



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING

RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

SHEILA A. ALLES
INTERIM STATE SUPERINTENDENT

MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 1, 2018

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

FROM: Sheila A. Alles, Interim State Superintendent 

SUBJECT: PSAT 8/9 Assessment for Eighth Grade

You may have seen a number of news articles and opinion pieces written around the state recently asking the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) to continue using the M-STEP for the math and English Language Arts portions of the eighth-grade state assessment, instead of the planned administration of the PSAT 8/9 assessment for those subjects.

These articles mentioned that moving the eighth-grade math and English Language Arts (ELA) assessment from the M-STEP to the PSAT 8/9 would be a continued churning of the state's assessment system; that the PSAT 8/9 is not aligned to our state's math and ELA standards; and that it doesn't prepare students for college and career.

I am confident that the PSAT 8/9 is aligned to a range of Michigan's rigorous standards and that it will provide parents and educators with data that depicts a student's trajectory toward career and college. The move to the PSAT 8/9 in eighth grade was announced two years ago. Schools have been preparing for this shift for the past two years and personally have told me that for MDE to abandon its plan to administer the PSAT 8/9 would be yet another assessment change. Local school leaders have reiterated to me that moving back to the M-STEP at this point would be disruptive; a step backwards; and continue the churn in state assessments.

When I accepted the position of Interim State Superintendent, I committed to the State Board of Education that I would 1) provide stability at the Michigan Department of Education; 2) continue the momentum late State Superintendent Brian Whiston started to make Michigan a Top 10 education state in 10 years; and 3) maintain the direction and decisions Brian made before his passing.

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After thoughtful and careful consideration about this very important issue and weighing the complex factors and many perspectives, I want to let school districts know that MDE will not be changing the course. I am informing you that we are moving forward with the administration of the PSAT 8/9 to Michigan eighth-graders in math and ELA beginning this coming spring.

I look forward to working with each of you on the many initiatives in which we are working together now and into the future to improve the educational outcomes for Michigan's children, and lead Michigan to become a Top 10 education state in 10 years.

For information regarding the PSAT 8/9 assessment for eighth grade, go to https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-22709_86724---,00.html.

cc: Michigan Education Alliance