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The current education positions are on the LWVMI website.

For basic information on how education is currently administered, go to the Department of Education <http://www.michigan.gov/mde>

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#1 Pre school
Denise Hartsough

Significance

Michigan is home to one of the path-breaking studies that demonstrates the high return on investment in high-quality pre-kindergarten—the Perry Preschool Project. The High/Scope Educational Research Foundation has been tracking a matched set of students from Ypsilanti who, as 3- and 4-year olds in 1962, either did or did not participate in high-quality early care and education. The children were living in poverty and at high risk of educational failure.

The study has tracked its participants to age 40 and found effects on educational placements, middle school achievement test scores, high school graduation, crime, earnings, and employment. The study finds that high-quality pre-kindergarten raises high school graduation rates and test scores, and leads to higher incomes and lower crime rates. The Perry Preschool study demonstrates that the long-term financial return on investment in high-quality pre-kindergarten is over $16 for every dollar invested.

History

Michigan was a leader among states in 1985, when it established the Michigan School Readiness Program, state-funded pre-kindergarten for at-risk 4-year olds. The percentage of 4-year olds served for the past 10 years has ranged from 16-19%. In 2013 the State increased support for what is now called the Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) by $65 million, a 60% increase over 2012 funding of $109 million. This is the largest state preschool expansion in the United States for the year.

Current Status

Number of Children Served
Michigan has 75,300 4-year olds (2012). In 2012 19% or 23, 579 of the children participated in state-funded pre-kindergarten (Great Start Readiness Program or GSRP). Another 15% or 11,295 participated in federally-funded Head Start.

In September 2012, 39% of children eligible for GSRP were not enrolled in either Head Start or GSRP. The State's 60% increase in GSRP funding for 2013-14 may increase the number of slots by approximately 19,000. The number of additional children to be served is unknown, as some of the additional funding may provide half-day GSRP for 4-year olds who are enrolled in 2013. GSRP's eligibility requirement was at or below 300% of the FPL, with exceptions for specific risk factors. As of 2013-14, the GSRP eligibility requirement is at or below 250% of the FPL. Providers must enroll children from the lowest-income households first.

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Provision and Administration of State-Funded PreK
Michigan does not require school districts to offer pre-kindergarten. Of Michigan's 549 Local Educational Authorities in 2011-12 (public school districts, not including 256 Public School Academies), approximately 80% offered GSRP for at-risk 4-year olds in 2011-12 and about 20% of districts did not.

Since August 2011 administrator of GSRP at the state level is the Office of Great Start, which is part of the Michigan Department of Education. Beginning in 2011-12, GSRP funds flow from the State to intermediate school districts (ISDs) based on need and a formula. ISDs administer the program. Beginning in 2013-14, ISDs are required to contract 30% of GSRP funding to public or non-profit community-based organizations, and/or to for-profit businesses.

Per-Pupil Funding
Beginning in 2013-14, the per-pupil payment for GSRP will be $3625, increased from $3400.

Quality
Teacher certification requirements increased in 2011. The State in 2012 encouraged GSRP providers to participate in the State's voluntary quality rating and improvement system. For 2013-14, GSRP providers must have at least 3 stars in the State's 5-star rating system, called Great Start to Quality.

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#2 Common Core state Standards
Liz Ennis

At first they were judged to be one of the chief solutions for transforming public education. Lately however, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) endorsed by forty four states, are at the center of debate between many Michigan legislators, teacher unions, the State Board of Education and citizens. Detractors find them too difficult or not difficult enough, and indicative of too much federal intervention. Supporters believe they will advance the much needed and overdue improvement of educational achievement among all of the State's students. Logic suggests that as long as states' student scores are compared and used to determine citizen information and support or lack of it, then why not level the playing field and compare schools against the same standards from state to state.

