



## AN ISSUES PRIMER FOR MICHIGAN'S 2011 LEADERS

**FROM CRADLE TO CAREER:  
EDUCATION**

**PROVIDING PATHS TO  
GRADUATION FOR A  
BRIGHTER FUTURE**

**ECONOMIC IMPACT:  
ASTRONOMICAL**

### WHERE MICHIGAN STANDS

**Too many Michigan young people aren't succeeding through high school graduation.** More than 35,000 Michigan young people did not receive a high school diploma in the spring of 2009 – nearly one-quarter of the students who began high school four-years earlier. In 2007, 155,000 young adults aged 18-24 did not have a high school diploma in Michigan. Young people of color or those from economically disadvantaged families remain the least likely to graduate “on-time” with their peers.

**Many young people need more time or different paths to reach a diploma.** Of the students who failed to graduate in four-years, fully 19,000 were still on a path toward high school completion. The share of students in this group has increased more than 50 percent since 2007, illustrating the need for increased attention to programs that serve young people who may need more time or different paths to graduate.

**The economic consequences of dropping out are high.** Dropouts have significantly less earning power, and much higher likelihood of unemployment, substance abuse, incarceration and poor health. Communities, which lose tax revenue and take on higher monetary and social costs, can be economically vibrant only when their residents are engaged in life-long learning beginning with a high school diploma.

**We know how to graduate more young people from high school.** There is strong research that allows us to predict which students are at-risk of dropping out. Young people who fall behind in credits are much more likely to not complete school, yet there are very limited options for credit recovery for these students. Once young people fall behind in school, or when they face significant personal and educational obstacles, a traditional high school setting is not always successful in reengaging them, yet few alternatives exist. In addition, school discipline policies often contribute to disengagement and lost credits. These barriers to success have always had significant implications for young people, their families and communities. Those implications have only grown with the recent change to compulsory attendance laws.

**Young people face barriers to graduation that education alone cannot remove.** Educational success is an outgrowth of successes and failures within many systems that have been built over the course of young

### Key Stats

**25%** of Michigan students did not graduate in 2009 after four years of high school

**155,000** young adults aged 18-24 did not have a high school diploma in 2007

**2/3** of teen moms in Michigan do not complete high school

**1 in 6** births in Michigan is to a mom who has not completed high school

people's lives. For students to successfully navigate school and life, they must remain healthy; feel safe and secure; feel supported and cared for; be challenged and inspired to achieve; and they must be engaged and connected in their learning, in their communities, to their future, to extracurricular activities, and at home. To change educational outcomes for young people, we must recognize the impact of all those areas.

**Michigan is poised to make great strides in improving the educational success of all children.** The unprecedented attention and engagement of the private sector, supporting research, innovation in Michigan and around the nation, and renewed public sector attention provide an opportunity. We must make a commitment to invest in our children and take advantage of these opportunities before we lose them to more disinvestment. It is in everyone's best interest to succeed in graduating more young people from quality high schools, and we have many models of this success around the state and nation.

## **BUDGET IMPACT**

**Costs of dropping out are far-reaching.** The economic, social, and fiscal consequences of dropping out of school—unemployment, poverty, substance abuse, incarceration, poor health, to name a few—are profound and unacceptable. In addition, high school dropouts face a labor market that is becoming more and more difficult to successfully navigate. Young people without a basic education are less likely to have the maturity and skills needed to parent effectively or the resources to promote the well-being of the next generation of Michiganders. These consequences translate to communities as forgone tax revenue, and higher social costs.

**Michigan has reduced its commitment to education over the past few years.** Policymakers have made significant reductions in per pupil grants to all local school districts, reductions for Intermediate School Districts, and cuts in programs improving adolescent health, high school completion and college and career access.

## **VOTER VOICE**

Polls show consistent agreement that economic development is of primary concern to Michigan residents, most recently evidenced through a June 2010 EPIC-MRA poll. Voters realize, and the research bears out that education is the most reliable path to the state's economic prosperity.

## **WHAT CAN WE DO?**

- Help adolescents stay in school by supporting innovative after-school programs in middle and high schools, including credit recovery programs and apprenticeships.
- Build an atmosphere conducive to learning by supporting incentives for schools to establish effective discipline alternatives, and supporting truancy prevention and credit recovery initiatives that utilize strong out-of-school time partners, strong workforce development partners and many others.
- Support multiple pathways to graduation: better support those that we have, such as alternative and community education options, community college and workforce development partnerships; and create other pathways to consistently serve young people throughout the state.
- Commit to meaningful education reform by supporting consistent funding for schools and programs in order to see real improvement in school success for those most challenged schools, communities and young people.