

The Best Education System for Michigan's Success

Executive Summary

A Blueprint for Educating Michigan's Residents to Build the Best Businesses, Win the Best Jobs, and Achieve the American Dream

Prepared for Gov. Rick Snyder
Prepared by the 21st Century Education Commission
February 28, 2017

Call to Action

Our existing education system is not built to produce the outcomes we want and need, but evidence from high-performing systems across the United States and internationally is promising. There are strategies we can pursue that will make Michigan a leading education state—from parents and students to educators and administrators and from local residents to elected officials and business leaders to government officials. We all have a role to play. However, unless we resolve to take action quickly to transform our current public education system into one that gives our children an edge, the prognosis for our state and its citizens' future prosperity is bleak. There is no time to waste.

Falling K–12 Performance

The urgency could not be greater. While it is difficult to face, the data are clear: Michigan children are falling behind. As early as fourth grade, Michiganders underperform their peers, ranking 41st on fourth-grade reading performance nationally. Michigan is one of only three states that has seen a decline in fourth-grade reading achievement since 2003. In eighth-grade, we continue to see a trend of low performance and slow growth. In 2015, Michigan ranked 37th for eighth-grade math performance.

Perhaps the most jarring finding is that black fourth graders in Michigan have the lowest reading performance in the country.

Results are worse for students of color, students in special education, and students living in poverty. On any performance metric, at-risk students in Michigan underperform their peers in other states. Perhaps the most jarring finding is that black fourth graders in Michigan

have the lowest reading performance in the country. Our system must recognize and address this disparity and do much more to reverse the connection between learning outcomes and race/ethnicity, disability status, and socioeconomic status.

Some may think that these unacceptable statewide outcomes are a result of changing demographics, but that is simply not true. Michigan's higher-income and white students are also among the worst performing in the country. When we remove our lowest-income students from the data set, Michigan's performance falls in comparison to other states. For example, in fourth-grade reading, higher-income Michigan students (those who do not qualify for the means-tested free and reduced lunch program) rank 48th among their peers. That is seven slots lower than our state's overall ranking.¹ Even among schools with a low number of students participating in free and reduced lunch—a proxy for wealthier schools—Michigan ranks near the bottom (36 out of 42 states reporting).²

Michigan's higher-income and white students are also among the worst performing in the country.

In a 21st century economy, our students need more than strong academic skills and knowledge. Employers report that they want employees who are critical thinkers who can process information and share their opinions verbally and in writing. They want good listeners, readers, and presenters.³ To prosper, we need to help our schools achieve rigorous academic outcomes and increase their focus on these crucial 21st century skills.

Low Postsecondary Attainment

By 2025, 65 percent of jobs in Michigan will require a postsecondary credential, and our workforce is not yet prepared to meet these new demands.⁴ Only 36 percent of Michiganders over 25 years of age have earned an associate degree or higher—ranking Michigan 34th for degree attainment. By comparison, Massachusetts has the highest degree attainment in the country with nearly half its population (48 percent) earning an associate degree or higher. Minnesota leads the Great Lakes region with 44 percent of its residents earning at least an associate degree.⁵

Degrees, of course, are not the only pathway to postsecondary success. Marketable postsecondary credentials, including certificates, industry certifications, and apprenticeships, are also gateways to rewarding and well-paying careers. In Michigan, 4 percent of residents have earned a postsecondary credential.⁶

Too many Michiganders face an uphill climb when enrolling in postsecondary education. Students face both financial and academic challenges. While state investment in higher education has steadily increased since its low point in FY 2012, Michigan's investment is down 14 percent from appropriations in FY 2008.⁷ At the same time, tuition at colleges and universities statewide has been on the rise, and state aid programs have been cut or eliminated.⁸ This has increased the financial investment required for students to pursue postsecondary education. In addition to financial barriers, too often students enter postsecondary education underprepared. One in four graduates of the class of 2014 were required to take remedial courses when they enrolled in a community college or public university.⁹ Michigan must reverse these trends to put more students on the pathway to success.



Photo taken at Jalen Rose Leadership Academy in Detroit

A Call to Transform, Not Tinker

It is easy to look for excuses or to believe that our local schools are doing fine—to believe that this is only a problem in other districts or for someone else’s children. We must be courageous enough to accept the fact that our public education system is falling behind those of our national and global competitors and begin working immediately to reverse our trajectory. We need not blame people or the past; we need to transform the system. This report outlines recommendations from the 21st Century Education Commission for how to design and rebuild our public education system to prepare all children for the careers, lives, and futures to which they aspire and a better future for our great state. The current state of our education system demands that we all play a role in this transformation: from students and parents to educators, school personnel, and administrators to business leaders and local residents.

