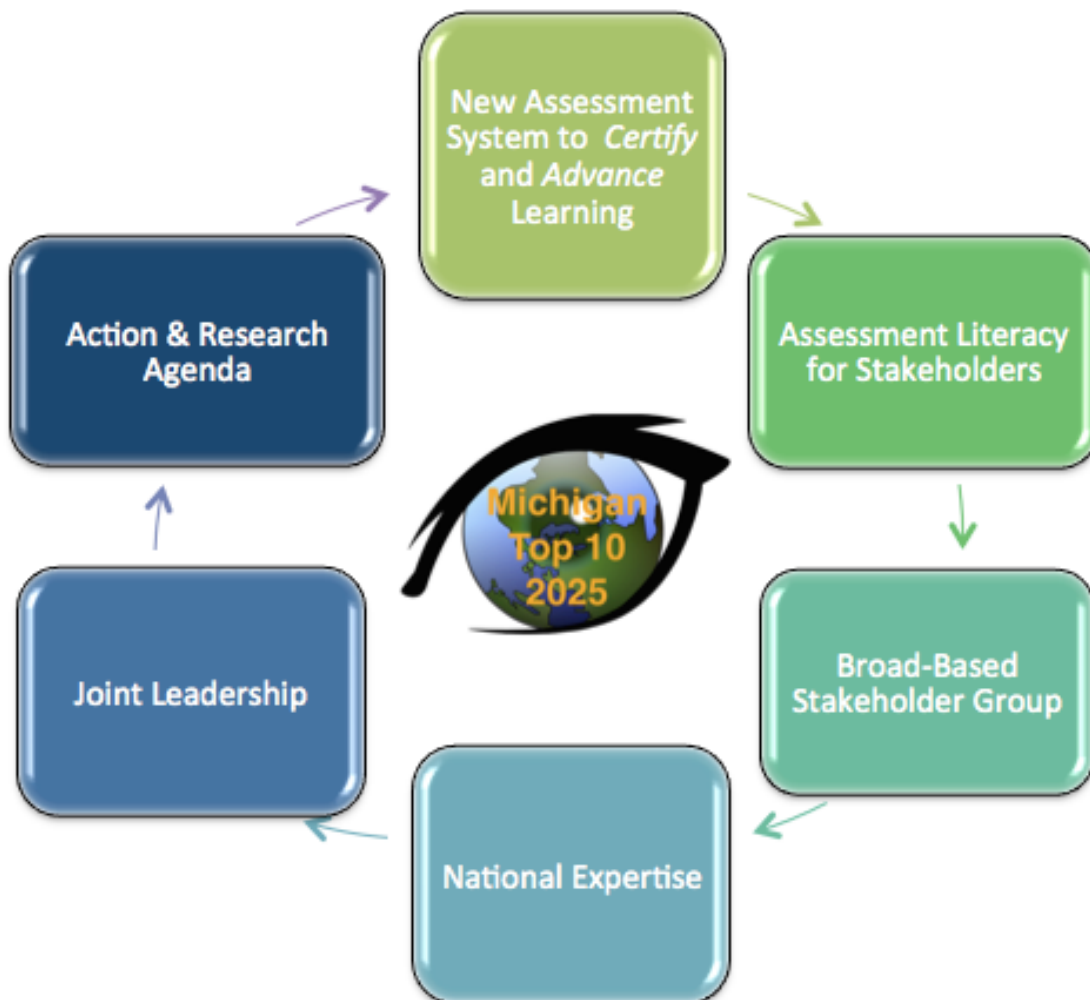


# Michigan Assessment Consortium: *Developing Michigan Into a Top 10 Education Performing State Over the Next Ten Years*



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# **We need a system of public assurance that measures the impact of schooling AND strengthens both classroom learning and the schools that provide it.**

The first requirement of world-class public assurance and accountability is collecting and using world-class information about student achievement. If the information is of poor quality, the system will be weak. More importantly, the power of assessment “done well” is that it *advances* learning. If we don’t use assessment to improve learning, we cannot hope to close achievement gaps for students in Michigan, we cannot hope to raise the percent of students in the state who meet the high standards we have set.



