MARE Focus

JUNE 2, 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

MO. Consult. For Ed.

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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 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.

Golf Tournament Players Needed – The 16th Annual MARE Scholarship Golf Tournament will be held on Monday, July 20th at the beautiful Osage National Golf Course in Lake Ozark, Missouri. We have many, very generous sponsors who are looking for players to help complete their foursome teams. **If you would like to join us for this fun-filled, rewarding event to benefit future teachers, please email (ksandlin@moare.com) or call me at (66) 747-8050 to share your interest in participating. If you would like to bring a few players from your district, please let me know that as well.**

August 4th Primary Ballot – Issues to Be Aware

Gov. Mike Kehoe will ask Missouri voters in August to decide whether lawmakers should have new power to expand sales taxes to replace the income tax and whether citizen-led constitutional amendments should face a higher bar for passage.

Kehoe moved four proposed constitutional amendments to the Aug. 4 primary ballot: Amendment 1, renewing a sales tax for state parks and soil conservation; Amendment 2, requiring direct election of county assessors; Amendment 4, changing the threshold for constitutional amendments proposed by initiative petition; and Amendment 5, authorizing lawmakers to expand sales taxes as part of an effort to eliminate the state income tax.

Check out the link below for some information on these amendments from our friends at MRTA!

..\YourVoteMatters.pdf

Foundation Formula Modernization Task Force — The next meeting is on Monday, July 13th 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. **Please note and share the link below for community input on this process.**

Submit Comments to DESE Task Force

MCE Policy Updates

The May 2026 updates are currently available on the MCE website located at www.moconed.com. For your convenience, access to the updates is located on the homepage under the "Updates" section on the left-hand side of the page. Simply select "View All Updates" to view or download current and past updates.

For those Districts utilizing MCE's webhosting services, the updates are now available on your District's portal, which can be accessed by visiting the MCE District Portal.

If you have any questions concerning these revisions or their implementation, please feel free to contact Tom Mickes.

Thomas A. Mickes
Cell Phone: (314) 330-8903
Email: tom@moconed.com
Nicole D. Boyles-Taylor
Cell Phone: (314) 258-7484
Email: nicole@moconed.com

Opportunity to Recognize Outstanding Staff

The Missouri Association of Rural Education will present awards for outstanding performance in the area of rural education. Four such awards will be given during the luncheon on **Thursday, October 22nd** as part of the Annual MARE/MO K-8 Conference at The Lodge of Four Seasons, Lake Ozark, Missouri. One award will be presented in each of the following areas.

- ***Outstanding Rural Teacher (1 award)***
  (Teachers from any grade level are eligible.)
- **Outstanding Rural Support Staff Member (1 award)**
  (Secretaries, aides, cafeteria employees, bus drivers, bookkeepers, etc.)
- ***Outstanding Rural Administrator (1 award)***
  (Principals and Superintendents are eligible.)
- ***Outstanding Rural School District (1 award)***
  (Any MARE member school district is eligible.)

To submit a nomination for an award, please complete the nomination form for each nominee. (No limit on number of nominees a school district may submit.) A minimum of three support letters is needed to validate the nomination. The support letters should provide information explaining why the individual or school district is being nominated. Nominations may be submitted by:

- Completing the nomination form on the MARE website and linked here 2026 Outstanding Rural Education Awards Nomination Form or
- Mailing or emailing (ksandlin@moare.com) all the requested information in an envelope marked, **"Award Nomination"** to the MARE office at the addressed listed above.

All nominations & materials must be received by 12:00 noon on Friday, September 25, 2026 to be eligible for consideration by the Awards Committee!

Inclusive Leadership Lab Survey – Please Participate!

Our friends at Inclusive Leadership Lab are inviting all to participate in a survey regarding the collaboration between Special Education & General Education Departments. Your input is desired so that the team will have more accurate data to base future programs and presentations on. Please take a moment to access the link below and provide your input. Share with other team members within your respective district staffs as well. Survey closes soon!

https://www.inclusiveleadershiplab.org/survey



DR. NIKKI HARDING
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, FOUNDER
785-547-5936
nikkie@inclusiveleadershiplab.org
www.inclusiveleadershiplab.org

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.

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 Conference Folder\2026 Conference Registration.pdf

..\2026 Conference Folder\2026 Exhibitor & Sponsor Registration (1).pdf

..\2026 Conference Folder\2026 Exhibitor & Sponsor Registration (2).pdf

..\2026 Conference Folder\Conference Call for Presentations Application - 2026.pdf

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!

Quote of the Week

"How quick time goes by now, compared to when you were a kid. Summer used to last forever. Now it's twelve weeks." — John Goodman

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

2026 DHSS School Health Academy –



To register, click on the link below:
2026 School Health Academy Registration

MOCAAT – What Can You Do for Me?



