First-Year Evidence from an Evaluation of the Partnership Model

October 7, 2019
• The Education Policy Innovation Collaborative (EPIC) at Michigan State University is an independent, non-partisan research center that operates as the strategic research partner to the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and the Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI).

• EPIC is devoted to research with consequence and the idea that rigorous evidence can improve education policy and, ultimately, students’ lives.

• EPIC conducts original research using a variety of methods that include advanced statistical modeling, representative surveys, interviews, and case study approaches to produce new insights that decision-makers can use to create and implement policy.
“When the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) reached out in the fall of 2017 to our strategic research partner, EPIC, and requested that they embark on an independent evaluation of our newest school and district turnaround strategy, we did so for two important reasons.

The first is that Michigan has been challenged with disparate, disconnected, and constantly changing approaches to helping our lowest performing districts and schools... instead of enacting a research-based policy, evaluating its implementation, and modifying the intervention as needed, we have used a less measured and more reactionary approach. The MDE wanted this effort to be different. The Partnership District model is rooted in evidence around what works with low performing schools—but we also know that there is no “one size fits all” approach to solving the issues facing these districts and schools. Moreover, many of the challenges faced by Partnership Districts are large systemic issues that span beyond the education realm, so any solutions would require partners, time, and honest conversations about deep-seated changes that are necessary. To do that, we needed ongoing evidence while we were implementing the model—instead of waiting to do an “after the fact” analysis when the state had moved on to another approach.”
AT MDE’S REQUEST, WE EMBARKED ON A STUDY OF THE PARTNERSHIP MODEL

“The second reason the MDE engaged in this independent evaluation is that we, as an agency, are committed to using research and evaluation to drive our decision-making and policy implementation efforts. This is an easy catchphrase—“data-based decision making” or “evidence-based policy decisions”—but a much more difficult idea to actualize. The MDE saw an opportunity to walk the talk—to have a transparent and independent process to evaluate our efforts and allow us to improve based on data and evidence as we continued to implement.”
PARTNERSHIP MODEL OVERVIEW:

• Launched spring 2017, implemented in the 2017-18 school year.

• Part of MI’s ESSA plan for school accountability, support, and improvement
  – Lowest-performing districts identified;
  – Districts tasked with improving outcomes over a 36-mo. Period;
  – MDE/OPD provides supports and monitors progress.


• 123 schools in 36 districts have been identified for Partnership.
COMPONENTS OF THE PARTNERSHIP MODEL

To support Partnership districts’ efforts to improve outcomes in Partnership schools:

- Districts craft a Partnership Agreement that analyzes strengths and weaknesses, identifies goals, outlines improvement strategies, and names consequences.

- MDE/OPD provides a Partnership Agreement Liaison, administers 21H grant to Partnership districts, administers regional assistance grants to ISDs, monitors/evaluates goal attainment, releases schools and districts from Partnership/implements next-level accountability.

- ISDs use RAG funding to support Partnership districts’ turnaround efforts.
PARTNERSHIP DISTRICTS ARE AMONG MICHIGAN’S MOST DISADVANTAGED

Partnership districts educate high proportions of non-white, low-income, low-performing and under-resourced students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community/School/Student Characteristics</th>
<th>Partnership Districts</th>
<th>Non-Partnership Districts</th>
<th>Differences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-white</td>
<td>68.4%</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
<td>50.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children living in one-parent households</td>
<td>52.6%</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree or greater</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>-11.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median household income</td>
<td>$33,433.97</td>
<td>$60,471.90</td>
<td>-$27037.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student: teacher ratio</td>
<td>28:1</td>
<td>23:1</td>
<td>5:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Salary Percentile Ranking in ISD*</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>46.1%</td>
<td>-15.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronically Absent</td>
<td>48.7%</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>32.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standardized ELA 3-8 M-STEP</td>
<td>-0.69</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>-0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: American Community Survey data is weighted by community population. All reported values of $0 are excluded from the reporting in this table. Many charter schools report expenditures of $0 on measures such as teacher salaries. *ISD = Intermediate School District

Sources: Community characteristics come from American Community Survey Data, 2013-17. District characteristics come from data from the Michigan Department of Education and the Center for Educational Performance and Information. 2017-2018 Bulletin 1014 Data from the Michigan Department of Education.
EPIC’S EVALUATION OF THE PARTNERSHIP MODEL ASKS THREE MAIN RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How was the reform intended to work?

