

MONTANA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BUSINESS OFFICIALS



Empowering School Business Leaders Through Education

APRIL 2022

Hello everyone!

I wanted to take a moment to thank everyone for the warm welcome I've received as I've stepped into the Executive Director position of MASBO. I have been so fortunate to be able to travel the state and attend several Regional meetings and I can't share enough how honored I am to be a member of such an amazing group of leaders. The MASBO membership, Board, and staff is filled with dedicated, hardworking professionals who continue to place the students of Montana first and foremost as their priority.

As I make my way across the state in the next few weeks please do not hesitate to reach out to me or the team if you have thoughts on how we can continue to serve our membership in ways that will allow you success in your positions. We know this is an incredibly busy time of year and we want to ensure we provide the tools you need.

Lastly, I'd encourage you to take a moment and read through the MASBO Board's updated [Mission and Strategic Plan](#) document. The Board has worked hard to keep this document up-to-date and relevant to the work school business leaders tackle each day.

Wishing all of you the best!

Shelley Turner
Executive Director
STurner@masbo.com
(406) 461-3659

Congratulations!

Rebekah Rhoades of Lewistown has been elected for a second term as Region 5 Director and Shay Baize of Lima Schools has been elected into her first term as the Region 4 Director. New terms begin July 1st.

We also want to extend our gratitude to Kevin Patrick of Butte, for serving as the Region 4 Director since July of 2017.

MASBO Board of Directors

President	Rita Huck , Huntley Project	Region 1 Director	Lacey Porrovecchio , Bigfork
Vice-President	Belinda Klick , Sun River Valley	Region 2 Director	Karsen Drury , Cascade
Past President	Lorie Carey , Jefferson Co. H.S.	Region 3 Director	Colleen Drury , Scobey
Fiscal Agent	Kim Aarstad , East Helena	Region 4 Director	Kevin Patrick , Butte
Ex-Officio, MTSUIP	Jen Mettler , Baker K-12	Region 5 Director	Rebekah Rhoades , Lewistown
Ex-Officio, OPI	Vacant	Region 6 Director	Stacy Montgomery , Forsyth

MASBO Staff

[Shelley Turner](#)
Executive Director
406-461-3659

[Marie Roach](#)
Association Services Coordinator
406-461-8804

[Steve Hamel](#)
Interim Services/Trainer
406-431-0124

2022 Summer Conference Registration opens late April:

Butte Copper King Hotel June 13-17

New Clerk Academy June 13-15

Summer Conference June 15-17

Copper King MASBO Room Block is full

Other options:

Hampton Inn (1.4 miles) MASBO Block \$106+tax/night: 406-494-2250

Best Western Plus Butte Plaza Inn (1.9 miles): 406-494-3500

Comfort Inn (2.2 miles): 406-494-8850

Please email Marie (mroach@masbo.com) to be placed on the Copper King sleeping room waiting list



TIME IS RUNNING OUT TO NOMINATE AN OUTSTANDING BUSINESS OFFICIAL!

MASBO is accepting nominations for 2022 Outstanding Business Official. Co-workers, teachers, trustees, district administration, other school business officials, OPI employees, and county or state officials may nominate **a current, active MASBO member** (i.e., a school employee directly connected with business administration of schools in the State of Montana and FY2022 MASBO member).

Please submit a letter of nomination and two letters of recommendation that support the nomination. The letter of nomination should include the nominee's name, job title and school district, and state the specific reasons the person is nominated, including: **1)** contributions to public education in Montana at the school, community, county, state and federal levels, **2)** service in civic and public organizations, and **3)** the nominee's service to students. For complete instructions, click [here](#).

