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*A Special Message from Governor Rick Snyder:
Education Reform*

To the Michigan Legislature:

One of Michigan's most pressing responsibilities is ensuring that students are prepared to enter the work force and to take advantage of new opportunities as our economy grows. Michigan's future is absolutely dependent on making our education system a success for our students, our teachers, our parents and our economy.

Our education system must position our children to compete globally in a knowledge-based economy. To prepare and train the next generation of workers, Michigan needs a capable, nimble and innovative work force that can adapt to the needs of the emerging knowledge-based economy and compete with any nation.

To accomplish that, Michigan's education system must be reshaped so that all students learn at high levels and are fully prepared to enter the work force or attend college. They must think and act innovatively, demonstrate high performance, and meet the highest expectations. In addition, our students must leave high school with the skills to make sound financial decisions and demonstrate a basic understanding of personal finance.

We have begun this ascent by implementing one of the most rigorous sets of content and assessment standards and high-school graduation requirements in the nation. We have adopted strategies to improve school nutrition and lower the dropout rate, while encouraging school districts to embrace innovative ways to educate students. I commend the State Board of Education and Michigan Department of Education (MDE) for taking these steps.

Results are promising. We have seen improved Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) test scores over the past three years, American College Testing (ACT) scores, lower dropout rates and healthier students who show their eagerness to learn.

But to compete on a world-wide scale, our education system must evolve from one that served us well in the past to one that embraces the challenges and opportunities of the new century. A grammar school education once suited the agrarian age, and a high-school education suited the assembly line age. A high-quality post-secondary education is needed for the technology age.

Michigan's education system is not giving our taxpayers, our teachers, or our students the return on investment we deserve. In spite of the fact that we rank 21st in the country in total current expenditures per pupil according to the most recent data of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), consider the following:

- Less than 50% of our students are proficient in writing across grades based on fall 2010 MEAP data in grades 4 and 7, and spring 2010 Michigan Merit Examination (MME) data for grade 11

- In National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) testing for grade 4 math we rank 39th; for grade 4 reading we rank 34th; for grade 8 math we rank 37th; and, for grade 8 reading we rank 33rd (NCES)
- Only 16% of all students statewide are college-ready based on the ACT taken in spring 2010 as a part of the MME
- 238 Michigan high schools have zero college-ready students in all subjects based on the spring 2010 ACT test

We can – indeed we must – do better.

Change does not have to create adversaries; it can create partners committed to a better future.

The vast majority of Michigan educators and teachers are hard-working and committed to a prosperous future for their students. And, Michigan has a long history of effective collaboration between labor and management.

The proposals in this message can all be achieved in our present system of collective bargaining for teachers and other school employees. When it comes to educating our young people for the 21st century, all of us in Michigan—parents, educators, school boards, the business community, public servants and citizens—share an enormous responsibility to help Michigan’s next generation succeed. We must all step up to that responsibility.

In this special message I will outline a plan for Michigan’s future that rewards outcomes and performance. We can no longer tolerate a system where either schools or students are rewarded for just showing up.

Garnering input from a wide variety of education stakeholders – educators, education associations, business leaders, private foundations and agencies, and the State Board of Education – these policy proposals will drive high expectations for an emerging system of schools and educators. They will provide transparency, detailed information and genuine choice for families. They will jettison the status quo that has too often accepted mediocrity and, at times, resulted in failure for our children and state.

Early Childhood Development

Preparing children for optimal learning and quality achievement in school actually begins at conception. Brain development begins early in a pregnancy. Threats, such as alcohol or malnutrition, can have a negative or even irreversible effect on the developing brain. Premature birth and low birth weight also can have lasting effects on a child. Early childhood is a time of remarkable brain growth that affects a child’s development and readiness for school.

According to Michigan kindergarten teachers, on average, only 65% of children entered kindergarten classrooms this year ready to learn the curriculum. This “readiness gap” often begins at birth and continues until school entry. It can lead to an achievement gap that persists through each year of school.

Seventy percent of Michigan fourth graders scored below the proficient reading level on the NAEP in 2009 (the most recent available data), placing Michigan 34th of the 50 states. Until the end of third grade, children are *learning to read*. Fourth grade students need to be able to *read to learn*. Children who cannot meet NAEP proficiency levels, especially low income children, are likely to end up not completing high school, becoming adults who struggle to qualify for even the lowest skill, lowest paying

jobs. The result for Michigan: a lack of competitiveness in the global marketplace and a significant portion of the population without hope for a prosperous future.

