



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
LANSING

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**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** March 3, 2016

**TO:** Local and Intermediate School District Superintendents  
Public School Academy Directors

**FROM:** Norma Jean Sass *NJS*  
Deputy Superintendent, Education Services

Venessa A. Keesler, Ph.D. *V. Keesler*  
Deputy Superintendent, Accountability Services

**SUBJECT:** 2015-16 Annual Education Report: Frequently Asked Questions,  
Important Changes, and Revised Posting Deadlines

For the past several years, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) has required districts and schools to communicate Annual Education Reports (AERs) to parents and the community in August, before the start of the school year, to fulfill requirements under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). However, this year new assessment and accountability processes delayed the production of AERs until now.

Based on directions given by the U. S. Department of Education, districts and schools must prepare and communicate AERs using the 2014-15 Assessment Results and related information found in the 'Combined Report' and revised cover letter templates. We ask for your cooperation in meeting these responsibilities.

MDE is releasing its Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) regarding the process to be used by local education agencies (LEAs) and schools to meet federal and state reporting requirements and the revised deadlines for the 2015-16 AER cycle.

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The timelines for meeting the 2015-16 AER requirements are:

<b>ACTIONS REQUIRED</b>	<b>TIMELINE</b>
All AERs are available for preview but are embargoed	Beginning March 9, 2016
Districts and schools finalize AER cover letters	March 9-23, 2016
First date 'Combined Reports' and cover letters may be posted for public review	March 23, 2016
Final date for all districts and schools to post 'Combined Reports' and cover letters	April 22, 2016

The AER is designed to meet the federal requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2001 for an annual report. The 'Combined Report' provides detailed data on state administered student assessment results, accountability results, teacher qualification information, and the state results for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). There is an AER populated with the appropriate information for the state, each LEA, and each school. If used as designed, the 'Combined Reports' and cover letters also meet the state requirements for reporting to parents and communities in an annual education report.

MDE reviews a sample of AERs every year. In the sample of AERs reviewed for compliance during 2013-14, 104 of 132 AERs did not meet one or more of the requirements of federal law, ESEA of 2001, or omitted elements required by state law, PA451, P.A. 1976. Please address all elements found in the AER cover letter templates to help resolve these findings and ensure your district's compliance with state and federal laws.

The FAQs also provide links to the new district and school template cover letters which have changed substantially this year due to transition to the new M-STEP assessments and ESEA Flexibility Waiver requirements.

We hope the attached list of FAQs will help you effectively use the AER. If you have additional questions, please email Mike Radke at [radkem@michigan.gov](mailto:radkem@michigan.gov) or David Judd at [juddd@michigan.gov](mailto:juddd@michigan.gov).

Attachment

cc: Michigan Education Alliance

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS  
REGARDING THE ANNUAL EDUCATION REPORT  
\*\*Updated 2/17/16\*\***

**Q.1 What are the changes for the 2015-16 school year?**

**A.1 \*NOTE\* - \*NEW CHANGE\***

Assessment and Accountability Changes:

- M-STEP (Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress) replaces MEAP (Michigan Educational Assessment Program) data for the assessment component
- MI-Access data is still included
- Accountability data required for this year excludes proficiency data—only participation, graduation/attendance data will comprise the accountability component

**\*NOTE\* - \*NEW CHANGE\***

CEPI (Center for Educational Performance and Information) Process Changes:

- Accountability Scorecard is removed for one year
- Data tables are condensed
- Previous year reports are available due to new historical data section

**\*NOTE\* - \*NEW CHANGE\***

Office of Field Services (OFS) Changes:

- AERs are now ALLOWED to be linked. See Q.4 below.
- School designations suspended for this year. See Q.8 below.
- Posting deadline date. See Q.9 and Q.12 below.

Linking allows a school or district to post a URL link that points directly to their AER, instead of posting a static PDF on the school or district website. Linking is easier than downloading and posting a PDF for the AER. Linking is a new option that schools/districts may be interested in utilizing. The existing ability to download a PDF AER for posting is still an option and may be utilized. See A.18 below for detailed directions.

