MDE ANNUAL REPORT

2019-2020

MICHIGAN Department of Education

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STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING

GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

MICHAEL F. RICE, Ph.D.
STATE SUPERINTENDENT

Dear Stakeholders of the Michigan Department of Education,

Last year was unlike any in modern times, especially for schools, school children, their parents, and their educators. The emergence of Michigan's first cases of COVID-19 on March 10 and the disruptions due to the rapid spread of the disease in the months that followed have had a significant impact on our state's students, educators, parents, schools, and school districts. Much of the department's work in the last half of the 2019-20 school year was focused on supporting schools and school districts in the sudden and unanticipated shift from traditional methods of in-person instruction to those that required educating students at a distance.

Even as we took on this new and important focus, members of the State Board of Education and I determined that it remained necessary to continue along the path to update the state's Top 10 Strategic Education Plan. The priorities that were important pre-pandemic became even more so in the midst of the pandemic, and a solid strategic plan could serve as a guide for the actions needed to emerge successfully post-pandemic.

This report contains highlights of work done in the department from August 2019 through August 2020. The first section provides details of the revised strategic education plan and the process that we used to develop the work. The plan was informed by the nearly 12,000 stakeholder comments provided to the department and the State Board of Education. From this broad input, it became clear that certain goals resonated across all stakeholder groups. The final plan, approved by the State Board of Education in August 2020, retains the mission and vision of the original 2016 Top 10 plan, with revised guiding principles that retain the same spirit as the previous guiding principles. The new plan has eight goals, aspirational like the ones in the previous plan but also operational and with associated metrics for each. Local school districts will be able to provide input and examples of best practice for each of the goals.

This report also includes details of the department's key efforts to support schools and districts in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In spite of Michigan's system of local control of public education in which many decisions are made at the local level, it nonetheless became essential for the state to increase its coordinated support and assistance to districts facing unprecedented challenges. This support included advocacy for funding and flexibility at the state and federal levels, development and sharing of guidance and resource materials, and increased communication with partners at all levels.

The remaining sections of the report feature short updates on several areas in which our work was focused over the past year—the Path Forward for special education, anti-racism efforts, literacy, and supports for social emotional learning and children's mental health. These updates share progress made in these important areas, aligned in many ways to the goals outlined in the revised Top 10 strategic education plan.

While it was certainly not the year that any of us expected, it was nonetheless a year in which our support of children—physically, socioemotionally, academically—was of critical importance. Never was it more clear how integral educators, support staff, and education were to our children than last year.

In the midst of the confluence of a public health crisis and the resultant disruption to schools across the state and country, I want to acknowledge our state board of education, our governor, our state and federal lawmakers, our education organization partners, and our colleagues in state government, all of whom have been profoundly challenged in their efforts—as we in ours—to support our children, families, and educators in this perilous time. I appreciate your partnership and leadership.

Sincerely,

Michael F. Rice, Ph.D.
State Superintendent

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608 WEST ALLEGAN STREET • P.O. BOX 30008 • LANSING, MICHIGAN 48909
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MICHIGAN'S TOP 10 STRATEGIC EDUCATION PLAN

Michigan's new Top 10 Strategic Education Plan was approved at the August 2020 State Board of Education (SBE) meeting, following several months of interviews with education stakeholders, discussion with focus groups, and responses from nearly 12,000 individuals to a statewide survey. The plan provides focused direction to Michigan's education community in support of all learners. It is intended to be everyone's plan. It is designed to concentrate energy and resources, strengthen operations, and set success measures to ensure that all stakeholders are working together toward common education goals. The plan is intended to provide meaningful direction to local education agencies and intermediate school districts as they work to improve educational outcomes for our students both in the mid-term and long-term, even during a pandemic.

Michigan's Top 10 Strategic Education Plan is both a directional and aspirational document and has five components. It has a mission statement and a vision statement, which are unchanged from the original plan; six guiding principles, which maintain the spirit of the original principles; eight updated goals that are more focused and streamlined; and metrics for each goal area to help monitor Michigan's educational progress. The metrics are new, and many have been identified for each goal area to help determine plan success and gauge whether Michigan is moving toward becoming one of the Top 10 education states in the nation.

