

# JOCELYN BENSON

for GOVERNOR



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# My Education Plan

## *Ensuring Public Education Excellence*

Michigan's next governor has a moral responsibility to transform our public schools – for our kids, our economy, and our future. Here's how we'll do it.

As the daughter of two public school teachers and a former educator myself, this is personal. I know what's at stake for Michigan families – and I'm ready to lead with the urgency this moment demands.

This plan is ambitious because the stakes are high. Our future economy, workforce, communities, and democracy depend on whether we are willing to build a truly world-class public education system for every child in Michigan.

### **5 Pillar Education Plan:**

- ✔ **Pillar 1: A World-Class Education for Every Michigan Child**
- ✔ **Pillar 2: Recruit, Pay, and Keep Great Educators**
- ✔ **Pillar 3: Start Strong: Birth Through Pre-K**
- ✔ **Pillar 4: Fund Schools Fairly, Equitably, Efficiently and Transparently**
- ✔ **Pillar 5: Make the System Work Together**

# Pillar 1 | A World-Class Education for Every Michigan Child

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### As Governor I will:

- ✓ **Establish The Michigan Education Guarantee.** Ensure a Michigan high school diploma means a student is college or career ready by creating a comprehensive, evidence-based statewide graduation standard.
- ✓ **Ensure every Michigan child can read by third grade.** Fully implement successful Science of Reading curriculum and Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading (LETRS) training and enable statewide tracking of literacy rates and improvements.
- ✓ **Expand hands-on learning opportunities for all students.** Expand the use of experiential learning, including career and technical education (CTE) programs in grades 5-8 and play-based STEM programs in K-4.
- ✓ **Arts education for all.** Ensure every student has access to a quality arts education in every grade, and invest in opportunities to connect arts education to STEM and critical thinking skills.
- ✓ **Ensure diverse high-quality post-secondary pathways are available to all students starting at the end of 10th grade.** These should include paid apprenticeships with unions and employers, expanded partnerships with community colleges, and advanced college-preparatory opportunities.
- ✓ **Establish a Summer or Year of Service.** Students will receive a paid stipend to work in community-based non-profits or state and local governments. Year-long fellows will receive a “bonus” at the end to put towards additional education, creating a non-profit or new business, or a down payment on a new home.
- ✓ **Wrap-around support beyond the classroom.** Expand certified career counseling to help students with their post-secondary pathway choices and invest in expanding mental health support in schools.
- ✓ **Tackle absenteeism.** With a statewide average of 30% of students who are chronically absent, and as high as 66% in some districts, we will establish a Statewide Absenteeism Strategy along with Local Implementation Plans to help local communities address chronic absenteeism.
- ✓ **Universal Out-of-School-for-All.** Expand affordable and high-quality before school, after school, and summer enrichment programs to deepen and extend learning time for all school-aged youth beyond the school day.
- ✓ **Ensure students with special needs are set up for success.** In coalition with families, special education advocates, educators, and partners like the Michigan Autism Alliance, build a strategic plan for how Michigan will improve the education level and employment rate of students with special needs so that they are able to thrive.
- ✓ **Provide advocacy support for families.** Create an independent state-level office for families with children who have special needs with the authority to provide advocacy support for families, resolve disputes and create remedies between families and districts.

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## Pillar 2 | Recruit, Pay, and Keep Great Educators

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*Pay teachers fairly*



*Expand wrap around services*

### As Governor I will:

- ✓ **Require starting teacher salaries of at least \$60,000.** This will be scaled up to provide additional compensation for experienced educators and staff commensurate with experience.
- ✓ **Expand wrap around support for educators.** That means mental health, career development support, behavioral health resources, and other professional needs.
- ✓ **Address educator shortages.** Make staffing needs more transparent so schools can maintain fair educator ratios and work toward smaller classroom sizes.
- ✓ **Strengthen educator preparation curriculum.** Give aspiring educators more hands-on classroom experience – especially in reading and math – so they enter schools ready to help students succeed.
- ✓ **Expand programs like Talent Together.** Enable educators and paraprofessionals to become certified teachers in the communities they already serve.
- ✓ **Ensure teacher education is affordable.** Through tuition incentives and paid student teaching programs, we will reduce barriers and build a stronger pipeline of aspiring teacher candidates from communities across Michigan.
- ✓ **Invest in teachers' professional growth throughout their careers.** Help all teachers continue their professional development while teaching with mentoring roles, ongoing training, and coaching to ensure great educators stay in Michigan classrooms.
- ✓ **Support the ESP Bill of Rights.** Ensure our school support staff contribute to student success – and are treated with the respect and dignity they have earned.

