

# Quality Education is a Civil Right

## Civil Rights Caucus of the 59<sup>th</sup> Montana Legislature

SENATE EDUCATION

EXHIBIT NO. 6

DATE 2-16-05

BILL NO. SB-341

QUALITY EDUCATION IS ...

### A CIVIL RIGHT

"A quality education for every child is a new civil right for the Twenty-first Century." Richard Riley, Secretary of Education 1992-1999

### GUARANTEED

"It is the goal of the people to establish a system of education which will develop the full educational potential of each person. Equality of educational opportunity is guaranteed to each person of the state." Montana Constitution, Article X, Section 1 (1)

### CULTURALLY RELEVANT

"The state recognizes the distinct and unique cultural heritage of the American Indians and is committed in its educational goals to the preservation of their cultural integrity." Montana Constitution, Article X, Section 1 (2)

"It is the intent of the legislature that ... every Montanan, whether Indian or non-Indian, be encouraged to learn about the distinct and unique heritage of American Indians in a culturally responsive manner..."  
MCA 20-1-501

### INCLUSIVE

"No sectarian tenets shall be advocated in any public educational institution of the state. No person shall be refused admission to any public educational institution on account of sex, race, creed, religion, political beliefs, or national origin." Montana Constitution, Article X, Section 7

### A HUMAN RIGHT

"Everyone has the right to education. ... Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations ..."  
Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Quality education in Montana must include measures that promote equal protection, equal access, cultural relevance, and the well-being of our students. Montana's Constitution contains a commitment our society makes to each student and a student's family. For thirty-three years the promise of quality education – and equality in education – has been broken. Quality education is not an amenity: it is a child's civil right and our constitutional obligation. The Civil Rights Caucus calls on the Legislature to fulfill this obligation.

### *Quality education in Montana is inclusive and accessible to all students.*

Students with disabilities have the right to an education that does not separate them from their families or communities. Montana should implement affirming programs that promote successful educational careers.

- HB 438 Buzzas – Braille literacy
- HB 550 Windy Boy – Youth Leadership Forum

### *Quality education in Montana provides a critical opportunity to learn about Montana's First People.*

Indian Education for All Montanans (IEAM) benefits everyone. We cannot recognize the value of our region unless we know of the aboriginal contribution to, and contemporary role in, our culture. \$12 million must be earmarked for comprehensive IEAM curriculum development and teacher training, from K-12 to higher education.

- HB 2 Witt – Education bill, includes IEAM priorities
- HB 692 Bixby – Define quality education and IEAM
- LC 0211 – Fund Indian Education for All Montanans

### *Quality education in Montana is free from harassment and discrimination.*

All students deserve to be valued and safe in their schools. We can improve student retention and the learning experience by strengthening our state's civil rights laws and establishing school safety policies.

- SB 198 Kitzenberg – Safe Schools
- SB 199 Toole – Human Rights Amendment

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