

# PLAYBOOK

FOR

## MICHIGAN'S CHILDREN

2019-2020 Legislative Priorities

**STRONG  
FAMILIES**



**THRIVING  
STUDENTS**



**READY  
LEARNERS**



**SUCCESSFUL  
TRANSITIONS**



Michigan's  
**Children**

[michiganschildren.org](http://michiganschildren.org)

# OUR CORE POLICY PRINCIPLES

**“Will this change the odds for children, youth, and families in Michigan?”**

**It's the most important question we ask ourselves when we begin our work, and it's how we decide what work to pursue with each new legislature and administration. To know whether our policy priorities are meeting our mission, we evaluate whether or not they will:**



## Close the Gaps

Discouraging and unacceptable gaps in a wide variety of life outcomes for children, youth and families begin early and persist over a lifetime, with race, ethnicity, geography and family economics continuing to predict success. The most effective public policies and investments not only improve overall well-being, but also close gaps in access to resources and opportunities.

## Grow Healthy Minds

Raising Michigan's children isn't rocket science—it's brain science. Healthy development and good mental health are critical for the growth and well-being of children and youth and for the stability of families. Public policy and investment must promote access to concrete supports and services. This is critical to prevent harmful experiences that alter brain development in ways that make it difficult to participate and excel, and to better align services to changing brain architecture of children, youth, and those who care for them.

## Listen to Youth and Families

To pursue the most effective solutions for children, youth, and families in Michigan, decision-makers need accurate information about what works and what doesn't. This means that our legislature and administration must ground their work in data and research and create space for the voices of youth and parents to impact policy conversations. Children, youth and families experience the outcomes of lawmaker decisions every day. Their voices are not always included in decision-making and yet their perspective on whether programs are accessible and effective and for whom is crucial information for design and investment.

## Make Government Work

Michigan's many state and local agencies administer scores of effective programs and collect millions of points of data, but existing resources and administrative staffing are often insufficient for making information and services work together to improve the lives of citizens. The needs of families don't neatly fit into individual programs or departments, requiring structures that enable cross-agency information sharing, research, constituent voice and program planning and investment.

## Support Professionals

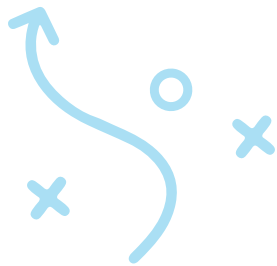
The individuals providing services to children and families across the state are helping grow Michigan's economy by strengthening our talent pipeline. Many professionals who serve children and families, however, do not currently earn wages that reflect their contributions to our state's economic growth and development. For example, in 2016, child care workers and mental health direct care professionals made under \$10.00/hour on average. Still others are overburdened with high caseloads, limited professional support, or populations with many needs and few available services. Public policy and investment decisions must also fortify those who serve kids and families on the front lines.

## Build on Progress

Many programs have become less accessible to Michigan citizens over recent decades and child and family outcomes remain far below acceptable levels. However, Michigan has moved the ball forward on a number of initiatives in recent years, and we must recognize and build upon that progress. (See page 12 for examples.)



# PROVEN PLAYS FOR THRIVING STUDENTS



## 6,000

Fewer hours spent by low-income kids in enriched learning — such as preschool, summer camp, or after-school activities — as their middle class or wealthier peers by sixth grade.

Source: [www.expandedschools.org/policy-documents/6000-hour-learning-gap#sthash.baTUgK2E.dpbs](http://www.expandedschools.org/policy-documents/6000-hour-learning-gap#sthash.baTUgK2E.dpbs)

Michigan's children will be our next scientists, entrepreneurs, teachers, parents, laborers, artists and lawmakers, and our future depends on preparing them for education, work, and life. There is universal agreement that a high-quality K-12 education matters for our future, but our results are not meeting the outcomes we need. By the time poor children are in the 6th grade, they have spent 6,000 fewer hours learning, resulting in gaps in their academic success. By the third grade, white students are well above their peers of color in reading, by the eighth grade those gaps are even larger for math outcomes. High school dropout rates remain higher for Black, Hispanic and American Indian students, and for those facing life challenges like poverty, disability and homelessness.

Years of research and the lived experience of youth and families have taught us that in order to succeed, students need: parents and caregivers who have tools to support their children's learning at home; trained school professionals who can recognize and respond to student needs; access to basic resources that are essential to learning; and academic tools and pathways that enable their educational success.

