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School Administrators of Montana

BULLETIN

Visionary leaders united in providing, advocating, and creating education excellence for Montana students!

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Protecting Academic Freedom in a Climate of Censorship

by Erin Lipkind, MACSS President

At a recent school law conference held in Chico, everyone's favorite school attorney—at least when she's on YOUR side—forced me to pull my head out of the sand and address the elephant in the room: SB 99 and the new Human Sexuality Instruction policy my districts (as County Superintendent I work with three different school boards) have yet to adopt. I know I can't be the only one loathe to bring this up to my school boards—nobody ever wants to talk about sex ed at a board meeting. But in fact, the issue has been brewing for some time in one of my districts—a not so surprising place—the school library.

You might be wondering what SB 99 has to do with the school library. It turns out SB 99 sticks its fingers into every piece of planned instruction that involves anything related to human intimate relationships. The pesky definition of “human sexuality instruction”* includes teaching about *intimate relationships* and requires parents be given 48 hours notice of said instruction and the ability to opt out. This includes every day school activities such as:

- The classroom teacher tells students to select a book from the classroom library during DEAR time, and a child selects one which depicts a heterosexual relationship.
- Junior high students are studying Shakespeare through *Romeo and Juliet*.
- The school counselor facilitates a lunch group for students struggling with their parent's divorce.
- The school librarian shows video trailers about the books which have been nominated for the [Young Reader's Choice Award](#). (yes, that's what I did recently—see the book trailers [here](#))

[ClassLink](#)

Upcoming Conferences, Meetings, & Events

[Montana Principals Conference 2023:](#)

January 22-24,
Helena

[MCEC and MCASE Conference 2023:](#)

February 22-24,
Billings

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Providing parents the opportunity to opt out of sex ed isn't new and it isn't surprising. What is surprising (but really, shouldn't be) is the length this bill goes to in order to prevent educators from discussing any issues relate to gender and sexual orientation. Because that's what was intended—to prevent any mention of LGBTQIA+ stuff from reaching the ears of our precious charges. What it has in fact done is require notice for ALL instruction wh depicts ANY intimate human relationship.

Now, according to the aforementioned school attorney, this doesn't apply to the content of the school library or individual student's selections from said library (which, by the way, is protected by the First Amendment), but it does apply to the individual teacher's classroom library (which is not so protected). It applies to the video traile I showed, some of which summarize books with LGBTQIA+ relationships or heterosexual relationships. It does apply to the books I and every classroom teacher in the history of the modern education select to read aloud to students. And I guarantee you that the average classroom teacher HAS NO IDEA the scope of this bill and the no board policies being adopted. The onus is on school administration to make them aware.

You may be thinking—so what? No teacher in their right mind is going to touch LGBTQIA+ topics with a ten-foot pole and no parent is going to challenge all the great books we read in school which depict heterosexual intimate human relationships. But let's face it. Teachers will screw up, (as will school administrators) out of ignorance of law, love of their students, or bad judgement. Parents will get wind of this language and will start challenging everything—both benign instructional content out of principle to test the limits of this statute (which they should do), or because they genuinely believe they need to protect their children from certain content and weren't given required notice.

Censorship in our country is on the rise, and books and instructional materials are increasing challenged and ultimately banned and removed from schools and libraries. Censorship is dangerous—it silences opinions, diversity, political views, and violates our and our students' First Amendment right of constitutionally protected speech. The most common reasons for censorship are that the material is considered sexually explicit, the material contained offensive language, and the materials were unsuited to any age group. Not surprisingly, the group that most frequently challenges materials is parents. Challenges are usually based on the premise that the public, particularly children, must be protected from difficult ideas and information. Take a look at these [censorship infographics](#) put out by the American Library Association, particularly the reasons given for why a book should be removed.