Nomination materials may be emailed to mroach@masbo.com

NOMINATION DEADLINE IS 5:00 p.m. APRIL 29, 2022

Sunshine Fund at Summer Conference

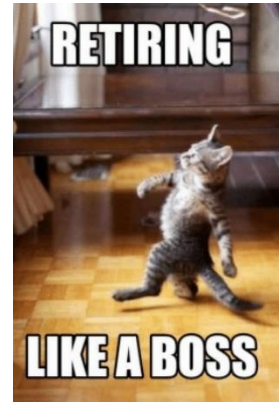
Each year, at the MASBO summer conference, a silent auction and fundraiser is held to raise money in support of members who are experiencing extraordinary expenses related to health issues. If you know of a member experiencing such a hardship, please reach out to [Marie](#) with information.

We suggest letting the person you are nominating know that you intend to submit their name.

MASBO members supporting members.

Calling all Retirees!

Please let [Marie](#) know if you intend on retiring this year. We would love to honor your years of service at the upcoming summer conference!



TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

REGION 3/6 SPRING MEETING

Regions 3 and 6 will be holding a combined region spring meeting in Miles City, MT on April 22nd. It's not too late to [register](#). Agenda and accommodation information is located on the MASBO website and included in the link.

ELECTION CHECK-IN with Nicole Thuotte

Join Nicole Thuotte and MASBO every other Friday for the school election topic of the day followed by Q & A. All meetings will be held 9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. No need to register – just zoom in!

- April 22 – Preparing for Election Day
- May 6 – Election Wrap Up

ESSA PER PUPIL EXPENDITURE WEBINARS

Join Nicole Thuotte on the following days for ESSA per pupil expenditure webinar trainings hosted by OPI. The link to the zoom sign in is located at: [April 2022 ESSA Per Pupil Expenditure Links](#)

- April 14th at 10am



Looking for Past MASBO Meeting Presentations?

If you are looking for information that was presented at a recent masbo training, be sure to check the [RESOURCES](#) page of our website.

DEQ Lead in Schools Compliance

Over the past few weeks I've heard quite a few folks have questions regarding Lead testing requirements for schools. The DEQ [website](#) provides information and resources (bottom of the webpage) for schools. Testing was to be completed by December 31st, 2021. Grant funding may still be available to defray a portion of the remediation costs. If you have questions, or need assistance please reach out to DEQleadinschools@mt.gov or call (406) 444-5312.

OPI NEWS

New Email Address

If you have a finance question and no longer know who to reach out to at OPI, it is recommended to send emails to the following address which has been recently created.

OPISchoolFinance@mt.gov

OPI Finance Calendar

OPI has recently released a [School Finance Monthly Calendar](#). They have encouraged our membership to let them know if there are other items you'd like to see listed as they are still in development of this tool.

Indirect Cost Applications Due April 30th!

Please remember to submit your indirect cost payments to OPI prior to the deadline of April 30th. OPI reached out and stated that they have received fewer indirect cost applications than in prior years.

Information on indirect costs can be found at [here](#).

OPI Education Compass

At recent region trainings, several OPI staff members have encouraged MASBO members to utilize the monthly [Compass](#) site listed above for important information as OPI is attempting to centralize their communication and limit the amount of outgoing email communication.

School Bus Stop Arm Requirements Effective July 1st, 2022

The following is from the [2022 Montana School Bus Standards Publication](#) located on the OPI website.

When a school bus route includes a bus stop that requires a child to cross a roadway, the school bus must be equipped with an extended stop arm that partially obstructs the roadway. A school child may not cross a roadway to enter or exit from a school bus unless the roadway has been partially obstructed by the extended stop arm. Extended Stop Arm must:

- Be equipped with additional flashing red lights as specified in 61-9-402, MCA;
- Be capable of extending a distance of at least 54 inches from the school bus; and
- Be at a height of not less than 36 inches.

Extended Stop Arm should have an additional illuminated stop sign located at the furthest distance from the school bus.



P-CARD NEWS-----

MASBO P-CARD PURCHASES REPORT

P-Card purchases for eleven months of the current rebate year (April - February) totaled over **\$33.1 million** with **175** school districts and special education cooperatives participating in the program. At the same time last year, we had 166 participants with over \$25 million in total purchases. Click [here](#) to see the current year P-Card purchases report.

