

NAACP Saginaw Branch Critique of Mackinac Center for Public Policy High School Ranking Report

The Mackinac Center for Public policy issued its fourth 2018 Michigan Public High School Performance Report Card in January. The report provides a statistical ranking for all 674 public high schools in the state of Michigan including charter schools. The report is compiled every 2 years dating back to 2012. The stated goal of the report card is to *“provide useful information identifying the relative effectiveness of schools so that parents, educators and school leaders can have a more accurate and well-rounded picture of school performance.”*

The most recent report ranks Saginaw High School as the worst performing high school in the State of Michigan (674th) with a F grade. Arthur Hill High School was ranked the 638th worst performing high school in the state also with a F grade while Bridgeport High School is ranked 629 with an F grade.

Several NAACP Executive Committee members at our meeting on February 2, 2019 brought up the report and requested that an examination of the study be completed and that a response be developed to help parents and community residents understand the significance of the report. This statement is intended to provide perspective and subjective critique of the report. It should not be deemed an analytical rebuttal to the report.

Who is the Mackinac Center for Public Policy?

The Mackinac Center for Public Policy, in Midland, Michigan, is the largest state-based free market think tank in the United States. The Center is a conservative oriented organization that regularly conducts policy research and educational programs. Founded in 1987 the Mackinac Center generally tends to advocate for lower taxes, reduced regulatory authority for state agencies, right-to-work laws, school choice, and enhanced protection of individual property rights. It is a strong proponent of charter schools. The Mackinac Center is classified as a 501(c)(3) organization that derives most of its financial support from foundations and corporate donations.

How is the High School Performance Report Card Report Compiled?

The methodology used for the report utilizes a statistical approach based on regression analysis (statistical process for estimating the relationship between variables). This approach largely relied on student state assessment test scores over the past four years and socioeconomic variables based on the number of students eligible for free-lunch (poverty-level). In short, the approach led to a predicted performance score and an actual average performance score for each building. This ultimately allowed the authors of the report to compare the performance between schools with a calculation indicating the percentage of schools either performing better or worse than a target school as well as rank all of the schools based on their context and performance (CAP) score.

A breakdown of the 674 high schools listed in the report include 573(85%) District Public High Schools, 79 (11.7%) Public Charter High Schools and 22 (3.3%) Selective High Schools (students must test-in or meet certain requirements to attend, i.e., Saginaw Arts & Science Academy).

What are the Major Findings of the Report Pertaining to Saginaw Area Schools?

Information below details the ranking, CAP score, percentage performance and grade letter rating for various high schools in Saginaw County. Saginaw Arts & Sciences Academy is the top-rated high school in Saginaw County and the 10th ranked high school in the State of Michigan.

<u>RANK</u>	<u>SCHOOL</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>SCORE</u>	<u>% RANK</u>	<u>GRADE</u>
10	Saginaw Arts & Sciences Academy	Selective	Saginaw	123.02	98.66%	A
93	Frankenmuth High School	District	Frknmuth	107.57	86.35%	B
134	Chesaning High School	District	Chesaning	105.45	80.27%	B
206	Carrollton High School	District	Carrollton	103.07	69.58%	C
370	Swan Valley High School	District	Swan Valley	99.19	45.25%	C
406	Freeland High School	District	Freeland	98.13	39.91%	C
412	Heritage High School	District	Sag Twp	98.04	39.02%	C
540	Hemlock High School	District	Hemlock	94.67	20.03%	D
629	Bridgeport High School	District	Bridgeport	88.95	6.82%	F
638	Arthur Hill High School	District	Saginaw	87.86	5.49%	F
674	Saginaw High School	District	Saginaw	75.56	0.15%	F

