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Office of the Superintendent

Updates in Montana Education

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays from the Office of Public Instruction! We thank you for putting Montana students first this year and we look forward to serving you again in 2019!

School Safety

1. The OPI is hosting a school safety summit at 2:30pm on Monday, January 7th in the Old Supreme Court Chambers of the Capitol Building. The purpose is to provide legislators with a variety of perspectives on school safety as the 2019 Legislative Session kicks off. A panel consisting of large schools, small schools, tribal schools, and law enforcement will discuss best practices and then there will be an opportunity for dialogue. The event is open to the public and will be live streamed at leg.mt.gov.
2. The [Federal Commission on School Safety](#) released their [final report](#) on December 18th. Superintendent Arntzen participated in a roundtable at the White House to discuss the report along with President Trump, Secretary DeVos, and other officials. [ABC Fox Montana](#) and others covered the event.

OPI Legislative Priorities

A comparison of the OPI's proposed budget in relation to the Governor's proposed budget along with the OPI's legislative priorities can be found on the OPI's website: <http://opi.mt.gov/Leadership/Finance-Grants/Legislative-Updates>.

Superintendent's December Events

- Hour of Code [event](#) with Helena Middle School
- [Library Commission](#) meeting
- Menorah lighting ceremony at the Capitol
- Federal Commission on School Safety roundtable and meetings with Montana's Congressional delegation
- Radio appearance on Montana Talks
- Recurring [Land Board](#) and [Education Advocates](#)

Follow the Office of Public Instruction on social media:  

For more information, contact dylan.klapmeier@mt.gov or 406-444-3559



- **Family, student, and community engagement**
- **Safety, mental health, and suicide prevention**



- **Celebrating teacher excellence and extending leadership opportunities**
- **Teacher retention and recruitment**



- **Closing achievement gaps**
- **Improving math and reading with a focus on middle school**



- **Expanding industry, military, and post-secondary partnerships**
- **STEM, CTE, and workforce development emphasis beginning in middle school**

Federal/ESSA Update

ESSA Report Card

To avoid confusion and allow more time for the development of our state, district, and school report cards, **Montana will not be releasing ESSA report cards displaying 2016-2017 school year data this December.** With the added time for the release of report cards, the OPI will:

- Further review feedback and updated report card guidance received by the Department of Education on December 6th (Montana plans to put only the required information on report cards).
- The OPI will finalize the upload and programming of the 2015-2016 CRDC data the OPI received from the DOE in late September which is required to be on the 2017-2018 report cards.
- Utilize the time to reach out to parents and our partners in education for further input on state, district, and school level report cards as well as the detail pages.
- Develop various levels of webinars on understanding and analyzing the report cards.

The new comprehensive, targeted, and universal ESSA designations will be released after running the accountability system and the report cards with 2017-2018 data will follow in early spring of 2019. Annually, the report cards will be released notifying schools, families, and communities of school; district; and state-level performance as well as ESSA designations. Schools and districts will have the opportunity to review the report card before the public release. Schools and districts will be given a template to design a cover letter highlighting strengths; an area they will be working on, with a call to action to the community; and a local data point to share information not included in the ESSA report card.

New report card drafts will be coming soon, and we look forward to receiving your continued feedback. Thank you for your input!



Accreditation and Educator Preparation

Application Due Date for Variances to Standards: March 4, 2019

The Board of Public Education rule, “Variances to Standards” (ARM 10.55.604), allows accredited schools to implement a variance to standards designed to meet or exceed results under established standards. Implementation of the variances to standards will be in September 2019. Districts interested in seeking a variance to a standard must submit a [Variances to Standards application](#) by March 4, 2019.

The variance to standards rule requires local boards of trustees to produce evidence of local public participation and evidence that the board officially approved the variance to standards application before submission to the Variances to Standards Review Board. For more information, contact [Patty Muir](#), 406-444-4317 or [Linda Vrooman Peterson](#), 406-444-5726.

