

**Reinventing College Readiness Opportunities for Michigan Students & Families:
A Three-Phase Plan in Public-Private Partnerships
for Globally and Regionally Competitive Citizens**

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Students Reinventing Michigan Competition

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Abstract:

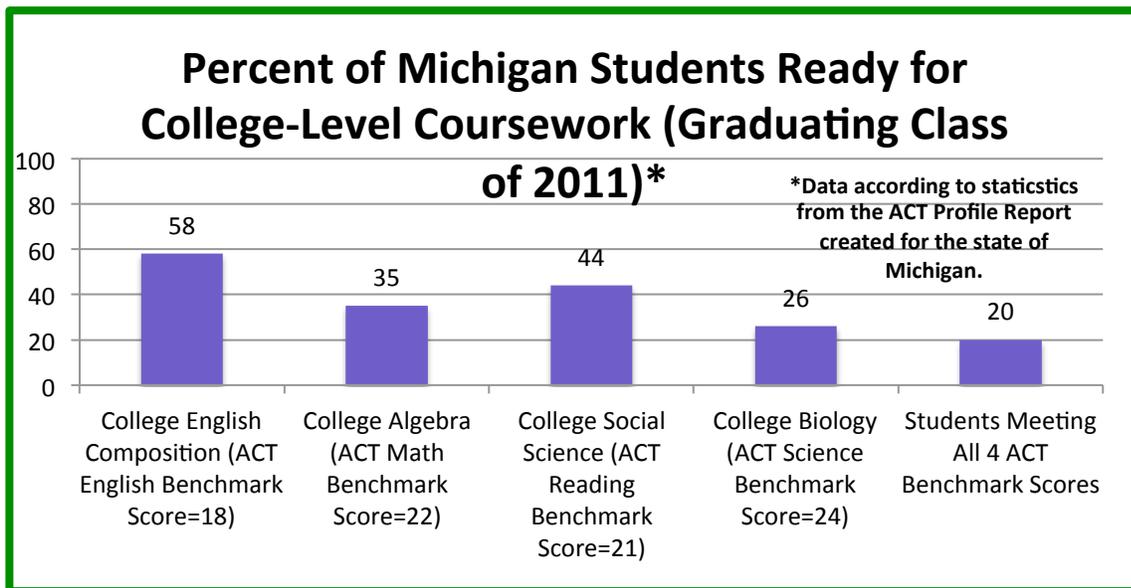
In 2011, 80% of Michigan high school seniors were not college ready. Not only does this inadequacy prevent them from being successful and competitive in this global age, but also provides poor return on the funds invested in our public education system. To ensure more Michigan students are college ready, this plan proposes a three prong strategy that would 1) create a comprehensive website of college scholarships and resources for high school students and their families, 2) establish a scholarship endowment funded by a public-private partnership to help all students access a college education, and 3) utilize existing Great Start Readiness Programs and use that successful model as a template for more early education programs. At a time when global and regional competitiveness are at an all-time high, creatively investing in Michigan's education system would benefit Michigan's students and residents and the state's economy as a whole. A stronger education system would attract young families, which in turn would help bolster our tax base and Michigan business revenues. These new sources of income would boost the state's economy, thus creating a stronger Michigan.

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I. College Readiness: What it Means for Michigan

First, it is imperative to discuss the meaning of “college ready,” as its definition is crucial to understanding our proposal’s main goals. According to an ACT assessment on the class of 2011, only 20% of Michigan high school students are determined to be college ready. As seen in the chart below, college readiness is defined as the percentage of students that meet the four minimum scores on the ACT: 18 on English, 22 on Mathematics, 21 on Reading, and 24 on Science.¹ As the ACT data proves, the vast majority of Michigan students are not “college ready,” as defined by ACT standards.



II. Introduction: A Call to Action

“Our education system must position our children to compete globally in a knowledge-based economy.”³

As the state of Michigan continues the comprehensive review of its public education system, our proposal envisions a three-phase approach to address the low rate of college readiness among Michigan’s high school students. Across the state of Michigan there is enormous concern about our children’s future by all citizens. There are many private partners, including foundations, global corporations, businesses, youth service organizations, service clubs, community foundations, and faith-based organizations that are equally concerned about our children’s future.

