



EDUCATION

“The roots of children’s learning and health begin in early childhood. From birth on, children’s life experiences contribute to their outcomes. Families are the locus for most of those experiences, but they must be supported by informal networks, communities that recognize and support the critical involvement of families in children’s educational and health outcomes, policies that support and strengthen the family system in carrying out its roles”

Cathy Jordan. Associate Professor of Pediatrics and Neurology and
Director of the Children, Youth and Family Consortium (CYFC) at the University of Minnesota.



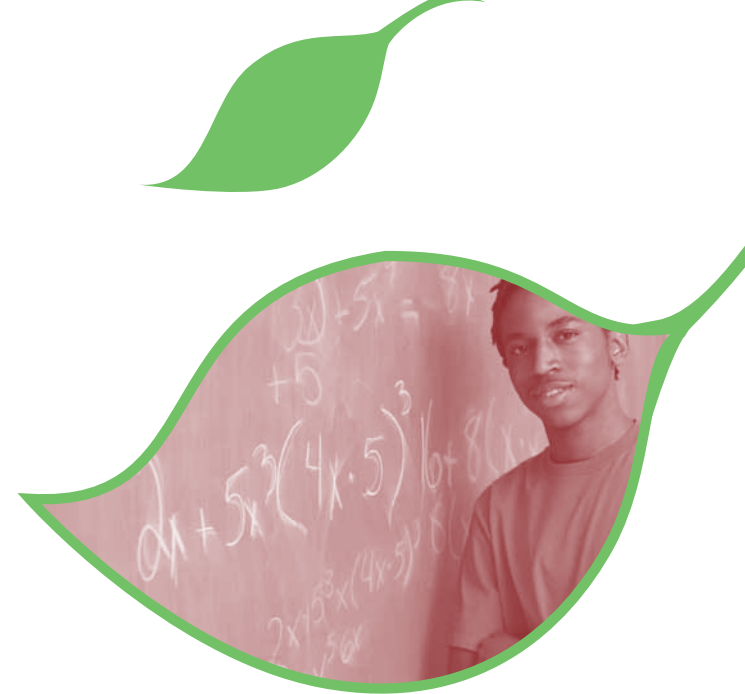
Education is a lifelong process that begins at birth. This concept is embodied in the term cradle to career, which is used to describe a student-focused and integrated system from birth through postsecondary training or college.¹⁴ The expectation is that all students need to be ready to complete postsecondary studies in order to have the skills for a job with an adequate wage. The importance of nurturing learning in the earliest days of life has been bolstered by research documenting the rapid growth of the brain in early childhood. Improving prevention and intervention programs in the earliest years provides the greatest opportunity to ensure optimum potential for brain development and lifelong learning.

To improve educational outcomes, the vital linkages to community services, supports for families, mental health services, school-based health, quality child care, school

health education, after-school and summer enrichment programs must begin in the earliest years and continue through high school. The academic success of children is grounded in their circumstances at home, in school, in the neighborhood and community. Children who are healthy—both emotionally and physically—are much more likely to succeed as students. Those who miss school due to asthma attacks or fear of bullies, fall behind. In like manner, all schools must have the resources to intervene quickly and effectively when students are falling behind, to create a safe and nurturing school climate, and to provide high quality educational opportunities for all children.

Programs such as home visiting that sometimes begin even before the birth are a key intervention for at-risk parents. Home visiting programs have proved to be successful in improving the lives of newborns and their mothers. Federal funding through the Affordable Care Act will enable Michigan to coordinate and expand evidence-based home visiting

¹⁴ The terms P-16 (preschool through four years of college) and P-20 (prenatal through age 20) are also used to capture this perspective.



in high-risk communities.¹⁵ Ongoing visits after the birth help mothers access services and improve parenting skills from the very outset of their children’s lives.

Efforts to coordinate services and programs for young children at the local level through Great Start Collaboratives will now be reinforced at the state level through the newly created Office of Great Start. This new office housed in the Michigan Department of Education was authorized in 2011 by an Executive Order (2011-8) to “create a coherent system of health and early learning that aligns, integrates and coordinates Michigan’s investments from prenatal to third grade.” Such a system ensures that more children get what they need from birth through early elementary grades so that they are able to read proficiently by the end of the third grade, a critical benchmark in a child’s educational development and a key measure of success according to the Governor’s planning and position papers.

¹⁵ Evidence-based programs are those that have been found to be effective (the program produces the desired positive results) based on the findings of rigorous and peer-reviewed evaluation.

