

WINTER 2010



MARE

Our goal is to work in cooperation with all other education organizations, but our programs and effort will be designed to meet the specific needs of schools in rural Missouri.

Please copy and share this newsletter with board members and other school staff.

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MARE Calendar **2010-2011**

February 24-26, 2011
Annual MARE Conference
Resort at Port Arrowhead
Lake Ozark, MO

May 2, 2011
Board Meeting
Jefferson City
10:00 a.m.

June 1 & 2, 2011
Custodial Workshop
St. James R-I
St. James, MO

June 14 & 15, 2011
Custodial Workshop
Naylor R-II
Naylor, MO

June 28 & 29, 2011
Custodial Workshop
New Franklin R-I
New Franklin, MO

Rural School District Summit

Looking to the future to review current trends/options that Rural School Districts have should statewide consolidation become a legislative priority.

When: Monday, March 14, 2011

Where: Jefferson City

WATCH FOR FORTHCOMING DETAILS

“Could the Consolidation of Rural Schools Become a Legislative Issue in Missouri?”

In response to the revolutionary cause of 1775, Paul Revere, on the way to Lexington, Massachusetts, rode along the countryside, stopping at each house to proclaim, “The British are coming, The British are coming!” In service to the rural school districts of Missouri, the Missouri Association of Rural Education (MARE) believes the time is now, to sound the alarm for local communities, their school districts, as well as for local and state policy makers to become more knowledgeable of the value of rural schools in this state.

Craig Wood, a professor of educational leadership at the University of Florida, provided testimony, in the fall of 2005, telling legislators that you have two choices – you can raise taxes or consolidate schools. The question asked at the time, “Could the consolidation of rural school districts become a legislative issue in Missouri?”

The education working group of the Senate’s Rebooting Government panel recently considered ideas for saving/eliminating program funding. Most of the ideas generated were devoted to elementary and secondary education. A Kansas City area Senator Victor Callahan stated that Missouri could save more than \$65 million annually by changing the way money is distributed to small school districts and districts with declining attendance. Eliminating such provisions might give school districts an incentive to consider consolidation to cut costs, several lawmakers said. Senator Jane Cunningham reported that studies have shown that the “sweet spot” for efficiency in schools districts is 7,000 pupils. She also noted that only 54 of the 522 school districts have 4,000 or more students. (Reported by Rudi Keller writer for the Columbia Tribune). “Could the consolidation of rural school districts become a legislative issue in Missouri?”

At the MARE 2005 Conference, Greg Malhoit of the Rural School and Community Trust provided five suggestions that Missouri rural school

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districts needed to consider in helping to head off efforts to consolidate rural schools.

Be prepared for a major push for school consolidation; it could be imminent. The price of being small and remaining small is constant vigilance because the forces of consolidation are never far below the surface. Conditions in Missouri are particularly ripe for a major push for consolidation of small and rural schools because of the convergence of three forces:

Missouri has a tight fiscal environment where there is little or no support for raising revenue to meet higher education costs. At the local level support for property tax increases is also diminishing.

The movement for higher education standards fueled by NCLB and elevated state standards is asking rural school to vastly improve student outcomes.

The third force in 2005 was the equity and adequacy lawsuit that had been filed in Missouri. It was noted that it had been the experience in other states that the first place policymakers tend to seek out savings is cutting “unnecessary or inefficient” education spending. In the minds of many policymakers, rural schools with their higher costs, represent “fat” that can be trimmed.

These forces have the potential to create the “perfect consolidation storm” that will put at risk the future of many small rural schools and rural school districts.

Be proactive in educating policymakers, the media and the general public of the value of rural schools.

It is critical that every rural district work to explain how rural schools benefit students, communities, and ultimately the entire State of Missouri.

Build and work effectively with coalitions. Even with MARE and other education groups working together, one should beware of potential fault lines that may develop. Again, experience from other states shows that urban/rural/suburban coalitions that may work well initially, can and do divide when it comes time to craft remedies. The key is to make sure that whatever remedies are adopted by state policymakers do not create winners and losers – just winners.

While litigation may aid in efforts to get equitable and adequate funding for schools, ultimately, rural schools must win in the legislature. The history of school finance reform shows that rural schools might win in court yet when it comes to adopting meaningful remedies that help rural schools, they can lose what they value most – their size and location. The key defense is to have an ongoing legislative effort in place that promotes rural schools and prevents consolidation.

Engage and activate rural people and communities to support small rural schools in the policy arena.



MARE Conference 2011

February 24-26

Resort at Port Arrowhead

“Rural Education: Leadership for Improved Teaching and Learning”

Program Schedule

Thursday – February 24

1:15 p.m.	Opening Remarks/Color Presentation/Pledge
1:20 p.m.	Commissioner of Education Dr. Chris Nicastro
1:45 p.m.	General Session -- Mickes Goldman and Associates – Legal Update
3:40 p.m.	General Session -- Western Missouri Cyber Crimes Task Force – Student texting, sexting, cyberbullying, etc.
5:30 p.m.	Opening Reception and Exhibitor Displays

Friday – February 25

7:15 a.m.	<i>Breakfast</i>
8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.	Exhibits Open
8:30 a.m.	Small Group Sessions
	Roof Asset Management – Matt Wegenka/Gary Arthaud
	Curriculum Accountability: Who’s Responsibility Is It? – Dr. Andy Arbeitman/Stacie Stryhal/Trish Burkeen
	The Health of Your Facilities – Dave Thompson
	Understanding Health Care Reform – Mary Nash/Joy VanDyke
	Leadership Practices for Successful School Superintendent Leadership – Dr. David Wilson
	Facility Improvements in Tough Financial Times – Joel Gundelfinger
9:30 a.m.	Small Group Sessions
	Capital Facilities Improvement – L.J. Hart & Company
	Teacher Recruitment, Induction and Retention – Dr. Jack Green/Dr. Kevin Cooper
	School Security Systems Solutions – Chad Sellers/Nate Dowling
	Biomass Energy Savings Projects and Funding Sources – Peter Maki/Jon McCoy
	Legal Issues facing Rural Educators and IDEA – Heidi Atkins Lieberman/James Thomeczek
	Consumer Driven Health Plans – Anthony Hartsfield/Mark Iglehart
10:45 a.m.	General Session – Tom Durkin (Attorney General’s Office) – Outlining Missouri’s Sunshine Law
12:00 Noon	<i>Lunch</i>
1:15 p.m.	General Session – Steve Yoakum (PSRS) – Missouri Retirement Issues
2:45 p.m.	. Keynote Speaker – Kent A. Rader – “Let It Go, Just Let It Go!”
4:05 p.m.	Missouri Legislative Update – SAC Lobbyist
4:40 p.m.	. Annual MARE Membership Meeting
6:30 p.m.	. Annual Rural Education Awards <i>Banquet</i>

Saturday – February 26

7:15 a.m.	<i>Breakfast</i>
8:30 a.m.	Small Group Sessions
	4-Day School Week – Dr. Chris Blackburn
	Missouri Teaching Jobs, Finding the Right People – Amy Youngblood
	Making Classroom Observations Easier with GoObserve – Julie Barchenski
	Educational Adequacy the Foundation of Planning – Karen Johnson
	Out of Books...Into Life – Bonnie Seymour
	They Want to do WHAT? – Charles Naas
9:30 a.m.	General Session. – Budgeting for the Future – Alan Crader and Roger Adamson
10:45 a.m.	General Session – Guin Martin and Associates – Legal Issues
12:00 Noon	– Conference Adjournment
	(16 Hour School Board Training Sessions -- Thursday Afternoon, Friday all day, Saturday Morning)

Kids Online: Parent's Guide to Internet Safety

Going Beyond Filter Software to Remain Safe Online

By [Christy Matte](#), About.com Guide

The headlines and statistics about Internet predators can be unnerving. It's difficult enough being a parent without worrying about Internet safety as well. Luckily, parenting a child online is not so different from parenting a child in the "real world." The key is to remember that the Internet is lot more like the real world than like television, to which it is so often compared.