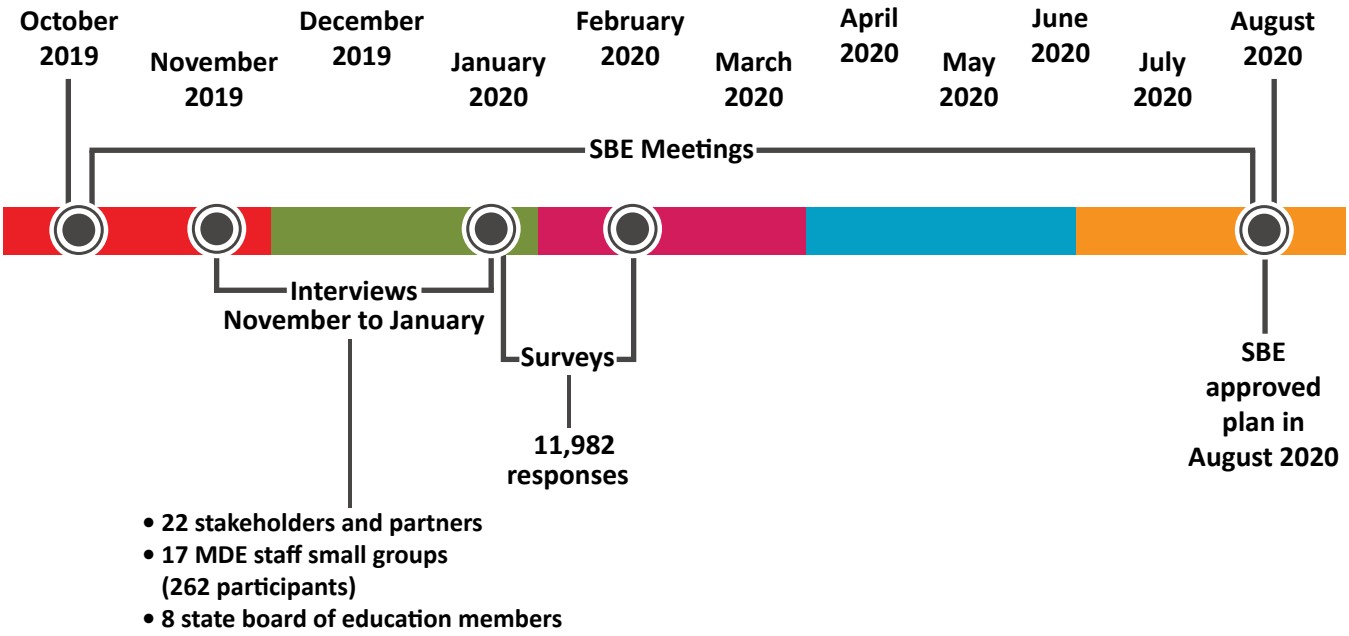
The Original Top 10 in 10 Plan

In 2016, the State Board of Education approved Michigan's original Top 10 in 10. It was created under the vision and guidance of late State Superintendent Brian Whiston, who advocated that a comprehensive strategic plan was critical to making Michigan a premier education state. The original plan components included a mission, vision, four guiding principles, seven goals, and forty-four strategies. Every strategic plan should go through a periodic review and update to reflect relevant and current improvement efforts. It had been almost four years since the SBE approved the plan, so a review was due. Under the leadership of current State Superintendent Dr. Michael Rice, who was appointed in August 2019, a comprehensive review process was developed and began in the fall of 2019.

Review and Update Process

To commence the review process, Dr. Rice said an updated plan should be streamlined, clear, and concise; have current and relevant language; ensure an improved knowledge of and support for the plan; and be directional as well as aspirational. The review began by conducting interviews and focus groups with SBE members, education stakeholders and partners, tribal partners, and MDE staff about the issues currently facing education in Michigan. The information gleaned from those interviews and focus groups was used to build a statewide survey. Nearly 12,000 individuals responded to the survey and aided in the development of the draft goals that were shared with the SBE members. Adjustments to the guiding principles, goals, and metrics were made based on SBE comments and, after 10 months of work (with a short pause in April and May due to the COVID-19 pandemic), the SBE approved the amended and strengthened Top 10 Strategic Education Plan.

Review Process and Timeline



Plan Implementation

The Top 10 Strategic Education Plan is a plan for everyone in our state. Collaboration among MDE, education partners and stakeholders, business and industry, and communities will be needed for the plan's successful implementation.

The education community will be invited to provide its contributions to the plan by sharing best practices that impact each of the goals so others can replicate that work. Additionally, educators will be convened to discuss best practices and the research supporting those practices. A series of documents that highlight best practices for each goal area will be developed and shared online. Districts should feel empowered to develop actions for advancing the goals within the plan that reflect their needs.

MDE's role in implementing the revised plan is to share contributions for each of the goal areas, support districts with their implementation, provide guidance to districts in response to their suggestions and practices, and be a resource for districts as needed. MDE will report to the SBE each month on the plan's implementation progress.

Components of Michigan's Top 10 Strategic Education Plan

Mission

Support learning and learners

Vision

Every learner in Michigan's public schools will have an inspiring, engaging, and caring learning environment that fosters creative and critical thinkers who believe in their ability to positively influence Michigan and the world beyond.

Guiding Principles

1. All students have access to high-quality instruction regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, race, economic status, native language, or physical, emotional, and cognitive abilities to close the student achievement and opportunity gaps that currently exist.
2. All educators are encouraged to be creative and innovative. All educators are adequately compensated and respected for their professionalism, and have the resources, support, and training needed to educate students.
3. All students are encouraged to express their creativity, have voice in their own learning, feel connected to their schools, and have authentic, meaningful relationships with educators.
4. All students are provided every opportunity to achieve the broadest range of life dreams.
5. Families and communities are essential partners of teachers, support staff, and administrators in the education of students.
6. In support of students and their achievement, the Michigan Department of Education is coordinated, aligned, and properly resourced, and collaborates with school districts and a wide range of partners and stakeholders.

Goals and Metrics

The eight updated goals are simple to remember and aim to have substantial impact on Michigan's 1.5 million children. The goals have relevance and meaning and will remain so beyond the current pandemic crisis. Six of the eight goals are output goals that focus directly on the improvement of learner outcomes. The other two goals are input goals—they identify the need for more teachers and funding to come into the education system to improve the output goals.

Metrics, which are commonly used to track and compare performance over time, were missing in the original plan. They are an essential component of the updated plan. Now, for each goal the plan identifies specific metrics to measure success, and there will be annual reporting of progress pertaining to each goal.

Goal	Associated Metrics
Expand early childhood learning opportunities *By participating in early childhood learning opportunities, a child will have a strong base in both cognitive and social development. More specifically, children will have improved social skills, better grades, and enhanced attention spans, and thus will be better prepared for Kindergarten.*	Number and percent of children served in Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP)* Number of children eligible for GSRP NIEER (National Institute for Early Education Research, Rutgers) annual yearbook rating for state-funded Pre-K programs *Collect/report, as available, for all students and all groups of students (gender, race/ethnicity, students with disabilities/students without disabilities, English learners/non-English learners)
Improve early literacy achievement *Literacy sets the foundation for learning and is the cornerstone for all future education. By fostering early literacy skills, students are more likely to achieve greater academic success and graduate with better employment opportunities.*	Percent proficient: • M-STEP – 3rd grade ELA • NAEP – 4th grade reading • Benchmarks – 3rd grade ELA Collect/report, as available, for all students and all groups of students (gender, race/ethnicity, students with disabilities/students without disabilities, economically disadvantaged/non-economically disadvantaged, English learners/non-English learners)

> ***Thank you for addressing our youngest population. Our pre-k system is the cornerstone of the future of our students' success.***
>
> *- Survey Response*

> ***We have been working on literacy and making great gains.***
>
> *- Survey Response*