2. How are schools, districts, and educators responding to and implementing the Partnership Model and what factors affect those responses?

3. How has Partnership changed education in Partnership schools?
EPIC'S MULTI-METHOD EVALUATION RELIES ON SEVERAL SOURCES OF DATA

Data sources and methods used to address research questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Type</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Analysis Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative</td>
<td>Student administrative records</td>
<td>Regression-based analyses (event studies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=7,685,261 student-years)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Educator administrative records</td>
<td>Regression-based analyses (event studies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=540,049 educator-years)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Teachers in Partnership districts</td>
<td>Descriptive analyses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=2,718; RR 38%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Principals in Partnership districts</td>
<td>Descriptive analyses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=81; RR 29%)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>Superintendent Interviews</td>
<td>Descriptive &amp; thematic coding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=21)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Case study interviews</td>
<td>Descriptive &amp; thematic coding, comp. case study</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=60 across 3 sites)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>State stakeholder interviews</td>
<td>Descriptive &amp; thematic coding</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=16)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partnership Agreements</td>
<td>Descriptive coding, EPIC-developed rubric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=37)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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2. How are schools, districts, and educators responding to and implementing the Partnership Model and what factors affect those responses?

3. How has Partnership changed education in Partnership schools?
MICHIGAN’S PARTNERSHIP MODEL
THEORY OF CHANGE

IDENTIFIED BY MDE AS LOW-PERFORMING

PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT DEVELOPMENT & IMPLEMENTATION
- District as driver of change
- Comprehensive needs assessment
- Draft 18- & 36-month goals
  - Academic
  - Non-academic
- Develop turnaround strategies
  - Aligned with district/school context
  - Aligned with 18- & 36-month goals
  - Align supports from MDE & ISD
- Identify community partners
  - Solicit input on reform strategies
  - Align supports with turnaround strategies & goals

PARTNERS
- MDE/OPD
  - Liaison
  - Teacher & Leader Instruction Support Grant
  - 21H Grant
  - Referrals to other offices departments
  - Regional Assistance Grant to ISD
- ISD
  - Professional development
  - Training
  - Coaching
- COMMUNITY
  - Advice & expertise
  - Additional resources

NEAR-TERM OUTCOMES
- DISTRICT
  - Improved systems with greater capacity to support core district functions
  - Human resources
  - Curriculum
  - Instructional systems (e.g., professional dev)
  - Operations
  - Data use
- SCHOOL
  - Improved functioning of instructional core
  - Improved instruction
  - Goals aligned with turnaround strategies & interventions
  - Use of data & metrics to inform & evaluate improvement

INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES
- Increased educator retention
- Consistent, high-quality instruction
- More efficient use of resources

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES
- IMPROVED ACADEMIC OUTCOMES
  - Higher achievement
  - Reduced dropout
- IMPROVED WHOLE-CHILD OUTCOMES
  - Attendance
  - Behavior

DISTRICT-DETERMINED CONSEQUENCES FOR FAILURE TO IMPROVE:
- Reconstitution
- Restart
- ISD takeover
- CEO appointed
“We realized that programming at the school level was ineffective. We had to program at the district level. The district is where the unit of change, the unit of systematic reform comes from.” – MDE official

“…a high school doesn't fail unless the elementary and middle schools are failing. They don't show up at the high school with great success and then all of a sudden stop succeeding. I mean, it means we've got problems in either elementary or middle.” – Superintendent Whiston

“…if the district as an organization better understands how to create and build a supportive structure designed to improve student performance, then as other buildings start to show signs of trouble, they'll be more prepared to deal with it and maybe not get there.” – State-level policymaker

“The state needs to work as a partner, not just as a compliance arm or as an accountability threat, while at the same time retaining that accountability threat. It's like the threat is there, it's just a little bit more in the back. It's not right in the front seat.” – MDE official
EPIC’S EVALUATION OF THE PARTNERSHIP MODEL ASKS THREE MAIN RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How was the reform intended to work?

