

NAME:



DINNER & DIALOGUE

MAKING THE GRADE: QUALITY K-12 EDUCATION

In Partnership With:



Chalkbeat
DETROIT



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AGENDA

SEPT 18, 2019

- Welcome & Context
- A-F School Grading Systems
- Guest Speakers & Panel
 - Dr. Nikolai Vitti, Superintendent, Detroit Public Schools Community District (DPSCD)
 - Katie Rae Stolper, Director of Operations & Accountability, Community Education Commission (CEC)
- Measures of School Quality
- Table Activity: Building Blocks of Quality

OUR PARTNERS



CHALKBEAT

Chalkbeat is an award-winning nonprofit news organization that provides deep, local coverage of education policy and practice in Detroit, New York, Denver, Memphis, Indianapolis, Newark, and across the nation. With a focus on issues of equity, Chalkbeat aims to inform the decisions and actions that lead to better outcomes for children and families, especially those in the low-income communities where improvement can have the largest impact.

chalkbeat.org/detroit



DETROIT PARENT NETWORK

Detroit Parent Network envisions a future where parents are the driving force ensuring conditions exist for Metro-Detroit children to thrive. We accomplish this through parent leadership training, advocacy, and education, as well as programs that build relationships between parents and their children.

detroitparentnetwork.org



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The **League of Women Voters of Detroit** is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. The League does not endorse candidates or political parties. It influences public policy through education and advocacy. We invite you to join us as we make democracy work in our communities.

lwwdetroit.org



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Since 1939, **Detroit Deltas** have built a rich legacy of dedicated service to the metropolitan Detroit community by promoting academic excellence, encouraging community and social activism, and providing solutions to community concerns. Our work is designed to ensure that the communities we serve — and the people who live in them — thrive. In the spirit of our 22 illustrious Founders, we are committed to “Building on the Legacy of Excellence” that is based on sisterhood, scholarship and service.

detroitdeltas.org

INTRODUCTION

“ALL DETROITERS WILL HAVE ACCESS TO A QUALITY EDUCATION.”

—2018 CitizenDetroit Citizen Assembly, *Top Ten Values of Detroit Citizens*

In 2018, CitizenDetroit hosted a Citizen Assembly where attendees determined priorities for “one city for all of us.” In 2019, CitizenDetroit hosted a 2018-In-Review event, and participants selected priorities for the upcoming year. At each event, **education** was identified as attendees’ top priority, with a **focus on quality**.

Long-term Detroit residents have fond memories of Detroit Public Schools (DPS) and the high quality of education it provided. Yet, the education landscape in Detroit has changed over the years for many reasons.

Poverty, divestment, and racism have challenged Detroit for many years. These structural issues have compounded over time with occasional periods of corruption and an increased transience of students between schools (both inside and outside the city). With these challenges, the system has struggled to consistently and sufficiently educate students. Our public education system is no longer the same as many of us remember it, and because of its importance to the stability of families and neighborhoods, many people are concerned about education quality.

CAN WE AGREE ON WHAT “QUALITY” MEANS?

Over the years the *quality* of education and ways to measure it have been researched, explored, and legislated. Many states, including Michigan, have an **accountability system** which measures and assesses the quality of schools. Recently, the State of Michigan and Detroit’s Community Education Commission (CEC) have developed new approaches in the form of A-F grading systems where a school receives a letter grade ranging from an “A,” representing the best-performing schools, to an “F,” representing the schools that need the most help.

These measurement systems involve different characteristics of schools. Some systems address the “headline issues” such as teacher pay and shortages, school building conditions, and historical issues we commonly discuss such as extra-curricular activities (art, music, gym), while other systems address curriculum and student progress. Still other systems may not address certain values at all.

There are three accountability systems affecting Detroit’s public schools (which are discussed in the pages of this workbook) that we should understand and engage with, but we still need to decide:

What does a quality education mean to me?

INTRODUCTION (CONT'D)

One person's definition of a quality school or education may differ from another's, depending on our personal experience, values, culture, environment, and other considerations.

What elements would you decide to measure? What if your values and measures are different than the measures of state and local accountability systems?

Government standards are unavoidable, which makes it even more important to know where you and your community stand on quality so that you will be able to make the most informed decisions for the future of our kids.

Understanding school accountability systems is critical for all parents, guardians, and community members, including the business community, because of the impact they have on shaping our neighborhoods city—and most importantly—our children. All of us have a stake in the debate over school quality.

Finally, if a school in your neighborhood receives a poor grade—from the State, the CEC, or any other system—you should be ready to decide, "What will you do?"

"IF YOU CAN'T MEASURE IT, YOU CAN'T IMPROVE IT."

—Peter Drucker, Educator and Business Consultant

Accountability systems attempt to measure certain characteristics of a school—what we are calling **measures of quality**—that contribute to the overall health of a student's learning environment. Developing a system that uses measures of quality can have many benefits:

- Assessing all schools by the same measures of quality can allow school leaders to understand and compare each school's performance and determine what they are doing differently.
- Tracking a school's measures of quality over time can tell a story about how the school has improved or declined in quality.
- Measuring the performance of a school can assist a school district in identifying which schools need intervention, such as additional support, funding, and other resources.

Asking the following critical questions can assist in better understanding which measures of quality should be used:



1. **Are the measures of quality fair and applicable to all schools?**
2. **Do the measures of quality consider everything about a school that contributes to a high-quality learning environment? Are there any elements that are missing?**
3. **What is the impact of using any particular measure of quality?**

Over the next few pages, you will see a host of measures of quality that are used at the state and city levels or in other systems outside the state of Michigan. Below is a list of some measures that are defined later in this workbook and others you may already discuss in your community.

Which ones stand out most to you?

- Student Proficiency
- Student Growth
- English Learner Progress
- Graduation Rates
- Parent Participation in School Surveys
- Re-enrollment Rates
- Student Surveys
- College and Career Level Courses
- (Chronic) Absenteeism
- Student Subgroup Proficiency
- Peer School Proficiency
- Standardized Test Participation
- English Learner Participation
- School Quality/Student Success
- On-Track Attendance
- Access to Arts/Physical Education
- Access to Librarian/Media Specialist
- Advanced Coursework
- Postsecondary Enrollment
- Curriculum



MEASURES OF QUALITY ARE USED IN ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

School accountability systems evaluate quality using selected measures such as those from the list on the previous page. Different school systems use different methods to determine the quality of a school or schools.

