

Achievement for All ANNUAL REPORT 2016-2017

April 2018



Forward Thinking, High Achieving.

STAFF AND STUDENTS TOGETHER

Creating a 21st Century Educational Culture



CONTENTS

MCPS Stats at a Glance	3
MCPS Board of Trustees	4
Mission / Vision / Core Beliefs	5
Talent	6 - 9
<i>Benchmarks and stories of progress</i>	
Learning	10 - 19
<i>Benchmarks and stories of progress</i>	
Environment	20 - 21
<i>Benchmarks and stories of progress</i>	
Operations	22 - 25
<i>Benchmarks and stories of progress</i>	
MCPS Finances at a Glance	26 - 27

A Message from the Superintendent PROGRESS: GOALS BECOMING REALITIES

The mission, vision and core beliefs of Missoula County Public Schools (MCPS) are the foundation for the future of our schools. We will continue to foster the development of an inspired 21st century educational culture that improves lifelong student achievement, develops remarkable educational leaders and engages the Missoula community in the future of its children.

“Forward Thinking, High Achieving” is a tagline that we use at Missoula County Public Schools. It highlights our goal of continuous improvement of existing programs while also seeking to identify new opportunities to enhance student engagement. MCPS continues to strive for success for every student every day, and this year will be no exception.

We continue to transform our district’s future through implementation of our 21st Century Model of Education and the “Achievement for All” five-year instructional strategic plan which call for enhanced student engagement, updated learning environments, increased collaboration and communication with all stakeholders, more “personalized” professional growth opportunities for staff, and development of a culture of innovation throughout the district.

I am proud of the accomplishments that are detailed in our 2016-17 annual report. These accomplishments reflect the continuing efforts of all staff to provide an engaging and relevant educational experience for all of the students we serve. These efforts, coupled with the promise of the facility projects supported by the Missoula community through the passage of our 2015 Smart Schools 2020 bond request, bode well for the future of MCPS. The bonds serve as a necessary investment in our schools to repair aging buildings, update technology infrastructure and increase capacity for our growing student body. Great school facilities will enhance student learning; well-educated students will yield a high-quality workforce which will attract new businesses and jobs. Improving our schools is truly an investment in our local economy.

At MCPS, we want students to succeed academically and graduate both college and career ready. Each and every student is important; our dedicated staff works tirelessly to ensure that each student is learning and succeeding in the classroom. Together, with continued community support and dedication to our children, we will continue to increase academic rigor, improve graduation rates and prepare our students for post-secondary and workforce success.

Our hopes, dreams and vision will continue to move us toward greater achievement. Together we can continue to move MCPS to a new American standard of public education. I look forward to partnering with the Missoula community to provide the foundation to ensure success for all students.



Sincerely,

Mark A. Thane

DISTRICT STATS AT A GLANCE

STUDENT ENROLLMENT

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS			
Chief Charlo	450	438	474
Cold Springs	495	488	490
Franklin	268	243	247
Hawthorne	375	380	405
Lewis & Clark	485	502	501
Lowell	282	291	277
Paxson	415	423	417
Rattlesnake	474	483	470
Russell	397	393	401
MIDDLE SCHOOLS			
Meadow Hill	493	456	467
CS Porter	471	504	505
Washington	579	643	636
HIGH SCHOOLS			
Big Sky	1050	1020	1053
Hellgate	1196	1157	1118
Seeley-Swan	99	108	102
Sentinel	1171	1138	1136
Willard	169	159	156
TOTAL K-12	8,869	8,869	8855



GRADUATION RATE

District

85.5%

DROP-OUT RATE

District

3%

DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWNS

Gender

Male	52%
Female	48%

Ethnicity

White	83.8%
Hispanic	3.6%
American Indian	7.6%
Asian	2.3%
Black	2.4%
Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander	0.3%

YOUR MCPS BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Missoula County Public Schools, a unified district, is governed by an 11-member elected Board of Trustees. Members serve without compensation for overlapping terms of three years each and convene bi-monthly on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month. We appreciate the 11 trustees who have dedicated hundreds of hours in thoughtful discussion and procedural meetings during the 2016-2017 school year to support MCPS students, employees, families and community members.



MICHAEL BEERS

Beers was elected to the Board of Trustees in May 2013. He is a youth transitions coordinator at the Summit Independent Living Center and a stand-up comedian. Beers is a K-12 trustee serving the elementary and high school districts.



DIANE LORENZEN

Lorenzen was elected as K-12 trustee in May 2013. She works as an environmental engineer in the wood products industry. Lorenzen grew up in the Missoula area, graduated from Stanford University and served in the Peace Corps. She represents both the elementary and high school districts.



KORBIN BRAGSTAD

Korbin was elected to the Board of Trustees in May 2015. He is a graduate of Hellgate High School and currently a student at the University of Montana studying political science. Bragstad is a high school trustee representing the areas of Bonner and Target Range.



VICKIE MCDONALD

McDonald, a K-12 trustee, was elected to the Board of Trustees in May 2016. McDonald serves both the elementary and high school districts.



GRACE DECKER

Decker was elected to the Board of Trustees in 2015. She is a graduate of Brown University with a BA and Honors in Education and has worked in education for over twenty years, as a teacher, a school director, an education program coordinator, and a trainer and classroom coach. Decker is a K-12 trustee serving the elementary and high school districts.



JENNIFER NEWBOLD

Newbold is an attorney for the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In addition, Jennifer has authored a children's book about UM mascot Monte's adventures in Missoula, entitled *The Great Monte Mystery*. Newbold is a K-12 trustee serving the elementary and high school districts.



DEBBIE DUPREE

Dupree was elected to the Board of Trustees in 2002. She owns Seeley Lake Auto Parts. A graduate of Shelby High School, she earned a degree in mechanics. She is involved with the Seeley-Swan High School Booster Club and the Seeley Lake Trailblazer 4-H. Dupree is a high school trustee, representing Seeley Lake, Swan Valley, Clinton, Potomac and Sunset.



MICHAEL SMITH (VICE CHAIR)

Smith was appointed to the Board of Trustees in 2010 and elected to the board in 2012. He has a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from Rennselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York, and is currently an engineer with Missoula's WGM Group. Smith is a K-12 trustee serving both the elementary and high school districts. Newbold was elected to the Board of Trustees in 2014.



MARCIA HOLLAND (BOARD CHAIR)

Holland was elected to the Board of Trustees in 2009. She is an attorney with a bachelor's degree from the University of Montana and law degree from The College of Law, Chicago-Kent. Holland is a high school trustee representing the Hellgate School District community.



ANNE WAKE (VICE CHAIR)

Before election to the trustees in May 2013, Wake worked for MCPS, four years, the city, 13 years, and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges in Reno, Nevada, eight years. Wake represents the K-8 districts of Lolo, Woodman and DeSmet on the MCPS high school board.



HEIDI KENDALL

Kendall was elected to the Board of Trustees in 2014. She is the Emergency Preparedness Coordinator at the Missoula City-County Health Department. Kendall grew up in the Missoula area and graduated from Hellgate High School. She represents the elementary and high school districts.

METHODS CHANGE. UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES DO NOT.

The mission, vision and core beliefs of MCPS are the foundation for the future of our schools. We will create an inspired 21st Century Educational Culture that improves lifelong student achievement, develops remarkable educational leaders and engages the Missoula community in the future of its children.

MISSION To ensure every student achieves his or her full potential, regardless of circumstance and ability.

VISION We communicate; we collaborate; we think critically; and we create. We are Missoula County Public Schools — educational leaders in a global society — fostering uncompromising excellence and empowering all learners.

CORE BELIEFS

 **EVERY CHILD** *deserves to be challenged, equipped and prepared for life beyond school.*

Therefore, we stimulate and develop each student's curiosity and creativity; we engage every child with a holistic education that inspires lifelong learning; and we collaborate with parents — who are every child's first and most influential teacher.

 **INNOVATIVE, COMMITTED TALENT** — *leadership, teachers and staff – drive success in the classroom and beyond.*

Therefore, we create a professional and supportive working environment; we insist on instructional competency and educational best practices; we put the right people in the right places to confront change and who are committed to a common purpose; and we hire leaders who listen well, engage others and confidently shape the future.

