MARE Focus

SEPTEMBER 30, 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.

Mountain View-Birch Tree R-III – Mr. Darryl Pannier is the search consultant. He can be reached at (573) 803-9008 or **dwpannier@semo.edu**. **Posting on September 28th!**

Henry Co. R-I – Mrs. Mary Beth Scherer is the search consultant. She can be reached at (660) 281-7678 or **mbscherer@ucmo.edu**. **(October 16, 2026)**

Rich Hill R-IV – Dr. Michael Jinks & Dr. Bryan McDonald are the search consultants. Contact Dr. Jinks at (660) 441-7473 or **19mj46@charter.net**. **(October 9, 2026)**

Stockton R-I – Dr. Jamie Burkhart is the search consultant. She can be reached at (660) 525-0952 or **jamiebeth.burkhart@gmail.com**. **(October 19, 2026)**

Documents linked to cover email!

District Searches – District is conducting search!

Lincoln R-II - Deadline to apply is 10/23/2026. Contact Kevin Smith for more information at **smithk@lincoln.k12.mo.us**.

Naylor R-II – Deadline to apply is 10/30/2026. Contact Stacey Roach for more information at **staceyroach@naylor.k12.mo.us**.

Calling on & Counting on our Educational Leaders

MARE, MASA, GOCSD, EdPlus, Kansas City GCSD, MRTA and others are working together to combine advocacy efforts for the 2027 Legislative Session. More information will be forthcoming as this evolves. We will be asking our members to rally folks to attend various "We Love Missouri Public Schools Days" at the Capitol from January through May. We will also be encouraging folks to attend State BOE meetings (Sign up for the October 20th meeting here - October 20th SBOE Meeting Sign-Up) and remaining Task Force Meetings. It is necessary that we all work together and do our part to fight for public education. The battle remains ahead of us. Recent victories in the elections have bolstered us, but there is much work ahead. Be ready to stand up when called upon, as I know you will!

2026 MARE/MO K-8 Conference

– Scheduled on October 21-23, 2026 at the Lodge of Four Seasons. We will have five legal sessions, a Legal Panel, Mandatory Initial 18.5-hour Board Training, Annual Mandatory 1 hour Board Refresher Training, presentations from Dr. Stacey Preis, Dr. Kyle Kruse, Dr. Kari Monsees, Dr. Paul Katnik, Mr. Justin Pickens, DESE Area Supervisors, Mike Lodewegen, MSPMA Sessions,

Specific Board Training sessions, and many more. **We will also be offering a specific two-hour Board Secretary Training on Wednesday, October 21st.** The conference also features the presentation of "Outstanding Rural Awards" during the luncheon on Thursday, an awesome reception, great food, an Exhibit Hall featuring many of our Associate Members and other companies who support rural education and numerous other opportunities to grow, learn and collaborate. **Please join us!**

Links to Registration, Exhibitor Registration, Conference Planner at a Glance, General Sessions & Small Group Sessions appear on the email accompanying this report.

We are still accepting registrations!

Foundation Formula Modernization Task Force – The next meeting is on Monday, October 19th at 10:00 a.m. in Jeff City. **Scenarios should be released at this meeting.** Check out the website at this link: Missouri School Funding Modernization Task Force. **Link for community input on this process. Submit Comments to DESE Task Force**

Brain Injury Association Information

Brain Injury Association of Missouri (BIA-MO)

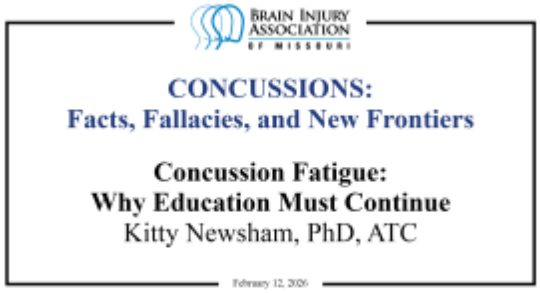
Free Professional Development Training Available!



Recordings of the BIA-MO Concussions: Facts, Fallacies, and New Frontiers Seminars are available on-demand.
This education may be accessed for group trainings or individual learning.

