



## OPI Navigator

October 15, 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 on November 26.

### Montana Teacher of the Year



Superintendent Elsie Arntzen has announced the 2022 Montana Teacher of the Year: Bill Stockton of Arlee. The Selection Committee was made up of representatives from the OPI, the Governor's Office, the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs, Educational Advocates, the Business community, the Montana Legislature, and the current Montana Teacher of the Year.

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

### Montana Begins MetaMetrics Pilot



The MetaMetrics Pilot is a pilot program contracted among the Office of Public Instruction, MetaMetrics, and participating districts. The pilot provides a Phase I development of a statistical defensibility project to ease the burden of State-mandated testing on local school districts. The pilot also allows for a proposed process for measuring student growth using locally selected interim assessments, such as NWEA MAPs, Curriculum Associates I-Ready, Renaissance Star, and Smarter Balanced Interim Comprehensive Assessments (or ICAs). The program will create lexiles (reading) and quantiles (math).

- Phase I: (2021-2022) Initial Pilot Study
- Phase II: (2022-2023) support for Federal Defensibility
- Potential Implementation of less restrictive interim testing requirements for districts: (2023-2024) or (2024-2025)

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

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

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## Comprehensive School & Community Treatment Program (CSCT) Updates

The Comprehensive School and Community Treatment (CSCT) program, established in 2005, was moved from DPHHS in the 2021 Legislative Session and placed with the OPI along with *all* Medicaid and CHIP services in schools. CSCT has been a school-based health services for students with serious emotional challenges and used an in-kind matching program for years.

In 2016, the Center for Medicaid Services (CMS) determined that the method by which Montana accounted for the match would no longer be approved. By 2019, DPHHS used State General Funds for the match. In the 2021 Legislative Session, that match was discontinued due to sustainability issues. A new challenge was determining methods available for the matching funds. The match must be non-federal funds, and the burden falls on school districts. The Legislature provided ~\$2 million in bridge funding while DPHHS seeks approval of a state plan amendment. A new state plan has been crafted and submitted for approval under HB 671.

The OPI and DPHHS have signed an MOU. The legislatively provided bridge funding expended as of the end of August was \$421,687.78.



The CSCT Program changes are rooted in [HB 671](#), which was introduced by Representatives David Bedey and LLeW Jones.

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**Montana School Law Conference: November 16 - 17**

The OPI is preparing for the Montana School Law Conference, set for November 16 - 17. The number of potential attendees has doubled, and we are excitedly looking forward to the event.

The Montana School Law Conference supports administrators, board members, and those interested in the current legal issues in education. Sessions will include the use of federal funds for public and non-public schools, innovative assessment, and much more.

To register, click here: [Montana School Law Conference](#).

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## OPI Letters

- [Superintendent Arntzen's October 6<sup>th</sup> letter to President Biden](#)
- [Letter from Acting U.S. Attorney Leif Johnson](#) from October 14<sup>th</sup>
- [October 15<sup>th</sup> letter from Superintendent Arntzen to School Board Leaders](#)

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## ESSER II and ARP ESSER Update

As of the 14<sup>th</sup> of October, there have been 304 ESSER I applications; 309 ESSER II applications with 279 approved; and 307 District Plans and 269 applications for ARP ESSER, with 216 approved. The OPI will continue to support the numerous school districts across the state to fulfill the obligations of ESSER I, II, and ARP ESSER.

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.

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## Attorney General Provides Guidance for HB 702

Montana Attorney General Austin Knudsen has reemphasized that failing to provide State resources to any individual on the basis of vaccination constitutes illegal discrimination. In an October 14<sup>th</sup> memo, Attorney General Knudsen wrote, **"Discrimination based on vaccination status is illegal in Montana. Violators of the law can – and should – be held accountable."**

To read the memo, click [here](#).



## Wanted: Purple Star Nominations

The Montana Purple Star awards distinguish schools and champions who have gone above and beyond for our military children and their families. Nominations remain open from now through October 31. Awardees will be announced November 30.

The OPI and the Montana Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission (MIC3) recognize Montana's Purple Star Schools and Purple Star Champions.

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

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## Legislation Important to the OPI



[SB 400](#), sponsored by Senator Theresa Manzella, restricts governmental entities from interfering with parental rights.

[SB 283](#), sponsored by Carl Glimm, revises laws regarding firearms on school grounds. This law mandates that each local board of trustees shall adopt a policy for the expulsion of a student who is determined to have brought a firearm to school. The board of trustees is provided the discretion to allow administrators not to expel a student for the mandatory one-year period on a case-by-case basis. It also allows safeguards for firearms to be brought to campus under certain conditions and carves out exceptions for firearms in locked vehicles in the parking lot.



[HB 210](#), introduced by Representative Moffie Funk, defines speech-language pathology and audiology assistants and formalizes the process of licensing speech-language pathology and audiology assistants. The process permits application prescribed by the Montana Department of Labor and Industry provided for in Title 2, Chapter 15, Part 17. An applicant must meet academic requirements, a clinical practicum, and pass a board-approved examination to become a speech-language pathology and audiology assistant.

[HB 207](#), and [HB 267](#), both sponsored by Representative Neil Duram, improve school bus safety laws. The OPI is working with local communities to administratively define the bills and clarify language.





[HB 300](#), sponsored by Representative Jerry Schillinger, revises school transportation laws.

The OPI supports school bus standards for rulemaking purposes. OPI will not be rulemaking official standards on school-owned passenger vehicles. The OPI will rely on the judgement of individual school districts and recommends that school districts adhere to state safety standards regarding buses.

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## Questions or Feedback?

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

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