



We have a dream
that every child
has access and
opportunity for
a bright future



Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley ... to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quick sands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood.

– Excerpt from Martin Luther King Jr.'s 'I Have a Dream' speech



Introduction

We know Michigan is not where we want it to be. Far from it.

Our public school system has long had troubling opportunity and achievement gaps, especially for students of color, English learners, students with disabilities and children from low-income backgrounds.

Our students don't all have the books, technology, support and services they need to thrive.

Our schools don't all have the resources and funding they need to create nurturing environments so that every child can learn at high levels.

Our teachers all don't have the mentoring, coaching and support they need and deserve.

Our state is one of the worst in the nation for fair funding.

But we don't believe that should continue to be Michigan's story.

Together, we have a vision: Michigan will be a national leader in public education, where all children achieve at high levels, regardless of race, gender, disability, family income, native language or geography.

Together, we dream that every child will have opportunity and access to a world class education and a fair school funding system to support them. These are our dreams. We will continue to fight for these dreams until they become Michigan's reality and our students' future.



Who we are

About the Michigan Partnership for Equity and Opportunity

We are a coalition of civil rights, social justice, civic and business leaders working to promote educational equity for all Michigan students, especially the most underserved. Our diverse, bipartisan table includes individual members as well as organizations who have signed on to be allies for equity.

Our Vision

Michigan will be a national leader in public education, where all children achieve at high levels, regardless of race, gender, disability, family income, native language or geography.

Protecting vulnerable students:

We advocated for Michigan to prioritize and protect funding for vulnerable students, including low-income students, English learners and students with disabilities, during budget discussions to ensure students with the greatest needs have the funding and resources they need to close opportunity gaps.

Equitable funding:

We focused public dialogue on the need for an equitable school funding system in Michigan.



Who we are

Our work and wins for Michigan's students:

Our coalition, which launched at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, has worked together to strengthen our diverse table and build knowledge among advocates regarding critical, relevant education issues, while securing wins for students with the greatest needs, including:

Pandemic assistance and food security:

We worked to ensure that nearly 900,000 Michigan students had much-needed food assistance when school meals were cut off due to the pandemic. Michigan quickly became the national model for efficient and effective distribution of Pandemic food assistance for vulnerable students. We applaud Gov. Whitmer and state leaders for their support in these initiatives.

Early learners:

We supported efforts by the Education Trust-Midwest to ensure all Michigan's early learners can read well by advocating for legislation that expands early and ongoing screening, requires educator training and offers greater student supports.

Transparency and honest information:

We advocated to ensure that Michigan's parents and other stakeholders are aware of the COVID-19 impact on student learning through transparent and honest information systems with the goal of making sure that all Michigan's students have the resources and necessary supports to address their unfinished learning.

Learn more about who we are and our beliefs at partnersformistudents.org/our-beliefs/.



ADNORIS "BO" TORRES

Project Supervisor

Strong Beginnings — Healthy Start



If Michigan had a fair school funding system, our students would be protected and funding for vulnerable students would reach them. We would encourage funding for language accessibility, create more accessibility for parents to engage in classroom education, and ensure transparency and accountability as to where our dollars are going. More teachers, staff, counselors and administrators of color would be present in classrooms and schools. We would encourage participation and teach a broader curriculum that spoke directly to our students of the global majority. We would engage in more exploratory education in our classrooms to utilize the communities we are a part of as an integral part of our youths' education.



I have a dream from prior to birth our students would have access to the best education possible. Early literacy for pregnant families, language accessibility and schools that teach in multiple languages would be the norm... Areas of emphasis like art, music and agriculture would be education cornerstones, not electives.





ALICE G. THOMPSON

Chair of the Education Committee, Detroit Branch NAACP

Chief Executive Officer

BFDI Educational Services, Inc.



