

**MONTANA STATE SENATE
2007 LEGISLATURE**

VISITOR REGISTER

EDUCATION AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

DATE 1-10-07

BILLS BEING HEARD TODAY SB 123

PLEASE PRINT

NAME	PHONE	REPRESENTING	BILL #	SUPPORT	OPPOSE
Frank Nelson	4067772658	My Self and My Family	123	X	
Samantha Nelson	406-727-2656	Myself & others	123	X	
SUZIN Kratina	406-549-1028	Montana After School Network	123		✓
Beth Emker	933-8428	myself	123		X
Lon Smith	933-8000	myself & my family	123		X
Mary Thompson	449-7128	myself + family	SB123		X
Jamie Paggi	444-1828	DPHHS	SB123	X	
Krista Best	594-4834	God's Love FC	SB123	X	
Erin Finstad	431-0481	Bryant	123	X	
Alison Burch	445-0370	myself + family			X
Pete Carparelli	439-0679	MDEC	SB123	X	
Lynda Brannon	442-5599	IISM	SB123	X	
Reston Pallen	422-5448	MEDA	SB123	X	
TIMOTHY J. BARTZ	447-3090	MT AMBASSADORS	SB123	X	
Marsha Davis	447-8344	L&C County Supl	SB123	X	
Kari Wald	443-7286	Bryant	123	X	
Patty Myers	899-0874	MBPE	123	X	
DAVE PUYER	3-2629	MREA	123	X	
Erin McMahon	495-9911	myself + family	123	X	✓
Chadene Atkins	442-5339	Early childhood Ed	123		✓

PLEASE LEAVE PREPARED STATEMENT WITH COMMITTEE SECRETARY

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NAME	PHONE	REPRESENTING	BILL #	SUPPORT	OPPOSE
Darrell Rud	442-2510	SAM	SB123	✓	
Sally Roseman	721-5956	Child Care Resources	SB123	✓	
Susan Dwyer	542-2564	Head Start Missoula	"	✓	
Mehdy Wall	449-0401	Four Georgians Elem. Helena	SB123	✓	
Terry Minow	442-4250	MEA - MFT	SB123	✓	
Wendy Studt	442-8385	RMDC Head Start	SB123	✓	
Lance Melton	442-2180	MTBA	SB123	✓	
Rich Thompson	225-9431	Self	SB123	✓	
Denise Horman	228-9431	Self	SB123	✓	
Josie McWhorter	628-8627	Lower Public Schools	SB123	✓	
LANCE MELTON	442-2180	MONTANA SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOC.	SB123	✓	
Karen Stout-Suenrath	442-6789	Helena School District		✓	
Russell Van Hook	324-1200	Bryant School	SB123	✓	
Terrri Middaugh	324-1186	Bryant School	SB123	✓	
Olana Kistal	447-4081	TR	SB123		
Kate Kern	324-2004	Helena Seeds	SB123	✓	
Sheila Stearns	444-0310	MT UNIV System	"	✓	
Nancy Jane Starbuck	444-0589	Early Childhood	SB123	✓	
Linda Gryczan	431-3635	Montana Women's Lobby	SB123	✓	
STUART NICHOLSON	452-0393	GREATER FALLS SCHOOL BOARD	SB123	X	

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NAME	PHONE	REPRESENTING	BILL #	SUPPORT	OPPOSE
Kevin Udovich	406-771-7014	Great Falls Public School Proponent	123	X	
Jared Chao	406-442-1109	Parent	123		X
Steven Shallwe	406-727-7848	GF Public School Dist	123	X	
Holly RORVIK	406-952-4808	Great Falls Parent	123	X	
CRAIG CUMMING	277-3684	Citizen	123	✓	
Jan Lombardi	444-9865	Gov. Office	123	X	
Kristi MESSINGER	324-2001	Helena Public School	SB123	X	
Camela Choc	442-1109	Educator/Parent	123		X
Jill Christensen	406 265-7771	Great Falls School Dist	123	X	
Bryan Drown	771-6691	Great Falls	123	X	

