

# Still Stalled:

State of Michigan Education Report 2022

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**In 2015, The Education Trust-Midwest launched the Michigan Achieves! campaign to make Michigan a top ten education state by 2030. Since then, a growing number of partners around the state have come together to advance the best practices and strategies from leading education states in order to close achievement gaps and ensure every Michigan student is learning — and being taught — at high levels. Join the movement at [www.edtrustmidwest.org](http://www.edtrustmidwest.org).**

# INTRODUCTION

## Still Stalled: State of Michigan Education Report 2022

*By The Education Trust-Midwest*

A high-quality rigorous curriculum.<sup>1</sup> Safe school buildings. Mental health counseling and supports.<sup>2</sup> Healthy meals to support learning.<sup>3</sup> Effective technology and up-to-date books.<sup>4</sup> Effective **teachers** in every classroom.<sup>5</sup> Opportunities for post-secondary education after graduation.<sup>6</sup>

These are just some of the expectations and wishes that parents across the nation have for their children so they can flourish in school and life.

And in Michigan, it's no different.

Parents here dream for their children to have access to opportunity. They have great hopes for their students in school. Indeed, no matter where parents live, their race or political affiliation, or how much their family earns, they want a high-quality education for their children, and they consider “**improving the quality of education**” to be a top concern.<sup>7</sup>

And yet, for far too many parents and their children across our state, those **dreams are far from a reality**.

As this report will show, Michigan's public education system remains in a perennial rut, as it has for decades. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Michigan's fourth grade reading scores show no significant change over the past 16 years. Even before the pandemic, too many dreams have stalled, and academic achievement remains largely stagnant across key indicators for success.<sup>8</sup>

And the following analysis from The Education Trust-Midwest shows some worrisome projections by 2030, if we don't commit to transformation. This is particularly

true for early literacy: Michigan currently ranks 32<sup>nd</sup> in the nation for fourth grade reading.<sup>9</sup> Without concerted efforts towards improvement, that ranking could fall to 39<sup>th</sup> by 2030, according to Ed Trust-Midwest's Michigan Achieves! Indicators.

These projections build upon a broad body of research and many analyses showing that student achievement has languished in Michigan **in reading and math**.<sup>10</sup> While other leading states show steady gains in student performance over the last 16 years, Michigan's fourth grade reading scores have stagnated.<sup>11</sup> Likewise, since 2003, students in other states improved their eighth grade math scores by nearly three times those of Michigan's eighth graders.

Data also reveal troubling opportunity and achievement gaps for underserved students, including students of color and low-income students.

Michigan is also in the bottom 10 states nationally for Black students in early literacy and eighth grade math.<sup>12</sup> And in the last 16 years, Michigan's Latino students improved in early literacy only about one third as much as Latino students nationwide.

Even more concerning are early indications that the disrupted learning amid COVID-19 did not only negatively impact students across the state but also widened devastating opportunity gaps.<sup>13</sup>

This is truly a moment for great empathy and support for educators, who have been working tirelessly for students during this unprecedented time of challenge. It is also a time for our state to be honest about the challenges we now face — and those that have endured

before the pandemic — as well as the supports and transformation that are needed.

The pandemic has introduced even greater challenges for our state’s students to be competitive, and thus great change is necessary.

Yet, there *is* hope for our students, families, educators and communities. We know that other states across the nation have turned around their public education system, making great strides for their students. And Michigan can do the same.

With radical transformation and radical honesty about our students’ achievement, Michigan’s public education system does not have to be the barrier that stalls the dreams for Michigan’s children and their families. Instead, it can be the catalyst for success and prosperity.

With greater access to effective educators, principals, and counselors, and better funded and supported schools, *all* students can be supported on their educational journey. With more one-on-one attention and increased opportunity for post-secondary options, *every* student can build a bright future. And with more investments, especially for vulnerable students, schools, and communities with the greatest needs, public education will improve overall — and our state will be stronger.

To be sure, Michigan needs to invest dramatically more in its public education system and in its overall funding system to be fairer and more equitable. The lack of supports and conditions in many schools, combined with pandemic fatigue, among other issues, are prompting educators across the state to leave the profession—with dire consequences for children.

Yet, funding alone is not enough to truly transform Michigan’s public education. Significant improvements in systems, policies, and practices are also needed. This is a moment for radical transparency. State leaders need to earn the trust of the Michigan public so that voters can have confidence in increasing investment for the public education system. It’s time to be honest about the state’s

performance and challenges, and to take responsibility for being accountable for the challenges.

Indeed, to build trust in the system, parents and stakeholders need honest information, including how students are progressing academically amid the unprecedented learning disruption, how federal stimulus funding is being spent, and whether the dollars intended for students in need are actually reaching their classrooms to improve outcomes.

Michigan students and their families should no longer have their dreams stalled. Our students need us now more than ever to create the best conditions for their future, so that every child, in every school, receives the quality education they deserve.

The moment has come. The next three years will be critical to reversing our course.

We need to make Michigan’s educational transformation a top issue for our state — and commit to better conditions and significant investments, combined with accountability and transparency, to ensure that the practices are changing, too.

Together, with our partners across Michigan, we will continue to advocate for all Michigan students — and their dreams for a bright future.



Photo credit: Valaurian Waller

# THE DATA

## Michigan's Troubled Reality: Where We Are and Where We've Been

While Michigan's parents and families have maintained hope for high-quality schools and steady improvement within the state's K-12 schooling system, Michigan's K-12 academic performance over the past 16 years has stalled. When compared to other states, Michigan's performance rankings prior to the pandemic fluctuated with what could be perceived as declines and improvements in areas such as early literacy. However, the state's actual scores and early literacy performance reflected little change, revealing a deep and troubling reality of stagnancy.

Michigan's pre-pandemic standardized assessments also revealed troubling signs of stagnation. And while results are limited, mid-pandemic data reveal that these outcomes have only depreciated, and things have only gotten worse.



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**Michigan's pre-pandemic performance in early literacy on the NAEP — also known as the Nation's Report Card — has long signaled concern as Michigan has seen little to no improvement in comparison to other states. In fact, between 2003 and 2019, Michigan's average fourth grade literacy scores fell while the national average score rose three points.**

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## WHERE WE'VE BEEN

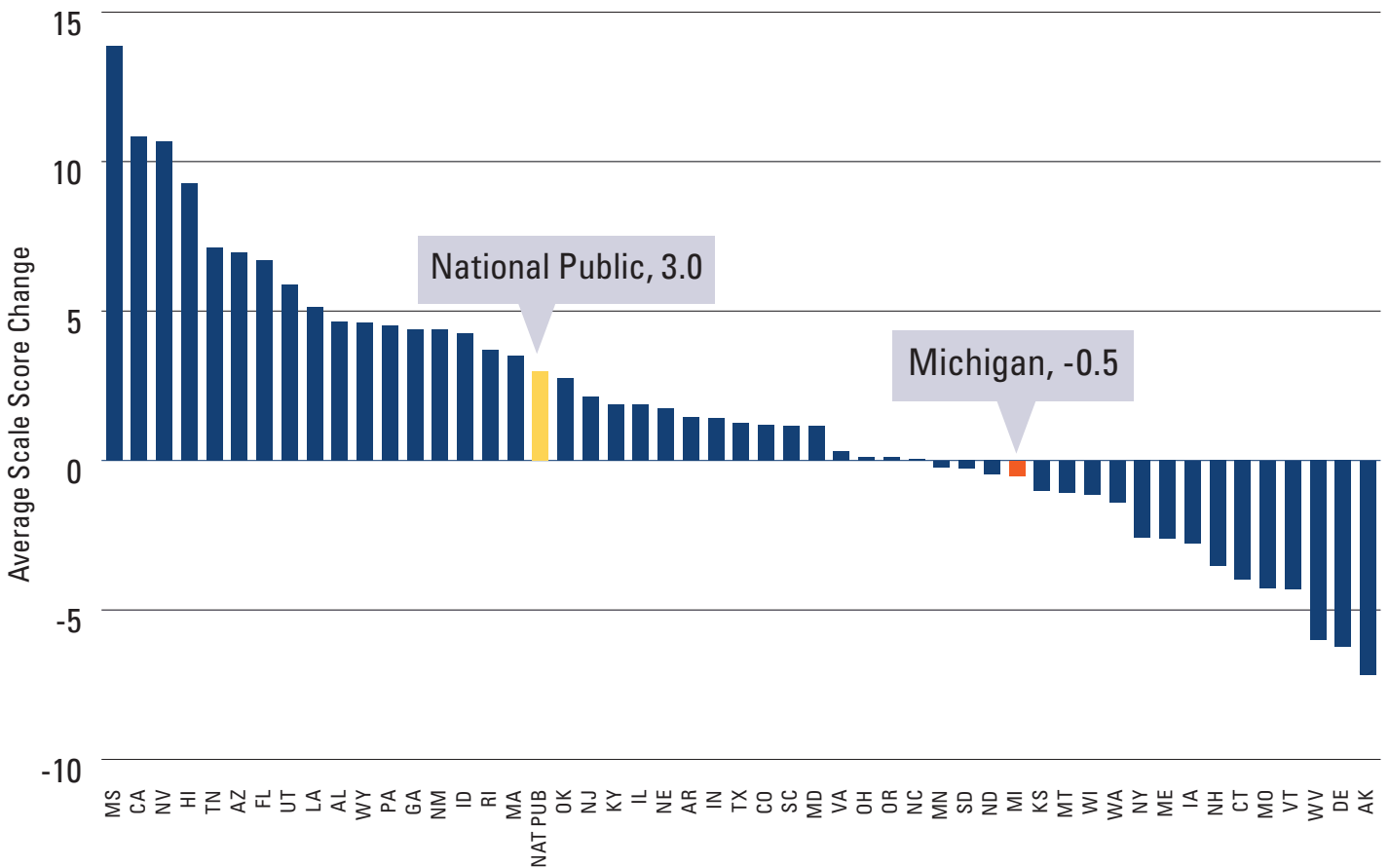
### NAEP

Michigan's pre-pandemic performance in early literacy on the NAEP — also known as the Nation's Report Card — has long signaled concern as Michigan has seen little to no improvement in comparison to other states. In fact, between 2003 and 2019, Michigan's average fourth grade

literacy scores fell while the national average score rose three points.<sup>14</sup> The state ranked 32<sup>nd</sup> for fourth grade literacy overall in 2019, indicating many of Michigan's students were not building a strong enough foundation for learning that would support them in the upper grades.

## Michigan's Literacy Scores Fell While Most States Improved

Average Scale Score Change, NAEP Grade Four — Reading — All Students (2003,2019)



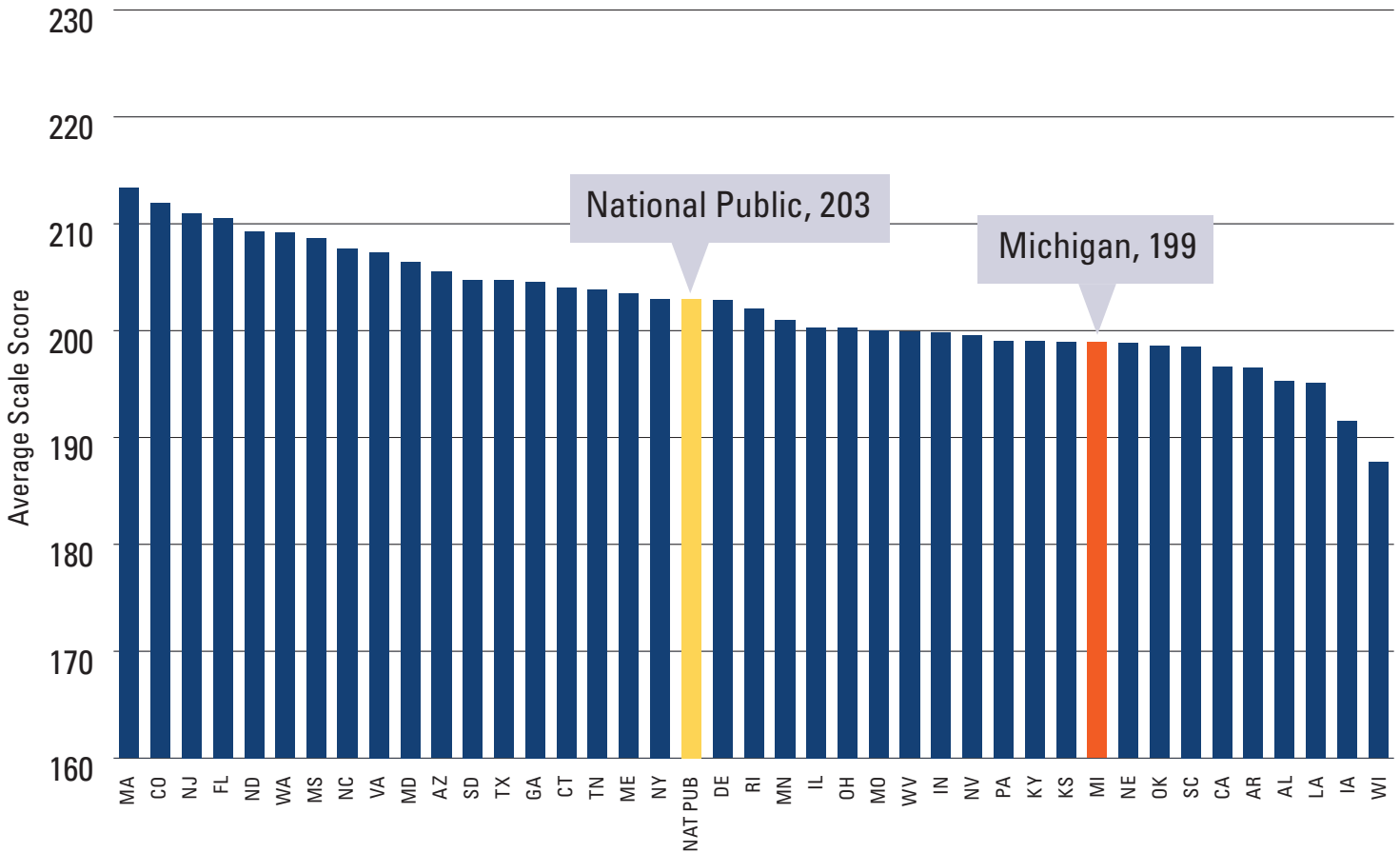
NOTE. Data from U.S. Department of Education. Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. (2019). *The Nation's report card: NAEP data explorer*. <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/ndecore/landing>. Basic Scale Score=208; Proficient Scale Score=238.

Among Latino students, Michigan performed in the bottom 50% of states for fourth grade reading in 2019.<sup>15</sup> These results were all the more dismal for Black students, as

Michigan ranked in the bottom 10 for fourth grade reading among Black students in 2019.

### Michigan Ranked in the Bottom 10 for Fourth Grade Reading among Black Students in 2019

Average Scale Score, NAEP Grade Four – Reading – Black Students (2019)



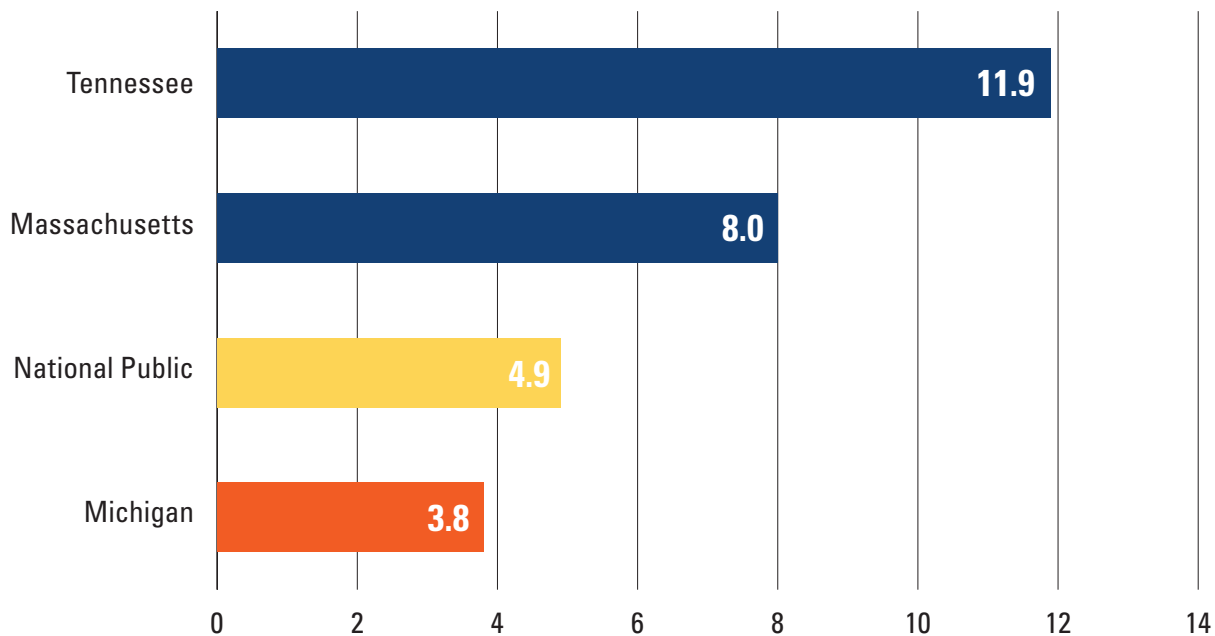
NOTE. Data from U.S. Department of Education. Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. (2003, 2019). *The Nation's report card: NAEP data explorer*. <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/ndecore/landing>. Basic Scale Score=208; Proficient Scale Score=238.

Pre-pandemic student performance in math on the NAEP was not much better. Michigan’s eighth grade performance in math ranked in the bottom 50% of the nation in 2019.<sup>16</sup> While leading education states such as Tennessee and Massachusetts saw changes in average

scale scores in eighth grade math of 11.9 and 8.0 points respectively between 2003 and 2019, Michigan saw a much smaller improvement of 3.9 points during that same time period — well below the national average change of 4.9 points.

## Michigan Eighth Grade Students’ Math Scores Showed Only Small Improvements Compared to the Nation and Leading Education States

Average Scale Score Change, NAEP Grade Eight – Math – All Students (2003, 2019)



**NOTE.** Data from U.S. Department of Education. Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. (2003, 2019). *The Nation’s report card: NAEP data explorer*. <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/ndecore/landing>. Basic Scale Score = 262; Proficient Scale Score = 299.

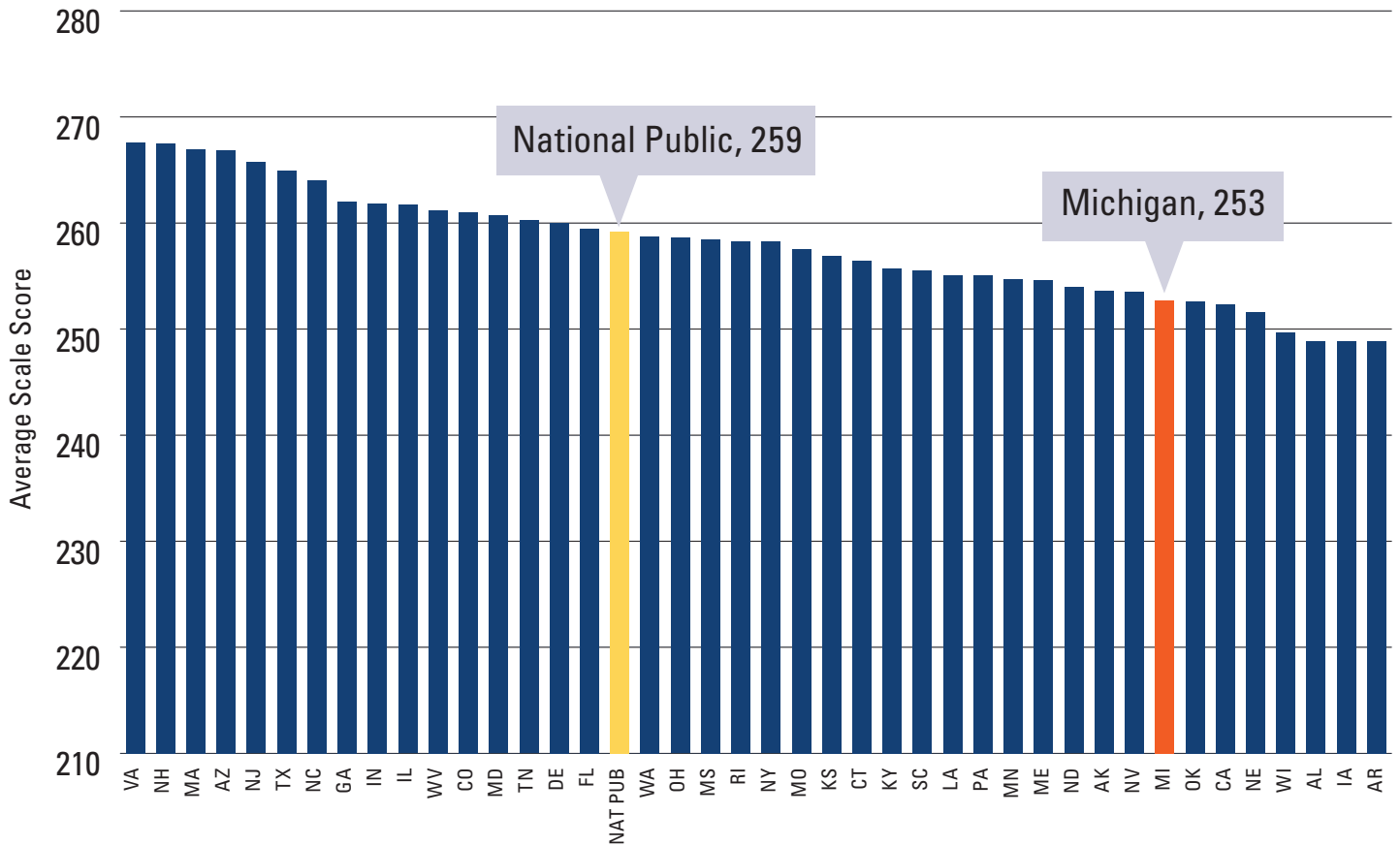


Once again, in 2019 Michigan performed in the bottom half of states among Latino students in eighth grade math.<sup>17</sup> And once again, these results were all the more

concerning for Black students as the state ranked in the bottom 10 for eighth grade math performance among Black students in 2019.

### Michigan Among Bottom 10 States for Black Students in Eighth Grade Math

Average Scale Score, NAEP Grade Eight – Math – Black Students (2019)



**NOTE.** Data from U.S. Department of Education. Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. (2019). *The Nation's report card: NAEP data explorer*. <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/ndecore/landing>. Basic Scale Score = 262; Proficient Scale Score = 299.

