

MSTA ACTION

THE LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN OF THE MISSOURI STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION • PLEASE POST



We Are MSTAA!

By Chuck Martin, MSTAA President

MSTA Capitol Days are extremely important events for Missouri educators to attend. Each region meets with our MSTAA lead lobbyist, Matt Michelson, on the day of their respective Capitol Day to be updated on issues pertinent to education. Beyond that, educators interact with their respective legislators, both Senators and Representatives, while visiting the Capitol. This opportunity to interact is a vital part of the influence educators have on education-related legislation. I understand that many MSTAA members may not be able to attend Capitol Days, especially considering the current substitute teacher shortage. If you cannot attend, I urge you to stay attuned to educational issues and contact your legislators via phone or email. I also encourage you to email me your concerns and/or questions so that I can have an opportunity to advocate on your behalf.

The best way for you to stay informed about issues that affect education is to be diligent to faithfully read or listen to MSTAA Action publications.

With over 45,000 MSTAA members, we are capable of being a powerful voice in our state Capitol! Sadly, I often hear fellow educators complain about our profession not being respected. We have the ability to change this, but it requires YOU letting your voice be heard. Each and every one of us has a responsibility to hold our legislators accountable for the education-related decisions they make and to speak up for ourselves and each other.

Supplemental budget continues to advance

March 24 is the deadline for the governor to sign the appropriation of federal funding sent to Missouri to support students, or it will be returned to the federal government. Before districts can spend this money, they must have plans that are approved by DESE. Currently 94 percent of

the local districts have approved plans on file with DESE. MSTAA thanks members of the legislature and leadership in both chambers for continuing to advance this important funding for students.

The Senate Appropriations Committee heard and voted out the supplemental budget this week. The bill was debated by the committee with changes made to some of the programs and spending impacting public education. The supplemental budget request from the governor includes a request that would allow \$1.9 billion in federal aid to be spent by local school districts.

HB3014 (C. Smith) includes federal money which would go to all school districts. The federal guidelines on this money require that 90 percent go to local school districts and 10 percent be used by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for discretionary spending.

The largest change made by the Senate Committee to the federal education funding relates to the \$75 million Close the Gap Program created in House. The proposed program would make direct payments to families of students in kindergarten through 12th grade to support qualifying educational enrichment activities. The Senate Appropriations committee removed that program from their version of the supplemental budget bill.

HB3014 was placed on the senate calendar and could be brought up for debate soon. If passed by the Senate, it will most likely be sent to conference committee to work out differences between the chambers and then approved by each legislative body before being sent to the governor for his signature.

Career Ladder bill approved by Committee

The House Workforce and Development Committee unanimously approved **HB2493 (R. Black)** that would restart the “Missouri Career Development and Teacher Excellence Plan” – also known as Career Ladder.

This bill is supported by MSTAA and is included in the MSTAA 2022 Education Policy Priorities. Changes to the currently unfunded program would include switching the funding to 60 percent state funded/40 percent local funded and allowing education employees to participate in the program after 2 years of teaching.

House Committee votes out bills relating to open enrollment and expansion of virtual education

MSTAA continues to oppose HB1814 (Pollitt) based on MSTAA Adopted Resolutions and concerns the bill would lead to school consolidation. MSTAA supports each local school district developing a written policy for transfer and assignment of students within a district and to any other school district. **HB1814** claims to create a voluntary open enrollment policy, yet voluntary open enrollment already exists in Missouri allowing districts to cooperate to enroll nonresident students. This harmful legislation would mandate open enrollment for resident districts while making enrolling of students optional for nonresident districts. The bill places a student transfer cap of 5 percent in the first 2 years, then removes this provision - removing any guardrails to prevent chaos across rural Missouri.

The open enrollment system proposed in the bill creates a system where districts would engage in an arms race to enroll students. Throughout the state, districts have seen great success cooperating with nearby districts. This legislation would create an ever escalating and costly arms race of have and have-not districts. Money now spent in the classroom could be diverted to student recruitment for districts to grow their budgets simply based on student enrollment.

