



# The OPI Monthly Summary

May 2021



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## USDA Continues to Offer Flexibilities for 2021-2022

The US Department of Agriculture 2021-2022 school year waivers for schools will continue to offer flexibility in feeding children and meeting local needs. These waivers are available for schools across the state regardless of student eligibility or in-person learning status.

Many of these flexibilities are extensions of [existing waivers](#). The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) option was not extended for schools into the 2021-2022 school year. Instead, a new waiver will allow school districts to access the [Seamless Summer Option](#) (SSO). Typically, schools operate the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) during the school year. The SSO program removes student income eligibility requirements providing free meals for all students and will provide the higher SFSP reimbursement. While very similar to the SFSP option that schools have been using since March 2020, the SSO requires schools to follow the NSLP meal pattern and complete the application and reimbursement forms under the NSLP section of MAPS.

The Montana Office of Public Instruction is currently making administrative and technology changes to existing systems to accommodate the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) to align with the federal waivers. The MAPS update is tentatively scheduled to be in place by June 18th, 2021. After the update, schools will be able to login to MAPS, complete their NSLP application packet, and opt into the SSO via the site applications section.

## Youth Risk Behavior Survey School-Specific Results Available

The 2021 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) was completed by students in schools this past winter. Results for the Middle School and High School school-specific and district-wide (for AA districts) results are now available!

To view your results:

1. Go to [www.opi.mt.gov/yrbs](http://www.opi.mt.gov/yrbs) and select “View School-Specific Results”
2. On the [YRBS Data Retrieval System](#) log-in screen enter your OPI Common Log-In (OCL) username used for other apps. This is usually your first name initial and last name (ex. SCourt)
3. Enter your password or click on the ‘forgot password’ button. A password will be e-mailed to you; copy and paste it into the log-in screen.
4. Once into the system you can change your password to something more user-friendly (passwords expire every 90 days.)
5. Select the year (2021) and school(s). This is a PDF file that can be saved to your computer.

Thank you to all superintendents, principals, YRBS coordinators, and most especially, the students who participated in the 2021 YRBS.

If you have any questions, please reach out to Susan Court, YRBS State Coordinator at [scourt@mt.gov](mailto:scourt@mt.gov) or 406-444-3178.



## Comprehensive and Targeted Support and Improvement

**The Regional Summit for all schools and districts in Comprehensive Status will take place on August 3-5 in Billings, MT!**

The summit is an opportunity for schools and districts identified in Comprehensive Support and Improvement; attendance is highly recommended but not required. Each day there will be designated time for you and your leadership team to meet, plan, and coordinate efforts before the school year begins.

The travel cost including hotel, breakfast, lunch will be paid by OPI and an additional mini-grant funding will be awarded to districts participating to cover stipends, mileage, and evening meals. We need to limit your teams to 6 people so all schools in comprehensive can participate. However, if space becomes available, we will send out an email stating how many spots we have open and more team members can sign up. We also highly recommend you include your business clerk to attend with your leadership team. It will be an opportunity for him/her to hear the overall plans of your district.

Each person from your leadership team needs to fill out the registration form by June 25th to ensure a hotel room can be reserved for you.

Register [HERE](#)

For more information, contact [Carrie.Kouba@mt.gov](mailto:Carrie.Kouba@mt.gov), 406-444-0864

## Waiver to the ESSA Accountability System

Montana applied and was granted accountability and school identification waivers on March 26, 2021, which are important as they provide relief from the impact of COVID-19 on the accountability system for the 2020-2021 school year. In particular, they waive the requirements to:

- Measure progress toward long-term goals and measurement of interim progress;
- Meaningfully differentiate, on an annual basis, all public schools, including by adjusting the Academic Achievement indicator based on a participation rate below 95 percent;
- Identify schools for comprehensive, targeted, and additional targeted support and improvement based on data from the 2020- 2021 school year; and
- Report provisions related to accountability based on data from the 2020-2021 school year.

