

Return-to-school 2020

What we believe

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. Repeated funding adequacy studies over the past six years explored the challenges and complexities of school funding in depth and each came to that conclusion. Many informed people were ready to do something about it. 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 activities. Michigan teachers pivoted immediately by learning new technologies to deliver virtual lessons and developing remote learning materials. Michigan children learned from home to different degrees with widely varying resources, technology access, and support.

The issue as we see it

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 will be even more critical. Students will have missed more than two months of in-school education. This might have been a time in which little to no **new** learning or content was introduced. And many students will have experienced some degree of social-emotional trauma as a result of:

- the fear and uncertainty accompanying the pandemic;
- social distancing that separated children/youth 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, and community members.

Teachers and students will, in a very real sense, begin next year by filling in missing instruction before moving on to 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. To appropriately serve Michigan students to move learning forward, schools must implement comprehensive and balanced assessment systems that meet the learning, teaching, and information needs of decision-makers at every level: student, parent, teacher, school, district, and state. This will require prioritizing the use of assessment *for* learning (the formative assessment process) while limiting assessment *of* learning (summative assessments) to those that enhance a quality school experience.

Support for our policy recommendations

- Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL): SEL Resources During Covid-19. casel.org/covid-resources
- ORBIT: The Open Resource Bank for Interactive Teaching: University of Cambridge. http://oer.educ.cam.ac.uk/wiki/Assessment_for_Learning_Research_Summary
- *Michigan Assessment Literacy Standards*. Michigan Assessment Consortium, 2017. <http://bit.ly/MI-ALS>.
- "Inside the black box: Raising standards through classroom assessment." Paul Black, P. & Dylan Wiliam (1998). *Phi Delta Kappan*, 80(2), 139-148.
- *Michigan school finance at the crossroads: A quarter century of state control*. David Arsen, Tanner Delpier, and Jesse Nagel. Board of Trustees of Michigan State University, 2019
- School Finance Research Collaborative. <https://www.fundmischools.org>

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 assessment systems that address assessment *for* learning and assessment *of* learning as well as social-emotional needs.
- 2) Resolve that no single assessment product or suite of products will constitute an “assessment system” and that significant decisions about student instruction/placement will rely on data from multiple assessment sources.
- 3) Preserve and protect school funding to support *all* returning student and staff needs.

What this means for...

Policymakers:

1. Work to protect schools from budget cuts that threaten the stability of Michigan’s schools to meet the increased student, staff, and infrastructure needs caused by COVID-19.
2. Create new requirements with supportive appropriations to enhance high quality assessment practices in some specific ways:
 - a. Provide new quality measures of student learning, both academic and social-emotional, that are aligned to state standards and help teachers accurately determine where each student is on their pathway of learning following the disruptions caused by COVID-19. (This could include performance assessments, , MDE-developed, standards based interim assessment items; and other appropriate assessments that could be scored using online collaborative scoring systems.)
 - b. Expand access to the Formative Assessment for Michigan Educators (FAME) program to reach every teacher and to support the use of the formative assessment process in remote learning environments.
 - c. Support educators in using assessment data to identify student deficiencies or lack of proficiency and then target what comes next through a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS).
 - d. Promote assessment literacy (as defined by and supported by MAC) for every practicing Michigan administrator and educator at all grade levels and in all subjects.
3. Suspend the requirement to demonstrate educator effectiveness through student growth data (for which appropriate measures and metrics are currently unavailable).

State Education Agency:

1. Encourage local districts and public school academies (PSA) to use Title I, Parts A & B funding authorized in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to analyze and prioritize the use of assessments designed to support and move learning forward.
2. Increase the capacity of school administrators and teachers to appropriately use assessment to inform defensible decisions about student placement and instruction, including assessments of social-emotional learning.
3. Increase access to the Formative Assessment for Michigan Educators (FAME) program to empower all Michigan teachers.

4. Provide support, resources, and funding for assessments aligned to MTSS (tiered instruction, assessment, and evidence-based interventions)

What this means for...

School leaders:

1. Advocate for K-12 school aid funding adequate to meet the increased student, staff, and infrastructure needs caused by COVID-19.
2. Ensure all instructional staff have access to professional learning to increase assessment literacy, understanding and using the formative assessment process, and support use of assessment literate practices in the classroom, school, and district.
3. Follow MAC's guidance to districts on continuity of learning plans¹, which supports less emphasis on high-stakes standardized tests and more support for use of the formative assessment process in every classroom.
4. Provide support and coaching for use of the formative assessment process in teaching and learning.
5. Support instructional changes and interventions needed to address deficiencies identified by student assessment data.

Teachers:

1. Participate in professional learning activities focused on building assessment literacy knowledge and skills to support assessment literate practice in your classroom/school/district.
2. Learn and use the formative assessment process in the classroom and in online environments to enhance student learning and improve student achievement.
3. Become proficient in using data derived from assessment to Identify:
 - a. Needed instructional changes
 - b. Interventions to address deficiencies
4. Advocate for K-12 school aid funding adequate to meet the increased student, staff, and infrastructure needs caused by COVID-19.

Students, Families, and Communities:

1. Seek to learn more about sound assessment practices so as to better support their use in your classrooms/school/district.
2. Advocate for:
 - a. more support for use of the formative assessment process in every classroom.
 - b. increased and expanded efforts to strengthen family engagement in the learning process.
 - c. K-12 school aid funding adequate to meet the increased student, staff, and infrastructure needs caused by COVID-19.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT?

“Formative assessment is a planned, ongoing process used by all students and teachers during learning and teaching to elicit and use evidence of student learning to improve student understanding of intended disciplinary learning outcomes and support students to become more self-directed learners.”

—Council of Chief State School Officers (CSSO), 2017

Learn more at <http://bit.ly/LP-FormativeAssessment>

¹ Available at www.michiganassessmentconsortium.org/policy-and-practice/balanced-assessment-systems.