



Presenters and Sessions

General Sessions

Opening Session

Kick off EdFest with this fun and fast-paced opening session! Learn all the tips and tricks you will need to get the most out of MTPBS EdFest. We'll talk about sign-in sheets, takeaway worksheets, and how to make sure you get your PDUs and prizes! Bring your snacks and a beverage of choice, and get ready to get this party started!

PBS is HERE for Teachers: PreK-12 General Session

Many things have changed in the PBS stratosphere in recent months, but our commitment to education and supporting teachers and their students is still as strong as ever! In this fun and interactive general session, EVERYONE will have the opportunity to learn more about PBS LearningMedia—a free content library for teachers of all ages and subject areas! New resources are added to the site every month, and in this session, you will get to see some of the latest resources AND get some time to explore them! Get ready to start opening browser tabs—we will see you there!

Closing Session

This is our final session together, where we will wrap up all the loose ends and think about next steps. There will be some reflection, some sneak peeks, and what's on the horizon at Montana PBS and the PRIZE DRAWING! Everyone who signs into this session will be eligible for prizes and PDUs! You don't want to miss it!

Facilitated Reflection Sessions

These sessions will take place at the end of the second day, just before the closing session. This is our time to reflect on all the topics and ideas that were presented at EdFest. Be prepared to share your thoughts and ideas in the chat box or with a small group in a break-out room. Bring all the notes you took during EdFest! There will be a session for elementary educators and one for secondary educators. Pick the

session that feels like the best fit for you.

K-4th Grade Strand

Jordan Parker, Teacher, Missoula County Public Schools, Missoula, MT

Bio

Jordan Parker, *B.A. Child Psychology; M.Ed. Teaching and Learning*

With over a decade of experience spanning the foundational years of preschool to the high-stakes environment of Title I elementary, Jordan brings a unique, 360-degree view of student development. Though once a "perfect on paper" student—straight-A's, multi-sport captain, and multi-club president—she navigated their entire academic career with undiagnosed anxiety. This lived experience, combined with over a decade in the classroom, has fueled a mission to help educators identify "invisible" anxiety and build trauma-informed, high-regulation classrooms where every student feels safe enough to learn.

Session

The Invisible Backpack: Strategies for Managing Student Anxiety

Anxiety doesn't always look like a panic attack; sometimes it looks like perfectionism, procrastination, or defiance. In this one-hour intensive, we move beyond theory to provide actionable, ready-to-implement strategies for the modern educator. Drawing on trauma-informed practices and neurobiology, this session will help you:

- Decode the "Anxiety Shapeshifter": Identify how anxiety manifests differently across age groups and achievement levels.
- Master Co-Regulation: Learn the "Brain-Boss" framework to help students move from survival mode (downstairs brain) to learning mode (upstairs brain).
- Build an Architect's Toolkit: Implement low-stakes coping mechanisms that lower student cortisol and raise academic engagement.

Traci Piltz, Technology Integration Specialist, Billings Public Schools, Billings, MT

Bio

Traci Piltz is a PK-3 Instructional Technology Coach who loves helping teachers

bring creativity and confidence into their classrooms through meaningful tech integration. As a PBS KIDS Early Learning Champion, PBS Media Literacy Certified Educator, Code.org Facilitator, and Apple Distinguished Educator, she blends storytelling, creativity, computational thinking, and AI literacy into learning experiences that spark curiosity. She loves helping teachers & students explore technology and media to investigate, create & share their learning!

Sessions

Creative Coding & AI Basics with Scratch Jr

Get ready to bring a little creative magic into your classroom! In this hands-on session, teachers explore how PBS KIDS Scratch Jr turns early coding into storytelling, problem-solving, and joyful learning for K–3 students. Along the way, we'll highlight how these playful projects build foundational AI literacy by strengthening computational thinking skills like sequencing, patterns, debugging, and logical reasoning. We'll connect it all to the ISTE Standards and share ready-to-use resources from PBS KIDS and PBS LearningMedia. You'll leave with practical ideas, fresh inspiration, and the confidence to help your littlest learners think big through code.

