



THE *PUBLIC'S* AGENDA FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

How Michigan citizens want to improve student learning



January 2013

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE MICHIGAN CITIZENS' AGENDA FOR IMPROVING STUDENT LEARNING

This report presents a clear view of what the Michigan public wants from public education.

Great schools are fundamental to Michigan's prosperity – there's little debate about that. But exactly how to vastly improve our state's public education system is a far more complicated question.

Our state capitol is abuzz with education reform proposals and debate. Teacher tenure, evaluation and retirement systems are being reworked. Plans are underway to overhaul the management and operations of the state's most challenged and under-performing public schools. Ideas to widen school choice, charter schools and online schools are the subject of fierce debate. And the state's public school finance law could be rewritten to encourage a dizzying array of new learning options for families and new management challenges and opportunities for school leaders.

Among the reams of draft legislation and testimony, one voice is often muted. That's the voice of the Michigan public – the parents, students, members of the workforce and employers who are the customers of our schools, and the front-line educators who teach our kids.

As this report illustrates, the public wants new focus on education reform issues that are not always on the front burner in Lansing. And large segments of the public are skeptical of some of the issues that are on that front burner.

The Center for Michigan strives to serve as the state's nonprofit, nonpartisan citizenship company. We provide inclusive public engagement programs so Michigan residents can learn about and discuss important public issues in thoughtful ways and amplify their collective voices in the halls of power. From December 2011 through November 2012, more than 7,500 diverse Michigan residents took part in more than 250 statewide community conversations and two large-sample polls to offer their views on how best to improve student learning in the state's public K-12 education system. (A full description of where we went, who participated, and our methodology for gathering public opinion is on pages 30-33 of this report.)

MICHIGAN CITIZENS' 4-POINT AGENDA TO IMPROVE STUDENT LEARNING

A clear citizens' agenda emerges from this public engagement campaign. We find a clear public mandate to:

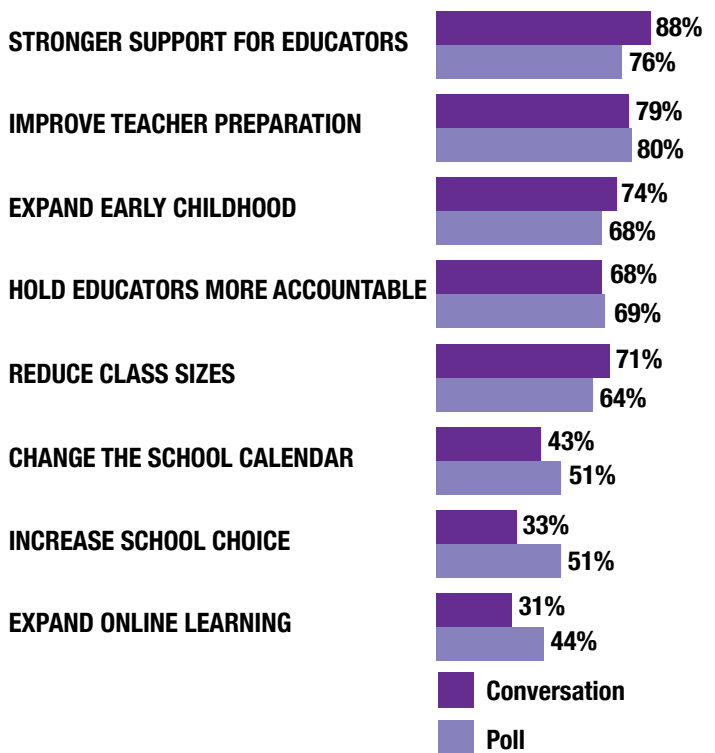
- **Intensify Early Childhood Education:** Expand access to publicly funded preschool and other early childhood programs to greatly increase at-risk students' reading and math

proficiency.

- **Improve Teacher Preparation:** Raise the bar for entry into education degree programs, require deeper mastery of the subjects teachers teach and institute tougher standards for teacher certification.
- **Provide Stronger Support to Educators:** Develop a stronger support system for educators once they're in the classroom. Options include more intense mentoring to help new teachers and administrators master their craft, ongoing in-depth training and evaluation of educator performance and development of more master teachers – true experts in the performance of their craft.
- **Hold Educators More Accountable for Student Success:** Removal of poor performers from the classroom while rewarding top performers, stronger evaluation processes and new compensation and promotion systems are all options for doing so.

In votes taken in our community conversations and polls, those four strategies consistently gained two-thirds support as being either "crucial" or "important" to improving student learning outcomes.

PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR SPECIFIC REFORMS



NOTE: "Consistent two-thirds public support" means the policy approach independently was deemed "important" or "crucial" by at least 67 percent of the more than 5,000 participants in 264 statewide community conversations as well as at least 67 percent of the nearly 2,000 participants in two statewide polls conducted for the Center for Michigan by Public Sector Consultants Inc.



WHAT CITIZENS DEEM TO BE LOWER PRIORITIES

Equally important are issues that state residents do not put at the top of the “to-do” list for policymakers intent on reforming education.

For example, we find considerably less enthusiasm for expanding school choice – an approach under intense consideration in Lansing. In both our community conversations and polls, fewer than one in five participants say it is “crucial” to expand school choice.

Likewise, we do not find clear public urgency to expand online learning opportunities. In short, the public is somewhat skeptical – especially if it means replacing traditional brick-and-mortar schools with more online-only schools.

Two other options to improve student learning receive a mixed response. A majority of participants in our community conversations and polls favor reducing class sizes, but affordable ways of doing so statewide are limited at best. We also hear mixed response to ideas to expand the annual school calendar.

We ask statewide residents of all ages, races, regions, income levels and walks of life to consider in detail eight particular strategies for improving student learning. Why eight strategies? Because those eight – as detailed in the following pages – are approaches that are either supported by academic research or are under serious consideration in the state capitol. The following pages provide the rationale behind these reform approaches. Most importantly, this report provides detailed public responses to each idea.

In summary, this report compiles the wisdom and wishes of the many different customers of public education – students, parents, and employers – and front-line educators.

IMPROVING STUDENT LEARNING – THE URGENCY IS CLEAR

The public scores Michigan’s statewide public education system as mediocre at best. A clear majority of community conversation and poll participants gave the statewide public education system a grade of “C” or lower. More than twice as many give the system a very low grade of “D” or “E” than an exemplary “A” mark. Only a quarter of community conversation participants and fewer than half of poll respondents said Michigan’s K-12 education system offers taxpayers a good return on investment.

As one community conversation participant says, “Michigan, on average, is passing, but just barely. We’re below average in our overall product... In comparison to other states and other countries, we are not doing very well.”

Such perceptions are grounded in statistical fact. As we launched this public engagement campaign at the beginning of 2012 – an Olympic year – the United States ranks nowhere near “medal status” for educational achievement. Instead, the U.S. ranks in the middle of the pack among nations in terms of literacy, and math and science proficiency. Worse yet, Michigan ranks at the low end of the middle of the pack among all states on a variety of math and reading outcomes, as well as for high school and college graduation rates. (See page 36 of this report for a quick Michigan education report card.)

SUMMARY (continued)

HIGHEST CONCERN IN COMMUNITIES MOST IN NEED

Across the state, we found African-American and low-income residents to be among the staunchest critics of public education. In community conversations and polls, African Americans give very low marks of “D” or “E” at higher rates than whites. And the wealthiest Michigan residents give considerably better grades to schools than the state’s poorest residents.

In other words, those most in need of the high-quality public education necessary to climb the economic ladder feel least well-served by the system. And, as this report details, they express some of the highest levels of support for reforms.

So, while there is heated debate in Lansing about exactly how best to improve the most-challenged and lowest-performing schools, there is no question that this is where policymakers’ attentions are rightly placed.

ADDITIONAL PUBLIC IDEAS FOR EDUCATION REFORM

Beyond the four clear priorities above, community conversation participants volunteer a wide range of additional approaches in open discussions. They propose many ideas to improve school outreach to families and increase business and community involvement in education success.

Likewise, they expressed a thirst for more creativity in public education – more elective class choices, more individualized learning, sharper focus on critical thinking skills than rote learning and exploration of new teaching models.

And there is public desire for more focus in schools on what students will do after graduation – better vocational education for those not heading to college, more career planning and prompting students at early ages to begin thinking about life and career options.

A WILLINGNESS TO INVEST IN BETTER STUDENT LEARNING

By consistent 70-30 majorities in both community conversations and polls, participants say they think Michigan needs to invest more money to improve student learning. If they are willing to invest more, they also want to invest differently.

Statewide residents express interest in investing more in expansion of preschool, higher pay to entice higher quality teaching, more use of technology, better support/training/evaluation of teachers, richer elective course choices and vocational programs and basic classroom supplies.

Many people also call for general and nonspecific efficiencies and greater accountability – after a decade of tight budgets, there is a belief that schools can still find ways to save money through consolidation of services across districts and cost-cutting in

pensions and benefits. Another popular notion is that too many burdensome regulations and inconsistent funding decisions in Lansing harm learning. Others expressed a grass-is-greener-elsewhere view and demanded equity in funding across all schools.

A CRUCIAL TIME FOR PUBLIC INPUT AND INVOLVEMENT

Altogether, this report presents nuanced and detailed public opinion on how to improve student learning outcomes at a key moment. It arrives just as policymakers consider many far-reaching changes to the public education system.

Opportunity is quickly emerging to advance key elements of this citizens’ agenda:

- In terms of early childhood expansion, a budget proposal is on the table in the legislature to more than double the amount of annual state appropriations for the state’s Great Start Readiness public preschool program.
- In terms of providing both more accountability and more support for educators, a panel of experts will offer in 2013 a new system for ongoing, in-depth evaluation of educator performance.

The Center for Michigan will engage policymakers on those fronts to assure that citizen voices are heard and new policies reflect the statewide values citizens have expressed.

On other issues, the Center for Michigan will invite citizen-inspired changes while examining other reform efforts to assure that policymakers understand the points of view of statewide residents. Examples:

- More work is needed to bring the issue of teacher preparation to the front burner of policymaking in Lansing.
- Some leaders – including Gov. Rick Snyder and State Board of Education President John Austin – have spoken favorably of developing standards for and recognizing true master teachers. But such programs are not yet fully developed.
- As policymakers develop new management models for the state’s poorest performing public schools, new opportunities to reduce class sizes may arise. The Center’s Bridge Magazine will report on any such innovations and the Center will seek to spread promising practices if they develop.
- As proposals are considered to expand school choice, charter schools, school calendars, and online learning, Bridge Magazine will monitor the efforts to measure gains or losses in student achievement and ensure accountability.

NEXT STEPS & WAYS CITIZENS CAN CONTINUE TO ENGAGE

As the Center for Michigan releases this report and begins the work of instituting the important changes for which it calls, we invite all concerned citizens to join us. We will offer numerous public opportunities to discuss this report and sharpen its strategies to improve student learning. Here are four initial ways citizens can continue their engagement:

- **Join** education experts and policymakers who will discuss how best to advance this citizens' agenda at a morning conference on January 29, 2013 at the Lansing Center just east of the state capitol. RSVP today by emailing us at info@thecenterformichigan.net.
- **Join** a Center for Michigan citizen education reform task force by signing up at (www.surveymonkey.com/s/C7RQ3B3). Additional citizen input can help us sharpen specific proposals to advance student learning policies at the statewide and regional levels.
- **Volunteer** locally. Many of our community conversation participants already have done so through the Michigan Community Service Commission volunteer match widget, a tool that lists opportunities for Michigan residents to volunteer with education-related organizations in their own communities. The service commission sees a sustained increase in use of the volunteer widget throughout 2012 as we present the opportunity in community conversations.
- **Read** Bridge Magazine at www.bridgemi.com or follow us on Facebook or Twitter to stay attuned to our additional public outreach efforts on improving student learning - and to read our in-depth statewide coverage of education reform issues.

A FINAL WORD OF THANKS

The Center for Michigan is grateful to a wide range of foundations, corporations and individuals whose financial support makes possible our distinctive statewide public engagement campaigns. Our investors are listed on page 35.

Ultimately, this citizens' agenda to improve student learning is a body of public work, only possible through the participation of more than 7,500 people who volunteered to offer authentic guidance to state and local policymakers. The highest thanks goes to all of you.



HOW THE PUBLIC GRADES K-12 EDUCATION

Our statewide public education system is mediocre at best. That's the general conclusion from the Center for Michigan's 264 in-person community conversations on the future of student learning with more than 5,800 people, and our accompanying phone polls of another 1,900 statewide residents.

A clear majority of participants gave the statewide public education system a grade of "C" or lower. More than twice as many give the system a very low grade of "D" or "E" than an exemplary "A" mark.

The long list of educational improvements the public favored in our community conversations includes more equal resources across schools and school districts, more relevant and practical learning in classrooms, new teaching methods to meet student needs, less bureaucracy, more funding, higher expectations of educators, more aggressive action to fight high dropout rates, higher curriculum standards, more curriculum choices, and higher expectations of students.

As one community conversation participant summarized, "Michigan, on average, is passing, but just barely. We're below average in our overall product... In comparison to other states and other countries, we are not doing very well."

Such perceptions are grounded in statistical fact. As we launched this public engagement campaign at the beginning of 2012 – an Olympic year – the United States ranked nowhere near "medal status" for educational achievement: we are in the middle of the pack among nations in literacy and math and science proficiency. Worse yet, Michigan ranked even below states in the middle of the pack on a variety of math and reading outcomes as well as high school and college graduation rates. (See page 36 for more statistical details).

Yet, through a combination of familiarity, community trust or perhaps even denial in some cases, we found far more public support for local schools than the statewide system. At the local school district level, a majority of the thousands of people we listened to gave high marks of "A" or "B."

We found two particularly noteworthy contrasts in the public's grades of public schools.

First, African-American and low-income residents were the staunchest critics of public education. In community conversations and polls, African Americans gave very low marks of "D" or "E" at higher rates than whites. And the wealthiest Michigan residents were more likely to hand out good grades than the state's poorest residents were.

In other words, those most in need of the educational tools necessary to climb the economic ladder feel least served by public education.

"I think the inner-city schools stink," one community conversation participant told us. "My first-grader didn't have any of the opportunities kids in close-by districts have."

Secondly, the customers of the education system – students,

parents, members of the workforce, employers, and retirees – are more critical of the current education system than those who work in the system.

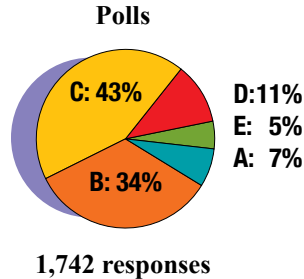
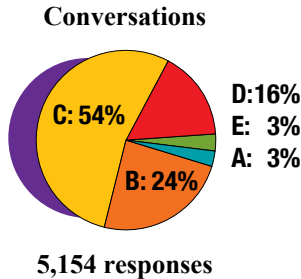
We found undercurrents of this culture clash throughout our year-long public engagement around the future of student learning.

Educators we heard from repeatedly reported being overworked and under-appreciated, their creativity shackled by reams of regulations and generally blamed by the public at large for larger social ills that can't be solved in the classroom. Meanwhile, many education customers expressed support for their specific local school leaders and teachers. But those customers also expressed considerable frustration with mediocre return on the taxpayers' education investment and the need for much greater accountability – finding ways to reward educators who achieve great classroom results while weeding out poor performers.

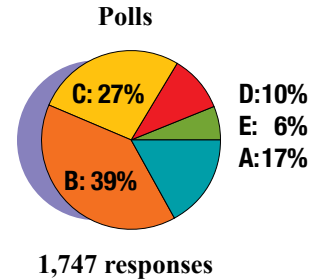
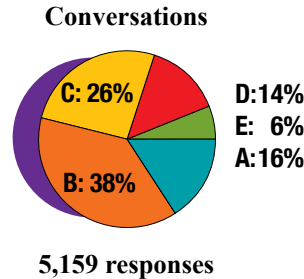
Overall, in choosing future policy paths to improve student learning, policymakers must navigate between the sometimes-differing visions of the customers and providers of public education.

THE PUBLIC'S GRADES: EDUCATION IS MEDIOCRE IN MICHIGAN

What letter grade do you give the statewide public education system?

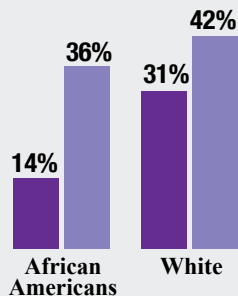


What letter grade do you give the local public education system?

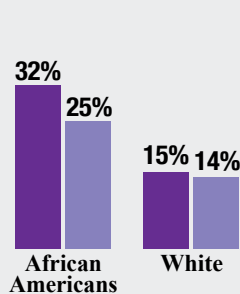


AFRICAN AMERICANS & LOW-INCOME RESIDENTS GIVE THE TOUGHEST K-12 GRADES

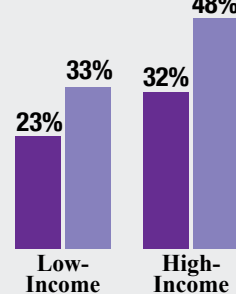
GAVE AN "A" OR "B"



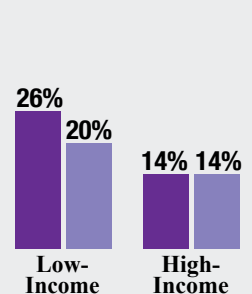
GAVE A "D" OR "E"



GAVE AN "A" OR "B"



GAVE A "D" OR "E"



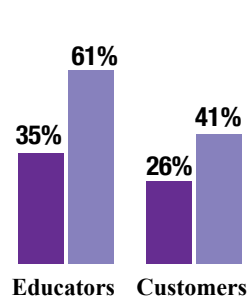
NOTE: Low income means community conversation participants who reported income of \$30,000 or less and poll respondents who reported income of under \$25,000. Middle income means community conversation participants who reported income of \$30,001-\$80,000, and poll respondents who reported income of \$25,000-\$74,999. High income means community conversation participants who reported income above \$80,000 and poll respondents who reported income above \$74,999.