¹ <http://www.act.org/newsroom/data/2011/pdf/profile/Michigan.pdf>

² <http://www.act.org/newsroom/data/2011/pdf/profile/Michigan.pdf>

³ Governor Snyder’s Special Message on Education issued April 27, 2011, http://www.michigan.gov/documents/snyder/SpecialMessageonEducationReform_351586_7.pdf

Our call to action encourages the state government to redirect existing resources, to strengthen private and public partnerships and to more clearly communicate these partnerships to all the citizens of Michigan. We frame this proposal with a three-phase approach including: 1) immediate, 2) medium-term and 3) long-term proposals that can be implemented. In doing so, we intend to address those cohorts of students who are currently in high school 14-18 years old, in late elementary and middle school, who have yet to start elementary school, and their families. In taking this three-phase approach, no cohort of students is neglected and immediate and long term improvements can be expected. In addition, this proposal also allows a rolling adoption of the three phases and complements many of the proposals developing under the Michigan Public Education Finance Act (MPEFA). The “Any Time, Any Place, Any Way and Any Pace” focus of the act and its specific five proposals to 1) remove district ownership of students; 2) create on-line options with performance funding; 3) funding to follow students; 4) performance based funding for courses and 5) early graduation scholarships would all be enhanced by our recommendations.

III. The Problem:

The problem, that has been identified by Governor Snyder and other concerned citizens, is that:

“Michigan’s education system is not giving our taxpayers, our teachers, or our students the return on investment we deserve.”⁴

Michigan is currently funneling billions of local, state and federal dollars into a public school system that is not preparing our students to compete in the global marketplace. We need to restructure where and how resources are directed in order to stop putting funds into a system that is not returning on the investment, as seen in Michigan’s low levels of college readiness and achievement gap. The MPEFA is already proposing much greater accountability between learning outcomes and performance funding which will address many of the structural inconsistencies between all students’ academic experiences. Our proposal would complement this emphasis within the MPEFA by addressing three additional factors: 1) disseminating information via the web through a public-private partnership to current high school students and their families about college readiness and success, 2) establishing a scholarship fund with public

⁴ Governor Snyder’s Special Message on Education issued April 27, 2011, http://www.michigan.gov/documents/snyder/SpecialMessageonEducationReform_351586_7.pdf

and private resources targeted at late-elementary to middle school students who might prematurely foreclose pursuing college due to financial constraints, 3) highlighting Great Start to serve as a template for all Michigan families and early childhood institutions as well as ensuring that eligible families access this valuable program. These proposals will ensure both immediate and long-term improvements in college-readiness among Michigan students. With these improvements we can expect considerable additional advantages in developing an entrepreneurial economy that retains college graduates in our state and in diminishing disadvantages often found in a population academically unprepared for global and regional competitiveness.

IV. Phase 1 - Immediate: Michigan College Success Partnership Website

Developing a state-wide, comprehensive website for information about college-readiness, college-planning, and resources for college would immediately address the needs of current high schools students and their families who are in the midst of determining whether college is even an option for them. For many families, regardless of income or ethnicity, finding reliable, unbiased information about the college planning process is extremely difficult. Very few sites integrate information about local, state and federal resources, nor do any specifically address citizens in the State of Michigan. We propose the immediate development of such a website.⁵ Just as the Michigan Ready to Succeed Partnership was expanded and developed into the highly successful Great Start Program, so too should the existing resources around college readiness and planning could be developed into a comprehensive site which could serve as a one-stop site for Michigan families with high school age students. Good models for the development of this site include Michigan's Great Start website⁶ and the state of Indiana's "Learn More Indiana" website⁷. Both sites serve as an exceptional resource for families and direct them to the wide array of local and state resources and with "Learn More Indiana" to the full complement of

