



MISSOULA COUNTY  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

# Annual Report 2012 – 2013



Forward Thinking, High Achieving.



## CONTENTS

A Message from your Superintendent	1
Your MCPS Board of Trustees	2
Goal: Increase Student Engagement	3
Implementing the 21st Century Model of Education	3
Goal: Transform Learning Environments	4
Goal: Support Innovators	5
Goal: Personalize Professional Growth	6
Goal: Collaborate to Make Decisions	7
Some District Snapshots	8
2012-13 Highlights and Achievements	9
Missoula Schools Test High	10
Relationships Matter	11
Parent and Community Involvement	12
Ag Center	13
Snapshots of Learning	14
Finance	16
Curricula Review Process	Back cover
Graduation Matters Missoula	Back cover

**MISSION:** Missoula County Public Schools' mission is 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.

## GOALS: LEARNING

### **Increase Student Engagement: Student Achievement for All**

- Achievement and graduation for all students regardless of their circumstances and abilities.

### **TALENT**

#### **Personalize Professional Growth & Support Innovators: Quality Professional Development**

- Define and implement a quality professional development program that encompasses best practices and supports the needs of all staff.
- Refine and implement a quality evaluation and supervision program for all staff.

## OPERATIONS

### **Enhance Communication & Collaborate to Make Decisions: Cultivate Involvement**

- Cultivate and enhance staff, student, parent, business and community involvement.

## ENVIRONMENT

### **Transform the Learning Environment: Restructure Organization & Facilities**

- Restructure the facilities and organization to become more efficient and effective in support of 21st century learning.



“

*We are well on our way to ensuring our students have full opportunities to achieve a 21st-century education.*

”

## Collaboration, Change, Success

As your Missoula County Public Schools are busy with the spring of the 2013-14 school year, it gives us great pleasure to look back and review the work your school system did during the 2012-13 academic year. Much of the good learning happening today throughout our classrooms and buildings has roots in the successes of the 2012-13 year.

And because of that work, we are well on our way to ensuring our students have full opportunities to achieve a 21st-century education and to be prepared for wherever they go after high school graduation.

As we review the past year, among the highlights are:

- Missoula County Public Schools set the standards of academic achievement and innovation in the state of Montana. From continuing to lead the state in graduation rates (nearing 90 percent) through our nationally recognized Graduation Matters Missoula initiative to expanding the programs that respond to the community's 21st Century Model of Education Plan, MCPS is moving forward courageously to ensure that all students achieve, regardless of their circumstances or abilities.
- The implementation of the International Baccalaureate Programme at Hellgate and Big Sky high schools and now Lewis and Clark Elementary; our Health Science Academy at Big Sky; the Dual Language Immersion program at Paxson Elementary; Project Lead the Way at Meadow Hill and Porter middle schools; and Robotics training at Chief Charlo, Lowell and Rattlesnake elementary schools. The 2012-13 school year was spent in deep preparation for many new programs that now are filled with thriving students.
- We are engaging our staff in the dynamic process of becoming a Professional Learning Community. This investment in our core asset, the talent of our teachers, is unparalleled and it will have positive impacts across the entire MCPS system.



Your continued support and involvement will help maintain our leadership in public education in the state of Montana and beyond. I sincerely look forward to our continued collaboration and success.

Sincerely,

*Alex P. Apostle*  
**ALEX P. APOSTLE**  
Superintendent

## 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 monthly on the second Tuesday of each month. We appreciate the 11 trustees who have dedicated hundreds of hours in thoughtful discussion and procedural meetings during the 2012-2013 school year to support MCPS students, employees, families and community members.



### SCOTT BIXLER

Bixler was elected to the Board of Trustees in 2004 and is a realty specialist for the U.S. Forest Service. He graduated from Helena High School in 1971 and moved to Missoula to attend The University of Montana, where he earned a bachelor's in 1975 and a master's in 1992. He currently

volunteers with Boy Scout troop 1909 and is a member of First United Methodist Church's Jubellation Handbell Choir. Bixler is a K-12 trustee serving both the elementary and high school districts.



### ROSE DICKSON

A Missoula native, Dickson was elected to the Board of Trustees in 2012. She graduated from Big Sky High School in 2010 and today attends the University of Montana where she is working toward dual degrees in Secondary English Teaching and Environmental Studies. She worked the past

two summers at the Natural History Center, and she has worked as a volunteer with the Watershed Education Network and the Missoula Writing Collaborative.



### DEBBIE DUPREE

Dupree was elected to the Board of Trustees in 2002. She works as an auto mechanic and business owner of Seeley Lake Auto Parts. After graduating from Shelby High School in 1983, she earned a degree in mechanics from Helena Vo-Tech. Dupree is involved with both the Seeley-Swan High School Booster Club and the Seeley Lake Trailblazer 4-H club.

Dupree is a high school trustee representing the areas of Seeley Lake, Swan Valley, Clinton, Potomac and Sunset.



### MARCIA HOLLAND

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. She is involved with Kiwanis and serves on several Missoula boards. She is a Montana native and has lived

in both Missoula and Butte. Holland is a high school trustee representing the Hellgate School district community.



### JOSEPH KNAPP JR. (VICE CHAIR)

Knapp was elected to the Board of Trustees in 2009 and is a cardiologist with the International Heart Institute of Montana. Knapp completed his undergraduate studies at Saint Clara University and earned a medical degree at Georgetown University. He moved to Missoula in 1982

and has practiced cardiology both in Missoula and Seattle. "It is imperative for the health of our community that we have an educated populace, prepared to face the demands of the 21st century. The future of our democracy is dependent upon an educated and involved citizenry. The job of educating our youth is one not done solely by our teachers, but in some fashion or another, by each and every one of us. It is for this reason that I am committed to advancing the quality of education that is available in Missoula County Public Schools," Knapp said. Knapp is a K-12 trustee serving the elementary and high school districts.



### DRAKE LEMM

Lemm was elected to the Board of Trustees in 1996 and works as a building contractor and developer. He graduated from Pendleton High School in Pendleton, Ore., in 1967 and earned a bachelor's degree in business and economics from Seattle Pacific University in 1971. He moved to Bozeman in

1971 before taking an insurance job in Missoula that same year. He married his wife, who was then a teacher at Lewis and Clark Elementary, in 1972. Lemm is a high school trustee representing the Lolo School district community.



### TONI REHBEIN (BOARD CHAIR)

Rehbein was elected to the Board of Trustees in 2004. She is a retired educator with a master's in counseling from The University of Montana. Rehbein is a K-12 trustee serving the elementary and high school districts.



### JIM SADLER (VICE CHAIR)

Sadler was elected to the Board of Trustees in 1994. He is a consultant for several federal agencies, including the Department of Education and Administration for Native Americans. He earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Great Falls, a law degree from The University of Montana,

and a master's in social work from Portland State University. He moved to Missoula to attend law school. "I have found Missoula to be very generous and supportive to me and my family. Serving on the school board is my way of giving back to my community and the children of the city the kindnesses we have received," he said. Sadler is a high school trustee representing the areas of Target Range and Bonner.



### MICHAEL SMITH

Smith was appointed to the Board of Trustees in 2010. He is currently an environmental science specialist with the Montana Department of Environmental Quality. Smith is a K-12 trustee serving both elementary and high school districts.



