



Fall 2017 State Assessment

Results Reporting

Communication Toolkit

(For School and District Use)

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Welcome

Last spring, Michigan students in grades 3-8 took the M-STEP (Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress) or the MME (Michigan Merit Exam) in grade 11. Based on calls and feedback received by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE), this year's test administration went smoothly for most schools.

We hope you've taken advantage of the access you've had to your students' preliminary test results, which were available within 48 hours of test session completion. By having early access to results from computer-based test items, school leaders and teachers had the opportunity to get an early start on curriculum and instruction adaptations for the coming academic year.

Prior to the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year, MDE will release the Spring 2017 state, district, and building M-STEP and MME results. This communications toolkit can assist you in your communications planning and implementation related to this release.

This series of updated documents, recommendations, and resources can help schools lead healthy, constructive discussions around Michigan's rigorous standards, assessments, and assessment results. I encourage you to customize the templates provided to tell your district's story and the role that state assessment plays in ensuring that students in your district are prepared for the next steps in their learning ... and their lives.

Here in Michigan, we are taking significant steps to improve education quality and student performance. Our goal: to make Michigan a Top 10 education state in 10 years. One strategy that will move us forward toward that goal is to challenge students to develop a deeper understanding of subject matter, learn how to think critically, and apply what they are learning to the real-world skills needed to be successful in both college and the workplace. We appreciate educators' ongoing efforts to align local curriculum and student learning to Michigan's higher standards.

The MDE will continue to use the M-STEP to measure student proficiency on Michigan's standards during the 2017-2018 school year. This consistency will allow schools to gauge the alignment of their curricula and success of their instruction, and to detect trends in student learning. Stay informed at www.michigan.gov/mde.

Thank you for your leadership on these important issues. Please don't hesitate to contact the Michigan Department of Education's Office of Standards and Assessments if you have questions or need additional support, at (877) 560-8378.

Assessment Information for Educators, Parents & Community

This toolkit is designed to assist you in providing meaningful information to staff, parents and families, and your community. The materials can be printed, emailed, posted on district and school websites, and included in newsletters, parent letters, etc. The PowerPoint presentation is considered a sample and may be used in whole or in part, and may be combined with other information and materials. The materials below are posted on the [M-STEP \(www.michigan.gov/mstep\)](http://www.michigan.gov/mstep) and [MME \(www.michigan.gov/mme\)](http://www.michigan.gov/mme) web page under General Information or Parent/Student Information.

Print Materials

[Parent Letter from Brian Whiston, State Superintendent for Public Instruction](#)

State Superintendent Whiston's letter is designed for schools to give parents and is filled with valuable information on upcoming spring assessments, how testing is part of learning, why it is important, our future assessment vision, and "opt out" information.

[2017 Michigan Assessment System: What it is, What it means - And What it Offers](#)

This popular one-page handout has been updated. (Also available in Spanish and Arabic translations.)

[Computer Adaptive Testing \(CAT\) Information](#)

Computer Adaptive Testing provides students with a customized testing experience and has been used in M-STEP assessments since Spring 2017. This information outlines how it works and the benefits for students, teachers and schools.

[Parent Guide to MI-Access: What it is, What it Means -- What it Offers](#)

This guide provides valuable information for parents of students taking Michigan's alternate assessment.

[How to Read Your Student's Score Report: Grades 3-8](#)

This guide provides a key to the information you will see on the M-STEP Parent Report.

[How to Read Your Student's Score Report: Grade 11](#)

This guide provides a key to the information you will see on the MME parent report sent home by your child's school.

[Spring 2018 State Assessment Planning Calendar](#)

This calendar shows testing windows over a three-year period that includes Spring 2018 State Assessments

[Student Testing: What Parents Can Do to Help Students Prepare](#)

This NEW resource helps put state assessment into perspective and provides practical tips on how families can ease students' anxieties and foster success. (Spanish and Arabic available soon).

Sample PowerPoint Presentations

Spring 2017 Results PowerPoint template – to be posted upon release of statewide results.

Overview of 2017 state results; can be customized to add district results.

Available at the M-STEP website at www.michigan.gov/mstep under "Parent/Student Resources" (available upon release of 2017 assessment data.)

[2017 Michigan Assessment System: What it is, What it means, What it Offers](#)

This companion PowerPoint presentation to the printed version provides an overview of Michigan's state assessment system and the upcoming Spring 2018 testing schedule.

