



Montana Quality Education Coalition

April 23, 2020

***MQEC is the “Constitutional Guardian” of Article X of the Montana State Constitution, working for public school students and their communities.***

***We advocate for, pursue, and defend the need for adequate and equitable funding to provide quality education for each of Montana’s public school students.***

Dear Matt,

The MQEC Board of Directors would like to thank Bigfork Public Schools for your membership this year, and we invite you to renew membership for the 2020-2021 school year. MQEC is a collaborative effort of the entire education community, providing the vital advocacy function of holding the state accountable to the guarantees of the Montana Constitution:

- *The legislature shall provide a basic system of free quality public elementary and secondary schools (Article X, Sec 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 (Article X, Section 6).*
- *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 (Article X, Section 8).*
- *There is a board of public education to exercise general supervision over the public school system and such other public educational institutions as may be assigned by law (Article X, Section 9).*
- *No appropriation shall be made for religious, charitable, industrial, educational, or benevolent purposes to any private individual, private association, or private corporation not under control of the state (Article V, Section 11(a)).*

These constitutional guarantees are challenged in each legislative session, and the education community has turned to the courts for relief when necessary. In the 1980s, these actions addressed equity issues (Lobel decision, 1989). Since MQEC’s inception in 2002 and through the support of our membership, we have worked with the education community to pursue adequacy (Sherlock decisions, 2004; 2008) and to maintain equity in state funding. In 2011, the education community through MQEC returned to court and successfully restored statutory inflation increases for the 2011-2012 biennium.

***In December 2018 the Montana Supreme Court affirmed MQEC’s position that tax credits for donations to sectarian schools is unconstitutional. This pivotal decision was a milestone in our multi-year effort to challenge the channeling of public tax dollars to sectarian schools following the passage of SB 410 in the 2015 legislative session. This decision was appealed to the United States Supreme Court and a decision is expected in June 2020.*** MQEC’s actions have been and remain critical to public education funding. In this instance, if we do not successfully defend the constitutional prohibition of aid to sectarian schools, this could open the door for additional mechanisms that direct public funds to private educational purposes – any of which would be harmful to public education funding.

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Montana Quality Education Coalition | Dianne M. Burke | Executive Director  
Post Office Box 993 | Helena, MT 59624 | [dburke@mqec.org](mailto:dburke@mqec.org) | 406-449-4594

In addition to serving as the “constitutional guardian” for education-related bills, **MQEC’s priorities for the 2021 legislative session will focus on preservation of the existing school funding formula; application of the final year of expanded GTB funding; continuing statewide aid to improve teacher recruitment and retention, continuing funding for school facilities program; and adding the automatic inflationary adjustment to special education funding.** Dependent upon the decision of the U.S. Supreme Court regarding the use of tax credits for donations to sectarian schools, we will not be surprised to see new efforts to channel public funds to private education endeavors, both religious and non-religious. MQEC will vigorously oppose these efforts, and we will continue our collaborative work with the education community to secure constitutionally sound and positive outcomes for Montana’s K-12 public schools.

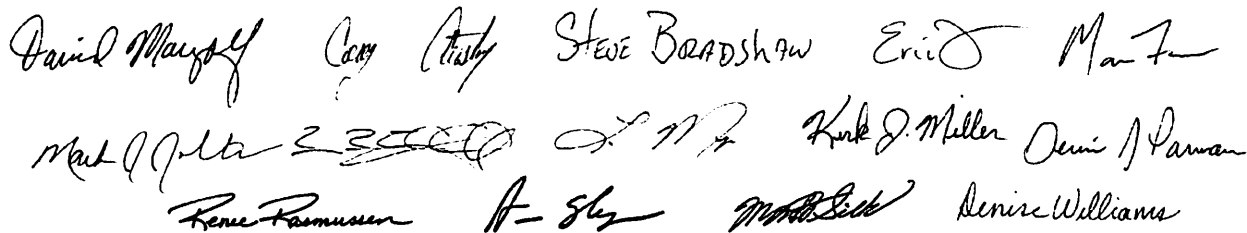
As described in the attached datasheet, the education community and MQEC have been effective in protecting the interests of public education. The gains from our 2004 litigation continue to multiply, and today each school district in Montana receives significantly more funding per pupil than we would have seen without intervention of the courts – a difference of \$1,255 per pupil in the 2019 school year. **Just think how different your district budget decisions would be without these additional dollars.**

