

Report Gives State C+ for Education Quality

In a recent report in Education Week Magazine, Michigan's overall education quality ranks just above the national average, **earning a C+**. State officials defend this by noting that the areas where the state ranks well in the report are areas that have been subjects of efforts by the Department of Education in recent years. **Michigan's numeric score was 77.8.**

Of the six general categories, **Michigan rated best on standards, assessment and accountability (A-)**. The national average grade for accountability was a B. The state scored well on standards and assessments because it had most of the elements the review sought, like extended response items on all tests, alignment of the tests to state academic standards, and a system of accountability for schools outside the federal adequate yearly progress measure. Among the things missing, were having the tests designed to measure student growth consistently from third grade through eighth grade, but these measures are being worked on.

Michigan rated worst on K-12 achievement (D). Achievement was based on 2007 scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, where Michigan improved on all but 8th grade reading from the prior test, but was still behind the national average on all but 4th grade reading. **The state also saw its graduation rate fall to below the national average for 2003-04.** The national average was a D+.

The other area where Michigan was behind the rest of the nation was in the **teaching profession**, with a D+ to the nation's C. Among the state's failings were **not making teacher education programs accountable for classroom performance** (18 states do that), **not linking student and teacher records** (12 states do) and **not tying teacher evaluations and student performance** (12 states do). The Governor presented proposals in her State of the State speech that address many of these areas.

Grievances

A grievance remains on behalf of the Dearborn High staff and the new "seminar" period. The original response administration sent was received but the DFT has not agreed with it. The administration has drafted a new response for the Union's consideration.

A new grievance has been filed and it concerns an elementary school administrator scheduling meetings during teacher prep time.

Homecoming 2008

The DFT is once again participating in Dearborn's annual Homecoming held at Ford Field. This year's Homecoming will take place on the weekend of August 1st through the 3rd.

Tracie Lake-Kinnaird, Media Specialist from Henry Ford Elementary, is once again chairing this event for us. She is currently looking for members who would be interesting in helping out at our booth.

If you have some time over that weekend, and you would like to participate in this year's event, please contact Tracie either at Henry Ford Elementary, 313-827-4706, or email her at kinnait@dearborn.k12.mi.us.

Bi-Weekly Pay Update

From now until the end of this school year, we will be keeping members updated on the pay conversion from monthly to bi-weekly pay periods.

For the 2008—09 school year, if you receive your checks over a ten month period, you will be receiving 22 checks, if you salary is spread over 12 months, you will be receiving 27 checks.

All members should be receiving their first check of the 2008—09 school year on August 29th. Checks will then be distributed every other Friday for the duration of the school year.

Current deductions will be totaled to get an annualized amount. This amount will then be divided by either 21 or 26, which represents the "normal" number of pay periods per year. The result will be the amount of the new deduction. The only exception to this may be for those who are buying years of service.

Members may also want to check with their financial institutions if they have loan payments taken from their accounts on paydays. Since pay dates and check amounts will change, this could effect loan payments.

GREEN SHEET

Official Newsletter • Dearborn Federation of Teachers • AFT Local 681, AFL-CIO

15250 Mercantile Drive, Dearborn, Michigan 48120 • 313/584-5311 • FAX 313/584-3232

April 2008

Membership Meetings

2007—2008 Meetings

April 2008

29 General Member 4:00 P.M. Bryant

May 2008

21 DFT Open House 3:00P.M. DFT Bldg
27 General Membership 4:00P.M. DFT Bldg

June 2008

4 Year-End Celebration 3:00 P.M. Park Place

DFT Open House

The DFT has acquired a new building off of Greenfield, south of Michigan Avenue. An open house is planned for Wednesday May 21 from 3 to 6 PM. Come see the new headquarters for our hard working DFT staff.

Graduation Rates

A report released from the Editorial Projects in Education Research Center shows Detroit with a graduation rate of 24.9%, putting it dead last in a list compiled of the 50 largest cities in the United States. The Detroit Metro area fared better with a graduation rate of 64.5%. The report contains the usual conclusion that schools are some how responsible for the society in which they serve. Those of us that have been in education a while know that as the population that schools draw from changes, schools change. This seems so simple, yet it is routinely ignored. It should be no surprise that the city with one of the nation's

highest rates of crime, is managed by a corrupt political body, and celebrates a yearly late October event by trying to burn itself down, is at the very bottom of this list. Detroit finds itself at the top of many lists, not many that it can be proud of. During a different time, with a different population, Detroit was at the very top of a list such as this. The report also contains a break down of graduation rates by ethnic/racial groups. Asians top this list with a graduation rate of 80%. Native Americans are at the bottom of this list with a graduation rate of just under 50%. See the full report on the DFT website.

www.dft681.org

Cities in Crisis

State Revenue

The State of Michigan is facing revenue issues totaling \$383.6 million according to Senate Fiscal Agency. The budget shortfall for the current fiscal year totals \$134 million (\$119 million from the General Fund and \$15 million from the School Aid Fund) and for the coming fiscal year \$249.6 million (\$114.2 million General Fund and \$135.4 million School Aid Fund).

The key issues facing the state during the current fiscal year (2007-08) include: tobacco settlement shortfall - the companies have been withholding around \$30 million; the federal stimulus package is expected to cost a loss of around \$22.3 million this year due to changes in how businesses expense certain

items; the State Education Tax (SET) is expected to bring in \$35.2 million less this year than; and the Midland Property Tax settlement is expected to cost the School Aid Fund an additional \$33.8 million this year.

