# MARE Focus

MAY 19, 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.

## Inclusive Leadership Lab Survey – Please Participate!

I hope you are doing well! I'm reaching out because we are doing a national survey on collaboration between general education and special education leadership teams. I am hoping you can help us get the information out there to get as many voices to participate as possible. All of the information is on the link below. If you can send it to your members and if you know of other organizations in other states who would like to have their voices heard too we would love to have their thoughts as well!
Thanks so much!
Nikki

https://www.inclusiveleadershiplab.org/survey




**DR. NIKKI HARDING**
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, FOUNDER
785-547-5936
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**Dr. Nikki Harding**
**CEO, Founder**
**Inclusive Leadership Lab**
***Here is my calendar!***
**785-547-5936**
***We improve special education processes for teachers and administrators so they can better support their most vulnerable students in achieving their full potential.***

# MagicSchoolAI Operating System Opportunity

Dear MARE Members,

A dozen Missouri small and rural districts are already braiding federal funding for AI — and back-to-school is just around the corner. The window to get your team ready before August is **now**.

MARE is pleased to highlight the **MagicSchool AI Operating System** - the #1 educational AI platform in the country—available to Missouri districts at exclusive consortium pricing through our MOREnet & MARE partnership.

**Real Results in Missouri — Last Month**

A southern Missouri superintendent, IT lead, and special education director audited their tech stack, built a custom workflow agent, and moved two FTE staff back to the classroom—freeing up **$150,000 in savings for 2026–2027.**

**What MagicSchool AI Does for Your District**

- **Build** custom AI agents around your curriculum, your goals, your district — K–12, every content area
- **Reclaim** 7–10 hours per teacher per week — standards-aligned materials in minutes, not hours
- **Cut costs** by optimizing your tech stack and eliminating redundant tools
- **Turn your APR data** into a tailored district improvement plan for 2026-2027
- **Attract, Prepare, and Retain** great leaders and teachers by giving them back the time that matters most

**Exclusive MOREnet & MARE Consortium Pricing**

- Districts under 500 students: **$3,600 flat rate**
- Districts 500–2,000 students: Tiered per-student rate
- Districts over 2,000 students: **$5.15 per student**

Partner now — **no invoice until July 1, 2026.**

**Fund It — Federal Dollars Are Available**

Districts in Oklahoma and Texas are using Title IV funds (~$25,000) to cover platform costs and professional development for 2026–27. Missouri districts can do the same. Two resources worth bookmarking:

- Small/Rural School Achievement Program (SRSA): ed.gov/grants-and-programs/formula-grants/rural-and-insular-areas/small-rural-school-achievement-program
- AI Funding Streams for Rural Schools: magicschool.ai/blog-posts/federal-funding-ai-in-education

⚠ **Title IV deadline reminder:** Confirm with DESE's Title IV deadline.

**Free Train-the-Trainer Workshops — Summer 2026**

In partnership with MOREnet and MARE, free regional workshops are coming to Southwest, Northwest, Northeast, and Southeast Missouri in June and July. Attend this summer—to prepare for 2026-2027 school year.

**Who Needs a Seat at the Table?**

This is a district-wide initiative, not just an IT purchase. For full impact, engage all five stakeholders from the start: your **Federal Programs Director** (unlocks Title IV and SRSA funding), your **Superintendent** (aligns agents to strategic goals), your **Curriculum & Instruction Lead** (drives instructional design), your Special Education Director **(ensures compliance and high-quality educational programming)** and **your IT Director** (ensures infrastructure governance and data privacy).

Let's connect! Hop on my calendar here for a 15- to 20-min call: https://magicschool.chilipiper.com/personal-page/stacy-hirt

I look forward to connecting with you. Take a moment to relax, reset, and recharge over the next 10 weeks.

Best,

Dr. 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.

