



A Union of Professionals

AFT Innovation Fund

# BUILDING THE TEACHER LEARNING HUB INTO A STATEWIDE PLATFORM TO DELIVER SUPPORT FOR EDUCATORS



MONTANA EDUCATION ASSOCIATION-  
MONTANA FEDERATION OF TEACHERS





# BUILDING THE TEACHER LEARNING HUB INTO A STATE-WIDE PLATFORM TO DELIVER SUPPORT FOR EDUCATORS

## PROGRAM GOALS

- To create the Montana Digital Professional Learning Network, an online platform of resources, training and up-to-date information for Montana educators as well as a place where they can connect peer-to-peer;
- To partner with providers and educators and to give access to online resources and professional learning statewide;
- To improve the implementation of new initiatives like new common standards for students and schools in math and English language arts; and
- To offer access to licensure exams like the PASS for paraprofessionals.

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## Summary

In 2013, the AFT Innovation Fund awarded MEA-MFT a grant to create the Montana Digital Professional Learning Network (MDPLN). This was a statewide online-learning platform designed after the success of the Montana Digital Academy (MTDA), a platform for student-based resources and courses. MDPLN was designed to give educators, no matter where they were in the state, access to professional learning opportunities at a time when new curricula and learning standards for students were being adopted.

Initially, the goal was to ease introduction of the Common Core State Standards in Montana. Training in the Montana English Language Arts, Literacy, and Mathematics Common Core standards as well as ongoing coaching support for Montana teachers and paraprofessionals were provided.

MDPLN was a broad collaboration among MEA-MFT, the Montana Office of Public Instruction, Montana University System (it was physically housed at the University of Montana), the School Administrators of Montana, the Montana School Boards Association, the Montana Rural Education Association, and the Montana Providers of Professional Learning Network.

Over a two-year period, this partnership resulted in more than 100 new online modules and expanded MDPLN to serve more than 1,000 users. In 2015, the Office of Public Instruction assumed the rights and ownership of the efforts to provide continuity and sustainability to the platform and rebranded MDPLN as the Teacher Learning Hub. OPI continues to work closely with Montana Digital Academy staff and other partners to expand the offerings and reach out to even more Montana educators.

## Program Leaders

- **ERIC FEAVER**  
President, MEA-MFT
- **MARCO FERRO**  
Public policy director, MEA-MFT

## Program Contacts

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## Statewide Partners

- MEA-MFT
- Montana Office of Public Instruction
- Montana University System
- School Administrators of Montana
- Montana School Boards Association
- Montana Rural Education Association
- Montana Providers of Professional Learning Network



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The AFT Innovation Fund was established in 2009 to identify, nurture and bring to scale union- and educator-led innovations in public education. As an initiative of the AFT, the fund's reach is nationwide. To date, the fund has made more than 45 investments. These investments position the AFT and its affiliates, in collaboration with school districts and the communities in which they work, as leaders and engaged partners in improving outcomes for our members and the people they serve.

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“In 2013, MEA-MFT took a great idea and replicated it for educators across a large and primarily rural state. Building on the momentum of distance learning and an unfilled need for educators to have access to high-quality professional learning, teachers and paraprofessionals used the platform that the union built to keep up with the latest training and inform their practice. The site hosted everything from tools for standards implementation, to para-educator licensure tests, to new ways for teachers to connect with each other. It was so successful that the state education department adopted it as its own, rebranding it aptly: the Teacher Learning Hub.”

—Randi Weingarten, AFT President

## MEA-MFT PRESIDENT'S REFLECTION

AFT not only generously supported this particular grant, but also assisted MEA-MFT and our partner education groups to pass legislation in 2007 creating the Montana Digital Academy in the first place. Without the academy as the blueprint, there would be no Teacher Learning Hub. The Hub has become a go-to resource for teachers all across the state to get help with curriculum and instruction and access professional development and even licensure requirements.

AFT has been there from the beginning working with MEA-MFT and partners for solutions to big challenges. By creating an accessible way for educators and students to access these high-quality, state-funded, distance-learning opportunities, we've shown how to use innovative ideas and collaboration in a big, largely rural state

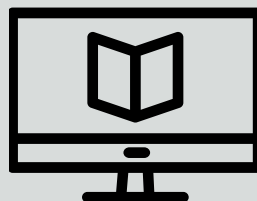
ERIC FEAVER  
MEA-MFT President



## TEACHER LEARNING HUB

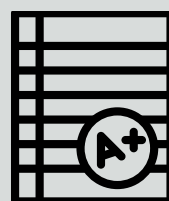
### By the numbers

Source: Teacher Learning Hub Annual Report 16/17, <http://bit.ly/TLH1617>



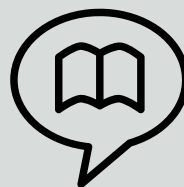
### USAGE

In November 2015, an average of 300 educators were actively using TLH. By August 2017, active users numbered above 2,000.



### COURSE COMPLETION

In November 2015, educators completed 176 courses on TLH. By June 2017, that number jumped to 569.



### BEYOND THE HUB

Overall, 92% of teachers using the TLH plan to implement what they had learned from their online coursework.



### SMART INVESTMENT

Montana schools are saving over \$467,700 annually in travel, substitutes, presenter fees, and reimbursements by using TLH. In the 2016-17 school year they provided educators 2919 6-hour professional development workshops and access to up-to-the-minute training, licensure tests and peer-to-peer contact.

## OUR MISSION

The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

Randi Weingarten  
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