### M-STEP

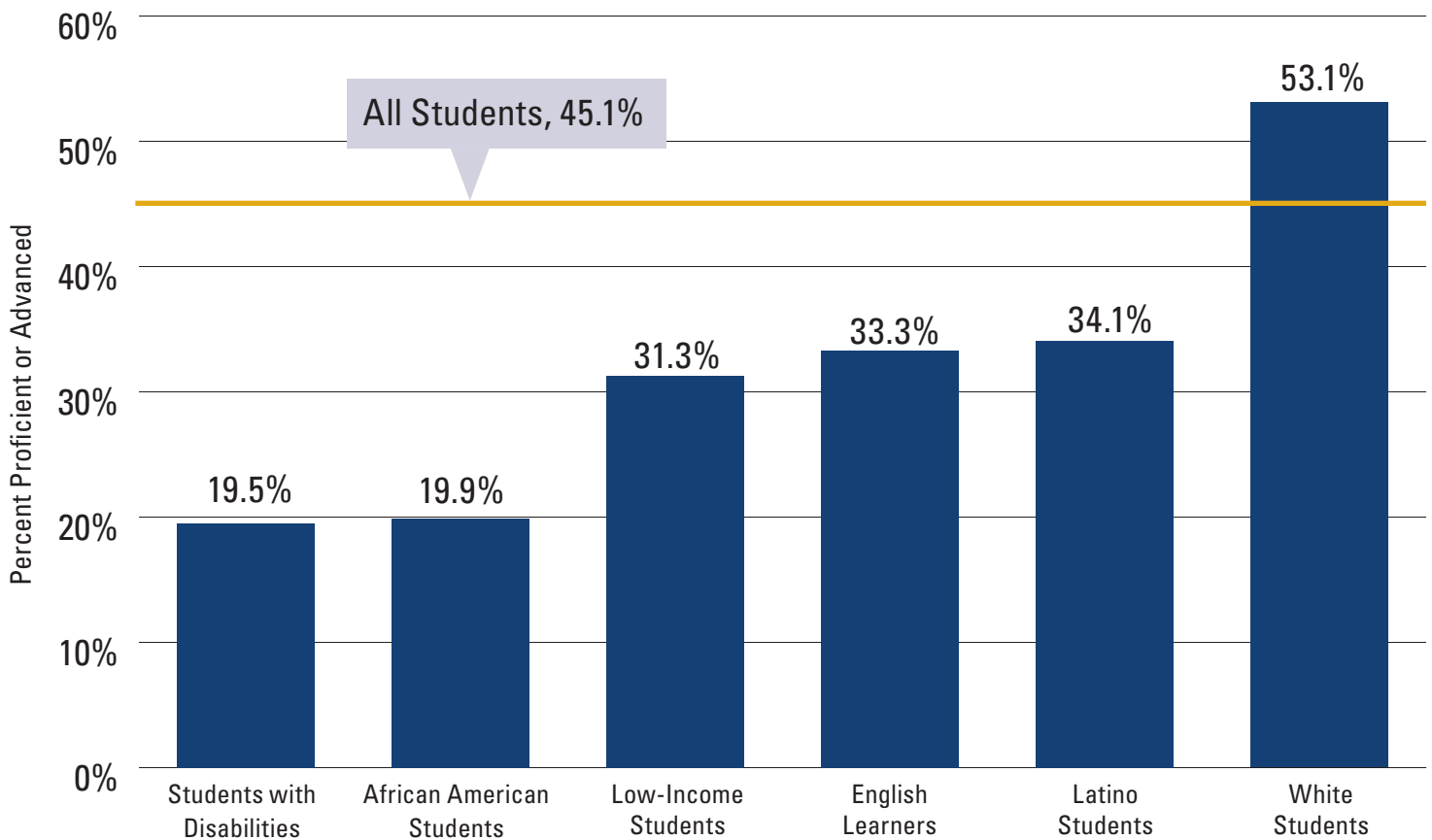
Michigan’s yearly mandated standardized assessment for students, the M-STEP, also painted a troubling picture pre-pandemic. In 2019, only 45.1% — or, less than half — of all students demonstrated proficiency in third grade reading statewide.<sup>18</sup> Yet the data also

signaled large and concerning equity issues, as students of color, students with disabilities, and students from low-income backgrounds fell at least 11% below the statewide average in 2019 prior to the pandemic.

### 2019 ELA Proficiency Rates Highlighted Equity Issues

Statewide M-STEP Proficiency Rates

English Language Arts — Grade Three — by Subgroup (2019)



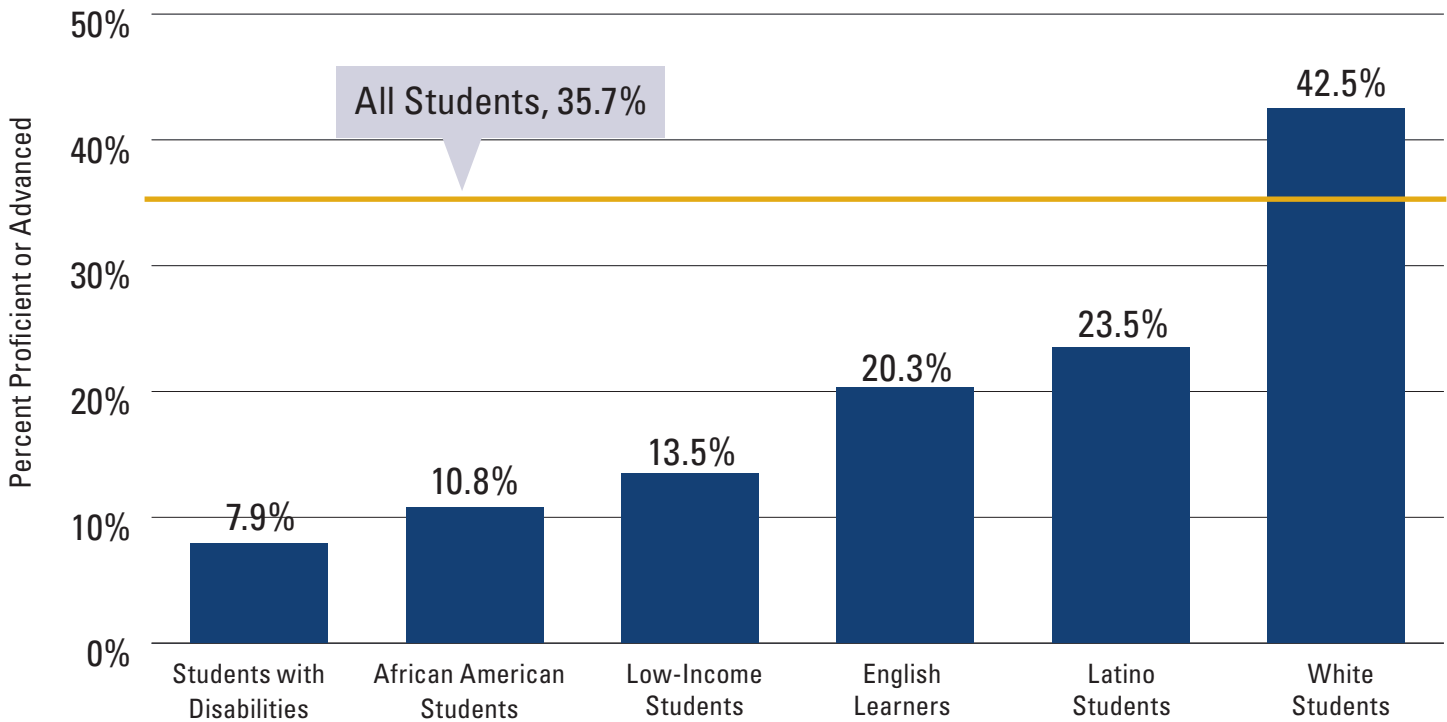
**NOTE.** Data from Michigan’s Center for Educational Performance and Information, [Bar graph showing the percentage of third grade students who were proficient on the 2019 M-STEP ELA]. *Grades 3-8 State Testing (Includes PSAT Data) Proficiency, Statewide, Third Grade, ELA, African American Students, Latino Students, Economically Disadvantaged Students, White Students, All Students (2018-2019)*. <https://mischooldata.org/grades-3-8-state-testing-includes-psat-data-proficiency/> (accessed March 13, 2022).

M-STEP seventh grade math proficiency rates pre-pandemic were similar. The statewide average proficiency rate for seventh grade math for all students

in 2019 was 35.7%.<sup>19</sup> Yet again, all student of color and low-income student subgroups' proficiency rates were more than 10% below the statewide rate.

## Pre-Pandemic State Math Proficiency Rates Paint Troubling Picture

Statewide M-STEP Proficiency Rates  
Math — Grade Seven — Subgroup (2019)



**NOTE.** Data from Michigan's Center for Educational Performance and Information, [Bar graph showing the percentage of seventh grade students who were proficient on the 2019 M-STEP Math]. *Grades 3-8 State Testing (Includes PSAT Data) Proficiency, Statewide, Seventh Grade, Math, Black Students, Latino Students, Economically Disadvantaged Students, White Students, All Students* (2018-2019). <https://mischooldata.org/grades-3-8-state-testing-includes-psat-data-proficiency/> (accessed March 13, 2022).

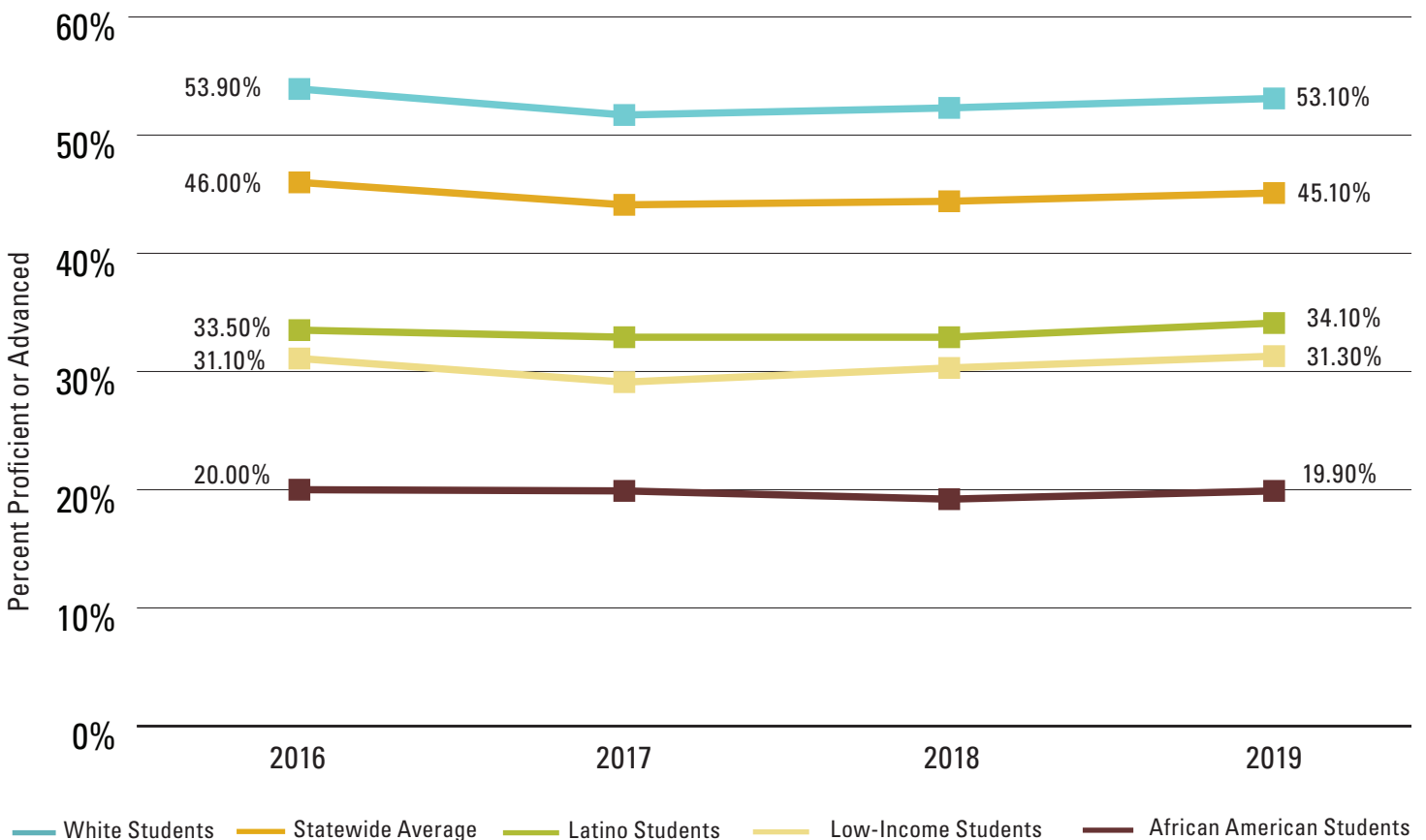
### Considering the Trends

Perhaps a more concerning aspect of Michigan’s student assessment performance pre-pandemic was how much it didn’t change *over time*. Undeniably, since the adoption of the M-STEP in 2015 student results have largely remained stagnant, with minor increases and decreases in statewide scores. This sluggish movement up and down held for subgroups as well. Even within subject areas and subgroups that showed larger gains, scores were alarmingly low to begin with, overall resulting in a persistently concerning picture.

Take, for instance, ELA proficiency for Michigan’s third grade students. In 2016, 46.0% of students statewide were proficient or above in ELA.<sup>20</sup> By 2019, that percentage dropped to 45.1%, with a -0.62% average rate of change during this period. While subgroups, such as economically disadvantaged students and Latino students, showed slight gains in proficiency from 2016-2019, neither group demonstrated a gain that was at least a full percentage point. (Note that we do not include M-STEP results from 2015 as this was the first year Michigan transitioned to the exam from the MEAP, as well as transitioned to online testing.)

### Third Grade Pre-Pandemic ELA Trends in M-STEP Reveal Stagnancy

Statewide M-STEP Proficiency Rates  
English Language Arts — Grade Three — by Subgroup (2016-2019)



**NOTE.** Data from Michigan Center for Educational Performance and Information, [Trend graph showing the percentage of third grade students who were proficient on the M-STEP ELA]. *Grades 3-8 State Testing Performance, Statewide, Third Grade, ELA, African American Students, Latino Students, Economically Disadvantaged Students, White Students, All Students (2016-2019)*. <https://mischooldata.org/grades-3-8-state-testing-includes-psat-data-proficiency/> (accessed March 13, 2022). We do not include M-STEP results from 2015 as this was the first year Michigan transitioned to the exam from the MEAP as well as transitioned to online testing.

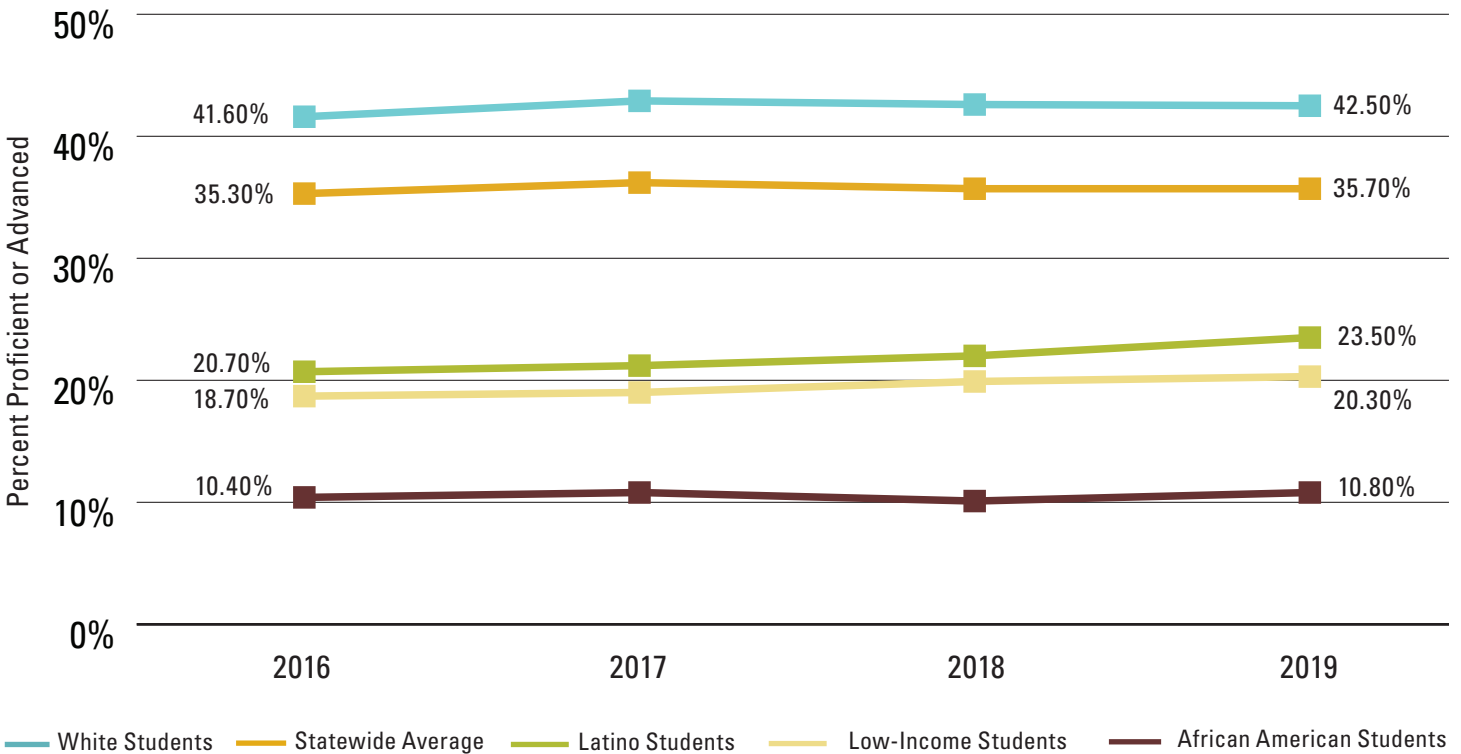
While seventh grade math proficiency scores between 2016 and 2019 highlighted larger gains, scores in this subject were very low to begin with. Less than a quarter of students of color and low-income students were proficient in math by 2019.<sup>21</sup> In fact, all subgroup proficiency rates

consistently remained more than 10% below the statewide rate. Even with modest positive average change rates of 2.78% for economically disadvantaged students and 4.34% for Latino students from 2016-2019, less than a quarter of students in either subgroup was proficient in math by 2019.

## Seventh Grade Pre-Pandemic Math M-STEP Trends Still Paint Concerning Picture Despite Small Gains

Statewide M-STEP Proficiency Rates

Math — Grade Seven — by Subgroup (2016-2019)



**NOTE.** Data from Michigan Center for Educational Performance and Information, [Trend graph showing the percentage of third grade students who were proficient on the M-STEP ELA]. *Grades 3-8 State Testing Performance, Statewide, Third Grade, ELA, African American Students, Latino Students, Economically Disadvantaged Students, White Students, All Students* (2016-2019). <https://mischooldata.org/grades-3-8-state-testing-includes-psat-data-proficiency/> (accessed March 13, 2022). We do not include M-STEP results from 2015 as this was the first year Michigan transitioned to the exam from the MEAP as well as transitioned to online testing.

Overall, the data show that even before the COVID-19 pandemic, Michigan students were struggling to demonstrate academic proficiency in many subject areas. Moreover, concerning equity issues persisted through the

data prior to the pandemic, as students who more often experience greater barriers and challenges to learning weren't receiving adequate resources that could support their achievement, let alone their learning at high levels.<sup>22</sup>

## WHERE WE ARE

Yet things could get worse, and they have.

Student achievement data from mid-pandemic assessments show scores have indeed taken a turn for the worse. This decline was most visible in data from Michigan's more vulnerable student populations, yet these data are complicated by vastly lower participation rates.

### MID-PANDEMIC ASSESSMENT PARTICIPATION

In 2019 (prior to the pandemic), over 90% of Black students, Latino students, and low-income students participated in the third grade state reading assessment at about the same rate as students statewide and as mandated by federal law.<sup>23</sup> In 2021, students were tested during pandemic learning conditions. As **underserved students were more likely to be learning remotely** even as more districts provided in-person learning, remote learning proved to be one of many barriers to test participation for underserved students.<sup>24</sup> In addition, while Michigan was denied a standardized testing waiver for 2021, it did secure a participation waiver. Maintaining the participation requirement would have assured that 95% of students participate in these annual exams.<sup>25</sup>

In all, barriers to test participation were high, and there was less motivation for districts to participate. As such, Latino and low-income student participation in the M-STEP third grade reading assessment dropped by over 30% while Black student participation dropped by over 50% compared to 2019 rates.<sup>26</sup> Statewide participation rates on the 2021 seventh grade math assessment dropped by over 30% overall compared to 2019 participation rates. Black, Latino, and low-income students' participation rates for seventh grade math fell by more than that, with Black students experiencing nearly a 54% reduction in 2021 assessment participation.<sup>27</sup>

Moreover, national research supports that these student groups may have experienced larger unfinished instruction compared to others.<sup>28</sup> It is also important to note that students of color and low-income students that were not assessed may not experience the benefit of data being used to allocate further resources and supports to assist in their educational recovery from the pandemic.



**Given this, mid-pandemic data does not accurately reflect the complete educational experiences, gains, and losses of students of color and low-income students in particular.**



## 2021 MID-PANDEMIC RESULTS

Nonetheless, the signs in the data are telling, showing a clear decline in scores for those that participate in assessments.

