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Office of the Superintendent

Montana Education Updates

2021 Legislative Priorities

1. BASE Aid plus inflation
2. Adding special education to BASE Aid plus inflation
3. Fund in-state residential treatment for at-risk students
4. Transfer the Broadband for Montana Schools program from the Department of Commerce to the Office of Public Instruction

Program 9 (funding to schools) [comparison](#)

Program 6 (state-level activities) [comparison](#)

The OPI is committed to hosting Education and Tribal Education Caucuses this session:

OPI Tribal Education Caucus:

4:00pm every Thursday Room 350 at the Capitol Starting January 7th

OPI Education Caucus:

7:00 am Every other Tuesday morning Room 335 at the Capitol Starting January 12th

Chapters 55 and 57 Review

Deputy Superintendent Sharyl Allen and the Board of Public Education are reviewing ARM Chapters 10.55 (accreditation) and 10.57 (licensure). We must continue working to provide our school leaders and educators with flexibility.

Federal Waivers

- Summer Food Service Program: extended to June 30, 2021
- Report Card: still required for available data points
- Assessment: ED has not made a decision on spring standardized assessments. The OPI is pursuing a waiver or determining how local interim data could be used instead
- The OPI continues to advocate an extension of the CRF deadline while encouraging the Governor to allocate additional funds to education

Stars and Stripes Initiative

The OPI and American Legion of Montana are partnering on a [Stars and Stripes initiative](#) to donate American Flags for Montana classrooms. The cost of the Flags is \$10 and donors can choose which school that flag goes to. The Flags are classroom-sized 16"x24" and include the staff and wall mount bracket.





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CRF Payments to Schools

A breakdown of CRF payments to districts can be found under the [finance section](#) of the reopening Montana schools webpage.

Promoting Career and Technical Education

The OPI continues to partner with businesses and industries to promote career and technical education. For the legislative session, we have March 26th scheduled for a Montana Ready Rotunda Day. If you haven't already seen this [promotional video](#) we made with the Montana Chamber, check it out and share!

Transformational Learning and Advanced Opportunities

Transformational Learning and Montana Advanced Opportunity grant applications and annual report submissions open Monday, December 7th at 8am MST. Applications and annual report templates are found on the OPI website under Leadership-Academic Success-Transformational Learning/Montana Advanced Opportunity. The submission window closes Monday, January 11th at 5pm MST. Remember, positioning on the funding waitlist is first-come, first-served. To submit a district application or annual report, combine all documents into 1 PDF file. At 8am on December 7th, the submission area will open up on both the [Transformational Learning](#) and [Montana Advanced Opportunity pages](#), allowing for submissions to be accepted. If on the page prior to 8am, refreshing the page will allow the submit button to appear once the window opens. The information you submit will include the submitter's first and last name and email address and an upload of your document. You'll then complete the recaptcha and hit submit. For more information, contact krystal.smith@mt.gov, 406-249-0758

Superintendent's Office November Activities

- Board of Public Education meeting
- CCSSO Annual Policy Forum virtual conference
- MIC3 meeting
- Land Board meeting
- Meeting with Native American Caucus
- Zoom meeting with local administrators

Follow the Office of Public Instruction on social media:



For more information, contact [Dylan Klapmeier](#), 406-444-3559.





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School Finance

State Paid Tuition and FP-15's

Please submit your state paid tuition and FP-15 (day treatment) claims for the 2019-20 school year as soon as possible. These claims must be submitted and approved prior to December 31, 2020. Once your claims are entered in MAEFAIRS, the district must verify the claim and number of days enrolled. Claims will be paid in the month after they are verified and submitted through MAEFAIRS. For more information, contact [Nicole Thuotte](#), at 406-444-4524

Compensation Expenditure Report

MAEFAIRS is currently available for compensation expenditure reporting. The Compensation Expenditure Report is due December 10th. There is a Compensation Expenditure Report training located here: [Compensation Expenditure Report Training](#). For TEAMS/TOE information, contact Linda Peterson at 406-444-5726. For MAEFAIRS information, contact [Renee Richter](#) at 406-444-1960.

