



## Missouri Federation of Teachers Records (S0447)

**Collection Number:** S0447

**Collection Title:** Missouri Federation of Teachers Records

**Dates:** 1957-1985

**Creator:** Missouri Federation of Teachers, 1957-

**Abstract:** The records of the Missouri Federation of Teachers contain correspondence, newsletters, legal materials, photographs, and the organization's charter. The collection documents various activities on behalf of teachers, including representing teachers in labor disputes with local school districts, lobbying for collective bargaining and improvement in teacher tenure requirements, and developing hiring guidelines for teaching positions created by voluntary desegregation.

**Collection Size:** 0.4 cubic foot  
(26 folders, 142 photographs)

**Language:** Collection materials are in English.

**Repository:** The State Historical Society of Missouri

**Restrictions on Access:** Collection is open for research. This collection is available at [The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-St. Louis](#). If you would like more information, please contact us at [stlouis@shsmo.org](mailto:stlouis@shsmo.org).

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**Preferred Citation:** [Specific item; box number; folder number] *Missouri Federation of Teachers Records* (S0447); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-St. Louis [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-St. Louis].

**Donor Information:** The papers were donated to the University of Missouri by Diane Killion on October 6, 1983 (Accession No. SA2763).

**Processed by:** Processed by AJ Medlock and Isaac Alexander, October 2023

**Historical Note:**

On September 3, 1957, the American Federation of Teachers (AFL-CIO) granted charters to the Teachers Federation of St. Louis and the St. Louis County Local 420, and the Teachers' Federation of Kansas City and North Kansas City and Independence, Missouri. These unions constituted the Missouri State Federation of Teachers, the statewide branch of the American Federation of Teachers.

The Missouri Federation of Teachers (MFT) represented teachers' unions in disputes with the Lindbergh, North St. Francois County, and the St. Clair County school boards in the 1970s. The disputes involved additional pay for after-school work, the right to post notices of union meetings on bulletin boards, to have union dues deducted from teachers' paychecks, and to present petitions for redress and grievances to school boards.

In 1981, MFT president, Kathryn Cormack, named the organizing of Missouri's approximately 50,000 teachers as the Federation's top priority and began efforts to improve the MFT's status with the American Federation of Teachers. The Missouri Federation of Teachers also lobbied for collective bargaining legislation for all Missouri public employees in 1981 and to reduce the number of years needed for teacher tenure from five to three.

The Missouri Federation of Teachers provided legal representation for Theresa Banks, a Social Studies teacher at Hanley Junior High School accused by the University City School Board of providing students with answers to the Basic Essential Skills Test in 1981. Despite Banks' assertion that she had no access to the test or the answers, Superintendent Irene M. Lober recommended her dismissal and a reprimand several other teachers involved. At a public hearing on July 30, 1981, the University City School Administration charged Banks with immoral conduct. The school board approved her firing, and the St. Louis County Circuit Court upheld the decision.

The Missouri Federation of Teachers moved to have the board dismiss the request for termination on grounds that the district administration failed to prove Banks cheated or engaged in conduct adversely affecting her teaching performance. MFT asked the board to reinstate Banks and expunge from her record all materials related to the charges. The board refused.

In July 1983, the implementation of the voluntary desegregation plan in St. Louis schools created approximately 800 teaching jobs during its first year. MFT issued a statement requesting the Board to fill the positions with teachers laid off during a 1982 financial crisis before hiring new teachers. The Federation also encouraged laid-off Black St. Louis teachers to apply for positions in county districts and created guidelines governing the staff exchange program between the city and the voluntary participating county districts of Clayton, Kirkwood, Ritenour, Pattonville, and University City.

The same year, MFT president, Kathryn Cormack, accepted an appointment to the Children's Trust Fund Board of Directors. The Children's Trust Fund, established by Governor Bond and the Missouri Legislature, accepted contributions to help prevent child abuse and neglect.

Student enrollment declined in the early 1980s and many school districts initiated a point system RIF-RECALL policy to reduce the number of teachers. The policy awarded points to teachers based on the number of subjects for which they had earned certification and "rified" teachers

with fewer points. The Missouri Federation of Teachers supported a RIF policy based on seniority. It encouraged teachers to vote against the point system policy, which MFT regarded as subjective and disproportionate in its reduction of minority teachers.

In 1984, Diane Killion, president of the University City Federation of Teachers, a local branch of the MFT, declined to participate on a Merit Recognition Screening Committee until the committee determined specific guidelines for awarding merit pay to teachers.

**Arrangement:**

The collection has been arranged alphabetically.

**Scope and Content Note:**

The Missouri Federation of Teachers Records are divided into six series, Administrative; Theresa Banks Dismissal; Desegregation; Legal Correspondence, Petitions, and Memoranda; Newsletters; and Photographs and Slides. The collection primarily documents the Missouri Federation of Teachers' activities from 1974-1984. It contains little manuscript material from the late 1950s and 1960s. The materials in this collection are arranged alphabetically, except the Theresa Banks Dismissal and Photographs and Slides series, which are arranged chronologically.

**Administration**

This series contains the Missouri Federation of Teachers' (MFT) 1957 Charter, correspondence on legal fees and the Children's Trust Fund, and Merit and RIF-RECALL memoranda from 1978 to 1984. The materials in this series are arranged alphabetically.

**Theresa Banks Dismissal**

This series documents Theresa Banks' dismissal in August 1981. It contains teacher evaluation reports, correspondence, written testimony, news clippings, transcript of hearing, copies of test answers, and legal petitions. The series also documents the St. Louis County Circuit Court's decision upholding Banks' firing. The materials in this series are arranged chronologically from 1970 to 1981.

**Desegregation**

This series contains correspondence, desegregation plans, and teaching staff exchange policies from 1982 to 1983. This includes the St. Louis Teachers Union Local 420's position on the desegregation plan and its guidelines concerning the voluntary exchange of teachers between the city and county. The materials in this series are arranged alphabetically.

**Legal Correspondence, Petitions, and Memoranda**

This series contains correspondence, petitions, and memorandums on disputes with local school boards. The materials in this series are arranged alphabetically by school district.

**Newsletters**

This series contains issues of *The Insider*, a monthly publication for MFT local presidents, treasurers and elected MFT delegates, September 1982 to May 1985. It also includes issues of

*The Missouri Unionist*, the official newspaper of the MFT published monthly, November 1980 to March 1981. The materials in this series are arranged alphabetically.

### Photographs and Slides

This series contains photographs of the East St. Louis and the St. Louis Teachers' strikes from 1962 to 1984, the 1969 St. Louis Decentralization Conference, the Ritenour Federation of Teachers 1981 bargaining team, and the Missouri Local's workshop in fall 1977. The materials in this series are arranged chronologically from 1962 to 1984.

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