Need Help? Contact Holly Wallace at **1-815-793-4655** or hwallace@iasbo.org for help or to schedule a webinar on helpful topics.

MASBO ENDORSES THESE PROGRAMS

	<p>Healthcare Reform Section 125 Services Health Savings Account Services Jacob Bautista, Office Manager 877-589-2544 jacob.bautista@americanfidelity.com http://www.americanfidelity.com/home.aspx</p>
	<p>Montana Schools Group Insurance Authority Workers Compensation Risk Retention Program Shawn Bubb, Director of Insurance Services 406-457-4500 sbubb@mtsba.org http://www.msgia.org/home</p>
	<p>Health, Dental, Vision, Life and Long-Term Disability Benefits Andy Holmlund, Chief Executive Officer 406-457-4400 aholmlund@ms-sf.org http://mustbenefits.org/</p>
	<p>Montana Schools Unemployment Insurance Program Theresa LeSueur, Director 406-457-4407 tlesueur@mtsba.org http://www.mtsuip.org/</p>
	<p>Payne West, Inc. Montana Schools Property & Liability Insurance Plan Rody Holman, Program Manager 406-533-1035 RHolman@paynewest.com http://msplip.com/</p>

IMPORTANT DATES & DEADLINES – APRIL 2022

MARCH 24 – APRIL 23

<p>Post Notice of Election (Not less than 10 days, or more than 40 days before election day)</p>	<p>The election notice must be published in a newspaper of general circulation in the district if available, posted in at least three public places in the district AND posted on the district’s website for the 10 days prior to the election, if the district has an active website. Notice using any other recognized media may be used to supplement the posting. The notice must include: 1) the date and voting locations for the election; 2) voting location hours; 3) each proposition to be considered by the electorate; 4) the number of trustee positions, if any, subject to election and the length of the terms for those positions; 5) where and how absentee ballots may be obtained; and 6) where and how late registrants may obtain a ballot on election day.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the polling place has changed from the previous school election, that change must be referred to in the notice. • If more than one proposition will be considered in the same district, each proposition must be set apart and identified, or placed in separate notices. 	<p>MCA 20-20-204</p> <p>Sample form: Notice of Annual School Election – Mail Ballot</p> <p>Sample form: Notice of Annual School Election – Polling Place</p> <p>School Election Calendar 2022 2022 School Election Handbook</p>
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APRIL 1

<p>Notify election judges of appointment</p>	<p>At least 30 days prior to election day, appoint three or more election judges for each precinct, one of whom must be designated chief judge.</p>	<p>MCA 13-4-101</p>
<p>Election administrator certifies ballot</p>	<p>Not less than 30 days prior to election day, the election administrator prepares the final ballot form, listing all candidates and propositions to be voted upon.</p> <p>Trustees must pass a resolution stating exact levy amounts by this date in order for the clerk to certify the ballot. This resolution must include the durational limit, if any, on the levy.</p>	<p>MCA 20-20-401</p> <p>Sample forms: Ballot – Trustee Election Ballot – General Fund Levy Ballot – Building Reserve Levy MCA 15-10-425</p>
<p>Election by Acclamation and Cancellation of Election</p>	<p>If the number of candidates filing a nomination petition or filing a declaration of intent to be a write-in candidate is equal to or less than the number of open trustee positions to be elected, the trustees may cancel the trustee election and give notice that a trustee election will not be held. The trustee election may not be declared by acclamation until all candidate filing deadlines have passed. Send a copy of your election cancellation notice to the county election administrator to aid with the provisions of late registration.</p>	<p>MCA 20-3-313</p> <p>Sample form: Notice of Trustee Election Cancellation</p> <p>Certificate of Trustee Election by Acclamation</p>