Multi-Media Materials

These videos can be shared with educators, students, parents, and community members, and placed on school and district websites. They are posted under Parent/Student Information on the [M-STEP](http://www.michigan.gov/mstep) (www.michigan.gov/mstep) and [MME](http://www.michigan.gov/mme) (www.michigan.gov/mme) web pages. Videos are also posted on the [Michigan Department of Education's YouTube](#) web page under Assessment Playlist.

Video Assessment Overviews

[M-STEP Parent Report Video](#) 5:40 minutes

This updated video provides an easy to understand summary of the Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (M-STEP) assessment and walks viewers through how to read and interpret student scores within the M-STEP and Michigan Merit Exam Parent Reports.

Available on You Tube (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hvenxL17_So)

[M-STEP Video, Featuring Computer Adaptive Testing](#) 4:20 minutes

This high-quality video was first produced in 2016 and has been updated for Spring 2017. It provides the viewer with an understanding of the connection between state standards, career- and college-readiness and state assessments. The video also explains Computer Adaptive Testing (CAT) and how it provides more precise information on student learning and growth. Available on You Tube (<https://www.youtube.com/%20watch?v=dUQ6NayCNiA>)

[M-STEP: What students can expect? \(video\)](#) 2:13 minutes

This video provides an overview of what students can experience when taking the online M-STEP assessments. The video is rich with images of the assessment's user-friendly navigation tools and interactive technology-enhanced (TE) items that students will encounter. Students with special needs and the adults who support them can learn more about the accommodations that are built into the assessments—accommodations such as the ability to choose background and text colors, cover up or mask areas of the screen, play audio using a screen reader, and view translations in Spanish.

Available on You Tube: (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s6YEkBQ6RVk>)

[Michigan Early Literacy and Mathematics Benchmark Assessments Video](#) 5:17 minutes

Early literacy and mathematics are critical milestones in a child's path to success. This video provides an overview of these benchmark assessments to ensure our youngest learners are on track and have the learning foundation to be ready to read by the end of third grade. Available on You Tube:

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QVOX3M5TYgY&index=9&list=PLQNV-MrTjyhLZWGC8WhRGxoEmynfXUHuc>)

Videos for Educators (MDE Assessment Playlist)

[English Language Arts \(ELA\) M-STEP Overview](#) 19:42 minutes

[Navigating the M-STEP Mathematics Computer Adaptive Test](#) 6:38 minutes

[Navigating the M-STEP English Language Arts Computer Adaptive Test](#) 5:12 minutes

[M-STEP Test Administration Videos and PowerPoints \(additional resources\)](#)

M-STEP Planning Calendar for 2018

The following calendar shows the testing window for Spring 2018 Summative Assessments. For the fourth consecutive year, the M-STEP and Michigan Merit Exam (MME) will be administered in the spring 2018. The M-STEP paper/pencil test dates for English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies will occur on designated dates within the testing windows.

Michigan schools are required by federal law to test 95 percent of their students in order to be considered successful.

The calendar below can help teachers and families avoid scheduling events or absences that conflict with testing dates.

Spring 2018 Testing Schedule for Summative Assessments																	
Assessment	Week of																
	2/5-2/9	2/12-2/16	2/19-2/23	2/26-3/2	3/5-3/9	3/12-3/16	3/19-3/23	3/26-3/30	4/2-4/6	4/9-4/13	4/16-4/20	4/23-4/27	4/30-5/4	5/7-5/11	5/14-5/18	5/21-5/25	
M-STEP Grades 5, 8, and 11										4 weeks							
M-STEP Grades 3, 4, 6, and 7													4 weeks				
MI-Access Alternate Assessments										7 weeks							
College Entrance: SAT with Essay										4/10 only		4/24 only					
Accommodations Testing										4/10 – 4/23							
Work Skills: ACT WorkKeys										4/11 only		4/25 only					
Accommodations Testing*										4/11 – 4/25							
PSAT**										4/10 or 4/11		4/24 or 4/25					
Accommodations Testing*										4/10 – 4/23							
WIDA ACCESS for ELLs 2.0	7 weeks																
WIDA Alternate ACCESS for ELLs	7 weeks																

* Only students who appear on the Non-standard Accommodation Report (NAR) are eligible to test within the 2-week window. Students approved for testing over two days must be tested on consecutive days.

