





## Sometimes a Little Ranting Is Good for the Soul

*Roger Kurtz, MASA Executive Director*

I need to do a little ranting at the end of the legislative session and in particular about the education funding

decisions that were made. I am excited that money was added to the foundation formula and transportation, but that is where my excitement ends.

The foundation formula continues to be underfunded and a portion of the funds the legislature included next year in the budget to increase formula funding relies on Missourians to lose more money in casinos, to lose more money buying lottery tickets and to spend more money on cigarettes. School districts cannot rely on those sources of funding as they have not been reliable in the past. It is more confusing than ever to determine what the State Adequacy Target will be next year and this formula was supposed to be more predictable than the previous formulas.

I am sure that out on the campaign trail, there will be boasting by politicians regarding how education was a priority; however, they failed to provide the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education with funds to help struggling school districts which legislators claim they want to improve. Instead, the legislature appropriated \$2 million to a Charter School Commission that oversees the operation of one charter school for about 140 students and that charter school has not even opened! Some sources say that the Charter Commission needs the \$2 million to build a facility for the Commission in Kansas City. Last time I looked, there was a lot of empty space in the Jefferson Building since the DESE budget has been cut so severely in recent years. (Remember this is a rant, sorry.)

The legislature increased funding for school transportation by \$5 million dollars next year but will never mention that it is still about \$62 million less than it was nine years ago. The legislature has provided about \$20 million in

additional funding for early childhood special education, only because the Missouri Supreme Court said several years ago that it was an unfunded mandate and it must be fully funded. The legislature has never replaced the \$37 million that was cut in fiscal year 2012 which was used for the Career Ladder program. (I think they were hoping we would forget about that.)

The legislature has provided more sales tax money to schools because voters approved a proposition C in the early 1980's and they cannot change it. They passed a law several years ago requiring school board members to complete a training program, yet cut all funding for that training program in the budget they just approved.

It is unfortunate that Missouri legislators say they value our public schools, but have not demonstrated their commitment to funding and instead focused on a host of legislative proposals that will add additional mandates and requirements and a long list of special interest tax cuts that will make it increasingly difficult to fund Missouri public schools?

If they cannot support these five items, their support for public education is just political rhetoric for the campaign trail. Our students deserve better.

Sorry for the ranting, but I feel better now.

### A Plan for Leadership Change

As members know, Roger Kurtz announced his retirement in April and he will step down at the end of this year.

Just as elected school board members select superintendents, the MASA Executive Board will name the next Executive Director, but they will do this by following a process.

The MASA Executive Committee met on April 21 to begin discussions on the timeline and process for replacing Roger. The Executive Committee has decided to go through a formal selection process. The successful candidate may start anytime after December 31, 2016 but no later than July 1, 2017, depending on his or her availability.

As part of the strategic plan, MASA

are five questions to ask every candidate for office:

1. If there is a shortfall in gaming, lottery or one of the other sources of funding for the foundation formula in 2016-17, will you support a supplemental budget request to use general revenue to cover the shortfall to ensure that Missouri schools are not shortchanged?

2. Will you work to restore transportation funding for public schools back to the level it was in 2009 (\$167,797,713)?

3. Will you oppose ALL vouchers and tax credit schemes in the future that threaten to divert funding from Missouri public schools to private entities?

4. Will you oppose further expansion of charter schools in Missouri?

5. Will you support local control of Missouri public schools?

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## A Capital Welcome for “The New Guy”

*Scott Kimble, Director of Legislative Advocacy, MCSA*

**Being the “new guy” is never easy.** Whether you’re a new administrator, new teacher or even a new student, the first year at your new job or school is difficult. Being the new guy at the Missouri Capitol is no different. With 197 legislators (that’s waaay too many by the way), just as many legislative assistants, numerous chiefs of staff and hundreds of lobbyists (some of which are former legislators who don’t particularly care for public education), it’s difficult to keep track of everyone and their different interests. To further exacerbate the issue, bear in mind that education associations have been battling various legislators and special interest groups regarding a number of topics for years with each battle having long, drawn out consequences.

