

2026 MEA Representative Assembly

Report on 2025 NBI #4: Education Campaign for Election 2026 - Losses & Gains

The following communications strategy memo outlines the research and work completed thus far, and where things move next as we approach Election 2026.

Kudos to MEA staff members Zach Crim for development of this plan document, as well as Brenda Ortega and Tanner Delpier for their work on a series of *MEA Voice* magazine stories delving into key topics to begin that education process. Those stories are attached, as well as slides used in various presentations through 2025-26 to educate voters about the damage inflicted in the 2010s on MEA and public education.

2025 RA NBI #3

The RA directs the MEA to create a statewide educational campaign for MEA membership highlighting the devastating impact Governor Snyder had on public education and union rights before the next governor's election using all available communication and resources.

Current Landscape

Public education and literacy are at the forefront of voters' minds this election cycle and Democrats are beginning to lose their long-held de-facto advantage on education issues. Former Gov. Rick Snyder has pledged to spend \$20-\$30 million dollars to make 2026 "the education election" and demand implementation of drastic public school reforms. Snyder's relatively low name ID may allow him and aligned candidates to redefine his legacy and frame themselves as education reformers. MEA has an opportunity to shape member understanding – especially with those who were not yet working in public education and did not experience the Snyder-era firsthand.

Value Proposition

By remembering the harm inflicted on public education and organized labor during the Snyder administration, we will mobilize our members to elect a Governor who aligns with MEA values. Recent progress has restored some protections and strengthened schools, but the next Governor will determine whether educators keep these gains.

Target Audience

Primary

- Educators under 30
- Educators with 10 or fewer years of experience

Secondary

- Local leaders who will act as trusted messengers

During workgroups on this issue, members were frequently concerned that many newer or younger members are not aware of the damage that Snyder inflicted. This was verified in polling, which showed that **23% of current/retired/potential MEA members do not know who Rick Snyder is** (this number jumps to 34% among educators with 10 or fewer years experience and **48% among educators under 30**).

Narrative Framework

Because of Snyder's low name recognition among our primary target audience, we are not aiming to sway entrenched opinions and must lead with educational content marketing. The campaign must **teach members what happened during the Snyder years** – not simply attack Snyder – and **set up protection of improvements made since**. This educational content can be followed by an emotional appeal, and finally, a direct call to action. This framework looks like the following:

1. Remember what happened.

Educators paid the price under Snyder's failed policies aimed at weakening unions and dismantling public education. Members lost bargaining rights, suffered pay cuts and higher costs.

2. Protect what we've rebuilt.

Hard-won progress in recent years restored protections and strengthened schools, thanks to educator advocacy and allies in public office.

3. Don't go backward.

The next governor will determine whether educators keep these gains – or we return to a bleak vision for public education. (NOTE: This phase is focused on active support for candidate(s) and can include clear Calls to Action – vote, volunteer, call, give to PAC, etc.)

Messaging Pillars

The **most persuasive messages are economic and workplace impacts**, not abstract policy debates. While still effective, some traditional messages (Right to Work, charter schools, emergency managers) poll up to 20% less impactful than **economic and collective bargaining** messages.

The general messages below reflect the issues which resonate with educators, but they **should be supported with specific examples and stories which emphasize personal impact**.

School Funding / Economic Security:

- Republican Gov. Rick Snyder cut funding from Michigan's public schools, forcing districts to do more with less – and **students suffered**. When schools lose resources, educators pay the price through **stagnant wages, larger class sizes, and fewer supports for students**.
- In 2012, **Snyder cut \$1 billion from K-12 schools** to pay for tax cuts for wealthy CEOs and businesses, which resulted in lower wages and benefits for public school employees.
- When politicians cut school funding, it means **fewer resources for students** and **less financial stability for school employees**.

Health Care Costs:

- Laws under the Snyder administration shifted health care costs onto educators and school employees. These changes **increased out-of-pocket costs and forced many educators to pay more for the same coverage.**
- When educators are asked to shoulder higher health care costs, it makes the profession less sustainable and **harder for schools to recruit and retain talented educators.**
- Policies that raise health care costs ultimately **hurt both educators and the students they serve.**

Retirement Security:

- Snyder-era changes **weakened the pension system** for public school employees and made it harder for educators to count on a secure retirement.
- **New educators were pushed into less secure retirement options**, undermining the stability that once made education an attractive career.
- When educators cannot rely on a secure retirement, it discourages young people from entering the profession and **accelerates the teacher shortage facing Michigan schools.**

Union Rights & Collective Bargaining:

- Snyder and his allies relied on classic union-busting tactics and corporate/for-profit motives for public education. They attacked educators' unions by **weakening collective bargaining, banning payroll deduction of dues, and limiting the topics unions are allowed to bargain in their contracts.**
- Snyder-era laws **stripped educators of the right to negotiate over key workplace decisions like placement, discipline, layoffs, and recall.**
- Teacher evaluation laws relied heavily on standardized test scores, prohibiting local bargaining and pushing districts toward systems where **up to 40% of an educator's evaluation could be based on test results instead of professional judgment.**

Voice Guidelines

- *Communicate with Integrity* – Share information that is honest and truthful. Avoid exaggeration or misleading rhetoric.
- *Educate* – Many educators are unaware of Snyder's attacks on public education and can be persuaded by objective information.
- *Focus on "Kitchen Table Issues"* – Educators care most about concrete impacts on pay and benefits, not general political arguments.

- *Use Real-World Examples* – Provide relatable impact on specific schools and educators, not simply philosophical ideas or large state funding numbers.
- *Empower Action* – After educating and laying emotional groundwork, follow with clear calls to action (e.g. talk to fellow members, vote for recommended candidates, give to PAC, etc.)

Tactics & Deliverables

This education content campaign must focus on **exposure**. Initially, **49% of educators are unsure how Snyder’s goals for public education would impact schools**. After messaging, that **“undecided” segment drops to 15%**, with nearly all of those swayed believing that Snyder’s plans are “negative” for public schools. This indicates that **we have a winning message, so the campaign must emphasize reach and repetition**.

MEA can help trusted messengers elevate our message through the following deliverables:

1. Story collection tools: Along with traditional tactics like interviews and surveys, direct member-to-MEA story collection will be driven at an individual level through an online video/photo/written content capture tool called *Memory Fox* (COMING SOON)!
2. Shareable social media content:
 - Graphics – Factoids (Remember What Happened), side-by-side comparison of policies (Protect What We’ve Rebuilt), member quote testimonials, etc.
 - Videos - Member testimonials or protest footage with text overlay / voiceover. (Remember What Happened)
3. Worksite flyers/posters/materials:
 - Fact sheets (*Remember What Happened*)
 - Side by side comparisons (*Protect What We’ve Rebuilt*) – **SEE SAMPLE ATTACHED**
 - Graph(s) of average out-of-pocket healthcare and retirement costs.
4. Materials support for Member-to-Member conversations:
 - Videos, PowerPoints and Scripts for member speakers at building, local and coordinating council meetings.
 - Relational organizing tools to facilitate and track individual member volunteer conversations (phone/texts) with fellow members they know/work with.
 - Commit to vote cards, volunteer recruitment opportunities and legislative outreach.
5. MEA member communication vehicles:
 - MEA Voice magazine – July/August and September/October issues
 - Direct Mail and Email to Homes
 - Member-targeted digital ads
 - Organic social media outreach and boosted posts to members

Hard Won, Not Done

Protecting our Progress in Election 2026

Michigan educators lived through a dark time between 2011 and 2019. Under Republican Gov. Rick Snyder, our neighborhood schools and the students they serve suffered. Snyder's attacks on public schools drove a statewide educator shortage and led to fewer supports for students.

After voters ousted anti-education politicians, educators successfully clawed back some of what was lost, but **the work continues.**

The Snyder Years

Snyder **cut \$1 billion from K-12 schools** to pay for tax cuts for wealthy CEOs and businesses, which resulted in lower wages and benefits for public school employees and fewer resources in classrooms.

.....
Snyder passed laws that shifted health care costs onto educators and school employees, **increasing out-of-pocket costs and forcing many educators to pay more for the same coverage.**
.....

Snyder-era changes **weakened the pension system** and made it harder for educators to count on a secure retirement. **New educators were pushed into less secure retirement options**, undermining the stability that once made education an attractive career.

.....
Snyder-era laws **stripped educators of the right to negotiate** over key workplace decisions like placement, discipline, layoffs, and recall.
.....

Teacher evaluation law relied heavily on standardized test scores, prohibiting local bargaining and pushing districts toward systems where **up to 40% of an educator's evaluation could be based on test results instead of professional judgment.**

What We've Won Back

School funding has increased, with equalized per pupil funding now over \$10k. However, we lost so much ground under Snyder that funding is still struggling to keep up with inflation.

.....
Democrats passed a bill to more fairly distribute skyrocketing healthcare costs between public employers and employees, but it has been blocked from becoming law since early 2025 by House Republican Leadership.
.....

The pension system is now the default option for new employees, but the work continues to ensure every educator can retire with dignity.

.....
Educators won back the right to negotiate over issues that impact their daily lives on the job.
.....

New laws reestablished evaluation as a topic of bargaining, allowing teacher input and reducing the weight of test scores in ratings.

What's at Stake in 2026?

Every gain educators have made since 2019 can be undone by the next governor. That's why getting involved and voting in 2026 is so critical to the future of public education.

