

## MINUTES

### MONTANA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES 52nd LEGISLATURE - 2nd SPECIAL SESSION

#### SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION & CULTURAL RESOURCES

Call to Order: By CHAIR RAY PECK, on July 6, 1992, at 1:45 p.m.

#### ROLL CALL

##### Members Present:

Rep. Ray Peck, Chairman (D)  
Sen. Greg Jergeson, Vice Chairman (D)  
Sen. Don Bianchi (D)  
Rep. Larry Grinde (R)  
Sen. H.W. Hammond (R)  
Rep. Mike Kadas (D)

Staff Present: Skip Culver, Associate Fiscal Analyst (LFA)  
Taryn Purdy, Senior Analyst (LFA)  
Doug Schmitz, Budget Analyst (OBPP)  
Mary Ann Wellbank, Budget Analyst (OBPP)  
Sylvia Kinsey, Secretary

Please Note: These are summary minutes. Testimony and discussion are paraphrased and condensed.

Announcements/Discussion: CHAIR PECK said the committee would hear the Board of Public Education, the School for the Deaf and Blind and the Office of Public Instruction. He would prefer to delay executive action for a day following the hearings, but might have to do it following the hearing on the Montana University System tomorrow. He also said the time schedule was to finish the subcommittee business by the end of the day on July 7.

#### HEARING ON EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE ACTION HOUSE BILL 2

#### BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

Doug Schmitz, Office of Budget and Program Planning (OBPP), said his office did not propose any reductions for this special session. Last month when the Finance Committee met, an appropriation transfer was approved for \$7,702 to cover increased costs associated with revocation hearings and the two school funding lawsuits. It is a two person office and is difficult to reduce anything further. There are no vacancy savings and operating costs are continuing to increase.

**CHAIR PECK** said if there was no change then indicated from the Executive, and asked Mr. Culver if he had any comment on the agency. **Mr. Culver, LFA**, said in the special session in January the Legislature reduced FY 93 budget by \$9,543 in general funds and then appropriated special funds of \$6,509 from the teacher registration fund. The net reduction to the agency was \$3,034 which came primarily from the contested case hearing allocation which was approved in the regular session.

**CHAIR PECK** recalled testimony about the use of those funds against the reduction and the opposition to that during the hearing.

**QUESTIONS FROM THE COMMITTEE:** none.

**Dr. Wayne Buchanan** said he had no comments but would be available for questions. **CHAIR PECK** asked if there could be a supplemental? **Dr. Buchanan** said yes. They will probably not need the entire \$7,700, since \$5,000 would be the appropriation transfer. It is probable that they will ask for that money to be replaced in a supplemental.

**CHAIR PECK** asked if \$7,700 was totally legal fees. **Mr. Buchanan** said yes. They believed they would be able to absorb some of that this time.

**REP. GRINDE** asked, in representing the Board of Education, is there any area they would be able to do without, or would be the best to cut. **Mr. Buchanan** said the only area the Board can cut in looking at the budget, would be to cut Board meetings. They have cut back to six board meetings next year because it costs between \$3,000 and \$3500 to have a Board meeting. \$3,600 was lost out of this fiscal year, but that was appropriated for extra hearings. Those extra hearings will not be needed because the rule was repealed that caused them. They were able to make that up in this year's biennium by turning that money back which had been specifically appropriated through line item. Next year \$3,600 would be cut directly from the budget, so one Board meeting will be cut from our seven Board meeting schedule.

#### **SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF AND BLIND**

**Mr. Schmitz, OBPP**, said the executive recommended a lesser reduction than the other agencies or the rest of state government. They have a lot of indirect care of the students that live on the campus etc., making it more difficult to achieve further reductions. They have proposed 6% versus the 8% for '93.

**Skip Culver, LFA**, said in the last special session the Legislature took \$10,000 from general services and \$36,000 in FTE for student services and a funding switch of \$20,000 increasing I and I funds (Interest and Income). They estimated the I and I funds would be higher by \$20,000 so they increased those funds by \$20,000 and reduced general fund by \$20,000. The

those funds by \$20,000 and reduced general fund by \$20,000. The net reduction in the last special session was approximately 3%.