■ Conversation
■ Poll

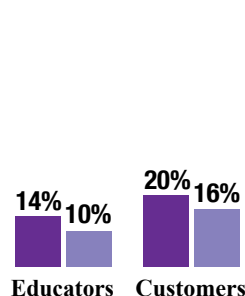
CUSTOMERS AND PROVIDERS DIFFER IN OPINION OF K-12 QUALITY

STATEWIDE EDUCATION SYSTEM

GAVE AN "A" OR "B"

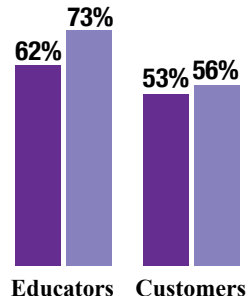


GAVE A "D" OR "E"

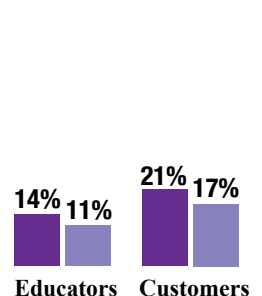


LOCAL EDUCATION SYSTEM

GAVE AN "A" OR "B"



GAVE A "D" OR "E"



NOTE: Educators are defined as those community conversation participants and poll respondents who described themselves as educators. Customers are defined as those community conversation participants and poll respondents who described themselves as students, parents, employers, members of the workforce, or retirees.

■ Conversation
■ Poll

PUBLIC VIEWS ON EXPANDING EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

Among the eight strategies to improve student learning, Michigan residents said expanding preschool and early childhood programs was a clear priority. In statewide community conversations and polls, seven out of 10 respondents said early childhood expansion was either “crucial” or “important.”

Decades of research show learning begins well before kindergarten. The state’s public preschool system – the Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) -- is a proven, high-return-on-investment strategy, especially for lower-income at-risk families. It results in significantly higher grade school reading and math proficiency – especially for low-income and at-risk children. Yet 30,000 Michigan 4-year-olds are eligible for GSRP but not enrolled, mainly because the state hasn’t invested enough in the program. Once available seats are full, they’re full.

In the community conversations, we explained to Michigan residents that preschool expansion can be costly. It could cost up to \$800 million to offer universal preschool to all 3- and 4-year-olds as the state board of education has advocated. It could cost approximately \$200 million to fully enroll in GSRP all 4-year-olds who meet income eligibility guidelines for the program.

Briefed with this knowledge about the costs involved, community conversation participants and poll respondents clearly favored expanding Michigan’s public preschool offerings.

Community conversation participants offered many reasons for supporting early childhood programs, including the notions that they level the playing field for all children, provides a necessary foundation for K-12 education and offers proven return on investment.

A sample of the widespread support for preschool and early childhood expressed by community conversations participants:

- “I think expanding early education is the most important priority. It would help children with a bad home life. We could prepare them for the challenges that they are going to face later on in life. It would also help with families that can’t afford day care. The younger you start the better off you’re going to be.”
- “I love the idea of early childhood because those kids are willing to learn, they are sponges, but if you have uneducated parents at home who don’t know how to implement these little things and recognize the small teachable moments then that child is going to fall behind.”
- “Just three weeks from the state prison budget would fund this for the kids who need it most. We should make that investment on the front end.”

We found wide support for preschool and early childhood expansion across many demographic groups. In both community conversations and polls, we found strong majority support among Michigan residents who reported being low income, middle income, high income, white, African American,

Hispanic, students, parents, educators, employers, members of the workforce and retirees.

We found a small minority of Michigan residents who opposed preschool and early childhood expansion. Nine percent of community conversation participants and 16 percent of poll respondents said it was “not very important” or “irrelevant.” Most cited reasons among opponents included the notion that not every child needs help before kindergarten, we need to “let kids be kids,” questions about economic value and funding and the idea that early learning is a family responsibility instead of a school responsibility.

CURRENT POLICY OPTIONS: HOW LEADERS CAN ACT ON PUBLIC WILL

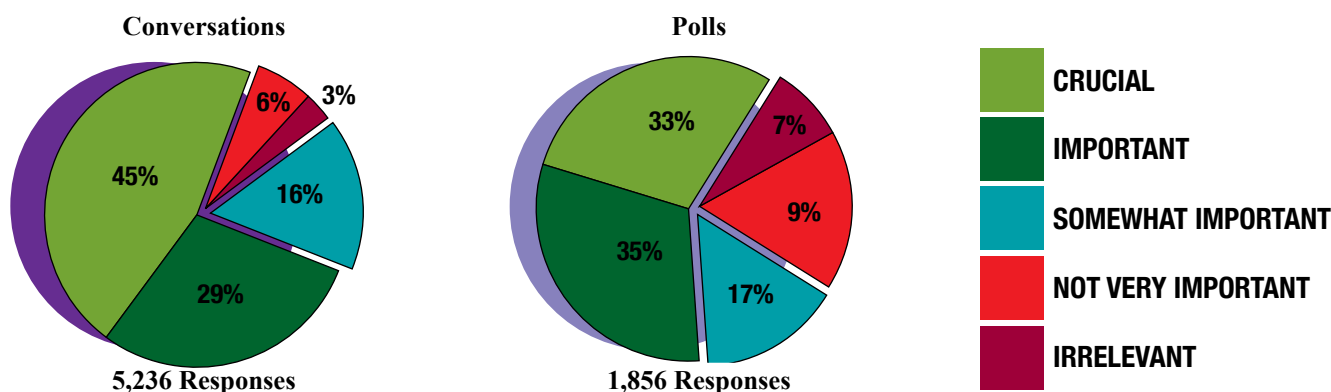
Working on behalf of the Children’s Leadership Council of Michigan (business leaders who support early childhood expansion), in August 2012 Public Sector Consultants Inc. and the Center for Michigan proposed a \$130 million expansion of the state-funded Great Start Readiness preschool program for 4-year-olds. This and other proposals under discussion in Lansing seek to quickly expand GSRP enrollment by several thousand students while also expanding some Pre-K programs from half-day to full-day.

Senator Roger Kahn, R-Saginaw Township, the chairman of the Michigan Senate Appropriations Committee, said in August that he would pursue a \$140 million early childhood expansion in the 2013-14 state budget for both GSRP expansion and additional programs for 0-3-year-olds.

Likewise, state schools Superintendent Mike Flanagan is negotiating for a GSRP expansion in excess of \$100 million. Flanagan stated at a public hearing in summer 2012 that preschool and early childhood expansion must be fundamental to any school reform efforts in the state. “We can’t get to third-grade reading proficiency without it,” he said. “You can’t get there. It’s impossible.”

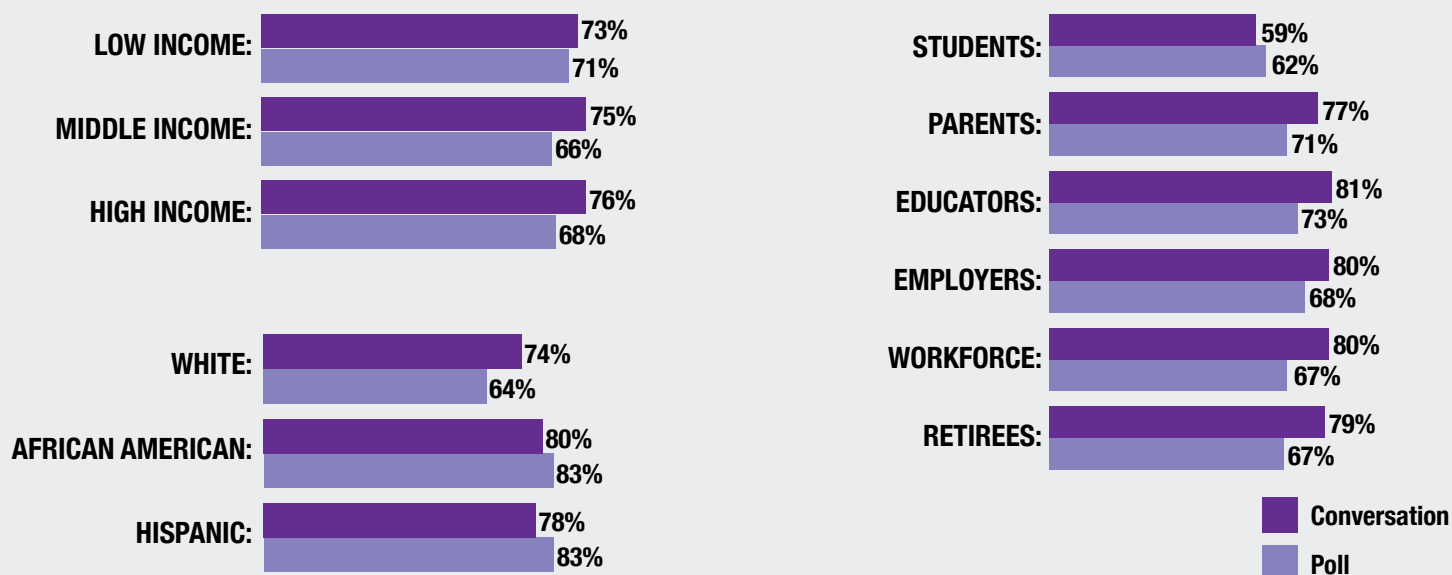
THE PUBLIC VIEW: WHAT MICHIGAN RESIDENTS SAID ABOUT EXPANDING PRESCHOOL & EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

In terms of improving student learning outcomes, how important is it to expand early childhood and pre-K?



Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding

RATIO OF SPECIFIC DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS WHO SAID PRE-K/EARLY CHILDHOOD EXPANSION IS “CRUCIAL” OR “IMPORTANT”



NOTE: Low income means community conversation participants who reported income of \$30,000 or less and poll respondents who reported income of under \$25,000. Middle income means community conversation participants who reported income of \$30,001-\$80,000, and poll respondents who reported income of \$25,000-\$74,999. High income means community conversation participants who reported income above \$80,000 and poll respondents who reported income above \$74,999.

TOP 5 COMMENTS IN SUPPORT OF EXPANDED EARLY CHILDHOOD TOP 5 COMMENTS OPPOSED TO EXPANDED EARLY CHILDHOOD

- Make pre-K accessible to all and level the playing field **(80 comments)**
- It provides the necessary foundation for learning/school **(84 comments)**
- There is proven return on investment **(39 comments)**
- The research clearly shows pre-K effectiveness **(38 comments)**
- Parents need to clearly understand the importance **(38 comments)**

- Don't make it mandatory. Not every child needs it **(25 comments)**
- Not necessary and doesn't improve things. Let kids be kids **(21 comments)**
- Don't do it at the expense of K-12 programs **(17 comments)**
- Parents shouldn't hand off their 2- and 3-year-olds **(13 comments)**
- It's the parents' responsibility, not the schools' **(11 comments)**

PUBLIC VIEWS ON IMPROVING TEACHER PREPARATION

There is a strong public mandate for policymakers to improve teacher preparation and raise the bar for entry into education fields in Michigan.

Currently, teachers must complete an approved teacher preparation program and pass the Michigan Test for Teacher Certification in their content area to obtain a teaching certificate in Michigan. Teachers must complete courses at or above the master's level to maintain certification.

That's not good enough, according to our community conversation participants and poll respondents. In addition, Michigan residents want incoming teachers to be better prepared for students' economic and cultural diversity and individual learning styles. They want teaching candidates to be plucked from the most gifted, passionate and motivated pools of college students. They want incoming teachers to be better prepared for classroom realities such as behavior problems and mental health issues. They want lesson plans to be more relatable and relevant to today's students. In general, they want teacher preparation programs to be more rigorous.

Eight out of 10 community conversation participants and poll respondents said improving teacher preparation was "crucial" or "important."

Educators themselves were among the strongest proponents of raising the bar for entry into their own profession.

Altogether, more than 70 percent of respondents across all dozen demographic groups we tracked strongly favored more rigorous teacher preparation programs. Support was highest among African Americans, Hispanics, educators, parents, and people with low incomes.

Sample comments from community conversations:

- "Finland, along with some other European countries, recruit from the top third of the class and we don't do that. Education is looked at as a fallback career here in the U.S. An education degree should be more difficult to obtain."
- "Teachers are as important as doctors, they should have higher standards for entry and get paid more."
- "When I was in a teacher preparation program, I was disappointed with the expectations for us and the work we had to do. I was embarrassed. It could have been my individual experience, but you would never see in a science class 90 percent of your students with a 4.0 grade point average."
- "You may be book smart, but not street smart, which is essential for addressing social issues with students. Teachers have the hardest jobs. Teachers need practical experience."

CURRENT POLICY OPTIONS: HOW LEADERS CAN ACT ON PUBLIC WILL

There is some agreement between citizens' support for improving teacher preparation and the governor's stated objectives for doing so. Gov. Rick Snyder has said he is in favor of reforming how we recruit and prepare prospective educators. Among his ideas is raising the score necessary to pass teaching certification exams.

The governor and legislature also seek to raise the bar for teachers already in Michigan classrooms. Teacher tenure reforms passed by the Michigan Legislature in 2011 called for the formation of the Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness. The council plans to recommend new standards for advanced teaching certificates in spring 2013. While the council is not required to consider changes to certification for brand new teachers, any updates to the advanced certificate may trickle down.

The Center for Michigan will present this citizens' agenda on education change to the council. Likewise, any Michigan resident can contact the council through its website (www.mcede.org/) or attend any of numerous periodic public meetings the council holds.

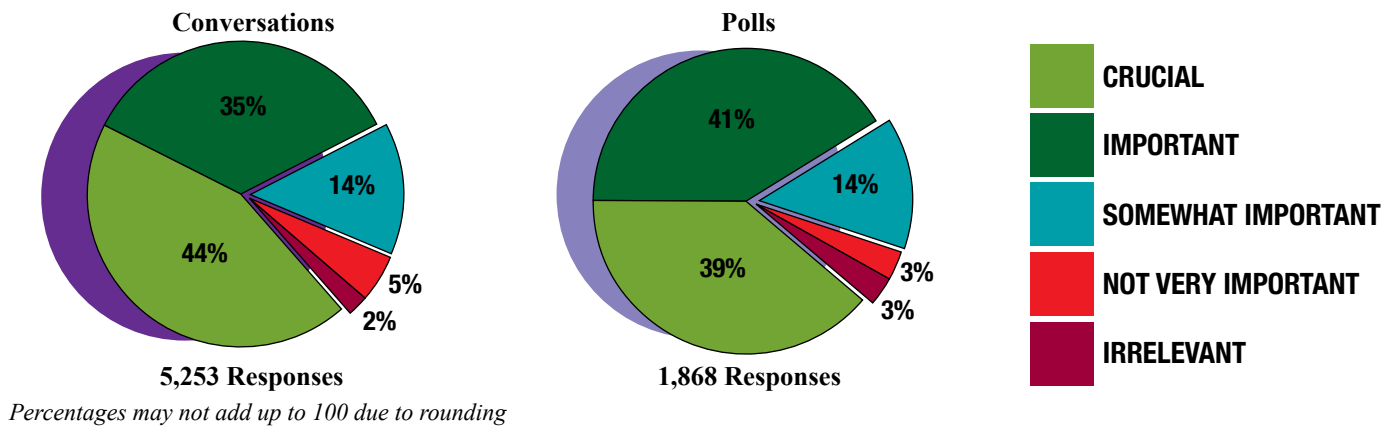
So, what does it take to become a teacher right now? Currently in Michigan, specific credit hour requirements vary across some three dozen colleges and universities that offer teacher preparation programs but, in all cases, would-be teachers are required to complete an education major that includes practice teaching.

There is national precedent for reforming our standards for educating educators. States like New York and Washington are implementing school of education standards that de-emphasize tests and written essays while giving new weight to how well prospective teachers actually perform in the classroom. Other states are participating in a three-year pilot trial of the standards, designed by Stanford University and known as the Teacher Performance Assessment.

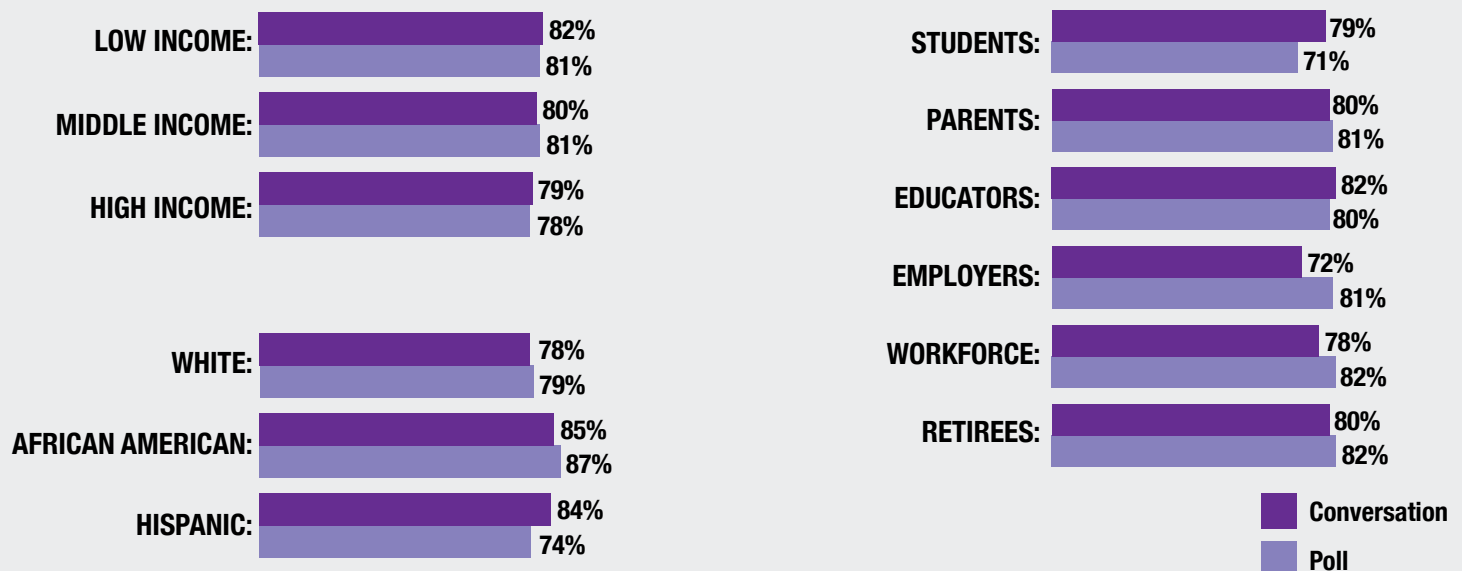
From a global perspective, Finland has some of the most rigorous standards for admission to its schools of education, while posting student test scores that rank at or near the top in the world. Teachers in Finland are required to obtain a three-year master's degree before teaching. Entrance is highly competitive, with just one in 10 applicants accepted for admission to these programs. Salaries are relatively generous. Teachers with 15 years of experience make 102 percent of what their fellow university graduates do, compared to 65 percent in the United States.

