

Role of Michigan Governor in Education Fact Sheet

ROLE OF GOVERNOR IN EDUCATION

The major responsibilities of the State of Michigan government are to create, vote, and enact laws and bills. The governor plays an important role in this process as they can sign/veto these laws and implement new or revised policies. This can include a wide range of categories, from housing to taxation. This report will focus on the role of the governor in the context of education.



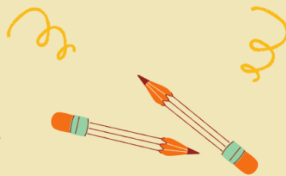
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HISTORY

The governor has the ability to make important decisions that have long lasting impacts on the public school system. Analyzing the consequences of all of these decisions highlight the pivotal role the governor has in educational policy and funding. The timeline below describes some of the most significant policy changes in the past twenty years.

EVENTS



Proposal A (1994)

One of the most fundamental changes to education funding was due to Gov. John Engler's approval of Proposal A. This completely transformed school funding from local to state funding. And while this helped minimize financial inequalities between districts, there were also a fair amount of shortcomings. For example, Kalkaska, MI had to end their school year early due to lack of finances because there was not enough time nor instruction regarding the shift in funding.

Charter Schools (1993/2011)

The law passed under Gov. Engler to allow charter schools and the law passed under Gov. Rick Snyder to abolish the cap for charter institutions directly influenced the quality of public schools today. This is because charter schools have failed to improve academic competition—rather, they fuel competition through cash/prizes to encourage student attendance. This targets many low income students and leads families to constantly switch schools in search for a better alternative. And unfortunately, many charter schools are either at or below the standards of traditional public schools. Nevertheless, charter schools continue to replicate and profit off of this system.

Michigan Merit Curriculum (2006)

Another important educational policy decision was the implementation of the Michigan Merit Curriculum, which transformed graduation requirements for high school students. However, it was introduced without any real evidence of its success. While the introduction of rigorous coursework seemed promising, studies do not reflect the success the program was promised to have.

POWER

As seen throughout Michigan history, the governor has noteworthy power over education. For example, the governor appoints members of Michigan Department of Education (MDE). In addition, the governor creates proposed budgets and can transfer funds between the School Aid Fund (SAF) and General Fund.

MDE

Gov. Whitmer created the Governor's Educator Advisory Council within MDE, which consists of fifteen voting members that create recommendations regarding legislation relevant to public education. The governor is also authorized to fill vacancies on the State Board of Education (of which they are a nonvoting member).



MEJC

So, how can the governor's power within education be used as a catalyst for *positive* change? The Michigan Education Justice Coalition advocates for 1) equitable funding, 2) mental health investment, 3) the elimination of standardized testing, 4) student leadership, and 5) school budgets that reflect the needs of the community. MEJC includes community partners all over the state, from Cheboygan to Detroit. And while these organizations are essential to education justice movements, we also need these values to be reflected in our governor in order to create significant school reform.

BUDGET

The governor makes budget recommendations that are then brought to the senate and house. For example, Gov. Granholm had a one-time appropriation from SAF after the great recession. Gov. Snyder later removed language requiring the fund to be repaid. There have also been shifts to include postsecondary education instead of just K-12 in the SAF.

TAKE ACTION

The State of Michigan is currently underfunded relative to other states and has drastically different educational outcomes dependent factors such as zip code. While some governors have attempted to initiate scholarships and training programs, these are only immediate changes. The structure of our public schools need to be reformed to address the root causes of educational inequalities. Because of this, we need a governor who puts educational equity at the forefront of their policy changes and focuses on both immediate and structural changes. We need to keep this in mind as we enter the upcoming gubernatorial election.



Role of the Governor in Education

- General

- The governor has the power to create new or revised policies that affect our K-12 schools for years to come. Some of their direct influences over education include, but are not limited to:
 - Appointing members of the Michigan Department of Education
 - Filling vacancies on the State Board of Education
 - Making budget recommendations
 - Transferring funds between the School Aid Fund (SAF) and General Fund
- We must ensure the future governor holds our values so we can continue to work towards equitable schools.

- Elections

- There is an upcoming gubernatorial election on November 8, 2022.
- Term lasts 4 years and is limited to two terms.

History of Governors in Education ([See here for more detail](#))

- John Engler (1991-2003)
 - Encouraged the decision to allow charter schools. He believed they would create competition and improve public schools, but instead the opposite occurred. Charter schools typically perform at or below traditional public school standards.
 - Passed Proposal A to reduce financial disparities. However, state policymakers failed to adequately distribute these funds based on cost differentials.
 - Took property tax funding out of schools without allowing enough to establish alternative funding.
- Jennifer Granholm (2003-2011)
 - Created Michigan Merit Curriculum with little evidence of positive change in student achievement.
 - Created No Worker Left Behind so the state could pay tuition for unemployed/underemployed citizens to go to technical schools or community college. Stopped funding in 2010.
- Rick Snyder (2011-2019)
 - Abolished cap that limited the number of charter schools. This allowed them to replicate failure without supervision.
 - Used Education Achievement Authority which directly harmed Detroit Public Schools by implementing faulty learning models and hiring under-qualified teachers.
- Gretchen Whitmer (2019-?)
 - Created CARES Act to allocate \$65 million in federal Coronavirus Aide, Relief, and Economic Security to school districts/higher education.
 - Recently passed a \$17 billion spending bill that ensures every school district will get the same baseline funding of \$8,700 per pupil.