



Reinventing Public Education in Michigan

A 21st-century
framework for
transformation

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Launch Michigan is an unprecedented partnership of business, education, parents, labor, philanthropy, and civic leaders, all of whom care deeply about education and our state's collective future. That is why we are crafting a new, high-quality, student-centered system for Michigan—one that helps every student succeed in school, in their careers, and in life. We understand implicitly that a strong, thriving public education system is the cornerstone of successful kids, prosperous communities, and a strong economy.

We firmly believe it is possible to make meaningful and lasting change for our students and for our own future. What we are doing is historic!

Launch Michigan Co-Chairs

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- Jeff Donofrio, Business Leaders for Michigan
- Paula Herbart, Michigan Education Association
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It is impossible to adequately express our appreciation for the hundreds of dedicated individuals and organizations who contributed their knowledge, time, experiences, talents, funding and leadership to this project during the past four years. Each of them has had an extraordinary impact on the work we share with you today, and we are grateful for their involvement, insight and support.



Michigan schools are producing the results they were built to deliver.

The problem is those results are no longer good enough to ensure our children can achieve their ambitions.

It's time to act differently.

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Friends,

It is long past time our state took a hard look at the way it prepares its children for the future. For decades, we have let too many factors stand in the way of the changes our students need and deserve.

The simple truth is this: the low-skill, living wage jobs that sustained Michigan throughout much of the past century are gone. They aren't coming back. Our state has to move forward in new ways that require more knowledge, innovation, and leadership.

We owe it to our children. We can't afford not to change.

That is why we, the members of the Launch Michigan coalition, have come together. We have chosen to completely re-imagine how education is structured and delivered in our state. Today, we stand shoulder to shoulder behind a series of highly principled proposals that can work to improve our state's educational achievement and, ultimately, to create the dynamic, energetic workforce of tomorrow.

In this document, we'll share how our proposals were developed and how they can work to create the kinds of improvements our state's educators, parents, businesses, and policy leaders have been demanding for many years.

The proposals you will review here are the first stage of this work—our effort to raise the common denominator for the future discussion. We have engaged the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE) to review these proposals and suggest ways we might build upon them to redesign Michigan's education system to be among the best in the world. This next phase has to be inclusive, transparent and public, because we cannot debate Michigan's plan for public education in private.

We invite you to become part of our efforts. Please visit our website, follow us on social media, and reach out to any of our steering committee members to learn more about how your voice can strengthen opportunities for our state and its children for generations to come.

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Best,


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Executive Summary

Michigan's economy has changed significantly over the past few decades, with more disruption on the horizon. For Michigan to be successful in the coming decades, where opportunity and prosperity are widely shared, and businesses find the talent they need to grow, our education systems need to be reinvented.

How to do that is why Launch Michigan was formed in 2018, bringing together leaders from business, education, labor and philanthropy to take on one of the most difficult questions for our future: how do we best prepare our children for success. Our current educational system is not delivering the results we or they need—not because of the people involved but because we haven't changed the system to meet our new needs.

The first phase of this work has resulted in a framework for our education system, which is attached to this document. It delves into the interconnected areas we must address to help our students perform to their fullest potential in our economy and our society. While much work remains to be done, the framework represents a solid foundation to build upon and should be viewed as a package, rather than a checklist, as each are interrelated and include needed supports for accomplishing true systems change.

Our framework includes the following recommendations for Michigan:

Reinvention

- **Becoming a Top Performing System:** Michigan must adopt a clear and rigorous college and career readiness standard, aligned to international benchmarks, to establish a foundation that is to be part of each student's graduation requirements.
 - The standard would be measured at 10th grade, or earlier if a student is ready, and again in 11th and 12th grade if a student does not meet it in 10th grade. Students would have multiple opportunities and multiple methods to show proficiency prior to graduation.
 - Should students not be able to demonstrate proficiency by the end of 12th grade, they would be entitled to up to an additional year of co-requisite enrollment to help them catch up.
 - Students' progress would be monitored throughout their PK–12 career with individualized support provided as needed to address gaps.
 - School/district accountability and transparency requirements would include data on the school's/district's student success rate of achieving the standard.
 - More than just academics, students would also graduate demonstrating important 21st century skills, using a portfolio model approach.

- **Multiple Student Pathways:** Michigan must ensure that all public high school students have access to rigorous, multiple post-secondary pathways including traditional college prep, opportunity to earn a full associates degree, advanced placement pathways, dual-enrollment pathways and robust 21st century career/technical education pathways.
- The state’s Read by Grade Three law should be amended to eliminate the retention requirement while enhancing the elements that have been shown to enhance early literacy success.



Resources

- **Funding to Enable Student Success:** Michigan must adopt and adequately support a new funding system that provides a strong foundation for all and focuses on providing equitable resources to students with the greatest needs, including those in poverty and enrolled in special education.
 - This new K–12 funding system would be structured to include a base per-student amount (\$10,421 as identified by the School Finance Research Collaborative in 2021) and include a series of equity weighting factors for each child to fit their unique needs.
 - The availability of early childhood, out-of-school time learning experiences, and wrap-around services must be dramatically increased, especially for students from high-poverty communities.
- New funds must be distributed utilizing a localized strategic planning process to help guide the use of practices proven to improve student success.
- This new funding system will require significant additional investment, which should come from increased revenues and cost efficiencies, connected and sequenced together. Additionally, dedicating School Aid Fund revenue to the classroom must be prioritized.
- **Valuing and Empowering Educators:** For the first time ever, Michigan should create career pathways, including negotiated minimum salaries, for educators that are competitive with similarly-educated private and public sector careers. These career pathways would provide for professional progression opportunities that allow for educators to continue teaching while also professionally evolving and advancing, similar to how physicians can progress in their careers.

Responsibility

- Michigan must evolve its PK–12 regulatory structures to ensure greater coherence and effectiveness.
 - Changes to MDE governance and function must be made to help ensure greater accountability for Michigan’s educational performance, including having the Governor appoint the State Superintendent.
 - Existing accountability systems, which include an index and A-F rating system, must be replaced with a single, summative, transparent, and easy-to-understand accountability tool and dashboard, focused on student performance and growth, that complies with federal laws and lets educators and families understand how their school is performing and what assistance will be provided if it is struggling.
- A plan must be developed and implemented to ensure all ISDs/regional service agencies offer consistent and equitable services no matter where they are in Michigan, and to ensure these agencies are in alignment with both state and local needs.
- Data systems and reporting requirements must be updated, overhauled and streamlined to ensure better decision making by having more information connect across the P–20 system.
- Michigan’s educator evaluation framework must be replaced and strengthened to have a focus on supporting educator growth, reducing its reliance on standardized assessments. A strengthened evaluation system will need to include more useful formative feedback from administrators and grow teacher capacity to help students succeed, while ensuring a greater voice for educators in the process, in concert with the aforementioned professional career ladder.



What Comes Next for Launch Michigan

Like all frameworks, this is complex, detailed work that must continue to be developed in transparent and inclusive ways. Using our framework as a foundation, broad groups of stakeholders and practitioners need to be engaged in further work to make these ideas a reality.

To help us on this journey, Launch Michigan engaged the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE), a group with a reputation for being the best education system transformers in the United States. We asked them to review our work and help us think through next steps. NCEE's full evaluation is attached to this document, along with our framework.

Over the past six months, NCEE has helped us connect the dots between education and the economy. They have given us valuable insight into the monumental transformation needed to make Michigan's education system a destination for families—and therefore talent—in a world economy that will increasingly be remote, automated, and global.

NCEE has emphasized the need for Michigan's leaders to come together and develop both a shared economic vision for the state and recommendations connected to that vision on how to create a world class education system that sees Michiganders as leaders in the U.S. and globally.

Given where we are in this process, it is now time for Launch to evolve. Successful education reform efforts around the country have been led by organizations and commissions that can deepen the work, build broad support and oversee long term implementation. To support this, Launch will pivot its structure and focus, and among other changes will become a 501(c)(3) to make these transformative changes a reality.



A Few Introductions Before We Begin

In order to fully convey the power of Launch Michigan’s redesigned Framework for public education in our state, we have created composite portraits of individual system stakeholders. As you review this report, you’ll meet these individuals again to see how the new Framework impacts their experiences.



Maya, Student

As a talented Michigan 8th-grader, Maya makes her parents proud. She’s a B student who enjoys science and dreams of college at the University of Michigan.

But while Maya and her parents believe her school performs relatively well, they don’t know its learning standards aren’t high enough, there are too few teachers, and resources are thin. In fact, Maya’s own achievements are relatively weak on a global scale—and she won’t find out until she tries to get into U of M.

How is Maya going to achieve her dreams?



Mrs. Baker, 10th-Grade Math Teacher

Kathy Baker is struggling. Morale is low, everyone seems to be leaving the profession, and there are very few options for her to grow as an educator.

What Mrs. Baker wants more than anything is to feel like she’s making a difference for the students in her classroom. Instead, she finds too many gaps, including holes in her students’ past preparation, and cracks in a system that isn’t supporting her very well.

How long is Mrs. Baker going to keep trying?



Jim Levenger, HR Manager

Jim works for a 500-employee equipment manufacturer in southeast Michigan.

He's hired so many young people, hoping for the best, only to find out later they couldn't do the math necessary to perform their tasks. Or write well enough to communicate effectively with their colleagues.

Jim's company is now at a crucial decision point. Having been founded in Michigan generations ago, they want to stay here.

But how long will it take before they have to relocate to follow better talent?



State Senator Anita Hamilton

Sen. Hamilton ran on a platform of business development. She is eager to help the state of Michigan create the kinds of economic incentives necessary to generate new jobs and investment.

Unfortunately, Sen. Hamilton has learned the state's economy is hampered by a lack of educated talent. She's been trying to research the problem so she can support effective solutions, but data and accountability are tough to figure out.

How can she determine what's wrong, so she can help fix it?

How we got here

Over the generations, our state’s schools have grown to fit our economy. They were founded with deep roots in farming and rural life until the middle of the last century. By the early 1960s, many non-farm workers held manufacturing jobs that typically provided a middle class living without a lot of education.

