

**MASB & MASA**  
**Legislative Relations Conference**  
**March 15, 2006**

**Major Talking Points**  
**For Meetings With Legislators**

You will not have enough time to discuss all the issues below with your legislator over lunch. You may wish to simply identify your main issues of interests, briefly outline your perspective on them, then follow up with your legislator and/or their staff in the near future with more detail. For example, you could write a letter to your legislator after the LRN meeting in which you list the issues of major importance to you.

This meeting is a part of the ongoing effort to nurture a productive relationship with your legislator. Maintaining contact with your legislator or their staff over the next few months is critical to your effectiveness. Without additional communication beyond today, your messages will fade in importance as time passes.

**Keep Communications Open and The Legislative Process Fair.** This is an overriding message. Ask your legislator(s) not to vote on any bills which affect public education without first contacting your district for input. Sometimes, particularly as sessions of the legislature are coming to a close, or promises have been publicly made to put an item on a “fast track,” bills can be subjected to votes on the respective floors with little or no notice. *Ask that legislation be debated and discussed openly rather than “blitzed” through the House or Senate.* We expect a number of issues that will impact public schools will be considered in the next few months, or even days. Ask your legislator not to vote on these issues without first discussing them with someone from your district. Here are a few items that we would like you to talk to your legislators about during lunch.

**School Aid Bill** The Senate K12 Subcommittee has begun hearings on the school aid bill and we expect that the bill will likely be voted out of the Senate K12 Subcommittee this week. The following are the most immediate things that you must communicate to your legislators:

- Support the \$200 per pupil increase in basic foundation allowance (including additional \$25 for FY 05-06)
- Pay for the \$35 million in Durant payments from the general fund, not the school aid fund as recommended. The court ordered the legislature to pay schools back and it was not supposed to be from your money.
- Pay for the MEAP test contract costs from the general fund not the school aid fund. This recommendation cost the school aid fund \$19.5 million.
- Do not pay for Renaissance zone reimbursements out of school aid fund. These items are a pattern to take the school aid fund revenue that voters thought was for school operations and use it for purposes it was not intended for. This is the ultimate in “tweaking” Proposal A.

- Support \$50 three year declining enrollment additional payments
- Encourage \$ 28.8 million increase in Michigan School Readiness funding to allow 8,700 more 4-year-olds to be served in the program.

This just focuses on the school aid bill itself. Please look at the issues section to get talking points about revenue problems and what you need to talk to legislators about regarding the funding of schools.

**Cost Containment** Local school boards are being put in situations at the local bargaining table that hurt communities and education in general. It is time for the legislature to step up and help schools out of this mess. We have a retirement system that is running itself into bankruptcy because the percentage of payroll districts will be forced to pay in the near future will not be sustainable. We also have healthcare costs for current employees rising at rates well above inflation without local ability to control those costs. Let your legislators know that nearly \$2000 per student goes to retirement and current employee healthcare. In fact, the proposed \$200 per student foundation increase will likely be completely used to pay for the added costs of just those two items. This puts local board members and superintendents in a bad position with the public because they don't necessarily understand all of the costs school districts have.

**High School Curriculum Reform** Both the Senate and House have their own versions of High School Curriculum legislation. The legislature has indicated their desire to pass legislation before the end of the month. Consider covering the following issues in discussions with your lawmakers.

- *Credit Requirements* – Increase flexibility by requiring no more than 14-16 credits instead of the proposed 18 credits.
- *World Language Requirement* – Change the world language requirement to a recommendation.
- *21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills* – Maintain opportunities for career pathways, fine arts, CTE programs, etc.
- *Intervention* – Provide provisions for bridge courses, tutoring, summer classes, etc. to help ensure student success in meeting the new requirements.
- *Opt-Out Provisions* – Link opt-out provisions to the compulsory attendance mandate (age 16 or prior to the junior year).
- *Advanced Math and Science* – Delay Algebra II and Physics/Chemistry requirements to allow districts time to assess facility and personnel needs.
- *Shortage of Highly Qualified Teachers* – Provide incentives for universities and individuals in the interest of increasing the number of highly qualified teachers, particularly in math and science.
- *Finance* – Provide the financial support necessary to fund the increased costs associated with the proposed changes.

- *Timing* – Delay implementation until high school course content expectations are established by the Michigan Department of Education. Allow school districts time to assess building and personnel needs.

Additional detailed information of legislation can be found in the issue briefs section of the enclosed materials

**K-16 Coalition** Last month the K-16 coalition submitted about 300,000 voter signatures to state election officials to put the issue of guaranteed funding for Michigan school children before either the Legislature or voters. After certification lawmakers will have 40 session days to act on the proposal. If lawmakers don't pass the plan, it would go to voters in November.

At this point all things are on the table for a legislative solution including more rigorous high school graduation requirements and school employee benefits. All have been the subject of legislative debate in recent months, and some lawmakers have said they would not address funding reforms unless the discussion is linked to improved performance of schools.

Talk to your lawmakers about the importance of some level of guaranteed funding after the past few years of tight state budgets and that financial problems have led to slashed programs, laid-off teachers and tuition increases. You can find more detailed info on this legislation in the issues briefs on the following pages.

**Other Issues** There are many more coming! See enclosed materials for some of them.