

BUSINESS AND EDUCATOR PERCEPTIONS OF STATE EDUCATION POLICY IN
MICHIGAN'S AFFLUENT COMMUNITIES

By

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation seeks to understand the tensions for Michigan's affluent school districts during an era when the state government exerted an increasing level of control and influence over local district operations. The business community's perception of education policy and its role in policy creation is examined to better understand how the business community views public education in Michigan.

Theoretical frameworks borrowed from political science are used to explain the education policy trends in Michigan since the early 1990s and to guide the dissertation's three main research questions which broadly seek to understand: 1) How do school district and business leaders in Michigan's affluent communities view education policy? 2) How do Michigan's state-level business organizations view education policy? 3) Who do school district and business leaders view as the main authors of education policy in Michigan?

A qualitative study of local school district and business leaders, statewide business organizations, and members of the Michigan House of Representatives was conducted using surveys, interviews, and document analysis. The data gained from the study was interpreted using political science frameworks to construct a better understanding of education policy in Michigan and the role affluent districts and business organizations play in developing policy.

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KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

AFT	American Federation of Teachers
ARRA	American Recovery and Reinvestment Act
BLM	Business Leaders for Michigan
DEC	Detroit Education Commission
DRCC	Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce
GLEP	Great Lakes Education Project
MAPSA	Michigan Association of Public School Academies
MASB	Michigan Association of School Boards
MASSP	Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals
MEA	Michigan Education Association
MEAP	Michigan Educational Assessment Program
MPSERS	Michigan Public School Employee Retirement System
NWEA	Northwest Evaluation Association

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Michigan's most affluent school districts, located in suburbs across the state, would seem from the outside to be highly stable organizations with the ability to chart a promising path for their students. In Michigan however, this is not necessarily true. A process of centralization has led to increased challenges and destabilization in such districts over the past 20 years. During this time, public education in Michigan shifted from a locally controlled system to a far more centralized system. Control over finances, curriculum, assessment, and personnel policies have largely been centralized to the state government.

This shift to a centralized system has increased the influence of certain groups and diminished the influence of others. The federal government, statewide business associations, and individual groups such as the Mackinac Center, the Great Lakes Education Project, and the Education Trust Midwest have increased their influence over educational policy. In comparison, teacher's unions, local district administrators, and school boards all appear to have lost influence over the policymaking process.

A number of these newly influential interest groups appear skeptical of traditional public school districts and their capacity to operate efficiently and to improve student outcomes and student performance metrics. This disposition is reflected in their support of new regulations, accountability policies, and market-based reforms that increasingly affect school operations. Such policies have been advocated as solutions to student performance problems that are prevalent in districts serving low-income students, especially in urban districts, yet the policies are increasingly impacting the operations of all public school districts, including the most affluent districts in the state.

The changes wrought by these policies raise interesting questions regarding how the centralization of control has been experienced in traditionally affluent suburban districts that have long enjoyed excellent public schools. This is particularly interesting given the fact that many local business and community leaders in affluent districts enroll their own children in public schools that have been critically affected by policies originating in Lansing with the support of the state's business community.

The rationale for studying affluent school districts stems from a recognition that many of Michigan's affluent school districts are populated by well informed and well connected individuals. Many of these families choose to send their children to traditional public schools and therefore have a vested interest in the local school system. The largest financial asset for many of these families is their primary homestead, and in Michigan, the perceived quality of the local schools can be one of the largest determinants of real estate values. Furthermore, the individuals populating the school boards of these affluent school districts are well informed and well connected. School board members of the districts included in this study work in high levels of state government, have executive experience in Fortune 500 companies, and are members of some of the most prestigious law firms in the state. Therefore, one would assume the residents, school board members, and superintendents would possess effective lobbying power to advocate for educational policies which benefit their districts. This study will discuss how that is an inaccurate assumption.

This study seeks to understand how tensions arise from state control of educational policies in affluent communities. What forms do they take and how have these tensions evolved over time? The purpose of this study was to explore these questions in three highly affluent suburban Michigan districts by interviewing and surveying the districts' leaders (superintendent

and school board members) as well as business leaders from each community. These educational and business leaders were surveyed and interviewed to learn about how they view education policy in Michigan. The local Rotary International chapter was identified to represent the business community in each school district. Rotary members were surveyed and interviewed to compare their views to the superintendents and school boards. Representatives of the statewide business lobby and members of the Michigan House of Representatives were interviewed to gain a statewide perspective on these educational issues.

The selected districts represent a geographic cross-section of the state's most affluent areas with one suburban district each from the Detroit, mid-Michigan, and Grand Rapids areas included in the study.

This dissertation is organized as follows. After this introduction, Chapter Two presents a literature review that evaluates theories of education policy-making, summarizes state education policy in Michigan over the last two decades, and identifies a set of research questions. Given these research questions, Chapter Three outlines the study's research design and methods. Chapter Four presents the findings from this study which largely took place during the first half of 2016. The final chapters of this dissertation synthesize the major findings from this study, consider how the findings from this study interact with the theories presented in the literature review, and consider the implications for educational policy in the state of Michigan.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review examines and evaluates political theories that may shed light on policy creation and how individual districts interpret and buffer policies handed down to them from state and federal governments. The five sets of theories discussed provide a lens for understanding where affluent districts fit into the political dynamics of state education policy creation. Next, this literature review explains the trend of centralization in Michigan's state education policy over the past 22 years. Specifically, state education policy changes in the areas of school finance, school choice, standardized testing, and personnel policies are reviewed. The two areas of theory and policy history provide informational background for the study into how local leaders in Michigan's most affluent districts perceive the trends in Michigan's education policy developments. Lastly, the literature review identifies a series of research questions developed to evaluate three affluent Michigan school districts and the Michigan business community.

Advocacy Coalitions

Advocacy Coalitions are relevant to this study because affluent districts may represent one part of a coalition. As discussed by Mintrom and Vergari (1996), Sabatier's (1988) Advocacy Coalition (AC) model does much to address the shift of political coalitions at the state level, in this case specifically the realm of education policy. The Advocacy Coalition theory states that public policy originates in coalitions both inside and outside of the dominant political structure (in this case, state legislatures). These coalitions are described as long-lived and resilient. They depend on interacting networks of different constituencies, including individual districts. For the purpose of this study the leadership of affluent districts can be envisioned as one part of a coalition, either dominant or non-dominant. Mintrom and Vergari's work analyzes

multiple groups within policy development as districts, legislators, and business interests all orbit the policy arena and lobby for influence over the eventual outcome. This study intends to learn more about where the leadership of affluent districts sees itself within the current coalitions influencing policy.

Mintrom and Vergari's (1996) work is particularly applicable to this study because they evaluated the Advocacy Coalition framework by interpreting the dynamic educational policy changes in Michigan which took place in the early 1990s during Governor John Engler's tenure. Mintrom and Vergari noted how legislation in 1993 "abolished the local property tax as a source of school funding" which then created a school funding crisis in Michigan. They said,

This crisis marks an important point in the history of policymaking in Michigan. Not only was the school finance system overhauled, but advocates of school quality reform seized the opportunity presented by the 1993 context to secure approval for some of their initiatives, most notably legislation approving charter schools.

Mintrom and Vergari proceeded to explain this policy process through two possible frameworks: The first being the Advocacy Coalition framework and the second being the Policy Entrepreneur framework. Under the Advocacy Coalition umbrella Mintrom and Vergari said,

We identify the dominant coalition as being comprised of the "the educational establishment"...including the Michigan Education Association (MEA), school boards, the Department of Education, district superintendents, and other public school administrators. Of these coalition members, the MEA is the dominant player...

This dissertation analyzes how the MEA is no longer the dominant player in the dominant coalition as it was in 1993. Instead, charter school advocacy groups have emerged as the new dominant player in the dominant coalition, as discussed in Chapter 5 of this dissertation.

One strength of the Advocacy Coalition framework's application to this study is that affluent districts, like coalitions, are long-lived. Districts are able to see the long-arc of policy change, and district leadership can provide insight into existing tensions in policy development.

The limitation of the Advocacy Coalition theory for this study lies in district leaders' self awareness of the district's position within a given coalition. Some board members or local business leaders in this study have a poor or inaccurate understanding of their district's position within the policy making process.

Regime Theory and the Role of Governors

While affluent districts, and their position within the policy arena, can be partially explained by their status within advocacy coalitions, Gittell and McKenna (1999) look to the developing trend of governors acting as leaders in policy development. They describe the modern governor as a figure willing to challenge the "dominant coalitions" or "education regimes" in order to enact change. As the authors describe, "State governors became more activist participants in state education policy regimes in the 1990s." Furthermore, they assert "state governors in the 1990s advanced an educational agenda that rarely included urban education initiatives. Instead, these new governors are committed to promoting market-based solutions for education, reducing taxes, supporting religious groups and suburban interests, and reducing special benefits for the needy."

Gittell and McKenna identify the educational "regime" as the stakeholders, or what Mintrom and Vergari defined as coalition members, including "the governor, the legislature, teachers' unions, professional associations, religious groups, business groups, principals, local school boards, state education departments, parents, advocacy groups, and local political actors." Cohen documented these stakeholders' growth as "agencies that make secondary gains from

success in policy making” (Cohen, 1982). What Cohen described later became known as policy feedback (McDonnell, 2012), an applicable idea in the growth of Michigan’s for-profit educational sector. The authors describe regime analysis as “attempts to map out informal and formal power relations among a diverse group of stakeholders both inside and outside of government and to assess the impact of these arrangements on policy outcomes.” Affluent districts certainly qualify as one of the stakeholders present.

After analyzing educational policy developments in nine states (including Michigan), Gittell and McKenna found that “governors have come to lead state regimes by setting the agenda and by successfully implementing it.” While relevant to this study, the role of governors has its limitations. Governors clearly wield strong influence over policy, but we know less about how this influence is perceived specifically in affluent districts. Do leaders of such districts accept education policy initiatives championed by the governor as legitimate and helpful for the state or for their own local circumstances? Do they perceive waxing gubernatorial influence to be commensurate with waning district influence?

One potential contradiction for the application of this theory in this study is that Gittell and McKenna characterize the new modern “education” governors as ignoring urban issues, whereas Michigan’s charter, choice, and personnel policies have been largely aimed officially at reforming urban districts. However, there is evidence that charter school groups in Michigan are the current dominant regime in Michigan instead of the Governor’s office.

Policy Streams

Another model for evaluating policy development in Michigan would be to evaluate them through the “multiple streams” framework, a model that explains policy change as a process of three policy streams (McLendon & Cohen-Vogel, 2008). The first stream, the “problem stream”

is exemplified by “A Nation At Risk” (National Commission on Excellence in Education, November, 1983) which identified a problem which then gained national attention. The second stream is the “policy stream,” which consists of the policy answers that are created in reaction to the identified problem. Policy ideas such as school choice and high stakes testing exemplify the “policy stream.” The third stream is the “political stream,” which ultimately represents the coalition of political actors and elected officials who pick solutions from the “policy stream” to enact as public policy. This dissertation outlines stakeholders’ different problem streams in Chapter Five; Affluent districts and statewide business organizations perceive different problem streams for public education.

The multiple streams framework offers the best approach to understand what affluent district leaders have identified as important problem streams. The framework helps evaluate tensions arising if and when the state develops policy and political streams in response to identifying different problem streams than affluent districts.

Policy Networks and Innovation Diffusion

Michigan’s position within national policy networks affects policy development within the state. Berry and Berry refer to this as “the pattern of adoption of state policy that results from states emulating the behavior of other states.” (Berry & Berry 2007). Charter schools are a good example of this “innovation diffusion” among the states. Michigan was one of many states that adopted a charter statute in the early 1990s, emulating states that had already done so, beginning with Minnesota in 1987. As discussed in Chapter Five, groups such as Education Trust Midwest and the Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce are now looking to innovation diffusion as a method for school improvement by looking to the top ten states in educational achievement and adopting policies already implemented in these states.

Mintrom and Vergari (1998) refer to these chronological developments as “innovation diffusion” whereby external policy networks (meaning interstate or federal networks) work to disseminate ideas and legislation through their respective networks. In a study specifically examining the spread of charter schools, Mintrom and Vergari found that these external policy networks were responsible for transmitting policy innovations throughout the country; ideas were often transferred from the external network to the internal network, as exemplified by the spread of charter schools.

Berry & Berry (2007) attribute the diffusion of state policies as partially stemming from competition among the states. In the 1990s, as dozens of states adopted charter statutes, states that declined to adopt charter schools risked becoming known as anti-innovation or anti-school choice. Whether or not affluent districts feel the pressure of these national trends is an emergent theme in this study. More specifically, does the elevated status of an affluent district make it more or less likely that such districts feel pressured by the prevailing winds of national educational policy trends? This study sheds light on how district leaders perceive recent policy trends.

The “Non-Monolithic” Local School District

Whether educational policy originates at the state or federal level, in the end it affects local districts. Therefore, it is important to examine theoretical explanations for how local districts interpret and implement state and federal policies. Probably the two most applicable studies of individual districts are Spillane’s *State Policy and the Non-Monolithic Nature of the Local School District: Organizational and Professional Considerations* (1998) and Feuerstein and Dietrich’s *State Standards in the Local Context: A Survey of School Board Members and Superintendents* (2003). Spillane (1998) describes the local school district as “non-monolithic.”

Explained simply, all districts, even districts with demographic similarities, are not alike. Policy makers and stakeholders often consider the impacts of policy on different categories of districts such as urban, rural, or suburban. State policies may be primarily crafted to address problems in one of these archetypes, but not necessarily all three. The “non-monolithic” theory, however, suggests heterogeneous responses to policy implementation by local districts even within such categories as “affluent suburban districts.”

In the case of this study, policymakers may be incorrect if they presume that all districts or even just affluent suburban districts will respond to policies uniformly. Similarly, while responses of similar districts are not homogenous, it should also not be assumed that a single district, especially a larger district, would have a homogenous policy response either. Variations in district departments, school buildings, and personnel can lead to varying policy implementation even within a single district.

Spillane’s work is relevant to both the question of whether Michigan’s affluent districts feel their circumstances have been adequately considered in state policymaking, and whether the perceptions of these policies are similar across affluent districts?

Spillane focused on instructional practices mandated by the state. The research examined how thoroughly reading strategies were implemented by districts and specifically how uniformly they affected individual schools. Instructional practices are not the focus of this study, but Spillane’s work provides valuable insight into the implementation variability of any state policy at the district level, as we will see in this study with policies such as school of choice. Spillane notes that reforms coming from the federal level were greeted with greater urgency than internal reforms coming from local superintendents. Is this true for funding, charters, choice, and standardized testing? Do affluent districts see reforms that originate in Washington D.C. or

Lansing as reforms that must be implemented, whereas a superintendent's ideas for reform can be implemented when convenient? These are important questions to be addressed. Spillane even goes as far as to imply that local reformers look for federal or state reforms to add needed legitimacy to reforms the local unit may have supported previously, but have been unable to endow with legitimacy. This study provides further understanding into how the local district perceives reforms as legitimate.

Beyond the characteristic of a state's school districts, it is important to consider dynamics within districts that shape the interpretation and implementation of policy. Feuerstein & Dietrich evaluated how local school boards and superintendents interpreted the standards-based movement in Pennsylvania's school districts. The authors discovered several relevant points. First, most local school board members did not support state standards, but they also did not vocally object to the standards implementation, nor aggressively lobby against them. Second, school board members acknowledged that they did not consider themselves to be experts on how state standards would affect their districts, but rather deferred to their local superintendent to evaluate state policies such as curriculum standards. Third, Feuerstein & Dietrich identified contradictions in who different groups attributed authorship of state standards. In Pennsylvania, local board members believed teachers and administrators drove the development of state standards, whereas Wirt and Kirst (1997) stated that legislators, governors, and business interests currently drive educational reform at state levels, and teachers and administrators solely play a "pro-forma" role in developing state policy. This is consistent with what seems to be the case in Michigan's affluent districts, but it would be an important addition to our current understanding to learn more specifically how certain affluent districts perceive state standards and/or the high stakes tests that supposedly address how well districts are meeting those standards.

The Spillane and Feuerstein studies do much to explain how districts understand policies that are handed down from their respective states. Whereas Spillane and Feuerstein each examined a single policy reform, my own research has surveyed district leaders on a variety of policy issues.

Competing Goals for Education

This study contributes to what different stakeholders in Michigan want from their education system. Labaree (1997) defined three competing goals for American education. He explained historically Americans emphasized the goal of “democratic equality” as a “mechanism for preparing children to play constructive roles in a democratic society.” It could be argued that Michigan’s Proposal A partially stemmed from democratic equality’s goals of equal treatment and equal access to education by attempting to decrease the significant funding gap in Michigan’s school districts.

The second goal is “social efficiency” which Labaree described as adapting students to “the demands of the occupational marketplace.” Social efficiency in Michigan’s current education system would emphasize a curriculum intentionally designed to provide students with practical job skills as an educational outcome.

Labaree’s third goal was “social mobility.” He described this as educational credentialing and competition which allows individuals to improve or maintain their socioeconomic standing in American society. The recent trend towards ranking both K-12 and higher education institutions to add weight to those credentials could be considered evidence of Labaree’s view of social mobility as the ascendant educational goal.

Centralization of State Education Policy in Michigan

Michigan's education system has experienced numerous substantive policy changes in the last 22 years, many of which can be partially explained by the previous theories. Some of these changes, specifically school choice and charter schools, have clearly been influenced by policy streams, policy diffusion, and national political trends. Other changes might be attributed to shifting coalitions or the agendas of specific political leaders. For my research, some background on changes in school finance, school choice and charters, standards-based accountability, and personnel policies provide important context for the challenges currently facing affluent districts.

School Finance. School finance has probably been the most influential area of policy change affecting affluent districts. Michigan school funding is under the system known as Proposal A that was passed into law in 1993. Proposal A marked the beginning of school funding in Michigan being primarily funded by the state government instead of local property taxes. Most school districts receive all their discretionary operational funding from the state, although this is supplemented with federal, state, and intermediate school district categorical funding for certain designated programs.

Michigan's school aid fund receives the plurality of its funding (46%) from the 6% sales tax. The sales tax was increased from 4% to 6% as part of Proposal A. The income tax (20%) and State Education Tax (15.5%) represent the other two largest portions of school finance. These funding sources have provided negative growth in inflation-adjusted dollars to affluent districts. As seen in Table 1, four affluent districts, Bloomfield Hills, Chadwell (pseudonym), Haggerston (pseudonym), and Redbridge (pseudonym) have all lost per-pupil funding in inflation-adjusted dollars since 1995 and 2005 respectively. Bloomfield Hills and Onaway are

included in Table 1 to provide examples of districts in the highest and lowest ranges of school funding in Michigan.

Table 1 Funding in Selected Affluent Michigan School Districts, 1995-2015

Per-Pupil Funding in US Dollars (Actual and Adjusted to 2015 Dollars)							
District	1995	1995 ^a	2000	2000 ^a	2006	2006 ^a	2014/ 2015
Bloomfield Hills	10,500	16,300	11,200	15,400	12,100	14,700	11,900
Chadwell	8,400	13,000	9,100	12,500	10,100	12,200	9,800
Redbridge	6,400	10,000	7,200	9,900	8,100	9,900	8,100
Haggerston	6,400	10,000	7,100	9,800	8,100	9,800	8,100
Onaway	4,200	6,500	5,700	7,800	6,900	8,300	7,100

a Funding adjusted to 2015 dollars

All figures rounded to the nearest hundreds to protect anonymity.

Source: Michigan Senate Fiscal Agency, Bureau of Labor Statistics (*Per-Pupil Foundation Allowance Ten-Year History for Schools*, 2014)

Proposal A did allow the highest revenue districts at the time of Proposal A's passage to maintain their funding advantage under a hold-harmless provision. This mechanism maintained additional millage taxes to add to their per pupil funding. These affluent districts would be able to receive increases to the general per-pupil foundation allowance, but would not be able to increase their extra millage beyond the levels set in 1993. Affluent districts receive funding increases under what is known as the "2x" principle, meaning they receive half of what a poorer district receives from a funding increase. For example, in the 2016-2017 fiscal year many districts in Michigan received a \$120 per-pupil increase from the state. Affluent districts would only receive an additional \$60, in-line with the philosophy of creating more equity in Michigan school finance.

For approximately a decade many affluent districts were able to receive additional funds under what became known as section 20j funding. These were additional funds that allowed a hold-harmless district to receive the full amount of an increase in the per-pupil foundation even if the increase exceeded the rate of inflation (Wicksall & Cleary, January 31, 2009).

Funding for a district's physical plant has remained under local control. This has allowed affluent districts to continue to build state of the art facilities due to their large fiscal capacity. This situation can also create confusing optics for community members. Affluent districts can afford to build new facilities using locally controlled funds, but must continue to make other efficiencies in personnel and student services due to their reliance on state funds for those district services (Arsen & Davis, 2006).

Affluent districts have fared better from an enrollment perspective. They have kept many more students than other Michigan districts during the past decade.

From a state-by-state comparison, Michigan has lagged behind its neighbors and competitors in school funding in recent history. Massachusetts, Ohio, and Illinois have all grown their school funding at a higher rate both in total revenue and in per-pupil funding than Michigan over multiple intervals dating back to 1980 (Table 2). These figures demonstrate that in the past decade Michigan's funding system has struggled to deliver stability to districts regardless of their socioeconomic status. The funding formula has proven sensitive to small and large recessions (Dawsey, 2014). Furthermore, all districts are exposed to fluctuations in the statewide economy. Cullen and Loeb (2004) point out that while the poorest districts have received funding increases, revenues and funding have largely been constrained for the most affluent districts.

Table 2 Growth in Real Per-pupil Revenue for Selected States, 1980-2011

	Annual Average Growth Rates			
	1980-2011	1980-2011	1996-2011	2000-2011
Michigan	1.29%	4.23%	2.7%	-1.23%
Massachusetts	2.2%	5.4%	5.1%	1.98%
Ohio	2.4%	5.45%	4.4%	2.0%
Illinois	1.98%	5.55%	5.67%	2.1%

a Funding adjusted to 2015 dollars

Source: "National Center for Education Statistics," 2013

Affluent districts have seen the greatest drop in per-pupil inflation adjusted revenues during this time period, as any per pupil foundation increases have continued to emphasize the Proposal A framework of raising the poorer districts to parity with affluent districts. Furthermore, Proposal A makes no provision for adjustments in local costs, which would seem a commonsense provision in areas as different as the Detroit metropolitan area and large rural areas. This cost of living adjustment is currently used in Massachusetts, a policy I review later in this chapter. Proposal A does not provide state assistance for physical facilities either, leading to large discrepancies in facilities funding between wealthy and poor districts (Arsen & Plank, 2003, Arsen & Davis, 2006; Michigan State Board of Education, 2014).

Therefore, while Proposal A was politically popular in the 1990s when it greatly increased school revenues for poor districts and provided property tax relief statewide, it clearly has not benefitted the affluent districts over the past 15 years (Table 1). Proposal A largely tied affluent district's financial health to the fate of the overall state economy and the willingness of the state legislature to direct funding to K-12 school districts.

Affluent district's inability to provide any significant extra funds to their operating budgets has placed them at a strategic disadvantage to comparable districts in other states (Table 3). In recent years, these districts have frozen wages, privatized support staff, and reduced student services in order to balance the budget. This is hardly what would be expected in some of the most affluent areas in the nation.

Stated simply, affluent districts believed at the outset of Proposal A that they could enjoy the property tax relief and continually rising revenues from a strong state economy and a legislature willing to support public education. A current analysis clearly shows that affluent districts struggle compared to similar districts in other states under Proposal A's current implementation.

Table 3 Funding in Selected Massachusetts School Districts, 1995-2015

Per-Pupil Funding in US Dollars (Actual and Adjusted to 2015 Dollars)					
District	1995	1995 ^a	2005	2005 ^a	2015
Needham	\$7,232	\$11,090	\$10,144	\$12,138	\$14,366
Wellesley	\$7,395	\$11,340	\$9,983	\$11,946	\$15,531

a Funding adjusted to 2015 dollars

Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2015

Choice and Charter Schools in Michigan. Inter-district school choice followed closely on Proposal A's heels in the early 1990s. Supported by Governor John Engler, school choice in Michigan partially fulfilled policy ideas introduced by economist Milton Friedman in the 1950s and 1960s that called for a market structure in education allowing families to choose schools, public or private, which they perceived would provide a quality education to students, thus creating a competitive environment that raised standards for all schools.

In Michigan, individual school districts were allowed to choose if they accepted students from outside district boundaries. If a district chose to accept “school of choice students” they could also set a limit on how many students they admitted. Twenty years into school of choice some districts may only have enrolled a few dozen school of choice students, whereas other districts may have hundreds or thousands of school of choice students.

For some affluent Michigan districts, school of choice presented a possible business model. It allowed a district to maintain enrollment by drawing students and their funding from surrounding districts. Affluent districts did not foresee the greater destabilization that would be caused by choice policies across the state. Urban school districts like Detroit and Lansing lost thousands of students to surrounding districts. The student exodus occurring faster than urban districts could adjust. School of choice led to instability in enrollments for many districts. As a school administrator, I can say from personal experience that it also has led to greater instability for the students who seem to be constantly entering and exiting school districts on an annual basis.

Charter schools were the next step in implementing greater school choice into Michigan’s educational system. Charter schools and for-profit management companies have changed Michigan’s educational landscape since 1994, when Governor Engler signed an unlimited number of them into law. The creation of hundreds of charter schools has given families an alternative public education to the local school district. As charter schools have continued to grow in number they have dramatically affected several, mainly urban, districts while others have been minimally affected. In 1996, the total number of charters in existence was capped at 150 schools chartered by public universities (although more could be chartered by local and intermediate school districts and community colleges). However, in 2011, the state legislature

and governor passed legislation lifting any cap on charter schools by 2014 (State of Michigan, 2011) while no strong evidence of improved student outcomes from Michigan charter schools existed (Bettinger, 2005; Eberts & Hollenbeck, 2002; Ni, 2009).

In recent years the elimination of charter school caps has allowed a proliferation of charter schools, which has allowed Michigan to become a state with “one of the most expansive charter statutes in the country” (Addonizio & Kearney, 2012).

Michigan charter schools are at an immediate disadvantage in comparison with their local district because they receive no local or state funds for capital funding of physical resources. Therefore, charter schools must pay for their physical plant expenses directly from their per-pupil funding. This funding regulation makes charters most viable in low-income areas where the charter can offer competitive services in comparison to the traditional public schools and ostensibly makes them non-competitive with affluent districts (Addonizio & Kearney, 2012; Arsen, Plank, & Sykes, 1999).

Michigan has numerous bodies that can authorize a charter school, as “Charters may be granted by local school boards of education, boards of ISDs, and the governing boards of community colleges and public universities” (MDE- Charter Public Schools, 2015). ISDs are intermediate school districts organized by county that provide specialized services and programs to districts and directly to students. These authorizing bodies have a statewide organization called the Michigan Council of Charter School Authorizers which serves as the statewide lobby group for charter authorizers.

Other groups supporting charter schools formed as well. Chapter Four of this dissertation discusses how the Michigan Association of Public School Academies (MAPSA) and the Great

Lakes Education Project (GLEP) have become newly influential in the policymaking process since charter schools were introduced to Michigan in the 1990s.

This loose chartering system in Michigan has steered Michigan's charter schools away from their original intention. Charter schools can be created independently of the local school districts, there is no structure for the sharing of ideas with the local school districts, and there are no supports between local districts and neighboring charter schools (Ravitch, 2010).

In affluent areas, charter schools are not typically considered to be part of the policy mix for improving student outcomes in affluent and suburban areas. They cannot compete with affluent districts' athletic and performing arts facilities, nor can they typically afford the smaller class sizes and student support services provided in affluent districts. These two reasons explain much of why affluent districts would not have fought the idea of charter schools in the 1990s. Affluent districts might have viewed charter schools as a recipe for urban reform and experimentation, but not as competition to their own local districts.

Thus affluent districts failed to see in the early 1990s that charter schools would become a drain on the overall system. Public districts are being asked to pay more into the pension system (MPERS) to cover current obligations that have almost doubled since 2004, and almost any funding increase from the state goes toward fulfilling these obligations, instead of towards instructional improvements. If the thousands of teachers in Michigan's charter schools were also paying into the pension system (less than a quarter of charter school teachers participate in MPERS) it would result in considerably less stress on the overall budget climate where local district budgets are stretched due to pension obligations (Citizen's Research Counsel of Michigan, 2013).

Standards-Based Accountability. High stakes testing represents another policy development that has greatly affected affluent districts. While the MEAP test served as Michigan's standardized assessment since the 1970s, it was the No Child Left Behind Act that fully ushered in high stakes testing as a part of the annual educational program in affluent districts.

Over the past decade, mandatory testing from the Michigan Department of Education has continued to increase in Michigan's public schools. In certain grade levels, students will spend well over a week completing standardized tests. In 2007, after the passage of No Child Left Behind, Michigan initiated a mandatory ACT for all Michigan eleventh grade students, which was the core of the new Michigan Merit Exam replacing the eleventh grade MEAP (Addonizio and Kearney, 2012). In response to parental protests against state testing and threats among parents in primarily affluent districts to withhold their children from taking the tests, the state provided an incentive that students who scored well on the ACT would receive scholarship funds, known as the Michigan Promise. Although this incentive was later withdrawn, the ACT remained a mandatory state test. In 2015, the Michigan Department of Education announced the state would switch from the ACT to the SAT, and that all ninth, tenth, and eleventh grade students would take a version of the SAT annually.