It was natural, therefore, that Michigan’s schools began to mirror the state’s economy. Schools became time-bound assembly lines and sorting systems, in which students were moved with like age groups down the hall, year after year, until they graduated from high school. After that, more than a third of them would start working in manufacturing, many on assembly lines. While some students excelled in this industrial-model design, any student with good attendance and at least a D minus average in high school would most likely graduate and still do well in the long run.

But today’s economy has changed. Good-paying jobs require Michigan’s high school graduates to achieve higher levels of academic and technical knowledge, and to continuously upgrade their skills throughout their careers. Our students need better outcomes to compete with the rest of the world when they graduate.

Even worse, too many students are being hurt by Michigan’s current model of education. There are huge learning gaps that make it harder for poor students, students of color, and students with disabilities to achieve everything they’re capable of. Today’s system makes it harder for these students to live up to their potential, and that’s just wrong.

No matter what measure is used to assess Michigan’s educational results, we find poor performance, learning gaps, and deeply-rooted problems that should be deeply alarming to all of us.

Just
3 in 10

MI educators would recommend education as a career field¹

In 2021,
45%

of MI business leaders told Launch finding well-prepared workers is a “very big problem” in their organizations²

MI student performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress ranked

41st | 39th

in 4th Grade Mathematics

in 4th Grade Reading

33rd | 35th

in 8th Grade Mathematics

in 8th Grade Reading

in the U.S. in 2019³

65% of MI voters believe our state’s schools are underfunded⁴



On the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), for example, Michigan children are achieving well below their peers in other states. And the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) shows the U.S. is achieving well behind other nations. Our current educational system is not delivering the results it should.

All around the world, formerly developing nations have created advanced educational systems with results that far outpace our own. Until we act to create a PK–20 system that is totally focused on giving students the knowledge, skills and experiences they need, we’ll continue to lag behind the rest of the planet.

And more of our children’s dreams will be lost.

If our state is serious about helping its children get off to the best possible start in life, we simply must do better.

And right now that means thinking deeply about how our schools are structured to perform.

It’s about ensuring skilled talent and strengthening our overall economy. It’s connected to our future citizenry and their ability to make good choices.

But most of all—and we can’t say this forcefully enough—it’s about the moral and ethical imperative we share: we must do right by our kids. To date, we haven’t prepared them well enough for the global economy they face.

MI per capita income has lagged the nation for nearly 20 years and is now

13.3%

lower than U.S. per capita income⁵

Approximately

17.7%

of MI residents are now aged 65 or older⁶

Our state is growing

**Smaller
Older
Poorer &
Less Prepared**

Introducing Launch Michigan

Launch Michigan began when a critical mass of partners from education, business, labor, civic and parent groups decided enough was enough. The urgency we collectively felt about delivering better results for our state’s children had reached a tipping point and we recognized it was time to act.

Beginning in 2018, one of the broadest coalitions in Michigan history began working together to understand what it would take to transform our state’s educational outcomes. After working closely together to understand all aspects of Michigan’s public education system, we came to one inescapable conclusion: our state’s schools are producing the results they were built to deliver. The problem is those results don’t command the respect they once did.

Everyone around the Launch Michigan table sees the urgency around improving our state’s learning outcomes. We believe there are no more excuses for why change has been so slow in coming.

We are determined to transform Michigan’s public education system from one that contains inequities nearly everywhere to one that guarantees equal opportunity for all kids in an equitable manner.



MI currently ranks

35th



in U.S. educational attainment⁷

MI’s manufacturing sector employs just

13%



of our population, down from 36% in 1970⁸

MI ranks dead last in school funding increases since 1995.⁹

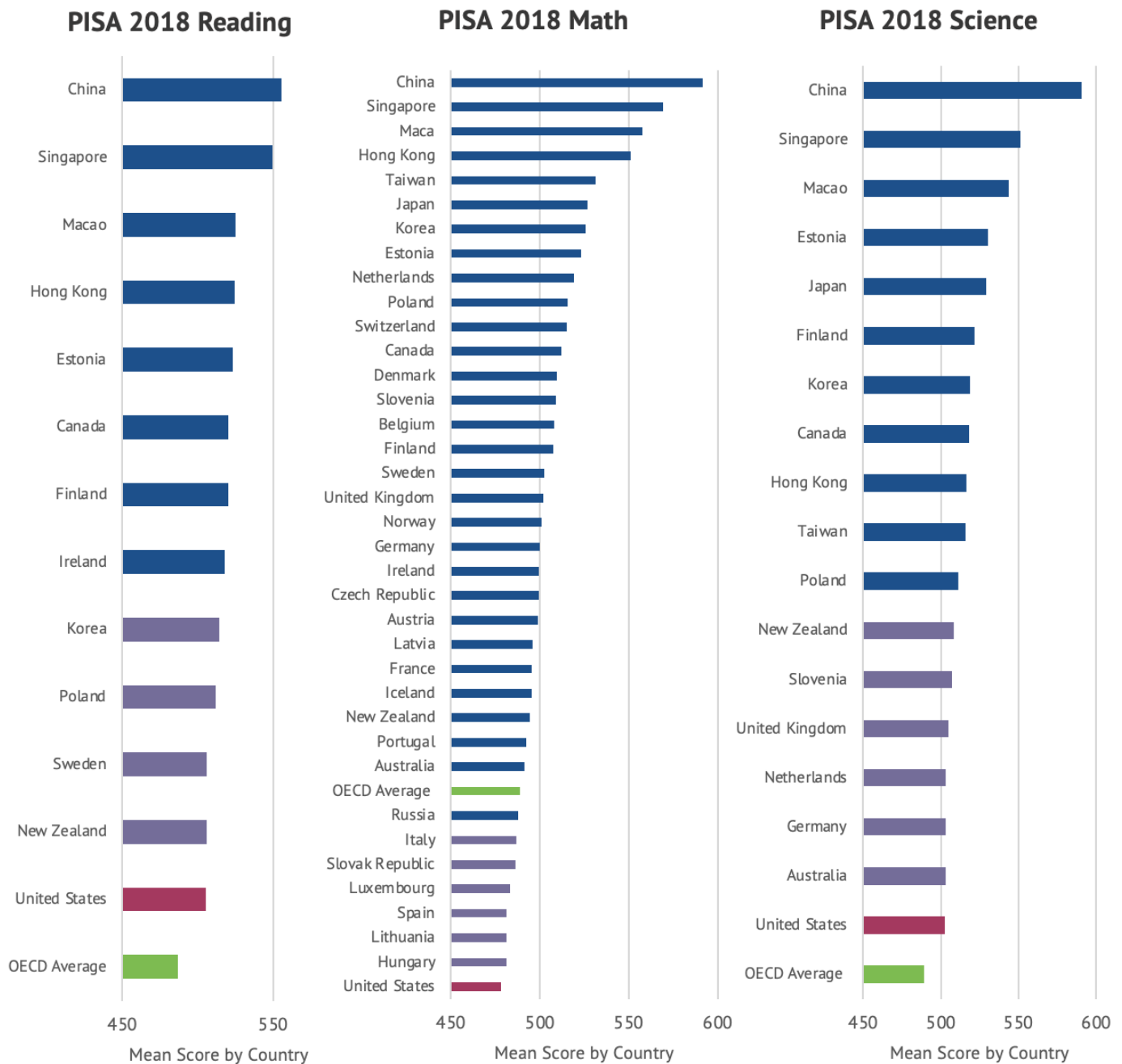


MI student attainment of SAT benchmarks in 2019 reveals gaps.¹⁰

2019 SAT College Readiness Benchmark	Percentage of MI Students Scoring at Benchmark
Reading & Writing	55.3%
Mathematics	36.3%
Combined	33.9%
State Graduation Rate	81.4%

U.S. Performance Relative to Nations in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

