MARE/MO K-8 Fall Conference 2026
"Forever Rural"

Conference Planner at a Glance

Time	Session/Program/Presenter	Room
Wednesday, October 21		
11:00-5:00 p.m.	MARE Initial Mandatory School Board Training - Dr. Jamie Burkhart	**Seachase**
11:00 a.m.	MO K-8 Executive Board Meeting - Mrs. Lexie Wallace	**Marbella**
11:30-12:45 p.m.	**Conference Pre-Sessions**	
	• Leading Well in Uncertain Times – H.E.R.O.S – Rush/Vigil/Rush	**HK's Club Rm.**
	• From Deferred Maintenance to Modernization – Josh Irving/Vince Throckmorton	**Valencia A**
	• CTE Certification Opportunity – Dr. Calee McElwain, iCEV	**Lookout**
1:00-2:00 p.m.	**"Teachers Wanted: Reimagining Recruitment in a Changing World" – Katnik**	**Marbella A/B**
2:10-2:50 p.m.	**Small Group Sessions**	
	• From Data to Difference – Whitney Thompson, Principal/Supt. at Orearville R-IV	**Marbella A**
	• Story to Strengthen Culture, Retain Teachers, & Influence Comm. – Justin Pickens	**Marbella B**
	• Cooperative Purchasing: A Tool to Save Time & Money – Jeff Townsend	**Granada A**
	• Making Every Square Foot Count – Dana Hubbard/Lindsay Reichert	**Granada B**
	• Let's Put the Cards on the Table: AI Ready? – Dr. Erin Lawson/Katie Dunlap	**Granada C**
	• Recipe for Success: Reducing Student Tobacco Use – Christy Inskip	**Valencia A**
	• Navigating CTE Programs in Your Small Rural School – Dr. Calee McElwain/Others	**Valencia B**
	• Getting Ready for 2026-2027 Federal Programs – De Frink-Hedglin	**HK's Club Rm.**
	• Board Secretary Training – Emily Omohundro, EdCounsel (2:30-4:30 p.m.)	**Seville**
	• MASA First-Year Superintendents & Mentor Roundtable – Kelly Hinshaw	**Lookout**
3:00-3:40 p.m.	**Small Group Sessions**	
	• Active Learning, Engaged Students, Healthier Outcomes – MDC Representatives	**Marbella A**
	• Why Teachers Leave: Four-Day School Week Teacher Turnover – Dr. Jon Turner	**Marbella B**
	• Questions Keeping Superintendents Up at Night – Lana Snodgras/Zac Rantz	**Granada A**
	• Maximizing School Funding: Bond & Levy Campaigns – Bextermueller/Mabe	**Granada B**
	• Roundtable with DESE Area Supervisors	**Granada C**
	• American Heart Association Programs & Resources – Van Bergen/Nikolai/Bachert	**Valencia A**
	• What's Next with eMINTS – Updates & Opportunities – Caldwell/Anderson	**Valencia B**
	• Small District, Big Story – Using Student Interns to Power Social Media – Kari Yeagy	**HK's Club Rm.**
	• Board Secretary Training – Emily Omohundro, EdCounsel (2:30-4:30 p.m.)	**Seville**
	• Small Schools Committee Meeting **(Members Only)** – Lodewegen/Kimble	**Lookout**
3:45-4:30 p.m.	**"Preparing for the 2027 Legislative Session" – Mike Lodewegen, MCSA**	**Marbella A/B**
3:00-7:30 p.m.	Exhibits Open	**Campana Hall**
4:30-7:30 p.m.	Reception with Exhibitors - Register for Door Prizes & School Checks	**Campana Hall**
Thursday, October 22		
7:00-9:00 a.m.	Breakfast with Exhibitors	**Campana Hall**
8:00-4:30 p.m.	MARE Initial Mandatory School Board Training – Dr. Jamie Burkhart	**Seachase**
9:00-9:15 a.m.	Vendor Prizes/Drawings for Exhibit Booth Cards & $500.00 School Checks	**Campana Hall**
9:30-10:30 a.m.	**"Schools & Security – SRO's, SPO's, and Searches" – Wiens/Hansen**	**Marbella A/B**
10:40-11:30 a.m.	**Small Group Sessions**	
	• Annual Mandatory 1 Hour Board Refresher Training – Emily Omohundro, EdCounsel	**Granada A**
	• Building a Diploma+ Mindset & Program in Your Rural School – Dr. Will Darter	**Granada B**

