



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
LANSING

RICK SNYDER  
GOVERNOR

MICHAEL P. FLANAGAN  
STATE SUPERINTENDENT

March 26, 2015

Dear Parent,

This year, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) will be transitioning to new statewide assessments beginning in mid-April. These new assessments, called the Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (M-STEP), will be given online and will measure current student knowledge. In past years, grades 3-8 assessments were given in the fall and measured a student's knowledge from the previous year.

The M-STEP will assess student learning on Michigan's standards in mathematics, English language arts (ELA), science, and social studies. This transition is necessary to meet state and federal education guidelines regarding assessment and accountability, as well as to ensure that our statewide assessments better reflect what students know and are able to do.

We want your child's experience to be relaxed, healthy, enjoyable, and stress-free. Your positive and supportive manner and outlook going into these assessments will have a tremendous impact on your child's experience, too.

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

<b>Grade Assessed:</b>	<b>Content Assessed:</b>
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	Mathematics, ELA
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Mathematics, ELA, Science
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Mathematics, ELA, Social Studies
6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Mathematics, ELA
7 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Mathematics, ELA, Science
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Mathematics, ELA, Social Studies
11 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Mathematics, ELA, Science, Social Studies

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- This year, your child will experience some exciting new test components in the M-STEP mathematics and ELA assessments that will measure deeper critical thinking skills. These new test components and items include:
  - Technology enhanced (TE): 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): 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.
  - Classroom Activity (CA) component: There will be a teacher-led 30-minute scripted lesson that introduces students to the topic of the Performance Task (see below). This component is NOT SCORED, but will help students to have an understanding of the theme being presented in the Performance Task.
  - Performance Task (PT) component: For mathematics and ELA, students will experience a new test component that is theme-based and asks them to answer more than one question related to a source, or several source/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 online tests anytime within a three-week time frame for each grade level. For example, schools will administer the three subject area tests to students in grades 5 and 8 during the testing window of April 13 through May 1.
- The high school test, the Michigan Merit Exam (MME), includes, for this year only, the ACT Plus Writing™ and WorkKeys™ as well as the M-STEP component. The M-STEP component of the MME will have an 8-week flexible time frame for testing, from April 13<sup>th</sup> through June 5<sup>th</sup>, for high schools to administer the 4 subject area tests. In future years, the SAT will replace the ACT as the college entrance test.

- There will be a paper/pencil version of the M-STEP this year for some schools. Please check with your child's school to find out if a paper/pencil or online format will be used. Please note: for the mathematics and ELA paper/pencil tests, there will be a 2-day testing schedule for each test, with several test make-up days to accommodate all students. Science (grades 4, 7, and 11) and social studies (grades 5, 8, and 11) tests will be given on a single day.

The MDE appreciates parent choice. Remember that students are being taught Michigan content standards and this is simply an opportunity to understand their progress. 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, and students who are not assessed will count against their schools' participation rate.

For more information, please see the *Spring 2015 Michigan Statewide Assessment Transition* document, available at [michigan.gov/baa](http://michigan.gov/baa) .

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Flanagan". The signature is stylized and includes a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Mike Flanagan  
State Superintendent