

Missouri NEA Missouri State Board of Education Report

*Notes from May 12, 2020 meeting of the Missouri State Board of Education
Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education*

Members of the state board met in person, with social distancing, in the Jefferson Building. The public was not allowed but could listen to the live audio stream. The Missouri National Guard is monitoring the Jefferson Building and doing health checks for all who enter. Most DESE employees are working remotely.

Board votes to allow exemptions to the August 24, 2020 school year start date

The state board voted to give Commissioner Vandeven authority to grant an exemption to the August 24 opening date for the 2020-21 school year to local school districts that apply. School districts must get community input with a public hearing at a minimum, explain how the exemption will benefit students, and how student health will be protected. Some health officials expect the virus to resurge in the fall which could disrupt school attendance.

MNEA note: Local association leaders should engage with their district to influence their district 2020-2021 calendar. Local association leaders need to monitor district plans to be sure staff are compensated for any additional working days.

Board votes to allow exemptions to the 120 clock-hour requirement for summer school in 2020

The state board voted to give Commissioner Vandeven authority to grant an exemption to the minimum 120 clock-hour requirement for summer school held in the summer of 2020. Local education agencies can apply and demonstrate that this waiver is necessary to better serve students. Districts must explain how the exemption will benefit students, and how student health will be protected. Area supervisors will monitor district summer schools to ensure students receive feedback from teachers whether in person or through distance learning.

Board hears results of district survey on internet connectivity

Survey results estimate 23% of Missouri students lack sufficient internet access. Affordability of internet access is the most common issue, but limited cell coverage and lack of devices are also issues. Districts reported extending Wi-Fi outside of school buildings, giving hotspots to students, extending Wi-Fi at partner/community buildings, and putting Wi-Fi on school buses. Many districts would like to implement or expand one or more of these practices. Three hundred and fifty school districts provided devices to students in some grade levels. Seventy-seven districts listed Wi-Fi enabled devices for students as their greatest connectivity need.

Board approves Missouri Perkins V plan for career and technical education

The Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) provides \$23 million in federal funding to Missouri to increase the quality of technical education. The new Perkins plan increases stakeholder involvement, requires a Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment every two years, enhances efforts to serve special populations, and encourages innovation. Additional information and supporting reports can be found at <https://dese.mo.gov/college-career-readiness/career-education/perkins-act>.

Board approves definition of teacher assistant

Missouri NEA has been working with DESE to create policies that make it easier for paraprofessionals to become certified teachers. Completing student teaching has been a significant barrier. The revised definition states a teacher assistant is “an individual who is serving in a classroom under the

supervision of a certificated teacher with responsibilities comparable to a certificated teacher in a public school or accredited nonpublic school setting.”

If a paraprofessional’s job meets this definition of teacher assistant, and other specified requirements are met, a paraprofessional can complete student teaching while doing their job. They must complete all student teaching requirements and their supervising teacher must hold the same certification that the paraprofessional is seeking.

Board hears report on CARES Act

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act includes an Education Stabilization Fund that provides Missouri with approximately \$265 million in one-time funding for preK-higher education with clear priorities to respond to the immediate needs of schools, build capacity to educate students during disruption, and address the digital divide and access needs of students. The Elementary and Secondary School Emergency funds (\$208 million) are allocated through Title I formulas but without Title 1 restrictions on expenditures. Local education agencies must provide equitable services to non-public schools who apply for relief support, though non-public schools will not directly receive money. Districts can use these funds for expenses incurred after March 13, 2020. MNEA encourages local association leaders to engage district leaders around how the district will use these funds.

DESE will use its authority to allocate 10% of the state package (\$20 million) to address digital access needs, provide teacher training on distance learning and social/emotional support for teachers and students, and identify learning gaps as schools open. DESE will prioritize addressing internet access and equipping educators to mitigate inequity for student usage.

Members of the Board engaged in animated conversation about providing teachers with the tools they need to move into new models of instruction and envisioning what Missouri schools might evolve into because of the pandemic. The Commissioner expressed gratitude and praise for Missouri teachers and their efforts.

In other business, the board:

- Heard report on DESE Covid-19 response. Commissioner Vandeven shared efforts to improve DESE coordination with other state agencies, i.e. local health departments, when offering guidance to local districts.
- Recertified the Joint Executive Governing Board for the Normandy Schools Collaborative, and reappointed the following four members to the governing board: Sara Foster, Anthony Neal, Sheila Grimes Williams, and Karen Pierre. A fifth person will be appointed later.
- Appointed Dr. Tammy Moore to MACCE. Moore represents the Missouri Association of Colleges for Teacher Education. She is the certification officer for Lindenwood University’s School of Education. Her resume does not include K-12 experience.
- Approved fiscal year 2021 trust fund budgets for the Missouri School for the Blind, the Missouri School for the Deaf, and Missouri Schools for Severely Disabled.
- Heard a report on current education-related bills that the Missouri legislature is considering. Please see MNEA’s Legislative Update for information, at www.mnea.org.

The next meeting of the Missouri State Board of Education will be June 9, 2020. If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact Rebeka McIntosh or Ann Jarrett at 800-392-0236. Details of state board agenda items can be found at <http://dese.mo.gov/state-board-education/agendas-minutes>.

Respectfully submitted,
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