# Two Factors Dictate What Information We Need and How We Should Gather It

## Factor 1 - 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills

Our aim is to prepare students with the skills and capacities they need to be successful learners and earners in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In Michigan, we call these our *Career and College Ready Standards*. These skills are different in many respects from the skills of the past, and many of these new skills do not lend themselves to traditional forms of testing or data capture. Our ability to assess accurately will depend on the use of assessment that require students to, conduct observations, orate, carry out investigations, write extensively, build models, present and perform, respond to the work of others, and develop complex and innovate solutions that demonstrate original thinking.

FORTUNE 500 MOST VALUED SKILLS		
	1970	Today
1	Writing	<b>Problem-Solving</b>
2	Computational Skills	<b>Collaboration</b>
3	Reading Skills	<b>Critical thinking</b>
4	Oral Communication	Oral Communication
5	Listening Skills	Write Persuasively
6	Personal Career Development	Listening Skills
7	Creative Thinking	Personal Career Development
8	Leadership	Creative Thinking
9	Goal Setting/Motivation	Leadership
10	<b>Collaboration</b>	Goal Setting/Motivation

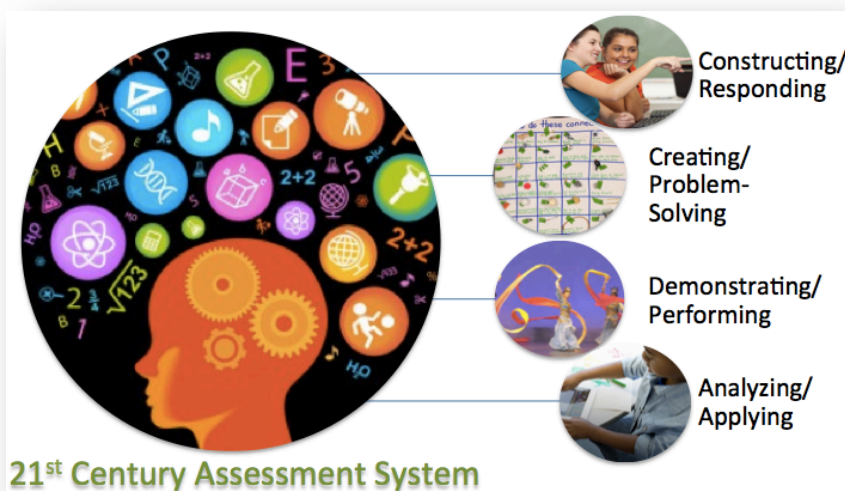
Sources: Forbes, Anne Fisher (2012); Casel & Kolstad (1999); Creativity in Action (1990)

## Factor 2 - Upgraded Assessment Practices

We will need to upgrade the assessment tools and methods designed to assess 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and capacities. First, this means we will have to invest in

developing assessment literate policymakers, administrators, educators, students and their parents. In 1988, the first meta-analysis of global research on educational assessment was published. The study confirmed what we suspected, “weighing the student doesn’t make them grow.” We do, however, know that matching the correct assessment methods to the learning aim (or target) and weaving formative assessment practices into our classroom

instruction holds the promise of “growing a learner.” To become a top 10 education state



within 10 years, the MAC asserts that the state assessment system we use must serve to improve and develop our students and our schools, not just measure them. We must use assessments that promote student learning as well as assess whether such learning has occurred.

## More Accountability Has Meant More Testing

Educational accountability, as a topic in the State of Michigan and the nation, has grown in prominence. Understandably we find ourselves questioning the time and resources we dedicate to testing, how we test, and how we use the information. **NCLB, enacted in 2002 includes...**

- Annual testing of all students in reading and mathematics in grades 3-8 and at least once during grades 10-12.
- Science assessments at least once at the elementary, middle and high school levels
- Annual assessment of limited English students for English language proficiency
- NAEP testing scheduled to be administered every year in grades 4, 8, and 12. (On even-numbered years, NAEP administers a variety of subjects to obtain a national sample. On odd-numbered years, NAEP administers Math and Reading and obtains state and national samples.

