



**Michigan State Board of Education Executive Search for
Superintendent of Public Instruction**

LEADERSHIP PROFILE REPORT

July 22, 2025

**MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION SEARCH
LEADERSHIP PROFILE REPORT**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From June 9th through July 7th, 2025, Hazard, Young, Attea, and Associates (HYA) President Glenn “Max” McGee; Vice President, Mike Richie; and Senior Consultant had the opportunity to conduct a thorough Engagement Phase that resulted in speaking with more than 200 individuals in interviews, focus groups, and forums and compiling the results of nearly 1600 completed online surveys. The purpose of this Engagement Phase was threefold:

1. Identify strengths of the State Board and Michigan Department of Education that could be used to recruit candidates as well as inform them of successful, proven practices and policies that should be sustained.
2. Identify both challenges the next education leader will face as well as priorities that she or he will need to address. These challenges and priorities will be used in identifying candidates with recent and relevant experience to tackle and address them and form the basis for interview questions, scenarios, and candidate presentations during the interview process.
3. Ascertain the desired qualifications and characteristics the next leader needs to have in order to succeed as a leader and to effectively serve Michigan’s students and educators.

Results are presented in great detail in the following pages but summarized in these next four paragraphs.

Strengths: The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) is widely recognized for its strong commitment to students, equity, and educational excellence. It is staffed by experienced, mission-driven professionals who are accessible, knowledgeable, and deeply dedicated to supporting schools, educators, and families. MDE prioritizes student well-being, mental health, and safety, while maintaining a clear strategic focus on literacy, whole-child development, and equitable outcomes. The department excels in fostering collaboration with ISDs, higher education institutions, and community organizations, and is guided by transparent, student-centered goals. Its leadership is seen as passionate and values-driven, and the State Board of Education members play a key role in governance, providing nonpartisan oversight and continuity. MDE is also known for its responsiveness, advocacy for public education, and innovative initiatives such as the Science of Reading and educator workforce development programs. Despite challenges related to funding, political pressures, and public perception, the department generally remains a respected agency that strives to improve outcomes and build partnerships statewide.

Challenges: The next State Superintendent of Education in Michigan will inherit a complex landscape marked by deep systemic challenges. Foremost are persistent funding inequities and capacity constraints—particularly for special education, CTE, and rural or under-resourced communities—compounded by federal budget uncertainty and declining public trust in public education. The superintendent must navigate a politically charged and often polarized environment, balancing limited statutory authority, fragmented governance, and pressures from legislators, the Governor’s office, and an array of stakeholders with competing priorities. Internally, the Department of Education struggles with understaffing and stakeholders report MDE communication gaps that hinder policy implementation and coordination with ISDs and local districts. Externally, public perception issues, educator burnout, the perception of stagnant or declining student outcomes, and growing absenteeism pose urgent concerns. The next leader must unify stakeholders, renew and rebuild relationships, articulate and operationalize a clear and student-centered vision, and drive statewide improvement through inclusive leadership, transparent communication, bold, urgent, equity-focused action especially in literacy and access and opportunities for the underserved and underrepresented.

Priorities: The top priorities for Michigan’s next State Superintendent, as identified across stakeholder groups, center on refocusing public education around academic excellence, equitable and sustainable funding, and whole-child success. Stakeholders call an equitable and adequate funding model that meets the diverse needs of students—especially those with disabilities, English learners, and students in rural or under-resourced communities—and supports essential services such as special education, mental health, early childhood, and the arts. Urgently elevating literacy through the Science of Reading, improving student well-being, and addressing chronic absenteeism are seen as foundational. There is strong demand for educator support through fair compensation and professional pathways alongside innovation in instruction, including 21st-century skills, CTE, and AI. To achieve lasting impact, the superintendent must be a transparent, student-centered, and politically astute leader who builds trust, unifies stakeholders, renews stakeholder commitment to and alignment with Michigan’s Top 10 Strategic Education Plan, strengthens relationships across agencies and government, and communicates clearly and consistently while taking the time to authentically engage and be a visible presence within the education community.

Desired Characteristics: Michigan’s next State Superintendent must be a visionary, student-centered leader of unshakable integrity who combines deep experience in public education with the courage to make bold, equitable decisions in a politically complex environment. Stakeholders seek an empathetic, inclusive, and honest educator who understands the realities of classrooms and the diverse needs of Michigan’s rural, urban, and under-resourced communities. This leader must be a skilled communicator and coalition-builder—politically

savvy yet nonpartisan—who listens deeply, acts transparently, and inspires trust. A systems thinker grounded in values of equity and public service, the superintendent must be committed to closing opportunity gaps, elevating student outcomes, and leading with compassion, accountability, and a steadfast belief in every student’s potential.

This Leadership Profile Report (LPR) is a public document and will be posted both on HYA recruitment web page and on the MDE’s Superintendent Search web page. Ideally, the State Board will use this document to assist them in selecting the next State Superintendent. To that end, HYA will assist the Board in using this LPR in recruiting and screening candidates, developing interview questions and activities for the board members as well as rubrics for the board to evaluate the candidates.

In closing we would like to express our profound gratitude to the staff who worked long and hard to schedule the 40+ Engagement sessions, to develop the recruitment flyer from initial board interviews, to develop the customized online survey, and to ensure broad statewide access to the survey. Karen Carefoot, Liz Evans, Jeanne Justice, Bob Wheaton, and Alisande Shrewsbury deserve special commendation for their efforts and support.

SECTION ONE: INTERVIEWS, FOCUS GROUPS, AND FORUMS

During the Engagement Phase members of the HYA team had the opportunity conduct numerous interviews, focus groups, and open forums. During the 40 hours allocated in the HYA's proposal, the team met with a total of 251 individuals in these sessions either on site or via video conference. While we were prepared to have up to 16 people per focus group, the number in parentheses indicates the actual number of attendees. This number is somewhat misleading because several of those attending were leaders in their organizations and had distributed the questions in advance to their leadership team and/or membership and were able to provide us with valuable, robust information. The groups and actual participants were:

State Board of Education (7 plus one written response)

Two forums, one for staff (82 attended) and one for board members wishing to invite stakeholders (18 attended)

Thirty-three focus groups in these categories:

MDE leadership staff

- Executive Leadership (14)
- Senior Staff (22)

Educator Groups:

- Librarians (2)
- Charters and Non Publics (2)
- CTE (5)
- MEMSPA/MASSP (1)
- Teachers of the Year (4)
- Small and Rural Schools (15)
- MTSS (5)
- Arts Educators (3)
- Partnership (4)
- MASB/MSBO (2)
- Nutrition (4)
- Teacher Unions Leadership (3)
- Teacher Preparation Providers (2)
- CMTE/IEI (4)

Student Advisory Group (12)

Parents

- Parent (1)
- Safety (1)

Governmental Officials and Policy Advisors

- Governor's Office (1)
- Ed Policy (1)
- Legislators (3)

Priority Areas

- Finance (3)
- Special Education (4)
- Literacy (3)
- Mental Health (3)

Other Interest Groups

- Foundations (16)
- SOM Agencies (3)
- Various Stakeholders I (18 – State organization representatives e.g. MiLeads, YMCA, Hispanic/Latino Commission; former educators; advocates; parents; organizers)
- Various Stakeholders II (25 – board members; advocates; faith leaders; former educators; organizers; parents)

While every group had their own particular interest and area of expertise, for purposes of analysis we have divided this section of the report into responses from State Board, MDE Staff, Educational Organizations, Governmental Officials, Students, Parents, and Other Interest Groups. For each of these we are summarizing the following:

- Perceptions of the Strengths of the Department (Strengths)
- Challenges the next State Superintendent will face (Challenges)
- Most important priorities for the next education leader to address (Priorities)
- Personal characteristics and professional qualifications desired (Characteristics and Qualifications)

For each of these larger groupings, we have listed the top five summary points to compare and contrast among groups. It should be noted that within these larger groupings, specific stakeholders tended to respond from their particular point of view, e.g. the Librarians fiercely

advocated for making the addition of certified librarians a top priority, the Arts team shared the importance of the arts in students' well-being, IEL representatives shared the importance of ensuring local districts were inclusive of their students' needs and for meaningfully engaging with the tribes on grant funding opportunities, etc.

STATE BOARD

Strengths

1. Expertise and Commitment

- Highly knowledgeable and experienced staff, including senior leadership.
- Strong policy and practice professionals with deep education knowledge.
- Commitment of the department and the Board to student achievement and educational improvement.
- Passionate focus on children's well-being and quality education.

2. Governance Structure

- The State Board of Education acts as a valuable governance body and political firewall.
- Board members are elected statewide, ensuring public accountability and continuity.
- The Board members promote and focus on educational goals

3. Strategic Focus

- Strong alignment with strategic plans and key priorities, including literacy and achievement.
- Proactive work on addressing the teacher shortage, certification flexibility, and grow-your-own programs.

4. Support for Schools and Students

- Strong support for local school districts.
- Department is student-centered and aims to improve outcomes like graduation rates and test scores.
- Dedicated to the betterment of children and education across Michigan.

5. Board Strengths

- Long-serving, knowledgeable, and engaged Board members.
- Consistent attendance, preparation, and productive discussions.
- Ability to select candidates with relevant experience and commitment.

Challenges

1. Governance and Role Clarity

- Helping the Board operate optimally given its limited statutory authority
- Navigating ongoing threats to the governance structure (e.g., proposals to eliminate MDE, change superintendent appointment process, or elect the full board).
- Constantly having to justify the existing structure and roles of the Board and Superintendent.
- Balancing the distinct roles of the Superintendent and Board Chair.
- Addressing public and political misconceptions that restructuring will solve systemic issues.

