



The OPI Compass

Great News: USED Approves OPI's ARP ESSER State Plan

On August 5th, the U.S. Department of Education [approved](#) the OPI's [ARP ESSER State Plan](#) for Montana. This action allows the OPI to begin transferring the remaining one-third of the ESSER III Fund balance to school districts. It also gives the OPI an approved roadmap for helping our great Montana schools use this large influx of Federal funding to innovate and improve instruction for our Montana students.

As a reminder, each local educational agency (LEA) is responsible for submitting an ARP ESSER School District Plan by August 24th in TEAMS. Please visit <https://opi.mt.gov/COVID-19-Information/ESSER> for a host of resources and guidance on how to complete these plans, including slide decks and recordings from recent Webinars with OPI staff. Please direct your ESSER questions to Jeff Kirksey, ESSER Program Manager, at jeffrey.kirksey@mt.gov. Thank you for all you do to put Montana students first.

CSCT Update

Mental and social emotional health is critical for every individual, but perhaps no more so than for our students. OPI is committed to our students who rely on the Comprehensive School and Community Treatment (CSCT) program. Our focus is on the well-being of Montana students. The Legislature transferred administration of CSCT to the OPI earlier this year, and our team is working collaboratively with the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS), schools, and providers to ensure the long-term viability of the program. Our team will continue working diligently to administer the program in a responsible and responsive manner moving forward, and mitigating new risks to school districts with their new financial burdens.

Chapter 57/58 Task Forces Continue to Meet

OPI and the Board of Public Education, as well as other stakeholders, continue their work reviewing ARM Chapters 10.57 (Educator Licensing) and 10.58 (Educator Preparation) and generating suggested revisions to the current language. The task forces reviewing the information that was gathered continue to meet weekly on Thursdays. Information on the agendas and recordings can be found at: <https://opi.mt.gov/Educator-Licensing-Preparation-Task-Forces>. Eventually, these Task Forces will recommend language to the Superintendent, who will then offer her suggestions to the Board of Public Education for its consideration.

Superintendent, Governor Address Back-to-School Preparation

Today, Governor Greg Gianforte and OPI Superintendent Elsie Arntzen sent a [letter](#) to all District Superintendents and Trustees discussing back-to-school preparation in Montana's 400 school districts. Specifically, they highlighted the need for parental involvement in health decisions regarding their children, and for listening to the voices of families throughout the state.

As OPI and the Governor's Office have heard from hundreds of parents across Montana, it is critical our kids get back into the classroom in as normal a setting as possible so they may learn, develop, and grow. The OPI will be a strong partner in helping to ensure a successful new school year.

Important Dates:

- 8/9–11: [MT CSPD Academy](#)
- 8/9, 23,30: [Positive Behavior Principles virtual book study](#)
- 8/10: [Virtual E-grants training](#)
- 8/11: [MACIE](#) meeting, 9 AM
- 8/12: [MontCOMM 2021](#)
- 8/12: [Montana DRIVE](#) Workshops end
- 8/12: [AIM Zoom Webinar](#): Creating/Modifying User Accounts/Data Privacy
- 8/13: [Emergency Connectivity Fund](#) Application closes
- 8/17: [DPHHS COVID Testing Funding Webinar](#)
- 8/17 - 18: [Jeremy Bullock Safe Schools Summit](#)
- 8/19: [AIM Zoom Webinar](#): Beginning of Year Verification
- 8/19: [DPHHS COVID Testing Funding Webinar](#)
- 8/22: [Novice Special Ed Training ends](#)
- 8/24: [AIM Zoom Webinar](#): Student Photo Repository
- 8/24: Districts Submit [ARP ESSER Plan](#) to OPI
- 9/1: [ESSER II & ESSER III](#) applications due

*** The Montana School Law Conference is being moved. Details are forthcoming.**



Jeremy Bullock Safe Schools Summit August 17, 18

The Jeremy Bullock Safe Schools Summit, set for August 17 and 18 in Butte and also available virtually, will focus on best practices for student and educator safety and creating safe school environments. This event is designed for school safety teams, educators, school nurses, mental health professionals, law enforcement, and emergency and disaster preparedness coordinators.

The outcomes of the summit are to bring together school professionals, law enforcement, and mental health professionals in preparation for the new school year. Attendees will discuss how to deal with post-COVID issues, as well as develop and advance school safety plans. Participants will learn from and network with their colleagues and key stakeholders from across Montana.