⁵ On a personal note, Amanda's Grandpa, Paul Michael, is greatly involved in his small-town community of East Jordan, Michigan, which has only about 10% of students who are deemed college-ready. As a dedicated member of Rotary International, which provides generous scholarships to local students, and the founder of a middle school mentor program, her Grandpa explained some of the problems that he believes contribute to East Jordan students' low college readiness levels. He revealed that one of his main concerns was the students' unfamiliarity with locally- and state-funded scholarships available to them. One of his recommendations was to make students more aware of these scholarships at an earlier age, so that they a) are fully aware of the scholarships and their requirements so that they can prepare to be eligible for the scholarships throughout their high school years, and b) are not discouraged at an early age because of their perceived inaccessibility to a college education (Michael, Paul. Personal interview. 30 Dec. 2012).

⁶ <http://greatstartforkids.org/>

⁷ <http://www.in.gov/learnmoreindiana/>

federal resources as well. The Michigan College Success Partnership could highlight local government, businesses, agencies, schools, local media, libraries, youth service organizations, service clubs, community foundations, faith-based organizations that are all contributing to college success. In capturing the array of groups and organizations across the state of Michigan that are already supporting students' paths toward college success, the Partnership would address student needs across all regions of the state as well as provide a location for new partners to link to the Partnership. In addition this website would be linked to all Michigan public, private, charter and home school high schools websites, ensuring access to all students and their families. With the potential for greater mobility of students under MPEFA, the Michigan College Success Partnership would ensure real-time information for all students regardless of the location and timing in their educational track. Without this central information website, we could expect continued unevenness in students' access to quality information and thereby college success. Resources to fund the website would come from redirecting existing DOE website funds and seeking private funds from Michigan based corporations and foundations.

V. Phase 2 - Medium-term: Michigan Scholars Fellowship

Establishing and marketing a scholarship funded with public and private resources targeted at late-elementary to middle school students would address those students who might prematurely foreclose pursuing college due to financial constraints. Shifting individual students' focus away from financial pressures toward access to college would eliminate one of the chief barriers to academic persistence and achievement. With college tuitions continuing to rise, the concerns about affordability are no longer reserved to low income families. Increasingly middle class families and their children are finding themselves in the same trap of aspirations conflicting with the reality of the high tuition costs. Therefore, the majority of Michigan's families are struggling with this reality. Establishing the Michigan Scholars Fellowship and widely publicizing its availability would allay many families and individual students that they can never afford college. Although funding for state scholarships has declined, in 2011, the state of Michigan appropriated \$95 million⁸ to state funded scholarships and grants, including the Michigan Competitive Scholarship where over 34,943 students were awarded scholarships totaling \$19.3 million

⁸ http://www.michigan.gov/mistudentaid/0,4636,7-128-60969_61002---,00.html

dollars,⁹ and the Michigan Tuition Grant where over 22,269 students were awarded scholarships totaling \$30.5 million dollars.¹⁰ Additional federal funds for tuition exist under the Tuition Incentive program (TIP) and Pell Grants. Also, federal funds have been specifically targeted to Michigan under the Gaining Early Awareness & Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) and GEAR UP Michigan Scholarship which matches Pell grants. A number of cities, like Kalamazoo and Lansing, have established scholarship programs to address this trap of aspiration conflicting with the reality of college tuitions as well. Even with this multitude of resources available, students and their families are unaware of their access to these resources and prematurely conclude that college is out of reach. One model for this type of scholarship which links together state supported college scholarship and an early readiness program can be found in the state of Indiana's 21st Century Scholars program.¹¹ Establishing and widely publicizing the Michigan Scholars Fellowships would assure students and their families during the current students late elementary and middle school years that no matter what their income level college will be financially accessible to them. Our proposal would redirect the \$95 million currently appropriated to state funded scholarship and grants to the Michigan Scholars Fellowship. In addition we would seek matching funds +\$95 million from private partners to establish an endowment for these scholarships. We see this proposal as consistent with and complementing the MPEFA's recommendation for early graduation scholarships of \$2500, which is modeled on the \$4000 Mitch Daniels Early Graduation Scholarships.¹²

Michigan Scholars Fellowship Plus Program

Many students who do not believe that they can ever afford college lower their aspirations at any early age and thereby their academic persistence because the goal seems unattainable. This problem is most common around seventh or eighth grade, when a student transitions between middle school and high school with new academic and social challenges.¹³ Because ninth graders are the group most statistically likely to drop out of school, this is the group Michigan needs to target with this proposed Michigan Scholars Fellowship.