** Schools can elect to administer the PSAT test to 9th graders on one day, 10th graders on the other day, or test both grades on the same day. As long as all students in the same grade are tested on the same day, schools can choose which date works best for them for both the initial test dates and the makeup test dates.



**Customizable
Fall Reporting
Communication Tools
For School and District Use
Fall 2017**

Anticipated Timeline / Communication Options—REPORTING

M-STEP assessment results are released in the fall for tests administered during the spring of that year, and measure former-year student achievement. Recognizing the relative newness of the M-STEP and the importance of parent engagement on these issues, these following options and supporting documents have been designed for your use.

Communication Options	When	By Whom	Sample Docs
Communicate with parents via newsletters, parent nights, or email to familiarize them with M-STEP. Videos, presentations and handouts are available on the M-STEP web page .	Various times throughout the year	District & Bldg Leaders	Page 11 - 13
Notify board, district, and building staff of pending state data release. Distribute talking points and elevator speech to raise awareness before release of results.	August	District & Bldg Leaders	Pages 11-19
Provide principals with a district parent letter to accompany M-STEP/MME parent reports.	August	Superintendent, Bldg Leaders	Page 22
Issue press release announcing student reports and aggregate scores and distribute information to staff and board.	Within a few days of state data release	Supt	Page 23
Schedule M-STEP agenda item for board members, staff meetings.	August - September	District & Bldg Leaders	Pages 14 & 17
Ensure building, district, and board leaders discuss preliminary results during board and staff meetings, back-to-school and other fall school events, as appropriate.	August - September	Board, District & Bldg Leaders, Staff	Locally developed using State M-STEP Information
Add M-STEP results article(s) to newsletters and appropriate parent publications.	September	District & Bldg Leaders	Page 20 - 21
Get district leaders on the agendas of local business and community meetings. Distribute overview and answer questions.	Sept.– Nov.	District Leaders	Overview
Share positive M-STEP news articles, columns, or social media via newsletters, district social media, and appropriate parent publications.	Sept. – Nov.	District & Bldg Leaders	Page 21 - 24

Communication Options	When	By Whom	Sample Docs
Prepare presentations for stakeholder groups.	Various times as available	District leaders	Overview PowerPoint
Identify parents, staff, and local business & community leaders willing to support and speak out on district's behalf.	As needed	District & Bldg Leaders	Page 26
Submit op-ed to local newspaper(s) OR Post to a blog.	As needed	Supt	Page 24
Activate community action team; encourage them to respond to op-ed/blog with supportive letters to the editor (if needed).	As needed	Supt	Page 25 - 26

Assessment/M-STEP/MME District Talking Points (overview)

Many parents are still learning about Michigan’s state assessments and about why assessment—and the M-STEP and MME, in particular—is important to their students. The messages below can serve as a guide for talking about assessment and about the M-STEP and MME in clear and accurate ways.

Background on Assessment

- Testing and other forms of assessment can provide valuable information to parents, educators, and policy leaders about students’ growth and learning.
- School districts with a balanced assessment system use a variety of assessment practices that both measure progress toward a student’s mastery of content standards and inform classroom instruction.

State Tests Measure Progress

- State standardized assessments like M-STEP and MME are a type of “summative” assessment that measures student progress toward mastering a rigorous set of state standards.
- M-STEP and the MME are Michigan’s summative assessments and are the only state tests given to all students each year. State testing is required under both state and federal law, to ensure all children in all communities are learning and receiving a high-quality education. Completion of the M-STEP takes an average of four to eight hours, depending on grade level.
- Taking tests is a part of life and will prepare students for what lies ahead. For example: a summative test may be required to get into the military and most four-year colleges or universities. Many professionals — from plumbers to doctors — must take tests to earn licenses.
- An alternate assessment called MI-Access is given to a small number of students with disabilities who, even with accommodations, are unable to meet the general academic content standards and whose participation in the regular grade-level state assessment has been determined by an IEP (Individualized Educational Program) team to be inappropriate.
- Each year, students identified as English Learners (ELs) take a federally required summative test called the WIDA ACCESS for ELLs 2.0. This assessment is designed to measure K–12 EL students on their progress in learning the English language. This assessment includes a status report of their development in reading, listening, writing, and speaking skills. WIDA ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 is aligned to the WIDA English Language Development (ELD) standards that Michigan adopted in 2013.