Goal	Associated Metrics
Improve the health, safety, and wellness of all learners *Students need strong emotional, behavioral, and social supports to benefit fully from the educational process. Safe environments encourage social and creative learning. Additionally, healthy students are better learners.*	Number and percent of daily student participation in school breakfast programs Number and percent of students who have on-track attendance Percent of students who were physically active for a total of at least 60 minutes per day on five or more of the past seven days Percent of students who used tobacco product and/or electronic vapor products during the past 30 days Number of students who received school mental health and support services Percent of students who have been bullied on school property in the past 12 months Percent of students who felt sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row during the past 12 months Percent of students who seriously considered attempting suicide during the past 12 months Percent who were ever told by a doctor that they had asthma Percent of children ages 0-17 years who currently have asthma Percent of children tested for lead (DATA PENDING) Percent of children who had high lead levels (DATA PENDING) Michigan's national rank for overall child well-being • Economic well-being rank • Education rank • Health rank • Family and community rank

Expand secondary learning opportunities for all students	**Career and Technical Education (CTE)**
	• Number and percent of students enrolled in CTE programs based on overall student population
	• Number and percent of CTE completers based on students enrolled in CTE programs
	• Number and percent of CTE students who received a:
	  • high school diploma
	  • credential
	
	Advanced Placement (AP)
	• Number and percent of students enrolled compared to the total population
	• Number and percent of:
	  • tests taken
	  • students earning credit from AP tests

> ***Integrating career education into all core academics will make those subjects much more relevant to our students and improve both engagement and achievement.***
>
> *- Survey Response*

Goal	Associated Metrics
Expand secondary learning opportunities for all students (continued) *Students who are offered extensive secondary learning opportunities (such as Career and Technical Education [CTE], Early Middle College [EMC], Dual Enrollment, Advanced Placement [AP], and International Baccalaureate [IB] programs) are empowered to determine their own future. Secondary opportunities expand a student's career options and reduce the disparity between demand and supply of skilled workers and higher education.*	**International Baccalaureate (IB)** • Number of students enrolled • Number of students earning credit from IB tests **Early Middle College (EMC)** • Number and percent of students enrolled in an EMC program • Number and percent of students who successfully obtained their high school diploma and/or earned at least one of the following EMC outcomes: 60 transferable college credits, associate's degree, professional certification, Michigan Early Middle College Association (MEMCA) certificate, or acceptance into a registered apprenticeship • Number and percent of students who enrolled in an EMC program, did not complete the program, and exited the program to attend college or some other postsecondary education or training **Dual Enrollment** • Number of students enrolled • Average college credits earned during high school Number and percent of youth ages 16 and above with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that meet the necessary federal reporting requirements Collect/report, as available, for all students and all groups of students (gender, race/ethnicity, students with disabilities/students without disabilities, economically disadvantaged/non-economically disadvantaged, English learners/non-English learners)
Increase the percentage of all students who graduate from high school *Graduating from high school may affect how students live the rest of their lives. It can impact job opportunities, personal satisfaction, self-esteem, happiness in their job, and quality of life.*	4-, 5-, and 6-year graduation rates Collect/report, as available, for all students and all groups of students (gender, race/ethnicity, students with disabilities/students without disabilities, economically disadvantaged/non-economically disadvantaged, English learners/non-English learners)

While we continue to have significant room for improvement, particularly for students of color, economically disadvantaged students, and special needs students, we are making yearly progress in increasing graduation rates and decreasing dropout rates.

- State Superintendent Michael F. Rice, Ph.D.

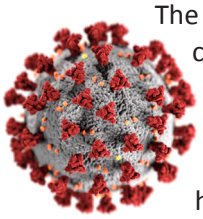
Goal	Associated Metrics
Increase the percentage of adults with a post-secondary credential *By encouraging adults to obtain post-secondary credentials, additional employment opportunities will be available for those seeking in-demand certifications and degrees. Governor Whitmer's goal is for 60 percent of Michigan adults to have a post-secondary credential by 2030.*	Number of adults with a certificate or degree (post-secondary credential) ***We need to better promote these post-secondary options and celebrate the successes of students choosing those pathways.*** *- Survey Response*
Increase the numbers of certified teachers in areas of shortage *Every student deserves access to well prepared, fully certified educators to support their growth and learning. Currently, teacher shortages are distributed unevenly among schools and may put the least prepared teachers in front of the neediest children.*	Number of endorsements in critical shortage areas Number and percent of positions filled by appropriately certified educators assigned to subject areas listed within the critical shortage list* Retention rate of appropriately certified educators assigned to subject areas listed within the critical shortage list Number and percent of positions on the critical shortage list that are reported as vacant* Percent of teachers by ethnicity compared to percent of students by ethnicity * These data are currently undergoing a shift in reporting standards, which may result in a change of trends. ***The teacher shortage is the biggest threat to public education. Too many students are beginning and ending a school year with long-term substitutes in their classrooms because no one is applying for the opening.*** *- Survey Response*

Goal	Associated Metrics
Provide adequate and equitable school funding *Different students have different needs and different needs have different costs. Our funding system should acknowledge and address those differences. Under the current structure, in many cases schools with the highest-need students receive fewer resources than those serving the most affluent. This translates to less experienced teachers, larger classes, and, ultimately, lower graduation rates and lower achievement levels.*	Is there a weighted formula for poverty? Yes or No Does the weighted formula match the School Finance Research Collaborative (SFRC) recommendation? Yes or No What is the difference between the current funding formula and the SFRC recommendation? Is there a weighted formula for English learners? Yes or No Does the weighted formula match the SFRC recommendation? Yes or No What is the difference between the current funding formula and the SFRC recommendation? Is there a weighted formula for students with disabilities? Yes or No Does the weighted formula match the SFRC recommendation? Yes or No What is the difference between the current funding formula and the SFRC recommendation? Is there a weighted formula for career and technical education? Yes or No Does the weighted formula match the SFRC recommendation? Yes or No What is the difference between the current funding formula and the SFRC recommendation? Is there a dedicated funding amount per child for GSRP? Yes or No Does the dedicated funding amount match the SFRC recommendation? Yes or No What is the difference between the current funding formula and the SFRC recommendation? Does the state provide funding for transportation? Yes or No Does the funding for transportation match the SFRC recommendation? Yes or No What is the difference between the current funding and the SFRC recommendation?

