

**2019-2020 Annual Report**



**MCCCSA**  
Michigan Council of Charter School Authorizers

**Choice.  
Progress.  
Achievement.**



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## From the Chair

Dear Friends,

The 2019-2020 school year was a year like no other. And yet, during these unprecedented and tumultuous times, Michigan's public charter schools overcame adversity and continued delivering the quality educational results students need.

The unique role of the authorizer – the public bodies entrusted with building, overseeing, tracking, and supporting public charter schools – was needed and utilized more than ever. With The Council's expertise and leadership, authorizers helped their schools navigate uncharted waters, drove innovation, and provided learning opportunities to thousands of children across Michigan – regardless of means, race, zip code, or needs.

During this school year, our results continued to surpass expectations. Student outcomes kept growing, and many public charter schools were recognized as statewide leaders in educational excellence.

This past year presented us with opportunities to look at education differently, and reminded us of the commitment families, teachers and school leaders share for students and for the charter school movement.

In this report, we capture the numbers, stories, and images of the challenging and rewarding work we do in fulfilling our mission to transform public education. I sincerely hope you will read it and reflect on the ways in which we can all reach higher and do even more.



**Corey Northrop**

Chair, Michigan Council of Charter School Authorizers  
Executive Director, The Governor John Engler Center for Charter  
Schools, Central Michigan University

## About The Council

The Michigan Council of Charter School Authorizers (“The Council”) is a collaborative, non-profit, non-partisan professional organization dedicated to providing quality public charter school oversight.

For over a decade, The Council has coalesced and supported public charter school authorizers and represented the important work they do to advance educational excellence, innovation, choice, and accountability for Michigan K-12 students.

The Council's ten members comprise its board of directors, who meet monthly to share best practices, updates, and resources, embracing a common vision based on these guiding principles:

- Choice is a necessary element in today's system of public education.
- Quality must remain the most central focus for authorizers, school operators, and policymakers alike.
- Autonomy and innovation are essential to ensure the promise of Michigan's public charter school movement and contribute to the success of K-12 education in general.
- Accountability is crucial. Quantifiable, data-driven results must be achieved and supported at all levels of K-12 public education.
- Public charter schools that fail to achieve adequate results pursuant to the terms of their contracts should face appropriate consequences, up to and including closure.
- Authorizers have a responsibility to provide input, advocacy, and support for public discourse on K-12 education issues.
- Policymakers and authorizers alike must ensure appropriate levels of accountability and oversight for all Michigan schools.

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*“The Council is a collaborative, non-profit, non-partisan professional organization dedicated to providing quality public charter school oversight.”*

## Council Board Officers for 2019-2020

Chair **Rob Kimball**, Grand Valley State University

Vice Chair **Corey Northrop**, Central Michigan University

Secretary **Dave Lewis**, Saginaw Valley State University

Treasurer **Jendayi Gardner**, Detroit Public Schools Community District



## How The Council Leads

### Accreditation and Assurance

In 2014, The Council established the nation's first statewide public charter school authorizing accreditation and assurance process, to demonstrate the commitment to quality that Michigan authorizers strive to achieve.

Partnering with nationally-recognized Cognia (formerly AdvancED), The Council set about moving beyond the basic practice known as "continuous improvement" to create a more rigorous definition of what it means to be an effective authorizer.

Today, **Michigan leads the nation with its authorizer accountability system** that not only includes the Cognia standards, but also The Council's thirteen assurances, demonstrated compliance, and Michigan Department of Education assurance and verification visits.

The assurances are the first step; these standards adjust with changes in law, and must be met in order to begin accreditation. Accreditation functions typically, with documentation and review, to ensure an authorizer continually meets the standards. Every review includes recommendations for improvement and subsequent monitoring for implementation.

Central Michigan University, Detroit Public Schools Community District, Ferris State University, Grand Valley State University, and Saginaw Valley State University are fully accredited. Lake Superior State University, Northern Michigan University, and Oakland University have completed the assurance review and are qualified to begin the accreditation process.

### School Funding Veto Response

In October, 2019, Council chairperson, Dr. Rob Kimball, issued a statement opposing Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's funding veto for Michigan's public charter schools. The veto eliminated a budget line item that would have reduced the gap between charter school per



pupil funding and per pupil funding for students in other public schools. (On average, Michigan public charter schools receive about 20% less funding per pupil than conventional public schools.)

“A Michigan student is a Michigan student—no matter where they live or what school they choose to attend,” said Kimball. “The existence of any funding disparity at all reflects the kind of unequal treatment our laws should seek to prevent. It’s long past time the state’s budget addressed the needs of students across Michigan, no matter the school.”

The funding was restored in a subsequent budget bill two months later.

### **Authorizer Roundtables**

In the fall of 2019, The Council, in partnership with the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and the National Charter Schools Institute (NCSI), began organizing **statewide roundtable discussions for all public charter school authorizers across Michigan**. These roundtables provide:

- opportunities for dialogue and collaboration among all Michigan authorizers;

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*“A Michigan student is a Michigan student—no matter where they live or what school they choose to attend.”*





- greater understanding of authorizers' needs by the organizations working to support them; and
- technical assistance for all Michigan authorizing bodies, regardless of Council membership.

**Funded by the federal Charter Schools Program (CSP) grant aimed at promoting quality authorizing, five of these roundtables were held over the course of the 2019-20 school year.** (A sixth

planned session in the spring had to be postponed due to the pandemic.) All Michigan authorizers were invited through formal invitations, newsletter invitations, and personal phone calls. To encourage attendance by non-Council members, the roundtables were held at convenient school district or ISD authorizer locations throughout the state.

At each session, MDE provided information and updates on items like the Charter Schools Program grant, the Michigan Integrated Continuous Improvement Process, and ongoing audits, and NCSI facilitated discussion on a broad variety of topics including:

- Opportunities and challenges
- Mission and vision
- Student achievement
- Alternative education programs, Michigan Merit Curriculum, and special education
- Educator pipelines
- Pupil accounting, reporting requirements, transparency
- Vendors, boards, management providers, and other relationships
- Communication efforts, public perception
- Resource and best practice sharing

In the fall, participants included twenty-five authorizer staff (representing 20 authorizer offices), one potential authorizer, and one superintendent from a public charter school, along with individuals from MDE, NCSI and The Council. Spring attendees included seven authorizers, three MDE PSA Unit team members, a NCSI team member and the Council facilitator.



## Special Education: School Supports and Interventions

The success of a public charter school depends on the quality of education services it provides to all children, with or without disabilities, as required under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Each public charter school in Michigan provides free, appropriate, and challenging educational opportunities to children with IDEA-eligible disabilities who are enrolled in the school. **On average, about eleven percent of public charter school students have special education needs.**<sup>1</sup> In 2018, The Council published a guide called, "Special Education Services in Charter Schools: What Authorizers and School Leaders Should Know." This free resource serves as a reference manual for those involved in public charter school oversight.

