



**MISSION: READINESS**  
MILITARY LEADERS FOR KIDS



## A STRONGER AMERICA

We need the Michigan Common Core State Standards for English and mathematics and aligned assessments to achieve a stronger military and a more productive economy





## WHO WE ARE

MISSION: READINESS is the nonprofit, nonpartisan national security organization of more than 400 retired generals, admirals and other senior retired military leaders who work to ensure continued American security and prosperity into the 21st century by calling for smart investments in the upcoming generation of American children. It operates under the umbrella of the nonprofit Council for a Strong America.

For a full listing of our membership, please see our website at [www.missionreadiness.org](http://www.missionreadiness.org).

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

MISSION: READINESS *MICHIGAN* is supported by tax-deductible contributions from foundations, individuals, and corporations. MISSION: READINESS *MICHIGAN* accepts no funds from federal, state, or local governments.

Major funding for Mission: Readiness is provided by: Alliance for Early Success • Betterment Fund • The Bingham Program • Frances Hollis Brain Foundation • The California Education Policy Fund • The California Endowment • The Annie E. Casey Foundation • Robert Sterling Clark Foundation • CME Group Foundation • Sam L. Cohen Foundation • The Colorado Health Foundation • Early Care and Education Funders Collaborative of The Washington Area Women's Foundation • Max M. and Marjorie S. Fisher Foundation • Ford Foundation • Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation • The Grable Foundation • George Gund Foundation • The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust • The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation • Robert Wood Johnson Foundation • W.K. Kellogg Foundation • The Kresge Foundation • Oscar G. and Elsa S. Mayer Family Foundation • Meadows Foundation • The David & Lucile Packard Foundation • William Penn Foundation • The J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation • Raise Your Hand Texas • Rauch Foundation • Texas Education Grantmakers Advocacy Consortium Fund.

This report was written by Sandra Bishop-Josef and Amy Dawson Taggart.

K.P. Pelleran, David Carrier, Miriam Rollin, William Christeson, Kara Clifford, Chris Beakey, David Kass, Soren Messner-Zidell, and Stefanie Campolo also contributed to this report.

Summary photo credits: US Department of Defense.

# SUMMARY

While there are other major disqualifying factors – including being overweight and having a criminal record – **poor educational achievement is one of the biggest reasons why an estimated 71 percent of young Michiganders are unable to join the military.** Nearly a quarter of young Michiganders do not graduate high school on time and even among those who graduate from high school, one-fifth of those seeking to enlist in the Army cannot join because of low scores on the military's entrance exam for math, literacy and problem solving. These alarming figures raise a critical question: will shortcomings in our state and local education systems become a threat to national security?

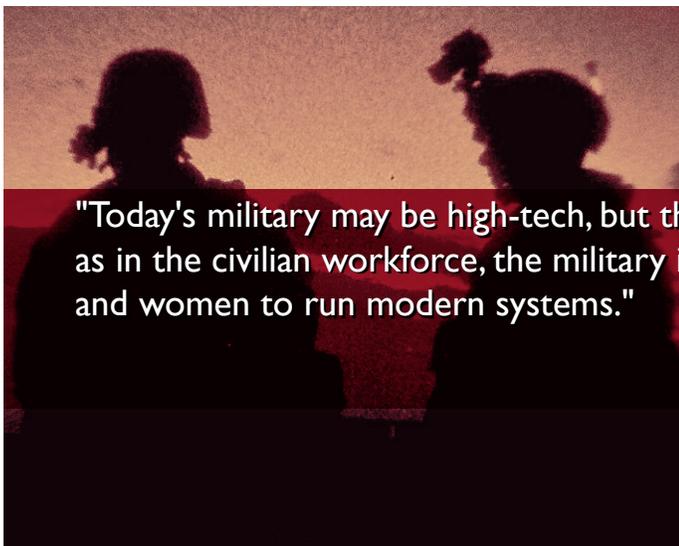
We need enough skilled men and women available to serve in tomorrow's armed services, to ensure the future strength of our military. What happens in our classrooms today will determine our future military readiness. Businesses in the private sector are seeking many of the same skill sets and running into the same challenging deficits. The Michigan Common Core State Standards for English and mathematics and aligned assessments can help ensure that students are receiving a high-quality education, so that all students are prepared for success in postsecondary education, the civilian workforce or the military, if they choose to serve. The Standards can also help ensure that children who move frequently, including military children, receive a consistent, high-quality education across districts and states.

