



Pre K-12 Public Education

A Michigan Platform

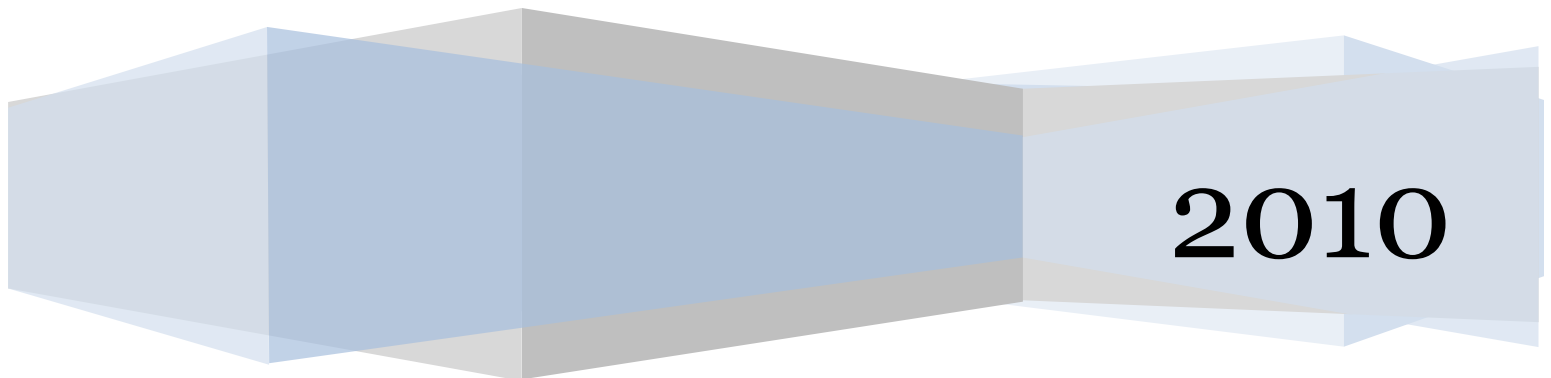


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AFT Michigan, AFT, AFL-CIO is a union of 35,000-members working in K-12 and intermediate school districts, community colleges, universities, and local government. The 97 locals extend as far south as Monroe and north to Whitefish Township in the Upper Peninsula.

Overview: *Michigan's future depends on the quality of education it provides for learners of all ages.*

Education reform has taken a center stage on both the state and federal level.

One thing remains clear: educators, parents and other stakeholders want a quality education for all students, and recognize that this means supporting “what works” in public schools. They want schools with high standards and high expectations; where all students are safe and secure; where there are small class sizes; where there are highly qualified teachers and support staff; and where schools ensure post-secondary education and career readiness. Toward that end, AFT Michigan has identified the following priorities for Michigan’s public schools. These priorities consider state policy changes and initiatives within the context of reform.

AFT Michigan has always advocated for accountability, transparency, and meaningful research based initiatives. Unfortunately, these same principles have been used to justify a narrow view of educational reform that assumes that the only factors that impact a child’s education are within the four walls of a school. Accountability and transparency must encompass all educational stakeholders from students to teachers to administrators, and not just be used as a political tool to attack a particular group. Reforms must be meaningful, proven and based on the findings of quality research, and not just the result of trendy “silver bullet” solutions. Otherwise we are gambling with our children’s future by implementing policy that ignores the research and is not based on the evidence of impact.

Michigan has seen a series of reforms emerge in the name of these principles: accountability, transparency, and research-based.

