



Guiding Principle 1:



Elevate the Education Profession

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 learner.



Rationale

A world-class education system must start with world-class educators and instruction. Quality instruction is foundational to student growth and achievement. Of all of the factors that schools control (including class size⁸¹), teachers have the largest impact on learning.⁸² Researchers have consistently documented that students have better outcomes on standardized assessments when they are taught by a highly-effective teacher compared to when they are assigned to an ineffective teacher.^{83,84} Despite recent reforms, teacher effectiveness varies widely across the state. Michigan must support effective teacher development to ensure that every student has an excellent teacher.

Countries such as Finland, Singapore, and South Korea consistently top the world in student performance, and they share a persistent focus on the quality of their teachers. One South Korean official said, “The quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers.”⁸⁵ McKinsey & Company researchers agree, “We have never seen an education system achieve or sustain world-class status without top talent in its teaching profession.”⁸⁶

Teachers are a critical part of the education profession, but other educators deserve our attention, too. If we want to dramatically improve learning in our state, Michigan must strategically attract, develop, and retain top educators—from early childhood educators and classroom teachers, to paraprofessionals and school administrators.

What does a 21st century Michigan look like?

Michigan has made great strides in strengthening its education profession. Every student across the state has an excellent teacher, and students are surrounded by effective paraprofessionals, counselors, and building leaders. Becoming an educator is an honorable professional choice, and talented candidates are pursuing a lifelong career in teaching. Teacher preparation programs require subject matter expertise and deep knowledge in pedagogy. Prospective teachers participate in yearlong internships so they know how to work with the classrooms and students they will have in their career. Training under master educators prepares them to support diverse students, master content standards, and build critical thinking, cooperation, creativity, and communication skills.

In their first years of teaching, educators participate in strong induction programs, and they are mentored by master teachers. As educators progress through their career, they receive actionable feedback about their instruction and have access to relevant professional development. Educators have numerous opportunities to grow—both inside and outside the classroom. Teachers, schools, and districts have critical conversations about instructional practice. They use data and technology to guide instruction, and they leverage expertise at intermediate school districts (ISD), the Michigan Department of Education, and teacher preparation institutions (as discussed in the second guiding principle). They are also partnering with postsecondary institutions and businesses to ensure students explore careers, formulate their pathway to a career, and are ready to compete and succeed in a global workforce.

Michigan's education workforce reflects the diversity of its student population, and educators in urban, high-poverty schools, or those with at-risk students, have the resources needed for high student outcomes.

Schools work to retain the best educators. They create collaborative working environments and pay education professionals competitively based on merit and on an educator's movement along an improved career ladder.

What does Michigan look like now?

Nearly 100,000 individuals teach in Michigan classrooms. Of those educators, nearly 77 percent are female and over 90 percent are white.⁸⁷ Over 60 percent of teachers have spent more than ten years in the classroom, and most (68 percent) have earned a master's degree or higher.⁸⁸ While these figures do not include every educator in our state, they do illustrate the size and scope of the education profession. Any strategy to improve learning will require a multifaceted approach. No single approach can improve instruction across different levels of experience and school environments.

As Commissioners heard during listening tour events in West Michigan and Southeast Michigan, our current workforce does not reflect the demographics of Michigan's student population. While nearly all of our teachers are white, 33 percent of Michigan students are not.⁸⁹ In addition, childhood poverty rates

continue to rise in our state, and too many educators lack the preparation to best serve at-risk students.

The Legislature has been focused on teaching for a number of years. Certification requirements are now more rigorous, and all educators are evaluated annually; new laws make it easier to dismiss underperforming educators, and more difficult to earn tenure without classroom competence. While these changes have increased school districts' ability to improve the quality of instruction, they have not impacted the way we develop current and future teachers, nor other school personnel. Importantly, these changes have not yet improved student outcomes across the state. In addition to these policy changes, budget constraints have often impacted teachers' salaries and benefits.

Like many other states, Michigan struggles to retain novice educators, and a large portion of the workforce is likely to retire in the coming years. As many as one-third of teachers leave the profession in their first three years, and almost 50 percent leave after five years. Half of new principals leave the profession within their first three years, and enrollment in teacher prep programs is down by more than one-third from 2009–2010.⁹⁰ This leads to churn in our schools and increases the pressure of teacher shortages across the state.