### Our MI Revised School Code (Act 451 of 1976) includes...

- Annual testing of all students in English language arts and mathematics in grades 3-8; science in grades 4 and 7 and social studies in grades 5 and 8.
- High school students take the Michigan Merit Examination in 11<sup>th</sup> grade. This includes a college entrance exam and a job skills assessment test and summative tests in English language Arts, mathematics, science and social studies. (380.1279g)
- Annual testing of all students in grades 9 and 10 English language arts and mathematics (388.1704)
- Teachers and administrators incorporate in their educator effectiveness plans student growth information measured, at least or in part, by state assessments for those grade and subjects which have a state assessment or alternative assessments for those subjects and grades without a state assessment (alternative assessments must be rigorous and comparable across schools within the school district, intermediate school districts, or public school academy). (380.1249)



### Our MI State School Aid Act (Act 94 of 1979) adds this... (388.1704c, amended section, effective 10.1.2015)

- Beginning in 2016-17 school year English language arts and mathematics assessments grades 1 and 2 will be administered in the fall and the spring (subsection 4)
- Beginning in 2016-17 the kindergarten entry assessment (KEA) will be administered in the fall

## Pending MI legislation could require...

- Testing to determine grade level reading competency and repeated screening and monitoring throughout the year for students in grades K-3.

## We Are Out of Balance

### **“ASSESSMENTS ACCOMPLISH TWO THINGS:”**

1. *Certify student learning* (measuring student acquisition of standards)
2. *Promote student learning* (an assessment act and sequence that permits the learner to see the target for learning, know where they are in relation to the target, and employ tactics to adjust behavior to reach the target).

### **Some assessments are designed to *certify learning*. Some assessments are designed to *promote learning*.**

School districts in the State of Michigan presently engage students in assessment through:

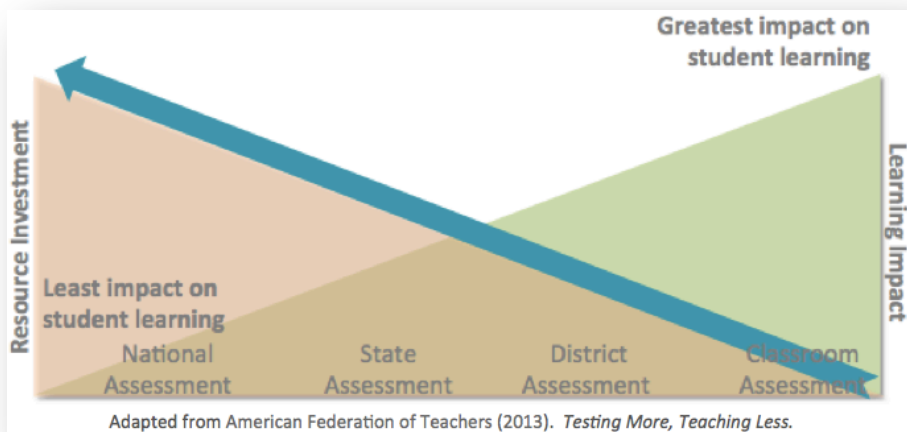
- Large-scale summative assessment used annually
- Interim summative measures selected and used periodically throughout the school year at the district level for a variety of purposes; and,
- Classroom assessments, especially formative-assessment practices used during instruction

Our large-scale summative assessments are not designed to advance student learning, nor are the interim summative measures that are growing in scope and breadth. Both types of assessments are used primarily to certify that learning has occurred and to meet accountability requirements.

Classroom assessment and especially formative assessment strategies and practices, when used correctly, provide the greatest opportunity for closing achievement gaps, since these are the assessments that actually promote student learning. It is in the classroom environment that we advance student learning and ultimately impact student achievement.

Two decades of international research affirm significant achievement gains for students when formative assessment is used by classroom teachers and by students as instruction occurs; with the largest gains demonstrated for students identified as low achievers (Black & William 1998.)

If we fully understood where assessment has its greatest impact, it would stand to reason that investing in classroom and formative assessment practices would



### **“RESOURCES”**

Investment in the assessment literacy of teachers, administrators, students and parents; appropriate uses of tests purchased and developed; time spent preparing for, taking, and analyzing assessment data.

command the greatest share of our resources. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Presently our resources are disproportionately dedicated, in large measure, to the type of assessments designed to certify learning. To achieve the objective of becoming a Top 10 State, we need to invest in learning to use the assessment strategies that promote student learning. To do this means addressing the assessment literacy in Michigan for all stakeholders that influence student achievement in Michigan.