Parents often set curfews and have rules about visiting a friend's house without an adult present. They expect to meet friends, boyfriends, and girlfriends in person. They want to know where a child is going and what they're going to be doing before they leave the house. When kids are young or if they are going further from home, there is usually a chaperone present. Parents frequently ground their children to take away privileges for not obeying. You may or may not enforce similar rules in your home, but they are an excellent starting place for creating a positive and safe online experience.

Talk to your children. Much like anything else, it's important that your child knows what your expectations are, understands the basics of [Internet safety](#)¹, and feels comfortable talking to you about problems and concerns.

Set guidelines. Create a set of guidelines about when and how long your children can use the computer. Be clear about what they can and cannot do online. If they need to complete chores or homework first, outline that as well. Discuss things like instant messaging, chat rooms, blogs, and social networking sites ([MySpace](#)², [Facebook](#)³), [virtual worlds](#)⁴ (club Penquin⁵, RuneScape, Gaia, Webkinz⁶). Work out a contract with your children about household expectations and have everyone sign it. Don't forget to come up with consequences for breaking the rules.

Follow through. It is important to stick with your rules. It's true that kids need boundaries and, as much as they fight you on it, count on you to set them. Set a timer for online activity. Use monitoring software that tracks where they are going and what they are doing.

Pay attention. It's not enough for your computer to be in a central location in your home if you're not paying attention to what your kids are doing. Make a habit of pulling up a chair and talking to your child about what they're doing. If you expect to know who your kids are with and where they go when they leave the house, this is no different.

Read more about it. If you ask your child what they're doing and you don't understand the answer, it's time to read more about it. Visit the website if possible, search for related news about it and see if you can find an article here on About.com or another site. You can even [email the Family Computing Guide](#)⁷ to ask. Whatever path you take, it's important to understand what your kids are going when they're online.

Join the fun. This is no different from attending a sporting match or chaperoning a dance or field trip. If your child has taken an interest in an online community such as Webkinz, Neopets, MySpace, Facebook, etc., find out what they like about it. Sign up for your own account and add your child as a "friend." This allows you to have a better sense of what they're doing and what sort of things they're coming in contact with, but it also shows your kids that you're interested in their activities.

Use available technology. There is no shortage of Internet Safety tools available to help you control, track and/or limit what your kids can say and do online. Take the time to learn about Internet filters, firewalls, monitoring software, [browsers for kids](#)⁸ and other tools. While they are not a replacement for strong parenting, they can help make your task easier, especially with younger children.

(Continued on page 7)

Recent Eighth Circuit Case Law:
A Lesson in What *Not to Do* in Disciplining Disabled Students

Alefia Mithaiwala
Teri Goldman
Thomas Mickes



Consider this: a high school principal suspends a disabled student on September 8 for fighting and bringing a pocket knife to school. He tells the student and his parent that the suspension is “until a hearing before the school board can be arranged.” **Problem number 1.** Then, because the student is disabled, the district’s special education director convenes a multidisciplinary team to conduct a manifestation determination on September 13. **Problem number 2.** The team finds that the student’s misconduct is unrelated to his educational disability (learning disabled). The team also agrees to change his educational placement to an after school alternative school, where he would receive only a portion of the educational services he received at the district’s high school. The special education director then informs the principal that, as of September 13, the student was “no longer suspended” because the IEP team changed his educational placement. **Problem number 3.**

The student remains in the alternative placement for 38 days until his IEP team changes his placement back to full time at the high school. In the meantime, the parent demands the hearing before the school board that the principal promised. The district responds that the student and parent are not entitled to such a hearing before the school board because there was no long term suspension. The parent then files suit in federal court, claiming that the alternative after school placement was a “constructive long term suspension” and triggered the district’s obligation to afford the parent and the student a hearing before the school board.

These are the facts of a recent Eighth Circuit decision, *Doe v. Todd Co. Sch. Dist.* Though the case involves a Minnesota School District, it is certainly feasible that a similar situation could land a Missouri school district in the same type of litigation. To avoid such a situation, certain precautions should be taken.

The first and most crucial mistake in the *Doe* case is that the high school principal issued a suspension for an indefinite and open-ended length of time. In Missouri, pursuant to RSMo. § 167.171, principals may only issue a suspension of 10 or less school days (commonly referred to as a short term suspension). Pursuant to the 1975 Supreme Court case of *Goss v. Lopez*, such short term suspensions require only minimal due process, and do not require a hearing before a district’s board of education. In Missouri, and also pursuant to RSMo. §167.171, only a district’s superintendent may issue any suspension longer than 10 school days (commonly referred to as a long term suspension), and only students issued a long term suspension are entitled to a hearing before the board of education.

If a Missouri principal issued an indefinite suspension similar to the one issued by the *Doe* principal, that suspension would be outside the bounds of his statutory authority. In addition, any promise of a board of education hearing, such as that promised in *Doe*, would be premature, unless and until the district’s superintendent issued a long term suspension.

The second issue in the *Doe* case involves the improper timing of a manifestation determination under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (“IDEA”). Under the IDEA, disabled students are entitled to a manifestation determination only when there is a decision to change placement through discipline. A disciplinary change of placement occurs in only one of three situations in Missouri: 1) a superintendent issues a long term suspension, 2) a board decides, after a hearing, to expel, or 3) after a series of short term suspensions, the district administratively determines that such short term suspensions have resulted in a pattern of removals. The *Doe* case does not indicate a pattern of removal. In fact, the court’s analysis clearly indicates that the manifestation determination was held because of the *anticipated* (although not yet issued) long term suspension. Unfortunately, holding a manifestation determination before it is legally required (i.e. before a decision for a disciplinary change of placement has been made) can have real consequences under the IDEA. If a premature manifestation determination is held and a student challenges the results by filing an IDEA due process request, the district will be unable to implement an after-imposed long term suspension and the student will return to his regular educational placement pending the due process hearing, pursuant to the IDEA’s “stay-put” provision. On the other hand, if the manifestation determination is properly held after the long-term suspension has been issued and the student challenges the results through due process, his stay-put placement will be the long-term suspension. Lesson learned: a principal should issue a short term suspension; the superintendent should quickly decide on and issue a long term suspension; and finally, within ten school days of the superintendent’s decision, the manifestation determination should be held.

The third critical issue raised by the *Doe* case involves a misunderstanding of the separate and distinct roles of the IEP team and the district’s administration in the discipline of disabled students. An IEP team has no authority to discipline. When a

