

Montana Legislature Education Workshop
Learning for Life: Pre-school through Continuing Education
Saturday, January 10, 2009
Time T.B.A.
Best Western Great Northern Hotel – Helena, Montana

Workshop Goal: To provide foundational information about Montana’s education institutions and funding; to examine the link between the state of our education and the health of our economy; to have attendees identify challenges at points along the education spectrum and discuss *shared* leadership and *integrated* policy remedies; and to impart some best-practices used in Montana and other states to address such challenges. *In short, the workshop will leave attendees with a foundation and fresh perspectives with which to approach education issues facing them in the 2009 legislative session and beyond.*

Workshop Format: An event facilitated by two nationally-renowned experts, with attendees to include Legislators (and former “emeritus” lawmakers) and leaders from across the education community in Montana.

I. Welcome and Preview

LSD Director welcomes audience and notes how shared education policy initiatives in Montana have already shown promise. Facilitator previews the day’s keynote theme: Many education challenges are “edge issues” that require us to view the functions and phases of education in a more integrated way and to approach collaboration among varied education players in a more systematic way. Experience around the country suggests that a “seamless” approach to education results in more P – 20 collaboration; more affordable and accessible higher education opportunities; more high school graduates going on to college; more effective use of two-year colleges; more working adults completing GED and getting advanced degrees; and more curriculum responsiveness to workforce realities and needs.

II. Overview of the education system in Montana

- a. Pre-school
- b. K-12 public schools
- c. Higher education
- d. Adult basic education
- e. Continuing education (job training)

Covers organizational flow, legal separations, and basics of funding. Summarizes how Montana’s education system works and the roles of different institutions at various stages or sectors of the educational spectrum. The Legislature’s interaction with these players and processes is part of the discussion.

V.III. Challenges ahead for the Montana economy

- a. Declining high school enrollment
- b. Aging demographic
- c. Global competitiveness: toward a “knowledge economy”?
- d. Workforce impact

IV. Keynote: “Thinking as a comprehensive P-20+ system” (Best-practices in other states)

Facilitator describes how some states have emphasized shared leadership and integrated all of education into a single, seamless system with shared policy goals. [Facilitator identifies a state that has been where Montana is now and demonstrates how to take the next step toward maximum integration of all education and operate from a set of comprehensive/shared policy goals for that education system.]

V. Working lunch: What might “shared policy goals” for education in Montana look like?

Attendees break into two groups, each headed by a facilitator. Facilitators guide attendees through the following exercises: (1) Name key challenges along the P-20 education spectrum that Montana faces. (2) Cite examples of shared policy goals that could plausibly address each challenge. Give special consideration to goals reflecting both the connectedness of policies and the importance of collaboration between institutions (including the Legislature). (3) As time allows, identify performance measures for some of these hypothetical goals.

VI. Bringing it together

The two groups reconvene. Each facilitator recaps the exercise results of their respective group. Question and answer period: a chance for Legislators to query the facilitators, leaders from across Montana’s education community, and “emeritus” Legislators with longstanding experience in education issues. Facilitators’ big-picture wrap-up: The attendees have discussed education issues using a process that links challenges, shares leadership, and ties goals back to measurements. Their discussions may carry forward and help inform deliberations during the 2009 legislative session and beyond. LSD Director thank you and closing.