MARE Focus

MAY 5, 2026 | FROM THE DESK OF MR. KEVIN SANDLIN, MARE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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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.

MagicSchoolAI Operating System Opportunity

Dear, MARE Members,

Missouri's rural and small school districts continue to do more with less -- supporting teachers, maintaining high-quality instruction, and meeting growing demands with limited time and staff.

To help address these challenges, we're excited to share a practical, affordable solution designed specifically for schools like yours.

The MagicSchool AI Operating System helps districts:

- Deploy customized AI tools aligned to district priorities
- Optimize your tech stack to reduce costs and maximize ROI
- Reduce teacher workload with standards-aligned materials generated in minutes
- Ensure consistent, high-quality instruction across classrooms
- Improve teacher satisfaction and retention by saving valuable time each week

Exclusive MOREnet & MARE Consortium Pricing makes this solution accessible and cost-effective, ranging from **$3,600 for districts under 500 students to $5.15 per student for districts greater than 2,000 enrollment**. Last month, I partnered with a southern Missouri district Superintendent, an IT Lead, and a Special Education Director. Together, we audited their tech stack, created a workflow agent, and reallocated two FTE staff members back to the classroom (previously, they were in the office moving paperwork). Thus, saving the district 150K for 2026-2027.

Partner schools also receive access to regional "Train-the-Trainer" summer events across Southwest, Northwest, Northeast, and Southeast Missouri in June and July, ensuring your team is fully prepared for implementation. I am a master trainer, with over 25 years of experience in education, including national work with the MTSS Center, the National Center on Intensive Intervention, the PROGRESS Center, and Lead IDEA. I have created an APR agent consultant to review

your current APR data and develop a tailored strategic plan to support your success moving forward.

I welcome the opportunity to partner with your district so your staff can hit the ground running in August and make the 2026-2027 school year your strongest yet. Missouri is my backyard, my home is in Columbia, Missouri. According to my data analytics from 2,500+ districts in the Midwest, Missouri is currently leading the AI charge. Partner *now*, and we will not invoice until July 1, 2026.

This week, I will be in the Saint Louis area W (5/6) & TH (5/7). Next week, I will be in the Kansas City area M (5/11) & T (5/12), and F (5/15) Springfield. Last, I will roll to Southeast Missouri (5/21). If you would like to meet in-person, let's chat! If you want to schedule a quick 15-min call, feel free to hop on my calendar here: https://magicschool.chilipiper.com/personal-page/stacy-hirt -- I look forward to meeting you.

Last, take a moment to breathe and finish May strong.

Cheers!

Stacy M. Hirt

Website: https://www.magicschool.ai
LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/in/stacyhirt
X: @StacyHirtPhD
Book a Demo: https://magicschool.chilipiper.com/personal-page/stacy-hirt

See how MagicSchool delivers trusted AI for schools and safe learning for students. Get our new Student Safety Loop White Paper. MagicSchool is the **#1** educational platform in the country, and **#1** educational platform worldwide (160+ countries) -- streamlining communication, saving educators 7-10 hours a week, and optimizing #UDL, #MTSS, and #SOR to drive educational outcomes for the 21st century learner.

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.

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!.

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

Preventing Youth Vaping - 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).**

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**.

Doctoral Study Participation Invitation – Ashley Gann



Quote of the Week

"Finish strong and success will follow."

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

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.

Funding Classrooms Before the Capitol – Jesse Uhlmeyer

Funding Classrooms Before the Capitol

This isn't just about a budget line—it's about a choice. Across Missouri, school leaders are finalizing budgets in a year where there isn't room for everything, and when that happens, the decision is never complicated—even if it's difficult: needs come before wants. Every time. That means delaying projects, stretching timelines, and putting off improvements—not because they don't matter, but because students sitting in classrooms today matter more. This blog is a call for legislators and the Governor to follow that same principle. The Missouri Senate has put forward a budget that includes $118 million in general revenue currently tied to Capitol renovations, and that funding represents more than a number—it represents classrooms, opportunities, and support for students across this state.



