

2018 St. Michael-Albertville Legislative Platform



School Board 2018

Drew Scherber, Chair

Gayle Weber, Vice Chair

Kari Dwinnell, Treasurer

Jennifer Peyert, Clerk

Jeff Lindquist, Director

Hollee Saville, Director

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 improve teaching and learning and expand opportunities for all students, St. Michael-Albertville School Board establishes the following priorities for the 2018 legislative session:

ADEQUATE FUNDING

Education funding has not kept pace with inflation or the rising expectations for student achievement. Low-property wealth districts such as STMA struggle to make up for inadequate state funding, which has created large disparities in opportunities for students. To close the opportunity gap:

- Provide state funding to cover any employer increase in TRA system and ensure that this funding is not viewed as part of the E-12 funding package.
- Create a program for districts that receive categorical and referendum revenue below the state average that will narrow the gap between districts at the top and bottom of this funding continuum.
- Create a plan to fully fund the special education cross-subsidy by 2026 by reducing the cross-subsidy by 25% each biennium. In FY2016 STMA diverted \$3.1 million or \$467 per pupil of funding meant for regular education classroom instruction to cover under-funded, state mandated special education programming. Reducing the cross subsidy by 25% reallocates \$775,000 to STMA regular education classroom instruction.

TAX RELIEF AND REFORM

Property tax policy inequities limit educational opportunities for STMA students. Without significant commercial and industrial development to expand the tax base and lower the overall taxpayer cost, the cost for an operating levy falls heavily on residential and small business owners. This reduces the amount of revenue taxpayers can provide in support of STMA Schools.

- Increase state aid in low-property wealth school districts for school operating levies by increasing the equalizing factors to reduce the inequitable property tax burden.
- Funding for property tax relief related to operating levies should be part of state tax policy with resources coming from the tax committee budget and not the education budget.

POLICY REFORM

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

- Find a legislative solution that allows high school teachers teaching concurrent enrollment courses to continue to do so after the Higher Learning Commission enforces the requirement that teachers have 18 college credits in the content area.
- Eliminate the redundant requirement where students must pass 30 out of 50 questions from the naturalization test as this is already part of the state's required curriculum.