Unfortunately too many are supported only by popular belief and personal agendas. AFT Michigan has identified a broader scope of priorities for Michigan public schools, policies and programs drawn from educational research. By name, some of these priorities mirror state and federal reforms. However, reforms, like books, should not be judged by their “covers,” but by the research behind them. These measures call for:

- **Ensuring a Well-rounded Curriculum**
- **Cultivating Quality Teaching and Learning**
- **Using Research-Based Best Practices**
- **Providing Safe and Supportive Learning Environments**
- **Enhancing School Infrastructure**
- **Early Childhood and Pre-school Programs**
- **Small Class Sizes**
- **Academic Assistance for Struggling Students**
- **Supporting Effective School Improvement Strategies**
- **Strong Special Education Programs**
- **Community Responsibility**
- **Necessary School Funding**

Ensuring a Well-Rounded Curriculum

Issues

All children, regardless of neighborhood, deserve to be exposed to a rich, well-sequenced curriculum, starting before kindergarten. A curriculum that is overly broad or shallow fails to teach students basic skills and is not desirable, but it is also clear that increased testing requirements have squeezed music, arts, history, and other non-tested subjects out of the curriculum. Just because something is easily tested does not inherently make it more important. A well-rounded and rich common curriculum is essential to preparing students to be college and career ready.

The strength of a curriculum rests on the standards that frame learning experiences. Standards define the knowledge and skills that students should acquire within their K-12 education careers so that they will graduate high school and finish their post-secondary education career ready. They are also vital for ensuring that we hold all students to high expectations. Currently governors and state commissioners of education from 48 states and the District of Columbia have committed to developing **Common Core Standards** in English-Language Arts and Mathematics for grades K-12. This Common Core State Standard Initiative (CCSSI) is creating standards that are clear, understandable, aligned with college and work expectations, rigorous in content and higher-order skill application, and evidenced based. Fortunately, the Michigan Department of Education has voted unanimously to adopt these standards.

The ability for students to master common core standards throughout their education largely depends on their ability to read. Early in their school career, students learn to read so that as they progress they are able to read to learn. When students struggle with reading acquisition early on, their entire academic career is impacted because reading is the way learning is communicated across science, technology,

engineering, mathematics (the STEM disciplines), the arts and the social studies.

Whether when learning to read or in any other discipline, it is essential to evaluate student progress. There are several ways to evaluate student learning by using different assessments. Assessment is a way of observing student learning in order to provide feedback on student's progress and inform future learning experiences. Student assessment must consider **multiple measures of student learning** (not just standardized tests) in order to provide thorough information about their progress. Standardized testing can be useful tool, but only if it is aligned with a rich curriculum (tied to common core standards).

Our curriculum must support our hopes for the next generation. It must provide children with the knowledge, skills, and tools to lead successful and meaningful lives. When a student's progress towards mastering this curriculum is assessed, those assessments must be high quality and tied to standards that foster student learning.

Actions

The following will ensure a well-rounded curriculum and quality measurements of student learning

Social Studies, Science, The Arts, and Physical Education: These important disciplines must be included in curricular frameworks even though these are subjects that are not often included in high-stakes testing. This has led to the perception that "if it's not tested, it's not important enough to incorporate into the school day." The CCSSI should continue its work by developing common core standards for these important subjects in order to ensure that they do not vanish from our schools.

Well-Rounded School Models: Schools must provide a range of high-quality extra-curricular programming.

Common Core Standards: Although Michigan already has some of the strongest state standards, adopting the Common Core State Standards only strengthens what is already in play.

Professional Development: In order for curriculum to meet its goals, it has to be implemented as intended, which means procuring essential resources and professional development. It is essential that staff receive high quality professional development that is aimed at developing good teaching and learning and is aligned with common academic standards.

Reading for Early Learners: There is no stronger educational research finding than the importance of developing early literacy skills. State funding for quality pre-school and all-day kindergarten programs allows children to develop the language, vocabulary, and conceptual skills – all of which contribute to become an active reader.

Comprehensive Reading Instruction: Reading instruction must include the proven combination of individualized, small group, and whole class instruction. Class-size matters when teaching reading, and therefore should be small enough so that each student receives the attention they deserve. Furthermore, reading programs should be evidence-based, accommodate different learning styles and fully implemented. No matter how powerful a reading program may be when it's designed, its effectiveness lies in its implementation. This means programs must be fully funded and staff must have access to all necessary supplies, materials, and professional development. If we want our children and our educators to be successful, we must set them up for success.