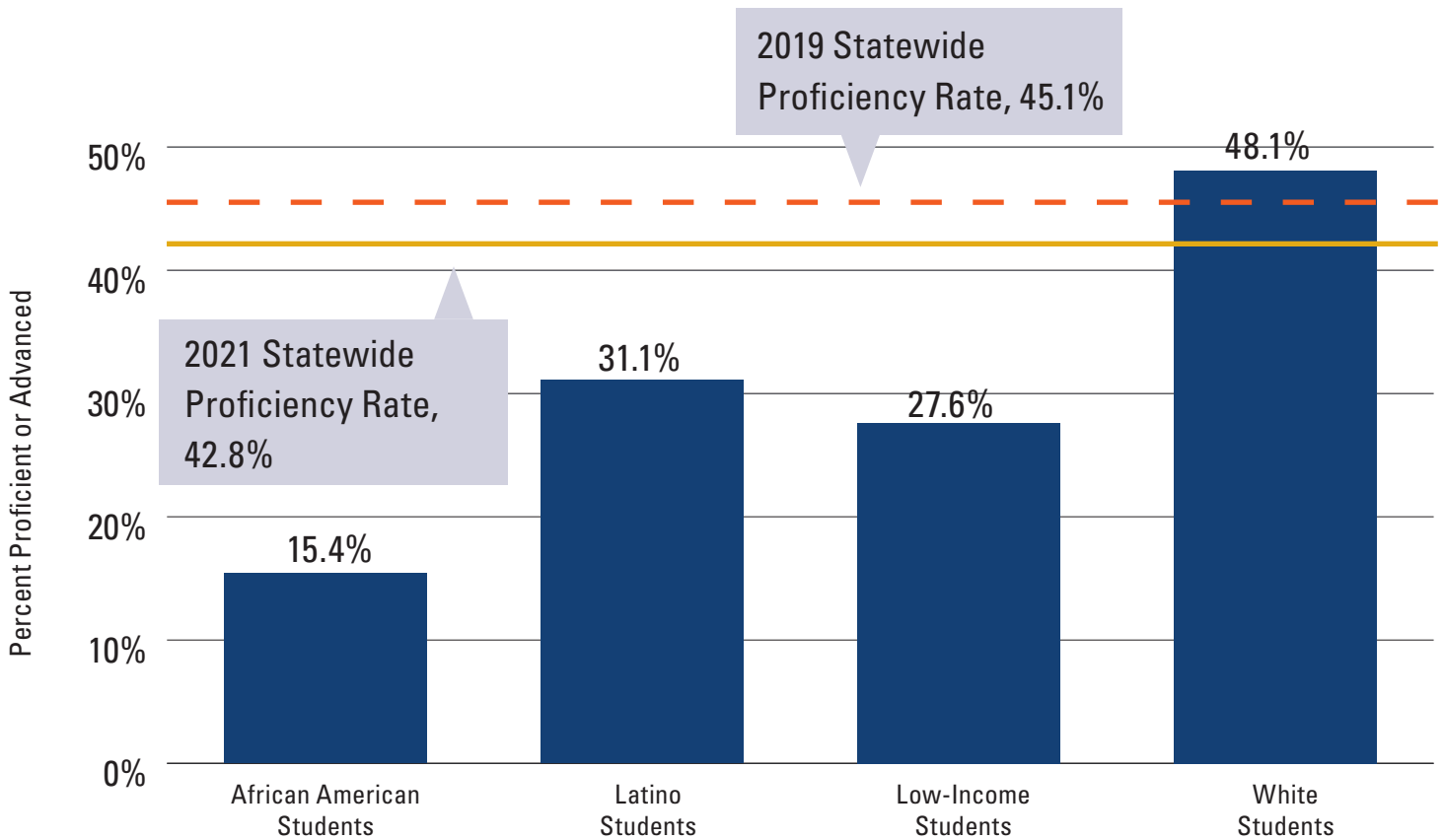
The statewide proficiency rate for third grade ELA on the M-STEP decreased from 45.1% in 2019 to 42.8%

in 2021 — a decline of 2.3%. Proficiency rates for third grade Black, Latino, and low-income students that were tested in 2021 were at least 10% below this declined statewide proficiency rate (15.4%, 31.1%, and 27.6% respectively).<sup>29</sup>

### Third Grade M-STEP ELA Mid-Pandemic Data Show Overall Decline

Statewide M-Step Proficiency Rates

English Language Arts — Grade Three — by Subgroup (2021)



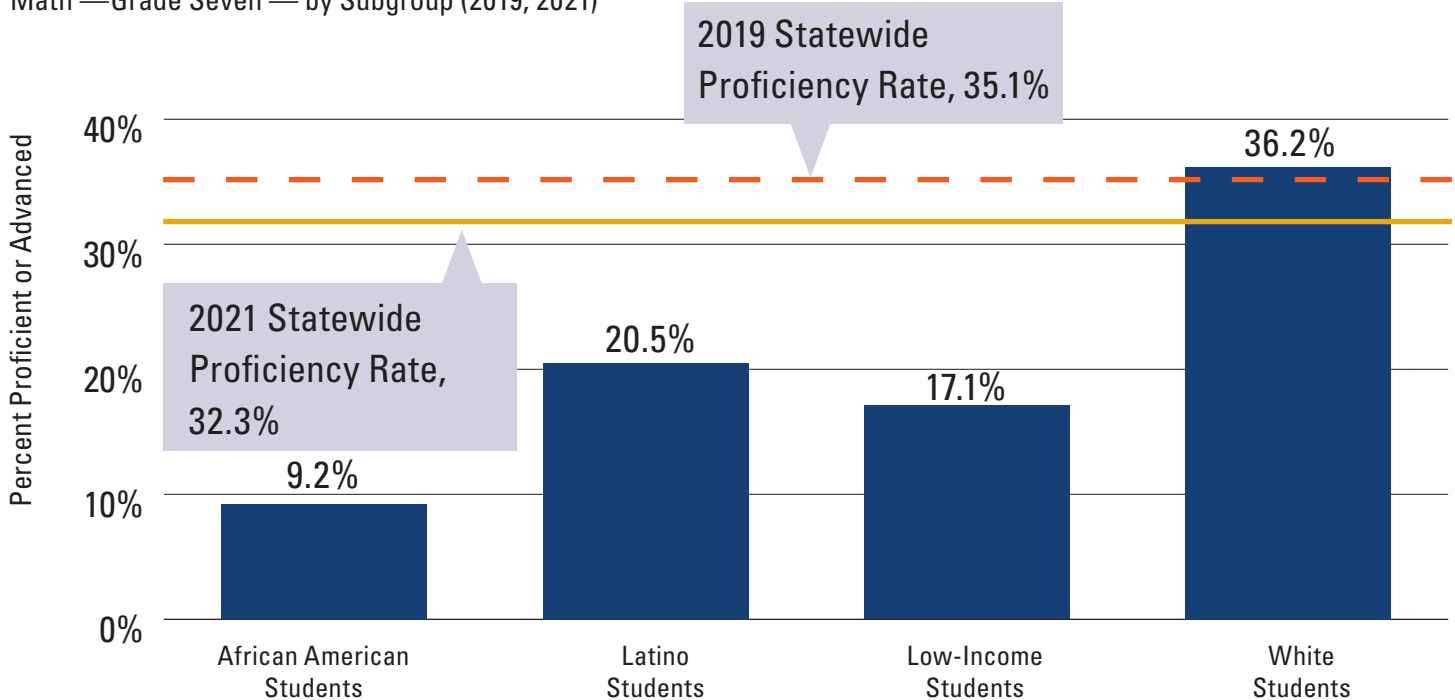
**NOTE.** Data from Michigan Center for Educational Performance and Information, [Trend graph showing the percentage of third grade students who were proficient on the M-STEP ELA]. *Grades 3-8 State Testing Performance, Statewide, Third Grade, ELA, African American Students, Latino Students, Economically Disadvantaged Students, White Students, All Students* (2019, 2021). <https://mischooldata.org/grades-3-8-state-testing-includes-psat-data-proficiency/> (accessed March 13, 2022).

Seventh grade M-STEP math scores reflected a similar story with parallel equity concerns. Proficiency rates in 2021 for all student subgroups decreased from 2019. Low-income students demonstrated proficiency at nearly half the statewide rate (17.1%) and Black students demonstrated proficiency at less than one third of the statewide rate (9.2%).<sup>30</sup>

## Seventh Grade M-STEP Math Scores Reflect Persistent Equity Concerns

Statewide M-Step Proficiency Rates

Math — Grade Seven — by Subgroup (2019, 2021)



**SOURCE:** Data from Michigan Center for Educational Performance and Information, [Trend graph showing the percentage of seventh grade students who were proficient on the M-STEP Math]. *Grades 3-8 State Testing Performance, Statewide, Seventh Grade, Math, African American Students, Latino Students, Economically Disadvantaged Students, White Students, All Students* (2019, 2021). <https://mischooldata.org/grades-3-8-state-testing-includes-psat-data-proficiency/> (accessed March 13, 2022).

Additional analyses of 2021 M-STEP results revealed that mid-pandemic proficiency rates consistently lagged pre-pandemic proficiency rates.<sup>31</sup>

Moreover, students from low-income backgrounds, English learners, students eligible for special education services, and most student of color subgroups experienced a larger negative impact to their learning compared to other subgroups.<sup>32</sup> Achievement growth in math also slowed relative to pre-pandemic achievement growth for many subgroups, with Black students experiencing the largest slow-down compared to their pre-pandemic growth rates. In both math and reading, achievement growth slowed at greater rates for students from low-income backgrounds than for students who are not economically disadvantaged.

Of additional concern is how this lag and decline showed up for students who had already achieved proficiency. Data show that the percentage of students who performed at or above proficiency in 2021 were less likely to maintain or improve upon their proficiency levels compared to prior cohorts of students.<sup>33</sup>

For example, among Black students who achieved third grade ELA proficiency in 2017, 60% achieved proficiency or advanced proficiency in fifth grade ELA in 2019.<sup>34</sup> Yet during the pandemic, only 46% of Black students who demonstrated proficiency in third grade ELA in 2019 continued to demonstrate the same or a stronger level of mastery in fifth grade in 2021.



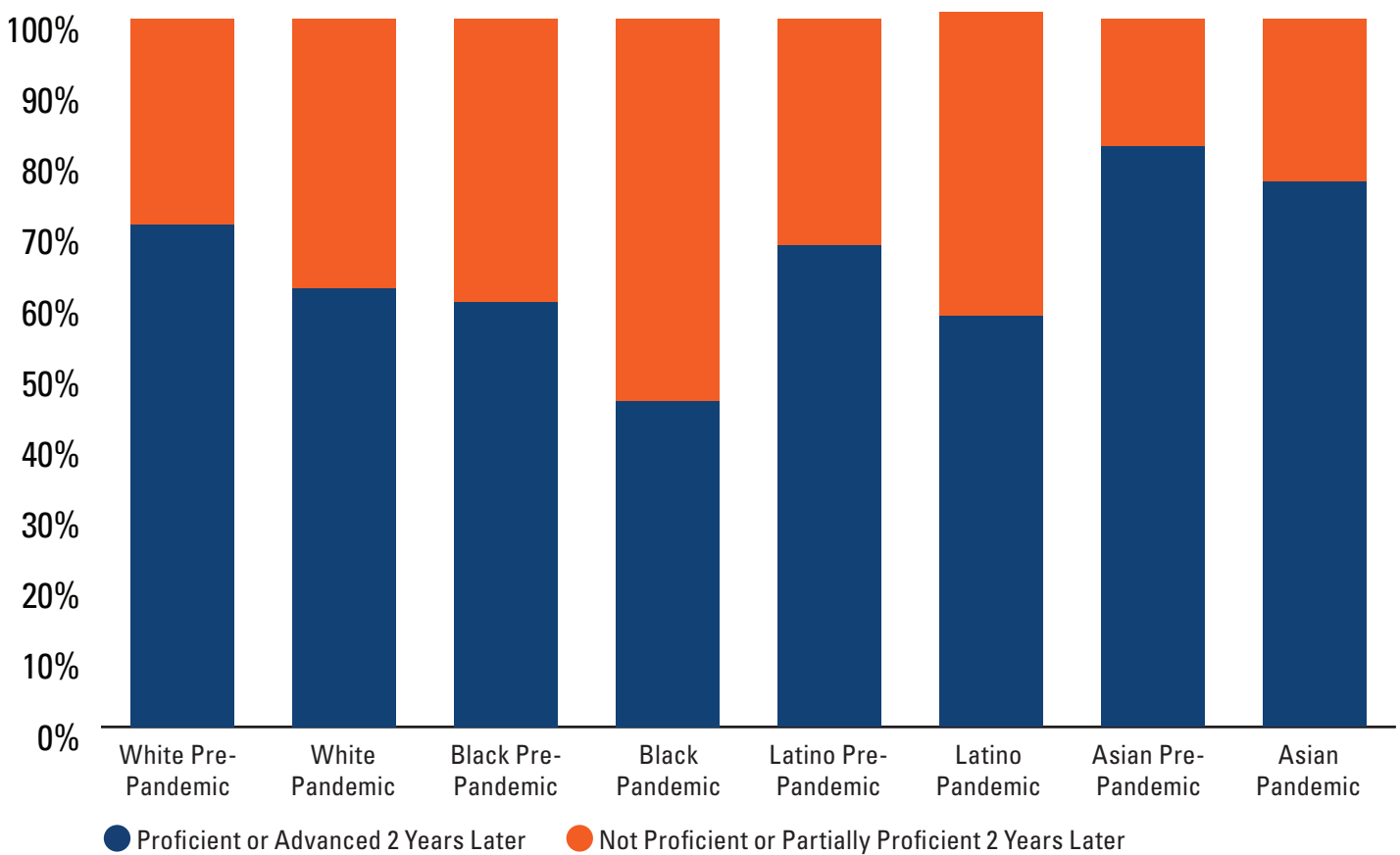


... students from low-income backgrounds, English learners, students eligible for special education services, and most student of color subgroups experienced a larger negative impact to their learning compared to other subgroups.



### EPIC M-STEP Proficiency Changes Before and During the Pandemic

ELA — Grades Three and Five — by Subgroup (2019, 2021)



NOTE. Data from Kilbride, T., Hopkins, B., Strunk, K., & Imberman, S. (2021). *K-8 student achievement and achievement gaps on Michigan's 2020-21 benchmark and summative assessments*. Education Policy Innovation Collaborative. <https://epicedpolicy.org/k-8-student-achievement-and-achievement-gaps-on-michigans-2020-21-benchmark-and-summative-assessments/>

This confirms that for students that participated in 2021 assessments, pandemic conditions did indeed stall their learning in comparison to cohorts of students that learned in pre-pandemic conditions.

## PROJECTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Prior to the pandemic, we forecasted 2030 state rankings for early literacy and math by calculating the average change in average scale score between 2003 and most recent years of NAEP data. Based on our then-most recent year of data (2019), Michigan ranked 32<sup>nd</sup> in the nation for fourth grade reading and 27<sup>th</sup> in the nation for eighth grade math.<sup>35</sup> However, given Michigan's slower progress as compared to other states, we projected that by 2030 Michigan would drop in ranking to 39<sup>th</sup> for fourth grade reading, with slightly better performance in eighth grade math at 27<sup>th</sup> by 2030.<sup>36</sup>

Yet, these projections were forecasted using pre-pandemic data. And as the emerging evidence above shows, pandemic learning conditions have resulted in unfinished and stalled learning for Michigan's students.

While mid-pandemic data show that students' academic growth slowed, Michigan's most vulnerable students

did not have the same access to participation in mid-pandemic assessments. As such, existing inequities in outcomes may be even worse than they were before the pandemic among students of color, students from low-income backgrounds, English learners, and students with disabilities.<sup>37</sup>

As a result, Michigan's educational future could look even grimmer when factoring in the impact of the pandemic on student learning.

This is also why this year's 2022 M-STEP data will be so important to collect and understand. As it is unlikely the state will receive a federal waiver to school accountability for a second year in a row, student participation in the exam will rebound. This can lead the state in gathering a comprehensive picture of where students are in their learning, and what must be done to support recovery from unfinished learning.



*Photo credit: Valaurian Waller*

# STALLED EFFORTS

## Michigan's Stalled Efforts to Improve: Implementation and Honesty Challenges

Michigan leaders have long known that the state's public education system needs an overhaul. As demonstrated, an arsenal of data has underscored the need for Michigan to focus on improving student learning through research-based policy improvements, thoughtful implementation, and strategic investments.

And while many leaders deserve credit for their efforts to improve, our state has faltered on critical and strategic follow-through. Far too often, strong and innovative strategies have suffered from implementation challenges. Michigan's plans for improvement have also often lacked honest information about our students' progress and their needs, which made implementation and ongoing adjustments even harder.

### THIRD GRADE READING AND EDUCATOR SUPPORT

For instance, five years ago, there was tremendous will — and strong bipartisan support — to ensure third-grade reading success for all students.<sup>38</sup> The need was great.

Data showed that reading scores were dismal, and Michigan was **among the lowest performing and improving states for early literacy**.<sup>39</sup> In fact, while other states were incrementally improving their early literacy performance, Michigan's students lost ground.<sup>40</sup>

To their credit, state leaders acted upon this dismal reality. Then-Governor Rick Snyder and the Michigan Legislature backed their intentions to make third-grade reading a priority by investing more than \$80 million in funding in recent years.<sup>41</sup>

Michigan lawmakers also passed a law focused on improving reading rates for Michigan third grade students. Known as "Read by Grade Three," the law requires schools to focus on early reading, support student learning, and communicate with parents about their children's learning. The law also requires students to be proficient in reading, before moving into the fourth grade.<sup>42</sup>

Yet, despite the significant investment and the plans for improvement, student reading rates declined.<sup>43</sup>

In fact, national data show that Michigan has been one of 18 states declining in early literacy, when comparing 2003 to 2019. According to a recent analysis conducted by the Education Policy Innovation Collaborative, in the 2020-2021 school year, more than half of Michigan's third grade students were identified as having a reading deficiency at some point in their first through third grade years.<sup>44</sup>

Why, after so much investment, did these initiatives fail? The reasons are varied, but serious implementation challenges, including lack of strategic support for educators, proved to be a devastating blow to the lofty intentions.<sup>45</sup>

Though Michigan's leaders stated intentions to prioritize early literacy, the state's overall lack of a strategic, coherent system of implementing best-practices far too often left it **largely to chance for students** to get the instruction they needed to become strong early readers.<sup>46</sup>



## State spotlight: Massachusetts<sup>47</sup>

*Massachusetts is the nation's leading state for student performance. It is so high performing today, if it were a country, it would be one of the leading nations in the world.*

- *Some key strategies in the comprehensive plan by Massachusetts included:*
  - ❖ *Investments in effective teaching and school leadership, including supports for all teachers.*
  - ❖ *Strong accountability systems for both schools and educators, ensuring they are held responsible for teaching at higher levels to produce higher learning levels.*
  - ❖ *Career- and college- ready expectations for all K-16 students.*
  - ❖ *Fair funding for schools.<sup>48</sup>*

### EDUCATOR SUPPORT: A MISSED OPPORTUNITY

Too often, Michigan's educators and schools proceeded without strong research-based systems of high-caliber training, feedback, support and tools that leading states provide their principals and teachers.

Michigan missed an opportunity to learn from leading education states, like Massachusetts, which continues

to be among the highest-performing states for education, and Tennessee, which has made tremendous academic gains through strategic investments and well-implemented plans.

Tragically, Michigan continues its troubling path of leaving far too much to chance.



## State spotlight: Tennessee

*Once behind Michigan in student achievement, Tennessee has made huge strides, particularly in early literacy, and has continued its improvement trajectory by staying the course through political transitions and the challenges of implementation. These gains are being made not just for white students but for Black students, too.<sup>49</sup>*

*Tennessee's leaders attribute this extraordinary growth to their implementation and investment in a statewide educator support and evaluation system, along with higher standards and aligned assessments. Leaders there acted on decades of research that show teaching quality is the most important in-school factor for improving student achievement.<sup>50</sup>*

*The key strategies in Tennessee's comprehensive plan included a balance of greater accountability and increased support for teachers.*

## Stimulus Funding: A Window of Opportunity Clouded by Lack of Transparency

Another important window of opportunity to radically transform Michigan public education is also threatening to close, as our state continues to reel from the devastating impact of COVID-19. Unless drastic changes are made to ensure unprecedented resources reach Michigan's most vulnerable students and are spent effectively, Michigan will miss a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to transform its public education system.

The incredible opportunity on the table is the unprecedented federal funding being provided to school districts through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund.<sup>51</sup> The funds were intended to provide a lifeline to schools suffering from the incredible disruption from the pandemic, which were forced to shutter in Michigan and across the nation amid COVID-19.

Nationwide, schools have received \$190 billion in aid.<sup>52</sup> Michigan districts are slated to receive \$6 billion.<sup>53</sup> These dollars undoubtedly have been critical for stabilizing schools amid this unprecedented period. At the same time, the money could serve as an important opportunity to show how much-needed investments in high-poverty schools can lead to increases in student learning.

Yet determining how the money is being spent varies widely. And for parents hoping for a better education for their children — and opportunities to catch up and accelerate learning post-COVID-19 — there is little opportunity for clarity.

Recent reporting has shown that some districts are engaging families and communities in their plans for the stimulus funding, while others refuse to provide even basic information.<sup>54</sup> That's despite federal law that requires states' districts to "engage in meaningful consultation" with the public about their spending plans.<sup>55</sup>

Such engagement is critical. Importantly, it's essential for parents and stakeholders to understand whether and how effectively the dollars are being spent on serving students' needs, especially those that have been most impacted during the pandemic, including students of color and students from low-income backgrounds.

Additionally, while the stimulus funding presents an immediate opportunity to make lasting change, we also know that Michigan has long lagged behind many other states on student outcomes, necessitating more thoughtful and long-term systemic improvements to our

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public education system — and honesty about how we plan to get there.<sup>56</sup>

**Consider this statistic: Michigan ranks 32<sup>nd</sup> in fourth grade reading.<sup>57</sup>**

Michigan is also in the bottom 10 states nationally for Black students in early literacy and eighth grade math.<sup>58</sup> And in the last 16 years, Michigan’s Latino students improved in early literacy only about one third as much as Latino students nationwide.

As our research and other analyses have shown, Michigan’s K-12 education funding system has long been a barrier to improving our education system. The funding for schools is neither adequate nor fair — with the hardest burden falling on students with special needs, those from low-income families, new English speakers and students in isolated rural schools.

The unprecedented federal stimulus funding from ESSER provides an incredible opportunity to begin to address these long-standing inequities for students most in need. State leaders can, and should, play an important role

in ensuring transparency around district finances and decision-making. Whether it’s general per-pupil dollars, funds targeted for vulnerable students or emergency funding from federal or state sources, state leaders should ensure measurement, oversight and accountability for spending. In a moment when so much is uncertain, Michigan students, families and stakeholders should not have to worry about whether federal, state or local education dollars are being used fairly and effectively.

While the lack of fiscal transparency among Michigan school districts raises many concerns, it’s not too late, however. Michigan can and must do what’s necessary to demonstrate to parents and stakeholders that the funding going to schools is being well-spent and on the strategies that matter most for students to improve. As we discuss further in this report, improved fiscal transparency systems must go hand-in-hand with a lasting equitable state funding formula that maintains a high level of investment in high-poverty schools and students with the greatest needs — and monitor those investments well.



**State leaders can, and should, play an important role in ensuring transparency around district finances and decision-making. ... In a moment when so much is uncertain, Michigan students, families and stakeholders should not have to worry about whether federal, state or local education dollars are being used fairly and effectively.**





## Stimulus Funding Priorities

Mid-pandemic research suggested that students, on average, could experience up to five-to-nine months of unfinished learning.<sup>59</sup> More recent findings suggest that learning recovery is happening at a slower rate for students in majority-Black schools, and students from low-income backgrounds could remain a grade level behind their peers.<sup>60</sup> We can start better supporting Michigan's most vulnerable students by doing the following:

### 1 Prioritize those whose Needs are Greatest

Far too often, it is not clear if funds intended to support Michigan's most vulnerable students actually reach them. This is the result of both Michigan's complex funding system and funding reports that don't include the context needed to make the information meaningful.<sup>61</sup> This moment is an opportunity to invest in what matters in the long-term for underserved students, utilize this one-time investment to rethink how we support student learning in Michigan and ensure funds actually reach Michigan's most vulnerable students.

