

## **Michigan State Standards, Assessment and Student Data Privacy**

### ***Frequently Asked Questions***

The purpose of this document is to provide factual information for parents and community members who may have questions about Standards, Assessment or Student Data Privacy. We encourage anyone with additional questions to contact our offices directly.

### ***Standards***

**Question:** Who created the Common Core State Standards?

**Answer:** The Common Core State Standards were developed by two state-led associations. The Council of Chief State School Officers: <http://www.ccsso.org/> and The National Governors Association <http://www.nga.org/cms/home.html> Michigan educators were actively engaged in the development process.

**Question:** When were the Common Core State Standards adopted in Michigan?

**Answer:** The Common Core State Standards were adopted by the Michigan State Board of Education in June 2010. The Michigan Legislature gave final approval for funding the implementation of the Common Core State Standards on November 1, 2013.

**Question:** How will the Common Core State Standards impact teaching and learning in our schools?

**Answer:** The Common Core State Standards have been adopted by 45 states and promote higher levels of critical thinking and problem solving that students need in order to compete in an increasingly competitive domestic and world market. The Common Core represent what students should know and be able to do. Our local school districts define how students reach those Standards. The Common Core do not dictate the specifics of how classroom teachers prepare and deliver lessons on a daily basis. The Common Core Standards also do not dictate textbooks or other curriculum resources used within our classrooms. In partnership with our community and our local Board of Education, we retain complete local control regarding the specifics of teaching and learning within our classrooms.

For example: Similar to a long road trip, the K-12 learning process has a desired destination and a route leading there. While Common Core State Standards define where we intend to our trip to end, our local schools and community choose the pathway that is best for our students.

**Question:** My child attends a public school, can I opt him/her out of the Common Core State Standards?

**Answer:** No; the standards were established by our State Board of Education and all public schools in Michigan, including charters and cyber schools, are required to align their curricula with these standards or risk statutory consequences.

**Question:** Where can I get additional information about Michigan and the Common Core?

**Answer:** Additional facts about the Common Core in Michigan are available at:  
[http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/FAQ\\_4.10.13\\_418299\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/FAQ_4.10.13_418299_7.pdf)

### ***Assessment/Testing:***

**Question:** What annual student assessment is used in the State of Michigan?

**Answer:** Michigan has adopted a new Assessment System, the Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (M-STEP), starting in spring 2015. The M-STEP replaces the MEAP assessment. The M-STEP was developed by the Michigan Department of Education's Office of Standards and Assessment. The M-STEP will include summative assessments designed to measure student growth effectively for today's students. English language arts and mathematics will be assessed in grades 3–8, science in grades 4 and 7, and social studies in grades 5 and 8. It also includes the Michigan Merit Examination in 11th grade which consists of the ACT Plus Writing, WorkKeys, and M-STEP summative in English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.

**Question:** Are schools required to administer State assessments?

**Answer:** The Revised Michigan School Code mandates that public schools in Michigan administer the statewide assessment program to all students at grade levels required under the federal No Child Left Behind legislation. This requirement applies to public, charter and cyber schools.

**Question:** Is the M-STEP online or paper-pencil?

**Answer:** The M-STEP will be administered online. A paper-pencil version will be available to districts who qualify for a waiver based on the lack of necessary technology resources, or have a specific instructional reason.

**Question:** What happens if a student does not take the M-STEP assessment?

**Answer:** There are several negative consequences to students not taking the assessment. First, the student, parents, teacher and school district will lose the valuable opportunity to learn whether or not a student is proficient in the tested subjects. Without this information, students, parents and educators lose an important data source that is useful in making the best instructional decisions on behalf of the student.

In addition, students who do not take statewide tests will be counted as “not tested” at the State level. Our local schools are penalized for not testing students under our statewide system of school accountability and could potentially lose federal funding.

**Question:** Do M-STEP questions ask students about values, attitudes, beliefs, political affiliations or any other subjects that would be personal in nature?

**Answer:** No. Test questions are confined to the State adopted standards that are being assessed.

### ***Student Data Privacy***

**Question:** Where is M-STEP testing data (such as student results) stored and who has access to it?

**Answer:** Results from State standardized tests are stored in a student's CA-60 educational record, in the district's student information management system and may be stored electronically by authorized state/public agencies. Access to this information is restricted by federal and state law. Typically, general information such as State assessment data is stored within a local district's Student Information System (or SIS). These information systems are limited access systems, e.g., they require login credentials. Authorized users only have data access privileges aligned to the educational interest a particular staff member may have with a given student, e.g., a teacher may see her students' records but not all students' records.

**Question:** How is M-STEP testing data secured and maintained private?

**Answer:** The online testing software to be used by schools in Michigan for spring 2015 M-STEP Assessments will be Data Recognition Corporation's (DRC) INSIGHT secure web browser testing software. The INSIGHT online testing software was used to administer the MDE Interim Assessment Field Test in Michigan schools. The DRC INSIGHT software utilizes a local caching server called the Testing Site Manager (TSM). The TSM is used to securely cache test content and student responses. Schools in Michigan are required to use a TSM for the spring 2015 M-STEP Assessments to ensure confidentiality of student testing data.

**Question:** Why is student test data shared beyond our local school district?

**Answer:** To allow for comparative analysis between and among school districts/entities, and in some cases, it may be a requirement for funding or state/federal reporting.

**Question:** How is my child's information protected by his/her district?

**Answer:** Many districts have implemented Board policies and procedures intended to protect student information. Specific Board policies that local districts have implemented to protect student privacy typically include:

8350 - Confidentiality

1619.02 - Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)

7540.07 - Personal Internet Account Privacy/Students

8330 - Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act (FERPA)

8330 - Records

7740 - Use of Video Surveillance Cameras

5771 - Searches of Lockers and Students

Federal law also protects third party access to student information. Specifically, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and its privacy regulations only allow “directory information” to be published for students if the student or his/her parent/guardian (if a minor) do not opt-out of the release of such information. The directory information that a district may release under FERPA (but is not compelled to do so) is defined in the district’s FERPA policy (see local district policy). Any information protected by FERPA is also exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act.

A district must also comply with the federal Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) and its regulations which require prior parental consent before minor students are required to participate in any federally funded survey, analysis, or evaluation that reveals information concerning:

1. Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or the student's parent;
2. Mental or psychological problems of the student or the student's family;
3. Sex behavior or attitudes;
4. Illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior;
5. Critical appraisals of other individuals with whom respondents have close family relationships;
6. Legally recognized privileged or analogous relationships, such as those of lawyers, physicians, and ministers;
7. Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or student’s parent; or
8. Income (other than that required by law to determine eligibility for participation in a program or for receiving financial assistance under such program.)

**Question:** What limitations does the federal government place on my ability to restrict the dissemination of my child’s testing/assessment results?

**Answer:** FERPA states that items such as State testing and program measurement information are exempt from a student or parent/guardian’s right to prevent information from being disclosed to third parties. As a result, the State has the right to mandate the data collection from local school districts and they are required to comply. Further information about a student’s privacy rights can be found at the following guidance provided by the US Department of Education at: <http://familypolicy.ed.gov/>.