Workshops will cover cybersecurity, human trafficking, and threat mitigation from law enforcement. Attendees will hear from mental health resources on emotional well-being, and tribal, state, and national education professionals on multi-tiered safe school approaches. Participants will leave with resources to continue to fund, develop, improve, collaborate, and advance their own school safety plans. Continuing education credits are available.

The Safe Schools Summit was established in memory of Jeremy Bullock following his tragic death at Margaret Leary Elementary School in Butte. Jeremy was the unintended victim of a school shooting on April 12, 1994.

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

Purple Star Award Nominations Now Accepted



OPI and the Montana Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission (MIC3) want to recognize Montana's Purple Star Schools and Purple Star Champions. These Purple Star Awards are meant to distinguish schools and champions that have gone above and beyond for our military children and their families.

Nominations for both awards will be accepted now through October 31; awardees will be announced on November 30. Click [here](#) for details.

Use Caution to Reduce Wildfire Risk

Please be mindful of potential fire risks you enjoy all Montana has to offer during the summer. The Governor's [statewide wildland fire emergency declaration](#), signed July 14, is a recognition of the difficult months we are in, and those that lay ahead. By using caution while hiking, camping, etc, we can help reduce the burden on our dedicated firefighters and first responders.

To visit the Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation's Interactive Wildland Fire Map before heading out, click [here](#).

Stay Informed with Testing Alerts and Updates

We will continue to share information with schools via [Assessment FAQ: Testing Alerts and Updates](#), [Monthly Assessment Bulletin Newsletter](#), [Monthly Webinars](#), [Standardized State Testing Guidance](#), and other communication means. If you are a System Test Coordinator, visit the [STC Corner Site](#) for testing alerts or announcements specific to your school district role.

Questions? Contact the OPI Assessment Help Desk at OPIAssessmentHelpDesk@mt.gov or 1-844-867-2569.



Train the Trainer: Applied Suicide Intervention Skills

The Systems of Care Tribal Wraparound Project funded a statewide train the trainer for Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training. The group included tribal and community representation for all of the areas covered by the project. A training schedule through December 2021 is being completed to have at least one training in each area for approximately 30 people per training.

For more information, contact SAMHSA Grant Manager Stephanie Iron Shooter at sironshooter@mt.gov or (406) 530-4364.

Addressing Tobacco Use in Montana Schools with Restorative Practices

Has your school been impacted by youth vaping? A well-measured, recuperative approach to discipline may be the most effective way to help Montana students overcome their urge to vape.

[Restorative discipline policy language](#) promoting communication, nicotine addiction education and a connection to resources for quitting will likely go a lot farther to stem this youth vaping epidemic than suspension and expulsion.

Peer-to-peer engagement opportunities can help prevent youth tobacco use. To learn more, watch [Reversing the Youth E-Cigarette Epidemic: What Principals Need to Know](#).

For more information, contact Kris Minard, Tobacco Prevention Education Specialist at kminard@mt.gov or (406) 444-0785.

Youth and Family Advisory Council Implementation

The Systems of Care Tribal Wraparound Project is funding mini-grants to project communities to provide youth and family engagement activities around mental health wellness. These activities include, but are not limited to, cultural integration education, culture camps and equine therapy.

For more information, contact SAMHSA Grant Manager Stephanie Iron Shooter at sironshooter@mt.gov or (406) 530-4364



Order Your Tobacco-Free School Signage

Please consider replacing your old tobacco-free school signs or adding to what you already have with our most current signage. We have three different signs to offer Montana schools and will mail them to you free of charge. For more information or to complete an order, click [here](#).

For more information about tobacco use prevention resources for your school, contact Kris Minard, Tobacco Prevention Education Specialist at kminard@mt.gov or (406) 444-0785.



MTSS Virtual Training Opportunity August 9

OPI's Coordinated School Health and Continuing Education and Technical Assistance Units in the Student Support Services Department are pleased to offer a virtual professional learning opportunity on August 9. This is a continuation from the June 22 training. New attendees are welcome; all participants will find this training relevant to Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) implementation work. Continuing Education Credits will be offered.