This study seeks to better understand how the leadership of affluent districts and business organizations perceive the current state of standards-based accountability. One could certainly argue that the affluent districts might enjoy the positive statistics associated with high performing students, but there is also a question regarding how these districts regard the considerable loss of instructional time and control over curriculum created by increased standardized testing.

Personnel Policies. In more recent years there have been major changes to the personnel policies that guide local districts. Most significantly, teachers in the MEA and AFT lost the closed shop in public schools when Michigan became a Right to Work state in 2012. Public school teachers now have the ability to forgo paying union dues, an option they did not have prior to 2012. This legislation has cost the MEA and AFT considerable influence, including their ability to lobby on behalf of their respective districts.

Beyond the major shift to becoming a Right to Work state, there have been numerous other reforms affecting districts and teachers.

Michigan's public school districts have seen considerable change regarding the items a local school board and administration need to negotiate with their local employee unions. For example, Public Act 103 of 2011 changed longstanding positions in local labor contracts. The Act mandated that local districts hold the group insurance policy for employees, a condition long held as a bone of contention between teacher unions and school boards. A district's start date, and pupil contact time are no longer negotiable items, districts can now make those decisions independently.

Furthermore, Public Act 103 of 2011 made it much easier for a school district to dismiss a non-tenured teacher, and enacted a process to evaluate all teachers and administrators on an annual basis. It also changed the grounds for dismissing a tenured teacher. Prior to this act, a tenured teacher could only be dismissed for reasonable and just cause. The act changed the language to state that a teacher's dismissal could not be arbitrary or capricious (Lowe & Summers, 2011). An example of this change came in 2012 when the Avondale schools were allowed to terminate a teacher convicted of drunk driving. The teacher appealed to the Michigan

Tenure Commission, where the district's decision was upheld under the new standard (Griggs, 2012).

Another mandated efficiency for local districts has been the provision of employee health insurance. State law now mandates that employees contribute up to 20% of their health insurance costs. If districts fail to comply with this regulation they are subject to a reduction in their per pupil foundation allowance.

The change in human resource laws affecting public school districts presents one of the most interesting topics to learn more about from affluent districts' leadership. The aforementioned changes provide an unknown dichotomy on the part of superintendents, school board members, and local business leaders. Do district leaders now feel they possess a greater ability to control and dictate working conditions in their public schools in the wake of Right to Work and other labor reforms? Alternatively, do district leaders perceive that Right to Work and other associated legislation has weakened the affluent districts' overall influence over the policymaking process? Based on what we know from the Spillane (1998) and Feuerstein (2002, 2003) studies it is important to discuss more specifically where district leaders stand on these questions.

This thesis adds to our current understanding of what community members are looking for in their public school systems. The Center for Michigan found in surveys and community conversations that the most affluent Michigan residents typically gave their local schools high grades, yet these affluent communities don't seem to be affecting policy. Additionally, the Center for Michigan found much higher support for local schools over public schools in general. In fact, the Center for Michigan reported strong support from affluent communities for multiple reforms. These communities supported more universal pre-k in the state, stronger teacher

preparatory programs, more support for successful teachers, and more accountability for unsuccessful teachers. Only expanding access to pre-school has been taken-up systematically by the legislature ("The Public's Agenda For Public Education," 2013).

In summary, there is more to be learned regarding how perceptions of state policy shifts in these four areas (finance, choice, testing, and personnel) may have evolved over the past 22 years. In each area the centralization of state control is more acutely affecting districts and their discretion in creating an educational program. Important questions exist regarding how districts see themselves within political coalitions, and how they interpret state reforms to be affecting their districts. Before formally stating the major research questions for this dissertation, a brief summary of education policy in a comparative state, Massachusetts, provides context for considering Michigan's educational policy reforms over the past 22 years. This background information on Massachusetts informs much of the commentary discussed by this study's participants as well.

The Massachusetts Model in Comparison

Michigan was not the only state which experienced watershed changes in educational policy in the early 1990s. The landmark Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993 ushered in a new era of education policy in Massachusetts. Since the early 1990s, Massachusetts has emerged as an educational leader in the United States (NAEP, 2014). Much of Massachusetts' success is attributed to the reforms that began in 1993 and were supported by both the Massachusetts educational and business communities. The Act was prompted by a state court case, *McDuffy vs. Secretary of the Executive Office of Education*, in which the Massachusetts Supreme Court ruled the state had an "enforceable duty" to provide a public education to the students enrolled in public schools, and that the wealth or poverty of a given district should not

be allowed to stand as an impediment to this goal. The Education Reform Act addressed areas of school reform such as policy development (advisory councils), the creation of charter schools, digital learning, professional development, teacher certification, length of the school year, and funding for K-12 education (“Education Reform,” 2014).

The Education Reform Act also created charter schools in Massachusetts. These “Independent Public Schools” were designed to have 5-year charters from the state Board of Education. The Act stated that potential charter schools would go through a “rigorous application process” and that a charter school must demonstrate good results within 5 years of receiving its charter or risk losing its ability to operate (“Massachusetts Charter Schools,” 2014).

The Massachusetts charter schools have possibly benefitted from the more tightly regulated environment surrounding charters in Massachusetts. Direct state oversight of all charter schools allows the Massachusetts Department of Education to ensure any group issued a charter has the organizational capacity to maintain a functioning school. Massachusetts charters submit to annual evaluations and a more in-depth five-year evaluation that maintains a strong regulatory environment for the charter schools.

The office of digital learning was also created by the 1993 Education Reform Act to provide districts support in technology infrastructure, classroom level instructional tools and the development of virtual schools and online courses (“Education Reform,” 2014).

School funding was another major component of the 1993 act. Public school funding in Massachusetts after 1993 is known as the Chapter 70 aid program. Originating in the McDuffy decision, the Chapter 70 aid program was designed to close the school funding gap between wealthy and poor districts in Massachusetts, similar to Proposal A in Michigan. The Chapter 70 program set certain parameters for how much of a district’s funding comes from local sources

and how much comes from state sources. While Massachusetts sets an annual minimum on how much aid should be provided to a district, the Chapter 70 program does not cap affluent districts as Michigan does. The Chapter 70 formula uses a regional cost-of-living adjustment as well to determine annual funding. The Massachusetts legislature recognized with the creation of the Chapter 70 program that average costs such as rent, home prices, gasoline, and food vary significantly by geographic area. Lastly, the Massachusetts funding formula recognizes that different categories of students require different funding levels. The state uses 14 different student categories which acknowledge differences in grade level, socioeconomic status, and special education status. The Chapter 70 program operates on the assumption that not all students cost the same amount to educate, and increased costs of education should be recognized in the state school finance system (“Report on the Status of the Public Education Financing System in Massachusetts,” 2013).

While critics exist in Massachusetts claiming there is still much to be done regarding the adequate funding of pre-kindergarten through 12th grade, Massachusetts has had consistent growth in nominal dollars directed to public schools since 1993. The state has not reduced the per pupil foundation grant in the last 21 years, and in most years the state has provided increases in both real and nominal terms to many districts. Districts with little fiscal capacity have seen relatively large increases in school funding since the 1993 Massachusetts Education Reform Act was passed.

One of the major actors in Massachusetts education reform was the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education (MBAE) which was established in 1988 as a 501(c)4 non-profit educational and community advocacy group. By 1991, the MBAE published *Every Child A Winner*, a lengthy piece (140 pages) that outlined a clear set of education reform goals for

Massachusetts ("Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education," 2014). MBAE attempted to gain information and insight from various individuals representing different economic sectors. *Every Child A Winner* clearly states MBAE's intention to work with the educational community in order to improve educational outcomes, and that the business community was not taking an antagonistic role against professional educators (*Every Child A Winner*, 1991).

In 1991, MBAE set out an ambitious agenda to dramatically reform education in Massachusetts. The group's work consistently stated a desire to reform components of the entire system, but most often MBAE stated educational finance reform as one of its primary goals. In many ways *Every Child A Winner* uses an economic lens to describe the shortcomings and potential fixes in the Massachusetts system. MBAE believed high school dropouts created measurable costs for the Massachusetts business community. Even in 1991, MBAE was looking to the future workforce demographically, stating that 85% of entrants to the labor pool would be women, immigrants, and minorities. *Every Child A Winner* identified that new labor market entrants who lack the basic job preparedness skills would cost businesses to educate, would be unable to fill advanced manufacturing positions, and would in-turn generate a poor consumer base for the Massachusetts economy. MBAE stated that most importantly, "Massachusetts and the nation have an informed educated electorate to sustain a free society in which the nation's values will endure and businesses flourish." Additionally, MBAE believed education was the cornerstone of social services and said, "good education relieves pressure on other social support systems, a weak education system stresses all other systems and services, including industry" (*Every Child A Winner*, 1991).

Michigan's business community has had a much limited and less unified role in educational policy making since 1993 as will be discussed in Chapters Four and Five.

Research Questions

Many business and civic leaders live in affluent districts, and should not only have influence over education policies within their own districts, but at the state level as well. Because there is currently a lack of understanding regarding how these individuals value the policies affecting their districts, this dissertation contributes to our understanding of how business and civic leaders in Michigan's affluent districts view current state education policies, and how these assessments align with their perceptions of measures that are needed to preserve or enhance the quality of public schooling in the local districts.

Therefore, the following questions are worthy of investigation:

1. How do school district and business leaders in Michigan's affluent communities view the impacts of state educational policy reforms on their local districts?
 - What are their perceptions of the adequacy of school funding, of school choice policies, mandated state testing, and laws regulating teacher employment relations?
 - Do they view growing state control of local school district operations as a mostly positive or negative trend?
2. How do Michigan's state-level business organizations view state education policy reforms pertaining to school funding, school choice, mandated state testing, and teacher personnel policies?
 - Do they view growing state control of local district school operations as a mostly positive or negative trend?
 - How do they perceive the general quality of public education in Michigan's affluent districts?

3. Who do school district and business leaders view as the main authors of educational policy in Michigan?

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODS

This study was conducted in two phases. The first phase investigated how local school district leaders and local business leaders in affluent areas view educational policy developments affecting their districts. Twenty-two local school leaders were surveyed and nine were interviewed. Sixty-five local business leaders were surveyed and six were interviewed. These surveys and interviews intended to gain their insights into how they feel their values are represented in educational policy, specifically the policies affecting school finance, school choice and charters, high stakes testing, and personnel policies. In the study's second phase, two representatives from statewide business associations were interviewed to learn more about how the larger state business community views education policy in Michigan. Lastly, three members from the Michigan House of Representatives were interviewed to gain their insights into the educational policymaking process that occurs within the legislature and to determine where these affluent districts are positioned within that process.

Interviews were recorded and professionally transcribed. All interview participants and the school districts are presented with pseudonyms.

What Can Be Learned from These Interviews?

The interviews pursued issues that arose from the surveys and searched for more nuanced opinions from interviewees regarding state policies affecting their districts. Interview questions considered both areas of agreement and disagreement between representatives of the local district and business communities (Rotarians), as well as looking for alignment of each group with the education policy positions of state business organizations.

Main topic questions covered school finance, choice and charter policies, standards-based testing, personnel policies, and the role of state government in local districts.

Sample Selection

The study purposely selected three affluent suburban districts across Michigan's lower peninsula, consisting of one in each of the metropolitan areas of Detroit, Lansing, and Grand Rapids. The districts vary in enrollment size, yet all have strong academic traditions, with high expectations and achievement, and all have a community education foundation affiliated with the district. Key district statistics such as enrollment, median income, and funding are provided including basic information from the National Center for Education Statistics. A key objective of this purposeful selection is to incorporate economic and civic leaders from affluent communities in three regions of the state. Perceptions may vary across regions and such a sampling is likely to be more representative of stakeholder sentiments in Michigan's affluent communities.

Data Collection

School Boards and Superintendents. Data collection began by contacting the selected superintendents and requesting their participation in the study by first, completing the survey (Appendix C) and second, agreeing to sit down for a recorded interview (Appendix E). Each superintendent responded positively after the second email solicitation.

After securing superintendent participation in each district, I contacted the school board president and vice president in each district, asking for both their participation in the survey and for an interview, asking the identical questions from the superintendent interviews (Appendix E). Simultaneously, I began sending emails to the remaining five board members in each district requesting their participation in the survey, which was included as a hyperlink in each email. In total, the study was designed to interview three superintendents and a total of six school board members. The school board surveys were meant to be completed by a maximum number of 24

people, which would have included three full boards of seven members and three superintendents.

Over a period of several months I was able to interview all three superintendents in person, and I was able to interview five of the six board members in person. In both Chadwell and Haggerston I was able to interview the board president and vice-president. In Redbridge, the board president and vice president declined to be interviewed (one completed the survey), so I was able to interview two other board members, one who had been on the board for approximately a decade and another who was the former head of the Redbridge Educational Foundation. The board president in Haggerston was interviewed by telephone.

Interviews of superintendents and board members occurred at district board offices or nearby locations within the community. These interviews typically occurred either at the beginning or end of the business day.

In Chadwell and Haggerston all members of the school board completed the survey. Some members required four solicitations before they agreed to complete the survey. In Redbridge, five of the seven board members completed the survey and two members refused participation after four solicitations.

What are the surveys' objective? The surveys are designed to assess local leaders' opinions on 1) state policies affecting their districts, and 2) the influence of state-wide business organizations on educational policy. The surveys provide a larger sample with greater validity than a smaller sample by interview only. The surveys enable me to identify patterns in participant views within and across districts.

The district survey and interview questions were tested on the superintendent of the Bloomfield Hills Schools who provided helpful feedback for refining the questions. The

interview and survey protocols were also reviewed by a member of the West Bloomfield School Board who provided valuable insight into clarifying certain questions.

Selection of Rotary International Clubs. A major portion of this study was dedicated to the perceptions and opinions of formal Rotary International members in the three designated districts. Rotary is a benevolent non-profit organization with worldwide chapters dedicated to service on both a local and an international scale. I became interested in Rotary clubs in my role as a public school teacher and administrator. I have regularly visited Rotary meetings as a school sponsor for students being recognized for exemplary academic effort and performance. These recognitions are often accompanied by a financial scholarship for the student to use for college and university fees.

Why Rotary? In the early stages of designing this study Rotary clubs were identified as a potential cross-section of local communities. When I attended Rotary meetings, I noticed that local Rotary clubs usually included the school superintendent, the police chief, a representative from a local insurance agency, and a general sample of local professional businesses. Essentially, these clubs are both service and civic minded. Rotarians care about their communities, and most of the club members have long-standing ties to the community going back decades. An obvious first step for the study design involved confirming that all three communities, one in Metro-Detroit, one in Mid-Michigan, and one in the Metro-Grand Rapids region all had active Rotary clubs that operated approximately within the boundaries of the targeted school districts. The Metro-Detroit district and club had the strongest correlation in both name and apparent membership. The Mid-Michigan district appeared to have members from two school districts. The Grand Rapids area appeared to have numerous Rotary Clubs, so it

was not a problem to identify if there was a Rotary Club, but rather which one would be the most appropriate to study in connection with the target West-Michigan district.

Rotary clubs demonstrate a significant amount of patriotism and attention to Judeo-Christian values. Each meeting begins with a group recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance and an invocation before the meal. Lastly, the club recites their “Four Way Test” as follows: 1) Is it the truth? 2) Is it fair to all concerned? 3) Will it build Goodwill and Better Friendships? and 4) Will it be beneficial to all concerned?

The clubs I visited all had locally-based ongoing initiatives for community service. For example, one led an annual coat drive to benefit children in need, and all seemed to have scholarship components to help local youth access educational opportunities. The Metro-Detroit chapter even made mention of regular meetings with the principal of the local high school to help determine which students would be considered for scholarships.

In summary, Rotary clubs present an important sample from what can be considered “strong communities” that still maintain vestiges of twentieth century local dynamics. The clubs appear to be apolitical. The members clearly care about their local communities, but also have an eye on their larger community as well. The very existence of these clubs indicate that these communities have not fallen victim to Robert Putnam’s (2000) diagnosis of “Bowling Alone.” In other words, the membership of Rotary clubs are well educated and well connected Michiganders who have a vested interest in their local communities and local school districts. Their opinions are informative of the political “middle.” These individuals likely vote in high percentages, yet none of them seemed particularly hard-line as far as educational policy issues were concerned. Essentially, the opinions of the Rotary members might provide insights into the members of the local business communities they represent.

To fulfill the study design, I planned to survey (Appendix D) the local Rotary club in each of the three school districts using a survey instrument largely identical to the one distributed to school boards and superintendents with two exceptions. First, the Rotary survey would ask for a minimal amount of biographical data that was not included in the school district survey. Second, the Rotary instrument allowed the Rotary members to select “neutral,” “no opinion,” or “non-applicable” in their responses. The secondary change being a necessity as it is assumed that a school board member or superintendent would have some opinion on an issue like school choice, whereas the same assumption could not be made about local Rotarians.

Who are the Rotarians? One section of the study that fully realized my expectations and assumptions was the constitution of the three Rotary clubs. The majority of the members in the Rotary were between the ages of 50 and 80 years old, and while each chapter had a mix of men and women, all of the three chapters seemed to be entirely of Caucasian ancestry. Their careers suggested almost 100% college attendance and completion, although this was unconfirmed. It is worth noting the Rotary occupations as reported in the survey (Table 4).

Table 4 Rotarian Occupations

Rotarian Occupations		
Attorney	Realtor	Director Adult Education
CPA	Education	Audit Manager
Dentist	Pest Control Sales	Operations Controller
Banker	Architect	Retire State Employee
Univ. Faculty	Treasurer/Gov't	Ford Engineer
Business Owner	Retired College Professor	Radio Host
Pharmacist	Insurance	Travel Agency Owner
Life Insurance	Osteopathic Physician	Project Manager
Marketing	Financial Advisor	Fundraising
Real Estate Broker/	HR Professional	Sales/Michigan Lottery
High School English Teacher	Non-profit executive	Capital Market
Psychologist	Engineer	Risk Manager
Retired Lawyer	Executive Education	Property Owner Manager
Statistician	Education Fund Raising	Physician
Non-profit management	Sales	Retired Teacher
Business Development	Retired Retail	Attorney/Broker
		Banking

As seen above, the Rotarians represent a large diversity of white collar professions in these communities. As a whole they are well educated and belong to stable career paths. Additionally, they are a geographically stable sample, 39 of the 65 survey respondents have lived in their school district for over 10 years. Half of the surveyed Rotarians have or had children who attended the local public schools in their respective areas. Only 10% of the Rotarians reported having children who attended private school at some point.

It is also important to note before discussing the Rotarians views on educational policy that the Rotarians perceive themselves to be well informed. In the aggregate of all Rotary members surveyed, 81.5% of the Rotarians reported themselves to be either familiar or knowledgeable of educational issues and policies. These statistics become relevant in the discussion of the Rotarians specific responses in the study as many of them reported having no opinion on specific issues raised in the study.

Rotary Clubs. All three Rotary clubs had public websites with listed email addresses for the club officers. The initial study design was to make contact with the Rotary president from each chapter, and to secure an interview with each chapter president. Additionally, the design called for interviewing one club member with a certain familiarity or interest in the local school district. This initial design only worked to secure interviews and surveys with the Redbridge Rotary Club; I conducted an initial interview with the chapter president, who then agreed to host me at an upcoming meeting where I was able to distribute surveys to the members. While at the Redbridge Rotary meeting, I spoke briefly with Mr. Larry Maguire, an attorney from Redbridge, who had two children go through the Redbridge Public Schools was and willing to be interviewed as the second Rotarian from Redbridge for the study.

In Haggerston, initial emails to the Rotary club president went unanswered, but the Haggerston superintendent was able to give me the name and contact information for a prominent local Rotarian who had considerable experience with the district. After conducting the initial interview, the first Rotarian relayed contact information for a second Haggerston Rotarian with an interest in the district who was also willing to sit for an interview.

In both of the Haggerston Rotary interviews I inquired about the possibility of attending an upcoming meeting with their chapter in order to introduce the study and to distribute surveys. Both Rotarians informed me that all formal guests of a Rotary meeting who wished to be added to the meeting agenda had to go through the chapter president, and that it would be frowned upon for any other member to try and add a guest to the agenda. It took approximately 4 months to receive a reply from the Haggerston Rotary Club president, who agreed to host me at an upcoming meeting after approximately a half dozen inquiries via email and LinkedIn.

The Chadwell Superintendent is a member of the local Rotary club, and similar to the Haggerston Rotarians, he instructed me that I would need to go through the chapter president in order to be added to a meeting agenda. The Chadwell Rotary Club president required two email solicitations before he gave me a response, which initially was simply that he would put me in touch with Mr. Randall Garrison, who served as the public schools expert for the Rotary Club. Mr. Garrison was eager to meet with me and participate in the study, but also instructed me that attending a meeting would require permission from the chapter president. Mr. Garrison also provided me with several names of other local Rotarians who had a noted interest in the public schools.

Unfortunately, upon returning to the chapter president both for an interview and for permission to attend a meeting the chapter president replied that he had very little interest in, or experience with our public schools, and that he was not willing to be interviewed, and he ignored the request asking to attend a meeting.

Furthermore, the contacts provided by Mr. Garrison were also unresponsive to interview requests. At this point I reached out to a former Chadwell Superintendent who was active in Rotary and knew the community well. She suggested that I speak with Ms. Carolyn Benett, a local Rotary member, who she believed to be quite interested in the public schools.

Ms. Benett was responsive to the interview request and invited me to interview her in her home. She also informed me that there was a “morning” chapter of the local Rotary, that met weekly at 7 am, and had a separate president than the “afternoon” chapter of the Rotary. She instructed me to reach out to the “morning” Rotary president to secure a spot at a meeting. Following through on that advice the morning chapter president eventually agreed to set a date for me to briefly present my study and survey the membership.

The survey (Appendix D) that was distributed to the Rotary can be completed in less than 20 minutes, intending for a high response rate. The survey also asks for demographic data from the Rotarians, such as their profession, age, parental status, and district of residence.

Interviews with Rotary members occurred at the Rotarians homes and offices. Telephone interviews were used as well to accommodate schedules of interview participants.

Interviews (Appendix F) were intended to last approximately 45 minutes. Interviews of a longer time period would have been too difficult to secure. Most of the interview questions submitted to the school district representatives and local Rotary chapters are identical, allowing for a stronger comparison of viewpoints.

Statewide Business Organizations. Two representatives from statewide business organizations were interviewed for this study as well, in order to answer the second broad research question: *How do Michigan's state-level business organizations view state education policy reforms pertaining to school funding, school choice, mandated state testing and teacher personnel policies?*

The organizations, the Michigan Chamber of Commerce and Business Leaders for Michigan, collectively represent the largest business lobby in Michigan.

For the Chamber of Commerce, I interviewed an education policy advisor from the Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce. At the Business Leaders for Michigan I was able to interview a representative from the Government Affairs and Public Policy division.

Interview questions for both organizations included questions regarding the study's four subtopics of finance, choice, testing, and personnel policies. Subjects were asked about who they perceived to be the authors of state policy and questions were included about specific educational priorities for each organization.

For both organizations I was able to complete a thorough review of publicly available education policy positions. The Michigan Chamber of Commerce had limited stated positions posted online, and their social media profiles provided very little indication of policy positions related to education. More detailed information regarding education policies were found on the Detroit Regional and Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce websites.

Alternatively, the Business Leaders for Michigan have more detailed policy briefs on a variety of topics, ranging from 3rd grade reading standards to higher education.

State Representatives. The final set of interviews was with three members of the Michigan House of Representatives, one from each of the geographic areas studied in research question number 1, though not always from the exact district. The representatives were intentionally selected to provide a mix of democratic and republican perspectives. State representatives were asked (Appendix H) to discuss their role in advocating for their individual districts, how they viewed the policy-making process, and how they viewed the status of school finance, school choice, standardized testing, and personnel issues.

Two of the state representatives were interviewed in their offices within the state capitol complex. The third interview was conducted over the phone with two of the representative's staffers also on the phone call. I tailored each set of interview questions for state representatives based on their geographic location, committee membership, and school districts within their constituencies.

Analysis. Analysis was ongoing throughout the data collection process. Superintendent interviews helped me become more familiar with each individual district. By constantly reviewing survey responses throughout the collection process I was able to craft more informal and precise questions for the second interview phase with state business organizations and state

representatives. Formal interview analysis did not begin until the 20 interviews were completed and professionally transcribed. Phase one also informed the effectiveness of securing interviews for phase two. Working through repeated solicitations of Rotarians and school board members provided important practice for successfully approaching more difficult targets such as the business organization representatives and state representatives.

The survey data was analyzed at the district level by first comparing responses from the three superintendents to each other. Next the school board and Rotary respondents were disaggregated into separate spreadsheets by districts so that school boards, superintendents, and Rotarians could be compared across districts, and to compare superintendents to their respective school boards. The same process was used to analyze Rotary members. Their responses were disaggregated into districts for cross-district and intra-district comparison.

I searched for areas of evident consensus, both within and across districts. If consensus or unanimous opinions were non-existent, then I reviewed the responses to evaluate if a school board or Rotary club could be categorized as favoring a certain position, or if it could be determined that no consensus existed among the group(s).

For the school districts, I delineated the individual school board and superintendent positions. When referring to superintendents and school boards as an aggregate they are referred to as “district leadership” throughout the dissertation.

In reviewing the interviews, I looked to determine if subjects held strong opinions and positions on the subtopics and different emergent topics raised throughout the study. The second review of the interviews searched for direct, and often in-depth, quotes from participants providing evidence for their documented positions and opinions in the study. The third review of

interviews examined the emergent topics and themes from the interview discussions, i.e., specific topics unintentionally highlighted in the discussion, but relevant to the overall study.

The interviews with representatives from Business Leaders for Michigan and the Chamber of Commerce were reviewed to first, identify the organizations' positions on the dissertations subtopics of finance, choice, standardized testing, and personnel policies. Second, the interviews were reviewed to determine who the representatives believed were influencing state education policy. Third, I looked for emergent themes from these two interviews to better understand their educational priorities.

I analyzed the state representative interviews to evaluate their understanding of where the dissertation's four subtopics currently stood in the policymaking process. The interviews were also analyzed to better understand each representative's educational policy priorities. Lastly, I reviewed the representatives' responses about which groups and individuals they considered to be influencing the legislature regarding educational policy.

In addition to the interviews with the business organizations and state representatives I reviewed their public documents and communications related to educational policy, this included their social media feeds on Facebook and Twitter. This review shaped the interview questions and provided better reliability and validity to their interview responses.

The document analysis for all the interview participants provided greater data triangulation. Analyzing interviews, surveys, and documents provided three perspectives to the organizations and individuals selected in this study.

Data-driven coding looked for certain concepts present in the literature review (coalitions, regimes, policy streams, intra-district dynamics), and examined whom district leaders perceived as the authors of state policy. I did not expect subjects to use the terms such as

advocacy coalition, regime theory, or the non-monolithic nature of their districts, so coding looked for unintentional references to these models. In addition to coding the presence of certain concepts, the subject's position on each topic was considered, i.e., not simply noting the presence of coalitions, but also looking for how respondents viewed these issues. Furthermore, I utilized coding to identify trends among the actors in different districts. For example, was a board member likely to have views more closely aligned with the community, or with that of board members across districts? Were local business leaders' opinions closely aligned to the business community or to their geographic district? Open coding looked for emergent or divergent themes found in the data from the respective districts (Glesne, 2006; Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 2010; Rudestam & Newton, 2007; Gibbs, 2007).

Limitations of the Study Design

The success of the 20 interviews relied upon finding individuals willing to spend time committing to an interview. For the school district representatives this was mostly preordained because subjects had to be the superintendents or school board members. In the Rotary set I felt fortunate to secure the interviews with the eventual subjects. In Haggerston, both of the Rotarians interviewed were well informed on educational issues and their district's dynamics even though they were both working in full time jobs in the for-profit sector.

In Chadwell, once again, I was able to interview a well informed member of the local business community and another Rotarian who still had personal interactions with the district. In Redbridge I had to turn down several potential interviewees because their professions kept them too close to the K-12 educational sphere, but eventually found a second Rotarian with well-formed opinions about his local district.

In terms of the meta-analysis presented in Chapter Five, the state representative interviews serve as the arbiters of policy mapping in the state. It should be noted that this small sample, 3 out of 110 representatives, limits the overall reliability of the findings discussed in Chapter Five.

Another limitation is the survey questions used in this study intended to identify broader perceptions and attitudes regarding educational policy in the four sub-topic areas. These questions intend to find broad traits across districts. They do not take into account the more sophisticated biases identified by Reckhow, Grossman, and Evans (2014) who used “policy cues” in determining public support for charter schools. This study does not use as sophisticated a method, but rather intends to determine larger trends in perceptions across the three districts.

CHAPTER FOUR: SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND BUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS

Introduction to the Three Districts

One might assume that three affluent suburban districts across the state of Michigan would have similar attitudes towards education policy. This study examines that assumption as well as looks for trends both within and across the districts.