## Authorizer Funding & School Financial Support

State law allows authorizers to collect up to three percent of the state funding allotted to their public charter schools. Funds collected are used for oversight and support functions, to ensure that all legal, regulatory, and performance measures are met. The vast majority of authorizers, however, collect only a portion of the state aid to which they are entitled, leaving millions of dollars for their schools to use.

Authorizers also typically invest a significant portion of their own operational fees in their schools, via numerous supports and services. **In 2019-20, Council authorizers gave back over \$8.3 million.** Here's where the money went:

\$1,774,029	School grants/awards
\$1,723,278	Student scholarships
\$1,675,268	Authorizer fee discount
\$940,877	Testing support
\$557,898	Board development
\$515,521	Educator professional development/continuing education
\$515,314	Compliance and accountability support
\$156,600	Board policy services
\$44,086	Business manager professional development
\$478,734	Other

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*"Each public charter school in Michigan provides free, appropriate, and challenging educational opportunities to children with IDEA-eligible disabilities who are enrolled in the school."*

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*“These collaborative meetings provide a one-stop place where concerns or opportunities can be reliably communicated throughout the chartering community.”*

## Council Practitioner Workgroups

To share information and best practices, four **Council workgroups meet several times a year on academics, finance, governance, and special education.** These workgroups host legal and regulatory experts, such as the state departments of Education and Treasury, to ensure authorizers are up-to-date on current laws and policies and to build strong working relationships across sectors and networks. The workgroups also provide a valuable peer network for problem-solving and capacity-building within authorizer teams.

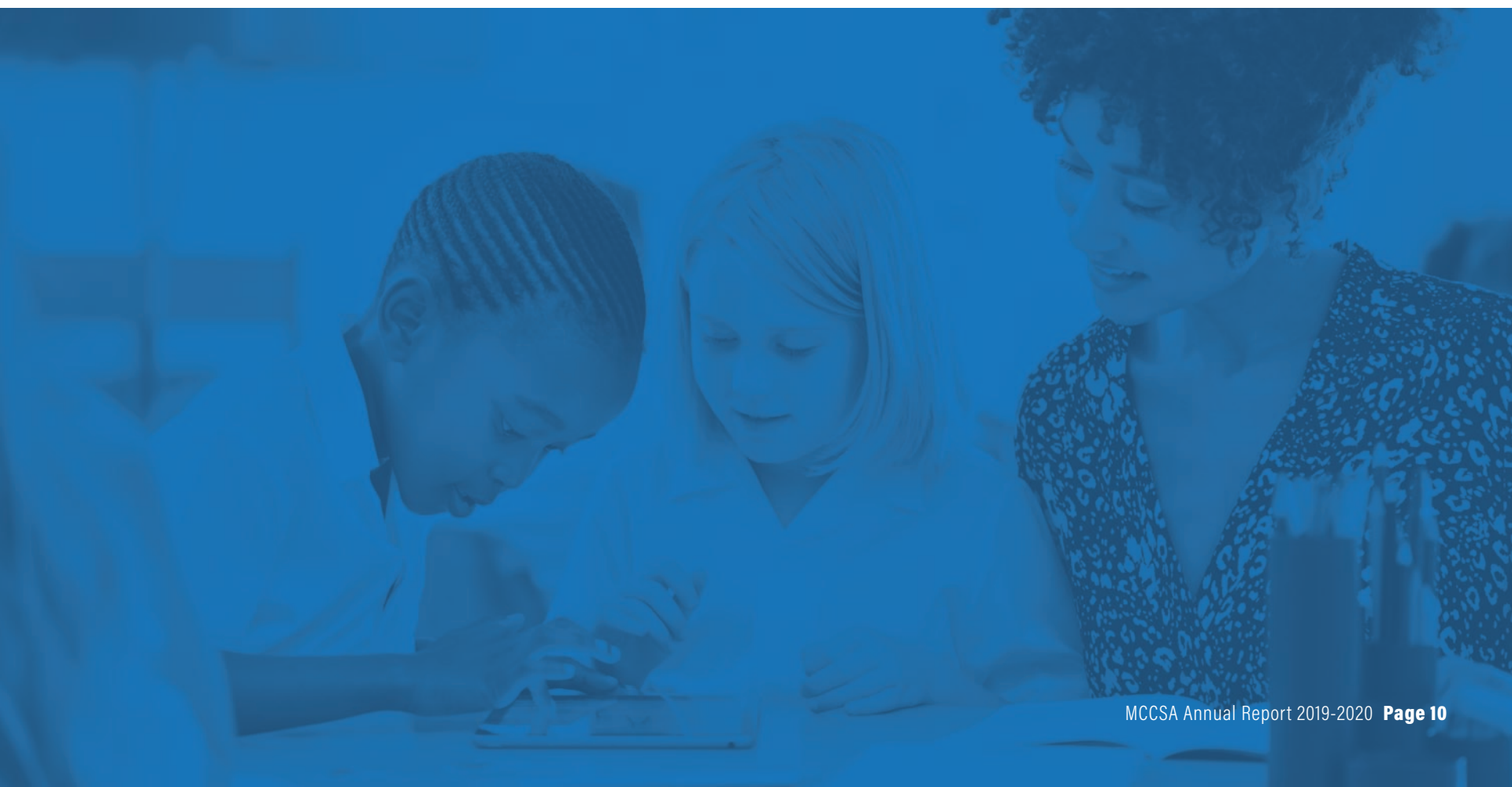
## Detroit Authorizer Meetings

Detroit authorizers convene regularly to coordinate with partners across the city’s broad education spectrum. Formed in response to the concern that public charter school leaders are often busy in their schools and also geographically distanced, these collaborative meetings provide a one-stop place where concerns or opportunities can be reliably communicated throughout the chartering community. Detroit’s nine authorizing bodies, representing approximately 75 school buildings, meet monthly with philanthropy and other key stakeholders, including the mayor’s office, Detroit Public Schools Community District, and the Community Education Commission, to stay connected and aware of happenings that impact Detroit students and families. From school openings and closings, to relocations, reconfigurations, authorizer changes, and more, **partners at the table share valuable information and perspective that promote healthy dialogue and ensure all voices are represented** in authorizing decisions.

## University Value-Add

University authorizers **leverage their campus resources to benefit public charter school students** in a number of ways:

- College exposure
- College preparation/advising
- College credit opportunities
- Student scholarships
- Student summer camps/outreach programs
- Teacher preparation/placement
- Teacher professional development
- Faculty-teacher partnerships
- Administrator professional development
- School board professional development
- Degree awards for educators
- Research



## Spring 2020 COVID Response

The Council's role in sharing issues, ideas, resources, and best practices became even more vital during the early days of the Coronavirus pandemic. The Council acted quickly and collaboratively to process and share information with schools, educators, families, and advocates. Additionally, The Council partnered with peer groups to assist the state of Michigan.

