



JULY 7, 2025

MARE Focus

FROM THE DESK OF MR. KEVIN SANDLIN, MARE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ENDORSEMENTS

American Fidelity
Assurance Co.

Claim Care, Inc.

Forrest T. Jones
& Co.

Hamlin Energy

IMS Technology

L.J. Hart &
Company

MASA MTS

MEUHP

Mike Keith
Insurance

MO. Consult. For
Ed.

MOCAAT

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MARE PARTNERSHIPS

- LEGAL
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KEENEY
- EDPLUS
- AMERICAN
LEGION BOYS
STATE
- GIRLS STATE

MISSOURI
ADMIN. JOB
POSTING

Superintendent Search Program – Over the past five years, MARE has facilitated more Superintendent Searches than any other organization in Missouri. We pride ourselves in offering a thorough, comprehensive and affordable Superintendent Search Program. We would be honored to work with your district should the need arise. If you have questions, please reach out to me at (6600 747-8050 or ksandlin@moare.com).

Save the Date – The 15th Annual MARE Scholarship Golf Tournament will be held on Monday, July 21st at Osage National Golf Course in Lake Ozark, Missouri. We will accept the first 36 paid teams for this growing event. Last year's event raised over \$35,900.00 for scholarships for students interested in teaching in rural Missouri schools.

[Plan now to join us!](#)

Golfers Needed – If you are a golfer and interested in playing in our Scholarship Golf Tournament on Monday, July 21st, please reach out to me at ksandlin@moare.com. I will likely have openings on some of our teams supported by amazing sponsors!

Foundation Formula Modernization Task Force – The Governor's Task Force has now met twice to discuss the foundation formula work that is has been charged to do. The next meeting is scheduled for July or August. It is imperative that school leaders, community patrons and other interested parties attend these meetings to hear the conversations and to let those sitting around the table know that we care and we want our voices heard throughout this process. It is a monumental task that they have been commissioned to accomplish. Please consider joining us at the next meeting!

Open Enrollment Appeal – Open Enrollment was held at bay again this past session. We are thankful for all of those districts who have passed a BOE Resolution in opposition to Open Enrollment. The list has grown (attached) and now sits at 259 school districts opposed, impacting 454,600 student lives in Missouri. The list has been noticed by various legislators and it has had an impact! We are appealing to the other 257 or so public-school districts to take action and pass the attached resolution in opposition. Our hope is that if the number continues to grow, legislators will have to seriously consider the issue before casting a vote when the issue comes up again in the 2026 session. Thanks to Dr. Chris Gaines at EdPlus, Dr. Kenny Southwick with CSDGKC, Dr. Pam Hedgpeth with GOCSD for their efforts in spreading the word. Thanks also to our many educational associations for their support in this endeavor and for sharing information with their respective memberships. If you have questions, please reach out to me at ksandlin@moare.com or (6600 747-8050)!

[List of Districts Opposed to Open Enrollment](#)
[Open Enrollment Board Resolution](#)

A Perspective on Choice – Short video!

Great thoughts by this politician, regardless of what side you are on.

<https://www.tiktok.com/t/ZTjKd4o89/>

(Shared by Mike Owen, Superintendent at Doniphan R-I)

SchoolAI Event – July 16th

SchoolAI Showcase: Wednesday, July 16th at 2 pm CT

We rebuilt SchoolAI from scratch (here's why)

Joell, a district technology integration coach, shared the following:

"In a typical classroom walkthrough, I'd catch surface-level things. But what I really wanted to know was: Are students truly engaged? Are teachers catching those who need support?"

After tens of millions of sessions on our platform, thousands of direct conversations with educators, and 200k+ teacher-created Spaces, we listened and built the next generation of SchoolAI from the ground up.

What we've built:

- **Smarter insights** - Real-time analytics that highlight exactly which students need you most, when they need you.
- **Deeper learning** - Personalized Spaces that adapt to each student's speed and interests, empowering them to dive deep through inquiry-driven conversations.
- **Stronger outcomes** - Timely insights that help you reach every student and close learning gaps before they widen.
- **Seamless integration** - Extensions and integrations that bring SchoolAI directly into your existing workflows.

We've created a foundation that helps teachers reach every student, every day. We're so excited to show you the all-new SchoolAI.

Enroll at SchoolAI.com/showcase or reach out to Matt Argubright at matt@schoolai.com or 913-710-8762

Join us at the MARE/MO K-8 Conference - October 22-24th!

Welcome New District Members - MARE is pleased to welcome Moberly & Malta Bend R-V as district members! Welcome to the MARE family of 425 districts!