If Michigan had a fair school funding system, our students who are most in need would have access to their critically needed resources. Critical resources include: 21st Century, state-of-the-art educational technology, best practice programs, and highly qualified teachers and school leaders to prepare them to compete in this global economy.

If Michigan had a fair school funding system, Michigan's underserved students, Black and Latino students, English language learners, students with disabilities, and students living in high poverty districts would receive a 100% weighted, equitable funding formula. This funding will eliminate the achievement gap and foster a solid path for mastery of grade level proficiency, embodied with a high degree of social and emotional support.



I have a dream that Michigan will achieve its desired goal of being a high performing state, providing the best educational opportunities from cradle to career. Michigan will be a state where families will want their children to be educated, and major industry markets will pursue Michigan as the best state to establish their business because of the wealth of talent in all position categories. I have a dream that Michigan will offer a quality of life environment second to no other state.



AMBER ARELLANO

Executive Director

The Education Trust-Midwest



I have a dream that Michigan will lead the country for its top-notch public education system. Leaders from around the world and country will come to Michigan to learn about its turnaround story and how it went from being a stagnant state for educational progress to one of extraordinary growth and opportunity for all children.

Michigan's rural, working-class and urban neighborhoods will have public schools that look and perform like the state's most affluent schools. These equitably resourced public schools will offer rich coursework and extraordinary instruction, from expansive Advanced Placement classes in high school to dual immersion programs in elementary schools, to broad music, visual arts, dance and theater and athletic programs. These schools will compete successfully for the nation's top teachers because they will be able to afford competitive salaries and attract strong school leaders. They will perform at the top of the country and world — and provide an educational experience with a global perspective that meets and goes beyond national standards for teaching and learning.

Where there is a lack of tutors for children who are behind or accelerated learning for children who are ahead, individualized learning pathways will be provided. Where there is a lack of counselors, there will be adequate counselors and other trained adults supporting children's diverse socio-emotional and other needs. Where there are food and book deserts, there will be schools that serve as the center of communities, providing food supports and thriving libraries. I have a dream that every Michigan child is flourishing in these schools, no matter who she is or where she lives.



BRIAN L. LOVE

Director of Community Outreach
The Education Trust-Midwest



I have a dream that during these very difficult times, when we have a global pandemic, economic insecurity and general sense of fear among people, we remember that education has always been the light in the darkness. When you look through our nation's history, no matter whose history you look at, the promise of education has given people hope, confidence and access to improve their lives and their communities.

I dream that together we can move forward with providing all of our children with the resources to improve their outcomes in the classroom. Education has and will provide for many young Americans the freedom that Rev. King shared in his "I Have a Dream" speech.



If Michigan had a fair school funding system, it would send funds and resources to all of Michigan's school districts as students need direct support. African-American, Arab-American and Latino-American students wouldn't have to compete for dollars in their classrooms as if they were on a basketball court or a soccer field. Our kids would not compete over dollars, but grades and academics. The rural student in the U.P. or the student in Detroit or Grand Rapids would have the same academic equality that a suburban school district student has.



DAVE MEADOR

Vice Chair DTE (retired)

Autism Alliance, Detroit and Michigan Workforce Board and State, Regional and Detroit Economic Development



If Michigan had a fair school funding system, that would mean Michigan would be a top ten State to live, raise a family, run a business, and our population and economy would grow because people would move here from around the country because of our exceptional education system for all, really for all — no matter who you are, the color of your skin, your disability (physical or mental), gender, sexual preference or where you live.

For special education, the system would be designed with high expectations for all, including highly trained teachers using evidenced-based methods. All would have robust IEPs focused on academic achievement and vocational skills. Aides would also be trained in evidenced based methods. All would be expected to graduate from high school and get a job...The system would be designed for the children, not the adults.





DEIDRE LAMBERT-BOUNDS

President

Ignite Social Media



If Michigan had a fair school funding system, a fair funding system would help level the playing field and give our students the ability to compete for careers and future opportunities, not just locally, but also internationally. For far too long, we have not done a good job of properly funding education in a way that the students with the most needs receive funding commensurate with those needs. The consequence has pitted one district against another in a battle for already limited funds, and Michigan students have suffered because of it.