Our goal must be to create a coherent system of health and early learning that aligns, integrates and coordinates Michigan's investments from prenatal to third grade. This will help assure Michigan has a vibrant economy, a ready work force, a pool of people who demonstrate consistently high educational attainment, and a reputation as one of the best states in the country to raise a child.

Today, Michigan's approach to investing in school readiness and early elementary success is not values-based or founded on sound scientific or economic evidence. Research confirms that the developmental needs of children are interrelated, yet we invest in a variety of fragmented, segmented and highly specialized programs. Michigan programs that serve children and families in the prenatal to third grade period are spread across multiple state departments and each department delivers programs based on its own culture, outcomes and goals. Currently, there are 84 separate funding streams scattered across state government that deal with early childhood. Programs operate with varying levels and types of accountability, inconsistently assess quality and lack capacity to measure or report results.

To remedy this, I am proposing the consolidation of early childhood programs and resources into a single office of early childhood focused on maximizing child outcomes, reducing duplication and administrative overhead and reinvesting resources from efficiencies into quality improvement and service delivery.

Our cohesive strategy starts with an Executive Order that combines the Office of Child Development and Care currently at the Department of Human Services with the Office of Early Childhood Education and Family Services at the Michigan Department of Education.

The new *Michigan Office of Great Start – Early Childhood* will be located at the Department of Education and will coordinate all 84 separate early childhood funding streams currently managed throughout various state government agencies. Programs that will become a part of the *Office of Great Start* in the initial phase will include: Great Start School Readiness, Great Parents/Great Start, Preschool Special Education, Child Care Licensing, Head Start State Collaboration, Child Care and Development Program, and Early On.

This new office will refocus the state's early childhood investment, policy and administrative structures by adopting a single set of early childhood outcomes. All public investments will be assessed against a single set of early childhood outcomes as follows:

- Children born healthy
- Children healthy, thriving, and developmentally on track from birth to third grade
- Children developmentally ready to succeed in school at the time of school entry
- Children prepared to succeed in fourth grade and beyond by reading proficiently by the end of third grade

Michigan government, business and foundation leaders agreed several years ago on the need for early childhood investment and the necessity of a new approach in order to close the readiness gap. They asserted that neither government alone, nor the private sector acting unilaterally, is able to change the trajectory of school readiness. A bridge is needed to connect the sectors. To that end, the Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC) was created to be more flexible and nimble than

government, and be more aligned with state and federal opportunities than the private and nonprofit sectors.

The *Michigan Office of Great Start – Early Childhood* working hand-in-hand with the private sector, through ECIC, will create a dynamic partnership aimed at maximizing public and private investment in the service of Michigan’s children.

All human behaviors, from work force abilities to social skills build on capacities developed during childhood, beginning at birth. The early development of cognitive skills, emotional well-being, social competence, and robust physical and mental health is the foundation for school success. These abilities are the critical prerequisites for economic productivity and responsible citizenship throughout life.

Michigan must change to support these realities. We know too much about the first five years of life to continue to invest as though learning begins at the kindergarten door rather than at birth. Government, the private and nonprofit sectors, and ECIC all have critical roles to play.

Performance-Based System of Schools

Michigan needs to drive toward a system of higher expectations for its system of schools and educators. We need a performance-based education system that will meet the 21st century education needs of all students. Innovation and educational entrepreneurship must be cultivated through improved models of instruction across the state. There must be greater choice for students and parents and greater responsibility and accountability at the individual school level for student growth.

Funding

The core of a performance-based education system must be a statewide school funding model based upon student proficiency and academic growth. Our school system should be dedicated to student outcomes. Reshaping education in Michigan and developing a performance-based system of schools demands that we rethink the way we fund education. Today, the state sends a full foundation allowance to school districts based entirely on attendance figures taken twice a year. These “count days” have become synonymous with pizza parties and prize offers as schools are compelled to get high attendance counts to maximize their funding. Accurate head counts are very important, but should not be the only factor in determining school funding levels. Instead, our statewide school funding should also be based upon academic growth, and not just whether a student enrolls and sits at a desk.

