



MICHIGAN
ACHIEVES:
BECOMING
A TOP TEN
EDUCATION
STATE

— 2015 —
STATE OF MICHIGAN
EDUCATION REPORT



The Education Trust—Midwest

MISSION:

The **Education Trust-Midwest (ETM)** promotes high academic achievement for all Michigan students at all levels – pre-kindergarten through college. Founded in Michigan in 2010, ETM works alongside parents, educators, policymakers, and community and business leaders in Michigan to transform schools and colleges into institutions that serve all students well. Lessons learned in these efforts, together with unflinching data analyses and research, shape the organization’s work with the goal of closing the gaps in opportunity and achievement that consign far too many young people – especially those who are African American, Latino, American Indian, or from low-income families – to lives at the margins of the American mainstream.

ETM is part of the national Education Trust, which is headquartered in Washington, D.C. Founded in 1996, The Education Trust speaks up for students, especially those whose needs and potential are often overlooked. The Education Trust (Ed Trust) is widely recognized as an unrivaled source of effective advocacy, expert analysis and testimony, concise written and spoken presentations, research, and technical assistance to districts, colleges, and community-based organizations. Ed Trust’s California division, Ed Trust-West, has worked to close achievement gaps for more than 13 years in the state of California. Regardless of location or context, Ed Trust, Ed Trust-Midwest and Ed Trust-West maintain a relentless focus on improving the education of all students, particularly those the system traditionally has left behind.

WHAT WE DO

- We serve as a nonpartisan source of information, data, and expertise about Michigan education to Michiganders and stakeholders, including policymakers, education and business leaders, parents, community-based organizations, media partners, and non-profits.
- We conduct data analyses and research to identify best practices across the nation and state to share and help build broader understanding of opportunity gaps and how to close them.
- We work alongside and in support of educators in their schools, as well as parents, to equip them with the information they need to influence policy and improve the quality of teaching and learning in Michigan’s schools.

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To learn more and join the movement, go to: MichiganAchieves.com.

For the digital version of this report and for our 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014 State of Michigan Education reports, go to: edtrustmidwest.org.

To request a presentation or community conversation about this report or other ETM reports, contact:

ETMinfo@edtrustmidwest.org.

DEAR FELLOW MICHIGANDERS,

Michigan is truly at a crossroads. After years of struggling to recover from the Great Recession, Michigan is beginning to rebuild its economy. More Michiganders are getting back to work and using their many talents to serve their families and communities. Storefronts, once dark, are blossoming with new life in Detroit, Grand Rapids, Lansing, and elsewhere across the state.

Our public education system, however, is not on the rebound. Over the past ten years, our state has fallen behind much of the rest of the country on national education rankings. Since 2003, Michigan's relative rank has fallen from 28th in the nation to 38th in fourth-grade reading. In fact, our fourth-graders now read at lower levels today than they did 10 years ago. Compared to their peers around the country, Michigan's African American students now rank 42nd of 45 states in fourth-grade reading while our Latino students rank at about the national average.

What's more, if Michigan stays on its current course, our state could fall to the bottom ten states for student learning in both reading and math by 2030, according to Education Trust-Midwest's new analysis. Within the next five years, if nothing changes, Michigan will be trying to catch up with what had been America's chronically lowest-performing education states, like Arkansas. Michigan's white students are now on track to be 49th in the country before 2030 in fourth-grade reading.

For our most vulnerable low-income students and children of color – who are too often segregated in Michigan's worst performing traditional public and charter schools – our state's continued academic stagnation and decline will mean the path out of poverty will continue to narrow. Opportunities to attain the skills necessary to compete in our global economy will be few, and the chances that these students will get the postsecondary experiences they need to succeed in Michigan's new and developing industries will dwindle.

Our students deserve better. Now more than ever, all Michigan children need a world-class education to ensure their success in life. At a time when the middle class is shrinking and global competition is growing, college- and career-ready skills continue to offer shelter from economic hardship and a ticket to upward mobility.

We must change. And the good news is, we can. Leading education states show us how we can rebuild our public education system just as we are doing with our economy. If we invest in our teachers, for example, we can improve fourth-grade literacy by nearly 17 points on average – that's equivalent to just under two years more learning for our young students. That's why we should start with one of the most important predictors of students' school and life success: early literacy.

a Top Ten Education State, measures Michigan's educational performance and progress from kindergarten through postsecondary education. We take a close look at not just student learning, but also the quality of school conditions that support that learning. There, too, Michigan has troubling weak spots. Our state currently ranks 42nd of 47 for funding equity, meaning our state has some of the biggest gaps in resources between high-poverty and low-poverty school districts. We see similar gaps in how well we pay our teachers in high-poverty schools, who have some of the most important jobs in America.

This report also launches a new initiative – Michigan Achieves – to make Michigan a top ten education state. It lays out an ambitious vision and roadmap for making Michigan a top ten education state by 2030, starting with what we know is essential for success in life and school: making sure all Michigan children read well by third grade. This work is based on three years of study of leading states' efforts to improve their teaching and learning levels, including extensive analysis of national data; interviews with leaders who have been key to those states' success; and The Education Trust's 25 years of experience working in dozens of states.

This effort will not be easy. One-off professional development, unproven literacy programs – these marginal strategies will produce just that: marginal improvement. Michigan's educational performance is so abysmal, the state needs comprehensive systemic changes to transform the current system from an increasingly fragile, lethargic, and highly decentralized system to a dramatically different system: one with far stronger state and local leadership that invests in, supports, and holds the system and its actors much more accountable.

Once, Michigan was a place where families came to find new opportunities, good public schools, and to live the American dream. We can be that place again. We must rebuild our public schools just as we have worked so hard to rebuild our economy. **This will require a deeper commitment by everyone – from state leaders to district leaders to parents – to implement and invest in the best ways to accelerate progress.**

We recognize that thousands of school leaders, teachers, and families strive daily to prepare all students for college and careers, even as many lack critical tools and resources. We applaud and support their efforts. It is with them in mind that we offer this report. It is a clarion call for all Michiganders to join them in strengthening our public schools.

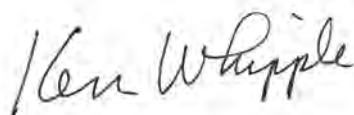
The decision is ours. We know we can do it. Let's start today.



AMBER ARELLANO

Executive Director

The Education Trust-Midwest



KEN WHIPPLE

Chair

Michigan Achieves Leadership Council

MICHIGAN ACHIEVES:

BECOMING A TOP TEN EDUCATION STATE

BY

SARAH W. LENHOFF

DIRECTOR OF POLICY AND RESEARCH

AMBER ARELLANO

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SUNIL JOY

DATA AND POLICY ANALYST



The Education Trust—Midwest

TWO MICHIGANS: THE CHOICE IS OURS

THIS REPORT LAUNCHES A NEW INITIATIVE, MICHIGAN ACHIEVES, TO MAKE MICHIGAN A TOP TEN EDUCATION STATE.

As the Education Trust-Midwest's 2015 State of Michigan Education report, this report also measures Michigan's educational performance and progress from kindergarten through postsecondary education. It tracks how our students have performed over the last decade and projects how Michigan will compare to the rest of the country in 2030, if we do not change. Finally, it lays out an alternate path – a better Michigan with a top ten education system – along with a roadmap on how to get there.

In the coming years, Ed Trust-Midwest will track Michigan's progress on academic and opportunity metrics to see if we are on track to becoming a top ten education state by 2030. To get there, we must become a top state for improvement over the next five years. In our report, we lay out key levers for systemic change to make that happen.

As our organization has documented, over the last decade Michigan students' performance – no matter what color their skin is or how much money their parents earn – has fallen behind much of the rest of the country on national education rankings. Since 2003, Michigan white student achievement's relative rank has fallen from 13th to 45th in the nation in fourth-grade reading. African American student achievement – long a weakness in Michigan – continues to be unacceptably low, now ranking 42nd of 45 states in fourth-grade reading. And while our Latino students rank at about the national average for fourth-grade reading, Hispanic students' relative rank has fallen dramatically in other subjects, such as eighth-grade math — from 4th to 43rd during the same time period. *To learn more about Michigan's school performance over the last decade, go to ETM's 2014 and other annual State of Michigan Education Reports at edtrustmidwest.org.*

Indeed, no one was as surprised as we were in recent years when new data revealed how dramatic these declines have been. So we understand denial when we

hear it. And we hear it a lot. In many education circles – both charter and traditional public, in communities as diverse as Ann Arbor and Detroit – we often hear a similar response to this information: “Yes, but what matters is student growth. We’re doing well in growth.”

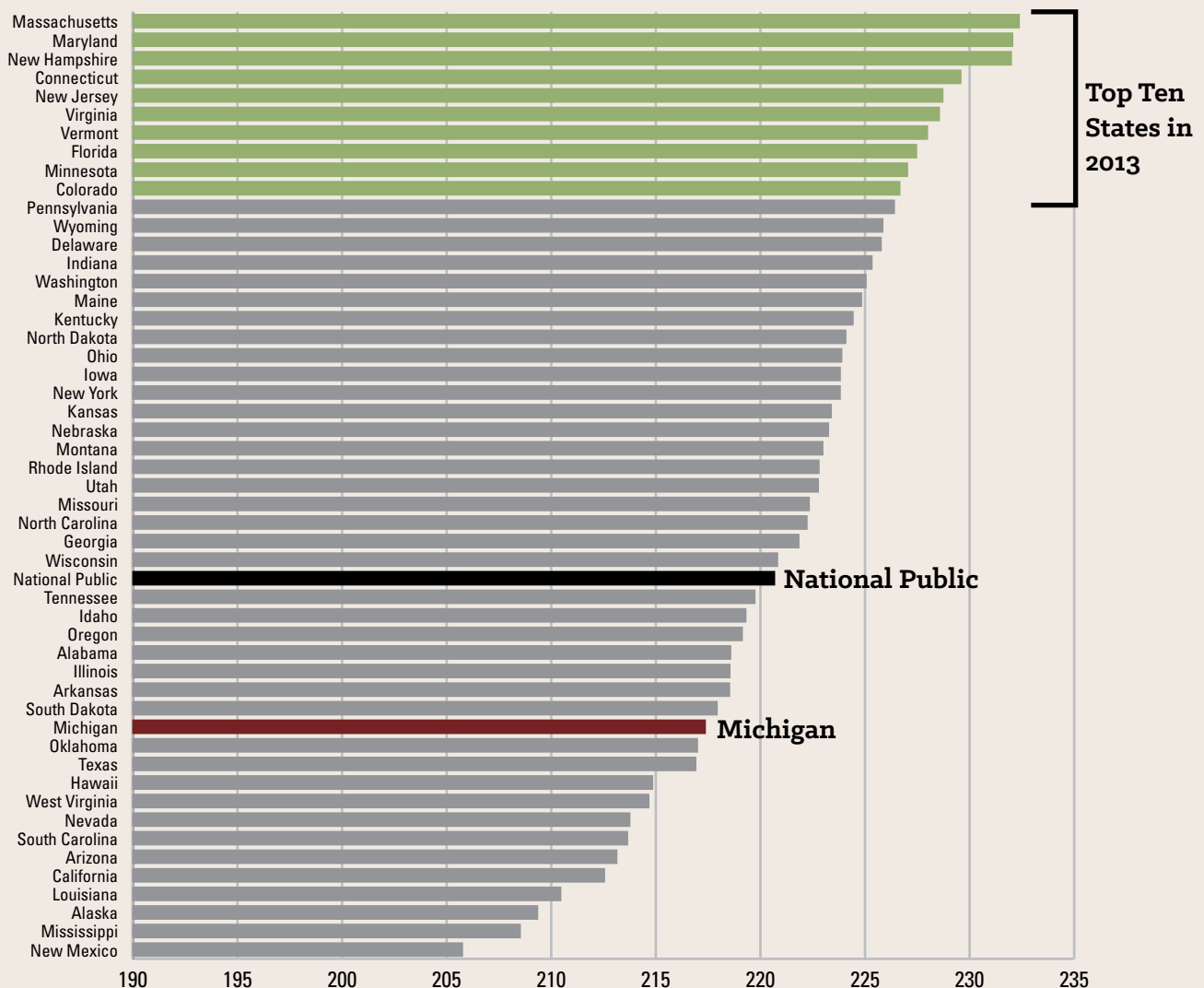
That’s simply not true; it’s a Michigan myth. When we examined national data for learning improvement, Michigan’s decline has been steady and sharp. Today, Michigan is in the bottom six states for improvement in fourth-grade reading, according to the national assessment

available from 2003 to 2013. One reason why many local educators believe their students’ growth is strong may be because typically they compare their children to other local students or the Michigan average, which is very low compared to the national average for improvement.

If the state stays on its current course – and other states’ improvement does not decline or accelerate – Michigan will be ranked 44th in the country by 2030 in fourth-grade reading, playing catch-up with Alabama, which is on track to beat the national average for student achievement in

TEN POINT GAP BETWEEN MICHIGAN AND TOP TEN STATES IN EARLY LITERACY – EQUIVALENT TO ABOUT A YEAR OF LEARNING

Average Scale Score, NAEP Grade 4 - Reading - All Students (2013)



Source: NAEP Data Explorer, NCES (Proficient Scale Score = 238; Basic Scale Score = 208), 2013

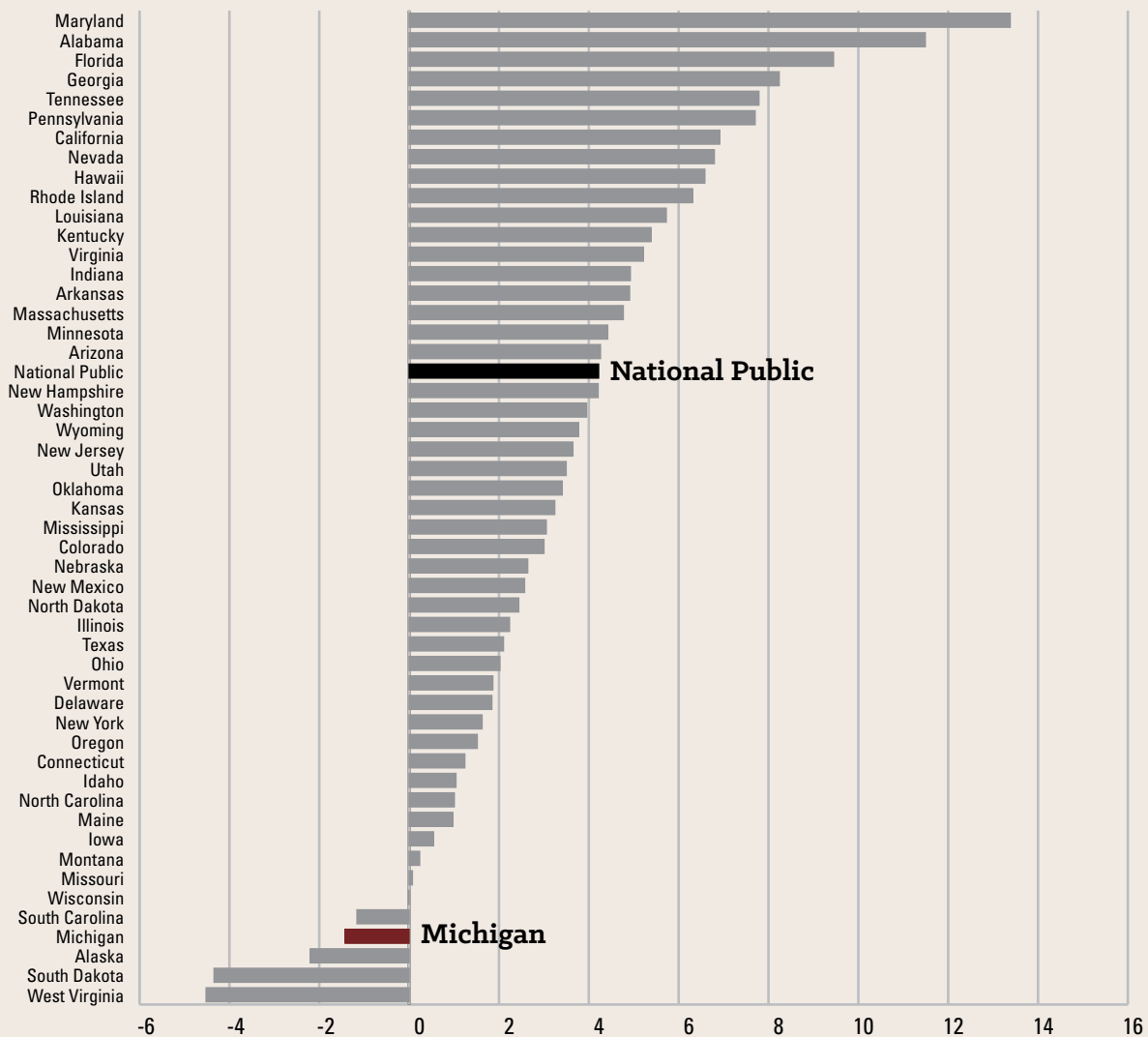
fourth-grade reading by 2030. What's more, if Michigan stays on its current course, our state could fall to the bottom ten states for student learning in both reading and math by 2030, according to The Education Trust-Midwest's new analysis. Within the next five years, if nothing changes, Michigan will be trying to catch up with what had been America's chronically lowest-performing education states, like Arkansas. Contrary to conventional wisdom, problems with school performance transcend race and class, too. For example, Michigan's white students are now on track to be 49th in the country before 2030 in fourth-grade reading. *To see how all Michigan students*

are performing on the national assessment, go to page 41.

