

# 2021 MSTA

## EDUCATION POLICY PRIORITIES



“A general diffusion of knowledge and intelligence being essential to the preservation of the rights and liberties of the people, the general assembly shall establish and maintain free public schools for the gratuitous instruction of all persons in this state within ages not in excess of twenty-one years as prescribed by law.” Missouri Constitution Article IX, Section 1(a).

### COVID-19

#### Pandemic Response:

MSTA strongly believes all students and staff have a right to a safe school environment. Missouri education professionals have worked tirelessly throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, responding to a constantly changing environment to provide the best possible education to students. As professionals in public education, teachers and support staff must be involved in decisions affecting schools, students and communities. In a June 2020 survey of MSTA members, with over 2,500 responses, over 70 percent of members said that state testing should be eliminated for the 2020-21 school year in order to add additional time to the calendar to make up for lost time from the 2019-2020 school year.

- **MSTA supports** local school districts developing, approving, and disseminating a local policy that prioritizes the health and safety of students and employees with input from school personnel and the community. The policy must describe the health and safety measures the district will take to mitigate and respond to public health threats, including what actions the school district will take in response to a confirmed contagious disease in the district.
- **MSTA opposes** statewide student assessments and punitive measures against school districts, educators and funding during any pandemic.

### STATE ISSUES

#### Funding:

Although the state legislature has worked to appropriate funds to fully fund the school foundation formula, years of underfunding transportation reimbursements by hundreds of millions of dollars, and recent budget withholdings have led to inadequate public school funding. Expectations from Missouri schools, teachers and students continue to rise, with a new return of indications that future revenues will not meet anticipated formula growth. To account for lost state revenues, local taxpayers have increased their percentage of funding for schools. The state must work to close the funding gap for K-12 transportation, while fully funding of the formula. “Full Funding for Education” must include the state meeting its obligation to pay the legally required reimbursement for transportation costs and addressing Missouri teacher salaries. MSTA also supports increased funding for early

childhood education, parenting programs and family literacy programs.

- **MSTA supports** helping students who have experienced adverse childhood events by incorporating trauma-informed initiatives in the classroom, and professional development for trauma-informed initiatives.
- **MSTA supports** public charter school expansion when charters are granted by the local school board within an existing accredited Missouri public school district and requires all members of a public charter school board to be residents of the district in which the charter school serves. Charter school expansion should include requirements that charter schools have the same certification and compensation standards of other schools in the district, and tenure status should not be reduced or lost as a result of teaching in the public charter school.
- **MSTA supports** requiring all members of a public charter school board be required to be residents of the district which the charter school serves.
- **MSTA supports** distance-learning opportunities for students approved and supported by the local school district.
- **MSTA supports** expanding high speed internet access.

#### Salaries, Recruitment and Retention:

The average teacher salary in Missouri is far below the national average and compared to other states, the average beginning teacher salary is even lower. These inadequately paid professionals are expected to deliver student performance results that are above average. While states surrounding Missouri continue to increase teacher pay, Missouri falls further and further behind national trends in teacher compensation.

- **MSTA supports** innovative strategies to recruit and certificate substitute teachers, provided that applicants complete a robust program that prepares candidates to deliver instruction to students and includes all health and safety screening required of school staff.

#### Teacher Retirement:

A secure and stable defined-benefit retirement program is vital to recruiting and retaining highly qualified and effective educators. Actuarially sound improvements to the system continue to strengthen the Missouri public educators’ financial futures. Transitioning work after retirement from a limit on the number of hours worked to an earnings

limit for Public School Retirement System (PSRS) will further simplify burdensome requirements on employees and districts.

### LOCAL CONTROL

#### Assessment and Evaluation Reform:

The single biggest factor in the success of students is the teacher. MSTA believes that teacher input is vital to the continued success of our students. Local districts need to have the freedom to meet the needs of their communities without control by the state or federal education departments.

- **MSTA supports** each school district developing a written policy for transfer and assignment of students within a district and to any other school district.
- **MSTA supports** the use of locally developed assessments to improve instruction.
- **MSTA supports** local control of public education by the district board of education and autonomy of the local school district to develop and adopt curriculum, assessments, evaluations and other programs to meet educational goals.
- **MSTA opposes** any plan that would use student grades, student class performance or student performance on standardized tests as the single criteria to measure the merit of the teacher.

### FEDERAL ISSUES

#### Retirement and Social Security:

- **MSTA opposes** any state or federal proposal to group the teachers’ retirement system funds with Social Security. In addition, the association opposes provisions that deprive teachers of their earned social security benefits.
- **MSTA opposes** the Government Pension Offset as well as the Windfall Elimination Provision.

#### Federal Influence in Education:

- **MSTA supports** requiring existing funding and future increases in federal dollars be delivered directly to the local school district whenever possible and increased focus on distributing federal dollars back to the classroom.

### MSTA OPPOSES

- **MSTA opposes** limiting the ability of employees to discuss working conditions with their employer.
- **MSTA opposes** federal supersession over state and local responsibility for public education, including assessments that set standards and drive curriculum.
- **MSTA opposes** any proposal to eliminate or weaken the teacher tenure law.
- **MSTA opposes** school vouchers, education tax credits, or education savings accounts, that would divert public money to pay for homeschooling or private school tuition.
- **MSTA opposes** merit pay, including the use of standardized test scores or other subjective criteria as a measurement of teacher performance or to determine further salary increases.

#MSTAadvocate



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