Quality Assessment: Quality assessment means using a variety of assessment tools, including multiple measures of student performance, and aligning assessment tools with curricular standards. This also means including educators in developing, evaluating, and revising assessments so that they are accurate and valid measures of student learning.

Responsible Student Testing: High-quality, responsible student testing that supports and enhances teaching and learning, and is linked to instruction can be a useful instruction tool. But testing should not overshadow the importance of student learning, particularly in disciplines that we currently have not developed standardized tests for. Similarly, high stakes testing should not be overemphasized or carry a disproportionate weight in high-stakes school decisions.

Cultivating Quality Teaching and Learning

Issues

It is undeniable that teachers and support staff play an essential role in providing a high-quality education for students. Therefore it is necessary to provide our students with highly qualified teacher in every classroom. This requires that the state help recruit, train, and retain a highly qualified teaching, paraprofessional, and support staff force.

Every student should have access to a teacher who holds students to high expectations, knows the subject matter, cares deeply about their students, can differentiate instruction, understands how to assess student, uses data to inform instruction, works collaboratively, is supported by a quality administration, and participates in the evaluation and development plans that inform student learning.

There has been much debate recently about what are the characteristics of a quality teacher. Research shows that those who performed best are ushered into the profession through a practical, proven and realistic training process that includes mentoring and professional development. A study conducted by the National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research found that teacher credential (being highly qualified) and having at least 3 years of teaching experience were positively correlated with student achievement. (Clotfelter et al. 2007) Similarly, Huang and Moon 2009) found that teaching experience at a particular grade level was significantly associated with increased student reading achievement. These are important finding, especially now that trendy policy solutions seek to plug inexperienced teachers into classrooms.

Actions

The following areas will ensure that every student learns from high quality teachers and support staff.

***Professional Teaching Standards:** Teaching requires instructors to be masters of content, engaging facilitators, and leaders of a classroom community. Including all stakeholders in developing professional teaching standards will ensure that the expectations and values we set on teachers are reflected in how they are evaluated and how they are supported.

***Teacher Evaluation:** When done effectively, evaluating teachers is an extremely important professional development tool. Moreover, every evaluation system must ensure that evaluation and development is designed to improve teaching and learning. As educational experts, a teacher's perspective is essential for deciding what constitutes the principles of "good teaching" and what it takes to improve student achievement. Therefore, it is essential that teachers are involved in developing and implementing evaluative tools including peer assistance and review. Teacher evaluation, like student evaluation, should include mixed measures of success and consist of a combination of teaching standards and student learning variables.

***Positive Learning and Work Environments:** Safe, modern, and healthy working environments are conditions that maximize teachers and support staff abilities and are essential for attracting and retaining highly qualified educators.

***Professional Development:** Effective teachers are cultivated through high quality, job-embedded professional development that is aligned with appropriate standards and curriculum. Even extraordinary teachers benefit from meaningful professional development that is research-based. Support staff also benefit from meaningful professional development. Investing funds in purposeful professional development is investing in student learning.

***Prepared for Challenges:** Working with children requires a variety of skill sets, especially because challenging situations often arise quickly and unpredictably. Therefore staff should receive training in conflict resolution and other techniques to support student and group behaviors.

***Professional Salaries and Benefits:** Fairly compensating teachers and staff is essential to retaining quality educators and attracting others to the profession.

Using Research Based Practices

Issues

Our children's education is too important to wager on unproven practices and policies. Research-grounded knowledge is essential to developing and implementing sound policies and to enhancing professional practice. Too often, policy makers, even those that herald the importance of research and data driven decision-making, grasp at "silver bullet" policies and trendy reforms trumpeted by the media and popular opinion. Michigan students deserve practices that are backed by educational research.

Action Steps

Research should inform educational policy.

Research Based Reform: As other states have implemented reform initiatives, strong bodies of research have illuminated the strengths and weaknesses of such policies. We must learn from these lessons. Only policies supported by evidence should be adopted. This means questioning policies that emerge simply based on public belief or political agenda.