Case in point, during the second day of session this year, I entered a legislator’s office to introduce myself and to discuss a bill (school administrators), I was immediately informed that one of our associations (guess which one) had financially supported the legislator’s opponent in a previous election. As a result

of backing the opponent and for other vague alleged misdeeds, our association and, one

individual in particular (who will not be named), were not permitted in the legislator’s

office. When I asked if the opponent we had supported in the previous election had won, I was informed that the opponent had been “crushed.” The legislator was unamused when I responded, “No harm no foul, right?” Suffice it to say, the rest of the meeting was

relatively brief and did not go well.

To add to the difficulty of being new, those who lobby for public education also have the difficult task of opposing legislation that is perceived as being beneficial to students, the elderly, farmers, the business community and just about any other major special interest. For example, this year we opposed legislation that’s stated intent was to provide additional educational options for students with disabilities. Among the reasons for our opposition was that the bill did not provide safeguards to ensure that the students were receiving adequate instruction by licensed special education professionals, or that the institutions in which the students would be attending would be required to follow the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

An additional interesting fact I learned very early in session is that school administrators are routinely blamed for the demise of legislation throughout session. For instance, a bill may be completely unrelated to public education, yet school

administrators are accused for the bill’s death. Indeed, a bill related to municipalities filing class action lawsuits to collect taxes was soundly defeated in the House of Representatives. No association that was a part of the Missouri Council of School Administrators (MCSA) spoke negatively of the bill or testified on the bill. Yet, the day after the bill’s defeat, I was called by a lobbyist working for the cable industry asking why we had opposed the bill.

While there are a variety of issues that make the lobbying position difficult, the individuals whom I represent (school administrators) make the job much easier than it should be due to the nature of the issues discussed above. To be sure, when asked, school

administrators provide support at the Capitol unlike any other group. When I first took the position in August of 2015, I was called by a legislator who stated he wanted to meet. When I arrived in his office the first thing he told me was, “You don’t have a very good reputation at the Capitol.” To which I responded, “How can that be, I just started?” He quickly corrected himself and stated that “School

administrators don’t have a good reputation at the Capitol.” I asked why and was told the following: “You know, when you all (MCSA staff) put out a bulletin that you don’t like a specific piece of legislation, our email in-boxes fill and our phones ring off the hook.” I couldn’t help but smile. What that legislator admitted to was that our education association is supported by individuals who are not only engaged, but care. At that moment, I could not have been more proud and honored to work for school administrators.

*“You know, when you all put out a bulletin that you don’t like a specific piece of legislation, our email in-boxes fill and our phones ring off the hook.”*



## MASA President’s Report

### A Heartfelt End to the School Year

*Scott Downing, Warsaw R-IX School District, MASA 2015-2016 President*

There’s a big difference in the types of things that set your heart to pumping. The old ticker can be calmly going about its business one moment only to be shifted into overdrive the next.

For instance, the other day I found myself sitting in the woods listening to a pair of turkeys consulting one another. I reached into my vest and grabbed my call and began to softly yelp. In turn, I got a fair amount of conversation from the pair of Toms who started their regal strut across the field towards me. My heart began thumping in anticipation, and the moment they came within my range, I pulled the trigger and bagged one of the gobblers.

You see, that was a moment that made my heart pound with excitement and a feeling of terrific satisfaction followed it.

I imagine we can all think back to a time when we were just entering the world of education as teachers, and those first weeks as a greenhorn in front of class elicited another type of heart pounding. Depending on what grade level you taught, you were either entering a classroom where you weren’t much older than the students you were teaching or you were surrounded by wide-eyed people who only came up waist high on you. Either way, it was a bit intimidating and probably made your head swim a little.

Again, that type of heart pumping was, at least during the early days on the job, anxiety and fear driven!

- Checking roads during inclement weather

- Difficult decisions that impact the welfare of employees
- Any decision that affects the health and safety of students
- Emails from school board



*Scott Downing and his hunting dog, Avery*

MASA membership has been both members, phone calls from school board members, board meetings... I

think you get the idea!

It’s no secret where my heart is at its happiest: with my family, with my friends and having the opportunity to serve young people. I hope that all of you continue to experience the good things in your vocations and avocations that make your heart happy.

A wise man once said *the best day to fish is any day you can go* and it just so happens that I may have a little more free time to throw a line in. Just the thought of it makes my heart pound a little – in a very good way!

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**MASA extends its sincere thanks to President Downing and the 2015-2016 MASA Executive Board for their outstanding leadership!**