I propose that a portion of state school aid be tied to the academic achievement of a school district for 2013 and beyond. This funding model will increase academic growth and the college and career readiness of our students by allocating scarce resources to districts that make the biggest gains.

In my 2013 budget message, I will be proposing that school districts receive a bonus beyond the per pupil state foundation allowance for demonstrating student growth in reading, math and other MDE selected subjects. This funding should be allocated to districts for students who show an average of at least one year of growth per year of instruction. By rewarding growth, and not only proficiency, students who have fallen behind their grade level are not forgotten. Instead, they are viewed as having the most to gain.

In my executive budget recommendation in February, I also proposed that in fiscal year 2013 a portion of the state foundation allowance be allocated to school districts that pay no more than 80% of employee health care premiums or control costs in other ways. Local school dashboards and school district accountability and transparency metrics also will be part of the funding discussion.

The State Superintendent is implementing new data collection systems to better document yearly student growth and proficiency. This type of student testing and data collection serves more than one purpose. In addition to helping educate our kids, this new testing will make Michigan more competitive for federal funding from Washington.

Public Charter Schools

Public charter schools in Michigan were first established in 1994. At the time they were an innovative concept, but because they were new, restrictions were placed on their establishment. Today, many of those restrictions do not make sense. In order to create dynamic, performance-based school districts in Michigan we need to challenge the status quo. Charter schools play an important role by offering an alternative education option to parents and students, particularly in our struggling districts. We need to increase the number of charter schools in Michigan to help attract the top charter operators from across the nation and encourage more choice at the local level.

Therefore, I am proposing that any caps limiting the number of charter schools in districts with at least one academically failing school be removed. This will allow for more charters in areas where additional education options are needed the most.

Another issue hampering the recruitment of nationally prominent charter school operators is that a charter board can oversee only one building under current law. It is difficult to rationalize this restriction when we allow a local board of education oversight of an entire school district. The legislature should allow top performing charter school boards to oversee more than one school.

A strong system of schools that is funded for outcomes will generate performance-based schools. I expect charter schools in Michigan to be held to the same rigorous standard as any other public school.

Accountability and Empowerment

In my State of the State address, I presented a dashboard for the state of Michigan. It includes a variety of metrics that illustrate how our state is performing in areas such as public safety, economic strength, and quality of life. Today, I am unveiling the "State of Education in Michigan" dashboard that will serve as our statewide report card on education. The dashboard includes metrics from public K-12 education, community colleges and universities to provide a snapshot of education in Michigan. As an example, many parents may be surprised to learn that 61% of community college students require developmental coursework in order to be successful at the college level. That is unacceptable. Many of the public education metrics are derived from data contained in the Center for Educational Performance Information database. This system of reporting will allow local districts and eventually school-level dashboards to be created with these and other data points.

Accountability and transparency should apply to every part of our education system, not just local school districts. Over \$2 billion flows through intermediate school districts (ISDs) in Michigan. In 2010, they employed over 15,000 people. In many cases, there has been a difference of opinion between what services should be provided by local school districts and what should be provided by the ISD.

I am convinced that significant savings can be achieved if business and administrative functions are consolidated. I propose that by the 2012 school year, an ISD should be able to bid on any service a local district provides outside the classroom. Alternatively, a local district should be able to bid on any service an ISD provides for the entire intermediate school district if it can provide the same quality of service for everyone at a better cost. An open bidding process that is public and transparent will

ensure value for the taxpayer and that Michigan is spending as much money as possible inside the classroom.

At every level we need to place the bright light of public scrutiny on the measures of success or failure that will drive a better future for Michigan.

But just measuring and reassigning responsibility is not enough. Districts and schools must be held accountable for student outcomes. In Michigan, 238 high schools did not produce a single student proficient in math or reading last year, yet every one of those schools is accredited. Michigan needs a school accreditation system that finally brings light to this issue in a responsible way. I urge the legislature to adopt new standards so we can have an honest assessment of where our schools stand.

In every school district, transparency, accountability and empowerment in the classroom are critical.

However, in a number of districts, additional attention is required. We have 23 school districts that are over \$1 million in deficit. Combined, these financially distressed districts have an operating deficit of about \$440 million. Students and families in these districts cannot wait for a long-term, viable education system.