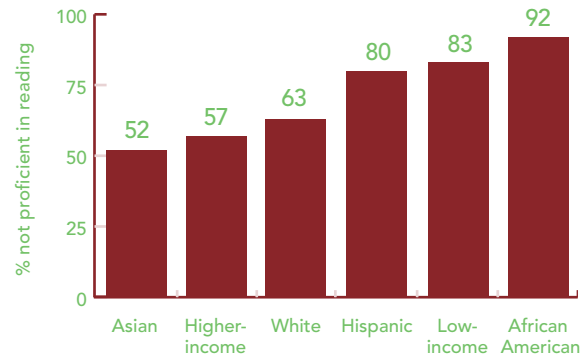
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While the ambitious federal *No Child Left Behind* legislation sought to have all the nation's children proficient in reading and math by 2014, many states, including Michigan, are now seeking waivers to that requirement. As Michigan works to bring its state standards in line with the more rigorous national ones, even more students in the state will have difficulty demonstrating proficiency. Michigan proposes to reduce the law's expectation to 80 percent of students prepared for college and career in the next 10 years.

Michigan has a long road ahead to achieve this goal. Just under one-third of Michigan fourth-graders demonstrated proficiency in reading (31%) on the 2011 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the standard for measuring academic proficiency across the states. Overall Michigan 2011 results were roughly the same as the national average and not significantly different from those of 1992.¹⁶

Substantial gaps in the Michigan results persist by income and race/ethnicity. The gap between white and African-American students in 2011 was 34 points, and between whites and Hispanics, 19 points. This achievement gap between African-American and white fourth-graders was the second largest in the nation. Roughly nine of every 10 African American fourth-graders in the state did not demonstrate proficiency (92%) in reading, nor did four of every five Hispanics (80%), compared with roughly two of every three whites (63%). Lower-income fourth-graders—those eligible for free or reduced price lunch—were also more likely to score below proficiency (83%) compared with higher-income students (57%).¹⁷

The percentages of Michigan fourth-graders not proficient in reading are highest in communities of color and low-income families.

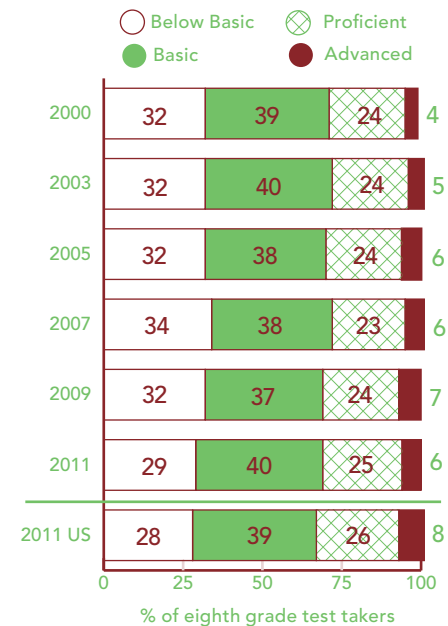


Source: *The Nation's Report Card, Reading 2011 State Snapshot Report Michigan Grade 4*

NAEP results for math at the fourth and eighth grade reflect similar achievement gaps for disadvantaged children. The latest NAEP math results for Michigan eighth-graders show an average score of 280, lower than the average scores in 25 other states. Over two-thirds of Michigan eighth-graders (69%) could not demonstrate proficiency on the national test, compared with only 22 percent failing to do so on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP). (Each state develops its own tests for the various grades and subjects and determines how many correct answers reflect proficiency.)

NAEP results are only available for the state as a whole. The results from the MEAP and high school Michigan Merit Exam (MME) are the only measures available to assess educational attainment across Michigan's counties. This report provides the 2010 results to compare with 2003 for the MEAP and 2008 for the MME.¹⁸

More Michigan eighth-graders in 2011 than in 2000 demonstrated proficiency on NAEP math.

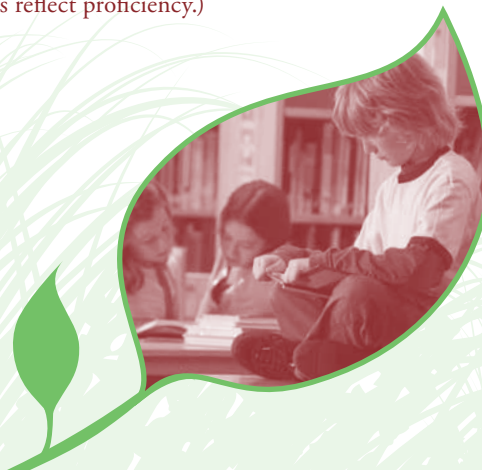


Source: *U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics*

¹⁶ The Nation's Report Card. Reading 2011 State Snapshot Report Michigan Grade 4 Public Schools.