My vision would be for all students to have an opportunity to achieve at their highest ability without funding, politics or access standing in the way. Our school buildings would be structurally sound, have reliable access to technology, staffed by high quality, effective and caring instructors. The districts would consistently use transparent systems that provide data in an easy to understand manner and clarity around where every dollar is spent.



I have a dream that we finally work together to put a proper funding formula in place that results in the highest quality educational outcomes for our children. My hope and dream is that every child has the ability to achieve at their highest ability without the barrier of inequitable funding.



ERIKA VANDYKE

Program Officer

Grand Rapids Community Foundation



If Michigan had a fair school funding system,

all students would have the opportunities and resources they need to thrive regardless of who they are or where they live. This extends to everything from infrastructure and technology in school buildings, to the course options and extracurricular activities available to students, to the staff and teachers interacting with students, to the special education, English language learner, and social-emotional supports at schools. Students would be able to dream big about their futures and see multiple paths forward after high school because they had ample exposure to all kinds of people and experiences — and because they feel supported by their teachers, families and community. Race and socioeconomic status would not predict student success or educational experience, and students would be engaged and excited to come to school every day.



If Michigan had a fair school funding system:

We would see people signing up for teacher training programs in record numbers. They would be eager to become educators because they would be well-supported in terms of compensation, coaching and mentoring, and in the resources available to help them do their jobs. Schools would be beautiful, with the latest technology and ample green space. Students and teachers would have all the books and supplies they needed, free of charge. Teachers would be creative, using project-based learning, field trips, and other engaging methods to get students excited about their subjects. Schools would be open to families and community partners, with ample staff to ensure that any student who needed extra support of any kind could get it. Administrators would be able to focus on school climate and on developing teacher leaders, rather than spending time trying to find the money needed to provide the best possible experience to the students in their care.



FRANCES LAZETTE

Middle School French and Individuals & Societies Teacher

Ann Arbor Public Schools

Michigan Teacher Leadership Collaborative (MTLC) member

(The MTLC is a partnership between The Education Trust-Midwest and Teach Plus.)



If Michigan had a fair funding system, all students would all have access to the academic opportunities, enrichment programming and social supports they need to be successful. Students would attend classes that have relevant and engaging curriculum, hands-on lab activities, and a variety of elective courses including art, world language, project based engineering, and instrumental music. A fair funding system would allow students to receive individualized reading and math instruction, designed to meet them where they are and help them reach grade level standards. There would be staff for special education students and English Language Learners, helping ensure they are getting the additional support they need and deserve. Students would have access to a range of after school programming including team sports, homework help, social clubs, affinity leadership groups and academic games. Fairly funded schools are places where all students are able to thrive academically and developmentally.



If Michigan had a fair funding system, that would mean schools and classrooms would be able to offer high quality, whole child education to its students. Buildings would be equipped with up to date technology, use relevant curriculum, have access to manipulatives and lab equipment, and offer a variety of elective and enrichment courses. School libraries would be full of new and engaging stories that uplift and empower the cultures of the building. Schools would be fully staffed with certified teachers, counselors and support staff all working to address the needs of students. Class sizes would allow students to engage in inquiry and facilitate cooperative learning experiences. An equitable funding model means that schools and classrooms that need more support would receive additional resources and programming, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to learn and grow.



HOLLY WINDRAM

Executive Director

Hope Network's Michigan Education Corps



If Michigan had a fair school funding system, teachers would have all the tools and resources to deliver instruction to meet the needs of each individual students. This includes high quality coaching and mentoring. Further, all kids would have access to education at their instructional level that fosters curiosity and is challenging and engaging. All students would have safe, reliable school transportation, healthy food, safe school environments, and physical/mental health services when needed. All kids — particularly in high school — would know many options for postsecondary training and careers. Also, services we say are important would be fully funded and consistently available for all students regardless of zip code or demographic.