Content Standards and Instruction

Teacher Learning Hub – New Courses, New Year

New Pathway: Foundational Skills

[Through this pathway](#), developed specifically for K-5 educators, participants will develop an understanding of the foundational skills in the Montana Content Standards. Each course focuses on learning to assess, planning to teach, teaching and re-assessing the following skills: print concepts, phonological awareness, phonics and word recognition, and fluency. The introductory course in this pathway is a prerequisite but participants may pick and choose from the others.

- Introduction to Foundational Skills & Montana Content Standards (1 OPI renewal unit)
- Foundational Skills: Print Concepts (1 OPI renewal unit)
- Foundational Skills: Phonological Awareness (2 OPI renewal units)
- Foundational Skills: Phonics and Word Recognition (3 OPI renewal units)
- Foundational Skills: Fluency (2 OPI renewal units)

Upcoming Facilitated Courses

Registration will open December 17th for our January Facilitated courses! Be sure to enroll before these courses fill up!

- GSuite Advanced: January 7 - February 15 (20 OPI renewal units)
- Student Created Digital Portfolios: January 7 - February 3 (15 OPI renewal units)
- STREAM: Developing Fraction Sense (3-5): January 6-25 (15 OPI renewal units)
- STREAM: Transformations and Proofs (HS): January 6-25 (15 OPI renewal units)
- STREAM: Number Systems and Operations (K-3): January 6-25 (15 OPI renewal units)
- STREAM: Number Systems and Operations (4-7): January 6-25 (15 OPI renewal units)
 - Registration for this January course will open on December 31st.
- 3D Science Implementation Mentorship: January 21 - March 1 (24 OPI renewal units)

Hub Upgrades - Temporary Outage

The Hub will be temporarily unavailable Monday, December 31st from 8am-12pm for the Hub Team to perform upgrades. Keep this in mind if you plan to work on any courses on this day. Visit the site that afternoon to check out the Hub's new look!

Learning Opportunities Portal

The [Learning Opportunities Portal](#) is filling up with upcoming professional development events, both online and in person. It isn't too early to look ahead to spring and summer 2019 to plan your professional development opportunities! For more information, contact [Colet Bartow](#) 406-444-3583

Educational Opportunity and Equity

Sesame Street Initiative on Family homelessness

On December 12, 2018, Sesame Street Workshop launched [a national initiative on family and child homelessness](#) to bring awareness and support to young children and their parents who are homeless, and those who serve them, including early childhood programs, schools, and service providers. The new resources include a storybook, videos, activities, and materials.

To help providers quickly and effectively leverage Sesame Street's resources in the context of their specific work, SchoolHouse Connection produced [suggested tip sheets organized by roles](#): school district homeless liaisons, early childhood programs, and homeless assistance and housing programs. For more information, contact Heather Denny at hdenny@mt.gov or 406-444-2036.

School Finance

Planning for School Closures

There are a wide variety of reasons that may drive the decisions to close a school. After that decision has been made and the closure is facilitated for staff, students, and the community, there are several other topics that will need the consideration of the district administration and the local Board of Trustees. School districts who need to plan or prepare for school closures, please reference the Emergency School Closures guidance located on the website [HERE](#). For additional information please contact our Legal Division at 444-4402 or School Finance at 444-3249.

School Finance Webinar – January 2019 Audits

The January 2019 school finance webinar will address school district audits presented by Dan Moody. The webinar will occur on the last Wednesday of the month, January 30, 2019, at 10:00 am and requires you to call into a phone line and use your computer to follow along. This discussion will include risk assessments, what they mean and why we have them, as well as a review of the most common audit comments and resources to assist school districts. To sign up for the webinar, please contact Debbie Casey at dcasey@mt.gov or 444-3096.

Staff Name Change

One of the school finance division staff has changed names from Kara Sperle to Kara Flath. Please note the new e-mail address of Kara.Flath@mt.gov.

