MARE Focus

MARCH 25, 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.

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MARE PARTNERSHIPS

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

MISSOURI ADMIN. JOB POSTING

2026-2027 Superintendents from MARE Searches

– The following individuals were selected to serve as Superintendents for the 2026-2027 school year through MARE facilitated Superintendent Searches:

Name	District	Name	District
Dr. Seth Ward	Altenburg 48	Mr. Phillip Pohren	Maryville R-II
Mr. Tim Thompson	Archie R-V	Dr. Chris Marshall	Morgan Co. R-I
Mr. Dereck Wilson	Bismarck R-V	Mr. Bryant Jones	NE Randolph Co. R-IV
Mr. Michael Creekmore	Breckenridge R-I	Mr. Doug Dunn	Newburg R-II
Mrs. Emily Koenig	Chaffee R-II	Mr. Josh Smith	North Harrison R-III
Dr. Tony Warstadt	Kirbyville R-VI	TBD	Orrick R-XI
Dr. James Frank	La Monte R-IV	Mr. Justin Thomas	Pettis Co. R-V
Dr. Kimberly Walters	Linn Co. R-I	Mrs. Melody Paulson	Prairie Home R-V
Mrs. Nicole Roark	Madison C-3	Mrs. Paul Brown	Santa Fe R-X

** Please join us in making these new leaders feel welcome!

Contact Kevin Sandlin, MARE Executive Director, at (660) 747-8050 or by email at ksandlin@moare.com for more information.

Foundation Formula Modernization Task Force

— 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

"Leadership, like coaching, is fighting for the hearts and souls of people and getting them to believe in you." – Eddie Robinson

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!

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 in Missouri!

The Teachers We Remember – Jesse Uhlmeyer

Yesterday I overheard a conversation between two Missouri state senators during the debate of SB1029 that stuck with me long after it ended. They weren't talking about legislation. Not mandates. Not financial transparency. Not test scores. They were talking about teachers.



Jesse Uhlmeyer

Each of them shared a story about a teacher who had shaped their life. The kind of teacher who saw something in them before they saw it in themselves. The kind who stayed after school to help, pushed them a little harder when it mattered, or quietly helped them realize what they were capable of becoming.
You could hear the respect in their voices.
Maybe even a little reverence for the teaching profession.
And it made me think about something.
Because on that very same day, if you opened a newspaper, scrolled through social media, or turned on the evening news, you were likely to see a very different story.
You would hear that **education is failing**.
That **schools are broken**.
That **the system isn't working for children**.
Two conversations.
Happening at the same time across Missouri and our nation.
One remembers the teachers who changed lives.
The other questions whether schools are doing their job at all.

The Quiet Work That Never Makes Headlines

The truth on the ground is far more complicated than the conversations on the TV network or in the halls of capitol buildings.
Across rural towns and city neighborhoods, educators still show up every morning carrying the same quiet responsibility they always have—helping young people find their path forward.
They do it in classrooms along gravel roads and inside buildings surrounded by busy streets.
They do it before the first bell rings and long after the last bus leaves.
Most of the time, they do it **without headlines**.
No cameras show up when a teacher spends their lunch period helping a struggling reader.
No breaking news alerts go out when a counselor helps a student navigate a difficult season in life.
No viral posts capture the moment a student finally understands a concept they've struggled with for weeks.
But those moments happen **every single day** in schools.

If Schools Were Failing, Our Stories Wouldn't Exist

Here's the part that often gets lost in the conversation.
If schools were truly failing the way the headlines suggest, then millions of Americans wouldn't have stories about the teachers who changed their lives.
But they do.
Almost everyone can name one.
Sometimes two or three.
The fourth grade teacher who made reading come alive.
The ag teacher who helped a kid discover a career path.
The coach who taught lessons about life that had nothing to do with the scoreboard.
The band director who built confidence one performance at a time.
These stories cross **political parties, generations, and communities**.
Republicans remember those teachers.
Democrats remember those teachers.
Parents, farmers, business owners, nurses, soldiers, and senators remember those teachers.
Because schools have always been places where lives quietly change direction.

The Story We Don't Tell Enough

There is a strange disconnect in the way we talk about education.
Individually, we celebrate the teachers who changed us.
Collectively, we sometimes talk about schools as if they are broken beyond repair.
Both things can't be true at the same time.
Yes, schools face real challenges.
Yes, education is evolving.
Yes, there are important conversations to have about policy and improvement.
But the daily work of teachers—the work that shapes lives—has not disappeared.
It's still happening.
Quietly.
Consistently.
Every day.
And if you listen carefully, you will even hear those stories being shared on the floor of the Missouri Senate.