Measuring Success

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

- How many educators are rated highly effective?
- Are graduates of teacher preparation programs effective?
- Do educators have multiple, meaningful career pathways?
- Are more teachers choosing to stay in the profession? Are retention rates on the rise?
- Does Michigan tie teacher professional development directly to performance evaluations?
- What systems and supports does Michigan have to improve building-level leadership?
- Do parent and teacher surveys demonstrate that building-level leadership is strong and effective?

Key Strategies

- 1.1 Enhance teacher preparation
- 1.2 Create multiple career pathways
- 1.3 Improve educator professional development
- 1.4 Strengthen building-level and organizational leadership

1.1—Enhance Teacher Preparation

To elevate the education profession, Michigan must enhance its teacher preparation programs and ensure they are attracting the best and brightest candidates. To accomplish this, Michigan’s teacher preparation programs must prepare educators who are ready to succeed in the classroom by training them to use evidence-based instruction and by licensing them via practice-based assessments.

Details

Michigan 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.

Rationale

To attract the best and brightest candidates into the teaching profession, Michigan must raise the standards for admission to teacher preparation programs. Increasing the expectations of new teachers can elevate the profession in Michigan to similar levels as those found in high-performing states and nations. A more selective acceptance process will elevate the entire teaching profession, resulting in an overall increase in high-achieving teacher candidates. To recruit high-achieving future educators, Michigan’s education preparatory programs should emulate programs that set high standards for acceptance, such as the W.K. Kellogg Foundation’s Woodrow Wilson Michigan Teaching Fellowship.

In addition to attracting more accomplished future educators, it is important to attract diverse educators to the profession so that tomorrow’s education workforce better reflects our students. In 2015–2016, while 18 percent of Michigan students were African American, only 6 percent of our teachers were.⁹¹ Seventy-seven percent of our teachers were female; 23 percent were male.⁹² Research shows, and leaders in Southeast and West Michigan confirmed during listening tour events, that increasing the diversity of the education profession can increase minority retention and engagement.⁹³

Once a prospective educator has been accepted into an educator preparation program within the state of Michigan, in-class experiences, often called field experiences or student teaching, differ depending on the institution they are attending. The in-classroom experiences these educators are exposed to range from one semester to nearly two years, and often do not support a new educator with enough time for reflection and collaboration. Looking to the medical profession, creating a year-long uniform apprenticeship model of teacher training with a master teacher will improve the practice of the new teacher. Other states have embarked on these clinical preparation models already; in 2010, for example, a teacher preparation program at the University of California at Los Angeles launched an 18-month educator preparation apprenticeship model that includes one full

year of residency working with a master teacher. This program is “rooted in authentic collaboration, reciprocal feedback, and transformative partnerships.”⁹⁴

Finally, the current model of licensure in Michigan needs to change. Michigan’s model sufficiently measures the content knowledge of educators, but poorly assesses how the teacher will perform in their own classroom. State licensure exams contain multiple-choice questions that do not accurately assess best-practice pedagogy or readiness to teach at a high level. Michigan should investigate adopting an observation-based licensure examination that evaluates mastery of pedagogy and readiness to teach. Using rigorous performance-based assessments for licensure should be the standard to improve Michigan’s teaching profession.⁹⁵

Potential Responsible Party

MDE should implement this strategy in collaboration with the state’s higher education public teacher preparation institutions and educators. These partners should also work with K–12 administrators to ensure critical shortages are being addressed.

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.

Details

MDE should lead the development of new, meaningful 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.

Rationale

Unlike many professions, most classroom teachers have the same job on the first day of their career as they do on the last day. In an era of frequent job changes, Michigan must create meaningful opportunities for educators to grow in their career. Without doing so, we will not be able to attract and retain the best and brightest to the education profession.

Currently, educators who are interested in advancing their career must enter administration. While we need excellent educators to pursue administrative positions, we must also create opportunities for top educators to remain in the classroom, where they can have the most impact on student achievement.