A Commitment to Ambitious Goals

How will we know if we have built a high-performing public education system in Michigan that prepares our students for the 21st century? We believe that, together, these four goals help to assess Michigan’s progress toward creating an education system that is more equitable and produces graduates that are more prepared and more competitive with their peers across the country and world.

To achieve these goals, we must all take responsibility for them. We must not expect that educators alone can be held accountable for these outcomes. Every stakeholder—from state lawmakers to students and from parents to teachers—must take ownership of our state’s outcomes. Michigan must also commit to publicly providing data about our shared progress toward the following goals. Data must be reported publicly and disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, and county.

By 2025, 70 percent or more of our 25-year-olds will have completed a college degree, occupational certificate, apprenticeship, or formal skill training.

By 2025, Michigan children will score in the top ten among U.S. states on the bi-annual National Assessment of Educational Progress in reading, math, and science.

By 2025, the high school graduation and postsecondary enrollment gap between low-income and middle-income children in Michigan will have disappeared.

By 2025, Michigan children will surpass the scores of Ontario school children on the Programme for International Student Assessment in reading, math, and science.

Framework for Success:

The Commission's Recommendations

Evidence from high-performing systems gives us hope and shows that dramatic improvement is possible. There are states and nations that face similar challenges to Michigan that have been more successful in educating all children to a high level. These high-performers have embraced bold, comprehensive long-term plans that have guided their education policymaking and propelled student achievement. They have focused on critical inputs like instruction, standards, and strategic investments. They have also monitored essential outputs such as student achievement and progress toward system-wide goals. In every case, their success required a sustained commitment to a shared vision and plan.

What we offer below purposely goes beyond less-disruptive improvements on the margins and instead proposes a set of strategies that we believe has the power to create a world-class P–20 education system. In choosing our recommendations, we have explicitly rejected warnings that certain changes could generate opposition, or be hard to get through the Legislature, or cost more money in an era where public resources remain scarce. We do so in the belief that catching up will not be easy. Based on what other states and nations have had to do to build high-performing education systems, what is required of us will be difficult. We offer bold ideas because we are convinced that Michigan must choose them if our communities and our children are to have a future. We urge the Governor, the Legislature, educators, employers, and citizens broadly to join us in making our vision a reality.

Our recommendations are organized in three building blocks and nine guiding principles that explain what we must do, and 32 key strategies that explain how.

Our Vision for the Future

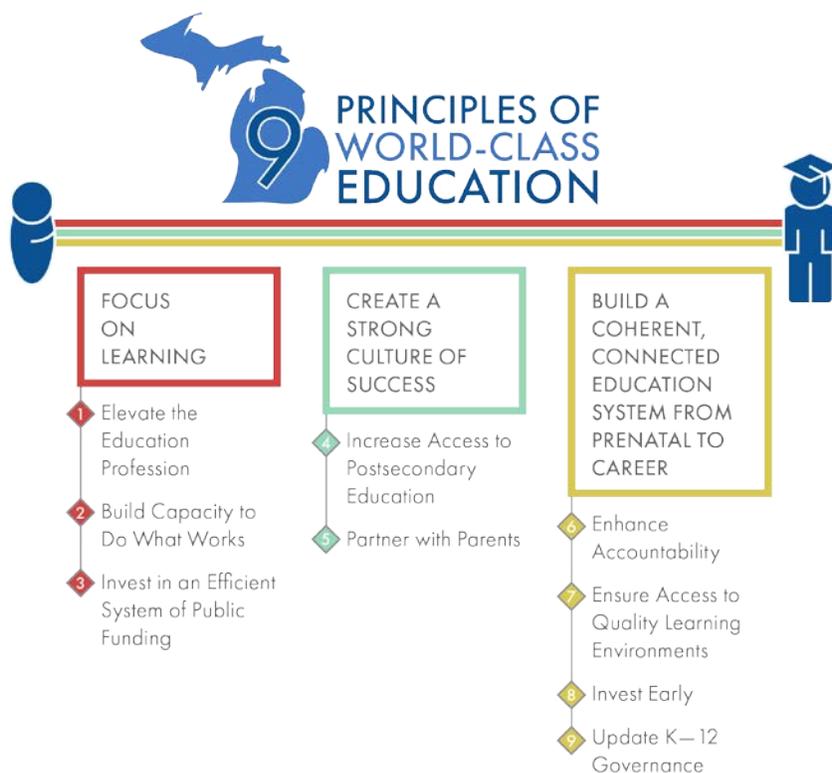
For Michigan to thrive in the current century, our state must have a world-class education system, from prenatal through postsecondary education, that prepares every Michigander for success. Our students must:

