

---SPECIAL ISSUE---

ASSESSMENT BULLETIN

April 2020

OPI COVID Page: opi.mt.gov/COVID-19-Information

Education News



Special Issue

The purpose of this issue is to share all of the updates and news related to the spring 2020 testing, accountability, and reporting waiver. This issue brings all of the testing activity news and events that have taken place since Governor Steve Bullock's school closure directive starting on March 16, 2020 to combat the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

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MontCAS
Montana Comprehensive Assessment System
Montana Office of Public Instruction

April 2020 Assessment Bulletin

Prepared by the Montana Office of Public Instruction, Elsie Arntzen Superintendent

Spring 2020 Testing Suspended

Assessment and Accountability

On March 26, the Montana Board of Public Education (Board) voted to waive the ARM 10.56.102(3) state requirements for Montana schools for the five state assessments this spring 2020.

1. **Smarter Balanced** is the general math and reading/language arts assessment for academic achievement reporting in Grades 3–8.
2. **ACT with Writing** is the general math, reading/language arts, and science assessment for academic achievement reporting in Grade 11.
3. **Multi-State Alternate Assessment** is the alternate math and reading/language arts assessment for academic achievement reporting in Grades 3–8 and 11 for students with significant cognitive disabilities.
4. **Montana Science Assessment** is the general science assessment for academic achievement reporting in Grades 5 and 8.
5. **Alternate Montana Science Assessment** is the alternate science assessment for academic achievement reporting in Grades 5, 8, and 11 for students with significant cognitive disabilities.

The United States Department of Education (USED) approved the OPI's request to waive requirements for the 2019–2020 school year assessment, accountability, and reporting for states and local education agencies under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). On March 27, the OPI received the official letter granting waiver of the following requirements:

- Assessment requirements in section 1111(b)(2) for the school year 2019-2020.
- Accountability and school identification requirements in sections 1111(c)(4) and 1111(d)(2)(C)-(D) that are based on data from the 2019-2020 school year.
- Report card provisions related to assessments and accountability in section 1111(h) based on data from the 2019-2020 school year.

(See [the USED Waiver Granted Letter.](#))

At this time, the OPI is unaware of any additional reporting required from local education agencies (school districts); however, given this federal waiver process was simplified and expedited to support states, it is possible some statutory and regulatory requirements were not addressed fully in the OPI's submission. The OPI is still reviewing what additional laws or regulations might need to be waived and request these additional waivers through USED during this novel coronavirus.

The waiver requires the OPI to solicit public comment on the request. Please see the next page for details on the public comment process.

Review the [COVID-19 FAQ for State Testing document](#) to find the latest information specific to state assessment. The document is being updated as new information is received by the OPI.

Email the [Assessment Help Desk](#) or call us at 1-844-867-2569 if you have other questions or concerns regarding Assessment.

Waiver Response and State Activities

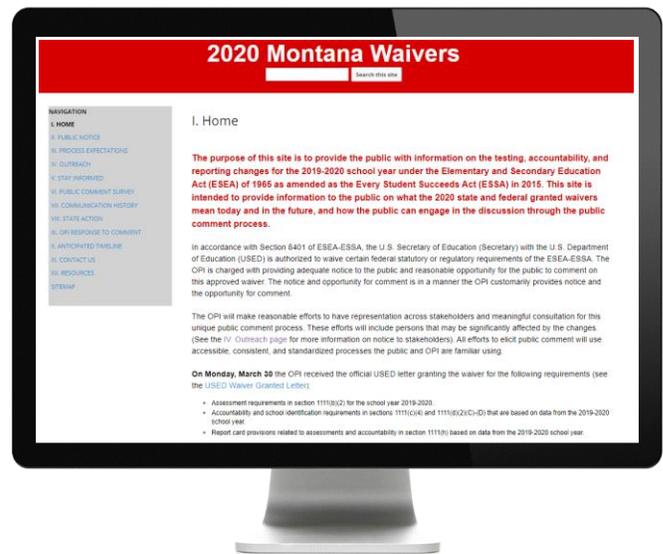
Public Comment Process

Public participation matters! Engaging in this public process is important for several reasons. First, the voice of interested and impacted stakeholders is critical to provide “real-world” concerns. Second, stakeholder comment informs the climate and realities these testing, accountability, and reporting changes can have at the local level. Lastly, public comments strengthen the quality and relevancy of the rules and help dictate what resources are needed to support implementation of the rules.

The 2020 state and federal waivers are important as they provide school districts with some relief and the ability to focus locally on the basic educational services and needs of students.