IMPORTANT DATES & DEADLINES – APRIL 2022

APRIL 4

Close of regular voter registration	Registration forms postmarked by this date and received within 3 days are accepted for regular registration. Beginning April 5, late registration must be completed at the county election office (not at the school district). <i>Contact your county election administrator for the absentee ballot list and work with them to develop a plan for registrations that come in after initial absentee lists are sent.</i>	MCA 13-2-301 MCA 20-20-312 MCA 13-2-304 MCA 13-13-212
Performance Testing and Certification of Voting System.	The election administrator must publicly test and certify that the system is performing properly, not more than 30 days prior to election.	13-17-212

APRIL 10

File monthly claims for NSLP or SSO reimbursement	Monthly lunch, breakfast and snack counts are due the 10 th of each month. Counts are submitted in the Montana Agreement and Payments System (MAPS) for National School Lunch Program (NSLP) or Seamless Summer Option (SSO) reimbursement. See OPI's Back to School Page for more information on SSO and important updates.	Montana Agreement and Payment System (MAPS) log in page School Nutrition Programs Checklist NSLP Reimbursement rates for FY2022 SSO Reimbursement rates FY2022 School Nutrition Payments
OPI pays grant cash requests	OPI pays grant cash requests submitted by the 25 th of the previous month.	E-Grants System Log in to your district's account, or click on Public Access, then Vendor Payee Details

APRIL 13

Poll Elections: Absentee ballots available	At least 20 days before election day, the election administrator prepares ballots for absentee voters.	MCA 13-13-205(1)(b) MCA 13-13-214 MCA 20-20-401(2) Absentee Voter Materials
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APRIL 13 – APRIL 18

Mail Ballot Elections: Mail ballots mailed to voters	Not before the 20th day nor later than the 15th day prior to election day, all ballots must be mailed on the same day, except that if an inactive elector reactivates after the ballots are mailed, the elector should be provided with or mailed a ballot. If the	MCA 13-19-207 Mail Ballot Election Materials
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IMPORTANT DATES & DEADLINES – APRIL 2022

Mail Ballot Elections: Mail ballots mailed to voters (continued)	elector reactivates after noon on the day before election day, the elector must come in on election day to receive a ballot.	
APRIL 23 through MAY 1		
Publish Absentee/Mail Ballot Counting Notice	Districts must publish in a newspaper of general circulation in the county a notice indicating the method that will be used for counting absentee/mail ballots and the place and time that the absentee/mail ballots will be counted on election day.	MCA 13-15-105 Absentee/Mail Ballot Counting Notice
Polling Location Accessibility Notice. *Not more than 10 days or less than 2 days before	Districts must publish in a newspaper of general circulation in the county a statement of the location of the polling places and whether each location is accessible or inaccessible. <i>This notice may be combined with the notice above, and with the notice of election if the notice is published on the 10th day prior to the election.</i>	13-3-105 13-3-207 Notice of Polling Place Locations and Accessibility Designations
Publication of Information Concerning Voting Systems. *Not more than 10 days or less than 2 days before	Districts shall broadcast on radio or television or publish in a newspaper of general circulation in the county a diagram showing the voting system to be used by voters and a sample ballot (newspaper only), a statement of location of where the voting system to be used is on public display, and instructions on how to vote. <i>This notice may be combined with the notices above, and with the notice of election if the notice is published on the 10th day prior to the election.</i>	13-17-203 Notice of Information Concerning Voting Systems
APRIL 25		
Grant cash request due to OPI	Grant cash requests made by this date will be paid on April 10.	OPI State and Federal Grants Handbook
APRIL 26		
OPI makes K-12 BASE aid payments	Direct State Aid Quality Educator Component At Risk Student Component Indian Education for All Student Achievement Gap Data for Achievement (SPED) State Special Education Payments	FY2022 Payment Schedule (scroll to bottom of page)
APRIL 30		
Form 941 for Quarter 1 is due	Form 941 payroll report for Quarter 1 (January, February and March) is due.	IRS Form 941 Instructions for Form 941