Protect Our Progress - Learn more at mea.org/HardWonNotDone

Facts v Fallacy

PART I: School Performance

By Brenda Ortega
MEA Voice Editor

MEA Labor Economist Tanner Delpier tells stories with data. The tale he tells of public education in Michigan runs counter to the message heard far too often in sound bites on the news.

We continually hear that public schools are “failing,” despite “record” state funding, because educators lack “accountability.”

“None of that is true,” Delpier says.

Yet former Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder announced last June he plans to spend his time and millions of dollars to pound the message of school failure into voters’ minds between now and the next statewide elections in November 2026.

This is the same Rick Snyder who presided over a steep, years-long decline in the state education budget, which hit bottom under his leadership in 2013. At the time, the goal of Snyder and others was shifting dwindling public resources to private, religious and for-profit charter schools — something we must remain vigilant against.

Pundits and influencers who want to perpetuate falsehoods know if they repeat a lie often enough, then eventually people will believe it. Here is the truth.

Our schools are not failing, though educators face significant challenges.

Education funding in Michigan still has not returned to peak levels reached in the early 2000s.

Accountability has been the focus ever since President George W. Bush made standardized test scores both the goal and the yardstick in 2002.

Framework

The education statistic most tossed-about lately is a ranking of Michigan compared to other states in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) — often referred to as The Nation’s Report Card.

Within this framework, Michigan ranked 44th among states in fourth-grade reading scores in 2024.

Michigan students performed at the national average on three of four NAEP measures that year except fourth-grade reading, which fell below average. Because the NAEP only tests a small random sample of students from each state, the standard error rate centers at 1.5 points, Delpier said. [\[Fig. 1\]](#)

Score differences within the error rate are not statistically meaningful, but news media and politicians use them to rank states and speculate about causes — even though the maker of the assessment (the National Center for Education Statistics or NCES) cautions against it.

In the case of fourth-grade reading, 31 states scored higher than Michigan which was statistically tied with 18 other states. In general, NAEP scores are tightly distributed — meaning a tiny increase can move up a state by many places in the rankings, Delpier notes. [\[Fig. 2\]](#)

Certainly there is room to improve “average” scores, but it’s inaccurate to depict student performance that is mostly on par with other states as a dire crisis unique to Michigan. What’s more, improved math scores in Michigan and the nation in 2022 and 2024 garnered little attention.

“There’s an asymmetry to how scores are discussed in the media which has little to do with the actual learning

that’s happening in schools and more to do with incendiary headlines that grab attention or try to place blame,” Delpier said.

Another way in which NAEP scores have been twisted to fit a political message is in the definition of “proficient.” In NAEP terms, proficient is a high bar and does not correlate to grade-level achievement.

Nevertheless, both news outlets and politicians from both parties misinterpret NAEP fourth-grade reading scores, for example, to say that only 25% of Michigan students are reading at “grade level” because that is the figure reported as reaching “At or Above Proficient.”

In fact, all but two states set their individual proficiency standards lower than the national test does — closer to the NAEP’s “Basic” standard, Delpier said, noting: “If you read the (NAEP) definition of ‘Basic,’ it involves pretty sophisticated reading skills.” [\[Fig. 3\]](#)

In Michigan, 55% reached “At or Above Basic” level compared to 59% nationally. “That’s not where we want to be as a state or as a country, but it’s better achievement than what is being reported,” Delpier said.

Instead of ranking states in a competition, the NCES recommends more broadly examining scores over time and breaking down data by subgroups — also combining the data with other information — to inform policy and instructional improvements.

The fact is nationwide scores remain below pre-pandemic levels in all tested grades and subjects, according to an NCES analysis. Moreover, the gap between the highest- and lowest-performing students is large and growing across the country — a trend seen for more than a decade.

Fig. 1 Michigan Compared to the National Average NAEP Scaled Scores, 2024

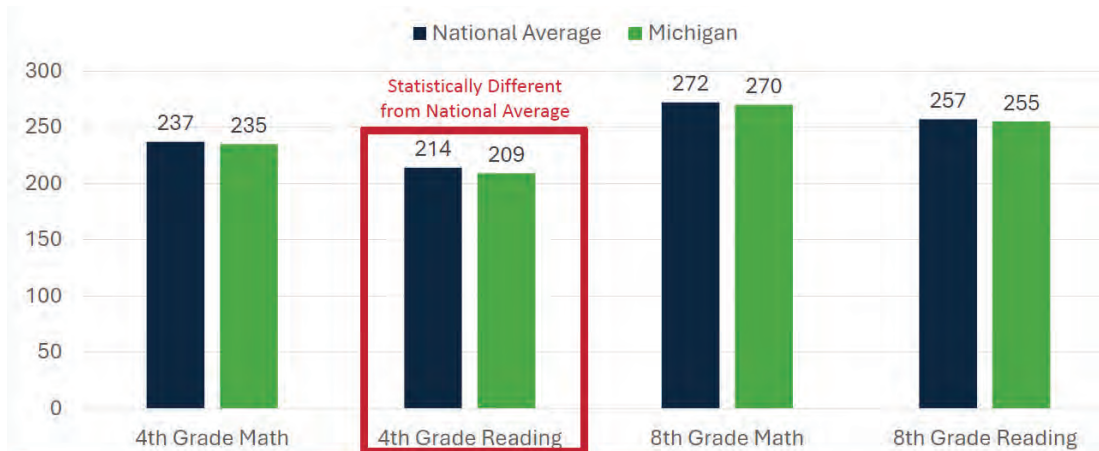


Fig. 2 NAEP equivalent scores of state grade 4 reading standards for proficient performance, by state: 2019

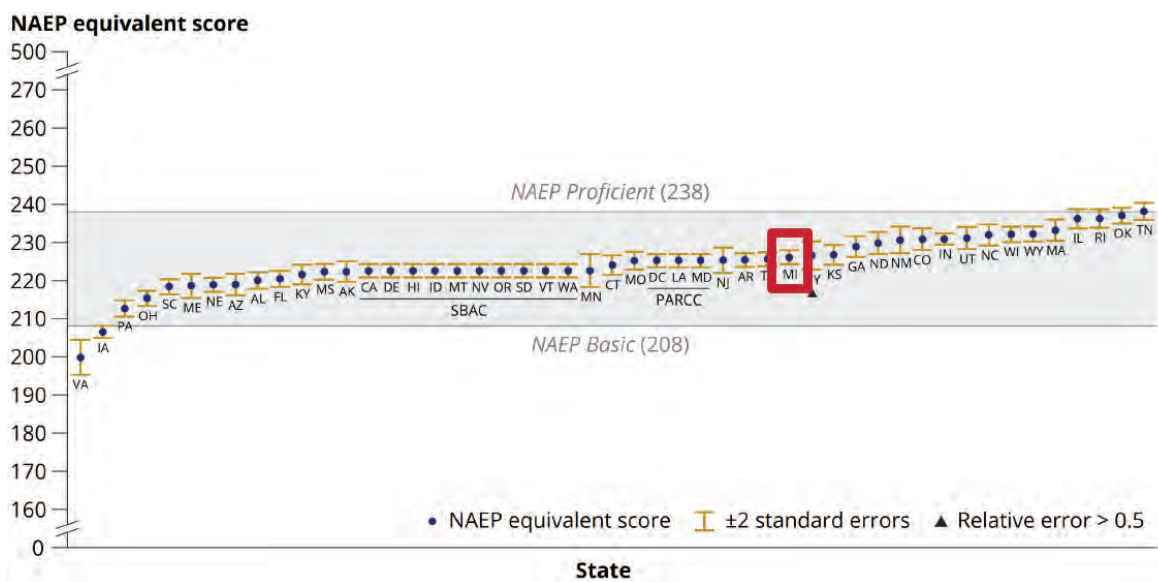


Fig. 3 NAEP 4th Grade Reading Standards: BASIC

- ✓ determine meaning of familiar words using context
- ✓ identify detail to make a simple inference
- ✓ sequence or categorize events from the story
- ✓ make reference to an appropriate section of the text
- ✓ Provide evidence from one of the texts when making a comparison
- ✓ identify explicit details from the text
- ✓ state an opinion with general support from the text
- ✓ restate a problem or solution presented in a single section of the text
- ✓ provide a description of a text feature or author’s craft using a general reference to the text
- ✓ provide an opinion using a general reference to the text

For related information and source information, visit mea.org/facts.

The NCES analysis asked and answered a key question: “Just how big is this gap? On a 500-point scale, the lowest-performing students generally scored about 100 points below the highest-performing students in 2024.”

Challenges

According to the *2025 Kids Count in Michigan Data Book & Profiles*, which released the latest information on child well-being in September, nearly one-in-five Michigan children were living in poverty, and food insecurity was on the rise in 61 counties.

- Fully fund access to early childhood care and education
- Improve access to mental health services in public schools
- Increase resources to schools and students with higher needs
- Adopt universal free community college

One of the struggles for educators is the expectation that they can solve all of society’s problems without adequate resources or proper training, says MEA member Amy Urbanowski-Nowak, an English teacher in Birch Run and president of the local union.

Meanwhile, Dick and Betsy DeVos have launched a new nonprofit organization, the Michigan Forward Network, to push their longstanding anti-public education messages.

Over the years, the DeVos family has spent millions of dollars funding right-wing political candidates and causes, including school voucher schemes.