### JOE TOTH

Toth was elected to the Board of Trustees in 2004. He works as Battalion Chief with the Missoula Fire Department and has a bachelor's in wildlife biology from the University of Montana and a secondary certification of broad field science. He taught in the adult education program for 13 years.

"Missoula is a great town; we're lucky to live here," he said. Toth is a K-12 trustee serving both elementary and high school districts.



### SHELLY WILLS

Wills was elected to the Board of Trustees in 2009. She is a self-employed property manager and a stay-at-home mom. She earned a bachelor's degree in business from the Montana State University in 1984. She moved to Missoula after graduating so that her husband could attend The University of

Montana School of Law. She is a volunteer at Missoula Children's Theatre, Graduation Matters Missoula Marketing Committee, MCPS Teaching and Learning Committee and the Hellgate High School coffee cart. She is a member of Christ the King Church. Wills is a K-12 trustee serving both elementary and high school districts.

## IMPLEMENTING THE 21ST CENTURY MODEL OF EDUCATION

Careers have changed dramatically over the past 50 years. While technology plays a central part in today's world, the fear is not whether computers will take over, but whether employees will gain the skills needed to run our increasingly sophisticated systems. "The main way in which governments can help their people through this dislocation is through education systems," The Economist wrote in its Jan. 18, 2014, issue. However, the article pointed out, "schools themselves need to be changed, to foster the creativity that humans will need to set them apart from computers."

In early recognition of this conviction, Missoula County Public Schools launched the 21st Century Model for Education. The 2012-13 school year marked the second year of the program's implementation. At the core of MCPS' 21st century model are six key "elements of change" that nourish student creativity, critical-thinking skills and understanding. Found throughout the district's diverse educational programs, these six elements are:

- **Increase Student Engagement**
- **Transform Learning Environments**
- **Support Innovators**
- **Personalize Professional Growth**
- **Enhance Communications**
- **Collaborate to Make Decisions**

The 21st century model incorporates innovative teaching and modern technologies to best prepare students for college and careers.

## GOAL: INCREASE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT



### DUAL LANGUAGE IMMERSION

Paxson Elementary is taking a giant step in preparing students for a 21st-century global world. With its dual language immersion program, Paxson recognizes that by educating bilingual speakers schools can open doors to future opportunities for students, both abroad and at home. According to the U.S. Census Bureau,

in 2011 there were more than 37 million Spanish speakers living in the U.S., a 233 percent increase since 1980. And the upward trend is predicted to continue. Paxson spent the 2012-13 school year preparing for the dual language immersion program, which it planned to launch in the fall of 2013 with 40 students. Participating students would divide their school time, 50/50, learning Spanish literacy and mathematics in a Spanish-speaking classroom and English language arts and literacy in an English-speaking classroom.

While starting such a program comes with challenges, Paxson Spanish teacher Ted Muhs believes the benefits are well worth the effort. Noting the importance of learning at least two languages, Muhs said: "Our global marketplace demands that, increasingly, adults do business and form relationships with diverse groups at home and abroad."

"The fact that the program has been overwhelmingly supported by the Paxson community tells me that we realize the importance of learning a second language and the vital role it plays in providing a 21st-century education."

### SENTINEL DESIGN LAB

It's hard to know what careers are in our futures, and the projected possibilities (3D body-part printer? Augmented reality architect?) seem to fall from the pages of science fiction. Whatever the future holds, new careers are certain to be immersed in technology, and employees will need the skills to manage it. The Sentinel Design Lab, opened in the fall of 2012, provides students with hands-on training in marketable technologies. A student-run design business that produces value-priced fliers, large posters, business cards and promotional videos for local businesses and nonprofits, the Design Lab lives by the motto, "Pushing boundaries, creating excellence." Through the lab, students learn effective communication and collaboration skills, and can become certified in Adobe products. The lab's students and advisor, business teacher Cindy Schultz, are continually seeking ways to expand, and MCPS' recent adoption of Google Apps for Education has bolstered growth opportunities. Using Google+ and Google Hangouts, the Design Lab can expand its business offerings to clients located outside Missoula. Eventually, lab students will "reach out across cities, states and, some day, maybe countries," Schultz said. "These highly skilled students are dedicated to their fields. This program is a unique example of 21st-century education at its best, an environment where students work with instructors to build their own educations and become productive members of their community."

## INCREASE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT *Continued*

### NOURISHING CREATIVITY

MCPS offers exceptional fine arts opportunities, including in music, theatre and visual arts. In 2013, Meadow Hill art teacher Vicki Wallace was celebrated in the Missoulian for teaching innovative art techniques, and inspiring creativity and community in her classroom. At the high school level, Dustin Hoon of Big Sky High School shares these ideals. Committed to exhibiting student art, during 2012-13 Hoon coordinated student shows at the Missoula Art Museum, University of Montana's University Center, Southgate Mall and Big Sky. Hellgate band director Leon Slater promotes musical excellence and inspires imagination in his students – efforts awarded in March of 2013 at the Chicago International Music Festival. One of five high school bands chosen from hundreds to perform at Chicago Symphony Hall, the Hellgate High wind ensemble earned the festival's top gold award.

Creativity is celebrated outside of the fine arts, too. In Lorilee Evans-Lynn's creative writing classes at Big Sky, students write fiction and poetry, take photographs, and learn solid editorial skills with the publication of two distinguished literary journals. Aerie Big Sky publishes the best art, photography and creative writing of Big Sky students, while Aerie International publishes the work of students internationally. Since 2008, both publications have earned the Highest Award from the National Council of Teachers of English, ranking them in the top 35 high school literary arts magazines in the nation. Big Sky is the only school with two winning magazines. In the words of German exchange student Katha Austilat, "Aerie has helped me to find synonyms, to believe in metaphors, and to understand that a fishing trip can be poetry if we find the right words."



## GOAL: TRANSFORM LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

### MCPS FACILITIES STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

During the 2012-13 school year, MCPS dug into the lengthy and important job of long-range planning, with the ultimate goal of developing a facilities strategic plan for the next 15 years. In the end, the facilities upgrade will result in updates to the following areas: technology infrastructure, safety and security, and learning spaces that meet the demands of the 21st Century Model of Education. Building on the planning period from the previous year, in 2012-13 MCPS collected data, formed a 30-person steering committee composed of school and community representatives, and began collaborations with local engineering and architecture firm CTA to help manage the project. The steering committee conducted site tours around the district to assess facility needs in the areas of technology, safety and security, facility renovation and design, deferred maintenance, energy conservation, and meeting expanding enrollment. Nick Salmon of CTA affirmed the need for a facilities upgrade. "The average age of our buildings is 59 years old," he said. "They are in need of major improvements to address deferred maintenance, accessibility, safety, security, etc. These improvements will help meet the needs of 21st-century teaching and learning."

### COWS IN SCHOOL

During the 2012-13 school year, new COWs made their way into MCPS high schools. A Computers On Wheels cart holds 10-30 laptops or tablets. In 2012, Sentinel got a 10-computer COW, as did Big Sky's Health Science Academy. COWs are also roaming at Hellgate High; in Big Sky's English, math and science departments; and at Willard Alternative, which received its second COW during the 2012-13 school year. As they hoof it into more schools, COWs will become a vital part in MCPS' shift toward flexible learning environments and an increased focus on technology.