 **LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS** *must continually evolve to be engaging, safe and up-to-date.*

Therefore, we skillfully use modern technology; we embed the best practices of professional learning communities in our schools; we instill respect for diversity in our students and staff; and we use resources efficiently and effectively in ways that keep our facilities current.

 **STRONG COMMUNITIES** *start with a strong public school system.*

Therefore, we answer to the community as a whole; we develop partnerships and cohesiveness in the community; we set a clear mission, vision, goals and measurable benchmarks; we are fiscally responsible; and we challenge the community to be everything it can be.

BENCHMARKS

- All staff know key characteristics of professional learning communities.
- All certified staff participate as members of a professional learning community with a focus on student learning.
- All certified staff have dedicated time during the contract day of not less than 60 minutes per week to meet in their professional learning community teams.
- Each grade level and department team clearly addresses the four critical questions of a professional learning community.
- Guaranteed and viable curriculum, formative assessment, intervention and enrichment are common throughout MCPS.
- Common Core and Next Generation Science Standards are embedded in instructional delivery.
- All staff are engaged in the District's mission and major initiatives.
- Annually, all staff members develop personal and team goals aligned with District goals and initiatives.
- Job-specific evaluation instruments are developed for specialized certified and classified positions.



MCPS TRUSTEES CELEBRATED: 2017 Outstanding School Board Award

In 2017, the Missoula County Public Schools Board of Trustees was named the School Board of the Year by the Montana Association of School Superintendents (MASS). The honor was presented at the Annual Montana Conference of Education Leadership (MCEL) in Billings on October 19, 2017. According to Superintendent Mark Thane, he nominated the “extremely dedicated and engaged School Board” because its “efforts and engagement have allowed the district to move forward to provide the community and its students with a high-quality school system.” As part of his nomination, Thane applauded the Board’s work in the areas of policy, facilities, and programs.

In the past two years, the Board has revised 27 policies and prepared another 8 policy revisions for review and action, including those that improve the very manner in which the Board conducts its business. Other policy revisions, such as Nondiscrimination and Sex Equity and Suicide Prevention, focused on making schools safer, fairer, and more effective. For facilities, the Board has taken a leading active role in the Smart Schools 2020 projects. In addition to voting on approval of related items, the Board has helped navigate the projects through alternative delivery methods, and each trustee has served on multiple selection committees related to the district’s massive 21st-century upgrades across the district. In their support of innovative practices and programs, meanwhile, the Board has paved the way for enhanced student achievement under the MCPS Achievement for All Plan. The expansive list of programs includes professional development (in areas including STEM and digital learning); advancing career academies (Health Science and Finance); Project Lead the Way; arts integration; dual-language immersion; dual-credit options; International Baccalaureate; and Zero Waste/sustainability.

CTE REVIEW: Helping Students Navigate Career

Choosing a career path is a hefty challenge with an exhaustive (and exhausting) list of considerations. *What are you interested in? How much education are you willing to complete before you can start your career? What kind of income would you like to earn? What is the job outlook for your chosen path?* Making the best possible choice, requires students to thoroughly reflect on these and similar questions. For schools, helping students through this process requires not only trained staff and modern resources, but also a clear vision. In fact, without a consistent districtwide vision, even the best staff and resources will fall short. For this reason, in April 2017, MCPS underwent a comprehensive review of its Career Technical Education (CTE) program, which includes the following discipline areas: business/finance, agriculture, family and consumer science, computer science, health science, and industrial arts.

Working with the Montana Office of Public Instruction, the District hired an external audit team to conduct the review. The team spent a week interviewing key stakeholders, including students, teachers, school board members, families, administrators, and community leaders (such as business owners and higher-education professionals). From the interviews, the audit team gauged the District’s strengths and weaknesses regarding its ability to prepare students for post-secondary options. Auditors then aligned this information with Department of Labor and Industry career projections (including projected salaries and projected numbers of jobs) through 2024.



The auditors’ recommendations to MCPS included developing an articulated 6-12 career and college readiness guidance system; strengthening the dual-credit program; articulating pathways from middle school to high school to post-secondary; and tapping into community partners through the development of advisory boards. “The review is forcing us to be reflective,” explains MCPS Executive Director of Teaching and Learning Dr. Elise Guest. “From the results, we are able to evaluate our current practices while also determining how best to prepare students for success in any post-secondary option. Conducting the review during the bond projects was good timing,” adds Elise Guest, “as it’s allowed the District to tailor some of the construction around facilities that support CTE efforts.”

MCPS BOND CONSTRUCTION CONTINUES INTO SECOND YEAR

“People in the community think we passed a bond, we hired some architects, engineers and contractors and it’s done. Boy, if it was that simple, it’d be great. But it’s not. It takes a village, for sure.”

MCPS Operations and Maintenance Supervisor Burley McWilliams speaking to the *Missoulian* about the second round of construction, which began in 2016.

See reflections on each project throughout the report.



TRADES AND CRAFTS: Vital to Bond Progress

From the outside, a construction site's progress might be measured by no more than two criteria: "in-progress"—i.e., filled with scaffolding, equipment, and hard-hatted workers—and "complete"—the point in which all these things disappear. From the inside, progress has many more layers and requires the expertise and collaborative efforts of professionals that include painters, electricians, plumbers, carpenters, and security specialists. For the MCPS bond projects, the momentum behind the progress starts with the district's Trades and Crafts department, which has proven pivotal to the success of the \$158 million construction upgrades.

While working alongside contractors, the trades' workers have also managed to sustain the district's routine maintenance and repairs, as well as their notoriously courteous demeanors. According to MCPS Operations and Maintenance Supervisor Burley McWilliams it comes down to three key traits: doing good

work, doing it quickly, and communicating well. "Our guys take great pride in their work," explains McWilliams. "They respond quickly, get it done right the first time, and they're so good with the kids and school staff, people like having them around."

Quick, meticulous, communicative—while these are commendable qualities in any circumstances, they rise to the level of "urgent" during a massive construction project with unique complications. And MCPS's bond projects have had plenty of unique complications. For instance, much of the building construction has occurred in occupied schools, requiring workers to block off parts of buildings, divert traffic, and correspond regularly with school staff regarding noise, interruptions, and areas of access. Other times, whole schools have needed to be transferred from one building to another, and then back again. Whatever the complications and whatever the specific work involved—plumbing; electrical wiring; furniture moving; installing white boards, fire detectors, or phone systems; repairing or replacing carpets; putting walls up or tearing walls down—production has been boosted by the quick, meticulous, and communicative trades team. Also contributing to the success, adds McWilliams, is Hulteng, Inc. (the owner's construction representative who negotiates contracts and works with contractors and staff). "We wouldn't have been as successful with the bond projects without them," notes McWilliams. "It's been a complete total team effort. Cliché, but it's the truth."

CHIEF CHARLO ELEMENTARY

"Nobody knew where to get into the darn school."

MCPS Director of Technology and Communication speaking to the Missoulian about Chief Charlo, pre-upgrade. In addition to gaining a "more obvious" entrance, the school got a more secure foyer, new learning labs, and upgraded wireless internet. Construction was completed October 2016.

TASK FORCE MODEL TAPS INTO BEST DISTRICT TALENT

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) have long been a part of MCPS schools. Through PLCs, teachers have collaborated, brainstormed, and shared expertise. Districtwide PLCs, meanwhile, have provided the mechanism for curriculum review. In fall 2016, MCPS improved districtwide PLCs by introducing the task-force model for curriculum review and the newly-implemented universal screener, Star 360. The task force model strives for equal representation involving the most talented staff members in the district. Key to the model's success is an application process, reports Executive Director of Teaching and Learning Dr. Elise Guest. "Because this work requires content knowledge and teacher experience, it is easy to identify people you assume are interested," she explains, "which means you might miss people who are passionate about the work but who go unnoticed." Beyond creating the best task forces, Guest believes it's important for the district to provide teachers the means to advocate for themselves. "An application process allows for teachers, who are passionate and excited about this work, to share their knowledge and skills in a collaborative forum."