⁹ http://www.michigan.gov/mistudentaid/0,4636,7-128-60969_61016-274563--,00.html

¹⁰ http://www.michigan.gov/mistudentaid/0,4636,7-128-60969_61016-274564--,00.html

¹¹ <http://www.in.gov/ssaci/2345.htm>

¹² <http://www.in.gov/ssaci/2504.htm>

¹³ http://library.constantcontact.com/download/get/file/1111061207872-64/hobsons_industryreport_collegeandcareerreadiness_p20response.pdf

Under the umbrella of the Michigan Scholars Fellowship Program, we propose the implementation of a more directed Michigan Scholars Plus Fellowship. The Michigan Scholars Plus Fellowship would target low-income eighth grade students and follow them and keep them accountable for their education through their middle school, high school, and college years. After being accepted as a Michigan Scholar, students would sign a pledge promising to 1) graduate from high school, 2) attend events such as scholarship informational meetings and college visits set up through the Fellowship, 3) achieve a grade point average of at least 2.5, 4) refrain from delinquent acts including using illegal drugs and alcohol. Ultimately these graduating Michigan Scholars would create a network and support system of successful individuals who would have the option to act as mentors to students currently enrolled in the Fellowship. Similar programs have been implemented in other states, including the Indiana 21st Century Scholars Program, which has proven to be greatly effective.¹⁴

We envision a state-wide initiative, in which the government would seek out Michigan-based businesses and organizations to donate funds for this Fellowship. Businesses would be drawn to funding this program because of the economic benefits they would receive from a more prosperous Michigan education system, that would attract more young families to the state and renew state population. Additionally, business often have funds reserved for non-profit work, and enjoy giving back to the community they serve while also promoting their own image. Fostering a better partnership between Michigan businesses, schools, and community, would create a better sense of solidarity and community involvement and help tie all Michigan residents to the state. A potent problem currently facing Michigan is that college graduates are leaving the state; however, an initiative focusing on Michigan businesses helping Michigan would increase loyalty to the state and attract new residents.

¹⁴ The Indiana 21st Century Scholars Program was found to be very effective by St. John et al. In their 2004 study, they determined that the program had a great impact on the scholars' college enrollment levels. The study stated, "Becoming an affirmed Scholar's measured by completing the preparation process and applying for aid and admissions was positively associated with college enrollment. Affirmed Scholars were 4.8-5.3 times more likely to enroll based on these analyses." The authors of the study determined that this higher enrollment was for two reasons: a) the financial support guaranteed to the student after the program's completion, and b) the support mechanisms required by the program, such tutoring, college visits, and financial aid searches. (St. John, Edward P., et al. "Meeting the Access Challenge: An Examination of Indiana's Twenty-First Century Scholars Program." *Research in Higher Education* 45.8 (2004): 829-71. Print.)

VI. Long-term: Great Start²

Highlighting the success of Great Start and assuring full access of eligible students to this program as well as establishing Great Start as a template for existing early childhood education institutions as well as home-based early childhood education would provide the greatest long-term improvement in college readiness. Studies show a direct correlation between high quality preschool and achievement in the later years of school. To compete globally, let alone regionally, Michigan needs to make quality preschool available to more of our students. More of our students K-12 need to be better prepared in our schools to compete in the real world. In Michigan, only 19% of four year olds are enrolled in a Great Start Program¹⁵, and over 30,000 four year olds who are eligible for Head Start or Great Start are not enrolled¹⁶. The importance of quality early childhood education is being recognized globally with, for example, China planning to have 70% of its children in three years of pre-school by 2020.¹⁷

