

Essential Truths About the Great Work of Montana's Public Schools



Jointly Prepared for the 2013 Legislature by
MASBO, MEA-MFT, MREA, MTSBA, MQEC and SAM
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Introduction and Executive Summary

Your service as a legislator in the 2013 Legislative Session is rapidly approaching and K-12 public policy issues are anticipated to be among the most critical issues facing legislators in the this session.

We have collaborated in creating this information packet *together*, in spite of the fact that we often have a diversity of viewpoints on matters affecting the public schools, based on the different constituencies we represent. We have reached common ground and consensus on the information in this packet, based on our shared vision for how to best develop the full educational potential of children in our public schools. We are hopeful that legislators from both parties can replicate or even exceed our success in overcoming differences and coming together in support of the children in our public schools.

You will find that this information packet includes objective, verifiable information regarding the innovations, high performance and efficiency of Montana's public schools. This information is intended to help you dispel the misplaced and inaccurate rhetoric promoted by a few who believe that public schools are failing, inflexible, inefficient, and replace it with the ***essential truths*** that public schools in Montana are succeeding, improving, innovative, efficient, supported by voters throughout Montana and in need of adequate funding to continue their good work with kids.

We are hopeful that the information in this packet can assist you in participating in deeper and more meaningful discussions with your constituents and fellow legislators that get beyond the misinformed rhetoric with which you may have been recently deluged and toward a fact-based understanding of the good work occurring in our public schools as well as the recognition of such work accorded by Montana Voters.

Thank you for your service as a legislator in the 2013 Legislative Session and in particular for your support of the kids educated in our public schools. We look forward to supporting your efforts during the 2013 Legislative Session and hope that you are able to use this packet to start the conversations necessary to ensure that Montana's public schools can continue their great work, engaging communities and seeking further enhancements in academic achievement for the children of our great state.



Essential Truths

About the Great Work of Montana's Public Schools

1. **Montana's Public Schools are High Performing and Efficient!** Montana public schools offer a tremendous opportunity for high achievement to children, close to or at the top of the nation in comparison to other states, at a relatively low cost to Montana Taxpayers.
2. **Montana's Public Schools Engage Communities to Support Innovation and Customization!** Montana public schools are innovative and offer unique opportunities for community input, accountability and access that cannot be replicated by diverting public resources to pay for private education alternatives.
3. **Montana's Public Schools are Supported by and in Harmony with Montana Voters!** Montana voters are in synch with and strongly supportive of the efforts of Montana's public schools in fully developing the potential of the kids. They support additional funding for schools, community ownership and local control, time for educators to focus on instruction instead of record keeping and want public schools to be able to offer a well rounded education to all kids. They also believe that the quality of public schools is comparable to the best of what private schools offer and they oppose the use of public funds for private and public education alternatives.
4. **Montana's Public Schools are Unified In Support of a Long-Term Vision of Success and a Legislative Plan for the 2013 Session!** MASBO, MEA-MFT, MREA, MTSBA, MQEC and SAM all share a common long-term vision for the success of public education in Montana. We have also gained consensus on short-term goals that are linked to the achievement of the long-term vision and Senator Llew Jones of Conrad has embraced those goals in LC 132. LC 132 includes a balanced combination of:
 - a. Funding and increased flexibility for innovation, improved academic achievement and inflationary costs;
 - b. Significant school district property tax relief;
 - c. A solution to ensure that income generated off of school trust lands is exclusively devoted to meet the needs of K-12 public schools and the taxpayers that support our schools; and
 - d. An alignment of the success of natural resource development and K-12.

A VISION FOR THE SUCCESS OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN MONTANA



ALL STUDENTS NEED TO EXPERIENCE A CURRICULUM THAT PROVIDES A CLEAR CONNECTION BETWEEN SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL COMPLETION AND SUBSEQUENT SUCCESS AND SATISFACTION IN LIFE.

The Core Purpose of public education in Montana is to fully develop the educational potential of each child served in our public schools.

Why Act and Why

Now?

To improve and broaden public understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing Montana's public schools and translate that improved understanding into support for our vision for public

education

- To ensure meaningful engagement of communities with their public schools
- To create a single inspiring vision to help bring focus to the purpose of public education in our state
- To ensure our students are

competitive in a global economy

- To increase student performance in all of our public schools
- To ensure appropriate curricula and the integration of technology for a new generation of learners
- To be more responsive to students' individual needs



Success in College



Success in Career



Success in Life

Envisioned Future

CORE PURPOSE



The Core Purpose of Montana's Public Schools is as set forth in the Montana Constitution, Article X, Section 1:

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



CORE VALUES

- We honor and hold ourselves and others accountable for compliance with all elements of Article X of the Montana Constitution.
- Shared Authority, Responsibility and Accountability: School districts share authority and responsibility with the state for developing the full educational potential of each student. All are jointly accountable to the public for providing a system of education that is worthy of the goal of the people.
- Equality of Educational Opportunity for All.
- Recognition of and commitment to the preservation of the distinct and unique cultural heritage of American Indians in Montana.

“Montana’s K-12 public schools work collaboratively with each other, with state policymakers and with their communities to successfully develop the full potential of every child in Montana through a system that is flexible, adequately and rationally funded, and community-owned.”

VIVID DESCRIPTIONS OF SUCCESS

Policymakers at all levels:

- Consistently support each community’s ownership of its public schools and each district’s ability to meet student needs.
- Support the resources needed by Montana’s public schools to fully develop the educational potential of each student educated in Montana’s public schools.

