

MISSOURI NEA's STATE BOARD REPORT

Notes from the October 4, 2007 State Board of Education Report

President Dr. Russell Thompson called the meeting to order.

Board member Derio Gambaro took the oath of office. He will serve until the Missouri Senate convenes to consider his appointment. Eric Langhorst was recognized as the Missouri Teacher of the Year for 2007-2008. Mr. Langhorst is a social studies teacher in the Liberty School District.

Missouri Preschool Project Increases Reading Scores in Primary Grades

MNEA member JoAnn Ford of Maplewood-Richmond Heights reported on the Missouri Preschool Project program (MPP). Denise Perry was featured in a video about the program. Maplewood-Richmond Heights have tracked their MPP students and compared them to students who did not attend MPP. MPP students showed impressive gains in reading. Mound City reported 100% of students who attended their preschool project read at grade levels in first and second grade compared to 50% or less of the students who did not attend the preschool. All presenters advocated for the state to allow preschool students to count toward Average Daily Attendance. This would enable them to serve more children in their district.

JoAnne Ralston, DESE early childhood education director, reported that last year 50 applications for new MPP programs were received. There were only enough funds to accept 8 programs. Information on applying for 2008-09 will be posted on the DESE website March-May of 2008.

Board Discusses Charter School Report

During the 2006-07 school year, twenty-three charter schools were in operation within the boundaries of the Kansas City and St. Louis districts only, as determined by law. Charter School students are required to take the MAP state Assessment. Some schools had good scores, others did not.

Paideia Academy was one of the charter schools which had test scores below the scores of St. Louis Public Schools. Paideia Academy had applied for renewal. State law does not allow the board to revoke the charter of a school as long as its application is complete. Their application was complete, so the board had to approve the renewal of their charter. Peter Herschend suggested a legislative change is needed to provide policy tools to use when charter schools do not perform. He went on to say charter schools are using public funds and there should be accountability for the public funds.

Without funding, the state has not tracked or studied the effectiveness of charter schools for the last few years. Derio Gambaro pointed out that state statutes require such a study every two years. The legislature did not provide funding for the study. The 2009 DESE budget once again requests funds for such a study.

Jocelyn Strand, DESE director of A+/Charter schools, reported enrollments in charter schools are relatively flat in Kansas City, while enrollment is growing each year in St. Louis. Both areas have new schools which opened this year, but none of the new schools met their target enrollment. Charter schools have a higher enrollment in elementary schools. This may change as some charter schools are now adding or planning to add high school.

The Can! Academies in St. Louis help students earn their GED. The 300 students work or do service learning for half of the day. Most of the students are over 17 and have been out of school 2 years, with a fifth grade reading level and third grade math level. Students take the Plato assessment to determine what their educational needs are so an individualized education plan can be developed.

Fiscal Year 2009 Budget Request Sent to Governor

Board members received summaries of the 3 to 4 inch thick budget document. DESE is asking for a \$258.7 million increase over last year. \$121 million of the requested increase would fund the 2009 school foundation formula. Other programs for which increases were requested include: PAT, transportation, state fleet vehicle replacement, Title 1, MO Scholar Academy and MO Fine Arts Academy, A+ funds to provide textbook money, MO Preschool Program, MoVIP, technology including eMINTS, GED, early childhood special education, and teacher scholarships. VOTECH building improvement funds are requested but are not usually included in the budget. In 2008, no funds were approved for any school capital projects in the state. DESE is asking for an estimated \$29 million to fund the current year formula through June.

Budget request was approved as presented and will be sent to the governor.

Three Districts Identified as Financially Stressed

Craig, St. Louis City, and Cowgill, a K-8 district with 30 students, were the only districts identified as financially stressed this year.

A district is identified as financially stress when one of the following occurs:

- A) Negative balance in either the teachers or incidental funds
- B) Combined ending balance in the teachers and incidental funds is less than 3%
- C) Tax anticipation borrowing between Feb 1 and June 30. Many districts do tax anticipation borrowing from November to January, and that is not a problem because most of their revenue comes in January.

These districts must provide documentation of budget charges and solutions. The state board cannot close the district. DESE staff will provide guidance to financially stressed districts.

State National Assessment of Educational Programs (NAEP) Scores Are Positive

All Missouri groups showed improvement in the 2007 NAEP tests, therefore achievement gaps did not decrease. Math scores in grades 4 and 8 had fewer students below basic, and more proficient or advanced students. Missouri is one of only 14 states to make gains at both grade levels.

Reading scores for Missouri and the nation showed very little gain over the last several years in grades 4 and 8. More students with disabilities were included in the test this year. Missouri scores are slightly above the national average. For more information, go to www.dese.mo.gov/divimprove/naep/index.htm or www.nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard.

MNEA Defends Teaching License of Member

The State Board of Education refused to revoke a teacher's license despite a request for revocation brought by a school district. The special education teacher had been accused of abuse in the classroom. Missouri NEA first represented the teacher in a Children's Division investigation which found the allegations to be unsubstantiated. Despite that finding, the school district requested the teacher's license be revoked. Missouri NEA provided legal representation at the DESE hearing after which the State Board denied the district's request for revocation. Missouri NEA was there for this teacher and will be there for you when you need help!

The next meeting of the state board of education will be November 15-16 in St. Joseph. Missouri NEA will be there!

Respectfully submitted,

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