For more information on the ESSA program, contact [julie.murgel@mt.gov](mailto:julie.murgel@mt.gov), 406-444-3174



## Implications of the ESSA Accountability Waiver

While the OPI is waiving accountability requirements, we are committed to providing technical assistance and professional learning to our schools to support transparency and reporting needs for students, families, and educators. The OPI will:

- Continue to maintain or improve transparency in reporting to parents and the public on student achievement and school performance in school year 2020-2021, including the achievement of subgroups of students;
- Make publicly available chronic absenteeism data on State and local report cards; and
- Collect and report data on graduation rates, college and career success indicators, attendance, and access to qualified educators data.

For more information on the ESSA program, contact [julie.murgel@mt.gov](mailto:julie.murgel@mt.gov), 406-444-3174

## Ongoing Support for Schools Identified Comprehensive or Targeted

All schools identified for comprehensive, targeted, and additional targeted support and improvement will continue to receive funding and support from OPI improvement specialists.

The OPI will identify comprehensive, targeted, and additional targeted support and improvement schools using data from the 2021-2022 school year in the fall of 2022/spring of 2023 to ensure school identification resumes as quickly as possible. Under ESSA, the OPI will continue to advocate for school communities and students, recognizing that the changes this year for accountability, identification, and reporting do not preclude Montana from submitting amendments or additional waivers to gain greater flexibility in the future.

For more information on the ESSA program, contact [julie.murgel@mt.gov](mailto:julie.murgel@mt.gov), 406-444-3174

## Novice Special Education Trainings

This year the Novice Special Education Teacher Trainings will be provided through the [Teacher Learning Hub](#) via a facilitated course. The course will be offered three times throughout the school year. The course will be offered for 16 renewal units and participants will have 8 weeks to be completed at their own pace. For more details, visit the [course information page](#). Enrollment for the first session will open on June 7, and is available for pre-service teachers, currently employed, and newly employed educators and administrators in Montana.

To confirm employment or student status and obtain the enrollment key, email Yvonne Field at [yfield@mt.gov](mailto:yfield@mt.gov) from your school district or university email. The enrollment key can also be requested by special education directors and administrators for new hires.

### 2021-2022 Schedule

Enrollment Begins	Course Run Dates(8 wks)
Jun. 7, 2021	Jun. 28 - Aug. 22, 2021
Sept. 6, 2021	Sept. 27 - Nov. 14, 2021
Mar. 7, 2022	Mar. 28 - May 22, 2022



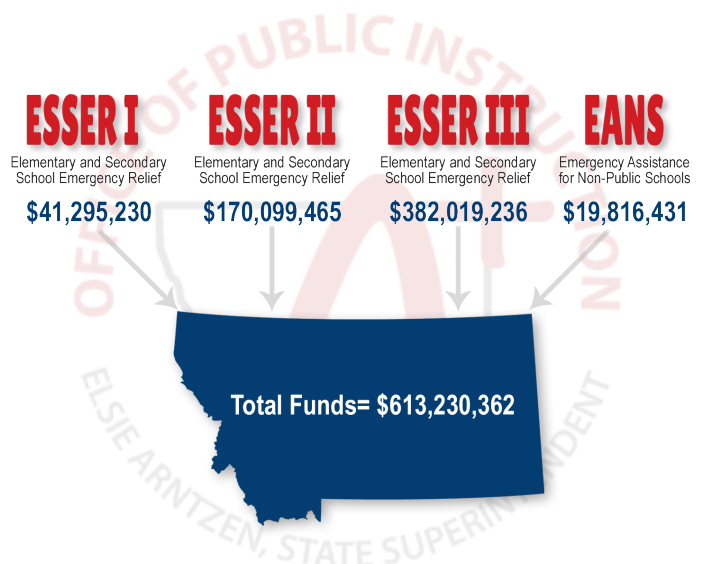
# American Rescue Plan Act

[Link to ESSER Information on the OPI webpage, which includes ESSER guidance, allocations, and FAQ documents.](#)

On March 24, 2021, the Montana OPI received from the U.S. Department of Education (USED) the American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) Funds, authorized under the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act. The ARP-ESSER provides \$382,019,236 (ESSER III) for Montana schools to safely reopen and sustain safe operations of schools while meeting the academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of students resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. This marks the third round of ESSER funding that Montana has received and is available through September 2024.

