Governor signs supplemental bill

Late Wednesday night, the Missouri Senate passed HB3014 (C. Smith), an appropriations supplemental bill. On Thursday, the Missouri House accepted the changes made by the Senate and the bill was signed by Gov. Mike Parson. The overall bill included $4.5 billion, of which $1.9 billion will go to Missouri public schools. These funds represent 90% of the American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief dollars passed by the federal government. Prior to school districts receiving the funding, the legislature was required to approve the funding and then signed by the governor, like other budget bills. The bill also included over $90 million for non-public schools and $219 million for school nutrition programs. Before districts can spend this money, they must have plans that are approved by DESE.

Ten percent of the funding from the federal funds was not appropriated in the bill. According to federal guidelines, 10% of the relief funds are allocated to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for statewide projects outlined by the State Board of Education.

DESE had previously planned on spending the money addressing four areas: learning acceleration, mental health needs, the digital divide, and educator workforce. Previous plans for the money included the following:

- Longitudinal data system update
- Postsecondary advising initiative
- Summer learning
- Teacher and recruitment grants
- Mathematics mastery
- Mental health support initiative
- Assessment system redesign
- Broadband expansion

The House of Representatives had included a new Close the Gap Program for $75 million. This program would have made direct payments to families of kindergarten through 12th grade to support qualifying educational enrichment activities. A third-party administrator would be required to run the program instead of local districts or DESE. The qualifying expense, which would be reimbursable include tutoring, extended school day educational programs, academic and arts-related day or summer camp, and educational, learning or study skills services.

None of the items outlined under DESE’s portion of the federal relief funding were included in the signed supplemental budget but could be included in FY23 budget bills or in a further supplemental spending bill.

This important funding for Missouri public education will support students across the state, and MSTA appreciates the approval of this funding by the General Assembly and governor prior to the federal deadline in March.

Alternative teacher certification proposed

This week the House Elementary and Secondary Education Committee heard a bill, opposed by MSTA, that would allow individual school districts to set criteria and issue teaching certificates.

MSTA testified that teaching is a profession that needs to have statewide standards approved by the State Board of Education. It should not be the role of individual districts to establish standards for becoming a teacher, Missouri already has adequate alternative methods to earn a teaching certificate in current law.

HB1998 (Davidson) would allow school districts to issue a district teaching permit to any individual who does not currently hold a State Board of Education issued teaching certificate. The district teaching permit allows the holder to teach only in the issuing school district unless another school district also issues permits and recognizes permits issued in this manner as part of their policy. The bill requires districts to develop a policy listing the qualifications an individual will meet to be eligible for the teaching permit, which include, at a minimum, a bachelor's degree, and background check.

The number of teachers issued a teaching permit must not exceed 15% of the total number of teachers employed in the district. If an individual is issued a teaching permit and teaches for four years, the State Board may issue a full teaching certificate. Any individual who obtains a teaching permit as described within the bill shall be deemed a teacher for purposes of determining minimum salary, tenure, and retirement.

The bill also includes provisions included in other bills related to issuing substitute teaching certificates. This would codify in law what DESE has already approved by allowing applicants for a substitute teaching certificate to have completed a background check and completed at least 36 college credit hours or completed a 20-hour online training and have a high school diploma or equivalent.

MSTA opposed HB1998 based on MSTA Adopted Resolutions for teacher preparation and certification. MSTA supports the State Board of Education as the sole issuer of teaching certificates.
House Education Committee continues to pass bills

Once again, the House Education Committee gave approval to several bills this week. Here is a run-down of the bills approved:

HB1881 (R. Black) revises the PSRS Work After Retirement rules by increasing the time a retiree can work under the critical shortage provisions from two years to four years.

HB1928 (Pollitt) changes the requirement for the visiting scholars teaching certificate by opening it up to hard-to-fill content areas. A provision was also added to allow districts to employ teachers who completed an approved teacher prep program but have not passed the exit exam and provides that such teacher shall receive a teaching certificate upon completion of three years of successful teaching.

HB1908 (Shaul) requires school districts to approve all curriculum and be adopted in a public hearing. The bill allows districts to use a rolling 5-year time frame for approval.

HB2011 (T. Smith) requires parental consent for changes to an IEP.

HB1556 (D. Gregory) revises the literacy and reading instruction statutes. The bill language matches language approved by the Senate Education Committee in SB681 (O’Laughlin).

HB1858 (Baker) relates to parental rights in education. Clarification was made to the bill to protect confidential information.

HB1669 (Seitz) prohibits certain concepts about individuals based upon race or gender from being included in course materials.

Education debt

Student loan repayment was paused during the pandemic but is currently scheduled to resume on May 1, 2022. In an October survey to MSTA members, 57% of the nearly 6,700 participants said they had student loan debt. Of those who had debt, 26% had loans totaling $40,000 or more.

Public service loan forgiveness and other programs can help lessen the burden, but sorting through options can be time consuming. MSTA is partnering with Savi to provide members with a service that will help them easily navigate the student loan repayment process.

All members can visit msta.bysavi.com and enter their salary and monthly student loan payments to receive a free estimate on the monthly savings possible through Savi.

MSTA members also have free access to:

- A personalized repayment calculator
- Forgiveness eligibility detection
- A basic federal enrollment guide
- Online support and help centers
- A student loan dashboard
- Live educational workshops

MSTA members are eligible to receive a 33% discount on Savi’s premier tier of offerings, including:

- Digital Applications with Savi e-file enrollment
- Maximized forgiveness credits
- One-on-one support from Savi student loan experts
- Ongoing plan monitoring and management
- Annual enrollment reminders and policy updates

The cost for this service is $60/year. For more information, visit msta.bysavi.com.

Competency-based education bill heard in Senate Education Committee

The Senate Education Committee heard SB660 (Arthur) which would establish several new education programs, a new Show Me Success diploma and a new task force relating to competency-based education.

Under SB660, high school students would have a new alternative pathway to graduation called the Show Me Success Diploma Program. Starting in 2023, the program would allow students to accelerate learning and earn their diploma at the end of the 10th grade. At the student’s discretion, they may continue to remain in high school or enroll in a postsecondary education institution.

Students who enroll in higher education would have an amount equal to 90% of the pupil’s proportionate share of the state, local, and federal aid that the district or charter school receives for the student deposited into a higher education savings account that lists the student as the beneficiary.

SB660 creates the Competency-Based Education Task Force to study and develop competency-based education programs in public schools. The bill outlines the work of the task force, including conducting interviews and at least three public hearings to identify promising competency-based education programs and obstacles to implementation. Before December first of each year, the Task Force is required to present its findings and recommendations to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, the Joint Committee on Education, and the State Board of Education.

The bill outlines that school districts and charter schools will receive state school funding under the foundation formula for high school students who are taking competency-based courses offered by their school district or charter school. Attendance of a student enrolled in a competency-based course will equal the product of the district or charter school’s prior year average attendance percentage multiplied by the total number of attendance hours normally allocable to a non-competency-based course of equal credit value.

SB660 would establish a competency-based education grant program. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education would award grants to eligible school districts for the purpose of providing competency-based education. The Department would be required to facilitate the creation, sharing, and development of course assessments, curriculum, training and guidance for teachers, and best practices for the school districts that offer competency-based education courses.

Included in the State Board of Education 2022 legislative priorities under Success-Ready Students and Workforce development, the board include supporting efforts to explore alternatives that replace the traditional time-based system with a competency-based system.