# MARE Focus

MARCH 10, 2026 | FROM THE DESK OF MR. KEVIN SANDLIN, MARE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**ENDORSEMENTS**

**American Fidelity Assurance Co.**

**Claim Care, Inc.**

**Forrest T. Jones & Co.**

**Hamlin Energy**

**IMS Technology**

**L.J. Hart & Company**

**MASA MTS**

**MEUHP**

**Mike Keith Insurance**

**MO. Consult. For Ed.**

**MOCAAT**

**M.U.S.I.C.**

**Veregy**

**MARE PARTNERSHIPS**

- **LEGAL HOTLINE: EDCOUNSEL, GUIN MUNDORF, MICKES O'TOOLE, TUETH KEENEY**
- **EDPLUS**
- **AMERICAN LEGION BOYS STATE**
- **GIRLS STATE**

**MISSOURI ADMIN. JOB POSTING**

**Superintendent Search Program** – One of the many services that MARE provides is a quality, yet affordable Superintendent Search Program. If you are retiring this year or making plans to move, we would welcome the opportunity to work with your district to find the next leader. Contact Kevin Sandlin, MARE Executive Director, at (660) 747-8050 or by email at ksandlin@moare.com for more information.

**Orrick R-XI Superintendent Search** – Mrs. Mary Beth Scherer is the Search Consultant. She can be reached at (660) 281-7678 or **mbscherer@ucmo.edu**. **(03/17/2026)**

*Closed Searches - Altenburg #48, Kirbyville R-VI, Maryville R-II, Chaffee R-II, Santa Fe R-X, Morgan Co. R-I, NE Randolph Co. R-IV, Pettis Co. R-V, Archie R-V, Linn Co. R-I, North Harrison R-III, Madison C-3, Prairie Home R-V, La Monte R-IV, Newburg R-II, Breckenridge R-I & Bismarck R-V*

**Foundation Formula Modernization Task Force** – The group met at 10:00 a.m. on Monday, February 23rd in Jefferson City. The next meeting is slated for Monday, March 30th at 10:00 a.m. in Jefferson City. You are encouraged to stay engaged and informed on this endeavor. For more information on this work, please check out the website at this link: Missouri School Funding Modernization Task Force.

## Quote of the Week

**One looks back with appreciation to the brilliant teachers, but with gratitude to those who touched our human feelings. The curriculum is so much necessary raw material, but warmth is a vital element for the growing plant and for the soul of the child. – Carl Jung**

**Welcome New Associate Members** – MARE is pleased to welcome the following as New Associate Members: Absolute Janitorial Services, LLC, CoffeeTree Group, First Onsite Property Restoration, Finalsite, HaloRRS, LLC & Absolute Janitorial Services, LLC. Be on the lookout for more information on these MARE supporters on the website, direct emails to membership and future MARE Focus articles. We appreciate their support for our work here at MARE!

## 2026 MARE/MO K-8 Conference – October 21-23, 2026!

**Save the Date** – 16th Annual MARE Scholarship Golf Tournament – Monday, July 20th, 2026 at Osage National Golf Course. $90.00 per person or $360 per team! Thanks to our very generous sponsors, we were able to commit over $43,000 to new scholarships for the 2026-2027 school year for students wanting to become Missouri teachers. Please make plans now to support this growing event!

## 2025-2026 MARE Scholarship Program Information

The Missouri Association of Rural Education offers two scholarship programs for students interested in becoming teachers and returning to rural school districts to teach. The first program is the MARE Rural Missouri Scholarship Fund. This program is open to only junior and senior level students attending Missouri colleges or universities that offer degrees in education. Applicants must have completed 60 or more credit hours and have declared a major in education. Last year, MARE provided twenty-two (22) $1,000.00 scholarships. We plan to present 20-25 $1,000.00 scholarships this year alone! Information for this program is available below. This information is in the mail to all Missouri colleges and universities that offer teacher education programs and certifications. The deadline to apply for this scholarship is Friday, March 13, 2026.

