

Designing a Healthy and Healing Community School System in Michigan

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School of Education
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **BOULDER**

2025

Presentation Overview



**Project
Background**



**Estimated Cost
of Michigan Healthy and
Healing Community School
System**



**13 Recommendations
For Michigan Healthy and
Healing Community School
System**

Section I

Project Background



About the National Education Policy Center (NEPC)

Mission & Vision

Our mission is to provide high-quality information that supports democratic deliberation about education policy.

NEPC is a research center housed at the CU Boulder School of Education. We believe that the democratic governance of public education is strengthened when policies are based on sound evidence and support a multiracial society that is inclusive, kind, and just.



About the Price of Opportunity Project

Project Team

The Price of Opportunity is a national collaborative project between several researchers from multiple educational institutions.

As such, all members of our team have made substantial contributions to the research design, data collection and data analysis.



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UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON



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NEPC's Price of Opportunity Project

PROJECT GOALS



Challenge

lawmakers and others to confront what's actually needed to provide equal and high-quality learning opportunities for all students.



Aim

to shift the discourse and logic that dominate deliberations about school resources and about broader social and economic policies.

NEPC's Price of Opportunity Project: Strategies

Healthy and Healing Community School System

What resources do schools need to counterbalance larger social inequities?



Social & Economic Policies

What broader changes and resources are needed to address the societal inequalities that impact schools?



NEPC's Price of Opportunity Project: Strategic Approaches

Healthy and Healing Community School System

Approach #1

Cost-out Interventions from Price of Opportunity Panel.

Approach #2

Cost-out Interventions from Researcher Judgement Panel.

Social & Economic Policies

Approach #3

Estimate cost of crucial additional US policy interventions.

Approach #4

Estimate % of GDP that OECD countries spend on social & economic policies.

Price of Opportunity Project in Michigan

In Michigan, NEPC and MEJC, worked to describe and cost out a statewide system that could create healthy and healing community schools for all students. Our work builds on previous school funding research in the state (like work from the School Finance Research Collaborative).





About Michigan Education Justice Coalition (MEJC)

Mission & Vision

The Michigan Education Justice Coalition is a statewide network committed to advocating for equitable public education policies and funding to create safe and healthy learning environments. We envision a Michigan where public schools get the support they need, strengthen communities and making them better places to live for all of us. MEJC's own publication from this work can be found at: <https://www.michiganedjustice.org/cookbook>

**Michigan
Education
Justice
Coalition**



MEJC's Healthy and Healing Community School System Platform

- 1 A fully funded public education system based on student need
- 2 Safe and supportive school communities
- 3 A challenging and equitable curriculum, systems to ensure that all students can access the curriculum and tests that measure real learning
- 4 Students drive Michigan's education system
- 5 School priorities match the values and needs of students, educators, and community members



Section II

Estimated Cost of a Michigan Healthy and Healing Community School System



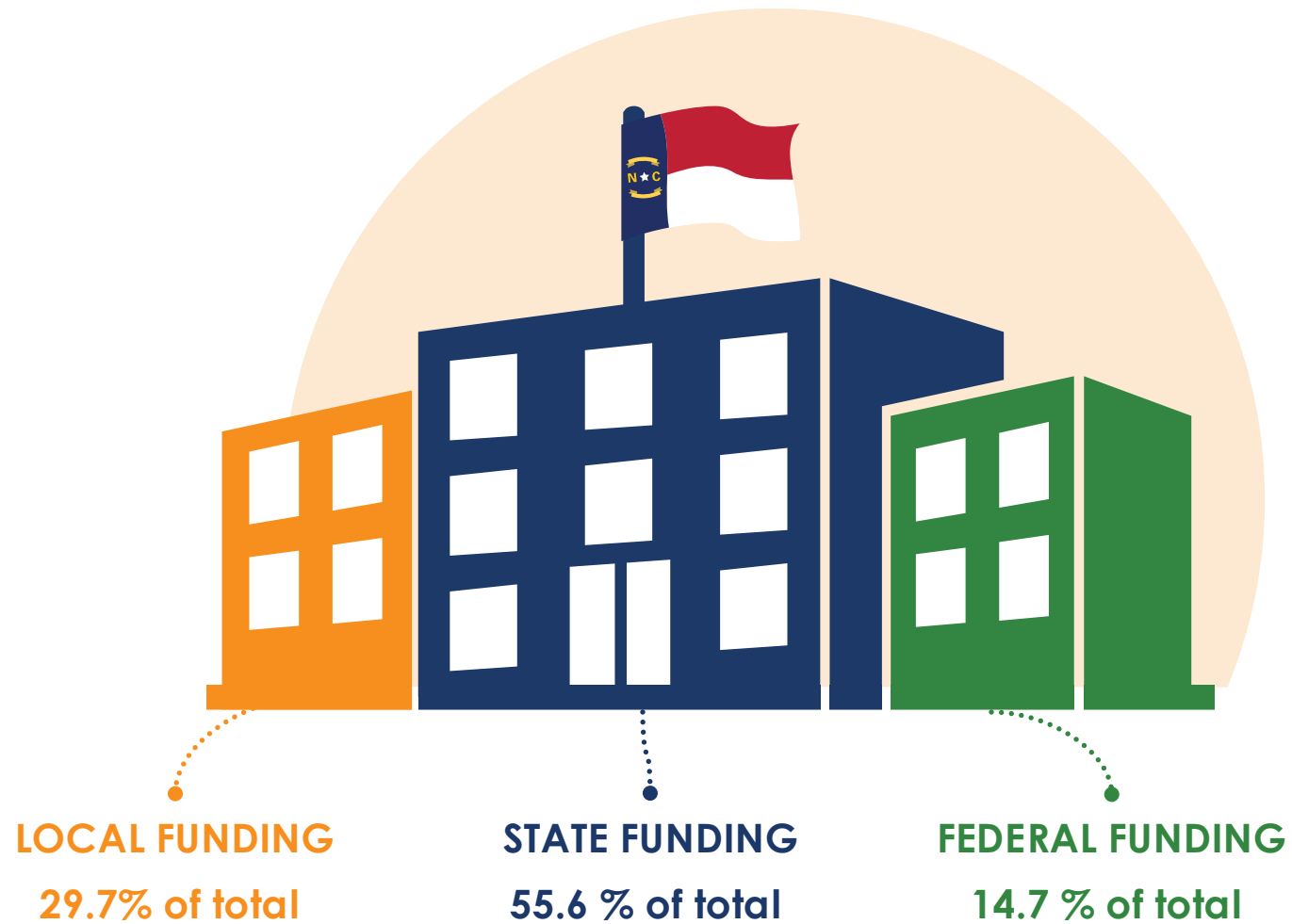
What does a Healthy and Healing Community School System Look Like?

Students from all backgrounds and circumstances have educational opportunities that prepare them to thrive economically and socially in college, career, and life.

The system has the resources and programs to help students overcome the challenges they face inside and outside of schools.

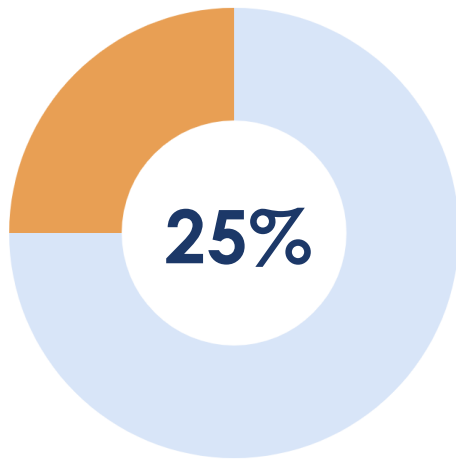


Who Funds Michigan's Schools?