These three school districts, Chadwell, Haggerston, and Redbridge are all educational leaders in their respective counties and broader regions in the state. Table 5 illustrates how different these districts are from the rest of Michigan when considering a few educational and demographic statistics.

Table 5 Key District Statistics

District	Haggerston	Redbridge	Chadwell	Michigan Average
2014-15 Average ACT Composite Score	23.9	24.5	23.2	19.9
Median Home Values	\$268,600	\$191,700	\$249,00	\$120,000
Percentage of College Educated Adults	65.7%	69.5%	70%	26.4%
Median Household Income (2010-2014)	\$118,788	\$71,678	\$97,083- \$113,969	\$49,087
Teacher Salary Range	\$38,605- \$84,932	\$38,016- \$81,812	\$37,782- \$89,066	--
Average teacher compensation (2014-15)	\$66,619	\$63,921	\$74,824	\$61,978
Teacher salary Michigan state rank (2014-15)	#59	#97	#13	--

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, mischooldata.org, Center for Educational Performance and Information

Perhaps the most striking statistic is the percentage of college-educated adults in each community. There are three times as many college graduates in these communities compared to

the state average. These communities represent college-educated enclaves which are drastically different than the rest of the state, and in some cases, their immediate neighbors.

It is important to review the financial picture of the districts before describing the districts' individual characteristics (Table 1). All three districts have better funding than a poor rural district such as Onaway, but they are also not at the very top level of public school funding seen elsewhere in the state, such as Bloomfield Hills. The next section will attempt to describe each community to provide a better understanding of the data in context.

Haggerston. Haggerston is a school district of almost 10,000 students situated outside of Grand Rapids, West Michigan's largest city. The district was consolidated in the 1950s and is made up of several individual districts which existed at the time. Today the district encompasses numerous townships in the county, and has three comprehensive high schools within the district.

Haggerston recognizes itself, and is recognized by its peers, as one of the 15 highest performing districts in the state. All three district high schools scored in the top 50 average SAT score high schools in Michigan during the 2015-2016 school year; the first year the SAT was mandatory for all 11th graders attending public schools. U.S. News and World Report ranked one of the district's high schools as one of the top 20 high schools in Michigan in 2016. Beyond SAT and ACT scores, there are other objective indicators demonstrating the community's investment and dedication to local public education. The superintendent, school board members, and Rotary members all indicated that voters in the Haggerston Schools have approved over 23 consecutive school funding questions on local ballots. This was clearly a point of pride amongst community members interviewed for this study.

A new teacher in Haggerston with a bachelor's degree has a contract of \$38,605 for teaching duties. A teacher who has been in the district for 28 years with a Masters degree and 45 additional course credits has a contract of \$84,932.

The local educational foundation also demonstrates the community's commitment to its schools. One school board member reported that during the last year the Haggerston Educational Foundation gave over \$120,000 for different projects throughout the district.

The per-pupil foundation allowance for this district is higher than many local districts in the area, but the district did not fall under the historical categorization of a "hold-harmless" or "20j" district (like Chadwell) that lost the 20j funding late in Governor Granholm's administration during the 2009-10 fiscal year. 20j funding ensured the better-funded districts in Michigan were at least allowed to keep pace with inflation since 1999.

School of choice, or open enrollment, has benefited the Haggerston public schools from a financial point of view, and those interviewed from Haggerston generally had a positive opinion of open enrollment. The district superintendent reported there are approximately 1000 school-of-choice students in Haggerston. The local school board maintains a policy that the district as a whole, and no individual school building, should ever have a "school-of-choice" population that exceeds 10%. Open enrollment has allowed this district to maintain full schools and to gain additional funding by attracting families to the district.

The Haggerston district and open enrollment must be considered with these caveats; First, all of these students come from within the county. Second, the majority of them are coming from a nearby urban school district, the Grand Rapids Public Schools. Third, hundreds of the school-of-choice students currently in the district are the children of district employees. This third caveat can be considered a beneficial human resources policy that benefits district

employees, but it may also serve to ensure that many students opting into the district share Haggerston's educational values as well. In other words, it allows for school of choice without opening the district to a cultural shift. The district superintendent put it into succinct terms when he said, "we are certainly net gainers under school of choice." Support for open enrollment also exists among the district's business class. One of the Haggerston Rotarians said,

there are lots of circumstances that, you know, make it rational to have that option, you know, it might be somebody who has lived here and moved away and moved back, might live near the boundary line of the district, but has always been with neighbors and so forth who go to Haggerston and would benefit from that. I just think that there are gonna be circumstances there that make that choice a rationally good idea.

This Rotarian indicated his support for open enrollment from a pragmatic viewpoint. For him, the open enrollment policy is about servicing the needs of people who live locally, just not formally within the district's boundaries.

Charter schools have not significantly affected Haggerston. The district has only one charter school within the district's geographic boundaries, and neither the superintendent nor school board members felt there was any consequential loss of students to charter schools. This does not mean that Haggerston lacks educational competition. There are numerous well established and well regarded Christian schools within the district's boundaries that provide an alternative option for students.

The district superintendent is experienced, having served as superintendent for over ten years. Based on interviews with school board members it appears that he enjoys strong support from his school board who look to him for guidance on educational policy, similar to Feuerstein's descriptions of the relationship between board members and superintendents.

Haggerston has the most experienced school board in 2016 of the three districts in this study by a considerable margin. One board member is in the first term, one in the second term, and the remaining five board members have all served more than three full terms. This longevity in board leadership provides the district with considerable leadership stability.

Ideologically, this district is largely Republican and conservative. Both of their representatives in the state house are Republicans, and Governor Mitt Romney (R) won the county by 8 percentage points in the 2012 presidential election.

Chadwell. *The Chadwell Public School District currently educates almost 8,000 students in a district comprised of multiple municipalities outside the City of Detroit. The district itself dates to the early 20th century, and many of the school buildings currently in use were built in the 1930s, including one of the district's two high schools. The district's high schools have long been rated as some of the best public high schools in the state due to their strong standardized test scores and Advanced Placement programs. In 2016, one of the district's high schools was recognized by Newsweek as one of the top 500 public high schools in the United States. The district also had one of the 25 highest SAT averages in the state among its 11th graders during the 2015-2016 school year.*

A new teacher with a bachelor degree in Chadwell has a contract of \$37,782 for teaching responsibilities. At the top end of the teaching contract, a teacher with 14 years of experience, a Master's degree, and an additional 60 course credits has a contract of \$89,066.

There are well documented efforts to support the district financially. The local educational foundation raised \$265,000 during the 2012-2013 fiscal year. These monies are used to pay for additional items in the school buildings.

Governor Granholm's elimination of the 20j funds dealt a considerable blow to Chadwell, which had been receiving the additional 20j funds since 1999 in order to keep pace with inflation. For Chadwell, the 20j funding erasure resulted in over \$250 per-pupil being cut from the district budget, an amount that has yet to be restored to the district through funding increases from the state.

This district has numerous idiosyncrasies that make it different from most other public school districts in the state. First, the district does not provide busing for students and families. It has been a longstanding policy that the district's schools are situated in walkable distances throughout the district, therefore the district provides no busing services to families.

Second, the district has chosen to forgo participating in open enrollment since it became an option in the early 1990s. Neighborhoods immediately adjoining the district's boundaries have drastically different ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic makeup, much more so than in the other two districts considered in this study.

District residents speak frankly that an open enrollment policy would not benefit the district, and that the voters would never allow open enrollment. This sentiment was expressed in numerous discussions with Chadwell residents throughout the study. One Rotarian stated unequivocally, "that would never pass in Chadwell. That would—whoa...the collaboration and coming together as partners is—it's about turf." Another Rotarian commented how he felt strongly that open enrollment should be a completely local decision, and that he supported the local school board's longstanding position to keep the district closed. One of the district's school board members said the anecdotal information he received from friends in districts with open enrollment was negative, and that open enrollment was really about stealing students from other areas in the county or state.

A failed bond attempt in the district two years ago has led to a current crisis of confidence regarding local financial support. Both of the Rotarians interviewed from Chadwell were cognizant of the fact that residents must be well informed about the uses of any additional funds for the schools, and that if they were not well informed there would be a good chance that any future requests for additional or renewed millages might not pass in the district.

Charter schools have not directly challenged the school district. According to the district superintendent, the public schools face competition from several parochial and private schools, but not from charter schools. According to the Michigan Association of Public School Academies (MAPSA) there are no charter schools within the district boundaries (“Michigan Association of Public School Academies,” 2016).

The school board and superintendent have varying levels of experience. The current superintendent has held the position for approximately a year and a half. The school board is relatively experienced. Two of the school board members have served for over 10 years on the board. Three of the board members are currently in their first terms.

Politically the district as whole can be considered conservative, with the majority of precincts voting for Republican candidates, however several precincts towards the southern end of the district voted for Democratic candidates in recent presidential elections. The district’s state legislature delegation is not Republican. This is because the school district is part of two state house districts and one state senate district that overlap with Detroit, resulting in 100% Democratic representation for the generally conservative Chadwell schools.

Redbridge. The third and smallest district included in the study is the Redbridge Public Schools, located in mid-Michigan just outside of the capital city. This district currently has over 4,000 students enrolled in its K-12 program. The district represents part of a larger township that

includes other school districts within the township boundaries. Redbridge is an academically high performing district like the other two districts in this study. In the 2014-15 school year Redbridge had the highest ACT average at 24.5 of the three districts. In the 2015-16 school year Redbridge had the 16th highest SAT average in the state among 11th grade students. In 2016 U.S. News and World Report ranked Redbridge High School as one of the top 600 public high schools in America, and ranked it as the 12th best public high school in Michigan.

A new teacher to Redbridge with a bachelor degree has a teaching contract of \$38,016. A teacher with 18 years of experience, a Master's degree, and an additional 30 course credits has a teaching contract of \$81,812.

The local education foundation in the district is well established and provides consistent aid to the district, specifically by sponsoring after-school clubs and activities for students. The foundation donated over \$100,000 to the district in the 2015-2016 school year.

Similar to Haggerston, the Redbridge schools never qualified as a 20j or hold-harmless district. The school finances have traditionally been more restricted than Chadwell, but they did not experience the budget shock that came with the elimination of 20j funds.

In terms of school of choice policies, Redbridge is an open enrollment district that allows students to choice into the district from surrounding communities. Redbridge has a managed open enrollment policy, which aims to keep the school of choice population within the district below 10% of the total district population. Redbridge, for example, created a primary years Montessori Program specifically aimed at attracting non-residents looking for a Montessori experience, and for attracting young families to live in Redbridge because there would be a public Montessori option in the district. The superintendent mentioned how Redbridge only posts open enrollment seats when a class is under-enrolled, but they do not hire additional staff

to service school of choice students. School-of-choice students are not accepted at the high school level. When an applicant surplus exists, the district holds a public lottery to determine who will receive the seats in the district. The number of applications for open enrollment seats in the district varies on the number of open seats in the district; For the 2014-15 school year there were 230 applications for open enrollment seats, for the 2016-17 school year there were 165 applications. According to statistics provided the Redbridge superintendent (dated February, 2016) the Redbridge Public Schools has 547 students opting into the district, and 120 students opting out of the district, for a net gain of 426 students. Redbridge Public Schools receives an additional \$3,500,000 for this net gain.

According to the Michigan Association of Public School Academies, there are no “brick and mortar” charter schools within the district’s geographic boundaries, however, there are two cyber-charter schools headquartered within the district.

Educational competition is one way the Redbridge district contrasts with Haggerston and Chadwell, in that very limited educational alternatives exist within the district boundaries. The Redbridge Public Schools could be said to have the strongest educational monopoly of the three districts as no private or parochial schools currently exist within district boundaries, although there are a few parochial schools in nearby districts.

District leadership in Redbridge is a mix of old and new. The superintendent has worked in a district leadership position for approximately 20 years. The school board, on the other hand, is relatively new, with five of the seven board members currently in their first terms on the board, including the board president and vice president. Several board members were appointed to the school board when previous board members resigned from the position before completing their elected terms.

Redbridge is the most politically liberal of the three districts surveyed. Both the state representative and state senator are Democrats, and the county has voted for Democratic candidates in recent presidential election cycles.

District Attitudes Towards State Control. Perhaps no question or topic in this study generated such a uniform response from district leadership than how they viewed the growing influence of state government in their districts over the last 22 years; it was overwhelmingly negative with 18 of 19 board members who participated in the survey indicating they viewed growing state influence negatively (Table 6). The 19th board member indicated a neutral opinion. All three superintendents indicated a negative position on this topic.

Table 6 View of the Increasing Influence of State Government

	Negatively	Positively	No Opinion
Rotary	44.6%	12.3%	43.1%
District Leadership	95.5%	--	4.5% (neutral)

Note: “District Leadership” refers to combined responses of the superintendent(s) and school board(s) for all subsequent tables.

Rotary responses from these communities also indicated a negative view of state influence, with only 12.3% of Rotarians indicating a positive view of the growing influence of state government.

The Chadwell Board President responded to the topic of state influence by stating, “It’s brutal. It really is brutal. We have very little say over anything anymore. A lot of mandates come down with no funding to cover the mandates, which again applies pressure to the budget.” A Haggerston board member provided her opinion on state influence more succinctly, “Largely negative.”

Interviewed Rotarians also favored local control, however their comments were more measured and somewhat more ideological than school board members. Both of the Haggerston Rotarians indicated they would like to see more local control, and that they generally lean towards favoring local control in governmental matters.

The Chadwell Rotarians had a negative opinion on state control. Their support for local control rested on the belief that Chadwell has the capacity from a financial and professional viewpoint to manage more of the district's affairs without state oversight. The superintendent and board members opposed the growth of state influence on pragmatic grounds informed by their experiences trying to implement these state policies.

Table 7 presents a consolidated view of how stakeholders in this dissertation felt about certain educational issues. The superintendents, school board members, and Rotarians are presented as an aggregate group across the three districts.

Table 7 Stakeholder Positions on Educational Issues (All Districts)

	Finance	Open Enrollment	Charter Schools	Standardized Testing	Personnel Policies
Superintendents	Districts are underfunded	Positive in districts w/open enrollment	Negative view	Mixed	Positive view of recent changes
Board Members	Districts are underfunded	Positive in districts w/open enrollment	Negative view	Too much time spent on standardized testing	Positive view of recent changes
Rotary Members	Majority believe schools are adequately funded	Positive in districts w/open enrollment	Plurality believe that Charters have been a positive addition	Plurality are negative on standardized testing	Positive view of recent changes
BLM & Chamber	No defined position	In favor of choice	Positive view	In favor of standardized testing and aligned assessment	Positive view of recent changes
State Representatives	Limited by Proposal A	Recognize the large effect on districts	Recognize need for reform	Committed to standardized testing plan	Positive view of recent changes

Note: All districts aggregated in superintendent and school board positions.

District Superintendents

The three superintendent interviews took place in their respective offices, and in each district the superintendent was the first district representative I spoke to. Prior to each interview the superintendents all completed the district survey (Appendix C) and each superintendent was asked approximately 15 broad interview questions (Appendix E).

It is important to consider whether these superintendents, the educational leaders of three districts, are aligned in their thinking towards recent educational policies in Michigan. The answer to this question is mixed based on their responses to survey and interview questions. Apart from the study's five main sub-topics which include finance, charter and choice, testing, and personnel policies, the superintendents did have a common set of emergent data and emergent themes that were evident in their responses. For example, they all mentioned how their district fared under the "2x formula", a reference to the fact that relatively poor districts in the state would be receiving twice the increase in state funding in comparison to their respective districts (Chapter Two). This awareness of the limited funding increase they were expecting from the state demonstrates the emphasis they all currently place on budgetary pressures facing their districts (Table 1).

Political advocacy emerged as a theme in each of the superintendent interviews. Each superintendent mentioned regular communication with state representatives and state senators. Two of the superintendents specifically discussed how they speak with their legislators on a bi-weekly to monthly basis.

Practical job skills and work credits were themes that emerged independently in all three interviews. Each of the superintendents specifically mentioned their desire to improve the K-12 to work transition for their students by providing high school students' access to high quality job training programs that could potentially begin in high school. This concern surprised me as a researcher. I did not anticipate that each of the superintendents in these traditionally college bound districts would emphasize serving a significant amount of students by facilitating their training and accreditations into high demand jobs that do not require four-year college degrees.

These individuals cannot be considered fully monolithic in their viewpoints when only considering their survey responses. The Chadwell Superintendent, being relatively new to the district and to the state, stood apart in his opinions on several of the key sub-topics, perhaps most noticeably when he responded on the survey that charter schools were an overall positive addition to Michigan's educational system. Interestingly, the Chadwell Superintendent could be characterized as appalled by the condition of Michigan's physical infrastructure, a point he raised several times during the interview in regards to statewide policies.

When evaluating the superintendents' responses from the interviews, they appear to be a relatively cohesive group that assess their district's current standing in the educational domain similarly.

School Finance. All three superintendents hold the opinion that their districts are not adequately funded. For five of the seven questions related to school finance the superintendents indicated they unanimously believed their districts to be underfunded (Table 8).

Table 8 Superintendent School Finance Responses

District	Redbridge	Haggerston	Chadwell
Opinion on district's funding	underfunded	underfunded	underfunded
Desire to/ability to raise funds locally?	agree	agree	agree
Teacher Compensation	under-paid	under-paid	paid adequately
Funding in comparison to neighboring districts	more funding than neighbors	more funding than neighbors	more funding than neighbors
Funding in comparison to peer districts in other states	less funding	less funding	equal funding
Funding in comparison to suburban Chicago districts	less funding	less funding	less funding

As previously discussed, the Chadwell Superintendent stands out from his two peers in response to the questions about teacher compensation and the district's funding in comparison to similar districts in other states. His responses on teacher compensation in the survey are moderated by comments from the interview where he said, "the teaching profession is going to shrink unless we can provide salaries and benefits that are going to keep people in the game." He uniquely stated that his district is funded equally to similar districts in other states. His position may stem from his experiences in a non-affluent district in a neighboring Midwestern state. His survey response on funding is moderated by the information provided during the interview where he acknowledged that districts in his home state are spending "16 to 20 thousand dollars per child" and that Chadwell was probably spending half of that amount.

Each of these superintendents also agreed with the idea of giving their districts the ability to raise additional funds in a local millage for operating expenses. The Haggerston

Superintendent indicated that he would support a modest millage, however he noted that his district is currently a “donor district” to the state school aid fund, so there would need to be a new policy regarding district contributions to the School Aid Fund. Jessica Hughes of Redbridge stated in the interview that she would support Redbridge’ ability to raise additional local funds, but she also noted that she has no desire for the state to return to the days of the “haves and have-nots” in school finance. She believes her community to be extremely supportive of the local schools and that they would easily approve a local operating millage. Once again, Robert Aubin of Chadwell stands-out from his two counterparts, in that he mentioned concerns with districts having the ability to increase taxes and potentially make their zip codes more exclusive to families.

Choice. Of these three districts, Redbridge and Haggerston participate in school of choice, also known as open enrollment. Chadwell has never accepted students from outside the district into the public schools. The Redbridge and Haggerston superintendents, as partially discussed in the district introductions, see themselves as the “winners” when considering school of choice. Both districts have attracted considerable net gains in student enrollment as a result of open enrollment, and both districts have established policies that allow their districts to maintain the districts’ brand, reputation, and excellence in student academic performance even while enrolling hundreds of students who live outside of the district boundaries.

Table 9 summarizes the three superintendents’ survey responses on questions related to school of choice and charter schools. The Redbridge and Haggerston Superintendents gave the same responses on the first three questions, and their interviews provided similar insights on these topics. The Chadwell Superintendent responded differently on the surveys, but the

following analysis discusses how his interview responses indicate his opinions are more similar to his counterparts than his survey responses indicate.

Table 9 Superintendents Charter and Choice Survey Responses

District	Redbridge	Haggerston	Chadwell
How has school of choice affected your district?	positively	positively	not affected
Charter schools have been a good addition to Michigan's education system since 1993	disagree	disagree	agree
The existence of charter schools has been good for my local district since 1993	disagree	disagree	agree
Our district should try to attract students from neighboring districts	disagree	neutral	agree

Haggerston and Redbridge have strong demand for their open enrollment seats. Each Haggerston graduating class will have approximately 140 seats for open enrollment. For these 140 seats, the district receives nearly 300 applications annually, which causes the district to hold a public lottery in order to determine who gains entrance to the district.

In Redbridge, the superintendent emphasized the district never deliberately strategized to attract students from other districts. The open enrollment experience in Redbridge is framed by the commensurate opening of a pre-kindergarten through 5th grade Montessori program. Superintendent Hughes explained, “we wanted to also offer an alternative approach to our own residents, and we didn’t want to, we feel very strongly about not attracting them away from other public schools. We feel very strongly about that.” This needs to be considered in context; neighboring districts of Redbridge and Haggerston unveiled large scale advertising initiatives in

the past to attract students to their districts, often by placing a billboard near the district border, literally beckoning students to cross the district boundaries.

A certain irony exists regarding the superintendents' responses to the survey question about whether they should be attracting students from outside of the district boundaries. The superintendent with almost 1,000 school of choice students in his district responded as "neutral", the superintendent with over 500 school of choice students responded that she disagreed, and the superintendent with zero school of choice students indicated his district should be trying to attract students from neighboring districts.

As with school finance, the Chadwell Superintendent's survey responses on school choice need qualification and consideration when balanced with his comments from the interview. In the survey he responded that charter schools were a positive addition to Michigan's education system; In the interview he acknowledged that lifting the cap off the number of charters in the state in 2011 probably "lowered their quality," but he also said,

I think there are some very, very good charters and I think there are some very, very iffy charters. And when you listen to Mayor Duggan talk, you listen to him talk about how they've opened and closed things to the point that it's all about what they can steal or take from a public system.

Based on all the Chadwell Superintendent's comments in this section, it appears he positively viewed the philosophy of allowing families to have choice when selecting their educational options from the public domain, however he also perceived complications with the Michigan charter school operating model.

In Redbridge and Haggerston the superintendents indicated the most concern with cyber-charter schools. The Redbridge Superintendent put it into more objective terms, highlighting in

her interview that cyber-schools have none of the physical plant costs that a regular district encounters, and that many charter schools target the K-8 population, which is less expensive than educating high school students. She put it into terms of “accountability” and mentioned that her district must educate all students in comparison to a charter school which can select which students they educate. The Haggerston Superintendent put his opinion in starker terms,

I think it’s really misguided policy to have unlimited charter schools. And then when we look at cyber charter schools, that’s just another level of—a whole other level of misguided policy. I see that as the ability for outstate actors to take bags of taxpayer money out of the state of Michigan.

The Redbridge and Haggerston superintendents had straightforward objections to current policies governing Michigan’s charter schools, and even though the Chadwell Superintendent appears more favorable towards charter and choice policies, he also perceives current gaps in the efficacy of state policy in this arena.

Standardized Testing. An important point of consistency among superintendent responses is the belief that students spend too much time testing, as evidenced in both the survey and interview questions (Table 10). Two superintendents both used the word “ridiculous” to describe the amount of time students in their districts spent on standardized tests mandated by the state. The third superintendent discussed how the student data from state testing was important information, however she said, “I think our kids are over-tested in state testing.”

Table 10 Superintendent Responses on Standardized Testing

	Redbridge	Haggerston	Chadwell
Too much time is spent on standardized testing in my local district	Agree	Agree	Agree
Standardized testing results give my district quality information regarding teacher performance	Disagree	Disagree	Agree
Standardized testing results give my district quality information regarding students' academic growth	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Agree

Less agreement exists in the data regarding what communities learn about their teaching staff and students from reviewing the results of state testing. Each superintendent emphasized different points concerning the value and uses of standardized testing data. The Chadwell Superintendent has a simplified vision of what the state should be doing, namely that the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) should be the testing model utilized for grades first through tenth grade.

NWEA tests typically assess students twice a year, on one day only, on their core academic subjects. The data is tied to each previous year's information, allowing a school district to evaluate an individual student's academic growth longitudinally as the student progresses through the grades.

The Chadwell Superintendent advocated using the SAT assessment for 11th and 12th grade students to assess academic progress on a statewide basis.

The Redbridge superintendent felt that meaningful data exists under the current state assessments. While she acknowledged the current M-Step data was taking an extended amount of time to get back from the Michigan Department of Education, she did feel that the district has

the ability to view individual student-level information that allows teachers and principals to identify academically at-risk students who could then be provided with necessary support.

The Haggerston superintendent was less optimistic about the possibilities of standardized testing. His position was that the educational system, and individual student progress is far too complex to be understood by statewide standardized exams. He did not articulate a vision for what testing should be as did the Chadwell Superintendent, nor did he express there was any value in the data currently being provided from mandated state tests as did the Redbridge Superintendent.

Personnel Policies. Feedback from superintendents on questions of personnel policies is difficult to interpret; the superintendents lacked unanimity on each survey question, yet their interview responses revealed very similar strains of thought on these subtopics (Table 11).

Table 11 Superintendent Personnel and Human Resource Policy Responses

	Redbridge	Haggerston	Chadwell
Teachers should pay 20% of healthcare	Agree	Disagree – should pay less	Agree
MI becoming a right to work state	Disagree	Disagree	Neutral
All teachers should be evaluated annually	Disagree	Agree	Agree

On the question of districts being mandated by the state to have teachers contribute a minimum of 20% of their healthcare costs, superintendents all discussed the importance of employees being better consumers when they contribute to their health insurance. None of the conversations with superintendents yielded any outrage, shock, or surprise on this issue. Instead,

the superintendents indicated in their interviews that this was a standard human resource policy in 21st century America that should be broadly accepted by employee groups.

As with other topics, the question of the Right to Work legislation that was passed in 2012 yielded a “neutral” response from the Chadwell Superintendent in the survey, yet his comments in the interview were much stronger in their criticism of the Right to Work legislation. When asked how Right to Work affected the Chadwell Schools, he commented that it was a “beat down on teachers” and that teachers had been “beaten on a lot.”

The other two superintendents were more analytical in that they believed in the coming years, as pre-2012 contracts expired, the issue of Right to Work would become an increasingly divisive issue in their districts among different employee groups. None of the superintendents connected the issue of Right to Work to their districts’ own declining political power.

In the interviews, annual evaluations received support from all three of the superintendents. Both the Haggerston and Redbridge Superintendents felt the evaluation process should focus on themes of growth and collaboration, but feared the current state system tries to emphasize the judgment of teachers. The Chadwell and Redbridge Superintendents feel the Charlotte Danielson framework is a good model to utilize when effectively implemented. There was also an emphasis from the superintendents that state policies emphasize a “one-size-fits-all mentality.” They commented that a highly regarded tenured teacher should have a different evaluation process, both in frequency and emphasis, than a novice or poorly performing teacher.

State Control. The three superintendents took strong positions against the growing influence of state government in the local district, and each emphasized slightly different points.

In Redbridge the superintendent said there could have been significant improvements in state policy that would have benefited public schools, but instead it was a missed opportunity

because individuals from the west side of the state were sponsoring educational policy that had nothing to do with evidence-based practices and policies. She indicated in the past she had mixed feelings about the growing influence of the state government, but currently she views the state government as having a “harmful” effect on her district.

Robert Aubin in Chadwell said he believed the growing influence of state governments in controlling the role of local districts was a national trend, and that state governments were trying to “usurp” local control from districts. He viewed many of the mandates coming from the state as wasteful “funky mandates” that keep essential resources out of the classroom.

Martin Shields from Haggerston seems to have an individualized level of disdain for the state legislature. He views them as unqualified “laypeople” who are unprepared when it comes to setting policy in a complex public education system. He used the metaphor that the public would not permit the state legislature to micro-manage something as complex as knee surgery, so why does the public allow these same individuals to set increasingly acute state education policies? He views public education as a complicated endeavor and he senses that legislators believe that each district, school, and individual teacher can be assessed by ranking them with an over-simplified reporting system.

District School Boards

In Chadwell and Haggerston, all of the school board members completed the survey, and I interviewed both the school board presidents and vice-presidents. Only five of the Redbridge School Board members were willing to take the survey, and the board president and vice-president would not agree to an interview. Two other Redbridge school board members agreed to be interviewed for the study.

School Finance. The collective school boards have the strongest consensus on their districts’ funding and ability to raise funds, which are areas of strong correlation with their superintendents (Table 12). All the board members felt their districts were underfunded, but there were important considerations regarding funding raised in the school board interviews as well.

Table 12 School Board Responses On School Finance

	Redbridge	Haggerston	Chadwell
Opinions on district’s funding	100% underfunded	100% underfunded	100% underfunded
Desire to/ability to raise funds locally?	majority: agree	100% agree	100% agree
Teacher compensation	majority: under-paid	majority: under-paid	majority: paid adequately
Funding in comparison to neighboring districts?	majority: similar funding to neighboring districts	no consensus among board	majority: more funding than neighboring districts
Funding in comparison to peers districts in other states?	4/5:less funding	4/7: no opinion	4/7: less funding
Funding in comparison to suburban Chicago districts?	100%: less funding	100%: less funding	100%: less funding

For example, Kerry Diotte, the Chadwell Board Vice-President emphasized he would agree with the Proposal A model if the state simply returned to the original model that included the 20j funding. Chadwell’s status as a “donor district” to the school aid fund concerned him. Mr. Diotte felt that district residents already pay a considerable sum in property taxes, and he felt those property taxes should all be coming back to the local district. In Mr. Diotte’s calculation,

the district was contributing \$12,000 per student to the school aid fund, but received under \$10,000 per pupil back from the state. As Mr. Diotte said,

I want all of the money to come back to Chadwell. If we can do that, I don't care if the enrollment goes down because I can manage my dollars around that....In a perfect world, I want the state to give me back every, I don't want to have to give my money to the state.