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3. How has Partnership changed education in Partnership schools?
EDUCATORS NEGOTIATED THE FIT BETWEEN PARTNERSHIP DEMANDS AND OWN GOALS

District Level Responses to Partnership Reform

- **SYMBOLIC ADOPTION**
  - Sharks
  - Devils
  - Bruins
  - Avalanche
  - Islanders

- **BRIDGING**
  - Hurricanes
  - Blues
  - Kings
  - Blue Jackets
  - Red Wings
  - Whalers
  - Sabers
  - Oilers
  - Flames
  - Senators
  - Capitals
  - Black Hawks

- **BUFFERING**
  - Flyers
  - Ducks
  - Canadiens
  - Penguins
  - Senators
  - Capitals
  - Black Hawks
SUPERINTENDENTS VARIED IN HOW THEY USED PARTNERSHIP TO ACHIEVE THEIR GOALS

"I was not here when they did the Partnership Agreement. I'm living off the document that was given to me when I got here. I was not involved in the creation of it... if I had been, I may have a better grasp of the whole idea." – New leader

"When they identified us as a Partnership district, and I was required basically to develop a Partnership Agreement, I simply cut and paste the strategic plan into the Partnership Agreement.” – Experienced leader

"[Partnership] really has given us more of a language for work we needed to get done.” – Avalanche superintendent

“Now after [teachers] being able to collaborate with a Partnership Agreement, [I feel] it changed their attitudes towards each other.” – Red Wings superintendent
PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS WERE OF MODERATE QUALITY

Partnership Agreement Quality, Overall, and by Domain

- Goals (20%)
- Strategies (25%)
- Partners (25%)
- Pre-Intervention Context (20%)
- Next-Level Accountability Measures (5%)
- Document Quality (5%)
- Overall Score (100%)

Note: Percentages noted in parentheses following each domain indicate the weight at which the domain counted toward the overall score.
Source: Author evaluation of Partnership Agreements
EDUCATORS IN PARTNERSHIP DISTRICTS EXPRESSED RELATIVELY LITTLE UNDERSTANDING OF PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS

Note: Educators were asked “How well do you understand the following aspects of your district’s Partnership Agreement?”

Source: EPIC survey of educators in Partnership districts.
EDUCATOR SUPPORT OF AND BUY-IN TO PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT GOALS IS CRITICAL BUT VARIED BY ROLE

Note: Educators were asked “Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement about [the goals in your improvement plan]?” As the survey was administered online, respondents were routed to a question about their Partnership Agreement if they indicated awareness of the Agreement or to a version that asked about their school’s overall improvement goals if they indicated a lack of awareness of their Partnership Agreement.

Source: EPIC survey of educators in Partnership districts.
LEADERS REPORTED IMPROVED ASSISTANCE FROM MDE, ALTHOUGH LIAISON SUPPORT VARIED

• 18 out of 21 Partnership district leaders positively mentioned MDE support and assistance.
  – Shift in orientation from compliance-focused to a more “service-minded orientation.”
  – Valuable assistance from MDE staff
  – 21H and other sources of funding

• Although many leaders reported that their liaisons provided critical and timely technical assistance and strategic support, others felt their liaisons were actively unhelpful.
  – “a go-between between [state] resources and the school”
  – “there whenever I needed to call for something.”
  – “top-down hammer approach”
  – Gaps in Liaison service
LEADERS REPORT VARIED EXPERIENCES WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS

• Community partners provided various forms of services
  – E.g., tutoring, after school programs, monitoring and supporting truant students, mentoring, field experiences, and mental health.
  – Some districts used partnerships to help address local economic and other structural challenges.

• Many community partnerships existed before the reform.

• Many leaders felt that these services were useful.

• However partnerships sometimes came at the cost to district progress.
  – At times, efforts to generate partnerships detracted from core work of district and leadership.
  – Partners varied in their capacity and alignment with Partnership work.

