

HOME SCHOOL BILL

Hello. I am Dave Lloyd, Superintendent of Moore, over by Lewistown. I have been in Montana education for, let's say a lot of years. When I was Supt. of Forsyth, back in the 1980's, I and George Bailey, who was then Superintendent at Plevna, were about the only people who stood in opposition of the present Home School Bill, which has now been on the books for almost 20 years. I remember that at that time, too, the halls were filled with Home schoolers, one who later threw a wet diaper at us. Yes, they can be a formidable crowd, and their ranks have grown, since Montana is now recognized as one of the states with the most liberal home school laws in the U.S. Well, here I am again today, to speak this time for a bill which I believe is very necessary for the good of our Montana children.

Most Montana people today don't have a million dollars or a big ranch to give their children. What they can do, though, is give them a good education, which at least will get them started in life. But some don't do this--for a variety of reasons. With your indulgence, I'd like to raise several points.

SAFETY

Public schools are subject to every inspection there is today, including the health sanitarian. Home schools typically never see an inspector, fire or otherwise. They are not subject to the monthly fire drills and the catastrophic drills public schools go through. Being as how the children are hidden away in private residences, few people get to check on their physical or mental security. As such, they can be subject to all sorts of predators who delight in the plight of the helpless little one. Educators, on the other hand, are subject to background checks and fingerprinting before employment, even the substitutes.

Perhaps some of you saw the 20/20 TV show which uncovered some of the dark side of home schooling--like the home schooler who was beaten by their parent after losing the National Spelling Bee, and the high incidences of sexual and physically abused children whose parents home school and move frequently to keep their sins hidden from public view. Like most other Supts. I too have experienced the situations where families suddenly withdrew their children from school and made a midnight move because the Family Services had been alerted to the hell they were making of their homes. How else can they hide their misdeed than by not allowing their children to go to public school where educators are required by law to report suspected child abuse to the authorities. The TV special showed how prevalent this is across America. Am I saying this happens in every home school?? Certainly not!! Some are providing excellent care and their children thrive in a positive learning environment. But I sincerely believe that those are the exception.

ACADEMICS

Now, with President Bush's education agenda, No Child Left Behind a reality and increased accountability [Annual Yearly Progress] with testing, testing, testing being the norm, it is only right that the home schoolers be accountable also. Minnesota is a state that has a home school law that makes sense to me--home schoolers must be tested like the rest of the student population. And if they show by their test scores to be falling behind, they must re-enroll in the public school to be caught up. Here, what frequently happens is that the home schooler teaches in their strength area and the student's education reflects this. Usually, home schoolers reach their teaching limits about junior high age of the kids. By that time, some severe deficiencies are imbedded in the child's learning process. Math is frequently their down fall, as is Science. Then they are sent back to the public school and expected to be caught up to the others of their age, which is sometimes impossible to do. And the school takes the hit on their test scores when they return. Often, they are placed in Title I or another program, further impacting that area.

[POINT]

Is a parent/ or parents well qualified in every subject to properly serve their children's needs??? I don't think so. But that is what our state and federal government is requiring of Montana's teachers. And if they teach out of their subject area, the school that employs them receives a deviation on their Annual Data Collection Report. Yet a parent can set themselves up as knowledgeable in every area from Kindergarten to the senior year of high school!!

[POINT]

Montana schools require 180 days of school around a seven or eight period day, comprised of six or seven hours, depending on the grade. Do home schoolers put in that much time on their education?? I doubt it. Most more likely don't put in half that much on average. I think all of us have seen the kids at Wal-Mart or the mall or on the streets during school time.

[POINT]

Strangely, some home schoolers still make demands on the public school for transportation, school breakfast or lunch, library use and athletics participation.

SOCIALIZATION

Because of the enforced isolation, these children rarely learn the proper social skills to survive in today's hectic world. I could go on, but just let me say that this bill is a step forward for helping meet the needs of these forgotten children. Some accountability and monitoring needs to be set in place. It is long over-due.

Thank you for your time and attention

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