**EXHIBIT 1**

**QUESTIONS FROM THE COMMITTEE:** none

**Bill Prickett, Superintendent for Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind (MSDB),** said the future of education of deaf and blind children depends on what the Legislature does during this session and what this subcommittee does. He said in the '91 session the Governor and the Legislature agreed on a level of funding that would be required to maintain programs at the current level. This would have provided a rather "bare bones" program. Vacancy savings were then assessed against us and in the special session they had another cut. At the same time their federal funds, which were appropriated by the Legislature to balance their budget, came in below the budgeted figures. They also had emergency repairs for their boiler. The total effect from an administrative standpoint for this biennium is in the neighborhood of \$250,000. He said they have devised a plan for this past fiscal year which turned out to be successful. Educational programs suffered, but they did not have to eliminate any program entirely. They have a plan in place for this fiscal year which is patterned after last year's, the amount they are losing is greater this fiscal year, the impact is greater. They had to eliminate one position and there have been wide-spread cuts in every budget category. Under this plan, no educational programs would be eliminated entirely and no students would be sent home. If MSDB is cut during this special session, there will be more lay-offs and there is a high probability of at least one educational program being cut and some students sent home.

**CHAIR PECK** asked what program may be cut. **Mr. Prickett** said it would be a matter of deciding which was the least onerous. The one that came to mind was the blind multi-handicapped program.

**CHAIR PECK** said he had become aware of some of the problems as a result of some association he had with OPI. He asked **Mr. Prickett**, if public schools pre-school handicapped responsibilities caused a reduction in their federal funds? **Mr. Prickett** said that was correct. With Chapter I funding, if the public schools capture the part B money from OPI, even if they are at his school, then he is not allowed to count these children for Chapter I purposes, and their Chapter I funding goes down. The students remain but the funding goes away.

**CHAIR PECK** asked how much money they actually lost under Chapter I and was told about \$25,000 in FY '92. **CHAIR PECK** asked if he would describe the \$250,000 again and **Mr. Prickett** said that is the total of the vacancy savings for both fiscal years, the budget reduction from the special session for both fiscal years, the Chapter I revenue that was lost this past fiscal year, and the loss of this coming fiscal year plus the emergency repairs for the boiler which was about \$20,000.

**CHAIR PECK** asked if he was saying they are \$250,000 below the budget this next year? **Mr. Prickett** said it was for the biennium.

**Mr. Prickett** was asked if the blind multi-handicapped program would be eliminated if further cuts were imposed. He said this is a class of seven children on site.

**CHAIR PECK** asked if that program at school were taken away would it create some responsibility back in the home district? **Mr. Prickett** said it would eliminate one teaching position, two aide positions, and those children would become the responsibility of the school district of residence.

**CHAIR PECK** asked if they are in districts which have fairly good sized special ed programs that could provide something to those seven kids. **Mr. Prickett** said the majority of them are from the Great Falls school district.

In reference to children in the larger districts being able to receive some special programs as opposed to those from a small district **Mr. Prickett** said the increased cost the district incurred would be probably eventually wind up coming from the general fund or from OPI. He said there would be a net reduction for his budget, but was not sure there would be a net savings to the state in the long run.

**CHAIR PECK** asked if any were boarding students and was told one is.

**SEN. BIANCHI** asked if he could check on that and be able to tell the committee if it would be a net reduction in general fund money, or a wash. **Mr. Prickett** said if permissible, he would prefer to have OPI answer the question.

**Gail Gray, Office of Public Instruction, OPI**, said if five of the students lived in the Great Falls public school area, the Great Falls school would have to hire a teacher, probably the same one, but pay him a higher salary and also hire aides. If two of them are in other school districts, they will have to hire teachers also since it is unlikely they will have staff on hand to provide those services. The services will be provided, but probably not as cost effectively as at the state school. **EXHIBIT 2**

**REP. GRINDE** followed up on the loss of Chapter I money and the loss of federal dollars. Why is OPI getting the effect of that program? **Mr. Prickett** said Chapter I is a federal program to supplement state responsibility, to enhance the educational program. They have been able to capture about \$510 per child. There are two components, one on campus for the children in residence and the other supporting a portion of their outreach program. There is another federal program, EHA Part B, which the public schools can capture, and up to this point MSDB has been unable to capture approximately \$300 per student. If the public

school district chooses to capture that \$300 which they don't have to account for since it comes in as a lump sum. There is a federal restriction against the child being counted for more than one federal assistance program. If the public school counts the child and gets the \$300, then MSDB is frozen out because they have first use. The major part of our outreach program has been built on these dollars and they are going away.

