

## Update on Testing as of April 19, 2021

This is a reference document to provide background information on student testing in Michigan.

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) has shared information on spring testing that is coming up shortly or has already begun. The United States Department of Education (USED) denied our state's testing waiver (see enclosed press release from the MDE). Therefore, standardized tests must occur this spring. However, the percentage of students taking the test, as well as other goals and objectives surrounding these tests, have been waived this year. (Ordinarily the Federal Government requires at least 95% of students to take these tests.)

The tests in question here are not benchmark tests (often referred to as iReady or NWEA tests) but rather summative tests such as:

Michigan Merit Exam (MME)  
SAT with Essay  
ACT Work Keys  
M-Step  
PSAT  
MI-Access

MDE has mandated that these tests can only be administered in person.

The Michigan PTA follows National PTAs guidance on the important role these tests play as they provide information for individual families, school communities and districts about how children are doing in school, how schools are educating the populations within, and how communities are comparatively fairing.

We also want to make sure that families understand their rights and responsibilities when it comes to testing, especially those specific to this school year, so we are including an FAQ produced by the MDE, with the key points summarized below:

1. Students who are learning virtually are not required to come in to take these tests. School districts cannot compel families to come in to take the tests.
2. Students who are learning virtually may come in to take these tests. School districts must provide options and information for students to participate.
3. Students who are learning in hybrid models and in-person may opt out of these tests.
4. Students may always opt out of testing in any given year.

The Michigan PTA encourages and directs all families to their school administration and/or school district office with any question or concerns about how testing will work for their student within their school community.

If you have any further questions please email Carin Meyer at [fedlegchair@michiganpta.org](mailto:fedlegchair@michiganpta.org) or call the Michigan PTA at (734)975-9500.



## *Press Release*

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# **USED Denies Michigan's Request to Waive Federal Requirement to Test Students During a Pandemic**

April 6, 2021

LANSING – The U.S. Department of Education (USED) has [denied](#) Michigan's request to waive the federal requirement to administer the state summative assessments, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) reported today.

In late January, given the COVID-19 pandemic that has disrupted the education of Michigan's 1.5 million students, MDE [requested](#) waivers to federal requirements for state summative tests, as well as waivers of associated high-stakes accountability requirements. The accountability waivers were approved on March 26.

State Superintendent Dr. Michael Rice and State Board of Education President Dr. Casandra Ulbrich explained in an OpEd that ran both [nationally](#) and in [Michigan](#) that it has been a brutally difficult school year for students, parents, and educators and that it would be made worse if schools are forced to spend a good portion of the spring on Michigan's year-end state summative tests when teachers could better spend that time working with their students.

As an alternative to the state summative tests, MDE argued that locally chosen and administered national benchmark assessments, required by state law last summer for this school year, would be more beneficial in providing parents and educators with the knowledge of where children are academically and to help target resources and supports as a result.

Dr. Rice noted the following regarding the denial of the assessment waiver request:

"With its decision today to deny Michigan's request to waive M-STEP testing in the midst of the pandemic, USED continues to demonstrate its disconnect from conditions in public schools in Michigan and across the country. Michigan has the highest rates of recent COVID-19 cases and recent cases per 100,000 in the nation at the moment. Our state legislators and governor had the foresight to require districts to administer benchmark assessments in the fall and in the spring of this school year to provide data to educators and parents and to help target

resources, interventions, and supports to students in districts. USED even canceled its own assessment—the National Assessment of Educational Progress—in November, an acknowledgement of the pandemic at that time.

“For a state that has mandated benchmark assessments this year to inform educators and parents of where students are in reading and math, USED’s lockstep allegiance in a pandemic to state summative assessments such as M-STEP is simply fidelity to two decades of education policy drift under the federal No Child Left Behind Act and its uncreative and still punitive offspring.

“Is it any wonder that educators are leaving the profession when, in a pandemic, USED insists that Michigan use time, which should be dedicated to children’s social emotional and academic growth, to test a portion of its students to generate data that will inform precisely nothing about our children’s needs that we won’t already know more substantially and quickly with benchmark assessments this year?”

State Board of Education President Dr. Casandra Ulbrich also had sharp criticism of USED’s decision.