> ***Without adequate and equitable funding, any other goals will be very difficult to attain.***
>
> ***- Survey Response***

COVID-19 SUPPORTS TO LOCAL DISTRICTS

The impact of COVID-19 on student learning in Michigan was swift and may be felt for years to come. At the start of the March 10, 2020 State Board of Education meeting, there were no publicly confirmed COVID-19 positive cases in Michigan. By the end of the meeting, there were two. Due to the escalating numbers of COVID-19 cases in Michigan, two days later, on March 12, Governor Gretchen Whitmer closed schools and child care centers in the state for in-person instruction, initially for three weeks and subsequently for the remainder of the school year. By the end of the school year there had been nearly 140,000 reported COVID-19 cases in Michigan and there had been over 7,000 reported COVID-19 related deaths.



The pandemic has affected our state, country, and the entire world. When schools and child care centers closed, educators had to determine how they would educate children during a pandemic, with no playbook available. There were logistical challenges to providing students with instruction, as many across the state had no means to learn online due to lack of internet connectivity and technology devices in their homes. A significant additional challenge was to ensure that children had access to the meals they would otherwise have received at school. The closing of after-school programs presented further challenges for Michigan families.

Governor Whitmer signed several executive orders providing direction and assistance to schools and child care centers to use in their efforts to serve Michigan's children during the pandemic. With the issuance of the executive orders, MDE immediately began providing critical guidance and technical assistance to schools and families.

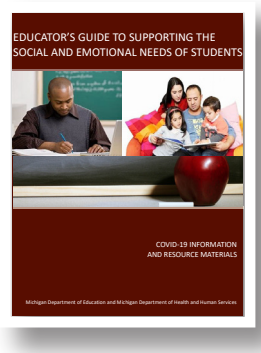
MDE Guidance and Technical Assistance

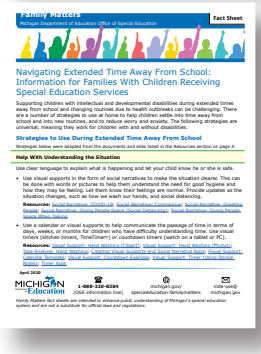
No organization, including local schools, could have planned for a response to the pandemic. As schools closed and learning began occurring at a distance, school leaders were faced with the daunting task of ensuring the best education possible for their students. During the past eight months, MDE has issued more than 120 guidance documents and other education resources on a wide range of topics and has conducted numerous webinars. These documents and webinars addressed topics that ranged from learning at a distance to literacy, from special education to social and emotional learning, from child care to career and technical education to educator certification, from evaluation to accountability, from early childhood education to early middle college. The documents were distributed to local school districts across the state and are available on the MDE website, on a page that was created specifically to house and organize COVID-19 related resources.

Over 3,000 people attended 28 webinars conducted by MDE's Office of Special Education for school personnel and families and advocates

Additionally, MDE worked with internal and external content experts to create these valuable guides for educators:

- Educator's Guide to Supporting the Social and Emotional Needs of Students
- Learning at a Distance Guidance
- Navigating Extended Time Away from School
- Supporting Summer Learning





MDE appreciates its partnerships with the office of the governor, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the Michigan Attorney General's office, the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs, and many other state agencies, as well as with our local school districts, Intermediate School Districts (ISDs), Public School Academies (PSAs), and other education partners.

Feeding Children During a Pandemic

The closure of school buildings challenged the ability of local districts to provide meals for students. School-based food programs are an important source of healthy meals for many Michigan students. With these closures, MDE and school and community partners across the state quickly mobilized to identify alternative ways to distribute food support to children. The day after the governor announced school closures, MDE began a series of webinars premised on approval of a range of waiver requests submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to deliver food to children differently. Once granted, these waivers permitted school feeding programs to provide families with food for children outside of school, to provide meals seven days per week rather than five days, to permit parent pickup of meals at a single school rather than at each of their children's schools, and to permit free meals for children at all schools rather than simply at those schools with particular free or reduced price lunch eligibility. This summer, the waivers were extended through the end of 2020. MDE has advocated for their continuation beyond that date, for as long as the need exists.

During the height of the unanticipated school closures, there were nearly 2,000 sites across the state providing meals to families with school-aged children. From March to July, MDE oversaw the serving of 85,566,972 meals to children in Michigan through several federal food programs operated by the department. The department's website hosted an interactive map where families were able to search for food sites near their homes. Several districts opted to create mobile sites, bringing food to families in innovative ways, such as delivery by school buses or via food trucks.

In a little more than a month, Michigan distributed more than $300 million to well over 900,000 families to purchase food during the pandemic. More than 85 million meals were served through 2,000 feeding sites.

In addition, MDE collaborated with the DHHS and the Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI) to quickly implement the federal pandemic electronic benefit transfer (P-EBT) program, providing families in need with up to $400 per month to purchase food. Shared data systems among MDE, DHHS, and CEPI allowed the three state agencies to move swiftly in identifying qualified families and to start sending money out in April. In a little more than a month, Michigan distributed more than $300 million to well over 900,000 families.

Supporting Early Childhood Programs

The closure of school buildings combined with steep increases in unemployment intensified pressure on parents to find and pay for quality child care. Funding to Michigan in the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Securities Act (CARES Act) supported the state's Child Care Relief Fund. Through this program, MDE's Office of Child Development and Care provided critical financial relief to thousands of child care providers and families across the state. MDE designed and implemented the program quickly when federal money became available. The Child Care Relief Fund was initially created with a $100.7 million increase in the child care development block grant. This funding supported 5,500 unique providers and provided financial relief to help providers reopen—or to stay open. Three rounds of funding were available in the spring. The state legislature then expanded the Child Care Relief Fund with an additional $125 million in CARES Act funding to provide tuition credits to families. With this funding, MDE helped provide tuition relief to over 9,500 children and their families over three rounds of funding in the summer. Across both programs, MDE processed over 20,000 grant applications, hosted 13 webinars, and fielded 10,000 calls at the child development and care help desk.

While federal funding has been a large and central part of the state's support for child care, MDE's Office of Child Development and Care has also partnered with child care providers, other state agencies, and local leaders to ensure that safe, affordable child care remains available to families throughout the pandemic. The state made changes to the child care subsidy program; offered flexibility in the Great Start to Quality system; and along with state and external partners, provided technical assistance to child care providers. Through the month of August, roughly 65 percent of providers had reopened statewide. MDE remains committed to helping all providers reopen and ensuring that every family has access to safe, affordable, quality child care that meets their needs. The state also established the Help Me Grow website, intended to help essential workers find child care in their communities.