### 2 Invest in Strategies that Work

By investing in strategies that work, including targeted intensive tutoring and expanded learning time, we can ensure that all students receive the opportunities and supports they need to catch up and accelerate after this unprecedented period of unfinished learning.<sup>62</sup>

### 3 Be Open and Transparent about Spending

Just as importantly, at a state level, we must make sure schools are accountable for how they spend the one-time funds and funds that are earmarked to serve vulnerable student populations so that the dollars are used to improve student outcomes. We recommend Michigan create fiscal systems that are transparent and easy-to-use. Doing so will also help inform future investments so that education funding can have the greatest impact to benefit students they are intended to support.



Photo credit: Valaurian Waller

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Radical Transparency and Radical Transformation Needed

Like never before, now is the time to be honest about Michigan's educational reality and the challenges ahead. Indeed, at a time when schools are working to recover from unprecedented disruptions and student learning loss, which builds upon decades of stagnation for our public schools, it's never been more important to face the facts about our public education system.

What we've been doing hasn't worked.

Michigan not only needs to invest in all aspects of the system, from funding to facilities to talent and more, but there is also a great need to be honest with Michiganders about how students are progressing. Amid the pandemic and with the influx of unprecedented stimulus funding, it's more important than ever to rebuild trust to show what the state and districts are doing with those dollars and how they are being used to improve schools.

Here, we build upon recommendations in our [previous State of Michigan Education reports](#) during the pandemic. As schools attempt to recover from two years of disrupted learning, we know that not only did the pandemic result in months of unfinished learning, but it also exacerbated preexisting opportunity gaps.<sup>63</sup> Without strong leadership and intervention, the effects on equity in student learning could persist long after COVID-19 is mitigated.

We must double-down on efforts to strengthen our state's education system and ensure we are prepared to meet the increased and varying needs of students in the years to follow.

We are at the beginning of a new era of public education — one that can, and should, be focused on equity and ensuring that all students are prepared for

success in college and career, no matter their income, race or neighborhood.

While we know that many challenges face Michigan students amid COVID-19, especially our state's most underserved students, we also know that they are resilient, capable and ready to learn. Effective implementation of research-based strategies can lead to significant learning gains.<sup>64</sup> Fair funding that serves the needs of all students is critical, so every child has access to opportunities for success.

Additionally, research shows that the quality of teaching and learning experienced by a student over the course of just one school year can have positive impacts lasting into adulthood.<sup>65</sup>

Now is the time to look forward and come together. With the right leadership, planning and investment, we can ensure that all Michigan students are supported to reach their full potential.

Here we lay out key recommendations for success:

### HONEST INFORMATION, TRANSPARENCY AND PUBLIC REPORTING

Providing education stakeholders — including students, families, educators and policymakers — with honest information, transparency and public reporting should always be a top priority in Michigan.

Honest and transparent systems are foundational to strong and effective improvement efforts, especially because of the clear and consistent information they can provide about troubling gaps in resources and



effectiveness that often disproportionately impact vulnerable students.

Amid and following the COVID-19 crisis, these systems are just as — if not more — important for ensuring all students, especially vulnerable students, are supported to succeed. For example, students and families deserve transparency around their school and district’s plans for continued recovery from unfinished learning from the past years and months; educators need meaningful information about each student’s learning in order to provide tailored supports; policymakers need to know the impact of emergency investments and where there is the most need for additional investment and support; and the general public deserves to know how — and how well — the public dollars for education are being spent.

Additionally, strong data, transparency and public reporting systems are important to quickly building knowledge about how to best address further disruptions to learning in the future, whether due to a pandemic or other unforeseen events.

Some positive steps have been made toward transparency, and our state must build upon them. For instance, in 2020, Governor Whitmer and Michigan’s legislative leadership made the right decision to reinforce the need for quality education data and transparency through a bipartisan package. Specifically, the legislation ensured that every district had access to a state-funded, high-quality suite of benchmark assessments that are aligned to state standards.<sup>66</sup> Since this decision, these benchmark data have been collected, analyzed, and used to inform Michigan’s education eco-system at large about the many ways student learning was impacted by the pandemic and the long road ahead to recovery.<sup>67</sup>

These tools help families and districts monitor student learning and provide prompt feedback to teachers. They are also particularly important for measuring learning during an unprecedented time of unfinished learning, particularly for Michigan’s underserved students, and informing future policy decisions about resources, supports and efforts to close Michigan’s wide gaps in opportunity and achievement. Continuing to provide these important tools at

no cost to districts will ensure that all students benefit from data-driven feedback on their progress.

Michigan made a bold move toward greater transparency and higher standards for teaching and learning when it adopted the M-STEP, the state’s first assessment system. M-STEP provides parents with honest information about how each of their children are performing compared to other states that are part of the same assessment consortium. Importantly, it also allows for Michigan student performance to be compared to national benchmarks for college- and career-readiness.

We recommend that the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and the state continue the commitment to transparency and national standards by continuing to administer the M-STEP. However, Michigan should improve upon this assessment and transparency system by adopting an earlier timeframe for releasing M-STEP data as other states have done, so that it’s more useful and accessible to schools and educators.

Additionally, during these unprecedented times, it is critical that clear information about the response to and impact of COVID-19 for Michigan students is made available in a timely, accessible manner for all stakeholders — including students, families, educators and policymakers.

Public reporting should be built into all response strategies to ensure transparency about shifts to education services and delivery systems, the impacts on student learning, the use of public investments and availability of additional resources.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY, PUBLIC REPORTING AND SYSTEMIC CHANGE**

It’s not enough that Michigan captures data on student learning; it also must report it publicly and use it to support improvement in all public schools. Some steps have been made in the right direction but there is much more to do.

State leaders also can, and should, play an important role in ensuring accountability and transparency around district finances and decision-making.

Whether it's general per-pupil dollars, funds targeted for vulnerable students or federal stimulus dollars, state leaders should ensure measurement, oversight and accountability for spending. In a moment when so much is uncertain, Michigan students, families and stakeholders should not have to worry about whether federal, state or local education dollars are being used fairly and effectively.

To ensure accountability for state dollars targeted to underserved students, state leaders should require school-level reporting of at-risk, English learner and students with disabilities funding and commit to at least 75% of targeted funds being spent at the school where qualifying students attend, beginning in fall 2022.

The transparency and accountability measures are timely in order to build trust stakeholders deserve when being asked to invest more in the system.

Recent state investments both from the federal stimulus funding and state dollars also are an opportunity to infuse radical transparency into the system and build trust for investment in the future by showing where dollars are being spent to improve student outcomes, as well as how they are being leveraged to improve results for all students, particularly underserved students.

Additionally, Michigan parents deserve honest and timely information about whether and how much their

children are on track to be college- and career-ready by 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

It's not enough for parents to know whether their child is learning at national grade level standards. Parents need to know at what learning level their children are on track for in terms of learning by 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade; their learning trajectory; whether they are projected to be behind or ahead of their learning goals; whether they need more accelerated learning to keep learning at a high level; or whether they need deeper, more tailored supports in some subjects to advance.

That information isn't available to parents in Michigan — and not because it's not possible. Indeed, the state's current assessment system has the capability of producing and sharing such data with all parents and teachers with the addition of some tools to make that information more accessible. Now it's a matter of investing in the right tools to make that happen.

As early as elementary school, for example, Tennessee parents can find out what their children are on track to get on the ACT by requesting what's called a **Student Projection Report**. This makes great sense, empowering both educators and parents to ensure their child is on track to be successful in reaching his/her life goals after high school throughout the child's K-12 learning journey — not at the very end. Indeed, waiting to know if your child is on track for college- and career-readiness until 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> grade is far too late.

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**In a moment when so much is uncertain, Michigan students, families and stakeholders should not have to worry about whether federal, state or local education dollars are being used fairly and effectively.**

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Michigan’s M-STEP assessment system should be leveraged and built upon with the addition of new tools to produce Student Projection Reports aligned with national college- and career-ready standards, just as Tennessee does. These reports should be made available to every Michigan student’s teacher and parent at the start of every school year.

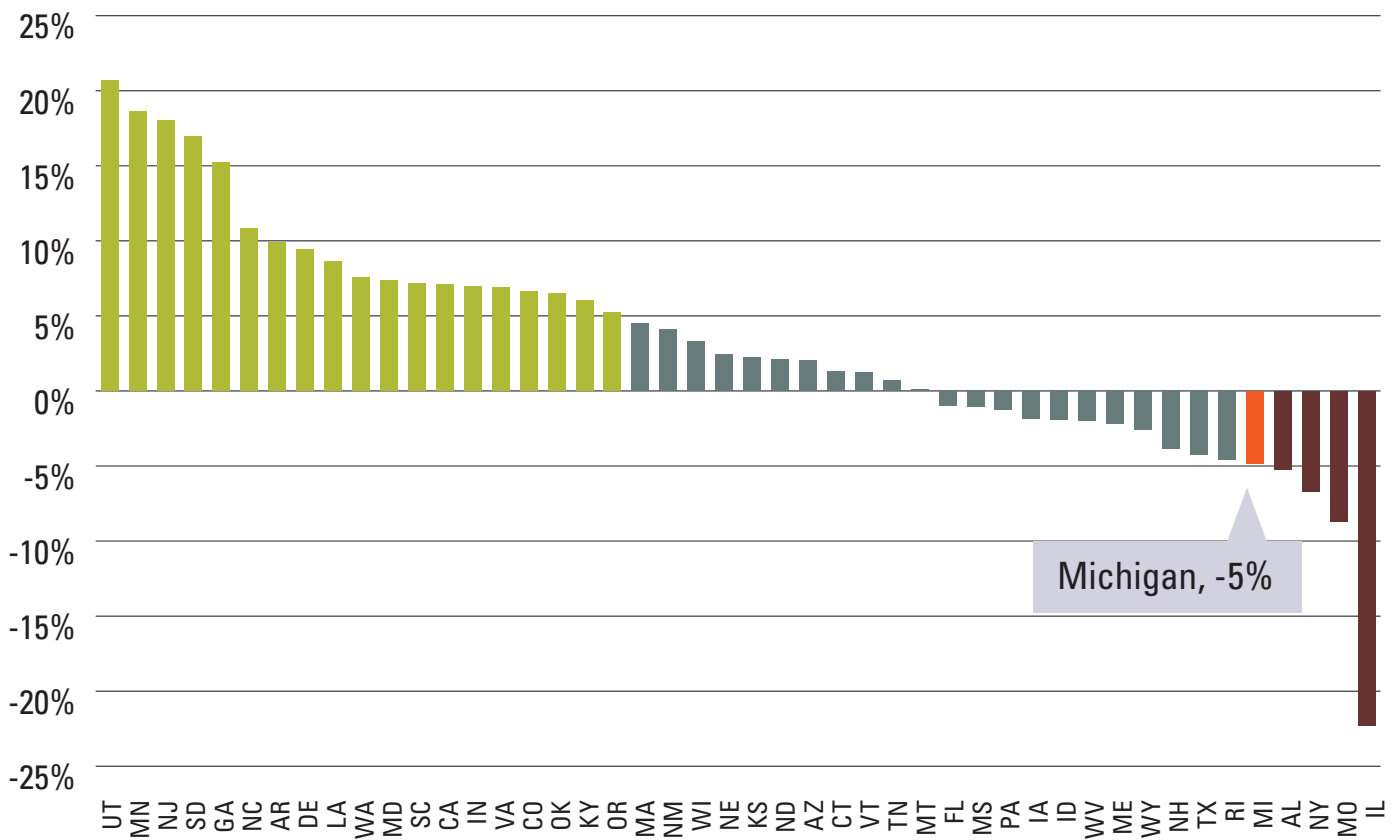
### FAIR FUNDING AND INVESTMENT

As outlined in our report, *Michigan’s School Funding: Crisis and Opportunity*, Michigan needs to invest much more in all of its students statewide, while investing significantly more in low-income students, English learner students and students with disabilities.<sup>68</sup>

Historically, the state of Michigan has drastically underfunded much needed support for the additional learning needs of these underserved student groups.<sup>69</sup> Now, after two years of unfinished learning amid the pandemic, students’ growth trajectories have slowed and the need to invest in Michigan’s vulnerable students is more urgent than ever.<sup>70</sup>

After all, Michigan has long had one of the most unfair, regressive school funding formulas in the country. National research has shown that historically and on average, Michigan’s highest poverty districts have received five percent less state and local funding than Michigan’s lowest poverty districts, despite serving a student population with significantly greater needs.<sup>71</sup>

### Gaps in State and Local Revenues per Student Between Districts Serving the Most and the Fewest Students in Poverty



NOTE. Data from Morgan, I., & Amerikaner, A. (2018). *Funding gaps 2018: An analysis of school funding equity across the U.S. and within each state*. The Education Trust. <https://edtrust.org/resource/funding-gaps-2018/>

State and local funding allocations can have major impacts on the learning conditions in each district, including the availability of student support and extracurricular activities, the amount of instructional time, the quality of instructional materials, the level of professional support and compensation teachers receive, and much more. And that's under normal circumstances.

While money is not the only factor that matters for improving student outcomes, research shows that money matters, especially for students from low-income backgrounds.<sup>72</sup> Increases in spending have been shown to improve educational attainment, lead to higher wages and reduce poverty in adulthood, particularly for students from low-income backgrounds.

Michigan's economic future rests on the investments it makes now in students. Now is the time to make investments in research-based educational recovery strategies, and to look forward to long-term solutions that will bring a more equitable approach to Michigan's school funding system, such as a formula that weights students and communities' needs, as the nation's leading education state, Massachusetts, has done.

We need to go beyond baby steps and instead become among the best states for fair funding.

Indeed, state leaders and school districts must grasp the important opportunity provided by the unprecedented federal investment in school districts to support recovery from COVID-19 and to build trust among stakeholders for a funding overhaul. It's critical that districts use the dollars effectively and transparently.

After all, an **overhaul in its funding system would provide state leaders and stakeholders with a major opportunity to make the funding system adequate and equitable** — and to overcome decades of historic inequities that have had harmful impacts on vulnerable students across every geographic area of the state. If done right, an equitable funding system could have dramatic benefits for all Michigan stakeholders, from

students, to parents, to educators, to the state's economy. If properly invested and utilized, students would be better equipped through better trained teachers, high-quality instructional materials and needed supports that can help a struggling student excel.

Without overhauling the state's school funding system to be more equitable in a lasting way, the impact of the one-time COVID-19 federal relief dollars will fade away in a few years, and rural, working-class and urban school districts will yet again find themselves chronically under-resourced with students left to pay those costs with their futures and earnings.

**A weighted student funding formula is a promising approach for both addressing adequacy and building equity into the state funding system's structure.**<sup>73</sup>

Under a weighted student funding formula, every time there is an increase in adequacy funding, there are also automatic increases to equity funding.

If state leaders equitably design the school funding formula to include transformative equity weights that ensure vulnerable students get the support and quality teaching and school conditions they need and deserve, then any subsequent adequacy improvements — that is, increases to the base amount of funding that all students receive — will automatically increase the spending on vulnerable students at the same rate. But if the funding weights for vulnerable students are not sufficient enough to provide the support they need to achieve at the same high levels as their peers who have no additional needs, then every future investment will compound that inequity.

Therefore, embedding transformative equity weights based on research and best practices in the formula's enduring structure is critical to ensuring adequacy increases made over time also automatically close opportunity gaps for low-income students, English learners, students with disabilities and students in underserved communities, such as communities with high concentrations of poverty and rural, isolated communities.

## BASE FUNDING IS INSUFFICIENT COMPARED TO LEADING STATES

Michigan’s current education system has many challenges that must be addressed. The equity allocations that are part of Michigan’s current formula are very low compared to what leading states provide and the levels of funding that research recommends.<sup>74</sup>

Additionally, while Michigan’s current funding system is student-based, meaning that education dollars are distributed largely based on the number of students a district enrolls and their needs, it is not a true weighted student funding formula. Rather, Michigan uses varying mechanisms for providing additional dollars for students with higher needs and therefore does not get all the benefits of a weighted student funding formula, including how it can balance the tension between equity and adequacy when new investments are made.<sup>75</sup>

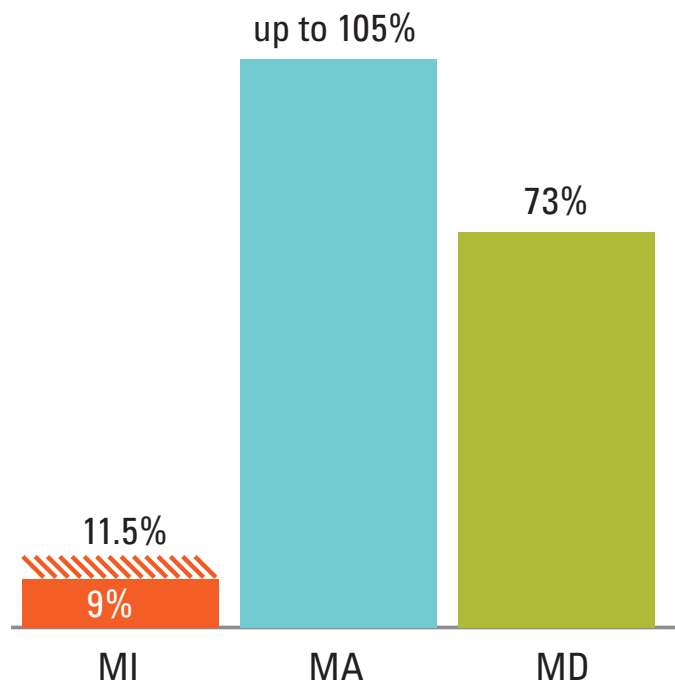
In the following sections, we will explore Michigan’s weighted funding compared to other states.

**LOW-INCOME STUDENTS:** Although Michigan is one of many states that target some additional dollars for low-income students, Michigan’s weight of 11.5% is among the lowest of such weights in the country according to data from EdBuild, a leading national organization that focused specifically on school funding policy.<sup>76</sup> Moreover, the funding stream for Michigan’s weight for low-income students remains vulnerable and subject to budget cuts and is chronically under-funded — even at the low level Michigan prescribes.<sup>77</sup>

While 11.5% is what’s promised in law, the state has actually spent only about 9.0% more on most low-income students in recent budget years.<sup>78</sup> When that line item is not funded at the 11.5%, a problematic section of the School Aid Fund boilerplate requires cuts to be made to funding for low-income students in order to balance this section of the budget.<sup>79</sup> Additionally, in the case of an overall revenue shortfall, this language requires these cuts to be made first. We applaud Governor Whitmer’s administration for striking that language within the proposed 2023 Executive Budget and proposing that this categorical is funded at the 11.5% amount for students from low-income backgrounds in

every district.<sup>80</sup> But even that is insufficient. The legislature should not only follow through with these proposed measures but commit to raising the funding to a level that leading education states such as Massachusetts fund them — and that underserved students deserve.

### Michigan’s Funding Weight for Students from Low-Income Families is Well-Below Leading Education States



**NOTE.** Data from EdBuild. (n.d.). *FundEd: Poverty funding; Policies in each state.* <http://funded.edbuild.org/reports/issue/poverty/in-depth>; State of Maryland, Enrolled House Bill No. 1372. (2021). <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2021RS/bills/hb/hb1372E.pdf>; State of Massachusetts, Session Law Chapter 132. (2019). <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2019/Chapter132>. In MI, because of a legislative loophole, only about 9% more has actually been spent on most low-income students in recent budget years even though Michigan’s low-income weight is legislated to be 11.5%. In MA, districts with the highest percentage of low-income students will receive 105% more for low-income Junior/Middle school students after new policies are fully phased in. Under MA’s new school funding policy, the amount of additional funding allocated for low-income students is sensitive to the district’s concentration of poverty. There is also variation in the base amount allocated for different grade bands. The percentage weights listed for MD reflect the additional amounts of funding that will be provided for student populations when the legislation is fully phased in fiscal year 2033. For fiscal year 2022, MD students from low-income families have a 91% weight and English learners have a 100% weight.

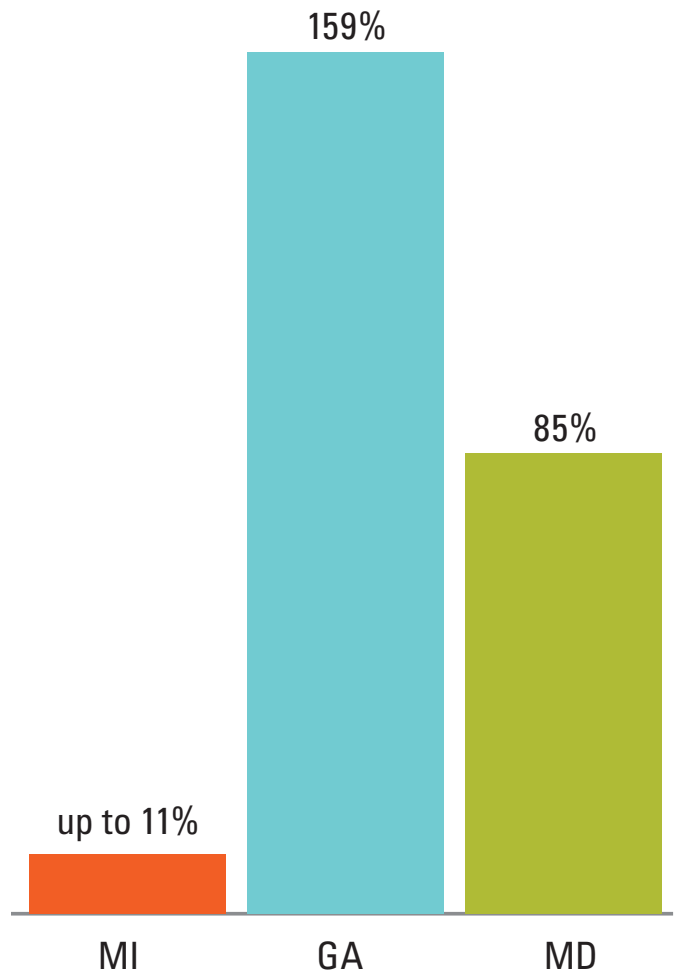
**ENGLISH LEARNERS:** The level of additional funding that Michigan provides for English learners is the lowest in the country among states that apply a weight or multiplier to the foundation amount for per-pupil funding, according to data from EdBuild.<sup>81</sup>

Compared to states like Maryland which is phasing in a weight of 85% more, and Georgia which now allocates 159% more funding to English learners, Michigan is missing the mark.<sup>82</sup> Michigan allocates between about 1% and 11% more funding for English learners (depending on their English language proficiency levels) than for students with English as their native language.<sup>83</sup> Rigorous empirical research recommends English learners receive at least twice as much funding as native English speakers to provide them with the additional resources and instructional supports necessary for language acquisition.<sup>84</sup>

Instead of using a true weight, Michigan allocates additional funding for English learners using dollar allotments that vary depending on the student’s English language proficiency score. This means that when there is an increase to adequacy by increasing the foundation allowance, the legislature has to separately decide whether or not to increase the dollar allotments for English learners. With a true weight as the structure for allocating additional funds to English learners, there would be an automatic equity increase to funding for English learners of the same proportion as any adequacy increase to the foundation allowance.



