



The Great Work of Montana's Public Schools

Volume IV October 2016

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

A joint publication of the following education advocacy groups

MASBO

Montana Association of
School Business Officials

MEA-MFT

Montana Education Association-
Montana Federation of Teachers

MQEC

Montana Quality
Education Coalition

MREA

Montana Rural
Education Association

MTSBA

Montana School Boards
Association

SAM

School Administrators
of Montana



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We are
united by
our shared
interests in
the best
interests
of students.

This information has been presented for the use of parents,
state policymakers, our members and the public at large.

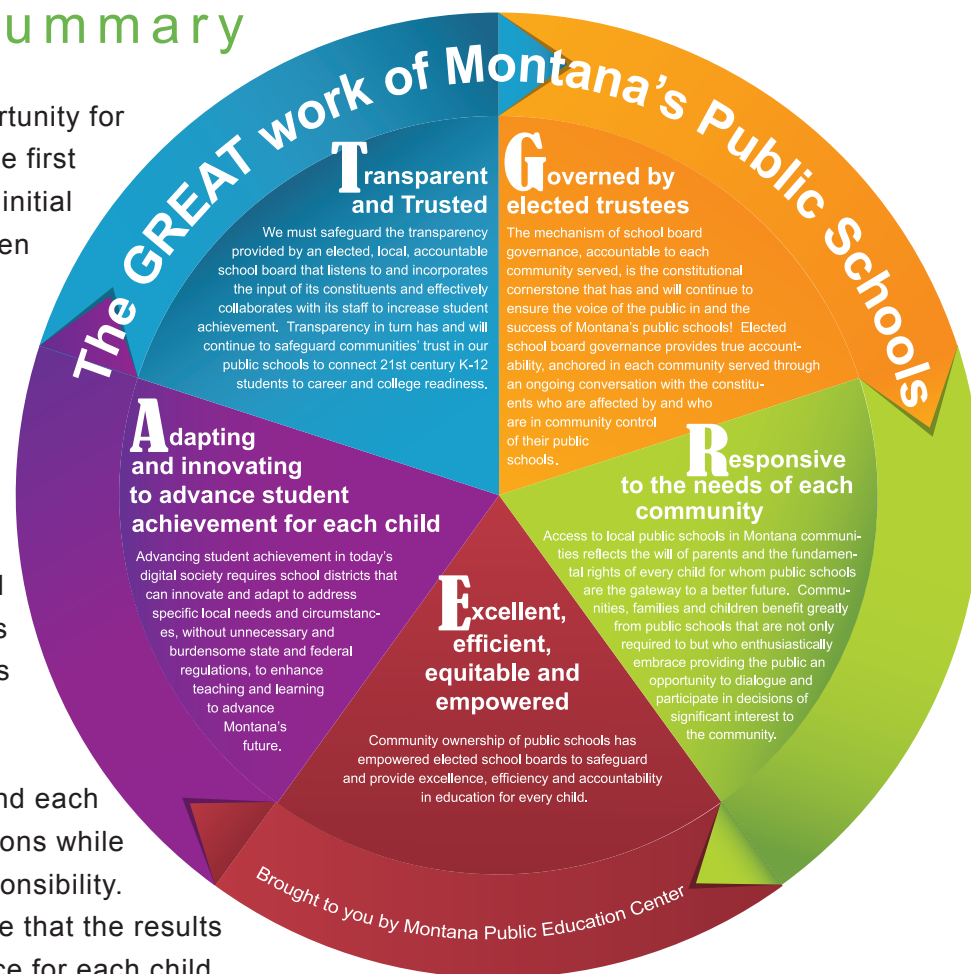
Introduction and Executive Summary

Montana's Public Schools provide the people of our state with an opportunity for a lifetime of success, and they have been doing so since 1865 when the first public school district formed in Virginia City, Montana under one of the initial laws passed by the First Territorial Legislature. The connections between our public schools, our communities and the success of our state have been growing ever since, driven by collaboration among generations of Montanans who have dedicated not just their careers but their very lives to fully developing the educational potential of each person in our state.

Montana's Public Schools have been commissioned by the people as caretakers of excellence and opportunity, with a charge of knowing and meeting every student on his/her own terms, embracing the distinctions in individual interest, capacity, economic and other living circumstances as we work toward maximizing each student's potential.

Each of us has a role in providing GREAT public schools in Montana and each of us has a moral imperative to ensure the quality of our own contributions while also coordinating our efforts with others sharing this authority and responsibility. If we succeed in collaborating effectively together, we can jointly ensure that the results of our efforts are worthy of the people's goal of individualized excellence for each child as set forth in Article X, Section 1 of the Montana Constitution.

The Montana Association of School Business Officials (MASBO), MEA-MFT, Montana Quality Education Coalition (MQEC), Montana Rural Education Association (MREA), Montana School Boards Association (MTSBA) and School Administrators of Montana (SAM) are proud to collaborate in spreading the word about the GREAT Work of Montana's Public Schools. **Learn more at mt-pec.org.**



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Montana's Public Schools are **governed** by elected school trustees

Montana's elected, volunteer school trustees have high hopes and high expectations for Montana's **145,000+*** public school students.

These trustees have been charged with the power and responsibility to effectively govern Montana's **821 schools*** and enthusiastically engage their local communities to provide an individualized education for each child.

In Montana, **410 school districts*** and their school board members are guardians of the public trust and, through their strategies and decisions, they are ultimately accountable to the public and the children they serve.

School trustees are strong advocates for individualized educational excellence of each community's youth with an undivided loyalty to put the interests of children first.

The responsibilities of school trustees often entail difficult choices, self-sacrifice and exposure to public criticism. However, it also brings a great deal of personal satisfaction and community ownership in finding solutions to challenges and in celebrating student successes.

*Source: MT OPI- Facts About Montana Education 2016



These constitutional guarantees afforded Montana citizens cannot be replicated in the private sector and provide an assurance that each community has a voice and a seat at the table when it comes to public education.

