

MSTA ACTION

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State Board of Education shouldn't ignore education professionals

A letter from MSTA Executive Director Bruce Moe

The State Board of Education named the members of the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Blue Ribbon Commission this week. The Commission will be comprised of 22 members, 18 of which have been appointed with four legislators who will be announced at the next State Board meeting in May. The State Board followed through with their initial plan that limits the inclusion of active education professionals. The Blue Ribbon Commission primarily includes business and industry members but also legislators, members of the State Board of Education, the governor's staff - only two educators and one school board member.

The Blue Ribbon Commission is charged with delivering a report to the State Board of Education in October 2022. They will provide a summary of the Commission's work along with clear action steps, suggested legislative and policy changes, and any other specific and measurable strategies recommended to address teacher recruitment and retention challenges in Missouri.

The State Board of Education has been working on issues regarding teacher recruitment and retention over the past four years. The Missouri State Teachers Association has been an active partner in those efforts, with membership on the DESE-organized Teachers Table and providing valuable survey information from thousands of Missouri educators.

This isn't new ground for the State Board of Education to cover. Beginning in March of 2019, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education presented the State Board of Education with a Teacher Workforce Outreach Plan with updates in May, September and December of that year. The plan provided direction and focus for addressing challenges and issues regarding Missouri's teacher workforce. This included 26 strategies and 90 action steps. The DESE-led effort - to prepare, develop and support educators to ensure an effective teacher in every classroom and an effective leader in every school - was largely halted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The work done on this plan in collaboration with students, parents and educators has been shelved and replaced by a panel comprised of individuals who work outside of education.

The absence of professional educators from all stages of their careers on this commission is another step in the wrong direction for a State Board of Education that adopted legislative priorities to study alternatives to traditional salary schedule, such as incentive pay, pay for performance, health benefit design, tenure, and differential pay based on subject area and geography. Not only do teachers not support these harmful changes, but Missouri citizens spoke loud and clear at the ballot box in 2014, defeating Amendment 3 which would have put many of these divisive ideas into law. Over 75% of Missourians rejected the well-funded ballot measure aimed at weakening Missouri's public schools. The Blue Ribbon Commission could address many educators' concerns by quickly discounting these highly unpopular ideas. Eliminating long-standing due process protections for educators will only exacerbate Missouri's educator retention problems.

Also unveiled by the State Board of Education was a Climate and Culture Task Force which will help advise the Commission. The State Board is correct to identify that climate and culture inside and outside the classroom has an impact on the wellbeing of our educators and the respect for the profession. This is a stated goal of the commission. Yet, the State Board has decided against the inclusion of more educators on this commission. They should be more inclusive on decisions regarding how best to support recruitment and retention efforts in their own profession.

MSTA's efforts to support recruitment and retention for Missouri teachers continue, including important work toward growing MSTAs Future Teachers of America and Student MSTAs on College and University campuses. Future Teachers of America (FTA), a program to introduce the profession to high school students, was founded by MSTAs in 1937. Student MSTAs (SMSTAs) is a student organization for college and university students looking toward a career in education. MSTAs has also directed considerable effort toward supporting new education professionals, including mentor guidance and leadership development.

During the current legislative session, MSTAs has supported increased funding for public education, the restarting and funding for the Career Ladder Program, and funding for increasing the minimum teacher salary. In budget requests to the legislature, the Department of Elementary

and Secondary Education didn't even request increased funding for the formula or student transportation reimbursement for school districts that are currently underfunded by over \$200 million at a time when the state has a record budget surplus.

While the composition of this Blue Ribbon Commission is disappointing, MSTAs members will continue to have a voice in this process as we work with all members of the commission, providing important information and input from education professionals. No one has more insight, and more at stake in the work of the Blue Ribbon Commission than Missouri's educators. We should have more seats at the table.

Members of the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Blue Ribbon Commission

Maxine Clark, Clayton, Founder of Build-A-Bear Workshop

Aaron Decker, Poplar Bluff, Vice President and Retail Lending Officer at Southern Bank

Amy Estes, Rosebud, Regional Manager at Ayusa Global Youth Exchange

Kurt Hellweg, Springfield, Chairman of the Board of International Dehydrated Foods, Inc., American Dehydrated Foods, Inc. ("ADF"), Food Ingredients Technology Company, LLC, and IsoNova Technologies, LLC.

