



WORD

Family Resource Centers

A Program of WORD-Women's Opportunity and Resource Development

Newsletter

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For more information go to:
www.wordinc.org/frc

Graphics and Editing by:
 Lindsey Rehder
 Stories by:
 Suzette Dussault
 Pictures by:
 Lindsey Rehder

Movin' On Up!!!

"Will we have lockers?" "Where is C.S. Porter, anyway?" "Will I be able to eat lunch with my friends?" Will we be able to use calculators?" What about flag football, will I be able to play?" These are some of the burning questions that plague and bedevil the lives of tweeners, that age between childhood and adolescence, as they anticipate with some fear, dread, and excitement the "new" school-the middle school.



The move to a new school is always scary, but Missoula County Public School principals, teachers, and counselors, have teamed up with elementary and middle school Family Resource Centers to make the transition as smooth as possible for these elementary students and their families. While each elementary and middle school is different in the activities and support they provide, all recognize that the challenge is real for many students and their families as they move on to another school. "This is a huge transition for some kids," said Porter Family Resource Center Coordinator Jari Davis. "Some kids are ready, but for a lot of them, this is a big change for them as well as for the family. We're here to help."

Lauri Briney, 6th grade counselor at Meadow Hill Middle School, begins the process for her sixth graders by visiting each of the fifth grades in Meadow Hill's feeder schools in the spring to teach Friendship Units. "We basically talk about

what means to be a friend and to have a friend," she explained. The students then visit their new school where they are given a tour of the school and are able to meet their homeroom teachers and, most importantly, the kids in their new homerooms. "This is a particular challenge at Meadow Hill," Briney explained, "because of the large number of feeder schools that send their kids to Meadow Hill." But these activities are so important, she said. "We forget how much they worry all summer. These activities make it easier on them."

That evening, the parents are invited back to the school to meet their child's teachers, the principal and staff, and to have their child give them a tour of the school. "I always challenge my kids to be brave," said Briney, "to see if they can show their parents around the school!"

Briney also makes sure to welcome her students in the fall. She displays the art they created in their Friendship Unit in the spring and Meadow Hill holds monthly dances, "so the kids have an opportunity to get to know one another," said Briney.

At CS Porter, the Family Resource Center hosts (Continued on Page 4)

Family Resource Centers, a program of WORD, are a collaborative program between WORD and school districts and are funded by:

- Montana Office of Community Service
- The Engelhard Foundation
- Title I
- Early Learning Opportunities
- Washington Foundation

Join the Literacy Support Corps

“Be the change you want to see in the world”

Mahatma Gandhi



WORD is currently recruiting for the Literacy Support Corps, an AmeriCorps program. Members serve in school-based Family Resource Centers, developing and strengthening partnerships between parents, educators, and surrounding community to support learning.

Join us for an Informational Meeting about what it means to become a Literacy Support Corps member.

**April 4th- Rattlesnake Elementary
Family Resource Center
6:30-7:30 pm**

**April 6th- Franklin Elementary
Family Resource Center
9:00-10:00 am**

**April 12th- Missoula Public Library
Board Room
12:00-1:00 pm
(bring a brown bag lunch)**

In the Bitterroot:

**April 22nd-
Hamilton Middle School @
Parent Workshops
9:00 – 3:00 pm**

**April 25th-
Victor School @ the
Academic Fair**

**April 25th-
Daly Elementary @
The Volunteer Tea
4:00 pm**

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For an application visit:
www.wordinc.org/frc

Women's Opportunity and
Resource Development
127 N. Higgins Suite 307
Missoula MT 59802

Poverty



It's no secret that one of the biggest challenges we face in Montana is poverty. In conversations with human service workers and public school educators I've heard "cultural barriers" within schools described as primarily related to economics. When we encounter a family or student struggling, most often the root cause of the struggle is poverty rather than race, gender, sexual orientation, disability or ethnicity. And, the truth about living in Montana is that most of us are just one job loss, or health crisis away from poverty.

