

Framework for Success:

The Commission's Recommendations

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

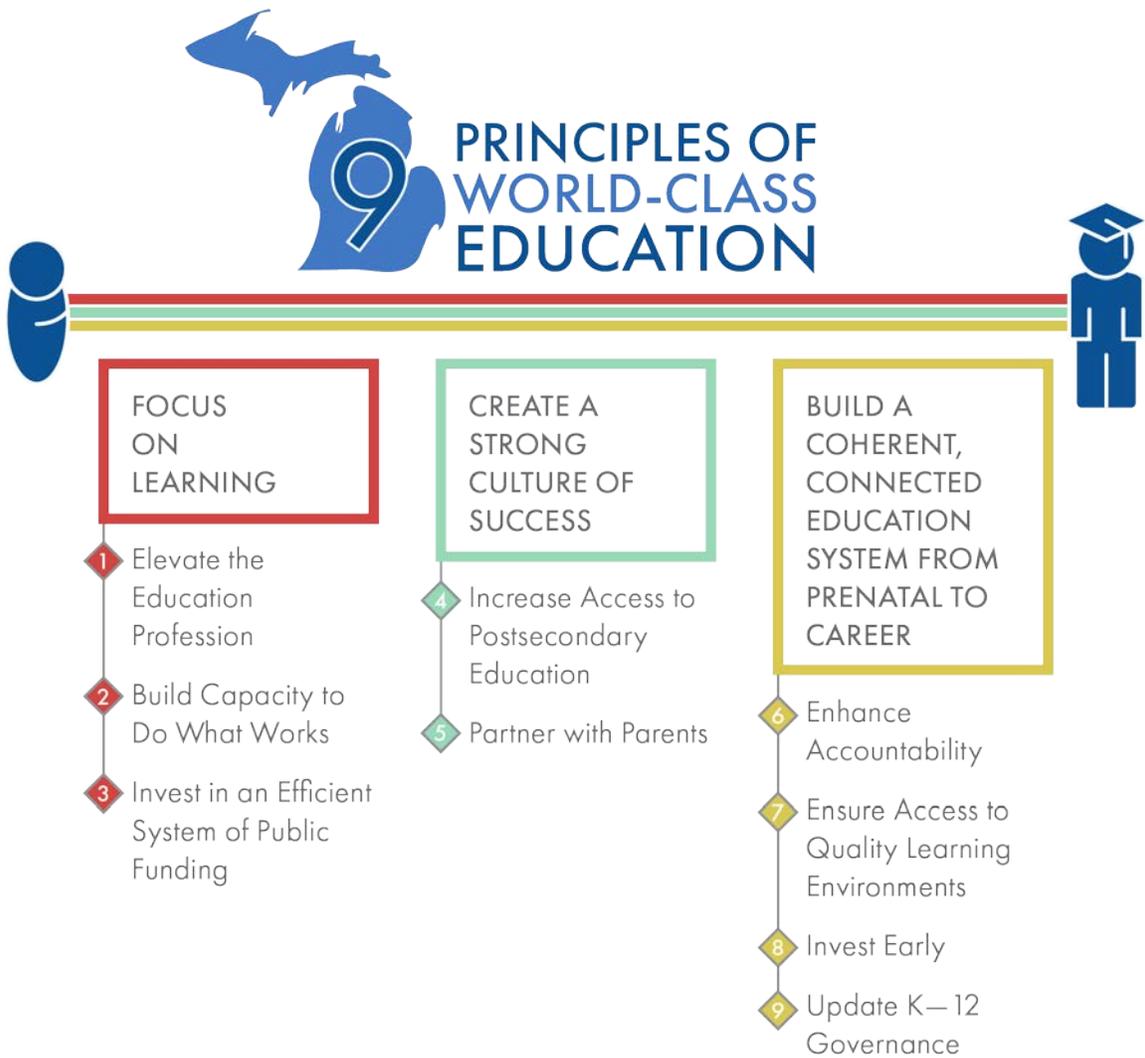
A critical underpinning of this report is the focus on a P–20 education system that serves residents from birth through life. Our state must intentionally invest in early learning opportunities for children and families. This means starting formal schooling with prekindergarten (pre-K) and providing 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 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. These recommendations do not discuss how to connect the P–20 system to workforce development. That relationship will be an important topic for future work.



