# Education

**Applied Policy Research and Training to Improve Educational Outcomes**

**M** | EDUCATION POLICY INITIATIVE

Since 2012, the Education Policy Initiative (EPI) at the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy has generated and supported rigorous research to help policymakers make evidence-based investments that address institutional and systemic barriers and improve educational outcomes across the country.

## Inequities in education is one of the most pressing challenges facing our country today.

*"Education has the power to improve outcomes and address inequality, but identifying which policies and programs work and why can be challenging. Many of the most pressing questions about education policy are of a causal nature, that is, how does a particular policy affect an outcome that we care about? For example, does universal preschool improve academic outcomes? Why don't more low-income students apply to selective colleges?"*

**Christina Weiland**, EPI Co-Director

Inequality and bias permeate the policies and practices in the education systems we study — and how they are studied. Addressing these structural problems is hard work and requires an honest examination.

EPI aims to inform evidence-based policy making in education. We use causal inference methods to identify the impact of specific policies, programs, and practices to improve student success and education outcomes. Using this leading-edge methodological expertise, EPI works to:

- Produce rigorous empirical evidence

- Inform education policy debates and discussions nationwide

- Build capacity among policymakers, educational practitioners, parents, and students for evidence-based education reform

- Train the next generation of education policy researchers

- Extend and strengthen the network of professionals who share an interest in improving educational equity and access

# What we do

EPI accomplishes its mission through rigorous research, state and local partnerships, interdisciplinary events, training and mentorship, and the distinctive Michigan Education Data Center.

## Research

EPI researchers are actively engaged in a variety of research and policy endeavors, including evaluations of early literacy interventions, career and technical education, programs aimed at increasing college readiness among high schoolers, improving the rates at which low-income students enroll in high quality postsecondary institutions, and ultimately ensuring that the effects of education policies are aimed to improve outcomes for children into adulthood.

## Training

EPI offers fellowships, apprenticeships, internships and specialized courses for masters and pre-doctoral (PhD) students, as well as post-doctoral researchers in training. These opportunities are aimed at deepening skills, knowledge, and expertise in the application of causal inference methods to education policy research and practice. Participants work productively in partnership with education policymakers and practitioners, and many secure positions in prestigious institutions that inform critical education policies.

## Policy Engagement & Events

EPI has established formal research collaborations with many state education agencies — including in Florida, Massachusetts, Michigan, Texas, and Tennessee — and engages with local education practitioners and researchers at other leading universities.

EPI hosts speakers and events that bring together scholars from different disciplines, schools, and departments to share knowledge about education policies and practices, which improve outcomes for students and reduce long-term inequalities.

## Michigan Education Data Center

Housed at the Ford School, MEDC operates as a secure data clearinghouse and aims to help researchers use Michigan's education data to uncover critical insights about children, schools, and educational interventions that improve outcomes for students. MEDC is part of the Michigan Education Research Institute (MERI), a groundbreaking partnership launched in 2018 between the University of Michigan, Michigan State University, the Michigan Department of Education, and the Center for Educational Performance and Information.

# Meet Our Experts

### Kevin Stange, Co-Director

Kevin Stange is an associate professor of public policy at the University of Michigan. He teaches graduate courses in higher education policy, economics, and quantitative methods. Professor Stange's research lies broadly in empirical labor and public economics, with a focus on education and health care. His prior research includes studies of college enrollment and persistence, the effect of resources and peers on community college students, the importance of amenities in college choice, and the effects of different pricing structures on major choice and student credit load. He is currently conducting research on the effects of price deregulation in higher education and the importance of school capital investment in K12. He has also researched changes in the health care workforce and occupational licensing.

### Christina Weiland, Co-Director

Christina Weiland is an associate professor at the University of Michigan's School of Education, with a courtesy appointment at the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy.  She also serves as core faculty for the University of Michigan's Predoctoral Training Program and Postdoctoral Training Program in Causal Inference in Education Policy Research. Professor Weiland's research focuses on the effects of early childhood interventions and public policies on children's development, especially on children from low-income families. She is particularly interested in the active ingredients that drive children's gains in successful, at-scale public preschool programs. She is also interested in quantitative research methods, educational measurement, and developmental processes research. Her work is also characterized by strong, long-standing research collaborations with practitioners, particularly the Boston Public Schools Department of Early Childhood.

### Brian Jacob, Co-Founder

Brian A. Jacob is the Walter H. Annenberg Professor of Education Policy and professor of economics at the Ford School, and is co-director of the Youth Policy Lab. Professor Jacob's primary fields of interest are labor economics, program evaluation, and the economics of education. Professor Jacob's current research focuses on urban school reform, with a particular emphasis on standards and accountability initiatives. At the Ford School, he teaches "Economics of Education" and classes focused on education policy.

### Katherine Michelmore, Affiliate Faculty

Katherine Michelmore is an associate professor of public policy at the University of Michigan's Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy. She was an Institute of Education Sciences (IES) postdoctoral fellow at the Ford School's Education Policy Initiative from 2014-2016, working with Susan Dynarski and Brian Jacob on issues surrounding inequality in education. Professor Michelmore's research interests include family policy, education policy, social demography, and inequality.