Montana's Public Schools are **excellent**



Four Montana Teachers Chosen as National Award Winners for Presidential Science and Math Teaching Awards!

Grades 7-12

Kerry Gruizenga

Skyview High School, Billings

Jessica Anderson

Powell County High School, Deer Lodge

Grades K-6

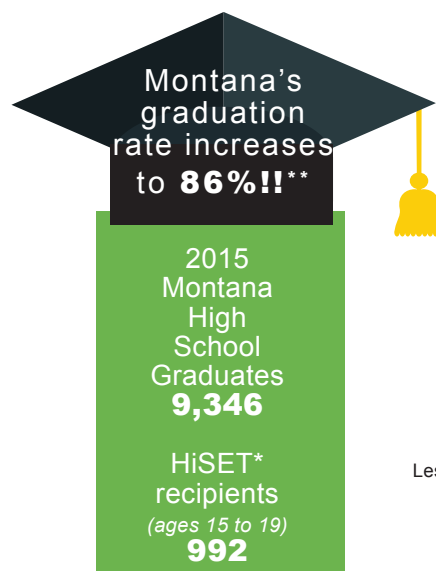
Kara Nelson

Meadowlark Elementary School, Bozeman

Colleen Windell

Washington Middle School, Missoula

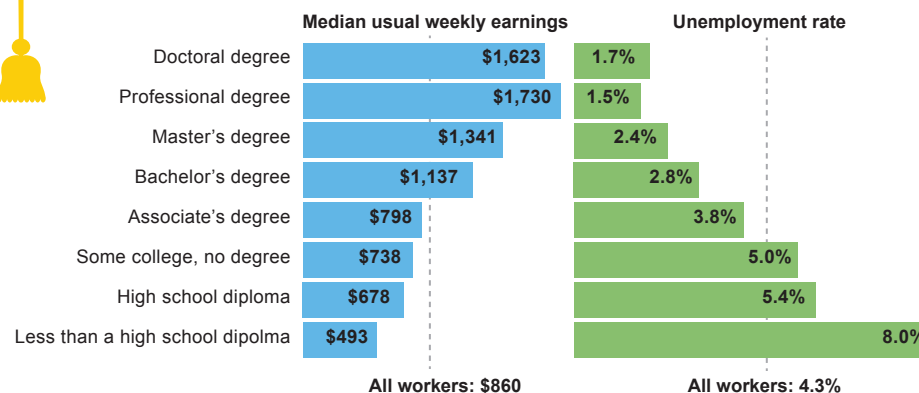
This is the nation's highest honor for U.S. mathematics and science teachers in grades K through 12. PAEMST finalists are true leaders in education, using highly innovative approaches and technology in their classroom teaching. Nominees for the award must complete a rigorous application process that incorporates video footage of classroom lessons along with substantial written documentation of impacts on student achievement.



**The Montana HiSET Option Program is designed to be a part of a high school curriculum that provides another pathway for students to obtain a high school diploma.*

***Source: MT OPI- Facts About Montana Education 2016*

Earnings and unemployment rates by educational attainment, 2015



Note: Data are for persons age 25 and over. Earnings are for full-time wage and salary workers. Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey



College Readiness Test Score Comparisons



	2013		2014		2015	
	MT	Natl	MT	Natl	MT	Natl
VERBAL	538	491	555	497	557	489
MATH	541	503	552	513	557	498
WRITING	513	480	530	487	534	475

Scholastic Aptitude Test-- High Score 800. In 2014, 17 percent of Montana graduating seniors took the SAT. Nationally, 43 percent of graduating seniors took the SAT.

In 2015, 100% of Montana graduating seniors took the ACT.

Nationally, 59 percent of graduating seniors took the ACT.

	MT	Natl
2013	21.3	20.9
2014	20.1	21
2015	20.4	21

American College Testing Program-- High Score 36.

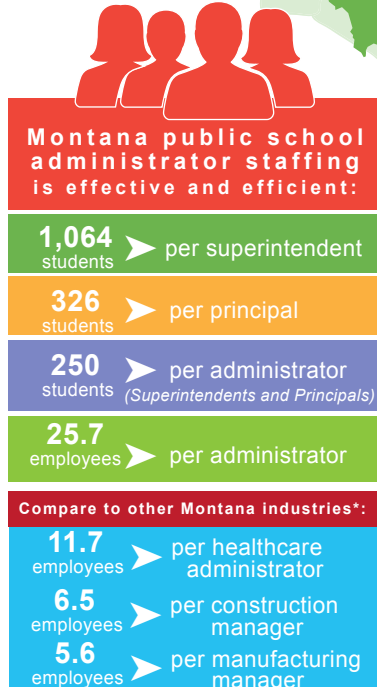
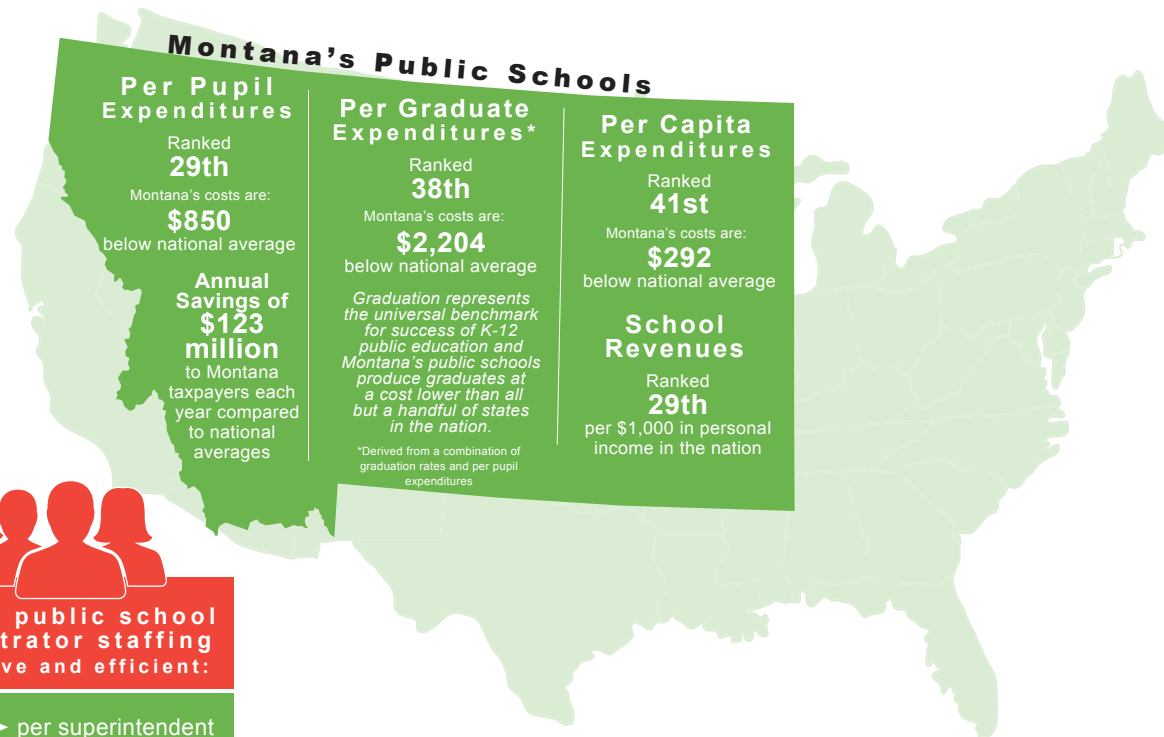
— Data from National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) —

