

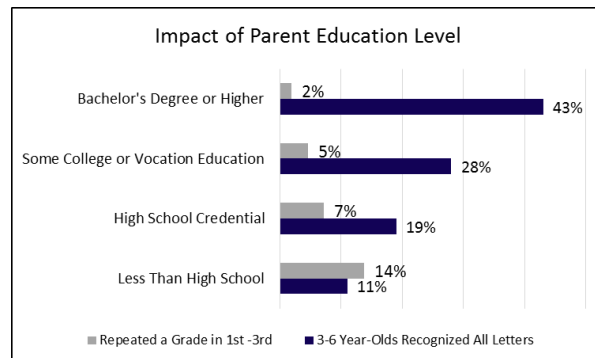
February 16, 2018

Supporting Family Literacy in the State Budget

Much attention has been placed on ensuring more young children are reading proficiently by the end of third grade. Despite research consistently showing the impact of parental education on children's education and life success, little focus has been placed on the importance of supporting the educational needs of parents with limited skills themselves.

Multiple studies have shown that children with more educated parents have more literacy readiness skills and greater education success.¹ When 42,000 Michiganders ages 18-34 have less than a ninth grade education², an assumption cannot be made about parents' ability to engage in their children's learning.

While there are other public funding streams that may include family literacy as a component of their service provision, there is no dedicated public resource at the state or federal level to support family literacy, despite its importance and success. Funding for Adult Education has not been adequate to meet the need and some mandates in that program have produced barriers to serving the hardest to serve families. In addition, many families don't have access to consistent and reliable child care while trying to fit in their own educational improvement with employment and family responsibilities. And, our financial aid system does not help people who have been out of high school for more than 10 years, which is counter-productive for those parents who have worked hard to complete their diploma or GED past that time and are trying to move forward.



Investment in family literacy must be included and supported in third grade reading efforts and Michigan must continue to rebuild its adult education investment. Both can further the educational attainment and skill-building of parents, while providing opportunities for them to learn alongside their children. The Governor failed to include investments in Family Literacy his recent budget recommendations, and now it is up to the Legislature to remedy that oversight through their work on the budget over the next few months.

Recommendations:

1. Include Family Literacy as a strategy in Section 35a of the School Aid Act to bolster support for the Read at Home plans outlined in recently passed legislation intended to avoid 3rd grade retention. Adult Education programs are uniquely situated to work with other K-3 staff in providing assistance to parents who are unable to help with their child's education because of gaps in their own learning skills.
2. Expand the current School Aid investment of \$25 million in Adult Education programs to better reflect the population in need of basic education support, ensure that a portion of that funding is directed toward parents with low skill levels, particularly those with less than a 9th grade education, and new funds specifically targeted toward two-generation family literacy programming.
3. Move administration for the Adult Education program back into the Department of Education from the Talent Investment Agency, where it can be better integrated with other child and family literacy supports.
4. Reinstate the Part-Time Independent Student grant – the only financial aid program for adults who have been out of high school for more than 10 years—to better facilitate paths to post-secondary for adults who have taken longer to get their GED or high school credential.

¹ Child Trends. <http://www.childtrends.org>

² U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey, 2011-2013 three-year estimates.