The Michigan Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are a

rigorous set of educational standards for English language arts and mathematics for K-12 education. In addition to essential academic content, the standards focus on critical thinking, complex problem solving and effective communication—all key skills for today's and tomorrow's military, as well as for many other careers. The Michigan CCSS for English and mathematics, developed by teachers, researchers and other experts, were adopted by the State Board of Education in 2010 and implemented starting in the 2011-2012 school year.<sup>1</sup>

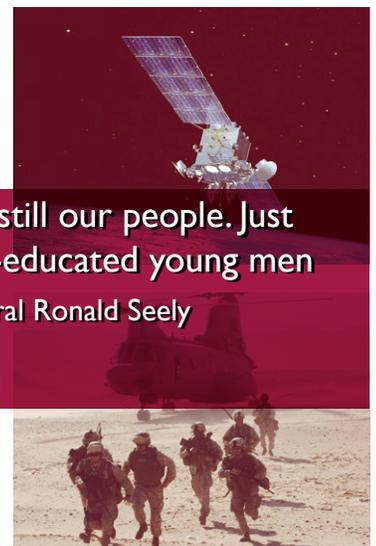
But standards alone are not enough. To have an impact on student outcomes, **there must be accountability. Standards must be accompanied by assessments**, based on the standards, and a system for reporting results, so everyone will know how students are really faring across schools, districts and states and what approaches are delivering the best results. Michigan started piloting the assessments aligned to the standards in the spring of 2013, and they will be implemented statewide in the spring of 2016.<sup>2</sup>

The Michigan CCSS for English and mathematics and aligned assessments will not magically turn things around overnight. But having high standards and accountability through related assessments will move us closer to all students doing well. Michigan is moving in the right direction to ensure that more than one in four young adults will be eligible to join the military, if they so choose. Michigan should continue on this course and move forward with the implementation of high-quality, aligned assessments.



"Today's military may be high-tech, but the most powerful tool is still our people. Just as in the civilian workforce, the military increasingly needs better-educated young men and women to run modern systems."

Brigadier General Ronald Seely  
USAF (retired)  
East Lansing, MI



# A STRONGER AMERICA

We need the Michigan Common Core State Standards for English and mathematics and aligned assessments to achieve a stronger military and a more productive economy

Poor educational achievement is one of the biggest reasons why an estimated 71 percent of all young Michiganders are unable to join the military.<sup>3</sup> In Michigan, 23 percent of young people do not graduate on time and 21 percent of high school graduates seeking to enlist in the Army cannot join because of low scores on the military's entrance exam for math, literacy and problem-solving.<sup>4</sup> These shortcomings in our state and local education systems can become a threat to national security. We need enough skilled men and women available to serve in tomorrow's armed services, to ensure the future strength of our military. Businesses in the private sector are seeking many of the same skill sets and running into the same challenging deficits.

In addition, children in military families are frequently burdened by variations in educational standards. Military children attend six to nine different schools during their K-12 school years.<sup>5</sup> These differences in standards, expectations and assessments can negatively impact their academic experience. For example, a military child might take algebra for three years in different schools, but never learn

geometry. Many non-military children are also mobile: more than 2.5 million children moved out of their home counties in 2011.<sup>6</sup>

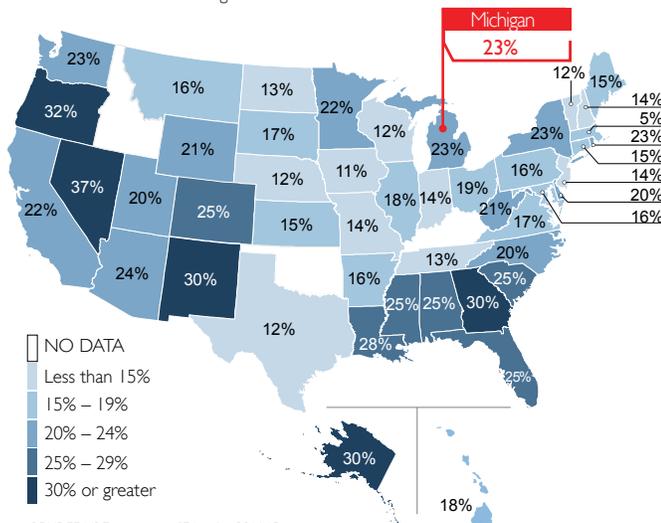
## MOVING AHEAD BY RAISING EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS

