MISSOURI COMMISSIONER'S EDUCATION POLICY COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE

RECOMMENDATIONS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In today's changing world, leaders must do all they can to ensure that children receive meaningful, engaging, and applicable learning experiences. It is important that Missourians maintain an educated citizenry and competitive workforce.

With this in mind, leaders from across Missouri came together in the spring of 2019 to serve as members of the Commissioner's Education Policy Committee ("Committee"). During a spring State Board of Education retreat, Board members identified eight priorities for the state's strategic plan, using Governor Parson's two areas of focus—infrastructure and workforce development—and the Department's existing strategic plan to guide their conversations. From these priorities, the Committee discussed six foundational topics and identified a series of action steps for each, which are discussed in detail throughout this report. These recommendations will be presented to the State Board of Education, who will then use this work to prioritize goals and develop specific next steps.

The Committee was designed to support Missouri Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education Dr. Margie Vandeven as she works to give all students the opportunity to succeed. The Committee evaluated the successes and challenges of Missouri's current education landscape and identified a number of areas for further growth.

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) partnered with The Hunt Institute to identify 33 bipartisan leaders from across Missouri who represented a diverse range of perspectives – including representatives from the Governor's Office, the legislature, and the Missouri Board of Education as well as business representatives, district superintendents, principals, and teachers, among other constituencies (see next page for full list of Committee members).

Senator David Pearce, who brought a wealth of experience as a state leader in education, chaired the Committee by leading two meetings on a broad range of critical issues in education. The Committee identified recommendations for Missouri across the following foundational topics:

- **Building the Workforce through Early Childhood Education**
- **Teacher Preparation, Recruitment, and Retention**
- **Workforce Development & Tomorrow's Economy**
- **Innovative & Flexible School Structures**
- **Using Data Systems**
- **Redesigning Accountability Systems**

At each meeting, The Hunt Institute and DESE staff presented on the state and national contexts of these six topics. Following the presentations, Committee members had in-depth discussions and identified key priorities that they believed DESE should focus on. The final recommendations outlined in this report are designed to support Commissioner Vandeven as she continues to refine DESE's priorities. All Committee members had the opportunity to provide feedback.

This Committee is a continuation of the many important conversations that regularly occur across the state, and this report was created to help advance educational outcomes for all students in the state of Missouri.

COMMISSIONER'S EDUCATION POLICY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

NAME	TITLE	ORGANIZATION
Secretary Jay Ashcroft	Secretary of State | 2017-Present	Missouri Office of the Secretary of State
Ms. Kim Bailey	Member	Missouri Board of Education
The Honorable Chuck Basye	Representative | District 47 | 2014-Present	Missouri House of Representatives
The Honorable Doug Beck	Representative | District 92 | 2016-Present	Missouri House of Representatives
Dr. Mark Bedell	Superintendent	Kansas City 33 School District
Mr. Steve Bowen	Deputy Executive Director, State Leadership	Council of Chief State School Officers
Ms. McClain Bryant Macklin	Director of Policy & Research	The Civic Council of Greater Kansas City
Dr. Don Claycomb	Member	Missouri Board of Education
Dr. Daniel Clemens	Superintendent	North Kansas City 74 School District
Ms. Kara Corches	Director of Legislative Affairs	Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Ms. Jacqueline Erickson Russell	Senior Program Officer	Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation
Mr. Kelly Garrett	Executive Director	KIPP St. Louis
Ms. Carol Hallquist	Member	Missouri Board of Education
Mr. Matt Jordan	Director of Strategic Initiatives	Education Commission of the States
Mr. Frank Killian	Superintendent	Richland R-I School District
Mr. Darius Kirk	Principal	Riverview Gardens Senior High School
Ms. Zora Mulligan	Commissioner of Higher Education	Missouri Department of Higher Education
Ms. Kathy Osborn	Executive Director	Regional Business Council
Mr. Jim Owen	Chief Executive Officer	Missouri Employers Mutual
Ms. Shelly Parks	2019 Missouri Teacher of the Year	Francis Howell R-III School District
The Honorable David Pearce	Committee Chair	Commissioner's Education Policy Committee

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

COMMISSIONER'S EDUCATION POLICY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