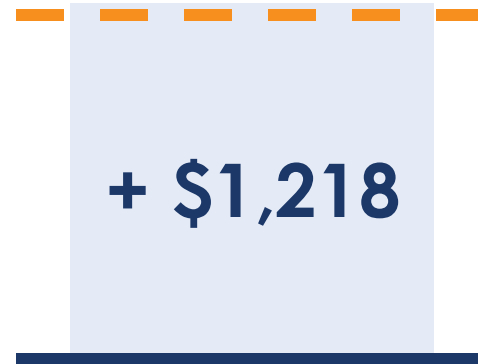


*Note: Data is from FY22 and includes COVID relief.
These data include infrastructure
Citation: NCES, 2024*

MI PreK-12 Education Funding in 2022



25% of Adjusted Gross Appropriations went to school aid*



Michigan's funding level is \$1,218 per pupil above the national average**



Michigan's per student funding level ranked 15th**

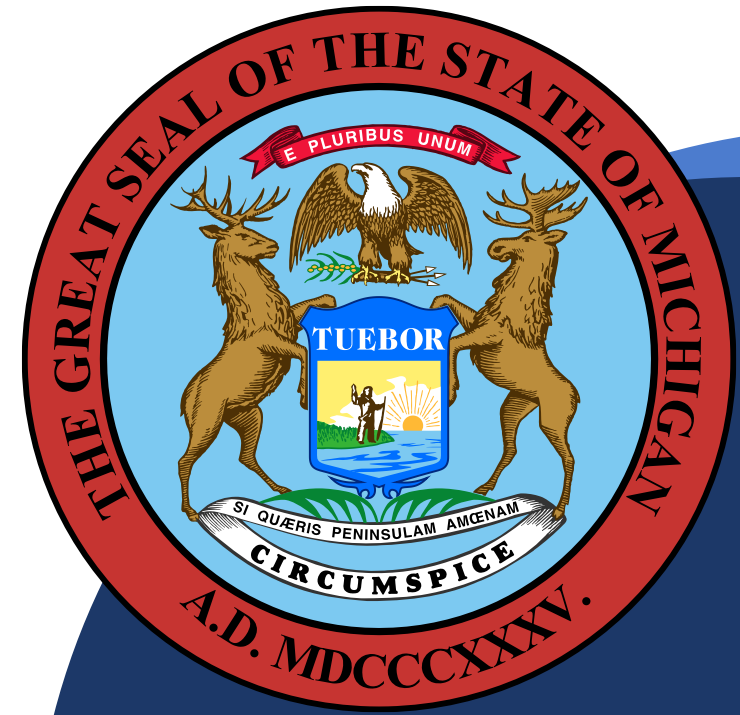
*Note: Data is from FY22 and includes COVID relief. These data include infrastructure.
Sources: *MI House Fiscal Agency 2021; **Education Law Center 2024*

Proposal A | 1994

Proposal A is the bedrock for Michigan's school finance system.

The referendum called for lower property taxes and “equalized per-pupil funding across districts” (ELC, 2023b, p. 3).

To accomplish this, it limited property tax increases by districts and implemented a per-pupil funding allowance “controlled by the state” (ELC, 2023b, p. 3)



Recent MI School Finance Studies

- **2016:** Michigan State Legislature funds a school adequacy study.
- **2017:** Lieutenant Governor commissions a study on Special Education.
- **2018:** School Finance Research Collaborative (SFRC) study to determine cost to fund an adequate school system in Michigan.
- **2021:** Second SFRC related study updates findings based on new laws, costs, and other changes in Michigan.
- **2022:** Third SFRC study focuses on the cost of equitable transportation.

Citation: SFRC, 2025



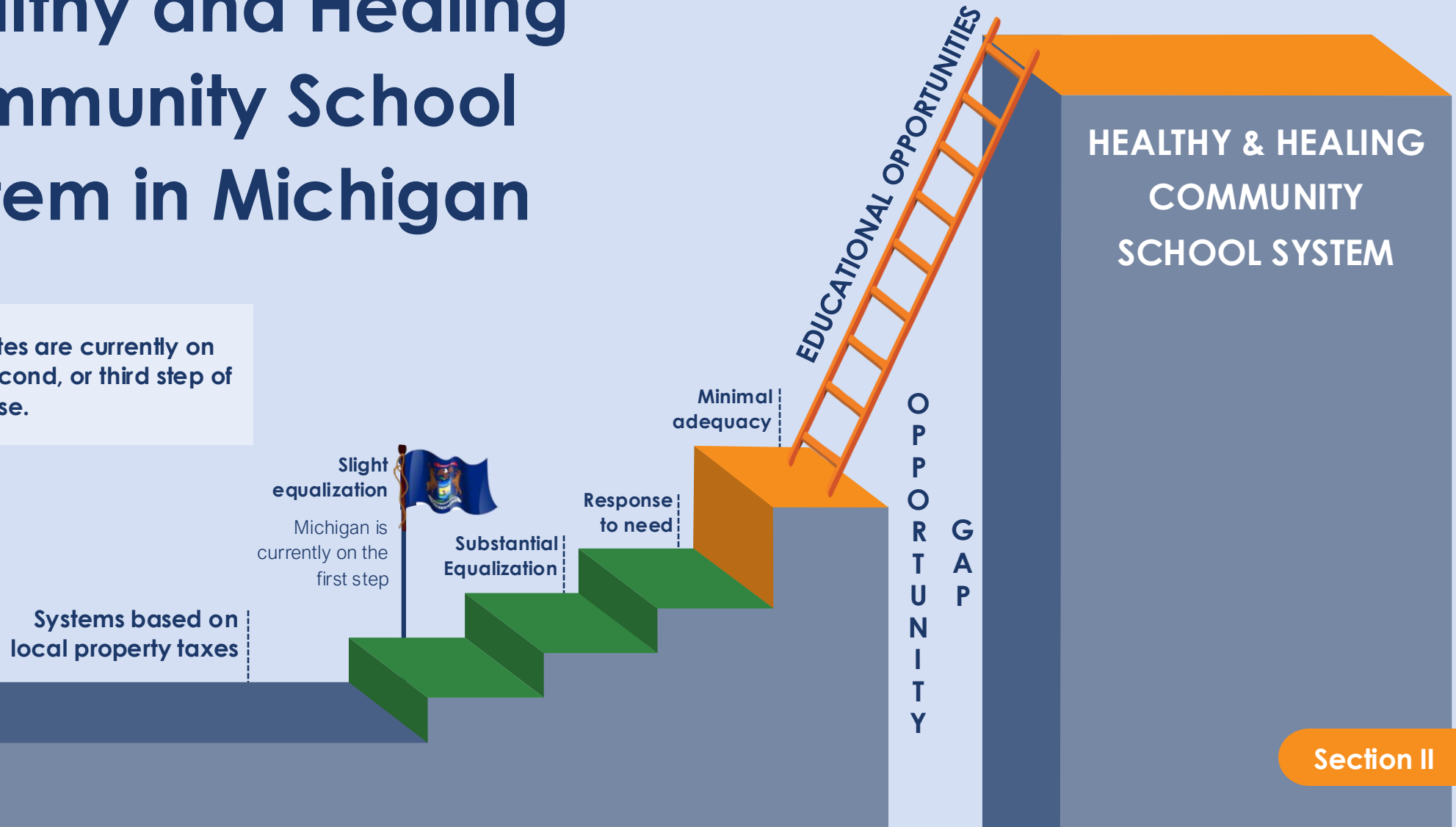
Envisioning Michigan's Healthy and Healing Community School System

What would it take to move Michigan from its current “slight equalization” model of public schools to a system of "healthy and healing community schools" that all children deserve?



Climbing Towards Healthy and Healing Community School System in Michigan

All U.S. States are currently on the first, second, or third step of the staircase.



What's in the Opportunity Gap?



Social Inequality

Inequalities in areas such as transportation, nutrition, healthcare, pollution, racism, poverty, and discrimination.