Changes to Trustees Financial Summary

If you find a material coding error on your FY 20 Trustees Financial Summary (TFS), please submit a revision to Renee Richter in the School Finance Division. Scan and email revisions to [Renee Richter](#), Financial Specialist, 406-444-1960, or mail revisions to: OPI School Finance, PO Box 202501, Helena, MT 59620-2501. The deadline for submitting revisions is December 10.

Changes to Fall Student Count for ANB in MAEFAIRS

Changes to Fall Student Count for ANB, including American Indian designation for SAG payment next year, will be accepted through December 31, 2020. For more information, contact Nica Merala 406-444-4401.

Elections

Election workshops are available through MASBO. These will be held via Zoom on December 1st and 11th. Click here to register! <https://www.masbo.com/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=1>

2021 Election Calendars and Handbooks are available on the OPI Elections

Webpage: <http://opi.mt.gov/Leadership/Finance-Grants/School-Finance/Elections>

Contact [Nicole Thuotte](#), at 406-444-4524 with election questions.





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School Innovation and Improvement Department

TSI Competitive Grant Announcement

The Targeted Support and Improvement competitive grants are currently being scored. Districts will be notified if changes need to be made to applications and will have until December 10th to resubmit. All districts who applied will be contacted about the status of their grant this month. For more information, contact [Crystal Andrews](mailto:Crystal.Andrews@opi.mt.gov), 406-444-3482.

Accreditation

Application Due Date for Variances to Standards: Monday, March 1, 2021

The Board of Public Education's Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) 10.55.604 "[Variances to Standards](#)," allows accredited schools to implement a variance to a standard or standards designed to meet or exceed results under established standards. Districts interested in seeking an initial or renewal of a variance to a standard must apply to the Office of Public Instruction by Monday, March 1, 2021. An approved application will take effect at the beginning of the 2021 academic year.

The ARM 10.55.604 requires local trustees to provide evidence of the community's public participation and evidence of official board action approving the variance to standards application before submission to the Variances to Standards Review Board. The [Variances to Standards Application Materials](#) are located on the OPI website.

For more information, contact [Linda Vrooman Peterson](mailto:Linda.Vrooman@opi.mt.gov), 406-444-5726.





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Indian Education for All

Major milestone in Montana history: Tribal Flags at the Montana Capitol.

The pending legislative session and recent dedication of the Tribal Flags monument on the Capitol grounds provide a great opportunity for students to learn more about the Tribal Nations of Montana. During the 2019 legislative session Representative Marvin Weatherwax (Blackfeet) sponsored House Bill 524 which established a new monument in front of the Capitol that displays the flags of the eight Tribal Nations in Montana. The monument dedication ceremony was held on October 14, 2020. We would like to invite teachers and their students to explore this new [IEFA video resource](#) featuring Representative Weatherwax sharing his thoughts regarding this historic moment in Montana history. Deeper understandings regarding the location and history of Montana Tribes can be acquired through our remote learning lesson - [Learning About the Seals of the Montana Tribal Nations](#). For more information, contact [Joan Franke](#), 406-444-3694

Student Support Services Department

New Technical Assistance Opportunity

The Office of Public Instruction has partnered with the [Salish Kootenai College Emergency Services Academy](#) to support schools in their efforts to understand, manage, and develop emergency operations plans unique to their schools and communities. This technical assistance could include topics relating to COVID-19 processes outlined in the [OPI's Reopening Guidance](#). This resource is provided to you at no cost to the school or school district. If you are interested in receiving technical assistance with your emergency operational planning, please reach out to [Michele Henson](#), School Safety Program Manager at OPI.

Mandatory Reporting

Educators play a critical role in the efforts to keep Montana children safe. Like many states, Montana saw decreases in reports of suspected child abuse and neglect as school buildings closed and education quickly transitioned to remote learning last spring. Experts do not believe that child maltreatment actually decreased during this time and are concerned that the observed decrease is because mandated reporters, such as teachers and childcare providers, were no longer physically present with children on a daily basis. To help school staff know their





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role as mandatory reporters, the OPI recently updated [Mandatory Reporting for Educators](#) on the Teacher Learning Hub. To specifically address the current needs, we have added a new section titled “Considerations for Virtual Learning.” This resource provides strategies and classroom activities to help school staff in identifying child abuse or neglect during remote learning sessions, as well as community supports for families. Please check out this updated course on the [OPI Teacher Learning Hub](#). For more information contact Tammy Lysons at tamara.lysons@mt.gov.

