

MAISA GENERAL EDUCATION LEADERSHIP NETWORK

FEBRUARY 2014

Representing 56 Intermediate School District and 83 counties in Michigan, the MAISA General Education Leadership Network (GELN) is committed to leadership and innovation in high quality teaching and learning in Michigan's schools.

STANDARDIZED ASSESSMENT IN MICHIGAN A POSITION STATEMENT

PURPOSE

The purpose of this position paper is to inform decision makers and shape policy regarding state standardized assessment in Michigan.

RECOMMENDATION

The MAISA General Education Leadership Network strongly recommends adoption of the Smarter Balanced Assessment as our statewide measure of student achievement in mathematics and English language arts.

FULLY ALIGNED WITH THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

The first and most important reason for our recommendation is that the Smarter Balanced Assessment is fully aligned with the Common Core State Standards in mathematics and English language arts. Alignment between what is taught and what is tested is a fundamental principle of best-practice curriculum, instruction and assessment. It is a simple principle. The

assessment should measure the extent to which students have mastered the state standards that they have been expected to learn. Each test item a student encounters should be aligned to one or more standards. A student should never be tested on content that does not fully align to the standards. It is not sufficient to have partial alignment between the standards being taught and the standards being tested. This principle is paramount in statewide high-stakes assessment where results lead to serious consequences for schools and individuals. For example, poor results on state standardized assessments can lead to students being retained, closure of schools and teachers being inappropriately evaluated. High-stakes such as these require full alignment between the state standards and the state test at every tested grade level. The test being created by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium is fully aligned to the standards. In fact, the Smarter Balanced Assessment was designed for the sole purpose of measuring student achievement with respect to the Michigan adopted Common Core State Standards and has utilized no other set of standards in the development of test questions.

QUALITY ASSESSMENT

The second reason we urge statewide implementation of the Smarter Balanced Assessment is that the technical qualities of the assessment exceed any of the other options. A few of the most important technical qualities include:

- **Computer adaptive rather than computer based or paper based:** The Smarter Balanced Assessment has the capability to adjust the difficulty of test questions based on individual student responses. As students answer test questions correctly, questions become more challenging. As students answer test questions incorrectly, questions become less complex. In this way, the Smarter Balanced Assessment will provide a customized and developmentally appropriate assessment for all students. Additionally, computer adaptive tests generate data reports that identify the individual learning level of each student, whether they are behind grade level or advanced. Therefore, computer adaptive assessments provide a more customized and meaningful testing experience for students while also providing educators, parents, students and other stakeholders with a more complete understanding regarding the specific learning level of each student.
- **A comprehensive assessment resource rather than a one-time end-of-year test:** In addition to a single high stakes end-of-year test, the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium will provide optional Common Core aligned interim assessments for classroom use. These interim assessments will be used by educators throughout the school year to check for student understanding and monitor progress as they prepare for the final end-of-year high stakes test. In other words, Smarter Balanced provides students and educators fully aligned opportunities to practice and address student progress before the final end-of-year assessment.

- **Criterion referenced rather than norm referenced:** The Smarter Balanced Assessment measures student achievement with respect to Common Core State Standards (criterion) rather than measuring student achievement in a comparative manner with other student test results (norm). The primary purpose of our state standardized assessment is to measure student achievement with respect to state standards and therefore must be a criterion referenced test.

MICHIGAN RETAINS OWNERSHIP AND CONTROL

Another important factor in our recommendation of the Smarter Balanced Assessment is that it is imperative that Michigan citizens and educators retain a great degree of control over our statewide assessment. From the beginning of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, Michigan educators have played a leading role in development and continue to influence test content, design, scoring, administration, reporting and technical quality. Most importantly, under the contract with the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium Michigan retains ownership and control of our own student achievement data and its analysis.

COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAM FOR 11TH GRADE

Finally, the MAISA General Education Leadership Network acknowledges the importance of a quality college entrance examination for students in the eleventh grade as well as an assessment aligned to Michigan state standards. Therefore, we recommend that the state continue to offer a college entrance examination for eleventh grade students in addition to Smarter Balanced.