



## What's Missing in Education Reform?

Last week leaders from around the state came together at Mackinaw to discuss the priority issues for Michigan. As you might expect Education Reform was one of the hottest topics. There is no doubt that dramatically improving, even transforming the quality of education is critical for our children and Michigan to compete and thrive in the emerging global economy. Without such improvement we will never attract new industries or for that matter, even ensure that jobs associated with the major upcoming construction projects (Detroit Public Schools, Vanguard/ DMC, new bridge crossing) are secured for our community.

Advocates for “education reform” focus almost exclusively on expanding choice; accountability at the classroom, building and district levels; raising academic standards; and merit pay. What’s missing is that this approach is an attempt to build reform on top of and without addressing some of the root causes of our poor educational performance. Can we really expect education performance to improve if children come to school hungry? If the truancy problem persists? If violence and illicit drug trafficking persist in and around our schools? If the physical, intellectual and psychological impact of poverty are not addressed?

What’s missing is that we are not listening to teachers and educational professionals on the frontline who when asked, reply the “major thing we need to improve performance is a student who is ready to learn. Tragically we spend most of our energy and time addressing home and life issues before we can even get to instruction!”

Students don’t come to school and leave all of their problems behind. What we need to do is identify ways to integrate and deliver support services in a way that they are child and family focused, easy to access, provide quick and appropriate interventions, and share the goal of advancing academic performance. What if non-academic support services were located in every school with the purpose providing wrap around student assistance programming to address problems that children face as whole human beings? For example: Every child in Michigan whose parents are uninsured is qualified for Medicaid and entitled to 20 counseling sessions a year. Sadly, only a fraction of those who need such services take advantage of it. What if the services were facilitated at the school level? Such a process would yield immediate results in improved behavior and academic performance.

The Real Talk is that we already pay for these support services, but they are not being delivered in a way that effectively supports children’s needs and Michigan’s priorities. While we talk about transforming education, we need to also focus on transforming the associated services that children and families desperately need.

I need your support to fight for resolution of issues like these in Lansing. Please visit Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Thomas-F-Stallworth-III-for-State-Rep-District-8/110391822336903?ref=share> and my website [www.thomasstallworth.com](http://www.thomasstallworth.com) to make a donation to my campaign, and join our team in fighting for jobs and education. We Can Do This Together!!!