

School Finance Monthly Newsletter February 2015

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February Foundation Payment Calculations

The February Basic Formula payment, including Classroom Trust Fund, was calculated using the most current data available as reported by the district to DESE. It is important that the district compare DESE’s calculations with those generated by the district. Please call or email School Finance at (573) 751-0357 (webreplyadmsf@desse.mo.gov) with questions or concerns about the district’s calculations.

2014-15 BUDGET ESTIMATES

2014-15 Proposition C Sales Tax Payment Estimate Revision

The 2014-15 Proposition C Sales Tax payment is paid on the 2013-14 weighted average daily attendance (WADA) which was 902,483.1536 as of the February 2015 payment. Based on the WADA and estimated revenue of \$827,500,000 the 2014-15 estimated amount per WADA would be \$916. At this point we remain cautiously optimistic that Proposition C funds will remain strong during the second half of FY15 and that the projected amount per WADA will be realized. You are urged to continue to closely monitor the Proposition C receipts very closely for the remainder of the year. For further information regarding 2014-2015 Proposition C estimate please see Dr. Lankford’s comments at the end of the memo, specifically the section titled Proposition C.

Below is trend data for Proposition C Payments since the inception of the current foundation formula.

Year	Dollars Distributed	WADA	WADA Payment
2006-07	\$784,900,800	915,941.2936	\$857
2007-08	\$772,820,015	914,272.3027	\$845
2008-09	\$730,325,406	908,284.1060	\$804
2009-10	\$695,120,132	910,040.6792	\$764
2010-11	\$711,615,172	915,272.7157	\$777
2011-12	\$749,703,272	901,439.5600	\$832
2012-13	\$751,559,817	899,756.8400	\$835
2013-14	\$793,100,000	896,553.9900	\$884

2014-15 Basic Formula Estimate Revision

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2014-15 Basic Formula appropriation was \$3,353,283,124. Since the FY15 calculations exceed the appropriation, an adjustment percentage has been applied throughout the year. The adjustment percentage applied to the February payment calculation was 0.96897686. For further information regarding 2014-2015 Basic Formula estimate please see Dr. Lankford's comments at the end of the memo, specifically the section titled FY15 Foundation Formula Payments.

2014-15 Classroom Trust Fund Estimate Revision

The 2014-15 Classroom Trust Fund payment is paid on the 2013-14 average daily attendance which was 847,707.1235 as of the February 2015 payment. Based on the ADA and estimated revenue of \$353,112,706 the estimated amount per ADA would be approximately \$416. Year-to-date revenues continue to trail those revenues compared to FY13. The state will only distribute funds that are actually collected into the Classroom Trust Fund, which may or may not reach the appropriated level of \$353,112,706. For further information regarding 2014-2015 Classroom Trust Fund estimate please see Dr. Lankford's comments at the end of the memo, specifically the section titled Gaming Revenue.

2015-16 BUDGET ESTIMATES

2015-16 Basic Formula Estimate

The House of Representative has begun preliminary consideration of House Bill 2. At this point nothing has been passed out of the House for further deliberation in the Senate.

For further information regarding 2015-2016 Basic Formula estimate please see Dr. Lankford's comments at the end of the memo, specifically the section titled FY16 SAT Predictions.

Dollar Value Modifier Recalculation (DVM)

The calculation of the Dollar Value Modifier that will be used in the formula distribution for FY16 has been completed and can be viewed at <http://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/fas-FY16DVMCalculation.pdf>.

2015-16 Proposition C Sales Tax Payment Estimate

The Governor's Budget projected an increase in Proposition C revenue for the 2015-16 fiscal year. The 2015-16 Proposition C Sales Tax payment will be paid on the 2014-15 weighted average daily attendance (WADA).

With statewide ADA basically holding constant and the assumption that summer school will do the same, it is predicted that Proposition C Payment WADA will be in the vicinity of 903,000 in FY15. If the Revenue Estimate of \$848,739,000 is achieved, it would mean a WADA payment of approximately \$939. While it appears this level of collection is achievable, caution should be used as determination of budget estimates are made.

Trend data for Proposition C Payments since the inception of the current foundation formula can be located in the section of this memo titled 2014-2015 – Proposition C Sales Tax Payment Estimate Revision.