A Question Worth Asking

So here's a simple question that might change the conversation.
Who was the teacher that changed your life?
Take a moment and think about them.
What did they say?
What did they do?
Why do you still remember them?
Because chances are, somewhere today, a teacher is doing that same thing for a student right now.
They just don't know it yet.

Let's Tell Those Stories

If we want a more honest conversation about education, we need to tell more of those stories.
The ones about the teachers who believed in us.
The ones who opened doors we didn't know existed.
The ones who helped shape the people we became.
So I'll start. Her name was Ms. Kim (Kirchner) Little and she was one hell of a high school biology teacher.
Who was the teacher who changed your life?
Share their name.
Share the story.
Because when we tell those stories, we remind people of something important:
Schools aren't failing.
They're still doing what they've always done.
Changing lives—one student at a time.

2025-2026 MARE Scholarship Program Information – MARE will award a total of 80 scholarships this year (up from 65 last year) including 18 - $1,000.00 scholarships to college juniors/seniors & 62 - $750.00 scholarships to graduating seniors from MARE member school districts = **Total of $64,500.00** (up from $54,250 last year). Proceeds from the annual golf tournament are our primary source of funding for scholarships. A complete list of scholarship recipients will be posted soon on the MARE website.

2026 MARE/MO K-8 Conference – Our conference is scheduled October 21st through October 23rd at the Lodge of Four Seasons. Make plans now to join us. More information can be found on the MARE website at www.moare.com.

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

Thanks for Making a Difference Today!

Learning Blade Corner

LearningBlade Powered by eDynamic Learning CORNER

April 2026 Learning Blade Corner

Maximize Learning Blade This Testing Season!

State testing is underway, but learning does not have to slow down. Keep students engaged with Learning Blade's interactive, self-paced lessons that reinforce STEM, computer science, and CTE skills.

Looking for ideas? Our "30 Ways to Use Learning Blade" blog is packed with quick implementation tips, including:

- Bell ringers with quick STEM activities
- Early finisher assignments that keep students learning
- Hands-on offline STEM projects
- Career exploration through real-world missions



...and many more easy ways to keep students engaged during testing season!

Click here to explore all the 30 ways to use Learning Blade.

Sign up for your fully funded account here.

MISSOURI CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION SUMMIT
IMPACT & EXCELLENCE
Right here, Right now

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!

Retention Rates Are Above 90% With Multiple TBA Partner Districts—Now Plato R-V Is Investing In The Leadership Coaching Advantage.

PLATO, MO – [March 25th, 2026] – As more school districts prioritize leadership development as a key driver of retention, culture, and performance, Team-Builders Academy (TBA) continues to expand its impact—now partnering with Plato R-V School District to deliver targeted leadership coaching.

This partnership places Plato R-V among a growing number of districts investing in ongoing leadership coaching as a proactive strategy to develop and retain leadership teams.
“The district wants to be intentional about supporting and growing our leaders,” said Dr. Cooper, Superintendent of Plato R-V School District. “Working with TBA will give our administrators a chance to reflect on their leadership, talk through challenges, and get outside perspective and feedback. It will create a supportive space for leaders to think through decisions and continue developing their leadership skills.”

Through TBA, Plato R-V leaders will engage in real-time coaching designed to address current challenges while building long-term leadership frameworks. “The goal is to strengthen leadership across the district and improve collaboration among our staff,” Dr. Cooper added. Districts already engaged in this work are seeing measurable and cultural results that are difficult to ignore.
“Bryan Rush allows me to have leadership that I cannot receive anywhere else,” said Kent Stoumbaugh, Superintendent of Laquey School District. “His expertise coaches me through live situations and gives me information to allow me to make decisions in the future with a framework.”
The long-term impact is showing up where it matters most—staff retention and culture. “The Laquey School District turnover rate has been less than 8% since working with Bryan Rush, and the communication and culture has developed energy within the staff,” he shared.

Districts investing in consistent coaching and development are gaining a clear advantage—building stronger teams, retaining high-quality staff, and creating environments where both educators and students can thrive.

With this partnership, Plato R-V School District joins a growing movement of schools choosing to invest in leadership at every level—setting a new standard for what sustainable success in education looks like.

Would it be a bad idea to explore what consistent leadership coaching could look like in your district?

About Team-Builders Academy:

Team-Builders Academy is a proven company of Certified Maxwell Leadership Members, we are formally trained in speaking, training, and coaching leadership and team development methodologies. Our team includes Certified Behavioral Analysis Consultants in the Maxwell DISC Method, equipping organizations with data-driven insights to improve collaboration and performance. We are the creators of the Connection Codes Ecosystem Team Training Program and hold specialization from Harvard Business School in Leadership and Management.

We leverage our collective 40 years of experience and strategic expertise to deliver impactful training and consulting services tailored to client specific needs, driving measurable results and sustainable organizational growth.

Contact Bryan Below.

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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.