More Than Minutes: Making Digital Learning Count

It's Time to Rethink Screen Time! What if the conversation wasn't about how much time students spend on devices, but what they're doing while they're there? In this interactive session, we'll explore the shift from Screen Time to Digital Learning Time and unpack what meaningful, purposeful technology use looks like in today's elementary classrooms. Together, we'll examine how to evaluate the quality of digital experiences, promote healthy technology habits, and build essential digital literacy skills that prepare students for the future. Through practical examples, reflection, and ready-to-use strategies, participants will leave with fresh ideas and a new lens for making technology a powerful tool for learning, creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking.

Tyler Moore, PBS LearningMedia Specialist, Montana PBS, Missoula, MT

Bio

Tyler is a LearningMedia specialist at Montana PBS and supports the production of content on PBS LearningMedia. He is pursuing his master's degree in Environmental Education at the University of Montana. Tyler taught elementary school in Washington State and plans to teach in Detroit in the fall of 2026.

Session

Environmental education in elementary classrooms can begin with curiosity, local places, and students' own interests. In this session, Tyler Moore will share practical approaches for designing place-based environmental learning experiences that help students notice, question, discuss, and take small forms of civic action. Drawing from his work as an elementary teacher, graduate researcher, and learning media specialist at Montana PBS, the session will offer educators adaptable strategies for connecting environmental topics to reading, writing, discussion, media analysis, and community engagement. Participants will leave with a simple planning framework and examples they can use to support meaningful environmental learning in their own classrooms.

**Eva Ticknor, Counselor, Bozeman Counseling Center,
Bozeman, MT**

Bio

Eva is a former elementary educator with 10 years of experience teaching 4th and 5th grade. Eva is now a counselor in private practice, where she works to support neurodivergent and sensitive individuals both in and beyond the classroom.

Session

Supporting Students with ADHD

In this session, educators will build a deeper understanding of ADHD and neurodivergence. We will explore common challenges students face, as well as the often overlooked “superpowers” of neurodivergent learners. Special attention will be given to different presentations of ADHD, including how it may appear in students who mask their symptoms. Participants will walk away with practical, classroom-ready strategies that support attention, organization, and emotional regulation.

**Kari Wardle, Director of Education, Idaho Public Television,
Boise, ID**

Bio

Kari Wardle currently works as the Director of Education for Idaho Public Television, where she leads the education department and provides training and support to teachers throughout the state. Before joining the IdahoPTV staff in 2017, she worked as an elementary school teacher for ten years. Kari is a PBS Media Literacy Certified Educator, a Google Level 2 certified teacher, a certified Microsoft Innovative

Educator, and an Apple Teacher. She obtained her B.A. in K-8 Interdisciplinary Studies from Western Governors University and her M.Ed. in Instructional Design and Technology from Idaho State University.

Session

All the Feelings! Social emotional learning with PBS KIDS

When working with children and families, social/emotional skills are the building blocks for success in and out of school. Finding appropriate, research-based, and affordable resources can be overwhelming. Join IdahoPTV for a breakdown of the PBS KIDS and Sesame Street in Communities resources that are ready for your immediate use. The best part? They're all free! These resources focus on everything from autism to homelessness and parental incarceration. You will leave this workshop with invaluable assets and ideas for meeting the SEL needs of your students and their families.

Nikki Vradenburg, Director of Education, Montana PBS, Bozeman, MT

Bio

Nikki Vradenburg is the Director of Education at Montana PBS and has worked to carry out the mission of the Education department since 2017. She brings 16 years of classroom teaching to her role—most of which were spent teaching in a rural school in the Gallatin Valley. Nikki facilitates professional development for teachers in Montana online and in person and oversees the planning and activation of events and programs for families of young children. Nikki leads a team of graduate students at MSU and UM as they collaborate to produce learning resources for Montana classrooms on PBS LearningMedia. She is a National Board Certified teacher with a Doctorate of Education in Curriculum and Instruction and a Master's Degree in Educational Leadership. Her dissertation research was about professional learning for teachers, media literacy, and program evaluation. Nikki is honored to have been a finalist for Montana Teacher of the Year in 2017. She is a reader of contemporary fiction and can often be found reading in a hammock in the trees in the summer or on the ski slopes with her husband and two children in the winter.

Sessions

Explore, Play Teach: PBS KIDS in the Classroom America 250 and More!

