

Achievement for All ANNUAL REPORT 2015-2016

February 2017



Forward Thinking, High Achieving.

STAFF AND STUDENTS TOGETHER

Creating a 21st Century Educational Culture



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A Message from the Superintendent
PROGRESS: GOALS BECOMING REALITIES

The mission, vision and core beliefs of Missoula County Public Schools 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 are transforming our district’s future through the implementation of our 21st Century Model of Education and the “Achievement for All” five-year 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 2015-16 annual report. These accomplishments reflect the continuing efforts of all staff to provide an engaging and relevant educational experience for the students we serve. These efforts, coupled with the promise of the facility projects supported by the Missoula community through the passage of our Smart Schools 2020 bond request, bode well for the future of MCPS. The bonds will provide the necessary investment in our schools to repair aging buildings, update technology infrastructure and increase capacity for our growing student body. A high-quality workforce augmented by well- educated students will attract new businesses and jobs. Improving our schools will truly be an investment in our local economy.

With continued community support and dedication to our children, we will further increase academic rigor, improve graduation rates and prepare our students for post-secondary education and the workforce. I look forward to partnering with the Missoula community to provide the foundation to ensure success for all students.



Sincerely,
Mark A. Thane
Mark A. Thane

DISTRICT STATS AT A GLANCE

STUDENT ENROLLMENT

2013-14 2014-15 2015-16

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Chief Charlo	411	450	438
Cold Springs	477	495	488
Franklin	253	268	243
Hawthorne	362	375	380
Lewis & Clark	491	485	502
Lowell	281	282	291
Paxson	402	415	423
Rattlesnake	454	474	483
Russell	374	397	393

MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Meadow Hill	485	493	456
CS Porter	491	471	504
Washington	543	579	643

HIGH SCHOOLS

Big Sky	941	1050	1020
Hellgate	1134	1196	1157
Sentinel	1099	1171	1138
Seeley-Swan	108	99	108
Willard	155	169	159
TOTAL K-12	8,461	8,869	8,826



GRADUATION

RATE

District

89.9%

DROP-OUT RATE

District

3%



DEMOGRAPHIC
BREAKDOWNS

Gender

Male	52%
Female	48%

Ethnicity

White	85.5%
Hispanic	3.1%
American Indian	6.9%
Asian	2.1%
Black	2.0%
Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander	0.4%

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 2015-2016 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.



JENNIFER NEWBOLD

Newbold was elected to the Board of Trustees in 2014. 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.



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.



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.



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.



JULIE TOMPKINS

Tompkins, a K-12 trustee, was elected to the Board of Trustees in May 2013. She has worked for the University of Montana for 15 years and currently is pursuing a graduate degree in systems ecology. Tompkins is a K-12 trustee serving both the elementary and high school districts.



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.

NATIVE AMERICAN BUSINESS OF MT TRIBES: Business Concepts from a Native-American Perspective

According to Native American Specialist and teacher Melissa Hammett, the role of education is to provide students with the tools and knowledge that will not only help them in the classroom, but in real life, too. This principle guided Hammett as she planned for the start of her Native American Business of MT Tribes class, offered at Hellgate High beginning 2016-17 and Sentinel beginning 2017-18. Hammett noted that her approach to student success is best summarized by the Indian Education Department’s mission statement: “Help Native American students achieve academically, culturally, socially to graduate and become successful lifelong learners.” To accomplish this, the class will help students gain knowledge and understanding of Montana tribes from a Native American point-of-view. This aspect represents the course’s most valuable lessons, noted Hammett, who will intertwine teaching about Montana tribes with business concepts. “There was economics and business made by Native Americans, just through a different thought-process than what non-Natives believed,” she explained.

Hammett has noticed a general lack of knowledge and understanding of Native Americans, by non-Native and Native students alike. She is glad for the opportunity to boost this understanding. “I get to teach about my Native people’s history and how business relates. Students inspire me. I like knowing that I can make a positive difference for them by encouraging and helping them when needed.” She added, “I learn so much from my students, as well. This makes me a better teacher and Native American Specialist.” According to Hammett, a key to the success of the Native American Studies Business Concepts of MT Tribes is support from MCPS administration. From the perspective of administration, the class fills a vital need in the district. “Native American business leaders are becoming more common in our urban area and their successes build a background for our students to learn from and grow on,” said Executive Regional Director Karen Allen.

MCPS Stadium

Creating one of the coolest, rainiest Septembers in Missoula, Mother Nature delayed progress on the turf and track. The turf was finished in time for the first football game on August 26, but just barely: the goal posts went up three hours before game time. The track is scheduled for completion in April 2017.

MCPS COACHES - TITLE 1 AND PLC COACHES

Despite the fact that teachers get few (if any) moments to themselves on any given school day, teaching can feel isolating. This can be particularly true for new teachers. For this reason—and to bolster the success of students, staff, and schools—MCPS uses an instruction coaching model that provides direct support to teachers and their schools. In total, the district employs eight Title I coaches and three PLC coaches.