A LITTLE HISTORY...

Since the beginning of the 20th century (the late 1800s/early 1900s), states have had an interest in publicly reporting school quality. The measured quality of a school has been used for state aid and accreditation.

Prior to the 1980s, researchers believed elements of successful schools included strong school board members, superintendents, and principals. In the 1980s, the focus became performance and test scores (connected with state and federal standards).

The 1990s brought the use of school accountability systems, and in 1999, Florida launched the first A-F school grading system. Accountability systems, the standards state governments set, and the measures they set vary from state to state.

The results of these accountability systems create different outcomes based on a state's education policies. School accountability incentives can work through direct government action or through the provision of information.

In an effort to simplify the way quality is reported, there has been a trend among states to redesign their school accountability systems to match an A-F grading system.

There are different types of school accountability systems:

→ **A-F grading system** ("A" represents the highest-performing schools and "F" represents schools that are struggling the most)

→ **Numerical index system** (100 represents the highest-performing schools and 0 represents schools that are struggling the most)

→ **1-5 star system** (5 stars represents the highest-performing schools and 1 star represents schools that are struggling the most)

→ **Color system** (green represents high-performing schools and red represents schools that are struggling the most)

What do you think?

WHAT ARE PEOPLE SAYING?

Michigan recently joined the growing list of states with A-F grading systems after legislation passed in 2018, despite the State already maintaining a numerical index system that was launched in 2016. There is much debate surrounding this particular approach to school evaluations.

Advocates for A–F	Critics of A–F
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 😊 Clear and simple evaluation of school quality. 😊 Easiest to understand. 😊 Forces improvements in low-performing schools. 😊 High-quality schools survive; low-quality schools don't. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 😞 Too simplistic; doesn't account for numerous factors that contribute to school performance. 😞 Doesn't explain the "how" or "why" of low performance. 😞 Doesn't support the growth of schools or educators. 😞 Doesn't reveal the higher or lower performance of certain student groups. 😞 Can hide indicators that a school is headed in the right direction. 😞 Low grades can make it more difficult to attract and retain highly-effective teachers and school leaders.

MY SCHOOL GOT AN "A" OR A "D." WHAT'S NEXT?

Outcomes from these accountability systems can present themselves in different ways in different states, depending on government standards. These might include:

- **Bonuses for educators in schools considered to be excellent**
- **Threats of restructuring or closing low-performing schools**
- **Government aid to struggling schools**
- **Community pressure on schools**

We'll dive deeper into Michigan's accountability systems over the next few pages.

! *If your school gets a poor grade in the Community Education Commission's grading system, contact the CEC at SRSDinfo@cecdetroit.org. If it gets a poor grade in Michigan's grading system or index contact the state at MDE-Accountability@michigan.gov.*

THREE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS FOR DETROIT

Detroit public schools (including traditional and charter) will be subject to three accountability systems, each with their own measures.

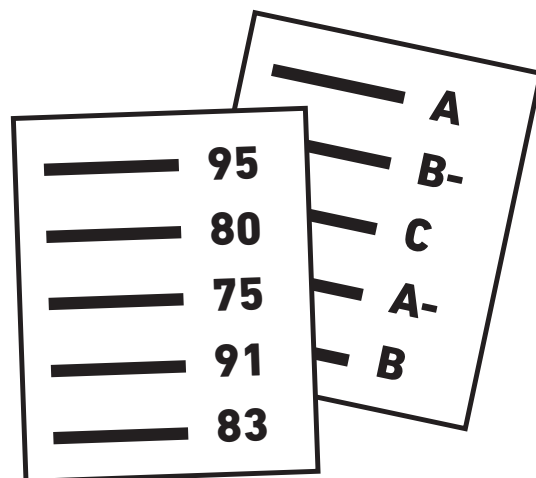
The **State of Michigan** currently has two school accountability systems to evaluate the quality of public schools statewide:

1. Michigan School Index System: 2016-Present

- This system was created to comply with federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requirements to develop accountability plans using certain metrics.

2. A–F Grading System: Under Development

- Public Act 601 was passed in 2018 and requires that the state create this system.



The **Community Education Commission** (CEC) recently developed an accountability system to evaluate the performance of Detroit’s public schools:

3. A–F Grading System: Under Development (rollout winter 2019/20 school year)

- This system was originally developed to comply with Public Acts 192-197, which created the Detroit Public Schools debt repayment structure and the Detroit Public Schools Community District.
- Though Public Act 601 repealed the Detroit-specific A-F grading requirement of Public Acts 192-197, the CEC decided to continue its work on a system uniquely designed for Detroit.

The CEC is not empowered to use grades to issue penalties or rewards to schools, and the impact of grades from the State’s A-F grading system has not been determined. However, we know that the Michigan School Index System is used to direct additional support to schools that are in need.

A QUICK NOTE ABOUT STANDARDIZED TESTS

In Michigan, many of the measures of school quality, such as Student Proficiency and Student Growth, are determined by using standardized test scores. Standardized tests are administered on a set schedule determined by the State and use a specific scoring method. They provide indicators of student learning and allow for monitoring and comparing different groups of students’ educational achievement.

