

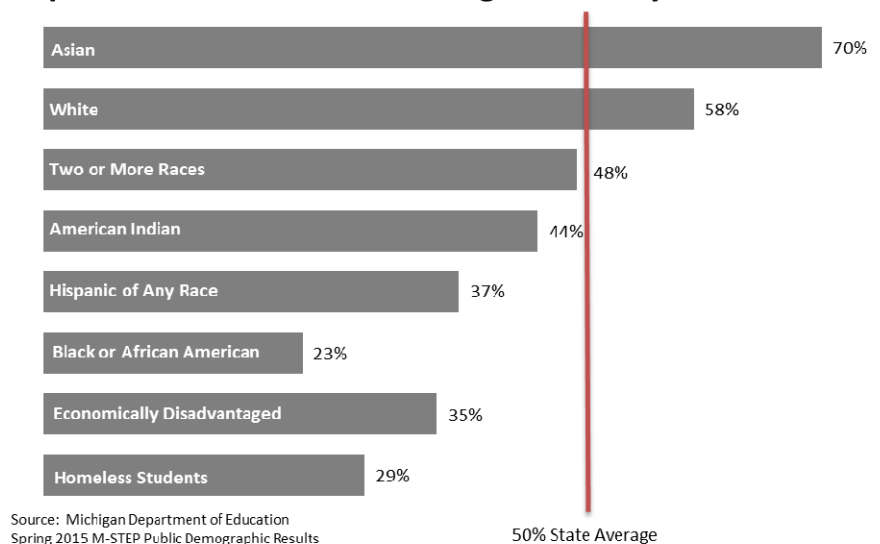
March 8, 2016

**Improving Third Grade Reading in Michigan
Needed Targeted Investments in the FY2017 State Budget**

Reading proficiently by the end of third grade is an important benchmark in a child’s educational development. Early learning success is impacted by the ability and efforts of parents, schools and other community resources. Investments in all sectors are important to support the needs of children struggling to read. While only one of every two Michigan students demonstrated reading proficiency in third grade in 2015, the statistics were significantly worse for certain groups of students.

To tackle this, the Legislature provided \$31 million in funding in the fiscal year 2016 (FY2016) budget for an array of services targeted towards improving early literacy, many which the Governor included in his FY2017 state budget recommendations. While these investments are a good starting point to improve literacy, more and better targeted investments will be needed to move the dime for Michigan’s most challenged young readers. Below are Michigan’s Children’s recommendations to improve literacy.

Disparities in Third Grade Reading Proficiency



Early On Early Intervention: Begin providing a state appropriation for *Early On* early intervention, which serves nearly 18,000 families with infants and toddlers birth to age three who have a development delay or disability. While Michigan receives \$11.8 million in federal funding through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act – Part C, these funds are vastly insufficient to provide adequate intervention like speech therapy and specialized instruction. National longitudinal studies demonstrate that 42 percent of infants and toddlers who receive adequate early intervention services will not need special education at kindergarten entry. For Michigan to see these types of results, we must begin investing statewide in *Early On*.

Great Start Readiness Program for three-year-olds: Begin piloting GSRP for the most at-risk three-year-olds who are not able to access Head Start. Working closely with Head Start and GSRP providers, provide a school-year, school-day length two-year preschool option that supports three- and four-year-olds who are at-risk of starting kindergarten behind their peers.

Expanded learning in K-3rd Grade: The FY2016 budget included \$17.5 million for additional instruction time by extending the day or school year in k-3rd grade, and the Governor requested this funding be continued in FY2017. However, what Michigan needs is targeted and increased state funding for expanded learning programs in k-3rd grade to before-school, after-school and summer-learning opportunities expanding Michigan's 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC). Michigan currently receives \$39 million in federal 21st CCLC funding to support effective expanded learning programs in the most challenged communities across the state, but this funds fewer than half of the best programs applying. Not only can Michigan consider using unspent federal TANF dollars to support expanded learning, 40% of Michigan's Child Development and Care (CDC) program is spent on school-aged child care. CDC funds can be better targeted through the 21st CCLC program by shifting subsidy reimbursement from an hourly rate to one that would better support a 21st Century program through contracted slots. Targeted expanded learning investments through CDC and TANF, combined with better targeting of the additional state appropriation, can improve students' performance in reading and math, increase student participation and engagement, and promote students' development in other areas needed for success in school and life.

Family Literacy Programs: The FY2016 budget included a \$3 million increase to adult education, which the Governor retained in his FY2017 state budget recommendations. Adult education is an important component to two-generation family literacy programs that concurrently provide classes for adults to improve their literacy skills while also providing literacy rich opportunities for their children through high quality early childhood care and education opportunities. Decades of research, including evaluation of the former federally funded Even Start programs in Michigan, tells us that family literacy is more effective than adults-only or children-only literacy programs; and young learners will face more struggles to read proficiently if their parents cannot support them through their reading journey. Michigan needs to continue to rebuild its adult education investment, with concentrated funding for the parents with the lowest education levels and new funds specifically targeted towards two-generation family literacy programming.