

State Board of Education Eight-Year Term – Vote for Two (2)

Candidates were asked to summarize their backgrounds in 75 words and were allotted 75 words to answer each question. If the candidate did not reply by the required date for publication, the words “Did not respond in time for publication” appear under the candidate’s name.

QUESTION 1
What long term evaluation plans should be in place to assess the results arising from the implementation of the new high school graduation requirements?

QUESTION 2
What new role/roles do you think the state board should undertake or, on the other hand, eliminate from its portfolio?

QUESTION 3
What measures should be taken to encourage the development of qualified Mathematics and Science teachers and to encourage young students to enter these fields?

Tom McMillin, Republican

Tom McMillin is President of Prevail Academy Charter School Board in Mt. Clemens. Tom graduated from the University of Michigan with a Bachelor’s degree in Accounting/Economics. He is a CPA and CFO of a property management company. Tom is happily married to Dalila McMillin and he has a wonderful 17 year old daughter, Jessica McMillin. Tom is former Mayor of Auburn Hills and County Commissioner. He is a member of the Charles Wright Museum.

Great care must be taken whenever the State interferes with local control and mandates what local districts must teach. Assessing the “success” of the newly imposed high school graduation standards should be done, not only by measuring any increased success of college-bound students, but also by measuring the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction of teachers and parents these new requirements have created.

Since parents and local teachers know what is best for their children/students, the authority of a state body, like the State Board of Education, should be limited. The State Board of Education should have the additional role of ensuring independent measurements of a district’s or school’s ability to advance below-grade level students to at or above grade level, as well as various parental satisfaction metrics. It should also ensure good parental choice in education.

Basic free market mechanisms should be allowed to take care of any lack of supply of specialized teachers. If a lack of supply of good Math and Science teachers exists, then the salary for those teachers should be allowed to increase, which would increase the interest of students to enter those fields. Additionally, some good teachers who are not specialized in these fields would naturally be interested in gaining that expertise for more pay.

Eileen Weiser, Republican

BA (MSU) & MM (U of M), piano performance. Held a variety of positions - from renovating a polluted scrapyard into a nonprofit center, to representing our country with my small son and husband, U.S. Ambassador to Slovakia (2001-2004). Served in many professional, philanthropic, civic and political roles that have provided knowledge and experience for this Board. Current Board member for The Nation’s Report Card (NAEP), working on national and state assessment.

Assessments are important long-range evaluation tools. Two exist: Michigan’s junior-year ACT and 12th grade NAEP, anticipated to evaluate preparedness for post-secondary education and employment without remediation. State law requires a subjective school evaluation - Education YES! - which now contains provisions for legislative oversight and intervention if needed. SBE will monitor implementation and results closely. Achieve, Inc. (Michigan’s HS reform advisor) works with many states, including Indiana, which is implementing a similar new curriculum successfully.

With limited staff, SBE concentrates on constitutional duties. One critical role is supervision of college and university teacher preparation programs. K-12 standards are increasingly rigorous. We must evaluate whether new teachers have matching content knowledge, and whether teaching methodologies prepare them for today’s students. Half of the best new teachers leave teaching within five years; we have to start this evaluation quickly. We must also finish both science and social studies content expectations.

Higher K-12 rigor should help more students earn college mathematics or science degrees. Students taking Algebra 1 in 8th grade can take enough high school mathematics for college entrance without remediation, which nearly halves graduation rates. We must improve transition for math and science professionals wanting to become teachers. Michigan should consider incentives for underserved subjects or teacher scarcity areas such as college loan forgiveness, merit pay and bonuses that work well in other states.

Reginald Turner, Democrat

State Board of Education Member Reginald Turner is an executive committee member in the Clark Hill law firm. He previously served on the Detroit Board of Education. Turner has volunteered in Michigan schools for many years. For ten years Turner and Dennis Archer Co-Chaired the Medical-Educational-Legal-Law Enforcement Program, an anti-drug and violence-prevention initiative, reaching over 5,000 children each year. Turner is a leader in many civic organizations, including the United Way.

We should assess the results of our more rigorous graduation requirements by tracking Michigan Merit Examination results, by measuring the nature and quality of achievement of students in post-secondary work, and by correlating such data regarding individuals, local school districts, intermediate districts and statewide, for purposes of support and accountability.

The State Board should play a greater role in partnership with intermediate school districts to drive constructive changes in the way we deliver services. We should hold ourselves accountable for ensuring that all of our children have opportunities to reach their potential. We should also develop mechanisms to provide more support and oversight to children in diverse educational environments, and particularly in our schools that have achievement challenges.

We can increase the development of highly qualified math and science teachers through rigorous K-12 curriculum standards and improved career counseling at K-12 and post-secondary levels to encourage promising students to consider teaching math and science. We also need better coordination with teacher preparation institutions on curriculum, and more financial incentives such as college and graduate school scholarships and loan forgiveness programs.

Cassandra E. Ulbrich, Democrat

Cassandra Ulbrich is a Senior Director of Development at WSU and a small business owner. She serves on the Boards for the U-M Club of Greater Detroit & Walter Reuther Library. Cassandra is the Past President of the National Women’s Political Caucus of Michigan. Cassandra earned an AA from St. Clair County CC, a BA from the U-M (Ann Arbor), and a MA from WSU. She is currently completing a PhD, also from WSU.

The Michigan Merit Curriculum is designed to ensure that students have the skills necessary to compete in the global economy. As such, benchmarks should be developed. Long-term evaluation plans should include quantifiable data related to the number of students who enter some form of post-secondary education, as well as college completion rates. In addition, the Michigan Merit Exam should provide data on high school achievement in critical areas.

It’s essential that the State Board of Education continue to place a high emphasis on preparing students for post secondary education. The Board must continue to outline high standards for all Michigan students. In addition, studies have shown that parental involvement is directly related to student achievement and school improvement. The State Board of Education should lead and support efforts to increase parental and community involvement in local schools, and create partnerships with stakeholders.

We need to look at best practices. For example, allow college students majoring in math and science to intern at local schools during their freshman or sophomore years, to experience a career in education. In addition, encourage those in the twilight of their professional careers, or seeking a second career, to consider the educational field. Teachers should be given the tools necessary to engage students through innovative methods.

Kevin A. Carey, Green

I am a graduate of Wayne State University, with Bachelor of Arts in Political Science. Member of Michigan Emergency Committee Against War & Injustice and Workers World Party. Former substitute teacher with Detroit Board of Education and Detroit Federation of Teachers. Active in civil rights, anti-war and union work for 30 years.

The State of Michigan should eliminate MEAP testing for students. Create much smaller class sizes and give time to teachers to give personal attention to the progress of all students. Develop the abilities of all students.

Immediate end to unequal funding for school districts throughout Michigan by bringing all districts up to the highest level in the state. Special funds for poorest urban and rural school districts that have special burdens. Require preschool programs and after school programs in every school district. Give students art, music and sports programs for all around development.

Increase pay for all public school teachers to attract and keep the most qualified personnel. Demand money from the military budget that is draining away from Michigan be used to improve school buildings, provide computers, books and supplies. Special scholarships to math and science students.

Jacob Woods, Green

Did not respond in time for publication.

George A. Emerson, US Taxpayers

Did not respond in time for publication.