THE PUBLIC VIEW: WHAT MICHIGAN RESIDENTS SAID ABOUT IMPROVING TEACHER PREPARATION

In terms of improving student learning outcomes, how important is it to improve teacher preparation?



RATIO OF SPECIFIC DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS WHO SAID IMPROVING TEACHER PREPARATION IS “CRUCIAL” OR “IMPORTANT”



NOTE: Low income means community conversation participants who reported income of \$30,000 or less and poll respondents who reported income of under \$25,000. Middle income means community conversation participants who reported income of \$30,001-\$80,000, and poll respondents who reported income of \$25,000-\$74,999. High income means community conversation participants who reported income above \$80,000 and poll respondents who reported income above \$74,999.

TOP 5 COMMENTS IN SUPPORT OF IMPROVING TEACHER PREP TOP 2 COMMENTS OPPOSED TO IMPROVING TEACHER PREP

- Better prepare teaching candidates for student diversity: cultural, economic, individual learning ability and style, and gender (**143 comments**)
- Teaching candidates must be more gifted/passionate/motivated (**103 comments**)
- Better prepare teachers for the classroom realities, including student management, behavior problems, and mental health issues (**91 comments**)
- Prepare teachers to make education more relatable/relevant to students (**42 comments**)
- Teacher preparation programs are not good enough or rigorous enough (**34 comments**)

- Teacher preparation programs are currently adequate/great/improving (**23 comments**)
- Teachers are prepared to teach what they are teaching (**8 comments**)

PUBLIC VIEWS ON OFFERING STRONGER SUPPORT TO EDUCATORS

The customers of education expect more accountability and better results from educators. But they also favor offering more support to educators so they can best prepare students to succeed.

Community conversation and poll respondents strongly endorsed the idea of a stronger support system for teachers once they're in the classroom and for school leaders once they are assigned to a school building. Approaches include: 1) mentoring to help new teachers and school leaders acclimate to new schools and grade levels and master their craft; 2) ongoing, in-depth training, feedback and evaluation to help novice and veteran teachers and school leaders continuously improve; and, 3) development of more master teachers (North Carolina, for example, has 20,000 National Board Certified Teachers while Michigan has about 400).

Eighty-eight percent of community conversation participants and 76 percent of poll respondents said providing stronger support to educators was "crucial" or "important."

All dozen demographic groups we surveyed strongly favored better support for educators. Predictably, educators themselves voted in highest numbers for stronger educator support. But more than eight out of 10 people in every demographic group supported the notion, with that support highest among people with low incomes, African Americans, Hispanics, people with high incomes and general members of the workforce.

Beyond the specific policy options mentioned above, community conversation participants expressed the need for more support, reinforcement and engagement from students' families, more classroom discipline and student accountability in schools, and the need for more classroom supplies and resources.

Sample comments from community conversations:

- "I believe there are some fundamentals that no longer exist – parents working with teachers working with kids – and we need to get those back."
- "I think we need more useful accountability as opposed to just more accountability. Just using standardized test scores doesn't get the job done. More comprehensive accountability could be much more useful for teachers and schools. It should help teachers learn and improve. It also speaks to support and training."
- "More support is crucial - teachers are now being asked to be nurses, housemaids and more on top of their teaching duties."
- "Teachers' attention is consumed sometimes with just a few students. We need to get teacher assistants in the classroom so teachers can focus more on all students."

CURRENT POLICY OPTIONS: HOW LEADERS CAN ACT ON PUBLIC WILL

One way to provide stronger support for educators is by providing feedback on their instructional practices through teacher and school leader evaluations. The state-sanctioned experts on the Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness are testing new evaluation models in 14 school districts across the state. They will release final recommendations in summer 2013 and a new statewide evaluation system will be rolled out in the 2013-14 school year. The goal of this system is to contribute to enhanced instruction, improve student achievement, and support ongoing professional learning, according to the Council.

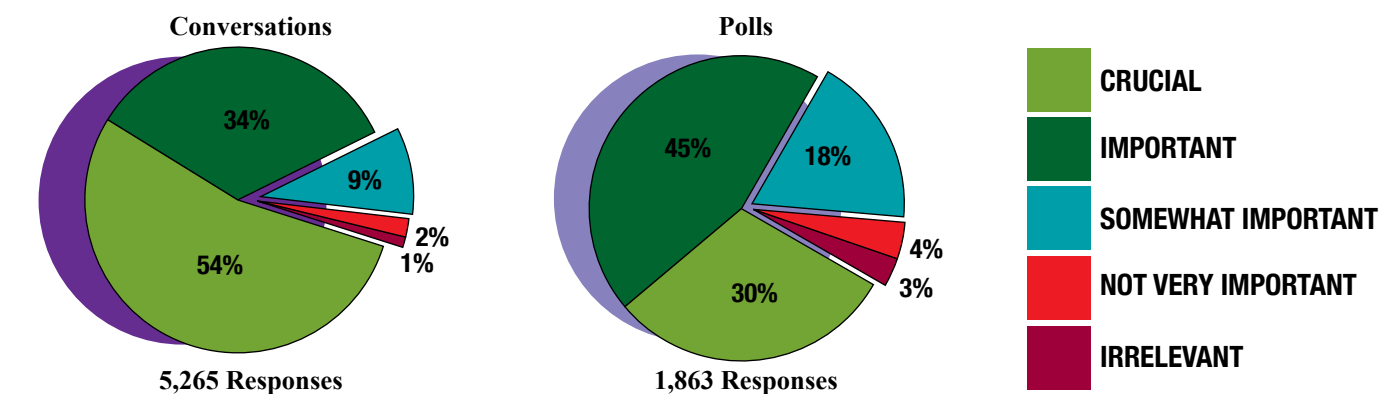
Another way to provide stronger support for teachers is through ongoing professional development. Michigan currently requires teachers to complete master's level courses or higher to maintain their teaching certificates. The council will recommend updates to these standards in spring 2013 and may adjust the amount and types of professional development required. The Center for Michigan will present this citizens' agenda on the future of student learning to the council. Likewise, any Michigan resident can contact the council through its website (www.mcede.org) or attend any of the numerous periodic public meetings the council holds.

To help develop more expert teachers, State Board of Education President John Austin has proposed that, for \$3 million per year, Michigan could pay for 1,000 teachers annually to obtain National Board certification. That idea has not yet been taken up by the legislature, but the governor has mentioned it as a possible tool to identify excellent teachers.

In line with community conversation participants' desire for more family support of educators, legislation that could make it easier for parents to take time off work to attend academic events has been introduced, but not yet acted upon, in the legislature.

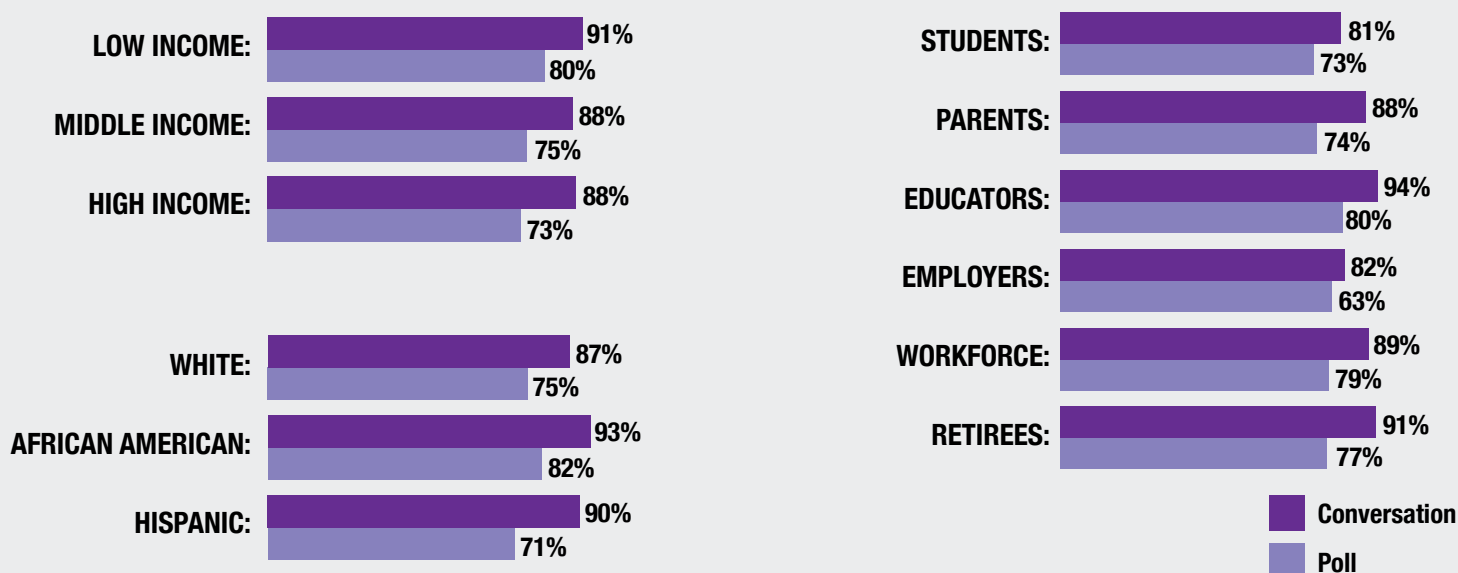
THE PUBLIC VIEW: WHAT MICHIGAN RESIDENTS SAID ABOUT PROVIDING STRONGER SUPPORT TO EDUCATORS

In terms of improving student learning outcomes, how important is it to provide stronger support to educators?



Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding

RATIO OF SPECIFIC DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS WHO SAID PROVIDING STRONGER SUPPORT IS “CRUCIAL” OR “IMPORTANT”



NOTE: Low income means community conversation participants who reported income of \$30,000 or less and poll respondents who reported income of under \$25,000. Middle income means community conversation participants who reported income of \$30,001-\$80,000, and poll respondents who reported income of \$25,000-\$74,999. High income means community conversation participants who reported income above \$80,000 and poll respondents who reported income above \$74,999.

TOP 5 COMMENTS IN SUPPORT OF STRONGER SUPPORT

- More family support of educators is needed (104 comments)
- There is a lack of discipline and student accountability in schools (75 comments)
- Teachers need more and better classroom supplies and resources (57 comments)
- Stronger school leadership and administration is needed to support teachers (38 comments)
- Teachers need more ongoing training and support once they're out of college (22 comments)

COMMENTS OPPOSED TO STRONGER SUPPORT

- No substantive opposition was received regarding stronger support for educators

PUBLIC VIEWS ON HOLDING EDUCATORS MORE ACCOUNTABLE

As community conversation and poll respondents considered ways to improve student learning throughout 2012, we informed them that Michigan had recently passed a variety of new measures aimed at holding teachers and school leaders more accountable for education results.

Specifically, we explained: 1) it is now somewhat tougher for new teachers to earn the job protections that come with tenure; 2) it is somewhat easier to remove poor-performing educators from the classroom; and, 3) new evaluation standards are being developed to place stronger emphasis on student performance and growth.

In response, two-thirds of overall community conversation and poll respondents said it was, indeed, “crucial” or “important” to hold educators more accountable for student success. But there were signs of a split on the issue between the customers of education and the providers of education. Across both community conversations and polls, more than seven out of 10 African Americans, parents, employers, members of the workforce and retirees favored more accountability. Among educators, 61 percent of community conversation participants favored more accountability while only 46 percent of poll respondents did so.

African Americans -- who predominately live in urban areas that are at the epicenter of today’s school reform debates – were consistently the strongest proponents of educator accountability.

In open discussion, community conversation proponents favored the idea of intensifying teacher evaluations and observations. They favored focusing accountability on student outcomes and suggested student evaluation of teachers also should be taken into consideration. Furthermore, they took the conversation beyond traditional reform talking points and said it was important to find new ways to hold parents and students more accountable for student success. Sample comments:

- “Accountability is crucial because there is no profession where people are not held accountable. If you don’t hit the objectives then a closer look can be taken to see what is going on. Without accountability then the oldest teacher wins and the new good teachers get pigeonholed.”
- “Our school has one teacher in particular who has been with the district a long time and he doesn’t teach at all. I had him for a class and all we did was watch videos. I thought it was ridiculous that he could be there holding a job when a lot of younger teachers probably want that job.”
- “Students’ test scores are bad, but teacher salaries in Michigan are 12th in the nation. There is something wrong with that.”
- “Teachers are very important, and if you find a good teacher and they are proficient, they should be paid for their proficiency and they should be retained based on performance and not seniority.”

Those who questioned or opposed additional accountability cautioned against placing too much emphasis on test scores and some suggested we are asking too much of educators in today’s climate. Sample comments:

- “I’d rather not discount teacher accountability, but maybe we don’t know how to measure these types of things. All professionals should be held accountable. But, because we don’t know how to do it doesn’t mean that shouldn’t be done.”

- “It’s critical that we have accountability, but I refuse to link that with compensation because that exacerbates the problem if you end up with teachers only teaching in places where they’re only going to look good.”
- “If a child does not perform well, it is not necessarily the teacher’s fault. How can you grade a teacher’s performance when the students do not attend school, behave or pay attention?”
- “A lot of areas that teachers could be measured on, they have no control over, like poverty in students. This results in more pressure on teachers, more likelihood for cheating from teachers wanting to hit their numbers.”

CURRENT POLICY OPTIONS: HOW LEADERS CAN ACT ON PUBLIC WILL

One critical component to holding educators accountable is having valid and reliable measures of their effectiveness. Until recently, teacher evaluations frequently identified all teachers as good or great. But the evaluation standards are slowly becoming more stringent. In 2009, Michigan passed new requirements for all teachers to be evaluated annually, with student learning being one important factor. In 2011, evaluation requirements were strengthened again. The results so far are inconclusive and debatable. The Michigan Department of Education concludes school districts are beginning to differentiate more among educators. But critics claim teachers are still not getting the detailed developmental feedback they need. Critics cite, for example, recent evaluations in which 99 percent of Michigan teachers received “effective” or “highly effective” ratings.

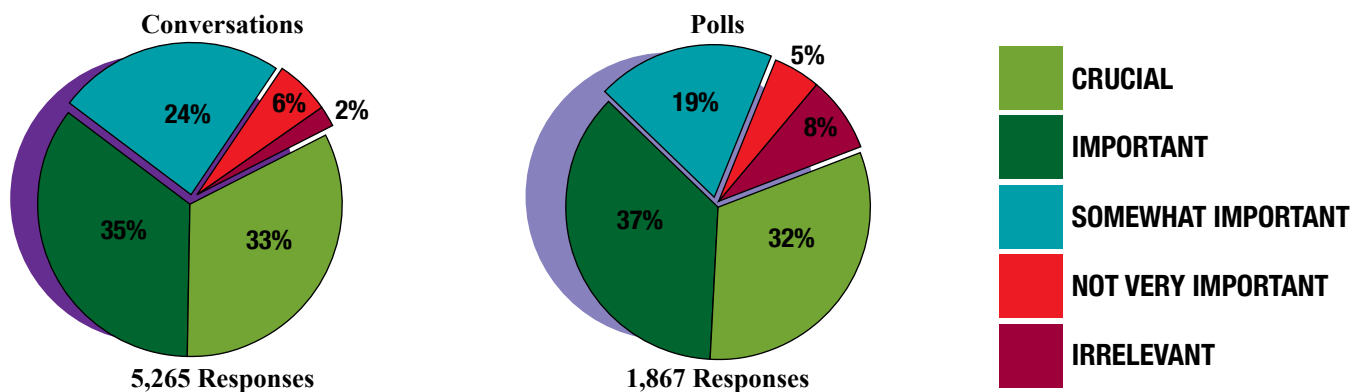
Recommendations for a new statewide educator evaluation system are expected by mid-2013 from a state-appointed group, called the Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness. The Center for Michigan will present this citizens’ agenda on the future of student learning to the council. Likewise, any Michigan resident can contact the council through its website (www.mcede.org) or attend any of the numerous periodic public meetings the council holds.

So, how are teachers and school leaders deemed minimally effective or ineffective held accountable? Teachers with these low ratings are evaluated more frequently and given improvement plans. If rated ineffective for three straight years, educators must be dismissed. Beginning in 2015-16, districts must notify parents if a child is assigned to a teacher who was rated ineffective for the past two years. Additional legislative proposals would require parental notification and consent if their child was assigned to a teacher who had an ineffective rating the previous year.

Performance pay is another accountability issue. In community conversations, proponents and opponents of performance pay for educators debated the issue without clear conclusion. A 2010 state reform to institute further merit pay for teachers has had little apparent impact. Many school districts have not implemented the new mandate to include job performance and accomplishments as a “significant factor” in determining future compensation. Some local districts do continue to experiment on their own with new performance pay models.