Young people in these struggling districts need a financially sustainable education system under which it is possible for both students and teachers to succeed. They need a system that efficiently directs limited taxpayer dollars toward smart, research-based efforts proven to help all students perform at dramatically higher academic levels. And, they need a system that holds every teacher and school administrator at the state, intermediate and local level accountable for student gains in the classroom, while also empowering them to get there with the autonomy, student data, instructional tools and meaningful support they require.

We must tap every available resource, continually assess the best of what is happening in the education field and swiftly find permanent solutions to the crises in these districts.

The time has come to stop the benign acceptance of non-performance in these districts. Soon, I will be applying the new Emergency Manager legislation for those districts that continue to fail financially and academically and take no steps to eliminate the drain on community financial resources and student academic achievement. This will include the announcement of a new Emergency Manager for Detroit Public Schools shortly.

School Safety

We must ensure that Michigan students' opportunities are not diminished because we fail to provide them with a safe and secure learning environment. Forty-five states already have passed laws to address the problem of bullying in schools. It is time for Michigan to join them.

The harm caused by bullying is not under debate. Studies have long shown that it leads to low self-esteem, depression, poor academic achievement, truancy, and even suicide. School is not a house of learning for a bullying victim; it is a house of pain. A bullied student is not only being tormented; he or she is being denied an equal opportunity to a quality education.

Even the home is no longer a refuge for the bullying victim. Much of bullying today takes place on the internet, cell phone text services and by other electronic means. Such "cyber bullying" may not always take place on school property or during school hours, but when it is between students it must be recognized as a school issue. And because bullying is a school issue, it must be dealt with in school – before it becomes a law enforcement issue.

Many Michigan schools already have good anti-bullying policies in place and we need to ensure that every school has one. School policies cannot be designed to only cover some students – every school must protect every student. And, as adults, we need to be clear in both word and deed – bullying is always wrong.

I am asking the legislature to pass a comprehensive anti-bullying bill that will be in place for the next school year. The bill need not tell each school how to deal with bullying, but it must require that they have clear policies do so. The State Board of Education already has developed a model policy that every district can look to as they develop their own.

Michigan students should not suffer because we fail to act.

Any Time, Any Place, Any Way, Any Pace Program

Choice

Today, I am proposing a new “Any Time, Any Place, Any Way, Any Pace” public school learning model. Michigan’s state foundation allowance should not be exclusively tied to the school district a child attends. Instead, funding needs to follow the student. This will help facilitate dual enrollment, blended learning, on-line education and early college attendance. Education opportunities should be available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

A model of proficiency-based funding rather than “seat time” requirements will foster more free market ideas for public schools in Michigan. This includes mandatory “schools of choice” for every public school district. Providing open access to a quality education without boundaries is essential. Resident students in every district should have first choice to enroll, but no longer should school districts be allowed to opt out from accepting out-of-district students. In the event more out-of-district students wish to enroll than space allows, the school should conduct a random lottery to determine acceptance. I will propose legislation to accomplish this change.

By introducing an education system that offers unfettered flexibility and adaptability for student learning models and styles, we will break down the status quo on how, when, and where students learn.

We must minimize all state and local barriers that hinder innovation at the local level, including seat time regulations, length of school year, length of school day and week, and the traditional configurations of classrooms and instruction. Blended learning models, where students receive instruction from high quality online educators, along with face-to-face instruction from high quality classroom teachers should be encouraged. School districts that embed technology into blended classroom instruction or embrace total online learning, project-based learning, and experiential learning models will make the system more cost-efficient, competitive, innovative, and effective in motivating student achievement.

21st Century Education

Access to quality education is no longer solely dependent on local classrooms and textbooks. A new global market has emerged as parents, schools and students are realizing the power and effectiveness of online learning. The time has come to embrace innovative learning tools for all Michigan students.

Michigan’s education system has revolved around a static approach to education delivery that can be at odds with individual learning styles. By creating a robust virtual learning environment, Michigan will provide students more education options that best meet their needs. Whether it is a gifted student

requiring an accelerated program, or a child struggling with a traditional classroom setting, virtual learning can provide a vital lifeline to ensure success.

Leveraging technology, I propose that every child in Michigan who needs or wants up to two hours of daily online education must receive it. To help enable this policy, any enrollment caps or seat time requirements on virtual schools should be removed. This plan eliminates barriers to true choice in education and gives parents and students the flexibility to employ education programming that ensures their future success.

