SCHOOL FUNDING

MASA continues to support a more robust funding formula to include additional revenue and a commitment to equity and student needs. We recognize that this is a long-term goal that needs to be carefully constructed and executed following the recommendations of the School Finance Research Collaborative report. We encourage lawmakers to familiarize themselves with this report and urgently work toward implementing those recommendations.

Special Education Funding

Michigan so dramatically underfunds special education services that the U.S. Department of Education flagged our state as needing federal intervention in 2018. As we look to the upcoming and future budgets, investment in special education must be top of mind for appropriations. Increasing the special education reimbursement rate is a matter of equity, adequacy, and it’s the right thing to do.

Categorical Funding

Categorical funding should be simplified so that discretionary categoricals that do not directly serve the aims of equitable and adequate funding are rolled up and reallocated to line-items that serve these ends. Districts need additional funding and the ability to use those funds in ways they deem the most appropriate for meeting student need.

Pupil Membership and the Foundation Allowance

The pandemic freshly exposed the flaws in how Michigan calculates funding related to pupil counts. It has been, and remains, important to recognize the impact enrollment fluctuations have on a school district’s essential operations. To that end, MASA supports changing the pupil count for the purposes of State School Aid Fund distribution to a rolling average and to include a three-year blend.

EDUCATOR PIPELINE/SHORTAGE

Michigan's education workforce is among the best in the nation, but fewer candidates enter the educator pipeline year-after-year. State law should change to reflect the need to bring more individuals into the classroom by removing barriers and providing effective and meaningful alternative paths toward certification.

ISD Certification Programs

State certification laws should allow intermediate school districts the ability to develop certification programs for high-needs areas, including, but not limited to, special education. ISDs are uniquely positioned to offer expertise and on-the-ground training to individuals wishing to pursue these fields.

Certification Flexibility

MASA supports more flexible options toward certification. As we struggle to fill critical positions, it is imperative that certification in Michigan come with clearer paths and less red tape. To that end, MASA supports more flexibility in educator certification.

Retirement Penalties

The laws that govern when and how retired school employees can return to the classroom are convoluted and disqualify veteran educators from serving where they may be urgently needed. MASA supports removing all barriers for retirees to return to work in favor of a streamlined surcharge to cover any actual stranded costs associated with retirants working in the system.

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ASSESSMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Testing regimens and accountability systems should be used to inform the craft of teaching and offer insight into the performance and growth of a student and their knowledge. They should not be part of a scheme to punish teachers, students, schools, or districts. MASA supports wholesale change in the state testing and accountability laws.

2021 Testing Schedule

MASA supports the suspension of the M-STEP for the 2020-21 school year. Given the realities presented by COVID-19, it is not practical nor useful to administer this exam. MASA encourages the Legislature to work with the Michigan Department of Education to receive a waiver from the U.S. Department of Education for the M-STEP and to change the law to reflect that waiver.

BROADBAND ACCESS

The pandemic has shown just how disparate and inequitable access to high-speed internet is in Michigan. These inequities have led to unequal access to online and virtual learning for many of Michigan’s children. Broadband access must be a priority for lawmakers. MASA calls on Congressional leaders to develop considerable resources to help close the homework gap and ensure equitable access to high-speed internet for all students in Michigan.

EVALUATIONS

Evaluations are an important part of ensuring that educators meet community expectations and goals. However, evaluations are only valuable if they are based on data and provide meaningful feedback. To that end, MASA encourages lawmakers to re-evaluate Michigan’s educator accountability requirements to ensure that the law and requirements placed on school districts and educators are relevant, meaningful, and truly inform best practices to achieve better student and staff outcomes.

Eliminate State Testing Data

For the 2020-21 school year, at a minimum, lawmakers should move to eliminate the state data component in MCL 380.1249 and 380.1249b, and the percentage of student growth should be lowered to a more reasonable amount, such as 20 percent. The pandemic has resulted in a lack of meaningful state testing data, and that data should not be a part of determining educator effectiveness.

M-STEP

MASA supports the elimination of the M-STEP in favor of a more timely test, accurately measures growth, and can inform student teaching and learning to improve student outcomes.

Building and District Accountability

MASA supports the complete disbandment of Michigan’s multiple accountability systems in favor of a new system developed in conjunction with educators and experts in the field. MASA supports a fair system of accountability, used to improve student learning and outcomes rather than punish and shame. The Association supports a system that must account for district realities and recognize that every district, building, and classroom is different, and every student is a unique learner.

Devices and Connectivity

In addition to the networks, it is imperative that state lawmakers continue to work toward providing districts with the General Fund resources necessary to ensure that every child has access to devices capable of serving as a virtual classroom. Resources should be allocated where they are needed to ensure equitable access to devices. Additionally, state General Fund resources should be dedicated to ensuring that families can afford high-speed internet access.

Educator Accountability System

Michigan needs a new accountability system for educators that evaluates based on local input and goals. The School Improvement Process drives much of the work educators put in daily, and evaluations should reflect the goals and outcomes identified in that process. MASA supports a wholesale retooling of the evaluation system to produce a new tool that is locally driven and holds educators accountable for goals relevant to their school improvement plans and their parent and community expectations.

MASA