**REP. GRINDE** said he was not sure what program allows OPI to do this? Is it the special ed programs? **Ms. Gray, OPI**, said the federal interpretation of all school districts proclaimed the "idea" money for the 941-42 money first and then, if they haven't counted that child for that particular money, then they can claim them on the other fund. She said an important thing to remember is that a lot of these children are three to five years old, so they are getting some services from the school where people come to the public schools to provide those services. They are getting some services from the public school. They are not getting duplicate services, they are getting two different kinds of services. It is more expensive to provide those services, and OPI can't duplicate the count, so they can't duplicate the federal money.

**REP. GRINDE** asked if any of the public schools had come to MSDB to coordinate this, or did they automatically go out and get the money? **Mr. Prickett** said the answer was no. They have not been approached by the public schools in that manner.

**CHAIR PECK** said they need an historical prospective on this. Previously, the public schools were not required to serve three and four year olds. Legislation was passed in '89 that made it an obligation to do this and federal money became available. School districts chose to start providing services that MSDB had been providing on an itinerant basis and received this money. Schools had no obligation to do this previously. This removed the funding for the D&B itinerant program.

**REP. GRINDE** said, then this was something we passed, and was not a federal mandate. **Ms. Gray** said it is not an absolute mandate, but the way the wording was in the bill and the reauthorization at the federal level, that if you didn't provide these services, you lost all money to serve the three to five year olds. You lost all the money for kids in special ed K through kindergarten as well, so in essence, it cost us less to increase the services for the three and four year olds than we would have lost if we had not received the money for the five year olds. This is a financial benefit to the state of Montana to mandate the services because we would lose substantial federal funds if we didn't.

**CHAIR PECK** explained that the first year this came up he opposed it and it failed by a few votes. Some of the language was changed making it obligatory and it passed the second year.

**REP. GRINDE** said if MSDB is doing that for the three to five year olds, does that meet the criteria? **Ms. Gray** said one of the difficulties of the law is that once services are provided all of the services that are necessary to those students must be provided. If the three year olds need time in a pre-school program for developmental skills, including audiology services, a deaf interpreter etc., those are included. The state school provides very fine services, but they are specialized services. The public schools, when students were in the mandatory ages, even more services had to be provided. They had to provide a comprehensive service plan. The students received more, everybody got more but the state school.

**Mr. Prickett** said there is a catch 22. In many cases the school districts included in that plan the outreach program from MSDB. MSDB is in a consultative role, advising as to what special services these children might need, where to get them, etc. MSDB still give the services, but loses the dollars.

**CHAIR PECK** asked if they received any pay for performing the consultive role and was told no, but are required by state statute to provide that service.

**SEN. HAMMOND** said when MSDB captured these funds, it amounted to about \$510 per student. What does the public school get when they get the money? Is it the same amount? **Mr. Prickett** said it was approximately \$300. It is a different fund, but if they capture \$300 from that fund, but if they capture \$300 from that fund MSDB is closed out. The public schools are providing a more comprehensive program than MSDB would provide.

**CHAIR PECK** said it seemed to him MSDB should have some call on the public schools to make some payment for the consultive services provided. **Ms. Gray** said they do not know of any law that would prohibit them charging for those services. She emphasized that pre-school children get about \$500 though, because they get the regular and the pre-school, so OPI is not losing that \$200 for pre-school children.

**Mr. Prickett** said there is a task force that is being convened by OPI and the Board of Public Education to look at the MSDB outreach program because of this funding crises. He was sure the question of the public schools paying their fair share for the services is one of the things that the task force will address.

**SEN. HAMMOND** asked who is getting the \$200. **Ms. Gray** said the public school is getting the full amount.

**Steven Gettel, Vice President, Montana Federation of Teachers Local #6045,** said any additional reduction in the funding allocated to MSDB will result in degradation of the quality of the educational opportunity presently provided to the students.

**EXHIBIT 3**

**REP. GRINDE** said he felt the committee should look at contracted services and asked if they have the ability to bill for them, or if a law must be enacted for this purpose. He was told by **Ms. Gray** that she thought they could, but had to have spending authority for it. **Mr. Sykes** said the I&I increase of \$20,000 had amounted to between \$170,000 to \$190,000 this year, so it was a pretty good estimate as to the increase.