Following the release of the ARP-ESSER funding, on April 21, 2021, USED issued an application template for States to share how they will work with districts to monitor the use and impact of ARP ESSER funds. Through the [ARP-ESSER State template](#), the requirements and timelines were set by the Department.

**Use of Funds:** Of the total amount allocated to an Local Education Agency (LEA) from the State's ARP ESSER award, the LEA must reserve **at least 20 percent of funds to address lost instructional time through the implementation of evidence-based interventions and ensure that those interventions** respond to students social, emotional, and academic needs and address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on underrepresented student subgroups. As of May 21st, the Department has not released the Use of Funds Guidance. As soon as the guidance is released, the OPI will make the information available on our website link listed above.



A timeline can be found on the next pages that include the requirements, due dates, and dates for technical assistance from the OPI.

DATES	Requirements and Information for Technical Assistance
May 24, 2021	MT OPI must allocate the school district share of the ARP ESSER funds received on March 24, 2021.
June 7, 2021	Due date for submitting the ARP ESSER State Plan to the US Department of Education.
June 8, 15, & 22, 2021	<p>The OPI will host live Q &amp; A Sessions during the month of June to address questions related to ARP ESSER district plans and budgets. The session days will be June 8th, 15th, 22nd, and 29th from 9:30-10:30am. To the extent possible, please submit questions to <a href="mailto:jeffrey.kirksey@mt.gov">jeffrey.kirksey@mt.gov</a> by the close of business each Friday. Submitted questions will be addressed during the session each Tuesday 9:30am. The weekly Q&amp;A sessions will be held through Zoom; the link and dial-in number will be the same every week.</p> <p><b>ARP Q &amp; A Session Link:</b>  <a href="https://mt-gov.zoom.us/j/85097037609?pwd=bjM5MjNESSs-3WG9OK3dIUUhYRjNXdz09">https://mt-gov.zoom.us/j/85097037609?pwd=bjM5MjNESSs-3WG9OK3dIUUhYRjNXdz09</a>  Meeting ID: 850 9703 7609  Password: 027973</p> <p><b>Dial by Telephone</b>  +1 646 558 8656 or +1 406 444 9999  Meeting ID: 850 9703 7609  Password: 027973  Find your local number: <a href="https://mt-gov.zoom.us/j/85097037609?pwd=bjM5MjNESSs-3WG9OK3dIUUhYRjNXdz09">https://mt-gov.zoom.us/j/85097037609?pwd=bjM5MjNESSs-3WG9OK3dIUUhYRjNXdz09</a></p>
June 21, 2021	No later than June 21, 2021, but as soon as possible, the OPI must make information available on its website about the numbers of schools in the state providing each mode of instruction, student enrollment data for each mode of instruction by all students and disaggregated by subgroup, and if available student attendance data.
June 24, 2021	<p>Districts must make publicly available <b>Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plans</b>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If a District developed a plan before ARP was enacted that does not address the above requirements, the District must revise its plan no later than six months after it last reviewed its plan.</li> <li>• Districts need to update the Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan at Districts every six months through September 30, 2023 and must seek public input on the plan and any revisions and must take such input into account.</li> </ul>
June 24 -25, 2021	Superintendent Arntzen is hosting the virtual Montana Education Summit (MTedX-21) to support districts with educational planning opportunities. The work sessions include: Developing ARP ESSER LEA plans, Meaningful Stakeholder Consultation, Data Usage, Redefining the purpose of K-12 education, and Reimagining State Assessment. The MTEDX-21 session is a two-day event on June 24th and 25th. Registration is required and open at this link: <a href="https://hopin.com/events/mtedx-21">https://hopin.com/events/mtedx-21</a>



