

A blurred black and white photograph of a classroom. A teacher is standing at the front, and students are seated at desks, some looking towards the front. The image is out of focus, emphasizing the text overlay.

TURNING THE TIDE ON THE TALENT SHORTAGE

*A Strategic Plan to Revitalize
Careers for Michigan's Current
and Future Educators*

Dear MASA Colleagues,

Eighteen months ago at our Fall Conference, I asked the 400 school leaders in attendance how many still had at least one teacher or administrator vacancy one month into the school year. The response was expected, but none-the-less sobering: almost two-thirds of those in attendance raised their hands. As an association dedicated to your success, we had to take action. Three months later, in December 2017, we convened the Educator Shortage Workgroup (ESW).

The ESW included 21 superintendents representing MASA's 10 regions who met for the next 12 months to better understand and address our educator shortages. In addition to their reading and research, they met with other stakeholders who share our mutual challenge (MDE leaders, college deans, marketing experts), before brainstorming actionable strategies to address the growing gaps in effectively staffing our schools.

As is almost always the case in these explorations, some of what we learned surprised us. In some ways, the knowledge was frustrating. For instance, there is no one entity, action, law, rule, or individual to blame for the shortages in qualified candidates. In other ways, the knowledge was liberating. Much of what needs to be done is within our control. What we learned has been summarized into a one-page document, "Understanding Michigan's Educator Shortages" and is included in this report. I strongly recommend you read it as it will offer important context for the committee's final recommendations.

Further, I recommend you review the ESW's first report "***Closing the Educator Shortage Gap: A Toolkit for Growing, Hiring and Keeping Talent in Michigan.***" The toolkit offers many short- to mid-term strategies every district can use to improve their talent acquisition and retention. Please share the toolkit with your HR administrators and hiring teams.

As you are all very much aware, this problem is both wide and deep, and we acknowledged early on that we wanted to develop a plan that was focused and realistic. To that end, throughout our work, we kept a focus on three primary targets:

- Growing the pool of qualified candidates
- Strengthening the recruitment and placement of qualified candidates
- Retaining and supporting educators

The ESW identified 26 possible short- and long-term strategies for addressing these targets. Those strategies were then assessed for:

- Impact: their potential for solving the problem of educator shortages, and
- Do-ability: the likelihood the strategy can be achieved given realistic constraints - cost, human capital, rule, law and/or budgetary implications.

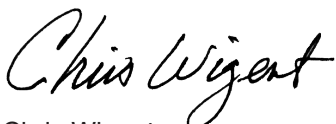
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That assessment produced 11 target strategies which MASA will pursue during the next several months. We will also be working with our members, stakeholders, and partners to gather the on-going data we need to further tailor these strategies for successful implementation and impact.

I cannot begin to thank the members of the ESW enough for their dedication to this initiative and their resolve to ensure the resulting strategies reflect the unique and disparate characteristics of our state, our communities, and our schools. They worked tirelessly on your behalf.

In the end, we know Michigan can only be as strong as its educated populace - a task entrusted in large part to us. We also know our success is driven by the quality of the educators we place in front of our students every day. With so much at stake, MASA stands ready to take the next steps in pursuing the actions that insure each and every school district has the talent it needs. I look forward to your continued partnership, feedback, and support.



Chris Wigent
Executive Director, MASA

Understanding Michigan's Educator Shortage

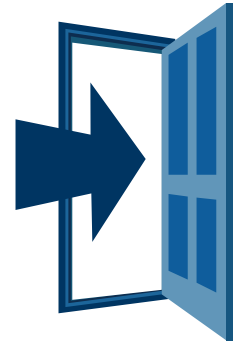


Michigan's employee pool is shrinking

- Michigan's population is aging; its birth rate has been cut in half since 1950.
- K-12 student enrollment has declined by 600,000 students in 40 years: 2.1 million to 1.48 million
- The number of high school graduates is projected to decline another 15% by 2030.
- We need to better understand how students make choices about future careers.