"Careers in the future will require computer competency," said Hatton Littman, director of technology and communication at MCPS. "In addition, our curriculum standards require computer literacy in students. The exciting part is that students get to show their knowledge in content areas in a variety of forms, including writing essays, making films and writing code to program a robot." By the 2014-15 school year, MCPS plans to purchase a COW for every elementary and middle school in the district.



## GOAL: SUPPORT INNOVATORS

### PROMOTING GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

During the 2012-13 school year Hellgate High School's Kalyn Campbell completed her senior year in Morocco, after she was awarded an all-expenses-paid scholarship from the U.S. Department of State. An Arabic student since her freshman year, Campbell was excited to improve her language skills and immerse herself in an entirely new culture. As she told the Missoulian after arriving overseas, "My Arabic studies have been incredible. I had no idea that learning a language could be this engaging and stimulating, and because of this my language has really progressed. I feel very comfortable speaking the language, and a majority of people here are surprised to learn that I am from America and not Moroccan!" Campbell was one of 625 American students chosen for the State Department's National Security Language Initiative for Youth, which sent students around the world, including to China, India, Korea, Persia, Russia and Turkey. According to statistics from the Council on Standards for International Educational Travel, in 2012-13 only 20 students from Montana and 1,165 from the U.S. studied abroad, numbers far lower than other countries'. In comparison, the U.S. hosted 29,698 foreign exchange students, 257 in Montana, that school year. The State Department's program is part of a larger movement to promote global leadership in U.S. citizens. MCPS is excited to be part of this initiative.

### YOUTH LEADERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

MCPS is dedicated to creating capable leaders and encouraging them to take charge. Taking charge is exactly what Big Sky High School's Sierra Lenox did, after Debi Lombardi of Forward Montana shared an internship opportunity with her history class in 2012. The next thing Lenox knew, she was reaching out to upperclassmen to register them to vote. Although Lenox said she initially felt out of her comfort zone, she ultimately registered more than 40 voters. "In the end, the act of trying to convince students to advocate for themselves was really motivating for me," she said. Lenox then helped advocate for the 2012 Technology Levy (which passed) and she continued to intern with Forward Montana, something she hoped to continue after graduation. "The most positive part about being a youth leader is seeing results," she said. "Each person who is inspired to become more involved because of my work is encouragement for me. The results and positive feedback I have received is reinforcement that young people's work makes a difference."

### MAKING WRITING A PRIORITY

According to the ACT college entrance exam organization, reading and writing are the two most important skills needed for college success, and overwhelmingly, strong readers and writers experience greater career success and quality of life. Within this realm, storytelling holds its place. "After nourishment, shelter and companionship, stories are the thing we need most in the world," declared novelist Philip Pullman. Cold Springs Elementary School takes this sentiment to heart and in the process has helped students to develop accomplished reading and writing skills.

During the 2012-13 school year, kindergarten teacher Jon Fines conducted a writing workshop in his class, something he has done since joining Cold Springs in 2008. Working with retired teacher and district writing coach Barbara O'Keefe, Fines uses literature to teach students to write in a variety of genres and text structures. "Now, when students hear stories by different writers, they think 'I can write like that,'" Fines said. "We explore language and writing through rich text and literature. We learn about and write fiction and informational pieces. I'd say it's one of my students' favorite times of day, when they write and then share their work through the author's chair." The skills developed in Fines' kindergarten class are built upon as students progress through each year of elementary school, and as any teacher of reading and writing knows, strong writing in fiction and nonfiction are analogous – quality writing is quality writing. Fines agrees and pointed out that Cold Springs' writing workshop helps teachers and students to incorporate Common Core curriculum requirements that emphasize nonfiction reading and writing.

### i3 SUMMER PROGRAM

MCPS concluded the 2012-13 school year with inspiration, imagination and innovation. In the summer of 2013, 30 high school students engaged in hands-on, collaborative problem-solving and solution seeking through the i3 Missoula program. Chosen from 150 applicants, these 30 students and three teachers spent four weeks on the University of Montana campus developing projects that tackled identified needs in the community.

Working in teams, the students came up with the following solution-based projects: an eco-friendly low-head water turbine that uses the river's current to produce electricity, a model of a living roof that can go atop MCPS and city

*Continued on page 6*

## SUPPORT INNOVATORS *Continued*

government buildings to increase energy efficiency, a solar-powered trailhead vending machine with nonconsumable outdoor safety items, a pothole filler that uses recycled glass, a working model of a biogas digester, and a teen job-search website that connects teens with Missoulians in need of help. To conclude the program, students presented their projects to the Missoula City Council.

## GOAL: PERSONALIZE PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

### SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAMS

In May of 2011, Montana adopted the Common Core State Standards, developed by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers. With full implementation and integration of the companion Smarter Balanced Assessment due by 2014-2015, the curriculum standards required MCPS to act quickly. To initiate implementation, MCPS Curriculum Coordinator Alanna Vaneps organized a team of instructional coaches to research Common Core expectations, best practice strategies and professional development protocols. By the 2012-13 school year, MCPS had created leadership teams – composed of administrators and teachers from a variety of disciplines, including special education – that would work with the coaches and train staff in the new standards. The teams met four times during the school year to build upon their knowledge and prepare staff for phases of implementation. “MCPS was one of the first districts in Montana to implement the standards,” Vaneps said. “The district was a pioneer in the state in the creation of professional development to prepare for the shift and to specifically address 21st-century learning.”

### PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

MCPS offers ongoing training in Professional Learning Communities to ensure best teaching practices and to improve teacher morale. Providing teachers a collaborative environment to consider the most effective ways to instruct their students, PLCs ask teachers to brainstorm the following: 1) What do we want students to know and learn? 2) How will we know when they learned it? 3) What will we do when they don't? 4) What will we do when they already know it?

By focusing on results, the process benefits students, teachers, administrators, parents, and the district as a whole.

Participating Big Sky teacher Cameron Johnson judged it a big success. As evidence, he quoted a student who at the end of the program said, “Now I have to go back to regular school.” Johnson stressed that “regular school” should include real-world problem-solving activities. And he noted that flexible schedules and spending more time in the community would allow this. “The best learning occurs when students are engaged and looking at things with a critical eye,” he said. “And it did this.”

“When instruction is modified based on student needs and lessons are developed for students to demonstrate understanding and the ability to apply skills, learning increases exponentially,” said MCPS Curriculum Coordinator Alanna Vaneps. She added that in addition to ensuring student learning, the goals of PLCs include community involvement, professional development opportunities, and effective learning environments and evaluation processes. “When teachers work together and grow as individuals, it supports positive attitudes,” Vaneps said. “When the focus is on results and not on problems, it removes barriers for students, teachers, administrators and families.”

### IB, LANGUAGE IMMERSION AND PROJECT LEAD THE WAY

In 2012-13, monumental grant funding from the Washington Foundation and the Heman Foundation provided MCPS with unparalleled professional development opportunities. The \$1.6 million Washington Foundation grant created a partnership between MCPS and the University of Montana called SHAPE P20 (Schools and Higher Education Advancing Public Education Across the P-20 Spectrum). The funding would be allocated for K-12 professional development that supports full implementation of the International Baccalaureate Programme; skill-based academies; language immersion for elementary and middle school students; and enhanced STEM – for science, technology, engineering and mathematics studies – including support of Project Lead the Way, the nation's leading provider of STEM programs.