2015-16 Classroom Trust Fund Estimate

The 2015-16 Classroom Trust Fund payment is paid on the 2014-15 average daily attendance of approximately 848,000. The projected Classroom Trust Fund revenue as stated in the Governor's recommendations for the 2014-15 budget is \$343,456,910. This estimated revenue will be divided by an estimated 2014-15 average daily attendance of approximately 848,000, which is approximately \$405 per ADA from the Classroom Trust Fund for the 2015-16 year. The Classroom Trust Fund is one of the funding sources of the Basic Formula and, like other funding areas, we will not know exactly the funding level until the appropriation process concludes. Please remember that this calculation is done to determine the proper placement of funds in accordance with statute.

As a reminder, Senate Bill 291 passed in the 2009 legislative session includes the following provision in Section 163.043.5:

For the 2010-2011 school year and for each subsequent year, all proceeds a school district receives from the classroom trust fund in excess of the amount the district received from the classroom trust fund in the 2009-2010 school year shall be placed to the credit of the district's teachers' and incidental funds.

OTHER INFORMATION

Estimated Regular Term Average Daily Attendance (ADA)

The estimated regular term ADA for 2014-15 may be provided to your School Finance Consultant to be entered on the August Core Data WEB Screen 2 in the Estimated ADA field. The district would report an estimated regular term ADA for the **2014-2015** year *only if the district's 2014-15 regular term ADA is expected to be greater than both the 2012-13 and 2013-14 regular term ADA figures* and the district wants to be paid in 2014-15 on the 2014-15 estimated number.

The local education agency (LEA) charter schools must provide an estimated regular term ADA to their School Finance consultant for 2014-15. Payment is made to charter schools on current year attendance.

Revisions to the 2014-15 estimated ADA may be made through **May 15, 2015**. Contact School Finance staff if you have questions about estimating ADA.

Mid-Year Fund Balance Reporting

The mid-year fund balance reporting is a part of the February Core Data cycle on Core Data Screen 35. Each district is required to report the following information as of December 31, 2014:

- Incidental and Teachers Funds Unrestricted Ending Fund Balance as of December 31 that can be found in the district's accounting records.
- Tax Anticipation borrowing in the Incidental or Teachers Funds between July 1 and December 31.
- Transfers from the General Fund to the Capital Projects or Debt Service Funds between July 1 and December 31.

If you have any questions regarding this reporting, please contact School Finance at (573) 751-0357.

Core Data Screen 15 – Home School/Free and Reduced Lunch Data

The February Cycle MOSIS submission will populate the Home School/Free and Reduced Lunch Data, Core Data Screen 15, which is used to collect the number of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch as of the last Wednesday in January (January 28, 2015) in the category described in the Core Data Collection System Manual –State FTE Free or Reduced Lunch Eligible Students. A description follows:

State FTE Resident Free or Reduced Lunch Eligible Students

1. Report the full-time equivalency count of resident students enrolled in grades K-12 on January 28, 2015, and in attendance one of the 10 preceding school days whose eligibility for free or reduced lunch is documented (through the application process using federal eligibility guidelines or through the direct certification process). For districts that participate in the Community Eligibility Program (CEP) all of the students enrolled in the district (if CEP is chosen district wide) or all of the students enrolled in a CEP building (if only certain buildings at the district participate) are considered eligible for free and reduced lunch.
2. Report eligible students on a full-time equivalency (FTE) basis. A student attending one-half day is counted as .5, one-fourth day as .25, etc. Kindergarten students attending less than a full day per the first grade calendar are included in the counts as a ratio of the kindergarten calendar divided by the first grade calendar. Example: If the calendar for "full day" students in a school is 1050 hours and the calendar for kindergarten students is 630, then the FTE for those kindergarten students would be 630/1050 or .60. In no case should a full-time half-day kindergarten student be reported less than .50.
3. Eligible students are counted regardless of whether or not they actually eat lunch/breakfast.
4. Nonresident students are to be counted by the district which pays the tuition for those students and are reported as "Resident II Students".
5. Do not count students for whom the Department does not distribute state aid. (Students in preschool, the Parents as Teachers Program or state schools are not counted for state aid purposes.)
6. Students are reported by attendance center. The total free and reduced lunch eligible students for an attendance center may not exceed the attendance center's January membership count reported on Screen 16.
7. Desegregation students are considered residents of the district in which the students are educated. Deseg In free and reduced lunch student counts will populate in separate columns for each attendance center.

