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## Counting every student means \$1B for schools

*IRIS SALTERS*

Every student counts.

It's a mantra school employees live by. But it's about to take on new meaning as millions of 2010 U.S. Census forms hit mailboxes across Michigan next month.

More than ever, it is vitally important that every student, every family, every Michigan citizen is accurately counted. Because the census isn't just about drawing legislative districts -- though those are important.

It's about making sure Michigan gets its fair share of \$400 billion in federal funding for hospitals, roads -- and schools.

At a time when our state's schools are reeling from deep budget cuts, Michigan students need all the resources they can get. Making sure that every citizen is counted in the census means more than a billion dollars for our state's schools -- not just once, but every year for the next 10 years.

How many residents there are in each Michigan school district determines how Title I funds are distributed. That money is used to help improve academic performance of economically disadvantaged students, a growing number here in our state.

How many residents living in each Michigan school district determines how much special education money those schools receive. The number of students in special education programs in our state is increasing as well, and districts must often scramble for the necessary resources to fund these crucial services.

How many residents Michigan has determines the funds available for tuition grants and loans for our state's college students. With the rising cost of a college education and the increasing scarcity of private loan programs, this funding is vital.

In all, census numbers impact more than 50 federal programs -- programs funded by our tax dollars. That's why it's critically important that every Michigan citizen fills out and returns his or her household census form.

The U.S. Census is teaming up with schools across the country to get the word out about the importance of

returning the questionnaire. There are lesson plans for teachers, outreach activities for parent-teacher organizations and materials for students to take home to their families. And there are online resources to help teach students and their families what's at stake.

The census is using the slogan "Ten Minutes, Ten Questions" to show people how easy it is to stand up and be counted. It's up to every person in this state to realize what a difference that short amount of time can make.

Imagine what Michigan's share of \$400 billion could do for struggling students, for the poorest students and those preparing to go to college. Imagine what it could mean for every student and every school across our state. Then imagine what it would mean if the money never came.

Wouldn't we all give up 10 minutes to make a difference for Michigan's future?

*Iris Salters is president of the Michigan Education Association, a union that represents teachers and education support staff and that is part of a nationwide campaign called "Census in Our Schools." E-mail comments to [letters@detroitnews.com](mailto:letters@detroitnews.com)">[letters@detroitnews.com](mailto:letters@detroitnews.com)*

## Additional Facts

### Labor Voices

Labor Voices columns are written on a rotating basis by United Auto Workers President Ron Gettelfinger, Teamster President James Hoffa, Michigan AFL-CIO President Mark Gaffney and Michigan Education Association President Iris Salters. Look for Labor Voices every Wednesday in The Detroit News.

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