Additionally, the MDE Office of Early Childhood Development and Family Education held online meetings with Great Start Collaboratives, Great Start Parent Coalitions, EarlyOn, and early literacy programs. These meetings were intended to keep stakeholders informed of the changing landscape during the pandemic, share information about requirements to support families virtually, and provide guidance to providers about plan submissions and other reporting requirements. The office also offered question and answer sessions.

Family engagement webinars were conducted to give an overview of MiFamily: Michigan's Family Engagement Framework. These webinars included review of resources and supports available for both schools and families during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Assessment and Accountability Requirements

Extensive school closures due to the COVID-19 crisis made it impossible to administer the assessments required under federal law and to comply with the accountability reporting requirements derived from assessment results. With that in mind, State Board of Education President Dr. Casandra Ulbrich and Dr. Rice sent a letter to U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos on March 17, urging the secretary to grant a nationwide waiver of statewide student assessments and accountability requirements for the 2019-20 school year. The U.S. Department of Education granted such waivers for every state. Furthermore, through Executive Order 2020-35 (updated with EO 2020-65), Governor Whitmer waived corresponding state-level requirements for state summative assessments and accountability reporting for the 2019-20 school year in those areas where data was unavailable to calculate results.

In June, Dr. Ulbrich and Dr. Rice submitted another request to the U.S. Department of Education, seeking waivers of the federal assessment and accountability requirements for the 2020-21 school year. In late August, the U.S. Secretary of Education indicated that she would be denying requests to waive federal assessment and accountability requirements for the 2020-21 school year. Dr. Rice has indicated that the state will reapply for the waivers in the winter.

The Digital Divide

The move to distance learning exposed great differences across the state. Some districts were able to transition seamlessly to virtual instruction. Others struggled to make the change due to lack of devices or connectivity to the internet for staff and students.

Key findings from the Michigan Education Technology Leaders (METL) survey reported in mid-April 2020 included:

- 90% (1,305,748) of Michigan students were represented in the survey responses
- 71% (923,396) of Michigan students reported some kind of device at home to use for school
- 73% (954,716) of Michigan students had internet access that could support some form of learning at a distance

Districts in rural areas and in other areas of the state where families did not have internet access had to find new ways to reach students and families. To help close the state's digital divide, several sources of funding were made available to local school districts. Funding that included more than $477 million in federal funding through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) fund; the Governor's Education Emergency Relief (GEER) fund; the state superintendent's Education Equity Fund; and the Coronavirus Relief Fund allowed for the purchase of digital devices and provision of internet connectivity for Michigan students and educators.

To continue the search for solutions to the issues of internet connectivity for students and educators, MDE and partners are working with the private sector to increase broadband access and adoption in Michigan; assisting with broadband and technology-related coordination in response to the COVID-19 emergency; measuring and reviewing the 2018 Michigan Broadband Roadmap to identify areas for updating, improvement, and implementation; and helping to identify, leverage, and establish funding sources and opportunities to entice investors to provide affordable broadband access to households and businesses statewide. Additionally, local community foundations and other philanthropic partners are working with local districts to meet the needs of families in their communities.

MI Safe Schools Return to School Roadmap and Return to Learn Laws

To build on the lessons learned through the closure of all schools in the state for in-person learning during the final months of the 2019-20 school year, Governor Whitmer convened the Return to Learn Advisory Council, charged with providing her with recommendations for the safe reopening of schools in 2020-21. This work resulted in the issuance in June 2020 of the MI Safe Schools Return to School Roadmap and related Executive Order 2020-142, which establish guidelines for school districts in the creation of their COVID-19 Preparedness Plans for the safe reopening of schools in the 2020-21 school year. These plans, approved by local boards of education, were required to include information on how the district would ensure safety for staff and students in each public reopening phase in the district's economic region.

In August, the Return to Learn bill package (now public acts 147, 148, and 149) was approved by the state legislature and signed by the governor. The law requires school districts and PSAs to create educational goals for the 2020-21 school year; to describe how instruction will take place under the plan; to describe how equitable access to technology within the district will be provided; to describe how students with special needs will be provided with equitable access to instruction; and to work with local public health departments on the creation of appropriate methods for delivering pupil instruction given the particular COVID-19 metrics in the district.

Each district was required to establish goals on or before September 15 as part of the district's Extended COVID-19 Learning Plan. The plans were required to be approved by October 9, either by the intermediate school district (ISD) for traditional public schools or by a board of directors for a public school academy (PSA), whichever is applicable. Every 30 days after the initial approval, the local district board or the board of directors must confirm or amend its plan about how instruction will be delivered in the district or PSA.

The day after Return to Learn laws were signed into law by the governor, MDE provided related guidance documents for school districts. MDE also developed a series of webinars for local school districts and ISDs to provide a more detailed information on certain subjects related to the Return to Learn laws.

Restarting with In-Person Options

As the 2020-21 school year began, local districts and PSAs were offering a variety of learning options for students. As of August 2020, data gleaned from an analysis of the more than 800 local school district Return to Learn plans (conducted by the Education Policy Innovation Collaborative [EPIC] at Michigan State University, in collaboration with MDE) showed that 86 percent of the local school districts in Michigan—both traditional school districts and PSAs—had planned to offer at least some in-person instruction in the 2020-21 school year. Of the 86 percent of districts planning to offer some form of in-person instruction, 59 percent planned to offer such instruction five days per week, while the other 27 percent planned to offer two- to three-day per week in-person instruction.

CARES Act/ESSER Funds

On May 12, 2020, Michigan's State Board of Education adopted a resolution calling on legislators at the state and federal levels to support the preservation of educational services to Michigan school children that were threatened as a result of the pandemic. State Superintendent Rice echoed these calls and engaged in ongoing communication with state and federal legislators to provide details on the needs of Michigan's schools. In the ensuing months, Congress passed and the president signed into law four coronavirus relief acts. The third of these four — the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Security Act (CARES Act) — provides pre-K-12 funding. Nationally, the CARES Act included $13.2 billion for the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) fund.

