



# SENATOR MATT BARTLE

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

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## **Legislation to Improve School Administration Laws for Better Educational Experience**

Over the past two weeks in this weekly report, I have discussed school funding and the importance of parents in teaching discipline to students. This week I want to address important legislation designed to give our school administrators more flexibility, free them from unnecessary “red tape” and streamline the process of educating Missouri’s kids. Although administrators often get more criticism than appreciation, hard-working school administrators and citizens elected to serve on our school boards form a critical link in providing our kids with a quality education. Today I want to briefly touch on three topics.

First, this year I am sponsoring bills shoring up state support for local districts. Senate Bill 653 fully reimburses school districts located at least partially in Jackson County for the costs of offering special educational services to children placed by the Department of Social Services. This measure ensures that when the state of Missouri asks local schools to educate a child in the custody of the state, the district will receive just compensation.

I am also sponsoring a bill removing unnecessary “red tape” in the form of inflexible Missouri School Improvement Program guidelines. These guidelines are used to rank school districts and look at factors such as the number of librarians hired. The change would give school administrators the freedom to decide based on local needs what type of staff they need to hire instead of trying to meet an arbitrary rule established by someone else. Although the state has a role to play, we must give professional educators the ability to govern without unnecessarily rigid regulations.

I am pleased to have worked with local officials in 2005 when we were able to successfully pass legislation that removed “red tape” that had been tying their hands. Under previous law, elected school boards were required to convene a hearing of the full board to determine a relatively simple matter of whether a pupil should be granted a waiver of certain residency requirements. SB 103, which was signed into law last year, allows districts to have a subcommittee of their board rule on such waivers.

Granted, this was a small change, but it serves as an example of how the law often needs to be revised to give local school officials, not those in Jefferson City, the flexibility that allows them to work effectively.

Another area that is important for local schools is helping their students succeed as they make the critical step between high school and college if they decide to pursue further education. This year the Senate has passed legislation promoting greater collaboration between education professionals and workforce-development officials, as well as between high school and college teachers. Senate Bill 580 directs the Commissioner of Higher Education, the president of the state Board of Education, the director of the Department of Economic Development and others to meet and discuss ways to develop an education system that offers students a more seamless academic experience. Officials are charged with creating a system that is more efficient and effective and better prepares students for the workforce.

This attempt to foster dialogue among state education officials, as well as the other measures discussed above, is a useful component in improving education for Missouri students.

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.

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