Companies/Organizations	Contact	Phone Number
ABC Systems, Inc.	George Baker	(573) 348-5600
ACT, Inc	Rick Bryant	(847) 634-2560
Allied Bus Sales	Jeff Futrell	(800) 890462-0173
American Boiler Services, Inc.	Mike Hemphill, Dean Phillips	St. Louis (800) 235-5377 – Kansas City (888) 440-0382
American Trust Group Holding	S.L. Baker, Ray Shoaf	(573) 374-9991
Budget Plus Software	Leland Foster	(816) 847-6610
Capstone Insurors, Inc.	Kevin Krueger/JR Collins	(800) 201-3249
Center for Distance/Independent Study	Kristi D Smalley	(573) 882-4054
Central State Bus Sales	Jeff Reitz	(636) 343-6050
Claim Care Inc.	Stacy L. Dye	(660) 327-5308
Constellation NewEnergy Gas Division, LLC	Larry D. Kilpatrick	(800) 829-3900
Control Technology & Solutions	Scott Ririe, Gina Bicknese	636) 230-0843
Dake Wells Architects	Brandon Dake, Andrew Wells	(417) 831-9904
Dickinson Hussman Architects	Pamel Erb	(314) 727-8500
ERateProgram, LLC	Richard Senturia	(314) 854-1328
Forrest T. Jones & Company	Terence O'Malley	(816) 968-0612
Forrest T. Jones & Company	Gary Hawkins	(660) 247-3967
Forrest T. Jones & Company	Kenneth Wilson	(417) 429-3957
Forrest T. Jones & Company (LTC)	Mark Iglehart, Harvey Day	(800) 821-7303
Foundation for Educational Services, Inc. (SOCS)	Stacey Musil	(800) 850-8397
George K. Baum & Company	Greg Brickner, Dick Bartow	(800) 821-7195
Guin, Martin & Mundorf, LLC	Duane Martin, Shellie Guin, Barney Mundorf	Kansas City (816) 333-1700
Honeywell	Joel Gundelfinger	(636) 327-6987
Insurance Benefits Consultants, LLC	Jay Boice	(417) 455-6000
Inter-State Studio, Inc	Roger Kimball	(660) 826-1764
Kromm, Rikimaru & Johansen, Inc.	David Kromm. AIA	(314) 432-7020
Lindenwood University	John Feely	(636) 949-4481
L.J. Hart and Company	Larry J. Hart, Roger Adamson	(800) 264-4477
McKinstry Co., LLC	Jon M. McCoy	(913) 515-0711
Mickes Goldman O'Toole, LLC	Tom Mickes, Teri Goldman	(314) 878-5600
Midwest Bus Sales	Jack Woolfe	(913) 422-1000
Midwest Digital Systems	Nathan Dowling	(816) 439-4979
Midwest Transit Equipment	Ken Pearce, Stephen Ball	(800) 933-2412
Mike Keith Insurance	Jeanie Cunningham	(660) 885-5581
Missouri Consultants for Education	Bill Ray	(816) 322-0870
Missouri Energy Center	Bernard Thompson	(573) 751-7466
Missouri Retired Teachers Assn.	Jim Kreider	(877) 366-6782
Missouri Rural Water Association	John Hoagland	(417) 876-7258
M.U.S.I.C. / Arthur J. Gallagher & Co.	Gary VanMeter	(636) 916-3433
National City Insurance Group	Kerry Hoffman/Lonnie Thompson	(314) 835-1050
National Financial Brokerage	Gerald W. Littell	(573) 289-4211
Naught-Naught Insurance Agency	Bruce Gentry	(573) 874-3102
New System	David Thompson	(314) 420-5742
Region VIII Educational Service Center (TIPS)	David Mabe, Kim Thompson	(866) 839-8477
Sam A Winn & Associates Architects	Sam A. Winn, Terry Holder	(417) 882-7821
Septagon Construction Company	R. Thomas Howard, Dennis Paul	(800) 773-5995
Sitton Construction Group	Doug Sitton	(314) 412-5677
Software Technology, Inc	Dan Snodgrass	(800) 844-0884
Southern Bus & Mobility, Inc.	Tom Gerbes	(866) 327-1600
Thomeczek & Brink, LLC	James G Thomeczek	(314) 997-7733
TREMCO	Matt Wegenka	(417) 894-4934
Tueth Keeney Cooper Mohan Jackstadt	Pete Yelkovac	(314) 880-3600/(816) 448-3730
VIRCO Inc.	Luke Bligh	(314) 518-5973

(Parent's Guide to Internet Safety, Continued from page 4)

Do a little sleuthing. Use your browser history, cache and cookies to find out what sites your kids have been visiting. This is not to suggest that you should spy on your child, but a spot check now and again is a good idea. Enter their names (including nicknames) into popular search engines to see if they have public profiles on social networking sites. Do the same with your address and phone number. You might be surprised by how much of your personal information is online!

Watch for warning signals. A child who is reluctant to talk to you about what they're doing online or seems to be withdrawing from family and/or friends may have a problem. It can be easy to chalk up certain things to normal teenage behavior, but that doesn't mean you should ignore changes in your child's personality. Cyberbullying⁹ is just one experience that may cause your child to withdraw.

Know when to say, "No." If your child continually spends too much time online or ignores rules about what they can and cannot do, it may be time to pull the plug on the Internet as a sort of "virtual grounding." Although your child may disagree, they can survive without it. Make sure you're clear about why you're doing it and how long it will last. Consider what you'll do if they have a homework project that requires access, and remember that they may be able to use computers at school, the library, and a friend's house. They may even be able to browse the web on their cell phone.

Links in this article:

1. <http://familyinternet.about.com/od/computingsafetyprivacy/a/TeenMySpace.htm>
2. <http://familyinternet.about.com/od/computingsafetyprivacy/a/myspaceparent.htm>
3. http://familyinternet.about.com/od/sharingcommunicating/ss/Facebook_photo_privacy.htm
4. <http://familyinternet.about.com/od/websites/tp/virtualworldskids.htm>
5. <http://familyinternet.about.com/od/websitesforkids/fr/clubpenguinrev.htm>
6. <http://familyinternet.about.com/od/websites/fr/webkinzreview.htm>
7. <http://familyinternet.about.com/mpremail.htm>
8. http://familyinternet.about.com/od/computingsafetyprivacy/tp/browsers_for_kids.htm
9. <http://familyinternet.about.com/od/computingsafetyprivacy/a/cyberbully.htm>



**GET YOUR
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Midwest Transit wants your bus photo for their 2011 calendar!

ARE YOU PROUD OF YOUR SCHOOL BUS? Midwest Transit Equipment wants to show off your bus through their 2011 calendar! The top three selected winners will receive cash prizes, and their photos will be featured in the next calendar! Visit www.midwesttransit.com/photocontest for complete contest rules.



*By submitting a photo, you are granting Midwest Transit Equipment full permission to use your photo for advertising purposes not pertaining to this contest.

Kirk Alan Skoglund



2010 L.J. Hart & Company Scholarship Recipient

Kirk Skoglund is a graduate of the South Nodaway High School, Barnard, Missouri. He is currently attending Northwest Missouri State University at Maryville, Missouri, working on a major in Math Education with a minor in Psychology.

Kirk shares that teaching in a rural district is education at its best, and the essence of teaching is embodied in the rural areas. Rural educators establish personal connections with almost all their students and consequently, have a higher stake in their student's education. I want to have a personal connection with each one of my students learning about who they are and helping them develop into who they want to be.

During his time in high school at South Nodaway, Kirk was an integral part of Future Business Leaders of America serving in officer status his last two years. During his senior year Kirk was recognized at FBLA's State Leadership Conference for his outstanding work in three different areas.

One of his former teachers shares that because both of his parents work in rural public schools, he is going into the world of education with his eyes wide open to the positives and negatives. He is committed to teaching students in a rural area to appreciate math the way he does.

One of his college instructors shares that Kirk is the President of the Mathematical Association of America student chapter. Through his leadership, the organization, after dwindling for a couple years, is now thriving and healthy based in large part to Kirk's leadership and organization skills.

Congratulations to Kirk Skoglund, the 2010 L.J. Hart & Company Scholarship recipient.

(Recent Eighth Circuit Case Law — Continued from page 5)

disciplinary change of placement has occurred, it is the responsibility of relevant members of the IEP team only to determine whether the misconduct is a manifestation of the student's disability. If the team decides that it is *not* a manifestation, as the team did in *Doe*, the long-term suspension can and should be implemented. The IEP team's role at that juncture is only to determine what services are necessary to enable the student to continue to receive a free appropriate public education, so as to enable the child to continue to participate in the general education curriculum, although in another setting, and to progress toward meeting the student's educational goals. If the team determines that a change in placement is necessary, that decision does not "cancel" any long term suspension already issued.

In addition and in sum, the *Doe* case is a good reminder that *educational* changes of placement, as determined by a student's IEP team, stand separate and apart from *disciplinary* changes of placement imposed by a district's administration. In that same vein, the *Doe* case also gives good reason to examine your district's practices to ensure that IEP teams are not prematurely conducting manifestation determinations or improperly making discipline decisions.

¹. The Eighth Circuit encompasses Missouri as well as Arkansas, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota.

