

# Missouri Association of School Administrators

## Legislative Priorities for 2009-10

During these difficult financial times, MASA recognizes that tough decisions must be made regarding funding for state services. We recognize that education cannot be completely immune to budget cuts. MASA is committed to working in collaboration with other educational groups, the Governor, the General Assembly, and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, to seek solutions for long-term sustainable funding for public education in Missouri. We also firmly believe that policy makers must do everything possible to eliminate any further erosion of local property taxes which are vital to preserving basic educational services. The following statement reflects the sentiment of MASA regarding Missouri public education funding.

**Foundation Formula:** MASA believes that full funding of the state foundation formula should be the top priority of the state of Missouri. Because the Small Schools Program is a vital part of funding in small districts, we believe these funds should continue at current levels. MASA also believes that school districts should be given more latitude in the use of professional development funds during this financial crisis.

**Comprehensive Education Services:** MASA supports a process under the leadership of DESE by which provisionally accredited and unaccredited school districts are evaluated by an outside team of education experts and a roadmap for improvement is prepared, state-funded and mandated to be implemented. MASA supports a comprehensive statewide system of treatment and services for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) to enhance the educational opportunities available. This includes but is not limited to state supported training for early childhood educators; expansion of early childhood services; coordination of services provided by state and local political subdivisions; and development of best practice guidelines for effective educational assessments and interventions.

**Modernization of Public Schools:** As funds become available, MASA supports legislation that will provide students with access to state-of-the art schools including: (1) creating a state-funded pool for providing facility replacement and/or improvement assistance; (2) increasing the bonding capacity for school districts; (3) providing additional funding for technology, MOREnet, math and science equipment, Safe Schools grants and alternative education programs; and (4) allowing voters to approve bond issues with a simple majority.

**Collective Bargaining:** MASA supports legislation that will define the parameters by which employees may collectively bargain. These parameters include: (1) establishing 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) establishing a process that does not exclude any teacher organization; (4) setting stringent and significant penalties for anyone participating in a school strike; and (5) defining "good faith bargaining".

**School Funding** MASA believes that adequate and equitable funding of public schools to meet state and federal program requirements should be the top priority of the state of Missouri.

**MASA supports:**

- Redefining the state foundation formula state adequacy target calculation to provide no less than a two percent increase each time it is recalculated;
- Increasing the minimum teacher's salary;
- Providing additional input for school districts on tax abatement proposals and placing restrictions on the use of tax increment financing for residential developments;
- Modifying the Circuit Breaker law to increase the number of eligible participants;
- Allowing small school districts to have summer school without jeopardizing their small school grant funds.
- The use of uniform assessment processes by county assessors to provide consistent appraisals throughout the state.

**MASA opposes:**

- Diverting state funds from the public schools by any means including tuition tax credits/vouchers;
- Mandating open enrollment of students;
- The erosion of public school funding to expand Charter schools;
- Mandating programs without appropriating the necessary funds to implement and sustain the programs; and
- Imposing property tax reductions, freezes or limits.

**School Governance** MASA believes that Missouri's educational goals can best be achieved within the framework of a governance system in which elected community representatives have final authority over policies and practices directly affecting teaching and learning.

**MASA supports:**

- Maintaining the Board of Education's local control of school districts and the education programs it provides;
- Amending Chapter 213, RSMo to eliminate claims of liability filed against individual employees and school board members when named parties in an employment action;
- Maintaining the current structure and governance of the Missouri State High School Activities Association;
- Maintaining safe transportation for students through compartmentalization practices;
- Maintaining local control of employment related decisions; and
- Maintaining local control of student educational and disciplinary decisions.

**MASA opposes:**

- Forcing consolidation of school districts
- Limiting the ability of school districts to seek civil, equitable and other legal remedies; and
- Placing special restrictions on PSRS retirees who wish to work after retirement.