Five Key Ideas for moving K-12 education forward in Michigan

1. Rethink our definition of “achievement”
   - As things stand, we have elevated test scores above all other measures or concepts of student learning.
   - All too often, we view education as the acquisition of facts and methods rather than clarity of thought, reasoned inquiry, and thoughtful choice.
   - Parents are not interested in raising good test-takers. We want our children to grow into productive members of our community and thoughtful friends, neighbors and citizens. We’re focused on our children’s futures, not yesterday’s test scores.

2. Get clear on what a “quality education” means
   - Schools do much more than impart information, and most parents believe it’s those other aspects of learning that matter most in the long run.
   - There is no time for an exercise in feel-good rhetoric. We need a thorough and honest public discussion, informed by professional educators, of what we want for our state’s children.
   - See the statement by Parents Across America, in which MIPFS participated, here: parentsacrossamerica.org/quality-education/

3. Ensure our schools have the resources they need
   - Michigan’s ranking in state K-12 spending per pupil has consistently fallen over the last 20 years, matched by a corresponding slide in NAEP scores compared to other states.
   - Our state’s overall commitment to schools as a share of our state’s economy—in good times and bad—has been in decline for over a decade.
   - Providing resources starts with adequate funding, but also requires smart spending and intelligent policies. Examples: the funding adequacy study embodied in PA 555 of 2014, and the proposal for educational audits in HB 5268 ’14, which MIPFS originally drafted (see: mipfs.org/node/211).

4. Put resources where they are most needed
   - Equity is not necessarily equal, and strict equality is not necessarily fair.
   - Our children and communities face a variety of obstacles and stresses that interfere with them offering or taking advantage of a quality education.
   - In order to offer a quality education to every child, our state must acknowledge that schools need resources to counter those obstacles. We must act intelligently to address those issues in a systematic and humane way.

5. No more chasing fads or basing policy on ideology
   - K-12 public education is a service provided by the public to the entire public, both because we have a moral duty to help every child fulfill their potential and because we know that the future of our communities depends on the investments we make in our children today.
   - We must not set or change policy arbitrarily or hastily. We must shape long-term policy, guided by research and expertise, that provides a stable foundation for our schools and can also meet the changing needs and uncertainties of the future.