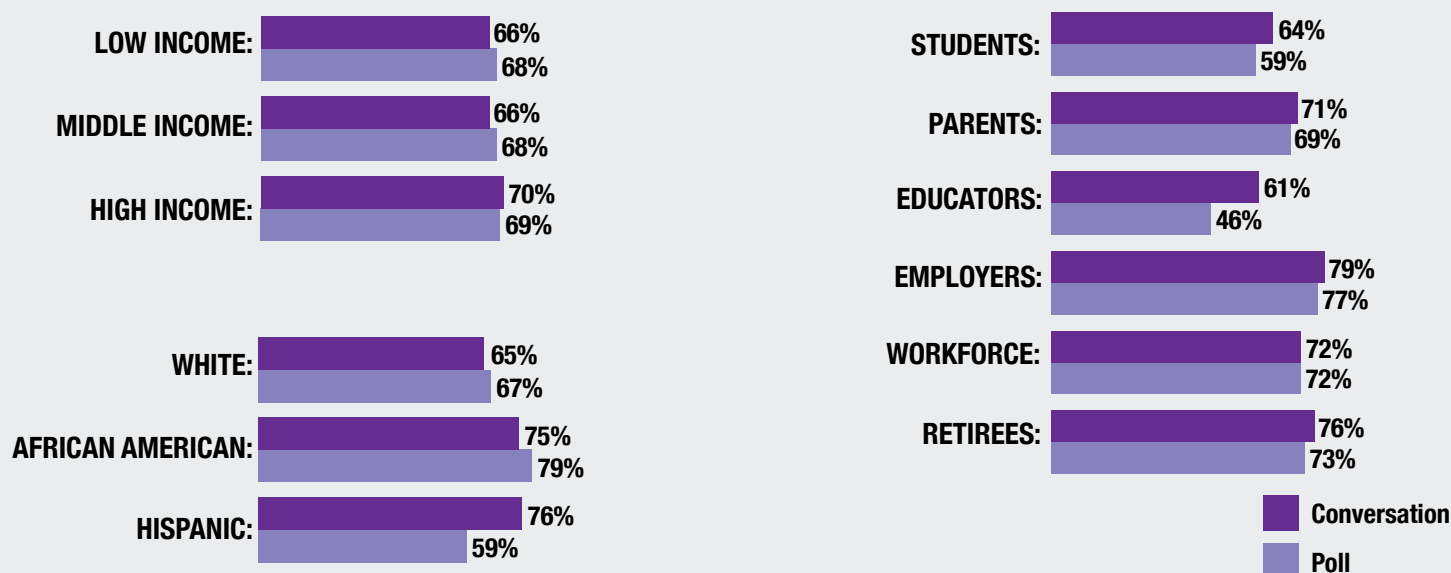
THE PUBLIC VIEW: WHAT MICHIGAN RESIDENTS SAID ABOUT HOLDING EDUCATORS MORE ACCOUNTABLE

In terms of improving student learning outcomes, how important is it to hold educators more accountable?



Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding

RATIO OF SPECIFIC DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS WHO SAID MORE EDUCATOR ACCOUNTABILITY IS “CRUCIAL” OR “IMPORTANT”



NOTE: Low income means community conversation participants who reported income of \$30,000 or less and poll respondents who reported income of under \$25,000. Middle income means community conversation participants who reported income of \$30,001-\$80,000, and poll respondents who reported income of \$25,000-\$74,999. High income means community conversation participants who reported income above \$80,000 and poll respondents who reported income above \$74,999.

TOP 5 COMMENTS IN SUPPORT OF MORE ACCOUNTABILITY

- Hold parents more accountable for student success **(103 comments)**
- Increase teacher evaluations and observations **(50 comments)**
- Hold students more accountable **(48 comments)**
- Increase accountability to assure teachers focus on student outcomes **(47 comments)**
- Accountability should be based on measuring student progress, not raw scores **(32 comments)**

TOP 5 COMMENTS OPPOSED TO MORE ACCOUNTABILITY

- Test scores should not be the only measure of accountability **(111 comments)**
- Are we asking too much of teachers? **(24 comments)**
- To hold educators more accountable, they need more stability and support **(20 comments)**
- Beware of fraud in accountability and evaluation systems **(19 comments)**
- Do not move to performance pay as an accountability measure **(18 comments)**

PUBLIC VIEWS ON REDUCING CLASS SIZE

A majority of Michigan residents want reduced public school class sizes. But the issue does not quite reach the consistent, two-thirds support mandate of more popular options for improving student learning, according to the views expressed by community conversation participants and poll respondents.

Reducing class sizes is a perennial education improvement strategy. Statewide, Michigan has one teacher for every 18 students, which is one of the highest student-to-teacher ratios in the nation. But those numbers include special education classes, which are smaller. The U.S. Department of Education estimates average class size is closer to 25 students per teacher. Class sizes vary widely among individual school districts. Budget cuts in recent years led to increased class sizes in some communities, prompting parental concerns about the quality of instruction.

In our community conversations and polls, participants considered the evidence on both sides of the issue. Research suggests that smaller class sizes can help student achievement, especially in early grades and among minority and at-risk students. But research also suggests that other reforms, such as investments in teacher training and professional development, are more cost-effective methods of improving student performance. Class size reduction is among the more expensive school reform options at a time when school budgets are generally strained. In Michigan, federal statistics suggest that reducing the statewide student/teacher ratio from 18 to the national average of 15 could cost approximately \$1 billion in additional teachers' salaries.

In response, 71 percent of community conversation participants and 64 percent of poll respondents said reducing class sizes was "crucial" or "important." In contrast, only 10 percent of community conversation participants and 17 percent of poll respondents deemed it "not very important" or "irrelevant."

Reducing class size was extremely popular among African Americans – more than 80 percent of African-American respondents in both the community conversations and polls considered it to be either "crucial" or "important." Support also was very strong (above two-thirds in both community conversations and polls) among Hispanics, parents and educators.

Supporters favored the prospects for better teaching and learning, more attention to each student, and more individualized learning for each student. Sample comments from community conversations:

- "I wish school was where my daughter wanted to go. I'd like for my daughter to be able to learn without feeling lost in a large group of kids."
- "My statistics class in high school had nine people. I was able to connect better and took more from that interaction because of the one-on-one time. It was fun because I got to know all my classmates, too."
- "As a teacher, I am 100 percent more productive in a smaller class. Students and parents realize the difference. To expect a teacher to have the same outcome of success with a larger class size is not reasonable."

- "If you compare Detroit public schools to suburban schools and private schools, this is one of the biggest issues."

Opponents raised concerns about the potential high costs to reduce class size and questioned whether smaller class sizes are needed for all grades or all subject matters. Sample comments from community conversations:

- "I don't care how big the class size is. If I have a mediocre teacher with 15 kids, I'm getting mediocre results. If I have 40 kids with a dynamic teacher, learning will be dynamic."
- "Reducing class sizes is not happening or going to happen. It's strictly budgetary. We simply can't afford to reduce the class size."

CURRENT POLICY OPTIONS: HOW LEADERS CAN ACT ON PUBLIC WILL

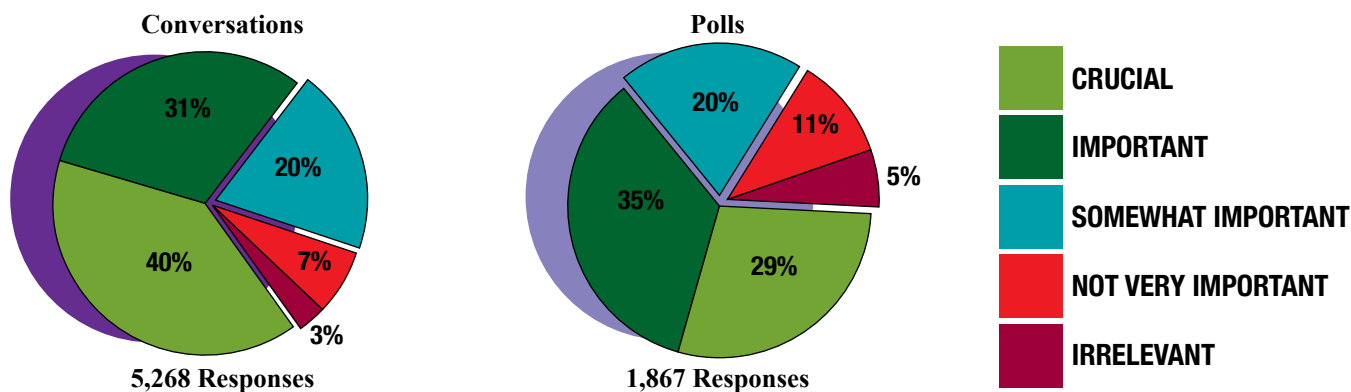
State policymakers have the option of dedicating more school aid funds to class size reduction, although budgetary pressures are intense throughout the state's School Aid Fund. In the past decade, the state has dispensed approximately \$300 million in grants per year to school districts with high poverty levels for a variety of intensive learning options, ranging from extended school calendars to smaller class sizes in kindergarten through sixth grade. These funds represent less than 3 percent of total state spending of about \$13 billion for K-12 education. Given that a district like Grand Rapids Public Schools has a budget of more than \$200 million alone, these grants have not had significant statewide impact in reducing class size. For example, the Detroit Public Schools budget for 2012-13 shows a classroom size of 25 students in grades K-3 and 33 in grades 4-5 -- an increase of three students from the previous year.

A new "Education Achievement Authority" (EAA) has been established to assume operation of the lowest-performing 5 percent of public schools in Michigan. The enabling legislation for the EAA generally calls for expanding "flexibility and adaptability for student learning models and styles" and the stimulation of "innovative public school teaching methods." -- While class sizes are not specifically mentioned in the EAA setup language, it is conceivable that the new "innovative teaching models" could include experimentation with smaller class sizes.

The particular urgency on class size reduction expressed by African Americans in our community conversations and polls is validated by some education research. A study of a class reduction initiative in Wisconsin found that first-grade students scored "significantly higher" on test scores than a comparison group in larger classes. The study found the benefits of smaller classes were "especially powerful" for African-American students.

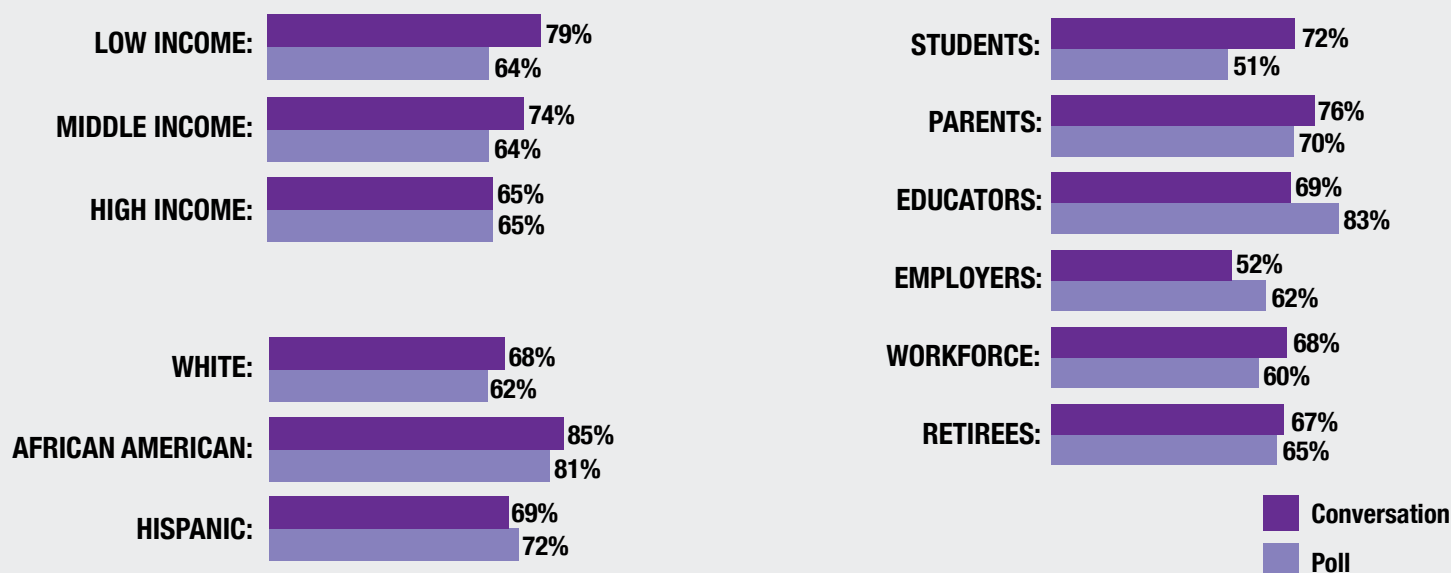
THE PUBLIC VIEW: WHAT MICHIGAN RESIDENTS SAID ABOUT REDUCING CLASS SIZE

In terms of improving student learning outcomes, how important is it to reduce class size?



Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding

RATIO OF SPECIFIC DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS WHO SAID REDUCING CLASS SIZE IS “CRUCIAL” OR “IMPORTANT”



NOTE: Low income means community conversation participants who reported income of \$30,000 or less and poll respondents who reported income of under \$25,000. Middle income means community conversation participants who reported income of \$30,001-\$80,000, and poll respondents who reported income of \$25,000-\$74,999. High income means community conversation participants who reported income above \$80,000 and poll respondents who reported income above \$74,999.

TOP 4 COMMENTS IN SUPPORT OF REDUCING CLASS SIZE

- It's needed so teachers can provide more attention to interactions with each student **(80 comments)**
- It allows for better teaching and better learning **(50 comments)**
- It's needed to provide individualized instruction to each student **(48 comments)**
- If not smaller class sizes, then we need more support staff in classrooms **(39 comments)**

TOP 5 COMMENTS OPPOSED TO REDUCING CLASS SIZE

- Additional funding needed to lower class sizes **(24 comments)**
- Smaller class sizes are only important in younger grades **(18 comments)**
- Students should be placed in classes/class sizes based on needs/motivation **(14 comments)**
- A good teacher can teach effectively regardless of class size **(10 comments)**
- Smaller class sizes are needed for some pieces of the curriculum but not all **(9 comments)**

PUBLIC VIEWS ON CHANGING THE SCHOOL CALENDAR

In general, Michigan residents are more in favor of extending the school year than they are opposed to it. But the idea lacks the clear mandate for change that state residents expressed for other options for improving student learning outcomes.

Some education reformers and researchers call the American school calendar woefully outdated – more a relic of 19th century farm life than 21st century globalization. They point out that few other countries offer more than seven weeks of consecutive vacation for students. President Barack Obama is among those who have argued for longer school days and shorter summer vacations. In Michigan, a Center for Michigan study in 2009 found that most school districts had dipped well below the traditional standard of 180 days of annual classroom instruction as a budget-cutting measure. In comparison, some countries with better overall education results than the United States require 200 or more days of annual instruction.

In our community conversations and polls, participants considered the evidence on both sides of the issue. Supporters of school calendar expansion argue this change can increase the student learning retention rate if summer breaks were shorter. Critics counter that the education results of longer school years are inconclusive, and a longer year could result in significant education cost increases and could weaken students' ability to earn wages in after-school work settings.

In response, just over half of poll respondents and 43 percent of community conversation participants deemed school calendar extension as "important" or "crucial." Slightly less than one-third of poll and community conversation participants deemed it a "not very important" or "irrelevant" issue.

Extending the school year was most popular among African Americans, employers, retirees and members of the workforce. It was least popular among parents, students and educators.

Supporters favored the possibility of higher learning retention and the prospects for better competitiveness. Sample comments from community conversations:

- "Whenever I bring this up, I feel like a lone wolf. Summer break is way too long. It would impact summer employment but I feel that if kids invest time in education that will have a bigger payoff."
- "It's really challenging for kids to retain what they've learned when they have 11 weeks off. I'm really a proponent of a year-round school year."
- "The lower income students continue to get behind, and they're not getting the summer enrichment that the students of wealthy families get."

Opponents didn't like the potential family logistical hurdles and costs of an extended school year. Sample comments from community conversations:

- "Sure we need to increase the school calendar. There is more to be taught every year, but there isn't enough funding to even run the utilities for longer hours, let alone extra days."

- "Year-round school seems to make sense, but in terms of the impact on child care, it would be difficult finding someone to keep a child while parents work with the awkward school years. Child care organizations would be out of business if year-round school years ever happened."
- "If the school year is longer, do we have to pay teachers more? Does that affect the budget?"

CURRENT POLICY OPTIONS: HOW LEADERS CAN ACT ON PUBLIC WILL

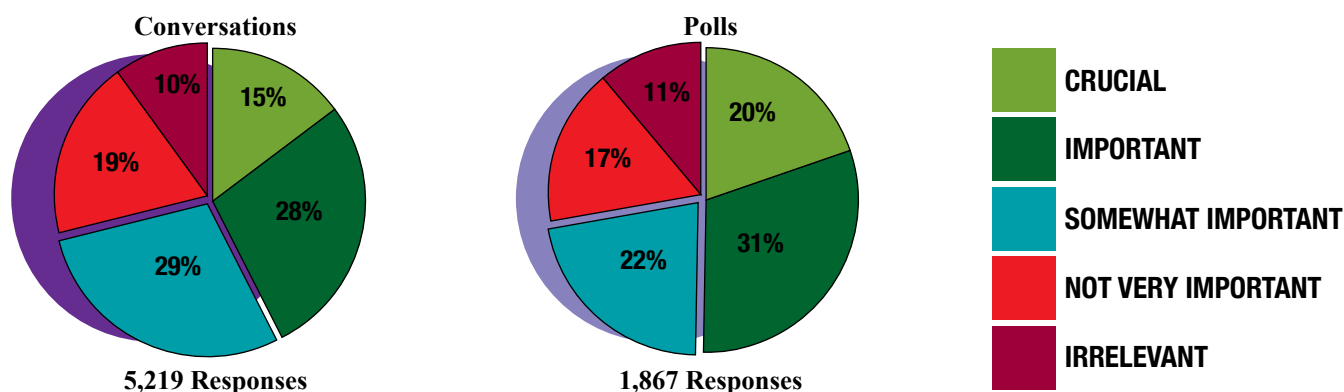
A number of schools across the state have experimented in recent years with the school calendar, with approaches ranging from year-round elementary schools to summer instructional programs for older at-risk students. In large part, these are decisions for discussion at local school board meetings.

