

MSTA ACTION



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

Tuition tax credits advance in senate

Legislation that sought to make it easier for governments to share services has grown to include several MSTA-opposed proposals, including tuition tax credits.

The Senate General Laws Committee this week approved **SB451 (Cunningham)**. The original bill allowed governments to share services, although many school districts and other governmental bodies already have such agreements.

The bill now includes provisions for tuition tax credits for students in unaccredited school districts. Under this plan, an individual or corporation would get a 60 percent tax credit for a donation to an organization that would fund scholarships for students in unaccredited school districts to attend private schools. The tax credits would be capped at \$40 million, with annual increases in the cap based upon the consumer price index.

MSTA opposes tuition tax credits because

they lower the amount of money available to state services and divert public money to pay for private school tuition.

The bill also would:

- Allow school districts or groups of districts to operate charter schools in unaccredited districts. Charters could not contract with the unaccredited district, hire the unaccredited district's teachers, or contract with teachers unions.
- Allow the State Board of Education to appoint a new district board immediately when a district becomes unaccredited, rather than waiting two years.
- Allow students in unaccredited school districts to attend school in the same or an adjoining county. Each district would establish admission criteria for the nonresident pupils from unaccredited districts. Primary criteria would be the availability of highly qualified teachers

- in existing classrooms and take into account the district's resident student population. The receiving district could not be required to hire more teachers or build new classrooms to take on new students.
- Require unaccredited districts to transfer local effort money received from the county assessor and collector to the state treasurer. The state treasurer could work with the State Board to identify the tuition and transportation costs for students transferring out of the unaccredited district and the amount needed from the local effort money to pay the tuition and transportation. The State Board would determine the extent to which the state treasurer may disburse the funds.
- Change procedures when a district becomes unaccredited. If a school district, except for St. Louis City or a district in St. Louis County, becomes unaccredited, surrounding accredited districts would divide the district's territory, annex it, and draw new attendance boundaries. When an accredited district annexes part of an unaccredited district, it would not be considered a successor entity for the purposes of employment contracts or unemployment compensation.
- Give school principals the right to hire teachers who have demonstrated effectiveness and qualifications. Districts with multiple schools would have to include provisions in teacher contracts to place teachers rated highly effective or effective based on the mutual consent of the teacher and principal. Districts could adopt options for teachers rated effective or higher who are displaced and not selected for a regular position.
- Require at least 51 percent of a teacher's evaluation to be based on students' academic growth.

MSTA opposes NCLB waiver

MSTA is opposing the state's application to waive the requirements of No Child Left Behind.

The ESEA Flexibility Waiver seeks to remove Missouri from the requirements of No Child Left Behind, but a waiver would be expensive for Missouri schools and would not free schools from unrealistic federal requirements.

It is irresponsible to exhaust state and school district resources to pursue a federal initiative that is likely temporary with mandates that will be replaced with new reauthorization requirements after less than one year. Many requirements established in the waiver conflict with state law. The waiver would establish more federal control over our school districts, despite its misleading title.

The application is due Feb. 21. Ten states have already received waivers from No Child Left Behind and 28 more states and two territories are seeking waivers.

MSTA opposes NCLB and this waiver request for several reasons.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has not studied the associated cost to Missouri taxpayers, nor has the department said when or if it will do a study. The application

is vague, and was developed on a short timeline with little input from Missouri educators.

The federal government would control Missouri's accountability system, rather than school districts, compromising an outstanding accountability model. This would not solve the flaws within NCLB, but will flaw MSIP and create one large flawed system.

The differences between MSIP 5 and DESE's waiver plan make it impossible to create a single accountability system. The Feb. 21 application deadline does not allow DESE time to conduct data analysis and simulations or to evaluate a new system's impact.

The requirements for teacher evaluations conflict with state law. Instead of gaining NCLB flexibility, Missouri would lose local control.

Our state assessment system was not designed to measure "teacher affect" as prescribed in the evaluation component of the application. Assessment results are a combination of factors, including the student's knowledge, the curriculum and instruction.

DESE is accepting comments on the waiver through Feb. 21. Send yours to esea@dese.mo.gov.