DATES	Requirements and Information for Technical Assistance
July 13, 20, & 27, 2021	<p>The OPI will host three live ARP ESSER Webinars during the month of July to assist districts in developing and submitting District ARP ESSER Plans. The webinars will be recorded and posted for future viewing on the OPI webpage. The webinars will be July 13th, 20th, and 27th from 9:30 to 10:30am. The ARP ESSER webinars will be held through Zoom; the link and dial-in number will be the same every week.</p> <p><b>ARP ESSER Webinars</b>  <a href="https://mt.gov.zoom.us/j/89630813262?pwd=SFB3TEhWc2l-ma2VlYkFoSFNjTXlFZz09">https://mt.gov.zoom.us/j/89630813262?pwd=SFB3TEhWc2l-ma2VlYkFoSFNjTXlFZz09</a>  Meeting ID: 896 3081 3262  Password: 074837</p> <p><b>Dial by Telephone</b>  +1 646 558 8656 or +1 406 444 9999  Meeting ID: 896 3081 3262  Password: 074837  Find your local number: <a href="https://mt.gov.zoom.us/j/kexjNeXVSX">https://mt.gov.zoom.us/j/kexjNeXVSX</a></p>
August 24, 2021	<p>Districts must submit an ARP ESSER Plan to the OPI through the Terms of Employment, Accreditation, and Master Schedule (TEAMS). The <b>District ARP ESSER Plan</b> template will open July 1st and close on August 24th in TEAMS. The requirements for the district ARP ESSER plans, must include at a minimum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The extent to which and how funds will be used by the District to implement prevention and mitigation strategies,</li> <li>• How the District will use the mandatory 20% set-aside for to address the academic impact of “lost instructional time” through the implementation of evidence-based interventions,</li> <li>• How the District will use the remaining ARP ESSER funds consistent with statutory requirements,</li> <li>• How the District will ensure that the ARP ESSER funded interventions, including but not limited to the 20% set-aside, will respond to the academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of all students, and particularly those students disproportionately impacted, and</li> <li>• Consultation with a wide variety of stakeholders when developing the plan.</li> </ul>
September 1, 2021	Due date to complete and submit ESSER II and ESSER III applications in the E-grants system.

For more information, contact Jeffrey Kirksey, the ESSER Program Manager, at [jeffrey.kirksey@mt.gov](mailto:jeffrey.kirksey@mt.gov)





# MTEdx-21

## Montana Education Virtual Summit & Job Fair

What Are Your Students Needs? What Do They Deserve?

### Featured Speakers

Dr. Yong Zhao



*University of Kansas Foundation Distinguished Professor and Award Winning Author*

The type of schools Montana students need and how to avoid the Learning Loss Trap will be key elements of the Opening Keynote. There are three big changes that education should make post-COVID. Avoiding the learning loss trap will aid local districts in the right direction for their students.

Melissa Emler



*Owner of Modern Learners Community and a Statewide Systems Coach in the Universal Design for Learning*

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) allows teaching methods to remove barriers to learning to give all students equal opportunities in the classroom. Ensure that your subgroups and teachers have the methods that will shift approaches to learning.

Dr. Julie Murgel



*Wallace Foundation Leadership Developer, Innovative Schools Principal, Senior Manager of Innovation and School Improvement*

Oh, The Opportunities, early morning session is focused on best practices around innovation and identifying what school leaders can do and, perhaps, what they should do.

Dr. Dan Popov



*Co-founder of The Virtues Project TM, a scholar of the world's sacred traditions, a Butte native and a clinical pediatric physician who has taught the indigenous cultures worldwide*

The development of the child sets the tone for everything. Understanding the unique development of each child will ensure that the wellbeing and social emotional needs, coupled with a genuine care for all children, will build success.

Dr. Peter Liljedahl



*Professor of Mathematics Education at Simon Fraser University. A former HS mathematics teacher and Swedish canoer. Creativity, insight, and discovery on the teaching and learning of mathematics, numeracy, mathematical problem solving and engaging student thinking.*

Join the conversation around Building Thinking Classrooms. Your engagement will provide you with effective strategies to immediately apply.