Montana’s public school districts are focused, adaptable, innovative, engaging, and driven to help every student succeed by consistently:

- Ensuring that public school students’ knowledge and skills match contemporary needs.
- Using technology to link each student to the world in which they will learn and succeed.
- Designing, updating and operating in facilities that enhance learning.
- Engaging families, the community and each other to meet the needs of every student.
- Driving the design and use of effective data systems to support and enhance each student’s success.

As a result of the support of policymakers and the leadership of Montana’s public school districts, Montana’s public school students:

- Think critically and engage as responsible citizens.
- Succeed without regard to circumstances of life that could otherwise interfere in achievement of their full potential.
- Use the knowledge and skills they develop in Montana’s public schools to succeed in whatever future they choose and wherever they go.

Areas of Focus for the Coming Years

Student Success
Teaching and Learning
Governance, Leadership and Accountability
Culture, Climate and Social Values
Community Engagement



Montana's Public Schools are High Performing and Efficient!

As we approach the time for the 2013 Legislature, you will likely hear from a limited few with a perspective that Montana's Public Schools are failing and in need of serious reform. These same people will argue that Montana should adopt charter schools without elected school boards, tax proposals to fund private education with public funds and a "reform" agenda to turn Montana's public schools around.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

Montana's Public Schools produce high student achievement through a system that respects local community ownership and parent involvement. The tremendous value that our public schools provide to students, parents and Montana citizens is proven through virtually every performance measure used. We remain committed to continuously improving academic achievement of Montana's school-aged children in collaboration with state policymakers and local communities. This is the Montana way, with community ownership and local control as the foundation of our success. Our results stand up to any comparative scrutiny and exceed those of other states that are often held up as models of success when it comes to student achievement. Consider the performance of Montana compared to that of Florida, a state often held up as an example of impressive student achievement gains:

1. Montana's graduation rate is ranked 11th in the nation at 82%. Florida's is 44th at 68.9%. There are many rural school districts in Montana that have achieved graduation rates in the high 90's and even 100% over the course of not just several years but even decades. Where graduation rates have been a challenge, the Graduation Matters initiative has been catching on and showing impressive results in the communities implementing the initiative. In Missoula, where Graduation Matters was first initiated, graduation rates have increased from 80%-nearly 90% since 2009 and the drop out rate has been halved in only three years.
2. Montana's ACT Average Composite score of 22.1 ranks 17th in the nation. Florida's is 47th at 19.6. Additionally, Montana tests 60% of its eligible students, compared to only 29.5% tested among the states ranked ahead of us. Only three states in the nation, Iowa, Wisconsin and Minnesota test a higher percentage of their children and have average scores above those in Montana. The ACT is the predominant test of college readiness used throughout the nation.

3. Montana's Average 8th Grade Reading Score on the National Assessment of Educational Progress is 270, good for 7th in the nation. Florida's is 30th at 264.
4. Montana's Average 8th Grade Math Score on the National Assessment of Educational Progress is 292, good for 6th in the nation. Florida's is 34th at 279.
5. Montana's Average 8th Grade Science Score on the National Assessment of Educational Progress is 162, good for 1st in the nation. Florida's is 32nd at 146.

Montana is also making substantial headway on addressing achievement gaps through state and local partnerships. A notable example can be found in the progress of Frazer Elementary, a rural school district located within the boundaries of the Fort Peck Reservation with a 94% free or reduced lunch eligible student population. Frazer Elementary has shown remarkable improvements in academic achievement through its participation in the Montana Schools of Promise – School Improvement Grants Initiative, a program developed under the leadership of Superintendent of Public Instruction Denise Juneau that partners with schools and communities to improve Montana's most struggling schools. Frazer Elementary went from struggling in addressing achievement gap issues to making AYP under the No Child Left Behind Act for the first time through its participation in the Schools of Promise program.

Additional indications of Montana's statewide success in tackling the achievement gap can be found in the fact that the Education Trust has recognized Montana for increasing student achievement in reading and math for both American Indian and White students over the past six years and that Montana was also one of six states recognized for achieving significant progress toward closing the achievement gap between low-income students and their peers. Montana has one of the smallest achievement gaps between low-income students and higher-income students in the nation.

Nearly as impressive as Montana students' academic performance is the relative efficiency of Montana's Public Schools when compared to spending in the rest of the Nation:

1. Per pupil current expenditures in Montana's Public Schools are ranked 29th in the nation, approximately \$850 below the nationwide average.
2. Expenditures per likely graduate (derived from a combination of graduation rates and per pupil expenditures) are even lower, with Montana ranked 38th in the nation, \$2,024 below the nationwide average and \$1,372 per pupil less than spent by Florida. With graduation

- representing the universal benchmark for success of K-12 public education, this demonstrated efficiency in Montana is all the more impressive.
3. Per capita expenditures in Montana's Public Schools are ranked 41st in the nation, approximately \$292 below the nationwide average.
 4. School revenues Per \$1,000 in Personal Income in Montana's Public Schools are ranked 29th in the nation.
 5. Montana public school administrator staffing is effective and efficient with 1100 students per Superintendent and 257 students per Administrator (Superintendents and Principals), as well as, supervision of nearly 26 licensed professional and paraprofessional staff per Administrator. These ratios compare very favorably to other public and private sector industries, and disprove the popular but inaccurate refrain that there is too much administration in Montana's public schools.

Montana public schools offer a tremendous opportunity for high achievement to children, close to or at the top of the nation in comparison to other states, at a relatively low cost to Montana Taxpayers. We don't need to look elsewhere when it comes to producing increased academic performance of the children in our public schools. We need only dedicate ourselves to a continued vigorous pursuit of the full development of each child's educational potential as envisioned in the Montana Constitution, engaging parents and voters through high quality educators and elected school boards.





Montana's Public Schools Engage Communities to Support Innovation and Customization!

