

Michigan Insights Review Series

Education

Published February 2023

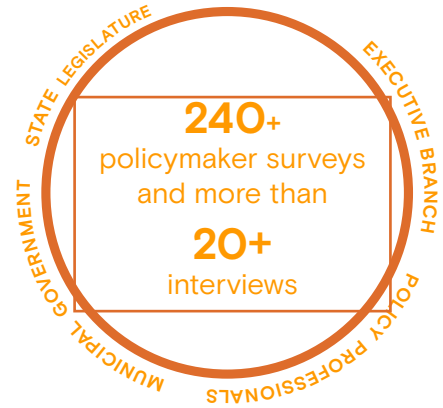


Executive Summary

We are excited to share findings from our second annual Michigan Insights Review. From March to May 2022, we surveyed and spoke with over 250 state and local policymakers in Michigan to understand policy priorities throughout the state and how the private and public sector can work on those issues.

While healthcare remains a top priority for Michigan policymakers, focus this year has shifted to infrastructure and education, as decision-makers grapple with questions around how to rebuild the state in a post-pandemic world.

Following a consequential midterm election, Michigan policymakers are aware that their constituents will be looking to them to work with the private sector to solve the issues they prioritized during their reelection campaigns. As leaders return to in-person engagement, policymakers want to see the private sector engaging on these foundational issues, placing an emphasis on direct collaboration with stakeholders, in order to benefit both local communities and the state as a whole.



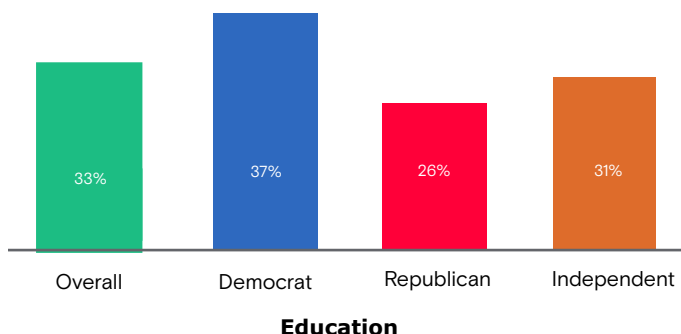
This is the third report in a series that examines Michigan policymakers' top policy priorities of 2022. This review examines Education in the state.



Education

Top Issues in the State of Michigan

Which of the following do you view as the most pressing issues facing the state? (percentage of respondents who placed the issue in their top three)



n = 273



K12 education is the most important thing that the state government does. I think it will always be the top issue.