A crucial part of developing districtwide curriculum relates to the Standards. First, as there are not enough minutes in the school year to teach them all, the curriculum task forces prioritize Standards. Then, they create proficiency scales and other assessment tools so that teachers are able to measure student proficiency for each Standard. The Star 360 task force, meanwhile, works to implement and oversee Star 360—a 20-minute, K-9 reading and math assessments administered 3 times a year. Star 360 task force members must learn more about the test, such as what it measures and how to read the reports, and then share that information to their individual buildings. According to Guest, the combined curriculum and Star 360 task forces play a vital role in shaping the district's answers to its most important questions: What do we want our students to know and be able to do? How do we know that they learned it? What do we do when they haven't learned it? What do we do when they have learned it?

AGRICULTURAL CENTER

"We are very excited to begin using it. There is certainly a demand for our product as we sold 14 beef quarters, 22 hog halves, and 2 goats in an online sale in less than an hour. People want to buy local food. This facility will complete the Ag Center's dream of actively showing our students where their food comes from - all the way from conception to dinner plate."

Big Sky Agricultural Education teacher Tom Andres on the forthcoming USDA State-Inspected meat lab, scheduled for completion in summer 2018. The new construction has contributed to additional Ag center developments, including a dual-credit collaboration with the UM and Montana Stock Growers Association and plans to help prepare the workforce for a new \$300 million meat processing plant that will sell Montana beef to China.



BENCHMARKS

- 96% cohort graduation.
- 90% of students on grade level or above in reading, writing, mathematics and science.
- Response to Intervention (RTI) and Montana Behavioral Initiative (MBI) systems in each school.
- K-12 International Baccalaureate Programme continuum in place.
- At least one thematic career academy implemented in each urban high school.
- Dual language immersion program implemented K-6.
- Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics – known as STEM – education implemented K-12.
- Common Core curriculum and Next Generation Science Standards are embedded in instructional delivery.
- Community-based early childhood program.
- K-8 art programs enhanced through community partnerships.
- All students in grades 5, 8 and 12 complete capstone projects.
- Problem-based, interdisciplinary i3 learning experience implemented.



2016-17 PROGRAM UPDATES: Career Academies, Dual Language Immersion, International Baccalaureate

Career Academies at Big Sky and Hellgate:

At Big Sky High School, the Health Science Academy (HSA) had much to celebrate during the 2016-17 school year, including the graduation of its second class of HSA students. Continuing its mission to prepare students for careers and post-secondary options in the health sciences, the HSA provided clear paths for preparation. For example, some students pursued certifications in phlebotomy or dental assisting, and others enrolled in a Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA) course through Bitterroot College. In addition, freshmen attended St. Patrick Hospital's "Ed-Venture," a hands-on showcase of four routine medical procedures (intubation, crash cart, stabilizing a newborn in distress, and respiratory therapy); sophomores learned about the signs of suicide and effective responses through the Signs of Suicide (SOS) Prevention Program; juniors each completed two job shadows with community partners, such as hospitals and clinics; and seniors presented their biomedical innovations projects (including one that identified the best apps to reduce texting and driving and another that studied variance in litter size of cross-bred sows) at the University of Montana. Through the year, interest in the program continued to grow, and in spring 2017 the HSA accepted its maximum number of incoming freshman (86) for fall 2017.

Meanwhile, the Hellgate Finance Academy completed its second year, adding an additional section of personal finance for students at the school. This program offers 9th-12th grade students the opportunity to increase their financial literacy and prepare for a career in business. The program includes classes in personal finance, accounting, banking and advanced finance. It

engages students in internships and job shadow experiences at businesses in the Missoula community and boasts over 30 community partners supporting the success of Hellgate students.

International Baccalaureate (IB) at Lewis & Clark and Franklin:

In 2016-17, Lewis & Clark Elementary School began its first school year as an IB World School, becoming the first public Montana elementary school to offer the Primary Years Programme (PYP). Working toward this goal was a three-year process that included curriculum alignment, planning, and staff training. During this time, students were already benefiting from the IB's inquiry-based, concept-driven focus. As noted by Lewis & Clark Principal Susan Anderson, the 2017 graduating 5th graders had "progressed through a collaborative, critical thinking journey of inquiry. They have explored local and global issues throughout their education and have learned conceptually with concerned, passionate PYP educators. Our

students can make connections and dig deeper." Meanwhile, Franklin Elementary was traveling right behind on its own path to become an IB PYP school. Beginning the 2016/17 school year as an approved candidate school, Franklin has its eyes on becoming IB PYP beginning fall 2018.

Dual Language Immersion (DLI) Schoolwide at Paxson:

Paxson Elementary School took another step toward schoolwide DLI in fall 2016, with every student in grades kindergarten, 3, and 4 participating in classes taught in Spanish and English. Launched in 2013, DLI will be fully schoolwide beginning the 2018-19 school year. Once this happens, all students in K-2 will receive half of their core coursework in Spanish while all students in grades 3-5 will receive one third of their core coursework in Spanish. And, as an indication that the benefits extend beyond the social and cultural realms, Paxson's spring 2017 Smarter Balance scores reflected higher skills in "speaking and listening," which is a Common Core standard.

WILLARD CLASS TEACHES STUDENTS ABOUT LOVE, COMMUNICATION, AND FILM MAKING

Working with the Roxy Film Academy last spring, Willard students transformed biases about senior citizens into a multi-media installation about love and communication. Entitled *Love Speaks*, the event combined elements of audio and video loops with live student performance, and was unveiled at the Roxy on May 12, 2017. Preparation was a two-month-long effort that began with interviews with local senior citizens Bonnie Tarses and Alan Joddard. In shattering the students' preconceived notions about senior citizens, these conversations determined the direction and focus of the project. The installation—which included the scenes "1970s Dinner & Movie Date" and "Modern Skype Date"—embodied the students' newfound understanding of the similarities and differences between people of different generations. In other words, love is still love, but the mode of communication has changed.

Willard students participated in the project as part of Anneke Hilvert's and Carolyn Grimaldi's block film study class. Funding was provided by a private donation secured by Grimaldi. In addition to supplying students the resources necessary to create and present *Love Speaks*, the experience allowed them to sit at a round table discussion with several local film and media professionals. For some students, the experience reinforced an interest in film and media careers. For others, the benefits ran deeper. For instance, Arlen Gamble's expectation to complete no more than "a little movie making project" in the class was far exceeded. "I soon learned about the history of Missoula and film installments. It was a wonderful class and it helped me make lots of really good friends and meet community members. Carolyn and Anneke's energy also made the learning environment a great place to learn!" Meanwhile, Anneke and Carolyn report that they and students were all stretched out of their comfort zones, but that seeing a final product helped with an emotional bonding of the group and a sense of accomplishment individually.

WILLARD ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM

"The fanciest building in the world can't do what a strong school on the inside can do. It's the soul of the school that matters - the people, the program that makes the school, it's not the building. That said, the current facility was not appropriate for 21st century - the building has a lot of character, but in terms of educational purpose, it doesn't function as a school in the ways that it should."

Principal Kevin Ritchlin on upcoming construction upgrades to Willard, scheduled for completion in August 2018.



MCPS STADIUM

“The stadium provides an amazing setting for a centralized location where our community members across the district can come to support our students and the programs in which they are involved. Of additional importance is that our stadium serves as a location for events and activities that bring revenue into our district and the Missoula community as a whole. The term ‘construction’ can be synonymous with the term ‘challenge’ on so many fronts and as a district we faced all that that entails; perhaps more remarkable is that we came together through a unified and collaborative approach to successfully address issues as they arose.”

Sabrina Beed, Big Sky Dean and Athletic/Activities Director, reflecting on the new track at MCPS, completed in spring 2017.



ACHIEVING BALANCE: Balanced Assessment System & STAR 360

Among the most debatable topics in education is the role of assessments in the classroom learning process. Perhaps the best argument in the debate, however, is one that does not consider these as separate entities, but instead recognizes how each assessment can enhance the others. This consideration was the thinking behind the district’s development of a Balanced Assessment System in the 2016-17 school year. Led by the district’s Teaching and Learning Department, development efforts were guided by this principle goal: to best assure that assessments are used to inform teacher instruction, thus enhancing student learning.

