



The Education Trust–Midwest

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Equity and Transparency: Critical focus areas for Michigan New state assessment data reinforces challenges and opportunities for state's students and educational improvement efforts

ROYAL OAK, Mich. (Aug. 29, 2018) – Today a new release of state education data highlights critical challenges and opportunities for Michigan's educational improvement efforts. The Michigan Department of Education's release of the 2018 Michigan Student Test of Education Progress (M-STEP) data shows that early literacy outcomes for African American, Latino and low-income students need particular attention as Michigan prepares to implement a third-grade reading retention policy across the state.

"Equity must be a top priority for Michigan's new governor next year," said [Amber Arellano](#), Executive Director of the non-partisan policy, research and advocacy organization, The Education Trust-Midwest. "Huge gaps in learning outcomes are holding back Michigan's economic vitality, and require policy leaders to not only invest - but to invest more strategically - in dramatically raising literacy levels through new, thoughtful systemic approaches."

"Equity must go arm-and-arm with greater data transparency and quality, however," Arellano added. "The MDE's recent changes to the state's assessment system create important questions about our state's data comparability, quality and transparency."

In order to improve systems and support educators in preparing students for success in early literacy, Michigan needs reliable assessment data that measures if progress has been made for all groups of students in the state over time, as well as how progress and improvement compare to other states that participate in the same assessment consortium as Michigan, called the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium.

Earlier this year, The Education Trust-Midwest released a historic [analysis](#) that leveraged data from the prior version of the M-STEP to compare the performance trends of Michigan's public schools for all students to those in other states around the country involved in the same assessment consortium. But because of unanswered questions about changes to the 2018 M-STEP assessment, it is unclear if the 2018 M-STEP assessment results are comparable to results in other states. These changes also make it unclear how comparable this year's M-STEP results are to prior years' data.

“It is in the best interests of Michigan students for the Michigan Department of Education to recommit to data quality and transparency by abandoning plans to further change the M-STEP in 2019, and reverse the changes recently made to the assessment,” Arellano said.

“What the 2018 M-STEP data does make clear is that troubling achievement gaps persist across the subject areas – including in early literacy,” said [Mary Grech](#), the lead analyst of the Ed Trust-Midwest analysis of new M-STEP data. “In 2018, only about half of Michigan’s White third graders scored proficient in English language arts, and the results are even more devastating for students of color. Only about one third of Latino third graders and less than a quarter of African American third graders were proficient in 2018.”

“These trends are especially concerning given the state’s major investment in improving literacy, which will total about \$100 million by the end of the next fiscal year, and the state’s new third grade reading law,” added Grech.

Under the state’s new reading and retention law, students could be retained if they are not at or near reading proficiency at the end of third grade, beginning with the 2019-20 school year. In a [report](#) released earlier this year, Ed Trust-Midwest highlighted how Michigan’s weak implementation and lack of strategy leaves it far too much to chance that young student’s reading levels will improve.

Statewide results released today from the spring M-STEP also show:

- Achievement gaps persist across grade levels. For example, in eighth grade math, statewide proficiency rates were nearly four times greater for White students (38.2 percent) than for African American students (10.4 percent) and about double the rate for Latino students (19.6 percent).
- Proficiency rates for low-income students also remain devastatingly low. Only 27.5 percent of Michigan’s low-income eighth graders were proficient in English language arts and just 17.3 percent were proficient in math in 2018.

Additional analysis of the 2018 M-STEP is available [here](#).

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The Education Trust-Midwest is a nonpartisan research and advocacy organization dedicated to improving outcomes for all Michigan students, especially for African American, Latino, American Indian, and low-income students. The Education Trust-Midwest believes in the power of intelligent education policy and practices — informed by data, research, and the successes of other states — to make Michigan a top ten education state for all students. Visit our website: www.edtrustmidwest.org

In 2015, Ed Trust-Midwest launched the Michigan Achieves campaign to build an effort to make Michigan a top ten education state. To join, sign-up at www.MichiganAchieves.com.

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