



MTDA
Montana Digital Academy

2025 YEARBOOK

**Montana
Digital
Academy**



Education as Vast as the Big Sky



Fueled by a shared passion for education, the Montana Digital Academy central office team leverages its diverse expertise to expand access to quality learning for every student in Montana. This annual report, *the 2025 MTDA Yearbook*, offers a glimpse into the mission, achievements, and work that drives digital education forward.

**#WeAre
MTDA**



“The School Administrators of Montana is proud to support the Montana Digital Academy for the invaluable opportunities it provides students to access courses that may not otherwise be available in their communities. Beyond expanding student learning, the Montana Digital Academy is leading the way in supporting curriculum resources and pioneering AI initiatives that strengthen schools across our state. We deeply value their partnership in preparing students for the future.”

Rob Watson, Ed.D.
Executive Director, School Administrators of Montana

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Second Edition

2025 Montana Digital Academy Yearbook

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#WeAre MTDA



MTDA at 15

Looking Back, Moving Forward: 15 Years of MTDA

From the Executive Director, Dr. Jason Neiffer

In 2009, the Montana Legislature envisioned something bold: **a statewide digital learning academy that could bridge distances, broaden opportunity, and bring the future of education to every corner of Big Sky Country.** What began as a forward-looking startup in 2010 (which we remember fondly as our “garage band days”) has become an integral part of Montana’s public education system, serving over 31,000 student engagements annually, supporting every public school in the state, and shaping the national conversation on digital learning.

From our very first courses—45 titles launched by a handful of dedicated staff and instructors—**we’ve grown into a multi-pronged learning engine.** Today, **Montana Digital Academy offers a range of options,** including original credit and dual credit courses, credit flexibility models, individualized learning pathways, Indigenous language instruction, and EdReady Montana’s nationally recognized approach to proficiency-based learning.

This growth hasn’t happened by accident. It’s been driven by our **core values: innovation, sound design, responsiveness, and a fierce belief in the potential of every Montana learner.** Along the way, we’ve adapted to meet new needs, whether that meant building a homegrown credit recovery system in 2015, launching EdReady Montana with visionary philanthropic support, or pivoting quickly to support schools during the early days of COVID-19.

In 2021, the Montana Legislature deepened its investment in our work by expanding our mission and calling on us to **help preserve and teach Indigenous languages, as well as expand dual credit and CTE offerings across the state.** In 2023, that charge led to the creation of our Digital Learning Clearinghouse. This **collaborative marketplace now connects districts with vetted online content and support,** especially critical for rural and under-resourced schools. This past session, the Legislature again bet on MTDA’s impact by funding our **Frontier Learning Lab, which focuses on technologies such as artificial intelligence and virtual reality.**

At the heart of all of this are people: **our incredible educators, dedicated staff, strategic partners, public school partners, parents, and most importantly, Montana’s students.** The MTDA story isn’t really about technology or platforms. It’s about *expanding access.* It’s about *showing up.* It’s about *creating a learning experience that works for every student,* whether they live in a small rural town or a larger city district.

As we celebrate our 15th anniversary, **we do so not with nostalgia, but with momentum.** MTDA is a national leader in areas such as learning design, responsive student support, and emerging technologies like artificial intelligence in education. We are building deep relationships with tribal communities to support culturally grounded, community-driven learning. And **we are more committed than ever to ensuring that every Montana student has the tools, flexibility, and support they need to thrive.**

Here’s to 15 years—and to what comes **next!**



Jason Neiffer, Ed.D.
Executive Director
Montana Digital Academy
jason@mtda.org



MTDA Retrospective

Looking Back, Moving Forward: 15 Years of MTDA

2009

- The Montana Legislature establishes MTDA to expand educational opportunities across the state.
- A national search brings Bob Currie aboard as founding executive director to launch operations.
- MTDA's inaugural board convenes to chart the organization's direction.

2010

- Jason Neiffer joins as Curriculum Director to build MTDA's academic programs.
- Operations launch with 45 course titles serving Montana students statewide.
- MTDA begins delivering consistent, high-quality online learning across the state.

2011

- MTDA expands access with its first credit recovery program for struggling students.
- The organization launches summer programming to support year-round learning.
- The Multi-Language Sampler (MLS) debuts, opening world language opportunities to underserved schools.

2013

- MTDA incubates the Montana Digital Professional Learning Network, connecting educators statewide.
- Grant funding from APT and MEA/MFT enables professional development programming for Montana teachers.

2014

- MTDA launches EdReady Montana with support from the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation.
- Executive Director Bob Currie earns INACOL's Outstanding Individual Contributor Award for excellence in K-12 online learning, establishing MTDA's role as a national leader in online education.

2015

- The Montana Digital Professional Learning Network transitions to OPI, becoming the Teacher Learning Hub.
- MTDA develops an innovative homegrown credit recovery system using Washington Foundation Shape P20 funds.

2016

- MTDA expands course offerings by 10 additional electives based on student and school feedback.
- The Washington Foundation extends EdReady funding for five more years, recognizing program impact across Montana.
- MTDA receives the Contributor of the Year Award from NROC for advancing EdReady access and community engagement statewide.

2018

- MTDA adds two strategic dual credit partnerships to expand college access for rural students.
- The organization earns dual recognition: the Blackboard Catalyst Award for innovative credit recovery design and the WOW Award for EdReady's statewide implementation impact.

2019

- Jason Neiffer (Assistant Director/Curriculum Director) and Mike Agostinelli (Instructional Program Manager) receive Northwest Council for Computer Education Eric Jensen Leadership Awards.

MTDA Retrospective

Looking Back, Moving Forward: 15 Years of MTDA

2020

- MTDA launches Individualized Pathway Courses, creating personalized learning options for students with unique circumstances.
- The organization pivots to support Montana schools transitioning to remote learning during the pandemic.
- MTDA teachers step up as statewide mentors, helping districts navigate the sudden shift to distance education.

2021

- The Montana Legislature provides one-time funding to launch new CTE offerings, dual credit courses, and indigenous language programming.
- MTDA begins cost-sharing partnerships with Montana public schools, expanding access while building sustainability.
- The organization adds dedicated student support staff and pilots expanded middle school programming.
- Legislative investment enables MTDA to diversify offerings while strengthening its financial foundation.

2022

- MTDA adds a Tribal Relations and Education Fellow position with Washington Foundation Teaching and Learning Grant support in collaboration with the Phyllis J. Washington College of Education.
- The organization secures five-year EdReady funding renewal, reflecting widespread program adoption across Montana, from K-12 to adult education.
- MTDA launches its first indigenous language course, Cree, expanding cultural learning opportunities through distance education and collaboration.
- Additional school support staff join the team to meet growing demand for student services.

2023

- The Montana Legislature passes House Bill 749, restructuring MTDA's board and strengthening the organization's authority to stand up the Digital Learning Clearinghouse.
- MTDA hires its first Digital Learning Clearinghouse Program Director to lead new legislative initiatives.
- The organization shifts focus to artificial intelligence education, training teachers and administrators statewide.
- MTDA launches Innovation Runs Through It, showcasing Montana's educational innovation capacity.
- MTDA staff presents expert workshops to teachers in Montana and beyond on artificial intelligence in education.

2024

- MTDA expands staffing to support the Digital Learning Clearinghouse and establishes partnerships with pilot schools.
- Executive Director Jason Neiffer receives the META Empowered Superintendent Award for educational leadership.
- The Digital Learning Clearinghouse begins regular operations, positioning Montana as a leader in educational technology innovation.
- MTDA rolls out EdReady Classroom, a service aimed at providing EdReady to small, rural, and virtual schools outside of Montana.

2025

- MTDA celebrates its 15th anniversary, marking a decade and a half of educational innovation.
- As part of the Montana University System's Canvas adoption, MTDA leads the largest technology transition in the system's history, being the first to offer courses in the system.
- The organization becomes Montana's hub for AI experimentation and training, providing statewide professional development on artificial intelligence in education.
- The organization earns recognition as Discovery Education School of the Year.
- Executive Director Jason Neiffer joins the COSN Innovation Board and is recognized as an ASU-GSV AI Innovator.



Strategic Planning

Strategic Planning

Fifteen Years In, A New Roadmap for Educational Impact

After fifteen years of growth, MTDA took a new step in 2024: **its first formal strategic planning process**. The timing wasn't accidental. We'd reached a point of maturity as an organization, and with expanded responsibilities, like running the Digital Learning Clearinghouse and leading AI efforts across Montana, we needed a clear framework for making decisions.

We started with research and listening. Our team closely examined the initiatives of peers in the Virtual Learning Leadership Alliance, drawing particularly from the Idaho Digital Learning Alliance and the North Dakota Center for Distance Education. In the end, we leaned on Patrick Lencioni's book *The Advantage*, which argues for no more than three "strategic anchors" to guide focus.

Together with our board and staff, **we named three anchors that capture who we are and where we're headed**:

- Student-centered and equitable learning experiences: the north star for every programming decision.
- Partnerships with local schools and communities: because MTDA exists within, and in service to, Montana's unique educational landscape.
- Innovation, rigorous academics, and operational excellence: the engine that allows us to scale impact statewide.

The planning timeline is tied to legislative cycles. That's the reality for us: so much of our work connects to state priorities and funding. In October 2024, **the board approved both the framework and the timeline**, with full implementation of the goals starting during the 25-26 school year.

Board member McCall Flynn put it best during the discussion: "This framework helps MTDA know when to say 'yes' and when to say 'not right now.' **It's an ongoing balance between clear priorities and enough flexibility to adapt in a world where both technology and education are constantly evolving.** This is foundational work. It sets MTDA up to grow with purpose, while keeping the focus squarely on serving Montana students and schools with innovation and excellence."

**#WeAre
MTDA**

"MTDA helps students make the most of their education by offering advanced, high-quality courses that fit around even the busiest and schedules. Whether it's due to full schedules during the regular school day, extracurricular activities, job commitments, or the need for more options, MTDA gives students the flexibility to succeed on their own timeline by offering personalized learning options throughout the school year and summer."

-Barb Ridgway
Chief of Staff, Helena Public School

MTDA's Strategic Anchors

Fifteen Years In, A New Roadmap for Educational Impact

1

Anchor 1: Student-Centered and Equitable Learning Experience

Deliver a student-centered learning experience that adapts to the needs of all learners.

This anchor combines aspects of student-focused online learning, equity, and accessibility. It emphasizes providing flexible, personalized, and inclusive education tailored to the unique needs of every student, including those requiring accommodations or those from rural and underserved areas. It also highlights the importance of readiness and support for independent digital learning, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to succeed. As the first and most critical anchor, it maintains MTDA's focus on students as the "north star" of the program. As teachers are critical to student success, they are a focus of all student-centered initiatives.

2

Anchor 2: Strengthen and Expand Partnerships with Local Schools and the Community

Build and maintain strong, collaborative relationships with local schools, educators, parents, and community stakeholders to ensure comprehensive local support for MTDA programs.

This anchor captures the collaborative nature of MTDA's work with local schools, teachers, and other stakeholders. It emphasizes strong partnerships with schools and the community to ensure seamless integration of digital learning and comprehensive local support. This anchor would also address teacher support and development and engage the broader educational community to ensure MTDA programs are well-utilized and understood.

3

Anchor 3: Maintain High Academic Standards, Innovation, and Operational Excellence While Scaling for Growth

Ensure academic rigor and quality across all programs while using data, technology, and innovation to support sustainable growth and operational efficiency.

This anchor focuses on maintaining high academic standards while leveraging technology and data-driven insights to deliver effective and scalable online education. It includes maintaining rigorous academic quality, using data to guide decisions, ensuring reliable technology infrastructure, and adapting to the evolving needs of Montana schools. It emphasizes MTDA's ability to scale programs, while maintaining quality and operational efficiency.



Distance Learning Program

MTDA Distance Learning

A Letter From the Program Director

The 2024–25 school year marked **a period of significant growth and transformation for the Distance Learning Program**. The year began with the transition to a new learning management system, prompting both teachers and Montana Digital Academy staff to explore innovative tools and strategies to enhance student learning.

Throughout the year, extensive efforts were made to improve courses in meaningful ways. Courses were reorganized to create predictable and student-friendly learning paths. There was a renewed commitment to accessibility standards, ensuring that all students could access content equitably. Additionally, the team began exploring proficiency-based learning, **laying the groundwork for a more personalized and mastery-focused educational approach**.

As generative **artificial intelligence (AI)** continued to evolve, the Distance Learning team remained proactive. They worked to stay ahead of emerging technologies, striking a careful balance between leveraging AI as a learning tool and preserving the integrity of student assessment data. Finally, the adoption of a new math curriculum provided an opportunity to integrate all of these advancements—combining the new learning management system, AI-powered learning tools, and proficiency-based practices into a cohesive and forward-looking instructional model.

This work could not have been completed without the efforts of the **Distance Learning Team members**, Kate Peterson, Caitlin Byers, and Susan Quinn. Special thanks to Christen Cole, Kylie Hook, Jodie Hirsch, and Paul Kozlowitz for your continued support of the distance learning program. I can't wait to see what school year 2025–26 brings!



Robyn Nuttall
Distance Learning Program Director



Meet the Team



Susan Quinn
Distance Learning Ambassador



Caitlin Byers
Student and Teacher
Success Specialist



Kate Peterson
Student and Teacher
Success Specialist

MTDA Distance Learning

What is Distance Learning?

MTDA's distance learning program is about **access**. It's about making high-quality educational opportunities available to every Montana student, regardless of location, background, or circumstance. At its core, distance learning uses digital tools and flexible instructional models to connect learners with the courses, teachers, and support they need, whether they're in a rural high school, an alternative education setting, or preparing for college from home.

Unlike traditional in-person instruction, distance learning removes the limits of time and place. Students can engage with coursework *asynchronously*, working through material at their own pace, or join scheduled virtual sessions that support structure and interaction. This flexibility makes distance learning an essential part of today's educational landscape, especially in a geographically large and diverse state like Montana.

Montana Digital Academy was built with this vision in mind. As the state's official distance learning program, **MTDA provides online courses, readiness tools, and digital resources that support schools and families in designing personalized learning pathways**. Distance learning creates space for that journey, whether a student is catching up, moving ahead, or exploring new academic interests.

More than just delivering content online, effective distance learning emphasizes intentional design, teacher support, and equity in access. It's not a replacement for traditional classrooms—it's a *complement*, an *extension*, and, for many learners, a *lifeline*.

**#WeAre
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“Montana Digital Academy continues to set the national standard for what’s possible in K-12 online learning. Their innovative use of AI to rethink content and learning design is inspiring programs and schools across the country. Jason Neiffer’s leadership in online course quality, including his work with the National Standards for Quality, has raised the bar for all of us. In a state where distance can limit opportunity, MTDA makes high-quality courses and learning experiences available to every student, and they’re always willing to share ideas and collaborate so we can all do better for our learners.”

