Guide to Educational Assessment in Michigan

What you should know

Testing and other forms of student assessment can provide valuable information to parents, educators, and policy leaders about students' growth and learning. In fact, a coherent, comprehensive assessment system, used with greater consistency across the state, is an important strategy to propel Michigan to be a top 10 education state in 10 years.

A key question for educators and policy makers is this: How can Michigan cultivate a balanced assessment system that **measures progress** toward a student's mastery of content standards AND **informs classroom instruction**?

Purpose matters

Student assessments are used for many different purposes at the state, district, school, classroom and student levels. These purposes include individual student instruction, individual or group remediation, instructional planning, program evaluation, student accountability, educator evaluation, and/or school accountability *(Michigan Assessment Consortium, 2014)*. Assessment tools and strategies work best when they match the purpose for which they are intended.

What do different types of assessments do?

Student assessments generally serve one of two overarching purposes: they either guide learning *(assessment FOR learning)* or certify learning *(assessment OF learning)*.

The table in **Figure 1** illustrates the flow from the **Formative** assessment process (assessment for learning) toward **Summative** assessment (assessment of learning). It includes information about **Interim/Benchmark** assessments, which are given periodically to monitor student learning over a specified period of time.

Figure 1. This table describes types of assessment and offers some examples of each. The chart also illustrates how different educators at various levels use assessment data to inform decisions.

4 Key Assessment Questions		When? (frequency)	What is provided?	Who benefits?	Why? (purpose)
Assessment FOR Learning	**Formative**	Continuous throughout construction	Immediate actionable feedback	Students and teachers	Inform teaching and learning approaches
	Examples	*Formative Assessment Strategies: Self-assessment, peer assessment, feedback, activating prior knowledge, goal setting, and questioning* *Formative Assessment Tools: Observable application of the formative strategy—can include student conferences, learning logs, portfolios*			
Assessment OF Learning	**Interim/ Benchmark**	Periodic	Multiple "checkpoints" across time	Students, teachers, school, and parents	Monitor student progress toward learning goals, predict performance on future assessments, or evaluate programs.
	Examples	*Pre-tests, graded classroom assignments, portfolios, and benchmark assessments*			
	Summative	End of learning (unit, term, school year)	Snapshot	Students, teachers, school/ district, parents/community, state/federal government	Certify student learning of intended academic outcomes (e.g. standards, student learning objectives)
	Examples	*End-of-year exams, portfolio, annual assessment data (M-STEP, MME, etc.), and unit assessments*			

What does a balanced assessment system look like?

It's important to remember that no single type of assessment can meet all the needs of every user of assessment. That's because no one assessment is able to provide answers to all questions around instructional decisions.[1]

A balanced assessment system must meet the needs of all users of assessment and directs proportionately greater time and resources to assessment practice closest to where learning occurs.

Who pays for assessments?

Currently, the responsibility for funding such a balanced system—and the professional learning required to support it—is shared among districts (formative, classroom, and other local assessments) and the state (M-STEP, PSAT/SAT, MI-Access, etc.). The Michigan Legislature supports state summative assessments and grants to assist districts with benchmark assessments. They also make funding available to support district-level assessment and related professional learning.

Career & College Readiness Standards

Formative Assessment

Classroom Assessment

District Assessment

State

National

Continuous: Formative & Classroom Assessment to support student learning

Periodic: Progress Monitoring and Interim Benchmark Assessments
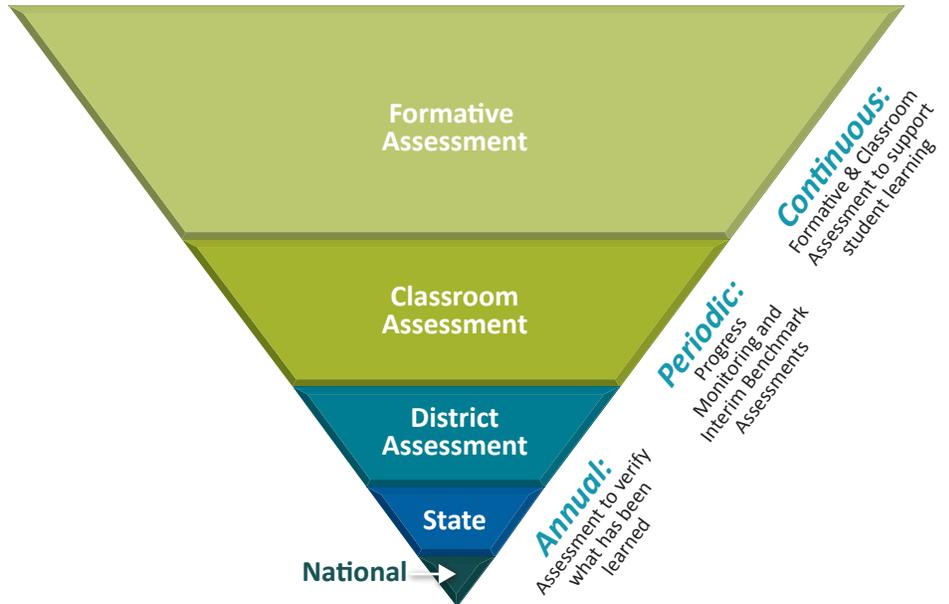
Annual: Assessment to verify what has been learned

Figure 2. Illustrates at a glance the proportionate student impact each type of assessment can have within a balanced, comprehensive system

Where can I see statewide assessment results?

Schools give parents reports about their own child's state assessment results at the beginning of each school year. School staff can see scores for individual students and different types of student groups through a secure web portal. Scores are reported to the public at MiSchoolData.org through reports at the school, district, and statewide levels. The Parent Dashboard for School Transparency (www.MiSchoolData.org/ParentDashboard) displays state test data as well as other important school-level information that families find useful.

Where can I find assessment resources?

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) (Michigan.gov/mde) has developed an array of print and video communication tools for multiple audiences. Choose "Student Assessment" in the navigation bar and explore resources on each state assessment page.

The Michigan Assessment Consortium (michiganassessmentconsortium.org) also offers a wealth of information to increase the assessment literacy of all those involved in the assessment process—including students!

[1] Principles for Creating an Effective Statewide Student Assessment System (2014), Michigan Assessment Consortium, michiganassessmentconsortium.org.

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