2. Political and Legislative Environment

- Operating within a politically divided ("purple") state with frequent partisan conflict.
- Respecting, acknowledging and addressing right and left positions of individual board members while maintaining unity on student-focused issues.
- Dealing with ongoing pressure from legislators, the Governor's office, the Federal Government and politically motivated and driven groups.
- Anticipating political turmoil and pressure related to upcoming elections in 2026 and 2028.

3. Public Perception and Accountability

- MDE and BOE face significant perception challenges and are often blamed for systemic issues (e.g., low test scores) without broader context.
- Educators are increasingly viewed as scapegoats in societal and political debates.
- External attacks and calls for dissolution of the Board and Department contribute to public distrust.
- Lack of sufficient community engagement undermines public support and understanding.

4. Operational and Resource Constraints

- The department is severely understaffed and underfunded (1% of state FTEs, 0.2% of state budget) yet responsible for distributing 25% of the state's budget.
- Inadequate state and federal funding leaves both the MDE and local districts, especially those with the greatest needs, significantly under resourced.
- Ongoing teacher shortage and need for improved compensation and recruitment efforts.
- Managing internal departmental and personnel changes requires strong interpersonal relationship skills.

5. Leadership and Communication Demands

- Need for a skilled communicator who can effectively engage with eight diverse board members and an array of diverse stakeholders who may have competing expectations and priorities
- Ability to balance multiple pressures from the Board, Legislature, Governor, and public while staying focused on students.
- Must be able to stand independently, interpret federal policy, and provide clear guidance to districts.

Priorities

1. Advance Equity in Funding and Opportunities and Access for All Students

- Maintain and advocate for an equitable school funding system, including support for categoricals and underserved communities.
- Ensure equitable access and opportunity for all students, especially historically disenfranchised groups and students with special needs.
- Champion inclusion and support for special education.

2. Support and Elevate Teachers

- Make supporting teachers a top priority—through empathy, understanding of classroom realities, and advocacy.
- Address the teacher shortage with both immediate and long-term solutions.

- Value teaching experience and promote policies that reflect the needs of educators.

3. Strengthen Literacy and the Whole Child Approach

- Prioritize literacy as a foundational educational goal, addressing the multiple factors that impact learning.
- Promote a whole child approach—emphasizing mental health, well-being, and learning environments.

4. Revisit and Refocus the Strategic Plan

- Review and potentially revise the state’s current strategic plan to ensure it is focused, relevant, and actionable.
- Reduce or refine goals in collaboration with the Board to drive clearer progress on student achievement.

5. Build Strong Relationships and Trust

- Spend time building trust and collaboration with the Board, local districts (LEAs), RESAs, charter schools, and education organizations.
- Work to rejuvenate Board dynamics and unify stakeholders around shared goals.
- Advocate for MDE and its staff to strengthen the department’s role and visibility in the education ecosystem.

Characteristics and Qualifications

1. Extensive Educational Experience

- Must be a lifelong educator with a background in both teaching and administration. Experience as a local or state superintendent, ideally in challenging contexts, is strongly preferred.

2. Credibility and Professional Credentials

- Must hold a terminal degree in education and have a proven professional background that earns the respect of teachers, administrators, and education stakeholders. Candidates with alternative certification or from non-education sectors (e.g., business or military) are not acceptable.

3. Strong Understanding of Michigan’s Education System

- Needs a deep understanding of Michigan’s unique education governance model, including the roles and functions of the State Board and superintendent.
- In-state experience is an advantage, though out-of-state candidates may bring valuable fresh perspectives.

4. Effective, Inclusive Communication Skills

- Must be an excellent communicator—responsive and clear across all formats and audiences, including teachers, stakeholders, and state political officials.
- Ability to engage consistently, including during evenings and weekends, is valued.

5. Visionary yet Collaborative Leadership

- Should be a change-maker who understands best practices, has worked with diverse demographics, and has a track record of closing achievement and opportunity gaps. Must balance educational expertise with political acumen and a collaborative leadership style—coming in ready to listen, not just to lead.

MDE STAFF

Strengths

1. Passionate and Mission-Driven Staff

- MDE is powered by exceptionally talented, passionate individuals committed to serving *all* students.
- MDE is energized, motivated, and united around a student-first mission.

2. Strategic Alignment and Focus

- The department grounds all decisions in a strategic plan (either the current one or revised version following the selection of the new superintendent) emphasizing focused goals, intentional delivery of services, and data-informed decisions.

3. Experienced and Diverse Team

- MDE benefits from a strong mix of former educators and experienced state government professionals, bringing deep knowledge of both fieldwork and policy implementation.

4. Visible Leadership and Advocacy

- MDE is a vocal and visible advocate for public education, mental health, and equity.
- Strong leadership that supports staff and students alike.

5. Positive Outcomes and Innovation

- The department has contributed to improvements in student achievement, graduation rates, CTE, AP participation and scores, and recently led major literacy reform efforts.
- Nationally recognized for mental health initiatives and successful partnerships with Indigenous communities and student leaders.

Challenges

1. Funding, Staffing, and Capacity Constraints

- Federal funding uncertainty, understaffing in key areas, and challenges in recruitment and retention strain MDE's ability to fully serve all districts and programs.

2. Political Pressures and Limited Authority

- The superintendent faces political scrutiny, must balance roles as board chair and agency leader, and operates with limited statutory authority, often becoming a scapegoat for systemic issues.

3. Public Perception and Communication Challenges

- Despite strong local school support, the statewide reputation of Michigan's education system suffers, driven by legislative narratives and simplistic public framing and blaming without consideration of the complexities and origins of significant problems.

4. Complexity of Coordination and Implementation

- MDE must align K-12 with postsecondary, manage collaboration across multiple agencies, and ensure effective implementation of the Top 10 Strategic Education Plan.

5. Equity and Access Gaps

- Ongoing funding and opportunity disparities among districts – suburban, urban, rural, impoverished, partnership, and affluent and resulting ongoing disparate outcomes in literacy, numeracy, career and college readiness requires targeted efforts to ensure all students—regardless of geography or background—receive high-quality support.

Priorities

1. Build Relationships and Listen First

- Spend time in the field, listen actively, seek to understand both staff and stakeholders, and honor the history and work of the MDE team.

2. Support Staff and Foster Leadership

- Empower internal talent, support hybrid work, and allow leaders to use their strengths without micromanagement.

3. Ensure Equity and Student-Centered Focus

- Prioritize getting students' needs met through equitable funding and support for mental health and social-emotional learning.

4. Strengthen Internal Alignment and Processes

- Improve interdepartmental collegiality and streamline internal operations to ensure consistency and efficiency.

5. Be Politically Savvy and Strategic

- Navigate political landscapes effectively, foster collaborative two-way relationships with the Governor and ISDs, and avoid launching new initiatives without the necessary resources.

Characteristics and Qualifications

1. Deep Educational Experience

- Background as an educator and experience in a school district or large educational entity; practical, on-the-ground understanding of Michigan's education system and demographics.

2. Political Savvy and Strategic Relationships

- Ability to navigate political dynamics, build relationships with state leaders, education prep providers, and external partners; skilled at protecting the department's reputation while advancing its goals.

3. Trustworthy, Delegative, and Empowering

- Trusts staff expertise, delegates effectively, boosts morale, and leads with humility, emotional intelligence, and a servant leadership mindset.

4. Strong Communication and Listening Skills

- Excellent communicator and storyteller who actively listens, values student and staff voices, and can translate ideas into compelling narratives.

5. Systemic Thinker and Continuous Learner

- Understands the complexity of the entire education system, models continuous improvement, cuts red tape when needed, and embraces innovation and feedback with an open mind.

EDUCATION ORGANIZATIONS

Strengths

1. Dedicated, Knowledgeable, and Accessible Staff

- MDE staff are experienced, responsive, and deeply committed to education. They are seen as partners who listen, communicate openly, and provide timely support across departments.

2. Strong Collaboration and Partnerships

- MDE maintains strong, collaborative relationships with higher education institutions, ISDs, districts, and stakeholder organizations, including support for CTE, arts education, and teacher preparation programs.

3. Clear Commitment to Equity and Student Success

- Equity is central to MDE’s work, with particular support for struggling schools, literacy initiatives, special education, and diverse learners. The department also promotes student voice and leadership.

4. Strategic Planning and Vision

- The “Top 10 in 10” strategic plan and other targeted initiatives reflect a clear, forward-thinking vision. MDE actively engages stakeholders in goal-setting and continuous improvement efforts.

5. Support for Educator Excellence and Workforce Development

- MDE invests in teacher licensure pathways, student teacher stipends, grow-your-own programs, and leadership development. Offices like Educator Excellence provide valuable funding, guidance, and advocacy for teacher voice and growth.

Challenges

1. Inadequate and Unequitable Funding

- CTE and special education funding have not kept pace with program growth. Federal budget cuts, unstable school meal funding, and structural funding inequities—especially between millage and non-millage districts—create serious sustainability concerns, particularly for rural and underserved areas.

2. Fractured Relationships and Political Tensions

- There is a deep lack of trust among the State Board, Legislature, Governor’s Office, and MDE. The superintendent will need to repair relationships, unify fragmented efforts, and navigate a volatile political environment with bipartisan skill.

3. Workforce Shortages and Capacity Issues

- Persistent teacher and staff shortages, lack of competitive compensation, and staff burnout—both in schools and within MDE—require urgent attention. The department also needs to rebuild internal capacity after significant staff turnover and low morale.

