



## Missouri Visioning Project Sub-Committee Report Climate, Culture, and Organizational Efficacy Sub-Committee

### Sub-Committee Co-Chairs:

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### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Learner is our focus.

1. Collective efforts are strengthened through increasing trust, collegiality, and teamwork.
2. Organizational culture is an important determination of climate and is a distinguishing factor between effective and ineffective public schools.
3. Effective leadership is critical for creating an organizational climate that is conducive to learning.
4. A healthy culture fosters community collaboration in finding solutions to challenges and is devoid of blame.
5. Organizational change and improvement occur only when individuals within organizations make needed changes with a sense of urgency.
6. Innovation and purposeful change in organizations are necessary to achieve sustainable competitiveness.
7. High performing organizations hold high and consistent expectations for all members.
8. High performing organizations recognize and address cultural differences. Strength can be derived from the rich diversity of our public schools.
9. Safety, order and respect are necessary conditions for teaching and learning to occur.
10. High performing organizations possess a climate and culture that supports a positive learning environment which is important for individual success to occur. This success may be measured by and through multiple outcomes.

### KEY ISSUES

1. **Missouri Public Education will be valued by all stakeholders. Positive information about our schools must be shared to educate and inform our public.** According to the 2010 Gallup Poll, 77% of parents give their local school an A or B and less than 20% of the public as a whole gives schools nationwide the same grades. That 77% figure, representing a high parental opinion of the local school is the highest in the history of the Gallup Poll. Where is the disconnect? How can this gap be bridged? What needs to take place for our public to better understand that the underperforming few are far from representative of the vast majority? These questions must be addressed effectively to shape the opinion of public education in Missouri. Accountability standards and their accompanying measures have been on the forefront of education reform for quite some time. As a result, the constant and continuous efforts of public school educators to get better at what they do have taken on new meaning, sometimes to a fault. The singular focus that tends to result from this type of accountability appears to have benefits and costs, but whatever the case may be, a focus on improvement is evident. The Gallup Poll results would suggest that much of the public does not recognize that those efforts go on outside of their local community or they do not see them as important. The education

community must understand why the public sees our schools in this way and be equipped to deal with those perceptions in order to close this gap in public opinion.

Does our culture need to change to impact the climate in such a way as to improve efficacy? This is a key question to consider in shaping the thoughts of the Missouri citizenry toward public education.

2. **Educational Leaders must model life-long learning.** Educators of all types must be evaluated on their attainment of life-long learning. Continuing education through high-quality programs including advanced degrees, on-going experiences, collaboration with other educators, and reflection throughout the learning process should be added to the current system. Strong mentoring and induction programs will be needed to keep quality educators in the profession and grow the leaders of the future. Teacher learning does not stop at the end of a pre-service education program; thus, induction and mentoring programs are necessary to ensure that teachers are supported as they continue to develop "the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for optimal teaching (Pennsylvania State Education Association, 2011).
3. **All Missouri students deserve the best education possible.** Missouri students must be offered the greatest opportunities for success. Standards for student achievement in our schools must be high and reasonably attained through highly effective and efficient practice in order to prepare our youth to compete in the national and global market.

According to a study conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics, Missouri now has some of the most rigorous standards in the United States to measure the academic proficiency of its students. The study focused on the 2005 and 2007 results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a measure that compares state standards in academic efficiency. The report looked at the three-year period to determine whether state standards were lowered significantly during that time. The NAEP study shows Missouri is one of 10 states with a significant increase in mathematics proficiency scores at both the fourth- and eighth-grade levels from 2005-2009. The report demonstrated that Missouri has the second most difficult standards in reading and math at the fourth-grade level and the fourth most rigorous math standards for eighth-graders. The report also found that Missouri has the second most stringent standards for reading at the fourth-grade level. The state test is much more difficult to pass than the national test.

The state of Missouri revised the Missouri Assessment Program in 2006 and transitioned from a system of periodic testing to one that tested grade levels three through eight on a yearly basis. The NAEP is given every other year to a sample of schools across the U.S. The stringent Missouri standards were implemented in the mid-1990s. The Missouri State Board of Education determined that standards would be set high, the thought being that students would be better prepared for a post secondary experience. One outcome may be lower scores relative to the proficiency scale for students in the short term, but the goal is for students to have mastered skills and content knowledge necessary for their future.