Calling the opportunity “historic,” UM President Royce Engstrom told the Missoulian, “Rarely does a university enjoy the kind of partnership that we do with the K-12 public education system ... This award from the Washington Foundation really will propel us, I think, to a national visibility for our high level of collaboration in the development of education.”



## GOAL: COLLABORATE TO MAKE DECISIONS

### COLLABORATING FOR IB

In 2012-13, Big Sky High School and Lewis and Clark Elementary School completed feasibility studies to determine whether the International Baccalaureate curriculum program was a good fit for their schools. Deciding it was, both schools continued the process, which will include an authorization visit from IB in the fall of 2014 and, if accepted, launching the program for the 2015-16 school year. The IB program – known for providing engaging, quality education – would undoubtedly enhance teaching and learning at both schools.

Perhaps more noteworthy about the schools' pursuit of IB, however, was the collaborative process that got them there. Before either school pursued the feasibility study, administrators ensured staff was on board. According to Lewis and Clark fifth grade teacher Susan Anderson (who became principal in 2013), "The feasibility study was smooth, organized and produced frank, thoughtful educational discussions among all teachers. The collaboration has steadily increased to the point that collaboration is now the way we do business at Lewis and Clark."

Big Sky Principal Trevor Laboski had a similar experience. "People like to be in charge of their own destiny. They like to have a voice. The simple act of collaborating made people better at doing it. It was a smooth process." Both Anderson and Laboski believe the implementation of IB will further boost staff collaboration at their schools. "It's going to unite – not just the student body, but the staff too – in a way that probably nothing else has before," Laboski said. "The teachers have to collaborate, the students have to collaborate, the subjects intertwine. IB is going to raise the performance level of the whole school."

## GOAL: ENHANCE COMMUNICATIONS

### SchoolWires PLATFORM

By implementing the SchoolWires platform in 2012-13, MCPS greatly augmented the district's technological capabilities. MCPS chose SchoolWires, a company that focuses exclusively on K-12 Web-based communications systems, after the district's servers could not keep up with all its sites. With simplified website creation and management systems – and features like blogging, video and social media connection – SchoolWires helps teachers, administrators, departments, school teams, and affiliated clubs and organizations enhance their online presence. Other features include an online printing request function for teachers and online registration services for students and volunteers. The system also allows for the quick distribution of important information such as school closures and weather delays. Forthcoming is a "My View" product, which will let parents quickly view relevant information – including homework, grades and lunch account balances – on their mobile devices, without needing to scroll the entire mobile site.

Fully augmenting the 21st Century Model of Education, SchoolWires streamlines communication between administrators, teachers, parents, students and other community members. Tracy Long, a specialist with the Superintendent's Office, pointed out that the platform supports her efforts to go paperless with the different PTAs in the district. With SchoolWires, data is easily uploaded onto spreadsheets, making it easier for PTAs to build directories, populate volunteer lists, and fulfill their other functions, paper-free.

*Continued on page 14*



*Scenes from i3 2013.*

## SOME DISTRICT SNAPSHOTS

### DISTRICT SNAPSHOTS

In 2012-13, MCPS operated nine elementary schools, three middle schools, four high schools, and an alternative high school program at Willard School. These schools served approximately 8,632 students, an increase of nearly 200 from the previous school year. By 2016-17, MCPS projects total K-12 enrollment at 8,882. Additional children attended the district's preschool program at Jefferson School and hundreds of adults took adult basic education, trade and technical, and special interest classes through The Lifelong Learning Center at the Emma Dickinson Building.

### ENROLLMENT

	2010	2011	2012	2013
--	------	------	------	------

#### ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

<b>Chief Charlo</b>	443	440	422	417
<b>Cold Springs</b>	472	475	463	472
<b>Franklin</b>	264	267	277	279
<b>Hawthorne</b>	317	322	326	350
<b>Lewis and Clark</b>	467	466	491	476
<b>Lowell</b>	245	276	285	295
<b>Paxson</b>	337	338	340	383
<b>Rattlesnake</b>	390	393	437	431
<b>Russell</b>	313	310	337	364

#### MIDDLE SCHOOLS

<b>C.S. Porter</b>	408	460	468	468
<b>Meadow Hill</b>	492	426	455	490
<b>Washington</b>	627	621	572	569

#### HIGH SCHOOLS

<b>Big Sky</b>	1031	1033	1047	695*
<b>Hellgate</b>	1229	1239	1252	1187
<b>Seeley-Swan</b>	101	102	113	112
<b>Sentinel</b>	1187	1191	1181	1108
<b>District (K-12)</b>	8,323	8,359	8,466	8366

### % FREE & REDUCED MEALS

	2010	2011	2012	2013
<b>Elementaries</b>	48.2	49.3	49.1	49.0
<b>Middle Schools</b>	40.9	42.7	41.5	43.1
<b>High Schools</b>	31.3	33.4	33.7	32.7

*\*Includes 60 Willard students.  
Data taken in February of each year.*

### ATTENDANCE

MCPS daily student attendance for the 2012-2013 year was 90.79 percent.



## SOME DISTRICT SNAPSHOTS

### TITLE 1 SERVICES

In December 2013 the Big Sky High School Family Resource Center held a holiday drive, collecting meals, clothing and holiday gifts for the school's families in need. Family Resource Centers represent one of many ways Title I provides essential resources to schools. Serving hundreds of MCPS students in 2012-13, Title I allocates federal funding to schools and districts with high ratios or high numbers of students from low-income families. The funding helps ensure that all students receive opportunities to achieve academically. Each school receiving Title I funding establishes programs and services that best serve its students. Schools review academic data annually to assess the needs of students and adjust programs and services as necessary. In 2012-13, Title I services were provided at Big Sky and Hellgate high schools, and at C.S. Porter, Hawthorne, Russell, Franklin, and Lowell elementary schools.

### 2012-2013 HIGHLIGHTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- Graduation Matters Missoula celebrated its second annual freshman rally on Thursday, October 11, 2012. More than 920 MCPS freshmen attended the event, which was held at the Washington-Grizzly Stadium on the University of Montana campus. Master of ceremonies Missoula Mayor John Engen was joined by keynote speaker Larry Simkins, president and CEO of the Washington Companies, with additional speakers MCPS Superintendent Alex Apostle, UM President Royce Engstrom and UM geosciences researcher Rebecca Bendick. The young high schoolers also enjoyed a musical performance and videos on the stadium's giant screen.
- GMM is a communitywide effort and includes four main committees: parents and family, schools and staff, community and business, and students. In 2012-13 these committees focused their efforts on improving student attendance, developing more programs to support early childhood development, enhancing student wellness programs, and continuing to build more partnerships with local businesses and community members.
- MCPS shared GMM's goals at a Graduation Matters open house on November 30, 2012. The event, which was reported on KPAX and in the Missoulian, underscored MCPS' commitment to achieving a 100 percent graduation rate.
- Big Sky and Sentinel high schools had the lowest dropout rates of all Montana AA high schools during the 2011-12 school year, according to data from Montana Office of Public Instruction. Released in January of 2013, the statistics support MCPS' belief that graduation for all can be a reality.
- Graduation Matters Missoula was awarded a \$5,000 grant from the Graduation Matters Montana Student Assistance Foundation College Readiness Fund. The grant money will be used to help students and families better navigate the Federal Application For Student Aid process for college financial aid, and to provide dual enrollment scholarships for high school students taking classes for college credit.
- In April of 2013 MCPS launched the online Applied Learning Portal, which will allow local professionals to register to provide work-based learning experiences to students, including job shadows, internships and senior-project mentorship opportunities. By engaging in "real world" learning, high school students obtain an authentic glimpse on why graduation matters.





