

Michigan's Requirements for Assessing Learners in Early Elementary Grades



Early literacy and mathematics development are critical milestones in a child's path to success. That's why Michigan is working to ensure that our youngest learners are on track to read by the end of third grade and have the learning foundation in mathematics and literacy they need to succeed in later grades.

To support early learners, the state has added new requirements and expanded resources to support early learning, especially in reading. As part of this effort, Michigan students in kindergarten through third grade (K-3) are given some special learning experiences.

- First, Michigan's third-grade reading law requires schools to assess young learners' skills in literacy within their first 30 days of each school year. The results of this early assessment reveal any learning delays and help teachers tailor instruction to meet each learner's needs. The results might also signal the need for more extensive assessment to accurately diagnose where the child struggles most.
- Students who show signs of a reading delay will receive an Individual Reading Improvement Plan within 30 days after being identified, as well as specially designed interventions to support student learning. Their teachers will receive support from regional literacy coaches, who will model effective instruction and help carry out improvement plans for students who struggle with learning to read.
- Finally, the student's progress will be assessed at least two more times during the school year.

Student Assessment in Early Elementary Grades

Districts are required by law to design a reading assessment system for students in grades K-3, in part by choosing tools from a list of state-approved assessments. Assessment systems look different from school to school, and sometimes from child to child, depending on their learning needs. In general, students might experience the following types of assessments:

- *Initial* assessment (might also be called "screeener" or "benchmark" assessment)
 - given to all students
 - covers an extensive set of standards
 - helps identify possible area(s) of concern in English language arts (ELA)
- *Extensive* assessment (might also be called "diagnostic" assessment)
 - given to students who display a learning deficiency
 - provides a more in-depth look at student ability
 - more directly aligned to a specific skill
 - helps guide decisions about intervention
- *Formative* assessment (might also be called "assessment for learning")
 - planned, ongoing process
 - used by all students and teachers
 - occurs during teaching and learning



Individual Reading Improvement Plan (IRIP)

Students whose initial assessment indicates a reading deficiency are assured an Individual Reading Improvement Plan within 30 days after identification.*

The plan must:

- be created by teacher(s), principal(s), parents/guardians, and other pertinent school staff
- include specific, research-supported reading interventions in addition to regular classroom instruction
- be followed until the child no longer shows a reading delay or deficiency

The law also requires schools to notify parents/guardians in writing about reading delays and engage them in activities to improve their child's reading. Talk with your child's teacher or principal to learn more about learning improvement activities happening in your school.

*Michigan Public Act 306 of 2016

How Are Early Elementary Assessment Results Used?

Michigan's early elementary assessments are meant to provide valuable information that supports learning and are not used as a state high-stakes accountability measure. Early assessment results help teachers identify and address learning challenges that might keep students from making progress in later grades.

Early elementary assessment is just one tool used to ensure that our youngest learners are on track and have the learning supports they need to read by the end of third grade and pass without delay to fourth grade.

This is more important now than ever, because Michigan's Read by Grade Three Law, passed in 2016, requires that students who exit third grade must read at or near grade level. This legislation affects any kindergarten student who starts grade three in Fall 2019 or after.



Parents Are Key Partners During the Early Years

Parents are their child's first and most important teachers. That's why Michigan's early learning efforts aim to engage parents right from the start.

- If your child's initial assessment shows a reading delay or problem, the school must notify you in writing within 30 days.
- You also have the right to be included in planning your child's Individual Reading Improvement Plan (see sidebar on page 1).
- The school must provide tools to help you work at home with your child to improve their learning—tools like a "read-at-home" plan, training workshops, and other resources you can use to boost learning.

Learn more!

Visit these MDE pages for more information about:

[Early Literacy in Michigan](http://www.michigan.gov/earlylitandmath)

(www.michigan.gov/earlylitandmath) — find details about Michigan's early learning efforts and up-to-date lists of approved initial and extensive assessment tools

[Michigan's Early Literacy and Mathematics Benchmark Assessment](http://www.michigan.gov/earlylitandmath)

(www.michigan.gov/earlylitandmath) — Michigan's state-developed K-2 assessment available as an initial assessment at no cost to schools

[M-STEP](http://www.michigan.gov/mstep)

(www.michigan.gov/mstep) — state summative assessment system used to measure student learning of Michigan standards in grades 3-8 and 11

Michigan's Early Literacy and Mathematics Benchmark Assessment

is a set of online assessments for students in kindergarten, first grade, and second grade, in both English language arts (ELA) and mathematics.

Michigan's engaging early elementary assessments are:

- ✓ short, age-appropriate assessment items written by Michigan educators
- ✓ fully aligned to Michigan's academic standards and M-STEP
- ✓ available at no cost to districts
- ✓ approved for use as an initial assessment
- ✓ delivered completely online

Michigan's Early Literacy and Mathematics Benchmark Assessment also can be used as one measure of student growth.

Your child's teacher or principal can tell you whether your district uses this or a different approved initial assessment.