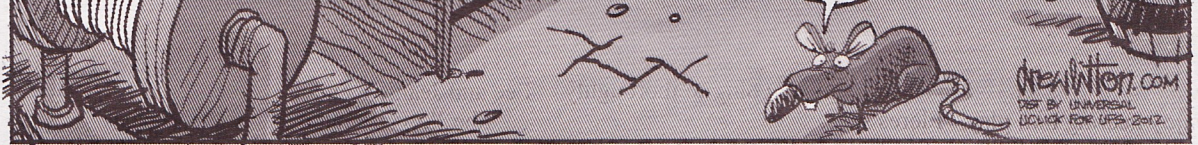


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COLUMN

Small dog breeders

are Facilities Act Program. Dog breed-
ers around the state have told me inspec-
tions are not being fair or consistent in
their inspections. There is a lack of care
of dog breeders shown by the inspectors
and their unpredictability in the handling
of violations is unacceptable.

One of the worst examples is a breed-
er reprimanded for a piece of dog food in
a water bowl. Another was fined for hav-
ing a small bit of plant life, a Morning
glory, growing on the side of one cage.

The fact is that no one wants dogs to
be mistreated or have inadequate care,
but it is right for inspectors to intimi-
date dog breeders by making it nearly
impossible to get properly licensed and
have their facilities pass inspection? The
regulations that are giving up are legiti-
mate small breeders that are fed up with
harassment by inspectors and threw in
the towel. Many of these smaller opera-
tions are owned by people who do care
for their dogs and raise dogs because
they enjoy animals.

The question is: If these attacks on
dog breeders continue and the humanely
operated dog breeder facilities continue
to shut down, where are Missourians
going to buy their families pets? If politi-
cians are "creating jobs," why are they
killing one industry at a time with regu-
lations? When you or your family want
to buy a dog in the future will you even
be able to do so in the state of Mis-
souri? These are questions that will be
answered in the coming years here in the
Show-Me State. I believe we have not
heard the last on this issue.

GUEST OPINION

American Board helps certify state's teachers

By Aaron Helmbrecht

We are the American Board. If you
don't know who we are, you should,
because we are the group tasked with
making sure your child's teacher is
highly qualified. Since 2008, we have
approved over 650 Missouri teacher
certification applications. Over
1,700 more are pending or have been
denied.

Before the American Board, there
were only two ways to become a
teacher in Missouri. One was to know
you wanted to be a teacher by age 18
and earn your bachelor's degree in
education. The only option for every-
one else was to earn a teaching cer-
tificate by taking about 30 additional
semester hours. Factoring the cost of
tuition, fees, books, and transporta-
tion, it would cost over \$10,000 and
require two years of college classes
just to earn the necessary credentials
to be hired as a Missouri teacher.

The Missouri Department of Ele-
mentary and Secondary Education
needed a more efficient way to hire
new teachers while still verifying they
were experts in their subject area and
they were qualified to lead a class-
room. That is where the American
Board comes in.

The American Board is an inde-
pendent non-profit teacher certifi-
cation organization established by
the U.S. Department of Education.
The group took all the content stu-

dents would be expected to learn in
a university certification program and
converted it into a self-paced online
training program. By doing this, they
reduced the cost burden on new Mis-
souri teachers from \$10,000 to about
\$1,995. By making it self-paced, faster
learners or people who have educa-
tion experience could complete the
program and earn certification in a
few months where others can study
in their own time.

After the studying is finished and
the tests are passed, the last part of
the process is a practicum. Except
where a university would use a stu-
dent teaching program, the American
Board uses a mentorship program.
In this style of practicum, the newly-
certified teacher is the lead instructor
(and paid as the lead instructor) but
works on a temporary license and is
assigned a faculty mentor as a guide
for the first two years in the class-
room. In the following two years,
the teacher works independently. This
gives the school up to four years to
evaluate the teacher's performance
before deciding to approve full licen-
sure.

So does this method of certifi-
cation really work? A 2011 Geor-
gia State University study found
American Board-certified teachers
performed just as well as their tra-
ditionally certified counterparts and
performed "substantially better" in
mathematics and retention rates.

The study found while approxi-
mately two-thirds of traditionally cer-
tified teachers passed the math por-
tion of the licensure exam the first
time, almost all American Board
teachers did. Looking at retention
rates, 87 percent of American Board
teachers were still teaching in their
school after five years compared to 67
percent nationwide.

The American Board program is
not intended to replace teacher col-
leges. In fact, the vast majority of
Missouri teachers are still certified
through university coursework. The
American Board is designed to work
in tandem with the university sys-
tem to diversify the teaching culture.
People who opt for an American
Board certification tend to be career-
changers who have practical experi-
ence using the subject they wish to
teach. Including a reasonable path to
certification allows engineers to teach
math or novelists to teach English.
Combining this with teachers pri-
marily trained in education, students
now receive instruction from both an
academic perspective and a practical
(when am I ever going to use this in
real life?) perspective.

To find out more about how Mis-
souri teachers are certified or if you
are interested in becoming a teacher
and want to find out what it takes to
earn your certification, visit our web-
site at www.abcte.org.

Aaron Helmbrecht is the director

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