As has already been studied, quality early education benefits students and benefits the public. The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study followed 123 at-risk African Americans born into poverty living in Ypsilanti, Michigan who at ages three and four were divided into two groups: one who attended a high-quality preschool program and one who attended no preschool program.¹⁸ In the months October-May, Perry preschool teachers taught daily 2 ½ hour morning classes and made weekly 1 ½ hour home visits in the afternoon.¹⁵ At 27 years old, fewer Perry preschoolers were found to have been arrested or ever on welfare, and more Perry preschoolers were found to have a monthly income of \$2,000+, own their own home, and graduate from high school.¹⁵ Also, by investing money in the preschool program, the public benefitted in the by savings in welfare funding, remedial schooling, justice system funding, fewer crime victims and increased tax revenues from incomes.¹⁵ In his study on the economic benefits of early education, James Heckman found that early educational interventions have higher economic returns than

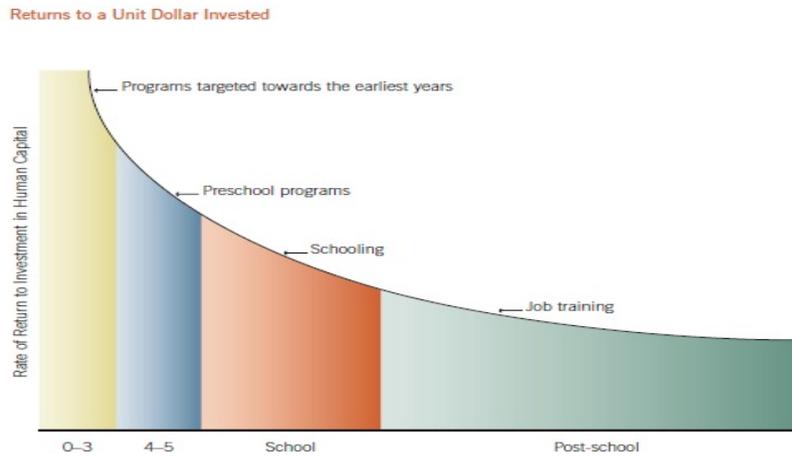
¹⁵ <http://nieer.org/sites/nieer/files/MI.pdf>

¹⁶ <http://bridgemi.com/2012/10/michigan-can-teach-plenty-more-preschoolers/>

¹⁷ <http://www.economist.com/node/21564410>

¹⁸ http://www.highscope.org/file/Research/PerryProject/Perry-SRCD_2003.pdf

later interventions for disadvantaged children¹⁹. These early education programs have a rate of return of 6-10% and have no equity-efficiency tradeoff. The earlier the intervention, the higher rate of return we would expect to see.



Source: Heckman (2008)

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The costs of not ensuring access for eligible students to Great Start appear significant. Published by Wilder Research, a study done by Michigan State University found there are about 35,000 four year olds who based on their family income are eligible for Great Start Readiness Program or Head Start, but are not currently enrolled due to lack of funding. These researchers found that for this group of 35,000 Michigan students, there are great costs we can expect because of their lack of early schooling.

Ongoing costs of 35,000 4 year olds currently eligible but not enrolled in Pre-K

K-12 Spending	\$115 million
Grade repetition	\$71 million
Preventable special education spending	\$36 million
Teacher turnover	\$8 million
Increased government spending and decreased tax revenues	\$303 million
Juvenile correction	\$111 million
Child welfare	\$55 million
Adult criminal justice	\$49 million
Public assistance (state portion of TANF and Medicaid)	\$35 million
Unemployment benefits	\$21 million
Child care subsidies	\$16 million
Lost income and sales tax revenue	\$16 million
Increased social costs	\$180 million
Losses to victims of juvenile crime	\$84 million

¹⁹ http://www.slate.com/articles/business/the_dismal_science/2007/05/teach_your_children_well.html

²⁰ http://www.childandfamilypolicy.duke.edu/pdfs/10yranniversary_Heckmanhandout.pdf

Losses to victims of adult crime	\$51 million
Decreased productivity of employed parents	\$38 million
Reduced health costs (alcohol, drug abuse)	\$7 million
Total estimated cost per year	\$598 million

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By not ensuring that all eligible students access Head Start and Great Start, not only are we not giving them their best chance to succeed in school and prepare for college, but also we are wasting state and private funds.