**The reporting deadline has changed for 2015-16 only.** See Q.12 below. AERs will be made available with embargoed data on March 9, 2016 for the 2015-16 AER cycle (based on the data results from the 2014-15 school year). The deadline for filing the 2015-16 AERs is April 22, 2016. For 2016-17, MDE will provide updated guidance based on timing of assessment and accountability data release and lessons learned from this year.

**Q.2 Are local education agencies (LEAs) and their schools REQUIRED to use the state produced Annual Education Report (AER)?**

- A.2 Yes. All LEAs, including public districts, public school academies (PSAs), and intermediate school districts (ISDs) or regional education service agencies (RESAs) are required to report their 2014-15 performance. This is how Michigan schools and LEAs will meet the requirement of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2001 (ESEA) and State law, Act 451, P.A. 1976 (and P.A. 25).
- Using the AER reduces the burden on nearly 850 LEAs and 3,000 schools to collect and format this complicated set of data for presentation to parents and community stakeholders in order to meet federal requirements. There remain only a few much simpler tasks for educators to perform (see A.6 below). To meet both state and federal requirements, the 'Combined Report' and all relevant portions of the cover letter templates must be addressed.
  - Audits of both state and federal requirements to notify parents noted that the 'Combined Reports' and cover letter templates address all required elements adequately. However, in the sample of AERs reviewed for compliance during 2014-15, 104 of 132 AERs did not meet one or more of the requirements of federal law, ESEA of 2001, or omitted elements required by state law, PA451, P.A. 1976.
  - Please address all elements found in the AER cover letter templates to help resolve these findings. MDE is considering options to enforce the state and federal laws.

**Q.3 What are the components of the AER that LEAs and schools must use?**

- A.3 LEA Required Components:
- The 'Combined Report' for the District and,
  - A cover letter using the content outlined in the district template cover letter.
- School Required Components:
- The 'Combined Report' for the School and,
  - A cover letter using the content outlined in the school template cover letter.
- Both the 'Combined Report' and the cover letter templates provide information unique to the LEA or school and can be found on the [MI School Data website](#):  
(<https://www.mischooldata.org>)
- The 'Combined Report' is different for each LEA or school. See A.13 below for a description of the content.
  - Login to the secure [MI School Data website](#) is required to access the templates. See Q.7 and A.7.

**Q.4 Linking the 'Combined Report' to the district's or school's website was prohibited in the past. We've heard that a direct link is now acceptable. What changed?**

**A.4 \*NOTE\* - \*NEW CHANGE\***

Districts and schools are now able to provide a link to their AER on the [MI School Data website](https://www.mischooldata.org) (https://www.mischooldata.org). See Q.15 below. Once you obtain the appropriate school or district level report, you can **link** it to your district or school website. These changes allow each district and school the ability to provide parents and the public access to the AER in a location that is easy to find and compliant with the AER requirements.

The data are important because it provides the public with detailed information and helps school districts easily package all of the required data elements needed for federal reporting in one location, to save valuable time and resources.

**Q.5 Can we retrieve our 'Combined Report', save it as a pdf copy, and then post it to our website as in the past?**

A.5 Yes, that is still possible. We are attempting to make it easier for schools to post their AERs by allowing you to **link** directly to your own unique 'Combined Report' on the [MI School Data website](https://www.mischooldata.org) (see A.4 above), but you may use the former method if you prefer.

**Q.6 What do the LEA and each school need to do to meet the reporting requirements?**

A.6 Each LEA must:

- Save the district 'Combined Report' and post it to the district website, or provide a link to the report on the [MI School Data website](https://www.mischooldata.org) (https://www.mischooldata.org).
- Edit the district template cover letter addressing all of the requirements and post this with the district AER. The letter should be dated to include when the AER was posted/sent <Month/Day/Year>.
- Make available paper copies of the 'Combined Report' and the cover letter to parents and members of the community that do not have internet access.
- Announce to the parents and community that both the district and the school AERs are available and how to access them.

Each School must:

- Save the school 'Combined Report' and post it to the school website. If the school does not have its own website, these must be posted to the district website.
- Edit the school template cover letter addressing all of the requirements and post this with the school 'Combined Report'. The letter should be dated to include when the AER was posted/sent <Month/Day/Year>.