Waiving these testing requirements is likely to have vast implications under the Administrative Rules for Montana (ARM) Chapter 56 and 55 and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Therefore, the OPI is seeking public comment on the local impacts and implications that these approved waivers may have for testing, accountability, and reporting.

The purpose of the [Montana 2020 Website](#) (coming soon!) is to share information with stakeholders on what elements were waived, the impacts these waivers may have for the future, and to provide a platform for the public to express concerns, thoughts, questions and ideas using the **Public Comment Survey** (coming soon!) or any comments on this waiver can be directed to essainput@mt.gov.



The [COVID-19 FAQ for State Testing document](#) will be updated as soon as these public comment referenced links are live.

Science Operational Tests in 2021

Because of the necessary school closures, the planned Montana Science Assessment (MSA) and Alternate Montana Science Assessment (AMSA) field tests this spring are not possible. The OPI is working with our test delivery contractor to finalize a contingency plan for the continued design and development of these tests in absence of the field test. As a result of this significant program change, the MSA and AMSA will be given during the 2020–2021 school year as an “operational” field test. This change means results will be available after the testing window and accountability determinations can be made after the test validation activities were completed. Additional accountability and validation activities for the ACT Science, MSA, and AMSA tests will be conducted over the summer. (See the [Science Opportunities.](#))

ACT Flexibility and Alternatives

The 2019–2020 high school juniors who were scheduled to take the ACT this spring will now have an opportunity to take the ACT free of charge this coming fall semester, as seniors. This alternative option is voluntary as noted in the [March 24 OPI/OCHE Joint Press Release](#) and the dates available this fall are October 6 (initial) and October 20 (make-up).

For Montana University System (MUS) campuses, students using the fall option will receive their scores in time for college admissions (3–8 weeks after testing). However, as stated in [the Assessment 411 release to districts](#), the Office of Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE) is exploring alternative college admission options with MUS in light of scheduling changes to the ACT assessment.

- If students need scores prior to the fall offer, they can take the test on a national day testing in June and July at their own expense, or
- ACT does provide fee waivers for students who qualify and these are distributed through school counselors. Please contact Rawnie Crasco for more details about vouchers at 406-444-5899 or Rawnie.Crasco@mt.gov.

WIDA Exit and Screening

With the testing, accountability, and reporting approved waivers, the OPI is still determining the implications for English Learners (EL) as this ESSA Section 1111 requirement was covered by the waiver; however, the WIDA testing had already taken place. In addition to this fact, USED has not yet approved the new exit criteria (overall 4.7 composite) from the [2019 WIDA Standards Validation Event](#). The OPI still intends to implement the new exit criteria during the 2020–2021 school year pending final approval from USED. Providing educational services and identifying EL students is still a requirement under state and federal law. Below are the abbreviated EL steps which under the remote-learning realm due to school closures may need flexibility to support these students:

- ☑ Districts administers the [Home Language Survey](#). District **screens** potential ELs within 14 days of enrollment using an approved WIDA screener (see [remote-learning guidance document](#)).
- ☑ Newly identified students AND transfer students are marked correctly in AIM.
- ☑ Parents of newly identified ELs receive an EL designation and placement letter within the first 30 days of enrollment.
- ☑ ALL EL students are marked in AIM with the primary home language and language of impact coded.

This [Provisional English Learner Identification Procedure](#) remote-learning guidance document provides a means of provisionally identifying ELs in times of extended school closures where remote-learning plans have been approved by the Governor and school districts are providing a continuity of educational services online and face-to-face screening is not possible.

Exiting a student from as an EL requires that the student meets the criteria for proficiency in both English language proficiency, academic achievement, and full participation in society within and without school per the [Montana English Learner Guidance for School Districts](#). An exited student must be re-designated as formerly EL in AIM and continue to be monitored for two years following the exit date.

AIM (State Achievement in Montana Student Information System)

