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**Western Montana Professional Learning Collaborative Partners with
Montana Small School Alliance to Increase Equity of Student Services**

***Receives Federal Grant to Deliver Resources and Services
to Montana's Underserved Schools***

Lolo, MT. October 13, 2022– [Western Montana Professional Learning Collaborative](#) (WMPCLC) partnering with the [Montana Small School Alliance](#) (MSSA) announces they have received Federal funding to increase the equity of student services for rural, tribal, and frontier schools across the state of Montana. The WMPCLC/MSSA partnership aims to serve nearly 150 small school and frontier member districts, as well as tribal schools, by providing counseling supports, mental health services, and proven violence prevention tools desperately needed by students, staff, and families across Montana. The grant will help fund increased access to basic needs resources, trauma-informed care, school counselors, e-therapy assessments, and treatment.

Montana schools have faced a lack of equitable resources, low student enrollment, inadequate financial resources, and difficulty recruiting qualified educators and mental health resources. This has increased the need to improve and provide equitable school-based mental health support and other resources to prevent school violence and student mental health issues. The 2021 Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey shared that in a one-year time frame, 8.9% of Montana students carried a gun on one or more days (not counting for hunting or for sport.) In that same time frame 23.4% of students seriously considered attempting suicide and 41.4% of students felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that they stopped doing some of their usual activities.

“As a school professional, it’s personal. There is a strong and growing need to improve and provide equitable school-based mental health support and other resources to prevent school violence and mental health concerns in rural settings,” said Jessica Johnson from WMPCLC. “Students are being trained to run, hide or fight for their lives at school. We must focus on a continued dialogue on improving student wellness with a stronger focus on prevention. With this Federal grant, we will look to meet critical needs in rural, tribal, and frontier schools, to better support our students.”

The project will improve schools’ access to skilled counseling services, social-emotional supports and content, a trauma and neuroscience-informed curriculum, mental health

assessments and treatment, and strategic plans for sustaining these resources. The grant will help fund and resource linkage app, e-therapy assessments and treatment, direct access to CrisisTextLine, and a full-time credentialed School Counselor to serve as the Mental Health Resource Navigator.

About WMPLC and MSSA

Western Montana Professional Learning Collaborative is a 501(c)3 organized to provide high-quality professional development opportunities and services which support communities of lifelong learners to achieve successful outcomes for youth. Together with its predecessor organization, WMPLC has been providing services to Montana schools for over 24 years and has a strong history and success in sustaining programs that meet critical school needs.

Montana Small Schools Alliance is a nonprofit organization representing over nearly 150 rural/frontier schools in Montana. Since 1996, the Alliance has provided workshops to frontier and rural school districts, helping them create curriculum, instruction, and assessments, and to meet state and federal standards.