Some would say Michigan's education rankings have declined so rapidly over the last decade because of our economic struggles. That's a legitimate concern, but it doesn't explain everything. To be sure, state and school budgets suffered greatly during the Great Recession; in some communities, those budgets and important investments like teacher salaries still have not recovered. Some Michigan households have not recovered entirely, either. The percentage of Michigan low-income students has climbed

MICHIGAN ONE OF ONLY SIX STATES WITH NEGATIVE IMPROVEMENT FOR EARLY LITERACY SINCE 2003

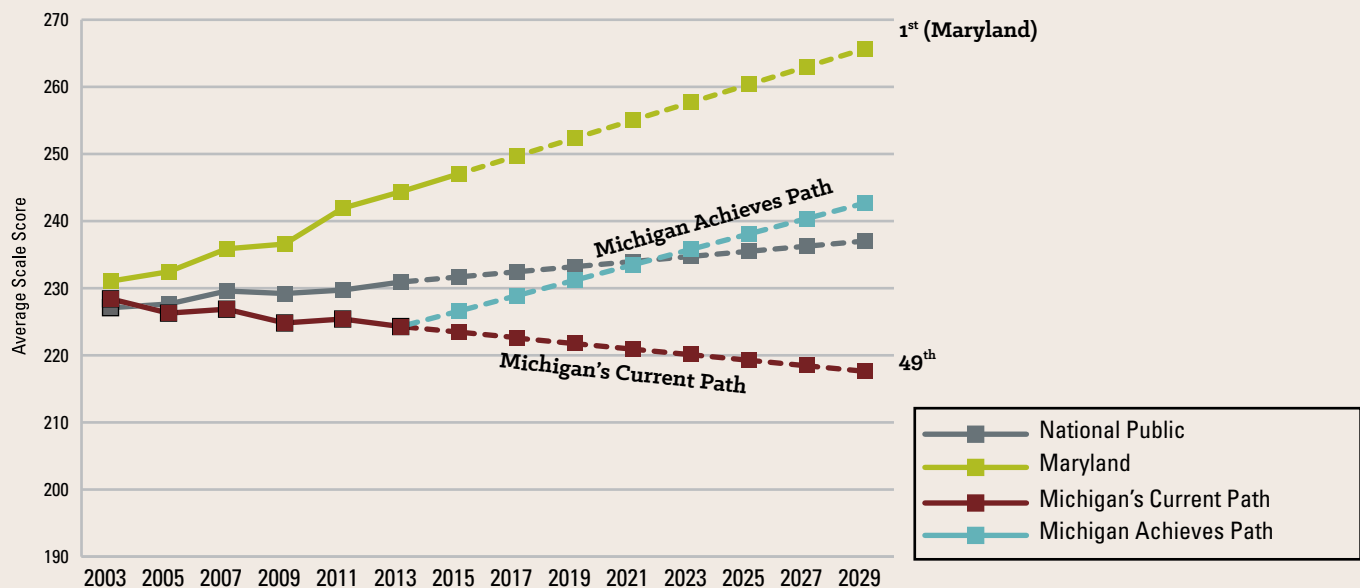
Average Scale Score Change, NAEP Grade 4 - Reading - All Students (2003-13)



Source: NAEP Data Explorer, NCES (Proficient Scale Score = 238; Basic Scale Score = 208), 2003-2013

MICHIGAN WHITE STUDENTS ON TRACK TO BE 49TH IN EARLY LITERACY BY 2030 IF WE STAY ON OUR CURRENT PATH

NAEP Grade 4 – Reading – White Students



Source: NAEP Data Explorer, NCES (Proficient Scale Score = 238; Basic Scale Score = 208), 2003-2013

steadily, jumping from 36 percent in 2006 to 47 percent in 2014.ⁱ

But the story of Michigan’s education decline is more complicated. States with similar levels of employment – and similar per pupil spending – have out-paced Michigan’s student improvement for years. In fact, Michigan’s student improvement rate is among the lowest in the nation for some subjects. While Michigan’s achievement has been stagnant or, in some instances, declining, most other states have improved at a much faster pace. Leaders in top-performing or improving states like Massachusetts, Florida, and Tennessee say the difference is that they have been willing to commit to and invest in the right levers for change, throw out antiquated local control models, and utilize strategies that boost effectiveness from the classroom and school level up to the state department of education. Leading states also demonstrate that poverty is far from destiny. In fact, Michigan’s average eighth-grader overall actually had slightly lower scores in math than Massachusetts’ average low-

income eighth-grader.

Our state leaders’ decision-making over the next five years will have an impact for years to come – and on generations of Michigan’s children. Consider: today’s kindergartners will be a few years out of high school in 2030. Based on the public education system’s current performance, most of them will not be ready to succeed in the jobs of tomorrow. According to an analysis by Business Leaders for Michigan, 70 percent of Michigan jobs in 2020 will require some education beyond high school.ⁱⁱ

Michiganders have an urgent choice, between the Michigan we could become – a better Michigan – or the Michigan we’re on track to be. Much will be impacted by our decision-making, from our state’s economic future and social vitality to our children’s and grandchildren’s job success and life outcomes.

The current path: We can continue to maintain the

status quo, become one of the nation's worst states for public education, and doom our children and state to become increasingly poor, isolated, and deprived of opportunities to learn and thrive in a globally competitive world.

Or we can choose a new path.

The path of action: Michigan can be a top ten education state by 2030. First, by getting on track to become a top improvement state within five years. That means taking action now, on some of the most proven strategies for boosting student learning, particularly in reading.

To change course, we must change. The good news is, Michigan has taken some big steps forward on some of the most promising, systemic statewide improvement strategies today. We are poised to build on these advances, if we have the appropriate state investment and leadership. Michigan is implementing high college- and career-ready standards for the first time this year, one of the most promising foundational strategies to raise achievement in more than two decades. This was the first step in Massachusetts, Tennessee and other states' turnarounds for public education

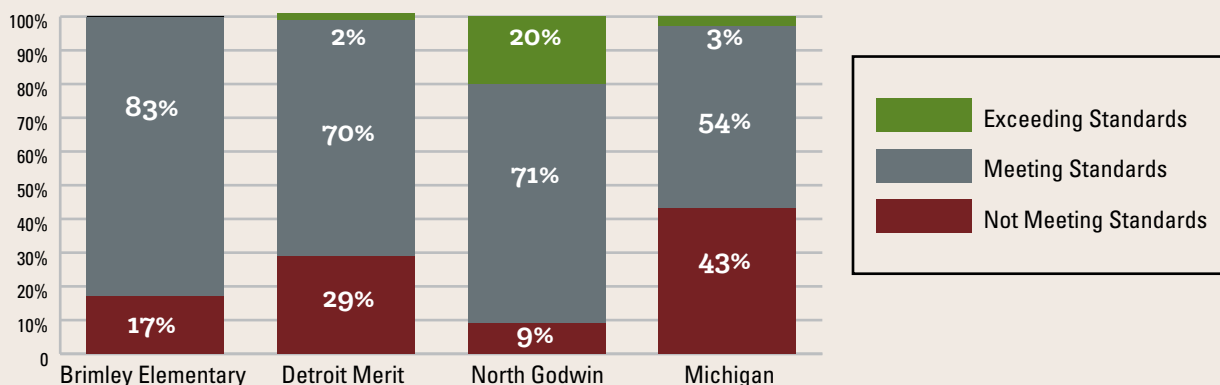
WE CAN CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN THE STATUS QUO, BECOME ONE OF THE NATION'S WORST STATES FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION, AND DOOM OUR CHILDREN AND STATE TO BECOME INCREASINGLY POOR, ISOLATED, AND DEPRIVED OF OPPORTUNITIES TO THRIVE IN A GLOBALLY COMPETITIVE WORLD.

OR WE CAN CHOOSE A NEW PATH.

– and Michigan is taking that enormous step forward now. And state leaders have developed a blueprint for a transformational statewide system of educator support and accountability, which has been essential to catapulting Massachusetts, Florida, and Tennessee to become model education states, as well. These two major steps alone over several years – alongside thoughtful, faithful implementation and targeted state investment – have driven a true

TOP MICHIGAN SCHOOLS SHOW WHAT'S POSSIBLE FOR IMPROVING EARLY READING ACHIEVEMENT

MEAP Grade 4 - Reading - Low-Income Students - 2013



Source: Michigan Department of Education, MEAP 2013

transformation in school practices in Tennessee. It now leads the nation for student improvement in fourth-grade reading between 2011 and 2013, and those gains are being shared among both white and African American children.

The bad news is, even as the state's economy recovers, major investments in proven strategies to improve public education have not. Many of the nation's most promising transformation efforts have been put on pause or neglected to be implemented in Michigan. While the governor and legislature rightly have supported adoption of rigorous new standards and assessments to better prepare students for college and career, they have not invested in any training or support of teachers to help them teach to those higher standards – even while leaders in every leading education state say this has been instrumental to their schools' success.

Leaders in leading states also recognize that raising teaching and school leadership quality is essential to their success. Indeed, this is one lever that all high-performing states share in common. Yet the Michigan Department of Education and the Michigan Legislature have had four years to invest in a statewide educator evaluation and support system to ensure that teachers and principals – our schools' most valuable resources – are given the feedback they need to improve and are held accountable for student learning. They still have not done so.

BECOMING TOP TEN WITH EARLY LITERACY

To become a top ten education state by 2030, Michigan needs to focus on and invest in the highest leverage strategies and learning opportunities for students. To be sure, there's a lot to do, and we can't do it all at once. That's why it's important to start where research and cost-effectiveness meet: early literacy.

Early literacy is an area of education research where the evidence is very clear on what it takes to improve student

learning – skilled teachers who can implement instructional methods related to vocabulary acquisition, phonemic awareness, and letter recognition in context and in line with children's cultural backgrounds; high standards and regular diagnostic assessments to track student progress; and targeted investment in early literacy programs with proven results.ⁱⁱⁱ One study on Chicago's Child-Parent program, which integrates improvements in pre-K through third grade, found a long-term return to society of \$8.24 for every dollar spent during the first four to six years of school.^{iv} Governor Rick Snyder has recommended that we invest about \$25 million in improving literacy by third grade this year. If this investment resulted in a similar return, that \$25 million would benefit Michigan to the tune of \$206 million.

Indeed, when children read well by third grade, they are dramatically more likely to succeed not only in school, but in life. They're much more likely to excel in school, go on to college, participate in the job market, and even be paid more. On the other hand, when students are not proficient in reading by third grade, there is a much greater risk that society will have to spend more on them for the rest of their lives. They are more likely to drop out of school, break the law, require unemployment or other government assistance, and earn much less than students who graduate from high school and college.^v

An effective focus on early literacy also would build on one of Michigan's emerging educational strengths. One of the state's most hopeful actions in the past few years was investing in and committing to pre-K for all Michigan students. But if Michigan leaders do not continue that level of commitment in students' early K-12 careers, they risk losing the benefits of that public investment. Students who catch up in pre-K, only to attend some of the nation's worst performing traditional and charter public schools in kindergarten, first, and second grade, often will be no better off than they might have been without it.

That's why if Michigan is going to become a top ten

TWO PATHS FOR MICHIGAN'S STUDENTS

Michigan leaders have two paths to choose for our students, and their choice will have an enormous impact on students' life trajectories, outcomes, and contributions to society. The current path, in which the vast majority of our young students are not proficient in reading by third grade, will mean higher dropout rates, higher unemployment, and more reliance on government assistance for too many Michiganders.

But we have another choice. We can choose the Michigan Achieves path and make the tough commitments and investments required to ensure more of our students are reading proficiently by third grade, graduating on time, and being prepared for success in a competitive, global economy.

MICHIGAN'S CURRENT PATH

- Less likely to find regular employment.ⁱ
- More likely to drop out of school.ⁱⁱ
- Spotty school attendance.ⁱⁱⁱ
- More likely to develop aggressive behaviors.^{iv}
- More likely to become young mothers.^v
- More likely to rely on government assistance.^{vi}
- Numerous infractions with law enforcement.^{vii}

**NOT PROFICIENT
IN READING BY THIRD GRADE**

MICHIGAN ACHIEVES PATH

- More likely to participate in the job market and be paid more.^{viii}
- More likely to graduate college within four years.^{ix}
- More likely to enroll in college.^x
- Strong school attendance.^{xi}
- Six times less likely to become young mothers.^{xii}

**PROFICIENT
IN READING BY THIRD GRADE**

i Jason Breslow, "By the Numbers: Dropping Out of High School," *Frontline*, September 21, 2012, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/education/dropout-nation/by-the-numbers-dropping-out-of-high-school/>.

ii Donald J. Hernandez, "Double Jeopardy: How Third-Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation," (Baltimore, MD: Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2011). <http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/AECF-DoubleJeopardy-2012-Full.pdf>

iii Leila Fiester, "Early Warning Confirmed: A Research Update on Third-Grade Reading," (Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2013). <http://gradelevelreading.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/EarlyWarningConfirmed.pdf>

iv Sarah Miles and Deborah Stipek, "Contemporaneous and longitudinal associations between social behavior and literacy achievement in a sample of low-income elementary school children," *Child Development*, no. 77 (2006): 103-117.

v Andrew Sum, Ishwar Khatiwada, and Joseph McLaughlin, "The consequences of dropping out of high school: joblessness and jailing for high school dropouts and the high cost for taxpayers," (Boston, Mass.: Center for Labor Market Studies, 2009). http://www.northeastern.edu/clms/wp-content/uploads/The_Consequences_of_Dropping_Out_of_High_School.pdf

vi Center for Labor Market Studies, "Left Behind: The Nation's Dropout Crisis," (Boston, Mass.:

Center for Labor Market Studies, 2009). http://www.rapsa.org/rapsa/pdf/CLMS_2009_Dropout_Report.pdf

vii Sum et al., "The consequences of dropping out of high school: joblessness and jailing for high school dropouts and the high cost for taxpayers."

viii Noah Berger and Peter Fisher, "A Well-Educated Workforce is Key to State Prosperity," (Washington, D.C.: Economic Analysis and Research Network, 2013). <http://www.epi.org/publication/states-education-productivity-growth-foundations/>

ix Sum et al., "The consequences of dropping out of high school: joblessness and jailing for high school dropouts and the high cost for taxpayers."

x Joy Lesnick, Robert George, Cheryl Smithgall, and Julia Gwynne, "Reading on grade level in third grade: How is it related to high school performance and college enrollment?" (Chicago: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, 2010). http://www.chapinhall.org/sites/default/files/Reading_on_Grade_Level_111710.pdf

xi Leila Fiester, "Early Warning Confirmed: A Research Update on Third-Grade Reading," (Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2013). <http://gradelevelreading.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/EarlyWarningConfirmed.pdf>

xii Sum et al., "The consequences of dropping out of high school: joblessness and jailing for high school dropouts and the high cost for taxpayers."

education state by 2030, it needs to start with what we know is essential for success in life and school: making sure all Michigan students read well by third grade. Michiganders and state leaders can invest now in a comprehensive plan to make Michigan top ten in improvement in early literacy within the next five years – and catch up our students to the rest of the nation. Or we can pay later, with our children’s futures and our taxpayer dollars. It’s our choice.

Thankfully, Michigan also can benefit from the successful work of leading education states that have shown what can be done to improve their public education systems in a relatively short amount of time. Michigan’s strategies and investment must be based on what we know works, from research and from efforts in other states. Our efforts will require holistic, systemic change that focuses on high-leverage strategies for improvement, from classrooms on up to the state systems that hold them accountable.

Take Florida. Since 2003, Florida’s fourth-graders have gained an average of almost ten points on the national reading assessment. That’s a remarkable gain, equivalent to about a year of additional instruction. Florida leaders attribute their success in large part to investing in training teachers on research-based reading instruction and providing diagnostic assessments to monitor student weaknesses to intervene early on when the state’s young students fall behind. If Michigan commits to supporting our teachers, we can potentially improve fourth-grade literacy achievement by an average of nearly 17 points on the national assessment.

Indeed, Florida leaders acknowledged how much early reading matters when they implemented and invested in a statewide strategy to boost achievement with their youngest students in 2002. By 2006, the state had trained 56,000 teachers in research-based reading instruction in grades K-5. To do this, Florida’s leaders reprioritized approximately \$80 million in state and federal funds to pay for teacher training, in addition to reading diagnostic tests and summer literacy camps. Over time, the state also raised academic standards;

installed a statewide educator support and evaluation system; and trained teachers on how to teach more rigorous, complex content.

Florida is far from the only state from which to learn. The most improved state in the country on fourth-grade reading on the national assessment between 2011 and 2013 was Tennessee, a state that also invested in supporting its teachers. That’s remarkable, considering that not long ago Tennessee was performing lower than Michigan in fourth-grade reading. Today Tennessee is on track to be 14th in the nation for fourth-grade reading performance by 2030.

Tennessee state leaders attribute its tremendous educational turnaround to its deep focus on raising the quality of teaching and school leadership. In 2010, Tennessee began to build a statewide educator evaluation and support system, grounded in its long-standing data system that tracks student and teacher performance over time. The system has become the backbone of Tennessee’s educational transformation.

Tennessee also underwent a multi-year effort beginning in 2011 to provide professional development around its college- and-career ready standards. The effort consisted of a statewide leadership council responsible for selecting top performing teachers to serve as coaches for other teachers statewide. Coaches themselves received literacy training from the University of Pittsburgh’s Institute for Learning, which provided curricular materials aligned to higher standards. The state also contracted with a vendor, Voyager Sopris Learning, for reading training materials. *To learn more about leading education states’ successful strategies to improve their public schools, go to page 16 and our website at edtrustmidwest.org/leading-states*

But these leading states don’t own the playbook on improving early literacy. There are examples of schools across Michigan that have implemented research-based reading strategies, supported their teachers in teaching to higher

standards, and used diagnostic assessments to track progress.