MICHIGAN’S FIVE STANDARDIZED STUDENT TESTS:

- Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (M-STEP)
- PSAT, one of the College Board’s collection of SAT assessments
- Michigan Merit Examination (MME)
- MI-Access, for students with disabilities
- WIDA Access and WIDA Alternate Access, for English Language Learners

	State of Michigan		Detroit's Community Education Commission
	MICHIGAN SCHOOL INDEX SYSTEM	A-F GRADING SYSTEM	A-F GRADING SYSTEM
STATUS	ACTIVE	UNDER DEVELOPMENT	UNDER DEVELOPMENT
MEASURES USED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student Proficiency 2. Student Growth 3. English Learner Progress 4. Graduation Rates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student Proficiency 2. Student Growth 3. English Learner Progress 4. Graduation Rates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student Proficiency 2. Student Growth 3. English Learner Progress 4. Graduation Rates
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Standardized Test Participation 6. School Quality/Student Success* 7. English Learner Participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Standardized Test Participation 6. Chronic Absenteeism 7. Peer School Proficiency 8. Student Subgroup Proficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Absenteeism 6. College and Career Level Courses 7. Student Surveys 8. Re-enrollment Rates 9. Parent Participation in School Surveys 10. Other
HOW WILL THE FINAL GRADE(S) LOOK?	An overall point score for each public school ranging from 0 to 100	Each public school will receive five A-F letter grades for the first five measures listed above and a ranking for the bottom three measures, ranging from "Significantly Above Average" to "Significantly Below Average"	An overall A-F letter grade for each public school

**School Quality/Student Success is a composite score of five additional categories: On-Track Attendance, Access to Arts/Physical Education, Access to Librarian/Media Specialist, Advanced Coursework, and Postsecondary Enrollment.*

MICHIGAN SCHOOL INDEX SYSTEM

The Michigan School Index System was developed to comply with federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requirements passed in 2015. The system is implemented and maintained by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE).

Schools receive an overall numeric score between 0 and 100, compiled using student assessment data, graduation rates, attendance rates, advanced coursework, postsecondary enrollment, and staffing ratios.

MICHIGAN SCHOOL INDEX SYSTEM FORMULA

STUDENT GROWTH – 34%

STUDENT PROFICIENCY – 29%

SCHOOL QUALITY/STUDENT SUCCESS* – 14%

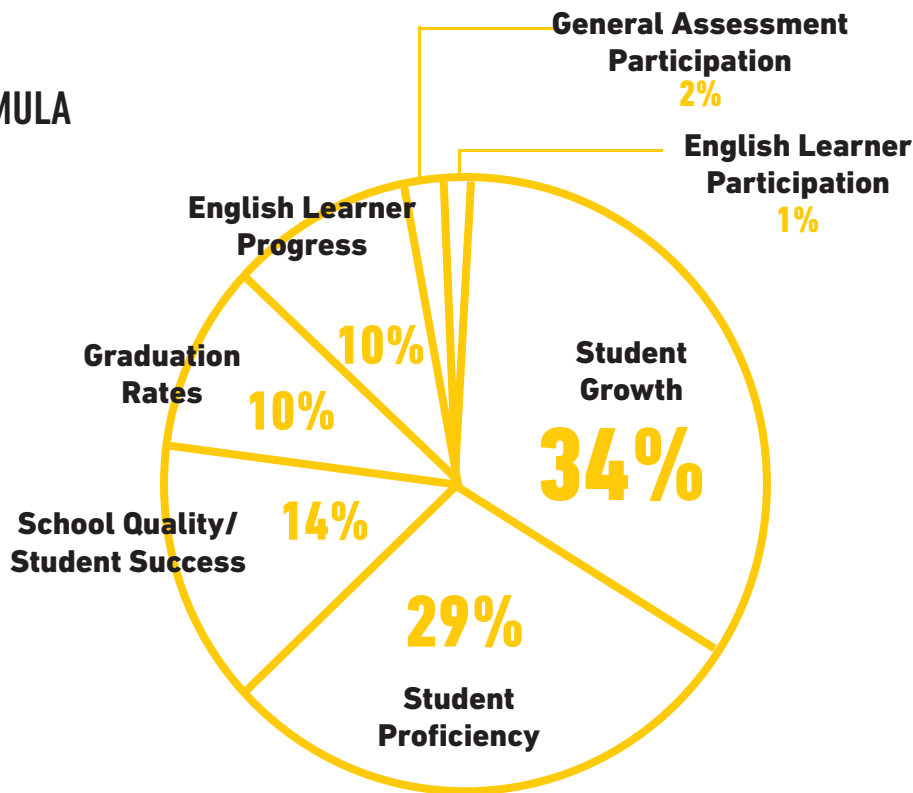
GRADUATION RATES – 10%

ENGLISH LEARNER PROGRESS – 10%

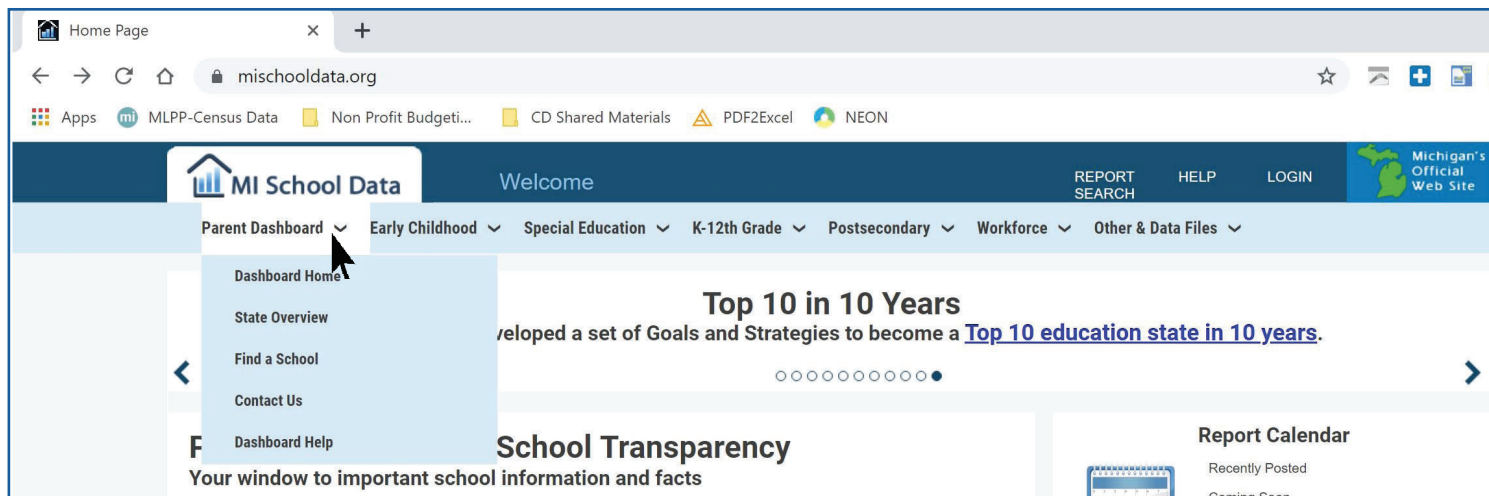
GENERAL ASSESSMENT PARTICIPATION – 2%

ENGLISH LEARNER PARTICIPATION – 1%

*Includes: Chronic Absenteeism, Advanced Coursework, Postsecondary Enrollment, Access to Arts/Physical Education, and Access to Librarians/Media Specialists



For more information about the Michigan School Index System, go to mischooldata.org.