Overview: MTSS Tier 1 Implementation of Instruction and Intervention

Presenter: Dr. Tessie Rose Bailey

Outcomes:

- Create a written definition of Tier 1 within the district or school;
- Develop a plan for implementing identified high leverage practices to increase collective efficacy at Tier 1; and
- Use practice guides to plan for implementation of Tier 1 evidence-based practices in 1-2 target areas.

To register, click [here](#). For more information, contact Sheila Lovato, CETA Unit Manager at (406) 444-5889 or Sheila.Lovato@mt.gov.

School Bus Standards to be Updated

With the recent passage of HB 207, HB 300, and HB 267, OPI must update the [2018 Montana School Bus Standards](#) to comply with the new changes in the law.

[HB 207](#) authorizes the use of additional flashing red lights on school buses;

[HB 267](#) requires certain signage, prohibits a school bus from actuating flashing red lights when the bus is stopped outside the roadway to receive or discharge students, requires the use of an extended stop arm in certain circumstances, and requires school district trustees to approve each bus stop that requires a student to cross the roadway.

[HB 300](#) authorizes the use of 8 to 15 passenger vehicles for transportation of students to and from certain events.

The beginning process to revise the current Montana School Bus Standards entails a committee of a wide range of members that possess a high level of knowledge, skills, and an understanding of school transportation laws and standards. This committee will meet at the OPI today, August 6, for discussion of implementation of the laws listed above for the 2022 Montana School Bus Standards.

OPI has tentatively set a date for introduction of the revised School Bus Standards to the Board of Public Education at its November meeting; a timeline for adoption will follow.

For more information, contact Donell Rosenthal, State Director of Pupil Transportation, at drosenthal@mt.gov.

Traffic Ed Reimbursements on the Way

This month, OPI will distribute \$985,000 to Montana school districts that offered state-approved Traffic Education programs during the 2020-2021 school year. The payments will be deposited electronically into school district accounts.

Traffic Ed reimbursement payments fluctuate annually, depending on the number of driver licenses issued/renewed and the number of students eligible for reimbursement. The funding source for the state special revenue Traffic Education account is the Montana Department of Justice's Motor Vehicle Division. Visit [OPI's Driver Education Forms & Reports web page](#) for 2021 reimbursement payment reports by county and school district.

For more information, contact Traffic Education Director Dwight Nelson at (406) 422-3944 or Dwight.Nelson@mt.gov.

Which ARMs are affected by the new laws?

- [10.64.301 School Bus Requirements](#)

[10.7.110 Standards for School Buses](#)

A total of 8,358 Montana teens completed a traffic ed course consisting of 60 hours of professional instruction, including six hours behind the wheel. District costs will be partially offset by the state reimbursement of \$117.85 per student.



Education Licensure Extension Approved

At the request of State Superintendent Elsie Arntzen, the Board of Public Education (BPE) gave its approval to grant a one-year extension for Montana Class 5-provisional license holders and third year internships.

The request was proposed to the BPE because Montana educators have been contacting the OPI requesting license extensions for various pandemic-related reasons. Examples include: having to quarantine, taking leave to care for a family member, being out sick themselves, issues taking the Praxis exam, and the demands of asynchronous and synchronous teaching.

OPI's request for a one-year expiration extension for Montana provisional license holders and third-year internships that were set to expire on June 30, 2021 will be extended to June 30, 2022. This extension addresses:

- Class 5 (*Three-year provisional license*)
- Class 5A (*One-year provisional license*)
- Third-year internships (*Internships are issued in one-year intervals for a total of three years*)

For more information, contact Crystal Andrews, Educator Licensure Program Manager, at (406) 444-3150 or Crystal.Andrews@mt.gov

Native American Heritage Day: September 24

The OPI Indian Education for All (IEFA) Unit asks you to mark your calendars for Friday, September 24, which is American Indian Heritage Day.

In 1997, the Montana Legislature established the fourth Friday in September as a day commemorating American Indian heritage. This year, the IEFA Unit plans to host a live event and coordinate activities around the state with our schools and partners honoring Montana's tribes and Indigenous peoples. Watch for details on OPI's website, the *Compass*, and social media as we get closer to the event.

For more information, contact IEFA Director Zach Hawkins at zachariah.hawkins@mt.gov or (406) 444-0708.

Smarter Balanced Interims Go Live This Month

To support instructional planning for next school year, OPI will make Smarter Balanced interims available starting August 23 in the [Montana Testing Portal](#). TIDE goes live one week prior to that on August 16; student data will be rolled over with all students upgraded to the next grade level. TIDE users will also be rolled over from the 2020-2021 school year.

