BOLD, COMPASSIONATE, ATTENTIVE: 2018 Superintendent of the Year
DR. JEANICE KERR SWIFT

MSU’s EPIC seeks to be a research partner with districts.

Educator Shortage Workgroup exploring solutions
Researchers at EPIC are committed to forming sustainable partnerships with district leaders, state officials and policymakers to identify pressing concerns. Then, using multiple disciplinary perspectives and methodologies, EPIC will produce rigorous, multi-methods research that leaders can use to form meaningful education policy and practices that can help improve educational outcomes for students in Michigan and beyond. “This is the next generation of research,” said Dr. Katharine Strunk, EPIC co-director and MSU’s Clifford E. Erickson Distinguished Chair in Education. “It will break new ground not only in helping us understand how specific policies work—or fail to work—but to highlight how policy change affects children of different backgrounds and needs. We not only evaluate what works, but answer how, why and for whom, beginning with the neediest students.”

Professor Strunk has more than a decade of experience implementing state and district partnerships in California and elsewhere. The College of Education recruited her to help build and lead EPIC’s work in Michigan. That work at EPIC was begun by EPIC co-director Dr. Joshua Cowen, associate professor of education policy at MSU, in the belief that answering the need for evidence-based policymaking requires collaboration between researchers and state and local stakeholders. Through deep, local partnerships, EPIC can use and expand existing community capacity to respond to state and federal policy changes. EPIC also is combining efforts with the Michigan Department of Education (MDE), the Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI), and the University of Michigan to launch...
new research projects on behalf of and for the benefit of MDE. These research projects will include exploratory analyses of MDE-initiated questions and formal research that allows for more in-depth analyses. By working with MDE and combining resources, EPIC will play a direct role in the state’s “Top Ten in Ten” strategic plan to improve academic outcomes within the next decade.

EPIC researchers will work closely with leaders in state Partnership Districts, as well as with leaders in other districts who request support, to provide data and analysis with the ultimate goal of improving instruction for all students in Michigan.

“We will be the research arm on policy issues for both the state and our local district partners,” Cowen said.

The center’s work will focus on several strands of research: school performance and improvement; school choice and student mobility; and recruiting and retaining educators, particularly in high needs areas.

“We know that the need for a skilled workforce that can respond to a changing labor market requires higher levels of education,” Strunk said. “These relationships require holistic approaches to policy and practice. The most valuable analysis integrates these strands into a larger whole and creates a big picture approach to the research.”

EPIC’s work is being supported by private foundations and Michigan State University, continuing the university’s emphasis on outreach and service.

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