

Introduction

United Way of America recently introduced a new framework for targeting community resources under the general title “Advancing the Common Good.” This framework is organized around three areas that address some of the most distressing and persistent issues that undermine the well-being of individuals, families, and communities throughout the nation.

- Education—Helping Children and Youth Succeed
- Income—Promoting Financial Stability and Independence Among Working Families and Individuals
- Health—Promoting People’s Health

Each of these is part of a long-term effort by United Way of America and local United Ways across the nation to improve the quality of life and the life-chances for Americans in all situations and all locations. The specific focus for launching this effort in 2010 is “a nationwide education campaign to help America’s children and youth achieve their potential.”¹ As stated in the Overview document that was shared at the January 2010 United Way Summit, the promotion of education-related initiatives by local United Ways across the country has already helped children succeed in school through programs such as Success by 6[®] and Born Learning[®].² The United Way’s focus on education this year is intended to expand upon these successes and introduce new strategies that are likely to have a positive impact on the educational achievement of children and their successful transition to productive adult roles. United Way plans to mobilize state and local United Way organizations around the nation to identify common education goals and work towards achieving them. The United Way Campaign for the Common Good effort to help all children and youth achieve their potential, for example, has identified several specific goals including the United Way’s goal to achieve a fifty-percent reduction in the high school drop-out rate across the nation by 2018.

Dropping out of high school before completion is emblematic of both the failures of the educational system across the country as well as the failure of the support for education within

¹ United Way of America. “United Way Campaign for the Common Good: Overview of 2010.” Discussion draft dated January 8, 2010, page 1.

² Ibid.

families, neighborhoods, and communities. Although there has been extensive research conducted about the drop-out issue by academics, school administrators, and others over the past several decades, there are no simple panaceas for achieving this goal.³ There is no silver bullet that will directly and immediately resolve all of the challenges and problems that would result in convincing individuals not to leave high school before completing their education. However, it is also widely recognized that there are several factors that consistently contribute to dropping out of high school that, if addressed, would contribute towards reducing at least some of the underlying factors associated with dropping out and, ultimately, reduce the incidence of dropping out of high school.

Several of these factors are closely tied to early childhood education opportunities for children along with educational efforts in subsequent years that tend to reinforce the positive learning that occurs within early childhood education programs. Dropping out of high school at age 16, therefore, may be seen as the result of one or more failures to educate our children beginning as early as age three. The key steps in progressively moving towards reducing the incidence of students leaving high school before they complete their education include the following:

- Fostering school readiness among preschool children. This specifically refers to inculcating preschoolers with the social, emotional, and cognitive skills they need to succeed in school.
- Ensuring proficient reading skills by the 4th grade so that students do not fall so far behind that catching up becomes exceedingly difficult.
- Transitioning students successfully from elementary school to middle school.
- Ensuring that students graduate from high school on time.
- Encouraging young people to continue their education or be employed (or both) by the time they reach 21 years of age.

³ See, for example, (1) Cathy Hammond *et al.*, *Dropout Risk Factors and Exemplary Programs*. Clemson, SC: National Dropout Prevention Center, Communities in Schools, Inc., 2007; (2) Jason Amos, *Dropouts, Diplomas, and Dollars: U.S. High Schools and the Nation's Economy*. Washington, D.C.: Alliance for Excellence in Education, 2008; and (3) Andrew Sum, *et al.*, "The Consequences of Dropping Out of High School: Joblessness and Jailing for High School Dropouts and the High Cost for Taxpayers." Boston, MA: Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University, 2009.

Educational Indicators

United Way of America has adopted and disseminated a number of statistical indicators that directly relate to the nationwide incidence of high school dropouts. Some of these indicators are available for states and smaller areas, including the areas served by local United Way organizations. Several indicators, however, are not readily available at the local level because the data required to compile them are not collected for relatively small geographic areas or because the nationwide indicators are derived from custom tabulations of publicly available data that cannot easily be replicated at the local level.

Nonetheless, an important aspect of this nationwide mobilization effort is the need to provide local United Way organizations with the information tools they need to assess the educational status of the communities they serve and to track the impact their efforts will have on improving educational progress in their communities. Where the specific information resources and measures that have been identified by United Way of America are available at the local level, these need to be compiled and provided to these communities. Where they are not available or are not easily compiled for the local communities that are served by local United Ways, alternative indicators should be identified and provided.

As part of Public Policy Associates' ongoing assistance to the Michigan Association of United Ways (MAUW), we propose assisting MAUW and its member United Way organizations throughout Michigan to educate their members and supporters by providing them with three corresponding information resources that address the educational status of their communities and may be used to track their success in improving the educational progress of their community's children.

