

Testimony before the House Appropriations Committee on House Bill 809
Michael Redburn, Superintendent of the Bozeman Public Schools
March 7, 2007

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

For the record, I am Michael Redburn, Superintendent of the Bozeman Public Schools. Thank you for the opportunity to address you today concerning HB 809.

As noted earlier by Bozeman School Trustee, Martha Collins, the funding provided for in HB 809, as currently written, is inadequate to meet the existing program needs of the Bozeman Schools and, consequently, leaves us unable to meet the increasing needs of our students.

Trustee Collins sighted our plans to implement a new approach in our math program in response to our determination that our students must improve their achievement in this area. This needed initiative is only one of the budget requests we received for the coming school year.

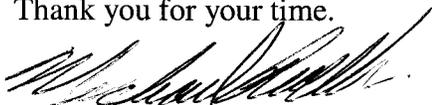
In the eight years I have served in the Bozeman Public Schools, I have seen the annual budget request lists change. When I began in the District this list included necessary items for continuing our quality programs and services, as well as "wish list" type items such as a request for a stipend for a sponsor of a new after-school club for students or the creation of a middle school cross country program. Over the past six years the wish list items have disappeared from the requests. Examples of items on this year's request list that we will be unable to consider with out the budget cuts described by Trustee Collins include:

- K-5 teachers for increased enrollment
- Math intervention teachers as suggested by Trustee Collins
- Reading intervention teachers
- Speech clinician
- Spanish language interpreters
- Instruction aides
- Technology and library aides
- Communication Arts textbooks and materials
- Custodial supplies and additional budget to maintain buildings to back-fill previous years' cuts

Funding the Bozeman Schools with the limitations provided by a 2.7% CPI increase might work if adequate funding for existing programs and requirements had been achieved in prior years. To the contrary, prior years' funding has created a sad history of budget reductions in seven of the past nine years with the threat of additional cuts for next year's budget.

The appropriations provided for in HB 809 do not allow for the Bozeman Public Schools to break even in next year's budget. Furthermore, this level of funding guarantees that our District will make no progress on addressing the many changing and increasing academic needs of our students. Providing funding increases limited to the CPI not only fails to provide the resources necessary to meet new and increasing demands, it fails to provide the basic sustainability of the quality programs and services provided in our District. This is not progress, nor a holding pattern – it is a step backwards for K-12 education.

Thank you for your time.


Michael Redburn