PLEASE LEAVE PREPARED STATEMENT WITH COMMITTEE SECRETARY

MONTANA STATE SENATE
2007 LEGISLATURE

WITNESS STATEMENT

NAME Mary Jane Standeart

ADDRESS 2015 LOCKEY Helena

HOME PHONE 443-0620 WORK PHONE 444-0589

REPRESENTING Early Childhood

APPEARING ON WHICH PROPOSAL SB 123

DO YOU: SUPPORT OPPOSE AMEND

COMMENTS:

attached

PLEASE LEAVE PREPARED STATEMENT WITH COMMITTEE SECRETARY

Testimony on full time Kindergarten
Jan. 10, 2007

Good Afternoon Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee, my name is Mary Jane Standaert. I am the Head Start/State Collaboration Director and Coordinator of the Early Childhood Comprehensive systems grant for DPHHS. Mine is a contract position. I have a long history of teaching in private preschool, working in home visiting in Head Start and teaching early childhood college classes for Western. I am also the mother of three young men. The older two attended full time K in North Carolina. The last one attended part day K in Bozeman. I have observed and volunteered in many different K classrooms. I have talked to, worked with and taught many Kindergarten teachers.

I believe one of the best things you can do for children is to allow parents and schools to have a choice. Providing increased funding so there is a possibility of providing full time K is another choice that will benefit many children, teachers and parents. However, as you choose to invest in full time K, I urge you to require quality, appropriate early childhood experiences and environments for all K classes in Montana. I urge you and all of our school districts to include the parents and early childhood professionals in the community to be part of the decision process. It can't be just about the money – it has to be about what is best for the children in a given community.

While your expertise may not be the particulars of Early Childhood you do know that children and parents prefer to be included in decisions, planning, changes and transitions. You do know there are many issues regarding parent work schedules, before and after school care, teacher education and community partnerships. All those seemingly huge issues can be easily addressed, if we focus on what is best for the child. According to some Kindergarten teachers that I recently talked to, full time K is not about accelerated K curriculum, it is not about pushing down first grade curriculum. It is about slowing down and giving young children time to practice, practice, learn, develop and minimize the hurry up nature of half time K. It is about giving parents increased time to take part in the

classroom and school activities. It is about stronger relationships between the teachers and the children which are key to a child's success in school. The K teachers I talked to, said full time K is about doing well what they already do. They have half as many children and parents to work with, they have lots more time for assessment, observation, individualizing and developing an appropriate curriculum for 5 year olds.

I see that you have three choices. You can fund full time K carefully and thoughtfully, or carelessly or not at all. I hope that you will make the first choice – do it well and thoughtfully. Encourage individual communities to do the same – make their decisions about full time K thoughtfully – following best practices in Early Childhood. The research and science is there, and it is our responsibility to do what is best for our children.

Thank you.

January 9, 2007

To the Education Committee

My name is Jeanette Hall and I am President of the Montana Association for the Education of Young Children (MtAEYC), an affiliate of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). I regret that I am not able to appear before you in person; however, a fractured leg prevents me from traveling at this time.

The purpose of this letter is to address issues concerning full-time kindergarten from the perspective of MtAEYC's mission statement, which is "to improve professional practice and working conditions for all teachers and caregivers of children, birth to eight years old, and to build understanding and support for high quality early childhood programs." In addition, NAEYC is dedicated to "working to achieve healthy development and constructive education for all young children." **The focus of MtAEYC is on what is best for children**, and it is through this lens that I hope you will view my remarks and the issue of full-time kindergarten.

Full-time kindergarten can provide high quality learning experiences and be a part of a comprehensive system of early learning and care for children birth through age eight. Research and reports from NAEYC, the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, From Neurons to Neighborhoods, and others gives strong evidence that appropriately implemented full-time kindergarten is an important piece as we strive for excellence in education for young children.

- Full-time kindergarten offers time for increased learning and achievement opportunities. A 6 ½ hour day rather than a 2 ½ hour day provides time for children to become engaged in learning projects on an in-depth level.
- Full-time kindergarten, 5 days per week, offers consistency in learning. All day/every other day kindergarten schedules leave large gaps of time during which learning can regress. There are times when teachers may not see one class of children for up to a 5 day period because of holidays or PIR days. Full-time kindergarten gives children time to frequently practice, review and reflect on what they have experienced and learned.
- Full-time kindergarten increases opportunities for social and emotional development – a critical asset for lifelong learning experiences. Children have time to interact with and develop strong relationships with their classmates. Increased time to practice social skills and to experience successes leads to increased self-confidence, self-esteem and a positive, open attitude toward learning in all areas of life.
- Full-time kindergarten allows teachers to focus on fewer children! Traditional ½ day or every other day kindergarten schedules require teachers to know and plan for up to 40 young children. A full-time kindergarten schedule cuts that number in ½. Teachers are able to form critical, positive relationships with each child; assess each child's abilities, interests and needs through individualized observation and assessment; and plan for the best possible learning and achievement of each child.