There's a significant decline in available candidates

- Enrollment in Michigan's educator prep programs is down and declining.
- The number of certificates earned is down and declining.
- The certificates granted are not a match for the existing vacancies.
- Candidate quality (preparation and temperament) is perceived by some as declining.
- Education careers have been "de-valued" by the public and by educators who discourage students from entering the profession.
- Students are actively encouraged to pursue other careers (skilled trades, STEM, etc.)



There's new uncertainty in Michigan's educator preparation and certification structure

- We do not yet know the impact of more rigorous preparation and certification requirements on candidates pursuing and/or completing degrees.
- New certificate "banding" and dual endorsement requirements could mitigate hiring flexibility in some districts.
- There are healthy differences of opinion over quality vs. quantity of candidates, the study of content vs. pedagogy, and course work vs. clinical experience in candidate entry, prep, and certification. Sorting this out during a shortage creates understandable tension.

The Result

Depending on *who they are, what they need, or what they have*, Michigan's school districts are reporting everything from chronic wide-spread shortages to few problems:



Urban & Rural Districts

Chronic shortages in most/all certifications
Chronic turnover as new hires look for "greener pastures"



Most Districts

Shortages in high school core content, dual, special education & specialist certificates & endorsements



Suburban & Higher-Funded Districts

Mostly adequate candidate pools
Stable retention

Strategies for Growing the Pool of Qualified Candidates

Relevant Context

- Our student enrollment continues to shrink.
- Our students are actively encouraged to pursue other careers.
- The return on investment (salary vs. college cost/debt) is shrinking.
- Our target market is also our captive audience - current students.
- No one is championing the profession, not even educators.
- Gen Z students, more than millennials, want to make a difference in the world but are very frugal students of the recession.
- On a national survey, for the first time, a majority of parents say they do not want their children to become teachers.

Target Strategies

- 1 Launch a state-wide campaign to promote and support education careers that includes both state-wide and local components, using multiple mediums.**

Rationale: Change the perception of educators and education careers; honor the work of those currently in the profession; highlight success and impact.

- 2 Launch a concerted effort to encourage educators to speak positively about the profession publicly and privately, including ideas and support for current educators to recruit their students into the profession.**

Rationale: Some educators portray the profession negatively and miss opportunities to identify and recruit promising talent for the future.

- 3 Create a template for local, regional and state-wide outreach to improve the narrative about educators, including talking points and strategies for working with legislators, business and community leaders, and parents.**

Rationale: Appeal to the mutual benefit of encouraging our best and brightest to pursue careers in education and challenge the intentional and unintentional negative commentary about teachers, teaching and public education.

- 4 Partner with MDE and Educator Preparation Program (college) deans to develop a state-wide teacher cadet curriculum and assessments articulated with college-level coursework; ensure courses apply to the 1098 hours requirement.**

Rationale: With a captive audience and an increasing interest in early college programs, schools are uniquely poised to go “direct to target market” to recruit their future workforce.

Strategies for Strengthening the Recruitment & Placement of Qualified Candidates

Relevant Context

- While our current output of new teacher candidates roughly equals the number of openings, their certificates are not a match for those openings.
- Shortages are uneven state-wide; urban and rural districts report wide-spread and chronic shortages; well-funded suburban districts often have adequate candidate pools.
- While candidate quality has been called into question, current state data indicates 95% of teachers are rated effective or highly effective.
- With significant enrollment declines, college teacher prep programs are experiencing budget and staffing cuts, threatening their efforts to increase outreach and partnerships.
- There are 100,000+ certified teachers in Michigan who are not currently teaching.
- More stringent dual certification requirements and the state's reciprocity rules can limit hiring flexibility, especially in small and rural districts.
- Michigan's special education certification requirements pose additional challenges for placement not found in other states.

Target Strategies

1 Launch a state-wide job bank for educator and education-related openings, including a centralized application tool

Candidates are often unaware of openings state-wide and checking 800+ district websites for openings is inefficient and ineffective.