A 2013 report commissioned by the American Federation of Teachers, **Testing More, Teaching Less**, attempted to shed light on the nature, amount, and costs of student assessments. The study included a detailed grade-by-grade analysis of the testing calendars

for two mid-size urban school districts, and the applied research from other studies of state mandated testing. The study found that the amount of time students spent taking tests ranged from 20-50 hours in heavily tested grades, and students spent 60-110 hours per year in test prep in high-stakes testing grades. The estimated annual testing cost per pupil ranged from \$700 to more than \$1,000 in grades that had the most testing. These calculations confirm a majority of a typical district’s assessment resources are used in pursuit of certifying learning. *That amount comprises roughly 10-14% of a district’s per pupil allotment in the State of Michigan.*

## **Effective International Models**

**Countries in Europe and Asia are shifting their assessment systems to incorporate greater use of formative assessment that occurs during instruction; data to improve instruction and student performance, and authentic measurement of higher order skills.**

In addition, they place a high priority on educator recruitment, training and special education interventions. These measures have resulted in increasing student success rates and reducing achievement gaps between low- and high-performing students. (Vivien Stewart, *A World Class Education*, 2012, ASCD, Alexandria, VA; Marc S. Tucker, *Surpassing Shanghai*, 2011, Harvard Education Press, Cambridge, MA)

Drawing from our international contemporaries, effective accountability systems vary but include similar components:

1. They assess the most important learning targets in appropriate ways.
2. They provide specific and timely feedback to improve learning – consistent with current research that tells us assessment for learning provides teachers and students with necessary information to adjust learning tactics and instruction.
3. They support professional learning opportunities that develop the assessment literacy of the teacher and administrator.





## “International Examples: Accountability Systems Emphasizing Assessment for Learning”

As of 2009, **England** has been in the middle of a large reform with changes to high stakes testing for students up to the age of fourteen. **Wales** made changes to their assessment systems in 2001 wherein summative teacher assessments are used; they continue to monitor these changes. **Northern Ireland** terminated their statutory testing in 2005 and has recently developed pupil profiles constructed by teachers.

**Scotland** reformed its *National Qualifications* system in 2000 and is sampling achievement with the *Scottish Survey of Literacy and Numeracy*.

**Finland**, one of the highest-performing countries in the world on PISA assessments, primarily uses school-based assessments with only periodic national testing from the national level to monitor quality. Finland relies on teacher judgment to assess student growth and achievement, and it does not employ a rigorous inspection system of schools and teachers. Educational dollars are invested in development of the professional capacities of teachers and administrators.

### *Essential Components present in International Accountability Systems:*

- 1. Assess the most important learning targets in appropriate ways*
- 2. Provide specific and timely feedback to improve learning*
- 3. Support professional learning that develops assessment literacy*

**Sweden** and **Australia** have followed Finland's lead. Since 1995 **New Zealand** has used governing boards that report to the Ministry of Education and conducts a sampling system of high school students in their later years in four-year cycles.

The New Zealand *National Education Monitoring Project* utilizes a mix of school based performance assessments and nationally standardized assessments. (Sources, A New Look at Public Assurance: Imagining the Possibilities for Alberta Students – Appendix A, 2012; Stewart, 2012, p. 150.)

## Principles for an Effective Statewide Student Assessment System

### In 2013, the MAC published *Principles for Creating an Effective Statewide Student Assessment System*.

The eight principles and practices identified include the three essential components present in international accountability systems. These Principles reflect what is already happening in countries with effective models. The Principles further combine to advance and support learning as well as delineate additional considerations important for Michigan and other states. The utility of the Principles has been to identify the key characteristics of high quality assessment systems and raise important questions to help decision-makers identify the most suitable choices for future state assessment systems.

*Do educators, students and parents have the requisite dispositions, knowledge, and skills to advance learning?*  
*Do we fully understand the differences between assessments that promote learning and those that certify learning?*  
*Are each of us literate when it comes to the uses of assessment practices?*

## NEXT STEPS: Building a Michigan Assessment System that Certifies AND Advances Learning

The Eight Principles are abbreviated as follows:

**Principle 1.** There are different purposes and uses for student assessment at the state, district, school, classroom and student levels.