The educational community has worked successfully together over the past several years, finding substantial areas of common ground and presenting a united front in our lobbying efforts. MQEC’s voice is an essential component of that solidarity. Your MQEC membership is important to our continued and collective success in providing quality public education for each child in Montana. **Please consider supporting our efforts this year. Simply put, you make our work possible.**

If you have any questions about membership please contact our Executive Director, Dianne Burke, at 406-449-4594 or at [dburke@mqec.org](mailto:dburke@mqec.org).

Sincerely,

Your MQEC Board of Directors



Handwritten signatures of the MQEC Board of Directors: David Marzolf, Corey Austin, Steve Bradshaw, Eric Feaver, Marco Ferro, Mark Johnston, Lance Melton, Les Meyer, Kirk Miller, Dennis Parman, Renee Rasmussen, Aaron Skogen, Monte Silk, and Denise Williams.

**Dave Marzolf, Chair** – Sun River Valley Schools  
**Corey Austin** – Target Range Public School  
**Steve Bradshaw** – Columbia Falls Public Schools  
**Jan Cahill** – Vaughn Public School  
**Eric Feaver** – Montana Federation of Public Employees  
**Marco Ferro** – Montana Federation of Public Employees  
**Mark Johnston** – Ronan Public Schools  
**Lance Melton** – Montana School Boards Association  
**Les Meyer** – Fairfield Public Schools

**Kirk Miller** – School Administrators of Montana  
**Dennis Parman** – Montana Rural Education Association  
**Renee Rasmussen** – Bainville Public School  
**Tyler Ream** – Helena Public Schools  
**Monte Silk** – Sidney Public Schools  
**Aaron Skogen** – Baker Public Schools  
**Denise Williams** – Montana Association of School Business Officials