-Dr. Allison Powell
Chief Academic Officer, DLAC

MTDA Distance Learning

Course Enrollments

Number of Students Enrolled in Each Course

122

Spanish I B – Spanish I B is our most popular course this spring! Learners build on their beginner skills to tackle more complex conversations and dive deeper into Hispanic cultures.

95

Criminology – A favorite for aspiring investigators, Criminology’s students explore what drives crime, how laws are enforced, and the realities of the justice system—case studies included.

81

Middle School Spanish – This lively one-semester course gives middle schoolers a fun, interactive start to language learning, mixing vocabulary, culture, and games for an early global perspective.

79

WRIT101 – College Writing I – In this course, students are earning both high school and college credit. WRIT101 sharpens academic writing skills, preparing learners to research, revise, and communicate with confidence.

53

Sports Officiating – This class has students learning the rules of the game—literally. From managing plays to making the call under pressure, this course is a fast pass into the world of sports officiating.

Check out the DL Catalog here!



<https://mtda.link/IWWz0>

#WeAre
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“As an online teacher for the Montana Digital Academy, I love the opportunity it allows to connect with students from all across Montana, including those in remote communities, and provide them educational opportunities and personalized learning experiences they might not have locally. Watching students grow, adapt, and thrive in an online setting while building essential skills for the future is a joy and a privilege. MTDA allows students the opportunity to bridge educational gaps, create meaningful connections and equip them for success, regardless of their geographical or situation barriers.”

-Amanda Ferderer, MTDA Teacher
Anatomy & Physiology, Middle School Exploring Health Sciences, Health

Webinar Series

Distance Learning



About the Webinar

The Summer and Fall Programming webinar brought together school leaders from across Montana for an engaging, 20-minute, resource-rich session led by Robyn Nuttall, MTDA's Director of Distance Learning, and Susan Quinn, Distance Learning Ambassador. Presenters delivered practical strategies and timely updates—

highlighting summer original credit and FlexCAP options, tips for successful fall enrollment, and a deep dive into MTDA's growing dual credit offerings. Attendees left with ready-to-use tools, from entrance counseling forms to start-of-semester checklists, and a clear picture of how MTDA's flexible, high-quality programming can help students thrive year-round. Overall, they summarized how when the MTDA community comes together to plan for student success, great things happen.



Follow the QR code to watch the full webinar!

<https://mtda.link/cdeBN>



Follow the team for upcoming videos! @MTDigitalAcademy on YouTube

#WeAre MTDA

"We are deeply grateful for the invaluable support provided by MTDA, which has been instrumental in enhancing our academic programs and driving our students towards greater success."

Amanda Lantt
Academic Dean of Students, Hardin High School

MTDA Distance Learning

Dual Credit Program

College Partners



Here in Montana, we know that talent is equally distributed, but opportunity is not. The most rural students around the state often don't have the same opportunities as their counterparts at bigger schools do. **With MTDA's Dual Credit program, that opportunity now reaches the most remote corners of our state and the results speak for themselves.**

In just four years, **MTDA's Dual Credit enrollments have soared.** Fall semester enrollments have jumped from 25 students in 2021 to 200 in Fall of 2024! Our spring numbers grew from 27 in 2022 to 244 this last spring! Such incredible growth in a short period speaks volumes for the need for dual credit opportunities statewide, and our most rural students lead the way!

Over half (78.66%) of all Spring 2025 Dual Credit enrollments came from Class B and C schools, with Class C alone making up 60.25% of students – nearly double their representation in the MTDA's total high school enrollment (34.5%).

In short, dual credit courses are where opportunity meets talent. Montanans often ask, *Are we preparing students for the jobs Montana needs?* MTDA's answer is a resounding **yes.**

Our newest offering, **Introduction to Cybersecurity**, gives students hands-on experience in network security, cryptography, and ethical hacking – skills that lead directly into high-demand IT and security careers. Paired with our **computer science pathways**, these courses help build the digital workforce Montana's economy needs to thrive.

Meanwhile, our **Education courses** invite students to explore careers in teaching – part of a statewide effort to “grow our own” educators. By giving high schoolers early exposure to the profession, we're building the next generation of classroom leaders.

Montana Digital Academy's Dual Credit program continues to prove that when opportunity meets talent, great things happen, no matter the location of the learner.

Check out the Dual Credit catalog here!



<https://mtda.link/gEJsN>



MTDA Distance Learning

Career and Technical Education (CTE) Courses

Jobs for Montana Graduates (see syllabus to the right)

Jobs for Montana Graduates equips students with the **professional skills, workplace savvy, and confidence they need** to stand out in any career path. Through project-based learning, leadership activities, and real-world networking, students build communication skills, explore career options, and connect directly with employers. Whether a student's goal is a trade, the military, or college, this program provides the tools to get hired, succeed, and thrive in the Montana workforce.

Check out a sample syllabus here!



<https://mtda.link/NH6nT>



Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship **turns ideas into action**. Students learn how to identify market opportunities, develop a business plan, and navigate the realities of starting and running a venture. Along the way, they build budgeting skills, marketing know-how, and problem-solving strategies that translate into any career field. It's hands-on, independent learning with a strong dose of innovation—perfect for those who want to create their own opportunities.

Personal Finance

Personal Finance gives students **a clear, practical roadmap for managing money**. Covering everything from budgeting and saving to credit, loans, and investments, the course empowers learners to make smart financial decisions for life. They graduate knowing how to handle a paycheck, set goals, and plan for both the expected and the unexpected—skills that protect independence and build long-term stability.



#WeAre MTDA



"I have really loved teaching on MTDA for the last several years. I have most enjoyed getting to know students across the state and their interests. Teaching on a global scale is very grounding and allows you to see that the world really is a very small place. It reinforces that we need to celebrate the successes and provide compassion during the struggles. I have learned so much about this great state through the students that I have had online, and I have appreciated the rigor of learning for my students applied through the online setting."

-Vicki Walsh
MTDA Teacher, Algebra 1

MTDA Distance Learning

Career and Technical Education (CTE) Courses

Health Occupations

Health Occupations **introduces students to the fast-growing field of healthcare**, from patient care basics to medical terminology, ethics, and safety. With an emphasis on professionalism, teamwork, and hands-on skill-building, students gain an inside look at careers in nursing, emergency services, therapy, and more. It's a solid launchpad for those considering medical training or allied health programs.



Artificial Intelligence in the World

Artificial Intelligence in the World **demystifies one of today's most transformative technologies**. Students explore how AI powers everything from search engines to smart devices, learning the concepts, ethics, and problem-solving strategies behind it. The course blends technical understanding with critical thinking, preparing students to adapt to—and shape—the future of work.

Hospitality and Tourism Marketing

Hospitality and Tourism Marketing **takes students inside the businesses that fuel travel, dining, and events**. From customer service to brand strategy, learners study what it takes to attract visitors, create memorable experiences, and keep them coming back. With skills in marketing, event planning, and client relations, students are ready to step into a wide variety of service-focused careers.



Public and Global Health

Public and Global Health **gives students a wide-angle view of how health issues cross borders and affect communities worldwide**. From infectious disease prevention to environmental health challenges, the course blends science, policy, and cultural awareness. Students build skills in research, communication, and advocacy—tools they can use to protect and promote health locally and globally.

Principles of Agriculture

Principles of Agriculture takes students beyond the textbook to **explore the systems that keep our farms, ranches, and communities thriving**. With a mix of science, technology, and hands-on problem-solving, learners dive into plant science, animal husbandry, natural resources, and Ag mechanics. They gain skills that translate directly into the workplace—whether they're headed for the family ranch, agribusiness, or an ag-related trade. It's a solid first step into a career field that feeds and sustains our state.

Student Spotlight Video

Distance Learning: Callie Wood



Follow the QR code to watch the full spotlight!

<https://mtda.link/VDWjN>



About the Student Spotlight

Callie Wood's journey with the Montana Digital Academy (MTDA) echoes the themes of personalized learning and flexible support seen with programs like EdReady Montana. **Callie, a 2025 graduate of Browning High School**, is leveraging MTDA to prepare for a career as a nurse, with

aspirations to specialize in neonatal or pediatric nursing. She is currently taking AP Literature and Composition and College Writing through MTDA, and last year completed Anatomy and Physiology, Medical Terminology, and a junior English class. Her favorite MTDA course was Anatomy and Physiology, driven by her strong interest in the human body.

Amy Andreas, a teacher and librarian at Browning High School, has known Callie since she was a baby and describes her as a **strong, gifted, and talented student who thrives on challenge**. MTDA has continued to be a crucial resource for Callie, helping her learn self-pacing and manage hard deadlines. Amy emphasizes that **MTDA is vital for rural schools like Browning, which often face challenges in offering a wide variety of electives or finding specialized teachers**. MTDA widens the selection of classes available to students, even though the courses are rigorous, fast-paced, and demand self-motivation.

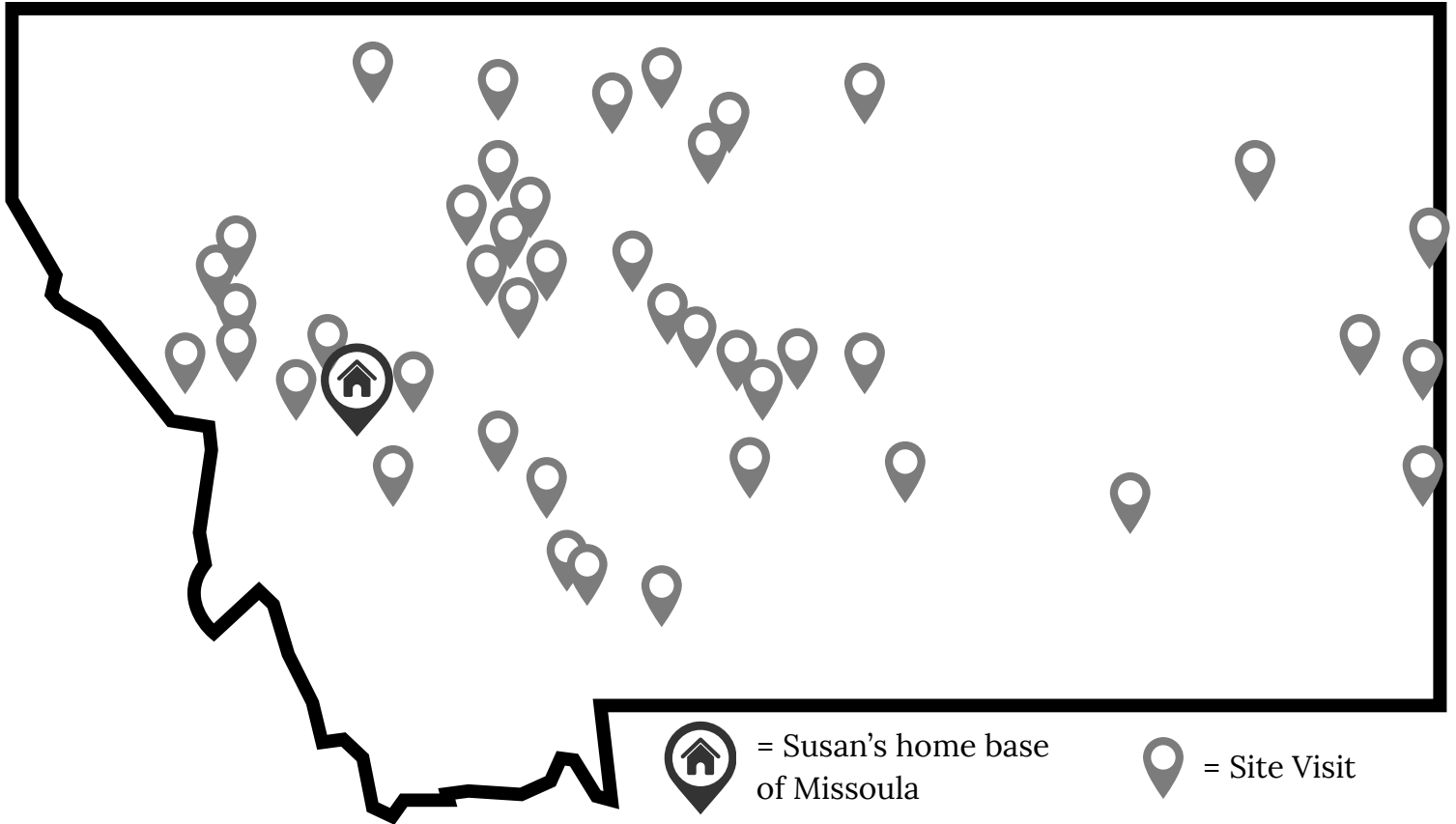
Ultimately, **MTDA has had a huge impact on Callie, setting her up for success**, and she is thankful for the availability of these classes. Amy Andreas notes that the benefits students gain are "priceless." Much like EdReady Montana, MTDA serves as a testament to the power of adaptable online learning platforms in fostering student success and confidence across diverse academic and personal pathways, especially in rural areas.

Follow the team for upcoming videos! @MTDigitalAcademy on YouTube

Distance Learning

Statewide Travel

MTDA has made a large effort this year to show up in person for the schools from Eureka to Ekalaka. See the map of where the distance learning ambassador, Susan Quinn has travelled throughout the year!



