



EMPOWERED

empowering michigan education

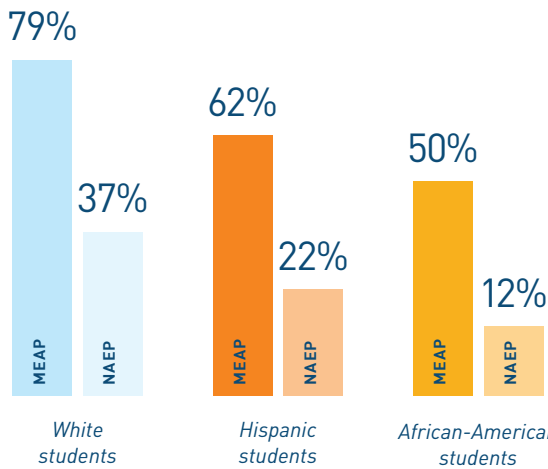


IMPROVING LITERACY OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS IN MICHIGAN

Attending to All Students' Learning Needs

READING PROFICIENCY OF MICHIGAN EIGHTH-GRADERS

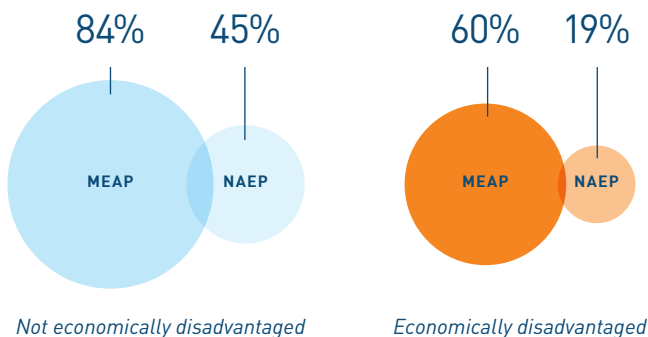
Outcomes from the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) and National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)



We do not equally value all Michigan students when it comes to their literacy education. While some children are appreciated as members of the school community, we far too often fail to respect the unique needs that students of color and those affected by poverty have in becoming proficient readers and writers. This fact is so troubling because it is these students who disproportionately struggle to develop literacy skills.

In Michigan schools, we ignore the very real social, historical and communal differences that stem from race as well as how identity affects learning. Instead, we devise and deliver educational strategies related to literacy without ever engaging those students of color who will be most directly affected.

Similarly, our formal literacy instruction has largely ignored and failed to address the impact that poverty and the variety of social issues that frequently accompany it have on literacy learning and the character of texts in people's lives.



We react to these students' needs by shunting them to "remedial" courses that are not tied to their actual learning challenges. There, our attempts to remediate are weak at best and are demeaning and demotivating at worst. They often result in pushing kids out of school, miseducating kids in schools, and disregarding the learning rights of students perceived to be uneducable.

It is of little surprise, then, that our inadequate

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

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.

¹ 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; 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>.