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School Administrators of Montana

BULLETIN

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

Volume XLIII

December 2021

No. 313

How Much is Too Much?

by Erin Lipkind, MACSS President



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Upcoming Conferences, Meetings, & Events

**January 23-25, 2022:
Montana Principals Conference - Bozeman**

**** [View the full SAM Calendar](#)****

Thank you to this month's featured Business Partners!

Our lives, and those of our students, colleagues, and neighbors, have been in upheaval for twenty months. An already challenging job in the best of times, the superintendency has evolved in ways well beyond the content of our graduate school coursework. From contact tracing to quarantining to conducting Covid testing in our schools, while simultaneously providing remote and traditional learning opportunities in a state lacking technology infrastructure, writing reopening plans, ESSER grant applications, and new board policies—How much is too much?

In rural schools, county superintendents serve as superintendent, principal, grant administrator, McKinney Vento, Title I, and Title IX coordinator, HR department, librarian, counselor, substitute teacher—just about every school-related position you can think of. Rural school leaders, teachers, and staff don't have the luxury of delegating—in the best of times, we must figure out a way to meet state and federal requirements and the needs of our students with limited resources. These days, we, like the rest of you, are juggling the usual work and challenges alongside Covid mitigation while also implementing exciting projects (construction, renovation, increased staffing, new programming, etc) that ESSER relief funding has allowed, and we ask ourselves—How much is too much?

In our little rural bubbles, we observe what is happening in the larger districts—the bigger rural areas and the urban areas in our state. We see the struggles dividing your communities, and frequently the same politics are dividing ours. We are horrified at the threats school boards, superintendents, principals, teachers, and students are facing—danger from disease, certainly, but unexpectedly, threats within communities driven by partisan politics and misinformation. This divisive rhetoric has resulted in an ignorance or disregard of science, hatred or contempt for one's neighbors, a mass exodus from the profession at all levels, and threats of violence directed at school leaders. With a dysfunctional OPI whose leader is actively working against public schools, stymying our efforts—How much is too much?

Like most of you, I am exhausted, tired of fighting the good fight while also taking care of the needs of my family. We have responsibilities beyond that of our jobs in this noble field—we are mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, daughters, sons, friends, colleagues, community members, Montanans, Americans. We need something to keep us here when it all feels like too much.

There are silver linings in the darkness of the pandemic, and it serves me well to reflect on them. Firstly, I am deeply appreciative of the collaborative relationships between schools and school leaders within my community. These include, for example, teacher and student vaccine clinics hosted by large districts to which rural districts are invited and being able to reach out to a neighboring school for counseling help when a rural student is in crisis. The connections and relationships built through membership in my SAM affiliate have felt more personal as I listen to colleagues share their struggles and worries.

Secondly, I am grateful for the unexpected boon of ESSER funding. In rural districts where it is nearly impossible to pass levies and bonds, ESSER funds have allowed us previously unrealized opportunities. We have been able to develop after school and summer school programming in areas devoid of such opportunities, renovate historic schoolhouses, update curriculum, and hire additional staff to reduce how many grade levels are assigned to one teacher.

Finally, I am continually inspired by committed, hardworking rural educators—both veteran teachers and new college graduates. I am grateful for the supervising teachers who manage the day-to-day operations in rural schools, such as Neil Murray of Woodman School and Toni Hatten of Sunset School. I am in awe of the talent that comes out of our Montana universities—young teachers who have had their educations impacted by Covid and still enthusiastically and competently join our beleaguered profession.



When I succumb to the pressure and decide it is time to leave my post (or the voters decide for me), I will be proud of what I have accomplished in the rural schools in my county, and as a member of MACSS. I stand by my efforts over the last 11 years, knowing that every decision I made was, at its foundation, based on the needs of the students and staff in those districts. I have been guided by a strong moral compass and the mentorship and friendship of many—including my father, a lifelong educator and educational leader, my dear colleague and friend, Cathy Maloney, former MACSS president, who sends me little email pep talks and gets riled up about the things that matter, and Kirk Miller, who always takes the time to thoughtfully listen and advise.

But for now, when it all feels too much, I retreat to my rugged log cabin in the woods and let nature work its magic.

Erin Lipkind
MACSS President

Thank You For the Passion You Bring to the Education Profession!

by Kirk Miller, SAM Executive Director



I have so many thoughts to share with you all with the top of the list being a ‘THANK YOU’ for all that you do in your professional and personal lives to support the education of the children in your community and for standing on the principle – each child, every day!