In his 2011 special address on education, Gov. Snyder proposed ending provisions for specific amounts of instructional seat time in terms of days or hours of instructions. And in a draft proposal released in November 2012, the governor's Michigan Public Education Finance Project proposes to do just that. This proposal would encourage year-round schools in an effort to reduce the summer erosion of learning retention, especially for at-risk students. The proposal calls for staggering a 180-day school year over 12 months rather than nine. Consistent with that notion, the desire for more flexibility in the school calendar was one of the most mentioned community conversation comments in favor of expanding the school year. The full text of the original Michigan Public Finance Project draft can be downloaded here: <http://oxfordfoundationmi.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/mefp-draft-version-1.pdf>. It is expected to be heavily debated in 2013 – and additional ideas for changing the school year may emerge in the process.

In addition, Michigan's Education Achievement Authority is considering moving to a 210-day academic calendar for the state's lowest-performing schools at an additional cost, for example, in Detroit of \$6 million per year.

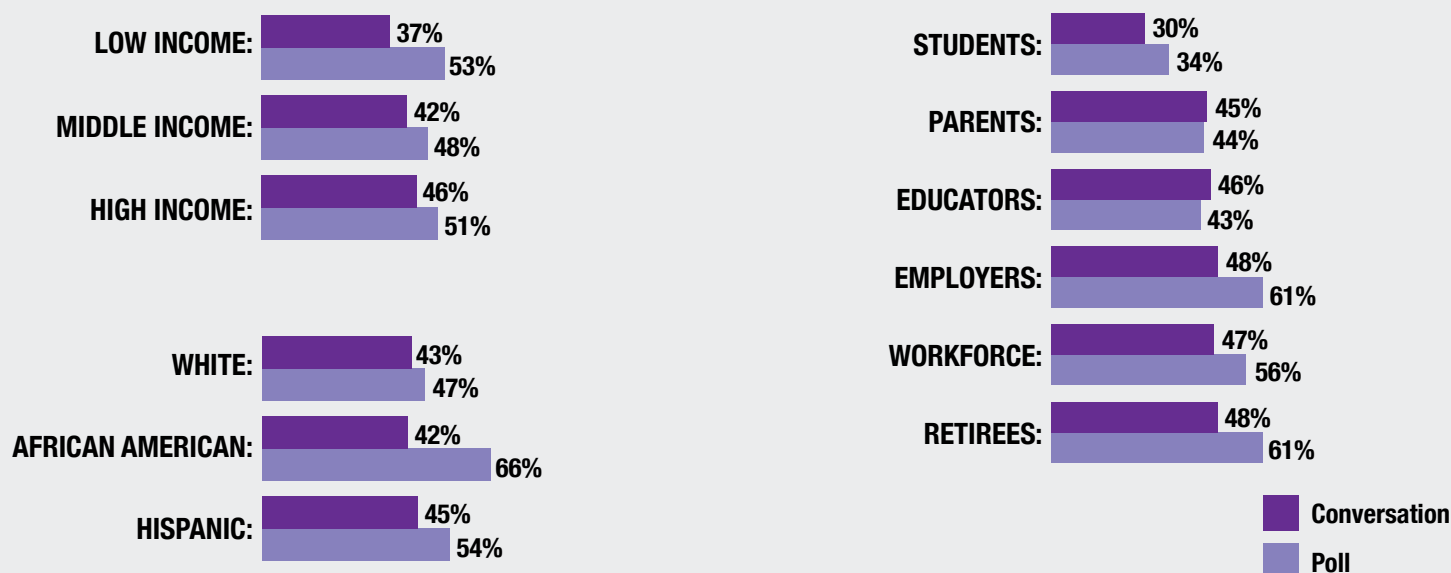
THE PUBLIC VIEW: WHAT MICHIGAN RESIDENTS SAID ABOUT EXTENDING THE SCHOOL CALENDAR

In terms of improving student learning outcomes, how important is it to extend the school calendar?



Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding

RATIO OF SPECIFIC DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS WHO SAID EXTENDING THE SCHOOL CALENDAR IS “CRUCIAL” OR “IMPORTANT”



NOTE: Low income means community conversation participants who reported income of \$30,000 or less and poll respondents who reported income of under \$25,000. Middle income means community conversation participants who reported income of \$30,001-\$80,000, and poll respondents who reported income of \$25,000-\$74,999. High income means community conversation participants who reported income above \$80,000 and poll respondents who reported income above \$74,999.

TOP 5 COMMENTS IN SUPPORT OF EXTENDING THE CALENDAR TOP 5 COMMENTS OPPOSED TO EXTENDING THE CALENDAR

- It is needed for knowledge and skill retention and for good learning habits **(129 comments)**
- More flexibility in the school calendar is important to improving learning **(100 comments)**
- Change the length or timing of the school day, not just the school calendar. **(53 comments)**
- It is needed to stay competitive and intensify instruction **(50 comments)**
- Kids should not have so much free time **(33 comments)**

- Logistical hurdles: family, summer extracurricular, and sports schedules **(79 comments)**
- What students learn is more important than the details of the school calendar **(35 comments)**
- Current law and labor negotiations hinder changing the school calendar **(16 comments)**
- We should shorten the school calendar **(14 comments)**
- Student and teacher burnout **(14 comments)**

PUBLIC VIEWS ON INCREASING SCHOOL CHOICE

Expanding school choice is one of the hottest school reform topics among Michigan policymakers. But it is far from the Michigan public's highest priority for improving student learning.

It is widely recognized that there are significant quality differences across Michigan's many public schools. Michigan has long offered parents some public school options beyond traditional neighborhood schools – more than 100,000 students attend public charter schools and nearly 100,000 more are enrolled in choice programs outside the boundaries of the school districts in which they live.

In the state capitol, momentum is building for considerable expansion of choice. Gov. Snyder contends “there must be greater choice for students and parents” and has advocated mandatory schools of choice for all districts. The legislature recently lifted the longstanding cap on more charter schools in Michigan and other legislative proposals could expand choice further by: 1) authorizing new types of schools; 2) potentially converting failing public schools to charters in some cases; and, 3) allowing students to take courses cafeteria-style from different schools in different districts.

In our statewide polls, a slight majority (51 percent) of respondents said more school choice was “crucial” or “important.” In community conversations, only one-third of participants considered expanded choice “crucial” or “important.” In effect, the public ranked expanded choice well below other school reform options – from expanding early childhood to expanding the school calendar, to raising the bar for entry into the education profession – that are receiving considerably less attention from policymakers.

However, expanded choice does receive some higher approval among some of the key demographic groups at whom the reform is aimed, including African Americans, low-income people, and parents. In our polls, 57 percent of African Americans, 54 percent of low-income people, and 52 percent of parents said expanded choice was “crucial” or “important.” Yet, in community conversations, those same demographic groups were considerably less supportive of expanded choice. And, those same demographic groups issued much higher approval ratings to other education reform options as illustrated throughout this report.

Those favoring more school choice said they thought it would lead to greater competition which would, in turn, lead to higher education quality and would create more opportunities for better or different types of learning. Some viewed more choice as simply a fundamental freedom, especially for families living in areas with poor-performing public schools. Sample comments from community conversations:

- “School choice in urban areas is a matter of urban justice. Some families feel trapped by where they live, and they should have choices.”
- “My wife is a teacher and won't like this, but I want the option of sending my kids to the best school, even if outside my district. She thinks it makes the rich richer and the poor poorer.”
- “While I am a great supporter of public school education, I support the charter school idea because there is a lack of competition in the public sector. In the private sector, if we don't improve we die, and charter schools encourage public schools to improve.”

- “Kids should have access to good schools, but it just doesn't happen that way. Until we can guarantee local schools can be fixed, school of choice is our only option.”

Educators led opposition to more choice in our public engagement with 53 percent of educators in community conversations and 43 percent of educators among our poll respondents deeming expanded choice “irrelevant” or “not important.” Among poll and community conversation participants across all demographic lines, expanded choice received a higher proportion of “irrelevant” or “not important” votes than any of the other education options they considered. Those who opposed more choice raised concerns about the need to improve all community schools rather than funnel public resources into new and unproven models. They raised questions about the potential motivations for more choice and argued for consistent and fair standards for evaluating both traditional and new public school models. Sample comments from community conversations:

- “I think increasing school choice has to be available, but what are we measuring? How do you determine if a charter school is a better option?”
- “It is very important for neighborhoods to own their schools. And that is lost when people go outside their districts.”
- “This is the greatest threat to public education that exists. We can't just let the failing districts fail. We need to maintain the precept of quality public education everywhere.”
- “Public schools become schools of default for the kids who don't have parents and for parents who, for whatever reason, can't be advocates. They end up in a public school that doesn't meet their needs and they won't get a good start in life.”

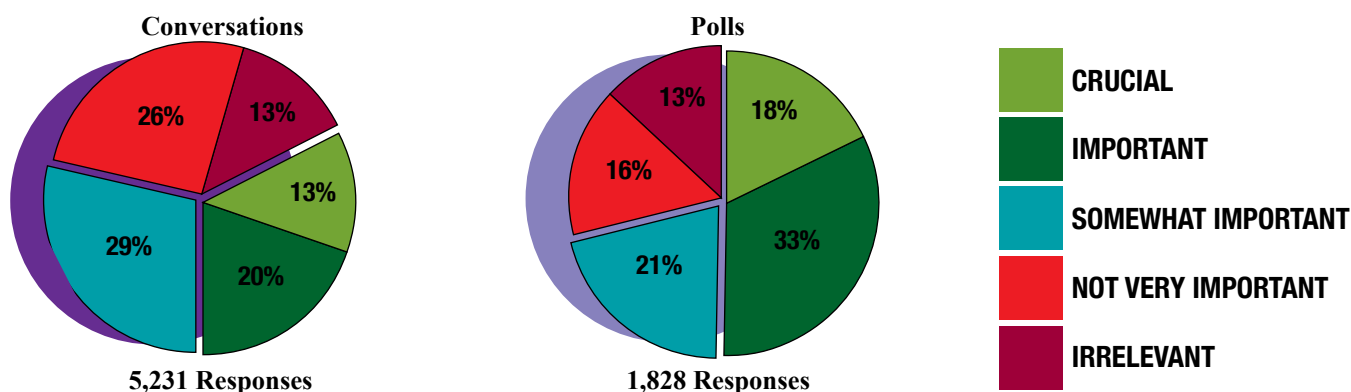
CURRENT POLICY OPTIONS: HOW LEADERS CAN ACT ON PUBLIC WILL

Our public opinion data presented here are a microcosm of what's happening in the broader choice debate – there's disagreement about how much and what types of choice can best help schools. Many policymakers have shown their interest in choice by drafting several pieces of new law that would change the menu of options available to Michigan families. In general, families have not rushed to choice as fast as some policymakers. Fewer than 15 percent of Michigan K-12 students use charters or schools of choice. Public K-12 educators have largely resisted the choice movement and instead seek more focus and investment in traditional public schools.

Expanded choice proposals continue to develop. New law allows an unlimited number of charter schools across the state beginning in 2015. Other proposals in development would create new types of schools (like single-gender schools, international cultural schools and employer-sponsored schools) and open up cafeteria-style class choices in which an individual student could pick courses across different school or school district boundaries. One key question – given the relatively tepid interest in choice we heard in our community conversations and polls – is whether demand for choice will meet expanded supply.

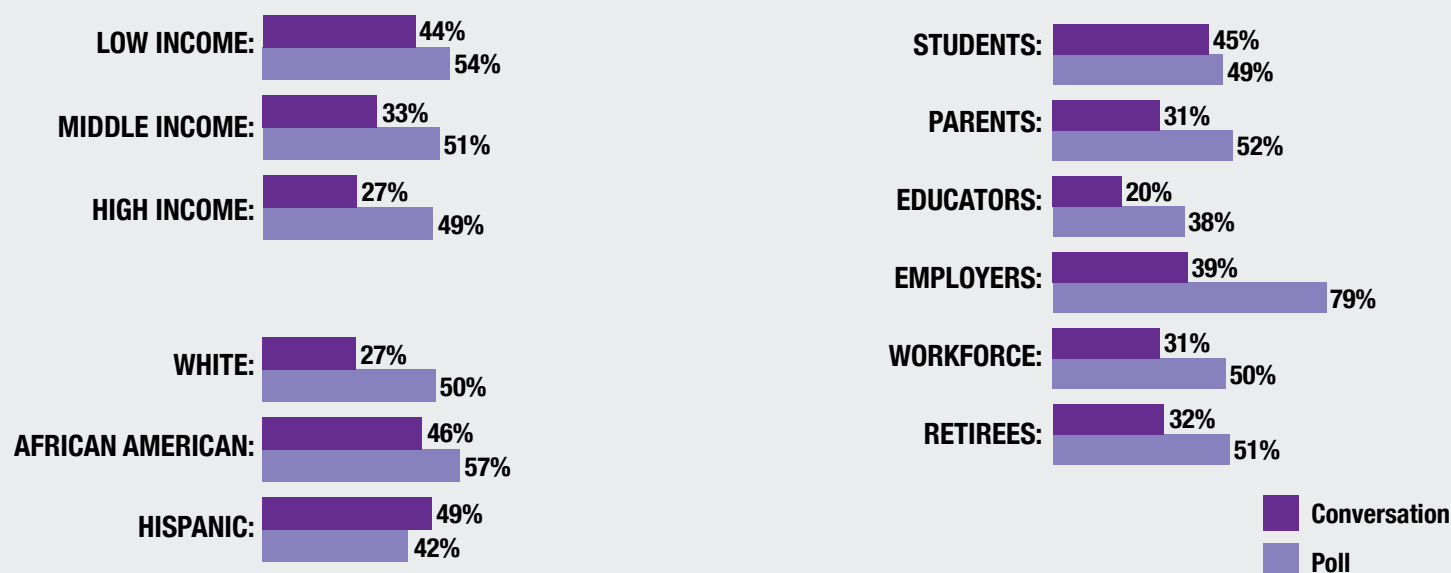
THE PUBLIC VIEW: WHAT MICHIGAN RESIDENTS SAID ABOUT EXPANDING SCHOOL CHOICE

In terms of improving student learning outcomes, how important is it to expand school choice?



Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding

RATIO OF SPECIFIC DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS WHO SAID EXPANDING SCHOOL CHOICE IS “CRUCIAL” OR “IMPORTANT”



NOTE: Low income means community conversation participants who reported income of \$30,000 or less and poll respondents who reported income of under \$25,000. Middle income means community conversation participants who reported income of \$30,001-\$80,000, and poll respondents who reported income of \$25,000-\$74,999. High income means community conversation participants who reported income above \$80,000 and poll respondents who reported income above \$74,999.

TOP 4 COMMENTS IN SUPPORT OF MORE SCHOOL CHOICE

- Having more competition and choice will encourage public schools to improve (**38 comments**)
- More choice creates more opportunity for a better education (**35 comments**)
- More choice creates more opportunity for a different kind of education (**31 comments**)
- It's important for parents and students to have the freedom to choose (**19 comments**)

TOP 5 COMMENTS OPPOSED TO SCHOOL CHOICE

- We should instead focus on making sure all schools are effective (**41 comments**)
- Questionable or poor motivations for choice: race, income, sports, etc. (**29 comments**)
- Choice does not always mean better choices are available (**20 comments**)
- Choice is an inefficient use of tax dollars; no public money for for-profit schools (**19 comments**)
- Fairness questions: across the board funding, standards, rules are needed (**17 comments**)

PUBLIC VIEWS ON EXPANDING ONLINE LEARNING

Michigan residents expressed mixed and inconsistent views in our community conversations and polls regarding expansion of online K-12 learning opportunities.

Governor Snyder is leading the charge to expand online learning across Michigan. “A new global market has emerged as parents, schools and students are realizing the power and effectiveness of online learning,” the governor proclaimed in his 2011 special message on education. Since 2000, students have taken more than 80,000 courses through the Michigan Virtual School. Two virtual charter schools are now operating in the state and there is talk of further expansion.

Snyder envisions expanding online learning to give students more choices in classes and learning styles and to increase students’ ability to become proficient and ready for college or employment. He contends every Michigan child who “needs or wants up to two hours of daily online education must receive it.”

We found Michigan residents to be less enthusiastic than the governor about the potential of online learning.

Forty-four percent of poll respondents and 31 percent of community conversation participants deemed online learning expansion “crucial” or “important.” At the other end of the scale, 29 percent of poll respondents and 38 percent of community conversation participants deemed it “irrelevant” or “not very important.” Expanded online learning did not receive “important” or “crucial” votes from a majority of any of the dozen demographic groups we tracked in community conversations. However, among poll respondents, more than 50 percent of African Americans, Hispanics, students, employers and low income residents did deem it “important” or “crucial.”

Those who questioned the value of expanding online learning were concerned that it could replace traditional K-12 classroom settings. They feared it could erode personal interaction with teachers and other students, would not be equally accessible to all students, and they questioned whether online learning will be truly accountable and held to high standards for student achievement. Sample comments from community conversations:

- “I’ve taken online classes. I’m struggling with it now because I don’t have the face time with the teacher. For high school students, face time is really important.”
- “I understand that there is a place for online learning, but for the average student, I don’t think they would have enough motivation.”
- “Online learning is all well and good, but we should require the same measures of success applied to other public schools to obtain the per pupil grants. There has to be a level playing field for cyber schools and traditional public schools.”
- “Online learning, by itself is not OK. There is learning in interacting with others. Students need the classroom to articulate their thought to one another and become well-rounded human beings.”

Supporters of online learning expansion saw its highest value as a supplement to traditional learning settings. They said it could add flexibility for both educators and students, increase individualized learning, combat large class sizes and efficiently

extend the annual school calendar. Sample comments from community conversations:

- “I have seen the quality of courses online increase dramatically. I used to be a skeptic. Now I think the blended strategy offers a new mode of learning. This is the future of learning.”
- “I think that they could offer online year-round learning and give credit as an incentive for doing the work. This way you would not have to force all students to do the work, but could give an incentive for those students who do.”
- “It has to be a viable option for all kids. A lot of countries are wireless. We are handicapping our youth in the global world by not making them proficient across the board.”
- “We need to fit technology in where the kid is at intellectually. Our educational model is to sit in a desk, read a book and listen to a teacher lecture. New things must be started. Technology can close the gap of where we could be.”

