

**Breakout Sessions - Strands and Location Key for Schedule**

A - Salon A (Autism)	B - Salon B (Behavior/MTSS/Mental Health)	C - Salon C (Current Topics)
E - Salon E (Leadership)	F - Salon F (Special Education Processes)	G - Salon G (Math/Reading)

\*If a breakout is marked E/F or similarly, that means it will use both Salons for a larger capacity.

<b>Montana Council for Exceptional Children</b> <b>2024 Conference</b> <b>Missoula Hilton Garden Inn</b>		
Wednesday, April 3, 2024		
8:00 -11:15am	<b>Registration</b> South Rotunda	
8:45 -10:15am	Welcoming & Keynote	Charlie Appelstein, MSW
10:30-11:45am	<b>Breakout Session 1 (choose one)</b>  <b>Salon A.</b> Brain Differences and the 3 M's of Autism  <b>Salon B.</b> It's not you, it's your system: Using the data-based individualization (DBI) framework to intensify reading instruction  <b>Salon C.</b> Part 2 No Such Thing As a Bad Kid  <b>Salons E/F.</b> OPI Updates, Partnerships and Opportunities  <b>Salon G.</b> Embedding Writing in Reading	Jenifer Schoffer Closson, University of Montana  Genevieve Thomas (SSOM)  Charlie Appelstein, MSW  OPI Special Education Leadership Team  Tara Ferriter-Smith and Justine Alberts, STRIVE Consulting
11:45-1:00pm	<b>Lunch on Your Own</b>	
1:15-2:30pm	<b>Breakout Session 2 (choose one)</b>  <b>Salon A.</b> Behavior or Executive Functioning? How to Determine It?  <b>Salon B.</b> Part 3 No Such Thing As A Bad Kid  <b>Salon C.</b> Distance Learning and Special Education  <b>Salon E .</b> A Dark Cloud on the Horizon. The Politics and Policy of K12 Education in Montana  <b>Salon F.</b> Special Education for General Ed Teachers and Paraprofessionals  <b>Salon G.</b> Defining and Understanding Dyslexia	Jennifer Schoffer Closson, University of Montana  Charlie Appelstein, MSW  Jason Neiffer and Robyn Nuttall, Montana Digital Academy  Rob Watson, SAM  Taylor Salmi, Cabinet Mtn Coop Director  Genevieve Thomas (SSOM)
2:45-4:00pm	<b>Breakout Session 3 (choose one)</b>  <b>Salon A.</b> Managing Number One First & Staying Motivated to Do the Job	Charlie Appelstein, MSW

	<p><b>Salon B.</b> What To Do When Students Stop Showing Up- Addressing Absenteeism in Schools</p> <p><b>Salon C.</b> Celebrating Neurodiversity for our Unique Learners in Trauma</p> <p><b>Salon E.</b> Building Advocacy &amp; Learning Leadership Skills</p> <p><b>Salon F.</b> OPI Team Round Table - Multiple Topic Tables; We are Here to Help! (2 hours)</p> <p><b>Salon G.</b> Language Deprivation in Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Children</p>	<p>Jessica M. Carranza, School Psychologist, M.Ed, Ed.S, NCSP &amp; Shawna Rader Kelly, Ed.S, NCSP</p> <p>Shawna Heiser</p> <p>Michael Beers</p> <p>OPI Special Education Leadership Team</p> <p>Cecily Whitworth; Montana Family ASL &amp; Caitlin Giammona; The Signing SLP</p>
4:15 - 5:30pm	<p><b>Breakout Session 4 (choose one)</b></p> <p><b>Salons A/B.</b> - Celebrating Neurodiversity in our Students with Autism Entering and Navigating College</p> <p><b>Salon C.</b> Threat Assessment Level I</p> <p><b>Salon E.</b> A Dark Cloud on the Horizon. The Politics and Policy of K12 Education in Montana</p> <p><b>Salon F.</b> OPI Team Round Table - Multiple Topic Tables; We are Here to Help! (2 hours)</p> <p><b>Salon G.</b> Deaf &amp; Hard-of-Hearing Kids in Montana: Resources &amp; Best Practices</p>	<p>Shawna Heiser</p> <p>Tammy Tolleson Knee &amp; Tina Eblen, Montana Safe Schools Center</p> <p>Rob Watson, SAM</p> <p>OPI Special Education Leadership Team</p> <p>Cecily Whitworth; Montana Family ASL &amp; Caitlin Giammona; The Signing SLP</p>
5:30 - 7:00pm	<b>Dinner on Your Own</b>	
7:00-8:30pm	<b>Comedy Night with Michael Beers</b>	Grand Ballroom

**Session Details:**

**10:30 - 11:45 a.m.**

*Breakout Session 1*

Salon A. **Brain Differences and the 3 M's of Autism**  
Jennifer Schoffer Closson, University of Montana

