

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bozeman School District Agrees to New Beginning for Special Education Program Students Told They Could Not Attend Graduation

Helena, August 26, 2008: In a settlement finalized last week of a discrimination case brought by the parent of an 8th grade student with a disability, the Bozeman School District agreed to a series of steps geared to improve the inclusion of students with disabilities. The case was brought after the 8th grade student with disabilities missed the 8th grade graduation celebration held at her school, after her special education teacher told her mother, erroneously, that all of the special education students could not attend because they had missed a practice when these students went on a field trip. There was no such practice.

In December 2007, an investigator from the Human Rights Bureau of the Department of Labor and Industry found good cause to believe that discrimination did occur, and the case was scheduled for hearing in September 2008. The student and her mother have been represented by Disability Rights Montana throughout the case.

"I am very glad that my daughter's case could be the cause of some changes in the special education program to ensure that other students with disabilities are not treated similarly in the future," said Jill Terry, the parent who filed the case. "I hope that all of the things that the District agreed to do will bring about improvement of the special education program as well as the treatment of students with disabilities."

As part of the settlement, the District has agreed to consult the new parent/teacher advocacy group in the search for the new special ed director, conduct a public review of school district policies to ensure that they do not discriminate against students with disabilities, require disability discrimination training and training provided by the office of public instruction to further include students with disabilities in the school-wide programs and services available to other students, include the special education teachers in the regular ed staff meetings, and pay damages and attorney fees.