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Missouri Association of Rural Education
Legislative Platform
2010-2011

State Issues:

1. **Supports** efforts to work with the Governor, the Missouri Legislature, and DESE to identify long-term solutions for full funding of Missouri public education.
2. **Supports** increased appropriations for the public schools, which are sufficient to fully fund the foundation formula and further equalize support of each child in Missouri.
3. **Supports** the appropriate distribution of federal funds (i.e. Education Jobs) through the current funding formula with support for the Department of Education to enforce the language/intent of the bill, by not allowing the governor to supplant federal funds or reduce Missouri's current obligation to fund the formula.
4. **Supports** efforts for the restoration of formula shortfalls for FY10 and FY11 as well as cuts and/or withholdings of categorical funds including transportation, parents as teachers, career ladder, and support for local professional development centers.
5. **Supports** efforts for the restoration of funding for state services in particular the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) that because of fund reductions is under-staffed preventing needed support of rural school districts.
6. **Supports** increased funding for transportation to address the increasing operational costs and concerns for student safety.
7. **Supports** the on going evaluation of the effectiveness of the Dollar Value Modifier on rural school districts.
8. **Supports** legislation to increase funding for Small Schools Grant in order to expand the program to include districts with an ADA of 351 to 450+ with consideration being given to a District Size Modifier in the formula.
9. **Supports** legislation requiring the State to provide assistance to rural provisionally accredited and unaccredited school districts to aid those districts in returning to full accreditation status.
10. **Supports** legislation that defines the parameters of collective bargaining for public school employees while preserving the local boards' authority to make final decisions in the best interest of their respective districts.
11. **Supports** legislation to provide adequate educational resources (funding) for district summer school programs.
12. **Supports** legislation to expend the prohibition of punitive damages against political subdivisions; Extension of Sovereign Immunity protection to all employees and volunteers of political subdivisions, and legislation to Reverse the consequences of the Schoemhl Decision (Supreme Court ruling that spouses of claimants who die subsequent to their injury and whose death had nothing to do with the original compensated injury are entitled for continuation of benefits).
13. **Supports** legislation to assist districts (through funding) wishing to share staffs or programs.
14. **Supports** legislation exempting public schools from paying state motor fuel tax for fuel consumed by buses.
15. **Supports** legislation that would mandate the utilization of seat belts on school buses on the basis that scientific evidence can demonstrate a marked increase in student safety and such a mandate would be totally funded (by the State) to include all costs associated with such legislation. (Funding to include additional equipment, equipment upgrades, personnel, etc.)
16. **Supports** legislation restricting any political subdivision from abating existing taxes or re-directing potentially new taxes to another subdivision.
17. **Supports** legislation preventing further erosion of and shifting of tax burdens from business to individual taxpayers forcing school districts to adjust levies upward to recover revenues lost due to the adverse decisions of the State Tax Commission.
18. **Supports** legislation removing school districts from prevailing wage requirements.
19. **Supports** legislation that would allow Missouri voters to amend the State Constitution to provide for a simple majority approval of public school general obligation bond issues.
20. **Supports** legislation that provides state funding for mandated increases in the minimum teacher's salary in Missouri.
21. **Supports** legislation that would reverse/eliminate the newly enacted statutory legislation for all funding penalties related to summer school programs.
22. **Supports** legislation not allowing a school board member to file for re-election if the required 16 hours of board training had not been completed within three years.
23. **Supports** legislation allowing the local school district the option to provide a hiring incentive or salary schedule modification to attract/retain teachers based upon demonstrated need for teachers certified in identified shortage subject areas.
24. **Supports** the affordability/accessibility of healthcare.
25. **Supports** legislation for increased funding for the use/upgrade of technology, internet connection support of MOREnet, and alternative instructional options.

One Common Sense National Health Care Solution

Promote Health Savings Accounts

By Mark Iglehart, Assistant Vice President, Forrest T. Jones & Company

Whether you are an advocate of the Affordable Care Act, which was signed into law on March 23, 2010, or you oppose it, the reality remains that something was and continues to be needed to curb health care expenses. According to government estimates, **17%+ of our nation's gross domestic product is consumed by spending on health care.**

(www.governmentspending.com)

In addition to the high cost of health care and the dozens of items that make our nation's health care debate so complex and polarizing are two huge issues: **the Uninsured and Freedom of Choice.** How can you help address these issues at your district? If you haven't done so already, you should seriously consider **implementing a Qualified High Deductible Health Plan coupled with a Health Savings Account (H.S.A.) as your core medical plan for your district employees.** To be most effective the district should pay part of the premium savings into the employee's own H.S.A. bank account where they will control how it is utilized for their health care. We have seen this strategy work well for our clients over the past several years and for our own company plan where over 50% are now covered on the core H.S.A. option.

Without going into the nuts and bolts and **tax advantages of H.S.A.'s**, the bottom line is that when a person is spending their own money they are likely to pay more attention to their own health, health care expenses and treatment outcomes. In-network eligible preventative care is covered at 100% on H.S.A. plans, which provides another good incentive to help people focus on wellness too.

Look before you Leap. If you are not ready to go "all in" with your H.S.A. strategy, you can still offer your employees and retirees one or two "buy-up" plan options (depending on your carrier) with traditional co-pays for doctor visits and prescriptions. You'll want your agent to provide solid benefit-cost analysis and supporting data to make a strong case for the move. Then, once you make your decision your agent should also provide hands on implementation and ongoing service to ensure effective participant and payroll supervisor education and buy-in for the long-term success of your program.

How do H.S.A's impact the above mentioned two national issues? *The uninsured.* H.S.A. premiums are significantly lower than comparable traditional PPO or HMO plans. Thus, more individuals can afford to obtain and maintain coverage in the future. *Freedom of choice.* Individuals can choose their own medical providers and pay them directly from their own tax-free H.S.A. funds. For more expensive care, you would still likely want to stay within your carrier's preferred network to benefit from their negotiated discounts and lower out of pocket limits.

Think H.S.A first. Make 2011 the year you do your part to address true health care reform.

(Anthony Hartsfield, MARE Member from the Pemiscot R-III School District will be presenting "Consumer Driven Health Plans: Advantages and Responsibilities" at the MARE Conference on February 25 at 9:30.)

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Reflections on The Winter of 2003

SNOW DAYS

By Randy Dewar

Central Missouri State University (presently Central Missouri University)

(Reprint of previous MARE Newsletter article)

As we face another Missouri winter we can reflect on one of the toughest decisions forces upon a Superintendent of Schools—THE SNOW DAY.

The winter of 2003-2004 is off to a snowy start. As always, there has been heavy snow in many areas and little or no snow in other regions. While the state has not experiences a massiv³ ice storm, like in 2002, icy roads have still been a factor in decisions to cancel school or delay opening in the morning.

A feature in The School Administrator, February 2003, presented some common sense thoughts on what to do and what not to do in calling a snow day. The response from readers across America was surprising. Missouri school leaders are not the only superintendents worrying over snow day decisions. Some thoughts, gained over 20 years of experience, are most appropriate for the rural superintendent who is moving children over many miles of country roads. Our city/suburban counterparts will have limited understanding of the challenges of gravel and even dirt roads with one-lane bridges that, if plowed at all, are plowed by the resident farmer who lives nearby.

The short and slick summary of the article, "The Snow Day: One Tough Call" from The School Administrator is a good reference for rural superintendents in the future.

Eight Common Mistakes

Mistake #1. Calling off school on the basis of a weather forecast

The weathercaster can be wrong. When he is, he can laugh it off with his next forecast. The superintendent who called off school can't laugh it off. The television weather report may cover weather that is sufficiently far away to make the forecast becomes reality before calling off school.

Mistake #2. Delaying an obvious call until the morning

If the weather is already bad and the roads are getting worse, call off school the night before. This saves parents from last minute childcare concerns and it saves the superintendent from getting up so early the next morning to make a snow day call that was obvious the previous night.

Mistake #3. Failing to recognize the dangers of extreme cold

Sometimes it is too cold for school. Marginal roads slow bus routes. Children at the end of the route are waiting longer and longer for the bus to arrive. Extreme cold with wind chill places these children at risk of frostbite. It is also important to be sure that buses will start in the extreme cold.

Mistake #4. Passing the responsibility to someone else.