Comprehensive and Relevant Data: We can certainly learn a lot about educational quality through student achievement data. But in too many places student learning has become a euphemism for "test scores." Evaluating the merits of a school or a reform practice calls for mixed research methods that examine more than one type of data. This is the only way to provide a clear picture of whether educational practices are benefiting students.

Quality Research and Accurate Conclusions: There is a growing body of educational research. In order to draw sound conclusions, research must be methodologically sound. Similarly, policy makers sometimes distort research findings and conclusions to support personal opinions. This requires decision makers to be scrupulous.

Safe and Supportive Learning Environments

Issues

Even the best teachers cannot help their students succeed in a classroom that lacks necessary up to date teaching tools. Similarly, when students and teachers are distracted by the conflict, fear, and blight present in some schools, learning is impacted. Teachers will excel and students will succeed only if they are provided with safe and supportive learning environments, where they can work together to focus on the lessons at hand.

Many students come to school with needs that impede their ability to thrive academically. If we are serious about increasing student learning and closing achievement gaps, we must address factors that are beyond the control of teachers and schools yet have a direct effect on student outcomes. Healthcare, social services, and parental involvement are often divorced from school life, even though they are critical to student success. These supports are even more vital now, given our struggling economy.

Actions

Commit to safe and supportive learning environments.

***Community Schools:** Community Schools create a culture and environment that nurtures children and their families. There are successful models of community schools in Michigan and across the country where school buildings are open all day and evening for tutoring, homework assistance, and recreational activities. Medical, dental, recreational, counseling and childcare services would be available to meet the community's needs.

***Clear and Comprehensive Code of Conduct:** School communities must adopt clear disciplinary expectations that support student learning and are consistently applied.

***Support Services:** Schools are not just places where academic learning occurs, but they are also the settings for social interactions. Guidance counselors, school psychologists, school social workers and other support staff are essential to fostering a student's emotional and social growth.

***Wraparound Services:** All students must be ready to learn when they enter their classroom: this means ensuring that they are physically and emotionally healthy. Some students, especially those from low-income communities, depend on the services provided at school. Preparing students for future success requires addressing health issues now. Wrap-around services range from mental and physical health services to family supports.

***Accommodations:** Students have unique issues, learning styles, and abilities. Therefore, learning environments should consider each student and should accommodate to their needs.

***Professional Development:** Staff need to be supported when addressing the need of individual students and fostering a productive learning environment for all students. This requires that staff receive professional development opportunities on issues such as classroom management and conflict resolution so that they are prepared to handle challenging situations.

Enhancing School Infrastructure

Issues

We can all agree that Michigan's children deserve high quality teachers and support staff, and first-rate instructional materials. But a quality education and student achievement does not depend solely on these two things. Student success also is dependent on healthy, safe, well maintained, and adequately equipped schools. Similarly the health and well-being of students and staff also impacts student achievement.

Recently it has become trendy to ignore many of the factors that contribute to providing quality education, and attribute the success and failure of schools solely to teachers and support staff. The bottom line is that teachers and support staff are very important, and therefore it is extremely important to set them up with the conditions that will most likely support their success. This means acknowledging obstacles they may face in the work-place and investing in fixing them.

One of the most recognizable obstacles is a school's infrastructure. The research is unequivocal: poor school building conditions are a serious threat to the health and academic performance of students. The reality of outdated schools and other structures as harmful is especially felt in our schools city.

Decaying buildings, poor ventilation, and out of date facilities hardly display a commitment to high standards or improving student achievement. By updating dilapidated buildings, and investing in green and sustainable schools we provide students and staff with an environment that promotes learning.

Action

Addressing school infrastructure problems begins by considering:

***Physical Spaces:** Existing buildings should be surveyed and assessed so that they can be improved.

***School Design:** School districts - especially those with the greatest needs – need assistance in developing effective school design, renovation and construction programs.