4. Communication and Implementation Gaps

- MDE’s messaging often fails to reach educators, and strong initiatives do not consistently translate to local impact. A clearer, more efficient system is needed to communicate policies, streamline compliance reporting, and ensure local districts understand and apply state-level work.

5. Lack of Coherent Vision and Strategic Focus

- The current strategic plan lacks clarity and statewide buy-in. There is a need to redefine a shared, actionable vision for education across Michigan—one that balances local control with state leadership, aligns with workforce needs, and improves literacy and student outcomes.

Priorities

1. Secure and Protect Equitable Education Funding

- Advocate for increased K–12 funding, prevent diversion to private schools, target funding based on district needs, and ensure resources support facilities, infrastructure, and teacher salaries.

2. Rebuild Trust and Strengthen Relationships

- Repair broken relationships between MDE, the Governor's office, legislators, and education stakeholders. Build trust within and across departments and ensure regular, transparent, two-way communication.

3. Champion Public Education and the Teaching Profession

- Be a visible, vocal advocate for public education, teacher retention, and professional development. Support initiatives like Grow Your Own and mentorship pipelines to address staffing shortages.

4. Advance a Clear, Student-Centered Vision

- Reaffirm and refine the MDE Strategic Plan with a bold, future-ready vision that includes whole-child development, 22nd-century learning, and coherent accountability systems for all school types.

5. Elevate the Narrative and Inspire Public Confidence

- Rebrand public education with a positive, compelling story that celebrates progress, values educators, and places students at the center. Communicate with clarity, consistency, and purpose.

Characteristics and Qualifications

1. Visionary and Outcome-Focused Leader

- Brings a bold, strategic vision for Michigan's education system, is outcome-driven, and can manage large-scale change while staying focused on academic excellence and equity.

2. Skilled Communicator and Relationship Builder

- Builds trust through consistent, transparent, and diplomatic communication. Listens well, values diverse input, and connects across educators, legislators, and communities to unite around common goals.

3. Politically Savvy and Policy-Minded

- Navigates complex political landscapes with legislative acumen, understands state and national education policy, and advocates effectively for public education and funding equity.

4. Experienced Educator with Systems Thinking

- Has real experience in schools (as a teacher, principal, or superintendent), understands urban and rural challenges, and can lead a large, complex state education system with confidence and credibility.

5. Humble, Inclusive, and People-Centered

- Leads with humility, empathy, and emotional intelligence. Builds inclusive teams, empowers others, welcomes feedback, and prioritizes students and educators in every decision.

GOVERNMENTAL OFFICIALS

Strengths

1. Accessibility

- Responsive to requests
- Very open to having a good relationship and collaborative

2. Department Staff

- MDE has expert employees and understand education and the work and are supportive

3. Goals and Initiatives

- Strategic plan and road map and goals focusing on whole child
- Breakfast, lunch programs, science of reading, class size reduction in high poverty schools are from MDE.
- We appreciate big ideas.

Challenges

1. Lack of Clear Authority and Alignment

- MDE must lead without direct authority over districts or funding, making leadership difficult but need to have accountability for LEAs
- Ongoing tensions between the Governor, State Board, and MDE contribute to governance challenges.

2. Need for Improved Student Outcomes

- Test scores, student attendance, and overall outcomes remain concerning.
- Increased spending has not consistently translated into better results.

3. Disconnects in Communication and Collaboration

- Gaps in communication between MDE, ISDs, and districts. Need consistent messaging
- Legislators feel a lack of heads-up and broader information sharing.

4. Political Polarization and Vision Deficit

- Polarized politics impede progress and frustrate stakeholders.
- There is a call for a unifying, student-centered vision that rises above partisanship.
- Political differences on the board might be a challenge

5. Calls for Innovation and Expanded Opportunities

- MDE needs to be more open to new ideas and approaches.

- Career and technical education opportunities need to expand to meet student and workforce needs.

Priorities

1. Improve Literacy and Implement the Science of Reading

- Lead the statewide implementation of the Science of Reading by 2027–2028.
- Focus on improving literacy outcomes as a major state and gubernatorial priority.

2. Advance Educational Equity and Close Achievement Gaps

- Ensure equitable school funding and targeted support for vulnerable populations, including students in foster care and those with IEPs.
- Reduce achievement gaps through systemic, inclusive strategies.

3. Address Chronic Absenteeism and Student Mental Health

- Tackle chronic absenteeism as a major barrier to student success.
- Support student mental health and safety through cross-agency collaboration and school-based supports.

4. Recruit, Retain, and Empower Teachers

- Reverse the decline in teacher recruitment by restoring the profession’s appeal and listening to teacher voices.
- Ensure educators are part of decision-making and seen as partners in systemic change.

5. Lead with Vision, Strategy, and Execution

- Provide a clear, systems-driven strategic vision for Michigan’s education future.
- Be a bold, collaborative change agent capable of driving and sustaining meaningful reform.

Characteristics and Qualifications

1. Proven and Visionary Leadership

- A successful track record as a superintendent, preferably in more than one district or state, including turning around lower-performing systems.
- Must be a strategic thinker and visionary leader who can build and execute a bold, systemic plan for educational improvement.

2. Commitment to Equity and Justice

- Deep, authentic commitment to educational equity, justice, and serving students from diverse backgrounds.
- Experience leading systemic change that addresses disparities in outcomes and opportunities.

3. Strong Communication and Relational Skills

- A people-first leader who listens well, connects authentically with all stakeholders, and inspires trust.
- Must be able to unify teams and bring the entire organization together around shared goals.

4. Instructional Expertise and Data-Driven Mindset

- Background in public school teaching and knowledge of evidence-based practices like the Science of Reading.
- Data-informed decision-maker who pushes for timely, results-oriented action.

5. Collaborative and Urgent Change Agent

- Works well with state leaders (e.g., MiLEAD, Governor’s office) and delegates effectively to build internal capacity.
- Brings a strong sense of urgency, especially around literacy and funding, and is committed to innovation and action.

STUDENTS

Strengths

- 1. Compassion:** The Board, Dr Rice, and department sincerely care about support students and value student voice
- 2. Strong leadership** for and commitment to education

Challenges

- 1. Pushback** from parents who are not accepting of all students
- 2. Funding** and resources for districts
- 3. Unifying** educators, legislators and MDE around a common vision and shared goals

Priorities

- 1. Equity:** Make sure all schools across the state have resource and equal opportunities and access to high quality curriculum
- 2. Mental health and wellness**
- 3. Increased support for special education**
- 4. Prioritize student voice**

Characteristics and Qualifications

- 1. Experience and Credibility in Education**
 - Must have prior experience as a superintendent and direct experience working in schools.
 - A strong background in advocating for students and leading with a servant-leader mindset.
- 2. Strong Communication and Listening Skills**
 - Excellent communicator who listens deeply, values diverse perspectives, and fosters open dialogue with all stakeholders.
- 3. Authenticity and Student-Centered Passion**
 - Genuine, caring, and passionate about students; demonstrates transparency, boldness, and a lifelong commitment to learning and service.
- 4. Political and Policy Acumen**
 - Legislative or political background that enables effective advocacy and navigation of state-level governance and policymaking.
- 5. Adaptability and Modern Awareness**
 - Versatile, visible, and approachable leader with a modern understanding of education trends (e.g., AI) and a willingness to engage publicly and be questioned.

PARENTS

Strengths

1. **Accessibility** of Staff
2. **Politically independent**

Challenges

1. **Federal government** and state legislators are hostile to public education
2. **Funding being slashed** from every direction
3. **Worsening perception** from residents regarding national rankings of the MI schools

Priorities

1. **Protect our children** and stand up for core values related to all students
2. Find a way to **retain teachers** - need to keep high quality teachers
3. **Funding and resources** to support kindergarten readiness, college readiness and literacy
4. Be a **cohesive unifier** with Governor and Legislature

Characteristics and Qualifications

1. **Extensive and Diverse Educational Leadership Experience**
 - Strong background in education with leadership roles beyond the classroom, including experience across different regions of Michigan (urban, rural, UP) and at the national level.
2. **Cultural Competency and Inclusivity**
 - Demonstrated ability to work effectively with diverse populations and a deep understanding of cultural responsiveness, equity, and the importance of diverse representation in leadership.
3. **Collaborative and Team-Oriented Leadership**
 - Proven ability to build, lead, and unify teams; a participatory, humble leader who values input, empowers others, and avoids bureaucratic management.
4. **Strong Communication and Relationship-Building Skills**
 - Personable, inspiring, and a skilled communicator who listens actively, engages with stakeholders, and can build trust across the state.
5. **Visionary and Resilient Change Agent**
 - A proactive, charismatic leader with a track record of innovation and perseverance, capable of driving meaningful change even in politically complex environments.

PRIORITY AREA ADVOCACY GROUPS

Strengths

1. **Strong Focus on Student Well-Being and Safety**
 - Prioritized mental health funding, school safety resources, and universal preschool; committed to supporting students from birth to age 26.

2. Professional Expertise and Responsiveness

- Staffed with experienced, competent professionals who can deliver high-quality, data-driven reports quickly and provide timely technical support.

3. Collaborative and Approachable

- Known for strong partnerships with public universities, literacy organizations, and other agencies; Board members are open, approachable, and value diverse perspectives.

4. Mission-Driven and Transparent

- Guided by a clear commitment to student-centered goals, transparency, and equity—especially in areas like special education and educator excellence.