MAGIC SCHOOL®

**PL Catalog for Magic School**

**Missouri Executive Brief**

**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

**Quote of the Week**

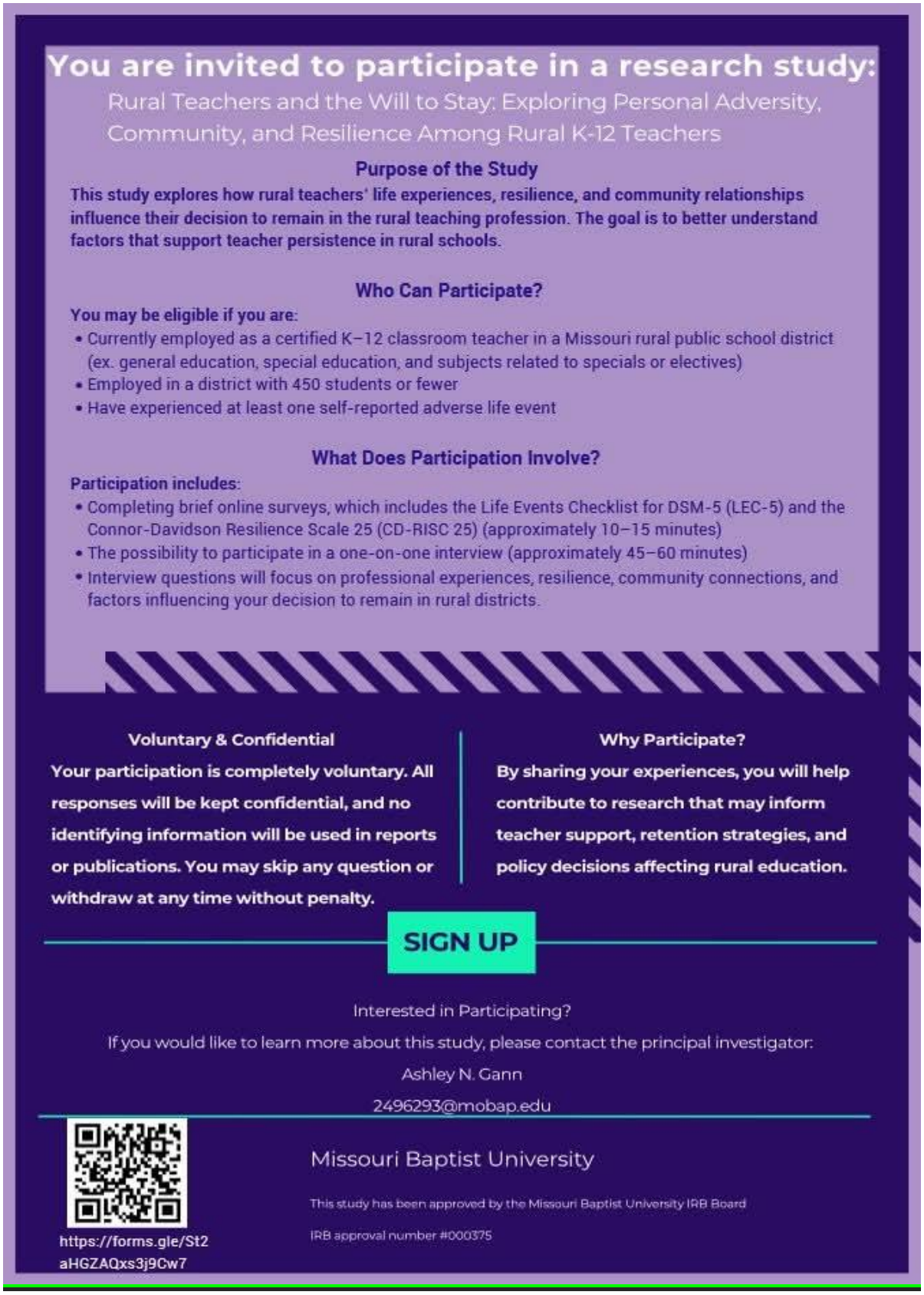
*"If I cannot do great things, I can do small things in a great way."* - ***Martin Luther King, Jr.***

**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.

**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.

**2026-2027 District Membership Invoices** – Membership invoices for 2026-2027 will be mailed on June 17, 2026. Please be on the lookout for the mailing addressed to the District Superintendent. Membership invoices should be paid by September 16, 2026! If you have any questions regarding your status as a MARE member, please reach out to me. If you are not a current member, we would love to have you join the other 419 MARE member school districts across the state!

# Doctoral Study Participation Invitation – Ashley Gann




MARE/MO K-8 Conference – October 21-23, 2026 at the Lodge!