According to Bridge Michigan, the DeVoses’ new group will operate as a 501(c)(4) — a “dark money” nonprofit that will not have to disclose its donors and can spend unlimited amounts to influence elections but cannot directly coordinate with candidates or campaigns.

That is a big part of the problem faced by Michigan schools, says Steven Norton, a public policy analyst and executive director of Michigan Parents for Schools, a nonprofit advocacy group working to support community-governed schools in the state.

“Over the last two decades, Michigan public schools have suffered a blizzard of ideologically driven ‘reform’ attempts,” Norton wrote in a recent op-ed in Bridge. “Nearly all of these focused on punishing what the sponsors saw as ‘failure’ and reshaping schools to fit their ideologies favoring privatization.

“They were not designed to help our local public schools, but to drive parents to other alternatives, weakening public schools in the process. How can we possibly be surprised at the result?” **V**

“Teachers feel like the weight of the world is on their shoulders.”

— Birch Run English teacher Amy Urbanowski-Nowak

“Many families in Michigan are still struggling to make ends meet on a daily basis, which will only be exacerbated by recent federal cuts to social safety net programs,” a summary of the report’s findings noted.

The Kids Count Data Book provides an evidence-based list of policy proposals to boost child well-being for state leaders to consider, including a few education-related proposals:

“I can’t solve students’ anxiety and depression, address special education needs, establish relationships, and teach English all at the same time,” Urbanowski-Nowak said. “Teachers feel like the weight of the world is on their shoulders.”

(Read more of Amy’s thoughts about this topic on the next page.)

Facts v Fallacy

mea.org/facts

Watch for the rest of our three-part *Facts v Fallacy* series in upcoming issues of MEA Voice, including “School Funding” in February-March and “School Policy” in April-May. Then stay tuned for a retrospective on the legacy of the Snyder years in the August-September edition.

Listen to educators for a change

*By Amy Urbanowski-Nowak
Birch Run Education Association*

When I was a young child, I often dreamt of being a teacher... and a horse trainer, but that's a story for another day. I would ask my sisters to play the role of the student, or set up my stuffed animals if my sisters grew tired of it.

Back then I was inspired to become a teacher, and when I made my dream come true, I was equally excited. I never expected testing to be the huge factor it has become in the life of my classroom.

A few years into my career, the emphasis on standardized assessments grew exponentially, and it saddened me. I never imagined when I was lining my stuffed animals into neat little rows that they

would be focused on test taking and surpassing the state and national average scores.

Over time the emphasis on testing grew, and as I sit here contemplating this ordeal today, high-stakes testing remains exactly as it sounds: high-stakes. Yet I know when we turn test scores into the goal, instead of one measure among many, real learning gets lost.

As an educator who has been in the field for 20-plus years, I've found that I must approach this subject in different ways with my students because they often seem confused as to why standardized testing is so important.

Some of them wonder why the SAT really matters or if scoring lower on one of our yearly assessments will make them look unintelligent. A few do not take the test seriously at all, while others stress over the assessments and let their anxiety get the best of them.

To them I say, "You are more than a test score."

We have students sitting in classrooms everyday who excel in many ways that a standardized test can't measure and

the news reports and charts and graphs will never convey.

Some are learning skills to fix automobiles and build homes at the career center. Others are involved in the Early College Program exploring what it's like to be a college student.

Students are learning valuable communication skills in Speech or how to envelop a character in Drama.

They're figuring out how to dissect sources for credibility in English class, a skill they will carry into the real world.

I have seen students compete in public speaking in the forensic circuit, among peers from all around the state, and do so with confidence and eloquence.

I have seen some gather the courage to perform in front of their community during drama productions and wow audiences.

I have seen students motivating their fellow classmates to succeed and helping those in need.

But test scores cannot show any of this.

Educators have been saying the same thing for years. We can't keep shouldering more of society's problems while resources and services are cut. Still we get policymakers touting more "competition," private schools and voucher schemes. Where has that gotten us?

It's time to re-evaluate. Students are more than a test score. Teachers are more than a test score. Schools are more than a test score. Let's put the emphasis where it belongs — on helping students succeed and teachers teach. **V**

Amy Urbanowski teaches high school English, speech, drama and forensics and serves as president of the Birch Run Education Association. She has also coached high school forensics for more than 20 years.



Facts v Fallacy

PART II: School Funding

By Brenda Ortega
MEA Voice Editor

Michigan voters are likely to see the phrase “record school funding” in campaign mailers from both political parties this election year. The difference will be in perspective.

One side will use the term to tout recent gains in school funding as a point of pride in better supporting educators and students. The other side will use it as a weapon to attack schools for not achieving better test scores.

The truth is school funding saw much-needed increases over Gov. Gretchen Whitmer’s tenure. It’s accurate to say, in nominal dollars, the state achieved historic school funding.

But the claim of “record school funding” is misleading — not only because it fails to account for inflation, says MEA Labor Economist Tanner Delpier, a leading expert on school finance.

Typically used to compare Whitmer’s education record to her predecessor, Gov. Rick Snyder, the term “completely ignores the historical context before 2012, which is right around the time that school funding in the state hit rock bottom,” Delpier said.

“Why start the line graph in 2012?” he asked. The answer is simple.

When compared to bottomed-out K-12 spending achieved by Snyder and a Republican-controlled state Legislature in 2014, significant increases led by Whitmer — especially in the past three years — appear as unprecedented.

[Fig. 1]

Further pulling back the curtain from 2012 to 2002 reveals the true trendline, Delpier points out.

“There was a massive decline from 2002 to 2014, and earlier funding levels have not yet been restored. While the state is no longer at the

lowest funding level in history, (school funding remains 32% below that early 2000s peak — a gap amounting to about \$10.4 billion.

“The truth is that funding has dropped sharply since Proposal A in 1994.”
[Fig. 2]

LESS FUNDING ÷ MORE SCHOOLS

After Michigan voters approved Proposal A, amending the state constitution to shift school financing from local property taxes to state taxes, lawmakers increased spending on education for a few years. Then began the devastating decades-long decline.

Promoted by Gov. John Engler, a conservative proponent of market-based school reform centered on competition, Proposal A also ushered in charter schools and schools of choice which placed additional financial pressures on public school districts.

In effect, “The policy of Michigan has been to spread a declining share of state resources over an ever-increasing number of institutions while we have a declining student population,” Delpier said. “That is the definition of inefficiency.”

Michigan has the most for-profit charter schools in the nation. The state spends more than \$1 billion on over 300 charter schools — 30% of which regularly fail and close due to low enrollment or financial mismanagement, according to a review by the Network for Public Education.

The rules in place allow charter school operators to generate profit from per-pupil revenue while holding land tax-free as it builds up value, Delpier said.

“The business model of charter

schools is land speculation. When you have a school that is for-profit, in a literal sense what they have to do is what’s best for the shareholders rather than the students.”

In addition to unaccountable charter schools, a growing number of hidden costs drain dollars from K-12 districts.

One type is pension debt payments drawn from state education funds, which reduce what’s available to serve students. Other examples include underfunded state mandates and pre-school expansion.

State policymakers also have accelerated a trend — as recently as the 2026 fiscal year budget — toward using the K-12 budget to pay for higher education, which historically came from the state’s general fund.

“Compared to the years after Proposal A, Michigan is now effectively transferring out \$1.6 billion from K-12 schools to support community colleges and universities each year,” Delpier said. “In real terms, nearly \$18 billion has been diverted away from K-12 schools since 2010.”

Recent per-pupil spending increases in 2023 and 2024 moved Michigan to the middle of the pack in national comparisons, he added. “While this recent *increase* in per-pupil funding may be ‘historic,’ the current funding *level* — in both per-pupil and total terms — is not.”

MONEY MATTERS

Numerous studies show that investing in schools and learning resources pays off in student outcomes, according to a research review by the Learning Policy Institute titled “How Money Matters in Schools.”