JAMETTA LILLY

CEO

Detroit Parent Network



If Michigan had a fair school funding system,

our students would have child care centers and school buildings that are state of the art. Children with special needs, ESL students, Black and Brown children and children in high poverty districts would have the individual and systems support they and their families deserve. Resources and funding would be tailored to the individual student and community-based needs to provide smaller classrooms and individualized best practice models, school-based integrated health clinics, school social workers and counselors, technology, the arts and college-to-career programs. And Michigan would have policies to resolve health and educational disparities that root out racism and other implicit bias. In an equitable education system these would be the norm from preK to high school and into college. Culturally responsive teaching, high performing school-community collaboration and parents as dreamers and decision makers would be the fuel to build dynamic and high performing schools in every zip code in Michigan.



I have a dream that we as a state can envision a new Michigan and work to honestly address the longstanding inequities of race, class, ethnicity and regionalism that have plagued our politics and relationships. Simultaneously, I dream that WE CAN focus on assuring that all our children and families are thriving and that Detroit and Michigan regain our position as a vibrant top destination in the U.S. and the world.



JOAN LAMAIN

Literacy Specialist, K-4, reading

Northview Public Schools

Michigan Teacher Leadership Collaborative (MTLC) member.

(The MTLC is a partnership between The Education Trust-Midwest and Teach Plus.)



If Michigan had a fair school funding system, our students would have the supports needed to achieve the education they deserve. This would include smaller class sizes so teachers can work with individual student needs, not simply teach a lesson. Fair school funding would put mental health and social work needs as a priority, so our students can learn. Students would enter into buildings that are bright, child-friendly environments that staff, students and communities would be proud to attend. Fair school funding would ensure that every student could read and become a life-long learner.



If Michigan had a fair school funding system, that would mean schools, especially high needs schools, would have math and reading specialists to support classroom instruction and student needs. Each school would also have mental health and social workers, as well as teachers trained in childhood trauma, to address student needs. All students would have access to a well-stocked school library in an inviting and child-friendly environment.



I have a dream that Michigan public schools will become a source of pride and symbols of new futures for our communities and our students. I have a dream that Michigan students will dream bigger, achieve higher and become world citizens because of the excellence in public schools education.



KEN WHIPPLE
Retired Chairman and CEO
CMS Energy



If Michigan had a fair school funding system, that would mean that our teachers would be well paid and have classes of reasonable size. They would be able to produce students who would realize their full potential, whether that's an immediate job or further education. Our citizens would be happier and the net cost savings would be huge.



I have a dream that all students would achieve their full potential, and Michigan would be fully competitive, not only with other states, but with other countries, many of whom are well beyond us. We would also be able to adjust our curricula for the future, to stay globally competitive, as Massachusetts and others are already doing.





LISA MARTIN

4th grade, self contained

Holton Elementary

Michigan Teacher Leadership Collaborative (MTLC) member.

(The MTLC is a partnership between The Education Trust-Midwest and Teach Plus.)



If Michigan had a fair school funding system,

our students would have access to the tools and interventions necessary to bridge the learning gap between students in poverty and trauma and those who are not. We know students in trauma need more support in the form of differentiation, emotional support, and the help of additional adults in the classroom for success, yet these are the first items cut. We are experiencing a vast economic divide in our country. Today's students are facing an almost insurmountable task. Budget cuts to relevant curriculum and updated technology, as well as the lack of a strong adult support system in classrooms, create hardships. History has shown that when a society becomes too economically divided everyone suffers! Health care costs increase, crime increases, and a heightened feeling of general discontent among everyone exists. Funding our kids helps everyone!