I urge you, my fellow school leaders, to do everything in your power to protect academic freedom in your district. We all have a "Controversial Issues and Academic Freedom" school board policy. Become familiar with it and ensure your teachers and school board review it. Provide professional development for teachers which educates them on how to address controversial issues. Work with your school librarian to review your library book selection policy, as well as your policies and procedures on dealing with book challenges and removal of library books and instructional materials. Consider revising your procedures if you discover that they aren't up to snuff—take a look at Kalispell School District for an example of robust policies on selection and removal of library books and learning materials.

Finally, make sure your librarian knows they can count on your support and that they aren't alone in protecting students' right to read. Ask your librarian what selection criteria they use, what resources guide them in building the library collection. Ask them how you can help them be better prepared to face a book challenge. As school leaders, make it your business to support your librarians in their work to balance the library collection so that students have access to information and resources while also respecting community values. Be proactive instead of reactive.

**Here is the full text of that definition: "Human sexuality instruction" means teaching or otherwise providing information about human sexuality, including intimate relationships, human sexual anatomy, sexual*



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reproduction, sexually transmitted infections, sexual acts, sexual orientation, gender identity, abstinence, contraception, or reproductive rights and responsibilities.”

Citations and resources:

"About Banned & Challenged Books", American Library Association, December 10, 2012.
<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/bbooks/aboutbannedbooks> (Accessed November 25, 2022)

“The First Amendment in Schools”, National Coalition Against Censorship, August 9th, 2021.
<https://ncac.org/resource/first-amendment-in-schools> (Accessed November 25, 2022)

“The Students’ Right to Read”, National Council of Teachers of English, October 25, 2018.
<https://ncte.org/statement/righttoreadguideline/> (Accessed November 25, 2022)

“The Freedom to Read Statement", American Library Association, July 26, 2006.
<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/freedomreadstatement> (Accessed November 25, 2022)

Erin Lipkind
MACSS President

2023 Legislature: Get Involved in Our Collective Advocacy

by Dr. Rob Watson, SAM Executive Director

Collective advocacy has been defined as a process that brings people together with a common interest, in a supportive environment, so that the group can explore that interest, identify goals and seek resolution. (partnersinadvocacy.org, 2022) I believe this concept helps to define our SAM process. Our common interest is support for public education and the delegate assembly process helps us to define our goals. The legislature is one way that helps us to seek resolution for our common goals.

To that end, I would encourage any and all members to get involved in the SAM Legislative Network. We are seeking representation from all the affiliate groups and all regions of our state. We know that trust is built when your local legislator has a chance to hear from you directly. We will provide you with the background information so that you can make an informed connection with your legislator. Then, when we need to make a call to action, know you will be ready.

What: SAM LN23 = SAM Legislative Network, 2023

Who: Any SAM member who would like to be involved

How: Complete this interest form - [SAMLN 23 Registration Form](#)

Expectations: Participate in a weekly zoom call, which will provide you with the background information on the various legislative issues. Pass on the critical pieces to others in your region.

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Help us get the word out when we need a “call to action.” (Full description of responsibilities can be found [HERE](#).)

Remember that we are more effective when we work together and our voice is strongest when we speak as one.
Thanks for your consideration in participating in SAMLN 2023.

Rob

Conference Registration is Open!



2023 MONTANA PRINCIPALS CONFERENCE
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Jessica Minahan Jennifer Silva, NASSP Earl Franks, NAESP
Jessica Cabeen Bob Green Ronn Nozoe, NASSP
Cindy Cromwell
Shawna Heiser

REGISTER HERE!

Be sure to register now for the Montana Principals Conference 2023! The conference is scheduled for January 22-24 in Helena at the Delta Colonial. You will not want to miss the line-up of national speakers who will be presenting:

- **Jessica Minahan**
- **Jessica Cabeen**
- **Cindy Cromwell**
- **Shawna Heiser**

Shawna Heiser, Jennifer Silva (NASSP), and Bob Green are just a few of the additional speakers providing presentations. Several breakout sessions along with time for you to connect with your colleagues are also on the agenda.