Only one of the other board members, from Haggerston, also emphasized the issue of being a “donor district” to the school aid fund.

School board interviews frequently mentioned a decade of declining revenue with increasing structural costs. The Redbridge board members were acutely aware that the district would be facing a \$1,000,000 cost increase due to healthcare and pension liabilities over the next year, but that a \$60 per pupil increase from the state would only cover \$250,000 of the increased costs.

School board members from these districts view current state financial support as inadequate for their schools. As one Haggerston board member said, the “state funds mediocrity, and we want to fund excellence.”

Several board members discussed how this decade of limited funding affected their teaching staffs. In Chadwell, the teachers took a 10% pay cut across the contract in order to keep the district solvent. A Redbridge board member also noted different bargaining units' importance in making concessions in order to keep the district financially stable. The Haggerston board president summarized the situation as having a decade without a positive inflow of finances into the district.

School boards differ across district lines regarding teacher compensation. Overall the Redbridge and Haggerston boards view their teachers as being underpaid, whereas five of the seven board members in Chadwell view the teachers as being paid adequately, even with the aforementioned pay-cut given to teachers in recent years. Interviews clarified this position somewhat, in that both of the interviewed Chadwell School Board members mentioned how their teacher contract ranked statewide. Both board members noted their district was around the 15th highest paying district in the state, and they felt they had a competitive contract that would attract strong teachers into the district. Additionally, the Chadwell School Board Vice-President mentioned his district has a large percentage of veteran teachers at the top of the contract, and therefore earning competitive salaries, but he noted this situation was likely to change in the next five years due to retirements.

There was less consensus among school board members on how districts compare in funding to their immediate neighbors and to similar school districts in other states.

Regarding neighboring districts, there are limitations stemming from the survey question “How does my district’s funding compare to neighboring districts? The Chadwell Board has the clearest distinction because none of the districts that geographically border the district are similar in funding or in academic culture, therefore the Chadwell board members recognize the stark differences between their district and neighbors in terms of school funding.

Haggerston and Redbridge school board members’ responses may have been limited by the nature of the question. Both districts have neighbors that receive considerably less funding per student, and both also have peer districts with comparable funding that immediately border the districts. These limitations may explain the weak consensus from Haggerston and Redbridge

on this question. If Redbridge looks to the west, the neighboring district has a relatively equal amount of funding. If they look to the east, they receive more funding than neighboring districts.

An interesting caveat is how these board members view their financing in comparison to similar districts in other states. Seven of the 19 board members who responded to the survey had no opinion on this question. Haggerston, which had the most experienced school board of the three districts, had four board members with no opinion on this topic. The responses from this question seem to indicate these boards are less aware of how Michigan, and their districts, have recently lost financial support for education in recent years compared to neighboring states (Table 1, Table 2, Table 3).

Choice. School board members from Redbridge and Haggerston all had a positive assessment of how participating in open enrollment affected their districts (Table 13). The Chadwell board members stated the obvious when they asserted that open enrollment has not affected their district due to the “no open enrollment” policy. Financially, the Redbridge and Haggerston board members had good reason to reply that open enrollment had been good for their districts, as each district added millions of dollars to the district budget by admitting hundreds (or up to a thousand) school-of-choice students to their district.

Table 13 School Board Responses on Charter and Choice

	Redbridge	Haggerston	Chadwell
How has school of choice affected my district?	5/5 positively	7/7 positively	7/7 not affected
Charters have been a good addition to Michigan's education system since 1993.	5/5 disagree	5/7 disagree	7/7 disagree
The existence of charter schools has been good for my local district since 1993.	5/5 disagree	6/7 disagree, one abstention	7/7 disagree
Our district should try to attract students from neighboring districts.	5/5 disagree	4 agree 2 neutral 1 disagree	6/7 disagree

The Chadwell board members had well articulated reasons for opposing open enrollment in their districts. The board president believed open enrollment “decimates” neighborhoods. She compared open enrollment to a series of dominoes that move away from the urban areas as students leave their home districts. The board vice-president reported his opinion regarding open enrollment was informed by the negative feedback he heard from friends who work in districts with open enrollment. They reported open enrollment had an overall negative effect on their districts. He explained, “the unfortunate reality is though, for districts to maintain their level of service and programs, they have to grow their enrollment, right? So they’ve got to recruit, and that’s what you’re doing, from other areas.”

Board members from Haggerston and Redbridge reported being confident in their districts’ open enrollment policies. They all reported these were controlled models that benefitted deserving students without requiring the district to hire additional staff as a business model. One noticeable difference between Haggerston and Redbridge is four of the Haggerston board members responded their district should be trying to attract students from neighboring

districts, whereas none of the Redbridge board members responded their district should be attracting students from neighboring districts.

Charter schools elicited negative responses from the school boards in all three districts and the interviews only clarified the collective wariness and distrust traditional school boards hold for the current Michigan charter system. The two most common themes emerging from questioning school board members about charter schools were the lack of oversight for charters in Michigan, and the notion that many of the charter schools seem to be profit-driven and unaccountable. This was a clear concern for Chadwell Board President Christina Freeland who stated, “I think the fact that they have no oversight and the fact that it’s public money going to private business that bothers me...there’s no accountability.” In addition to Christina Freeland, two other board members interviewed specifically mentioned their concern that charter schools in Michigan serve as a mechanism for transferring public dollars into private hands.

Standardized Testing. The issue of standardized testing yielded more varied responses from school board members than the other sub-topics (Table 14). School board members characterize state mandated standardized testing as a necessary evil. The main consensus on this subtopic was that a large majority of school board members agree that excessive amounts of time are being spent on standardized testing.

Table 14 School Boards and Standardized Testing

	Redbridge	Haggerston	Chadwell
Too much time is spent on standardized testing in my local district	4/5 agree	6/7 agree	5/7 agree
Standardized testing results give my district quality information regarding teacher performance.	3-agree 2-disagree	1-agree 4-disagree 2-neutral	2-agree 4-disagree 1-neutral
Standardized testing results give my district quality information regarding students' academic growth.	3-agree 2-disagree	4-agree 3-disagree	4-agree 2-disagree 1-neutral

Interviews yielded numerous concerns about the current format of state testing. School board members perceived high stakes testing was unnecessary in these affluent districts because the teachers already possess significant self-motivation, or motivation to live up to the district's demanding expectations.

Ginette Taylor of the Haggerston School Board explained that her concern with the state testing regime was it emphasized learning which was less valuable than what the Haggerston teaching staff had the capacity to offer. She believed state testing requires teaching down to the test in her district. She said, "They're trying to get their students to get to the test as opposed to really getting deep learning and deep knowledge. Those two don't necessarily go hand in hand."

Two board members specifically mentioned that by making standardized testing results part of teacher evaluations it has done nothing but make teachers fearful. As Chadwell's Kerry Diotte said, "I think that we probably over test, and I don't think its fair to...directly tie test results to teacher performance."

None of the school board members believed the results of standardized testing were useful to them. In Chadwell, the board vice president described how one of the assistant superintendents for curriculum was essential to district leadership in helping them interpret data

from state testing to identify learning gaps in the district. Similarly, one of the Redbridge board members referred to the superintendent as the chief data interpreter who helped make sense of the data for the school board. In Haggerston both of the board members referenced that receiving the data in the next school year was far too late in order to give the district a meaningful opportunity to intervene with students who may be behind grade level in certain subjects.

Several board members across districts mentioned how the continually changing nature of the state tests renders them worthless, “I think it is a mess. And it’s only a mess because they keep changing their mind” said Pat Kelly from Redbridge. This is in reference to news that the state may have been abandoning the most recent M-Step exams in favor of a new exam and that the state recently switched to giving all 11th grade students a mandatory SAT after a decade of using the ACT.

Personnel Policies. Personnel policies garnered the least passionate responses from board members (Table 15). Right to Work emerged as a topic where the three different school boards disagreed with each other, with Haggerston indicating strong support for Right to Work, Redbridge being mostly against the change, and Chadwell being split on the issue. Despite the differences of opinion, none of the interviewees from school boards anticipated that “Right to Work” had any significant effect on the teachers in their districts. Chadwell signed a long-term contract immediately preceding Right to Work, so district teachers would not be facing the choice to opt-out of their union until the summer of 2017. Tracey Ramsey indicated that Haggerston never had a traditionally strong chapter of the MEA, so weaker unions would not drastically affect the district. Only one school board member, Pat Kelly of Redbridge, indicated that he saw Right to Work as an attack on all bargaining units in the district, but he also

indicated, as did his fellow board member, that he had no idea if there had been any change in union membership since December 2012.

Table 15 School Board Responses to Personnel Policies

	Teachers should pay 20% of healthcare	MI becoming a right to work state	All teachers should be evaluated annually
Redbridge	4/5 agree	4/5 disagree	5/5 agree
Haggerston	7/7 agree	7/7 agree	6/7 agree
Chadwell	6/7 agree	4/7 disagree 3/7 agree	6/7 agree

Several board members mentioned how policies coming from the state government had significantly streamlined negotiations with the local teacher's union. They referred to the fact that only salary and calendar were left as negotiable items, and that the calendar may not be a negotiable item for much longer.

Board members perceive healthcare provisions as a matter of due course in the current economy. All the board members interviewed mentioned that everyone they know in the modern economy contributes a significant amount of income towards paying for their health insurance. None of them took issue with the 20% healthcare provision.

Annual teacher evaluations were specifically supported by five of the six board members in the interviews. Two board members raised the idea of including student and parent feedback in the evaluations, a process rarely used in Michigan's teacher evaluations. Two other board members emphasized the importance of a goal setting meeting at the beginning of each year, so expectations could be discussed and then revisited at the end of the year. The Chadwell School Board President was the only board member who acknowledged the opportunity-cost in time that

administrators must pay to the evaluation process instead of handling other significant school duties.

The Haggerston School Board Vice President expressed frustration about the state expecting teachers in her district to use student growth data in their evaluations from standardized tests. Her concern was that in a district with pre-existing high test scores, there was often little room for growth in standardized test scores. Essentially, in a high-performing district it is difficult for teachers to show growth against a performance ceiling.

Growing Influence of State Government

The school district survey provided a strong indication of school boards' negative opinion of growing state influence over local district operations. Eighteen of 19 board members indicated they viewed this influence negatively, and one Redbridge board member responded as "neutral" to this question.

Interviews with board members largely substantiated the survey data. As previously mentioned, the Chadwell Board President referred to the state's influence as "brutal," and the Haggerston Board Vice President gave a simple two-word answer, "largely negative." Board member Pat Kelly of Redbridge views it as a transgression of political authority, stating,

It is disturbing that they, all of their efforts really. Because it does, I mean, there's nothing really more fundamental, I think, than local control over school districts. And there's just not, it's just not an area of government where our state political leaders should be involved at that level.

Some of the board members had slightly different insights into the question of state control. Kerry Diotte of Chadwell said that overall "the state should not take over local districts, they should give us our money back so we can control it ourselves." Even with this statement

Mr. Diotte then went on to describe how the state should promote consolidation of many districts that are too small to run efficiently, pointing out several examples from Macomb County where he believed the districts were ridiculously small. Importantly, Mr. Diotte mentioned how Chadwell, a district of approximately 8,000 students, was large enough to avoid consolidation with any other districts.

The Haggerston Board President specifically mentioned a general disagreement with federal and state mandates over public schools. She stated that parents in her district strongly disagree with the Common Core movement, not because of the content, but rather ideologically. They view it as a federal curriculum that has been taken out of the local district's control. Another example she provided was recent guidelines from the federal level allowing transgender students to use bathrooms of the gender they identify with, and noted there was significant resistance to this policy among community members.

The only interviewed board member who equivocated her opinion on state control was Yvonne Jones of Redbridge who was neither in favor of or against the growing influence of the state government, although she did indicate that negotiations with bargaining units were much more streamlined due to the various topics that are now prohibited to bargaining in teacher contracts.

Comparison of Superintendent and School Board Views on Educational Policy

Superintendents and their board members, henceforth referred to as district leadership, largely agreed on issues of school funding and finance, both within each individual district and across the three districts. There was not a 100% consensus on all issues, but there was a strong belief among superintendents and school boards that their districts are considerably underfunded. Strong support existed for the ability to raise more funds locally, through a variety of methods,

whether it be an additional millage for general operating expenses or the broadened use of sinking funds. Even the use of private foundation dollars to support the districts was within the realm of possibility for both superintendents and school board members in these districts.

Teacher compensation was another area of agreement among district leadership, and the relationship was strongest within the individual districts. Haggerston and Redbridge both perceived their teachers to be underpaid for their work, and both the superintendents and the school board members recognized that the last decade has been especially challenging to their teachers in terms of wages.

In Chadwell the data indicated that district leadership perceived teachers to be paid adequately, based on their rank in the state and the ability to attract applicants. However, both the superintendent and board members expressed concerns about maintaining a talented teaching force in their district in the near future. Notably, Chadwell has an average annual teacher wage that exceeds the other two districts by more than \$10,000 (Table 5).

School boards and superintendents viewed school of choice on how it currently affects their individual district. The Chadwell Board and Superintendent perceived that open enrollment does not affect their district, as they do not participate in any open enrollment policies. The other two districts, both of whom have open enrollment programs that result in a net increase in student enrollment, see school of choice as a good policy for their districts; they do not refer to the potentially negative effects on “sending” school districts and communities. Stated simply, district leadership in all three districts seemed to strongly support the current practices within their own districts regarding school of choice.

Michigan charter schools evoked unified negative responses from the boards and superintendents. The district leadership in these three communities tended to hold critical

opinions of Michigan's charter schools. Superintendents tended to have lengthier and more detailed criticisms about charter school policies than their respective school boards, but nevertheless, these groups saw charter schools in a negative light.

Student hours dedicated to standardized testing unified district leadership's concerns about testing and accountability policies. Superintendents and school board members across all three districts responded almost uniformly that too much time is dedicated to testing students beginning in elementary school. None of the interviewees objected to the philosophy of statewide educational accountability, but several of them had well-formed ideas about how this process could be improved to provide better and more timely data back to the educators. Little consensus existed about how standardized testing influences teacher accountability and the current data-value coming from the state after each annual assessment round. This lack of consensus could be indicative of the larger struggles in the state to reach agreement on a long-term assessment and accountability model.

Right to Work elicited varied responses within and across districts. As previously mentioned, Chadwell's board was split on Right to Work. The Haggerston Superintendent was against the change, in contrast to his school board's full support of Right to Work, while the district leadership of Redbridge was unanimously against Right to Work.

The important commonality on this topic is that these interviews yielded an understanding that Right to Work had yet to create fundamental shifts in district dynamics. The district leadership perceived that Right to Work has not changed their individual districts, only that it opened the possibility for general dissension in the ranks among their districts' employees.

State influence and control over district operations was viewed negatively by district leadership. There was 100% consensus among the district leadership of Chadwell, Haggerston,

and Redbridge, that increasing state control over education policy had negatively affected their districts. Superintendents Aubin and Shields both believed their districts did not need control from the state. They both viewed their districts as fully capable of leading the students in the best directions. Superintendent Hughes certainly felt that state influence could have a positive effect, however she stated that currently, increasing state control has largely been a missed opportunity to improve Michigan's educational outcomes.

Rotary Clubs

This study's Rotary data set is comprised of 65 survey responses across the three districts and six interviews with local Rotarians, two from each of the respective districts (Table 16). Among Rotary respondents, 53.8% assessed themselves *as familiar with educational issues and policies*, 27.7% assessed themselves *as knowledgeable of educational issues and policies*, and approximately 18% assessed themselves *as unfamiliar or unaware of educational issues and policies*. This section first considers the Rotarians' views on the main subtopics independently and then compares Rotarian views with those of district leadership.

Table 16 Rotary Interview Participants

Name	District	Occupation	Affiliation with district
Ruth Brosseau	Redbridge	CPA	Rotary Chapter President
Larry Maguire	Redbridge	Attorney	Parent/children graduated from district
Randall Garrison	Chadwell	Small Business	Intensely interested in local issues
Carolyn Benett	Chadwell	Non-Profit	Parent/child graduated from district and on Rotary scholarship committee
Jon DeGroot	Haggerston	Architect	Parent/children graduated from district and consults with district on architectural issues.
Arnold Viersen	Haggerston	Furniture Dealer	Parent/children graduated from district and former school board member

School Finance. The majority of Rotarians perceived their districts received adequate funding, with approximately a quarter of the sample responding their district currently receives less funding than necessary (Table 17). This perception largely held true across all three districts. This question had a high response rate with a relatively low number of Rotarians indicating “no opinion” in comparison to other questions from the Rotary survey. Overall, the Rotarians agreed with the concept of having more local control over school finances in terms of being able to raise more funds locally. This question raised a distinguished response from the three districts as seen below, with Chadwell Rotarians indicating the strongest support for local ability to raise funds versus Haggerston Rotarians being least likely to favor this aspect of local

control, even though Haggerston has the strongest record of passing funding increases from voters.

Table 17 Rotary School Funding Survey Responses

	My school district receives an adequate level of funding	My school district receives more funding than is necessary	My school district receives less funding than is necessary	No Opinion
Rotary Total	59.6%	3.1%	24.6%	15.4%
Chadwell	53.8%	7.7%	26.9%	11.5%
Redbridge	62.5%	--	25%	12.5%
Haggerston	53.3%	--	20%	26.7%
District Leadership	4.5%	--	95.5%	--

Interviews with the Rotarians yielded a variety of insights into how they view Michigan's current school funding model (Table 18). Several of them were not specifically critical or in support of the current funding model, but rather acknowledged school finance's complex nature.

Table 18 Rotarian Opinions on Local District Funding

My local district should be able to raise more funds locally to support local public schools.			
	Disagree or strongly disagree	Neutral	Agree or strongly agree
Rotary Total	9.3%	33.8%	57%
Chadwell	3.8%	30.8%	65.4%
Redbridge	12.5%	29.2%	58.3%
Haggerston	13.3%	46.7%	40%

Rotarian Arnold Viersen of Haggerston had the unique perspective of being a former school board member going back to the 1980s. Mr. Viersen had an incorrect belief regarding state financial support for the district. He believed the financial support Haggerston received

from the state had increased faster than inflation since Proposal A (see Table 1). Using data from Michigan's Senate Fiscal Agency and the Federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, if Haggerston's funding had kept pace with inflation since the 1995-96 academic year, the district would be receiving an additional \$1,800 per student in the 2014-2015 academic year. Mr. Viersen correctly recognized that one of the largest fiscal struggles for the district was that "much of any increase in money that comes from the state goes towards legacy or healthcare costs." This was a point raised in Randall Garrison's (Chadwell) interview as well.

Jon DeGroot of Haggerston perceived that while Haggerston certainly dealt with budget challenges in recent years, the district stepped up financial support for the schools by encouraging contributions to the Haggerston Education Foundation and by supporting sinking fund millages for the district. The counter to Mr. DeGroot's view on local efforts to support his district came from Carolyn Benett of Chadwell, who expressed "disappointment" over her school system's inability to pass a technology bond in 2013, stating that "we should be on the leading edge in this affluent society on things like technology, and we slipped there." This is an important distinction from the Chadwell Rotary members. Among Chadwell Rotarians, 65% believed the district should have the ability to raise more funds locally, including both Rotarians whom I interviewed. Even though they believed Chadwell should have this ability, they questioned whether it would be supported by voters, a concern that was not raised in Haggerston or Redbridge.

Larry Maguire of Redbridge acknowledged the role of equity in school finance. When asked about the ability of Redbridge to raise more funds locally he responded,

That's a tough question, because the local parent in me says, yes, but that's a funding model that doesn't work statewide, and so, you know, you need more of a statewide

funding model, but you need at the same time have the ability for local districts to raise additional funds, which is what they're trying to do now with bond authority and things of that nature.

Ruth Brosseau, the Redbridge Rotary president, brought another perspective to the question of school finance because she does not live in the Redbridge school district, but has significant district exposure as the chapter president and as someone who works in close proximity to several district schools. When asked about how she views Redbridge school's funding, she said,

If I rate it based on like what I'm seeing with the quality of their programs and teachers, Redbridge and (third district) look far superior. I mean, I would guess that funding is a big source of who they get there. (Resident district) positions go unfilled for quite a while because no one will take them, which to me sounds like not the right amount of money is being offered. So it would sound like they're being underfunded. When I see Redbridge and just the caliber of their offerings of like their extracurricular classes and then I see (resident district) in there struggling to get students into their required foreign language courses because they don't have enough people teaching them.

Ms. Brosseau's comments indicate a perception that a well-recognized district such as Redbridge must have strong funding in order to attract a talented teaching staff to the district.

The Rotarians in all three districts acknowledge a lack of understanding regarding where their districts rank in comparison to similar districts in other states. Over 50% of all Rotarians have "no opinion" when comparing the three districts to districts in other states.

Furthermore, the survey data indicate that beyond not having a relative sense of how well their districts are funded, more than half of the Rotarians do not have a finite sense of where their districts stand nationally in terms of funding. In response to the question, "do you think your

district is funded as adequately as districts in suburban Chicago, some of which spend over \$20,000 per student annually?” almost half of the Rotarians responded they were unfamiliar with funding levels in suburban Chicago. This can be interpreted to mean they do not know where their respective district falls in comparison to that \$20,000 per pupil benchmark. An average of 20% of Rotarians across districts indicated their district was funded as adequately as districts in suburban Chicago. Even taking into consideration the differences in cost of living expenses, it is hard not to recognize that affluent suburban Chicago districts appear to have outpaced their peer Michigan districts by a considerable margin.

Choice. An interesting data point outside this study’s scope would be to know how often school-of-choice issues have been represented in either regional or local papers since the early 1990s. This would be interesting to know in a district like Haggerston, the largest of the three districts, which currently has a school of choice population of approximately 1,000 students, or 10% of the district population. This number of students adds approximately \$7.5 million to the annual district budget. With such a significant effect on the district, it stands out when 40% of the Haggerston Rotarians who participated in the survey have “no opinion” regarding the effect of “school of choice” on their district (Table 19). Similarly, it is worth noting that a third of Haggerston Rotarians indicated school of choice had positively affected their district.

Table 19 Rotary Opinions on School of Choice

How has the practice of allowing students to attend public schools outside of their resident districts (known as schools of choice or open enrollment) affected your local district?				
	School of choice has not affected my district	School of choice has positively affected my district	School of choice has negatively affected my district	No opinion
Rotary Total	26.2%	21.5%	16.9%	35.4%
Chadwell	46.2%	--	23.1%	30.8%
Redbridge	12.5%	37.5%	12.5%	37.5%
Haggerston	13.3%	33.3%	13.3%	40%

The interviews in Haggerston revealed support for open enrollment, and it is important to note that both of the Rotarians interviewed in Haggerston appeared well informed of the major issues facing their district. Mr. DeGroot referred to open enrollment as a very “rational” idea to have for the district, and his justifications appear non-ideological. He felt there could be many families living near district boundaries, or possibly moved out of the district after starting their children in the district who could benefit from having the option to participate in school of choice. Mr. Viersen also stated his support for the current Haggerston school of choice policies, even though he acknowledged that school of choice families were not paying the same amount in sinking fund taxes as the district residents.

Redbridge, like Haggerston, had a large number of Rotarians with “no opinion” on open enrollment, but had more Rotarians who viewed open enrollment positively than negatively. Ruth Brosseau brought the perspective of someone who has often thought about pulling her children out of her home district and enrolling them in Redbridge because she felt the district would provide the academic challenge her children were missing in their home district. She

viewed open enrollment as an opportunity for parents to find an appropriate academic program for their children. Her only criticism of open enrollment was the families who take advantage of the program for mainly athletic programs. She said, “I hear people do it all the time” referring to open enrollment decisions based on athletic options.

Larry Maguire saw school of choice as an economic necessity. When asked whether he thinks the Redbridge Schools should be taking school-of-choice students, he said,

I think under the current school finance model, yes, they almost have to take school of choice, because the state aid comes with them. And so it ultimately becomes a financing thing, and so, you know, you do need to open the spots.

An insightful caveat important to this overall Rotary response analysis is how the Chadwell Rotarians responded to the school of choice question. Throughout the Rotary surveys there were high rates of “no opinion” responses that could be interpreted as an indication the Rotarians are not as well informed on educational issues as they claimed in their self-assessments. The datum point that contradicts this assumption is that none of the Chadwell Rotarians indicated “school of choice has positively affected my district.” This absolute response from Chadwell Rotarians seems to indicate their full awareness of the Chadwell Public Schools not participating in any way in open enrollment, and therefore not possibly benefitting from the program.

Mr. Garrison and Ms. Benett (as mentioned) had clear cut positions on Chadwell’s school-of-choice policies. Mr. Garrison partially addressed his opinion on school of choice in the opening minutes of the interview without explicitly being asked about the topic when he warned, “once you crack the egg then if the state wants to go all schools of choice then a (third district) can’t go ‘wait a minute’.” Mr. Garrison’s statements on school of choice provide further insight

into his overall sentiments on state policy. He felt open enrollment was fine as long as the decision came from the local school board. He adamantly said, “I think school of choice is not right for Chadwell.”

An interesting distinction presented in the Rotary surveys (Table 19) is while small numbers of Rotarians provided a “negative” response on how school of choice affected their district, an even smaller number responded their district should be trying to attract students from neighboring districts. This distinction is further discussed in comparing the views of district leadership and Rotarians on school-of-choice issues.

Charter Schools. Opinions and perceptions regarding charter schools generated noticeably different responses from Rotarians across the three districts (Table 20). Conclusive explanations for these differences is beyond this study’s scope, however the Rotary interviews and background information on each district may provide some explanation for these differences.

Table 20 Rotary Responses on Charter Schools

Charter schools have been a good addition to Michigan’s education system since 1993.			
	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
Rotary Total	39.1%	28.1%	32.8%
Chadwell	46.2%	34.6	19.2%
Redbridge	17.4%	30.4%	52.2%
Haggerston	60%	13.3%	26.7%

Haggerston has the strongest positive indications for charter schools, with 60% of the Rotarians indicating their positive view of adding charters to Michigan’s education system. Mr. Viersen and Mr. DeGroot’s interviews reinforced this view from their district. Mr. Viersen indicated that only urban districts such as Detroit and Grand Rapids have suffered from the

existence of charter schools. Specifically, Mr. Viersen noted his personal friendship with J.C. Huizenga, the owner of National Heritage Academies (a charter school operator with almost 50 charter schools in Michigan) has influenced him to view charter schools positively.

Mr. DeGroot's positive view of charter schools came from his belief in "having choices." He said,

...charter schools exist because of a demand at some point for that format, and I think until there's no reason to have that option there probably will always be a need for that, whether it's private school, home school, charter school, public school, I just think that there ought to be options for people.

Almost half of the Chadwell Rotarians have a positive opinion of the effect of charter schools on Michigan's education system. This could be due to the rise of charter schools within the City of Detroit, as many Chadwell residents might welcome educational alternatives for Detroit. Notably, only 19% of Chadwell Rotarians indicated they were neutral on the effect of charter schools on Michigan's education system, indicating possibly a greater degree of exposure to information about charter schools.

Both Mr. Garrison and Ms. Benett held critical views of charter schools in their interviews, disagreeing with the majority of their fellow Chadwell Rotarians. Mr. Garrison described himself as a conservative informed by the Mackinac Center for Public Policy on educational issues. Yet even from this conservative position he said,

I am stupefied that they do not have the same reporting requirements that the public school system, once you take the devil's money, once you take the money, you're in.

That's it. You have no other choice. And a lot of these things are private, and closed and everything, and I just think that is an absolute mistake.

Regarding charter schools Ms. Benett said, “they’re for profit.”

In Redbridge, Mr. Maguire picked up on the same theme regarding charter schools, he said,

It has always been baffling to me how some in the legislature think that charter schools, which may operate on a for-profit, not a non-profit corporate model, can somehow provide better services when they have to return, there has to be a return on investment to their shareholders.

The Rotarian interview responses on charter schools from Redbridge and Chadwell indicated critical opinions on charters. In Redbridge, this was consistent with the survey responses. In Chadwell, more survey respondents held positive opinions on charters, yet both of the interviews yielded strong negative opinions on charters. This could be sampling bias, as two Rotarians who were more informed on educational issues, Ms. Benett and Mr. Garrison, may have been paying attention to recent exposes in the Detroit Free Press and other publications on charter schools.

Standardized Testing. Several key indicators stood out in the Rotary responses on standardized testing (Table 21). Haggerston had a clear trend against testing. As the school board president implied, there appears to be a strain against standardized tests, or what the school board president described as more of an aversion to policies originating from the state or federal level. Rotarians from Haggerston were more likely to respond that too much time was spent testing and they responded that they do not value the data provided by the tests.

