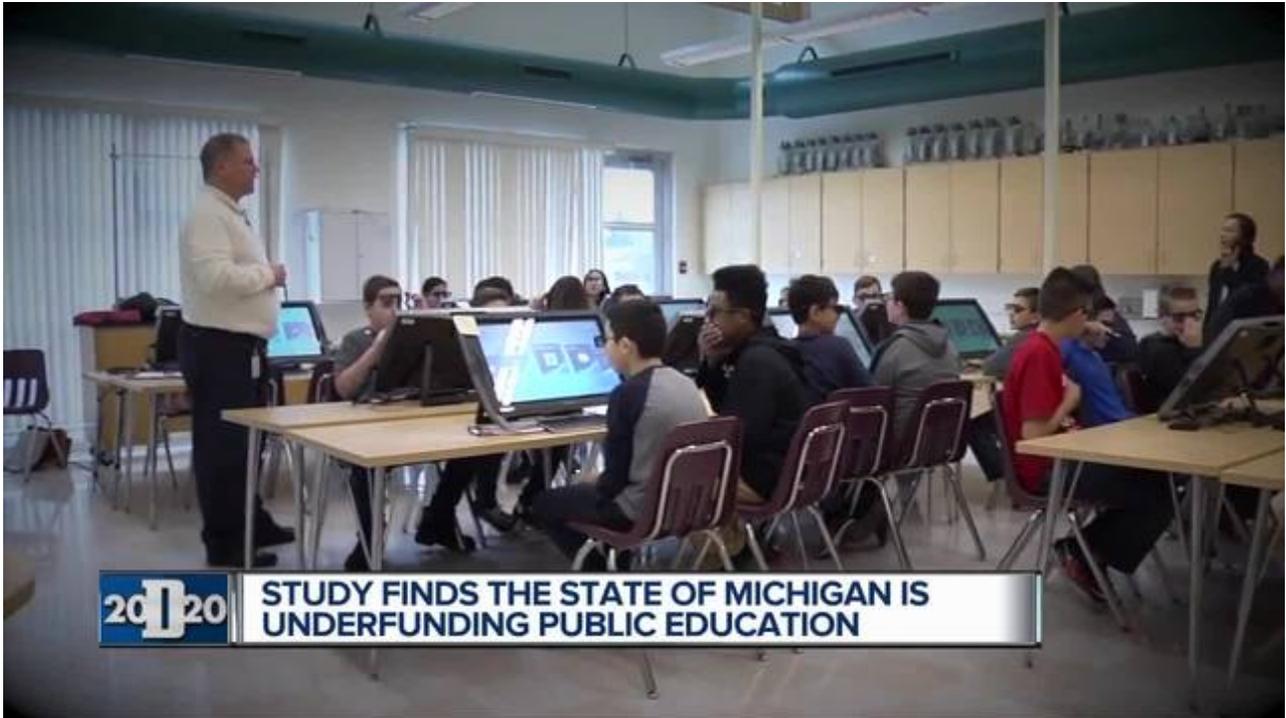


Study finds Michigan schools are underfunded

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Kim Russell



(WXYZ) - This week Amazon delivered news many did not want to hear. It will not be coming to Detroit.

One of the reasons given is our state's school system is not making the grade. This comes as a new study finds the state is underfunding education.

Right now in Michigan schools get their primary funding from the state. The per pupil base funding is between about \$7600 and \$8200. A new study calculated how much it would cost schools to educate students to state standards, and found the base cost (which doesn't include food or transportation) is \$9,590.

This School Finance Research Collaborative study was put together by businesses, school leaders, and non-profits in Michigan.

"This was a group of people who came together both Republicans and Democrats, business leaders and educators, coming together with the common belief that the school funding system was not working here in Michigan," said Randy Liepa, Superintendent for the Wayne Regional Educational Service Agency.

Liepa says the broken system is a problem that impacts not just children in our schools but costs every single person in Michigan opportunity. Amazon is an example.

“If you look at our performance compared to the rest of the country both in regards to growth, how our students are improving, and their proficiency rates, we are near the bottom. And so that has to be corrected if we are going to be competitive here in Michigan,” said Liepa.

Superintendent Liepa says being competitive requires resources. He says the study’s researchers called on the state to not just increase base funding- but provide more for special services.

“Nine-thousand-five-hundred-and-ninety dollars is the base cost that has been identified and there are weighted factors. There is a certain percentage of additional dollars needed for English Second Language Learners, for at risk student, for special education students for example,” said Liepa.

The state is not the only source of funding for Michigan schools, but researchers say even with federal funding there is a shortfall in Michigan. They hope studies like this one raise awareness and result in change.