2021 Youth Risk Behavior Survey – Registration Underway

Registration is underway for the 2021 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). This is the 30th year for the biennial, self-reporting, student survey which measures health risk behaviors regarding unintentional injury and violence, tobacco use, alcohol and other drug use, sexual behaviors, nutrition and dietary behaviors, and physical activity. School-specific reports are available from the [YRBS website](#). Registration packets were mailed to district superintendents in early October; however, if you did not receive one please contact Susan Court at scourt@mt.gov or 406-444-3178.

Guidance on Verification of Free and Reduced-Price School Meal Applications and Direct Certification Activities

The OPI is waiting for additional Federal guidance surrounding free and reduced eligibility data, economically disadvantaged and poverty indicators for SY 2021 and will send updated information once received.

In the meantime, schools that participate in School Nutrition Programs National School Lunch Program (NSLP), including schools that may have started the school year using the School Nutrition Programs NSLP then changed to the Summer Food Service Program, must do the following during SY 2020-21:

- Report student’s free and reduced eligibility (FRAM) determinations in AIM for meal applications received from households during 2020-21.
- Check DCA for direct certifications at least three times during SY 2020-21 and document eligibility changes.
- Verification - Schools that have received free and reduced-price meal applications from households during SY 2020-21 must conduct verification of 3% of applications on file and report the results in the MAPS system by February 28, 2021.





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Summer Food Service Program Claim Rate Change

Summer Food Service Program reimbursement rates are updated annually based on the Consumer Price Index. This change normally happens when SFSP is not operating in late January.

December SFSP claims are due no later than January 10th. Since the SFSP will be operating during the rate change, Montana OPI will need to lockout December claims from January 11th through the date when the new SFSP claim rate is released. No December claims may be submitted starting January 11th.

If you miss this deadline, December claims can be submitted after the reimbursement rates are released and Montana OPI has made the update in MAPS. Claims submitted after January 11th will be processed with January claims in February.

For more information, contact [Christine Emerson](mailto:Christine.Emerson@opi.mt.gov), 406-444-2502.

ADOS Booster

Montana has previously had 141 educators attend two-day certification training in administering the Autism Diagnostic Observation Scale (ADOS), which is a best-practice method of identifying students with an autism spectrum disorder. The ADOS Booster is a one-day follow-up training to help currently certified educators continue to administer the ADOS with fidelity. This year the OPI is offering the Booster training online on December 4th.

We also continue to offer our popular Online Autism/Behavior Training, which has 49 hours of training in applied behavior analysis (ABA) and teaching students with autism.

For more information, contact Doug Doty at ddoty@mt.gov, 406-459-5303.



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Teaching and Learning Department

Assessment Unit

COVID-19 Standardized Testing Guidance

As of today, the participation requirement to administer annual state standardized assessments is required under federal and state law. The OPI recognizes the pandemic challenges Montana schools face and are seeking flexible approaches to administer these required assessments. Secretary DeVos issued a memo to Chief State School Officers on September 3rd on the requirements of testing this school year. The “COVID Standardized Testing Guidance” was created as a result of key needs that districts have shared with the OPI Assessment Unit. The document presents some challenges of test administration given three settings: (1) traditional (in-school), (2) hybrid (blended), and (3) remote-only settings. The document is dynamic and will change and grow over time as the impact of pandemic evolves.

Submit Comments on the 1.0 Percent State Cap

The OPI is reaching out to all interested stakeholders to solicit public comment on the implications of exceeding the 1.0 percent alternate assessment cap at the state-level. The public comment survey allows the OPI to provide further clarification on the requirements and solicit comments on any training or technical assistance needs necessary to address the concerns of the federal 1.0 percent cap. You can also submit written comments to the OPI Assessment Help Desk opiassessmenthelpdesk@mt.gov.