The Michigan CCSS offer a way out of these dilemmas. The standards for English language arts and mathematics are rigorous learning goals that outline what students should know at each grade level and upon high school graduation. For example, by the end of kindergarten, children should print many upper- and lowercase letters and count to 20, orally and in writing. By the end of third grade, children should be able to read grade level text orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression. By high school graduation, students should read, analyze, and compare historically and culturally significant works of literature and use a variety of math problem-solving strategies. In addition to essential academic content, the standards will help students develop higher-order skills, such as critical thinking, problem solving,

## INADEQUATE EDUCATION PREVENTS YOUNG AMERICANS FROM SERVING

### Proportion Who Do Not Graduate

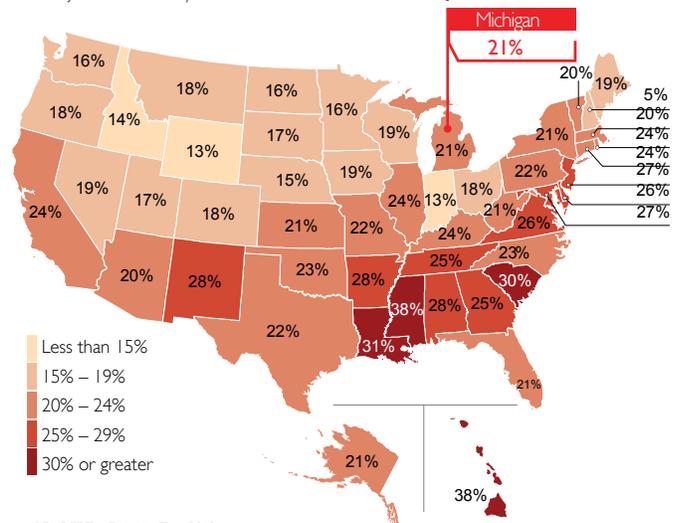
Nationwide, **one in five** young Americans do not graduate on time from high school. In some states it is even worse.



SOURCE: US Department of Education, 2014-15.

### Proportion Who Score Too Low

Out of those who do graduate and try to join the Army, **over one in five** cannot join because they score too low on Armed Forces Qualification Test.



SOURCE: The Education Trust, 2010.

being able to comprehend and communicate complex text—skills essential for today’s and tomorrow’s military, as well as for many other jobs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce.

Given the rigor of the Michigan CCSS for English and mathematics, it is likely that their implementation will result in more military applicants being able to score highly enough on the military’s entrance exam to join (the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery, or ASVAB). Parents will also benefit from the standards, as they will know what their children should learn at each grade level, and can hold schools accountable.

The Michigan CCSS for English and mathematics establish the content and skills that children must learn at each grade level, but they do not tell teachers how to teach, nor do they specify a curriculum; these important decisions remain under teacher or local control. The standards also do not require collecting any new data on children or families.

The National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers spearheaded the development of the CCSS. A wide variety of stakeholders (teachers, academics, business leaders, etc.) participated in the development of the standards, including experts from Michigan. The standards were similar to, and improved upon Michigan’s existing Grade Level Content Expectations and High School Content Expectations.<sup>7</sup>

Forty-three states, including Michigan, as well as the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity and four U.S. territories (American Samoa Islands, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands and U. S. Virgin Islands), have voluntarily adopted the CCSS. Each state has its own process for adopting educational standards; in some states adoption of the standards went through the state legislature, in other states the adoption procedure was through the state board of education. In 2010, the Michigan State Board of Education voted to adopt the more rigorous standards for English language arts and math. Implementation began in the 2011-2012 school year and full implementation is expected during the 2014-15 school year.<sup>8</sup>