Salon B. **It's not you, it's your system: Using the data-based individualization (DBI) framework to intensify Reading Instruction**  
Genevieve Thomas (SSOM)

*"Help! My school has been implementing reading instruction and intervention through a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) framework for several years. We are doing all of the things - screening our students, providing small group differentiated instruction, and monitoring student progress. While many students are showing great growth, we have some students who are persistently not responding. What do we do?!"*

Salon C. **Part 2 No Such Thing As a Bad Kid**  
Charlie Appelstein, MSW

*Follow up to Keynote: Strength-based practice is an emerging approach to guiding students and, in particular, those with emotional and behavioral challenges, that is exceptionally positive and inspiring. Its focus is on strength-building rather than flaw-fixing. It begins with the belief that every young person has or can*

*develop strengths and utilize past successes to mitigate problem behavior and enhance academic and social functioning. This presentation will highlight many of the key principles and techniques of this transforming modality. Areas covered include: What is strength-based practice & the power of a positive attitude & culture; the effects of trauma and positive emotions on the brain; changing negative mindsets and the deleterious effects of pejorative labeling; strength-based communication principles and techniques – including reframing, using solution-focused questions, positive predicting and inspirational metaphors; self-esteem building & activities for at-risk children and youth; how to help cognitively-inflexible students; the importance of being family-friendly; why, how, and when to use incentive plans; the importance of controlling personal emotions (i.e. managing number one first); respectful, relationship-based limit setting; and a host of creative cognitive behavioral strategies.*

Salon E/F: **OPI Updates, Partnerships and Opportunities**  
OPI Special Education Leadership Team

Salon G. **Embedding Writing in Reading**  
Tara Ferriter-Smith and Justine Alberts, STRIVE Consulting  
*Do you find it difficult to incorporate writing into your instruction within the day? Are you needing some additional "tools" to add to your toolbox to support students with writing processes? If so, this writing sessions will help you understand and focus on delivering engaging strategies to increase student writing throughout the day. In this session, participants will learn strategies to scaffold writing instruction for students as they respond to reading in writing.*

**Lunch on Your Own 11:45 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.**

**1:15 - 2:30 p.m.**  
**Breakout Session 2**

Salon A. **Behavior or Executive Functioning? How to Determine It?**  
Jennifer Schoffer Closson, University of Montana

Salon B. **Part 3 No Such Thing As A Bad Kid**  
Charlie Appelstein, MSW

*Understanding and Responding to Students with Emotional & Behavioral Challenges Using a Positive, Trauma-Informed, Strength-Based Approach*

Salon C. **Distance Learning and Special Education**  
Jason Neiffer and Robyn Nuttall, Montana Digital Academy

Salon E. **A Dark Cloud on the Horizon. The Politics and Policy of K12 Education in Montana**  
Rob Watson, SAM

Salon F. **Special Education for General Ed Teachers and Paraprofessionals**  
Taylor Salmi, Cabinet Mtn Coop Director

Salon G. **Defining and Understanding Dyslexia**  
Genevieve Thomas (SSOM)

*While Montana's 2019 Dyslexia Screening and Intervention Act has increased awareness of dyslexia across our state, many misconceptions about dyslexia persist. Join Genevieve Thomas, School Psychologist and Director of Professional Learning for School Services of Montana, to learn early signs of risk for dyslexia, characteristics of dyslexic readers, and best practices in dyslexia evaluations and intervention planning.*

**2:45 - 4:00 p.m.**  
**Breakout Session 3**

Salon A. **Managing Number One First & Staying Motivated to Do the Job**  
Charlie Appelstein, MSW

*Working day after day with kids struggling with emotional and behavioral challenges elicits difficult*

*feelings that can compromise an educator's performance. This presentation examines the major triggers and provides strategies for self-management that keep enthusiasm alive. Focal points include: how to respond instead of react when personalizing difficult interactions, the need to check personal baggage at the door, the pivotal role of support and how to "Do your job" when it is lacking, understanding and mitigating staff "splitting" and staying cohesive, and a new, uplifting definition for success in working with at-risk populations.*

Salon B. **What To Do When Students Stop Showing Up- Addressing Absenteeism in Schools**  
Jessica M. Carranza, School Psychologist, M.Ed, Ed.S, NCSP & Shawna Rader Kelly, Ed.S, NCSP

*Objectives-*

- *Define and understand types of absences*
- *Identify Prevalence, Risk Factors, and Cultural Considerations*
- *Identify Assessment, Prevention, and Intervention options*

Salon C. **Celebrating Neurodiversity for our Unique Learners in Trauma**  
Shawna Heiser



*A thorough presentation entitled Celebrating Neurodiversity for our Unique Learners in Trauma will be a description of how to reach and teach our neurodiverse students with trauma. Trauma informed instructional practices will be discussed and detailed through the lens of positive behavioral support. The audience will be able to apply the information presented through videos, activities, and examples of how to interact with students affected. We will examine what practices are best received from the neurodiverse student affected by trauma.*

