

Five Key Ideas

for moving K-12 education forward in Michigan



① *Rethink our definition of “achievement”*

- ▶ As things stand, we have elevated test scores above all other measures or concepts of student learning.
- ▶ All too often, we view education as the acquisition of facts and methods rather than clarity of thought, reasoned inquiry, and thoughtful choice.
- ▶ Parents are not interested in raising good test-takers. We want our children to grow into productive members of our community and thoughtful friends, neighbors and citizens. We're focused on our children's futures, not yesterday's test scores.

② *Get clear on what a “quality education” means*

- ▶ Schools do much more than impart information, and most parents believe it's those other aspects of learning that matter most in the long run.
- ▶ There is no time for an exercise in feel-good rhetoric. We need a thorough and honest public discussion, informed by professional educators, of what we want for our state's children.
- ▶ See the statement by Parents Across America, in which MIPFS participated, here: parentsacrossamerica.org/quality-education/

③ *Ensure our schools have the resources they need*

- ▶ Michigan's ranking in state K-12 spending per pupil has consistently fallen over the last 20 years, matched by a corresponding slide in NAEP scores compared to other states.
- ▶ Our state's overall commitment to schools as a share of our state's economy—in good times and bad—has been in decline for over a decade.
- ▶ Providing resources starts with adequate funding, but also requires smart spending and intelligent policies. Examples: the funding adequacy study embodied in PA 555 of 2014, and the proposal for educational audits in HB 5268 '14, which MIPFS originally drafted (see: mipfs.org/node/211).

④ *Put resources where they are most needed*

- ▶ Equity is not necessarily equal, and strict equality is not necessarily fair.
- ▶ Our children and communities face a variety of obstacles and stresses that interfere with them offering or taking advantage of a quality education.
- ▶ In order to offer a quality education to every child, our state must acknowledge that schools need resources to counter those obstacles. We must act intelligently to address those issues in a systematic and humane way.

⑤ *No more chasing fads or basing policy on ideology*

- ▶ K-12 public education is a service provided by the public to the entire public, both because we have a moral duty to help every child fulfill their potential and because we know that the future of our communities depends on the investments we make in our children today.
- ▶ We must not set or change policy arbitrarily or hastily. We must shape long-term policy, guided by research and expertise, that provides a stable foundation for our schools and can also meet the changing needs and uncertainties of the future.