



## OPI Navigator

November 26, 2021

Welcome back to the *Navigator*! The OPI is providing this newsletter to legislators every six weeks to keep you updated on current events and ongoing education-related issues in Montana. The next *Navigator* will be sent to you in January 2022.



Teacher of the Year Bill Stockton was recognized at the 2021 Brawl of the Wild on Saturday November 20.

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### Senator Ellsworth and Superintendent Elsie Arntzen Announced a Planned Education-Focused Broadband Hire

Jason Ellsworth, R-Hamilton, and Superintendent Arntzen announced on November 17<sup>th</sup> that the state will hire a broadband outreach coordinator focused on the internet needs of Montana Schools. Montana's American Rescue Plan Act Communications Commission is leading the unprecedented investment in Big Sky Country's broadband infrastructure.

***"We're going to leverage this once-in-a-generation investment to make sure kids throughout Montana have access to 21<sup>st</sup> Century resources," Ellsworth said. "We're committed to improving education and providing more options and flexibility for parents to raise their kids with the tools they need to learn and succeed in the modern world."***

### Final State Assessment Results were Released for School Year 2020-2021

Superintendent Elsie Arntzen announced on November 17<sup>th</sup> that the Montana statewide federally mandated summative end-of-year assessment results for the school year 2020 to

2021 were [available](#). The Montana OPI recognizes the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. [Test results](#) reflect the unique instructional circumstances and challenges of these past two years.

***“During the past school year, every one of our over-800 schools faced unique circumstances and challenges,”*** stated Superintendent Elsie Arntzen. ***“These aggregate state scores continue to reflect a wide variation in the learning outcomes of our students.”***

## Preliminary Enrollment for Autumn of 2021

[Preliminary Enrollment numbers](#) are now available for the autumn of 2021. Additional enrollment numbers will be finalized in the spring.

***These preliminary enrollment numbers reflect that Montana is seeing students return to our public schools from the 2020-2021 school year when the pandemic dramatically impacted our schools, communities, families, and children,”*** State Superintendent Arntzen said.

## Montana MAST Pilot

The Montana Alternative Student Testing Pilot (MAST Pilot) is a pilot program operating with selected school districts. The MAST pilot will provide a system to support school choice and alternative interim assessments outside of the current end-of-year summative. Thus far, there has been significant support among school leaders and the OPI is working to determine pathways of implementing alternative assessments while complying with federal regulations and the needs of our school districts.

Current avenues for alternative assessment piloting include:

- Smarter Balance Interim Comprehensive Assessment for student assessment
- A New Build working with NWEA or New Meridian
- Independent federal feasibility study

Montana is the first state in the nation to undertake a proposed study like this, intending to seek federal support for school districts and administrators to select preferred assessment systems.

For more information, click [here](#).

## ESSER Interim Final Rule Public Comment

The federal government has released an updated Interim Final Rule for public comment regarding ESSER data collection. Currently, it is estimated that there will be over 140 annual burden hours per response to submit the requested data-collection for ESSER I, ESSER II, and ARP ESSER, funding. The period of public comment closes Monday, October 29<sup>th</sup>.

Formal public comment may be made regarding Agency Information Collection Activities; Submission to the Office of Management and Budget Review for Approval Regarding the ESSER I/ESSER II/ ARP ESSER Fund may be submitted [here](#).

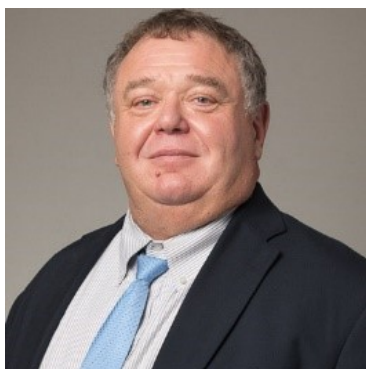
## Updates in the Comprehensive School and Community Treatment Program (CSCT): House Bill 671



[HB 671](#) is an act providing \$2.2 million in bridge funding with an expenditure of \$1,050,000. As of November 15<sup>th</sup>, another \$180,000 is in the queue and still to be paid. This will leave just under \$1,000,000.00 before bridge funding is exhausted. All CSCT districts have been sent the IGT MOU that the OPI & DPHHS have signed. It now requires each district that is participating to get Medicaid-Medicare reimbursement to execute the MOU and return it to the OPI.

The OPI and DPHHS continue to provide regular updates for districts on CSCT processes. The next CSCT webinar will be held on December 13, 2021.

For more information, see [House Bill 671](#).