Title I coaches provide onsite support to the district’s eight Title I schools—Russell, Lowell, Franklin, Hawthorne, CS Porter, Hellgate, Big Sky, and Seeley Swan. Within each of these schools is an individual who works half-time as an instructional coach and half-time as a classroom teacher. Under the direction of Lead Mentor Coach Seena Demmons, Title I coaches offer a wide range of support to teachers, with a particular focus on those who are new and/or non-tenured. This includes co-designing lessons and units; modeling and co-teaching; demonstrating lessons; analyzing assessment data; facilitating peer observations; and providing professional learning opportunities such as book studies, blended online courses, and staff meetings. As noted by Demmons, the value of the coaches can be summed up by their coaching mission:

“Advancing student learning through collaborative, professional partnerships.”

PLC coaches provide additional support to all of the district’s schools, with a focus in three key areas: building professional learning communities (PLCs), instructional planning and assessment, and districtwide curriculum development. For instance, in 2015-16, PLC coaches planned for professional development involving The Next Generation Science Standards, scheduled for the following school year. Across subject areas, the coaching model has made significant impact, explained MCPS Executive Director of Teaching and Learning, Elise Guest, who refers to coaching as “the vehicle for school improvement that directly impacts student achievement.” However, as with most things involving education, the greatest challenges involve time: three coaches cover seventeen schools. To overcome this challenge, said Guest, the district is “being strategic with how we plan a multiple-year cycle for curriculum development, which articulates how the coaches would work with teams of teachers and individual teachers, based on the depth of that curriculum development and implementation.”





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.



SEELEY SWAN: 4+ SCHOOL WEEK

In fall 2015, Seeley Swan High School moved to a 4-day school week (or more accurately, a 4+ day week). With lengthened school days and class periods, all regular classes are held Monday through Thursday; on Friday, school remains open for one-on-one intervention. Friday morning attendance—transportation, breakfast, and lunch provided—is required of any student behind on school work or in need of additional support. Looking ahead, the school plans to add Friday enhancement activities, such as drama productions and art clubs. According to Principal Kat Pecora, the schedule offers a solution to a long-standing problem: how to provide each student the additional time and support needed to be successful. For five years, the school's staff tried a number of approaches. They read books, added advisory groups, changed the school's grading system, added dual-credit courses, and implemented reading and math enhancement programs. "However, without dealing with the time constraints of the traditional schedule," recalled Pecora, "we were unable to address our issues effectively and strategically."

Preparations for the schedule change included meetings with students and the community, during which time staff shared what research had taught them: switching to a 4-day school week positively impacted schools' rates of attendance, dropout, and disciplinary referrals. It also boosted morale. The impact on Seeley Swan was immediate. For one, attendance rate—at 86.5% before the 4-day week—grew to 92.8% in fall 2015 and 95% in spring 2016. Further, even as research indicated that the 4-day week generally had no impact on student achievement, Seeley Swan's 4.5% failing-grade rate dropped to 2.7% in fall 2015 and 0.23% in spring 2016. Pecora attributes the new schedule's success to two primary factors: attendance and intervention. "We know that attendance at school is important for students to achieve at their best," she explained. "We also know that when kids struggle, one-on-one intervention has been proven to be the most effective instructional strategy and that the 4+ school week addresses these needs."

JUMP ROPE FOR HEART/SPARK!

For Brianna Hanson, exposing kids to global culture and dance are among the best parts of her job as a Health Enhancement Specialist at Cold Springs Elementary School. Having previously lived and taught in South America and New Zealand, Hanson appreciates the opportunities presented to MCPS via SPARK!/Any Given Child, the arts-focused initiative developed by the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Hanson's students encountered the benefits of SPARK! during the 2015-16 school year, when they learned African dance from University of Montana dance instructor Tarn Ream.

Presented with a list of SPARK! arts instructors, the choice was easy for Hanson, who had worked with Ream in the past. "We're all connected globally, Africa is a place of heritage for everyone in the world, and dance can be a daily activity linked to health," Hanson explained. "Also, so many people love to dance." Ream's visit to Cold Springs came at the heels of Cold Spring's participation in Jump Rope for Heart, a school-based fundraiser for the American Heart Association. Although it was at the fundraiser celebration assembly that students were introduced to African dance, Hanson helped students connect the dots early on. While students skipped rope, she asked them where else they heard the sound of a heartbeat. From a jump rope hitting the floor? From an African drum? For the American Heart Association, students jumped for people impacted by heart conditions (marked with stickers on a map); when the African dancers came to Cold



Springs, Hanson asked students to consider who the dancers might be dancing for.

In total, Hanson's students raised \$7,941.40 for the American Heart Association. As an added bonus, for every extra \$1,000 they raised over the previous year, Cold Springs was awarded \$100 in vouchers from US Games (as the school raised \$800 the previous year, this equated to a lot of hockey sticks and other equipment). Equally successful was the exposure to a new art form, the benefits of which extend beyond the cultural element. For comparison, Hanson explained that just as a healthy diet is complimented by all the food groups, education requires the whole spectrum, including creativity and social well-being. "If we think the arts isn't a critical component to that plate, we are jeopardizing the education of children."

ASIST MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING

In March 2016, all MCPS mental health professionals—including counselors, school psychologists, and social workers—completed Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST). The two-day training provided participants with suicide prevention kits, which, according to MCPS Response to Intervention Specialist Carol Ewen, creates the consistency needed to respond appropriately to students experiencing suicidal ideation. The training was a key component of a focused three-year suicide-prevention plan within MCPS. As part of these efforts, all district teachers will participate in Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR), hour-and-a-half training focused on awareness.

