



SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS OF MONTANA *2016-17 SAM Advocacy Priorities by Action Designation*

SAM Delegate Assembly 2016 convened on June 17, 2016 following the review of Positions and Resolutions by affiliate caucuses on June 16, 2016. Forty-three delegates approved 39 Positions and 43 Resolutions for recommendation to the SAM membership at the annual meeting scheduled for October 20, 2016 from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m. at the Billings Radisson Hotel. Below are the SAM Advocacy Priorities 2016-17, as derived from a summary of Positions and Resolutions with Action designation.

SAM Advocacy Priorities 2016-17

- Support Recruitment and Retention of Quality Educators
 - Public School Health Insurance Costs
- Oppose Privatization with Public Funds
- Support Special Education Funding
- Support Facility and Technology Infrastructure

POSITIONS with Action Designation

Support Recruitment and Retention of Quality Educators

TEACHER & ADMINISTRATOR RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

SAM affirms that teacher and administrator retention and recruitment are keys to quality education. It supports efforts to support mentoring and to fund incentives for recruitment and retention of staff. Districts are faced with an increasing need to compete with other states for a shrinking pool of qualified candidates. The legislature must address current laws, administrative rules, and funding support to provide districts the flexibility to retain personnel and to compete for new candidates.

PUBLIC SCHOOL EMPLOYEE HEALTH INSURANCE

SAM will seek legislative changes to find a method for relief to health insurance costs.

Oppose Privatization with Public Funds

NON-PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND HOME SCHOOLS

SAM supports legislation that strengthens the accountability of non-public schools and home schools in Montana.

NON-PUBLIC AND HOME SCHOOL FUNDING (PK-12)

SAM opposes any legislation or initiatives, which would allow for vouchers, tuition tax credits, tax savings accounts, or any other funding plans for any non-public and home PK-12 schools.



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Support Facility and Technology Infrastructure

TECHNOLOGY

SAM believes technology is now and will forever be an integral part of our culture and presents ever changing challenges and opportunities for our students. Schools throughout Montana struggle to finance critical technology infrastructure. Educational services requiring technology are not available to all Montana Students. Therefore SAM will support:

- Administrative, operational and learning process change at the federal, state, district and school levels must be addressed strategically where goals, resources and timing for improvement are managed cohesively.
- Baseline funding for supportive technology infrastructure should be addressed by a variety of methods that include; mechanisms that account for life cycle cost of ownership, technology that is driven by changes in classroom and/or curricular needs, and operational technology related to business function necessary to run a school district (i.e. State reporting, security systems, telecommunications, etc). Districts would be encouraged to fund additional infrastructure and capabilities as demanded by their environments.
- Technology education for administrators, staff and students is timely, relevant, and compulsory.
- The management of technology requires a baseline of understanding and education. School administrators and leaders need support in specific process and technology implementation management.
- Technology planning, implementation and support functions, requiring specialized skills and knowledge, are accomplished by professional staff or contracted consultants according to specific district business models.

RESOLUTIONS with Action Designation

Support Recruitment and Retention of Quality Educators

Resolution #10/16-01 – UNIFIED RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

WHEREAS, Montana has significant difficulty in recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers and related service professionals in general and special education; and

WHEREAS, Montana has historically experienced difficulty in the recruitment and retention of low incidence professional positions, such as speech pathologists, school psychologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, sign language interpreters and other professional staff necessary for the provision of a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) under the Individual with Disabilities Education Act 2005 (IDEA); and



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WHEREAS, Montana has historically experienced difficulty in the recruitment and retention of general education professional positions necessary to provide instructional service which meet accreditation standards; and

WHEREAS, school districts currently spend a significant amount of resources including time and money on the recruitment and retention of low incidence personnel; and

WHEREAS, a unified collaborative effort towards statewide recruitment and retention would be more cost effective and efficient; and

WHEREAS, recruitment and retention of highly qualified/low incidence positions is difficult due to the geographic isolation of many communities of Montana; and

WHEREAS, Office of Public Instruction has worked collaboratively with Montana Council of Administrators of Special Education on the recruitment and retention of highly qualified/low incidence personnel; and

WHEREAS, Montana continues to have chronic shortages;

BE IT RESOLVED: That SAM supports the implementation of a unified recruitment and retention program designed to address current personnel shortages in both general and special education.