**Materials must be received by this date!**

2025-2026 College Scholarship Guidelines & Application

2025-2026 College Scholarship Guidelines in Word

The second scholarship program offered by MARE is open to graduating high school seniors of MARE member school districts. Applicants must have indicated plans to pursue a degree in education. Only senior students from MARE member school districts are eligible to apply. This includes HS students from tuition paying MO K-8 MARE member school districts. Last year, MARE, with support from EdCounsel, LLC provided forty-three (43) $750.00 scholarships to graduating high school seniors from all over the state. The deadline to apply for this scholarship is Friday, March 13, 2026.

**Materials must be received by this date!**

2025-2026 HS Senior Scholarship Guidelines & Application

2025-2026 HS Senior Scholarship Guidelines & Application in Word

If you have any questions regarding these Scholarship Programs, please contact Kevin Sandlin, Executive Director, at (660) 747-8050 or ksandlin@moare.com. Since 2017, MARE has provided a total of **$316,250.00** in scholarships through these two programs.

**Now more than ever, we must be engaged in the legislative arena in Jefferson City. Please join the weekly MASA calls, read the weekly bulletin, continue to reach out to your area legislators, and find key leaders in your community to speak up! Together, we can protect public education!**

## A-F Accountability - Videos

GOCSD created the video below as an informational tool regarding A-F accountability. We are encouraging our districts to share this with teachers and their broader communities as they see fit. The video's purpose is to provide basic insights into accountability and general concerns with the A-F Executive Order.

My team created the content, and MSBA recorded and edited it. Please know their videographers are excellent, and I appreciated Melissa allowing us to utilize their production skills. However, my team created the script, and my board members and Tony Rosetti vetted it. You will notice that the video is unbranded.

I am hopeful that organizations across the state might consider sharing this with their members and promoting it on social media. It would be beneficial to have common talking points established within our communities throughout the state.

Here are the videos, share them with whomever you think appropriate.

**Beyond The Grade: A Vision For Missouri's Students**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m833-tIlEfA

**Beyond The Grade: A Vision For Missouri's Students (Captioned)**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BW-K27vT5sU



**Pam Hedgpeth**
Executive Director

417-234-2903
gocsdmo.org

GREATER OZARKS
COOPERATING SCHOOL DISTRICTS

## MOCAAT – What Can You Do for Me?



# Board Training Schedule for 2026 – See dates/locations below!

**Southeast Missouri - Poplar Bluff, MO – Holiday Inn – (573) 712-9021**

- Friday, May 29, 2026 (12:00 noon - 6:00 p.m.)
- Saturday, May 30, 2026 (8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.)

**Northeast Missouri - Kirksville, MO - Holiday Inn Express (660) 956-4682**

- Friday, June 12, 2026 (12:00 noon - 6:00 p.m.)
- Saturday, June 13, 2026 (8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.)

**Southwest Missouri - Bolivar, MO - Comfort Inn - (417) 326-6169**

- Friday, June 19, 2026 (12:00 noon - 6:00 p.m.)
- Saturday, June 20, 2026 (8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.)

**West Central Missouri - Warrensburg, MO – Quality Inn - (660) 747-3000**

- Friday, June 26, 2026 (12:00 noon - 6:00 p.m.)
- Saturday, June 27, 2026 (8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.)

**Northwest Missouri - Maryville, MO - Holiday Inn Express (660) 562-9949**

- Friday, July 10, 2026 (12:00 noon - 6:00 p.m.)
- Saturday, July 11, 2026 (8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.)

**Lake Ozark, MO – The Lodge of the Four Seasons (Conference)**

- Wednesday, October 21, 2026 (11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.)
- Thursday, October 22, 2026 (8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.)

**Lake Ozark, MO - The Lodge of the Four Seasons**

- Friday, December 4, 2026 (12:00 noon - 6:00 p.m.)
- Saturday, December 5, 2026 (8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.)