## Michigan’s Funding Weight for English Learner Students is Well-Below Leading Education States



**NOTE.** Data from EdBuild. (n.d.). *FundEd: Poverty funding; Policies in each state.* <http://funded.edbuild.org/reports/issue/poverty/in-depth>. The percentage weights listed for MD reflect the additional amounts of funding that will be provided for student populations when the legislation is fully phased in fiscal year 2033. For fiscal year 2022, MD students from low-income families have a 91% weight and English learners have a 100% weight. Michigan allocates between about 1% and 11% more funding for English learners (depending on their English language proficiency levels) than for students with English as their native language.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:** Michigan chronically underfunds needed services for students with disabilities. Due to Michigan’s partial reimbursement system, Michigan districts shoulder most of the funding responsibility for students with disabilities but have varying capacities to cover these costs.<sup>85</sup> For instance, districts with higher special education costs may have to rely on general fund revenues to pay for special education costs not covered by state, county, or local funds designated for special education.<sup>86</sup>

As a result, both students with disabilities and typically developing students are shortchanged. Decisions about services for students with disabilities should never be made with the bottom line in mind. Similarly, schools need sufficient resources to address the learning needs of students without disabilities.

A Michigan State University study found that in order to fully fund special education costs, Michigan districts use

more than \$500 per pupil from general education funds, on average.<sup>87</sup>

This even exceeds \$1,000 per pupil in some districts and affects both special education and general education students because diverting general education dollars to cover the needs and requirements of special education dollars leaves fewer dollars for pupils overall.<sup>88</sup> Michigan’s partial reimbursement approach to distributing equity funding to students with disabilities is uncommon compared to other states’ approaches to funding special education services.

As a result of the partial reimbursement approach, the level of additional funding for students with disabilities is ultimately determined based on the spending decisions of lawmakers rather than the learning needs of students.<sup>89</sup> This approach also means districts have to shoulder the costs of services for students upfront, which may disincentivize resource-strapped districts from providing high-cost services.<sup>90</sup>



**While other states intentionally allocate additional funds specifically for districts with high concentrations of students in poverty, Michigan does not have a funding mechanism to do so. This is despite Michigan having one of the highest rates of concentrated poverty in the country.**

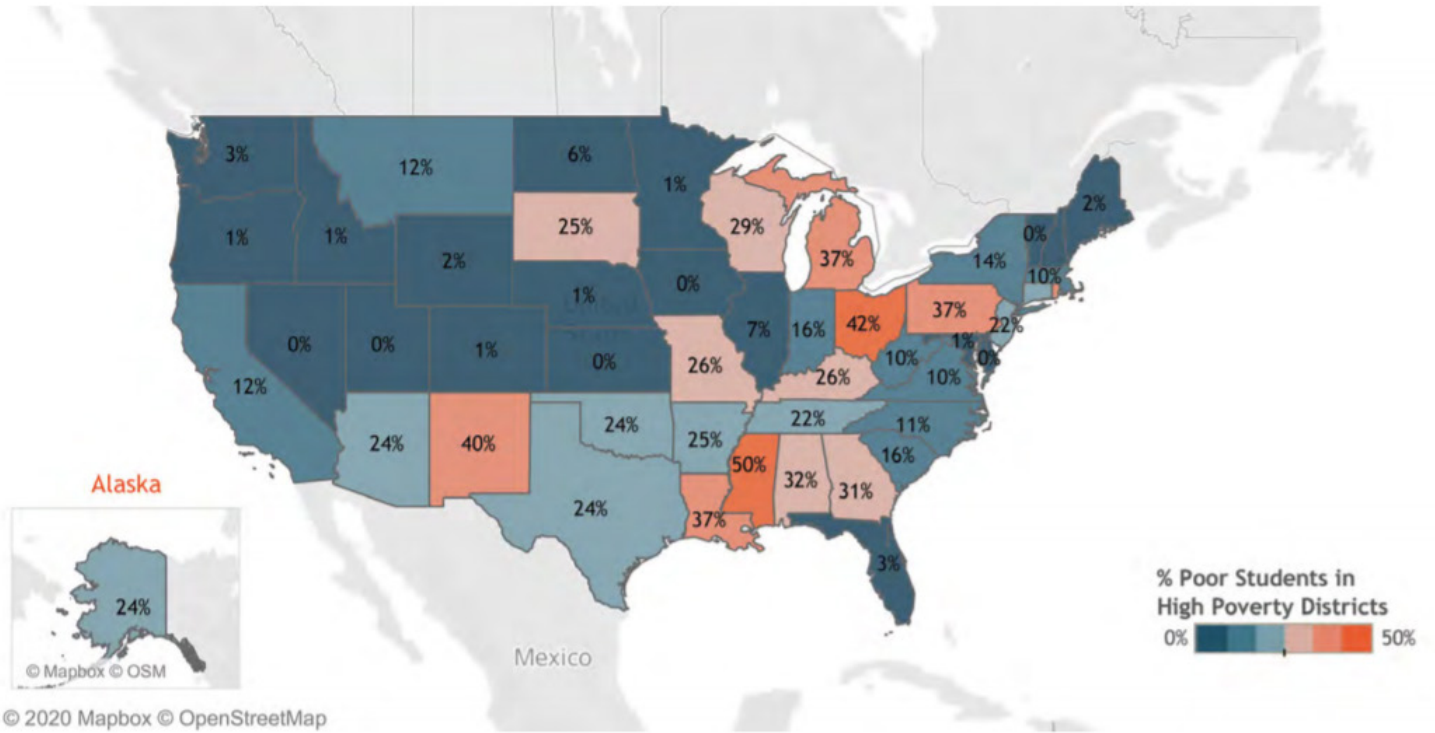


### DISTRICTS WITH HIGH CONCENTRATIONS OF POVERTY:

While other states intentionally allocate additional funds specifically for districts with high concentrations of students in poverty, Michigan does not have a funding mechanism to do so.<sup>91</sup> This is despite Michigan having

one of the highest rates of concentrated poverty in the country.<sup>92</sup> Research indicates schools and districts with particularly high concentrations of poverty face compounded challenges in helping their students succeed — and consequently require more resources.<sup>93</sup>

## CONCENTRATED STUDENT POVERTY, 2017 Percentage of Poor Students Living in High-Poverty (>30%) Districts



NOTE. Chart from Farrie, D., Kim, R., & Sciarra, D.G. (2019). *Making the grade 2019: How fair is school funding in your state?* Education Law Center. <https://edlawcenter.org/assets/Making-the-Grade/Making%20the%20Grade%202019.pdf>. Map represents the percentage of poor students in the state who live in high poverty (>30% Census poverty) school districts. In orange states, at least 1 in 4 students ( $\geq 25\%$ ) lives in a high poverty district.







## Immediate Equity Commitment: Stop Balancing the Budget on the Backs of Low-Income Students

*State leaders should start by supporting Governor Whitmer’s proposal to provide more funding for low-income students. The Legislature should also support removing the language in Sec 31a(15) that specifies when cuts to at-risk funding must be made.<sup>94</sup> This change will make clear that at-risk funding should not be targeted when there is a budget shortfall.*

*Governor Whitmer proposed funding the at-risk line item, at the 11.5% allocation promised in state law, a critical first step to ensuring students with the greatest needs are not stripped of the funding and resources they need. Underfunding this line item has been a common practice in many past budget cycles. As it stands now, the budget annually calls for allocating 11.5% more per-pupil funding for students considered at-risk.<sup>95</sup>*

*Yet, in many recent budgets, Michigan has not funded to the 11.5% level — and even if the state had done so, Michigan’s weighted allocation of 11.5% is far below the amount that leading states provide to students with the greatest needs.*

*In fact, as we noted in a [report](#) last fall, these students have not received the full funding that the state budget has prescribed in many of the past years, amounting to millions of lost dollars for students with the greatest needs.<sup>96</sup> Coalition partners from the Michigan Partnership for Equity and Opportunity have strongly advocated for the state to provide greater funding for these students.*

*Currently, the governor’s budget calls for \$746.5 million for economically disadvantaged students, which amounts to 11.5% of the base per-pupil amount per student.<sup>97</sup>*

*Legislators should work to develop and adopt language that would protect at-risk funding — and funding for English learners — and commit to raising the funding to a level that these underserved students need to be successful.*



Photo credit: Valaurian Waller



*Photo credit: Valaurian Waller*

What follows is a set of principles which Michigan policymakers, district leaders, families and educators can use to evaluate funding systems and proposals. Focusing on these principles can help make sure that any new funding system keeps opportunity for all students front-and-center and prioritizes improving

educational experiences and outcomes for students from low-income families, English learners, students with disabilities, students of color, and students in rural and sparsely populated communities. In particular, state funding systems should:



## Principles of Fair Funding<sup>98</sup>

### ***Provide funding according to student need.***

- Provide at least 100% more funding for students from low-income backgrounds.
- Provide at least 75% to 100% more funding for English learners (ELs).
- Provide additional funding to support students with disabilities.
- Provide the full amount of additional funding for every category of need that students meet.
- Target resources to high-poverty districts and schools.

### ***Provide more funding to districts with lower fiscal capacity.***

- Provide equalization funding to low-wealth districts.
- Provide additional funding for rural and sparse districts.

### ***Ensure dollars are used well to improve student experience and outcomes.***

- Require districts to spend according to student need.
- Require districts to develop and publish a plan for how they will use funding.

### ***Be transparent about the system's design and monitor funding districts actually receive.***

- Annually publish information about how the funding system is designed to work in clear, plain-language.
- Publish easy-to-follow data on the amount of funding each district should receive according to the state funding system, compared to what it actually receives.
- Review the funding system to understand patterns in which districts are being underfunded.

### ***Provide transparent data on funding going to schools.***

- Develop, use and publish consistent rules for calculating spending for all schools in the state.
- Report clear, timely and accessible school and district spending data alongside contextual information to enable equity-focused comparisons.

## CULTIVATING, SUPPORTING AND RETAINING TALENT

To truly improve outcomes for all students, Michigan also should be leveraging data from the statewide teacher evaluation system to better support teachers and their needs as professionals. After all, educators deserve honest feedback that's aligned with national college- and career-ready standards — and parents need to know teachers and principals are getting such feedback.

Michigan took major steps toward building a more fair and effective system of professional development, feedback and evaluation when it adopted the state's first such statewide system in 2011.<sup>99</sup> The state has struggled to implement this system well, however, and needs much greater work, leadership and investment to do so.

A key piece of the system includes ensuring all Michigan teachers receive feedback on how effective their instruction is according to multiple measures, including a measure that is aligned to national college- and career-readiness for teaching and learning. This is crucial for transparency purposes. Michigan should not use data that could falsely inform teachers and principals on how well their instruction and school practices are raising student learning outcomes.

Decades of research show low-income students, Latino and especially Black students are the most likely to be placed with an ineffective teacher in their classroom. These data — and how transparent, honest and aligned they are with national standards — are crucial for closing this unacceptable opportunity gap, as well.

Michigan leaders should ensure systems of feedback, professional development and evaluation are strongly aligned with national standards of college- and career-readiness and imagine innovative new strategies to leverage these data to inform supports to teachers and principals and ensure vulnerable students have access to the state's most effective educators.

The system should also be leveraged to ensure educators have access to coaching and tailored, individualized feedback and consistent support, especially early

career teachers and new principals. And the roles and responsibilities that many teachers serve in — such as mentor, coach, master teacher and others — should be formally recognized and given opportunity for higher pay. Additionally, Michigan's deep-rooted school funding inequities are a major barrier to retaining, attracting and supporting teachers in underserved districts in Michigan, a growing crisis exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic that also compounds educators' challenges in raising student achievement. Teachers should be paid for the many roles they play.

In a recent report by The Education Trust-Midwest, **Talent Matters: Building Educator Talent to Support an Equitable Future in COVID-19 and Beyond**, district leaders in nearly two dozen underserved districts also cite salary inequities, legacy debt payments, salary freezes and lack of retirement security as significant challenges to educator retention.<sup>100</sup>

School funding inequities have intensified these talent shortages in underserved districts, making it even harder for them to recruit, retain and compensate highly effective and diverse educators — especially as wealthier nearby districts are able to offer higher teacher salaries.<sup>101</sup>

### Key findings of the report included:<sup>102</sup>

- Many participating leaders estimate a \$10,000 salary gap in their districts' ability to attract the talent they want most in their schools.
- District leaders said school funding inequities present the greatest barrier to offering higher salaries and retaining teacher talent. Salary freezes, enduring legacy debt payments, undercompensating for additional responsibilities, and lack of retirement security also contribute to retention challenges in historically under-resourced districts.
- Salary boosts for new teachers do not address the challenge of retaining experienced teachers within underserved districts, which costs even more for districts to remain competitive.



**In a recent report by The Education Trust-Midwest, Talent Matters: Building Educator Talent to Support an Equitable Future in COVID-19 and Beyond, district leaders in nearly two dozen underserved districts also cite salary inequities, legacy debt payments, salary freezes and lack of retirement security as significant challenges to educator retention.**



- While some districts have found ways to increase teacher salary or provide enticing compensation packages through external funding, these strategies are not sustainable long-term.
- District leaders with teacher salaries that were deemed competitive to other local districts did not believe their district’s salaries compensated teachers enough given their job expectations, nor did they believe teacher salaries were competitive in larger job markets.
- The talent crisis in underserved school districts is a significant barrier to raising student achievement. For instance, research shows that persistent talent turnover has a negative effect on student achievement in math and English language arts.<sup>103</sup> Leaders in both rural and urban districts spoke of similar challenges.

In the immediate term, districts facing talent challenges can leverage federal stimulus dollars to temporarily address their salary gaps. The executive budget proposal for fiscal year 2023 continues statewide teacher recruitment and retention incentives.<sup>104</sup> The legislature should build on this foundation by utilizing

federal stimulus dollars to close the \$10,000 salary gap for teachers in districts serving greater percentages of economically disadvantaged students. The program included incentives for first-year teachers with higher payments to teachers in districts serving greater percentages of economically disadvantaged students, incentives that should be dramatically raised to close the \$10,000 teacher salary gap raised above.

Beyond the next two years, the state should make every effort to be part of the solution. Steps should include significantly expanding salary incentives for both new and veteran teachers, especially in underserved districts, programs to close the teacher salary gap, and overhauling Michigan’s deeply inequitable funding system to ensure all districts in the state can retain, attract and support top talent.

## **CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS**

### ***Post-Secondary Options***

For high school students who are preparing to enter postsecondary education, disruptions to learning due to COVID-19 can be particularly harmful — and expensive. In order to reach the goal of increasing degree

attainment in Michigan to 60.0%, state leaders must act now to ensure all Michigan students, especially low-income students, are both academically prepared for postsecondary education and able to afford it, despite the crisis. Supporting students' transitions to postsecondary learning is essential to ensuring they are well-positioned to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century global economy. Almost two-thirds of current jobs require some form of postsecondary training, and the long-term benefits of this investment are clear.<sup>105</sup>

**Supporting College- and Career-Readiness:** When students graduate without necessary fundamental skills, they may have to enroll in remedial courses which can mean additional costs for students, more time to complete their degrees and a higher likelihood of dropping out before they complete their degree.

Already, before the COVID-19 crisis, about 23.0% of all Michigan high school students were required to take at least one remedial course upon enrolling in one of Michigan's two- and four-year college or university programs.<sup>106</sup>

That's almost a quarter of students who must pay for additional instruction in college before moving on to credit-bearing courses. The percentage is even more startling for historically underserved subgroups — 43.8% of Michigan's Black students who enrolled in a postsecondary program in Michigan were required to enroll in at least one college remedial course in 2018.<sup>107</sup>

The expense of missing important coursework during the pandemic should not threaten Michigan students' opportunities to succeed in college and beyond. We urge state leaders to fully fund the cost of postsecondary remediation at Michigan community colleges for impacted seniors and juniors so that the effects of the crisis won't further widen the gaps in enrollment and attainment. To address this long-standing issue and prevent even more students from requiring remediation due to COVID-19, high school students will also need a particular focus on college readiness, perhaps delivered through extended day learning and college remedial coursework that's ideally paid for by federal stimulus dollars.

**Protecting Access to Financial Aid:** Many Michigan students already struggle to afford postsecondary learning. On average, a low-income Michigan student paying in-state tuition at a four-year public institution, who lives on campus and works over the summer, faces a \$2,347 affordability gap.<sup>108</sup> This means that despite financial aid and summer wages, a low-income student still falls \$2,347 short, on average, of being able to afford Michigan's four-year public institutions.

Amid the COVID-19 crisis, students and families faced even greater challenges when it came to paying for college or other forms of postsecondary degrees. In May of 2020, 18 organizations, including The Education Trust-Midwest, called for state leaders to take immediate action to preserve student access to financial aid in a [letter](#) to leaders of Michigan's higher education legislative committees. House representatives acted with the introduction of two bills, yet both ultimately stalled.<sup>109</sup>

Continued actions to protect access to financial aid should include increasing efforts to inform students about financial aid options. We applaud Governor Whitmer's proposal to continue funding the Michigan Reconnect Program, which provides tuition-free pathways to an associate degree or occupational certificate for Michiganders 25 and older without postsecondary credentials and expand postsecondary pathways and supports.<sup>110</sup>

The Education Trust-Midwest also recommends increasing efforts to inform students about completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), the common application that students must fill out to access federal and state aid and, in many cases, institutional aid.

The Education Trust-Midwest's ultimate goal is removing barriers to accessing financial aid by ensuring every high school graduate either completes a FAFSA or knowingly opts out of completing the form — a goal that is especially important now as students and families face an economic downturn.

### **Ensuring Awareness and Access to Transition Supports:**

In a typical year, 10% to 40% of college-intending students, and particularly those who are first generation or low-income, face “summer melt,” meaning that despite being accepted to college by the spring of their senior year, they ultimately do not enroll in a postsecondary program come fall.<sup>111</sup>

Indeed, amid the COVID-19 pandemic, Michigan and the nation at large have seen alarming declines in college enrollment for high school graduates.<sup>112</sup> This trend particularly holds true and has substantial impact for students from low-income backgrounds.<sup>113</sup>

Schools and districts play a vital role in ensuring that students are supported with the appropriate resources to begin their intended postsecondary program. This includes communicating with parents, families and staff to discuss and assist with students’ college plans, financial aid forms, scholarships and academic requirements.

Districts should publish how school counselors and other administrators will continue to assist students with finalizing their college plans, securing financial aid and entering the workforce during this unprecedented time. Additionally, K-12, higher education and college access organizations should partner to remind students of key deadlines for enrollment throughout the spring and summer before college.

*Photo credit: Valaurian Waller*



# CONCLUSION

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The past results are clear. Yet, they do not have to define the future dreams for our students and families.

Leading education states have made great strides to turn around their public education systems. Michigan has a great opportunity to transform its system, too, so our students' dreams are no longer stalled.

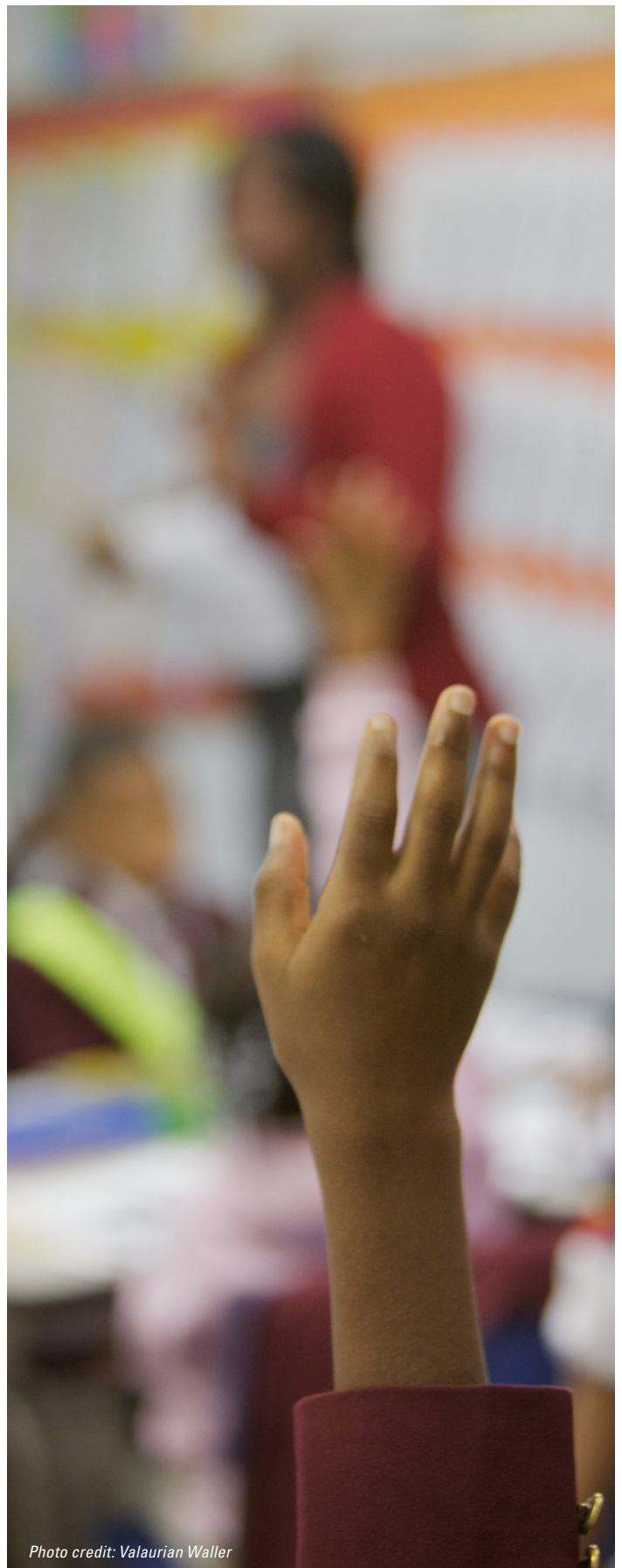
With radical transformation and radical honesty about our students' achievement, we can design systems that are effective and support all students. And by leveraging federal stimulus dollars strategically on what we know works and investing more equitably and overall, we can make long-lasting change, especially for vulnerable students, schools and communities with the greatest needs.

The time is now to build trust in the system, be honest about the state's performance and challenges, and take responsibility for those challenges.

By doing so, Michigan can reverse course. Our state can be a place where every child, in every school, receives the quality education they deserve.

Michigan's public education system can be a place where students' dreams do not stall, but instead a place where they take shape and soar.

The opportunity is now. Our state must embrace these challenges and make educational transformation a top priority now to ensure ***all*** students have an opportunity for success in school and in life.



