



Holden Recognizes Nationally Board Certified Teachers

Gov. Bob Holden recognized 61 Missouri teachers who qualified last fall for certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

Missouri now has 136 teachers who have earned the prestigious national certification.

Fifty of the 61 teachers, along with members of their families, met with Gov. Holden this morning at a news conference in his office.

"We all know that the best way we can achieve better student performance in our schools is by having the best teachers in the classroom," Holden said. "These teachers represent the level of instructional performance we hope to see in every classroom in our state."

"The National Board Certified teachers will tell you that they have improved more during this process than at any other time in their teaching careers," Holden said. "This affirms how valuable these instructors are to their school districts and the students they teach."

Holden has consistently supported the voluntary National Board Certification process as a way of encouraging teachers' professional growth and recognizing individual teaching excellence.

Achieving National Board Certification is the culmination of a rigorous training and assessment process that requires at least a year. Candidates must assemble a portfolio of their classroom teaching practices and complete a final, three-hour computer-based exam.

Both assessments are designed to demonstrate the candidate's advanced subject matter knowledge and teaching skills. Fewer than half of all candidates achieve national certification on their first try.

The Columbia School District now has 30 teachers who have attained national certification, the most of any district in the state. Of the 61 teachers that qualified for national certification last year, 13 were from the Independence School District.



Recommended Educational Web Sites

Visit these web sites for lesson plan ideas, technology advice and parent/teacher interaction.

- www.lessonplanspage.com
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State Board of Education Proposes Policy for Identifying Dangerous Schools

The State Board of Education has tentatively approved a policy that spells out criteria for identifying public schools that are dangerous for students.

The policy approved yesterday is required under the No Child Left Behind Act, the sweeping federal law enacted one year ago. Under the law, students may be eligible to transfer out of a school that is declared to be "persistently dangerous" by state education officials. Any student who is a victim of a violent crime on school property also would be allowed to transfer to another school.

"Safety of students is the first priority for parents, staff and students themselves. I believe the public schools of Missouri are safe – safer than ever, in fact, because of the increased emphasis on security in recent years. I hope we never have to implement this policy," said Commissioner of Education D. Kent King.

In discussing the proposed policy, state education officials voiced concerns about potential misuse or misunderstanding of the "persistently dangerous" label. They said the policy also could have the unintended result of encouraging school officials to avoid tough disciplinary actions against students in order to make their

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schools appear safe.

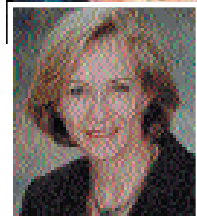
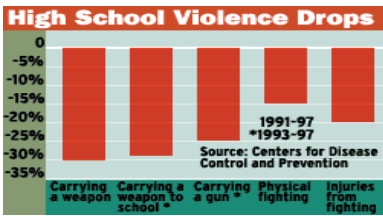
Under the proposed rule, a school would be identified as persistently dangerous if a student were expelled for bringing a weapon to school in each of three consecutive years, or if a student were expelled for committing a violent criminal offense on school grounds in each of three consecutive years.

In addition, a school would need to have a specified number of student expulsions for offenses involving drugs, alcohol, weapons or violence in two out of three years. In small schools (under 250 students), the rate would be five expulsions per year. The threshold increases to 15 expulsions per year for schools of more than 1,000 students.

For purposes of this policy, "violent criminal offenses" are defined by the state's Safe Schools Act (Section 160.261, RSMo) and include drug-related offenses.

The policy also calls for the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to help local schools that request assistance in dealing with safety concerns.

The proposed policy will be published for a 30-day comment period. The board will consider public comments and suggestions about the policy before it takes final action to implement the rule this spring. When finalized, the new policy will be in force for the next school year.



First Lady Lori Holden fields questions after reading to children at a Jefferson City School.

State Board of Education Proposes Limit On Textbook Aid for "A+" Students

Students eligible for financial assistance under Missouri's "A+ Schools" program would get less money for textbooks, under a plan approved yesterday by the State Board of Education.

Currently, about 6,500 students who graduated from one of Missouri's public A+ high schools are attending community colleges or public technical schools. They receive state financial assistance to cover the full cost of tuition, fees and books.

The policy proposed by the State Board of Education would limit the benefit for books to half of the student's cost. Officials from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education estimate the change would save about \$3 million next year and enable more students to receive tuition.

Participation in the A+ program has been growing steadily in recent years, and state education officials expect about 600 more students who graduate this spring to take advantage of the A+ assistance.