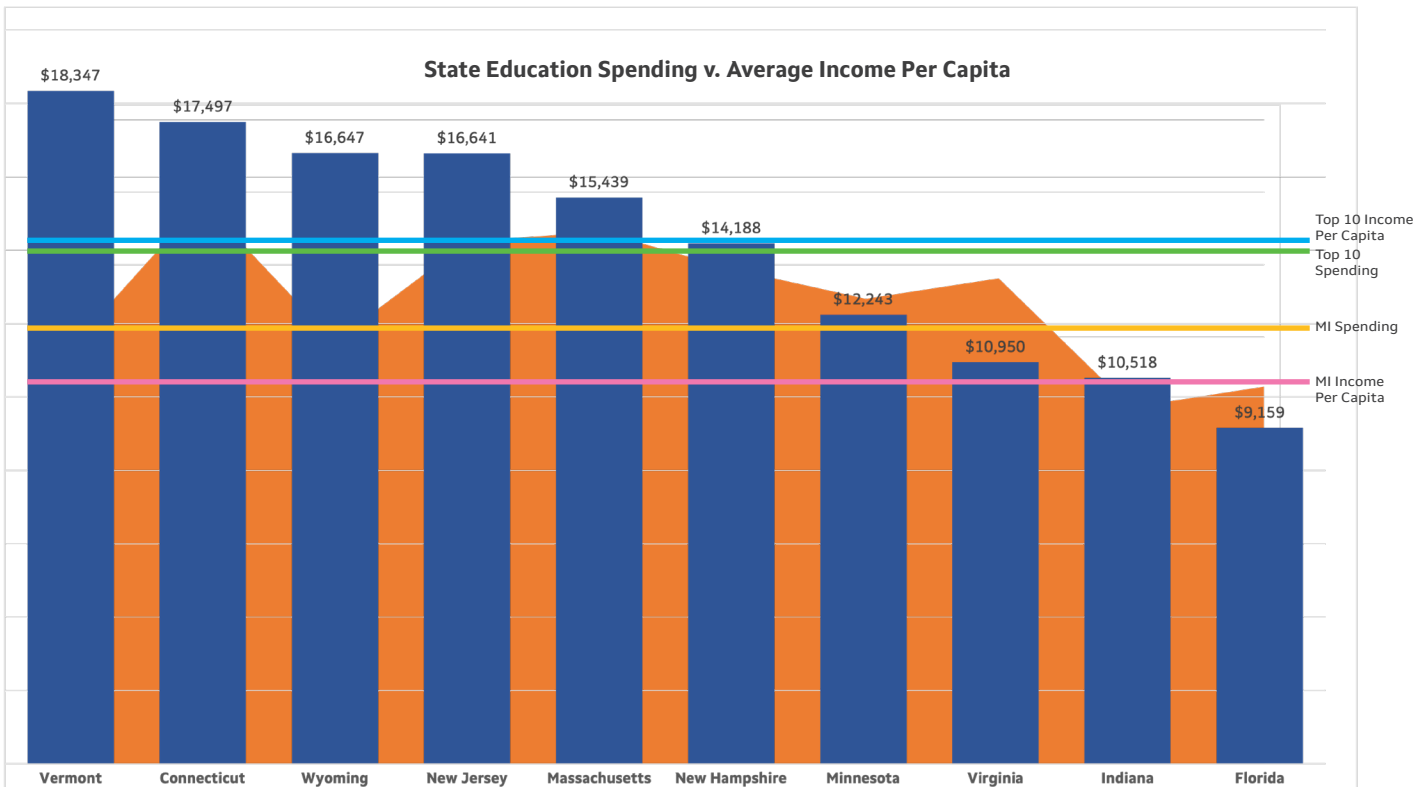
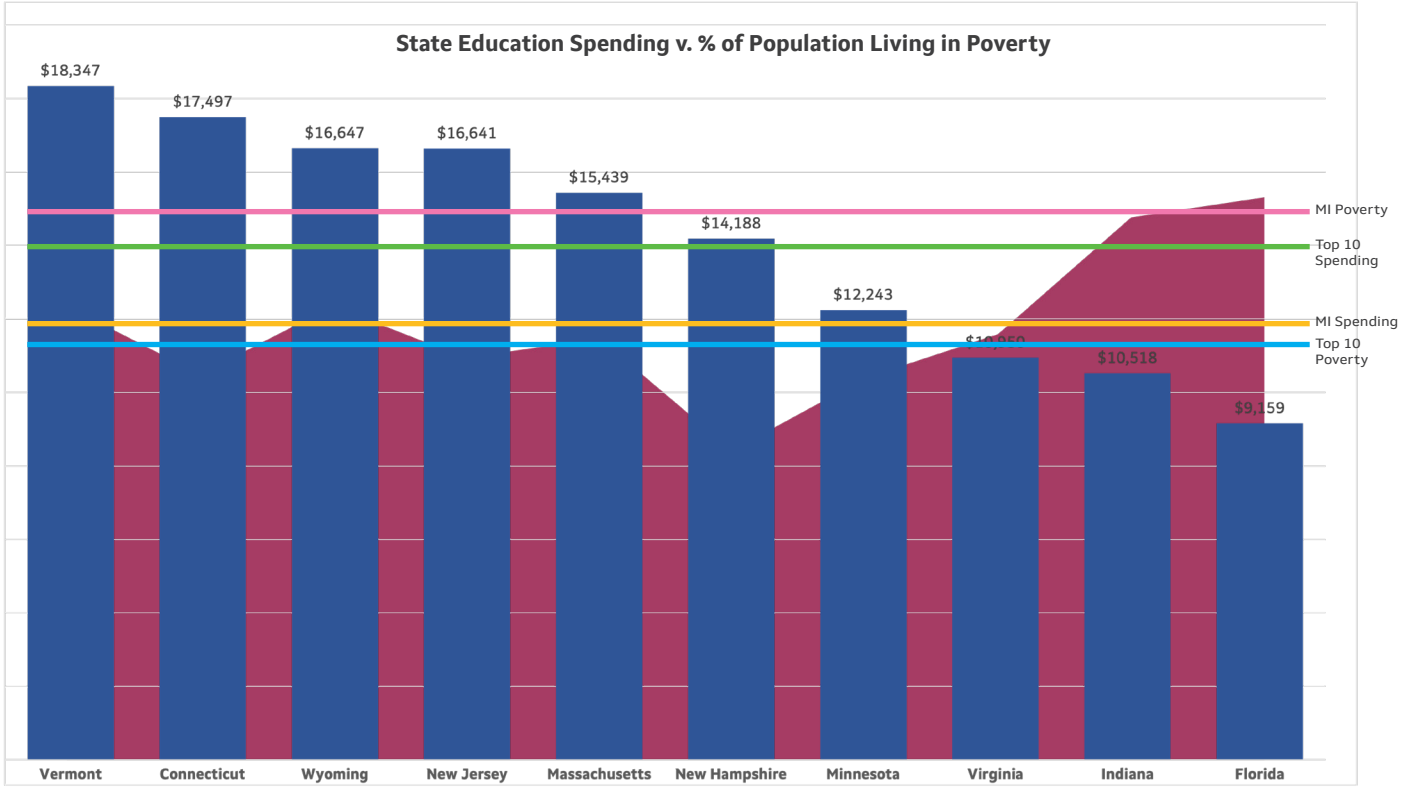
In 2018, the most recent Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) administration, 12 education systems outperformed the U.S. in reading and 36 outperformed the U.S. in mathematics.

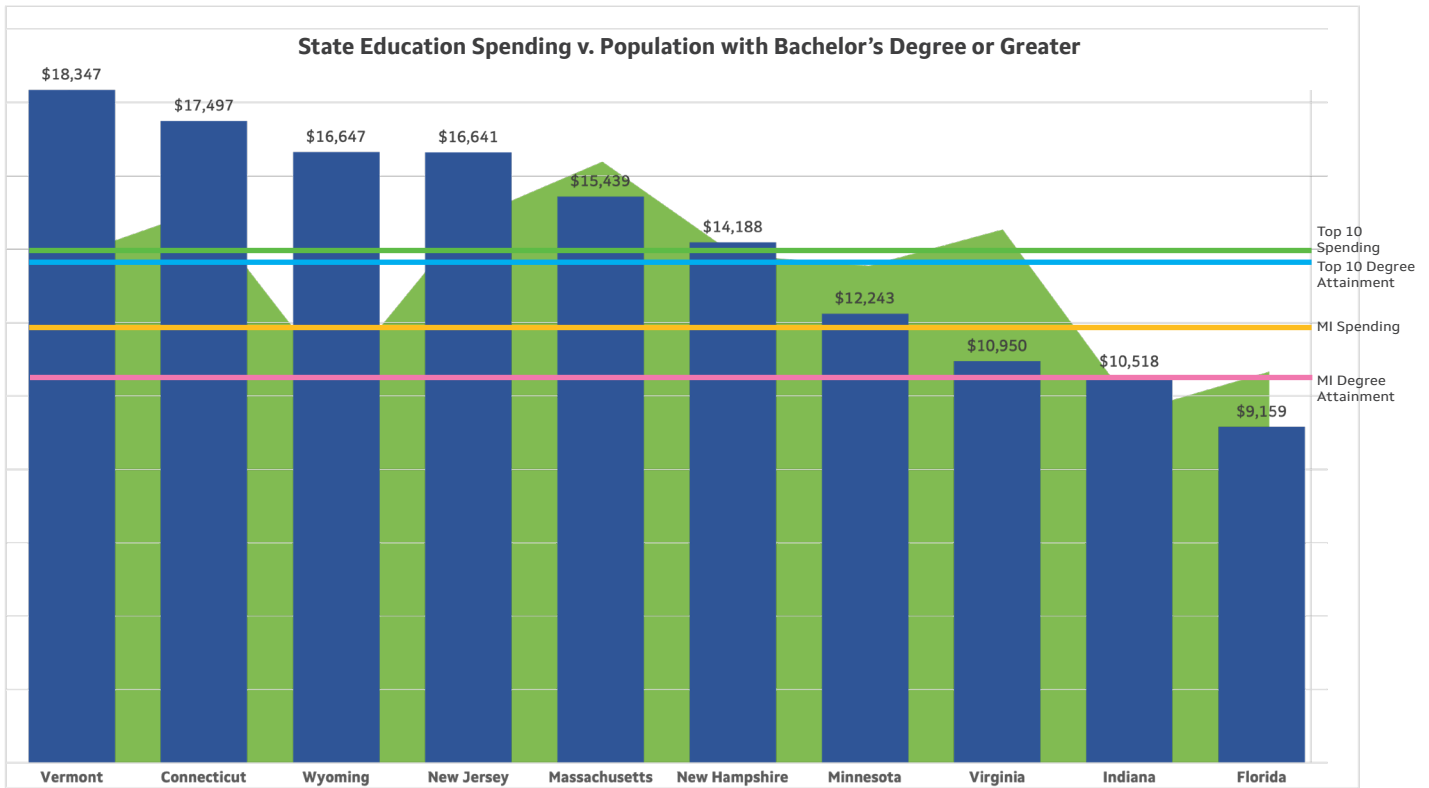


Vertical (Category) Axis

- Countries scoring higher than the U.S. by a significant margin
- Countries scoring higher than the U.S., but not by a statistically significant margin.

Lower K-12 spending translates into lower educational attainment and income, higher poverty¹¹





Maya:

“I can’t wait to be an engineer. My dad is worried because he says Michigan isn’t going to be home to the auto industry for too much longer, with all the jobs going away now, but I’m pretty sure I can find something to do close to home.”

“I don’t get all As, but my grades are okay enough and I’m pretty sure I’ll be fine.”

Mrs. Baker:

“When I first started teaching, I felt so much passion for my students’ learning. But today it’s a lot harder. There are lots of extra regulations and paperwork to keep up with—half of which don’t make sense—and my colleagues keep leaving so there’s more work for fewer people. I’m starting to feel burned out.”

Our Vision

Every framework is built around a vision that is firmly anchored, realistic and attainable. Whatever the ultimate plan for change looks like, we are committed to ensuring this fundamental vision is achieved. We believe Michigan’s future PK–12 structure must:

- Make sure every Michigan child is well-prepared to be successful in college, career, citizenship, and life.
- Eliminate the gaps that exist between students of different racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds, so all students are supported according to their unique needs and abilities.
- Make Michigan a top U.S. state for student learning.

As you read this document, you’ll see this vision referenced again and again. It is the primary source of strength for our entire Framework.