Differences in School Quality

Differences in areas such as school funding, facilities, curriculum, access to qualified teachers, and learning materials.

How Much Would a Healthy and Healing Community School System Cost?



\$46.25B to \$53.75B



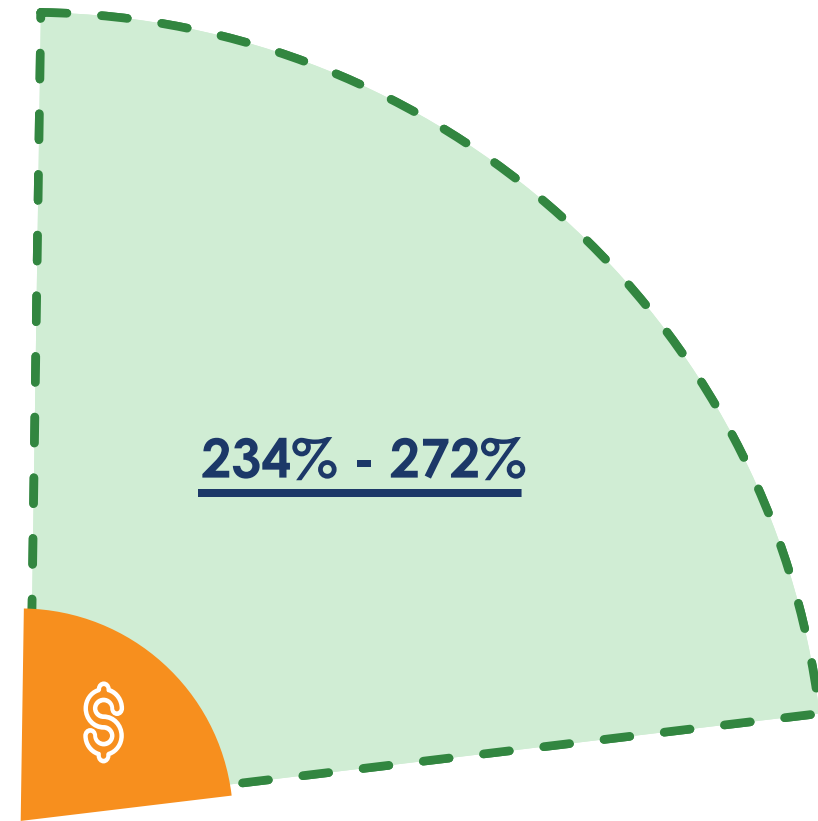
How much does the state education budget allocation increase?

234%-272% increase

It would increase the state's education budget allocation from the FY22 figure of approximately \$14.1 Billion

Note: Figures do not include capital expenses other than maintenance paid through operating budgets or ESSER (COVID-relief) spending.

Citation: NCES, 2024



How much does this increase K-12 spending, including state, federal and local?

219% - 255% increase

It would increase overall K-12 spending, including federal and local contributions from the FY22 figure of approximately \$21.1B

Note: figures do not include capital expenses other than maintenance paid through operating budgets or ESSER (COVID-relief) spending.

Citation: NCES, 2024



How much does this increase to overall education spending increase total per-pupil spending?

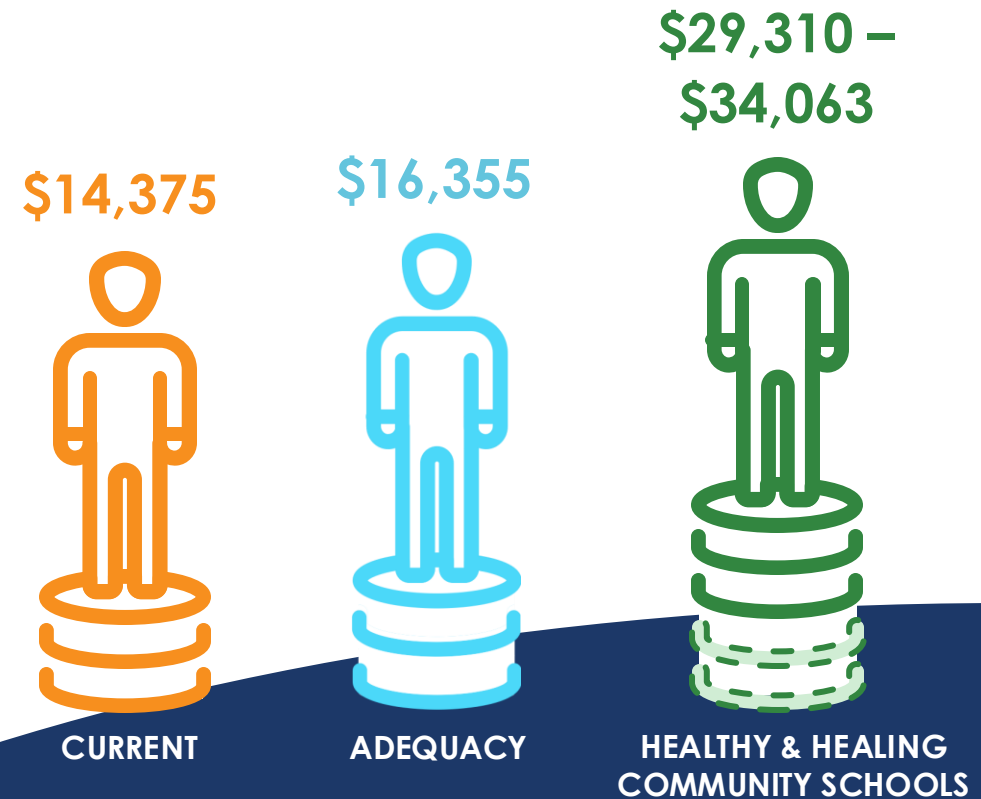
204% - 237% Increase

- FY22 per pupil spending in MI is \$14,375.*
- Per pupil spending at the level of adequacy is \$16,335. **
- Per pupil spending for a Healthy and Healing Community School System would be \$29,310 - \$34,063

Note: Figures do not include capital expenses other than maintenance paid through operating budgets or ESSER (COVID-relief) spending.

These calculations include new pre-k students.

*Citations: *NCES, 2024; **Ed Law Center, 2023b*



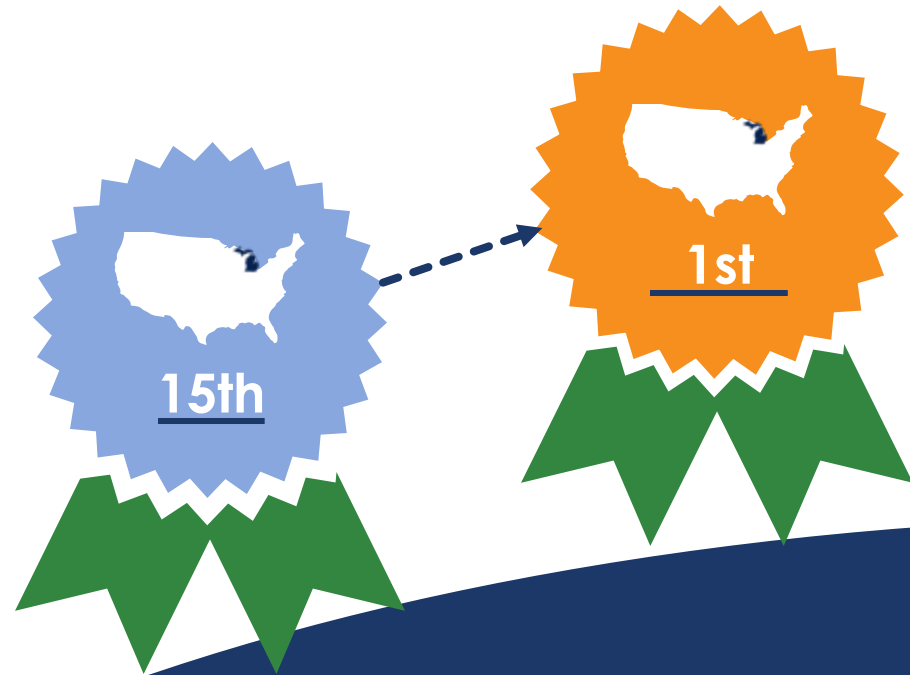
How would this increase to overall education spending raise Michigan's ranking?