- Learn the 21st century skills necessary to compete in the global economy, including critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration
- Achieve internationally benchmarked standards
- Succeed in earning postsecondary credentials to be prepared for careers

How We Get There: Nine Principles for a World-Class Education System

A critical underpinning of this whole report is a focus on a P–20 education system that serves residents from birth through life. Our state must intentionally invest in early learning opportunities for children and families. This means starting formal schooling with prekindergarten and providing supports and services to help parents be their child’s first teacher. Our education system must continue with a high-quality K–12 experience for every student in the state where students have access to effective teachers, rigorous standards, and quality facilities.

As students move toward graduation, we must help them navigate myriad postsecondary options to find the one that is right for them. This may include enrolling in career and technical education, participating in an early middle college, enlisting in the armed services, applying to a college or university, and more. At every point in this continuum—and particularly at every transition point—students and families should encounter a quality, connected system that is designed to meet their interests and needs.



What follows below are brief summaries of nine guiding principles for rebuilding our education system and the strategies we recommend to implement these principles. More detail can be found in the full Commission report.

Focus on Learning

To improve outcomes for students, Michigan's education leaders must support excellent teaching and learning. This requires high standards for all students; relevant and rigorous instruction; innovative practices, priorities, and policies; and well-trained and skilled teachers and administrators.



1. ELEVATE THE EDUCATION PROFESSION

Educators are critical to our state's success, and we must design and support a world-class education profession, from early childhood through postsecondary, that attracts, develops, elevates, and retains top talent to meet the needs of every student.

- 1.1 Enhance teacher preparation**—Michigan must enhance its teacher preparation programs and ensure they are attracting the best and brightest candidates, increase certification requirements, and improve training for teachers before they lead a class of their own. This means that all teacher preparation programs must set higher standards for admission, require a year-long residency, and require evidence of skills in their subject matter, social-emotional intelligence, and pedagogy.
- 1.2 Create multiple career pathways**—Michigan's educators—both those entering the profession and seasoned veterans—need to have multiple, meaningful career path options to ensure they have opportunities to grow in their jobs and stay in the profession.
- 1.3 Improve educator professional development**—Teachers play a critical role in helping students learn. To ensure that students are getting the highest-quality instruction possible, teacher professional development should be focused on improving instruction. Michigan should invest in providing exceptional professional development to help our teachers become the best, including professional learning communities to support teachers as they learn and grow. Professional development should also be tied to feedback in teacher evaluations. As areas for a teacher's improvement are identified in evaluations, professional development and trainings should be matched to the teacher's classroom competence and growth.
- 1.4 Strengthen building-level and organizational leadership**—Effective school leadership supports student learning. To improve student outcomes, Michigan should implement a performance-based leadership development system, that includes administrator credentialing, that will ensure that building-level leaders are invested in student outcomes.



2. BUILD CAPACITY TO DO WHAT WORKS

Our educators need more support to do what works. Michigan must support the collection, deployment, and implementation of evidence-based strategies and ensure that state education goals are supported with the knowhow and teacher training to deliver on our commitment to improve learning, teaching, and leading.

- 2.1 Support state priorities with the necessary resources and tools**—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.
- 2.2 Support implementation of evidence-based practices**—Michigan needs a statewide effort to amplify evidence-based practices and coordinate efforts to deploy them. Together with local, regional, state, and national stakeholders, the Michigan Department of Education (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.



3. INVEST IN AN EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE SYSTEM OF PUBLIC FUNDING

To achieve the learning outcomes we want and need, Michigan must invest in an efficient and effective system of public funding that ensures that every student is supported by sufficient resources to achieve high-performance standards. This includes necessary additional resources for students with higher risks.