**#WeAre
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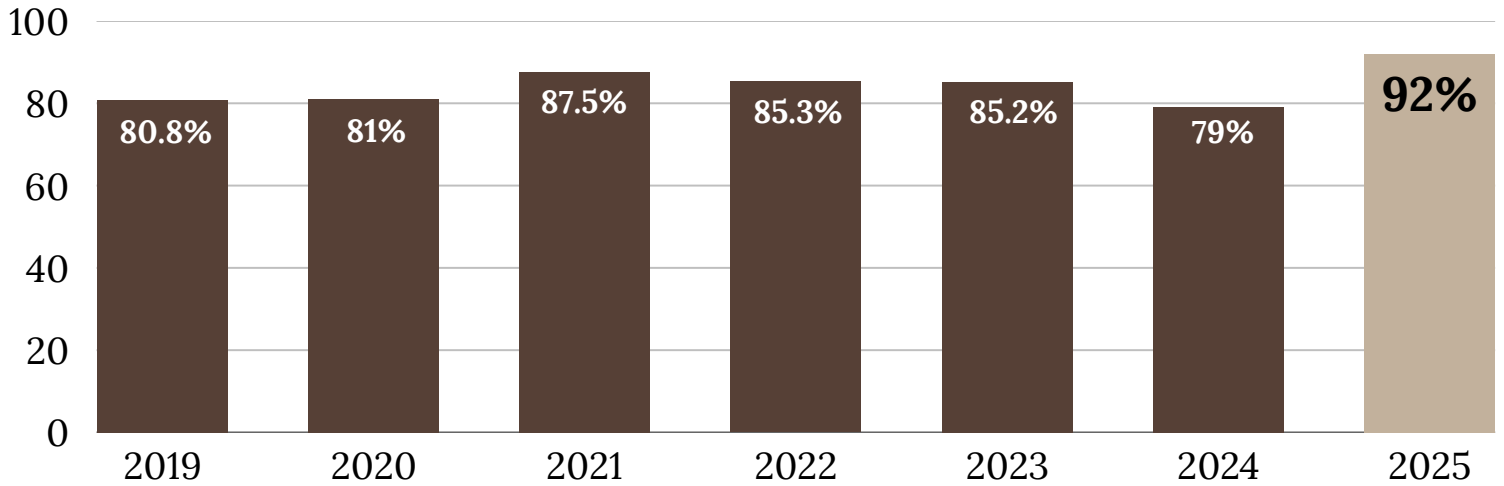
I love that I am able to connect with students all over Montana through MTDA. Students are able to be successful and strive for their goals in an environment that works for them. MTDA provides a unique opportunity for students to build upon their skills in their classes while preparing for their future.

-Taylee Schlauch, MTDA Teacher
WRIT 101

MTDA Distance Learning

Program Data

Percentage of *Student Satisfaction* Program Years 2019-2025



Enrollment by School District Size

	OC	OC-AP	OC-DE	OC-CTE	Flex/IPC	TOTAL ENRs	# UNIQUE STUDENTS	AVG ENRs PER STUDENT
AA DISTRICTS	694	78	16	78	135	1001	501	2
A DISTRICTS	549	99	164	142	206	1160	599	1.9
B DISTRICTS	732	84	80	68	235	1199	652	1.8
C DISTRICTS	982	85	192	274	181	1714	904	1.9
Other (Elementary/Alt Ed)	650	10	2	72	19	753	407	1.9
	3607	356	454	634	776	5827	3063	1.9
	62%	6%	8%	13%				
89%								

MTDA Distance Learning

Class B & C Highlight

Small Schools, a World of Opportunities

Montana Digital Academy is a critical educational partner for Montana's smallest school districts, directly empowering Class B (101-300 students) and Class C (1-100 students) schools to provide diverse and advanced learning opportunities that would otherwise be unavailable. This partnership allows small schools to expand their course catalogs exponentially without the cost of hiring additional staff.

During the 2024-25 School Year...

50%

of ALL enrollments came from Class B and C Schools

2,913

Number of Class B and C students who took MTDA classes

Class B and C schools that use MTDA include:

- Belfry
- Custer
- Grass Range
- Lambert
- Lavina
- Lima
- Power
- Reed Point
- Roy
- Ryegate
- Saco
- Valier
- Westby
- Winifred



Image of children playing at the same school as the background image in 1899. Courtesy of MTSL

Boundless Growth

MTDA levels the playing field, ensuring that students in Montana's most rural communities have the same access to a robust and comprehensive education as their peers in larger Class AA and A districts.

MTDA Distance Learning

Program Data

FY SUMMARY COMPARISON	2024-2025							
	MTDA Core Program							
	OC	OC-AP	OC-DE	OC-CTE	Flex/IPCT	TOTAL ENRs	#UNIQUE	AVG ENRs
AA DISTRICTS	694	78	16	78	135	1001	501	2.0
A DISTRICTS	549	99	164	142	206	1160	599	1.9
B DISTRICTS	732	84	80	68	235	1199	652	1.8
C DISTRICTS	982	85	192	274	181	1714	904	1.9
Other (Elementary Alt Ed)	650	10	2	72	19	753	407	1.9
	3607	356	454	634	776	5827	3063	1.9
	62%	6%	8%	13%				
		89%						

FY SUMMARY COMPARISON	2023-2024							
	MTDA Core Program							
	OC	OC-AP	OC-DE	OC-CTE	Flex/IPCT	TOTAL ENRs	#UNIQUE	AVG ENRs
AA DISTRICTS	1150	73	23	106	769	2121	968	2.2
A DISTRICTS	495	75	118	138	219	1045	536	1.9
B DISTRICTS	564	68	68	70	254	1024	575	1.8
C DISTRICTS	997	77	124	203	278	1679	910	1.8
ELEMENTARY DISTRICTS	436	0	0	24	2	462	334	1.4
	3642	293	333	541	1522	6331	3323	1.9
	58%	5%	5%	24%				
		91%						

FY SUMMARY COMPARISON	2022-2023						
	OC	OC-AP	OC-DE	Flex/IPCT	TOTAL	#UNIQUE	AVG ENRs
	AA DISTRICTS	1190	44	17	921	2172	991
A DISTRICTS	371	87	34	386	878	465	1.9
B DISTRICTS	671	63	24	227	985	563	1.7
C DISTRICTS	915	42	97	230	1284	705	1.8
ELEMENTARY DISTRICTS	417	0	0	12	429	263	1.6
	3564	236	172	1776	5748	2987	1.9
	62%	4%	3%	31%			
		69%					

FY SUMMARY COMPARISON	2021-2022						
	OC	OC-AP	OC-DE	CR	TOTAL	#UNIQUE	AVG ENRs
	AA DISTRICTS	918	67	3	1248	2236	1162
A DISTRICTS	311	59	0	231	601	390	1.5
B DISTRICTS	645	53	0	225	923	522	1.8
C DISTRICTS	816	37	22	184	1059	608	1.7
ELEMENTARY DISTRICTS	133	1	0	0	134	111	1.2
	2823	217	25	1888	4953	2793	1.8
	57%	4%	1%	38%			
		62%					

FY SUMMARY COMPARISON	2020-2021						
	OC	OC-AP	OC-DE	CR	MSL	TOTAL ENRs	#UNIQUE
	AA DISTRICTS	1890	185	14	668	1	2758
A DISTRICTS	789	113	5	219	3	1129	681
B DISTRICTS	853	80	29	135	11	1108	723
C DISTRICTS	1127	65	42	76	48	1358	923
ELEMENTARY DISTRICTS	12	0	0	0	13	25	20
	4671	443	90	1098	76	6378	4041
	73%	7%	1%	17%	1%		
		81%					

FY SUMMARY COMPARISON	2019-2020						
	OC	OC-AP	OC-DE	CR	MSL	TOTAL ENRs	#UNIQUE
	AA DISTRICTS	1461	89	7	967	1	2525
A DISTRICTS	659	88	2	280	13	1042	667
B DISTRICTS	862	101	7	122	153	1245	714
C DISTRICTS	1196	39	23	126	398	1782	1047
ELEMENTARY DISTRICTS	10	0	0	0	168	178	139
	4188	317	39	1495	733	6772	3982
	62%	5%	1%	22%	11%		
		68%					

Student Spotlight Video

Distance Learning: Inga Lee-Eichenwald



Follow the QR code to watch the full spotlight!

<https://mtda.link/xgsvd>



About the Student Spotlight

Inga Lee-Eichenwald's journey with the Montana Digital Academy (MTDA) echoes the themes of personalized learning and flexible support seen with programs like EdReady Montana. Inga, a student at Gallatin High School, initially leveraged MTDA for her freshman and sophomore years to

balance her highly competitive figure skating career in California with her academic commitments. This allowed her to stay enrolled in her Montana high school while pursuing her athletic dreams.

Even after returning to in-person schooling, MTDA continued to be a crucial resource. Inga utilized the platform for a French 3 class that conflicted with her Orchestra schedule, showcasing MTDA's ability to provide solutions for various student needs, including scheduling conflicts and remote learning.

Inga's experience in her AP Biology class through MTDA highlights the program's engaging learning environment. She praised her teacher's proactive communication via email and through assignments that included direct phone conversations, which helped her grasp complex material and prepare for the AP exam. A key takeaway, reinforced by another speaker in the video, is the constant availability of MTDA teachers to support students.

Ultimately, MTDA provided Inga with a valuable opportunity, allowing her to pursue her passion for skating while remaining connected to her home state and her education. Much like EdReady Montana, MTDA serves as a testament to the power of adaptable online learning platforms in fostering student success and confidence across diverse academic and personal pathways.

Follow the team for upcoming videos! @MTDDigitalAcademy on YouTube



Indigenous Language at MTDA

Indigenous Language at MTDA

Review of the Program

In 2021, the Montana Legislature asked the Montana Digital Academy to join the statewide effort to preserve and revitalize Indigenous languages. Representative Jonathan Windy Boy brought the idea forward, with a clear mission for MTDA: **work with interested tribes to create courses that support heritage language revitalization.**

From the start, MTDA partnered closely with tribal leaders and language experts. The goal has been simple but ambitious: **design courses that reflect community priorities and help keep languages alive.**

With support from the Dennis and Phyllis J. Washington Foundation's 21st Century Teaching and Learning Initiative at the University of Montana, MTDA launched a Tribal Relations and Education Fellowship in July 2022.

Dr. Anna East, a former Montana Teacher of the Year, stepped into the role. Her focus is on building Indigenous language courses and supporting the instructors who teach them. The fellowship has helped grow the program, expand its offerings, and keep course development grounded in the communities it serves. The 2023 legislature provided additional support through the MTDA Clearinghouse. MTDA also uses its Digital Learning Clearinghouse to support the work.

The first course, Neyio (Cree), was rolled out in fall 2022 to all public school students through MTDA's Distance Learning program. Apsáalooke (Crow) followed in spring 2023. Both are still available, depending on teacher availability and student interest.



Dr. Anna East
Tribal Relations and
Education Fellow

In fall 2023, MTDA worked with Browning Public Schools to digitize a district-wide Blackfoot language assessment, a step toward broader language instruction. The team also partnered with the Fort Peck Tribes to create Dakota and Nakoda language courses, available now in our distance learning program.

MTDA's approach remains relationship-first. Tribal language experts guide cultural and instructional content, and MTDA brings technical and instructional design know-how. The result is courses that are academically sound, culturally authentic, and shaped by the communities they represent.



Indigenous Language at MTDA

Class 7 Work

In Montana, Class 7 teachers are language and culture specialists specific to our state's tribal languages. This classification is special: in keeping with tribal sovereignty, Class 7 teachers are identified and approved by their tribes in whatever way the tribe determines appropriate. Because of the decentralized and highly culture-specific nature of this process, a singular Class 7 organization that supports language teachers, provides curriculum and classroom strategies, and offers professional development appropriately, does not exist. Instead, there are many varied conferences and other resources that may or may not apply to unique language groups.

The **MTDA Class 7 site** aims to provide at least one resource useful to Class 7 teachers across the state. The concept is this: brief video clips of real classroom language instruction where strategies are transferable to other language contexts. For example, how to teach greetings, drill math concepts, and demonstrate verb conjugation. These clips are accompanied by a video interview of the teacher explaining how he or she uses the strategy and what kind of instruction or scaffolding must precede it.

We have taken care to minimize disruptions to classrooms and not show students' faces in our videos. **"I am so pleased to help highlight the best of what these remarkable teachers are doing every day,"** said Anna East.

Check out the full
Class 7 page here!



Image above shows Class 7 teacher, Bill The Boy leading a lesson



EdReady Montana



EdReady Montana

A Letter From the Program Director

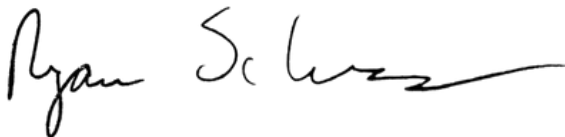
The EdReady Montana team continued its work in 2024, supporting students at key educational transition points. **We remain a foundational solution—combining cutting-edge technology with expert guidance—to help educators in Montana and beyond tackle critical learning challenges.**

This year, we saw schools using EdReady to track student growth over time, incorporating periodic skills assessments into their instructional strategies. **One particularly impactful approach has been the Pathway to Algebra program**, where schools identified students struggling with foundational skills and used targeted interventions to close those gaps. As a result, many students made academic gains of up to—and beyond—a full year’s progress.

Another key focus has been **test readiness**, ensuring students build the skills needed for success on exams such as the HiSET/GED, state-wide standardized tests, and college entrance assessments like the ACT and SAT. We are excited to introduce new MAST test prep modules to support this, launching in January 2025!

Meanwhile, our higher education partnerships continue to grow. This year, **eight Montana colleges and universities expanded their use of EdReady to help students strengthen key skills before starting their first college classes.** Additionally, our first implementations in Colorado and Wyoming are taking shape, marking an exciting step toward expanding **our impact in the country.**

As we look ahead, **we remain committed to helping students bridge readiness gaps, build confidence, and achieve their academic goals**—wherever they are in their learning journey.



Ryan Schrenk, Ed.D.
EdReady Montana Program Director



Meet the Team



Above: Dr. Ryan Schrenk, Jason Leonard
Below: Virg Hale, Jacquie Teasdale

EdReady Montana

What is EdReady?

EdReady Montana is **MTDA's statewide competency learning platform focused on math or English, helping students prepare for algebra, college, high school completion, and whatever comes next.** It is not a curriculum replacement or a one-size-fits-all tool. Instead, it's a flexible system that identifies where a student is academically and charts a personalized path forward. Funded through generous support from the Dennis and Phyllis J. Washington Foundation, EdReady is a wide-ranging program that serves a vast expanse of learning environments across Big Sky Country.

EdReady was designed by our long-time strategic partner, the **NROC Project**, and is responsive to real-world challenges. Whether students are brushing up on foundational skills, preparing for college placement, or working toward a diploma, EdReady helps them build confidence and close learning gaps at their own pace.

What sets EdReady apart is its *adaptability*. It works in K-12 classrooms, adult education centers, colleges, correctional facilities—wherever there's a need for targeted support and a smarter way to measure growth. Educators can see what students need in real time and use that insight to guide instruction.

At its heart, EdReady Montana is about access, progress, and meaningful results. It's one way MTDA is working to ensure every Montana learner, regardless of background, has a clear, supported path to success.

DENNIS & PHYLLIS
WASHINGTON
FOUNDATION

THE
NROC
PROJECT

EdReady
CLASSROOM

#WeAre
MTDA

“Having this goal under my belt is a huge weight off. EdReady helped me step-by-step to learn the different concepts of math. My goal is to...become a wildlife biologist. I can start working toward my higher education now that I am done with my HiSET. And, knowing the universities use EdReady as a placement test in Montana, I don't have to change anything to prepare for college. That's a win in itself... I am going to stick with EdReady to pursue my higher education.”

