

State Superintendent's Student Advisory Board

Spring 2011



The Student Advisory Board is part of Graduation Matters Montana, an initiative to increase the number of Montana students who graduate from high school through collaborative partnerships with schools, community organizations, businesses and youth.



“Every child deserves to feel secure, valued and surrounded by adults they trust at school. A positive school climate is foundational to a quality learning environment.”

**Superintendent of Public Instruction,
Denise Juneau**



State Superintendent Denise Juneau’s Student Advisory Board (SAB) consisting of 40 high school students from 31 schools re-convened in Helena on April 14-15, 2011 after its first summit in the Fall of 2010.

Members of the Student Advisory Board were nominated by local school and community leaders. The board brings together a diverse group of voices, including students who have considered dropping out as well as students who excel in school. Board members, in grades 9–12, reflect the range of experiences of Montana students.

Board members and chaperones gathered at the Holter Art Museum for a reception and to view the Youth Electrum, a student art exhibit, on Thursday evening, April 14. The following day, the board gathered at the Rocky Mountain Emergency Services Training Center, an aircraft rescue and fire fighting instructional facility. The students discussed the results of the recent OPI-initiated My Voice survey that 15,000 Montana students completed in Fall 2010, participated in a mini-workshop by the National Coalition Building Institute on building inclusive school communities and shared their perspectives with Superintendent Juneau on issues related to school climate.



Student Advisory Board Recommendations

The Student Advisory Board provided Superintendent Juneau advice on how to improve school climate. The National School Climate Council defines school climate as the quality and character of school life. "School climate is based on patterns of students', parents' and school personnel's experience of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures."

Engaging Student Voices

Student Advisory Board members are concerned that not every student's voice is heard. SAB members recommend that all students be encouraged to give input, not just the most involved, highest-achieving, or "in-crowd" students.

Research:

- "Engagement, which is an index of student's time and energy invested in educationally purposeful activities, has been shown to have a positive impact on student persistence and grades." (Kuh et al., 2007).
- Tweedell (2000) showed that students must feel vitally connected to their cohort group in order to feel socially integrated. Her findings revealed that students are more likely to withdraw when they are not yet vitally connected to a group.
- According to the 40 Developmental Assets for Adolescents from the Search Institute, "Young people need to feel valued and valuable. They need to feel safe, to believe that they are liked and respected, and to have opportunities to make meaningful contributions within the hierarchies that surround them."

SAB Recommendations:

- School boards should have a student representative.
- Students want to be able to evaluate and provide feedback to teachers.



- Students want to be involved in principal and teacher hiring processes.
- Students want to be supported in creating new clubs that interest them.

A Comprehensive Approach to Address Bullying

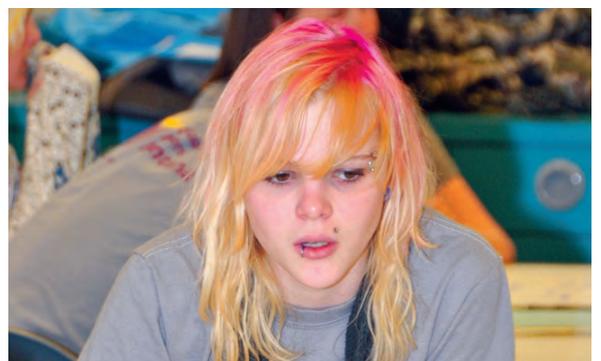
Student Advisory Board members emphasized that bullying happens in every community and needs to be addressed in school handbooks in the same way that dress codes or attendance policies are addressed. SAB members said, “Don’t assume we understand what’s right and wrong intuitively.”