***Greening Our Schools:** With the design and construction of new schools, and the renovation of older buildings, we should invest in greening our schools. This means prioritizing energy efficiency and environmentally friendly practices. Not only will this hold us to standards of healthy living and environmental sustainability, but it also passes on this important message to our students by having them learn in such a context.

***Funding:** There are expenses associated with updating facilities. Necessary state and federal assistance is imperative.

Early Childhood and Pre-School Programs

Issue

Early childhood programs have an immediate short-term impact on ensuring that children are “school ready,” but researchers have also found that whether or not children attend pre-school is a predictor for their likeliness to be retained a grade, to graduate high school, increase their earning power, and even avoid prison! (Reynolds, 2004) (Perry Preschool Study 2005) Unfortunately not all families have the resources to provide pre-school for their children.

Actions

We encourage state leaders to become stakeholders in our children’s future by supporting accessible and affordable statewide high-quality early childhood.

***Accessible to All Children:** The State of Michigan currently has two early learning programs, Head Start (federally funded) and MSRP (state funded). While these programs reach some children, we need to expand programming throughout the state. We believe that providing all children, regardless of their families’ financial standing, access to pre-school is a social justice issue.

***Mandatory Preschool and Kindergarten:** It is important the students do not fall behind in their early years; therefore all should attend pre-school and kindergarten.

***Adequately Funded:** There needs to be an increase in early childhood education funding to ensure access to support services and quality programming. Money invested in early childhood education is money saved in on later intervention programs. (Perry Preschool Project)

***High Quality Staff:** Our early learners deserve high quality early childhood staff that is skilled, competent, consistent, caring and ade-

quately paid. The impact of pre-school is connected to its quality. Therefore demanding a highly qualified early childhood workforce is of utmost importance.

***Developmentally Appropriate.** Learning experiences must be age appropriate and individual appropriate.

Small Class Sizes

Issue

Recently much debate has centered on whether class size actually matters for student learning. For years some of the most methodologically sound educational studies, like the Tennessee Star Project, have shown that small classes lead to an increase in student achievement. Other studies have also found that class size reduction has benefits that are not so easily measured like increased student engagement and a greater likelihood of addressing individual learning styles. So why is there even a debate?

Most studies that claim that class size does not matter usually only measure the impact of class size on standardized tests. Some of these studies have found that an extraordinary teacher can offset the importance of a small class. While this may be true, even the most talented teachers could have a greater impact in a smaller classroom. Small class sizes benefit students beyond just raising their test score. They provide a learning environment that nurtures cognitive, emotional, and social growth. We know that a small student teacher ratio benefits children, but those who deny its impact usually do so against research because they are reluctant to provide the necessary resources.

Actions

State leaders can raise student achievement and provide nurturing learning environments.

*** Funding Class Size Reduction:** This is especially important in the elementary grades, where a small student to teacher ratio has its greatest impact.

***High-Qualified Staff:** It is essential that all students have a highly qualified teacher. It is also important not to diminish the importance of paraprofessionals and other support staff in contributing to a positive learning environment.

Support staff allow for more individualized and small group instruction.

Academic Assistance for Struggling Students

The Issue

Not all students are the same. Some students require additional assistance and support to reach their full potential. Supporting struggling students is a necessary step towards reducing Michigan's dropout rate and ensuring that our education system works for all students. Providing meaningful assistance for those that struggle requires *identifying struggling students, implementing early intervention strategies, and supporting full accountability for all educational personnel.*

Michigan's graduation rate of 75 % (CEPI Graduation Report, 2009), means that in one in four students will struggle to complete high school on time. While there are certainly achievement gaps between and within school districts, all schools service children that require additional academic assistance. Some of these students will "fall through the cracks" because they will not be identified as needing assistance, not qualify for available programs, or their families are unaware of existing services.