Start Date	Due Date	Collection	General Purpose / Summary	AIM Collection User Guides AIM Upload Templates (for MT Edition Users)
		Behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Behavior reporting is open throughout the school year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Behavior Guide on AIM User Guide website.
		Enrollment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student enrollment data should be kept up-to-date within AIM/Infinite Campus. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student Enrollment Guide on AIM User Guide website. Student Enrollment Template
		EL Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure all newly enrolled students have been administered the Home Language Survey (HLS). Ensure students with a language other than English on the HLS are given the WIDA Screener before identifying students as English Learners in AIM. Provide the WIDA Screener score in the LEP Service screen comment box. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EL English Learner Tool Guide Statewide Assessment Participation & Registration Guide EL Template
			2018-19 School Year Data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete data entry for summer graduates and dropouts and verify the data. Modify enrollments for summer transfers and end status for re-enrolled/non-returning students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beginning of Year Verification Guide End of Year Progress Guide Student Demographic Template Student Enrollment Template End of Year Attendance Totals Template
	8/14/19	Beginning of Year Verification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assign/Update state ID for new students. Verify calendar, terms, grade levels. Verify an enrollment record for each student. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EL English Learner Tool Guide Statewide Assessment Participation & Registration Guide EL Template
	10/20/19	Full EL Assessment Verification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Verify all active English Learners have an EL Flag for the October WIDA materials ordering upload due 10/20/19. 	
	9/16/19	Previous Year Graduates, Cohort and Dropout Verification and Certification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review previous school year 2018-19 data validation dropout data check reports. Those responses who have returned to a district in the state by 9/16/19 can be adjusted to have a non-dropout end status. Review previous year graduates and cohorts using the data validation reports. After 9/16/19 when previous year dropouts have been reviewed and adjusted if needed, notify previous year dropouts using the data certification process. After previous year graduates and cohorts have been reviewed and adjusted if needed, notify previous year graduates and cohorts using the data certification process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Setup for Previous, Graduate and Cohort Data Validation and Certification Graduate Cohort & Dropout Verification & Certification Guide Reporting Cohort Data
	10/31/19	Special Education Child Count	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Verify accuracy of data for students receiving Special Education services enrolled on 10/31/19. Ensure completed IEPs and EIs are locked, and Exit Dates & Exit Reasons are current. Confirm current SPED Child Count System hit by 10/31/19. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact your local Special Education Director for assistance.
AIM Help Desk 1-877-424-6681 or 406-444-3800 on AIMHelpDesk@mt.gov			QUESTIONS? 2019-20 AIM Collection Schedule	ASSESSMENT HELP DESK 1-844-867-2569 or OPIAssessmentHelpDesk@mt.gov

Even with the approved state and federal waivers the OPI is still conducting the *AIM Test Window Collection*. This collection includes important data needed for state and federal funding generated from student enrollments, count date absence, and program data. This data is gathered from the *Test Window Enrollment Count* and the *Test Window Program Participation* data.

Due to COVID-19 pandemic and related school closures, the AIM Test Window 'count' date or 'as of' date has been changed to be 3/3/20 instead of 4/8/20. This adjustment for the count date to be a pre-COVID-19 date was made to accommodate more accurate student data for the OPI's state and federal reporting needs.

AIM Collection Schedule 2019–20

Since the 'as of' or 'count' date has been changed to **3/3/20**, this collection will start today, 4/1/20 (instead of 4/9/20) and is due to the OPI on **5/5/20**. Consult with your District's AIM Specialist (or District Clerks/Business Officials) if you have questions about the District AIM Enrollment reporting.

For more information on this topic, please review the AIM recorded webinars on the AIM web site in the [AIM Webinars](#) section. The [AIM User Guides](#) are also up-to-date.

For questions, please contact the [AIM Help Desk](#), 1-877-424-6681 or 406-444-3800.

Remote-Learning Tools

Smarter Interims

Interim assessments for grades K–12 will remain available to schools until May 22. See [OPI Allowed Interim Use to Support Remote Learning](#) to view state-specific guidance for Montana educators using interims and the Digital Library in a remote-learning situation. The OPI recommends:

- [IABs](#) to show individual student attainment of the math and ELA standards for specific learning targets and to connect to online instructional resources within the [Digital Library](#).
- [ICAs](#) to be given in the fall to show prior knowledge and growth over the school year on the same scale as the summative assessment.

	Available on the Teacher Learning Hub	Implementing Smarter Balanced Interim Assessments Training on the Smarter Balanced Interim Assessments that will enable school systems in Montana to implement interim assessments.
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MSAA Resources

Much of the guidance is related to core fundamental components of the IDEA, Office of Civil Rights, the Federal Educational Rights to Privacy Act, as well as numerous other federal laws, agency regulations and guidance, we are directing districts serving students with disabilities to the OPI’s [Special Education COVID- 19](#) information page.

ACT Academy

To support students and families during the COVID-19 closures, ACT offers the [ACT Academy](#) as a free resource to support educators, students, and parents. It provides personalized practice to help students work on college- and career-readiness skills. It is an online learning tool and test practice program designed to help students be successful on the ACT test and beyond. In addition to the ACT Academy, ACT is also offering [ACT Online Prep](#) at a reduced rate of \$9 for a six-month subscription; students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals may qualify for a free subscription. See you school counselor for details.

