MARE Focus

JULY 1, 2026 | FROM THE DESK OF MR. KEVIN SANDLIN, MARE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ENDORSEMENTS

American Fidelity Assurance Co.

Claim Care, Inc.

Hamlin Energy

IMS Technology

L.J. Hart & Company

MASA MTS

MO. Consult. For Ed.

MOCAAT

M.U.S.I.C.

Veregy

MARE PARTNERSHIPS

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

MISSOURI ADMIN. JOB POSTING

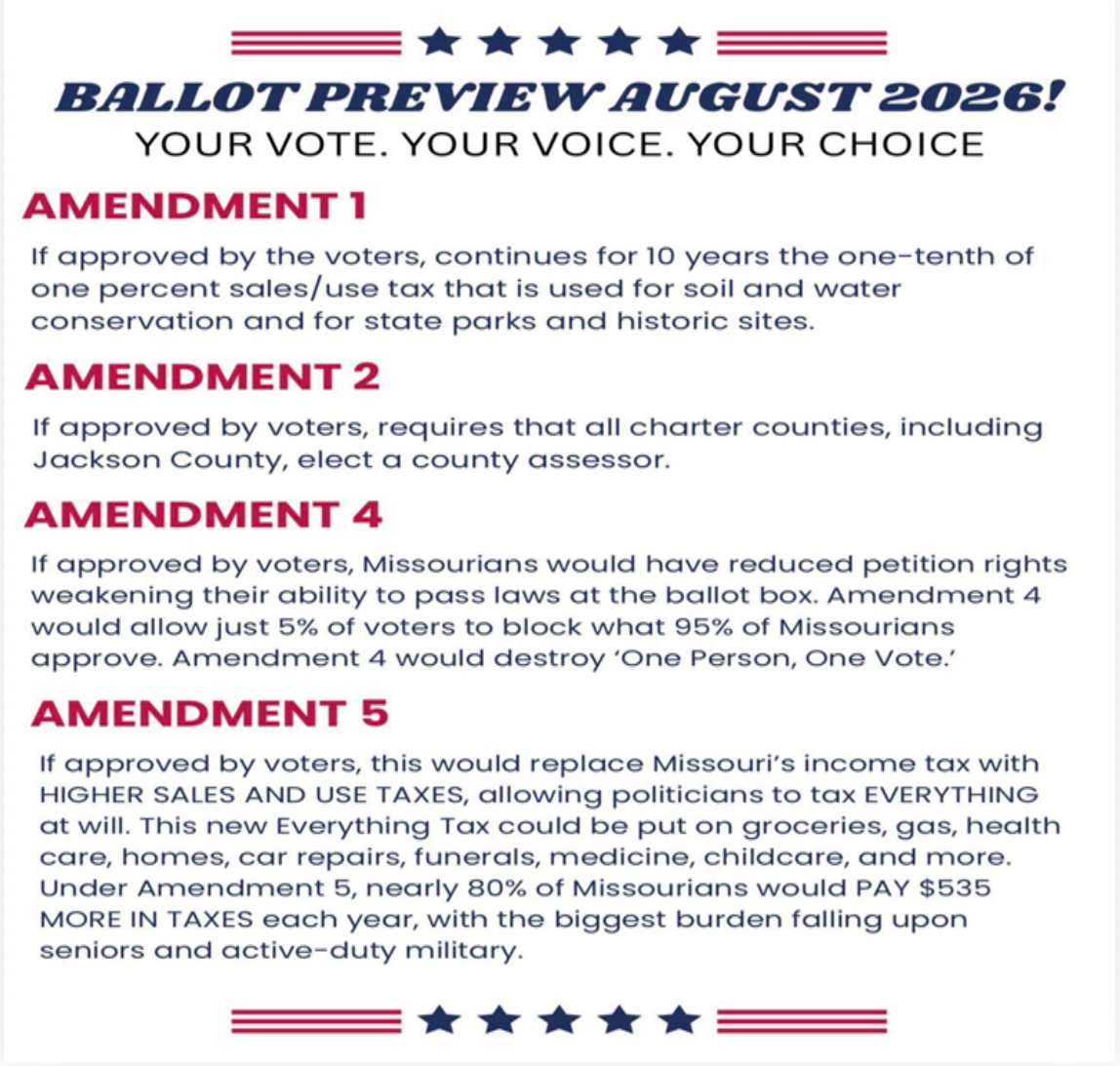
2026-2027 Superintendent Searches

– 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.