Great Start Template and Third Grade Reading Proficiency

Currently in Michigan, we have two publicly funded preschool programs: Head Start, federally funded; and the Great Start Readiness Program, state-funded. Great Start looks at the fostering healthy development of the whole child by focusing on the areas of Physical Health, Social and Emotional Health, Child Care and Early Education, Parenting Support, and Family Support/Basic Needs.²² Great Start programs in Michigan have been proven effective—in a 2002 study of the Michigan School Readiness Program (now renamed as Great Start Readiness Program) showed that in kindergarten students who participated in MSRP out-performed non-program students in language and literacy, logic and mathematics, music and movement, creative representation, social relations, and initiative.²³ This academic success carried over to fourth grade in which program students out-performed non-program students in math and literacy with less grade retention¹⁸ and through high school in which program students graduated from high school on time at a greater rate than non-program students (greater high school graduation rates was especially significant for non-white participants).²⁴ Michigan does not need to create a new system of early education programs, but rather better utilize the existing programs by increasing their availability to families and use its successful and comprehensive structure as a template for other early education programs. Michigan does not have to start from scratch to ensure a quality early education for all of its four year olds, if it can better make use of and replicate its current programs.

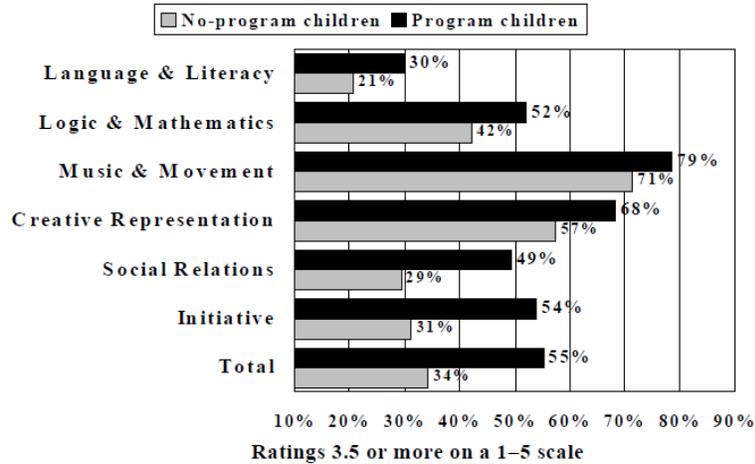
²¹ http://media.mlive.com/grpress/news_impact/other/Wilder%20Study%20-%20Executive%20Summary.pdf

²² <http://greatstartforkids.org/content/vision-mission-system-and-results>

²³ <http://www.highscope.org/file/Research/Effects%205%20Years%20Later.pdf>

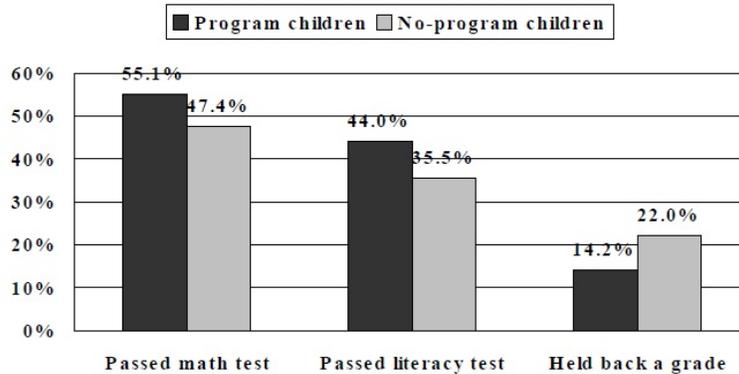
²⁴ http://www.highscope.org/file/Research/state_preschool/MGSRP%20Report%202012.pdf

