



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING

RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

BRIAN J. WHISTON
STATE SUPERINTENDENT

August 1, 2017

Dear Parent,

Each spring, your school district administers the Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (M-STEP) to students in Grades 3-8. The M-STEP will be given online to nearly all students and will measure current student knowledge of Michigan's high academic standards in English language arts (ELA), mathematics, science, and social studies.

High school students in Grades 9 and 10 will continue to take the PSAT to provide schools, students, and parents valuable information on what students know in ELA and mathematics. It also helps students prepare for the SAT college entrance exam given to high school juniors as part of the Michigan Merit Examination (MME).

Students in Grade 11 will take the MME, which consists of a free SAT that also measures student knowledge on Michigan's English language arts and mathematics standards, M-STEP science and social studies components, and a work skills assessment called WorkKeys.

Michigan's assessment vision calls for the tests outlined above to remain in place during the 2017-18 school year. This vision, available at www.michigan.gov/essa, is designed to promote the goal to become a Top 10 education state within 10 years. The Michigan Department of Education staff are working to put that assessment vision into place for the 2018-19 school year.

We want your child's state assessment experience to be as relaxed and stress-free as possible. Your positive outlook and supportive manner going into these assessments will also influence your child's experience.

Remember, testing is a part of learning. State assessment results do not impact student grades. They are designed to provide information on student knowledge and ability in relation to state grade-level content standards that identify what educators and employers believe students need to know and be able to do to be career- and college-ready upon graduation. Schools and districts use the results for curriculum planning and school improvement initiatives that benefit all students.

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State assessment results also are the only measure universal to all Michigan students and provide an important snapshot of student achievement at a state, district, and building level. M-STEP testing time has been significantly reduced since its first year. Most students will spend no more than 4-8 hours *total*—less than 1 percent of instructional time—on state assessments.

We care deeply that students graduate ready to succeed in college or the workplace. State 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 state assessments. Students who are not assessed will count against their schools' participation rate, leaving schools open to penalties.

The M-STEP web page at www.michigan.gov/mstep includes more helpful information for families. There, you will find *Student Testing: What Parents Can Do to Help Prepare*; and *Michigan's Education Assessment System: What it is, What it Means, and What it Offers* (complete with our testing schedule).

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Brian J. Whiston".

Brian J. Whiston
State Superintendent