State Senator, Legislative, D

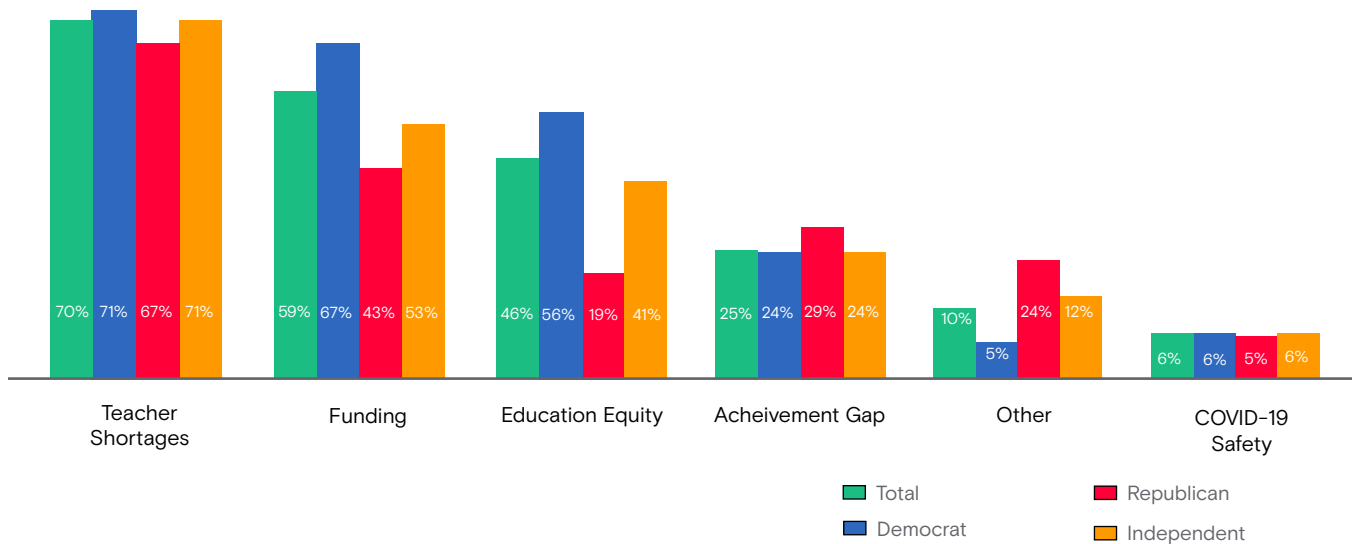
Michigan Deep Dive: Education

Education as a Potential Cure All

The K-12 education system was identified as a top priority for Michigan policymakers on both sides of the aisle. With current challenges ranging from teacher shortages to education equity, policymakers see increased funding as a way to help solve for some of these concerns.

Top Education Issues in the State

Which of the following do you view as the most pressing issues in regards to education in your state?
(percentage of respondents who placed the issue in their top three)



Funding and teacher shortages are top of mind for policymakers as they discuss the most pressing issues related to education in the state of Michigan. Policymakers emphasize that making the proper investments to address these two concerns could provide long-term results, ranging from improving the reading comprehension levels of current students to developing a stable future workforce.

Appropriate Allocation of Funds

Policymakers believe that continuing to prioritize funding for the state’s education system will help ensure that existing gaps are addressed, and any potential future issues are prevented.

In fact, Michigan policymakers have reinforced their commitment to the state’s education system by approving a historic budget proposal intended to help address the challenges both students and schools face. A record \$19.6 billion has been allocated for PreK-12 schools, and encompasses capital aimed at increasing school foundation allowances, aiding economically disadvantaged students, and bolstering the retirement funds of Michigan Public School employees, among other things.¹

Michigan Deep Dive: Education

The Benefits of Unprecedented Funding

“We’ve been able to provide record funding this year, and we will next year... If we want to provide COVID recovery, make sure our kids are getting back on their feet and providing them that quality education, it starts with funding and then moves through all the other areas.”

Representative, Legislative, D

“We have several hundred million dollars in funds for at-risk students in general. And a lot of times, in a lot of ways, leave that up to the school districts to use that money to help those students as they best see fit for their individual school districts and students. It’s kind of **this overall idea of trying to address inequities in students...that really do end up affecting their academic performance.”**

Policy Advisor, Legislative, R

Policymakers hone in on reading proficiency, particularly in regards to students in low income households, as an area where they would like to see funding distributed.

A recent report from Michigan State University’s Education Policy Innovation Collaborative (EPIC), the strategic partner of the state’s Department of Education and local school districts, found that almost 6,000 Michigan third graders received reading scores low enough that they could be required to repeat the year.² The report found that, among other things, economically disadvantaged students are 4.5 times as likely to be retention-eligible than their more advantaged peers.³ While some of this disparity has been attributed to changes in learning structures due to the Covid-19 pandemic, policymakers indicate that they would potentially like to see teachers receive more expansive training in order to help with this issue.



Kids are struggling and they’re not reading at grade level. They’re not being exposed to opportunities that will lift them up out of poverty.

Councilman, Municipal, D

How to Better Equip Teachers

“Instruction in reading is probably the primary concern that I have. **Things to help prepare teachers when they’re at the university level and getting trained to teach with challenging populations, kids who are more at risk and from families in poverty...** Usually, it’s the low-income families that overall that have issues with this and **[we could help teachers] know how to sort of make up for the lack of resources and lack of experiences that these children have had.**”

Policy Advisor, Legislative, R

Michigan Deep Dive: Education

Re-engaging with Teachers to Help Retention

Michigan policymakers also acknowledge the challenge of retaining teachers, which has been impacting communities across the country.