**REGISTER NOW**

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



## Schedule at a Glance

Thursday, June 24, 2021

Friday, June 25, 2021

8:00 a.m. Virtual Job Fair Begins and continues all day

9:00 a.m. PreSession - Oh the Opportunities with Dr. Julie Murgel

9:45 a.m. Opening Keynote - Reimagine the Possibilities with Dr. Yong Zhao

11:45 a.m. - Breakout Sessions

- ♦ Community Engagement
- ♦ Acceleration of Learning
- ♦ Innovations for Every Classroom
- ♦ Non-public Funding Resources
- ♦ ESSER Uses - Brainstorming Session

1:00 p.m. - Breakout Sessions

- ♦ Evidence Based Strategies
- ♦ Innovations
- ♦ Use of ESSER Funds Q&A
- ♦ Don't Fall off the Funding Cliff - Meaningful Planning for your Student's Future
- ♦ Non-public Resources

2:30 p.m. Closing Keynote - The Whole Child with Dr. Dan Popov

8:00 a.m. Virtual Job Fair Begins

9:00 a.m. PreSession - Universal Design for Learning with Melissa Emler

10:00 a.m. Opening Keynote - Building Thinking Classrooms in K-12 Mathematics with Dr. Peter Liljedahl

11:30 a.m. - Breakout sessions

- ♦ SEL
- ♦ Learner Needs - Student Panel
- ♦ Evidence Based Strategies
- ♦ Resources for Homeless Students

12:30 p.m. Virtual Job Fair Closes

1:00 p.m. - Breakout Sessions

- ♦ Supporting your LEA Plan - Facilitators Available to Assist You

2:30 p.m. Closing Keynote - What Will Tomorrow Hold for Your Children?

## Where

On the HOPIN events platform, the only of its type, meant to be a green solution for events.

## Cost

MTEdx - 21

- ♦ FREE!

Virtual Educator's Employment Fair

- ♦ Job Seekers - FREE!
- ♦ District Recruitment Booths - \$50

## What

### Registration is open NOW!

Registration for District Recruitment Booths will close June 16th 7:00 pm MST. When districts register, the booth space will be open for their set-up purposes until June 24.

## Materials Available

The OPI will have preorder available for:

- ♦ Speaker Materials
- ♦ Recommended Books

## When

For convenience and flexibility, the OPI has joined the Montana Education Summit and their Second Virtual Employment Fair. The two events will run concurrently. June 24 & 25 9:00 am - 2:30 pm

### Questions?

For general inquiries, contact Tristen Belnap at 444-5643 or [tristen.belnap@mt.gov](mailto:tristen.belnap@mt.gov)

For Job Fair District Recruitment Booth inquiries, contact Mellisa Emler at [missy@modernlearners.com](mailto:missy@modernlearners.com)

**REGISTER NOW**



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



## Indian Education for All

### IEFA Grant Opportunities for 2021-22 School Year

The OPI Indian Education For All (IEFA) Unit has opened the RFP portal for 2021-22 IEFA grant proposals in the e-grants system. Districts can apply for funding up to \$12,000 to develop and support activities that strengthen and enhance their IEFA implementation efforts. Proposals must be submitted in the e-grants system by July 31st, 2021. However, districts interested in submitting a proposal must contact Zach Hawkins, OPI IEFA Director, to talk through their ideas prior to submitting a proposal. The deadline to contact him and discuss your proposal ideas is June 30th, 2021.

For more information, please contact Zach Hawkins @ 444-0708 or [zachariah.hawkins@mt.gov](mailto:zachariah.hawkins@mt.gov)

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



## Preliminary Title Allocations

Preliminary allocations for Titles I, II, III, and IV have been posted to the OPI website at: <http://opi.mt.gov/Leadership/Academic-Success/Title-Other-Federal-Programs/Federal-Allocation-Bulletin>. Final allocations may be different from preliminary so please use the amounts for planning purposes only.

For more information, contact Sheri Harlow, at [sharlow@mt.gov](mailto:sharlow@mt.gov), or 406-444-5660

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

## Montana's Virtual Academy Days

Every year, Montana's best and brightest apply for the opportunity to attend each of the elite United States Service Academies—the [U.S. Military Academy](#), the [U.S. Naval Academy](#), the [U.S. Air Force Academy](#), the [U.S. Coast Guard Academy](#), and the [U.S. Merchant Marine Academy](#).

