

CANDIDATES' FORUM:

Montana Superintendent of Public Instruction

Dateline: September 16, 2004, 7:00 P.M., Best Western Great Northern Towne Center, Helena

Forum Sponsors: MASCSD, School Administrators of Montana, and the Montana School Boards Association

An open invitation went out to the recent Candidates' Forum for Montana Superintendent of Public Instruction candidates Bob Anderson (Republican) and Linda McCulloch (Democrat, incumbent), and more than 40 people attended. Missoula television journalist Ian Marquand served as debate moderator; MASCSD Board Member Chris Olszewski was timekeeper. Each candidate had five minutes to respond to an opening statement and five prepared questions, as well as two minutes to respond to five audience-generated questions. A summary of the candidates' responses follow.

— By Susan Arthur and Dr. Christine Kuschel

Opening questions: Where is public education today? What are the key challenges and how do you plan to deal with these challenges?

Bob Anderson (BA): Montana education has high-quality programs. We should continue to provide a high-quality education with changing demographics (an aging population and related health care issues) and senior citizens should be encouraged to get involved in public education. Additionally, students should have options available, with high-quality teachers and accountability for learning. Teachers should have a state-wide health insurance plan and reasonable retirement packages.

Linda McCulloch (LM): *Montana education is at a crossroads. We have approximately 148,000 students who perform well and we must ensure that our educators are high quality. [Montana teachers are among the lowest paid in the nation, and 70% of new teachers leave Montana.] We must continue to work on a health insurance plan. We must see increases in reading scores and decreases in the drop out rate for Native American students.*

Question #1: What influence can the funding lawsuit and the superintendent's office have on legislative

action? With that in mind, what can we expect for education from this next legislative session?

LM: *We will have a new Governor and a new Legislature. We should base funding on "per teacher" rather than "per pupil" to account for our declining enrollment. Health insurance is an issue, as is school readiness through full-time Kindergarten. We must focus on Indian Education for All (20-1-501), and repay student loans for teachers who stay in Montana and in geographic areas where they are needed.*

BA: We need a special session to look at school funding. We must recommend 40 million dollars in new funding for per student entitlement, and 48 million dollars for statewide health insurance for teachers.

Question #2: What do you see are some of the primary issues facing Montana schools related to the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act? How is Montana doing in addressing the requirements of NCLB?

BA: As an advocate, I believe the benefits of NCLB include the infusion of money for high-quality teachers through professional development.

LM: *NCLB has 55 measures to deter-*

mine Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). If even one measure is not met, the school does not pass. NCLB should recognize that "one size does not fit all" in terms of high-quality teachers at rural and isolated sites, and does not provide adequate implementation funds.

Question #3: In the area of teacher quality, what suggestions do you have for the US Congress as it gathers recommendations for the reauthorization of NCLB? Would you suggest the law be revised? If so, in what way? If not, why not?

LM: *NCLB must be funded, and Congress must also recognize that each state has a local Constitution, that "one size fits all" does not fit rural and isolated states in terms of high quality teachers, and that it must recognize state and local control issues. Before taking a law to Congress, committees should work with ALL states.*

BA: Benefits of NCLB include the infusion of money for high-quality teachers through professional development.

— Responses continue on page 2

More from the Candidates' Forum

Question #4: What issues and direction for school improvement will be prominent in the next four years?

BA: Professional development is key to school improvement. School improvement should be voluntary for each district — issues include *Reading First*, increased school funding, and reduction of local property taxes.

LM: *School Improvement must be approached with a sense of urgency. We need it now, especially in the areas of reading, early intervention, and Indian Education to close the achievement and drop-out rate gaps. We need academic specialists at OPI to assist with this.*

Question #5: Summarize why you want to be the Montana Superintendent of Public Instruction.

BA: I am concerned about the OPI Accreditation Standards, and want money to go to teachers in the classroom; I am also committed to a high-quality system of education and will fund it.

