



2019 MSTA LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

“A general diffusion of knowledge and intelligence being essential to the preservation of the rights and liberties of the people, the general assembly shall establish and maintain free public schools for the gratuitous instruction of all persons in this state within ages not in excess of twenty-one years as prescribed by law.” Missouri Constitution Article IX, Section 1(a).

STATE ISSUES

Funding:

While the state legislature has finally fully funded the school foundation formula, after years of underfunding by hundreds of millions of dollars, expectations from Missouri schools, teachers and students continue to rise, with few indications that future revenues will meet anticipated formula growth. To account for lost state revenues, local taxpayers have increased their percentage of funding for schools. Increasing the legally required funding for transportation needs to be a high priority for our legislature, while maintaining full funding of the formula. MSTA also supports increased funding for early childhood education, parenting programs and family literacy programs.

At a time when the state budget cannot provide funding for the most basic state services, the legislature needs to stop considering additional ways to pick winners and losers through a fragmented tax policy, and develop a long-term strategy to continue to fully fund public education.

- **MSTA supports** helping students who have experienced adverse childhood events by incorporating trauma-informed initiatives in the classroom, and professional development for trauma-informed initiatives.
- **MSTA supports** public charter school expansion when charters are granted by the local school board within an existing accredited Missouri public school district and requires all members of a public charter school board to be residents of the district in which the charter school serves. Charter school expansion should include requirements that charter schools have the same certification and compensation standards of other schools in the district, and tenure status should not be reduced or lost as a result of teaching in the public charter school.
- **MSTA supports** streamlining the expensive and burdensome process for teachers to become certified professionals by limit-

ing the cost and scope of assessments for pre-service teachers to obtain certificates.

Teachers' Salaries:

The average teacher salary in Missouri is far below the national average and compared to other states, the average beginning teacher salary is even lower. These inadequately paid professionals are expected to deliver student performance results that are above average. Missouri has raised the standards for prospective teachers. Many legislators and state leaders say that they want to attract the best and brightest to the teaching profession, but fail to provide adequate funding.

Teacher Retirement:

A secure and stable defined-benefit retirement program is vital to recruiting and retaining highly qualified and effective educators. Actuarially sound improvements to the system continue to strengthen the Missouri public educators' financial futures. Transitioning work after retirement from a limit on the number of hours worked to an earnings limit for Public School Retirement System (PSRS) will further simplify burdensome requirements on employees and districts.

LOCAL CONTROL

Assessment and Evaluation Reform:

The single biggest factor in the success of students is the teacher. MSTA believes that teacher input is vital to the continued success of our students. Local districts need to have the freedom to meet the needs of their communities without control by the state or federal education departments.

- **MSTA supports** the use of locally developed assessments to improve instruction.
- **MSTA supports** local control of public education by the district board of education and autonomy of the local school district to develop and adopt curriculum, assessments, evaluations and other programs to meet educational goals.

- **MSTA opposes** any plan that would use student grades, student class performance or student performance on standardized tests as the single criteria to measure the merit of the teacher.

FEDERAL ISSUES

Retirement and Social Security:

- **MSTA opposes** any state or federal proposal to group the teachers' retirement system funds with Social Security. In addition, the association opposes provisions that deprive teachers of their earned social security benefits.
- **MSTA opposes** the Government Pension Offset as well as the Windfall Elimination Provision.

Federal Influence in Education:

- **MSTA supports** requiring existing funding and future increases in federal dollars be delivered directly to the local school district whenever possible and increased focus on distributing federal dollars back to the classroom.

MSTA OPPOSES

- **MSTA opposes** restricting voluntary employee payroll deductions for professional associations.
- **MSTA opposes** federal supersession over state and local responsibility for public education, including assessments that set standards and drive curriculum.
- **MSTA opposes** any proposal to eliminate or weaken the teacher tenure law.
- **MSTA opposes** school vouchers, or education tax credits that would divert public money to pay for private school tuition.
- **MSTA opposes** merit pay, including the use of standardized test scores or other subjective criteria as a measurement of teacher performance or to determine further salary increases.



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