## ANNUAL STATE ASSESSMENTS

### AP & DUAL CREDIT AT SENTINEL

In 2012-13, Sentinel High School offered 19 courses that allowed students to earn university credit. These included seven dual-credit courses, offered through a partnership with the University of Montana and Missoula College, and 12 Advanced Placement classes. Students taking dual-credit courses register at UM or Missoula College, but take courses at Sentinel. Students can earn up to 17 college credits while in high school, paying just \$50 a credit. Students can also gain college credits for taking Advanced Placement courses. This year, Sentinel had 178 AP students who took 301 AP exams. Of these, more than 67 percent earned a passing score of 3, 4 or 5, higher than the national average of 58.9 percent that year. Most U.S. colleges and universities offer college credit or advanced placement for a score of 3 or above on AP exams. Parents and students should check with individual colleges to learn about their AP credit policies.

### MISSOULA COUNTY SCHOOLS TEST HIGH STATEWIDE, NATIONALLY

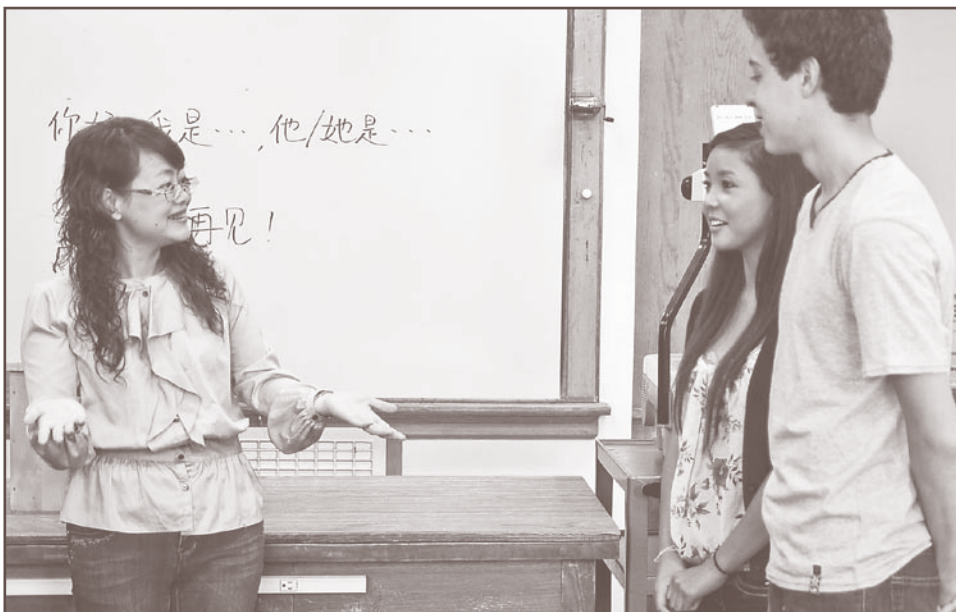
More than 4,000 MCPS students take Montana's annual assessment tests every March. Required by the federal No Child Left Behind Act, students' scores on these tests determine which schools and districts across Montana achieve Adequate Yearly Progress. The Montana Office of Public Instruction publishes AYP and assessment test data in the Montana NCLB Report Card, available online at [www.opi.mt.gov](http://www.opi.mt.gov).

The assessments measure students' skills and knowledge in reading, mathematics and science. In March 2013, overall, MCPS students performed better on these tests than did students as a whole across the state and the nation.

Elementary and middle school students are tested during grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8. In reading, 89 percent of these students scored at proficient or advanced, higher than the state average of 84 percent. Scores for math and science held steady from 2012. In math students scored 75 percent at or above proficiency, and in science they scored 74 percent proficient or advanced (compared with 67 percent statewide for both math and science).

High school students are tested in 10th grade only. The percentage of these students who scored proficient or advanced in reading was 87 percent, a 3 percent jump from 2012 and 5 percent higher than the state average. In math, 62 percent scored proficient or advanced, compared with 56 percent statewide. In science, 50 percent were proficient or above, compared with the state average of 45 percent.

Schools are required to meet 41 benchmarks on the Montana assessment tests to meet AYP under the federal NCLB Act. A school's AYP is also calculated on test participation, academic achievement, graduation rate and other statistics. In 2013, under these strict federal guidelines, Seeley Swan High School made AYP for the third year in a row.



### RELATIONSHIPS MATTER

“Graduating from high school feels like the first of many processes in life that include showing up, being on time, completing work, and learning to try and further yourself,” said Scott Mathews, coordinator of The Flagship Program at Big Sky High School. “I think that earning a high school diploma teaches that process to young people, a process they’ll repeat in their lives if they’re successful.”

Through The Flagship Program, Mathews works with teens on activities that matter a great deal to them. These include filmmaking, photography, music recording, Special Olympics soccer camp and Gladiators (a foam-weapon jousting group). Mathews also coordinates Respect Club, in which students volunteer in the community. Respect Club students also pitch in during Diversity Week, an annual school event that shows films from the Big Sky Documentary Film Festival and celebrates people who have made contributions to peace, acceptance of differences, and respectful communities.

More important than these activities, however, are the relationships Mathews forms with teens, including those who need a great deal of support.

Year after year, he provides a key link between struggling students and graduation. By getting to know students while they’re freshmen and maintaining those relationships throughout their high school years, he can make an impact when students are in trouble. Mathews attributes this to the flexibility his job provides – he is to be wherever he’s needed to assist. It also helps that he is patient, relates well to teens, and knows when to back off and when to push.

In 2012-13, Mathews worked with a student who possibly presented him with his greatest challenge to date. The student was struggling in school, at home, and in all areas in his life. His teachers Pam Courson, Ron Stirling, Bethany Shepard and LanAnn Bryant turned to Mathews. “We all recognized that this student was in danger of not graduating and he had no support system at home,” Mathews said. Working with the student’s case manager, the teachers and Mathews put together a graduation action plan. They also pitched in to buy the student the clothes he needed to dress up for prom, his senior project presentation and graduation. To make sure he got to school each day, Mathews picked him up in the morning and drove him home each afternoon.

But graduation was not going to happen without a lot of dedication from the student, who began to labor through missing homework and exams. “We didn’t cut him any slack,” Mathews said. “He had missed a lot of school, had a lot of makeup work to do, and we spent many extra hours after school to complete that work. We finished at 5:30 the night before the list of graduating seniors was going out.” Of his accomplishments, the student told Mathews that “he was proud that he did it, proud that he graduated, and that it was the hardest he’d ever worked in his life.” Mathews was on the same page. “That’s what I was most proud of for him, how hard he worked to make all these things happen.”