Top Three

In FY22, MI was 15th in per student education spending. If the per pupil spending were in the \$29,310 - \$34,063 range, it would be ranked first overall.

Note: figures do not include capital expenses other than maintenance paid through operating budgets or ESSER (COVID-relief) spending.

Citation: ELC, 2024



How We Calculated This Number

\$46.25B to \$53.75B

We grounded cost assumptions in data from experts, state reports, and databases and relied on four methodological principles:

- The best, most reasonable estimates
- Synergies in programmatic costs
- A justifiable range for cost estimates

More about methodology:

<https://nepc.colorado.edu/initiative/price-opportunity>



Section III

13 Recommendations for Healthy and Healing Community School System in Michigan

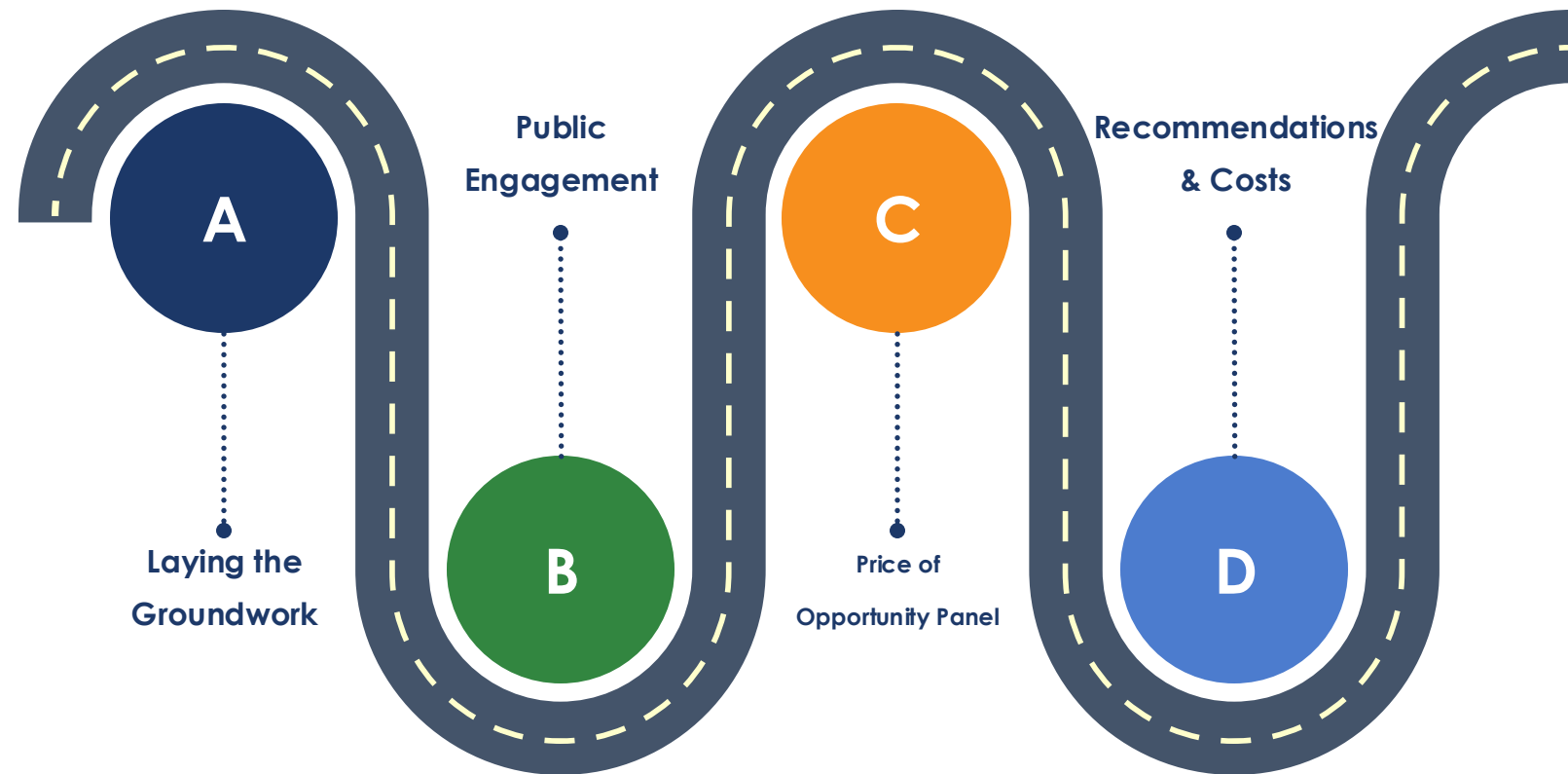


Getting to 13 Recommendations

Phases A-D

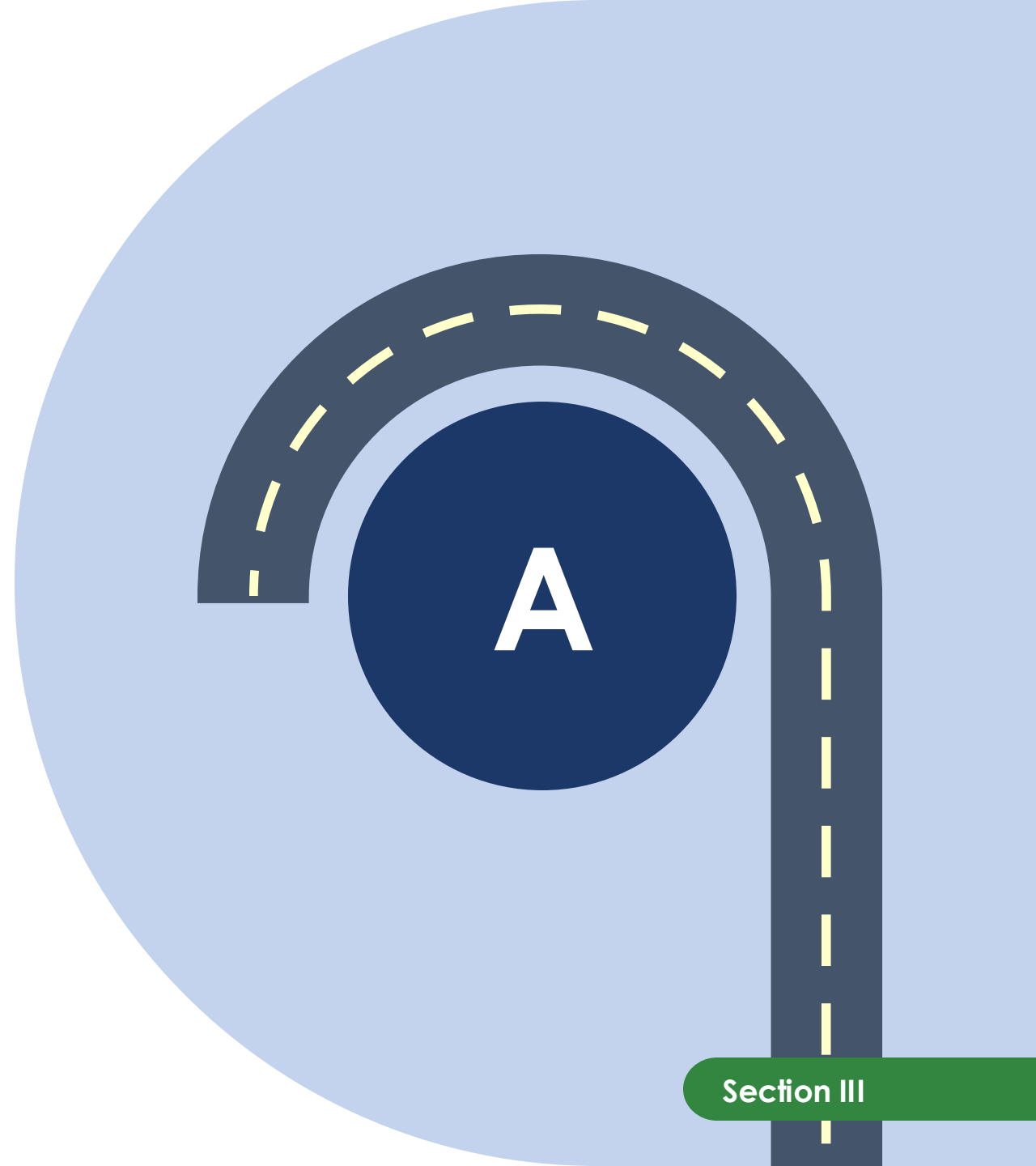
Between 2022 and 2024, the collaboration between NEPC and MEJC developed and tested a costing strategy tailored to the state of Michigan.