Unlike ASIST, QPR is not intervention-based. Instead, noted Ewen, QPR helps teachers in three key areas: recognizing the

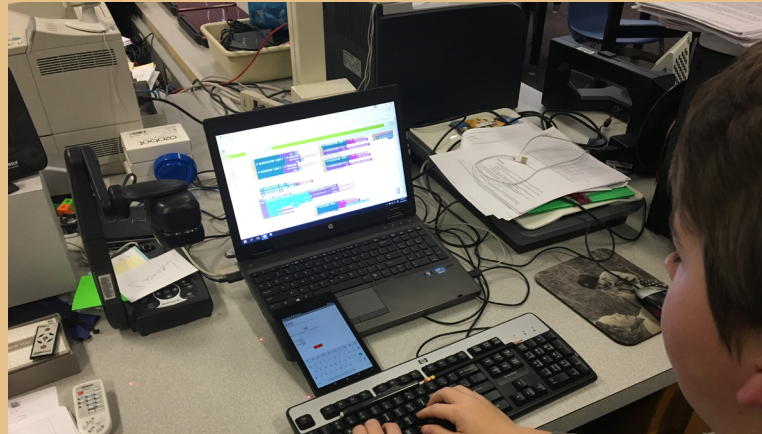
signs of suicide; understanding how to talk to kids they're worried about; and knowing who to refer them to. Other resources provided to MCPS staff include Signs of Suicide (SOS) kits and the Missoula County Youth Crisis Diversion website. SOS provides health teachers and counselors materials for teaching students about suicide. "Often, peers are the first to know if a student is struggling and giving them tools to get that student help can be highly effective in suicide prevention," said Ewen. Missoula County Youth Crisis Diversion (<http://missoulayouthcrisis.org/>) is a collaborative project between MCPS and a wide range of community organizations; the website provides urgent response resources (for suicide-prevention and other mental health crises) for staff, parents, and students.



MEADOW HILL AND CS PORTER ADD CODING TO PLTW COURSE

In 2015-16, Meadow Hill and C.S. Porter added coding to their Project Lead the Way (PLTW) course offerings, contributing to MCPS's goal to provide computer science opportunities to students in all district schools. C.S. Porter Computer Applications teacher Scott Edge applauded the district's decision to train teachers to teach coding. "It was a risk. The district had to decide if it should keep doing what it was doing or try something new." Kasey Dirnberger, who teaches Computer Applications at Meadow Hill, pointed out the important role the district plays in introducing more girls to coding. "The stereotype that coding is for boys has to be broken," said Dirnberger. "I make an effort to recruit girls into my program, and my class inspires them to move into coding classes in high school, because they can see the potential to change the world with their work."

The coding curriculum offered at Meadow Hill and C.S. Porter—and, beginning 2016-17, at Washington Middle School—represents a brand new curriculum from PLTW. It includes learning a basic, drag-drop-based Python program, which teaches kids about syntax, language, and how a small error can mess up a whole program. The project-focused course gets students working in pairs, which emulates teamwork seen in today's jobs, an aspect Edge has built upon. "We're one big happy family. I tell students that even though they're working in pairs, to consider the whole class their team." Specifically, students code apps for android devices, which they present to the class. Projects take about a week



to complete and are broken up into "sprint tasks," small parts designed to keep students motivated and prevent them from feeling overwhelmed.

Edge and Dirnberger considered the course's first year a success, yet they saw a way to further increase engagement. Working with Washington's Computer Applications teacher Brittanie Keilman, they applied for a Century Link grant that would allow them to purchase Raspberry Pi computers, which are small, affordable, and can be programmed with Python for an interactive experience. For instance, students can program games to appear on Raspberry Pi's 4-inch screen or make lights go on and off. "Back when I was in school, the hands-on classes were the ones I was most interested in," said Edge. "It's really cool to see students' eyes light up when they put to use what they learned in the classroom."

MIDDLE SCHOOL DANCE COLLABORATION WITH HIP HOP DANCER VIA SPARK!

In February 2016, all eighth-graders at C.S. Porter Middle School learned hip hop dance and culture from Detroit-based professional dancer Marcus White. A 2016 resident of the UM School of Theatre & Dance, White was invited to C.S. Porter for two weeks through collaboration between CoMotion, MCPS, and SPARK! Arts Ignite Learning/The Any Given Child Initiative. From White, C.S. Porter eighth-graders learned valuable lessons both on and off the dance floor. No doubt, they learned an array of moves, as exhibited in daytime student performances. However, as then Principal Julie Robitaille pointed out, "It's good for students to learn that there are people who make their living practicing their art form, that if you're passionate about your art, you can make that into your career and life. That exposure is one of the great things about SPARK!"

The latter point was reinforced by the presence of White's college students, who shared with the middle schoolers what it's like to study dance in college. The informal discussion occurred the evening of February 18, as part of C.S. Porter's "One Book" event—a Title I literacy program that encourages whole schools, including families, to read the same book. Since White's visit coincided

with "One Book," he incorporated the book (Scott Westerfeld's dystopian *Uglies*, which calls to attention societal ideals of beauty) into his lesson plan. Through the lens of dance, White demonstrated to students the importance of having one's own moves and being unique, instead of trying to fit in and be like everyone else. At a school dance the following week, eighth-graders took White's words to the hip-hop floor, leading dancers in a flash mob that simultaneously displayed their new dancing skills and their embracing of uniqueness. To Robitaille, it was the perfect ending to the experience. "If you look at the videos and photos, there are just smiles. You can't help but to enjoy yourself when there's music and dance."



