



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
LANSING


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STATE SUPERINTENDENT

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** April 12, 2018

**TO:** Local and Intermediate School District Superintendents  
Public School Academy Directors

**FROM:** Sheila A. Alfes   
Chief Deputy Superintendent

**SUBJECT:** Definitions of "Whole Child" and "P-20 Systems"

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) has defined two key terminology, "Whole Child" and "P-20 Systems." These terminologies appear in the state ESSA plan and Top 10 in 10 Goals and Strategies and are used in multiple projects and initiatives such as Multi-Tiered Systems of Support. The definitions for "Whole Child" and "P-20 Systems" are:

**Whole Child**

The "whole child" is a unique learner comprised of interacting dimensions such as cognitive, physical, behavioral, social and emotional. The whole child lives within multiple and interconnected environments including home, school, and community.

**P-20 Systems**

The "P-20 System" is a seamless development of all learners, prenatal through adulthood.

Each definition may be found on the MDE website:

[https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-80635\\_86000---,00.html](https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-80635_86000---,00.html). The definitions are accompanied by a graphic representation or visual framework. Local education agencies, public school academies, and intermediate school districts are encouraged to adopt and/or align both definitions.

By providing state-level definitions, the MDE will establish and model consistency and alignment. Additionally, sharing these definitions will support and reinforce a consistent application of the definitions. Defining these terms aligns to Goal 7 of Michigan's Top 10 in 10 Strategic Plan: *Further develop an innovative and cohesive state education agency that supports an aligned, coherent education system at all levels (state, ISD, district, and school).*

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cc: Michigan Education Alliance