• Some leaders expressed confusion at the role of community partners in the reform; educators were unaware of partnerships.
PERSISTENT CHALLENGES CONTINUED TO PLAGUE PARTNERSHIP DISTRICTS

Partnership Model 21H funds provided needed resources, but many educators reported need for additional financial assistance.

“Do you see that box over there? The Kleenex box. Is that a bucket or a small box?... Spread out over [a large number of kids]? We’ve received a couple hundred thousand dollars of that. We appreciate that. There’s some value to it. I’m not going to denigrate it. I’m simply going to say it’s insufficient.” – Bruins

Structural challenges – poverty and trauma – interact with efforts to improve outcomes

“Our kids have a ton of trauma and toxic stress. This is what our kids – it’s a bigger issue than school, right? They struggle to sleep because they worry about their safety. When our kids leave at the end of the day, they say to each other, ‘Be safe.’ That’s their goodbye is, ‘Be safe’.” – Blues

Local politics and systems play a critical role in helping – or hindering – reform

 “[The school board] comes in with demands and initiatives that don’t have anything to do with what best practice in education is. They have a lot of power [...] They are a real barrier to the implementation.” – Whalers
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1. How was the reform intended to work?

2. How are schools, districts, and educators responding to and implementing the Partnership Model and what factors affect those responses?

3. How has Partnership changed education in Partnership schools?
   - Educators’ perspectives
   - Teacher staffing and retention
   - Student outcomes
MICHIGAN’S PARTNERSHIP MODEL
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MDE/OPD
- Liaison
- Teacher & Leader Instruction Support Grant
- 21H Grant
- Referrals to other offices departments
- Regional Assistance Grant to ISD

ISD
- Professional development
- Training
- Coaching

COMMUNITY
- Advice & expertise
- Additional resources

NEAR-TERM OUTCOMES

DISTRICT
- Improved systems with greater capacity to support core district functions
  - Human resources
  - Curriculum
  - Instructional systems (e.g., professional dev)
  - Operations
  - Data use

SCHOOL
- Improved functioning of instructional core
  - Improved instruction
  - Goals aligned with turnaround strategies & interventions
  - Use of data & metrics to inform & evaluate improvement

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

IMPROVED ACADEMIC OUTCOMES
- Higher achievement
- Reduced dropout

IMPROVED WHOLE-CHILD OUTCOMES
- Attendance
- Behavior

DETERMINED SUCCESS OR FAILURE BY:

Local Context
State Context
SCHOOLS MAY BE SHIFTING FOCUS TO IMPROVE SYSTEMS AND OPERATIONS

Notes: Educators were asked “Comparing this year to the 2017-2018 school year, to what extent has your school’s focus changed in the following areas?” Only educators who indicated earlier in the survey that they had worked in their current school the previous year were asked to respond to this question.

Source: EPIC survey of educators in Partnership districts.
EDUCATORS PERCEIVE SLIGHTLY POSITIVE CHANGES IN PARTNERSHIP SCHOOLS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Significantly Worse</th>
<th>Slightly Worse</th>
<th>About the Same</th>
<th>Slightly Better</th>
<th>Significantly Better</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ focus on student learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers’ willingness to collaborate</td>
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<td>Academic expectations for students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to try out new practices</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality of professional development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Socio-emotional supports for students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality of teaching staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall change in school features</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community and external partnerships</td>
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<td>Staff participation in decision making</td>
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<tr>
<td>School culture and climate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Morale of school staff</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Educators were asked “To what extent have the following features of your school changed since last year?”
Source: EPIC survey of educators in Partnership districts.
PARTNERSHIP TEACHERS HIGHLIGHT AREAS IN WHICH THEY NEED MORE ASSISTANCE
PARTNERSHIP PRINCIPALS HIGHLIGHT AREAS IN WHICH THEY NEED MORE ASSISTANCE
MICHIGAN’S PARTNERSHIP MODEL
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INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

- Increased educator retention

SCHOOL
- Improved functioning of instructional core
- Improved instruction
- Goals aligned with turnaround strategies & interventions
- Use of data & metrics to inform & evaluate improvement

DISTRICT-DETERMINED CONSEQUENCES FOR FAILURE TO IMPROVE:
- Reconstitution
- Restart
- ISD takeover
- CEO appointed