Photo courtesy of Stephen Beigleter

INTERSECTIONS: Writing About the Natural World in the Natural World

When school resumed at Big Sky in fall 2015, Aaron Fortner was eager to get his students out of the classroom to learn. This was exactly what the English-Health Science Academy teacher spent his own summer doing, as a student with the Intersections Project. The eight-week K-12 teacher training program—a collaboration between MCPS, University of Montana spectrUM, and the National Writing Project—took teachers out of the classroom to explore the intersection between writing, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), and indigenous ways of knowing. Guided by representatives from these disciplines, teacher-students of the Intersections Project spent their time engaging in activities they would later introduce to their students. For example, they spent hours outdoors, writing about things they encountered in nature.

To participating teachers, the experience served as a reminder of the limits of the traditional classroom. "Students are used to experiencing all kinds of context in the classroom, but it's desensitized," said Fortner. "For instance, you can show them a video about a river, but they won't write as well about that river unless they are physically by that river." Back at Big Sky, Fortner practiced what he learned, taking his students outside and in unique indoor settings to write. The latter included a visit to the planetarium at the University of Montana's Payne Family Native American Center. As Fortner explained, the planetarium provided an excellent



avenue for introducing a universal perspective of knowledge, for seeing through both a lens of scientific understanding and "an indigenous narrative of the sky that we see above us all the time." Fortner discovered another benefit of leaving the classroom, too, one that gets to the heart of the Intersections approach: "A lot of really good writing comes out of informal learning environments. Students are a little bit more themselves, teachers are a little bit more themselves. It breaks down a lot of walls."



SENTINEL COMPUTER SCIENCE: Dual Credit Joy and Beauty and Juniper Academic Alliance

In the few years since getting serious about computer science, Sentinel High School has accomplished a great deal, including wins at the statewide Rocky Mountain Computer Science Competition and at the UM Cyber Hackathon (where the high schoolers beat out undergraduate and graduate teams). For computing fans like Jackson Servheen, high school couldn't have started at a better time. A freshman the first year Sentinel took gold at Rocky Mountain, Servheen said he has taken computer science classes in all four years of high school. "I really like the competitions and computer science club, because they're fun." In 2015-16, the Sentinel Computer Science department broadened its horizons in two key areas: female participation and real-world relevance. With these goals in mind, the school designed the Joy and Beauty Computing class and partnered with Juniper Networks' Academic Alliance program.

Joy and Beauty of Computing

In 380 BC, Plato argued that, unless women worked the same jobs as men, society missed out on half its talent. Today, the same words are being spoken within computer science, a field in which females earn just 18 percent of bachelor's degrees. To boost these numbers (and those of computer scientists in general) the National Science Foundation launched the CS 10K Project in 2013. The project's goals include having computer science classes available in 10,000 U.S. schools and increasing participation of females and minorities. Sentinel responded to the challenge by creating Joy and Beauty of Computing, a course that involved three years of planning.



Offered beginning 2016-17, in its first year the course will be co-taught by University of Montana Computer Science professor, Yolanda Reimer. Diversification is a key objective of the class, said Sentinel Principal Ted Fuller, who explained, "There's a ceiling to our capacity if it's only males; if we're going to make it as good as it can, we need more people participating."

Juniper Academic Alliance

In 2015, Sentinel became the first high school in the world to partner with Juniper Networks' Academic Alliance. The program, which has worked with over 200 universities around the world, trains students to use Juniper's industry-leading network operating system. Through the partnership, Juniper has provided teacher-training and equipment to Sentinel. Upon learning to configure the equipment, students can earn industry certifications, a spectacular accomplishment for teenagers. "One thing I love about this program is that it meets kids on their level of competency," said Fuller. "We have 14- to 15-year-olds doing college-level learning." Fuller credits success with the partnership to teacher and computer science club advisor Dan Lande, whose background includes co-founding a software company and teaching college computer science courses. According to Lande, the key to success is starting students while they're young and promoting computer science as the creative field that it is. As he explained, "Creative science is a creative environment, because it's limitless. Anything you can think up you can create." Sentinel junior Ryan Sandau agrees with both his teacher and his principal: "Lande's the best. When he showed up my sophomore year, the program began to grow and now we have 3D printers, we've beaten college students, have android app development. We learn things that are useful. It's a global pioneering network class and it's awesome."



SPECIAL OLYMPICS GOES UNIFIED: MCPS Earns SOMT Unified Champion School of the Year

In early 2016 Special Olympics began a national shift from Project UNIFY to Unified Champion Schools, to better reflect the organization's ongoing work with school-based programs. "For eight years it was Project UNIFY and we decided that the term 'project' seemed temporary," explained LeAnn Dolly-Powell, Vice President of Unified Strategy at Special Olympics Montana (SOMT). By engaging with students of all abilities and increasing inclusion in schools, the Unified movement aspires to instill long-term values of responsibility, caring, and community engagement. "The lessons from our childhood can frame who we are as adults," said Dolly-Powell. "And one of the best places to do that is in our schools."