**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 |

**2026-2027 Superintendent Searches** – MARE prides itself in providing a thorough, district-focused and economical Superintendent Search service. If you are making plans to retire or leave your current district next year, please give MARE an opportunity to visit with your district about our Superintendent Search Program. We have a team of seven former district Superintendents who make up our search team. For the sixth year in a row, MARE has provided more facilitated searches than any other entity in the state. Please contact Kevin Sandlin, Executive Director, at (660) 747-8050 or ksandlin@moare.com for more information.

# 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, August 14, 2026 (12:00 noon - 6:00 p.m.)
- Saturday, August 15, 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**

Scholarship Golf Tournament – July 20th at Osage National

# The Bill is Past Due – Jesse Uhlmeyer

## The Bill Is Past Due

There is something deeply contradictory happening in Missouri right now in plain view. State leaders continue talking about workforce shortages, economic growth, and preparing for the future while simultaneously underfunding the very system responsible for educating more than 900,000 future workers, business owners, and community leaders. You cannot build a stronger economy or stronger communities while weakening public education. Eventually, those two paths collide.


Jesse Uhlmeyer

In partnership with

1440

## Signs of Success

This week's success story is unfolding today in Monroe City, where the member schools of the Clarence Cannon Conference are hosting their annual Track and Field Day for students with special needs.
And honestly, there may not be a better reminder anywhere in Missouri of what school communities are supposed to look like.
If you want to spend a day smiling, cheering, and witnessing pure joy, make your way to Monroe City. You will see students competing with pride, classmates celebrating every finish line, educators pouring their hearts into kids, and communities showing up in ways that matter.
For many of these students, today is bigger than a track meet.
It is their moment.
And the send-offs, applause lines, receptions, and celebrations happening across schools this morning and this afternoon rival the excitement communities show for MSHSAA Final Fours and state championship teams. Buses leave campuses with cheers. Hallways fill with signs and encouragement. Students are celebrated not out of sympathy, but because they belong, they matter, and their accomplishments deserve to be honored loudly.
That is public education at its best.
Not test scores.
Not politics.
Not headlines.
People.
Moments.
Belonging.
And communities coming together to make sure every child feels seen.
*Here is the local WGEM news coverage from 2023*.

## Now for This Week's Content

## The Bill Is Past Due

This week, Missouri lawmakers revealed their priorities once again.
Not through speeches.
Not through campaign slogans.
Through the budget.

And despite the constant talk about workforce development, economic growth, and preparing Missouri for the future, public education was once again asked to do more without receiving the full funding support needed to sustain it.
For educators and school leaders, this pattern has become painfully familiar.
More political energy continues flowing toward "school choice" proposals backed by political donors and outside influence groups, while the public schools serving the overwhelming majority of Missouri children continue fighting for adequate funding.
Meanwhile, local districts are left figuring out how to absorb rising costs, expanding expectations, staffing shortages, transportation demands, and operational challenges with fewer real resources behind them.
Eventually, the math stops working.

## The Contradiction Missouri Cannot Ignore

Missouri lawmakers spend enormous amounts of time talking about economic development.
They talk about attracting business.
Building workforce pipelines.
Preparing students for careers.
Growing communities.
Strengthening the state economy.
But none of those goals happen without strong public schools.
Why?
Because more than 900,000 Missouri students rely on public education every single day. They represent the majority of the future workforce of this state—the welders, nurses, mechanics, teachers, engineers, entrepreneurs, healthcare workers, and skilled laborers Missouri's economy will depend on tomorrow.
Public schools are not separate from economic development.
They are the foundation of it.
Every manufacturing plant Missouri hopes to attract will eventually ask whether there is a skilled workforce available. Every healthcare system depends on educated graduates entering the pipeline.
Every community hoping to grow depends on schools that families trust and businesses respect.
Strong schools are not a side issue in economic development.
They are the infrastructure behind it.
Yet, Missouri continues acting as though workforce development can somehow be separated from the funding realities facing public education.
It cannot.
You cannot ask schools to produce career-ready graduates while simultaneously underinvesting in career and technical education programs, staffing, transportation, technology, and operational support.
You cannot demand higher outcomes while refusing to provide stable long-term investment behind the work.
At some point, the rhetoric and the reality collide.
And public schools are living in that collision every day.

