



# *News Release*

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## **Discussions Begin with Seven New Districts To Build Partnership Agreements**

*32 Schools Exit Priority School Status*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### ***Exiting Priority School Status***

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

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

### ***Next Steps***

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Partnership District receives maximum support for success from MDE, as well as from the partners and other state agencies.

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

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## **New Partnership Districts**

### **American International Academy-Elementary**

#### **Battle Creek Public Schools**

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

### **David Ellis Academy**

### **Henry Ford Academy: School of Creative Studies-Elementary**

#### **Lansing Public Schools**

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

### **Mildred C. Wells Preparatory Academy**

### **Wayne-Westland Community School District**

Hoover Elementary School

## **Current Partnership Districts Adding Schools**

### **Benton Harbor Area Schools**

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

### **Detroit Public School Community District**

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

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

**Pontiac City School District**

Owen Elementary  
Pontiac Middle School (Optional)

**Saginaw City School District**

Jessie Rouse School  
Arthur Hill High School (Optional)  
Thompson Middle School (Optional)

**Schools Exiting Priority School Status**

**Arenac Eastern School District**

Arenac Eastern High School

**Battle Creek Montessori Academy**

**Battle Creek Public Schools**

Post Franklin School

**Bay City School District**

MacGregor Elementary

**Bear Lake Schools**

Bear Lake High School

**Benzie County Central Schools**

Betsie Valley School

**Carney-Nadeau Public Schools**

Carney-Nadeau School

**Cesar Chavez Academy-Elementary**

**Clintondale Community Schools**

Charles C. McGlennen School

Robbie Hall Parker School

**Detroit Leadership Academy-Elementary**

**Detroit Public Schools Community District**

Cooke Elementary

Western International High School

**Francis Reh Public School Academy**

**Grand Rapids Public Schools**

Coit Arts Academy

Dickenson School

**Hale Area Schools**

Hale High School

**Jackson Public Schools**

McCulloch School

**Kalamazoo Public Schools**

Northeastern Elementary

Northglade Montessori School

**Lansing Public School District**

Cavanaugh School

Willow School

**Mount Clemens Community School District**

Seminole Academy

**Muskegon, Public Schools of the City of**

Marquette Elementary

**Oak Park, School District of the City of**

Key Elementary

Pepper Elementary

**Plymouth-Canton Community Schools**  
Starkweather Academy at Fiegel

**Port Huron Area School District**  
Woodrow Wilson Elementary

**The James and Grace Lee Boggs School**

**Washington-Parks Academy**  
Lincoln-King Academy

**Wayne-Westland Community School District**  
Alexander Hamilton Elementary  
David Hicks School