- Marty, Student, Great Falls Pre-Release Center

EdReady Montana

This Year In EdReady

In 2024–2025, **EdReady Montana continued to serve as a critical readiness resource across the state**, helping students at key academic transition points—from foundational math to high-stakes test prep in math and English. Schools increasingly used EdReady, not just as an intervention tool, but as part of their instructional rhythm. Through ongoing skills assessments and personalized learning plans, educators were able to respond with targeted support and monitor growth over time.

One standout example of this approach is the **Pathway to Algebra** program. Schools identified students with gaps in early math skills and used EdReady’s adaptive platform to deliver customized support. Many students showed measurable academic gains, with some demonstrating more than a full year’s growth in a single academic year. This model of readiness-based instruction continues to guide our implementation strategy and resource development.

Test preparation remained another strong use case for EdReady. With students preparing for the math and English content areas of HiSET, ACT, SAT, and statewide assessments, demand for targeted prep tools grew across K-12 and adult education settings. In response, **EdReady Montana launched new MAST (Montana Aligned to Standards Through-Year, Montana’s educational assessment program for grades 6-8) modules in January 2025** to provide even more focused support aligned to Montana’s evolving assessment landscape.

EdReady’s reach also expanded geographically and institutionally. Eight Montana colleges and universities now integrate EdReady into their math placement and bridge programs, while early implementations began in Colorado and Wyoming—marking a promising step forward in regional collaboration. Whether in a rural high school, an alternative education program, or a college advising office, EdReady remains a trusted and flexible solution to help learners move forward with confidence.

**#WeAre
MTDA**



“EdReady has become an essential tool in Kalispell Public Schools’ educational programs. As both the director of KPS’s summer school program and chair of Glacier High School’s math department, I have witnessed firsthand the platform’s transformative impact on student learning.

The educational disruption from COVID-19 continues to affect our students and families, creating significant learning gaps, particularly in mathematics. Many students now enter our high school lacking the prerequisite skills from middle school, leading to challenges in algebra and geometry courses. EdReady’s learning pathways have proven invaluable in addressing these gaps, helping students demonstrate proficiency in their core math courses’ essential standards.”

– Anthony Lapke, Math Department Chair, Glacier High School
Summer School Director, Kalispell Public Schools

EdReady Montana

By The Numbers

4

Number of Staff
in the EdReady MT
Department

202

Number of Affiliations
in Program Year 2024

26,090

Number of Enrollments
in Program Year 2025



Webinar Series

EdReady Montana



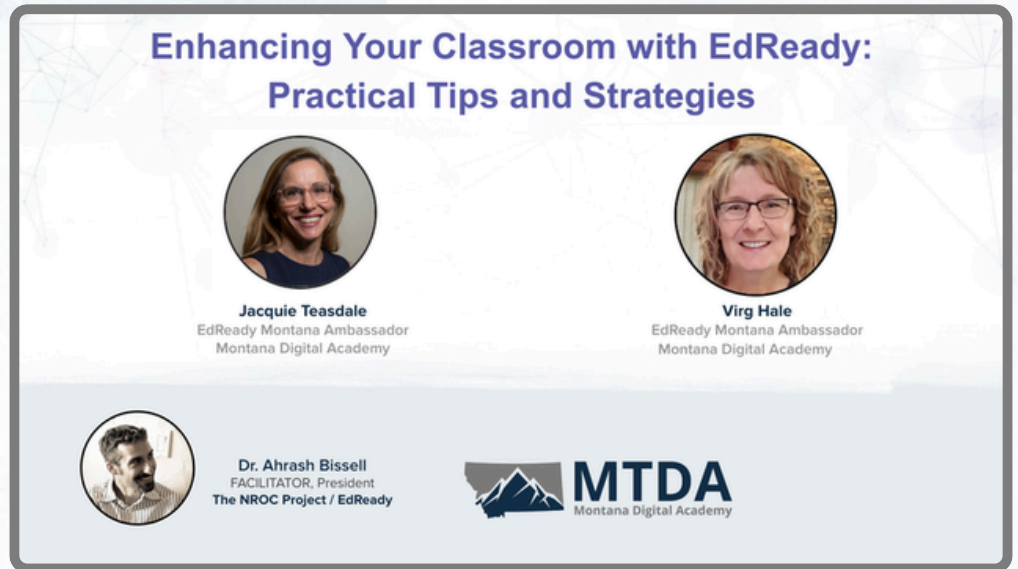
About the Webinar

A featured webinar this year highlighted **the successful collaboration between The NROC Project and the Montana Digital Academy**, showcasing a decade of growth and innovative implementation of the EdReady platform. As a nonprofit dedicated to improving college and career readiness, NROC's flagship

EdReady platform provides a flexible, adaptive learning tool that assesses students and creates personalized study paths with integrated resources to guide them toward mastery.

The presentation, led by EdReady Ambassadors Jacquie Teasdale and Virg Hale, detailed Montana's "teachers helping teachers" model, which has produced a rich library of shared resources developed with educators across the state. **Their success stems from a comprehensive approach that includes strategic onboarding with school-specific needs assessments, a structured communication plan, and alignment with state initiatives like Proficiency-Based Education and MTSS.** A vast collection of offline resources supports this—from gamification tools to student note-taking rubrics—designed to boost engagement and cultivate a growth mindset. Crucially, the team provides dedicated training on using EdReady's reports to drive instruction, offering tangible evidence of student growth.

The EdReady Montana partnership, now branded as **EdReady Classroom**, serves as a powerful model for the entire NROC network. It demonstrates how a foundation of intense collaboration, shared expertise, and a commitment to empowering teachers can unlock the full potential of educational technology to support every student's journey.



Follow the team for upcoming videos! @MTDigitalAcademy on YouTube



Follow the QR code to watch the full webinar!

<https://mtda.link/pKKcz>



THE NROC PROJECT

Student Spotlight Video

EdReady Montana



Follow the QR code to watch the full spotlight!

<https://mtda.link/kgsDu>



About the EdReady Spotlight

For nearly a decade, Glacier High School has enthusiastically embraced the EdReady Montana program as a key **competency based** support for students across the academic spectrum. Teachers and students alike praise EdReady's ability to pinpoint where students are in their learning and provide a clear, **personalized** path forward.

Whether **filling skill gaps** during summer bridge programs or **preparing for rigorous courses** like Algebra II and AP Calculus, EdReady helps learners build the confidence and **proficiency** they need to succeed. Instructors use it strategically, assigning targeted pathways that foster **motivation and accountability**—especially for students who haven't thrived in traditional classroom settings.

Beyond math, EdReady has proven itself as a **flexible and accessible** platform used across disciplines, from grammar and writing to ACT and SAT preparation. Its strength lies in its adaptability: teachers can integrate it into a wide range of courses, supporting both struggling students and those on track for college. Glacier High School educators emphasize how valuable it is to review foundational skills—especially for standardized test prep—and appreciate the way EdReady supports both classroom instruction and independent learning. More than a tool, **EdReady Montana has become a trusted partner**, with responsive staff and a shared commitment to Montana's students and teachers.

Follow the team for upcoming videos! @MTDigitalAcademy on YouTube



Digital Learning Clearinghouse



Digital Learning Clearinghouse

A Letter From the Program Director


As we wrapped up our inaugural year with the Clearinghouse Department at MTDA, **I'm struck by what truly drives educational transformation: relationships and connections.**

Visiting over 40 Montana communities—from Hardin to Superior, Nashua to Missoula—has reinforced that **real change happens through authentic partnerships.** Whether it's Dick Anderson Construction connecting students to real apprenticeships, Stories for Action bringing Indigenous perspectives to life, or Code.org expanding computer science access statewide, our most impactful work and solutions stem from relationships that reflect the concerns, questions, and ideas raised by our K-12 schools in Montana.

We've learned that teachers don't just need content—they need connections. That's why our Digital Content & Platform courses succeed: **they provide educators with both flexibility and support.** Similarly, our Digital Learning Resources like "Journal Your Reading Journey" and "How to Become a Millionaire" work because they bridge academic learning with real-world application.

Montana's educational landscape is as diverse as its geography, but **the common thread is educators' unwavering commitment to their students.** By facilitating connections—whether between a teacher in Fromberg and a mindfulness expert, or a student in Wolf Point and a construction pathway—we're weaving a support network that strengthens Montana's entire educational ecosystem.

The connections and relationships established this past year would not have been possible without the hard work of the Clearinghouse team, who learned their job roles while supporting the growth and development of this new department. A big thank you to Marcella Flannigan and Ally Riggs, and I look forward to what 2025-26 holds for the Clearinghouse at MTDA!



Lisa Bechtold
Clearinghouse Director



Meet the Team



Marcella Flannigan
Clearinghouse
Ambassador



Ally Riggs
Clearinghouse
Business Manager

Digital Learning Clearinghouse

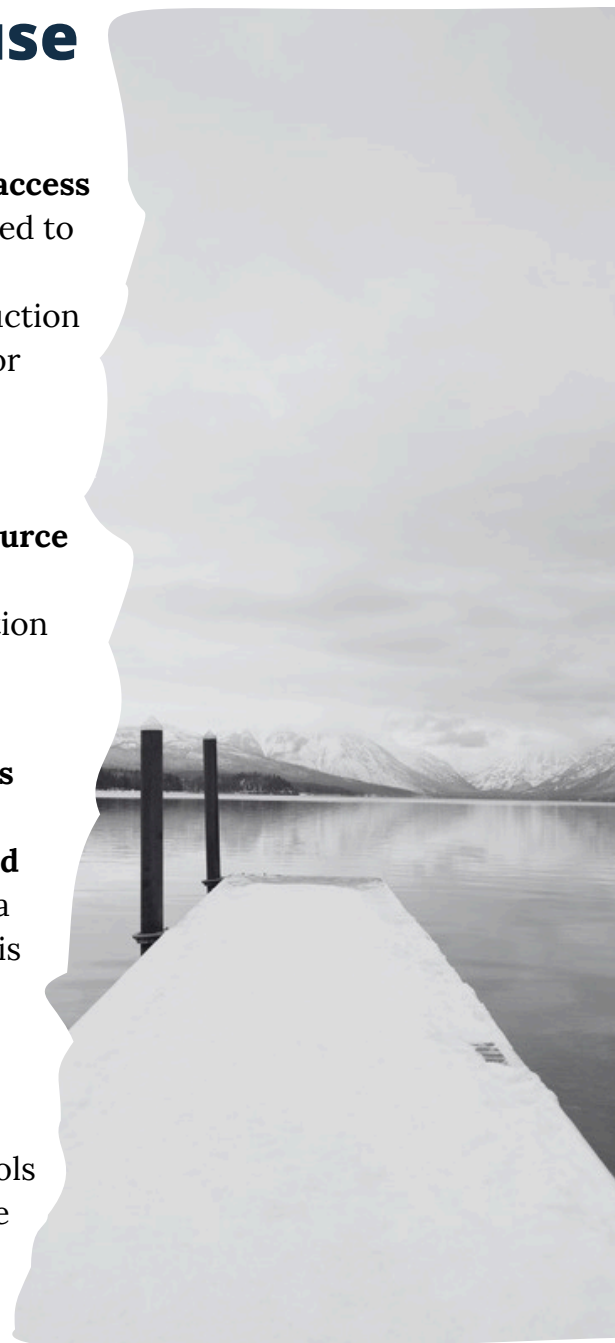
The Pilot Year

The MTDA *Digital Learning Clearinghouse* is **Montana’s open-access hub for digital learning tools, strategies, and content.** Designed to support educators across the state, the Clearinghouse brings together curated resources that can be used to enhance instruction in any setting: traditional classrooms, blended environments, or fully online programs.

Built with the needs of Montana’s diverse schools in mind, the Clearinghouse is more than a website—**it’s a professional resource built by educators, for educators.** It features ready-to-use instructional materials, best-practice guides, and implementation support for schools looking to integrate digital learning more effectively and equitably.

The Clearinghouse supports local control by allowing districts to choose what works best for their students, while still benefiting from a centralized, high-quality collection of vetted resources. Whether a teacher is looking for enrichment ideas, a district is exploring online course options, or an administrator is planning a digital learning rollout, the Clearinghouse offers practical support grounded in Montana’s context.

In a time of rapid change and growing demand for flexible instruction, the Digital Learning Clearinghouse is helping schools navigate the complexity of digital education—one resource, one solution, one learner at a time.



**#WeAre
MTDA**



“The aspects of the blended learning that students most find motivating is having their own teacher in the classroom. We’ve had a lot of experience with MTDA and online platforms, and we get good reviews from our students about those courses; however, when they can have the content of an MTDA course with their teacher that they know, trust, and have built relationships with... **That is by far the most motivating piece for our students. We’ve learned so much.**”

– Michael Wilson
Principal, Cascade Public Schools

Digital Learning Clearinghouse

By the Numbers

2,906

Number of student engagements in 2024-25

Here's the breakdown...

1,465 Engagements

Digital Content & Platform

65 Engagements

Digital Learning Resources

1,376 Engagements

Proficiency-based Testing Services

Digital Learning Clearinghouse

Digital Content and Platform Courses (DCP)

DCP curriculum is **full-year or semester-long courses designed to support blended and distance learning in local classrooms**. These flexible, teacher-supported courses allow schools to combine high-quality online content with in-person instruction while giving local teachers full control over pacing, grading, and customization. Educators can adapt the content—adding or removing materials—to meet the specific needs of their students and school communities.

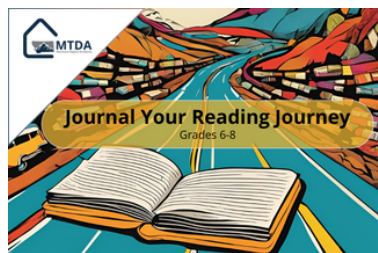
New DCP Courses in 24-25

- Middle School Spanish
 - Physical Education 6, 7, & 8
 - Agricultural Communications I-II
 - Social Media I
 - 2D Studio Art
 - Music of the World
- ...and more!



Enrichment Courses

These short, engaging enrichment Digital Learning Resources were created to spark curiosity and creativity in students through flexible, self-paced learning experiences. Designed for blended classrooms or independent use, they're great for advisory periods, genius hour, club time, or even as a full-class exploration. Students can dive into unique topics—like Understanding the Night Sky, How to Become a Millionaire, or Journal Your Reading Journey—while building skills in reflection and independent thinking.



Journal Your Reading Journey: Students design and personalize a reading journal to track and celebrate their reading journey. Using dotted journal pages, they'll create a title page, book lists, reading logs, and a choice section with pens, markers, and watercolor. After completing the course, students can continue using their journals during independent reading time.



