

# MICHIGAN:

## It's Time for Comprehensive School Funding Research

*By Rob Fowler*





The School Finance Research Collaborative, a broad-based, bipartisan group of business and education experts from metro Detroit to the Upper Peninsula, applauds the recent call for school funding research in Gov. Rick Snyder's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Education Commission Report.

It's never been clearer—the way we fund Michigan's schools is broken, and we must reexamine our approach so all students can achieve and succeed.

Here's the good news: the Collaborative, whose members agree it's time to change the way Michigan's schools are funded, is already taking the lead in this effort. We are bringing together top industry experts to reexamine our approach to funding Michigan's public schools to serve all students, regardless of their circumstances.

Our group is supporting a new, comprehensive school funding adequacy study that will use multiple methodologies to reexamine how we fund Michigan's public schools to prepare all students for college and careers.

The state-funded Michigan Education Finance Study provided a good starting point for reexamining our approach to school funding. The Collaborative will build on the state's findings using multiple methodologies to produce the best, most complete and most accurate information on what it truly costs to educate our students.

We have begun the process of hiring a contractor to provide this first-of-its-kind analysis of school financing in Michigan, with the results expected to be released by early 2018.

Once accurate and comprehensive data are available, the Collaborative will communicate this critical information to Michigan policymakers, stakeholders and the public at-large.

As President and CEO of the Small Business Association of Michigan, I continually see how strong schools mean strong small businesses

every day. We must recruit top-notch talent to grow our businesses and fill the cutting-edge jobs of tomorrow.

It's important to build and attract the talent of the future and build Michigan's workforce from the ground up, brick by brick, student by student.

Michigan's small business community relies on our public schools to prepare students for jobs, technical education and college so they are primed for success and ready to enter the workforce. That begins with a diverse public school education that prepares all students for success, regardless of their background or circumstances.

Schools need a plan and a roadmap for success just like businesses do.

That journey begins with the best and most reliable data on how to prepare our students for the competitive 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce. A truly comprehensive adequacy study is the first step toward meeting this goal.

Some people have prematurely criticized the Collaborative, claiming our work will invariably lead to recommendations for more school funding. We're committed to letting research—not any preconceived notion or agenda—drive our work in the months ahead.

Working together, we will create a roadmap to provide great learning opportunities for the next generation of workers, entrepreneurs and small business owners.

Our overarching goal is to prepare all students for jobs and bright futures right here in the Great Lakes State. The success of all of our students will keep Michigan's economic comeback charging forward.

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