The Balanced Assessment System encompasses three distinct assessment categories: common formative, state and national, and a universal screener. The first, common formative assessments are created by teams of related teachers (such as 9th-grade ELA or third-grade teachers) and have a direct impact on student learning. Next, state and national exams, such as Smarter Balance and ACT, test for statewide or national benchmark skills by grade level per subject area. Finally, a universal screener acts as a mediator between formative testing and larger standardized assessments. The district’s universal screener—called Star 360—is also new to MCPS in the 2017-18 school year. Consisting of 20-minute tests in early literacy, reading, and math, Star 360 is taken by K-9 students three times a year. Results are used to catch students who are at risk for falling behind. As such, teachers and schools can provide students the extra support they need as they need it to ensure students are reaching grade level achievement.

While Star 360 is a significant new resource in assessing student learning, most important is the balance. As explained by Dr. Elise Guest, MCPS Executive Director of Teaching and Learning: “If we use these three to form our instruction and influence how we respond to students’ learning needs, then we can best ensure that all students will achieve grade level standards.”

FUNDING THE FUTURE

Established by the MCPS School Board of Trustees in 2007, the Missoula Education Foundation is an affiliate organization of MCPS. The Foundation works to provide experiences, equipment, supplies and tools that are not otherwise funded in the District’s budget. Missoula Education Foundation exclusively exists to benefit the District: their Mission is to provide opportunities for enhanced student learning, foster teacher creativity, and recognize the exceptional educators in MCPS.

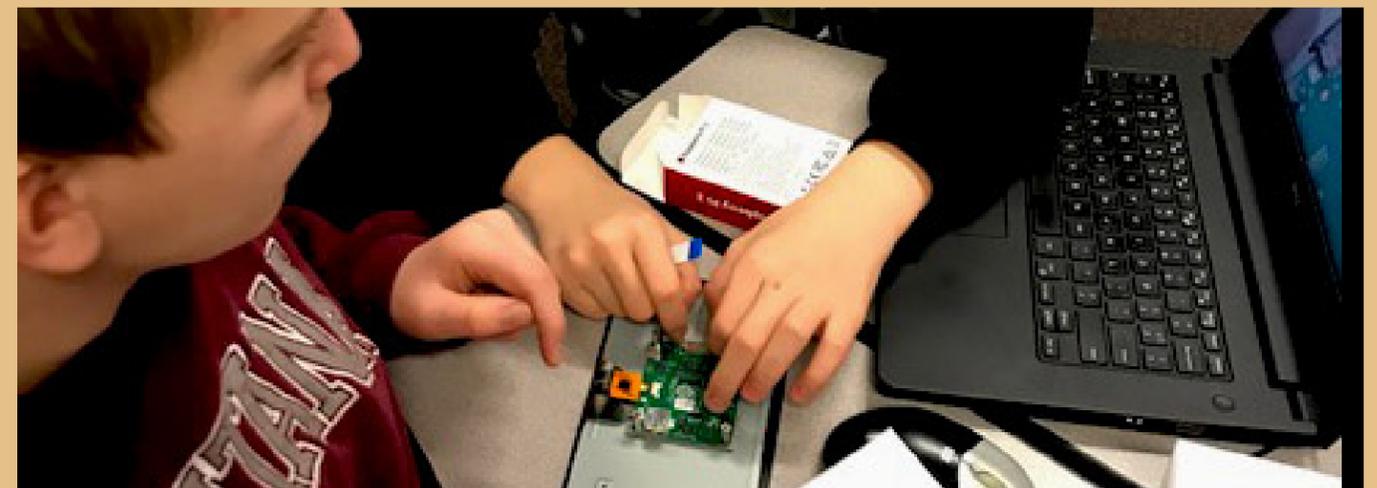
The Foundation has awarded over \$150,000 to the District cumulatively since its inception. This year, the Foundation awarded another \$20,000 to teachers across the District via the Classroom Grant program. The average grant award was in excess of \$1,400.

While the Foundation funds a wide range of projects across all academic disciplines, STEM fields are something we continue to celebrate. Scott Edge was the recipient of one of the Foundation’s Classroom Grants. Mr. Edge purchased equipment used to teach his students how to build small computers and learn basic coding. “Arduinos and Raspberry Pi’s are a huge hit in my 8th grade Computer Science class. Thanks to the MEF grant, I was able to purchase a classroom set of both Arduinos and Raspberry Pi microcomputers. The eighth-grade computer science curriculum engages students

in drag and drop computer coding. I wanted to amp up student learning by bringing in hardware that would allow students not only to participate in syntax coding, but engage in learning about physical computing systems as well. Students are able to program various input and output devices such as LED lights, motors, pressure sensors, light sensors, and flex sensors using the Arduino and Raspberry Pi kits. Thanks to the MEF, my classroom has become much more engaging.”

The Missoula Education Foundation Board voted this year to increase funding to the Creative Classroom Grant program by at least 15% per year going forward. The total per student impact in the 2017-2018 school year is roughly 1 in 3 MCPS students, or over 3,400 students across the District and we anticipate this number will continue to grow.

In addition to the Classroom Grant program and MCPS Educator of the Year award program, the Foundation maintains a tax-qualified endowment. This endowment is used to fund scholarships for MCPS graduating seniors, as well as to provide support for Foundation programs that will benefit MCPS for years onward. To learn more about the Foundation and how to support the Missoula County Public Schools, please visit their website: <http://missoulaedfoundation.org/fund-the-future/>





LEWIS & CLARK STUDENTS PUT IB LEARNING TO SERVICE

How much can society be shaped when influential people put their ideas into action? Who should be considered “influential”? Pondering over such questions, the students in Kathy Dungan’s multi-grade 1-2 classroom concluded that “everyone” has the power to impact society, and that this impact can be significant. Next, the Lewis & Clark IB Primary Years Programme (PYP) students took deliberate action to prove it, helping to raise \$2,335 for clean water in Sierra Leone, Africa.

The questions—part of the “inquiry” cycle in the IB dynamic cycles of learning (inquiry, action, and reflection)—arose during the class’s “Where We Are in Place and Time” unit of study. The fundraising (“action” cycle) was initiated by students following a classroom visit with 2015 Hellgate High School graduate Usifu Bangura. Through the Bangura Project, his Missoula-based nonprofit, Bangura wants to bring clean water to his birthplace in Sierra Leone. Specifically, he aims to purchase and deliver “hippo water rollers” (containers able to hold large amounts of water and roll over assorted terrain) and a water filtration system. To contribute to the cause, Dungan’s first- and second-graders teamed up with the Lewis & Clark Service Club. Working together, students hosted a schoolwide change fundraiser, which involved speaking to each of the school’s twenty-three K-5 classrooms and collecting coins in zip-lock bags.

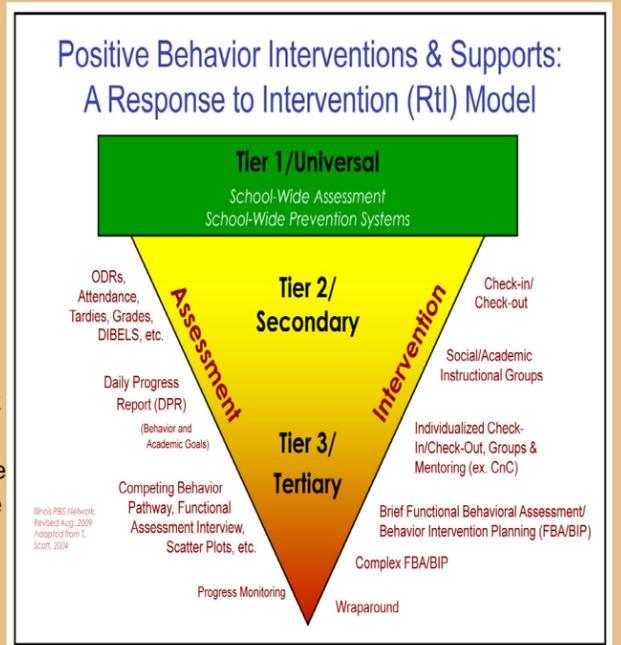
The change—presented in April 2017 as a \$2,335 check for the Bangura Project—amounted to seven hippo rollers and one filtration system. And in the time between fundraising and presenting the check, students completed the reflection cycle of the unit. Perhaps nothing illustrated the unit’s success like first-grader Ruby Roscoe’s reflection: **“Everyone has magic inside of them, the kind of magic that can change the world.”** The unit inspired reflection in the school principal too. “I beam with joy when I share the wonderful examples of the IB Learner Profile for the public,” says Principal Susan Anderson. “The students and teachers are so amazing in the way they weave action projects seamlessly into their units of study.”