Featured Session:

Concussion Fatigue:
Why Education Must Continue
(30 Minutes)
Kitty Newsham, PhD, ATC
Associate Professor
Saint Louis University



Watch Now - Concussion Fatigue: Why Education Must Continue

Additional trainings available on-demand

Concussions 201
(35 Minutes)

Parent Communication: Strategies Around Concussion Management
(30 Minutes)

Feeding the Mind: Nutrition Strategies for Brain Injury
(35 Minutes)

The Importance of Lifestyle Choices in Long-Term Concussion Effects
(20 Minutes)

Get Schooled on Concussions for Missouri: Show Me the TACT
(15 Minutes)

Return to Play Guidelines
(25 Minutes)

Reaction Training: Increase Performance and Reduce Injury Risks
(45 Minutes)

BIA-MO Concussions: Facts, Fallacies, and New Frontiers Seminar 2026 Recorded Sessions - Links Here

Get Schooled on Concussions provides clinically-proven academic adjustments to support any concussed student in Return to Learn.

Get Schooled on Concussions for Missouri

These resources are available free of charge to every school in Missouri.

www.GetSchooledonConcussions.com

My TACT:
Select Missouri

Password: (case sensitive)
TACTmissouri2022

Concussions: Facts, Fallacies, and New Frontiers Seminars 2027

Sign up to receive information about the BIA-MO Concussions Seminars 2027

Program Partners

Quote of the Week

"A good education can change anyone. A good teacher can change everything!" Anonymous

New MARE Associate Members – Since January of 2026, the following organizations have been added as MARE Associate Members: **Absolute Janitorial Services, HaloRRS, Magic School, Omni Energy Partners, Bubbletastic Events, Tri-County Electrical Contractors, FARCO, Paschal Air Plumbing & Electric, Progressive Technologies, Inc., Washington Roofing & Insulation, LogiCourt & Lebra**. Please watch for upcoming postings on the MARE website and in new MARE Focus articles. We greatly appreciate these businesses joining the MARE family!

iCEV Certification Opportunity at MARE/MO K-8 Conference



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

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

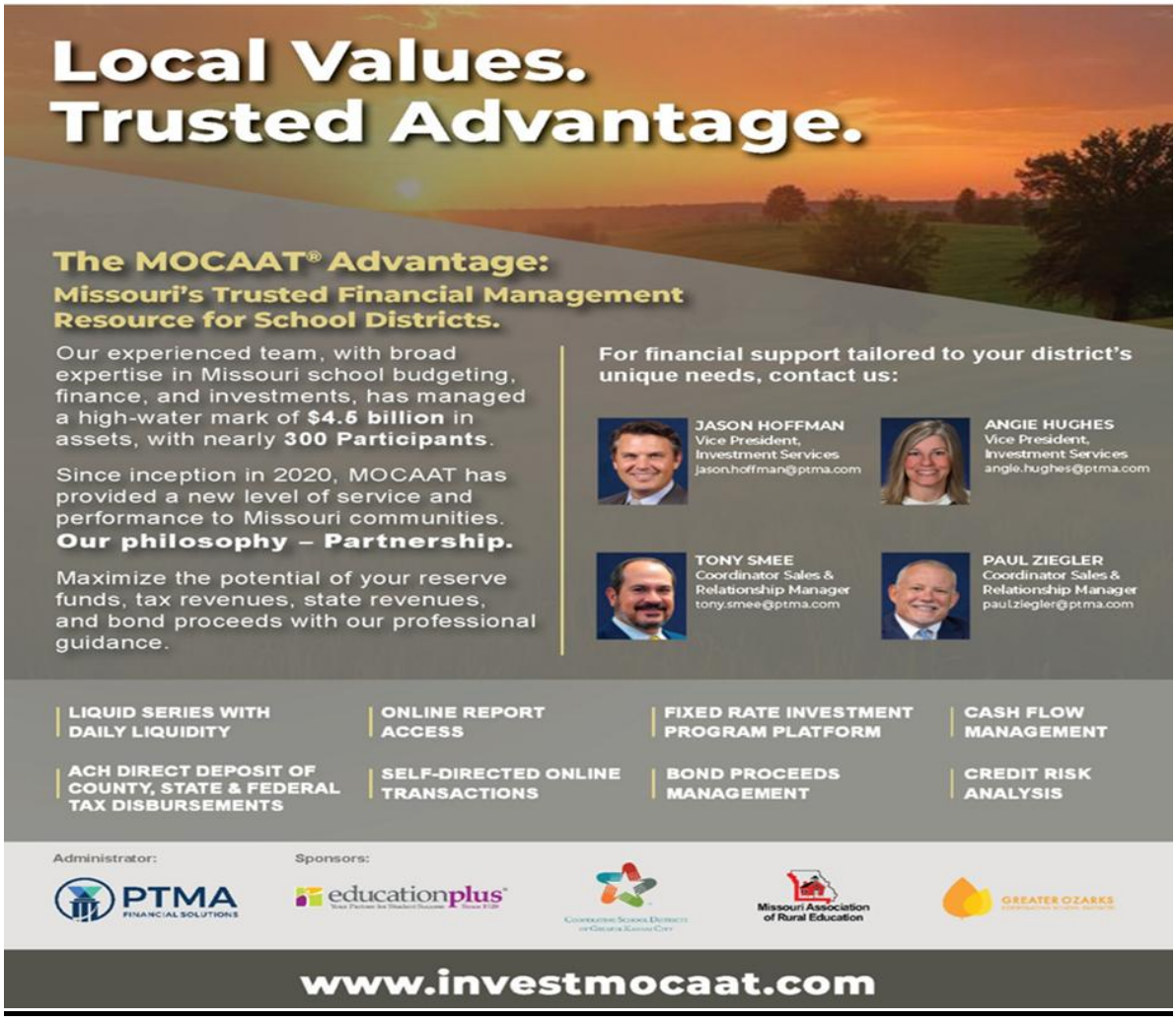
- Friday, December 4, 2026 (12:00 noon - 6:00 p.m.)
- Saturday, December 5, 2026 (8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.)

