

THE MICHIGAN ASSESSMENT CONSORTIUM (MAC)

is a nonpartisan and nonprofit, professional association of educators who believe quality education depends on high quality instruction and accurate, balanced, and meaningful assessment provided to all students.

In support of our mission to promote assessment knowledge and practice, provide professional learning, and produce and share assessment tools and resources, this statement addresses the current exceptional circumstances facing our schools in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the equally exceptional measures that will be required to address student needs in an *equitable* way when learning resumes for 2020-21.

Where we started

The MAC believes all children deserve a quality education that prepares them for future success. Before COVID-19, Michigan leaders were beginning to recognize the degree to which the State has been underfunding its schools. Several recent funding adequacy studies explored the challenges and complexities of school funding in depth and each came to the same conclusion. Informed leaders were ready to do something about it. Many decision-makers began to consider how to approach adequate levels of funding for Michigan’s K-12 schools.

Then COVID-19 struck, turning the world upside down for schools as it did for so many elements of our communities. Michigan K-12 students were physically separated from teachers, classmates, and in-school activities. Michigan teachers pivoted immediately by learning new technologies to deliver virtual lessons and developing remote learning materials. Michigan children learned from home with widely varying resources, technology access, and support.

SUMMARY STATEMENT

We already know that Michigan funding of schools is inadequate. Our schools cannot be asked to do far more—with much less.

Post COVID-19, our schools will have to attend to:

Social-Emotional Needs of Students

- Ensuring a classroom environment supportive of the social-emotional needs of students following the COVID-19 pandemic and its ensuing life impacts
- Assessing the social-emotional strengths and needs of students
- Instructing using social emotional learning strategies

Academic Needs of Students

- Assessing students’ academic learning and achievement status following the loss of more than two months of traditional classroom-based instruction
- Teaching content missed during the COVID 19 Stay-Home window prior to progressing to typical content standards for the current grade
- Assessing along the way to ensure learning and to inform next instructional steps for each student

Potential Second Wave or Similar Situation

- Refining crises plans and learn-at-home plans in preparation for future disruptions to instruction.

To provide for appropriate re-entry and instruction and to promote and deepen learning, **Michigan Schools need:**

- 1) Comprehensive and balanced assessment systems.
- 2) Resolve to make research-supported and responsible purchases and decisions.
- 3) Full financial funding.

Moving forward

Starting in late summer 2020, Michigan's students will return to classrooms, with teachers working to determine what their students know and can do following the extended and unique hiatus from traditional learning. While it has always been important that teachers know the extent of student achievement when students return to school, assessment throughout the 2020-21 school year may be even more critical. Students will have missed more than two months of in-school education. This may have been a time in which little to no **new** learning or content was introduced. And, many students may have experienced some degree of social-emotional trauma as a result of:

- the fear and uncertainty accompanying the pandemic;
- social distancing that separated them from extended family members and other adults, as well as from classmates, teammates, and peers;
- deepened poverty and its impact on the family's mental and physical health; and
- loss and grief associated with death of family, neighbors, community members.

Teachers and students will, in a very real sense, begin next year by filling in missing instruction before moving on to the teaching the content and skills to be learned in the 2020-21 school year.

Implications for assessment during 2020-21

Assessment upon return to school must happen not only in academic areas such as mathematics, science, social studies, language arts and reading, but also in the social-emotional domain.¹ To appropriately serve Michigan students to move their learning forward, schools must implement comprehensive and balanced assessment systems² that meet the learning, teaching, and informational needs of decision-makers at every level: student, parent, teacher, school, district, and state. This will require prioritizing the use of assessment **for** learning (formative assessment process) while limiting assessment **of** learning (summative assessments) to those that enhance a quality school experience.

Recommendations

Whereas funding for K-12 Schools was already shown to be inadequate prior to disruption by the pandemic, we have deep concerns about student well-being and success if projected school aid reductions are realized.

As an organization that believes all children deserve a quality education that prepares them for success, the MAC contends that to provide for appropriate re-entry and instruction, and to promote and deepen learning, *Michigan policymakers and school leaders need to:*

- 1) Implement and support comprehensive and balanced approaches to assessment that address assessment *for* learning and assessment *of* learning, as well as social-emotional needs.
- 2) Resolve that significant decisions about instruction/placement rely not on a single assessment product or suite of products, but rather on data from multiple assessment sources.
- 3) Preserve and protect school funding to support the needs of *all* returning students and staff, whether in person or in a remote or online environment.

¹ Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL): SEL Resources During Covid-19. casel.org/covid-resources

² *Michigan Assessment Literacy Standards*. Michigan Assessment Consortium, 2017. <http://bit.ly/MI-ALS>.