Even though the bipartisan Board of Education adopted the Standards (CCSS) three years ago and school districts have spent resources on curriculum, technology, and staff development it is possible that full implementation of teaching, learning, and assessment may be stalled. A group called Stop Common Core is supporting an effort to eliminate the Standards. A Michigan House sub-committee is holding review meetings of the CCSS and will determine if a recommendation will be made to support their adoption. The Department of Education is prevented from spending resources on the implementation of CCSS without legislative approval. (Higgins)

Author, activist, and research professor Diane Ravitch has not expressed support for the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) citing that in her opinion the elementary school standards are developmentally inappropriate. She is further critical of the high school standards and has stated that they have not been internationally benchmarked. (Gongwer) Given that U.S. student test scores are compared with those worldwide and that the U.S. score decline has helped drive the CCSS movement, it would seem sensible to benchmark the Standards before advancing them nation wide.

In a 2011 report from the National Center on Education and the Economy, author Marc S. Tucker stated support for the Common Core State Standards. In his study of countries whose students lead the world in performance, he found that curriculum standards are at the base of a framework that aligns a high level of learning expectations with course content and student work materials and activities. He urges continued efforts to engage institutions of teacher preparation toward preparing teachers in the best practices for teaching within the framework. (Tucker)

The League of Women Voters supported a national two- year study on the Federal Role in Public Education. Local and state Leagues across the country participated. The National Board announced the League's Statement of Position in March, 2012. Included in the six recommendations is the League's position on standards. PROVIDE BROAD COMMON

#2 Common Core state Standards
Liz Ennis

STANDARDS DEVELOPED BY EDUCATIONAL EXPERTS UPON WHICH STATES AND LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCIES CAN BUILD.

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#3 Students and Schools at Risk
Liz Ennis/FPH

Schools or school districts can fail either in achieving their educational goals or financially and many solutions have been offered.   Family poverty and other stressful circumstances are recognized as major factors but the remedies for these conditions are generally beyond the scope of school systems. Schools for poor and minority students reflect large and significant achievement gaps between white and Black and Latino students. While this has been a subject of concern for over forty years, it has now become a matter of urgency for public schools and a standard for rating school quality in Michigan. (Lynch)

Recently, with the general push to provide alternatives to traditional schools, the proposed solutions to academic or financial failure tend to be drastic. These include closing the failed school and instituting an Educational Achievement Authority (as in Detroit), consolidating the district with a neighboring healthy district or otherwise providing the displaced students with alternative options. In the process the authority of locally elected boards may be abrogated. Often the situation has become so bad that proponents say there is no time to consider alternatives to these drastic and, in some cases, undemocratic measures.

There has not been sufficient time to evaluate the efficacy of the solutions described above. However, some of the side effects, particularly in regard to financing are troublesome. The diversion of funds away from traditional public schools to alternatives further weakens traditional schools. (See references to Ulrich and Arsen)

It has long been known that top down plans rarely lead to large-scale school improvement. Lortie was one of the first to recognize and report the importance of school social systems being idiosyncratic and resistant to change without teacher involvement in early levels of change. Wood's noteworthy research on school improvement named staff readiness, planning, and training as central to successful school improvement. Yet as a nation we seem to overlook years of outstanding research and instead arrive at top down, short-term solutions for what should be long term goals. blossom.

 What are the appropriate interventions to increase skills, knowledge, and interest in learning? Is closing a school due to repeated low ratings the best decision? What role does a community play in the successful school? Where do we begin? At this juncture of public education history we should look to the qualities that are inherent in institutional models of social justice, equity, and mental and physical health. One such example can be found in Comer's work in the School Development Program at Yale University. Regarded as a successful plan for teachers and students, it has been recognized as important in addressing classroom climate, healthy school-community relations, academic improvement, attendance, and grades. There are many positive change programs across the U.S. However, the current testing climate has pulled teachers and administrators toward external goals for school,

#3 Students and Schools at Risk
Ennis/FPH

district and state comparison. Here are some other ideas for helping schools that struggle to help their students reach higher levels of learning.

When academic standards are not met by students the State and local districts have a responsibility to:
    1. Identify and provide additional time, resources, and expertise to assist a school.
    2. Assistance in such cases may include a provision for additional time on task for students, after school tutoring, mentor support, a parent support   program, staff development for teachers and a one to one computer to   student availability.
    3.Funds for program assistance to open alternative Education settings to   serve
    students who cannot or are not flourishing in the regular school   environment. These may be specialized career oriented programs,   remedial programs, or other curricular focused programs to engage student interests and foster a commitment to learning.
    Problem based learning, integrated teaching and learning, independent   learning, online learning, cooperative learning, research based best practices teaching programs, team teaching, and Reading Recovery programs should be among the options available for schools to use as improvement strategies.