Results from Massachusetts demonstrate the importance of rigorous academic standards. In 1993, Massachusetts passed standards-based education reform legislation. Since that

time, students in the Commonwealth have had dramatic academic growth, including leading the nation on the National Assessment of Educational Progress test (also known as NAEP or the Nation’s Report Card), a periodic assessment of what American students know and can do.<sup>9</sup>

## ASSESSMENT IS ESSENTIAL

Education experts agree that standards alone are not enough—research has shown only weak relationships between the quality of state educational standards and achievement test scores. To have an impact on student outcomes, there must be accountability. Standards must be accompanied by assessments based on the standards, and a system for reporting results, so everyone will know how students are really faring.<sup>10</sup> There is considerable confusion

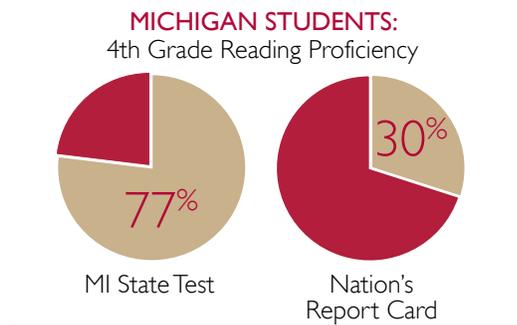
about student achievement levels, because each state developed its own standards and test. For example, in 2009 in Michigan, for 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading, only 30 percent of students scored proficient or higher on the NAEP, versus 77 percent on the state test.<sup>11</sup> If we do not know how students are really performing, we do not know the scope of the problem, nor can we make informed efforts to solve it.

**In addition to core academic content, the Michigan CCSS focus on critical thinking, complex problem solving and effective communication — all essential skills for today and tomorrow’s military, as well as for many other careers.**

Results following implementation of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act demonstrate the importance of accountability in improving outcomes, and the role of accurate measurement: when states were required to use a valid method of computing graduation rates and publicly report the results, graduation rates *increased*.<sup>12</sup> States could no longer manipulate how graduation rates were computed in order to maximize their results. Instead, they had to implement real reforms that contributed to a real change in student outcomes: more students graduating. Rigorous assessment was also a significant component of the Massachusetts school reform effort. They developed an assessment, the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), aligned to their educational standards. Results are reported for individual students, allowing both teachers and parents to see how each child is faring. The MCAS was also high stakes: after an implementation phase, students had to pass the MCAS in 10<sup>th</sup> grade in order to graduate from high school. Experts credit the combination of rigorous standards and aligned assessment for the excellent

## REAL ACCOUNTABILITY

The “Nation’s Report Card” currently helps just states see how they are doing, but common assessments will let individual school districts determine how well they are doing and will also let them learn from the districts that are seeing real changes.



results Massachusetts has achieved in recent years.<sup>13</sup>

Michigan started piloting the assessments aligned to the standards in the spring of 2013, and they will be implemented statewide in the spring of 2016.<sup>14</sup> Assessments allow educators to determine how students are doing and to use this information to improve education by learning what is working in other schools, districts or states.

In order to affect student outcomes, we also need better curricula, compatible with the Michigan CCSS for English and mathematics, as well as improved quality of teaching (including through better pre- and in-service training).<sup>15</sup> Teachers must also receive support to connect the standards to everyday life, develop curricula and lesson plans, and learn how to use assessment data effectively. Districts are implementing curricula, instructional materials, and accountability systems, as well as teacher professional development aligned to the Standards.

The new standards and assessments will not magically turn things around overnight. Because the Michigan CCSS for English and mathematics are more rigorous than prior standards, at first there is likely to be a decrease in student test scores, compared to previous assessments—difficult news to deliver. But rigorous standards and aligned assessments are a solid part of the solution for educating our children, which is essential for not just their future, but also our national security.

## MOVING AHEAD

Military leaders understand that in order to get ahead, all students must be held to high standards and learn both the content and skills necessary for success. The Michigan CCSS for English and mathematics are an important step in this direction and will help ensure that more than one in four young adults will be eligible to join the military. Our state should continue on this course and move forward with the implementation of high-quality, aligned assessments.