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

IMPROVED ACADEMIC OUTCOMES
- Higher achievement
- Reduced dropout

IMPROVED WHOLE-CHILD OUTCOMES
- Attendance
- Behavior

MORE EFFICIENT USE OF RESOURCES
- Operations
- Data use

STATED GOAL
- Improve student achievement

MDE/OPD
- Liaison
- Teacher & Leader Instruction Support Grant
- 21H Grant
- Referrals to other offices departments
- Regional Assistance Grant to ISD

ISD
- Professional development
- Training
- Coaching

COMMUNITY
- Advice & expertise
  - Additional resources

LOCAL CONTEXT

STATE CONTEXT

More efficient use of resources
- Operations
- Data use

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MORE EFFICIENT USE OF RESOURCES
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IN PARTNERSHIP DISTRICTS, EDUCATORS AT ALL LEVELS REPORT HUMAN CAPITAL CHALLENGES

• Reported challenges are greater within Partnership schools

• Human capital issues impact Partnership districts’ ability to develop the capacity of their teaching force

• Educators attribute human capital challenges to lower compensation and a lack of locally available teachers

• Though human capital challenges remain significant, recent years have seen a decrease in mobility and increase in hiring

• Partnership districts respond to human capital challenges in varied ways
  – Using long-term subs to staff classrooms
  – Altering instructional programming
  – Focusing on teacher compensation
PARTNERSHIP SUPERINTENDENTS SEE HUMAN CAPITAL AS KEY TO IMPROVEMENT

20 out of 21 superintendents identified human capital issues as among the most significant challenges to turning around their districts.

“The main issues facing our district are -- I think one of the primary issues is regarding teacher, the absence of quality teacher candidates. People who are prepared, A, B, willing to work in an urban environment. Not everyone is cut out to do that [...] The absence of good teacher candidates is one of our problems, one of our challenges.” – Penguins superintendent
PRINCIPALS SEE **HUMAN CAPITAL AS A CHALLENGE; IMPROVING OVER TIME**

**Principals’ reported difficulty with recruiting and hiring teachers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Partnership Principal</th>
<th>Non-Partnership Principal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2018-2019</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>My district experienced...</td>
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<tr>
<td>My school experienced...</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2017-2018</strong></td>
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<td>My district experienced...</td>
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<tr>
<td>My school experienced...</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Principals were asked “To what extent did your school and district experience difficulties in recruiting and hiring teachers this year (last year)?”*

*Source: EPIC survey of educators in Partnership districts.*
PARTNERSHIP DISTRICTS EXPERIENCE HIGHER RATES OF TEACHER TURNOVER, THOUGH THAT RATE HAS DECREASED IN RECENT YEARS
TEACHERS SEE HUMAN CAPITAL AS A CHALLENGE

Teachers’ grades for their schools’ ability to retain teachers

Please give your school a grade from A to F in the area of teacher retention.

Non-Partnership Teachers

Partnership Teachers

A  B  C  D  F
“We've been unable to have one program model implemented more than one year due to a turnover in either leadership and/or teachers. [...] There's the consistency issue, which prevents the model from being able to really take hold, and then there's the lack of talent.” – Flyers superintendent

“Spend all this money and time on professional development and then have to start from scratch with a new teacher who has not had that information because the other teacher left. It's a constant struggle.” – Flames superintendent

“That kind of turnover—every time that happens—that puts us in a situation where we’re trying to rebuild things that had previously been functioning and working and now we’re trying to rebuild it.” – Avalanche superintendent
# After Partnership, Exits Decreased and Hiring Increased

**Round 1 Partnership schools compared to Priority schools**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Probability leave teaching (All teachers)</td>
<td>-0.04**</td>
<td>-0.04**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probability leave teaching (1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;-5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; year teachers)</td>
<td>-0.08*</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probability out-of-district transfer (1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;-5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; year teachers)</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probability new to school (All teachers)</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.09***</td>
<td>**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Probability new to district (All teachers)</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.03</td>
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*Note: + p<.1 * p<.05 ** p<.01 *** p<.001*
## Partnership Effects are Concentrated in DPSCD