The above remedies take time to be effective and therefore early intervention is necessary before the situation requires more drastic measures.

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#4 Teacher Evaluation
Kathy Primeau/FPH

Background:
Although a number of states have supported high quality research-based teacher evaluation systems, Michigan has, so far, not made any major investments in building its teachers' ability to teach. Current law requires that annual evaluations be performed locally with student growth being a significant factor, that the results and a timeline for dealing with the consequences be reported, that there be a statewide registry of "effectiveness labels' and that compensation should be tied to the results. The No Child Left Behind Act also requires teacher evaluations but to date Michigan has received annual waivers from these requirements.

The governor appointed a committee to examine teacher evaluation and the following is a summary of that committee's report. The committee, called the Michigan Council for Educational Effectiveness (MCEE) completed its work in late July, 2013 and sent its recommendations to the state legislature.

The MCEE based its recommendations on "rigorous standards of professional practice and measurement" with the overarching goal of enhancing instruction, improving student achievement, and supporting ongoing professional development. If implemented by the state legislature, the plan would replace over 800 different evaluation systems currently used in Michigan. It would become a "fair, transparent, and feasible" system for evaluating teachers and school administrators and would provide a strategy to improve educational outcomes by focusing on student learning objectives.   The process of evaluation would be focused on professional growth and not simply a tool to terminate employees. The goal is to improve instruction and provide useful feedback to educators. The MCEE wants to "emphasize the need to continue to develop skillful teachers who can use best practices to educate our students."

Recommendations:

The MCEE report recommends that evaluations should be based half on observations of teacher practice and half on student growth. For the observation portion, teachers would be observed multiple times over the year by principals, assistant principals, master teachers, curriculum directors, superintendents, assistant superintendents and/or qualified peers. The observations would be based on an established observation tool selected by the state from among the following options: 5 Dimensions of Teaching and Learning, Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model, The Thoughtful Classroom, or Charlotte Danielson's "Framework for

#4 Teacher Evaluation
Kathy Primeau/FPH

Teaching." The vendor chosen would train observers so that any two observers watching the same lesson would have identical scores. The observers would also be trained in coaching and providing feedback to teachers. Observations would count for at least 80% of the observation portion with as much as 20% coming from student surveys, parent surveys, and portfolios. For the student growth portion, the MCEE recommends that the state develop or select student assessments that are aligned to state adopted content standards in all core content areas. Also, the report recommends that the state should "in all cases that are possible and professionally responsible produce value-added modeling (VAM) scores for state provided assessments in core content areas." VAM would consider student scores in light of variables that impact student learning, such as poverty and other issues that educators cannot control.

The observation and student growth scores would be combined to categorize teachers as professional, provisional, or ineffective. A "Professional" teacher will "exhibit the knowledge and capabilities expected of a skillful educator. Extraordinary and competent teachers will fall into this category. These teachers should be recommended for "advanced roles or leadership." A "Provisional" teacher will have "exhibited some professional knowledge and skills," but will have specific substantial identified weaknesses that should be addressed through feedback and targeted professional development. Teachers who receive this rating for three years should be counseled out of their current role. An "Ineffective" teacher will have "exhibited performance that has specific identified weaknesses. Significant improvement must be achieved within two years or the employee should be terminated. The ratings are not intended to give teachers feedback only "when there is something wrong" but to give all teachers specific feedback on how to improve.

Under this plan administrators would also be evaluated based on their practice and student growth. In addition they would be evaluated on the "proficiency of their skill in evaluating teachers, progress made in the school improvement plan, attendance rates, and student, parent, and teacher feedback." As the report states, "the documentation of teaching is only as good as the observer." Because of this, the MCEE states that it's critical that our Legislature adopt a mechanism for teachers to appeal if they feel they have been unfairly evaluated.