Montana's public schools have innovated throughout the state to meet the needs of children in each community. Montana's school districts are eager to engage their communities in meaningful and thoughtful discussions regarding how to best serve Montana's school aged population. These discussions have resulted in choices that flourish throughout the state. Open enrollment with no tuition for out of district students in a large majority of our public schools; 4 day school week programming in many of our rural schools; online learning options available to all children of the state through the Montana Digital Academy; courses taken for concurrent high school and college credit; Montessori schools; alternative high school programs where high achievement is the constant and time is the variable (a partnership of Bozeman, Lame Deer and Havre high schools); International Baccalaureate programs in Kalispell and Missoula; part time enrollment for home school students; and even religious instruction release time are just a few of the flexible innovations available in Montana's public schools.

Innovations are occurring not only at the local level but also through local school districts' collaboration with the Board of Public Education. More recently, K-12 advocacy groups worked together with teachers, administrators and parents from across the state in recommending significant updates and improvements to the Board of Public Education's Accreditation Standards. These changes, which were ultimately adopted in October by the Board of Public Education with the support of MASBO, MEA-MFT, MREA, MTSBA, MQEC and SAM, include:

1. New performance standards to help measure and stimulate efforts to increase rigor and academic achievement;
2. An amendment to the rule on teacher and administrator evaluations designed to increase the thoroughness, consistency and overall quality of such evaluations through models developed collaboratively by representatives of elected school boards, administrators and teachers while also preserving local school districts' rights to develop comprehensive evaluations on their own; and
3. Providing improved opportunities for flexibility and innovation for schools in pursuing alternatives to the assurance or "input" standards through a review by peers nominated from the field. Every input standard included in the Accreditation Standards other than standards also required by law (e.g. educator qualifications) are eligible for variance, provided that the district has developed a plan to produce comparable or better student performance under the alternative.

The bedrock principles that promote innovation and choice in Montana's public schools begin with a community-driven process that leads to an assurance of community ownership and include safeguards to protect the right of input and influence that are uniquely characteristic of public education:

1. Collaboration with all parents and taxpayers in the community;
2. Accountability to voters through their rights to elect trustees; approve or disapprove discretionary levies; and demand transparency through access to information regarding school performance and expenditures.
3. The engagement of classroom teachers and other educators as the sources of both ideas for innovation and delivery of instruction; and
4. The assurance that all such offerings are provided on a nondiscriminatory basis in pursuit of the full development of the educational potential of each student as required under the Montana Constitution.

In recent public policy discussions regarding the use of public funds to pay for private education in Montana, there are critical facts that are lost in the details.

Using public funds for private education essentially makes "private" education "public", only without the accountability, rights and choices made available to the public when interacting with their existing public schools. Each of the following rights or choices under current law would be notably absent if public funds were used to support private schools:

1. Your choice of which trustees to vote for and elect to represent the community and oversee how the school district spends taxpayer funds;
2. Your choice of whether to support requests for funding and other voted matters required to be placed before the voters by public schools;
3. Your right to observe, participate in and challenge the deliberations and decisions of public schools through open meeting laws;
4. Your rights to know and assess how well the schools you are supporting with your taxes are performing on various standardized measures of student performance. Private schools are exempt assessing and disclosing their performance to the public.
5. Your right to enroll your child in a school. Unlike public schools, which are required to serve all resident school aged children, private schools have the right to deny admission for a variety of reasons that would be unlawful if used as a basis for denial of admission in a public school.

With all of the choices available within our accountable statewide system of public schools, why would we sacrifice any, much less all of the benefits for children above by using public funds to pay for private education in any form that lacks the accountability, transparency and voter control present in our public schools? The short answer is that we should not accept anything less and should in fact be pursuing an increased presence of the voice and role that the public currently enjoys in influencing the decisions of our public schools as they work to serve the children of this state.

Montana's Public Schools are In Harmony with, Supported by Montana Voters!

Several key education advocacy groups recently commissioned a public opinion poll regarding Montana's public schools. Covering a wide range of topics and using highly reputable polling firm Zogby Analytics of Utica, New York, the poll results demonstrate that Montana voters are in synch with and strongly supportive of the efforts of Montana's public schools in fully developing the potential of the kids.

Montana Voters:

1. Believe their public schools are doing a good job and trust in their teachers, administrators and elected school boards to act in the best interests of kids;
2. Believe the school district consolidation should be decided locally, by those affected;
3. Want schools funded first when it comes to how their taxes are spent and support elected officials who support increased funding for schools;
4. Want teachers and administrators to have the time to focus on instruction of kids rather than on record keeping and data entry;
5. Want public schools to cover more than just the basics and offer a well rounded education to all kids;
6. Believe that the quality of public schools is comparable to the best of what private schools offer in Montana and is better than many private alternatives; and
7. Oppose the use of public funds for private and public education alternatives that lack supervision and control by accountable elected trustees.

Issue	Summary Conclusion	Detail of findings from 2012-13 Zogby Poll
Grading the Performance of Montana's Public Schools	Montanans believe that their public schools are doing a good job.	This year, as expressed in our previous polls from 2010 and 2011, Montana Voters believe the schools in their community are doing a good job with nearly 57% giving the schools in their community either an A or a B. This is much more favorable than the sentiment of voters nationwide, both with regard to national opinions of voters regarding schools in their own community (48% gave A's and B's in the recent national PDK poll) and with regard to national voters' opinions regarding the nation's public schools overall (with fewer than two of 10 assigning a grade of either A or B to the nation's public schools).
School District Consolidation	Montanans oppose forced consolidation.	This year, as expressed in our polls from 2010 and 2011, Montana Voters continue to express a strong support for community ownership and local control. When asked to identify who should be responsible for determining if a school district consolidates, an overwhelming majority (73.1%) identified the communities impacted by the consolidation as the group that should be in charge of whether consolidation occurs. The only other answer trending with more than single digit percentages was the state superintendent with 11.9%.
School Funding	Montanans support prioritizing funding of public schools by the Montana legislature.	This year, as expressed in our previous polls from 2010 and 2011, Montana Voters continue to express an overwhelming preference for prioritizing state funding of K-12 public education over other key governmental services. When asked what should be the highest priority when it comes to how state government spends their tax dollars, 51.6% chose K-12 public schools. The next highest response was "not sure" with 14.1%. Only one other option was at more than single digits - social programs for the aged and disabled at 11%.

