

# **NEWS FROM: *Montana Small Schools Alliance***

**UPDATE: March 2025**

## Message from the Director:

Happy almost Spring!

This year Spring officially starts on March 20, 2025. And in Montana, it unofficially probably won't start until June (maybe). Over the years I have finally learned I can't plant petunias in April, in May and probably I should wait until late June. Especially in Butte where we usually get a dusting of snow in June. Regardless of where you live, this time of year always brings a sense of hope and renewal, and I hope you feel that way too.

I know Spring is a busy time of year, hopefully a few days off for vacation, and then back to testing, trying to finish curriculum, and restless students. Probably some restless teachers as well- I remember! Try and take some time to stop and enjoy the year, your students, and all you have accomplished so far. The year still has some months to go, but think about where you started in August or September and how far you and your students have come. Your students might enjoy thinking about how far they have come, how much they have learned, and how proud you and they are with the progress made this year. Maybe that pride will make the last few months of school a little easier and the goals you and your students have set a little more attainable. We all like to see how far we have come and how close we are to achieving our goals.

Wishing you a great Spring, and a renewed spirit as the end of the school year approaches.

Thanks for all you do every day for our students and our schools.

Sincerely,

*Janelle*

## **April In-person Workshops**

### **Preparing for the New Montana Mathematics Standards**

#### **Part 1: Energizing Your Classroom Through the Montana Mathematical Practice Standards**

**Sign up on the website today!**

**April 9, 2025**

**April 11, 2025**

**April 14, 2025**

**April 16, 2025**

**Miles City, Miles City Community College**

**Lewistown, Yogo Inn**

**Helena, University of Montana Campus**

**Kalispell, Springhill Suites**

## Counties Feature

This month we are featuring news from two of Lincoln County Schools presented by Suzy Rios, County Superintendent. Lincoln County has five schools, with Fortine, McCormick, Trego and Yaak under the County Superintendents leadership. Only Eureka School District has its own Superintendent and administration. However, all five schools are members of MSSA.

### McCormick School

Nestled in the scenic rural community of Troy, Montana, just two miles from the Idaho border, McCormick School has been a cornerstone of education since 1909. This one-room schoolhouse is a unique blend of tradition and innovation, serving 25 students from both Montana and Idaho with a dedicated team of two teachers.

The McCormick experience goes beyond academics, fostering a close-knit, supportive environment where older students often mentor younger ones, and everyone knows their neighbor. The schoolhouse, rich in history, retains its classic charm while incorporating the latest technology to ensure students receive a modern education. Adding to its charm are the schoolhouse dogs, beloved members of the community.

In 2024, McCormick expanded with the addition of a multipurpose building, enhancing its capacity to host physical education classes and serve as a hub for community gatherings. Located on Old Highway 2, McCormick School remains a proud symbol of resilience, community spirit, and educational excellence in Northwest Montana.

### Yaak School

The Yaak School is a rural K-8 elementary school that has served an isolated mountain community in Northwest Montana for over 100 years. This two-room school currently has 4 students, one teacher, a teacher's aide that comes in once a week, a part time custodian and part time District Clerk.

The school, built with hand hewn logs and up until recently was heated with a wood burning stove. We strive to maintain its character by continuing to emphasize the traditional skills of reading, writing and arithmetic along with fun subjects of science, social studies, P.E. and technology.

Students have participated in a wide range of enriching activities and field trips, providing opportunities for learning and memorable experiences. These have included attending the play *Wicked* in Spokane with special VIP tours and catered lunches, traveling to Washington to visit the Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium, the Children's Museum, an art gallery, and attending a double-header game at the Seattle Mariners' ballpark. They have also taken part in unique cultural events, such as rendezvous gatherings and tepee-raising ceremonies in collaboration with other small schools.

Additional activities have included ice fishing, snowshoeing, skiing, apple cider making, and exploring Montana's many historical locations. Students also participate in an annual spring camp-out rendezvous with other small rural schools, fostering connections and cultural understanding.

The spring of 2013 was especially exciting, as students traveled to Washington, D.C., Pennsylvania, and New York to explore some of the nation's most iconic historical landmarks, offering a once-in-a-lifetime educational opportunity.