MBI CELEBRATING THE SUCCESS OF ALL

When students receive interventions before problems escalate, when schools operate on the belief that education is a whole community endeavor instead of the responsibility of a select few, the result is fewer conflicts, fewer discipline referrals, fewer students identified as having behavioral problems, and higher student achievement. Since implementing the Montana Behavioral Institute (MBI) Response to Intervention (RTI) model, MCPS schools have experienced these exact scenarios. The key to MBI’s success lies in its understanding that student achievement is the result of combined academic, social, emotional, and behavioral skills, and that maximum achievement can only be attained when all school staff work together to promote a positive school environment.

When first implemented (MBI implementation was achieved districtwide by fall 2014), schools primarily focused on Tier 3 intervention efforts. These involved comprehensive, individual interventions for the districts’ highest-need students—those at least two grade levels behind. Tier 3 students are placed on behavior plans, most receive 90 minutes of focused reading and/or math instruction, and sometimes family therapy is provided. Once schools felt secure that they were meeting their Tier 3 needs, they began to focus more on Tier 2—these involve small-group and less-intensive interventions, such as check-in/check-out policies and Daily Behavior Reports (DBRs). Tier 2 students work on a point system that allows them to leave the intervention, and schools have worked to ensure that these students aren’t unnecessarily placed in resource-intensive Tier 3.

By the 2016-17 school year, the district was glad to shift its focus to Tier 1 interventions, those that involve intervening for the success of all students. Tier 1 efforts involve improving classroom management and instruction practices, which will result in overall higher (academic, social, emotional, and behavioral) student success.



ROOFS ACROSS THE DISTRICT

“Those roofs were in rough shape. They were all in the 30+ year range. We kept the roofs clean, got rid of standing water, unclogged drains, replaced sections over the years. A lot of patchwork went on, and our trades’ guys did a fantastic job of keeping things running as long as they did. But it was time.”

MCPS Operations and Maintenance Supervisor Burley McWilliams on the 2016 completion of re-roofing at Big Sky and Hellgate high schools, Meadow Hill and Washington middle schools, and Lewis and Clark Elementary.



SPECIAL OLYMPICS STATE SUMMER GAMES AND BEYOND

The best part about Missoula’s three-year run of hosting the State Summer Games is student athlete participation, maintains Big Sky High School life skills teacher/Special Olympics coach WyAnn Northrop. All 75 athletes get the opportunity to compete. Also, it raises local awareness of what Special Olympics really is: “truly competition.” Rotating cities on three-year cycles, the Summer Games were in Missoula each May between 2015 and 2017; in 2018, another three-year cycle will ensue in Great Falls. When the Games are out of town, factors such as costs and medical conditions don’t allow all to travel. Yet traveling to the Games has benefits too. For one, each traveling team gets an “adoptive” local school—fans who cheer in the stands, make signs for athletes’ hotels, put goody bags in rooms, and make athletes feel welcome and celebrated.

Whether home or away, the experience for athletes is positive, says Northrop. “There are lots of smiles and they love the attention. Who doesn’t love attention?” For those who rise to the top, the lessons clearly register: play hard, work hard, win. “It’s a huge confidence booster.” For less competitive athletes, the State Games teaches trickier lessons. While all athletes earn ribbons, only the top finishers leave with medals and, as Northrop notes, “the kids really love those medals.” When asked how she helps them cope, Northrop says she’ll talk about an amazing shot they made, talk about something else they did well. “I don’t know,” she shrugs. “I just talk.”

Athletic opportunities expand beyond State Games as well. For instance, Area Games, run locally each May, include the events of track & field, bocce, and swimming, and also features a dinner, a dance, and ribbons for all. Winter Games, held each January at Lost Trail, involves Nordic skiing, Alpine skiing, and show shoeing. There are seasonal team sports, too, including basketball, soccer, and bocce, as well as year-round swimming. Northrop says she is fortunate to work with the athletes in so many capacities, and to teach at Big Sky. As she points out, the school offers extensive support of Special Olympics. A lot of this support comes from peer tutors (around 30-50 each semester), who get to know athletes in the exceptionalities program and then get involved with Games and teams. For those not at the school who wish to help, volunteering is possible. Or, as Northrop points out, when people purchase raffle tickets from them at grocery stores and other booth sales, more athletes can attend out-of-town Games.



ELL TUTORS: First Year with Refugee Students in the District

In 2016 and 2017, Missoula welcomed several refugee families from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Syria. The new families meant big changes for the MCPS English Language Learner (ELL) department. When school began in August 2016, the department serviced one refugee family of three kids. New families arrived throughout the year, and by the time the school year ended, the number of refugee students increased from three to fifteen (of 111 ELL students). The influx presented a number of challenges for the department, consisting of program coordinator Shirley Lindburg, teacher Aria Peters, and tutors Judy Sylvest, Marion Benton, Svetlana Lemeza.

One difficulty, notes Peters, was that new families typically arrived with a one- or two-week notice. This meant they had to figure out a process for enrolling families as they arrived. Another challenge was finding enough time to meet with every student one-on-one, five times a week. “Language can be a barrier to opportunities,” explains Peters. “The more resources we can provide students, the better we can help these students get access to education.” For the staff of four, the numbers didn’t add up; there simply weren’t enough hours in the day. To fill the gaps, the department began recruiting volunteer tutors. With the help of the local nonprofit refugee-assistance agency Soft Landing Missoula, their efforts were fruitful. By the end of 2016-17, the department had 20 volunteers working with students.

The volunteers not only helped ELL staff to meet their tutoring goals, but they provided the department more time to streamline the enrollment process, a process involving training non-ELL teachers to work with ELL students, translating permission forms and other legal documents, and working with translators to communicate with families. According to Lindburg, district and community response to the refugee students has



been positive, and this has had a circular effect. “As the students learn English, they bring that home and help their families fit in,” says Lindburg. “Then the families become more involved with the community.” For instance, one family signed up to sing at First Night, while another introduced Eritrean food at a local restaurant. Looking forward, Lindburg and Peters anticipate continued growth, up to one to two new families a month. Volunteer tutors will be vital in keeping up with the growth.

FRANKLIN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

“It’s fantastic. It’s like a spaceship. They’ve done a good job of keeping the old gymnasium for people who are nostalgic and having modern design for the younger generation who don’t care as much.”

Gabriel, father of 5th-grader Jersey Earle, speaking to the Missoulian about seeing the new Franklin School. Scheduled for completion in August 2017, the school replaces the old Franklin building, which was has been completely demolished.



MIDDLE SCHOOL MEDIEVAL DAYS

Last year at Meadow Hill and C.S. Porter, all seventh-graders and their teachers traveled to the Dark Ages. Before embarking on the several-day journey, however, each student had to draw (from a hat) their lot in medieval life: serf, apprentice, merchant, knight, clergy, lord, or lady. Since the teachers had experienced the journey in years past, they knew to assign themselves the roles of monarchs (aka “rulers of the kingdom”). Though the interdisciplinary unit garnered much fun—with activities that included a catapult contest, archery, G Whiz chemistry tricks, a demo by the Missoula Fencing Association, and a banquet—students were also exposed to the less agreeable aspects of medieval life. For one, regardless of their interests, students were required to embark on the training and activities aligned with their drawn lot—serfs do field work, the clergy write prayers in Latin.... And then there were the Black Plague, excessive punishment for perceived crimes, the presence of barbarians...etc.

According to C.S. Porter teacher Mindy Hammitt, the hectic days of the unit each year are “totally worth it!” She continues, “Students anticipate it all year and remember it for years to come. When I bump into former students, they ALWAYS remember their medieval days’ rank, even if they’ve forgotten everything else from seventh grade.” The experience is memorable for teachers too. As Hammitt points out, the costumes made by students often go above and beyond. For instance, one former “clergy member” came to Medieval Days with a monk’s tonsure haircut (with a wide shaved circle at the top of the scalp). Another, a “serf,” trapped a squirrel, cleaned and tanned the hide, and made it into a hat. While Meadow Hill teacher Charlie Struna has not witnessed a shaved head or homemade squirrel hat at her school, she agrees that the interdisciplinary unit’s a successful one. As she concludes, “This is something students remember forever.”