***** Please share this information with any new Board member who has not completed the 18.5 hours of required training! MARE is an approved Board Training provider!**

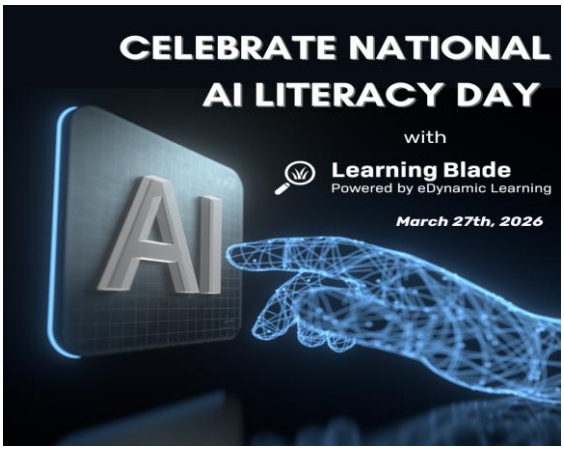
**To register, please complete the form found on our website, scan and email to ksandlin@moare.com**

# Learning Blade Corner

LearningBlade Powered by eDynamic Learning CORNER

**March 2026 LB Corner**

**Celebrate National AI Literacy Day with Learning Blade!**




National AI Literacy Day is March 27, 2026! This is a great opportunity to introduce students to artificial intelligence and its impact on our world.

Learning Blade's "Intro to AI" course makes AI accessible and engaging, covering key topics like:

- What is AI?
- AI in Everyday Life
- Machine Learning
- Robotics
- AI Ethics
- Getting Creative with AI
- Solving Problems with AI
- The Exciting Future of AI

Inspire students with hands-on lessons that build curiosity and interest in AI-driven careers.

**Get started today! Sign up for your FREE account:** LearningBlade.com/States

## Missouri Youth Leadership Forum - The Governor's Council on Disability is pleased to announce **that applications are now open for the 2026 Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (MO-YLF)**.

This is a highly regarded, week-long program designed for Missouri high school students with disabilities, ages 16-21. MO-YLF provides delegates with a structured, immersive experience focused on developing critical leadership skills and ensuring a successful transition to post-secondary education, employment, & independent living.

Delegates will spend the week on the University of Missouri campus in Columbia, engaging with successful adult mentors and leaders from the disability community. **The entire program is offered at no cost to selected delegates**, thanks to support from our generous sponsors and donors.

Please share this opportunity with your colleagues, family members, or constituents who may know a student who would benefit from participation.

**Watch the Experience Come to Life**!

To truly capture the **energy and scope** of the Forum, we encourage you to view the following promotional videos. Produced by the Office of Administration (OA) communications team, these resources feature highlights from the 2024 Forum, including legislative role-playing, collaborative projects, adaptive sports, social events, and personal testimonials from parents and staff:

- Missouri Youth Leadership Forum Video for Parents and Teachers
- Missouri Youth Leadership Forum Video for Potential Delegates

**Mark your calendar!**
**When: July 14-18, 2026**
**Where: University of Missouri – Columbia**
**Application Deadline: March 16, 2026**

MO-YLF is more than just a leadership camp. It's an immersive program that delivers critical leadership and transition skills through five core pillars:

- **Leadership & Advocacy:** Workshops cover key areas like self-advocacy, goal setting, and self-determination.
- **History & Culture:** They will explore the rich history of disability rights and culture while connecting with successful mentors.
- **Career & College Readiness:** Delegates get vital resources to prepare for a successful transition to adulthood and careers.
- **Community & Friendship:** They will form friendships and networks with peers and young leaders from the disability community.
- **Recreation & Fun:** The experience is rounded out with adaptive sports, social events (talent show, dance), and more

If you know a student who would benefit, encourage them to apply or learn more by visiting: disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylf

Applications close on **March 16, 2026**—don't let them miss this chance!

Together, let's support the next generation of leaders in Missouri's disability community.

Sincerely,

The Governor's Council on Disability

# Shape the Future of Missouri Education at MOCIS 2026!

Are you ready to innovate, collaborate, and elevate your teaching practice? Join a community of passionate educators at the **Missouri Curriculum & Instruction Summit (MOCIS)**. This isn't just another conference—it's a movement dedicated to sharing knowledge and tackling the most pressing topics in education today.