PO Box 993  
Helena MT 59624

# Fiscal Year 2021 Invoice

**Bill To:**

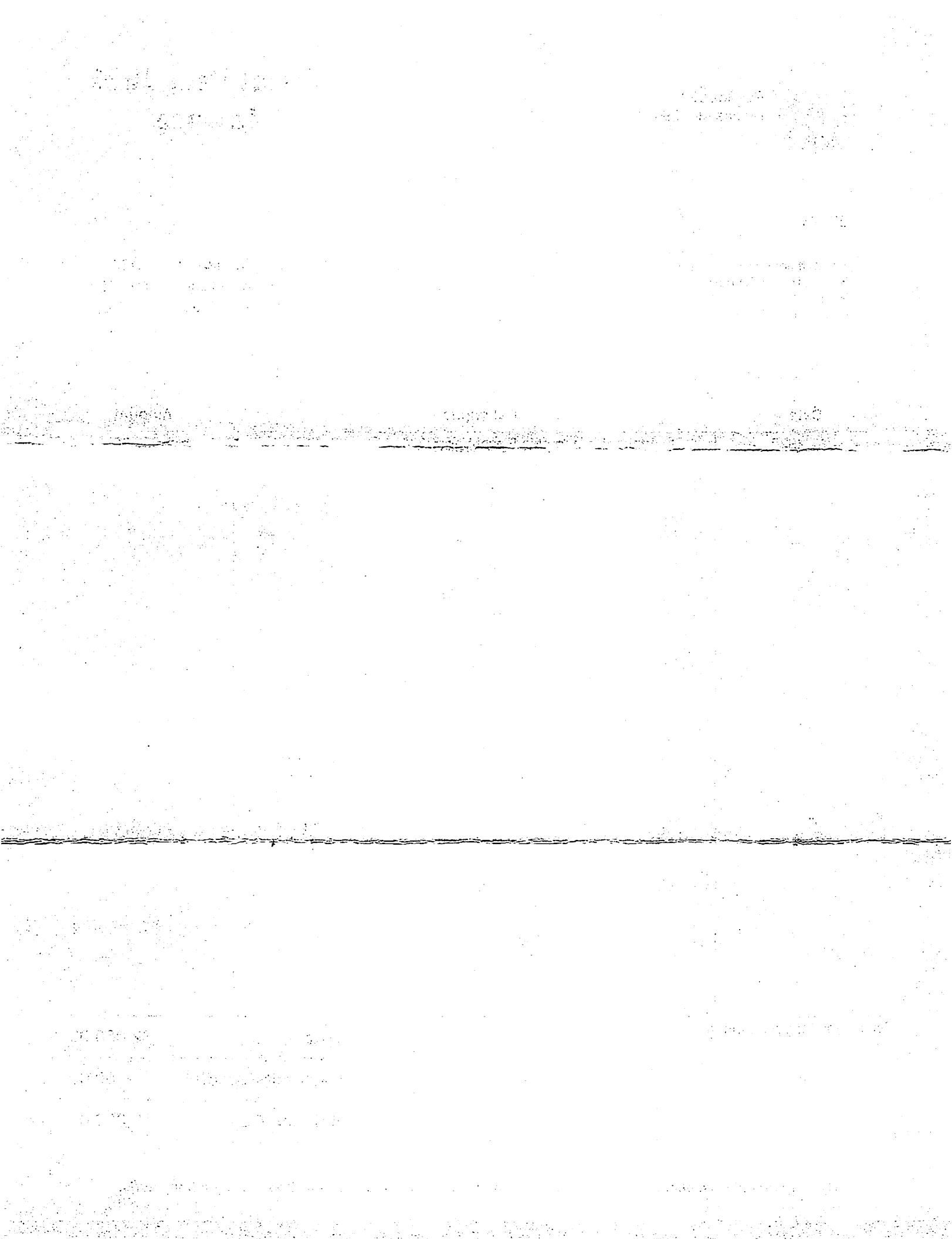
Mr. Matt Jensen  
Bigfork Public Schools  
PO Box 188  
Bigfork, MT 59911