- Make paper copies of both documents available to parents and the school community members that do not have internet access.
- Notify parents that the AERs are available and how to access them.

**Q.7 Where will I find the cover letter templates to be used?**

A.7 **\*NOTE\* - \*CHANGE\***

**The cover letter templates have been updated. Do not use a template from a previous year.**

The templates are available only to secure users on the MI School Data website:

- [MI School Data Website](https://www.mischooldata.org) (https://www.mischooldata.org).
- For secure access to the site, contact your ISD system administrator. For access issues, refer to A.9 below.
- Click on the 'Annual Education Report' tab at the bottom of the left hand navigation. This will take you to the correct page where you will find a tab labeled 'Cover Letters.' Click on this tab at the top right of the screen.

**Q.8 How do schools and districts report designations of Priority, Focus, and Reward schools this year?**

A.8 **\*NOTE\* - \*CHANGE\***

Schools do not report a designation on their AER this year.

**Q.9 When must the 'Combined Reports' and cover letters be posted and available?**

A.9 LEAs and schools must post and make copies available no sooner than **March 23, 2016**, but no later than **April 22, 2016**. Providing this information may help parents work with the teachers, principals, and administrators to better meet the unique needs of their children. This information should remain available on the website(s) until the next year's report is prepared. MDE will notify schools of the earliest date for public release.

**Q.10 If my staff does not have a log-in name and password to the [MI School Data website](https://www.mischooldata.org) (https://www.mischooldata.org), how do I establish one for them?**

A.10 [Contact your ISD/RESA](https://www.mischooldata.org/Downloads/isdresa_key_contacts_201112.pdf). For a list of these contacts, visit the complete web address at:  
[https://www.mischooldata.org/Downloads/isdresa\\_key\\_contacts\\_201112.pdf](https://www.mischooldata.org/Downloads/isdresa_key_contacts_201112.pdf)

**\*NOTE\* - \*NEW CHANGE\***

For additional assistance, please contact MI School Data at [CEPI@michigan.gov](mailto:CEPI@michigan.gov).

**Q.11 How will the state monitor implementation of the reporting requirements?**

A.11 Both the state and the federal government will be monitoring district and school websites for 'Combined Reports' and cover letters.

**Q.12 How do school staff members PREVIEW the AER to help prepare the template cover letters?**

A.12 **\*NOTE\* - \*NEW CHANGE\***

**Expect to have the embargoed data available to prepare your 'Combined Reports' and cover letters beginning March 9, 2016.**

MDE will provide early access to the 'Combined Reports' so that LEAs can PREVIEW their embargoed data at the [MI School Data website](https://www.mischooldata.org) (<https://www.mischooldata.org>) beginning March 9, 2016, as the assigned district and school staff members responsible for these reports finalize the cover letters. The cover letter templates have been significantly updated to reflect Michigan's federally approved Flexibility Waiver request and specifics regarding data used to complete the 2015-16 AERs (based on data from the 2014-15 school year). Please do not post or link any data reports prior to March 23, 2016. Parents must be notified when the district and school release these annual reports. The final date for all districts and schools to post 'Combined Reports' and cover letters is April 22, 2016.

**Q.13 What will we find in the 'Combined Report' on the [MI School Data website](https://www.mischooldata.org)?**

A.13 The content of the report is presented in several sections:

**\*NOTE\* - \*UPDATED INFORMATION\***

**Teacher Quality:** Displays the professional qualifications of teachers within the state, district, and school. You can view percentages of teachers with emergency or provisional certifications, and percentages of core academic subjects not taught by highly qualified teachers, within the state, district, and school.

**Student Assessment:** Includes the following two assessments: M-STEP (Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress), and MI-Access (Alternate Assessment). Presents assessment information for English language arts and mathematics for grade 3 to 8 and 11, and science for grades 4, 7, and 11, compared to state averages for all students as well as subgroups of students. The report helps users to understand achievement performance within grades and schools, and to make comparisons to district, state, and national achievement benchmarks.