***** 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

MOCAAT – What Can You Do for Me?

MOCAAT™



Missouri Loves Public Schools – Capitol Visit Days - Collaboration

Here is the webpage we have created for our Capitol Visit Days.

I have linked it here, too. This QR points to the webpage. Here's a typable address for the webpage: bit.ly/MOlovesPS

Please join us in participating in and promoting this initiative within your school community!

Learning Blade Corner – October Article

LearningBlade Powered by eDynamic Learning CORNER

October Learning Blade Corner

October is Cybersecurity Awareness Month!

Cybersecurity matters across Missouri, from protecting our schools and local businesses to securing manufacturers, hospitals, utilities, and government systems. As technology and AI continue to grow, Missouri will need more people with the skills to protect the systems we depend on every day. Learning Blade can help your students learn about the important work of cybersecurity and explore the careers that help keep us safe.

Through the **Hack Attack** mission and resources like **Introduction to Computer Careers**, students can:

- See how a team works together to restore a school's website and social media accounts after a cyberattack.
- Explore careers such as **Information Security Analyst** and learn how these professionals protect businesses, schools, government agencies, and other organizations.
- Build awareness of the computer science, problem-solving, and technology skills needed for cybersecurity and other high-demand careers.

Learning Blade is **fully funded for Missouri schools**, so teachers can create an account and begin using these resources at no cost. www.LearningBlade.com/MO

For more help on how to use Learning Blade, get expert tips and support with your state manager: Schedule Here

2026-2027 Missouri School Directory - Each MARE member school district will receive one free copy. If you pre-ordered extra copies through MARE, we will have those to deliver as well. We will start delivering these in early October! **Also available at the conference!**

Kummer Center for STEM Education Event

The Kummer Center for STEM Education is excited to invite you and your staff to the **Northeast Missouri STEM Connections Day** on October 20th!

Spend an exciting day discovering new STEM education resources for your school, grant opportunities, free equipment loans, and more. Hear from a variety of STEM organizations including Missouri's After School Network, REC Foundation, Project Lead The Way, 4-H, and others!

This free event will be hosted at the **Missouri Military Academy** in Mexico, MO, so stop by on your way to the annual fall MARE Conference. A continental breakfast and lunch will be provided.

For questions, please contact the Kummer Center for STEM Education at mststemoutreach@mst.edu.

Please let me know if you need anything else from me. In case the links do not transfer, I am including them below.

- Kummer Center for STEM Education: https://stemcenter.mst.edu/
- Register: https://connect.mst.edu/register/regionalstemconference

Coover/Rural Schools Partnership

The Coover/Rural Schools Partnership Rural Ready Grant Program is now open for application by school partners of the CFO. With $185,000 available, the program will provide up to $7,000 for projects that prepare students for an ever-changing world while strengthening the communities they call home.

Possible themes for projects include:

- Youth markets and economic development
- Career and workforce readiness
- Community connection and engagement
- Community improvement and volunteer service

School partners can begin the application process at cfozarks.org/applyforgrants. Applications are due Tuesday, Oct. 27.

