

NEWS FROM: *Montana Small Schools Alliance*

UPDATE: September 2025

Message from the Director:

Welcome Back To School!

I hope that your 2025-2026 school year is off to a great start. I know how busy the first few weeks of school are, and I hope you were able to start the school year with ease.

Thanks to all of you who attended the Standards workshops. We had record numbers and great interaction. It is always such a pleasure to see all of you and to see your dedication and excitement for the year ahead. There is no doubt in my mind that our students are in good hands.

Our September workshops will be in just a few weeks, or days depending on the location. I hope you have signed up and made the time to attend. Please look ahead to the yearly schedule and sign up ahead of time. We have realized that in person workshops are not financially viable without at least 10 attendees. Zoom workshops need at least 6 to keep them on the schedule. The cost of presenters, travel, substitutes and catering has made this hard decision necessary. I hope you will understand and sign up for future PD.

Group and independent book study information is below. Make sure you fill out the online form for both options. See the links in the articles below.

The English Language Development standards are now on our website. This is a new area for MSSA and I hope you will be able to use the information with your students. The Mathematics standards group will meet several times throughout the year, with the new standards ready to go for the 26-27 school year. I am still looking for someone to lead the English Language Arts work. If you are interested, or have a suggestion for me, please reach out.

Thanks for all you do for our students!
Have a great September,

Janelle

September Workshops

Sign up for the September workshops will close on September 4, 2025.

If we do not have at least 10 sign ups for a location it will be necessary to cancel that location.

Title Programs with Jack O'Connor ½ day and **IEFA** with Erin Lipkind ½ day
(Jack will also be available in the afternoon for one-on-one appointments with schools to go over their Title programs, monitoring, etc.)

September 11- Thursday- Miles City- **Cancelled**

September 12- Friday- Lewistown

September 17- Wednesday- Butte

September 19- Friday- Kalispell Sign up on the website and remember to fill out the entire form including if you are staying for lunch. Thank you

Title II-A Language is now on the MSSA Website under the Consortium tab.

MSSA 2025 Book Study Opportunities

This year MSSA will offer two types of book study opportunities.

1. Group book study will read, “ **What Great Teachers Do Differently**” (based on voting from the sign up link and the Standards workshops.) Weekly meetings, for seven weeks, on a book of the group's choice. Hour long discussions. Sixteen professional development hours. Hopefully we will have a Fall and Winter book study this year. I will contact everyone who showed an interest but, if you did not sign up before you can send me a quick email, or just show up at the first Zoom meeting on **September 25, 2025, from 5:30-6:30 PM**. A brief overview of the book is attached. Please purchase your book (3rd edition) and be ready to start our book study on September 25th. The book study will be Thursday's from September 25 to November 13, 2025.

2. Independent reading/work book study. The sign up deadline is September 15, 2025. This offering is for the book, “180 Days of Self-Care For Busy Educators”. You must sign up to get the credit. If you cannot get the link to work, email me with your interest.

You will work independently throughout the year, reading the book and completing the weekly reading and activities. There will be a check in four times throughout the year, at the end of each section of the book, and a final summary paper. The check in will just be a short 2-3 questions about the experience so far and if you are still wanting to continue the independent study. Since this is a year long study, you will receive 12 professional development hours, in June 2026, upon successful completion of the activities and summary. If you would like to sign up for the Independent Study, follow this link.

<https://forms.gle/EPSQqFYt4KhL79ns8>

Then purchase the book and start the work.

Do you need Special Education help in your school or classroom? **Classroom management, case management, how to talk to parents, classroom expectations, etc.**

If you need help in this critical area and don't have onsite SPED staff, please let me know with a quick email. We are researching PD ideas to help solve these issues but really do not know the exact need.

Email me at: jbeers@mt-ssa.org

County Schools Feature

Lewis and Clark County Schools- Part II

Auchard Creek School is located on Milford Colony, as one might describe, in the middle of nowhere, between Wolf Creek and Augusta. With the vast expanse across the highway from the colony, the view of the Rockies from this site is truly breathtaking, no matter the time of year.

Auchard Creek School sits enmeshed in the plain beige metal homes around it. The school building blends in with the nearby homes of the students. The thirteen K -8th students walk or scooter to school, to lunch, and after school to German class. These students have long, busy days, so recess time in their outdoor paradise is a time they enjoy to the fullest. Students of all ages enjoy recess: playing dodgeball, baseball, swinging, or playing tag. A recent outdoor basketball court has provided hours of evening entertainment this summer for the students and colony members.

Educator, Josh Wood, has been commuting 2 hours each day from Great Falls to his teaching position at the Milford Colony, for 25 years. Josh started this position shortly after college and has stayed committed to this job, his students, and the colony members.

Students enter school shortly after they reach their 6th birthday, so young students trickle in throughout the school year. Most students know only a few English words when they start school, as communication at home and around the colony is in German. Mr. Wood begins teaching English to his young students, along with other basic subjects when the students start school. He teaches all subjects, except music and library skills. The colony hires a specialist for these two areas. Mr. Wood obtained his counseling degree a few years back, so he is the supervising teacher, ESL teacher, and the school counselor!

Six kindergartens, all girls, will join the older students this fall, to increase the enrollment of Auchard Creek School enrollment from 13 to 19 for the 2025-26.



MENTOR MONTANA

MentorMT is here for new rural teachers in 2025 and expects to continue well into the future! This is a year of transition: we are enrolling a smaller cohort, but space is still available for 10 to 15 new or underprepared rural teachers. We are asking MSSA and MREA to share this information through your network. Admission will prioritize new teachers who are teaching in remote and/or unfamiliar settings (e.g., colony or multi-grade assignments, emergency and non-endorsed positions, first-year international teachers). Please forward the announcement below to member schools. Thank you!