**NAEP Report:** The NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress), commonly referred to as ‘the Nation’s Report Card,’ is another important assessment tool used to determine student progress. NAEP administers a state level assessment in mathematics and reading every two years. The most current results are from the year 2013. NAEP and M-STEP have different assessment frameworks, and define their performance level descriptions differently, so they cannot be directly compared. NAEP is administered in the winter; M-STEP is administered in the spring. NAEP data is reported at the state level only. The NAEP report is the same for all Michigan School districts and provides a benchmark showing how Michigan students performed on national performance standards.

**Accountability:** Uses information from assessments, graduation and attendance rates to determine if the school and district are meeting accountability targets. Here you can identify how well your school and district are serving the overall academic needs of students. Accountability data for the 2014-15 school year will not include: school/district-level proficiency targets or final accountability outcomes due to Michigan’s transition to M-STEP. Full accountability information will resume being a part of the Annual Education Report starting with 2015-16 data. More information about the [Accountability Scorecards](http://www.michigan.gov/schoolscorecard) is available at: <http://www.michigan.gov/schoolscorecard>.

**\*NOTE\* - \*UPDATED INFORMATION\***

The AER has been developed to prevent the display of data that might allow for identification of individual student level information. The report utilizes two sets of suppression rules.

**Assessment Data** – If there is a subgroup that has less than 10 students, you will see a label of <10 in place of the data.

**Accountability Data** – If there is a subgroup that has less than 30 students, you will see a label of <30 in place of the data.

**Q.14 Where does this data come from? Will we have a chance to appeal the data presented?**

A.14 The data in the ‘Combined Report’ has been extracted directly from a variety of state databases. For example, the assessment data comes directly from the M-STEP, MI-Access, and NAEP reports prepared by the MDE, Division of Accountability Services (DAS). Teacher Quality data comes from the Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI) as reported in the Registry for Educational Performance (REP). Some accountability data comes from DAS and some data comes from CEPI.

LEAs and schools will have had the opportunity to appeal this data during the appeal or correction windows of the source reports. For example, a district that wanted to appeal graduation rates or participation rates had the opportunity to do so during the appropriate appeals windows. Districts that



wanted to correct the teacher quality data had the opportunity to do so shortly after submitting the REP data.

To appeal or correct next year's data, take full advantage of the assessment and accountability appeal or CEPI data correction opportunities. There are no appeals of data once it is part of the AER.

**Q.15 What can I do now to prepare for the release of the 2015-16 AER (which is based on assessment and accountability data from the 2014-15 school year)?**

A.15 Go to the [MI School Data website](https://www.mischooldata.org) (https://www.mischooldata.org) and log in as soon as they are available. See Q.12. Open the 'Combined Report' for your LEA or school. Familiarize yourself with the data from last year. Learn how to navigate the reports. Identify how to print the 'Combined Report' and how to **link it** to your website.

Find the new 2015-16 district and school cover letter templates on the [MI School Data website](https://www.mischooldata.org). When you have assessment and accountability results, you can begin drafting your AER cover letters using the templates found on the website.

**Q.16 Help us understand the accountability differences.**

A.16 Michigan sought and received approval from USED to limit the scope of accountability reporting using 2014-15 assessment data. This means 'Combined Reports' will not include school/district accountability statuses or targets due to the assessment transition from MEAP to M-STEP. Accountability data included in this year's 'Combined Reports' is limited to rates of assessment participation, graduation, and attendance disaggregated by subgroup for districts and schools.

**Q.17 Does a district, PSA, ISD/RESA, or LEA that has ONLY ONE SCHOOL need to produce and distribute both district and school 'Combined Reports' and cover letters?**

A.17 No. If there is only one school in your LEA, ISD/RESA or PSA, you only need to produce and distribute a school level 'Combined Report' and a school level cover letter. Do NOT produce, post, or distribute district level reports or district cover letters.

**Q.18 Can I just link to the MI School Data website to provide the 'Combined Report' for my LEA and each of my schools?**

A.18 Yes. 'Combined Reports' can now be LINKED directly from the [MI School Data website](https://www.mischooldata.org) (https://www.mischooldata.org) to your district's or school's websites. Use the link when you have filtered to the appropriate report and LINK it to your district's AER webpage.

