MARE Focus

APRIL 22, 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

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MO. Consult. For Ed.

MOCAAT

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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	Mr. Seth Morton	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.

Child Abuse Information

I enjoyed our time together today. Thank you for meeting with me. I enjoyed learning a bit more about Missouri and how we might be able to work together.

Our website is: www.fightchildabuse.org

Our YouTube channel is: https://www.youtube.com/@fightchildabuse1913

Here is the link to the presentation I showed you today: https://heyzine.com/flip-book/ed31f73d01.html#page/1

I have also attached a flyer that we created for April Child Abuse Prevention month. You can distribute this as you see fit in MIssouri.
Child Abuse Flyer

I look forward to hearing from you and seeing how we can forge a long-lasting relationship in MIssouri. We do make an impact for kids!.

Sincerely,

Mike Nelson
Vice President, Education and Strategic Partnerships
Barbara Sinatra Children's Center Foundation
in Partnership with Wonder Media

Cell: 801 368 5580
Voice // 800 675 4123
Email: mnelson@wondermediagroup.net

Doctoral Study Participation Invitation – Ashley Gann



Preventing Youth Vaping Application

Application Now Open: Missouri Preventing Youth Vaping in Schools TEAMS Program

The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (MDHSS), the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors (NACDD), the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), and Missouri Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (MO AAP) are now accepting applications for the **Preventing Youth Vaping in Schools through Training, Education, Assistance, Mentorship, & Support (TEAMS) Program**.

The year-long TEAMS program (May 2026–May 2027) supports Missouri schools/districts in strengthening policies, practices, and infrastructure related to vaping and tobacco prevention through training, technical assistance, peer learning, and mentorship. Participating districts will assemble a multidisciplinary team, complete AAP's Health Services Assessment Tool for Schools, and develop and implement a strategic action plan tailored to schools/district needs.

Selected teams will receive customized training, access to tools and resources, networking opportunities with partners across the state, individual technical assistance, and a **total stipend of $3,100** for completing participation requirements. Participation requirements and more information on the program can be found in the Request for Application attached.

Applications are due by 11:59 PM CST on May 8, 2026. Schools/districts interested in elevating vaping and tobacco prevention efforts are encouraged to apply. Please review the Request for Application prior to applying.

Apply here: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MOVapingTEAMSProject

If you have any questions, please contact **Haily Rauzi** at **hrauzi@aap.org**.

Foundation Formula Modernization Task Force

— The next meeting is on Monday, June 1st at 10:00 a.m. in Jeff City. **Scenarios are on the horizon!** For more information on this work, please check out the website at this link: Missouri School Funding Modernization Task Force.

Quote of the Week

"Good leaders build products. Great leaders build cultures. Good leaders deliver results. Great leaders develop people. Good leaders have vision. Great leaders have values. Good leaders are role models at work. Great leaders are role models in life." - Adam Grant

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 **$64,500** 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 – 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/EdCounsel HS Senior Scholarship Recipients

Student	District	Student	District
Sierra Allen	Hickory Co. R-I	Desiray Lewis	Scott City R-I
Joshua Arendt	Hickory Co. R-I	Jana Limberopoulos	Gasconade Co. R-I
Isabella Asante	Camdenton R-III	Joel Long	Santa Fe R-X
Sienna Billings	South Nodaway R-IV	Madelyn Lumby	Neelyville R-IV
Kayden Box	Green Ridge R-VIII	Isabelle Magner	Dixon R-I
Keely Byrd	Odessa R-VII	Helanea McKenzie	Wellsville-Middletown
Kelsey Carter	Montrose R-XIV	Brooklynn Morris	Glasgow
Lillian Chesser	Silex R-I	Alexis Neeley	Tri-County R-VII
Isha Cunningham	Miller R-II	Jordan O'Quinn	Hartville R-II
Jocelyn Curtis	Community R-VI	Abigail Parker	Fayette R-III
Kaylee Drunert	Santa Fe R-X	Jordan Patterson	Clearwater R-I
Addison Eaker	North Callaway R-I	Madison Paxson	Cole Camp R-I
Miley Edens	Bakersfield R-IV	AnnaBelle Perkins	Higbee R-VIII
Carter Fewins	Tri-County R-VII	Kendall Phillips	Bloomfield R-XIV
Annelise Forney	Savannah R-III	Aubrey Rehmert	Maries Co. R-II
Karley Frank	Osage Co. R-II	Taylor Rice	Neelyville R-IV
Trinity Futrell	Naylor R-II	Madelynn Ritter	Warrensburg R-VI
Alana Gauthier	Prairie Home R-V	Jaiden Rodenberg	Chillicothe R-II
Braxton Greer	Hallsville R-IV	Addison Rogers	Pleasant Hope R-VI
Jailee Griffin	Tri-County R-VII	Katelyn Schuman	South Holt Co. R-I
Ashley Haley	Brookfield R-III	Rylie Scott	North Callaway R-I
Naomi Hand	Richland R-IV	Mallory Shaw	Stoutland R-II
Gavin Harding	Chillicothe R-II	Madeline Swope	Clever R-V
Aleksander Harman	Elsberry R-II	Gracie Thompson	Polo R-VII
Jordan Harms	Sherwood Cass R-VIII	Helen Waller	North Callaway R-I
Jenna Helton	Summersville R-II	Seth Walton	Montgomery Co. R-II
Phoebe Hornickel	Maryville R-II	Kristin Waters	Norborne R-VIII
Molly Kelley	North Platte Co. R-I	Dakota Williams	Montgomery Co. R-II
Michael Kincaid	Stoutland R-II	Taylor Williams	Winona R-III
Maggie Kramm-Neighbors	Glasgow	Carman Woodworth	Chillicothe R-II
Blake Lee	Dexter R-XI	Izabelle Yates	Clinton