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## Montana School Law Conference

The OPI held its first-ever virtual Montana School Law Conference on November 16. We would like to thank our presenters:

- Peter Zamora - Federal Legislative Updates
- Yong Zhao - How to Avoid the Learning Loss Trap
- Brent Mead - Montana Legislative Updates
- Wilfred Reilly - Critical Race Theory
- Anthony Johnstone - Preserving Parental Right
- Christian Corrigan - Title IX and Protecting Women's Sports Bill

The Montana School Law Conference supported administrators, board members, teachers, parents, legislators, and all those interested in the current legal issues in education. The conference had 118 registered attendees. A video recording of the conference will be made available in the next Navigator. Be watching in the new year for details on our 2022 Montana School Law Conference!

## ESSER II and ARP ESSER Update

As of November 16, ESSER plan feedback has been provided to our districts, along with tools with which to update the ESSER plans. Federally required ESSER data collection is

planned before the end of November when districts will fulfill the federal data reporting requirements associated with the ESSER I, ESSER II, and ARP ESSER funds.

For more information, visit the [information page on the OPI website](#) or call Jeff Kirksey, MSED., OPI's ESSER Program Manager, at (406) 444-0783.



## 2021 Purple Star Schools Applications

The Montana OPI welcomes [Ray Shaw, the new MIC3 commissioner](#). The Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission (MIC3) was adopted by the Montana legislature through SB 203, 20-1-230 & 20-1-231 MCA. MIC3 is part of the national Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission with the purpose to remove barriers to educational success imposed on children of military families.

The Montana Office of Public Instruction and the Montana Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission adopted the [Purple Star School Program](#). MIC3 has accepted applications for the Purple Star School Designation and nominations for Purple Star Champion Award through November 24. These awards recognize military-friendly schools and individuals that have shown a major commitment to students and families connected to our nation's military. 2021 Purple Star School Awards Applications:



- Flathead High School – Kalispell, MT
- Holy Spirit Catholic School – Great Falls, MT
- Morningside Elementary School – Great Falls, MT
- Townsend School District – Townsend, MT
- Big Sky Elementary – Billings, MT
- Ben Steele Middle School – Billings, MT
- Great Falls Central Catholic High School – Great Falls, MT

### **2021 Purple Star School Champions Applications:**

- Missoula, MT
- Billings, MT

For more information, click [here](#).

## Stars and Stripes in Every Classroom

State law requires flags in every school classroom. State Superintendent Elsie Arntzen spearheaded the partnership with the American Legion of Montana and local American Legion groups to help raise funds for classrooms in need of an American flag. The program is intended to honor Montana's veterans and foster strong civics education. The new

Montana civics education standards are strengthening student understanding about the American Pledge of Allegiance and are revitalizing Indian Education for All in concert with state Constitutional requirements.

When the program began, the American Legion Post in Billings spearheaded the program and raised close to \$600, and the American Legion Post in Libby raised close to \$200. Since then, another \$200 has been raised through independent donations. At \$10 per flag, that is 100 flags that have been sent to Montana classrooms. The American Legion and OPI continue to build this program in support of our many military servicemen and women. The program accompanies the newly revitalized social studies standards adopted July 1, 2021, to increase civic engagement in the classroom including a new video developed with the Montana Army National Guard explaining the importance of [The Pledge](#).

For more information or to donate, contact Jessica Flint, OPI Communications Specialist, at (406) 438-3400 or [click here](#).



### Legislation Updates from the OPI:

[HB 207](#) and [HB 267](#), were sponsored by Representative Neil Duram, improve school bus safety laws. [HB 300](#), sponsored by Representative Jerry Schillinger, revises school transportation laws.

The OPI will rely on the judgment of individual school districts and recommend that school districts adhere to state safety standards regarding buses. On November 18th OPI presented a draft of new bus standards at the Board of Public Education.



[HB 671](#), sponsored by David Bedey, is an act providing interim fiscal studies on fiscal matters that revises the Montana Indian Language Preservation Program, eliminating terminations of the Montana Indian Language Preservation Program and the Cultural Integrity Commitment Act.

Representative Windy Boy is hosting a Language Revitalization Class in Billings and via Zoom on December 10 and 11. To register please visit the registration [link](#).

“Please join us for a Tribally Driven Class 7 Professional Development Training. This training is designed to empower all attendees who are interested in providing their students culturally responsive pedagogy. Our training features many tribal and non-tribal professionals who are dedicated to advancing the Language, Culture, and History, of all native nations across the continent. Feel free to join us as we begin to shift the tribal educational landscape in this land we call home.”



## Questions? Contact:

[Dr. Trenin Bayless](#), OPI Project Manager, 406-444-3449

The OPI is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to people with disabilities. If you need a reasonable accommodation, require an alternate format, or have questions concerning accessibility, contact the OPI ADA Coordinator, 406-444-3161, [opiada@mt.gov](mailto:opiada@mt.gov), Relay Service: 711.

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