School Elections

Candidate filing continues through Thursday, March 29. No signatures are required for a candidate's name to appear on the ballot. Please verify the candidate's signature on the Declaration of Intent and Oath of Candidacy with the county election administrator and verify the candidate's voter registration status. The deadline for passage of all election resolutions is Tuesday, February 27.

As this is a legislative year, districts may, in accordance with 20-20-105(5), MCA, hold an election for general fund financing on a date other than the regular school election day. However, districts must still meet the same deadlines for holding a regular school election, including passage of the election resolution at least 70 days before election day. Custom election calendars may be created for elections outside the regular school election day upon request. If the district is planning to conduct the election by mail ballot, the deadline to submit a mail ballot plan to the Secretary of State is Friday, March 9.

The Election Handbook and Calendar are available on the [OPI School Finance Election Resources](#) webpage. For more information, contact Nicole Thuotte, nthuotte@mt.gov 406-444-4524.

Impact Aid

The deadline to submit 2019 Impact Aid applications is Wednesday, January 31st, 2019 at 9:59 pm, Mountain Standard Time. Applications are submitted electronically through the G5 electronic application. Applicants must also submit their signature page, assurances and their Indian Policies and Procedures (IPP) document (if applicable) by the application deadline. Applications submitted after the deadline are subject to a late payment penalty of 10%. Applications more than 60 days late will not be accepted.

Data sheets are available on the OPI webpage, under Title & Other Federal Programs and select [Impact Aid](#). The survey date may be any day between the 4th day of school and January 31st. Please be sure to use the most recent survey/source check forms available on the U.S Department of Education (DOE) webpage. Any variations to those forms must be approved by a DOE analyst. After submitting the application through G5, districts are required to send a copy to the OPI for review. Applications may be sent via email, fax or regular mail to the addresses below: Email: nthuotte@mt.gov Fax: (406) 444-0509 Regular Mail: PO Box 202509, Helena, MT 59620. For more information, contact Nicole Thuotte, nthuotte@mt.gov 406-444-4524

2nd Semester Bus Inspections

Second semester school bus inspections must be performed by the Montana Highway Patrol by the end of January 31, 2019. Only school buses that pass inspection may be used to transport students, and only school buses that pass inspection will receive state and county transportation reimbursement. Type E buses must also be inspected by the highway patrol. For the Type E buses, please use the Inspection Form TR13A. A school bus that fails to pass inspection will not be eligible for state and county reimbursement until the bus is re-inspected and approved by the inspecting officer. The school district is responsible for contacting the Montana Highway Patrol for bus inspections. The TR13 and TR13A Bus Inspection forms can be accessed through the Pupil Transportation Program. You will need to use your user name and password to log in. For questions or assistance with entering inspections in the Pupil Transportation Program, please contact Donell Rosenthal at (406) 444-3024 or email drosenthal@mt.gov

Official Enrollment Count Date

The official spring count day is Monday, February 4, 2019. MAEFAIRS Student Count for ANB must be submitted no later than Friday, February 8, 2019. This reporting period is necessary to allow the School Finance Division the time needed to issue Preliminary Budget Data Sheets by the March 1st deadline. Extenuating circumstances for students who will be gone 10 days prior to the count date, but which would support a variance, should be submitted to the OPI prior to the official enrollment count date for consideration of inclusion of the student in the enrollment count for ANB purposes beyond the 10th day of absence.

For MAEFAIRS questions, or to correct data once it has been submitted, please contact Nica Merala at 406-444-4401 or nmerala@mt.gov.