The Council, in partnership with the Michigan Association of Public School Academies (MAPSA), developed two online resource centers that were continuously updated as regulations and orders changed:

- Distance Learning Charter School FAQs: this tool provided information on distance learning, board requirements, food provisioning, and special education.
- Roadmap to Reopening FAQs: this website gave guidance on the state's return to school roadmap, protocols by phase, and COVID-19 preparedness and response plans.

The Council and MAPSA collaborated on a weekly series of webinars, "Moving Forward with Purpose," featuring key content experts sharing best practices and creative thinking strategies to help charter educators maximize success and think outside the box.

The Council also was **directly involved in rapidly developing a statewide reporting template** with the Michigan Department of Education and the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators for school officials to use in submitting their remote learning plans – an important accountability measure for all schools in Michigan.

Finally, **each authorizer was responsible for reviewing, approving, and overseeing each of their schools' Continuity of Learning Plans, Preparedness Plans, and Extended COVID-19 Learning Plans**, in order to ensure the greatest possible academic achievement and social-emotional well-being for public charter school students during the remainder of the 2019-20 school year and as they would start the 2020-21 school year.

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*"The Council acted quickly and collaboratively to process and share information with schools, educators, families, and advocates."*



*With the support of their authorizers, Michigan public charter schools found meaningful ways to keep delivering quality education and other support for their students in the midst of the Spring pandemic. These are some of their stories.*

### **Waterford Montessori Academy**

As early as February of 2020, Waterford Montessori Academy (WMA) school leaders, led by Jeremy Gilliam, realized they might face school closures and started planning. They quickly surveyed parents to assess families' technological readiness, and used the feedback to update school inventories as well as teacher and building online resources.

When the state of Michigan announced school closures on Friday, March 13, WMA was ready. School leaders immediately set up communication with parents and prepared learning packets. Parents picked those up the following Monday, and by the next day, WMA was back up and running online. **Rather than waiting for direction from the state, they kept teaching and kept parents engaged.**

Midland campus director Christine Schoenherr said, "For the first time in twenty plus years as a principal, I gave my cell number to parents – but it was that important that I reach out and that they be able to check in with me."

Being a Montessori school meant they had to approach things differently. Faculty recreated materials to send home, and realigned curriculum and standards for each grade level. They used Google Classroom and Class Dojo platforms, and found that their prepared environments in classrooms naturally transitioned into real world problems – such as baking cookies to understand metric units. They were pleasantly surprised to find they could maintain the authenticity of Montessori even online, still approaching concepts in concrete stages before moving to abstraction with children using their home surroundings.

"This was definitely not eight-to-four," teacher Amy Dressler, said. "Sometimes we'd be on Google classroom at 7 pm because someone needed a math lesson. Sometimes parents were at their wits' end, worried about being teachers to their children. So, we made ourselves available to both students and their parents."

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*"For the first time in twenty plus years as a principal, I gave my cell number to parents – but it was that important that I reach out and that they be able to check in with me."*

In their planning, they had looked not just at academic but also emotional needs, and considered different ways of delivering instruction, especially for special needs students. The teachers and specialists collaboratively figured out how to adapt, and kept up on all their compensatory time through the rest of the school year, meeting with special education students on a daily basis as needed.

In May, WMA conducted NWEA testing – with 100% participation on one campus and close to 100% at the other – and found no significant difference in test scores overall from the previous year.

“Teamwork is what made it work,” said Colleen Shunn, Elizabeth Lake campus director. “Our staff, teachers, students, and parents all worked together to make it better.”

Waterford Montessori Academy is authorized by Saginaw Valley State University.

**Other public charter school examples include:**

- **Crescent Academy** (BMCC) created a YouTube channel to deliver student and family support.
- **Detroit Community Schools** (BMCC) held graduation in a parking lot with an outdoor stage, while audience members viewed the ceremony from their cars.
- **Distinctive College Prep** (CMU) quickly and effectively distributed student devices, and found creative ways to stay connected with school families.
- **George Washington Carver Academy** (BMCC) made food deliveries to forty-two bus route stops from April to June, and conducted home visits to keep students engaged.
- **International Academy of Flint** (CMU) provided over 12,000 meals to school families in March and April via pick-up service and porch delivery. They partnered with outside organizations to reach out to families and supported students with new resources. For example, the local Crim Fitness Foundation and the school's management company, SABIS, provided physical activity and technology services, respectively. Weekly teacher outreach efforts resulted in 90% of students remaining connected to the school.<sup>2</sup>
- **New Paradigm Loving Academy** (GVSU) went above and beyond to track students who were missing and ensure they were given the learning resources they needed.
- **Renaissance Public School Academy** (CMU) distributed 200 Chromebooks and launched a creative online program to continue their project-based learning model remotely, with 97% student participation.
- **Summit Academy North** (CMU) effectively launched remote learning, creatively leveraging technology.
- **West Michigan Academy of Arts and Academics** (GVSU) created an “Amazing Art Adventure” that advanced the school's art-centric curriculum through weekly challenges. Students who completed activities in visual arts, dance, music, and drama received a decorative badge for their bookbag. Students from other schools were also invited to participate.
- **Weston Preparatory Academy** (OU) organized a drive-through graduation ceremony to honor its eighth graders.

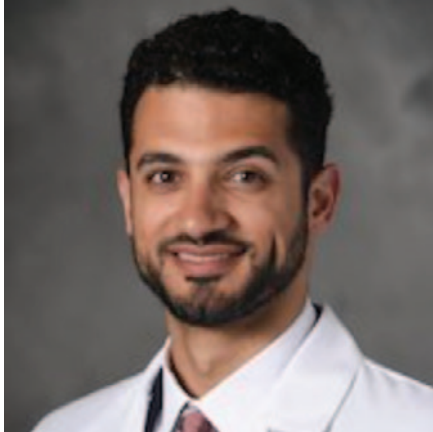
## Alumni Testimonials



*"As I reflect, I realize that if my family did not have a school of choice option then I could have easily been one of those lost students, forgotten due to my lack of self-esteem and confidence in my academics. My experiences as a bi-cultural, bi-racial learner in the educational system ignited my passion for educational equity for all students."*