**Invoice #:** 3183  
**Invoice Date:** 4/17/2020  
**Due Date:** 7/1/2020

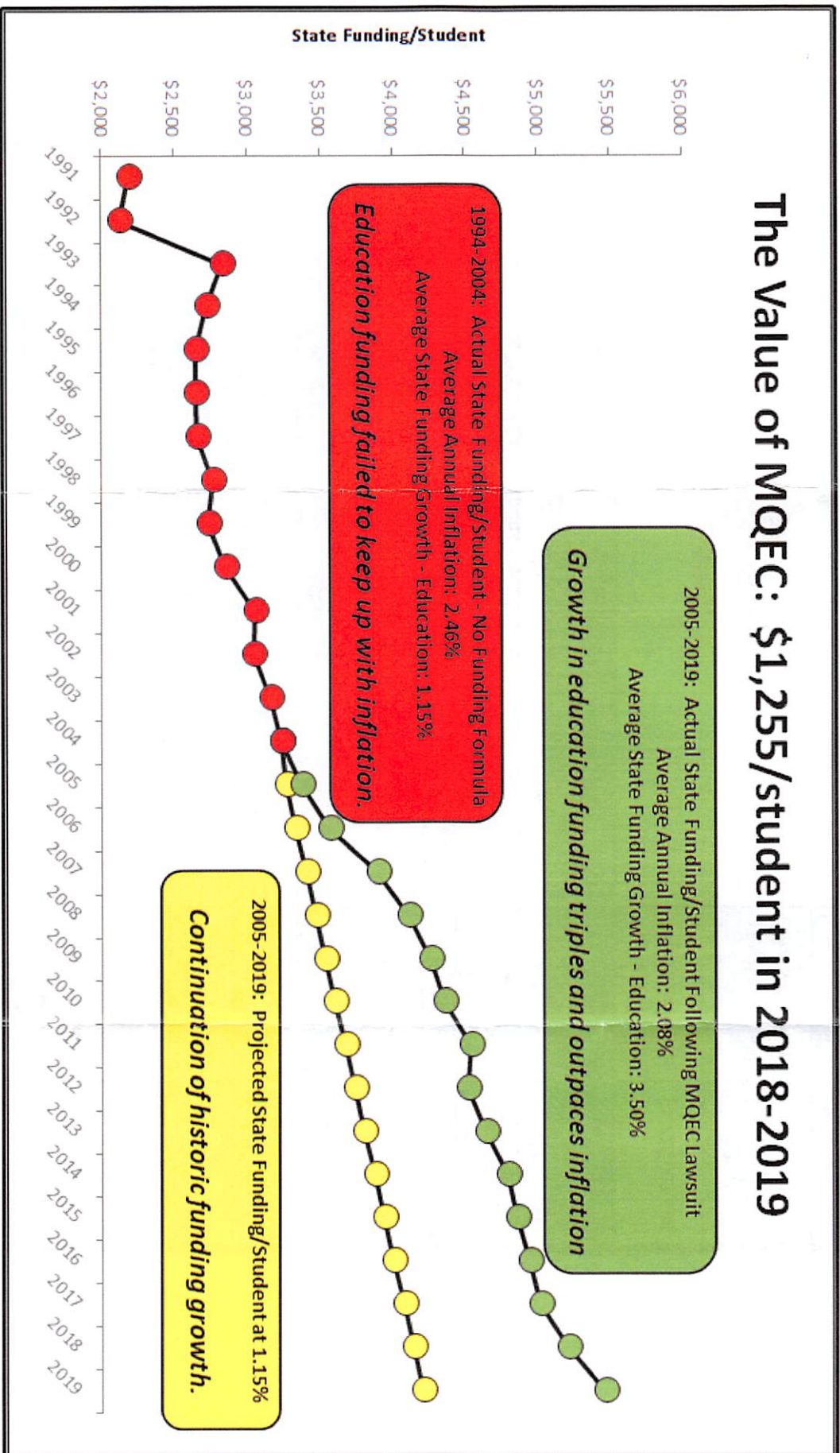
Date	Description	Amount
4/17/2020	MQEC Annual Membership Fiscal Year 2021	2,000.00

Thank you for your support.


<b>Total</b>	\$2,000.00
<b>Payments/Credits</b>	\$0.00
<b>Balance Due</b>	\$2,000.00



# The Value of MQEC: \$1,255/student in 2018-2019



## Statewide Per-Pupil Funding Increase 2005-2019

Fiscal Year	Projected State Contribution/pupil based on historical trends (yellow line on chart)	Actual State Contribution/pupil (green line on chart)	Funding Attributed to MQEC Efforts (Difference between Actual and Projected)	Statewide Student Enrollment	Statewide Per-Pupil Increased Funding
2005	\$3,267	\$3,374	\$107	147,652	\$15,754,217
2006	\$3,335	\$3,565	\$230	148,899	\$34,294,712
2007	\$3,402	\$3,896	\$495	147,019	\$72,705,211
2008	\$3,469	\$4,115	\$646	150,157	\$97,035,017
2009	\$3,536	\$4,264	\$728	149,748	\$108,958,293
2010	\$3,604	\$4,353	\$750	148,865	\$111,577,779
2011	\$3,671	\$4,538	\$866	147,965	\$128,200,290
2012	\$3,738	\$4,522	\$784	147,525	\$115,593,652
2013	\$3,806	\$4,645	\$840	147,705	\$124,021,476
2014	\$3,873	\$4,790	\$917	148,567	\$136,246,611
2015	\$3,940	\$4,863	\$922	149,410	\$137,786,862
2016	\$4,008	\$4,948	\$940	150,187	\$141,176,168
2017	\$4,075	\$5,017	\$942	151,433	\$142,649,886
2018	\$4,142	\$5,216	\$1,074	152,221	\$163,485,354
2019	\$4,210	\$5,464	\$1,255	152,628	\$191,517,170
 <b>MONTANA</b> Quality Education Coalition				Cumulative Per-Pupil Increase in Funding	\$1,721,002,698
				Quality Schools Grant Program	\$63,036,219
				Cumulative Per-Pupil Increase in Funding + QSGP: 2005-2019	\$1,784,038,917