These reforms are designed to move us from school systems to a system of schools. Parents deserve more data and information on every school, with genuine data and benchmarks to identify schools with effective instruction and sustained student achievement growth.

Degrees Matter

The proposed inclusion of post-secondary education into the state school aid fund clearly signifies the need for a P-20 state education system that integrates all levels of learning.

I am asking for the legislature to approve a seamless “Degrees Matter” system that values and demands a post-secondary degree or skilled trades credential for all Michigan residents. Currently, many of our skilled trades provide credentials through highly concentrated and typically oversubscribed apprenticeship programs. Those who choose to work with their hands and minds, whether building our infrastructure or growing our food, need extensive skill focus and training to move forward after secondary school. We need to enable and encourage their proficiency and dedication. All Michigan students should be able to receive a community college degree or credential no later than their 13th year of school. My plan calls for every public school district to offer college credit opportunities by using early college, dual enrollment, online college credit courses, direct credit, and other valid and rigorous course options.

Career and college readiness for all students, coupled with the opportunity to receive college credit before graduation, provides both an incentive for students and an affordable post-secondary pathway for all families. Students should be able to earn college credit as early as their ninth year, and those students who choose to, should be able to earn college credits that will be accepted by Michigan community colleges and four-year baccalaureate institutions.

With performance-based funding, local school districts that seize these innovative strategies will thrive. We can improve schools’ ability to monitor student academic progress and growth through high school with college readiness assessments in a student’s ninth and 10th years. Shortly, the Department of Education will be laying out its plans for these assessments.

Similarly, to allow students to move through their education at their own pace, I call for “testing out” assessment opportunities for all students, at all levels of education.

The goal of the Degrees Matter approach to education will result in a post-secondary degree or credential and not just an accumulation of college credits. It will require three way multi-directional college credits, where universities will accept blocks of credits from community colleges and quality high school courses; community colleges will be allowed to accept university credits toward the attainment of a student’s community college degree or credential; and universities will accept blocks of credits from community colleges.

This Degrees Matter system of reverse transfer credits will increase the number of students who are awarded associate degrees or credentials upon completion of the necessary credits. Students who

have earned credits at a community college and transfer to a baccalaureate-granting institution would be able to reverse transfer the credits earned at the baccalaureate institution to complete their community college degree or credential.

Performance-Based Teaching

We are expecting a lot of our students and our schools as well as those who teach in them and those that run them. This is as it should be. To reinvent Michigan and realize our potential, we must expect the best. We have to provide the tools, the support, and the environment for students to reach the high expectations we have set, as parents and as state decision-makers.

To get the student learning we expect nothing matters more than great teachers and great teaching. Every body of research confirms that the biggest contributor to learning gains and good school and life outcomes is the great teacher who inspires student learning. The impact of great teaching is most dramatic among those with the furthest to travel in their education.

Bill Gates, whose foundation is dedicated to improving education worldwide, spoke to the nation's governors recently. He said: "We know more (today) about what works. Of all the variables under a school's control, the single most decisive factor in student achievement is excellent teaching. It's astonishing what great teachers can do for their students. But compared to countries that outperform us in education, we do very little to measure, develop and reward excellent teaching."

All of us know in our hearts the genuine importance of teachers. We remember the handful of teachers who shaped our lives and careers. We fight to get our kids in the best teacher's classes. It's time we said clearly: every teacher in every Michigan classroom is going to have the tools, training, feedback and support to be a star teacher.

Teachers themselves are asking for help. Earlier this month, the American Federation of Teachers issued a report outlining what new, young teachers expected in order to keep them in the profession and thrive in the classroom. They asked for:

- Regular feedback on their effectiveness
- Fair, rigorous and meaningful evaluation systems
- Peer learning and shared practice
- Recognition of and reward for high performance
- Intelligent use of technology to enhance performance

To deliver on Michigan's constitutional promise to our children and our state, we have to change the ways we prepare, support, evaluate, and reward teachers. We also have to send a clear message in every school and community that we honor teachers and value great teaching.

We need our best and brightest, in teaching, in Michigan. We should provide the highest-quality training that can ensure that every child is taught by a skilled professional who can help that child succeed.

That is why I am calling for a series of steps to enable great teaching and great teachers.