## ENDNOTES

- Michigan Department of Education (n.d.) “Common Core Standards Fact Sheet: Frequently Asked Questions.” Retrieved from [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/FAQ\\_4.10.13\\_418299\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/FAQ_4.10.13_418299_7.pdf); Michigan Council of Teachers of Mathematics (n.d.) “Common Core Standards – Questions and Answers.” Retrieved on February 11, 2015 from [https://www.mictm.org/attachments/article/171/Common\\_Core\\_QandA\\_311926\\_7\\_12092010.pdf](https://www.mictm.org/attachments/article/171/Common_Core_QandA_311926_7_12092010.pdf)
- Michigan Department of Education (n.d.) “Common Core Standards Fact Sheet: Frequently Asked Questions.” Retrieved from [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/FAQ\\_4.10.13\\_418299\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/FAQ_4.10.13_418299_7.pdf); Associated Press (2014, August 30). “How is Common Core playing out in all 50 states and DC?” PBS; WETA. Retrieved on February 11, 2015 from <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/50-state-look-common-core-playing-us/>
- According to the 2013 Qualified Military Available (QMA), as obtained through personal communication with the Accession Policy and Joint Advertising, Market Research and Studies teams at the Department of Defense in July 2014.
- U.S. Department of Education (2015, February). “Public high school 4-year adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR) for the United States, the 50 states and the District of Columbia: School years 2010-11 to 2012-13.” Common Core of Data. National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences. Retrieved from [http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/data/ipeds\\_tables/2010-11\\_to\\_2012-13.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/data/ipeds_tables/2010-11_to_2012-13.asp); Theokas, C. (2010). *Shut out of the military: Today's high school education doesn't mean you're ready for today's Army*. Washington, DC: The Education Trust. Retrieved from [http://www.edtrust.org/sites/edtrust.org/files/publications/files/ASVAB\\_4.pdf](http://www.edtrust.org/sites/edtrust.org/files/publications/files/ASVAB_4.pdf)
- Department of Defense Education Activity (n.d.). “All About Military K-12 Partners.” Military K-12 Partners, DODEA. Retrieved from <http://www.militaryk12partners.dodea.edu/about.cfm>
- Murphey, D., Bandy, T., & Moore, K. A. (2012, January). Frequent residential mobility and young children’s well-being. Retrieved from: <http://childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/2012-02ResidentialMobility.pdf>
- Michigan Department of Education (n.d.) “Common Core Standards Fact Sheet: Frequently Asked Questions.” Retrieved from [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/FAQ\\_4.10.13\\_418299\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/FAQ_4.10.13_418299_7.pdf); Michigan Department of Education (n.d.) “What does it mean to be Career & College-Ready?” Retrieved from <http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-28753---,00.html>
- Michigan Department of Education (n.d.) “Common Core Standards Fact Sheet: Frequently Asked Questions.” Retrieved from [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/FAQ\\_4.10.13\\_418299\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/FAQ_4.10.13_418299_7.pdf)
- Haskins, R., Murnane, R., Sawhill, I. V., & Snow, C. (2012, October 2). *Can academic standards boost literacy and close the achievement gap?* Paper. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, The Future of Children. Retrieved from: [www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2012/10/02-boost-literacy-haskins-sawhill](http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2012/10/02-boost-literacy-haskins-sawhill)
- Deans, E. (2010, September 8). Examining the Data: Using Achievement Data to Compare State Standards. Retrieved from: <http://edmoney.newamerica.net/sites/newamerica.net/files/articles/NCLB-NAEP%20proficiency%20by%20state.pdf>
- Editorial (2012, March 25). Graduation rates rise. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from: [http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2012-03-25/opinions/35446713\\_1\\_graduation-rates-dropout-nclb](http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2012-03-25/opinions/35446713_1_graduation-rates-dropout-nclb)
- Mass Insight Education (2013). *Education reform in Massachusetts 1993-2013*. Retrieved from: <http://www.massinsight.com/publications/ACSC/226/file/3/pubs/2013/05/10/EdReformReport.pdf>
- Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (n.d.). “Field Test.” Retrieved on April 29, 2014 from: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/field-test/>
- Michigan Department of Education (n.d.) “Common Core Standards Fact Sheet: Frequently Asked Questions.” Retrieved from [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/FAQ\\_4.10.13\\_418299\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/FAQ_4.10.13_418299_7.pdf); Associated Press (2014, August 30). “How is Common Core playing out in all 50 states and DC?” PBS; WETA. Retrieved on February 11, 2015 from <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/50-state-look-common-core-playing-us/>
- Haskins, R., Murnane, R., Sawhill, I. V., & Snow, C. (2012, October 2). *Can academic standards boost literacy and close the achievement gap?* Paper. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, The Future of Children. Retrieved from: [www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2012/10/02-boost-literacy-haskins-sawhill](http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2012/10/02-boost-literacy-haskins-sawhill)

ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION COUNTY HEALTH RANKINGS – MICHIGAN

	ADULT OBESITY RATE (2010)	HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE (2010-11)	ANNUAL VIOLENT CRIMES (2011)		ADULT OBESITY RATE (2010)	HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE (2010-11)	ANNUAL VIOLENT CRIMES (2011)
Statewide*	32%	77%	47,408	Keweenaw	32%	-	3
Alcona	30	83	16	Lake	32	-	37
Alger	33	-	17	Lapeer	34	86	140
Allegan	34	81	251	Leelanau	27	79	12
Alpena	33	70	66	Lenawee	32	78	237
Antrim	31	87	40	Livingston	27	83	179
Arenac	34	77	31	Luce	35	88	26
Baraga	32	80	16	Mackinac	34	-	25
Barry	37	80	103	Macomb	30	75	2,645
Bay	34	75	332	Manistee	29	78	39
Benzie	32	79	21	Marquette	30	83	109
Berrien	37	78	589	Mason	32	78	70
Branch	35	80	87	Mecosta	31	70	222
Calhoun	37	74	901	Menominee	32	69	28
Cass	31	67	83	Midland	31	83	119
Charlevoix	27	75	43	Missaukee	33	82	5
Cheboygan	33	82	36	Monroe	33	80	366
Chippewa	38	72	88	Montcalm	32	86	137
Clare	29	72	48	Montmorency	32	-	10
Clinton	33	92	70	Muskegon	36	71	755
Crawford	30	73	45	Newaygo	35	74	116
Delta	31	85	51	Oakland	27	78	2,958
Dickinson	30	85	-	Oceana	35	69	45
Eaton	33	75	194	Ogemaw	34	68	46
Emmet	29	81	42	Ontonagon	34	-	7
Genesee	36	72	3,417	Osceola	34	82	68
Gladwin	34	80	45	Oscoda	30	-	28
Gogebic	28	79	-	Otsego	32	85	42
Grand Traverse	31	83	144	Ottawa	26	85	432
Gratiot	37	82	58	Presque Isle	33	-	20
Hillsdale	30	75	91	Roscommon	33	64	46
Houghton	27	87	34	Saginaw	40	75	1,712
Huron	29	84	38	St. Clair	31	78	437
Ingham	31	71	1,523	St. Joseph	33	78	177
Ionia	34	83	118	Sanilac	36	88	84
Iosco	34	69	59	Schoolcraft	28	88	22
Iron	31	84	19	Shiawassee	35	81	170
Isabella	31	78	115	Tuscola	31	81	88
Jackson	34	76	632	Van Buren	32	72	252
Kalamazoo	31	74	1,065	Washtenaw	23	80	1,121
Kalkaska	30	76	52	Wayne	34	70	20,809
Kent	31	75	2,517	Wexford	33	79	114

\*The statewide high school graduation rate is for 2012-13.



---

**MISSION: READINESS**  
MILITARY LEADERS FOR KIDS

---

**Michigan Office:**

Boji Tower – Suite 1220  
124 W. Allegan Street  
Lansing, MI 48933  
(517) 371-3565  
[www.MissionReadiness.org](http://www.MissionReadiness.org)

**National Office:**

1212 New York Ave NW  
Suite 300  
Washington, DC 20005  
(202) 464-5224  
[www.MissionReadiness.org](http://www.MissionReadiness.org)

