

Increasing Social + Academic Opportunities for Michigan Students



Michigan's school funding system has been among the most underfunded in the nation according to many reports in recent years. National research showed Michigan's funding formula--for decades-- served as one of the most *regressive* school funding formulas in the country. Consequently, **Michigan is ranked in the bottom 15 states** for equitable spending.¹

What *is* equitable school funding? Equitable school funding means ensuring that our students, regardless of zip code, identity or status, receive the adequate amount of dollars required to promote their learning and meet their individual needs

Voices from the Field on Equitable School Funding



"Our schools are asked to fix societal issues, and our students living in impoverished communities need additional resources to achieve the same outcomes." - *David Kobel*

"Inequitable funding is teachers getting 500-\$1000 from Parent/Teacher Associations in Ann Arbor while there's a \$100 district allotment 30 miles away... As a teacher, the inequities are too many to count. No band programs, no 5th grade trips, no librarian, no computer lab. These are just some of the loses I've experienced as a teacher while I have seen other schools have so much more than this. " - *Drea Somers*

"Inequitable funding results in buildings that are under-resourced and unwelcoming. One building I worked in had warped floors and holes in the ceiling. When it would rain outside, it would rain inside the building. The school didn't have adequate supplies for students. I would purchase paper, pencils, crayons and scissors myself... We had no textbooks or technology to use to support instruction. " - *Frances Lazette*

"When kids know they're being invested in, they feel worthwhile because they are aware of the differences between districts themselves. They talk about the 'rich schools' vs. 'the poor' schools, and the message that sends to kids at schools who lack resources is 'you don't matter,' and that is unacceptable. Who is willing to look a child in the face at a school that is struggling and say you don't matter? Probably no one. But we communicate that each year we leave this issue of funding unaddressed." - *11th & 12 grade students at Kent Career Tech Center, Grand Rapids*

The evidence is irrefutable: when schools lack funding to support student access to high-quality educational experiences, students and families lose opportunities to enrich their lives, which in turn limits their ability to achieve.

What can be done?

Educator Recommendations



As members of The Michigan Teacher Leadership Collaborative, a highly selective leadership opportunity for outstanding Michigan educators co-convened by The Education Trust-Midwest and Teach Plus Michigan, **we strive to ensure that our state policies benefit our diverse population of students.** With that, we are making the following recommendations:

Recommendation #1 - The state should increase its weighted funding model that provides additional supplemental funds for at-risk, low income, Special Education, and English Language Learner students. These student groups require more assistance and support, including but not limited to: specialized instructional staff, classroom aides, small classroom environment, assistive technology, modified curriculum, social and emotional support programming, etc. Michigan currently provides additional funding for these student groups, but that amount is inadequate.

Recommendation #2 - Schools with concentrated poverty should be prioritized when distributing supplemental funding. Michigan has one of the highest rates of poor students living in high-poverty districts nationwide. This is problematic because high-poverty districts “often lack the essential education resources for low-income students to succeed in school.”

Benefits of Equitable School Funding:

- The quality of education and knowledge capital of workers has a strong positive economic impact.
- Increased educational attainment yield decreased property crime and violent crime.²
- Improved school quality reduces juvenile and adult crime, even in cases with small effect on traditional educational outcomes.
- Increases in spending have been shown to improve educational attainment, lead to higher wages and reduce poverty in adulthood, particularly for students from low income backgrounds.³
- Access to quality educational opportunities allows for students to have diverse experiences which better prepares them for secondary education and allows them to have enriched school experiences.



Michigan has the opportunity to make a critical investment in its students that have the greatest need. It is our hope that the Legislature will finally prioritize Michigan students by supporting the development of their academic and social opportunities in life through equitable funding.

¹ Funding Gaps Report 2022, The Education Trust Midwest

² Lochner, L. (2011). Non-production benefits of education: Crime, health, and good citizenship.

³ Michigan School Funding: Crisis and Opportunity, Education Trust Midwest, 2020