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# Capitol Comments

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## Committee Hears Testimony on Flexibility Bills

Last week a package of education flexibility bills was introduced in the Senate. The Senate Committee on Education took up the bills Thursday for testimony only. The bills and their sponsors are as follows:

### **SB 364** sponsored by Sen. Valde **Garcia** (*R-Howell*)

The bill amends the State School Aid Act to do the following:

- Eliminates the penalty for school districts holding less than 180 days of pupil instruction.
- Eliminates the two allocated "snow days" per school district that currently count as days of instruction.
- Retains the 1,098 hours of required minimum number of hours of pupil instruction. Failing to meet this requirement will result in a forfeiture of a percentage of its state aid allocation.
- Deletes a provision that at least 75% of a district's membership must be in attendance on any day of pupil instruction or the

district will forfeit a percentage of its state aid.

- Continues to allow a district to count up to 51 hours of professional development for teachers as hours of pupil instruction.

### **SB 365** sponsored by Sen. Nancy **Cassisi** (*R-Novi*)

This bill amends the State School Aid Act to require that the Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI) collect all information from school districts and intermediate school districts that is currently submitted to various state departments, officers or agencies.

The bill provides that by August 15, 2003, each state department, officer or agency that collects information from districts or intermediate districts would have to make arrangements with CEPI and the districts to have CEPI collect the information and then provide it to the department, officer or agency as necessary. To the extent that it did not cause financial hardship, CEPI would have to arrange to collect the information electronically. Each affected state department, officer or agency would have to provide CEPI with any details necessary for it to collect the information as required by the bill.

### **SB 366** sponsored by Sen. Alan **Cropsey** (*R-DeWitt*)

The bill amends the Revised School Code to eliminate the required number of days of professional development a district must provide teachers each year.

Currently, Section 1527 of the Code requires that the board of each school district, intermediate school district, or public school academy provide at least five days of professional development to its teachers. The bill repeals this section.

The Code further requires that, for the first three years of their classroom teaching, new teachers receive at least 15 days of professional development (not including the five required under Section 1527), the experiencing of effective practices in university-linked professional development schools, and regional seminars conducted by master teachers and other mentors. The bill eliminates this requirement.

### **SB 367** sponsored by Sen. Wayne **Kuipers** (*R-Holland*)

This bill amends sections of the State School Aid Act that allocate funding for at-risk programs and the All Students Achieve Program (ASAP), to do the following:

- Allow a district to use at-risk funding for any purpose that

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was determined locally to benefit its at-risk pupils.

- Delete the requirements that at-risk funding be used only for specific purposes, including a school breakfast program; and delete provisions that allow the funding to be used to reduce class size and for adult programs.
- Delete the requirement that districts receiving at-risk funding report each year on their use of the funds and allow the Department of Education access to their records for an audit.
- Allocate funding for early education grants (rather than ASAP), and allow grant recipients to determine locally how to use the funds.

The bill also repeals sections of the act that allocate ASAP funds for specific purposes.

The bill would take effect on Oct. 1, 2003.

**SB 368** sponsored by Sen. Shirley **Johnson** (*R-Royal Oak*)

This bill repeals Section 1280 of the Revised School Code, which requires that every public school be accredited by the State Board of Education or face penalties. Section 1280 defines “accredited” to mean certified by the State Board as having met or exceeded State Board-approved standards established for six areas of school operation: administration and school organization, curricula, staff, school plant and facilities, school and community relations, and school improvement plans and student performance. Schools failing to be accredited for three consecutive years are subject to at least one of four corrective measures or penalties, which include permitting parents to send

their children to an accredited school within the district, or closing the school.

Other sections of the Code specify five additional requirements a school must meet in order to be accredited:

- All students in grades one to five must take yearly assessments.
- Each school and each intermediate school district must prepare and submit a three-to-five year school improvement plan.
- School boards must develop a core academic curriculum for their pupils at the elementary, middle and secondary school levels.
- School boards must submit an annual report to the State Board by September 1 of each year.
- All of the applicable information contained in a school’s report must be disaggregated by gender.

The bill retains these requirements, but requires schools to meet them in order to avoid a reduction in funding under Section 19 of the State School Aid Act, rather than to earn state accreditation.

**SB 369** sponsored by Sen. Beverly **Hammerstrom** (*R-Temperance*)

This bill amends Section 19 of the State School Aid Act to eliminate the funding penalties schools currently face if they have not earned State Accreditation.

Section 19 of the Act requires that a district comply with the requirements of the Revised School Code for annual reporting, school improvement plans, core academic curricula, and state accreditation. This bill deletes the

requirement that schools comply with state accreditation procedures, but would require schools to comply with the remaining provisions in order to avoid the reduction in funding under Section 19.

The Act appropriates \$2 million for fiscal years 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 to the Department of Education to provide technical assistance to districts for school accreditation purposes as described in Section 1280 of the Revised School Code. The bill deletes the requirement that the department spend the funds on assistance to districts for school accreditation, and instead requires the funds be spent on helping districts meet adequate yearly progress requirements under the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

**MEA testified Thursday** in support of SB 365, which will streamline data collection for all school districts. We believe that is an example of helping schools to work smarter.

Since SB 364, 366, 367, and 368 have a direct impact on students and school accountability standards, MEA took a position in opposition of the bills. MEA believes that the Legislature should stand up to its responsibility to adequately fund the public schools of Michigan in order for them to meet such standards.