“This is beyond disappointing. It's shameful,” Dr. Ulbrich said. “USED had an opportunity to do the right thing for the right reasons, and instead chose to appease special interests rather than support students. Michigan citizens, educators and parents will get virtually no useful and actionable information from this year’s state tests. It would be shameful now if the state legislature used these 'results' to impose negative consequences on children or schools.”

With USED denying Michigan’s request to waive the federal requirement for state summative assessments, local school districts will be expected to administer the state tests as scheduled. These tests 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.

MDE has informed school districts that during the COVID-19 pandemic, it does not support requiring otherwise remote or virtual students to be brought into school solely for the purpose of state assessment. Districts will 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 will *not be required* to come into school for the sole purpose of taking the assessments.

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STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
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MICHAEL F. RICE, Ph.D.  
STATE SUPERINTENDENT

**State of Michigan  
State Board of Education**

**Statement on Parental Rights Regarding Testing**

We support the fundamental right of all parents and legal guardians to determine and direct the care, teaching, and education of their children.

Although the federal waiver for the spring 2021 state summative assessment administration was not granted, the accountability waivers were granted. Notably, the United States Department of Education will not penalize Michigan or other states for failure to secure 95% or higher student participation in the administration of these assessments.

Given that coronavirus infection rates are increasing in Michigan, and many students are still attending school remotely, the State Board of Education supports the guidance to parents and legal guardians that these students need not be brought into school solely for the purpose of state assessment, and will *not be required* to come into school for the sole purpose of taking the assessments.

Adopted April 13, 2021

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# Spring 2021 Spring Summative Assessments: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)



## Introduction

Requirements concerning state assessment systems and the accountability systems using those assessment results are governed by federal and state law. Due to challenges raised by COVID-19, some of these requirements have been waived for 2019-20 and/or 2020-21.

The table below shows by governance level (federal or state), requirement type (assessment or accountability), and whether the requirements have currently been waived.

Governance Level	Requirement Type	2019-20 Waiver Status	2020-21 Waiver Status
Federal	Accountability	Waived*	Waived*
	Assessment	Waived	Not Waived**
State	Accountability	Not Waived	Not Waived
	Assessment	Waived	Not Waived

\* The approved federal accountability waiver still requires public reporting of some measures (e.g., graduation rates, chronic absenteeism, etc.) for transparency purposes.

\*\* Michigan's request to waive the 2020-21 federal assessment requirement was declined on April 6, 2021 by the United States Department of Education (USED).

This document addresses questions related to the Spring 2021 statewide summative assessments. There are a small number of questions regarding accountability as they relate to the administration of state assessments. For a more complete discussion of accountability impacts please view the [Michigan School Accountability Planning and Response to COVID-19 document](#) on the [Michigan School Accountability web page](#) ([www.michigan.gov/mde-accountability](http://www.michigan.gov/mde-accountability)).

Please note this is a living document and represents the most up-to-date knowledge at the time of publishing. This document will be updated regularly. Please check it and Spotlight for the most up-to-date information.

# Spring 2021 State Summative Assessments: FAQs

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Assessments

For 2020-21, are state summative assessments planned to proceed, or have those been waived?

- On April 6, 2021, the United States Department of Education (USED) formally denied Michigan’s request to waive the federal requirement to administer the state summative assessments in Spring 2021. Therefore, local school districts are expected to administer the state summative tests as scheduled.
- These tests include M-STEP for students in grades 3-8, 11; PSAT 8/9 for students in 8th grade; MME, including SAT with Essay and ACT WorkKeys, 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.
  - For students who are receiving remote-only instruction, districts must **offer** these students the opportunity to take the appropriate summative assessments. Remote-only students are **not required** to come into school or a testing location for the sole purpose of taking the assessments.
  - Student participation and performance in these assessments will be reported in the Annual Education Report (AER).
- In addition, PSAT 10 for students in grade 10, and PSAT 8/9 for 9<sup>th</sup> graders must be offered to all students.

