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Jen and the art of education

By Dr. Ryan S. Olson, Tue., August 16, 2005

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In June, I enjoyed a front-row spot among 11,000 people at a state Capitol rally sponsored by the K-16 Coalition for Michigan's Future. I saw and heard many people who were quite passionate about children and Michigan's future.

But for all the energy at the gathering, no one produced an argument that made a connection between the crowd and speakers' goal — better education for students — and the stated purpose of the rally, which was to support state Senate Bill 246 and state House Bill 4582. These two bills would guarantee minimum annual state funding increases for primary, secondary and higher education.

The participants included students, educators, administrators, school board members, parents and policy-makers. All were visibly committed to the education of Michigan's K-12 and college students. They carried placards urging support for the two legislative bills, announcing the districts they represented or questioning whether students were worth "only \$6,700" (the current minimum state per-pupil grant). One sign pleaded to the governor, "Help us, Jen!"

The speakers were equally earnest about students' education. Tom White, executive director of Michigan School Business Officials and chair of the K-16 Coalition, insisted that supporters were not "tying legislators' hands," but were interested only in providing a "world-class education." Another speaker stressed the fact that policy-makers' abstract education figures in fact represent real students. She exhorted participants to exercise their "democratic right" by making legislators "work for" them, and trumpeted the importance of good public education in attracting businesses to the state. A bright student from Northern Michigan University who had graduated from a public school in Detroit asked legislators to help secure Michigan's future by "fully funding" education.

Neither she nor any other speaker argued in any significant way that there is a connection between increased funding for education and improving the quality of education (typically measured by student performance). She, like most of the speakers, seemed to assume that quality education would follow if only legislators would provide "full funding" for it.

Supported by data?

While this assertion may have seemed intuitive to participants, research does not support it. The Hoover Institution at Stanford University recently published a review of education research entitled "School Figures: The Data behind the Debate." In the fourth chapter, the book's authors, Hanna Skandera and Richard Sousa, note the following: "There is a common perception that the way to improve our failing public schools is simply to spend more money on them. According to many public school administrators, the amount we spend per pupil is an excellent way to predict student performance, yet a review of the data for the last 80 years shows clearly that there is not a strong correlation between increased spending and improvements in student performance. In fact, increases in per-pupil expenditures in the past have often not been matched by better student performance. In short, the evidence suggests that we cannot simply buy better schools."

Gov. Jennifer Granholm has broached this issue with K-16 Coalition leaders. Although she stayed clear of it at the rally, deftly avoiding an endorsement of the bills and praising participants for forcing the Legislature to deal with education, the governor told K-16 Coalition leaders a day earlier in a news release that, "Investment (in education) ... must go hand-in-hand with getting the most out of every dollar we spend in education, which means reducing costs and realizing greater student achievement."

That is precisely the rub: More money doesn't guarantee better learning, in part because the money isn't always spent well.

Despite the governor's admonition and a body of established education research, the point of the event seemed to be calling for increased expenditures ("Support SB 246 and HB 4582!") and expressing a general desire for better schools ("Improve education now!"). By omitting a discussion of the connection between the two, the organizers and speakers of the K-16 Coalition rally did participants a disservice: They neglected a chance to provide substantive ideas for improving the quality of Michigan public education to an eager crowd. They therefore missed the opportunity to channel the collective voice of an impassioned throng toward more effective solutions for Michigan's schools.

The rally's attendees can regret that oversight.

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Restoring Parental Control of
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The Cost of Remedial Education



With Clear Eyes, Sincere
Hearts and Open Minds
*A Second Look at Public Education
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The Michigan Education
Association



Michigan Education
Special Services
Association: The MEA's
Money Machine

Education Report Daily

Thu., June 11, 2009

"State education officials want to implement a new rating system for public schools, though it means more than 100 schools would likely lose their current accredited status." >>

Wed., June 10, 2009

"The State Board of Education might get into the fundraising business by forming an education foundation and public/private partnership arrangement." >>

Tue., June 9, 2009

"Of all first-time college students who enrolled in four-year colleges in 2001, only 53 percent graduated within six years." >>

Mon., June 8, 2009

"Pinckney Community Schools will lay off 14 teachers as it plans for a decline in enrollment and higher health insurance and diesel fuel bills." >>

Sat., June 6, 2009

"Keeping a promise made by a predecessor, a Beecher Community Schools administrator presented flat screen TVs to two students who earned the district's best scores on the ACT exam." >>

Fri., June 5, 2009

"Eighty percent of the employees in the Detroit Public Schools curriculum department will be laid off by the end of June, while 11 cabinet-level executives will not be invited back when their contracts run out." >>