“The research documents that resource investments matter for

FIG. 1 Effective PK-12 Education Revenue, FY 2012-2024

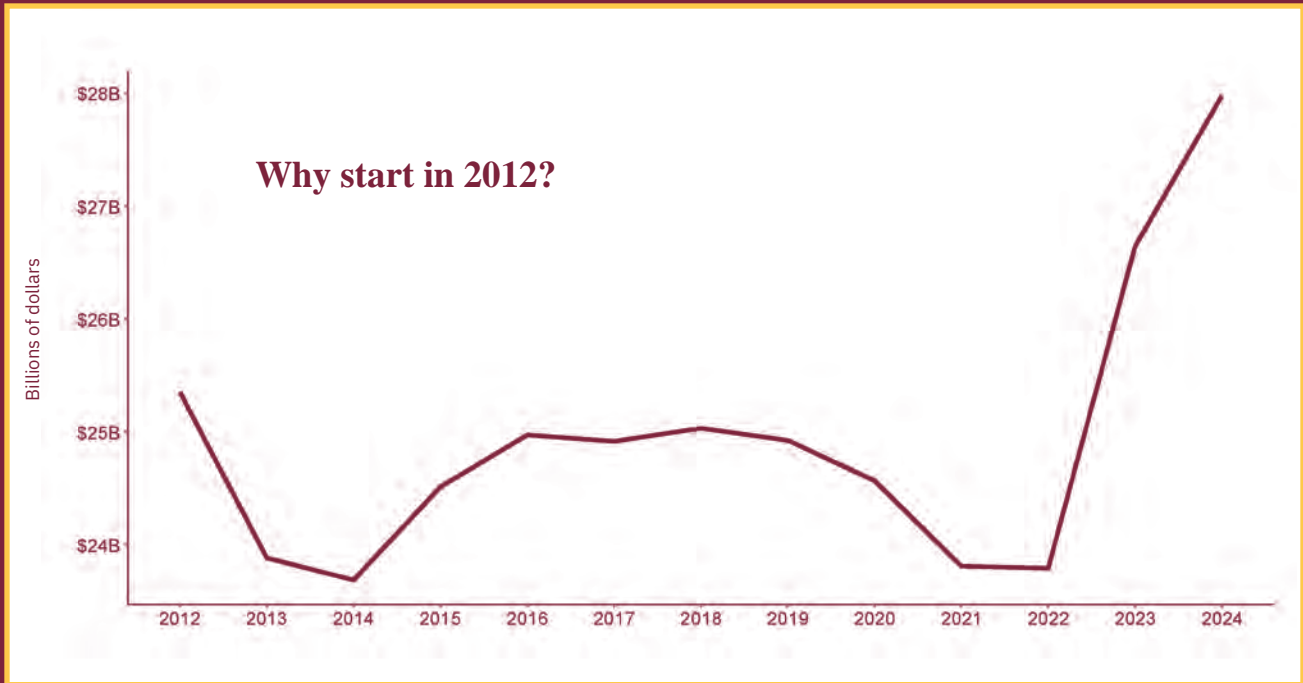
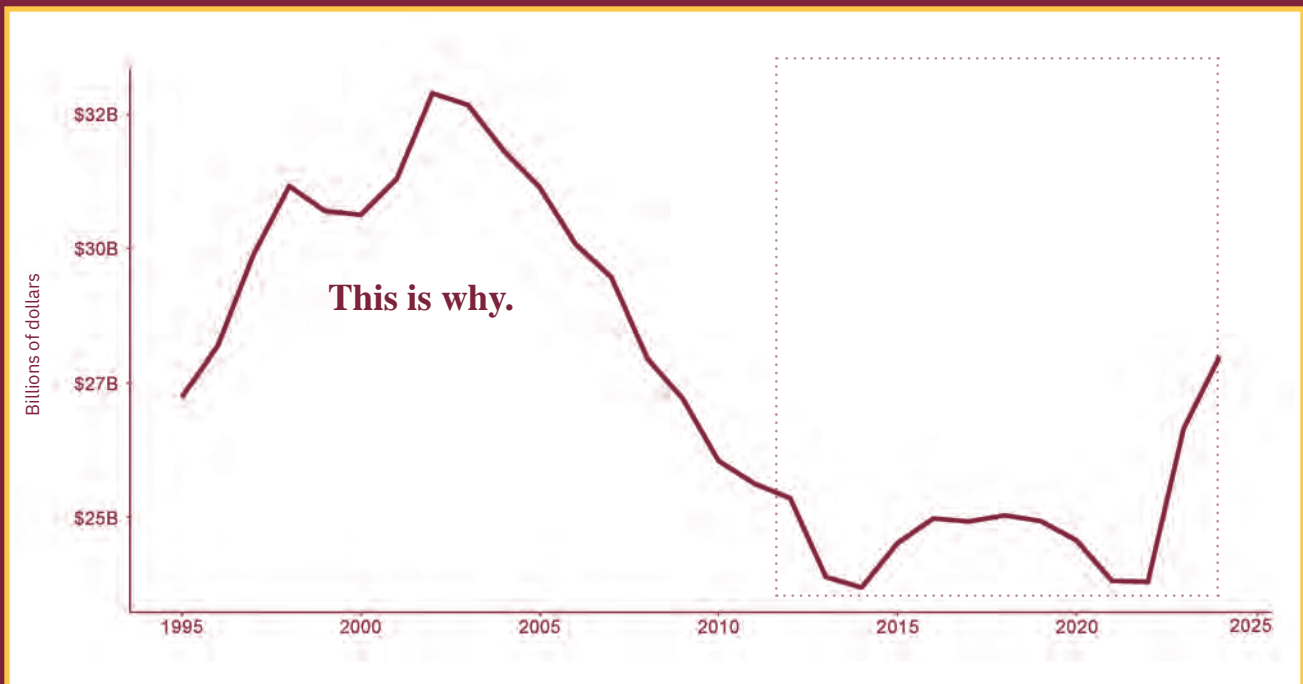


FIG. 2 Effective PK-12 Education Revenue, FY 2012-2024



Effective Education Funding excludes one-time federal stimulus revenue and state debt passthrough revenue and adjusts for inflation.

student outcomes, especially when they are directed to under-resourced districts and students from low-income families,” the policy brief concludes.

The institute’s review found the biggest payoffs from investments toward smaller class sizes and additional supports for younger children and those with greater academic needs, plus ensuring educator quality through higher pay.

“Sustained improvements in the level and distribution of funding across local public school districts lead to improvements in the level and distribution of student outcomes, ranging from graduation rates to educational attainment and wages,” the report said.

“There is scarce evidence that one can gain stronger outcomes without these resources.”

The key word is “sustained,” Delpier said. “What the research literature tells us is that funding has to be sustained for a period of years before you expect to see impacts on achievement.”

A recent study by Michigan State University’s Education Policy Innovation Collaborative (EPIC) concurred with Delpier’s assessment that the state’s K-12 school funding has not rebounded from the peak of 2002 even as pressures have intensified on school districts.

Key findings from the EPIC study, titled “Funding Michigan’s Future: Three Decades of School Finance and the Policy Questions Ahead”:

The demographics of Michigan’s student body have changed in ways that make it more expensive to provide education now than in the past. Today Michigan has fewer students and a student body with greater needs.

Districts face greater restrictions on how they use their revenues now than in the past.

Districts are now expected to provide more services beyond instruction (e.g. universal meals, student mental health), but funding for them has been unstable.



Nevertheless, as this year’s election season intensifies, partisan pundits and politicians will turn up the volume on school funding and performance.

Critics of public education, including billionaire dark money donors like the DeVos family and the politicians and think tanks they finance, will talk about record funding and label schools as “failing” to make the case for further test-and-punish policies and privatization.

They will continue to say Michigan ranks 44th in the country in fourth-grade reading scores on the Nation’s Report Card, even though the test makers warn against using the data to rank states because score differences are often tiny enough to fall within the standard measuring error.

The election messaging was already clearly on display last June at a House Education Committee hearing on education budget goals and needs, as Rep. Brad Paquette (R-Niles) engaged in a lengthy argument with state education officials.

“We’ve increased funding, yet results are still tracking downward,” Paquette said. “When does accountability come into play?”

Committee member Rep. Dylan Wegela (D-Garden City) set the record straight: “Record funding is only as good as saying we have record wages today. When you adjust for inflation, we are barely ahead of the year 2000. This has created a classroom size problem and a teacher shortage.”

The forces tearing down public education over the past 20 years pretend it’s possible to do more with less funding, but their real goal is privatization and profit-making, says Josh Cowen, an MSU professor of education policy and a member of UTSF MSU (Union of Tenure Stream Faculty).

An expert on school vouchers and their effects on student performance, Cowen is the author of *The Privateers: How Billionaires Created a Culture War and Sold School Vouchers*.

What stands at 44th in the nation and falling is average starting teacher pay in Michigan, Cowen notes. Overall Michigan educators now earn nearly 23% less than other workers with similar levels of education and experience.

Cowen shared a new research paper in the February 2026 issue of *Economics of Education Review*, showing that increasing teacher pay in New Jersey led to large gains in student math and reading performance over time.

“No serious plan for improving Michigan schools exists without higher educator pay,” Cowen said. **V**

Read more from Josh Cowen on the next page, and find related stories and source information from our Facts v Fallacy series at mea.org/facts.



Data says vouchers harm kids

Two decades ago, MEA member Josh Cowen began his career as an education researcher without strong opinions on school vouchers and full of idealism about the potential for scientific data to help make public schools the best they can be.

Over time, working alongside voucher advocates to evaluate programs, he watched as evidence mounted showing vouchers harm students and communities — especially the most vulnerable. Yet proponents continued pressing for expansion.

Today he's a modern-day Paul Revere, traveling the country to speak and testify, writing articles and books, warning of the danger he sees in a school reform movement built on right-wing ideology instead of evidence — and funded by a shadowy network of billionaires.

“Just on the merits, vouchers should have died a decade ago,” Cowen said in an interview.

A professor of education policy at Michigan State University and member of UTFS MSU (Union of Tenure System Faculty), he added, “Why are we still having this conversation?”

Cowen is talking about vouchers a lot these days out of necessity. The policy of granting publicly funded “scholarships” or “tuition tax credits” for children attending private schools has spread to more states than ever, despite a record of academic loss for students.

Last July, Republicans in Congress and President Donald Trump passed the first nationwide federal voucher scheme, which will require states to opt-in. “There could be some benefit to public schools under the federal tax credit, but the devil will be in the details,” he said.

Cowen wrote a book, *The Privateers: How Billionaires Created a Culture War and Sold School Vouchers*, published by Harvard Education Press, to tell the story he's witnessed over 20 years and make the case against vouchers plainly and urgently.