The MCEE report recommends tying teacher certification to the proposed performance categories. Teachers wishing to move from a provisional license to a professional one would have to achieve three consecutive years of professional ratings.

#4 Teacher Evaluation
Kathy Primeau/FPH

School districts would be able to receive a waiver from the proposed plan provided they can demonstrate that their evaluation system has the "same level of quality and rigor" as the state plan.

Problems and Challenges:

The legislature will need to draft and pass legislation to put this plan into place. The legislature called for this plan but did not commit to adopting it. Many legislators will need to be educated because they don't understand our education system. In addition, legislators will be lobbied heavily from many sides including those who wish to turn all education over to private corporations.

The MCEE plan will be expensive to fund in the short and long term and will require a financial commitment to public education from the legislature.

In order for it be successful, a new evaluation system will require a full buy-in from teachers, administrators, parents, and other stakeholders. Also, the public will need to understand that students come from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds and the implications for teaching and learning that those differences bring.

The MCEE plan has many recommendations for implementing the new evaluation tools. Some of these include: 1.) building an infrastructure that would be responsible for developing processes and policies, 2.) adopting, purchasing, and evaluating assessment instruments that are aligned to state- developed content standards, 3.) creating a framework for monitoring and improving the system, 4.) creating a system for disseminating information on successful practices, 5.) creating a reasonable system for storing and analyzing all the data that will be received, and 6.) using that analyzed data to work with teacher preparation institutions to support change and enhancement of university curriculum.

Pros:

Teachers will know how they will be evaluated throughout the state.

Administrators will be trained to be observers who can give teachers solid feedback on their teaching performance and steer teachers into appropriate and specific professional development.

Teacher training institutions will be able to help pre-service teachers understand the evaluation system and teach them what they will need to know to become a successful

professional.

Teacher evaluation will be based on an established observation tool not just an evaluation form agreed upon by administration and teacher unions.

Administrators will also be evaluated on a number of things especially the quality of their teacher evaluations. This raises the stakes for administrators to make good evaluation a priority.

Teachers, at all levels, will be able to attend appropriate professional development. This should create Michigan teachers using what is considered best practice in their instruction. This would be a wonderful improvement for our students.

Teacher certification will be based on evaluations, not additional degrees, time spent in the job, or other arbitrary conditions.

Evaluation will be focused on professional growth.

Cons:

 Money! This is an expensive plan to properly implement and it will continue to be expensive for perhaps a number of years. It is essential that the state NOT mandate this plan and then expect school districts to find a way to pay for it.

Many will see this as the state taking over an area that previously was the province of the individual school districts.

The ability of some school districts to opt out of the program. Who will evaluate these districts and be sure they are doing what they proposed.

Who will provide for the professional development recommended to teachers? Who will pay for it? When will teachers attend these development sessions? It would be a shame for teachers to want to work on an area of concern and then find that there is no way to complete that work.

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#5 Schools of Choice
Amy Hutchinson

August 8, 2013 Schools of Choice (SOC) interview
Amy Hutchinson, Midland High School Assistant Principal interviewed:

Linda Cline, Associate Superintendent and Director of Finance for the Midland Public Schools (MPS)

Jana Kullick, MPS Administration (Schools of Choice)

The state of Michigan provides guidelines and individual districts establish timelines and make other choices. The SOC option was initially tied to Proposal A (1996?)

The first choice is whether to participate or not; however, a local board of education (BOE) can opt to take students through SOC but cannot opt out of losing them.

Under SOC a student may attend school in any district contiguous to his/her resident intermediate school district (ISD).

Things a district can determine through their BOE include a limit grade levels and buildings open to SOC (based on enrollment with respect to FTE -full time equivalent staffing and space available). Resident SOC is entirely a district prerogative with no state oversight.

SOC does not currently require the district to provide transportation.

The majority of school districts in Michigan participate. Districts that chose not to participate tend to do so because of extreme disparate per pupil funding between the two districts or because of a racial divide between the two districts. For example, Freeland and Frankenmuth Public Schools did not initially elect to participate in SOC perhaps because of the contiguous district of Saginaw Public Schools.

Once a student is accepted as a SOC student, the district is obligated to keep that student until high school graduation.