Our Pillars for Change

This vision is great, right? It’s hard to find a reason to dispute it. But how do we make it happen in reality—and quickly, so we can give more Michigan children the knowledge and skills they need to build bright futures. If our vision is the new “house” we’re building, we need the right pillars to make it stand.

After a great deal of research and consultation, the Launch Michigan steering committee determined the best way of organizing those inputs is to imagine a three-legged stool made up of the following key pillars:

- **Reinvention:**
Michigan must reinvent its schools into a dynamic network of learning opportunities that help all our young people perform at their peak capacity, no matter where they come from or what their unique backgrounds and learning needs might be.
 - We need a stronger standard aligned with international College and Career Readiness benchmarks that ensures students are ready for opportunities for education, training and the workforce against their peers from around the world.
 - Gaps need to be identified before students even enter kindergarten and supports need to be targeted throughout their academic careers to ensure that by high school students are on track to be successful beyond.



- All learners need to meet these higher standards, but may need different ways of doing so, whether it's through portfolios or tests. All evaluative tools will need to be carefully managed to ensure their effectiveness and utility.
- Universally-available, multiple pathways for student learning are essential, including college preparation and credit bearing programs, quality and universally-available career and technical education programs, and whatever combination thereof best meets students' needs. These pathways must be available to all students, regardless of zip code or differing ability.
- Stronger student supports—both in and out of school—must be a fully funded part of the equation, including greater school counseling and mental health supports along with afterschool and summer learning programs.

Resources:

The supports and opportunities we've described above aren't free. All the opportunities and expectations in the world don't matter if we're not providing the dollars to make sure they get done—and done well.

Research tells us the amount of money invested to care for and educate our children isn't enough, nor do we sufficiently account for children with higher levels of need.

- A combination of new tax revenue along with revisiting how current funds are spent can provide Michigan with the resources necessary to meet student needs and properly invest in an essential factor in student success—the educators who help make that happen. It is important to note here that no Michigan child will receive fewer resources. Growth will occur for all.
- **Responsibility:**
We want to build a new system that puts children first, with every single individual, organization and agency taking responsibility for their support of children. The Framework looks at ways to streamline structures and use data more effectively to a variety of ends.
 - Teachers, leaders and support staff are invested in and developed, moving from a system of judging and evaluating to intensifying our commitment to support and grow the talent needed to guide students to high levels of success.
 - Data about the performance of students and schools must be transparently available, accessible and understandable. Parents must be partners in education early and always, especially when students are off track. Schools must be supported to build the capacity they need when they aren't meeting student needs in our reinvented system.
 - Coherence and alignment is critical from the highest levels of the state to the classroom. It will take everyone working together and reinforcing each other's efforts to change policy and practice in service of students.

The Importance of Interconnectivity to Effective Systems

The list of education reform efforts undertaken during the past half century is too long to detail in this report. Since the 1980s, many efforts to improve school performance have been tried at the local, state and federal levels with limited success.

We believe any effort to effect meaningful change can't be undertaken halfway. Reinvention, resources and responsibility are so deeply interwoven that when we pull on the threads of one, the others tend to unravel.

That is one of the primary features of the Launch Michigan Framework that we believe makes it more likely to succeed—it is holistic. We don't change one thing without shoring up the others. It is the best kind of transformation: it is built on a solid foundation with strong pillars that work together to create the change our children deserve.

Reinvention

The secure foundation of our reimagined public education system is simple. If the end result of the schooling process in Michigan is a diploma, then we need to think about what that credential represents to students, employers, and institutions of higher education.

Today, a Michigan high school diploma means many things depending on where a student went to school. On a purely technical level, the diploma marks the end of a student's time in a high school and at least a D minus grade point average (GPA). It does not necessarily signify what each student knows and is able to do in a way that is reliable—or fair—enough.

We envision a future where the attainment of a high school diploma means more than just having been present from kindergarten through 12th grade. We want the diploma to be a certification of sorts, one that can reliably indicate the achievement of a specific set of standards.

That is why we have begun working on the development of a robust new standard for learning—one that is significantly stronger than the one Michigan has in place today. Our new College and Career Readiness (CCR) standard will be capable of providing comprehensive information about how Michigan schools are performing and offer students and educators alike a clear roadmap for where improvements are needed.

Everything Launch Michigan recommends in this Framework is built upon the bedrock of that CCR standard, which will be designed to certify that Michigan students perform in foundation skills at the same levels as students in top performing countries. The CCR standard will ensure consistently high achievement by all Michigan students who have met that standard.

Using and Measuring the CCR Standard

Once the CCR standard has been adopted, the next step is to ensure it is used well. The standard will serve as a foundation that is part of every student's graduation requirement, but it is not designed to be punitive. The Framework offers multiple strategies for ensuring every Michigan child has the ability to achieve that standard.

Our state's students would have three years to demonstrate they have achieved the CCR standard before graduation. One or more meaningful tools would be developed and administered each year beginning in 10th grade. If tests are not the best option, then students also could develop and submit a portfolio of work that demonstrates mastery of the standard.

In a similar way, it's going to be necessary to measure students' growth earlier in their educational experiences, to ensure they are on track to meet the CCR standard by 10th grade. We want these assessments to be meaningful, so students, parents and educators can work together to do what's best for kids.

That is why Launch Michigan believes measurement must occur at the following points in time, at minimum:

- At the start of kindergarten, to ensure children are developmentally ready to begin school,
- In third grade (although the current reading retention requirement would be removed, the timely assessment and interventions would be kept), and
- In eighth grade.

Once assessment results are back, students that are found to be off-track need plans to accelerate their growth, in consultation with their parents and teachers.

If the Framework existed today, here's what Maya's experience would be:

"This year, I'm getting some extra help in math. I've taken a test that lets my teachers know if I'm on track. I've had to take tests like these before. They're like check-ins to be sure I'm keeping up, so I'm not too worried about them. This year I did great in everything except math. My teachers have a whole plan for me now, and my parents have been helping put it together.

"The next time I will have to take this kind of test is in 10th grade. If I don't pass then, I can try again in 11th grade and one more time in 12th grade. Or, if my parents and teachers and I decide I'm just not a great test taker, I can submit a portfolio of work that helps show that I know the material.

"I know my friend George isn't on track. It's hard for people to reach him sometimes, even though his teachers spend a lot of extra time trying. Between you and me, I think George might have to spend a 13th year in school, which is an option if he can't pass the test by 12th grade. It's okay; my teachers say there's no shame in it. Just some people need more time than others, and it's totally free at our local community college. And if George decides to go do something else, that's okay too. He will just get something called a 'certificate of completion' instead of a high school diploma. But I hope he does the 13th year."

You may be asking yourself, “Why 10th grade? What is significant about that point in time?” There are two chief factors at play:

- NCEE’s study of high performing education systems around the world indicate that these systems offer students the opportunity to specialize at around age 15, or a typical 10th grade year in the United States. In these instances, every student is required to show their ability to reach a foundation level of common standards by this point in time.
- As you will read later in this report, NCEE indicates that in order for Michigan students to be at a level of competitiveness with respect to their peers in high-performing developed countries—countries with whom our economy is competing—then our students must advance three additional years prior to high school graduation.

Let’s look well down the road, to the year 2038. By that year, students who do not attain the new learning standard by the time they reach 12th grade would have a new series of options:

- They can attend a 13th “opportunity year” of school to help them attain the standard. During that year, they can attend a local community college—free of charge—and participate in necessary courses to ensure their progress.

The opportunity year would be paid for by the state’s general fund, and would include help for students to complete federal financial aid forms. Once students have passed their CCR-aligned courses during the opportunity year, they would be considered to have met the new learning standard.

- Students who decide not to do the opportunity year would receive a Certificate of Completion, rather than a high school diploma.
- If a student receives special education services, he or she would be eligible to receive school services until they meet graduation requirements or turn 26 years of age. Nothing about these federally required services would change.

The opportunity year approach accommodates differences in learning, and supports a fairer option for more students who simply need extra time or a different learning environment to build necessary skills.



Stronger Student Support

The Framework includes better supports for students, including early childhood programming, before- and afterschool and summer learning opportunities, and other holistic supports for children.

Right now, the simple fact is that many of these supports don't exist today. Too few schools and districts are fortunate to have enough key staff members like nurses, counselors, and other specialists available on site.

- Michigan has one of the worst **student-to-counselor ratios** in the U.S., at 671 students to one counselor.¹² This means little support is available for Michigan students with psychological, emotional or behavioral health challenges—a fact that can have lifelong implications for students. Of course, this gap also means limited career and college guidance is available.
- Our state's **student-to-school nurse ratio** is also inadequate, at 4,204 students to one nurse.¹³ When there's a health emergency, there's often nobody on-site to assess student symptoms, make important decisions, or provide skilled care. Medications and first aid often are given by secretaries and other staff members. Even worse, there is often nobody on campus to coordinate programs to ensure physical wellbeing among entire groups of students, which is harmful during disease outbreaks such as COVID-19.

If the Framework existed today, here's what Maya's experience would be:

"I've been going to school for as long as I can remember. My mom and dad signed me up for preschool, and since way back then they have been coming to the school district for grown-up learning programs, computer stuff, and of course anything to do with me.

"And after the school day ends, I get to go to the local YMCA, which is just a block away. When I'm there, I do a bunch of fun things outside and work on special projects like robotics and design. I also have extra help with my homework when I'm there."



- The number of **special education teachers** available to Michigan students continues to decline. Michigan's educator shortage is much worse than it used to be. The shortage used to be most acute in urban and rural districts, particularly in the areas of special education, math, science, world languages, counselors, and administrators. Now, there are educator shortages in nearly all areas for urban and rural school districts and even in some suburban districts.
- There is a similar lack of access to **out-of-school time programs** in Michigan. Current estimates suggest that more than 750,000 students would attend an afterschool or summer program if one were available to them. For every one student in a local program, four more are waiting to get in.¹⁴ This is why we, in partnership with the Michigan Afterschool Partnership (MASP), are pushing state policymakers to include a large funding investment in this year's budget. Out-of-school time opportunities must be available to all children, including those with disabilities.
- It also is important to ensure broader student access to **wraparound services and integrated student supports**.