What do we mean when we say "poverty"? National data for 2005 lists the basic cost of living for a family of three at \$30,000. This is the income necessary to cover basic needs – housing, food, health care, etc. Federal poverty income guidelines (which continues to use the economic formula developed in the 1950's that does not account for today's housing costs) lists the poverty line for a family of three at \$16,090, roughly half the amount it actually takes to meet basic needs. In Missoula County 19.2% of our children live in poverty – one in every five children. A growing number of families are not only finding themselves in poverty, but generations within families cannot find their way out of poverty.

Employment at minimum wage *requires a 60 hour work week* for a family of three just to reach a poverty income level. Not accounted for in those 60 hours of work is the time this same family must find to make it to appointments for assistance with food, health, housing and the myriad of other basic needs that \$16,090 does not cover. And we wonder why parents are stressed? Why they don't attend school events? Why children come to school without supplies, sick or hungry? At times I've perceived a "parents just don't care" attitude around education schools, as if all parents have a choice in these situations. Too many parents, especially single parents, work hard, all day and often most of the night and still suffer the effects of economic injustice - poverty.

Recently the staff of WORD's Family Resource Center program had the opportunity to attend a two-day Poverty Institute in Vancouver WA. The primary presenter, Donna Beegle, Ed.D. presented her "insider perspective". She was born and raised in a family where no one was educated beyond the 8th grade, a migrant, homeless family. She described learning early

that education meant additional "stress" to her family. "The stress of trying to arrive on time; having the right clothing, shoes, lunch, and materials for homework projects – all these stresses created a perception that education was not for people like me. In my world, education served as a distraction from being able to earn the daily basic needs or from being close to family, the only thing I had." Over the course of the institute Dr. Beegle framed the challenges of education between economic classes as the challenges between oral culture and print culture.

Another presenter, Mr. Sharif Abdullah, author and director of Commonway Institute, clearly addressed poverty, culture and class. He also was born and raised in poverty. He earned a juris doctor degree from Boston University and practice law. He very clearly illustrated the class bias that maintains our economic system for the benefit of very few. His question "Can you conceive of a world that works for all?" was the catalyst for thought provoking conversations. How can we understand poverty and it's relationship to education if we ignore the ways in which schools mirror the societal classism that keeps some of our families and students in poverty?

Mark Twain said, "When I find myself on the side of the majority, it's time to pause and reflect." We'd be wise to do the same. The mainstream stereotype is that we need to "fix" poor people, rather than reform classist policies and practices. Research clearly shows that people in poverty have very similar values as middle and upper class people. Family structure, employment and education do not *cause* poverty, they reflect the *impact* of poverty. This cause and effect reversal lies within No Child Left Behind legislation that targets schools with high poverty populations without addressing the classism underlying achievement gaps. Less than fifteen years ago Jonathan Kozol's book *Savage Inequalities* was the talk of the education equity community. The anxiety inducing atmosphere of high stakes testing, vouchers and school choice that NCBL advocates is a lure away from the reform that is truly needed to leave no child behind. As Kozol writes, "Surely there is enough for everyone within this country. It is a tragedy that these good things are not more widely shared. All our children ought to be allowed a stake in the enormous richness of America."

-Jeanne Moon, Program Director

Locations of the Family Resource Centers:

Missoula Area:

Bonner School
PO Box 1004
Bonner, MT 59823
Anya Miles
406-258-6151
family@bonner.k12.mt.us

Franklin Elementary
1901 S. 10th West
Missoula, MT 59802
Alicia Crandell
406-327-0483
franklinfrc@mcps.k12.mt.us

Hawthorne Elementary
2835 S. 3rd West
Missoula, MT 59804
Carrie Strike
406-327-6945
hawthornefrc@mcps.k12.mt.us

Lewis and Clark Elementary
2901 Park St.
Missoula, MT 59801
Erin Kral
406-327-6946
frclewis@mcps.k12.mt.us

Lowell Elementary
1200 Sherwood
Missoula, MT 59802
Josh Archey
406-327-0390
lowellfrc@mcps.k12.mt.us

Paxson Elementary
101 Evans
Missoula, MT 59801
Liz Stotts
406-542-4055
frcpaxson@mcps.k12.mt.us