How to Become a Millionaire: This comprehensive online course is designed to **equip students with the essential knowledge and skills needed to build wealth and achieve financial independence**. Students will explore the fundamentals of personal finance, banking, and investing needed to achieve millionaire status.

The Digital Learning Clearinghouse has a few standout popular courses! The engagement numbers of the most popular courses are as follows:

Biology A/B: 360

Health: 146

Spanish II A/B: 128

Google Workspace: 74

Check out the full Catalog here!



Student Spotlight Video

Digital Learning Clearinghouse



Follow the QR code to watch the full spotlight!

<https://mtda.link/PdMOt>



About the Clearinghouse Spotlight

The **Montana Digital Academy (MTDA) Clearinghouse echoes the themes of personalized learning and flexible support** seen with programs like EdReady Montana. Small, rural institutions like Cascade Public Schools initially leveraged the MTDA Clearinghouse to expand their course offerings and provide diverse academic opportunities. This

allowed them to offer a wider range of electives and core classes, such as chemistry, that they might not otherwise be able to provide.

The Digital Learning Clearinghouse facilitates a *blended learning* approach, combining online curriculum with the presence of a local teacher in the classroom, showcasing MTDA's ability to provide solutions for various school needs, including resource limitations and teacher workload.

Student experiences with programs like Google Workspace through MTDA highlight the platform's **engaging learning environment**. Students learned practical skills such as using Google Docs, Slides, and Sheets, as well as typing and formatting documents like book reports, resumes, and cover letters. A key takeaway is that the most motivating aspect for students is having their own familiar teacher present in the classroom while using the MTDA content. This combines the quality of MTDA courses with established student-teacher relationships.

Ultimately, MTDA provides a valuable opportunity, **allowing schools to overcome limitations in course offerings and empower students for college preparation**. Much like EdReady Montana, MTDA serves as a testament to the power of adaptable online learning platforms in fostering student success and confidence across diverse academic and personal pathways.

Follow the team for upcoming videos! @MTDigitalAcademy on YouTube

Digital Learning Clearinghouse

Montana Partnerships

Building on the success of our ongoing partnership with **Dick Anderson Construction**, we're excited to announce the next course in the series—*Intro to Construction 1*. The Pre-Apprenticeship course has seen strong student engagement and positive outcomes, with several students transitioning into real-world job placements and apprenticeships. This new online, self-paced course continues to support career-connected learning by introducing students to core construction concepts and job site expectations. DA Construction plays a vital role in helping students take the next step—connecting them with real-world apprenticeship opportunities that move learning from the screen to the field.



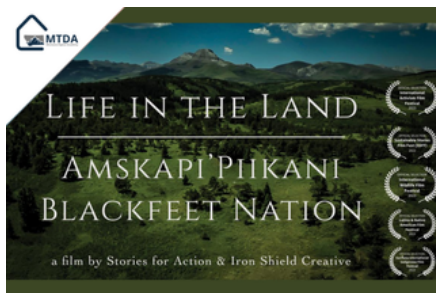
#WeAreMTDA



“This really has been positive for the couple of students who have completed it, one being my own son. He started this week doing 12 hour days with Dick Anderson and he's a totally different kid since he started working with them a few months ago! This is exactly what many of our kids need!”

- Jennifer Courtney
Principal, Big Sky High School

New Montana Partnerships



Organization: Stories for Action

Course: Life in the Land: Amskapi' Piikani Blackfeet Nation

Students engage with the culture, land, and stewardship of the Amskapi' Piikani (Blackfeet Nation) through place-based storytelling and Indigenous perspectives. The course highlights the deep connection between people, land, and community in northwestern Montana, with a focus on the *Life in the Land* film by Stories for Action.

Organization: Montana Mindfulness Project

Course: Mindfulness for Teens

This course **helps teens explore mindfulness practices to manage stress, build self-awareness, and improve focus.** Through guided activities and reflections, students learn tools to support their emotional well-being both in and out of the classroom.



More on the next page!



Digital Learning Clearinghouse

Montana Partnerships

Organization: CAST.org

Course: Take Flight: Mission 1

Take Flight: Mission 1 is the first of six missions **designed to prepare students for flying drones** through the lens of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). In this mission, students begin with a LEGO challenge to build teamwork and communication skills, then apply those skills by collaborating with flying orbs.



CAST | Take Flight: Mission 1

Organization: Montana PBS

Course: Media Mavericks: Teen Storytelling

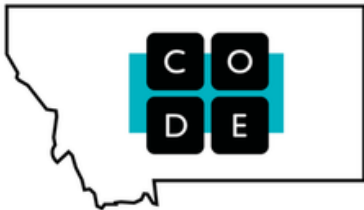
In this storytelling course with a purpose, **students respond to a "Call for Change" by exploring issues that matter to them and choosing how to express their message.** They then create a final project in the format of their choice: a video, audio story, or editorial cartoon.



Check out the full Catalog here!



Regional Partnerships



Organization: Code.org

The MTDA Clearinghouse is now the regional partner for Code.org, **offering schools in Montana K-12 Computer Science and AI courses, programming, and professional development for teachers.** This is achieved by utilizing Code.org-trained Montana facilitators for on-demand workshops, available to both schools and districts. Montana Code.org Facilitators, supported by MTDA's MT Facilitators' Hub, provide comprehensive on-demand teacher training and support through virtual or face-to-face workshops.

#WeAreMTDA



"Montana Digital Academy has become the central hub for high-quality learning resources across the state. Their commitment to educational access and excellence is unmatched. They are not only easy to work with—they are eager collaborators, always ready to partner in ways that truly support Montana's educators and students."

—Amanda Bastoni

Senior Director Higher Education and Workforce Implementation at CAST

Digital Learning Clearinghouse

MTDA and the RFP

What is an RFP?

A **Request for Proposal (RFP)** is a competitive bidding process where organizations invite vendors to submit proposals for specific products or services. For MTDA, RFPs ensure we select the highest-quality educational technology solutions through a transparent, fair evaluation process.

Current Focus Areas: During the 2024-25 school year, MTDA launched three National RFPs targeting:

- Elementary Education solutions
- K-12 CTE/STEM tools
- K-12 AI/VR/AR technologies

MTDA's RFP process partners with the University of Montana and is built on transparency and fairness. Every step is documented and publicly available, so anyone can see exactly how decisions are made. Our standardized evaluation process gives all vendors an equal chance, while multiple review levels ensure we select only the best solutions for our K-12 schools in Montana. This approach protects our stakeholders while delivering quality technology solutions that truly serve students and educators.

#WeAre
MTDA



“It’s been my pleasure to work with the team at MTDA as a Warranted Procurement Officer for the State, helping them navigate Montana’s procurement processes as they expand the Clearinghouse and broaden support for Montana’s public-school students. Having spent many hours with these educators, and the technical and support staff who comprise the team at MTDA, **I’ve seen firsthand their experience, dedication and hard work to bring only the best instructional programs to Montana’s students** in conjunction with support to the school districts, from largest to smallest in equal fashion. **Parents, teachers, and administrators should know the MTDA team are worthy partners with them;** and the Clearinghouse is an amazing opportunity for students to develop greater knowledge and skills than ever before. MTDA has my full support and endorsement!”

-Jay Michalik, University of Montana Procurement Officer

Digital Learning Clearinghouse

From Idea to Implementation: What does it look like to launch an RFP at MTDA?

Starting Strong: Planning Our Path

When MTDA identifies a technology need in our educational community, we don't just jump in—we plan thoughtfully. Our team works with our university procurement expert, Jay Michalik, to map out exactly what we're looking for and create a clear timeline. Think of it as building the foundation before constructing the house.

Crafting the Invitation

Next, we develop a comprehensive request that tells potential vendors exactly what our schools need. This isn't just a wish list—it's a detailed roadmap that includes technology compatibility, content, pricing, scoring criteria, and key dates. Every vendor must meet the same initial requirements, ensuring a level playing field from day one.

Going Public

Once our procurement partner gives the green light, the RFP goes live on Montana's official contracting system, eMacs. Vendors can ask questions, attend information sessions, and prepare their best proposals. This transparency means everyone—including our stakeholders—can follow along.

The Evaluation Marathon

Here's where the real work begins. Our scoring team dedicates 10-15 hours per person, carefully reviewing each proposal. We check references, verify claims, and score everything against our established criteria. It's thorough, it's fair, and it's documented every step of the way.

Making the Decision

Our team gathers with procurement officials for collaborative scoring sessions. Together, we review findings, discuss strengths and concerns, and make final selections. Results are posted publicly, maintaining our commitment to transparency.

Sealing the Deal

Successful vendors work with the university system to finalize contracts, complete security requirements, and begin integration with MTDA's systems. Within 60-120 days, new solutions are ready to serve Montana's educational community.

The Bottom Line

Three to four months from start to finish, the RFP process ensures our schools get the best technology solutions through a process that's fair, thorough, and accountable to everyone we serve.



Digital Learning Clearinghouse

Vendors

Montana Digital Academy partners with carefully selected vendors to expand our catalog and bring high-quality digital resources to Montana students. These partnerships allow us to offer specialized content – including STEM, Career & Technical Education, Artificial Intelligence, and Virtual Reality – that provides schools with flexible options for blended and self-paced learning. Each vendor is chosen through a formal Request for Proposal (RFP) process, ensuring every resource we adopt meets our standards for quality, alignment with Montana frameworks, and accessibility for teachers and students.

2024-25 Approved Vendors

8

Number of active vendors in 2024-25

2025-26 Tentative Awards

7

Number of vendors offering K-12 AI tools

Check out the full Catalog here!



To see the list of all active & currently available vendors, please visit the Clearinghouse online catalog. This is the most up-to-date resource.

#WeAre
MTDA

“We are so happy to be working with the team at MTDA. We see this as our best path to reach Montana students and educators.”

-Tim Felke
Founder & CEO, Active Learning Labs

Vendor Highlight: Active Learning Labs



Personal Finance introduces students to the money skills they’ll use in life – budgeting, saving, credit, investing, and planning for future goals. Through real-world examples and interactive activities, students learn to make informed financial decisions, avoid common money pitfalls, and prepare for long-term success.

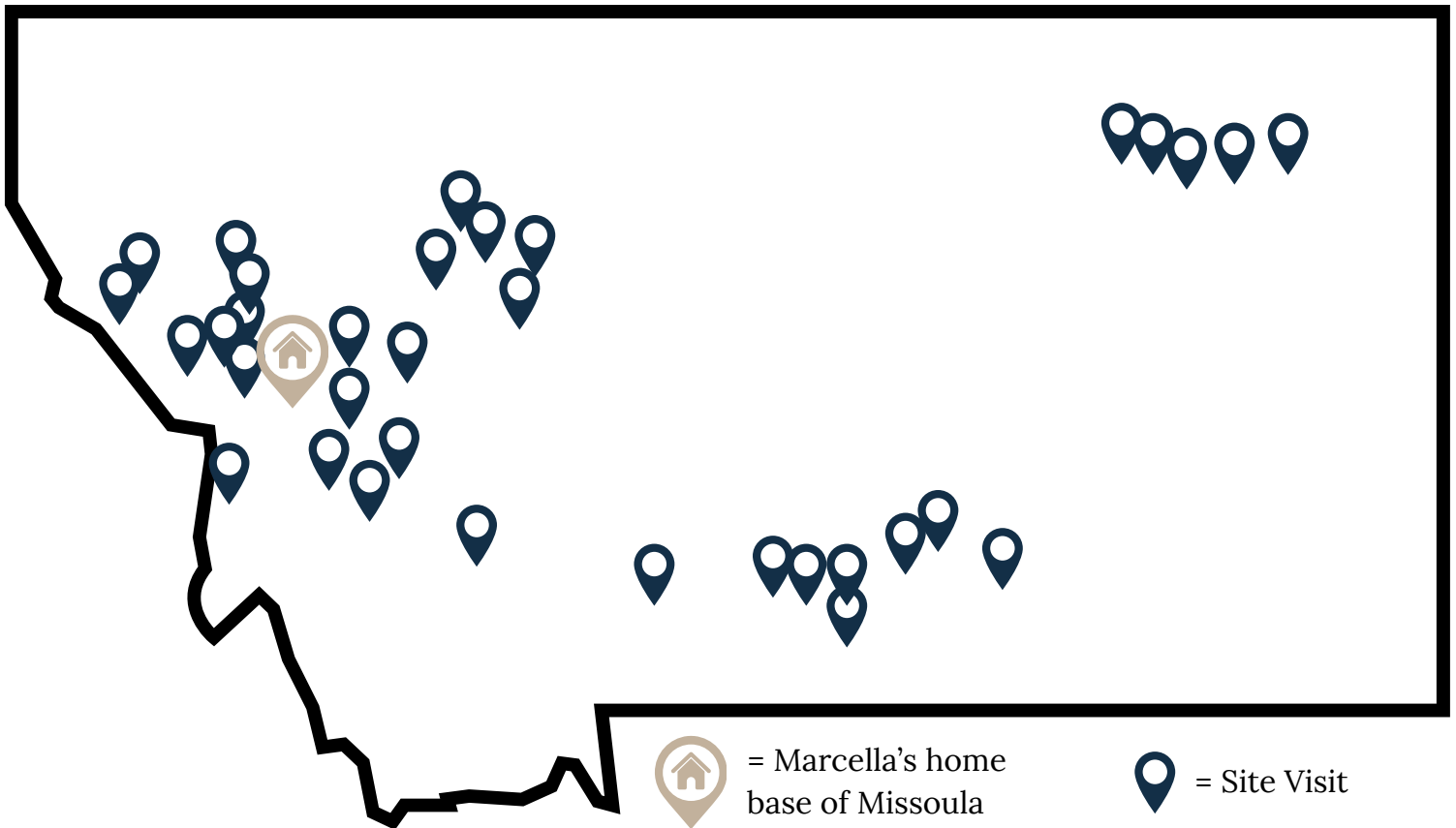
Culinary Arts: Business Simulation gives students a taste of both the kitchen and the boardroom. In this course, they explore what it takes to launch and run a food-related business – from menu planning and pricing to marketing and customer service. Using real-world scenarios, students practice decision-making skills and see how culinary creativity connects to entrepreneurship.



Digital Learning Clearinghouse

Statewide Travel

The following map illustrates the statewide travel undertaken by Clearinghouse Ambassador Marcella Flannigan. **Each visit represents a targeted engagement with local education professionals and community members.** Throughout the year, Marcella met with school counselors, teachers, and students to introduce and set up program resources, assess specific community needs, and gather essential feedback. This direct outreach is a fundamental component of our strategy to ensure our services are accessible and responsive to all regions of Montana.



