



MIRS Capitol Capsule

"If you don't read us, you just don't get it!" News
And Information About Michigan Government

Mackinac Center Swings At Teacher Pay

In Michigan's case, teacher salaries are not indicative of education quality.

While elementary and secondary school teacher salaries rank 8th and 11th in the nation, respectively, student math and reading scores for those grades rank 32nd, 30th, 36th and 32nd, according to calculations done by the Mackinac Center for Public Policy.

Statistics also show that since 1999, fourth and eighth grade MEAP math and reading scores have been trending downward, falling below the NAEP in 2007, even as education spending has increased 50 percent since 1989.

Marc J. **HOLLEY** presented these statistics and potential educational reforms today at the Center's "Improving Teacher Quality" Issues and Ideas Forum. Holley is a University of Arkansas Doctoral Academy Fellow in public policy, and author of *A Teacher Quality Primer: For Michigan School Officials, State Policymakers, Media and Residents*.

In keeping with the Center's theme of free-market economics, Holley's principle reforms focus on the implementation of a market-based approach towards education, including merit-based pay, differential pay, and career ladders.

Traditional reforms don't offer the results that these could, he said.

The two more traditional reforms he focused on were

reductions in class sizes and broad-based pay increases. In both cases, the research suggests that they do not contribute to an increase in education quality, even though intuitively they should.

During the 1980s, the Tennessee STAR Experiment found smaller kindergarten and first grade classes did show positive gains in education quality. In response to the study, California adopted broad-based classroom reductions, reducing class sizes from 28 students to 20. The program, which necessitated mass hiring of teachers, added \$1.2 billion to the state budget but did little to improve teacher quality.

Evaluators found that the quality of teachers actually declined, because schools had to hire applicants who would not have previously been eligible to teach to fill the new classrooms.

This emphasis placed on teacher performance is a product of George W. **BUSH**'s 2001 "No Child Left Behind" policy. Using test scores to measure teacher quality has been a point of contention between educators and legislators since the bill's passage.

Holley said that while test scores remain the most utilized predictor of success, methods of predicting teacher quality are improving. But, he said, "We can't make decisions based on proficiency results."

The complete primer will be available within the next few weeks at the Mackinac Center's Web site.