- 3.1 Identify efficiencies**—Becoming a world leader in education will require additional investment. However, before Michigan taxpayers can be asked to support additional spending for education, they need to be assured that Michigan spends current funds efficiently and effectively. Determining how to spend funds in the most efficient manner will require a careful review by policymakers with the input of education experts.
- 3.2 Determine the base funding amount for K–12**—The Commission is recommending that Michigan adopt performance outcomes that are benchmarked against the highest-performing states and nations. If the state is going to be successful in meeting these benchmarks, schools need to be provided with the resources necessary for success. Michigan needs to efficiently distribute resources, and efficient distribution requires a transparent calculation of what it costs to meet performance standards.

- 3.3 Determine the additional resources needed for disadvantaged students**—Michigan’s funding formulas should be equitable. Similar districts and similar students should be provided with similar resources, and students with greater educational needs should be provided with additional resources where needed to have an equal chance of meeting the performance standards.
- 3.4 Develop funding formulas to support the system**—Once the levels of spending needed to meet Michigan’s performance standards are determined, Michigan needs to develop funding formulas that efficiently and effectively distribute these resources to the proper entities to support student success.

Photo taken at Walden Green Montessori in Spring Lake



Create a Strong Culture of Success

Education is a public good that benefits everyone in the community. Strong evidence tells us that school-based strategies alone cannot overcome the impact of social and economic disparities on learning. We must couple a sustained commitment to improve teaching and learning with a pledge to increase access to services and supports that help every student arrive at school ready to learn.



4. INCREASE ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

Our state must send a clear message: Michigan students need a postsecondary credential to succeed in a 21st century economy and achieve the American dream, and our state is committed to eliminating family income as a barrier to obtaining those credentials.

- 4.1 Determine the proper funding level for higher education**—Becoming a leading state for postsecondary degree and credential attainment will likely require significant new investment. The state should consider strategies including direct funding to higher education institutions, performance-based funding formulas, as well as other methods to incent best practices, tuition restraint, and spending efficiency.
- 4.2 Support universal access to community college for all Michigan students**—Michigan needs to view postsecondary education and training as a necessary step to fully participating in the economy and democracy. If Michigan is to become a leader in residents with postsecondary degrees and credentials, it is time to consider moving our current system of universal education from P–12 to P–14. Postsecondary education is becoming increasingly essential to earning a living wage. Michigan needs to make postsecondary educational opportunities available to every citizen so they can fully participate in society.
- 4.3 Make four-year degrees more affordable for students who demonstrate merit**—Michigan should provide scholarships to help students who have successful academic records afford four-year degrees at public universities without taking on onerous debt. It is important that the state earn the best rate of return possible on this investment. Toward this end, the state should adopt best practices in improving completion rates, and continue to work with universities to constrain tuition cost growth.
- 4.4 Support all students with counselors skilled in career guidance and postsecondary access**—Michigan should ensure that every high school student has the support of a counselor skilled in career guidance and postsecondary learning opportunities. These counselors can help students select the program that best fits their interests and provides them with the best opportunities for success in college and the labor force. Counselors can also help students navigate the application and financial aid process.



5. PARTNER WITH PARENTS

Our system must clearly recognize that parents are children's first and most important teachers. Michigan's education system must partner with parents to support learning, provide the information necessary to guide decision making, and ensure families have the resources necessary for success.

- 5.1 Connect human services to schools**—Michigan must embed human services in schools and strengthen links between schools and community-based human services in order to connect children, students, and their families with the right services at the right time.
- 5.2 Nurture parent and educator collaboration**—Michigan must be much more intentional about nurturing parent engagement. With a diverse set of stakeholders, we must identify and evaluate existing parent supports and recognize and address gaps.
- 5.3 Create user-friendly tools to navigate educational options**—Michigan must create a comprehensive set of user-friendly tools to help students and parents select the educational option that best meets their needs. This must include an online tool to help parents identify their choices, define criteria, evaluate their options, and select a school.

Photo taken at Starfish Family Services in Inkster



Build a Coherent, Connected Education System from Prenatal to Career

Michigan's 21st century economy and educational goals require an education system that is seamless and accessible to all, from prenatal through career. Young families need easy access to early childhood programs that prepare children to arrive at kindergarten ready to succeed. Students need clear pathways into postsecondary opportunities and career preparation, and adults need access to continuing education, training, and lifelong learning.