*Throughout the presentation, the attendees will receive a vast amount of information on what seems to work best for the children and adolescents with trauma and learning challenges and how to set up positive behavioral supports and interventions for the individuals they are serving in the classroom.*

*Learning Objectives: After attending this session, participants will*

- 1. Identify why difficult behaviors are occurring, and what to do to change the inappropriate behaviors of students with emotional disturbances.*
- 2. Gain knowledge about how to interact and be successful with children affected by trauma.*
- 3. Know how to utilize positive behavioral practices in the classroom and where to begin to make a change for their students.*

Salon E. **Building Advocacy & Learning Leadership Skills**  
Michael Beers

*Loneliness & lack of confidence are issues that I, and almost every person with a disability including youth, deal with on some level. In this presentation we will start a conversation about how to address these issues by building communities of people based on mutual interests and not labels.*

Salon F. **OPI Team Round Table - Multiple Topic Tables; We are Here to Help! (2 hours)**  
OPI Special Education Leadership Team

Salon G. **Language Deprivation in Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Children**  
Cecily Whitworth; Montana Family ASL & Caitlin Giammona; The Signing SLP

*Children with hearing loss are at high risk for language deprivation, resulting in language delays, emotional/behavioral distress, and Language Deprivation Syndrome. Neither assistive technology nor intensive spoken-language support can reliably prevent the permanent and devastating psychosocial and neurological damage caused by language deprivation. Intensive early intervention focused on family sign language skills and deaf cultural identities, with the goal of a bilingual/bicultural family, both avoids the risk of language deprivation and improves the academic performance and emotional health of the deaf/hh child later on.*

*Learning Objectives:*

- *Define causes and results of Language Deprivation Syndrome;*
- *Understand the differences between American Sign Language and English;*
- *List the environmental components necessary to prevent language deprivation;*

Describe a bilingual/bicultural approach to raising a deaf/hh child

**4:15 - 5:30 p.m.**

**Breakout Session 4**

Salon A & B

**Celebrating Neurodiversity in our Students with Autism Entering and Navigating College**

Shawna Heiser



*A thorough presentation entitled Celebrating Neurodiversity in our Students with Autism Entering and Navigating College. Positive behavioral supports and instructional practices will be discussed and detailed through the lens of students with Autism who are challenged with navigating college. The audience will be able to apply the information presented through videos, activities, and examples of how to interact with students affected.*

*Throughout the presentation, the attendees will receive a vast amount of information on what seems to work best for young adults with Autism and how to set up positive behavioral supports and interventions for the individuals they are serving in college.*

*Learning Objectives: After attending this session, participants will*

- 1. Identify what transitional behaviors occur through college transitions*
- 2. Gain knowledge about how to interact and be successful with students with Autism navigating college.*
- 3. Know how to utilize positive behavioral practices in the classroom and where to begin to make a change for their students.*

Salon C.

**Threat Assessment Level I**

Tammy Tolleson Knee & Tina Eblen, Montana Safe Schools Center

*This session explores the impact of stress on the developing brain and why threat assessment is necessary. We will dive into what constitutes a threat, types of threats, building a behavior intervention team and violence prevention, and with an overview of the threat assessment process.*

Salon E.

**A Dark Cloud on the Horizon. The Politics and Policy of K12 Education in Montana**

Rob Watson, SAM

Salon F.

**OPI Team Round Table - Multiple Topic Tables; We are Here to Help! (2 hours)**

OPI Special Education Leadership Team

Salon G.

**Deaf & Hard-of-Hearing Kids in Montana: Resources & Best Practices**

Cecily Whitworth; Montana Family ASL & Caitlin Giammona; The Signing SLP

*Hearing loss is a low-incidence disability, which means that deaf children\* in Montana and many other remote or rural areas are frequently the only deaf child in their class, in their grade, in their school, or in their entire school district. Parents, educators, and other professionals may not have met or worked with a deaf child before, and may be unfamiliar with the unique challenges faced by deaf children in typically-hearing environments. Extensive research has determined what the best practices for working with deaf children are, and a growing number of resources are available to support isolated deaf children as they develop and learn. Learning about the best practices in deaf education and seeking out resources specifically designed for deaf children are essential for ensuring the cognitive development, social/emotional wellbeing, and academic success of deaf and hard-of-hearing children.*

*\*including hard-of-hearing, deafblind, and deaf children with additional disabilities*

*Learning Objectives:*

- Understand the unique challenges of deaf children who live in hearing environments, specifically in rural areas*
- Describe evidence-based best practices for raising, educating, and working with deaf children*
- Identify resources for supporting deaf children in areas where there is no existing deaf education system*

**5:30- 7:00 p.m. Dinner on your own**

**7:00 - 8:30 p.m. Comedy Night with Michael Beers**  
**Bars will be available - please bring credit; they are cashless**