Michigan received $390 million in ESSER funds. The CARES Act requires at least 90 percent of these funds to be distributed to local school districts or PSAs through the formula used to calculate Title I Part A funds. The CARES Act money can be used for any of twelve purposes, including addressing the digital divide. As permitted by the federal law, MDE is using its remaining funds to create a $37 million Education Equity Fund for which districts and PSAs may compete, based on need as determined by poverty levels and the percentage of students with disabilities and English learners. The Education Equity Fund has the express purpose of addressing the digital divide and mental health challenges within school communities.

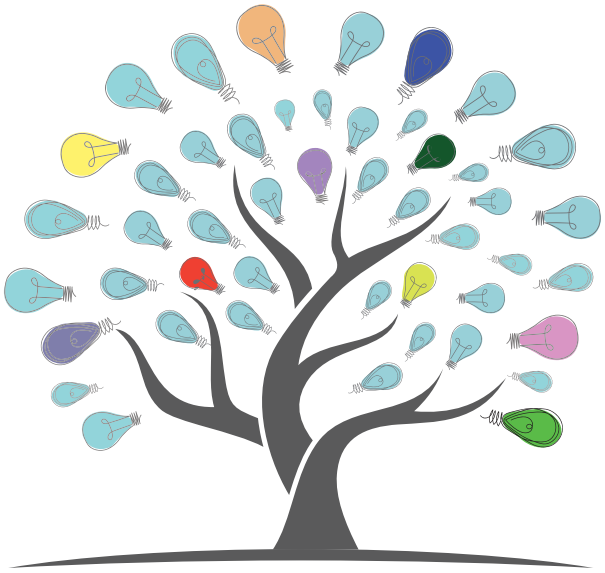
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PATH FORWARD FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION

In 2018, in response to a federal special education determination that placed Michigan in the "needs intervention" category, MDE worked with multiple special education stakeholders to develop the Path Forward plan to drive improvement in this area.

Since the implementation of the Path Forward, Michigan's ratings have increased year after year, with a score of 72.5% in 2020, up from 65.28% in 2019. This resulted in the state being moved into the "needs assistance" category, after the 2018 rating of 59.17% that resulted in the state's "needs intervention" status.

This year saw the formal establishment of the Special Education Instructional Leadership Network (SEILN), a collaborative effort of MDE, the Michigan Association of intermediate School Administrators (MAISA) and the Michigan Association of Administrators of Special Education (MAASE). The SEILN, representing special education leaders from ISDs across the state, works collaboratively with MDE to focus on quality instruction and inclusion in Michigan's classrooms. A great deal of work is being done in school districts across the state and at MDE, to improve the compliance and outcomes for students receiving special education services.

The Path Forward



Driven by the Collective Wisdom of Partners across Michigan

> ***72.5 percent is the highest score Michigan has received since 2014, when the federal government moved to results-driven accountability. We are pleased with the trajectory of growth and will continue working to improve outcomes for every Michigan student. There still is much to do around the areas of graduation and dropout rates, research-based best practices, and inclusion, as we are still in the 'needs assistance' category.***
>
> ***- Dr. Scott Koenigsknecht, MDE Deputy Superintendent for P-20 System and Student Transitions***

ANTI-RACISM EFFORTS

The past few years have heightened awareness of the inequities in American culture. Many educators and researchers believe the COVID-19 pandemic has affected and will continue to affect learning for millions of children nationwide. This impact will be particularly severe for historically marginalized children. Adding to the impacts of the pandemic are the killings of Black people across the country, which have reignited a call for social justice. This call has caused Americans to look into the mirror and assess how we treat others. Only if we confront racism in a thoughtful and effective way can we hope to improve educational outcomes for marginalized children. This is a moral imperative that should engage us all.

In response to the national outcry after the death of George Floyd, Dr. Rice put out the call both internally within the department and to school and district leaders across the state, seeking to find ways to focus the department's efforts in eradicating racism in our schools across Michigan. Four areas were identified:

- Listening to the voices of students
- Listening to and using the expertise of teachers and educators
- Providing implicit bias training to MDE staff
- Providing resources to our schools

Listening to the Voices of Students

Understanding that providing students a voice in important conversations can increase students' engagement and ownership, Dr. Rice met (virtually) with student representatives ranging from grade 5 to post-secondary. Those students, who were nominated by their local superintendents or other school leaders, came from across the state. These meetings with students offered an opportunity to listen to the students' experiences with racism and their thoughts about how to eradicate racism in Michigan schools. At this initial meeting, students shared that they would like to have lessons rich in diversity, with lessons and literature that are relevant to their lives, and that they believe there is a need for more persons of color in the educator workforce.

The students further talked about the need for a safe place in schools where students can talk about racism. They expressed a desire that teachers participate in anti-bias and anti-racism training. They said they wanted courses on social justice, women's studies, and African American studies. The students also expressed the desire for a social studies curriculum that includes the contributions of people of color and that delves into the roots of systemic racism. This work will continue in the coming year as Dr. Rice and department staff engage students in action-oriented discussions on the topics identified by the students.

> ***Instead of pushing current leadership to change, I think it would be much more productive to empower students to organize and change policies they disagree with in their own districts. Students don't realize the power that they have. Our school districts have long silenced the voices of youth. If students across Michigan start demanding things, change they will, because we are the core of the education system. By empowering students, we are also empowering the next generation of leaders in education.***
>
> *– Quote from student*

Listening to and Using the Expertise of Teachers and Educators

In August, more than 70 educators, primarily representing K-12, also met with Dr. Rice and MDE staff to discuss ways to eradicate racism in schools. Their thoughts paralleled the student comments on the lack of diversity in literature and history books and lessons, and the need for a more diverse teaching workforce. The educator group added their concerns about inequities in funding as they affect districts with high populations of students of color, and about policies that hinder progress toward equity in education. This group will continue to convene in the coming year.