The decision to close school, or not, belongs to the superintendent. Enjoy your exalted position. Stand up and make the call. Passing the blame/credit on to someone else will not win friends. People will still hold you responsible.

Mistake #5. Getting stuck in the snow and being unable to call in to cancel school.

Our friends in the city can rely on a quick cell phone call to communicate. They may not understand that in rural areas a cell phone tower may be too far away or hidden by hills and trees. Be careful where you roam on a snowy day. Better yet, have other people check things out for you. Make sure that you can communicate your decision.

Mistake #6. Making a decision without sufficient road reports from a variety of locations.

There are too many miles of back roads for one person to check. Have people in strategic locations check out their own area and report back to you. Remember that conditions in one end of the district may be totally different than those in the opposite end of the district.

It is wise to check with neighboring districts to see if they have made a decision. There is comfort in numbers.

Naturally, the superintendent will check with the person in charge of transportation. One big difference here is that, in rural areas, the superintendent may well be in charge of transportation (and everything else).

(Continued on page 23)

SOME THOUGHTS ON PUBLIC FINANCE

By Larry J. Hart
President/CEO
L.J. Hart & Company

In the current economic situation, we sometimes hear school districts express their concern over how to pass a general obligation bond issue with the perceived voter reluctance to approve new spending. The needs of Missouri School Districts to finance new facilities, or improvements to their existing structures, have not decreased. In fact, there is possibly more need for new money General Obligation Bonds because facilities that are well maintained can serve to ease pressure on the Operating Funds and avoid emergency uses of these funds that could otherwise pay for salaries and more directly impact student achievement. An additional benefit to the District can be achieved when a General Obligation Bond Issue is utilized to pay off an existing Capital Facilities Lease, thereby freeing up the money budgeted to make the lease payments.

While there is no campaign strategy that will guarantee passage of a bond issue, voters are generally receptive when they are well informed about the reasons why the funds are needed, how the new issue will benefit the students, and the impact on their taxes. Even though the economy and subsequent reduction in state funding have caused numerous difficulties for School Districts and their patrons, some opportunities do surface that can become important parts of the campaign message. Interest rates remain at low levels; which means that some bond issues can be “no tax levy increase” proposals. Most general and sub contractors are eager for work, and the prices for projects continue to be very competitive. Many Districts have found that they can get much more for their money in these conditions. The public is increasingly aware of the state revenue circumstances and want to preserve a quality education program in their local school system, even when it means an operating levy or debt service fund levy increase. It is very important, though, to provide the details of how the money is to be used and what the impact

is on their individual tax bill. If the election fails, it still serves the Board and administration by educating the citizens about the district’s needs, which can prove to be very important for future attempts.

In order to get this information to the voters, campaign committees should be well organized and work hard to complete specific assignments. It is often better for the election effort to concentrate on the frequent voters, those individuals who consistently voted in previous elections. By using the information about who these persons are, the committee can avoid much wasted time, effort, and expense. It has been a proven method for achieving election success.



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To summarize this message, I would emphasize that school districts recognize where the economic downturn might lead in the event conditions continue at present levels or even get worse. Based upon these unfavorable projections, think in a proactive manner about what actions can occur locally to avoid the worst case future outcomes, and communicate the facts to the community. The familiar cliché “God helps those who help themselves” is applicable. One final postscript is to state that many are already in the midst of implementing these suggestions and we applaud and support those activities.

(Parent's Guide to Internet Safety, Continued from page 2)

In some places, the lack of community engagement has been the Achilles heel for school districts as schools often are not able to mobilize the citizen support they need at key moments in the political process. Building and sustaining this type of support is a major challenge for schools because it often is outside of their comfort zone; but it is absolutely essential, nevertheless.

In a paper (Rural School District Consolidation) issued by the National Rural Education Association Consolidation Task Force (2006), the report provided a review of the literature on rural school consolidation, definition of consolidation, addressing current research and issues related to consolidation with respect to school size, economies of scale and student achievement, the following points were summarized:

There should not be “forced” consolidation.

There is no “ideal” size for schools or districts.

“Size” does not guarantee success – good schools come in all sizes.

Small districts have better achievement, affective and social outcomes.

The larger a district becomes, the more resources are devoted to secondary or non-essential activities.

Local school officials should be wary of merging several smaller elementary schools, at least if the goal is improved performance.

After a school closure, out migration, population decline, and neighborhood deterioration are set in motion, and support for public education diminishes.

There is no solid foundation for the belief that eliminating school districts will improve education, enhance cost-effectiveness or promote equality.

There is a strong negative correlation between district size and student achievement in low-income populations.

The Missouri Association of Rural Education believes by *sounding the alarm* now, ALL of us can become better informed in order to take action on behalf of rural children and ensure quality educational opportunities in rural Missouri. *Forced closing or consolidating of rural schools based on misinformation and outdated notions of economies of scale, is unacceptable!!*

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4 Day School Week: How, When and Why

Dr. Chris Blackburn
Superintendent
Lathrop R-II School District

As a result of the 2009 legislative session, SB 291 created §171.029, RSMo that allows school districts some discretion with their school calendars. The number of required hours remained the same, but the total number of days required was changed from 174 to not less than 142. Under the old law, the maximum length of the day could only be 7 hrs, but under the new law it was extended to 8 hours. This new law brought about discussions across the state as the state financial situation became grim.

Lathrop R-II School District first discussed the 4 day school week during the school board retreat in August, 2009. Information was shared about the requirements of the new law, what the possible savings might be, what other states currently utilize a 4 day school week schedule, and what possible concerns accompany such a schedule. After the retreat, there wasn't much discussion for a while, but the seed had been planted. Building level administrators began thinking about it and discussing it informally with their staffs.

2009-2010 SY was very unsettling for school districts throughout the United States. While Missouri may have been better off financially than many other states, school districts throughout the state knew that times were bad, getting worse, and that our budgets would be affected. Articles were written every day about the doom and gloom of the state's financial status and the drastic cuts that were going to be taken. Those articles were shared with board and staff, discussed at monthly board meetings, and much of the information was shared in local newspaper articles or newsletters. It was important to be sure that everyone knew about the financial status of the state and how it would affect our local school district. We knew that changes and/or cuts were going to have to be made to the 2010-2011 school district budget. At the February, 2010 school board meeting, during budget discussion, the president of the board brought up the possibility of a need to look at all budgetary savings options, including the 4 day school week. So, the process began.

As we all know, change can be challenging, but ours would probably be more challenging due to the limited time before the end of the school year. So, we began quickly. Administrators began working at the building level with their staffs to determine the changes that would be necessary and their affects upon the students. Building level staffs worked closely throughout the process and the teaching staff was very supportive of the change. A newsletter was put together and sent out to every parent/guardian in the district. The newsletter consisted of general information, information about state funding concerns and how it may affect our local district, information about a 4 day school week and a survey for the parents regarding a 4 day school week. A community meeting was set up for the first part of April. The meeting was held to share budget information and discuss the 4 day school week. Different budgetary scenarios were discussed depending upon state funding. Information about the 4 day school week was also shared that included a Research Summary Brief from 2009 on the 4 day school week and the possible savings to our district if implementation took place.

The parent survey results were very interesting and provided some valuable feedback. We had pretty much decided that the 4 day week would be Monday through Thursday, with Friday being the Fifth Day, but the survey showed the need to look at a Tuesday through Friday schedule with Monday as the Fifth Day. There was approximately a 50% response to the surveys. They were emailed to those households that we communicate with through email and regular mail to those that we do not. From the responses, 80% were in favor of the 4 day. With the positive response, we felt it necessary to send another survey to determine if there would be a preference of Monday or Friday as the Fifth Day. That response was split, but feedback helped us decide to use the Tuesday through Friday schedule with Monday as the Fifth Day.

In the next couple of months, March and April, there was a lot of information gathered and shared. The survey results and some information from the Research Brief were shared and discussed. Administrators and board members had contacted schools in other states that were currently on a 4 day school week, and that information was shared.