Table 21 Rotarian Opinions of Time Spent on Testing by District

Too much time is spent on standardized testing in my local district.			
	Agree	Disagree	No opinion
Rotary Total	46.2%	16.9%	36.9%
Chadwell	30.8%	26.9%	42.3%
Redbridge	45.8%	16.7%	37.5%
Haggerston	73.3%	--	26.7%

The insights provided by the Rotarian interviews ranged significantly. Several Rotarians could be described as hostile towards standardized tests coming from the state whereas some Rotarians held the viewpoint that data from these standardized tests could be one part of a larger mosaic used to assess the effectiveness of teachers and schools (Table 22).

Table 22 Summary of District Rotarian Positions on Standardized Testing

Standardized testing results give my district quality information regarding teacher performance.			
	Strongly Disagree or Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Agree or Agree
Rotary Total	40%	30.8%	29.2%
Chadwell	26.9%	34.6%	38.5%
Redbridge	37.5%	29.2%	33.3%
Haggerston	66.7%	26.7%	6.7%

Personnel Policies. Several human resource reforms affecting teachers in the last six years in Michigan seemed in line with the expectations of most Rotarians in terms of human resource policies for the modern workplace. Among Rotarians, 70% responded that teachers

should pay 20% or more of their healthcare premiums. Ruth Brosseau (Redbridge) responded in the interview that,

20% to me is a bare minimum. Like I feel privileged that my employer is paying 80% of my healthcare. I heard so many complaints about them having to pay for that, I'm thinking you should feel lucky, you shouldn't be complaining.

Larry Maguire (Redbridge) took an opposite view of the state mandate on health premiums. He saw it as a political problem that, "interfered with local control." He saw the mandate as a "punitive" effort to enforce a certain political philosophy statewide.

Arnold Viersen (Haggerston), one of the more traditionally conservative Rotarians was split on this issue of the state controlling personnel policies at the local level. He summarized his position on the healthcare premiums question when he said,

the state certainly has certain rights in demanding certain things. They certainly can overstep those boundaries. And I don't know how you could combine the state implementing certain things and yet still have local control.

Rotarians across districts supported the need for an annual evaluation process, with 90% of Rotarians responding that all teachers should have an annual evaluation.

Right to Work enjoyed general support from the Rotarians, with 59% indicating support for the measure across the three districts. Chadwell and Haggerston Rotarians indicated much stronger support for the measure than the Redbridge group where only 41.7% indicated support for the measure. Jon DeGroot of Haggerston described his position from a small business perspective when he said, "It was definitely on our radar in terms of the Small Business Association of Michigan. I'm also on the board of the National Small Business Association, and the Right to Work was a very big deal." When considering that many Rotarians run small

businesses within their communities, it makes sense they would support the adoption of Right to Work legislation in Michigan.

Rotarians' View of Growing State Control of Local School District Operations

The question of state control of local school districts elicited some local variances (Table 23). Haggerston had a very high “no opinion” response rate, and none of the Haggerston Rotarians gave growing state control a positive response. This is consistent with their responses on standardized testing.

Table 23 Rotarian Views on State Influence by District

How do you view the growing influence of state government in your local district over the last 22 years since the implementation of Proposal A?			
	Negatively	Positively	No Opinion
Rotary Total	44.6%	12.3%	43.1%
Chadwell	46.2%	23.1%	30.8%
Redbridge	54.2%	8.3%	37.5%
Haggerston	26.7%	--	73.3%

In the interviews, both of the Haggerston Rotarians indicated their support for local control. Arnold Viersen said,

If possible, I'd rather see more local control. Again, I understand the difficulty of that. School board members are volunteers...it is a lot of work, but they meet once or twice a month and, you know, do a lot of reading and stuff. But how much they can really get involved in, you know, in the regulations and details, I'm not sure. They're volunteers.

Chadwell Rotarians saw the growing influence of state government in their district as unnecessary due to the district's capacity to manage its own affairs without state oversight.

Randall Garrison saw this as a larger problem of overlapping authority, saying,

The state will (expletive) about all the unfunded federal mandates and then turn around and tell the local communities what to do. With that being said, power of the local government is granted by the state. It's a totally different relationship than state to federal...we're the preeminent districts so just stay out of our business.

Ruth Brosseau and Larry Maguire of Redbridge had more mixed views regarding the growing influence of state government on local education. Ms. Brosseau was critical of the standardized testing mandates coming from the state, but saw the state as the only broker that would bring about needed district consolidation. Larry Maguire responded that, "I don't view it favorably, except to have some general discussion of what the expectations should be of our public school system. If the state's going to provide the money, they've got the right to have some input."

The Rotarian responses on this topic may have a connection to the generally positive view of district leadership in these districts. Randall Garrison explicitly complimented district leadership in his interview, and the longevity of the Redbridge and Haggerston superintendents may create a perception the districts can operate well with minimal state oversight or intervention in those communities.

Comparison of Rotarian and District Leadership Views on Education Policy

School Finance. The survey numbers demonstrate (Table 24) distinctions between district leadership and Rotarians regarding school funding. The interviews yielded a distinction as well. In each of the districts, district leadership mentioned specifics regarding how their

districts struggled to keep pace with growing costs when working with a stagnant or contractionary funding model.

Table 24 Comparison of Rotarian and District Leadership Views on Funding

Which of the following best describes your opinion of your school district's funding?				
Group	My school district receives an adequate level of funding	My school district receives more funding than is necessary	My school district receives less funding than is necessary	No Opinion
Rotary	59.6%	3.1%	24.6%	15.4%
District Leadership	4.5%	--	95.5%	--

In comparison, the Rotarians see their districts' funding from relative viewpoints. Their districts are financially sound compared to many other districts, even though they acknowledged recent years have been difficult from a financial perspective. Rotarians have no sense of urgency when it comes to their schools' financing, whereas district leadership views their districts as currently in a funding crisis.

These different perspectives were mentioned directly by Haggerston Board President Tracey Ramsey, who indicated many business people in her community understand very little about school finances. She recalled conversations from board meetings where community members openly discussed how they believed Proposal A only affected property taxes, and they had no understanding of Proposal A's role in school finance.

Local ability to raise additional school funds represented an area of common agreement among district leadership and Rotarians, with less than 10% of Rotarians in disagreement with the idea of raising local revenue for the schools.

Rotarians and district leadership viewed teacher compensation differently: the majority of district leadership believed their teachers were underpaid, whereas half of the Rotarians reported that teachers were paid adequately, with 17.2% of Rotarians reporting no opinion.

In comparison to other states, 58.4% of Rotarians reported having no opinion in terms of how their district was funded comparatively to other states. Essentially, they were unaware of how Michigan was faring in school finance compared to other states, whereas a majority of district leadership viewed Michigan as losing ground to other states.

Choice. In Redbridge and Haggerston, more Rotarians indicated a positive view of open enrollment than a negative view, and their school boards viewed open enrollment as having a positive effect on the district (Table 25). As previously mentioned, the Chadwell Rotarians appeared aware and in support of the “no-open enrollment” policy for the Chadwell schools.

Table 25 Comparison of Rotarian and District Leadership Views on School

Our district should try to attract students from neighboring districts			
Group	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
Rotary	14.1%	45.3%	40.6%
District Leadership	27.3%	59.1%	13.6%

Although Rotarians appeared more comfortable with choice and charter schools than district leadership (Table 13, Table 20), when asked whether their “district should try to attract students from neighboring districts,” there was a lack of support, indicating a potential wariness about the expansion of open enrollment in their districts (Table 26).

Rotarians appeared less hostile to charters than district leadership (Table 26). Additionally, more than 50% of Rotarians had no opinion regarding how charter schools have

affected their local districts, in comparison to the 95.2% of district leadership who viewed charters as having a negative effect on their districts.

Table 26 Views on Charter Schools

Charter schools have been a good addition to Michigan's education system since 1993.			
Group	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
Rotary	39.1%	28.1%	32.8%
District Leadership	9.5%	90.5%	--

Standardized Testing. Comparisons of district leadership and Rotarians on the question of standardized testing provide an interesting analysis. Comparable percentages of district leadership and Rotarians responded their “agreement” or “disagreement” with the quality of information derived from standardized tests. The outlier in this sub-set is Haggerston. District leadership and Rotarians in Haggerston indicated a strong dislike of standardized testing. Neither group valued the data generated by the assessments and large numbers from each group indicated too much time was spent on standardized testing in Haggerston.

Personnel Policies. District leadership and Rotarians seem to be in agreement on issues such as teachers paying 20% of their healthcare, and all teachers having an annual evaluation process. They differed slightly on the issue of Right to Work, with almost 60% of Rotarians agreeing with the change, compared to 45.5% of district leadership. The issue of Right to Work does seem to correlate across the three communities in terms of political affiliation. In Redbridge, only 41.7% of Rotarians supported the change and four of the five school board members responded they did not support Right to Work, whereas in the other two districts there was more support for Right to Work from both the boards and Rotarians.

Statewide Business Organizations

As described in Chapter Three (Statewide Business Organizations), this study includes the positions of two Michigan business associations, the Business Leaders for Michigan and the Michigan Chamber of Commerce, more specifically the Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce. These organization's views are critical to answering the second research question: "How do Michigan's state level business organizations view state education policy reforms...?" This section primarily derives data from interviews with a policy representative from each organization, and the data is supported by publicly available documents from each organization related to education policy. These are two distinct organizations; they are evaluated independently in this chapter, although their positions are considered more collectively in Chapter Five.

The Detroit Education Commission. The proposed Detroit Education Commission (DEC) is a significant touchstone in these interviews and requires a brief introduction before analyzing the business organization interviews. The DEC was proposed in the spring of 2016 and it intended to create a gatekeeper for charter schools within the City of Detroit among other initiatives (Higgins & Gray, 2016). The DEC would have had the ability to regulate which charters opened within the city and where geographically they opened as well. Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan and Governor Snyder supported this commission which was included in the Michigan State Senate version of a Detroit education bill considered by the state legislature. The final bill passed by the state legislature in June 2016 did not include the DEC, which is discussed in greater detail in the following interview analyses with business organization representatives and state representatives.

The DEC issue exposed a chasm in the Michigan business community's stance on education policy. The Michigan Chamber of Commerce diverged from much of the Detroit business community over this issue as noted in an Associated Press article (Eggert, 2016) from June, 2016,

'Whoever's doing the governance today, it's not working,' said John Rakolta, chairman and CEO of the Walbridge construction company in Detroit and co-chairman of a coalition backing an overhaul of the district.... 'The DEC is the best hope, and it is supported by a vast number of people- Democrats, Republicans, labor, management, suburban, city, black, white, every business organization except for the Michigan Chamber' of Commerce, Rakolta said.

The DEC is not the only indication of business interests taking a greater interest in education policy. Data from a Crain's Detroit Business survey published in November 2015 reported Crain's subscribers emphasized small class sizes, high quality teacher evaluations, and "some priority on increasing state per pupil aid funding to K-12 districts." Strong support for these initiatives existed in the real estate industry, where one Crain's subscriber said, "as the school systems get funded and can improve in various regions, the property values will there as well." Small class sizes were a top priority for 60% of Crain's respondents, and 43% said greater state aid to school districts was as well. The respondents did not report strong opinions on the issue of charter schools.

These news articles may indicate the Michigan business community is trying to become more involved in education policy.

Business Leaders for Michigan. Business Leaders for Michigan (BLM) describes itself as the state's business roundtable. It grew from a Metro-Detroit area business association into a

statewide organization in 2009 in response to the Great Recession. It is private, non-profit, and communicates its agenda through various methods including two political action committees. The BLM website (“BLM,” 2016) said the organization is “composed of the chairpersons, CEOs, or most senior executives of the state’s largest job providers and universities. Our members power one third of the state’s economy and educate nearly one-half of the state’s university students.” The Presidents of the University of Michigan, Michigan State University, and Wayne State University sit on BLM’s board, hence the claim that BLM educates half of the state’s university students. The BLM website documents legislative achievements in public sector health care reforms, public employee retirement plan reforms, expanded technical training, increased funding for higher education, increased access to early childhood education, and rigorous K-12 education standards. The achievements related to public education represent a portion of what was known as BLM’s “Michigan Turnaround Plan”; A proposed set of policies intended to propel Michigan into a “top ten” state for conducting business and economic performance (*Michigan Turnaround Plan, 2010*).

BLM’s numerous successful efforts in shaping policy demonstrate its important role in voicing the Michigan business community’s vision for education.

For this interview I met with a member of BLM’s government affairs office. This individual brought prior experience in state government to BLM.

School Finance. Both the BLM representative and all available information on the BLM website indicate that BLM has no formal position on K-12 funding. From an interview with lengthy and candid opinions, the BLM representative simply said, “we have not gotten involved on it” when asked about K-12 funding. BLM did have stated positions on three related school finance issues. The first and most prominent policy concern for BLM is higher education

funding. BLM assessed Michigan as only supporting 25% of the student costs for public universities, and 75% of higher education costs have been directly included in student tuition. This substantial increase in tuition costs was seen as a direct impediment to higher education access in the state. BLM felt a continuation of this trend will result in a long term reduction in the number of college graduates in Michigan. The representative mentioned that “top ten” states typically have a 50/50 split in terms of tuition costs at public universities.

The Michigan Public School Employees Retirement System (MPERS) is BLM’s second area of concern on school finance. The fact that 27% of the per pupil foundation allowance is redirected back to MPERS is “unsustainable” according to the BLM representative.

The BLM representative is proud of the expanded access to early childhood education in Michigan. He emphasized that BLM prioritized lobbying for appropriating funds to support that access.

Choice. More than anywhere else in our conversation the BLM representative chose his words carefully when discussing charter schools. BLM’s initial “turnaround plan” and other public documents indicate strong support for charter schools in Michigan. A BLM policy position document from November 16, 2011 supported “allowing an unlimited number of charter schools to stimulate competition, especially in under-performing districts.” However, this does not fully define BLM’s lobbying efforts for charters.

In the spring of 2016 BLM chose to take a formal position on the proposed Detroit Education Commission (DEC). The DEC would have had the ability to control who could open charter schools in the city, a check on the currently unlimited number of charters. The DEC was included in the Michigan Senate’s version of the 2016 Detroit school’s legislation. The BLM

representative clarified his organization's viewpoint on charters in regards to this legislation when he said,

We came out in support of the senate version of the DPS legislation which had the DEC in it, so we support that. We also, though, early on in our existence, you know, in the original turnaround plan, supported removing the cap in charter schools. We support charter schools as well. Major charter school groups in the state, such as the Great Lakes Education Project and the Public School Academies Association view the DEC as anti-charter. The proponents of the DEC say that's not the case, it just a way to deal with sighting (referring to location).

This refined stance on charter schools reported by the BLM representative correlates with the organization's 2016-17 master plan document (Business Leaders for Michigan, 2016) that makes no mention of "choice" as compared to the aforementioned policy brief and the original "Turnaround Plan" (*Michigan Turnaround Plan, 2010*).

Standardized Testing. From reviewing BLM's documents it is clear BLM considers itself a "data-driven" organization, and therefore often uses educational statistics when considering educational policy. At the outset of our discussion I asked the BLM representative to provide a brief orientation to his organization. He described how his organization evaluates the state's performance on the NAEP, on ACT college readiness exams, and overall educational attainment levels in the state.

BLM views standardized assessment as part of committing to the Common Core movement. As the BLM representative said,

We were very supportive of the Common Core. They're now calling it the Michigan standards, because the name of Common Core engendered so much political backlash.

But then we were very supportive of the Smarter Balance Assessment, which has become the M-Step.... on the standards and assessments, I think we need to establish some consistency. There's still fights that goes on every year you see it. In the budget this year, you see it in the goals introduced in the senate and the house to change, to switch to the 2008-2009 Massachusetts standards. There was a lot of work that went into those. Since 2010 the state adopted and decided that Common Core, there's been a lot of work done from the state and the local school building level to implement those standards. We're in year two of the M-Step. We can't keep changing it every couple of years. There's some disagreeing...with some educational experts over whether or not those standards by assessment is the right one. But there are plenty of smart people out there who say, you know, who put a lot of effort into creating those standards, so let's give it a chance to work. To see if it does help us get better, before we get on with some other new direction.

The representative went on to say his organization believes the M-Step will allow the state to track student progress on an annual basis, and it should allow for a better comparison of how they're doing comparatively to their peers across the country. He included these points were part of testimony recently provided to the Michigan Senate's education committee.

A related priority for BLM is the 3rd grade reading requirement. The BLM representative discussed the political fight over 3rd grade reading as being about mandatory retention for students who do not meet the reading requirements by 3rd grade. He acknowledged this was an area where issues of local control came into play making the topic even more complex. In the end, he summarized "we support retention in 3rd grade reading, but we also support spending the money where we need to up front." This 3rd grade reading emphasis is

reflected in BLM's written stances as well. The "2016 New Michigan" plan emphasizes improving Michigan's rank in 4th grade reading proficiency as a key plank in BLM's policy platform for making Michigan an attractive state for employers (Business Leaders for Michigan, 2016).

Personnel Policies. The BLM representative clarified they did not take a legislative position on Right to Work legislation. He acknowledged certain business groups reference Right to Work as a favorable business condition in any state, but it was not an issue adopted by BLM as part of the Michigan "Turnaround Plan," nor was it mentioned in any of BLM's available documents.

A related personnel issue supported by BLM is the consolidation of services for local school districts and local units of government. The representative clarified that BLM was not looking to consolidate districts, but just looking for efficiencies in consolidating certain administrative services to the local Intermediate School Districts. He had a similar position in terms of MPSERS reform, stating BLM's goal is to streamline more resources directly to classrooms, and move all public employees to defined contribution plans.

In terms of recent teacher healthcare reforms, such as requiring districts to have teachers pay 20% of their healthcare costs, the BLM representative simply confirmed "we supported those reforms."

The Chamber of Commerce. The Michigan Chamber of Commerce states its mission as "we promote conditions favorable to job creation and business success in Michigan." The Chamber serves as arguably the most well known and recognized business organization in the state, with regional and local chapters throughout the state as well. For the purposes of this dissertation, I met with a Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce (DRCC) policy representative

to learn more about the organization's views on educational policy. The data includes publicly available documents related to educational policy from the Michigan Chamber, the DRCC, and the Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce.

Non-Monolithic Chamber. The Michigan Chamber of Commerce, the Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce, and the Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce are non-monolithic in terms of education policy, as demonstrated by the DEC battle in the state legislature. The DRCC and Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce were in favor of the DEC, but the Michigan Chamber of Commerce formally took a stand against the DEC. The DRCC representative explained the Michigan Chamber was more involved in education policy prior to 2009. He said, "when the Great Recession occurred I think they lost funding for that (education policy) and they discontinued it....They seem to have fall back to some very, very basic principles of you know, support for education choice." He went on to say typically the DRCC and the Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce are responsible for formulating the business lobby's position on education policy.

This fracturing of the Chamber of Commerce community on education policy has implications for education policy creation in the state. The Chamber of Commerce is the most well recognized business lobby in Michigan. The Michigan Chamber of Commerce's lack of a defined educational vision for the state could be considered a roadblock to forming a business/educational partnership similar to what was created in Massachusetts in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The DEC scenario demonstrated a committed effort from the Detroit business community to enact policy changes benefitting public education within the City of Detroit. The Detroit business community formed a regional coalition of business and non-business stakeholders to propose the DEC. If the Michigan Chamber of Commerce and the Detroit

business community cannot develop a unified educational policy approach it will be difficult to form a similarly effective partnership compared to the existing coalition in Massachusetts.

The DRCC's Educational Mission. From a review of available documents and the interview I learned about the DRCC's sophisticated educational policies that attempt to create access to higher education for students coming from the city of Detroit. The DRCC has a history of working with business leaders, the state universities, and the federal Pell Grant program to make higher education a financial reality for Detroit students. Currently, the DRCC is under pressure to make their programs similar to the Kalamazoo Promise in order to create a recognized program that guarantees college tuition for students coming from Detroit. These programs constitute the majority of the DRCC's educational portfolio. However, the interview with the DRCC representative provided useful information for the main research questions, particularly in regards to the DRCC's lobbying efforts on specific issues.

School Finance. Similar to BLM, the DRCC interview indicated the DRCC does not prioritize school finance as one of its educational priorities. The DRCC representative stated his organization was currently looking at the Massachusetts model for school finance, and they had solicited individuals from Massachusetts to come to Michigan to discuss the Massachusetts funding model. He acknowledged the significance in Massachusetts of the business community playing a lead role in the current funding model's development.

It is informative to review which pieces of the Massachusetts model were emphasized by the DRCC's monthly publication, *The Detroit Magazine*, in March 2015. Referring to the 1991 blueprint for educational improvement in Massachusetts, the *Detroit Magazine* noted how educators accepted reforms "in exchange for increased funding." Furthermore, the article quotes

one of the main architects of the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education, Paul Reville, on the funding reforms made in the early 1990s,

‘It was a floor, not a ceiling,’ Reville said. ‘The state doubled its commitment to public education over seven years....A massive amount was directed to the lowest income communities.’

This article started by stating, “It stands to reason: The better educated a region is, the better its economy performs, and the better its businesses do.” Taking a closer look at the Massachusetts model seemed to be a growing priority for the DRCC in terms of education finance moving forward.

The Massachusetts model is not the only current influence on the DRCC’s policy positions. In May 2016 the *Detroit Magazine* interviewed the Education Trust Midwest CEO Kati Haycock, who said the following about school funding in Michigan,

‘While Michigan spends roughly the national average per pupil in terms of elementary and secondary education, its funding is among the most inequitable in the country.

Districts that serve high concentrations of students from low-income families get considerably fewer dollars than those that serve middle and high-income kids. Clearly, this is not a strategy that is giving Michigan children the education they need and deserve.’

The DRCC representative listed Education Trust Midwest as a group the DRCC works with in terms of education policy, so Ms. Haycock’s comments may be instructive to understanding future policies the DRCC will support.

The Michigan Chamber has little publicly available commentary regarding school finance. The only document regarding school finances I was able to find on the Chamber’s

website was a link to the Chamber's Facebook page where it reposted an article from the Mackinac Center for Public Policy titled "Firm Picked to Evaluate Education Funding Has Long History of Recommending Spending Hikes." The article then describes how the firm chosen by Governor Snyder to evaluate K-12 education spending in the state has recommended funding increases in its 12 most recent state studies (Spencer, 2015).

Choice. Educational choice has been a priority for the DRCC for a long period of time, however, the DRCC interview clarified the DRCC feels the current Michigan charter school model is not succeeding. The DRCC representative said, "If competition was the answer, you can't look around and find a more wide-open market for schools. And yet, we have the worst of all in terms of outcomes, so something has got to change" and separately he said "we're very much about pro-choice and charter you have to look at the results and say, it's not working the way it is right now."

Similar to BLM, the DRCC supported the inclusion of the Detroit Education Commission in the Detroit schools legislation from spring 2016. The DRCC representative felt strongly that the DEC's failed passage was a significant legislative loss for all involved. He said, "you need, you know you have to have somebody that manages who gets in." Perhaps most telling was almost 30 minutes after our discussion of charter schools, the DRCC representative returned to the issue in the last minute of our discussion, where he said,

Yeah, I mean we're, we're really intensely involved with this. I was up, our lobbyist was in the House until 4:30 in the morning when the House voted. I was up on Monday talking to legislatures and the House Republicans about you know, we had people who are pro-Charter but we need a DEC. We need something to kind of limit who creates a charter.

The DRCC representative indicated this loss was due to the emergent political power of the choice lobby when he said,

You know we have legislatures that are receiving generous funding from people aligned with choice. And you know frankly we've built up kind of a constituency of mediocre charter schools that you know are going to clamor to not be interfered with...they're a strong effective voice right now.

Regardless of the concerns about charter schools raised by the DRCC representative in this interview, it was evident charter schools have become a permanent part of Detroit's educational landscape. In regards to scholarships and college entrance programs it was mentioned numerous times that scholarship opportunities in Detroit would be open to students coming from the Detroit Public Schools and from charter schools.

It appears charters and choice still represent a cornerstone for other chapters of the Chamber of Commerce. The Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce published a 2015-2016 Legislative Priorities document (*2015-2016 Legislative Priorities*, 2015) on its website. Under the goals for K-12 Education the website listed "support efforts to launch and expand diverse learning options (vocational/skilled trades training, dual enrollment, virtual learning, place-based learning programs, schools of choice, charter schools, and special designation schools)."

The State Chamber posted a similar goal for the 2015-2016 legislative session, citing "supporting parental choice and charter schools to expand and enhance high quality educational opportunities for all Michigan students" as one of its legislative priorities.

Standardized Testing. The DRCC representative believes there is a large misconception in the state regarding the amount of time students spend on standardized tests. He said, "you

would think it was like three quarters of the school year. And you know I contend that's not nearly what people think it is."

He tells the same story as the Business Leaders for Michigan representative describing what seems like a lack of commitment from the state legislature to a longer-term standardized testing program. He described how the Detroit Regional Chamber, the Grand Rapids Chamber, and the Business Leaders for Michigan had to heavily lobby the state legislature to confirm a commitment to the current M-Step program. The DRCC's views on standardized testing can be summarized when he said "we're very comfortable in public about supporting the high standards."

The DRCC's position aligns with the Michigan Chamber who listed "insisting that all schools adhere to a challenging curriculum predicated upon high academic standards" as well as the Grand Rapids Chamber who listed "career and college ready standards" as legislative priorities supporting "the development of common K-12 and higher education metrics."

Personnel Policies. When I asked the DRCC representative about whether his organization had taken positions on human resource policies the state government passed down to districts, such as best practices on healthcare and privatization, he said, "we don't get into the weeds on that."

The State Chamber's publicly available documents make a strong case for supporting Right to Work as a business development tool, with support for the measure prior to its passage in 2012 and continuing to the present.

The Grand Rapids Chamber makes specific mention of reducing school district legacy costs as a legislative priority (*2015-2016 Legislative Priorities*, 2015). This is a direct reference

to MPSERS reform and moving more school district employees towards a defined contribution retirement plan instead of the current pension system.

Statewide Business Organizations and Local Control. Statewide business organizations prioritize education standards which are rigorous, long-term, and widely applied. Groups such as Business Leaders for Michigan and the Detroit Regional Chamber recognize local control's historic importance in Michigan, but it is a secondary consideration to the educational goals being set by Michigan's business leaders, one of which is consistent measurement of Michigan students' educational progress.

Support for standards means support for the Common Core from the business organizations. Sometimes this is locally interpreted as a loss of local control. In both interviews the representatives were unequivocal in their support for adhering to Common Core in the face of widespread opposition from numerous groups.

Service consolidation was another goal for these business groups that appeared to be pragmatically driven simply by applying economies of scale to different districts. Business groups view consolidating services as administrative efficiencies which result in better use of public funds allowing more funds to be directed towards classrooms.

Statewide Business Organizations Perceptions of Educational Quality. Both representatives from these business organizations believed Michigan's educational quality and attainment issues go much further than Michigan's urban districts. The DRCC representative said, "if you compare our more affluent white kids to affluent white kids in other states, we do pretty bad." He said many people in Michigan believe an educational problem only exists in Detroit, but he noted there is "denial" regarding Michigan's educational decline in comparison to the rest of the country. These sentiments directly contradict the superintendents and school

board members from the study's three affluent districts who all rated their districts as very high quality, and none of them referred to achievement gaps between their districts and peer districts in other states.

The BLM representative noted a cultural problem exists in Michigan regarding educational attainment. He referred to a popular narrative in Michigan about college graduates having trouble entering the labor force, a narrative he said data does not support. He attributed this narrative to generations who had high standards of living even with low educational attainment, and he believes a cultural shift has yet to occur where people begin to place greater economic value on educational attainment.

How do Statewide Business Organizations Compare to Rotarians? This study allows for three comparisons between statewide business organizations and local Rotarians. Statewide business organizations advocate for “choice” in education policy, both in reference to charter schools and school-of-choice. Local Rotarians favored charter schools more positively than negatively (except in Redbridge) and Rotarians in Haggerston and Redbridge favored school-of-choice for their district.

Statewide business organizations and Rotarians agreed on personnel policies coming from the state. MPSERS reform, healthcare contributions, teacher evaluations, and Right to Work were all topics on which local Rotarians and the business organizations agreed.

State-testing is the area of disagreement between these groups. Statewide business organizations see the state testing program and the 3rd grade reading requirement as cornerstones of improving educational outcomes in Michigan. Rotarians, most strongly in Haggerston, perceive that too much time is spent on standardized testing and they do not perceive state-testing programs to be valuable.

CHAPTER FIVE: STATE POLICY MAKERS AND POLICY NETWORKS

This chapter analyzes the information gained from studying the superintendents, board members, Rotarians, and business organizations using the theoretical frameworks discussed in Chapter Two. First, interviews with the three state representatives are reviewed to highlight their positions on education policy and discuss how they understand the current education policy-making process in Michigan. Second, the political science theories presented in Chapter Two are interpreted to examine whether the data from this study coincides with the processes described in the political science frameworks.

Section 1: Interviews with State Representatives

Interviews with state representatives focused on the subtopics of finance, choice, standardized tests, personnel policies, and individuals or groups the representatives believed to influence educational policy in Michigan (Table 27).