Rattlesnake Elementary
1220 Pineview
Missoula, MT
Jane Yungmeyer-Olson
406-542-4914
resfrc@mcps.k12.mt.us

Russell Elementary
3216 Russell St.
Missoula, MT 59801
Jillian Foster
406-728-2400 ext 4846
frcrussell@mcps.k12.mt.us

Teen Family Resource Center
1861 S. 12th St
Missoula, MT 59802
Cheryl Matt
406-542-4900
cmatt@wordinc.org

Northside Women's Center
127 N. Higgins Suite 307
Missoula, MT 59801
Meg Heart
mheart@wordinc.org

Bitterroot Area:

Daly/Grantsdale Elementary
778 Grantsdale St.
Hamilton, MT 59840
Rachel Martin
406-363-2122 ext 190
406-363-1889
martinr@hsd3.org

Florence Elementary
5602 Old Hwy 93
Florence, MT 59833
406-273-6741 ext 203
elemfrc@florence.k12.mt.us

Florence Middle School
5602 Old Hwy 93
Florence, MT 59833
Christa Burns
406-273-6741 ext 203
burnsc@florence.k12.mt.us

Hamilton Middle School
209 S. 5th St
Hamilton, MT 59840
Cathy Orr
406-363-2121 ext 5004
orrc@hsd3.org

Hamilton High School
327 Fairgrounds Rd
Hamilton, MT 59840
Ellen Ryter
406-375-6060 ext 6222
rytere@hsd3.org

Lone Rock Elementary
1112 Three Mile Creek Rd
Stevensville, MT 59870
Erica Amt
406-777-3314 ext 219
ericaamt@lonerockschool.org

Ravalli Head Start
81 Kurtz Lane
Hamilton, MT 59840
Cami Ewalt
Susan Matthews
406-363-1217 ext 20
camrae@ravalliheadstart.org
susanm@ravalliheadstart.org

Kids First
Westview Center
103 S. 9th St. #105
Hamilton, MT 59840
Jodi Waliser
406-375-9588
jwaliser@bitterrootkids.org

Stevensville Elementary
300 Park Ave
Stevensville, MT 59870
Debbie Bauer-Johnson
406-777-5613 ext 351
johnsond@stevensville.k12.mt.us

Stevensville Junior High
300 Park Street
Stevensville, MT 59870
Debbie Bauer-Johnson
406-777-5533
johnsond@stevensville.k12.mt.us

Washington Primary
225 N. 5th St.
Hamilton, MT 59840
Michelle Wilson
wilsonm@hsd3.org
406-363-2144

Victor School
425 4th Avenue
Victor, MT 59875
Brandy Boak
boak@victor.k12.mt.us
406-642-3221 ext 255

Flathead Area:

Cherry Valley Elementary
111 4th Ave
Polson, MT 59860
Tara Bowman
Liana Zimmerman
406-883-6333 ext 525
lzimmerman@polson.k12.mt.us

Linderman Elementary
111 4th Ave
Polson, MT 59860
Cassie Anderson
406-883-6229

Two Eagle River School
PO Box 160
Pablo, MT 59855
Dacia Whitworth
406-675-0292

Movin' On Up Continued...

Literacy Lunches for all sixth grades the first month of the school year. "It's become a tradition," said Jari Davis. "My goal is to help our parents feel comfortable at school. I try to make sure that they feel welcomed, and to dispel the huge myth that kids don't want their parents at school."

A quick survey of some of the Missoula elementary school Family Resource Centers reveals that many FRC Coordinators are planning Literacy Lunches for their fifth grade students and their parents this spring. On the agenda? Middle school transition activities.

"We have always had an evening for parents with Washington Middle School counselors," said Lewis and Clark principal Karen Allen. "Washington Principal Bob Gearhart will show a video and talk with the kids about how Washington is different from Lewis and Clark and all the things that happen there that don't happen here."

It's important for parents, said Davis. "They are very anxious and so, these nights give them a chance to network with other parents and get a feel for the school."

At Russell School, the challenge is even greater. All the kids at Russell will go on to three different middle schools. They are split up. So, their questions have a little more urgency, and in many cases, different responses. The important thing is, however, that they have someone there to give them the answers.