New Search Postings Coming Soon!

Ballot Measures for Tuesday, August 4th

– **It is imperative that we share this information and rally voters to take a stand on Tuesday, August 4th! Amendment 4 & Amendment 5 are of utmost importance! Please share!**



More Information on Amendment 5 – Please review and share!

Just an FYI for anyone interested in the potential impacts of Amendment 5 on Missouri public school districts clients. If you go to **Across the Aisle for Missouri Public Schools'** website (**AAMPS.US**) and click on the Amendment 5 tab (Amendment 5 - Across the Aisle for Missouri Public Schools), you will find a wealth of information about the topic. Please feel free to share.

Rural Leaders Literacy Fellowship

My name is Heather Zuerblis, and I lead rural literacy support at Leading Educators. I'm reaching out because we're recruiting rural elementary principals for the Rural Literacy Leaders Fellowship, part of Leading Educators' Science of Reading Network, and I wondered if this opportunity might be relevant to principals in your state network.

The fellowship is fully funded and designed specifically for rural elementary principals who want to use assessment data more effectively, align literacy supports, and strengthen schoolwide systems for lasting improvement through practical coaching, implementation support, and collaboration with peers facing similar realities.

The experience begins with a **free 4-day intensive** that gives principals dedicated time, practical tools, and peer connection to support literacy leadership in rural school communities.

Applications are open through June 30

Heather Zuerblis | Leading Educators
Senior Director, Science of Reading
hzuerblis@leadingeducators.org

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, bookkeepersetc.)
- ***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!

Scholarship Golf Tournament - Monday, July 20th

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

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

"Education is the best friend. An educated person is respected everywhere. Education beats the beauty and the youth."

Chanakya

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

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.com

The Voice of Rural Schools – 2026 NREA Annual Report

You are viewing the first annual report in the history of the National Rural Education Association.

NREA was founded in 1907. For more than a century, this organization has been the national voice for rural schools, and for most of that time, the work happened without a formal public accounting of the year behind us. That changes now.

This report is for you - our members, our state affiliates, our partners, and the rural education community we exist to serve. It is a snapshot of where NREA is, what we accomplished this year, and where we are headed. It is also a commitment. Going forward, you will hear from us each year in this form: honest, clear, and grounded in the work.

Rural schools deserve an organization that operates with the same transparency and accountability it asks of the systems it advocates for. This report is that standard in practice.

Follow the link for more information: - 2026 NREA Annual Report

MOCAAT – What Can You Do for Me?



2026 DHSS School Health Academy



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

American Heart Association – Our friends with the American Heart Association have reached out share information regarding rural health concerns and issues. Please access the links below to find more useful information. Share within your education community!

The one thing I'll add to this conversation is around the Cardiac Emergency Response Plan piece given that it is state law now. The below paragraph may add some additional context and be useful for sharing in some fashion:

- Last summer, Governor Parson, in seeking to strengthen community level preparedness, signed SB 68. The bill requires every school to have a **Cardiac Emergency Response Plan** by the **start of the 2026-2027 school year.** Missouri joined a growing number of states in working to ensure the cardiac arrest chain of survival is strong in schools, an effort that is often especially important in rural areas given longer EMS response and transport times. Because this work is so important, groups like the **American Heart Association** and the **Missouri EMS Association** are working to support schools in

building out – and executing - strong plans. More information – including potential funding – can be found **here** and schools can reach out to the American Heart Association for technical assistance using this **quick survey** or by contacting the Association's Rural Health Director for Missouri: **Tim.Nikolai@heart.org**.