Preparing for the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 Assessment

Due to disruptions caused by the pandemic, the ACCESS for ELLs testing window has been extended to 12 weeks (2/26/2021). We encourage districts to take advantage of the additional four weeks to ensure that health and safety guidelines are maintained during testing. We would also like to remind districts to request English Learner (EL) records in AIM/Infinite Campus for all students transferring from another district. EL status does not transfer along with a student automatically, and it is crucial for the education of ELs that their records be requested and transferred so that their new school and teachers can provide them with the services that they need. If you have any ACCESS questions, attend the OPI EL Office Hours from 3:00–3:30 p.m. on Wednesdays thru December 2.

Mark your calendars for the 2021 ASSIST Conference: January 28-29!

Although we are unable to host the conference in person this year, the OPI remains committed to supporting the use of high-quality and balanced assessment to advance student learning and is therefore hosting this year’s conference virtually via Zoom. Find more information and register for free on the OPI Data and Assessment Conference website.





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Roadmap of Montana's Balanced Assessment System

Data literacy and its direct influence in guiding instruction, alongside a balanced approach including the use of formative and interim strategies ensures all children have fair and equitable opportunities to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging academic content standards. The [Balanced Assessment Roadmap](#) is a one-stop resource housing all of the math and English language arts resources from the suite of tools provided through the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. This includes content from state standards and assessments to educator lesson plans.

For more information, contact the Assessment Unit at OPIAssessmentHelpDesk@mt.gov or 844-867-2569.

Career, Technical and Adult Education Unit

For questions, please contact:

Shannon Boswell, Division Administrator - 406.444.7915

Eric Tilleman, Agriculture Education Specialist - 406.444.4451

Renee Erlandsen, Health Sciences Education Specialist - 406.994.6986

Ian Beagles, CTE/Perkins Data Control Specialist - 406.444.9019

Mike Houghton, Industrial Technology Specialist - 406.444.4452

Austin Schweitzer, Marketing Program Coordinator - 406.444.2059

Eric Swenson, Business Education Specialist - 406.444.7991

Megan Vincent, Family & Consumer Sciences Education Specialist - 406.444.3599

Katie Madsen, Adult Education State Director/ HiSET State Administrator- 406-444-4443

Emily Fuller, Adult Education Program Specialist, 406-444-1691

John Stankowiak, Veterans Education- 406-444-4122

Wanda Arlint, HiSET Administrative Assistant, 406-444-415

Colstrip Entries are Top 10 in National Youth Entrepreneurs Big Idea Challenge

Three Colstrip teachers and their students were selected as finalists in the [Youth Entrepreneurs](#) Big Idea competition. The Top 10 video submissions can be viewed and voting conducted [here](#). When viewing the videos, be sure to also check out the activity guides submitted for each "Big Idea" by clicking the links under the Additional Documents heading of each video. Congratulations and good luck Tiana Yates, Business Education; Mindy Kohn, Family & Consumer Sciences; and Nicole Kirschten, Science.

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TEAMS FALL Collection is OPEN

TEAMS is now open and closes on December 1, 2020. Due to the impact of Covid-19, the TEAMS data collection window is extended to provide ample time and flexibility to complete the TEAMS report. Teams data is used to calculate the CTE/Vo-Ed allocations for their CTE programs. It is essential that CTE program offerings, extended contract days for CTE Instructors, number of male students in CTE courses, as well as verifying the semester 1 and 2 course in Teacher Class data is accurate. Please remember that semester 2 courses must all be entered in the fall, enrollment numbers for spring can be adjusted but classes cannot be added in spring. *This data is also what CTE specialists use to approve the Montana Career Pathways offered by each program.*

Fall CTE Data Collections Now Open

The AIM Fall Career & Technical Education (CTE) Collection is now open and ends December 31, 2020. Please review all the AIM user guides for the Fall Enrollment and Program Participation collections on the [AIM User Guides Page](#). The Fall Career & Technical Education (CTE) Data Collection is a follow-up to the Spring CTE Collection. Students identified as CTE Concentrators in the Spring who graduated in the Class of 2020 must be contacted to identify their status six months after high school graduation. For more information, please see the AIM Fall CTE Collection User Guide and the recorded webinar on this collection.