LM: *I am “for the kids.” The purpose of OPI is to provide services and resources to the schools. Achievements include office automation to save money, donating state computers to schools and the creation of a web page. OPI is the smallest agency in the state, with the largest budget. It passed an audit with 100% accuracy. Money goes to schools. Communication has been facilitated. We cannot build a first class economy with a second class education system.*

Questions from the audience

#1: Where would additional funding for education come from?

LM: *Montana has the lowest car rental tax in the nation. We should increase car rental and big box store taxes, utilize Bush’s “stimulus” packages, and add an alcohol and tobacco tax.*

BA: We don’t need to increase taxes; we can use the \$40 million budget surplus over the biennium.

#2: Should schools consolidate?

BA: All schools, regardless of size, should be high quality.

LM: *Schools are important to communities. Research shows that forced consolidation does not save money. We should look at barriers to consolidation. Over the past 10 years, 75 Montana schools have consolidated voluntarily.*

#3: Should the Arts be offered in schools?

LM: *The Arts are important to students and parents. Some kids only go to school because the Arts are offered.*

BA: Anderson supports the Fine and Performing Arts in schools, and suggests the addition of a “Gifted and Talented” Academy.

#4: What role should the State play in School Safety and bullying?

BA: The Montana Behavioral Initiative (MBI) offers schools professional development that targets school safety and bullying.

LM: *Montana schools are the safest places for students to be. The violence continuum escalates. The MBI offers districts a model of prevention.*

#5: We see an increase in disaffection with public schools, and growing support for non-public schools. How do we build confidence in public education?

LM: *Non-public school enrollment has remained stable at 4% for elementary and 2% for high school-aged children. Children are not leaving public school and going to non-public school. The declining enrollment is due to the birth rate.*

BA: NCLB and vouchers are a response to lack of confidence in public schools. Anderson doubts the statistics quoted by McCulloch. In regards to school closures, we should take lessons from private enterprise.

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MASCD builds and fosters collaborative partnerships to produce meaningful, effective, and timely professional learning for all educators.

RECAPPING the MASCD Summer Institute 2004

Beyond Compliance: Balancing Learning and Accountability

— Chris Olszewski

Day One: June 16th

Larry Peterson, the first speaker, taught AP Mathematics for more than 25 years and currently teaches at North Ridge High School in Layton, Utah. He is a College Board Consultant and has authored a number of mathematics texts. Larry has received numerous awards that include the Utah Teacher of the Year and the Disney American Teacher Award.

Larry's presentation, *Measuring Up!*, focused on improving mathematical thinking skills by using integrated science and social studies activities. Participants learned how to use ratios to solve scale conversions for maps, practiced using slope to determine questions about local topography, and reviewed procedures for effective use of TI-graphing calculators.

Session highlights included the *Rise & Fall of the Montana Landscape*, an activity in which groups predicted and discussed which river had a greater slope: the Madison or the Missouri. During *What's Shaking*, participants learned how to find the epicenter of an earthquake using math, science and maps. Other activities involved using TI graphing calculators to determine how much to overbook a flight, and playing the *Greedy Pig Game*, which used the laws of probability.

Day Two: June 17th

Rick Wormeli, a 20-year veteran teacher, was the second speaker. Rick teaches at Rachel Carson Middle

School in Herndon, Virginia and authored the award-winning books *Meet Me in the Middle* and *Day One & Beyond*. He is a nationally recognized speaker and educational consultant, and received the Disney American Teacher Award in 1996.

Rick is an outstanding presenter on differentiated instruction. During his presentation, *Differentiated Instruction: Principles and Perspectives*, he guided participants through the basics of effective strategies and discussed the qualities young adolescents crave from the classroom setting and their teach-

ers. He presented the *Ten Basic Principles of Differentiation*, which described how teachers can differentiate content, process, product, effect and learning environment, according to student readiness, interests and learning profiles.

Participants benefited from Rick's advice on lesson design and components, as well as various workable models of instruction for differentiation. One of the most exciting moments was his use of a movie clip from *The Sound of Music*, which provided an example of effective differentiation.

The overall response to this year's institute was very positive. Participants raved about the presenters and the location.