Brimley Elementary is countering student achievement trends in Michigan – and showing that it is possible to provide a high quality education to all students. Brimley, Michigan is a tiny town of fewer than 1,500 residents, about 25 miles southwest of Sault St. Marie, located right on Lake Superior. More than half of the elementary school's 271 students in the 2013-14 school year were American Indian and 59 percent were low-income. In Michigan, about 58 percent of American Indian students and 48 percent of low-income students are proficient in reading by third grade. But Brimley's students perform much better than those in most Michigan schools. About 77 percent of students at Brimley were reading on grade level in the third grade on the 2013-14 Michigan reading assessment, including 77 percent of American Indian students.

That kind of high performance doesn't happen by accident. Through sustained commitment to proven practices, particularly in early literacy, Brimley's educators are working to inspire a new generation to love reading, reach high expectations for success, and become leaders in Michigan and beyond. In the school's fourth-grade class, the big reward for good behavior is getting to read for an hour. Students clamor to find a cozy spot, and many of them select hefty books well beyond what most fourth-graders in the state can handle. Teachers and leaders at Brimley have put a laser-like focus on improving early literacy, and they have seen first-hand how important a good foundation in reading is to a child's future success in school and in life.

And in the lower peninsula, despite serious challenges with poverty and employment in their communities, North Godwin Elementary, located in Godwin Heights in West Michigan, and Detroit Merit Charter Academy on the east side of Detroit serve as proven models of how changes in school practices – along with tremendous school leadership and highly effective teachers – can radically transform a school from mediocre to truly exceptional. They are

important proof points for Michigan – and models of what's possible for all of our students. *Read more about the strategies of leading Michigan schools on page 18.*

Unfortunately, the inspiring work in these schools is too rare in Michigan. Our teaching population – in which 30 percent of our teachers have been teaching for 16 or more years – has not consistently been trained on the most up-to-date reading instructional techniques. This is notable, given the explosion of research about what works to raise reading levels among young children over the last decade. And Michigan's leaders approved more rigorous college- and career-ready standards back in 2010 but never followed through with training our educators and, in turn, our students, on how to reach them.

Michigan leaders and citizens can act and invest now – or we can pay later, with our children's futures and our taxpayer dollars. State strategies and investment must be based on what we know works, from research and from efforts in other states. This will require holistic, systemic change that focuses on high-leverage strategies for improvement, from classrooms on up to the state systems that hold them accountable.

LEARNING FROM LEADING STATES AND SCHOOLS

BY SUNIL JOY



A DEDICATED REFORM AGENDA FOR ALL MASSACHUSETTS STUDENTS

IN 1993, REPUBLICAN GOVERNOR WILLIAM WELD SIGNED THE MASSACHUSETTS EDUCATION REFORM ACT (MERA).ⁱ This law would bring sweeping changes to the entire educational landscape in Massachusetts, elevating the Commonwealth to one of the top performing states both nationally and globally. Today, if Massachusetts were a country, its eight-graders would rank 2nd in the world in science and 6th in the world in math, trailing only places like Singapore or Hong Kong.

MERA represented a “grand bargain” between the K-12 community, business groups, and educational advocacy groups statewide. In return for standards-based reforms – including greater educator and school accountability – state leaders dramatically increased the level of public dollars devoted to high-needs schools. The Education Trust-Midwest highlights these reforms in-depth in the 2014 State of Michigan Education Report, *Stalled to Soaring: Michigan’s Path to Educational Recovery*.ⁱⁱ

But Massachusetts’ reform agenda did not simply end after the passage of this landmark legislation. In 2005, Massachusetts became the first state in the country to create an agency dedicated to early education and after-school services. The Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) consolidated former offices to provide a much more streamlined system for early education, moving away from the “silo” approach in years past. The primary role of the department includes providing financial assistance for low-income families to participate in child care or afterschool programs, overseeing preschool special education funds, providing professional development and support for early education professionals, and others.ⁱⁱⁱ

A few years later, Governor Deval Patrick initiated the “Commonwealth Readiness Project.”^{iv} The Readiness Project represented an ambitious set of goals that by 2020 would provide a high-quality education for all Massachusetts students, beginning from birth. This project also represented a continuation of the original reforms first set out in 1993. Although like many of Massachusetts’ reforms the project provided a comprehensive set of initiatives for all ages, we highlight some of the early childhood initiatives below:

- Incremental increases in annual funding to achieve universal pre-K access.

- Expansion of full-day kindergarten programs for high-needs districts.
- The creation of a statewide birth-to-school-age taskforce, intended to ensure an all-encompassing set of strategies in child development, specifically for low-income families.^v
- Creation of a statewide child and youth data reporting system, helping to ease the transition for children moving between schools and communities. Known as the “Readiness Passport,” this tool would provide every child’s family access to their educational experiences and provide a comprehensive record of services, interventions and supports.

Massachusetts’ continued commitment to high quality educational outcomes for all kids, beginning from birth, should serve as a model for our state. A model that continually seeks to improve in order to provide the best possible educational opportunities for all Michigan children.



TENNESSEE’S PATH TOWARD THE TOP: HIGHER STANDARDS AND SUPPORT FOR ALL TEACHERS

FOR YEARS, TENNESSEE WAS NOT REGARDED AS A GREAT STATE FOR EDUCATION. In fact, it ranked lower than Michigan in 2003 for fourth-grade math on the national assessment. Ten years later, Tennessee now outranks Michigan. Indeed, in recent years, Tennessee posted some of the largest gains on the national assessment. On the 2013 national eighth-grade reading assessment, Tennessee’s average score was about six points higher than it was in 2011, for students overall and for low-income students. The average score for African American eighth-graders was 10 points higher in reading in 2013 than 2011. That’s the equivalent of about an extra year of learning for African American eighth-graders in Tennessee.

These big gains didn’t happen overnight, but through strong leadership, a strategic focus on teaching quality, and sustained investment. This led to major reforms in effective teaching and school leadership along with support for all teachers in higher standards.

EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Tennessee has put a laser-like focus on effective teaching, making educator evaluation and improvement a priority. The Volunteer State was one of the first in the nation to create a value-added data

system, which helps educators analyze data to inform instruction and target professional development. Tennessee also requires that all teachers, regardless of experience level, receive annual evaluations that consider student achievement data, student growth data, and classroom observations.^{vi}

SUPPORT FOR ALL TEACHERS IN HIGHER STANDARDS

After taking a close look at its own students, Tennessee found that a very small percentage actually had the skills necessary to enter college or the workforce.^{vii} State leaders saw this need, and in turn, adopted new and more rigorous college and-career ready standards in all grades.

Instead of leaving training of new standards to local districts, Tennessee spearheaded state-led efforts to ensure that teachers were prepared to teach the new and more rigorous standards. Tennessee led a statewide effort to train nearly *all* of their teachers in college- and career-ready standards in math and reading. As the largest effort to provide professional development to teachers in the state's history, a rigorous study of the effort found "consistent and significant" impacts on both instruction and classroom practice in just a few years.^{viii} Support was also provided through consultation from the Institute of Learning out of the University of Pittsburgh and Voyager Sopris, which provided guidance on reading intervention curriculums in grades K-3. And in 2014, the Tennessee state board of education adopted new higher standards for children from birth to age five, through the Tennessee Early Childhood Education Early Learning Developmental Standards.^{ix}



FLORIDA'S UPWARD TRAJECTORY: COMPREHENSIVE EARLY LITERACY STRATEGIES

IN 2002, THE STATE OF FLORIDA EMBARKED ON A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY AIMED AT BOOSTING EARLY LITERACY. Many experts agree that third grade is the pivotal point where a child goes from "learning to

read" towards "reading to learn." Students unable to read by this point are more likely to continue falling further behind in middle and high school.

Florida took a multi-tiered approach to address early literacy, which included early diagnostic tools for identifying students with reading problems, intensive reading plans for struggling readers, and additional instructional support for teachers. The state also required students not proficient on the third grade state reading assessment to repeat 3rd grade. The requirement did, however, allow for "good cause" exemptions. This primarily gave exemptions for students with disabilities, English Language Learners, and other exemptions.

Among the services provided to students who did end up being held back were: 90-minute reading instructional blocks, summer literacy camps, placement with a "high-performing teacher" in the subsequent year, parental reading plans, and before or after-school tutoring.

Florida's leaders understood that this new strategy could not be successful without making sure teachers had additional tools for reading instruction. This meant that by 2006, roughly 56,000 Florida teachers had received training in new scientifically based reading research (SBBR) instruction. SBBR employs systematic and empirical objectives to assess instruction and covers phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Training was coordinated through Florida's statewide reading office. The state also revised its teacher certification exam to be more aligned with SBBR and also required additional reading courses in Florida teacher prep programs.

Florida's commitment to early literacy was not a passing phase. In fact, Florida lawmakers allocated \$130 million for research-based reading instruction in 2013-14, more than a decade after the initial policy was passed.^x In addition to more training for teachers in reading instruction, funding also supported reading coaches to assist teachers in improving their instructional practices.^{xi}

The results of these efforts have made a tremendous impact for students. According to the national assessment, Florida ranks in the top ten states in fourth-grade reading in 2013 after experiencing rapid growth over the last decade. In comparison, Michigan ranked 38th in 2013, having dropped from 28th just ten years prior.

Leading states like Florida prove that only through a comprehensive strategy will Michigan one day become a top ten state.

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SUSTAINED IMPROVEMENT AND HIGH ACHIEVEMENT AT NORTH GODWIN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

2009 EDUCATION TRUST
DISPELLING THE MYTH AWARD
WINNER

BY SUNEET BEDI

SIMPLY REFERRED TO AS THE “IT” FACTOR, it is the element which uniquely contributes to the inspiring culture of achievement in one of West Michigan’s higher performing elementary schools – North Godwin Elementary. The “it” factor is what Principal Mary Lang refers to as the essential characteristics a truly transformational teacher must possess, and it is what she specifically looks for in her staff and new hires to ensure the students of North Godwin have access to high-quality teaching. Through Lang’s praise of her staff it is evident that she is continually inspired by their unending dedication and persistent efforts to do whatever necessary to help their students and families overcome the obstacles that can often hamper achievement. It is this capacity to build deep relationships with students, families, and the community that contribute to the effectiveness of the teachers at the school.

During its peak transformation, the North Godwin administration set very high expectations for the educators in the building, realizing that the teacher is one of the most influential in-school factors to student success. The administration has continued to ensure that the staff is not only hardworking, but also unwaveringly dedicated to the success of all students. It is clear that the teachers operate with the passionate belief that all students can achieve despite their socioeconomic status or race. The minority and low-income students of North Godwin are given equitable access to qualified teachers, allowing them to make the necessary growth and gains to be successful learners.

These students are far outperforming the state and their district; for example, in reading, 92 percent of fourth-graders are proficient at North Godwin Elementary compared to 70 percent at the state level and 77 percent at the district level.

However, it is not enough for Lang to be doing comparatively better than other schools. She does not root her work in comparisons; rather, she focuses on the need to achieve greatness and improve the educational landscape for the students of North Godwin at and beyond the elementary level. It is this tenacity for high standards that makes her such an effective school leader in the North Godwin community. In addition to a rigorous criteria for hiring and maintaining high quality staff at the school, the school and district leadership work hard to ensure that the staff is supported. The teachers

work very hard to make significant gains with their students by collaborating with one another, sharing best practices, and reflecting on their own teaching constantly.

This concentrated investment in choosing and supporting high-quality teachers and using data to reach all students, makes it clear why this school has been a reward school for two consecutive

years. Despite a deteriorating local economy, the teachers and administrators work diligently to ensure that the 90 percent of low-income students they serve are given access to an equitable education comprised of rigorous standards and high-performing teachers. By supporting teachers and developing novice teachers into excellent instructors, the students are given access to transformative educators. The environment is one in which the teachers have come to expect nothing but the best from their highly capable students.

When students are invested in properly and given access to highly effective educators, it is no mystery why they can succeed at such high levels. North Godwin represents a shining example of what equitable access to effective teaching and leadership, combined with rigor in curriculum and teacher support, can do for children in low-income communities.



NORTH GODWIN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

DISPELLING THE MYTH IN THE U.P.: BRIMLEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

2014 EDUCATION TRUST
DISPELLING THE MYTH AWARD
WINNER

BY KARIN CHENOWETH

IN A NEVER-ENDING QUEST to find schools to learn from, I found myself flying into the Sault Ste. Marie airport in Michigan's Upper Peninsula and driving north and west, parallel to Lake Superior.

I was drawn there by the lure of a particular school – Brimley Elementary – where 59 percent of the students qualify for free and reduced-price lunch and where a larger proportion of students met or exceeded state reading and math standards than those in the rest of the state.

For example, 82 percent of the school's fifth-grade students from low-income families met or exceeded state reading standards, compared with only 59 percent in the rest of the state. In fact, they are proficient at roughly the same rate as non-poor fifth-graders in the rest of Michigan.

The school serves a substantial population of American Indian children, most of whom live on the Bay Mills Reservation just west of the town, and 53 percent of the school's American Indian fifth-grade students met or exceeded the state's math standards, compared with 52 percent of the state's white students – and 36 percent of the state's American Indian students.

"It is a proud fact that Native students outperform non-Native students in some subjects and some grades," says the principal, Pete Routhier.

This is a school that has improved over the last decade – slowly, incrementally, but very steadily – until achievement gaps

with other schools have narrowed almost into non-existence.

Mind you, Brimley is hampered in many ways. It is part of a tiny district (its superintendent only works three days a week) that has been subject to a series of budget cuts and serves a remote part of the state. And yet the data speak a story of capacity.

And that's what I found. Brimley is a school full of thoughtful educators who have worked hard to understand how to help all students read, write, and compute at high levels and who think in very sophisticated ways about how to improve instruction.

It is an example of how resourceful educators overcome obstacles when they operate with the idea that all kids are capable and work together to figure out how to teach them.

When Routhier and the teachers talk about how they do

what they do, one of the first things they talk about is the "curriculum review teams" that have been organized by the Eastern Upper Peninsula ISD, or "intermediate school district." Every Michigan district is part of an ISD, and for smaller districts like Brimley they provide a way to collaborate with teachers and principals in the area, looking at data and developing

curriculum and trainings.

Brimley is a school that helps dispel the myth that there is little schools can do to help students overcome poverty, isolation, and discrimination. But such schools can't be reduced to just a couple of practices. They do a lot of things right, not just a few. As Routhier says, they look at what they need to do – based on high state standards – and then make sure all their resources are aligned to support that.

It's a powerful story that should give hope to all educators and parents.

Note: A version of this article first appeared in the Huffington Post on November 5, 2014.

Karin Chenoweth is writer-in-residence at The Education Trust.



BRIMLEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

PHOTO: JILL STENGLIN

DETROIT CHARTER AIMS TO BE 'FINEST K-8 SCHOOL IN THE NATION'

BY SARAH W. LENHOFF

"THE STANDING JOKE WITH PARENTS at Detroit Merit is that I came with the building," says Principal Sandra Terry-Martin.

Terry-Martin started her teaching career at a Catholic school on the east side of Detroit. In 2002, the building was converted into a charter school managed by National Heritage Academies (NHA). Terry-Martin applied for a job and got it. She taught fifth grade for five years and was then promoted up the ranks to dean, assistant principal, and finally principal. She is now a well-known institution in a school that is undermining stale beliefs about who can learn at high levels.

Detroit Merit Charter Academy is a K-8 charter school authorized by Grand Valley State University. More than 90 percent of Merit's students are low-income, 98 percent are African American, and about 10 percent have disabilities. Despite what many might think when looking at these numbers, Merit students are beating their peers across the state no matter their income-level or race.

Close to 70 percent of Merit's students are proficient in math. In reading, the school does even better – 88 percent of students at Merit can read on grade level or above. In writing, too, the school is defying the odds, with 83 percent of students writing on grade level or above.

When asked what makes Detroit Merit so successful, Terry-Martin says, "It's not rocket science."

"We have really high expectations. We believe all students can attend and graduate from college. We make sure students know exactly where they are as far as performance. All students know whether they are ahead or behind and how much they need to grow to get where they need to be."

The school's commitment to tracking performance data and communicating it honestly is clear in every classroom. Students

are asked to reflect on their own learning and share with the class when they have mastered the material and when they need more support. Teachers then check students' work at night.

Students and teachers have also embraced Michigan's college- and career-ready standards – high expectations for what they should know and be able to do at each grade level. Principal Terry-Martin believes these expectations are allowing Merit to "prepare students to really function in the real world."

"Students are talking more, speaking more, and doing more close reading. NHA does a really great job with professional development. Our whole staff had two days prior to school starting going through the objectives, breaking down the language, looking at examples of instructional shifts. We had

three sessions provided by NHA that were regional, so we could collaborate by grade level and share resources, ideas, and lesson planning," says Terry-Martin.

Detroit Merit also has a unique commitment to developing its teachers throughout the school year. The school has an evaluation system grounded in observing and practicing high quality instruction. Teachers who are in their first three years in the classroom are assigned an experienced, trained mentor. Novice teachers observe their mentors or other seasoned teachers eight times a year, and their mentors observe them eight times.