5. Research-Informed and Literacy-Focused

- Grounded in evidence-based practice with a strategic focus on advancing literacy and providing curricular guidance to schools statewide.

Challenges

1. Communication and Coordination Gaps

- Disconnects exist within MDE departments and between MDE, ISDs, and local districts, leading to confusion, missed opportunities, and weakened partnerships. Improved internal cohesion and external communication are critical.

2. Political and Governance Complexity

- Navigating split state government leadership, federal uncertainty, and local control tensions (especially around literacy and dyslexia legislation) requires politically savvy, balanced leadership.

3. Systemic and Structural Barriers

- The department faces outdated internal processes, limited retirement system access, staffing shortages, and slow hiring—all of which hinder responsiveness and capacity to act quickly.

4. Educational Equity and Student Outcomes

- Major concerns include underperforming schools, the dropout crisis, disproportionate special education outcomes, lost students and teachers, and the absence of a pipeline for deaf education. There is an urgent need to improve results for the most vulnerable learners.

5. Capacity Building and Leadership Urgency

- There is a need for bold, urgent leadership to build statewide capacity (e.g., MTSS), ensure consistent literacy training, address gaps in special education services, and scale equity efforts beyond isolated pockets.

Priorities

1. Strengthen Communication and Collaboration

- Improve coordination with ISDs, associations, higher education, and across state agencies.
- Repair and build productive relationships with the Governor’s office and legislators.

2. Advance Safe, Supportive, and Healthy Schools

- Prioritize student and staff well-being through mental health supports and aligned school safety laws.
- Conduct an environmental scan to resolve conflicting school and mental health policies.

3. Champion Literacy and Instructional Quality

- Continue momentum in K–12 literacy efforts with a systems approach.
- Advocate for consistent, basic teacher training in literacy.

4. Lead with a Unified Vision and Strategic Advocacy

- Speak clearly and credibly to complex issues across the education system.
- Promote a shared vision that bridges political divides and centers student success.

5. Pursue Funding and Workforce Reform

- Align the school finance system with district needs.
- Focus on workforce quality and capacity building to support sustained improvement.

Characteristics and Qualifications

1. Experienced and Proven Educational Leader

- Must have served as a superintendent or in key educational leadership roles with a track record of improving outcomes and leading large systems through change.

2. Student-Centered and Equity-Focused

- Demonstrates a deep commitment to equity, understands special education and literacy (e.g., Science of Reading), and always prioritizes the needs of students.

3. Collaborative and Strategic Communicator

- Builds partnerships across sectors, over-communicates, listens deeply, and brings people together with transparency and shared accountability.

4. Politically Savvy and Culturally Competent

- Capable of navigating bipartisan politics, embracing diverse perspectives, and leading with integrity, humility, and respect for local contexts.

5. Visionary, Adaptive, and Ready to Learn

- A systems thinker with a clear game plan who is also a lead learner—open to listening, growing, and managing change while inspiring others.

OTHERS

Strengths

1. **Attentive** to children and family's needs as well as to supporting local districts.

2. **Strong educator culture** with caring and talented educators and administrators.

3. **Data rich**

- The department has a wealth of data beyond test scores that can benefit local districts and help shape positive education policies.

Challenges

1. Educational Equity and Funding Gaps

- Persistent inequities in funding and resources, especially for special education, low-income students, and underserved communities. MDE often designs programs around revenue rather than actual needs.
- Overlapping and/or conflicting legislation, administrative burdens, lack of political will, and a need for bold leadership make it difficult to implement and sustain effective initiatives.
- Fighting a federal government determined to gut public school funding

2. Political Instability and Governance Issues

- Education is highly politicized, especially in an election year, with federal cuts, departmental mistrust, and unclear governance structures complicating decision-making and reform.

3. Barriers to Family and Community Engagement

- Challenges in incentivizing parent involvement. Parent engagement and involvement is essential to student success and the department has to find ways to help local district more broadly and deeply engage parents.
- There needs to be support for families with older children (21+), with special needs

4. Student Outcomes and Engagement

- High dropout rates (particularly among Latino students), rising absenteeism, and a lack of youth leadership opportunities require urgent attention and targeted interventions.
- Vaping, drug use, and mental health issues are negatively impacting students

5. Technology

- AI will impact every aspect of students' lives yet there seems to be no plan for its place in education
- Equitable access to technology and a digital literacy gap
- Overwhelming amounts of misinformation and disinformation

Priorities

1. Elevate Equity

- Prioritize educational and digital equity in access, engagement, and outcomes.
- Ensure equitable funding and access to resources; consider models of shared resources among districts and ISDs
- Focus on ensuring all children are literate; equity begins with literacy and children must be readers by third grade

2. Address Chronic Absenteeism and Truancy

- Tackle high absenteeism with urgency, linking it to student well-being, access to meals, and educational equity (e.g., through programs like TRAILS).

3. Support Educators and Staff

- Ensure equitable access to Science of Reading training, address teacher workload, and provide career development pathways for paraprofessionals.

4. Promote Integrated, Whole-Child Learning

- Focus on student performance while integrating literacy, math, science, and social studies—without neglecting the humanities.

5. Collaborative Systems Overhaul

- Work across systems and structures (including the State Board and Governor’s office), balancing immediate needs with sustainable, strategic reform.
- Understand and capitalize on the intersection of foundational partnership between key stakeholders: parents, children, teachers, educational systems, state and federal government

Characteristics and Qualifications

1. Political Acumen and Bipartisan Leadership

- Must be politically savvy, able to navigate Michigan’s divided political landscape (“purple hue”), work across systems, and achieve bipartisan results while protecting public education.

2. Deep Educational and Leadership Experience

- K–12 educator experience is essential, along with advanced degrees (master’s or doctorate) and a proven track record of managing large systems and leading complex organizational change.

3. Equity-Driven and Student-Centered

- Committed to educational equity, especially for vulnerable students including those with disabilities and English language learners, and aware of how school choice policies impact equity.

4. Strong Communicator and Public Advocate

- Capable of telling a compelling story about Michigan education, building public trust, and effectively advocating for public schools and students at all levels.

5. Creative, Curious, Humble, and Forward-Thinking

- A good listener who seeks feedback, reflects on impact, stays rooted in core values, and embraces innovation—especially in areas like AI and future-ready learning.
- One who takes a creative approach to identifying and pursuing solutions

Based on the feedback from participants in interviews, focus groups, and forums, there are numerous strengths to the Michigan Department of Education and the State Board and to their relationships with stakeholders. There are also numerous challenges, some immediately tangible such as inadequate and inequitable funding for public education, teacher and staff shortages, a polarized political climate, existential threats to public education, and urgent need to improve student outcomes in literacy, academics, graduation rates, and mental health.

Moreover, while perceptions of the highest priorities and the most desired characteristics and qualifications differ from group to group, from the data above common themes emerge that will inform both the selection of the state superintendent and the new educational leaders’ priorities.

Synthesizing the qualitative data, we identified these “top ten” desired attributes:

1. **Visionary and Outcome-Oriented Leader**
Brings a bold, future-focused vision for Michigan education with the ability to inspire, execute, and deliver results.
2. **Deep Educational Experience and Systems Leadership**
Has served as a teacher, principal, or superintendent; understands both classroom realities and the complexities of leading large educational systems.
3. **Strong, Inclusive Communicator**
Listens actively, communicates transparently, engages across communities, and tells a compelling story that builds public trust in education.
4. **Equity-Driven and Student-Centered**
Prioritizes educational justice, especially for vulnerable student populations, and promotes policies that close opportunity and achievement gaps.
5. **Political Savvy/Acumen/Acuity/Astuteness**
Navigates the state and nation’s divided political landscape with skill; builds relationships with legislators, the governor, and stakeholders to advance public education.
6. **Collaborative and Relationship-Oriented**
Fosters unity, brings people together across diverse perspectives, and empowers teams to lead collectively and inclusively.
7. **Humble, Authentic, and Trustworthy**
Leads without ego, values feedback, uplifts others, and builds trust across the department and broader education community.
8. **Resilient and Courageous Advocate for Students**
Demonstrates grace under pressure, makes tough decisions putting students and public education first, and leads through adversity with collaboration but without compromising values.
9. **Strategic, Creative Thinker and Effective Manager**
Finds innovative ways to align goals, policies, people, and resources across the system; able to delegate, manage complexity, and ensure execution at scale.
10. **Committed to Whole-Child Success**
Supports student wellness, mental health, the arts, and holistic learning, integrating these into academic achievement strategies.

Likewise, our analysis and synthesis of the qualitative data identifies these “top five” priorities for the next leader to address.

1. **Advance Equity and Access for All Students**
Champion equitable funding, inclusion, and support for vulnerable and underserved student populations.
2. **Support Teachers and Strengthen the Workforce**
Address teacher shortages, increase retention, deliver high quality professional development, and advocate for policies that support educators.
3. **Improve Literacy and Prioritize Whole-Child Learning**
With a renewed sense of urgency, fully implement the Science of Reading, integrate all content areas, and address student mental health and well-being.
4. **Unify Vision and Strengthen Relationships**
Rebuild trust with stakeholders, align priorities with the State Board, legislature, and Governor's office, ideally around the current or modified/revised *Michigan's Top 10 Strategic Education Plan*.
5. **Lead with Clear, Transparent, and Responsive Communication**
Develop, implement, and evaluate consistent, two-way communication systems (with traditional, social, and emerging media as well as enhanced visibility and face to face engagement with education partners and stakeholders) that keep educators, families, and partners informed, engaged, and involved in statewide initiatives and decision-making.

