



# EMPOWERED

empowering michigan education



IMPROVING LITERACY OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS IN MICHIGAN

## Supporting Literacy by Supporting Students' Communities

**“Every student who does not complete high school costs our society an estimated \$260,000 in lost earnings, taxes and productivity.”**

JASON AMOS

Author of *Dropouts, Diplomas and Dollars: U.S. High Schools and the Nation's Economy*

**Our failure to develop students' literacy skills is creating a “cycle of poverty” in Michigan.**

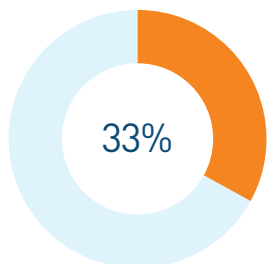
Michigan students once outperformed the national average, but today, the opposite is true. Among U.S. states, Michigan, between 2003 and 2011, fell from 28th to 35th place in rankings for the fourth-grade reading portion of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

Michigan's decline in providing students with literacy skills can be seen across grade levels, and the results are far-reaching and devastating.

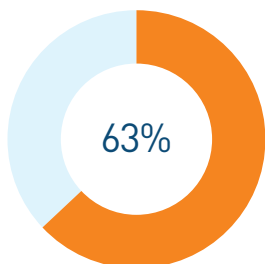
Michigan children who do not develop adequate literacy skills are at a significant risk of leaving school without a diploma. And Michigan students who fail to graduate from high school cost our state fiscally and in even more important ways.

These children are not merely unable to find sufficient employment or to be more likely to need social welfare assistance. Their physical health suffers, they are more likely to be involved in criminal activity, and they are at greater risk for becoming parents themselves at far too young an age.

**And the children of these children are then susceptible to the same fate.**



Proportion of children with lowest reading scores among all students.



Proportion of children with lowest reading scores among students who do not graduate from high school.

---

acknowledgment of and response to the issues of poverty and race have contributed to lower literacy outcomes for low-income and minority children.<sup>1</sup>

**Across Michigan, we should do more to attend to the needs of a diverse student population and to meet the special learning needs of individual students. To do so, we must:**

- **Offer students high-quality literacy programs** that are respectful of their needs, desires, struggles, and potential, specifically by using “expansive pedagogies” to start where children are in their literacy capabilities, help them build the talents they have, and add the skills and knowledge they need.
- **Provide teachers with professional learning opportunities** to instill within them the knowledge, skills, and practices necessary to address the role of race/ethnicity, social class, gender, and other qualities of difference in literacy teaching and learning.
- **Increase the amount and quality of academic and social support** outside of school that students who are affected by poverty receive.
- **Facilitate access** to tutors, summer enrichment camps, and homework support for students in poverty.
- **Implement community-based programs** to improve the health, nutrition, safety, overall psychological and emotional well-being of students and their families faced with poverty.

## WHO CAN HELP

*Here is how we, as a state, can take action to ensure a quality literacy education for all of our children.*

### MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND THE SCHOOL REFORM/REDESIGN OFFICE

- Expand certification requirements for both novice and expert teachers to gain coursework and field experience that specifies how to enact culturally responsive teaching practice.
- Require coursework on meeting the individual learning needs of all students.

### UNIVERSITIES AND TEACHER EDUCATION PROVIDERS

- Expand certification requirements for both novice and expert teachers to gain coursework and field experience that specifies how to enact culturally responsive teaching practice.
- Conduct and disseminate research on culturally responsive interventions.
- Expand coursework and field experiences for both novice and expert teachers that specifies how to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all learners.
- Continue to conduct and disseminate research on general education interventions that respond to students’ individual differences.

### INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND LOCAL SCHOOLS

- Provide professional development and collaborative networks that explore how to validate and build on students’ cultural strengths.
- Build professional development and collaborative networks that explore how to meet the needs of individual learners.
- Invite primary caregivers and childcare providers to early childhood professional development based at school districts and ISDs; offer self-assessments.

**Want to learn more about what you can do?** Read the full report on *Improving Literacy Outcomes for Students in Michigan’s Most Vulnerable Schools* at [aclumich.org](http://aclumich.org).

<sup>1</sup> Michigan Department of Education. (2013). State demographic report. Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP). Retrieved from [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Fall\\_2013\\_MEAP\\_State\\_Demographic\\_Report\\_448999\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Fall_2013_MEAP_State_Demographic_Report_448999_7.pdf); National Center for Education Statistics. (2013). Reading: 2013 State Snapshot Report: Michigan Grade 8 Public Schools. The Nation’s Report Card. Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/stt2013/pdf/2014464M18.pdf>.