Kindergarten Child Observation Ratings



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MSRP Participants Versus Nonparticipants Academic Performance At Grade 4



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Table 2
High School Graduation on Time, by GSRP Status and Race

	GSRP	No GSRP
All	57.3%**	42.5%
Non-white	58.8%**	36.5%
White	56.3%	46.5%

** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$; GSRP percents are adjusted for the effects of 7 covariates.

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Funding and Enrollment

²⁵ <http://www.highscope.org/file/Research/Effects%205%20Years%20Later.pdf>

²⁶ <http://www.highscope.org/file/Research/Effects%205%20Years%20Later.pdf>

²⁷ http://www.highscope.org/file/Research/state_preschool/MGSRP%20Report%202012.pdf

Funding and Children Served in Great Start Readiness Program

Year	Funding		Children Served	Based on Funding per Child
2008-2009	80,100,000	Formula	25,911	\$3,400
	15,150,000	Competitive	4,455	
2009-2010	88,100,000	Formula	25,911	\$3,400
	7,575,000	Competitive	2,227	
2010-2011	89,400,000	Formula	26,294	\$3,400
	8,875,000	Competitive	2,610	
2011-2012	95,400,000	Formula	28,058	\$3,400
	8,875,000	Competitive	2,610	
2012-2013	100,400,000	Formula	29,529	\$3,400
	8,875,000	Competitive	2,610	

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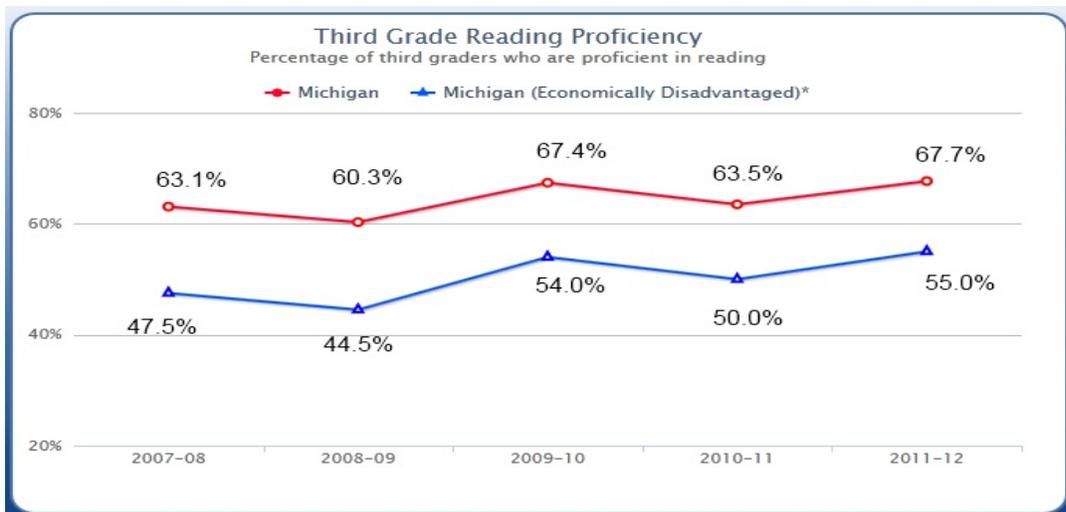
The state provides approximately \$3,400 per child in Great Start and the school district and community contribute funds as well. Unfortunately due to budget cuts and strained community resources, some programs are reducing enrollment to avoid jeopardizing their quality. There is no doubt that Great Start has proven effective, but there are still over 30,000 four year olds in Michigan who are eligible for Great Start who are not being served. We cannot ignore these children if we want to help all of Michigan students have their best chance at college readiness. If the state could continue to contribute \$3,400 per child and establish a public-private partnership with local business and organizations (similar to the partnership we advised for the Michigan Scholarship Fellowship Plus program) to create an endowment to fund Michigan’s expanding preschool program.

