



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
LANSING

GRETCHEN WHITMER  
GOVERNOR

MICHAEL F. RICE, Ph.D.  
STATE SUPERINTENDENT

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** March 31, 2021

**TO:** Local and Intermediate School District Superintendents  
Public School Academy Directors

**FROM:** William A. Pearson, Ed.D., Interim Deputy Superintendent  
Division of Educator, Student, and School Supports *WAP*

**SUBJECT:** State Testing Requirements Pending the Approval of the  
Assessment and Accountability Waivers - MEMO #COVID-19-175

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) has submitted requests for waivers to the U.S. Department of Education (USED) that cover summative assessments (M-STEP, PSAT8/9, MI-ACCESS, SAT/MME, and WIDA) and high-stakes school accountability requirements.

On Friday, March 26, 2021, MDE received approval to waive federal high-stakes school accountability requirements. Based on Michigan's waiver request, USED has waived the following federal accountability and school identification requirements:

- that the state measure progress toward long-term goals and measurements of interim progress;
- that the state meaningfully differentiate, on an annual basis, all public schools;
- that the state assess with a participation rate of at least 95 percent; and
- that the state identify schools for comprehensive, targeted, and additional targeted support and improvement based on data from the 2020-21 school year.

MDE has met with USED, both separately and with other states, several times and is currently waiting for USED to render a decision on the summative assessment waiver.

**The state superintendent and the State Board of Education remain strongly opposed to the administration of these assessments during a pandemic.**

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Instead, they emphasize the requirement this year to administer benchmark assessments, and the value of such, for determining children's reading and math levels; sharing the information with parents; and targeting resources, interventions, and supports to children.

If USED denies Michigan's request to waive the federal requirement for state summative assessments, local school districts will have to administer the state assessments as scheduled. These assessments include M-STEP for students in grades 3-8; PSAT 8/9 for students in 8th grade; MME, including SAT, for students in 11th grade; MI-ACCESS for students receiving special education services in grades 3-8 and 11; and WIDA for students in English learner programs in grades K-12.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, MDE does not support bringing otherwise remote or virtual students into school solely for the purpose of state assessment.

If USED denies Michigan's assessment waiver request, districts would have to *offer* remote or virtual students the opportunity to come into school to take the appropriate state summative assessments. However, those remote-only students would not be *required* to come into school for the sole purpose of taking the assessments.

For questions on student assessments, please contact MDE's Office of Educational Assessment and Accountability at [mde-oeaa@michigan.gov](mailto:mde-oeaa@michigan.gov).

cc: Michigan Education Alliance  
Confederation of Michigan Tribal Education Directors