The above paragraph describes the count of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch which differs from the count used by School Food Service in the National School Lunch Program. The criteria for the **National School Lunch** count of free or reduced lunch eligible students include:

1. Report on the monthly lunch claim for food service reimbursement the highest number of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch during the month being reported.
2. Report students on a head count basis. (Both part-time and full-time students are counted as 1 in the head count.)
3. Eligible students are those eligible for free or reduced price meals that have access to the lunch program. This eligibility would include PK students and students up to age 21 that are enrolled in a high school grade and are allowed access to the lunch program.
4. Eligible students are counted regardless of whether or not they actually eat lunch/breakfast.
5. Students are reported by the district in which they are educated.

Core Data Screen 16 – January Membership

The February Cycle MOSIS submission will populate Core Data Screen 16 providing a membership count of resident students who were enrolled on January 28, 2015, and were in attendance one of the previous ten school days. The February Cycle is due to DESE by February 15, 2015.

Inclement Weather

Districts must comply with Section 163.021.1, RSMo, which requires compliance with the minimum term, including a minimum number of days and hours, to be eligible for state aid. Additionally, Section 171.033.4, RSMo, provides forgiveness for inclement weather days after a specified number of inclement weather days have been reached by a school district or charter school. Below is specific information regarding minimum day length, minimum hours of attendance, and inclement weather forgiveness day information.

Minimum Hours Required in a School Day

Severe weather increases the possibility of an early release from school. Section 160.041.1, RSMo, states that a minimum school day consists of at least 3 hours (except districts establishing less than a 174 day school calendar which require 4 hours) in which the pupils are under the guidance and direction of teachers in the teaching process. Districts must meet both the minimum day requirement and the minimum hour requirement as dictated by their respective calendar.

Minimum required hours of class time to count as a school day:

- School districts that provide a minimum term of at least 174 days and 1,044 hours of instruction must have at least three hours of class time to count day as an attendance day for calendar purposes.
- School districts that provide a minimum term of less than 174 days, and with a minimum of 1,044 hours, must have at least four hours of class time to count day as an attendance day for calendar purposes.

A school day ending before the minimum required hours of class time does not count toward the day requirement and the hours do not count toward the 1,044 hour requirement. Since the day is not a legal school day, the hours and day do not count for state aid purposes. Such hours are not reported as a part of the school district's calendar and the attendance hours are not reported in the June MOSIS Enrollment and Attendance file submission for the ADA calculation for state aid purposes.

Missed School Days

Some school districts may have missed days this school year due to inclement weather. Per 171.033.4, RSMo:

“In the 2009-2010 school year and subsequent years, a school district may be exempt from the requirement to make up days of school lost or canceled due to inclement weather in the school district when the school district has made up the six days required under subsection 2 of this section and half of the number of additional lost or canceled days up to eight days, resulting in no more than ten total make-up days required by this section.”

“Inclement weather”, for purposes of this section, shall be defined as ice, snow, extreme cold, flooding, or a tornado, but such term shall not include excessive heat.

This rule applies to districts that plan to attend 174 days or more as well as to those districts that plan to attend less than 174 days (per Section 171.029, RSMo). Days that are missed for reasons other than inclement weather, such as illness, have to be made up and are not included in this provision of law.

Reminder: Days that are forgiven due to inclement weather will not have an adverse impact on the average daily attendance (ADA) calculation. This will create a situation which will have an effect on both components (both the total attendance hours and the hours in session) of the ADA calculation and, therefore, will not have a negative impact on the ADA.

The following two charts illustrate the make-up requirements associated with this statute.

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10	Day 11	Day 12	Day 13	Day 14	+
M	M	M	M	M	M	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	F

Key:

M = Day must be made up

F = Day is forgiven

Days Missed	Days to Make Up
1 Day	1
2 Days	2
3 Days	3
4 Days	4
5 Days	5
6 Days	6
7 Days	7
8 Days	7
9 Days	8
10 Days	8
11 Days	9
12 Days	9
13 Days	10
14 Days	10
More than 14	10

The above information regarding inclement weather and a short FAQ are available at <http://dese.mo.gov/divadm/finance/topicsandprocedures/index.html>

Non-Certificated Educators – Attendance Hours Adjustment

Attendance hours for any educator without a valid certificate will be disallowed for state aid payment purposes. State law requires all school district personnel who are responsible for working with students in an instructional or supervisory capacity during the school day to have a valid Missouri teaching certificate. This applies to in-school suspension teachers as well as those supervising study hall, recess, virtual courses taken in school, or other computer based instructional programs taken in school. A substitute certificate meets the requirement of a certificate when the employee is functioning as a substitute teacher in the absence of the teacher-of-record or is employed as the teacher-of-record.