## Save the Date: June 9, 2026
## Location: Stoney Creek Hotel, Independence, MO

## Why You Can't Miss MOCIS 2026:

- **Cutting-Edge Topics:** Dive deep into **Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the Classroom**, Personalized Competency-Based Education, and Real-World Learning.
- **Expert Insights:** Gain actionable solutions from thought leaders and specialists—you don't have to figure it all out alone!
- **Networking:** Connect with fellow Missouri educators and leaders who share your drive for student success.
- **Community Focused:** Celebrate the achievements of our state's educators and help build a stronger network of support.

**Be Part of the Story**

Don't miss your chance to be part of the progress. Whether you are a classroom teacher, a district leader, or an education advocate, MOCIS is the place to be this summer.

**Ready to register?** Visit the official site for registration, agenda details, and speaker bios: **MOCIS Official Website**

*Together, we are building the future of Missouri education. See you in Independence!*


## MARE Organization Staff

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# Across the Aisle for Missouri Public Schools: Uniting Missourians for Strong Public Education

By Duane Martin, EdCounsel

*Across the Aisle for Missouri Public Schools (AAMPS) is a newly formed bipartisan advocacy coalition dedicated to protecting and advancing public education in Missouri. Founded in 2025 amid growing concerns over school funding, AAMPS brings together school leaders, educators (current and retired), parents, and community members from all political backgrounds. Its very name – "Across the Aisle" – highlights a core principle: public education should rise above partisan divisions. AAMPS's vision is to ensure strong, equitable, and fully funded public education for every child in Missouri by building a united, bipartisan advocacy movement. In other words, the group believes that quality public schools for all children are a nonpartisan cornerstone of Missouri's future.*

**Protecting Public Schools – A Bipartisan Effort:** AAMPS was formed in response to mounting threats to public school funding and capacity. Missouri consistently ranks near the bottom nationally in state funding for public schools. In recent years, state officials have pursued programs like MOScholars that funnel public funds into private schooling, despite the fact that every dollar sent to private schools is a dollar lost for our children's classrooms, teachers, and resources in Missouri public school districts. Seeing these trends, a coalition of public education supporters – including former school superintendents, school board members, parents, and concerned citizens – came together to form AAMPS. The group's immediate goal has been to halt the defunding of public schools. One of AAMPS's flagship initiatives has been proposing a state constitutional amendment to prohibit using public funds for private schools, ensuring that public money stays in public schools where it benefits all students.

**Grassroots Mobilization and Connection to MRTA:** What makes AAMPS unique is its emphasis on grassroots, community-driven advocacy for the entire state. Our intent is to build a statewide network of local champions for public schools. AAMPS is establishing local advocacy teams in every county, training volunteers to engage with policymakers, and organizing town halls and community forums to rally support for public schools. AAMPS also forges alliances with other pro-education groups to strengthen its impact.

AAMPS recognizes that no organization is more important for advocacy on behalf of Missouri public schools than MRTA. AAMPS understands that retired educators are among the most trusted voices in their communities, with a wealth of experience and passion for public schools. By partnering with MRTA, AAMPS hopes to call upon retirees' knowledge and community connections for grassroots mobilization and storytelling in defense of public education. The wisdom and advocacy of retired teachers are seen as vital to AAMPS's mission of unifying Missourians around support for public schools.

**A Shared Commitment to Public Education:** AAMPS stands as a bipartisan voice for Missouri's public schools. The coalition is working to ensure that public education remains a public priority – adequately funded, accessible to all students, and championed by citizens from every walk of life. The formation of AAMPS sends a hopeful message: Missourians can come together "across the aisle" to protect the public schools that educate and empower our next generation, ensuring that every child has the opportunity to learn and thrive in a strong public school. With its broad-based, bipartisan coalition and grassroots spirit, AAMPS is poised to become a powerful advocate for public schools, working hand-in-hand with retired educators and communities statewide to keep Missouri's public education system strong, inclusive, and transparent for years to come.

***Editorial Note: Duane Martin will be presenting in a breakout session at the 2026 Leadership Summit.***