

## **PTO Council Advocacy Committee**

### **Talking Points**

Talking points are “bites” of key information that you can use in your conversations, media encounters and other contacts with people and legislators who need to know and understand the importance of school funding. Try to weave these messages into your written communications. Don’t be afraid of repeating yourself; you want to repeat yourself to reinforce the message.

### **Facts about School Funding *trends* in Michigan:**

- Our children lost \$1 Billion in basic education funds within the last two school years alone. (2007-08 to 2009-10)
- Nationally Michigan’s kids rate 20<sup>th</sup> in per pupil dollars down from 11<sup>th</sup> in just 10 years time. (National Center for Education Statistics)
- Students will suffer a \$400 drop in per pupil funds in the coming school year if the legislature does not act. (\$250 per student in budget cuts and an additional \$150 each when factoring in increased retirement costs)
- Class size increases are inevitable with funding cuts and detrimental to the education of every student.
- Michigan ranks 27<sup>th</sup> in personal, overall tax burden below the national average. (Tax Foundation)
- 80 districts out of 549 face serious risk of bankruptcy. That was the count, as of June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2009, of districts with fund balances below \$400 per pupil. More will follow if funding reform is not addressed immediately.
- Built-in costs are mandated by the State leaving no room for negotiation on the \$1,800 per student spent on retirement costs in Washtenaw County.
- The foundation allowance per pupil for AAPS in 2009-2010 is LOWER in absolute value than it was four years ago in 2005-2006. (\$9,409 down to \$9,325) Meanwhile, real costs have increased as well as state mandated contributions to retirement and pensions.

### **Key Messages and Talking Points cont.**

- Good schools are good business! Employers and families make schools a priority when considering relocating.
- If you educate their children, economic developers will come. Employers look for higher quality of life indexes to lure the best employees and ensure a stable operational base.
- Less than zero for schools? Lansing's current inaction forces districts to choose between the evils of deficit spending or slashing core programs for our kids. We cannot make good on the promise of educational opportunity for this generation, and those to come, in the absence of reliable revenue at the state level.
- Make Lansing accountable. For years Lansing has turned a blind eye to the budget crisis it created, refusing to act on meaningful reform at the state level and shifting the crisis to the individual schools already severely restricted by state law from raising their own revenue. The result? Cuts, cuts and more cuts.
- Lansing does not feel responsible for providing stable school funding, instead they issue unfunded curriculum mandates, cut funding and dramatically increase mandatory payments into state benefit systems.

OR

Show us the money. Lansing freely imposes unfunded curriculum mandates and funding reductions while dramatically increasing mandatory payments into state benefit systems WITHOUT taking any responsibility to provide a stable mechanism for school funding.

- Education IS an economic development issue. The workforce and entrepreneurs of the future require great schools not only to train and inspire them, but also to retain them here in Michigan. Businesses love a stable well-educated community. Forcing districts into bankruptcy will have tragic consequences for economic development.

### **What we are asking for...**

- Guarantee school **funding levels are set prior to the start of the school fiscal year.**
- Support schools at a level that provides for **a quality education** based on program cost, not current dollars available.
- Develop a **stable, sustainable funding model** for school funding.
- Prioritize **education funding as the top state priority** against other funding needs.