Providing Implicit Bias Training to MDE Staff

Stereotypical thoughts and behaviors can hinder the outcomes of individuals. In July, Dr. Rice called for training for staff within the department. This focus area was augmented when Governor Whitmer declared racism a public health crisis on August 5, 2020 and announced that all state government employees would participate in implicit bias training by the end of the year. MDE is exploring other ways to supplement the statewide training through additional learning opportunities for departmental staff on this topic in the coming year.

Providing Resources to Our Schools

The lack of prominent and numerous examples of diversity in students' lessons can have a negative impact on their learning. Studies show that students become more engaged in lessons that include positive portrayals of people like themselves. MDE is working to provide academic resources to educators that assist them in responding to the needs of students—sharing a rich variety of educational materials that accurately reflect the realities of all children's lives.

This work aligns with the updated Top 10 Strategic Education Plan, which has metrics for each of the eight goals to include measures that emphasize the need for improvement in achievement for marginalized students. It also supports the actions called for in the June 2020 State Board of Education resolution, which includes the following statement:

> *NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Michigan State Board of Education does hereby commit to stand against any and all acts of racism, disrespect, violence, and inequitable treatment of any person and to provide leadership with the Michigan Department of Education to support local public schools and districts in their efforts to help eradicate racism and to create more equitable and inclusive schools for all children.*

> ***Schools are but one part of a much larger world. Those like us who believe in schools—and especially in public schools—believe that schools can change lives . . . and do every day. We as educators must continue to re-think what we do in our schools to consider how we can help to root out racism. We need to go beyond tolerance and acceptance to inclusion. We need to recognize that difference is richness, and not stigma.***
>
> ***- State Superintendent Michael F. Rice, Ph.D.***

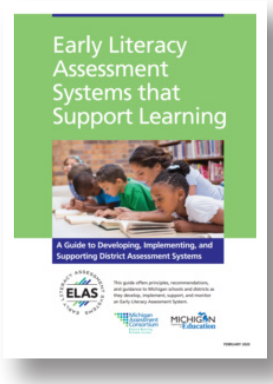
SUPPORT FOR LITERACY

Literacy is the foundation upon which all other learning is built. MDE reaffirmed its commitment to increasing children's literacy rates in multiple ways this year. Several of those key efforts are described below.

Ongoing: Read by Grade Three Law

The third-grade retention requirement that is part of Michigan's Read by Grade Three law was to take effect at the end of the 2019-20 school year. In anticipation of this new requirement, the MDE literacy team worked closely with schools identified as likely to have a high percentage of students affected by the law to provide information and resources. In addition to this targeted support, MDE provided support to all districts through a series of Read by Grade Three memoranda, including a district communication guide created in collaboration with the Michigan School Public Relations Association. In response to Governor Whitmer's executive order that waived the retention portion of the law for the 2019-20 school year (due to the COVID-19 pandemic), MDE adjusted its efforts in this regard. To support districts in the 2020-21 school year, MDE shared a webinar series that addresses questions from districts on how to continue implementing all components of the law.

Early Literacy Assessment System Guide



The Early Literacy Assessment Systems that Support Learning (ELAS) guide completed in Winter 2020 offers principles, recommendations, and guidance to Michigan schools and districts as they develop, implement, support, and monitor an early literacy assessment system. This work was created by MDE in collaboration with the Michigan assessment consortium (MAC) and assessment expert James Pellegrino, PhD. The work has since been used to create a facilitation guide to help districts analyze existing assessment systems and align instruction and intervention. The guidance can be found on the MAC website.

Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Grant

In 2020, the MDE literacy team applied for and was awarded the U.S. Department of Education Comprehensive Literacy State Development grant. Beginning October 1, 2020, this federal grant will provide $16 million over the next five years to advance literacy skills, including pre-literacy skills, reading, and writing, for children from birth through grade 12, including limited English proficient students and students with disabilities. The funds will be awarded through a competitive process to local school districts and other eligible entities.

Family Engagement in Early Literacy

The MDE literacy team began work in family engagement in early literacy. With support from the federally funded Region 8 technical assistance center, the team is developing research-based resources for administrators, educators, families, and communities. The resources will include briefs created for educators and infographic one-pagers for families. These will provide districts with practical literacy strategies that families can implement at home with the intent of strengthening early literacy skills for children from preschool through grade three. These resources will comprise the content of upcoming professional learning materials that will include an equity component to ensure educators are addressing any barriers resulting from bias that could inhibit an educator's ability to serve all families equitably. The messages and materials will be aligned with the department's family engagement framework, MiFamily.

A CONTINUUM OF SUPPORTS: SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

Children who feel safe and secure at school are better prepared to learn. Supporting the mental health and social emotional needs of students is an important factor in providing a positive environment for success in education. MDE has several efforts under way to support children's needs in this area.

Monitoring Michigan Youth Voice: YRBS and MiPHY

Each year, MDE's school health and safety unit collects student survey results through either the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) or the Michigan Profile for Healthy Youth (MiPHY). Among the YRBS questions, high school youth are asked to report the degree to which they felt sad/hopeless, and their vulnerability to the risk of suicide. During the 2019-2020 MiPHY administration, 55,180 adolescents shared how challenged, connected, safe, and healthy they felt at home, in their community, and at school. Both surveys help Michigan districts focus their social, emotional, behavioral, and mental health prevention and intervention efforts.

> ***Because if students aren't mentally OK and are constantly stressed and feeling uneasy, it is difficult to get work done. Family issues or other things outside of school can be distracting. We need our teachers to care about us not only academically but emotionally.***
>
> ***-Student, Senior in High School***

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Professional Learning

When educators are competent in SEL, they are better able to support the educational process for all youth, infants through graduation, in these areas. In combination with the Michigan Health Education Standards, SEL competencies help support a well-rounded education that teaches to the whole child. Research shows SEL competencies are necessary for school and life success. The SEL competencies are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, responsible decision making, and relationship skills. These competencies need to be grounded in an equity lens that supports each student's identity, agency, and belonging.