1. A **Dashboard Display** of the latest information for each of the school districts located within the communities served by each local United Way that relates as closely as possible to each of the critical steps leading towards educational success for children and youth. This display will be provided in a form that is straightforward, easily understood, and suitable for distribution to community members as the basis for discussion and planning.

2. **Statewide maps of Michigan school districts** illustrating the relative value of selected indicators for easy identification of similarly positioned districts that may stimulate local United Ways to collaborate with each other where appropriate. These maps may also be used to illustrate regional differences across Michigan that may require diverse responses rather than a uniform “one size fits all” approach among the local United Way organizations throughout Michigan.
3. **A profile of each Michigan school district** using graphic illustrations of key variables along with comparison information, where available, drawn from the data provided in the Dashboard Display. Included are illustrations of 4th grade reading proficiency, attendance, annual yearly progress, graduation and drop-out rates, and poverty among school-age children.

Each of these proposed information resources is illustrated on the following pages. However, it is important to recognize that the data presented are not the only indicators or necessarily the best indicators of educational progress and achievement for school districts. Suggested alternative or replacement data tabulations are also identified for consideration for future collection and use by United Way organizations throughout Michigan.

1. **Dashboard Display.** The Michigan Association of United Ways 2010 Education Dashboard includes the latest data available for each of the following indicators for each school district in the state and, where appropriate, the statewide indicator.
 - **Geographic Location.** Each district will be identified by the county in which it is located.
 - **Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP) 4th Grade Reading Proficiency.** The most recently available information from the Michigan Department of Education regarding 4th grade reading scores is provided.
 - Total number of 4th grade students tested.
 - Percentage of 4th grade students tested who fall in each of the four reading achievement categories.
 - Total percentage of 4th grade students tested who test as being in either in Level 1 (Advanced) or Level 2 (Proficient).

Recommendation for Alternative Data:

The most appropriate alternative data resource is the 4th grade reading assessment scores from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Unfortunately, this indicator is *not* collected from all students in all districts but rather from students in a sample of schools in each state and a selected number of metropolitan areas. Typically, only a statewide score is available for use. However, the NAEP reading assessment scores are broadly considered by educators to be more authoritative than the various statewide assessment scores currently available and allow for state-by-state comparisons and for legitimate comparisons between statewide scores and percentages and nationwide scores and percentages.

Although not available for local school districts, the latest available statewide NAEP reading assessment (2009) indicates that 30 percent of Michigan 4th grade students read at or above the “proficient” level.⁴ “The National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) is the only nationally representative and continuing assessment of what America’s students know and can do in various subject areas. . . . Since NAEP assessments are administered uniformly using the same sets of test booklets across the nation, NAEP results serve as a common metric for all states and selected urban districts. The assessment stays essentially the same from year to year, with only carefully documented changes.”⁵

- **District-Wide Attendance.** Average yearly attendance rates for all students are presented for the three most recent school years as well as an average rate for the three most recent school years. The source of this information is the Michigan Department of Education.

Recommendation for Alternative Data

Multiple studies⁶ have demonstrated that **school attendance is critical for student achievement, especially in the earliest years. Chronic absenteeism not only adversely affects academic achievement; it is also linked with subsequent drop-out rates.** Ideally, data should be made available by school district and, if appropriate, by individual school building. The preferred measurements are calculations of the mean absentee rate by compiling days attended for all students and total days enrolled for all students and then identifying:

⁴ National Center for Educational Statistics, Nations Report Card.
http://nationsreportcard.gov/reading_2009/state_g4.asp

⁵ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics. Nations Report Card.
<http://www.nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/about/>

⁶ Hedy Change and Mariajose Romero. “Present, Engaged, and Accounted For: The Critical Importance of Addressing Chronic Absence in the Early Grades,” National Center for Children in Poverty, September 2008.
http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub_837.html

- Chronically absent students—those students who have been absent between 10% and 19.9% of all possible days they were enrolled.
- Excessive chronically absent students—those students who have been absent 20% or more of all possible days they were enrolled.

The percentage of students who are chronically absent or excessively chronically absent provides a well-recognized indicator of the potential for academic failure and, ultimately, withdrawal from school before graduation from grade 12. In contrast, average annual attendance rates tend to be artificially high and are not closely associated with academic failure and high school drop out rates.

Chronic absenteeism and excessive chronic absenteeism data are not currently available from the Michigan Department of Education although it is known that at least some Michigan Intermediate School Districts (ISDs) do collect district and school attendance data that may be used to compute these indicators.

With the assistance of the Michigan Association of United Ways and local United Ways around the state, a pilot project for the routine collection of school and district attendance data on days of attendance and enrollment may be planned and implemented in order to provide local United Ways with chronic and excessive chronic absenteeism rates for early grades such as kindergarten and/or grades one and two in order to provide local United Ways with a very early warning of problems that may lead to dropping out of high school ten years later.

