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STATE OF MONTANA

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**Bullock and Juneau Set the Stage for State-Funded Early Childhood Programs
*Early Childhood Licensure and Accreditation Rules to be proposed to Board of Public
Education***

Helena, MT - At the July 17 Board of Public Education meeting, Governor Steve Bullock and Superintendent Denise Juneau will announce their proposal to update Montana's educator licensure and accreditation rules in order for the state to be prepared to offer publicly funded, accredited early education programming for four-year-olds. **Governor Bullock will address the Board of Public Education at 9 a.m. in Helena at the State Capitol Building, Room 317.**

"Montana children deserve every opportunity to succeed, that begins with ensuring that they come to kindergarten ready to learn," Bullock said. "Students who participate in high quality pre-Kinderergarten programs as kids see improved academic performance in school, higher graduation rates, and increased earning potential as adults. Despite all of these benefits, Montana remains in the dwindling minority of states who don't provide our youngest learners with a pre-K option available for all. It's time that we change that."

Currently, educator licensure endorsements in Montana are only issued for grades K-12, except for special education licenses, which include pre-school through 12th grade. The new rule will propose an early childhood educator licensure endorsement for "age three to grade three," as well as a middle school endorsement for grades four through eight. The new rule proposed will offer a three-year window for educators with a current special competency in early childhood to get the endorsement or to receive a provisional license for three years in order to get licensed.

Montana's current accreditation standards cover K-12 education programs. In order to ensure that publicly funded early learning programs meet high quality standards, Juneau and Bullock are proposing new accreditation standards for programs serving children ages three and four.

"Part of Graduation Matters Montana is making sure our earliest learners have access to a high quality education that prepares them to be successful in Kindergarten," said Superintendent Juneau. "When students step into their Kindergarten class prepared and ready to learn, there is no end to

what they will accomplish in their elementary and high school careers. It's time for Montana to join the 42 other states who have made this investment in their children and in turn, their economic future. Montana's public education system is ready to take this step."

Studies have shown that every dollar spent on high-quality early childhood education saves \$7-\$9 down the road in reduced costs of remediation, public services, and incarceration. Children who take part in high-quality pre-kindergarten programs graduate at a higher level, and earn higher salaries later on in life.

Superintendent Juneau will officially present the proposed new rules to the Board of Public Education at their September 11-12 meeting. The Board of Public Education will then set the timeline for the public hearing process, set a date for a public comment hearing and a window for receiving written public comment.

Governor Bullock will bring forward a proposal at the 2015 Legislative Session to fund voluntary early education available to all four year olds in the state of Montana. Montana is currently one of only eight states with no publicly funded pre-kindergarten option.

The Board of Public Education meeting can be viewed online at the following link:

http://montanalegislature.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?publish_id=3c0e02cb-34b7-4778-b4d3-e23ab02f6667.

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