



2024 MSTA

EDUCATION POLICY PRIORITIES

“A general diffusion of knowledge and intelligence being essential to the preservation of the rights and liberties of the people, the general assembly shall establish and maintain free public schools for the gratuitous instruction of all persons in this state within ages not in excess of twenty-one years as prescribed by law.” Missouri Constitution Article IX, Section 1(a).

STATE ISSUES

Supporting Educators for Recruitment and Retention

Raising Education Professional Salaries:

- **MSTA supports** a comprehensive program utilizing both legislation and the appropriations process to increase all public education employees' salaries and raise the minimum teacher salary to \$45,000. Funds must be available to help districts with salary schedule compression.
- **MSTA supports** continued state funding of the Career Ladder program and increased award amounts to program participants, allowing educators to earn an additional stipend for engaging students in activities that enrich the student, school, and community. MSTa supports the expansion of eligible criteria to earn Career Ladder hours.

Missouri's inadequately paid professionals are expected to deliver student performance results that are above average. While states surrounding Missouri continue to increase teacher pay, Missouri falls further and further behind national trends in teacher compensation.

Educator Safety and Student Accountability:

- **MSTA supports** teacher certification programs providing coursework and training in classroom and behavior management which will help empower educators with techniques and strategies to address smaller behavior issues so that they don't become larger issues that impact all students.
- **MSTA supports** clear and consistently applied discipline policies for student behavior that prioritize safe and productive learning environments for all students and education employees. Students should be held responsible and accountable for maintaining a safe school environment.
- **MSTA supports** increased involvement and responsibility by parents for their children's attendance, performance, and behavior in public schools.

Missouri teacher surveys conducted by MSTa consistently show that the leading reason teachers consider leaving the profession are disrespect, student behavior, the lack of classroom support. These issues go beyond classroom management, and impact not only education staff, but other students in classrooms as well. According to the MSTa Educator Wellness survey, the leading factor for educator stress was student behavior.

Foundation Formula and Transportation Funding:

In 2022, the state legislature fully funded the school foundation formula, as well as the transportation reimbursement. The legislature is legally obligated to fully fund Missouri's students, including full payments for reimbursable transportation costs to allow the best possible public schools in communities across the state.

- **MSTA opposes** lawmakers slipping back into the past practice of underfunding public education in Missouri.

Assessment and Evaluation Reform:

The single biggest factor in the success of students is the teacher. MSTa believes that teacher input is vital to the continued success of our students. Local districts must have the freedom to meet the needs of their communities without being controlled by state or federal education departments.

- **MSTA supports** the use of locally developed assessments to improve instruction.
- **MSTA supports** local control of public education by the district board of education and autonomy of the local school district to develop and adopt curriculum, assessments, evaluations, and other programs to meet educational goals.
- **MSTA opposes** any plan that would use student grades, student class performance or student performance on standardized tests as the single criteria to measure the merit of the teacher.

FEDERAL ISSUES

Retirement and Social Security:

- **MSTA opposes** any state or federal proposal to group the teachers' retirement system funds with Social Security. In addition, the association opposes provisions that deprive teachers of their earned social security benefits.
- **MSTA opposes** the Government Pension Offset as well as the Windfall Elimination Provision.

Federal Influence in Education:

- **MSTA supports** requiring existing funding and future increases in federal dollars be delivered directly to the local school district whenever possible and increased focus on distributing federal dollars back to the classroom.

LOCAL CONTROL

- **MSTA opposes** legislative actions involving inter-district choice. Open enrollment fails to serve the needs of all students in the community to receive a quality education, increasing student mobility while creating further funding inequities.
- **MSTA supports** each school district developing a written policy for transfer and assignment of students within a district and to any other school district.
- **MSTA supports** public charter school expansion when charters are granted by the local school board within an existing accredited Missouri public school district and requires all members of a public charter school board to be residents of the district in which the charter school serves. Charter school expansion should include requirements that charter schools have the same certification and compensation standards of other schools in the district, and tenure status should not be reduced or lost as a result of teaching in the public charter school.
- **MSTA supports** expanding high speed internet access.

Teacher Retirement:

A secure and stable defined-benefit retirement program is vital to recruiting and retaining highly qualified and effective educators. Actuarially sound improvements to the system continue to strengthen the Missouri public educators' financial futures. Transitioning work after retirement from a limit on the number of hours worked to an earnings limit for Public School Retirement System (PSRS) will further simplify burdensome requirements on employees and districts.

MSTA OPPOSES

- **MSTA opposes** federal supersession over state and local responsibility for public education, including assessments that set standards and drive curriculum.
- **MSTA opposes** any proposal to eliminate or weaken the teacher tenure law.
- **MSTA opposes** limiting the ability of employees to discuss working conditions with their employer.
- **MSTA opposes** school vouchers, education tax credits, or education savings accounts, that would divert public money to pay for homeschooling or private school tuition.
- **MSTA opposes** merit pay, including the use of standardized test scores or other subjective criteria as a measurement of teacher performance or to determine further salary increases.
- **MSTA opposes** undefined liquidated damage clauses in teacher contracts.