Steps to Retain Teachers

“Another huge issue right now that we’re all talking about is the teacher shortage in Michigan and teacher retention. Because a lot of teachers, I think, in Michigan it’s about 42% or so of teachers leave the profession, not just leave the district, after five years or within five years. So what do we do to get teachers to retain them, not only in the district where there are the most challenging kids but also in the profession itself and to reattract them?”

Policy Advisor, Legislative, R

“Everyone’s talking about the teacher shortage. It was happening before COVID... **We have to get back to respecting our public school teachers and being grateful for what they do and their commitment to our kids...** I think that’s a big part of it. We need to get back to respecting and supporting public education to the highest expense.”

Representative, Legislative, D

As policymakers discuss the future of education within the state of Michigan, they highlight various opportunities to better engage both teachers and students.



“I think it’s salary support. **Making sure the salary is appropriate and fair, and making sure they have the support they need** in the school system and offering opportunities for paid internships because a lot of times they’re in the classroom and not getting paid for that. We have to be creative because it’s a real problem. So what do we invest that’s going to be the largest payoff?”

Representative, Legislative, D



“**We have what we call career tech, and that is a high school program that includes both the local high schools and the community...** I wish we’d promote it more, or put it in a positive perspective that this is an opportunity... **I think anytime you can get a private-public partnership, it’s great.** We do need to invest more in those career tech areas.”

Representative, Legislative, R

Michigan policymakers believe that bolstering the foundation of support for educators could help curb ongoing teacher shortages, and see opportunities for increased involvement from the private sector in building out an employment pipeline for students. Specifically, policymakers believe that the private sector can help further promote such employment avenues by taking advantage of career tech programs offered by the state.



“**Education is the silver bullet that solves all these problems.** If you can have an educated workforce that can go get good-paying jobs and you have a system and a structure in place where being educated means that you get a decent shake in the world, then I think you’re going to set everyone up for success.”

Council Member, Municipal, D

By addressing all these factors, policymakers are optimistic they can maintain education as a priority in the future.

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Policy Professionals

Municipal Government

State Legislature

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Trade Groups

Interest Groups

Professional Societies

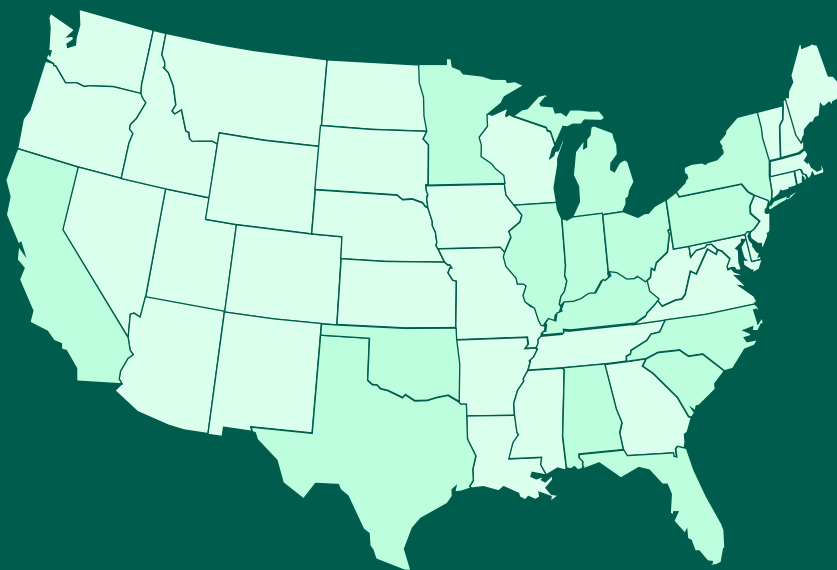
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¹ <https://mea.org/another-record-breaking-education-budget-for-michigan-students/>

² <https://msutoday.msu.edu/news/2022/third-grade-reading-2022>

³ Ibid.

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