page](http://www.michigan.gov/wida) (www.michigan.gov/wida)

# Assessment Print Materials

## Student Testing What Parents Can Do to Help Students Prepare

As a parent and your child's first teacher, you can help your child understand and prepare for the assessments they will take in school. Here are some points that will help your child perform their best:

**Find out the facts:** To start, review the Michigan Department of Education's Parent/Student Information at [www.michigan.gov/oeaa](http://www.michigan.gov/oeaa), which includes valuable information on state assessments and the Spring testing calendar.

**Talk to your child about testing:** Let them know that assessment is a regular part of learning. Make sure they understand why they are being tested and how it is important to their future.

**Keep state tests in perspective:** Reduce your child's anxiety about the test by reminding them that it is just one measure of learning and another way to find out where their academic strengths and weaknesses are. Remind them of what they do well, and how they have improved with effort.

**Take a look at the state practice opportunities and encourage your child to practice at home:** Not only will this help you better understand the types of questions your child will be answering, it will help familiarize your child with the test format and features. If your child is struggling, let the teacher know so when your child takes the test, the focus can be more on test content and less on test navigation. Links to the below information can be found at [www.michigan.gov/mstep](http://www.michigan.gov/mstep) in the parent/student section.

• Elementary and middle school M-STEP sample test items can be found at [www.michigan.gov/mstep](http://www.michigan.gov/mstep).

• High School PSAT and SAT sample test items can be found at <https://collegeboard.org/sat> or the MME assessment high school page <https://www.michigan.gov/mme>.

**Make sure that your child is well rested and eats a high protein, low sugar/carb breakfast:** Children who are tired, hungry or have too much sugar and carbs are less able to attend in class or to handle the demands of a test.

**Remember—Attending school matters:** Tests reflect children's overall knowledge and achievement. Missing school means missing instruction.

**Meet with your child's teacher as often as possible to discuss progress:** Ask the teacher to suggest activities you and your child can do at home to increase and reinforce the learning.

**Learn what your child should be learning in English language arts, math, social studies, and science:** Michigan learning standards can be found at [www.michigan.gov/oeaa](http://www.michigan.gov/oeaa). In addition, the PTA has developed the PTA Parent's Guide to Success, which gives descriptions of the skills/knowledge your child is expected to gain every year.

**Testing Facts to Share with Your Child**

- Tests are just one way teachers, schools, districts, and states use to measure what students know and how well they are learning what is taught.
- The purpose of a state assessment is to

Information on how parents can help their students prepare including links to online practice.

## Education Assessment Michigan's System What It Is, What It Means, And What It Offers

**Expecting More**  
Getting children ready to take their place in the world is challenging. The knowledge and skills students need for a successful career continually evolve to meet current and future workplace demands. To ensure students can meet these demands, Michigan's State Board of Education has adopted high learning standards that broadly outline what students need to know and be able to do in each subject and grade level to be ready for the next stage of learning.

Standards also guide teachers as they develop lesson curriculum and lesson plans. Today's standards are designed to help students:

- Understand subject matter more deeply
- Think critically
- Apply what they learn to the real world
- Engage in activities that are more relevant in their lives

Michigan takes a high-quality, formative assessment approach and are able to do so at specific subject areas.

State assessments measure student progress against Michigan content standards or other learning goals. The Michigan Student Assessment Progress (M-STEP) is given online in grades 3-8 and measures current student progress on Michigan's high academic standards in English language arts (ELA), mathematics, science, and social studies.

High school students in grades 9 and 10 take the PSAT, to inform schools, students, and parents on what students know in ELA and mathematics, and help prepare students for the SAT college entrance exam given to every high school junior as part of the Michigan Merit Examination (MME). The MME consists of a free SAT with essay that also

measures student knowledge on state ELA and mathematics standards, M-STEP science and social studies components, and a work skills assessment called ACT WorkKeys.

