

Gov. Whitmer's 'Weighted' School Funding Plan Met With Support, Skepticism

By KEVIN LAVERY · 13 HOURS AGO



Gov. Gretchen Whitmer is proposing a "weighted" school funding formula that gives districts more money to teach special education, at-risk and career and technical (CTE) students.

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Governor Gretchen Whitmer's proposal to boost K-12 education spending by more than \$500 million is getting a mixed reception in Michigan. Educators welcome the idea of extra funding, but GOP lawmakers are wary of approving a big tax hike to pay for the increase.

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All schools in Michigan are not funded the same. The state uses a [three-tiered formula](#) involving a minimum, base and maximum funding level. The amount an individual school district gets is based largely on its population.

Under [the governor's plan](#), school districts would receive more funding to meet the needs of

special education, at-risk and career and technical students. This so-called “weighted” approach would be a departure from the model Michigan has used for the last 25 years.

The plan is based in part on findings by the [Michigan School Finance Research Collaborative](#), which in 2018 published a comprehensive study of the state's school funding needs.

Matt Gillard is the CEO of the public policy advocacy group Michigan's Children, and a member of the collaborative.

“This is frankly why Michigan has fallen so far behind, because other states have dramatically shifted their funding formula to truly meet the needs of the students and the districts that are educating most students,” Gillard says.

Whitmer's proposal still falls well short of the \$9,590 the School Finance Research Collaborative concluded is necessary to educate each student in the K-12 system.

But, Gillard says, it's a good first step.

As a former Republican state lawmaker, Gillard knows the governor faces an uphill battle to get her proposed budget through the GOP-dominated legislature. With so much public attention focused on road funding, Gillard wants to see people just as engaged in the education issue.

“And really get people to understand what the current school funding formula is providing for their districts and what's truly needed,” he says. “We think that will benefit all kids in Michigan and lead to a much more fair and equitable system.”

As the budget process begins, Governor Whitmer says she also wants to protect the K-12 School Aid Fund from being pilfered to pay for higher education and community college programs.