From the introduction: “Expert analysis, independent and investigative journalism, and a handful of transparent state and federal accountability audits show that policies diverting public funds for private school tuition have some of the worst outcomes in the education research record to date.”

For his work, Cowen was honored with NEA's 2025 Friend of Education Award at last summer's NEA Representative Assembly (RA). In his acceptance speech, he explained that vouchers were rooted in backlash against the Civil Rights movement dating back to the 1950s.

“When I first started the work that brought me up here, I thought I was talking about history,” he told thousands of member-delegates gathered in Portland, Ore. for the NEA RA in July.

“But as we've seen, threats to public education and to public investments

in all of our futures — from health care to jobs to retirement security and even basic, affordable costs of living — this is all very much breaking news.”

In the first Trump administration, Michigan Republican Party donor Betsy DeVos became U.S. Education Secretary favoring charter schools and vouchers. But it's bigger than DeVos.

“It's an entire political agenda,” Cowen said. “We know not just the DeVoses but other Republicans are gearing up to make 2026 in Michigan the ‘education election’ for their priorities like more standardized testing. Cuts to public school funding. And yes, school vouchers.”

In his book, Cowen details how randomized control trials — conducted by multiple research teams studying voucher programs in Louisiana, Indiana, Ohio and elsewhere — measured academic losses on par with or surpassing those from Hurricane Katrina and later COVID-19.

Meanwhile, a growing body of research reveals strong positive effects from increased funding to public schools when sustained over time and paired with evidence-based practices.

“If you grew up professionally, as I did, in the world where data and evidence and results are supposed to inform public policy, then you should be saying at the top of your lungs that vouchers hurt kids and families,” he said. **V**

Facts v Fallacy

PART III: School Policy

By *Brenda Ortega*
MEA Voice Editor

Support over blame

MEA member Danielle Cover has seen the difference it makes for students when state leaders listen to educators and deliver resources that schools need, rather than issuing unfunded mandates and setting up systems of punishment based on standardized test scores.

A 19-year educator, Cover teaches first grade in Ferndale and recently witnessed dramatic improvements — in her classroom and districtwide — as the state funded high-quality literacy training along with reading coaches and interventionists.

“My students’ success or failure should not be used to score political points,” Cover said. “It should be a driving force for policymakers to ask, ‘What can we do to make it better?’ And ask the people who it affects every day.”

In Ferndale, shifts made over four years helped the district to buck statewide trends in third-grade reading on the 2025 M-STEP, surpassing the state average and jumping more than 11 percentage points in third-grade proficiency from pre-pandemic levels.

Cover credits key supports put in place since 2020, under Gov. Gretchen Whitmer’s leadership, with offering both means and methods for schools to beef up early literacy approaches. Those include funding for LETRS, a training for educators on the science of reading.

She is one of 12,000 Michigan teachers who have completed Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and

Spelling (LETRS) or are working toward completion at no cost since 2021.

Ferndale and other districts have also leveraged state funding to purchase research-aligned elementary curricula and materials.

LETRS explores the latest research into how children learn to read and best practices for teaching. Some districts used state grants or federal COVID-relief dollars to pay educators for extra time required to complete the course — up to 160 hours over two years.

“Out of all the professional development I’ve ever received, this introduction to the science of reading was the most beneficial,” Cover said — while adding the course was a “huge lift,” and all educators should be paid for spending many nights and weekends completing it.

She praised bipartisan literacy and dyslexia laws, passed in 2024 by a Democratic-led Legislature, which take effect in 2027. But many schools remain short of needed literacy and mental health supports, she added.

“If more legislators came to classrooms willing to listen, I promise — we have solutions. It starts with investing in the dedicated professionals doing the complex work of teaching young people how to read and write, building a foundation of literacy for the future.”

Learn from mistakes

In this election year, too many candidates will push a message that calls for market-based “competition” favoring consequences over supports:

school choice, charter schools, and test-and-punish accountability.

Ironically those have been the most consistently pursued state education policies for the past 35 years.

Cutting funding while expanding for-profit charter schools and cycling through numerous accountability systems for public school districts all have destabilized the state’s education system since the early 1990s, says MEA Labor Economist Tanner Delpier.

“We should learn from that instead of doubling down on failed policies,” Delpier said.

Yet big donors, such as Betsy DeVos, have vowed to use their money and influence to center November’s General Election on the so-called “failure” of public education — as voters decide on the next governor and control of the state Legislature.

One example is former Gov. Rick Snyder calling the performance of Michigan schools and educators “an outrage” last spring as he rolled out his plan to spend millions of dollars targeting and promoting political candidates — despite it being his own policies that created many of the problems.

Ignoring a decades-long assault on school budgets, critics argue schools need reform over funding. They claim recent efforts to rebuild education funding prove money doesn’t make a

“My students’ success or failure should not be used to score political points.”

—Ferndale teacher Danielle Cover

difference — even though inflation-adjusted spending remains far below previous levels.

They say educators, including school administrators, need more high-stakes standardized testing to force better student outcomes.

“We’re seeing increased emphasis on school accountability even though

included AYP; Beating the Odds; top-to-bottom and achievement gap rankings; focus, priority and reward designations; multiple iterations of teacher evaluation; the accountability scorecard; A-F grading; and the Michigan School Index system.

“We can’t forget emergency management and the Education Achievement

some majority Black school districts and privatized others.

At the same time, state assessments required to measure public school performance have continually shifted the ground under educators’ feet: MEAP, M-STEP, ACT, SAT, Michigan Merit exam, BPA, Work Keys, PSAT, benchmark assessments.

“Schools need to have enough resources to be able to serve the needs of a diverse population of students, and they require stable policy environments to be effective.” —Tanner Delpier, MEA Economist

these systems have been a primary focus of policymakers for quite a while and despite the fact that past accountability policies failed to raise literacy scores in any meaningful way here in Michigan,” Delpier said.

A respected expert on school finance with a doctorate in education policy, Delpier points out the names and acronyms by which accountability has been known at the federal level: No Child Left Behind, ESEA, ESSA.

State-level systems have

Authority,” Delpier said, referring to laws used by the state to assume control of high-poverty local school districts or funnel students from Detroit schools designated low-performing to state-run EAA schools with no local accountability.

The EAA was a key part of Snyder’s school reform agenda initiated in 2011, which he tried to expand statewide, but the district was shut down in 2017 after poor performance and financial mismanagement led to federal lawsuits.

Snyder’s other reform — emergency managers — closed

Constant change — called “policy churn” — and underfunded mandates make it harder for school districts to effectively utilize scarce resources, Delpier said. An example is the Read by Grade 3 law, passed by a Republican-controlled Legislature and later amended when Democrats took control in 2022.

The third-grade retention requirement included in the original law was removed in 2023 because it didn’t show results improving student literacy. Aside from failing to provide additional resources to struggling readers, the approach was expensive and redundant.

“You’re essentially adding an entire extra year of schooling for a particular group of students without changing the approach,” Delpier said.

Research proves there are better long-term strategies that require sustained investment — such as smaller K-3 class sizes, targeted interventions for at-risk students, and wraparound services to support young people and families.

“Schools need to have enough resources to be able to serve the needs of a diverse population of students, and they require stable policy environments to be effective,” he concluded. **V**





Facts v Fallacy

Thanks for your interested in the three-part *MEA Voice* “Facts v Fallacy” series. Here you’ll find links to the stories from the magazine, as well as related source information and links for those wanting a more in-depth look at the issues.

Part I: School Performance

MEA Labor Economist Tanner Delpier tells stories with data. The tale he tells of public education in Michigan runs counter to the message heard far too often in sound bites on the news. We continually hear that public schools are “failing,” despite “record” state funding, because educators lack “accountability.”

“None of that is true,” Delpier says. [Read the full story here from the December 2025-January 2026 *MEA Voice*.](#)

- Member Voice – [Amy Urbanowski-Nowak: Listen to educators for a change](#)
- In-Depth – [“Michigan’s NAEP Performance” Policy Brief by Dr. Tanner Delpier](#)
- Sources from the *MEA Voice* articles and other information:
 - From the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP):
 - [2024 Reading State Snapshot Report – Michigan 4th Grade](#)
 - [2024 Reading State Snapshot Report – Michigan 8th Grade](#)
 - [NAEP Reading Achievement Level Descriptions by Grade](#)
 - [Interpreting NAEP Reading Results](#)
 - From the Michigan League for Public Policy (MLPP):
 - [2025 Kids Count in Michigan Data Book](#)

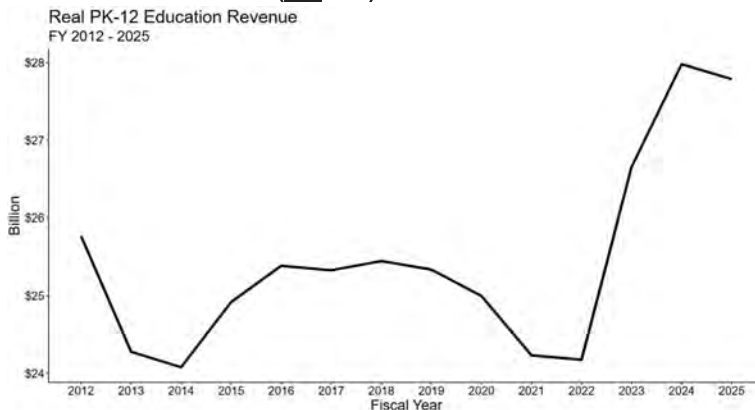
Part II: School Funding

When it comes to analyzing improvement in Michigan school funding, a lot depends on when you start looking. Why start in 2012, for example? The answer is simple: when compared to bottomed-out K-12 spending in that year, gains since then look unprecedented. But further pulling back the curtain from 2012 to 2002 reveals the true trendline.