WASHINGTON MIDDLE SCHOOL

“Our biggest challenge is creating a facility that allows for 720 students to learn in a creative, collaborative environment. We are really excited about the additional learning space. We will have a multi-purpose room that will give students a flexible learning space. Our library will be the hub of learning, and we are getting an incredible music wing.”

Principal Kacie Laslovich on Washington’s construction project, scheduled for completion in August 2019..

YEAR ONE OF JUNIPER ACADEMIC ALLIANCE PROGRAM AT SENTINEL

For any new program, the first year presents unique challenges. And Sentinel’s first year as the first high school in the world to partner with Juniper Networks’ Academic Alliance definitely presented challenges. For computer science teacher Daniel Lande, these included adding a new class, teaching a new curriculum, and teaching (and learning) new equipment. The partnership between Sentinel and Juniper began in 2015 and, looking back at that first year, Lande believes that, despite the challenges, the year was a success. Most notably, this success was made evident by the expansive employable skills acquired by students.

Specifically, students built a 7-layer model networking stack (OSI), which involved the following tasks: make custom-length Ethernet cables for the rack, install cables in rack, and separate the Juniper network from the school’s network. Students also configured home wireless routers and learned the theory behind networking, called networking fundamentals. Such skills look good on a résumé and might help students land entry-level jobs, such as working at an IT help desk at college. Looking ahead, Lande believes he’ll see students earning the Juniper Networks Certified Associate (JNCIA) certification and possibly other professional certifications. And in addition to learning employable skills, all of Lande’s first-year “Juniper” students entered college as tech-field majors, including one who is pursuing computer science and physics at Yale. “We’re getting there,” says Lande. “We still have a long way to go, still need more female participation. But it’s a process. It takes time.”



MAGNOLIA CHINN: Montana 2017 State AP

During her time at Sentinel High School, 2017 graduate Magnolia Chinn compiled a long list of athletic, musical, and academic accomplishments. Among these was the designation of Montana AP® Scholar. Granted by the College Board, the AP® Scholar awards recognize one male and one female student in each state for earning the highest scores on the greatest number of Advanced Placement exams. In total, Magnolia completed 12 AP® classes and exams for an average exam score of 4.5 (out of 5). In addition to studying on her own (especially during the week leading up to each exam period), Magnolia said that her AP® teachers helped to prepare for the exams by providing study materials and hosting practice test sessions outside of class.

Following graduation, Magnolia moved east to pursue college at MIT, with the plan to major in Biological Engineering and minor in music. According to Magnolia, “taking AP® classes and their corresponding exams helped me transition into college. They helped me become a better student because the heavier course load forced me to develop better time management and studying skills, overall helping me improve my work ethic.”





BENCHMARKS

- Facilities long-range strategic plan complete.
- Major bond initiative to address instructional, facility, technology and safety / security needs.
- Robust wireless network in all schools.
- Support for a Bring Your Own Device or BYOD program across the District.
- Hardware and software installed to meet instructional needs across the District.
- Montana Behavioral Initiative in all schools.
- Autolocks on all school doors; all staff trained in active resistance; obvious and secure front entry to all school buildings.
- Budget aligned to support programs and priorities of the District.



MCPS SUPPORTING INITIATIVES FOR NUTRITIONAL PHYSICAL, AND MENTAL HEALTH

There's a new food culture at MCPS, and the trend is healthy. Evidence for this, says MCPS Response to Intervention Specialist Carol Ewen, is found in the shifting criticism voiced about food in the schools. Previously, compliance with USDA Smarts Snacks laws (implemented in 2014-15) was met with complaints about the more nutritional options in cafeterias, vending machines, and school stores. These days, food-related complaints tend to be from parents protesting about too many sugary snacks in the classroom. As Ewen notes, "There has been a shift in our culture, where we are more aware of the detrimental effects of sugar and poor diet on achievement."

Additionally, MCPS has expanded its free breakfast program to include Breakfast After the Bell at Hawthorne, Russell, and Franklin Elementary. In these schools, breakfast will be available to all students during the first 15 minutes of class each morning. According to Ewen, by avoiding the stigma attached to before-school breakfast, Breakfast After the Bell will "ensure students are fed and ready to learn." Since physical activity is also vital to student engagement (and to overall health), MCPS has established Active Recess and Morning Move. With the help of more actively involved playground monitors, Active Recess has set more elementary kids in motion during recess. And to start the day right, Morning Move promotes daily playground activities before the start of school. These initiatives have not only increased student activity levels, but have reduced playground behavior problems too.

To promote improved mental health, in 2016/17 MCPS implemented its suicide-reduction initiatives—QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) and SOS (Signs of Suicide)—in all its middle schools. Through QPR, every teacher in every MCPS school building receives suicide-prevention training. With SOS, which has been added to the middle and high school health enhancement curriculums, students are taught to recognize the signs of depression and flags for suicide (in self and others).

"Screening students should help them get treatment sooner and eliminate years of suffering," says Ewen, who points out that there's usually an 8-year time gap between depression onset and treatment. Ewen adds that teacher response to the training has been positive. "It is an uncomfortable subject but through training and conversations we hope to de-stigmatize mental illness and make it easier for people to seek help."

RUSSELL, WASHINGTON, HELLGATE AND WILLARD: The Construction/School Day Balancing Act

Running school around a construction project is as tricky as running a construction project around school. Clearly challenges arise from both sides—noise, diverted foot and auto traffic, buildings blocked off, playgrounds made smaller, fewer accessible doors and walkways. As Hellgate High School Principal Judson Miller puts it, "There's a complexity to this not seen in other school construction projects, ones in which students move out." Hellgate, along with Russell Elementary, Washington Middle School, and Willard High School, face this very complexity in the 2017-18 school year. The key to managing through the potential chaos: preparation and communication.

At Washington, meeting the primary goal of "creating a safe learning environment for our students" requires constant communication and planning with staff and the construction team, says Principal Kacie Laslovich. It's a notion shared by all the principals facing the construction/school-day balancing act come fall 2017. For Russell Principal Cindy Christensen, the greatest challenges will involve managing student needs with a shrunken playground and reduced door access. However, she and her staff have worked out an "efficient and safe plan" involving creativity, additional supervision, and new traffic-flow procedures.

At Willard, staff dug right into planning in August. For members of the alternative high school staff, the project was an opportunity to shape structures around their greatest educational aspirations. It also meant they would see the deficits in their current building addressed. Starting with a hard look at the building and a several-month study on the best alternative-education programs in the country, Willard considered how they could best incorporate project-based learning while meeting the school's basic needs. In the end, their list included two designated science labs, a proper library, three music practice rooms, a designated common space and grand stair, a washer/dryer/shower in the Home Resource Room, a "dirty space" for making things like bicycles and crafts, and nicer colors on the walls. "We'll still have classes, lessons, learning assessments," explains Principal Kevin Ritchlin. However, having a building fully equipped for a project-based approach will, he believes, "enhance our ability to work together to solve problems, as colleagues, as teachers acting as conduits to help students learn."





BENCHMARKS

- All schools have a schoolwide intervention and enrichment model during the school day.
- Ensure new staff have a deep understanding of the key characteristics of professional learning communities.
- Each school site includes opportunities for student, staff and community leadership.
- Yearly focus groups at each school for students and teachers deepen understanding of My Voice Survey results.
- Annual climate survey data from parents, students and staff informs yearly operations benchmarks.
- Business and community representatives participate on district-level committees and task forces.
- Collaborate with UM on pre-K-20 initiatives.
- SHAPE P20 staff survey results guide future grant activities.
- A district communication plan supports two-way communication between students, families, staff, community and the District.
- Staff respect and refine individual communication styles that support collaboration and shared decision-making.



NEW TECHNOLOGY IMPROVES MCPS SECURITY AND EFFICIENCY

While buildings, classrooms, and other physical structures are a substantial part of the SmartSchools 2020 initiative, vital technological updates are also in the works. Among these are new phone, bell, fire alarm, and card key access systems. The new systems are run by a Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) system, also new to the district. Using VOIP, MCPS can operate, via the Internet, the district's phones, bells, fire alarms, card keys, new front entrance security cameras, and even the boiler system. The end result is more securely and efficiently run schools.