There was *push back* about changing to the 4 day school week. In fact there was a small group of constituents that fought very strongly against the change. Their concerns centered upon the same possible concerns that were brought out in the Research Brief and shared with the community. The concerns were: childcare, loss of academic time, and not enough financial savings.

(Legislative Platform—Continued from page 9)

26. **Supports** legislation to create educational standards for home-schooled students and institutes procedures for enforcement of those standards.
27. **Supports** the maintenance of a strong Public School Employee Retirement System (PSRS/PEERS).
28. **Supports** efforts to work with the IRS and the Missouri Office of Administration to ensure that all members of the Missouri Public School Retirement System holding a valid teacher certificate continue to be exempt from payment of Social Security taxes.
29. **Supports** legislation to address issues with the PSRS/PEERS COLA Cap.
30. **Opposes** legislation that would require PSRS/PEERS to combine/consolidate in whole or part and/or asset investments with any or all of the other state retirement systems.
31. **Opposes** legislative/constitutional mandates that would interfere with the local board of education's efforts/responsibilities to operate the school district. (Example: 65% Solution)
32. **Opposes** any attempt to change the current non-partisan process for appointing the Commissioner of Education. (As recommended by MO State Government Review Commission.)
33. **Opposes** legislation mandating that school districts educate students who have been suspended or expelled.
34. **Opposes** legislation restricting school administrators from prior review of student publications.
35. **Opposes** legislation forcing non-voluntary school consolidation.
36. **Opposes** legislation forcing non-voluntary open enrollment between school districts
37. **Opposes** legislation allowing state funding (tax dollars) in the form of vouchers /scholarships/tuition tax credits, for non-public schools.
38. **Opposes** legislation creating any new property tax relief programs by freezing, reducing, limiting, eliminating or exempting the current property tax base.
39. **Opposes** legislation mandating new programs without appropriating the necessary funds to implement and maintain the programs.
40. **Opposes** legislation removing the local board of education authority to set salaries/benefits for any member of the district staff.
41. **Opposes** legislation restricting/changing the basic governance, policies and services provided by educational support organizations to the local school district (i.e. MSHSAA, MUSIC, etc.).

Federal Issues:

1. **Supports** assessments to improve student achievement, but opposes the expansion of testing under No Child Left Behind to grades 9 through 11.
2. **Supports** the critical role that career and technical education plays in preparing rural students for the workforce and further education.
3. **Supports** the expansion of the definition of a high-need school district to include rural school districts in addition to high-poverty districts, recognizing the unique staffing needs and shortages of geographically isolated districts.
4. **Supports** maintaining E-Rate as an element of the Universal Service Fund.
5. **Supports** the fulfillment of Congress' promise of mandatory funding of IDEA at 40 percent of the National Average per Pupil Expenditure for every child in special education.
6. **Supports** the reimbursement of rural districts for medical expenses attributed to Medicaid eligible students.
7. **Supports** the use of poverty indicators in place of census poverty as the measure of student poverty within rural school districts.
8. **Supports** the Formula Fairness Campaign to end Title I formula discrimination against disadvantaged rural students with the elimination of the "Number Weighting" provision.
9. **Supports** the continuation of the Rural Education Achievement Program.
10. **Supports** the continued funding of Title I dollars in meeting the needs of poor rural districts.
11. **Supports** fully funding of the authorized amounts promised under NCLB.
12. **Supports** efforts to work with the IRS and SSA to ensure that all members of the Missouri Public School Retirement System holding a valid teacher certificate be exempt from Social Security taxes.
13. **Supports** legislation to repeal the WEP and GPO provisions for Social Security.
14. **Opposes** the use of Federal funds to fund private schools through vouchers, scholarships, or tuition tax credits.
15. **Opposes** the federal government issuing any un-funded mandates within education.
16. **Opposes** legislation that would force mandatory Social Security for new teachers.
17. **Opposes** mandates in the Child Nutrition Bill that would require school food service directors to be certified.

(Adopted July 31, 2010)

(Revised October 4, 2010)

Planets in Strange Places

By Trudy E. Bell

Red star, blue star, big star, small star—planets may form around virtually any type or size of star throughout the universe, not just around mid-sized middle-aged yellow stars like the Sun. That's the surprising implication of two discoveries in 2006 from the 0.85-meter-diameter Spitzer Space Telescope, which is exploring the universe from orbit at infrared (heat) wavelengths blocked by the Earth's atmosphere

At one extreme are two blazing, blue “hypergiant” stars 180,000 light-years away in the Large Magellanic Cloud, one of the two companion galaxies to our Milky Way. The stars, called R 66 and R 126, are respectively 30 and 70 times the mass of the Sun, “about as massive as stars can get,” said Joel Kastner, professor of imaging science at the Rochester Institute of Technology in New York. R 126 is so luminous that if it were placed 10 parsecs (32.6 light-years) away—a distance at which the Sun would be one of the dimmest stars visible in the sky—the hypergiant would be as bright as the full moon, “definitely a daytime object,” Kastner remarked.

Such hot stars have fierce solar winds, so Kastner and his team are mystified why any dust in the neighborhood hasn't long since been blown away. But there it is: an unmistakable spectral signature that both hypergiants are surrounded by mammoth disks of what might be planet-forming dust and even sand.

At the other extreme is a tiny brown dwarf star called Cha 110913-773444, relatively nearby (500 light-years) in the Milky Way. One of the smallest brown dwarfs known, it has less than 1 percent the mass of the Sun. It's not even massive enough to kindle thermonuclear reactions for fusing hydrogen into helium. Yet this miniature “failed star,” as brown dwarfs are often called, is also surrounded by a flat disk of dust that may eventually clump into planets. (This brown dwarf discovery was made by a group led by Kevin Luhman of Pennsylvania State University.)

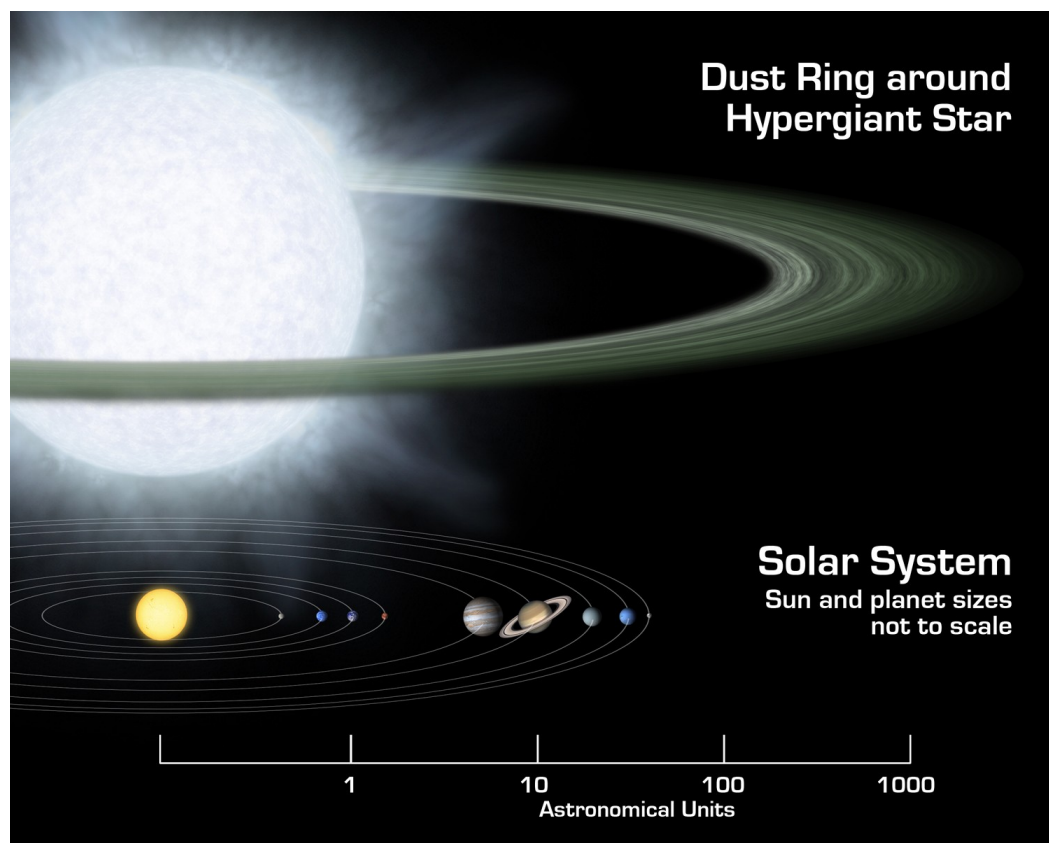
Although actual planets have not been detected (in part because of the stars' great distances), the spectra of the hypergiants show that their dust is composed of forsterite, olivine, aromatic hydrocarbons, and other geological substances found on Earth.

