

SCHOOL EQUITY CAUCUS

Making a difference for the public school children of Michigan

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Dear Colleagues:

After a wild month of weather, it is nice to look at the calendar and envision the arrival of spring as we turn to March! Spring also means a busy time in Lansing, and here's some of the latest news:

1. State of the State Recap, Budget Proposal Forthcoming

Governor Gretchen Whitmer delivered her first State of the State address on Tuesday, February 12. The main new proposal regarding education in Michigan came in the form of the MI Opportunity Scholarship, designed to provide debt-free community college education for all students in Michigan who qualify, and two years of tuition assistance at four-year colleges in Michigan. The governor also spent some time discussing other areas of workforce development.

Beyond those items the speech did not include many specifics; instead it appears Governor Whitmer is reserving them for her budget address next Tuesday, March 5. She did, however, indicate that for years Michigan's leadership had failed the children of the state by underinvesting in education. Therefore, it is hoped that the governor's budget proposal will be significantly better for Michigan's schools than those in recent years.

We will update you further as we hear more!

2. Legislative Meetings Underway

In preparation for the work to come, over the past few weeks we have been engaged in meetings with legislators and their staffs. Of particular note were very positive meetings held with both of the K-12 Appropriations Committee Chairs (in the House and Senate). Senator Wayne Schmidt and Representative Aaron Miller both come from areas of the state where funding equity is an issue, and both legislators understand many of the problems faced by districts funded at or near the minimum foundation allowance. We look forward to building on these initial meetings as we move forward through the budget process.

3. Snow Days Piling Up

Of current importance to most districts in the state is the potential for forgiveness of snow days in excess of the standard six days. First, if your district has exceeded the number of allowable days and you have not yet filed for a waiver with the Department of Education for days missed during the governor's declared state of emergency, please do so immediately. Those waiver requests appear to be being approved rapidly for districts in the areas covered by the governor's emergency declaration.

Beyond that, as of this writing three bills have been introduced that seek to address the issue. SB 103 (Ananich) and HB 4206 (Frederick) each look to codify the waiver action currently being approved by MDE. A new bill, HB 4250 (Hoitenga) introduced on Tuesday, proposes another way to deal with the situation by allowing districts to count hours instead of days to meet minimum requirements. There will certainly be much more discussion (and probably more bills) over the next couple of weeks, especially given the time frame left in the school year.

4. Other Legislation to Watch

It has now been two months since the 100th Michigan Legislature took office, and the action is starting to ramp up!

One of the most potentially significant items introduced is HB 4125 (introduced by Rep. VanSingel) which would undo the lame duck action that reduced the percentage of income tax receipts earmarked for the School Aid Fund, and instead directed these monies to the Michigan Transportation Fund (for roads) and the newly-established Renew Michigan Fund. This is obviously a high-priority piece of legislation for schools in Michigan.

Another time-sensitive issue is the percentage of student growth measures to be included in educator evaluations. This week saw the introduction of bills that would maintain the percentage at the current level (25%) for both teachers (HB 4221 – Rep. Alexander) and administrators (HB 4222 – Rep. VanSingel). There is obviously a tight time crunch to push this issue through.

And here are a few of the other bills beginning their movement through the legislative process:

- HB 4162 (Reilly) – This bill would eliminate the WorkKeys assessment as part of the Michigan Merit Exam. The bill has passed the House Education Committee, and is now off to the new House Ways and Means Committee (acting as a “super-committee”) for vetting and approval before being moved on for consideration by the full House.
- HB 4075 (Miller) – This bill would expand the permissible uses of sinking funds to include the purchase of school buses. The School Equity Caucus has consistently advocated for this logical extension of the uses of a sinking fund.
- HB 4087 (Hornberger) – This legislation would allow for pre-Labor Day starts, while prohibiting school from being in session on Mondays and Fridays in August. It also preserves the current waiver process for year-round/balanced calendar options.
- HB 4088 (Hornberger) – Mandates the popular election of ISD boards.

We will keep you updated as this and other legislation moves forward.

