



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
LANSING

GRETCHEN WHITMER  
GOVERNOR

MICHAEL F. RICE, Ph.D.  
STATE SUPERINTENDENT

## **MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** January 9, 2020

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

**FROM:** Venessa A. Keesler, Ph.D., Deputy Superintendent   
Division of Educator, Student, and School Supports

**SUBJECT:** District-Level Plans for Assessment Windows, Read by Grade 3  
Implementation, and Communicating Retention to Parents

In 2016, the Michigan state legislature passed Michigan's Read by Grade 3 Law (MCL 3801280f) and districts have been implementing components of the law since then. As prescribed in the law, this year's Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (M-STEP) must be used to flag students who are eligible for retention. As we approach the spring assessment windows, there are actions that districts need to take to prepare for this requirement and to communicate with families. The law describes specific timelines and dates that districts and families must know and follow. To meet the deadlines, communication between districts and families is important. This memo provides important timeline reminders and communication resources for districts.

- MDE **strongly urges** districts to begin third grade ELA M-STEP testing at the **beginning** of the testing window.
- A student's preliminary scores will be used to determine possible retention. Districts will be able to see the preliminary scores in the Student Assessment Secure Site within 24-48 hours after the student has completed testing. Checking the test scores regularly will maximize time for district communication to families about next steps to support the child. : MDE has created a user guide to accessing these scores in the Dynamic Score Reporting Site. It can be found here: [Dynamic Score Reporting Site User Guide](#).
- MDE also **strongly urges** districts to send their own communication home to parents/guardians in advance of the official communication from the state. We have provided a sample communication here: [Read by Grade 3 Parent and District Resources](#).
- In conjunction with this memo, districts should carefully review the memo sent today entitled, "Assessment Window Changes for Spring 2020."

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Michigan's Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI) will be sending official certified letters to individual students who score below 1253 on the ELA M-STEP assessments and who are therefore eligible for retention, as required by state law. Student addresses logged in the Michigan Student Data System (MSDS) will be used to send the letters so districts must ensure, to the extent possible, that the addresses are accurate and current prior to testing.

Families receiving a letter will have 30 days from date of the letter to contact the district superintendent and request their child not be retained. The final decision for retention is made by the local district superintendent. Districts are to notify families of their retention decisions at least 30 days before the start of the 2020 school year. Please note: in some districts, the 30-day appeal window will extend beyond the close of the school year. MDE strongly encourages districts to have a plan to communicate early to parents in advance of the official communication from the state (as described here) and to ensure there are plans in place to answer questions and address appeals from parents that may come after the close of school.

If not already completed, districts must finalize and communicate their guidance regarding the process for requesting an appeal; the options available to parents; information on how to request good cause exemptions; and any other district-level processes needed to work with parents/guardians of students flagged for retention. We encourage you to use the Read by Grade 3 District Checklist found here: [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Read\\_by\\_Grade\\_3\\_District\\_Checklist\\_675553\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Read_by_Grade_3_District_Checklist_675553_7.pdf) to help you prepare.

For additional questions and support, please contact the Michigan Department of Education at [MDE-EarlyLiteracy@michigan.gov](mailto:MDE-EarlyLiteracy@michigan.gov). If you would like to receive Read by Grade Three communications, please sign up at <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/MIMDE/subscriber/new>.

cc: Michigan Education Alliance