



94d TASK FORCE

Recommendations for the Upcoming Budget

Initiated by the Michigan State Legislature in 2021, the 94d task force was created to develop a comprehensive multi-year plan to attract, prepare, and retain diverse and qualified special education personnel to serve individuals with disabilities. Out of that mission comes our vision statement:

*The 94d Task Force will build, support, and sustain a NEW education system that can enthusiastically attract, prepare, and retain an effective and diverse special education workforce to serve individuals across Michigan. We will convert **energy into action**.*

To-date, the 94d Task Force has met with scores of education organizations, institutes of higher education, and experts from across the fields of education and educator talent. At this point, we are confident that our findings represent a clear picture of the challenges faced by school systems, teachers, paraeducators, specialized instructional support personnel, educator preparation programs and the negative impact on Michigan's individuals with disabilities and their families.

While our evidence is clear that Michigan faces an unprecedented educator crisis that disproportionately affects individuals with disabilities, the task force's research reinforces that general education classrooms across our state gravely feel the painful effects of our limited educator pipeline, too. Therefore, while the task force has much work ahead, we have gathered enough convincing evidence that points to realistic, practical solutions that can be undertaken *immediately* to begin to alleviate the shortages our schools are experiencing. Furthermore, in line with the legislature's desires, we are recommending comprehensive solutions that will treat the underlying causes of recruitment, preparation and retention shortages for special education personnel.

The Task Force's findings align with what well-documented public data suggests: the Michigan teacher pipeline is in trouble and requires high-quality, innovative solutions immediately. Michigan has seen reductions in interest in the profession, including a 66% reduction in enrollment in teacher preparation programs; the state also has the lowest retention rate among pre-service programs in the country. Michigan does not have adequate data to define the gap between the supply and demand needs. It is imperative Michigan builds a sustainable system of supports by implementing short-term, intermediate and long-term strategies. These will require financial support to design and deliver the necessary innovative practices that will bring positive results.

Therefore, the 94d Task Force recommends a set of first-tier solutions for immediate funding consideration:

- 1) Fund \$4M to contract with a research institution such as American Institute for Research, Great Teacher Great Leader Center to work with Intermediate School Districts (ISD) to assess, plan, prepare, implement, monitor and evaluate a statewide effective induction, mentoring and coaching system. It is imperative to support a plan for scaling up and sustainability across Michigan. This should be carried out through an ISD fiduciary to ensure proper oversight and management.
- 2) The task force is currently working with CR Marketing, East Lansing, on a campaign to elevate the profession and change the perception of being a special educator. Currently, money or the task force in Section 94d is being used to initiate this campaign. This work must continue for several years if it is to have an impact on the profession. Fund \$500,000 continue the work with CR Marketing for 2 more years to design and implement an Elevate the Profession (Change the Perspective) campaign across Michigan. Dissemination of information, resources, and innovative practices through a website, social media, newsletter, interactive system and special education personnel and family storytelling, development of interactive system to collect stakeholder input and feedback, transparency of recommendations and stakeholder participation in 94d OPTIMISE work and much more. This is a required prerequisite so everyone will consider special education as a preferred profession.
- 3) Fund \$3M to develop a new data collection, warehousing, and reporting system to ensure all stakeholders have the educator talent data required for strong decision-making and program design in the years ahead. It would provide access to recruitment and hiring tools for all districts and early childhood programs; the statewide data dashboard would show teacher supply and demand across the state's K-12 and early childhood programs; ability for educator preparation program graduates and other teacher candidates to create a profile, allowing the state to forecast labor market supply trends; and access to a statewide educator job board for all districts and candidates statewide.

The above recommendations represent the solutions in line with the findings of the 94d Task Force to date. The Task Force expects to provide additional reports prior to the conclusion of our work, as noted in 94d, in September 2024. At that time, the Task Force will provide an evaluation on the above funding and resulting programming and provide a recommendation for continued funding for those programs determined to be successful.

Happy to provide additional information or supporting documentation.

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