



History of MSBA

Missourians have always recognized the importance of locally controlled public schools. The Act of 1820, which allowed Missouri to become a state, established the township as the first way of organizing schools. This system led to the creation of many small, autonomous schools governed by local citizens. In 1839, the Geyer Act was passed. This Act is generally recognized as the real beginning of organized education in Missouri. It eliminated the township system and created what were known as sub-districts governed by three trustees. Another sweeping revision of Missouri's education laws in 1874 gave almost complete control of schools over to local citizens. Among other things, citizens were empowered to elect local school district directors. By 1878, there were about 10,000 separate school districts in Missouri. No more than 100 of them offered courses above the elementary level. These thousands of school districts brought education within reach of nearly all the population and led to the pattern of school district development that exists today.

Many changes took place in Missouri's schools during the early part of the 20th century. New laws were adopted to require a longer school year than the traditional three-month school year that had been in place. Training and certification requirements for teachers were strengthened. School districts consolidated. A compulsory attendance law was passed in 1905.

In 1936, a group of school board members in the state decided to get together once in a while to share ideas and exchange information. In 1942, officers of this loose-knit group were elected. In 1954, members decided to incorporate the organization and call it the Missouri School Boards' Association. In 1958, the existing corporation was dissolved, and the organization was incorporated under a new state law providing for the incorporation of non-profit organizations. It was the beginning of the Missouri School Boards' Association we know today.

The early focus of MSBA was on monitoring legislation. In the early 1960s, activities related to board member training were also established. Those two areas remain a fundamental part of MSBA's activities to this day.

Much has changed in the last 60 years. The demands placed on our public schools have increased substantially. The issues board members and superintendents face today were unheard of just a few years ago. To meet these challenges, services provided to school boards and administrators through MSBA have expanded as well. Today, members have access to legal services, policy support, school board training, financial programs, state and regional meetings, and many other services designed to help school boards be successful in their role as local education leaders.

The school board remains an essential institution to ensure that local communities are connected to their public schools. Whether large or small; urban, suburban, or rural; Missouri communities are all striving to provide the best educational opportunities for our young people, and we're doing it together through the Missouri School Boards' Association.