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Photo credits: Most photos in this report were taken by Valaurian Waller in schools that were named a 2021 Building the Hope School by The Education Trust-Midwest. At the Building the Hope Schools, the majority of students are students of color and students from low-income backgrounds. These public schools are in the top 25% for academic proficiency or above average student growth for all Michigan students. Moreover, their subgroups of students — Black, Latino, low-income and English Learner students in particular — also are performing in the top 30% among Michigan’s high-growth public schools where data is available. They also engage in culturally- and linguistically-responsive schoolwide practices — including instructional practices — that facilitate students’ outstanding academic progress and growth, making them true outliers in the state of Michigan. Learn more at: <https://buildingthehopeschools.org/>

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# 2022 Michigan Achieves!

80%

70%

60%

40%

30%

20%

32.7%

27.4%

# 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Reading

CURRENT PERFORMANCE

2030 PROJECTION

32<sup>nd</sup>\*

39<sup>th</sup>\*

## WHAT IT IS

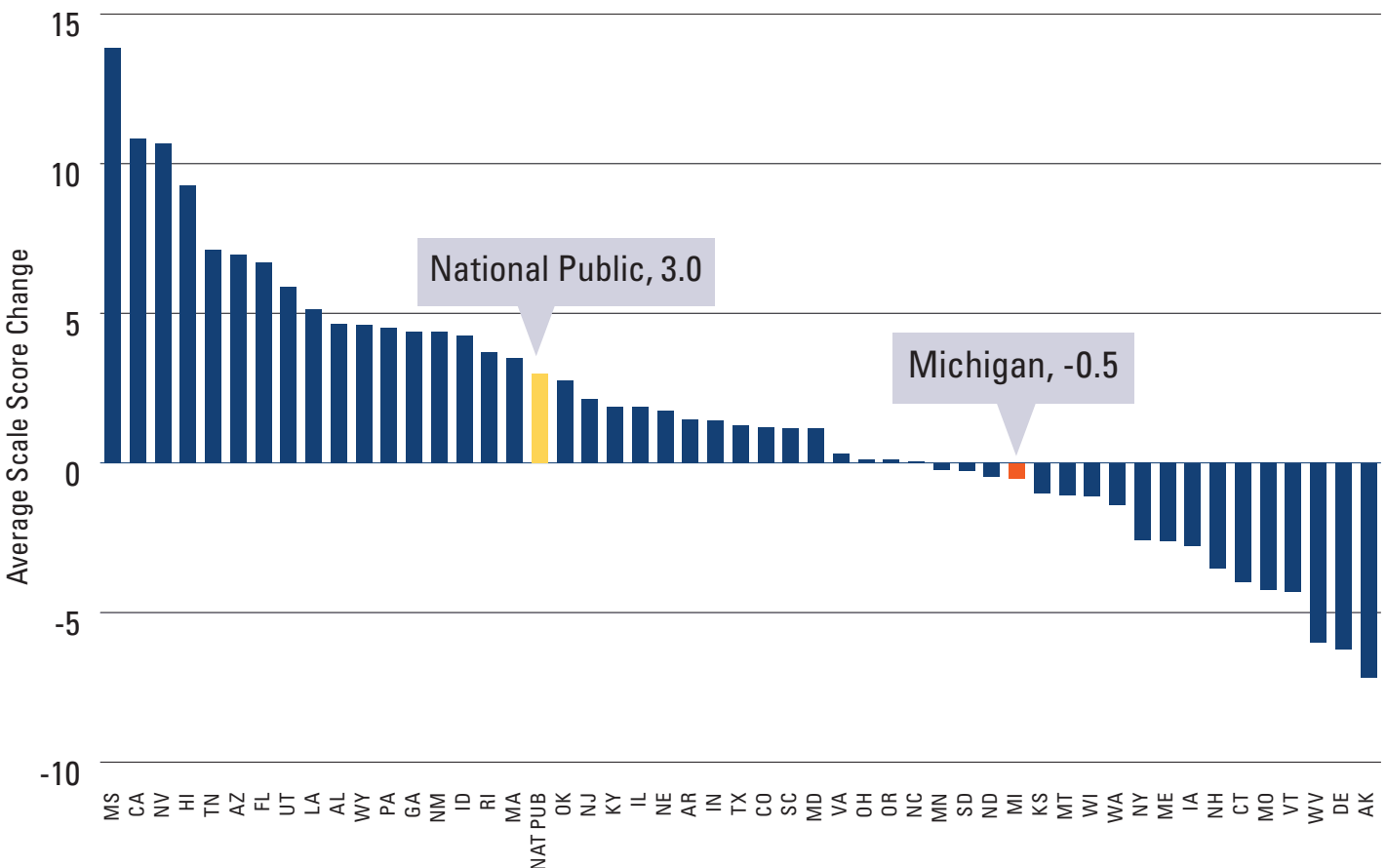
Early learners' reading proficiency is a telling indicator of whether Michigan's students are being prepared for success. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is the largest nationally representative assessment that provides for long-term comparisons of what America's students know and can do in various subject areas. The assessment is traditionally given every two years and provides necessary information about student performance and growth for several indicators, including fourth grade reading.

## WHY IT MATTERS

Reading proficiency is tied to all kinds of academic and life outcomes and is an important foundation for learning in the upper grades. Michigan must drastically improve its early literacy achievement for all students and close the opportunity gaps that keep far too many low-income children and students of color from fulfilling their potential.

## Michigan One of Eighteen States Declining in Early Literacy

Average Scale Score Change, NAEP Grade Four – Reading – All Students (2003-19)



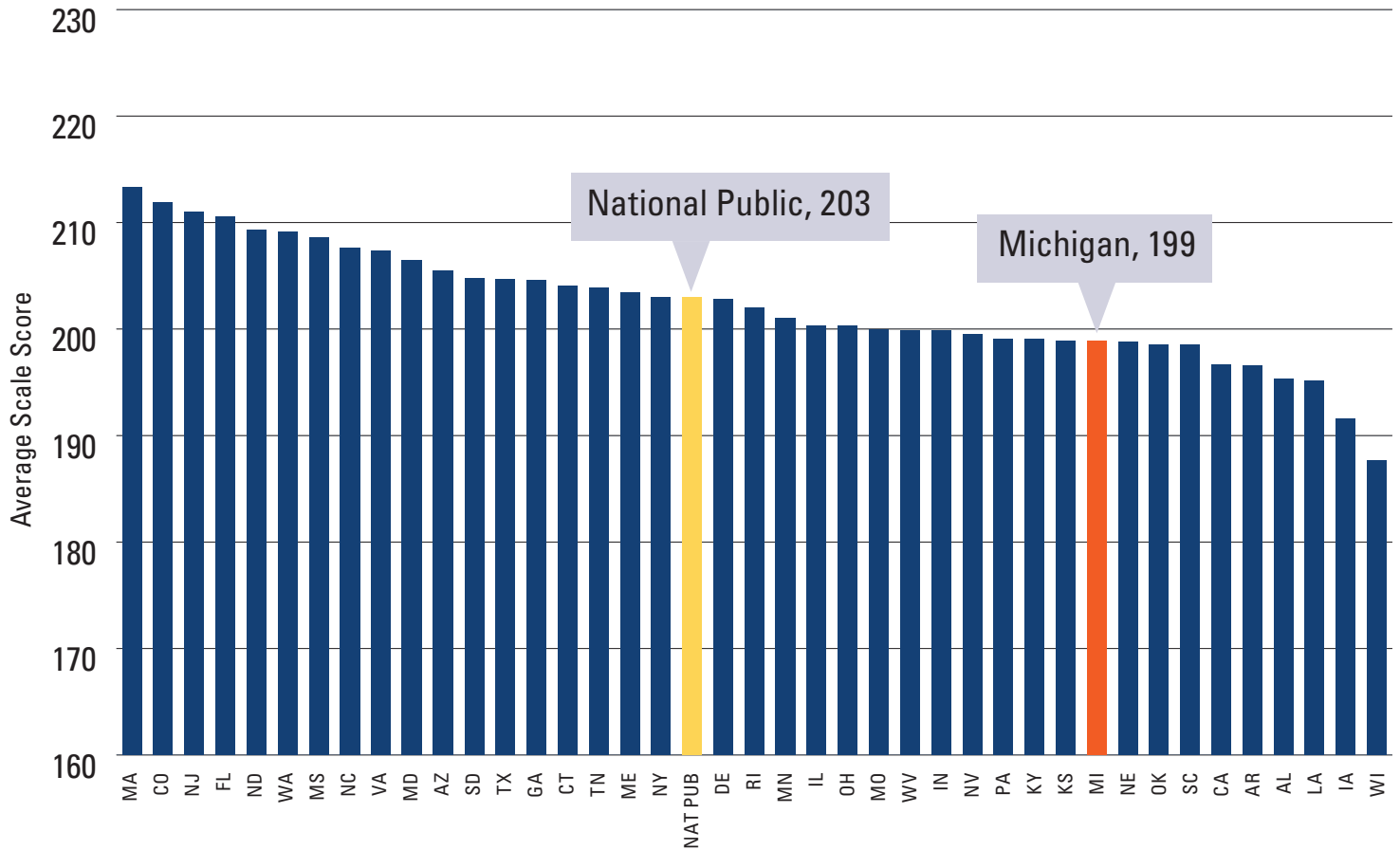
SOURCE: NAEP Data Explorer, NCES (Basic Scale Score = 208; Proficient Scale Score = 238) 2003-2019

\*Current performance and projections are based on pre-pandemic data. Performance and projections may change based on future post-pandemic data.

# 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Reading (cont.)

## Michigan in Bottom Ten for African American Students in Early Literacy

Average Scale Score, NAEP Grade Four – Reading – African American Students (2019)



SOURCE: NAEP Data Explorer, NCES (Basic Scale Score = 208; Proficient Scale Score = 238) 2019

NOTE: All states with available data are included in this analysis.



### WHAT IT IS

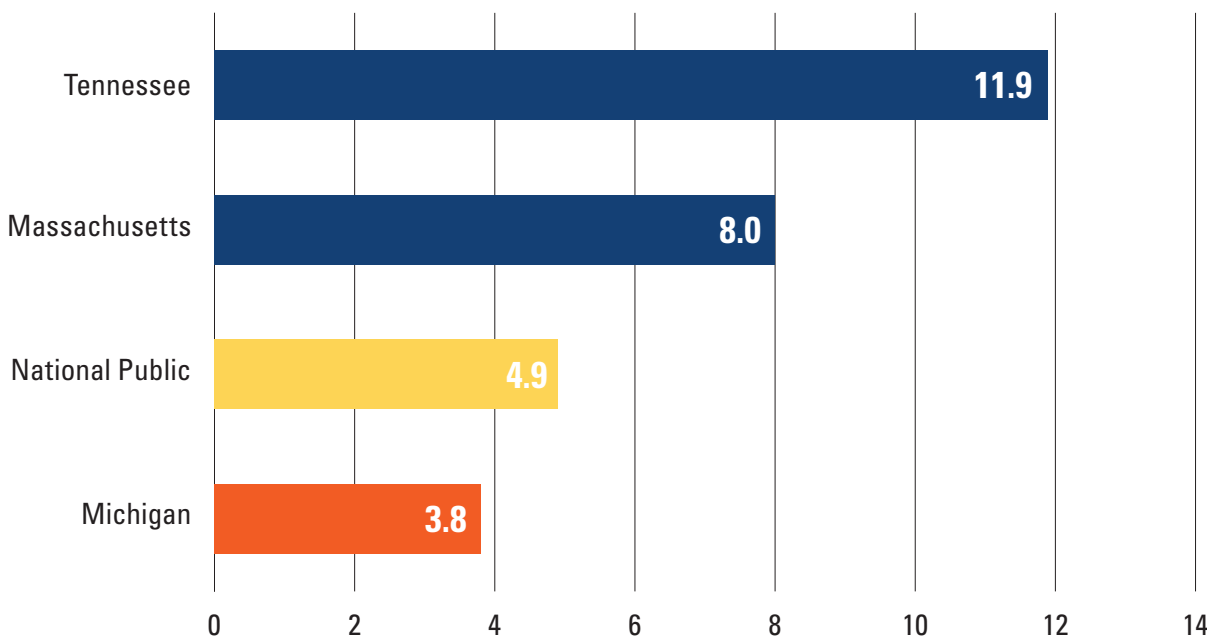
The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is the largest nationally representative assessment that provides for long-term comparisons of what America’s students know and can do in various subject areas. The assessment is given every two years and provides necessary information about student performance and growth for several indicators, including eighth grade math.

### WHY IT MATTERS

In addition to basic reading skills, math skills are essential for all students. Basic algebra is the foundation for high-level math courses. When students have not mastered this foundation, they are required to enroll in remedial courses when they begin college. But eighth grade math skills are not just for students attending college. A study conducted by ACT found that along with reading skills, math skills are essential for careers including those as a plumber, electrician or an upholsterer.<sup>1</sup>

## Michigan Eighth Grade Students Show Little Improvement in Math Compared with Peers in Leading States

Average Scale Score Change, NAEP Grade Eight – Math – All Students (2003-19)

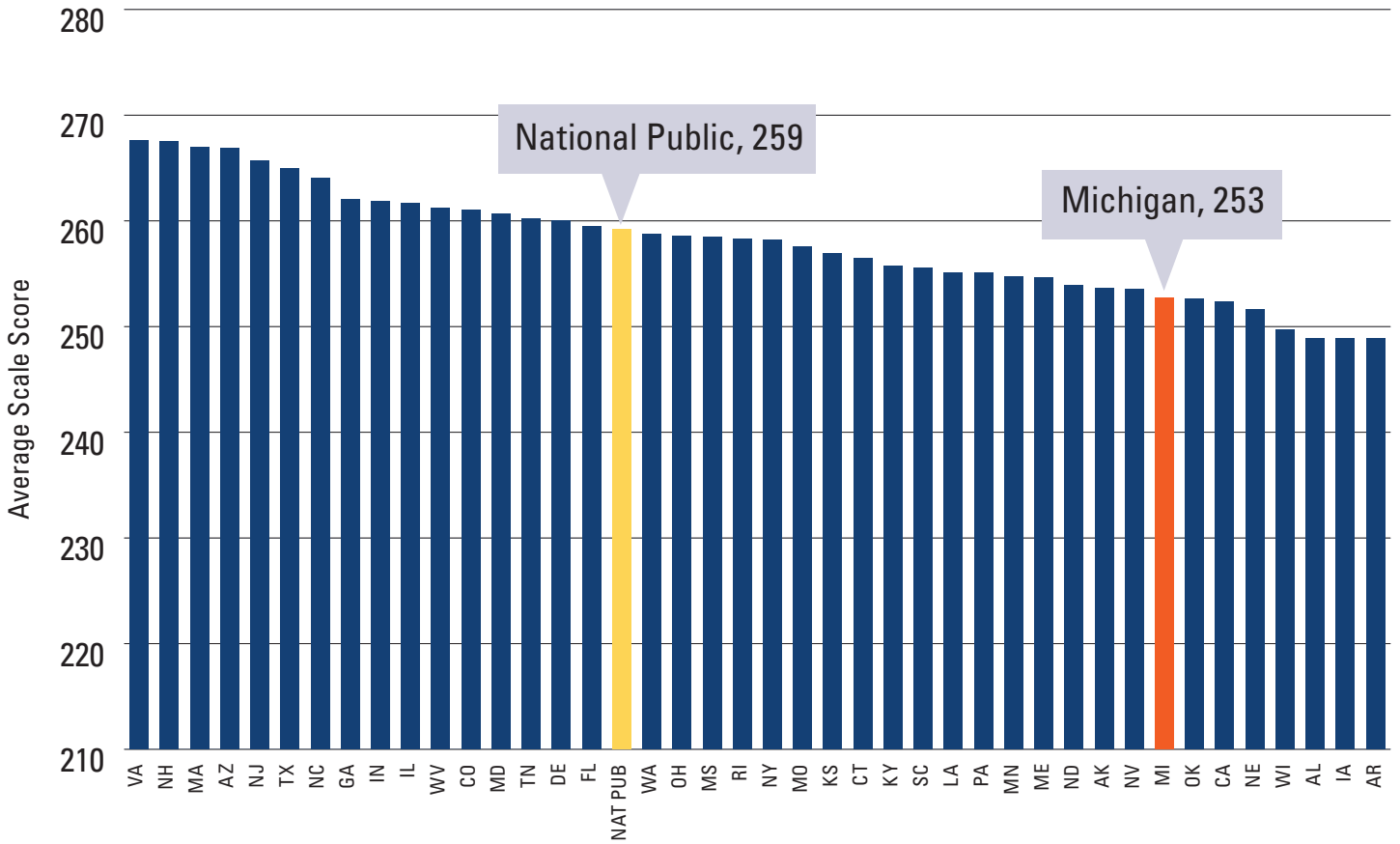


SOURCE: NAEP Data Explorer, NCES (Basic Scale Score = 262; Proficient Scale Score = 299) 2003-19

\*Current performance and projections are based on pre-pandemic data. Performance and projections may change based on future post-pandemic data.

# 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Math (cont.)

Michigan Among Bottom Ten States for African American Students in Eighth Grade Math  
Average Scale Score, NAEP Grade Eight – Math – African American Students (2019)



SOURCE: NAEP Data Explorer, NCES (Basic Scale Score = 262; Proficient Scale Score = 299) 2019

# Kindergarten Readiness

Michigan recently leveraged historic federal investment and committed substantial state investment to improve early childhood education access and increase the number of students who enter kindergarten ready to learn at high levels. From 2012 to 2020, the portion of Michigan four-year-olds enrolled in prekindergarten increased from 19.4 percent to 32 percent.<sup>ii</sup> While access to prekindergarten has improved since 2012 for Michigan’s four-year-olds, it is still unclear whether these prekindergarten programs are high-quality and aligned with the K-12 system.

While access to Pre-K in Michigan has improved, data on students’ kindergarten readiness are still not available. Michigan does not require implementation of a common assessment for kindergarten readiness, nor does the state participate in a national effort to collect that data. Consistent and comparable data from a common kindergarten readiness assessment would provide vital information to parents and educators about the strengths and needs of students as they enter kindergarten.

We will track any state or national data on Michigan’s kindergarten readiness when they become available.

“

**From 2012 to 2020, the portion of Michigan four-year-olds enrolled in prekindergarten increased from 19.4 percent to 32 percent.**

”



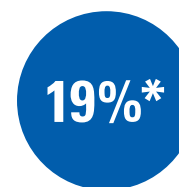
Photo credit: Valaurian Waller

# College Readiness

CURRENT  
PERFORMANCE



2030  
PROJECTION



Enrolled in at least one remedial course

## WHAT IT IS

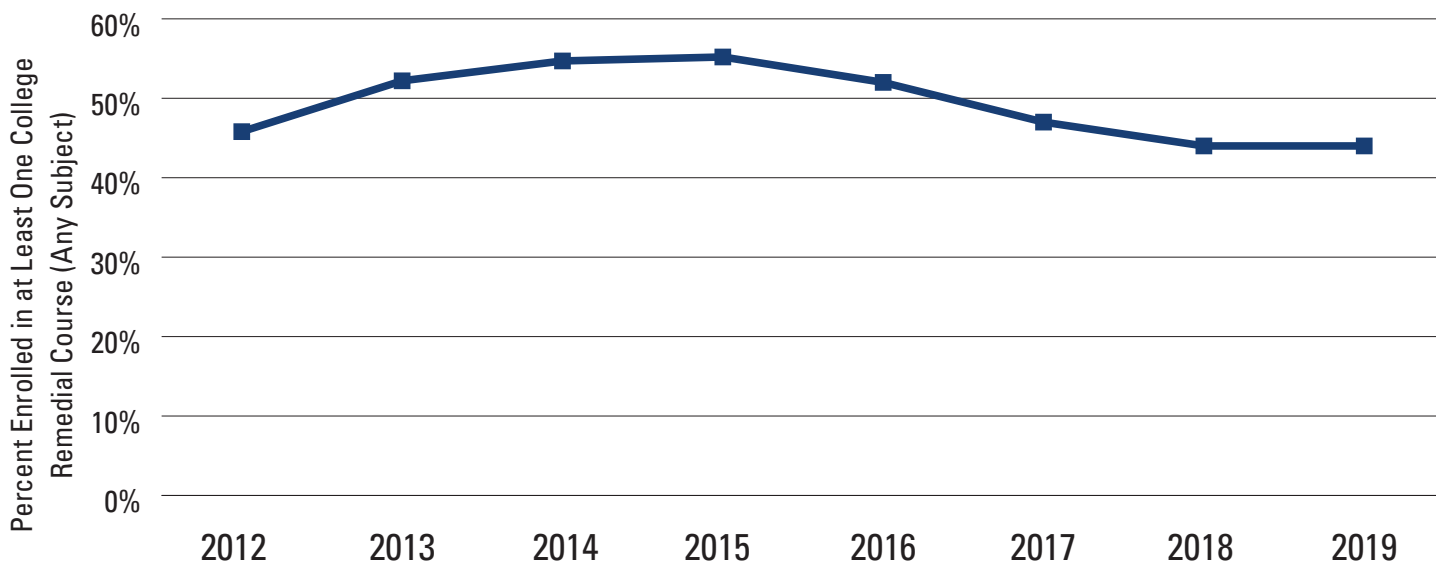
Remedial coursework is necessary for students who lack fundamental skills in a subject area — skills that should have been developed in K-12. These courses also are not credit bearing, meaning they don't count toward a degree.

## WHY IT MATTERS

About 23 percent of all Michigan students were required to take at least one remedial course in two and four year college or university programs. That's almost a quarter of Michigan students who must pay for additional instruction in college before moving on to credit-bearing courses. The percentage is even more startling for historically underserved subgroups — 43.8 percent of African American students in Michigan are required to enroll in college remedial courses. Having to enroll in remedial courses can mean additional costs for students and more time to complete their degrees.

## Remediation Rates Remain High for Michigan's African American Students

Michigan African American College Remediation Rates (Community Colleges & Four-Year Universities, 2012-19)



SOURCE: CEPI College Remedial Coursework Enrollment Trend 2012-19.

NOTE: Remedial coursework includes math, reading, writing or science courses. Data is limited to Michigan high school graduates enrolled in college the following fall in a Michigan college or university only.

\*Current performance and projections are based on pre-pandemic data. Performance and projections may change based on future post-pandemic data.

# College and Postsecondary Enrollment

CURRENT PERFORMANCE

19th\*

2030 PROJECTION

Not Yet Available

## WHAT IT IS

This measure represents the percentage of high school graduates in each state who enroll in and intend to attend college anywhere in the U.S. directly from high school.