For AIM questions, including how to correct student information in order to be included in the MAEFAIRS Student Count for ANB, please contact the AIM Helpdesk at 1-877-424-6681, or locally at 406-444-3800 or opiaimhelp@mt.gov. For more information, contact Nica Merala, 406-444-4401

Health Enhancement and Safety

21st CCLC Grant Guidance for 2019 Available

The grant guidance and training video for the spring 2019 competition for 21st Century Community Learning Center funding is now posted on the OPI website at <http://opi.mt.gov/Leadership/Academic-Success/After-School-Programs>. If you are interested in competing in the next round of funding, this training video and grant guidance document includes important information regarding application completion. For more information, contact Mary Ellen Earnhardt at mearnhardt@mt.gov or Tracy Moseman at tmoseman@mt.gov 406-444-3000

Green Ribbon Applications Available

Applications are now available to schools that would like to be considered for the U.S. Department of Education's Green Ribbon Schools designation. More information can be found on OPI's [website](#).

DOJ/OPI Missing Children Poster Contest

The Montana Department of Justice (DOJ) and the OPI are working together to give Montana students the opportunity to participate in state and national poster contests which focus on the theme of "Bringing Our Missing Children Home." More details can be found on [DOJ's website](#).

School Nutrition Programs

- January Webinar Wednesdays include: January 9- Administrative Review Process; and January 23- Afterschool Snack Programs and 21st Century Programs.
For more information, <http://opi.mt.gov/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=K9352s7PIBI%3d&portalid=182>
- January Harvest of the Month is lentils.
For more information, <http://www.montana.edu/mtfarmtoschool/index.html>

Board of Crime Control School Grants

MBCC is soliciting proposals for programs providing direct services to youth victims of crime; to be funded by the U.S. DOJ, Office for Victims of Crime. VOCA Federal Guidelines state that services are defined as those efforts that 1) respond to the emotional and physical needs of crime victims; 2) assist primary and secondary victims of crime to stabilize their lives after a victimization; 3) assist victims to understand and participate in the criminal justice system; and 4) provide victims of crime with a measure of safety and security. For the purposes of this program, a crime victim is a "person who has suffered physical, sexual, financial, or emotional harm as a result of the commission of a crime" and a youth is defined as a person between the ages of birth and 21 years of age. For more information, visit MBCC's [website](#).

School Safety Transfers (Local Flexibility Opportunity)

Section 20-9-236, MCA, allows school districts to transfer state or local revenue from any budgeted or non-budgeted fund, other than the Debt Service Fund or Retirement Fund, to the Building Reserve Fund. If transfers are made from budgeted funds, the district may not “spike” its non-voted levy to restore the transferred funds. The amount transferred may not exceed the school district’s estimated costs of improvements to school safety and security as follows:

- planning for improvements to school safety including but not limited to the cost of services provided by architects, engineers, and other consultants; “other consultants” provide school districts with latitude in determining what will best enhance school safety which may include school resource officers, active shooter training for staff/students, threat assessments, or restorative justice programs;
- installing or updating locking mechanisms and ingress and egress systems at public school access points;
- installing or updating bullet-resistant windows and barriers, and;
- installing or updating emergency response systems using contemporary technologies (which allows upgrade of the district’s IT backbone).

Indian Education

IEFA Advocacy Award

The Indian Education for All Unit of the Office of Public Instruction is soliciting nominations for an important opportunity – the 8th Advocacy Award for Excellence in Indian Education for All (IEFA), in honor of one of Montana’s finest educators, Teresa Veltkamp. Teresa was a classroom teacher and Indian Education Specialist at the Office of Public Instruction who was passionate and inspirational in her efforts to ensure and support the highest levels of implementation of IEFA in Montana.

Please consider this opportunity to acknowledge and honor an outstanding educator’s efforts in the promotion of and steadfast support for IEFA. The nominee should be an exceptionally skillful, dedicated teacher who has earned the respect of students and colleagues. The award will be presented during the 13th annual IEFA Best Practices Conference Cultural Continuum, Saturday, March 2, 2019, at Carroll College, Helena. Nominations must be received by NOON on Thursday, January 24, 2019. The nomination form can be found [here](#).