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 contact ksandlin@moare.co

Kummer Center for STEM Education Opportunities

I hope your day is going well! The Kummer Center for STEM Education is currently accepting applications for our high school summer research program called SPARC. Please see the attached flyer. If you have students with prior research experience or students who are curious about one of the four research projects, please encourage them to apply. A standardized test score is not required for the application.

The application deadline is **April 30th**.

Also, please encourage your students to consider one of our other exciting summer camps! Scholarships are still available, and many camps still have space for more students.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thanks,

Justin Sanders

Program Director for K12 District Engagement | Kummer Center for STEM Education | Missouri S&T

500 Tim Bradley Way, 210 J Welcome Center; Rolla, MO 65409

Email: justin.sanders@mst.edu Phone: 573-341-6205

..\2026 Summer Camps.pdf

..\2026 SPARC Flyer.pdf

Nitazenes Health Advisory

DHSS issued a **health advisory** and **news release** on Tuesday, March 24, to alert the public about the rising use of **nitazenes**, a highly potent class of synthetic opioids increasingly found in counterfeit pills, powders, and vapes—often without users knowing. Because they are significantly stronger than fentanyl, even a very small amount can cause someone to stop breathing and lead to a life-threatening overdose very quickly. In Missouri, recent wastewater testing in schools has detected nitazenes in several communities, indicating that young people may be unknowingly exposed to these drugs through substances.

Please view and share the **health advisory** and the attached **Substance Abuse Prevention Guide**, along with information about the free **National Virtual School Assembly**: The Risks are Real: The Truth About Fentanyl and Fake Pills.

Christy Inskip, MPH, CHES®

Youth Tobacco Prevention Specialist

Tobacco Prevention and Control Program

Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services

Email: christy.inskip@health.mo.gov | Phone: 573-526-1880

health.mo.gov/living/wellness/tobacco/smokingandtobacco

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.

The Quiet Cost of Uncertainty

We've navigated lean times before—years where tough decisions had to be made, where priorities were sharpened, and where doing more with less wasn't just a phrase, it was reality. But this year feels different. In the past, even when resources were limited, there was a level of predictability we could plan around. This time, it's the moving targets that change everything. And that uncertainty—not just the lack of dollars, but the lack of clarity—makes this moment heavier than the ones we've faced before.

Jesse Uhlmeyer

In partnership with 1440

A few weeks ago, I added something new to this blog.
I wanted a space that didn't argue, defend, or analyze—but instead paused long enough to recognize something good. Something real. Something worth holding onto.
It may not always connect directly to the topic at hand, and the title might evolve over time. But for now, I'm calling it: "Signs of Success"

Signs of Success

Yesterday, I couldn't be in Jefferson City to testify on SB1442 and HB2872. But this issue is personal—my wife, Lindsay, earned her doctorate in literacy and teaching—so I listened in.
And what I heard mattered.
Missouri educators showed up prepared—not just with opinions, but with clarity and purpose. They said what should be obvious: retention should be a last resort.
Just as importantly, they didn't ignore progress. They recognized the impact of recent literacy efforts, gave credit where it was due, and acknowledged that while the work isn't finished, it is moving in the right direction for students.
Each person spoke from their own perspective. Their own district. Their own experience.
But it didn't feel fragmented.
It felt aligned. Steady. Grounded.
It felt like professionals—those closest to students—bringing both honesty and hope into the same room.
That's a sign of success.