School Funding	Montanans support elected officials that support increased funding for schools.	Related to the previous question and consistent with past poll results as well, Montana Voters demonstrate that they support elected officials who support increased funding for Montana's public schools. When asked what type of elected official they support more, one who supports increased funding for K-12 public education or one who supports decreasing or freezing spending for K-12, 68.4% expressed a preference for an elected official who supports additional funding for K-12 public education. Only 13% expressed a preference for an elected official who supports decreasing or freezing funding.
Trust of public officials	Montana Voters trust public employees and officials directly involved in public education to do what is right by kids.	When asked to identify who they trust the most when it comes to deciding what is best academically for students in Montana's public schools, Montana Voters expressed a strong preference for those directly involved in our public schools. Montana Voters overwhelmingly place their highest levels of trust in classroom teachers (38.7%), elected school boards (13.2%), the state board of public education (12.3%), and school administrators (combined percentage of 16.8% for superintendents and principals) compared to the trust they vest in the Executive (6.3% between the Governor and State Superintendent) or Legislative (1.3%) branches to decide what is best academically for the kids in Montana's public schools.

PLEASE CONTINUE TO THE FOLLOWING PAGE FOR FURTHER RESULTS

<p>Instruction of kids</p>	<p>Montana Voters want their teachers and administrators to have time to teach kids, improve performance and engage families and communities.</p>	<p>When asked to identify how they believe a teacher's and a school administrator's time should be spent, Montana Voters express a strong preference for protecting the time needed for direct instruction of kids and engagement of families and communities over preparing for standardized testing and tracking and entering data. When asked to identify the most important use of a classroom teacher's time, Montana's Voters overwhelmingly identified instruction of kids (82.7%) first, followed by those identifying improving knowledge and instructional skills (47.3%). Remaining priorities chosen as the most important use of a teacher's time included interacting with parents (15.7%); preparing students for standardized testing (15.1%); and, in last place, tracking and recording data regarding academic progress (14.4%).</p> <p>When asked to identify the most important use of a school administrator's time, Montana Voters were similarly decisive in identifying instructional support and evaluation of teachers (55.7%) as the most important use of a school administrator's time. Remaining priorities chosen as the most important use of a school administrator's time included keeping the public informed regarding the public schools (25%); regulating student conduct (21.7%); interacting with parents (18.5%) and, in last place, maintaining record keeping obligations for statewide and federal accountability programs.</p>
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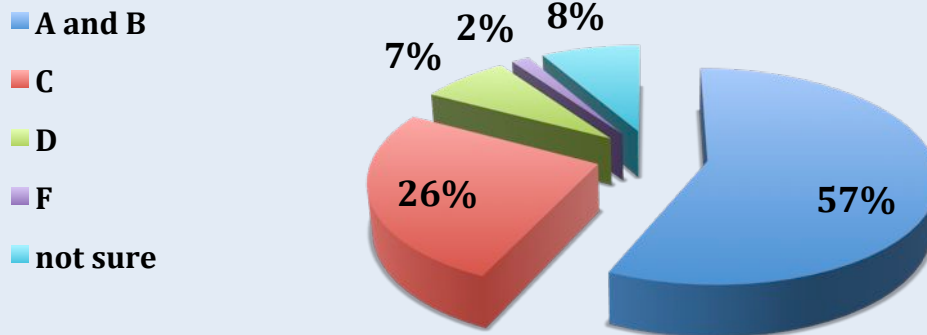
<p>Scope of K-12 Public Education, Quality or Basic?</p>	<p>Montana Voters want public schools to provide a well-rounded education, more than just the basics, to Montana's kids.</p>	<p>When asked whether public schools should offer the basics or a well-rounded education, Montana Voters speak loud and clear. In the most decisive answer in the entire poll, 91.8% of Montana Voters said public schools should provide a well-rounded education to all children, including items such as all day kindergarten, gifted and talented classes, music, art, physical education, technology and advanced placement courses. This perspective aligns nicely with the goal of our system of public schools (“fully developing the educational potential of the state’s citizens”) as set forth in the Montana Constitution.</p>
<p>The Quality of Public vs. Private and Home Schools</p>	<p>Montana Voters believe public schools are better than most and comparable to the best private education alternatives available in Montana.</p>	<p>When asked to rate how good an education each provides, excellent, good, fair or poor, Montana Voters believe that Montana's public schools hold their own with the best of private alternatives. The percentage of Montana Voters rating schools as excellent or good was 68.8% for independent private schools, 68.2% for public schools, and 64.3% for private parochial schools, with the top two statistically tied within the 3.7% margin of error for the poll. Those identifying home schooling as excellent or good lagged significantly behind at 41.7%.</p> <p>The results on this question demonstrate Montana Voters’ recognition of the quality of Montana’s public schools and is in stark contrast a recent national poll comparing the quality of the nation’s public schools to private education alternatives, where the nation’s public schools came in last place behind private, parochial, charter and home school options.</p>

School Privatization and Charter Schools	Montana Voters oppose the use of public funds for private education	When asked whether they support providing tax benefits (tax credits or vouchers) for tuition at a private religious school, the percentage of Montana Voters opposed exceed the percentage in support by a 47.5% to 41.3% margin, with 11.2% unsure. Additionally, the percentage strongly opposing such proposals (27.8%) was significantly above the percentage strongly supporting (17.4%).
School Privatization and Charter Schools	Montana Voters oppose charter schools that are not under supervision and control of elected school boards	When asked whether they support or oppose legislation providing for public funding of charter schools that are not supervised by trustees subject to election in their community, Montana Voters were decisively opposed. Montana Voters oppose charter schools outside of supervision and control by elected school boards by a 50.6% to 32.8% margin, with 16.4% unsure.