We must reform how we recruit and prepare our teachers. Great teaching starts with getting the best and brightest into teaching, and making sure their education equips them to succeed at inspiring students in the classroom.

The first step in this process is ensuring that all universities that educate teachers passionately pursue this mission. I challenge these institutions to transform their teacher education programs to deliver the skills teachers need to succeed in the classroom, including ensuring teachers can teach the national Common Core College and Career-Readiness Standards, now embraced by Michigan and almost all states. In addition, they should be requiring more in-classroom clinical experience for all teacher-candidates. To move Michigan in this direction, I am asking the State Board of Education and Department of Education to take the responsibility to re-fashion the certification and approval of teacher education institutions to reflect the same expectations.

I ask the Board and Department to raise the bar for certification tests. All students who are accepted into teacher preparation programs should be required to pass the basic skills test and all teacher candidates should be required to pass their subject matter tests before student teaching. For those students who struggle to meet this new standard, their university and teacher preparation program should take responsibility to ensure that they can meet this minimum bar. The Standing Technical Advisory Committee in the Department of Education should be convened immediately to review cut scores for competency for Michigan's tests for teacher certification. Neighboring states (IL and IN) have increased the cut scores for their teacher certification tests.

I am also asking the State Board of Education and Department of Education to help us assure that every district utilizes assessments of teaching performance that focus on teachers' actual skills in teaching academic content. Other professions, and most of the skilled trades, assess practitioners' skills at the actual work — whether the work is surgery, flying planes, or wiring a house. We need a rigorous performance-centered assessment of teaching for two reasons: (1) in order to ensure that training focuses on the core professional skills and knowledge and (2) so that no one is allowed to “practice” on our young people without demonstrating sufficient proficiency with the highly skilled work needed for teaching.

We need to enable the development of methods and programs for preparing teachers with the skills they need to help all children succeed academically. With firm entrance requirements and continuing performance standards, we can encourage excellent ideas about teacher training that prepares them to perform skillfully in the classroom. The bottom line must be the encouragement of optimal skill in teaching children, and helping our children learn to the highest academic levels.

We also must support and build the skills of new teachers and connect ongoing teacher training and tenure to great teaching.

Nearly half of all new teachers quit during their first few years. Some are those who chose teaching as a “safe” career, only to find it is much more demanding than they thought. Our children benefit when these folks move on. Many, however, fall out because they don't get the clear and consistent coaching, mentoring and feedback they need to become great teachers.

Great teaching requires specialized knowledge and skill, including how to connect with students. These skills can be taught. Great teaching needs to be supported by lifelong learning and ongoing, regular evaluation. Further, the opportunity to teach our children, particularly in a position with the security of tenure, is a privilege that must be earned and maintained. Finally, great teachers must be adequately rewarded and able to find satisfying careers in teaching and not be required to move into school administration to advance their careers.

To accomplish these goals, Michigan must take a number of important steps. Today, I am calling on the State Board of Education and Michigan Department of Education to replace Michigan's continuing education requirements with new requirements that are clearly linked to teacher skill-building.

The mere receipt of a master's degree should not mean automatic increases in pay. Nor should it be a hindrance to a highly educated person desiring to enter the field of teaching in Michigan. Performance in the classroom should supersede pure longevity.

Michigan law should be changed to recognize performance and future potential in the hiring and pay process, not just the receipt of degrees. If a professional chemist wants to teach chemistry the state has allowed for an alternative certification system to quickly get the teacher in the classroom. Likewise, the state should be encouraged when a successful and qualified businessperson wants to teach a high school class. I urge the State Superintendent and Department of Education to quickly allow teachers to enter the profession through alternative certification. They then would be held to the same rigorous performance standards and student proficiency requirements as any other teacher.

I am also requesting that the State Board and Department of Education ensure that all school districts in Michigan fully implement administrator certification and training. This guarantees that our school administrators are well prepared, routinely assessed, continually trained and demonstrate ongoing proficiency, including the importance of both the timeliness and rigor of their responsibilities to evaluate teachers.

