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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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October 2023

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Upcoming Conferences, Meetings, & Events

MCEL, October 18-20,
DoubleTree, Billings

SAM Annual Business Meeting, October 19,
DoubleTree, Billings

Montana Principals, January 21-23
Conference
Copper King, Butte

October is Cybersecurity Month

by Carol Phillips, METAPresident

As leaders in your school, you are challenged daily to manage the many priorities that come across your desk. One such priority, that you may have been seeing more of lately, is that of improving your cybersecurity posture. If your school's network and/or data is hacked it will be very hard to serve the students and staff in your district. Unfortunately, there are many nefarious characters in the world that are actively going after the educational sector within the state of Montana. In addition, cybersecurity premiums have become a multi-billion dollar industry. In fact, according to [Schools' Insurance Costs Soaring - and Climate Change Isn't the Only Reason](#) article from the Education Week website in June 2023¹, the cost of cybersecurity insurance in schools has gone up across the nation approximately 328% in two years! You may have already seen some network security surveys that need to be completed from your insurance carriers. Since October is Cybersecurity Awareness month it is a great opportunity to sit down with your Technologist, if you have one, and review what your current cybersecurity situation is. It is also a great month to take a moment to educate your staff, students, and community about cybersecurity and what they can do to protect themselves, and the school district.

Let's start with Cybersecurity Awareness Month created by the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency (CISA) and the National Cybersecurity Alliance. They have many great free resources to share with your students, staff and community. You can learn more at [Cybersecurity Awareness Month](#). There are articles as to why password complexity is important, phishing emails, updating software, etc. You can sign up to be a Champion of Cybersecurity and they will provide a FREE social media kit with premade graphics, and articles that you can share during the month of October. Since cybercriminals often use social engineering tactics this is a great place to start to improve your cybersecurity stance.

The next part of awareness is acknowledging exactly what your current situation is. This will allow you to decide what areas you need to work on. To do this you can fill out, with your Technologist, a Network Security Survey or other evaluation tool. You can get these tools from your insurance carrier (i.e. MSGIA, Payne, etc) or online. For example, CISA has an entire [K-12 Security Guide Product Suite](#) that is free for schools to use. Take a moment to evaluate yourself in October. Some guides will give you a score or a grade. Just like in school, when you receive a lower score than you hoped for, you just need to work a little harder to improve and earn that gold star. Make a commitment to spend a little time each month during this school year to improve on weaknesses that you uncover. Pretty soon, your score will be higher and you can wear that gold star with pride!

You could also leverage your insurance carrier resources for training, knowledge, and opportunities to improve. It is in their best interests to assist you, and your team, in making improvements to the cybersecurity structure within your district. Start by asking your Technologist to reach out to your insurance representative and learn about the best first steps in a Data Breach Incident Response Plan.

Another great step is to take a moment to make sure your Technologist is a member of the [Montana Educational Technologists Association \(META\)](#). Becoming a member of META offers many benefits:

★ Access to Technologists across the state of Montana to ask questions, learn, and share

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

Thank you to this month's featured Business Partners!



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Membership in Consortium of School Networking (COSN), a premier professional association for K-12 EdTech leaders, and their teams. Principals and Superintendents of the META member are also eligible for COSN membership

★ Access to Cybrary - For online cybersecurity training that allows your Technologist to stay ahead of the curve when it comes to network security

★ Regional Technologist Meetings - allows your Technologist to stay current on the happenings around the state

★ Access to a variety of conferences throughout the great state of Montana

Last but not least, make a commitment to yourself, as a leader in the educational community, to do one thing to make yourself more secure. For example, if you haven't already done so, ask your Technologist to help you set up Multi-Factor Authentication, and/or update your passwords to passphrases. These two things alone will make your network more secure!

Feel free to reach out to me if you need some guidance on first steps or other assistance! META is here to help! You are NOT in this alone!

I hope you have a fantastic October!

Carol Phillips
META President

1 Lieberman, Mark. "Schools' Insurance Costs Are Soaring-and Climate Change Isn't the Only Reason." Education Week, Education Week, 15 Aug. 2023, www.edweek.org/leadership/schools-insurance-costs-are-soaring-and-climate-change-isnt-the-only-reason/2023/06

Embracing Generative AI in Education: A Cautionary Path.

by Dr. Rob Watson, SAM Executive Director

In the rapidly evolving landscape of education, technology continues to play an increasingly vital role. One of the latest advancements on our radar is Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI), a tool that has the potential to reshape the way we teach and learn. While the possibilities are exciting, it is crucial for us, as educational leaders, to approach this technology with caution while recognizing its potential as a powerful learning tool.

SAM recently hosted Jason Neiffer for our monthly webinar series. If you have not had a chance to listen to [Jason's presentation about Generative AI](#) - I would encourage you to do so. It will give you a great overview of what is currently happening with this technology.

