

**MISSOURI EDUCATION NEWS**  
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## **Education News**

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### **QUALITY COUNTS 2007: Missouri Lags Behind**

Education Week's "Quality Counts" report has ranked Missouri well below average on all 4 categories covered. Missouri ranked 33rd in the nation both for Elementary and Secondary performance and Chance for Success.

The Elementary and Secondary Index is based equally on current performance and improvement, or changes over time, and uses 15 individual indicators relating to reading and math performance, graduation rates and the results of advanced placement exams.

The “Chance-for Success” index, which is based on 13 indicators that highlight whether young children get a good start, succeed in elementary and secondary school, and hit key educational and income benchmarks as adults.

Missouri’s other scores were even lower:

Aligning Education from Cradle to Career  
State rank: 39  
Standards, Assessments, and Accountability  
State rank: 48

To read the complete, highly detailed report, please go to:  
(<http://www.edweek.org/media/ew/qc/2007/17shr.mo.h26.pdf>)

## **The View from Sixth Grade**

by: Ellen Berg

Ellen Berg, a sixth-grade language arts teacher in St. Louis, Missouri has been writing weekly on-line diary entries about her experiences for the past two school years, offering a detailed and personal look at her classroom struggles and successes.

Her diary on the MiddleWeb site pulls no punches when it comes to describing troubles with discipline, burnt-out colleagues, struggles with her principal, and challenging students. But it also reveals the joys and pleasures of working with children at the famously moody and mercurial age between childhood and adolescence.

Connect for Kids Editor Susan Phillips recently asked Berg about what she has learned in her years at Turner Middle School in St. Louis, Mo., where close to 90 percent of the students are African-American, and as many as 95 percent qualify for free or reduced-price lunch...

To read the complete article, please go to:  
(<http://www.connectforkids.org/node/381?&tn=hp/lf/2>)

## **Missouri State Board of Education Will Consider Plan to Require End-of-Course Tests in High School**

State education officials are working on a plan to replace the current “MAP” tests in high school (grades 10 and 11) with a slate of at least four “end-of-course” exams.

The State Board of Education could decide as early as next month to move forward with developing the specifics of a new testing policy. If the board approves, new high school tests could be ready for use during the 2008-09 school year. The plan would not affect the MAP exams that are now required of all students in grades 3-8.

For more than two years, state and local school officials have been discussing possible alternatives to the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) tests that are now used in all public high schools. A statewide advisory committee appointed in 2004 by Commissioner of Education D. Kent King recommended that Missouri require and pay for a college-entry exam (such as the ACT) for all students, in lieu of the MAP tests.

While that proposal was favored by many in the education community, it was strongly opposed by some, and the idea was never endorsed by the State Board of Education.

In recent months, the concept of end-of-course tests - state-approved “final exams” for selected classes - has gained increasing favor with state officials. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is preparing a formal recommendation about high school assessment for the State Board of Education to consider in February...

To read the complete article, please go to:  
(<http://www.infozine.com/news/stories/op/storiesView/sid/20374>)

## **School Choice Plan Gains Support**

A parent who appreciates quality education, Maxine Johnson made sure her six children attend the finest magnet schools in St. Louis.

Although Johnson gives mostly high marks to the magnets, she still wishes she could send the children to private schools.

Right now, that's not an option. Johnson and her husband cannot afford the tuition.

Instead, she and other parents are hanging their hopes on a controversial bill that would set aside up to \$40 million in Missouri tax incentives to help children enroll in private schools. If approved, the plan could trigger an exodus of as many 8,000 students from struggling school districts, such as St. Louis, Kansas City, Riverview Gardens and Normandy.

Versions of the bill filed in each of the last several years have wallowed and eventually died in the Legislature, amid fierce opposition from the public education lobby. That resistance coupled with concerns by rural lawmakers continue to stack against the bill's chances of becoming law.

But supporters see new hope this year. And their optimism is rooted at least partly in the latest struggles of St. Louis Public Schools...

To read the complete article, please go to:

(<http://www.stltoday.com/stltoday/news/stories.nsf/education/story/450EEF4AEDF2F2A58625726900793BDF?OpenDocument>)

## **Reading, Writing, and a Roof Overhead**

A Missouri school district steps up to provide housing for four homeless high school boys.

Officially, it's known as Joe's Place. But one of its first residents has dubbed the cheerful yellow house "Big Bird." It opened recently with enough space for four homeless boys who attend high school in the Maplewood Richmond Heights (MRH) district, near St. Louis.

The result of a collaboration between school officials, local churches, and scores of volunteers, Joe's Place appears to be a first-of-its-kind endeavor in the United States.

"The thing that makes this unique is that the school district actually put up the money for the housing," says Barbara Duffield, policy director of the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth.

The small district should be applauded for taking such direct action to meet a need, Ms. Duffield says, but it's also important for people to keep in mind that "the overall problem [nationwide] is there is not adequate attention to the needs of families and youth on the housing and shelter front."

About 14 percent of shelter requests go unmet, according to the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty in Washington. That group also reports that 48 percent of homeless families have children under 18; an additional 1 percent of the homeless population consists of unaccompanied youths. Nearly half of students who are homeless are not able to attend school for the full year.

MRH superintendent Linda Henke wasn't content to wait for the government to create more shelters. A few colleagues suggested she had enough to think about with the requirements of No Child Left Behind without taking on this project, but "if a child is homeless, he's behind," she says.

Out of 1,100 students here, about 30 each year are in situations that count as "homeless" under federal law that spells out their educational rights. Ms. Henke's concern had been growing as she saw the challenges for teen boys in particular. Many places where women seek refuge from abuse don't allow boys over a certain age, while men's shelters aren't nearby and can be intimidating, she says. She knows a boy who lived in a car and another who rents a couch...

The school board put up the money to buy the house last summer and plans to spend about \$34,000 a year on the mortgage, insurance, and utilities. To keep four students in school each year, it seemed a reasonable cost, Henke says; it costs at least that much to house just one person in prison – a place where young men are much more likely to end up if they drop out of school...

To read the complete article, please go to:  
(<http://www.csmonitor.com/2007/0201/p13s01-legn.html>)