IMPORTANT DATES & DEADLINES – APRIL 2022

Indirect Cost Applications for FY2023 grants are due to OPI	<p>Application forms to request an indirect cost rate for fiscal year 2023 are posted on the OPI website. This form is optional, but is required if your district plans to charge indirect costs to federal and state grant awards using an indirect cost rate. Application for an indirect cost rate does not increase the amount of your grant awards.</p> <p>For compatibility with the E-grants system the closing date for applying for an Indirect Cost Rate is April 30.</p>	<p>Indirect Cost Rate Cover Letter Indirect Cost Rate Instructions</p> <p>OPI Indirect Cost Rates page</p>
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IMPORTANT DATES & DEADLINES – MAY 2022

MAY 1		
Deadline to apply for isolation status	By May 1, trustees apply to County Superintendent for school isolation status when ANB will be less than 10 for elementary or less than 25 for high school for the second consecutive year.	MCA 20-9-302(1)
MAY 2		
Deadline for absentee ballot requests (by noon)	Voters who wish to vote absentee may request an absentee ballot in writing or in person until noon the day before the election.	MCA 13-13-211 MCA 13-13-214 Application for Absentee Ballot
County election administrator delivers certified copy of the lists of registered electors to the school election administrator	Before the day of election, the county election administrator shall deliver a certified copy of the lists of registered electors for each voting location to the district. The district shall deliver the lists to the election judges prior to the opening of a voting location.	MCA 20-20-313
Late voter registration is closed at noon.	Late registration is closed at noon the day before the election. Electors must late register at the office of the county election administrator by noon and return their certificate of late registration to the election administrator (the school district clerk if the school district is running the election) by 8:00 pm on election day.	MCA 13-2-304
MAY 3		
SCHOOL ELECTION DAY	<p>The election administrator must prepare the polling places, printed ballots, ensure election judges are present, and conduct a fair and unbiased election (See Election Procedures).</p> <p>Notify election judges of the names of write-in candidates</p>	<p>Title 13 MCA 20-20-105 MCA 20-20-401(3) MCA 20-20-411</p> <p>2022 School Election Handbook Display of Instructions for Electors Election Judges Oath</p>

IMPORTANT DATES & DEADLINES – MAY 2022

MAY 9

<p>First date that provisional ballots may be counted</p>	<p>Following the election, unresolved provisional ballots are sealed. These ballots may not be opened until after 3pm on the 6th day after election. At that time election judges convene, and a determination is made as to whether the ballots are counted. If there are provisional ballots in a school election, the canvass may not occur until after all provisional ballots are resolved.</p>	<p>MCA 13-15-207 Provisional Ballot Instructions</p>
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MAY 10

<p>File monthly claims for NSLP or SSO reimbursement</p>	<p>Monthly lunch, breakfast and snack counts are due the 10th of each month. Counts are submitted in the Montana Agreement and Payments System (MAPS) for National School Lunch Program (NSLP) or Seamless Summer Option (SSO) reimbursement.</p> <p>See OPI's Back to School Page for more information on SSO and important updates.</p>	<p>Montana Agreement and Payment System (MAPS) log in page School Nutrition Programs Checklist NSLP Reimbursement rates for FY2022 SSO Reimbursement rates FY2022 School Nutrition Payments</p>
<p>OPI pays grant cash requests</p>	<p>OPI pays grant cash requests submitted by the 25th of the previous month.</p>	<p>E-Grants System Log in to your district's account, or click on Public Access, then Vendor Payee Details</p>

MAY 24

<p>Second semester transportation claims due</p>	<p>Submit second semester transportation claims online to the Superintendent of Public Instruction and transmit one copy of each claim to the County Superintendent of Schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TR-5 Claim for State Reimbursement for Individual and Isolated Transportation • TR-6 Claim for Reimbursement for School Bus Transportation 	<p>MCA 20-10-145(2) A.R.M. 10-7-104(2)(a)</p>
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MAY 25

<p>Grant cash request due to OPI</p>	<p>Grant cash requests made by this date will be paid on June 10.</p>	<p>OPI State and Federal Grants Handbook</p>
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MAY 26