District Assessments

- Other assessments are determined by local districts to guide classroom instruction and inform school-level decisions. Two other types of assessment are commonly used with students by districts throughout the school year.

- Formative assessment practices are used by teachers continuously in the classroom in order to help students and teachers check learning progress. Formative assessment gives teachers and students quick feedback so that they can adjust teaching to better meet students' needs. **[CITE EXAMPLES USED AT PRESENT IN YOUR DISTRICT: LEARNING LOGS, PORTFOLIOS, GOAL SETTING, ETC.]**
- Interim or Benchmark assessments are district-developed or standardized assessments given occasionally throughout the school year. These are chosen and administered by schools and districts to monitor progress and inform decisions at the school level. **[CITE EXAMPLES USED AT PRESENT IN YOUR DISTRICT: COMMON COURSE EXAMS, NWEA MAP, SCANTRON ASSESSMENTS, ETC.]**
- State Superintendent Brian Whiston directed the Michigan Department of Education to work with local districts and assessment experts to align and balance assessments so the amount of student testing can be reduced and ultimately used to inform instruction and improve student learning. Since the 2015 test administration, state assessments for most students have been significantly shortened by up to eight hours. A more detailed assessment overview can be found on the [M-STEP web page](#).

Background on M-STEP and MME:

- The M-STEP is a 21st century test given primarily online each spring. M-STEP is designed to gauge how well students are mastering Michigan's standards. These state standards, developed for educators by educators, broadly outline what students should know and be able to do, by subject and grade level. Ultimately, M-STEP results will show how ready students are to enter the workplace, career education training, and college.
- M-STEP also asks students to demonstrate critical thinking, problem solving, and deeper knowledge through written responses.
- The M-STEP is administered to students in the following grades and subjects:
 - English language arts and mathematics in grades 3–8
 - Science in grades 4, 7 and 11
 - Social studies in grades 5, 8 and 11
 - Starting in 2018, both science and social studies will be given in grades 5, 8, and 11
- High school students in grades 9 and 10 take the PSAT (Preliminary SAT) which helps prepare them for the SAT they will take in grade 11.
- The Michigan Merit Examination (MME) is a series of general assessments given to students in grade 11. The MME includes:
 - A free SAT with Essay (college entrance exam and English language arts and mathematics)
 - M-STEP (science and social studies)

- ACT WorkKeys (real-world career skills)
- M-STEP and MME provide important snapshots of student progress at a state, district, and building level. When combined with classroom work, report cards, local district assessments, and other tools, M-STEP results offer a comprehensive view of student progress and achievement.
- As the only statewide student academic measurements, M-STEP and MME provide valuable information to parents on the academic progress of their child, school, and district in relation to statewide results. M-STEP and MME also provide teachers and schools with important data to identify struggling students and determine what kinds of academic supports they need.

For additional general information on M-STEP and MME click [Michigan's Assessment System: What it is, What it means, and What it Offers](#)

Assessment/M-STEP/MME Elevator Speech

Background: Parents, teachers, and administrators often have only a few seconds to discuss the important changes that are going on in Michigan schools. An “elevator speech” is a very brief summary of important information.

Our school district is working hard to keep pace with the dramatic advancements in K–12 education.

Michigan students deserve a world-class education. By setting high learning expectations—and measuring progress toward them—we can make sure that our students graduate ready to be competitive in today’s knowledge economy.

Our students, like students across Michigan, take the M-STEP and Michigan Merit Exam (MME) each spring. M-STEP replaced the old MEAP tests in 2015, and it is required by state and federal law to be given annually to all Michigan students in grades 3-8.

The Michigan Merit Examination (MME) is a series of general assessments given to students in grade 11. The MME includes the SAT college readiness exam, M-STEP social studies and science tests, and the ACT WorkKeys, which measures real-world career skills.

State standardized assessment is just one type of assessment tool our district uses to inform classroom teaching and measure progress toward preparing our students to be college- and career-ready.

In the classroom, teachers use FORMATIVE assessment practices to continually monitor learning and adjust instruction. For example, **[CITE FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT EXAMPLES IN USE: self-assessment, feedback, goal setting, learning logs, portfolios, etc.]**

Our district also administers an INTERIM BENCHMARK assessment to monitor progress toward broader learning goals. In our district, we measure progress using **[CITE INTERIM/BENCHMARK ASSESSMENT(S) IN USE: district common course exams, NWEA MAP, SCANTRON, etc.]**

The M-STEP is our state’s summative evaluation, meaning that its primary use is to tell the district how well our curriculum and instruction align to Michigan’s rigorous standards.