Jesse Uhlmeyer

In partnership with

1440

Signs of Success

This Signs of Success was sent to me last Friday from Natalie Gibson the superintendent of Van-Far School District in northeast Missouri:

"Hundreds of students and staff came together this past week in a powerful show of love for Keaton O'Neal—a former student and someone deeply connected to our school family.

Keaton, a freshman at Mark Twain High School, had been courageously battling a brain tumor since November 2024. This past weekend, he lost that battle—but in his faith, he gained something greater as he went home to his Savior.

What followed was nothing short of extraordinary.

Schools across the area wore blue in his honor. Our Van-Far baseball team and the Elsberry team paused competition to stand united for something bigger than the game. Students, staff, and entire communities showed up—not out of obligation, but out of genuine care.

In just two days—through a collection at the game and again at school—over $1,600 was raised for Keaton's family.

No gesture can ever replace a child. But in those moments, through every shirt worn, every dollar given, and every silent prayer lifted, one message rang clear:

They are not alone."

Now For This Week's Content

This week's blog isn't meant to be read and set aside—it's meant to move.

Share it.

Forward it.

Post it.

Talk about it in your communities, your networks, and your circles of influence until it reaches the legislators sitting in conference committee making decisions about K–12 funding in Missouri. Because those decisions won't just shape a budget—they'll shape classrooms across this state.
I'll say it again, because it matters:
This isn't just about a budget line—it's about a choice.
And the choice is simple.
Kids.
Yours. Mine. Theirs.
This isn't about adults or politics. It's about kids that deserve the best education we can give them.
Not later.
Not after.
But right now.

Budgets Don't Care What You Prefer

But they reveal what you value
There's a difference between what you plan to do—and what you actually fund.
Anyone who has sat in a superintendent's chair knows that difference well.
On paper, everything fits.
In reality, something has to give.
Not because leaders lack vision.
Because resources force clarity.

What Gets Pushed Down the Road

Spend enough time building a school budget and you start to recognize a pattern.
The things that get deferred are rarely unimportant.
They're just... not *immediate*.
A roof that still holds.
An HVAC system that limps through another season.
A project that would be nice—but not necessary right now.
So you make the call.
You buy time where you can—
so you don't have to compromise where you can't.
Because the moment budgets tighten, the question changes from *"What do we want?"* to:
"What can't wait?"

Where the Line Usually Gets Drawn

In most districts, that line is pretty consistent.
You don't cut corners on instruction.
You don't gamble with student support.
You don't delay things that directly affect kids sitting in classrooms today.
Everything else becomes negotiable.
Not dismissed.
Just... delayed.
It's not a perfect system.
But it's an honest one.

A State-Level Version of the Same Decision

That's why a recent piece from the Missouri Independent stood out.
Leaders in Missouri are weighing whether to continue funding a significant Capitol renovation or consider redirecting some of those resources toward public education.
No one is arguing the Capitol doesn't matter.
But the conversation itself is familiar.
Because stripped of politics, it's the same question superintendents answer every year:
What moves forward—and what waits?

The Difference Between "Can" and "Should"

Here's where school leadership offers a useful lens.
In districts, leaders don't just ask what they *can* afford.
They ask what they *should* prioritize.
There's always a reason to keep a project moving.
There's always a justification to stay the course.
But when something more urgent surfaces, good leaders adjust.

Not because it's easy.
Because it's necessary.
And in "tight times" like we are facing the priority becomes 100% about the children sitting in the classrooms.

What Deferral Really Means

Deferring a project isn't just a financial decision.
It's an acknowledgment:
Something else matters more right now.
Superintendents make that call knowing it comes with trade-offs.
They also make it knowing the people most affected by their decisions don't get to wait.
Students move forward whether systems are ready or not.
Which means timing matters.