- **Graduation Rate.** The most recent four-year graduation rate and most recent four-year drop-out rate are provided for each district. These rates are compiled by tracking the outcomes for 9th grade students over a four-year period, accounting for students who transfer into and out of the district. Students who leave the system entirely to attend a non-public school, to be home schooled, to move to another state, or who have become deceased are also removed from the calculations. The source of this information is the Michigan Department of Education. The “four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate” is designed to document the “on-time” rate of graduation among students who enroll as 9th graders and are expected to graduate within four years. These calculations comply with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.⁷
- **Drop Out Rate.** “There is no national standard for calculating cohort four-year dropout rates.”⁸ It is also important to point out that the drop-out rate is not simply calculated by subtracting the graduation rate from 100 percent. The drop-out rate presented here is a more detailed calculation that is consistent with the methodology recommended by the National Governor’s Association and the U.S. Department of Education. This approach

⁷ Michigan Department of Education, Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI). http://www.michigan.gov/cepi/0,1607,7-113-21423_30451_51357--,00.html

⁸ Michigan Department of Education. *State of Michigan 2008 Cohort 4-Year & 2007 Cohort 5-Year Graduation and Dropout Rate Reports*. http://www.michigan.gov/documents/cepi/2008-2007_MI_Grad-Drop_Rate_283914_7.pdf

excludes students who are identified as “other completers” and “off track” completers. Other completers are those who earn a GED or other certificate as well as special education students who reach the maximum age for special education services. Off track completers are those students who took more than four years to complete their diploma or who are still enrolled and pursuing their diploma after four years. Dropouts, therefore, are defined strictly as those students “who left high school permanently at any time during the four-year period, or whose whereabouts are unknown.”⁹

■ **Poverty Level.** Poverty level is indicated by:

- The percentage of students who qualify for either a free or reduced-price lunch during the most recent school year. The source of this information is the Michigan Department of Education.
- Estimates of the population ages 5 through 17 who reside in households at or below the federal poverty level (FPL), as determined by the Bureau of the Census, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) Program.

The Dashboard Display that appears on the following three pages includes actual data for a small sample of Michigan school districts. The complete Dashboard Display will include data for all Michigan school districts.

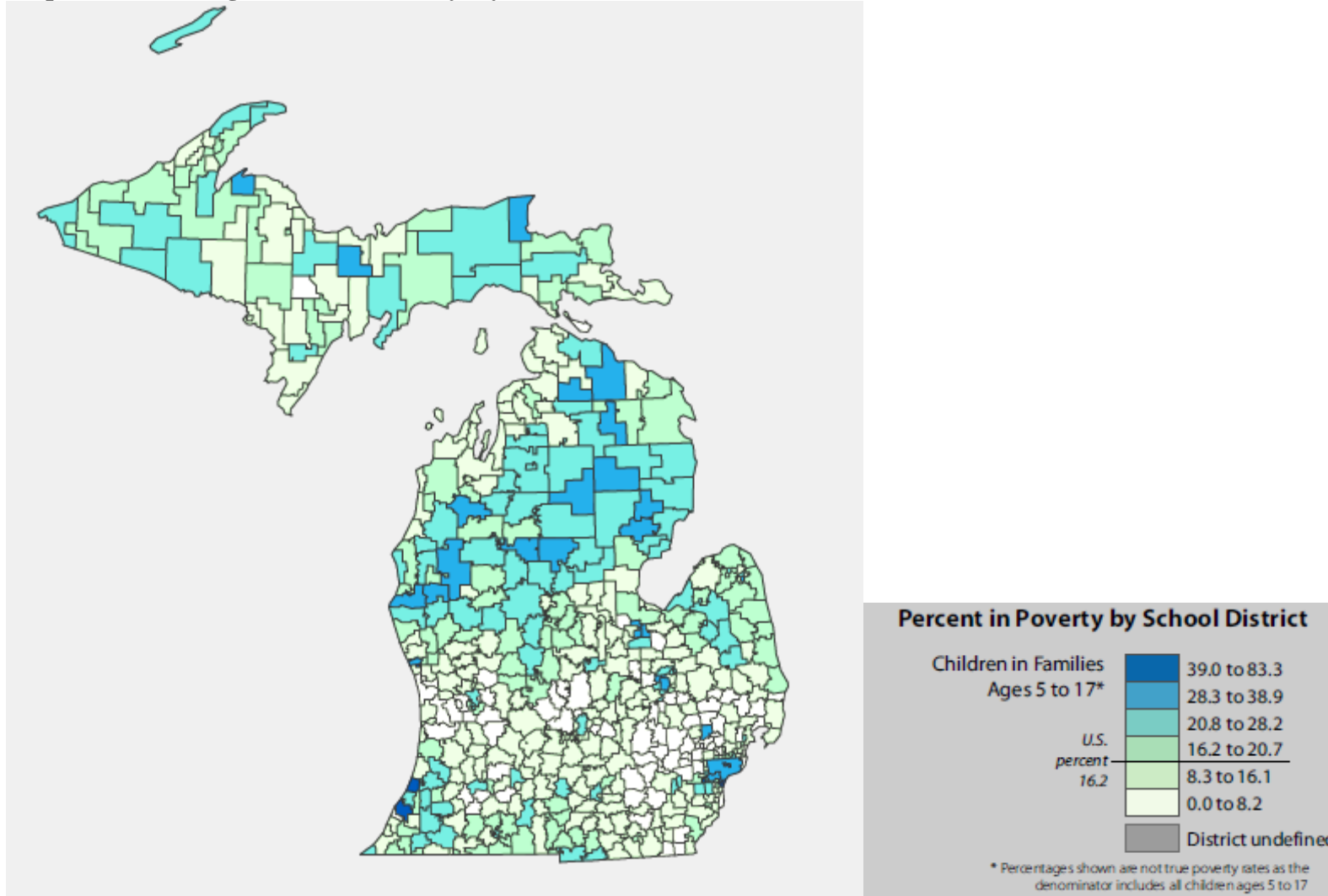
⁹ Ibid.

