



Senator Matt Bartle – Serving Jackson County

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## Reforming Missouri's Educational System

Constantly striving to improve education in Missouri is one of the General Assembly's top priorities, and this week, the Missouri Senate went to work on a comprehensive education bill. The debate was wide-ranging as over 30 amendments were offered. I was pleased to see that some of these amendments, even if all of them were not ultimately adopted, sparked important discussions that could have long-term positive effects for Missouri's children.

One such amendment that was successfully added to [Senate Bill 291](#) requires schools to develop certain standards of teaching by June 2010. While the amendment did not specifically prescribe what the standards should be, if passed, it would help begin a discussion in local school districts about the proper standards for educators. I am convinced that more accountability and better goal-setting will have a positive effect on the education of Missouri's children.

Another amendment that was added to SB 291 is in some ways similar to an interesting approach taken by the forward-thinking new superintendent of the school system in Washington, D.C. The proposal would allow teachers to voluntarily opt out of teacher tenure in exchange for higher pay. In essence, it opens the door to allowing excellent teachers to earn substantially more money—up to \$15,000 each year.

In every part of the free market, incentives to excel promote excellence. Education is no different. If we offer our teachers better pay and reward good performance, just as we do in business, we could see substantial improvement in our schools. These changes will help attract the most talented and competent individuals to the field of education, not only because they enjoy what they do, but also because they have a chance to be fairly

compensated for their efforts. In a pay-for-performance system, everyone would be better served—especially the students.

We are fortunate to live in an area with excellent schools. While schools in our area might rank very well, there are so many others in our state that face significant challenges preparing their students to become productive members of society and even the best schools can always improve. Every child deserves a quality education, and I am hopeful that if some of these changes ultimately become law, we will be able to offer a better education to each one of Missouri's students.

Education is an important subject that deserves more discussion than one column can provide. Over the next couple of weeks I want to discuss three proposals that I believe will dramatically reform and improve education in the Show-Me State.

If you have any 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. My web address is <http://www.senate.mo.gov/bartle>.

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