4. **Educational organizations are extensions of their communities.** The relationship between the school and the community at is symbiotic in nature. Schools and school districts exist within the communities in which they are located and not in isolation of the four walls of the school building. The support and engagement of the community is critical to district and building success. An increase in community and importantly parent involvement can lead to improvement in student success. Regular assessment

of the satisfaction with and engagement of stakeholders with respect to their schools and school districts is vital for educational leaders. Once these attitudes are understood by the educational leaders they must be proactive in developing and nurturing positive relations with the community leaders and stakeholders of the school and district. There is often little guidance from the school on the most effective way in which positive engagement can occur; educators must assume the responsibility for offering a wide variety of suggestions, models, programs and providing the needed leadership for positive and long term engagement.

5. **Safe, orderly, and supportive learning environments must be maintained.** Teaching and learning do not occur without a safe and secure environment for learners and those who instruct and support them. Indeed, high performance cultures at pre-K to 12 schools and higher education require a nurturing context that is dependent upon a safe and secure environment. Safety at pre-K to 12 schools and higher education institutions must be a community focused effort—community engagement is a requisite. This requires the collaboration of federal, state, and local policymakers, those who administer and manage schools as well as higher education, law enforcement, and other emergency responders in planning and preparedness.

#### **PROMISING PRACTICES**

**Good News about Public Schools** A promising practice would be to produce video informational pieces designed to stress the positive outcomes present in our schools. The pieces could follow the examples provided by our universities. The participation of public figures who are products of our schools would certainly add value to these projects. Another practice might be to enlist the assistance of a marketing/pr firm to pursue other ideas such as radio spots, newspaper articles, television appearances, etc.

New Jersey Education Association and Pennsylvania State Education Association both host a web sites dedicated to good news, see <http://www.njea.org/about/who-we-are/good-news> and <http://www.psea.org/general.aspx?id=680>

A wide variety of good news YouTube videos are also on-line such as:

<http://vimeo.com/20850537>

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d\\_pGiUeVFEU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d_pGiUeVFEU)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y7UDOlvatgw>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K2cP-FonWjQ>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=suPWwKJCXtc>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZMy44a21VU&feature=related>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xhvSIO-I-N4&NR=1>

**Leadership Academy:** The Leadership Academy caters to new and aspiring administrators through continuous on-going collaboration and professional development. The Academy meets the requirements for mentoring for new administrators in their first three years of the profession. Information about the Missouri Leadership Academy can be found at <http://dese.mo.gov/divteachqual/leadership/index.html>

**Advanced Degrees to Upgrade Certification:** Missouri's process for upgrading and extending teacher and administrative certification involves continuing education. The process requires the attainment of an advanced degree in order to upgrade or maintain certification. Information about teacher and administrative certification in Missouri can be found at: <http://dese.mo.gov/divteachqual/teachcert/>

**The Missouri Quality Award:** Recognized as one of the strongest state-level quality award programs in the country, the Missouri Quality award is the official state recognition for excellence in quality leadership. The program, modeled after the prestigious Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, offers a thorough and objective educational process through which an organization can learn and apply quality implementation techniques and assessment methods. Organizations participating in the Award process join a growing number of Missouri organizations that are dedicated to promoting quality as a vital element to enhancing customer satisfaction and operational performance. Since its inception in 1992, 51 organizations have received the Award and have been regarded as role models for successful quality strategies. Through their willingness to help others, the Missouri Quality Award Recipients have encouraged other organizations to undertake their own quality improvement efforts. More information can be found at <http://www.mqa.org/qualityaward.htm>

**e-Learning for Educators:** Missouri is a program for developing and delivering high-quality online professional development designed to increase teacher knowledge and skills to improve student performance. The program is designed to leverage the expertise and experience of Missouri's educators while making high-quality professional development available across the state. Experienced Missouri educators facilitate and develop the online professional development courses for teachers. More information can be found at <http://www.elearningmo.org/>

**"The Communities in School Network"** has shown success in reducing dropout rates, graduation rates, at a relatively low cost. From their information "*Communities In Schools* positions a dedicated staff member - a site coordinator - inside partner schools. In this pivotal role, the coordinator works with school staff to identify students at risk of not graduating. He or she assesses school and student needs and establishes relationships with local businesses, social service agencies, health care providers, and parent and volunteer organizations to harness needed resources. Whether it's tutoring, eyeglasses or just a safe place to be after school, when these needs are met, students can concentrate on learning. With a largely volunteer base, *Communities In Schools* is cost-efficient, and the model is adaptable to urban, rural or suburban communities."