### **Stephanie Yassine**

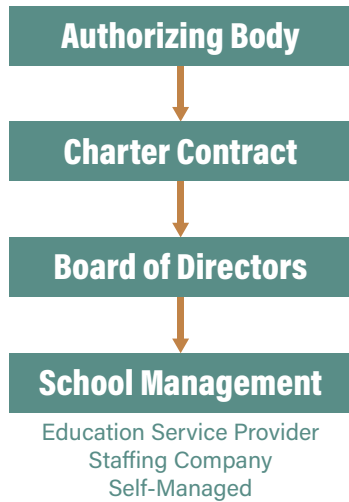
Dearborn Academy, alumna  
Executive Director, Sanga Consulting  
(educational service provider at Escuela Avancemos!  
Academy in Southwest Detroit)



*"I attended Central Academy for 10 years, which allowed me to develop and appreciate long-lasting relationships with my teachers and classmates. I also appreciated having a smaller class size, something I was able to value again when I was part of a class of 104 at CMU's College of Medicine"*

### **Dr. Firas Shalabi**

Central Academy, alumnus  
Resident in Obstetrics & Gynecology at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit



## An Authorizer’s Work

### Academic Performance

State law explicitly requires public charter schools to contract with their authorizers, and these legally binding agreements define and protect a school's autonomy and governing authority, while clearly specifying performance expectations and conditions for renewal.

#### **Academic oversight is an authorizer’s paramount focus.**

In 2018-19 (the most recent year for which data is available), Michigan public charter schools performed at the 49.6 percentile on the Michigan School Index System<sup>3</sup>, despite far outpacing the statewide average for Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) student populations:

- Public charter school FRL: 75%
- Statewide FRL: 50%
- Non-charter FRL: 47%

Public charter schools in Detroit outperformed their counterparts on the state system:

- Detroit charter average: 40%ile
- Detroit average: 37%ile
- Detroit non-charter average: 34%ile

Also, seventy-one (71) public charter schools ranked in the top 25th percentile on the state system.

Michigan public charter schools average a graduation rate of 62% compared to the state non-charter average of 72%.<sup>4</sup> In 2019-20, these six public charter schools had a 100% graduation rate:

- Bay City Academy - Farragut Campus (LSSU)
- Byron Center Charter School (GVSU)
- Charlevoix Montessori Academy for the Arts (SVSU)
- Concord Academy - Petoskey (LSSU)
- Nah Tah Wahsh Public School Academy (NMU)
- Universal Learning Academy (BMCC)



## Academic Performance Caniff Liberty Academy

Caniff Liberty Academy (CLA), authorized by Oakland University, has been recognized for “beating the odds” to improve educational performance for students in poverty.

Located in Hamtramck, surrounded by the city of Detroit, CLA serves primarily low-income students (over 95% qualify for free/reduced lunch)<sup>6</sup> who typically arrive at the school one to two years behind grade level in reading ability.<sup>7</sup>

Yet, despite these challenges, CLA has outperformed peer schools and the state of Michigan average when it comes to gaining proficiency for English Learner students – not just in one year, but for three years in a row (see graph).<sup>8</sup>

In its 2019 Context and Performance Report Card (CAP), which rates schools based on state test scores adjusted for student socioeconomic status, the Mackinac Center for Public Policy reported that “no school in Michigan showed greater growth than Caniff.”<sup>9</sup>

The CAP report ranks all Michigan public elementary and middle schools, including public charter schools, using multiple years of state test results but adjusting for the socioeconomic status of a school's student population. Because poverty is so strongly associated with lower test scores, this measurement gives a more fair and reliable indication of actual school performance than pure test scores alone.

For the second consecutive CAP report, Michigan's top-ranked school was Hamtramck Academy, a Bay Mills

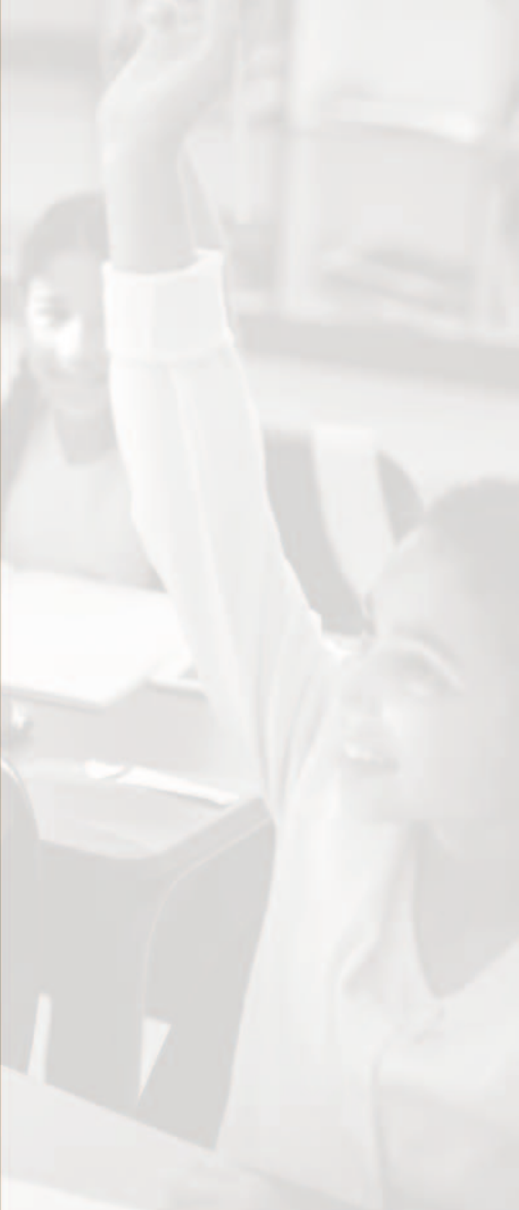
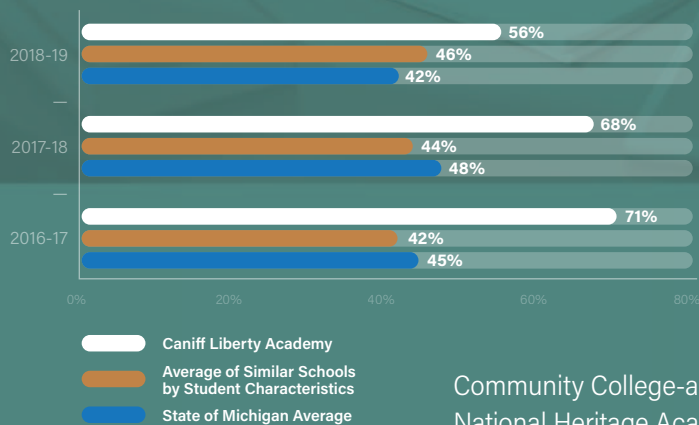
Community College-authorized public charter school managed by National Heritage Academies. In fact, 26 of the top 100 schools in the 2019 report are public charter schools. Caniff Liberty Academy “finished as the state's most improved school over the period studied.”<sup>10</sup>