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, skilled teachers and administrators. This goal will require that Michigan significantly elevate the education profession, build capacity to identify and disseminate effective methods to teachers, and invest sufficient resources.



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. The state must increase requirements and improve training for preservice teachers. 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. Michigan must also look for strategic opportunities to attract diverse candidates to teaching preparation programs.
- 1.2 Create multiple career pathways**—Michigan’s educators—both those entering the profession and seasoned veterans—need to have multiple career path options to ensure they have opportunities to grow in their jobs and stay in the profession. The Michigan Department of Education should lead the development of new career paths for teachers that reflect their skills and responsibilities as educators, not the duration of their employment. These career paths must be developed in collaboration with a range of partners, including teachers themselves.
- 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 will ensure that building-level leaders are invested in student outcomes. This system would work to develop building-level leaders capable of fostering teacher growth and coaching teachers to positively impact student growth and achievement. This system should include basic administrator credentialing as well as more intensive programming focused on improving student outcomes, collaborating with community partners, and organizational development.



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, 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 the state 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 amounts 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. Tennessee and Washington provide good models for transparent funding. These models determine the costs associated with instructional, classroom, and nonclassroom services, and the foundation allowances are built from these costs.
- 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.

Create a Strong Culture of Success

Education is a public good, and it is not the sole responsibility of our formal education system. Schools are powerful engines to propel learning forward for all students; however, 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 child arrive at school ready to learn.

This means fostering a shared responsibility for public education across our state that extends beyond traditional education partners. We must engage all Michiganders in this urgent work—particularly nontraditional partners such as business leaders, human service providers, the armed services, and community organizations. We need a culture that values and demands exceptional student achievement and postsecondary aspirations. We must articulate the responsibilities of students, families, educators, and others in meeting this challenge, and hold each other accountable for achieving measurable results.



4. INCREASE ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

To start, 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 actively support development and learning, build strong partnerships with educators, provide the information necessary to guide decision making, and ensure all children and parents have the support and 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. In the long run, social workers and caseworkers should be ubiquitous in schools across Michigan. This effort, however, should begin by serving our highest-need students first, including students receiving free and reduced lunch and students with disabilities.
- 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. This includes offering innovation grants to districts and community-based organizations to improve existing supports. In addition to supporting parents, Michigan must actively share best practices with educators and teach them to strategically embed parent engagement to achieve our state's educational goals.
- 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. Critically, this online interface must include all the educational options that parents consider, including early childhood services and providers, K–12 options, higher education, and workforce training. In addition to access to quality information from the state, Michigan must create consumer protections that ensure that educational providers share accurate information about their services, programs, and outcomes.

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. Under the Governor's leadership, Michigan has advanced its awareness around the need for lifelong learning, and we encourage more work to make this system a reality for all students.



6. ENHANCE ACCOUNTABILITY

Our state must adopt and 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.

- 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 HIGH-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 (PSAs), which instead pay for facilities with their foundation allowance, donations, grants, and private funds. Michigan should provide direct funding to public school academies to help pay for purchasing or renovating facilities if 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 early—before children enter our traditional education system at age five.

- 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 (GSRP)—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, 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

In our move toward a P–20 system, we cannot overlook the governance challenges in K–12. 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 by placing a constitutional amendment on the ballot to allow the Governor to appoint the members of the SBE, to allow the Governor to directly appoint the state superintendent and then abolish the SBE, or to expand the membership of the SBE and change the election process to include gubernatorial appointments.

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.

- 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.