Fall 2008 MEAP 4th Grade Reading Proficiency							
School District	County Location	Number Tested & Included	2008	2008	2008	2008	2008
			Level 1 (Advanced)	Level 2 (Proficient)	Level 3	Level 4	Proficient or Better
Adams Township School District	Houghton	40	5.0%	75.0%	17.5%	2.5%	80.0%
Addison Community Schools	Lenawee	54	13.0%	72.2%	14.8%	0.0%	85.2%
Adrian City School District	Lenawee	231	7.4%	69.3%	23.4%	0.0%	76.7%
Airport Community School District	Monroe	178	10.1%	66.3%	23.0%	0.6%	76.4%
Akron-Fairgrove Schools	Tuscola	13	0.0%	92.3%	7.7%	0.0%	92.3%
Alanson Public Schools	Emmet	25	4.0%	76.0%	20.0%	0.0%	80.0%
Alba Public Schools	Antrim	14	14.3%	78.6%	7.1%	0.0%	92.9%
Albion Public Schools	Calhoun	69	8.7%	56.5%	31.9%	2.9%	65.2%
Alcona Community Schools	Alcona	64	10.9%	67.2%	21.9%	0.0%	78.1%
Algonac Community School District	St. Clair	142	9.2%	77.5%	12.0%	1.4%	86.7%
Allegan Public Schools	Allegan	205	7.3%	71.2%	19.0%	2.4%	78.5%
Ann Arbor Public Schools	Washtenaw	1,136	29.4%	59.4%	10.5%	0.7%	88.8%
Au Gres-Sims School District	Arenac	35	19.0%	5.7%	71.4%	22.9%	24.7%
Bad Axe Public Schools	Huron	93	14.0%	65.6%	20.4%	0.0%	79.6%
Bay City School District	Bay	622	9.2%	70.3%	18.3%	2.3%	79.5%
Big Bay de Noc School District	Delta	18	16.7%	61.1%	16.7%	5.6%	77.8%
Birmingham City School District	Oakland	601	21.8%	70.5%	7.5%	0.2%	92.3%
Clarkston Community School District	Oakland	588	19.0%	70.4%	10.2%	0.3%	89.4%
Corunna Public School District	Shiawassee	158	14.6%	79.7%	5.1%	0.6%	94.3%
Redford Union School District	Wayne	234	5.1%	59.4%	32.9%	2.6%	64.5%
Pontiac City School District	Oakland	488	0.6%	49.6%	45.9%	3.9%	50.2%
Sault Ste. Marie Public Schools	Chippewa	144	9.7%	70.1%	18.8%	1.4%	79.8%
St. Johns Public Schools	Clinton	223	13.0%	72.2%	14.3%	0.4%	85.2%
Statewide		113,373	11.0%	65.6%	21.7%	1.7%	76.6%