<p>OPI makes K-12 BASE aid and other payments</p>	<p>Guaranteed Tax Base Aid Education Improvement Payment State Major Maintenance Aid</p>	<p>FY2022 Payment Schedule (scroll to bottom of page)</p>
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IMPORTANT DATES & DEADLINES – MAY 2022

MAY 27		
Deadline for trustees canvass the votes, issue certificates of election, and publish results	Following receipt of the tally sheets from all polls and within 15 days after the election, the trustees review the tally sheets compiled by the election judges to ascertain their accuracy. Recounts are ordered, if necessary. If the tally is complete and accurate, trustees issue certificates of election to successful candidates. The canvassed results shall be published immediately in a newspaper that will give notice to the largest number of people in the district.	MCA 20-20-415 MCA 20-20-416 Canvass of Votes and Results Certificate of Election of Trustee
MAY 27 (continued)		
Deadline for trustees to hold organizational meeting	The trustees of each district shall annually organize as a governing board of the district after the regular school election day and after the issuance of the election certificates to the newly elected trustees, but not later than 15 days after the election.	MCA 20-3-321 School Board Organization

How Employee Benefits May Help Retain Teachers

Attracting new talent can be a challenge for any employer, but it can be exceptionally hard for the education sector due to the increasing teacher shortage. According to the Economic Policy Institute, the number of public school teachers is expected to decrease by almost 100,000 in the next five years.¹

Retaining the people you've worked so hard to develop is more important now than ever. Especially when more than 50 percent of teachers quit teaching before reaching retirement in the U.S.² Offering a robust benefits package that includes supplemental insurance options may help attract and keep them. And when you include a benefits education strategy to help your employees better understand their options, you may make yourself an even more desirable employer.

Benefits Education May Also Help

When employees don't understand their benefits options, it can leave them feeling confused during open enrollment. Many employees will even opt-out of purchasing any benefits at all if they don't feel equipped to make intelligent choices. This can lead to gaps in coverage and financial difficulties.

Offering educational videos, one-on-one sessions with an account manager, brochures, and more can help your employees understand their benefits and give them the confidence they need to enroll every year. In fact, 93% of employees who have participated in one-to-one benefits counseling sessions found them valuable. Yet, only 15% of employees are offered this kind of personalized benefits enrollment experience.³

Don't let the lack of a robust benefits package or educational resources be the reason you lose top talent. Learn more about our communication and education strategy so you can keep the teachers you have and be a top pick for job seekers.



Stephanie Thomas-Roid
Account Development Executive
stephanie.thomas-roid@americanfidelity.com

P: 503-828-3718 | americanfidelity.com

¹Economic Policy Institute, Figure A, March 26, 2019. <https://www.epi.org/publication/the-teacher-shortage-is-real-large-and-growing-and-worse-than-we-thought-the-first-report-in-the-perfect-storm-in-the-teacher-labor-market-series/>

²NASSP: Making Teachers Stick; January 2020.

³BenefitsPro: 5 myths about enrollment that employers need to forget; June 24, 2019.