For the coming fiscal year, (FY 2008-09) lawmakers must confront revenue related issues including: the Federal stimulus package will reduce business taxes by \$114.2 million (General Fund); SET revenues are expected to come in \$100.4 million lower than expected due to falling property values; and \$54.4 million to support the basic school foundation grant as local schools see loss in property tax revenue due to a loss in property values.

Online Schooling Grows

From the New York Times

Two models of online schooling predominate. In Florida, Illinois and half a dozen other states, growth has been driven by a state-led, state-financed virtual school that does not give a diploma but offers courses that supplement regular work at a traditional school. Generally, these schools enroll only middle and high school students.

At the Florida Virtual School, the largest Internet public school in the country, more than 50,000 students are taking courses this year. School authorities in Traverse City, Michigan, hope to use online courses provided by the Michigan Virtual School next fall to educate several hundred students in their homes, alleviating a classroom shortage.

The other model is a full-time online charter school like the Wisconsin Virtual Academy. About 90,000 children get their education from one of 185 such schools nationwide. They are publicly financed, mostly elementary and middle schools.

Many parents attracted to online charters

have previously home-schooled their children, students download assignments and communicate intermittently with their certified teachers over the Internet, but they also read story books, write in workbooks and do arithmetic at a table in their basement. Legally, they are considered public school students, not home-schoolers, because their online schools are taxpayer-financed and subject to federal testing requirements.

Despite enthusiastic support from parents, the schools have met with opposition from some educators, who say elementary students may be too young for Internet learning, and from teachers, unions and school boards, partly because they divert state payments from the online student's home district.

Other opposition has arisen because many online charters contract with for-profit companies to provide their courses. The Wisconsin academy, for example, is run by the tiny Northern Ozaukee School District, north of Milwaukee, in close partnership with K12 Inc., which works with similar schools in 17 states.

The district receives annual state payments of \$6,050 for each of its 800 students, which it uses to pay teachers and buy its online curriculum from K12.

"Virtual education is a growing alternative to traditional schooling," Barbara J. Hinton, a Kansas auditor, said in a report. Ms. Hinton found that virtual education had great potential because students did not have to be physically present in a classroom. "Students can go to school at any time and in any place," she said.

But, she added, "this also creates certain risks to both the quality of the student's education and to the integrity of the public school system."

Rural Americans have been attracted to online schooling because it allows students even on remote ranches to enroll in arcane courses like Chinese.

MHSAA Ordered to pay Millions

AP A federal judge ordered the Michigan High School Athletic Association to pay millions in legal bills, plus interest, after its scheduling system was found to have discriminated against some female student-athletes.

U.S. District Judge Richard A. Enslen directed the organization to pay \$4.4 million in attorneys' fees. Most of the money is to go to Kristen Galles, whose one-lawyer public-interest law firm is in Alexandria, Va.

Galles represented a small group of Grand Rapids-area women who believed their athlete daughters were discriminated against. In a lawsuit filed nearly 10 years ago, they claimed that high school girls basketball and volleyball in Michigan were played in seasons opposite those of colleges and most other states' high schools.

In a ruling released Monday, Enslen also awarded interest on the judgment from the date that the suit was filed in June 1998, swelling the total payout to a current value of \$7.4 million, according to *The Detroit News*.

"We are not going to offer any comment for at least the next week to 10 days," MHSAA spokesman John Johnson told The Associated Press on Tuesday.

The MHSAA is a private, nonprofit corporation that writes and enforces sports rules, trains officials and stages season-ending tournaments for some 300,000 athletes at 1,500 member middle and high schools.

Galles, who said she has not been paid for her more than 10 years of work on the lawsuit, said the MHSAA could have avoided the legal bills if it had done what was originally asked and made sports seasons fairer before the suit was ever filed.

"I'm hoping schools will wake up and realize they need new leadership," she said of the association's membership. "They are lucky parents and kids didn't seek monetary damages. The

bills could have been significantly higher."

The MHSAA has a net worth of nearly \$6 million, roughly half in investments and half in real estate, according to its most recent tax return, for the fiscal year ending July 2006.

The association had an insurance policy covering up to \$2 million in legal expenses. Counting its own costs, the MHSAA's total legal bill for fighting the season changes surpasses \$10 million, with the interest.

Enslen ruled against the association on every point of the suit in December 2001, finding that girls were being discriminated against in violation of the Constitution, the federal anti-discrimination law Title IX, and a Michigan civil rights law.

MHSAA launched an appeals process that ended in April 2007, when the U.S. Supreme Court rejected a final attempt. The changes Enslen had ordered for the 2002-03 school year went into effect last September, which included switched seasons for girls basketball and volleyball.

Familiar Territory?

AP Gov. Mitch Daniels says Indiana's new property-tax-restructuring plan "puts taxpayers first." But schools worry that coming in second could cost them millions, threaten programs, and widen the gap between poor and rich districts.

"We have a responsibility, an obligation, and a duty to ensure that our students receive a quality education," said Eugene White, the superintendent of the Indianapolis public schools. "We have to pay for that."

The tax plan Gov. Daniels signed into law last month will cap property-tax bills for most homeowners at 1 percent of a home's assessed value, with 2 percent limits on rental property and 3 percent caps for businesses.

More money in taxpayers' pockets means less cash for schools, educators say. And education budgets are already tight, said Nate Schnellenger, the president of the Indiana State Teachers Association.