Some successes in MDE's efforts to provide support for educators in these areas include:

- This year, Michigan Virtual recorded 21,000 teacher enrollments in MDE's SEL online modules. Beyond defining the SEL competencies, the online modules cover themes of adult SEL, SEL and culturally responsive practice, and SEL's connection to trauma-informed schools. The SEL/Trauma Informed module is the most popular of the five modules available.
- In terms of SEL and Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), 1,000 educators registered for "SEL Wellbeing Return to School" offered through the MiMTSS technical assistance (TA) center. The webinar provided schools with information on the connections that exist across SEL, mental health, and MTSS in relation to COVID-19 supports for students.
- Michigan is one of the pioneering states in SEL. As a result, MDE was invited to, and is receiving support from, several federal technical assistance centers. These include CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning), CASEL/CCSSO (Council of Chief State School Officers), CISELSS (Center to Improve Social & Emotional Learning & School Safety), and the Region 8 comprehensive center on statewide SEL initiatives. Additionally, MDE was invited to apply for funds from the Michigan Health Endowment fund. If MDE's application is successful, these funds will support system SEL expansion in new districts across the state.

Interconnected Systems Framework Model Demonstration Project

The MDE/MiMTSS TA Center state team supports the Central Montcalm and Hazel Park public school districts as they implement the interconnected systems framework (ISF). ISF is a structure and process to integrate positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) and school mental health programs within school systems. The goal is to blend resources, training, systems, data, and practices to improve all children and youth outcomes. There is an emphasis on prevention, early identification, and intervention of students' social, emotional, and behavioral needs. Family and community partner involvement are critical to this framework. Between the two districts noted above, potentially 4,542 students and their families will benefit from this model, working to achieve a vision of mental health for all.

Project AWARE (Advancing Wellness and Resilience in Education) State Level Grant Funds Secured

In early 2020, MDE's school health and safety unit planned and wrote a successful application to secure funds to partner with three ISDs — Copper Country, Delta-Schoolcraft, and Van Buren. This partnership is intended to increase the educational system's ability to identify and respond to behavioral health needs, and to increase access to and connection with appropriate behavioral health resources for school-aged youth and their families. This $9 million, five-year grant will support districts' efforts to reduce the percentage of youth who report feeling sad or hopeless and who have seriously considered, planned, or attempted suicide. Responses to the Youth Risk Behavior Survey and the Michigan Profile for Healthy Youth survey questions will provide a baseline for progress. These three ISDs support 28,251 students.

State-Funded School-Based Mental Health Services

Recognizing the importance of school mental health and support services, Governor Whitmer and state legislature have provided funding for regional support of these programs through section 31n of the state School Aid Act (MCL 388.1631n). This section also earmarks funds for behavioral health team pilot programs and for administration of the programs. This year, $30 million was distributed to ISDs and RESAs for mental health services.

- 10,528 students were screened for mental health services.
- 7,301 students received services from a 31n provider.
- 1,173 students were referred to an external community partner for services beyond 31n.
- ISDs held 117 evidence-based professional development events for educators covering topics such as restorative justice, youth mental health first aid, transforming research into action to improve lives of students (TRAILS), social and emotional learning, "handle with care", and the Michigan Model for Health.

> ***Our ISD is thrilled to be able to hire a mental health provider to assist our local schools with student behavioral needs. The 31n grant addresses the number one issue identified within our classrooms by all of our districts. We have high hopes that having 31n funds for needed services within the classrooms will make a significant difference for teachers and students.***
>
> *-Intermediate School District Superintendent*

2019-20 MICHIGAN TEACHER OF THE YEAR AND MICHIGAN TEACHER LEADERSHIP ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS

CARA LOUGHEED

Michigan Teacher of the Year

Cara Lougheed is the 2019-2020 Michigan Teacher of the Year. Cara has taught English Language Arts and history in Rochester Community Schools for 21 years. She began her teaching career at Rochester High School in 1998 and was a founding staff member of Stoney Creek High School when it opened in the fall of 2001. Over the years, Cara has taught multiple levels of English, from remediation to Advanced Placement courses, as well as U.S. and World History.

Cara has also served as a Social Studies teacher leader, a building Activities Director, union building representative, and a National Education Association delegate. She has worked collaboratively with colleagues and administrators to write curriculum, design an attendance incentive program for students, and contribute to various projects designed to increase student connectedness and improve school culture. Cara has also trained six student teachers from four different universities over the last decade. She is currently the student intern and mentor liaison to Oakland University (OU), and is working collaboratively with the Michigan Program Network (MiPN) and TeachingWorks to improve and broaden teacher education. In addition, Cara is an advisory member of OU's Vision 20/20 committee, which seeks the input of classroom teachers in making improvements to teacher education.

Michigan Teacher Leadership Advisory Council 2019-20

The Michigan Teacher Leadership Advisory Council (MTLAC) is comprised of nine Regional Teachers of the Year and the Michigan Teacher of the Year (MTOY). The MTLAC's mission is to share issues of importance with educators in their region and around the state, students, and with MDE. The MTLAC began in 2017 with 24 educators from across Michigan. During 2018-19, MDE adopted the current MTLAC selection format with membership determined through the MTOY program application process.

2019-2020 MTLAC Members

Region 1: Rachal Gustafson, Rapid River Schools

Region 2: Amanda Clemons, Manistee Middle/High School

Region 3: Katie Farrell, Bauer Elementary School

Region 4: Jeremy Winsor, Fulton Middle/High School

Region 5: Jessyca Mathews, Carman-Ainsworth High School

Region 6: Tricia Zeman, Sycamore Elementary

Region 7: Douglas Duncan, Prairie Ridge Elementary & Indian Prairie Elementary

Region 8: Kristalyn Musselman, Tecumseh High School

Region 9: Cara Lougheed, Stoney Creek High School/ Michigan Teacher of the Year

Region 10: Michele Pizzo, Davison Elementary-Middle School

More information on the Michigan Teacher of the Year program can be found online at michigan.gov/mtoy

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MICHIGAN STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION ACTIONS IN 2019-20

Resolutions, statements, and policies adopted by the State Board of Education can be accessed online at michigan.gov/sbe

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Dr. Noel Kelty, Director

Head Start State Collaboration
Cynthia Derby, Director

Preschool and Out-of-School Time Learning
Richard Lower, Director

Special Education
Teri Rink, Director

MICHIGAN Department of Education

608 W. Allegan Street
Lansing, Michigan 48915
Phone: 1-833-633-5788
Website: www.michigan.gov/mde