



Children's Education Alliance  
of Missouri

Board of Directors

Rachel Keller Brown

Kat Cunningham

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Laura Slay  
*President &  
Executive Director*

June 21, 2013

Dr. Chris E. Nicastro  
Missouri Commissioner of Education  
Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  
205 Jefferson St.  
Jefferson City, MO 65101

Dr. Don Senti  
Executive Director  
Cooperating School Districts  
1460 Craig Rd  
Saint Louis, MO 63146

Dr. Gayden Carruth  
Executive Director  
Cooperating School Districts of Greater Kansas City  
Broadway Plaza Building  
3444 Broadway, Suite 401  
Kansas City, MO 64111

Dear Drs. Nicastro, Senti, and Carruth,

I am writing today for two reasons. First, I would like to offer the support of the Children's Education Alliance of Missouri (CEAM) as you develop a process to best support the families living in and near unaccredited school districts. Second, we have received questions from families that we are unable to answer, and I was hoping you might help our office give these parents accurate responses.

Over the last several years, many families have reached out to CEAM seeking assistance as they attempted to transfer from an unaccredited district to a neighboring accredited one. However, as you know, school districts were refusing to abide by RSMo 167.131. CEAM promised these families that when a resolution to *Turner v. Clayton* and subsequently *Breitenfeld v. Clayton* was reached, we would make very effort to inform them of their rights and assist them as they looked for a high quality option for their child.

It is our intention to get in touch with each of these families next week and let them know they can enroll in a neighboring school district of their choosing. I believe that RSMo 167.131 requires school districts to accept as many students

*Our mission is to  
improve Missouri's  
K-12 education  
system by  
advancing  
education policies  
that ensure all  
families have the  
right to choose the  
education they  
determine is best for  
their children.*

from unaccredited districts as desire to enroll. However, I understand that until the General Assembly is able to reach an agreement that will ensure there are enough high quality seats available for all children residing in unaccredited districts, that a temporary solution to prevent overcrowding may be necessary.

In order to help families who might be attempting to enroll in districts that are at capacity, it would be helpful if a list of eligible districts and the number of seats still available was posted online and was easy for families to access. Not only would this prevent families from being rejected at a district with no available seats, it would allow CEAM to direct families to a district with open seats.

Additionally, in order to assist the families who have reached out to our office, it would be helpful to have answers to the following questions:

1. There are dozens of families residing in unaccredited districts who attempted to transfer to an accredited school district. As you probably aware, these families were told they would be placed on a waiting list until school districts began enrolling transfer students. None of the families who we have been working with have received a call. In addition, we are told by many families who have just recently tried to enroll that they have also been placed on waiting lists. Are there plans to contact these families? If so, will the families placed on the waiting lists have first priority on available slots?
2. Will the schools and/or school districts with waiting lists be made public? Will the number of families still eligible to transfer who are on those waiting lists also be made public?
3. When will it be made public to which school districts the unaccredited districts will provide transportation?
4. If the school district to which an unaccredited district is transferring students reaches capacity, will the unaccredited district be required to choose another district to which students should be transported?
5. Will accredited districts be allowed to deny students based on academics, discipline records, attendance, standardized test scores, or any other selective enrollment standards?
6. Are charter schools allowed and/or required to enroll students from unaccredited districts?
7. Are provisionally accredited districts eligible/required to enroll students?
8. Several parents are concerned about being forced to make a decision about their child's education in six short weeks. We believe the August 1 deadline for notifying districts is not enough time for families especially since school districts have not yet released the requirements for enrollment. Can you respond to this concern?

We are pleased to hear that some students in unaccredited districts will now be able to access a high quality education, but are disappointed that not all students in these failing districts will be able to realize their right to transfer. We look forward to receiving your answers to these questions and working with you during the 2014 Legislative Session to ensure all students in unaccredited districts have access to a high quality education.

Thank you for taking the time to respond, it would be helpful to have answers to these questions by June 30, 2013.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kate Casas". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "K".

Kate Casas  
State Policy Director  
Children's Education Alliance of Missouri