Action Steps

We encourage elected officials to support policies and programs that:

Promote Early Intervention Strategies: by providing resources and professional development for identifying struggling students

Provide Student Support: by funding and implementing programs that provide targeted academic assistance for those students that are struggling. This is necessary to prevent these students from falling further behind. Quality solutions may include alternative settings, additional academic instruction through tutoring, and mechanisms for family and community engagement, enhanced alternative programming, smaller class settings, access to specialists and special services.

Provide Professional Support: by developing and implementing meaningful professional development opportunities for staff members working with struggling students.

Support Full and Meaningful Accountability: by insisting that all educational personnel including administrators and superintendents, teachers, and support staff play a vital role in supporting struggling students.

Address Physical Conditions of Students: by providing school-entry screening programs that identify hearing, vision, and other medical conditions that may impede student learning.

Supporting Effective School Improvement Strategies

Issues

Recent federal and state policies target improving “the lowest performing schools.” In fact, in December of 2009, the state passed legislation requiring that schools performing in the lowest five percent on state assessments are required to implement one of four school improvement strategies: closure, restart (as a charter school), turnaround, and transformation. This initiative, developed by President Obama and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, includes a series of reform strategies that accompany each of these models.

While it is extremely important to improve chronically low-performing schools, there is little evidence that suggests the policies behind this legislation improve student learning. Similarly, some of the other consequences associated with each strategy may be damaging to communities, school districts and children.

There is no evidence supporting that large scale policies based on closing schools and moving control over educational programming to educational contractors, educational management companies, and for-profit or non-profit charter school operators raises student achievement or is a viable school improvement strategy. (Saltman, 2010) Similarly there is no evidence supporting the benefits of the mass removal of staff, a reform measure that is part of the “turnaround model,” as a school improvement strategy. (Advocates for Children and Youth 2010)

Research shows that one of the most successful strategies for improving low-performing schools is providing staff with support from the whole community, resources and tools to improve as professionals, and school leaders who could help them help with their students. (Silva, 2008) When provided with a context that fosters success, teacher effectiveness increases. (Silva,2008)

An important aspect of school improvement involves **addressing achievement gaps**. Achievement gaps refer to the disparity in performance between groups of students on educational measures and standardized tests. Achievement gaps are deeply ingrained in our educational system. Narrowing achievement gaps will require reforms that address their systemic causes while improving the quality of education for students.

Every student is not receiving the quality education students all students deserve, but improving schools should not be done haphazardly by implementing reforms with more costs than benefits.

Actions

Improve struggling schools by supporting:

***Research Based School Improvement Strategies:** Research shows that student achievement will increase when staff members are supported with high quality professional development, given the opportunity to collaborate with their colleagues, have access to resources and tools that foster growth, and are supported by school leadership. (Silva, 2008)

***Amend Legislation:** School improvement legislation forcing schools into one of the four improvement models passed in December 2009 should be amended. Closing schools has proven to be damaging in many communities. There is little evidence supporting that restarting a school as a charter school will improve student achievement and the quality of educational experiences, nor is there evidence supporting the mass staff turnover associated with the turn around model.

***Meaningful Measures of School Success:**

Advocate for measures of school success and improvement that are more comprehensive than just students' achievement (test scores). While student achievement will play a significant role in determining how a school is performing, there is other relevant data.

***Targeting Achievement Gaps:** The following policies will address achievement gaps:

- Early childhood education – so that all children begin education school ready
- Comprehensive social programs that address the root causes of the achievement gap
- Adequately funding districts that serve students from low socioeconomic backgrounds
- Holding all students to high expectations by adopting common core standards

Strong Special Education Programs

Issues

Michigan has some of the strongest and most effective rules and regulations for special education in the nation. These regulations provide thousands of students with the accommodations necessary for their education. They also allow special education teachers and paraprofessionals with support to deliver quality-learning experiences. Unfortunately many students who are eligible for special education resources are not in settings that are equipped to address the needs of these students. Additional funding is necessary to supply appropriately trained staff, accessible school buildings, flexible curriculums and other necessary supports. Shortfalls in special education funding also impacts general education. As a way of addressing special education financial shortfalls, districts often draw from funds earmarked for general education use.

