

Michigan Early Literacy and Mathematics Benchmark Assessment:

What It Is, What It Means, What It Offers

Early literacy and mathematics development are critical milestones in a child’s path to success. That’s why Michigan is working to ensure that our youngest learners are on track and have the learning foundation in mathematics and literacy they need to succeed in later grades.

As part of this effort, Michigan developed the Early Literacy and Mathematics Benchmark Assessment to measure the learning progress of students in kindergarten through grade two.

Michigan Early Literacy and Mathematics Benchmark Assessment

Michigan’s Early Literacy and Mathematics Benchmark Assessments (also referred to as the K-2s) are short, game-like assessments that help educators monitor and guide student learning three times a year.

In the fall, the tests measure students’ knowledge of the academic content they will learn throughout the school year. This provides an important baseline to determine student growth.

In the winter and spring, test results show what students are learning over the course of the year—and whether they might need additional support.

This assessment is fully aligned to Michigan’s standards and to the state’s M-STEP assessment given to students beginning in grade three. It is available to schools at no cost.

The early literacy component is the only state-developed tool approved for use as an initial assessment under Michigan’s third-grade reading law. This law requires schools to regularly assess students for early signs of reading deficiencies or delays starting with an initial assessment within the first 30 days of school.

Districts can choose to use this state assessment at no cost, or they can choose to purchase another qualified initial assessment.

What Are These Early Assessments Like?

Michigan’s early assessments are short and are given on the same computers or tablets students use in school.

The test questions actually look and feel more like a computer game than a traditional test.

For example, the English Language Arts (ELA) question shown in Figure 1 asks first grade students to find and move the correct letter into the blank to describe the picture.

Figure 1

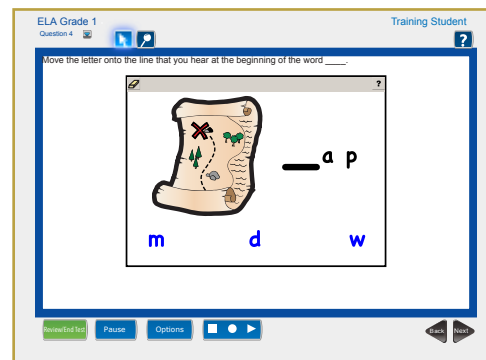


Figure 1: English Language Arts – Grade 1 Sample Item

The drag-and-drop math question in Figure 2 asks second grade students to move the correct shapes into a box.

Figure 2

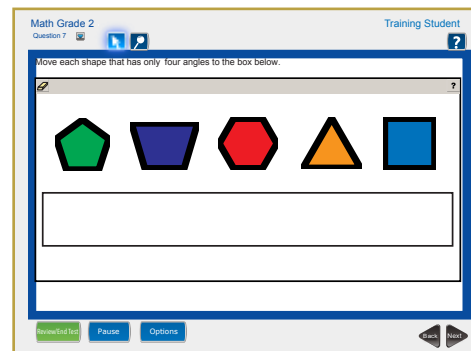


Figure 2: Mathematics – Grade 2 Sample Item

These engaging and age-appropriate assessment items were developed by Michigan teachers and are completely aligned to Michigan’s standards for early elementary students. Michigan’s academic standards guide the teaching and learning in every classroom across the state. This means students answer questions about what they are learning in class, so there is no need for teachers to “teach to the test.”

What Is On The Test?

Questions on the test are designed to measure what students know and are able to do in two broad subject areas: English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

English Language Arts Domains (Measurements)	Mathematics Domains (Measurements)
Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Literary Text Informational Text Foundational Skills 	Operations and Algebraic Thinking
	Number and Operations in Base Ten
	Measurement and Data
Writing	Geometry
Language	Counting (Kindergarten only)

Figure 3: Michigan’s Early Literacy and Mathematics Benchmark Assessments measure progress toward eight sets of learning standards.

Test questions are written in a way that is suitable for young children. And, to make sure students are ready to take an online test, they practice in school and can even practice at home.

How Are Test Results Used?

Michigan’s Early Literacy and Mathematics Benchmark Assessment is used to shine a light on student progress over time. Results from the online test are available to schools within 48 hours of the completion of each subject.

Schools can review student progress reports to discover each student’s current understanding of grade-level academic standards and show how students are progressing over time. Schools will also be able to identify students who might need extra help or who are ready for more of a challenge.

This information will reveal which students need more extensive assessment to pinpoint the cause of learning delays and help teachers personalize instruction to help them improve.

Results from this assessment will not be used by the state for grading students or schools. Rather, they will provide valuable data to help teachers adjust their instruction and help districts improve their programs and learning materials.

Parents will also have access to their child’s reports by requesting a copy from their school. Any questions or concerns should be directly discussed with the school or teacher.

What Do Students Think About This Test?

Tens of thousands of students in schools across Michigan have taken Michigan’s Early Literacy and Mathematics Benchmark Assessments. Their teachers indicate that students are able to easily do the tests’ tasks, and say students think the test is like playing a game.

Students typically say, “That was fun.” and “Wow– I can’t believe they let us take a test on the computer!”

Families can help ensure a good experience by helping their child understand that assessments are a natural part of learning. Remember, the goal of the Michigan Early Literacy and Mathematics Benchmark Assessment is the same as for any state test: to ensure our state’s schools do the best job possible in preparing students to become successful.

By using the data gathered during these early foundational years, schools can better support early literacy and mathematics across Michigan. And because the tests are fully aligned with Michigan’s standards, they should be a natural extension of what young students are learning every day in their classrooms.

For practice resources and information to help your child succeed, please visit the [Early Literacy and Mathematics web page](http://www.michigan.gov/earlylitandmath) (www.michigan.gov/earlylitandmath).

Summary

Studies show that students who struggle with learning the fundamentals of reading and math in early grades often fall behind and stay behind in school. By gathering and providing meaningful assessment data during these foundational years, schools can better support and prepare students for a lifetime of success.