“The students that we get are wanting to learn, even though they come with a lot of challenges,” said Ahmed Saber, CLA CEO and founder.<sup>11</sup>

Opened in 2012, CLA has nearly doubled in enrollment, a credit to the high-quality academic programs and safe learning environment the school provides its K-8 students.<sup>12</sup>

### English Learner Progress

Percent of Caniff's English Learner students making progress compared to similar schools and statewide, over a three-year period.<sup>5</sup>



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*“Public charter schools are subjected to an extra layer of accountability, compared to their conventional school counterparts, due to the legally binding performance contracts that authorizers administer.”*

## Fiscal Performance

The expectation for public charter schools to be fiscally solvent is spelled out in their contracts and required by law. **Council authorizers have developed processes to review quarterly and audited financial statements in order to identify financial challenges and help schools make adjustments to avoid a deficit.** For public charter schools, a deficit likely will lead to a notice of intent to revoke the contract and a requirement that the school create a corrective action plan, which includes a deficit elimination plan required by law. The number of public charter schools in deficit has declined significantly over the years thanks to these proactive practices.

## Reporting Compliance and Oversight

During the 2019-20 school year, Council **authorizers processed a total of 22,571 compliance items** related to school operations and support. Examples include transparency reporting, measures of academic progress, teacher certification, special education reviews, quarterly financial statements, audited financial statements, student counts, school schedules, board meeting schedules, budgets, and more.

## Law/Policy Implementation

**Authorizers ensure the schools in their portfolios properly implement new laws or policies enacted at the state and federal levels.** In this regard, public charter schools are subjected to an extra layer of accountability, compared to their conventional school counterparts, due to the legally binding performance contracts that authorizers administer.



## School Opening **Flint Cultural Center Academy**

The Flint Cultural Center Academy (FCCA) creates unique learning opportunities by immersing students in the educational resources located on Flint's Cultural Center campus. In 2019, the C.S. Mott Foundation committed to fund the design, construction, and outfitting of the school, which is physically connected to the Sloan Museum and Flint Institute of Music.

The academy builds curiosity and civic responsibility in children through an experiential learning curriculum combined with daily activities and programs at the Flint Cultural Center institutions – Flint Institute of Arts, Flint Institute of Music, Flint Public Library, Longway Planetarium, Sloan Museum, The Whiting, and Applewood.

Authorized by Grand Valley State University, FCCA plans to add an additional grade level over each of the next three years. The school will have the capacity to serve 650 K-8 students when completed.

"Walking across the (Cultural Center) campus, students can experience the performing, the visual, the fine arts as well as planetarium and public library... really looks at (a) new concept in education differently," said Eric Lieske, chief executive officer of the Flint Cultural Center Academy.<sup>13</sup>



Photo credit: Rick Smith



## School Opening **Ivywood Classical Academy**

Ivywood Classical Academy (ICA) in Plymouth Township offers a classical education with an emphasis on humanities, math, sciences, arts and virtues for grades K-6. The goal is to develop critical thinkers by using a time-tested, research-based curriculum rooted in the classical liberal arts.

Authorized by Central Michigan University, ICA is the dream of a group of parents who joined together to fill the gap they found in the Detroit area's educational offerings. The parents partnered with Hillsdale College's Barney Charter School Initiative, which provides the academy's curriculum and also coaching and mentoring for teachers in the classical studies method.

"Ivywood Classical Academy is another great example of a charter public school being born from community members identifying an educational need and then recognizing that they have the power to address it," said Corey Northrop, executive director of The Governor John Engler Center for Charter Schools at CMU. "The school's founding board members wanted to offer what is typically only provided in private institutions [but] in a public school setting."<sup>14</sup>

The school began with about 130 students in grades K-5, and plans to add a grade each year until they reach 12th grade.

"Parents want this back-to-the-basics model of education," said school co-founder, Jim Musgrave. "One that encourages virtues like self-government, respect, and excellence."<sup>15</sup>



# Innovation.

# Who Authorizes in Michigan?

## Universities

Central Michigan University  
 Eastern Michigan University  
 Ferris State University  
 Grand Valley State University  
 Lake Superior State University  
 Northern Michigan University  
 Oakland University  
 Saginaw Valley State University

## Community Colleges

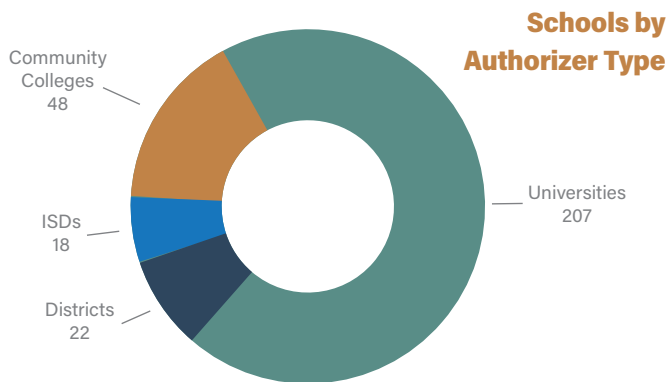
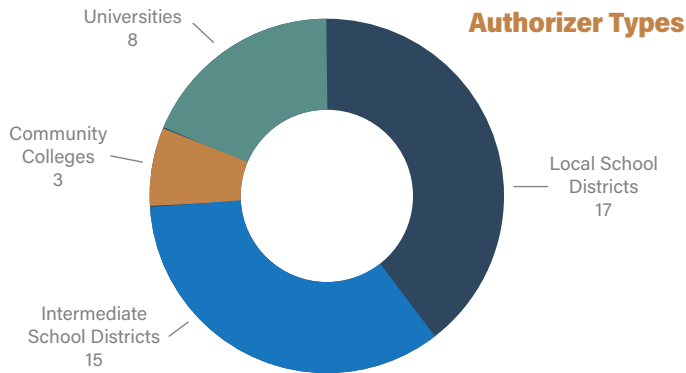
Bay Mills Community College  
 Jackson College  
 Washtenaw Community College

## Intermediate School Districts

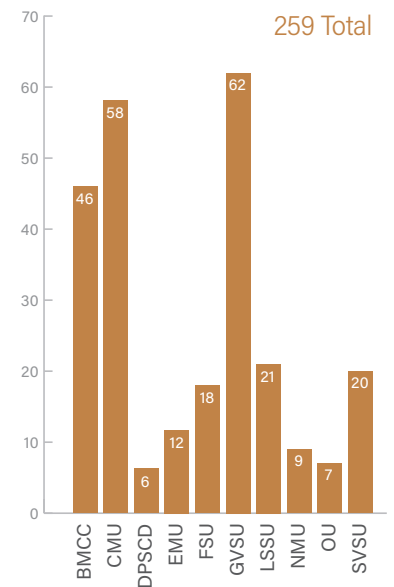
Allegan Area Educational Service Agency  
 Bay-Arenac ISD  
 C.O.O.R. ISD  
 Eaton RESA  
 Hillsdale ISD  
 Iosco RESA  
 Kalamazoo RESA  
 Macomb ISD  
 Manistee ISD  
 Midland County Educational Service Agency  
 Saginaw ISD  
 St. Clair County RESA  
 Washtenaw ISD  
 Wayne RESA  
 West Shore Educational Service District