To access and administer the Smarter Balanced Interim assessments, users must complete the annual Test Administrator Certification Course and sign the virtual Test Security Agreement.

Questions? E-mail OPIAssessmentHelpDesk@mt.gov or call 1-844-867-2569.

Assessment Webinars Scheduled for 2021-2022 School Year

The OPI Assessment Unit has posted the Monthly MontCAS Webinar Series schedule for the 2021-2022 school year. In addition to the dates and times, the [full schedule](#) provides a brief description of the focus of each monthly webinar. System Test Coordinators and other educators interested in balanced assessment systems and strategies for implementing high-quality data literacy practices can plan now to attend the monthly webinars.



Virtual E-grants Training August 10

OPI will hold one virtual E-grants training via Zoom on August 10. **Registration for the training will be open until noon today (August 6).**

On August 9, registrants will receive an e-mail to join the Zoom meeting. This e-mail will contain a passcode to enter the room.

Training will begin at 8:30 AM and run until approximately 2:00 PM; renewal units will be available. The agenda will include an overview of the E-grants system, general grant rules and guidelines, and time to work in the application. Breakout rooms will be set up for specific federal programs.

The session is limited to 100 participants; interested individuals must sign up on a first-come, first-served basis. For those unable to attend, the session will be recorded and archived on the OPI website.

E-Grant Application 2021-2022 Timelines:

September 1: E-grant consolidated applications for SY21-22 must be created/opened by this date.

September 1: Last date to create an amendment on a previous year's application without OPI approval.

September 15: Carl D Perkins E-grant must be completed by this date.

September 30: E-grant consolidated applications must be submitted by this date.

October 31: E-grant consolidated applications must be approved by this date.

Questions? E-mail [Sheri Harlow](#), ESSA Administrative Assistant, or call her at (406) 444-

English Learner Professional Development Opportunities, Resources

The OPI, together with WIDA, offers webinars and workshops to help educators build up their EL programs and prepare for the new school year. Webinars will address EL screening and identification, sheltered instruction techniques, culturally responsive pedagogy, and an interactive workshop provided by WIDA will address EL program design and continuous improvement.

Whether you have one EL student or 100, these presentations and workshops can help both administrative and teaching staff understand the responsibilities and best practices for serving English learners. See the [schedule](#) and register today!

For more information, contact Evelyn Paz Solís, Title III Coordinator and Multilingual/EL Instructional Specialist, at (406) 459-3552 or evelyn.paz@mt.gov.

Montana School Nurse Diabetes Education Day August 21

Logan Health is collaborating with medical providers across the state to provide a one-day educational conference on August 21 for school nurses focusing on the care of the student with Type 1 Diabetes Mellitus. The planning committee is working to reach as many school nurses as possible who live in Montana in order to provide evidence-based care for our students.

Registration cost is \$15.00 for either virtual or live attendance. To register, click here: [Montana School Nurse Diabetes Education Day](#).

For more information, contact Heidi Brandt, MN, RN, Clinical Education/Continuing Ed Supervisor at Logan Health in Kalispell at hbrandt@logan.org or (406) 890-7392.



Providing Score Reports to Families

In anticipation of the [state-level release](#), resources and sample memos will be published on the [OPI Statewide Testing Page](#) to help school districts describe the local conditions for learning and some potential impacts of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) on the student achievement results and participation.

School districts are required to notify parents/guardians of individual student reports in a timely manner to help families, teachers, and school leaders understand and address the specific academic needs of students (see [ESSA 1111\(b\)\(2\)\(B\)\(x\)](#) and [1112\(g\)\(1\)](#) and [ARM 10.56.102\(6\)](#)). Results for each tested student are available in the test vendor's reporting system. State aggregate data is also available in the test vendor reporting systems and this fall, OPI will release state-level results in the [Growth and Enhancement of Montana Students](#) (GEMS longitudinal data warehouse).

Registration Open for STC Workshop Series

Confirmed System Test Coordinators (or STCs) are invited to attend the STC Workshop Series and can register using the links in the [STC Workshop Session Registration Calendar](#). STCs are the OPI's primary contact for assessment updates and alerts and the role OPI designates with access to all secure assessment portals. STC participants will leave this three-day series with content to complete the four required MontCAS testing plans and will also be provided with step-by-step instructions on how to accomplish the various STC activities. The OPI Assessment Team will share some tips and tricks to accomplish these activities and invite veteran STCs to share their experiences as well.

