



Education Interim Committee
65th Montana Legislature

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DRAFT FOR COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION JUNE 2018

June TBD, 2018

Montana Board of Public Education
Certification Standards and Practices Advisory Council
Montana Council of Deans of Education
Superintendent of Public Instruction Arntzen

Dear Education Partners,

Over the course of the past two interims, both the 2015-2016 School Funding Interim Commission and the 2017-2018 Education Interim Committee have heard testimony regarding, and examined the state of, gifted and talented education in Montana. This letter formally expresses the questions and concerns of the current Education Interim Committee in two areas:

1) Are teachers adequately prepared to identify and serve gifted and talented students?

The committee understands and appreciates the breadth of preparation required of candidates for teacher licensure in Montana and is grateful for your work in this area. However, in testimony provided to the committee, we discern a lack of consistency in the amount of preparation required of teachers in serving gifted and talented students and a lack of agreement about whether that preparation should focus on classroom differentiation or specialized programs. It is likely that in the great variety of Montana school districts, teachers need to be prepared for both approaches, but regardless of district approach, it is the teachers who will be of paramount importance in identifying and serving our high-ability/high-potential students.

2) Are districts being held accountable for providing educational programs for gifted and talented students?

Montana's Standards of Accreditation at [ARM 10.55.804](#) require that all districts "provide educational services to gifted and talented students." Yet in testimony to the committee, we learned that a significant number of districts report identifying no gifted and talented students despite reporting through the accreditation process having programs to serve gifted and

talented students. It appears that Montana either has extremely anomalous distribution of gifted and talented students or a less than rigorous accountability system for ensuring that the standards of accreditation regarding gifted and talented education are met. We suspect the latter.

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The committee acknowledges the Legislature's responsibility to fund the basic system of free quality public elementary and secondary schools that includes educational programs to provide for students with special needs such as gifted and talented children (pursuant to [Article X, section 1\(3\), of the Montana Constitution](#) and [20-9-309, MCA](#)) and plans to continue its conversation about how best to meet this responsibility. In doing so, the committee would appreciate your response to the above questions and concerns. You are always welcome at our meetings. We appreciate the multiple entities with constitutional, statutory, and practical roles to play in ensuring all Montana students an equal opportunity to develop their individual potentials and desire to work effectively and together with all of you to accomplish this goal.

Sincerely,

Sen. Edie McClafferty, Presiding Officer

Rep. Fred Anderson, Vice Presiding Officer

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