## Local School Districts

Center Line Public Schools  
 Detroit Public Schools  
 Community District  
 Eaton Rapids Public Schools  
 Gobles Public School District  
 Grand Rapids Public Schools  
 Hazel Park School District  
 Highland Park City Schools  
 Madison District Public Schools  
 Manistee Area Public Schools  
 Mesick Consolidated Schools  
 Muskegon Heights School District  
 Ovid-Elsie Area Schools  
 Oxford Community Schools  
 Port Huron Area School District  
 Stephenson Area Public Schools  
 Vestaburg Community Schools  
 Whitmore Lake Public School District



## Schools Authorized by Council Members



## Council School Boards

### Board Member Appointment Process

Quality governance is one of the foundations of high performing schools, and **authorizers have established rigorous processes for making qualified public charter school board appointments.** Prospective candidates must be nominated by a school board, complete an application for board service, undergo extensive vetting, and pass a criminal history background check. If appointed by the authorizer, they then must swear an Oath of Public Office at the first meeting following their appointment. The Oath of Office must be administered in the presence of a Notary Public and filed with the authorizing office.

### Board Member Professional Development

Council authorizers provide regular enrichment opportunities for school board members, and many require participation in new member orientations and ongoing professional development.

**Training sessions on academics, fiscal oversight, good governance, and a host of other topics equip board members to fulfill their oaths of office and lead their schools effectively.**

Ferris State, Lake Superior State, and Northern Michigan universities pool their resources to provide professional development webinars to members located across the state, and other authorizers maintain timely and pertinent online resources to educate members on topics that affect their boards.

**253** Boards

**1,326** Board members

**231** New board members  
appointed 2019-20

**2,486** Board meetings per year

**56%** of board members have served 3 years+

**264** Founding board members

**56%** of board members hold bachelor's  
degrees or higher



## School Opening **Westfield Charter Academy**

Westfield Charter Academy (WCA) opened with two campuses in Redford Township, Westfield Charter Academy and Westfield Preparatory High School. The school is the first that is jointly managed by National Heritage Academies and PrepNet.

WCA was built on the pillars of nine Moral Focus virtues, academic excellence, personal responsibility, and parental partnerships. The school aims to develop people of character and prepare students not just for college, but to reach the highest level once they get there. Extracurricular pursuits are emphasized as a way to give back to the community.

"Something extraordinary happens when you set extremely high expectations for students and give them support; they defy the odds, they use grit, and they achieve greatness!" said Principal Aquan Grant.<sup>16</sup>

Authorized by Grand Valley State University, WCA started with K-9 and has added an additional grade every year since opening.



## About Michigan Charter Schools

What is a public charter school? **Public charter schools are free, independently operated schools that have the flexibility and autonomy to meet their students' needs.** They've existed in Michigan since 1994, and they operate under legally binding charter contracts issued by public authorizing bodies (universities, community colleges, school districts, or intermediate school districts).

Public charter schools may not charge tuition, and must accept all students who apply, up to their enrollment capacity. This means they are prohibited from screening students based on race, religion, sex, or educational ability, and must randomly select students for admission if the number of applicants exceeds available space. They may not be religiously affiliated.<sup>17</sup>

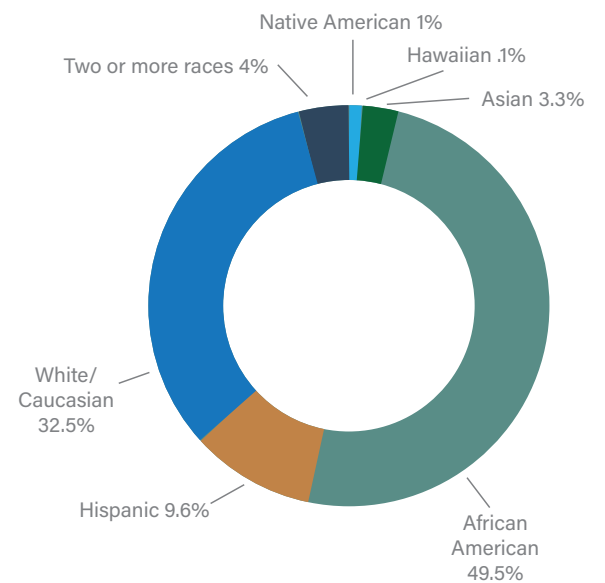
Michigan law requires all public charter school educators to be certified, and all students to be assessed annually.<sup>18</sup>

### Charter School Funding

Public charter schools receive state funding through a per-pupil foundation allowance. Michigan law stipulates that this amount cannot exceed the per-pupil allowance received by the local school district where the public charter school is geographically located.<sup>19</sup>

On average, **Michigan public charter schools receive about 20% less funding per pupil than conventional public schools, yet are 32% more cost-effective** than the average conventional public school in the same city.<sup>20</sup>

Student Race/Ethnicity<sup>21</sup>



### Specialty Schools and Curriculum

A World in Motion STEM  
 African-Centered  
 Aviation  
 Classical Studies  
 College Preparatory  
 Credit Recovery  
 Early/Middle College  
 Environmental Science

Homeless Students  
 K-8 Language Study/Arabic ESL  
 Language Immersion  
 Leadership Emphasis  
 Math and Science  
 Media Arts  
 Montessori  
 Moral Focus

Multicultural and Arabic Language  
 Performing Arts  
 Pregnant/Parenting Teens  
 Project-Based  
 Self-Paced  
 Strict Discipline  
 Trades and Career & Technical Education  
 Virtual/Cyber