The Cost of Getting Priorities Out of Order

Anyone who has delayed maintenance knows it eventually catches up.
But so does underinvestment in people.
And that cost shows up differently.
It shows up in opportunity gaps.
In stretched resources.
In moments that don't get recovered later.
You can patch a roof next year.
You don't get to redo a student's experience the same way.

A Question Worth Asking

This isn't about choosing buildings *or* education.
It's about sequencing.
It's about recognizing that not everything carries the same urgency at the same time.
School leaders make those distinctions every day—without headlines, without debate, and without the option to do everything at once.
So the question isn't complicated:
When priorities compete, are we applying the same logic at every level?

Final Thought

Budgets don't just allocate dollars.
They expose priorities—clearly, and without apology.
Right now, Missouri has a choice to make.
Not between good and bad.
But between what can wait—and what cannot.
Superintendents across this state make that decision every year. They push projects back. They make do. They find a way—because students are sitting in classrooms today, not next year.
That same urgency should guide this moment.
Because a building can wait.
A renovation can wait.
Students cannot.
And if we get that order wrong, no future investment will fully make up for what was missed in the moment that mattered most.

Smart starts here.

Bryan Rush – Crocker R-II Commencement

PRESS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Leadership Expert Bryan Rush to Keynote Crocker R-II Commencement

[SAINT ROBERT, MO] — April 30, 2026 — Leadership strategist and Team-Builders Academy founder Bryan Rush has been selected as the keynote speaker for the Crocker R-II School District's high school graduation ceremony on May 17, 2026.

Equipping the Next Generation for Purpose and Service

The commencement address, titled **"The H.E.R.O.S. Journey,"** is designed to be an engaging and high-energy session that moves beyond traditional graduation platitudes. Rush will provide graduates with a tactical framework to identify their unique purpose, overcome obstacles, and serve their communities with excellence. Truly fulfilling The H.E.R.O.S Journey.

Unlike standard motivational speeches, his talks focus on **"Actionable Competence,"** giving students the mental tools to transition from the classroom to high-impact leadership roles in their future careers and service.

"Our goal is to ensure these impressive graduates leave not just with a diploma, but with a proven method to navigate the complexities of life, personal growth, and leadership, " says Rush.

Ms. Ashley Burton, Crocker R-II Superintendent states "We're excited to welcome Mr. Rush back for this year's graduation. He's engaging, he connects quickly with students, and he brings energy that people remember!"

Images from 2026 FCCLA State Conference Keynote Speech Team-Builders Academy, LLC Office: 573-842-1406 bryan.teambuilders@gmail.com Helping leaders build connected and inspired teams!

Evidence-Based Impact: Why Leaders Choose TBA

Team-Builders Academy (TBA) leverages over 40 years of collective strategic expertise to deliver measurable results for educational and government organizations.

Measurable Performance Data:

- **Retention Excellence:** Achieved over 95% staff retention at Licking School District and 90% at Laquey School District through targeted training.
- **Behavioral Intelligence:** Increased Rolla Middle School staff's ability to recognize and manage behavior patterns by 80%.
- **Performance Scaling:** Contributed to a 100% increase in win totals for the Missouri S&T football program over three years.
- **National Recognition:** Designed the Fort Leonard Wood Junior Executive Development Initiative (JEDI), officially recognized as a U.S. Army-wide best practice.

About Team-Builders Academy

Team-Builders Academy (TBA) helps teams increase retention, reduce conflict, and predict behavior through world-class professional development. The team consists of Certified Maxwell Leadership members and Behavioral Analysis Consultants specializing in the Maxwell DISC model. TBA holds certifications from Harvard Business School in Leadership and Management and has served over 40 districts, universities, and government agencies.

Media Contact:

Bryan C. Rush - bryan.teambuilders@gmail.com
Maxwell Leadership Trainer | Harvard Leadership & Management Specialist
Team Builders Academy | Mobile: 573-842-1406 | www.tbaconnect.net
Maxwell DISC Pattern - IDC | Working Genius Style DG-WI-ET
Team-Builders Academy Calendar

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