



Resolution Form

To submit a Resolution, please answer the following required questions:

Note: This form is set-up to be filled out electronically. Place your cursor in the shaded box and begin typing. The space between questions will expand for longer answers. If you are handwriting answers on the form, please print answers legibility and use extra pages as needed.

1. Name of member school system submitting the resolution (**please include full name of school system, i.e., more than "school district number ____**): Bitterroot Valley Education Cooperative
2. Date upon which the Board of Trustees affirmatively voted to submit the resolution for consideration by MTSBA?
2/8/18
3. What is the conceptual change sought? Please provide an overview of the intended purpose of the resolution. Support for legislation to adequately fund the needs of all students with disabilities throughout Montana schools including increased federal funding, special education inflationary funding and increased funding for special education cooperatives in serving the needs of students in rural schools.
4. What specific sections of law do you anticipate need to be changed? (please list the sections of law, but not the specific changes sought to such laws, so as to ensure sufficient flexibility regarding how to implement the change). One option is to consider revisions to 20-9-321, MCA, the Allowable Cost Payment for Special Education. Any revisions to the formula may necessitate additional funding allocation.
5. How is the resolution anticipated to advance the interests of all of Montana's public schools, and/or public school students and/or increase student opportunity and success? Revision of the special education funding formula or other mechanisms to increase funding will help improve personnel shortages, costly supports for students with high needs and student access to appropriate services across diverse school settings.
6. What are the anticipated sources of external opposition (groups outside of MTSBA)? Individuals including representatives who oppose funding increases.
7. What are the anticipated sources of internal opposition or division within MTSBA and what steps have been taken, if any, to mitigate/minimize or resolve such division? We don't anticipate significant opposition. During the 2017 legislative session, there was general support from all size school districts to improve the special education funding formula, including a representative of the Great Falls School District who promoted it as a measure to reduce pressure on GFPS to serve students from area school districts where access to services was limited.
8. What is the projected statewide impact on Montana's public schools of the proposed resolution? Improved equalization for access to appropriate special education services among individual community schools. Reduced student transfers among districts when parents seek appropriate levels of resources and services. Reduced complaints and due process proceedings over failure to provide FAPE to students when individual needs are unmet or special education supports are considered unsatisfactory.
9. Please provide any additional background, explanation or other context for the resolution that you would like to be considered during the deliberations of the Delegate Assembly. Please see attached supporting information.
10. Check-Off List to Ensure a Proper Submission:

- Confirm that the resolution consistent with the MTSBA Member Adopted Principles & Guidelines**
- Confirm that the resolution is consistent with previously-adopted School Funding Resolution #1**
- Confirm that all background materials are included. Please note that the deadline of February 15 applies to the resolution and to any supporting materials to be considered.**

Loyd Rennaker
Electronic Signature of Board Chair

2/8/18
Date

Note: By entering your name here, you are signing this form electronically and it is the legal equivalent of having a handwritten signature.

Item 9 - Supplemental Background Information:

The current special education funding formula in 20-9-321 has not been updated since 1992 and costs have significantly shifted since then. Additionally, state funding for special education is one of the only education funding sources that does not include annual inflationary adjustments. Federal IDEA funding has been stagnant since 2009 and languishes at 15% of costs, far below the 40 percent rate authorized by congress when originally enacted in 1975 under P.L. 94-142.

In the MTSBA Critical Issues Survey from summer of 2017, 89% of members completing the survey chose “meeting the needs of special education students” as either “significant” or “very significant” in terms of this issue’s impact on and/or importance to serving students in their district. This was the highest ranked answer on the survey. The third highest ranked answer chosen by 82% of MTSBA members participating in the survey showed “Recruitment and retention of quality staff” as either “significant” or “very significant” in impacting service to students.

Montana’s public schools have more difficulty recruiting and retaining special education teachers than in any other endorsement area, with nearly double the number of total vacancies in special education than in the next highest area, CTE, according to the Office of Public Instruction’s teacher shortage report. Moreover, 92% of school districts reported hiring School Psychologists as “difficult or very hard” rising twelve percentage points higher than special education teacher difficulty at 80%.

Results from the MTSBA and the OPI survey data reinforce that recruitment and retention challenges are most numerous and difficult for special education related vacancies.

It would be prudent for the membership of MTSBA to consider solutions to shore up, stabilize, and further secure equitable and quality resources for our students with special needs in light of the survey responses above. Solutions should include the role of special education cooperatives in serving students with special needs which is of critical importance in Montana. Solutions should not include tradeoffs that result in reductions to other state special education or general education funding streams.

It is critical to support and advocate for greater access and equity for every special education student regardless of zip code through increased services, academic support, and expanding recruitment and retention of quality educators. To support Montana’s public schools and special education cooperatives’ efforts and to fulfill the promise of Article X and IDEA solutions could include, but are not limited to, increased federal advocacy efforts, increased funding for special education cooperatives and inflationary funding for special education.