Kathy Osborn, St. Louis, President and CEO of the Regional Business Council

Keith Pritchard, Waynesville, Chairman of the Board of Security Bank of Pulaski County

Dred Scott, Kansas City, President and CEO of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Kansas City

Ruth Stricklen Pullins, Kansas City, Chief Human Resources Officer for University Health

Mark Walker, Springfield, Chairman and CEO of TransLand

Bob Wollenman, St. Joseph, Managing Partner of Deluxe Truck Stop

Kim Bailey, Raymore, Missouri State Board of Education Member

Donald Claycomb, Linn, State Board of Education Member

Mary Schrag, West Plains, Missouri State Board of Education Member

Jamie Birch, Ashland, Governor Mike Parson's Deputy Policy Director

Paul Katnik, Jefferson City, Assistant Commissioner DESE Office of Educator Quality

Darrion Cockrell, St. Louis, Elementary physical education teacher, 2021 Teacher of the Year

Misty Grandel, Fordland, High School language arts teacher, 2020 Teacher of the Year

Rhonda Gilstrap, Blue Springs, President Blue Springs School District Board of Education

4 Legislators (2 House and 2 Senate) to be named later

Senate Education Committee votes out two omnibus

The Senate Education Committee created two large education omnibus bills, combining bills that had been heard or voted out of the committee at earlier hearings.

HB2202 (Fitzwater) began as a bill that would modify computer science courses and requires certain coursework and instruction in computer science and computational thinking in public and charter high schools, middle schools, and elementary schools. Courses and instruction offered under the bill would be required to meet standards established by the State Board of Education and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The bill also creates a computer science education task force that will make recommendations for legislation to the General Assembly.

Bills that were added into the omnibus committee substitute.

SB660 (Arthur) creates the show me success diploma program as an alternative pathway to graduation for high school students. Language from this bill also establishes the competency-based education grant program and the competency-based education task force and allows for competency-based credits for high school students.

SB681 (O'Laughlin) requires the State Board of Education in consultation with the Missouri Advisory Board for Educator Preparation to align literacy and reading instruction coursework for teacher education programs. All reading and special education certificates shall include training in reading. The State Board of Education, in collaboration with the Coordinating Board for Higher Education and the Commissioner's advisory council is required to develop a plan to establish a comprehensive system of services for reading instruction. The State Board of Education will also create an Office of Literacy and take other actions relating to improving literacy. The bill also creates the evidence-based reading instruction program fund. **SB681** included

the creation of school innovation waivers, allowing school districts to submit a state innovation waiver plan to the State Board of Education for certain purposes. Any plan for a school innovation waiver must contain information that includes the specific provision of law for which a waiver is being requested and an explanation for why such provision of law inhibits the goal stated in the plan. The State Board shall not authorize the waiver of any statutory requirements relating to teacher certification, teacher tenure, or any requirement imposed by federal law. The bill changes the term "reading intervention plans" to "reading success plans" throughout the bill and will apply to charter schools. Each school district and charter school will have a policy for reading success plans. The reading success plans will provide all parents of students with a plan that includes suggestions for regular parent-guided home reading.

At the beginning of the school year, each school will provide a reading success plan to any student who exhibits a substantial deficiency in reading or has been identified as being at risk of dyslexia. If a student has a substantial reading deficiency at the end of 3rd grade, promotion or retention of the student will be discussed by the student's parent or guardian and appropriate school staff. Schools will provide students identified as having a substantial reading deficiency with certain additional services. Each school district and charter school must ensure that intensive reading instruction is provided through a reading development initiative to each kindergarten through 5th grade student who is assessed as exhibiting a substantial reading deficiency. Such instruction shall comply with criteria listed in the bill. Schools must provide professional development services to enhance the skills of elementary teachers in responding to children's unique reading issues and need to increase the use of evidence-based strategies.

SB958 (Bean) provides that a school employee trained by a nurse and contracted for the transportation of school children shall have the discretion to administer an epinephrine auto syringe on any student who is having a life-threatening anaphylactic reaction. Language from this bill also provides that school districts have the authority to use vehicles other than school buses to transport school children.

SB703 (Eslinger) requires DESE to establish for students prior to their 9th grade year to develop an individual career and academic plan of study, with help from the student's parent or guardian and the school's guidance counselors. The bill states that no student shall receive a certificate of graduation unless the student has completed and submitted the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, with exemptions under certain circumstances.

Also passed by the committee was **HB2304 (E.Lewis)** which includes all of the language and bills that were included in **HB2202 (Fitzwater)** listed above as well as the bills listed below.

HB2304 was passed by the House and included language relating to changes to obtaining a substitute certificate to teach. This bill is similar to the changes that were adopted by the State Board of Education. Applicants for certification must complete a background check and have at least 36 college hours or have completed a 20-hour online training, individuals must also have a high school diploma or equivalent. The bill also allows retired teachers to substitute part-time or as a temporary substitute and not have those hours and salary affect their retirement allowance until June 30, 2025.

SB769 (O'Laughlin) authorizes the creation of up to four pilot recovery high schools to be established and operated by individual public school districts or groups of districts.

SB806 (Hoskins) expands gifted education.

HB2114 (R. Black) allows any teacher retired from the PSRS to be employed in a position covered under PEERS without stopping their retirement benefit to earn up to the annual earnings limit applicable to a Social Security recipient before the calendar year of attainment of full retirement age under federal regulations. The bill would also allow critical shortage provisions for work after retirement to be used for up to 4 years instead of two years.

For bill summaries and more details, visit msta.org/action.



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