The state also uses the data from the M-STEP and MME in their efforts to hold schools accountable. It is one measure used to score schools and districts for Michigan’s school accountability measures.

M-STEP/MME School/District Talking Points – REPORTING

M-STEP features quicker, more accurate results

Since 2015, M-STEP developers have worked hard to improve the M-STEP for schools and students. In addition, school district leaders have continued to improve their access to computers and Internet connectivity. These and other changes make the M-STEP more manageable, less time-consuming, and more responsive to individual students.

In 2017, 98 percent of schools tested students online, up from 80 percent in 2015.

Testing time has been reduced and averages a total of 4-8 hours (depending on grade) or less than one percent of a student's overall instruction time.

M-STEP includes Computer adaptive testing (CAT) in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics assessments for grades 3-8 which provide a more personalized test experience for students and result in more precise measurements of student learning.

High school juniors take the SAT college entrance exam as part of the Michigan Merit Exam (MME). The MME also includes M-STEP science and social studies, and ACT WorkKeys a career skills assessments.

The M-STEP delivers quick results to schools. Preliminary score reports were available to schools within 24-48 hours after students completed the online assessments for an entire subject area, allowing districts to adapt instruction and programs more quickly.

Final M-STEP results, which include parent reports that are distributed by districts, will be available to schools in late summer prior to the beginning of the 2017-18 school year.

Score reports reflect higher standards, build on 2015 baseline

The 2017 M-STEP allows local schools to compare this year's results with results from two prior years of student performance. In this third year, we can see how students are progressing toward meeting today's more rigorous standards, and we will gain better understanding about how our district is preparing students to excel in future learning or work.

Michigan's higher standards hold our students to higher expectations. We see students and teachers rising to the occasion, and meeting the challenges of standards that ask more of them.

The assessment results also can show how well the school's curriculum aligns to state standards. The more aligned a school's curriculum and the more students learn, the higher state test scores are likely to be.

[INCLUDE DETAILS ON THE DISTRICT'S 2017 RESULTS TRENDS]

Educators and parents can use this year's data as feedback for the future

The M-STEP tests are important in measuring how our students are doing. The data will give parents, teachers, and schools the information they need to see what schools are doing well and where we need to improve.

Now that we have several years of data available, teachers will have indicators of how students are progressing over time, which can inform curriculum development and instruction and boost progress.

These data also will help measure overall student progress within an individual school, among school districts, and across the state.

Parents and students can do the same—use the data to note where performance was strong and where help might be needed.

Families can then work with teachers to support students with extra help where needed to boost lasting learning and achievement. MDE has developed a parent handout called [Student Testing: What Parents Can Do to Help Students Prepare](#), available on the [M-STEP web page](#) (www.michigan.gov/mstep.)

It's also a good idea for families to learn more about all the ways that their child's learning has been assessed during the school year. By looking at all available assessment data, parents can more easily put the M-STEP and MME results in perspective and gain a more comprehensive picture of their child's progress.

M-STEP/MME Elevator Speech–REPORTING

Background: Parents, teachers, and administrators often have only a few minutes to discuss the important ongoing changes in Michigan schools. An “elevator speech” is a very brief summary of important information related to the spring testing season.

Our students took the 2017 M-STEP in Spring 2017.

This year’s M-STEP and MME final results are expected to be available to schools just prior to the start of the new school year.

Schools have had preliminary student results on machine-scored items within 1-2 days after each subject-area test was completed.

M-STEP Parent reports will also be given to families by **[DATE OF DISTRICT’S PARENT REPORT DISTRIBUTION]**.

Since 2016, computer adaptive testing (CAT) in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics assessments for grades 3-8 has provided a more personalized test experience for students and will result in more precise measurements of student learning.

Incoming high school seniors received SAT college entrance exam scores as part of the Michigan Merit Exam (MME). The MME also reports M-STEP results in science and social studies, and ACT WorkKeys results in some “real-world” career skills.

The M-STEP and MME measure student performance on a rigorous set of state standards in English language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science.

This year’s results will allow us to compare three years of data, starting with a 2015 baseline that provided a clearer picture of what students know and where they need help.