#### OFFICE OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

**Mr. Schmitz, OBPP**, said the executive recommendation took into consideration the January reductions imposed by the special session. In consideration of the operating budgets only in an attempt to try to equalize this out throughout state government, has proposed that an additional \$48,308 be reduced from OPI's operating budget. They did not propose, other than the special ed transportation, any reductions in the distribution to public schools in program IX. This would bring it up to about \$230,000 in total reductions for '93, including what was proposed in January in operating budget.

**Mr. Culver, LFA**, said in January the Legislature in special session reduced the administration program of OPI by 5% which totaled \$185,990. The Gifted and Talented program was reduced from \$300,000 by \$24,000 to \$276,000. Impact aid was reduced 8% from \$5,000 to \$4,600. Secondary Vocational Education which was a biennial appropriation for \$1,800,000 was reduced by \$144,000 to \$1,656,000. House Bill 99 was added to the OPI program which was originally appropriated at \$2,471,000 was reduced by 8% to approximately \$197,000.

**CHAIR PECK** asked what the amount for next year in the budget is for Secondary Vocational Education and was told by **Mr. Culver** that this was a biennial appropriation. It is now \$1,656,000 for the biennium. He did not have any information on what has been spent, but could get it for the committee. **Mr. Schmitz** said they did not propose any reductions in that. **CHAIR PECK** said this was an item school administrators were concerned about.

**Gregg Groepper, OPI**, said in regard to the Governor's proposal to reduce operating general fund budget an additional 2% or \$48,000. He said they do not have a problem with that. In the past special session they said they could withstand an 8% general fund cut, their interest was in being treated fairly like all the other executive branch agencies. He felt the Legislature did that in the last special session. They need more money. They are up to 8% and that is okay with them in their general fund operating budget. He pointed out how that relates to OPI. Their operating fund budget is about \$859,000 and in that general fund operating budget, about \$260,000 for audiology, \$150,000 for Vo Tech and school foods. When those figures are taken out, OPI's general fund operating budget is about \$440,000 which is projected for this next year. The \$48,000 is about 9%. Their agency is predominately federally funded, about 75% of their

operating expenses come from state and federal special revenues. In the spirit of cooperation with the Governor's program, they would agree to the recommendations.

**CHAIR PECK** asked if he had any comments on the transportation cut. **Mr. Groepper** said they do not have any comment on that. The school districts will still get revenue and the part that is normally made up as part of the county transportation levy will be shifted a little more to the county level instead of the state reimbursement. It is about \$700,000 spread throughout the program. It will be a slight shift to local property taxes from the state coffers. It will not damage getting the students to school, and that is their biggest concern at OPI.

**CHAIR PECK** asked if 19 of the counties that would not be affected by this because they have no special ed programs. **Mr. Groepper** said if the committee is going to do that, he hoped they would recognize the counties set their mill levy the second Monday in August.

**SEN. JERGESON** asked if this would require statutory change. **Mr. Groepper** said yes, it would take a bill. At the present time in the transportation law, when they passed the transportation reform last time, those percentages were changed. The special ed percentage used to be 2/3 and thought it had gone back up to 100%. He assumed that would be a part of the Governor's request. **CHAIR PECK** said he believed the bill draft is in.

**REP. GRINDE** asked **Mr. Groepper** if he would propose some areas and programs wherever there is a possibility to cut. He said he would like some options the committee could look at before executive action is taken.

**CHAIR PECK** said he would remind the committee that the Board of Public Ed was put in, not because there was a cut, but because it is a part of the budget of this committee.

**Mr. Schmitz** said he did not have anything further. **Mr. Culver** said when the LFA did their analysis it showed they spent \$1.6 million. The calculation they figured would save approximately \$800,000 while the Governor's proposal states \$700,000.

**Mr. Schmitz** said at the time they made this proposal that was the information they had received from OPI. Since that time there has probably been more information coming in from the local districts. They have been able to get a more accurate figure of their total special ed transportation costs are.

**CHAIR PECK** said there was some justification of special ed transportation. At one time there was some abuse because there was language in the law that said if there is one special ed student on a bus it is considered loaded for reimbursement purposes. He said he had never found that language and OPI has not found it as yet.

He asked if the executive office had found it. **Mr. Schmitz, OBPP**, said the administrative rules they used indicated there was a more recent version available. He had not found it. He had checked with the Secretary of State's office and he indicated there was none. The Current Administrative Rules, "Subchapter 25 in Special Ed Transportation" indicates that any bus that is altered to transport special ed students. If it is a 66 passenger bus altered to haul twelve students for example, they get paid for 66 eligible transportees on that bus. If a 24 passenger bus and it is altered to handle 6, they get paid for 24.