*Continued on page 15*



## PARENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

## PARENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

MCPS is fortunate to enjoy tremendous support from its community members, who take great pride in their public schools. This pride is apparent in the outpouring of volunteer time and materials that MCPS receives each year from parents, local businesses and other community members. This assistance is vital for MCPS to reach its educational goals.

More than 1,211 volunteers registered with MCPS during the 2012-13 school year. Among these were members of Missoula Aging Services, who donated more than 21,000 hours to MCPS in 2012-13. The group volunteered in a variety of capacities – assisting in libraries, helping special needs students with sewing projects, mentoring students. They also judged numerous events, including senior projects, science fairs, and speech and debate. While all volunteer hours by this group have benefitted MCPS, Colleen Baldwin, Senior Corps program manager, highlighted two that made particular differences in students' lives: the RSVP Tutors Program and the Foster Grandparent Program. "Beyond the academic improvements, the children benefit from an additional caring adult in their lives," Baldwin said. "The Foster Grandparents often attend plays and performances when family can't make it. They encourage, they care and they comfort."

Sometimes the volunteer's influence is subtle; sometimes it's huge. Paxson Elementary Principal Kelly Chumrau cited one "adopted" third grader as but one example. "He was not reading as successfully as his peers. (Foster Grandparent) Jonna Rhein never gave up on him, and by the end of the year he was reading at grade level." Upon advancing to fourth and fifth grades, Rhein kept up with him. "He sought her out when he struggled with assignments, but in the end he could be successful because he was now a reader . . . We have heard that this (now) middle school student is now quite successful and is a member of the student council!"

Of her volunteer time, Rhein said, "When you stop that working life, you need something to keep yourself busy in a fun way. I don't ever have to go to a meeting. But I have a little person waiting for me in the hall to read an adventure."

In addition to Missoula Aging Services, MCPS partners with many community organizations that provide volunteer services to students. These include Flagship Foundation, Big Brothers Big Sisters, YWCA, Writing Coaches of Missoula, Missoula Family YMCA, Garden City Harvest, Montana Auto Technologies, Missoula Parks and Recreation, Missoula Organization of Realtors, Missoula Writing Collaborative and numerous organizations affiliated with the University of Montana. And, and a great number more businesses, organizations and individuals who go unnamed – countless parents of students, college students, businesspeople and other community members.

"I wish more adults could work with these students," said Robert Lee of the Missoula Writing Collaborative. "I am an old cynic and working with today's youth gives me hope for the future."

On behalf of Missoula County Public Schools, thank you to all of our volunteers who work to make our district better. The time you give to our students, teachers and schools makes a difference to us all.



*Writing Workshop's Robert Lee gains hope from his work with high school writers, work that included a student poetry reading at Dana Gallery.*



## AG CENTER

## AG CENTER

Imagine a classroom full of teenagers who are engaged, enthusiastic and independently solving complex tasks that most adults would struggle with. This is the scene at the MCPS Agricultural Education Center. Except the “classroom” is a barn, a farm and the wider community. For students at the Ag Center, hands-on learning is more than a teaching tool; it’s about getting the job done.

During the 2012-13 school year, Ag Ed students grew and harvested alfalfa; built a shed for Target Range School; volunteered at youth homes and community events; and birthed pigs, lambs, goats and steers. The previous year, the students performed their first embryo transplant on a cow.

“If you look at our walls, you’ll see that there is a legacy of greatness here that begins with students,” said Big Sky junior Neela Andres.

Administered by Big Sky High School, the Ag Ed program is open to all MCPS high school students, and includes a very active chapter of Future Farmers of America. With more than 200 registered members, Missoula FFA reaped big awards in 2012-13. These included five wins at the Montana FFA Competition – in Vet Science, Parliamentary Procedures, Forestry, Livestock and Extemporaneous Speaking – which sent a record-number of Missoula students to the National FFA Competition.

Missoula FFA students birthed a record number of pigs this year – 93 – from which they later harvested more than 25,000 pounds of pork. Some of the meat was donated to the Poverello Center and the rest was sold at the Missoula County Fair and to community members. Sales help FFA students contribute to their college educations. Beginning with the birthing, students raise their own animals at the Ag Center’s 100-acre farm and keep the proceeds from sales. Big Sky junior Kasey Sweeney made \$4,000 from her steer, which will contribute to her future veterinary studies. Sweeney pointed out that the experience itself also contributed. “Being able to raise animals on your own provides invaluable hands-on experience in the vet field.”

“FFA has given me a good career path and a jump-start on what I want to do,” added Abby Bardwick, another Big Sky junior who plans to go to veterinary school.

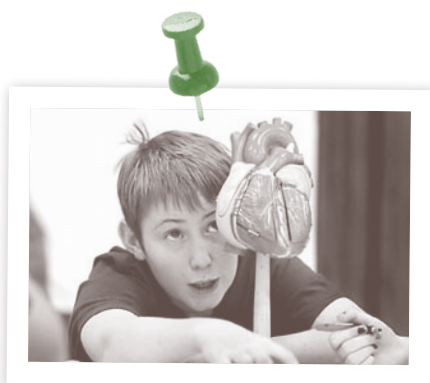
And Big Sky sophomore Emily Standley – who plans to pursue a career in hospitality management – pointed out that FFA prepares students in all fields, not just agricultural ones. Neela Andres agreed: “As I figure out what to do as a college freshman, I’m conflicted because I’ve been successful in so many aspects of FFA. It’s a nice problem to have.”

Reflecting back on 2012-13, all four agreed on the year’s highlight: Mathalia Stroethoff. A student with Down’s syndrome, Stroethoff raised a goat, which earned her \$3,000 at the fair. “It was great,” Andres said. “One person would win the bid, donate it back to Mathalia, and someone else would bid. This went on for a while and, in the end, Mathalia made \$3,000. She donated it all to build houses in Guatemala. It was wonderful. Everyone was in tears.”



*Big Sky High Ag Center student Mathalia Stroethoff raised a goat and then sold it, using the proceeds to help build houses in Guatemala.*





*Health Science Academy.*



## ENHANCE COMMUNICATIONS *Continued from page 7*

### GOOGLE APPS FOR EDUCATION

During the 2012-13 school year, MCPS made plans to implement Google Apps for Education for the 2013-14 school year. The decision would provide student email accounts for all high school students and a safe system to access Google's full suite of application and collaboration tools. To address safety and educational issues, MCPS created the Google Apps Committee, made up of staff members from district schools. The implementation of GAFE aligns with MCPS curriculum, which requires that students learn computer competency and email-related best practices.

"With Google Apps for Education, we're enhancing communications and providing students education in a platform they'll use after graduation," said Hatton Littman, MCPS director of communication and technology.

According to 2012 statistics from the Babson Survey Research Group, the number of students learning online has surpassed 6.7 million, with 32 percent of college students taking at least one course online. High school students, including those from MCPS, are taking online courses, too. GAFE – particularly its student email component – will be extremely helpful to students taking online courses, noted Seeley Swan librarian and Google Apps Committee member Katrina Stout. Some teachers plan to use GAFE to create in-building online-formatted classes; in these instances, the teacher will supervise as students work online and submit assignments via Google Docs.

