



## NEWS RELEASE

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# **Early Look at Results of School Restructuring Under No Child Left Behind Shows Promise For Struggling Schools In Michigan**

## ***Report Warns There Is “No Miracle Cure,” But That A Combination of Reform Strategies Has Had Most Success In Boosting Achievement***

WASHINGTON – November 10, 2005 – The No Child Left Behind Act’s ultimate sanction for struggling schools – restructuring – appears to be having a positive impact for a group of schools in Michigan among the first in the nation to face the law’s controversial last consequence, according to a new report from the Washington, D.C.-based Center on Education Policy (CEP).

The study tracks the progress of 133 schools in mostly urban areas in Michigan that have missed Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) toward state achievement targets for five or more consecutive years, placing them in restructuring and subjecting them to a variety of major, school-wide reform strategies intended to revive struggling schools including replacing school staff and implementing a new curriculum. Now that many districts involved have implemented their restructuring plans for at least one year, there are some encouraging, if early, results.

Of the group of schools in restructuring, 113 of them – or 85 percent – improved test scores enough in 2004-05 to make AYP, according to the report. Of the schools in restructuring, 26 schools, or 20 percent, made AYP for the second consecutive year, allowing them to exit the restructuring process altogether.

But while the early results of restructuring in Michigan are encouraging, the report warns that there are no quick fixes, and that no single factor was identified as the most responsible for achievement gains. In contrast, the study, *Hope But No Miracle Cures: Michigan’s Early Restructuring Lessons*, found that the implementation of a combination of four or more reforms over the past two years significantly increased a school’s likelihood of meeting AYP targets.

The report also points out that some improvements in making AYP may be the result of factors other than restructuring efforts, such as federal and state policy changes that have made it easier for schools to demonstrate AYP.

“Michigan has adopted a thoughtful approach to restructuring schools, and the initial successes in that state offer hope that low-performing schools can be turned around,” said Jack Jennings,

president and CEO of CEP. "However, Michigan's experiences are also a caution that this is hard work involving many different ways of bringing about improvement. There are no quick fixes."

Because schools must fail to meet AYP targets for five or more years before entering restructuring, many states have not yet reached the point of restructuring. A few states, including Michigan, are home to some of the first schools to enter the process because they began calculating AYP based on data collected prior to NCLB to meet the goals of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994.

In Michigan, most schools used more than one restructuring strategy. The most popular restructuring option was the catch-all option under NCLB of "any major efforts that significantly change school governance." This option was selected by 124 schools, or 94 percent of the 132 schools in restructuring that reported their strategies for improvement. Appointment of a new principal was used in 78 schools, or 59 percent of the group. In contrast, several options were used rarely, if at all, including closing a school and reopening it as a charter school (one school), and turning a school's operation over to a private management company (no schools).

The report noted a few issues of concern in the restructuring process evident in the experience of at least some schools and districts in Michigan. For example, district officials reported that Title I funds were not enough to implement all aspects of the restructuring plans. One school profiled in the report, Brownell Elementary, could not afford the increased academic coaching hours the principal thought they needed.

In addition, there is little guidance available for schools that have missed AYP targets for six years in a row. The Michigan Department of Education took the initiative to develop protocols for auditing schools in year six of school improvement since there is no guidance written into the NCLB law and no advice forthcoming from the U.S. Department of Education.

The report follows up CEP's 2004 study on restructuring efforts in Michigan, and is based on interviews with state education officials, local administrators, and teachers in districts with school restructuring. CEP also reviewed state and district documents including state restructuring and school improvement policies, state records tracking restructuring implementation, state report cards, and testing results. Both the interviews and document reviews were conducted in August and September 2005.

To track restructuring trends in other states, CEP plans upcoming reports on efforts underway in Maryland and California.

*Based in Washington, D.C. and founded in January 1995, 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.*

<p>The report, along with additional information on CEP, its publications and its work, is available on the web at <a href="http://www.cep-dc.org">www.cep-dc.org</a>.</p>
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