Montana's Public Schools are **efficient**

Montana Public Schools offer an outstanding opportunity for high achievement to children, close to or at the top of the nation in comparison to other states, at an efficient cost to Montana taxpayers.

Take a look at the per pupil, per graduate, and per capita expenditures supporting this cost effectiveness.

Also take a look at the Montana public school administrative staffing and licensed staffing to see how effective and efficient leadership and education services are provided for the children in our schools!



Licensed K-12 Staff (Full-Time Equivalent) 2015-16

Teachers-Classroom, Title I, Special Ed.....	10,334
Superintendents and Assistant Superintendents	156
Principals and Assistant Principals	520
Other Administrative Staff	112
Education Specialists (Library, Guidance Counselors).....	933
Licensed Professional (Non-educator).....	410
Paraprofessionals.....	2,621
Total Licensed and Paraprofessional Staff	15,086

Student/Teacher Ratio	2011 -12	2012 -13	2013-14
Montana average	14	14	14
National average	16	16	16

* U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics/Educational Research Service

— Data from National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) —

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Montana's Public Schools **adapt** and innovate to ensure student success

The timeless and relentless charge of generating individualized excellence in Montana's Public Schools has come with a corresponding necessity of innovation that has been well-embraced by our public schools throughout the state.

Clear-eyed and stoic, Montana's public school leaders work through the forces beyond their control to achieve the people's vision, demonstrating grit, refusing to settle for anything less than excellence for the kids in their care and constantly searching for new ways to adapt and innovate to ensure student success.

This “outside of the box” thinking has generated several innovations to better meet the diverse needs of Montana families, including:

- Four-day school weeks, implemented in collaboration with communities to improve efficiency and improve focus on instruction time;
- Distance learning to connect our rural communities and the world;
- Proficiency-based learning to customize instruction and match the needs of each student;
- Advanced Placement and dual credit to provide greater challenges for advanced learners and gifted and talented students as well as cost-savings for families of college-bound students;
- Vocational/technical training to provide a path from school to career for students planning to enter the workforce upon graduation;
- Part-time enrollment opportunities for home school children; and
- Credit recovery to help students who have fallen off the path of success to earn their high school diplomas.



Our public schools enthusiastically embrace the adage of “better, stronger, harder, faster” in serving kids and our communities!

Montana's Public Schools are **trusted** as a result of **transparency**

It is no surprise that Montana voters trust local educators the most when it comes to doing what is right academically for children in our public schools. That trust is earned through the transparency of Montana's Public Schools:

Budgets and financial records are public documents, including annual financial reports. For all but our smallest school districts, financial reports are verified by independent external audits.

Public schools are required to disclose minutes of meetings and related documents.

Montana public charter schools and Montana traditional public schools are not-for-profit and are governed by locally elected trustees.

Montana's Public Schools comply with public bidding requirements.

Montana's Public Schools openly disclose employee contracts and wages.

Current and historical licensure and endorsements of Montana educators are public information.

The public has the right to participation on each voted item.

Montana voters **overwhelmingly trust** their classroom teachers and locally elected school board to decide what is best academically for students in Montana's Public Schools. *See page 17 for polling results.*



K-12 Vision Group Strategic Plan

Updated August 18, 2016

A Vision for Public Education in Montana

CORE VALUES

Montana's public school districts share the authority and responsibility with the Legislature, Governor, Board of Public Education and State Superintendent to provide a system of public education that affords children, their families and Montana's citizens each of the guarantees of Article X of the Montana Constitution. The Montana Constitution guarantees:



WHO ARE WE?

The K-12 Vision Group's membership includes school trustees, teachers and administrators from every corner of Montana. In addition, the group is anchored by key representatives from Montana's education groups including MASBO, MEA-MFT, MQEC, MREA, MTSBA and SAM.

CORE PURPOSE

A system of public education which will develop the full educational potential of each person.