Questions? Contact the OPI Assessment Help Desk at OPIAssessmentHelpDesk@mt.gov or 1-844-867-2569.

21st CCLC Approved Trainings Announced

Approved trainings have been announced for the 5% of professional development funds set aside within 21st CCLC budgets. All MTAA trainings are pre-approved, but they cannot take the place of any 21st CCLC required trainings. These trainings are also listed on this [calendar](#).

Recommended Training:

Cayen Training: August 16 or 17; please register [here](#) by August 11. Currently, no additional trainings are scheduled for this system.

Required 21st CCLC Regional Training: Full day attendance is required for program directors and coordinators. Only one training location is scheduled for the spring; please plan accordingly:

- September 29: *Billings*
- September 30: *Bozeman*
- October 4: *Polson*
- April 4: *Helena*

Approved National Conferences:

[National Family Engagement Summit:](#) October 13-15 / *Norfolk, VA*

[Bridge Conference:](#) October 26-29 / *Virtual*

[Summer Changes Everything:](#) November 8-10 / *Washington D.C*

[Beyond School Hours:](#) February 23-26 / *Orlando, FL*

[National Afterschool Alliance:](#) March 23-26 / *Las Vegas, NV*

[Boost Conference:](#) April 26-29 / *Palm Springs, CA*

Questions? Contact [Michelle Cusey](#), 21st CCLC Program Manager, at (406) 431-3029.



ARPA Water/Sewer Infrastructure Grant Money Available

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) provides state and local aid to make investments in water and sewer infrastructure. The 67th Montana Legislature passed HB 632, which makes \$462,689,925 in federal funding available for these types of projects in Montana. See Section 2 of [HB 632](#), which outlines this matching grant funding and eligible entities, including school districts.

Round 1 applications were due July 15; there was a staggering total of 320 applications submitted by eligible government entities totaling \$919.7 million. A second round is expected to close in January 2022. Visit <https://arpa.mt.gov> and click on “Water & Sewer.”

MAEFAIRS Open for TFS and Budget Reporting

MAEFAIRS is now available to report information for the FY2021 Trustees Financial Summary (TFS) and FY2022 Budget. To access MAEFAIRS, click [here](#).

To access TFS/Budget:

1. Click on the Data Entry tab.
2. Hover down to the Trustee Financial Summary (TFS). Another menu box will slide open. Choose Step 1: Prefilled Data Verification (Districts Only).
3. Highlight your district or click on the Select All Districts button, then click on the Print to PDF button.

Once you have verified your information on the Prefilled Data Report, you may move on to the other TFS and Budget steps. Special education cooperatives may begin TFS data entry with Step 3 and not complete the Budget data entry.

A completed, printed, and signed copy of the FY 2021 TFS is due to the county superintendent by August 15. FY 2022 Budget reports are due to the county superintendent within three days after the budget adoption meeting per 20-9-131 MCA. **School districts must then submit both reports electronically to the Office of Public Instruction no later than September 15.**

For more information, contact [Debbie Casey](#), Technology Support Coordinator, (406) 444-3096.

Air Quality Resources:

CDC:
[Ventilation in Schools](#)

EPA:
[Energy Savings Plus Health](#)

[Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools](#)

ASHRAE:
[Guidance for Reopening Schools and Universities during COVID-19](#)

Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health:
[5 Step Guide to Checking Ventilation Rates in Classrooms](#)

Healthy Schools Network:
[Green Cleaning for Healthy Schools Toolkit](#)

School Air Quality Improvements

The Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA) signed in December 2020, and the American Rescue Plan (ARP) signed in March 2021, provide over \$2.6 billion directly to Montana public school districts.

The ARP details 18 different uses of funds, including a broad range of school facility repairs and improvements. By investing some of the relief funds in improving school buildings, school districts have the opportunity to improve equity and health conditions and to provide long-term benefits and savings. The one-time nature of these funds makes them an excellent fit for durable investments in facilities that will provide long-term health benefits and financial savings. An important new eligible use for these funds is to upgrade HVAC systems to improve indoor air quality (IAQ).

