

St. Michael-Albertville Legislative Platform 2019



School Board 2019

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The mission of District 885 is to provide a safe educational environment where students are encouraged to develop lifelong learning skills which nurture positive attitudes and self-worth.

To continue the District's strong tradition of excellence and expand opportunities for all students, St. Michael-Albertville School Board establishes the following priorities for the 2019 legislative session:

ADEQUACY

Education funding has not kept pace with inflation, unfunded mandates, or the rising expectations for student achievement. STMA ranks 329/330 in per pupil revenue. **Inadequate state funding has created large disparities in opportunities for our students.** To close the opportunity gap:

- Increase the basic formula by a minimum of \$250 per pupil in each of the next two years.
 - Recent increases in the basic formula have done little to make up for the significant loss of buying power due to inflation over the past two decades.
 - If the legislature had provided inflationary increases to the basic formula, schools would have over \$1,400 more per pupil. This loss of buying power limits educational opportunities for students.
- Increase the state's share of special education funding.
 - In FY2017 STMA diverted \$3.7 million or \$538 per pupil of funding meant for regular education classroom instruction to cover mandated but unreimbursed special education programming.
 - The \$3.7 million that STMA must divert from its general fund to pay for special education mandates substantially limits opportunities for all STMA students.

EQUITY

Without significant commercial and industrial development to expand the tax base and lower the overall taxpayer cost, the cost for school levies falls heavily on homeowners in low-property wealth districts such as STMA. This reduces the amount of revenue local taxpayers can provide in support of STMA Schools. **The quality of a student's education should not depend merely on their zip code.**

- Increase equalization in low-property wealth school districts for school operating levies and building bonds.
 - Through increased equalization (state aid) the inequitable property tax burden and the growing educational opportunity gaps can be reduced.
 - For a \$2,387 per pupil levy since STMA is "property poor" our taxpayers would pay \$682/yr. while taxpayers in neighboring Hopkins, a "property wealthy" district, would pay \$169/year.
- Create an equitable program for districts such as STMA that receive significantly less revenue to narrow the gap between districts at the top and bottom of the funding continuum.

COMMON SENSE

Policies that divert resources of time or money is an equity issue for the lowest-funded school districts such as STMA. As each district is unique, each school board must have the local control to manage limited resources to provide the best possible education for all students.