Webinar Series

Digital Learning Clearinghouse



About the Webinar

The **Montana Digital Academy** continues to evolve its offerings with the **Digital Learning Clearinghouse**, providing supplemental digital resources that complement traditional face-to-face instruction. In addition to expanding our distance learning offerings, the Clearinghouse delivers curated content directly to Montana classrooms, supporting certified teachers with ready-to-use curriculum and self-paced learning modules. This strategic expansion addresses a critical need: providing schools with flexible, high-quality digital tools that enhance, rather than replace, the classroom experience.

Montana Digital Academy Clearinghouse Webinar

K-12 STEM & CTE Digital Content

April 2025



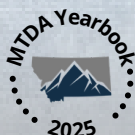
The Clearinghouse's **STEM and CTE offerings demonstrate MTDA's commitment to career-connected learning through meaningful partnerships**. Highlights include the Dick Anderson Construction pre-apprenticeship program, which not only teaches construction fundamentals but also connects students who complete it directly to apprenticeship opportunities, and EdReady Montana's personalized algebra readiness course. From culinary business simulations to Python programming essentials, these resources bridge academic learning with real-world application, preparing students for both immediate career pathways and future educational pursuits.

What sets this initiative apart is **MTDA's wraparound support model**. Rather than simply providing content, the Clearinghouse team offers implementation training, regular office hours, and ongoing support to ensure teachers can effectively integrate these digital resources. With plans to expand offerings from vendors like RefREPs for sports officiating certification and Learning Mate for career preparation, MTDA is positioning Montana schools to provide comprehensive, future-ready education regardless of their size or location—truly embodying the mission to enhance educational opportunities across Big Sky Country.



Follow the QR code to watch the full webinar!

<https://mtda.link/hZz12>



Follow the team for upcoming videos! @MTDigitalAcademy on YouTube



Operational Highlights

Operational Highlights

Behind the Screens

#WeAre
MTDA



“With every radical technology change, there emerge organizations that the nation turns to for expertise and leadership. As AI transforms how students learn, staff work, and content is created, MTDA has become that leading organization, pioneering new ways to use AI in content creation while helping educators navigate these tools responsibly. Be proud, Montana.”

-Ryan Gravette

Director of Information and Technology, Idaho Digital Learning Alliance

New Catalog

In August 2025, MTDA released version two of its course catalog, introducing a series of **enhancements over the initial version**. Key improvements included new filtering options that allow school districts to search by additional variables—such as cost—and use specific tags to quickly locate offerings like AP courses, dual-credit courses, or CTE courses. These filters give districts a highly detailed view of the catalog so they can easily find what meets their needs.

Another major enhancement **was a course comparison tool**. Similar to comparing vehicles when shopping for a car, this feature allows districts to select up to three courses and view them side-by-side. The comparison highlights key details, such as:

- Whether the course is designed for blended, fully online, or face-to-face instruction
- If it requires additional hardware (e.g., VR headsets)
- Whether it is intended for enrichment or for full course credit

The catalog also now offers greater control over its display.

Users can switch between a card-based layout, a list layout, or a hybrid view. Additionally, any filtered list can be exported in the current viewing format, enabling districts to print a customized, workable list for counseling departments to use when helping students select from a targeted set of course options.



Check out
the full
catalog
here!

These added user controls are essential as the catalog continues to expand in both depth and breadth. MTDA’s goal is to provide a single, easy-to-use catalog that displays all available offerings—whether MTDA-developed or third-party—so that districts can make well-informed decisions about which resources and courses best fit their local needs. This approach supports complete local control while simplifying the selection process.

Operational Highlights

Behind the Screens

Connections on Campus

Sarah Marker, the Business Director for the Montana Digital Academy (MTDA), has worked hard throughout the 2024-25 academic year to strengthen **her professional connections with the University of Montana**. This effort is crucial for the smooth operation and success of MTDA's programs and office. She works closely with a variety of key contacts, including the university's hiring contacts (Marcie Briggs, Steven Oswalt), the procurement office (Bob Hlynosky, Jay Michalik, and Jody Parrow), the University of Montana's business services department, and the Dean's staff of the Phyllis J. Washington College of Education.



Sarah Marker
Business Director



Building strong relationships with the University of Montana is vital for MTDA. The university serves as a central partner, and effective communication with its staff ensures that administrative processes run smoothly. This includes everything from posting new staff positions and creating employee contracts, to handling purchasing agreements and financial transactions. By fostering a collaborative environment, Sarah helps to prevent misunderstandings and delays, allowing both organizations to focus on their primary mission: providing quality education to students across Montana. These relationships are the backbone of a successful partnership, ensuring that MTDA's operations are efficient and well-supported by the university's infrastructure.

Professional Development at MTDA

All teacher professional development has been brought under the Canvas umbrella, including courses such as New Teacher Orientation, Very Good Online Teaching, Generative AI in the Online Classroom, Digital Accessibility for Teachers, IPC Teacher Training, and Working with Indigenous Students.

#WeAre MTDA



“It has been a pleasure working with Jason Neiffer and the Montana Digital Academy. Providing resources, professional development, and keeping our rural schools and students on pace in the technology world is important to our small, rural schools. MTDA makes sure ALL the students in Montana have the skills necessary to be successful. I appreciate the willingness and cooperation that has been shown by MTDA in working with the Montana Small Schools Alliance (MSSA).”

-Janelle Beers
Executive Director, Montana Small Schools Alliance

Operational Highlights

Organizational Chart

As we wrap up the 2024-25 school year, Montana Digital Academy (MTDA) is excited to announce that we have been working on a new organizational chart. The primary purpose of this tool is to enhance clarity and transparency across our growing team. It provides a clear visual map of our internal structure, helping everyone understand how we all connect and work together to serve Montana students and schools.

This chart is designed to be a practical resource for both new and veteran staff. It clearly outlines reporting relationships, so our staff will always know who manages whom and understand the proper channels for communication. For our newest team members, it will be an invaluable guide for putting names to faces and understanding job titles. For all of us, it will serve as a quick reference to identify the right person for specific queries, clarify responsibilities, and see how each unique role contributes to our shared mission. We believe this will foster a more efficient and collaborative environment for everyone at MTDA.



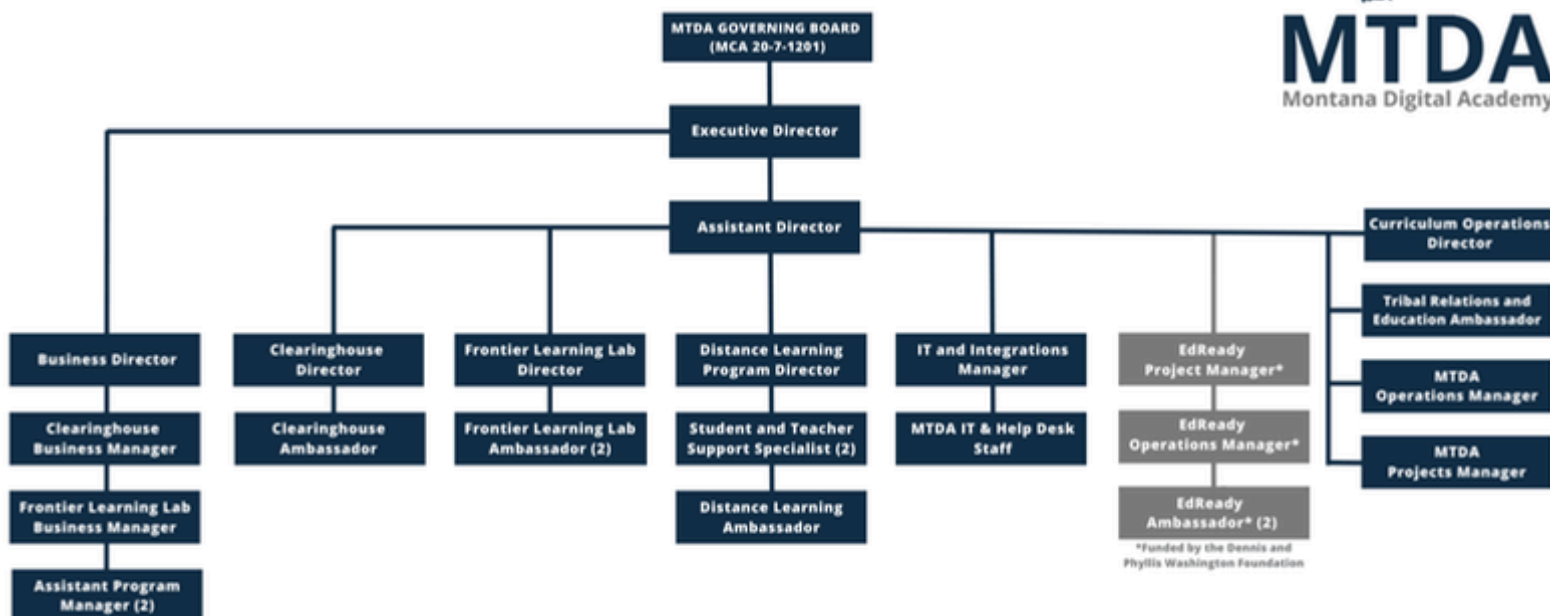
Follow the QR code to see the Organizational Chart in full!

<https://mtda.link/BDgD1>



Organization Chart

August 2025

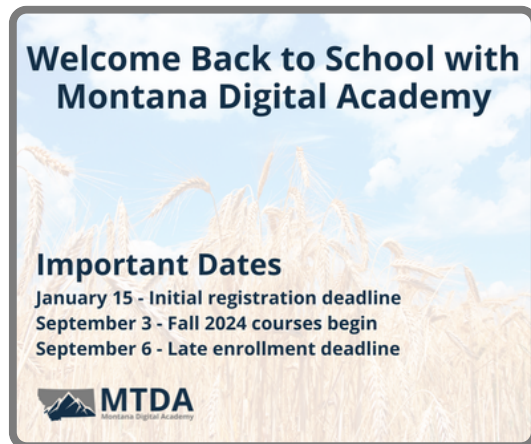


Operational Highlights

MTDA Marketing and Communication Plan: 2024–2025 School Year

During the 2024–2025 school year, the Montana Digital Academy (MTDA) embarked on an initiative to **evolve its marketing and communication strategy**. This effort was driven by the academy's growth, with an expanded catalog of options and programs designed to serve students and educators across the state. The intent of this process was to ensure that school staff, students, and families are well-informed of the opportunities available through MTDA while strengthening the organization's statewide visibility.

One major component of the revised communication plan was the establishment of a robust social media presence across five platforms. This multi-platform approach allowed MTDA to reach a wider audience while tailoring messages to specific groups, including educators, students, and families. Through consistent posting, MTDA leveraged social media as a tool to highlight program successes, promote new opportunities, and strengthen community engagement. Between August 2024 and August 2025, MTDA achieved significant social media engagement and activity, publishing a combined total of **467 posts** across BlueSky, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and X. These efforts resulted in over **2,300 total engagements across all platforms**. MTDA's content strategy effectively utilized image-based posts to drive engagement across most platforms. Beyond engagement, MTDA successfully expanded its audience, gaining sixty-four new likes on Facebook and 163 new, 100% organic followers on LinkedIn. These two platforms show the most public engagement.



Sample social media post

Additional Sample Posts

A sample post graphic for "Digital Content & Platform (DCP) Courses". It features the MTDA logo and the text "New blended courses for use in YOUR classroom!". Two course thumbnails are shown: "Two Dimensional Studio Art" and "Allied Health Assisting III". A "NEW!" badge is prominent. At the bottom, it says "For more info, reach out to support@mtda.org".

A sample post graphic for "Webinar Week". It features the MTDA logo and the text "Webinar Week August 18-21". A background image of a bison is visible. A schedule of events is listed in a dark blue box: "8/18 NEW! Frontier Learning Lab", "8/19 Clearinghouse", "8/20 EdReady MT", and "8/21 Distance Learning".

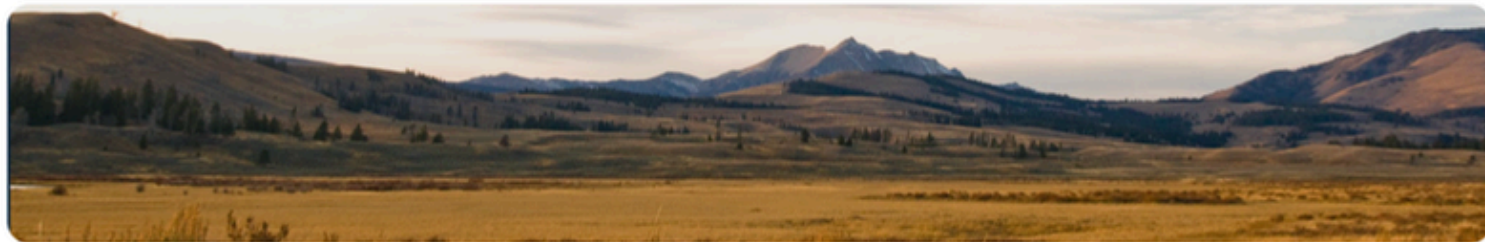
A sample post graphic for "Pilot the Future". It features the MTDA logo and the text "In partnership with CAST.org Pilot the Future". The main text says "Elevate your skills with a new MTDA Clearinghouse offering! Hands-on challenges build communication skills and prepare students to pilot drones." A list of activities includes "Drone prep", "STEM-Based", "Girl-empowering", and "Flying orbs and Legos". A small graphic shows a drone and the text "Take Flight: Mission 1". At the bottom, it says "Learn more by reaching out to support@mtda.org".

Operational Highlights

MTDA Marketing and Communication Plan: 2024–2025 School Year

MTDA has transitioned the Student Spotlight series from written interviews and features to short feature videos. Produced through a partnership with KPCN, a student-led production crew from the University of Montana, the Spotlight Series highlights exceptional stories and various applications of MTDA's educational programs within Montana schools, showcasing how these resources address diverse student and institutional needs.

Finally, MTDA implemented a monthly webinar series targeted toward Montana school staff. These webinars were designed to be both timely and practical, delivering relevant updates on MTDA programs, instructional practices, and support resources. In addition, the webinars served as professional development opportunities, allowing school staff to expand their understanding of online learning environments and enhance their ability to support students enrolled in MTDA courses. By maintaining a consistent monthly schedule, MTDA ensured that communication with school partners was regular, predictable, and aligned with their needs.



