



July 25, 2023

Dear Department of Education Officials:

The Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) appreciates the opportunity to provide additional information to support Montana's Double Testing Waiver. Please find below responses with links to your three follow-up questions.

Additionally, we have included information regarding the annual meaningful determination process to supplement the accountability system timeline we discussed yesterday and a copy of the response we provided last week to the questions you posed at that time.

1. We know you've been engaging the public on this proposal, but how are you thinking about communicating about the pilot assessment more broadly as you head into SY23-24? How would you be portraying the proposed changes to parents and public?

The OPI will continue to build on strategies from Year 1 of the Montana Alternative Student Assessment (MAST) pilot to inform and engage our stakeholders, particularly parents of students participating in the field test. To date, the OPI has:

- Developed [letter templates](#) for district leaders to notify parents of their child's participation in the field test.
- Generated [student reports](#) with raw scores after each "testlet" window with an accompanying [Reports Interpretation Guide](#);
- Created a robust [MAST webpage](#) that is updated on a regular basis; and
- Included stakeholder voice on the development of the [MAST Theory of Action](#), which has guided our work.

During SY23-24, the OPI will expand our communication efforts and portray proposed changes to parents and public in the following ways:

A. Implement communication steps for MAST that will be shared to the public with an emphasis on parents:

- Expand the Assessment [Parent Corner](#) to include a section particular to MAST;
- Utilize email and webpage updates regarding the changes to the State assessment;
- Conduct a statewide tour to engage with parents and communities;
- Administer online surveys and hold parent focus groups; and
- Consult with the State PTA organization.





B. Provide student score reports for parents with accompanying information to understand the reports:

Current reports are limited to raw scores. Parents and teachers will have access to timely reports to review the raw scores from testlets during conferences or other standing opportunities for engagement using the Reports Interpretation Guide. A tab on how to prepare for the parent-teacher conference regarding the MAST pilot and formative assessments will be provided on the parent corner.

- A copy of a redacted [score report or sample](#)
- A copy of the [Reports Interpretation Guide](#)

As requested, for field testing schools waive:

- **Section 1111(b)(2)(B)(x):** Requirement that the assessment produces individual student interpretive, descriptive, and diagnostic reports that allow parents, teachers, principals, and other school leaders to understand and address the specific academic needs of students, and that are provided to parents, teachers, and school leaders, as soon as is practicable after the assessment is given, in an understandable and uniform format, and to a language that parents can understand.
- **Section 1111(b)(2)(B)(xii):** Requirement that state assessments must enable itemized score analyses to be produced and reported to the district administration and schools.

C. Host feedback sessions in 2023-24 that will be focused on parents:

The OPI in partnership with our MAST assessment vendor will hold focus groups, empathy interviews, listening sessions, etc. with parents from around the state. This would be a valuable opportunity to hear from parents and use their feedback to enhance reporting in the coming years.

- D. Denote on the 2023-2024 Montana Report card, an asterisk (*) for any impacted data on for the first two sections of the report card (Student Achievement Scores and Student Achievement Progress Scores).** For example, a school or district where no data is available, an asterisk will be noted with an explanation and reference to the waiver by ESEA section number. On the state report card, an asterisk will be utilized to show the change in the number of student scores used in the overall total compared to the previous year. All other areas of the report card will be generated, including Student Academic Achievement in science and alternative assessments, English Learners, School Attendance disaggregated by subgroup, Educator Qualifications, School Quality, Climate, Safety, and School Finance. The 2022-23 state, district, and school report cards will contain all data elements, including data for a record high for the percentage of 2023 statewide testing participation at 98%. [Report Card \(mt.gov\)](#).





As requested, for field testing schools and districts waive:

- **Section 1111(d)(2)(C)-(D):** Report card provisions related to specific assessments and accountability in section 1111(h) based on data from the 2023-2024 school year, namely:
 - **Section 1111(h)(1)(C)(ii):** Requirement for information on student achievement on the academic assessments for reading and math.
 - **Section 1111(h)(1)(C)(iii)(I):** Requirement for information on the other academic indicator (student growth).
 - **Section 1111(h)(1)(C)(vi):** Requirement for information on the progress of all students toward meeting the State-designed long-term goals.
 - **Section 1111(h)(2)(C)(i)-(ii):** Requirement that the SEA ensures that each LEA collects appropriate data and reports disaggregated data that shows how students have achieved on the academic assessments compared to students in the State as a whole.

Under the Field Test Flexibility waiver, SEA and LEA reporting for schools not participating in the field test is unchanged.

E. Reinforce parental access to multiple measures at the district level:

We will emphasize the state requirement of districts to use a balanced assessment system including formative or interim testing. Multiple measures, selected and administered by school districts, will continue to provide parents information about their child(ren)'s learning progression.