NAME	TITLE	ORGANIZATION
Mr. Jim Pritchett	Principal	Rolla Senior High School
Ms. Linda Rallo	Vice-President	Aligned
Ms. Melissa Randol	Executive Director	Missouri School Boards' Association
Ms. Susan Rupert	President	Missouri Parent Teacher Association
Mr. John Shikles	Policy Counsel	Office of Governor Mike Parson
Dr. Javaid Siddiqi	President & CEO	The Hunt Institute
Dr. Peter Stiepleman	Superintendent	Columbia 93 School District
The Honorable Kathryn Swan	Representative	District 147	2012-Present	Missouri House of Representatives
Dr. Jeremy Tucker	2019 Missouri Superintendent of the Year	Liberty 53 School District
Dr. Margie Vandeven	Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education	Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
The Honorable Brian Williams	Senator	District 14	2019-Present	Missouri State Senate
Ms. Phyllis Wolfram	Executive Director	Missouri Council of Administrators of Special Education

▸ *Building the Workforce through Early Childhood Education*

Missouri needs to develop a shared vision defining the role of early childhood education, particularly as it relates to strengthening the current and future workforce. The vision-setting process should be focused on increasing alignment in governance and standards, dispersing funding adequately and equitably, and creating buy-in statewide for quality early childhood programs.

ACTION STEPS

- **Develop a shared definition of "early childhood education," and decide what it should look like in Missouri to set priorities going forward:**
  - Create a mission statement defining the overall objective of Missouri's early childhood education efforts and gather data to measure progress against that objective, focusing on making these services equitably available to all.
  - Engage parents/guardians and local partners including libraries, health care clinics, and child care providers in grassroots efforts to advocate for high-quality early education programs in their regions.
  - Develop a strategic plan for expanding early childhood programs equitably and communicate these successes to the public. This is also an opportunity to use the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five Initiative (PDG B5) needs assessment that will be available in late 2019.
  - Create a communications plan that will inform stakeholders on the need for early childhood investments and highlight the bipartisan support.

- **Create a statewide framework that supports alignment in governance and standards between various early childhood programs:**
  - Explore options for creating a cohesive statewide early childhood system. Currently, funds are sent from the Child Care Development Fund within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to the Missouri Department of Social Services. It is then subcontracted to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to administer a portion of the funds to support early learning services.
  - Establish policies that increase collaboration and standardization among the various state departments responsible for quality early childhood care and education.
  - Create a framework at the regional and local level for community-based preschool providers to work with school districts to utilize curriculum and standards that match school readiness standards.
  - Develop a formal communication and collaboration plan that increases efficiency between departments responsible for the development of young children and clearly outlines the responsibilities of each.

- **Allocate additional *and* equitable funding across the state for early learning centers, including funding to acquire and/or upgrade facilities:**
  - Explore the benefits to additional revenue in early childhood programs, including the expansion of access to early childhood education, which would allow more parents to reenter the workforce and, in turn, strengthen the economy. This may take the form of cost-modeling to better understand exactly what funds are needed and how they can come from existing policy.
  - Conduct an analysis of what percentage of the available "Four Percent Funds" (the funding from the state aid calculation available to school districts to expand pre-K) school districts are drawing from to ensure that there is an understanding of what is already available and how it is being used.
  - Partner with businesses and universities to encourage and support the creation and/or utilization of existing early education centers in private and community facilities.
  - Direct a portion of increased funds towards building and diversifying the early childhood workforce. This could take the form of creating a tax-credit or scholarship fund for early childhood educators looking to further their education or working with higher education institutions, particularly community colleges, to create early childhood education programs.

▶ *Teacher Preparation, Recruitment, and Retention*

Teacher recruitment and retention levels are low statewide, and Missouri is experiencing a shortage of qualified teachers to fill available positions. Missouri needs to improve teacher preparation recruitment efforts and reconsider preparation providers' models in ways that encourage a high-quality and diverse selection of candidates. Additionally, policies must be enacted that encourage teachers to continue teaching. These policies may relate to compensation, leadership opportunities, access to mental health and wellness supports, and increased support and professional development.

ACTION STEPS

- **Create a marketing and communications campaign that rebrands the teacher profession in a way that entices people to enter the teaching workforce and emphasizes the beneficial impact teachers have on the public. Research shows that millennials are attracted to organizations and positions whose missions align with their own beliefs:**
  - Develop relationships with chambers of commerce who are working to increase workforce participation to create partnerships to build the teacher workforce as well.
  - Create a statewide program that encourages and guides candidates to enter the teaching workforce through marketing campaigns and incentives for entering the workforce such as loan forgiveness or scholarship programs.
  - Prioritize the recruitment of teachers from underrepresented groups.

