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Partners in building full potential

COLLABORATION INTEGRITY INNOVATION SERVICE ACCOUNTABILITY DATA-DRIVEN

Board Report — April 16, 2026

- **Special Education Millage Restoration:** We are presenting this month proposed ballot language for an August 2026 countywide special education millage restoration renewal vote. The proposed ballot language was prepared in consultation with legal counsel at Thrun Law.

In 2003, Ionia County voters approved up to a 4.75 mill special education millage to provide essential services for this vulnerable population. This amount immediately began to roll back due to the Headlee Override. In 2017, Ionia County voters approved a millage restoring the rate to the original 4.75 mills. We are asking a decade later once again that county voters consider a restoration of the special education millage to the original approved amount. The proposal must be filed with the county by May 12 for an August 4, 2026 election.

The district is actively in the process of creating a website for information, social media informational posts, campaign flyers and documents for disbursement, FAQ documents and video messaging among other actions intended to raise community awareness and hopeful support. Legal counsel will review all materials, print or visual, to ensure compliance with the campaign finance act.

- **Policy Update:** To remain in compliance with recently enacted state law prohibiting student cell phones during the school day, we are presenting for a first reading this month the new district policy that would address this topic. This policy would be adopted next month upon second reading and be in place for the beginning of the 2026-2027 school year.
- **Legislative Update:** Neither the House or Senate provided their proposed state budgets prior to the multi-week spring break session. We both chambers off for this extended period, there has not been any action on new topics that may impact education. I do want to share, however, in recognition of the outstanding local work performed by our literacy coaches under the leadership of Mrs. Piercefield, a press release from the Governor's office highlighting this essential work statewide.

ICYMI: New Report Shows Literacy Coaches Yield Positive Results

Governor Whitmer's first budget tripled the number of literacy coaches in the state

LANSING, Mich. — Today, Governor Gretchen Whitmer highlighted a new [report](#) from Michigan State University' Education Policy Innovation Collaborative (EPIC) showing that teachers who

receive literacy coaching produce better instruction in the classroom. For this study, EPIC analyzed how literacy coaching was implemented in 89 Michigan classrooms across three school years. Since taking office, Governor Whitmer has tripled the number of literacy coaches in Michigan, delivering on proposals made during her first State of the State address.

“We’ve made record investments in training our teachers, and I’m proud to see that it’s working,” said **Governor Gretchen Whitmer**. “Literacy coaches give educators the support they need to bring what works to their classroom and develop confident readers and writers. We’re focused on getting every teacher the knowledge and tools they need to help every child build strong literacy skills in Michigan. Let’s keep working to expand these opportunities so that Every Child Reads.”

The report states that their findings “...provide compelling evidence that Michigan’s investment in early literacy coaching is producing measurable gains in classroom instruction for the teachers who receive it and that instructional change at scale is possible when coaching support is well aligned with research and clearly defined.”

“The Michigan Department of Education agrees with the report’s findings that Michigan should expand literacy coaching for elementary teachers to ensure that Every Child Reads,” said **State Superintendent Dr. Glenn Maleyko**. “Teacher professional development and classroom materials that are aligned with the Science of Reading are critically important to improving literacy instruction for the sake of Michigan’s students. Literacy remains our department’s top priority.”

“At a time when educators and policymakers in our state are keenly focused on helping every child read, it is important to build a state-wide system that supports the use of evidence-based instructional practices,” said **EPIC Director Madeline Mavrogordato**. “This study demonstrates that literacy coaches stand to play an important role in this process by working with teachers to adopt practices and enhance their instruction in ways that are closely aligned with state literacy priorities.”

“Improving literacy instruction at scale is possible when coaching is well aligned with research and supported by strong local systems,” said **Tanya S. Wright, Professor of Early Literacy at the University of Michigan and Faculty Affiliate at EPIC**. “In our study, we found that Michigan teachers who had the opportunity to work with a literacy coach improved their research-aligned literacy instruction compared to teachers who did not receive coaching.”

Governor Whitmer’s 2027 budget recommendation includes the largest literacy investment in state history—including increasing investment in proven methods, like literacy coaches. To support effective reading instruction, the budget also proposes investments in teacher training and curriculum. Today, over 6,000 educators have been trained in the intensive science of reading program, LETRS. Through the Every Child Reads plan, LETRS training would be offered to all educators.

Every Child Reads

Governor Whitmer vision to help Every Child Read is a three-part plan that builds on years of record, bipartisan education investments in students and schools.

1. **Early Starts:** build on work parents already do to talk to, sing with, and read their babies stories with free, high-quality preK education. Continue delivering PreK for All to set every kid with a solid academic foundation, ensuring they arrive at kindergarten better prepared to learn.

2. **Proven Methods:** get evidence-based, proven literacy teaching practices into all Michigan classrooms. Fund additional professional learning for teachers, including LETRS training and coaching, so all educators use the most effective strategies to improve student outcomes, and expand the use of effective curriculum.
3. **Extra Help:** provide every student more tutoring and small group support in class, over the summer, and in before- and after-school programs.

“Literacy coaches are making a significant difference in classrooms across the Ottawa Area,” said **Kyle Mayer, superintendent at Ottawa Area ISD**. “Across local districts, they work side by side with teachers to strengthen instruction and improve the quality of classroom practice. When we invest in teachers, we accelerate learning for students. The state’s commitment to this work has been a strong step forward, and continuing to build on it will be critical to ensuring every child becomes a confident, capable reader.”

"Learning to read is a complex process involving multiple abilities, skills, and knowledge. Each is essential, but none is sufficient on its own," said **Erin Hoppstock, superintendent at Berrien RESA**. "The teaching of these skills requires a corresponding complex set of teaching skills that are mastered through practice and accurate feedback. Michigan's literacy coaches provide that expert guidance and essential feedback so that teachers master the skills that optimize student reading abilities. Studies confirm that increased teacher skills improve reading outcomes for students. But, these coaches are spread too thin working with many teachers spread across many schools. Continued and expanded investment, like the one proposed by Governor Whitmer, is needed to realize strong literacy skills for all students."