Phases A-C were data collection, and Phase D was data analysis and costing-out.



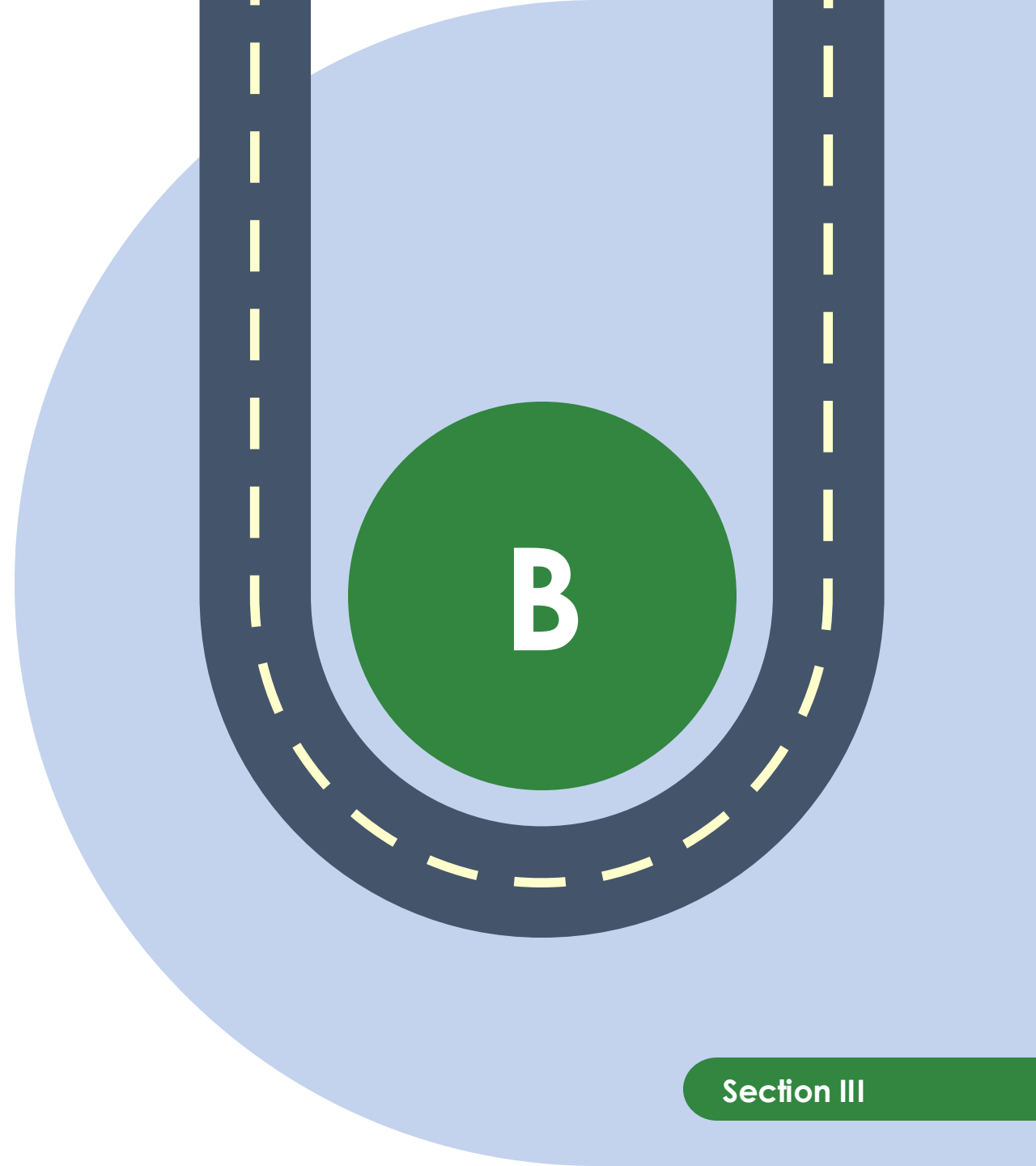
Phase A: Laying the Groundwork

First, NEPC and MEJC took time to build a strong relationship. Then, through an extensive literature review and one-on-one interviews, we gained foundational knowledge of school finance in Michigan, setting the stage for informed discussions.



