

THE MICHIGAN ASSESSMENT CONSORTIUM (MAC) is a nonpartisan and nonprofit professional association of educators who believe quality education depends on accurate, balanced, and meaningful assessment.

In support of our mission to promote assessment knowledge and practice, provide professional learning, and produce and share assessment tools and resources, we would like to address the current exceptional circumstances facing our schools, and the equally exceptional measures that will be required to address student needs in an equitable way. In responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and a shifting educational landscape, MAC believes our primary responsibilities must be to maintain equitable learning opportunities for all students and to communicate clearly with all stakeholders. Given the range of resources available for educational responses to the pandemic, we must be mindful of the foundational, research-based attributes of effective assessment, grading, and reporting.

THE PURPOSE AND ROLE OF ASSESSMENT WITHIN CONTINUITY OF LEARNING PLANS

The MAC supports Michigan's required assurances (see sidebar), knowing that assessment serves multiple purposes within any learning context. First, it elicits evidence of students' current skills and understanding in relation to specific learning goals; then, it communicates students' strengths and needs to teachers and students to provide them with the information required to respond to those needs in specific and meaningful ways; and finally, it allows teachers to verify the degree to which students have achieved the desired skills and understanding over time so that this information may be shared with stakeholders.

In other words, assessment:

- identifies students' needs,
- celebrates their strengths,
- documents learning as it progresses, and
- verifies and communicates levels of proficiency at the end of an instructional cycle.

These roles are essential, regardless of whether learning occurs in classrooms or remotely.

REQUIRED ASSURANCES DURING COVID-19

Michigan's school leaders and teachers face many challenges in complying with Governor Whitmer's April 2, 2020 Executive Order ([EO 2020-35](#)) directing local districts and public school academies to serve students in accordance with their Continuity of Learning and COVID-19 Response Plan ("Plan").

School districts and public school academies (PSAs), in collaboration with regional intermediate school districts (ISDs) and educational service agencies (ESAs), are to develop guidelines and policies to address the challenge of determining end-of-year/end-of-course grades as part of their state-required Continuity of Learning Plans ("Plans"). In addition, districts are making Plan Assurances to: *"manage and monitor student learning and plan what's next for learning including the potential need for summer and supplemental learning."*

Districts further assure to:

- **Check Student Learning:** Use a variety of strategies to monitor, assess, and provide feedback to students about their learning.
- **Make Instructional Adjustments:** Use formative assessment results to guide educators' reflection on effectiveness of instruction and to determine next steps for student learning.
- **Engage Families:** Communicate with families about assessment results in order to inform next steps and the potential for supplemental summer learning. Provide translations as necessary.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

for Student Assessment and Reporting/Grading Policies and Guidelines in District Continuity of Learning Plans

While district Continuity of Learning Plans are essential to guide teachers' practices in the immediate crisis, it is imperative that grading and reporting decisions be made within the context of rich instruction, targeted and specific feedback, and opportunities for learners to continue to practice and grow for the remainder of the academic year. Without this context, it may be tempting to fall back on simplistic and expeditious numerical grade determination and lose the power of assessment as a foundation for learning.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR REPORTING AND GRADING

When it is time to summarize assessment evidence and report results, we know that teachers want to communicate clear and accurate statements about student achievement, not only to reflect each learner's current levels of skill and understanding, but to support future decision-making at the next grade level or in post-secondary settings. In order to support district leaders and school boards as they draft guidelines and policies to address grading/reporting and "end-of-year/course achievement," we would like to offer the following considerations as a way to meet Michigan's required assurances:

ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOLS

No grades; feedback and narrative reports only regarding competency/mastery of standards/learning targets. This will serve to communicate important information to students, families, and next year's teachers, while maintaining a focus on learning.

HIGH SCHOOLS

For ongoing learning: no grades; feedback and narrative reports only regarding competency/mastery of standards/learning targets. This will serve to communicate important information to students, families, and next year's teachers, while maintaining a focus on learning.

For final summative grading and reporting: Given the exceptional circumstances facing high school teachers and students, a temporary solution is necessary in the area of grading and reporting. The most efficient and equitable approach in high schools is for teachers to use existing and ongoing information about each student to determine a grade of Incomplete or Complete based on evidence of achievement.¹ For students who provide insufficient evidence of achievement (therefore incomplete) both at the time classes were suspended and after being given opportunities to provide evidence² throughout the remote learning period, the final grade for this year will be Incomplete.

¹ For students with disabilities, consideration to and input from IEP members should be considered in making a final determination for IEP goal progress reporting and grading.

² All evidence submitted should contain a statement such as the following, signed by the student:

"Academic Integrity means **honesty** and **responsibility** in scholarship. My signature below indicates my commitment to and obligation that all of my academic work is from my own efforts, unaided except where specified by my teacher. _____ (initial here)" (Source: Crofton House School, Vancouver)