



RAMP UP

SCHOOL FUNDING

"Why do we punish students for things that are out of their control? Schools need to support kids who struggle."

-Maddie, Muskegon

THE ROAD AHEAD

To give our kids the support they need, Michigan should:



Revise the School Aid formula to create greater equity in school funding and improve educational achievement for all students regardless of race, place or income.



Fully fund the At-Risk School Aid program to help school districts meet the higher costs of educating children who are economically disadvantaged.



TIME FOR A TUNE-UP

Policymakers, parents, teachers, advocates and business leaders all agree that more must be done to improve education in Michigan. While the focus has been on strategies for raising test scores and improving instruction, a closer look shows that students face obstacles outside the classroom that must be overcome if all students are to succeed. As Michigan faces the first round of potential third-grade retentions based on its Read by Grade Three law, stark disparities in educational achievement based on race, ethnicity and income must be faced head on.



ABOUT THE OWNER'S MANUAL FOR MICHIGAN

We all agree Michigan needs a major tune-up. And like the real vehicles we all depend on, it takes a lot of components and tools to make our state go. Without good jobs and training, reliable healthcare, quality education, strong families, and a safe environment, our state can't run properly. That's why we've created a clear and **comprehensive plan to help lawmakers on the road ahead—the Owner's Manual or Michigan.**



REPAIRING THE PROBLEM:



HOW TO IMPROVE SCHOOL FUNDING

- 1. Ensure that all 3- and 4-year-olds have access to a preschool education, starting with children in families with low to moderate incomes.** High percentages of Michigan students are facing steep barriers to educational achievement that will not be resolved without intentional, intensive and highly targeted investments. The nonpartisan School Finance Research Collaborative concluded that a school funding formula that is weighted by the number of students in poverty or facing other risk factors could improve equity, and their recommendations need swift action.
- 2. Fully fund the At-Risk School Aid program.** The At-Risk School Aid program provides funds to districts based on the number of economically disadvantaged students they enroll. It is the state's current mechanism for addressing the added costs of teaching children in low-income schools and communities, but it is not fully funded. Despite increases in At-Risk funding during the 2016 to 2018 budget years, school districts currently receive only 78% of their intended allocations.

SHARING THE ROAD

Equity is of utmost importance when it comes to building a better Michigan. A high-quality public education is a path to equity and the foundation of economic growth. Unfortunately, this path has been blocked for too many children of color in Michigan. Children of color are less likely to read proficiently by third grade, are more likely to be retained in grade at all levels, change schools more frequently and miss more school. Ultimately, children of color and those from families with low incomes are less likely to graduate from high school or be college- and career-ready. These disparities can be traced to public policies that have limited economic opportunity for many families and fail to recognize the added cost of teaching children who live in high-poverty neighborhoods.