Student Mode of Instruction	M-STEP, MI-Access, PSAT in Grade 8, MME (all 3 components)	PSAT 8/9 in Grade 9, PSAT 10 in Grade 10
100% Remote	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Districts must administer assessment(s)</li><li>• Students may choose to participate in the assessment(s)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Districts must administer assessment(s)</li><li>• Students may choose to participate in the assessment(s)</li></ul>
All or some In-person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Districts must administer assessment(s)</li><li>• Students are expected to test</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Districts must administer assessment(s)</li><li>• Students may choose to participate in the assessment(s)</li></ul>

Do students who are not receiving in-person instruction have to test?

- Students who are receiving **all** of their instruction remotely must be offered the opportunity to take the appropriate assessments; they are not required to come into school or testing location for the sole purpose of taking the assessments.
- Students who are receiving some or all of their instruction in-person during the testing window are expected to test.

Will 2020-21 seniors unable to test in 2019-20 be eligible or expected to test in Spring 2021?

- There are no accountability calculations associated with testing 12th graders in the 2020-21 school year.
- Schools that were established for SAT with Essay testing in Spring 2020 were expected to administer the SAT with Essay to their 12th-grade students in Fall 2020.

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- 12th graders who were unable to take the SAT with Essay in the Fall 2020 administration may take the entire MME in Spring 2021. (Schools must be established to administer both the SAT with Essay and the ACT WorkKeys and provide the M-STEP assessment for science and social studies.)
- Students who took the SAT with Essay on a school testing day in Fall 2020 are not eligible to take the SAT with Essay again in Spring 2021.

What if a student is unable to test due to COVID-related reasons?

- OEAA is implementing a COVID reason for this year's "Answer Documents Received and Not Tested Students" window. Most students who do not test will have this reason pre-loaded for them in the Secure Site. OEAA is collecting this information in anticipation of transparency reporting for assessment results and participation rates. An Incident Report is not necessary.

Do students have to test on the initial testing date for PSAT? If our remote students are not attending on the day of the initial test, can they test during the testing window?

- Students who are absent or otherwise not in the school building on the initial test day, 4/13/21, may test during the remainder of the Primary Testing Window (4/13/21 – 4/16/21), or if unable to test in the Primary Testing Window, may test on an approved makeup day.

If students miss the primary test day and the makeup window for the SAT with Essay due to a COVID-19 related event, can our school use the SAT Contingency Date to test those students?

- Yes, the SAT Makeup Contingency Day of 5/18/21 may be used for students who were unable to test on either April 14 or April 27 due to a COVID-related event.
- Students who are unable to test on the initial WorkKeys test date (April 15) or the make-up date (April 28) due to COVID-19 can use the ACT Contingency Makeup Day of 5/5/21.

Are there additional options for students to participate in a state-paid SAT administration?

- No, students must be assessed on the initial, makeup, or contingency makeup dates.

Some states have extended their WIDA testing windows through the spring and into the fall.

Why isn't Michigan considering this option?

- MDE wants schools to adhere to federal assessment laws to the extent possible but also prioritize instruction for EL students whose access to instruction was tremendously negatively impacted. Significantly extending the testing window serves only to create additional burdens on students.

What happens if I do not assess all of my English learners with WIDA this year?

- Untested students will not have an opportunity to exit English Learner (EL) services this year (as the only path to exit is proficiency on WIDA) and will instead have to wait until next year.
- For 2020-21 only, some Federal accountability requirements including the 95% participation rate requirement have been waived. Assessment results, including participation rates, will still be reported publicly. Currently, the state law requiring the A-F School Grade system remains in effect.

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## Is the first year ELA exemption for English learners still allowed this year?

- Yes, the first year exemption from the ELA state content area assessments for English Learners (ELs) is still allowed for this spring but EL students must still take the WIDA ACCESS for ELLs assessment which measures students English language development (ELD) and not ELA content knowledge.