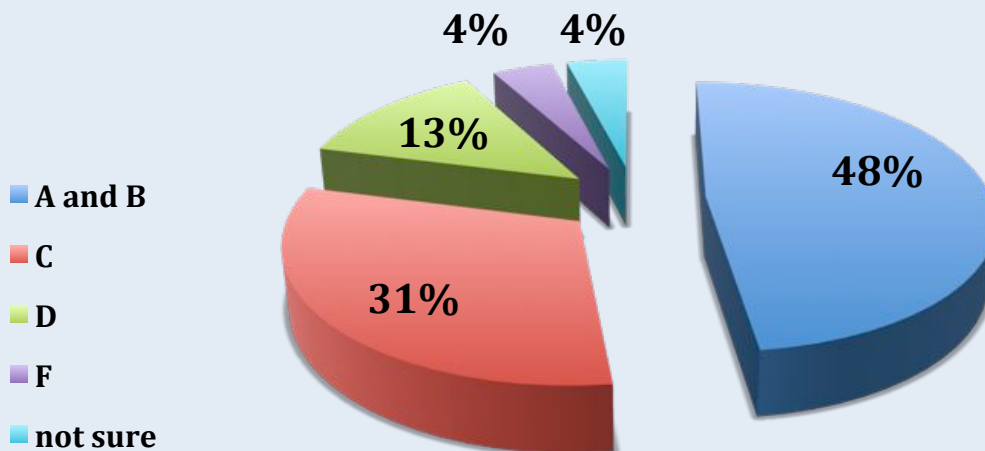
GRADING MONTANA'S SCHOOLS – ***MORE FAVORABLE*** THAN NATIONAL PERCEPTIONS OF COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Students are often given the grades of A, B, C, D and Fail to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the public schools themselves in your community were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools in your community?



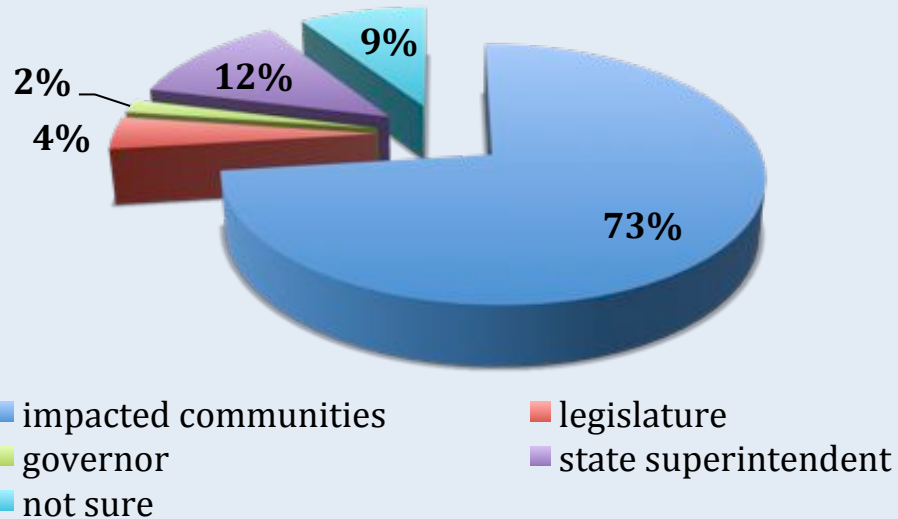
NATIONAL PERCEPTIONS OF COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

National poll results on the Nation's public schools are not nearly as favorable as Montana Voters' opinions of our public schools here.



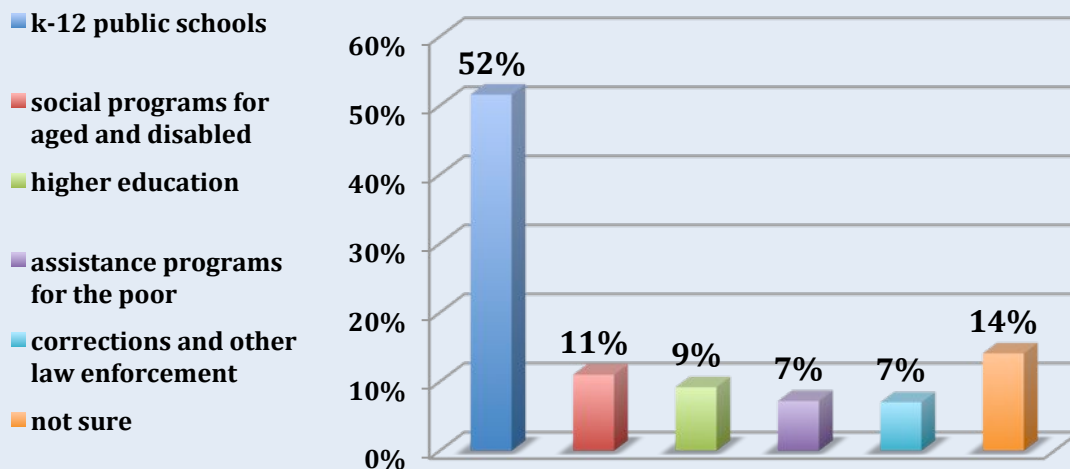
WHO SHOULD DECIDE WHETHER TO CONSOLIDATE?