MASBO EXHIBITOR MEMBERS

American Fidelity Assurance Company Jacob Bautista, Office Manager jacob.Bautista@americanfidelity.com	Anderson, Zurmuehlen & Co. Stefeni Freese, CPA sfreese@azworld.com	Black Mountain Software Teresa Van Buren teresav@blackmountainsoftware.com
Bruco, Inc. Adam Uselman, V.P.-C.O.O. adamu@bruco.com	C & C School Accounting David Bardwell Help@CandCSchoolAccounting.com	D.A. Davidson & Co. Bridget Ekstrom Bekstrom@dadco.com
Fatbeam Graham Taylor graham@fatbeam.com	Felt Martin, PC Jeffrey Weldon JWeldon@feltmartinlaw.com	Fisher's Technology Amanda Byrne info@fisherstech.com
Frontline Education Lisa Sierra lsierra@frontlineed.com	Horace Mann Keith Jorgensen keith.jorgensen@horacemann.com	Iconergy Carl Hurst churst@iconergyco.com
Infinite Campus Mariah Ristow mariah.ristow@infinitecampus.com	Insurance Management Services of Montana John R Boyer john@imsvest.com	Joint Powers Trust Cyndy Maxwell cyndy@jointpowerstrust.com
K12 Montana Jeffrey Patterson jeffp@k12mt.com	Kalmbach Consulting Cathy Kalmbach cathymkal@gmail.com	Klimas Financial Services, Inc. Charles Klimas cklimas@gwnsecurities.com
Montana Public Employees Retirement Administration Terry Dalton tdalton@mt.gov	MSGIA-WCRRP Shawn Bubbs sbubb@mstba.org	Montana Schools Unemployment Insurance Program (MTSUIP) Theresia LeSueur tlesueur@mtsba.com
Montana Unified School Trust (MUST) Andy Holmlund aholmlund@ms-sf.org	Payne West, Inc./MSPLIP Rody Holman RHolman@paynewest.com	Pine Cove Consulting Brandan Bassett bbassett@pinecc.com
Teachers on Call Lesley Hacker Lesley.hacker@teachersoncall.com	Tyler Technologies Carrie Hughes carrie.hughes@tylertech.com	Todd Watkins Consulting Services Todd Watkins Toddwatkinsconsulting101@gmail.com
Wipfli LLP Kim Dare, CPA kdare@wipfli.com	<p><i>Stay Humble</i></p> <p><i>Work Hard</i></p> <p><i>Be Kind</i></p>	

SEASONAL ALLERGIES:

SYMPTOMS, CAUSES AND TREATMENT

Allergies happen when your immune system identifies an airborne substance that is usually harmless or dangerous. It responds to that substance, or allergen, by releasing histamines and other chemicals into your bloodstream. Those chemicals produce the symptoms of an allergic reaction.

Common triggers of allergies vary from one season to another.

SPRING

Trees are responsible for most springtime seasonal allergies. Birch is one of the most common offenders in northern latitudes, where many people with hay fever react to its pollen. Other allergenic trees in North America include cedar, alder, horse chestnut, willow, and poplar.

SUMMER

Hay fever gets its name from hay-cutting season, which is traditionally in the summer months. But the real culprits of summertime seasonal allergies are grasses, such as ryegrass and timothy grass, as well as certain weeds.



ALLERGY TREATMENTS

The best medicine for hay fever and year-round allergic rhinitis is avoidance of allergens that trigger symptoms for you. Medications are also available to treat symptoms of hay fever. Some people also try alternative treatments.

■ AVOIDANCE

- ▶ Keep your windows shut
- ▶ Limit your time outdoors
- ▶ Consider wearing a mask when you're outside

■ MEDICATION

When you can't avoid your allergens, other treatments are available, including—over-the-counter decongestants and antihistamines, such as cetirizine (Zyrtec) and combination medications containing acetaminophen, diphenhydramine, phenylephrine, and prescription medications, such as steroid nasal sprays.

FALL

Autumn is ragweed season. The genus name for ragweed is *Ambrosia*, and it includes more than 40 species worldwide. They're invasive plants that are difficult to control. Their pollen is a very common allergen, and the symptoms of ragweed allergy can be especially severe.

Other plants that drop their pollen in the fall include nettles, mugworts, sorrels, fat hens, and plantains.

WINTER

By winter, most outdoor allergens lie dormant. As a result, cold weather brings relief to many people with hay fever. But it also means that more folks are spending time indoors. If you're prone to seasonal allergies, you may also react to indoor allergens, such as mold, pet dander, dust mites, or cockroaches.

Indoor allergens are often easier to remove from your environment than outdoor pollens. Here are a few tips for ridding your home of common allergens:

- Wash your bedding in very hot water at least once a week.
- Cover your bedding and pillows with allergen-proof covers.
- Get rid of carpets and upholstered furniture.
- Remove stuffed toys from your children's bedrooms.
- Fix water leaks and clean up water damage that can help mold and pests flourish.
- Clean moldy surfaces and any places that mold may form, including humidifiers, swamp coolers, air conditioners, and refrigerators.
- Use a dehumidifier to reduce excess moisture.

