



LAUNCH

M I C H I G A N

BOOSTING EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE
for our **children**, our **schools**, our **state**

Phase 1 Report

**It's time to
do right by
Michigan
children
and teachers.**





For more than a generation, Michigan has fought a series of highly pitched battles over how Pre K-12 education is delivered. From school funding to testing and accountability, we've been all over the map - and often in ways that have not helped children grow.

Now we are reaping the results of our actions and inactions. More than half of our third-grade children score below proficient in reading, a number that increases to 70 percent for those living in poverty. The numbers are also concerning in mathematics; Michigan fourth graders are ranked 42nd in the country in comparison to their peers.

We can do much better by our kids and our schools. Working together, using a multi-year, multi-phased approach, we will provide the world-class learning opportunities they deserve.

By establishing Launch Michigan, our organizations have called for a halt to the years of noise and discord that have perpetuated these problems, and now we are working on a common agenda to do what is right for Michigan's children and educators. We envision a coherent, connected educational delivery system, from every individual classroom to state government, and we're working together to make it happen.

United around the same Launch Michigan table, our unique panel of educators, business leaders, labor unions, philanthropists, civic leaders, and workforce experts research, discuss and vet ideas on how to improve all of Michigan's publicly-funded schools for our kids. We have studied national best practices and have spent time with experts around the country. We have asked questions of a robust field of state and national professional educators and we are listening to their responses. We challenge ourselves, working to be more impactful and always mindful of how policy decisions impact those who attend and work in our schools.

Thousands of hours of work have helped bring us to the phase one recommendations now before you. We will continue to listen as we advocate for the changes in this first phase, as well as work towards building consensus in phases two and three. This approach is not rocket science, nor are many of the recommendations. What is new is our common commitment - despite our political differences - that these steps are essential to improve Michigan's schools.

We invite you to join us on our journey toward stronger outcomes for Michigan. A future where all children have access to consistent supports that are capable of meeting their needs. Where talented, dedicated teachers are in every child's classroom. And where our state's talent pipeline - and our economy - can continue to grow and flourish.

Please join us in our quest to help build a better Michigan!

Steering Committee Co-Chairs

Tonya Allen, Skillman Foundation

Paula Herbart, Michigan Education Association

Doug Rothwell, Business Leaders for Michigan

Steering Committee Members

Amber Arellano, The Education Trust Midwest

Rick Baker, Grand Rapids Area Chamber

Sandy Baruah, Detroit Regional Chamber

Tim Daman, Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce

Darrienne Driver Hudson, United Way for Southeastern Michigan

Rob Fowler, Small Business Association of Michigan

David Hecker, American Federation of Teachers Michigan

Ron Koehler, The School Finance Research Collaborative

Bill Miller, Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators

Dan Quisenberry, Michigan Association of Public School Academies

Michael Rice, Michigan Department of Education

Julie Ridenour, Steelcase Foundation

Joe Scantlebury, Council of Michigan Foundations

Kevin Stotts, Talent 2025

Ray Telman, Middle Cities Education Association

Chris Wigent, Michigan Association of Superintendents and Administrators

Don Wotruba, Michigan Association of School Boards

The Michigan Parent Teacher Association

Traverse Connect

Michigan's potential remains untapped.

Michigan's children deserve world-class learning opportunities to help them reach their potential. But many of those experiences today fall well short of that mark.

Last school year, more than 2,500 long-term substitute teachers taught in Michigan classrooms. And with our educator preparation colleges experiencing a 70 percent drop in enrollment over the past 10 years, this problem will get worse before it gets better.

Achievement scores vary widely among student groups, and Michigan's workforce is not prepared to compete with the nation and the globe. We cannot hope to build prosperity, nourish a thriving talent pipeline, or end generational poverty cycles unless the people of Michigan unite around investments and strategies that support our children.

Moreover, we need to ensure solutions are consistently, equitably and adequately funded, rooted in research and best practice, and given time to take hold. There are no quick fixes in

Michigan has hardworking teachers, principals, counselors and other staff. And smart, hardworking children as well. Our problems aren't because of them, but they are on the front lines. It's time to show our professionals on the ground the respect and appreciation they deserve.

Pre K-20 education – and Michigan educators deserve continuity and space to deliver on the promise of change.

That is why we at Launch Michigan have chosen three simple core priorities to underlie all our work:

- **Preparing Graduates**
- **Ensuring Rapid Improvement**
- **Closing Equity Gaps**

These priorities represent what each and every Michigan child deserves now; from the Upper Peninsula to the neighborhoods of Detroit, and from the earliest years of life through college and beyond.

As the Launch Michigan coalition has worked together during the past year, we have understood challenges, studied what works, and developed a phase one set of recommendations aimed at prioritizing and expediting growth. Our intention in phase one is to begin the hard work of building more equity into our system with a strong first step towards student-centered funding, and a focus on the most fundamental building block of learning: reading.