**CHAIR PECK** said the key point is altered. He asked if taking out all the seats and putting in locking devices for wheel chairs is completely devoted to special ed. He asked **Don Waldron** if he could shed any light on this question. **Mr. Waldron** said the comment is that when special ed students are transported a number of seats are lost for each seat since they have to have more space around. They need to get rid of the rule that causes them to have a certain percentage load. He said he did not know whether it is justified for one person or not. He did not know where it was written down, but if more than one, he could see justification for saying they would reimburse them for a full load.

There was some discussion on the size of a door to handle a wheel chair and lifts to handle them. **Mr. Waldron** said he felt if they had to remove six seats to put in two for special ed, they should be reimbursed for the six. There was also discussion on the administrative rule and the interpretation of "alter".

**SEN. BIANCHI** asked how much was still available of transportation money, whether it is \$700,000 or \$800,000. **Mr. Culver** said that if you changed the law to make it 50-50, it should save us approximately \$700,000 or \$800,000. **SEN. BIANCHI** asked if it was something they had to do in this committee or if it is something that will be taken care of by the legislature. **CHAIR PECK** said it would have to be a recommendation out of this subcommittee. If they decided they wanted to do this. If it is cut to 50-50 they would have to discuss whether they would put in the \$800,000 or the \$700,000.

**Mr. Schmitz, OBPP**, said since the time they gathered the information to make the proposal, there had been updated audited information that reflects the LFA figure as being more accurate.

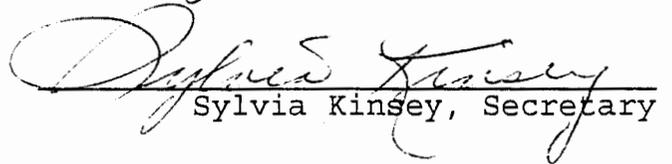
**CHAIR PECK** said he would call for adjournment and would start with Higher Education tomorrow morning.

ADJOURNMENT

Adjournment: 3 p.m.



RAY PECK, Chair



Sylvia Kinsey, Secretary

RP/sk

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE

ROLL CALL

DATE

July 6 - 92

NAME	PRESENT	ABSENT	EXCUSED
REP. LARRY GRINDE	✓		
SEN. DON BIANCHI	✓		
REP. MIKE KADAS	✓		
SEN. H.W. "SWEDE" HAMMOND	✓		
SEN. GREG JERGESON, VICE-CHAIRMAN	✓		
REP. RAY PECK, CHAIRMAN	✓		

**EXHIBIT 1 WAS NOT TRANSMITTED WITH THE MINUTES.**

10.16.2106 SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

(3) If the trustees determine that the special education expenditures from the revenue deposited in the miscellaneous fund set out in subsection (2) of this section will be continuing expenditures from the general fund for the future, the trustees shall petition the superintendent of public instruction for approval to add the expenditures to the current year's general fund budget for purposes of calculating the ensuing year's general fund budget, pursuant to section 20-9-147, MCA. (History: Sec. 20-7-403, MCA; IMP, Secs. 20-7-403, 20-9-147, 20-9-321, MCA; NEW, 1977 MAR p. 315, Eff. 8/26/77, ARM Pub. 11/26/77; AMD, 1992 MAR p. 213, Eff. 2/14/92.)

10.16.2106 SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS PROVIDED BY A COOPERATIVE (1) Each application for a special education program provided by a cooperative shall be submitted through a single district or county superintendent. The application shall identify the districts to be served, the projected population, and the services to be provided through the cooperative. (History: Sec. 20-7-457, MCA; IMP, Secs. 20-7-403, 20-7-457, MCA; NEW, 1977 MAR p. 315, Eff. 8/26/77, ARM Pub. 11/26/77; AMD, 1983 MAR p. 1669, Eff. 11/11/83; AMD, 1992 MAR p. 213, Eff. 2/14/92.)

10.16.2107 TRANSPORTATION FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION CHILDREN

(1) With the approval of the superintendent of public instruction, any special education child shall be eligible for resident district transportation pursuant to section 20-7-441, MCA.

(2) Special student transportation for children with disabilities to and from school is not an allowable cost under the special education budget in the general fund. Budget authority for transportation of children with disabilities must be established in the transportation fund of the local school district and must follow the budgeting procedures established in the Montana School Accounting Manual.