Standards, Instruction, and Professional Learning Unit

Contact Us!

- [Colet Bartow](#), Senior Manager, Teaching and Learning Department, 406-444-3583
- [Stephanie Swigart](#), English Language Arts and Literacy Coordinator, 406-444-0736
- [Michelle McCarthy](#), Science Coordinator, 406-444-3537
- [Marisa Graybill](#), Mathematics Coordinator, 406-444-0706
- [Terri Barclay](#), Comprehensive Literacy State Development Program Manager, 406-444-0753
 - Literacy Grant Specialist, [Liz Tuss](#)
 - Literacy Grant Specialist, [Rachel Anderberg](#)
- [Carli Cockrell](#), Professional Learning Coordinator, 406-444-0769
 - Renewal Unit Providers, OPIRUPS@mt.gov
- [Jessica Bryant](#), Teacher Learning Hub Coordinator, 406-444-3557
- [Allyson Briesse](#), Teacher Learning Content Specialist, 406-444-0716
- [Marjorie O'Rourke](#), Professional Learning Data & Information Specialist, 406-444-3538



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Content Standards Revision Update

The Board of Public Education (BPE) approved the Career and Technical Education, Computer Science, Library Media and Information Literacy, Social Studies, and Technology Integration Standards at their November 5, 2020 meeting. The implementation date for the new standards is July 1, 2021.

Districts should consider their 5-year curriculum review cycle in order to plan for a staggered approach to aligning to the new standards.

Visit the [OPI K-12 Content Standards and Revision webpage](#) for more information. Additional resources, standards documents, and professional development will be developed over the coming months. Contact [Colet Bartow](#), Senior Manager – Teaching and Learning Department, with any questions.

Attention Renewal Unit Providers!

The Renewal Unit Provider System and the renewal unit process is now under the purview of our Professional Learning staff, and we have a website that answers many of the Renewal Unit questions. [The Professional Learning website](#) is a one-stop location for all things related to educator professional learning in our state. The Renewal Unit Provider System was recently updated, and we have created a [brief video tour](#) of the updates. You can reach OPI Professional Learning staff by email at opirups@mt.gov. Licensure can still be reached by visiting the [Licensure website](#), by emailing cert@mt.gov, or by calling 406.444.3150.

OPI Learning Opportunities Portal

Visit the Learning Opportunities Portal website to find out about classes, workshops, and courses. The Portal is just one of the ways the OPI informs educators about upcoming professional learning opportunities in our state. We are updating with any cancellations or postponements as we are made aware of these changes. Contact Professional Learning staff at OPIRUPS@mt.gov with any questions or to let us know about changes to your events.





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New Courses on the Teacher Learning Hub

If you haven't already, check out what more than 16,000 Montana educators have experienced! The Hub team is always adding and updating our self-paced and facilitated courses. Please check the Learning Hub homepage for a complete listing and catalog.

Take a look at these recently released courses!

- Building the Foundation of Digital Literacy – This introductory course provides insight into data literacy and data analysis for teachers and administrators in Montana. (3 renewal units)
- Montana Science Standards 501: IEFA and Equity – This course addresses the why and how's of culturally responsible integration of Indian Education for All (IEFA) while ensuring your science instruction is equitable and meaningful. (3 renewal units)
- Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS): Tier 2 – This course gives participants the knowledge necessary to understand and implement the second tier of strategies in MTSS. (3 renewal units)
- Playing with Pythagoras – Investigate how the Pythagorean Theorem provides a vital foundation in 8th grade that progresses into high school geometry! (4 renewal units)
- Standards-based Grading and Reporting: Feedback – This course outlines one step toward implementation that teachers can take – providing feedback through standards-based rubrics. (2 renewal units)

Contact OPILearningHub@mt.gov with any questions.

-END-