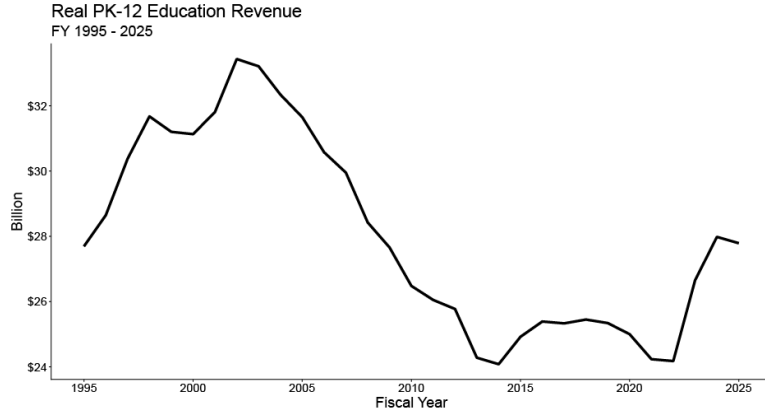
“There was a massive decline from 2002 to 2014, and earlier funding levels have not yet been restored,” says MEA Labor Economist Tanner Delpier. “While the state is no longer at the lowest funding level in history, (school) funding remains 32% below that early 2000s peak — a gap amounting to about \$10.4 billion. The truth is that funding has dropped sharply since Proposal A in 1994.”

[Read the full story here from the February-March 2026 *MEA Voice*.](#)

- Updates: See fresh versions of the charts from the magazine with data for the latest year:
 - **Real PK-12 Education Revenue (2012-2025)**



- **Real PK-12 Education Revenue (1995-2025)**



- Sources from the *MEA Voice* articles and other information:
 - [Financial Information Database \(FID\) for FY 2004 – 2025 and Form B for FY 1995 – 2003](#)
 - From MSU's Education Policy Innovation Collaborative (EPIC): [Funding Michigan's Future](#)
 - From School Finance Research Collaborative (SFRC): [School Funding Adequacy Studies](#)
- Related: [Higher ed member's research shows vouchers harm kids](#)

Part III: School Policy

MEA member Danielle Cover has seen the difference it makes for students when state leaders listen to educators and deliver resources that schools need, rather than issuing unfunded mandates and setting up systems of punishment based on standardized test scores.

"My students' success or failure should not be used to score political points," Cover said. "It should be a driving force for policymakers to ask, 'What can we do to make it better?' And ask the people who it affects every day."

Read about Cover's experience with dramatic local improvements thanks to consistent and quality school policy — and learn more from MEA's Tanner Delpier about Michigan's history of "policy churn" and its damaging results for students. "We should learn from that instead of doubling down on failed policies," Delpier said.

[Read the full story here from the April-May 2026 MEA Voice.](#) Then dive deeper into more resources from the following sources:

- [Learning Policy Institute](#): Research consistently shows that when more money is spent on education, especially for students from low-income families, achievement and graduation rates improve, along with life outcomes such as employment and wages.
- [Education Commission of the States](#): Over the past three decades, research regarding grade retention has been mixed. A few studies point to positive effects in the short run, but most studies indicate that benefits fade over time when not paired with significant academic interventions.
- [UPenn Urban Education Journal](#): A look at the state of Michigan's state takeover laws and the case study of Detroit Public Schools (DPS) demonstrates the negative consequences and nuances of the policy to improve academic achievement and promote fiscal health. In Michigan, the takeover of school districts has had generally negative results in improving district fiscal health, test scores, or gaining the support of the community.

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101 - A Legacy of Advocacy: The History of the Michigan Education Association

Founded in 1852 – Nearly 175 Years of Progress



1

Learning Targets

Take a journey back in time to understand the MEA's history, impacts and growth.

Understand key milestones in Michigan's public education system and the evolution of the MEA.

Serve as a reminder of the challenges we faced and actions taken to affect positive change for students, educators and communities

2

Introductions



Blake Mazurek
MEA Chief of Staff
MEA Retired Member
30 yr. Teacher



Doug Pratt
MEA Director of
Communications &
Public Engagement



Jeff Pietrowski
MEA Board of
Directors
Grandville Teacher

3

Teaching in Early Michigan – A Humble Beginning

Chalk, Coal Stoves, and Character

- Early 1800s: Most Michigan teachers were men; few had formal training
- Schools were one-room buildings with no plumbing or heat
- Teaching was seasonal, often a side job for farmers or ministers
- Pay was low; supplies were purchased out of pocket
- Classrooms had wooden benches, no blackboards, no books



SCHOOL HOUSE 1870

4

"Working Conditions"

1872 Rules for Teachers

- Teachers each day will fill lamps, clean chimneys.
- Each teacher will bring a bucket of water and a scuttle of coal for the day's session.
- Make your pens carefully. You may whittle ribs to the individual taste of the pupils.
- Men teachers may take one evening each week for courting purposes, or two evenings a week if they go to church regularly.
- After ten hours in school, the teachers may spend the remaining time reading the Bible or other good books.
- Women teachers who marry or engage in unseemly conduct will be dismissed.
- Every teacher should lay aside from each pay a goodly sum of his earnings for his benefit during his declining years so that he will not become a burden on society.
- Any teacher who smokes, uses liquor in any form, frequents pool or public halls, or gets shaved in a barber shop will give good reason to suspect his worth, intention, integrity and honesty.
- The teacher who performs his labor faithfully and without fault for five years will be given an increase of twenty-five cents per week in his pay, providing the Board of Education approves.
- You may ride in a buggy with a man, if the man is your father or your brother.

5

Birth of the Michigan State Teachers Association -1852

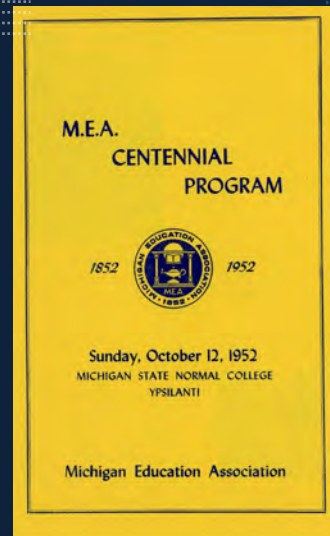


- 1852: Michigan State Teachers Association (MSTA) is founded in Ypsilanti
- Response to poor pay, inconsistent training, and lack of standards
- Avg. Monthly Salary in 1849: \$14.14 for men and \$6.46 for women
- Dues were .25 cents per YEAR.
- Focused on improving teacher preparation and educational policy
- Advocated for teacher certification and compulsory education
- Early motto: "To elevate the character and advance the interests of the profession"

6

A Growing State, a Growing Profession

- - MSTA pushed for creating Central, Northern, and Western Michigan Universities
- - By 1900: only 9% of youth graduated high school; teacher pay still lagged



7

Rise of the Teacher “Clubs”

*Before the Union: Organizing
Around a Stove*

- Mid-to-late 1800s: Women formed teacher “clubs” to connect and collaborate
- Discussed lesson planning, classroom discipline, health and hygiene
- Clubs advocated for school improvements and fair pay
- Became informal support networks — and early political voices
- Paved the way for future union structures

8



The Seeds of Advocacy

From Conversation to Collective Action

- Teacher clubs evolved into professional groups with influence
- By 1911, 86% of members were women
- **Renamed to MEA in 1926**
- These groups demanded certification standards (1930's)

9

How Michigan Educators Won Tenure

The Problem

- In the 1950s and early '60s, many Michigan teachers had **no job security** and could be dismissed without cause.
- **Arnold Korpi**, a teacher from Ontonagon, was denied tenure and took his case to the MEA.

The Spark

- Korpi urged the MEA Board to support tenure protections statewide.
- His activism catalyzed a **statewide ballot initiative**.

The Action

- MEA organized a **grassroots petition campaign**, collecting over **325,000 signatures**.
- The effort mobilized educators across Michigan and won broad public support.

The Victory

- In **1964**, the Michigan Legislature passed a **teacher tenure law**, making Michigan the **25th state** to guarantee tenure.
- The law provided due process protections and inspired broader educator activism.



ARNOLD J. KORPI

10

Fighting for Retirement Security: A Legacy of Advocacy

Early Struggles

- Before 1945, most Michigan educators retired into poverty—few received any pension.
- MEA was instrumental in passing Public Act 136 of 1945, creating the Michigan Public School Employees Retirement System (MPERS).
- Even after the law passed, early pensions were extremely modest (e.g., ~\$500/year).

Key Milestones in Retirement Reform

- 1950s–60s: MEA pushed for increased state contributions and improved benefits formulas.
- 1980s–90s: Advocacy secured retiree health benefits as part of MPERS.
- 2010s: MEA fought against increased employee contributions, elimination of retiree health care for new hires, defined contribution plan default for new educators—MEA raised the alarm on long-term impacts for recruitment and retention.