EL Resources

Amidst the school closures across the nation, Montana is not alone in the challenges of online instruction for ELs. Here are some online instructional resources including the [Working with WIDA Global Educators: Teaching Multilingual Learners Online](#) which have been assembled by WIDA and WIDA member states. The [Working with WIDA Global Educators](#) document has been organized by Guiding Principles and what teachers and multilingual students can do.

Here is a list of online free resources to support ELs and multilingual students (see [EL Online Resources](#)).

Webinars and Educator Resources

Score Reports

A webinar on *Meaningful Score Reports* will be provided on April 15, from 3:30 – 4:30 P.M. This webinar is intended for anyone responsible for accessing the [Online Reporting System \(ORS\)](#) and using data from this system to inform local decisions or parents about student performance. This session will provide the basics on score reports including but not limited to timely access, expanding access and utility, compliance with parent notice requirements, limiting privacy risks, and best practices. **Duane Schlabach** will provide some suggested strategies on how to deliver score reports and use these data for local planning. Timely score report notice ensures parents understand their child’s knowledge of the content standards and progress towards proficiency to help identify academic strengths and weaknesses, and to adjust needs accordingly. The link to attend the webinar is:



Join the webinar from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/511102621>

You can also dial in using your phone.

- **United States: +1 (571) 317-3122**
- **Access Code: 511-102-621**

Science Opportunities

A webinar focused on *Science Next Steps and Opportunities* will be provided on May 20, from 3:30–4:30 P.M. This webinar is intended for anyone involved in administering, reporting, or using the data from the state science assessment. Rawnie Crasco will hold a one-hour session to discuss the goals of the balanced science assessment, availability of interims, next steps for reporting, and future educator opportunities. This session will be a great way for participants to learn how to get involved and have a voice in the implementation of these three-dimensional science assessments. Despite this spring’s setbacks, development of the state science assessment program will be moving forward in preparation for the 2020–21 school year:

- The MSA and AMSA Practice Tests will be updated over the summer to make them more useful in training students on how the tests work.
- In September 2020, science interims will be available for grades 5, 8, and 11.
- OPI will hold a variety of Standards Setting, Content Development, and Test Validation activities over the next 18 months as development of the balance assessment system for science continues. Educators interested in participating in these activities are encouraged to fill out this Educator Interests and Opportunities form.
- To learn more about any of these topics, attend the webinar. The link to attend the webinar is:



Join the webinar from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/511102621>

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OPI Resources

The OPI Content Standards and Instruction Division is partnering with teachers and other OPI divisions to offer rich, relevant, and robust trainings to support educators with remote learning via these Zoom meetings.

Purpose: We will use this time to provide teachers an opportunity to share resources, ask questions, and build community around remote learning. These are collaborative sessions designed to learn from each other about the hard work you have been doing to provide remote learning for students across Montana.

Who: All Montana Educators and Administrators

Example Schedule for Tuesday

Tuesday, April 7

Content Area/Grade Span	Facilitator	Teacher Leader	Time	Zoom link
Google Classroom Grades K–5	Jessica Bryant	Tom Redmon and Michelle Trafton	9:00	https://mt-gov.zoom.us/j/557664361 Meeting ID: 557 664 361 Dial by phone: 1 406 444 9999
Mathematics Grades 6–8	Marisa Graybill	Beth Walsh, and Nicole Hash	10:00	https://mt-gov.zoom.us/j/140468930 Meeting ID: 140 468 930 Dial by phone 1 406 444 9999
Mathematics Grades 9–12	Marisa Graybill	Brooke Taylor, Tony Riel, and Chris Linhart	11:00	https://mt-gov.zoom.us/j/140468930 Dial by phone 1 406 444 9999 Meeting ID: 140 468 930
ELA Grades 6–12	Carli Cockrell Terri Barclay	Christy Mock-Stutz, Cori Krick, and Casey Olsen	1:00	https://mt-gov.zoom.us/j/950819552 Meeting ID: 950 819 552 Dial by phone: 1 646 558 8656
Social Studies Grades 6–12	Carli Cockrell Jessica Bryant	Dylan Huisken, Merrick Parnell, and Martha Kohl	2:00	https://mt-gov.zoom.us/j/690099261 Meeting ID: 690 099 261 Dial by phone: 1 646 558 8656

For more information on this week's Remote Learning Sharing Sessions schedule, check out [Remote Learning Sharing Sessions – Week 3](#). For past events, check out the recordings and notes from:

- [Remote Learning Sharing Sessions - Week 1](#)
- [Remote Learning Sharing Sessions - Week 2](#)

Assessment Updates

Smarter Balanced

ELA and Math

SBAC

Smarter
Balanced
Assessment
Consortium

This assessment must be annually administered to all students in Grades 3–8 (unless the child is eligible for the alternate) using the OPI’s published guidance for test administration and test security.