6. ENHANCE ACCOUNTABILITY

Our state must sustain statewide P–20 performance measures that are benchmarked against high-performing states and nations. These measures should align responsibility and authority and lead to strong outcomes for learners. Once set, they must be sustained for at least a decade so that schools can organize teaching and learning to meet these new standards.

- 6.1 Enhance student achievement measures**—Michigan has adopted rigorous standards that should be maintained to ensure that longitudinal data on student growth remains intact. Michigan's assessment system should be enhanced to better align and measure 21st century learning skills known to prepare our students in becoming both career and college ready and should also disseminate useful data that informs instructional practice in the classroom and measures the performance of our schools for the general public and policymakers.
- 6.2 Hold the right people accountable**—Michigan must create an accountability system with clear lines of responsibility that is well integrated with the state's education governance system so that all stakeholders know what they are responsible for and can assess their performance. All actors in the system, from pre-K providers to teacher preparation institutes, should be held accountable for student achievement outcomes.
- 6.3 Improve data reporting**—Michigan must collect, analyze, and share quality data to hold all stakeholders accountable for performance outcomes. It is equally important that timely and relevant data are available to help educators, parents, practitioners, and policymakers make data-driven decisions in pursuit of continuous improvement.
- 6.4 Move toward a competency-based learning model**—Over the next decade, Michigan should move its P–20 education system toward a competency-based learning model, an approach that focuses on the student's demonstration of desired learning outcomes as central to the learning process. The focus of learning should be shifted toward a student's progression through curriculum at their own pace, depth, etc. As competencies are proven, students will advance academically.



7. ENSURE ACCESS TO QUALITY LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Michigan must ensure that all students have access to high-quality, innovative, welcoming, and safe learning environments equipped with the technology necessary for teaching and learning 21st century skills and achieving high-performance standards.

7.1 Assist poorer communities with funding for school facilities—Michigan is one of 11 states that provides no support to local districts for capital outlay. As a result, the playing field is highly uneven. Wealthier suburban districts can finance facilities at much lower tax rates than poorer urban and rural districts. Michigan should provide state aid to local school districts levying property taxes for facilities to ensure that every district is guaranteed a minimum yield for each mill raised.

7.2 Support public school academies with funding for school facilities—Traditional school districts in Michigan can ask local voters to support facility and infrastructure costs through local property taxes. This option is not available to public school academies, which instead pay for facilities with their foundation allowance, donations, and grants. Michigan should provide direct funding to public school academies to help pay for purchasing or renovating facilities provided that there is demonstrated need for the project. Charter schools and their education management organizations will need to meet financial transparency requirements to be eligible for state funds.



8. INVEST EARLY

Michigan children must have access to safe, quality, and affordable early childhood care and education that prepares them for long-term educational success and supports whole-child development. That means investment and programming must start before children enter our traditional education system.

8.1 Support universal preschool for all four-year-olds—Preschool is a proven strategy to improve school readiness, and the Great Start Readiness Program—Michigan's homegrown preschool program—is among the best in the country. This program, working synergistically with Head Start, should be expanded to all four-year-olds in Michigan.

8.2 Develop and retain a quality early childhood workforce—In order to attract and retain qualified professionals in the early childhood field, Michigan must ensure that they are competitively compensated for their knowledge and skills. There are a variety of ways to accomplish this goal, including policies such as offering state-subsidized salary increases after completing professional development, offering tax credits for child care workers, and offering scholarship opportunities, loan forgiveness, and more.

8.3 Increase access to quality services through improved coordination—Michigan needs to ensure that early childhood resources are spent efficiently, resources are deployed strategically, and programs reach the children and families who need them most. Given the wide range of service providers from social service agencies to healthcare systems to school districts, this goal can only be accomplished if services and existing resources are well coordinated. Recent efforts to improve coordination have resulted in significant progress, but much more needs to be done.

8.4 Enhance early learning outcome measurement and tracking—Michigan must continue to enhance the early learning portion of the state’s longitudinal data systems to inform service delivery, improve program alignment, and increase our understanding of what works. First steps include improving early learning participation and outcomes data by expanding the number and types of programs participating in existing data collection and using developmentally-appropriate kindergarten entry assessments statewide to gauge the impact of early investments on readiness.



9. UPDATE K-12 GOVERNANCE

Michigan must reform K–12 governance as part of developing a coherent P–20 governance structure that ensures the public education and higher education marketplace produces high levels of learner outcomes, equity, efficiency, innovation, and collaboration.

