

CV school board supports school finance research collaborative



Chippewa Valley Schools Superintendent Ron Roberts brought a resolution of support regarding the School Finance Research Collaborative before the Chippewa Valley Board of Education on Feb. 26. Photo courtesy of CHIPPEWA VALLEY SCHOOLS

By Nicole Tuttle , For **The Macomb Daily**

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Chippewa Valley Schools Board of Education approved a resolution of support regarding a School Finance Research Collaborative on Feb. 26. Nicole Tuttle — For The Macomb Daily

A recent study of state school finance received the support of the Chippewa Valley Board of Education on Feb. 26, when members approved a resolution designed to send a message to lawmakers in support of changes in school funding.

Superintendent Ron Roberts brought the resolution in support regarding the School Finance Research Collaborative before the board.

“We wanted to do a resolution, it is important that we communicate to our community and to policy makers that this study was very important,” Roberts said in an interview with The Macomb Daily prior to the board meeting. “Implementing the study could have a huge impact on K-12 education.”

Denise Aquino, board vice president, made the motion to approve the resolution, which was seconded by Treasurer Jill DeMuyneck Zeck and approved unanimously. Copies of the resolution will be provided to elected officials, according to Roberts.

“Frankly, right now our funding methodology in the state of Michigan is broken,” Roberts said.

He stated the issues can be traced back to the enactment of Proposal A in the 1990s.

“School funding is not really an issue that our state government has shown a desire to address. We hope that this raises that issue and helps our state government to realize that it is important to us,” Roberts said. “If it is important to us as educators and parents and community members, hopefully it is important to them.”

The School Finance Research Collaborative is a study that brought together industry experts to reexamine how Michigan schools are funded, according to the study’s website.

The collaborative, formed in 2016, is a bipartisan group of business leaders and education experts from across Michigan. The study was conducted by school finance research firms Augenblick, Palaich and Associates and Picus Odden and Associates. The full report can be found at fundmischools.org.

“What I think is that since Proposal A, our conditions for education have changed drastically. We have a higher percentage of poverty, we have a higher percentage of students coming to us speaking a foreign language, English language learners. We have more needs regarding special ed, we have greater transportation needs,” Roberts said.

The study was conducted using evidence based and professional judgement approaches.

Nearly 300 state educators informed the study by serving on panels, according to the website. Roberts said some Chippewa Valley district administrators served on panels.

“The study is not about just a dollar figure for students. It is about what that dollar figure should provide for our students,” Roberts said.

The report incorporated findings of Michigan’s 2016 school funding report, which called for increased base per-pupil funding and additional funding for at-risk students and English language learners.

Study funding came from the W.K. Kellogg, Charles Stewart Mott and Skillman foundations, as well as other non-profits and associations. Twenty-two ISDs across the state also provided funding.

It identified a base cost for educating a student and factors that could use additional funding for student characteristics including poverty, special education, English language learners and career and technical education.

The website indicates the study found the base cost of a regular education student to be \$9,590 for traditional public schools and charter schools. The figure excludes transportation, food service and capital costs, and includes pension costs at 4.6 percent of wages, according to the website.

“The state wants quality education. I think they made that clear. I know of no business that can financially cut their way to quality. If the state has set a high bar for us then the state needs to support us in achieving that goal,” Roberts said.

The study further identified costs in school districts or charter schools of transportation for students, geographic isolation, the state pension system costs and enrollment size.

Researchers recommend the state conduct a full capital study examining costs faced by districts and charter schools, recommended an additional study for transportation needs for all districts, and recommended additional study for high level poverty and potential additional funding to serve these students, according to the website.