

School Finance

The School Finance Division distributes state funding to Montana's 420 school districts, establishes school accounting and budgeting policies, trains and assists school and county staff with all facets of school finance, and collects and reports highly reliable data used by legislature and the federal government. This division also oversees and funds pupil transportation.

With nine program staff and one computer programmer, this OPI division is cost efficient, operating the entire school funding distribution system with overhead costs of less than 1/10 of one percent of the total state payments to schools.

Within the School Finance Division,

State Payments to Schools, Special Education Cooperatives and Counties:

- Distributes over \$708 million (close to 40 percent of the Montana State General Fund Budget) to Montana's 420 school districts under 14 payment programs.

Pupil Transportation:

- Distributes state transportation payments to districts for over 2,000 school bus routes traveling over 18 million miles each year, transporting almost half of Montana's 141,807 K-12 students.
- Ensures Montana's 2,700 school buses are inspected yearly and 2,500 bus drivers are certified and trained according to Montana's standards.

Accounting Policies:

- Sets Montana's school accounting policies in accordance with national accounting standards and best practices, ensuring school finance data used in legislative decision making is consistent and reliable.

Data Collection and Reporting:

- Maintains the MAEFAIRS computer system to collect school district budgets, annual revenue and expenditure reports, and other financial data used by practically all OPI divisions, other state and federal agencies, and the Montana Legislature.

Technical Assistance and Training:

- Provides technical assistance and trains school district business managers, superintendents, county officials, board members, and auditors on all topics related to school finance.
- Provides online resources for schools and the public on our OPI web page. Answers thousands of calls to provide information to school personnel, parents and other taxpayers every year.

Audit Monitoring:

- Annually reviews approximately 250 school district audits and helps schools take corrective action on audit findings.

Impact Aid Liaison:

- Serves as the liaison to the Federal Impact Aid Program, which provides more than \$40 million each year to over 100 Montana school districts. Montana receives no federal administrative funding for this federally required state liaison function (0.20 FTE).