

NEWS FROM: *Montana Small Schools Alliance*

UPDATE:

August 2023



Message from the Director:

BACK TO SCHOOL!

I hope you have all had a great summer, it's not over yet, but we are heading in that direction. Depending on where you are located in the State, some of you are heading back in the next few days or weeks.

I have had a busy summer with lots of visitors both family and friends. It seems like everyone wants to visit Montana. After several visits to Yellowstone, Museum of the Rockies, and tours in other areas of the State, I really know why they want to come here. It is just so beautiful!

We were fortunate enough to have nice weather, saw lots of animals in the park, and didn't really hit crowds that were out of control. Mind you, there were lots of people, but we found parking spots, places to eat, and plenty of wonderful people watching. Our great niece and nephew were amazed at the animals and the bubbling pots, and our older visitors were in awe at the beauty of our mountains and open landscapes. We really are lucky to live in this great place!

I hope you had some wonderful summer adventures, or some wonderful down time, either is much deserved and much needed.

So, welcome back! Let's get started on a great 2023-2024 school year.

MSSA is of course gearing up for Standards Training, MAPS training, and making sure you are all signed up for what you need this year. This newsletter covers workshop dates, upcoming events, and some news from outside sources for training and resource opportunities.

As you head back to school and check your emails, please feel free to reach out if you forgot to do something, sign up for something, or are unsure of anything. We are here to help you as you get started on another year.

Have a wonderful August, and see you soon,
Janelle

Congratulations to Alexis Nikirk from Spring Creek for winning the 2023 Jules Waber Memorial NREA Travel Award! Alexis will travel to Chattanooga, Tennessee to attend the conference in November.

Standards Workshops for 2023-2024

If you have not signed up and are part of the Standards Programs, you need to do this ASAP, then contact Linda at 406-988-0164 for confirmation!

Dates for this year's Standards Trainings are below.

There will be no make-up sessions next year.

August 9, 2023- Miles City- Miles City Community College

August 11, 2023- Big Timber- Ambulance Barn

August 14, 2023- Kalispell- Red Lion Hotel

August 16, 2023- Helena- U of M Helena Campus

MAPS Training

The date for the 2023 MAPS training has been set.

August 7, 2023 via Zoom

If you haven't signed up and need to contact our office ASAP.

2023-2024 Workshop Dates and Topics

Attached is the updated 2023-2024 workshop dates and topics.

We have had some changes based on presenter availability, and school needs.

The first upcoming change is to the September workshops. There is no Miles City session. There are two in-person workshops in Great Falls and Butte and one Zoom session. Please review the dates.

Topics still include everything from Teacher Resiliency and Stress Management, IEFA Classroom Lessons, OPI Assistance in Monitoring, Grants and Title Programs, How to use the newly OPI approved Discovery Education curriculum and materials, Writing Across the Curriculum, Stress Management and Resiliency, Brain Development, Trauma, and Balance Strategies and Tools as well as Engagement Strategies, How to use NWEA Data for future planning, and Aligning Unit and Lesson Plans for a variety of curricular areas. This year's offerings are full of variety and are timely and necessary professional development opportunities. **Check out the attached workshop flier!**

Montana Cares Changes and Next Steps

Welcome to our new Mental Health Resource Navigator, Cindy Fouhy. Cindy joined our grant work in late July (replacing Kelsey McGill) and is ready to hit the ground running so our member schools can take advantage of all the benefits of Montana Cares and the grant resources.

Thank you to our early adopters and those who have shown interest in the Stop Act Grant work. If you are interested but were waiting until the start of another school year, now is the time! Contact Cindy Fouhy at MHRN@wmpic.org or call 406-880-9123, or contact me and we will get you connected. More information will be available at the August Standards and September workshops. Services from Mandt training, classroom counseling and lessons, e-therapy, and parent resources are all available completely free to MSSA member schools. This is a great opportunity for your students!