The Louis L. and Julia Dorothy Coover Charitable Foundation, a private foundation managed by Commerce Trust, is providing $135,000 for the program, with an additional $50,000 provided by the Trust for Civic Life.

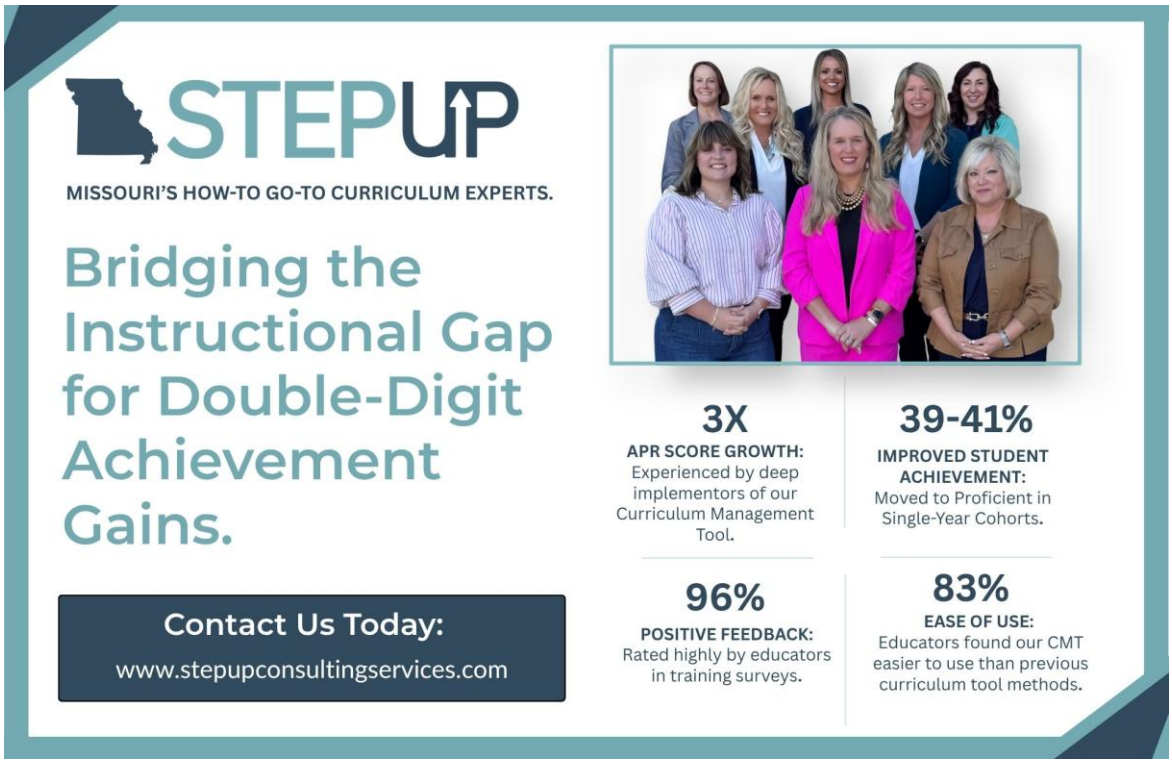
Learn more at cfozarks.org.

LEARN MORE

MUSIC Senate Bill 68 Implementation Workbook



StepUP Ad



Join us at the 2026 MARE/MO K-8 Fall Conference October 21-23, 2026!

Where Underfunding Public Education Lands

Underfunding public education doesn't affect every child equally. It lands hardest in the gaps—between the child who has somewhere else to turn and the child who only has us.

 Jesse Uhlmeyer

Let's call him Eli. He is not a real student, but you probably know him.
Eli walks into kindergarten already behind. Not because he isn't smart or his family doesn't care. He simply hasn't had the same opportunities as some of the children sitting beside him.
Across the room sits Emma. You probably know her too. She knows her letters and sounds. She attended preschool. Her family has read to her since she was little. If she struggles, her family has the time and resources to find additional help.
Emma hasn't done anything wrong by having those advantages. Neither have her parents.
But Eli's starting line is different.
Maybe preschool wasn't available. Maybe Mom works nights or Dad works two jobs. Maybe there aren't many books at home. Eli's parents haven't done anything wrong either. They have made the best of a different situation. Whatever the reason, Eli and Emma walk through the same school doors and sit in the same classroom.
But they aren't starting in the same place.
And here's the difference that matters:
Emma has more room for the system to come up short. Eli doesn't.
That's why Missouri's current school-funding conversation matters.