In states where open enrollment exists, including Iowa, there has been a trend toward consolidation of rural schools. During debate on the issue

last session, the sponsor of the legislation admitted that school consolidation is a possible outcome from this new program. Districts that participate in open enrollment may limit the number of students that they allow to transfer into the district by adopting a policy that outlines the standards for acceptance and rejection of transfer applications, including building capacity and class-size limitations.

The House Committee also voted out **HB1903 (Christofanelli)** which would expand Missouri's virtual education options. Substantial portions of the bill remove protections and accountability for students who are enrolled in the program, which was revamped in the 2018 legislative session.

The committee made changes to the bill, including the payments that are made for educating students enrolled in full time virtual programs. The resident district is now required to pay online programs for the time a student is enrolled, regardless of completion. If students enroll and then leave a full-time virtual provider, the local district must still pay for any time in which the student was enrolled - even if they return to the resident district.

The bill still removes a provision of the 2018 law that allows districts to negotiate a lower rate from the provider than the state education dollars paid to the district. The bill also still creates a scenario where students could enroll in a full-time online program, then transfer back to the local district who would be responsible to assess and remediate any learning loss.

According to the 2020-21 Missouri Course Access and Virtual School Program (MOCAP) Annual Report published by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, only 77 percent of students who enrolled in virtual courses completed them.

The bill further removes the ability of local districts to work in collaboration with parents to ensure that online programs are suitable for the student and that services entitled to the student under state and federal law are available and accessible. **MSTA opposes HB1903.**

MSTA adopted resolutions oppose public funding of virtual education without the oversight of a local education authority.

Other bills **voted do pass** out of the House Elementary and Secondary Education Committee include:

HJR110 (Christofanelli) would send a ballot measure for a statewide vote to include the Parents Bill of Rights as well as changes to the state accreditation system and the assignment of letter grade rankings of schools into the Missouri Constitution.

HB1973 (K. Gregory) modifies provisions relating to school buses.

HB1995 (Richey) combines language from **HB1474** regarding curriculum with language commonly referred to as the Parents' Bill of Rights.

HB2010 (T. Smith) places the burdens of proof and production on school districts in due process hearings for children with a disability.

HB2095 (H. Kelly) modifies provisions relating to child abuse investigations in schools.

HB2306 (Christofanelli) moves school board elections to November.

HB2359 (Basye) adds local government and public school district information to the Missouri Accountability Portal.

HB2428 (Dogan) enacts provisions promoting dignity and nondiscrimination in public schools.

The committee also heard the following bills:

HB1556 (D. Gregory) changes requirements for reading success plans for students.

HB1858 (Baker) establishes the Parents' Bill of Rights Act of 2022.

HB1908 (Shaul) requires school districts to review curriculum intended for use in each school year in a public forum.

Senate Education Committee hearing on various bills

After voting out several bills during last week's meeting, the Senate Education Committee held hearings on four bills relating to K-12 education but did not take further action on any bills assigned to the committee.

SB659 (Cierpiot) requires school districts to submit to DESE information related to computer science courses and demographic enrollment information for those courses. Each year the department must publish a list of computer science course codes and names with a course description and indicate which courses meet or exceed the department's computer science performance

standards. The department is required to appoint a computer science advisor. Beginning July 1, 2023, computer science courses successfully completed and counted toward state graduation requirements will be equivalent to one science or practical arts credit for the purpose of satisfying admission requirements at any public institution of higher education in the state.

SB684 (May) would allow school districts to offer elective social studies courses on the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament.

SB691 (Thompson Rehder) requires school districts to conduct criminal background checks on certain adults seeking enrollment in courses taught at public schools such as career center classes.

SB703 (Eslinger) makes DESE responsible for establishing a process for students to develop an individual career and academic plan of study with help from their parent or guardian and the school's counselors prior to 9th grade. Before graduation, the student will declare their postsecondary plans as part of the individual career and academic plan. The bill also states that no student shall receive a certificate of graduation from any public school or charter school unless the student has completed and submitted the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. A student is exempt from this requirement under certain circumstances.



Visit msta.org/Education-Policy/ Capitol-Visits to find your region's visiting date. Get involved today!