To summarize, the next State Superintendent of Michigan must lead with a clear, equity-driven vision that prioritizes improved student outcomes and educator support across the state. A top priority is ensuring equitable funding and access to high-quality education for all students, including those with special needs, from underserved communities, and in rural areas. Addressing chronic absenteeism, mental health, and student well-being is critical to whole-child success. Literacy must remain a central focus, with full implementation of the Science of Reading and integration of subjects like the arts, science, and social studies. To achieve sustained change, the superintendent must renew and rebuild trust, unifying relationships across the Governor's office, Legislature, and greater education community, and strategically advocate for public education. Supporting and elevating the educator workforce, renewing or revising *Michigan's Top 10 Strategic Education Plan*, streamlining internal operations, and leading with transparency, collaboration, and a long-term vision are essential to advancing Michigan's public education system. Clear, consistent, regular two-way communication and enhanced visibility of the superintendent are critical to the next leader's success.

Stakeholders across Michigan desire for the next State Superintendent of Education to be a visionary, equity-driven leader with deep roots in public education. They seek someone who brings extensive experience as an educator, and who understands the complexity of Michigan's

educational landscape—including its rural, urban, and under-resourced communities as well as both its many resources and financial, geographical, historical, and impending challenges. The ideal candidate will be a systems thinker with the capacity to lead large-scale growth in student outcomes. The individual must be grounded in student-centered values and committed to closing access and opportunity gaps, especially for students with disabilities, English language learners, and historically marginalized groups.

In addition to educational expertise, the superintendent must be politically astute, capable of navigating a divided political climate, building bipartisan coalitions, and protecting public education from harmful policies. Stakeholders emphasize the need for authentic communication and relationship-building—someone who listens deeply, communicates transparently, and unites educators, families, and policymakers under a shared vision. Humility, emotional intelligence, and a collaborative leadership style are seen as essential, as is the courage to lead boldly, make difficult decisions, and inspire confidence in Michigan’s education future.

SECTION TWO: ONLINE SURVEY RESULTS

Quantitative Results: Priorities

Working with representatives from the MDE State Board, HYA developed a customized survey to garner stakeholders' perceptions regarding the priorities they have for the next educational leader as well as the professional qualifications and personal characteristics they believe are important for the state superintendent to embody. As with the information gathered in the above noted individual interviews, focus groups, and forums, the survey results are used to recruit candidates, as the basis for interview questions, and to assist the board and new superintendent in developing his or her 100 day plan and initial set of annual performance goals.

Stakeholders had the opportunity to participate in the online survey between June 23, 2025, and July 9, 2025. MDE staff and board members made concerted efforts to share the link and QR code with stakeholders across the state. As a result, 1664 stakeholders responded to the survey and 1594 of these respondents completed it. This number is in line with our initial target of 1500 participants. However, the total number of 2,243 comments and 129 valid referrals (those with contact or employment information) for potential consideration were beyond what we expected and speaks well to the stakeholders' interest and engagement in this initial phase of the search process.

By group, the number checking each box was:

- 87 superintendents
- 329 teachers and certificated staff members
- 274 public school employees who are not teachers
- 139 MDE staff
- 396 parents/guardians of current students
- 13 students
- 35 elected officials
- 252 resident taxpayers without children currently in school
- 260 other valued stakeholders

Note that in this survey participants were allowed to check one or more boxes of the categories above. While a small sample of respondents (~4%) in all categories except one checked a second box of the 260 "other valued stakeholders," 119 checked another box so for purposes of analysis we used the 141 who did not check a second box for analysis. It should also be noted that this survey was not a scientific stratified random sampling. The term of art is "survey of convenience," which means that individuals could take it if and when they choose. Also,

respondents could only complete the survey once from one device but could take it from another device.

In the discussion of the results that follow, responses marked “No Opinion” were dropped from the particular question and not used in any of the percentage calculations for the quantitative results.

Quantitative Results: Priorities

Part 2 of the online survey asked respondents to select up to the five top priorities for the next superintendent from a list of these twenty choices.

1. Expand early childhood learning opportunities.
2. Improve student literacy (reading, writing, speaking).
3. Improve the health, safety, and wellness of all learners.
4. Expand secondary learning opportunities for all students.
5. Increase the percentage of all students who graduate from high school.
6. Increase the percentage of adults with a post- secondary credential.
7. Increase the numbers of certified teachers in areas of shortage.
8. Provide adequate and equitable school funding.
9. Develop new educational opportunities to prepare students for future success.
10. Improve professional development, training, and support for staff.
11. Improve communication with all stakeholders.
12. Provide opportunities for parents and educators to provide input into MDE policies.
13. Address the opportunities and threats AI (artificial intelligence) poses for education.
14. Improve programs and support services for students with special needs.
15. Advocate with the state and federal legislatures for high quality public education.
16. Continue efforts to close opportunity and achievement gaps.
17. Other (please specify).

The choices were in randomized order for every survey.

Table 1 shows the percentage of respondents who selected a listed priority in their top five choices and rank (1, 2, 3, 4 or 5) of that priority among the thirteen. For example, 58% of the

935 parents responding had “Maximizing opportunities for increasing staff compensation in support of the retention and recruitment of top-quality teachers” in their top five priorities. This was the highest percentage, hence the number one ranking for parents.

“Improving academic performance” is a close second, in fact statistically close enough to also be considered the top priority. Related to academic performance were the next three parent priorities. In order they are “Evaluating curriculum content and effectiveness,” “Improving instructional practices in the classroom,” and “Improving academic rigor.” The table contains rankings and percentages of the other groups.

Table 1: Ranking and Percentage of Respondents Selecting Priority in Their Top Five (disaggregated by role)

Answer Choices	Stakeholder Group									
	District					Taxpayer w/o				
	Superintendent	Teacher	Employee	MDE Staff	Parent	Student	Elected Official	Children in School	Other	COMPOSITE
Expand early childhood learning opportunities.										
Improve student literacy (reading, writing, speaking).	4 (48)	2 (51)	2 (52)	1 (62)	1 (59)	3 (54)	2 (55)	1 (68)	2 (53)	1 (57)
Improve the health, safety, and wellness of all learners.										
Expand secondary learning opportunities for all students.										
Increase the percentage of all students who graduate from high school.										
Increase the percentage of adults with a post- secondary credential.										
Increase the numbers of certified teachers in areas of shortage.	3 (49)	4 (38)	5 (38)	5 (41)					5 (36)	4 (35)
Provide adequate and equitable school funding.	1 (74)	1 (73)	1 (66)	2 (52)	2 (42)	3 (38)	1 (63)	3 (36)	1 (58)	2 (56)
Develop new educational opportunities to prepare students for future success.						1 (62)				
Improve professional development, training, and support for staff.										
Improve communication with all stakeholders.										
Provide opportunities for parents & educators to provide input into MDE policies.					5 (36)		5 (35)	5 (32)		
Address the opportunities & threats AI (artificial intelligence) poses for education.										
Improve programs and support services for students with special needs.					4 (38)	1 (62)	4 (40)	2 (37)	4 (39)	3 (42)
Advocate with the state & federal legislatures for high quality public education.	2 (61)	3 (49)	4 (39)	3 (50)	3 (38)	3 (38)	3 (43)	4 (35)	3 (40)	5 (35)
Continue efforts to close opportunity and achievement gaps.	5 (38)	5 (36)	3 (40)	4 (45)						

A most notable finding is the consistency among most groups in their top rankings. The next leader should clearly focus on improving student literacy, ensuring adequate and equitable school funding, and advocating with state and federal legislatures for a high quality public education. Thus, it behooves the Board members to find a future educational leader with demonstrated success in these critically important areas.

Although the small number of student respondents does not provide the basis for serious analysis, it is worth noting that when we survey local school districts, we often find that students rank developing/creating/offering new/innovative opportunities to prepare them for future success as their one or two top priorities.

Qualitative Results: Priorities

In addition to the 1594 participants responding to this prompt, 337 offered comments when asked for other priorities. In comparing responses from educators (superintendents, teachers, non-teaching educators, MDE staff) with those stakeholders not currently employed by schools or MDE – labeled “All other respondents” – differences emerged. The first two rows in Table 2 show commonality in support for teachers and student centered, personalized learning yet the other three priorities diverge.

Table 2: Top 5 Other Priorities from Open Ended Response to Q3.

Educators	Non-Educators
Teacher Recruitment, Retention, and Compensation Increase pay, improve working conditions, and support veteran teachers to retain and attract high-quality educators statewide.	Reduce Class Sizes and Improve Teaching Quality Advocate for more teachers, higher pay, and stronger accountability to reduce classroom size, eliminate low-performing practices and educators, and elevate teaching standards across the state
Personalized and Student-Centered Learning Expand competency-based, real-world, and project-based learning models that tailor education to individual student needs and mastery.	Personalized and Student-Centered Learning Increase individualized instruction, support gifted and special education students, and expand access to alternative pathways including vocational, hybrid, and hands-on learning experiences.
Reduce Bureaucratic Burdens and Promote Local Flexibility Eliminate redundant mandates, streamline grant and accountability processes, and allow flexible learning models like work-based and hybrid education.	Refocus on Core Academic Instruction Prioritize reading, writing, math, and science over political or ideological content; eliminate distractions like excessive tech use or unproven educational trends (e.g., DEI, Common Core, excessive testing).
Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Workforce Readiness Prioritize funding and expansion of vocational and CTE programs to prepare students for employment in skilled trades and post-secondary success	Strengthen School Safety, Discipline, and Mental Health Supports Improve security, support mental health services, restore classroom order, and enforce discipline for disruptive or violent students to create safe and stable learning environments.

