

Testimony of Superintendent Michael P. Flanagan 09/21/2011

Good Afternoon Chairman Pavlov and members of the Senate Education Committee.

I'm reading this for the most effective use of your time, since my remarks sometimes tend to wander. Then I'm available for your questions.

Thank you for inviting me today.

And thank you for your efforts to move Michigan's system of education forward by Re-Imagining how students in our state are educated; and how we help prepare them for the careers of the 21st Century global economy.

My wife, Anna, and I were blessed again this week with another granddaughter, Avery Claire. I want to make sure that she and every other child born in Michigan has the best system of education available for them.

This past spring, the Governor sent his Message on Education to the Legislature. It is a dynamic document that I agree holds the key to moving our state forward. It is consistent w the goals of the Dept and the State Board.

There is real opportunity within our reach. We need to look forward and release the past.

These proposals focus on proficiency; growth; measurement; and results. Built on a system based on student achievement growth and not just raw test scores.

We will achieve this by giving schools more flexibility; providing students and parents with additional options; keeping our best teachers in the classroom; and demanding greater accountability and transparency.

This plan is a blueprint for collaboratively reshaping Michigan's century-old education system (you know, kids needing the summer off to pick crops) into one that recognizes the dramatic influences of globalization and technology.

The Governor's Reinventing Michigan's Education System special message demonstrates his commitment to education and underscores the urgency in focusing on this vital issue. I share in that commitment.

Many vital reforms already have been enacted, through collective leadership and compromise (we never all agree on every item in a law) so thank you Senators:

- \* Teacher Tenure reform (to develop a tighter system to ensure the best teachers educating our children)

- \* Governor's Council on Educator Effectiveness (using experts to develop a fair and stable educator evaluation system)

- \* Funding incentives for Consolidation of Services, and Best Practices by local school districts
- \* State Reform/Redesign Office in my Dept to assist our Lowest Performing Schools
- \* Raising the Dropout Age to 18
- \* Requiring school administrator certification
- \* Cyber Charter Schools and Schools of Excellence

And other important changes have been implemented:

- \* Office of Great Start that coordinates early childhood programming and resources (will help with the application for federal Learning Challenge grant - possibly \$70 million over four years) in the Michigan Dept of Ed
- \* MISchool Data dashboard (a one-stop, online location of school data for parents and communities - to make informed decisions) [www.MIschooldata.org](http://www.MIschooldata.org)
- \* Our "Top to Bottom List" of all public schools, using comprehensive data to drive transparency and local accountability
- \* Education Achievement Authority - a statewide plan for schools not able to improve on their own.

The great people that I work with on a daily basis also have taking some aggressive steps to move Michigan's education system forward.

The State Board of Education has been courageous in its action to improve the cut scores on the state assessments. It also took strength for the Board to develop and support much of the Governor's proposals here.

The State Board has been a model in this state at how colleagues can work in a bi-partisan manner for the betterment of our state.

My team in the Michigan Department of Education is dauntless in its work to help create a system of education that is effective, efficient, and practical.

I whole-heartedly stand by the work they do - from the pending accreditation system; an innovative 3-tiered licensure system for educators; and "Light of Day" reports - our team at MDE is top quality and you can trust the work they do.

Yet, with that said, there are a number of very important reforms for which your committee plays a very important role.

I think the keystone to creating the most effective system of education, is in what the Governor and we called "Any Time, Any Place, Any Way, Any Pace" - or, what WE call "The Any's."

As it relates to the package of bills before you, that is the idea of expansion of choices for parents and a focus on student outcomes.

With the collaboration of key education stakeholders, we determine WHAT children need to learn and set the bar to achieve career- and college-readiness (content expectations, cut scores, high school credit requirements, etc.).

Through legislation, parents and districts and certainly teachers will be given the flexibility in terms of HOW to educate children, and turning accountability more toward performance outcomes, than inputs.

It's the system that's broken (and I'm part of that system) - it's not the people in the system (especially not most of the teachers).

We can't continue holding on to this outdated system that does not meet the needs of our age.

Let's take away the barriers to teaching.

Let's take away the barriers to learning.

Parents need more choices and schools need more flexibility.

\* School Choice - quality education for every child, with no boundaries.  
(15 years ago, I launched one of the first charter schools in Michigan: Henry Ford Academy w Steve Hamp at Greenfield Village - it didn't go without a lot of opposition, but it was the right thing to do - to meet student needs) we went on to approve 7 more charters that first 2 years

\* Every public school district should offer college credit opportunities (early college; dual enrollment; AP, online college credit courses; direct credit)

\* All students able to earn college credit as early as their ninth year and receive a community college degree or credential no later than their 13th year of school (I have a 3 year contract and plan to stay at least that long to help make that a reality).

\* Removing the Charter cap in districts with at least one academically-failing school. I think this should be limited to Authorizers with a track record of student achievement gains).

\* Every child who needs or wants up to 2 hours of daily online education must receive it

\* ISDs able to bid on any service a local district provides outside the classroom; and visa versa.

\* A comprehensive anti-bullying bill (not telling districts how to address it, but THAT they have to address it)

As I said earlier, what is being proposed is creating a system of education based on OUTCOMES... and less on the turf battles and red tape that has fragmented our system of education up until now.

If schools can demonstrate authentic student proficiency and academic growth each year, then we should let go of the reins.

We can't afford to have any "lines in the sand"!

Everyone needs to work together -

- \* Early Childhood with K-12
- \* K-12 with post-secondary
- \* Teachers with administrators
- \* Administrators with local school boards
- \* Urban with suburban
- \* Charters with traditional schools
- \* Regional and local businesses with their schools
- \* Republican Senators with Democratic Senators
- \* And EVERYONE working with the parents and students!

Let's be the first state - the first country - to get past the rhetoric that "all kids can learn" and actually commit to "all kids WILL learn" - whatever it takes !

We can do this... together.

Thank You.