We know Michigan can do better for its children—and for its educators. For every gap in staffing, there is a group of educators working to meet student needs themselves, often without the training or the time they need to do so effectively. **That is why the Launch Michigan Framework adequately funds and staffs these types of school supports on an active, ongoing basis.**

More Learning Pathways for Students

In recent years, there has been an ongoing struggle over making sure our schools offer enough pathways for students. Some have suggested a greater focus on college preparedness for all, while others press for the expansion of career and technical education opportunities.

At Launch Michigan, our belief is that we can—and must—offer as many diverse learning pathways as possible. That is why, in addition to a general pathway (akin to today’s Michigan Merit Curriculum) that exposes students to academic disciplines in robust ways, our Framework ensures all Michigan students can—and are strongly urged to—pursue standards-aligned opportunities in several key areas.

- College preparation pathways, such as Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses, and at least one college credit-bearing pathway, such as dual enrollment, early/middle college, or opportunities to pursue an associate’s degree. These offerings would give Michigan students an opportunity to accumulate college credit while still in high school.
- A robust career/technical skill pathway that combines solid classroom knowledge with hands on, project based learning opportunities. Ultimately, students in this pathway should leave high school with robust work based learning experiences and a 21st century industry credential that ensures they’re ready for a job or apprenticeship, or even partway through one.
- A combination of the college prep and career/technical skill pathways that ensures students participating in one pathway can take coursework in another pathway.

One concern Launch Michigan brings to these “pathway” concepts is that students of different backgrounds would find themselves tracked into one or another of the options provided above. That is why our Framework requires that, at least once per year, school boards would have to hold a public discussion of the backgrounds and socio-economic status of students in each pathway.

Another concern Launch Michigan has heard is that students who receive special education services don’t have the same opportunities as other students. That is why our Framework specifically indicates that all students have the same strong expectations associated with the CCR standard, and receive the same encouragement to pursue these pathways to opportunity in high school. No students are exempted from this preparation for post-high school success.

At all times, students and their families/guardians would be engaged in ensuring the pathways chosen—and students’ progress along those pathways—are appropriate. If changes are needed, they would be made with full input and discussion among everyone who’s involved, under the guidance of counselors and other well-trained educators.

If the Framework existed today, here's what Maya's experience would be:

“My school offers a program in mechatronics, which sounds kind of interesting. But I know U of M is hard to get into, so it's probably best that I do some AP classes to help show them I'm ready for the work. I'm going to meet with my new guidance counselor today and there are ways of combining the pathways so I can maybe try them both out.

“Either way, I'm really glad to have so many options. I've heard it wasn't this way before—my mom tells me lots of stories—and it sounds like things are better now.”

If the Framework existed today, here's what Mrs. Baker's experience would be:

“Today, there is one goal and every teacher in the school is working toward it. I feel lucky, because I teach 10th grade and can loop in right after the CCR assessment to help those who pass go even further in their love of mathematics. For those who struggle, I have the time to focus on them, as well as the tools I need to get them where they need to be.

“Even better, I now have help from a team of special education experts, a full-time counselor and other colleagues who let me bounce ideas off them to ensure I'm making the right connections at the right times.”

If the Framework existed today, here's what Jim Levenson's experience would be:

“I used to administer a rudimentary skills assessment only to find many applicants couldn't pass it. Eventually I gave up on the idea and began developing a costly internal program to help the company get its employees up to speed.

“Today, things have gotten a lot better. Best of all, I'm part of a state group—led by the Michigan Department of Education—that has input into what students in grades 7–12 are learning. The panel meets on a regular basis to discuss where there are gaps and develop ways of addressing them through a stronger set of learning standards. This helps ensure employees are prepared before they come to me looking for work.”

If the Framework existed today, here's what Sen. Hamilton's experience would be:

“In the years since we began providing more revenues to Michigan schools, we have seen a huge jump in student results, educator satisfaction, and employer outcomes. My business development work has become so much easier now that our talent pipeline is back on track.

“Michigan has now become a leader when it comes to public education results, and I've been greatly encouraged by the fact that our outcomes are going to transcend legislative cycles and gubernatorial terms. That's a first for our state.

“Now I can focus on the things that matter most.”

Resources

For many years, policymakers and the public have been engaged in an ongoing discussion about how Michigan schools are to be funded.

Since Proposal A was adopted in 1994, our state’s schools have been funded by a combination of federal, state and local resources. While the state and federal formulas are complex, they are generally based on the number of students attending each school:

- Most of the money schools get is distributed by the state. Michigan allocated a foundation allowance of \$8,700 per student in FY 2022. Every year, school districts count the number of students they have in October and February, and these numbers are blended and multiplied by the foundation allowance amount.
- Michigan schools also get a good deal of federal money, usually awarded to categories of students based on their needs and experiences. For example, students that are considered to be “at-risk” based on key socio-economic factors are eligible for federal Title I money.

Based on extensive research, we know the amount of money our state’s schools receive today isn’t enough to get the job done well. Report after report has emerged telling us state funding should be increased.

For decades, Michigan has underfunded its schools, and now we are reaping the results of that disinvestment. We can—we MUST—do better.

Most recently, the bipartisan School Finance Research Collaborative (SFRC) released its findings that it costs \$10,421 to educate each Michigan student, at minimum.

Currently, Michigan spends \$17.1 billion in aid to schools. Launch Michigan is recommending an additional annual investment of between \$3.5 billion and \$3.8 billion in the children of our state. These funds would be allocated as experts have recommended, with a base per-pupil funding amount that is healthier than it’s been in decades—exactly \$10,421 per pupil, which should be indexed annually to account for inflation.

But then we’re going to take it a step further in our Framework, in accordance with research and best practice.

Equity: The Importance of Funding Each Child’s Unique Needs

Specifically, we believe additional resources also should be provided to children who need them most. For too long, our state has prioritized equal funding over equitable funding. This is in keeping with the old factory model of education, which suggests every child is alike and must therefore cost the same.

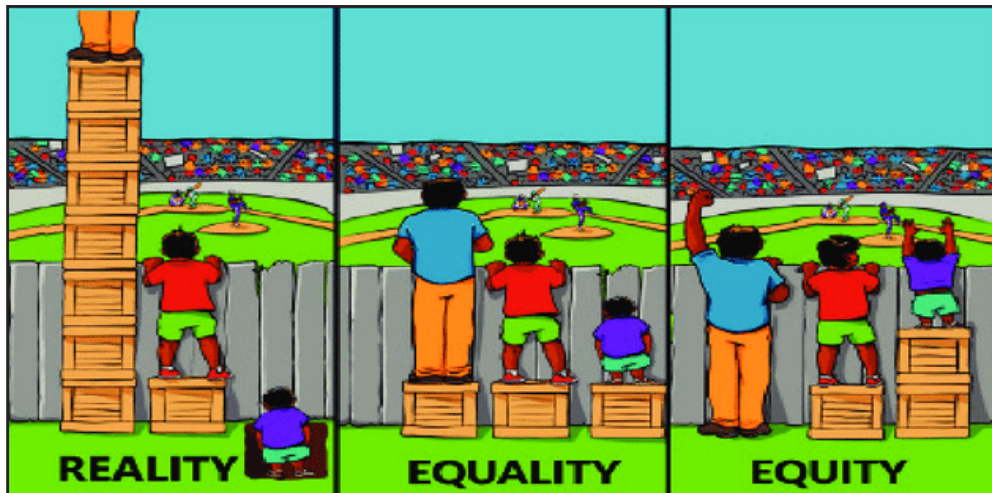
But the fact is this: no two children are alike. And it’s true that some students require more financial support for their learning than others do, because they are unique beings with distinctive backgrounds that must be addressed at different levels. But under today’s funding model, a student who requires a minimal level of additional support is funded at similar levels as one who requires a great deal of extra help.

And there are many students who require extra support, due to circumstances beyond their control. Whether its a language barrier, a special learning need, or other issue, many students merit more than a one-size-fits-all funding formula.

The funding also would be shared in ways that are fair. Students who are living in poverty, working to learn English, or receiving special education services would get additional money allocated based on their level of need. Our Framework is based on the School Finance Research Collaborative recommendations for weighting additional funding allocations to these students.

For the most part, the Launch Michigan framework adopts the SFRC funding formula recommendations as a whole. The research that went into them is robust and credible and we have a staffing calculator that helps us measure progress of some of the impact of this funding. But there is one area that steering committee members really felt was yet more important—tackling the impact of concentrations of poverty. Thus, we have adopted a supplemental cost model that indexes the SFRC poverty multiplier to account for concentration.

Fig. 1. The difference between the terms equality, equity, and liberation, illustrated;
© Interaction Institute for Social Change | Artist: Angus Maguire



The Framework further incorporates enough money to provide better supports for students, including many more early childhood programming, before- and afterschool and summer learning opportunities, and other holistic supports for children.

Moreover, Michigan would ensure adequate funding for its state education department and regional service agencies (sometimes known as intermediate school districts, ISDs or RESAs) for the first time in recent memory. These dollars would help ensure schools have the research-based tools and practices they need to be effective—including model curricula aligned to the CCR Standard—along with the technical assistance they need to use those tools well.

The Framework says all current and future state School Aid Fund money would be dedicated to PreK-12 purposes. Higher education money would come from the General Fund from now on. This change would help protect school budgets during challenging fiscal times, and send a strong message that our children come first.

It's also important to think about how schools will use this increased funding to benefit our state's students. That is why we have inserted a provision that says our state's schools would have to submit a student achievement and investment plan every three years in order to receive state funding. These plans would help us know what schools are doing to ensure the strongest possible experience and outcomes for Michigan kids.

Funding Sources

Funding would be obtained through a combination of new revenues and cost savings achieved through various efficiencies and statutory changes.

New state tax revenues must be a major part of additional investment, but there are some other changes that can help offset the amount required:

- Changes to the ways schools, districts and ISDs use their money,
- Restructuring of the state's school employee retirement system (while protecting educators' retirement pensions and savings),
- Repurposing some special funding sources
- Reallocation of federal funds, as available.