Article X, Section 1, Montana Constitution, 1972

The preservation of a basic system of free quality public elementary and secondary schools throughout Montana that is capable of developing the full educational potential of each person served;

Article X, Section 1

Quality and equality of educational opportunity for each person;

Article X, Section 1

The preservation of the distinct and unique cultural heritage of American Indians;

Article X, Section 1

Prohibits direct or indirect aid to parochial education;

Article X, Section 6

Prohibits discrimination on account of sex, race, creed, religion, political beliefs, or national origin in Montana's public schools;

Article X, Section 7

Each community's ownership of its publicly funded schools, with the support and engagement of school staff and the community exercised through supervision and control by elected trustees;

Article X, Section 8

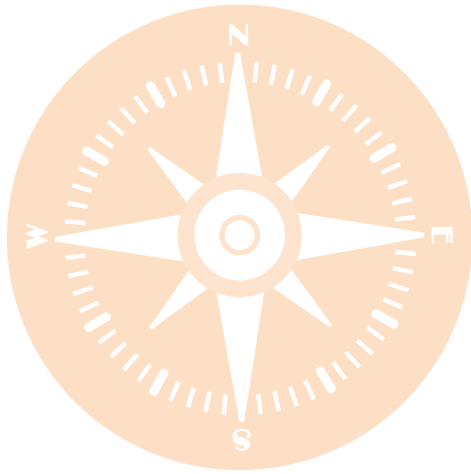
General supervision of Montana's public schools by an appointed Board of Public Education

Article X, Section 9 and,

The proper and exclusive use of state land revenues for Montana's public schools.

Article X, Section 2,3,4 and 5

— WHERE ARE WE GOING? OUR ENVISIONED FUTURE - 2025 —



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 each person.

Vivid Descriptions of our Envisioned Future:

Policymakers at all levels:

- Consistently recognize, honor and support the goal of the people to establish a system of education which will develop the full educational potential of each person and use that goal to drive policymaking decisions;
- Consistently support each community's ownership of its public schools and each district's ability to develop the full potential of each person through supervision and control by locally elected school boards;
- Adequately and rationally provide the resources needed by Montana's public schools; *and*
- Support the budgetary and other flexibilities needed by Montana's public schools to be responsive to community and student needs.

Montana's public school districts are student-centered, focused, adaptable, innovative, engaging, safe and secure, and driven to:

- Ensure that public school students' knowledge and skills match contemporary needs;
- Use innovation and technology to link each student to the world in which he/she will learn and succeed;
- Operate in well-designed, modern and updated facilities that enhance learning;
- Engage families, the community, and each other to develop the full potential of each person;
- Empower and engage students to actively participate in their education and set high expectations for themselves;
- Design and use effective data systems to support and enhance each student's success; *and*
- Increase academic excellence through equitable availability of the full spectrum of educational resources and opportunities.

As a result of the support of policy-makers and the leadership of Montana's public school districts, Montana's public school students:

- Appreciate the intrinsic value of their education and are inspired to ensure the success of public education as stewards of the future;
- Succeed despite the circumstances of life that could otherwise interfere in achievement of their full potential; *and*
- Use the knowledge and skills they develop in Montana's Public Schools to think critically, engage and succeed as productive members of society.

— HOW DO WE PLAN TO GET THERE? OUR FIVE YEAR GOALS —

Student Success:

Statement of Intended Success, 2020

Continued growth in student success in Montana's Public Schools is evident through multiple measures, including but not limited to:

- 100% of Montana's students exit the public education system career and college ready;
- A continued increase in students graduating with post-secondary credits through enhanced and expanded opportunities for dual enrollment;
- Continued improvement in narrowing achievement gaps through targeted intervention and other strategies;
- Increased achievement and proficiencies using multiple measures;
- Fostering growth mindsets, passions for learning and perseverance of personal goals; *and*
- Wide availability of a well-rounded education, including items such as early childhood education, all day kindergarten, gifted and talented, music, art, physical education, technology, career and vocational technical education and advanced placement courses.

As a result of these achievements, students in Montana's Public Schools complete their K-12 education ready for a lifetime of post-secondary success as productive and engaged citizens, pursuing the full spectrum of college and career options.

Teaching and Learning:

Statement of Intended Success, 2020

Through a widely held, intrinsic trust in educators and strong local control, Montana's public school educators and students thrive. Montana's Public Schools have the resources they need to focus on students and student success, allowing teachers and administrators to consistently avail themselves of the latest research and the innovative use of technology and other evolving teaching and learning strategies to provide personalized instruction for each person. As a result, Montana's Public Schools are a magnet for the recruitment and retention of quality educators.

Governance, Leadership and Accountability:

Statement of Intended Success, 2020

Locally elected school boards, administrative leaders, teachers and other staff, and local communities collaboratively focus on the interests of each person educated in our public schools. This collaboration and focus is also reflected in the relationships among the statewide public education advocacy groups representing teachers, trustees, administrators, and school business officials. The Legislature, Governor, Board of Public Education, and State Superintendent all actively support and collaborate to continually improve and enhance a system that develops the full educational potential of every student in Montana's Public Schools. As a result, Montana schools are nationally recognized for excellence.

Culture, Climate and Social Values:

Statement of Intended Success, 2020

The independent spirit, unique values and strong work ethic of Montanans are well recognized and reflected in each of Montana's Public Schools. Through our collective dedication to maximizing our resources for excellence, our commitments to quality public education in each community, and the preservation of our American Indian culture and our personalized learning environments, all students, regardless of personal circumstance or ability, feel supported and fully prepared for a successful future. Montanans recognize their public schools as the key to the state's future success.

Community Engagement:

Statement of Intended Success, 2020

Montana's communities understand the importance of taking pride and ownership in their local public schools, setting high standards, being an integral part of the solution and sharing in the successes of our students and local public schools. Increased recognition of the great work of Montana's public schools has caused Montana's communities to engage and support success for each person served. As a result, Montana's public schools and their communities have collaborated to energize and effectively individualize public education to increase student success in Montana's Public Schools.

— LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES IMPLICATED BY OUR VISION —

Our legislative priorities are designed to ensure constitutional protections guaranteed by Article X, including the people's goal to establish a system of education which will develop the full educational potential of each person.

In pursuit of this overarching goal, we have identified initiatives/proposals that we support and others that we oppose.