Source: www.healthline.com

In severe cases, your doctor may recommend allergy shots. They're a type of immunotherapy that can help desensitize your immune system to allergens.

■ ALTERNATIVES

Few studies have been done on alternative treatments for hay fever. Some people believe the following alternative treatments may provide relief:

- ▶ Quercetin, a flavonoid that gives fruits and vegetables color
- ▶ *Lactobacillus acidophilus*, the "friendly" bacteria found in yogurt
- ▶ Spirulina, a type of blue-green algae
- ▶ Vitamin C, which has some antihistamine properties

■ THE TAKEAWAY

The symptoms of seasonal allergies can be uncomfortable. If you suspect you have seasonal allergies, talk to your doctor. They can help diagnose the cause of your symptoms and prescribe a treatment plan. They will likely encourage you to take steps to avoid your allergy triggers. They may also recommend over-the-counter or prescription medications.

DID YOU KNOW?

For the first time, maximum educator expense deduction rises to \$300 in 2022; limit \$250 for those filing 2021 tax returns

WASHINGTON – The Internal Revenue Service today reminded teachers and other educators planning ahead for 2022 that they'll be able to deduct up to \$300 of out-of-pocket classroom expenses when they file their federal income tax return next year.

This is the first time the annual limit has increased since the special educator expense deduction was enacted in 2002. For tax-years 2002 through 2021, the limit was \$250 per year. This means for people currently filing their 2021 tax returns due in April, the deduction is limited to \$250. The limit will rise in \$50 increments in future years based on inflation adjustments.

For 2022, an eligible educator can deduct up to \$300 of qualifying expenses. If they are married and file a joint return with another eligible educator, the limit rises to \$600. But in this situation, not more than \$300 for each spouse.

Who qualifies?

Educators can claim this deduction, even if they take the standard deduction. Eligible educators include anyone who is a kindergarten through grade 12 teacher, instructor, counselor, principal or aide in a school for at least 900 hours during the school year. Both public- and private-school educators qualify.

What's deductible?

Educators can deduct the unreimbursed cost of:

- Books, supplies and other materials used in the classroom.
- Equipment, including computer equipment, software and services.
- COVID-19 protective items to stop the spread of the disease in the classroom. This includes face masks, disinfectant for use against COVID-19, hand soap, hand sanitizer, disposable gloves, tape, paint or chalk to guide social distancing, physical barriers, such as clear plexiglass, air purifiers and other items recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- Professional development courses related to the curriculum they teach or the students they teach. For these expenses, it may be more beneficial to claim another educational tax benefit, especially the lifetime learning credit. For details, see [Publication 970](#), Tax Benefits for Education, particularly Chapter 3.

Qualified expenses don't include expenses for home schooling or for nonathletic supplies for courses in health or physical education. As with all deductions and credits, the IRS reminds educators to keep good records, including receipts, cancelled checks and other documentation.

Reminder for 2021 tax returns being filed now: Deduction limit is \$250

With the tax deadline just around the corner, the IRS reminds any educator still working on their 2021 return that they can claim any qualifying expenses on [Schedule 1](#), Line 11. For 2021, the deduction limit is \$250. If they are married and file a joint return with another eligible educator, the limit rises to \$500. But in this situation, not more than \$250 for each spouse.

Whether a return is self-prepared or prepared with the assistance of a tax professional or trained community volunteer, the IRS urges everyone to file electronically and choose direct deposit for any refund. For details, visit [IRS.gov/efile](#).

In addition, the IRS urges anyone with tax due to choose the speed and convenience of paying electronically, such as with IRS Direct Pay, a free service available only on [IRS.gov](#). For information about this and other payment options, visit [IRS.gov/Payments](#).

This year, the tax-filing deadline is:

- Monday, April 18 for most taxpayers.
- Tuesday, April 19 for residents of Maine and Massachusetts.
- Wednesday, June 15 for most Americans who live abroad.

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