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IN THIS ISSUE:

[Education News](#)

[More Than 1.2 Million Students Will Not Graduate in 2007;
Detailed Graduation Data Available for Missouri](#)

[Educators Reclaim Bargaining Rights](#)

[Connections Academy Named Elementary Level Provider for Missouri's First Virtual School](#)

[Kaplan to Provide Online Courses for Missouri Virtual Education Program](#)

[Tell a Friend about Subscribing to the Education Research Report](#)

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Education News

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More Than 1.2 Million Students Will Not Graduate in 2007; Detailed Graduation Data Available for Missouri

In-depth Labor-Force Analysis Finds Strong Relationship Between Education and Income for Jobs Nationally and for Individual States

Today's high school graduates enter a world in which they'll need at least some college to gain access to decent-paying careers, according to a report released by *Education Week*. And those without even a high school diploma will face increasingly bleak labor-market prospects. The report, *Diplomas Count: Ready for What? Preparing for College, Careers, and Life After High School*, draws on two national databases to examine the distribution of jobs nationally and within each state, and the relationship between education and pay levels.

The report also includes the latest analysis by the Editorial Projects in Education Research Center of graduation rates nationwide, finding that an estimated 1.23 million students, or about 30 percent of the class of 2007, will fail to graduate with

their peers. Native American, Hispanic, and African-American students are among the groups with the lowest graduation rates.

A Road Map to Missouri Graduation Policies

To provide context for high school graduation rates, *Diplomas Count* examines state policies in three key areas: definitions of college and workforce readiness, high school completion credentials offered, and exit exams.

To see Missouri Report:

http://www.edweek.org/media/ew/dc/2007/mo_SGB07.pdf

Educators Reclaim Bargaining Rights

Missouri Supreme Court Ruling Confirms Educators' Right to Bargain Collectively with Their Employers

On May 29, the Missouri Supreme Court confirmed in its ruling on *Independence NEA vs. Independence School District* that public employees, including teachers and education support professionals, have a constitutional right to bargain collectively with their employers.

The ruling supports Article 1, Section 29 in the Missouri Constitution, which provides "That employees shall have the right to organize and bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing."

"This is great news for all public employees, but it is especially good news for Missouri's educators and students," says Missouri NEA President Greg Jung. "This decision, allowing all the experts a place at the table, provides a means for collaborative decision making combined with accountability. Ultimately, the result is better working and learning conditions in Missouri schools."

The case began in 2003 when MNEA employee groups in the Independence School District filed a lawsuit against their school district, which unilaterally rescinded the employees' contract. When the Trial Court, in 2006, decided in favor of the district based on *Springfield vs. Clouse* and *Sumpter vs. City of Moberly*, the Independence MNEA groups took their case to the Missouri Supreme Court.

“The perseverance of local leaders in Independence and the legal advocacy efforts of Missouri NEA have opened doors for a new era in Missouri’s public schools,” Jung says.

The ruling reverses a 1947 decision, *Springfield vs. Clouse*, whereby the Court ruled that the constitutional language did not apply to public employees, and the 1982 decision, *Sumpter vs. City of Moberly*, whereby the Court ruled that meet-and-confer agreements were not legally binding.

“This decision is also about fairness and honoring commitments,” says NEA President Reg Weaver. “Before this decision in Missouri, any agreements made between associations representing teachers and education support professionals and local school administrators could be determined null and void at any time by the district. It was unfair. We have to model good behavior for our students and set good examples. If we expect students to be fair and honor their commitments, then as adults, we should do the same.”

In both the neighboring states of Iowa and Kansas, and 32 others, collective bargaining correlates with increased student achievement and a more stable workforce.

“MNEA believes that every child has the basic right to attend a great public school, and the court’s decision allows educators to have a voice in how that is accomplished,” Jung says.

Connections Academy Named Elementary Level Provider for Missouri's First Virtual School

Connections Academy, a leading national provider of high quality, highly accountable virtual public schools operated in partnership with state departments of education,

school districts and charter schools, has been named the elementary level provider for the Missouri Virtual Instruction Program (MoVIP). The State of Missouri's Office of Administration and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) announced late last week that Connections Academy won the competitive bid to serve as the K-5 provider for the state's first virtual school, which will open in 2007, and is expected to serve as many as 4,000 full- and part-time elementary and secondary students tuition-free, statewide. The Secondary (6- 12) Level MoVIP award went to Northwest Missouri State University. "

"The state of Missouri is pleased to make the innovative MoVIP virtual school available to Missouri families, and to ensure a high quality program by partnering with established leaders in virtual public education," said Dr. Curt Fuchs, MoVIP Director. "We are confident that by working with Connections Academy, the MoVIP K-5 program will fill an important educational need for Missouri families, meeting a wide range of students' educational needs while maintaining the highest academic standards."