The United States Service Academies give students the unique opportunity to earn their bachelor's degrees while preparing for a career in the military, combining world-class education with the proud legacy of military service.

Service Academies routinely rank among the top universities in the nation. Students pay no tuition to attend, and are required to serve in the military upon graduation. Admission to an Academy is a competitive, two-step process. First, students must obtain a Congressional or Presidential nomination. Then, students receive an appointment from the individual Academy.

To be eligible to apply for a nomination to a Service Academy with a member of Montana's congressional delegation, you must meet the following initial requirements:

- Be a U.S. citizen.
- Be at least the age of 17, but less than 23 by July 1st of the year of matriculation.
- Be unmarried, not pregnant, and without legal obligation to support children or other dependents.
- Reside within the legal boundaries of Montana.

NOTE: If you are attending a service academy preparatory school, a university out of state, or have recently relocated out of Montana due to your parents' service in the military and maintain Montana as your permanent residence, you may still apply with the Montana delegation.

Applying to a United States Service Academy is a rigorous, highly-competitive and lengthy process—and Montana's congressional delegation is here to help. Montana's Academy and ROTC Days are hosted annually to connect students, parents, and educators with the infor-

mation and advice they need to successfully navigate the Academy nomination process. Due to coronavirus public health and safety concerns, this year's Academy days will take place virtually, via WebEx.

**These calls will connect prospective students with Academy liaisons from the U.S. Military Academy, U.S. Naval Academy, U.S. Coast Guard Academy, U.S. Air Force Academy, U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, and ROTC, as well as representatives from each of Montana's congressional delegation. Any student looking for more information regarding the Academy experience or questions regarding the nomination process is encouraged to join.**

[Click here to join Montana's Virtual Academy Days information sessions!](#)

Each member of Montana's congressional delegation has a different nomination process. While many of Montana's outstanding students will compete for nominations, only a small percentage will receive a nomination. To maximize the opportunity of selection, students are encouraged to complete nomination applications with each of Montana's congressional delegation.

For specifics on each office's nomination process and application requirements, visit Senator Tester's website [here](#), Senator Daines' website [here](#), and Representative Rosendale's website [here](#). Students are encouraged to reach out to representatives of the offices of Senator Tester, Senator Daines, and Representative Rosendale with questions.



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

# Announcements & News

## K-12 Data Task Force Membership

The OPI is seeking your help in finding people interested in serving on the K-12 Data Task Force. The [K-12 Data Task Force](#) was created by the 2013 Montana Legislature through the adoption of [20-7-104, MCA](#) and [20-7-105, MCA](#), and includes legislators, school board members, educators, school administrators, school technology staff and parents. The purpose of the K-12 Data Task Force is to advise and provide guidance to the Office of Public Instruction on the statewide K-12 data systems.

As most of you are aware, approximately \$13.5M in CARES and ARPA funding was appropriated this past legislative session to the OPI for the purposes of data systems modernization. You can learn more about the OPI's plan for data systems modernization by visiting our [project web-page](#). As the OPI prepares and plans for this significant investment in and change to data systems, **it's important to us that the K-12 Data Task Force is involved**. We are anticipating quarterly meetings with the task force, and will also conduct numerous focus groups with specific audiences and stakeholders for at least the next year as we work together to gain cooperation and support. We expect the task force meetings to restart in late June with the Data Modernization Project as its main work and focus.

With that in mind, please help spread the word to your staff and community, we need people to fill the following roles on the task force (click [here](#) to see district classifications):

- **three elected school board trustees** consisting of one each from a class 1, class 2, and class 3 school district
- **three school administrators** consisting of one each employed by a class 1, class 2, and class 3 school district
- **three teachers** consisting of one each employed by a class 1, class 2, and class 3 school district
- **three technology staff** consisting of one each employed by a class 1, class 2, and class 3 school district
- **six parents**, consisting of one parent of an elementary (K-8) pupil currently enrolled in each of a class 1, class 2, and class 3 school district and one parent of a high school (9-12) pupil currently enrolled in each of a class 1, class 2, and class 3 school district
- **three school district clerks**, consisting of one each employed by a class 1, class 2, and class 3 school district

[Click here to apply to become a member of the task force](#)  
(Deadline to apply is July 11th.)