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Thursday, October 22 Continued		
10:40-11:30 a.m.	**Small Group Sessions Continued**	
	• The Trust Advantage: Building, Maintaining & Protecting – Jill Filer	**Granada C**
	• What AI Can't Do: The Four Pillars of Prosocial Education – Anderson/Caldwell	**Valencia A**
	• Are Your Bond & Operating Dollars Working as Hard as You Do? – Hoffman/Hughes/Th.	**Valencia B**
	• Religion in Schools Update – Preparing for 2026-2027 – McDaniel/Wiegers	**HK's Club Rm.**
	• Is It Time for Change? MSHSAA's Possible Next Moves – Dr. Jennifer Rukstad	**Seville**
	• Career Advisors and Career Exploration – Marling/Carbol	**Lookout**
11:30-1:15 p.m.	**Awards/Lunch/Speaker**	**Marbella A/B**
	• **Outstanding Rural Education Awards – MARE & MO K-8**	**Marbella A/B**
	• **"Breaking Cycles, Building Futures: A Forever Rural Story" – Justin Pickens**	**Marbella A/B**
1:20-2:10 p.m.	**Small Group Sessions**	
	• Board Meeting Jeopardy - Duane Martin, EdCounsel	**Granada A**
	• The Rural Voice: Building Trust that Inspires Advocacy – Jesse Uhlmeyer	**Granada B**
	• MTDS – An Overview of Programs & The Difference They Can Make – Lewis/Pannier	**Granada C**
	• The End of the Sticky Note – Organizing Digital Keys – John Riley	**Valencia A**
	• Show-Me Missouri Schools: Using AI for a Data-Driven Voice – Turner/Darter	**Valencia B**
	• Here Comes the Sun(shine Act): A Legal Primer on Compliance – Michelle Basi	**HK's Club Rm.**
	• Effectively Using State Achievement Reports to Improve Achievement – Jessica Gray	**Seville**
	• Architecting Unbreakable Culture: 90% Retention with Connection Keys – Rush/Vigil	**Lookout**
2:20-3:10 p.m.	**Small Group Sessions**	
	• Jeopardy Beyond the Board Meeting - Duane Martin, EdCounsel	**Granada A**
	• Educating the Masses – Jerry Girdner/Dustin Skoglund/Wade Hall	**Granada B**
	• DESE's Level Up and Building & District Matrix Tools– Smith/Sayeski	**Granada C**
	• Special Educators Who Stay – RTA at MSU – Pickett/Guner/Smith	**Valencia A**
	• Leveraging Technology for CSIP, MSIP & Leadership – Chad Sutton/Bryan Copple	**Valencia B**
	• Protecting Your District: Essential Contract Provisions – Bernard/McDaniel	**HK's Club Rm.**
	• Community Conversations with Purpose – Marci Orr	**Seville**
	• MO K-8 School Leadership Roundtable – MO K-8 Board Members	**Lookout**
	• Inside the MARE Superintendent Search Service – MARE Search Consultants	**Terrace I**
3:20-4:20 p.m.	Legal Panel - Answers to **"Hot Topic Questions"**	**Marbella A/B**
4:30-5:00 p.m.	MO K-8 General Membership Meeting – Mrs. Lexie Wallace	**Seville**
5:00-6:00 p.m.	MARE Executive Board Meeting - Mr. Kevin Sandlin	**HK's Club Rm.**

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Friday, October 23		
7:00-8:00 a.m.	Breakfast	Marbella A/B
8:00-8:45 a.m.	**"DESE School Finance & Governance Update" - Dr. Kyle Kruse**	Marbella A/B
8:45-9:30 a.m.	**"School Funding Modernization Task Force Update" – Dr. Kari Monsees**	Marbella A/B
9:30-10:00 a.m.	**"A Conversation with the Interim Commissioner" - Dr. Stacey Preis**	Marbella A/B
10:05-11:00 a.m.	**"The Coming Legal Storms: What's on the Horizon?" – Martin/Omohundro**	Marbella A/B
11:00-11:30 a.m.	MARE General Membership Meeting/Prizes/Conference Adjournment	Marbella A/B

**** Conference may conclude earlier than scheduled depending on Friday morning sessions!**

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