



## Michigan State Board of Education Presentation: 9/8/2015, 11:10am-11:18am

*Immediate Past President Dawn Bentley and President-Elect Eric Hoppstock*

**Challenge:** The SBE is interested in hearing positive, proactive ways we can work together to achieve the goal of making Michigan a Top 10 State for Education in the next ten years.

**Handouts:** *2025 Infographic* and *This is MAASE 2015-16*

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### **Introduction:**

The Michigan Association of Administrators for Special Education, MAASE, would like to thank the Michigan State Board of Education and the State Superintendent for this opportunity to speak with you today. The organization would like to especially applaud the decision to seek public feedback on what will make Michigan a Top 10 State for students to learn. Great accomplishments first start with an honest assessment of current performance, followed by a clear action plan to achieve our goals.

Our professional association MAASE is comprised of nearly 650 special education leaders from across the state of Michigan. We believe that the single greatest way to improve outcomes for students with disabilities is to build strong systems in general education and responsive frameworks- like multi-tier systems of support (MTSS) and positive behavior intervention supports (PBIS)- that effectively serve ALL kids and ensure that every child receives the best instruction and supports possible. That, coupled with high expectations for all, will ensure that our special education systems aren't left to compensate for the compounded effects of poor teaching and lack of opportunity for students who struggle.

### **So What Will it Take?**

High-performing states *expect* districts to succeed. Districts achieve because the state provides them with the necessary resources, training and technical assistance, and opportunities to implement educational practices that are tied to strong student outcomes and to receive feedback about how they are doing. The state genuinely believes that every district has the raw materials to be successful. The key is to provide districts and educators with an opportunity to learn and implement evidence-based practices.

We would like to propose that to become a Top 10 State to Learn, Michigan should focus on three straightforward concepts: **Simplicity, Clarity, and Priority**. These three elements, if even *reasonably* well-executed, would have more impact than all other initiatives *combined* to ensure that students- of every ability level and socioeconomic stratum- learn and are prepared for college, careers, and citizenship.

### **Simplicity:**

Simplicity does not mean unsophisticated or low standards, but rather, it is the clear identification of a mission and vision, coupled with high-leverage activities, that will produce the most desired gains.



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The state must uphold a simple vision of learning and clearly articulate it to every Michigan citizen. Vague goals and an interest in maintaining the status quo are common pitfalls in less effective educational systems. Michigan must emphasize innovation and improvement in providing learning for all- students and educators of all backgrounds. This will require the state to be persistent and energetic until all members of the educational community commit to the mission and accept responsibility for their individual and collective impact on learning outcomes.

- **Guaranteed and Viable Common Curriculum:** We must have assurance that in each and every one of our schools, 75% or more of our students meet standards without additional supports. According to Marzano (2003), curriculum may be the largest factor that determines how many students learn.
- **High-Quality Instruction:** The single greatest factor in determining whether a student learns or not is excellent instruction (Schmoker 2006) and access to excellent teachers. Period. We must invest purposefully in developing our educators across all levels of their career: pre-service to pre-retirement.
- **Authentic Literacy:** Purposeful reading, vocabulary instruction, writing and dialogue must serve as the primary modes of learning both content and thinking skills (Schmoker, 2011).

### **Clarity:**

Clarity is about implementing the highest priorities or the most essential elements first, before adopting any other initiative. Michigan must ask, **“What is essential?”** The constant bombardment of new programs or initiatives distracts us from those few, powerful actions and structures that are at the heart of solid teaching and learning.

This clarity must extend beyond the schoolhouse. Our charge must be to work collectively and collaboratively across all levels of government on a cohesive set of goals to harness resources and knowledge in order to influence outcomes for children. We have a moral imperative to ensure that *every* child in Michigan receives the best education, which means that we must eliminate all silos and bureaucratic barriers that currently exist (or are perceived to exist) so we can get down to the business of educating children and families.

### **Priority:**

Priority is a function of simplicity and a focus on a few key elements that are most likely to help us achieve our goals. Part of the human condition is to make the simple complex and to add elements to our well-laid plans that actually undermine and compete with our abilities to reach our targets.

Rick Hess has outlined six simple questions to assist us in setting priorities:

1. Is *X* important?
2. If so, how well should we be doing on *X*?
3. How are we doing on *X*?



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4. If we are not doing as well as we should, how can we improve *X*?
5. What is stopping us from improving *X*?
6. How do we remove/blast through/tunnel under the bars that are stopping us from improving *X*?  
(Hess, 2013)

The State must demonstrate a willingness to say no. No to what we know does not work. No to rules and legislation that are not research-based, and what doesn't work for students. Michigan must have clarity on what needs to be accomplished and a dogged persistence to say "NO" to anything that diverts us from successfully implementing our goals.

