



Guiding Principle 2:



Build Capacity to Do What Works

Michigan must support the implementation of evidence-based strategies to improve learning, teaching, and leading.

Photo taken at Grand Valley State University
in Allendale



Rationale

After focusing on who serves in Michigan classrooms, we must consider how our state learns, teaches, and leads. The state plays a critical role in helping educators be as effective as possible in their day-to-day work with Michigan's children.

Too often educators—especially classroom teachers—work in isolation. Michigan needs tools, processes, and resources to help every educator identify and adopt practices that improve student learning. Fortunately, Michigan benefits from tremendous knowledge in our universities, intermediate school districts, and local districts. Together these entities must work together to identify, aggregate, and share what is working, make it easy for other educators to adopt these practices, and help to bring them to scale.

In addition to broad support to improve learning, teaching, and leading, Michigan needs the infrastructure necessary to build capacity around specific statewide policies. When state-level leaders—from the Legislature to the state superintendent—mandate new policies, these initiatives must be accompanied by an intentional, robust capacity-building strategy that ensures that educators are equipped and supported to implement these initiatives effectively.

What does a 21st century Michigan look like?

Michigan is known as the place where educators and education leaders—from early childhood through postsecondary education—can hone the skills they need to effectively serve students. Educators know how and where to find information about evidence-based instructional practices. They discuss effective instructional practices with peers, and they receive feedback about how to improve. Michigan is committed to investing in the professional development of the teaching workforce. Teachers have time for professional development, and the state has invested in the capacity to identify what works and bring that knowledge to teachers to enhance their classrooms. When new policies or priorities are introduced at the state-level, they are accompanied by training and support to help local educators and leaders implement them.

School leaders and educators review local data and identify evidence-based strategies to improve school culture and climate and deepen student engagement. School boards and policymakers review research and demand a strong evidence base before deploying strategies at scale. When best practices are identified, they are quickly and seamlessly translated into classrooms.

At the state level, leaders fund what they mandate. Educators have the support they need to ensure that these policies are implemented effectively at scale.

Educators and leaders across the state value research and development. There are opportunities for researchers and educators to propose new methodologies, and these innovations are evaluated. Promising practices are carefully scaled and supported. All stakeholders recognize that children are not test

subjects and take care to ensure that students learn the skills and content they need.

What does Michigan look like now?

Across our state, there are people striving to identify what works and share best practices with educators. Too often, however, these practices are not shared or implemented broadly. When Michigan identifies statewide priorities, local and regional entities are left to

determine how, and if, to support capacity building. This leads to inconsistent support and failed policies. For example, over the past five years, Michigan has passed policies to increase content standards and improve teacher evaluations. Both of these strategies, however, have struggled in the implementation phase, and our state has not been able to realize the full impact these policies can have on student learning.

Measuring Success

While we implement these strategies, we must track progress and outcomes by asking questions such as:

- Do educators and leaders know evidence-based practices? Do they report knowing how to implement them?
- Are programs and strategies implemented with fidelity?
- Does Michigan deploy resources to support capacity building?
- Are student outcomes improving?

Key Strategies

2.1 Support state priorities with the necessary resources and tools

2.2 Support implementation of evidence-based practices

2.1—Support State Priorities with the Necessary Resources and Tools

Michigan must provide districts with the resources, supports, and tools necessary to implement the state mandates and policy with fidelity.

Details

When the state mandates that districts implement a policy or practice, we must provide districts with the resources, supports, and tools necessary to implement the policy successfully and with fidelity.

Rationale

When policies or practices are mandated by the state, we must recognize that it will take time and support to help educators integrate these changes into everyday practice. The state must allocate the resources, supports, and tools necessary to implement these changes at scale. In the newly redesigned MDE (discussed in strategy 2.2 and strategy 9.2), there must be a team of educators that identifies how to implement a particular change at scale. They should have a variety of tools at their disposal such as: offering flexibility to districts, suggesting how to reprioritize resources, providing professional development, and recommending the allocation of additional funding to support the effort.

Potential Responsible Party

The Legislature must support capacity building and resources, when necessary, to ensure that state policies are implemented effectively statewide.

2.2—Support Implementation of Evidence-based Practices

Michigan must fund, staff, and empower MDE to build the knowledge and understanding of how to implement state priorities and evidence-based practices.

Details

Michigan must have a coordinated effort to identify best practices, disseminate those practices, evaluate what's working, and spur innovation. We must develop and invest in capacity at MDE to lead this work.

Rationale

High-performing nations identify and implement coherent, effective instructional policies and implement them at scale. Most individual districts lack the scale and resources necessary to develop the research capacity and expertise to maintain their schools and teachers on the pedagogical cutting edge. Michigan needs a statewide effort to amplify evidence-based practices and coordinate efforts to deploy them. Currently, there are many different entities attempting to understand what is working well in our state and across the nation and share those practices with educators. However, we lack organizational capacity and accountability to coordinate and lead that effort. A reconstituted MDE (as discussed in strategy 9.2) is a natural fit.

Together with local, regional, state, and national stakeholders, MDE should focus on the field's most vexing problems; identify, pilot, and evaluate possible solutions; and share what works at scale. Central to this work will be partnerships with districts, intermediate school districts, and universities across the state to amplify existing efforts and address gaps in our existing knowledgebase.

A more extensive discussion of MDE's broader role can be found in strategy 9.2.

Potential Responsible Party

The Legislature must empower, staff, and fund MDE for this expanded role. MDE must recruit the best staff and create systems that can support diverse policies and evidence-based practice.