

# MSTA ACTION

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



## House passes budget with Career Ladder funding

The House spent this week putting the finishing touches on their version of the state's budget. **HB3002 (C. Smith)** is the budget bill that funds K-12 schools and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

The House's version of the budget includes full funding for the foundation formula and flat funding for school transportation. Many of the increased funding efforts for programs were due to the spending of federal funds delivered to the state to help with the response to Covid-19.

Funding for the Career Ladder Program was included in the budget. In fact, money was added while the bill was debated on the House floor. The amount in the budget for Career Ladder is now \$37,467,000, which is the exact amount that the Career Ladder Program was funded during the 2010 fiscal year when state funding for the program ended. Other items of interest in the budget include the use of federal funds for the following:

- \$75 million for Close the Gap Grants to provide direct payments to families of kindergarten through 12th grade to support qualifying educational enrichment activities. The qualifying expenses, which would be reimbursable, include tutoring, extended school day educational programs, academic and arts-related day/summer camps and educational, learning or study skills services.
- Grant awards would be calculated in two groups. The first group would include those with incomes below 185% of the federal poverty level (\$49,025). The awards would be the lesser of \$1,500 or the ratio of total number of applicants divided by the appropriation allowed in the bill. The second group would be for remaining applicants with a cap of \$1,500.
- \$20 million for summer school programs
- \$20 million for after school programs
- \$19 million for recruitment and retention of teachers
- \$5.8 million for Parents as Teachers

The budget will now go to the Senate where they will craft their version of the state budget and then the difference will be worked out in a conference committee before being approved by both chambers. The deadline for completing the budget is May 6th.

## What is Career Ladder?

Career Ladder is a voluntary program for both districts and teachers. If a district decided to participate in the program, teachers within that district would then decide if they wanted to participate or not.

The Missouri Career Development and Teacher Excellence Plan was established by the Excellence in Education Act of 1985 and started in the 1986-87 school year with 63 districts representing 2,400 teachers. When the state funding ended after the 2010 fiscal year, there were 343 districts and 17,980 teachers in the program. The state funding for the Career Ladder was \$37,467,000.

The program requires that local districts pay 60% of the costs with the state picking up 40%. There is currently legislation being considered that would change the match to 60% state and 40% local.

Under current law, a teacher in a district that participates in the program would be eligible after 5 years of teaching. Proposed legislation would lower this to 2 years of successful teaching.

Teachers take on additional responsibilities and volunteer efforts outside of compensated hours. Those responsibilities may include uncompensated coaching, supervising and organizing extracurricular activities, serving as a mentor or tutor to students, additional teacher trainings or certifications and assisting students with college or career preparation.

Career Ladder is composed of three steps of eligibility:

- Step 1 of the program requires teachers to work 60 hours outside of the contract time to receive \$1,500. The teacher must successfully complete 2 years on Step 1 before moving to Step 2.
- Step 2 of the program requires teachers to work 90 hours outside of the contract time to receive \$3,500. Teachers must successfully complete 3 years on Step 2 before going to Step 3.
- Step 3 of the program requires teachers to work 120 hours outside of the contract time to receive \$5,000.

Teachers on the Career Ladder provide students with opportunities for enhanced learning experiences, remedial assistance and various extended day/year activities. These teachers would also participate in professional growth activities, workshops, professional organizations and mentoring. Curricula could be updated in many districts with teachers on Career Ladder.

## Senate gives initial approval to education bill for charter school funding and virtual open enrollment expansion

The Missouri Senate gave initial approval to **HB1552 (Richey)** with sweeping changes from the version that was passed by the House. The bill was filed to address funding issues for charter schools in the St. Louis and Kansas City school districts.

The Senate changed the funding mechanism in the bill and attached language that would change and expand virtual education. Under the foundation formula, charter schools received less per pupil than the traditional school districts where they operate. This legislation is designed to address the issue, with the difference now being made up from state funding. This new funding calculation would not take money away from local school districts where charters currently exist and would only apply to charter schools where they currently operate under law.

The bill now also includes several sections that are designed to increase accountability for charter schools. Charter schools that operate outside of the locally elected school board are required to have governing board members to be residents of the state of Missouri. Charter school management companies that operate charter schools in the state will now be required to be a nonprofit corporation. The schools must provide lactation accommodations and will be required to publish their annual performance reports on their school websites.

Changes to virtual education were also included in **HB1552** which would modify the payment and accessibility to both part-time and full-time virtual programs, creating an open enrollment system for students to participate in virtual education and eliminating local oversight of public education. The bill states that full-time virtual education providers will be paid per student enrolled, based on the state adequacy target. Full-time virtual providers will be required to participate in the statewide assessment system and the academic performance of the students enrolled will be assigned to an attendance center designated for the virtual provider.

Decisions regarding enrollment are now placed with the virtual provider. School districts are required to notify all students of their options to enroll in virtual education. The academic performance of any student who disenrolls (*continued*)

from a full-time virtual school program and enrolls in a public school or charter school shall not be used to determine the annual performance report score of the attendance center or school district in which the student enrolls for 12 months from the date of enrollment. Under current law, payment for full-time virtual school students shall not exceed the state adequacy target and schools may negotiate a lower cost directly with the course or full-time virtual providers. This legislation eliminates that provision from law.

