



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING

RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

SHEILA A. ALLES
INTERIM STATE SUPERINTENDENT

May 16, 2018

Honorable Betsy DeVos, Secretary of Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary DeVos:

Under the authority granted in section 8401 of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) is submitting a waiver request to its approved ESSA plan. As noted in supporting documents accompanying Michigan's originally submitted plan and referenced in Superintendent Whiston's letter to you dated August 22, 2017 we are requesting flexibility from the required assessments described in subsection (b)(2)(B)(i) of Section 1111 of ESSA. The intent this waiver would be to allow Michigan the ability to grant waivers to local educational agencies (LEAs) to allow the use of a locally-determined innovative assessment system under the conditions described below. Michigan would like authority to grant up to 5% of LEAs the ability to create these innovative assessment systems.

The MDE sought public comment on the proposal from April 24, 2018 through May 11, 2018 following the department's normal public comment process. During this time, we received one comment in support of the proposed waiver.

According to Michigan's approved ESSA plan, in order to be eligible LEAs must demonstrate strong performance on the state standardized assessment and present the MDE with a concrete assessment plan for what they will do in lieu of the state assessment, how it will support student learning, and how it will ensure that all students are held to high standards. The MDE does not believe this meets the requirements and regulations of the official Innovative Assessment Pilot, which does not allow flexibility within the 5% of LEAs; thus, Michigan proposed its plan separately as part of the approved main application.

A primary driving factor of this request is the growing interest the MDE and many LEAs have in the practice of competency-based education. The MDE believes that competency-based education is an innovative approach to instruction which requires an innovative approach to assessments, for some districts. Students must be able to demonstrate complex higher-order cognitive and metacognitive skills that will allow them to engage meaningfully with the world around them. Many Michigan LEAs need a dynamic approach to teaching, learning, and assessments where students can explore and solve real-world problems and challenges. There are schools that are working hard

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

CASANDRA E. ULBRICH – CO-PRESIDENT • RICHARD ZEILE – CO-PRESIDENT
MICHELLE FECTEAU – SECRETARY • TOM MCMILLIN – TREASURER
NIKKI SNYDER – NASBE DELEGATE • PAMELA PUGH
LUPE RAMOS-MONTIGNY • EILEEN LAPPIN WEISER

608 WEST ALLEGAN STREET • P.O. BOX 30008 • LANSING, MICHIGAN 48909
www.michigan.gov/mde • 833-633-5788

to change their instructional models to meet the needs of their students. Competency-based education could be a method used to engage students in more meaningful ways.

This new dynamic approach to learning, which is in-tune with current workforce and college demands, will benefit from an improved dynamic assessment system.

This request would allow LEA's the option to propose different innovative systems to the department for their use; however, the MDE knows that many LEAs are pursuing a system like New Hampshire's Performance Assessment of Competency Education (PACE) model. This model has proven to be a first-in-the-nation accountability strategy that offers a reduced level of standardized testing together with locally developed common performance assessments. These assessments are designed to support deeper learning through competency-based education and to be more integrated into students' day-to-day work than current standardized assessments. Meaningful assessment is a key part of a strategy to ensure students are getting the most out of their education.

Example of one potential innovative assessment system model for grades assessed under ESSA

Grade	ELA	Math	Science
3	M-STEP or State Assessment	Local Performance Based Assessment	Local Performance Based Assessment
4	Local Performance Based Assessment	M-STEP or State Assessment	Local Performance Based Assessment
5	Local Performance Based Assessment	Local Performance Based Assessment	Local Performance Based Assessment
6	Local Performance Based Assessment	Local Performance Based Assessment	Local Performance Based Assessment
7	Local Performance Based Assessment	Local Performance Based Assessment	Local Performance Based Assessment
8	PSAT 8/9 or State Assessment	PSAT 8/9 or State Assessment	Local Performance Based Assessment
11	SAT	SAT	Local Performance Based Assessment

The Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (M-STEP) is Michigan's current summative assessment system. In Spring 2019 Michigan is planning on shifting to the PSAT 8/9 exam as Michigan's summative assessment for 8th grade mathematics and English language arts (ELA).

Secretary DeVos

Page 3

May 16, 2018

This possible model would still retain the state assessment, M-STEP, once in elementary and middle school grades for ELA and mathematics as well as retain the SAT in high school, which is our current summative assessment in grade 11.

The above innovative scenario is only an example. The MDE wants to allow LEAs to propose innovative solutions around assessments that meet their students' needs and can be used together with innovative instruction to best measure their students' progress.

The MDE is working on putting together a set of criteria against which any proposed solution can be held. The MDE will require assurances that any innovative system maintains the rigor embedded in our state content standards and measured with our state summative assessments. The MDE will partner with local education experts, our Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), and other nationally known assessment experts to develop and vet these criteria.

The MDE is eager to partner with LEAs to work on this initiative. Please feel free to reach out to our department if there are any questions. We look forward to receiving confirmation of your approval of this flexibility waiver, which was referenced in our approved ESSA state plan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sheila A. Alles".

Sheila A. Alles

Interim State Superintendent