Generative AI can generate human-like text, answer questions, and even assist with tasks such as content creation. These capabilities present exciting opportunities, from personalized learning experiences to enhanced teacher support. However, embracing generative AI requires a delicate balance. For example, many educators are concerned that this new technology will make it easier for students to escape difficult work, like writing.

With this technology moving faster than many of us have predicted, it has created some "knee-jerk" reactions from schools across the country. Last spring, many districts made moves to ban the technology in their classrooms. Others have stated that they will use resources to "detect" the use of AI in student work. For our school administrators, I would recommend a cautious approach, rather than the heavy handed discipline approach for teachers and students.

In late August, I had the opportunity to discuss this issue with a national expert Victor Karar, the CEO of [Scribble](#). His company has many years of experience in helping students and teachers with the writing process.

I asked specifically what school leaders should avoid with regards to policy and practice. Below is a short list of recommendations from Victor.

- Don't take the "ban it" or "block it at school" approach. The effort is likely futile and you will end up changing course in the coming months as the technology is evolving so quickly. In addition, students can access the technology outside of the school network. This means you will create inequalities with regard to who is actually impacted by your practice of banning or blocking.
- Don't assume that we should stop teaching writing. Sure, AI could produce a decently written document that could be submitted for credit by a student. However, the writing process builds critical thinking skills. Every student should experience this process, even if it is easier and faster to do it with AI. Encourage your teachers to teach writing much like their approach to teaching math - "show your work." Students should be showing their effort in each step of the writing process, not just the final product.

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- Don't assume that your school can use an "AI detector" to find students who may have cheated on an assignment. You may have someone tell you that products like Turnitin or GPTZero can detect when students are using AI to write their paper. In his research, Victor discovered that several of these AI detectors have shown a high % of false positives, between a 20-50% occurrence rate. That means you may be falsely accusing a student of using AI, when actually they did author their own paper. Something to keep in mind before we discipline a student for cheating with AI.

Finally, we must remain adaptable. The field of AI is rapidly evolving, and what we know today may be outdated tomorrow. It is crucial to maintain a growth mindset, embracing change while critically assessing its impact on our educational goals.

Rob



MCEL is scheduled for Wednesday, October 18 through Friday, October 20 at the Billings DoubleTree. MCEL provides a professional learning opportunity for school administrators, trustees, and business officials. Gather your team and register to attend either in-person or virtually for this outstanding conference featuring a strategic legislative leaders panel, our own Jason Neiffer (*Bringing Artificial Intelligence to Schools*), closing keynote presenter Jason Horn and MANY breakout presentations. [Click here for the Schedule at a Glance](#)

All SAM members are also invited to attend the annual SAM Membership Meeting on Friday, October 20 at 8:00 AM. Agenda items include voting on the SAM Delegate Assembly 2023 Advocacy Recommendations, affiliate board reports, and an update on the work of your association. Watch for more SAM Membership Meeting information coming soon.

[Click here to register for MCEL](#)

Upcoming SAM Events and Professional Learning Opportunities

SAM Webinar Series
Thursday, October 12
Montana's New Accreditation Process -
What you need to know

SAM MONTHLY
WEBINAR SERIES

 **THURSDAY**
OCTOBER 12 |  **TIME**
10:00 - 11:00 AM

Montana's New Accreditation Process:
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[HTTPS://US06WEB.ZOOM.US/J/3923446729](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/3923446729) 

In the upcoming SAM webinar on October 12 at 10:00, we will review the components of the accreditation process reference guide that OPI is scheduled to release on October 2nd. We will also look at the tasks that districts need to complete in the first year and provide due dates and deadlines. Be sure to join us for the conversation. SAM Webinars are scheduled for the 2nd Thursday of each month at 10:00 AM.



October is National Principals Month

October marks the celebration of a special group of leaders in our community – our school principals. These dedicated individuals play a pivotal role in shaping our students' futures and the trajectory of our education system.

This month-long celebration is an opportunity to recognize and thank our principals for their unwavering dedication, exceptional leadership, and

- **Join SAM Zoom:**
<https://uso6web.zoom.us/j/3923446729>

SAM Annual Membership Meeting

All SAM members are invited to attend the Annual Membership Meeting **on Friday, October 20 at 8:00 AM either in person at MCEL or via Zoom**. Agenda items include voting on the SAM Delegate Assembly 2023 Advocacy Recommendations, affiliate reports, and an update on the work of your association. Watch for more information coming soon.

2024 Montana Principals Conference

Save the date for the 2024 Montana Principals Conference set to take place January 21-23 at the Copper King Hotel & Convention Center in Butte. Organized by MAEMSP and MASSP leadership, this conference promises to be an outstanding experience featuring several keynote speakers and a variety of breakout sessions. The event will focus on timely topics including leadership, climate and culture, behavior, mental health, and assessment. It's a perfect opportunity for principals from across the state to come together, collaborate, and reenergize as they prepare for the second half of the school year.

