EXHIBIT 3
DATE 2-3-05
SB 152

Senate Bill 152 seeks to determine the educationally relevant factors on which a basic system is established. In the simplest terms this bill attempts to codify many mandates such as the state accreditation standards from the Board of Public ED., state and federal laws, the Indian Education for all act, appropriate instruction for students effected by special needs including those with disabilities, at risk students, gifted and talented, salaries and benefits as mandated by law and collective bargaining agreements, text books, technology, staff development and transportation.

Two additional factors must be considered within the context of SB 152. Most significant, in my opinion, is the ability for districts to pay competitive wages for our teachers and their building administrators who provide the needed leadership. Secondly, capital outlay consumes a small portion of a districts annual budget in the maintenance and minor improvements of school buildings. A community's ability to levy significant building projects through long term bonds is periodically necessary to assure safe, up to date learning environments. The impact of such proposals varies greatly based of the taxable valuation of property within the district.

Last night I reviewed several amendments during the second reading of this bill before the Senate. One amendment suggested that the public be consulted in seeking a definition of Quality Education. Through a process called Study Circles several school districts including mine in Whitefish, have sought out specific direction from a cross section of our community in order to bring forward a more accurate Strategic Plan. Following six session our public suggested the following issues for consideration within the Plan. They suggested that we incorporate differentiated learning, (SB 152-staff development), through mandatory staff development in order to get the best bang for the buck in our ability reach all our students with highly effective teaching practices, they suggested we expand school to work opportunities so that all students are exposed to the many opportunities which will be before them, and they suggested we do a better job to connect our students , teachers and community through mentorship opportunities. This dove tailed nicely with existing goals including ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF TEACHERS AND CURRICULUM ALLIGNMENT.

Do you want a world class education system for Montana's kids and what will it take to get there? Here are five factors that must be considered:

1. We must make teaching and school administration a viable career for our best and brightest students, Pay compensation and advancement must reflect a competitive marketplace that seeks intellectual capital. A shining example, a starting point to attract and retain candidates is the professional Compensation and Alternative Plan, contract now being used in the Helena School District. This is a concrete example of where we need to go with additional dollars on the table for salaries, benefits and an accountable measure of professional development throughout a teacher's career.

2. We must demand, support and fund the ability to meet and in some cases for some students significantly surpass accreditation standards. Are such standards arbitrary or Capricious? Will SB152 encourage frivolous standards? Is there an alternative standard?

3. A quality education will afford opportunities for students to the many options our wonderful country can offer. Serious opportunities to study subjects beyond the core are necessary for students. Such subjects would include music, fine arts, vocational technology, world languages, agriculture, and advancement placement courses. Our nation's strategic setting in the world demands attention to this. Outsoucing can only be tempered by intellectual capital, our ability to create better ideas, as nations compete for resources.

4. A long term solution can not advance without an educationally relevant funding formula. Thus, a foundation based upon quality education is necessary to measure expenditures.

5. What is the relevancy of the Augenblick and Meyers adequacy study and the Renewal Commission? Clearly a snapshot has been taken and analyzed regarding the costs involved in funding the mandates to yield students who can enter and succeed in the global market. You have sound suggestion from the commission on improving the mechanics and governance of public schools. Do not allow this work to gather dust.

I implore you to leave your partisanship at the door. Like it or not the court now has authority to implement its decision. The responsibity is yours to define and implement a basic system of quality education. This is an exciting task and will make Montana better for generations to come.

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