

**Metropolitan Affairs Coalition  
Education Issues Board Advisory Team  
Opinion on Education Reform**

As a coalition of business, labor and government leaders in Southeast Michigan, MAC demonstrates that problems are best addressed when all parties are at the table. MAC's Education Issues Board Advisory Team has reviewed Governor Snyder's Special Message on Education and has prepared this response, consistent with the MAC State Issues Platform and representing consensus of the group.

MAC agrees with the Governor that education is the long-term key to reinventing Michigan's economy and critical to our future success. We recognize the Governor for his determined and purposeful approach to education reform as foundational to our economic potential, prosperity and well-being – as well as part of an overall solution to our state and region's fiscal crisis. We acknowledge the need for structural change. We agree that the present K-12 decentralized district structure and lack of consistent execution of common curriculum or agreed upon accountability measures should be replaced with a coordinated approach based on a vision which places priority on quality public education for all residents. This is fundamental to Michigan's economic recovery.

We concur that we need to: create an integrated and holistic P-20 education approach that prepares students for optimal lifelong learning; create a safer school environment; give students more options to succeed, working with individual learning styles; review and improve how teachers are prepared, supported, evaluated and rewarded; and hold districts, administrators, parents, and teachers accountable for results. Ultimately, we need to create a more capable, nimble, and innovative workforce that can adapt to the knowledge-based economy and compete globally.

We strongly believe that we must invest in P-20 education, and that good teachers and involved parents are critical to successful outcomes. The best approach to education reform should be data and research driven, and student focused. We urge caution when viewing education in a market-based context, as research shows that competition doesn't necessarily drive learning.

Within this framework, MAC offers the following perspective around key provisions of the Governor's education reform proposal.

**Performance Based System of Schools and Teaching**

MAC supports accountability, measuring and rewarding student growth, and implementing higher standards for teacher and administrator certification, and school performance. We also endorse supporting and rewarding educator excellence through appropriate compensation, professional development, and tools. We offer these suggestions to help meet these goals:

Implementation of a data collection and measurement process should encompass public and private, charter, home schools, and post-secondary education; and take into account the educational setting, broader home and community environment, funding equity, etc.

Parents should have access to data to make informed educational choices. Creation of a school dashboard should be done with teacher input, and provide easy to understand measures of student outcomes, school accountability, school fiscal health, etc.

We support higher standards for teacher and administrator certification, including raising qualifications to enter teacher training; requiring subject matter testing before entering student teaching; enhancing clinical practice/experience; and reviewing competency scores for teacher certification testing.

Alternative certification opportunities for professionals to become educators should be reviewed and strengthened to assure that this effort does not run counter to higher standards for teacher training, recognizing that an expert can know his/her field and subject matter and not know how to teach it.

A feedback loop should be created between new teachers and their Schools of Education to provide field tested process improvement recommendations.

A common teacher performance/evaluation system and process, based on a mutually established set of goals, should measure, develop and reward excellent teaching, while allowing flexibility at the local district and union level.

A successful tenure system is based on skillful and dedicated execution of administrative duties which include regular performance evaluations, mentoring, monitoring, and assurance of due process in the case of probation or dismissal. Steps must be followed to ensure that management of the tenure system is less time consuming and costly, supports excellence in teaching, and helps those not equipped for the profession to move on without undue harm or delay.

### **School Finance**

Bonuses provided as reward to top performing school districts should be in addition to and not subtracted from core funding sources. In many cases, schools that do not meet reward criteria may be in most need of additional resources to support improvement.

Rewards should be based upon innovative cost cutting methods and accomplishments, and not be restricted to healthcare and benefit reductions. Practices implemented in the recent past that are saving money or improving student performance should be recognized and rewarded as well.

We support removing barriers, encouraging, and rewarding ISD's and local school districts for collaboration and sharing services to reduce costs and improve efficiencies.

### **Michigan Office of Great Start – Early Childhood Education**

MAC strongly believes in the imperative need for universal, fully-funded quality early childhood education and health intervention. Investment in early childhood education is the most cost effective solution to our educational challenges. Early investment creates exponential savings later on in more prosperous and successful citizens and healthier communities.

We support consolidation and streamlining of early childhood programs and funding; bridging public and private sector resources and services; and establishing a single set of outcomes focused on early health and development.

### **Safe Schools**

We uphold the imperative of a safe school environment and support the passage and enforcement of anti-bullying legislation.

### **Schools of Choice**

We suggest additional research before further mandating schools of choice. Questions to explore include:

- Impact on educational outcomes of competition for students vs. opportunities for collaboration and sharing of best practices between schools and school districts
- Impact of resources focused on marketing rather than educational outcomes
- Fairness of opportunity for students without parental engagement; means of transportation
- Destabilizing influence of funding and students moving in and out of districts
- Impact on poorer performing districts of loss of funding due to reduced student population, often losing the best and brightest
- Impact on higher performing districts of receiving greater number of students, some with academic challenges, placing greater strains on the school system

### **Any Time, Any Place, Any Way, Any Pace**

MAC supports a flexible learning environment that meets desired quality educational outcomes, including allowing students to participate in dual enrollment, blended learning and online education that complements, not replaces, classroom learning, and encourages use of media and technology.

Enhanced and alternative educational opportunities should be commensurate with the student's aptitude, and level of achievement, maturity, and responsibility.

We support providing school districts more flexibility and control over instruction and classroom configuration, including seat time regulations, and length of school day/week/year, as long as it results in doing more – and not less – for student growth and educational outcomes.

## **Credentials Matter**

MAC strongly believes that we should value, demand and accelerate post-secondary degree and/or skilled trades and professional credentials/certifications for all Michigan citizens.

We encourage a more seamless higher education system, providing ease of movement for students between community college and four-year baccalaureate universities, including a simpler, more streamlined credit transfer system.

We encourage performance measures for higher education that move beyond the traditional six-year graduation rate to consideration of the *Voluntary System of Accountability* (VSA). The VSA is a national system of measurement that tracks all students who enter in a given year, including transfer and non-traditional students, and may be a better indicator of successful student outcomes.

*Note: MAC's Education Opinion Paper was approved by a majority vote of its Board of Directors, but does not necessarily reflect the opinions of all members or member organizations, which may disagree or hold stronger positions on certain points.*

***The Metropolitan Affairs Coalition (MAC), a non-profit public/private partnership, is the only group in Southeast Michigan that brings business, labor and government together to build consensus and seek solutions to regional issues. It promotes regional cooperation and dialogue, and works to advance policies and develop programs that enhance the region's economic vitality and quality of life. With its partner organization SEMCOG (the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments), and the diverse perspectives of its members, MAC is uniquely positioned to be a catalyst for change and help move the region and state forward. For more information about MAC please go to [www.mac-web.org](http://www.mac-web.org).***