



Michigan's Alternate Assessment

WHAT IT IS ... WHAT IT MEANS ... AND WHAT IT OFFERS

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Expecting More

Getting children ready to take their place in the world is challenging. For students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, the task is particularly important for quality of life, independence, and ongoing self-advocacy.

To ensure students can meet these goals, Michigan has adopted alternate content standards designed for the small number of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who, even with accommodations, are unable to meet the general academic content standards and whose IEP (Individualized Educational Program) team has determined the student's participation in the regular grade-level state assessment to be inappropriate.

These alternate standards reflect Michigan's expectations for students, and broadly outline what students need to know and be able to do in each subject and grade level. The alternate standards also serve as a foundation from which teachers can develop classroom instruction and lesson plans.

Today's standards challenge students to:

- ✓ Understand subject matter in real-life context.
- ✓ Learn how to generalize learning, as much as possible.
- ✓ Apply what they learn to the real world.
- ✓ Make learning more relevant in their lives.

What Is MI-Access?

For over 10 years, Michigan has been administering MI-Access, which is a group of tests specifically designed to allow students who have, or function as if they have, significant cognitive impairments to participate in state-wide assessments. Students are eligible to take MI-Access when the IEP team has determined that general assessments, even with accommodations, are not appropriate for the student. IEP teams make this

decision following State guidelines for participation in the alternate assessment.

MI-Access assessments provide selected response options (multiple choice), as well as constructed responses (essay or drawing) and observational scoring by administrators. Each of these approaches is designed around the student's level of independence.

MI-ACCESS ALTERNATE ASSESSMENTS ARE ADMINISTERED AT THREE LEVELS:

1) MI-Access Functional Independence (FI) –

For students who have, or function as if they have, a significant cognitive impairment, and whose instruction is most closely aligned to the Essential Elements* within the High Range of Complexity.

2) MI-Access Supported Independence (SI) –

For students who have, or function as if they have, a significant cognitive impairment, and whose instruction is most closely aligned to the Essential Elements* within the Medium Range of Complexity.

3) MI-Access Participation (P) –

For students who have, or function as if they have, a significant cognitive impairment, and whose instruction is most closely aligned to the Essential Elements* within the Low Range of Complexity.

* Essential Elements are specific statements of Knowledge and Skills linked to the grade-level standards.

Should My Student Take MI-Access?

When determining which assessment is most appropriate for a student, the IEP team must follow the state [guidelines for assessment selection](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Should_My_Student_Take_the_Alternate_Assessment_556705_7.pdf) (www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Should_My_Student_Take_the_Alternate_Assessment_556705_7.pdf).

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 the state, district and building level.
- ✓ Valuable information to parents on their child's academic achievement and growth.
- ✓ 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.

Which Assessments Do Students Take?

MI-Access is administered to students in the following grades and subjects:

- ✓ English language arts and mathematics are assessed in grades 3 through 8, and 11.
- ✓ Science is assessed in grades 4, 7, and 11 (note that this is different from M-STEP for this year).
- ✓ Social studies (FI only) is assessed in grades 5, 8, and 11.

NOTE: Students taking the SI or P levels of the assessment in grades 5, 8, and 11, must be given a locally determined social studies assessment.

11th Grade Assessments

All students are required to be assessed in the 11th grade. MI-Access grade 11 assessments address all levels (FI, SI and P) and subjects with the following exceptions:

- ✓ Students taking the Grade 11 MI-Access FI assessments are eligible, but not required, to take the Michigan WorkKeys assessment.
- ✓ If the SAT with Essay is an appropriate assessment for the student as determined by the IEP team, then the ELA and mathematics scores will be derived from the SAT with Essay, and the student will NOT take the MI-Access FI ELA and mathematics tests.
- ✓ If the student's IEP team determines the MI-Access FI ELA and mathematics assessment is most appropriate for the student, then the student is NOT eligible to take the SAT with Essay.
- ✓ The student will take the appropriate level science and social studies tests (M-STEP or MI-Access) based on his or her IEP.
- ✓ If a student participated as an 11th grader in a previous MI-Access administration, then the student is NOT eligible to take any component of the Spring Michigan Merit Exam (MME).

Other Assessments for Special Populations

Michigan also has 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 MI-Access?

To provide schools and districts scheduling flexibility, MI-Access assessments may be administered any day within a seven-week window during April and May:

Release of Test Results

MI-Access student performance will be described as one of three levels: Surpassed, Attained, and Emerging toward the alternate content standard. Final reports will be available each fall.

For More Information on MI-Access please visit the [MI-Access web page](http://www.mi.gov/mi-access) (www.mi.gov/mi-access).