Research has shown that improving the quality of data and feedback to teachers, and therefore improving instruction, can have a huge effect on student performance.

Clearly, it's working at Detroit Merit.

About eight years ago, Principal Terry-Martin bought custom water bottles for a school fundraiser. The message on the bottles?

"The Finest K-8 School in the Nation."

Terry-Martin admits that it's a "huge, lofty statement." But she says that's her goal – to continuously improve, to be the finest school in the nation. "That's what our kids deserve," she says.



DETROIT MERIT CHARTER ACADEMY

A ROADMAP FOR MICHIGAN

TO MAKE MICHIGAN A TOP TEN EDUCATION STATE, WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO DOUBLE DOWN ON THE STRATEGIES THAT ARE MOST EFFECTIVE FOR BOOSTING STUDENT LEARNING AND THE MOST RELIABLE MEASURES OF SUCCESS. Michigan needs to make major changes in K-12 policy and practice to improve outcomes for all students, particularly low-income students and children of color. We need leadership that supports a coherent, research-based agenda, and investment in what it will take to make this agenda happen. And we need better delivery systems of education, especially for our high-poverty schools and communities.

We recommend a policy and investment agenda with four essential pillars of work that will dramatically raise early reading levels in our state. These are based on research and best practices from around the country.

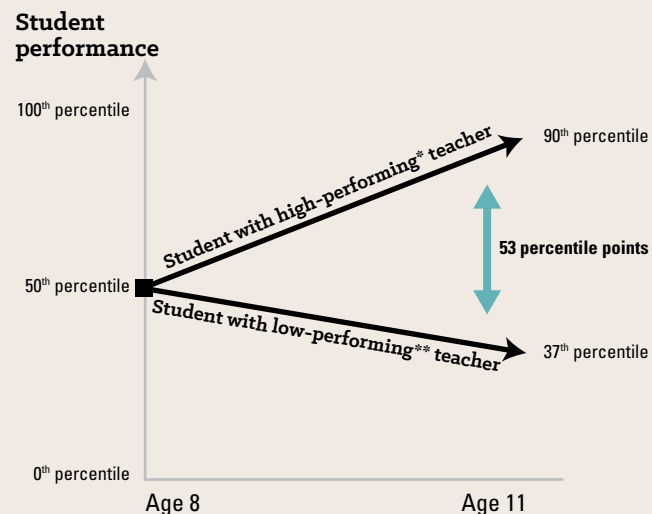
But first, we'd like to highlight some of the commonalities that leading education states share.

- **Focus first on what matters most for student learning – then bring bureaucracy along**

Leading states don't wait to have perfect funding systems or more productive state departments or regional service delivery centers to improve. Rather, they first invest in making changes in what matters most – teaching and learning in classrooms and at the school level – and then bring their state and regional delivery systems along.

Once teachers and students are getting the support they need to improve, state leaders can turn to reimaging the role of state leadership as helpful for driving improvement, reinventing their departments of education to play a leading role in state-led leverage points, facilitating high-caliber external providers when appropriate and, sometimes, driving greater accountability for

THE EFFECT OF TEACHER QUALITY



*Among the top 20% of teachers; **Among the bottom 20% of teachers
 Analysis of test data from Tennessee showed that teacher quality effected student performance more than any other variable; on average, students with average performance (50th percentile) would diverge by more than 50 percentile points over a three year period depending on the teacher they were assigned

Source: (Sanders and Rivers (1996): Cumulative and Residual Effects of Teachers on Future Student Achievement)

performance in local delivery centers.

Tennessee is a great case in point: its leaders realized its regional service centers (equivalent to Michigan’s intermediate school districts) were not best positioned nor appropriate to train teachers to teach at higher college- and career-ready standards, so they utilized external providers to train master teachers in the state, who they identified using high-caliber state data. This has been one of the state’s most effective investments, according to leaders there.^{vi} They focused on the big levers for change for student learning – and then later revamped their intermediate school district system to make it more effective and helpful to the field.

- **Educators matter – a lot**

Adults matter in children’s lives. Just as high-quality parenting matters, the adults in students’ schools – teachers and principals – are extraordinarily influential in their students’ learning success. Indeed, every leading education state has zeroed in on comprehensive systemic changes – often investing tens of millions of dollars – to make their

teachers and principals much more effective, productive, and supported. These systemic changes include better professional development provided by proven external providers; leveraging the system’s existing teaching talent to train other teachers; better assessment and data systems that can provide actionable feedback to improve instruction and earlier interventions in students’ lives; and other efforts.

- **Spending effectively**

More money for schools does not necessarily produce dramatically better teaching and learning, if that funding maintains the status quo. However, more money invested in transformative, systemic changes can and has produced extraordinary improvements in student learning in leading education states. It’s the difference between spending public dollars more effectively to leverage change versus maintaining old ways of doing business – and seeing the same lackluster results.

- **Both accountability and investment in capacity-building are critical**

In Michigan, the far left and far right often dominate the public education debate. One side argues for more money; the other side argues for greater accountability for schools and educators. Both are important.

Leading states show greater accountability is not only desirable but needed to drive improvements in the P-16 system, regardless of whether a district is traditional or charter. Massachusetts, Tennessee, and other leading states demonstrate that the system does not change on its own; change must be driven up from classrooms or down from the state – or ideally both. Still, accountability alone is not enough. Successful states also invest in systems change and capacity-building. States are most effective at dramatically improving student outcomes when both levers are used – and used effectively and thoughtfully.

- **Successful implementation is essential**

Any veteran policymaker knows this adage is true, yet Michigan education leaders often forget this. Successful implementation requires strong, consistent leadership; investment in implementation; data-driven feedback loops that drive continuous improvement to new systemic improvement strategies; and a focus on improving school- and classroom-level effectiveness in delivering high-caliber teaching and learning.

Strong implementation has been a problem in Michigan for many years. For example, when state leaders courageously enacted the Michigan Merit Curriculum, they had a tremendous opportunity to transform Michigan secondary schools – and yet didn’t maximize it. State support and accountability for implementation was practically non-existent. That remains true today. No wonder a study by the Michigan Consortium for Educational Research found implementation was spotty and inconsistent across the state – and thus, the impact for students has been positive overall but, nevertheless, uneven. This type of approach helps lead to inequitable outcomes for students.^{vii}

Michigan should learn from this mistake when it comes to its next big opportunity to transform teaching and learning this year: the first year of full implementation of college- and career-ready standards. It’s so important, even high-performing Massachusetts leaders have committed to simply focusing on implementing the new standards well for the next three years. Michigan is on track to implement higher standards and an aligned assessment, but has been notoriously weak at providing training and support for teachers. We outline recommendations to correct this in our recommendations section.

ROADMAP FOR MICHIGAN

MICHIGAN SHOULD FOLLOW THE LEAD of states that have transformed their education systems by taking a cue

from the best research and data on what works, and making strategic decisions to build from the earliest grades, up. We recommend four essential pillars state leaders should focus on in the coming years to reach the top ten.

1. Effective teaching and school leaders for every Michigan student

The Education Trust-Midwest has been a vocal advocate for improving the quality of teaching in Michigan, and ensuring that all students have access to skillful teaching. The reason? It’s the single most influential in-school factor on student learning.

While Michigan has taken some steps to improve its teaching quality, it has been slow to establish systems to improve teaching practices and elevate the profession, including a statewide system of educator evaluation and support that would give teachers the targeted feedback and data to know where they are and what they need to do to reach their goals – the kind of system that was instrumental to improving early literacy in states like Tennessee and Florida. This means that four years since the passage of tenure and evaluation reform in Michigan, almost all teachers in the state are told they are “effective” or “highly effective” no matter how much their students are learning – and many of them are not getting what they need to improve. The Michigan Department of Education and the Michigan Legislature have both continued to stall on this issue – by failing to adequately implement and invest in a statewide educator evaluation and support system.

This means Michigan’s students are sitting in classrooms every day with teachers who have little knowledge of their performance, compared to what research says is best practice. Students are not benefiting from a professional growth system in which teachers and principals work together to identify weaknesses, attend targeted professional development, and implement more effective strategies in the classroom.

What's more, because research from around the country has shown that low-income children and students of color are much more likely to be taught by ineffective teachers than their white and higher-income peers, Michigan's most vulnerable students are bearing the brunt of the state's inaction.^{viii} This is unacceptable, especially considering the data that has shown that having an effective teacher three years in a row can actually close racial and economic achievement gaps.^{ix}

Our first recommendation for improving education is to implement statewide standards for educator evaluation and support and require districts to eliminate gaps in access to effective teachers. Michigan can do this by starting in the early grades, prioritizing teachers of K-3 literacy, so that the most important teachers in children's schooling – those who teach them how to read – will get the feedback they need to improve first.

In the long run, a state system of support, feedback, data, and evaluation is essential for all teachers. But it makes sense to start this commitment and investment in the early grades, where the investment in improving teaching is likely to pay off quickly. We urge the state to not only pass a comprehensive educator evaluation and support package, but also invest in the infrastructure and capacity Michigan schools need to implement the new system well. That means, first and foremost, a data system that can track student growth over time and measure the impact teachers have had on that growth. It also means support for training evaluators on how to interpret student growth data and combine them with measures of practice in order to give teachers the feedback they need to improve.

2. College- and career-ready instruction and preparation for every Michigan student

College- and career-ready standards are so instrumental to high-performing and high-growth states' success, every one of them started their educational transformation by

working intensively to raise standards first – and then make sure their teachers knew how to teach to these higher new levels. There's good reason for that: college- and career-ready standards and their full implementation are the biggest opportunities for transforming public schools that the U.S. has had in more than two decades.

The good news is, despite some delays in implementation, Michigan educators and students are in the midst of their first year of fully implementing Michigan's career- and college-ready standards—expectations for what students should know and be able to do in each grade. Many of them have told us that the standards provide a welcome foundation for building more advanced, applicable skills in their students.

But they also tell us that the support they have received on how to teach the standards has been spotty, at best. Many teachers have had access to some professional development, but few say they have everything they need to succeed. Following in the footsteps of emerging leader Tennessee, Michigan should support its teachers in reaching our new standards by using high-performing teachers already working in the state as coaches.

If Michigan starts with our K-3 teachers this year, we could train all of our state's teachers on Michigan's standards within three years, for about \$4-5 million a year.^x That's significantly less than the cost of remediation in middle and high school, and much cheaper than paying for extra years of schooling or special education services for students who would not have needed them, had they been taught to high levels early on.

In addition, Michigan's teachers, particularly those who teach our youngest K-3 students, should be trained on the best instructional approaches to teaching literacy, including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension instruction.^{xi} While many new teachers may have received this training in their teacher preparation

programs, 70 percent of Michigan’s teachers have been teaching five or more years, and 30 percent have taught for at least 16 years.^{xii}

That means that our teaching force is largely made up of educators who have not had the benefit of training based on the most up-to-date research on literacy practices. Michigan leaders should consider supporting Michigan’s K-3 teachers by providing them with proven professional development on these strategies. Experts in early learning reform estimate that there are nearly 30 evidence-based elementary reading programs with demonstrated effectiveness for state leaders to choose from.^{xiii}

This investment in supporting educators to teach to high levels will have a huge impact on all students, but it will particularly help our most vulnerable low-income and African American students, who have historically been cut out of the most rigorous instruction in our public schools. By raising standards for all students, and helping the teachers of all students meet them, we can level the playing field and ensure equitable access to rigorous coursework and instruction.

3. Accountability for student learning, including in charter operators and authorizers

If we’re going to hold our students accountable for reading by third grade, the state must hold adults accountable for doing everything they can to get them there. Leading states like Tennessee and Massachusetts have shown that a key to real reform is ensuring that teachers and principals are held accountable for their students’ academic success. This means creating an accountability and assessment system that can accurately measure student performance and growth in reading and giving schools the support – and accountability – they need to raise levels of reading performance. At the same time, accountability should pertain to all students in Michigan, not just some. Michigan in 2013 had a nearly 25 percentage point

achievement gap in fourth-grade reading between white and African American students. This type of gap cannot be tolerated, and our schools must be held accountable for closing these gaps.

In addition, Michigan’s accountability policy must adequately take into account the importance of charter operators and authorizers, especially for high-poverty communities such as Detroit and Flint. Michigan’s charter schools serve mostly young elementary school students, and roughly half of all charter students are African American. That means that they are an essential part of the problem of our state’s underperformance – and an essential part of the solution. Michigan’s new accountability and assessment system should hold charter schools, operators, and authorizers responsible for their performance and prevent poor-performing actors from expanding across the state.

To learn more about charter school authorizing, see our report, [Accountability for All: The Need for Real Charter School Authorizer Accountability in Michigan](http://edtrustmidwest.org/accountability-for-all), online at edtrustmidwest.org/accountability-for-all.

4. Improving learning opportunities for all students

We have already highlighted many of the ways that low-income students and students of color are given less of the things that matter most in schools – effective teaching and school leadership; rigorous standards, coursework, and assessments; and strong accountability for learning at high levels, especially in early literacy. But our most vulnerable students miss out in other ways – big and small – that have a cumulative effect on their opportunities to learn throughout their educational careers. Michigan must also choose the path toward progress and make strides in narrowing and eventually closing the gaps that consign far too many of our young people to lives on the margins of the American mainstream. Below, we outline several of the ways Michigan must change course.

Teacher Attendance

In 2009-10, about 46 percent of teachers in Michigan were absent from their jobs more than ten days. That’s about 6 percent of the school year, which is equivalent to a typical 9-to-5 year-round employee missing more than three weeks of work on top of vacation time. To provide perspective, Utah has the lowest rate of teacher absences, with 21 percent absent more than ten days throughout the school year.

All of us know that when the teacher is absent, students don’t learn much. Substitute days often are days to mess around in school or, at best, catch up on work. And anyone who was ever a substitute teacher will tell you that it’s really difficult to jump right in to another teacher’s lesson plans to teach effectively to an unknown group of students. For our youngest learners, these missed days of instruction mean

missed opportunities to learn the basic skills they will need to succeed in the rest of school.

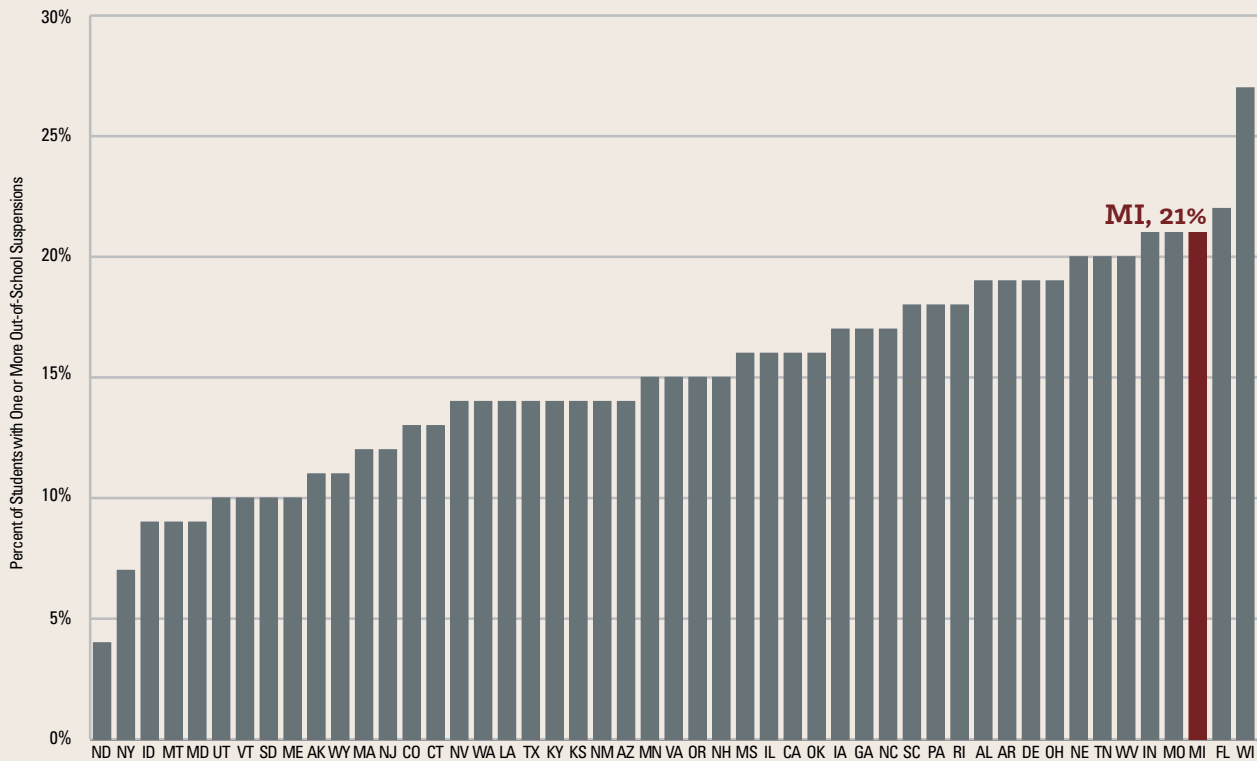
Student Attendance and Discipline

Not only are Michigan’s teachers missing too much school, but our students – especially our African American students – are missing far too many days of school, often against their will. According to the 2013 national assessment, 21 percent of Michigan’s eighth-grade math students said they had been absent from school three or more days in the last month – five percent more than the top states.

