



AA CAUCUS

**STRONG STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT**

**EQUALS**

**STRONG MONTANA ECONOMY:**

**Being Part of the Solution**

## MISSION ONE

# STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IS MONTANA'S ECONOMIC FUTURE

To ensure a strong economy, Montana needs a well-educated, productive workforce.

✓ **RAISE ACHIEVEMENT ACROSS MONTANA**

We support efforts to raise student achievement and success for all students in Montana.

✓ **HIGH NEEDS STUDENTS CONCENTRATE IN AA DISTRICTS**

The seven largest population centers in Montana educate over 40 percent of Montana's students—many with special needs.

✓ **SUCCESS IS ACHIEVABLE**

Many students are at-risk; and with adequate support, their teachers can, and do, work miracles daily!

## FACTS<sup>1</sup>:

- *An educated workforce attracts business investment in our state and communities.*
- *AA Districts have a high number of At-Risk and high needs students who require additional resources in order to succeed.*
- *Native American students in urban settings are five times less likely to complete high school than their non-native peers.*
- *Legislature 2009 removed general fund allocation for At-Risk students. If funding is not restored, schools will be faced with reducing or eliminating proven, successful programs.*

## MISSION TWO

# GRADUATION MATTERS

It is the "goal of the people to establish a system of education which will develop the full educational potential of each person."

- Montana Constitution

### ✓ **PREPARE KIDS FOR COLLEGE, CAREER, AND CITIZENSHIP**

We support the strong efforts of AA school staff using new methods to prepare students for either college or career and for good citizenship.

### ✓ **CONTINUE FUNDING SUCCESSFUL 'BEST PRACTICES'**

Newly developed practices are showing success, for example:

Rigor, relevance, and relationships

Early childhood programs

Jumpstart college enrollment

Technology-assisted learning

### ✓ **FUND 19-YEAR OLD STUDENTS**

We support including 19-year old students in ANB funding counts. Many students need one more year to become successful wage earning graduates.

## FACTS:

- ***High school dropouts reduce tax revenues and economic activity.*** Compared with high school graduates, high school dropouts earn about \$9,634 less every year and pay about \$60,000 less in taxes over a lifetime. The Montana dropouts from 2007 may be expected to cost an estimated \$800 million in lifetime earnings.
- ***High school dropouts increase the cost of government.*** Compared with graduates, high school dropouts are *less likely* to raise healthier, better educated children, are *less likely* to vote and volunteer, and are *more likely* to be teen parents, to commit crimes, to rely on government healthcare, or to use public services such as food stamps or housing assistance.

## MISSION THREE

### FUNDING

A program of adequate, stable, and flexible funding promotes cost-effective long-range planning by local communities' boards of trustees.

✓ **ADEQUATE FUNDING**

We support adequate, student-centered funding for school districts of all sizes.

✓ **STABLE FUNDING**

We support predictable and consistent funding to allow school districts to plan effectively for the short and long term.

✓ **FLEXIBLE FUNDING**

We support funding that is sufficiently flexible to allow school districts to respond to and address the needs and priorities of their local communities.

✓ **FIX THE FINANCIAL CLIFF**

Best practice efforts are in jeopardy due to lack of stable funding. We support distribution of new federal dollars through direct state aid formula.

### FACTS:

- ***School Districts across Montana face a funding cliff that will not help the economy.***
  - ***Filling the funding hole will cost \$72.1 million.***
  - ***Present law adjustment alone will cost \$35 million.***
- ***Given the costs of incarceration and public services for families in poverty, this expenditure is an investment in the future of Montana.***
- ***Children who participate in Early Childhood Education demonstrate both academic and social development benefits that prepare them for third grade academics, leading to middle school socio-academic success and high school graduation.***

## MISSION FOUR

# INVESTING IN SCHOOL FACILITIES

Improve teaching and learning environment by increasing the efficiency of heating, ventilating, lighting and plumbing equipment.