Nominate a School Custodian for a Spotlight Award

LifeChanger of the Year is an annual program recognizing K-12 educators and school employees across the country. The LifeChanger of the Year program is introducing its Spotlight Award, an award dedicated to shining a well-deserved light on a specific K-12 discipline.

This year, the program will be recognizing a group of school employees who often work behind the scenes but are essential to the well-being of our schools: custodians and janitors. They invite you to consider nominating a deserving custodian or janitor from your school or to share this incredible opportunity with your organization.

The winner of the Spotlight Award will receive \$5,000 to be shared between a \$2,500 individual award and a \$2,500 donation to their school or district. Additionally, all Spotlight Award nominees will be eligible to win one of 16 other awards. Nominations for the Spotlight Award will close on October 22nd, 2023.

Anyone can nominate (by name or anonymously) and it's completely free. [Click here to access the nomination form.](#)

remarkable impact on student success.

We encourage you to join us, and educational organizations nationwide like AFSA, NAESP, and NASSP, as we acknowledge the tireless efforts of these unsung heroes. Share your appreciation using the hashtag #ThankAPrincipal on social media, and visit principalsmonth.org for more resources and ways to get involved.

Let's come together to celebrate the extraordinary individuals at the helm of our schools and the difference they make every day transforming our communities.

Visit principalsmonth.org send an [E-card](#) to a principal and access the [social media toolkit](#).

Assistant Principal of the Year Award Deadline Approaching

[MASSP Assistant Principal of the Year - Applications will be accepted until Friday, October 13, 2023:](#)

This award recognizes outstanding school leaders who have succeeded in providing high-quality learning opportunities for students. The program honors high school assistant principals who have demonstrated excellence in the areas of personal excellence; collaborative leadership; curriculum, instruction and assessment; and personalization. To be eligible, the nominee must be an active assistant principal and have been an active assistant principal for at least three consecutive years.





LEADING EDUCATION INNOVATION
transformations.

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

[EmpowerED Superintendents Initiative](#) – Resources for School Leaders

With the start of the new school year we are pleased to remind school leaders of the EmpowerED Superintendents Initiative, graciously sponsored by [ClassLink](#), [edWeb.net](#) and [jamf](#). This initiative exists through a dedicated and ongoing partnership between [AASA](#) and [CoSN](#) to support technology innovations through the lens of Superintendent leadership.

Below are highlights of a few of the EmpowerED Superintendents Initiative’s Resources:

- **EmpowerED Superintendents Toolkit:**The toolkit includes guidance, specific action steps and practical tools for navigating leadership in the ever changing landscape of educational technology.
 - **Critical Focus Areas: Issue One-Pagers:**When school leaders get questions from their board, staff or community members about issues related to educational technology practices and challenges their responses often need to be both clear and brief. The EmpowerED Superintendents “One-Pagers” are the perfect guide for responding to those questions in “non-techy talk”.
 - **Creating Effective Responsible Use Policies for Schools:**This new report was created in partnership with the Digital Citizenship Coalition, ISTE, ATLAS and CoSN. In this report readers receive guidance on creating the conditions (technical and behavioral) for both safe and effective use of technology in schools.
 - **Self-Assessments:**Designed to help school leaders analyze their own leadership skills, three different self-assessments are provided: Superintendent Self-Assessment, CTO Self-Assessment and a District Leadership Team Self-Assessment.
 - **Financing Technology Innovations, Strategies and Tools:**Multiple tools to assist school leaders when analyzing educational technology through the lens of Total Cost of Ownership and Value of Investment.
- All of the above resources are readily available at:*
- *All of the above resources are readily available at:* <https://www.cosn.org/superintendents/>.

AASA/CoSN EmpowerED Superintendents edLeader Panel Series

The upcoming October 9, 5:00 PM ET, broadcast is titled, “Artificial Intelligence and Generative AI: Empowering a Deeper Conversation”. The featured guest panelists include Dr. Matthew Friedman, Superintendent of Schools, Quakertown Community School District, PA, Dr. Kelly May-Vollmar, Superintendent, Desert Sands Unified School District, CA, Dr. David Miyashiro, Superintendent, Cajon Valley Union School District, CA, and Pete Just, CETL, Executive Director, Indiana CTO Council. The series is co-hosted by [AASA](#) and [CoSN](#) in partnership with [edWeb.net](#) and is sponsored by [ClassLink](#). Free registration for the October 9 broadcast – as well as access to previous broadcasts - is available at <https://home.edweb.net/supers/>.

CoSN 2024 Annual Conference, “Leading for Innovation: At Warp Speed”

Registration is now open for the CoSN 2024 Annual Conference, scheduled for April 8-10, 2024, in Miami, Florida. For conference and hotel information and registration links, see <https://www.cosn.org/cosn2024/>.

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

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Please take time to visit their websites.

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