But perhaps even more disturbing are the new data on out-of-school suspension rates. Michigan ranks 40th overall and 47th for African American students in out-of-school

MICHIGAN HAS 3RD HIGHEST OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSION RATE FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS AT 21 PERCENT

African American Out-of-School Suspension Rates



*Note: Hawaii is excluded because it provided limited data.
Source: 2011-12 Civil Rights Data Collection

suspensions – meaning we suspend students at much higher rates than most of the rest of the country. In fact, in 2011, 21 percent of Michigan’s African American students had been suspended one or more times out of school.

Michigan must take action to ensure that more teachers and students are in school every day. Bills addressing school discipline policy are sitting in the Michigan Legislature right now, and should be addressed this session. But school districts should also be more proactive in establishing sensible teacher absence policies, as well as creating environments where school discipline issues don’t lead to missing instructional time. Especially perplexing are policies that suspend students for being truant. Where’s the sense in that? All school and state policies should be focused on keeping students in school as much as we can, and teaching them all that we can while they are with us.

Equitable School Funding and Teacher Pay

Michigan has fallen tragically behind the rest of the country in funding our lowest-income districts at equitable levels. We now rank 42nd of 47 in the nation for funding gaps that negatively impact low-income students. A recent report by The Education Trust found that, on average, Michigan schools serving the highest rates of students from low-income families receive about 6 percent less in state and local funding than more affluent schools. When adjusted to take into account the additional cost of supports needed to serve our most vulnerable students, we find that schools serving the highest rates of students from low-income families, on average, receive 16 percent less in state and local funding than more affluent schools.^{xiv}

This is the exact opposite of what should be happening. Michigan should be investing the most in the schools and students with the greatest need, taking a cue from states like Massachusetts. In the coming years, Michigan leaders are likely to revamp our state’s school funding formula. As they do, they must consider the impact of our current system

on our poorest students, and find a way to ensure that the students with the greatest needs receive the most support.

OUR GOALS ARE WITHIN REACH

Many of the strategies that we’ve outlined so far can be done within current budget constraints. Teachers already participate in lots of professional development, districts already evaluate teachers every year, and the state already holds schools accountable for performance.

The key, then, will be to ensure that the dollars that are currently being spent in these areas are spent wisely. That means requiring that the state and districts spend professional development dollars on training teachers in evidence-based early literacy instruction and our rigorous new standards.

It also means that money currently being spent to evaluate and support teachers should be spent within a statewide evaluation and support framework that requires evaluations to be research-based, accurate, and equitable.

Finally, it means that interventions and supports for schools not reaching accountability targets should be grounded in practices and programs that we know work. No longer should Michiganders’ hard-earned money be spent on pop-up school improvement schemes with no evidence of success.

It’s clear that Michigan has a long way to go to becoming a top ten education state. Fortunately, we have blueprints from other states on how to build a solid foundation for educational improvement. Massachusetts, Tennessee, and Florida have already begun this work, and their proven and emerging results give us hope that our goals are within our reach.

RECOMMENDATIONS

BY 2016 MICHIGAN SHOULD:

COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READINESS FOR EVERY MICHIGAN STUDENT

- Fully implement and administer college- and career- aligned state assessments, which Michigan is on track to do, as well as interim and alternate assessments to track progress in early grades, especially in reading. This should include a statewide kindergarten readiness assessment.
- For the next three years, focus on successfully implementing the new high standards for teaching and learning from the classroom up, leveraging the opportunity to transform classroom and school practices.
- Utilizing proven external training providers, train all Michigan teachers – starting with K-3 – on teaching based on college- and career-readiness. Provide similar training to principals to equip them to be the instructional leaders in their public schools.
- Hold a statewide conversation about the importance of sticking with the new standards and aligned assessment, and ensure Michigan business, civic, and policy leaders and parents understand the new standards are necessary to prepare students to thrive and compete in a global economy.

EFFECTIVE TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS FOR EVERY MICHIGAN STUDENT

- To provide far greater supports to teachers and principals in their transition to teaching high college- and career-ready standards – a major shift for the state and the professions – the state should invest in the proposed digital library, which would provide useful materials to teachers for classroom instruction. This is key to improving teacher support in Michigan.
- Starting with K-3, train all teachers on the most effective methods of teaching literacy today by proven external providers that have been effective in raising learning in states such as Florida.
- Develop a detailed, holistic strategy to boost early literacy achievement that includes retraining teachers on the most up-to-date reading instructional practices, implementing interim diagnostic assessments to track progress in early literacy and diagnose problems early on, and holding schools and districts accountable for improving early literacy achievement.
- As a large part of a comprehensive statewide strategy to elevate and improve the teaching and principal professions in Michigan, approve the blueprint developed by the Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness (MCEE) and subsequent plans for a new statewide system of evaluation and support for teachers. The passage should include the release of \$14.8 million to be invested in the initial development of the new system, including in external providers with proven track records in other states. A council of appointed civic leaders should provide oversight of the state agency left responsible for the implementation of the new system, and work with external providers to address gaps in recommendations left undone by the MCEE.
- Establish an effective state plan to ensure greater access to effective teachers for low-income students and students of color.

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR STUDENT LEARNING

- Undertake an independent study of the future role and functions of the Michigan Department of Education, including an assessment of the department's current capacity and effectiveness with recommendations for improvement.
- Utilize an out-of-state, independent actor with deep expertise in improving state- and regional-level delivery systems to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness and role of the intermediate school district systems across the state, including by collecting feedback from teachers and principals in the field.

IMPROVING LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL STUDENTS

- Pass legislation to ensure student discipline policies are sensible and equitable – and focused on keeping students in school.
- Research best practices from leading states for equitably funding public schools and begin to develop a plan to revamp Michigan's school funding formula based on those best practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

BY 2020 MICHIGAN SHOULD:

COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READINESS FOR EVERY MICHIGAN STUDENT

- Implement a high-caliber growth model and data system – aligned to college- and career-ready standards and demonstrated as fair to high-poverty schools – that with Michigan’s new modern assessment system, will measure higher-order thinking, monitor progress over time, and provide actionable data for administrators, teachers, and parents.
- Extend access to Advanced Placement courses and promote greater opportunities for academically rigorous coursework and instruction.
- Develop and implement a strategy to better understand whether and where Michigan public schools are successfully providing college- and career-ready instruction and coursework to all students, and how well – including postsecondary and vocational training. Use that information to make further systemic changes to support schools’ and educators’ transition to the new era of high standards – a driver of transformation for schools.

EFFECTIVE TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS FOR EVERY MICHIGAN STUDENT

- To undertake a comprehensive strategy to improve the teaching and principal professions in Michigan, strike a grand bargain that includes development of a rigorous statewide educator evaluation and support system based on leading state models, including a statewide student growth system; common definitions and a vision for effective teaching; and greater capacity-building for districts to deliver effective annual evaluations and data-driven feedback, in return for higher salaries in low-income and other communities where attracting and retaining high-caliber talent is difficult.
- Pilot and implement effective new teacher and principal induction strategies based on the nation’s best models, particularly for high-poverty urban and rural communities to increase the number of effective educators serving low-income students.
- Leverage Michigan’s existing teaching talent by piloting a statewide performance-based master teacher pathway to identify highly effective teachers who can serve as coaches and mentors of other teachers. Develop new opportunities for greater pay and teacher leadership responsibilities for these proven educators.
- Develop effective new models of professional development.
- Close gaps in teacher salaries to make teaching in high-poverty communities more attractive and easier for schools to retain top talent.

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR STUDENT LEARNING

- Develop policies to ensure Michigan charter schools are dramatically higher performing; low-performing authorizers are held accountable for their performance, including facing closure; and the nation’s truly best operators are attracted to serve the state’s neediest students.
- Overhaul the state accountability and support system to be more effective; hold schools accountable for closing achievement gaps; and dramatically improve systems of support and capacity-building for struggling and chronically low-performing schools.
- Ensure the Michigan Department of Education has shifted to a clearer, more strategic and effective leadership role. Also ensure the intermediate school district (ISD) system role is more clear and the state has a sharper focus on ISDs adding value to schools – and a system of accountability for their performance, particularly for the value they provide to local educators in high-poverty, rural and urban communities.

IMPROVING LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL STUDENTS

- Overhaul Michigan’s school funding formula to make Michigan a top ten state for funding equity, based on lessons learned from the nation’s leading states on funding equity – including being weighted for student needs; a focus on money that follows students; and transparency. Greater resources also must be found for targeted state investments in strategies to improve student achievement levels.
- Pilot and innovate new models of school scheduling and use of time to allow for extended learning time, particularly for low-income schools; more time for teachers to develop critical thinking and analytical skills required by college- and career-ready standards; and incentives for greater teacher and principal collaboration to improve instruction.
- Pilot and develop new state delivery systems – using a mix of public and external partners, when appropriate – that will be effective and strong enough to play central roles in leading high-leverage strategies and targeted investments aimed at raising teaching and learning for all students.

MICHIGAN ACHIEVES: GOALS AND METRICS

WE'VE GOT A LONG WAY TO GO TO REACH THE TOP TEN.

To know whether we're on track, starting this year, The Education Trust-Midwest will regularly monitor Michigan's performance and progress of our P-16 system, including both academic measures and measures of learning conditions that research shows are essential for equitable access to opportunities to learn. We will use these measures to determine our progress toward becoming a top ten education state by 2030, as part of our Michigan Achieves initiative.

We use the best available state and national data to show where we are and where we need to go to become a top ten state. When possible, we report on:

- Michigan's current performance and relative rank nationwide
- Michigan's projected rank in 2030 if we stay on our current path
- The current and projected rank of African American, Latino, and low-income students^{xv}

We track achievement and improvement in fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math by using the National Assessment of Educational Progress or NAEP. The NAEP has been administered every two years since 2003. It is the best measure for benchmarking our performance and comparing Michigan to other states over time, since state assessment data don't tell us how Michigan compares to the rest of the country.

MICHIGAN ACHIEVES: ACADEMIC GOALS

1. KINDERGARTEN READINESS

Michigan has recently invested in early childhood programs meant to increase the number of our students who enter kindergarten ready to learn at high levels. Unfortunately, we have not yet adopted a statewide kindergarten readiness assessment that will tell us if our investment is paying off. The Education Trust-

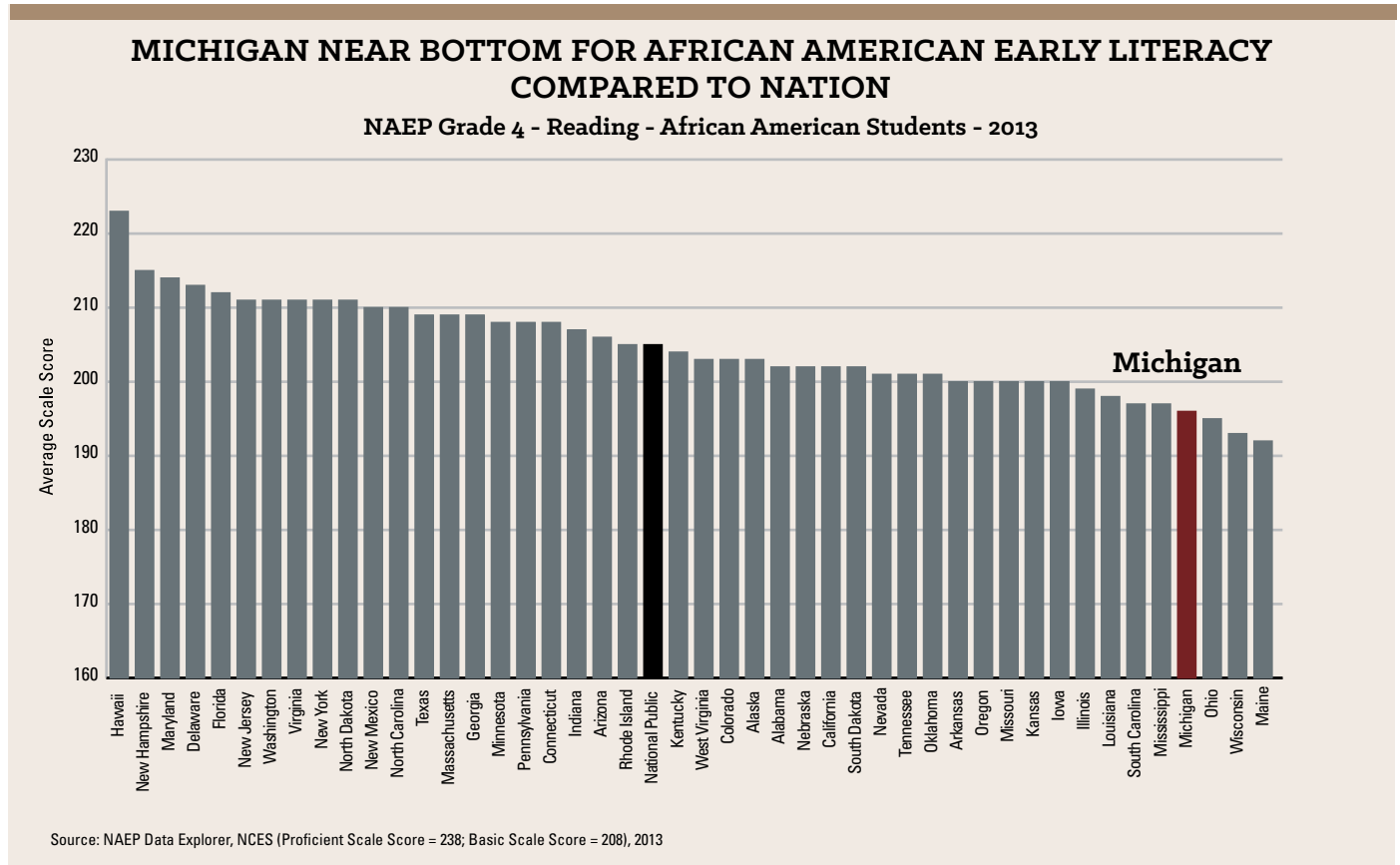
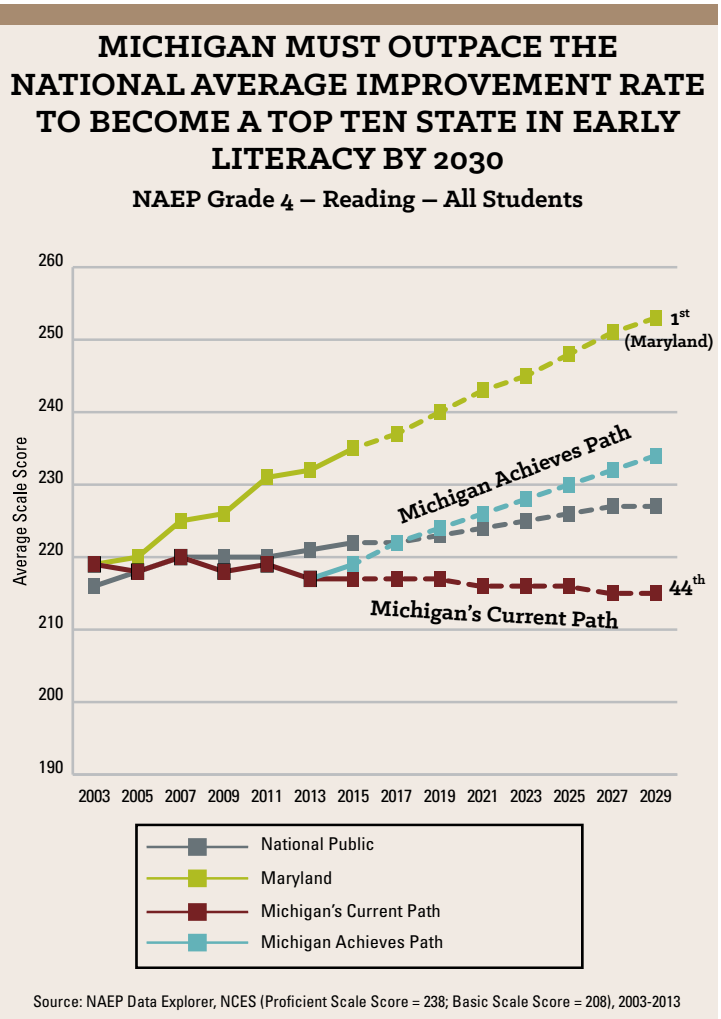
Midwest encourages state leaders to monitor kindergarten readiness in future years. When the data are available, we will track our achievement and improvement over time.