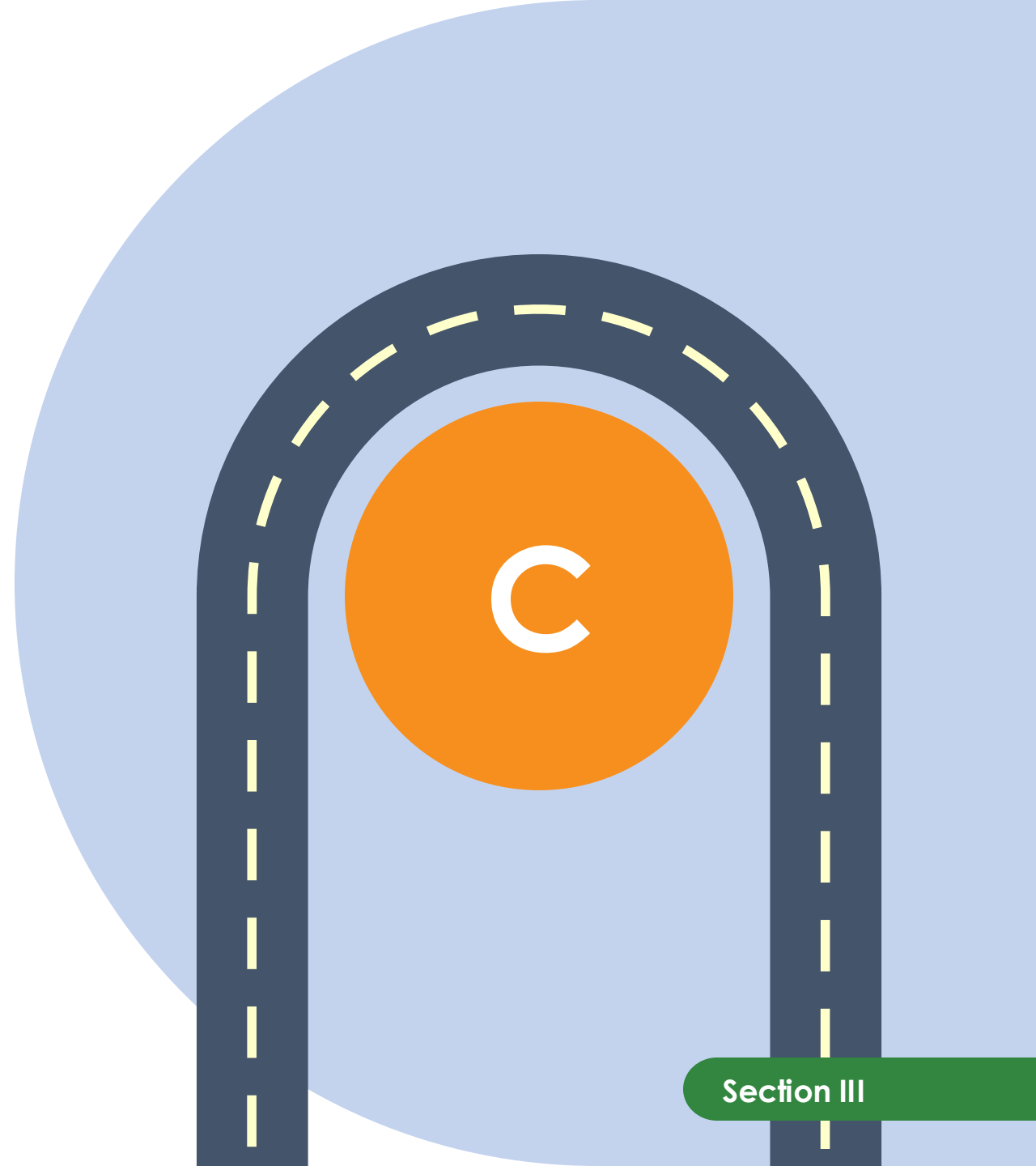
Phase B: Public Engagement

- We held five regional community focus groups across the state, facilitated with the support of MEJC partners.
- The sessions posed key questions based on insights gathered in Phase A.
- The outcomes informed discussions at the statewide convening.



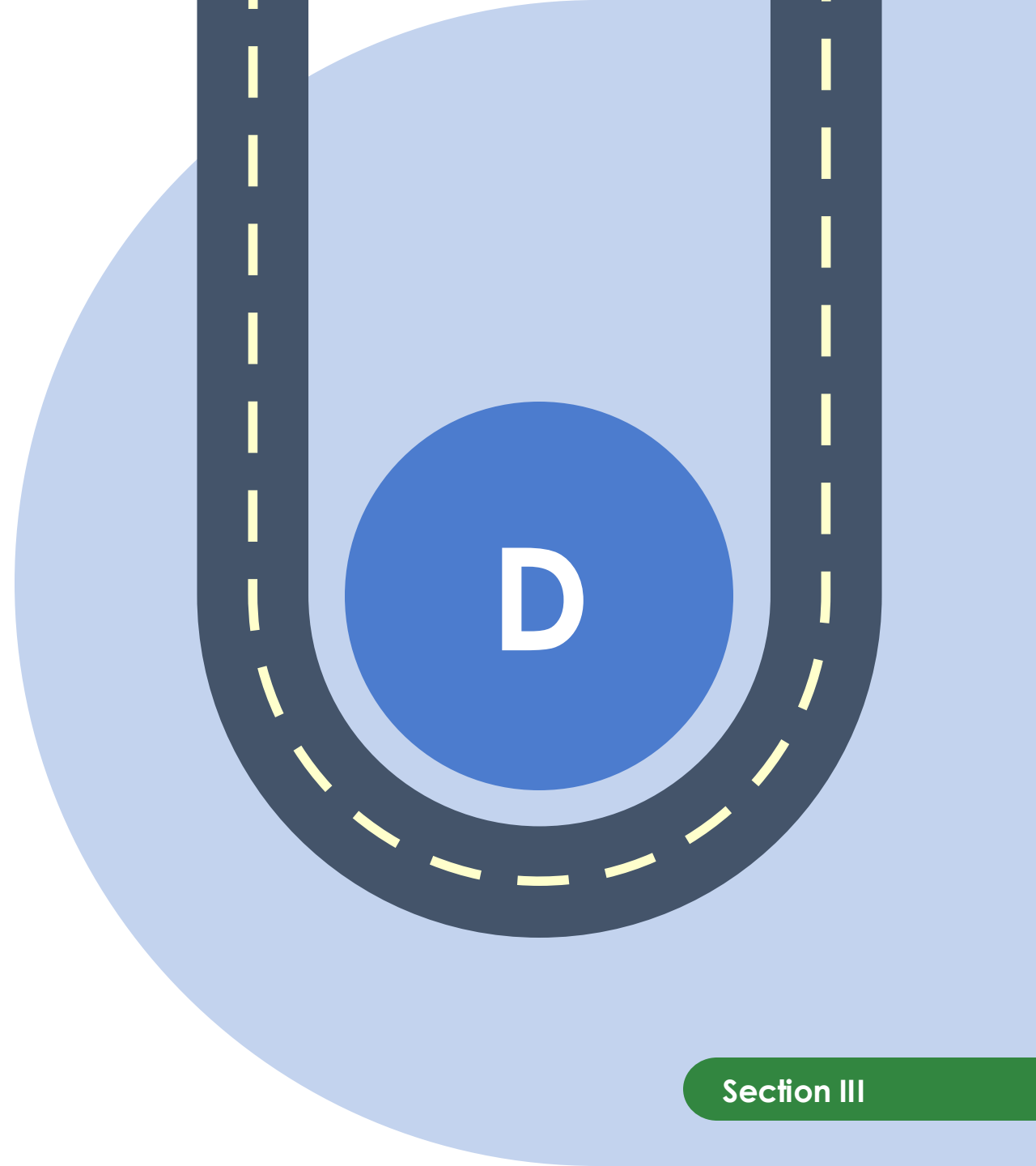
Phase C: Price of Opportunity Panel

A statewide Price of Opportunity Panel drew on the expertise of stakeholders including teachers, school leaders, parents, students, and community advocates to suggest the specific resources and programs necessary for a "Healthy and Healing Community School System" in Michigan. These conversations were recorded and transcribed, marking the completion of data collection.



Phase D: Recommendations and Costs

- Research analysts reviewed audio transcripts from the statewide panel and identified key programs and practices needed for a Healthy and Healing Community School System.
- We estimated costs for implementing the envisioned school system and developed a set of 13 recommendations and aligned them with MEJC's 5 policy platforms for healthy and healing schools.



MEJC's Healthy and Healing Community School Platform

- 1 A fully funded public education system based on student need
- 2 Safe and supportive school communities
- 3 A challenging and equitable curriculum, systems to ensure that all students can access the curriculum and tests that measure real learning
- 4 Students drive Michigan's education system
- 5 School priorities match the values and needs of students, educators, and community members



A fully funded public education system based on student need

1. Well prepared, high quality and supported teachers and administrators in every school and district.
2. Optimized class sizes and schedules across the education system.
3. Upgraded and maintained infrastructure.



Safe and supportive school communities

4. A positive school climate in every school.

5. A system of inclusive and restorative conflict prevention and resolution in every school.



A challenging and equitable curriculum, systems to ensure that all students can access the curriculum and tests that measure real learning

- 6. Relevant, rigorous, antiracist, and inclusive curriculum for all students
- 7. A meaningful and reasonable assessment and accountability system.



