



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING

RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

BRIAN J. WHISTON
STATE SUPERINTENDENT

March 1, 2018

Dear Parent,

Beginning in mid-April, your school district will administer the Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (M-STEP) to students in grades 3-8. The M-STEP will be given online to nearly all students and will measure student knowledge of Michigan's high academic standards in English language arts (ELA), mathematics, science, and social studies.

High school students in grades 9 and 10 will continue to take the PSAT to provide schools, students, and parents valuable information on what students know in ELA and mathematics. It also helps students prepare for the SAT college entrance exam given to high school juniors as part of the Michigan Merit Examination (MME).

Students in grade 11 will take the MME, which consists of a free SAT that also measures student knowledge on Michigan's English language arts and mathematics standards; M-STEP science and social studies components; and a work skills assessment called WorkKeys.

We all want your child's state assessment experience to be as relaxed and stress-free as possible. Your positive outlook and supportive manner going into these assessments also will influence your child's experience.

Remember, testing is a part of learning. State assessment results do not impact student grades. They are designed to provide information on student knowledge and ability to be career- and college-ready upon graduation. Schools and district use the results for curriculum planning and school improvement initiatives that benefit all students.

M-STEP testing time has been significantly reduced since its first year, with further reductions made for 2018. In fact, students—on average—will spend no more than 3 hours on state tests in math and English language arts. Students in 5th and 8th grade who take state assessments in science and social studies will spend an additional two hours on those tests. Even so, 2018 state assessments *in total* take up less than 1 percent of total instructional time for the school year.

While we support parents in making choices for their children, there is no allowable way in state or federal law to "opt out" of state assessments. Students who are not assessed will count against their schools' participation rate, and create an incomplete picture of school performance. Schools rely on accurate test results to focus on students or

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Parent Letter
Page 2
March 1, 2018

programs that may need more academic support. That's one reason federal law requires a 95% participation rate target on state assessments be used in a school's accountability rating.

To provide you with additional information on M-STEP, we have attached an overview called *M-STEP: WHAT IT IS, WHAT IT MEANS, AND WHAT IT OFFERS*. Additional information, including how you can help your child prepare for testing, is available on the M-STEP web page at www.mi.gov/mstep.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Brian J. Whiston". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Brian J. Whiston
State Superintendent