



News Release

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MICHIGAN STUDENT TEST SYSTEM DEVELOPED FOR SPRING 2015

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LANSING – Michigan’s public schools can begin moving forward in their planning for the online statewide student assessment in the Spring of 2015. The Michigan Department of Education announced today its updated assessment system, called the Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (M-STEP).

“This is great news for our local school districts,” said State Superintendent Mike Flanagan. “They’ve been very anxious to hear what the new assessment will be, as we developed a new test to comply with legislatively-mandated changes.”

The new assessment was required by the state legislature for the Spring 2015 testing period. The legislature also required the Department of Education to re-bid its long-term assessment system that will begin in the Spring of 2016.

The new assessment meets all of the requirements put into law by the legislature; that it be: an online assessment, with a paper-and-pencil option; aligned to the state standards; expanding writing assessments to additional grades; providing an increased number of constructed response test questions so that pupils can demonstrate higher-order skills, such as problem solving and communicating reasoning; and pilot tested before statewide implementation.

M-STEP replaces the 44-year-old MEAP test, which was not online and measured the previous state standards. The Spring 2015 assessment will include Michigan-created content, as well as content developed by the multi-state Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. Educators from Michigan public schools helped develop and write test content that will appear on M-STEP.

“The changes in law diverted what the department and local school districts had been developing and preparing for over the past three years,” Flanagan said. “It put schools in some unwelcomed limbo while our experts scrambled to find testing content that met the legislative requirements.”

The assessment for Spring 2015 is a one-year stopgap until the long-term assessment is awarded through the re-bidding process.

M-STEP includes the following assessments:

- A Spring summative assessment for grades 3-8
- A Michigan Merit Exam (MME) for grade 11, which includes a college entrance exam; a work skills component; and a summative component aligned to Michigan content standards

This will be the first time all statewide assessments will be administered online. To help prepare, 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 new assessments. To date, over 80 percent of schools meet the minimum technology requirement for the new assessment.

There still will be a paper-and-pencil option for schools if they believe they are not ready with the minimal technology requirements. Districts have until November 21 to request a waiver to administer the paper/pencil test. Due to the cost concerns of preparing the separate online and paper/pencil formats, and wanting to be the best stewards of public funds, MDE will not entertain change requests beyond that November 21 deadline date.

The entire Michigan Merit Exam for the Spring of 2015 will take longer for local schools to administer due to requirements in state law.

The high school test requires additional time because the college entrance and work skills tests that Michigan currently is contracted to use, do not measure the state's standards for English language arts and mathematics. The move to more rigorous standards requires additional types of test questions not present on those assessments. As a result, the state is required to provide additional testing to ensure state and federal laws that require measurement of the state's standards are met.

The U.S. Department of Education (USED) has allowed a few states to get a federal flexibility waiver with a future plan to use only a college-entrance exam like ACT. However, USED cannot waive the Michigan law that requires the state assessments be aligned to the state standards.

The majority of schools that are testing online will have greater flexibility and can configure testing, as desired, within the eight-week window the department has provided them. This provides ample opportunity for schools to plan their testing times. There will be eight partial days of testing for the paper/pencil option of the high school test in the spring. This option, which should be used only by those continuing to prepare their buildings for online testing, must continue to be spread in this fashion to assure adequate testing security.

School Accountability

MDE will be working with the USED to update Michigan's school accountability model used in its flexibility waiver to the federal No Child Left Behind Act. These updates would recognize the changes in statewide assessments and improvements in identifying student academic growth and learning.

In these discussions with USED, it will be the Michigan Department of Education's intent to use the test data from this transitional year for a trial run of a revised accountability system. It is the intent of the Department that the results of the trial run of accountability would be shared with schools and districts for local decision making, but that no consequences would be applied.

The Department encourages local districts to use the data to inform classroom instruction; student and school improvement planning; and local programming decisions.

Educator and Administrator Evaluations

Schools will be provided student-level growth data for use in teacher and administrator evaluations. Because these educator evaluations are still determined by local school districts, how local districts choose to use the data in the evaluations is up to each district.

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For more information on M-STEP, log on to: <http://www.michigan.gov/mstep>