Several breakout sessions along with time for you to connect with your colleagues are also on the agenda including:

- **Top Gun Themed Awards Night**
- **Cornhole Tournament**
- **Live Music - 10 Years Gone**

Follow this link for more information and to Register:

[Montana Principals Conference 2023 Information and Registration](#)



Please Complete the SAM Needs Assessment Survey

SAM Members: Please take a few minutes to complete the [2023 SAM Needs Assessment Survey](#). The purpose of the survey is to gather information about our members' needs for Services, Professional Development, and Advocacy (Goals of the SAM Strategic Plan). **Please complete the survey by January 6, 2023.** The time required to complete the survey is approximately 15 minutes. We appreciate your responses to the survey and your assistance in making SAM the best it can be for your leadership needs.

SAM Membership and Directory

The most up-to-date membership listing is on the SAM website! The SAM School Leadership Directory 2022-23 is a list of renewed SAM members as of 12-1-22. The Leadership Directory gives you access to the contact information for all SAM members. The SAM School Leadership Directory 2022-23 is open only to SAM members and can be found on the SAM website on the [Member Landing Page](#) (login is required).

Montana Youth Challenge Update

Administrators of Montana: SB197 and HB556 Montana Youth Challenge Academy hopes this short article increases understanding and knowledge of SB197 and HB556, Montana Youth Challenge, and the relation to school districts.

You Still Have Time: SAM Affiliate Awards are Open for Nomination!

The following SAM affiliate awards are open for nominations. Please consider nominating a deserving candidate and recognizing them for the great work they are doing in their schools and communities. Follow the links below for more information about each award and submit a nomination.

MAEMSP Awards (Deadline Friday January 13, 2023)

- [MAEMSP/NAESP National Distinguished Principal](#)
- [Adrian Langstaff Award](#)
- [NAESP Conference Incentive Award](#)
- [MAEMSP Aspiring Principal Scholarship Award](#)
- [MAEMSP Friends of Education Award](#)
- [MAEMSP Appreciation Award](#)

MASSP Awards (Deadline Friday, January 13, 2023)

- [MASSP Principal of the Year](#)
- [MASSP Conference Incentive Award](#)
- [MASSP Community Partner in Education Award](#)
- [MASSP Future Administrator Scholarship](#)

MCASE Awards: (Deadline Friday, January 13, 2023)

- [MCASE Outstanding Administrator of Special Education Award](#)
- [MCASE Special Education Teacher Award](#)

As you may know, Montana Youth Challenge Academy is a residential academic intervention program on the campus of the University of Montana Western for 16-18-year-old students who are at risk of high school dropout. The Academy offers military-style structure and discipline along with academic, professional, and life-coping skills students need to become productive citizens. Cadets will earn 3.5 credits including Math, English, Science, History, Physical Fitness/Health, Jobs for Graduates, and Service to Community (40+hours). Cadets also have classes for employability skills, anger management, healthy relationship, substance prevention, suicide prevention, conflict resolution, and extensive goals and future planning activities.

This fall, the MYCA Public School Liaison has been contacting districts on behalf of the cadets currently enrolled in the program enquiring about diploma options, which are twofold:

SB197: Collaborative effort between Montana Youth Challenge Academy and OPI allow resident districts to award MYCA Cadets a diploma based on the district's standards for proficiency, which may take into consideration the completion of MYCA (includes 3.5 credits and 40 hours of service to the community) and passing of the Hi-Set. The opportunity to receive a diploma from the student's resident district is at the discretion of the district trustees. The requirements vary and can include a presentation to the trustees by the cadet after completion of the program and/or a recommendation from the administration for example. Under SB197, students/cadets do not need to meet the state minimum credit requirements; it is focused on proficiency in conjunction with successful completion of MYCA.

