Frequently Asked Questions

Q: The Launch Michigan steering committee has put in thousands of hours over the past 18 months. Shouldn’t these recommendations go further to advance the cause of education reform in Michigan?

A:Launch Michigan’s leaders recognize the many challenges that exist in public education today. In fact, the problems can seem overwhelming, which is why the steering committee has decided to use a multi-phased, tiered approach that seeks to tackle the most acute challenges first, then moves on to tackle deeper, more fundamental opportunities for change.

One of our core beliefs is that change takes time—for too long, Michigan educators have been buffeted by policies that shift too much, too quickly. We seek to build a solid, reliable foundation that transcends legislatures and allows for steady growth that gets the job done right.

Launch has talked with an unprecedented number of educators throughout Michigan. One of the things they said consistently is that there is no silver bullet to improving education. Phase One echoes that sentiment; utilizing a district planning process, it puts local educators in the driver seat to tell the state where they most need to put resources.

Q: Why was literacy chosen as a first area of focus?

A: Literacy is a fundamental building block for much of the other learning that takes place in a person’s lifetime. That is why Michigan’s third-grade reading law was initially adopted, and it’s also an area of continued critical importance for children across the state.

It makes sense, therefore, to select this initial area of academic focus as a proving ground for the strategies Launch Michigan plans to pilot and incubate.

Q: How is the Equity Fund different?

A: Once literacy was selected as the initial area of focus, the Launch Michigan steering committee overlaid its other strategic priorities onto the first phase of implementation.

Chief among them is the idea of equitable funding for all Michigan schools. By piloting equitable funding approaches with our urgent need to boost literacy, we can maximize—and prove—the effectiveness of our strategies before we begin building on them.
Q: What does Launch Michigan mean by “equity”?

A: Reaching for equity is different than reaching for equality, which is the strategy Michigan more or less uses to fund its schools today. Equality means funding every child the same, no matter where s/he lives or what his/her needs are.

An approach that is based on equity, however, offers extra financial support to students whose needs are greater. These dollars are used to pay for extra remediation, help, and interventions for children who start behind their peers for any reason. It’s a way of giving them a hand up, so they can more quickly develop the skills and assets they need to be successful in school and in life.

Establishing equitable funding for all students is something that has been validated in research across many states to help improve outcomes for all children, and it was cited by educators in Launch’s 17,000-person educator survey as an important step to improve opportunity for Michigan’s kids.

Q: What about accountability?

A: Launch Michigan believes funding and accountability are inextricably linked. Accountability will be infused into all funding recommendations by having districts define their needs, describe research-based strategic approaches they will use, and the goals and outcomes they are working towards in the local accountability/district plan.

Q: What happens next?

A: Launch Michigan is working to develop specific statutory language to implement the Equity Fund during the 2020 legislative cycle. We intend to get underway with our recommendations as soon as possible, putting the full support of our entire steering committee behind our suggested policies.

Moreover, we will continue to devise specific strategies for building on our successes and supporting children over the long term. Our energies are unflagging and our coalition is solid. We will continue to meet to build on our successes and address our challenges for years—even decades—to come.