

NEWS FROM: *Montana Small Schools Alliance*

UPDATE: August 2024

Message from the Director:

Happy August! Here is wishing you a great start to your 24-25 school year activities!

I know it seems early, but it is the time of year when we have lots of news to share, and everyone seems to be gearing up for the start of the school year. I know that some of you start this month, and some after Labor Day, but regardless- it is coming very fast!

I hope you have had a restful and fun summer. We certainly can't complain that we didn't have summer- it has been hot! It is too hot and windy in some locations. I am hoping and praying that you have not had fire danger worries and that you and your students are safe. I know that worry is not over, you are definitely in our thoughts if your school or town has been impacted.

If you have a natural disaster, like fire, please let us at MSSA know. We may not be able to help you on the ground level, but there may be some things we can do to help you in other ways. It is important that we know what is going on with our schools and our people so thanks for keeping us in the loop if need be.

As we start the 2024-2025 school year, please be aware of several new things covered in this newsletter: Jules Waber award deadline extension, New timeline for District and Instructor Scholarships, Math Standards work, New book study idea called "Rural Readings", September workshop signup, and more. Make sure you are in the know and feel free to share information with other staff members in your school.

Again, enjoy the rest of your summer, and welcome back!

Janelle

2024-2025 Standards and Workshop

Everyone should be signed up for the Standards Workshops which start next week. **Thanks to StopIt Solutions one free iPad will be given away at each Standards Workshop!** Plus our regular prize drawings.

Standards Dates and Locations

August 5, Miles City- Miles City Community College

August 7, Big Timber- Ambulance Barn

August 9, Helena- University of Montana

August 12, Kalispell- Springhill Suites

See you next week!!

MAPS Workshops August 6th

Zoom trainings-

Beginners Track, August 6th from, 9:00-11:00 AM

Advanced Track, August 6th from, 1:00-3:00 PM

Zoom links sent from NWEA.

Jules Waber NREA Travel Award Deadline Extended

The MSSA Board has extended applications for the Jules Waber NREA Travel Award through August 15, 2024. Two travel scholarships for \$2000 each will be awarded. Applications are on the website and will be available at the Standards workshops. Don't miss this wonderful opportunity to travel to Savannah, Georgia and be part of the latest in rural education. **Get your applications in!**

MSSA District and Instructor Scholarships

The MSSA Board has decided to offer the District and Instructor Scholarships earlier in the year so that the funds can be used throughout the year more effectively. Applications are on the MSSA website and will be available at the Standards workshops. **Due date is September 20, 2024.** The MSSA Board will meet the following week and awards will be given at that time. Don't delay, get your applications in now. The process is simple and the awards are very generous.

Discovery Education News

Days of Discovery – August 6, Miles City – www.bit.ly/MTDoD2024

Days of Discovery – August 8, Helena – www.bit.ly/MTDoD2024

Both Day of Discovery events (Miles City and Helena) will:

- Discovery Education Experience, DreamBox by Discovery Education, and Science within Experience
- 8 am – 4 pm
- Lunch provided
- Snacks and beverages provided
- Cool swag to send home with each participant

Discovery Education has several exciting FREE professional development opportunities this summer!

Day of Learning – August 5, Hardin – www.bit.ly/DoLHardin

- Discovery Education Experience, and using Science within Experience
- Full day of learning with lunch on your own
- We will provide snacks throughout the day

- OPI renewals (6)

Day of Learning – August 19, Hamilton – www.bit.ly/intheroot

- Discovery Education Experience
- 8 am – 1:00 pm
- No lunch – we will provide lots of snacks
- OPI renewals (5)

Any questions can be directed to Allison Nys – anys@discoveryed.com or Natalee Hawks – nhawks@discoveryed.com.

Math Standards Advisory Group

Are you interested in being part of the Math Standards Advisory Group? We are looking for 10-12 MSSA members who would like to help with the new Math Standards. Sonja Whitford will be leading this group through the process of taking OPI Standards and making them work for our small/rural/multi-grade classrooms and schools. If you are interested please email me at jbeers@mt-ssa.org. A stipend will be paid and work will begin January 2025.

Other Standards opportunities for this year include work on ELL and Foreign Language. Let me know if you have an interest in those areas.

MSSA if Offering a New Opportunity for Professional Development and Renewal Units

Rural Readings 2024

Be a part of MSSA's first ever book study!

Please read the book summaries below, and then let me know what books you would like to consider reading and, if you are interested in being part of the 2024 Fall book study group. Formal sign up will take place in early-September once a book decision has been made and books ordered.