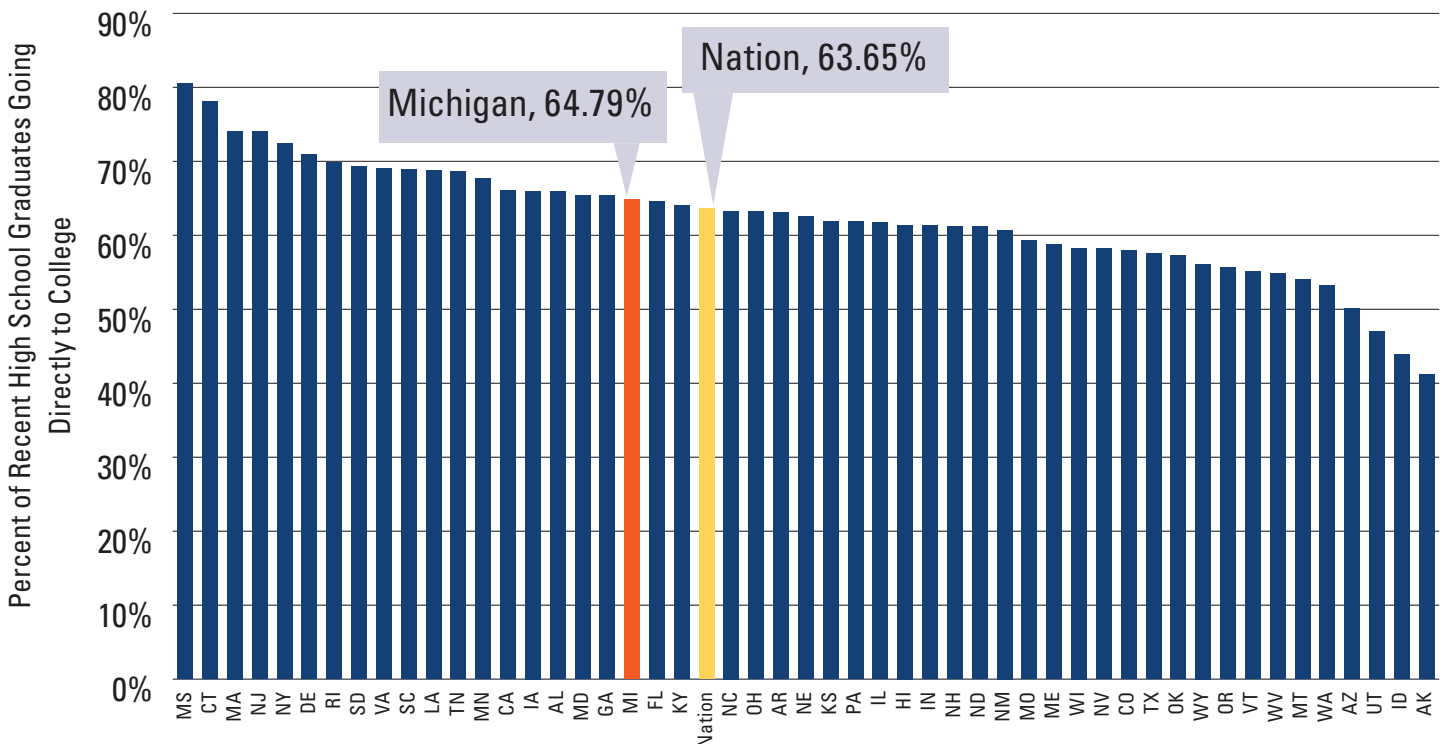
## WHY IT MATTERS

In order for Michigan's students to fulfill their true potential and be the leaders of tomorrow, more must enroll in postsecondary training, whether that be at a trade school, community college or a four-year university. On this measure, Michigan is slightly above the national average, ranking 19th, with about 64.8 percent of high school graduates going directly to college in the fall of 2018.<sup>iii</sup>

Michigan's Center for Educational Performance and Information reports that 65.3 percent of Michigan's 2019 high school graduates enrolled in a postsecondary program within 12 months of graduation.<sup>iv</sup>

In addition, research shows that completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) leads to higher postsecondary enrollment.<sup>v</sup> As of March 4, 2022, the National College Attainment Network reported that Michigan ranked 27th (at 39 percent) in the percentage of high school seniors completing the FAFSA for the current cycle, slightly below the national average of 41.2 percent. Michigan's completion rate reflects a 2.7 percent decrease from last year's cycle at this time.<sup>vi</sup>

## Michigan Slightly Above National Average with 64.8% of High School Graduates Enrolling in College Higher Education Enrollment Rate for Recent High School Graduates (2018)



SOURCE: NCHEMS Information Center 2018

\*Current performance and projections are based on pre-pandemic data. Performance and projections may change based on future post-pandemic data.



# College Attainment

CURRENT  
PERFORMANCE

33<sup>rd</sup>\*

2030  
PROJECTION

31<sup>st</sup>\*

## WHAT IT IS

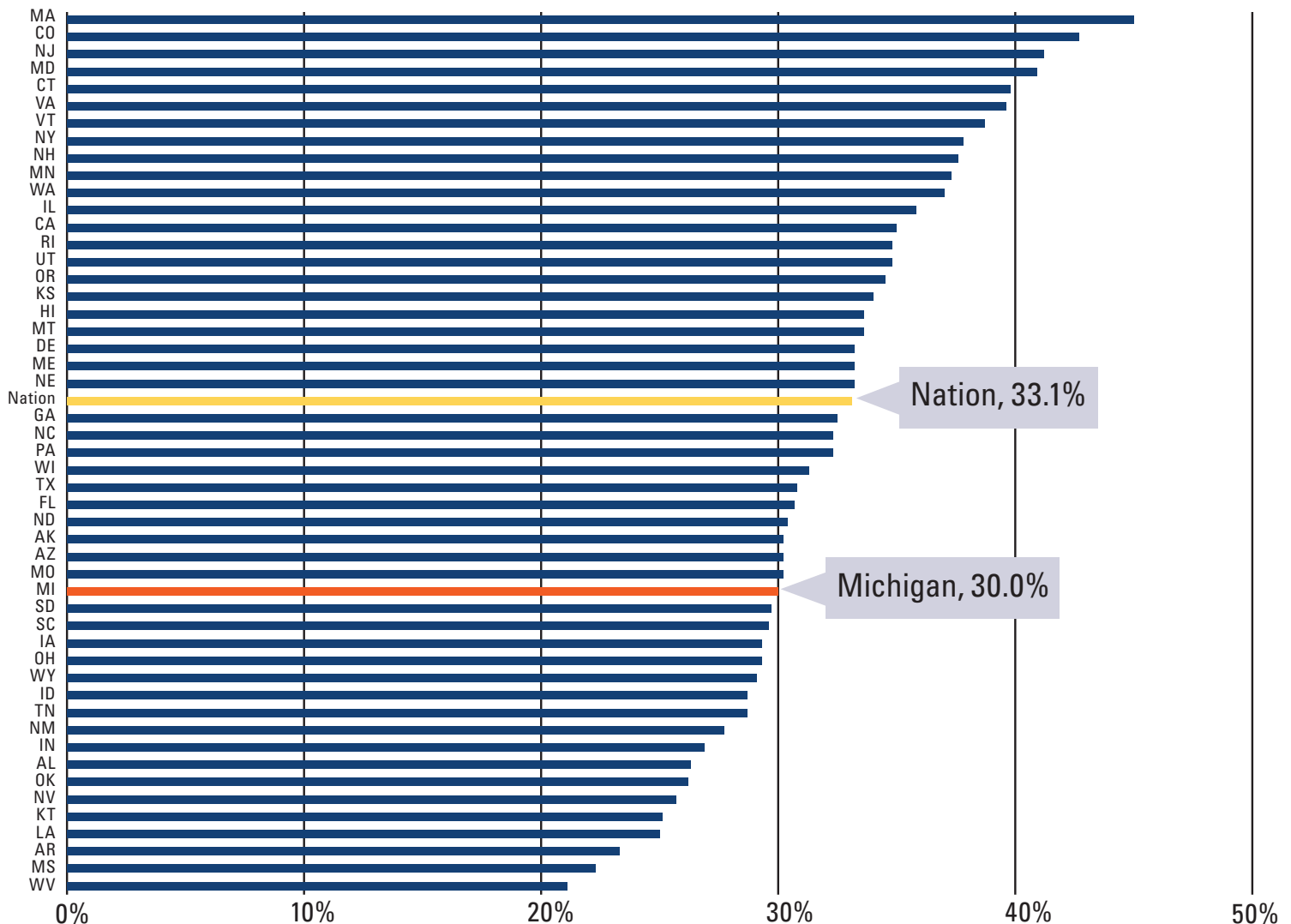
This indicator represents the percentage of people 25 years or older in each state and nationally who have completed a bachelor's degree or greater.

## WHY IT MATTERS

Michigan's future economy depends on more adults earning college degrees. In 2019, Michigan ranked 33rd in the percentage of adults 25 or older who have completed a bachelor's degree or greater, at 30 percent. Roughly 18 percent of African American and 21.6 percent of Hispanic Michiganders have completed a bachelor's degree or greater.

## Michigan's Future Economy Depends on More Adults Earning College Degrees

Percent of People 25 Years and Older with a Bachelor's Degree or Greater in 2019



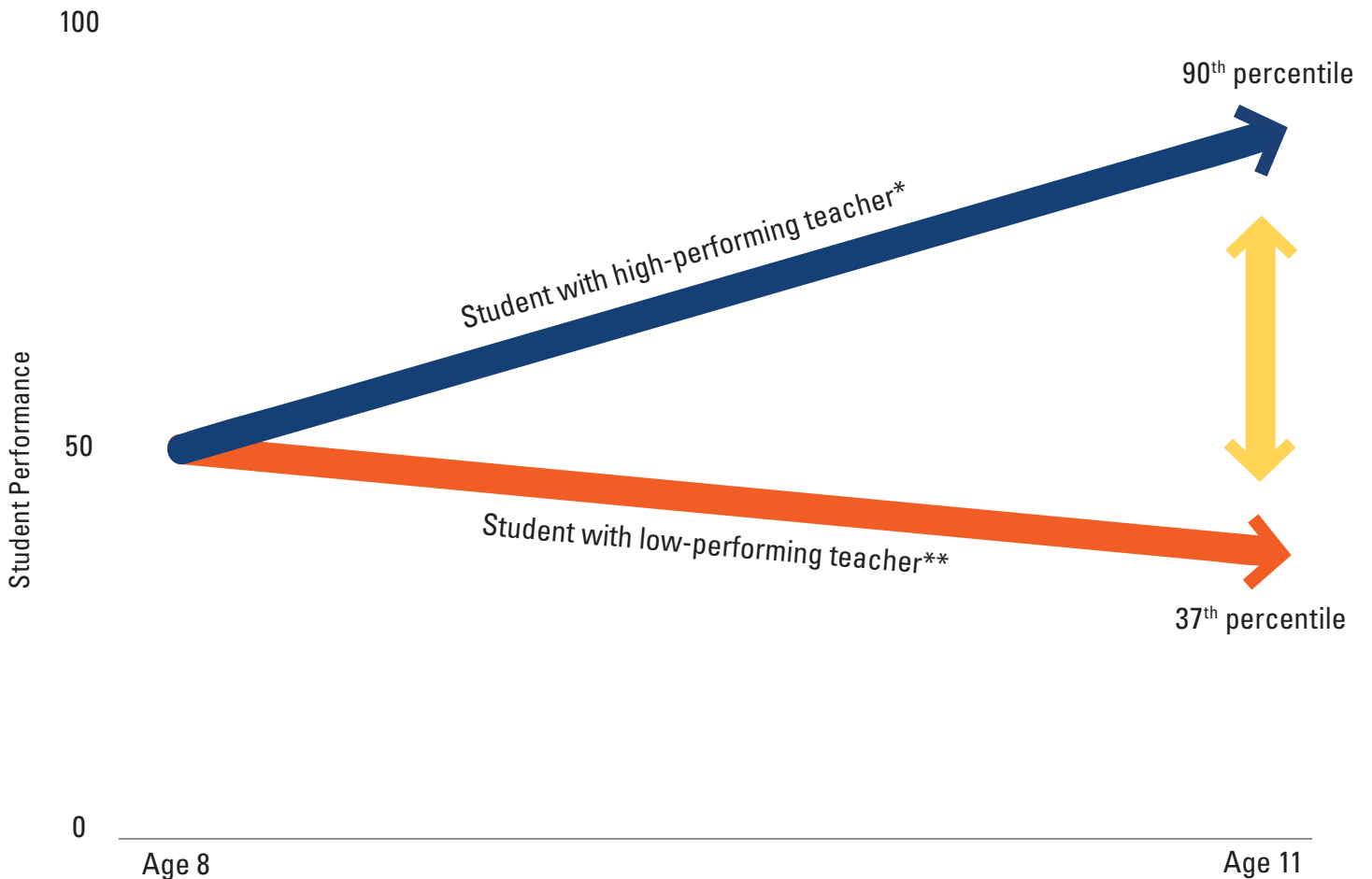
SOURCE: United States Census – American Community Survey – 1 Year Estimates 2019

\*Current performance and projections are based on pre-pandemic data. Performance and projections may change based on future post-pandemic data.

# Teacher Effectiveness

Without a doubt, student learning is dependent on many factors. But, the research is clear—the number one in-school predictor of student success is the teaching quality in a child’s classroom.<sup>vii</sup> In leading states, sophisticated data systems provide teaching effectiveness data that are used for many purposes, such as professional development and early student interventions. In Michigan, those data are unavailable at this time.

## The Effect of Teacher Quality on Student Learning



SOURCE: Sanders and Rivers (1996): Cumulative and Residual Effects of Teachers on Future Student Achievement

NOTE: \*Among the top 20% of teachers; \*\*Among the bottom 20% of teachers

Analysis of test data from Tennessee showed that teacher quality effected student performance more than any other variable; on average, two students with average performance (50th percentile) would diverge by more than 50 percentile points over a three year period depending on the teacher they were assigned.

# Access to Rigorous Coursework

CURRENT PERFORMANCE



2030 PROJECTION



## WHAT IT IS

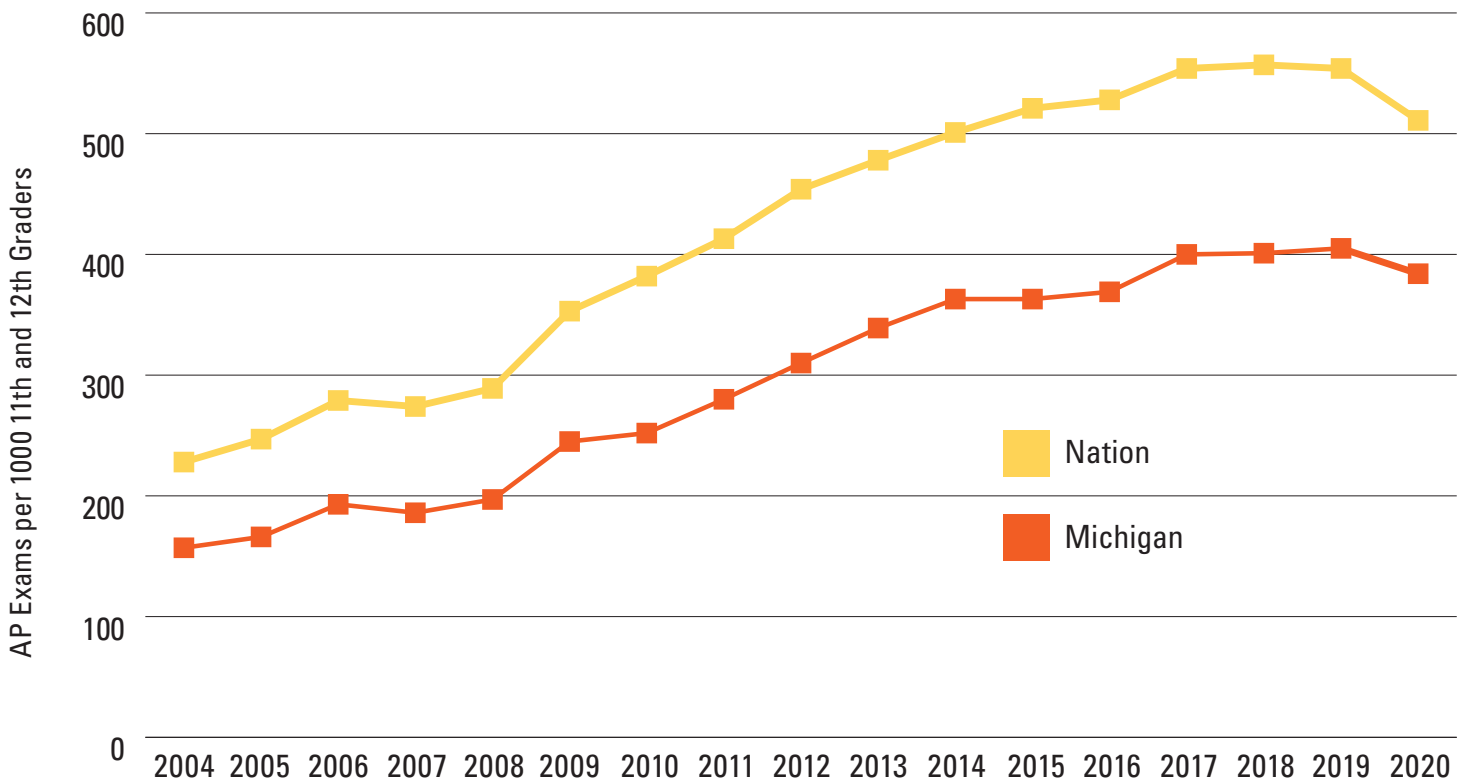
Access to rigorous coursework is measured by the College Board Advanced Placement (AP) Program Participation and Performance data. The data represent the total number of AP exams administered per 1,000 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students.

## WHY IT MATTERS

One of the best ways to ensure more students are college- and career-ready is to increase access to rigorous coursework in high school, such as Advanced Placement courses. Research shows that having access to rigorous coursework and high quality instruction in high school is one of the best predictors of postsecondary success.<sup>viii</sup> Michigan is currently ranked 27<sup>th</sup> for the total number of AP exams administered per 1,000 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders. Similar to the nation, Michigan saw a drop in AP Exam participation in the 2019-20 school year.

## Michigan Still Lags Nation in AP Exam Participation

AP Exam Participation (2004-2020)



SOURCE: College Board AP Program Participation and Performance Data 2004-20

\*Current performance and projections are based on pre-pandemic data. Performance and projections may change based on future post-pandemic data.

# School Funding Equity

CURRENT PERFORMANCE

43<sup>rd</sup>\*

2030 PROJECTION

Not Yet Available

## WHAT IT IS

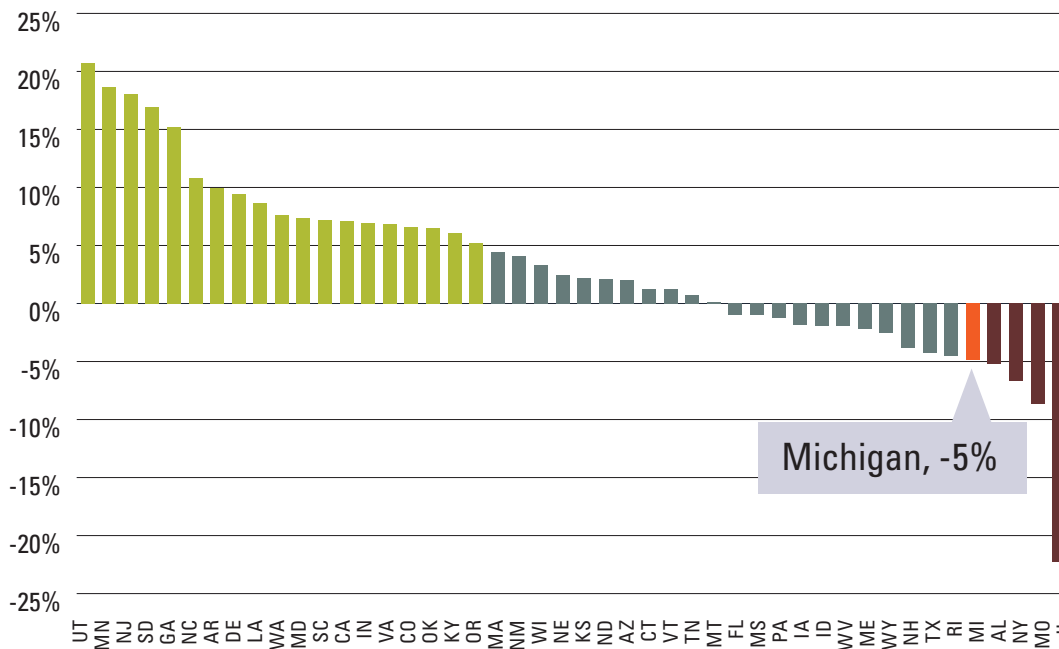
This measure represents how the highest and lowest poverty districts are funded based on state and local revenues and whether it is equitably distributed or not.

## WHY IT MATTERS

Michigan ranked an abysmal 43rd of 47 states in the nation for funding gaps that negatively impact low-income students. Michigan districts serving the highest rates of students from low-income families received about 5 percent less in state and local funding per student than more affluent districts. This lack of equity led to further imbalances in our educational system as a whole.

## Michigan: One of Only Sixteen States Providing Less Funding to Highest Poverty Districts than to Lowest Poverty Districts

Funding Gaps Between the Highest and Lowest Poverty Districts, By State (2018)



**READING THIS FIGURE:** In Utah, the highest poverty districts received 21 percent more in state and local funds per student than the lowest poverty districts (not adjusted for additional needs of low-income students). In states shaded in green, the highest poverty districts received at least 5 percent more in state and local funds per student than the lowest poverty districts; in states shaded in maroon, they received at least 5 percent less. Grey shading indicates similar levels of funding for the highest and lowest poverty districts. Note that although all displayed percentages are rounded to the nearest percentage point, states are ordered and classified as providing more or less funding to their highest poverty districts based on unrounded funding gaps.

**SOURCE:** The Education Trust, Funding Gaps Report 2018

**NOTE:** Hawaii was excluded from the within-state analysis because it is one district. Nevada is excluded because its student population is heavily concentrated in one district and could not be sorted into quartiles. Alaska is excluded because there are substantial regional differences in the cost of education that are not accounted for in the ACS-CWI. Because so many New York students are concentrated in New York City, we sorted that state into two halves, as opposed to four quartiles. Though included in the original publication, data from Ohio are now excluded from this chart because of subsequently discovered anomalies in the way Ohio reported its fiscal data to the federal government.

\*Current performance and projections are based on pre-pandemic data. Performance and projections may change based on future post-pandemic data.

# Teacher Salary Equity

CURRENT  
PERFORMANCE

**\$8,594**

2030  
PROJECTION

**Not Yet  
Available**

**Avg. Salary Gap for highest- and  
lowest-poverty districts**

## WHAT IT IS

This measure represents the gap in average teacher salaries between Michigan's highest income and lowest income districts.