### Round 1 Partnership schools compared to Priority schools

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<tr>
<td>Probability leave teaching (All teachers)</td>
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<td>Probability leave teaching (1st-5th year teachers)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Probability new to school (All teachers)</td>
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<td>0.10*</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-0.00</td>
<td>0.03</td>
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Note: + p<.1 * p<.05 ** p<.01 *** p<.001
PARTNERSHIP DISTRICTS USE VARIOUS STRATEGIES TO RESPOND TO HUMAN CAPITAL CHALLENGES

LONG-TERM SUBSTITUTES

“It’s not like we’ve got a list of potential candidates for any of these openings. Yeah, it’s a challenge to fill those positions. We have a fair number of subs in the building. We do our best to hire solid ones.”
– Sabres superintendent

ADAPTING CURRICULUM

“One of the things that we did, honestly, take into account was teacher turnover. That is one of the reasons why we chose the language arts program that we did because anyone literally could come in, and it is a scripted program.”
– District-level employee in Blues

TEACHER PAY

“We allocated funds to offer signing bonuses for staff who come on. We were able to give a $1,000 signing bonus to any highly-qualified staff member that agreed to come on, which we did get. We were able to hire three very capable teachers as a result of that.”
– Hurricanes superintendent
MICHIGAN’S PARTNERSHIP MODEL
THEORY OF CHANGE

IDENTIFIED BY MDE AS LOW-PERFORMING

PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT DEVELOPMENT & IMPLEMENTATION
- District as driver of change
- Comprehensive needs assessment
- Draft 18- & 36-month goals
  - Academic
  - Non-academic
- Develop turnaround strategies
  - Aligned with district/school context
  - Aligned with 18- & 36-month goals
  - Align supports from MDE & ISD
- Identify community partners
  - Solicit input on reform strategies
  - Align supports with turnaround strategies & goals

NEAR-TERM OUTCOMES

DISTRICT
- Improved systems with greater capacity to support core district functions
  - Human resources
  - Curriculum
  - Instructional systems (e.g., professional dev)
  - Operations
  - Data use

SCHOOL
- Improved functioning of instructional core
  - Improved instruction
  - Goals aligned with turnaround strategies & interventions
  - Use of data & metrics to inform & evaluate improvement

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

IMPROVED ACADEMIC OUTCOMES
- Higher achievement
- Reduced dropout

IMPROVED WHOLE-CHILD OUTCOMES
- Attendance
- Behavior

TO IMPROVE:
- Reconstitution
- Restart
- ISD takeover
- CEO appointed

LOCAL CONTEXT

STATE CONTEXT
PARTNERSHIP DISTRICTS IMPROVED STUDENT OUTCOMES IN IMPLEMENTATION YEAR

### Round 1 Partnership Schools Compared to Priority Schools

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>A. Math 3-8 Achievement (Gains)</td>
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<td>B. ELA 3-8 Achievement (Gains)</td>
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<tr>
<td>F. High School Dropout Rates</td>
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<tr>
<td>I. Out-of-District Transfer</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*p<.10 +, p<.05 *, p<.01 **, p<.001 ***
M-STEP GAINS AND DROPOUT REDUCTIONS PARTICULARLY STRONG IN DPSCD

DPSCD Round 1 Partnership Schools Compared to DPSCD Priority Schools

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*p<.10 *, p<.05 *, p<.01 **, p<.001 ***
YEAR 1 PARTNERSHIP OUTCOMES COMPARE FAVORABLY WITH OTHER SIMILAR INTERVENTIONS

*Estimated effect was statistically significant
1 Nakamoto, Rice & Bojorquez (2013)
2 Brummet (2014)
3 Zimmer, Henry & Kho (2017)

Effect size interpretation based on Kraft’s effect size schema (2018)
THREE CASE STUDY DISTRICTS

SYMBOLIC ADOPTION
- Sharks
- Devils
- Bruins
- Avalanche
- Islanders

BRIDGING
- Hurricanes
- Kings
- Blues
- Whalers
- Blue Jackets
- Red Wings

BUFFERING
- Sabers
- Oilers
- Flames
- Senators
- Capitals
- Black Hawks
- Flyers
- Ducks
- Canadiens
- Penguins
- Black Hawks

EPIC
POSITIVE CHANGE AT DISTRICT LEVEL

• District Changes Attributable to Partnership
  – Creating new roles for implementation (e.g. Partnership coordinator)
  – Creating new partnerships with MDE, MI Excel, and community partners.
  – Adopting a new curriculum and creating new district systems.