These newfound disks represent “extremes of the environments in which planets might form,” Kastner said. “Not what you'd expect if you think our solar system is the rule.”

Hypergiants and dwarfs? The Milky Way could be crowded with worlds circling every kind of star imaginable—very strange, indeed.

Keep up with the latest findings from the Spitzer at www.spitzer.caltech.edu. Kids and their grownup friends can enjoy beautiful images from Spitzer while playing Spitzer Concentration at The Space Place (spaceplace.nasa.gov/en/kids/spitzer/concentration).

This article was provided by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology, under a contract with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.



Caption:

Artist's rendering compares size of a hypothetical hypergiant star and its surrounding dusty disk to that of our solar system.

An in-house website is cheaper ... or is it?

There is a common misconception that creating, hosting and maintaining an in-house website is free. Actually when you calculate the total cost of ownership, the cost is much higher than a SOCS license.

An in-house website may seem like a cheaper way to produce a website, but what many forget to include are the hidden costs. Time is money and your technical professional's time is valuable and should be calculated into the overall cost of your website.

When you add up the time to:

- research and purchase components
- design the layout and navigation
- develop the code
- perform ongoing maintenance and updates
- post new articles and update content

The advertisement for SOCS (Simplified Online Communication System) features a superhero character in a blue suit and red cape, standing next to a computer monitor displaying a school website. The headline reads "Become the superhero of your school's website." Below the headline, a list of features is provided: "Build your professional online image with:" followed by "Easy Website Updates", "Timely Event Notifications", "Classroom Tools", "Language Translation", and "Live Customer Support". At the bottom, the SOCS logo is displayed along with the text "Simplified Online Communication System", the phone number "800.850.8397", and the website "www.SOCS-hero.org".

... all while redirecting your technical team from other priority projects, you realize how much is actually spent on an in-house website.

According to a web article from District Administration*, the average technical professional salary for a rural community is \$59,870 per year or \$257 a day. The average salary for a technology professional in a small town is \$73,000 per year or \$312 a day.

If a technical professional spends only two days a month on your website, that equals approximately \$6,000-\$7,500 a year.

Plus, it's hard to put a price on your public image. A technology professional may not have the luxury or the skills to devote time to design and messaging. A website takes more than technical knowledge. It takes creative design and public relations skills.

With a SOCS license, you not only get the easiest content management system on the market, you get:

- personal customer service
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- a list of features that engage students and interact with your community
- and the ability to have an unlimited amount of contributors develop content

Plus there are no hidden fees for system upgrades, customer support or training.

You too, can become a website superhero when you realize what SOCS can do for your school and community. Contact Stacey Musil at 800.850.8397, ext. 6691 or staceym@fes.org for more information.

*9th Annual Salary Survey: Administrator Roles Shift With the Times by Alan Dessoff, September 2009; <http://www.districtadministration.com/viewarticlepf.aspx?articleid=2116>

(Four Day Week -Continued from page 15)

Several things were done to address the childcare issue. The district offered a childcare certification class for students from 7th – 12th grades. It was decided to start a before and/or after school care program for school aged students that would be financially supported by participation fees. Two local churches worked with the district to set up Monday day care programs. After the May board meeting, a survey was sent to parents inquiring about utilizing the before and/or after school care program, and if they would be interested in the Monday daycare program. We received 6 responses that were interested in the before and/or after school care and 3 that would be interested in the Monday program. We continued to discuss it in articles during the summer, but at the beginning of the school year we ended up with 10 students in the before and/or after program and still only 3 for the Monday program so the churches dropped it.

It was shared with parents and community members that there would not be a loss of academic time because the district would still have to provide at least 1,044 hrs of instruction. In fact, we shared that with the 4 day school week OUR students would be in school more consistently than they had in the years with 5 day weeks. The previous year our students had been in school 39 weeks, 26 of those weeks were interrupted by early release or fewer than 5 day weeks. There were actually 13 uninterrupted 5 day weeks and 13 weeks of 4 days or less. The current 4 day school week calendar results in 35 weeks of 4 full days and 3 weeks of less than 4 days, which are the 1st week of school, Thanksgiving week, and the last week of school. There are no early release days.

At the same time that we changed to a 4 day school week, we also changed from a block schedule to a 7 ½ period day. The ½ period is a seminar/advisory period at the end of each day. This change resulted in middle and high school students having each class every day, instead of every other day, and therefore more homework per evening. Some people felt that the more homework was a result of the 4 day.

The financial savings that were projected were approximately \$120,000 and that was from only 2 sources: classified salary and benefit savings and some transportation savings. Those were the only 2 areas that could be shown in black and white. While we believed there would be savings on utilities, food service items, and some other areas, we would need to wait to actually see the data for comparisons.

The May board meeting was the meeting at which the board would vote to adopt the 4 day schedule, or not. The meeting was held in the Performing Arts Center at the Middle School and there were a lot of people present. Major television stations from the Kansas City area were also in attendance. The board allowed community members to share their support and/or concerns. The board then voted to adopt the 4 day school week with a 5 – 2 vote.

The first half of the year has gone by great. A parent survey and a student survey were done at the end of September and the parent survey results are on the district website. In January, a survey was done with the faculty and another parent survey sent out. The faculty continues to support the 4 day and they suggested some good questions to be included on the

second parent survey. Both parent survey results will be posted on the website.

Changing to a 4 day school week has not been easy, but I commend the Lathrop School Board for going ahead and adopting it. I believe that we have been proactive, instead of reactive. We didn't wait for our reserves to deplete before taking action. We didn't want to change the programs that the students were experiencing. We didn't want to enlarge the class sizes. We put those dramatic changes on hold for at least one more year. The continuation of the educational program in the classrooms is what must come first.



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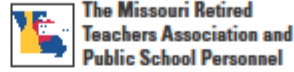
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MARE Superintendent Search

The MARE organization is available to all school districts throughout Missouri to facilitate superintendent searches. MARE prides itself in being able to help school districts locate and employ leaders in a very cost competitive manner.

In an effort to maintain cost effectiveness, MARE's superintendent searches make significant utility of technology to facilitate its work with boards of education who are seeking interested candidates. Mailings, notifications, listings, reviews, profiles, and other search techniques are efficiently designed and delivered to allow MARE to offer its search services at a reasonable cost to the school district. The following charges apply:

District Enrollment	Charges	District Enrollment	Charges
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501 - 1000 students	\$3,000	3001 - 3500 students	\$5,500
1001 - 1500 students	\$3,500	3501 - 4000 students	\$6,000
1501 - 2000 students	\$4,000	Above 4000 students	\$6,500
2001 - 2500 students	\$4,500		

If a school district is current in their annual membership with MARE, the above professional charges will include the official mailings to every district in the state of Missouri. If a non-member district engages MARE to conduct their superintendent search, MARE will include in the above professional charges a full year's membership in the MARE organization for that school district.