Fully embracing its role as a Unified Champion School, MCPS became the first district to be named an SOMT Unified Champion School of the Year (2016). "This has been largely due to the great support given by [Executive Regional Director] Karen Allen, who has gone above and beyond in her commitment to working with SOMT and the State Summer Games," pointed out Dolly-Powell. Allen, meanwhile, credited MCPS staff and students, whose engagement begins before the Games, via email, Skype, and pen pal letters. "Our school staffs are vital to our successful collaboration with Special Olympics Montana (SOMT), because they become personally engaged

and invite kids to engage with them. Kids in the class get to know kids on the team. Kids on the team get to know kids in the class. Often by name."

For the 2016 Games, schools built upon previous years' efforts. These included Paxson's Young Athlete Program and Unified Bocce team; Cold Spring's Student Council-led Respect Rally; and Big Sky's 6th annual Unified Soccer Camp. In addition, MCPS Native American Specialists Ray Kingfisher and Jake Arrowtop hosted the 2nd Special Olympics Native Games at Olympic Village. Of all MCPS participation, perhaps none made as big an impact to athletes as Washington Middle School's Adopt-a-Team efforts. Adopting Kalispell for the second consecutive State Summer Games, Washington "hometown fans" made posters, cheered from stands, presented athletes with Washington t-shirts, and transformed the hallways into an all-out hero's reception. As athletes entered the school, they were met with the sound of student-played music and a tunnel of students to run beneath. "It is incredible to see how the entire school joins in," said Dolly-Powell. "It is amazing." Allen agrees, noting, "Schools are where we embrace inclusion. All kids have strengths and we want to find ways to support and learn from each other. In the real world, we are all different, but we are all in this life together."



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.



PREP FOR MOVE: LOWELL AND FRANKLIN

“I think the hardest part of the project is getting buildings ready for construction,” said Burley McWilliams, MCPS Operations and Maintenance Supervisor. “The logistics are tough. Moving affects a lot of people, creates a lot of staff inconvenience.” Since construction at Lowell and Franklin elementary schools was scheduled to begin in summer 2016, the work had to begin before the end of the school year. For teachers and other staff, this equated to running a school around box packing, communicating with maintenance crew, holding building yard sales, and stacking boxes in hallways and classrooms for pickup. “We couldn’t get the boxes out quickly enough,” recalled McWilliams. “We needed to allow teachers a good workplace to teach kids in.” Within days after school broke for summer, Lowell and Franklin were cleared completely: school boxes were taken to Mount Jumbo and Jefferson schools, the respective temporary homes of Lowell and Franklin, while furniture and equipment were placed in other MCPS schools, stored, donated, or sold.

To be equipped to receive students in fall 2016, Mount Jumbo and Jefferson needed work too, including painting, flooring, and plumbing. To accommodate for the number of Franklin students and staff, two modular buildings were moved to Jefferson. This created another set of time-crunched tasks: fill out permits; excavate ground; pour foundation; split double-wide modulares in half for delivery; deliver modulares in middle-of-the-night trips, to avoid traffic. With modulares delivered, the list continued: put modulares together; hook up sewer and water; coordinate with movers, contractors, utilities, and the city of Missoula. Though workers succeeded in getting the heavy work done by the time school doors opened in fall 2016, painting and other cosmetic tasks continued through that first week. Despite the challenges, the moves went smoothly, said McWilliams, who attributed the success to school staff. “They were very patient and understanding. I can’t speak enough about the staff. You always look at the end of the tunnel and see there’s a greater good. It’s a neat process. They’re going to love their new facilities.”

Highlights of Construction

Paxson Elementary

The four-classroom, 5,000-square foot addition got off to an excellent start and experienced no significant delays. The remodel—including new restrooms, an office space, and wide hallways that double as learning breakout spaces—would easily meet its December 2017 scheduled completion date.



Rattlesnake Elementary

The \$4 million project experienced a series of interruptions, some typical and others more unusual. The delays, which have been ironed out, involved the fire sprinkler system, a modular that was moved off of the property, abatement, and excavation work near unmarked graves of former railroad workers. “We had to be very careful when we were excavating up there,” explained Burley McWilliams, MCPS Operations and Maintenance Supervisor. “We encountered a grave, reached out to local authorities and the archeology department on campus, and they oversaw it to ensure everything was handled in the right way.”



Roofs across District

For years, MCPS maintenance workers did all they could to extend the aging roofs of district buildings: kept them clean and clear of storage, eliminated standing water, unclogged drains, repaired leaks. Yet with many roofs hitting 30+ years (and the typical roof lifespan at 20-25 years), new roofing couldn’t have come at a better time. This year, partial roofs were replaced at Lewis and Clark Elementary, Meadow Hill and Washington middle schools, and Big Sky and Hellgate high schools.





ENVIRONMENT TRANSFORM THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

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.

Vo-Ag

The welding shop received a mechanical upgrade that improves ventilation and provides an emergency shower (in case of fire) and an eye-wash system.