Which of the following do you think should be most responsible for deciding whether school districts should merge or consolidate?



STATE BUDGET PRIORITIES

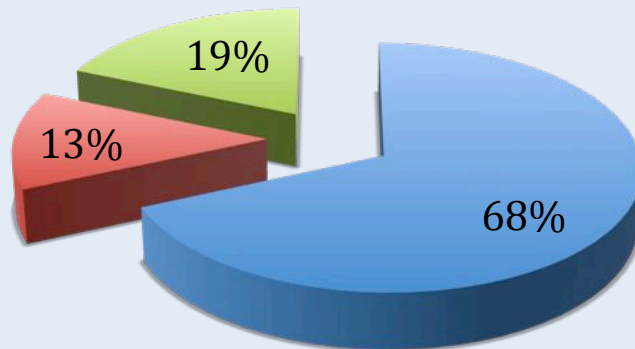
When it comes to how state government spends your tax dollars, which of the following areas do you think should be the highest priority?



VOTERS SUPPORT ELECTED OFFICIALS WHO SUPPORT PUBLIC EDUCATION

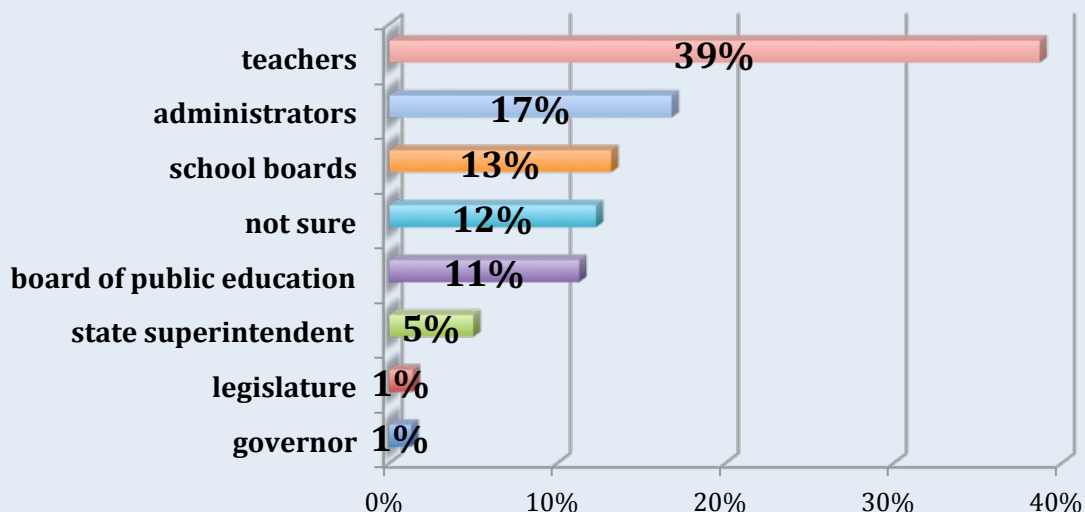
Which type of elected official do you support more?

- one who supports increased funding for k-12 public education
- one who supports decreasing or freezing spending in k-12 public education
- not sure



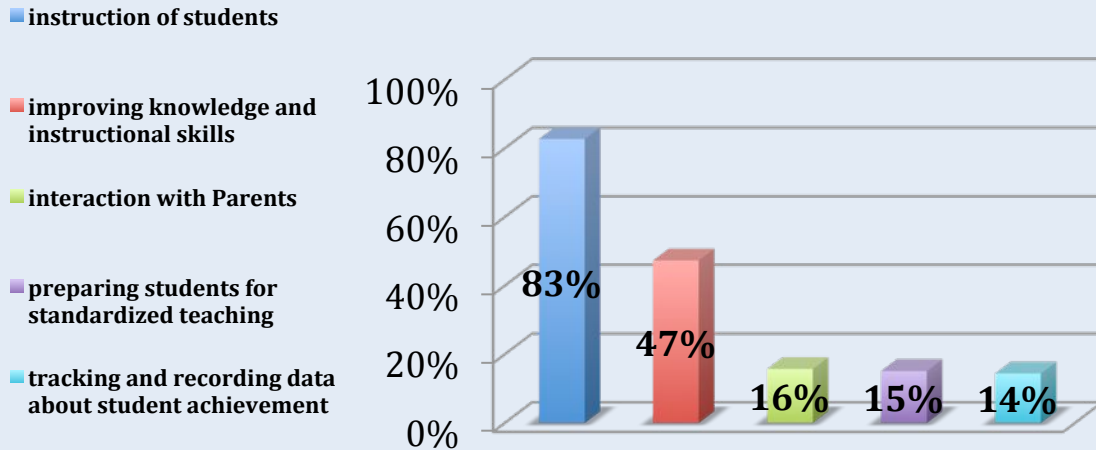
WHO DO YOU TRUST?

Who among the following public employees and officials do you trust the most when it comes to deciding what is best academically for students in Montana's public schools?



