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MAR 24 2008

Mackinac Center launches school checkbook transparency project

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MIDLAND — To mark Sunshine Week, the Mackinac Center for Public Policy launched an initiative that aims to open up the check registers of Michigan's public school districts and place them in comprehensible form on the Internet.

Sunshine Week, which began March 16, is a national initiative that stresses open government and freedom of information.

The center began contacting Michigan school districts directly to stress the value of spending transparency and to facilitate access to this information, according to Policy Analyst Kenneth M. Braun.

The center will compile a single Web listing for districts that partici-

pate.

"Michigan spends about \$19 billion a year in local, state and federal tax dollars on public education," said Braun. "That's quite a significant number when you realize that the state's total budget is \$43 billion.

"Anything school districts can do to be open about how they spend tax dollars will enhance peoples' confidence and promote accountability."

The Montrose Community Schools (www.mackinac.org/9329) in Genesee County has already provided the model for other districts to follow. Parents, taxpayers, school employees, reporters and anyone else can use that district's Web site to see how school resources are spent.