

FAQ

Q: What is the transition timeline from the Smarter Balanced assessment to statewide MAST administration?

A: See timeline below.

Timeline



Q: How has Montana been measuring the other academic indicator (growth)?

A: Growth is measured by computing standard scores, called z-scores, then comparing the standardized scores between two consecutive years for all students (4th to 8th grade) at a school. Then, the student scores are summed to produce a school-level growth score.

Q: How is the OPI proposing to measure the other academic indicator (growth) in 2023-2024, 2024-2025, and 2025-2026?

A: For 2023-2024, the OPI will measure growth for the schools that administered the state summative assessment (Smarter Balanced) utilizing the current methodology. Schools that participated in the MAST pilot in 2023-2024 will be excluded, per the federal flexibility testing waiver.

A: For 2024-2025, the OPI will utilize skip-year growth for all schools, taking data from 2022-2023 (Smarter Balanced for all) and comparing it to data from 2024-2025 (MAST for all). These results will be published on the report card.

A: For 2025-2026, the OPI will utilize the same methodology for growth, comparing 2024-2025 to 2025-2026 (all schools MAST, year 2).

Q: How will the OPI calculate growth based on two different assessments (SBAC and MAST)?

A: The approach to calculate growth with two different assessments is based on an approach commonly used in statistics and other fields when we have to compare measures based on different scales. We standardize the scores (z-scores) within each year and then compare the standardized scores to evaluate growth.

Q: Does the ‘federal flexibility testing waiver’ waive school accountability determinations for comprehensive support and improvement (CSI), universal, additional targeted support and improvement (ATSI), and targeted support and improvement (TSI) for 2023-2024?

A: According to the federal flexibility testing waiver accountability determinations are only waived for schools that participated in the 2023-2024 MAST pilot. In 2023-2024, the annual meaningful differentiation, ATSI, TSI, and Small School CSI, will continue for schools that administered Smarter Balanced. MAST Pilot schools will hold their identification status from the 2022-2023 school year data.

- **2024-2025**
 - MAST Schools: Maintain status from the previous year, no 2023-2024 data
 - Smarter Balanced Schools: Determination based on 2023-2024 data
- **2025-2026**
 - OPI is proposing to maintain status for all schools.
- **2026-2027**
 - MAST data from 2025-2026 will be used to determine:
 - CSI, ATSI, TSI, Universal
 - This is consistent with our current timeline

Q: Why is the OPI proposing through an amendment to maintain all school determinations in 2025?

A: Given the changing nature of the data between two assessment tools, this is the fairest approach for all schools in Montana.

Q: When will Comprehensive School Improvement designations next be determined?

A: In the Montana ESSA Plan, every three years, the OPI will identify schools for comprehensive support and improvement and therefore the next year CSI determinations will be identified in 2026. Current CSI schools identified in 2023 will either exit in 2026 or progress to rigorous action.

Q: What data will be recorded on the report card annually?

A: As outlined in the federal flexibility testing waiver, the OPI will continue to report the same information that is on the current [report cards](#) with available data. School participating in the Smarter Balanced assessment in 2024 will have all data reported, whereas schools participating in the MAST pilot will not have data on the annual report card for the academic indicator or the other academic indicator (growth indicator). Starting again in the 2024-2025 report card will contain all data that is on the current report cards.