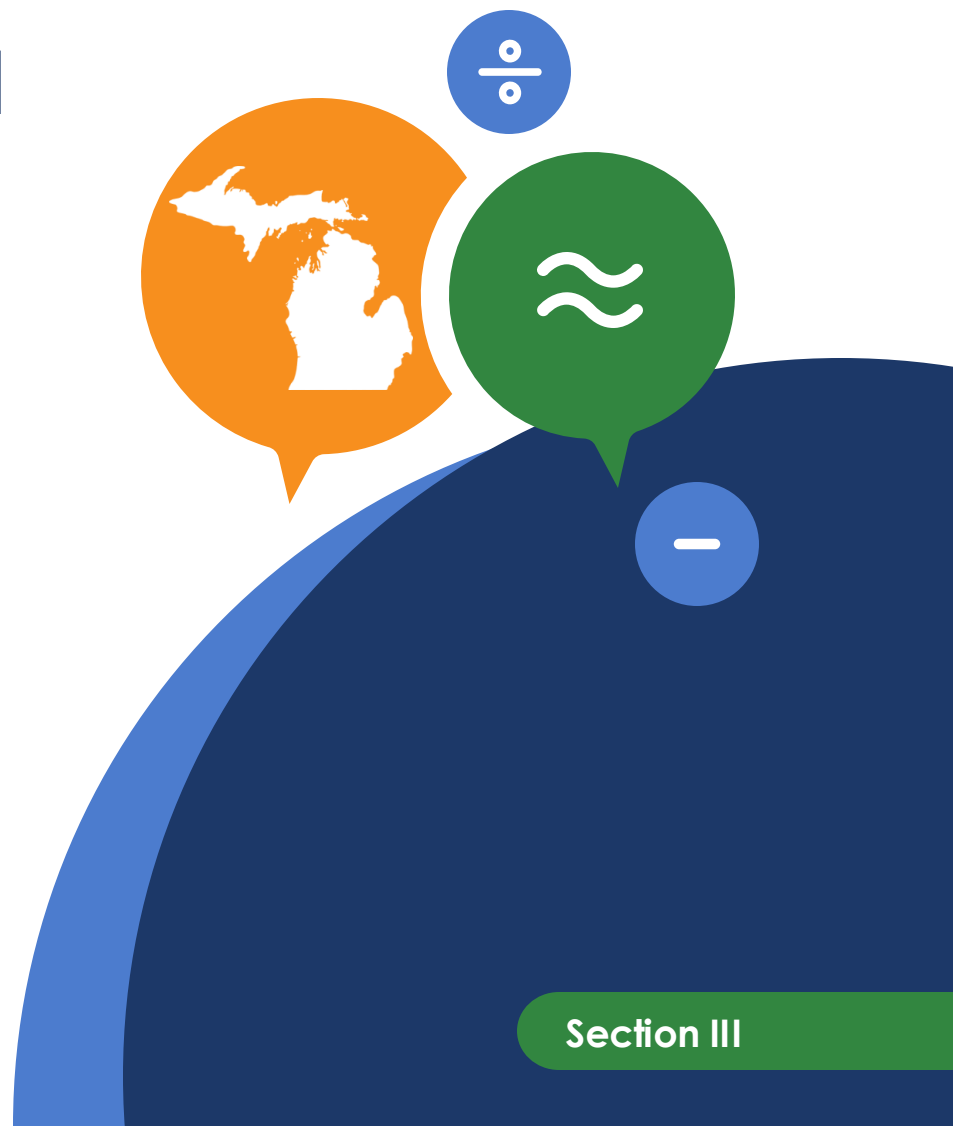
Students drive Michigan's education system.

8. A robust and meaningful system of student engagement in decision making.



School priorities match the values and needs of students, educators, and community members.

- 9. An empowering system of supports for linguistically diverse learners and families
- 10. A strong system of supports for special education
- 11. A strong system of integrated student support services
- 12. A robust and multifaceted family engagement system
- 13. Consideration of unique regional needs.



1

Well prepared, high quality and supported teachers and administrators in every school and district



1

Ingredients for well prepared, high quality and supported teachers and administrators in every school and district

- Increase compensation for school leaders and teachers.
- Increase discretionary budgets for school principals and teachers.
- Intentionally recruit and support BIPOC principals and teachers.
- Create mentorship opportunities for school principals.
- Identify and make accessible paid internship initiatives for student teachers.
- Make mental and physical wellness programs accessible to all staff.
- Offer professional development opportunities for teachers and principals.
- Provide building-level technical assistance liaisons.



Rec. 1 What Participants Shared



We need to hire more teachers of color, especially if you're in an urban school district [where] 90% of your population [of] students are [students] of color. Those students don't get a chance to see anybody that looks like them.”



Admin need paid trained support staff on specialized tasks, like a communication liaison, a D.E.I. liaison, a financial liaison. I'd love that support staff for every administrator”



Principals need their own budgets of, like, \$100,000 of free money to do what they want to do with it, bottom line. They should just have money to be able to bring in speakers, bring in different people, bring in – and not have to meet these requirements that are so restrictive for them.” .”

2

Optimized class sizes and schedules across the education system



2

Ingredients for optimized class sizes and schedules

- Create smaller class sizes in all public schools.
- Allow local flexibility in school schedules.
- Center students' mental and physical health in school schedules.
- Provide time for students to experience a broad and rich curriculum.



Rec. 2 | What Participants Shared



In an ideal world... I would lower class sizes for sure, even reducing it a bit would be a big shock because they have way over 30 [students].”



Are we doing what's best for students in terms of how many students we have assigned to each person at one time? Are you genuinely meeting the needs of those students?”



In my experience, when teachers work in the balanced calendar schools, there's less burnout and there's more joy in that type of schedule.”

3

Upgraded and maintained infrastructure



3



Ingredients for upgraded and maintain infrastructure

- Make a one-time investment to address existing infrastructure inadequacies.
- Update all school facilities and accommodate Pre-K and smaller class sizes.
- Upgrade heating and AC systems and address air quality concerns.
- Ensure ADA compliance and build single-use bathrooms in all classrooms.
- Ensure safe, reliable and convenient transportation for all students, including in rural areas.
- Increase compensation for bus drivers and transportation employees.
- Ensure up-to-date technology infrastructure, support and maintenance for teaching and learning (including Wi-Fi access).
- Offer professional development for effective technology use.

Rec. 3 | What Participants Shared



[We should be] increasing transportation budgets to include transportation for after school programming...Trying to do extended day or additional enrichment, right now it's prohibitive for families.”



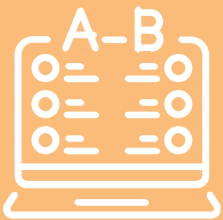
If you're asking for kids to do homework and things like that, then we need to provide internet and computers at home.”



The great equalizer to me when it comes to the access of optimal technology, transportation, and facilities, it would be everyone having the access to all of that.”

4

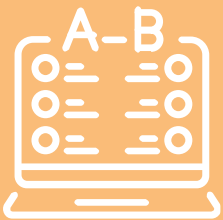
A positive school climate in every school



4

Ingredients for a positive school climate in every school

- Ensure staff and students have time to build strong relationships.
- Enhance inclusion and support for students with disabilities.
- Create climates that affirm BIPOC students and LGBTQ+ identities.
- Improve strategies for preventing and responding to bullying.
- Expand supports for students transitioning to a new school.
- Create wellness rooms for students and staff to recharge.
- Increase health and wellness support staff at each school.
- Supporting clubs and services with attention to intersectional identities.



Rec. 4 | What Participants Shared



[We] have to create a healthy village. If we're going to create healthy children, we have to create [a healthy village]."



All cultures need to feel like they belong [in our schools], no matter if it's the child, the parent, or the staff."



It's good to come together, let everybody bond, to make us feel like a real team. You got to do those little things."

5

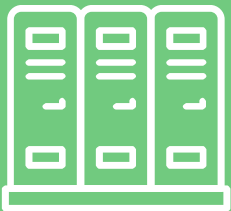
A system of inclusive and restorative conflict prevention and resolution in every school



5

Ingredients for a system of inclusive and restorative conflict prevention and resolution in every school

- Educate teachers, administrators, staff, parents and community members on restorative conflict prevention and resolution practices.
- Implement social-emotional learning (SEL) programs for all students, educators and staff.
- Ensure diverse and sustainable leadership and holistic implementation of these initiatives.
- Remove cultural or gender-based forms of biases from codes of conduct.
- End exclusionary, harsh, and racially disproportionate school discipline.