- Administrative Rule of Montana (ARM) 10.55.603(3) and (5).
- [10.55.603 CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT](#)
- ARM 10.55.101(2)
- [10.56.101 STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT](#)

Based on feedback from stakeholders in 2021 regarding statewide summative assessment, it is clear that Montana schools rely on assessment data for a wide variety of activities beyond just the state level accountability metric.

Survey Question: Local Understanding of Student Support Using Various Instructional Measures

What local systematic data-based policies and procedures does your school district have for determining student proficiency and progress outside the achievement data from state summative assessments?

Of the 92 responses to this question, individuals indicate that districts in Montana overwhelmingly have local policies around benchmark assessments and progress monitoring.





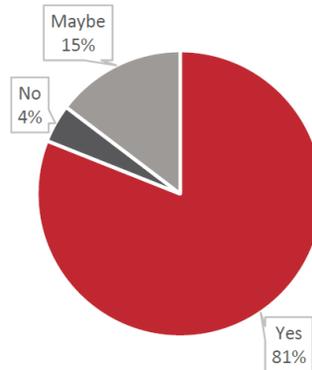
The tools, processes, and timelines for this vary widely from one school or district to another - current Montana statute requires that all districts must have a continuous improvement plan written and publicly available. It also is required that these plans be reviewed yearly. The Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) states 10.55.601 (3) (a) Each plan shall include: (iv) a description of strategies for assessing student progress toward meeting all content standards, pursuant to the requirements of ARM 10.55.603 and ARM 10.56.101.

Across all responses to this item, respondents indicated that their local plans include the following:

- **Assessments Designed for Benchmarking**
 - o MAP (NWEA)
 - o Star (Renaissance)
- **District Generated Assessments**
 - o Aimsweb
 - o Fastbridge
- **Assessments Designed for Identification/Monitoring**
 - o WIDA/ACCESS
 - o DIBELS
- **Other Assessments**
 - o ACT
 - o State Provided Interim Assessments
 - o Curricular Programs that Include Assessments
 - o IXL
 - o Curriculum or Textbook Provided Assessments
 - o MobyMax
 - o iStation/iReady
 - o Lexia
- **District or Locally Managed Processes of Informal Observations**
 - o Formative Assessments
 - o Standards Based Grading
 - o Work Samples/Student Portfolios
 - o Other
 - o 1900 Series
 - o Accelus software (used to monitor time in a remote instructional setting)

Survey Question: Understanding of Student Support Using Various Instructional Measures
Do you feel teachers understand how to support students using other instructional measures such as formative and interim assessments to gauge student learning? (N=116)





2. Can you share OPI’s accommodations handbook (or other policy or memoranda) for the New Meridian assessment?

The accommodations provided for the MAST are listed below. The accommodations available and how to set the accommodation in the testing platform were shared with educators through a virtual training session 1 held in Fall of 2022:

[Slide Deck](#)

[Tip Sheet](#)

In-System Supports:

- Spanish Forms (Math Only)
- ASL (video of test and directions)
- Text to Speech
- Text to Speech Spanish
- Screen Reader (24/25)

External Supports:

- Paper / LP (Spanish and English)
- Braille (on a delayed schedule for 23/24)
- Translated Test Directions

PNP Flags for additional allowed external supports:

- Bilingual Dictionary
- Extended Time Keyword Translation (Glossary)
- Noise Buffers
- Read Aloud
- Translated test Directions

Platform Tools:

- Color Contrast or several standard alternative color schemes
- Zoom magnification of up to five times
- Highlighter
- Bookmark





- Notes
- Pointers
- Strikers
- Tagging
- Calculator
- Closed Captioning
- Eraser
- Guide Line
- Masking
- Glossing

3. When fully operational, how will OPI calculate proficiency for New Meridian, given possibility (likelihood) of changes in tested population, administration to administration?

- a. New Meridian is using the pilot dataset to inform the initial development of a summative scoring model. A student's performance on a testlet will generate a mini-scale score that is specific to that testlet. Next, the summative scoring model will aggregate the mini-scale scores into an overall summative score, using a weighted system that incorporates variables like the timing of the testlets' administrations and their content. A similar process will drive New Meridian's predictive scoring models.
- b. New Meridian is excited to develop summative and predictive scoring models to help the OPI incorporate testlets into the state accountability system by the 2024-2025 school year after standard setting in summer of 2025.