Oppose Privatization with Public Funds

Resolution #12/13/16-03 – SCHOOL PRIVATIZATION WITH PUBLIC FUNDS LEGISLATION

BE IT RESOLVED, that SAM take the following positions with regard to school privatization legislation of any kind by the Legislature; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that SAM work to ensure that elected school boards in member school districts are empowered to innovate and adapt public school offerings to best meet the needs of students and to fully develop the educational potential of each student in the public schools as envisioned by the Constitutional framers in writing Article X, Section 1 of the Montana Constitution; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that SAM work to ensure continued supervision and control of all publicly funded PK-12 education in Montana by existing school boards in current member districts who are subject to popular election to ensure that publicly-funded PK-12 education remains accountable to citizens in each community through oversight by volunteer elected trustees; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that SAM oppose any attempts to fund private PK-12 education, including sectarian and non-sectarian private schools and home schools through public means and that SAM interpret “public means” to include but not necessarily be limited to any appropriation, tax credit, tax deduction, voucher or any other financial incentive or construct mandated or allowed by law or proposed in any bill or initiative. Guidance on SAM’s position and efforts are to be derived from but not limited to the language of Article X, Section 6 (Aid prohibited to sectarian schools) and applicable



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interpretations of this provision by the Montana Supreme Court and other courts interpreting similar language in their respective state constitutions; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that SAM work to ensure that any school choice legislation be limited only to public schools and comply with and afford every student in every public school with all constitutional rights specified in Article X of the Montana Constitution and access to a public education that complies with the definition of the basic system of free quality schools adopted by the Legislature in 20-9-309, MCA;

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that SAM actively and vigorously opposes any legislation failing to meet the standards set forth above and pursue enforcement of the constitutional provisions referenced in this resolution through any lawful means.

Constitutional References:

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.

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.

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.

Resolution #02/12/14-03 – VOUCHERS, TUITION TAX CREDITS, TAX SAVINGS ACCOUNTS AND CHARTER SCHOOLS (OTHER THAN AS DEFINED IN ARM 10-55-604)

WHEREAS, vouchers, tuition tax credits and charter schools detract from the goal of comprehensive improvement of public schools, do not enhance public and non-public school competition, and do not significantly impact student achievement levels; and

WHEREAS, voucher programs do not cover the full tuition costs of many schools, thus preventing true choice for many parents and students; and

WHEREAS, the acceptance or use of public funds by private and parochial institutions would threaten the unique mission of these schools by requiring every recipient of public funds to abide by the same laws, rules, and regulations as public schools; and

WHEREAS, non-public schools ultimately determine which students will be admitted and/or removed from their rolls; and



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WHEREAS, vouchers, tuition tax credits and charter schools are prohibitively expensive, require taxpayers to finance the tuition costs of students attending private and parochial schools, and remove funds from public schools;

BE IT RESOLVED, that SAM will oppose the use of vouchers, tuition tax credits, tax savings accounts and charter schools in any form.

Support Special Education Funding

Resolution #03/15-01 - SPECIAL EDUCATION FUNDING

WHEREAS, the percentage of state support for earmarked special education general fund expenditures has declined at a rate significantly greater than has the rate of state support for the total general fund budget; and

WHEREAS, the original intent of Congress was to fund special education at the 40% level of the national average for pupil expenditure; and

WHEREAS, the lack of state fiscal support for mandated special education services effectively decreases the amount of general funds available to support general education programming;

BE IT RESOLVED; that SAM urges the legislature and state officials to avoid state appropriations that may suggest discriminatory funding practices between special education and regular education; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that SAM supports legislation to allow school districts to increase their budget caps to provide for the disproportionate costs associated with educating students with special needs; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that SAM supports efforts to fully fund IDEA at its originally intended levels and to allow flexibility in maintenance of effort requirements.

Resolution #03/06/11/16-02 – ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR MANDATED SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

WHEREAS, the state provides no funding to support the mandated services required of schools for students with disabilities in the 3-5 year old age range; and

WHEREAS, the state provides no funding for mandated extended school year services for students with disabilities;

BE IT RESOLVED, that SAM supports full state and federal funding for mandated special education services for three to five year old students with disabilities based on the current ANB formula; AND



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BE IT RESOLVED, that SAM supports full state and federal funding for mandated Extended School Year special education services.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that SAM will prioritize support of legislative action to increase the monetary investment for such Mandated Special Education Services by applying additional state funding without reducing payments for the Instructional Services Block Grant, Related Services Block Grant, and the Disproportionate Cost Reimbursement.