Additionally, I am requesting that the legislature reform Michigan's antiquated tenure law to assure that our children are being taught by the best, the brightest, and those with a clear results-oriented mission. I will support tenure reform legislation in Michigan that:

- 1.) Awards tenure based on demonstrated, multiple years of effective teaching ability, instead of the current system that relies only on the number of years teaching. I propose that new teachers be given five years of probationary status, and teachers must demonstrate three consecutive years of effectiveness in order to be eligible for tenure.
- 2.) Requires that the annual evaluations of teachers be based on multiple measures, but must include in its determination of effectiveness at least 40% based on student achievement growth.
- 3.) Requires that ineffective teachers, as determined by annual evaluation, enter a probationary status. If such teachers receive a second consecutive ineffective rating, they should forfeit the rights and privileges secured by tenure. Ineffective teachers should then be dismissed or given a third year at the option of the local district.
- 4.) The tenure appeal process needs to be reformed so that ineffective teachers who have been unable to improve their performance can be dismissed in a more timely and cost-effective way.

I am convinced that effectiveness in teaching should trump seniority in layoff and placement. I will support legislation that ensures consideration of teacher effectiveness in "bumping" situations to end the practice of "last in/first out" in our schools. I also will support legislation that requires the consent of the school principal before bumping into a new school. These two steps will empower schools over districts and ensure that the best teachers, regardless of years of service, are teaching our young people.

Michigan also must create career paths that reward great teaching. Michigan has to nurture great teachers, make sure they find satisfying career paths that reward them for teaching excellence, and keep them in the classroom changing student lives. That is why we must add a master teacher category to our Michigan teacher certification system. I encourage the State Board of Education and the Department of Education to create a performance-based credential for excellent teachers that helps them play enhanced roles as new teacher mentors and school instructional leaders. Such teachers should also be eligible for higher pay and recognition for great teaching. The new program should be based on demonstration of proficiency, and/or earning of master teacher credentials (such as National Board Certification).

I ask the State Board of Education and Department of Education to address these issues by the beginning of the next school year.

Conclusion

We cannot expect reform if we ignore the most important part of education – our kids. A better future for Michigan youth begins with a shared understanding of what is right with our students, rather than what is wrong.

A 2010 Gallup poll of American 5th – 12th graders revealed that kids cite three things they need to succeed in education and in life. They tell us: “I need to be known. I want to be excited about the future. And, I could use your help.”

Our schools and communities need to show kids that they matter, that we see them as individual human beings, and that we commit ourselves to knowing and developing what is right about each and every student. Parents, educators, and community leaders need to help students become excited about their future and about the vitality of their cities and towns.

Kids need to hear that their parents and communities will actively help them learn, grow, and move toward an independent and successful future.

This is the invisible issue in American education: we have local control of schools, but we don't feel local ownership of what happens in them. In 2009, 2,835 parents of school-aged children were asked: “What is the one thing you could do to raise the graduation rate at your local high school?” These parents have a daily, personal stake in education. Yet their responses reveal uncertainty and ambivalence about their role in it. The most common answer: “I don't know. Nothing.”

I'm asking all of Michigan to make our youth a priority. Listen to what students say they need from their schools and communities. Track their hope, engagements, and well-being. And, take action to improve those areas.

How do we do this? I am encouraging all of our public schools to participate in the Gallup Student Poll to give our youth a voice in our local, state, and national discussions about education and their futures. We can measure the hope, engagement, and well-being of our young people in less than 10 minutes and at no cost. Schools will receive their results within weeks allowing each community to act on current, relevant data that drives student achievement and overall success. I have asked the Michigan Department of Education to take a leadership role with the Gallup organization to encourage all our school districts to participate in this important survey of young people.

H.G. Wells once said that “civilization is a race between education and catastrophe.” In Michigan, we have the obligation to determine the winner.

After more than a century, the traditional methods, mindsets and goals of Michigan's education system can take us no farther. Like the Model T car or the one-room schoolhouse, our education system did what we asked of it at the time – but that time has passed. The dramatic influences of globalization and technology on today's society demand a more prepared, skilled and sophisticated work force. Equipping tomorrow's workers with the tools to master these critical skills is our obligation today.

As we stand at the threshold of the New Michigan, we must embrace profoundly different expectations of our schools, teachers and students. In turn, we must encourage them to thrive by providing a structure that shuns complacency and mediocrity. The reforms being proposed today realign our educational values. They will reward performance rather than attendance, and outcomes rather than process. By taking hold of exciting options ranging from partnerships to innovative technology, education across Michigan will be infused with the unfettered ability and enthusiasm to teach and learn.