Also acceptable are 'Combined Reports' that are retrieved, saved as a pdf file, and posted to the LEA or school websites and linked in your cover letters. Directions follow for this process:

[Log in to the MI School Data website](https://www.mischooldata.org) (https://www.mischooldata.org). For access to the site, contact your ISD/RESA system administrator. Refer to A.10 for detailed information.

Click on the 'Combined Report' tab at the top center portion of the screen. This is the report you use after selecting your entity by providing the report parameter selections (see 'Instructions to generate your AER and save the report by either a URL link or PDF' below). The 'Combined Report' contains all required data elements if used properly.

#### Instructions to download your district or school cover letter template

1. Go to the [MI School Data website](https://mischooldata.org) (https://mischooldata.org).
2. Sign into the [MI School Data website](https://mischooldata.org).
  - a. Click on the 'Login' text located in the top left corner of the page
  - b. Enter your username and password and click the 'Login' tab. If you do not remember your username/password, please [email the CEPI Help Desk for assistance](mailto:CEPI@michigan.gov) (CEPI@michigan.gov). If you do not have a secure login and require one, please [visit this link and find the Technical Contact for your specific ISD](http://i.mischooldata.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/MISchoolData_Contacts.pdf) for further assistance (http://i.mischooldata.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/MISchoolData\_Contacts.pdf).
3. After logging in, click on the 'Annual Education Report' tab located on the left hand navigation.
4. Click on the 'Cover Letters' tab.
5. The Cover Letter page contains two links—one for a district cover letter template and one for a school cover letter template. The Word document is downloaded after clicking on the link. Save this document and follow the instructions contained within it to complete your district/school cover letter for your AER.

#### Instructions to generate your AER and save the report by either a URL link or PDF

1. Go to the [MI School Data website](https://mischooldata.org) (https://mischooldata.org).
2. Click on the 'Annual Education Report' tab located on the left hand navigation.
3. Click on the 'Combined Report' tab; this will automatically generate a Statewide AER if you have not already selected your entity in a prior inquiry or report. If you need to specify a different location (district or school) for your AER, click on the 'Edit Report' button at the top of the page. This will provide a report parameter selection page that will allow you to select your specific location.
4. For Districts:
  - a. ISD - Pull down list to the appropriate ISD from the top drop down.

- b. DISTRICT – Pull down your DISTRICT NAME from middle drop down.
  - c. SCHOOL – Pull down to “All Schools in District” or if Academy, pull down to the Academy’s Name. It will produce the AER for that district or academy.
5. For Schools:
  - a. ISD - Pull down list to the appropriate ISD from the top drop down.
  - b. DISTRICT – Pull down your DISTRICT NAME from middle drop down.
  - c. SCHOOL – Pull down list to the appropriate school from the bottom drop down. It will produce the AER for that school.
6. Once you have confirmed that you generated the correct AER for your entity, choose your desired method for saving your AER (Link or PDF):
7. To save as a PDF, do the following:
  - a. Click on the ‘Download/Print’ text located at the top of your AER.
  - b. This will present a PDF icon for your report. Click on the ‘As a PDF’ text. This will download your PDF to your computer. You may now use the static PDF for posting on your district/school website.
8. To save a link, do the following:
  - a. Click on the ‘Link to Report’ text located above your AER.
  - b. This opens a text box that has generated a specific URL link to your AER. Highlight this URL and copy it. This link may be used for websites or embedded in documents. All that is necessary for a user to do in order to access the generated AER is to simply click on this URL link.
9. Prepare to post this link or PDF to your district or school website no earlier than March 23, 2016, and no later than April 22, 2016.
10. Confirm that clicking on this link in your cover letter gets you directly to the correct ‘Combined Report’.
  - a. Once the link has been inserted in the document, test the link by clicking on it.
  - b. Your browser (Internet Explorer, Chrome, etc.) should open to MI School Data.
  - c. The link should automatically open up the Annual Education Report that you had previously generated. Verify that the entity being displayed is the one intended.
  - d. Any user that clicks on this embedded link will be able to navigate through the AER report within MI School Data.