



Wendy Zdeb
Executive Director

Andy Kowalczyk
President

February 19, 2021

Dr. Michael F. Rice
State Superintendent
Michigan Department of Education
P.O. Box 30008
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Dr. Rice:

On behalf of the more than 1,800 high school, career technical and middle level principals and assistant principals represented by MASSP, we are writing to voice our support for the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) request to the U.S. Department of Education to waive certain assessment and accountability requirements of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

Securing a waiver from end-of-year state assessments for the 2020-21 school year is one of MASSP's member-adopted policy priorities. Recently, 2,683 Michigan educators and other Michiganders signed a petition circulated by MASSP urging coordinated action by the Michigan Legislature and Governor Whitmer to:

- Waive the requirement in state law for schools to administer the M-STEP, MI-Access, WIDA, and WorkKeys for the 2020-21 school year, pending approval of our state's waiver application by the U.S. Department of Education.
- Make it optional for students in grades 8-11 to take the PSAT and SAT during the 2020-21 school year.

These same points and the support they have garnered speak to MDE's waiver request as well.

Right now, principals and other educators across Michigan are having to spend time and resources planning how to safely administer spring testing. That time and those resources would be much better spent supporting students in recovering from the mental, physical and academic hardships of the pandemic.

Many students will want the opportunity to take a free college entrance or pre-college entrance exam, and they should be afforded that option. However, while a school day administration of the PSAT and SAT should be provided by every Michigan school, the tests should be optional for students to take and the results should be used solely to assist individual students with setting goals for improvement as they work toward college and career readiness. Similarly, while some school districts will want the option to use state assessments to track their students' progress, none of these assessment results should be used for educator evaluations or other state or federal accountability purposes.

As MDE emphasized in their waiver application, every school district in Michigan is already mandated to administer benchmark testing this year to gauge student learning needs and Michigan did a statewide administration of PSAT and SAT for high school age students this past fall. By prioritizing the state-required administration of benchmark assessments we are utilizing tools that have long been helpful to local educators across the country to help provide us with an understanding of where children are during the pandemic in the absence of being able to administer state summative assessments with the same rigorous protocols as in past years.

We don't need more test data to tell us that many students have struggled throughout the past 12 months with remote learning and the challenges of the pandemic. For many of these same students, high stakes testing is just one more stressful experience in a year when the last thing we need is more stress.

Thank you for your work on behalf of Michigan's students and schools to pursue this waiver.

Sincerely,

Wendy Zdeb
Executive Director

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