• Superintendent Leadership
  – One district administrator said, “I will tell you that this district would not be where it is without [superintendent]. She/he's the force behind this turnaround.”
MANY IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES AT SCHOOL LEVEL BECAUSE OF CHRONIC TEACHER TURNOVER

“We started to spin our wheels again this year even though we have these systems now. It was just like every third day we had new staff... To train them and to spend the time with them was taking up a majority of our time. We never got our feet off of the ground.” – District staff

Note: Educators were asked “To what extent is the following a hindrance to achieving your Partnership Agreement goals?”

Source: EPIC survey of educators in Partnership districts.
“Penguins [has] a very strong superintendent who’s built a good team, and has built a lot of internal administrative systems, and works well with the school board. A lot of those institutional pieces are there. You don’t have institutional fragmentation and conflict. The superintendent and the board tend to work fairly collaboratively with each other.” – School board member
A STRONG AND EXPERIENCED LEADER ALONGSIDE COHERENT PRE-EXISTING INITIATIVES LED TO SYMBOLIC ADOPTION AND BUFFERING OF THE PARTNERSHIP REFORM

Symbolic Adoption

• Aligning pre-existing plans with agreement.

• Because of strong and stable leadership from the superintendent the district mainly “[does] what it was going to do anyway,” according to a Penguins board member.
“No [I don’t think teachers are aware of the agreement]. They might know they’re on some sort of state list… I think from a teacher’s perspective a lot of their attitude is this, too, shall pass.” – District leader

Understanding of Partnership Identification, Partnership Educators Only

Note: Educators were asked “How well do you understand why your school was identified as a Partnership school?”
Source: EPIC survey of educators in Partnership districts.
USING THE REFORM AS A BRIDGING STRATEGY TO RECONSTITUTE A PARTNERSHIP SCHOOL

Parthenship offered a language, urgency and an opportunity to navigate those politics and implement a difficult change.

“Sometimes there are schools that just need to be shut down and restarted... By saying we're hiring staff from the beginning now, the principals going to be hired. We just started all over again and set the expectations for what you want.” – Penguins Superintendent
CASE STUDY: WHALERS
“I think [superintendent] built her/his relationships with [state agency] and some of the partners, and maybe didn’t have a strong relationship with the board. I’m not sure that’s good for the district. The Partnership is intended to be reflective of the community, but I think it only reflects a portion of the community, whereas the board is elected by the community. Whether we’re happy or not that they’re our board, they are our board, and they’re elected by the folks who pay for this district. I think if you’re going to prioritize external relationships, probably the board relationship has to be stronger than the actual partnership.” – Whalers district employee
ATTEMPTS TO ENACT PARTNERSHIP LED TO CONFLICT, LACK OF CONSENSUS OVER GOALS, AND PERCEPTIONS OF WASTED TIME

“Has [partnership] impacted us? It's impacted us negatively. It stops the work. It doesn't promote the work, unfortunately. As soon as this Partnership hit, we stopped. Halted completely. [Our other work] was dead in the water, because we spent so much time, weeks at a time, all day in this room knocking out the Partnership. That was us. Then when our part was written and we started moving forward, [the superintendent] has been out of the picture working on bringing in partners, meeting partners.”