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

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

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

Should Missouri Voters Surrender a Safeguard – Jesse Uhlmeyer

Should Missouri Voters Surrender Their Taxpayer Safeguard?

This piece takes a closer look at Amendment 5, which will appear on Missouri's August 4 ballot, and highlights something that may get lost in the wording voters will read at the polls. Because here is the real question: If Missouri lawmakers already have the power to lower — or even eliminate — the state income tax, then why does this issue need voter approval in the first place?

 Jesse Uhlmeyer

This piece is an attempt to try to explain a complex constitutional issue in simple terms.
Because most Missourians have heard the argument before:
"Missouri should eliminate the state income tax."
For some people, that sounds great. More money in your paycheck. Lower taxes. Simpler government.
But Amendment 5 is about something much bigger than whether you like income taxes or not.
It is about power.
More specifically:
Should Missouri voters continue serving as a constitutional check and balance on lawmakers when it comes to raising statewide taxes?

But Google Says They Can't Eliminate the Income Tax Without Voter Approval

If you search Google and ask, "Can Missouri lawmakers eliminate the state income tax without voter approval?", you will probably see the answer:
"No."
At first, that sounds confusing because lawmakers already have the power to lower income tax rates.
So why do many searches still say "No"?
Because eliminating the income tax would create a massive loss of state revenue.

Missouri's income tax brings in a huge amount of money for the state budget — roughly two-thirds of the state's general revenue. That money helps pay for public schools, roads, law enforcement, and healthcare programs.

If lawmakers completely eliminate the income tax, the state would lose billions of dollars.

And because Missouri still has to fund important services, lawmakers would likely need to replace that lost money somewhere else — most likely through higher sales and use taxes.

That is where the Hancock Amendment comes in.

What Many Missourians May Not Realize

The Missouri legislature already has the authority to lower or even eliminate the state income tax.

In 2022, Missouri lawmakers lowered the top income tax rate from 5.3% to 4.95% and created a plan to reduce it even further over time. In January 2025, that rate dropped again to 4.7%. Lawmakers also changed Missouri from a nine-bracket income tax system to one flat 4.7% tax rate.

Lawmakers did not need voter approval to do that.

But there is one thing lawmakers currently cannot easily do.

They cannot raise statewide sales and use taxes on their own to replace billions of dollars in lost revenue.

That protection exists because of the Hancock Amendment.

The Hancock Amendment Was Designed to Protect Taxpayers

In 1980, Missouri voters passed the Hancock Amendment to limit the power of government when it comes to taxes.

One of the most important parts of Hancock is simple:

If state lawmakers want to raise taxes like sales tax or use tax, voters should have a say.

That means the people of Missouri act as a safeguard.

A final checkpoint.

A constitutional check and balance.

Lawmakers can propose ideas, but voters still hold important power over major tax increases.

Amendment 5 would weaken that protection.

The proposal would pause the Hancock Amendment for 5 years and allow lawmakers to raise sales and use taxes on any good or service high enough to replace money lost from eliminating the income tax.

You will not read that last statement in the ballot language at your polling place.

That is why this vote matters.

This Is Bigger Than Politics

This is not really a Republican issue.

It is not really a Democrat issue.

It is a question about whether voters want to hand over more authority to Jefferson City lawmakers.

Some Missourians may trust lawmakers to make those decisions.

Others may believe voters should continue having the final say before statewide sales taxes increase.

But either way, voters should clearly understand what is being asked.

Because once power is handed away, it is very difficult to get it back.

A Call to Action

Before voting in August, take time to look beyond the campaign slogans and political talking points.

Read the amendment. The actual text and not just the ballot language.

Ask questions.

Understand what powers lawmakers already have — and what new authority Amendment 5 would give them.

Because this vote is about more than whether you support lower income taxes.

It is about whether Missouri voters should continue serving as a constitutional check and balance when statewide taxes are increased.

Talk about it with your family.

Discuss it with your neighbors.

Share information with people who may not fully understand what is being proposed.

An informed voter is one of the strongest safeguards any state can have.

For more than 40 years, Missourians have held an important seat at the table when major tax increases are considered.

In August, voters will decide whether they want to keep that seat — or give part of it away.

June Learning Blade Corner

June 2026 LB Corner

School's Almost Out… But Learning Doesn't Have to Be!

Summer is the perfect time to explore Learning Blade, your go-to tool for STEM/CS/CTE enrichment!

Whether you're planning for the fall, brushing up on tech skills, or exploring exciting career pathways for your students, Learning Blade is here to support you all summer long.

From self-paced lessons to hands-on activities, you can:

- Discover new ways to integrate STEM into your classroom
- Try out engaging missions on real-world careers
- Get ahead on lesson planning with zero stress!

Make this summer count. Start exploring with Learning Blade today! Sign up for your fully funded account: LearningBlade.com/States



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If you are the intended recipient but do not wish to receive communication through this medium, please notify the sender immediately.