If the Framework existed today, here's what Maya's experience would be:

“My school is able to spend as much time on me and my friends as we need. Some ideas are harder, but our teachers have time to spend with us, or they can call in other people to come and help.

“Some of my friends get lots of extra help. Sofia is new to the U.S., so there's a teacher here to help her learn English faster. And then there's Sarah, who needs extra help reading because she's dyslexic. They do extra work with her too. I don't need a ton of help, but I know it's there if the work ever goes too fast.”

If the Framework existed today, here's what Sen. Hamilton's experience would be:

“The state's policy environment has changed considerably as a result of this new education Framework. We've gone from a state that has been focused on preventing negative outcomes to a state that's united behind a plan to compete.

“We've got a vision for the economy we want to create and—even better—we have a plan for preparing our students to achieve it.”

If the Framework existed today, here's what Mrs. Baker's experience would be:

“I'm so pleased that my students are finally getting the supports they need. These additional dollars are helping us afford the staff and services that are essential to their futures. It didn't used to be this way, and the only regret I have is that it took this long.

“My own salary is better too. I now earn a salary that's more like other jobs that have the same kinds of education requirements. Regional cost of living levels also are factored in, too, so I'm not so far out of line with other jobs.

“And best of all? We're not so short-staffed any more. The teacher shortages of years past are fading as young students realize the desirability of this profession.”

If the Framework existed today, here's what Jim Levenson's experience would be:

“Don't get me wrong—I don't love a tax increase. But I know this change is going to save the company a great deal of money on the other end, since there won't be a need to pay to educate workers on the job any more.

“Even better, I know the new generation of Michigan workers won't just come prepared, they'll come with the ability to innovate, think, and generate the kinds of creative ideas and processes we need to get ahead in a global economy.

“Ultimately, the increased employment, productivity and personal income that come from this change are going to translate into huge wins for all of us.”

Better Support for Educators

Launch Michigan partners recognize there is a critically important element of our state's educational system that has been left relatively unsupported in recent years: our teachers and other education professionals. Currently, we are paying the price for this benign neglect as today's educators leave the profession in rising numbers.

Our Framework works to provide renewed support to Michigan educators by ensuring salaries are brought to the level of jobs that have the same education requirements and reflect local living costs. A new educator evaluation process also is in place (see page 34 in the next section, "Responsibility").

A New Professional Continuum

A new educator continuum is being proposed as part of the Launch Michigan Framework, and it's very similar to the one used in the medical profession. It includes at least three distinct stages of development, which are: (i) residency/novice teachers, (ii) developing and continuing practitioners, and (iii) master teachers. Opportunities and compensation should be structured in accordance with these stages, collectively bargained where teachers are in a union..

Teachers who observe, coach and mentor other teachers, conduct site-based research, attain National Board Certification and/or lead teams of teachers in improving student outcomes will earn more money than those who don't. There also are opportunities for sabbaticals taken at the Michigan Department of Education, the ISD/RESA, or other areas for practicing educators to grow and share their work.

Finally, the continuum supports more time for educators to grow in their work by creating a 'model day' for resident, practicing, and master teachers as it pertains to the amount of time spent in the classroom, in planning, in consult with other teachers, and/or observing/coaching other teachers.

Recruitment & Retention

As part of our effort to better support Michigan educators, we also are focused on the importance of recruiting and retaining enough high-quality educators so each child can have a great teacher every year. Right now, this is not the case in many communities across our state.

There are many states and nations that do this work better than Michigan does, and we need to learn from them. We have been working with state policy leaders to fund a Michigan Future Educator Fellowship, which is only the beginning of our work to adopt successful strategies used in other states and countries.

If the Framework existed today, here's what Mrs. Baker's experience would be:

"I absolutely love the new educator review system we have now. While it still focuses on student achievement in part, there are other factors too, such as observations, progress on my goals and continuing education, and more. Every so often my colleagues and I meet with the district to figure out what's fair.

"But what makes me happiest of all is the fact that there's a professional continuum in place for me now. I am working on becoming a master teacher, so I can deepen my work in ways I couldn't have imagined two decades ago. I'll be more like a college professor, spending less time in the classroom and more time coaching and mentoring my colleagues.

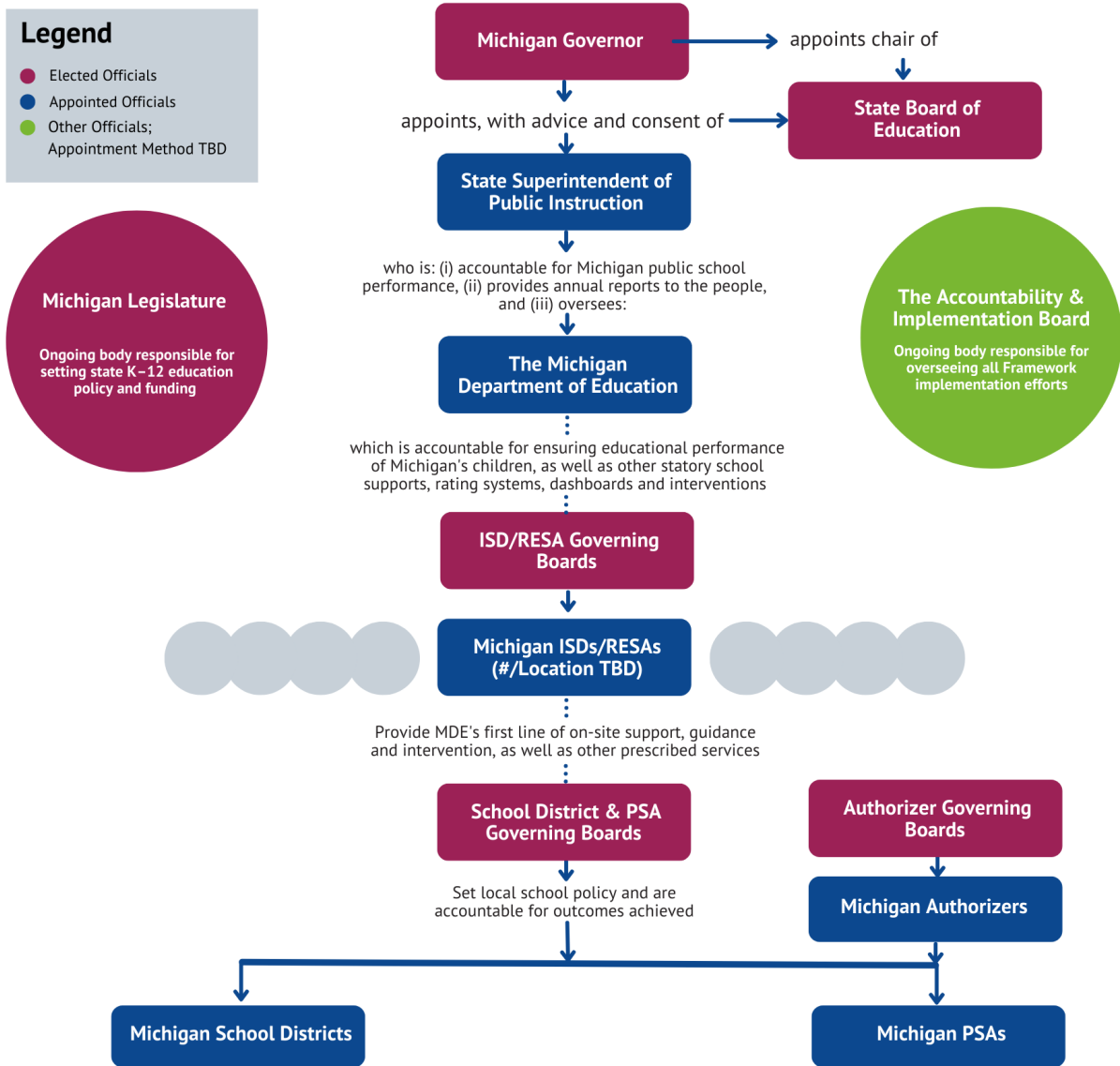
"And best of all, I can even get a state-funded sabbatical to work inside the Michigan Department of Education. This will allow me to bring my 25 years of field experience to the department in ways that serve education statewide."



Responsibility

There are some necessary changes to how Michigan schools are governed and supported if we are to effect the changes our state’s children deserve. We need to make sure the entire system is working in ways that fit well together, so our students can rely on a consistent level of support to help them every step of the way.

To help ensure the redesigned framework we’ve created is clear, we’ve created the following visual aid.



Governance

This graphic represents a coherent education system; one where each level of the state's education system—from local schools up to the State Department of Education and State Superintendent of Public Instruction, as well as the elected Governor—are aligned. If you look to high performing education systems, you will almost always find this characteristic.

In Michigan's first constitution, its framers found it smart to have the state's top schools chief, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, be appointed by the state's top policymaker, the Governor. This relationship makes practical sense because voters hold the Governor responsible for the overall performance of the state, and public education plays an important role in this performance. There is good alignment between authority and accountability to voters.

Over the course of multiple iterations to the state constitution, however, Michigan has become one of only a few states where members of the State Board of Education now oversee the State Superintendent and Department of Education, even though these individuals are not directly involved in state education budget or legislative policymaking. Political relationships have largely become the connection between the education department and legislative policymakers, and the alignment between authority and voter accountability is less connected.

We believe it is essential for the State Board of Education and Michigan Department of Education to have strong collaborative relationships with the state legislature and governors of both political parties. Lack of consistency with these, coupled with term limits, has led to ineffective decisions being made by policymakers at a time when our system of schools needs outstanding research-based decisions made on behalf of about 1.5 million kids and more than 100,000 educators.

Launch Michigan has talked with the Education Commission of the States (ECS) about more effective governance structures and decision-making processes. We recommend that, while all members of the State Board be elected by voters, the State Board chair and state superintendent of public instruction should be appointed by the Governor of Michigan (with the State Board serving in an advice and consent role for the Governor's nominee for superintendent). This will help reduce the number of conflicting education policy agendas at play, increase voter accountability for educational outcomes, and ensure solid leadership of the Michigan Department of Education. For the first time in a long time, that agency can be led in ways that are consistent with other agencies led by the state's Governor.

