

Column from Sen. Matt Bartle for
Week of Aug. 22, 2005

Education bills become effective Sunday

This Sunday (Aug. 28) marks an annual event when most bills passed by the legislature each year go into effect. While many bills of all kinds will complete their transition from concept to law this weekend, I want to highlight several dealing specifically with education.

This year the legislature took up and passed several important revisions to Missouri's education laws. Chief among these was our work on a new education funding formula that will improve the way school districts are funded across the state. This formula sets up a system that distributes education funds more equitably and moves the current program from one driven by property tax rates to a system based on the differing needs of each school district.

While the new formula has garnered the most attention, there were several other bills passed this year that are also worthy of mention.

SB 480 - Encouraging Family Involvement: This bill requires each local school board to develop policies to invite parents to be involved in decisions affecting their kids, to promote open communication with parents, and to recognize the family's value in education. I am convinced one of the most important parts of a child's education is the involvement of his or her parents. No amount of money and no innovative state program can replace the active participation of a child's dad and mom in his education.

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SB 103 & 115 - Cutting Red Tape: In response to requests from a local school, I sponsored two bills to remove “red tape” that was tying the hands of school officials. The bill allows districts to have a subcommittee of their board (rather than the entire board) rule on pupil residency waivers and gives school officials more time to make enrollment decisions.

SB 254 - Prescription Drug Distribution: Prohibits kids from possessing medications on school property without a prescription and from passing such drugs out to other kids.

HB 530 - Credit for Sign Language Class: This bill allows students to satisfy their foreign language credit requirement by learning sign language. It also requires public universities accept sign language credits as part of their entrance requirements.

HB 297 - “Report Cards” on Each School: Requires the State Dept. of Education, instead of the local district as is currently done, to issue a “report card” to parents on the school their child attends. This will save local schools time and expense and will make reports more uniform statewide.

If you would like a copy of any past “Report Cards” on your child’s school or if you would like to stay up-to-speed on issues affecting education in Missouri by getting the “Education Update” I send out during the legislative session, please contact my office.

You can reach my office by e-mail at matt_bartle@senate.state.mo.us or by phone at (888) 711-9278.

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