



# MTSBA

"...fostering excellence in public education  
through  
school board leadership."

TO: Senate Education Committee

FROM:   
Lance L. Melton, Executive Director  
Montana School Boards Association

SENATE EDUCATION

EMERIT NO. 7

DATE 1-10-05

BILL NO. SB-170

RE: SB 170

DATE: Monday, January 10, 2005

The Montana School Boards Association stands in strong support of SB 170, introduced by Senator Mangan. SB 170 is an important component in the Legislature's efforts to ensure a basic system of free quality public elementary and secondary schools in Montana, and coordinates nicely with the applicable definition in Senator Ryan's SB 152. Senator Ryan's definition of quality in SB 152, Section 3, subsection (3)(e), where the definition of quality includes:

*"the preservation of local control of school districts pursuant to Article X, section 8, of the Montana constitution."*

The premise behind SB 170 is that locally-elected trustees, their employees, and the communities they serve are in the best position to collaboratively determine the methods and times of delivery of education in each community. SB 170 would give local communities a broad array of options in improving the quality of education through scheduling flexibility. One of the most likely innovations in this regard would be in the area of professional development.

By making even minor adjustments to the daily schedule, a school district could provide additional professional development opportunities for its staff with existing resources. Without SB 170, the statewide cost of additional professional development days is approximately \$3 million per day. With SB 170, school districts can make minor adjustments in the daily calendar and provide for these opportunities without additional costs. For example, by increasing instructional time by the equivalent of 6 minutes per day, a school district can save enough time to provide three 6-hour days of professional development for its staff. The ultimate objective of professional development is improving student achievement as a result of increased teacher learning, and the relationship between professional development and student achievement is well-established. SB 170 would promote additional professional development opportunities without the necessity of additional costs.

SB 170 is based on one of the recommendations of the Public School Renewal Commission, specifically findings and recommendations under 2(a) and 2(b) of the final report:

**2a. Concept: Flexibility**

**Statement:** The Commission recommends greater flexibility in the school calendar and time (days/hours) requirements. The Commission also supports encouraging local school districts to provide expanded learning opportunities addressing the unique learning needs of all students by flexing time and resources.

**Vote:** Consensus

**Date of Vote:** August 16, 2004

**2b. Concept: Pupil Instruction Related Days**

**Statement:** The Commission recommends greater flexibility in the school calendar and time (hours/days) requirements, without reducing the minimum aggregate hours of pupil instruction required by law, to allow local school districts to provide expanded professional development opportunities.

**Vote:** Consensus

**Date of Vote:** August 16, 2004

MTSBA appreciates Senator Jeff Mangan's efforts in addressing quality *AND* local control in the same bill. SB 170 provides a real example of how the Legislature can promote efficiency in our public schools without denigrating local control.

The bill has adequate safeguards in terms of the requirement to bargain with staff and solicit input from the community, and provides the Legislature with a means of partially addressing quality in a bill with no fiscal impact. MTSBA respectfully requests your support of SB 170 as introduced.

Thanks