Equity in Public Education Funding and Access Ensure equitable funding for rural, high-needs, and special education students; protect public school funding from privatization and ensure local school and district accountability for equitable access and opportunities for all students.	Ensure Transparency, Fiscal Responsibility, and Parental Rights Promote transparent governance, efficient use of funds, respect and opportunity for parental input and choice, and a return to traditional teaching values with limited administrative bloat and political interference.
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Q3 asked respondents to **“Please provide any additional comments regarding the priorities for the next superintendent.”** 713 participants provided comments.

We analyzed them by group and listed below are top five priorities for each.

Superintendents:

1. Equitable and Sustainable Funding for All Students

- Develop a *nationally tested, sustainable funding model* that ensures funding follows the student equitably, whether they attend traditional public schools, charters, cyber schools, or other innovative options.
- Prioritize resources for students in poverty and under-resourced communities to close achievement gaps.
- Address disparities in virtual and alternative school funding.

2. Focus on Literacy and Core Academic Achievement

- Launch a *statewide literacy initiative* modeled on proven successes in states like Massachusetts and Mississippi.
- Improve overall academic achievement by identifying and replicating best practices from high-performing states.
- Emphasize rigor, relevance, and relationships in curriculum and instruction.

3. Support Innovation and Personalized Learning

- Advance *personalized, student-centered learning*, including MOOCs, micro-credentialing, career/technical education, and nontraditional pathways.
- Work closely with the Future of Learning Council and other grassroots innovators to modernize Michigan’s educational offerings.
- Encourage flexibility in staffing, certification, and instructional models to meet evolving student needs.

4. Collaborative, Trust-Building Leadership

- Be an *accessible, relationship-oriented leader* who listens first, engages stakeholders statewide, and rebuilds trust among the Department, local districts, and ISDs.
- Foster a positive internal culture in MDE, reduce silos and bureaucracy, and improve systems to better serve schools and families.
- Focus on what is best for all children rather than partisan agendas.

5. Accountability, Transparency, and Results

- Implement *nationally normed assessments* and clear accountability systems that drive real, measurable improvements in student outcomes.
- Maintain high expectations for teacher quality and student learning instead of lowering standards.
- Demonstrate a proven track record of action, responsiveness, and success in prior leadership roles.

Teachers

1. Strengthen and Protect Public Education Funding

- Increase funding for public schools, especially in high-need communities.
- Oppose private school vouchers and unchecked charter school expansion.
- Ensure equitable allocation of resources across districts, schools, and student groups.
- Prioritize funding for essential supports: mental health services, certified school librarians, arts programs, and early literacy initiatives.

2. Support and Retain Educators

- Reevaluate teacher compensation to reflect cost of living, expertise, and workload.
- Address burnout by reducing mandates, supporting mental health, and ensuring manageable class sizes.
- Ensure teacher voice is central to decision-making.

3. Improve Student Learning Conditions and Outcomes

- Invest in literacy and math instruction, personalized learning, and career/technical education.
- Support trauma-informed practices, behavioral interventions, and safe learning environments.
- Reduce focus on standardized testing in favor of meaningful, authentic learning experiences.

4. Ensure Educational Equity and Inclusion

- Guarantee services for students with disabilities and those needing specialized supports.
- Support DEI initiatives, protect access to diverse materials, and reject censorship.
- Advocate for fair access to arts, libraries, and enrichment programs in all schools.

5. Lead with Vision, Innovation, and Non-Partisanship

- Embrace 21st-century learning models, including project-based, hybrid, and technology-enhanced instruction.
- Navigate political environments while staying student-focused and research-driven.
- Be visible, transparent, and committed to long-term systemic improvement, not short-term trends.

Non-Teaching Public School Employees

1. Ensure Equitable and Adequate School Funding

- Advocate for fair, needs-based funding across all districts and public school types (urban, rural, virtual, etc.).
- Prioritize sustainable funding for special education, EL services, mental health, school libraries, support staff, and early childhood education.
- Address funding inequities that affect opportunity gaps and reduce reliance on short-term grant programs.

2. Strengthen Special Education and Student Support Services

- Provide increased funding and staffing for special education teachers, paraprofessionals, psychologists, speech/language pathologists, and related services.
- Reduce caseloads, improve IEP compliance, and ensure access to services for all students with disabilities, including low-incidence populations.
- Expand support for English Learners, foster youth, and students experiencing homelessness.

3. Address the Educator Shortage and Elevate the Profession

- Tackle the teacher and support staff shortages through better compensation, working conditions, and recruitment pathways.
- Invest in professional development, especially in behavior support, literacy, STEM, and inclusive practices.
- Include clerical and paraprofessional voices, value experience alongside credentials, and promote career advancement within schools.

4. Focus on Foundational Learning and Career Readiness

- Make literacy, math, and STEM education core priorities, grounded in research-backed practices (e.g., science of reading).
- Ensure college and career readiness through expanded access to CTE, dual enrollment, apprenticeships, and life skills education.
- Prioritize data-informed, developmentally appropriate instruction, not overreliance on outdated state assessments like M-STEP.

5. Lead with Inclusive, Student-Centered Vision and Innovation

- Champion equity, inclusion, and diversity, especially amid political pushback.
- Embrace new educational models (project-based, hybrid, tech-integrated) to meet modern learner needs.
- Maintain clear, transparent communication with educators, families, and legislators while focusing on student well-being and voice.

MDE Staff

1. Improve Student Learning Outcomes, Especially in Literacy and Special Education

- Accelerate early literacy efforts with leadership grounded in the *science of reading*.
- Strengthen support for students with disabilities, including low-incidence populations, by improving services and staffing.
- Shift focus from graduation rates alone to ensuring foundational academic competencies (reading, writing, math, etc.) are mastered by all students.

2. Transform MDE into a More Supportive, Transparent, and Efficient Agency

- Continue the transition of MDE from a compliance-focused department to a service-oriented agency that provides actionable, timely support to schools.
- Reduce bureaucratic barriers, streamline internal workflows, and empower staff by trusting their expertise and flattening hierarchies.
- Enhance internal communication, transparency, and morale, and ensure MDE staff feel valued, supported, and heard.

3. Advocate Boldly and Strategically for Public Education and Funding

- Champion high-quality, adequately funded public education at both the state and federal levels.
- Work effectively across political divides to advance shared educational goals, protect public education from privatization, and prioritize outcomes over ideology.
- Use stakeholder input (educators, families, business partners, and community leaders) to inform funding priorities and legislative strategies.

4. Strengthen Safe, Inclusive, and Whole-Child Learning Environments

- Promote the *Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC)* framework for student wellness, safety, and connectedness.
- Support student mental health, school climate, and safe, supportive environments that meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of all students.
- Continue equity-focused and anti-racist efforts that protect BIPOC students and ensure every child feels seen, supported, and valued.

5. Embrace Innovation and 21st-Century Learning

- Encourage technology integration, computational thinking, and innovative instructional approaches (e.g., badging, microcredentialing).

- Rethink outdated models like the Carnegie Unit and align graduation pathways with real-world skills, including career and technical education.
- Study successful models from other states and empower Michigan districts to pilot new learning systems through flexible policy and creative partnerships.

Public School Parents

1. Refocus on Core Academic Excellence and Student Achievement

- **Prioritize reading, writing, math, and science** over political or ideological agendas. Many stakeholders call for a return to the basics of education, with high academic expectations and mastery-based instruction.
- Address Michigan's low proficiency rankings by implementing evidence-based curricula (e.g., Science of Reading) and raising standards without simply lowering the bar to boost graduation rates.
- Promote career readiness through expanded CTE, trades, and vocational training, in addition to college pathways.

2. Improve Special Education and Support for Diverse Learners

- Urgently address IDEA compliance failures, improve IEP implementation, and ensure students with disabilities receive adequate support through better funding, staffing, and oversight.
- Expand services for students with autism, ADHD, and other high-needs learners.
- Emphasize inclusion, accessibility, and equity, particularly for students from underrepresented communities or economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

3. Strengthen and Respect the Teaching Profession

- Tackle the teacher shortage crisis by raising salaries, improving working conditions, reducing burnout, and increasing support staff (especially paraprofessionals).
- Invest in teacher recruitment and retention by providing meaningful professional development and raising the standard and attractiveness of the profession.
- Elevate teacher voice in policymaking and restructure compensation to align with cost of living and performance.

4. Reduce Bureaucracy and Increase Local Autonomy

- Shift MDE's role toward supporting districts rather than top-down compliance control.
- Minimize burdensome reporting, streamline grants, and improve responsiveness and transparency at the state level.
- Empower local communities, educators, and parents to make decisions that best serve their students, while maintaining consistent academic standards.

5. Lead with Nonpartisan, Student-Centered Vision

- Stakeholders want a nonpolitical leader who centers decisions on what's best for students—not trends, ideologies, or personal agendas.

- Protect parental rights and engagement, while also advocating for safe, inclusive, and supportive schools for *all* students.
- Build trust through transparency, frequent communication, and a collaborative style that bridges political divides, listens to all perspectives, and fosters unity around educational excellence.

Students (there were only 4 comments)

I'm a big advocate for students having the ability to be heard when their education is on the line. It's very important to me that the next superintendent knows the importance of holding space for student voices.

Foreign language in elementary

More staff in classrooms

Don't run school districts from Lansing

Elected Officials

1. Refocus on Academic Excellence and Foundational Skills

- Prioritize student achievement in reading, writing, and math using traditional, evidence-based instructional methods.
- Move away from overuse of technology (e.g., Chromebooks) in classrooms and instead support mastery-based learning.
- Address early learning gaps, particularly by reforming Head Start and kindergarten readiness programs to better prepare students for school.