**State Assessments Provide**

- An important snapshot of student achievement at a state, district and building level
- Valuable information to parents on their child's academic achievement
- Important data for teachers, schools, and districts to help guide instruction

Most students will spend no more than 4-8 hours—less than 1 percent of instructional time—on state assessments. All other assessments are determined at the school district and building level.

The table on the following page lists the state tests students take at each grade level. Schools have the flexibility to give the M-STEP online tests anytime within a four-week time frame for each grade level. The PSAT, SAT and ACT WorkKeys assessments are administered according to College Board and ACT guidelines on specific dates. Check with your child's school for exact M-STEP and MME administration dates.

**M-STEP Features**

- Modern test design, with fewer multiple-choice questions and more problem solving and critical thinking.
- Computer adaptive testing (CAT) for English language arts (ELA) and mathematics assessments, which provides a more individualized test experience for students and more precise measurements of student learning.
- Efficiency:
  - Testing time takes less than 1% of instructional time annually
  - High school assessment also serves as a college-entrance exam

State assessment overview, features, student test time, testing dates ... and more.

## For Parents of Students in Grades 3-8 HOW TO READ YOUR CHILD'S SCORE REPORT

Michigan schools assess the progress of students in grades 3-8 by using two types of assessments:

- The M-STEP (Michigan Test of Educational Progress) measures what students know and are able to do in relation to Michigan's academic standards. Students in grades 3-8 take M-STEP tests in science and social studies. Students in grades 3-7 also take M-STEP tests in English language arts and mathematics.
- The PSAT®/8/9 measures what students in grade 8 know and can do in English language arts and mathematics.

Results from M-STEP and PSAT/8/9 are just one source of information about your child's learning progress. Local tests, classroom work, and report cards can add more insight into how well your child is learning. To learn more, visit the [M-STEP web page](http://www.michigan.gov/mstep) ([www.michigan.gov/mstep](http://www.michigan.gov/mstep)) and/or the [PSAT/8/9 web page](http://www.michigan.gov/psat) ([www.michigan.gov/psat](http://www.michigan.gov/psat)).

M-STEP and PSAT/8/9 results are released in late summer to provide parents and teachers with valuable information where students are doing well and where they might need additional support. Scores also can support instructors helping educators better align curriculum and instruction to state standards.

**Score Report Components**  
M-STEP results: grades 3-7 English language arts and mathematics (2019 science field test scores do not appear on parent reports)

**1 Student Overall Performance Level and Scale Score** — Students receive a numerical scale score and, based on that score, are ranked in one of four performance levels: Not Proficient, Partially Proficient, Proficient, or Advanced. This section of the report provides your student's numerical score and performance level.

**2 Claims** — Assessments in ELA and mathematics include sub-categories, called Claims, which relate directly to Michigan's learning standards for those subjects. This section describes the claims that were assessed.

**3 Claim Performance Indicators** — The report shows at a glance whether your student's score on this claim shows  adequate progress,  of attention might be indicated, or  indicates risk of falling behind. The bar chart indicates the range of possible performance within each claim. The black vertical lines indicate your student's performance.

How to Read Your Child's Score Report

# Assessment Videos

The following videos can be found on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/user/michdepted) ([www.YouTube.com/user/michdepted](http://www.YouTube.com/user/michdepted) (choose "Assessment" playlist), or click on the pictures to open each video.

Spring M-STEP video featuring computer adaptive testing



M-STEP: What students can expect when taking the test

M-STEP: What students can expect when taking the test

Michigan's Early Literacy and Mathematics Benchmark Assessment



# Assessment Online Practice Tools for Students

MICHIGAN Education  
Online Tools Training  
MStep  
MI Access  
K, 1, 2 Early Literacy and Mathematics  
Online Tools Training  
DRC INSIGHT Online Assessments Tutorials  
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Online practice for selected State tests



These and other tools are available on each State assessment web page, which can be accessed through the [OEAA Student Assessment page](http://www.michigan.gov/OEAA) ([www.michigan.gov/OEAA](http://www.michigan.gov/OEAA)).