The Gap Doesn't Wait

Eli's teacher notices quickly. She works with him in a small group, finds extra minutes during the day, and maybe connects him with a reading interventionist.
But Eli isn't the only student who needs more. Another struggles with speech. Another has an IEP. Another needs behavioral support. Another comes to school carrying challenges from home.
There are only so many adults and so many minutes in a school day.
Meanwhile, if Emma begins struggling, her family might hire a tutor or work with her every night. None of that is wrong. It's exactly what families should do when they can.
But Eli may not have another option. Mom may just be getting off of work and dad is getting ready to head into work. Food and lights take priority over tutors and programs.
What the school can provide may be what he gets.

Where $270 Million Lands

For FY28, the Missouri State Board of Education directed that its foundation-formula budget request remain at approximately $4.283 billion—about $270 million below what DESE says would be required to fully fund the formula.
The final appropriation hasn't been made. But if Missouri ultimately provides less than the formula requires, that difference won't stay in Jefferson City.
It will show up in hundreds of small decisions across the state as school districts prepare to absorb $355 to $395 less per student. Those numbers equate to approximately $35,500-$39,500 per 100 students.
(For a simple calculation for your district, take your overall enrollment and divide it by 100. Then multiply by $35,500 and $39,500 to see to approximate values of the high and low end of what $270 million in decreased funding means for your schools. This calculation does not factor in all of the formula calculations and weighted factors, but it gives you a quick snapshot of the magnitude locally.)
Those are the numbers facing school leaders. That is the difference between a reading interventionist being replaced. An intervention group gets larger. A counselor serves more students. Summer programming gets smaller. A position stays vacant. A teacher tries to find five extra minutes for a child who needs twenty.
The doors still open. The buses still run. Teachers still teach.
Schools find a way to make it work.
But eventually, someone absorbs what is missing.

The Same Reduction. A Different Result.

Suppose Emma and Eli both need additional reading help, but the school does not replace the reading interventionalist and therefore has fewer intervention slots.
Neither gets one.
On paper, they were affected equally.
Emma's family finds a tutor.
Eli goes home.
Maybe summer programming is reduced. Emma's family finds another option. Eli spends the summer without additional support.
The reduction was the same. The impact wasn't.
Because underfunding public education lands in the gaps.
It lands between the child who can get a tutor and the child who cannot. Between the student who has support waiting at home and the student who depends on school for that support.
That doesn't mean Emma deserves less.
It means Eli may need more.
And when schools have fewer resources, providing more to the children who need more becomes increasingly difficult.

Gaps Grow Quietly

Achievement gaps rarely appear overnight.
They grow a little at a time.
A few less minutes of intervention. A larger group. A position that isn't replaced. A summer without additional help.
Kindergarten becomes second grade. Second becomes fourth. Fourth becomes sixth.
Eventually, Eli isn't a five-year-old struggling with letters. He's 13 and more than one grade level behind.
By then, we may say he doesn't try, doesn't care, or won't do the work.
Maybe sometimes that's what we're seeing.
But imagine spending eight years sitting beside classmates who seem to understand things you don't. At some point, falling behind can start to look a lot like giving up.

Accountability and Capacity

Then we test Eli. We measure his growth and hold his school accountable for whether he learned.
And we should.
Public schools must provide strong instruction, identify struggling students early, monitor progress, and change course when something isn't working. More money alone doesn't guarantee better results.
But resources matter.
Intervention requires people. Smaller groups require teachers. Counseling requires counselors. Additional instructional time requires someone to provide it.
We should expect schools to produce results. We should also give them the capacity to do it.
Those ideas belong together.

There Is an Eli Everywhere

This isn't just a rural Missouri story.
Eli is in St. Louis and Kansas City. He's in Springfield and the Bootheel. He's in the suburbs and in towns most Missourians couldn't find on a map.
He may ride a city bus, walk three blocks to school, or wait at the end of a gravel driveway before sunrise.
Every community has children who arrive at school with fewer advantages than the child sitting beside them.
Those are the students with the least room for the system to come up short.
Not because they deserve more than Emma.
But because Emma has more places to turn.
Eli needs school to be one of his places.

The UnCommon Principle

Picture Eli one more time.
He's five years old. His backpack is almost as big as he is, and his feet barely touch the floor.
He doesn't know what the foundation formula is. He doesn't know what the State Board requested or what lawmakers will eventually appropriate.
He just knows the child sitting beside him can read the book.
And he can't.
That's where the school-funding debate eventually lands.

