

Discussions Begin with Seven New Districts To Build Partnership Agreements

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LANSING –State Superintendent Brian Whiston and the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) will be entering into discussions with seven new school districts to develop Partnership Agreements with the goal of improving achievement levels at these struggling schools in Michigan.

“These will be positive, yet pressing, conversations with the leaders of these districts to get their struggling schools back on track,” Whiston said. “We want to provide as many local and state-level partners as possible to help students in these schools be successful.”

These seven districts were identified for Partnership District discussions based on having previously-identified Priority Schools that continue to lag in their percent proficient scores in math and English language arts on the Spring M-STEP test; and the district’s percent proficient in math and English language arts declined at the district level.

Whiston will be arranging initial meetings with the following school districts: Battle Creek Public Schools; Lansing Public Schools; Wayne-Westland Community Schools; and American International Academy; David Ellis Academy-Elementary; Henry Ford Academy; School for Creative Studies-Elementary; and Mildred C. Wells Preparatory Academy.

Whiston said this is meant only as a positive opportunity to work together under the leadership of the local superintendent and the local board of education to improve student achievement and outcomes, with an explicit and detailed understanding between all partners.

Currently, there are nine Partnership Districts in Michigan. Four of those districts will have additional schools added to their Partnership Agreements, based on the same criteria as the schools in the seven new districts. Benton Harbor Area Schools, Detroit Public Schools Community District, Pontiac City School District, and Saginaw City School District will be adding a total of 27 schools to their current Partnership Agreements.

These districts also are being given the opportunity to include “Optional” schools to their Partnership Agreements. Optional schools are those previously-identified Priority Schools that are trending to be “Required” in the next round of accountability next spring, that MDE is giving their districts the opportunity to start addressing their needs earlier.

With the expectation that Michigan’s plan for the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) will be approved yet this fall, MDE will be identifying more Partnership Districts next spring for Comprehensive Support and Improvement. MDE also will be identifying a number of Early Warning Districts in the spring, using the state’s ESSA plan.

Exiting Priority School Status

As a result of improving academic achievement, MDE has removed 32 schools from the list of identified Priority Schools from previous years. Through the diligent work of the educators and students in those schools, test scores have improved and will be expected to continue on their positive trends.

“It’s encouraging to see schools identifying the needs of their teachers and students, developing strategies to address those needs, and showing progress,” Whiston said. “There still is work to do and I commend their commitment and tenacity to keep improving.”

Next Steps

Under a Partnership Agreement, the local district remains in total control of its schools with support from MDE and partners, Whiston said. Each agreement includes 18- and 36-month accountability timelines when they will be evaluated on the progress toward their goals.

“This has been a remarkable experience with the current Partnership Districts, and helping them start implementing their improvement strategies,” Whiston said. “We look forward to working with the seven new districts to help them build their Partnership Agreements.”

MDE will be providing resources for the districts to utilize in identifying their needs and a plan to improve. These include: needs assessment tools, evidence-based practices, draft Partnership Agreement, lists of potential partners and contact information.

Under a Partnership Agreement, the local district remains in total control of its schools with support from MDE and partners. The districts have 90 days to reach an agreement. If no agreement is reached, the next level of accountability would be implemented.

With multiple partners – including local board members, the intermediate school district, education organizations, business, community members, parents, higher education organizations, foundations – committing to be actively engaged, work will ensue to identify a plan of supports and interventions that will improve student outcomes.

Academic outcomes are a primary focus, and other whole child outcomes that can impede improved academics like health, nutrition, behavior, social/emotional issues also will be addressed.

The Michigan Department of Education works intensely with the Partnership District, with each district having been assigned a liaison from MDE. This person is responsible for supporting the district in implementation of its agreement; helping resolve problems and breaking down barriers; facilitating discussions and meetings; and ensuring that the Partnership District receives maximum support for success from MDE, as well as from the partners and other state agencies.

This Partnership Model puts a broad spectrum of technical expertise and resources in the hands of the school district, and allows local districts to use community and state-level support systems to drive improvement and self-accountability. The ultimate benefit would be to regenerate a struggling school to be one that helps students and teachers achieve at higher levels.

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New Partnership Districts

American International Academy-Elementary

Battle Creek Public Schools

Ann J. Kellogg School
Northwestern Middle School
Verona Elementary (Optional)

David Ellis Academy

Henry Ford Academy: School of Creative Studies-Elementary

Lansing Public Schools

Attwood School
J.W. Sexton High School
Gardner Academy (Optional)
North School (Optional)
Woodcreek Achievement Center (Optional)

Mildred C. Wells Preparatory Academy

Wayne-Westland Community School District

Hoover Elementary School

Current Partnership Districts Adding Schools

Benton Harbor Area Schools

Benton Harbor High School
Arts & Communications Academy at Fair Plain (Optional)

Detroit Public School Community District

Blackwell Institute
Brewer Elementary-Middle School
Carstens Elementary-Middle School
Central High School
Cody Academy of Public Leadership
Detroit International Academy for Young Women
Dixon Elementary
Dossin Elementary-Middle School

Earhart Elementary-Middle School
East English Village Prep Academy
Duke Ellington at Beckham
Emerson Elementary-Middle Schools
Greenfield Union Elementary-Middle School
King High School
John R. King Academy and Performing Arts Academy
Mackenzie Elementary-Middle School
Mann Elementary
Marshall Elementary
Neinas Dual Language Learning Academy
Nobel Elementary-Middle School
Palmer Park Prep Academy
Pulaski Elementary-Middle School
Schulze Elementary-Middle School
Wayne Elementary
Academy of the Americas (Optional)
Bagley Elementary (Optional)
Brenda Scott Academy for Theatre Arts (Optional)
Carve Elementary-Middle School (Optional)
Edison Elementary (Optional)
Ludington Magnet Middle School (Optional)
Medicine and Community Health Academy at Cody (Optional)
Nichols Elementary-Middle School (Optional)
Spain Elementary-Middle School (Optional)

Pontiac City School District

Owen Elementary
Pontiac Middle School (Optional)

Saginaw City School District

Jessie Rouse School

Arthur Hill High School (Optional)

Thompson Middle School (Optional)

Schools Exiting Priority School Status

Arenac Eastern School District

Arenac Eastern High School

Battle Creek Montessori Academy

Battle Creek Public Schools

Post Franklin School

Bay City School District

MacGregor Elementary

Bear Lake Schools

Bear Lake High School

Benzie County Central Schools

Betsie Valley School

Carney-Nadeau Public Schools

Carney-Nadeau School

Cesar Chavez Academy-Elementary

Clintondale Community Schools

Charles C. McGlennen School

Robbie Hall Parker School

Detroit Leadership Academy-Elementary

Detroit Public Schools Community District

Cooke Elementary

Western International High School

Francis Reh Public School Academy

Grand Rapids Public Schools

Coit Arts Academy

Dickenson School

Hale Area Schools

Hale High School

Jackson Public Schools

McCulloch School

Kalamazoo Public Schools

Northeastern Elementary

Northglade Montessori School

Lansing Public School District

Cavanaugh School

Willow School

Mount Clemens Community School District

Seminole Academy

Muskegon, Public Schools of the City of

Marquette Elementary

Oak Park, School District of the City of

Key Elementary

Pepper Elementary

Plymouth-Canton Community Schools

Starkweather Academy at Fiegel

Port Huron Area School District

Woodrow Wilson Elementary

The James and Grace Lee Boggs School

Washington-Parks Academy

Lincoln-King Academy

Wayne-Westland Community School District

Alexander Hamilton Elementary

David Hicks School