9.1 Reform state board of education governance—At the state level, the Governor, Legislature, MDE, and Michigan State Board of Education (SBE) all, to varying degrees, direct state policy. Michigan must ask voters to decide how best to align state educational policy with accountability through the Governor. There are several options that provide a suitable outcome: place a constitutional amendment on the ballot to allow the Governor to appoint the members of the SBE, allow the Governor to directly appoint the state superintendent and then abolish the SBE altogether, or change the SBE by removing partisan nominations and expanding membership of the SBE to include gubernatorial appointments. Additionally, the Legislature may consider conducting these elections on a regional basis.

9.2 Enhance the function and capacity of the Michigan Department of Education—To support the policies and practices outlined in this report, Michigan must dramatically reshape our department of education. We must enhance MDE’s capacity to help teachers, schools, and districts improve, and we must also situate education functions that are currently performed by a range of state agencies within the department.

9.3 Reconceptualize the structure and function of intermediate school districts—In order to facilitate higher levels of effectiveness and efficiency, Michigan must rename, reconfigure, and reassign tasks to intermediate school districts to enable high-quality and economically efficient delivery of services to students. Critically, this change in roles can

only take place after the changes to the SBE and MDE outlined above are implemented so there is alignment and coherence in the state's system. In addition to serving as a testing and compliance agency, MDE must become a source of high-quality education knowledge and training.

9.4 Support local efforts to consolidate—In an era of declining enrollment, Michigan has too many seats for the number of students we serve. The state must support local efforts to consolidate by revisiting existing laws and regulations regarding the consolidation process, changing unnecessary barriers, and offering incentives for local districts to voluntarily consolidate.

9.5 Ensure access to high-quality educational options for all—Students and their families across Michigan have choices when deciding where and how they will learn. Michigan must develop policies that promote high-quality educational options for every child in every community across our state, but this will require managing Michigan's public education system to ensure that all schools are high quality and that every student has access to a high-quality school, including traditional public schools, cross-district choice, charters, and online learning options.

An Investment in Our Future

This Commission recognizes that the work of many government commissions, blue-ribbon committees, and similar efforts are often put on the shelf and not revisited because there is little appetite for generating the revenues needed to implement report recommendations. We also recognize that Michigan taxpayers have a right to be skeptical of requests for additional resources. K-12 performance in Michigan has not been historically commensurate with spending. However, we should be clear, without significant new investment, Michigan cannot become a top-performing education state.

Current Investments

While Michigan currently ranks 24th in per-pupil K-12 spending, this represents a sharp drop in the state's standing. Michigan ranked 8th highest in per-pupil spending as recently as 2000, but since that time, the state has seen inflation-adjusted per-pupil spending fall by \$663 per pupil, while the U.S. average for per-pupil spending increased by over \$1,400. Michigan schools have also seen increasing fiscal pressure from retirement costs. Declining resources relative to other states is a likely cause of Michigan's recent poor performance relative to other states.

On the higher education front, Michigan ranks 42nd for state support for two- and four-year public institutions and has the fourth least-affordable tuition levels in the nation.¹⁰ Michigan simply will not be a leading state in postsecondary attainment if it is a bottom state in postsecondary funding.

New Investments: Challenging but Essential

We are cognizant of the challenge facing policymakers. They must balance many

competing priorities, including finding the funds to support the state's infrastructure. At the same time, our current level of investment puts the state's future at risk.

Michigan can potentially find ways to incrementally improve performance through more efficient and effective spending. But we need to be realistic about where the state currently stands. Michigan is near the bottom in education performance and we have identified quickly becoming a top state as essential to Michigan's future. Dramatic gains will not happen without significant new investment.

Policymakers should view education as an investment, and increasing investment now will lead to increased prosperity in the future. Business Leaders for Michigan has estimated the benefits of Michigan becoming a top-ten state for jobs, personal income, and a healthy economy. The benefits include 72,000 more people working, \$9,200 more income per person, and \$12,300 more in gross domestic product per person.¹¹ This would increase Michigan's total state income by \$90 billion. At current tax rates, this would translate to over \$8 billion per year in additional state and local tax revenue—increasing state and local tax revenue to \$45 billion.

Where to Start

This blueprint is intended to transform education policy in Michigan over the next 30 years. The size and scope of the recommendations, however, can make it difficult to determine where to start. Commissioners prioritized strategies into four categories: short term (less than two years); medium term (three to five years); long term (six to ten years); and ongoing efforts that must start early and continue throughout this transformation process.