5. CRC Teacher Shortage Study Released

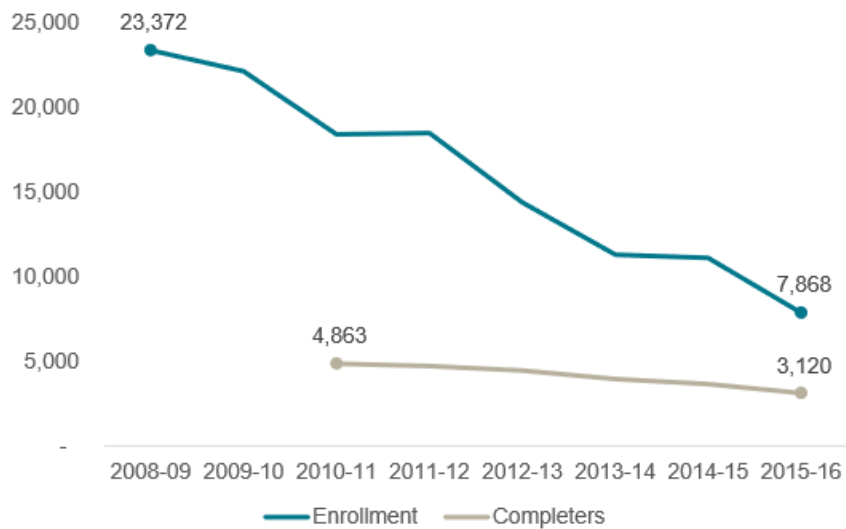
Last month Michigan State University released a study looking back at funding for schools in Michigan since the advent of Proposal A. (For more information, please refer to last month's newsletter.) Two weeks ago another study was released, entitled "Michigan's Leaky Teacher Pipeline: Examining Trends in Teacher Demand and Supply". Conducted by the independent Citizens' Research Council of Michigan, this study looks at recent trends in Michigan's teacher workforce, and comes at a time when discussions are being conducted on the subject at a statewide level.

The study noted a 66% decline in enrollment in teacher preparation programs over a recent seven-year period, but also cites an ongoing decline in overall student numbers across the state. It also identified "troubling trends" in finding adequate numbers of teachers in Michigan's urban areas and in certain subjects including English as a Second Language (ESL), special education, and STEM fields. The report says that additional analysis of teacher supply and demand is hampered by a lack of "adequate, timely, and relevant information".

The following chart, taken from the study, shows the decline in both enrollments and completions at Michigan teacher preparation institutions over the past several years:

Chart 12

Enrollment and Completers at Michigan Teacher Preparation Programs



Source: U.S. Department of Education, Title II Higher Education Act Report Card

The table below further illustrates the problem on a subject-by-subject basis:

Table 5

Program Graduates by Subject Area, 2011-12 and 2015-16

"Top 10" Subjects	2011-12		2015-16		% Change Teachers
	Teachers	Share	Teachers	Share	
Elementary Education	2,624	21%	1,779	23%	(32%)
English/Language Arts	1,499	12%	886	11%	(41%)
Secondary Education	1,792	14%	844	11%	(53%)
Math	912	7%	579	8%	(37%)
Social Studies	856	7%	445	6%	(48%)
Special Education	672	5%	413	5%	(39%)
Early Childhood	421	3%	336	4%	(20%)
General	400	3%	308	4%	(23%)
Science	447	4%	308	4%	(31%)
History	494	4%	211	3%	(57%)
Total all Subjects	12,674		7,706		(39%)

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Title II Higher Education Act Report Card

Among the other items of note, the study found:

- Teacher-student ratios in Michigan are higher than the national average (running about 2.5 students higher per teacher on average).
- Teacher turnover is significantly higher (as much as 25% higher) than the national average, and this trend is worsening.
- Turnover in charter schools is significantly higher (30% of staff in 2016-17) than in traditional public schools (14% of staff).
- The report states "Michigan's teacher turnover rate is high and is particularly problematic in charter schools, urban schools, and those with high-concentrations of poverty."
- The ratio of newly-issued teaching certificates to the number of statewide new teacher hires has declined from 38% oversupply to 19% over the period from 2011-12 to 2016-17.
- The availability of substitute teachers is also declining and problematic.
- Overall, Michigan teachers are compensated well (average of \$62,380, 11th in the nation, 10% higher than the national average), but starting teacher salaries average 3.5% below national average. At the same time, graduates from Michigan colleges and universities rank 11th in the nation in average debt upon graduation.

While some potential policy ideas were discussed, the study did not delve deeply into the causes of the problems Michigan faces.

You can read the full study by clicking on this link:

https://crcmich.org/PUBLICAT/2010s/2019/rpt404-teacher_pipeline.pdf

6. Need a Speaker?

Please contact me if you would be interested in a visit or presentation to your district or county/region superintendents' or board meeting. I truly enjoy these opportunities to interact, and these experiences help me to have more on-the-ground stories with which we can better describe the needs and circumstances of our members.

Have a wonderful month of March! Spring break is not far away!



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