- **Create opportunities for districts to develop innovative pathways to teaching:**
  - Explore the creation of innovative pathway programs such as: early teacher colleges, grow-your-own teacher programs, and pathways for paraprofessionals and other non-certified staff to earn their teaching certificate.
  - Collaborate closely with higher education agencies to ensure teacher preparation courses are giving candidates the skills needed to be effective in the classroom.
  - Create flexibility both in entry to the teacher workforce and teacher licensing once teachers have already started working, while still keeping high expectations and rigorous standards for performance.

- **Work to change the traditional structure of the teaching profession so that it is a sustainable field in which one can grow:**
  - Create pathways for teachers to participate in leadership development opportunities that advance their career while remaining in the classroom.
  - Develop frameworks to support districts in prioritizing student and teacher mental health and wellness.
  - Rethink and restructure compensation systems so that teachers are compensated in a way that makes it possible for them to continue working with students. Some possible examples are: increased compensation for leadership responsibilities, student debt reimbursement and/or forgiveness programs, increased options for affordable access to quality childcare, longevity bonuses, and pay-for-performance compensation models.

▸ *Workforce Development & Tomorrow's Economy*

Missouri needs to create shared definitions of the various pathways students can take as they move from K-12 schooling to postsecondary education and the workforce in the form of concrete checkpoints that students reach as they advance through their academic careers. In order to achieve this common understanding, strategic conversations need to regularly occur across sectors, including education, business, and government. Systems that allow for this consistent communication need to be created at the local, regional, and state levels.

ACTION STEPS

- **Strengthen partnerships between education leaders and business leaders to better inform workforce needs:**
  - Encourage coordination within regions and across the state between businesses and local education agencies (LEAs) to support development of LEA programs informed by workforce needs.
  - Facilitate listening sessions between K-12 and industry leaders so that both groups have a working knowledge of the current landscape and opportunities for growth and partnership.
  - Partner with industry leaders to better communicate to students the importance of what they're learning and demonstrate ways classroom knowledge is applied in industry.
  - Develop state-level frameworks to engage students and businesses in high-quality, meaningful, and applicable internships and apprenticeships.

- **Develop a state framework that establishes clear pathways for students to enter the workforce:**
  - Assess existing policy around student safety and employer liability to ensure the wellbeing of everyone in an office or workplace environment, including workers and students.
  - Outline clear pathways at the state level that allow students to track their progress along these pathways in order to effectively prepare them for their future.
  - Redesign accountability systems so that student success is measured based not only on traditional performance but also career credits, social emotional learning, and community service, among other metrics.
  - Develop stronger and more consistent postsecondary advising programs in schools and invest in programs that give students the skills they need for postsecondary success. Some methods for doing so are: school counseling corps, professional development for teachers, counselors, and administrators, and college and career mentors.
  - Allow greater flexibility for schools and districts to create sustainable structures that better prepare students for workforce needs. This could take the form of project-based learning, early colleges, profession-based learning opportunities, year-round school, or other innovative ideas.

- **Expand access to postsecondary credentialing opportunities for all students, regardless of location, race, age, socioeconomic class, etc.:**
  - Expand funding for A+ Schools, the state's framework for incentivizing higher education access, to allow more students from a larger diversity of backgrounds to access significant postsecondary funding.
  - Create a marketing campaign to highlight the innovative, cost-effective program offerings of the community college system.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

▸ *Innovative & Flexible School Structures*

In order to respond to the changing and differing needs of Missouri's students, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) should give districts flexibility in creating different pathways and school structures. Missouri is a diverse state that represents a number of geographies and types of people, and the state should develop a clear vision around what students should know, what skills they should possess, and what steps need to occur for that to happen. This may include teacher professional development and microcredentialing, innovative curriculums that emphasize soft skills, project-based learning, and a number of other initiatives that serve students' individual needs.

ACTION STEPS

- **Develop a clear vision around what students should know and be able to do by the end of high school, and demonstrate why those goals are important. Systems operate in the way they were created to operate. To redesign schools, there must be a clear goal for what students should receive from their education. From there, local districts and schools, with support from DESE, can determine what would need to happen to rebuild the system based on those goals.**
  - Facilitate processes to begin a shift in mindset from a generally compliance-based process to an innovation-based one.
  - Encourage engagement among local districts and their stakeholders, such as students, parents, civic groups, business partners, and insitutions of higher education to inform what this ideal system would look like.
  - Develop an understanding at the local level of what the ideal school would look like and what would need to happen at each step of the education continuum to keep students moving through the redesigned system effectively.