Overall Conclusions and Ramifications of the Report

In general, this report as well as the previous three reports significantly confirm what we already know. There is a direct correlation between poverty and the academic performance of many students. In our view the study falls short of its intended purpose of *“providing useful information identifying the effectiveness of schools so that parents, educators and school leaders can have a more accurate and well-rounded picture of school performance in Michigan.”* In many respects, the report continues to stigmatize many rural and urban schools that struggle academically when they represent the most viable option for many thousands of students across the state. Further, the study historically has not served as a major contributor in guiding decision-making or re-directing limited resources either at the local or state level to address a wide range of socio-economic factors impacting academic performance. The report offers no recommendations for policy or budgetary guidance to address academic performance issues in the state public school system. Finally, the report fails to recognize the fact that even in many of the State’s poorest performing schools there are students who do excel and outstanding teachers and administrators who perform at a high level.

Of particular interest to the NAACP is the lack of examination of other well-researched contributing variables that impact academic performance and the quality of education particularly in urban and rural districts. These include:

- Unreliable and inequitable school funding in the State of Michigan over the years
- High levels of teacher turnover in many urban school districts
- Highly competitive environment for limited number of teacher graduates particularly male teachers and STEM certified teachers
- High levels of turnover with Superintendents and other instability issues associated with inexperienced administrative team members.
- Declining enrollment coupled with building closures which lead to regular shifting of student populations and education delivery teams (teachers/principals) at the building level
- Disproportionate levels of special needs and special education students in many urban districts
- Frequent changes and disagreement at state and federal levels as to what assessment tests to be used

NAACP SAGINAW BRANCH RESOLUTION

*In Response to Mackinac Center for Public Policy Michigan High School Context and Performance Report Card
Adopted March 2, 2019 by NAACP Saginaw Branch Executive Committee*

WHEREAS, the NAACP for more than a century has worked to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate race-based discrimination; and

WHEREAS, the NAACP has adopted education as a key strategic thrust with the purpose of addressing inequalities for disadvantaged and minority students with the overall goal of every child receiving a free, high quality, equitably-funded, public pre-K and K-12 education followed by diverse opportunities for accessible, affordable vocational or post-secondary education; and

WHEREAS, the NAACP education strategic initiative is structured around five specific areas of emphasis including increasing resource equity by targeting funds to neediest kids, ensuring college and career readiness for all students, improving teacher development and training, improving discipline and a moratorium on the authorization of more charter schools; and

WHEREAS, the NAACP Saginaw Branch fully concurs with the strategic direction and goals established at the national level; and

WHEREAS, the NAACP Saginaw Branch has completed a review of the 2018 Michigan Context and Performance Report Card authored by the Mackinac Center for Public Policy that includes letter grades and performance ranking for all 674 public high schools in Michigan; and

WHEREAS, the 2018 Mackinac Center for Public Policy High School Performance Report ranks several Saginaw County high schools among the poorest performing high schools in the State of Michigan including Arthur Hill High School, Bridgeport High School and Saginaw High School; and

WHEREAS, the NAACP Saginaw Branch's examination of the Mackinac Center for Public Policy High School Performance Report concludes that the report does little to further public discourse that would contribute to solving academic performance issues in our schools; and

WHEREAS, the NAACP further concludes that the Mackinac Center Report continues the stigmatization of rural and urban schools by further propagating that assessment tests represent the best way to identify good or poor performance; and

WHEREAS, the NAACP feels that the Mackinac Center Report on High Schools completely ignores important variables that impact academic performance particularly in urban schools including ongoing unreliable and inequitable state funding, teacher and administrative turnover, limited numbers of teacher graduates and STEM certified educators, declining enrollment, building closures that lead to the shifting of students and teachers to frequently and disproportionate levels of special needs and special education students;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Executive Committee of the NAACP Saginaw Branch requests and challenges the Mackinac Center for Public Policy to divert and direct its considerable research capability and resources toward delineating strategies and plans that go beyond parental choice and the authorization of more charter schools that will demonstrably impact academic performance in so-called "underperforming" schools and that would provide sustainable and equitable funding for public schools in the State of Michigan.