This year’s results **[FILL IN LOCAL TREND INFORMATION.....]**

FAQ for Teachers – REPORTING

These suggested responses to frequently asked questions are intended to help teachers address many of the questions that parents are likely to raise about M-STEP SCORES this year.

What will the M-STEP scores tell us?

The M-STEP and MME measure a student's proficiency related to a set of high academic standards specific to Michigan. Thanks to more modern types of questions than were used in past tests, M-STEP also is able to better measure real world skills like critical thinking and problem solving.

Student scores are communicated to parents through four achievement levels that indicate if the child is proficient for their subject and grade level.

By comparing this year's scores with last year's scores, we are also able to look at individual students, classrooms, and schools to see where students are making progress and where additional support may be needed.

The scores also can show how well the school's curriculum aligns to state standards. The more aligned a school's curriculum and the more students learn, the higher state test scores are likely to be.

How can parents use score reports to help their children?

In the fall, parents will receive a report of their child's performance on M-STEP or MME. The report will include a breakdown of how their child performed within each subject. Consider giving parents the "How to read your student's score report" handout included in the toolkit Appendix or available online:

[How to Read Your Student's Score Report: Grades 3-8](#)

[How to Read Your Student's Score Report: Grade 11](#)

The report can help parents understand where their children excel or where they may need additional support. It also can be used to guide conversations with teachers about additional supports or challenges that may be needed in the classroom, as well as other ways for parents to support their child at home.

Parents can support their children in a number of practical ways:

Work with your child's teacher to identify strategies to enrich your child's education where he or she is already meeting or exceeding grade-level expectations. Likewise, your student's teacher can help identify resources to improve performance where needed. Tutoring, after-school programs or at-home activities might be available to help students practice their skills.

Determine which skills to reinforce at home. The detailed descriptions of specific skill areas on your child's score report serve as a great starting point for identifying areas that need improvement.

Remind your child that test scores are only one indicator of progress.

Review the parent handout called [Student Testing: What Parents Can Do to Help Students Prepare](#), available on the [M-STEP web page](http://www.michigan.gov/step) (www.michigan.gov/step).

Learn more about Michigan's standards and aligned assessments at: [Michigan Academic Standards](#).

School Newsletter Article #1 – REPORTING

NOTE: Written at 8th grade level, to connect with a diverse array of community members.

M-STEP Results: What **DISTRICT NAME** Families Can Expect

This past spring, **DISTRICT NAME** students took one of Michigan’s summative statewide tests for the third time. Students in grades 3-8 took the M-STEP (Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress). Students in grade 11 took the MME (Michigan Merit Exam). Final results from the M-STEP and MME will be available to districts by the start of the new school year. Thanks to technology improvements and online testing, our district has much earlier access to data that is also a more precise measure of learning.

The purpose of these state summative assessments is to see how close our students are to reaching Michigan’s new higher standards in English language arts and mathematics. For high school students, the PSAT, SAT, and WorkKeys components also measure students’ readiness for success in college and careers.

This year’s test scores will build on the new baseline set in 2015 when the M-STEP was brand new. This year’s results **[FILL IN TREND—IMPROVEMENT? DECLINE?]**. We expect that as students gain more and more experiences with online assessment and as our instruction adapts to Michigan’s higher standards, our scores will rise over time. We encourage families to remember that state standardized test scores are just one measure of student progress and to keep them in perspective.

What happens next?

DISTRICT NAME will spend time reviewing the 2017 M-STEP and MME results to find where we are having success, and where we see areas in which to improve. The test results also will reveal which groups of students are doing well, and which will need more or different kinds of support.

Families are encouraged to review the M-STEP or MME Parent Report and learn where your child might need additional support. Be sure to discuss your concerns with your child’s teacher and learn how together you can target academic support where it’s needed most.

The Michigan Department of Education has developed a useful document called [Student Testing: What Parents Can Do to Help Students Prepare](#) that is now available for download on the M-STEP web page (www.michigan.gov/mstep).

School Newsletter Article #2 — REPORTING

Note: Written at 8th grade level, to connect with a diverse array of community members

M-STEP Results: What **DISTRICT NAME** will do next

This past spring, **DISTRICT NAME** students took Michigan's statewide summative test, the M-STEP, for the third time. This challenging online test measures higher expectations about what our students should know at the end of each school year, and requires students to write responses and show their work, instead of merely filling in a bubble answer sheet.