I have a dream that Michigan schools would someday fully serve all students. We need buildings which are designed to be student centered and allow for relevant study. We need shop classes, trades training, and project-based learning opportunities. All Michigan students deserve the opportunity to graduate capable of competing at the same level as their peers. Michigan residents deserve a generation of graduates capable of critical thinking and with enough hope to create an environment of change. There is no way to close the educational and economic gaps we are experiencing in this country without equitably funding our schools.



LUNA TERAUCHI

1st grade ELA teacher

Detroit Public Schools Community District

Michigan Teacher Leadership Collaborative (MTLC) member

(The MTLC is a partnership between The Education Trust-Midwest and Teach Plus.)



If Michigan had a fair school funding system, we could ensure our collective power to nourish the spirits of our students, teachers, support staff, families and communities. This system actualizes our imaginations of the impossible as possible, and the fair funding gives us agency to do it well. Parents sending their children to oppressed schools would no longer be forced to caution their children from the drinking waters or raise their fists to fight, always on guard for their safety. Students, families and teachers can learn to trust their learning environment and each other because of the system that upholds their standards of excellence. A system that encourages learning in its purest form, students and teachers unbothered by the crippling infrastructure that once was. Schools will no longer be an isolated entity from their environment, but an integral hub for communal learning — one that grows by its dependency on every member of the ecosystem to thrive.

...When schools are funded to the justice of oppressed communities, poor, persons with disabilities, multilingual learners, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), LGBTQ+, immigrant, refugees, asylum seekers, and much much more, the state humanizes these communities' needs for a collective livelihood created for everyone to thrive. Families could send their children to neighborhood schools confidently knowing that the schools are well-equipped with safe infrastructure and school personnel to serve their children's education. The investment back into these schools means investment into the families and their community, creating a ripple effect towards sustaining this prosperous way of life.