For a child’s educational development, third grade is a crucial year. It is the year when a child should be able to read, and the focus in the classroom shifts from learning to read to reading to learn.²⁹ From third grade on, reading is not only a necessary skill in and of itself, but also a necessity to master other skills. If a child is not proficient in reading by third grade, intervention is much less effective the later it is introduced.¹⁷ With such an important task to complete in such a short time implies the necessity to start earlier with a quality pre-kindergarten program. Based on MEAP reading scores, in the 2011-2012 school year 67.7% of Michigan third grade students were proficient, and only 55% of Michigan economically disadvantaged students (those

²⁸ http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Funding_History_317203_7.pdf

²⁹ <http://www.aecf.org/~media/Pubs/Topics/Education/Other/DoubleJeopardyHowThirdGradeReadingSkillsandPoverty/DoubleJeopardyReport040511FINAL.pdf>

receiving free meals at school) were proficient. These statistics show that there is an achievement gap in Michigan, and that based on the above research, more third grade students need to be proficient in reading if we want our students to graduate from college let alone be college ready. In order to guarantee more of Michigan’s third graders are reading proficiently, Great Start can provide the template for all early childhood education endeavors. Ensuring access to Great Start and highlighting its linkage of early childhood learning outcomes to third grade reading proficiency would provide the template for expanded and more rigorous preschool program available across the state of Michigan to all families in all regions regardless of income or location.



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Evidence of Success of Great Start in Michigan

An outstanding example of the linkage between quality early childhood education and its correlation to higher achievement is the Montgomery County Public Schools Model (MCPS) where the school district has pegged high quality early childhood education to elementary readiness.³¹ Over the last decade the district has made major reforms so that in recent years: 90% of kindergarteners entered first grade with essential literacy skills; 88% of third graders read proficiently; 90% of 12th graders graduated from high school and 77% of graduating seniors enrolled in college. Although MCPS provides universal pre-school to its district, our Great Start² proposal addresses the most disadvantaged population in Michigan, while at the same time providing a template that would allow all other families access to the same measures of early childhood outcomes by which to determine their own children’s best early childhood educational

³⁰ http://www.michigan.gov/midashboard/0,1607,7-256-58084_58143_58106---,00.html

³¹ http://www.pewtrusts.org/our_work_report_detail.aspx?id=60521

setting. In addition we would recommend following the MCPS model of integrating Great Start pre-K programs into the existing K-12 system and blending Head Start with existing pre-K programs, which allowed all Head Start teachers to be district employees and allowed the district to blend federal Title 1 funds with those from Head Start to use the money more efficiently.²⁰ Our Great Start² proposal ensures that every Michigan child has a high quality preschool experience available to them and by linking early childhood learning outcomes to elementary school readiness that every child can read proficiently by third grade.

VII. Conclusions

Our three-phase proposal recommends to the state government of Michigan to redirect existing resources, to strength private and public partnerships and to more clearly communicating these partnerships to all the citizens of Michigan. Our proposal complements many of the recommendations found in the MPEFA and provides immediate, medium-term and long-term phases that will lead to improved college readiness for the greatest number of Michigan citizens. The savings to the state and to private employers that will result from our proposal are significant. In particular, providing a template for all children to receive a high quality early childhood experience and securing the resources for the most disadvantaged will ensure that all children have the best preparation for elementary school and beyond.

In order to make sure that the greatest number of Michigan's students will be college ready, we need to change the way we see how, where and when preparation for college begins. By adopting a three-phase approach with our Michigan College Success Partnership, the Michigan Scholars Fellowship and Great Start², we reach the greatest number of Michigan students and their families regardless of income, ethnicity or location. Our proposal complements the provisions of the MREFA while taking the next steps toward ensuring access to reliable information, supplying resources so that college affordability will not become an obstacle to college readiness, and ensuring that all students and their families have access to and a template by which to measure high quality early education. Our three-phase plan ensures that students in every cohort would be better prepared to access and succeed in higher education.

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