As Michiganders prioritize the work ahead, we must also resist efforts to veer off course. High-performing systems create a plan, and they commit to implementing that plan. We must do the same. Focusing our attention on these strategies alone is the first step in creating a cohesive, shared plan for our state and improving outcomes for our young Michiganders.

Short-Term Strategies

We urge the Governor and Legislature to discuss and make significant progress on implementation of the following items in the final two years of this administration. By doing so, our state will be demonstrating a shared commitment to dramatic change.

The strategies that follow are grounded in our work, but offer slightly more detail about how the principles ought to be executed. The Commission recognizes that as this report is implemented, policy details like those proposed below will be discussed and debated, which is a critical part of operationalizing this blueprint for Michigan.

Focus on Learning

- *As discussed in key strategies 1.1 and 1.2:* Elevate the teaching profession and raise the standards for admission to teacher preparation programs, increase rigor during preparation, and require a year-long residency for student teachers. Once educators enter the profession, offer meaningful career pathways for teachers advance in their career. The Commission suggests engaging a diverse group of stakeholders to lead this effort, including educators, school leaders, teacher preparation institutions, MDE, and others.
- *As discussed in key strategies 3.1 and 3.2:* Implement a process during the current legislative session to (a) determine the level of resources needed for K–12 students to meet performance metrics (assuming those funds are used effectively and efficiently), and (b) to make recommendations to the Legislature on the best ways to attain those resource levels. The

Commission suggests implementing the approach taken by Tennessee and Washington to construct an appropriate foundation grant.

- *As discussed in key strategy 3.3:* Adopt budgets for FY 18 and FY 19 that put Michigan on the path to providing significant additional resources for every disadvantaged student in the state that would follow the child to whichever public school he or she attends. The Commission believes this is an urgent investment and the Legislature should not wait to have a new foundation formula in place before increasing support for our neediest students.

Create a Strong Culture of Success

- *As discussed in key strategy 4.2:* Commit during the current legislative session to a K–14 education system for Michigan that offers universal access to community college and other skill training options for Michiganders. This should be a top funding priority in coming years.
- *As discussed in key strategy 4.4:* Provide incentives to districts to boost the number of high school counselors skilled in career guidance and postsecondary access. This will help students navigate their postsecondary education options. Our goal should be to quickly move Michigan to the national average of 491 students per counselor—with the longer-term goal of achieving an average ratio of 250 students to one counselor.
- *As discussed in key strategy 5.1:* Increase access to human services in schools by strengthening the link between schools and community-based human services in order to connect children, students, and their families to the right services at the right time. The short-term goal should be for every school that has a student population of over 50 percent disadvantaged students to have a caseworker on site.

Build a Coherent, Connected Education System from Prenatal to Career

- *As discussed in guiding principle 6:* Maintain our current content standards, and commit to relying on the M-STEP and SAT to measure student outcomes. High-performing states and nations set and maintain high standards for a long period of time. We must do the same by defining and protecting performance outcomes and assessments for the next decade for Michigan students. We must also work to identify additional measures for student success and specific tools to assess 21st century skills.
- *As discussed in key strategy 9.1:* Provide Michigan with the sole source of accountability a high-performing state public education system requires by placing a constitutional amendment on the 2018 ballot to determine if the people wish to (a) allow the Governor to appoint members of the State Board of Education and then allow the SBE to hire the state superintendent, (b) allow the Governor to appoint the state superintendent and abolish the SBE altogether, or (c) expand the SBE to include gubernatorial appointments and change how SBE members are elected.
- *As discussed in key strategy 2.2 and 9.2:* Establish a professionally staffed office in MDE to serve as a focal point for collecting the latest evidence-based knowledge about teaching and learning from local districts, ISDs, and universities and deploying these practices at scale.