Grade- and subject-level support for new teachers **Limited space is still available - apply by September 15th**

Are you, a colleague, or a staff member a **new or underprepared teacher** who is...

- Teaching in a **rural** school during their first or second year of teaching?
- Teaching **outside** their grade level or subject area endorsement?
- Teaching on a **provisional** license while working toward full licensure?
- Teaching under **emergency** authorization?
- Teaching through an **international** visa program?

MentorMT uniquely provides:

- One-to-one mentoring that **addresses teachers' needs** and **respects their time**
- Experienced mentors assigned by aligned **grade level and subject area**
- A focus on **content, curriculum, and instructional** support that is non-evaluative
- **No cost to schools** and a **\$500 incentive stipend** for participating teachers
- **Requisite high-quality mentoring** as outlined in [ARM 10.55.723](#)

Priority enrollment for rural schools/districts

Limited space available - enroll now through September 15th

[Information](#) about MentorMT and benefits:

<https://www.montana.edu/crre/mentormt/index.html>

Enrollment form:

https://montana.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6u3yHtFYi0cGv4y

Questions? Contact Jennifer Luebeck, MentorMT Director
Email jennifer.luebeck@montana.edu or call (406) 994-5341
Watch our website grow at www.montana.edu/crre/mentormt

MentorMT is a program of ASPIRE, a grant administered by the Center for Research on Rural Education at Montana State University and funded by Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies

Upcoming Math PD Opportunities

OPI is launching **two monthly webinar series** this school year—designed specifically to support educators in implementing the new math standards.

- **Insightful content** that aligns with the updated standards
- **Monthly continuity**, so teachers can build their confidence over time
- **Recording availability**, making it easy for anyone who can't attend live
- **Professional Development Units** to educators who join for the live sessions

Montana Math: Monthly Math Implementation Series

This free webinar series is designed to support school-based Montana educators through the adoption and implementation of the new standards, effective July 2026. This series will offer practical guidance, job-embedded strategies, support for curriculum alignment efforts, and create a community of professionals engaged in a shared learning experience.

Webinars will occur at 4 PM MT the third Thursday of every month, August 2025 - April 2026. Join us, starting August 21st, from 4-5 pm!

[Register Now!](#)

Big Sky Standards: Real-World Data

[Data Science 4 Everyone](#) is partnering with OPI to bring a free, monthly, professional learning series to Montana's educators.

This series will address why data skills are woven into the new MT math standards, why they matter for students today, how they can drive engagement in the classroom, and so much more!

Join us, starting August 19th, from 4-5 pm!

This series will occur, from August 2025 through April 2026.

[Register Now!](#)

IEFA Virtual Workshop Series from MTPLC

We're excited to invite you to an upcoming virtual workshop series designed to support Montana educators in fulfilling the Indian Education for All (IEFA) requirements.

This thoughtfully curated series offers engaging, standards-aligned sessions that will deepen your understanding of Montana's tribal histories, cultures, and contemporary issues. Facilitated by experienced presenters, each session provides culturally responsive resources, classroom-ready materials, and opportunities for reflective practice—making this a valuable professional learning opportunity whether you're just getting started with IEFA or seeking to enrich existing efforts.

Virtual: Monthly IEFA Professional Development Series: Integrating Indian Education for All 2025 - 2026 Registration

IEFA Virtual Workshop Series Overview

Location: Virtual

OPI Renewal Units: 14 total

Recordings: Each session will be recorded and made available to participants for a limited time after the session.

Workshop Schedule & Topics

IEFA 101

 September 10, 2025 | 4:00–6:00 PM

 Dr. Anna East

Foundations of IEFA, constitutional roots, Essential Understandings, and classroom resources.

Applied IEFA

 October 8, 2025 | 4:00–6:00 PM

 Dr. Anna East

Evaluating curriculum for cultural accuracy and understanding current IEFA-related laws.

Federal Indian Policy Eras

 November 5, 2025 | 4:00–6:00 PM

 Dr. Erin Lipkind

Explore key policy eras and their impacts on tribal communities with age-appropriate classroom applications.

Boarding School Era



January 14, 2026 | 4:00–6:00 PM



Michele McGuire

Investigate the history and legacy of boarding schools using primary sources and adaptable activities.

Resilience, Resurgence, and Activism



February 4, 2026 | 4:00–6:00 PM



Michele McGuire

Highlight Indigenous strength and survival through the lens of authors, artists, and activists.

An Indigenous Peoples' History



March 11, 2026 | 4:00–6:00 PM



Sindie Kennedy

Shift dominant narratives by integrating Indigenous perspectives into U.S. history instruction.

American Indian Sovereignty and Jurisdiction



April 8, 2026 | 4:00–6:00 PM



Dr. Anna East

Understand sovereignty, legal frameworks, and tribal–state–federal relationships.

Pricing Options

Individual Registration

- \$50 per session
- \$225 for access to the full series (all sessions)

School-Wide Pricing (all sessions for all instructional staff):

- 1–5 staff: \$500
- 6–15 staff: \$750
- 16+ staff: \$1,000

Instructional staff includes teachers, paraprofessionals, counselors, specialists, interventionists, and others who work directly with students.

 SSOM Member Discount:

Schools that are members of the School Services of Montana (SSOM) receive **20% off** all pricing tiers.

 [Check if your school is a member](#)

Rusty May Virtual Counseling

Attached is a flyer from Rusty May outlining the services he provides for schools. To learn more including the cost of the programs offered, follow the email links in the flyer.