



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about Michigan Intermediate School Districts (ISDs)

Q. What is an Intermediate School District?

A. An Intermediate School District (ISD) is a regional educational service agency. When first formed, they were named Intermediate School Districts but now they may also be called Regional Educational Service Agencies (RESAs), Educational Service Agencies (ESAs), Regional Educational Service Districts (RESDs), or Educational Service Districts (ESDs).

Q. When and Why were ISDs formed?

A. The Michigan Legislature formed ISDs in 1962 to offer quality and equitable educational opportunities for students and schools throughout the state.

Q. How many ISDs are in Michigan?

A. Michigan has 56 ISDs covering 83 counties.

Q. Who do ISDs serve?

A. ISDs serve school districts, educators, students, families and, ultimately, the community within their geographic service area.

Q. What is an ISD service area?

A. The service area or boundary of an ISD spans a designated number of local school districts. The number of districts varies among ISDs. Some ISDs serve districts in just one county, while others may encompass several counties.

Q. How do ISDs achieve their purpose?

A. ISDs provide quality programs, services, initiatives and support needed to help equitably and effectively educate all students by:

- Creating and promoting economies of scale (especially for programs and services that are highly specialized or that would be far too expensive for an individual district to offer);
- Sharing current and credible educational research, best practices and innovation;
- Providing oversight when required; and
- Serving as liaisons when needed.

Q. What do ISDs do for my local schools and community?

A. ISDs work with local school districts, the Michigan Department of Education, business and industry, and community groups to support student achievement and leverage resources in the following areas:

- **Teaching and Learning:** ISDs offer thousands of professional learning sessions each year to educators, keeping them current on the latest research and teaching methods.
- **Specialized Student Services:** ISDs help local school districts meet ever-growing needs in Early Childhood (birth to age 5) and Parent Education, Early Literacy and Mathematics, Special Education (birth to age 26), Career and Technical Education, Career Preparation, Talent Development, Online and Digital courses, Early/Middle College, Student Activities, Extended Day, Alternative and Adult Education programs, and Court-Involved Youth and Homeless Education programs.
- **Shared Operational Services:** ISDs provide quality, efficiency and cost containment when they help districts share services in technology, instruction, transportation, business, communication and support services, teacher and school staff training and purchasing.
- **Developing Partnerships:** ISDs are often key partners in local economic development through their community ties with colleges and universities, businesses, industries and human service agencies. Many of these partnerships benefit our schools and students by readying them for 21st Century careers.
- **Technology Services:** ISDs are technology leaders in their region. ISDs often manage the area's fiber network, provide internet access, obtain lower costs for computer hardware and software, provide internet safety filters, purchase digital collections, promote online and digital learning options, and provide technical support.
- **School Improvement, Assessment and Mandates:** ISDs help member districts follow often-complex state and federal education standards, meet state and federal requirements, secure grants, measure student performance and growth, and assist low-performing schools.

Q. What other programs and services can ISDs provide for my local schools and community?

A. Each ISD customizes services to meet the unique needs of its service area. Each ISD works within its local school districts to develop a specific mix of products, programs and services to maximize benefits for that area.

Q. How do ISDs deliver programs and services?

A. Michigan's ISDs help communities make the best use of resources in educating students by collaborating with school districts, higher education, nonprofit organizations, business and others to bring key programs and services to our schools. Through this regional collaboration, ISDs can provide programs like Literacy and Mathematics Coaches, Early Childhood Education Programs, Career and Technical Education and Special Education. ISDs help educate students using specialized equipment, technology and expertise that would be far too costly for any local district to fund. Support services like bulk purchasing, technology or payroll may also be on the list of requested ISD services. As school districts request specific programs and services, ISDs design ways to meet those requests. That's why services may vary from one ISD to another.

Q. Who oversees ISDs?

A. Each ISD has its own Board of Education which approves all official policies, budgets, staff and plans in open, public meetings. The school board hires and evaluates the ISD Superintendent, who then manages the services and staff of the organization. For more ISDs, members of this five-or-more-person board are elected by the school boards of local districts to serve for six-year terms. Typically, the community members nominated to an ISD board have previously served as school board members in a local district. ISDs serve the education needs of their constituent local districts; therefore, local school board members elect ISD board members. Each local school board casts one vote. This provides for geographic representation that balances large and small school districts, as well as urban, suburban and rural. [These four ISD school boards are publicly elected by the voters in their region: Gogebic-Ontonagon ISD, Midland County ESA, COOR (Crawford, Oscoda, Ogemaw, Roscommon) ISD, and Charlevoix-Emmet ISD.]

Additional transparency comes through public meetings, along with the official documents, budgets, independent financial audits, and the extensive reports and large amounts of information posted on each ISD's public website. Plus, periodic elections to vote on millage renewals or other important issues keep ISDs accountable to their voters. Oversight can

also come from the local association of school boards, the superintendents' association, special education administrators, parents/guardians and others.

Plus, the Michigan Department of Education helps ensure ISDs comply with state and federal regulations and requirements.

Q. What laws govern ISDs?

A. ISDs are accountable under state and federal laws and statutes, including (but not limited to):

- Michigan's Revised School Code
- Michigan's School Aid Act
- Open Meetings Act (OMA)
- Annual public budget hearings
- Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act
- Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- Michigan's Rules for Special Education
- Every Student Succeeds Act
- Elementary and Secondary Education Act

Q. Why are they called ISDs?

A. An ISD is an "Intermediate School District." The word "intermediate" means "between two things." In this case, it refers to ISDs operating between the Michigan Department of Education and the local school district. Regardless of what they're called, today ISDs still fulfill this original purpose in many ways, including managing pupil accounting and pass-through funding from the state to the schools. They also help local school districts understand and implement regulations and requirements, such as those contained in the Michigan Merit Curriculum and Medicaid reimbursement rules.

"School District" refers both to its legal function and to its primary customer, the local school district.

Q. Where can I get more information?

A. Contact your Intermediate School District or visit the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (MAISA) website at www.gomaisa.org or call MAISA at 517.327.9263.