These activities and field trips not only enhance students' learning but also broaden their horizons and create lasting memories.

Despite the isolated status of the school, students from the Yaak School have repeatedly tested well on mandatory state tests. Perhaps this is due to the amount of individual teaching time each student gets in this small school, or the high level of parent involvement, or the dedication of everyone helping the school to succeed. All the above is true and we are glad we have the opportunity to share our unique school with you.

## **2025-2026 MSSA Workshop Schedule**

The professional development schedule for 2025-2026 is attached to this newsletter.

Sign up for Maps, Standards, and all of the yearly workshops.

Sign up will be available on the website beginning March 10, 2025.

## **Spring Book Study Information**

If you are interested in participating in the Spring Rural Readings, MSSA book study, information and sign up will be sent out in the next few weeks. Session will start in April and go for six weeks. Renewal units and the opportunity to collaborate with other small school teachers.

## **\*\*\*\*\*Update- Math Standards Advisory Group\*\*\*\*\***

Due to the fact that OPI has put off the implementation of the Math Standards/Curriculum until 2026, the Math Advisory Group will not meet this year. I will be checking in with those who signed up in the fall to check on your continued interest. And, if anyone else is interested in joining the committee, knowing the timeline is next school year, please let me know. Sonja Whitford will be leading this group through the process. If you are interested in being on the advisory group please email me at [jbeers@mt-ssa.org](mailto:jbeers@mt-ssa.org). A stipend will be paid.

## **From OPI's Monthly Newsletter**

### **2025 Civics for All of US Teacher Institute with the National Archives**

Teachers working with students in grades 3–12 are invited to apply for the Civics for All of US Teacher Institute at the National Archives in Washington, DC. Focusing on the Declaration of Independence, this three-and-one-half-day institute will include hands-on sessions featuring strategies for teaching civics with primary sources, special tours and activities in the National Archives, and site visits to additional landmarks and museums in the nation's capital. Each participant will receive a stipend of \$1,050 to help cover travel, lodging, and other expenses. We are offering two separate Institute sessions this summer. The first cohort will meet July 14–July 17, 2025, and the second cohort will meet July 29–August 1, 2025.

Learn more [here \[civics.archives.gov\]](https://civics.archives.gov) and apply by March 31, 2025.

## **Parent Guidance Newsletter from the Cook Center**

At the Cook Center for Human Connection, we recognize the unique role of grandparent guardians and the challenges they face. This March Mental Health Newsletter ([English](#) / [Spanish](#)) offers strategies to help grandparents thrive as they raise their grandchildren.

In this newsletter, you'll find tips on prioritizing self-care, building a support system, and creating a stable environment. We address common hurdles like financial strain and generational gaps, and highlight opportunities for growth and connection. For additional support, visit [ParentGuidance.org](https://ParentGuidance.org), a platform designed to empower you with expert insights, practical tools, and a supportive community as you navigate your caregiving journey.

## **Jeremy Bullock Safe Schools Summit**

August 5 and 6, 2025

Ben Steele Middle School

Billings, Montana

To Register go to:

<https://jeremybullocksafeschools.com/register/>

**\*\*\*Save the Date: The 27th Annual August Institute\*\*\*  
July 30-August 1, 2025, DeSmet School in Missoula  
Join in-person or virtually. More to come!**

## **Mental Health and Professional Development Resources**

More information and flyers were sent out on March 4 with the weekly job posting.

**\*Mental Health Essentials for Educators.** March 17, 2025 from 9AM-12 noon. Zoom format. Flyer attached for registration.

Participants will learn: how to identify when students need referrals for mental health, how to refer students, how to manage mental health in the classroom, how to talk about mental health, and how to take care of your own mental health.

All educators are welcome.

Please note the focus of this program is on middle and high school students.

**\*The Resilience Advantage for Montana Rural Educators\***

Sponsored by MSSA, MTPLC, and HeartMath Education

Registration is open for April 2025

Fees for Montana Educators are covered through the partnership of sponsoring organizations.

For more information see the attached flyer or contact:

Cindy Fouhy at [cfouhy@mtplc.org](mailto:cfouhy@mtplc.org)

Jeff Goelitz at [jgoelitz@heartmath.org](mailto:jgoelitz@heartmath.org)