A district is obligated by law to post the number of SOC students accepted, for example MPS does so through its website and the local newspaper.

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) audits districts for overall SOC compliance, documentation of public notice, count day enrollment numbers, MSDS coding, etc.

#5 Schools of Choice
Amy Hutchinson

The initial idea behind SOC was the thought that schools should be competitive in a market-driven atmosphere, but SOC did not create an incentive for all districts.

There are financial incentives to participate; most recently Best Practice money (state categorical funding) was an incentive. A district has to meet so many out of a total number of incentives (SOC was one) to qualify for the additional funding. This Best Practice money per pupil allowance for the 2012-13 school year was $52. It's expected to be approximately $16 per student in 2013-14.

Overall incentive is more political than financial. It's a bonus to have your kids in school where you work (day care costs, etc.)

The per pupil foundation allowance of a SOC student's district of residence goes with the student unless that foundation allowance is higher than the chosen SOC district, in which case the lesser amount is given.

The concept is financially attractive in the beginning, but it is difficult to determine if SOC helps a district financially over time when extra staff have to be hired and/or additional sections/classes added, etc.

Many districts see a broader impact of SOC . . . Do some districts lose enough students where it becomes a financial strain? Do the students gained in a particular district bring in enough money to cover the additional staff and oversight costs?

As more people send their kids to districts where they don't live, there become implications for local elections. If people have less of a connection between their community and their school of residence, will they be less likely to vote for sinking fund proposals, capital improvements, enhancement millages, etc.?

Online learning may be a game changer in the world of SOC.

A majority of public school districts are participating in SOC and expansion is likely.

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#5 Schools of Choice
Amy Hutchinson

Websites:

State Aid Act definition http://www.michigan.gov/documents/choice_122527_7.pdf

Here is a link to the specific page that lets you search by district:https://www.mischooldata.org/DistrictSchoolProfiles/StudentInformation/NonResidentStatus.aspx

An article from the Mackinac Center gives some figures that they claim come from MDE (http://www.mackinac.org/18122), but Linda Cline (Associate Superintendent, Midland Public Schools) can't verify them.
The Center for Michigan addressed this issue from a SE Michigan perspective (http://bridgemi.com/2013/06/schoolchildren-shuttle-across-se-michigan-raising-questions-about-funding-community-identity/); Linda believes its figures came from MI School Data. (see above)

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#6 Post-secondary Education for High School Students
Beth Berglin

When discussing the LWVMI education position regarding a publicly financed, equal opportunity and high quality education we need to take a brief moment and remember why. We have a desire to have a productive and engaged citizenry and Michigan's students need to be prepared to be as economically successful as possible after high school. College graduates make as much as a million dollars more than high school graduates over their lifetime. In order for our 18 year olds to be prepared for post-secondary education – regardless of the setting - they need to have k-12 programming that supports success in a post-secondary experience.

For many of Michigan's students attending community college or a trade program seems out of reach if they have fallen behind in credits, especially with our new rigorous graduation requirements. Many local districts and ISD's have developed programs – in partnership with Community Colleges and Universities – to get these students reengaged and back on track.

There are seemingly limitless iterations of program designs (particularly once community organizations* are involved) but for the most part programs seem to fall into the following categories.

Dual Enrollment – Traditionally for "advanced" students and utilized when the local district can not provide courses to meet the academic needs of the student. Students are enrolled at the local district and take a class or two per semester at the college or university. The district pays the college or university directly for the courses.
http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-28753_65799_40085---,00.html

Early/Middle College - "Early/Middle College School" means a stand-alone public high school, a school within a school, a Public School Academy (PSA) or a Shared Educational Entity (SEE) designed to allow a pupil to earn a high school diploma and either an associate's degree, technical certification or up to 60 transferable college credits at the same time. Early/Middle College High Schools can begin as early as 9th or 10th grade. The schools have a unique Entity Code and students attend for 5 years and follow a specific, 5 year program of instruction.
http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-43092_51178---,00.html