For MCPS's Security and Communication staff, the high-tech upgrades have greatly changed the scope of work. Learning the system has involved a mixture of informal and more formal training. For instance, MCPS security experts Keaton Surratt and Bruce Mix received on-the-job training from phone contractors during the installation process, which they then began sharing with the rest of their department. To gain more in-depth knowledge, Surratt also traveled to pursue factory training on the new phone system, training he now continues online. In addition, Surratt and Mix received specific informal operational training from the contractors on each of the new fire systems, which they shared with their team (all of whom have been licensed in Montana-State Fire Alarm System: Sales, Service, and Installation for all over 20 years each, licenses they maintain annually through formal continuing education). Overall, the thorough and streamlined approach to training will best ensure that the systems are run well and will eliminate the need for contractor repairs down the road.

While increased security remains a top benefit of the new systems, Surratt is particularly pleased with the phone upgrades. By replacing 15-20 year-old phones, the upgrades mean no more constant hard-drive failures and part-hunting on eBay. "I sleep better knowing our systems are supported again," says Surratt. Additionally, by using the district's new fiber network, the new phone system saves the district a monthly phone connection charge.



FIBER PROJECT FINISHED SUMMER 2017

With 21 miles of fiber wide area network (WAN) installed underground to connect MCPS buildings, in summer 2017 MCPS became the first Montana school district to own a fiber network. And the benefits far outweigh a "first-to" accolade. For one, there's speed. Abandoning the old WAN network for its own fiber-optic cables has equated to a data transmission boost from 100 megabits to 10 gigs per second, a whopping 100-fold increase (to put this into perspective, a 100% increase equals merely a 2-fold increase). This level of speed is in line with the U.S. Department of Education and former-President Barack Obama's ConnectED Initiative recommendation of "speeds of no less than 100 megabits per second per 1,000 students and a target speed of 1 gigabit per second by 2018." In contrast, the district's previous speed was, "woefully under recommended speeds," according to MCPS former Director of Technology and Communication Hatton Littman.

Besides being sluggish, the previous WAN network was not competitively priced, so much so that the district anticipates earning back the cost of the project within less than a decade. In total, installing the fiber network—a process that involved blowing fiber into underground conduits—came at a \$3.2

million cost (of the \$158 million bond project). Of this, MCPS predicts \$3 million will be returned via long-term savings. Much of the anticipated savings are associated with discontinuing the poorly priced leased service and the old network's phone connection charges. Although the district will need to contract with a local Internet Service Provider to supply Internet access, this will come at drastically lower costs than was the case with the former WAN network. And had the district opted to replace the old WAN system with a high-speed leased fiber network, the costs would have run around \$3 million for just a 5-year contract.

While Littman and others in the business office are keeping close track of associated costs, others in the district have not been able to take their eyes off the speed. At Sentinel High School, for instance, Dan Lande's networking class was thrilled when their speed test confirmed speeds nearing 1gbps. "It was the geek version of watching a room full of kids watch the touchdown-scoring goal of the Super Bowl," Littman heard from Lande's in-class experience. "They were so excited about seeing the data transmission speeds we could accomplish."



OPERATIONS ENHANCE COMMUNICATION & COLLABORATE TO MAKE DECISIONS



LOWELL AND FRANKLIN GET HELP IN THEIR SWING SPACE

Lowell and Franklin students and staff spent a year in their swing spaces of Mount Jumbo and Jefferson, while their schools were under construction until the start of the 2017-18 school year. Getting to the grand re-opening celebrations, however, “took a lot of patience, understanding, and a ton of work” from the district’s Trades and Crafts Department and the bond project’s hired contractors, said MCPS Operations and Maintenance Supervisor Burley McWilliams. First, the swing spaces had to be prepared for students—an effort that included painting, carpet repairs, and installations of white boards, phone systems, and fire and security panels. There were also busing changes to coordinate as well as the actual moving process, both of which required a lot of logistical work. “Moving an entire school is not an easy task,” said McWilliams, who rattled off the things that had to be moved, installed,

moved back, reinstalled—furniture, coat hangers, ceiling hooks, posters, student art...

Whether they were preparing Mount Jumbo or Jefferson or, a year later, moving everything back to Lowell and Franklin, it was up to the Trades staff to make things look like school, like classrooms, instead of temporary spaces or newly-constructed rooms. According to McWilliams, his team has become especially efficient in this task. Key to their success has been their ability to communicate well and get things done fast and right. “Our guys are loved by district staff because we’re a customer-service oriented department,” said McWilliams. “The staff are our customers.”

LOWELL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

“We’re excited that we get to hold onto the historical piece but yet add new and make it brand new, state-of-the-art, functional. I think the thing we’re most excited about is we’re going to have functionality that we haven’t had before. And it’ll be ADA-accessible everywhere. Right now if you are wheel-chair bound or have mobility issues, to get to our gym you actually have to go outside and around the building to get in.”

Former principal Brian Bessette speaking to the Missoulian about Lowell’s massive reconstruction.

CONSTRUCTION REFLECTIONS.....

Cold Springs Elementary: “Some of them had roller coasters on the roof, so we couldn’t take all the ideas.”

Principal Susan Daniel speaking to the Missoulian about students acting as “architects for a day” when A&E Architects visited the school. Scheduled for completion in August 2018, the new Cold Springs is being built at a different site than the original school. The new building will feature flexible learning spaces, a centralized library, and front-of-building administrative and counseling offices.

Hellgate High School: “Right now the main entrance is up a flight of stairs, and there’s no building space except the gym in which all students can be at the same time, not even the cafeteria. Right now it’s hard to monitor student movement in and out of the building. The best parts of the project will be our new entrance and common spaces; the student-friendly spaces and security measures; and heating and cooling. It’s exciting and people have been really flexible. It’s a credit to our staff and our kids.”

Paxson Elementary: “We really wanted to respect Paxson as a design. It’s a very well-designed school. We went through a lot of scrutiny when it was first built ... it’s a 100-year building that’s built to last, so we wanted to carry that tradition forward. We wanted to use very good quality materials knowing that long-term maintenance costs are a key component with all these schools.”

A&E Architects principal Chris Martison, speaking to the Missoulian about Paxson’s upgrades, which included an east-side addition and a more secure entrance. Construction was completed in December 2016.

Rattlesnake Elementary: “But the whole thing has gone surprisingly smooth. We knew it was going to be unusual so we over-planned ... It’s like when the lights go out at home and you and your family focus on each other. These kids will remember this forever.”

Principal Pam Wright on keeping school running around the construction project. The upgrades—which include new windows, classrooms, boiler, ventilation system, collaborative breakout space, and sprinkler system, as well as upgrades to security/wireless internet, the library, existing classrooms, and the roof—was completed in December 2016.

Russell Elementary School: “We are really looking forward to having all students and staff under one roof! We also are excited about having both a gym and a dining area as well as larger break out spaces. This will be a very exciting learning process for our kids. Every day they’ll get to see the construction taking place and the progress that is being made.”

Principal Cindy Christensen speaking about construction at Russell, scheduled for completion in August 2018.

Seeley Swan High School: “This is what makes our students excited about coming to school.”

Principal Kat Pecora, speaking to the Missoulian about the new performance arts and studio space at Seeley Swan High School. With construction complete in April 2017, the school hosted a “celebration of the arts event” that featured student work in creative writing, band, choir, and drama.

FINANCES

FINANCES AT A GLANCE

MCPS is a unified school district that operates two separate districts – a K-8 Elementary District and a 9-12 High School District. While unified, each district adopts their own budgets for 9 separate funds – general, transportation, tuition, retirement, adult education, technology, flexibility, debt service and building reserve. (See *graph of budgeted funds*.)

The general fund supports the primary operating expenditures of the district, including employee salaries and benefits, utilities, instructional materials and supplies, and student activities and athletics. The general fund does not cover the cost of transportation to and from school, the adult education program, most technology purchases and most facility repairs. (See *chart of general fund expenditures by program*.)