In addition to changing how the state's top education leaders are selected, we are looking at the structure of our state's ISDs/RESAs. Under current law, ISDs/RESAs are

only required to provide special education services, oversight of the state's pre-kindergarten program, pupil accounting, and what is agreed to by their local school districts. As a result, the quantity and quality of services varies widely from region to region, as does the funding.

One of the biggest decisions impacting the future ISD/RESA organizational structure is this: what kinds of services should they provide to local schools and students? How should these services be funded? And how do we make sure every school operating across the state can access similar levels of support? There are many ways of organizing the work ISDs/RESAs do, and much work remains to ensure a complete, adequate menu of services and supports can be provided to all Michigan schools.

As Launch Michigan's work continues, the question of ISD/RESA funding, governance, structure, services, and leadership remains to be researched and developed.

It is also important to note that many other state agencies and partners interface with Michigan's public schools. One of the challenges local schools and districts now face is a lack of consistent, clear reporting and support structures. One of our Framework ideas is to make the management of information and support simpler.

The only new entity created in our Framework is an Accountability and Implementation Board, which is there to help make sure all the Launch Michigan recommendations are working well and implemented faithfully. To reiterate, this new Board would be responsible for ensuring that the final plan is executed with fidelity. It would not be another bureaucratic, punitive accountability layer.

Data & Information

We also believe it's important for Michigan parents, businesses, and communities to be able to review and understand how the changes we're making work over time. That is why part of our Framework includes the creation of a simple, easy-to-understand school rating system and dashboard.

Part of the dashboard would include a strong emphasis on how well the students in a given school are on track to achieving the CCR Standard. This way, educators and families can easily understand how their school is performing and what assistance would be provided if there are gaps. As you can see, this brings our plans for strengthening Michigan's schools full circle, and highlights the interconnectivity of the entire Framework.



The data included in this dashboard also would help all education stakeholders know when it's time to step in and help a school that's in trouble, and when to recognize the achievements of a school that's doing well. Our Framework assumes these activities will always be required to some extent, and offers big-picture strategies on both ends of the performance spectrum.

In particular, we are committed to furthering and funding the partnership approach that is currently being used by the Michigan Department of Education to support struggling schools, at minimum. That approach has worked well as a starting point for providing technical assistance in ways that are both effective and friendly, and should be further developed.

We believe Michigan's ISDs/RESAs should be the Michigan Department of Education's first line of support for schools that are struggling. That is, in part, why we are emphasizing the need for consistency, cohesion, and reliability throughout this Framework.

And finally, it's a big priority for Launch Michigan partners that reporting structures are streamlined to ensure schools focus on students, not paperwork. The most important document school districts would submit is a Student Achievement & Investment Plan, which would detail how student results will be achieved through programs, budgets and staffing.

While education in Michigan will always have policy issues and opportunities for change, the tighter structures and performance improvements introduced through the Launch Michigan Framework are carefully designed to generate the improvements our children need and deserve.

Educator Evaluation

The Framework also proposes an educator evaluation system that is fairer to teachers and part of the stronger educator professional continuum. Educators would have a voice in the measures that are used to assess their work, and they'll be able to see how the feedback they get can be used more fairly to help them grow in the profession. The process would be clearer, more effective, and more supportive of professional growth overall.

Michigan's teacher and administrator evaluation frameworks would be replaced with a new system of Professional Practice Reviews. Working educators would be involved in developing the policy framework and legislative language for these reviews, along with teacher preparatory educators and other experts. The state's new process, as defined in law, would be comparable to processes used in top performing schools, districts, and nations.

The new reviews won't have to use state test scores any more, but would include local assessments and observations by administrators and other educators, including teacher mentors and coaches. We further believe an appeals process also should be built into any new methodology. Even better, teachers that are higher performing can earn the opportunity to be reviewed less often.

Most importantly, teachers would have opportunities to advance along a professional continuum that has never existed for them before. From mentoring and coaching to research projects or even a legislatively funded sabbatical to work inside the Michigan Department of Education, teachers in our state would be able—for the first time in history—to advance within their professions. Please see prior section, "Resources," for more information.

NCEE Feedback on the Launch Michigan Framework

Following agreement in December 2021 among the members of the Launch Michigan coalition on the major proposals it wanted to make, the coalition agreed to ask the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE) to review the Framework and make suggestions on directions for the further development of the Launch Michigan program.

NCEE has been studying the countries that have risen to the top of the world's education league tables for 35 years to identify the policies, practices and strategies that account for their success. Its work helped Massachusetts come up with the plan that vaulted Massachusetts into the ranks of global top performers. Massachusetts then called on them to train the state's schools to implement the state's much admired school reform plan throughout the state after the legislation was passed.



When U.S. education Secretary Arnie Duncan turned to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to tell the U.S. what had been learned from the top performing countries about what it takes to ensure a first-rate education at a national or state scale, the OECD turned to NCEE to take the lead on doing the research. Most recently, NCEE was asked by the state of Maryland to help their Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education to identify the policies, practices and strategies used by the countries with the world's best education systems, and tell the legislature and Governor what Maryland needed to do to match their performance. The Commission's report has received national attention.

Overall, NCEE told us they thought that the Framework they reviewed contained important proposals that would improve the Michigan education system and would result in real benefits for Michigan students. They understood that these proposals addressed tough issues that had long been contested and were the result of hard-won agreements that now need action. They observed, however, that the Framework appeared to have been based on a consensus among the drafters of the document that Michigan should be shooting for having an education system that would place among the top ten in the country. That would, they said, be a big climb for a system that now places below the middle, but, in a state so dependent on manufacturing, it would not be enough.

We asked NCEE for specific comments on the Launch Michigan Framework in the form the Framework took last year. What follows is some highlights from that review. The full review is linked to this report.

Reinvention

NCEE is fully on board with the concept of the CCR and with the idea that that concept should drive the whole plan. But the standard to which the CCR would be set needs much further clarification and development. They believe that it is essential that 1) that the standard be set to the foundation skills required to be successful in the first year of a typical Michigan community college, 2) that most students from all backgrounds be expected to reach that standard by the end of grade 10 and 3) that the measures used to determine whether that standard has been met are the same for all students, are administered by external examinations and are reliable. They also believe that it is very important that access to the pathways described as following achievement of the CCR be available only to students who have met the CCR standards.

That said, NCEE believes that the success will depend entirely on the degree to which the whole system is redesigned to make full use of the strategies used by the top-performing countries to enable the vast majority of their students to reach these standards, standards that would require the typical Michigan student to leave high school with three more years of education than the typical high school student graduates with now.

To accomplish that kind of improvement in outcomes, on that scale, would require, in NCEE's view, more than is now described in the Framework. Getting to top performance would require a transformation in the criteria for admission to teacher education programs, in teacher compensation, in the way teachers are first educated and then trained, in the way the work of teachers is organized and managed, in the pattern of teachers' careers, in the incentives that teachers face and in the performance management systems that are employed by school systems.

Taken as a whole, what is required, NCEE says, is redesigning teaching to resemble the way the high status professions are organized and managed, turning teaching into a profession that people who are now qualified to become attorneys, doctors and engineers would want to pursue. NCEE pointed out that some parts of the Framework address some of these issues, some just point to these kinds of policies and practices, but need to be fleshed out and there are others that need to be reconceived or are not mentioned. Additionally, the framework does not address how to get Michigan's teachers from the best of the young people graduating from high school, or about the standards for admission to teacher education programs, or about the reform of teacher education to improve both their education and training, or in detail about the need to couple the creation of real career ladders for teachers to the redesign of the work that teachers do.

The redesign of the work that teachers do sounds a bit like mechanics, but NCEE told us that it is a good example of the kinds of system redesign at the school level that is key to the outcomes Launch Michigan is looking for. Teachers in the U.S. are expected to spend more of their time in front of their students in class than is the case in any other advanced industrial country. Teachers in the top performing countries spend much less time in front of their classes and much more time working in teams with other teachers. In some of those countries teachers meet at least once a week with other teachers of the same kids, looking at data on their performance, identifying kids who appearing to be falling behind, pooling information about what the problem might be and coming up with strategies for dealing with it, then assigning one of their team to implement the strategy and report back on progress, then either closing the book on a job well done or coming up with an alternate strategy if the first one did not work. American teachers don't have the time to do this. Students whose problems are not dealt with early fall so far behind that they become intractable. This form of work organization can make all the difference.

NCEE pointed out that none of this needs to be invented. The top performers have taken many years to work out ways to get all of this done.



To make the plan work once the CCR standard is set, NCEE said, the state would have to describe developmental trajectories that the typical student would have to follow to get from the beginning of first grade to the CCR by the end of the 10th grade, so that teachers could judge how their students were doing as they progressed through the system. Indicators and measures would have to be available to them to do that. Curriculum would have to be developed that matches the trajectories. Materials would have to be developed to support the curriculum. Teaching methods would have to be developed to help teachers use those materials effectively with students from different backgrounds.

While the Launch Michigan Framework hints at some elements of some of these ideas, including the importance of changing Michigan's trajectory in teacher recruitment, the importance of changing the daily workload of Michigan's teachers, and ensuring there are things like model curricula to help guide students' trajectories to meeting the CCR standard, NCEE points out that Michigan's educational redesign plan must go far further.



Resources

NCEE was in strong agreement that Michigan needs to implement the kind of school finance reforms that are described in the Framework, based on pupil-weighted formulas that put more resources behind students who require more resources to meet common high standards. They pointed out, however, that this kind of school finance system has been in many states for many years.

It will, they said, make Michigan school finance fairer, which is a good thing and an important goal. But it is not likely to contribute very much to raising student performance above the national average.

To do that in Michigan, Michigan would need to do what NCEE advised Maryland to do: tie at least 25 percent of the funds provided by the legislature to the schools to full implementation of the strategies used by the top performers to get to the top of the global league tables.

Legislatures typically use pupil weighted formulas to distribute the state money to the districts but then typically allow the districts and the schools to use the money as they wish. When Maryland did this in the early 2000s, the schools got a big budget increase, but there was very little improvement in student performance. NCEE pointed out that that has been the national pattern.