Montana Digital Academy
@MTDigitalAcademy · 64 subscribers · 29 videos
More about this channel ...more
montanadigitalacademy.org and 2 more links
Subscribed

Home Videos Live Playlists

MTDA Spotlight ▶ Play all

- Clearinghouse Spotlight: Cascade Public Schools (3:56)
- EdReady MT Spotlight: Glacier High School (3:57)
- Student Spotlight: Inga Lee-Eichenwald of Gallatin High School (3:27)
- Student Spotlight: Callie Wood of Browning High School (3:17)

Follow the team for upcoming videos! @MTDigitalAcademy on YouTube





Governance

Governance

Meet the 2024-25 MTDA Board



Fred Anderson
Board Chair

MT Representative



Joseph Thiel
Vice-Chair

Interim Deputy
Commissioner of
Higher Education



Tyler Capece (2025-)
Member

Deputy Chief of Staff,
Office of Public
Instruction



Kara Edgar
Member

Trustee, Big Sky
School District



McCall Flynn
Member

Executive Director,
Montana Board of
Public Education



Tanya Funk
Member

Superintendent, Saco
Public Schools



Dylan Klapmeier
Member

Education &
Workforce Policy
Advisor, Gov. Gianforte



Anthony Lapke
Member

Teacher, Glacier High
School



Christy Mock-Stutz
Member (2023-2025)

Assistant Superintendent
of Public Instruction



Jason Neiffer
Member

Executive Director,
Montana Digital
Academy



Dan Saloman
Member

MT Senator

MTDA is deeply grateful to the board for their expertise, visionary leadership, and unwavering commitment to advancing the organization. We sincerely appreciate their expertise and drive, which are instrumental to our success.

Governance

2024-2025 Board Meeting Summaries

August 2024

Meeting on August 20, 2024, the MTDA Board welcomed guest Dr. Rob Watson to discuss opportunities for partnership between MTDA and school administrators statewide. Chair Rep. Fred Anderson led the session, which included approval of the agenda, staff reports on program operations, and updates on student support systems. Financial updates showed a strong start to the fiscal year, while technology and curriculum teams confirmed readiness for fall courses. The meeting underscored MTDA's role as both a service provider and a collaborative partner in Montana's educational network.

September 2024

Meeting on September 24, 2024, the MTDA Board convened under the leadership of Chair Rep. Fred Anderson to review early-year progress and operations. The session opened with the adoption of the agenda and a financial report from Business Manager Sarah Marker, noting that fiscal health was on target for this stage of the year. Staff provided updates on curriculum offerings, student services, and technology systems, confirming smooth program operations and readiness to support schools statewide. The meeting reinforced MTDA's focus on strong operational foundations and collaboration with partner districts.

October 2024

Meeting on October 15, 2024, the MTDA Board gathered under Chair Rep. Fred Anderson to continue work on program oversight and improvement. After approving the agenda, members heard from guest presenters Tina Chamberlain and Alyssa Sorenson of the Montana Legislative Audit Division, who shared updates on their review process. Staff reports covered curriculum development, student support services, and technology performance, all indicating stable operations midway through the fall term. Financial updates confirmed the budget continued to align with projections, while the discussion emphasized transparency and collaboration with oversight agencies.

December 2024

Meeting on December 3, 2024, the MTDA Board convened under Chair Rep. Fred Anderson to review fall term progress and prepare for the transition into spring. Following agenda approval, Business Manager Sarah Marker presented the financial report, confirming the budget was in line with expectations. Staff updates highlighted curriculum delivery, student support activities, and technology system stability, along with progress on the AI Lab initiative, which is being developed to expand Montana's readiness in edge technologies. The discussion also included collaboration with partner districts to ensure seamless course access during the upcoming term, reinforcing MTDA's commitment to supporting statewide digital learning.

Governance

2024-2025 Board Meeting Summaries

January 2025

Meeting on January 21, 2025, the MTDA Board convened under Stand-In Chair Joseph Thiel to review midyear operations and financial health. Following approval of the December meeting minutes, Business Manager Sarah Marker presented the December financial report, noting that expenditures and revenues were aligned with the annual budget plan. Staff updates covered curriculum delivery, student support initiatives, and technology systems, as well as continued work on the AI Lab, including design and integration planning and potential legislative funding. The meeting emphasized maintaining consistent service to partner schools while monitoring resources for the remainder of the academic year.

March 2025

Meeting on March 18, 2025, the MTDA Board gathered under Pro Tem Chair Joseph Thiel to review program activity and ongoing initiatives. After approving the January meeting minutes, members welcomed new board member Tyler Capece and guest Lucas Rowsey from the Office of Public Instruction. Staff updates highlighted curriculum and course delivery, student services, and technology performance, all supporting steady program operations. Financial reporting indicated the budget remained on track, and discussion reinforced collaboration with state education partners to ensure MTDA continues meeting district needs.

April 2025

Meeting on April 22, 2025, the MTDA Board convened under Pro Tem Chair Joseph Thiel to review late-year progress and prepare for summer and fall planning. Following approval of the agenda, staff provided updates on curriculum initiatives, student support services, and technology systems, including readiness plans for the AI Lab's next phase of implementation pending support in House Bill 2. Financial reporting confirmed the budget remained in alignment with projections, supporting upcoming program priorities. The meeting emphasized readiness for the next academic cycle and continued collaboration with education partners across the state.



Governance

2025 Legislative Session Update

MTDA staff collaborates with and reports to the Montana Legislature both during and outside of the every-other-year session. During the 69th Legislature, **MTDA staff returned to the Montana Capitol to advocate for continued funding for the MTDA Clearinghouse and responded to legislators' requests to propose a lab to assist K-12 schools across the state in implementing future-oriented technologies.**

Through the budget process, **MTDA requested ongoing appropriations for the Digital Learning Clearinghouse**, a significant step that would transform the pilot program launched in 2023 into a permanent state service. The request was included in Governor Gianforte's proposed budget, released in November 2024.

On a January morning in Helena, Jason Neiffer and Mike Agostinelli presented to Education Appropriations Subcommittee E, armed with data that told a compelling story of growth and impact. The numbers spoke clearly: **over 30,000 student engagements in 2023-24, with the core distance learning program alone experiencing 10% growth and dual credit enrollments increasing by 48% year-over-year.**

The presentation highlighted MTDA's transformation into what Neiffer called "essentially three departments in one:" the traditional distance learning program, the EdReady Montana proficiency platform funded by the Washington Foundation, and the new Digital Learning Clearinghouse created by House Bill 749. **This structure positioned MTDA to serve students from rural Busby to suburban Glacier High School with equal effectiveness.**

A particularly telling moment came when Agostinelli addressed declining student satisfaction scores in 2023-24. Rather than deflecting, he explained the root cause: larger districts increasingly turning to MTDA when they couldn't hire teachers in core subjects. This was a new reality; previously, only the smallest schools faced such staffing challenges. MTDA's response demonstrated organizational maturity: immediate action plans, enhanced local support, and weekly synchronous sessions for affected students. This past year's student satisfaction ratings bounced back... and then some!



MTDA Assistant Director Mike Agostinelli testifying in January 2025

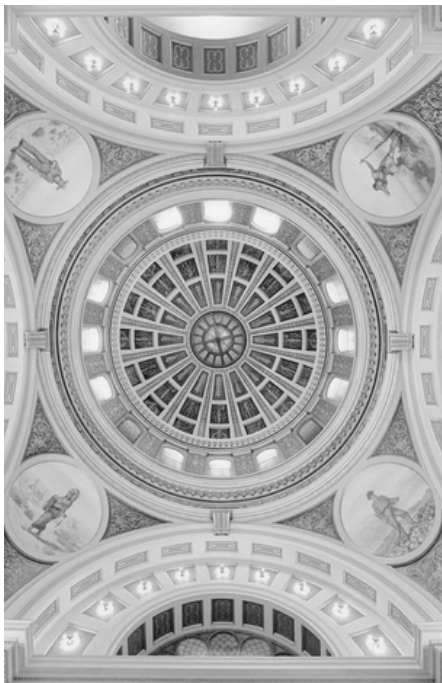
Governance

2025 Legislative Session Update

Technical questions about homeschool participation (about 5% of enrollments), tribal language expansion (now offering Cree, Crow, Nakota, and Dakota), and district participation patterns revealed the depth of MTDA's statewide reach. The discussion of Canvas LMS transition and partnership with the Montana University System showcased MTDA's integration with higher education infrastructure.

MTDA worked directly with members of the Appropriations subcommittee to ensure that they received an inflationary increase to assist with increases in labor costs related to the negotiated state pay plan.

Two weeks later, the Education Appropriations Subcommittee invited Director Neiffer back to discuss artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and the potential of a K-12 “lab” to support schools with these rapidly evolving technologies. **Neiffer proposed the “Frontier Learning Lab” as an initiative to provide meaningful support to teachers and administrators in schools of all sizes to help them stay ahead with “edge” technologies.** The funding was included in House Bill 2 as one-time-only money and was ultimately successful.



“

I started in this business in 2019, and it is astounding the evolution of the Montana Digital Academy over the last six years. Hats off to you and your team. As they say leadership matters and I'm highly impressed by where you're going with this.

”

Rep. David Bedey
Chair, Education Appropriations Subcommittee
Subcommittee Hearing, January 2025



State & National Leadership

State & National Leadership

Building the Next Chapter of Education—Together

At MTDA, we believe the future of education isn't something to wait for... **it's something to build right now.** Across Montana and beyond, we're working to show that digital, blended, and AI-enhanced learning are not distant possibilities. They're powerful tools we can use today to expand opportunity for students in every community.

Over the past year, our team has stepped into national and state-level leadership roles that make this future real:

- **Mike Agostinelli**, MTDA Assistant Director, co-chaired a Virtual School Leadership Alliance (VLLA) Curriculum Director's committee and helped plan its annual conference. These spaces amplify Montana's work, and Mike has made our programs a model for other states, proof that innovation from a rural state can influence classrooms across the country.
- **Caitlin Byers**, MTDA's Student Support and Content Specialist, served on the University of Montana's Futures Committee, focused on AI and future-looking technology. Her work connects K-12 and higher ed, placing MTDA's AI projects alongside cutting-edge research and strengthening our role as a trusted partner in shaping classrooms of the future.
- **Paul Kozlowitz**, MTDA's IT and Integrations Manager, is serving as President of the Montana Educational Technologists Association. In that role, he's showing districts that technologists aren't just behind-the-scenes problem solvers—they're leaders who drive student success. Paul also co-led a national DLAC work group on AI in schools, ensuring Montana's perspective helps shape national policy and practice. Paul also co-chaired the VLLA technology director's committee.
- **Jason Neiffer**, MTDA's Executive Director, co-chaired the revision of the National Standards for Quality Courses. Those standards now set the bar for online learning nationwide, with Montana voices front and center. Jason also joined the 2025 CoSN Driving K-12 Innovation Advisory Board, ensuring that when the nation talks about what's next in technology, Montana has a leading voice at the table.
- **Ryan Schrenk**, EdReady Montana Director, co-chaired the VLLA GeniusSIS working group for the VLLA. The working group is dedicated to sharing knowledge and resources on the Genius platform, which is critical infrastructure for MTDA and other VLLA schools.

Together, our team is moving the conversation forward because education is evolving. And Montana Digital Academy is helping to lead the way. We invite educators, leaders, students, parents, and partners across Montana and beyond to join us in shaping the next chapter of digital learning: a chapter where rural and urban schools share the same opportunities, where technology empowers teachers instead of replacing them, and where every student has a path to thrive. The work ahead is bigger than any one organization, but together, we can build a future of learning that is more connected, more inclusive, and more innovative than ever before.

**#WeAre
MTDA**



"Montana Digital Academy has been a Quality Matters member since 2013 and a key leader in the Virtual Learning Leadership Alliance, with Executive Director Jason Neiffer co-chairing the 2025 National Standards for Online Course Quality revision. As pioneers in K-12 AI, MTDA is setting the national example by thoughtfully integrating tools like generative AI to enhance instruction while keeping educators and students at the center of learning."

-Suzanne Scheffler, Community Engagement Manager, K-12, Quality Matters

State & National Leadership

A New Era of Technology

This year, under the leadership of our IT and Integrations Manager, Paul Kozlowitz, Montana Digital Academy made significant strides in upgrading its technological infrastructure. This new role, established as part of the Clearinghouse hiring process, was designed to centralize technology-related duties and build a scalable infrastructure to support 21st-century learners across Montana. Paul and the MTDA team have successfully met their initial goals, laying a robust foundation for future growth and innovation.



Paul Kozlowitz
IT & Integrations
Manager

Key advancements for the year include:

- **Strategic Integrations and Partnerships:** A primary focus has been on integrations that bridge new frontiers, such as the Clearinghouse. The team now manages a thorough vetting process for all third-party integrations, ensuring they meet the security and reliability standards for both K-12 and higher education. A significant achievement was the integration of Clever, Montana's leading digital learning ecosystem, which allows for seamless student rostering and provides districts with a familiar, efficient interface.
- **System and Database Overhaul:** MTDA's internal database was completely rebuilt using Zoho CRM. This new system provides a single, scalable database for all four MTDA programs, significantly improving real-time data access and communication. All website properties and the organization's server infrastructure were also overhauled to enhance security, compliance, and capacity for future programs.
- **Improved Operations and University Relations:** Paul has worked closely with the University of Montana to streamline technology administration, gaining the ability to manage all MTDA devices and systems efficiently while adhering to university standards. By removing technological hurdles, this dedicated IT role has allowed other departments to deploy new programs and initiatives more rapidly and reliably.

These foundational improvements have solidified MTDA's infrastructure, ensuring it is prepared for future challenges and positioning the organization as a state leader in educational technology.



Last Best Learning Podcast Feature

AI Podcast with Montana Office of Public Instruction



Listen to the full podcast here!

<https://mtda.link/OykKd>



About the Podcast

MTDA Executive Director Jason Neiffer sat down with OPI’s Michelle McCarthy, Katrina Engeldrum, and Claire Mikeson, and Polson High School teacher and AI specialist Connor Mulvaney. They unpacked the current state of AI tools in education, what teachers are already encountering, and how

school systems can respond thoughtfully—not reactively—to the moment. The conversation was framed around practical classroom realities and the leadership opportunities that Montana educators have in this space.

Neiffer emphasized that **“the best tool in the classroom is still the teacher,”** positioning AI not as a replacement but as **an amplifier of excellent classroom instruction.** He called for scaffolding AI literacy, like any other academic skill, and cautioned against fear-based reactions, such as blocking tools outright. Instead, he encouraged schools to define what good use looks like and to guide students accordingly. His message: this isn’t about chasing shiny tech, but about equipping both students and teachers to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

#WeAre
MTDA



“The Montana Digital Academy has been an invaluable resource for Carroll College and our international conference, the MountainMoot. Having cutting-edge expertise in AI education right here in Montana is a tremendous asset, and the Academy’s willingness to openly share that knowledge has had a meaningful impact on our community. Jason, Mike, and the entire team aren’t just leaders in our state—they are recognized contributors at the national level. Their work continues to elevate the conversation around digital learning and innovation.”