Join us for a fun and interactive workshop designed just for K-3 teachers! Discover how to bring the magic of PBS KIDS programs into your classroom to spark curiosity,

creativity, and learning. Learn about brand new PBS KIDS programs and resources produced for America 250 to help younger learners explore history, civics, and a sense of place. Teachers will have the chance to dig into resources on PBS platforms to support lessons during “Celebrate Freedom Week” and other designated holidays during the school year.

Made in Montana: Resources for Montana Teachers on PBS LearningMedia

Join us for an engaging virtual breakout session designed specifically for Montana elementary teachers! In this session, you'll explore a rich collection of Montana-focused resources available on PBS LearningMedia—created and produced by the Education team at Montana PBS to reflect the stories, cultures, and landscapes of our state. We'll highlight ready-to-use videos, lesson plans, and interactive activities that align with elementary standards while showcasing authentic, locally produced content you can trust. You'll learn how to easily find, save, and integrate these resources into your daily teaching—whether you're building background knowledge, supporting literacy, or enhancing social studies and science instruction.

5th-12th Grade Strand

Ann Bernard, Youth Media Specialist, Montana PBS, Bozeman, MT

Bio

Ann Bernard is the Youth Media Specialist for the Montana PBS Education department and a former Montana Middle School English and Social Studies teacher of almost 15 years. During her years as a middle school teacher, Ann focused her professional development on meeting the needs of all learners in her classroom through project-based, hands-on learning and the responsible use of technology to engage her students. Ann holds a Master's degree in Education. The focus of her personal research and professional development is centered on teacher well-being in education reform, and she believes that the greatest student success will come when educators are cared for and treated like the professionals they are. As a lifelong reader, writer, and learner, Ann knows the power of words when given a platform and an authentic audience. She is dedicated to amplifying Montana Teen voices through the Media Mavericks program and is excited to help honor and validate the lived experiences of all Montana teens.

Sessions

Media Mavericks: The Power of Youth Media

Learn about the engaging use of media projects in any subject area, classroom, or extracurricular space. This session will introduce you to free, high-quality resources that connect your classroom learning to the real world and your students' futures. It's completely free, and all of our resources are ready to use, easily accessible, and editable. Don't miss your chance to connect your content area to 21st-century skills and projects that your students will love!

Celebrate Freedom Week with America 250 and the American Revolution

In this session, we will explore how to leverage the intersection of America's 250th birthday, Ken Burns' *The American Revolution* film, Montana's newly adopted "Celebrate Freedom Week", and the Youth Media Challenge to engage students and support your delivery of civic education.

Will Fassbender, Assistant Professor of English, Montana State University, Bozeman, MT

Bio

Dr. William Fassbender is an Assistant Professor of English Education at Montana State University. His research focuses on the impact of technology on teacher identity in secondary English classrooms using novel approaches to qualitative inquiry. Current projects revolve around the impact of AI on literacy and composition, as well as the challenges English teachers face in an increasingly complex media landscape.

Sessions

Meaningful Podcast Creation

Before students can create compelling podcasts of their own, they need to develop an ear for how podcasts actually work. This session invites teachers to help students slow down and study podcasts as mentor texts—examining the formal elements that shape the medium, from music and bumpers to stingers and transitions, while exploring how different genres (interview, storytelling, panel, solo show) make distinct rhetorical choices. Attendees will leave with materials and practical frameworks for facilitating "close listening" in the classroom and engaging students in genre study as a meaningful entry point into podcast creation.

Katherine Hodge, Director of Education, Museum of the Rockies, Bozeman, MT

Bio

Kate Hodge is the Director of Education and Public Programming at the Museum of the Rockies. She is an experienced educator with a background in science and history education and a commitment to creating museum spaces where all learners can pursue curiosity. She holds degrees in Anthropology and History from the University of Chicago and has archaeological field experience in the U.S., Spain, Italy, Israel, and Peru. Kate has worked in multiple roles at the Field Museum at UChicago, as well as at the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures Museum. Before joining MOR in 2025, she served as Public Education Coordinator and Interim Director at Project Archaeology and later worked in youth and family programming and academic administration at UChicago. At MOR, she leads efforts to expand school partnerships, strengthen outreach to rural and tribal communities, and develop new opportunities for lifelong learners.