Connections Academy has been operating its high-tech, high-touch public "schools without walls" since 2002. As of Fall 2007, it will serve students in 12 states, including Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Minnesota, Nevada, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin as well as Missouri.

The Connections Academy program combines state-certified teachers, a Missouri standards-aligned curriculum, unique technology tools, and community experiences to create an individualized alternative to the bricks-and-mortar classroom. All MoVIP elementary level students can choose up to six courses from the nationally-certified Connections Academy curriculum that combines high-quality textbooks from leading publishers with cutting-edge technology-based resources and hands-on materials. Students work closely with their parents, or other "learning coaches" and a licensed Missouri teacher using detailed daily lesson plans that can be personalized to meet individual student needs. Teachers confer with students and their parents biweekly, and students also participate in field trips and other in-person activities facilitated by a community coordinator.

The MoVIP elementary level program is expected to serve a wide range of Missouri students, including those who are significantly ahead or behind in the classroom; students who would benefit from more individualized instruction; or who require a flexible school schedule.

To register students for either the elementary or secondary MoVIP program, parents should go to <http://www.dese.mo.gov/movip/>. If enrollment requests exceed its funded student slots, the state will conduct a lottery to select students. After the lottery, the program will be open to those who pay tuition, or who live in districts that will pay it.

For more information, visit <http://www.connectionsacademy.com>.

Kaplan to Provide Online Courses for Missouri Virtual Education Program

Missouri's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has selected a team that includes Kaplan Virtual Education to provide online high school courses for the Missouri Virtual Education Program (MoVIP), a state-wide virtual school. MoVIP will begin offering courses to thousands of students in the fall of 2007.

"Along with Northwest Missouri State, Kaplan Virtual Education will offer high school students access to high-quality online curriculum and outstanding instruction from Missouri-certified teachers," said Charles Thornburgh, President of Kaplan Virtual Education. "Missouri's progressive approach to innovative educational offerings will allow the state to effectively serve a population of students whose needs might otherwise have been unmet."

Kaplan Virtual Education, which includes Sagemont Virtual online high school and online course developer Virtual Sage, will team up with platform provider eCollege and software developer BocaVox for this project. The trio will provide course content, curriculum development, online instruction and administrative tools. Northwest Missouri State University's Center for Information Technology will serve as project manager.

"MoVIP is excited to have Kaplan and Northwest Missouri State University form this team to provide virtual education opportunities for our secondary students. This

partnership will give our small school districts in Missouri access to a larger range of courses, especially advanced courses,” said Dr. Curt Fuchs, DESE's Director of Virtual Education. “For home schooled students, dropouts, home bound, or even credit recovery, Kaplan Virtual Education along with Northwest Missouri State University will be providing another option that Missouri students have not had before.”

MoVIP will offer part-time and fulltime online learning opportunities for Missouri students seeking credit retrieval, advanced courses, and those trying to resolve scheduling conflicts. Some of the online course offerings will include physics, algebra and biology, in addition to Advanced Placement courses in calculus, literature and U.S. history, among others. For detailed enrollment information, visit www.dese.mo.gov/movip.

MoVIP was in 2006 by the Missouri legislature authorized. The DESE and the state Board of Education oversee its administration. Missouri is among several states that have established statewide virtual school programs. Overall, the number of K-12 students in the United States engaged in online courses in 2005-2006 was estimated to be 700,000, according to the Sloan Consortium, which researches online education.

About Kaplan Virtual Education and Kaplan Higher Education

Kaplan Virtual Education recently acquired Virtual Sage and Sagemont Virtual (www.virtualsage.org), which has been doing business as the University of Miami Online High School (www.umohs.org). The high school has been offering students an opportunity to earn their high school diplomas online since 2001. Virtual Sage has developed approximately 200 online high school courses designed to meet various state and national education standards; these courses are used by online high school programs around the country.

Kaplan Virtual Education is part of Kaplan Higher Education, a business unit of Kaplan, Inc. Kaplan Higher Education includes Kaplan University, Concord Law School and more than 70 campus-based locations in 21 states, serving approximately 68,000 students. Through its schools, Kaplan Higher Education offers master's, bachelor's and associate's degrees, as well as certificates designed to provide students with the skills necessary to qualify them for employment in fields such as business, criminal justice, education, fashion and design, health care, information technology, legal and paralegal studies.

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