Our three priorities have and will remain reliable guideposts for the Launch Michigan steering committee. So have the stories of Gabby and Jonathan, at right. These two children – one from Muskegon County, the other from Iron County in the Upper Peninsula – highlight for us where (and why) meaningful, lasting change is so critical.



Jonathan

It is all too common in today's Michigan for teachers to get hired away by competing districts at the start of – or in the middle of – a term. This is what happened in Jonathan's Iron County class the day before school started and, when combined with a significant shortage of substitute teachers, the district was left with a lack of good solutions to fill his vacant kindergarten class. To fill the gap, two generous long-time retired teachers offered to team-teach, as they were not comfortable with the demands of a full-time kindergarten class.

This small rural school district has 69 percent of its students living in poverty. Roughly 45 percent of its children score proficient on Michigan reading and math assessments.



Gabby

As a bright and fun loving 6th grader in Muskegon County, Gabby has had limited access to certified teachers. Between kindergarten and fifth grade, she has had 14 teachers, half of whom were certified.

Although the needle is starting to move, this historical inequity has resulted greater than 90 percent of third graders in her school being not proficient on Michigan literacy assessments.

Launch Recommends:

All too often, education stakeholders and advocates have looked at school funding and school accountability systems as two distinct topics. As Launch Michigan has studied best practices in these two areas around the nation and the world, one thing has become clear: funding and accountability are closely connected. School funding is invested to achieve high outcomes for all children, then data and accountability systems assess our needs and targets, which then trigger the appropriate restructuring and investment of resources.

Launch Michigan calls for a future state where our systems for funding, strategic planning, and accountability achieve desired results for children through coherence and interconnectedness at the classroom, building, district, regional, and state levels.

During phase one, Launch Michigan has identified opportunities to build capacity and connectedness within these functions, through critical work on emergent issues of improving elementary literacy and providing all kids the great teachers they deserve.

● Investment

- We support a student-centered, weighted funding formula that drives greater equity into our funding system, and funds children based on their needs, regardless of the governance or geography of the school they attend. This formula should strive to create educational adequacy for all children, in concert with School Finance Research Collaborative findings.
- To generate needed funds, Michigan must use a balanced approach that includes more equitably rethinking existing resources, identifying and eliminating structural inefficiencies, and securing and prioritizing equitable distribution of new revenue.
- Michigan must prioritize equity with a focus on literacy by first targeting elementary school children who live in poverty and in geographic isolation.
- Recognizing our goals include the creation of a more adequate and equitable funding system, our next phase is to build Michigan's new revenue strategy and support a reliable accountability system by engaging policymakers and voters.

● Strategic Planning and Capacity Building

- With the consultation of state and national experts, Michigan must create a mechanism to deploy best practices at scale.
- Michigan must immediately make needed statutory changes to allow educators to be employed at the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) without sacrificing their school retirement funds or comparable benefits.
- With money comes accountability. Districts must develop local plans that transparently account for needs, summarize academic goals, and align new spending to research-based best practice areas. This must be the basis of any new equitable spending.
- Michigan must ensure that all kids and educators have access to high-quality books and curricula, and that educators receive on-going, high-quality professional learning experiences on research-based literacy instruction, including coaching and feedback.
- Michigan must create pathways to coaching and hybrid teacher/coaching positions, and strive to improve engagement with parents around literacy best practices.



● Transparency and Data Empowerment

- We urge an expedient reconciliation of Michigan’s Every Student Succeeds Act-approved accountability system and PA 601 under one single statewide accountability and reporting system that: (i) complies with federal law, (ii) helps identify our most challenged schools for needed interventions, and (iii) is clear and concise to educators, parents and community members.
- Michigan must prioritize student growth for all children and will work to advance much-needed improvements in, and access to, essential data systems in support of this aim.
- Launch Michigan will create an annual progress report to hold state and local stakeholders accountable for Michigan’s educational progress, which will reflect the intersection between best practice policy, funding adoption, and field implementation.

● Interventions and Supports

- Michigan must support a sustainable, adequately-funded office to provide school accountability, with a clear and predictable statutory scope of escalating interventions for chronically-failing schools.
- Accountability must avoid shaming and trigger support. Systems that flag failure but provide no meaningful interventions and supports are ineffective.
- Michigan must respond to schools that are the lowest performing, have negative growth, and/or have unacceptable sub-group performance with a multi-tiered approach to intervention that starts with a fully-resourced partnership model, but also extends beyond it.
- Intervention models must empower all levels of Michigan public education to be invested in and accountable for turning around challenged schools. School buildings, districts, regional entities, the state Department of Education, the Legislature and the Governor must partner to significantly improve outcomes for children.