Welcome New Associate Members – MARE is excited to welcome the following New Associate Members – **balanceHQ, Hoener Architects, LLC, Inclusive Leadership Lab, Oasis Intergenerational Tutoring, Kummer Center for STEM, & Sonus Benefits**. Please watch for upcoming postings on the MARE website and in new MARE Focus articles. We greatly appreciate these joining the MARE family!

Save the Date – The 2025 MARE/MO K-8 Conference will be held on October 22-24, 2025 at the Lodge of Four Seasons. Plans are underway to make this our biggest and best ever. Please block this on your calendar now and make plans to join us! I promise you will have a great time and learn a lot! More information will be posted on the website and appear in an upcoming MARE Focus. Our goal this year is 325 in attendance!

Conference Vendors Encouraged to Join Us – Associates and Vendors are encouraged to sign up to join us at our upcoming MARE/MO K-8 Conference, slated for October 22nd through October 24th at the Lodge of Four Seasons. Our conference continues to grow each year! We invite you to join us and get to know our rural leaders from all across our great state!

[Exhibitor/Sponsor Registration Page 1](#)
[Exhibitor/Sponsor Registration Page 2](#)

MARE Board Training Calendar for 2025

MARE Board Training Dates – 2025

Northwest Missouri - Maryville, MO - Holiday Inn Express (660) 562-9949

- Friday, July 11, 2025 (12:00 noon - 6:00 p.m.)
- Saturday, July 12, 2025 (8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.)

Lake Ozark, MO – The Lodge of the Four Seasons (Conference)

- Wednesday, October 22, 2025 (11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.)
- Thursday, October 23, 2025 (8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.)

Lake Ozark, MO - The Lodge of the Four Seasons

- Friday, December 5, 2025 (12:00 noon - 6:00 p.m.)
- Saturday, December 6, 2025 (8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.)

***** Please share this information with any new Board member who has not completed the 18.5 hours of required training! MARE is an approved Board Training provider!**

To register, please complete the form found on our website and fax to (660) 747-8160, scan and email to ksandlin@moare.com, or go online (www.moare.com) and complete the electronic form found under Board Training.

Conference Theme – Power of Rural Education!

MARE Welcomes Inclusive Leadership Lab



I am Dr. Nikki Harding, a former district administrator, adjunct professor, school improvement specialist, statewide director of teacher recruitment and retention, and special education teacher. I am also the parent of 3 beautiful children, one of whom has Down Syndrome. I am also married to a school Superintendent. To say I am fully entrenched in supporting schools is an understatement. I am a teacher at heart, dedicated to improving social emotional, behavioral and academic outcomes for each student so they can realize their full postsecondary quality of life. I founded the **Inclusive Leadership Lab** and our sister company, [ILL Academy](#) (which houses our graduate courses and [podcast](#)), with that in my heart.

Supporting students begins with supporting school staff and leadership teams. I have an associate director and a team of people with whom we partner. We have developed a framework for teams that may look familiar to you, but we put a new spin on it. It is fully customizable for your needs. The most beautiful thing about our framework is *that we are not adding to your plate*.

We support the implementation of what you are already doing. We help your leadership team communicate their vision of instructional coherence and instructional support. We support teachers in implementing curriculum and high-quality instructional practices with fidelity. We provide instructional coaching enhanced by artificial intelligence. It saves time. It's a safe place: HIPPA and FERPA compliant. We use a system that only uses your curriculum and your state standards – no weird random stuff from the internet.

It's not "more." It's clarity: consistent communication and meaningful feedback loops. It's developing a school where everyone feels a true sense of belonging; everyone has a voice. It's inclusion in action.

[Check out our website to learn more.](#)

[Make an appointment here to learn more.](#)

MOCAAT – What Can You Do for Me?

The MOCAAT® Advantage: Missouri's Trusted Financial Management Resource for School Districts.

Our experienced team, with broad expertise in Missouri school budgeting, finance, and investments, thoroughly manages nearly \$4 billion in assets for over 260 Missouri Participants, including school districts (as of March 31, 2025).

Since inception in 2020, MOCAAT has provided a new level of service and performance to Missouri communities.

Our philosophy – Partnership.

Maximize the potential of your reserve funds, tax revenues, state revenues, and bond proceeds with our professional guidance.

For financial support tailored to your district's unique needs, contact us:



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Missouri School Plant Managers Association — MSPMA is offering scholarships for district leaders to attend their Fall Conference on September 28-30, 2025 in Branson! For more information, visit the Missouri School Plant Managers Association website.