(3) Procedures for specialized transportation for children with disabilities is set out in sub-chapter 25 of this chapter. (History: Sec. 20-7-403, MCA; IMP, Secs. 20-7-403, 20-10-145, MCA; NEW, 1977 MAR p. 315, Eff. 8/26/77, ARM Pub. 11/26/77; AMD, 1983 MAR p. 1669, Eff. 11/11/83; AMD, 1992 MAR p. 213, Eff. 2/14/92.)

10.16.2108 CALCULATIONS FOR BUDGETING PURPOSES (IS HEREBY REPEALED) (History: Sec. 20-7-403, MCA; IMP, Sec. 20-7-403, MCA; NEW, 1977 MAR p. 316, Eff. 8/26/77, ARM Pub. 11/26/77; REP, 1982 MAR p. 1934, Eff. 10/29/82.)

Rule 10.16.2109 reserved

10.16.2110 RELATIONSHIP TO THE GENERAL FUND (1) The dis-

SPECIAL EDUCATION

10.16.2503

Sub-Chapter 25

Special Education Transportation

10.16.2501 DEFINITION (1) Specialized transportation for handicapped children and youth is a related service which is necessary in order for a handicapped child or youth to benefit from special education. It includes, but is not limited to:

- (a) travel to and from school and between schools;
- (b) specialized equipment, i.e., special or adapted buses and lifts, if required to provide special transportation for handicapped children or youth;
- (c) travel to and from services listed in the student's individual education plan (IEP). (History: Sec. 20-7-442, MCA; IMP, Sec. 20-3-106, MCA; NEW, 1986 MAR p. 1383, Eff. 8/15/86.)

10.16.2502 ELIGIBILITY (1) Specialized transportation needs must be documented in the handicapped child or youth's IEP as a related service. (History: Sec. 20-7-442, MCA; IMP, Sec. 20-3-106, MCA; NEW, 1986 MAR p. 1383, Eff. 8/15/86.)

10.16.2503 FUNDING (1) For the purposes of capacity rating, the capacity of the bus prior to alteration for special education shall be the capacity used for reimbursement.

(2) All special education buses are deemed to have met the student load requirement of the law and are deemed to be full.

(3) On buses approved by the superintendent of public instruction as special buses, an additional one-third of the on-schedule amount shall be paid to the school district.

(4) On individual transportation contracts where a special education student is transported, an additional one-third of the on-schedule amount shall be paid to the district. (History: Sec. 20-7-442, MCA; IMP, Sec. 20-3-106, MCA; NEW, 1986 MAR p. 1383, Eff. 8/15/86.)

EXHIBIT 3  
DATE 7/06/92  
HB 2

MONTANA FEDERATION OF TEACHERS  
Local #6045  
Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind  
3911 Central Avenue  
Great Falls, Montana 59401

July 6, 1992

Members of the Joint Legislative  
Subcommittee on Education  
Capitol Station  
Helena, Montana 59601

Dear Subcommittee Members:

The Montana Federation of Teachers, Local #4027, represents a wide variety of professional and paraprofessional staff at the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind, including nurses, professional support staff, counselors, teachers and teacher aides. Within our unit are 58 staff members with a combined total of nearly 600 years of experience serving Montana's deaf and blind children.

As an organization of professionals, our mission is to provide the highest quality education and care for the students who attend MSDB. Because of the comments made by parents and education professionals from across the state, we are confident in stating that MSDB is unmatched, in the state, in providing the specialized education and support programs necessary for these children so that they may receive an appropriate and quality opportunity for education. However, as with any conscientious group of professionals, we recognize our weaknesses and the inequities that our students face and we continually strive, within the limits of our professional abilities, as well as the financial means provided by the state, to provide better services for our students.

Any additional reduction in the funding allocated to our school by the 1991 legislature will result in a degradation of the quality of the educational opportunity we are presently providing our students. For us, success is measured by our ability to help students get the most from their education experience and to become productive citizens and confident adults. When you reduce funding, whether for programs, materials, support staff or teachers, you reduce our opportunity and potential, as professionals, to provide the education our students need, deserve and are guaranteed under the Constitution of the State of Montana.

The members of MFT, Local #4027 will work cooperatively with this legislative body to assure that the existing level of funding granted by the 1991 legislature is secured but we adamantly oppose and will fight any attempt to additionally reduce MSDB's appropriation for the coming school year.

Sincerely,

Steven Gettel  
Vice-President