School District	County Location	Annual District-Wide Attendance				Graduation/Drop-Out		Poverty Level	
		2008-09	2007-08	2006-07	Three-Year Mean	Five-Year Graduation Rate 2008	Five-Year Drop-Out Rate 2008	Free and Reduced Lunch 2008-09	Child Poverty Rate 2008
Adams Township School District	Houghton	92.9%	90.4%	93.2%	92.2%	91.2%	5.9%	57.9%	15.3%
Addison Community Schools	Lenawee	96.4%	96.0%	94.7%	95.7%	88.9%	7.8%	37.9%	11.5%
Adrian City School District	Lenawee	93.2%	94.2%	95.2%	94.2%	69.4%	17.4%	57.2%	14.8%
Airport Community School District	Monroe	97.6%	97.7%	94.3%	96.5%	50.4%	13.9%	40.5%	14.3%
Akron-Fairgrove Schools	Tuscola	92.3%	92.1%	92.3%	92.2%	3.1%	90.6%	66.2%	17.9%
Alanson Public Schools	Emmet	94.6%	NA	NA	94.6%	54.6%	42.4%	60.8%	NA
Alba Public Schools	Antrim	94.0%	94.0%	93.9%	94.0%	85.0%	10.0%	73.4%	26.5%
Albion Public Schools	Calhoun	93.9%	93.0%	92.9%	93.3%	74.3%	18.6%	78.4%	27.0%
Alcona Community Schools	Alcona	93.6%	93.0%	94.4%	93.7%	78.3%	18.5%	51.4%	22.3%
Algonac Community School District	St. Clair	96.1%	96.2%	96.3%	96.2%	85.9%	10.2%	39.8%	10.7%
Allegan Public Schools	Allegan	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	64.9%	12.7%	94.9%	14.4%
Ann Arbor Public Schools	Washtenaw	95.4%	96.9%	96.2%	96.2%	87.5%	7.3%	19.3%	9.6%
Au Gres-Sims School District	Arenac	96.6%	97.0%	97.5%	97.0%	91.8%	6.1%	56.3%	23.3%
Bad Axe Public Schools	Huron	96.2%	96.3%	95.9%	96.1%	75.3%	13.7%	41.7%	19.8%
Bay City School District	Bay	95.2%	95.0%	94.8%	95.0%	89.5%	5.3%	48.4%	16.9%
Big Bay de Noc School District	Delta	96.8%	97.1%	97.6%	97.2%	88.9%	11.1%	51.1%	25.8%
Birmingham City School District	Oakland	96.8%	96.8%	97.3%	97.0%	97.3%	1.4%	4.7%	4.0%
Clarkston Community School District	Oakland	95.4%	96.5%	96.4%	96.1%	88.1%	7.7%	12.1%	5.4%
Corunna Public School District	Shiawassee	97.2%	97.0%	96.0%	96.7%	88.1%	7.6%	40.2%	14.3%
Redford Union School District	Wayne	93.8%	94.2%	94.7%	94.2%	67.2%	18.7%	55.6%	15.2%
Pontiac City School District	Oakland	91.1%	91.8%	91.4%	91.4%	69.7%	20.8%	90.1%	29.6%
Sault Ste. Marie Public Schools	Chippewa	93.5%	93.7%	93.5%	93.6%	84.9%	7.7%	47.5%	18.4%
St. Johns Public Schools	Clinton	97.1%	97.1%	97.0%	97.1%	89.1%	6.4%	24.5%	7.0%
Statewide		94.3%	94.5%	94.6%	94.5%	78.9%	17.0%	44.1%	17.8%

2. Michigan School District Maps.

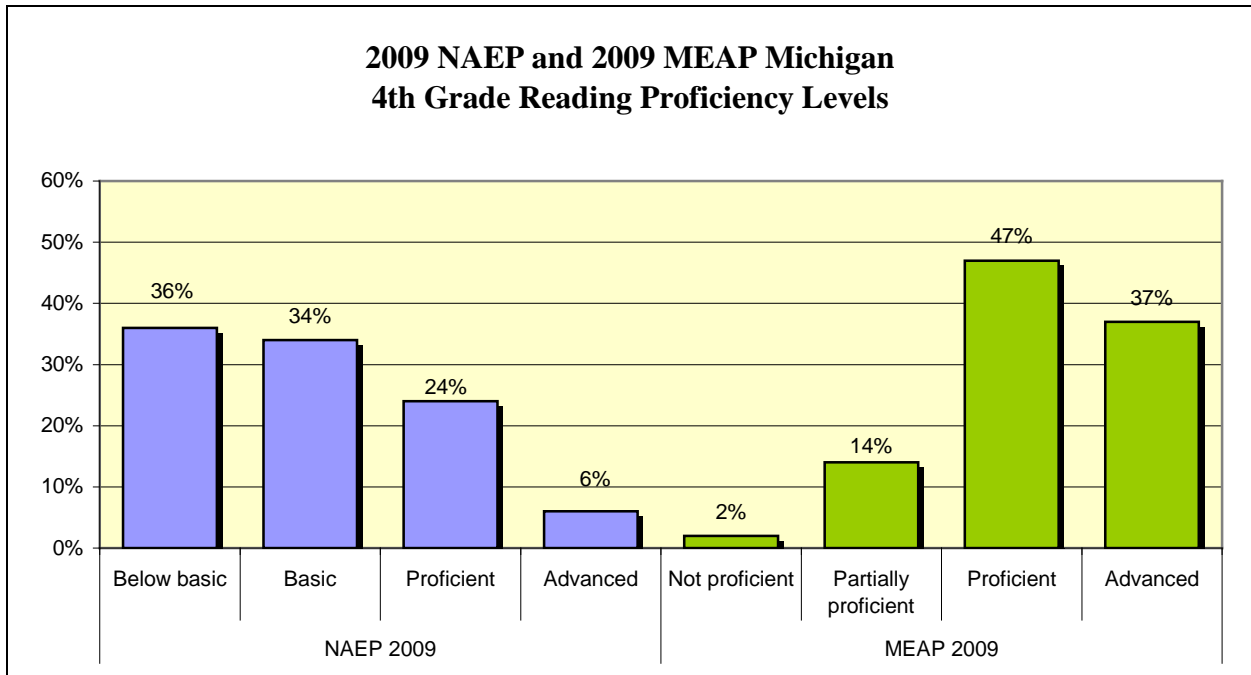
Map 1: Children Ages 5 – 17 in Poverty, by School District, 2008



