



Spartan Partner Schools

A Long-Term Collaboration Between the
Lansing School District and Michigan State University



Partnership Goal

- We propose to designate three Lansing schools as Spartan Partner Schools and marshal human and financial resources from Michigan State University to support those schools in becoming National Blue Ribbon Schools within five years.

What Does It Take to Become a National Blue Ribbon School?

- The [National Blue Ribbon Schools](#) program recognizes two types of schools: those with overall academic excellence and those that show strong progress in closing achievement gaps among student subgroups.
- We believe that Spartan Partner Schools could become Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools. Given the district's recent adoption of a new literacy curriculum, this is an ideal time to start recording progress in student achievement. The award criteria are based on student performance on state reading and math assessments over a 2-4 year period, including:
 - Improvement for one or more large subgroups is in the top 15% for the state
 - Performance for all subgroups is in the top 40% for the state
 - Whole school rate of improvement equals or exceed the whole state's improvement
- Schools that meet these criteria can be nominated by the State Superintendent of Michigan. Schools then complete a nomination packet to illustrate what makes them exemplary.

Why Should Lansing Schools Pursue Blue Ribbon Status?

- **For the symbolism.** The framing of striving for national recognition is positive and sends a message of encouragement and purpose to teachers, students, and collaborators. As stated on the program's website, "The coveted National Blue Ribbon School award affirms the hard work of students, educators, families, and communities in creating safe and welcoming schools where students master challenging and engaging content. The National Blue Ribbon School flag gracing an entry or flying overhead is a widely recognized symbol of exemplary teaching and learning."
- **For the specificity and worthiness of the goal.** Focusing on a very specific and worthwhile collaborative improvement goal can provide a central, unified purpose for improvement, a targeted way to measure and track progress toward that goal, and accountability for educators to stay committed.
- **For the culture shift.** Achieving National Blue Ribbon status in three Lansing schools would improve community perceptions of the local schools and increase teachers' expectations for Lansing kids.

How Could MSU Help Spartan Partner Schools Meet this Goal?

- **Through research.**
 - Ongoing data collection and analysis to track needs and progress toward goals.
 - Regular presentation of data to leaders and teachers to inform planning.
 - Documentation of what works for improving student learning in these schools, so that efforts can be replicated in other Lansing schools (and schools elsewhere).
- **Through resources.**
 - Focused support in literacy, student discipline, and instructional leadership.
 - External partnership grants focused directly on supporting needs in the Spartan Partner Schools.
 - Access to initiatives, programs, and curricula designed by MSU faculty.
 - Access to expertise of MSU faculty.
 - Access to support through MSU's Office of K-12 Outreach.
 - Access to MSU undergraduates for community service (such as mentoring or tutoring).

Which Lansing Schools Would Be Spartan Partner Schools?

- Leaders in LSD would identify three schools to become Spartan Partner Schools.
- Potentially, these might be:

- o Schools serving any combination of grades K-8
- o Schools with strong principals and some high-capacity teachers
- o At least one school designated as a state partnership school

How Might This Partnership Unfold Over Time?

- We propose:
 - o **2024-2025 – Planning Year**
 - Identify Spartan Partner Schools
 - Set goals with principals and other school community members
 - Collect and analyze baseline data, including analysis of discipline and academic performance data and conducting focus groups with members of the school community to identify needs, strengths, and aspirations
 - Form a committee to oversee the partnership, establish collaborations with various offices at MSU – particularly in the MSU College of Education and MSU School of Social Work, establish community partnerships, and plan the Year 1 launch
 - Begin support in these schools through professional development for teachers led by MSU partner faculty
 - Apply for external funding to meet specific needs of Spartan Partner Schools
 - o **2025-2026 – Year 1**
 - Focus on literacy instructional improvement and restorative practices
 - Targeted support for principals, instructional coaches, teachers, and students
 - Apply for additional external funding to meet specific needs of Spartan Partner Schools
 - o **2026-2027 – Year 2**
 - Continued focus on literacy instructional improvement and restorative practices
 - Continued targeted support for principals, instructional coaches, teachers, and students
 - Integrate support for math instruction if schools are ready
 - Attention to aligning systems and structures with school goals and needs
 - Apply for additional external funding to meet specific needs of Spartan Partner Schools
 - o **2027-2028 – Year 3**
 - Differentiated supports for the three schools based on needs, strengths, and aspirations
 - Potential target areas: math instruction, science instruction, parent engagement, improved services for special education or English Learners, wrap-around supports for families, new teacher induction and mentoring
 - o **2028-2029 – Year 4**
 - Continued differentiated supports for the three schools based on needs
 - Potential expansion into other Lansing schools if the first 3 are on track
 - o **2029-2030 – Year 5**
 - Continued differentiated supports for the three schools based on needs
 - GOAL YEAR – Improvements for all students and subgroups since Year 1?
 - o **2030 and Beyond**
 - We envision this partnership continuing for as long as it is mutually beneficial

How would Research Be Central to this Partnership?

- As a land grant institution, MSU’s mission is to “advance knowledge and transform lives by providing outstanding undergraduate, graduate, and professional education; conducting research of the highest caliber; and advancing outreach, engagement, and economic activities.”
- As such, this partnership is important to MSU because it can “advance knowledge,” “transform lives,” produce “research of the highest caliber,” and “advance outreach and engagement.”
- Because we seek to generate and disseminate knowledge to inform the fields of education and social work broadly, Spartan Partner Schools would be research sites. We would seek to document and learn from the work undertaken in Spartan Partner Schools so that educators and students elsewhere could benefit from these insights.