CURRENT POLICY OPTIONS: HOW LEADERS CAN ACT ON PUBLIC WILL

In his April 2011 address on education, Gov. Rick Snyder urged the legislature to “realize the power and effectiveness” of online learning. Later, he signed a bill opening the door to expanded virtual learning. Online learning happens in a couple of different settings: 1) “blended” courses that offer both online and in-person instruction; and, 2) a completely online curriculum in which students only attend school remotely.

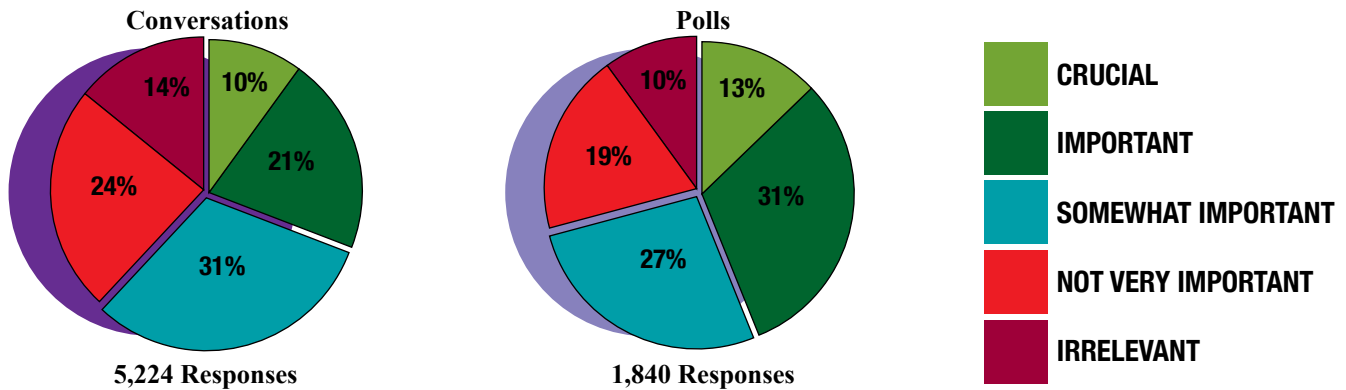
Michigan has two virtual charter schools, with enrollment capped at 1,000 for each. Both are operated by for-profit management companies and offer courses for kindergarten through 12th grade to students anywhere in the state. The law includes a gradual lifting of the cap, allowing up to five schools by 2014, 10 by 2015 and 15 schools thereafter with a cap of 2 percent of total state K-12 enrollment. Online charters shall be granted to schools that demonstrate “experience in delivering a quality education program that improves pupil academic achievement.” Other proposals in Lansing would expand online learning more aggressively by essentially lifting the online enrollment cap or allowing parents and students to choose individual courses from myriad education providers – thereby potentially increasing demand for online courses.

Michigan students now receive part-time online instruction and blended instruction through their classroom teachers, programs across districts, and intermediate school districts. One statewide effort is the Michigan Virtual School, which offers online courses to middle school and high school students across the state. It is operated by the Michigan Virtual University, a nonprofit Michigan corporation established in 1998. In 2011-2012, it enrolled 24,000 students from 500 Michigan schools.

Researchers continue to debate the effectiveness of full-time virtual schools. Researchers have found, in some cases in Michigan and elsewhere, that test scores for students at online school operations have lagged well behind those at brick-and-mortar schools.

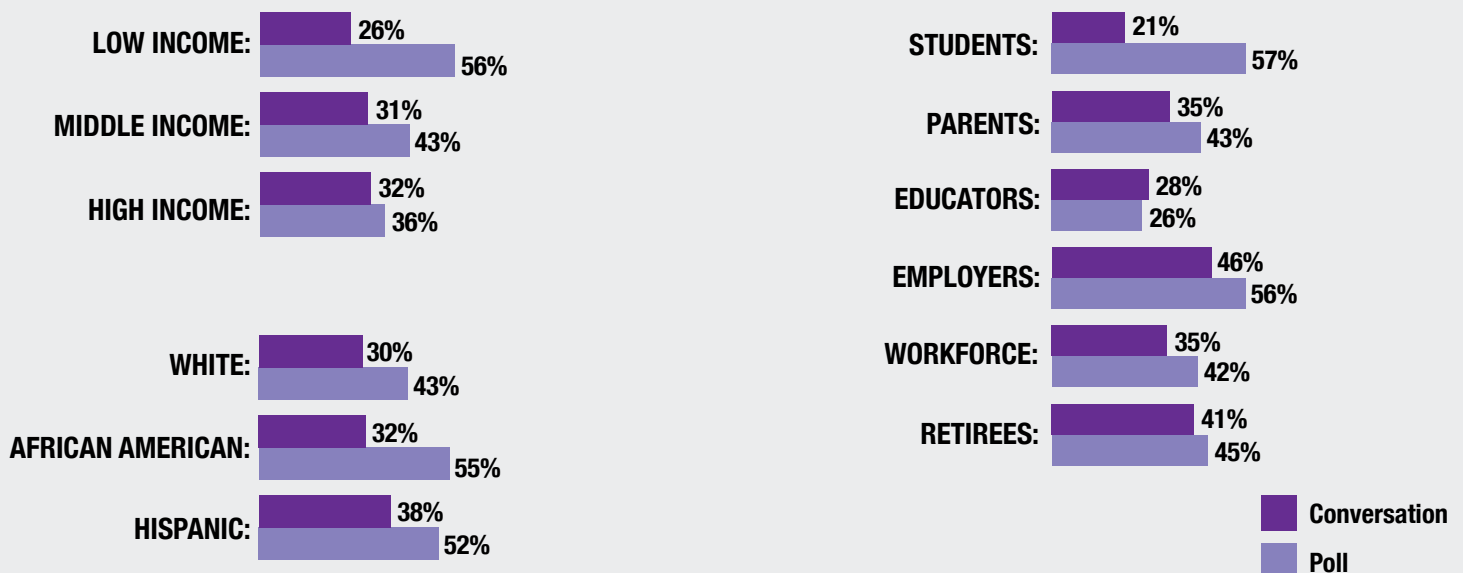
THE PUBLIC VIEW: WHAT MICHIGAN RESIDENTS SAID ABOUT EXPANDING ONLINE LEARNING

In terms of improving student learning outcomes, how important is it to expand online learning?



Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding

RATIO OF SPECIFIC DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS WHO SAID EXPANDING ONLINE LEARNING IS “CRUCIAL” OR “IMPORTANT”



NOTE: Low income means community conversation participants who reported income of \$30,000 or less and poll respondents who reported income of under \$25,000. Middle income means community conversation participants who reported income of \$30,001-\$80,000, and poll respondents who reported income of \$25,000-\$74,999. High income means community conversation participants who reported income above \$80,000 and poll respondents who reported income above \$74,999.

TOP 5 COMMENTS IN SUPPORT OF EXPANDING ONLINE LEARNING TOP 5 COMMENTS OPPOSED TO EXPANDING ONLINE LEARNING

- Choice: Could be used as school of choice or supplemental to traditional K-12 (72 comments)
- Flexibility: allows teachers to personalize pace and subject (51 comments)
- Gives students productive online experience they'll need later (24 comments)
- Efficiency: can increase individualized learning and combat large class size (14 comments)
- Could be used to efficiently lengthen the school calendar (12 comments)

- Online learning should supplement - not replace - traditional K-12 classrooms (187 comments)
- It takes away from personal interaction (87 comments)
- Will be accessible to everyone? (49 comments)
- Assure accountability: Online learning must work and show results to be funded (41 comments)
- It's too easy for students to fall behind in an independent online setting (31 comments)

ADDITIONAL VIEWS ABOUT IMPROVING STUDENT LEARNING

Beyond their in-depth consideration of the preceding eight options to improve student learning, community conversation and poll respondents weighed in on a variety of other education issues, including public spending on K-12, the role of families, business, and communities in education, and a wide range of additional citizen-inspired ideas for improving student learning.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

We did not find clear public consensus on the question of whether the current public education system provides good return on taxpayer investment. Instead, we found stark contrast among specific demographic groups on the K-12 return on investment (ROI) question.

African Americans were the most critical. Only 10 percent of African-American participants in community conversations agreed that the education system provides good ROI – two-thirds said it did not. Likewise, in our polls, 38 percent of African Americans said the system provides good ROI – among the lowest ratings across a dozen demographic groups. And, only one in 10 community conversations participants from low-income households said the education system provides good ROI. As emphasized elsewhere in this report, these responses on the ROI question are yet another indication of how those most in need of high-quality educational opportunity are most critical of the current K-12 system.

Among the biggest contrasts on the ROI question was between the providers of education and those who ultimately employ the graduates of the education system. Educators were protective and supportive of their field. Educators gave good ROI marks at considerably higher rates than all other demographic groups – two-thirds of educators in our polls said the system provides good ROI. Among employers, a majority of respondents in both community conversations and polls said the education system does not provide good ROI.

K-12 SPENDING: PUBLIC SEES CLEAR NEED FOR MORE - AND DIFFERENT - INVESTMENT

Asked bluntly if Michigan needs to spend more money to improve student success, 70 percent of respondents in both polls and community conversations answered, “Yes.” Across nearly every demographic group we tracked, strong majorities – higher than two-thirds in most cases – said more investment was needed to improve student success. Employers were the least enthusiastic about additional K-12 investment, but even among those job providers majorities of poll respondents (58 percent) and community conversation participants (51 percent) said increased investment is necessary to improve student success.

But, given the mixed public opinions on the education ROI question, and the thrust of comments in community conversations, if the public is willing to invest more in education, they also want to invest differently.

In community conversations, we outlined to participants that the total public investment in K-12 – more than \$19 billion in state and local taxes – is the highest annual expense category for Michigan taxpayers. We also outlined how that money is spent, with half going to educator salaries and another quarter going to pensions and health care benefits.

In response, community conversation participants flooded us with responses – hundreds of individual comments with ideas big and small.

On the investment side, people favored investing more to adapt teaching to individual student needs, expansion of preschool and early childhood programs (“Would we be willing to take from 12th grade and give it to early childhood?”), higher pay to entice higher quality teaching, more use of technology, better support and ongoing training for teachers, richer electives (“We cut things that are important to kids like music and art. Can’t you cut something else like a secretary?”), richer vocational programs (“Not everyone is cut out to go to college.”), and better focus on essential classroom supplies like books.

As one student put it, “We need new textbooks. We have government text books that say the last president was Ronald Reagan.” Yet others peered into the future and saw textbooks going the way of the dinosaur – instead students could work off of electronic tablets onto which textbook updates could be cheaply downloaded year after year.

On the spending reform side, people called many times for nonspecific efficiencies and greater accountability – after a decade of tight budgets, there is a belief that schools can still find ways to save money through consolidation of services across districts and other means. Another popular notion is that too many burdensome regulations and inconsistent funding decisions in Lansing harm learning. Many others expressed a grass-is-greener-elsewhere view and demanded equity in funding across all schools.

PUBLIC IDEAS FOR MORE FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

In community conversations, more than eight of every 10 participants said there was more schools could do to encourage greater family involvement in improving student success. But we found nothing approaching a consensus on specific, concrete ways for doing so. Instead, we found many ideas, some of them competing with each other.

Many insisted on intensified outreach to teach families the value of learning, provide them with online and printed resources to assist with homework, and incentivize parental involvement with awards, prizes and the like. Others countered that schools are already doing all they can in this regard.

Many said schools must improve communication and stagger schedules for school events and parent-teacher conferences in sensitivity to parents’ demanding and diverse work schedules.

Still more said the responsibility rests on the families themselves and suggested more stringent accountability measures: criminal truancy warrants for the parents and caretakers of chronically absent children, mandatory attendance at parent-teacher conferences, and even cuts to public assistance to low-income parents who are demonstrably uninvolved in their students’ school lives.

A sample of the diverse comments on parental involvement from community conversations:

- “Why are we putting more on the schools? How in the world can we expect that? Schools are already tapped.”
- “I am a single parent, and am employed full-time. Our parent-

teacher conferences are so rigid. I visited another school that gives parents options for attending conferences, from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. Flexibility is needed when a parent may be working a low-wage job.”

- “I think Luce Road School in Alma is a good role model. The principal does something every month for families to interact. Each event is family friendly, child care is provided, and siblings are invited.”
- “One school brought in three washers and dryers and that brought parents in. You have to make it a relevant place for them. You have to think outside the box.”
- “One thing I appreciate from my elementary school principal is a weekly email. They are very engaging and helpful.”
- “We need to be going to people rather than expecting them come to us. Representatives of the schools should go out to meetings in their neighborhoods and communities. This could build understanding and eventually respect.”
- “I get frustrated when I don’t hear from the teacher, but my son brings home a report card with Ds. I’m not hearing from the adult in the situation. There needs to be communication between me and the teacher. I’m dependent on that teacher for what’s going on in that classroom.”
- “There are a lot of things public schools can do to reach parents. We have a group of volunteer educators. The hardest-to-reach parents live in county detention centers. We don’t preach to them, but show them how. There are tears in parents’ eyes as they say no one has ever showed them how to do this.”
- “Schools can educate parents on the best practices to encourage good student performance like proper diet, study hours, amount of sleep, etc.”
- “We need more online parent resources. Even for me, I can’t help my kids with algebra. There are some things we don’t know or haven’t been exposed to in a long time.”
- “You’d be surprised how many more parents come to football games than parent-teacher conferences.”

BEYOND SCHOOL BOUNDARIES: PUBLIC APPETITE IS STRONG FOR BUSINESS & COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Nine out of every 10 community conversation participants also said there was more business and community groups could do to improve student learning.

Tops on the list was providing more real-world experiences – part-time jobs and internships, mock interviews, and demonstrations to both students and educators of the kinds of skills employers are looking for in today’s global economy. Likewise, many said there was strong need for more hands-on assistance from business and community groups – more mentors, tutors and school volunteers. Still more said community and business awards could better highlight student successes and more workplace support would help encourage working families to be more engaged in student learning.

A sample of community conversation comments on business/ community involvement:

- “Business involvement is super important. Students can work with a dry-waller and an electrician. They see that they can make a living that way.”
- “I had a junior from church shadow me at work because he’s interested in accounting. We need to introduce students to the realities of the world. That improves student learning.”
- “We participated in mock interviews and students were able to interview some high profile employers. The students realized that when asked if they had excessive tardiness the companies were not going to hire them.”
- “There should be more opportunities for people to take time out of work to mentor, tutor, etc. It’s really important that schools open their doors and say that yes, we do need help.”
- “Communities need to rally together. There is a restaurant in town that displays accolades of the students, which shows pride on the part of the restaurant and the community as well as the students and parents.”

ADDITIONAL IDEAS FOR IMPROVING STUDENT LEARNING

Community conversation participants also shared a wide range of their own creative approaches to improve student learning.

Most notably, there is a public thirst for more creativity in public education. This means more curriculum choices, more individualized learning, more focus on critical thinking skills than rote learning and a public willingness to experiment with new teaching models especially if there is evidence such models are effective.

And there is strong public desire for more focus in school on what students will do after school – better vocational education for those not headed to college, more career planning and prompting students at early ages to begin thinking about life and career options.

Other oft-mentioned ideas included grouping students by abilities instead of age, increasing education on health and nutrition issues and occasional concern about school sports taking precedence over academics.

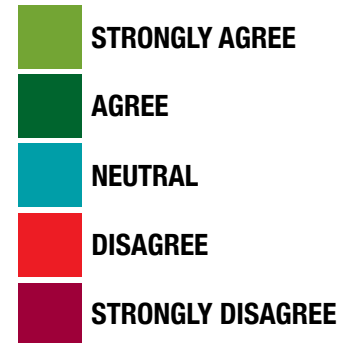
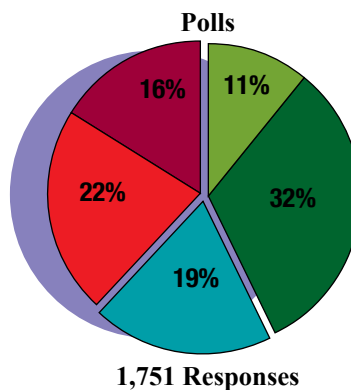
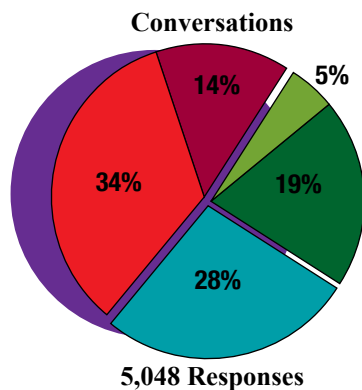
A sample of community conversation comments about additional approaches to improving student learning:

- “We need to redefine education. Being a plumber is just as important as being a PhD. There is dignity in every profession.”
- “Kids and parents need to be informed about options after high school.”
- “There’s too much time being spent on sports. There should be more time spent on academics. The coaches are over the top and don’t focus on academics.”
- “We need to start talking about students being life-ready. We need to create students who can think for life, not for a test. They need critical thinking skills that allow them to become life-long learners.”
- “Incorporate all subjects in teaching – now we teach math, we teach English, and we teach science separately. They should be used together. Information is not retained because the information was not taught in a way that was important for the students to retain – how it’s useful in everyday life.”