Along with other mitigation measures, improvements in ventilation in K-12 schools can decrease the risk of SARS-CoV-2 spread. These improvements can also help schools maintain clean indoor air when outdoor air quality is poor due to wildfire smoke or cold weather inversions.



District ARP ESSER Planning Tip: Stakeholder Input

Meaningful stakeholder consultation is a requirement for District ARP ESSER Plans. This can seem challenging while crafting your plan over the summer, but some simple outreaches could lay a good foundation for your plan formation.

Consider sending out a brief survey to all stakeholders asking them to identify their top priorities for the district post-pandemic; personally invite key stakeholders to board meetings where the plan will be discussed; conduct a virtual or in-person parent/family focus group; make specific outreaches to populations that may have been most impacted from the pandemic (i.e. special needs, low income, and students of color).

While having a standing agenda item for your board meetings is helpful, this alone won't produce the robust input the plan is requiring. Remember, you'll be reviewing and updating this plan at least every six months, so if at first you don't get all of the stakeholder input you'd like, plan to keep pursuing meaningful feedback so the voices of the entire school community can be reflected in your plan. Regardless of the process followed, you should document what you do and ensure that all the applicable stakeholder groups were included in the process and that meaningful consultation occurred.

Dates to remember:

August 24, 2021: Districts must submit an ARP ESSER Plan to OPI through the Terms of Employment, Accreditation, and Master Schedule (TEAMS). The District ARP ESSER Plan template opened July 1 and will close on August 24 in TEAMS. The requirements for the district ARP ESSER plans must include at a minimum:

- The extent to which and how funds will be used by the District to implement prevention and mitigation strategies;
- 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;
- How the District will use the remaining ARP ESSER funds consistent with statutory requirements;
- How the District will ensure 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, particularly those students disproportionately impacted; and
- Consultation with a wide variety of stakeholders when developing the plan.

September 1, 2021: Due date to complete and submit ESSER II and ESSER III applications in the E-grants system.

For more information, contact Jeff Kirksey, ESSER Program Manager, at jeffrey.kirksey@mt.gov.

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 at (406) 444-3161, opiada.mt.gov, Relay Service: 711.

State Testing Windows Set for 2021-2022 School Year

Given the uncertainty of test planning and preparation needs for next school year, OPI has selected intentionally broad test windows to provide school districts with maximum flexibility and options to administer statewide summative assessments.

These test windows are subject to change based on approval of testing consortium and the evolving needs of the field during the pandemic.

View the [full state assessment calendar](#) on the Statewide Testing pages of the OPI website.



Accreditation and Educator Preparation

At the request of State Superintendent Elsie Arntzen, the Board of Public Education (BPE) recently gave its approval to two accreditation items:

- Allowing the [School District plan](#) required by the U.S. Department of Education under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) for use of Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) III Fund dollars to be considered as the Continuous School Improvement Plan (CSIP) for the 2021-2022 school year;
- Extending the School Year 2020-2021 Accreditation Status of all school districts through the 2021-2022 school year, and in essence providing a two-year accreditation cycle for districts.

By approving the Federal School District ARP-ESSER Plan as the CSIP for the 2021-2022 school year (ARM 10.55.601(3)), this will allow school districts to have a single plan to meet the demands of continuous improvement of learning for Montana students while providing relief from multiple plans with the same intended outcome. Districts would not be required to submit corrective plans to deviations, as the federal School District ARP-ESSER Plan requires six-month updates. As such, where workforce challenges, serving subgroups, and other requirements by the federal government are not met, the updates would appear in the LEA plan. For public school districts declining these funds and private schools that are accredited, the continuous school improvement plans as outlined in ARM 10.55.601(3) are still required.

ARP ESSER LEA Plan

To complete the ARP ESSER LEA Plan for your district, log in to the OPI TEAMS application. The link to complete the form is on the home page. **All plans must be completed no later than August 24 by 8:00 am.** Any district that completes an ARP ESSER LEA Plan will not need to complete a Continuous School Improvement Plan (CSIP) this fall. Visit this [OPI web page](#) for helpful resources.

The requirements for the district ARP ESSER plans must include at a minimum:

- The extent to which and how funds will be used by the District to implement prevention and mitigation strategies;
- 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;
- How the District will use the remaining ARP ESSER funds consistent with statutory requirements;
- How the District will ensure 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, particularly those students disproportionately impacted; and
- Consultation with a wide variety of stakeholders when developing the plan.