Discovery Education

Discovery Education and the Montana Office of Public Instruction have partnered to provide all K-12 public school teachers in the state of Montana with open access to the Discovery Education Experience for two years. This partnership includes open access to Experience along with free professional learning. To sign up for this free resource, visit the following website ([Montana Partnership Resources | Discovery Education](#)) and fill out the form to receive open access to Discovery Education Experience. For more information you may contact Allison Nys at anys@discoveryed.com or 406.281.1390.

School Safety Training Opportunity

The Montana Safe Schools Center (MSSC), in collaboration with the University of Montana Police Department, are happy to offer a FREE online training on August 15, that will cover a variety of school safety-related topics, allowing school professionals to increase their own knowledge and skills around the topics, as well as identify potential holes and necessary supports in their school building and communities. Target school professionals include superintendents, administrators, school counselors, school psychologists, and others involved in school safety teams.

August 15, 2023

The schedule is as follows:

9:00-11:00a: ALERRT (Brad Giffin, UMPD Chief) -- best practice for armed intruder / active shooter training

11:00-12:00p: Emergency Operations Planning (EOPs; Tina Eblen, MSSC Training Support Specialist)

12:00-1:00p: Lunch Break

1:00p-2:00p: Standard Response Protocols (SRPs; Emily Sallee, MSSC Executive Director)

2:00p-4:00p: Reunification Protocols (Nancy Berg, MSSC Assistant Director)

All participants are eligible to receive 6 OPI CEUs from the MSSC.

Register [HERE](#) -->

<https://umontana.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJAocuirpjwoHdSiaOWchNOhMwni-3RKVL5H>

NWEA Updates and Questions

Some of you have reached out with concerns regarding the NWEA, MAPS testing changes you have heard about. I know some Districts received letters and others did not. We have reached out to NWEA and have some answers for you. I hope this helps alleviate some of the anxiety you have felt about the “new program” as you start the school year.

Directly from NWEA:

“I am assuming the “new program” you are referencing is the [new algorithm MAP tests](#). (Click the previous link for a visual of the new algorithm.) First of all, your schools will not lose any data. The algorithm is very exciting in making MAP even more precise. Test questions will still adapt and be on the student’s RIT level needed. With the new algorithm, the test will look first for questions in the RIT level that is from that student’s grade.

You can see all the information on upcoming updates on the connection page, [Product Update \(nwea.org\)](#). There are also [videos on the updates](#).”

If you click on the Product Update link above, or the videos link you will find great information, and all of your questions should be answered.

Please reach out if you still have questions.

Graduate Profiles

If you are concerned about Graduate Profiles and how to begin this work, July’s OPI Compass Shared the following information. If this is something you would like MSSA to consider for a workshop topic, please let me know.

OPI held a Graduate Profile Educational Summit on April 14, 2023 for Montana schools. Watch the recording [here](#).

A Stakeholder Review composed of school and community leaders will convene to discuss the new 4-point system to ensure that Montana schools can understand the new system.

The 4-point includes:

- 1. Family and Community Engagement*
- 2. Professional Development*
- 3. Academic Programming including how the education program enables students to recognize the district and unique cultural heritages of American Indians*
- 4. Assurance checklist for required accreditation policies*

The Stakeholder Review will meet eleven times between July 2023 and March 2024 via Zoom:

- July 27, 2023*
- August 9, 10, and 15, 2023*
- September 11 and 18, 2023*
- October 16, 2023*
- November 20, 2023*
- January 8, 2024*
- February 12, 2024*

- *March 11, 2024*

OPI will offer multiple work sessions offered to parents, teachers, and school leaders:

- *July 25 and 26, 2023 at the Great Northern Hotel in Helena*
- *August 14, 2023 via Zoom*
- *September 28 and 29, 2023 at Lockwood High School*
- *October 18-20, 2023 during the Montana Conference of Education Leadership (MCEL) Conference in Helena*
- *November, TBD at Montana Tech in Butte*
- *January 25 and 26, 2024 at the Great Falls Public Schools Office*
- *February 20-22, 2024 via Zoom*
- *March 1 and 5-7 via Zoom*

More details on the work sessions are available [here](#).

For more information, please contact Crystal Andrews, Accreditation and Licensure Manager, at crystal.andrews@mt.gov.