- ✓ **MAINTAIN TAXPAYER INVESTMENT IN COMMUNITY ASSETS**  
We support moving forward to improve schools based on data gained from the state's 2008 facilities survey.
- ✓ **MITIGATE ENERGY COST INCREASES**  
Schools need financial assistance to replace antiquated and inefficient equipment with energy efficient systems.
- ✓ **SAVE MONEY FOR CLASSROOMS**  
Utility costs are high and dollars saved will be better invested in direct education of students.
- ✓ **HEALTHY AND SAFE ENVIRONMENTS FOR KIDS AND STAFF**  
Energy savings initiatives of the 70s and 80s boarded up windows and left a legacy of inadequate fresh air ventilation and expensive electric lighting.

## FACTS:

- *20% of U.S. population is in schools on a daily basis*
- *40 Year old buildings are newest schools in most AA Districts.*
- *Utilities are largest school general fund expenditure after teachers and staff.*
- *Montana Code currently restricts school districts from using same 15-year, savings-based financial vehicle that counties and municipalities may use.*
- *\$1.375 million annual savings is estimated from Quick Start and Quality Schools \$25 million investment.*

## MISSION FIVE

# EFFICIENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

AA Districts are committed to helping create cost-saving efficiencies.

### ✓ **SCHOOL DISTRICTS UNDERSTAND THE NEED TO BE EFFICIENT**

School districts across the state are collaborating in many ways to increase efficiencies.

Staff development, cooperative special education and pre-school  
E-Learning and Montana Digital Academy  
Loaned equipment and purchasing cooperatives  
Education Service Areas

### ✓ **OPTIMIZING RESOURCES THROUGH COLLABORATIVES**

Gallatin County area school districts are pioneering a grassroots movement to seek efficiencies by combining efforts—in 29 different ways—on a regional basis.

### ✓ **WORKING FOR EFFICENCIES**

We support Montana's Regional Education Service Areas.

## **FACTS:**

- *Many co-operative, cost saving practices are already shared by districts.*
- *Fuel tax exemption for school districts could save bookkeeping costs at the state and the district.*
- *Regional Service Center concept is active in many states, including Colorado, Oregon, and Texas.*
- *Colorado has Boards of Cooperative Educational Services that supply educational services to two or more districts that finds it advantageous and cost-effective to cooperate with other districts.*

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

### **MONTANA CONSTITUTION**

**Section 1. Educational goals and duties.** (1) 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.

(2) 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.

(3) The legislature shall provide a basic system of free quality public elementary and secondary schools. The legislature may provide such other educational institutions, public libraries, and educational programs as it deems desirable. It shall fund and distribute in an equitable manner to the school districts the state's share of the cost of the basic elementary and secondary school system.

[http://data.opi.mt.gov/bills/mca\\_toc/Constitution.htm](http://data.opi.mt.gov/bills/mca_toc/Constitution.htm)

### **MONTANA CODE ANNOTATED**

MCA 20-9-309 at <http://data.opi.mt.gov/bills/mca/20/9/20-9-309.htm> . This is the current definition of a Basic system of free quality public elementary and secondary schools, identifying educationally relevant factors, establishing a funding formula and budgetary structure, and legislative review.

### **BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION**

Montana Board of Public Education Positions on Public School Funding and Structure, Research Conducted Over Three Interims at

<http://www.bpe.mt.gov/pdf/BPEPositionPositionPublicSchoolFundingStructure.pdf> .

This document is a compendium of study group and committee work during 2001, 2003 and 2005 legislative interims, including the Governor's K-12 Public School Funding Study Advisory Council (2001), Montana K-12 School Renewal Commission (2003), and Quality Schools Interim Committee (2005). It also includes a brief history of Montana School Funding and funding studies commissioned over the past decade. Special attention to the Montana School Renewal Commission work would be advised – where the entire report can be found at <http://www.bpe.mt.gov/reports.shtml>

## **<sup>1</sup>SOURCES OF FACTS**

Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007  
American Association of School Administrators Schools Energy Summit, 2008  
Bureau of Business and Economic Research, University of Montana, Outlook 2010  
Colorado Department of Education Website  
Education State Rankings, PK-12 Education Across America, 2009-2010  
Knowledge Works Foundation, 2004  
Montana Department of Commerce  
Montana Kids Count Data Book, 2009  
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National Renewable Energy Laboratory, 2000  
National High School Center, High School Dropout: A Quick Stats Fact Sheet, 2007