





Montana Quality Education Coalition

April 1, 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 2021-2022 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).* This provision is still in effect, but is subject to the U.S. Supreme Court’s *Espinoza* decision.
- *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.

***The 2021 Legislative Session has been particularly worrisome regarding impacts to K-12 education. Several bills are currently in play that challenge the constitutional authority of the Board of Public Education and locally elected school boards (HB 633, HB 543, SB 157); that make appropriations to private entities not under control of the state (HB 329, HB 633); and that will significantly impact general fund revenues (HB 279) and the general fund itself (HB 633) – any of which would inflict harm to Montana’s K-12 public schools.***

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Montana Quality Education Coalition | Dianne M. Burke | Executive Director  
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MQEC, along with our MT-PEC partners, continues to vigorously oppose these bills, and we remain committed to our collaborative work with the education community to secure constitutionally sound and positive outcomes for Montana's K-12 public schools. When the 2021 Legislative Session comes to a close, your MQEC Board of Directors will determine the best way to continue our opposition to those bills that are enacted despite our efforts to defeat them. Several options are available but as the designated litigation arm of the K-12 public education community, we may consider court action if appropriate.

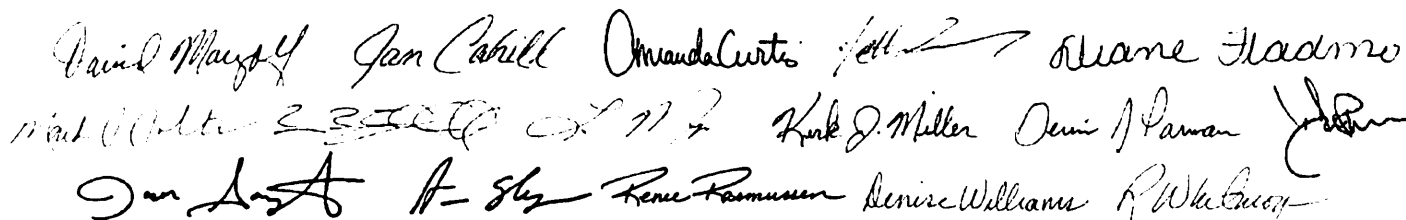
As described in the attached datasheet, the education community and MQEC have been effective in protecting the interests of public education. The gains from our 2004 litigation continue to multiply, and today each school district in Montana receives significantly more funding per pupil than we would have seen without intervention of the courts – a difference of \$1,248 per pupil in the 2020 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