**Bright Futures:** Bright Futures is a grassroots community initiative led by Joplin School involving over 1,000 community volunteers, local businesses, faith-based and non-profit organizations. This initiative aligns community resources with the goal of meeting every child's identified basic needs within 24 hours. Further, Bright Futures focuses on building community leadership capacity and understanding of school challenges related to issues around poverty. Completing the loop, the initiative emphasizes service learning as a means of giving back to the community. Bright Futures teaches students the importance of service before self thus creating a "Synergy of Community Cultural Change" resulting in greater community support for schools and ultimately improve student outcomes.

**Montgomery County Public Schools, 2010 Annual Report on Call to Action:** "Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) is committed to building and maintaining strong relationships with a broad range of stakeholders including parents, civic, business and community groups in support of student achievement and employee excellence." There are four milestones that support this goal of MCPS; 1) The district and local schools communicate with parents regularly about MCPS's educational programs and student academic progress, 2) The district has processes in place for stakeholder input, 3) All schools are welcoming to our diverse student and parent communities and provide opportunities for engaging parents as partners, and 4) The district and local schools collaborate with county agencies and parent, student, civic, business and community organizations to support student success.

**The Missouri School Violence Hotline,** [www.schoolviolencehotline.com](http://www.schoolviolencehotline.com), provides a portal for parents, students, schools and law enforcement to report safety concerns. It offers answers to many safety and security questions,

information on bullying (including cyberbullying) and other resources. It is sponsored by the Missouri Department of Social Services, Children's Division.

**The Missouri Safe School Initiative** working with the Missouri Department of Public Safety, offers schools and families a wide array of resources including facilities assessments, staff training, and national resource linkages. Missouri United School Insurance Council, MUSIC, which provides insurance coverage to over 75% of Missouri's Public Schools offers risk assessment and staff training and partners with a company called in2vate to offer web based staff training on student protection including recognition of child predators and bullying prevention ([www.in2vate.com](http://www.in2vate.com)) , [www.dps.mo.gov/homelandsecurity/safeschools/index.html](http://www.dps.mo.gov/homelandsecurity/safeschools/index.html)

**The Center for Education Safety (CES)** is an innovative, public-private partnership of the Missouri Department of Public Safety, Missouri Office of Homeland Security, and the Missouri School Boards' Association (MSBA). Located at the MSBA Communications Center in Jefferson City—Missouri's capitol—the CES is dedicated to enhancing various aspects of emergency planning, preparedness, and safety and security in public and nonpublic education—pre-K, K-12, and post-secondary. The services provided by the CES fall into three categories—Leadership, Information Resource, and Technical Assistance and Training.

**Bullying – Cyber-Bullying:** In our vision to promote a climate and culture for schools that promotes world class student achievement, we cannot ignore what has been termed the most under-reported safety problem in schools—bullying. Bullying (both so-called traditional bullying and cyber bullying) is a serious problem that can dramatically affect the ability of students to progress academically and socially. There are a number of statistics available from a variety of sources that underscore the pervasive nature of bullying in our nation's schools. One of these data points—reported by several sources—suggests that each school day, more than 160,000 students are purposively absent from fear of being bullied. These data seem to indicate that even the best of schools has a bullying problem to some degree. There is an evolving body of information about the effects of bullying. Studies show there are short- and long-term negative effects on persons who bully and those who are bullied. School bullying is increasing linked to school violence. Efforts to “bully proof” schools, throughout the nation and in Missouri, have met success. Typically, this success has followed the implementation of bullying prevention programs that are researched-based and comprehensive—not implemented in an isolated fashion, includes all aspects of the school, is a part of every school day and continues indefinitely, provides for staff training, and makes the responsibility of eradicating bullying an obligation for all—students and staff.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Determine public perception and address misconceptions (GP 1,4,10 and KI 1)**

The rumor mill often takes on a life of its own. This concept applies to issues large and small. The issues regarding the public perception of our education system is no different. In an effort to educate our public about the successes of our public education system we must identify the perceptions that exist and take tangible steps to address the inaccuracies that will undoubtedly surface. This effort must take place in each community and across the state and the responsibility must be shared by all. A method for gathering data must be identified or developed and implemented. Through this process, misconceptions will be apparent and a targeted plan can be developed to deal with those inaccuracies.

A systematic approach for handling negative perceptions and accentuating the positive results of our efforts must be developed as well. This approach should be embraced by leaders in all of the professional associations within our state and the strategic plan should cover the full spectrum from a statewide perspective to local action steps. The personal touch can and should be emphasized and Town Hall meetings and other community gatherings in

each school community would provide the opportunity for quality two-way communication. Individual and collective successes can be highlighted through the creation of video products, printed materials, and personal appearances by key communicators.