Session

Learn about Museum of the Rockies teacher resources!

Rachel Roberson, Senior Program Manager for Education Content, KQED, San Francisco, CA

Bio

Rachel Roberson is KQED's senior program manager for education content, where she brings together her passion for student voice, media literacy, and civic storytelling to support educators and classrooms. As a nonprofit, public media partner, Rachel leads the development of KQED's Youth Media Challenge curriculum and professional learning workshops, and is a course writer and instructor on KQED Teach. In her 15 years as a classroom teacher, Rachel taught middle school social studies, humanities core, ELD, and English in California, Texas, and internationally. Before becoming an educator, she was a newspaper reporter in the Bay Area.

Session

Supercharge Student Voice and Creativity with KQED's Youth Media Challenge

As you think about the coming school year, why not start by opening space for students to reflect on their values, share their learning, and express their viewpoints with KQED's Youth Media Challenge? This standards-aligned media project and national publishing opportunity hosted by KQED invites middle and high school students to make media in your classroom and share it with a public media audience. At the EdFest session, KQED's session will focus on personal narrative

projects, often a strong way to start the year. But the Youth Media Challenge also includes commentary/argument and informational projects. Media-making in the classroom strengthens reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language fluency, in addition to boosting confidence, building community, and centering student voice. You'll come away with ideas, inspiration, and ready-to-use modifiable curriculum resources in English and Spanish to start the year with a Youth Media Challenge project in your classroom. *(Note: this session is intended for middle and high school teachers. Upper elementary teachers are welcome to use and modify the curriculum, but their students are not able to publish on KQED's Youth Media Showcase.)*

Share or Beware: Fact Check Like a Pro in the Age of AI

Searching for reliable information can feel like navigating through a jungle of claims, clickbait, and AI-generated content. Fortunately, the strategies professional fact-checkers, journalists, and media producers use to find reliable sources still work, whether that information is produced by humans or generated by AI. In this interactive session from KQED, you'll learn how to support students to develop healthy skepticism without turning into cynics as they gain vital online reasoning skills to use in the classroom and everyday lives. Then, practice evaluating sources using a variety of methods, including Share or Beware!, KQED's ever-evolving, easily modifiable source evaluation game. You'll leave with ideas, teaching tips, and free, ready-to-use resources to help students find reliable sources no matter where they click. *(Note: this session is best for grade 4-12 teachers.)*

George Scott, Teacher, Bozeman School Public Schools, Bozeman, MT

Bio

My name is George Scott, and I am a special education teacher at Bozeman High in Bozeman, MT. I have been teaching special education for over 20 years. I have two boys- one senior and one sophomore. I have absolutely no experience in teaching film or media. My incentive for diving into media production was simply to help my older son find a new passion, and it turned out to be a ton of fun for both of us and a wider audience of students who have a passion for media making.

Session

In this session, we will explore how to start, grow, and maintain a Media Mavericks club with absolutely no experience teaching film or media. I will share my story of starting a club out of personal necessity and ending up finding a community of like-minded students who are motivated to create high-quality media projects and share their stories. We will discuss how clubs can grow and change over time to serve their

members, how to leverage community partnerships to provide real-world experiences, and how to foster a sense of community within the club.

Kari Wardle, Director of Education, Idaho Public Television, Boise, ID

Bio

Kari Wardle currently works as the Director of Education for Idaho Public Television, where she leads the education department and provides training and support to teachers throughout the state. Before joining the IdahoPTV staff in 2017, she worked as an elementary school teacher for ten years. Kari is a PBS Media Literacy Certified Educator, a Google Level 2 certified teacher, a certified Microsoft Innovative Educator, and an Apple Teacher. She obtained her B.A. in K-8 Interdisciplinary Studies from Western Governors University and her M.Ed. in Instructional Design and Technology from Idaho State University.

Session

KNOW VAPE

Do you **KNOW VAPE**? Vaping is quickly becoming an epidemic, and 1 in 4 Montana students has tried vaping. Join Idaho Public Television for a professional development workshop for educators on the dangers of vaping. Throughout the course of this workshop, participants will learn about the damage caused by vaping and the connection between vaping and mental health. Attendees will learn how they can help students avoid vaping, and will walk away with a wealth of resources they can use in their classroom.