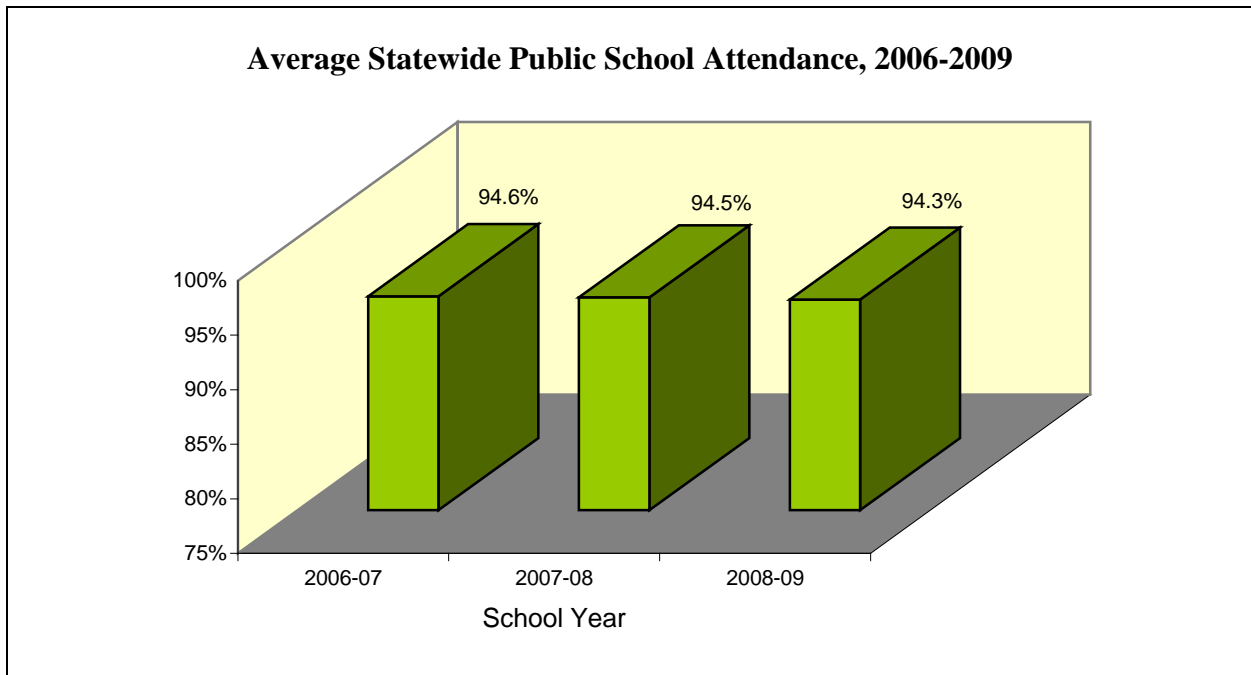
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates Program, November 2009. (<http://www.census.gov/did/www/saipe/data/schools/index.html>)