2. Strengthen Accountability and Transparent Leadership

- Hold administrators and school leaders accountable when students consistently underperform.
- Promote transparency, fiscal responsibility, and hiring based on merit rather than ideology.
- Ensure the superintendent leads with clear communication and avoids politicizing the role.

3. Expand Career Readiness and Trade Pathways

- Increase skilled trades education and pathways in secondary schools.
- Remove stigma around non-college routes by valuing all post-secondary options, including apprenticeships and career/technical training.
- Update graduation requirements to reflect current and future workforce needs.

4. Ensure Sustainable and Equitable School Funding

- Adjust per-pupil funding models to account for inflation, student needs, and rural district realities.
- Prioritize adequate funding for students with varying needs, including those in small districts, tribal communities, and underserved areas.

5. Embrace Innovation and Safe Learning Environments

- Explore how to safely and effectively integrate AI into teaching and learning.
- Develop school safety plans that include community input and consider new proposals such as incorporating trained personnel with law enforcement backgrounds.
- Consider school scheduling changes (e.g., later start times, more recess) to support student well-being and engagement.

Taxpayers without Children in School

1. Refocus on Core Academic Excellence and Foundational Skills

- Prioritize reading, writing, math, science, and history with research-backed approaches (e.g., phonics-based reading, Orton-Gillingham).
- Move away from excessive screen use in classrooms and restore traditional instruction methods, including cursive writing and critical thinking.
- Support early literacy, aiming for all students to read and calculate proficiently by the end of elementary school.

2. Restore Public Confidence Through Transparency, Accountability, and Neutral Leadership

- Lead with nonpartisan integrity, ensuring schools are focused on learning—not ideological or political agendas.
- Hold administrators, teachers, and programs accountable for student outcomes while promoting fair teacher evaluation systems.
- Engage respectfully with all stakeholders, including parents, educators, legislators, and marginalized communities.

3. Support Safe, Respectful, and Inclusive School Environments

- Address school safety with better discipline systems, smaller class sizes, and mental health supports.
- Create schools where diverse learners feel safe and valued, including students with disabilities, Indigenous students, LGBTQ+ students, and others.
- Balance calls for traditional values with constitutional protections and age-appropriate, inclusive content.

4. Empower Families and Expand Educational Choice

- Respect parental rights in shaping their children’s education, including curriculum transparency and opt-out options.
- Ensure education funding follows students and support a mix of public, charter, private, and home-based options.

- Increase communication with families and provide regular input opportunities into state education policy.

5. Elevate Student Preparation for Life, Work, and Citizenship

- Expand life skills and vocational programs, particularly in grades 11–12 (e.g., trades, financial literacy, civics).
- Promote flexible graduation pathways, meaningful credentials, and alternatives to four-year college.
- Align Michigan’s education system with global best practices, preparing students to be productive, thoughtful citizens—not just future workers.

Other Valued Stakeholders

1. Improve Academic Outcomes through Foundational Skills and Innovation

- Prioritize literacy, numeracy, science, and history.
- Reduce over-reliance on testing; support critical thinking, career readiness, and mastery-based models.

2. Champion Equity and Inclusive Education

- Ensure equitable funding across all districts, especially for rural, under-resourced, and marginalized communities.
- Address racial and economic disparities in achievement and access.
- Prioritize services and support for students with disabilities and English learners.

3. Strengthen the Teacher Workforce and School Support Systems

- Invest in teacher and staff recruitment, retention, and compensation.
- Provide robust training in literacy, SEL, special education, and classroom management.

4. Ensure School Safety, Discipline, and Student Wellbeing

- Improve mental health services, staffing, and student safety protocols.
- Address discipline policies to protect learning environments and staff safety.
- Promote respectful, secure school climates that protect all students and staff.

5. Build Collaborative, Transparent, and Visionary Leadership

- Foster unity across MDE, ISDs, local districts, the legislature, and families.
- Advocate for a bold, learner-centered vision for Michigan’s future.
- Support diverse learning pathways including CTE, AI integration, early learning, and community partnerships.

Addressing the above multiple and occasionally competing priorities presents a significant challenge for the next state superintendent. She or he may be well advised to remind oneself of the adage, “If everything is a priority, nothing is a priority.” It would be wise for the next leader

to work with the board to review the current Strategic Plan as well as these data and identify a small number of focused priorities and actionable goals that will prove best for students.

Summarizing these priorities, HYA notes that cross stakeholder groups—superintendents, teachers, support staff, parents, elected officials, and others—there is broad consensus on the core priorities for Michigan’s next State Superintendent. At the heart of these expectations is a call to refocus on academic excellence. Equally urgent is the demand for equitable and sustainable funding, particularly for under-resourced districts, students with disabilities, English learners, and rural communities. Stakeholders want a funding model that reflects actual student needs and supports the full spectrum of services—special education, mental health, arts, libraries, and early childhood education.

There is also strong emphasis on supporting and retaining educators, with calls for competitive compensation, manageable workloads, and more inclusive professional pathways. The next superintendent must prioritize innovation—including personalized learning, 21st-century skills, CTE, and responsible AI integration—while resisting ideological trends and bureaucracy that hinder progress. Finally, stakeholders consistently emphasize the need for a transparent, student-centered leader who builds trust, communicates clearly, navigates political complexity with integrity, and fosters collaborative, inclusive environments for students, families, and educators.

Quantitative Results: Attributes

Turning to leadership qualifications and experience, respondents were asked to rank the following as: “Extremely important; Important; Somewhat important; Not so important; Not important at all.”

Q4. Experience as an educator?

Q5. Proven ability to manage conflict and change with confidence and equanimity?

Q6. Successful leadership experience in a large and complex organization?

Q7. Expertise in improving students' literacy (reading and writing)?

Q8. Proven success in implementing new and innovative opportunities for recruiting and retaining excellent staff?

Q9. Experiences with legislators to pursue school, district, regional, or state public education needs?

Q10. Created new opportunities for stakeholder engagement and collaboration?

Q11. Ensured high standards of academic excellence for ALL students?

Q12. A comprehensive knowledge of leading educational research and best practices?

Q13. Provided consistent, proactive, and transparent INTERNAL communication to staff?

- Q14. Provided consistent, proactive, and transparent EXTERNAL communication to statewide stakeholders?
- Q15. Successfully addressed the needs of a diverse student population?
- Q16. Distinction as a visible and immersive presence in the community and schools?
- Q17. Successfully articulated a compelling vision for their organization's future and led progress in fulfilling this vision?
- Q18. The proven ability to inspire and motivate all stakeholders?
- Q19. Expertise in serving special education students?
- Q20. An earned doctorate degree?
- Q21. Leadership experience in a field other than education (e.g. business, military, non-profits)?

Paraphrasing the adage we used above, “if everything is important, nothing is important,” HYA uses “Extremely important” as the indicator of a necessary qualification and/or experience. The four leading qualifications/experiences were:

- Experience as an educator.
- Proven ability to manage conflict and change with confidence and equanimity.
- Successfully addressing the needs of a diverse school population.
- Ensuring high standards of academic excellence for ALL students.

Disaggregating the data by role (Table 3), we found more similarities than differences among groups. For example, more than 50% of participants for all groups – with the exception of elected officials note that “Experience as an educator” is extremely important. Recalling the qualitative data in the earlier section, these findings align perfectly with each other.

Table 3: Percentage Ranking a Characteristic, Qualification, or Experience as Extremely Important (disaggregated by role)

	Superintendent n=87	Teacher n=329	District Employee n=274	MDE Staff n=139	Parent n=396	Student n=13	Elected Official n=35	Taxpayer w/o Children in School n=252	Other Valued Stakeholder n=157	COMPOSITE n=1594
Q4. Experience as an educator?	84	88	67	63	57	67	15	53	67	67
Q5. Proven ability to manage conflict and change with confidence and equanimity?	54	49	50	55	47	42	53	47	52	50
Q6. Successful leadership experience in a large and complex organization?	38	37	37	43	35	42	50	31	34	37
Q7. Expertise in improving students' literacy (reading and writing)?	30	37	35	18	44	17	41	39	28	35
Q8. Proven success in implementing innovative opportunities for recruiting/retaining excellent staff?	37	34	30	27	31	33	16	23	30	30
Q9. Experiences with legislators to pursue school, district, regional, or state public education needs?	59	43	41	49	31	17	34	34	39	41
Q10. Created new opportunities for stakeholder engagement and collaboration?	22	15	15	11	19	0	13	11	18	15
Q11. Ensured high standards of academic excellence for ALL students?	48	38	44	34	48	33	47	45	46	44
Q12. A comprehensive knowledge of leading educational research and best practices?	31	42	33	26	30	33	28	28	33	33
Q13. Provided consistent, proactive, transparent INTERNAL communication to staff?	40	38	39	61	35	42	44	35	38	39
Q14. Provided consistent, proactive, transparent EXTERNAL communication to statewide stakeholders?	55	34	38	34	40	33	41	38	36	38
Q15. Successfully addressed the needs of a diverse student population?	42	52	44	40	43	42	44	33	37	44
Q16. Distinction as a visible and immersive presence in the community and schools?	40	27	22	11	24	17	22	16	16	23
Q17. Successfully articulated & fulfilled a compelling vision for their organization's future?	61	32	33	36	25	27	47	32	37	33
Q18. The proven ability to inspire and motivate all stakeholders?	41	27	27	31	33	8	25	23	30	27
Q19. Expertise in serving special education students?	13	28	25	11	31	25	25	22	22	25
Q20. An earned doctorate degree?	10	9	10	11	9	17	9	11	10	10
Q21. Leadership experience in a field other than education (e.g. business, military, non-profits)?	3	3	7	3	9	25	19	8	8	7
KEY: Green shading = 50%+ of respondents rated this item as "Extremely Important"										
Yellow shading = 40-49% of respondents rated this item as "Extremely Important"										

Likewise, more than 40% of all participants ranked the “Proven ability to manage conflict and change with confidence and equanimity” as an important characteristic. When conducting interviews, focus groups, and forums we frequently heard that one of the great challenges will be navigating a seemingly increasingly polarized political climate and thus it will take someone with a calm, thoughtful demeanor who can communicate with confidence and be trusted not to be overly reactive to external forces. Participants are also looking for a leader who “successfully addressed the needs of a diverse population,” diverse not just in terms of ethnicity but also socioeconomics, geographical diversity, community cultures, and the like.

