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Citizens of Great Falls:

Please read the following from Tom Moore, Superintendent of Great Falls Public Schools, about a forum, organized by Elsie Arntzen, **Monday, September 19th from 4:00 to 6:30 PM in Heritage Hall at Great Falls College MSU.** This is an invitation that was not issued to the superintendents around Montana and was discovered only by hearsay. The Director of OPI has not been forthcoming about her plans for reorganizing education in Montana. It is imperative that residents of Great Falls who are interested in continuing with our excellent education in Great Falls are present at this meeting. We know that she is inviting her supporters. Please attend and bring friends who also want to support public education in Great Falls.

Thanks so much.
Gerry

Good afternoon, Partners!

I received this (notice of meeting) from Rob Watson, School Administrators of Montana Exec. Director this morning. I had a phone call yesterday from Dr. Stephanie Erdmann, Dean @GFC-MSU, informing me that OPI had called and asked to reserve a room at Heritage Hall on Monday Dec. 19 from 4-6:30 PM. I had heard on Wednesday that the Supt. of Kalispell Schools caught wind of a similar meeting in his area.

Last night I called and spoke with Supt. Arntzen and she informed me that she will be holding four of these sessions in specific areas around the state, Kalispell, Billings, Great Falls and Stevensville. None of the Superintendents have received personal invitations to attend, nor have they been asked to help facilitate these forums. According to the Superintendent of Public Instruction, these sessions are designed to engage our parents and newly elected legislators in discussing issues of mutual interest prior to the upcoming legislative session.

My suggestion is that we all plan on being there and encouraging **ALL** of our parent, business and community partners to attend and let the elected officials know what our priorities are for our children and our schools here in Great Falls.

I have attached the GFPS priority list that we presented to our candidates in the Forum held at Alliance for Youth back in October.

If you have any questions or comments, feel free to call or email me.

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GREAT FALLS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

PRIORITIES

Student
Achievement

Reading at grade level by the end of third grade, Math Proficiency by seventh grade, skillful use of technology, Social Studies and Civics Education are focal areas of our curriculum, instruction and assessment efforts.

Funding

Inflation for supplies and recruitment and retention issues put a tremendous strain on General Fund budgets. One time only (OTO) funding helped postpone the reality that schools are underfunded.

School Safety

There are many safety measures that must be taken in order to protect our most valuable resource, our students. (For example; Infrastructural improvements to school building entrances to limit access, training for staff, School Resource Officers, Threat assessment protocols by qualified individuals, costly alternatives for educating students who pose a high level of risk to others, communications and notification systems, etc.

Career /Technical
Education &
Transformational
Learning

Students who are CTE concentrators have a graduation rate of 94%. This program is vital to an economy that needs workers with basic skills. Great Falls Public Schools provides students, parents and staff with the full advantage of flexibilities provided through Transformational Learning, Advanced Opportunities and Personalized Learning plans.

Early Childhood
Education

Montana is one of only eight states that doesn't fund Early Childhood Education. Reading at grade level by third grade is a universally accepted metric for student success. However, not all students have the same foundation coming into kindergarten and find themselves behind before they begin.

Student Wellness

- 2021 Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey indicates;
 - 41.4% of grades 9-12 students reported feeling sad or hopeless for more than 2 weeks
 - 10.2% of grades 9-12 students made a suicide attempt
 - 17.6% American Indian students attempted suicide one or more times
 - 21.7% of grades 9-12 students seriously considered suicide
 - Great Falls Public Schools report 504 homeless students in 2021
- Schools and communities desperately need high quality professional services to deal with the rising mental health and wellness needs of our youth.

Recruitment and
Retention

Staffing at all levels is in a near crisis level. Many teachers are retiring and there is high demand throughout the State and nation in attracting new employees. Great Falls Public Schools Hired 86 new teachers in 2022.

