



Dear Partners in Education,

August 18, 2017

One month from today is the submission due date for our state plans! Thank you for participating in efforts to finalize our draft that will be submitted to the Department of Education on September 18th, 2017.

- **Feedback and Changes**

As feedback was reviewed in early August, changes and edits have been made to the ESSA draft and will continue until submission. We will keep you all notified as changes are made and appreciate your ongoing input. Please review the [current revised state plan](#) that includes the following updates as of August 18th:

- Adding Early Childhood Standards in the standards list
- Adding library media and digital literacy throughout the plan
- Adding language on nutrition and school foods efforts: The OPI works with multiple state agencies and local organizations to combine efforts in order to end childhood hunger and promote health and nutrition.
- Adding more family and community engagement language
- Adding language on cultural awareness

- **Long-term Goals**

One section the OPI has received feedback from many of you on and has closely looked at is the long-term goals section. A main concern is that student groups that struggle are expected to improve at greater rates; however, this is required and explicit in the law and guidance. Closing achievement gaps and civil rights are the essence of the ESSA law and it is very clear that greater rates of improvement are required for lower performing student groups. Montana is one of the states that is not expecting subgroups to attain the same proficiency level as all students because the OPI and partners in education considered where they are starting from and the large gap they have to work toward closing. Many states including Oregon, Colorado and Louisiana set the same expectation across the board for their student groups. Please see the [Long-term Goals Power Point](#) for further details on long-term goals and the accountability system.

- FEDERAL PEER REVIEW CRITERIA A.4.iii.a.3: Do the long-term goals and measurements of interim progress for academic achievement take into account the improvement necessary for subgroups of students who are behind in reaching those goals to make significant

progress in closing statewide proficiency gaps, such that the State's **long-term goals require greater rates of improvement for subgroups of students that are lower achieving?**

- **Peer Review**

The OPI is analyzing the peer review feedback that other states have received and are looking for common technical issues we can correct prior to submission. States that have received written formal feedback include: Tennessee, Oregon, New Mexico, New Jersey, Nevada, Massachusetts, Louisiana, Illinois, District of Columbia, Delaware, and Connecticut. The Department of Education has notified us that peer review feedback is no longer being written formally but will be discussed in a consultation. Once OPI consults with peer reviewers we have 15 days to respond. Then the OPI will work toward compliance or providing further information where appropriate, and push back on areas that we feel are written in the best way to serve all of Montana's students and that we do not intend to change.

- **Continued Collaboration**

The OPI will continue to meet with our partners in education throughout August to gain more feedback and input. Recent and upcoming meetings include: the Governor's office, MACIE Indian Education Council, School Administrators of Montana, Northern Cheyenne Tribal Leaders, OCHE Higher Education, PTA, Montana Library Association, Early Childhood Services, Head Start and MT-PEC education organizations: MREA, MASBO, SAM, MTSBA, MEA-MFT and MQEC.

Please send feedback, input and questions to ESSAinput@mt.gov