## Schools Are Carrying More Than Ever

Today's schools are expected to do far more than they were twenty years ago.
Schools are expected to improve academic performance while also addressing mental health, school safety, workforce readiness, chronic absenteeism, behavioral intervention, technology access, career certification, and countless other challenges students bring through the doors each morning.
Society's expectations for schools continue expanding because schools remain one of the only institutions still expected to solve problems no matter how complicated they become and prepare students for job and careers that don't exist today.
And educators continue stepping forward because they care deeply about children.
But caring about children does not eliminate financial reality.
Districts across Missouri are dealing with rising insurance costs, inflation, staffing shortages, aging facilities, increased special education demands, and transportation expenses that continue climbing year after year.
At the exact same time, lawmakers continue layering additional responsibilities onto schools through legislation and policy changes.
That is why so many school leaders warned about policies and reforms, like SB727, from the beginning.
The concern was never about resisting accountability or avoiding improvement.
The concern was always about sustainability when future legislative sessions failed to fully fund public schools.
Because reform without funding is not reform.
It is cost-shifting.

It allows the state to publicly claim progress while quietly transferring the financial burden onto local districts and more importantly taxpayers already struggling to keep up with the rising cost of living.

## The Quiet Reality Inside Public Schools And Why We Have The Start Sounding The Alarm

Most Missourians never see the conversations happening behind closed doors inside district offices.
They do not see administrators trying to determine whether they can afford to replace outdated curriculum materials.
They do not see principals piecing together coverage plans because substitute shortages have become routine.
They do not see school boards trying to balance shrinking margins against growing expectations from both the state and their communities.
And they do not see teachers carrying responsibilities that would have been divided among multiple positions a decade ago.
What the public often experiences as isolated inconveniences are usually symptoms of larger financial strain.
A delayed bus replacement.
An unfilled position.
A larger class size.
A reduced elective offering.
A maintenance project postponed again.
Those decisions rarely happen because school leaders want them to happen.
They happen because eventually there are no painless choices left.
As school leaders, we eventually face a difficult choice.
We can quietly absorb the pressure—carry the weight of impossible decisions, internalize the stress of budget cuts, staffing shortages, and shrinking opportunities for students—or we can speak plainly about what is happening to public education.
Because silence does not protect schools.
It only hides the consequences.
And this is not about politics for most educators. It is about reality. Political decisions made in Jefferson City eventually become real-world consequences inside classrooms, staff lounges, school buses, and communities. They affect employees. They affect students. They affect opportunities.
School leaders are simply the people left standing in the middle, trying to hold everything together after the decisions have already been made.

## Budgets Tell the Truth

Political talking points are easy.
Budgets tell the truth.
And this week's decisions sent a message many educators heard clearly: Missouri continues expecting public schools to carry expanding responsibilities without dependable long-term investment behind them.
That should concern everyone—not just educators.
Because weakening public education does not simply impact schools.
It impacts workforce development.
It impacts economic growth.
It impacts community stability.
And ultimately, it impacts the long-term future of the state itself.
The frustrating reality for many educators is that public schools continue being scrutinized for every outcome while lawmakers avoid confronting the funding realities tied directly to those outcomes.
At some point, Missouri must decide what it actually wants from public education.
Does the state want schools capable of preparing students for an increasingly complex economy?
Or does it want schools forced to operate in a constant state of financial survival?
Because those two visions are not compatible.

## The Bill Always Arrives

For years, school leaders have shielded students from the full impact of underfunding by stretching budgets, delaying projects, combining responsibilities, and quietly carrying more pressure than the public ever sees.
But resilience has limits.
Eventually, the bill arrives.
Not in Jefferson City.

In classrooms.
In staffing shortages.
In exhausted educators.
In reduced opportunities for students.
Missouri still has a choice.
Lawmakers can continue prioritizing political agendas and donor-driven education policies while public schools struggle to hold systems together.
Or they can recognize what school leaders across this state already know:
If Missouri truly wants economic growth, stronger communities, and a prepared workforce, then investing in public education is not optional.
It is essential.
And maybe—when the voices of more than 900,000 Missouri students are joined by their parents, grandparents, educators, taxpayers, employers, and the communities that pour their pride, time, and resources into public schools—someone in Jefferson City will finally stop listening only to political donors and start listening to the people they were elected to represent.
Because at some point, Missourians have to decide how much more they are willing to let public schools absorb before they finally say:
Enough is enough.

## MARE Organization Staff

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