Thus, they recommended that the state sequester funds from the districts and individual schools until they showed that they were using the money to implement the strategies that were used to calculate the amount of funds awarded. The schools and districts will not be able to use the funds to continue to do more of what they were doing before.

NCEE recommended that Michigan do the same thing, and that the localized Student Achievement and Investment planning process the Framework chose would reflect this pattern if Michigan is to have any hope of matching the performance of the world's best education systems.

Responsibility

NCEE described the Michigan system of education governance as very weak and 'atomized,' leaving Michigan without any means of planning effectively for the future or managing its present. The result, it said, is several hundred school districts that each have the effective authority of the ministry of education in one of the top performing countries, but without the capacity to use that authority effectively.

NCEE contrasted education governance in Michigan with education governance in countries with a population similar to ours but with ministries of education that have the authority, prestige and funds to attract many of the country's leading educators; people who can lead the whole country into the future with confidence.

NCEE supports the idea that Michigan adopt a single unified school rating system that provides the information families want, including how well students (and subgroups of students) are being prepared, particularly relative to the new CCR standard.

But many states, including Michigan, have struggled to find effective approaches for supporting low-performing schools. Instead of repeating those mistakes, NCEE is eager to help Michigan adopt the policies of high-achieving countries, such as pairing strong performing schools and educators with those that are struggling.

NCEE believes these ideas, and others put forward in the Framework are much-needed, good beginnings, but they do not go far enough. NCEE believes that the design of a much more effective system of education governance should be part of the plan to build a world-class education system in Michigan.

What's Next

This Framework is far from a complete plan. Going back to the construction analogy we used at the beginning of this narrative, Launch Michigan has developed the foundation, pillars, and rough framework for an entirely new structure. What's needed now is the drywall, insulation, plumbing and electrical to make the structure comfortable, safe, and effective.

When we produced this Framework in December 2021, we knew we were taking a significant step forward. We also knew that parts of it would still need adjusting and that it would take a lot more work to create the plan for educational transformation that Launch Michigan's steering committee desires—and that the children of our state so desperately need.

We also recognized we didn't have all the answers. That's why we engaged the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE), a group with a reputation for being the best education system transformers in the United States. We asked them to review our work and help us think through next steps. Some of that feedback was mentioned earlier in this report, and some goes even deeper.

Over the past six months, NCEE has helped us connect the dots between education and the economy. They have given us valuable insight into the monumental transformation needed to make Michigan's education system a destination for families—and therefore talent—in a world economy that will increasingly be remote, automated, and global.



NCEE first provided us with an analysis of the Michigan economy and in particular, the future of auto manufacturing in the state. It describes the Michigan economy as on a long, slow downhill slide that could easily become irreversible and calls on the state to decide what kind of economy it wants and then to come to a consensus about how to create such an economy for itself. It offers the vision of a future for the state of broadly shared prosperity, but makes it clear that if that is the future the state wants for itself, that future can only be achieved with an education system that is among the best not in the United States, but in the world.

NCEE pointed out that virtually all of the countries that now dominate the global education league tables redesigned their education systems for high performance only after facing what they believed to be an economic crisis. They thought the future of their country in this age of globalization and technologically-driven change would depend on having a world class work force. NCEE pointed out that, relative to the rest of the world, Michigan now has a high-priced, poorly-educated workforce, a formula for a rapidly declining economy and an increasingly bleak future for Michigan students as they enter the adult world.

NCEE then went on to point out that many of the countries that now dominate the global education league tables were impoverished and largely illiterate during Michigan's economic heyday in the 1950s and 60s. They have come from far behind Michigan to leap far ahead. They argue that the best way—indeed the only way—for Michigan to catch up is to carefully study the policies, practices and strategies they have used to build their highly successful education systems and to adapt those policies, practices and strategies for use in Michigan.

NCEE thinks there is much in the Launch Michigan Framework that is valuable and should be acted on as soon as possible. They think that the Framework in its current form would, if fully enacted, significantly improve education in the state, and that Michigan needs to go even deeper to compete with the best education systems in the world.

Equipping Michigan with a world-class workforce would require the redesign of the whole Michigan education system, they said. And that could only be done if Michiganders were convinced that the future for the state and its children would be bleak without such a redesign. But, at the same time, that Michigan could have a new golden age for all Michiganders if it chooses to buy into building a truly modern, highly competitive economy. That message would have to be delivered by the leaders of the state, and fully embraced by the leaders of the business community. But, once that was done, the education community—joined by others—would have to take the lead in designing the new education system that would be needed by the new economy.

We believe Michigan can change.

We believe that we can and should meet the demands of this fast-changing globally competitive economy. We believe that the state can and should set an economic vision to achieve this leadership mantle, and simultaneously transform—not reform—our public education system to build the workforce required to drive it.

We believe in a bright future where all Michiganders have opportunities for prosperity and the state is globally competitive on all fronts. Here's our plan for getting us there.

STEP ONE: Start making our education system more fair and equitable, immediately.

The Launch Michigan Framework includes elements of a high performing education system; one that as a baseline, is far more fair and equitable than Michigan's current system. When sequenced correctly, these elements utilize the interconnectivity of the system as a force to implement change—change that our state must begin pursuing today.

Every step of this process must be done in the eye of the public. Building the Framework was an important step at elevating a common denominator for this debate. Now it is time to bring in our parents, students, educators, elected officials, and business and community leaders. Michigan cannot debate the future of public education in private.

As a next step, we are forming cross disciplinary development and implementation teams comprised of Michiganders of all backgrounds. These teams will work with members of our steering committee and experts such as those at NCEE. They will take the Framework and begin the necessary steps to transform it into policy bills and implementable actions. Then we will advocate for the passage of this work in the halls of state government and help implement it in the halls of our local schools.

In the end, NCEE has reinforced for us that we can learn from what is working well for kids around the world. While we are uniquely Michigan, there are common principles that top performing states and nations have implemented to better serve and prepare their young people. It is not a matter of simply duplicating those efforts, but rather thoughtfully considering, tailoring, and executing them to have maximum benefit for Michigan's children.

STEP TWO: Think deeply about Michigan's economic vision for our future and how we guarantee shared prosperity for all present and future Michiganders.

We heard it from NCEE and debated it at this year's Detroit Regional Chamber Mackinac Policy Conference: Michigan needs a multi-decade vision for building an economy that creates our state's next season of prosperity for all Michiganders.

Per NCEE, time after time, in cases where entire countries have successfully transformed their education systems and provided more prosperity for their residents, it has been because an economic crisis prompted them to shake up the status quo. Michigan is in that crisis now, whether people recognize it or not.

We believe that Michigan must act now.

NCEE has emphasized the need for Michigan's leaders to come together and develop both a shared economic vision for the state and recommendations connected to that vision on how to create a world class education system that sees Michiganders as leaders in the U.S. and globally.

Whatever method Michigan chooses to create this vision, the end product of this work should be a plan that includes not only the tactical pathways through the forest, but also presents a clear view of what that forest will look like for the residents who will live and work in it in the decades to come. This big picture view is crucial to guide the transformation of our state's education system.

STEP THREE: Build the plan for transforming Michigan's public education system to meet this economic vision.

As noted by NCEE, the Launch Michigan Framework provides a robust starting point for the educational transformation our state needs to produce globally-competitive graduates.



Utilizing this Framework as a foundation, we will help convene a commission to build the plan for transforming Michigan's public education system into one that is truly world class. This work will be done in partnership with all of the people and institutions that have helped Launch Michigan and invested so much over the last few years in the development of the Launch Michigan program and in our vision for education in our state.

The outcome will be a public education system that that attracts, trains, and supports world class educators and aspiring educators, and makes the profession attractive and revered at levels that reflect its importance.

Most importantly, this system will provide the high-quality experiences our children need to become economically prosperous and well-informed citizens.

This final plan will show the vision, and pathways to achieve this vision, for a transformed, globally competitive Michigan public education system, from early childhood through post-secondary.

We need your help.

We are eager to include as many voices as possible in these next steps. Does that include you? If so, let us know—just drop us an email at participate@launchmichigan.org.



We know we cannot have this debate—and, more importantly, be successful at making transformation—without full transparency and full participation of concerned partners in our economy and our education system. Launch Michigan is committed to developing the right structures to ensure that everyone’s voices are heard.

Many people are calling for our state to face our related economic and educational challenges in a civil, multi-stakeholder, bi-partisan manner. That is what brought Launch Michigan together in the first place and what we’ve strived to accomplish over the past few years, working together with a clear understanding that it is imperative for the success of our young people to effectively transform our system of public education.

The linked documents that follow include the Launch Michigan Framework and the reflections on it from NCEE.

A final note: the issues we are addressing are structural, deep, and interconnected. They are both economically and educationally related. It’s time for Michigan to fundamentally transform its approach to providing strong, equitable opportunities to all children—opportunities that will enable each of them to build success for themselves and for our state.

We hope you’ll join us in this effort to transform our schools and our economic future.

Conclusion

Every Michigan child deserves opportunity. Knowledge. Success.

Unfortunately, our state’s current educational system doesn’t go far enough to make the ambitions of our young people real. Our achievement and learning gaps are widening, and that’s not fair to them, or to our future selves.

After all, when the jobs of tomorrow go elsewhere, how will Michigan manage its economic needs? How will we build prosperity and opportunity for our residents, and—most difficult of all—how will we explain to today’s students why our state’s elected and educational leaders didn’t build them the system they need?

These are all moral imperatives with which Launch Michigan has been wrestling for some time. We are committed to changing our state’s future and doing right by all its people, young and old alike.

The Framework we’ve shared is the foundation for the plan that still must be developed. What’s needed now are the many diverse voices of people who understand the needs of today’s children, educators, employers, agencies, and partners. All the stakeholders that come together around education in our state on a regular basis now need to join us at the table, where we will begin to develop and implement a totally different future for Michigan.

At the beginning of this report, we suggested that today’s schools are delivering the results they were built to deliver. If we want something different, we need to think and build differently.

Let’s get started.



Link & References

View the framework and related documents online at www.launchmichigan.org/framework

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