..\Newsletter Content MARE July2026.pdf
..\Presentation - Rural MO.pdf
..\AHA Rural Health Update (07.26).pdf

Happy New Year – Education Leader – Jesse Uhlmeyer

Happy New Year, EdLeader

When so much feels beyond our control, the most important work still begins with the things we can. Let's use today to focus on those important items. They are showing up in a few short weeks.

Jesse Uhlmeyer

For most people, the new year begins on January 1.
There are fireworks.
Resolutions.
Fresh calendars.
Optimism about what's ahead.
For education leaders and school superintendents, the new year begins on July 1.
The fireworks come a few days later on July 4th.
A new fiscal year quietly arrives with budget revisions, state funding projections, audit preparation, staffing decisions, insurance renewals, transportation costs, capital projects, and a growing list of questions that no spreadsheet can answer.
If you've spent any amount of time leading a school district, you know the feeling. Heck, you've probably spent the better part of May and June searching for the answers.
One budget closes.
Another one begins.
And somewhere in between, you're expected to predict the unpredictable.
Will state revenue meet expectations?
Will Governor ever finalize the state budget?
Will enrollment hold?
Can we fill every vacancy?
Will this be the year something unexpected breaks?
By the time August arrives, many school leaders have already spent weeks carrying the weight of an entire school year that hasn't even started.
I understand why.
I've been there.
The responsibility is real.
But I've also learned something over the years.
The budget may define our limitations.
It should never define our leadership.

The Things That Keep Us Awake Longer Than They Should

Every July, I find myself thinking about control.
Not because I have more of it.
Because I realize how little I actually do.

- I can't control what happens in Jefferson City.
- I can't control federal policy.
- I can't control inflation.
- I can't control interest rates.
- I can't control utility costs.
- I can't control the weather that delays construction projects.
- I can't control whether the bus decides to break down on the coldest morning of the year.
- I can't control what appears on social media before sunrise.

If I'm not careful, I can spend an entire summer worrying about things that have never once asked for my permission.
But leadership has a funny way of reminding us where our influence actually lives.
It isn't in the things we can't control.
It's in the things we can.

Where Ed Leadership Actually Lives

I can control whether a first-year teacher feels like they belong.
I can control whether a veteran teacher knows their experience still matters.
I can control whether my principals feel supported when difficult decisions have to be made.
I can control whether parents hear from the school before they hear about the school.
I can control whether students walk into a building where adults genuinely enjoy serving them.
I can control whether our district becomes known for complaining about challenges or solving them.
Those things don't appear anywhere in the budget.
Yet they determine almost everything that matters.

The Best Investments Never Appear in a Line Item

The public often assumes a superintendent's most important job is balancing the budget.
They're only partially right.
A balanced budget keeps a district operating.
A healthy culture keeps a district alive.
One can be calculated with formulas.
The other is built through thousands of ordinary moments that never appear in a board report.

- A handwritten note.
- A conversation in the hallway.
- Showing up at a ballgame.
- Listening before speaking.
- Celebrating a custodian.
- Encouraging a bus driver.
- Thanking the cafeteria staff.
- Helping a new teacher through a difficult first week.

None of those things require an appropriation.
Yet every one of them pays dividends.

Advocacy Without Anxiety

Public education has no shortage of uncertainty right now.
Funding questions remain.
Policy debates continue.

Expectations seem to multiply every year.
None of that is going away anytime soon.
And we should continue advocating—for our students, our staffs, our communities, and the future of public education.
That work matters.
But advocacy and anxiety are not the same thing.
One moves us forward.
The other keeps us standing still.

The Question Every Student Asks

In a few short weeks, buses will roll.
Teachers will unlock classroom doors.
Parents will take first-day pictures.
Kindergartners will climb onto a school bus for the very first time.
Seniors will walk through the doors for the last first day of their public school journey.
None of them will ask whether your projected ending balance was exactly what you budgeted on July 1.
They'll ask something much more important, even if they never say it out loud.
"Is this a place where I belong?"
That question has never been answered by a spreadsheet or line item.
It's answered by people.

MARE/MO K-8 Conference - October 21st-23rd

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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.

Have a Wonderful 4th of July Weekend! We live in an Amazing Country and We are all truly blessed!