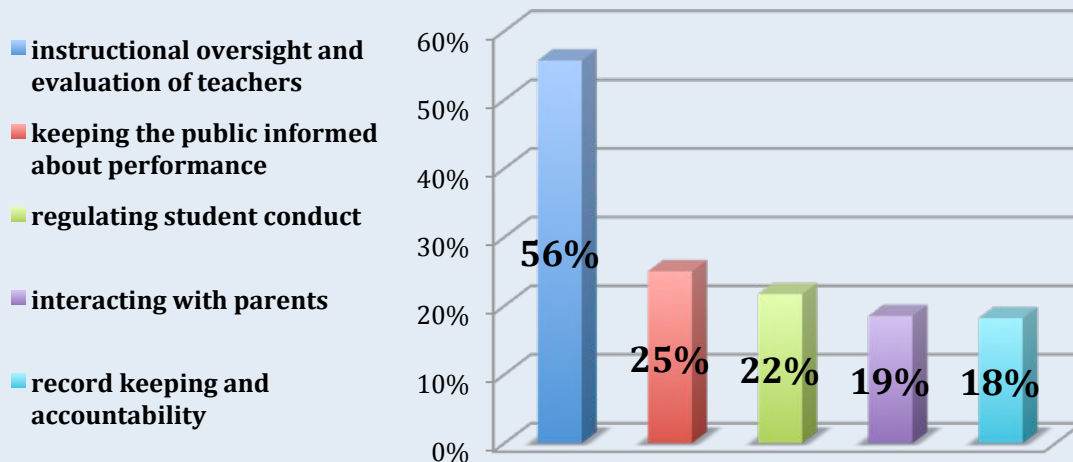
PREFERRED USE OF CLASSROOM TEACHER'S TIME

Rate each of the following on how you believe a classroom teacher's time should be spent (percent identifying as "very important")



PREFERRED USE OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS'S TIME

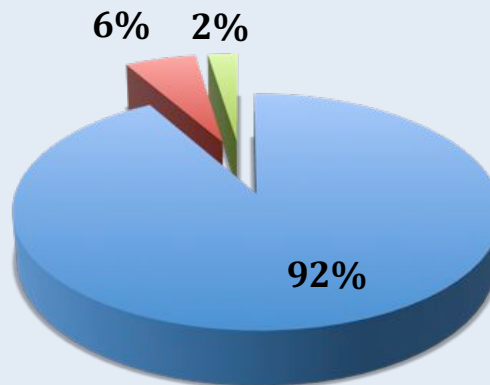
Rate each of the following on how you believe a school administrator's time should be spent (percent identifying as "very important")



SHOULD PUBLIC EDUCATION BE WELL ROUNDED OR BASIC?

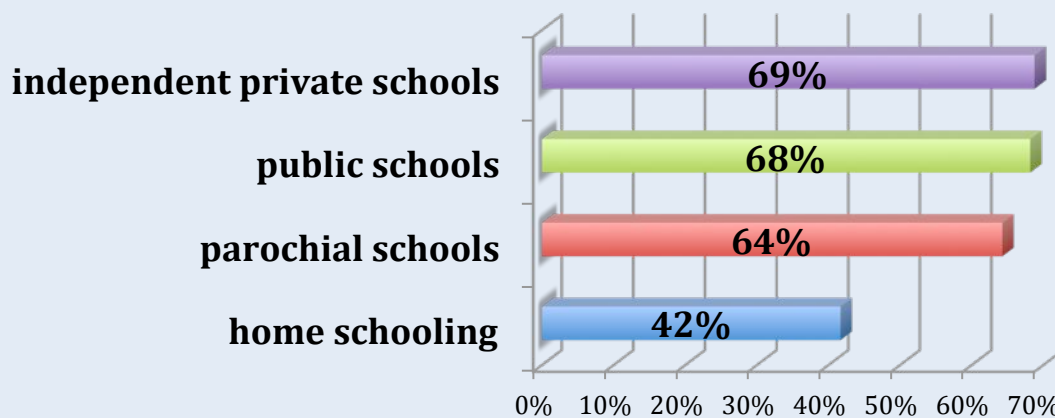
In your opinion, should public schools provide a well-rounded education to all children, including items such as all day kindergarten, gifted and talented classes, music, art, physical education, technology and advanced placement courses or should public schools provide the basics only?

■ well rounded
■ basics only
■ not sure



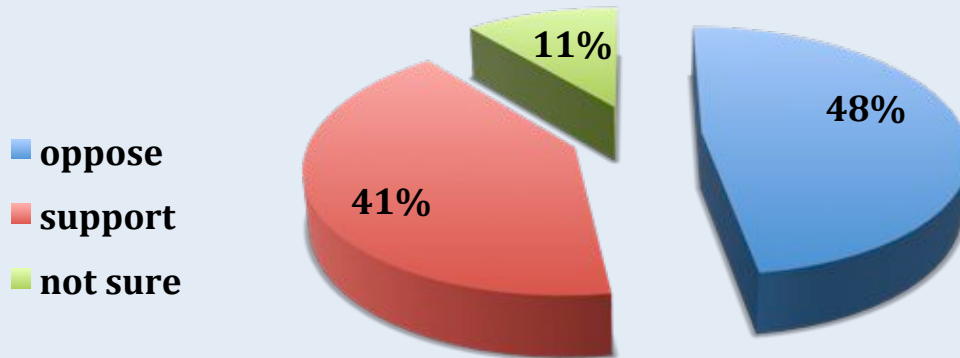
RELATIVE QUALITY OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS

For each method, please indicate your opinion regarding how good an education each provides children (percent identifying excellent or good)



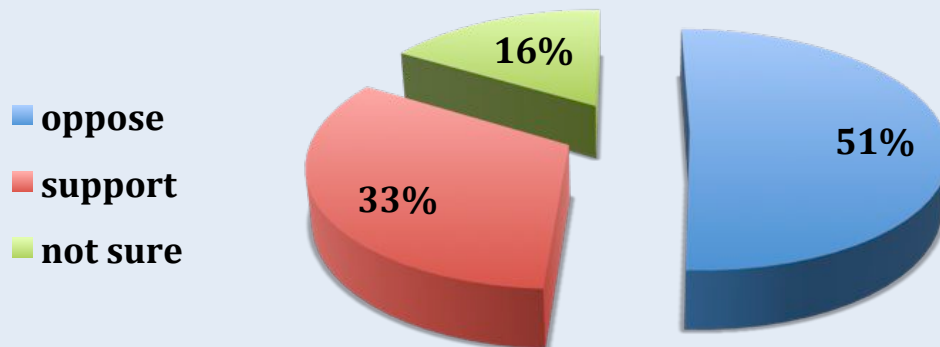
VOTERS OPPOSE PUBLIC FUNDING OF PRIVATE SCHOOL ALTERNATIVES

