

April, 2018

## Supporting Family Literacy in the State Budget UPDATE

Much attention has been placed on ensuring more young children are reading proficiently by the end of third grade. Despite research consistently showing the impact of parental education on children's education and life success, little focus has been placed on the importance of supporting the educational needs of parents with limited skills themselves.

Multiple studies have shown that children with more educated parents have more literacy readiness skills and greater education success. With the Census pointing to 42,000 Michiganders ages 18-34 with less than a ninth grade education, an assumption cannot be made about parents' ability to engage in their children's learning.

While there are other public funding streams that may include family literacy as a component of their service provision, there is no dedicated public resource at the state or federal level to support family literacy, despite its importance and success. Funding for Adult Education has not been adequate to meet the need and some mandates in that program have produced barriers to serving the hardest to serve families. In addition, many families don't have access to consistent and reliable child care while trying to fit in their own educational improvement with employment and family responsibilities. And, our financial aid system does not help people who have been out of high school for more than 10 years, which is counter-productive for those parents who have worked hard to complete their diploma or GED past that time and are trying to move forward.

Investment in family literacy must be included and supported in third grade reading efforts and Michigan must continue to rebuild its adult education investment. Both can further the educational attainment and skill-building of parents, while providing opportunities for them to learn alongside their children.

**Current Situation: The Governor, House and Senate failed to include significant investment in Family Literacy in their budget recommendations. The slight increase in adult education funding in the Senate budget must be maintained, and House actions to support the Governor's Marshall Plan for Talent that improve services for young parents and other struggling students must be maintained. Other adjustments could still be considered through the conference committee process.**

### Actions Needed:

1. Support the Senate's recommendation of \$30 million to expand the current School Aid investment in Adult Education programs.
2. Support the House Marshall Plan increases for competency base programs, Talent Pledge Scholarships, and other initiatives that support over-age and under-credited young adult learners.
3. Move administration for the Adult Education program back to the Department of Education from the Talent Development Agency, where it can better integrate with other child and family literacy and other basic skills supports.
4. Continue support for Early Literacy initiatives, but add a requirement for Early Literacy Coaches to collect data on barriers that parents/guardians have with implementing required read-at-home plans. Better understanding barriers will allow for better support of parents.