

## Report serves as roadmap to fix school funding in Michigan

By Chris Wigent, executive director, Michigan Association of School Administrators

School hallways are once again filling with students for the start of a new school year. In Lansing, our lawmakers will soon fill the chambers of the Capitol, and they've got a big job to do: Fix our state's broken system of funding our schools.

The Michigan Education Finance Study that was released in June sounded a warning bell that the state is falling far short on funding our schools. Superintendents, educators, students, parents and communities can all feel the shortfall in their classrooms, technology centers, libraries and more.

Michigan has some of the hardest working, most determined and most committed educators and school administrators around. They are constantly asked to do more with less, and they rise up to meet that challenge time and again to ensure that each child gets the education needed to succeed. But they shouldn't have to work so hard to make every penny count.

Many of the findings from the report commissioned by the legislature itself should give its members pause – and promptly spur them to action.

The most glaring finding in the report is that Michigan is underfunding the basic cost of educating our children by more than \$1,000 per student. The study also found that resources for at-risk students and English as a Second Language (ESL) students are even more inadequate, falling far below recommendations in other states that aim to ensure the most vulnerable students can reach their full potential. Furthermore, the study shows that the current system of funding Michigan's schools has been getting less equitable over the years.

Any way you look at it, none of this is good for our students, our schools, or the future of our state's economy.

Our lawmakers must make it a priority to provide sufficient resources to ensure that our students can tackle public education's aggressive curriculum. Part of that job is providing the resources needed for our most vulnerable students to reach their full potential—without reducing the quality opportunities that some students are currently receiving.

This report serves as an excellent resource that the legislature can use moving forward. The last thing our lawmakers should do is let this report get lost under a pile of papers on their aides' desks.

We can all agree that we want every school district to fall into the category of successful, and now our legislature has a roadmap that shows how to make that happen.

Knowledge is power. The Michigan Education Finance Study gives our soon-to-return lawmakers the knowledge they need to work toward improving public education in Michigan. Ignoring its warnings and failing to take action to fix our state's broken system is not an option.

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