We support:

- Any and all initiatives/proposals that will advance the interests of public school students as described in our vision for the success of Montana's Public Schools herein;
- Implementation of formula-based early childhood education through expansion of the definition of pupil to include 4-year-olds in a half day program;
- Ensuring a meaningful state role in guaranteeing the adequacy and quality of public school facilities;
- Ensuring public schools' success in recruiting and retaining quality teachers and administrators to serve students in Montana's Public Schools;
- Consideration of accountability measures implemented only as necessary to ensure transparency and public confidence in how tax revenues are spent, with equal application of such measures to all schools receiving public support of any kind;
- A mechanism to guarantee that the state's share of special education is annually adjusted by inflation as called for in the Legislature's definition of quality schools in §20-9-309, MCA;
- Increased flexibility in calculating school districts' maintenance of effort obligations to recognize all support of special education in such calculation; *and*
- Implementation of formula-based support of technology in Montana's Public Schools in alignment with the Legislature's definition of quality schools in §20-9-309, MCA.

We oppose:

- Any proposal that seeks to infringe on the constitutional rights afforded Montana's Citizens under Article X of the Montana Constitution, including but not limited to direct, and indirect public appropriation or payments in support of private, parochial education;
- Any public support of private nonreligious schools through direct or indirect means while the state's compliance with its constitutional obligations under Article X of the Montana Constitution is incomplete.

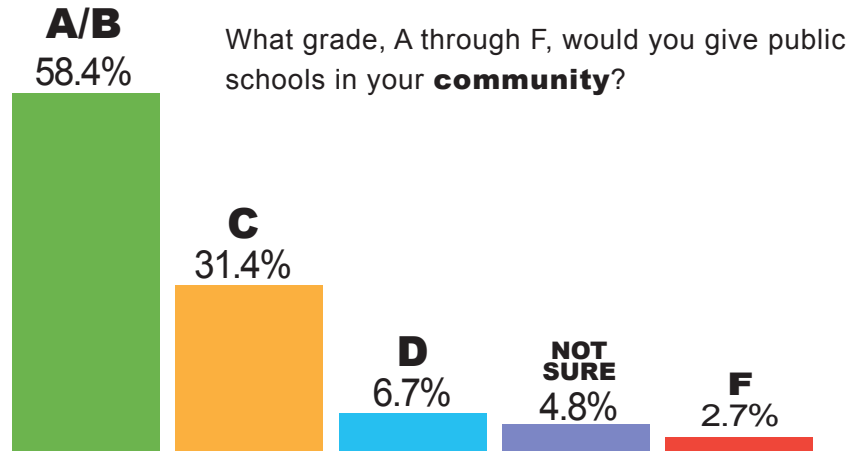
K-12 Vision Group Statewide Representation



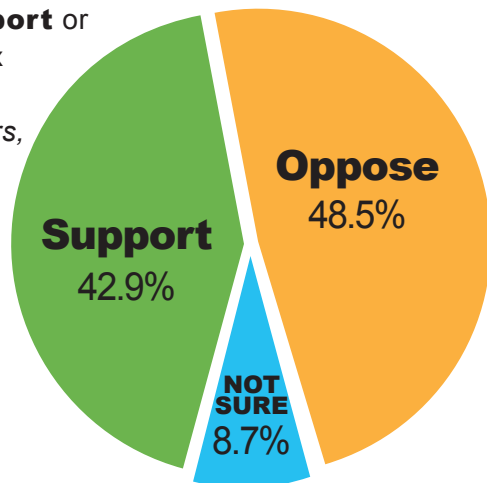
MT-PEC/Zogby Poll reflects **strong support** for public schools among Montana voters

In October 2016, the Montana Public Education Center released results of a recent poll of Montana voters' opinions on K-12 public education issues.

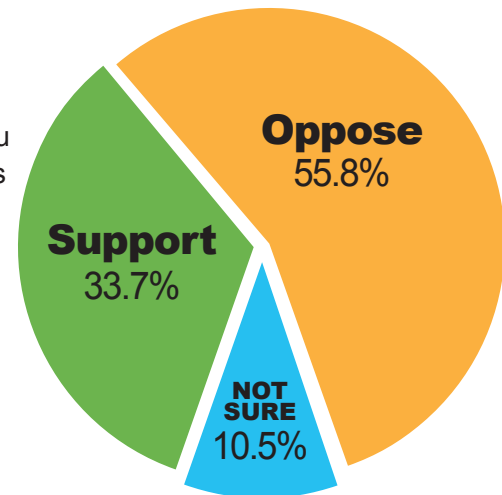
The poll was conducted by respected international polling and research company Zogby Analytics, using industry-standard methodologies with a margin of error of +/-4.5%. The poll results reveal a strong sentiment of support among Montana Voters for K-12 public education on a wide range of issues.



Do you **support** or **oppose tax benefits** (e.g. *vouchers, tax credits*) for religious education?