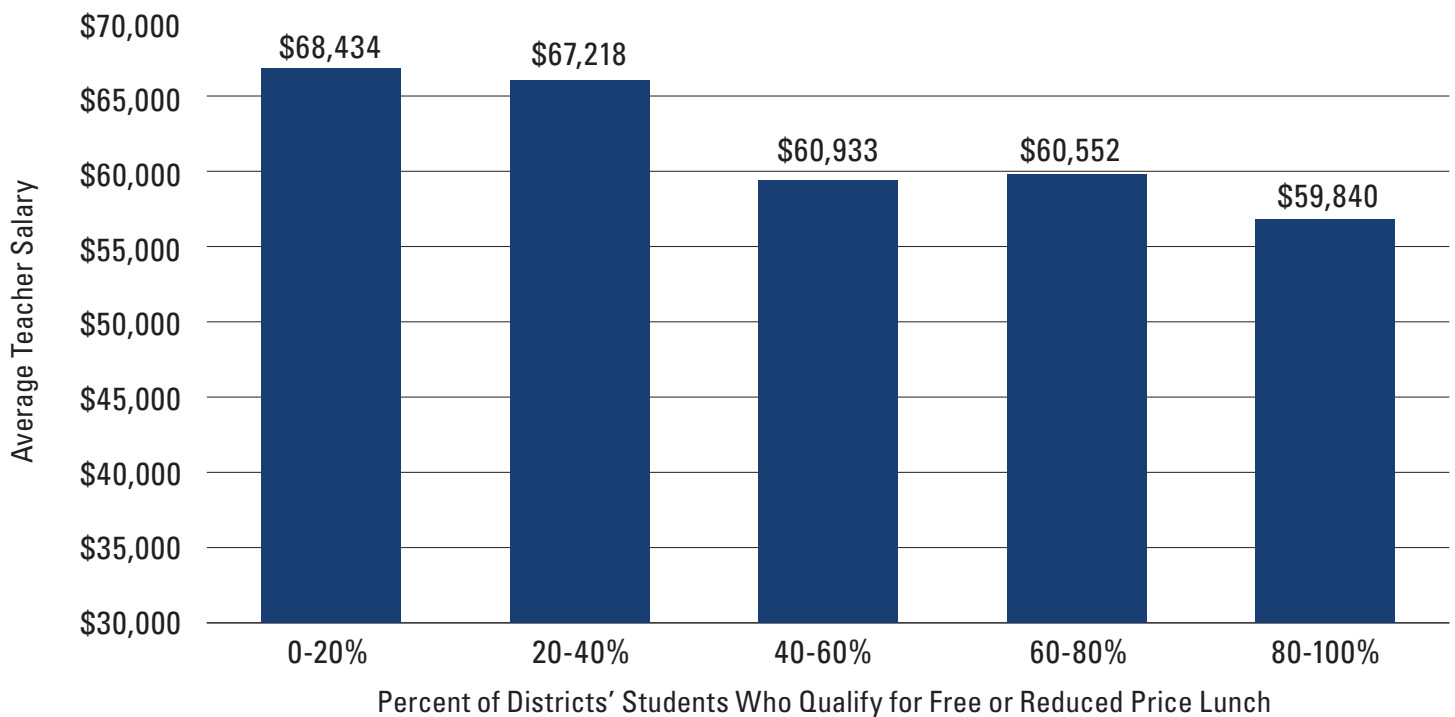
## WHY IT MATTERS

Teachers in Michigan's wealthiest districts are paid about \$8,600 more, on average, than teachers in Michigan's poorest districts. That's alarming, considering what we know about the importance of high-quality teachers in closing the achievement gap that persists between low-income and higher-income students.

To recruit and retain highly effective teachers in the schools that need them most, Michigan must close the gap in teacher pay.

## \$8,600 Gap in Average Teacher Salaries Between Michigan's Highest Income and Lowest Income Districts

Average Michigan Teacher Salary based on Percent of Free and Reduced Price Lunch (2019-2020)

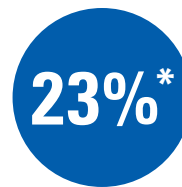


SOURCE: MDE Bulletin 1011, 2019-20; CEPI Free and Reduced Priced Lunch, Fall 2019-20 (District)

# Student Attendance

CURRENT PERFORMANCE

2030 PROJECTION



**8th Graders Absent Three or More Days in Surveyed Month**

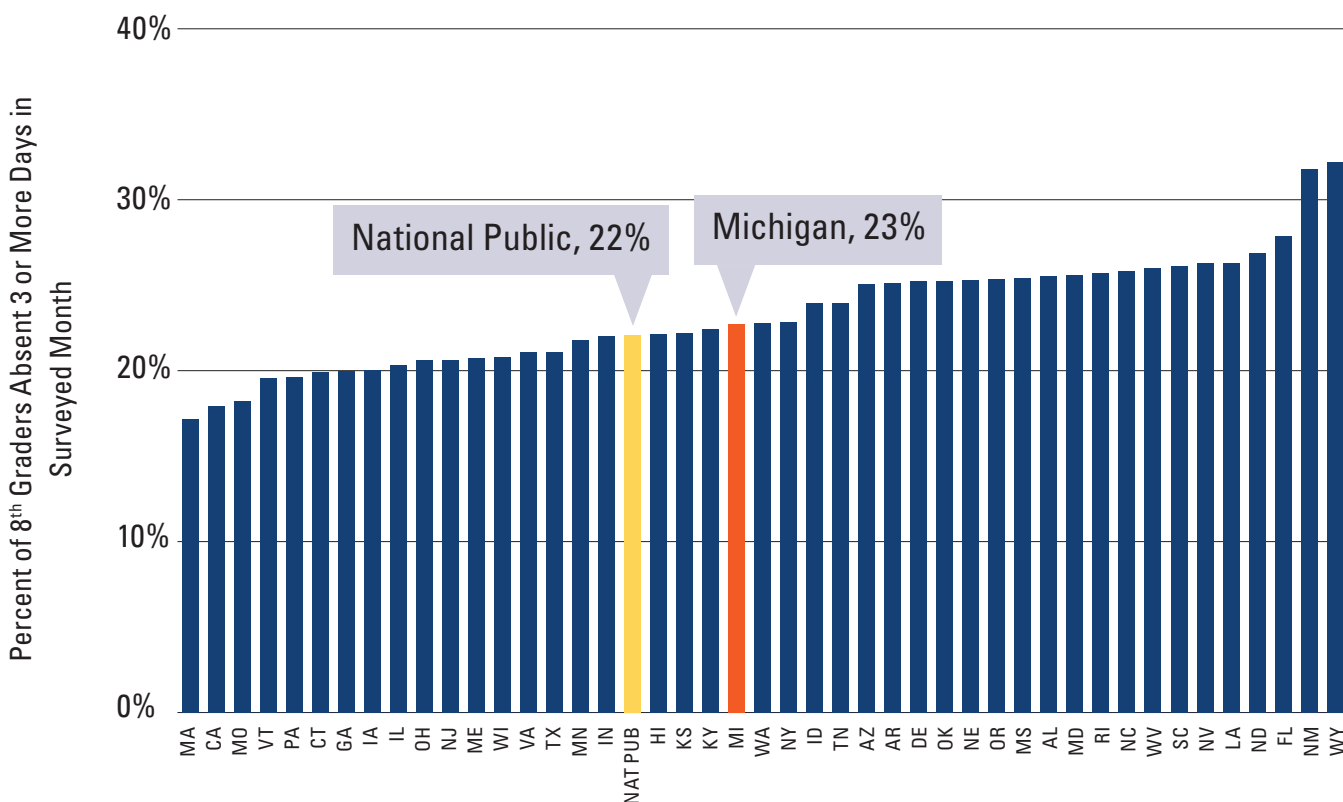
## WHAT IT IS

This measure represents the percentage of eighth-graders absent three or more days in the last month before the administration of the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP).

## WHY IT MATTERS

Not only are Michigan’s teachers missing too much school, but Michigan’s students—especially African American students—are missing far too many days of school, often against their will due to disproportionate rates for out-of-school suspensions. According to the 2019 national assessment, 23 percent of Michigan’s eighth-grade students said they had been absent from school three or more days in the last month. Moreover, Detroit leads the nation for absences among urban districts, with 41 percent of students absent three or more days in the surveyed month.<sup>x</sup>

**Nearly One Quarter of Michigan Eighth Graders were Absent Three or More Days in Last Month in 2019**  
Percent of Eighth Graders Absent Three or More Days in Last Month, NAEP Grade Eight – Math – All Students (2019)



SOURCE: NAEP Data Explorer, NCES (Reported for 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Math) 2019

NOTE: AK, CO, MT, NH, SD and UT are not included in the analysis because data was not available.

\*Current performance and projections are based on pre-pandemic data. Performance and projections may change based on future post-pandemic data.

# Out-of-School Suspensions

CURRENT PERFORMANCE

45<sup>th</sup>\*

2030 PROJECTION

Not Yet Available

## WHAT IT IS

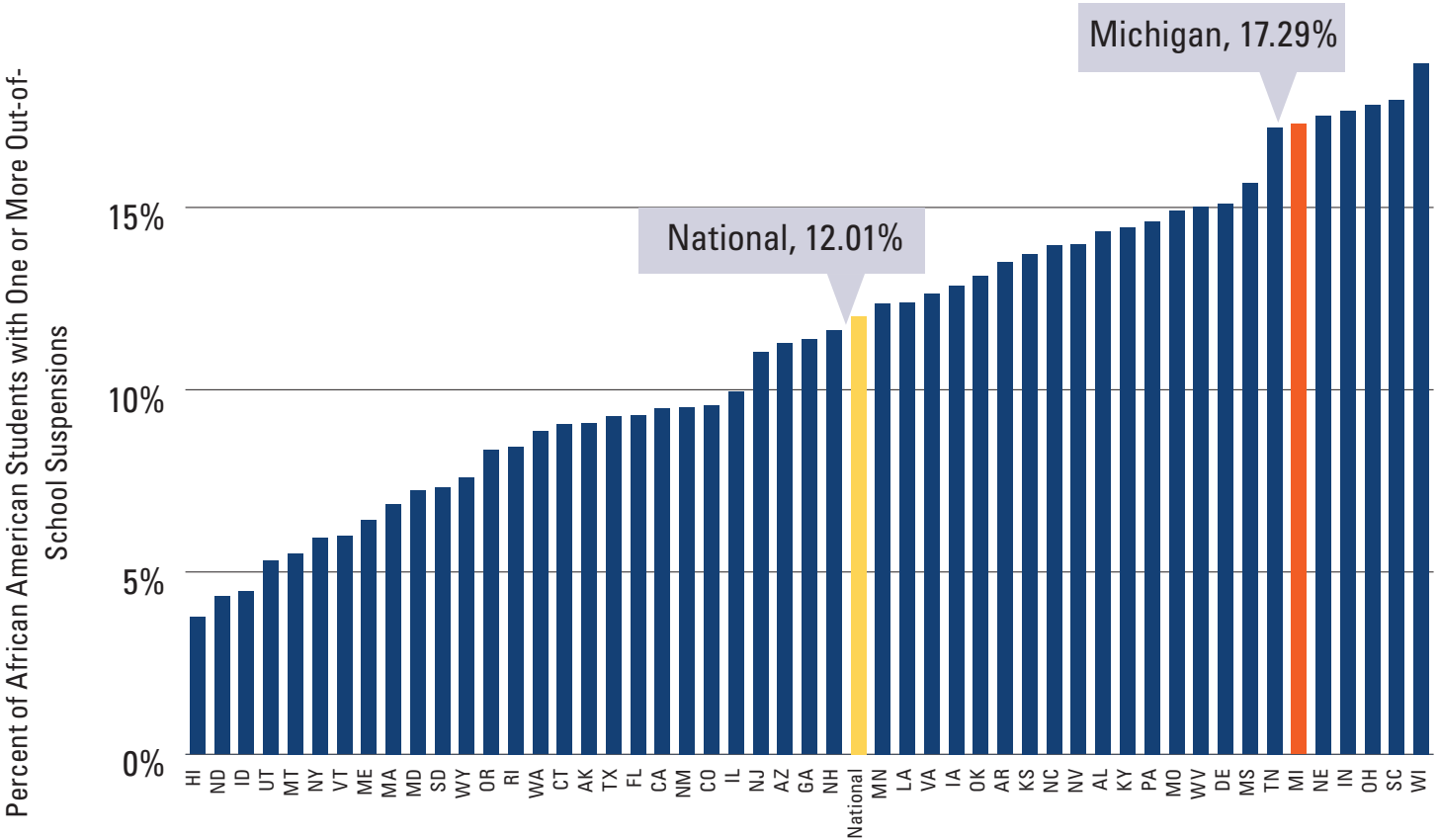
This data measures the percentage of students in each state who have one or more suspensions within a school year.

## WHY IT MATTERS

One of the most troubling practices in Michigan — and around the country — is the overuse of suspension and expulsion, particularly for students of color. For all students and for Black students, Michigan ranks 45th when comparing out-of-school suspension rates. This means Michigan has the sixth highest out-of-school suspension rate in the country. 17.3 percent of Black students were given one or more out-of-school suspensions in 2017-2018.

## Michigan Has 6th Highest Out-of-School Suspension Rate Nationally for African American Students

African American Out-of-School Suspension Rates (2017-18)



SOURCE: Civil Rights Data Collection 2017-18

\*Current performance and projections are based on pre-pandemic data. Performance and projections may change based on future post-pandemic data.

# College Affordability

CURRENT  
PERFORMANCE

26<sup>th</sup>\*

2030  
PROJECTION

Not Yet  
Available

## WHAT IT IS

This indicator measures the affordability of four-year public institutions by state for an average Pell Grant recipient who lives on campus, receives the average amount of grant aid, takes out the average amount of federal loans and works over the summer. Data represent the additional dollars needed to cover the cost of attendance.

## WHY IT MATTERS

It's not enough to get into college. Young Michiganders have to be able to afford to stay in school and graduate. On average, in 2019, a low-income Michigan student paying in-state tuition at a four-year public institution, who lives on campus and works over the summer, faces a \$2,347 affordability gap. This means that despite financial aid and summer wages a low-income student in 2019 still fell \$2,347 short, on average, of being able to afford Michigan's four-year public institutions. Michigan is currently ranked 26th for college affordability. While this is a slight improvement from Michigan's previous ranking of 29th, the affordability gap in the state grew by nearly \$700 from 2018 to 2019. This highlights a troubling trend in college affordability both in Michigan and nationwide. Additionally, *a report* by the Education Trust found that low-income students would need to work 20 hours per week at minimum wage to afford Michigan's public four-year institutions. Low-income students at Michigan's community and technical colleges would need to work 11 hours per week at minimum wage. Both figures exceed the recommended 10 hours per week of work — and if students worked only 10 hours at minimum wage, they would face a \$4,595 and \$425 affordability gap at public four-year institutions and public community and technical colleges, respectively.<sup>xi</sup>

\*Current performance and projections are based on pre-pandemic data. Performance and projections may change based on future post-pandemic data.



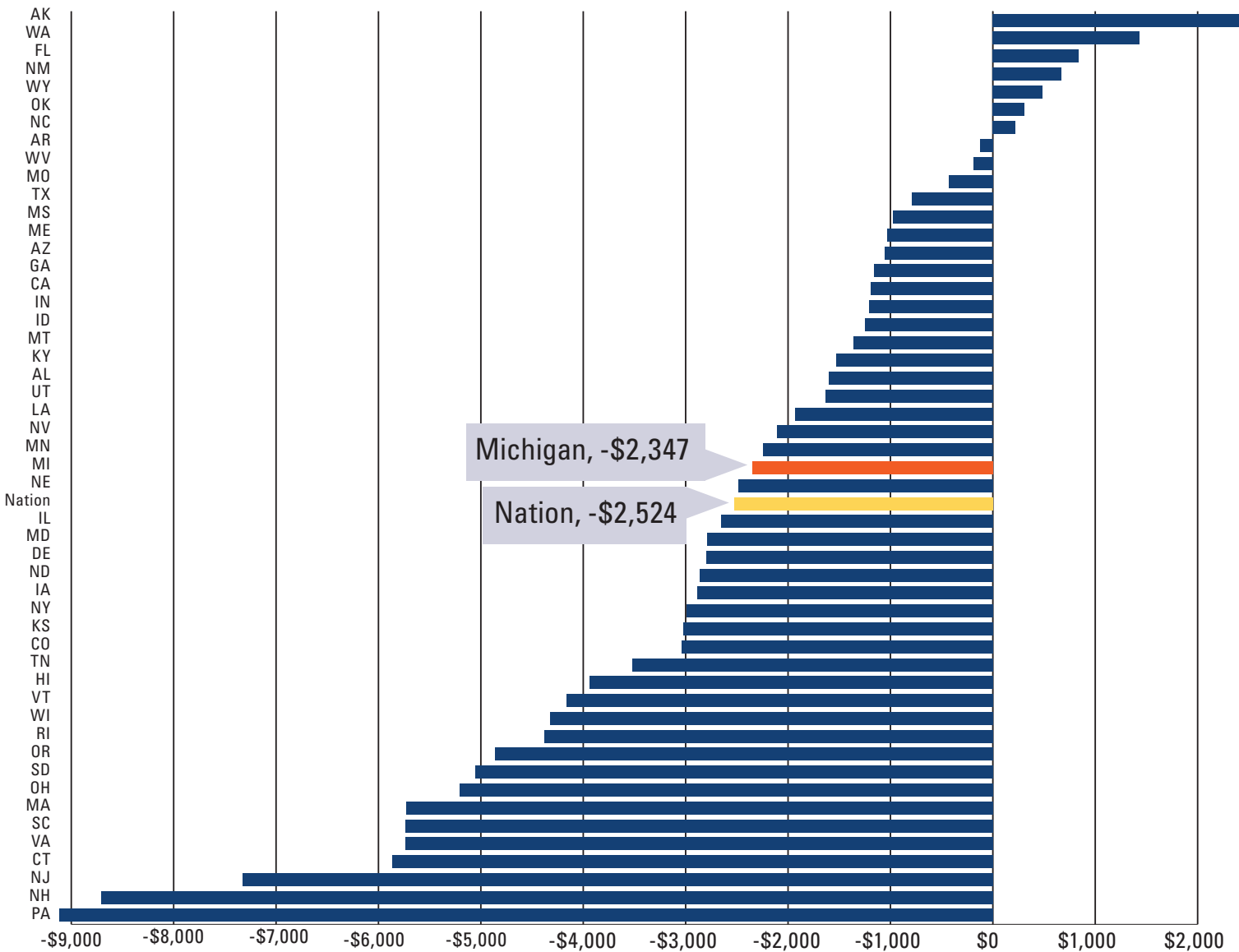
Photo credit: Valaurian Waller



# College Affordability

## Low-Income Students Fall Short \$2,347, On Average, of Affording the Cost of Attending Michigan Four-Year Public Institutions

Four-Year Public Institution Affordability Gaps for In-State Students Living on Campus with Summer Work (2019)



SOURCE: National College Access Network, The Growing Gap: Public Higher Education's Declining Affordability for Pell Grant Recipients, 2021

# Endnotes

To ensure the highest quality data available and up-to-date resources are used, the data sources used to track some Michigan Achieves! Indicators have been updated over time.

<sup>i</sup> ACT, Inc. (2015). *Ready for college and ready for work: Same or different*. <https://www.act.org/content/act/en/research/pdfs/ready-for-collegeandreadyforworksameordifferent.html>

<sup>ii</sup> Barnett, W.S., Carolan, M.E., Fitzgerald, J., & Squires, J.H. (2012). *The state of preschool 2012: State preschool yearbook*. National Institute for Early Education Research. <https://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/yearbook2012.pdf>; Friedman-Krauss, A., Barnett, W.S. Garver, K.A., Hodges, K.S., Weisenfeld, G.G., Gardiner, B. (2020). *The state of preschool 2020: State preschool yearbook*. National Institute for Early Education Research. <https://nieer.org/state-preschool-yearbooks/yearbook2020>

<sup>iii</sup> National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, *College-Going Rates of High School Graduates, 2017-2018*

<sup>iv</sup> Michigan Center for Education Performance and Information. (2018-2019). *College Enrollment by High School* [Dataset]. <https://www.mischooldata.org/college-enrollment-by-hs/>

*Note: According to mischooldata.org, this metric is subject to change in the “within 12 months” timeframe as more data become available and is incorporated. The data published in this report reflect what was available on 3/18/2022.*

<sup>v</sup> National College Attainment Network. (n.d.). *National FAFSA completion rates for high school seniors and graduates*. [https://www.ncan.org/general/custom.asp?page=NationalFAFSACompletionRatesforHighSchoolSeniorsandGraduates&msclid=890957fda6ec11ecbca215454952\\_ea82](https://www.ncan.org/general/custom.asp?page=NationalFAFSACompletionRatesforHighSchoolSeniorsandGraduates&msclid=890957fda6ec11ecbca215454952_ea82)

<sup>vi</sup> National College Attainment Network. *Form your future: FAFSA tracker*. Retrieved March 17, 2022 from <https://formyourfuture.org/fafsa-tracker/>

<sup>vii</sup> Rivkin, S.G., Hanushek, E.A., Kain J.F. (2005). Teachers, schools, and academic achievement. *Econometrica*, 73(2), 417-458.

<sup>viii</sup> Adelman, C. (2006). *The toolbox revisited: Paths to degree completion from high school through college*. U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education.

<sup>ix</sup> Harwin, A. (2018, June 05). How many teachers are chronically absent from class in your state? *Education Week*. <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/how-many-teachers-are-chronically-absent-from-class-in-your-state/2018/06?msclid=c57091fea6fd11eca511bae4a8af59af>

<sup>x</sup> National Assessment of Educational Progress, National Center for Educational Statistics. *Mathematics, Grade 8, Days absent from school in this month, 2019*.

<sup>xi</sup> Nichols, A.H., Anthony Jr., M., & Schak, O. (2019). *How affordable are public colleges in your state?* The Education Trust. <https://edtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/How-Affordable-Are-Public-Colleges-in-Your-State-for-Students-from-Low-Income-Background-December-2019.pdf>



Photo credit: Erik Holladay



In 2015, The Education Trust-Midwest launched the Michigan Achieves! campaign to make Michigan a top ten education state by 2030. Each year, we report on Michigan’s progress toward that goal based on student outcome performance metrics and opportunity to learn metrics. These metrics shed light on the health of education in our state – and the extent to which Michigan is succeeding at creating conditions that support teaching and learning in Michigan public schools.

Since then, a growing number of partners around the state have come to work together to advance the best practices and strategies from leading education states to Michigan, in order to close achievement gaps and ensure every Michigan student is learning—and being taught—at high levels. Join the movement at [www.edtrustmidwest.org](http://www.edtrustmidwest.org).

### **Acknowledgments:**

The Education Trust-Midwest is grateful to the many funders, partners and supporters who are committed to lifting up public education as a top priority for Michigan.

### **About The Education Trust Midwest**

The Education Trust-Midwest is a non-partisan, statewide research, policy and advocacy organization focused on what is best for Michigan students. Our mission is to close opportunity gaps, particularly for students of color, English learners, students with disabilities and children living in poverty — and to make Michigan a top ten education state for all children.



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**The Education Trust—Midwest**

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