

MASA Legislative Priorities 2014-15

Approved at the MASA Business meeting on September 26, 2014

The Missouri Association of School Administrators (MASA) represents the majority of school administrators serving the school districts in Missouri. The MASA legislative priorities cover a multitude of issues that our members have identified which they support and oppose. While the following pages detail these positions, the organization will focus the following three priorities during the 2015 legislative session.

- 1. Fund the Foundation Formula and Categoricals** - Missouri legislators made a commitment to Missouri schools with passage of SB287 in 2005. The seven-year phase-in never happened and the formula remains underfunded by about \$500 million in 2014-15. When economic times were difficult, Missouri schools saw the formula under-funded, transportation funds cut by nearly one-third; the career ladder program eliminated; and the parents as teachers program cut in half. It is time to restore the funding to the public schools. Because of language in HB1689 that was passed during the 2014 legislative session, the formula must be funded to at least \$3.250 billion to avoid a shift in funding from formula districts to hold harmless districts.
- 2. School Transfers from Unaccredited Districts** - The consensus among Missouri education leaders is that busing students from unaccredited school districts to neighboring districts is definitely not in the best interest of the students and will not help unaccredited districts get better. The “New Path To Excellence” proposal prepared by school administrators should serve as a roadmap to move from punitive solutions to an intervention model of support. We support strengthening neighborhoods and communities which will in turn strengthen public schools. MASA is opposed to using vouchers in any form as a school improvement solution.
- 3. New Assessments & Standards** – MASA supports high standards for students and our schools. However, school districts should not be penalized anytime DESE modifies or implements new standards and begins using new assessments. Test scores should provide a picture of how well students are performing and should not be a reflection of the school district’s demographics or technology capabilities of the district. As the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) moves forward with new assessments, MASA believes we must carefully consider how these new assessments will be used to determine school district accreditation.

Legislative Priorities for 2014-15

Struggling Districts: MASA supports collaboration as a means to provide assistance to struggling school districts through interaction among school administrators, teachers and other educational professionals who can provide suggestions for a viable long-range school improvement plan.

MASA Supports:

- Offering incentives for the recruitment of highly effective teachers into unaccredited districts;
- Providing specialized training for administrators, teachers and staff who work in high poverty areas or with diverse student populations that focus on the unique situations children face in their communities and culture; and
- Replicating programs that have been proven to be effective in meeting the needs of students and specifically those that live in poverty or those who are considered “at-risk”.

MASA Opposes:

- Redirecting resources from public schools to unproven, for-profit charter schools until the charter reforms passed in 2012 are implemented and proven effective; and
 - Allowing open enrollment of students to attend districts in which their parents do not pay property taxes.
-

Funding: MASA supports the creation of a long-term plan to grow Missouri’s state budget and cut wasteful spending in order reach the goal of fulfilling the promise that was made to Missouri schools when the foundation formula was adopted in 2005 and to restore the cuts made in transportation funding, parents as teachers funding and early childhood education programs.

MASA Supports:

- Fully funding the state foundation formula;
- A long-term plan to fully fund the foundation formula;
- Providing funding for early childhood programs;
- Funding the small schools appropriation for the formula;
- Freezing the Dollar Value Modifier and thresholds until the State Adequacy Target of \$6,131 is reached;
- Updating the calculation of the State Adequacy Target to be consistent with the current school accreditation program;
- Restoring funds to the transportation categorical; to Parents as Teachers;
- Reinstating flexibility of professional development funds to allow for alignment with district expectations;
- Reforming Missouri’s business regulatory climate to spur job creation. Examples include reforms to be made to laws regarding workers’ compensation, unemployment insurance, employment, etc.;
- Consideration of revenue enhancements such as a sales tax on Internet sales tax, tobacco taxes, alcohol taxes or a general sales tax to provide long-term funding for Missouri public schools;
- Modifying the Circuit Breaker law to increase the number of eligible participants;
- Using uniform assessment processes by county assessors to provide consistent appraisals throughout the state;

