

Cooke City School District is and has been a member of Montana Small Schools Alliance for many years and actively participates in the Alliance. As such, Cooke City is applying the work we have done with MSSA in Curriculum, Professional Development, and New Teacher Mentoring to our Accreditation profile. The MSSA work that Cooke City uses is outlined below:

Curriculum

Montana Small Schools Alliance schools developed curriculum using a cooperatively developed model. Using a team approach, MSSA has a curriculum committee guided by a chairman who is an expert in the curricular field being implemented. The advisory/curriculum committee is made up of county superintendents, teachers, curricular specialists, and the MSSA Executive Director. Schools complete a needs survey and teachers are asked to volunteer for the committee work. Curriculum is reviewed by the committee and submitted for adoption to the MSSA Board and/or Executive Director for approval. All standards and curriculum is directly from OPI and developed for the rural/frontier schools with multigrade and multi-levels at the forefront.

MSSA and our member districts address IEFA in our curriculum work. Instructional materials, and resources are reviewed to include the distinct and unique cultural heritages and contemporary portrayal of American Indians. IEFA is embedded in our curriculum and in our professional development. Always keeping in mind the importance of this component in our schools and local communities.

Currently MSSA is working with Sonja Whitford as the committee head and a committee of member school teachers in the Mathematics Standards/Curriculum process. Implementation to begin in August 2026. Committee work and notes will be available when completed.

The MSSA Curriculum review schedule for the past four years is below:

2020- K-8 and 9-12 Science

2021- K-8 and 9-12 Social Studies and Health and PE

2022- K-8 and 9-12 CTE, Technology Integration and Computer Science

2023- Kindergarten Readiness completed and implemented

Current and future MSSA Curriculum work as per OPI schedule:

2024- Mathematics committee begins work, professional development, ELP begins work

2025- Mathematics committee work, English Language Arts and Literacy begins work, World Languages begins work, ELP implemented

2026- Mathematics implementation, English Language Arts and Literacy professional development and Implementation, World Languages Implementation

Educator Effectiveness and Professional Development

The Montana Small Schools Alliance provides statewide professional development to “Consortium” members four times annually. MSSA has a schedule of K-12 curriculum which is reviewed and aligned each year to state standards according to a schedule on file with the OPI. Regional professional development for member schools follows that schedule. Member surveys prioritize what type of training will take place each year. In addition, member schools participate in Standards library and counselor training programs each August.

2023-2024 School Year-

In 2023-2024, MSSA members focused on Indian Education for All Training: Lessons for classroom use, and Federal Programs assistance in September. In November MSSA members focused on Writing Across the Curriculum and Discovery Education lessons focusing on Science and Social Studies. In February MSSA focused on Educator and Student Wellness, Stress and Resiliency and Brain

Development, Trauma, and Balance Strategies and Tools. In April members were trained on Engagement Strategies and Aligning Unit and Lesson Plans to State Standards in art, writing and social studies. Additionally member schools participate in MAPS training, focusing on using and understanding Assessment Data.

2024-2025 School Year-

In 2024-2025, MSSA members focused in September on learning the tools necessary for OPI programs and reporting, including early learning plans, federal programs, accreditation and graduate plans. In November MSSA members were trained on mental health issues with QPR certification training and training on use of the classroom curriculum Character Strong. In February MSSA will focus on technology including cyber security for classrooms, schools and students, AI and its place and future in education. In April members will focus on Mathematics, training on OPI Standards being implemented in 2025, specifically their use in lesson planning with small schools and multi-grade classrooms. Additionally member schools participate in MAPS training, focusing on using and understanding Assessment Data. MSSA member schools also have the opportunity for book studies throughout the year focusing on improving their teaching skills through engagement strategies, sustaining their productivity and improving their planning.

A MSSA statewide planning team both reviews the training and the curriculum being reviewed each year. The review team consists of the MSSA Board, County Superintendents, and member teachers. The Executive Director reviews evaluations of each member from each conference during the year to assist in determining success and future planning. Montana Small Schools Alliance Conferences incorporate formative strategies for teachers to assess student achievement based on developed classroom lessons. MSSA conferences always try to deliver material, resources and lessons that are classroom ready for the unique demographics of member school districts. Each conference throughout the year focuses on the scheduled K-12 aligned core curriculum and is always based on “best practices” research and current pedagogy. Technology is integrated in all professional development. Each conference also includes a component addressing Indian Education for All- IEFA.

Mentoring and Induction

MSSA does not have a specified mentoring and induction program. But, when speaking with OPI they said that some of the things MSSA provides and in which Cooke City participates fit in this category, and they are listed below:

*OPI Bootcamp PD- helping new teachers/administrators understand the OPI programs and requirements.

*Monthly Newsletters- information shared with member schools on programs for mentorship and induction, as well as sharing information that new teachers/administrators would find informative and helpful in doing their jobs.

*Book Study Groups- professional development designed to improve teaching skills, strategies, and knowledge.