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Bill Summaries

HOUSE

ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

HB1425 (McNary) requires school district to establish programs for student academic progression. **MSTA testified in opposition.** See related story.

HB1629 (Barnes) allows a student to enroll in a school district other than their district of residence to attend virtual courses. **MSTA testified in opposition.** See related story.

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

HB1577 (Largent) requires schools to implement criteria regarding the enrollment and educational success of foster care children.

SENATE

EDUCATION

SB483 (Rupp) creates the Early High School Graduation Scholarship Program for public high school students who graduate early. Voted out “do pass.”

SB654 (Lager) requires the school board of each district and charter school to establish an evaluation system for teachers and teaching. **MSTA testified in support.** See related story.

SB677 (Pearce) modifies provisions relating to governance for failing school districts.

SB737 (Engler) restricts the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education from including certain data from neglected and delinquent children in the aggregate data of a school district.

GENERAL LAWS

SB451 (Cunningham) creates a tuition tax credit program, changes laws relating to unaccredited school districts, changes laws regarding charter schools, and requires at least 51 percent of a teacher’s evaluation to be based on student performance. Voted out “do pass” as substituted. See related story.

SJR47 (Rupp) removes a portion of the Missouri Constitution that prohibits distribution of public funds to religious organizations.

House committee hears two bills

The House Elementary and Secondary Education Committee this week heard bills regarding student performance and virtual instruction.

HB1425 (McNary) would require school districts to develop academic progression programs that specify standards to evaluate student performance; reading performance for each grade level; and alternative placement for students who have been retained for two or more years. It would also require districts to allocate resources to students who are not reading at grade level by the end of third grade, and to students who do not meet district standards for progression. Beginning in the 2014-15 school year, students who are not proficient in reading by the end of third grade would be retained.

HB1629 (Barnes) would allow Missouri students to enroll in any school district or charter school in the state to participate in virtual programs. For state funding purposes, the student would be reported in the enrollment of their district of residence. The district would forward payment to the virtual school program. The bill sets the payment rate at 72.5 percent of the average expenditure per student.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education runs the state’s virtual school, the Missouri Virtual Instruction Program, or MOVIP. State funding for MOVIP has been drastically cut in the past three years, but students can enroll if their parents or school district pay tuition. School districts can also offer virtual courses and negotiate with other districts to allow students to access those courses.

Bill would include teachers in evaluation process

The Senate Education Committee is considering an MST A-supported bill on teacher evaluations.

SB654 (Lager) would require school boards to work with evaluators of instruction and teachers to establish evaluation systems. The law would apply to public school districts and charter schools.

This bill is part of MST A’s Solutions for Teachers campaign, which promotes legislation that will positively impact teachers and students. The committee heard the bill this week.

Some senators on the committee said the state should set standards for teacher evaluations. MST A believes that local districts are best able to decide the evaluation standards for their teachers.

Evaluation systems developed under the bill would include performance reviews to help teachers improve instruction, and summative evaluations. The evaluations would consider teacher quality, performance and effectiveness using multiple measures. The school board would train evaluators, and use independent evaluators to ensure consistent application of criteria. Districts could not release individual teacher or administrator evaluations to state or federal agencies.

School districts and charter schools would have to develop guidelines for professional improvement plans by June 30, 2013. The process would include teachers chosen by the district teaching staff, administrators, and others. The professional improvement plan would be used to help teachers reach satisfactory performance.

Attend MST A Lobby Day

Join the grassroots teacher movement in support of quality schools by attending MST A’s Lobby Day on Feb. 28.

Member involvement is key to success at the Capitol. Legislators must hear first-hand how proposed laws will affect students, teachers and school districts.

The day will begin with a presentation at 9 a.m. in the first-floor rotunda of the Capitol. Participants will learn about the education issues

in the legislature and hear from a few legislators. Members can then meet with their area’s legislators to discuss important issues. MST A staff will be available to answer questions.

Legislators welcome visits from people from their area. Partner with other teachers from your area and visit multiple legislators. It is always easier to visit as a group.

This is a great way to become involved with your profession.

Solutions for TEACHERS