Rotunda Day

The Indian Education for All (IEFA) Unit of the Office of Public Instruction is hosting its biennial IEFA Showcase Rotunda Day on Friday, January 18, 2019, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Dedicated educators who have won the IEFA Advocacy Award will have booths at the capitol rotunda showcasing their implementation of Indian Education for All into their classroom curriculum and pedagogy. For more information, contact Stephen Morsette at (406) 444-0754 or smorsette@mt.gov.

ESSA Tribal Consultation

The Indian Student Achievement Unit of the Office of Public Instruction, along with the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes, will host a summit regarding tribal consultation and what it means for tribes and school districts under the Every Student Succeeds Act. This will take place February 7-8, 2019, at Salish Kootenai College, Pablo. For more information and registration, contact Michelle Mitchell at (406) 444-3013 or michelle.mitchell@mt.gov.

IEFA Best Practices Conference

The 13th Annual Indian Education for All Best Practices Conference will be held March 2-3, 2019, at Carroll College, 1601 North Benton Ave, Helena.

- Saturday, March 2 – Mini-Institute Session 1 - 12:00 – 3:30 p.m., with registration starting at 11:00 a.m. The Cultural Continuum and IEFA Advocacy Award presentation will follow, 3:45 – 4:25 p.m.
- Sunday, March 3 – Mini-Institute Sessions 2 & 3 - 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., with registration starting at 7:30 a.m., lunch will be provided.

Register [here](#). The cost for the conference is \$60 or \$30 for one day. For more information, contact Jennifer Stadum at (406) 444-0725, jstadum@mt.gov, or Joan Franke at (406) 444-3694, jfranke@mt.gov.

Measurement and Accountability

2019 OPI Data and Assessment Conference

The OPI Assessment Division has opened registration for the annual OPI Data and Assessment Conference. The conference will be held January 14-15, 2019 at the GrandTree Inn in Bozeman, Montana. A keynote presentation by Dr. Jim Pellegrino will be followed by one and a half days of sessions including topics such as current practices, building local comprehensive balanced assessment systems, and highlights of what's to come in 2020. Interested parties can register on the [MT OPI Assessment Conference page](#). For more information or questions about the conference, contact the OPI Assessment Help Desk at 1.844.867.2569 or OPIAssessmentHelpDesk@mt.gov.

MontCAS

This month, the OPI Assessment Division asked System Test Coordinators (STC) to affirm their compliance with test security policies and set assessment dates on the [MontCAS Application](#). The [MontCAS Application](#) is a restricted-use website that contains information on the state-required MontCAS summative assessments intended for use by the STC. A [Test Security Collection Schedule](#) is located on the OPI Statewide Testing pages of the OPI website. If you have any questions about the MontCAS Application or the collection schedule, please contact the OPI Assessment Help Desk at 1.844.867.2569 or OPIAssessmentHelpDesk@mt.gov.

Access for ELLs 2.0

The test window for the ACCESS for ELLs assessment opened on December 5 and will remain open through January 30, 2019 for administration of Montana's English language proficiency assessment. The ACCESS for ELLs is used to help monitor EL progress in Grades K-12 toward English language proficiency according to Montana's proficiency criteria. If you have questions about the ACCESS for ELLs assessment, contact the OPI Assessment Help Desk at 1.844.867.2569 or OPIAssessmentHelpDesk@mt.gov.

Student Support Services

Discipline Reporting in AIM

Every school in each district must enter all discipline data in their local AIM site. This report is due by the end of business day on Sunday, June 30, 2019. Events that meet the following criteria must be reported. Any event that taking place during the reporting period that:

- results in an out-of-school suspension or expulsion, regardless of the length of time, for any enrolled student; or
- results in an in-school suspension, regardless of the length of time, for an enrolled student with a disability.

In-school suspensions may also be entered for general education students; however, only the special education events are required for federal reporting. For more information, contact Mary Graff at mgraff@mt.gov or 406-444-0685