## Academic Tools and Pathways

Students who begin behind in school remain behind without appropriate intervention, and other students face life challenges that require additional academic supports, particularly those experiencing foster care, homelessness or juvenile justice.

- ✕ **Provide dedicated state funding to ensure quality after-school programs are available around the state.** Quality after-school and summer learning programs help struggling students improve attendance, behavior, and achievement through developing their own strengths and potential.
- ✕ **Remove barriers to families affording child care for their school-age children** by ensuring that quality after-school and summer learning programs can qualify for child care funds.
- ✕ **Preserve and expand state support for competency-based education and flexible paths to graduation** which provide flexible scheduling, smaller classes, alternative credit bearing options, and post-secondary pathways to students who may struggle to achieve and graduate due to their personal circumstances.

## Family Skill-Building

Children learn best when their households are able to reinforce lessons from school and effectively interact with schools and other services. Building caregiver skills and improving access to services for families leads to resilient and successful students.

- ✕ **Preserve and expand state support for adult education programs** that provide opportunities for young adults and parents to build literacy skills, earn a GED, and prepare for a career, improving workforce participation and family literacy rates.
- ✕ **Require regional needs assessments for adult education programs** so that additional resources can be appropriately utilized to close service gaps.
- ✕ **Improve coordination of family skill building initiatives with other services**, including coordination of free and affordable child care for adult learners and co-location of supports for children with education and workforce training programs for their parents.
- ✕ **Require Early Literacy Coaches to collect data on barriers that parents/guardians have with implementing read-at-home plans**, which Michigan law requires for families of students who do not score proficient in reading. Understanding parents' barriers must inform decision-making.





## Access to Resources for Learning

Children learn best when their brains and bodies are healthy and ready to learn. Supporting responsibility for education beyond the school doors can create a system of integrated services that better serve the most challenged children, youth, families and communities.

- ✕ **Allocate professional development resources for trauma-informed practices** to increase educators' capacity to diagnose and appropriately respond to student behaviors that may have been influenced by trauma. This helps bolster increased investments in student services and recent changes to state school discipline law.
- ✕ **Expand funding to ensure statewide access to school-based and school-linked physical and mental health services**, and invest in statewide capacity to match school spending for student health services with federal Medicaid funds.
- ✕ **Build programs that address the specific needs of children, youth and caregivers experiencing foster care**, including communications, trauma-informed practice, improved assessment and service provision for developmental and learning delays, and additional flexibility.



## Skilled School Professionals

All students deserve access to teachers, counselors, health professional, social workers and others who are trained to help build important skills and connect with critical academic, health and social supports and services.

- ✕ **Allocate professional development resources to trauma-informed practice** to ensure that increased investments into student services and recent changes to state school discipline law are bolstered by increased educator capacity to diagnose and appropriately respond to student behaviors that may have been influenced by trauma.
- ✕ **Continue and expand support to schools to ensure access to trained mental health professionals and services** on-site and through community partnerships.

## Early Learning

Providing high-quality early learning experiences can ensure that young children have the social and cognitive skills they need to start school prepared and will help prevent an achievement gap that emerges as young as nine months of age:

- ✕ **Preserve and expand recent state investment in *Early On Michigan*** to provide recognized levels of service to all eligible infants and toddlers. *Early On* provides screening and services to families with infants and toddlers with and at risk of acquiring a developmental delay, equipping families in their homes with skills to help their children, often preventing the need for future costly K-12 special education services.
  - ✕ **Increase state support for local abuse and neglect prevention councils** which coordinate community support, assess needs, and build partnerships to provide needed services for families.
  - ✕ **Increase state support for child abuse and neglect prevention services statewide.** Community-identified needs lead to evidenced practices like home visiting, parenting classes, counseling, child care, referrals, transportation and prenatal care for families preventing instability.
  - ✕ **Increase state support to provide statewide access to voluntary evidence-based home visiting programs based on local needs assessments.** These quality programs work with families exhibiting some risk to promote early learning and healthy child development and improve birth and early learning outcomes.
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**1 in 5**  
students

experience mental  
health challenges.

**2 in 5**  
of those

receive treatment  
they need.

**2/3**  
of those

receive services  
only at school.

Source: [www.nasponline.org](http://www.nasponline.org)