Thu., June 4, 2009

"Several former charter public school teachers say they will appeal a state decision denying them tenure and also will ask Wyoming Public Schools to give them jobs next year." >>

User Comments

MichelleO

Newspaper saving money is very crucial and

nowadays, saving money is very crucial and properly investing the money can keep you and your family away from the effect of the financial crisis. The sad news is that a lot of the options for short term funding have been drying up. Short term funding is a necessary thing to have around, and going through traditional channels such as banks isn't an option for a lot of people anymore – basically it's only open to Ken Lewis. Installment loans are an option, but some people, including senior citizens, have been thinking about raiding their retirement fund. Getting into your pension retirement plan or 401(k) funds is the last thing you want to do if you don't qualify for any withdrawals yet. The penalties are substantial, and you'll end up needing installments loans to pay them if you use retirement funds for short term funding.

>>

QUEEN_BEE_09

I AGREE >>

colonelb

Godfrey-Lee on the west side of the state has been running all-day, every-day kindergarten for several years. >>

BenjaminY

We have a problem in Detroit Public School, their system had cash flow problem for years now. And honestly it getting worst in terms in progression with more children leaving to charter their schools almost every year. The state decided to give the Detroit school districts cash advance of \$70 million so they would meet the schools expenses, as well as payment for teachers. Robert Bobb, the newly appointed emergency financial manager, requested the funds early in order for him to get the house in order before he had to start panicking. President Obama has been giving out large sums of money for troubled school districts, perhaps that's where a generous portion of the aid came from. Getting Detroit Public Schools in working order is a worthy cause.

LINK TO READ FOR MORE INFO:

<http://personalmoneystore.com/moneyblog/2-advance-detroit-public-schools-70m/>

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colonelb

I am all for school choice and think its great that charters are finally moving forward. However, I'm wondering if the research accounts for a playing field that is not level. I can't take my school buildings and move them anywhere I want, nor can I simply slap up a pole building and make it a school. If anything, public schools need less state regulation and oversight so we can play by the same minimal rules charters do. If you want public schools to compete to improve, remove the barriers to doing so. I will gladly except less funding per pupil if the playing field is level.

>>

karen

The purpose is to encourage non excercising children to excercise but my daughter's highschool gave her an improper body fat percentage and made my healthy daughter who trains 20 hours a week in tap jazz and ballet believe she was overweaghit instead of a person with muscles.

I believe the public schools do not have the right to make the diagnoses with these kids because they are using one measurement and recording it from their arms that they have a certain percetnage of body fat with one arm caliper test.

Does any one have feed back?

>>

deepakp9

Specifically, 81 percent of students in religiously affiliated schools and 82 percent of students in other private schools have parents who report being "very satisfied" with their schools, compared to 55 percent of students in assigned public schools and 63 percent of students in chosen public schools.

High levels of satisfaction among private school parents also extend to opinions about their children's teachers, academic standards

of the school, order and discipline at the school, the amount of homework assigned, and interactions with school personnel.

<http://fitt.in> >>

TeenageProblems

Treatment centers offer <A HREF=<http://www.teenageproblems.net/>>stru children treatment in effective and real sense. Center provides expert and professional medical expertise that have years of treatment experience. Center develops spiritual qualities in youths. They encourage teens to become descent.

<http://www.teenageproblems.net/>
>>

Lisa P

For me, either public or private could give good education to students. It really doesn't matter whether you are in public or private school as long as you are studying and obtaining education, and providing that you can afford the expenses. One of the key ingredients to the success of a modern nation is education. As Americans emerge from the afterglow of the recent presidential elections and president-elect Obama prepares to take the reins of the country, education is a topic on the minds of many. What will he do to improve the lot of students and teachers in America?

According to an article at The Apple, Obama's first order of business when it comes to education will be to look at No Child Left Behind. He doesn't want to scrap the program, but he does want to reform it, particularly when it comes to standardized testing. He does not support preparing students all year to "fill out bubbles."

Referencing schools, both Obama and vice president-elect Joe Biden support charter schools, as long as they perform up to standard. Teachers at charter schools and others are pleased with Obama's incentives like Teacher Service Scholarships and various pay rewards – this will certainly be a great help. Furthermore, part of the president-elect's main concern is to boost Early Head Start programs and provide tax credit for college education. The course to repair faith in the American educational system through these ideas and more will definitely lead to the kind of credit repair the country needs. Click to learn more about Credit Repair. >>

johnson

Now a days most of the parents are looking to join their childerens in private school. Because parents are thinking ,Government would not provide good facilities . And also promoting good teachers. Government never concerned about the good quality schools and techears. so most of the parents interesting to higher in private schools.

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johnson

michigan drug rehab >>