Format:

*Meet once per week for 7 weeks starting late-September 2024. (After school hours- one hour only.)

*Virtual-Zoom format.

*Read designated chapters each week and be willing to discuss at the weekly meetings. (Breakout room format.)

*Weekly reflection and final evaluation.

*Renewal units- 16 renewal units for attending and participating (camera on, participate in discussion), must attend at least 6 of the 7 sessions.

Here are the four book choices and the summaries. Do your own research and make the choice that will be most valuable to your teaching.

Teach Like a Pirate - Increase Student Engagement, Boost Your Creativity, and Transform Your Life as an Educator, by Dave Burgess

The book is divided into three sections. The first explains what it means to teach like a P.I.R.A.T.E., with a chapter for each letter of word (P-passion, I-immersion, R-rapport, A-ask and analyze, T-transformation, and E-enthusiasm.)

In the second section of the book, called Crafting Engaging Lessons, Dave provides many examples of the right type of questions as he explains various “hooks” teachers can use to engage students in lessons. Dave doesn’t claim that any of the hooks are truly original ideas—the incorporation of movement, the arts, mnemonic devices, etc. has been happening in many classrooms for decades. But the questions Dave provides are helpful in broadening your perspective to consider the different possibilities in your classroom, and the examples he gives from his own classroom are inspiring and sure to spark lots of great ideas of your own.

The third and final section, Building a Better Pirate, reinforces the motivating tone that’s been evident throughout the book. Dave asks the questions we are scared to ask ourselves (*Do you want to be great?*) and he says the things that teachers desperately need to hear, but rarely do: *A teacher’s impact can only be measured through generations, not through a single test. You don’t have to figure it all out before you begin.*

What Great Teachers Do Differently- 17 Things That Matter Most, by Todd Whitaker

The book is broken up into chapters each with their own topic of advice for what “great teachers do differently”. The author does a magnificent job at focusing on the positives and talking about GREAT teachers. He gives specific examples of what he’s seen in the field, and makes all of his advice very realistic to what happens in schools-without sugar coating anything.

He starts off the book explaining that furthering your “greatness” as a teacher is like answering an open-ended essay question, versus a true/false question. What he meant by this is, you can only learn so much by observing what NOT to do (true/false: choosing the opposite answer). But you aren’t going to be able to answer an essay question by explaining what not to do. You need solid evidence of what to do, and what other great people do, to improve your greatness. From that example then on out, he talks about these great teachers and what to do. He throws in some examples of what not-so-great teachers have done, but then combats those examples typically with what TO DO.

Educator Bandwidth - How to Reclaim Your Energy, Passion and Time, by Jane A. G. Kise and Ann C. Holm

It's time to make your mental bandwidth work for you. Being an educator is more stressful than ever, and teachers and administrators must constantly shift gears to stay on top of the newest initiatives and students' ever-changing needs. This book provides the tools and strategies to reduce stress, avoid burnout, and regain the time that gets lost to interruptions, temptations, competing demands, and task-switching.

The first step is to understand how much stress is weighing on your own mental bandwidth. Professional development experts Jane A. G. Kise and Ann Holm have developed the Brain Energy and Bandwidth Survey to help you self-assess the six key factors that contribute to

- * Balance between priorities
- * Filtering through possibilities
- * Mental habits that improve focus
- * Physical habits that fuel the brain
- * Connection with others
- * Workload and time management

Kise and Holm combine the latest neuroscience research with their own extensive experience working with educators to bring the most effective strategies and habits that help you manage your mental bandwidth and prioritize drains on mental energy. When you can establish good habits, focus on what's possible within your locus of control, and balance priorities, you can improve your educator bandwidth and feel more engaged, centered, and effective in your work.

Make Teaching Sustainable - Six Shifts That Teachers Want And Students Need, by Paul Emerich France

Rethink your teaching practice with six mindset shifts that will transform how you approach the job, ensuring that you can sustain your energy and effectiveness while empowering and supporting learners.

Traditional approaches to the practice of teaching are unsustainable. Too many educators are disengaging, burning out, and leaving the profession in response to stressors both inside and outside of schools. And high teacher turnover has a negative effect on our students.