MICHIGAN ACHIEVES GOAL: *To become a top ten education state for kindergarten readiness by 2030.*

2. FOURTH-GRADE READING

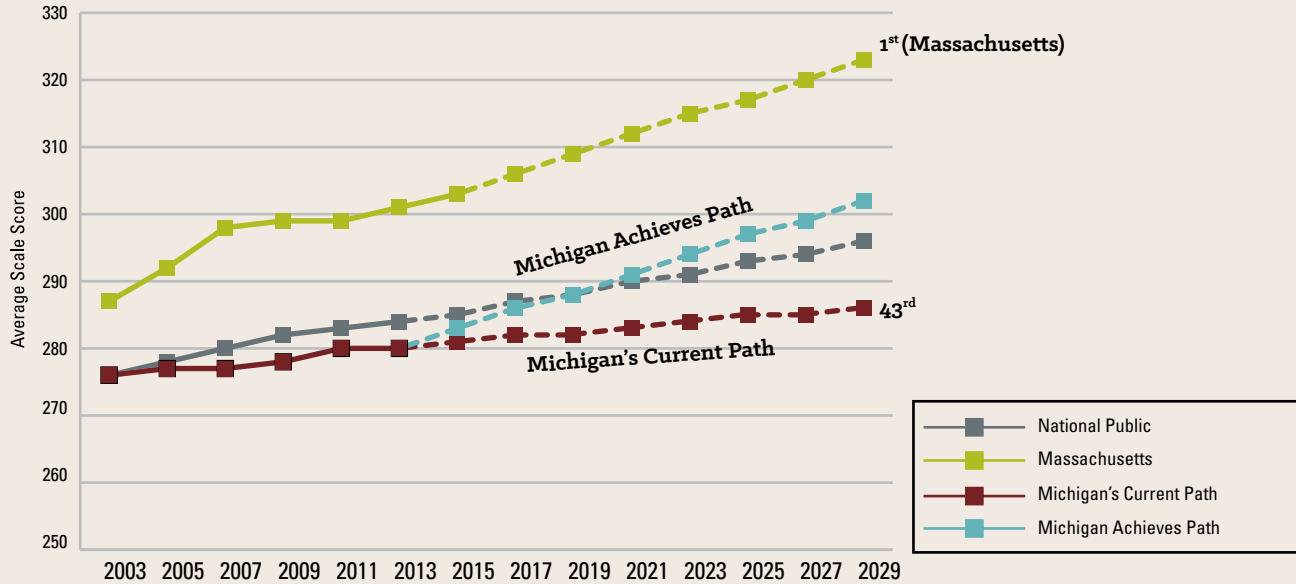
Governor Rick Snyder rightly has made this a top priority for his administration. One of the most telling indicators of whether Michigan's students are being prepared for success is how well our young students read. In 2013, Michigan ranked 38th in fourth-grade reading. If we stay on the same downward trajectory, we will rank 44th by 2030 for all students and 49th for white students.

MICHIGAN ACHIEVES GOAL: *To become a top ten education state for fourth-grade reading for all groups of students, including African American, Latino, and low-income students, by 2030. By 2020, become a top improvement state for early literacy.*



MICHIGAN MUST MATCH THE TOP STATE'S IMPROVEMENT RATE TO BREAK THE TOP TEN IN 8TH GRADE MATH BY 2030

NAEP Grade 8 – Math – All Students



Source: NAEP Data Explorer, NCES (Proficient Scale Score = 299; Basic Scale Score = 262), 2003-2013

3. EIGHTH-GRADE MATH

In addition to basic reading skills, math skills are essential for all students. Basic algebra is the foundation for high-level math courses. When students have not mastered this foundation, they are forced to enroll in remedial courses when they begin college. But eighth-grade math skills are not just for those students who are college-bound. A study conducted by ACT found that math skills are essential for vocational jobs including those as a plumber, electrician or upholsterer.^{xvi} Michigan now ranks 37th in eighth-grade math and is on track to rank 43rd by 2030 if we don't change course.

MICHIGAN ACHIEVES GOAL: *To become a top ten education state for eighth-grade math for students of every background by 2030, and a top improvement state by 2020.*

4. CAREER- AND COLLEGE-READINESS

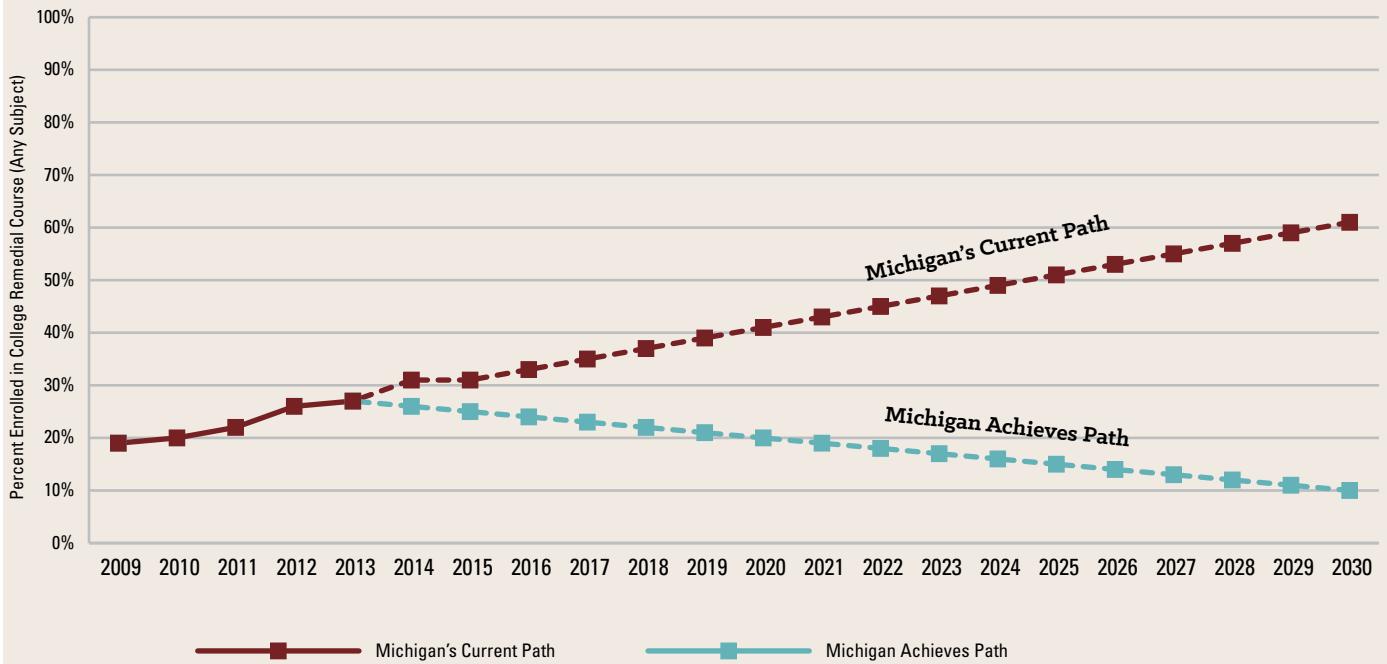
About 27 percent of all Michigan students are required to take at least one remedial course in college. That's more than a quarter of our students who are forced to pay for additional instruction in college before moving on to credit-bearing courses. Having to enroll in remedial courses actually increases the likelihood that students will drop out of college.^{xvii}

The data are even more troubling for our African American students, over half of whom must take remedial courses. If Michigan stays on its current path, projections show that about 61 percent of all students will need at least one remedial course by 2030.

MICHIGAN ACHIEVES GOAL: *To become a top ten college- and career-ready state by 2030, and a top improvement state by 2020, in reducing the percentage of students who must enroll in remedial courses.*

MICHIGAN HEADED TOWARD STEEP REMEDIATION RATES, IF WE DON'T CHOOSE THE TOP TEN PATH

Michigan College Remediation Rates (Community Colleges & Four-Year Universities)



*Note: Remedial coursework includes math, reading, writing, or science courses. Data is limited to Michigan high school graduates enrolled in college the following fall in a Michigan college or university only. Source: CEPI College Remedial Coursework Enrollment Trend, 2009-2013

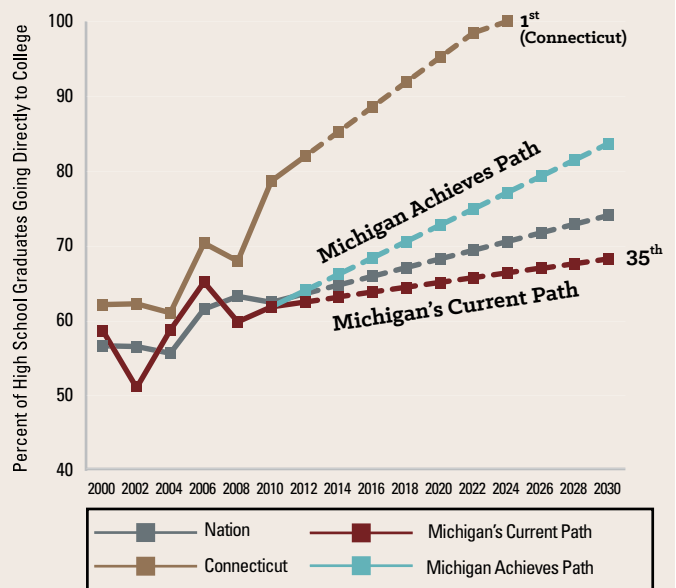
5. COLLEGE AND POSTSECONDARY ENROLLMENT

In order for Michigan's students to fulfill their true potential and be the leaders of tomorrow, more of them must enroll in postsecondary education, whether that be at a technical trade school, community college, or a four-year university. On this measure, Michigan is near the national average, with about 62 percent of high school graduates attending some form of postsecondary training in 2010. In order to reach the level of top ten states in ten years, Michigan must increase college enrollment by more than 2 percent every year for the next decade.

MICHIGAN ACHIEVES GOAL: *To become a top ten college and postsecondary enrollment state by 2030.*

MICHIGAN MUST ENSURE 84% OF HS GRADS ENROLL IN COLLEGE BY 2030

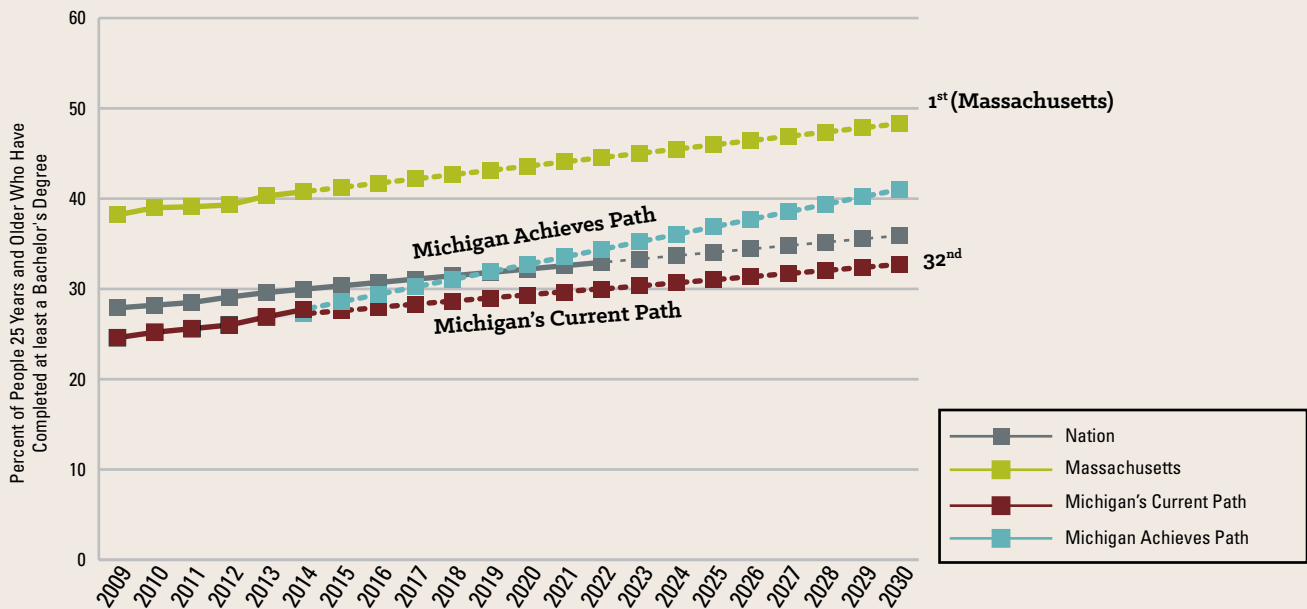
College-Going Rates of High School Graduates - Directly from High School - All Students



Source: NCHEMS Information Center, 2000-2010

MICHIGAN'S ECONOMY DEPENDS ON MORE ADULTS EARNING COLLEGE DEGREES

Percent of People 25 Years and Older with a Bachelor's Degree or Greater



Source: United States Census – American Community Survey - 1 Year Estimates, 2006-2013

6. COLLEGE ATTAINMENT

Michigan ranks 33rd of 45 in the percentage of adults age 25 or older with at least a bachelor's degree, at 27 percent. The numbers are even worse for African American or Hispanic Michiganders, only 16 percent of whom have a bachelor's degree or higher. In order to join the top ten states by 2030, Michigan must increase its bachelor's degree attainment by almost one percentage point every year through 2030.

MICHIGAN ACHIEVES GOAL: *To become a top ten college attainment state by 2030.*

MICHIGAN ACHIEVES: OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN GOALS

TO BE A TOP TEN EDUCATION STATE, WE NEED TO BE NEAR THE TOP TEN IN IMPROVING THE CONDITIONS OF OUR SCHOOLS AND CLASSROOMS. That means focusing on the levers that research shows are most important – and what schools can actually control – for dramatically raising teaching and learning levels. These factors have been instrumental to the top performance and improvement in leading states. For this reason, in addition to our Michigan Achieves academic goals and metrics, The Education Trust-Midwest also has developed a set of progress metrics that gauge how well Michigan is providing equitable access to opportunities for learning, including high-performing teachers, rigorous coursework and instruction, and other key factors that reflect school conditions.

Our most vulnerable students miss out on many of these opportunities, research shows – in big and small ways – that

have a cumulative effect on their opportunities to learn throughout their educational careers. In some cases, the data below are not available; we highlight the need for such reliable data in Michigan, which continues to be weak in the K-12 data infrastructure that supports quality learning.

1. TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS

Without a doubt, a child’s academic learning is dependent on a lot of factors, ranging from family characteristics to neighborhood experiences. But what research is clear on is that the number one in-school predictor of student success is the quality of the teacher. Unfortunately, Michigan’s leaders have delayed passing and implementing a statewide educator evaluation and support system that would help districts identify their most effective teachers and improve the practice of all teachers. We urge

Michigan leaders to adopt this system so we can accurately track teacher effectiveness in years to come.

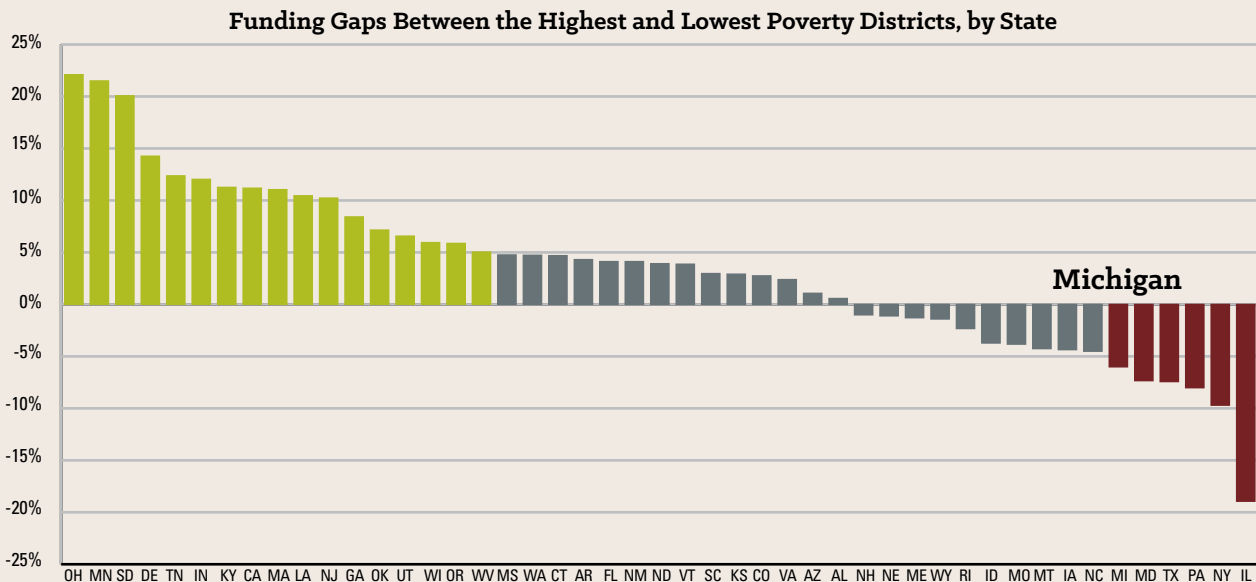
MICHIGAN ACHIEVES GOAL: *To become a top ten state for quality teaching, by elevating the profession; developing new systems of improved support and capacity-building; better state systems of reliable data and feedback; fair and thoughtful accountability; and improving structural barriers to equitable access to high-performing educators.*

2. SCHOOL FUNDING EQUITY

Michigan ranks an abysmal 42nd of 47 states in the nation for funding gaps that negatively impact low-income students, according to a recent report by The Education Trust. On average, Michigan schools serving the highest rates of students from low-income families receive about 6 percent

MICHIGAN’S FUNDING GAP BETWEEN THE HIGHEST AND LOWEST POVERTY DISTRICTS IS 42ND OUT OF 47 STATES

Michigan is one of only six states in the analysis that provides substantially less funding to its highest poverty districts than to its lowest poverty districts



Reading this figure: In Ohio, the highest poverty districts receive 22 percent more in state and local funds per student than the lowest poverty districts (not adjusted for additional needs of low-income students). In states shaded in green, the highest poverty districts receive at least 5 percent more in state and local funds per student than the lowest poverty districts; in states shaded in red, they receive at least 5 percent less. Grey shading indicates similar levels of funding for the highest and lowest poverty districts.

*Note: Hawaii was excluded from the within-state analysis because it is one district. Alaska and Nevada are also excluded because their student populations are heavily concentrated in certain districts and could not be broken into quartiles. Because so many of New York’s students are concentrated in New York City, we sorted that state into two halves, as opposed to four quartiles. Source: The Education Trust – Funding Gaps Report, 2015

less in state and local funding than more affluent schools. This is the exact opposite of what should be happening. Michigan should be investing the most in the schools and students with the greatest need, taking a cue from states like Massachusetts. These kinds of inequities in resources lead to other inequities, like inequitable access to high-performing teachers.