ADDITIONAL VIEWS (continued)

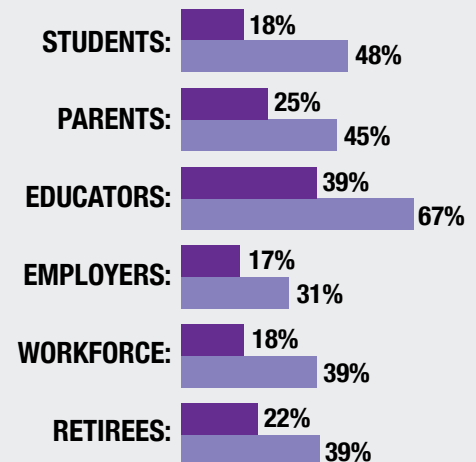
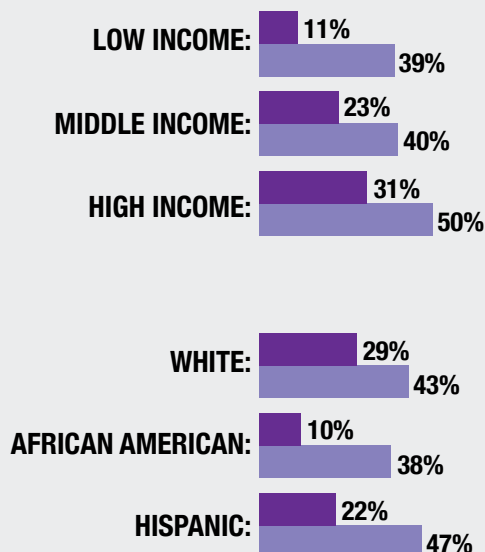
THE PUBLIC'S VIEW ON RETURN ON INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION

Do you feel that the current Michigan public pre-K-12 education system offers taxpayers a good return on their investment?

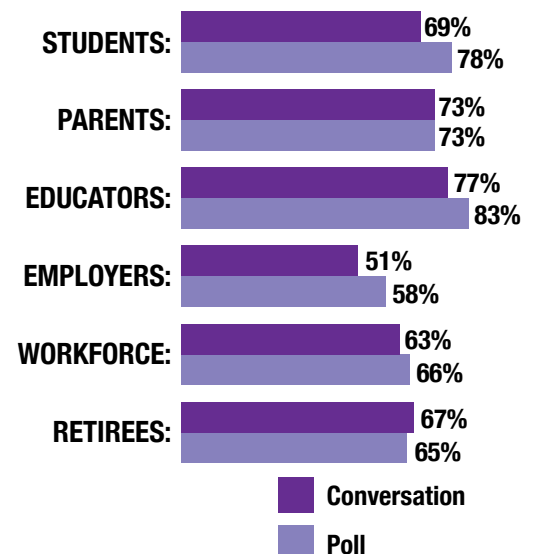
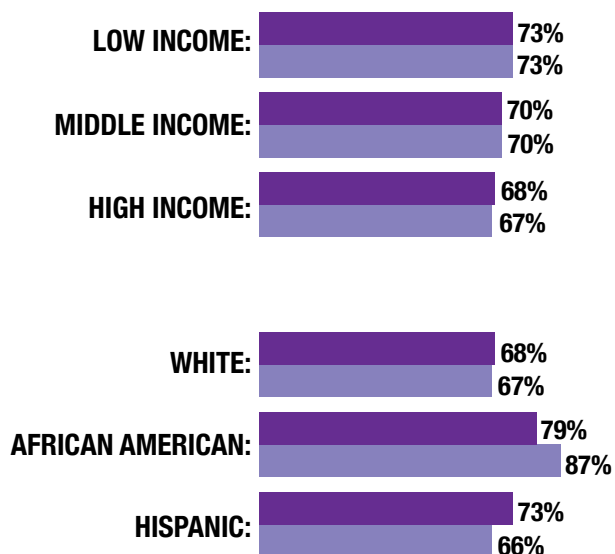


Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding

RATIO OF DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS WHO AGREED OR STRONGLY AGREED K-12 EDUCATION PROVIDES GOOD ROI



DOES MICHIGAN NEED TO SPEND MORE MONEY TO IMPROVE STUDENT SUCCESS? PERCENTAGE ANSWERING "YES."



MOST FREQUENT COMMENTS ON HOW TO SPEND DIFFERENTLY ON K-12

TOP 5 AREAS IN NEED OF MORE INVESTMENT

- Adapt teaching to individual student needs **(58 comments)**
- Early childhood and elementary grades **(51 comments)**
- Higher pay to entice higher-quality teaching **(55 comments)**
- Improve and increase use of computers/technology in classrooms **(48 comments)**
- Teacher support: ongoing training, increased staffing **(40 comments)**

TOP 5 AREAS IN NEED OF FINANCIAL REFORM

- More accountability and efficiency in K-12 funding is needed **(326 comments)**
- Create and assure equality in funding across all schools **(115 comments)**
- More accountability needed from Lansing and public officials **(93 comments)**
- Spend less by consolidating administration and services across districts **(67 comments)**
- Spend less on prisons/legal system and reinvest in education **(42 comments)**

MOST FREQUENT COMMENTS ON HOW TO IMPROVE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

TOP 5 COMMENTS REGARDING FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

- Intensify family outreach: teach families the value of learning and how to help students at home **(317 comments)**
- Improve communication, through the internet and other means, about what's going on in school **(235 comments)**
- Impose more accountability measures on families to improve student success **(134 comments)**
- Greater attention to, and more schedule flexibility in, school events and parent/teacher conferences **(112 comments)**
- Some families just refuse to be involved **(98 comments)**

TOP 4 COMMENTS REGARDING BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT

- Provide real-world experiences: internships, mock job interviews, demonstrations of needed job skills **(254 comments)**
- Hands-on assistance: mentors, tutors, and school volunteers **(135 comments)**
- Create more school-friendly workplaces so working families can better participate in school functions **(36 comments)**
- Show visible support: offer awards and highlight successes **(28 comments)**

MOST FREQUENT COMMENTS ON HOW TO IMPROVE STUDENT LEARNING

TOP 5 COMMENTS REGARDING STUDENT LEARNING

- Get creative: more teaching models, curriculum choices, individualize learning and critical thinking **(108 comments)**
- Focus more IN school on what students will do AFTER school **(91 comments)**
- Group students by abilities, not age **(20 comments)**
- Increase education on health and nutrition **(20 comments)**
- Academics should take higher priority over sports **(11 comments)**
- Explain why: Make sure the need for particular academic requirements makes sense to students **(11 comments)**

WHAT YOU CAN DO

SPREAD THIS CITIZENS' AGENDA

Help us inform your community about what is needed for ensuring success for Michigan's pre-K-12 students. Bring copies to your local library, send the PDF version of this report to your friends and family, and post the report on your social media pages. Order more copies by contacting us at 734-769-4625 or info@thecenterformichigan.net.

JOIN A CENTER FOR MICHIGAN CITIZEN POLICY TASK FORCE

The recommendations of community conversation participants resulted in several policy imperatives that The Center for Michigan will advocate for in the near future. We need your help in this work! Visit <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/C7RQ3B3> to let us know which education issue(s) you are most passionate about, and then volunteer to serve on the appropriate policy task force.

WRITE YOUR LEGISLATORS

Contact your legislators about the policy imperatives outlined in this citizens' agenda. To find the name and contact information for the legislators representing your community, visit <http://www.house.mi.gov/mhrpublic/> for the House of Representatives and <http://www.senate.michigan.gov/fysenator/fysenator.htm> for the Senate.

FOLLOW THE CENTER FOR MICHIGAN ON FACEBOOK AND TWITTER

The Center will post updates regarding issues of educational improvement in our state. Find us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/thecenterformichigan> and follow us on Twitter, @CenterforMI.

VOLUNTEER LOCALLY WITH EDUCATION-FOCUSED ORGANIZATIONS

Community conversation participants already have begun this to-do list item. The Center for Michigan partnered with the Michigan Community Service Commission to present conversation participants information about MCSC's volunteer match widget, a tool that lists opportunities for Michigan residents to volunteer with education-related organizations in their own communities. Conversation participants often took advantage of this tool; MCSC found a sustained increase in use of the volunteer widget over the ten months when conversations took place.

SIGN UP TO RECEIVE BRIDGE MAGAZINE

The Center for Michigan produces a free, online magazine called Bridge. Bridge provides independent, thoughtful journalism about the issues that matter most to Michigan, including our pre-K-12 education system. Subscribe to Bridge

at <http://bridgemi.com/>. Additionally, join the Michigan Truth Squad and help the Center call foul on false and misleading political speech by politicians and special interest groups during election seasons. Coverage of Truth Squad calls can be found in Bridge.

GIVE US YOUR GUIDANCE ON FUTURE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS

We are currently seeking input about what issues are most pressing for the success of our state. If you have ideas about a topic you think the Center for Michigan should discuss in future Community Conversations, email us at engage@thecenterformichigan.net.





METHODOLOGY

STATEWIDE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The public participation goals for our 2012 public engagement campaign were two-fold: to engage 5,000 Michigan residents in meaningful dialogue about the future of education in the state and to ensure that those we reached were representative of the state's rich demographics.

We ultimately exceeded our participation goals by holding 264 statewide community conversations from December 2011 through early November 2012. More than 5,800 people participated.

We also conducted two statewide phone polls in order to add statistical rigor and demographic balance to this public engagement campaign. Two phone polls conducted in February and September engaged another 1,900 participants. The community conversation and phone poll results should be viewed together to get the full picture of our community engagement results.

In the end, the full combined results of our community conversations and polls present a detailed and conclusive portrait of how Michigan residents view options for education reform in our state.

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT

We recruited participants for our community conversations by forming diverse statewide partnerships with community organizations, chambers of commerce, school districts, business and professional associations, colleges and universities and community leaders from across the state. We began our recruitment by sending letters to more than 2,500 potential host organizations explaining the project and inviting them to take part in our statewide initiative. Once we located potential hosts, we worked with them to either build a new event with their members or colleagues, or tap into a pre-existing meeting by offering free programming content.

WHAT WE ASKED

The community conversations and phone polls centered on discussion topics related to improving student learning: grading our schools, teacher and school leader quality, options for improved student learning, family, community and business involvement in student success, the public's financial investment, and community success stories. Except for the last topic, which was asked only of conversation participants, community conversation and poll participants were asked to assign a grade to local public schools and public schools statewide and to vote on the relative importance of various student learning options and the value of the public's financial investment in public schools. For all of these issues, community conversation participants were encouraged to offer comments to support why they voted the ways that they did. Given the limited timing and logistics of phone polling, poll participants were not asked to explain the reasons behind their votes.

We started out by asking participants in both the community

conversations and phone polls to grade their local schools as well as the state education system as a whole. Next, participants were asked to assess the importance of a handful of educator issues in terms of increasing student outcomes. The issues discussed were educator accountability, support for educators, and preparation to become an educator.

The third discussion surrounded a number of commonly mentioned ideas for improving student outcomes, including expanding early childhood programs, reducing class sizes, changing the school calendar, increasing school choice, and expanding online learning. Participants were asked to weigh in on how important these items were to improving student outcomes. Then we discussed external stakeholders in student learning: family, community and business groups. We asked the participants to simply express whether or not they thought schools should be doing more to engage these groups.

The financial discussion was next; we asked questions about whether the current system gave taxpayers a good return on their investment and whether more money should be spent on schools.

We closed by encouraging community conversation participants to share positive stories about initiatives, individuals, and model programs that are encouraging student success in their communities.

HOW WE GATHERED NUMERICAL AND ANECDOTAL ANSWERS IN CONVERSATIONS AND POLLS

Participants in community conversations used electronic clickers to vote on 15 multiple-choice questions, with results displayed instantly to help provoke thoughtful discussion. We assigned trained facilitators and scribes for each community conversation in order to capture participants' detailed comments. Participants were also asked to respond with their clickers to seven demographic questions. These thousands of individual comments were collected, databased and categorized into themes by the research staff at Public Sector Consultants Inc. The themes and groupings of those most common conversation remarks are tallied throughout this report.

POLL METHODOLOGY

Public Sector Consultants Inc. conducted two statewide polls, from February 17-26, 2012, and again from September 21-30, 2012, with a total of 1,900 respondents, including 1,284 landline, 352 cell phone and 264 online respondents. A targeted oversample of African-American and 18-34 year old respondents was employed by landline telephone and lower income respondents (annual household income less than \$25,000 per year) online to ensure that the sample of these population subgroups was proportionate to Michigan's adult population. Data were weighted by race, gender, age and income to more accurately reflect estimates for Michigan's population using the 2010 Census and the 2010 American Community Survey. The overall survey margin of error is +/- 2 percent at a 95-percent confidence level. The margin of error for subgroups examined in crosstabs (race, gender, age, income), self-identification (student, parent, educator, member of the workforce, employer,

retiree), is higher than the overall survey margin of error, and varies depending upon the subgroup. Results for most subgroups will fall between +/- 4 – 8 percent at a 95-percent confidence level, with notable exceptions for employers and educators. The margin of error for was 3 percent whites and 5 percent African Americans. Comparisons among smaller racial, ethnic and workplace self-descriptions should be viewed with some statistical caution.

EDUCATION ISSUE GUIDE

The Center for Michigan's Education Issue Guide was handed out to all community conversation participants before the beginning of the conversation. The aim of the issue guide is to offer readers a manageable and objective picture of the state's K-12 public education system. The guide includes:

- Statistics on K-12 public schools - reading and math proficiency scores in selected grades, student-teacher ratios, spending per pupil, average teacher salaries, among many others;
- Overviews - with pros and cons - of key student learning improvement options;
- Charts that explain the public investment in K-12 education in Michigan.

The issue guide is sourced in detail with endnotes. In addition, the overviews of the student learning improvement options were reviewed by nine K-12 education experts who represented a wide range of interests and perspectives. While these experts provided improving suggestions, the Center for Michigan retains sole responsibility for the quality and accuracy of the information in the guide.



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT BY THE NUMBERS

The Center for Michigan is committed to assuring all of our public engagement work reflects the rich diversity of Michigan's people and regions.

Our goals in this campaign were to gather detailed, nuanced and statistically relevant views of the Michigan public, to get the public's best thinking on the critical need to improve student learning, and, ultimately, to present those public views to state and regional decision makers and inject this important public voice into policymaking.

To those ends, we have carefully tracked the demography of all participants in our community conversations and phone polls. As a result, we have been able to crosstab the public's answers to a wide variety of education policy questions by respondents' age, race, income levels and, to some extent, professional/community standing based on participants' self-labeling as students, parents, educators, members of the workforce, employers and retirees.

As the tables and maps below illustrate, our public engagement participants represent the Michigan public in many ways, most notably on race and region of residence.

However, in our analysis of this public opinion data, we have been careful to draw conclusions and emphasize specific points of public will in instances where we saw the strongest, clearest and most consistent conclusions across both our in-person community conversations and our random phone polling.

We do so because both forms of public engagement we employed – in-person group discussions and phone polling – feature specific strengths and weaknesses.

Because participants are randomly selected, phone polling allows for more precise statistical representations about the broader population of Michigan. The margin of error for the phone poll is +/- 2 percentage points at a 95-percent confidence level. This means that 95-percent of the time, the actual population of Michigan will be within 2 percentage points of the results of this poll. The margin of error for specific sub-groups is higher.

But phone polls are considerably shorter and do not allow for the same kinds of thoughtful and deliberative interaction participants experience in our community conversations.

Conversely, participants in community conversations are ultimately self-selected, even though we cast a very wide and diverse net in reaching out to some 2,500 business, community, student, parent and other groups to engage more than 5,800 participants. Because community conversation participants are self-selected, their views are representative of a slice of the Michigan public which is more likely to be knowledgeable or passionate on education issues. For example, our community conversation participants skewed higher on personal income and included more educators than the general statewide population as a whole. Still, four out of five community conversation participants were not educators and, altogether, the conversations represented a broad cross-section of the views of the customers of public education: students, parents, employers, members of the workforce, and retirees.

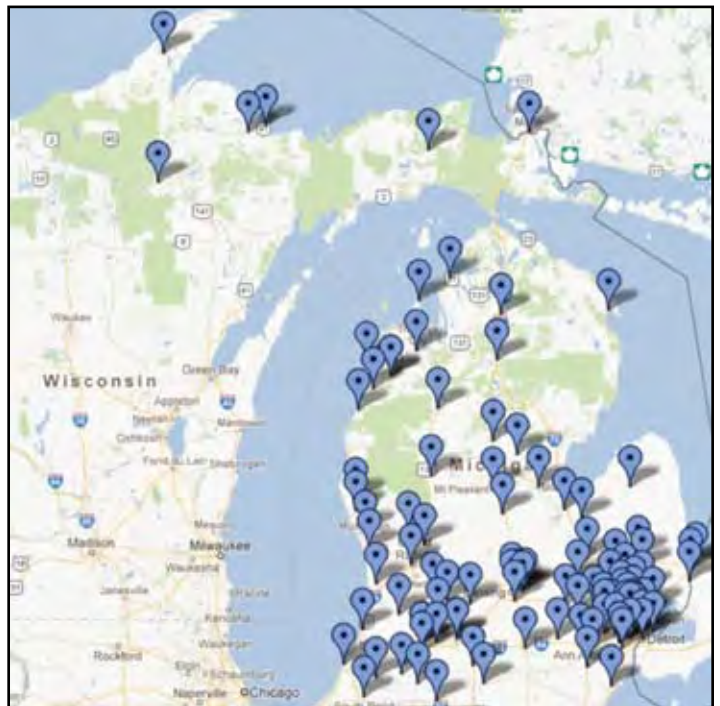
When combined, our polls and community conversation results show many consistent conclusions across many demographic groups. Readers of this report are, of course, free to draw their own conclusions. We have published in this report many examples of detailed data and anecdotal conclusions from both the community conversations and the polls.

Finally, we have included in this report many sample quotations from community conversation participants. Obviously, the printed quotes are but a small sample of the thousands of utterances we captured and categorized with trained professional scribes in every conversation. We have strived to publish quotes that were representative of the most-mentioned conversation topics and quotes that also were consistent with data collected in response to our detailed questions in both polls and the in-person meetings.

In the end, we believe this report represents some of the most detailed and nuanced public views on public education ever published in our state.

WHERE WE WENT

The pin map below illustrates the 107 municipalities across Michigan where we held community conversations on the future of student learning from December 2011 through November 2012. Altogether, 5,823 people participated in 264 community conversations. We tracked community conversation participation by tallying the number of people who responded with a digital "clicking" device to at least one question on computerized screens used in the conversations. More than 5,100 participants consistently responded to almost all questions posed in these in-person meetings, which we supplemented with our two random polls of an additional 1,900 statewide residents.