Action Steps

Quality special education programs depend on:

***Regulations and Rules:** Students and families depend on public education, regardless of their special needs, weakening the regulations that protect the quality of education for these families is harmful.

***Funding:** Special education programs requires funding so that they can serve their students. Adequately funding special education will help districts avoid using general education funds to make up shortfalls, and deliver services to some of the student who need them most. It is also essential to ensure that the federal government makes good on promises of special education funding.

***Service Providers:** Special education students must have access and support from service providers such as occupational therapists, speech/language therapists, physical therapists and art/music therapists.

***Individual Education Program (IEP) Goals:** Assessment of special education students must consider student growth based on Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals. IEPs provide individualized framework educating a student with special needs, and define the accommodations necessary for student learning.

Community Responsibility

Issues

Providing children with a high quality education requires outstanding schools, but it also requires that all stakeholders—students, parents, educators, administrators, community leaders, business, and elected officials—take responsibility for ensuring that all children receive the education that they deserve.

Every parent wants the very best for his or her child, but socioeconomic factors impact the quality of life for many families. Families living in poverty face challenges that affect a child's ability to learn and succeed in school. There are some who maintain that addressing quality of life issues in the name of improving education is simply making an excuse or passing the buck. The reality is that growing up in poverty has an impact on children and that impact does not vanish when they sit at a desk.

For evidence, look no further than a recent study that found nearly sixty percent of the children who attend Detroit Public Schools has a history of lead poisoning. What's more, the study found that those who scored "not proficient" on the MEAP test had lead levels up to 30 percent higher than those who scored "advanced."

This is just one example of how improving socioeconomic conditions cannot be extracted from conversations about improving education. Recognizing these conditions and taking responsibility for improving them is making a commitment to education for all children. There is no excuse for community stakeholders to ignore these realities.

Actions

Community responsibility requires:

***360 Degree Accountability:** Students, parents, educators, administrators, community leaders, business and elected officials are all educational stakeholders, and therefore

should all be accountable for ensuring a high quality education.

***Community Commitment:** Community commitment means that parents, within their means, will provide their children with the support that will make their children successful. They will take responsibility for being involved. This means that businesses should allow their employees time off to volunteer at school or attend parent teacher conferences. This means city officials will demand that every child's walk to school is a safe one. This means that state elected officials will properly fund our schools and only enact reform legislation that is research based. Ultimately community responsibility means that a commitment to education is a commitment to the well being of children. This commitment is made through improving of social conditions, developing an economic system that supports families with good jobs, and delivering high-quality instruction to our children.

Necessary School Funding

Issue

School funding is inadequate. It is time that Michigan aligns its spending priorities with our state's need to be an educational leader. It is also time that Michigan address the disparity between the lower and higher funded districts. Only then will we take steps towards closing the achievement gap. While philanthropists, foundations, and the private sector have generously invested in education in recent times, their contributions cannot be seen as a justification to reduce state spending on education. In fact, by continually cutting state aid to schools, Michigan runs the risk of making educational programming dependent on the if-come of private dollars. Some charter schools can support reforms like smaller class-sizes, increased technological resources, and extended school days because they receive large donations to supplement their state aid. If we expect traditional public schools to implement these reforms, they have to have the funding to do so, even if they are not receiving private foundation support.

At the heart of the school funding issue is a state revenue issue. Our state's revenue system is antiquated, unfair, unstable and inadequate. In short, it is holding our state back and hurting our children.

Actions

This systemic issue calls for solutions addressing

***Financial Needs:** Examine the real financial needs of school districts.

***Tax Structure:** Support an effective tax structure in Michigan that creates jobs, is stable, and is fair to Michigan families.

***Funding Michigan Schools (prek-12 and post-secondary):** Michigan schools need to be funded in a way that provides them with fis-

cal stability. This will require completing the school aid, community college, and higher education budgets by June 1st. It will also mean adequately addressing declining enrollment in school funding plans.

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