PUBLIC ACT 601: MICHIGAN'S NEW A-F GRADING SYSTEM

On December 28, 2018, Governor Snyder signed into law Public Act 601 which required the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) to develop and implement a new statewide A-F school accountability system.

Unlike Michigan's index system and the CEC's grading system, PA 601 will not provide a weighted grade for its measures. Instead, the system will grade five measures A-F and rank another three measures: Significantly Above Average, Above Average, Average, Below Average, or Significantly Below Average.



Former Governor Rick Snyder. Photo courtesy of MI News 26.

A-F Letter Grades Will Assess:	Rankings Will Assess:
Grade 1: Student Proficiency Grade 2: Student Growth Grade 3: English Learner Progress Grade 4: Graduation Rates (High School) Grade 5: Peer School Proficiency	Category 1: Chronic Absenteeism Category 2: Standardized Test Participation Category 3: Student Subgroup Proficiency

DID YOU KNOW...?

Many accountability systems, including the Michigan Index System and the CEC's rating system use **weighted** measures. This means that some measures are determined to be more important than others, which is reflected in the math that determines the final score. The State's new A-F grading system does not use weights; instead each measure receives its own grade based on progress toward a state determined goal.

In 2011, an education advocacy nonprofit organization named Excellent Schools Detroit rolled out the city and state's first comprehensive A-F grading system for Detroit public schools.

The organization was dissolved in 2017.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION COMMISSION



The Community Education Commission (CEC) recently developed an accountability system to evaluate the performance of Detroit's public schools. This grading system is known as the School Rating System for Detroit (SRSD).

The CEC is a nonprofit organization led by a board of eleven members and five staff. The board represents Detroit charter schools, the Detroit Public Schools Community District, philanthropic organizations, unions, community agencies, and the Michigan Department of Education.

THE CEC'S SCHOOL RATING SYSTEM

Every public school in the city of Detroit will be labeled with a cumulative letter grade ranging from an "A," representing the best-performing schools, to an "F," representing the schools that need the most help. The grades are intended to help parents make better decisions about where to send their kids to school.

The system has been designed to take into account the unique issues that face schools in the city, such as poverty and enrollment instability. The A-F grades emphasize student growth and give schools credit for helping students learn even when students don't advance enough to produce grade-level test scores.

The CEC board approved the following formula for the A-F letter grades in March 2019:

OVERALL GROWTH – 56%

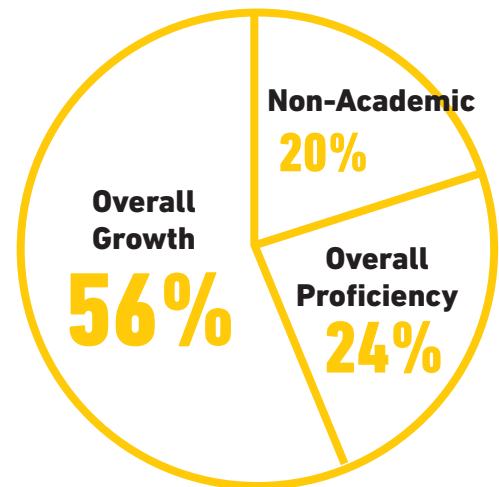
OVERALL PROFICIENCY – 24%

NON-ACADEMIC – 20%

(Student surveys, re-enrollment rates, absenteeism, and parent participation on school surveys)

Each of the above measures will contribute to an overall A-F letter grade. For example, a school's proficiency is based on its students' standardized test scores with a few other factors, which will represent 24% of its overall grade.

CEC Rating System Formula



The CEC has published a guide with information about every public school in the city called *Detroit Parents' Guide to Schools*. Find it at DetroitSchoolsGuide.com

WHAT ARE THE PROS AND CONS OF A “DETROIT-ONLY” SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM?

PROs	CONs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☺ Accounts for the unique issues that schools have faced in the city for decades, such as poverty, enrollment instability, and student transience. ☺ Designed for the turnaround needed in Detroit, with emphasis on overall growth in students and schools. ☺ Could serve as a policy test for the rest of the state to determine which accountability grading system works best. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☹ Would not be able to compare Detroit public schools to public schools in any other district in the state. ☹ Perpetuates an existing “Detroit-only” narrative that serves to isolate the city from the region and the state. ☹ Promotes the idea that Detroit needs a handicap to ensure equal opportunity.

..... What do you think?

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

- The Michigan Department of Education had until **August 1, 2019** to develop their A–F letter grading system and until **September 1, 2019** to issue the letter grades to schools. *The state has not yet determined what the outcomes will be of a school receiving a high or low letter grade.* Sheila Alles, Chief Deputy Superintendent for the Michigan Department of Education (MDE), recently reported to the State Board of Education that the MDE would be prepared to roll out letter grades starting in **March 2020**.
- The Community Education Commission plans to issue grades for all Detroit public schools in **winter of the 2019/2020 school year**, regardless of what happens with the new state law.
- **Detroit schools could receive grades from three different systems with three different measures**, forcing parents, educators, and stakeholders to decide which report card to consider.

MEASURES OF QUALITY DEFINITIONS

A snapshot of these definitions can be found with your activity on page 16.