WHO PARTICIPATED

Demographic characteristics of the community conversation participants and poll respondents represented in this report:

Participants by Region (Community Conversations only)

Region	Conversation Participants	Total % of Conversation Participants	Total % of State Pop. (2010 census)
(1) UP	186	3.6%	3.3%
(2) Northern	419	8.2%	7.1%
(3) Western	699	13.7%	13.3%
(4) Bay	520	10.2%	9.9%
(5) Southwest	497	9.7%	7.9%
(6) South Central	532	10.4%	9.0%
(7) Southeast	2036	39.8%	45.7%
(8) Thumb	223	4.4%	3.9%
Total	5112		

12.1% of community conversation participants did not respond to the question

Participants by Age (Conversations and Poll)

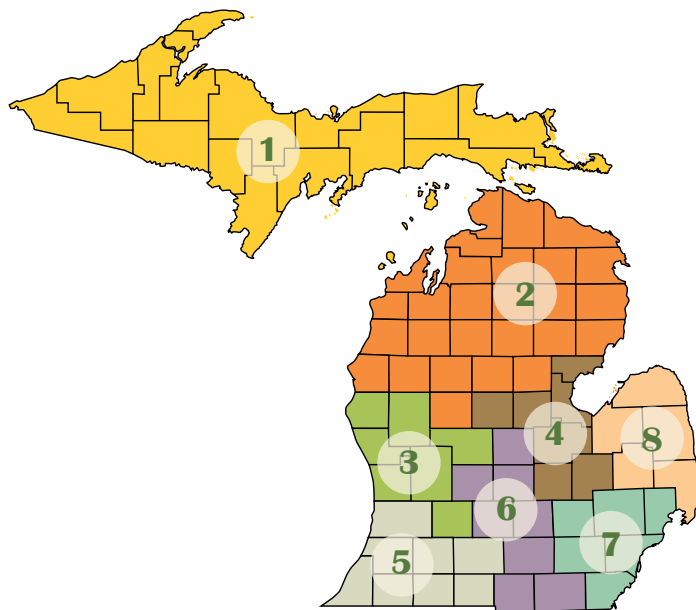
Age	Conversation Participants	Total % of Conversation Participants	Total % of Poll Participants	Total % of State Pop. over 16 yrs old
16-24	1307	25.6%	13.1%	16.2%
25-34	611	11.9%	16.8%	14.9%
35-44	849	16.6%	18.3%	16.3%
45-54	969	18.9%	20.8%	19.3%
55-64	858	16.8%	16.6%	16.0%
65+	521	10.2%	14.4%	17.4%
Total	5115		1865	

12% of community conversation participants did not respond to the question and 1.8% of poll respondents did not respond to the question

Participants by Race (Conversations and Poll)

Race	Conversation Participants	Total % of Conversation Participants	Total % of Poll Participants	Total % of State Pop.
African American	861	16.8%	11.5%	13.5%
American Indian	47	0.9%	0.5%	0.6%
Asian	95	1.9%	2.8%	2.4%
Caucasian/ White	3627	70.9%	78.5%	82.4%
Hispanic	205	4.0%	3.7%	3.6%
Multi/ Other	281	5.5%	0.9%	1.0%
Total	5116		1862	

12.1% of community conversation participants did not respond to the question and 2% of poll respondents did not respond to the question



Participants by Income (Conversations)

Income	Conversation Participants	Total % of Conversation Participants	Total % of State Pop. (2009-11 ACS)
Less than \$10,000	279	5.7%	7.9%
\$10,001 - \$20,000	270	5.5%	11.4%
\$20,001 - \$30,000	330	6.7%	11.4%
\$30,001 - \$40,000	343	7.0%	10.9%
\$40,001 - \$50,000	372	7.6%	9.8%
\$50,001 - \$60,000	361	7.4%	8.5%
\$60,001 - \$100,000	1360	27.8%	22.5%
\$100,000+	1591	32.4%	17.5%
Total	4906		

15.7% of community conversation participants did not respond to the question

Participants by Income (Poll)

Income	Poll Participants	Total % of Poll Participants	Total % of State Pop. (2009-11 ACS)
Less than \$24,999	448	27.4%	25.2%
\$25,000-\$49,999	503	30.7%	26.2%
\$50,000-\$74,999	304	18.6%	19.0%
\$75,000-\$99,999	167	10.2%	12.1%
More than \$100,000	214	13.1%	17.5%
Total	1636		

13.9% of poll respondents did not respond to the question

ABOUT THE CENTER

The Center for Michigan is the state's nonprofit, nonpartisan citizenship company. We provide distinctive public engagement programs so statewide residents can learn about and discuss important public issues and amplify their collective voices in the halls of power. We provide citizens, business and community leaders, and state and local policy makers with in-depth journalism to inform well-reasoned and future-oriented policymaking. And we leverage the results of our public engagement and journalism programs into policy advocacy aimed at assuring Michigan has a prosperous future with a high quality of life.

We organize our work into three verbs:

ENGAGE

We are Michigan's leading practitioner of nonpartisan public engagement. Our interactive, small-group community conversations, large town-hall conferences, polling and online citizenship tools allow the full Michigan public to better understand and deliberate state and regional policy issues and develop "common ground" agendas to impact future decision making by elected leaders.

INFORM

Bridge Magazine, our online publication, has quickly developed into one of Michigan's leading providers of in-depth public issues journalism. In an age of retrenchment for traditional newspapers and broadcasters, we invest the time and expert reporting necessary to cover Michigan's economic, talent and education, public sector reform, social safety net and quality of life issues in-depth. With an emphasis on explanatory reporting and data analysis, we track Michigan's regional economic growth, rank Michigan's best schools, explore the present and future job market, benchmark Michigan's economic, tax and education policies against those in place across the country, and strive to peer over the horizon at policy issues not yet on the agendas in the state capitol or at local city council and school board meetings. And our award-winning Michigan Truth Squad political advertising watchdog service is syndicated statewide by traditional news publications and broadcasters.

ACHIEVE

We serve as a nonprofit, independent think-and-do tank to inspire and achieve common-ground policy reforms. The Children's Leadership Council of business leaders we formed and staff has led to serious proposals to double the state's investment in public preschool and early childhood programs. In 2010, our "Common Ground Citizens Agenda for Michigan's Future" report framed the only gubernatorial debate. Both major party candidates for governor adopted significant portions of the economic growth, talent and education and accountable government platforms more than 10,000 Michigan residents assembled in more than 500 community meetings over three years. And a Corrections Reform Coalition formed by the Center helped achieve \$30 million in state budget savings while slowing the growth of spending in the state prison system.

The Center for Michigan was founded in 2006 by retired newspaper publisher Philip Power and is governed by a 12-member board of directors. The Center is helped enormously

by the counsel of a bipartisan and deeply experienced steering committee of nearly two dozen Michigan leaders. Likewise, a statewide board of advisers with hundreds of years of combined professional journalism experience provides key guidance to Bridge Magazine.

Read more about the Center here:
thecenterformichigan.net/about-the-center/

Read more about Bridge Magazine here:
bridgemi.com/bridge-team/

The Center maintains a staff of eight professional journalists and public engagement and policy experts. Staff bios are here: thecenterformichigan.net/staff. In addition, we benefit greatly from the policy expertise and technical support of Public Sector Consultants Inc., a leading, Lansing-based policy, research and consulting firm with whom we have maintained a strategic partnership since 2007.



THANKS TO OUR INVESTORS

Little of our work – past, present or future – would be possible without generous corporate, philanthropic and individual support. The Center for Michigan is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Contributions are tax-deductible. Please consider investing in the future of our state with a contribution to the Center for Michigan.

We are extremely grateful to the following foundations, corporations and individuals for supporting our Engage, Inform or Achieve missions for our 2011-2015 program period:

MAJOR FOUNDATION INVESTORS

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Michael and Susan Jandernoa
Porter Family Foundation
Philip and Kathleen Power
Van Dusen Family Fund
William and Barbara Parfet



CITIZENS EDUCATION AGENDA AT-A-GLANCE

MICHIGAN CITIZENS' 4 KEY PRIORITIES TO IMPROVE STUDENT LEARNING:

1. Expand Pre-K and Early Childhood Programs (*see page 8*)
2. Improve Teacher Preparation: Raise the Bar to Enter the Profession (*see page 10*)
3. Provide Stronger Support/Evaluation/Ongoing Training for Educators (*see page 12*)
4. Hold Educators More Accountable (*see page 14*)

SEVEN WAYS ANY CITIZEN CAN WORK FOR CHANGE:

1. Spread this citizens' agenda
2. Join a Center for Michigan policy task force
3. Write your legislators
4. Follow the Center for Michigan on Facebook and Twitter
5. Volunteer locally with education-focused organizations
6. Sign up to receive Bridge Magazine for free
7. Give us your guidance on future public engagement efforts
(*See page 28 for details*)

MICHIGAN LEARNING REPORT CARD

As thousands of statewide residents deliberated the future of student learning, they considered these many statistics on where the state stands:

Total number of public K-12 students ¹	1,650,000
High School Graduation Rate ²	76.5 %
National Ranking ³	27th
Annual number who drop out / don't graduate on time ⁴	37,000

4th Grade Student Performance⁵

Math Proficiency	35%
National Rank	38th
Reading Proficiency	30%
National Rank	34th

8th Grade Student Performance⁶

Math Proficiency	31%
National Rank	34th
Reading Proficiency	31%
National Rank	30th

Among 34 Leading Nations (15-yr-olds)⁷

Reading Literacy	14th out of 34
Math Literacy	26th out of 34
Science Literacy	17th out of 34

Michigan High School Grads Academically

Ready for College ⁸	19%
National Rank	37th

K-12 Students per Teacher ⁹	18 to 1
National Ranking ¹⁰	43rd

K-12 Spending per Pupil ¹¹	\$10,483
National Ranking	22nd

Average Teacher Salary ¹²	\$57,958
National Ranking	12th

Adults with a High School Diploma ¹³	88 %
National Ranking	21st

Adults with a Bachelor's Degree or more ¹⁴	25%
National Ranking	35th

Number of Students in Degree Programs

Community College ¹⁵	254,000
Private College ¹⁶	133,000
Public University (undergrad & graduate) ¹⁷	270,000

Graduation Rate¹⁸

Associate's Degree	16 %
Bachelor's Degree	55 %

Average Annual Cost (Tuition/Fees/Room/Board)¹⁹

Public Universities	\$17,852
National Ranking	9th

Private Colleges	\$23,170
National Ranking	38th

Community Colleges	\$2,312
National Ranking	38th

Student Debt Burden²⁰

Annual Debt Per College Student	\$6,825
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State Funds for Colleges & Universities ²¹	\$1.65 billion
National Ranking ²²	37th

Employment Prospects: High School Dropouts

Projected Job Openings (2008-18) ²³	103,000
2010 Average Weekly Pay ²⁴	\$444
2010 Unemployment Rate	14.9 %

Employment Prospects: High School Graduates

Projected Job Openings (2008-18)	338,000
2010 Average Weekly Pay	\$626
2010 Unemployment Rate	10.3 %

Employment Prospects: Degrees or Advanced Training

Projected Job Openings (2008-18)	836,000
2010 Average Weekly Pay	\$767-\$1,272
2010 Unemployment Rate	4% - 7%

Notes on Data: Some of these data points are now dated by one year, but were the latest available when we began this public engagement campaign at the end of 2011. Those data points are reprinted here, without updates, for the sake of consistency. Source material for all data can be found in the Center for Michigan's Education Issue Guide, available online at: <http://www.thecenterformichigan.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Education-Issue-Guide-FINAL.pdf>

WHERE EDUCATION MONEY GOES IN MICHIGAN

Total spending from state tax revenue (FY2011-12)

K-12 Education	\$11,034,921,300	41%
Social Services/Medicaid	\$6,078,436,400	23%
Prison/Justice/Pub Safety	\$2,600,531,400	10%
Transportation	\$2,029,655,500	8%
Other Gov Operations	\$2,020,329,400	8%
Universities & Colleges	\$1,549,732,500	6%
Revenue Sharing	\$1,000,804,600	4%
Environment	\$511,162,100	2%
Governor & Legislature	\$104,082,400	<1%
Total	\$29,929,655,600	

Where the money goes

Michigan's public K-12 school districts spent more than \$19 billion in federal, state and local tax revenue and from other sources in 2009-10, the last school year for which full data are available.

Instruction	\$9,895,953,130	52%
Operation Maintenance	\$1,717,504,332	9%
Student Services	\$1,352,691,212	7%
Other Support	\$1,285,190,486	7%
Facilities Acquisitions	\$1,167,084,904	6%
School Administration	\$953,243,358	5%
Instructional Staff	\$902,212,100	5%
Transportation	\$813,194,442	4%
Business Office	\$404,737,515	2%
General Administration	\$361,074,668	2%
Community Services	\$291,916,633	1%
Total	\$19,144,802,781	

School expenditures

Salaries	\$9,379,283,313	49%
Purchased Services	\$2,618,300,893	14%
Pension/Social Security	\$2,353,080,888	12%
Insurance & Benefits	\$2,132,339,952	11%
Capital Outlay	\$1,253,803,873	7%
Supplies and Materials	\$1,204,900,731	6%
Other	\$203,093,131	1%
Total	\$19,144,802,781	

Employee cost by work type

Public school employees in Michigan earned \$9.4 billion in compensation and benefits in 2009-10. Here's the breakdown by type of work performed:

Educational	\$6,058,518,661	65%
Operation and Service	\$1,653,428,596	18%
Administration	\$789,586,703	8%
Professional - Other	\$302,843,117	3%
Technical	\$228,783,736	2%
Temporary Salaries	\$115,211,476	1%
Special Salary Payments	\$84,647,099	1%
Overtime	\$81,538,973	1%
Professional - Business	\$64,724,950	1%
Total	\$9,379,283,313	

NOTES

¹ 2009-10 school year. National Center for Education Statistics, data for 2009-10 school year: <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/stateprofiles/sresult.asp?mode=full&displaycat=1&s1=26>

² 2008-09 school year. National Center for Education Statistics: <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2011/graduates/tables.asp>

³ 2008-09 school year. National Center for Education Statistics: <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2011/graduates/tables.asp>

⁴ 2008-09 school year. National Center for Education Statistics: <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2011/graduates/tables.asp>

⁵ U.S. Ranking from 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress (<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subjectareas.asp>).

⁶ U.S. Ranking from 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress (<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subjectareas.asp>).

⁷ National Center for Education Statistics PISA Data for 2009 (<http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pisa/idepisa/>)

⁸ 2010 National and State ACT Scores (<http://www.act.org/news/data/10/benchmarks.html>)

⁹ 2009-10 school year. National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data for 2009-10 school year: <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/>

¹⁰ 2009-10 school year. National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data for 2009-10 school year: <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/>

¹¹ U.S. Census Bureau Public School Finance Data (<http://www.census.gov/govs/school/>)

¹² NCES Digest of Education Statistics, 2009-2010 data (http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d10/tables/dt10_083.asp)

¹³ Percentage as of 2008. 2011 U.S. Census Bureau Statistical Abstract (http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/cats/education/educational_achievement.html)

¹⁴ Percentage as of 2008. 2011 U.S. Census Bureau Statistical Abstract (http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/cats/education/educational_achievement.html)

¹⁵ As of 2009, per January 2011 House Fiscal Agency Report (<http://house.michigan.gov/hfa/briefings/CC%2010-11.pdf>)

¹⁶ U.S. IPEDS data, total fall 2010 enrollment for all private nonprofit and for-profit colleges in Michigan.

¹⁷ As of 2010. House Fiscal Agency budget briefing (<http://house.michigan.gov/hfa/briefings/HigherEd%2010-11.pdf>)

¹⁸ IPEDS State Data Center, Michigan Profile (http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/sdc/SP_Profile.aspx)

¹⁹ For 2009-10. Digest of Educational Statistics (http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d10/tables/dt10_346.asp?referrer=list)

²⁰ For public universities in Michigan only. Calculated as total annual debt accumulated on all campuses divided by total fiscal year equated students on all 15 campuses. Data acquired from House Fiscal Agency University Profile sheets for 2009-10 (http://house.michigan.gov/hfa/PDFs/heidi%20summary%20data_%20feb11.pdf)

²¹ House Fiscal Agency budget summary for FY 2011-12 (http://house.michigan.gov/hfa/Summaries/11h4325_conference%20summary.pdf)

²² For 2010. Ranking based on per capita support for higher ed of \$184. From Illinois State University Grapevine Project. (<http://grapevine.illinois-state.edu/tables/index.htm>)

²³ All projected job openings for all education levels are from "Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements Through 2018," from the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce," Michigan Profile Sheets (<http://www9.georgetown.edu/grad/gppi/hpi/cew/pdfs/michigan.pdf>)

²⁴ Average weekly wages and unemployment rates from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics "Education Pays" presentation: (http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_chart_001.htm)

CREDITS

This public engagement campaign is only possible through the participation of more than 5,800 statewide residents in community conversations and 1,900 more in in-depth statewide polls. Together, these people volunteered more than 12,000 combined hours to consider future education policy options in Michigan and offer guidance to state and local policymakers. The highest credit goes to them.

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PHOTOS

All photos by Lon Horwedel and Sam Zomer.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Founded in 2006, The Center has been incorporated in Michigan as a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. Its officers and directors are: Philip H. Power, Chairman and Director; Kathleen K. Power, Vice President and Director; James S. Hilboldt, Esq., Director; Paul Hillegonds, Director; Mike Jandernoa, Director; Dr. Glenda D. Price, Director; Douglas Rothwell, Director; Dr. Marilyn Schlack, Director; S. Martin Taylor, Director; John Bebow, President and CEO; Loyal A. Eldridge III, Secretary; David S. Kruis, Treasurer.

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The Center has been fortunate to attract a group of distinguished Michigan citizens to serve on its Steering Committee. They include:

- Richard T. Cole, Chair, Department of Advertising, Public Relations and Retailing, Michigan State University
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- Cynthia Wilbanks, Vice President for State Relations, University of Michigan

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Mead



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