-Dan Case, M.Ed
Director of Academic Technology, Carroll College



Teacher & Student Feedback

Student Perception Survey

This Year In Quotes

It has shown me that I have the ability to push myself and have the ability to do really well in college courses.

It gave me the opportunity to take a course that's not offered at my school.

MTDA is a great way for rural students to take classes that are not offered at their school, with a real teacher that you can talk to.

My experience has got me excited about taking future MTDA courses.

It has meant to me the ability to do classes on a college-level like schedule and have a large flexibility in the learning process, which has helped me grow and continue to develop as a student.

Glad I have MTDA to take classes that fit with my schedule.

It has allowed me to not only practice the skill of self-discipline but also the skill of organization and scheduling. It allows me to get my assignments done in a schedule that works best for me and that is one of my favorite things about the program.

MTDA hires teachers that regularly check emails and grade assignments daily.

MTDA is a great program to help Juniors and Seniors gain college credits. It's great, it should continue to be funded because it helped me continue to learn.

It's been a key component in helping me get to graduate with honors.

It has given me chances to take courses to further span my education as an 8th grader.

“MTDA is a fabulous online school organization with amazing teachers that allow a flexible schedule, allowing students to learn the most they can at their own pace.”

92%

MTDA saw the highest ever student satisfaction rate during the 2024-25 school year!

Teacher Perception Survey

This Year In Quotes



I think MTDA is always on the cutting edge of delivering online content in such a way as to empower our students to take control of their learning, and have a successful educational experience.



I love that students have an online option to learn languages when their schools do not have the ability to offer the courses. I also love the support staff at MTDA. I am treated as a respected professional.



Working for MTDA is what has kept me in teaching!



Teaching for MTDA is truly a pleasure. I love educating students across Montana and providing them with educational opportunities they otherwise would not have. The staff at MTDA is amazing and so supportive - their communication is top-notch!

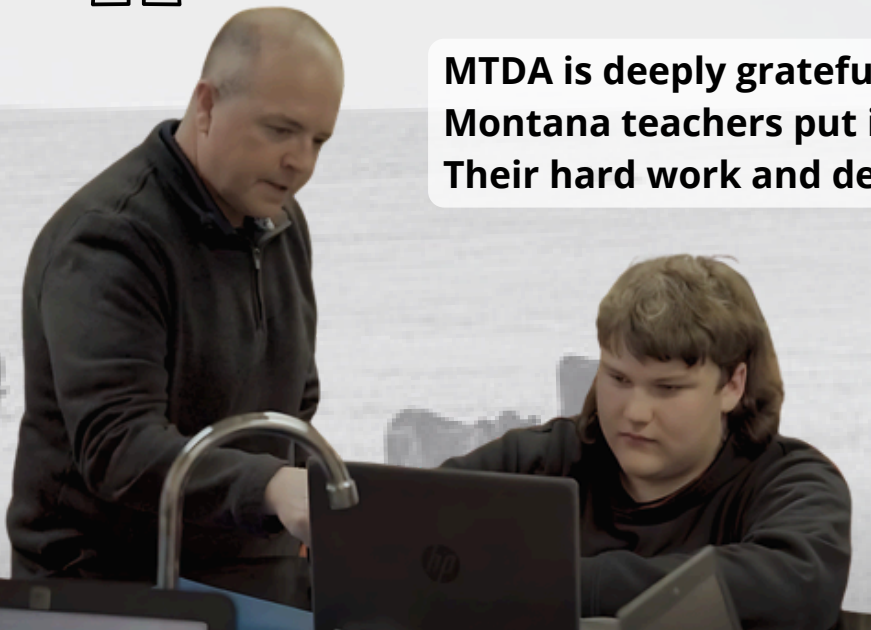


[MTDA] keeps me on my toes, shows me new things, and we always seem to be slightly ahead of trends when they make it to the in-person schools.



MTDA supports teachers. There has not been one time in all of my years at MTDA that I did not feel valued and supported, thank you!

MTDA is deeply grateful for the time and effort our Montana teachers put in to keep educating students. Their hard work and dedication are sincerely appreciated.



Left: Teacher Sean Thornton and student



Awards & Recognition

Awards & Recognition

Honors that Reflect Our Shared Work

While Montana Digital Academy does not do this work for awards or recognition, we are grateful when our efforts are acknowledged. These moments of recognition reflect the collective commitment of our team, our partners, and the students we serve across the state.

Montana Digital Academy was selected as a **2025 School of the Year by the Discovery Education Awards**, which recognize schools and educators that inspire curiosity and connect learning beyond the classroom. We are honored by this recognition, which highlights the dedication of our team and the resilience of our students. The award affirms MTDA's ongoing mission: ensuring that all Montana learners can access high-quality education, anytime and anywhere.

Executive Director **Jason Neiffer** was named a **2025 ASU+GSV AI Innovators**, a recognition given to educators and leaders who are actively shaping the future of learning with artificial intelligence. The honor highlights Jason's ongoing work to thoughtfully integrate AI into teaching and learning, ensuring these tools expand access, support educators, and empower students in Montana and beyond. Jason presented at the AI Innovator's showcase on using AI to enhance the design of curriculum and student materials.



Above: Jason Neiffer (center) with fellow awardee

#WeAre MTDA



“On behalf of the Montana School Boards Association, I would like to express our unwavering support for the Montana Digital Academy and its remarkable contributions to public education across our great state. As we approach our 100th anniversary in 2026, we remain steadfast in our commitment to innovation and excellence in education. The Academy's Core Program, encompassing AP, dual credit, middle school, and elective courses, alongside initiatives like EdReady Montana, the Clearinghouse portal, and the Frontier Learning Lab, exemplify a forward-thinking approach to learning. We are especially grateful for the invaluable partnership with Jason Neiffer and the board of the MTDA, whose dedication enriches our educational landscape. Together, we are empowering Montanans by providing high-quality instruction, innovative resources, and flexible access, ensuring that all learners have the opportunity to thrive in an ever-evolving world.”

-Lance Melton
Executive Director, Montana School Board Association



Outreach & School Engagement

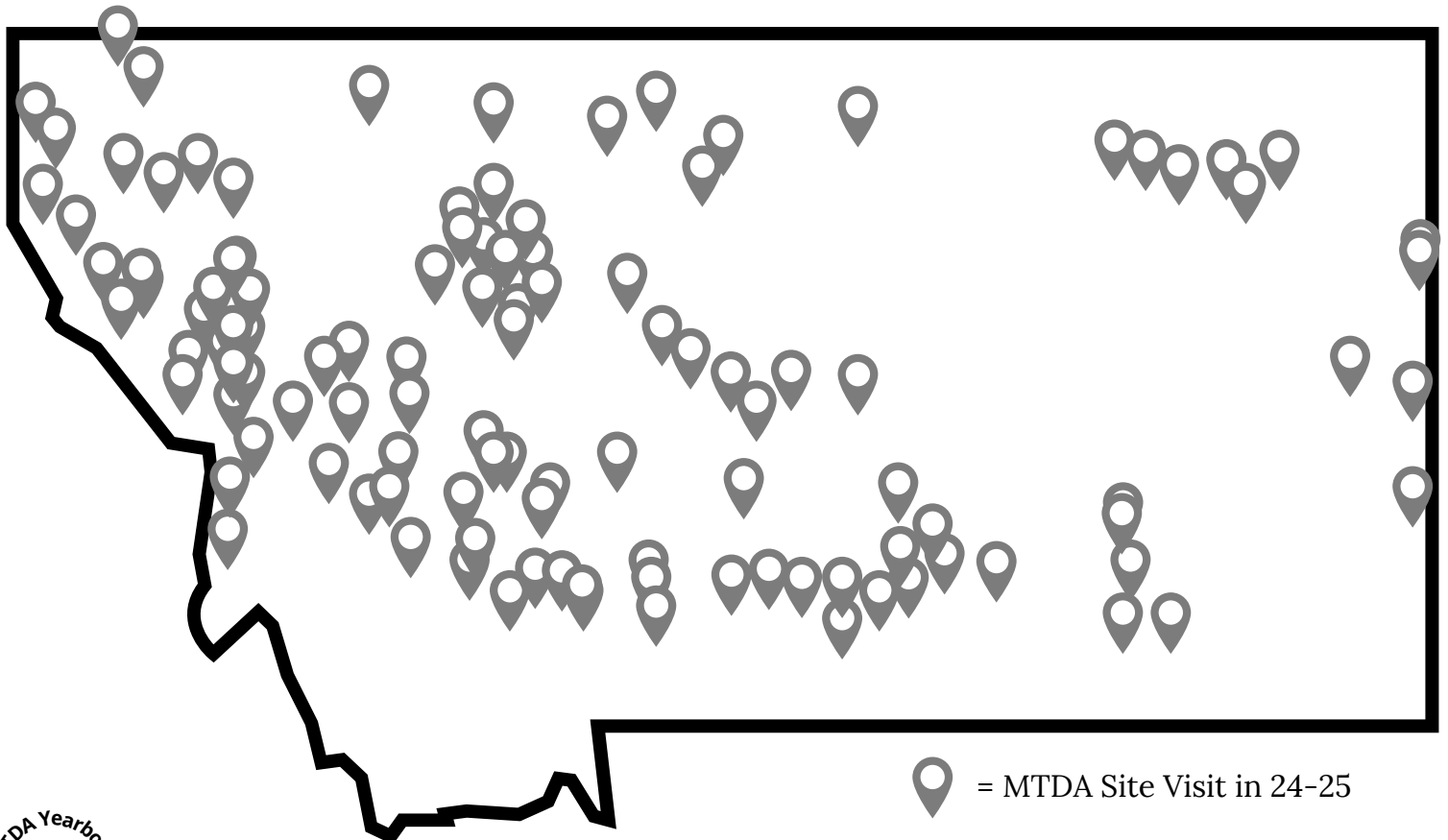
Outreach & School Engagement

Statewide Site Visits

Every pin on the map represents a conversation, a handshake, or a classroom story. These visits remind us that behind every course is a student, a teacher, and a community working together. By sitting down in cafeterias, classrooms, and school offices across the state, we hear directly what's working, what challenges remain, and where digital learning can make a difference. Each visit strengthens our connection to Montana's schools and ensures MTDA remains a partner rooted in local voices, not just digital tools.



From Eureka to Ekalaka





Innovation Runs Through It Symposium

Innovation Runs Through It

2024 Symposium Summary



The Montana Digital Academy team offered its second annual innovation symposium, **Innovation Runs Through It**, in **July 2024** at the Phyllis J. Washington College of Education at the University of Montana.

The symposium included expert sessions, discussions, and networking opportunities for K-12 and higher education teachers, professors, and administrators. Topics included **the effective implementation of EdReady, artificial intelligence in education, proficiency-based education, dual credit, and blended and online learning.**

Registration and attendance was up 30% over the previous year.



MTDA plans to run its next symposium July 2026.

The ALI Auditorium located in PJW, pictured below, is one of the many classrooms IRTI took place in.



DENNIS & PHYLLIS
WASHINGTON
FOUNDATION

Innovation Runs Through It

2024 Symposium Summary

Sample Sessions from 2024 IRTI

- Shaping Your AI Story
- Bridging the Gap: EdReady Montana's Pathway to Algebra
- Anchors Aweigh: Exploring the Six Anchors of Student Retention
- Hacking Student Motivation
- Supercharge Reading Engagement/Motivation with Generative AI
- Healthcare Apprenticeships and Career Pathways for High School Students
- 10 AI Applications That Will Change Education
- Drones & UDL: Increasing STEM Career Thinking for Rural Middle School Girls
- Supporting Universal Design for Learning with AI

Feedback from 2024 Attendees

- Great speakers and such engaging conversations!
- This was one of the best events I attended!
- Overall, this was interesting, intriguing, informative, and introduced innovative practices, tools, and approaches!

97% of those surveyed said they would come back next year!

33

Number of presenters

7

Individual states represented by the speakers

45

Sessions offered at 2024 IRTI





Looking Ahead

Looking Ahead

Fully Engaged on What's Next

As we close out another year, our eyes are firmly on the horizon. MTDA is fifteen years in, but in many ways, it feels like **we are just getting started**. The work ahead is exciting and humbling, and it will demand the same spirit of collaboration and innovation that has carried us to this point.

Our focus remains on making sure **every Montana student has access to the opportunities they deserve**, whether that means dual credit courses, career and technical pathways, or simply the reassurance that a readiness gap doesn't have to hold them back. At the same time, **we are committed to exploring new tools and approaches with purpose**. Artificial intelligence, immersive technologies, and flexible digital platforms all hold tremendous promise, but **only when they are applied thoughtfully and in service of teaching and learning**. Through initiatives like the Frontier Learning Lab, we will continue to create space for educators to test, reflect, and grow in ways that put students at the center.

Most importantly, **our strength comes from partnerships**. Schools, universities, and communities across Montana have always been the heart of MTDA's work, and in the year ahead, those connections will only deepen. Together, we can take on challenges—whether they come in the form of funding pressures, enrollment shifts, or the rapid pace of change—and turn them into opportunities for students.

The story of MTDA has always been about what happens when Montana educators work side-by-side for kids. That story is far from finished, and we look forward to writing the next chapter with all of you.



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The MTDA Office Team

Titles are listed as of July 2025

MTDA Leadership Team



Jason Neiffer, Ed.D.
Executive Director



Mike Agostinelli, Ed.S.
Assistant Director/
Curriculum Director



Lisa Bechtold
Clearinghouse Program Director



Paul Kozlowitz
IT and Integrations Manager



Robyn Nuttall
Distance Learning Program Director



Ryan Schrenk, Ed.D.
EdReady Montana Program Director



Sarah Marker
Business Director



Ally Riggs
Clearinghouse Business Manager



Anna East, Ed.D.
Tribal Relations & Education Fellow



Caitlin Byers
Student and Teacher Support
Specialist



Christen Cole
MTDA Operations Manager



Jacquie Teasdale
EdReady MT Ambassador



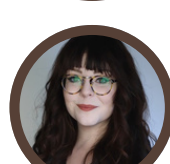
Jason Leonard
EdReady MT Operations
Manager



Jodie Hirsch
MTDA Projects Manager



Kate Peterson
Student and Teacher Support
Specialist



Kylie Hook
Assistant Program Manager



Marcella Flannigan
Clearinghouse Ambassador



Susan Quinn
Distance Learning Ambassador



Virg Hale
EdReady MT Ambassador



MTDA
Montana Digital Academy



**For more information,
visit [MTDA.org](https://www.mtda.org)**