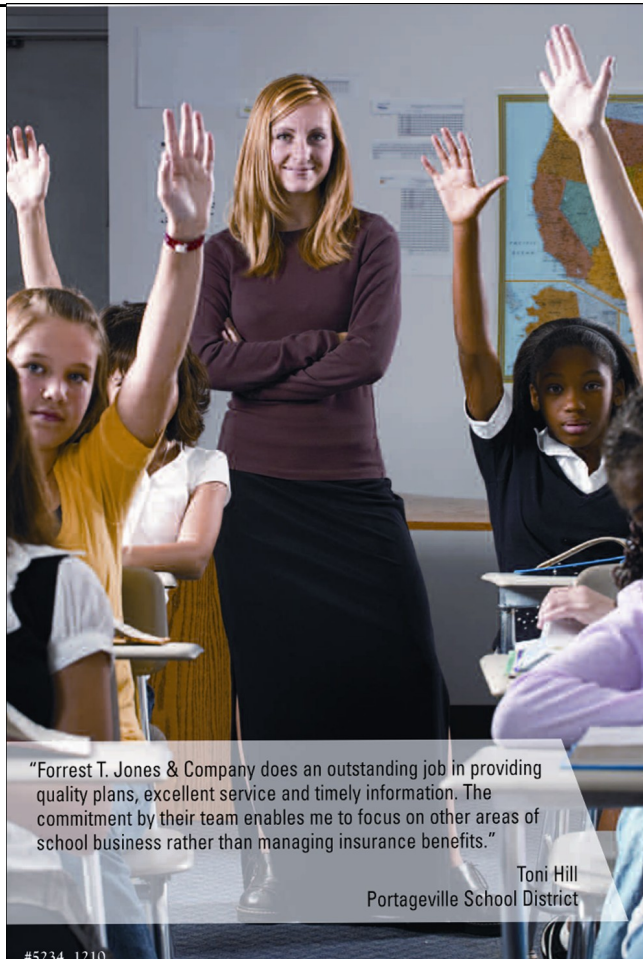
School districts interested in more information about the superintendent search services should forward inquiries to:

MARE Superintendent Searches
Dr. Ray V. Patrick
201 South Holden St., Ste 202
Warrensburg, MO 64093

Phone: (660) 747-8050
Cell Phone: (660) 909-5118
Fax: (660) 747-8160
Email: rpatrick@moare.com

MARE will provide the following services to school districts wishing to conduct their own search:

- Listing of the opening in the MARE Focus (emailing to all Missouri districts)
- Listing of the opening on the MARE website (home page with link) and MO Administrator Jobs site
- Sample sets of interview questions (no cost)
- Set of Missouri School District mailing labels (cost - \$10.00) or will provide by email for district download at no charge.



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From [Michigan Department Of Attorney General](#)

If you have a child in the home who has access to your computer, these ten safety rules will help them enjoy the Internet safely.

1. Always ask your parents' permission before using your full name, address, telephone number or school name anywhere on the Internet.
2. Always tell your parents or guardian if you see something online that you know is wrong or that makes you feel uncomfortable.
3. Don't respond to messages that make you feel uncomfortable or uneasy.
4. Never give out a credit card number or password online.
5. Never send out your picture without your parents' permission.
6. Be careful when someone offers you something for nothing, such as gifts or money.
7. Don't ever accept a gift or an offer that involves having someone visit your house.
8. Never arrange to meet someone you've met online in person unless you discuss it with your parents and an adult goes with you.
9. Talk to your parents to set up rules for going online. Decide with them the best time of day to be online, the length of time to be online, and appropriate areas to visit.
10. Get to know your "online friends" just as you get to know all of your other friends. Be sure that you are dealing with someone that you and your parents know and trust before giving out any personal information about yourself via email.



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Consider a Bond Issue

By: Tom Howard, Sales Consultant for Septagon Construction Management

In the 20 years that I was a superintendent, Missouri schools went through many fluctuations in the level of state funding for our mission of educating the children of the state. There were more “lows” than “highs”, but not since the great depression has Missouri faced the financial shortfalls we now are experiencing. School administrators are being forced to look into every nook and cranny of their budgets to find ways to make the dollar stretch farther than they ever have before. As in the past, facility maintenance and repairs take a backseat to things that more directly affect the education of our students.

As all superintendents know, the funding for facility repairs usually comes out of Fund 4, Capital Improvements. The source of this money has changed a couple of times over the years, from a tax levy set in that fund, to a transfer from Fund 1, to various combinations of the two. Money is also put into this fund as a result of bond sales paid from Fund 3, Debt Service. Almost always, money for facilities comes from local sources with very little state help. With huge shortfalls in state funding, districts must now rely on their local funds to pay for a larger share of their operating expenses. For example, the state used to pay for 80% of the cost of transportation. That amount has shrunk in the last couple of years, and it appears that it will be totally eliminated for 2011-2012. That expense does not go away. Schools will need to find local money to continue to bus students. Now, when financial stress is so great, anything a district can do to save money in the operating fund allows the district to focus more money on things that directly affect student learning.

Districts that have passed bond issues in the past may be lucky enough to ask the voters for a no-tax-levy-increase bond issue through a ballot initiative. When this type of bond issue is passed, the current bonds are then restructured and new bonds are sold to extend the years of payment. If it has been a number of years since the old bond issue was passed, or if the district has been able to pay off bonds early, schools can sell additional bonds without requiring an increase in the debt service tax rate. The revenue from these bond sales can provide money for repairs and energy renovations that will make their buildings operate more efficiently. The funds from these bonds can be used for many projects, such as replacing a roof, updating lighting or replacing old, inefficient HVAC systems. While a lease purchase would be a funding option, the school would have to make lease payments out of Fund 4, taking money that could be used for teachers, transportation and instructional items for the classroom. A no-tax-levy-increase bond can provide the money to do these same things, while increasing the amount of money that districts can use to keep the educational process going. It gives them desperately needed flexibility to use funds where they are needed.

Take a walk through your facilities and make a list of things that could help your district be more efficient. Ask your principals to do the same. Then match up the lists and set priorities based on what work “has” to be done now, what work will need to be done in the near future, and what you would like to see after the needs have been met. When doing this, ask yourself, “Will this save money in the operating fund now or in the near future?” Most schools will end up with a fairly long list of items that will drain the budget of desperately needed funds. These are things that can be done with bond funds and help you survive the current crisis.

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(Snow Days—Continued from page 11)

Mistake #7. Calling a now day because the private schools are closing.

This mistake is less likely in rural areas because private schools are less likely in rural areas. However, it would be a mistake to base a decision on what private schools are doing. Many private schools rely on private vehicles for transportation. They are also under a different set of rules for the school calendar and days of attendance.

Mistake #8. Accepting calls at home from community members regarding the snow-day decision.

Advise callers to tune in to the radio or TV. If you start answering inquiries, you will never stop. On a snowy and cold Missouri morning your phone must be open for real business calls.

Your Plan For Snow-Days

This is a good time to reflect upon the winter and how your plan for making the snow-days built into the school calendar for next year. Reflect on those who call you with road conditions and decide if their advice was sound and whether they should be a part of your system of decision making for next year. Add people to report on areas where you feel uncertain. Review your calling tree to be sure that it works even better next time.

Three Final Thoughts For the Rural Superintendent

First, respect the decision of the parent who decides to keep a child at home because of winter weather. It is the parent's responsibility to do what they think is right to keep their child safe.

Second, when in doubt, call off school. Err on the side of caution. There will be a better day to hold school.

Then, plan to get to your office and be ready to take the calls. Snow-day or no snow-day, you are in for some free advice. Enjoy your exalted position!

Randy Dewar was a superintendent for 20 years in Missouri, Wisconsin, and Oklahoma. He now teaches Educational Administration courses at Central Missouri University, Warrensburg, MO, 64093.

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Our purpose is to LISTEN to the NEEDS of rural Educators and then help them meet those NEEDS as efficiently as possible. Through this type of SHARING and COOPERATION we can improve the OPPORTUNITIES for the CHILDREN of rural Missouri.

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The MARE organization is available to all school districts throughout Missouri to facilitate superintendency searches. MARE prides itself in being able to help school districts locate and employ leaders in a very cost competitive manner.

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MARE Superintendency Searches

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