I have had many conversations with our colleague administrators over the past four months since the opening of the school year, and have a full view of the challenges you have faced in addition to the normal flow of being responsible for creating the very best atmosphere for our students to learn, grow and reach their full potential. The additional burden of challenges that have been imposed on the schools in our communities due to the polarization regarding the pandemic; and the necessary request for our local communities and the education leaders in our state to rise up to protect the ability of our public schools to serve every community across our state with high quality, responsive services for our children (see [SAM Strategy – Promote the Value Your Public School Brings to the Community](#) for resources to assist you in this work) has impacted all of you. The harm of this misguided, politically motivated, vitriolic, and angry approach is not only creating an inappropriate example for our children on how to resolve complicated issues, but is instilling a counterproductive culture of mistrust, harming the ability of our community schools to recruit and retain quality educators and support staff to meet the needs of our children and develop the full potential of each child in every public school. We have worked together to request the assistance of our political leaders and community leaders to refrain from further second guessing of local decision-making and cease instigating vitriol and anger directed toward Montana's public schools.

The harm to the success of our public schools in successfully recruiting and retaining high quality educators should be of grave concern to all Montanans. By working together, sorting out differences of opinion, ensuring a voice for students and families in each community, we can all work together to protect the value

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that our public schools bring to each community and ensure the preservation of a tradition of community ownership and local control that provides much benefit to our way of life as Montanans.

In the midst of the holiday season, it is a good time to reflect on the amazing profession you have chosen. The passion, expertise and work ethic of Montana school administrators is a credit to the education profession. As you create and implement an educational environment for the students and education team you serve, the holiday season is a great way to showcase your school and the value it provides to the community. With COVID impacting all communities, our schools are the center of progress and focus of reason. From innovative holiday programs at the center of gathering your community, to the kind giving projects and community service, to the educational focus on supporting others at this time of year, your schools and the innovative work you do with your students are critical to the future of your community. Please consider this as you go about your work this month, knowing that you have a substantial purpose in helping students grow into healthy, happy productive citizens, and the impact of that great effort on your community.

At SAM, we are coordinating efforts to assist our profession, and the administrators we serve, with professional learning and advocacy. Professional learning opportunities are at an all-time high. We have 54 administrators in the [SAM Leaders Professional Learning Program](#) (LPLP) this year. Each of these administrators are working on their personalized professional learning plan that they have developed to impact their students, school and district. Great work is being accomplished in so many areas evidenced through seven Collegial Learning Networks collaboratively involved in studying and finding solutions to key areas for their students and community. Additionally, every 2nd Thursday our LPLP members are participating in the SAM LPLP Huddle, a one-hour virtual discussion featuring monthly calendar items & resource update, thought-leader session about a timely topic, and full discussion Q&A about contemporary issues.

SAM assists in the development of 11 conferences annually that are important for our Montana administrators to gather to learn together and plan together. This year, we have developed blended (both in-person and virtual) conferences (SAM AI 2021) and virtual conferences (2021 MASS/MCASE Fall Virtual Conference) to meet the learning needs of our members, and the results have been favorably evaluated by the attendees. The [2022 Montana Principals Conference](#) is the next conference on the schedule, January 23-25, blended delivery with in-person at the Bozeman GranTree Inn Convention Center and virtual via Zoom. I hope all principals and other administrators are planning to attend this outstanding agenda of contemporary issues around the theme 'Don't Stop Believin' (you remember the 80's!) and 3 internationally renowned speakers, Dr. Joe Sanfelippo (Culture and Climate), Dr. Ruby Payne (Emotional Resiliency), and Dr. Rick Wormeli (Assessment). Your engagement will help you with your work for students. District leaders, please urge your principals to join their colleagues at this professional learning event. Further information and [registration](#) are in this Bulletin.

Advocacy work by our SAM leaders is underway. The [SAM Advocacy Issues](#) webpage has been updated for 2021-22 to include

- SAM membership (October 22, 2021) approval of the [SAM 2021 Advocacy Priorities Positions Resolutions Approved 10-22-21](#).
 - [SAM Legislative Session 2021](#) webpage provides detailed information about SAM progress through the 68th Montana Legislative session.
 - Legislative Interim 2021-22 Advocacy – [Interim 2021-22 Legislative Committees](#) provides information on SAM progress on advocacy.

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- [Federal Advocacy Issues](#) webpage is a good resource for review of contemporary Federal issues important to SAM and Montana.

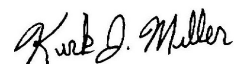
Advocacy work to support a great education for each child at every school continues to be a priority. Please review [GREAT 2021, Vol IX](#) (released by MT-PEC at MCEL 2021), and use this for reference to advocate in your school community. Develop a strategy to tell 'your story' widely in your community and include legislators in that distribution. Consider the strategic approach developed in [The Crossroads of Advocacy and Professional Learning...SAM Style!](#) article describing a tiered system for getting educator voices heard - Universal, Targeted, and Comprehensive.

