

**Camdenton Teachers Association
School Board Report
April 14, 2014**

MSTA Southwest Region Capitol Day

On March 11, David Swantner, Sandy Letterman, and I traveled to Jefferson City to meet with our state legislators. We had a nice chat with Senator Dan Brown, who mentioned that he had just visited with some of our school board members the week before! ☺ Please read on for a legislative update.

Legislative Update

During the first week in April, three bills were approved by the House Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education. The first bill is HB 1139, which deals with school calendars. Under this proposal, the school year could not begin any earlier than seven days before Labor Day and could not end later than May 31. In addition, the current school calendar of 174 days with a minimum of 1,044 hours would change to a minimum of 1,085 hours with no required number of days. Another element of this proposal is that statewide testing would not be conducted before May 1, and all students scoring less than proficient would be required to attend summer school. The danger of this legislation is the undermining of local control.

The second bill voted out of committee is HB 1639. This bill would allow a teacher certified through the American Board for Certification of Teaching Excellence to be granted a Missouri teaching certificate in elementary education.

Finally, the House Education Committee approved HB 1347, which allows home school students to participate in MSHSAA activities in the district where the student resides. These students will be held to the same requirements, standards, and expectations as enrolled students.

These bills now await being placed on the calendar for discussion on the floor by the House of Representatives.

Another significant legislative development is House approval of HB 1303, which establishes the Student Religious Liberties Act. This bill prohibits a school district from discriminating against a student or parent on the basis of religious viewpoint or expression. While students will still not be *required* to participate in prayer, they must be allowed to pray or engage in religious activities to the extent that they would be allowed to participate in nonreligious activities before, during, or after school. Any expression of religious beliefs in homework, artwork, or written/oral expression must be judged on ordinary academic standards. This bill requires one more vote before going to the Senate.

Of course, the big news in the Missouri Senate is the status of SB 798 and SB 514. These bills would block or delay implementation of the new Common Core State Standards. Last week hundreds of teachers and parents expressed their concerns with the standards. This week hundreds of teachers, administrators, school board members, and business leaders testified about the positive impact the standards would make on student achievement. If Common Core continues as planned, DESE expects every district in the state to be on course with the new curriculum and preparing teachers to learn it before the new state testing next year. The sponsors of this legislation are expected to make changes to the bill based on the testimony over the past two weeks. The Senate Education Committee could take action on a substitute bill as early as next week.

Initiative Petition

You may have already been approached asking for your signature on a petition to “help schools.” This petition would absolutely NOT help schools; what it does it remove teacher tenure in Missouri. St. Louis billionaire Rex Sinquefeld is backing a petition effort to have this issue placed on the November ballot. He is paying signature gatherers \$1.50 per signature in order to obtain the necessary 200,000 by May 1 for the initiative to move forward. It appears that he will reach that goal.

If that happens, MSTA and MNEA will partner (I know...shocking, right? ☺) with other education groups to launch a PR campaign to educate the public on the realities of teacher tenure. Too many folks just see tenure as “protecting bad teachers,” when in reality it protects good teachers. Tenure simply provides due process procedures that must be followed before a teacher can be fired. It is NOT “guaranteed job security,” as some think. I would be happy to speak with any of you and provide more information, if you like.

CTA Scholarship

Each year, the Camdenton Teachers Association awards a \$250 scholarship to a graduating senior who is planning to pursue a bachelor’s degree in education. This year we determined that we have the funds to award three \$200 scholarships and help support more students in their journey to becoming a teacher. Those recipients will be announced at the Senior Awards Ceremony on Friday, May 16.

Respectfully submitted,

Nickie Jones
CTA President