2 Create a “best practices” framework for working with deans and counselors at Michigan’s educator prep colleges including ideas for sharing data about current and upcoming openings, partnering on professional development and workshops for current and future educators, and bringing courses and candidates to local district campuses.

Rationale: Partnerships bring mutual benefit for colleges, districts, candidates, and current educators, ensure common understanding of the challenges faced by all stakeholders, and offer an early look at potential candidates.

3 Work with the Michigan Department of Education to improve pathways to special education certifications and endorsements, especially as they relate to exceptionality and reciprocity.

More and more districts are reporting difficulty in finding the right mix of special education certifications and endorsements, especially in urban and rural districts.

Strategies for Retaining & Supporting Educators

Relevant Context

- Like their counterparts nationally, Michigan educators prefer to live near where they grew up and work in familiar environments. (e.g. children who went to school in suburban districts are more likely to seek employment in suburban districts close to their home.)
- While there is no Michigan data, nationally teachers report the number one reason for transferring to a new district or leaving the profession is a lack of targeted support from their principal or district.
- While, historically, teaching has been a “second income” career, it now must provide a “primary” income for young people who are remaining single longer and leaving college with significant debt.
- New teachers who remain in a district three years are more likely to stay in that district for their careers.
- Career commitment is shifting, with younger generations opting to move between careers at a faster pace.

Target Strategies

- 1 Establish, through legislative and budgetary action, targeted financial incentives (signing bonuses, loan forgiveness, housing subsidies) for candidates willing to teach in shortage areas (certifications and locations.)**
Rationale: Targeted incentives will entice candidates to pursue shortage certifications and/or positions in chronically understaffed districts.
- 2 Restore and/or improve, through legislative and budgetary action, all forms of educator compensation, including wages and benefits.**
Rationale: Wages have not kept pace with inflation or remained competitive with other career options; benefits have been reduced.
- 3 Modify, through legislative action, educator evaluation requirements that serve as a deterrent to healthy work cultures.**
Rationale: Punitive evaluation practices based on inconsistent or widely misunderstood data produces additional anxiety for professional educators and poses a threat to collaborative practice, especially in a declining enrollment state.
- 4 Develop state-wide “best practices” for principal training, new teacher support, and data collection.**
Rationale: Retaining teachers is intrinsically tied to the degree to which they feel competent and supported.

Next Steps

While each strategy has merit, MASA is aware it is their combined impact that has the best chance to reverse the decline in the number, preparation, and quality of future candidates. Increased pay without a change in public perception of the profession won't be enough. Partnering with colleges while ignoring direct recruiting of middle and high school students will not be enough. Asking others to speak positively about teachers while educators expound on the difficulties in today's classrooms is counterproductive. Offering incentives for hard-to-fill vacancies and then not supporting a new teacher's success is untenable. The challenge is complex. So is the solution.

To that end, in the weeks and months ahead, MASA will work with partners and stakeholders to assess both opportunities and obstacles for each strategy. Part of that assessment will include estimating the cost, both human and financial, required to initiate, develop, pursue and/or implement each strategy as well as the data and information required to generate support.

MASA will also work to secure partners who share a mutual interest in reducing educator shortages and determine how partner capacity can be leveraged to expedite results.

MASA will continue to provide updates to all members and continue its relationship with members of the Educator Shortage Workgroup, who will act as important liaisons with the field, providing information to the local school leaders and feedback to the Association.

MASA will also provide updates, resources, professional development, and other assistance at upcoming conferences, drive-in events, and digitally as appropriate.

All members are encouraged to keep the association informed of locally-developed new and effective practices in teacher development, recruitment and retention by sharing that information through their region's liaison to the Educator Shortage Workgroup or directly to MASA Deputy Executive Director Dr. Tina Kerr at tkerr@gomasa.org.

MASA Educator Shortage Workgroup

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