Student Proficiency: The number of students whose scores on standardized tests indicate that they are at grade-level in certain subjects. Michigan’s accountability system assesses proficiency in Mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA), while the CEC’s system also includes proficiency in Social Studies.



Student Growth: The change in a student’s academic ability in Mathematics and English Language Arts between two or more points in time (e.g., the beginning of the year and the end of the year).



English Learner Progress: The percent of English learners (students who speak English as a second language) who show proficiency or adequate growth in learning the English language (referring to the language itself, not the subject of English Language Arts, or ELA).



Graduation Rates: The percentage of students who complete high school. The State measures the number of students who complete high school within four, five, or six years. The State also looks at this information within subgroups—or specific groups—of students. The CEC measures graduation rates based on four-year completion and considers the increase in graduation rates.



Peer School Proficiency: The comparison of one school’s standardized test scores to other schools with similar demographics.



Student Subgroup Proficiency: The comparison of student proficiency in one subgroup of students to students within the same subgroup statewide. This measure can be used to evaluate how well different groups are performing comparatively and whether they are being served by their schools. The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires the use of subgroupings, and each state is able to define those subgroups. In Michigan, the following subgroups are considered:

- *American Indian or Alaskan Native*
- *Asian*
- *Black or African American*
- *Hispanic of Any Race*
- *Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander*
- *Two or More Races*
- *White*
- *Economically Disadvantaged*
- *English Learners*
- *Students with Disabilities*



Standardized Test Participation: The percentage of students who take scheduled state-administered standardized tests.



Chronic Absenteeism: The failure to attend 10% or more of the school year for any reason, including excused absences, unexcused absences, and suspensions. In an average year at DPSCD, a chronically-absent student would miss 18 days of 180 total school days. Michigan is one of 36 states that considers chronic absenteeism as a measure of school quality.

OTHER MEASURES FOR YOU TO CONSIDER

Measures of quality that are recommended by nonprofits, private companies, and researchers such as *GreatSchools.org*, the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research, and the Education Trust assess quality education for children. The measures below are identified by these organizations.



Curriculum and Advanced Courses: This measure includes Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate classes, as well as higher-level math courses and specialized curriculum, such as career pathways. The Michigan School Index System does consider this measure to define “School Quality.”



Culture and Leadership: “Culture” is the environment in a school and its approach to education in areas such as teaching methods, staff collaboration, discipline, and safety. Culture is a difficult measure to quantify. What feelings do you have after a few visits to a school? Does it feel chaotic, strict, or warm? Do educators work as teammates or as individuals? How do staff members feel and talk about the school’s leader?



School Conditions and Materials: The quality of the learning environment—including the condition of school buildings and learning materials—are of particular concern in Detroit. This measure also includes access to 21st century technology and relevance of learning materials.



Class Size: The student-to-teacher ratio of an average class is an important measure of quality to many parents and teachers, but Michigan law does not limit the number of students per classroom. In some school districts, district and teacher contracts often determine the number of students who will receive instructions at any one time in classrooms.



Reviews: One of the simplest measures of quality can be determined by the way students and their parents feel about a school, which can be evaluated through surveys, for example. Reviews account for 10% of a school’s letter grade in the CEC’s rating system for Detroit. The private school-rating company, Niche, also calculates 10% of a school’s grade using reviews from students, parents, residents, and recent alumni.

Principals can make a school flourish!

Do you like the principal at your school? The education-focused Wallace Foundation conducted research that found that schools have the best outcomes when there is a principal who doesn’t focus on just one thing, but creates the conditions for many different qualities of a school to flourish.

DISCIPLINE...

The US Department of Education Office of Civil Rights found that suspensions affect African-American children at a higher rate than other students.


How important are these measures to you?

ACTIVITY: BUILDING BLOCKS OF QUALITY

Using the Building Block diagram, rank these measures of quality according to your own values.

