



**Embargoed: Not for release before April 23, 2008**

**NEWS RELEASE**

**CONTACT:** Kari Hudnell (202) 955-9450 x324, [khudnell@communicationworks.com](mailto:khudnell@communicationworks.com)

**Number of Michigan Schools in Restructuring Increases  
As More High Schools Miss NCLB AYP Targets**

*State Becomes More Strategic About Options for Assistance*

WASHINGTON – April 23, 2008 – The number of Michigan schools in restructuring under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) rose for the 2007-08 school year, according to a new report from the Washington, D.C.-based Center on Education Policy (CEP). The report attributed this rise, in part, to a greater number of high schools failing to meet state targets on a new state-mandated high school test.

The study also found that Michigan has refined strategies for assisting schools in restructuring to provide more targeted options, ending what had been a “smorgasbord” of choices. Michigan has been developing strategies for NCLB school restructuring since 2003-04. NCLB requires schools to undergo restructuring after they fail to meet state test-score requirements for five consecutive years.

“Before [restructuring] was like a buffet,” said Betty Underwood, interim director of Michigan’s Office of School Improvement. “Now we’ve moved on to a sit-down dinner. You have to have your protein. You have to have your vegetables. And you have to eat your dinner before you have dessert.”

The report, *The Sit-Down Dinner: Formalizing Restructuring Under the No Child Left Behind Act in Michigan*, also finds that more than half the schools in restructuring (34) recently entered the planning phase, with the majority (27) of these being high schools. If not for these high schools, the number of Michigan schools in restructuring would again have declined. The report notes that for the first time, high schools were evaluated based on the performance of 11<sup>th</sup>-graders on the Michigan Merit Exam, which replaced the Michigan Educational Assessment Plan in 2007.

In the 2007-08 school year, 63 Michigan schools that receive federal Title I support are in the planning or implementation phase of restructuring. That is down from a high of 109 in 2004-05, but well above the 46 schools in restructuring in 2006-07. Geographically, most of the 63 schools (84 percent) in restructuring in 2007-08 were in urban areas, and 68 percent were from Detroit, including one charter school.

The Michigan Department of Education is taking a more prescriptive role in helping schools in restructuring, the report finds. In the 2007-08 school year, the state for the first time offered a set plan of restructuring assistance: leadership coaches who work with principals in their schools, professional-development fellowships for principals, auditors who monitor schools, and Process Mentor Teams that review the improvement process and help set goals.

"Yesterday, Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings called on states and schools to go beyond efforts that have not helped improve our lowest-performing schools. Michigan appears to be moving in this direction with its new strategies to help schools in restructuring," said Jack Jennings, president and CEO of CEP.

Officials at the nine restructuring schools featured in the report said they welcomed the new assistance from the state. They especially appreciated that the assistance was tailored to school needs. Several, however, said the Process Mentor Teams and leadership coaches were slow in starting and hoped that next year the assistance would be available at the very beginning of the school year.

In addition to the new state assistance, schools are still required by federal law to choose a restructuring strategy. Hiring a turnaround specialist or coach remains the most common option chosen by schools in restructuring in Michigan and is recommended by the Michigan Department of Education to most schools.

The state discourages replacing most of the school staff, and the percentage of schools using this option is relatively low, just 7 percent. The state also discourages the "any other" option available to schools because it is vague and difficult to monitor. In fact, the percentage of schools using this option decreased from 23 percent to 7 percent in 2006-07.

According to the report, which draws on interviews with state and local officials and from an extensive review of state records from September 2007 through February 2008, a combination of multiple strategies continues to be more effective than a single strategy. More than half (57 percent) of schools using three or more options over two years exited restructuring while only 22 percent of schools using two or fewer exited that status.

"Most school and district officials see restructuring as an ongoing process that requires various strategies rather than relying on any one option as the guaranteed fix," Jennings added.

The Center on Education Policy has conducted a series of analyses of the school restructuring efforts in California, Maryland, and Michigan as part of its comprehensive, multiyear study of the No Child Left Behind Act. In 2008, NCLB school restructuring efforts in Ohio and Georgia and will also be studied. The restructuring reports and other CEP publications on NCLB are available at [www.cep-dc.org](http://www.cep-dc.org).

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*Based in Washington, D.C., and founded in January 1995, by Jack Jennings, the Center on Education Policy is a national, independent advocate for public education and for more effective public schools. The Center works to help Americans better understand the role of public education in a democracy and the need to improve the academic quality of public schools. The Center does not represent any special interests. Instead the Center helps citizens make sense of the conflicting opinions and perceptions about public education and create conditions that will lead to better public schools.*