## Does OEAA have guidance to help districts and schools assess students in a safe manner?

- Districts and schools should follow state and local health department guidance regarding student safety in schools.
  - Visit the [K-12 School Opening Guidance page](#) in the State of Michigan Coronavirus web site ([www.michigan.gov/coronavirus](http://www.michigan.gov/coronavirus)).
- OEAA and its vendors has developed the following documents to assist schools administer state assessment safely. These documents are located on the Office of Assessment and Accountability webpages at [www.michigan.gov/oeaa](http://www.michigan.gov/oeaa).
  - [Safe Testing Planning Guide](#)
  - [Safe Testing Planning Template](#)
  - Spring 2021 Summative Assessment Flexibility Options (currently under development)
  - [Spring 2021 SAT, PSAT 10, PSAT 8/9, WorkKeys Contingency Dates and Flexibility Options](#)
  - [Spring 2021 WIDA ACCESS Planning Document](#)

## Where do I find information on how to test my students remotely?

- Remote testing is not allowed for the Spring 2021 statewide summative assessments. All summative assessments must be administered in-person with a trained test administrator.
- After consulting with our assessment providers and Technical Advisory Committee, OEAA determined there are significant concerns that outweigh the potential benefits of a remote administration including:
  - equity especially as it relates to student access to adequate testing devices and internet access
  - validity of the test results
  - demands on local educators
  - test security

## What is the difference “remote testing” and “off-site testing”?

- Remote testing or remote test administration refers to assessing students online with the test administrator in one location and students in another location or locations. This is not allowed for the statewide summative assessments.
- Off-site testing refers to assessing students in-person at an approved testing location with a trained test administrator. Off-site testing must be requested through the OEAA Secure Site for M-STEP, MI-Access, ACT WorkKeys, and WIDA or through the College Board for SAT with Essay, PSAT 10, and PSAT 8/9.

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Can we test our remote students together even though they are enrolled at different buildings in the district?

- Yes, be sure that students are pre-identified to the assessments they are taking using the correct enrollment data. Ensure online test tickets and answer document barcode labels show the correct school for each student.

Do we need to submit an off-site testing request if students are testing in a different building in our district?

- No, an off-site testing request is not required if the student is testing in a district building.

What is MDE's requirement for spacing when assessing students?

- Schools and districts must follow state and local health the guidelines for spacing students in effect at the time of assessment. At the time this document was published MDHHS requires 6 feet between students. The College Board and ACT have modified their spacing requirements to allow schools to follow state and local health guidelines.

Can we use plastic dividers between students?

- Yes, as long as the dividers do not interfere with the ability of test administrators and proctors to properly monitor the test administration they are allowed.

Can we test students in small groups?

- Yes, students may be tested in small groups.

How many proctors do we need?

- M-STEP, MI-Access, and WIDA do not have specific numerical requirements for the number of proctors needed. All testing rooms require a test administrator and as many proctors the test coordinator deems appropriate for the number of students testing and the configuration of the testing room. The test administrator and proctors must be able to actively monitor students throughout the test session in order to provide assistance as needed and to prevent prohibited behaviors.
- The SAT and PSAT Coordinator Manuals, found on the [MME](#) and [PSAT](#) web pages, provide specific requirements for proctors and room monitors based on the number of students testing in a room.
- Staffing requirements for ACT WorkKeys are documented in the ACT WorkKeys State Administration Manuals located on the [ACT Michigan Testing web site](#).

What are some supports or accommodations not listed in the DRC INSIGHT Portal?

- One example of a Designated Support not listed in the INSIGHT Portal is the use of a page turner. There are others but educators should refer to the [Supports & Accommodations Tables in the Supports and Accommodations Guidance Document](#) for a complete list of allowable supports and the ways in which they should be recorded/enabled for testing.

My school is closed (because of spring break or a temporary closure due to COVID-19) and no one is available to accept testing materials, what do I do?

- FedEx will attempt to deliver materials three times before returning the materials to the appropriate assessment vendor. Schools may use the tag left by FedEx to contact them and

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make arrangements to hold the delivery for pickup. For materials returned, contact the appropriate assessment vendor for assistance:

- M-STEP and MI-Access materials: call the OEAA Help Line at 877-560-8378 (option 3)
- SAT or PSAT materials: contact the College Board by calling 866-870-3127 (option 1) or emailing [michiganadministratorsupport@collegeboard.org](mailto:michiganadministratorsupport@collegeboard.org)
- ACT WorkKeys materials: use the [ACT Contact Us web page](http://www.act.org/aap/state/contact.html) ([www.act.org/aap/state/contact.html](http://www.act.org/aap/state/contact.html))

When do I need to complete COVID-19 School Closure page on the Secure Site; do I need to fill that out if I have students in quarantine?

