



'School Grading' bill expected to move in the House

February 20, 2013 / by Collin Reischman, Managing Editor / 0 Comment

Jefferson City, MO — As elected officials and education associations jockey for the best solution to fix the struggling school districts throughout the state, House Bill 388 emerged this week as the first major education bill most likely to move through the legislature.

HB 388, "The Parent and Community School Information Act," would require that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education create a "simplified letter-grade report for each public-school attendance center and each charter school," similar to a student report card.



The bill, which is sponsored by Rep. Kathy Swan, R-147, moved rapidly through committee, despite opposition from St. Louis Public Schools, the Missouri School Teachers Association (MSTA) and the Missouri School Board Association.

Mike Wood of the MSTA said his organization would support the measure with an amendment removing the requirement for an "over simplified," letter grade. Wood said a single letter grade measuring the performance of an entire school was "dumbing down," the process.

"We support all the data being collected, which the bill calls for," Wood told The Missouri Times. "But if your child comes home, he doesn't get a grade for his whole school experience. He gets a grade for everything, because in some areas he's probably stronger than others. If a school does one thing very well and another thing not so well, is a letter grade going to reflect that?"

Rep. Dave Hinson, R-119, officially filed the amendment in question. The amendment retains the language of the bill but removes the requirement for a letter grade system, but instead requires a report card that is "easy for the general public to understand."

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Hinson declined to comment on his amendment, which his office says he might withdraw.

Kate Casas, State Policy Director for the Children's Education Council, said the amendment was "well intentioned," but not the right answer. Casas testified in favor of the bill during committee and strongly supports the measure.

"We support House Committee Substitutes for HB 388, because it will provide clear, understandable information to Missouri parents and communities by assigning each school a letter grade based on multiple measures," Casas said. "We do not support Rep. Hinson's amendment because it would remove the letter grades from the school's simplified report."

HB 388 is expected to move to the floor for a vote sometime this week

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