Rec. 5 | What Participants Shared



I lean towards restorative practices. I don't know if punishment fixes anything, it's only consequences without any support or structure that doesn't help students grow."



We need a dedicated decompression space so that kids can remove themselves out of situations that are getting heated and calm down before returning so that issues don't escalate."



[Disciplinary actions compound inequity] because...[students] don't have the services they need in the first place and then they're punished for not having them at higher rates than their peers."

6

**Relevant, rigorous, antiracist,
and inclusive curriculum for all
students.**



6

Ingredients for relevant, rigorous, antiracist, and inclusive curriculum for all students.



- Provide training on and implement culturally relevant, anti-racist and LGBTQ+ inclusive curricula and pedagogies.
- Expand hands-on learning, electives and specialized course opportunities that reflect student interests.
- Include gender and sexual diversity in SEL and health curricula.
- Incorporate SEL, asset-based frameworks and student input into curriculum.
- Train all educators and staff on how to support Black students and other students of color and integrate anti-racist frameworks into teacher evaluations.
- Recruit, compensate, and support Black teachers and teachers of color.

Rec. 6 | What Participants Shared



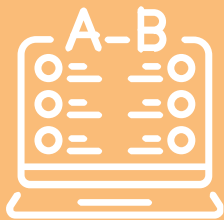
We need to start looking internally to ask what does a curriculum look like that doesn't do racial harm? When we're studying history, are we perpetuating white supremacy and patriarchy in the material that we're teaching?"



Every school should have social-emotional learning curriculum. And within that curriculum...school districts need to make sure that...communities are explicitly represented"

7

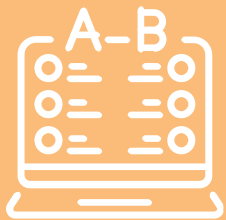
A meaningful and reasonable assessment and accountability system



7

Ingredients for a meaningful and reasonable assessment and accountability system

- ❑ Expand support for real-world and culturally relevant project-based learning as an alternative to high-stakes testing.
- ❑ Remove high-stakes consequences based on single assessments.
- ❑ Include teachers in the development and decision-making around learning measures, assessments and accountability.
- ❑ Provide professional development on meaningful measures of learning.



Rec. 7 | What Participants Shared



In this case we're interested in our students developing and growing. What we're really looking at is the successful of the students and the communities that the students live in."



I think we go back to let's trust teachers as professionals. I trust teachers to be able to assess their content areas and assess their students the best."



Just get rid of [standardized testing]. We know it's biased by race. We know that it's supposed to help teachers teach. We rarely see the results, and if we do see them it's a year later."

8

A robust and meaningful system of student engagement in decision making



8

Ingredients for a robust and meaningful system of student engagement in decision making.

- ❑ Create meaningful structures for student decision-making.
- ❑ Allocate support and resources towards advancing decisions students make.
- ❑ Provide opportunities for to students co-develop classroom practice and pedagogy with teachers.
- ❑ Implement school policies that reflect a commitment to power-sharing with youth.



Rec. 8 | What Participants Shared



[It] would be really beneficial for...schools to have that type of student government... letting the kids run with the ideas”



I think students should have a strong hand in decision making, [they] should have a lot of voice and power."

9

An empowering system of supports for linguistically diverse learners and families



9

Ingredients for an empowering system of supports for linguistically diverse learners and families.

- Increase support for bilingual education programs, including professional development for educators and staff.
- Affirm linguistic and cultural diversity and provide throughout the education system.
- Improve coordination of special education and multilingual education services.
- Expand translation services in classroom learning and in communication with families.
- Provide salary incentives for multilingual educators and staff.
- Hire multilingual, culturally competent community members as student advocate.



Rec. 9 | What Participants Shared



Emerging bilinguals need...an environment that has more support for them because just throwing them into an environment where English is being taught isn't a way that language is necessarily acquired for that student."



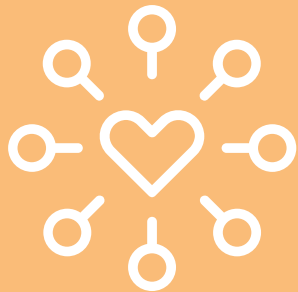
Our district is the most diverse district in the state. And I think there's still a huge gap in meeting the need of our multilingual learners and families who don't speak English and how we can make them feel like they belong into our community..."



We currently have telephones that we use to translate. But that's not helping. It's hard to try to translate something when you're over the phone."

10

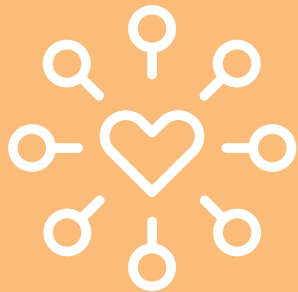
A strong system of supports for special education.



10

Ingredients for a strong system of supports for special education.

- Increase number of and compensation for special educators.
- Establish high-quality inclusion classrooms with adequate staffing.
- Provide training to staff on special education laws and procedures.
- Improve coordination of special education and language services.
- Create support programs for parents of students with disabilities.
- Implement early screening and linguistically informed screening for students.



Rec. 10 | What Participants Shared



We need more training so we can provide that quality education to our special education students.”



Students’ language barriers are not disabilities.”



We need better infrastructure and support for the safety of our students with disabilities.”

11

A strong system of integrated student support services



11

Ingredients for a strong system of integrated student support services

- ☐ Create school-based medical clinics staffed by nurses and physicians' assistants.
- ☐ Provide each school with a support team of specialists (social workers, psychologists, counselors, family resource coordinator) with attention to ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity.
- ☐ Ensure that all school specialists are well compensated and supported.
- ☐ Ensure that school staff are diverse, trained in trauma-informed approaches and responsive to students' diverse cultures and identities.
- ☐ Conduct family-specific needs assessments and home visits.



Rec. 11 | What Participants Shared



[We] should have an integrated supports team within every [school].”



We need to think about the academic, the social, emotional, and just kind of the overall wellbeing of the kids.”



New parents need food for the mother and the baby and access to things like affordable and stable housing.”

12

A robust and multifaceted family engagement system



12

Ingredients for a robust and multifaceted family engagement system

- Hire family engagement coordinators to partner with parents in meaningful and equitable ways at every school.
- Increase funding for family engagement activities and initiatives.
- Support involvement between marginalized parent groups and school boards.
- Create or expand adult educational programs.



Rec. 12 | What Participants Shared



We will start to build trust with families... by showing them that this is a place you want to be and that our school is a hub in our community. And so as their kids get older families will feel more comfortable coming into schools.”



We need something where even the parents might be able to get tutored. Because a lot of times the parents can't help the kids with their homework because they don't know. We need ways to just take care of the family as a whole.”

13

Consideration of unique regional needs



13

Ingredients for consideration of unique regional needs

- ❑ Develop exchange programs linking rural and urban students.
- ❑ Improve transportation to school in rural areas.
- ❑ Expanded broadband access, distance learning and career development opportunities for remote students.
- ❑ Consider local context and areas of concentrated need when providing career and college planning, special education and multilingual education services, integrated student supports, and transportation.
- ❑ Expand translation services in classroom learning and in communication with families.



Rec. 13 | What Participants Shared



There's a need for some kind of backyard exchange student program to help students learn simply by having the opportunity to go spend instructional time with people who don't look like the folks that they typically wake up with?"



There just is not a lot of access to the Internet and knowledge of how to use the tools of the Internet. We need that connectivity and let's also make sure they have the knowledge to use it as best they can."

A large, dark blue circular graphic that occupies the left side of the slide, partially overlapping the white background.

Thank you!

For more information

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**Find us on
the web**

Learn more about the NEPC

If you'd like to learn more about the National Education Policy Center, please feel free to explore our website!

<https://nepc.colorado.edu/>

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Place-Based Partnerships

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In-Text Citation

(Sawyer et al., 2024)

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