GENERAL FUND

The budget for the general fund is based upon a formula found in state law. That formula is built upon various components that together calculate the Base Budget, which is the minimum budget that all districts in Montana must adopt, and the Maximum Budget. The funding of the Base Budget is shared between the state and local taxpayers while the budget above Base to Maximum is funded almost exclusively by local taxpayers via voted levies.

The calculation of the Base and Maximum Budget depends primarily upon the district's enrollment and inflationary increases to the school funding components. Declining enrollment means little to no budgetary increase even with the passage of levies. It is possible under Montana law to adopt a budget above Maximum, if the prior year budget is greater than the calculation of the current year Maximum budget.

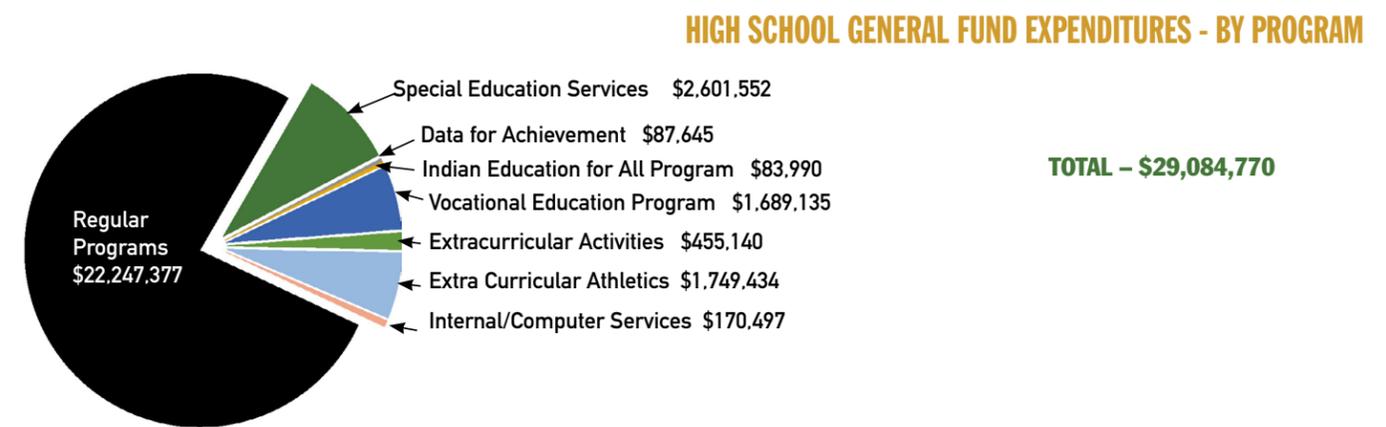
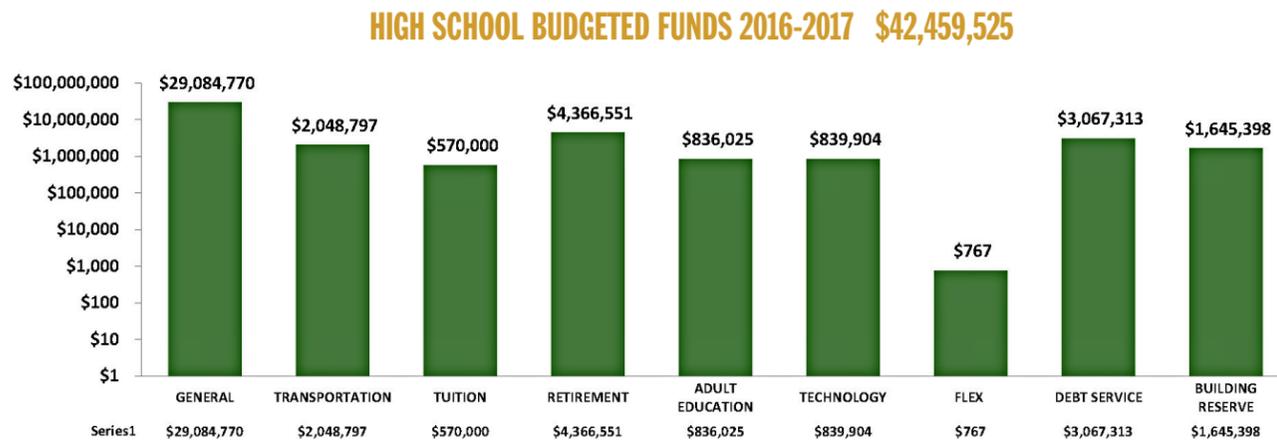
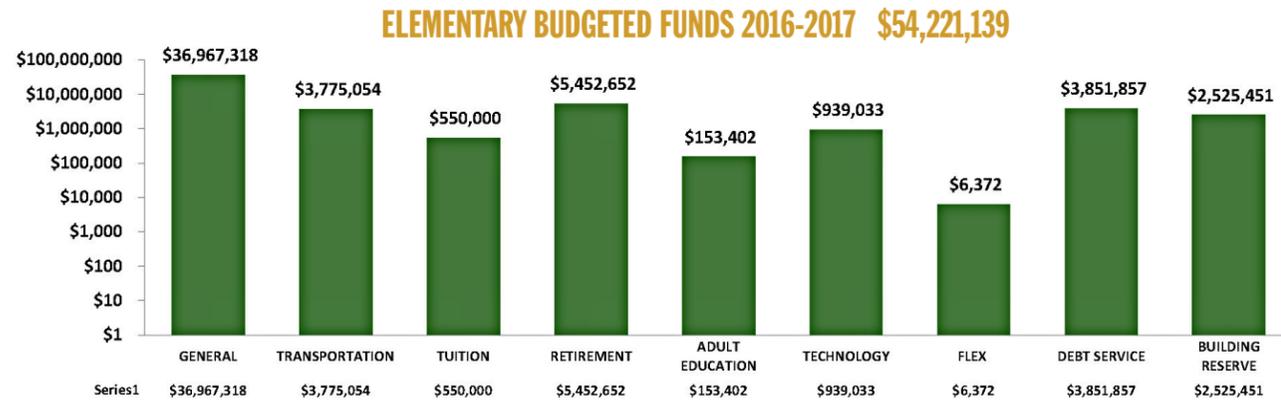
The elementary budget for all budgeted funds totaled

\$54.2M for 2016-2017. This represented an increase of \$5.3M from 2015-2016 with the General Fund increasing \$793K (2.19%), and the Debt Service Fund increasing from \$0 to \$3.8M. The increase in the Debt Service Fund was necessary to fund the principal and interest payments coming due on the 2016 bond issue. The proposed General Fund budget for 2016-2017 was primarily impacted by the following factors: an increase in K-6 ANB of 65; a decrease in 7-8 ANB of 27; and an inflationary increase of 1.79% to the 2 entitlements and the 5 additional funding components. The Board chose not to run a voted levy. The funding formula would have supported a voted levy of up to \$782K.

The total tax value of the Elementary District increased by \$1.4M over FY16. Property tax levies for all budgeted funds, other than the Debt Service Fund, decreased by \$162,476 and total mills decreased by 3.41. With the increase of 34.01 mills in the Debt Service Fund to serve the 2016 bond issue, the total mills levied in the Elementary District increased by 30.60. This translated to an annual increase of \$82.61 in taxes on a \$200,000 assessed value home.

The secondary budget for all budgeted funds totaled \$42.5M in 2016-2017. This represented an increase of \$3.4M from 2015-2016 with the General Fund increasing \$1.2M (4.4%), and the Debt Service Fund increasing \$1.6M. The increase in the Debt Service Fund was necessary to fund the principal and interest payments coming due on the 2016 bond issue. The proposed General Fund budget for 2016-2017 was primarily impacted by an inflationary increase of 1.79% to the 2 entitlements and the 5 additional funding components, and an increase of 84 ANB.

The total tax value of the Secondary District increased by \$3.4M over FY16. Property tax levies for all of the budget funds, other than the debt service fund, increased by \$395K and .86 mills. With the increase of 9.08 mills in the Debt Service Fund to serve the 2016 bond issue, the total mills levied in the Secondary District increased by a total of 9.94. The tax impact was an annual increase of \$26.83 on a home with an assessed value of \$200,000, of which \$24.53 supported the debt service related to the bond issue.





Forward Thinking, High Achieving.

MISSOULA COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
215 S. 6th St. W. • Missoula, MT 59801
(406) 728-2400

www.mcpsmt.org