- "Outstanding. This year's institute focused on topics applicable to districts' needs here in Montana. The focus was on new and upcoming educational issues that will help prepare us for the future." — Shawn Clark, Secondary Principal, Shelby
- "It was worth every minute out of an educator's summer to be here. What MASCD provided was the opportunity to hear excellent speakers and the time and place for schools to exchange ideas with others." Neal Wedum, Principal, Choteau Public Schools

— Chris Olszewski, from Shelby, is a member of the MASCD Board

Day Three: June 18th

— Tamara Ziegler

The third-day presentation was by Carol Jago, a high school teacher from Santa Monica, California. Carol's presentation, *Beyond Standards: Literary Instruction that Transforms Learners*, deserves accolades.

Carol pointed out something I've thought for a long time: something is wrong with our curriculum. All the evidence points to reading, reading and reading. Carol used a three-legged stool representing the three legs of education: *Standards*, *Assessment* and *Curriculum*, to illustrate the problem. Carol stated

that instruction is weak because these areas are not working *together* and that we, as educators, have to stop our *private practice* work ethic.

I learned that 53% of college students have to take remedial courses and that many never complete a degree.

Carol offered good advice: "It is extremely important to give students direction before you begin to read." She also discussed ways to develop reading skills through paraphrasing and used three prompts as a spring board for discussion:

1. *It says*
2. *I say*
3. *So what?*

This frames the story and involves the students in determining why it's important.

Carol also said that we should stop evaluating and move on to analyzing. Though she noted that the Montana Standards for Literature are rich and powerful, she also stated that students need two kinds of books: mirror books and window books. Mirror books show that other people share the problems we do. Window books spotlight other cultures, other times and other expectations.

Teachers need to be artful and purposeful. Building an academic vocabulary is imperative — a key to controlling comprehension in reading. "We need to teach our kids how to learn, how to read. There is nothing else we can teach them so they are ready for the future."

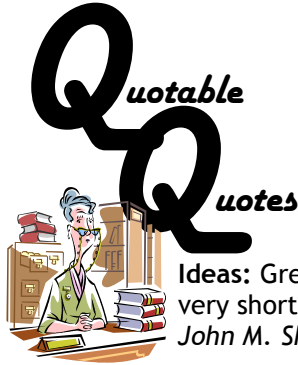
"A good teacher gets students to work, not give us more work. School is not a place where young people come to watch old people work." — Carol Jago

— Tamara Ziegler, of Helena, is a 30-year veteran teacher and a member of the MASCD.



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Ideas: Great Ideas have a very short shelf life. — *John M. Shanahan*

Life: Life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it. — *Lou Holtz*

Prejudice: Prejudice is an opinion without judgment. — *Voltaire*

Priorities: Keep the main thing the main thing. — *Carol Johnson*

Problems: Every problem has in it the seeds of its own solution— *Norman Vincent Peale*

Television: TV - chewing gum for the mind. — *Frank Lloyd Wright*

Testing: What gets measured gets done. — *Tom Peters*

- **Source:** *Well Said, Well Spoken* by Robert D. Ramsey



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Annual MASCD Exhibitor Fairs 2005

The Montana Exhibitor Fairs provide a one-stop venue for Montana teachers and Curriculum Committees to see new products and services — and the opportunity to hear from company representatives and specialists. The fairs have been popular among districts and teachers. Each company has its own presentation room and offer presentations lasting approximately 50 minutes. This year there are two Exhibitor Fairs scheduled in Montana. *Plan to attend!*

MASCD Textbook Exhibitor Fairs

- January 27th – Great Falls
- February 28th – Missoula

For more information: Janet Thomson, Executive Director at jannyt@bresnan.net or 406-453-6242.

MASCD Summer Institute 2005

The 2005 MASCD Summer Institute is scheduled for June 14-16, 2005, in Helena, at the Great Northern Hotel in the Great Northern Center. Special pre-conference sessions for administrators and math teachers will be offered on Monday, June 13th, 2005.

Watch for details in the next issue of InfoClips!



Info CLIPS

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