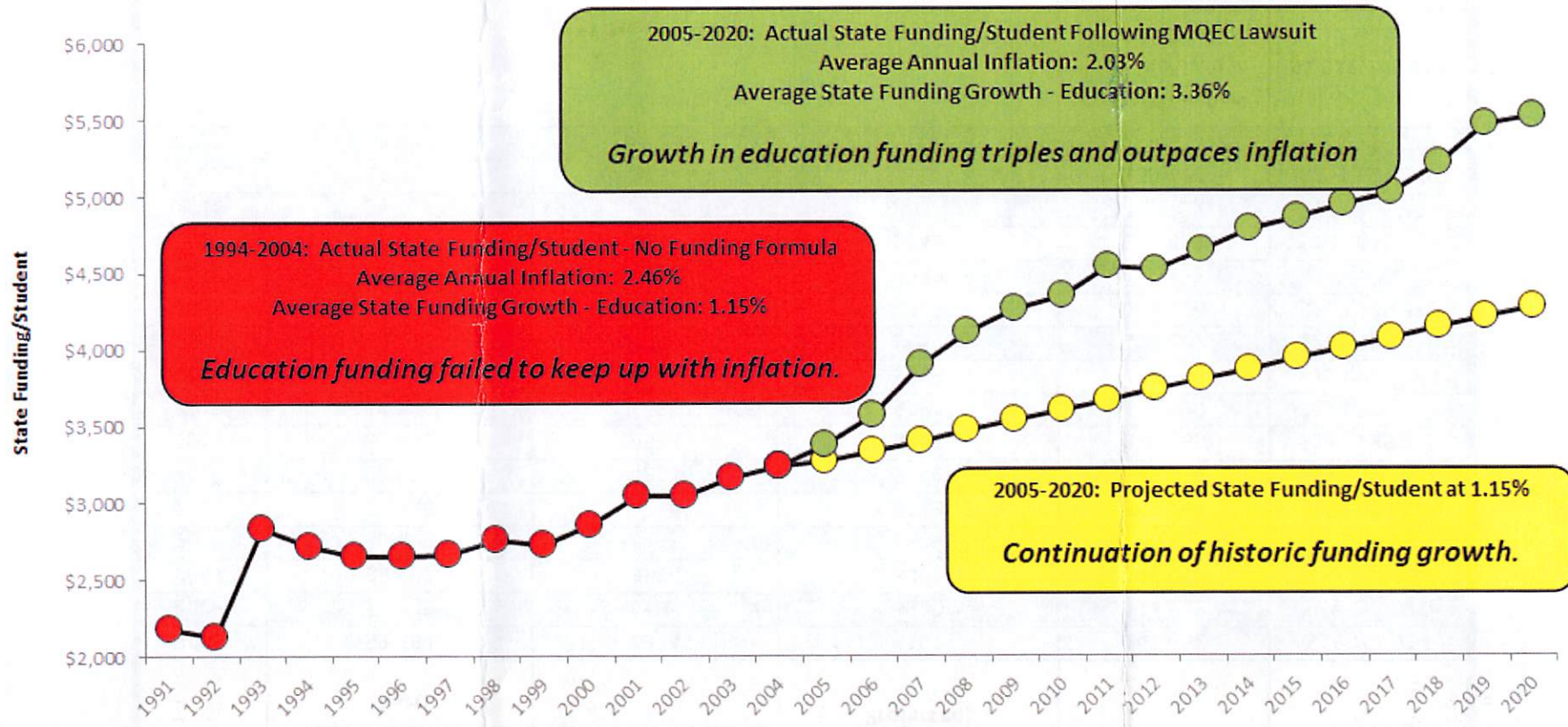


- Dave Marzolf, Chair** – Sun River Valley Schools
- Jan Cahill** – Vaughn Public School
- Amanda Curtis** – Montana Federation of Public Employees
- Matt Driessen** – DeSmet Elementary School
- Diane Fladmo** – Montana Federation of Public Employees
- Mark Johnston** – Ronan Public Schools
- Lance Melton** – 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
- Jason Sargent** – St. Ignatius Public Schools
- Aaron Skogen** – Baker Public Schools
- Ron Whitmoyer** – East Helena Public Schools
- Denise Williams** – Montana Association of School Business Officials




# The Value of MQEC: \$1,248/student in 2019-2020





## Statewide Per-Pupil Funding Increase 2005-2020

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	3374	\$107	147,652	\$15,798,764
2006	\$3,335	3565	\$230	148,899	\$34,246,770
2007	\$3,402	3896	\$494	147,019	\$72,627,386
2008	\$3,469	4115	\$646	150,157	\$97,001,422
2009	\$3,536	4264	\$728	149,748	\$109,016,544
2010	\$3,604	4353	\$749	148,865	\$111,499,885
2011	\$3,671	4538	\$867	147,965	\$128,285,655
2012	\$3,738	4522	\$784	147,525	\$115,659,600
2013	\$3,806	4645	\$839	147,705	\$123,924,495
2014	\$3,873	4790	\$917	148,567	\$136,235,939
2015	\$3,940	4863	\$923	149,410	\$137,905,430
2016	\$4,008	4948	\$940	150,187	\$141,175,780
2017	\$4,075	5017	\$942	151,433	\$142,649,886
2018	\$4,142	5216	\$1,074	152,221	\$163,485,354
2019	\$4,210	5464	\$1,255	152,628	\$191,517,170
2020	\$4,277	5525	\$1,248	153,614	\$191,710,272
				Cumulative Per-Pupil Increase in Funding	\$1,912,740,352
				Quality Schools Grant Program	\$63,036,219
				Cumulative Per-Pupil Increase in Funding + QSGP: 2005-2020	\$1,975,776,571