MEA's Ongoing Role

- MEA monitors the MPERS Board and defends pension stability.
- Continues to fight for affordable healthcare and fair retirement for all school employees, including ESPs.



11

Collective Bargaining Rights Won (1965)

- 1965: Michigan passes the Public Employment Relations Act (PERA)
- Grants public school employees the legal right to unionize and bargain
- Ends the era of “begging” for fair wages and working conditions
- First contracts negotiated in 1966 – included MESSA benefits
- Sparked an era of educator empowerment and activism



12

The Holland Decision – Standing Strong for Rights

- In 1967, MEA supported teachers in Holland, MI, who refused to work without a contract
- Despite court injunctions and threats of jail, they stood firm
- The Michigan Supreme Court ruled that:
 - Districts must prove harm before seeking injunctions
 - Teachers had a right to defend their position
- This empowered local bargaining and protected protest rights

Teachers Reject Board Offer, 153-7

Holland Teachers' Case Heard

Court Procedures On Injunctions Will Be Studied

LANSING — The Michigan Supreme Court Friday left undecided for at least two weeks the question of whether to lift an injunction forcing Holland school teachers to work without a contract.

Further Negotiations Are Sought

HEA to File Unfair Practices Charge Against School Board

Holland public schools likely will not open Tuesday.

By a vote of 153 to 7, Holland public school teachers Wednesday night reaffirmed decision to withhold services in the event a master agreement is not ratified by Sept. 5.

The vote was by written ballot, and signed by each teacher.

13

Voices for Equity: "The Conference That Never Ended"

In 1968, a minority caucus made several demands at the MEA Representative Assembly in Battle Creek:

- Hiring of minorities and women at all levels
- Bilingual and multicultural education
- Representation and equity

Result:

- Creation of MEA's Office for Women's Concerns (1970)
- Creation of MEA's Minority Affairs Division (1971)



Herman Coleman, MEA's 1st Minority Affairs Division Director

14



Reese: A Defining Moment in Educator Organizing

- 1971: Teachers in Reese launched a strike over unfair bargaining conditions
- Became a statewide flashpoint for labor rights in education
- Teachers were jailed for defying back-to-work orders
- Community division was intense — neighbors on opposing sides
- Media attention propelled MEA's legislative advocacy
- The strike helped push for stronger enforcement of collective bargaining rights

15

MEA Expands to All School Employees

K–12 Support Staff: From the Margins to the Table

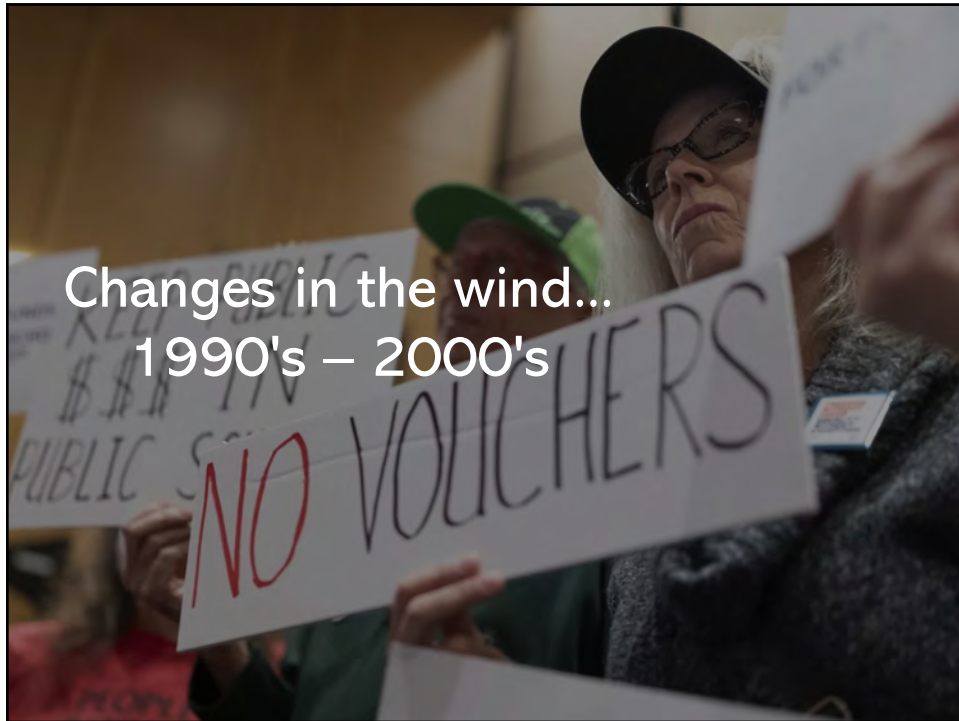
- In the 1970s, support staff such as bus drivers, aides, food service workers, and custodians often lacked union representation.
- MEA formed MEAO in 1976 to organize these employees, which evolved into MESPA in 1978.
- In 1984, MESPA merged fully into MEA, uniting certified and non-certified school employees under one union—**one of the first in the nation to do so.**

Higher Education Joins the Movement

- In 1981, MEA established MAHE – the Michigan Association for Higher Education – to support:
 - Faculty
 - Adjunct instructors
 - Librarians
 - Academic advisors and other professional staff at community colleges and universities
- MAHE members often face unique issues: shared governance, academic freedom, contingent contracts, and funding inequities.




16



Changes in the wind...
1990's – 2000's

17





Nationally

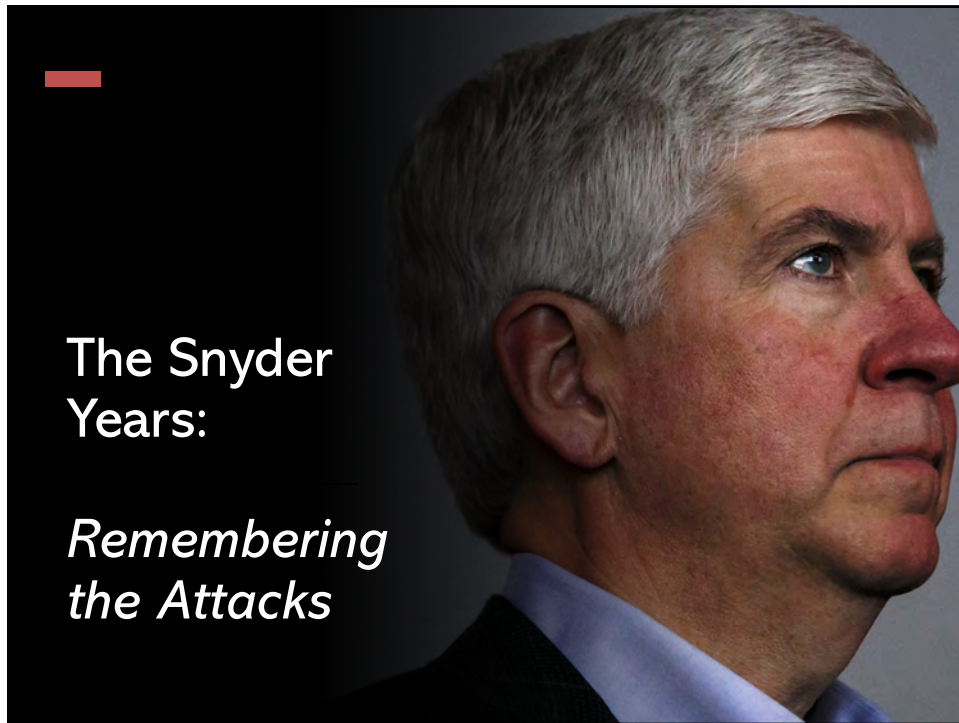
- NCLB - 2001
- RTTT - 2009
- Rise in organizations like ALEC (American Legislative Exchange Council)
- The Great Recession (2007-2009)

Michigan

- 1994: PA 112 undercut bargaining rights
- 2000: Voucher ballot initiative defeated (Prop 1)
- Prop 2 (2012) - Defeat & Consequences
- Rise Betsy DeVos

Public Education: Under Threat

18



19

School Funding Cuts

- 2011–12 **per-pupil cut of \$470** to the K-12 foundation allowance (totaling \$1 billion in first year) to pay for tax cut for wealthy CEOs and businesses
- Increased shift of School Aid Fund to higher ed: roughly **\$4.5B moved since 2010**
- Created scarcity mindset – drove stagnant academic growth and school employee compensation losses

