

August 2019

Updated Guidance on Early Literacy and Mathematics Benchmark Assessments

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) is providing updated guidance to districts related to the assessments given in the earliest grades – kindergarten, first, second, and third.

Beginning in 2017-2018, the Read by Grade Three Law requires that students in grades K, 1, 2 and 3 be given an English Language Arts (ELA) assessment within the first 30 days of school. The assessment must be from the MDE-approved list of initial assessments and should be administered three times a year to assure students are on target to pass the third-grade summative assessment (M-STEP). The Michigan Early Literacy and Mathematics Benchmark Assessments are provided at no cost in the fall, winter and spring and are on the approved list of initial assessments. Students who display a deficiency will need to be given an extensive assessment from the list of MDE-approved extensive assessments. These assessments provide a more in-depth look at student ability and will produce support for the placement of students into intervention tiers.

District/schools can choose to administer any assessment from the MDE-approved list of initial assessments and the ELA benchmark requirement for students in grades K, 1, and 2 will be fulfilled.

Districts should continue to administer benchmark assessments in mathematics to students in grades K, 1, and 2. MDE provides the Michigan Early Literacy and Mathematics Benchmark Assessments at no cost in the fall, winter and spring; or districts may choose to use a different benchmark assessment tool for mathematics. If a district chooses to administer a benchmark assessment other than the MDE-developed Michigan Early Literacy and Mathematics Benchmark Assessment, it is the district's responsibility to ensure their selected benchmark assessment meets both the definition and criteria of benchmark assessments set by MDE.

Benchmark Assessment Definition: Benchmark assessments are used to evaluate student knowledge and skills relative to a specific set of academic goals within a limited time frame, and are designed to inform decisions at the classroom level and beyond. In many cases, the timing of benchmark assessments is determined by the district, which may impact classroom use of the results. The results of a benchmark assessment are meaningfully aggregated and reported at a level beyond the classroom.

Benchmark assessments are used to predict a student's ability to succeed on a large-scale summative assessment, evaluate a particular educational program or pedagogy, or diagnose gaps in student learning.

Benchmark Assessment Criteria include the following:

- Be aligned to Michigan's state content standards
- Complement Michigan's summative assessment system
- Be administered at regular intervals (at least once before any summative assessment to monitor pupil progress)
- Provide information on pupil achievement with regard to learning the content required in a given year or grade span

For additional information regarding Early Literacy and required assessments, please visit the Early Literacy webpage at http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-22709_63192---,00.html