It should be noted that there were very few large differences (15+ percentage points) among groups (students are not included because of the small number of respondents) indicating a closer alignment for desired characteristics and qualifications than agreement on priorities. It is worth noting a few outliers including the high importance of “internal communication” for MDE staff as well as the strong desire among superintendents to have a leader who will articulate and fulfill a compelling vision for Michigan’s future.

Qualitative Survey Results: Attributes

In addition to the multiple choice prompts, participants were invited to provide open ended responses to “ the most important PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES you believe are essential traits for the next superintendent to have. (For example, integrity, empathy, courage, political savvy ...)” We received 1,193 comments to this prompt. Responses from all groups were closely aligned and can be distilled into these eleven traits:

1. **Integrity** – Above all, stakeholders want a superintendent with unwavering moral character, transparency, and a strong ethical foundation to make decisions in the best interest of students.
2. **Empathy** – The ability to deeply understand and respond to the needs of students, educators, families, and marginalized communities with compassion and care.
3. **Courage** – A bold leader willing to stand up to political pressure, challenge the status quo, and advocate fiercely for all students, even when it is difficult or unpopular.
4. **Political Savvy** – An astute navigator of Michigan’s complex political landscape who can build coalitions, influence policy, and advocate effectively without being overtly partisan.
5. **Communication Skills** – A clear, honest, and persuasive communicator who listens well, speaks with purpose, and builds trust across diverse stakeholder groups.
6. **Leadership Experience in Education** – Proven experience leading within educational settings, especially with knowledge of the classroom and systems-level reform.

7. **Commitment to Equity and Inclusion** – A demonstrated belief in diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion, with the ability to advocate for underrepresented and vulnerable student populations.
8. **Visionary Thinking** – The ability to articulate a bold, student-centered vision for Michigan’s educational future and develop strategic plans with measurable outcomes.
9. **Collaboration and Relationship Building** – A connector who values input from others, works across boundaries, and empowers teams to co-lead meaningful change.
10. **Resilience and Adaptability** – Someone with grit and flexibility, able to withstand criticism, learn from mistakes, and adapt in response to emerging needs and challenges. The superintendent must be willing to listen, to learn, and adapt. Humility and openness are essential to adaptability.
11. **Accountability and Results Orientation** – one who is focused on measurably improving student learning and well-being, clearly reporting outcomes, and holding oneself and systems – local, regional, and state – accountable for producing results.

Here are five relevant verbatim quotes supporting these characteristics:

We have to have a leader who is passionate about transforming the system and has experience in doing the work themselves. They need to be an effective communicator but most importantly, they have to be able to articulate a vision for where our state will be in 3-5 years. We have a window of opportunity right now to drive meaningful change in Michigan schools. We need a leader who has done the real work and can build the capacity of others to do the work as well ... This next hire is a milestone hire. Be courageous with this hire.

They must be willing to stand up for what’s right—calmly, thoughtfully, and consistently. Leadership requires presence, conviction, and a genuine commitment to both children and the people who serve them.

A willingness to listen and learn; ability to trust the expertise of others (governor, legislature, MDE staff, ISDs, districts, and others); a commitment to accountability for themselves as well as others; awareness that guiding statewide policy is different than running a local district.

integrity, thick skin, ability to work professionally with a wide range of stakeholders - even those with differing viewpoints, courage to stand up for those who need it the most (vulnerable students, department staff, teachers) - especially in tough or politically sensitive times, kindness, humility, quick learner, ability to manage/delegate, ability to grasp important details without micromanaging, ability to multi-task, willingness to learn/acknowledge what they don't yet know, ability to trust experts in the department and wisdom to ask the tough questions when

needed, curiosity (why are things like they are and could they be improved?), professionalism, and a sense of humor (doesn't take him/herself too seriously). Bottom line - someone who focuses on what's best for kids and has the administrative skills to carry out the vision in a complex and diffusely structured system. :)

Humility and willingness to listen and learn from others' experience and expertise. A relationship builder. Someone more interested in outcomes than personal recognition or power. A demonstrated ability to work in a system where authority is distributed (in other words, they must be collaborative and compromising to get things done, rather than being able to call all the shots or let ego drive their agenda). Someone who understands or who will seek to understand the different perspectives and needs of urban, rural, and suburban school districts.

In closing, we found most participants to be thoughtful and engaged respondents. While some survey comments were lighthearted and humorous, there were also a few inflammatory and derogatory ones; however, in our professional opinion those who took time to complete the survey provided helpful, thoughtful feedback and expressed their thoughts clearly. Distilling enormous amount of data into one paragraph, our team concludes that the ideal candidate for Michigan's next State Superintendent is a person of *unshakable integrity*, with the courage to make difficult, student-centered decisions in a politically complex environment. They should be an experienced educator who deeply understands the day-to-day realities of classrooms and brings a fierce commitment to equity, transparency, and public education. This individual is *empathetic, honest, and inclusive*, consistently responsive to the voices and needs of underrepresented, underserved learners. They must be a *visionary communicator*, capable of inspiring trust, building coalitions, and driving measurable, systemic change. Politically savvy yet nonpartisan, they balance bold advocacy with the humility to listen and collaborate. Above all, this leader must embody compassion, accountability, and a relentless belief in every student's potential, while maintaining a clear moral compass and consistent thoughtful, collaborative, innovative leadership.

SECTION 3: LIST OF DESIRED CHARACTERISTICS AND QUALIFICATIONS

From the interviews, focus groups, forums, and survey results, we have identified these primary desired characteristics and qualifications for the next State Superintendent of Michigan. As noted earlier, these will be used throughout the recruitment and selection process to identify highly qualified candidates and ultimately the individual that the State Board will select to lead and serve Michigan's present and future students and educators as well as the Michigan Department of Education and ultimately to ensure that all of Michigan's residents benefit from the highest quality of public school education.

1. **Integrity and Ethical Leadership** – Demonstrates unwavering moral character, transparency, and the ability to consistently act in the best interests of students and public education.
2. **Visionary and Outcomes-Oriented** – Brings a bold, future-focused vision with the ability to inspire and drive measurable improvement in student success.
3. **Deep Educational and Systems Experience** – Has experience as an educator with a comprehensive understanding of classroom realities and systems-level leadership.
4. **Equity-Driven and Student-Centered** – Prioritizes educational justice, advocates for underserved populations, and is committed to closing achievement and opportunity gaps.
5. **Empathetic and Inclusive** – Understands and responds compassionately to the needs of diverse students, educators, and families, especially those from marginalized communities.
6. **Strong Communicator and Listener** – Communicates clearly, honestly, and persuasively while actively listening and building trust across all stakeholder groups.
7. **Politically Savvy/Acumen/Acuity** – Navigates Michigan's complex political environment with skill and diplomacy, building coalitions and advancing education policy without partisanship.
8. **Collaborative Relationship-BUILDER** – Brings people together, values diverse perspectives, and empowers others through shared leadership and meaningful, inclusive engagement.
9. **Resilient and Courageous** – Leads with strength and adaptability in the face of adversity, makes difficult decisions with children's welfare at top of mind, and remains student-focused under pressure.
10. **Strategic Thinker and Effective Manager** – Aligns vision, goals, people, and resources; delegates effectively and ensures coherent execution across the education system.
11. **Authentic, Humble, and Trustworthy** – Leads with humility, seeks feedback, uplifts others, and earns the confidence of colleagues, educators, and the public.

12. Committed to Whole-Child Success – Supports holistic student development by integrating wellness, mental health, the arts, cultural relevance and social-emotional learning into the academic mission.

In closing, we have pulled one representative quote from the thousands we heard that arguably best summarizes stakeholders' desires:

“We have to have a leader who is passionate about transforming systems and has experience in doing the work themselves. They need to be an effective communicator but most importantly, they have to be able to articulate and execute a vision for where our state will be in 3-5 years. We have a window of opportunity right now to drive meaningful change in Michigan schools. We need a leader who has done the real work and can build the capacity of others to do the work as well ... This next hire is a milestone hire. Be courageous with this hire.

They must be willing to stand up for what's right—calmly, thoughtfully, and consistently. Leadership requires presence, conviction, and a genuine commitment to both children and the people who serve them.

A willingness to listen and learn; ability to trust the expertise of others; a commitment to accountability for themselves as well as others; awareness that guiding statewide policy is different than running a local district; meaningfully engaging parents and partners are all of paramount importance.”

Respectfully,

Glenn “Max” McGee, Mike Richie, and Connie Collins
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