20

Healthcare & Retirement (MPSERS) Changes

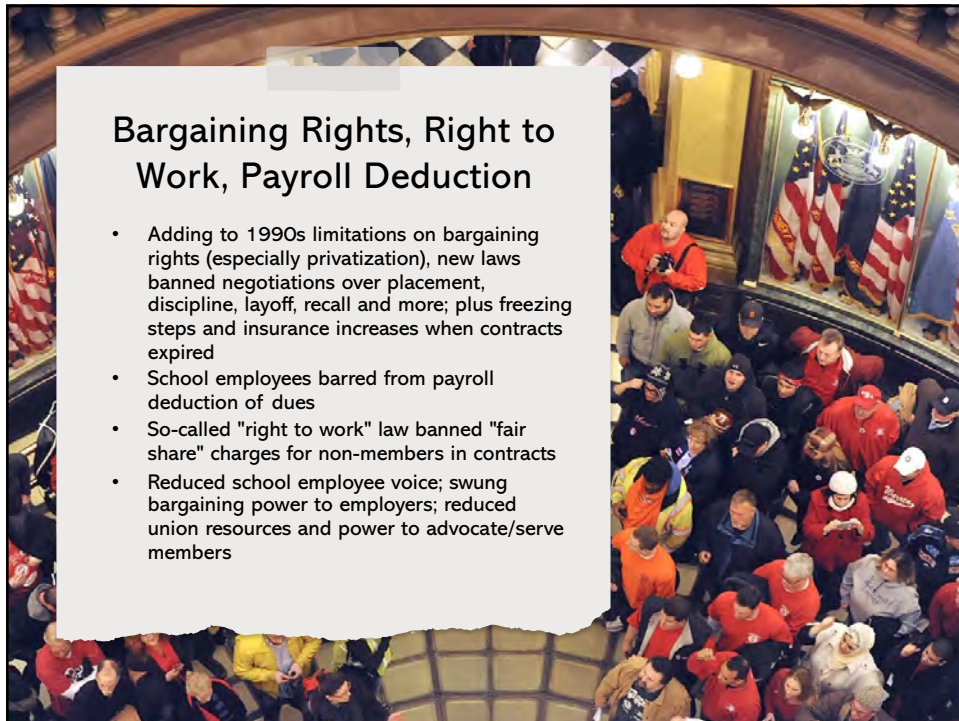
- Created mandatory hardcap or 80-20 split for employer health costs
- Increased employee retirement costs; new hires lost retiree health; other cost shifts to employees to address unfunded liabilities
- Created a new default plan (DC) with a revised hybrid option and cost-sharing triggers
- Drastically reduced take-home pay for school employees; along with reduced voice in profession, drove statewide educator shortage; PLUS recent health cost spikes for school employee.




21

Bargaining Rights, Right to Work, Payroll Deduction

- Adding to 1990s limitations on bargaining rights (especially privatization), new laws banned negotiations over placement, discipline, layoff, recall and more; plus freezing steps and insurance increases when contracts expired
- School employees barred from payroll deduction of dues
- So-called "right to work" law banned "fair share" charges for non-members in contracts
- Reduced school employee voice; swung bargaining power to employers; reduced union resources and power to advocate/serve members



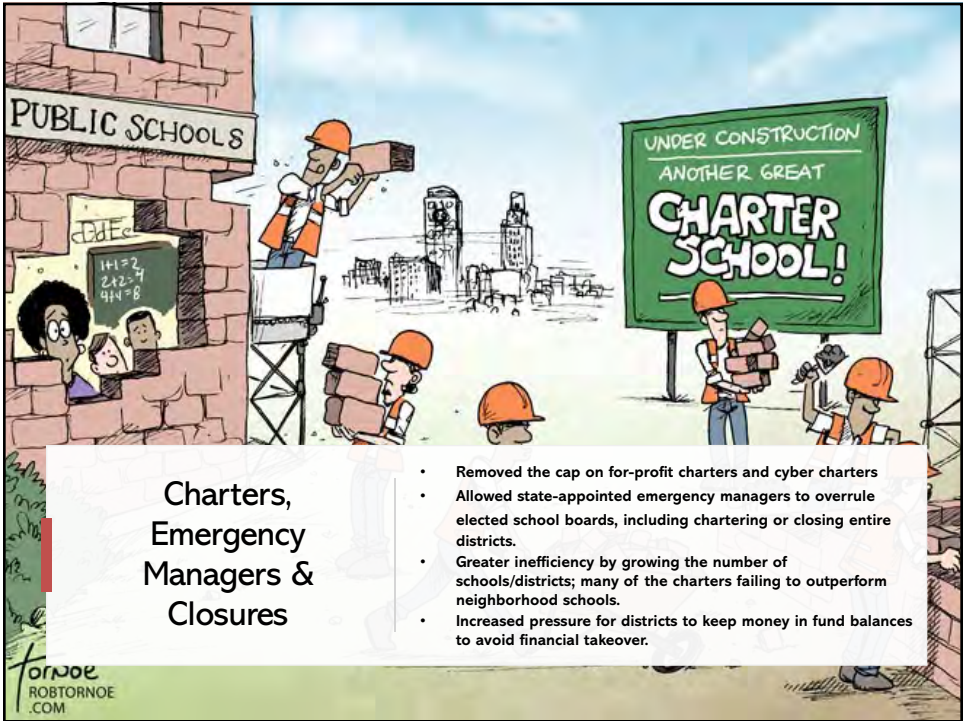
22



Teacher Evaluation System & Tenure

- On top of ban on bargaining evaluation, created standardized tools that emphasized standardized test scores (up to 40%)
- Eliminated just cause protections for teachers, extended probationary period and tied tenure to evaluation scores
- Punitive and inconsistent system that undermined professional growth; used for dismissal over development due to weakened due process and tenure protections
- Arbitrary and inconsistent ratings across districts; heavy bureaucracy; increased pressure to "teach to the test"

23

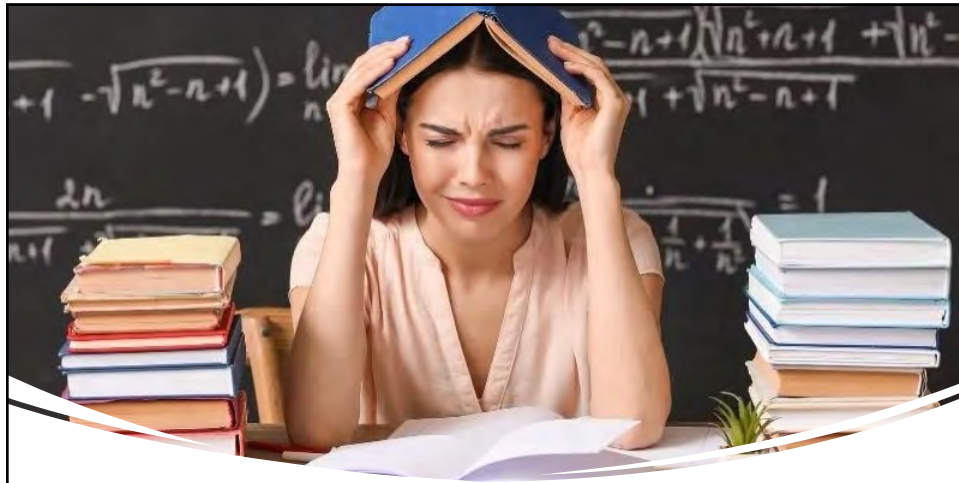


Charters, Emergency Managers & Closures

- Removed the cap on for-profit charters and cyber charters
- Allowed state-appointed emergency managers to overrule elected school boards, including chartering or closing entire districts.
- Greater inefficiency by growing the number of schools/districts; many of the charters failing to outperform neighborhood schools.
- Increased pressure for districts to keep money in fund balances to avoid financial takeover.

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Consequences for Schools and Students

- Climate of fear and demoralization; increased burnout and attrition
- Instruction narrowed toward tested subjects; less creativity and problem-solving
- Recruitment and retention strains, especially in high-poverty and rural districts
- Reduced educator voice in profession
- Reduced union power and resources

25



26



A New Era for Public Education

- 2018: Gretchen Whitmer elected Governor.
- 2022: Pro-education trifecta — first time in 40 years all branches aligned with public education.
- Educators regained a strong seat at the table.

27

Investing in Students & Professionals

- Historic increases in education funding reversed years of underfunding, including foundation and weighted funding increases.
- Educators listened to and respected as partners in student success.
- Repealed 3rd grade reading retention & test-based school report cards.
- Targeted recruit & retain efforts brought talent back to classrooms.





28

Rolling Back Harmful Policies

- Bargaining rights restored...
 - Evaluation & Discipline
 - Placement & Staffing
 - Layoff & Recall
 - Privatization
 - Expired Contract Penalties
 - Payroll Deduction
 - Michigan repealed Right-to-Work (change applied to private sector due to U.S. Supreme Court limits).

29

What's Next?

- Electing and re-electing pro-public education school boards and resisting control by groups like "Mom's for Liberty"
- HB 6058 - controlling skyrocketing health costs
- Improving Educator Retirement
- Strengthening Cyber Safety & Anti-bullying Laws
- Fixing Counselor to Student Ratios
- Addressing Special Education Concerns
- Holding all schools that receive public funding to the same standards


30




What will it take to make it happen?

- Bring back the state government trifecta.
- Build relationships with community, public education advocacy groups, and other labor groups.
- Activate MEA Members to advocate for issues that matter to them. WE are the MEA!

31



MEA's Advocacy Leads to Real Change

All MEA Members need to answer the question... How am I helping move the MEA torch forward and pushing back on resistance?

External Coalitions

- School Board Support Groups
- Local, State, and National Government
- Labor and Public Education Support Groups

Internal Involvement

- Building Level
- District Level
- Coordinating Council
- Region
- State & National

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MEEA

The Work Continues...

- MEA's legacy is built on action, courage, and collective strength.
- Our history shows what's possible when educators organize and lead.
- Today's challenges — from political attacks to privatization — demand the same resolve.
- The future of public education depends on *our* voice, *our* unity, and *our* advocacy.

33

Momentum & What It Means

- More students enrolling in colleges of education.
- MEA membership and strength on the upswing.
- United educators deliver for students, profession, and state — nearly 175 years strong.



MEEA

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