Not in Jefferson City.
Not on a spreadsheet.
Underfunding public education lands in the gaps. And eventually, those gaps have names.
Eli won't know whether Missouri fully funded its schools.
He'll only know whether someone was there when he needed help.

Educational Shame – Dan Wehmer

This is a Republican newspaper.

We are registered to this political affiliation with the state.

However, for the first time in decades, there is some embarrassment in saying this.

Actually, a lot of embarrassment.

Last week, the Missouri State Board of Education, a Republican-controlled group primarily appointed by Gov. Mike Kehoe, rendered a decision to do two things. First was approval of an "A to F" grading framework for public-school districts with financial consequences attached for perceived failure. Second was to recommend a freeze on state revenue for public schools, essentially underfunding them. As a result, an already underfunded foundation formula will see its shortfall rise.

To us, public education shouldn't be a political football. But in Missouri, it apparently is.

After his election in November 2024, Kehoe intentionally appointed an education board that doesn't care for public schools. Some members and their children didn't and don't attend them. That loathe is exposed when new funding for private schools, via vouchers, becomes a priority, while a constitutional obligation to fund public education is ignored.

Fact is, roughly 92 percent of Missouri's children are educated in public schools. In turn, the recent decision by the state's education board to underfund those schools certainly cuts opportunities for those children.

Seymour will be a victim. So will Fordland.

So will every rural school in our state, schools that currently struggle to hire and retain teachers, fund day-to-day operations, maintain extracurricular programs and provide opportunities to our children.

In virtually every Missouri community with 20,000 or fewer residents, the school is the largest employer, so with the cuts in state funding — along with likely future cuts per the ridiculous grade-card mandate that will punish smaller schools — also lost will be jobs, lots of them.

Here in Seymour, they are cherished jobs that provide health insurance and retirement. Moreover, a majority of those jobs are filled by non-certified staff, folks who live in the communities where their schools are located. Replacement jobs don't exist. For certified staff, i.e. school administrators and teachers, the only option when jobs are lost is finding a new one, which more often than not will mean leaving a rural community for an urban one.

What the state's education board and Kehoe obviously don't understand is that public schools are the touchstone of community pride. Whether a resident came from a wealthy or poor family, whether they were an athlete or played in the band, whether they were a cheerleader or member of the FFA, whether they made stellar grades or barely passed — their prep alma mater is special to them.

In small communities, the public school is the straw that stirs the drink. It is the backbone of the local economy. It is the tie that binds.

Unfortunately, our governor has appointed a state board of education that seemingly wants public schools to fail. We suppose that's a stellar plan for wealthier Missouri residents who will enroll their children in private schools, typically families that reside in affluent suburban areas.

But for the masses, and for the communities that rely on public schools to churn their local economy and educate their children, it's a plan bent on the disintegration of a system that's made our country the greatest in the world, one that provides a free public education to every child, regardless of their geographic location or economic status.

Shame on the Missouri State Board of Education for its actions last week.

Shame on Gov. Mike Kehoe for putting this plan in motion, likely at the request of mega donors and special-interest groups that seem to set his agenda and use him as a puppet.

And shame on any Republican legislator who supports this nonsense, flying a political flag instead of prioritizing public schools and the children they serve.

We agree that state government has a spending problem. Much of that waste exists in Jefferson City. Legislators should start there instead of starving rural Missouri and its schools.

Before you cast a ballot on Nov. 3 for a candidate seeking a state office, find out his or her stance on the recent decision by our state's education board.

Process that answer, then determine how it impacts you, your family, your neighbors and the people you care about.

Then vote accordingly.

Schilling Technical Education Grant Program

The Schilling Technical Education Grant Program, supporting technical and vocational education programs in Barton, Dade and Jasper counties, is now open for application. Funded by the Clinton and Nancy Schilling Community Fund, the $205,000 grant program will provide grants of up to $50,000 to eligible nonprofits, including schools and municipal organizations, serving the tri-county area.

Funding priorities include:

- Equipment for classrooms or hands-on education
- Curriculum
- Continuing-education stipends for educators
- Expenses for students to attend trade shows, competitions or conferences
- Facility renovations
- Capital requests (if nearing the end of a capital campaign)

Agencies can begin the application process at cfozarks.org/applyforgrants. Applications are due Wednesday, Oct. 21.

Learn more at cfozarks.org.

LEARN MORE





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