– District administrator
WHALERS’ LOW DISTRICT CAPACITY WAS ACCELERATED BY A LACK OF HUMAN CAPITAL

“I mean, you can develop these goals, these lofty goals, and say that our students are capable of achieving them, but they need teachers to teach them.” – District employee

“Great curriculum, high ranked by ed reports. Very rigorous for students. The problem is, it’s rigorous for staff. When I have a third of my staff who, A, they have no content, no understanding of teaching, and they were supposed to come in and pick up a sub and teach it, and then I have low students. Beginning of this year, [hundreds of] kids who didn’t know letter sounds or letter IDs. How do you implement something that’s so rigorous, right?” – District employee
THREE CASE STUDY DISTRICTS

SYMBOLIC ADOPTION
- Sharks
- Devils
- Bruins
- Avalanche
- Islanders

Productive Bridging and Buffering

Bridging with mixed effect

Unproductive Bridging

BRIDGING
- Hurricanes
- Kings
- Blues
- Whalers
- Blue Jackets
- Red Wings
- Sabers
- Oilers
- Flames
- Senators
- Capitals
- Black Hawks

BUFFERING
- Flyers
- Ducks
- Canadiens
- Sabers
- Oilers
- Flames
- Senators
- Capitals
- Black Hawks

EPIC
KEY TAKEAWAYS

• **Local focus of each Partnership reform is an important component of Partnership success, but it can also create challenges.**
  - Districts varied widely in the extent to which they embraced and implemented the reform.
  - Community contexts (community partners, school boards, structural challenges) impact Partnership implementation and success.

• **Human capital challenges remain hugely problematic – and complex – for Partnership schools and districts.**
  - Extends beyond teachers to school and district leaders.
  - Need stable and high-quality workforce and cannot invest in development without stability.

• **Partnership schools saw positive gains in their first year of Partnership implementation.**
  - Year 1 effects were particularly strong in DPSCD.
  - Identification may have had a negative effect on test scores.

• **Teachers and principals expressed some optimism that practices are changing for the better in their schools and districts.**
POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

• Local context require local solutions with centralized supports.
  – How can MI retain local focus on the Partnership reform to allow for local solutions and strengths without allowing local context to hamper reform?

• Human capital challenges are unaddressed by the Partnership Model.
  – How can MI build workforce capacity and supply to serve the state’s lowest-performing districts and schools?

• Competing policies may affect future Partnership implementation.
  – As Partnership schools and districts adjust to new state-level policies like RBG3, how can MI help them to maintain momentum?

• Resource constraints plague Partnership schools and districts, and 21H and associated funding streams are insufficient to plug the gap.
  – How can MI support low-performing schools and districts to implement strategic far-reaching reforms?
MDE IS EXCITED BY SOME OF OUR FINDINGS

• Modest improvements in test scores.

“While test scores are far from the only measure of success for students (in Partnership Districts or otherwise), they are an important indicator, and they are also a measure with a high degree of external validity with key stakeholders such as the legislature.”

• Positive impacts on teacher retention in the Partnership Districts.

• Evidence of improved relationships between MDE and the districts, and between the districts and the ISDs.

“In a coherent education system, it is critical that the various layers of the system work together and are aligned instead of working in opposition. Previous reform efforts had often created negative relationships between MDE and districts, and sometimes created siloes or competing approaches with multiple parties working with the same schools without coherence and alignment.”
MDE IS ALSO WORKING TO STANDARDIZE AND IMPROVE IMPLEMENTATION

“MDE has been working, and will continue to work, to refine the role of the liaison; the content and structure of partnership district plans; and the expectations of the partnership district model. During this last year, MDE has created new policies and procedures for all Partnership Districts, including a Comprehensive Guide for Partnership Districts that includes information regarding how a district is released from the Partnership Agreement, and has strengthened training and cross-office work so that we speak with one voice and liaisons have the tools necessary for success.”

“As we approach another round of identification in the next two years, we want to have a more standardized process for onboarding the districts and for helping them develop their plans. Additionally, our work with the Michigan Integrated Continuous Improvement Process (MICIP) will provide all districts with a whole-child focused tool for assessing needs and creating high-quality plans. This tool will be particularly useful for Partnership Districts in developing the kind of plans the partnership model encourages.”
MDE IS ALSO WORKING TO ADDRESS HUMAN CAPITAL CHALLENGES ACROSS MICHIGAN

“One of the greatest challenges facing partnership districts is *human capital*—the need to recruit and retain high quality teachers and leaders. We agree wholeheartedly with this finding and the fundamental challenge it presents and have been working with Partnership Districts individually to help them craft innovative solutions, such as “grow your own” teacher programs.”