See [Smarter Interims](#) section.

See [Score Reports](#) section.

For more information or resources on this program, please contact Duane Schlabach at 406-444-0748 or Duane.Schlabach@mt.gov.

ACT with Writing

ELA, Mathematics, and Science

ACT with Writing

American
College
Testing

This assessment must be annually administered to all students in Grade 11 (unless the child is eligible for the alternate) using the OPI’s published guidance for test administration and test security.

See the [ACT Flexibility and Alternatives](#) section.

See the [ACT Academy](#) section.

All spring 2020 ACT test dates have been cancelled. **Schools should return test booklets as soon as they are able, with all materials kept secure until then.** Student answer sheets, preprinted labels, and test administration documents should be destroyed.

Details regarding **PreACT** have not been finalized and will be shared as they become available. Remember—for PreACT, only completed answer sheets are returned to ACT. If it turns out that a district does not administer the PreACT this spring, all materials can be disposed of, including unused test booklets and answer sheets.

For more information or resources on this program, please contact Rawnie Crasco at 406-444-5899 or Rawnie.Crasco@mt.gov.

MSAA

Alternate Assessment, ELA and Math

MSAA

Multi
State
Alternate
Assessment

This assessment must be annually administered to only students with significant cognitive disabilities in Grades 3–8 and 11 using the OPI’s published guidance for test administration and test security.

See the [MSAA Resources](#) section.

For more information or resources on this program, please contact Duane Schlabach at 406-444-0748 or Duane.Schlabach@mt.gov.

Montana Science Assessment (MSA)

Science

MSA

Montana
Science
Assessment

This assessment must be annually administered to all students in Grades 5 and 8 (unless the child is eligible for the alternate) using the OPI’s published guidance for test administration and test security.

See the [Science Operational tests in 2021](#) section.

See the [Science Opportunities](#) section.

For more information or resources on this program, please contact Rawnie Crasco at 406-444-5899 or Rawnie.Crasco@mt.gov.

Alternate Science Montana Assessment (AMSA)

Science

AMSA

Alternate
Montana
Science
Assessment

This assessment must be annually administered to only students with significant cognitive disabilities in Grades 5, 8, and 11 using the OPI’s published guidance for test administration and test security.

See the [Science Operational tests in 2021](#) section.

See the [Science Opportunities](#) section.

For more information or resources on this program, please contact Rawnie Crasco at 406-444-5899 or Rawnie.Crasco@mt.gov.

ACCESS for ELLs

English Language Proficiency Assessment

ACCESS for **ELLs**

English
Language
Learners

This assessment must be annually administered to all students in Grades K–12 who are indicated to take the assessment based on the results of the WIDA Screener (unless the child is eligible for the alternate) using the OPI’s published guidance for test administration and test security.

See [WIDA Exit and Screening](#) section.

See [EL Resources](#) section.

For more information on this program, please contact OPI Assessment Help Desk at 844-867-2569 OPIAssessmentHelpDesk@mt.gov.

NAEP

National and International Assessment Studies

NAEP

National
Assessment of
Educational
Progress

This assessment is administered to ONLY selected schools and students. This year NAEP will be given in mathematics and reading for ages 9, 13 and 17 (unless the child is eligible for the alternate).

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), often called The Nation’s Report Card, is the largest nationally representative and continuing assessment of what students in the United States know and are able to do in various subjects. For more information, please review [An Overview of NAEP](#).

In 2021, state-level data will be collected in mathematics and reading assessments at grades 4 and 8. Under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act Reauthorization of 2001 and continuing with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which was signed into law in December 2015, state applications for Title 1 funds must include an assurance that states will participate in the biennial NAEP mathematics and reading assessments at grades 4 and 8 and that state results will be reported.

In late May, schools will be randomly selected and will receive an email regarding school selection. To ensure that a representative sample of students is assessed, NAEP is given in a sample of schools whose students reflect the varying demographics of a specific jurisdiction, be it the nation, a state, or a district. For more information, please review [Selecting Schools for Participation in State-Level NAEP](#).

For more information or resources on this program, please contact Shantel Niederstadt at 406-444-3450 or Shantel.Nierdstandt@mt.gov.

Contact Us

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MontCAS

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Montana Office of Public Instruction

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