## By the Numbers

**295** Public Charter School Districts (371 Buildings)

**3** School Openings Fall 2019

**7** School Closings Spring 2020

**150** Buildings with High School Grades (9-12)

**40%** of Buildings are High Schools, compared to 33% for non-charter<sup>22</sup>

**10,508** Teachers (sector wide)

**23,140** All Staff (includes teachers)

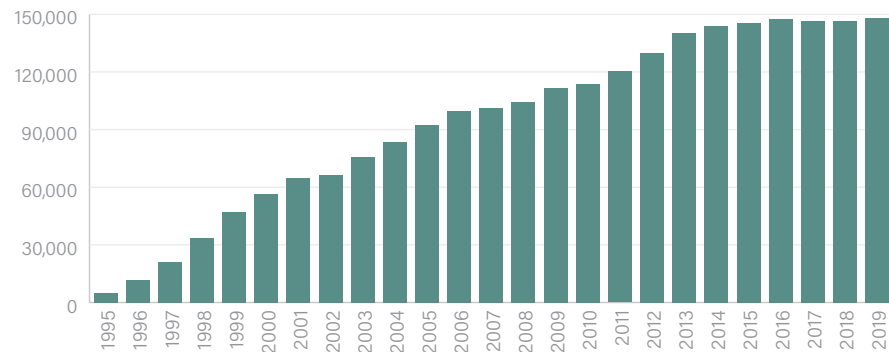
**147,338** Students (approximately 10% of total statewide public K-12 enrollment)<sup>23</sup>

**76%** Free and Reduced Lunch<sup>24</sup> compared to statewide 51% and non-charter 48%

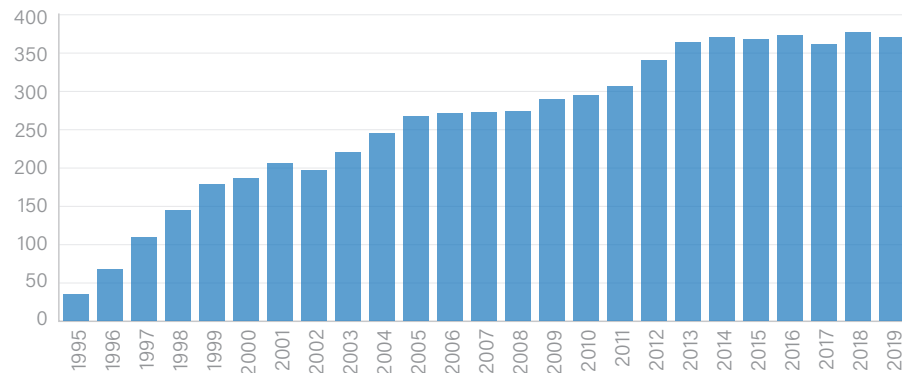
**10%** English Language Learners<sup>25</sup> compared to statewide 6% and non-charter 6%

**11%** Special Education<sup>26</sup> compared to statewide 13% and non-charter 13%

### Enrollment history



### Public charter school growth



## School Management

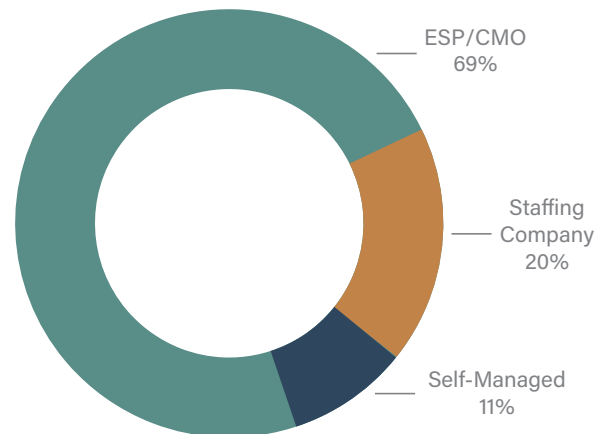
Public charter schools utilize a variety of management structures to run day-to-day school operations.

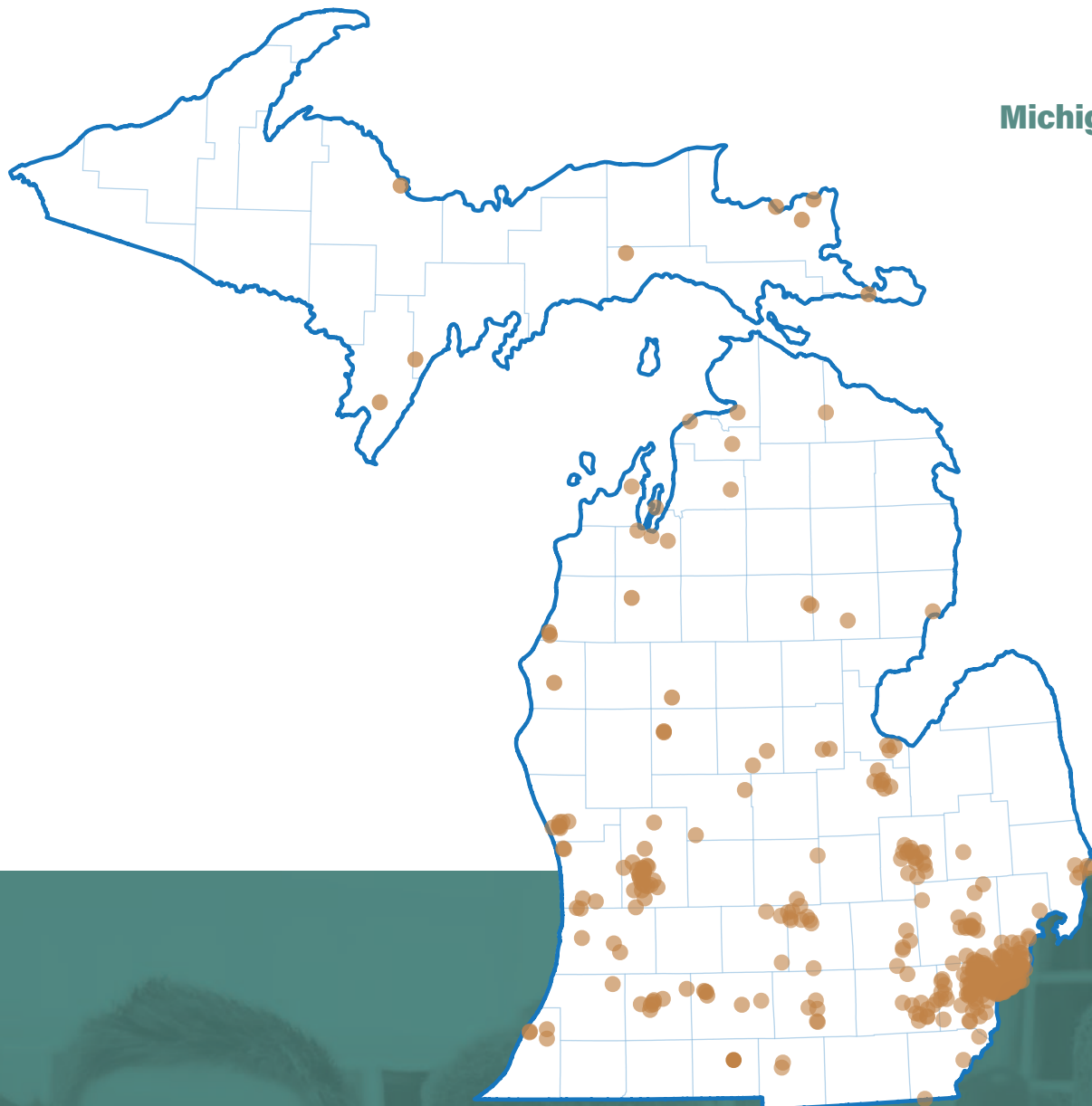
**Education Service Provider (ESP) & Charter Management Organization (CMO)** – Public charter school boards contract with these providers to supply some or all educational, financial, and personnel services. The board holds the ESP accountable to the contract terms, and does not perform human resource functions. Typically, the ESP handles daily managerial decisions.