Table 27 Summary of State Representative Positions

	Metro-Detroit Rep	Mid-Michigan Rep	West-Michigan Rep
School Finance	Supports local funding options. Does not see it as a political reality	Supports local funding options, most likely through expansion of sinking funds	Supports local funding options, possibly through expansion of sinking funds
Charter Schools	Supported the DEC. Believes authorizers should be accredited	Need more accountability from charter authorizers.	Wants more accountability but did not support DEC
Standardized Testing	Need to agree on a test for the long-term	Need to agree on a test for long-term	Might be open to switching to NWEA tests, but recognized that would set state back
Who is influencing education policy?	Charter school groups	Charter school groups	Lobby groups representing educational stakeholders

Metro-Detroit Representative (Republican). The Metro-Detroit state representative's constituency has some of the wealthiest suburbs in Michigan. The school districts in his constituency are similar to the three affluent districts in this dissertation. They have some of the highest funding in the state, high property values, and standardized test scores that outperform state averages.

The interview with the Metro-Detroit representative was somewhat limited in comparison to the other state representative interviews because it had to be conducted by phone. An advantage of this interview was that two of the representative's staffers were also on the phone call, so they were also able to provide relevant information to the conversation.

For school finance, this representative would support giving his districts the ability to raise more funds locally. However, he does not see this as a political reality because the poorer

districts outnumber the wealthier districts in the state legislature. These poorer districts will continue to advocate for funding policies designed to move them up to parity with wealthier districts in the state. He sees it as problematic that districts such as his contribute the majority of property tax funds to the school aid fund, yet his districts have not been able to keep up with inflationary cost increases under Proposal A.

He described school choice as following the same pattern as white-flight out of Detroit. The representative described a migration northward where students continually enroll in districts further from the city in search of better educational options. Regarding the movement of students in open enrollment programs, he said,

From the conversations I hear you know kids in Detroit end up wanting to go to the Ferndale schools, the Ferndale kids want to go to Berkley, the Berkley kids want to go to Royal Oak, and the Royal Oak kids want to go to Troy. So they kind of move up the ladder and I think where we really see the hit take place is in Detroit Public Schools between the open enrollment districts, not only in south Oakland county but in southern Macomb county that sucks up the kids that way too....Not all schools are open enrollment for instance, so then you lose all the population of kids in Detroit that were public school kids in Detroit, which put us a lot in the debt that we have in Detroit because they couldn't wind down that size of a infrastructure fast enough and the way we do head counts to match the dollars that left immediately balanced by the exodus.

This acknowledgment of the chaos caused for Detroit schools by choice and charter options is an important consideration as legislators chart the future of education in Michigan's urban centers.

This state representative does not hear about charter schools from his constituents, as the relatively high quality educational options in his district make it an unfavorable environment for

charter schools. He did vote for the DEC, and even though the DEC provision did not pass, he believed the requirement for all charter authorizers in the state to become nationally accredited is an important step in charter regulation.

Regarding standardized testing he said, “I hear from the teachers and administrators there is just too much testing going on in general, and that it is a moving target.” He is in favor of finding one test and making a long-term commitment to avoid the significant cost in time and materials incurred by switching testing instruments regularly.

He considers personnel policies affecting districts and teachers as subject to whoever populates the state house in the most recent elections. The representative sees this as a political reality that much could change in this policy area depending on who is elected every two years into the state house.

The representative spoke frankly about how business interests in Michigan affect education policy. He said that he and his staff do not see regular position statements from the Michigan Chamber of Commerce on education policies. When he does meet with local business leaders, their interest in the public education system is more concerned with curriculum than with the sub-topic areas of school finance, choice, standardized testing, and school personnel policies discussed in this dissertation. He reports many local business leaders want to know how the current curriculum will prepare students for a modern economy.

Charter schools have a significant effect on funding and policies for schools right now, according to the representative. He mentioned that he worked with his local districts to be more vocal in Lansing because he wants to ensure their educational interests are represented in comparison to the charter school lobby.

The representative and his staffers seemed to disagree over how often, if ever, he has met with representatives from the Michigan Education Association (MEA), however all of them agreed that the MEA's role in education policymaking is diminished.

In terms of input from constituents, the representative said that he meets with his county's local superintendents once a month to discuss educational issues and legislation. He also hears from his constituents at large during the budget season, and he said he hears from his constituents about educational issues more than any other issue with the exception of roads.

Mid-Michigan Representative (Democratic). The mid-Michigan representative represents four school districts that vary in socio-economic status, including Redbridge.

Regarding funding, the mid-Michigan representative believed that "Proposal A was the right thing at the right time" but "we have to re-evaluate where we are with school funding." He supported looking at the Adequacy Study commissioned by the Governor to review Michigan's current school funding status. He believed this study should look at how to replicate what was done in Massachusetts for school funding.

On a shorter term basis, he supported broadening the use of sinking fund monies in the state, especially to include district transportation costs, but he noted that the Chamber of Commerce opposed the expansion of sinking fund applications because he said,

My gut tells me that they and other business groups would want transportation privatized...and if they have that kind of privatization mentality it's gonna be hard for them to then agree to something in the taxation side of the equation.

The mid-Michigan representative also recognized that some of his districts "have really benefitted from school of choice" over the last 20 years, but he also feels that "we've pitted, you know, higher performing schools versus lower performing schools against each other instead of

saying let's figure out how we make those lower-performing schools into a higher-performing school district."

Charter schools were an area of concern for him, starting with cyber-schools. Similar to the Metro-Detroit representative, he felt quality issues existed with Michigan's charter authorizers, and he hoped the "legislature and the governor demand more accountability from authorizers." On the subject of for-profit charter schools and charter school influence, he said,

Most other states don't allow for this unlimited access of for-profit schools, you know?

Some of them just only have non-profit charter schools, right? So you have these different patchwork of laws across the country that for whatever reason in Michigan we have done the experiment for the for-profit side. I think that plays a big role here because I do think the money that comes in from the for-profit school lobby, that is coming through GLEP, through the association, through the DeVos Family, has made the conversation about holding charter schools accountable at the same level we want to do for public schools...very difficult.

These statements were put into context when the representative said that more conservative states than Michigan still have better charter school policies and do not rely on a for-profit model.

He identified The Great Lakes Education Project as the biggest winner in terms of influencing the education policy debate. He identified the Business Leaders for Michigan as being a positive force for higher education, but stated that "nobody is doing that with K-12." To reinforce his point about the dominance of charter groups in Michigan, he said "stopping the DEC did not come from the MEA."

Similar to the Metro-Detroit representative, the mid-Michigan representative reported his school districts tell him the legislature needs to stop changing the standardized assessments, there is too much focus on testing, and as a state we spend too much time testing students.

The mid-Michigan representative believed the personnel policies affecting teachers recently passed into law are finalized. He said the emphasis on privatization and the expansion of charter schools has dealt a serious blow to MPSERS, and he charges the Governor with hypocrisy for taking credit for contributing funds to MPSERS, even though he said the problem with MPSERS is, “based on policies that they (the Governor) have created that have made the problem even worse.” The representative is referring to how legislation signed by Governor Snyder has removed thousands of contributing employees from the MPSERS system. Districts were incentivized to privatize custodial and food service employees. Privatization created short-term savings for districts but created long-term gaps in MPSERS funding because a younger generation no longer pays into the pension system. The same is true for removing the cap off of charter schools. By employing more and more teachers outside of the MPSERS system, it creates a long-term budget shortfall.

This representative perceived that Michigan is facing a teacher shortage, because highly qualified teachers are going to other states where they believe teachers are more valued. He said, I’ve talked to people that are coming out of the teacher prep school, and, you know, a lot of people are wanting to go to other states where they feel like teachers are better valued, they have better benefits, and have a better atmosphere....I’m obviously struggling with a group of people who feel that uncertified teachers is the solution to the teacher shortage. The mid-Michigan representative attributes Michigan Republicans’ attitudes to a belief that teachers all have “Cadillac” benefit plans that are out of sync with the private sector.

Connections with local districts seemed important to the mid-Michigan representative. He attends school board meetings regularly, and invites school board members to attend local political events as well to include them as part of the political dialogue.

The mid-Michigan representative hoped that business groups in Michigan will evaluate the adequacy study (*Michigan Education Finance Study*, 2016) to help lobby for necessary funding changes in Michigan.

West-Michigan Representative (Republican). The West-Michigan representative is a high ranking member of the Michigan House Education Committee and therefore had the closest connection to K-12 education policy of the three representatives interviewed.

When discussing finance, the West-Michigan representative kept in mind the historical reasons for why Michigan passed Proposal A, and that “one of the big reasons to pass it was because people were losing their homes because their property taxes were going up so fast.” However, when asked if she would support current local efforts to increase revenue for local districts, she said she would be in support. Similar to the mid-Michigan representative, the West-Michigan representative viewed the most likely funding reform to come from a possible expansion local sinking fund applications.

The rotating door of state representatives created by term-limits is one of the major problems facing funding reform right now in her view.

Multiple times in our discussion the West-Michigan representative mentioned how interpretation of policy and statistics led to lack of consensus on education policy. First, she stated that local “Superintendents are the great obfuscators of truth....they twist the truth a lot and its very frustrating.” This disagreement with superintendents stemmed from the interpretation in her local districts over the use of ARRA funds and MPSERS funds during

Governor Snyder's tenure. The West-Michigan representative said that her local superintendents continue to refer to the fiscal years after the ARRA as years of budget cuts, whereas she maintains the ARRA funds were always short-term stimulus funds, and their removal cannot be categorized as a budget cut. She also credited the state with assuming an increasing amount of responsibility for MPSERS funding, but said that her local superintendents continue to complain that a large percentage of any increase in per-pupil funding goes directly to MPSERS.

There seemed to be similar disagreements over Detroit charter schools and the fate of the DEC. The West-Michigan representative stated that part of the reason the DEC did not pass was because the state house Detroit delegation continued to raise the point that charter schools had been a major reason for the downfall of the Detroit schools, and the West-Michigan representative reported that this was affronting to many representatives who felt they were trying to help the Detroit schools by passing this restructuring package in spring 2016. She believed this disagreement over charter schools' role in the Detroit Public Schools financial crisis was a major breakdown in negotiations.

The West-Michigan representative described Michigan's current policies as "Charters 1.0" and said there should be a "more accountable system of who actually is permitted to open. We've got some pretty bad actors, pretty marginal people...I mean some really strange people opening up schools where they have no right to do it."

In regards to standardized testing, the representative stated that educators wanted stronger standards and a more stringent test after the MEAP test. She believed the current tests which are aligned to Common Core provided that rigor. Addressing the political backlash against Common Core, the representative stated that once Common Core is explained to parents very few of them have any objections. She also mentioned that much of the anxiety associated with standardized

tests comes from teachers, because it is tied to their evaluations. She acknowledged there are some in the state who favor switching much of the testing to NWEA tests, but noted such a change would push back the ability to tie tests to teacher evaluations by one year.

In personnel policies, the West-Michigan representative saw the changes from the last six years as finalized (similar to mid-Michigan representative), however she wanted to see further reform of the MPSERS system, eventually moving all teachers to a defined contribution plan, as she said, “it would be great to get out of the MPSERS system.”

When asked who has influence over education policy in the state, she responded that as a Republican, she listens to business groups more, but there are, “I will say, in education policy there is a vocal and huge contingent of stakeholders, and then they will let you know on every single thing.” She mentioned the MEA, the School Boards association, and the Secondary School Principals Association. Out of the three state representatives, she did not mention the charter school lobby, the Great Lakes Education Project, or MAPSA. This is particularly interesting because GLEP featured the representative multiple times on the Great Lakes Education Project website in the fall of 2016, yet she made no mention of GLEP in her interview.

Summary of State Representative Interviews. The three representatives held similar opinions and viewpoints on numerous educational issues in the state. They all reported that Proposal A’s intentions from over 20 years ago were still relevant, but they recognized and said they would support reforms to the current funding model. Specifically, they mentioned supporting the expanded use of sinking fund millages for local districts (which came to fruition in October 2016).

The representatives acknowledged that unqualified individuals and groups were currently operating charter schools in the state. They said they would support reforms to ensure stronger screening of those who might open charter schools in Michigan.

Standardized testing was the third area of agreement among the representatives. They all mentioned the need for a stabilized and long-term testing system. Additionally, they all mentioned testing was a topic they heard about regularly from their local school districts.

The West-Michigan representative stood apart from her counterparts in two areas. First she mentioned that further MPSERS reform was necessary, and ideally she would like to move all current teachers out of the MPSERS system. Secondly, she identified a different “dominant coalition” in education policy than the other representatives.

A final point is the Metro-Detroit and West-Michigan representatives both acknowledged how term limits for the Michigan Legislature make it difficult to form longer-term commitments to any educational policy.

Section Two: Emergent Themes from the Data

Chapter Four of this dissertation outlined the responses from participants on the two large research questions: 1) How do school district and business leaders in Michigan’s affluent communities view the impacts of state education policy reforms in their local districts? and 2) How do Michigan’s state-level business organizations view state education policy reforms pertaining to school funding, school choice, mandated state testing, and teacher personnel policies?

Thus far Chapter Five has summarized the insights of three state representatives on how education policy is currently created in Michigan. The following sections of Chapter Five describe what other themes emerged from this study, and answers the third research question:

Who do school district and business leaders view as the main authors of educational policy in Michigan? Chapter Five identifies where the relevant political science theories from the literature review seemed to be present in the interviews and survey responses, and discusses how these theories can explain the current educational policy process in Michigan.

Education as Social Efficiency. One emergent theme from the interviews presented in this dissertation was how participants viewed the goals of the public education system. The goal of social efficiency (Labaree, 1997) emerged in discussions with different stakeholders. It was expected the two main business groups interviewed would hold this social efficiency viewpoint. Business Leaders for Michigan wanted to make Michigan's economy one of the top ten states nationally, and they see strong higher education completion rates as a cornerstone of that goal. The DRCC wanted to ensure participation in higher education and job training programs for students coming from Detroit. They saw the community college system and the use of federal education funds as key assets available for training future workers.

The Metro-Detroit and West-Michigan State Representatives mentioned local business leaders in their communities wanted students who exited the education system ready to work. These business leaders wanted to see standards that reflect job skills for young workers entering the economy.

The third group where social efficiency emerged thematically was with district superintendents. All three superintendents said providing students in their districts with better job and work-certificate training was a priority for them in leading their districts.

Multiple Streams Framework. The multiple streams framework evaluates policy development in three phases, or "streams." The first phase is the problem stream, in which a policy problem is identified. The second stream is the policy stream, in which solutions to the

problem are generated and evaluated. The third is the political stream, in which political actors and political coalitions debate and decide which policies to enact as policy solutions.

An emergent theme from this study was what different groups identified as the educational problem streams for Michigan's education system as outlined below (Table 28).

Table 28 Problem Streams

	School District Leaders	Rotarians	Statewide Business Organizations
Problem Stream	Funding (11) Testing (4) Local Control (3)	Funding (6) Local Control (5) MPERS (4) Teacher Accountability (4)	BLM: College affordability, early childhood funding, Common Core DRCC: Slipped educationally compared to Massachusetts GRCC: Choice, teacher evaluations, education standards, 3 rd grade proficiency, MPERS Reforms

Note: Parenthetical numeration indicates responses mentioned two or more times by stakeholders. School District n=16, Rotarians n=25.

School district leaders in the three affluent districts identified funding as the main problem stream for their districts. In both the interviews and surveys district leaders reported that school funding was the most important issue they would like to see the legislature address. Only one of the interviewed district leaders did not name school funding as a critical issue. This includes all three superintendents who mentioned funding as a key issue for public education in Michigan. Standardized testing reform was a second issue raised by district leaders and a return to more local control was the third most prevalent issue.

The Rotarians' educational problem stream aligns partially with their district leaders and partially with the statewide business organizations (Table 29). Rotarians identified school

funding as an issue they would like to see addressed more frequently than other issues, but this was a larger sample with inherently wider responses to the questions. Rotarians mentioned returning to more local control (similar to district leadership) second most in frequency. The third most frequently mentioned topics were MPERS reform and teacher accountability.

The only area where statewide business organizations may have an area of overlap in interest with school district leaders is in standardized assessment; However, they viewed progress in this policy area differently. District leadership viewed this problem stream as being one of too much testing and a constantly changing assessment that prevents longer-term measurements. The statewide business organizations saw this as being an issue of keeping assessments aligned with the Common Core and maintaining academic rigor in Michigan's schools. Business organizations do not perceive a problem with the amount of student time spent testing.

A large discrepancy exists between district leadership and business organizations regarding funding. Business organizations mentioned funding as an issue only when the DRCC referred to adopting something closer to the Massachusetts model. This is still a limited claim because the DRCC discussed the Massachusetts model through the lens of the Education Trust Midwest, whose CEO was featured in the DRCC magazine saying that Michigan does not face an overall K-12 funding deficiency, only that it is still challenged by unequal funding issues in the state.

It appears the affluent districts' "problem stream" does not concern policymaker coalitions at the state level. Instead it appears that policymakers are adopting initiatives supported by statewide business organizations such as 3rd grade reading requirements, early childhood education, protecting the current charter school model, and developing a statewide

testing model. The coalition supporting these reforms appears to be the current dominant coalition in education policy.

Advocacy Coalitions. Table 29 represents the communication pathways existing among different education stakeholders in Michigan. An “X” indicates communication between groups. Groups that were interviewed are represented both horizontally and vertically to confirm both groups indicated communication with each other. For example, the study confirmed that superintendents speak with their state representatives regularly, at least once a month. This communication pathway was confirmed both ways, i.e., the superintendents made reference to regularly speaking with their state representatives, and vice-versa. The two groups that I did not speak with, the Education Trust-Midwest and the Great Lakes Education Project are listed once because other parties, the state representatives and business organization representatives, indicated they received communications from those groups.

Table 29 Education Stakeholder Communication Pathways

	Affluent Superintendents	Affluent School Boards	Affluent Rotary Members	BLM & Chamber of Commerce	State Representatives
Affluent Superintendents		X			X
Affluent School Boards	X				X
Affluent Rotary Members					
BLM & Chamber of Commerce					X
State Representatives	X	X		X	
Education Trust-Midwest				X	X
Great Lakes Education Project					X

As another example, it does not appear that local educational leaders speak with local or statewide business leaders regarding educational issues. The BLM and DRCC seem to have no input from educational leaders in the state, and not once did a Rotarian indicate that they gained information from their local superintendent, even though two of the superintendents belonged to the local Rotary chapter. The Haggerston School Board President alluded to this situation when she noted that she once had to facilitate a dialogue between her district business manager and local business people just to help the business group understand school funding in Michigan. Table 29 reinforces this anecdote from Haggerston that indicates local business leaders are not

engaged in educational issues. Table 29 also serves as a tool to begin understanding the current educational advocacy coalitions in Michigan.

An important consideration in Advocacy Coalition theory is the extent to which different groups view themselves as part of the “dominant” or “non-dominant” coalition, and several sources in this study indicated confusion regarding who currently comprises the dominant coalition.

In 1996 Mintrom and Vergari identified the Michigan Chamber of Commerce and groups supporting “various school choice initiatives” as the minority coalition in Michigan education policymaking. They said,

...the core beliefs of the minority coalition are not as well defined as are those of the dominant coalition. Nonetheless, several important beliefs can be identified. First, members believe the solutions offered by the dominant coalition are inadequate and misguided philosophically. Members of the minority coalition typically are skeptical of the ability of government to efficiently address collective action problems such as the delivery of education. They argue that voluntary actions and market forces can best achieve desired results. Members of this coalition share a common frustration with the impervious nature of the dominant coalition.

Conducting this study has led me to believe the interests represented as the “minority coalition” by Mintrom and Vergari in 1993 have become the new “dominant coalition” in Michigan educational policymaking (Table 30). Groups formally dedicated to propagating charter schools and limiting state oversight over charter schools are the cornerstone of this coalition. In fact, one of these groups, the Great Lakes Education Project, published a press release on June 1, 2016, entitled “The Coalition Opposed to the Detroit Education Commission”

that listed 17 different groups opposed to creating a regulatory body to control opening charter schools within the city of Detroit (Great Lakes Education Project, 2016). This coalition, which included the Michigan Chamber of Commerce and the Mackinac Center for Public Policy, was able to defeat the lobbying efforts of the Governor, the Mayor of Detroit, the Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce, and the Business Leaders for Michigan in order to prevent the Detroit Education Commission from coming into existence. The defeat of the DEC marked the progress of the charter school movement in Michigan from when charters were first authorized in the early 1990s to becoming the leading members of the dominant coalition in 2016.

This new coalition benefits from “policy feedback” as discussed in the literature review. Certain groups in this formal coalition, such as the Michigan Chamber of Commerce and the Mackinac Center for Public Policy are well established groups that would be present in Lansing regardless of the educational legislation that has been passed over the past 22 years. Other groups such as MAPSA and the Michigan Council of Charter School Authorizers have benefited from the growth of charter schools over the same time period. The coalition which aligned against the DEC fits Sabatier’s (1988) definition of “a network of individuals from a variety of public and private organizations who are concerned actively with the maintenance and evolution of policy in a particular domain.” When the DRCC representative said, “we’ve built up kind of a constituency of mediocre charter schools that you know are going to clamor to not be interfered with,” he was referring to a pure example of policy feedback in Michigan’s charter school community.

The DRCC’s representative’s opinion on the political power of charter school advocates was reinforced by the Haggerston superintendent when discussing charter schools. He said,

Betsy DeVos has set up the Great Lakes Education Project, and she has on her board some incredibly heavy hitters when it comes to insider influence in Lansing. I mean, she's got the former Speaker of the House, Jase Bolger; she's got the former head of the Chamber; she's got the guy who singlehandedly pushed through Right to Work. All those folks work for her...those folks come calling, and the lawmakers listen.

The Haggerston Superintendent's insights on the individuals currently directing this new "dominant coalition" does much to explain the new coalition's political efficacy in circumstances such as the DEC legislative debate.

Table 30 Who is in the Dominant Coalition?

Stakeholders	Main authors of educational policy in Michigan
School District Leaders	Charter School Advocates (5), MEA (4), Republicans (4), Mackinac Center (3), DeVos Family (2), Gov. Snyder (2)
Rotarians	MEA (11)
DRCC	Organizations aligned with school choice
BLM	More conservative groups in the state
Metro-Detroit Rep	Charter schools
Mid-Michigan Rep.	GLEP, DeVos, MAPSA
West-Michigan Rep	MEA, MASB, MASSP, State Board of Education, the Chamber of Commerce

Note: Parenthetical numeration indicates responses mentioned two or more times by stakeholders. School District n=17, Rotarians n=21

Responses from Rotarians, and to a lesser extent, school board members, suggests that some members from these affluent communities still perceive the MEA to be part of the dominant coalition setting educational policy in Michigan. By reviewing responses from the statewide business organizations and state representatives, it appears that local district and

business leaders operate under antiquated assumptions when they label the MEA as belonging to the current dominant coalition. When I asked the Metro-Detroit Representative about the MEA's influence, he said, "I think it's been diminished a little bit." His first staff member added, "We haven't worked with them. I can't even think of if we have ever met with them to be honest." The Metro-Detroit Representative then asked his second staff member, "We've had a couple of meetings with them lately haven't we?" to which the second staff member responded, "Correct, you have. I would agree with your sentiment though that their influence has been diminished in recent years."

The mid-Michigan Representative had a similar opinion to the Metro-Detroit Representative regarding the MEA, he said, "If you look at all the big policy changes that have happened just this year, none of it was victories for the MEA. They were all victories for GLEP."

The BLM representative reinforced this view of a declining MEA, he said, "I think their position is weaker than it has been in the past" but he believed there was "room for someone to step in and try to be middle ground between those two points of view (MEA and more conservative groups) and really take a strong leadership role."

Non-Monolithic and Locally Determinant. As presented in the literature review, Spillane's *State Policy and the Non-Monolithic Nature of the Local School District* (1998) is relevant to this dissertation's data. The three affluent districts, while similar in some respects, have numerous independent traits not shared with their peer districts. Haggerston's resistance to state testing and the Common Core is one example of departing from the peer districts in terms of position on a certain topic.

Right to Work is a second area where these districts differ. One district's leadership was strongly in favor of Right to Work, one was mixed, and one was strongly against Right to Work. Right to Work may have greatly damaged the political effectiveness of traditional affluent districts, yet leadership in these three districts view it quite differently. District leadership saw Right to Work with concerns about infighting between teachers. The local business community viewed Right to Work more traditionally as a pro-business policy.

Furthermore, these three districts' mixed political coalitions have rendered them outside of the current dominant coalition. Haggerston has two state representatives who are endorsed by the dominant coalition, but neither representative has been able to effectively lobby in the district's interest. Redbridge is a politically liberal district with democratic representation which is the minority in the state legislature. While Chadwell's political representation in the state legislature is effectively voided by nature of being a dense Republican enclave inside of a larger Democratic district.

Spillane's second point was that district leadership tends to place the highest priority on reforms coming from a centralized authority such as the state or federal government. The three districts studied contradict Spillane's model. They view state and federal mandates as compulsive requirements they must conform to in order to avoid penalty. These three districts place a much higher priority on locally driven initiatives and management than federal or statewide initiatives, a direct contradiction to Spillane's findings.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS

Validity. The interviews with state representatives have demonstrated considerable validity based on developments since the interviews were conducted in summer 2016. As mentioned in Chapter Four, the representatives believed allowing districts more discretion in the use of their sinking fund had strong potential and benefit for affluent districts, and indeed this passed the state legislature in October 2016. The second example of validity from these interviews was the reference by a state representative that districts should work with their counties to pass county-wide enhancement millages to districts' general operating funds as a step to demonstrate counties and local districts are exhausting available funding options. This was exemplified by Chadwell, and the rest of its county which took advantage of this option by passing a county-wide millage in the November 2016 election. The statewide business organization interviews have demonstrated strong validity on the topic of 3rd grade reading. The BLM and DRCC representatives both indicated their support for a stringent 3rd grade reading bill, which was passed into law in the fall of 2016. The 3rd grade reading requirement is supported by Education Trust Midwest as well.

Status of local control. Much of this dissertation described the loss of local control experienced by Michigan's school districts. It is true that individual districts have lost significant local control since the early 1990s, however, they have not lost all control. The two examples from fall 2016, the ability of counties to levy county-wide district operating millages and the expanded applications of district sinking funds demonstrate that districts have limited options available to enhance their school funding.

Current open-enrollment policies still provide local control options, especially to the districts featured in this study. Affluent districts have the luxury of using school-of-choice to fill

seats and maintain revenue, but they also have the option, as in Chadwell, to keep district enrollment closed exclusively to residents.

School of choice has taken on such large proportions in Michigan that it is hard to imagine school of choice being curtailed. Several participants in this study referred to the detrimental effect school of choice can have on the communities losing the students to more attractive suburban districts. A question for further research is to what extent are school of choice and charter school policies eroding the public's sense of ownership over the public schools? At what point might groups like the Rotarians cease to view the local schools as "their" schools?

For the subject matters of standardized testing and personnel policies, it appears the loss of local control will be permanent. Interviews with the state representatives and business organizations demonstrated a commitment to strong statewide academic standards and personnel policies that are consistent with the private sector in terms of benefits and evaluations.

Two Potential Paths. Michigan's current policy environment has similarities to the early 1990s. The potential for dynamic policy change exists although it is unclear which direction it will take.

The first path is that charter school advocates will continue to grow in political influence and they will continue to reap the benefits of policy feedback discussed in this dissertation. The November 2016 elections in Michigan reinforced the political ascendancy of the charter school lobby. On November 9th, 2016, the Great Lake Education Project reported that 49 of the 53 candidates they endorsed for the Michigan House of Representatives won their elections, indicating GLEP will continue to have a significant role in education policymaking over the next two years. However, this dissertation indicates that other significant actors such as the DRCC

and BLM have grown uncomfortable with the charter schools having an almost completely unregulated system in Michigan.

The second path is to develop a more effective educational model based on states such as Massachusetts. In Massachusetts, a long-term and resilient advocacy coalition formed in the early 1990s to create a statewide educational program. Members of this coalition, namely the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education, took a comprehensive approach to working with the educational leadership in Massachusetts to do much of what was referred to by different stakeholders in this study.

