



# Missourians to End Poverty

*Bringing the Community Together to End Poverty*

Food    Health    Education    Energy & Housing    Family & Economic Security

[www.communityaction.org](http://www.communityaction.org)

Who are the

*Missourians to  
End Poverty?*

AmerenUE

Beyond Housing- St. Louis

Cafe Via Roma

Catholic Charities  
Archdiocese of St. Louis

Catholic Charities of Kansas  
City - St. Joseph, Inc.

Citizens for Missouri's  
Children

Community Action Agency of  
St. Louis County

Community Action Partner-  
ship of Greater St. Joseph

Community Awareness and  
Resource Exchange (CARE)

Social Concerns Office -  
Diocese of Jefferson City

Eileen Wallace Consulting

Faith Beyond Walls

Gardner Capital, Inc.

Green Hills Community Action  
Agency

Health Care Foundation of  
Greater Kansas City

Kansas City Power and Light

Laclede Gas Company

Lutheran Family & Children's  
Services of Missouri

Madsen & Wright  
Governmental Consultants

## Education Policy Statement

To reinforce the policy platform of Missourians to End Poverty, our policy statements center around the intertwined five pillars of poverty: **health care, housing & energy, economic & family security, food, and education**. Our goal is to raise community awareness and understanding of the impact of poverty as well as create concrete ideas with communities about local and state solutions to ending poverty.

### Quality Education

Ensuring quality education from early childhood, through grades K-12 and college is an essential component to eradicating poverty in the state of Missouri. Numerous studies find a positive correlation between higher levels of education and increased job earnings later in life. One study has found that for every one year of schooling earnings for welfare recipients increased by 7%. Without adequate education, young people are regulated to low-paying unskilled service jobs that fail to provide economic security and trap them in a lifetime of poverty.

Yet it is precisely in areas of concentrated poverty, where quality education is most lacking. In 2009 Missouri had a 4.3% high school dropout rate. In areas of concentrated poverty, however, the dropout rate is much higher. For example, the St. Louis City district in 2009 had a dropout rate of 27.5% while Kennett, Missouri had a dropout rate of 12%.

Many conventional solutions to improving educational performance have failed. A new strategy must involve rejecting a "silo" mentality that views schools in isolation from the rest of the community. In order to ensure quality education for children in areas of concentrated poverty, all aspects of family and community life must be engaged in the process of educating children.

### Family Stability

A stable and caring family enables children to learn and to be formed in basic values, such as respect for one self and for others. Schools can assist in this process through programs such as Parents as Teachers. Neighborhoods must be safe and offer children and young people constructive activities. Law enforcement, community organizations such as Big Brother and Big Sister and churches can all work with local schools to help create an environment where children and young people can reach their full potential.

Schools themselves must be staffed by skilled teachers who are compensated fairly and

Missourians to End Poverty continued...

Missouri Association for Community Action

Missouri Association for Social Welfare

Missouri Budget Project

Missouri Career Center

Missouri Department of Mental Health

Missouri Department of Social Services, Family Support Division

Missouri Family Health Council

Missouri Food Bank Association

Missouri Gas Energy

Missouri Head Start Association

Missouri Head Start Collaboration Office

Missouri Health Alliance

Missouri IMPACT

Missouri Kidney Program

Missouri National Education Association

Missouri Public Service Commission

Northwest Workforce Investment Board

Ozarks Food Harvest

Partnership for Children

Primaris/CLAIM

Ready Aim Advocate!

Salvation Army

Treasures

United Services Community Action Agency

United Way of Central Missouri

West Central Missouri Community Action Agency

given adequate resources to help students to learn at high levels. A recent Trust report 1 reveals that nationwide about 40 percent of all core subject area classes in high poverty, high minority middle schools are staffed by out-of-field teachers.

Building principals must be recruited who know how to lead and support effective teaching and to create school environments where children can learn. These principals must be allowed sufficient flexibility to assess the challenges in their schools and to address them with creative solutions.

### Public Policy Action Strategies

- Enhance the Parents as Teachers program and provided incentives for parents to participate. Ensure schools are welcoming to parents and encourage their involvement. Expand funding for quality early childhood centers and make those centers accessible to families.
- We support efforts to increase opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive early education programs for low-income children by increasing or sustaining appropriations to Head Start and Early Head Start programs.
- Strengthen school ties to community organizations and institutions that work with children and youth, such as YMCA, Big Brother, Big Sister, Boys & Girls Clubs, Scouts, law enforcement, drug treatment and juvenile facilities, libraries and places of worship.
- Educate the whole community , ie. business, faith-based, human services, etc.) about the dynamics that poverty and the economy have to play in the development of our future community by improving our state's graduation rate and producing educated and productive citizens.
- Create school environments where children feel safe and can learn. Initiate positive behavior programs with appropriate training for staff. Give building principals sufficient flexibility to address discipline problems. Encourage the use of dress codes and ensure that alternative schools are available for disruptive students.
- Give more authority to school principals to spearhead educational initiatives, mentor teachers, and provide for more parental involvement in their schools.
- Fairly compensate teachers and ensure that they have adequate resources to teach their students. Recruit talented teachers to teach in areas of pervasive poverty. Provide these teachers with special training to meet the unique challenges they face in these areas.
- In order to promote testing that facilitates learning rather than penalizing schools and teachers, scale back state testing of students and place more of the testing decisions with school principals and their teachers.
- Promote a comprehensive and flexible curriculum that meets the educational needs of students at different levels of academic ability. Provide arts education, career education and other programs that motivate students and keep them in school.
- Encourage the use of Work Opportunity Tax Credits to assist employers in hiring employees from targeted groups with barriers to employment.