1. Additional Information about the annual meaningful determination process for the SY22-23 and SY23-24.

Through the Montana Field Test Flexibility Waiver for the Montana Assessment System, Montana ensures that accountability provisions and reporting for non-participating districts and schools will not be changed. For field testing schools, the Identifications Flexibility waives the following ESEA sections:

- **1111(c)(4)(B)(i):** Requirement that all schools in the State be held accountable using an academic achievement indicator based on proficiency on state assessments.
- **1111(c)(4)(B)(ii):** Requirement that all schools have the same student growth academic indicator.
- **1111(c)(4)(C)(i):** Requirement for annual meaningful differentiation of all public schools based on all indicators.
- **1111(c)(4)(C)(iii):** Requirement that schools with consistently underperforming subgroups based on all indicators must be annually identified for targeted support.

| | 2022-2023 | 2023-2024+ |
|--|--|--|
| Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) | <p>All Schools:</p> <p>Use the State’s system of annual meaningful differentiation of all public schools in the State for CSI accountability determinations in the fall 2023 based on data from the 2022-2023 school year.</p> <p>Exit Criteria:</p> <p>Montana 2022 Approved Addendum: Omit the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years when determining whether the school has met the statewide exit criteria for CSI. Utilize the 2018-19, 2021-22, and 2022-23 data to determine exit criteria.</p> | <p>All Schools:</p> <p>Every three years, the OPI will identify schools for CSI. The next cycle will occur in fall 2026 based on data from the 2025-26 school year.</p> |





The OPI has identified three criteria for exiting CSI.

- The first criteria is to exit out of the lowest performing 5 percent of Title I schools after three years

Once schools have met the first criteria, they must meet the second or the third criteria to demonstrate continuous improvement and not fall back into the lowest performing five percent.

- The second criteria is to meet the academic growth goals (ELA and Math) set in a school's CSIP. Growth goals include the same growth percentages each year as the long-term and interim goals set by the state.

- The third criteria is to show continual improvement in all the components within the comprehensive needs assessment. A score of 1 indicates beginning implementation of each component while a score of 5 representing a fully sustained implementation of the component. Improvement means moving from 1 to at least 3 over the course of three years.

Montana Approved Addendum 2022: For CSI schools identified in fall 2022, revise the exit





| | | |
|--|---|--|
| | <p>criteria for fall 2023 to require that (1) a school no longer be in the bottom 5 percent of Title I schools and (2) meet the academic growth goals in the school's improvement plan (CSIP) for one year.</p> | |
| <p>Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI)</p> | <p>All Schools:</p> <p>Identify schools for TSI due to consistently underperforming subgroups using data from the 2020-21, 2021-22, and 2022-23 school years.</p> <p>Field testing Schools:</p> <p>No field-testing schools have been identified as TSI in 2020-21 and 2021-22 that could potentially reach 3 years of underperforming for a subgroup in 2022-23.</p> | <p>Non-Participating Schools:</p> <p>In the fall of 2024, identify schools for TSI due to consistently underperforming subgroups using data from the 2021-22, 2022-23, and 2023-24 state summative assessments.</p> <p>Exit Criteria: Non-Participating Schools:</p> <p>To exit TSI, all subgroups must perform at a level higher than the lowest performing 5 percent of Title I schools, as determined in the annual meaningful determination process. These schools also must meet their growth goals for the year they are in TSI as well as the following year.</p> <p>Field testing Schools:</p> <p>No field-testing schools will be identified for TSI in the fall of 2024. Identify field testing schools for TSI due to consistently underperforming subgroups using data from the 2021-22, 2022-23, and 2024-25 school years. Omit data from school year 2023-24.</p> |





Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI)

All Schools:

The OPI identifies ATSI schools each year. In the fall of 2023, the OPI will identify schools for ATSI using data from the 2022-23 school year. Any school with any subgroup performing at a level equivalent to the performance of all Title I schools in the lowest performing 5 percent will be identified for ATSI.

Exit Criteria:

To exit ATSI status, all subgroups must perform at a level higher than the lowest performing 5 percent of Title I schools. These schools also must meet their growth goals for the year they are in ATSI as well as the following year.

Montana Approved Addendum 2022: For ATSI schools identified in fall 2022, revise the exit criteria for fall 2023 to require that (1) all subgroups in the school perform at a level higher than the lowest-performing 5 percent of Title I schools and (2) the school meet the academic growth goals set in the school's CSIP for one year (rather than two consecutive years).

Non-Participating Schools:

In the fall of 2024, the OPI will identify schools for ATSI using data from the 2023-24 state summative results. Any school with any subgroup performing at a level equivalent to the performance of all Title I schools in the lowest performing 5 percent will be identified for ATSI.

Exit Criteria:

To exit ATSI status, all subgroups must perform at a level higher than the lowest performing 5 percent of Title I schools. These schools also must meet their growth goals for the year they are in ATSI as well as the following year.

Field testing Schools:

No field-testing schools will be identified for ATSI in the fall of 2024, based on data from the 2023-24 school year. The field testing schools

Exit Criteria: Field testing Schools:

Any Field-testing School identified in the fall of 2023 as ATSI, will maintain their ATSI status and not be eligible for exit until fall 2025, based on data from 2024-25 school year.





The OPI team appreciates the continued dialogue and the opportunity to provide you additional understanding of the Montana innovative assessment plan, focused on the teacher and student in each classroom. We look forward to celebrating with our schools, our parents, our students and you, the waiver approval that you are striving mightily to provide.

Sincerely,

Elsie Arntzen, State Superintendent