The due date to complete/submit ESSER II and ESSER III applications in the E-grants system is September 1.

Questions? Contact Jeff Kirksey, ESSER Program Manager, at jeffrey.kirksey@mt.gov.

TEAMS Security Access

If a district changed an authorized representative (AR) or other administration personnel, submit this information to CentralUpdates@mt.gov. Districts must also complete a [TEAMS Security Form](#), signed by the new AR, and submitted to OPITEAMS@mt.gov to grant access to TEAMS. The district should indicate which personnel need to be inactivated and add the assigned roles of any new personnel. For a list of current users with TEAMS access, email OPITEAMS@mt.gov.

Compensation Expenditure TOE (2019-2020)

The COMPENSATION EXPENDITURE TOE (2019-2020) screen is now open. The screen is located under the SYSTEM drop-down menu. You can also generate SEID numbers if necessary.

For more info, contact Nathan Miller, Accreditation Program Director, at (406) 444-4317 or nmiller5@mt.gov.



CDC Guidance: Masking and School Bus Transportation

According to the [CDC](#), “passengers and drivers must wear a mask on school buses, including on buses operated by public and private school systems, subject to the exclusions and exemptions in CDC’s Order.” Specifically, those exemptions are: children under the age of 2; persons with disabilities who cannot wear a mask, or cannot safely wear a mask because of a disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.); and persons for whom wearing a mask would create a risk to workplace health, safety, or job duty. Please reference the [CDC Order](#) for additional information.

K-12 COVID-19 Screening/Testing Funding Available

The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) received \$32 million in funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to support COVID-19 screening/testing in K-12 public and private schools across the state through July 2022.

Implementing COVID-19 testing strategies to rapidly detect and isolate infectious individuals and quarantine exposed persons in conjunction with other mitigation strategies can reduce transmission of SARS-CoV-2, helping schools stay open for in-person instruction and helping prevent further transmission within the community.

Funding from this initiative may be used by schools to support existing staff in implementing COVID-19 testing protocols or to hire additional support staff, contractors, or temporary workers to oversee these activities. The funding may also be used to support staff time related to implementing COVID-19 mitigation strategies (e.g., contact tracing in coordination with your local health department) and the purchase of necessary supplies and equipment (e.g., computer, collection supplies, personal protective equipment (PPE)) and other materials needed to implement this effort. DPHHS will provide schools with SARS-CoV-2 antigen rapid test kits, technical assistance to implement screening/testing protocols, and training. More information regarding this funding opportunity is on the [DPHHS school health web site](#).

DPHHS is working closely with education support organizations like SAM, MASBO, REA, and MASN to understand the needs of schools and communicate with school leaders about this funding opportunity. All school districts and private and parochial schools providing in-person instruction will be invited to apply for this funding opportunity this month. DPHHS will hold Zoom webinars soon to provide more information regarding this funding opportunity and how to apply. The presentation will be archived on the [DPHHS web site](#) for viewing later.

DPHHS COVID Testing Funding Webinars:

- [August 17/Noon–1:00 pm](#)

Repeated on:

- [August 19/Noon-1:00 pm](#)

Topics include:

- How to apply for funds
- Screening testing options
- How to request supplies
- Reporting requirements

Need more info? Contact BJ Biskupiak, DPHHS School Health Program Manager, at wbiskupiak@mt.gov or (406) 444-0995.

Wanted: Accreditation Task Force Members

OPI seeks members for its [Chapter 55 - Standards of Accreditation](#) Task Force. If you are interested in participating in this important work, please complete this brief [form](#) by September 1. Interested individuals will be contacted by a member of the OPI staff for any follow-up discussions regarding the revision Task Force.

For more information, contact Tristen Belnap, Executive Assistant to Deputy Superintendent Sharyl Allen, at (406) 444-5643 or Tristen.Belnap@mt.gov.

New Hub Course Released: 2021 New or Revised Content Standards

We are excited to announce our newest Teacher Learning Hub Course: [New Standards for 2021: Overview and Planning for Implementation!](#) This three-hour self-paced course for all K-12 educators introduces the five new or newly revised sets of standards that went into effect on July 1. The course highlights the interconnected nature of these new standards and how educators can integrate the standards into other content areas.

If you recommend this course to your school staff, we encourage you to take a look at the Information for School Administrators [website](#) to ensure your staff members are ready to engage in Hub courses.