



STATE SENATOR

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Success in school starts with reading. I look forward to visiting elementary classrooms during March is Reading Month as a guest reader. It's a great way to talk with students about the importance of reading.

DEAR NEIGHBOR:

With summer coming to a close, there's an air of anticipation as families look forward to the start of school. There are old friends to see, new friends to make and much to learn and do!

We all want to see our children achieve so they have a great chance at a bright future. That is why we are committed to helping ensure our schools are able to prepare students for the opportunities and challenges of the 21st century.

I am pleased to share this Back to School report with you. From a special section on increased school funding to legislative news and more, I hope you find it informative and useful.

Best wishes to all those beginning a new school year!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tonya Schuitmaker".



SCHUITMAKER: STATE K-12 FUNDING AT RECORD LEVEL

Michigan students are first in line when it comes to the state budget!

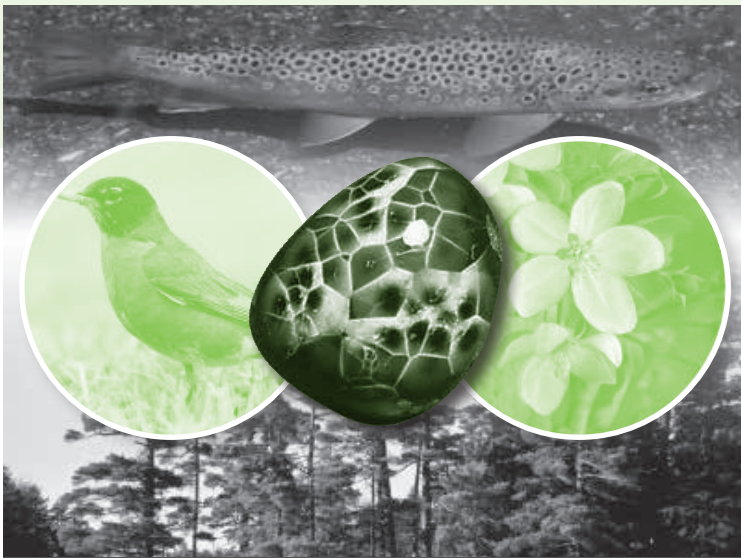
The Legislature again increased support for our schools, providing more than \$260 million above last year. Along with an increase in the foundation allowance, we set aside funds to improve early literacy, as well as an increase for science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) related activities.

In addition, \$4.5 million was allotted for voluntary statewide school water testing for school health and safety.

We directed more than \$1 billion to help pay down school retirement costs and put more resources into the classroom.

Funding for community colleges and higher education also received a boost.

All told, more than 46 cents of every state tax dollar goes to education!



MICHIGAN'S STATE SYMBOLS

Many young students enjoy learning about Michigan's heritage and how our state is different from other states. Michigan's state symbols represent some of the things that make our state special. From the American Robin to the White Pine, these symbols teach us about Michigan's proud history, natural resources and culture.

I am pleased to offer the **Getting to Know Michigan** coloring book which features our state symbols, history and interesting facts for younger readers and their families. Please contact my office at [866.305.2120](tel:866.305.2120) to receive a copy.

K-12 EDUCATION FUNDING STATE FUNDING FROM STATE RESOURCES

FY '17

\$12.3 B to K-12

FY '16

\$12.1 B

FY '15

\$11.9 B

FY '14

\$11.5 B

FY '13

\$11.2 B

FY '12

\$11.1 B

FY '11

\$10.8 B

Non-partisan Senate Fiscal Agency analysis data



GRADUATION RATES CONTINUE TO IMPROVE

Michigan's four-year high school graduation rate increased to nearly 80 percent for the 2014-15 school year. The upward trend continued for five-year and six-year graduation rates as well. Graduation rates are calculated by following individual students from the time they first enroll as ninth-graders and are a good way to measure school accountability.

Dropout rates also declined, continuing a positive four-year trend.

Find graduation and dropout rates for schools and districts at www.mischooldata.org in the Kindergarten – 12th Grade section.

SCHUITMAKER BACKS LAW TO SUPPORT TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

Good teachers are crucial to our students' success and educational achievement.

A new law revises teacher evaluation standards to help ensure we have the best teachers in our classrooms. Public Act 173 of 2015 requires Michigan schools to base certain percentages of their teacher and administrator evaluations on student growth and assessment data.

Under the new law, schools can use a local evaluation tool to determine what skills and talents teachers need to be effective in their communities. Since no two schools are the same, using a local measure instead of a state model may better fit the needs of their students.

Our students deserve the best teachers possible to help them achieve their full potential!



NEW LAW PROMOTES FINANCIAL LITERACY FOR STUDENTS

Learning how to budget and manage personal finances early in life can pay big dividends down the road.

I supported legislation — now signed into law — that allows schools to include a financial literacy component as part of the semester of economics required to earn a high school diploma. Understanding the basic principles involved with earning, spending, saving, borrowing and investing will help students acquire the skills they need to make sound financial decisions later in life.

RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

Michigan Education Dashboard
www.michigan.gov/midashboard

Michigan Education Savings Plan
www.misaves.com
1-877-861-MESP

Michigan Education Trust
www.setwithmet.com
1-800-MET-4-KID

Michigan e Library
www.mel.org

Michigan Kids!
www.michigan.gov/kids/

Michigan School Information
www.mischooldata.org

OK2SAY
(Student Safety Tip line)
855-565-2729
Text: 652729 (OK2SAY)
www.michigan.gov/ok2say



BUS SAFETY RULES

Bus stops and crossings can be hazardous, especially for young children. Use extra care around parked cars.

MOTORISTS

- When the **YELLOW** overhead lights are flashing, prepare to stop.
- Flashing **RED** lights on a school bus mean one thing—**STOP**—at least 20 feet from the school bus. Remain stopped until the flashing **RED** lights are turned off or the bus resumes its travels.
- When the **YELLOW** hazard lights are flashing, move with caution.

It is not necessary to stop for a school bus stopped on the other side of a divided highway where the road is separated by a barrier, such as a concrete or grass median, island, or other structures that separate the flow of traffic.

Adapted from What Every Driver Must Know (www.michigan.gov/sos)