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District 8 – Capitol Building, Room 431 Jefferson City, MO 65101

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Keeping Our Promise: Legislators Fully Funding Missouri's Foundation Formula

Last year, the legislature took on the difficult issue of revising Missouri's outdated education funding formula. I was appointed to serve on the committee that was charged with recommending to the full General Assembly a new funding plan. The committee spent many hours listening to testimony of different witnesses and grappling with how to more equitably fund education in the "Show Me" state. As you can imagine, when it comes to dividing up the funding "pie," it is incredibly difficult to do it in a way that satisfies everyone.

In the end, we recommended, and the legislature passed, a bill establishing a new formula for funding public schools that distributes education funds more equitably and is based on the needs of students, not local tax rates. The new plan will implement an \$800-million increase in the annual budget for schools over the course of seven years.

Under the old plan, per-pupil funding in Missouri school districts varied from \$5,000 to \$13,000. However, our new formula determines a minimum per-pupil dollar figure needed to provide our students with an adequate education and adjusts funding according to a district's differing costs of living. No Missouri school district will see a reduction in state funds under the new system. The new plan also provides that the buying power of Missouri districts will be equitable. This was an especially important provision I wanted included because the cost of living in Eastern Jackson County is considerably higher than in other areas of the state, and I did not want to see teachers and school districts penalized by a "one-size-fits-all" approach.

With the budget for Fiscal Year 2007 currently under debate, it is worth reviewing how much the school districts in our area stand to gain from the new formula.

Below is a listing of school districts in the 8th District and the estimated funding increases they will see in 2007 under the new system.

	FY '06 Funding	FY '07 Funding	FY '07 Increase	Percent Increase
Blue Springs	\$33,302,624	\$34,671,960	\$1,369,336	4.1 percent
Fort Osage	\$21,282,690	\$21,921,171	\$638,481	3.0
Grain Valley	\$5,871,956	\$6,048,115	\$176,159	3.0
Independence	\$44,292,533	\$45,621,309	\$1,328,776	3.0
Lee's Summit	\$41,125,816	\$42,359,591	\$1,233,774	3.0
Oak Grove	\$6,045,042	\$6,375,593	\$330,550	5.5

The differences in the percentage increase you see above are due to a number of factors, the most significant is the number of children in a district that come from lower-income homes.

As is apparent, area school districts will see significant gains in state funding under the new foundation formula. And this is just the beginning of the new funding system. In fact, the new system will not be fully funded until 2014, when more than \$800 million will be added to the Missouri budget for K-12 education.

The new foundation formula implements statewide funding increases gradually over the next several years, beginning in Fiscal Year 2007. A funding increase of \$113 million for fiscal year 2006 was made under the previous formula. Annual statewide funding increases under the new formula break down as follows:

- Fiscal Year 2007: \$99,290,474
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- Fiscal Year 2009: \$111,172,543
- Fiscal Year 2010: \$90,287,341
- Fiscal Year 2011: \$107,830,428
- Fiscal Year 2012: \$129,253,446
- Fiscal Year 2013: \$154,990,620
- Fiscal Year 2014: \$39,830,058
- **Total Annual Increase: \$ 831,945,384**

One of the Legislature's most important jobs is to provide for the education of Missouri's children. Missouri's new foundation formula funds public schools at unprecedented levels.

If you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by e-mail at matt_bartle@senate.mo.gov or by phone at (888) 711-9278.