A report is available on the Data Collection web application system which will identify educators within the district that do not have a valid certificate on file with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. To access this report in the Data Collection system, go to the left hand navigational tree and select Reports, then Special Reports, then Staff Certification.

The Department will prepare a list of educators meeting the following criteria:

1. did not hold a valid Missouri educator certificate for the Regular School year teaching assignment or;
2. has a certificate pending but did not initiate the required background check.

School districts notified they have an educator(s) that met the above criteria must provide School Finance with the attendance hours by building and by grade for all students who were under the supervision of those educators since the educator did not have a valid certificate. These hours of attendance will be excluded from the total hours of attendance for the school year.

Missouri Accountability Portal (MAP) – Debt Reporting

HB116 was passed by the General Assembly and became law on August 28, 2013. The new legislation in 37.850, RSMo, requires school districts to report all bonded indebtedness and requires charter schools to report all debt. This information shall be supplied to Office of Administration (OA) for display on the State's Accountability Portal.

The State's Accountability Portal accepts the submission of bond and debt information. A user link for this portion of the portal is available on the main page (<http://mapyourtaxes.mo.gov/MAP/PORTAL/DEFAULT.aspx>) under the "Bonds" section. In order to submit information, an entity will need to visit the portal website and obtain a secure user name and password. The user name and password can be created by selecting bonds, then selecting user login and selecting request user account. Once credentials are granted, a user may enter the site to enter or update bond or debt information.

Each district is initially required to enter all bonded indebtedness and all charter schools to enter all debt on the portal to meet the reporting requirements. Once the current debt of the school districts and charter schools has been entered the district and charter will be required to update the debt with the outstanding balance once a fiscal year. This update will correspond with the Annual Secretary of the Board Report (ASBR) deadline and should contain the outstanding balance as of June 30.

Most of the required fields on the reporting tool are self-explanatory; however, there have been questions regarding a couple of the fields. The description of the revenue stream is generally something such as revenue generated from a levy that was established, Classroom Trust Fund revenue, or local revenue. This list is not an all inclusive list but provides a general idea as to what would seem to be an appropriate response. The description of the project would be a description as to what the project was, for example, a building project.

If a school district issues new bonds or a charter school enters into debt obligations the new debts are required to be entered onto the portal within seven days of issuing a bond or incurring an obligation or debt per section 37.850, RSMo.

If a school district does not have any bonded debt or a charter school does not have any debt there is no requirement for the completion of any information on the portal.

If you have questions regarding accessing the portal website, please contact OA at (573) 751-2971 or MAPBonds@oa.mo.gov. For questions regarding what debt should be entered on the portal please do not hesitate to contact School Finance at (573) 751-0357.

Audit Requirement Changes

New requirements released by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Supercircular include increasing the threshold requirement for a single audit from \$500,000 to \$750,000. These requirements will become effective for school years that begin after December 26, 2014. Therefore districts/charter schools that expend more than \$750,000 in federal funds in **school year 2015-2016** must contract with an independent auditor to perform a Single Audit of federal funds. Please view the new OMB Supercircular guidance that was effective December 26, 2013 at: <https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2013/12/26/2013-30465/uniform-administrative-requirements-cost-principles-and-audit-requirements-for-federal-awards>. Please read "**Subpart F**" of the OMB Supercircular for all of the new audit requirements for the **school year 2015- 2016** and beyond audit reports. The Audit Rule will be updated and additional guidance provided at a later date.

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

Qualified Zone Academy Bonds (QZAB)

The Qualified Zone Academy Bonds (QZAB) have been re-authorized by Congress, Missouri has \$7,349,000 from the 2014 allocation. DESE currently has \$1,354,708 of authorization remaining from the 2013 allocation to distribute as well. The 2013 authorization is due to expire on December 31, 2015 and the 2014 authorization will expire on December 31, 2016.