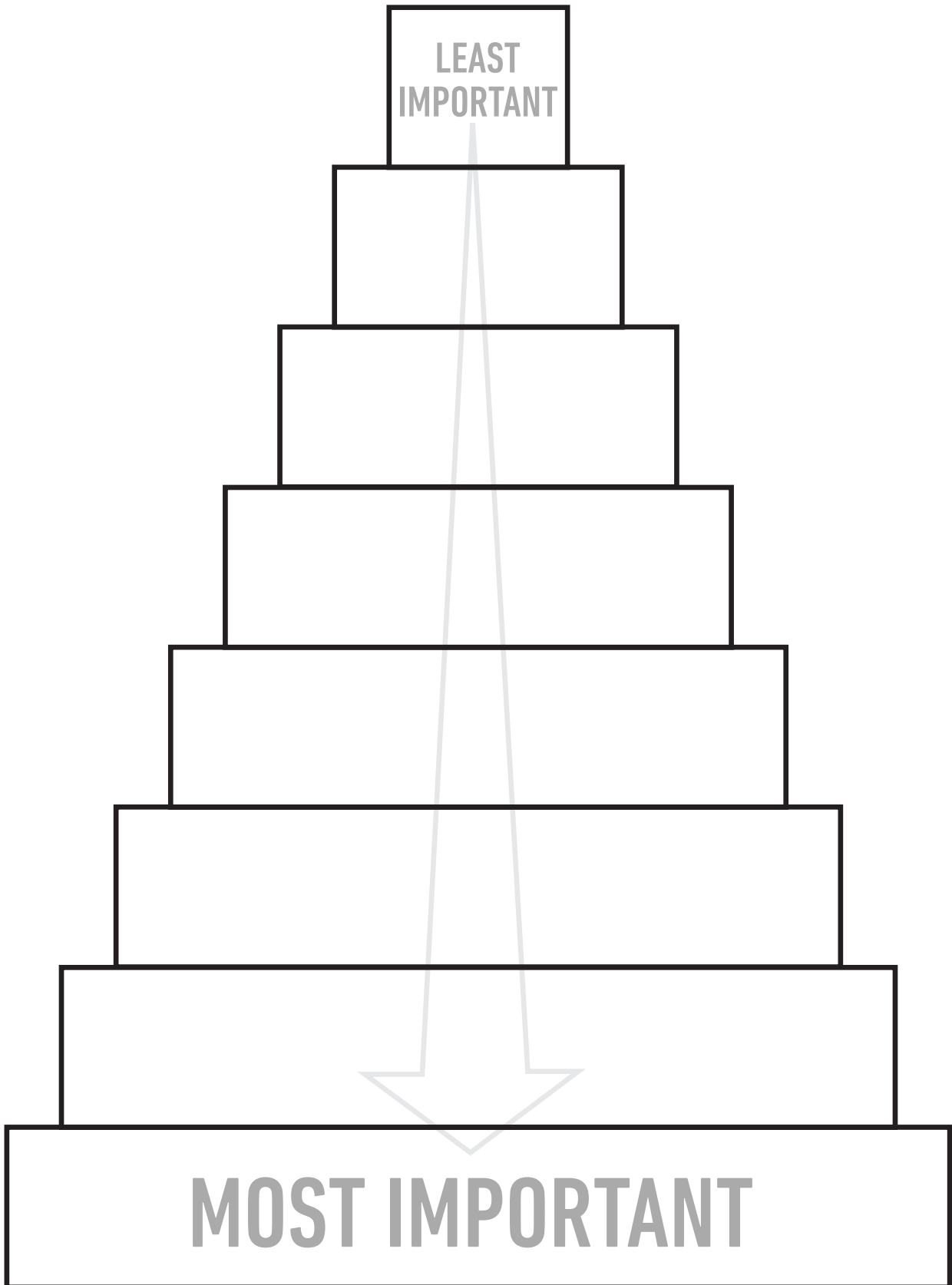
Student Proficiency	A student's academic ability in the subjects of Mathematics and English Language Arts (according to Michigan standards); also referred to as being "on grade level."
Student Growth	The change in a student's academic ability in Mathematics and English Language Arts between two or more points in time (e.g., the beginning of the year and the end of the year).
English Learner Progress	The percentage of English learners who show proficiency or adequate growth in the English language.
Graduation Rates	The percentage of students that graduated from high school.
Peer <i>School</i> Proficiency	A comparison of one school's standardized test scores with other schools that have similar demographics.
Chronic Absenteeism	Missing 10% of the number of possible days of attendance in a school year.
Standardized Test Participation	The percentage of students that took standardized tests.
Student <i>Subgroup</i> Proficiency	The performance of certain "subgroups" (specific populations of students), compared with statewide results for those groups.

Are there additional measures of quality that you think should be considered? Add them here.

 *Note: The table activity "Building Blocks of Quality" primarily is based on the measures of quality that are used across all three accountability systems (Michigan School Index System, the Michigan A-F Grading System, and the CEC A-F Grading System).*

Write in your priorities here. Use the list of priorities and their definitions on the left and decide which is **most important** (the bottom or foundation block) to **least important** (the top block).

BUILDING BLOCKS OF QUALITY



FUNDING K-12 EDUCATION

Whatever you decide about quality, schools require funding to accomplish it! A 2016 study found that between 1990 and 2011, states that reformed school finance policies in order to allocate more funding to high-poverty school districts successfully narrowed the achievement gap.

Research shows that increases in school spending result in greater educational and economic outcomes for all students, but funding increases had even more impact on children from low-income families. Additional funding also can help to attract highly-qualified teachers, improve curriculum, and fund additional programs such as early childhood education.



Capitol of Michigan. Photo courtesy of David Marvin.

BUT MICHIGAN EDUCATION FUNDING HAS DECLINED...

A Michigan State University Education report by David Arsen, Tanner Delpier, and Jesse Nagel found that, after adjusting for inflation, **total K-12 education funding** in Michigan declined by 30% between 2002 and 2015. This same report placed Michigan's 2015 revenue at 85% of its 1995 revenue, ranking **Michigan at 48 of the 50 states in education revenue growth.**

Additionally, this same report documented that Michigan's approach to **school facility finance** created unequal opportunities for students at various schools and unequal burdens for taxpayers. In Michigan, school construction and infrastructure improvements remain a **local** responsibility, funded entirely by local property taxes. As a result, the inequalities in local districts' property wealth has created dramatic disparities in the quality of facilities across the state.