- Full-time kindergarten increases time for early intervention resources and supports. Brain research tells us that intervention for special needs is most critical in the early years of life for long-term benefits.
- Full-time kindergarten meets the needs of parents and children. It requires fewer transitions each day. Parents and children need not experience broken up schedules and numerous caregivers in one day. It provides consistency of care and an opportunity for parents to interact with, communicate with, and share information with one teacher who truly knows the parent's child.

As I prepared this letter, I talked with Amy Fraser, a teacher at Whittier School in Bozeman, who has been a full-time Title I kindergarten teacher. She stated that she could see an obvious difference in the achievement of the children in her class versus the children in the classroom with the traditional schedule because of the extra time for in depth projects and practice and because she could plan for the needs of each child. She was confident that the full-time children were ready for first grade at the end of the school year. Amy was emphatic about the positive benefits of a full-time schedule; "I would never want to teach kindergarten without a full-time schedule."

Having extolled the positive benefits of full-time kindergarten, it is important to also state that there are concerns about how it will be implemented. Research studies show that full-time kindergarten is only effective when thoughtful consideration and planning are given for the following.

- Funding must be sufficient to provide each local school district with all the start-up money necessary for space, environments, materials and staffing. Not just enough to get by, but enough to develop quality programs! Funding must be available for continued support.
- Full-time kindergarten teachers must have an educational background that addresses the wide range of developmental levels of kindergarten age children and best practices for their education. At the present time, there is no requirement for an early childhood education endorsement, however, in-service professional development and training is one way to ensure that teachers have a solid knowledge of early childhood development and educational best practices.
- The Office of Public Instruction and local school districts must ensure that each kindergarten classroom is using a curriculum that is developmentally appropriate. In this age of high-stakes achievement and testing, it may become all too easy to begin "pushing down" the first grade curriculum to the kindergarten. Appropriate, successful kindergarten curriculums allow children time to learn through projects, exploration and social interaction. They focus on growth and learning in all areas including academics, physical, social, and emotional skills and creative thinking.
- Parent involvement and parent needs must be recognized as a valuable part of education. A change to full-time kindergarten may be a huge benefit to most parents' schedules, but it also brings new challenges. After school care and holidays and PIR days must be planned for. Montana is fortunate to have a growing and effective Afterschool Network for developing and promoting after school programs with resources and supports. Local communities must

collaboratively assess the current situation for after school care and plan for future needs.

We know that the Office of Public Instruction and, especially, Linda McCulloch have given careful and thoughtful consideration to the proposal for full-time kindergarten. We know that the Office of Public Instruction is ready to provide resources and supports to local school districts. We appreciate the fact that Linda McCulloch has been willing to discuss this issue at length with other agencies and organizations, such as MtAEYC, that are committed to high quality care, education and services for young children.

Full-time kindergarten is the next step that Montana should take in providing excellent learning opportunities for our youngest children. It brings many challenges in its implementation, but offers many new opportunities for collaborations between the Office of Public Instruction, local school districts, early childhood professionals, parents and local communities. With our continued work together, we will be able to create systems and programs that meet the unique needs of each community.

I leave you with the following quote from "A Call to Excellence in Early Childhood Education".

"Our nation can and must do better to create opportunities that help all children and families succeed. The time for action is now."

Gratefully,


Jeanette Hall

Montana Association for the Education of Young Children, President
3808 West Cascade Street
Bozeman, Montana 59718
587-1779



Montana Economic Developers Association

118 E. Seventh St.; Suite 2A Anaconda, MT 59711
ph: 406.563.5259 fx: 406.563.5476

January 9, 2007

TO: Senate Education and Cultural Resources Committee
Sen. Don Ryan, Chair

RE: SB123 Full Time Kindergarten

The Montana Economic Developers Association (MEDA) represents more than 200 economic development professionals that work throughout the State. Most of our members work for local economic development organizations that are supported by private sector businesses and local governmental entities. We all have different priorities, but we share a strong common interest: building a better economy for Montana citizens.

This letter is sent to encourage your support of SB123 to provide full time Kindergarten to Montana's children. Studies show that in the short term, Montana's youngest students would benefit educationally, socially and emotionally from a full time program.

In the long term, Montana's economy would benefit from a full time Kindergarten program. With an aging population and in the face of current trained workforce shortages, it is critical for Montana's education system to prepare its youth for the employment needs of Montana's future.

To support and encourage economic development in Montana, we encourage you to support SB123.