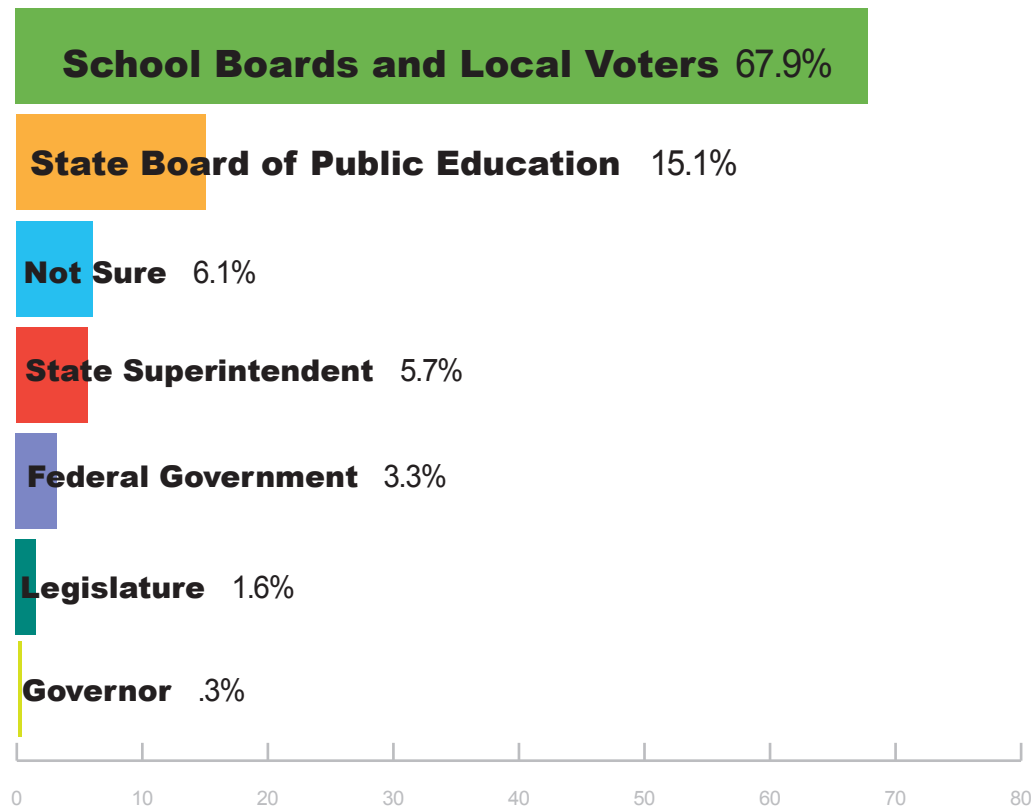
Would you **support** or **oppose tax benefits** (e.g. *vouchers, tax credits*) for religious education if you knew that some tax benefits would be used to pay for education expenses other than Christianity (e.g., *Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism*)?



Totals may not always be exactly 100 percent due to rounding. Variations should never exceed a tenth of a percent.

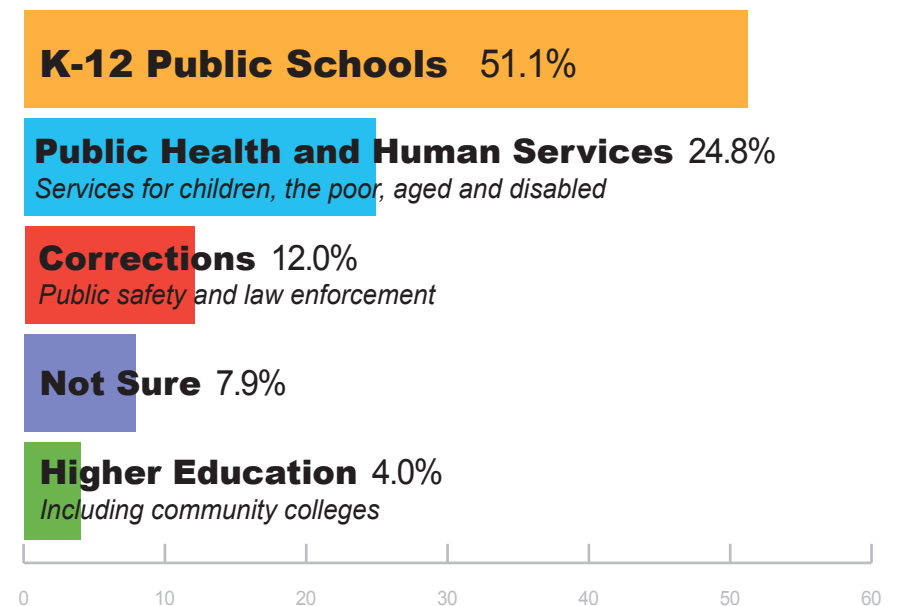
WHO DO VOTERS WANT TO HAVE AUTHORITY OVER MONTANA'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS?

Which of the following do you think should have the **most authority** to determine how public schools are operated?



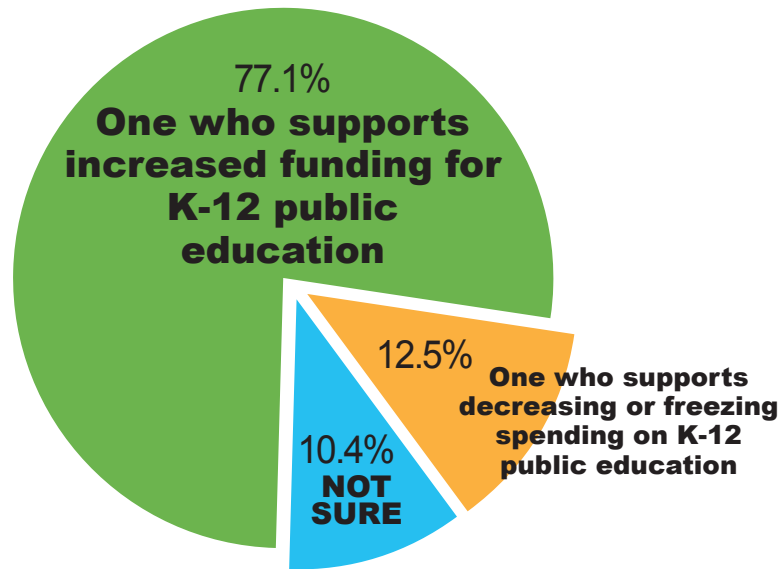
HOW DO VOTERS WANT THEIR TAX DOLLARS SPENT?

