

HIDDEN TREASURE IN MONTANA

MAPS Media Institute

Story by Jeffrey Conger



MAPS is a creative powerhouse! Celebrating its 20th year in Montana as a dynamic educational non-profit media institute fostering the vision of Treasure State youth. Established in 2004, MAPS was initially known as the "Media Arts in the Public Schools" program and now offers year-round classes, at studios first in Ravalli County (Hamilton), then in Lewis & Clark County (Helena), and most recently opening doors in Fort Belknap (Harlem) community.

The free MAPS programs serve ages 13 to 18, with workshops for young adults 18 to 24. The three locations across Montana create an effective hands-on learning environment for youth to explore new technical skills to be successful in filmmaking, graphic design, music production, photojournalism, and podcasts. MAPS focuses on essential communication and storytelling skills, helping students explore future opportunities, pursuing post-secondary education, starting a business, or contributing to their local community.

While MAPS programs are open to everyone, its rural roots often serve students from low-income families and Indigenous communities across Montana. The engaging programs are offered during the 32-week after-school program, a 6-week summer program, and a 2-week traveling program. The MAPS programs focus on technical proficiency and creative skills while also fostering workforce readiness, time management, leadership, and marketing expertise. All the curriculum is designed by licensed educators and taught by professional artists, aligning with state and national standards.

Through a proven record of education and outreach to the state, MAPS has earned numerous accolades for its impact on youth education and media arts. These include the prestigious 2023 Governor's Arts Award and the 2017 National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award. Recently, student projects won the 2023 Short Form Nonfiction Regional Student Production Award and the 2022 Long Form Nonfiction Regional Student Production Award from the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences.

So, please take the time and learn more about MAPS Media Institute and its free programs at mapsmediainstitute.com, or contact the administrative office in Hamilton, MT, at (406) 381-7230 or director@mapsmediainstitute.com.

The MAPS Media Institute opened its doors in 2004. Now celebrating its 20th year, it still holds the foundational goals bestowed in its original name, "Media Arts in Public Schools." MAPS now has locations in three Montana communities along with a traveling Media Lab program.

Photos courtesy of MAPS Media Institute

