

**For Immediate Release**

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## **North Ed Breaks Ground on Joseph C. Fisher Early Childhood & Family Center Renovations**

### *Redeveloped Building Honors Longtime Board of Education President*

**TRAVERSE CITY, Mich.** – For nearly half a century, Joe Fisher has demonstrated a steadfast commitment to education. That dedication was honored Tuesday as Northwest Education Services (North Ed) held a groundbreaking ceremony to mark the beginning of renovations at the newly named Joseph C. Fisher Early Childhood & Family Center.

North Ed acquired the building, at 1050 Silver Drive, Traverse City, in March 2023 from Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services. Tuesday's event marks an official launch to renovate the facility and the public unveiling of its new name honoring Joe Fisher, who has served on the North Ed Board of Education for 48 years. Fisher chose not to seek re-election this year and will finish his final term in June as board president.

"I am fortunate to have been a member of the North Ed Board of Education for so many years, and it has been a privilege to serve the children and families of Northwest Michigan," Fisher said. "This recognition is deeply appreciated, and I am excited to see the changes happening at this center. Under the care and direction of the exceptional people who work here, I am confident it will have a lasting positive impact on the lives of young children and families in our community for years to come."

Renovations at the 12,000-square-foot facility are slated to take place throughout the remainder of this calendar year. Improvements include the creation of spacious new conference rooms, enhanced accessibility to restrooms, a thoughtfully designed outdoor play area featuring accessibility-friendly surfaces, an engaging indoor play area, alongside space for a model onsite infant toddler child care setting that will serve up to eight children.

The establishment of the Joseph C. Fisher Early Childhood & Family Center addresses a need – identified through North Ed's 2021 facilities assessment and strategic planning efforts – to consolidate Early Childhood staff, who were spread across multiple locations. One facility will allow the Early Childhood team to better coordinate internally and with partner agencies to improve training opportunities and support regionally, while also increasing community access to early childhood services, such as playgroups, parent education, child assessments, developmental screenings and early intervention programs.

"Bringing our dedicated Early Childhood team together into one space will undoubtedly enhance their ability to serve our students, families and the wider early childhood community," said Dr.

Nick Ceglarek, North Ed superintendent. “President Fisher’s unwavering dedication has shaped North Ed for nearly five decades. It is truly a privilege to name this building in his honor. His years on the board have been driven by a passion for ensuring all students have the opportunity to thrive, and early childhood education lays such a critical foundation for success throughout a person’s life.”

The North Ed Board of Education began a process to acquire the former Pine Rest facility in June 2022. In March 2023, North Ed announced the addition of the building to its Arnell Campus, along with an arrangement to leaseback a portion of the building to Pine Rest as the organization found a new location. Minor renovations and technology updates occurred in spring 2023, allowing some Early Childhood staff members to occupy the building for the 2023-24 school year. Pine Rest fully vacated the space in December 2024.

GMB Architects + Engineering is leading the project. Renovations are estimated to cost \$2.92 million, and anticipated to be complete by January 2026. North Ed pays for capital improvement projects through its dedicated capital project funds, derived from local operating millage, and state and federal sources.

In addition to his time on the North Ed Board of Education, Joe Fisher is a dedicated attorney with the law firm [Alward Fisher](#) and a member of the Grand Traverse-Leelanau-Antrim Bar Association. He is a past Rotarian and previously served as chairman of the Elk Rapids Harbor Commission.

North Ed’s [Early Childhood](#) team plays a crucial role in the community, providing support and resources to young learners, families and early childhood professionals across the region. The Joseph C. Fisher Early Childhood & Family Center will further amplify their impact by creating a central location for collaboration and direct services.

[North Ed](#) is an intermediate school district serving Antrim, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska and Leelanau counties. North Ed provides a range of specialized services and programs to local school districts, educators, students and families, with a strong commitment to early childhood education, special education, career and technical education, and more.

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*Photos below*



Above and below: Joe Fisher, president of the Northwest Education Services Board of Education, speaks during a groundbreaking ceremony Tuesday. The event was held to commemorate renovations to the newly named Joseph C. Fisher Early Childhood & Family Center, at 1050 Silver Drive, Traverse City. Fisher has served on North Ed's board for 48 years, and will end his final term in June.







North Ed administrators and board members participate in a groundbreaking ceremony Tuesday for the Joseph C. Fisher Early Childhood & Family Center. From left, Yvonne Donohoe, Early Childhood director; Shawn Biddle, CFO; Superintendent Dr. Nick Ceglarek; Board President Joe Fisher; Vice President Rachael Birgy; Trustee Jim Scherrer.





Above: North Ed Board of Education President Joe Fisher, second from right, poses with members of his family. Below: Fisher poses with members of North Ed's Early Childhood team.