- The COVID-19 School Closure page should be filled out if your school is closed for in-person instruction due to COVID-19 during any of the testing windows. The page is not intended for schools that are open for some form of in-person instruction or for individual students in quarantine. For directions on how to complete this page, visit the [OEAA Secure Site Training web page](http://www.michigan.gov/securesitetraining) ([www.michigan.gov/securesitetraining](http://www.michigan.gov/securesitetraining)).

How is TTS for Directions Only turned on in the INSIGHT Portal for students?

- TTS for Directions Only is available for M-STEP on the test directions screens without any need to turn them on or assign them. Specific instructions for how to use TTS for Directions Only are available in the [M-STEP Online Test Administrator's Directions and Manual documents](#) and in the [M-STEP Test Administration Manual](#). Both sets of documents are located on the M-STEP web page ([www.michigan.gov/mstep](http://www.michigan.gov/mstep)).

Can we test our students using paper/pencil now if we did not apply for an online testing waiver in the fall?

- The OEAA orders paper materials based on the number of schools expected to administer in a paper/pencil test mode. While we do have a small overage to paper/pencil materials, schools that are considering changing more than a few students from online to paper/pencil should contact the OEAA at [mde-oeaa@michigan.gov](mailto:mde-oeaa@michigan.gov) before ordering paper/pencil materials

Can parents choose for their student(s) not to test this year?

- MDE supports parents in making choices for their children, especially in this unprecedented year. In normal circumstances there is no allowable way in state or federal law to “opt out” of state tests. However, circumstances are not normal this year. There are no high stakes accountability ramifications this year for the student or school related to student participation in state assessment this year. MDE does not support requiring students receiving remote-only instruction to come to school for the sole purpose of state assessment.

Our district is providing benchmark assessments this year as required by the Return to Learn Law. Why do we need to also administer the M-STEP (PSAT, SAT, MI-Access)?

- MDE submitted a request to USED waive the requirements to administer statewide summative assessments. This request was not approved, therefore federal and state laws require districts administer the M-STEP, the MME including SAT with Essay, PSAT, MI-Access, and WIDA this spring.

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- The Michigan Return to Learn law requires districts to administer benchmark assessments to all students in grades K-8 at least twice a year, once at the beginning of the school year and again before the school year ends.
- Both summative and benchmark assessments are required by federal and/or state law.

### What assessment data will be released?

- Schools and districts will receive the same score reports and downloadable files for students that tested as they would receive in a typical school year.
- Parents and guardians will receive their child's Parent Reports for the assessments taken.
- Summarized assessment results, including participation rates, will be reported in the Annual Education Report (AER), Parent Dashboard, and the A-F School Grade System.

# Spring 2021 State Summative Assessments: FAQs

## Accountability

Will there be federal accountability for the 2020-2021 school year?

- The table below lists each of Michigan's accountability systems, grouping them by whether they are governed by federal or state law/policy and indicates whether the system was waived for 2019-20 and/or 2020-21. For additional details regarding accountability, visit the [Michigan School Accountability Planning and Response to COVID-19 document](#) on the [Michigan School Accountability web page](#) ([www.michigan.gov/mde-accountability](http://www.michigan.gov/mde-accountability)).

Accountability System Type	Accountability System Name	2019-20 Waiver Status	2020-21 Waiver Status
Federal	School Index	Waived	Waived
	Annual Education Report (AER)	Partially Waived*	Partially Waived*
State	Parent Dashboard	Not Waived*	Not Waived *
	School Grades	Not Waived*	Not Waived*
	At-Risk (31A)	Not Waived*	Not Waived*

\*Metrics may have limited or no data depending on participation/reporting rates

## How will assessment participation rates affect accountability results?

For 2020-21 only, some Federal accountability requirements including the 95% participation rate requirement have been waived. Assessment results, including participation rates, will still be reported publicly.

- The 2021-22 **Annual Education Report (AER)**, which will use 2020-21 data, is still required under federal law; however, some portions will not be required to report. The 2021-22 AER **will** contain information on student participation and performance on state summative assessments.
- Currently, the state law requiring the A-F School Grade system remains in effect.
- The Parent Dashboard will be updated with summary results from the 2021 assessments.