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, it is time to restore public faith in our educators and in our educational system. Our schoolhouse must be **a safe and organized place** where administrators, teachers, and students can feel safe, physically and emotionally- supportive communities where all of our educators can focus on their most important job- teaching and learning.

Educational leader Michael Fullan said, "The best case for public education has always been that it is a common good. Everyone, ultimately, has a stake in the caliber of schools, and education is everyone's business... Publicly funded schools must serve ALL children...with an emphasis on including those who may not have been well served in the past."

In 2025, it is our sincere hope that Michigan *is* the top-performing state in the nation. But in order to become so, we must focus on three concepts: **Simplicity, Clarity, and Priority**. On behalf of our association, we thank you again for your time today, and we welcome the opportunities this presents for MAASE to collaborate with you in the near future.

July 1, 2025

# Michigan Students Lead Nation in Performance: State Superintendent and Board Cite "Simplicity, Clarity & Priority"<sup>1</sup>

## SIMPLICITY: a clear mission



Simplicity does not mean unsophisticated or low standards, but rather it is the clear identification of a mission and vision, coupled with high-leverage activities that will produce the most desired gains. The state must uphold a simple vision of learning and clearly articulate it to every Michigan citizen. Vague goals or an interest in maintaining the status quo are common pitfalls in less effective educational systems. Michigan must emphasize innovation and improvement in providing learning for all- students and educators of all backgrounds. This will require the state to be persistent and energetic until all members of the educational community commit to the mission and accept responsibility for their individual and collective impact on learning outcomes.

## CLARITY: What is Essential?



Clarity is about implementing the highest priorities or the most essential elements first, before any other initiative is adopted. So Michigan must ask, "What is essential?" The constant bombardment of new programs or initiatives distracts us from those few, powerful actions and structures that are at the heart of solid teaching and learning. This clarity must extend beyond the schoolhouse. Our charge must be to work collaboratively across all levels of government on a cohesive set of goals to harness resources and knowledge to impact outcomes for children. We have a moral imperative to ensure that every child in Michigan receives the best education, which means that we must eliminate all silos and bureaucratic barriers that currently exist (or are perceived to exist) so we can get down to the business of educating children and families.

## PRIORITY: Six simple questions<sup>2</sup>

- Is X important?
- If so, how should we be doing on X?
- How are we doing on X?
- If we're not doing as well as we should, how can we improve X?
- What's stopping us from improving X?
- How do we remove the barriers that stop us from improving X?

X = student performance



"The best case for public education has always been that it is a common good. Everyone, ultimately, has a stake in the caliber of schools, and education is everyone's business... Publicly funded schools must serve ALL children...with an emphasis on including those who may not have been well served in the past."

Michael Fullan<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Schmoker, M. J. (2011). Focus: Elevating the essentials to radically improve student learning. ASCD.

<sup>2</sup> Hess, F. M. (2013). Cage-busting leadership. Harvard Education Press.

<sup>3</sup> Fullan, M. (Ed.). (2003). The moral imperative of school leadership. Corwin Press. Chicago

# This is...



**Introduction:** MAASE is a statewide professional organization of over 600 members affiliated with the national Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) and the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). MAASE members are dedicated to the enhancement of the worth, dignity, potential, and uniqueness of each individual.

**Mission:** to provide leadership for the development and implementation of quality programs and services for students with disabilities within the total education community.

**Vision:** to align and organize our strategic priorities and work to focus on the following elements:

1. High quality student evaluations
2. Specially designed Instruction
3. Skilled Staff
4. Program Evaluation

## The Strategic Priorities of MAASE are to provide...

### Technical Assistance

- Web-based resources and links
- Membership newsletters and alerts
- Regular membership meetings with targeted information sharing
- Ongoing MDE communication and updates

### Professional Learning

- Summer Institute (approx. 600 participants)
- Developing Leaders EdCamp (5 per years)
- 10+ annual professional learning workshops
- Community of Practice (CoP) meetings and conferences

### Networking

- Communities of Practice
- Membership Services Committee Activities
- Social Events (e.g., Annual Golf Outing)
- Fund raising activities and charity events

### Political Action

- Finance & Legislation Committee activities
- MASA/MAISA Legislative Action Committee
- Legislative Action Committee & work groups
- MAASE input and position papers
- State and National partner collaboration

### Promote Educational Innovation

- Annual MAASE Mini-Grant program for innovative classroom instruction
- MAASE Spotlight and luncheon presentations
- Special Project Groups (e.g. ASD Programs & Services Implementation)

### Communication and Collaboration

- Ongoing collaboration with other school administration associations
- Representation on the MDE Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)
- Representation on the Bureau of Assessment and Accountability (BAA) Advisory Committee