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

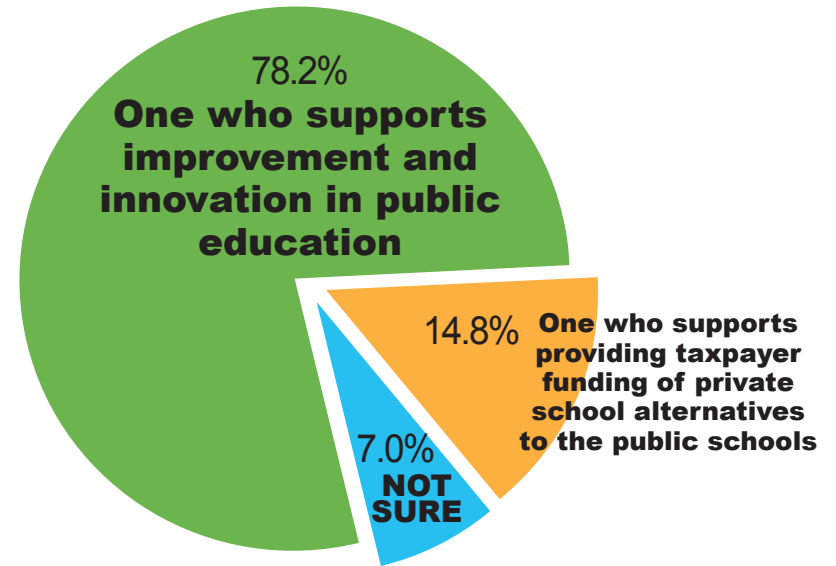


WHAT TYPE OF ELECTED OFFICIAL DO VOTERS SUPPORT THE MOST?

Please tell us which **type of elected official** you **most support**?

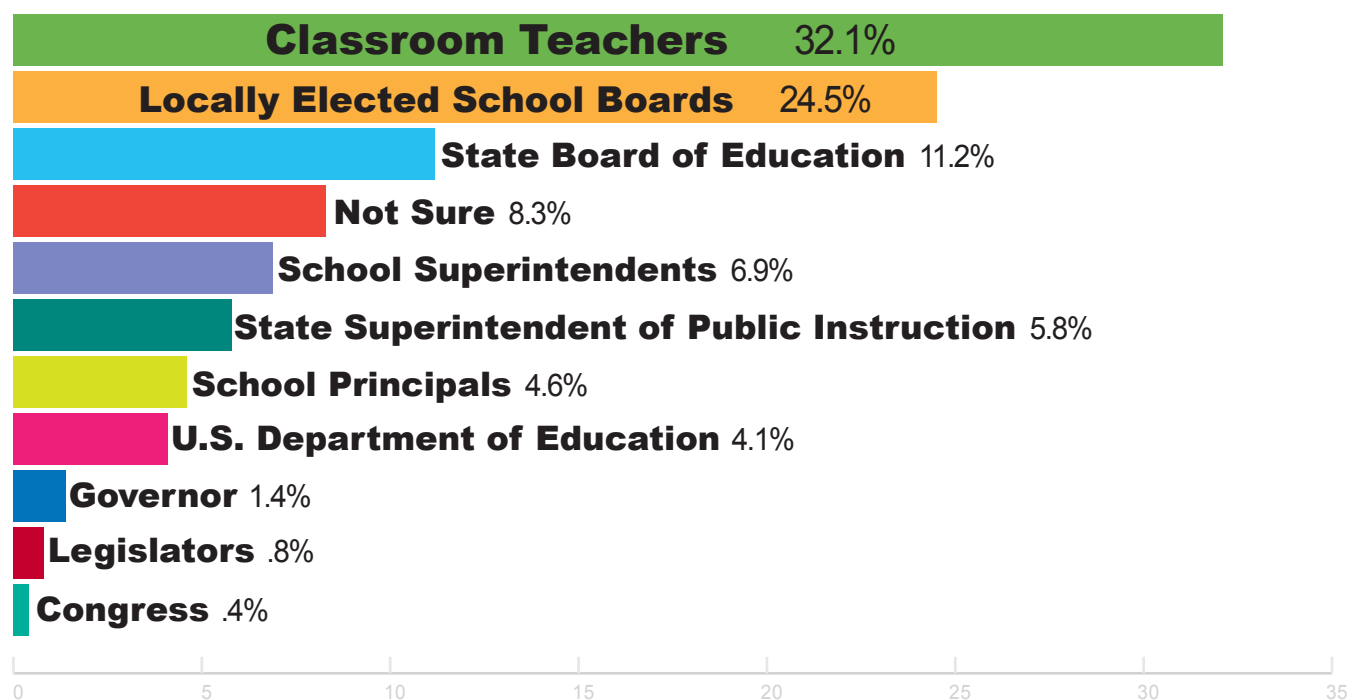


Again, please tell us which **type of elected official** you **most support**?



WHO DO VOTERS TRUST THE MOST WHEN IT COMES TO DOING RIGHT BY KIDS?

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?



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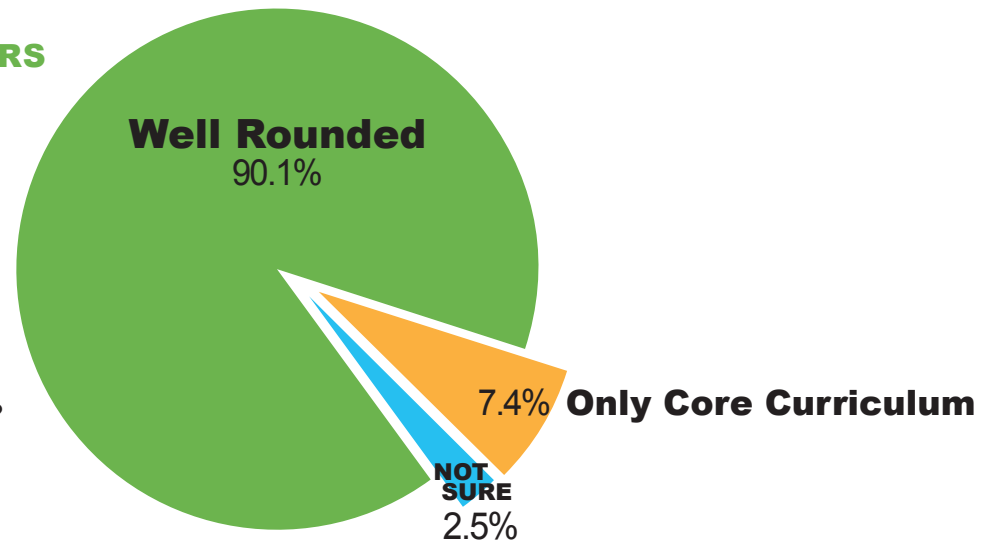
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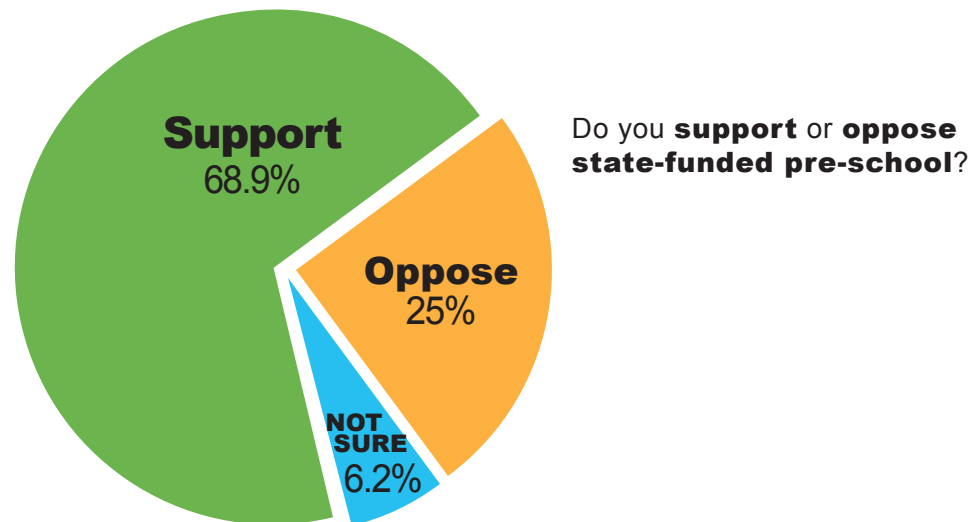
WELL ROUNDED OR BASIC? WHAT DO VOTERS WANT FROM THEIR PUBLIC SCHOOLS?