- **Implement a plan to support schools and districts in understanding what flexibility they have and the potential incentives available:**
  - Create financial and non-financial incentives that encourage schools and districts to redesign traditional systems in a manner that best serves their students.
  - Develop a program to fully support schools and districts that are doing this work so that they may do so in a way that still provides a high-quality education.
  - Aid districts in creating systems that prioritize quality. Clear skills goals must be articulated, and these skills should be aligned to an applicable workforce need.
  - Organize high-quality professional development programs that train school leaders and teachers in how to implement these new strategies.

- **Rethink accountability standards for districts based on a redesigned school model:**
  - Define what purpose assessments play in accountability and what assessments would look like in nontraditional school models.
  - Identify how some of the wraparound services and social emotional learning competencies schools will be encouraged to provide will play into the accountability system.
  - Develop a system for balancing equity within these accountability measures so that schools who may not be able to undertake some of these efforts are not punished through their Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP) rating.

▶ *Using Data Systems*

State longitudinal data systems are complex and often lack a direct connection to learning, which is why it is crucial to have a set of statewide goals that inform practice. Missouri should develop a set of use cases that can inform programs and practice by identifying scenarios in which data systems can be used. Once those use cases are clearly defined, the state will need to ensure that it has the necessary data systems and processes that will allow teachers and leaders to use the data to improve practice and prioritize equity. Given the challenges involved with making the connection between data and practice for many, Missouri should also inform its target audiences about the usefulness and importance of strong data systems, particularly for accountability and equity.

ACTION STEPS

- **Identify what Missouri is trying to measure and what information needs to be collected for these measurements:**
  - Answer the questions of: who needs to be targeted, what message should be communicated, and how is that message being communicated?
  - Determine the precise timeline for collecting and releasing this information so that it can be as useful as possible.
  - Identify the purposes for collecting data. Data can be used for action and accountability, and it is necessary for Missouri to create a balance between the two.
  - Engage in a gap analysis process to identify what data are needed that either are not being collected or are too difficult to access and analyze.

- **Create a plan to engage stakeholders to define outcomes for a longitudinal data system to encourage momentum and collaboration:**
  - Develop an action plan for using analyzed data so that Missourians can see how this information can be used for practical purposes.
  - Anticipate concerns of data privacy, and proactively develop plans to prevent data abuse and breaches.
  - Communicate that these data can empower students and families to become well-informed about their educational progress.

- **Create a communications plan to educate audiences (i.e. students, parents, districts) on how a data continuum can be useful for their needs. For example, parents will be informed on how to access data dashboards and districts will know how to navigate data available on their schools and students:**
  - Roll out a series of tutorials, focus groups, information sessions, and other engagement means to make it clear to families that the data can be useful for them as well.
  - Further develop relationships with policy and business leaders to build a coalition of people who see data systems as a priority.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

▶ *Redesigning Accountability Systems*

In order to incentivize districts to take advantage of the flexibilities available to them, the state must create an accountability system that rewards innovation while continuing to hold educators to a high standard. The accountability system should incorporate traditional rigorous measures such as literacy and numeracy, as well as innovative programs and hard to define elements such as school climate and social emotional competencies. The system must be designed to capture how well students are performing and being served and ensure that student subgroups are not being left behind.

ACTION STEPS

- **Determine the purpose of the accountability system and clearly communicate that message to various audiences:**
  - Create easily digestible goals that schools and districts should meet and then decide what information is necessary to see if they are meeting that goal.
  - Communicate the importance of accountability as a means of program improvement and better student outcomes rather than as a punitive measure.
  - Identify any additional accountability requirements needed to address the unique aspects of programs that prepare students for different career tracks.

- **Build out accountability standards for project-based learning, internships, and other innovative programs to ensure that they are adequately preparing students:**
  - Continue communication with business leaders and trade organizations to identify base metrics for various career tracks.
  - Create measures to ensure that outside partners providing educational opportunities such as internships are being held to rigorous standards.

- **Develop a system for measuring some of the more abstract elements of school quality, such as school climate, leadership, and social emotional competencies:**
  - Communicate to the public why these measures are important. One method for doing so could be framing it from a business mindset. For example, DESE can allow business leaders the opportunity to explain why social emotional competencies are an important workforce skill, which would then allow this to be framed as a workforce development need.
  - Maintain rigorous accountability standards for critical college and career readiness skills such as literacy and numeracy.