In *Make Teaching Sustainable*, Paul Emerich France explores six mindset shifts that you can implement to improve your educational environment—while also supporting and empowering the students you lead:

- Humanity over industry
- Collectivism over individualism
- Empowerment over control

- Minimalism over maximalism
- Process over product
- Flexibility over fixedness

The goal of sustainable teaching is not simply to have teachers do less work, but also to help focus efforts on effective, efficient, and meaningful practices that make learning richer for students. Guided by recent research and interviews with practitioners in the field, France explores how mindset and practice shifts interact with themes of healing, regeneration, vulnerability, partnership, ritual, and simplicity. He also outlines tangible benefits to sustainable teaching, from a reduction in burnout to an increase in student engagement with learning. Whether you're a teacher, coach, or administrator, *Make Teaching Sustainable* will inspire you to embark on a practicable, action-oriented path to sustainability, ensuring that you can continue to be nurtured, supported, and effective in the profession that you love.

September Workshops

Sign up now for the MSSA September Workshops- OPI Bootcamp

September 13- Great Falls- Heritage Inn

September 16- Butte- The Butte Plaza Inn

September 18- Kalispell- Springhill Suites

September 20-Zoom

The day will include information from Jackie Ronning and Kimberly Evans on the Early Learning Targeted Intervention Program, Serena Wright on Federal Programs, and Crystal Andrews and staff on accreditation, graduate profiles and other changes and or requirements for schools. It will be a full day of all things OPI that you need to know!

Sign up on the MSSA website now.

Rural Debate Initiative

The [Rural Debate Initiative](#) is an opportunity for our teachers/students who might be interested in this resource.

It's the kind of thing, I think, that is especially good for a student or two in a small school that are needing a challenge or are particularly advanced and could use this [structured and supported opportunity](#) to learn to debate.

It's all virtual and the amount of teacher time required varies from very little, to leading a small group or if desired, teaching an elective. There are some nice little [teacher profiles](#) on the site. The program can support the students one-on-one as well. I think it could also be useful to support students interested in college.

If this sounds like anything your schools might be interested in, feel free to pass it along or reach out to [Kelly](#). Her team is very happy to meet directly with anyone.

Home | Rural Debate Initiative The Rural Debate Initiative (“RDI”) is a non-profit organization that seeks to expand access to competitive debate across secondary school students residing in rural areas. The RDI will offer debate programs in a virtual format at no cost to the students (no tournament entry fees and no debate camp tuition) .www.ruraldebateinitiative.org

Parent Guidance Newsletter from the Cook Center

Discover the art of balancing technology and well-being in our July Mental Health Newsletter (English/Spanish). Dive into insights and expert tips on fostering healthier tech habits and nurturing mental and physical wellness in an increasingly digital world. Just click on the English or Spanish above to get the newsletter.

OPI MAST Road Show

Professional learning opportunities are planned to support Montana’s districts in implementing the new MAST statewide assessment for grades 3-8 in math and ELA. These opportunities will encompass in-person sessions, live virtual events, and asynchronous learning modules.

- On **August 7, 2024**, members of the Assessment Team will be at the **Annual Hutterite Educator Conference** where there will be devoted sessions focusing on preparing for the 2024-2025 statewide MAST Assessment, ELL Identification & Support, and ACCESS for ELLs Testing. Navigate to the RSVP Link: <https://forms.gle/6hQYznHaDgKHLEXi6> [forms.gle]. All are welcome to attend sessions that pertain to their districts.
- From **August 8-16, 2024**, a second in-person **MAST Roadshow** will take place at multiple locations throughout Montana. Dates, times, locations, and the registration link can be found [here](#). Please register by August 1.
- On **September 5, 2024**, a second live virtual **MAST Summit** will take place. Once all details are confirmed, information will be shared and made accessible on the [OPI MAST webpage](#) and [MAST Portal](#).
- On **October 3rd, 10th, and 24th**, the Assessment Unit’s fall **STC Workshop Series** will provide details and support regarding the MAST. Once this information becomes available, it can be found on the Assessment Unit’s [Stay Informed \(mt.gov\)](#) webpage under the STC Workshop Series tab.
- This fall, the OPI Assessment Unit will be offering **weekly office hours** at various times to best support STCs and the field with statewide assessment-related questions. Details and information can be found on the Statewide Assessments [Stay Informed \(mt.gov\)](#) webpage once finalized.
- Additional **live virtual** and **asynchronous learning opportunities** will be available. More details and information will be shared on the [MAST Portal](#), [OPI MAST webpage](#), and [OPI MAST Monthly Compass](#) once finalized. For more information, please contact **Tressa Graveley**, Assessment Specialist.

Thank you for getting your Letters of Agreement and MAPS Testing information in to Linda, it is appreciated.