#6 Post-secondary Education for High School Students

Beth Berglin

Michigan Early/Middle Colleges

- LCC's Early College Program
- Croswell-Lexington Early College (CL5)
- Traverse Bay Area Early College
- Mott Middle College High School
- Washtenaw Technical Middle College
- Monroe County Middle College
- Oakland Early College
- Academy of Science, Mathematics, and Technology
- JCC/LISD Academy: A Regional Middle College
- Monroe County Middle College
- Early College of Macomb
- Bay Middle College
- Henry Ford Early College
- Genesee Early College
- Clare-Gladwin Middle College
- Detroit Allied Health Middle College High School
- Early College Alliance(sm) @ Eastern Michigan University

District Developed Programs

Developed to meet the needs of specific communities, these programs typically utilize a partnership arrangement between the local district and a Community College or University. These are structured like a Dual Enrollment program but focus on students who have fallen behind and may be in an Alternative Education program.

One such program is the Opportunity School – a partnership between Marshall Public Schools and Kellogg Community College http://www.michiganschildren.org/Download-document/684-Focus-Opportunity-Academy.html

#7 New Forms of Learning - Technology
Liz Ennis

TECHNOLOGY TOOLS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

Some would say that perhaps the greatest change for schools in today's world is the advent of technology and the tools that have emerged from this advancement. Certainly our lives have been changed in communication, medicine, banking, engineering and all other areas of living. Students in today's schools were born in the age of technology and have no memory of a transistor radio or an 8 track cassette. It is quite obvious that their expectation of a place called school should not only have teachers but the other masters of content known as computers, tablets and all other means of mobile devices. This is their world.

A recent report by the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission illustrates the wide discrepancy of the number of available computers to students in schools. It should be noted that in the State of Michigan there is not a separate fund for computer purchases leaving it up to local communities for determining their ability to invest in these resources. Consistent and adequate funding is an absolute if students across Michigan are to develop the abilities expected for workforce entry in almost every field. Of course, students with computers at home develop skills for technology use, but there is so much more for them to gain if they are able to integrate a home school connection. The inequitable level of home ownership of computers between those with and those without is a real problem making it difficult for schools to equalize even if access at school is pervasive.

With more than twenty-five years of using technology in schools, many districts have matured in their purchasing decisions, programs for teachers, and diversity of uses. Technology facilitated by skilled teachers has the power to engage students in learning that expands knowledge, focuses on students' interests, promotes group production projects, independent review of teacher lessons, technology assisted language learning, art, music and even three dimensional projects in auto, engineering, and manufacturing programs. Yet, many schools have not risen to such uses or have the ubiquitous access of tools that afford such teaching and learning.

So how are policymakers and school boards to know the degree to which technology will make a difference toward increasing school success? The answer may lie in a new report just released by (Fullan and Donnelly) on which digital inventions are capable to deliver. The "innovation index" is designed to rate products and services on three broad criteria; pedagogy, system change, and quality of technology. This kind of assistance could surely be helpful to those wondering how much technology, what kind, and what might be the pedagogical benefit. The International Society for Technology in Education published the "essential conditions" (iste) for learning with technology. They appear to be obvious considerations for fostering high technology learning environments. However, we have seen too many examples of spending in this area without the attention necessary to guarantee success. Among the conditions are having a systemic plan, adequate funding, equitable access, skilled personnel, technical support, engaged communities, ongoing professional learning, etc.

For those who believe that broad and intensive use of school technology may be the transforming

#7 New Forms of Learning - Technology
Liz Ennis

element for our schools, others may want us to think again. In Carr's book, THE SHALLOWS, he suggests that we should be aware of how the internet is shaping and maybe even warping our lives. He cited another book ALONE TOGETHER by Sherry Turkle in which she examined how the very communication technologies designed to bring us together are actually pulling us apart. The writer is reminded of the couple observed at a restaurant, both focused on their phones instead of talking to each other. While Carr's book is an arresting look into the social changes taking place because of technology he admits that we are using it more and more. He wonders also if our brains are changing due to the fast paced feed of information and our insistence on being hooked into the internet. We won't know the answer to that for a while. In the meantime, we can't hold up this generation any longer in our schools. They should have the tools they have come to know and be able to use them to learn.

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