A Phased Approach to Change



Immediately: Tackling Michigan's Most Acute Needs

Create an equity fund with an initial focus on literacy. Within this fund, enact:

- A 0.35 poverty multiplier to every qualifying student's foundation allowance in grades K–3 at a minimum.
- A 0.04 geographic isolation multiplier to every qualifying student's foundation allowance in grades K–3 at a minimum.

Hold all districts harmless so total resources do not fall below current levels.

Create a district-driven strategic planning process to ensure that resources can be directed to where local schools determine they are experiencing the greatest need. This process should include:

- A clear, locally-derived plan that shows how equity fund resources will be used to improve literacy, with clear results and metrics.
- A planning process that involves local, regional and state entities to ensure that resources are being used on evidence-based best practices and strategies that align with recipient children's needs.

PHASE 1



Today–2025: Bridging Michigan’s Gaps

- Determine a revenue strategy and scale investments to provide student-centered funding for all kids by focusing on poverty, geographic isolation, English language learners, special education, and career and technical education multipliers.
- Improve support of early childhood education, focusing on areas of greatest need first while improving quality and alignment with K–20.
- Develop strategies to improve college and career readiness for all post-secondary pathways.
- Study and implement world-class strategies around teacher training, licensure, attraction, and retention, with a focus on providing all Michigan children with great teachers who are adequately resourced and supported.
- Build out multi-tiered turnaround planning through developing local, regional, and state partnership processes.
- Ensure that Michigan has a single, effective, and transparent accountability system.

PHASE 2

Today–2030: The Change Michigan Needs

- Identify and implement research-based models for addressing the needs of the whole child, including social, emotional and physical needs.
- Research and identify solutions to create equity in transportation, technology and capital needs.
- Tackle structural inefficiencies by scaling best practices, prioritizing build-up of efforts already under way at the local and regional level.
- Ensure that all children have a safe and sound place to attend school.
- Close structural equity gaps in ways that prioritize and expedite growth throughout all levels of Michigan’s Pre K–20 education system.

PHASE 3

Launch Listens to Michigan Educators

In March 2019, Launch Michigan conducted a survey of 17,000 Michigan educators from all regions of the state. Their views have helped shape and support the recommendations in this document:

The data reveal gaps in literacy support – a critically important area, especially as Michigan moves toward implementation of the law requiring retention of third graders who do not meet literacy benchmarks.

Nearly a quarter of educators (24 percent) say their schools are not ready to provide any additional support for children who are held back, and this rises to over four in ten in certain types of urban districts, especially those with high poverty and lower per-pupil spending.

While majorities say their school libraries and classrooms have enough reading material for children, over three in ten do not – particularly in the same high poverty and lower-spending districts.

Large majorities of educators say each of the policy solutions presented in the survey would improve schools:

- Allocating funding based on student need, effective mentoring for early-career teachers and principals, and expanding programs to connect families with social services will have a large impact.
- Although fewer say additional literacy coaches would make a large impact (38 percent), this may be partly a function of awareness. Where literacy coaches and literacy interventionists are available (43 percent and 56 percent, respectively, say they have access to these supports), over two-thirds of educators describe them as helpful.

Launch Michigan plans to similarly engage with parents, community members, business leaders, labor unions and other civic leaders around the state in the future.





Inequity: A Statewide Problem

Rural Traditional

County: Chippewa
Geographically Isolated: Yes
Percentage of Children in Poverty: 71%
Number of K-3 Children in Poverty: 152
3rd-Grade Children Below Proficient in 3rd-grade
English Language Arts: 71.4%
Potential Equity Fund Phase 1 Distribution in
2020-21 School year: \$419,052

Rural Traditional

County: Clare
Geographically Isolated: No
Percentage of Children in Poverty: 61%
Number of K-3 Children in Poverty: 243
3rd-Grade Children Below Proficient in 3rd-grade
English Language Arts: 80.6%
Potential Equity Fund Phase 1 Distribution in
2020-21 school year: \$669,428

Suburban Traditional

County: Kent
Geographically Isolated: No
Percentage of Children in Poverty: 12%
Number of K-3 Children in Poverty: 279
3rd-Grade Children Below Proficient in 3rd-grade
English Language Arts: 39%
Potential Equity Fund Phase 1 Distribution in
2020-21 school year: \$821,138

Urban Traditional

County: Jackson
Geographically Isolated: No
Percentage of Children in Poverty: 71%
Number of K-3 Children in Poverty: 1,223
3rd-Grade Children Below Proficient in 3rd-grade
English Language Arts: 77.1%
Potential Equity Fund Phase 1 Distribution in
2020-21 school year: \$3,369,181

Urban Charter

County: Wayne
Geographically Isolated: No
Percentage of Children in Poverty: 84%
Number of K-3 Children in Poverty: 215
3rd-Grade Children Below Proficient in 3rd-grade
English Language Arts: 90+%
Potential Equity Fund Phase 1 Distribution in
2020-21 school year: \$592,292

