

MASA Legislative Priorities

2022-2023

The Missouri Association of School Administrators (MASA) represents the vast majority of school superintendents and central office administrators serving public school districts in Missouri. The MASA Legislative Platform covers a multitude of issues that our members support or oppose. While the subsequent pages detail these positions, the following three provisions represent MASA's essential priorities for the 2023 Legislative Session.

Prioritizing the Recruitment and Retention of Teachers and Support Staff: For years, Missouri administrators have recognized that fewer and fewer individuals are seeking to become teachers or serve in other education-related support staff roles. Each of our districts have, at least in recent years, experienced difficulty in filling openings. While pay is not the only reason individuals have sought a different career, we do know pay is a major contributing factor in hiring and retaining both quality teachers and support staff in Missouri's public schools. We also know that school districts already, on average, spend between 70-80% of their district's budget on salaries/wages and benefits. As such, we urge the Legislature and the Governor to work with school leaders to develop an ongoing statewide, comprehensive approach to increased teacher salaries and wages for support staff. It is vital that Missouri seeks to bring teacher pay and support staff pay to a level that is competitive with other neighboring states. Further, we urge the Legislature to partner with local school districts and school stakeholders to "build up" the profession of public education.

Prioritizing Funding for Public Education: Last session, for the first time since 1991, the Legislature appropriated full funding (i.e., 75% of a school district's allowable transportation costs) for the state's transportation categorical. We wholeheartedly support this allocation of state dollars for our public schools and call upon the Legislature to fully fund this categorical once again. Missouri legislators have, in recent years, also "fully funded" our state's foundation formula. While full funding has been achieved, the State Adequacy Target (SAT) has remained static (\$6,375) for the last four years and it appears that it will remain unchanged for the foreseeable future. Moreover, since 2009, the SAT has only grown from \$6,117 to \$6,375. This means the funds needed to "adequately" educate children in the state of Missouri has only increased 4.2% over 14 years, while the cumulative Consumer Price Index (inflation) over that same period of time has increased 36.9%. We urge the Legislature to work in conjunction with school leaders to amend the current formula to increase funding for our public schools by creating a mechanism that would raise the SAT each recalculation cycle.

Refocusing Priorities on Quality of Public Education: Continued access to a quality public education for all of Missouri's children is critical to the future of our state. Over the past decade, efforts have increased to privatize public education via vouchers, voucher tax credits, virtual privatization and privately run charter schools. Open enrollment and other choice measures have also been advanced. These initiatives erode the foundation of a quality public education by diverting funding from local public schools. We believe the Legislature should prioritize the quality of public education and work with public school leaders to meet this challenge as opposed to the aforementioned harmful interferences which have proven to be ineffective, inefficient and unsustainable.

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Education Policy

Continuous improvement of the public education system being necessary to student success,

MASA Supports:

- Limiting charter school expansion until additional and effective accountability and transparency measures are placed on existing charter schools;
- Replicating programs that have been proven effective in meeting the needs of students, specifically students that live in poverty or are considered “at-risk”;
- Providing specialized training for administrators, teachers and staff who work in high poverty areas or with diverse student populations that focus on the unique situations children face in their communities and culture;
- Offering incentives and policy changes to assist the recruitment of talented individuals into the education profession and retain them once they are in the profession;
- Defining the parameters by which employees may collectively bargain including (1) ensuring the Board of Education as the decision-making body on any issue that may reach an impasse between administration and a bargaining group; (2) identifying issues and topics which may be the subject of bargaining negotiations; (3) clarification to the definition of labor organization; (4) setting stringent and significant penalties for anyone participating in a school strike; and (5) defining “good faith bargaining”;
- Continuing the independent governing structure of the PSRS/PEERS retirement systems;
- Reinstatement of the 2.55 multiplier for PSRS members who have 31 years of service or more;
- Ensuring changes to work after retirement rules do not place a financial burden on school districts and provides maximum flexibility to allow school districts to fill positions where few quality applicants may exist;
- Ensuring students who graduate from a Missouri high school be eligible for all state financial aid made available by the state of Missouri;
- Ensuring the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has the resources needed to intervene and assist low performing school districts; and
- Continuing the current independence, structure, and governance of the Missouri High School Activities Association (MSHSAA);
- Working to close the technological divide by increasing access to broadband internet across Missouri;
- Allowing schools to choose the curriculum that meets the needs of their community while adhering to state standards; and
- Creating approved pilot programs that would exempt districts from certain aspects of the state school improvement program in exchange for a continuous improvement effort that promotes financial and organizational efficiency while focusing on the unique needs of their communities.