HB556: Provides a path to a state-issued high school diploma for students who have no other option, but who can demonstrate competence through alternative means. The following criteria need to be met:

- Written notification from the student's most recent or current high school confirming that a traditional path to a diploma does not exist.
- The age of student is at least seventeen (17) years old at the time that they graduate from the residential phase of the Montana Youth Challenge Academy.
- The student achieves HiSET scores of approximately 20% above the minimum requirements of the tests.
- The student graduates from the residential phase of

- [MCASE General Education Teacher Award](#)
- [Lori Ruffier Legacy Award](#)
- [MCASE Nomination for CASE Awards](#)
- [Early Career Special Education Administrator Award Nomination](#)

MACSS Awards: (Deadline Friday, January 13, 2023)

- [County Superintendent of the Year](#)
- [Rural Teacher of the Year Nomination Form](#)



Data Privacy

The [Consortium for School Networking \(CoSN\)](#) and its Montana state affiliate chapter, [Montana Educational Technologists Association \(META\)](#) are pleased to continue to support the work of current and aspiring superintendents and district leadership teams in leading all aspects of digital learning transformations.

EmpowerED Superintendent edLeader Panel Series **Upcoming December edLeader Panel Broadcast:**

The next live broadcast of the CoSN / AA EmpowerED Superintendent edLeader Panel Series, *Planning and Sustaining Technology Innovations: Aligning Priorities, Costs, and Outcomes*, will be on Monday, December 12, 2022, at 3:00 Mountain Time. Dr. Chris Gaines, Superintendent, Mehlville School District, MO, along with Dr. Kelly May-Vollmar, Superintendent, Desert Sands Unified School District, CA, and Dr. Aaron Spencer, Superintendent, Virginia Beach City Public Schools, VA, share the strategies they learn in their school districts to evaluate, rethi

the Challenge Academy. Students must complete the program to be considered.

[Reference to Senate Bill 197](#)
[Reference to House Bill 556](#)

For further questions contact Melissa Robbins at 406 988 7032 melissa.robbins@mycacademy.org

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Wishing you a joyous holiday season



and strengthen district technology decision making. Free registration for the upcoming December 12, 2022 live broadcast is available [HERE](#).

November 14 edLeader Panel Broadcast Recording:

If you missed the recent CoSN / AASA EmpowerED Superintendent edLeader Panel broadcast, **Leadership Challenges and Solutions Regarding Data Privacy in Technology-Enriched Learning Environments**, which aired on Monday, November 14, 2022, you are welcome to access the link to the recording [HERE](#).

In this recent broadcast **Casey Bertran Superintendent of Bozeman Public Schools, MT**, Dr. Alex Marrero, Superintendent of Denver Public Schools CO, and Dr. Penelope Martin-Knox, Superintendent of Raytown Quality Schools, MO, shared the leadership strategies they implement to assess their school districts' privacy and compliance policies. All three superintendents represent school districts that have earned the Trusted Learning Environment (TLE) Seal, the nation's only privacy framework designed specifically for school systems. Information about the TLE and how and why other school districts can benefit from earning the TLE Seal was also covered during the November 14 live broadcast.

CoSN Data Privacy Resources Resources

CoSN Data Privacy Self-Assessment
Assist school leaders in learning where they need to focus to improve data privacy practices in their school systems. (found [HERE](#))

Infographic: School System Jobs and Their Impact on Student Data Privacy
A snapshot of the many different roles across a school system that have an impact on student data privacy. (found [HERE](#))

Building A Trusted Learning Environment: Understanding The Leadership Practice

Take a deeper dive into the role of leadership in protecting student data privacy. (found [HERE](#))

Trusted Learning From the Ground Up: Fundamental Data Governance Policies and Procedures

Learn fundamental data governance policies and procedures and check to see how many your district has in place. (fou [HERE](#))

CoSN Membership:

If you, your school or district would like more information about joining CoSN, please contact membership@cosn.org.

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Please take time to visit their websites.

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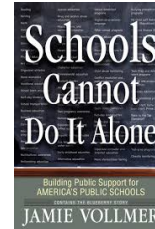
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