



Holly Area Schools

Excellence in Action!

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Dear Parent,

Thank you for allowing Holly Area Schools to be part of your child's education.

We are enclosing some information about the state assessment scores your child will receive near the end of this month at parent teacher conferences. As you may recall, Holly students took Michigan's new statewide test, the M-STEP, for the first time this past spring.

After nearly 45 years of the MEAP, the change is a big deal for students and teachers. Michigan has adopted more rigorous standards for its students in English language arts and mathematics, and the M-STEP was built to see how close our students are to reaching them.

We expect that this year's test scores may appear lower than scores on the previous test. The new test is challenging because it moves beyond multiple-choice and demands more of our students. M-STEP was developed to measure more rigorous standards and requires students to demonstrate deeper understanding, problem solving skills, and critical thinking.

As a result of the new test and higher expectations, test scores are being used to set a new baseline so that we can better understand student progress. Because this is a different test measuring different standards, scores should not be compared to scores on previous MEAP tests. This year's M-STEP data will provide a baseline to which future year's data can be compared.

Over time, these scores will be a reflection of all of the progress happening in schools across Michigan. Teachers and parents can use student scores to reflect on what is already working and where there are needs for improvement. Working together, we can learn how to support each and every student, so they can improve their scores next year.

As we learn more about our school's results, we can make decisions that will rapidly improve the supports and services we deliver. Over time, each Holly Area Schools graduate will be stronger and more competitive when it comes to his/her career training and/or college, career, and citizenship.

Below this communication, we have included an update from the Michigan Department of Education on the Spring 2016 M-Step. Please talk with your principal about any questions you may have about the M-STEP, Michigan's new learning standards, or your child's progress overall. We look forward to helping your child continue toward the best possible start in life.

Sincerely,

Scott M. Roper
Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum & Instruction

Serving Students of Northwest Oakland County

The Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress – Spring 2016

WHAT IT IS, WHAT IT MEANS — AND WHAT IT OFFERS

Expecting More

Getting children ready to take their place in the world is challenging. The knowledge and skills students need for a well-paying job continually evolve to meet current and future workplace demands.

To ensure students can meet these demands, the State Board of Education routinely strengthens Michigan learning standards. These standards broadly outline what students need to know and are able to do in each subject and grade level to be career- and college-ready upon high school graduation. The standards also serve as a foundation from which teachers develop classroom curriculum and lesson plans.

Today's standards challenge students to:

- Understand subject matter more deeply.
- Learn how to think critically.
- Apply what they learn to the real world.
- Make learning more relevant in their lives.

Achieving More

Just as “world-class” athletes continue to break records that were once thought unreachable, today’s learners aim higher as state standards rise to meet future workforce demands.

As student knowledge increases, student achievement on state assessments over time should increase and will help ensure all students are prepared for success in college and the workplace.

What is M-STEP?

New learning standards require new ways to measure how much students know and can do. That’s why in 2014-15, Michigan replaced the 44-year-old MEAP test with the new Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (M-STEP). Most schools have chosen to administer M-STEP online rather than paper and pencil.

M-STEP is aligned to Michigan’s challenging learning standards and is administered each spring to students in specific grades outlined in the Which Assessments Do Students Take section below.

M-STEP has fewer multiple-choice questions and more questions that require problem solving and critical thinking skills than the previous MEAP assessment.

Why are State Assessments Important?

Once each year, all students in Michigan take a high-quality state assessment, whether it's the M-STEP general assessment or the MI-Access alternate assessment. State assessments provide:

- An important snapshot of student achievement at a state, district and building level.
- Valuable information to parents on their child's academic achievement.
- Important data for teachers, schools, and districts to help guide instruction.

These assessments are required by both state and federal law in order to ensure all children are learning and receiving a high-quality education.

State assessments take up or require less than one percent of student instructional time during a school year. All other assessments are determined at the local district or building level.

Which Assessments Do Students Take?

M-STEP is administered to students in the following grades and subjects:

- English language arts and mathematics are assessed in grades 3 through 8.
- Science is assessed in grades 4 and 7.
- Social studies is assessed in grades 5 and 8.

High School Students

[9th and 10th Grade Assessments](#)

New state law requires all 9th and 10th grade students to take a state summative assessment in the spring, called the PSAT (PreSAT). Summative assessments measure what students are expected to know and be able to do at specific grade levels and in specific content areas.

Therefore, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) will provide for the statewide administration of the PSAT in spring 2016. For more information on the PSAT, please contact your local high school.

[11th Grade Assessments](#)

The Michigan Merit Exam (MME) is the general assessment for students in Grade 11.

The MME includes:

- A free SAT with Essay college entrance exam. SAT is the nation's most widely-used college admission test and is aligned with Michigan's academic standards.

- A work skills assessment (ACT WorkKeys).
- M-STEP science and social studies assessments.

Beginning in the spring of 2016, the SAT will serve as a college entrance exam and the M-STEP English language arts and mathematics assessments, reducing state-required testing time by up to eight hours.

Free Practice Tests for All High School Grade Levels

To prepare students for the College Board's PSAT, and the SAT with Essay, Michigan students now have **free access** to the Khan Academy for online test practice. For more information on the PSAT and SAT, please visit: the [College Board's Michigan website \(www.collegeboard.org/michigan\)](http://www.collegeboard.org/michigan).

Assessments for Special Populations

An alternate assessment called MI-Access is available to students with disabilities whose Individualized Educational Program (IEP) team has determined that general assessments, even with accommodations, are not appropriate.

There also is an assessment, called World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA), for students who are learning the English language. To find out more about these and other assessments, please contact your local school district.

When Do Students Take M-STEP?

To provide schools and districts scheduling flexibility, the online M-STEP is administered any instructional day within a select three-week window in the spring.

MI-Access and WIDA have longer test windows.

Spring 2016 Test Windows and Release of Test Results

- Grades 5, 8 & 11 – April 11 through April 29
- Grades 3 & 6 – April 25 through May 13
- Grades 4 & 7 – May 9 through May 27
- SAT – April 12, Makeup April 26
- WorkKeys – April 13, Makeup April 27
- PSAT – April 12 or 13, Makeup April 26 or 27
- MI-Access – April 11 through May 27
- WIDA – February 8 through March 25

For More Information on M-STEP

Please visit www.mi.gov/mstep.