

# Education Assessment Michigan's System

## What It Is, What It Means, And What It Offers

Revised March 2026

### Expecting More

Getting children ready to take their place in the world is challenging. The knowledge and skills students need for a successful career continually evolve to meet current and future workplace demands. To ensure students can meet these demands, Michigan's State Board of Education has adopted [high academic standards](#) that broadly outline what students need to know and be able to do in each subject and grade level to be ready for the next stage of learning.

The standards also guide teachers as they develop classroom curriculum and lesson plans. Today's standards challenge students to:

- understand subject matter more deeply
- learn how to think critically
- apply what they learn to the real world
- make learning more relevant in their lives

### Checking for Progress

Once each year, all students in Michigan take a high-quality state summative assessment. Summative assessments measure what students know and are able to do at specific grade levels and in specific subject areas.

All of Michigan's state assessments measure student progress with Michigan's content standards or other career- or college-readiness goals. The Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (M-STEP) is given to students online in grades 3-7 to measure their knowledge of state standards in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. The PSAT 8/9 measures ELA and mathematics in grade 8. Student knowledge of science and social studies standards are measured by M-STEP in grades 5, 8, and 11.

High school students take the PSAT 8/9 in grade 9 and PSAT 10 in grade 10 to inform schools, students, and parents on what students know in ELA and mathematics, and to help prepare students for the SAT college entrance exam given to every high school junior as part of the Michigan Merit Examination (MME). The MME consists of a free SAT with Essay that also measures student knowledge on state ELA and mathematics standards, M-STEP science and social studies components, and a work skills assessment called WIN Work Readiness Assessment. Students earn a National

Work Readiness Credential according to their scores on the WIN Work Readiness Assessment, which they can use to demonstrate career readiness.

### State Assessments Provide

- ◆ An important snapshot of student achievement at the state, district, and building levels
- ◆ Valuable information to parents and teachers on their student's academic achievement
- ◆ Important data for schools and districts to evaluate curriculum and programming effectiveness
- ◆ Comparable performance and growth trends over time at the state, district, and building levels

Most students will spend no more than 3-8 hours—less than one percent of instructional time—on state assessments. All other assessments are determined at the school district and building level.

The table on the following page lists the state tests students take at each grade level. Schools have the flexibility to give M-STEP online tests within a six-week time frame, MI-Access assessments over seven weeks, and the PSAT-related assessments, SAT, and WIN Work Readiness Assessment over a four-week window. Check with your student's school for the exact dates that your child will participate in the state assessments.

### M-STEP Features

- ◆ Modern test design, with fewer multiple choice questions and more problem solving and critical thinking.
- ◆ Computer adaptive testing (CAT) for ELA and mathematics assessments, which provides a more individualized test experience for students and more precise measurements of student learning.
- ◆ Efficiency—testing time takes less than 1% of instructional time annually.
- ◆ Actionable results—preliminary results available to schools within a few days of testing, and final results are available before the start of the next school year for buildings operating under a standard calendar. Additionally, parent reports are distributed by schools at the start of the school year.

| Michigan Assessment Schedule<br>Spring 2026 |                                                    |                            |
|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Grade Level                                 | Assessment                                         | Testing Window             |
| 3-8                                         | <a href="#">M-STEP:</a><br>All content areas       | April 6 through May 22*    |
| 3-8, 11                                     | <a href="#">MI-Access:</a><br>All content areas    | April 6 through May 22     |
| 8, 9, 10                                    | <a href="#">PSAT 8/9 and PSAT 10</a>               | April 6 through April 30   |
| 11<br>(MME)                                 | <a href="#">M-STEP: Science and Social Studies</a> | April 6 through May 22*    |
|                                             | <a href="#">SAT with Essay</a>                     | April 6 through April 30   |
|                                             | <a href="#">WIN Work Readiness</a>                 | April 6 through May 1      |
| K-12                                        | <a href="#">WIDA</a>                               | January 26 through April 3 |

\* Due to severe weather events, the M-STEP testing window is extended by one week for the 2025-26 school year only.

### Assessments for Special Populations

An alternate assessment called MI-Access is available to students with the most significant cognitive disabilities and whose Individualized Educational Program (IEP) team has determined that general assessments, even with accommodations, are not appropriate. For more information, see the [MI-Access web page](#) ([www.michigan.gov/mi-access](http://www.michigan.gov/mi-access)) under the Parent/Student Information section.

The WIDA ACCESS assessments assess students in grades K-12 who are learning the English language. WIDA Parent Guides and other information are located on the [WIDA web page](#) ([www.michigan.gov/wida](http://www.michigan.gov/wida)) under the Parent/Student Information section.

### Why Assess Students?

Student assessment is a hot topic of conversation with diverse opinions on how, when, how much, with what tests, and for what purpose we assess students. Here are a few important points to keep in mind:

- ◆ State and federal laws require schools to assess student learning every year in specific grade levels and subjects (see table at left for this year's assessment schedule).
- ◆ Annual assessments that are the same for all Michigan students give us information on how students are performing, and how well schools and districts are teaching students compared to those in other communities, states, and nations. This helps target supports and resources to students and schools that need them most. It also helps identify areas of success from which others can learn. This information and data support [Michigan's Top 10 Strategic Education Plan](#).
- ◆ State standardized assessments cannot measure everything important about a student, but they do measure how much a student knows in terms of our state's content standards.

### Preparation Can Make a Difference

All students have access to sample test questions, answer keys, and practice tests online.

Students in grades 3-8 and 11 can access [sample M-STEP and MI-Access item sets and Online Tools Training](#) (<https://portal.te.drcedirect.com/MI>) using the Chrome browser. [Answer keys for M-STEP online sample items](#) and [answer keys for MI-Access Functional Independence online sample items](#) are also provided.

Students in grades 8-11 can find sample test items and practice tests at the College Board [SAT Suite of Assessments website](#) (<https://satsuite.collegeboard.org/>).

### Nonpublic and Homeschooled Students

All nonpublic schools can choose to administer state assessments to their students during the assessment windows identified by the Michigan Department of Education.

Homeschooled students also have the opportunity to take state assessments. To do so, the homeschooled student should contact the school district in which the student resides to make arrangements. The student's scores will be reported individually and not included in results for the district where they were tested.