Members will be appointed by legislative leadership of the task force, currently:

[Representative David Bedey](#)

[Senator Daniel Salomon](#)

[Senator Russ Tempel](#)

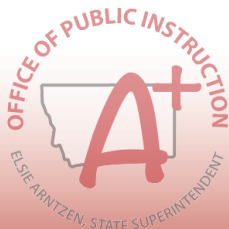
[Senator Edie McClafferty](#)

[Representative Seth Berglee](#)

[Representative Fred Anderson](#)

[Representative Moffie Funk](#)

Questions or need more information? Contact Michael Sweeney, Chief Data Officer via [email](#) or 444-4411





## Announcements & News

### DEQ Announces 13 Clean School Bus Replacement Grants

*Announcement Commemorates Air Quality Awareness Week*

HELENA—The Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has awarded 13 clean school bus replacement grants. The grants will help school districts replace older diesel school buses with newer diesel models to help reduce air pollution.

Older diesel buses release nitrogen oxides which can lead to asthma and respiratory illnesses, especially in children and elderly who are known to be at increased risk. DEQ's Clean School Bus Replacement program aims to reduce kids' exposure to harmful diesel exhaust from old diesel buses across the state.

"Montana is a rural state, and many parents depend on safe, reliable buses to get their children to and from their schools," said Superintendent of Public Instruction Elsie Arntzen. "These DEQ grants are a great way for these five school districts to ensure quality transportation for students in a cost-effective manner."

The grants awarded by DEQ are funded through the Environmental Protection Agency's Diesel Emission Reduction Act (DERA). This year's the grants were awarded to school districts in Billings, Hamilton, Kalispell, Vaughn and Grass Range.

"DEQ is proud to continue supporting Montana schools by helping them purchase cleaner buses that reduce children's exposure to harmful nitrogen oxide emissions. These new buses not only reduce pollution but are more efficient to operate, saving school districts money," said DEQ Energy Bureau Chief Dan Lloyd.

The announcement celebrates National Air Quality Awareness Week, May 3-7, which raises awareness of air quality issues such as impacts from wildfire smoke. Air quality information is available for sites across Montana on DEQ's Today's Air page at: <https://svc.mt.gov/deq/today-s-air/>

### IEFA Best Practices Conference

May 15th and 16th, the Montana OPI Indian Education for All Unit hosted their 14th annual statewide Best Practices Conference. Due to the pandemic, the event was held virtually, and the theme was Honoring Indigenous Resilience and Persistence. Over 140 educators and stakeholders attended each day's sessions. The conference kicked off with a welcome from Superintendent Elsie Arntzen followed by a keynote address from Oren Lyons, a Faith Keeper of the Onondaga Nation of the Iroquois, one of America's most renowned Indigenous elders. Mr. Lyons spoke of the Iroquois role in America's founding, the treaties that shaped America's relationship with the tribal nations, and the need for all of us to be responsible for future generations. The event also honored 6 outstanding recipients of the IEFA Advocacy Award and featured 5 students from tribal nations across Montana who are making positive contributions to their community by leading school and community improvement efforts and staying true to their tribal ways.

**OPI and the IEFA unit are pleased to celebrate this successful event!**



# Announcements & News

## 2021 Graduation Message

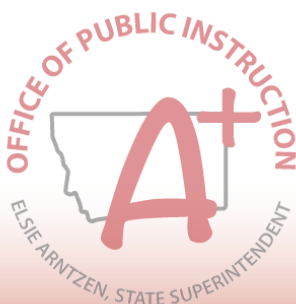
Superintendent Arntzen was pleased to release a [graduation message](#) to the Class of 2021 this week. After a long year full of challenges, this group of Montanans was able to overcome and meet the pinnacle of their K-12 career. We look forward to seeing all of the great things the Class of 2021 will achieve as they move forward in their lives.