**Principle 2.** One single assessment cannot meet all of these purposes equally and effectively. Some purposes are mutually exclusive with other purposes.

**Principle 3.** A *system* of assessments is needed for the different purposes. (See Principle 2)

**Principle 4.** In order to accomplish all assessment purposes equally well, a *balanced* system of assessments is necessary.

**Principle 5.** A typical balanced assessment system consists of an annual summative assessment, several additional mini-summative or interim assessments, and on-going formative-assessment strategies and practices used daily.

**Principle 6.** All the assessments used in the assessment system should be fully aligned to the academic content standards being measured.

**Principles 7.** Teacher preparation programs must include sufficient instruction about classroom assessment, especially formative-assessment practice. Professional learning opportunities must be provided to students and their parents, teachers, administrators, and local and state policymakers.

**Principle 8.** Providing instructional resources to educators about instruction is vital to assuring that educators help students achieve the standards being measured.

*Eight Principles*, above, can also be found on the MAC website –

[www.michiganassessmentconsortium.org](http://www.michiganassessmentconsortium.org) - click on RESOURCES/White Papers

### Assessment Literacy is Key

The MAC developed *Assessment Literacy Standards* because it identified a need in assessment practices in Michigan. With the increase of school and educator accountability connected to student achievement on assessments intended to “certify learning,” the need arose from a fundamental measurement principle - assessment information used incorrectly is harmful to students, educators and society. To address this need, the MAC developed and sought feedback on the *Assessment Literacy Standards* from numerous groups and national assessment experts (Stiggins, Popham, O'Connor, Brookhart, Commodore, and others) since 2011. A number of documents were used in the development of the standards. Complete references are found in *Assessment Literacy Standards: A National Imperative* (2015).





The **Assessment Literacy Standards** should serve as the basis upon which education policy is developed and vetted. The standards should be used in teacher preparation programs, and in the continuing professional learning of practicing teachers and administrators. The standards could form the basis for professional endorsements and certifications. The standards are intended for long-term use in the field of education as opposed to being a temporal topic that fades from importance with the rise of new issues. The leadership of assessment literate stakeholders should contribute to a new MI Vision for Assessment.

## RECOMMENDATION



The MAC recommends development of a *new* Michigan Vision for Assessment. The *new* vision would necessarily be guided by the goal of creating policy, practice and commensurate resources to develop and implement a balanced assessment system that serves to advance, as well as, certify learning. A *new* MI Vision for Assessment would require contributions from a broad-based stakeholder group. The group should obtain national assessment expertise, and be convened by joint leadership such as the MAC, the Governor's Office and the Michigan Department of Education. The group should produce an articulated shared vision as well as an Action Agenda and a Research Agenda – for the purpose of guiding and monitoring a reimagined statewide assessment

system. This will necessarily require capacity building in assessment literacy for the stakeholder groups contributing to the MI Vision for Assessment.

### Michigan can have a statewide system of assessment that **advances AND certifies** learning.

Any educational accountability system should measure what matters most. Michigan has much to gain by ensuring our students acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes they need to be successful 21<sup>st</sup> Century learners. It is the view of the MAC that the state of Michigan can develop and embrace a statewide system of assessment that supports learning, and at the same time, assures the public that students are receiving a world-class education. The MAC believes that such a balanced assessment system is a vital and necessary part of the work for Michigan to become a Top-10 state in the next 10 years.

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### About the MAC

Founded in 2008 as an un-incorporated statewide directorship and then constituted as a not-for-profit, nonpartisan organization in 2012, the MAC is dedicated to the development of quality, comprehensive assessment systems and practices. The MAC is a unique education partner in the state with an independent voice, providing informed responses to assessment issues that impact student learning. The MAC contributes to assessment literacy in the state through publishing *Assessment Literacy Standards*, writing and publishing on various assessment topics, providing assessment development resources, hosting professional learning events, and engaging in development and evaluation projects that have produced model assessments, and supporting model programs contributing to high quality teacher assessment practices.