3. Statewide and School District Profiles

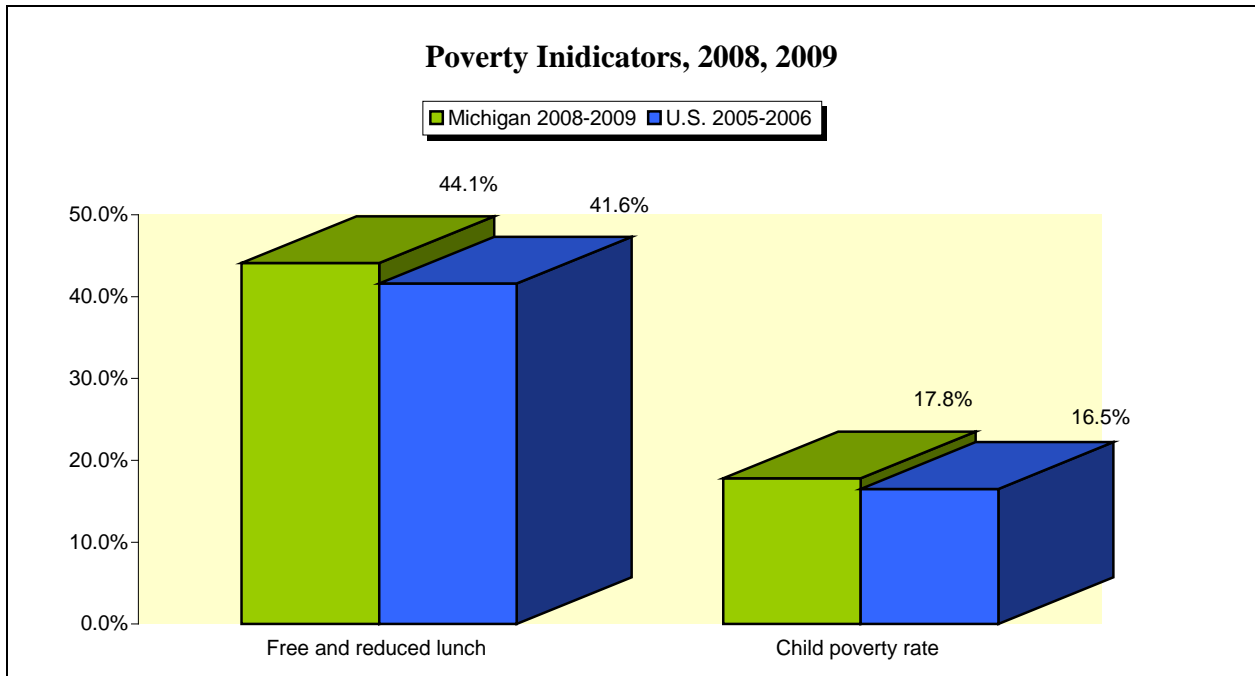
a. Statewide and United States Comparative Data



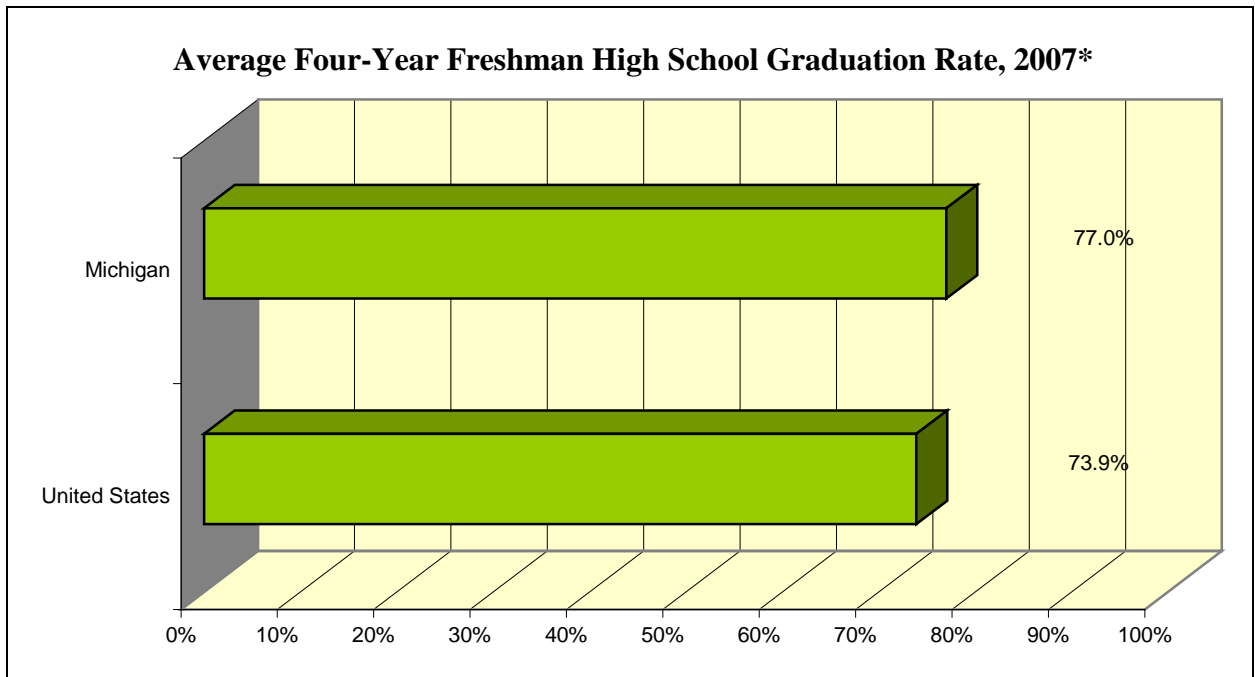
Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, 2010; Michigan Department of Education, 2010.