To address this, Michigan must find ways to create multiple, meaningful career pathways for teachers, including different levels of teaching. Such a system should align career pathways with the teacher evaluation process, and have coherent structures for base rates of pay and advancement qualifications. These levels could include the following:

- **Teacher in residence:** Before advancing out of a teacher preparation program, new teacher candidates wishing to be employed in Michigan would complete a teacher-in-residence or practicum program as a capstone experience. This residency experience would replace student teaching. A teacher in residence would be supported by a master teacher to create mentorship opportunities. During the residency, a teacher in residence would receive a modest stipend for living expenses. Standards would be set to determine when a teacher in residence could become fully certified and ready to advance into the teaching profession. These standards may include, for example, an effective or highly effective district evaluation, ratings by students and parents, or additional professional learning.
- **Intermediate teacher:** After advancing beyond the teacher-in-residence level, teachers would move to the intermediate level, where pay and benefits would be determined by the local district contract. This would not include a hard-and-fast rule on number of years at this level; instead, this should be determined by what expertise the teachers have gained that have made them better instructors and may include a certain number of effective or highly effective district

evaluations, ratings by students and parents, additional professional learning, etc., as well as evidence of some level of student achievement.

- Distinguished teacher: Pay and benefits would be determined by the local district contract. MDE would determine what would be required to move to the next level and would not include a hard-and-fast rule of the years at this level. Instead, this would be determined by criteria such as the expertise the teacher has gained that has made them a better instructor, earning a certain number of effective or highly effective district evaluations, ratings by students and parents, additional professional learning, evidence of outstanding student achievement, and earning an advanced credential in a specialty area, or area of additional endorsement. Most teachers should be able to reach this level of teaching.
- Master teacher: In this role, top teachers would document mastery in their subject matter and pedagogy and be eligible for new responsibilities or pay increases. These teacher leaders could have hybrid roles where they teach students for part of the day and mentor peers for another portion of the day. In a recent national survey, a quarter of teachers report significant interest in a hybrid role.⁹⁶ This model may also include the opportunity for a teacher to pursue professional development or research for a limited amount of time.

Like certification, MDE would determine when a teacher has met the requirements to achieve each level. This would likely require teachers to submit a portfolio for the state to review that documents effectiveness across the domains required for each level of mastery.

Potential Responsible Party

The MDE, in collaboration with educators, teacher preparation institutions, and other stakeholders, should develop sample career ladder proposals.

1.3—Improve Educator Professional Development

Michigan should ensure that the goal of educator professional development is rooted in improving teacher effectiveness and student growth, and replace the current system with a more focused one.

Details

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. A teacher's supervisor or mentor should then coach the teacher on the application of new knowledge and instructional techniques learned through the professional development the teacher received. With accurate and timely feedback, skilled and knowledgeable coaching, peer review and dialogue, and consistent performance evaluations, improvement in teaching and learning will be continuous and measurable.

Rationale

High-quality teaching is vital for student growth and achievement. It is critical for all teachers to have ongoing and regular opportunities to learn, whether from a program or each other. Continuous professional development should keep teachers up to date on new research, emerging technology tools for the classroom, new curriculum resources, and other relevant topics. Michigan should seek to ensure that teacher professional development is ongoing, experiential, collaborative, and based on working with students and understanding their culture.

Potential Responsible Party

MDE, in collaboration with school leaders such as principals, superintendents, and local district boards of education, should lead this effort.

1.4–Strengthen Building-level and Organizational Leadership

Effective school leadership supports student learning. Michigan should investigate and implement a performance-based leadership development system at the state level that focuses on developing building-level leaders and school administrators as instructional leaders and effective managers of overall school functioning.

Details

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.

Rationale

As Commissioners saw during listening tour events in West Michigan, building-level leaders play a major role in helping their teachers improve instruction. Their leadership matters to the teaching and learning environment established and maintained for students and teachers. It matters to the school climate and classroom culture of learning created within a building, and across a district. It matters to student achievement and to building and district outcomes. Building-level and organizational leaders are instructional leaders and are, therefore, critical partners in the effort to both elevate the education profession and to improve student outcomes.

Too often, schools recruit building leadership from their teacher workforce out of loyalty to their personnel for parameters not aligned to administrative professional requirements. It is paramount that building and district administrators receive ongoing leadership development that is more intensive than the informal system the state utilizes today. A more intensive system will help identify the necessary training and professional development to improve an administrator’s knowledge and skills in creating and maintaining a successful school. The state credentialing process for school leaders must be rigorous and applicable to the specific expectations and responsibilities of the role (e.g., elementary school, middle school, high school, and district levels).

Potential Responsible Party

MDE, in collaboration with district superintendents, boards of education, and professional organizations for school administrators should develop an approach to a more intensive, performance-based leadership development system for building-level leaders.