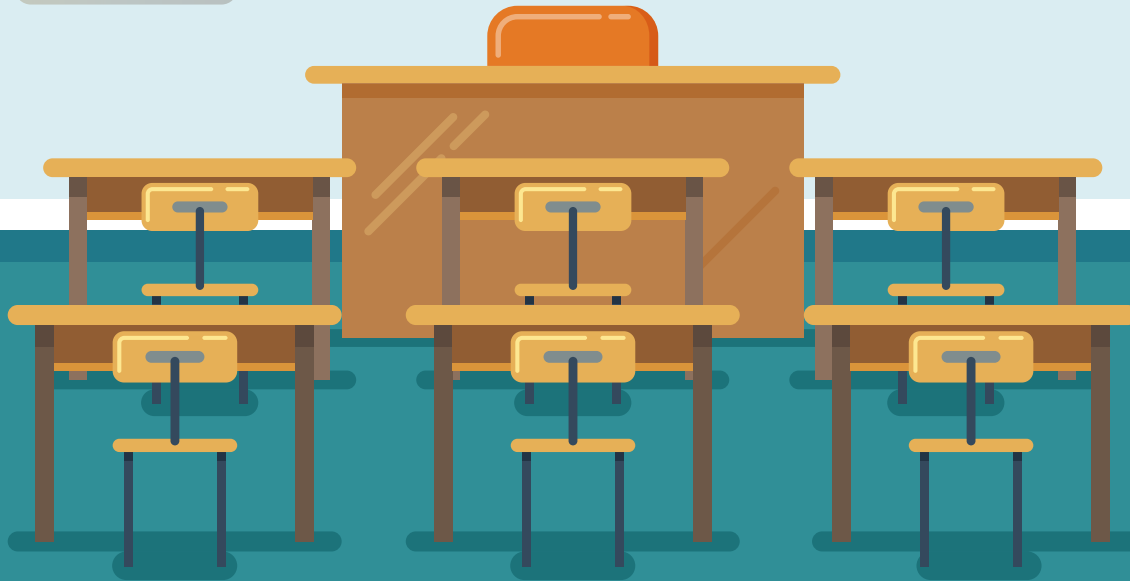
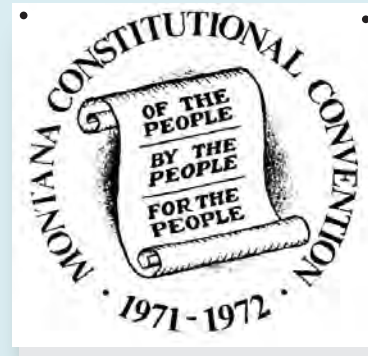
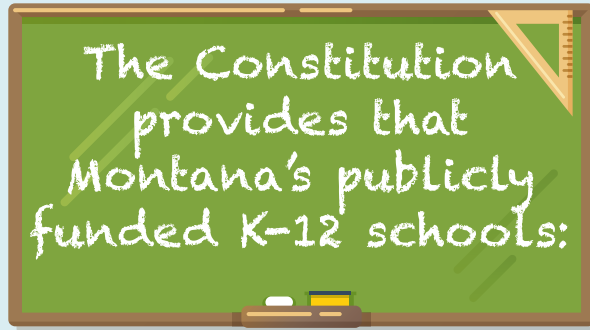
In your opinion, should public schools **provide a well-rounded education to all children**, including items such as all-day kindergarten, gifted and talented, music, art, physical education, technology, and advanced placement courses or should public schools **provide only core curriculum** (math, English, science, social studies)?



VOTERS OVERWHELMINGLY SUPPORT STATE-FUNDED PRE-SCHOOL!

Why is Montana one of only a handful of states without state-funded pre-school?





Will devote themselves to developing the full educational potential of each student

Will be generally supervised by an appointed board of public education

Will provide equality of educational opportunity to each child

Will afford citizens a right to attend and participate in decisions of the school board and access public documents

Will be governed by local trustees, subject to popular election in each community

Will be nonsectarian and otherwise free from discrimination on account of sex, race, creed, religion, political beliefs, or national origin

Will be adequately and equitably funded by the Legislature

Will preserve the distinct and unique cultural heritage of American Indian Peoples and Tribes

Will protect the privacy interests of students

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