**Congratulations to our 2021 Graduates!**

## HB 702

HB 702, passed by Montana's 67th Legislature and signed by Governor Gianforte on May 7th, defined that it is an unlawful discriminatory practice for a governmental entity to deny a person any services, goods, or advantages based on the person's vaccination status or whether the person has an immunity passport.

Superintendent Arntzen joined DPHHS Director Adam Meier in [sending a letter](#) to school officials and health-care providers on May 21st reminding them that students who are under 18 years of age will require a parent or legal guardian's consent to get a COVID-19 vaccine. The letter also encourages school administrators to proactively communicate with parents and legal guardians regarding parental consent requirements for vaccines should a district choose to host COVID-19 vaccine clinics in their schools.



## Memorial Day Message

On Monday, we mark Memorial Day. Our nation is grateful for the many men and women across our history who have given the ultimate sacrifice to defend our freedom and secure our peace. The OPI Digital Communications Team has worked with Helena Vietnam War Veteran and recent author, John Quintrell, to produce a video about his experiences. Please take time this weekend to honor and remember our veterans.



*John Quintrell, Vietnam Veteran and Author  
in the OPI Memorial Day Short.*

## OPI Responds to USED

On Monday, Superintendent Arntzen [submitted comments](#) to U.S. Department of Education urging them to revise their interim final requirements for the implementation of the American Rescue Plan Act's Elementary and Secondary School Relief (ARP ESSER) Fund. Superintendent Arntzen strongly believes that the Department needs to respect local control, particularly when it comes to what kinds of actions individual school districts are undertaking to keep their students safe.



# June

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 <a href="#">Montana Virtual Academy Days DAY 1</a>	2 <a href="#">Montana Virtual Academy Days DAY 2</a>	3 <a href="#">Montana Virtual Academy Days DAY 3</a>	4	5
6	7 <a href="#">Submit ARP ESSER Plan to USED</a>  <a href="#">Enrollment opens for Novice Special Education Trainings</a>	8 <a href="#">ARP ESSER Q&amp;A Session</a>	9	10	11 <a href="#">Deadline for K-12 Data Task Force Application</a>	12
13	14	15 <a href="#">ARP ESSER Q&amp;A Session</a>	16 <a href="#">District Recruitment Job Fair Booth Registration Deadline</a>	17	18 <a href="#">Tentative MAPS Update</a>	19
20	21 <a href="#">ARP ESSER Data available on OPI Website</a>	22 <a href="#">ARP ESSER Q&amp;A Session</a>	23	24 <a href="#">Return to in Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan Public MTEdx-21 &amp; Job Fair DAY 1</a>	25 <a href="#">Registration for Regional Summit Due</a>  <a href="#">MTEdx-21 &amp; Job Fair DAY 2</a>	26
27	28 <a href="#">Novice Special Education Training Class 1 Begins</a>	29	30 <a href="#">Proposals for IEFA Grant Due to Zach</a>			

# July

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13 <a href="#">ARP ESSER Webinar</a>	14	15	16	17
18	19	20 <a href="#">ARP ESSER Webinar</a>	21	22	23	24
25	26	27 <a href="#">ARP ESSER Webinar</a>	28	29	30	31 <a href="#">IEFA Grant Application Due</a>



# August

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3 <a href="#">Regional Summit Day 1</a>	4 <a href="#">Regional Summit Day 2</a>	5 <a href="#">Regional Summit Day 3</a>	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22 <a href="#">Novice Special Education Training Ends</a>	23	24 <a href="#">Districts Submit ARP ESSER Plan to OPI</a>	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				



# September

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 <a href="#">ESSER II and ESSER III Applications Due</a>	2	3	4
5	6 <a href="#">Enrollment Opens for Novice Special Education Training</a>	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27 <a href="#">Novice Special Education Training Class 2 Begins</a>	28	29	30		