2015-16 PROGRAM UPDATES: Dual Language Immersion + International Baccalaureate

Paxson prepared for DLI Schoolwide. Expanding on its 2013 launch of Dual Language Immersion (in which 40 students divided their time between classes taught in Spanish and English), in 2015-16 Paxson Elementary School made preparations to incorporate schoolwide DLI. Whereas the previous model had an opt-out option, beginning fall 2016 all students in grades kindergarten, 3, and 4 will participate in classes taught in Spanish and English. The eventual goal—for every K-2 Paxson student to receive half of their core coursework in Spanish and for every 3-5 Paxson student to receive a third of their core coursework in Spanish—will be reached in 2018-19. Response from parents and the community has been “overwhelmingly positive,” reported MCPS Executive Regional Director Karen Allen, who pointed out that there continues to be a waiting list for students in grades 1 and 2 with full inclusion. She added that the benefits of bilingualism are extensive, including increased access to other countries, ability to better compete in a global economy, greater cultural awareness, and, as studies indicate, better brain capacities in areas of logic, decision-making, creativity, mathematics, and reading comprehension. “It’s exciting to be part of an educational setting that is willing to do things differently than they have always been done,” noted Allen. “This communicates to our students that learning is a lifelong endeavor.”

Lewis & Clark Elementary was in candidacy to become an IB World School while Franklin Elementary prepared for IB candidacy. According to Elise Guest, MCPS Executive Director of Teaching and Learning, the International Baccalaureate program “enables students to gain a global perspective about the world, to be part of something greater as global citizens.” While the rewards are significant, preparation is extensive. The biggest component involves shifting curriculum to be more interdisciplinary and inquiry-based. “It’s a different way of teaching that promotes teachers to work collaboratively across disciplines,” said Guest. “It can be hard to find the time and to collaborate in a meaningful manner.” To address this challenge, both schools designated all PLC time to IB training, and the efforts paid off. In August 2016, while Franklin prepared to begin its candidacy year, Lewis & Clark hosted a celebration to commence its first year in the IB Primary Years Program. “The whole community came out for it,” recalled Guest. “Leaders, teachers, parents and students are proud of passing candidacy to earn the Primary Years Programme distinction and are very committed to its success.”



Franklin Elementary and Lowell Elementary

After students and staff left for the summer in 2016, maintenance scurried to clear out Franklin and Lowell, among MCPS’s oldest buildings (and, each exceeding \$11 million, among the largest projects of the \$88 million elementary bond). Both buildings were empty by the Wednesday after school was out. On track for summer 2017 completion dates, the buildings will reopen soon after Lowell turns 108 and Franklin turns 101.



ENVIRONMENT TRANSFORM THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT



GRADUATION MATTERS AND STUDENT WELLNESS: Multiple Layers to Student Achievement

The four committees within the Graduation Matters Missoula (GMM) Student Wellness Council—Behavior, Physical Fitness, Nutrition, and Personal Health—provide significant support to teachers and students. “We have great community resources willing to help us, but they needed an avenue to access schools and provide targeted help requested by schools,” reported Carol Ewen, MCPS Response to Intervention Specialist. The GMM Student Wellness Council provides this avenue, as evidenced by these 2015-16 achievements:

The behavior committee developed a list of resources for the district’s counselors and helped plan a two-day Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) held in March 2016. Additionally, the group supported schools’ efforts to establish positive behavioral interventions and support mechanisms, as modeled by Montana Behavioral Initiative (MBI). For these efforts, ten MCPS schools earned 2016 MBI Awards, including two—Franklin Elementary and Hawthorne Elementary—that reached Platinum, MBI’s highest tier. The other schools recognized by MBI in 2016 were Lewis & Clark Elementary, Paxson Elementary, Rattlesnake Elementary, C.S. Porter Middle School, Meadow Hill Middle School, and Washington Middle School (all awarded Gold) and Russell Elementary and Willard High School (awarded Silver and Bronze, respectively).

The physical fitness committee continued their ongoing support of monitoring student body mass index (BMI), developing and posting safe routes to schools, and providing student brain breaks/“Morning Move” activities. The group also wrote a winning grant proposal that paid for fun playground equipment for structured student activities two mornings a week. Volunteers of the activity are supervised by Missoula Parks and Rec; MCPS plans to expand the program as the number of volunteers grows.

The nutrition committee helped schools achieve compliance with the Smart Snacks in School Rules, adopted by Montana in 2014 as part of the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010. The committee’s efforts included conducting a Smart Snack inventory in all middle and high schools; presenting findings to building principals and the school board; and meeting with every school’s PTA and PTO to discuss Smart Snacks and improving student nutrition. The group also began to develop “Sugar on the Brain” training, to be provided to teachers in spring 2017.

The personal health committee provided allergies and asthma training and immunization updates for all MCPS staff and students at back-to-school time. The group also collaborated with the Missoula City-County Health Department to complete a memorandum of understanding for supporting pregnant students.

THE FLAGSHIP PROGRAM: Providing Every Kid a chance

When asked to name her favorite aspect of The Flagship Program, Program Manager Nicole Mitchell struggled to identify just one. “It’s many things—there’s providing a safe place for community youth, mentoring kids, and making struggling kids feel good about themselves, whether that’s by helping them make friends or do better in school.” An affiliation of Western Montana Addiction Services, Flagship partners with MCPS to offer afterschool and summer programs that help ensure student success through healthy prevention and diversion from risky behaviors. During the 2015-16 school year, Flagship offered 406 unique programs, including afterschool tutoring, in eight MCPS schools (Franklin, Hawthorne, and Lowell Elementary Schools; Washington and CS Porter Middle Schools; and Hellgate, Willard Alternative, and Big Sky High Schools).