Now for This Week's Content -

The Quiet Cost of Uncertainty

There's no line item for it. No formula. No report that captures it cleanly.
But it's there. Lingering in the background.
And if you spend enough time in schools right now—especially in Missouri—you can feel it. It's the quiet cost of uncertainty.

It Starts Small

At first, uncertainty feels manageable.
A delayed funding decision.
A new proposal that might—or might not—pass.
A number in the formula that could change before the year is over.
You tell yourself, *"We've handled worse."*
And you have.
So you adjust. You wait. You watch.
That's what leaders do.

But It Doesn't Stay Small

Because uncertainty has a way of compounding.
Right now in Missouri, school leaders are building budgets around a State Adequacy Target that was supposed to be funded at one level—but is currently coming in thousands of dollars lower per student.
They're watching conversations around property tax reform that could limit local revenue—without a clear plan for how that gap gets filled.
They're seeing public dollars appropriated for programs like MOScholars continue to grow, even as the foundation of public school funding feels less certain.
None of these decisions exist in isolation.
And none of them come with absolute clarity.

The Weight Leaders Carry

Most people will never see this part because great leaders are good at disguising it. And there are a lot of great leaders in Missouri.
They'll see the decisions.
They'll see the outcomes.
They'll see the headlines.
But they won't see the space in between—
where leaders sit with incomplete information and still have to move forward.
Right now, that means building a budget not knowing:

- if the full appropriation will actually be distributed

- if revenue projections will hold
- or if mid-year adjustments will force difficult decisions

They won't see the second-guessing.
The contingency plans.
The quiet recalculations happening late at night or early in the morning.
Because leadership, especially in uncertain times, isn't about having all the answers.
It's about carrying the weight of not having them—and still showing up anyway.

It Shows Up in Teachers, Too

Uncertainty doesn't stop at the central office door.
It starts making its way into classrooms, the copy machine corner, and the lunch table discussions.
Teachers start to wonder:

- *Will resources still be there next year?*
- *Will class sizes change?*
- *Will programs disappear?*

And even when nothing has changed yet—something has.
The feeling.
And that feeling matters.
Because you can't do your best work when you're constantly wondering what's coming.

Communities Feel It—Even If They Can't Name It

In every community, especially rural ones, **uncertainty travels fast**.
It shows up in conversations at the local restaurant.
In the stands at a baseball game.
In the quiet questions people ask when they run into you at the grocery store.
They may not use words like "State Adequacy Target," "withholding," or "appropriations."
But they understand this:
Something feels unsettled.
And when schools feel unsettled, communities do too.

The Hard Truth

Here's the part that doesn't make headlines:
Uncertainty changes behavior before it ever changes budgets.
It makes leaders more cautious.
It makes districts slower to invest.
It makes people hold back instead of move forward.
Right now, across Missouri, districts are:

- delaying hires
- scaling back plans
- hesitating on long-term investments

Not because they want to—
But because they have to.
And over time, that **caution has a cost**.
Opportunities missed.
Programs delayed.
Decisions made from a place of protection instead of possibility.

Still, We Lead

And yet—despite all of it—leaders keep leading.
They keep showing up.
They keep making the best decisions they can with what they have.
They keep carrying the weight so others don't have to.
Not because it's easy.
But because it matters.

Because kids are still walking through those doors every morning.
Because teachers are still giving everything they have.
Because communities are still counting on their schools to hold steady.
Maybe this is the part we don't talk about enough:
Leadership isn't tested when everything is clear.
It's revealed when it's not. That's when you find out what kind of leader you are.

The Quiet Cost—and the Quiet Strength

Uncertainty has a cost.
But so does steadiness.
So does integrity.
So does the decision to lead with clarity, even when you don't have it handed to you.
And while the cost of uncertainty may never show up on a spreadsheet—
The strength it requires will always show up in people.
In the way they lead.
In the way they serve.
In the way they refuse to let uncertainty define what's possible for the kids and communities they care about.

A Simple Ask

If there's one thing Missouri's schools need right now, it's not just funding—
It's **certainty**.
Not perfection.
Not politics.
Not promises that sound good in a headline.
Certainty.
The kind that allows schools to plan, hire, invest, and serve with confidence.
The kind that allows communities to trust that what is said will match what is delivered.
So to those shaping decisions that impact our schools:
Take a moment to consider not just the policy—But the people carrying it out.
Consider what it means to lead a district when the numbers aren't settled.
Consider what it means to answer questions when the answers aren't clear.
Consider what it costs—not in dollars, but in decisions—when stability isn't there.
Because the strength of our schools isn't built in moments of clarity.
It's sustained in moments like this.
And the more certainty we can provide—
The stronger our schools, our communities, and our future will be because of it

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