MIKE JANDERNOA

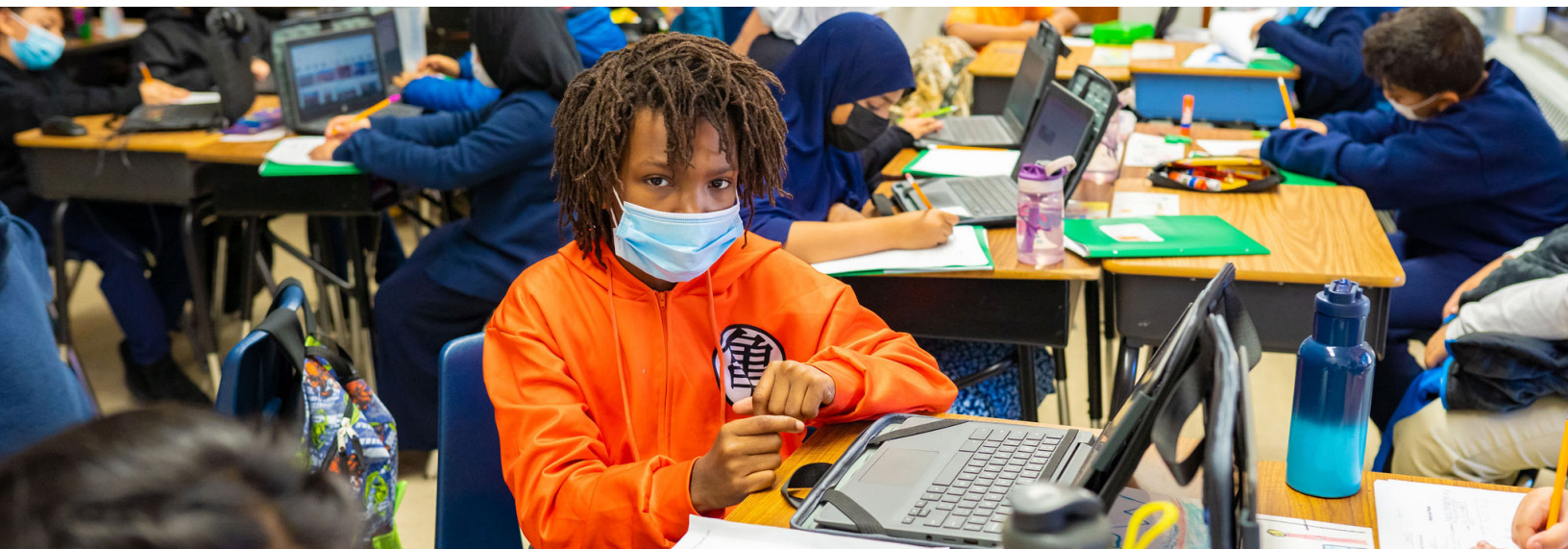
Founder

42 North Partners



I have a dream that there would be an overall increase in academic performance and graduation rates for K-12, technical schools, community colleges, and four-year colleges with no gaps for minorities, especially Black and Brown individuals. The state would have the fewest job openings and that jobs would be filled with pro rata racial diversity at all levels: entry, mid-management and executive. Michigan would be a top-ten state for per capita income and growth. The income and wealth gaps would be closed. Home ownership would be similar, and all neighborhoods would be diverse.

Access to opportunity would be different if all children received a high-quality education, preschool through college. With a record number of job openings, we can change the landscape dramatically. There is an opportunity to create a more level playing field. With a more diverse and talented pool of teachers and better funded schools, we could provide the at-risk children the high-quality education they deserve from preschool through technical school or college. Our diverse community could create more interesting lives and careers, including more wealth and brighter futures for their children and grandchildren.





MONIQUE MARKS

President and CEO

Franklin Wright Settlement



If Michigan had a fair funding system, we would have less individuals living in abject poverty. We would have a greater employment pool of both skilled trades and entrepreneurs. We would decrease the prison system and have less crime in our cities. Overall, (we would have) a better quality of life for all citizens living in Michigan.

If Michigan had a fair school funding system, that would mean more qualified teachers, two teachers per classroom for assistance, special education teachers, teaching staff for English learners, and additional support. You have to make allowances for children living below poverty in high crime neighborhoods. We should also implement socio-emotional and trauma health (services).



I have a dream that all schools would be created equal: Schools that are not flourishing will receive special attention, so that all schools and all children are given the same opportunity to be who they want to be—and to see the American dream and feel like they are part of the global system. This dream will create equitable learning for all our children, making us a better nation.



PETER WALBLAY

High School Teacher (English/Social Studies)

Grand Rapids Public Schools

Michigan Teacher Leadership Collaborative (MTLC) member

(The MTLC is a partnership between The Education Trust-Midwest and Teach Plus.)



If Michigan had a fair school funding system, our students would have the resources needed to feel empowered and uplifted by their school systems. Fair funding would ensure equitable classroom environments for all learners while laying the foundation for engagement in relevant curriculum and opportunities for community growth. If Michigan had a fair school funding system, that would mean that all schools would be able to provide safe and equitable schools and classrooms. Students would have access to services, resources, and professionals that would help catalyze their growth and development, while supporting their goals and aspirations. Through fair funding, all schools would be able to serve as pillars of the communities they serve, giving all stakeholders pride and confidence in the future that lies ahead.



I have a dream that all students will be provided with the tools and resources necessary to accomplish their goals. This begins with equitable and fair funding. All learners deserve to have safe and supportive school environments where they can discover and pursue their passions. Education is for everyone, and I have a dream that school funding systems in the state of Michigan will reflect this belief.

Join the movement

The Michigan Partnership for Equity and Opportunity is convened by The Education Trust-Midwest, a nonpartisan, data-driven education policy, research and advocacy organization that works for the high academic achievement of all Michigan students in pre-kindergarten through college. The organization's goal is to close the gaps in opportunity and achievement that disproportionately impact underserved students, including students of color, English Learners, students with disabilities and children from low-income backgrounds.

Learn More

midwest.edtrust.org

partnersformistudents.org