MICHIGAN ACHIEVES GOAL: *To become a top ten state for equitably funding our highest poverty schools and districts by 2030.*

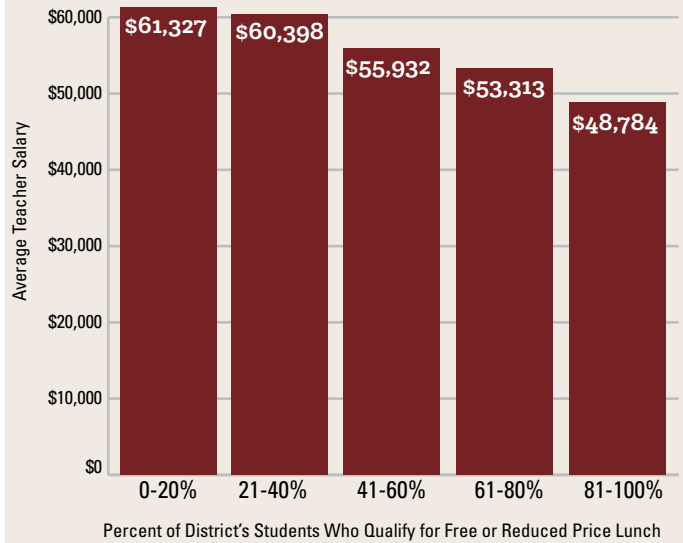
3. TEACHER SALARY EQUITY

Teachers in Michigan’s wealthiest districts are paid about \$12,500 more, on average, than teachers in Michigan’s poorest districts. That’s alarming, considering what we know about the importance of high-quality teachers in closing the achievement gap that persists between low-income and higher income students. To recruit and retain highly effective teachers in the schools that need them most, Michigan must close the gap in teacher pay.

MICHIGAN ACHIEVES GOAL: *To close the gap in teacher pay between high and low poverty school districts by 2030.*

MORE THAN \$12,500 GAP IN AVERAGE TEACHER SALARIES BETWEEN MI HIGH-INCOME AND LOW-INCOME DISTRICTS

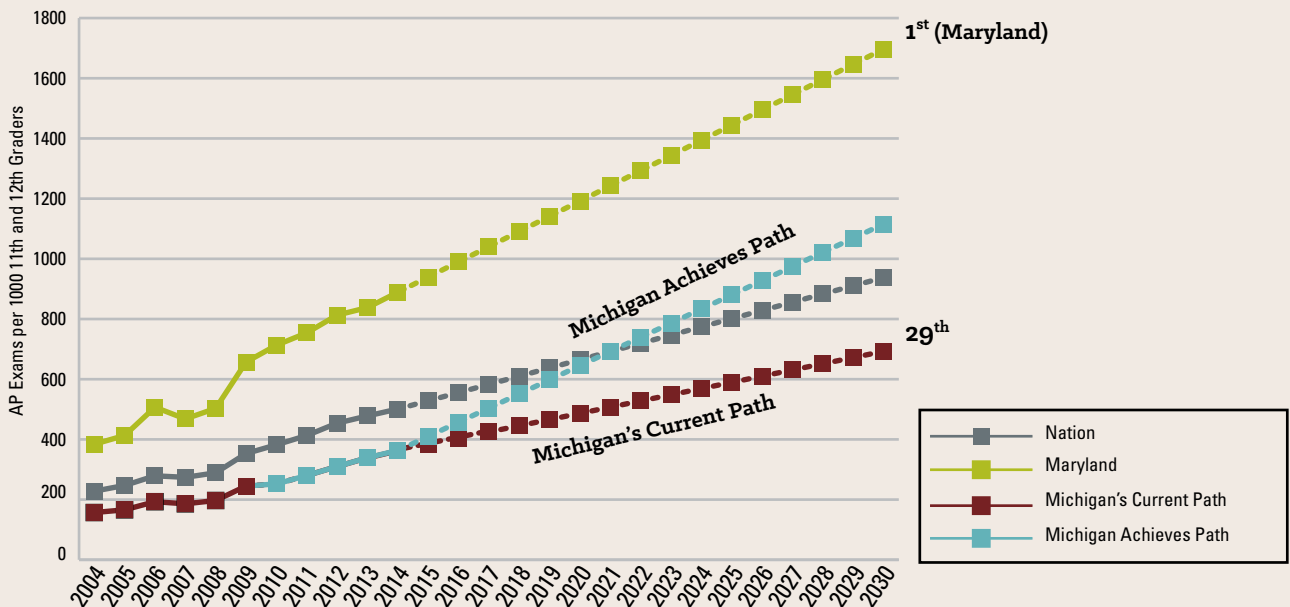
Average Michigan Teacher Salary based on Percent of Free and Reduced Price Lunch



Source: 2013-14 MDE Bulletin 1011, 2013-14 CEPI Free and Reduced Lunch Counts

MICHIGAN MUST INCREASE ACCESS TO RIGOROUS COLLEGE-LEVEL COURSEWORK, SUCH AS ADVANCED PLACEMENT (AP) COURSES, BY 2030

AP Exam Participation



Source: College Board AP Program Participation and Performance, 2004-2014

4. ACCESS TO COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY COURSEWORK

One of the best ways to ensure more students are college- and career-ready is to increase access to rigorous coursework in high school, such as Advanced Placement (AP) courses. Research shows that just taking these classes – even if a student does not earn credit in a college-level course – increases the likelihood that the student will go to college.^{xviii} Michigan currently ranks 29th of 49 in access to AP courses, measured by the number of students taking AP exams.

MICHIGAN ACHIEVES GOAL: *To become a top ten state in access to Advanced Placement classes by 2030.*

5. TEACHER & STUDENT ATTENDANCE

Michigan lacks a comprehensive approach to improving teaching quality. This problem manifests itself in many ways. Teacher attendance – or lack thereof – often is a symptom of

larger problems at a school, such as lack of support and weak management, among other issues. Teachers and students must be in school more often if Michigan is going to chart a new path toward the top ten.

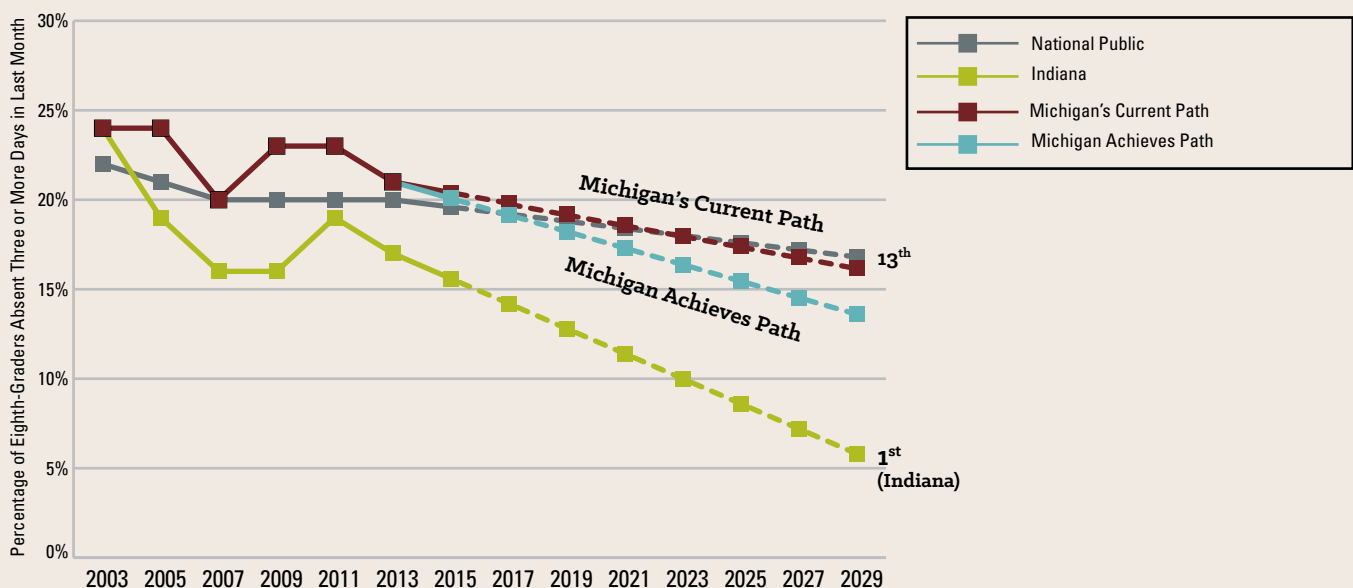
MICHIGAN ACHIEVES GOAL: *To become a top ten state in student and teacher attendance by 2030.*

6. STUDENT SUSPENSIONS

One of the most troubling practices in Michigan – and around the country – is the overuse of suspension and expulsion, particularly for students of color. According to data from the national Civil Rights Data Collection, Michigan has the third highest out-of-school suspension rate of African American students in the country. A full 21 percent of the African American students in Michigan schools were suspended in 2011-12. In comparison, New York, a state that also has a large African American student population, had the second lowest suspension rate for African American students,

MICHIGAN NEEDS TO OUTPACE THE COUNTRY IN REDUCING STUDENT ABSENCES TO REACH TOP TEN BY 2030

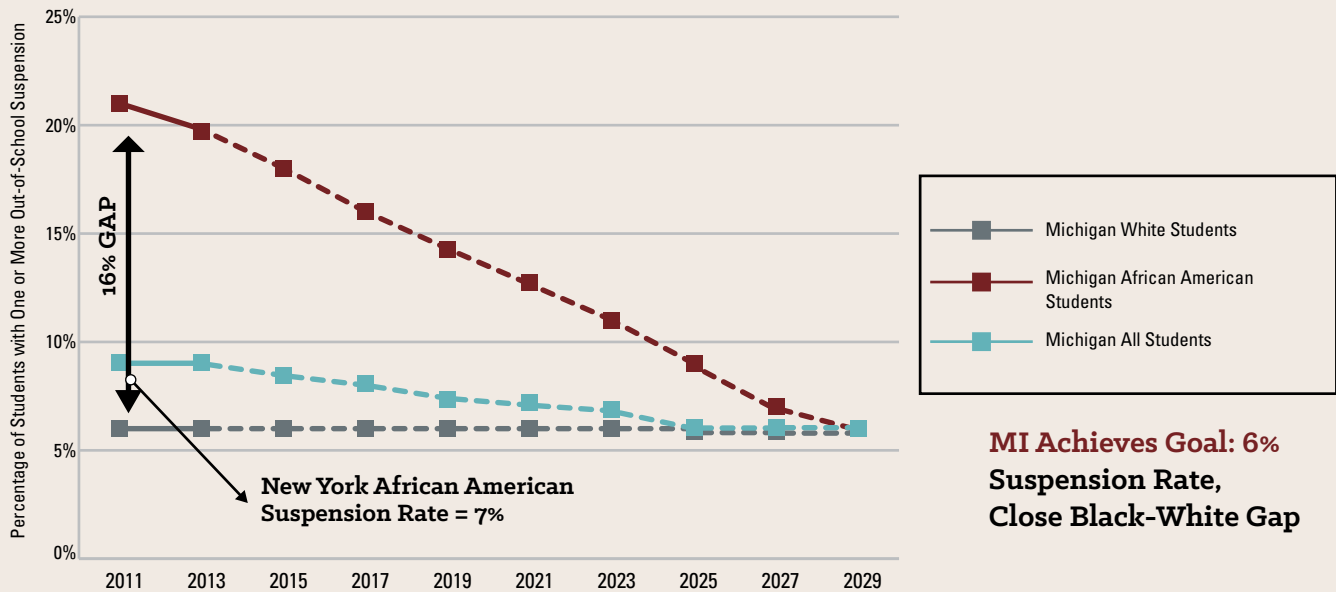
Absenteeism in Last Month – NAEP Grade 8 – All Students



Source: NAEP Data Explorer, NCES (Reported for 8th Grade Math), 2003-2013

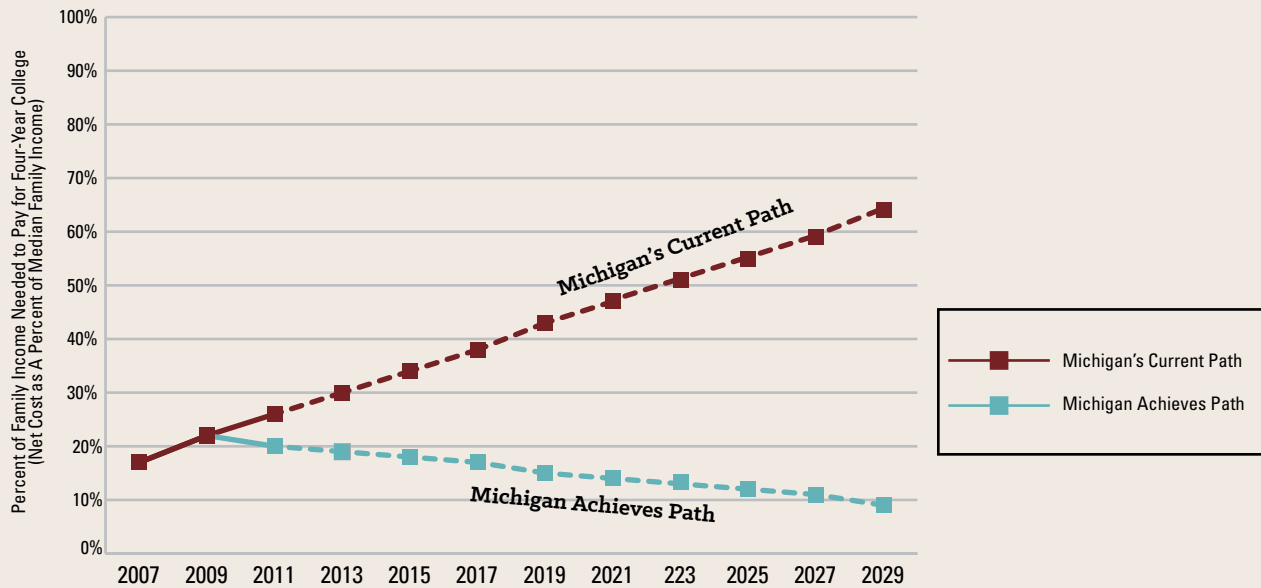
MICHIGAN FACES A UNIQUE CHALLENGE IN REDUCING SUSPENSION RATES AMONG AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS, CLOSING GAP

Out-of-School Suspension Rates



MICHIGAN'S CURRENT PATH WOULD MAKE COLLEGE IMPOSSIBLE TO AFFORD FOR MANY FAMILIES BY 2030

Family Income Needed to Pay for Four-Year College



at 7 percent.^{xix} Michigan's suspension rate is even more troubling when you consider that Michigan suspends 16 percent more of its African American students than its white students, compared to a 4 percent gap in New York.

A recent report by the UCLA Civil Rights Project found that, among districts with at least 1,000 students, Pontiac School District was the highest suspending district for elementary students nationwide. Pontiac suspended roughly one out of every three elementary students at least once in 2011-12.^{xx}

MICHIGAN ACHIEVES GOAL: *To become a top ten state for the lowest percentage of African American students who are suspended and the narrowest suspension gap between African American and white students by 2030.*

7. COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY

It's not enough to get into college. Young Michiganders have to be able to afford to stay in school and graduate. Unfortunately, Michigan ranks near the bottom in college affordability. It takes about 22 percent of an average family's income in Michigan to pay for a four-year public college or university. That means almost a quarter of a family's income is needed to pay for just one child to be in college – and that's after students receive financial aid from all sources.

Not many people can afford that expense, and it's even more difficult for our most vulnerable low-income families. For families in the bottom 20 percent of income in Michigan, the cost of college for one child, after receiving financial aid, is about 77 percent of their annual income. *Seventy-seven percent.* This is not sustainable, considering roughly half of Michigan's public school students are now low-income.

MICHIGAN ACHIEVES GOAL: *To become a top ten state for college affordability by 2030.*

MICHIGAN ACHIEVES: ACADEMIC GOALS

KINDERGARTEN READINESSⁱⁱ – GOAL: TOP TEN BY 2030

Michigan has recently made the smart investment in early childhood programs meant to increase the number of our students who enter kindergarten ready to learn at high levels. Unfortunately, we have not yet adopted a statewide kindergarten readiness assessment that will tell us if our investment is paying off. Ed Trust-Midwest encourages state leaders to monitor kindergarten readiness in future years. We will track our progress when the data become available.

4TH-GRADE READINGⁱⁱⁱ – GOAL: TOP TEN BY 2030

Governor Rick Snyder rightfully has made early literacy a top priority. One of the most telling indicators of whether Michigan's students are being prepared for success is how well our young students read. Reading proficiency is tied to all kinds of academic and life outcomes, and improving early reading is much more cost-effective than intervening with older students, when they are many years behind in school, or dropping out. Michigan must drastically improve our early literacy achievement for all students and close the achievement gaps that keep far too many of our low-income children and students of color from fulfilling their significant potential.

8TH-GRADE MATH^{iv} – GOAL: TOP TEN BY 2030

In addition to basic reading skills, math skills are essential for all students. Basic algebra is the foundation for high-level math courses. When students have not mastered this foundation, they are forced to enroll in remedial courses when they begin college. But eighth-grade math skills are not just for those students who are college-bound. A study conducted by ACT found that along with reading skills, math skills are essential for vocational jobs including those as a plumber, electrician or an upholsterer.^v

COLLEGE READINESS^{vi} – GOAL: 10% ENROLLED IN REMEDIAL COURSE

About 27 percent of all Michigan students are required to take at least one remedial course in college. That's more than a quarter of our students who are forced to pay for additional instruction in college before moving on to credit-bearing courses. Having to enroll in remedial courses actually increases the likelihood that students will drop out of college.^{vii} We must prepare many more of our students to succeed in whatever they choose to do after high school.