- Reforming Missouri tax credits largely based on the recommendations of the Missouri Tax Credit Review Commission that includes the following...
 - ✓ Placing sunsets on all current and future tax credit programs;
 - ✓ Making all new tax credit programs subject to the appropriations process;
 - ✓ Tying the caps of tax credit programs to funding of categorical education spending;
 - ✓ Conducting a standardized, annual review of tax credit programs to monitor and report on each tax credit's return on investment;
 - ✓ Prohibiting the use of multiple tax credit programs on the same project, particularly the stacking of the low-income tax credit with the historic preservation tax credit; and
 - ✓ Placing a portion of the savings from tax credit reform to be dedicated to funding the improvement of school facilities and infrastructure;
- Increasing the bonding capacity for school districts;
- Allowing voters to approve bond issues with a simple majority;
- Providing additional funding for technology, MOREnet, math and science equipment, Safe Schools grants and alternative education programs;
- Creating state funding for school facility replacement and/or improvement;
- Exempting education spending from proposals, like the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights that seek to put a cap on state spending;
- Funding of the Missouri Virtual Instruction Program rather than the establishment of virtual charter schools;
- Requiring the unanimous support of all taxing jurisdictions for any tax abatement project. If unanimous support cannot be achieved, the issue should be put to a vote of the people in the affected taxing jurisdictions;
- Changes to transportation hardship law that do not financially burden either the sending or receiving district; and
- Amending Chapter 213, RSMo to eliminate claims of liability filed against individual employees, school board members when named parties in an employment action.

MASA opposes:

- Diverting state funds from the public schools by any means including tuition tax credits/vouchers;
- Mandating open enrollment of students to attend schools in districts in which their parents do not pay property taxes;
- Mandating programs without appropriating the necessary funds to implement and sustain the programs;
- Any effort to change the current process for determining the taxable assessed value and tax status of senior citizen living facilities in Missouri;
- Imposing property tax reductions, freezes or limits;
- Transforming the early childhood special education program from a required to a voluntary program;
- Replacing the Missouri income tax with a sales tax;
- Forcing consolidation of school districts; and
- Limiting the ability of school districts to seek civil, equitable and other legal remedies.

Educator Quality: MASA understands that high quality educators are the best investment Missouri can make in order to deliver a world-class education to its students. The following positions represent MASA's position on increasing educator quality in Missouri.

MASA Supports:

- Defining the parameters by which employees may collectively bargain including (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”;
- Dedicating funds for programs that train superintendents and principals to deliver effective and constructive teacher evaluations; and
- Reinstatement of the 2.55 multiplier for PSRS members who have 31 years of service or more.

MASA Opposes:

- Basing a teacher’s pay, a district’s salary schedule, layoffs, or tenure solely on teacher evaluations until funding can be dedicated to effective teacher evaluation and evaluator programs.
 - Establishing an arbitrary percentage of student performance that must be used in employee evaluations;
 - Reducing the probationary period for teachers; and
 - Using outside arbitrators to resolve employment disputes.
-

Investment in the Future of Education: MASA acknowledges the large amount of pressure to change the way education is delivered in the state and country. MASA opposes many of these “reforms” because many of these proposals are more interested in abandoning our local communities and school districts. MASA also understands that it is in the best interest of students, school districts, and administrators that stakeholders must come to the discussion with their ideas of what “reform” looks like.

MASA Supports:

- Creating approved pilot programs that districts may adopt which would allow those districts to be exempt from certain aspects of the state school improvement plan in exchange for a continuous improvement effort that promotes financial and organizational efficiency while focusing on the unique needs of their communities;
- Increasing Missouri’s graduation rates by offering incentives for students to stay in school and/or disincentives for dropping out; and
- Continuing the current independence, structure, and governance of the Missouri High School Activities Association.