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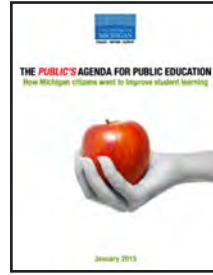
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What We've *Learned* about Learning

A Center for Michigan Policy Brief
March 2015

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The Public's Agenda for Public Education

http://bridgemi.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Education_Report_FINAL.pdf



Policy Options to Support Children from Birth to Age Three

<http://www.crcmich.org/PUBLICAT/2010s/2014/>

[Policy_Options_to_Support_Children_from_Birth_to_Age_3.pdf](#)



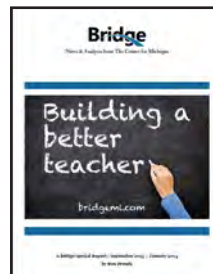
The Smartest Kids in The Nation

<http://bridgemi.com/tag/series-the-smartest-kids-in-the-nation/>



Michigan's Forgotten Four Year Olds

<http://bridgemi.com/tag/series-michigans-forgotten-4-year-olds/>



Building a Better Teacher

<http://bridgemi.com/tag/series-building-a-better-teacher/>

The Center for Michigan is a nonprofit, nonpartisan “think and do tank” founded in 2006. We combine public engagement and journalism to spur research and momentum for positive, public-oriented policy change. The Center is funded by a wide range of foundations, corporate philanthropy, and hundreds of individual donors statewide. The Center does not engage in any form of campaign finance. The Center stands ready to share what it continues to learn with policymakers at any time. Center for Michigan Chairman Phil Power and President & CEO John Bebow can be reached at 734-769-4625 or at info@thecenterformichigan.net to provide copies of the reports discussed in this brief or to discuss the Center's work.

For the past four years, the Center for Michigan has engaged in a deep dive on public education in Michigan. We've traveled across the state, convened thousands of statewide residents in nearly 300 community meetings, conducted large-sample statistical polls, and assigned some of the state's most experienced journalists to research and write dozens of reports about K-12 education.

A CHECKLIST FOR BETTER EDUCATION PERFORMANCE

Four key ways policymakers can leverage the Center's public engagement work, journalism, and research to continue to improve Michigan's education system...

1) START AT THE START: KEEP GOING ON EARLY CHILDHOOD

The Michigan Legislature and Snyder Administration have implemented the largest expansion of public preschool in the nation. This reform is addressing major school readiness gaps identified in 2012 by Bridge Magazine's special report, “Michigan's Forgotten Four Year Olds.” **Now the key is to continue to refine kindergarten readiness assessments and Great Start Readiness Program evaluation to measure the effectiveness of the preschool expansion.**

In addition, research organized by The Center for Michigan and conducted by Public Sector Consultants, Inc. and the Citizens Research Council of Michigan outlines **four more ways to steadily boost third-grade reading proficiency through investments and reforms in child care, providing medical homes to vulnerable children, home visiting programs, and pilot Pre-K programs for three year olds.**

2) BOLSTER EDUCATOR ACCOUNTABILITY AND ONGOING TRAINING

The Michigan public wants educators held accountable for student success. They also want stronger support for educators to succeed. Those clear public mandates emerged from more than 100 statewide community meetings and large-sample polls conducted by The Center. The crossroads of those two public priorities – accountability and support – is **implementation of a comprehensive and rigorous statewide educator evaluation system including ongoing training to improve educator performance.**

3) IMPROVE AND INTENSIFY TEACHER PREPARATION

Our public engagement research also shows the public wants Michigan to raise the bar for entry into the teaching profession and require deeper mastery of the academic subjects teachers teach. A lengthy investigation by Bridge shows Michigan is a long way from accomplishing that goal. Our “Building a Better Teacher” report demonstrated that Michigan is failing its children by failing its beginning teachers. Other countries with stronger academic performance are more selective about who gets into their more rigorous teaching programs. In Michigan, teachers drop out at a higher rate than their students – one-third of new teachers flee the classroom within four years. Inexperienced teachers are clustered in Michigan's poorest schools, widening an already yawning achievement gap. And Michigan colleges churn out more than 4,000 new educators every year with little incentive to limit enrollment. **The Michigan Legislature has taken a first step to deal with these issues by providing partial funding for an overhaul of teacher certification exams. Legislators can continue the push through oversight to assure the Michigan Department of Education rapidly implements more rigorous teacher tests.**

4) LEARN FROM LEADING STATES

In the past decade, dozens of states have taken steps to raise student achievement in public schools. Many states are zooming past Michigan in terms of improved student performance. In fourth and eighth-grade reading and math – key barometers of student learning – Michigan students of different races and income levels have fallen behind their demographic peers in other states, and the gaps are widening. Over the past decade, Michigan has been lapped by states as liberal as Massachusetts, as conservative as Tennessee, and as close as Indiana, Ohio and Wisconsin. **Bridge Magazine's report, “The Smartest Kids in the Nation” shows how such states are using rigorous teacher evaluation and training, intensified early education programs, intense focus on boosting grade school reading proficiency, low class sizes, high academic standards, and increased investment on at-risk students to boost academic performance.**