Each Flagship program falls within one of four core components: academic achievement, health and wellness, art and culture, or pro-social development. Many take an interdisciplinary approach, allowing students to make connections that would help them in the real world. For instance, this year at Willard, students

created a wall-sized 4-panel mural that illustrated Missoula’s past, present, and future. By completing the mural—which is on display at Missoula

Job Service—students learned what it takes to complete a large-scale project of this nature, including design and painting, collaboration, coordinating with another organization, and meeting deadlines.

Of Flagship’s 782 volunteers this year, 90 percent were students at the University of Montana. The partnership is a win-win: it allows the college students to fulfill field-experience requirements and provides valued young-adult mentors to MCPS students. “The kids love having those college students come to their schools,” said Mitchell. “They’re so caring and—as with our other volunteers—they see how meaningful the experience is for MCPS students, how much they’ve impacted students’ lives, and it becomes meaningful for them, too.” Here, Mitchell realized that she could, in fact, pick a favorite: “Some of our UM volunteers participated in Flagship growing up, and it’s so good to see them return in the mentor role. They remind kids that everybody has a chance in this world. Those relationships are my favorite part of The Flagship Program.”



Lowell Elementary

In the basement of Lowell, on a slab of concrete beneath old yellowed carpet, maintenance crew found a surprise: a “Lowell Bobcats” logo featuring a devilish-looking bobcat. The image is thought to have been painted by a Lowell student during the 1970s or 1980s.

FINANCES

FINANCES AT A GLANCE

MCPS is a unified school system that operates two separate districts — a K-8 elementary district and a 9-12 high school district. While unified, each district adopts its own budgets for nine separate funds: general, transportation, tuition, retirement, adult education, technology, flexibility, debt service and building reserve.

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.*

GENERAL FUND

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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. For FY16, the high school general fund budget was at maximum, and the elementary general fund budget was below maximum. No over-base operating levy was run in either district.

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.

For fiscal year 2016, the combined general fund budgets grew by \$2,280,379 or 3.69%. This increase was primarily the result of an inflationary increase of 2.3% to the basic and per ANB entitlements. The ANB (enrollment) increased

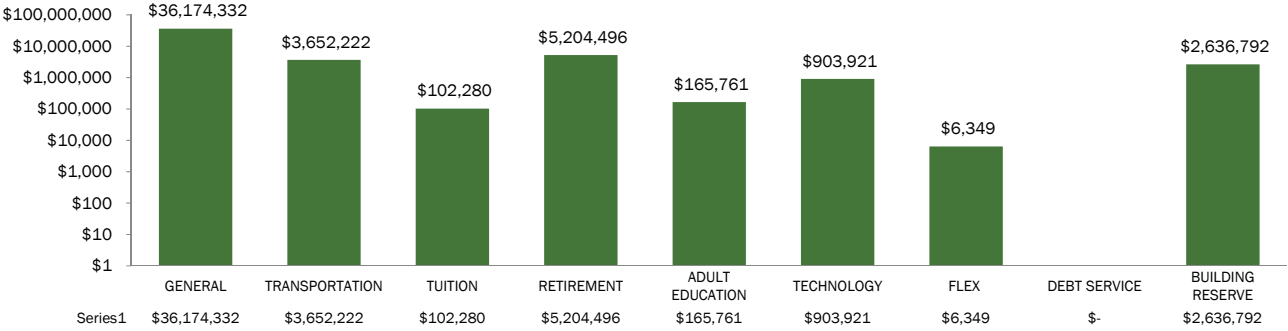
by 177 in the Elementary District, and decreased by 36 in the High School District. The general fund budget in the Elementary District increased by \$1.9M (5.8%) while the High School general fund budgets increased by \$290K (1.1%).

For fiscal year 2016, the elementary budget for all budgeted funds totaled \$48.8M. This represented an increase of \$2.4M. Based upon District taxable values, the total mills for the Elementary District decreased by .63 mills in 2016.

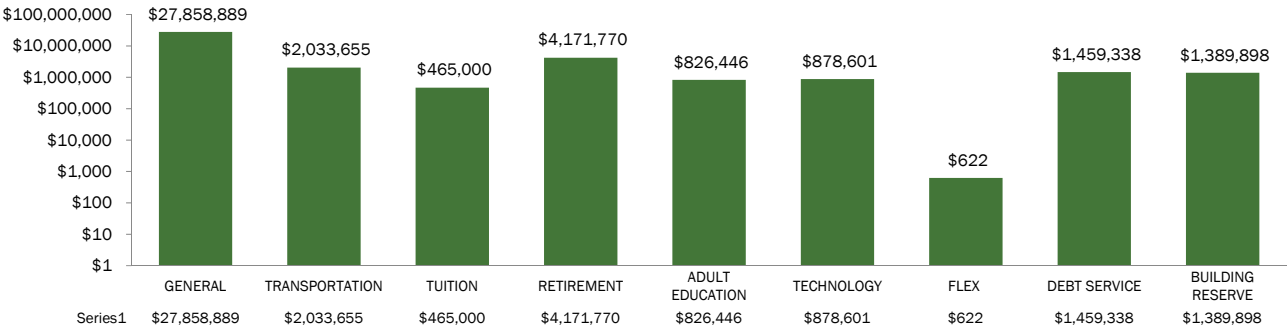
The high school budget for all budgeted funds totaled \$39.1M in fiscal year 2016. This represented an increase of \$855K and 2.34 mills based upon 2015 certified taxable values in the High School District. The increase of 2.34 mills represents approximately \$3.16 of annual property taxes to a home with taxable market value of \$100,000.