Sincerely,

Rick Edwards
President

JOIN US AT <http://www.medamembers.org>

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PAUL TUSS, HAVRE * BRETT DONEY, GREAT FALLS * KEN RICHARDSON, MISSOULA *

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

BRIAN SCHWEITZER
GOVERNOR



JOHN BOHLINGER
LT. GOVERNOR

Testimony -- Senate Bill 123, Full-time Kindergarten
Senate Education Committee
January 10, 2007
3:00 PM

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee. For the record, my name is Jan Lombardi, and I am the Governor's education policy advisor.

It is my pleasure to be here this morning on behalf of Governor Schweitzer to support SB123.

The governor wholeheartedly supports this bill and full-time kindergarten. Why? Because the Governor believes that full-time kindergarten is the best way to target funding that will make a lasting difference in the lives of Montana's children and families, especially those at-risk.

His support for full-time kindergarten did not come lightly, but rather unexpectedly while attending a Western Governor's Association meeting. At this meeting focused on workforce, the governor posed a question to a panel of K-12, higher education and business experts -- if you had just one more dollar, how would you invest it? Known for being a champion of 2-year colleges to address the changing workforce needs of our state, the Governor was surprised by the consistency of the panelists' answers -- invest earlier.

The joint recommendation by the specialists was to start young -- Kindergarten and earlier -- because:

- Students are then better prepared for elementary school.
- They will have a better chance of graduating from high school.
- They're more likely to succeed in college.
- And ultimately they'll become a successful, skilled workforce.

It was then that the governor embarked on studying the body of research supporting full-time kindergarten and became convinced that Montana schools needed the ability to provide this opportunity to its youngest citizens. This Friday, you will hear testimony for SB 152 – the Governor’s education funding bill, which includes full-time kindergarten.

Education is our competitive edge, and the Schweitzer Administration wants Montanans to be able to compete in a global economy, regardless of where you live in this big state. This administration has a school readiness agenda that incorporates children ages birth through 8 years old with full-time kindergarten as a key piece to ensuring that all Montana students are ready for school and have a solid foundation for becoming the workforce of tomorrow. The Governor supports a long-term vision by providing resources to schools and communities to decide if and when to implement full-time kindergarten. This long-term vision will can reap benefits a generations long after the State Superintendent and Governor Schweitzer have left office.

You have already heard many benefits to students from the State Superintendent and will hear much more from the many experts in this room. Full-time kindergarten is a mainstream idea that is supported by organizations like the Foundation for Child Development, the Montana Economic Development Association, both the National and Montana chapters of the Association for the Education for Young People and others.

Montana needs young minds that are ready to change the world, and to do that we must invest in our youth. The Governor wants Montana’s children to have the best beginnings in early childhood, so they grow to become the best and brightest who attend one of Montana’s fine colleges. The Governor urges this committee to support full-time kindergarten for our children and Montana.

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to oppose the plan to make Kindergarten a half-day program.

When my now seventh grader was in Kindergarten, she attended Morningside Elementary School here in Great Falls, Montana. The program at the time was a half-day program. From the time she was enrolled until the time we transferred out of the state, she struggled everyday. The curriculum was so intense that she fell behind all of her classmates. I was told that maybe she was ADD or had some other type of learning disorder. There was no way that my daughter had any kind of learning disorder. There was too much information being given out at an excessively fast of a pace for her to grasp. Her being in a half-day program was hurting her learning abilities. It was too much too fast.

Once at our new duty station, I learned that their Kindergarten program was full day so I did not enroll her immediately. I waited until the following school year to enroll her and did she ever learn what was put out by the teachers. I know you are probably thinking that she did better because she had already had Kindergarten and was repeating but I want to point out that my now sixth grader started school at four years old and did not turn five until the end of November. She learned at a normal rate like everyone else in the school.

Another thing I want to point out is my now seventh grader has never been diagnosed with any kind of a learning disability and she has been on the honor roll almost every year, and she received a Ram Pride Award at East Middle School. My Now sixth grader has also been on honor rolls throughout her elementary years.

Not every preschool child in Great Falls has the benefit of attending such a wonderful program such as Head Start or any other preschool within the city, which would help to become ready for Kindergarten. Because of this, when you make Kindergarten a half-day program these unfortunate children as well as the children that do have learning disorders are only getting half the benefits of other children in school. I urge you; **DO NOT** make Kindergarten a half-day program. Keep it a full day program.

Sincerely,
Rebecca K. Mohar
Great Falls Head Start Policy Council Chairperson
Lead Preschool Teacher at Malmstrom Child Development Center - Room 12
406-899-1425