The application period for QZAB began on Monday, February 2, and will end at 4:00 pm on Friday, March 20, 2015. The application can be accessed at <http://dese.mo.gov/forms/MO5002299.pdf>. There is a Qualified Zone Academy Bonds Q & A document which describes QZAB's and the application process that can be found at <http://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/sf-QZAB-QAs-8-2013.pdf>.

If you have questions, contact Roger Dorson at (573) 751-0357 or roger.dorson@dese.mo.gov.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

2014-15 State Transportation Aid Calculation

The fiscal year 2014-15 state transportation aid calculation is available through the School Finance website. Select Monthly Financial Reports. Input County-District number. The Payment Transmittal is then displayed. Click on the revenue name "Transportation" on the Payment Transmittal to access the transportation aid calculation. The link to School Finance Monthly Financial Reports is <http://dese.mo.gov/financial-admin-services/school-finance/financial-reports>.

This is the fourth live state transportation calculation made for the current year. The calculation is based on 2013-14 school year data submitted by the district on the state transportation aid documents included in Part IV of the Annual Secretary of the Board Report (Application for State Transportation Aid, School Bus and Facility Depreciation Schedules).

The percent of reduction to the calculated entitlement computed for the January 2015 calculation is shown below. This reduction percentage represents the amount the entitlement exceeded the appropriation and will fluctuate from month to month as revisions are made to individual school district data. The percent of reduction and the A and B factors are also reflected on each district's Summary Transportation Report.

The percentage reduction and the A and B factors are as follows:

	<u>Reduction Factor</u>	<u>A Factor</u>	<u>B Factor</u>
February 2015	65.050665	3.525012	-1.421138

Prior Year (2013-14) Adjustment - Transportation

Each year the prior year's state transportation aid calculation is recalculated to reflect the best actual data applicable for that payment year. The 2013-14 transportation calculations were made in January 2015 using 2012-13 transportation data from the latest 2012-13 ASBR. Districts will receive a positive or negative recalculation based on the current data.

First Observer Program Returns

The TSA Office of Security Policy and Industry Engagement, Surface Division, is pleased to announce a new web-based restoration of the First Observer™ Program, a security awareness training initiative that focuses on enhancing security across all highway surface transportation modes including school transportation. After an interruption of the program, they have now re-tooled all of the critical training modules and have made them available on-line at <http://www.tsa.gov/first-observer>.

Ridership List

The second ridership list for the current school year should have been finalized on the second Wednesday of February (February 11, 2015). This list should be a compilation of the students' names that regularly ride the bus from the beginning of the second semester to the February count day and should identify which students are eligible for state transportation aid (those living one mile or more from school) and those ineligible for state transportation aid (those living less than one mile from school).

The ridership list should not be a listing of all students who are eligible or ineligible to ride the buses nor should it be a listing of only those students riding on the count day, but should be a listing of students regularly riding the buses. A student should ride the bus a minimum of once a week to be considered a regular rider.

Certified School Bus Driver Instructor Training

The Certified School Bus Driver Instructor recertification training will be held in Columbia on July 24, 2015. The Certified School Bus Driver Instructor workshop is scheduled for July 27-29, 2015, in Warrensburg. Registration forms for this training are available at <http://dese.mo.gov/financial-admin-services/school-transportation/certified-bus-driver-instructors>, also, a listing of all current Certified School Bus Driver Instructors can also be viewed at this site.

Deputy Commissioner's Comments

Revenue Trends YTD

	<u>YTD as of</u> <u>January FY14</u>	<u>YTD as of</u> <u>January FY15</u>	<u>Revenue</u> <u>Change</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Individual Income Taxes	\$3,280,000,000	\$3,490,000,000	\$210,000,000	6.40%
Sales & Use Taxes	\$1,140,000,000	\$1,170,000,000	\$30,000,000	2.63%
Corporate Inc. & Franchise	\$277,900,000	\$286,400,000	\$8,500,000	3.06%
Other Collections	\$201,500,000	\$196,000,000	(\$5,500,000)	-2.73%
 Increase in Revenue YTD			 \$243,000,000	 4.96%
 Refunds (YTD)	 \$331,100,000	 \$350,400,000	 \$19,300,000	 5.83%
(A decrease in refunds enhances Net Revenue. An increase in refunds diminishes Net Revenue.)				
 Actual Net Revenue Status YTD	 \$4,568,300,000	 \$4,792,000,000	 \$223,700,000	 4.90%