However teachers choose to incorporate GAFE in their classrooms, the format will bolster students' independent study skills and prepare them for an increasingly technological world.

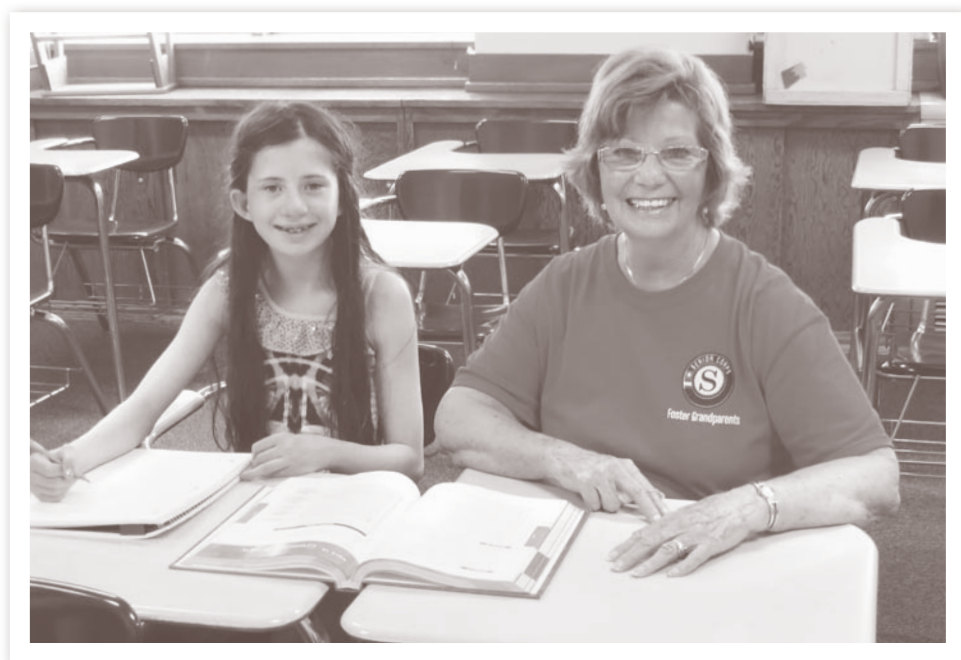


*Hellgate High students publish The Leader newspaper.*

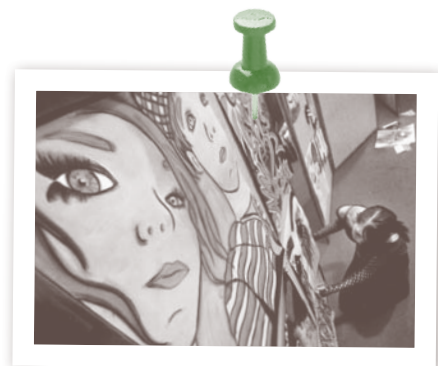
## RELATIONSHIPS MATTER Continued from page 11

The Flagship Program offers services in eight MCPS schools. Funded by United Way of Missoula County, Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation and other important partners, The Flagship Program provides afterschool enrichment programming and additional caring adults to students in need. A community-school partnership, The Flagship Program's mission is to enhance the social, academic, cultural and physical achievement of Missoula's young people by creating opportunities during nonschool hours that help them succeed in school and grow to become healthy and productive adults.

---



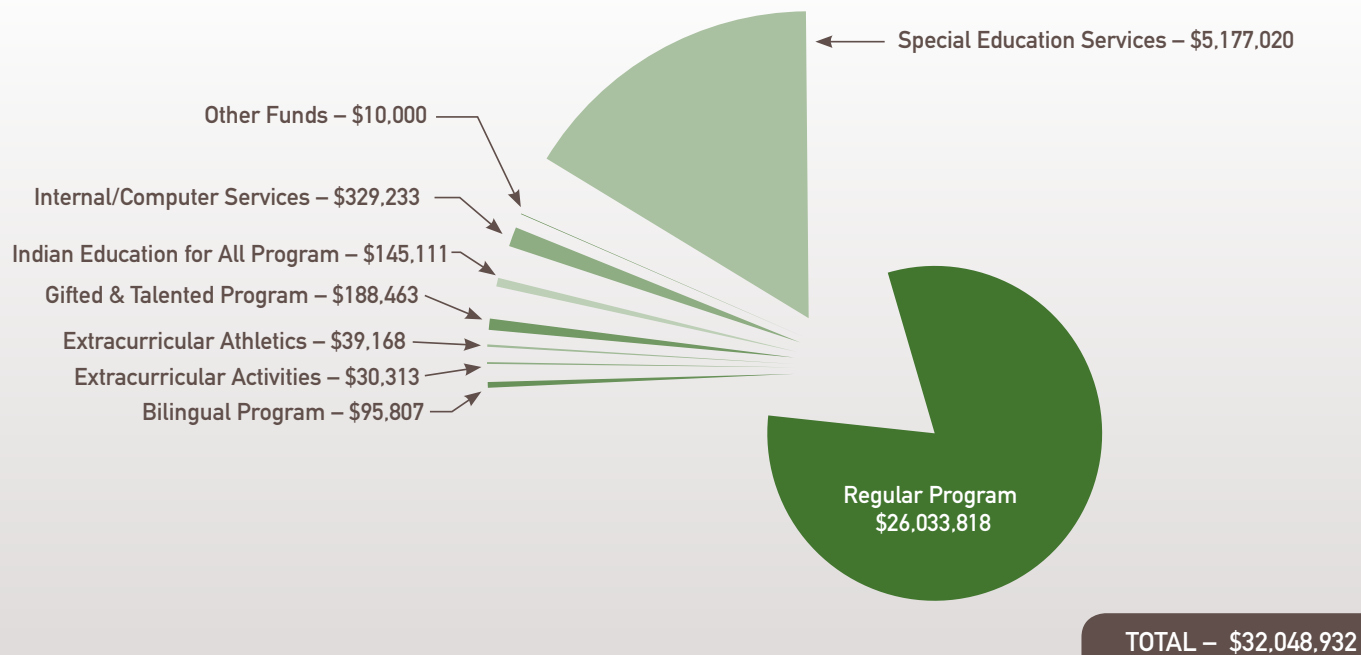
*School-based city police officers promote safety and security on campus, and connect with students on a daily basis.*