Following this second path will depend on whether charter schools' continued ascendancy is a phenomenon singular to Michigan, or if it is part of a national policy diffusion process. The answer is unclear. On November 8th, 2016, Michiganders elected 49 out of 110 legislators who were openly endorsed by GLEP. In contrast, on the same day, over 60% of Massachusetts voters rejected a proposal to lift the cap off the number of charters in the commonwealth (Walker, 2016). Stakeholders such as BLM, the DRCC, the Education Trust Midwest, and state legislators are increasingly suggesting that Michigan look to Massachusetts as a model for education reform. Michigan's affluent districts would need to use their political and economic influence to aid the process in forming a coalition of leading business and educational interests. In order to achieve this shift, the Michigan educational community and business community must work in tandem to create a similar coalition as the one in Massachusetts which is now almost 25 years in the making.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: List of Interview Subjects

1. Chadwell Superintendent Robert Aubin
2. Chadwell Board President Christina Freeland
3. Chadwell Board Vice-President Kerry Diotte
4. Chadwell Rotarian Carolyn Benett
5. Chadwell Rotarian Randall Garrison
6. Redbridge Superintendent Jessica Hughes
7. Redbridge School Board Member Yvonne Jones
8. Redbridge School Board Member Pat Kelly
9. Redbridge Rotary President Ruth Brosseau
10. Redbridge Rotarian Larry Maguire
11. Haggerston Superintendent Martin Shields
12. Haggerston Board President Tracey Ramsey
13. Haggerston Board Vice-President Ginette Taylor
14. Haggerston Rotarian Jon DeGroot
15. Haggerston Rotarian Arnold Viersen
16. Business Leaders for Michigan Representative
17. Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce Representative
18. Member of the Michigan House of Representatives from Metro Detroit
19. Member of the Michigan House of Representatives from mid-Michigan
20. Member of the Michigan House of Representatives from West-Michigan

Appendix B: Glossary

Adequacy Study	Statistical study commissioned by the State of Michigan and outsourced to an independent research firm to determine the adequate level of school funding for Michigan's K-12 students. The study was published in June 2016.
Donor District	A school district that contributes more to the Michigan School Aid Fund than the district receives in return on per-pupil basis. Few districts in Michigan have the property values to place them into the category of a Donor District.
Hold Harmless	A school finance categorization for the 52 school districts which were spending more than \$6,500 per pupil during the 1993-1994 school year. These districts were allowed to keep their additional millage levels beyond the minimum funding levels established under Proposal A.
Intermediate School District (ISD).	County-wide school districts in Michigan which provide additional services to local school districts such as special education services, transportation, vocational training, and professional development opportunities.
No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)	Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act signed into law in 2001. The Act increased the use of standardized tests to measure student progress in all public schools and emphasized bringing all students up to a "proficient" level of academic performance.
Right to Work	Law passed in Michigan in December 2012 that outlawed the "closed shop" in Michigan. The effect of this law was that union membership was no longer compulsory in union organized places of employment such as public schools and automotive factories.
Sinking Funds	Local sources of revenue that Michigan school districts can levy to raise funds for capital improvement projects in their districts, including new buildings. The use of local sinking funds allows wealthy districts to raise significant amounts of funds for building new facilities without a large tax burden.
20j Districts	Districts who were allowed from 1999 to 2009 to receive the full basic per-pupil foundation allowance increase given to all school districts in the state even if the increase surpassed the rate of inflation, which was supposed to cap any foundation increases for these districts. The section 20j funds were suspended in 2009 and have not been reinstated.

Appendix C: Survey for School Board Members

1. What is your age?
2. What is your profession/career?
3. In which school district do you reside?
4. Which of the following best describes your opinion of your school district's funding?
 - a. My school district receives an adequate level of funding.
 - b. My school district receives more funding than is necessary.
 - c. My school district receives less funding than is necessary.
5. My local school district should be able to raise more funds locally to support local public schools.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree
6. Do you think your district is funded as adequately as districts in suburban Chicago, some of which spend over \$20,000 per student annually?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
7. Which of the following best describes your opinion on teacher compensation in your district?
 - a. teachers are overpaid.
 - b. teachers are underpaid.
 - c. teachers are paid adequately.
8. How has the practice of allowing students to attend public schools outside of their resident districts (known as school of choice or open enrollment) affected your local district?
 - a. School of choice has not affected my district
 - b. School of choice has positively affected my district
 - c. School of choice has negatively affected my district
9. Charter schools have been a good addition to Michigan's education system since 1993.
 - a. Agree
 - b. Disagree
10. The existence of charter schools has been good for my local district since 1993.
 - a. Agree
 - b. Disagree

11. Standardized testing results give my district quality information regarding teacher performance.
- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
12. Standardized testing gives my district quality information regarding students' academic growth.
- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
13. According to state law, teachers in your district must pay 20% of their health insurance premiums. Which of the following best describes your opinion on this policy?
- I agree. Teachers should pay 20% health premiums.
 - I disagree. Teachers should pay more than 20% of their premiums.
 - I disagree. Teachers should pay less than 20% of their premiums.
14. In 2012, Michigan became a "Right to Work" state, meaning teachers in your district now have the ability to opt-out of membership in the Michigan Education Association. Which of the following best describes your opinion on this change?
- Disagree with this change
 - Neutral
 - Agree with this change
15. All teachers should be evaluated annually by a school administrator.
- Agree
 - Disagree
16. How do you view the growing influence of state government in your local district over the last 22 years since the implementation of Proposal A?
- Negatively
 - Positively
 - Neutral
17. Are there important educational issues the state government has not addressed in recent years? If so, please list them:
18. Michigan should promote more universal pre-kindergarten for three and four year old children.
- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree

- c. Neutral
- d. Agree
- e. Strongly agree

19. Michigan needs stronger teacher preparatory programs

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Neutral
- d. Agree
- e. Strongly agree

20. Michigan needs greater support for successful teachers

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Neutral
- d. Agree
- e. Strongly agree

21. Michigan needs greater accountability for unsuccessful teachers

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Neutral
- d. Agree
- e. Strongly agree

22. How do you view your district's funding in comparison to your neighboring districts?

- a. My district has more funding than neighboring districts.
- b. My district has less funding than neighboring districts.
- c. My district has similar funding compared to neighboring districts.
- c. No Opinion.

23. How do you view your district's funding in comparison to comparable districts in other states?

- a. My district has more funding than comparable districts in other states.
- b. My district has less funding than comparable districts in other states.
- c. My district has relatively equal funding with comparable districts in other states.
- d. No opinion.

24. Our district prepares students for college or careers when they graduate from our district.

- a. Agree
- b. Disagree
- c. Neutral

25. Our district should try to attract students from neighboring districts.

- a. Agree
- b. Disagree

c. Neutral

26. Is there an individual or organization who you believe is driving educational policy and/or legislation in Michigan?

Appendix C: Survey for Rotary Club Members

1. What is your age?
2. What is your profession/career?
3. In which school district do you reside?
4. How long have you resided in this district?
5. Do you have children who currently attend or have attended schools in this district?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
6. Do you have children who attend private school?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
7. Which of the following best describes your knowledge of educational issues and policies?
 - a. unaware of educational issues and policies
 - b. unfamiliar with educational issues and policies
 - c. familiar with educational issues and policies
 - d. knowledgeable of educational issues and policies
8. Which of the following best describes your opinion of your school district's funding?
 - a. My school district receives an adequate level of funding
 - b. My school district receives more funding than is necessary
 - c. My school district receives less funding than is necessary
 - d. No opinion
9. My local school district should be able to raise more funds locally to support local public schools.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree
10. Do you think your district is funded as adequately as districts in suburban Chicago, some of which spend over \$20,000 per student annually?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I am unfamiliar with funding levels in suburban Chicago.
11. Which of the following best describes your opinion on teacher compensation in your district?

- a. teachers are overpaid.
- b. teachers are underpaid.
- c. teachers are paid adequately.
- d. no opinion

12. How has the practice of allowing students to attend public schools outside of their resident districts (known as school of choice or open enrollment) affected your local district?

- a. School of choice has not affected my district
- b. School of choice has positively affected my district
- c. School of choice has negatively affected my district
- d. No opinion

13. Charter schools have been a good addition to Michigan's education system since 1993.

- a. Agree
- b. Disagree
- c. Neutral

14. The existence of charter schools has been good for my local district since 1993.

- a. Agree
- b. Disagree
- c. No opinion

15. Standardized testing results give my district quality information regarding teacher performance.

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Neutral
- d. Agree
- e. Strongly agree

16. Standardized testing gives my district quality information regarding students' academic growth.

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Neutral
- d. Agree
- e. Strongly agree

17. Too much time is spent on standardized testing in my local district.

- a. Agree
- b. Disagree
- c. No opinion

18. According to state law, teachers in your district must pay 20% of their health insurance premiums. Which of the following best describes your opinion on this policy?

- a. I agree. Teachers should pay 20% health premiums.

- b. I disagree. Teachers should pay more than 20% of their premiums.
- c. I disagree. Teachers should pay less than 20% of their premiums.
- d. No opinion

19. In 2012, Michigan became a “Right to Work” state, meaning teachers in your district now have the ability to opt-out of membership in the Michigan Education Association. Which of the following best describes your opinion on this change?

- a. Disagree with this change
- b. Neutral
- c. Agree with this change

20. All teachers should be evaluated annually by a school administrator.

- a. Agree
- b. Disagree
- c. No opinion

21. How do you view the growing influence of state government in your local district over the last 22 years since the implementation of Proposal A?

- a. Negatively
- b. Positively
- c. No opinion

22. Are there important educational issues the state government has not addressed in recent years? If so, please list them:

23. Michigan should promote more universal pre-kindergarten for three and four year old children.

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Neutral
- d. Agree
- e. Strongly agree

24. Michigan needs stronger teacher preparatory programs

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Neutral
- d. Agree
- e. Strongly agree

25. Michigan needs greater support for successful teachers

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Neutral
- d. Agree
- e. Strongly agree

26. Michigan needs greater accountability for unsuccessful teachers

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Neutral
- d. Agree
- e. Strongly agree

27. How do you view your district's funding in comparison to your neighboring districts?

- a. My district has more funding than neighboring districts.
- b. My district has less funding than neighboring districts.
- c. My district has similar funding compared to neighboring districts.
- c. No Opinion.

28. How do you view your district's funding in comparison to comparable districts in other states?

- a. My district has more funding than comparable districts in other states.
- b. My district has less funding than comparable districts in other states.
- c. My district has relatively equal funding with comparable districts in other states.
- d. No opinion.

29. Our district prepares students for college or careers when they graduate from our district.

- a. Agree
- b. Disagree
- c. Neutral

30. Our district should try to attract students from neighboring districts.

- a. Agree
- b. Disagree
- c. Neutral

31. Is there an individual or organization who you believe is driving educational policy and/or legislation in Michigan?

Appendix E: Interview Questions District Leadership

1. First I would like to inquire regarding your opinions on school finance. What is your opinion on the current status of how your district is funded?
 - A. How would you describe the funding trend over the last decade?
2. Specifically, what do you think about your district having the ability to raise funds locally in addition to what they receive from the state?
3. How do you view teacher compensation levels in your district?
4. What is your opinion on school of choice issues in your district?
 - A. Do you consider yourself to be in favor of allowing students to “choice into your district or do you think only students who live within district boundaries should be allowed to attend?
5. How do you think charter schools have affected enrollment in your district?
 - A. What are your thoughts on charter school policies in Michigan?
 - B. Do you think charter schools need more or less regulation in Michigan?
 - C. Have charter schools had a financial impact on your district?
6. How do you view the role of standardized testing in your district? Do you support the state mandated testing system that begins standardized testing in the 3rd grade?
 - A. Do you think data provided by the state is valuable?
 - B. Do you think this data makes teachers more accountable?
 - C. Do you think kids are spending too much time testing?
7. Do you think the business community approves of recent educational reforms in Michigan?
8. How do you think Michigan becoming a Right to Work state in 2012 has affected your district?
9. What is your opinion on the state government mandating certain human resource policies, such as requiring school district employees to pay 20% of their healthcare premiums?
10. Do you feel like your district is able to attract the best candidates for teaching positions?
11. How do you think teachers in your district should be evaluated?
12. What is your opinion of growing state control of local school district operations?
13. How do you rate the overall quality of your school district in comparison to other public school districts?

14. What would be three or four educational policies you would like to see the state government address in the next year?

15. Which individuals or organizations do you feel currently have the greatest influence on educational policy development in Michigan?

Appendix F: Interview Questions for Rotary Members

Interviewee: _____

Date: _____

Familiarity level with educational issues and/or policy? _____

Parent? _____

District: _____

1. First I would like to inquire regarding your opinions on school finance. What is your opinion on the current status of how your district is funded?
 - A. How would you describe the funding trend over the last decade?
2. Specifically, do you think your district should have the ability to raise funds locally in addition to what they receive from the state?
3. How do you view teacher compensation levels in your district?
4. What is your opinion on school of choice issues in your district?
 - A. Do you consider yourself to be in favor of allowing students to “choice into your district or do you think only students who live within district boundaries should be allowed to attend?
5. Do you think charter schools have affected enrollment in your district? If so, how?
 - A. What are your thoughts on charter school policies in Michigan?
 - B. Do you think charter schools need more or less regulation in Michigan?
 - C. Have charter schools had a financial impact on your district?
6. How do you view the role of standardized testing in your district? Do you support the state mandated testing system that begins standardized testing in the 3rd grade?
 - A. Do you think data provided by the state is valuable?
 - B. Do you think this data makes teachers more accountable?
7. Do you think business interests favor recent educational reforms in Michigan?
8. How did Michigan becoming a Right to Work state in 2012 affect your district?
9. What is your opinion on the state government mandating certain human resource policies, such as requiring school district employees to pay 20% of their healthcare premiums?
10. Do you feel like your district is able to attract qualified candidates for teaching positions?
11. How do you think teachers in your district should be evaluated?
12. How do you view growing state control of local school district operations?

13. How do you rate the overall quality of your school district?
14. What educational policies would you like to see the state government address?
15. Who do you feel currently has the greatest influence on educational policy development in Michigan?

Appendix G: Interview Questions for Statewide Business Organizations

1. If you could wave a wand, and have the state government address three or four educational priorities for Business Leaders for Michigan in the next year, what would they be?
2. What is Business Leaders for Michigan's current stance on school finance in Michigan?
3. Have there been specific educational reforms or accomplishments your organization has been strongly in favor of?
4. Which organization (or individual) do you think has the greatest influence on educational policy development in Michigan?
5. Can you speak at greater length regarding the role of community colleges in economic development?
 - 5.a More specifically, how does the Detroit Promise fit into this view of community colleges?
6. With charter schools now being such a large part of the mix in Detroit (and Michigan), how does your organization view the regulation of charter schools in Michigan? Role of charter schools in general?
7. Can you speak at greater length regarding your organization's position on early childhood education?
8. How does your organization view state testing in public schools? Is that a policy area your organization ever takes a position on?
9. Does your organization have a stance on teacher quality as part of an overall talent attraction policy for the entire state (region)?
10. Can you tell me a little more about the Detroit promise? How does this fit into a talent pipeline strategy?
 - 10.a I also feel like I heard very little about the Detroit promise, especially the four-year college option. Can you tell me more about that initiative? Where does the funding comes from (I saw mention of Pell Grants)? Why did it receive such little attention? How is it able to include parochial schools?
11. How does the Detroit Regional Chamber fit-in with the State Chamber on educational issues? It seems like you have a much more defined vision for education.
12. What does preparing students for high tech careers look like to Business Leaders for Michigan?
13. Can you tell me more about the Detroit Education Commission? (mentioned as something that should be part of the house plan regarding DPS).

14. Has your organization ever taken a position on some of the HR policies that the state government has passed down to districts, such as best practices on healthcare, encourage privatization, etc?

15. I noticed that education reform is listed prominently on the Detroit Regional Chamber website, what does education reform look like to the chamber?

Appendix H: Interviews with State Representatives

Mid-Michigan Representative

1. First I would like to ask you about school funding. How do you balance the position of districts like (excerpted for confidentiality) and Redbridge who have strong property values and would like to use that fiscal ability to finance their schools with the constraints of Proposal A and the extreme need of many poorer districts in the state?
2. Do you think it would be conceivable that the state legislature would ever consider amending Proposal A in order to allow districts like (excerpted for confidentiality) and Redbridge to increase funding above the state constraints as similar districts are allowed to in Massachusetts?
3. Next I want to ask you about school of choice. Do you ever hear from neighboring districts that they are losing students and therefore funds due to school of choice policies? With current situations like the one in Detroit are there ever discussions of limiting school of choice to provide greater stability to certain districts?
4. How much of your position in education policy is about creating an effective statewide educational system versus representing the interests of your specific school districts?
5. Specifically with charter schools, with Redbridge and (excerpted for confidentiality) not having many charter schools within their boundaries, do you see charter schools as a critical issue for Michigan? For your districts? Do you ever see charter schools in Michigan receiving greater regulation or oversight?
6. What about the state testing program, most recently known as the M-Step, do you ever hear from your respective districts about the time, rigor, or results from these tests?
7. Is there any discussion in policy circles regarding the expansion of laws regulating teacher HR policies such as how much teachers pay into healthcare, the state pension system, Right to Work, privatization within districts, ect?
8. What is the role of the Michigan business community in education policy in the legislature? Does the business community have a vision for education? Are there prominent business groups affecting ed policy or education debates?
9. How much do you hear from constituents in your district about educational issues
10. Who (group or person) do you think has the greatest influence on educational policy in Michigan right now?
11. When ask education professionals and business people that question, I get drastically different answers, what do you think might account for that difference?

West-Michigan Representative

1. First I would like to ask you about school funding. How do you balance the position of districts like Haggerston who have strong property values and would like to use that fiscal ability to finance their schools with the constraints of Proposal A and the extreme need of many poorer districts in the state?
2. Do you think it would be conceivable that the state legislature would ever consider amending Proposal A in order to allow districts like Haggerston to increase funding above the state constraints as similar districts are allowed to in Massachusetts?
3. Next I want to ask you about school of choice. Do you ever hear from neighboring districts that they are losing students and therefore funds due to school of choice policies? With current situations like the one in Detroit are there ever discussions of limiting school of choice to provide greater stability to certain urban districts?
4. How much of your position in education policy is about creating an effective statewide educational system versus representing the interests of your specific school districts?
5. Specifically with charter schools, with Haggerston not having many charter schools within district boundaries, do you see charter schools as a critical issue for Michigan? For your districts? Do you ever see charter schools in Michigan receiving greater regulation or oversight?
6. What about the state testing program, most recently known as the M-Step, do you ever hear from your respective districts about the time, rigor, or results from these tests?
7. Is there any discussion in policy circles regarding the expansion of laws regulating teacher HR policies such as how much teachers pay into healthcare, the state pension system, Right to Work, privatization within districts, etc?
8. What is the role of the Michigan business community in education policy in the legislature? Does the business community have a vision for education? Are there prominent business groups affecting education policy or education debates?
9. How much do you hear from constituents in your district about educational issues?
10. Who (group or person) do you think has the greatest influence on educational policy in Michigan right now?

Metro-Detroit Representative

1. First I would like to ask you about school funding. How do you balance the position of advocating for relatively wealthy districts in Oakland County while acknowledging that the majority of your peers in the Michigan House represent districts that receive considerably less?

Do you see any political reality in Proposal A being amended to allow greater flexibility in funding to different types of districts?

2. Do you think it would be conceivable that the state legislature would ever consider amending Proposal A in order to allow districts like (excerpted) and (excerpted) to increase funding above the state constraints as similar districts are allowed to in Massachusetts?

3. Next I want to ask you about school of choice. Do you ever hear from neighboring districts that they are losing students and therefore funds due to school of choice policies? With current situations like the one in Detroit are there ever realistic discussions of limiting school of choice to provide greater stability to certain urban districts?

4. How much of your position in education policy is about creating an effective statewide educational system versus representing the interests of your specific school districts?

5. Specifically with charter schools, do you hear much from your constituents regarding charter schools? Do you see charter schools as a critical issue for Michigan? For your districts? Do you ever see charter schools in Michigan receiving greater regulation or oversight?

6. What about the state testing program, most recently known as the M-Step, what do you ever hear from your respective districts about the time, rigor, or results from these tests?

7. Is there any discussion in policy circles regarding the expansion of laws regulating teacher HR policies such as how much teachers pay into healthcare, the state pension system, Right to Work, privatization within districts, etc?

8. What is the role of the Michigan business community in education policy in the legislature? Does the business community have a vision for education? Are there prominent business groups affecting education policy or education debates? Do you ever see a difference between the needs of big business and small business in regards to our education system?

9. How much do you hear from constituents in your districts about educational issues?

10. Who (group or person) do you think has the greatest influence on educational policy in Michigan right now?

Appendix I: District Leadership Survey Responses

Survey for District Leadership

What is your age? (22 responses)

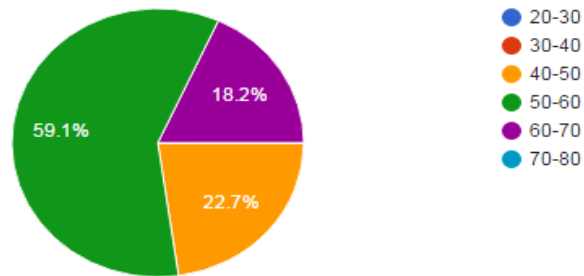


Figure 1 Participant Age

Which of the following best describes your opinion of your school district's funding?

(22 responses)

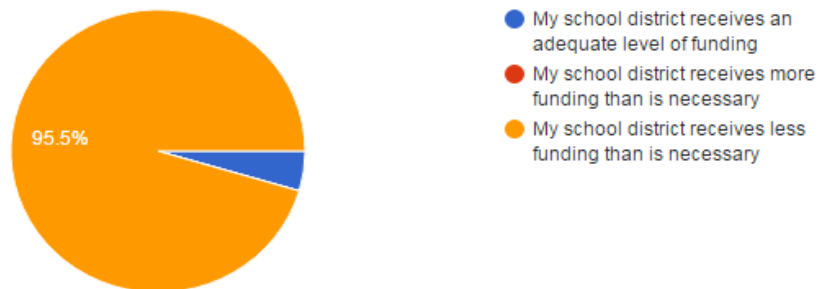


Figure 2 School District Funding

Do you think your district is funded as adequately as districts in suburban Chicago, some of which spend over \$20,000 per student annually?

(22 responses)

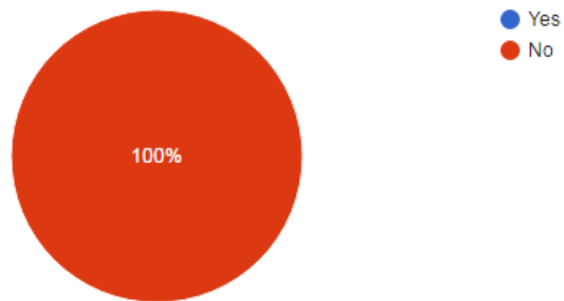


Figure 3 Funding Comparison to Chicago

Which of the following best describes your opinion on teacher compensation in your district?

(22 responses)

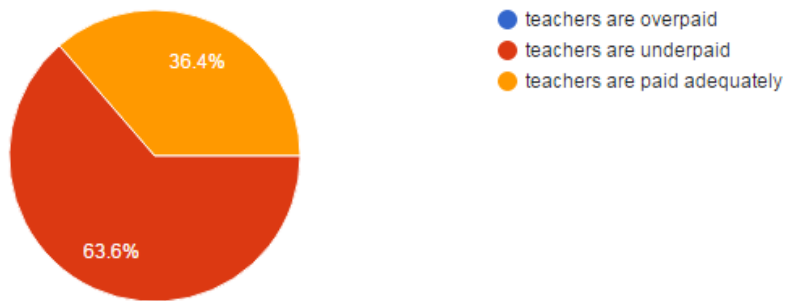


Figure 4 Teacher Compensation

How has the practice of allowing students to attend public schools outside of their resident districts (known as school of choice or open enrollment) affected your local district?

(22 responses)

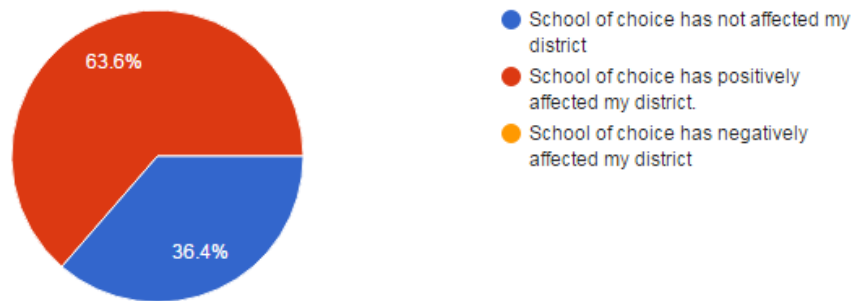


Figure 5 School of Choice

Charter schools have been a good addition to Michigan's education system since 1993.

(21 responses)

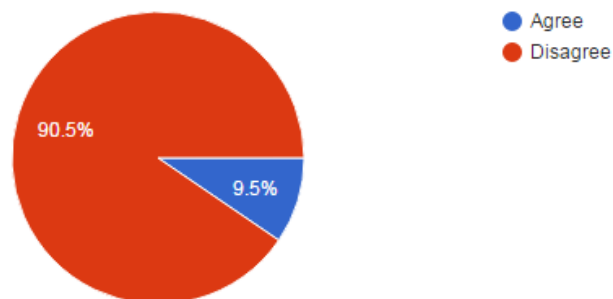


Figure 6 Charter Schools

The existence of charter schools has been good for my local district since 1993.

(21 responses)

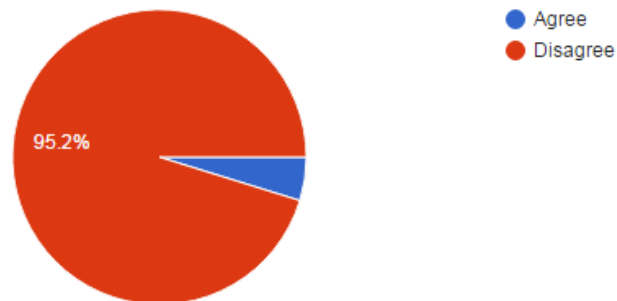


Figure 7 Charter Schools/Local Districts

Standardized testing results give my district quality information regarding teacher performance.

(22 responses)

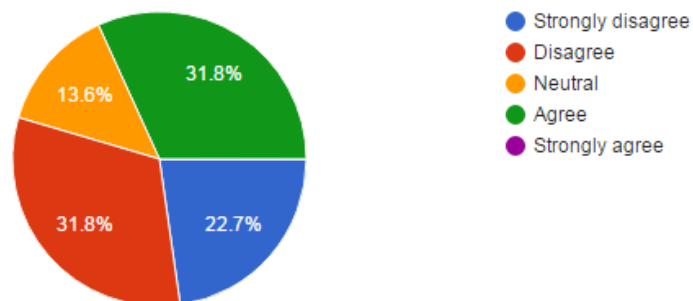


Figure 8 Standardized Testing/Teacher Performance

Standardized testing results give my district quality information regarding students' academic growth.

(22 responses)

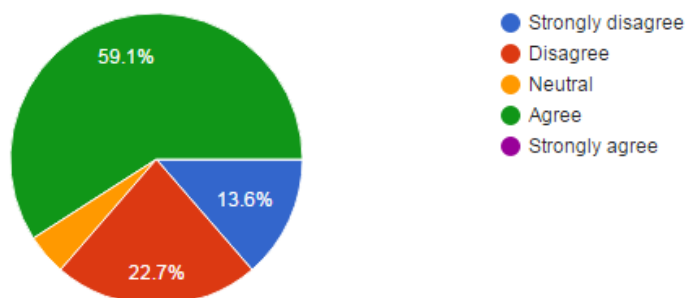


Figure 9 Standardized Testing/Student Growth

Too much time is spent on standardized testing in my local district.

(21 responses)

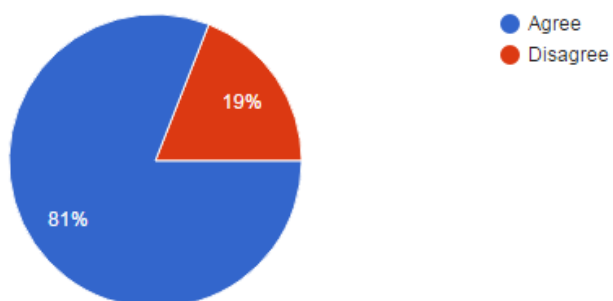


Figure 10 Time Spent on Standardized Testing

According to state law, teachers in your district must pay 20% of their health insurance premiums. Which of the following best describes your opinion on this policy?

(22 responses)

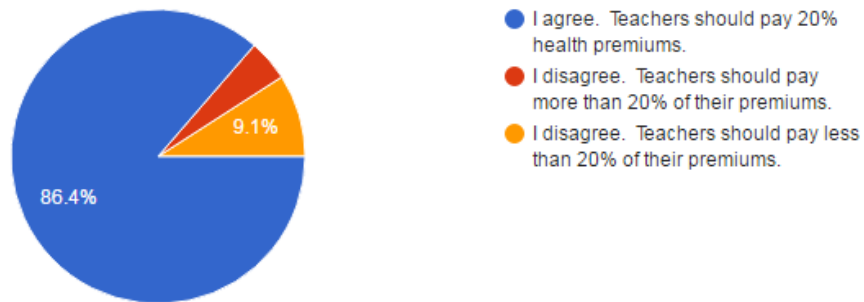


Figure 11 Teacher Healthcare

In 2012, Michigan became a "Right to Work" state, meaning teachers in your district now have the ability to opt-out of membership in the Michigan Education Association. Which of the following best describes your opinion on this change?