MASA Opposes:

- Basing a teacher's pay, a district's salary schedule, layoffs, or tenure solely on teacher evaluations;
- Establishing an arbitrary percentage of student performance that must be used in employee evaluations;
- Reducing the probationary period for teachers; and
- Using outside arbitrators to resolve employment disputes.

Finance

Resources being necessary to carry out the charge of public education in the state of Missouri,

MASA Supports:

- Ensuring the foundation formula and the transportation categorical are fully funded;
- Ensuring that a long-term plan is developed to fund Parents as Teachers and early childhood education programs in all school districts;
- Funding the Small School appropriation for the formula;
- Increasing the bonding capacity for school districts;
- Funding to further enhance school safety (e.g., mental health programming, facility upgrades, staff onboarding and training, etc.) so as to prevent/reduce inappropriate and/or dangerous behavior;
- Creating a comprehensive state plan to address improvement of educator salaries;
- Reforming Missouri's tax credit programs by:
 - Placing a sunset clause on all current and future tax credit programs;
 - Making all new tax credit programs subject to the appropriations process;
 - Prohibiting the use of multiple tax credit programs on the same project, particularly the stacking of the low-income tax credit with the historic preservation tax credit;
 - Conducting a standardized, annual review of tax credit programs to monitor and report on each tax credit's return on investment;
 - Tying the caps of tax credit programs to funding of categorical education spending;
 - Modifying the Circuit Breaker Tax Credit to increase the number of eligible participants; and
 - Placing a portion of the savings from tax credit reform in a dedicated fund for the improvement of school facilities and infrastructure;
- Requiring the unanimous support of all taxing jurisdictions for any tax abatement project. If unanimous support cannot be achieved, the issue should either be put to a vote of the people in the affected taxing jurisdictions or schools should be given the ability to opt out of the abatement;
- Providing resources to provide targeted professional development to school districts and their administrators so they may utilize the unique resources in their community to better address the mental healthcare of their students;
- Reinstating flexibility of professional development funds to allow for alignment with district needs;
- Consideration of revenue enhancements such as a tax on internet sales, tobacco taxes, alcohol taxes or a general sales tax to provide long-term funding for Missouri public schools;

- Ensuring county assessors conduct accurate assessments to ensure true market value is obtained and penalizing assessors that fail to meet that task;
- Allowing voters to approve bond issues with a simple majority;
- Providing additional funding for technology, MOREnet, math and science equipment, Safe Schools Grants and alternative education programs;
- Creating state funding for school facility replacement and/or improvement;
- Exempting education spending from proposals, like the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights that seek to put a cap on state spending;
- Ensuring districts maintain discretion to evaluate the quality of virtual education offerings and the flexibility to make enrollment decisions that are in the best interest of students; and
- Changes to the transportation hardship law that do not financially burden either the sending or receiving district.

MASA Opposes:

- Diverting state funds from the public schools by any means including tuition tax credits/vouchers;
- Revenue reductions that impact the state's ability to fund public education;
- Mandating open enrollment of students to attend schools in districts in which their parents do not pay property taxes;
- Any effort to reduce the amount of funding available to districts for summer school;
- Mandating programs without appropriating the necessary funds to implement and sustain the programs;
- Any effort to change the current process for determining the taxable assessed value and tax status of senior citizen living facilities in Missouri;
- Imposing property tax reductions, freezes or limits;
- Transforming the early childhood special education program from a required to a voluntary program;
- Replacing the Missouri income tax with a sales tax;
- Forcing consolidation of school districts;
- Limiting the ability of school districts to seek civil, equitable and other legal remedies; and
- Any effort to nullify election determinations based upon an arbitrary threshold of voter turnout.