COLLEGE AND POST-SECONDARY ENROLLMENT^{vii} – GOAL: TOP TEN BY 2030

In order for Michigan's students to fulfill their true potential and be the leaders of tomorrow, more of them must enroll in postsecondary training, whether that be at a technical trade school, community college, or a four-year university. On this measure, Michigan is near the national average, with about 62 percent of high school graduates attending some form of postsecondary training in 2010. In order to reach the level of top ten states in ten years, Michigan must increase college enrollment by more than two percent every year for the next decade.

COLLEGE ATTAINMENT^{viii} – GOAL: TOP TEN BY 2030

Michigan ranks 33rd of 45 states in the percentage of adults 25 or older with at least a bachelor's degree, at 27 percent. Yet, only 16 percent of African American or Hispanic Michiganders have a bachelor's degree or higher. Showing that high performance in the earliest grades can foretell high performance later in life, Massachusetts leads the country with 40 percent of its adults with at least a bachelor's degree. In order to join the top ten states by 2030, Michigan must increase its bachelor's degree attainment by almost one percentage point every year through 2030.

i For each of these measures, if it's possible to track Michigan's progress compared to top-performing states, we'll do that. If it's not, we'll use the best available data we can to call for better monitoring of these important indicators in Michigan.

ii Data are not currently available because Michigan does not have a statewide kindergarten readiness assessment nor do we participate in a national effort to collect these data. Michigan is in the process of implementing a statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment. We will track any state or national data on Michigan's kindergarten readiness when they become available.

iii Source: NAEP Data Explorer, NCES. Estimated rank in 2030 only includes states that have data from 2003-2013 for that subgroup (2003-2013).

iv Source: NAEP Data Explorer, NCES. Estimated rank in 2030 only includes states that have data from 2003-2013 for that subgroup (2003-2013).

		MI CURRENT RANK	MI RANK BY 2030 IF WE STAY ON CURRENT PATH ⁱ
KINDERGARTEN READINESS			
		Not Available	Not Available
4TH-GRADE READING			
	All Students	38 th	44 th
	African American	42 nd of 45	28 th of 41
	Latino	24 th of 47	20 th of 39
	White	45 th	49 th
	Low-Income	37 th	32 nd
8TH-GRADE MATH			
	All Students	37 th	43 rd
	African American	41 st of 43	37 th of 39
	Latino	43 rd of 46	36 th of 36
	White	42 nd	48 th
	Low-Income	44 th	40 th
COLLEGE READINESS			
	All Students	27% in Remedial Course	61% in Remedial Course
COLLEGE AND POST-SECONDARY ENROLLMENT			
	All Students	25 th of 46	35 th
COLLEGE ATTAINMENT			
	All Students	33 rd of 45	32 nd
	African American	38 th of 49	29 th of 45
	Latino	19 th	19 th

v ACT, Inc., "Ready for College and Ready for Work: Same or Different," (Iowa City, IA: ACT, Inc., 2006). <http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/pdf/ReadinessBrief.pdf>

vi Source: CEPI College Remedial Coursework Enrollment Trend. Remedial coursework includes math, reading, writing, or science courses. Data are limited to Michigan high school graduates enrolled in college the following fall in a two-year or four-year Michigan public college or university only. Data that would allow us to rank Michigan compared to other states are not available at this time.

vii Source: NCHEMS Information Center.

viii Source: United States Census – American Community Survey - 1 Year Estimates.

MICHIGAN ACHIEVES: OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN GOALS

TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS – GOAL: TOP TEN BY 2030

Without a doubt, a child's academic learning is dependent on many factors. But what research is clear on is that the number one in-school predictor of student success is the teaching quality in a child's classroom. In leading states, sophisticated data systems provide teaching effectiveness data that are used for many purposes, such as professional development and early student interventions. In Michigan, those data are unavailable due to state leaders' delayed implementation and investment in a statewide educator evaluation and support system with standards and a growth model that would help districts identify and support teachers' effectiveness.

SCHOOL FUNDING EQUITYⁱ – TOP TEN BY 2030

Michigan ranks an abysmal 42nd of 47 states in the nation for funding gaps that negatively impact low-income students, according to a recent report by The Education Trust. On average, Michigan schools serving the highest rates of students from low-income families receive about 6 percent less in state and local funding than more affluent schools.

TEACHER SALARY EQUITYⁱⁱ – GOAL: TOP TEN BY 2030

Teachers in Michigan's wealthiest districts are paid about \$12,500 more, on average, than teachers in Michigan's poorest districts. That's alarming, considering what we know about the importance of high quality teachers in closing the achievement gap that persists between low-income and higher income students. To recruit and retain highly effective teachers in the schools that need them most, Michigan must close the gap in teacher pay.

ACCESS TO RIGOROUS COURSEWORKⁱⁱⁱ – GOAL: TOP TEN BY 2030

One of the best ways to ensure more students are college- and career-ready is to increase access to rigorous coursework in high school, such as Advanced Placement courses. Research shows that just taking these classes – even if a student does not earn credit in a college-level course – increases the likelihood that the student will go to college.^{iv} Michigan currently ranks 29th of 49 states in access to AP courses, measured by the number of students taking AP exams.

TEACHER ATTENDANCE^v – GOAL: TOP TEN BY 2030

In 2012, about 46 percent of teachers in Michigan were absent from their jobs ten or more days. That's about 6 percent of the school year, which is equivalent to a typical 9 to 5 year-round employee missing more than three weeks of work on top of vacation time.

STUDENT ATTENDANCE^{vi} – GOAL: TOP TEN BY 2030^{vii}

Not only are Michigan's teachers missing too much school, but our students – especially our African American students – are missing far too many days of school, often against their will. According to the 2013 national assessment, 21 percent of Michigan's eighth-grade math students said they had been absent from school three or more days in the last month – five percent more than the top states.

OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS^{viii} – GOAL: TOP TEN BY 2030

One of the most troubling practices in Michigan – and around the country – is the overuse of suspension and expulsion, particularly for students of color. According to data from the national Civil Rights Data Collection, Michigan has the third highest out-of-school suspension rate of African American students in the country. A full 21 percent of the African American students in Michigan schools were suspended in 2011-12.

COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY^{ix} – GOAL: TOP TEN BY 2030

It's not enough to get into college. Young Michiganders have to be able to afford to stay in school and graduate. Unfortunately, Michigan ranks near the bottom in college affordability for all students and 45th out of 47 for low-income students. For families in the bottom 20 percent of income in Michigan, the cost of college for one child, after receiving financial aid, is about 77 percent of their annual income.

i Source: The Education Trust, The State of Funding Equity in Michigan

ii Sources: MDE Bulletin 1011 (2013-14), High and Low-Poverty districts derived from percentage of Free or Reduced Lunch Students

iii Source: College Board AP Program Participation and Performance Data.

iv National Conference of State Legislatures, "Hot Topics in Higher Education: Reforming Remedial Education," (Washington, D.C.: NCSL, 2013). <http://www.ncsl.org/research/education/improving-college-completion-reforming-remedial.aspx#FF>

v Source: 2012 Center for American Progress

		MI CURRENT RANK	MI RANK BY 2030 IF WE STAY ON CURRENT PATH
TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS			
		Not Available	Not Available
SCHOOL FUNDING EQUITY			
	Funding Gap between Highest and Lowest-Poverty Districts	42 nd of 47	Not Available
TEACHER SALARY EQUITY			
	Teacher Salary Gap between Highest and Lowest-Poverty Districts	\$12,543 teacher salary gap between the highest and lowest-poverty districts	Not Available
ACCESS TO RIGOROUS COURSEWORK			
	All Students	29 th of 49	29 th
TEACHER ATTENDANCE			
	All Teachers	45 th	Not Available
STUDENT ATTENDANCE			
	All Students	6 th (tied with 8 others)	13 th (tied with 1 other state – of 34)
	African American	12 th (tied for last place)	32 nd (of 34)
	Latino	12 th (tied with 3 others)	22 nd (of 33)
	Low-Income	8 th (tied with 6 others)	19 th of 40 (tied with 1 other)
OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS			
	All Students	40 th of 49	Not Available
	African American	47 th of 49	Not Available
	Latino	46 th of 49	Not Available
COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY			
	All Students	42 nd of 44	Not Available
	Low-Income	45 th of 47	Not Available

vi Source: NAEP Data Explorer, NCES, reported for NAEP 8th Grade Math.

vii The number of ties in rankings of absenteeism do not allow for much variation. Interpretation of rankings should consider these ties.

viii Source: 2011-2012 Civil Rights Data Collection. Note: Hawaii is excluded because it provided limited data.

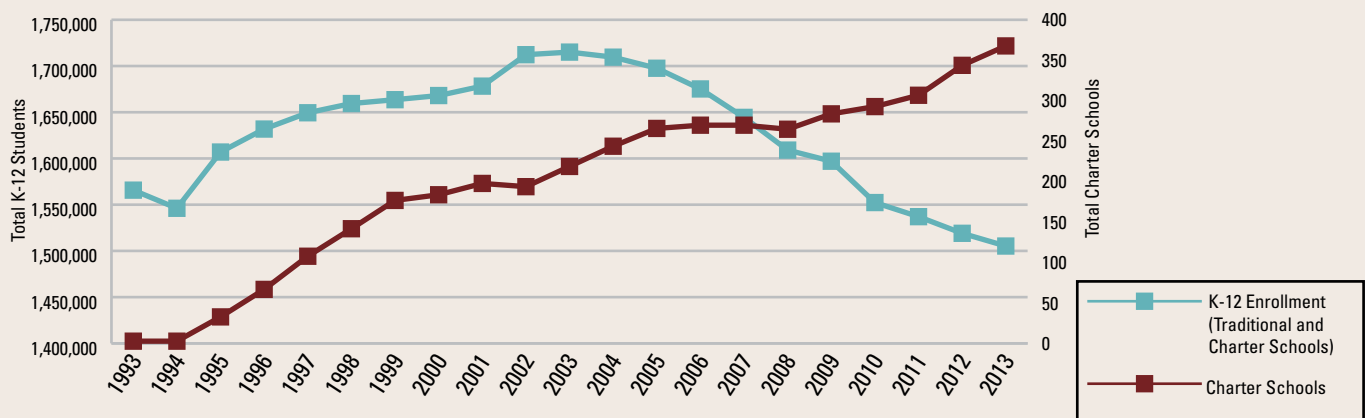
ix Source: 2009 NCEMIS Information Center.

MICHIGAN EDUCATION BY THE NUMBERS

The following charts provide context for Michigan's educational performance and trajectory. For more Michigan education data, go to edtrustmidwest.org/MichiganAchieves

STEADY INCREASE IN CHARTER SCHOOLS DESPITE DECLINING PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENT ENROLLMENT

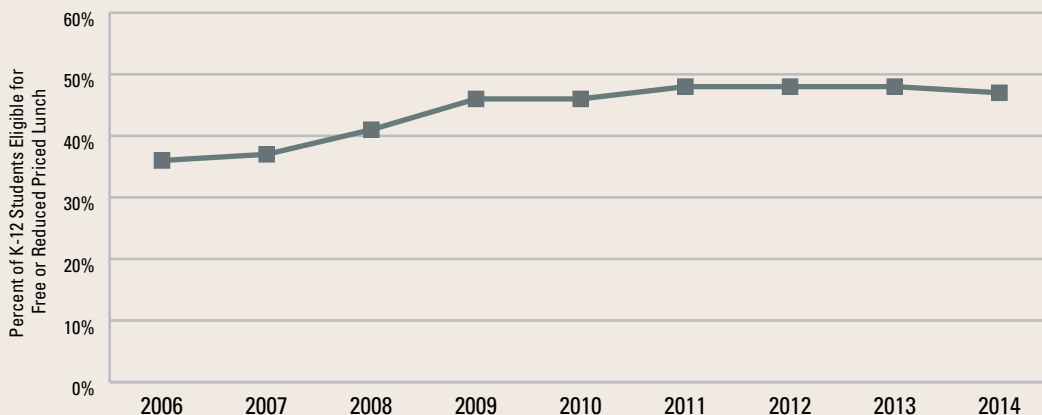
Total K-12 Students vs. Total Number of Charter Schools
1993-2013



Source: CEPI Pupil Headcount Data, CEPI Educational Entity Master (EEM), 1993-2013

TEN PERCENT MORE MICHIGAN K-12 STUDENTS WERE LOW-INCOME IN 2014 THAN IN 2006

Free or Reduced Price Lunch Eligibility – Michigan K-12 Students



Source: CEPI Free and Reduced Lunch Counts, 2006-2014

MICHIGAN NAEP PERFORMANCE

Relative Rank of All Students 2003-2013

	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013
4th Grade Reading	28 th	30 th	30 th	34 th	35 th	38 th
4th Grade Math	27 th	32 nd	32 nd	38 th	41 st	42 nd
8th Grade Reading	27 th	29 th	32 nd	32 nd	28 th	32 nd
8th Grade Math	34 th	33 rd	36 th	36 th	36 th	37 th

MICHIGAN NAEP PERFORMANCE

Relative Rank of Low-Income Students 2003-2013

	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013
4th Grade Reading	35 th	35 th	35 th	37 th	36 th	37 th
4th Grade Math	34 th	37 th	40 th	45 th	46 th	48 th
8th Grade Reading	31 st	33 rd	41 st	37 th	26 th	31 st
8th Grade Math	34 th	37 th	42 nd	47 th	43 rd	44 th

MICHIGAN NAEP PERFORMANCE

Relative Rank of Higher Income Students 2003-2013

	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013
4th Grade Reading	24 th	35 th	36 th	36 th	35 th	38 th
4th Grade Math	20 th	29 th	35 th	35 th	43 rd	32 nd
8th Grade Reading	21 st	37 th	36 th	31 st	30 th	31 st
8th Grade Math	34 th	35 th	38 th	39 th	40 th	39 th

MICHIGAN NAEP PERFORMANCE

Relative Rank of African American Students 2003-2013

	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013
4th Grade Reading	38 th	39 th	36 th	44 th	45 th	42 nd
4th Grade Math	37 th	40 th	40 th	43 rd	44 th	44 th
8th Grade Reading	29 th	33 rd	38 th	37 th	34 th	33 rd
8th Grade Math	35 th	32 nd	39 th	42 nd	42 nd	41 st

MICHIGAN NAEP PERFORMANCE

Relative Rank of Latino Students 2003-2013

	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013
4th Grade Reading	22 nd	15 th	13 th	25 th	26 th	24 th
4th Grade Math	16 th	25 th	20 th	31 st	32 nd	40 th
8th Grade Reading	5 th	13 th	38 th	13 th	4 th	21 st
8th Grade Math	4 th	12 th	35 th	19 th	13 th	43 rd

MICHIGAN NAEP PERFORMANCE

Relative Rank of White Students 2003-2013

	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013
4th Grade Reading	13 th	26 th	33 rd	38 th	35 th	45 th
4th Grade Math	13 th	20 th	37 th	41 st	45 th	46 th
8th Grade Reading	12 th	30 st	37 th	38 th	37 th	41 st
8th Grade Math	25 th	31 st	38 th	40 th	44 th	42 nd

*Note: Rankings are among all 50 states. States without sufficient subgroup data are excluded from rankings.
Source: NCES, NAEP Data Explorer

ENDNOTES

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- xiii Robert E. Slavin, "The Message from Baltimore," *Huff Post Education*, May 7, 2015. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/robert-e-slavin/the-message-from-baltimor_b_7231190.html
- xiv Natasha Ushomirsky and David Williams, "Funding Gaps," (Washington, D.C.: The Education Trust, March 25, 2015). <http://edtrust.org/resource/funding-gaps-2015/>
- xv For each of these measures, if it's possible to track Michigan's progress compared to top-performing states, we'll do that. If it's not, we'll use the best available data we can to call for better monitoring of these important indicators in Michigan. To determine Michigan's projected performance – if we stay on our current path – we calculated the improvement rate for each prior year of data. We then averaged each of those improvement rates to establish an average improvement rate for each state, for each metric. We then applied that average improvement rate to each future year we are expected to have new data to estimate our performance in 2030.
- xvi ACT, Inc., "Ready for College and Ready for Work: Same or Different," (Iowa City, IA: ACT, Inc., 2006). <http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/pdf/ReadinessBrief.pdf>
- xvii National Conference of State Legislatures, "Hot Topics in Higher Education: Reforming Remedial Education," (Washington, D.C.: NCSL, 2013). <http://www.ncsl.org/research/education/improving-college-completion-reforming-remedial.aspx#FF>
- xviii Saul Geiser and Veronica Santelices, "The role of advanced placement and honors courses in college admissions," *Expanding opportunity in higher education: Leveraging promise* (2004): 75-113.
- xix North Dakota has lower suspension rates for African American students than New York. We do not use this state to compare to Michigan because they had a much lower percentages of African American students in their public school populations. Additionally, Hawaii provided limited data on students without disabilities suspended out-of-school. This state was excluded from the analysis entirely.
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The Education Trust—Midwest

306 S. Washington Ave., Suite 400, Royal Oak, MI 48067

Tel: 734/619-8008 Fax: 734/619-8009 | www.edtrustmidwest.org