Combined with the increase of 2.34 mills in the High School District, the total mills in the Elementary District increased by 1.71 - approximately \$2.31 on a home with a taxable market value of \$100,000.

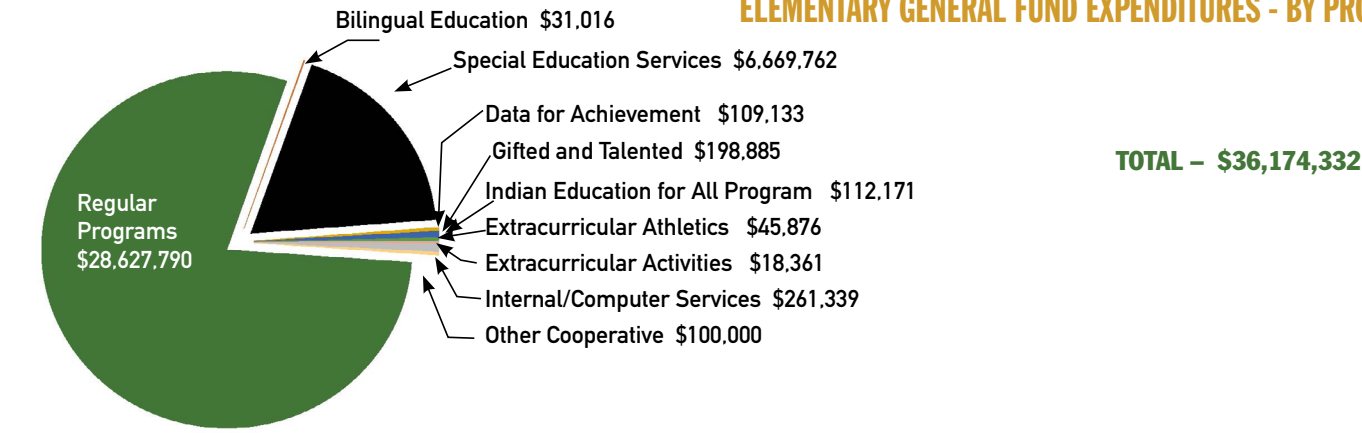
ELEMENTARY BUDGETED FUNDS 2015-2016 \$48,846,153



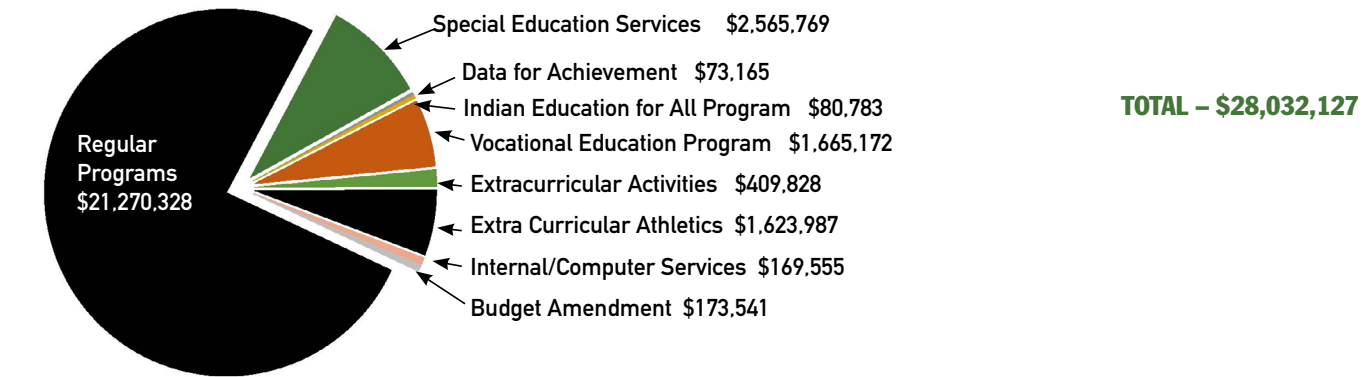
HIGH SCHOOL BUDGETED FUNDS 2015-2016 \$39,084,219

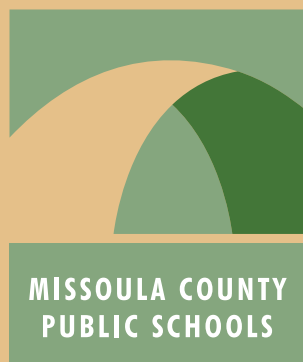


ELEMENTARY GENERAL FUND EXPENDITURES - BY PROGRAM



HIGH SCHOOL GENERAL FUND EXPENDITURES - BY PROGRAM





Forward Thinking, High Achieving.

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