



April 2020

## **Helping All Students Thrive During COVID-19**

Michigan's Governor has closed school buildings for the rest of the year, asking Intermediate School Districts to approve local district plans for spending emergency federal and existing state K-12 funds. State and federal policymakers also continue to explore options to meet student and family needs through additional spending. We must marshal resources to deliver critical services and learning resources for students who face the most instability, much like our state has done for nutrition. A successful and equitable plan for Michigan's students will make sure that:

- Students who were dealing with significant instability or gaps in learning opportunities can grow academically along with their peers, both now and when school opens again.
- Children and youth with disabilities, early on through young adulthood, are receiving what they need, including equitable remote access,
- Parents are well-positioned to help reinforce their children's learning at home, and build their skills if they have lost employment.

### **Closing Learning Gaps for Students Experiencing Instability**

Many students were already falling behind their peers due to persistent disparities in access to learning resources when they are out of school, and this crisis will underscore those disparities. We must ensure that our schools plan equitable opportunities for students in poverty, who cannot access online resources easily, or who are experiencing foster care, homelessness, or juvenile justice. That means not only providing for academic needs through high-quality learning programs out-of-school and over the summer, but also meeting students' nonacademic needs beyond nutrition that were met through their school, including mental health care.

### **Serving Students with Disabilities**

Disruption of school-based activities and home-based therapy has placed significant strain on families of children and youth with disabilities. During this crisis, we must equitably allocate available funds for the needs of students with disabilities. We must also ensure that coming out of this crisis, services for early developmental delays, K-12 school supports, respite care, and postsecondary transition services are all available to every family, especially those whose lives are most disrupted.

### **Supporting Parents and Caregivers**

Many Michigan students who cannot access important learning resources live in homes with parents who may lack the educational attainment to leverage new resources or respond to new educational challenges in these changing times. With thousands of Michiganders experiencing work stoppage, the COVID crisis provides an opportunity to meet parents who have not completed high school, especially underemployed and hourly workers, as they move through the unemployment system and with opportunities to gain educational credentials and build skills. Educational plans must also take into account working with parents who lack key foundational literacy skills in order to best serve their children.

A path forward that provides opportunities to continue to learn and thrive for all of Michigan's students will ensure:

### **Equity for Students Experiencing Instability and Disability**

- Target federal and state emergency educational funds in local school district plans for training and resources that will support students experiencing economic disadvantage, English language barriers, disability, foster care, homelessness, or juvenile justice, including only accepting district plans that prove collaboration with public and nonprofit agency foster care, youth and family homelessness and juvenile justice partners.
- Provide increased transition support for students with disabilities, including early transition planning, high-quality academic pathways, appropriate learning resources, and supports for employers.
- Target resources in school district plans to high-quality supports that are proven to help students catch up get ahead in their learning, including afterschool and summer learning programs and integrated student services, including physical and mental health, that are proved by school-community partnerships.
- Explore state legislation defining partial credit opportunities to facilitate credit and skill accumulation for students who move across districts or whose timelines are upended.

### **Supports for Parents and Caregivers**

- Target federal and state emergency educational funds in local school district plans to expand adult educational opportunities, including high school completion and family literacy, and coordinate with these programs to provide intensive education and training opportunities for adult participants to accelerate quickly into high need, in demand jobs.
- Provide support and services for parents of children developmental delays and disabilities, including respite care for families and screening and services for infants and toddlers, and plan for expansion of access to these supports in the transition from this crisis.
- Increase housing, income, health, connectivity, and nutrition supports and services to meet all families of students in need for the period of school closure, including through existing school-community partnerships, and through future budget action.