Launching today, is the [SAM Needs Assessment Survey 2021-22](#) asking for your input on the SAM core values/goals – Leadership Involved in the Decisions that Impact Education, Professional Learning and Services, and Advocacy. Please take 15 minutes to complete the needs assessment survey by January 7, 2022.

Coming in the new year will be the 2021-22 Montana District/School Leadership Staffing Report and the 2021-22 SAM Administrative Vacancy Report Executive Summary for your use in advocacy discussions with community members and legislators. The Leadership Staffing Report emphasizes the effective and efficient administration of Montana's schools, giving you valid information to disprove the popular but inaccurate refrain that there is too much administration in Montana's public schools, and the reduction of administrators will resolve funding shortfalls. The Administrative Vacancy Report will provide ongoing information on superintendents and principals who have left Montana school districts for reasons provided in the report. It encompasses impacting, relative information that results from the vacancy and gives a composite view of retention factors in school districts and recruitment by-product of those vacant positions being filled. These resources are intended to help you tell the advocacy story for your school in your community.

SAM members' work in professional learning and advocacy are examples of our collective effort to improve our great profession! Thank you SAM members for your participation in professional learning and advocacy, this is how our profession will continue to make a positive difference in the education of our children!

Have a great December and Holiday Season. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you from your team at SAM!



**Request to Complete
SAM Needs Assessment
Survey**

**MAEMSP and
MASSP Awards**

SAM Members: Please take a few minutes to complete the [2022 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 7, 2022**. The time required to complete the survey is 15-20 minutes. We appreciate your responses to the survey and your assistance in making SAM the best it can be for your leadership needs. Please look for this email coming to your inbox in the next few days.

SAM Membership Report and Directory

The most up-to-date membership listing is on the SAM website! The SAM School Leadership Directory 2021-22 is a list of renewed SAM members as of 12-1-21. The Leadership Directory gives you access to the contact information for all SAM members. The SAM School Leadership Directory 2021-22 can also be found on the SAM website on the [Member Landing Page](#) (login is required).

Nomination Window Closing Soon!

There is still time to nominate candidates for the following awards that are open for nominations until **Friday, December 17, 2021**! Please consider nominating someone you know and recognizing them for the great work they are doing in your schools and communities to enhance the education of our Montana children. For more information about each award, visit the [MAEMSP Awards](#) and [MASSP Awards](#) webpages or follow the links below.

[MAEMSP Awards](#)

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

[MASSP Awards](#)

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



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AND HAPPY NEW YEAR

 	<h2 style="text-align: center;">Montana Principals Conference 2022</h2>
<p style="text-align: center;">Sunday, January 23</p>	<h1 style="text-align: center; color: yellow;">Don't Stop Believin'</h1>
<p style="text-align: center;">Joe Sanfilippo Coach Vigen, MSU Breakout Sessions</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Trivia Live Music</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Monday, January 24</p>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Joe Sanfilippo Climate & Culture</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Ruby Payne Emotional Resiliency</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Rick Wormeli Assessment</p> </div> </div>
<p style="text-align: center;">Ruby Payne Coach Hauck, UM Breakout Sessions Affiliate Business Mtgs Boom Discussions</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Banquet and Awards 80s Theme Cornhole Tournament Live Music</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Tuesday, January 25</p>	<p style="text-align: center; background-color: #ADD8E6;">LIVE MUSIC, SOCIAL EVENTS, AWARDS BANQUET</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Rick Wormeli Roundtable Discussions</p>	
<h2 style="color: yellow;">Click HERE to Register!</h2> <p style="font-size: 1.5em; color: blue;">January 23 - 25, 2022</p> <p style="font-size: 1.5em; color: magenta;">Bozeman - GranTree Inn or Virtually</p>	

Be sure to register to attend the Montana Principals Conference 2022!
The conference is scheduled for January 23-25 in Bozeman at the Best Western GranTree Inn. A virtual option will also be available. You will not want to miss the line-up of national speakers who will be presenting in-person:

Joe Sanfilippo

Ruby Payne

Rick Wormeli

Coach Vigen (MSU) and Coach Hauck (UM) will be onsite for presentations. Several breakout sessions along with time for you to connect with your colleagues are also on the agenda including.

80s-Themed Awards Banquet

Cornhole Tournament

Trivia/Social

Live Music

Follow the link for hotel information and to register: [Register HERE!](#)

Thank you to SAM's Business Partners!

Please take time to visit their websites.

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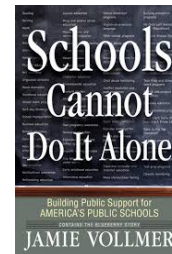


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2021-22 SAM Bulletins

- [November 2021 Bulletin](#)
- [October 2021 Bulletin](#)
- [September 2021 Bulletin](#)
- [July - August 2021 Bulletin](#)

SAM Bulletins from Previous Years

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