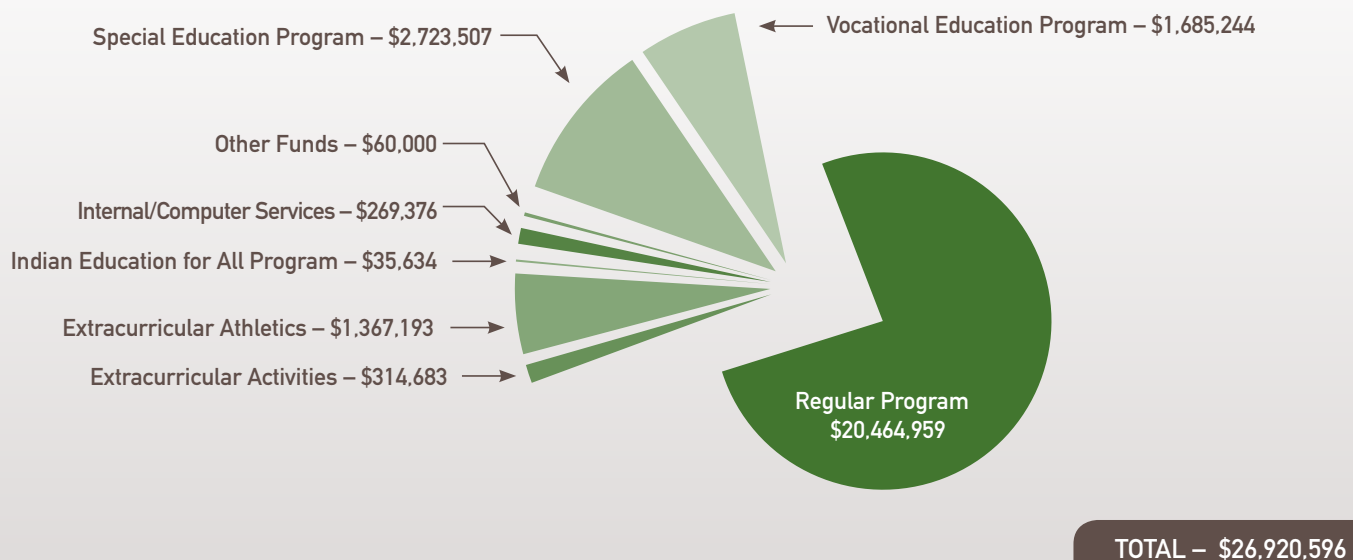
*First Friday at Willard Alternative High.*



## ELEMENTARY GENERAL FUND EXPENDITURES – BY PROGRAM



## HIGH SCHOOL GENERAL FUND EXPENDITURES – BY PROGRAM



## FINANCE

### SHAPE P20 GRANT

MCPS and the University of Montana were jointly awarded a three-year grant from the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation for an original amount of \$1,555,600. This award fosters MCPS-UM collaboration with the goal of transforming classrooms, schools and student experiences from preschool to doctoral (“Shape P-20”). This work potentially could help shape the future of public education in the United States.

## GENERAL FUND

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 a Montana school district, including employee salaries and benefits, utilities, instructional programs, supplies, student activities and athletics, and textbooks. The general fund does not cover the cost of transportation to and from school, the adult education program, most technology equipment, and most facility repairs.

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; the budget above Base, up to Maximum, is funded almost exclusively by local taxpayers via voted levies. MCPS has been adopting budgets at Maximum thanks to the passage of mill levies by our community.

The calculation of the Base and Maximum budgets depend primarily upon the district’s enrollment, and inflationary increases to the school funding components approved by the state Legislature. Because such a large portion of the overall budget is determined by enrollment, declining student numbers means little to no budgetary increase even with taxpayer levies. When this is an issue for a given year, the Board of Trustees can adopt the prior year’s Maximum budget to ensure that the general fund stays steady and doesn’t have a big dip due to declining enrollment.

For fiscal year 2013, the Legislature’s revised inflationary increase of 2.43 percent and a student (ANB) increase of 96 resulted in an elementary general fund increase of \$959,249. The general fund in the high school district, on the other hand, experienced no appreciable gain in funding (\$5,541) given a minimal increase in student enrollment (ANB) and the fact that the high school general fund budget was already over Maximum Budget by \$1,081,314. With the budgetary increases, the MCPS Board of Trustees adopted general fund budgets for fiscal year 2013 of \$32,048,952 (Maximum Budget) in the elementary district, and \$26,920,595 (\$117,281 over Maximum) in the high school district.

### BOND RE-FUNDING

Given interest rates in the fall of 2012, the Trustees authorized district administration to refinance approximately \$5,450,000 in outstanding bonds in order to benefit from lower interest rates and reduce the overall cost to taxpayers. Called “refunding” of bonds, it is similar to refinancing a home mortgage at a lower interest rate. The bond sale took place at the end of January at rates that produced an actual gross savings of \$596,702 over the remaining life of the bonds, and a present value savings of \$572,959. The approximate annual savings to taxpayers will be \$79,560 per year.





## THE TARGET:

Every student will start – and finish – high school with a diploma in hand.

That's the goal of Graduation Matters Missoula. MCPS continues to stay focused on this single aspiration by working with the community to create solutions to help at-risk students remain in school and earn their diplomas. The school-community partnership, launched in 2010, now serves as a model across the state. Inspired by the success of Missoula's initiative, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Denise Juneau is helping communities of all sizes to focus on increasing the number of graduates. Students, parents, teachers and community members are coming together to address this very important state and national issue.

## THE CURRICULA REVIEW PROCESS

MCPS is currently aligning its K-12 curriculum content to the Common Core State Standards, a multiple-year process. Locally, curricula review committees are charged with the preparations necessary to adhere to the new standards. Curricula review committees are formed in each content area; individually, committees engage in a yearlong review and alignment of materials before implementation can occur.

In the fall of 2012, implementation of the English Language Arts Standards occurred, following a review year in 2011-12. Math completed its review year in 2012-13, with implementation planned for fall of 2013. Other content areas will follow, until the district is fully aligned with the Common Core Standards. The review process is scheduled as follows: Social Studies/World Languages, 2013-14; Science/Health Enhancement, 2014-15; CTE/Fine Arts, 2015-16; Admin/Counselors/Librarians, 2016-17.

“Adoption of the Common Core Standards will help students to improve their critical-thinking skills and better prepare for college and careers,” noted MCPS Curriculum Coordinator Alanna Vaneps. “Additionally, the standards are internationally benchmarked. This will improve the United States’ ranking in the world and better prepare our students to compete both locally and globally.”

## THE GOAL:

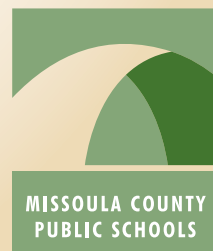
Missoula County Public Schools will achieve a 100 percent graduation rate for all its students. At the same time, the district will improve student attendance, engage parents and community, and enhance student wellness.

In January of 2013, Montana Office of Public Instruction announced that for the 2011-12 school year Big Sky and Sentinel had the lowest dropout rates and highest completion rates among all Montana AA high schools. Big Sky's graduation rate was 92.3 percent and Sentinel's was 88.3 percent. With Graduation Matters Missoula, MCPS remains dedicated to achieving a 100 percent graduation rate. The Graduation Matters Missoula initiative inspired the launch of Graduation Matters Montana, which received a \$50,000 grant from the Student Assistance Foundation in November of 2012. The award was divided among 10 Montana school districts, including MCPS, who each received a \$5,000 check to help students and families better navigate the Federal Application For Student Aid process that helps determine financial aid for college studies. In MCPS, the money will also provide dual-enrollment scholarships for high school students taking classes for college credit. The funding helps MCPS act on its ambition to motivate students to not only graduate from high school, but to pursue postsecondary education too. Montana Superintendent of Public Instruction Denise Juneau presented the check. “It's a pretty special day when we receive a gift from the state of Montana,” said MCPS Superintendent Alex Apostle.

MISSOULA COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
215 S. 6th St. W. • Missoula, MT 59801  
(406) 728-2400, Ext. 1024



• [www.mcpsmt.org](http://www.mcpsmt.org)



Forward Thinking, High Achieving.