Generosity – Leadership Skill – Shared by Schooley Mitchell

Is Generosity the Most Underrated Leadership Skill?

by Joe Davis



[Send to a Friend](#)

Leadership isn't about a title or position — it's about generosity, says organizational expert Joe Davis. Drawing on his extensive experience as a people manager, he shares three essential tips for leaders to unlock the potential of their teams by listening generously, embracing vulnerability and leading with humanity — and shows how it's possible to both earn trust and drive results.

You can watch the whole video [here](#).

Over 85 Associates/Vendors at the Conference!

STEM & CTE Career Pathways Leadership Cohort

We're excited to invite you to learn how to join the **STEM & CTE Career Pathways Leadership Cohort Information Webinars** hosted by Learning Blade in partnership with DESE. Only 20-25 teachers will be selected to participate in the actual cohort that will take place in the 2025-2026 school year. Participation in the cohort will give teachers the opportunity to:

- Increase educator capacity to motivate students through real-world STEM and CTE career connections.
- Build and refine leadership skills.
- Connect with fellow educators who are equally passionate about career readiness.
- Enhance professional reputation and become a thought leader in STEM and CTE education.
- Be recognized for their work statewide, which will be highlighted to state education leaders, professional organizations, and through public platforms such as social media and press releases.
- Obtain professional development hours.

These information sessions are a great opportunity for teachers to learn how to participate in the **STEM & CTE Career Pathways Leadership Cohort** to expand access to STEM and CTE career paths in rural Missouri.

What:

Increase your capacity to impact rural communities in Missouri and motivate students to increase STEM skills and pursue STEM and CTE career paths. Grow as an educator leader in the state to impact educators and elevate the significance of STEM and CTE pathways.

Informational Webinar Dates:

- Wednesday, September 10
- Wednesday, September 17
- Wednesday, September 24

Time: 4:00 PM CT

Here's the link to [REGISTER NOW](#).

Need your free Learning Blade account? Go to www.LearningBlade.com/MO.

For more information, please contact Dr. Michele Linch at michele@learningblade.com.

Quote of the Week

"The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say thank you. In between, the leader is a servant."

Max DePree

Team Builders Academy – Bryan Rush

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Keynote Speaker Bryan Rush Inspires Crocker High School Graduates to "Rise and Rise Again Until Lambs Become Lions"

ST. ROBERT, MO – [June 10th, 2025] – Celebrated keynote speaker Bryan Rush delivered a powerful, fun, and moving commencement address to the Crocker High School Class of 2024-25, leaving graduates inspired, confident, and equipped with actionable steps to achieve success. The speech, titled "Rise and Rise

Again Until Lambs Become Lions," challenged the graduating class to confidently follow 3 winning steps to fulfilling amazing purpose after graduation.

In his address, Rush masterfully blended humor, personal anecdotes, and profound insights to present three entertaining, challenging, and inspiring ways for the graduates to transform from "lambs" into the "lions" they are destined to be. The core message resonated deeply, and focused on the following three moves-moving towards opportunity, moving towards empowering relationships, and moving our mindsets to defiant optimism.

"Every student has the ability to rise and rise again until lambs become lions," Bryan said.

The speech met with praise from students, faculty, and parents alike, and administrators praised the address for it being, "One of the best speeches they'd ever heard".

See the full speech here: <https://youtu.be/y3L5mPlvNXk?si=dpPoY8E5izyxFvNK>



Rise and Rise Again Until Lambs Become Lions

2025 Crocker Graduation
Keynote Speech
by Bryan Rush



About Bryan Rush: Bryan Rush helps education teams navigate change with clarity, connection, and purpose. For over 20 years, he's trained educators to reduce conflict, predict behavior, and build retention—equipping them with tools to thrive in times of transition. His mission is simple yet profound: to build others up so they can do good in the world.

As a leadership and staff development trainer, Bryan delivers high-impact, engaging experiences that have helped local schools reduce employee turnover by 67% and significantly boost staff retention. He's proud to have served more than 20 businesses, K-12 schools, universities, and military bases—each with measurable improvement.

Bryan is a certified Maxwell Leadership Member with a Specialty in Leadership and Management from Harvard Business School. He's also a proud husband, father, and U.S. Combat Veteran. His team at Team-Builders Academy is dedicated to making world-class development accessible to local schools.

Above all, Bryan shows up with care, curiosity, and a learner's heart. He's honored to serve—and excited to help your district succeed.

Contact Bryan Below.



Bryan C. Rush

Maxwell Leadership Certified Trainer | Harvard Leadership and Management Specialist

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Maxwell DISC Pattern - IDC

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