**HB1552** requires the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to adopt a policy for students enrolling in a full-time virtual program that outlines the responsibilities of the online provider. Virtual school programs are required to monitor individual student success and engagement in addition to providing regular progress reports for each student at least four times per school year. The bill repeals a provision requiring school districts and charter schools to monitor student progress and success.

An education services plan may require an eligible student to have access to student facilities of the resident school district during regular school hours. The plan must provide for reimbursement of the resident school district for such access. Full-time virtual schools are required to develop a policy setting forth consequences for a student who fails to complete the required instructional activities. If a full-time virtual school disenrolls a student for failure to complete required instructional activities, the school must immediately provide written notification to the student's school district of residence.

Virtual school programs are required to comply with audit requirements under state law, access to public records under state law and school accountability report cards. The Department must create a guidance document that details options for virtual course access and full-time virtual course access for all students in the state on or before January 1, 2023.

## Senate Education Committee votes out open enrollment bill

By a vote of 5-4, the Senate Education Committee voted out **HB1814 (Pollitt)**. **MSTA opposes this bill based on MSTAs Adopted Resolutions** that support each local school district developing a written policy for transfer and assignment of students within a district and to any other school district. MSTAs main concerns have still not been addressed in this legislation, including the harmful effects of school consolidation and possible discrimination against special needs students.

**HB1814** establishes the "Public School Open Enrollment Act." The bill creates a public school open enrollment program and specifies that any student beginning public school may attend a public school

in any nonresident district. Districts must declare participation in the Open Enrollment Program by October 1. School districts can decide if they will accept open enrollment students but may not deny residents students from participating with a district that will accept students. Participating districts are not required to add teachers, staff or classrooms to accommodate transfer applicants.

Schools may establish standards for transfer applications and post the information on the school website and in the student handbook. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), or an entity skilled in policy development, is required to develop a model open enrollment transfer policy. A school board may modify the model policy, but all public schools must adopt the model policy, regardless of participation in the program. However, each school board may modify the model policy based on the district's needs.

Students who participate in open enrollment during high school may not participate in varsity sports during the first 365 days of enrollment in a non-resident district, with exceptions outlined in the bill. No transfers under the bill may begin until the school year 2023-24. For school years 2023-24 and 2024-25, districts may restrict the number of transferring students to 5% of the previous school year's enrollment and the bill allows Hickman Mills school district to prevent students from leaving the district under this program until the 2025-26 school year.

Any student who applies for a transfer may only accept one transfer per school year, although the student may return to their resident district and must complete a full semester before applying for another transfer. Students may complete all remaining school years in their nonresident district and any sibling may enroll if the district has the capacity as provided by the bill. For the purposes of determining federal and state aid, the student shall be counted as a resident pupil of the nonresident district except for federal calculations of military impact aid.

**HB1814** establishes the "Parent Public School Choice Fund" with a \$60 million appropriation to supplement open enrollment transfers from any resident district for transportation costs for students that qualify for free and reduced meals, and to reimburse for special needs education. This funding is not included in the current state budget and would require additional general revenue to be allocated each year.

Parents will be responsible for transportation to the nonresident school or to an existing bus stop location in the nonresident district. Students that qualify for free and reduced meals may have transportation expenses reimbursed quarterly from the Parent Public School Choice Fund. The bill allows districts to

receive funding from the "Parent Public School Choice Fund" for special education services up to three times the current expenditure per average daily attendance and for transportation costs for students that qualify for free and reduced meals.

The bill specifies that each year before October 1, each school district must set and publish the number of transfer students the district is willing to receive for the following school year if they are accepting students. Districts will also develop a policy for a wait list. It also allows further open enrollment outside of the framework above for any person or a beneficiary of a trust that owns residential or agricultural real property in any school district. To qualify, they must pay a school tax of at least \$3000 in that district and own property for at least three years to send up to four children to that district without a tuition payment, upon notification to the district at least 30 days prior to enrollment. The district shall count that child for the district's average daily attendance.

## House Pension Committee combines PSRS bills

Consolidating many different bills into one bill seems to always happen when time starts to run short during the legislative session. This week, the House Pensions Committee combined many non-controversial bills into one bill. **HB2799 (Pike)** was filed as a bill that would waive the current work after retirement provisions until 2026. Currently, PSRS retirees are limited to working 550 hours and can make 50% of pay while still receiving their retirement benefits.

The bill now includes a provision from **HB2161 (Dinkins)** that would allow retirees working 32 or more years to receive a 2.55% factor when figuring their retirement benefits.

This bill is intended to reward teachers who work more years by increasing their monthly retirement benefit, while saving their retirement money. A financial analysis of the bill indicated that there would be a savings of \$21.1 million to PSRS for the next 30 years. One other PSRS provision was added to the bill from **HB1881 (R. Black)**, which increases the number of years that a retiree can work for a district under critical shortage provisions from 2 years to 4 years.



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