A FEW DETROIT CHALLENGES

DPSCD BUILDING CONDITIONS

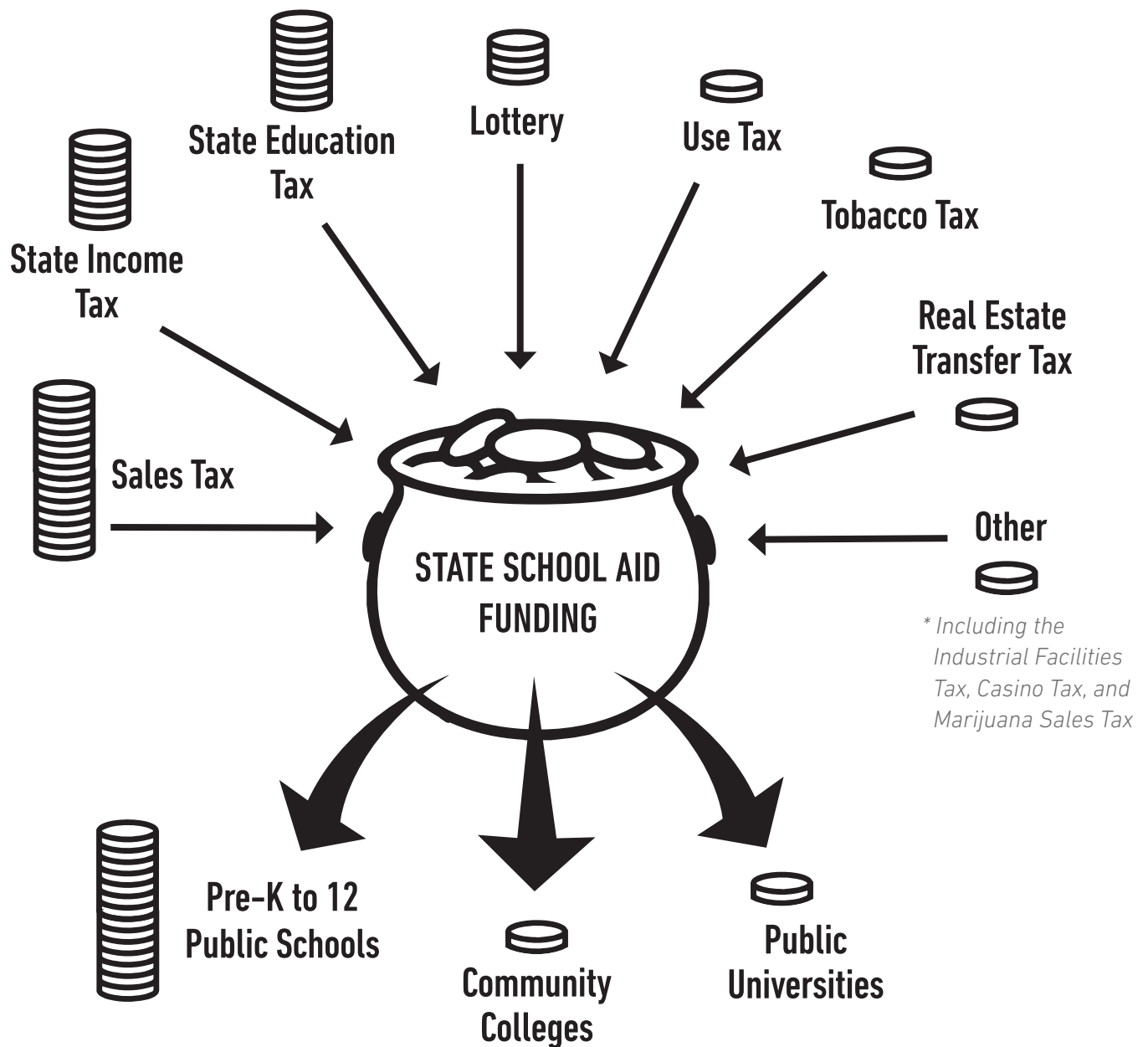
DPSCD is faced with an aging infrastructure that would cost a half billion dollars to improve. If left unaddressed, this number will increase to \$1.5 billion by 2023. Public Acts 192-197, which established DPSCD, restrict the district from proposing new millages or raising new debt through local bonds. Without additional revenue options, facilities will continue to deteriorate at a rate faster than the district's budget will be able to manage.

FUNDING SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS

Students with special needs have a higher per-student cost for which the state and local districts are responsible. State resources never have been able to cover the full cost of special education. As a result, local districts across the state use general fund revenues to cover the costs of special education. Compared with districts statewide, Detroit schools have a disproportionate enrollment rate of students with special needs (i.e., 18% versus a statewide average of 12%).

The funding for traditional K-12 public school education in Detroit comes from a mix of local, state, and federal sources. Public charter schools are funded by the state and further rely on investor or grant dollars.

Over the past decade, the State of Michigan has shifted K-12 dollars from the School Aid Fund to projects that usually are supported by the State's General Fund (i.e., supporting postsecondary budgets). The purpose of this reallocation has been to balance the budget. As a result, Michigan's K-12 schools have been receiving smaller shares of the budget to operate.



NEW FUNDING CONCERNS IN LANSING

Governor Whitmer's proposed budget in March 2019 called for a \$507 million add-on to Michigan's K-12 funding. Her proposal was the first step toward a "weighted, per-pupil funding system" that would pay schools more for special needs and at-risk students, as well as for career and technical education programs. Her proposed budget also would have ended the practice of allocating school aid funding to public universities.



Governor Gretchen Whitmer.
Photo courtesy of State of Michigan.

Specifically, the governor's budget proposal:

- ↑ Increased the amount allocated per-student, ranging between \$120 and \$180, depending on the district.
- ↑ Increased reimbursements for special education services.
- ↑ Increased state support for at-risk students.
- ↑ Increased opportunities for career and technical education.
- ↑ Increased the budget allocated for the Great Start Readiness Program by \$84 million, increasing the budget from \$244.9 million to \$328.9 million.
- ↑ Increased the amount of funding for at-risk students from \$746 to \$894 per student.

As of the publication of this workbook (August 2019), state legislators still had not approved a budget for the fiscal year that begins October 1, 2019, largely due to the debate surrounding road funding. Regardless, public school districts were required to adopt their budgets in July. Without a budget from the State, school administrators will enter the school year and make hiring and resource decisions based on conservative estimates, rather than hard numbers.

If legislators do not pass funding legislation by the September 30th deadline, the state government will "shut down" and cease non-essential operations until legislation is passed.

Let your legislator know how you feel about education funding!

Find your State Representative and State Senator here:

house.michigan.gov

senate.michigan.gov

DID YOU KNOW...?

Career Technical Education

Students and parents can find curriculum in DPSCD schools that is specific to various career paths such as business administration, nursing, public leadership and others AND there are three Career Tech Centers across the city. Breithaupt CareerTech

Center offers programs in automotive repair, the culinary arts, and mechatronics. The A. Philip Randolph Career and Technical Center teaches the construction trades and partners with the Mayor's Workforce Development Board. And Golightly Career and Technical Center offers Flight Training, Graphics & Printing Technology, Information Technology and Welding.

LEGISLATION, THE COURTS, AND THE MICHIGAN CONSTITUTION

A “RIGHT TO LITERACY”

In 2016, seven students from Detroit filed a class-action lawsuit against the State of Michigan, asserting that education is a basic right which they have been denied. This was the first case to argue that the U.S. Constitution guarantees access to literacy, because other rights in the Constitution require the ability to read.

The suit sought to hold state officials — including then-Governor Rick Snyder — responsible for system-wide failures that the plaintiffs said had deprived Detroit children of their right to literacy from 1999 until 2005 and again from 2009 until the end of 2016, while Detroit Public Schools were under emergency management.



Photo courtesy of The Boston Globe.



Michigan Attorney General
Dana Nessel. Photo courtesy
of State of Michigan.