Resolution #14-04 – FUNDING SPECIAL EDUCATION COOPERATIVE INFRASTRUCTURE

WHEREAS, a large majority of school districts, 81%, participate in special education cooperatives owing in a large part to a very sparsely distributed population; and

WHEREAS, increasing frequency, intensity, and investments of special education services require a robust cooperative infrastructure necessary to assure our students in rural schools equal access to special education services and quality education; and

WHEREAS, school laws of Montana do not adequately address funding the basic entitlement of Cooperatives in order to establish the appropriate infrastructure necessary for rural students to have equal access to special education services and quality education;

BE IT RESOLVED, that SAM supports legislative action ensuring the development of the full educational potential of each person;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that SAM supports legislative action to increase the monetary investment in Cooperative infrastructure including means to recruit and retain highly qualified personnel in rural areas; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that SAM supports legislative action to ensure educational infrastructure is equitably and adequately funded across all Montana administrative units.

Resolution #15-01- SPECIAL EDUCATION FUNDING, CLOSING THE GAP

WHEREAS, review of recent legislative funding increases for K-12 education will clearly show there has been, and continues to be a significant “gap” between increases in revenue provided general education versus increases provided special education;

WHEREAS, the 2015 legislature provided no increase in funding for special education services, this lack of additional revenue from the state places increasing pressure on districts to use local revenue to fund special education services;

WHEREAS, because districts and cooperatives are not receiving an increase in special education revenue, the effect on districts’ includes reducing services to special education children placing districts at risk of failing to provide FAPE (Free Appropriate Public Education), places special education in the



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position of “competing” for local funding with general education, sports, and other activities, and places an increasing burden on local tax payers;

BE IT RESOLVED, that SAM will develop a proposal to present to their educational partners, the Office of Public Instruction, and the Governor’s office, to “close the gap” in funding increases for general education versus special education.

Resolution #16-07 – ADEQUATE FUNDING FOR MANDATED SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

WHEREAS, IDEA, as federal law, mandates a free appropriate public education for children with disabilities, ages 3-21. (Title I, B, 612, a, 1, A) with provision for State level statutory language to limit services to children with disabilities ages 18-21 (Title 1, B, 612, a, 1, B, ii); and

WHEREAS, most Montana school districts limit attendance to age 19, mandated special education services in the State typically address the needs of children with disabilities ages 3-19; and

WHEREAS, inadequate State funding of mandated special education services negatively impacts the education of all students by effectively decreasing the amount of general funds available to support general education programming;

BE IT RESOLVED, that SAM will prioritize adequate funding of mandated special education services; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that SAM will prioritize support of legislative action for statutory language that includes the special education appropriation in the group of education appropriations subject to the mandatory inflationary increase; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that SAM will prioritize support of legislative action to increase monetary investment in Cooperative infrastructure without reducing payments for the Instructional Services Block Grant, Related Services Block Grant, and the Disproportionate Cost Reimbursement; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that SAM recognizes proposals for new program entitlements for students outside the current age-range of State-funded educational programs may negatively impact funding consideration for mandated special education services; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that SAM will prioritize support of legislative action for inflationary increases for special education and increased monetary investment in Cooperative infrastructure above advocacy efforts for new program entitlements for students outside the current age-range of State funded educational programs.

Support Facility and Technology Infrastructure

Resolution #13/15-01 – CAPITAL FACILITY NEEDS

BE IT RESOLVED, that SAM pursue continued and expanded state funding for capital facility needs in districts across the state of Montana to match and leverage local support for maintaining quality, safe, healthy, and educationally appropriate school facilities that meet the needs of 21st Century learning. The



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resolution should include support for technology costs within the definition of capital facility needs. The resolution should encourage energy efficiency, quality materials, and the general concept of sustainability. In addition, we encourage state support to match local building reserves so that school districts will be able to maintain facilities.

We encourage state support maintaining local control, and ensuring full funding for programs such as the state Facility Guaranteed Mill per ANB funding, as well as new initiatives that might be developed in the future.

We believe that this resolution is important to the needs of students in districts across the state of Montana.