(22 responses)

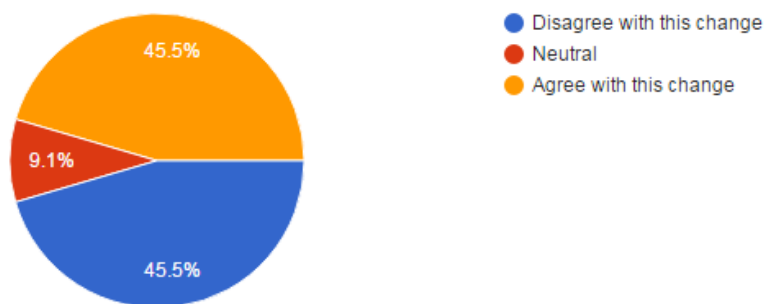


Figure 12 Right to Work

All teachers should be evaluated annually by a school administrator.
(22 responses)

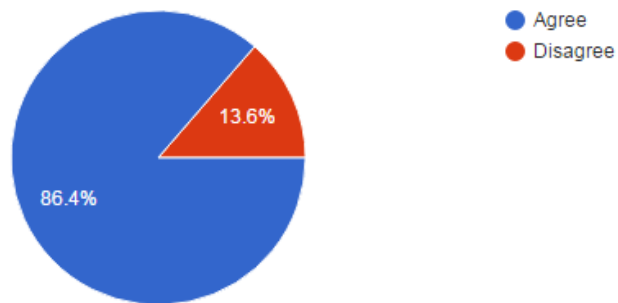


Figure 13 Teacher Evaluations

How do you view the growing influence of state government in your local district over the last 22 years since the implementation of Proposal A?
(22 responses)

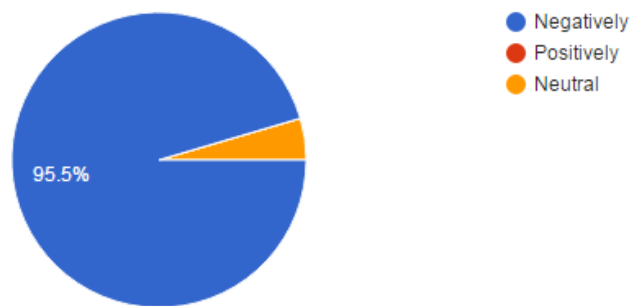


Figure 14 Growing State Influence

How do you view your district's funding in comparison to your neighboring districts?

(22 responses)

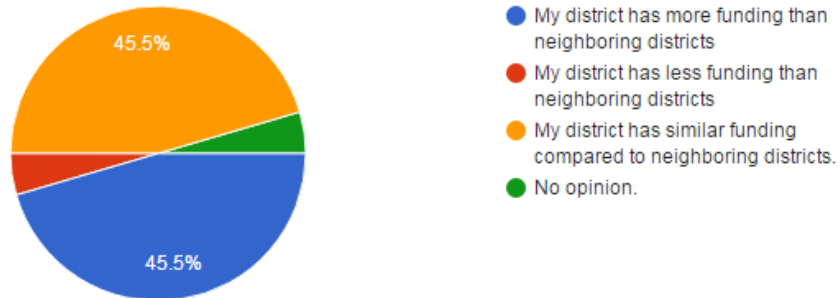


Figure 15 Neighboring District Funding

How do you view your district's funding in comparison to similar districts in other states?

(22 responses)

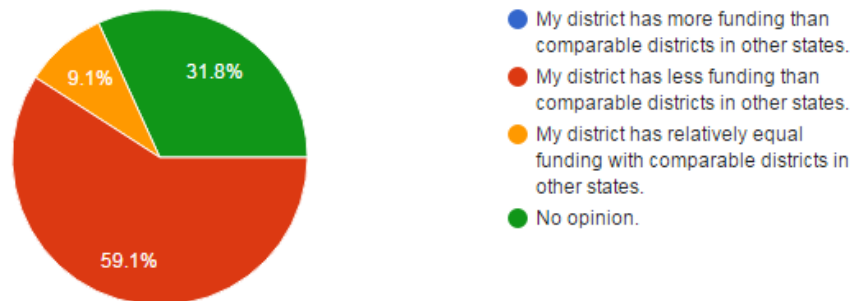


Figure 16 State Funding Comparison

Our district prepares students for college or careers when they graduate from our district.
(22 responses)

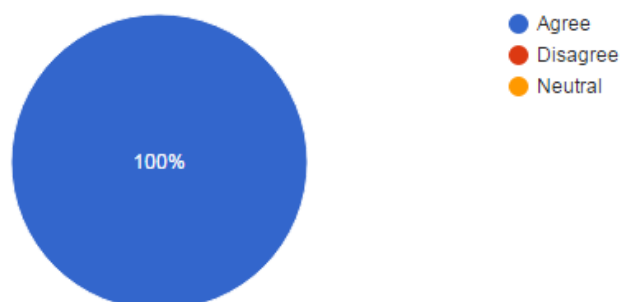


Figure 17 Student Preparation

Our district should try to attract students from neighboring districts.
(22 responses)

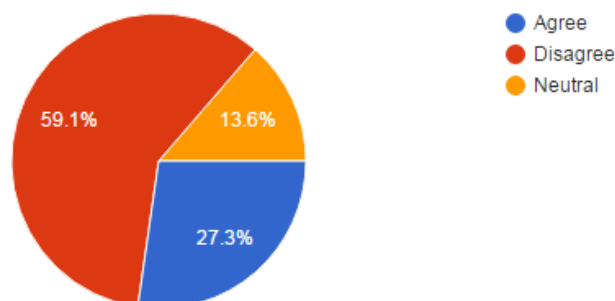


Figure 18 Attracting Neighboring Students

Is there an individual or organization who you believe is driving educational policy and/or legislation in Michigan?

Governor Snyder and the MEA.

Mackinaw Center (Negatively)

Republicans - DeVos Family

ALEC and the Mackinac Center and GLEP

mackinaw center

ISDs, superintendents, MEA

Yes, our current legislative leaders with the responsibility for creating educational policy and legislature are influenced by groups that support a dismantling of traditional public school systems through a voucher system and creation of charter schools. The Great Lakes Education Project is one of several organizations that benefit from ample funding from individuals who believe that this is the solution to public education. Individually, the Devos family stand out as

individuals who use their financial assets to promote policy and legislation that is detrimental to public schools in Michigan.

GLEP has an outsized influence on lawmakers and educational policy. This is highly problematic.

Conservative, business republicans.

Most of the discourse has moved strongly rightward - away from support from public schools and teachers. There is a concerted effort in this regard with multiple groups (state and national) involved in it.

Educational policy at the state level is disjointed, but it appears organizations that will gain financially are driving legislation in the state, like charter/private school operations, testing companies, and unions.

My concern is that those who are driving educational policy in Michigan are not education experts. Many policies coming out of Lansing are punitive toward teachers, don't address extreme poverty or special education issues, and favor for-profit education entities. There should be a teacher on every educational policy committee in Lansing.

Senator Phil Pavlov

The Republican Party has a vendetta with the MEA for political reasons which clouds reasoning and collaboration. The "Union Mentality" approach to everything by the MEA conflicts with the need for Professional Teachers who are on the front lines with our kids daily!

I would like to think Talent 2025 and business leaders are involved alongside the state superintendent and some rock star superintendents and educators but not likely. My impression to date is some of the charter school advocates are pushing the agenda. I honestly don't know who is driving the ship at this point.

Republicans

Gov. Snyder, both legislative parties, government looking at too many social issues emphasizes is on economy not education, the state rules allow for very little innovation time as the curriculum is guided to a specific type of college bound student.

Are there important educational issues the state government has not addressed in recent years? If so, please list them:

Dealing with the structural problems of the Detroit Public School System and the unfunded mandates school systems are continually being asked to meet.

Financing districts with more funds

Local Control - Needs to be reinstated, Adequacy Study - Funding Recommendation, Dual Enrollment/Early College - Easier Process

Critical thinking and creativity

yes. mandating second language learning in early years.

Inadequate funding

Proposal A needs to be revisited. It was intended to provide fair and adequate funding for all Michigan school districts. The reality today across the state is that school funding is not fair among all districts and the amount of per-pupil funding provided is not adequate.

High school graduation requirements are too prescriptive and represent a 20th century model of secondary education.

Equity in funding. Supporting public schools particularly for the most disadvantaged in society.

Funding, testing, curriculum, technology, instructional training

Surge of Special Education students reaching ages of 18-26 and the lack of quality educational programming.

School Districts are local with various issues they should address, not State Government

1. Added requirements versus any requirements being removed. "Requirements" meaning in curriculum or reporting or number of school days or hours - requirements of all varieties. Very constrained.

2. Disparities among "rich" and "poor" districts is still an issue even with "fairness" in school funding as hoped for 20+ years ago. Funding from the state is one thing that hampers everyone but the wealthier districts do have the ability to leverage constituents for bonds - however voters don't always jump on with enthusiasm thinking everyone is getting "equal" so why support...Equal may equate to "mediocre".

3. High stakes testing = havoc on kids and teachers...leads to stressed out kids and teachers. And cycle continues with demand to do well on high stakes tests for college...which NO ONE seems to believe correlates with the best kind of employees that businesses or any organization will want in the future.

4. Is K-12 education preparing kids for the workforce of the future or the workforce of the past? Educators K-12 AND higher ed AND businesses need to be engaged and aligned. For some reason businesses have been perceived as "against" education and education is "against" business. Get all the parties around the table

I would prefer they readdress/refine current issues: financial, testing, MMC, etc.

Funding

involvement in curriculum, too much emphasis on pre-kindergarten successful districts need to be able to determine their own curriculum, the state "dummys down" the successful schools and stops innovation.

Appendix J: Rotarian Survey Responses

Survey for Rotary International Members

What is your age? (64 responses)

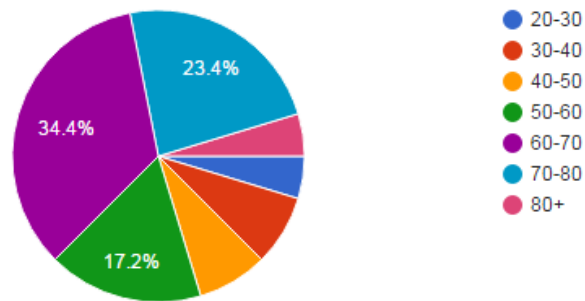


Figure 19 Rotarian Ages

Do you have children who currently attend or have attended schools in this district?

(65 responses)

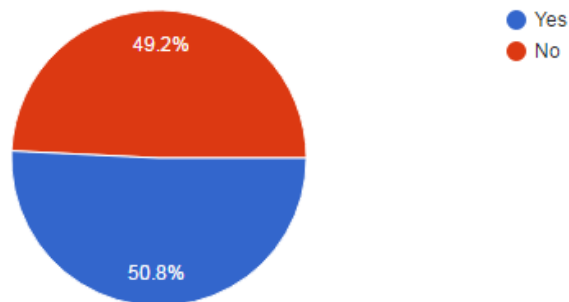


Figure 20 Rotarian Children School Attendance

Do you have children who attend or have attended private schools?
(65 responses)

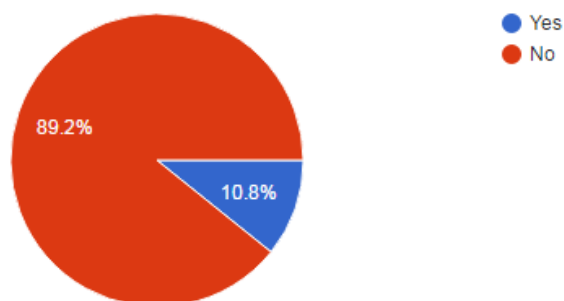


Figure 21 Rotarians Private Schools

Which of the following best describes your knowledge of educational issues and policies?
(65 responses)

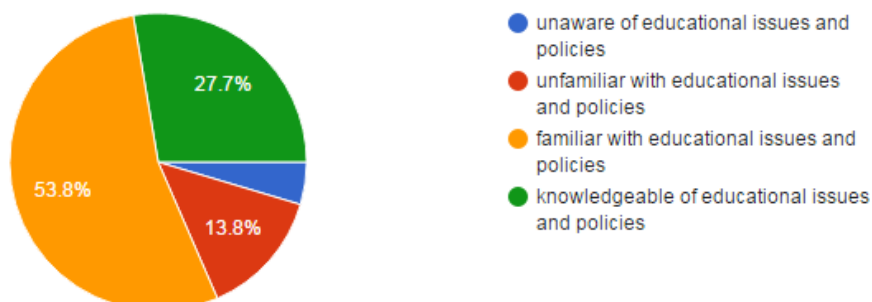


Figure 22 Rotarian Knowledge of Educational Issues

Which of the following best describes your opinion of your school district's funding??
(65 responses)

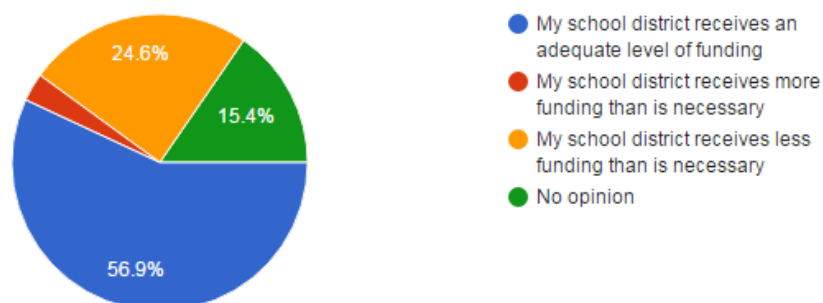


Figure 23 Rotarian School District Funding

My local school district should be able to raise more funds locally to support local public schools.

(65 responses)

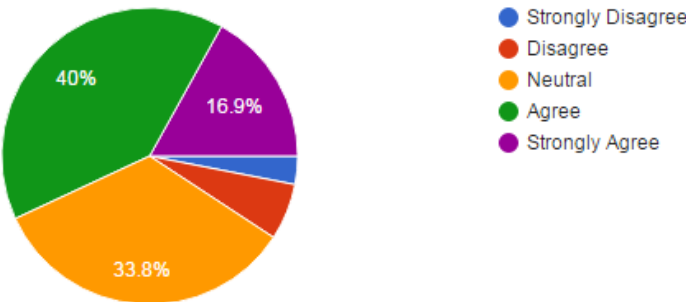


Figure 24 Rotarian Local School Funding

Do you think your district is funded as adequately as districts in suburban Chicago, some of which spend over \$20,000 per student annually?

(65 responses)

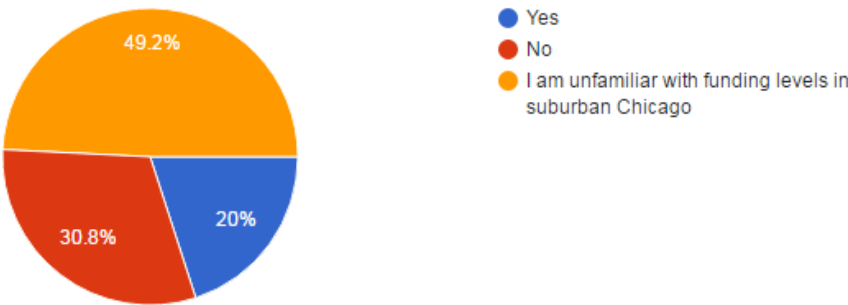


Figure 25 Rotarian Chicago Comparison

Which of the following best describes your opinion on teacher compensation in your district?

(64 responses)

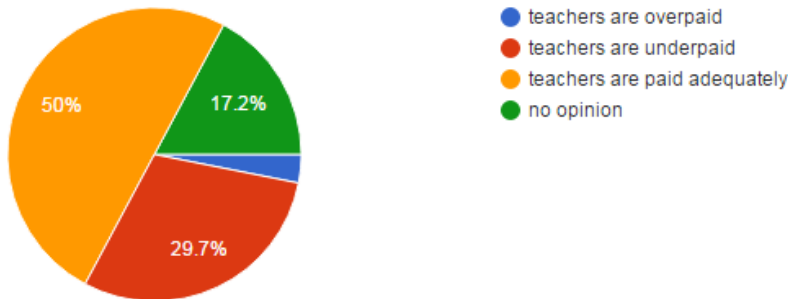


Figure 26 Rotarian Teacher Compensation

How has the practice of allowing students to attend public schools outside of their resident districts (known as "school of choice" or "open enrollment") affected your local district?
(65 responses)

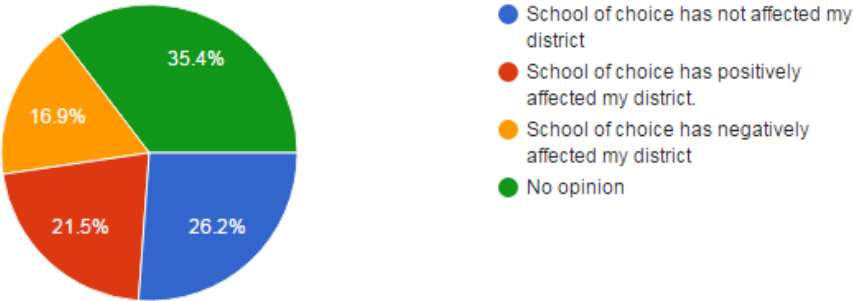


Figure 27 Rotarian School of Choice

Charter schools have been a good addition to Michigan's education system since 1993.
(64 responses)

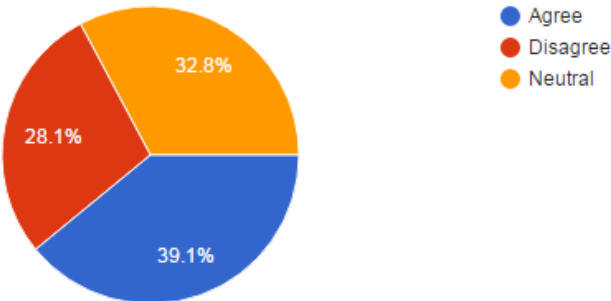


Figure 28 Rotarians Charter Schools

The existence of charter schools has been good for my local district since 1993.

(64 responses)

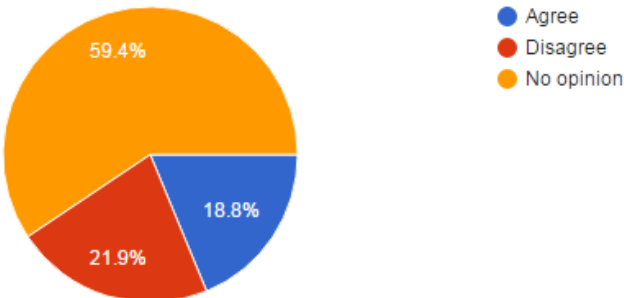


Figure 29 Rotarians Charters and Local Districts

Standardized testing results give my district quality information regarding teacher performance.

(65 responses)

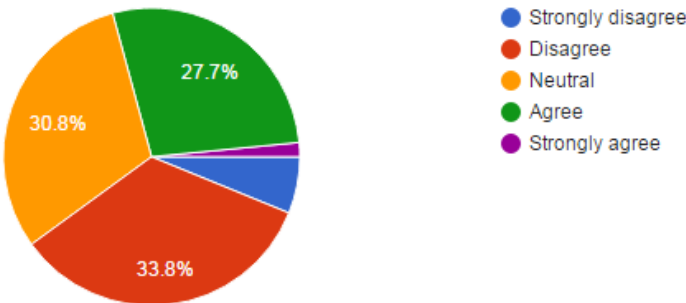


Figure 30 Rotarians Standardized Testing/Teacher Performance

Standardized testing results give my district quality information regarding students' academic growth.

(65 responses)

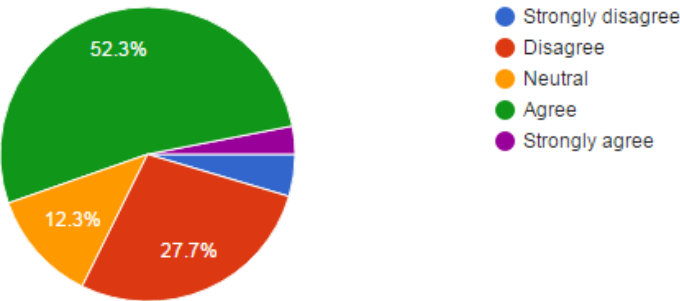


Figure 31 Rotarians Standardized Testing/Student Growth

Too much time is spent on standardized testing in my local district.

(65 responses)

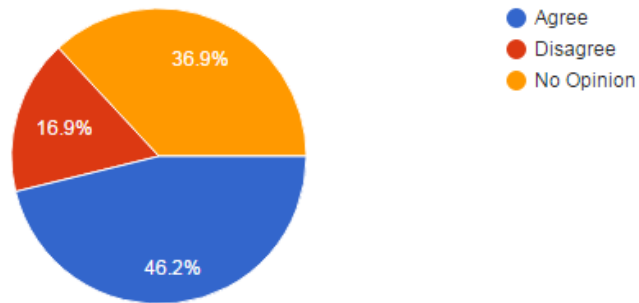


Figure 32 Rotarians Time Spent Standardized Testing

According to state law, teachers in your district must pay 20% of their health insurance premiums. Which of the following best describes your opinion on this policy?

(65 responses)

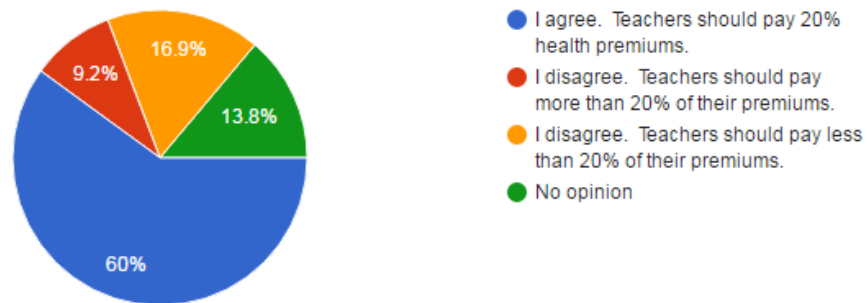


Figure 33 Rotarians Teacher Healthcare

In 2012, Michigan became a "Right to Work" state, meaning teachers in your district now have the ability to opt-out of membership in the Michigan Education Association. Which of the following best describes your opinion on this change?
(65 responses)

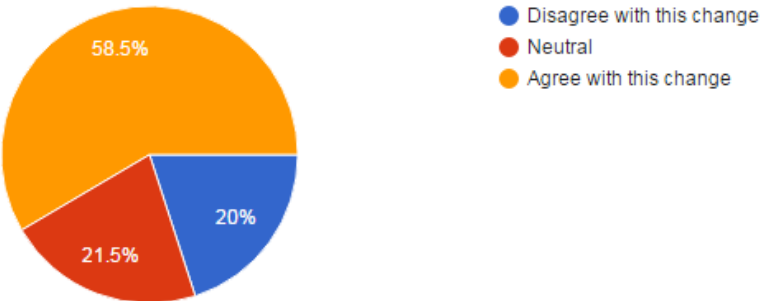


Figure 34 Rotarians Right to Work

All teachers should be evaluated annually by a school administrator.
(65 responses)

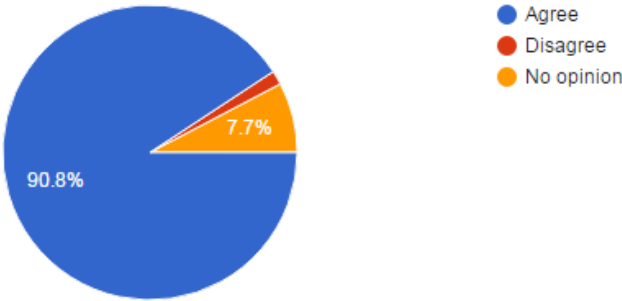


Figure 35 Rotarians Teacher Evaluations

How do you view the growing influence of state government in your local district over the last 22 years since the implementation of Proposal A?
(65 responses)

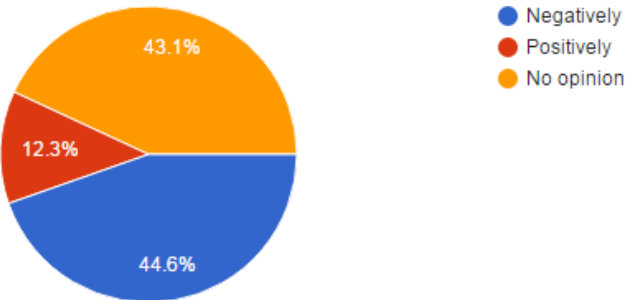


Figure 36 Rotarians Growing Influence of State Control

How do you view your district's funding in comparison to your neighboring districts?
(65 responses)

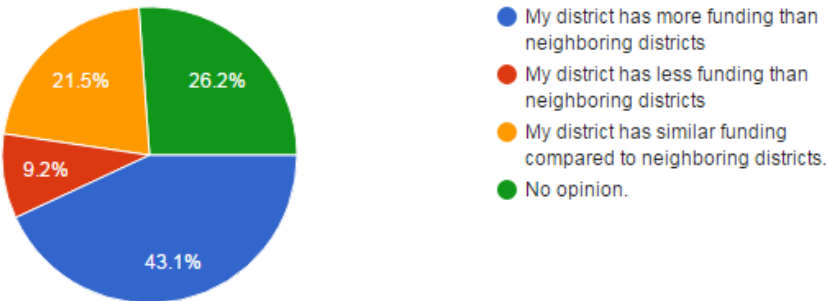


Figure 37 Rotarians Neighboring Districts Funding

How do you view your district's funding in comparison to similar districts in other states?
(65 responses)

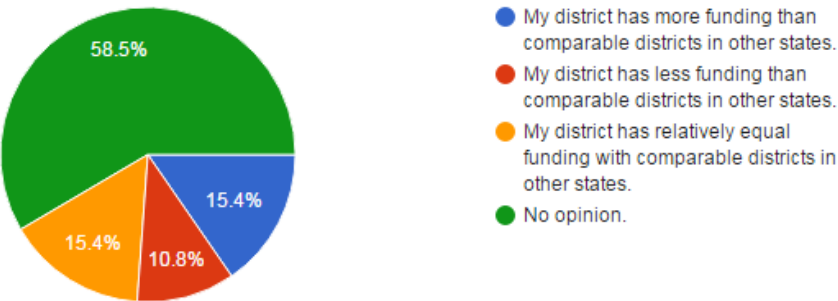


Figure 38 Rotarians State Funding Comparison

Our district should try to attract students from neighboring districts (64 responses)

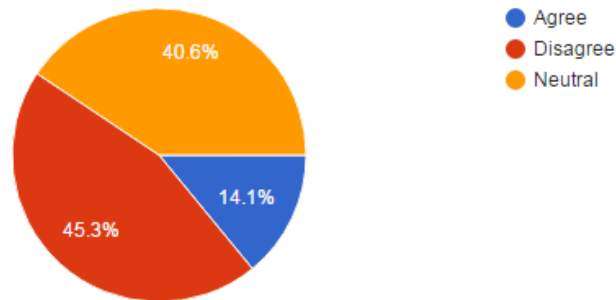


Figure 39 Rotarians Attracting Students from Neighboring Districts

Is there an individual or organization who you believe has the greatest influence on educational policy development in Michigan?

MEA

MEA

MEA

MEA

Teachers Union

Teachers Union

Local Elected School Board

No.

MEA, Michigan League for Human Services

State Superintendent for Education

MEA or equivalt. The impact is both negative and positive.

Unfortunately it is the MEA. They are a union and should be limited to that issue.

A few have some influence, but not the greatest.

Parents

?

Center for MI

Local School Boards Should Have

n/a

Governor Snyder

Mayor Duggan

DeVos

Teacher's Union

DeVos Family Another Promotion of Charter Schools

(DELETED TO PROTECT DISTRICT ANONYMITY)

Michigan Teacher Union

State Gov

State Education Board

Local School Board

No.

Are there important educational issues the state government has not addressed in recent years? If so, please list them:

n/a

n/a

Poor performing teachers

To much involvement

Yes. Public education is not receiving the level of support that it should. The apparent rejection of a standardized core curriculum is a major mistake in our mobile society.

equal funding, consistent testing and curriculum instead of changing minds based on election year, consolidating districts so it is centralized under an ISD, looking at school boards (many people are not knowledgeable, micromanage...antiquated system)

Increasingly poor models of education (teaching to the test), which are thrown out every few years and replaced with another bad methodology

Graduation rates.

Legacy costs

Local school district asking for local mileage operating vote

I don't like schools teaching to the lowest level. They should raise the bar and teach to the highest level.

Low per student funding of urban schools (e.g. Detroit, Lansing) relative suburban schools (e.g., DELETED) Poor management of resources by some schools (e.g., Detroit)

LGBT- issues

Birth Control

Reproductive Science

More explicit evaluation of Charter Schools

Teacher Performance

Special Education

More State Funding For Poorer School Districts

Funding, Deterioration of local control

Detroit and poorer districts

Additional funding

funding methodology

Too much oversight for a high performance district

Not all students are college bound

How are those students prepared to leave school and be productive in our community?

What sort of programs are available to these students?

Parents that take advantage of school of choice should pay the difference in taxes between their home district and their school of choice.

Freedom of Religion

Teacher Pension- Define should be changed; the legacy is hurting school districts.

Teacher pay/performance needs to be addressed

Teacher accountability needs to be addressed

Hold more students back- teachers need to do their job.

Pension obligations to teachers and administrators must be changed to 401k style plan or we will go bankrupt.

School Aid Fund 44% of Governors Budget. Payroll and pension the bulk of 22 Billion.

Leave it to the locals
Substance abuse

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REFERENCES

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