

Proven Plays for Supporting Students

Michigan's children will be our next scientists, entrepreneurs, teachers, parents, laborers, artists and lawmakers, and our future depends on preparing them education, work, and life. There is universal agreement that a high-quality K-12 education matters for our future, but our results are not meeting our high standards. By the time poor children are in the 6th grade, they have experienced a 6000 hour learning gap which exhibits in gaps in academic success. By the third grade, white students are well above their peers of color in reading, by the eighth grade those gaps are even larger for math outcomes. High school dropout rates remain higher for Black, Hispanic and American Indian students, and for those facing life challenges like poverty, disability and homelessness.

Years of research and the lived experience of youth and families have taught us that in order to succeed, students need access to: parents and caregivers who have tools to support their children's learning at home; trained school professionals who can recognize and respond to student needs; access to basic resources that are essential to learning; and academic tools and pathways that enable their educational success.

Academic Tools and Pathways

Students who begin behind in school remain behind without appropriate intervention, and other students face life challenges that require additional academic supports, particularly those experiencing foster care, homelessness or juvenile justice.

- X Provide dedicated state funding to ensure quality afterschool programs** are available around the state. Quality afterschool and summer learning programs help struggling students improve attendance, behavior, and achievement through developing their own strengths and potential.
- X Remove barriers to families affording child care for their school-age children** by ensuring that quality afterschool and summer learning programs can easily access child care funds.
- X Preserve and expand state support for competency-based education and flexible paths to graduation** which provide flexible scheduling, smaller classes, alternative credit bearing options, and post-secondary pathways to students who may struggle to achieve and graduate due to their personal circumstances.

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Family Skill-Building

Children learn best when their households are able to reinforce lessons from school and effectively interact with schools and other services. Building caregiver skills and improving access to services for families leads to better student success.

- X** **Preserve and expand state support for adult education programs** that provide opportunities for young adults and parents to build literacy skills, earn a GED, and prepare for a career, improving workforce participation and family literacy rates.
- X** **Require regional needs assessments for adult education programs** so that additional resources can be appropriately utilized to close service gaps.
- X** **Improve coordination of family skill building initiatives with other services**, including coordination of free and affordable child care for adult learners and co-location of supports for children with education and workforce training programs for their parents.
- X** **Require Early Literacy Coaches to collect data on barriers that parents/guardians have with implementing read-at-home plans**, which Michigan law requires for families of students who do not score proficient in reading. Understanding parents' barriers must inform investment.

Access to Resources for Learning

Children learn best when their brains and bodies are healthy and ready to learn. Supporting responsibility for education beyond the school doors can create a system of integrated services that better serve the most challenged children, youth, families and communities.

- X** **Direct state funds towards proven models of integrating student services at school, which could be facilitated through interagency funding mechanisms.** Coordinating academic, health, and other services between schools, service providers, parents, and community partners for students can remove barriers to learning that one system alone can't solve.
- X** **Expand funding to ensure statewide access to school-based and school-linked physical and mental health services**, and invest in statewide capacity to match school spending for student health services with federal Medicaid funds.
- X** **Build programs that address the specific needs of children, youth and caregivers experiencing foster care**, including communications, trauma informed practice, improved assessment and service provision for developmental and learning delays, and additional flexibility.

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Skilled School Professionals

All students deserve access to teachers, counselors, health professional, social workers and others who are trained to help build important skills and connect with critical academic, health and social supports and services.

- ✘ **Allocate professional development resources to trauma-informed practice** to ensure that increased investments into student services and recent changes to state school discipline law are bolstered by increased educator capacity to diagnose and appropriately respond to student behaviors that may have been influenced by trauma.
- ✘ **Continue and expand support to schools to ensure access to trained mental health professionals and services** on-site and through community partnerships.

Early Learning

Providing high quality early learning experiences can ensure that young children have the social and cognitive skills they need to start school prepared and will help prevent an achievement gap that emerges as young as nine months of age:

- ✘ **Preserve and expand recent state investment in *Early On Michigan*** to provide recognized levels of service to all eligible infants and toddlers. *Early On* provides screening and services to families with infants and toddlers with and at risk of acquiring a developmental delays, equipping families in their homes with skills to help their children, often preventing the need for future costly K-12 special education services.
- ✘ **Increase state support for local abuse and neglect prevention councils** which coordinate community support, assess needs, and build partnerships to provide needed services for families who without concrete support might experience trauma.
- ✘ **Increase state support for child abuse and neglect prevention direct services statewide.** Community-identified needs lead to evidenced practices like home visiting, parenting classes, counseling, child care, referrals, transportation and prenatal care for families preventing instability.
- ✘ **Increase state support to provide statewide access to voluntary evidence-based home visiting programs based on local needs assessments.** These quality programs work with families exhibiting some risk to promote early learning and healthy child development and improve birth and early learning outcomes.