The Montana Constitution, Article X, Section 6 prohibits the Legislature from making any direct or indirect appropriation or payment from any public fund or monies for any religious purpose or to aid any school controlled in whole or in part by any church. Knowing this, would you support or oppose providing tax benefits (including either tax credits or vouchers) for tuition at a religious school?



VOTERS OPPOSE CHARTER SCHOOLS WITHOUT ELECTED BOARDS

The Montana Constitution, Article X, Section 8 provides that the supervision and control of schools in each school district shall be vested in an elected board of trustees. Knowing this, would you support or oppose legislation providing public funding for charter schools that are not supervised and controlled by trustees subject to election in your community?



Montana's Public Schools are Unified In Support of a Legislative Plan for the 2013 Session! LC 132 by Senator Llew Jones, Conrad

LC 132 Proposes to:

1. Reduce taxes for property taxpayers statewide and align the success of natural resource development with the success of public schools, by ensuring that tax revenues generated from natural resource development are used to reduce property taxes.
 - a. Oil and gas revenues currently collected by the state will be shared to reduce property taxes throughout the state, ensuring a well-deserved reduction in property taxes used to support Montana's public schools;
 - b. Excess interest and income generated on state lands will be used to give further breaks in property taxes.
2. Increase academic achievement through enhanced access of educators and families to current data on academic performance of students in our public schools and funding needed to implement new Common Core curriculum requirements and other changes to the accreditation standards adopted by the Board of Public Education.
3. Increase flexibility and local control for schools by:
 - a. Allowing school districts in areas affected by increased oil and natural gas development to address impacts and ensure that the needs of children in these schools are met.
 - b. Allowing elected school boards greater flexibility to allocate existing levy authority among different funds, as long as there is *no increase in overall taxes* imposed by the district.
 - c. Allowing school districts to focus on mastery of content rather than being tied to antiquated seat time requirements currently embedded in the law.
4. Ensure the State of Montana's compliance with its constitutional obligations under the Montana Constitution through funding aligned with the definition of the basic system of free quality schools defined in law.



Constitution of Montana – Selected Provisions of Article X -- EDUCATION AND PUBLIC LANDS

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.

Section 5. Public school fund revenue. (1) Ninety-five percent of all the interest received on the public school fund and ninety-five percent of all rent received from the leasing of school lands and all other income from the public school fund shall be equitably apportioned annually to public elementary and secondary school districts as provided by law.

(2) The remaining five percent of all interest received on the public school fund, and the remaining five percent of all rent received from the leasing of school lands and all other income from the public school fund shall annually be added to the public school fund and become and forever remain an inseparable and inviolable part thereof.

Section 6. Aid prohibited to sectarian schools. (1) The legislature, counties, cities, towns, school districts, and public corporations shall not make any direct or indirect appropriation or payment from any public fund or monies, or any grant of lands or other property for any sectarian purpose or to aid any church, school, academy, seminary, college, university, or other literary or scientific institution, controlled in whole or in part by any church, sect, or denomination.

(2) This section shall not apply to funds from federal sources provided to the state for the express purpose of distribution to non-public education.

Section 7. Nondiscrimination in education. No religious or partisan test or qualification shall be required of any teacher or student as a condition of admission into any public educational institution. Attendance shall not be required at any religious service. No sectarian tenets shall be advocated in any public educational institution of the state. No person shall be refused admission to any public educational institution on account of sex, race, creed, religion, political beliefs, or national origin.

Section 8. School district trustees. The supervision and control of schools in each school district shall be vested in a board of trustees to be elected as provided by law.

Section 9. Boards of education. (1) There is a state board of education composed of the board of regents of higher education and the board of public education. It is responsible for long-range planning, and for coordinating and evaluating policies and programs for the state's educational systems. It shall submit unified budget requests. A tie vote at any meeting may be broken by the governor, who is an ex officio member of each component board.

...

(3) (a) There is a board of public education to exercise general supervision over the public school system and such other public educational institutions as may be assigned by law. Other duties of the board shall be provided by law.

(b) The board consists of seven members appointed by the governor, and confirmed by the senate, to overlapping terms as provided by law. The governor, commissioner of higher education and state superintendent of public instruction shall be ex officio non-voting members of the board.

THE TIME IS NOW!



DISCUSS - TALK ABOUT K-12 ISSUES WITH SCHOOL OFFICIALS. YOU WILL BE AMAZED AT THE LEVEL OF EXPERTISE, KNOWLEDGE AND COMMITMENT OF THOSE SERVING IN OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ENGAGE - REACH OUT TO PARENTS, TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS AND ELECTED TRUSTEES TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES OF SCHOOLS IN YOUR LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT!

The Time to Support Montana's Public Schools is Now!

Your service in the 2013 Legislature can make a difference for kids! Voters support legislators who support Montana's public schools. They trust in educators to do right by their kids and you should too! Voters want K-12 public education funding to be prioritized and they want public schools that are able to not only survive but also thrive in delivering a quality education to all children in every school system in the state.

The time to embrace and create excitement for this exciting Vision for the Future of K-12 Public Schools is now. Our students deserve no less.