

February 2, 2005



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EXHIBIT 6
DATE 2-2-05
HB 47

Vice-Chairman Branae and members of the House Education Committee,

For the record, my name is Darrell Rud, Executive Director of the School Administrators of Montana.

I would like to convey my support and that of the School Administrators of Montana for **HB47** for the establishment of the opportunity for full day kindergarten. I would also like to commend the sponsor for bringing this legislation to the session.

Our membership views this as an integral part of our association's platform and adopted it as a formal resolution in our August 2004 Delegate Assembly. It reads as follows:

Resolution #04-05 FUNDING FOR FULL-DAY EVERY-DAY KINDERGARTEN
WHEREAS: Many school districts are providing full-day every-day kindergarten at their own expense
and;
WHEREAS: Many school districts are not providing full-day every-day kindergarten because they can't afford it;
BE IT RESOLVED: That SAM supports full ANB for kindergarten students in districts that choose to provide all-day every-day kindergarten.

From a personal perspective, I had the recent opportunity to work with the entire learning community in Billings that addressed early childhood needs as part of an overall review of school improvement needs. When Garfield Elementary School, of which I was the Principal, was placed on "School Improvement Status" in 1997, we needed to look at any and all ways to strengthen student achievement, be increasingly accountable, expand the engagement of parents and others in activating learning, and insure a safe and nurturing school environment for some of the highest poverty children and families in Montana! Full day, every-day kindergarten proved to be a key to making these improvements that were needed and that every child in Montana deserves! We read extensive research, contacted schools where this opportunity was present, analyzed budgetary, staffing and building needs and came to the conclusion that we would not be able to accomplish our needed and desired improvements without this investment in our school's youngest students!

Our efforts yielded desired results as student achievement increased considerably, attendance improved, parents got much more engaged in our school processes in meaningful ways and, most importantly, students became increasingly ready for the rigors of the high-stakes environment that pervades today's schools and districts in Montana and across the nation. We gave students the tools that they needed to be successful to a significantly higher level than we had previously done!

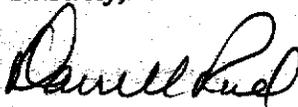
Coupled with other meaningful and effective changes and strong neighborhood and community support, Garfield Elementary was recognized in 2001 by the U.S. Department of Education as a *Title I Distinguished School* for the significant difference it was making in the achievement and success of all students! We could not have attained this recognition and, more importantly, our students could never have attained the levels of success that they did without full day, every day kindergarten.

As a footnote, our successes were also rewarded by being removed from the dubious distinction of being "a school in need of improvement". This removal was based on the data that we were able to provide that validated this significant growth in student achievement in the areas of mathematics and reading.

It is time to give all Montana Boards of Trustees and the communities that they represent the reasonable choice of expanding these vital early childhood opportunities....with support from the state of Montana! The children of our state deserve nothing less than the best and this is an investment that will keep on giving!

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of Montana's youngest students and I urge your positive vote for HB47!

Sincerely,



Darrell Rud
Executive Director
School Administrators of Montana