The state now has 174 public high schools that have earned the A+ designation from the State Board of Education. More than 30 other schools also are working to achieve the designation.

The A+ Schools program was established in 1993. To qualify, a public high school must revamp curriculum, adopt stiffer academic standards and reduce its dropout rate.

To qualify for state financial assistance, students in A+ high schools must maintain a GPA of at least 2.5 and an attendance rate of at least 95 percent. They also must maintain good citizenship and perform 50 hours of unpaid tutoring services while in high school.

The policy change is necessary, education officials say, because the number of students eligible for A+ assistance is growing rapidly while funding for the program is flat, due to the

Four Schools are Added to the State's "Deficient" List

The State Board of Education declared four schools in three school districts to be academically deficient, based primarily on the schools' low scores on the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) tests.

ACADEMICALLY DEFICIENT

- Breckenridge High School
- Kennett Middle School
- Kennett High School
- Wright City High School

RECOMMENDED FOR ACADEMIC DEFICIENT STATUS

(given one year to demonstrate continued academic progress)

- Caruthersville Middle School
- Caruthersville High School
- Center High School, K.C.
- Jennings Jr. High School
- Jennings High School
- Maplewood-Richmond Hts. Middle School
- Jefferson Elementary Normandy School District
- Reed Middle School Springfield School District

State education officials now must appoint 10-member “management teams” to work with each of the academically deficient schools in an effort to boost academic performance.

Schools identified as deficient have two full school years to demonstrate satisfactory gains in academic performance.

If progress does not occur, the local board of education is authorized to impose sanctions such as suspending tenure for the professional staff in the school. There are now 19 academically deficient schools across the state.

Five School Districts are Recognized for High-Quality Staff Development Programs

State education officials have honored five Missouri school districts for having exemplary training and development programs for teachers – programs that translate into improved academic achievement by students.

On March 16, Commissioner of Education D. Kent King formally recognized officials from the six school districts with the Commissioner’s Award of Excellence for Professional Development. The five school districts are:

- Blue Springs
- Cabool
- Fulton
- Lee’s Summit
- Lindbergh (St. Louis)

The awards were presented at the annual Show-Me Professional Development Conference. The annual program is sponsored by the Missouri Staff Development Council, in cooperation with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

School districts are eligible to apply for the award during the year in which they complete their formal accreditation review by state education officials.

“These school districts demonstrate that effective, continuous professional development for teachers and other school personnel is not ‘an extra.’ It is an essential ingredient of a top-quality educational program,” King said.

“In these schools, teachers and administrators work together, share information about students’ strengths and needs, and focus constantly on ways to improve academic achievement. They use the state’s accreditation standards and their own school-improvement plans to guide their staff-training initiatives. They serve as models for school districts of all sizes,” he said.



Public Schools Earn Statewide “Top 10” Honors for High MAP Scores

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education announced today that 226 public schools, in 140 school districts, have earned “Top 10” honors, based on their students’ consistently high scores in one or more areas of the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) exams.

The Department’s annual list of highest-performing schools identifies elementary, middle and high schools with the highest percentages of students scoring at the “Proficient” and “Advanced” levels in each subject area and grade level covered by the mandatory MAP tests.

The complete list is available online at www.dese.state.mo.us. The 18-page report will not be distributed in printed form this year to save printing and mailing costs.

“Missouri schools aspire to be on this list,” said Commissioner of Education D. Kent King. “Being among the state’s 10 top-performing schools in a particular subject

and grade level is something about which students, teachers and parents can be proud.”

For the second consecutive year, the report recognizes schools for sustained strong performance over multiple years – from the year the exam became mandatory in each subject area until 2002.

The report actually consists of 36 separate Top 10 lists. There is a list for each of the four academic areas covered by the MAP (math, science, social studies and communication arts) at each level tested (elementary, middle and high school). In addition, the report rates schools in three size categories: under 250 students, 250-500 students and over 500 students.

The report also shows the percentage of minority students and the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price meals in each of the schools.

The purpose of the report is to recognize students and teachers in high-performing buildings and to identify successful schools that can provide effective examples of ways to improve student achievement.

The report also is important, King said, because it confirms that students in all types of schools – large and small, rich and poor, urban and rural – can achieve at high levels on the demanding MAP exams.



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Department of Elementary
& Secondary Education



For questions or comments regarding any article in this newsletter, please contact Jane Smith at 573-555-7890, ext. 125.

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