



# SENATOR MATT BARTLE

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

**Column for Week of:  
March 20, 2006**

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## **Teachers Need Help from Parents When it Comes to Developing Disciplined Students**

This week marks the halfway point of the legislative session. Time passes quickly, and although much has been accomplished, much remains to be done. One of the few things required of the Legislature each year under the Missouri Constitution is that it pass a budget for the state. The Senate will soon take up the budget for debate, and, as discussed last week, this year's budget marks the first year of the new Foundation Formula for public schools and will include millions of dollars in new funding for education.

Although funding is important, it takes more than dollars and cents, bricks and mortar to operate top-quality schools such as the ones in Eastern Jackson County. A school's quality is primarily determined by the people who work in it, those who dedicate their lives to educate the next generation — our teachers. Teachers provide an invaluable service to our communities and too often the job is a thankless one.

Perhaps the most challenging part of being a teacher is maintaining order in the classroom so that students can learn. The lack of discipline among some students has become a severe obstacle to effective teaching in schools across the nation.

In 2004, I served on the Joint Interim Committee on Teacher Support, Regulatory Reduction and Accountability, and part of our mandate was examining problems with student discipline. We heard testimony from one teacher who stated that the decline in discipline over her long career meant that it was now more difficult to teach a class of 20 students than it used to be to teach a class of 30. A kindergarten teacher testified that she had been kicked, hit and spit on during her first year of teaching.

The solution to this problem is not primarily the responsibility of the hard-working teacher. Much of that work must be done before the child gets on a bus to head for school. The solution begins at home.

I can remember being sent to the principal's office by a teacher when I was a youngster and thinking that my parents would be able to straighten things out once they heard my side of the story. I was wrong. They knew enough to trust a respected teacher over a 13-year-old, and I got a second serving of punishment when I got home.

While most parents do a good job of training their kids and preparing them for their years in school, it only takes a few unruly students to disrupt a classroom — robbing each child of the chance to learn. While the primary solution begins with parents themselves, the Legislature and the general public must stand behind teachers and support them in every way possible as they educate the children of this state.

The best way for the Legislature to be informed on how best to help is if teachers themselves will share their ideas for how the education environment in schools might be improved.

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](mailto:matt_bartle@senate.mo.gov) or by phone at (888) 711-9278.