



Montana
Office of Public Instruction
 Denise Juneau, State Superintendent

opi.mt.gov

Office of Public Instruction

P.O. Box 202501

Helena, MT, 59620-2501

(406) 444-3095

(888) 231-9393

(406) 444-0169 (TTY)

opi.mt.gov

PUBLIC HEALTH, WELLNESS & SAFETY

Exhibit No. 6

Date 2/18/11

Bill No. HJ 5

February 18, 2011

Mr. Chair and members of the committee, for the record I am Steve York Assistant Superintendent at the Office of Public Education. Consider this testimony in support of House Joint Resolution 5.

As a Montana born educator with 33 years of service to the children of our state, I am proud to speak of the work our schools complete yearly in assuring our 17,000 students with disabilities receive the best education possible and the opportunity to develop their skills to the highest possible level.

It is recognition efforts like HJ 5 proposed by Representative Reiger, that highlights what makes this country and the state of Montana great. We care! We cared enough as a nation to assure our children with disabilities would have the right to a free and appropriate education through passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act in the 1970's. Students who were kept at home, sent to institutions, or educated in special schools are now educated where they should be educated, with their peers.

When I moved into educational leadership, it didn't take long for me to realize the great value our young people with disabilities gained from inclusion in their neighborhood schools. Yet, I witnessed even a greater gain in the students without disabilities in having our children with disabilities learning along-side of them.

Dr Willard Daggett, CEO of the International Center for Leadership in Education, is recognized worldwide for his proven ability to move education systems towards more rigorous and relevant skills and knowledge for *all* students. He has presented to hundreds of thousands of educator's worldwide. Dr. Daggett has five children. Three are college graduates, one was born with significant developmental disabilities, and number five was a victim of an accident which left him with a traumatic brain injury. At a recent presentation that I was fortunate enough to attend, Dr. Daggett stated that the United States is still the greatest education system of all. One of the reasons is that all five of his students received an equal opportunity to grow to be the best they could be. This is not true in other countries.

I am proud of our nation and state for collectively deciding that we have a responsibility to educate ALL children. I am proud of the efforts we carry out in our communities and public education system in meeting these needs and preparing all of our children for life and career.

With honor the Office of Public Education supports House Joint Resolution 5.

Steven M. York
 Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services
 Montana Office of Public Instruction
 (406) 444-4434
syork@mt.gov