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## Pillar 3 | Start Strong - Birth Through Pre-K

### As Governor I will:

- ✓ **Increase the availability of high-quality childcare.** Streamline the approval and certification process to make it easier and more affordable to open licensed, high-quality centers that provide care to families 5 days per week. Establish a ratio goal of available centers to children in a community and invest in opening childcare centers in areas where existing coverage is limited.
- ✓ **Ensure competitive pay and professional support for childcare staff.** Align their compensation with comparable careers and expand support and professional development opportunities for childcare professionals.
- ✓ **Expand Pre-K-For-All.** Ensure that high-quality pre-kindergarten is available to all 3- and 4-year-olds. The expansion will build a mindset that formal learning starts long before kindergarten.
- ✓ **Expand Rx Kids to every community in Michigan.** Provide direct financial support to new mothers and their newborn children, putting money directly in Michiganders' pockets and helping cover critical costs in a child's earliest life moments.
- ✓ **Grow wrap around support for families of young children.** Create local family support centers for young children and their families. These centers will provide comprehensive services for pre- and post-natal support, healthy child development, and enhance family stability and self-sufficiency. We will also establish a "single door" entryway for families to access wrap-around services – from pediatrics to other needs.



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## Pillar 4 | Fund Schools Equitably, Efficiently, and Transparently

### As Governor I will:

- ✓ **Fund schools based on student-needs, not a one-size-fits-all model.** Michigan has underfunded its public schools for nearly three decades. Schools must receive the funding resources they need to meet the unique needs of every child.
- ✓ **Fix special education funding so schools can better support students of all abilities.** The Autism Alliance of Michigan's MI Blueprint model proposes a fundamental overhaul of special education funding to include a tiered system that better meets the varying needs of the students and schools.
- ✓ **Invest in school buildings and classrooms.** Every child deserves safe, updated schools with quality facilities - no matter where they live. We need to invest in school buildings and expand public-private partnerships that help all communities fund better school infrastructure.
- ✓ **Expand career and technical training opportunities statewide.** Every student who wants to "learn while they earn" should have access to a quality career and technical education programs in their community.
- ✓ **Support the unique transportation needs of communities.** Ensure all young people have safe transportation to schools, after school programs, and summer learning experiences.
- ✓ **Fully fund early childhood education and after school programming.** Establish shared funding responsibility between the state and local communities around wrap-around education priorities, including early childhood education and out-of-school, replicating successful models in Kent County and elsewhere.
- ✓ **Protect the School Aid Fund.** Commit to using the School Aid Fund for Pre K-12 only and establish a separate, dedicated funding system for higher-education programs with its own revenue streams.
- ✓ **Protect schools from state budget delays.** If the state fails to enact a fiscal year budget for public education by the July 1 deadline in any given year, mandate that the previous year's budget, adjusted for inflation, be carried forward and applied to the upcoming fiscal year.

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*Invest in school buildings and classrooms*



*Protect School Aid Fund*

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## Pillar 5 | Make the System Work Together

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*Establish state-wide standard processes*



*Create an Education Cabinet*

### As Governor I will:

- ✓ **Build a statewide education strategic plan.** Create a statewide, goal-based, and trackable strategic plan that engages stakeholders and incorporates roles for the state, regional, and local districts.
- ✓ **Launch an "Education Cabinet" to unite our statewide agencies.** The "Cabinet" will work in tandem to drive implementation and strategy, will report to the Governor, and be chaired jointly by the heads of the Department of Education, the Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity, and the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs. The Education Cabinet will be empowered, within the limits of state and federal law, to obtain all disaggregated student data that is necessary to set statewide strategy and aid in improving schools.
- ✓ **Build stronger partnerships between regional education agencies.** Guided by the Education Cabinet, we will link regional education service agencies so that these regional entities become a network of 'implementation arms' across the state.
- ✓ **Ensure school locations match population needs.** As Michigan's student populations change, the state should help districts determine how to address legacy capital costs and school infrastructure through a joint effort of the state Department of Education, state housing authority, developers, and districts.
- ✓ **Hold ourselves accountable for student improvement.** Establish a public and transparent statewide audit process to understand how funding is being spent and ensure resources are being used efficiently and effectively to achieve necessary outcomes.
- ✓ **Enshrine a constitutional right to high quality education in Michigan.** Establish a constitutional right to a world-class education for every young Michigander. Doing so provides parents, students, and educators with an enforceable pathway to hold lawmakers accountable to our education excellence goals.
- ✓ **Help schools learn from one another.** Create a support system between schools with similar student populations so that successful educational practices can be shared and expanded. Utilize partnerships, shared programming, coaching support and other tools to improve schools that continue to struggle.

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