A federal judge dismissed the case in 2018, stating that access to literacy is not necessarily a fundamental right, though it's of "incalculable importance." The students' lawyers appealed the ruling, which is currently being litigated in the U.S. 6th Circuit Court of Appeals. However, in a brief filed during the last week of May 2019, legal counsel for the State sidestepped the question of the right to literacy and urged the U.S. Court of Appeals to dismiss the lawsuit that aimed to establish that right. **Attorney General Dana Nessel then filed a separate brief** on behalf of her office that supports the continuance of the suit.

THE STATE CONSTITUTION

All 50 state constitutions mandate public education systems, but the U.S. Constitution does not mention the word "education."

In Michigan, there is no legal obligation to provide an "equitable" or "adequate" education for all of its citizens. The only thing Michigan is constitutionally required to do is to provide a "free" education. Here is what our state constitution says about education:

"Article VIII, Sec. 2. The Legislature shall maintain and support a system of free public elementary and secondary schools as defined by law. Every school district shall provide for the education of its pupils without discrimination as to religion, creed, race, color or national origin."

Some states, including Arkansas and Delaware for example, constitutionally require the provision of "general" or "efficient" education, while states such as Colorado and Idaho stipulate that education must be "thorough" or "uniform."

Montana is the only state that guarantees "equality of educational opportunity" for all of its residents. It also requires in its statutes that all schools must provide a sound foundation for literacy in kids' early years.

What do you think?

Citizens could put a constitutional amendment on the ballot, detailing a more pronounced mandate for child literacy and quality education standards.

ACTION AND RESOURCES

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

- ✓ Communicate your expectations about quality to your school leadership. Attend the public board meetings of your school.
 - DPSCD School Board Meetings take place on the second Tuesday of each month. Details can be found at detroitk12.org/board.
 - Charter school board meetings vary; check with school leadership for dates and times.
- ✓ Attend the Community Education Commission public meetings, get more information, and participate in surveys.
 - All meetings are open to the public.
 - You can find information about upcoming board meetings at www.cecdetroit.org.
- ✓ Talk with your legislators about Governor Whitmer's proposed budget.

VOLUNTEER!

- ✓ Support Your Local School and Impact Student Performance

Your local school likely has programs that are in need of volunteers, and there are organizations around the city that work with students on their academics.

LEARN MORE

- ✓ For information on existing school ratings, check out Michigan's Parent Dashboard: www.mischooldata.org/ParentDashboard.

The Parent Dashboard provides colorful bar charts that represent the outcome of the Michigan School Index System.

BECOME AN ENGAGED DOCUMENTER

- ✓ In partnership with WDET, Outlier, and City Bureau, the Detroit Documenters program is documenting Detroit's public boards, authorities, and commissions through note-taking and live-tweeting. Register as a Documenter or see a schedule of all Detroit public meetings at Documenters.org. Contact Vassilis Jacobs at info@citizendetroit.org or 313-334-3131. Help keep public officials accountable!

GLOSSARY

2018-in-Review Event. A CitizenDetroit Dinner & Dialogue that determined the CitizenDetroit priorities for 2019.

A-F Grading System. A type of school accountability system that uses letter grades to rate a school.

Accountability System. A system that measures and rates certain characteristics of a school.

Accreditation. A process of validation in which colleges, universities and other institutions of higher learning are evaluated.

Advanced Coursework. Specialized classes of a higher academic rigor that may provide college credit.

Career Technical Education. The teaching of vocational and academic skills for employment in a defined occupation.

Chronic Absenteeism. The pattern of a student who misses 10% or more days of the school year.

Citizen Assembly. A 2018 CitizenDetroit forum that determined the top ten things citizens want addressed as part of the “CitizenDetroit Action Agenda.”

Class Size. The student-to-teacher ratio of an average class.

Community Education Commission (CEC). A mayoral-appointed Detroit education commission with members from the public schools, foundations, unions, community agencies, philanthropic organizations, and the Michigan Department of Education.

Culture and Leadership. The environment of a school and its approach to education in areas such as teaching methods, staff collaboration, discipline, and safety.

Curriculum. The classes and subjects taught at a school.

Dropout Rates. The State of Michigan measures high school dropout rates based on the percentage of students who leave high school permanently

within four, five, or six years, or whose whereabouts are unknown.

English Language Arts (ELA). The subjects that develop a student’s comprehension and capacity to use written and oral language, including reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

English Language Learners (ELL). Students whose first language is not English.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). A 2015 federal education law that includes the requirement of states to enact a school accountability system.

Excellent Schools Detroit. An education organization that created Detroit’s first A-F grading system. **It closed in 2017.**

Michigan School Index System. A numerical index system of Michigan public schools created under the ESSA federal requirements.

Numerical Index System. A type of accountability system that uses a numerical score to rate a school.

PA 601. An abbreviation for Michigan Public Act 601 of 2018. A law that requires a state grading system for public schools.

Reviews/Surveys. The way that parents, students, and teachers evaluate a school.

School Condition and Materials. The quality of the learning environment reflected by the condition of the building and learning resources.

School Rating System for Detroit (SRSD). An A-F grading system that is being by the CEC for all Detroit public schools.

Standardized Tests. Assessments administered on a set schedule which use a specific scoring method.

Subgroups. An ESSA-mandated category of students from the following groups: economically disadvantaged students; students from each major racial and/or ethnic group; children with disabilities; and English learners.

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GROUND RULES FOR DISCUSSION

- Be respectful.
- Participate. Be open, honest, and forthcoming.
- Don't dominate the discussion. Invite other points of view.
- Listen and try to understand various perspectives.
- Stay on topic and limit side conversations.
- Turn cellphones off or to vibrate.
- Be mindful of time!



BECOME INFORMED ABOUT THE CANDIDATES RUNNING FOR OFFICE.

InformDetroit is our platform to help citizens become more informed voters by providing candidate videos for the upcoming election. Check out *InformDetroit.org* for candidate videos leading up to the election on **March 10, 2020!**

PUBLIC MEETINGS ARE IMPORTANT SPACES FOR DEMOCRACY.

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