Timetable

Exhibit 1. Key Strategy Implementation Schedule

#	Key Strategy
Short-term	
1.1	Enhance teacher preparation
1.2	Create multiple career pathways
2.2	Support implementation of evidence-based practices
3.1	Identify efficiencies
3.2	Determine the base funding amounts for K–12
4.2	Support universal access to community college for all Michigan students
4.4	Support all students with counselors skilled in career guidance and postsecondary access
5.1	Connect human services to schools.
6.1	Enhance student achievement measures
9.1	Reform state board of education governance
9.2	Enhance the function and capacity of MDE
Medium-term	
1.4	Strengthen building-level and organizational leadership
3.3	Determine the additional resources needed for disadvantaged students
3.4	Develop funding formulas to support the system
4.1	Determine the proper funding level for higher education
4.3	Make four-year degrees more affordable for students who demonstrate merit
5.3	Create user-friendly tools to navigate educational options
6.3	Improve data reporting
7.1	Assist poorer communities with funding for school facilities
7.2	Support public school academies with funding for school facilities
8.1	Support universal preschool for all four-year-olds
8.2	Develop and retain a quality early childhood workforce

#	Key Strategy
9.3	Reconceptualize the structure and function of ISDs
Long-term	
6.4	Move toward a competency-based learning model
9.4	Support local efforts to consolidate
Ongoing	
1.3	Improve educator professional development
2.1	Support state priorities with the necessary resources and tools
5.2	Nurture parent and educator collaboration
6.2	Hold the right people accountable
8.3	Increase access to quality services through improved coordination
8.4	Enhance early learning outcome measurement and tracking
9.5	Ensure access to high-quality educational options for all

The importance of education has long been recognized in Michigan, even in the years before Michigan was granted state status. The Northwest Ordinance, passed in 1787 by Congress, created a compact between the original states and the Northwest Territory, which included Michigan, in which “schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged.”¹²

However, in an economy where a superior education is the most reliable ticket to a bright future, Michigan’s public education system is failing our children. It is a harsh judgement, but an unavoidable one based on the achievement data. Until we are honest about current performance in our state, we cannot demand the changes our education system needs to more effectively support today’s kindergarteners and tomorrow’s college students. It is hard to imagine higher stakes for our state and its families.

Endnotes

¹ U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. n.d. *NAEP Data Explorer: Reading, Grade 4, All Jurisdictions, National School Lunch Program eligibility [SLUNCH3]*. 2015. Accessed February 7, 2017.

<https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/naepdata/dataset.aspx>

² U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. n.d. *NAEP Data Explorer: Reading, Grade 4, All Jurisdictions, Percent eligible for National School Lunch Program. 2003 and 2015*. Accessed February 7, 2017.

<https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/naepdata/dataset.aspx>

³ Talent 2025. September 2016. *West Michigan Talent Assessment and Outlook*. Accessed February 7, 2017. http://talent2025.org/files/documents/misc/Talent2025_2016TalentDemandReport.pdf

⁴ A.P. Carnevale, N. Smith, and J. Strohl. 2013. *Recovery: Job Growth and Education Requirements through 2020*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown Public Policy Institute. Accessed February 7, 2017.

https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Recovery2020.FR_Web_.pdf

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau. 2016. *2014 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates: Table B15001 Sex by Age by Educational Attainment for the Population 18 Years and Over, All States within United States and Puerto Rico*. Accessed February 10, 2017.

<https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk>

⁶ Lumina Foundation. 2016. *A Stronger Nation*. Accessed January 2017.

<http://strongernation.luminafoundation.org/report/2016/#michigan>

⁷ House Fiscal Agency. 2016. *Budget Briefing: Higher Education*.

http://www.house.michigan.gov/hfa/PDF/Briefings/higher_education_budgetbriefing_fy16-17.pdf

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ MI School Data. 2017. *College Remedial Coursework. 2013–2014*. Accessed January 30, 2017.

<https://www.mischooldata.org/DistrictSchoolProfiles/PostsecondaryOutcomes/lheRemedialCoursesByHighSchool2.aspx>

¹⁰ Business Leaders for Michigan. February 4, 2015. *Business Leaders' Insights: How Higher Education Can Help Michigan Become a Top Ten State*. Detroit: Business Leaders for Michigan. Accessed January 27, 2017. <https://businessleadersformichigan.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/BLM-Higher-Ed-Report-2015.pdf>

¹¹ Business Leaders for Michigan. 2016. *2016 Economic Competitiveness Benchmarking Report: Data Supporting the Building a New Michigan Plan*. Detroit: Business Leaders for Michigan. Accessed February 8, 2017. <https://businessleadersformichigan.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/BenchmarkReport2016.pdf>

¹² The Northwest Ordinance. art. 3. Accessed February 7, 2017.

<https://ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=8&page=transcript>