School District Trust Fund (Proposition C) YTD

	<u>(Feb.) Prior Year</u>	<u>(Feb.) Current Year</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Amount Paid to School Districts	\$530,065,130	\$562,717,218	6.16%
Appropriation	\$827,500,000		

Gaming Revenue YTD

	<u>(Jan.) Prior Year</u>	<u>(Jan.) Current Year</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Total Gaming Proceeds to Education	\$182,815,097	\$182,111,393	-0.0038%
Gaming Revenue Appropriated	\$353,112,706		

YTD Classroom Trust Fund Available FY15* \$115,300,352
 *Includes \$8,665,050 carryover from FY14 and \$13,105,978 unclaimed Lottery funds

1. **General Revenue:** State revenue for January continued to hold a positive position as we moved past the seventh (7th) month of the fiscal year. The overall economy for the country continues its upward climb as was evidenced by the January jobs report for the nation. Data seems to indicate that Missouri's job outlook aligns with that trend which is very good news as we move forward through the five (5) months between now and June 30.

2. **Proposition C:** Revenue from the School District Trust Fund (Proposition C) available for distribution continues to run ahead of the prior year. The revenue available for payment in February was surprisingly strong, especially due to the fact that the month's revenue spanned a fewer number of days than is normal. We stated last month that one reason for the increase is that new car sales remain strong as well as other big ticket revenue generators. Additionally, lower gasoline prices continue to provide Missourians more discretionary funds which appears is being spent on other everyday needs, resulting in additional sales tax revenues.

3. **Gaming Revenue:** Compared to recent trends, gaming revenue has steadied and is only slightly under the level of last year. This is significant in that we had experienced revenue declines of a much greater percentage in recent years. As is the case with any revenue stream, things can change for the better or worse in a relatively short time span.

4. **FY15 Foundation Formula Payments:** During FY14, the Department followed a very conservative strategy in the projection of funds that would actually be available for distribution through the foundation formula. The goal was to prevent any significant negative adjustment in the month of June. When the fiscal year ended, the distribution came in very well in-line with the strategy and a major negative adjustment was avoided.

As we began FY15, a similar strategy was implemented. With the year now half over, and the revenue pattern rather stable, districts will note an increase in the percentage of funding available for February. The goal will be to assess revenue and adjust accordingly for the remainder of the year. If revenue patterns hold positive, monthly adjustments will be made to the extent deemed reasonable, but with the goal of avoiding a necessary negative adjustment in June.

5. **FY16 SAT Predictions:** Several questions have been asked relative to the impact of HB1689 and what the SAT might be in FY16. As everyone knows, that number is difficult to predict due to the changing dynamics that influence the formula calculations, the most significant of which is WADA. It would not be responsible to attempt to give an exact number, but what we can tell you is that if \$50 million would be appropriated and available above the current year's projections, the SAT based upon the January payment would be approximately \$6,076. By using that number, and not reducing by a percentage, you could get a rough estimate as to how the formula change would trend in your district.

Since the last memo, Jefferson City has again resumed a quickened pace due to the 2015 Missouri Legislative session. As has always been the case, the Capitol becomes the hub for activity that leads to eventual decisions impacting the entire state. Advocates for programs, causes and interests abound and work aggressively to communicate their message to the elected officials that ultimately cast their votes deciding the fate of the many questions brought before them. As I watch the process, I am again reminded that the work of our elected officials is not easy and the demands placed upon them are sometimes beyond my comprehension. In my thirty-five years of service as a public school administrator, it was not uncommon that someone would come to me promoting a program of importance to them. Never, however, did I have to endure a day, let alone multiple days, when almost everyone I saw was requesting that I make a decision in support of their respective causes. Such seems to be the nature of the day of elected officials that serve in Jefferson City.

Observing that environment, I have concluded that each member must be given the same benefit of the doubt that I always desired others grant me, which was the belief that I attempted to do the best job I could base upon the situation at the time and with the information I had at my disposal. Some decisions I made were agreed with, others were not. In the end, however, I was convinced that if I kept my focus on what was really important, that being the students for whom I worked, that I would get generally close to the right decision. So is the case of public policymaking. If we keep our focus on the welfare of the entire state and work to assure it has the opportunity to enable a bright future for all its citizens, especially our children, I believe good decisions will be made.

Thank you for all you do to prepare our next generation of Missouri adults.



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