¹⁷ Students in families with income below 185 percent of the poverty level (\$32,500 for a single-parent family of three and \$40,900 for a two-parent family of four) qualify for School Lunch at free or reduced prices.

¹⁸ The 2011 MEAP and MME results will not be comparable to previous years as students will have to answer many more questions correctly to be deemed proficient. This change will bring the state more in line with the NAEP standards, but the percentages of Michigan students attaining proficiency on the MEAP and MME are expected to decline significantly in 2011.



FOURTH-GRADE MATH MEAP

The 2010 MEAP results showed substantial improvement in reading and math proficiency among Michigan fourth-graders compared with those in 2003. The percentage of fourth-graders who did not perform at a proficient level fell by 76 percent over the seven years. Only 9 percent of Michigan fourth-graders tested below proficiency level in 2010 compared with over one-third in 2003. The improvement was reflected across all 82 Michigan counties with test results. Across the counties the percentage of fourth-graders not showing proficiency in math ranged from roughly 3 percent in Antrim to 17 percent in Oscoda.

EIGHTH-GRADE MATH MEAP

Similarly math proficiency improved substantially among Michigan's eighth-graders on the MEAP test. The percentage of Michigan eighth-graders who did not demonstrate proficiency in math dropped from 48 percent of test takers in 2003 to 22 percent in 2010. Nonetheless, these results still mean that a relatively large number (25,400) of Michigan eighth-graders in 2010 did not demonstrate math skills deemed as proficient for their grade level.

Across Michigan counties, the percentage of eighth-graders not performing at proficient levels on the MEAP math test ranged from 7 percent in Mackinac County to 45 percent in Lake County.

11TH-GRADE MATH MICHIGAN MERIT EXAM

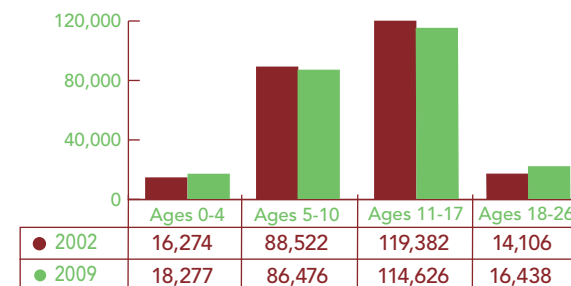
Half of Michigan 11th-graders did not meet the proficiency level for math on the Michigan Merit Exam (MME) in 2010, compared with 54 percent in 2008. The percentage change was an 8 percent improvement over the three years. Among Michigan counties the percent of 11th-graders not demonstrating math proficiency ranged from 30 percent in Ottawa to 70 percent in Lake. Almost every county (73 of 82) showed improvement over the trend period; only five counties sustained double-digit change for the worse.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Roughly 14 percent of Michigan students received special education services in 2010—approximately 226,700 students ranging in age from 3 to 26. These services are vital for improving achievement and long-term outcomes for children with special needs. Part B of the federal *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) requires school districts to identify and evaluate students who may need special education services. If found eligible, a student must be provided with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that outlines education goals and steps to achieve them.

In Michigan most children are identified in the teen years; however, the largest number identified—19,800—for a single year were the 12-year-olds. Since 2002 the total number of special education students has remained quite stable—ranging as high as 250,000 in 2005 to the 2010 low. Between 2002 and 2009 the number of preschool and young adults receiving special education services increased by a total of 5,000 across both groups.

Fewer children receive special education services in K-12 as numbers for preschool and young adults rise.



Source: Michigan Department of Education, Special Education Services

In the area of education the glaring achievement gaps provide Michigan its most critical challenge: Relatively large percentages of the state's disadvantaged children have not been able to demonstrate proficiency in reading and math. The state needs a coordinated strategy to address the scope of this disparity. For too many low-income students and those in communities of color, multiple barriers, such as under-resourced schools, unstable and unhealthy housing, lack of reliable transportation and hunger, exist. Community services to address the full scope of the family needs, including physical and mental health, must be in place to improve the social and economic circumstances in which children live.

Without a focused effort to outline a comprehensive approach, coordinate a strategy, and provide the resources, including instructional materials and professional development, Michigan will continue to fall behind as other states make the commitment to ensure all children succeed academically.

