

NEWS FROM: *Montana Small Schools Alliance*

UPDATE: April 2023

Message from the Director:

Happy Easter!

I had the opportunity last weekend to attend the Reba concert in Boise. I have long been a Reba fan and the concert was something I have always wanted to do. It did not disappoint! She was energetic, full of life, and belted out song after song. I realize many of you might not be country music fans but regardless of the genre you prefer, it is pretty amazing that someone can still perform at such a high level after over a 40 plus years career. That truly takes a level of professionalism that you don't find everyday.

But wait, yes, you do see that everyday. In fact, you are that professional. You are the one who performs full of life, who is energetic, and who belts out that lesson day after day! And, you do not disappoint. You bring that zest for learning, that focus on what is important, that structure to our student's lives September through May without expecting anything in return. Definitely not for the millions that Reba is making, and definitely not for the recognition.

Even though my Reba concert experience was amazing, it is you who truly bring the magic to your students every day. If I had my way, you would be pulling in the big bucks and getting the recognition you deserve. Since I can't control that, please know that you are appreciated and respected. If I, and MSSA, can do things to make your work easier please let me know. Because you really are the STARS of the show!

Thanks for all you do,
Janelle

Montana Cares Help App Now Available for Sign Up

Thank you to our early adopters and those who have shown interest in the Stop Act Grant work. If you are interested in signing on to the Montana Cares work please contact myself, or our Resource Navigator, Kelsey McGill at kmcgill@wmplc.org. More information will be available at the April workshops and at the August Standards workshops. This opportunity is completely free to MSSA member schools.

April Workshops In Person and Zoom Dates

Register Now!

The format for the April workshops has changed to include one Zoom option, and three in person sessions.

Mathematics Instruction

April 14, 2023- Miles City (Miles Community College)

April 17, 2023- Big Timber (Ambulance Station)

April 18, 2023- Zoom

April 20, 2023- Butte (Copper King Hotel and Convention Center)

Standards Workshops for 2023-2024

Dates for next year's Standards Trainings are below.

Make sure you put these on the calendar, and make sure if you are part of the Library or Counseling Standards Program that a licensed teacher from your school attends. There will be no make-up sessions next year.

August 9, 2023- Miles City

August 11, 2023- Big Timber

August 14, 2023- Kalispell

August 16, 2023- Helena

2023-2024 Workshop Dates and Topics

Attached is the 2023-2024 workshop dates and topics.

Please put these in your calendar and plan to attend the workshops for next year.

We have some great topics and presenters. Everything from Teacher Resiliency and Stress Management to Writing Across the Curriculum, How to Use the NWEA Data, and Classroom Counseling and Coping Techniques. You won't want to miss these timely and necessary professional development opportunities.

MAPS Training

The date for the 2023 MAPS training has been set.

August 7, 2023 via Zoom

Add this to your calendar now

Hutterite Colony Educator Conference 2023

The 2023 Hutterite Conference will be August 10, 2023 at the Great Falls College- MSU. For more information go to www.gtccmt.org.

MSSA and Board Policies

Just a reminder that MSSA no longer provides Board Policies to our schools. We stopped providing this service last year when we found out we did not have the legal authority to provide these policies. Small schools can join the Montana School Boards Association for a fee and receive their small schools policies and the legal advice that comes from that membership.

OPI Accreditation Feedback Sessions

OPI is seeking stakeholder involvement in the upcoming changes to the accreditation process for Montana school districts. They have already held four sessions and have two remaining, April 11 and April 17. Link for Sessions: <https://opi.mt.gov/Portals/182/Page%20Files/School%20Accreditation/Feedback%20Session%20Zoom%20Links%20Access.pdf>

Chapter 55: School Accreditation

During the March 9-10 Board of Public Education (BPE) meeting the board approved the recommended changes to Chapter 55. BPE has offered the following pertaining to the graduation requirements:

Delayed Effective Date under consideration for new Graduation Requirements:

The Board of Public Education's recently adopted rules for Title 10, Chapter 55, Standards of Accreditation, include new graduation requirements for:

- ½ unit of economics or financial literacy within the 2 units of social studies, the 2 units of mathematics, or the 1 unit of career and technical education; and
- ½ unit of civics or government within the 2 units of social studies.

In response to comments from school districts, and in consultation with the Office of Public Instruction, the Board of Public Instruction is considering a proposal to set a delayed effective date for these new graduation requirements. To make this change, the Board will need to hold a special board meeting to approve an amended notice of adoption for Rule 10.55.905. The Board plans to meet to consider this amendment in early April.

Student Mental Health

In 2021, over 41% of high school students reported feeling sad or hopeless (Montana YRBS, 2021), the highest rate ever reported in the state of Montana. In the same year, nearly a quarter (23%) of high school students reported seriously considering suicide and over 10% actually made a suicide attempt (Montana YRBS, 2021). For all age groups, Montana has ranked in the top five for suicide rates in the nation for the past thirty years (Montana DPHHS, 20202).

Despite these stark numbers, schools across the state are taking important steps to support student mental health. At the Office of Public Instruction, we are working to highlight some of the successful programs being implemented in Montana's schools to improve the mental health of their students, elevate the voices of students, and bring a message of hope and encouragement to continue to keep the mental health of students as a top priority in the state of Montana. We graciously thank the students and school staff who helped make this video possible, and all the students and school staff from across the state who are working tirelessly to support student mental health and wellness.

Please visit the OPI's [School Mental Health website](#) for more information and resources.

Western Regional Threat Assessment Training

The Montana State University Police Department and the Association of Threat Assessment Professionals, Northwest and Great Lake chapters are excited to announce that registration is open for the 2023 Western Regional Joint Threat Assessment Training May 31-June 1, 2023.

This event will bring some of the best speakers and presenters that the threat assessment discipline has to offer and promises amazing networking opportunities. We know that you receive frequent training opportunities and want to take a moment to explain how this training is different.

The Association of Threat Assessment Professionals (ATAP) is a multidisciplinary non-profit organization comprised of law enforcement, prosecutors, school leadership, mental health professionals, corporate security professionals, probation and parole personnel, human resource professionals and others involved in threat violence risk assessment. ATAP's membership is composed of experts in these areas, and they take pride in affording their

members a professional and educational environment to exchange ideas and strategies to address such issues as stalking and domestic violence prevention, threats of violence, violence prevention, and homeland security. This training will provide attendees with the opportunity to learn from this shared expertise.

This year we are also very excited to partner with the Montana Disaster & Emergency Services and Montana Analysis and Technical Information Center to offer free registration for the first 100 Montana public employees including police officers, public school employees, firefighters, and more. This is possible because of the Homeland Security Grant Program. Please click on the registration link for more information and to see if you qualify. To register, please click [here](#).

“No winter lasts forever; no spring skips its turn.” Hal Borland