Students at **DISTRICT NAME** are performing **[BETTER THAN/ON PAR WITH]** the statewide trend, and **[IMPROVED/REMAINED STEADY IN MATH/ELA/SS/SCIENCE]** as our teachers and curricula adapt to new standards and testing methods. The 2017 M-STEP feedback is an important tool for us to understand how well the district is serving students and where we can provide more support.

Teachers and parents can use student scores to make sure they're doing all the right things. Working together, they can learn how to best support each child in order to improve learning during the coming year.

By reviewing school-wide results, principals and other district leaders can make decisions that are more likely to improve the services we deliver. Over time, each **DISTRICT NAME** graduate will be stronger and more competitive when it comes to career training, college, and in the workplace. District and statewide leaders will analyze the scores to assess the success of our efforts to close performance gaps between different groups of students. M-STEP results will help uncover inequities of learning and help us target resources to close those gaps.

At every level, these scores will be used as they always have been: to measure the outcomes that result from our public investment in education, and to help improve learning in Michigan's schools.

Few of us like taking tests, but they are one important way for us to understand how our students are doing, and to keep our focus on powerful, engaged learning towards Michigan's high standards.

Sample Letter to Parents

Dear Parent,

Thank you for allowing **DISTRICT NAME** to be part of your child's education.

I am writing to let you know that you will soon be receiving the results of your child's performance on the M-STEP, Michigan's statewide exam.

The current M-STEP assessments feature some key enhancements that likely improved your child's testing experience ... and can even lead to more precise measures of learning. Total testing time is significantly reduced from the M-STEP'S first year.

Testing schedules are more flexible, preserving more instructional time.

Schools receive student results more quickly, with preliminary results available within 24-48 hours after all subject area tests were completed! This helps teachers and schools make faster adjustments to instruction and programs to support student learning.

M-STEP incorporates computer adaptive testing (CAT), which provides a more personalized test experience for students and improved test security, as well as more precise measures of learning for schools.

This year's test scores on the challenging M-STEP are overall **[CHOOSE ONE: IMPROVED OVER/UNCHANGED FROM/LOWER THAN]** last year, and district leaders will be studying these results to discover where we are having success, and where we see areas in which to improve. The test results also will reveal which groups of students are doing well, and which will need more or different kinds of support.

Here's some good news about the 2017 M-STEP:
Teachers and parents now can work together to identify where students excel and where they need additional help, and find ways to better support students.

Administrators and teachers can work to better align lessons with state standards tested by M-STEP, which could result in student score improvement.

As we learn more about our school's results, we can make decisions that will help improve instruction. Over time, each **DISTRICT NAME** graduate will be stronger and better prepared to succeed in the next grade and after high school, in college or post-secondary training, career, and life.

No matter whether your student's scores improved or declined compared to last year, students won't be affected in a bad way. The scores will be used, as they always have been, to help improve our programs and our schools.

Please let me know if you have questions about the M-STEP, Michigan's learning standards, or your child's progress overall. I look forward to helping your child continue toward the best possible start in life.

Sincerely,

Sample Press Release Announcing Student M-STEP Score Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Contact: XXXX

DATE Phone: xxx

STUDENT STATE ASSESSMENT RESULTS RELEASED TO DISTRICT NAME FAMILIES

Families across DISTRICT NAME this week are beginning to receive their students' scores on Michigan's Spring 2017 statewide assessments.

- Students in grades 3-8 took the M-STEP (Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress)
- Students in grades 9 and 10 took the PSAT (Pre-SAT)
- Students in grade 11 took the MME (Michigan Merit Exam), which includes:
 - The SAT college-readiness exam
 - M-STEP in social studies and science
 - ACT WorkKeys (a work-skills test)

The district received DISTRICT aggregate scores for all students district-wide as well.

“Our students’ scores overall show STABILITY/IMPROVEMENT/LOSSES (AS APPROPRIATE) compared to last year’s M-STEP scores,” said Superintendent SUPERINTENDENT NAME. “We plan to dig into the data to see where we are showing success, and where we need to adapt and improve our programs and instruction.”