Research:

- Olweus Bullying Prevention Program reports an “increase in students’ satisfaction with school life, improved order and discipline, more positive social relationships, and more positive attitudes toward school work and school in general” with the implementation of a bullying prevention program. (Olweus, 1997)
- Twenty-six percent of Montana high school students report being bullied on school property and nearly one in five reports being electronically bullied. (YRBS, 2011)

SAB Suggestions:

- Students want clear policies that are consistently applied.
- Students want punishment for bullying to be severe enough to get it to stop.
- Students want a “go-to” person at school to advocate for bullied students in order to combat “just get over it” attitudes.
- Students want adults to have necessary training to be able to effectively intervene, and they want ending bullying to be a part of the culture of the entire school.
- Students want to be aware of their rights and of laws related to bullying and harassment in and out of school.



Future Role of SAB and Launching the I Pledge to Graduate Campaign

Student Advisory Board members stated they see themselves as ambassadors for Superintendent Juneau and Graduation Matters Montana and want the chance to engage in SAB work in between meetings. SAB members provided feedback about the launch of an I Pledge to Graduate campaign, where students pledge to graduate to a peer, a teacher, a school counselor or parent and identify why graduation is important to them. Students wanted the opportunity to help kick off I Pledge to Graduate campaigns in their own community and travel to neighboring communities.

Research:

- According to the Montana Office of Public Instruction, during the 2009-2010 school year, 2,010 students in grades 7 through 12 dropped out.
- An article published in Educational Psychologist in 2007 used longitudinal analysis to demonstrate that student disengagement begins at the start of the middle grades, which greatly reduces the odds that they will eventually graduate. By combining effective whole-school reforms with attendance, behavioral, and extra-help interventions, graduation rates can be substantially increased.

SAB Recommendations:

- Students suggested that a graduation buddy system should start early, in middle school.
- Students supported the I Pledge to Graduate campaign and want to be involved in its design and implementation.
- Students stated that they need to be reminded often of the consequences of not graduating.

Final Reflection and Next Steps

Student Advisory Board members learned that all students are affected by positive or negative school environments. Students emphasized that every student, no matter their circumstances, has potential.

- Help support the design and implementation of the I Pledge to Graduate campaign
- The Student Advisory Board will reconvene tentatively October 13-14, 2011
- New board nominations will be accepted in September. For information on the nominating process, please visit the Graduation Matters Montana link on the OPI website: http://www.opi.mt.gov/Programs/SchoolPrograms/Graduation_Matters/index.html

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2010-2011 State Superintendent's Student Advisory Board Members

Ashley Bergstrand	Belgrade High School
Rachel Drost	Big Sky High School
Richard Wright	Big Sky High School
Tyus Rock Above	Billings Senior High School
Ty Show	Browning High School
Shannon Sullivan	Butte High School
Kristin Rossmiller	Conrad High School
Brooke Regan	Custer County District High School
Aurora Hurlburt	Cut Bank High School
Josie Vegoren	Darby High School
Cooper Johnston	Fergus High School
Nichole Fullbright	Fergus High School
Michelle Mulligan	Glasgow High School
Elizabeth Grandchamp	Glasgow High School
Logan Hendrix	Glacier High School
Brooke Guckeen	Great Falls High School
Collette Spangler	Great Falls High School
Megan Mathews	Hamilton Alternative School
Cody Preston	Helena High School
Taylor Mindt	Lambert Public Schools
Derek DeShazer	Lincoln County High School
Kaitlynn Lynch	Lincoln Public School
Guy Afflack	Paris Gibson Alternative High School
Celeste Never Miss A Shot	Paris Gibson Education Center
John Barlow	Park High School
Michael Devlin	Polson High School
Nicole Parshall	Poplar High School
Katherine Hibbs	Roberts High School
Taylor Spotted Horse	Rocky Boy High School
Sapphire Carter	Rocky Boy High School
Jaron Mudrow	Seeley-Swan High School
Dalen Erickson	Sentinel High School
Andrew Payne	Sentinel High School
Alec Kimball	Skyview High School
Jeanne Breakall	Twin Bridges High School
McKenzie Kralich	UM Helena- Access to Success
Cody Hill	Whitefish Independent High School
Jennifer Vail	Whitefish Independent High School
Walt Zeimer	Wibaux County High School