Source: Michigan Department of Education, 2009.



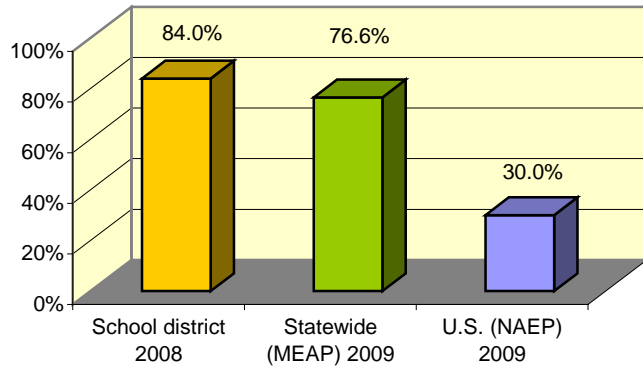
Source: Michigan Department of Education, 2009; Bureau of the Census, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates Program (SAIPE), 2009.



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2009.

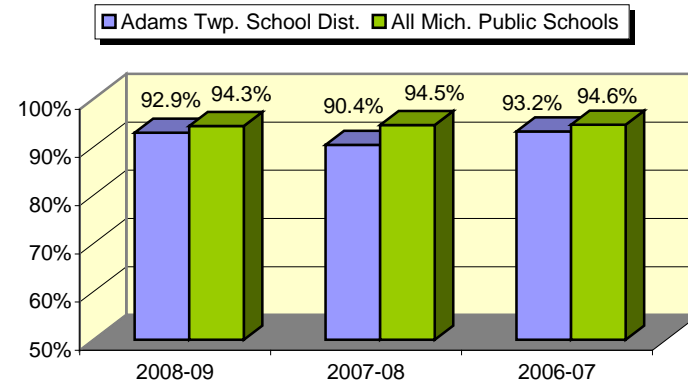
*These rates are based on the aggregate size of the freshman class and the aggregate number of diplomas awarded four years later. Adjustments for transfers, mortality, and other issues are not made for these calculations

Percentage of 4th Grade Students Reading at or Above Proficient



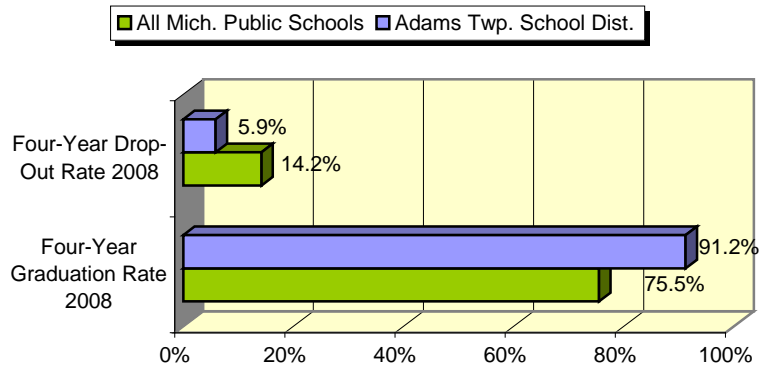
Source: U.S. Dept. of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2009; Michigan Department of Education, 2010.

Average Attendance Rate, 2006-07 through 2008-09 School Years



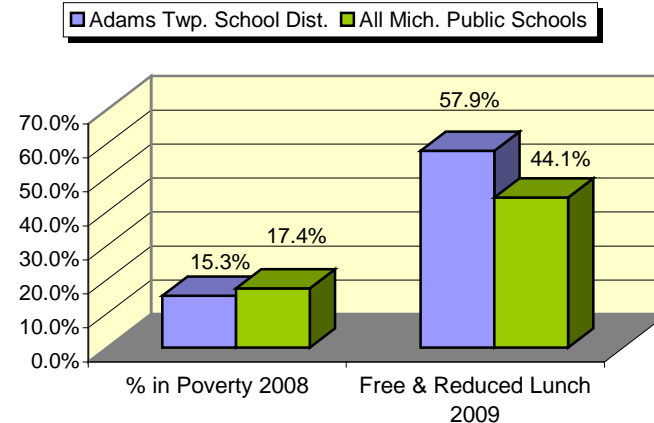
Source: Michigan Department of Education, 2010.

Four-Year High School Graduation and Drop Out Rates



Source: Michigan Department of Education, 2009.

Indicators of Students in Poverty



Source: Bureau of the Census, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, 2009; Michigan Department of Education, 2010.