BREAK OUT RESULTS HERE

Superintendent SUP LAST NAME said that this year’s M-STEP featured some modern enhancements, such as scheduling flexibility, shorter test sessions, and computer adaptive assessments that customized the test experience for students. Even so, shifting to a new test requires several years of significant transitions for students, families, and educators. Stronger standards and more dynamic assessments require new levels of effort and skill from the entire district community.

“Across Michigan, districts are working to meet the same high standards as we are,” Superintendent SUP LAST NAME said. “All of our teachers are working every day to help our students meet and exceed these expectations.”

The M-STEP and MME state assessments are important sources of information districts use to evaluate their schools’ overall progress in meeting Michigan’s standards.

“We encourage parents to discuss their children’s scores with their teachers, and partner with them in giving students the tools and support they need to be successful, in and out of school,” SUPT LAST NAME said.

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Newspaper Op-Ed or Superintendent Blog Post

Stepping Up to the M-STEP

All across **DISTRICT NAME**, families are beginning to better understand the scores their children received on this year's state assessments—the M-STEP (Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress) and MME (Michigan Merit Exam). Whether those scores are encouraging or concerning, I hope they are generating some good conversations about learning and about the future.

Why are state standardized tests important? While often unpopular, they provide the only way to consistently measure the progress of *all* Michigan students against a set of high standards—standards that are designed to prepare students for college learning and today's careers. This year's state assessment encompassed less than one percent of the year's instructional time, yet it has provided rich results that give families and educators honest and reliable information about where students are doing well, and where they need support.

DISTRICT NAME and schools across Michigan have been teaching to higher standards—expectations for what students should know and be able to do in English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. The M-STEP is designed to measure progress toward these challenging standards and show where we might have learning gaps. Our goal is to make sure that *all* students are prepared for the next grade, and on track to graduate ready to succeed in career training or college and life in the future.

Here's some good news about how the M-STEP and MME scores can help us now: Teachers and parents can use student scores along with other performance data to make sure they're doing the right things to support students. Working together, we can identify where our students excel and where they need additional help, and find ways to better support each child.

As we learn more about our school's results, we can make decisions that will help to better support students, align curriculum to state standards and improve instruction. Over time, each **DISTRICT NAME** graduate will be stronger and better prepared to succeed in the next grade and after high school, in college, career, and in life.

When it comes to state assessments, we must ask ourselves: Do we want a rigorous test that measures the skills our kids need to be successful in life? We at **DISTRICT NAME** say "Yes" to these questions. We invite others to join us in creating learning conditions in which every child can be as successful as possible.

Sample Email to Community Partners: requesting responses to op-ed/supportive letters to the editor

I wanted to take a moment to thank you for your continued support! As you may have seen, **PUBLICATION NAME** recently printed my op-ed article **(add hyperlink)**. I'd like to once again invite you to lend your support by sending a letter to the editor of this publication.

Ideally this letter will be in your own words, but sometimes it's helpful to see a sample such as the one below to get started. As always, please let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you,

SUPT NAME

Dear Editor:

Thank you for running the recent op-ed article about the M-STEP and MME assessments by **SUPT NAME** in your **DATE** publication. I know that not everyone appreciates the value of state standardized testing, but the M-STEP results provide some timely and valuable feedback to schools.

This year marks the third year for M-STEP and MME, and we can see that as students and schools adjust to new standards and aligned tests, we are even better able measure Michigan students' learning. We are helping our students become more competitive in the world, because we are now able to adjust our curriculum and instruction according to their learning needs.

Let's continue to support our school professionals who are working so hard to adapt to new learning challenges. Together we will ensure that Michigan becomes a Top 10 education state.

Sincerely,

YOUR NAME

Community Partners

Community partners form a group of people who are willing to promote an activity, project, event, or a message. In this context, community partners can be valuable in the effort to help you communicate accurately about the importance of educational assessment and the ways your district uses the results to help improve instruction for students. Community partners can be your biggest fans and advocates, able to communicate *en masse* about the value of your goals, strategies, and practices. These are people you can trust to convey their enthusiasm and stay motivated to spread the word.

Each partner should have a key communicator—someone who can get in touch quickly, and then work directly with their constituents to support district activities [or messages] and report back.

Your partner team should include:

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Parents | Youth advocates |
| Business leaders | Alumni |
| Local government leaders | Friends |
| Civic organizations | |

Use the above list, plus a chart that resembles the one below, to identify and organize community partners.

Team Member	Role	District Liaison
Jane Doe	Parent & Volunteer	Principal Jones