**Staffing Company** – These providers contract with a public charter school board to supply staffing and some limited managerial services. The board does not perform human resource tasks, but oversees a contract with the provider who employs the staff. The board typically works in partnership with the provider on managerial issues.

**Self-Managed** – Under this management structure, a public charter school board relies on administration and employees they hire, and operates similar to a conventional district in terms of human resources and managerial decisions.

## Council Schools' Management

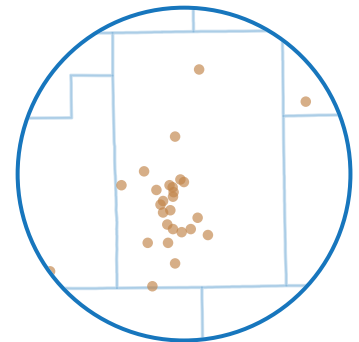




## Michigan Public Charter Schools

371 Total Schools

Grand Rapids area



Detroit area



## Public Charter School Teacher & Administrator of the Year

2019-20 MICHIGAN CHARTER TEACHER OF THE YEAR  
**JEN MELERO**, KINDERGARTEN TEACHER  
HOLLY ACADEMY

As a veteran, 21-year kindergarten teacher at Holly Academy, Jen Melero focuses on uncovering new, innovative teaching strategies that can transform education for young children. Her fellow educators say her ability to forge lasting relationships with coworkers, parents and students is unmatched. Jen also spends time organizing local and global giving projects as part of her mission to show students the value of charity, community, and leadership.



Photo courtesy of Michigan Association of Public School Academies

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*"I want our children to look outward and to figure out 'how can I be a leader within and outside of Holly Academy walls'... because even when you are five or six years old, you can exhibit characteristics of being a great leader. I truly believe that this is one of the most important jobs you can have, because we are molding a child and their perspective of the world."*

2019-20 MICHIGAN CHARTER ADMINISTRATOR OF THE YEAR  
**JEREMY BROWN**, SUPERINTENDENT  
WOODLAND PARK ACADEMY

As superintendent of a diverse student body from all over Genesee County, Jeremy Brown centers his educational philosophy around forging lasting relationships – getting to know students' hearts in order to ultimately impact their minds. In his eight years at Woodland Park Academy, he has assembled a dedicated, passionate team of educators who are committed to each other and the evolving needs of the students they serve.



Photo courtesy of Michigan Association of Public School Academies

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*"I'll ask a lot of times in meetings, 'Who is this child's person?' and if no one in the room can answer, we don't continue the conversation until that child has a person – a point of contact the child and family can trust, and who our team supports with solutions."*

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## CITATIONS

- <sup>1</sup> Michigan Center for Educational Performance and Information, MI School Data.
- <sup>2</sup> DeGrow, Ben. *Mackinac Center for Public Policy*. "Distance Learning Doesn't Slow Down Leading Charters." May 18, 2020.
- <sup>3</sup> Michigan Center for Educational Performance and Information, MI School Data, School Index System.
- <sup>4</sup> Michigan Center for Educational Performance and Information, Graduation/Drop Out Rates.
- <sup>5</sup> Michigan Center for Educational Performance and Information, MI School Data.
- <sup>6</sup> GreatSchools: School Ratings and Reviews; greatschools.org.
- <sup>7</sup> DeGrow, Ben. *Mackinac Center for Public Policy*. "Highly Rated Hamtramck Charters Rise to Challenge," May 12, 2020.
- <sup>8</sup> Michigan Center for Educational Performance and Information, MI School Data.
- <sup>9</sup> DeGrow, Ben. *Mackinac Center for Public Policy*. "Highly Rated Hamtramck Charters Rise to Challenge," May 12, 2020.
- <sup>10</sup> *Mackinac Center for Public Policy*. "New Report Card Ranks Michigan's Elementary and Middle Schools." February 11, 2020.
- <sup>11</sup> DeGrow, Ben. *Mackinac Center for Public Policy*. "Highly Rated Hamtramck Charters Rise to Challenge," May 12, 2020.
- <sup>12</sup> Michigan Center for Educational Performance and Information, Student Enrollment Counts Report.
- <sup>13</sup> MLive, "Look inside new Flint Cultural Center Academy." September 5, 2019.
- <sup>14</sup> DeGrow, Ben. *Mackinac Center for Public Policy*. "Classical Charter Schools on the Rise in Michigan." March 18, 2020.
- <sup>15</sup> McGee, Kaylee. *The Collegian*. "Hillsdale Alumni to Open Classical Charter School in Metro-Detroit." February 14, 2019.
- <sup>16</sup> Brink, Haley. *Westfield Preparatory High School*. "Meet Aquan Grant: Principal of Westfield Prep High School." August 1, 2019.
- <sup>17</sup> Michigan Department of Education, "Michigan Charter Schools – Questions and Answers." November, 2017.
- <sup>18</sup> Michigan Department of Education, "Michigan Charter Schools – Questions and Answers." November, 2017.
- <sup>19</sup> 979 PA 94, as amended, Article 2 §388.1620(6).
- <sup>20</sup> DeAngelis, Cory and Ben DeGrow, "Doing More with Less: The Charter School Advantage in Michigan." Mackinac Center for Public Policy, 2018.
- <sup>21</sup> Michigan Center for Educational Performance and Information, MI School Data.
- <sup>22</sup> Michigan Center for Educational Performance and Information, Educational Entity Master for 2019-20, downloaded January 20, 2021.
- <sup>23</sup> Statewide K-12 enrollment was 1,457,838 in 2019-2020, per Michigan Department of Education Bulletin 1014.
- <sup>24</sup> Michigan Center for Educational Performance and Information, MI School Data.
- <sup>25</sup> Michigan Center for Educational Performance and Information, MI School Data.
- <sup>26</sup> Michigan Center for Educational Performance and Information, MI School Data.





**MCCCSA**  
Michigan Council of Charter School Authorizers

[www.michiganauthorizers.com](http://www.michiganauthorizers.com)