**Evaluation of Board of Educations, Superintendents, Principals, and Teachers should contain a life-long learning component (GP 3,5,7 and KI 2)**

A well informed and continually learning environment is a hallmark of high performing organizations and is necessary for the success of public schools; this environment should include all parts of the district leadership team including Boards of Education. The Michigan Institute for Educational Management discusses evaluations with the following components: professional development is an investment in people, learning is a life-long process and professional development is necessary to prepare educational leaders to meet the challenges of the future. The Rhode Island Department of Education developed educator evaluation standards in 2009. The second standard details the direction Missouri should follow in order to meet this recommendation including the emphasis upon professional growth and continuous improvement of individual educators' professional practice. This constant learning model is a key component of a continuous improvement process all districts and schools should adopt.

**Provide funding for innovative programs and encourage districts to share knowledge (best practices) for the betterment of students (GP 5,6 and KI 3)**

One of the great strengths of our public education system is the focus on the learner and the collaborative approach to enhancing learning opportunities for all Missouri students. We must continue to assess students in grades 3-8 in the content areas of math and reading and compare this assessment to national standards. We must also continue to assess students in grades 9-12 in a variety of ways including end-of-course exams and college entrance exams and compare those scores to others in the state and nation. However, these assessments and the manner in which they are conducted should not drain funding from the process of educating our students, nor should the process by which schools are held accountable

Sufficient resources must be provided to schools to maximize the potential of all students in Missouri having the tools necessary to become competent and confident learners and ultimately productive citizens. An important piece in the process must be strong, focused professional development for teaching staff to assist in implementing a rigorous curriculum using the best methodology or lessons to teach students.

**Make each school and district an inviting place to be for students, parents, staff and the larger community (GP 2,8,10 and KI 4)**

Each school district and building should develop an outreach and engagement program designed to connect the community stakeholders with the school. This effort should be included in the Board of Education planning process and should be celebrated in the Comprehensive School Improvement plan and individual building plan. Such actions should extend well beyond traditional parent groups and embrace business and industry, faith based organizations, community groups, and local government, etc. The programs offered such as those discussed by Communities in our Schools and Bright Futures should become part of the school and community fabric.

**Develop safe, orderly, and supportive learning environments (GP 9,10 and KI 5)**

School buildings and all components (instructional materials, technology, desks, bookcases, etc.) should provide an environment that is conducive to learning and assure student safety. National standards to assess the building's integrity and safety should be utilized at least annually in a formal assessment by appropriate personnel. Those assessments should be thorough and complete and include annual elevator inspections, fire,



insurance company audits, etc. To assure safety, this inspection document should be available to the public on request.

Buildings that are unsafe should be repaired and/or replaced. Funding for these necessary renovations should be available to public schools. Innovative blending of volunteer and public support should be encourage and supported through legislative incentives and waivers of existing barriers.

Appropriate policies and procedures should be in place in each district and school building to assure that all instructors and volunteers are firmly vetted and that there is in place a mechanism to routinely check that these background results assure student safety.

Continuous staff training on safety procedures and child safety is provided to staff and parents through workshops, learning materials, on-line training and appropriate introductory job orientation and ongoing mentoring and supervision.

Students, through the Model Guidance Program, Technology Training Programs, Drug and Alcohol Awareness Programs, Anti-Bullying Training, Cyber Bullying awareness and prevention, appropriate use of social media (Facebook®, Twitter®, etc.) and other like learning opportunities, will be aware of appropriate and inappropriate student/citizen conduct. Parents and community members will have numerous opportunities to work with school districts to view each of these already developed training modules and work with district staff to develop and provide further instructional programs. Advisory committees composed of staff, parents, and community members will evaluate these programs annually and add or modify as desired.

**We must celebrate the uniqueness and variety of Missouri community (GP 8 and KI 4,5)**

Missouri is a diverse state consisting of urban, suburban, and rural communities. With that diversity comes great opportunity for us to value the unique strengths of each of those communities. The challenge lies in the variety of resources, expectations, and perhaps most importantly, values each possesses. While we must understand the need to have standards for performance reached by all, we must also understand the strong desire for those at the local level to have a significant amount of autonomy in determining how their children are educated. Local districts are responsible for developing and implementing a curriculum that aligns with state and national expectations while still meeting the needs of the local community. Local boards must communicate their understanding that state and national standards must be met while maintaining the autonomy manifest in the concept of local control. It is what their community expects and the level of engagement and support of that community is dependent on a responsive nature by the board toward those expectations. At the very least, those who are interested want to feel as if they have been heard and an interested and supportive citizenry is vitally important to the education of our children at the local level and across our state.

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## VISIONING PROJECT MEMBERSHIP

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