



Each January, the Governor of the state of Michigan presents a formal State of the State Address before a joint session of the Michigan state House and Senate.

The address is an opportunity for the Governor to present her reform plans and legislative priorities for the coming year. The address is also typically packed with loaded terms and insider-language meant to sound appealing while hiding budgetary and policy realities.

To help viewers, parents, teachers, lawmakers and members of the press better unpack some of these terms and their implication in the context of policymaking at the state Capitol, the Great Lakes Education Project has compiled the following glossary for your easy reference.

For comment following the speech, more information, or background on education topics raised in the address, please contact Beth DeShone at bdeshone@glep.org.

LIKELY TERM

IMPORTANT BACKGROUND

Evaluations

Michigan has a teacher and administrator evaluation law that requires the use of student achievement data to ensure that educators are effectively educating students. The current control of data distribution from the Michigan Department of Education is not working for educators and parents to have transparent and measurable information to affect teaching and learning in classrooms.

Funding (Fair or Increase)

References to “fair” or “increased” funding for public schools almost always reference traditional public schools, excluding public charter schools. Governor Whitmer last fall vetoed \$36 million in per-pupil funding for public school students in public charter schools, while holding harmless students in traditional publics.

Great Teachers

We have thousands of fantastic educators in Michigan who deserve to be recognized for their hard work and dedication to students. That is why efforts should be made to ensure that these educators are supported with merit pay.

Letter Grades

References to letter grades may be made, and the letter grade concept embraced, for roads and bridges or other areas of state performance measurement. Any such suggestion should be looked at with reservation.

The Whitmer administration is in violation of state law that requires her Department of Education to provide parents with letter grades for their students’ public schools.

Public schools

When Gov. Whitmer references public schools, she almost exclusively means traditional public schools, to the exclusion of public charter schools.

Public charter schools are 100% tuition free, open to every student, and led by state certified public school teachers.

Retention

The state’s 3rd grade reading law goes into full effect this year, and an incredibly small percentage of students may face retention until they can read at grade level. Studies show the benefits of being adequately prepared to advance far outweigh the burden associated with repeating the 3rd grade.