



MACSS 2021 Fall Conference – September 23, 2021 via Zoom

The Montana Small Schools Alliance is happy to join the county superintendents at their MACSS Fall Conference. We appreciate this opportunity to share information about the services that we can provide to schools in your counties. If you have questions or need assistance, please give us a call. You are welcome to browse around our website to see what we do at www.mt-ssa.org

Here are the emails for our staff:

Linda Marsh, Interim Executive Director – lindam@mt-ssa.org

Linda Sunderlin, Office Manager – mssa710@gmail.com

Dan Rask, Guidance Specialist – mtguid2021@gmail.com

Dr. Erin Lipkind, Librarian – erinl@mt-ssa.org

Here is a list of our services:

MSSA PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, CURRICULUM AND POLICY CONSORTIUM – The Montana Small Schools Professional Development and Curriculum Consortium is one of the major programs of the Alliance. Starting in 1996, the Alliance has provided more than eight hundred day-long workshops to multi-grade school districts and small K-12 districts helping them create curriculum, instruction, and assessments, to meet state and federal standards. Each year the consortium has grown to serve more school districts. In 2021 the consortium is serving over 140 school districts throughout Montana in various programs. A team of member teachers continually aligns MSSA curriculum to the Montana Content Standards in all disciplines. The “Consortium Member” section holds full K-12 curriculum, completely aligned. The Rural Schools Policy Manual is also included on the consortium member page. Language for REAP and Title II grants are additional features of Consortium membership. Membership in the Consortium runs between \$750 and \$2,000 depending on school size. MSSA reimburses one vehicle per district and substitute teacher costs for teachers to attend the Consortium workshops. MSSA gives six hours of OPI approved renewal units for each day attended.

MSSA STANDARDS PROGRAM - In response to a change in policy by the Montana Board of Public Education regarding the accreditation standards for guidance and libraries, MSSA offers a program for districts with under 126 students enrolled. If a school district meets the ANB requirement, joins and complies with the MSSA program, they will be fully accredited in either or both disciplines. MSSA contracts approved, accredited specialists who provide an annual workshop and regular consultation either by email or directly. The 2021-2022 specialists are Dr. Erin Lipkind, Librarian, and Dan Rask, Guidance/Counseling. Their full contact information is listed on the "Standards" page. Districts are required to have a certified instructor as the contact person. That individual need not have the certifications in guidance or library, but must be a certified instructor meeting the qualifications outlined by OPI. The MSSA currently has 95 members for library and 100 members for counseling. The MSSA fee for standards is \$300 for each school site, not per district, for each program.



MSSA-MAP TESTING PROGRAM - Knowing how difficult and expensive it is for small school districts to create a student growth model assessment system, we have teamed up with the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) of Portland, Oregon to offer school districts, with a student body of less than 200 students, special rates to use NWEA's well-known Measures of Academic Progress (MAP). Assessments may be given up to four times in a school year (fall, winter, spring and summer). MAP assessments are computerized adaptive tests, the difficulty of each question is based on how well a student answers all the previous questions. The final score is an estimate of the student's achievement level. Individual scores are norm referenced, reflect Montana's standards, and can help predict SBAC and Montana State Science test scores. Teachers receive results back the next day. Our most popular assessment is the MAP Growth. This test includes language, reading, and mathematics for grades K-12. In addition, schools can also choose to assess students in Reading Fluency (PK-5) and Science (3-12). Kindergarten, first graders and English Language Learners are assessed orally.

NREA/NREAC - MSSA and MREA under the partnership of the Montana Rural Education Partnership (MREP) is the unified state affiliate of the National Rural Education Association. Montana students have taken top honors in the NREA Student Essay Contests. Montana Teachers have received NREA mini-grants. A Montana Rural Teacher of the Year has been awarded National Rural Teacher of the Year honors and others have been finalists. MSSA teachers and board members serve on national executive committees. The past Executive Director served on the National Rural Education Advocacy Consortium, which was instrumental in maintaining the REAP grants as they currently are administered.

GRADUATE COURSE - MSSA offers a graduate class annually with a University Alliance Partner to assist teachers in recertification and moving on the district's salary schedule. Teachers who attend at least three workshops during the year and complete a project over the topics presented at those seminars, receive one graduate credit of Continuing Education upon successful completion. *This course is a second semester course and enrollment is generally from January until March of each year.*

RURAL SCHOOLS FINANCIAL SURVEY - MSSA annually compiles a survey of participating schools regarding taxable values, base salaries, budgeting, and a host of other district financial data to assist rural schools in determining where they may lie with regard to other districts across the state financially. Once districts submit their data, our office manager compiles and organizes the data into the yearly financial survey which is sent out to each participating district. Other districts may request a copy of the survey for a small fee. All copies are archived in the "Research" page of our website.

FEDERAL GRANTS (REAP, TITLE IIA) SUPPORT - MSSA assists member district in both attaining and maintaining the Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP) as well as the Title IIA portion the ESEA Consolidated Grant process, in the OPI E-grants system. Acceptable language for both are provided as a member of our consortium. *Language to use for the Title IIA application and Project Final Report is located on the "Consortium Members" page.*