

March 18, 2021

Return to Learn Benchmark Assessment Reporting

Frequently Asked Questions

Michigan's [Return to Learn law \(Public Act 149 sec. 104\)](#) requires districts to administer benchmark assessments at the beginning and again at the end of the 2020-2021 school year, to measure proficiency in reading and mathematics of all students in grades K-8. Districts are required to select and administer a benchmark assessment (or assessments) to all students in grades K-8 that measures proficiency in reading and mathematics. The results from these assessments may **not** be used for accountability purposes.

Districts may choose to administer one or more of the following benchmark options:

- a benchmark assessment from an Michigan Department of Education (MDE)-approved provider list
 - » These assessments are addressed in the [Reporting through the Michigan Data Hub](#) section.
- an assessment that provides progress monitoring
 - » These assessments are addressed in the [Reporting through GEMS/MARS](#) section.
- a local benchmark assessment
 - » These assessments are also addressed in the [Reporting through GEMS/MARS](#) section.

More information related to the Return to Learn benchmark assessment requirements can be found on the [MDE Benchmark Assessments - Return to Learn web page](#) (www.michigan.gov/mde-benchmarkassessments).



statewide aggregations that will inform the legislatively mandated report. To complete the necessary aggregations, districts will need to create an API integration, or request one be created by MiDataHub support; this will allow the research partners to access the data. Look for communications from and webinars hosted by MiDataHub in April, which will provide more detailed information on this process.

The assessment data will be joined to student demographic data from the Michigan Student Data System (MSDS) to allow for the following disaggregations at the state level:

- Gender
- Race/ethnicity
- Students with disabilities
 - » Primary disability
- English learners
- Economically disadvantaged
- Homeless
- Migrant
- Foster
- Military connected
- 2019 M-STEP performance levels

Only students who tested in both the fall and the spring of the 2020-21 school year will be included in the aggregation process.

The aggregated data will be returned to the Michigan Data Hub, which will verify the file, provide districts a copy of their specific results, and then share the data with the Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI) for uses stated in law. CEPI and MDE will work with a university research partner to report outcomes to the Michigan legislature and the governor's office. The data will also be used to

supplement work by a research team contracted to study pandemic learning under MCL 388.1706(16).

6. How will my data be kept safe?

The Michigan Data Hub is in the process of securing data sharing agreements with MEDC and EPIC. These data sharing agreements will be posted on the [MiDataHub website](http://www.midatahub.org) (www.midatahub.org).

Contracted by MiDataHub, MEDC and EPIC have considerable experience working with and keeping highly sensitive data secure. These research centers were built with data security at the forefront and in consultation with university and State of Michigan security experts. Sensitive data housed by MEDC resides solely on file, database or computational servers hosted within U-M data centers in Washtenaw County, MI. These servers are highly secure and approved for use with FERPA, Export Controlled (ITAR, EAR), PII, HIPAA, and Sensitive Human Subject Research data. All servers are monitored 24/7 for network and physical intrusion and regularly patched by the U-M Information Technology Services. Group-based access controls ensure data access follows the principle of least privilege. Separate server instances are used to ensure identifiable and de-identified data are not co-mingled. Virtual data enclaves requiring a VPN and two-factor authentication allow approved researchers to analyze data without removing it from protected data centers.

7. Who will have access to my data?

The Michigan Data Hub and the research partners, MEDC and EPIC, will have access to student-level data. MiDataHub will collect the data and the research partners will aggregate it. MDE and CEPI will have access to the **aggregated** data only.

8. How long will my data be kept?

Each school district will determine how long student-level data is kept in the Michigan Data Hub. The research partners, MEDC and EPIC, will destroy student-level data 60 days after the end of the Return to Learn reporting project. The aggregated data set becomes part of the State of Michigan's administrative data sets and will be retained for analysis in accordance with state records retention and disposal rules.

9. How will my data be reported?

Based on the statewide aggregates, EPIC will develop and MDE and CEPI will produce a report to the governor and the education-related standing committees of the Michigan Senate and House of Representatives. The report will identify the number and percentage of students in the state who are significantly behind grade level as determined by the benchmark assessment data. Certain aggregated data may be subject to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) rules, locally and then

again at the state level. The local sharing of data is important for informing parents in the community the district serves, and allows local context to be discussed with those data.

10. What if I am not on the Michigan Data Hub?

Most districts are already on the Michigan Data Hub. If yours is not and you are using one of the integrated student information systems (SIS) – PowerSchool, Infinite Campus, MISTAR, Skyward, or Synergy – then contact MiDataHub, at support@midatahub.org or 269-250-9240, for assistance in getting your Return to Learn Benchmark assessment results loaded.

If you are not on an integrated SIS, the MiDataHub Team is developing an import process to populate a district in MiDataHub from an MSDS General Collection file. Once a district has populated data from the MSDS file, it will be able to follow the procedures to load one or more assessments as indicated above. Contact support@midatahub.org if assistance is needed.

Reporting through GEMS/MARS

1. Which assessments are reported through GEMS/MARS?

If a district uses a local benchmark assessment, including those using progress monitoring tools, a survey related to those benchmark test choices is to be completed through the Grant Electronic Monitoring System/Michigan Administrative Review System (GEMS/MARS). This survey pertains to all benchmark or interim assessments administered by the district in order to comply with the Return to Learn Law **except** for NWEA MAP, i-Ready, Star, Smarter Interim, and Early Literacy and Mathematics Benchmark assessments. The results from those five assessments are reported through the Michigan Data Hub.

2. How are the data reported?

If your district provides either benchmark assessments with progress monitoring tools or local benchmark assessments, you must complete the [Return to Learn Benchmark Assessments survey](#) in GEMS/MARS. In order to submit a response, users must sign in with a Michigan Education Information System (MEIS) account. If you do not have an account, you may request one through the [Create a New MEIS Account](#) page. The deadline for completing the survey is **April 12, 2021**.

3. How can I correct my submission?

Once a submission has been submitted, it can be re-opened and adjusted by signing in to your MEIS account and clicking on your submission. This can only be done prior to the April 12 deadline for the submission. If you need to correct your submission

after the deadline, send an email to cepi@michigan.gov with your district name, district code, and the corrections that need to be made.

4. When must the data be reported?

All responses to the survey are due by **April 12, 2021**.

5. What data are to be reported?

In this survey, districts must report the following:

- the local assessments they use
- the grades those assessments were provided to
- how the assessment measures changes, including any learning losses
- how the district plans to address any losses in learning

If your district uses multiple local assessments for different grade spans, you will need to list each assessment and the grades served.

6. What happens to my data after it has been reported?

Once all surveys are collected, MDE and CEPI will provide a report to the governor and to education-related standing committees of the Michigan House and Senate.

7. How will my data be kept safe?

Your responses in GEMS/MARS can only be viewed by system administrators and the MEIS account used to submit the data. Extracts will be produced and shared following appropriately secure protocols.

8. Who will have access to my data?

Survey responses will be shared with MI Data Hub, and with state government and research research partners as needed to meet reporting requirements.

9. How long will my data be kept?

Survey responses will be retained in accordance with state record and retention schedules.

10. How will my data be reported?

Local assessment information reported via the GEMS/MARS survey will be incorporated into the report that EPIC is developing and that MDE and CEPI will provide to the governor and the legislative education-related standing committees. This report will identify the number and percentage of districts that opted to use local assessments and will describe how districts planned to use those assessments to measure and address learning loss. It is not the current intent to include the identification of specific districts within this report.