

# The OPI Monthly Summary: April 2020

<b>Office of the Superintendent.....</b>	<b>2</b>
○ COVID-19 Updates	
○ 2021 Montana Teacher of the Year Nominations Due May 15	
○ Summer Reading and Math Resources	
○ Jordana Alliance for Bus Safety Digital Poster Contest	
<b>Assessment.....</b>	<b>3</b>
○ Smarter Balanced	
○ Multi-State Alternative Assessment	
○ Fall ACT Testing	
○ Science Assessment	
<b>Content Standards and Instruction.....</b>	<b>4</b>
○ Online Learning Resources and Remote Learning Sessions	
○ OPI Learning Opportunities Portal	
○ Learning Hub	
<b>Federal Programs.....</b>	<b>5-7</b>
○ Private School Participation in Federal Programs Trainings	
○ ESSA Updates	
<b>Finance.....</b>	<b>7-8</b>
○ Upcoming School Election Deadlines	
○ Second Semester Transportation Claims	
○ Upcoming Finance Webinars	
<b>Health Enhancement and Safety.....</b>	<b>9</b>
○ School Nutrition	
○ Traffic Education	
<b>Licensure.....</b>	<b>10-11</b>
○ Provisional Licenses and Third-Year Internships Expiring 6/30/2020	
○ Renewals-Don't Delay	
○ Considering Employing a Foreign National?	
<b>Student Support Services.....</b>	<b>11-12</b>
○ Special Education Updates	

# Office of the Superintendent

## Updates in Montana Education

### COVID-19 Updates

- To view the latest updates and press releases from the OPI, DPHHS, the Governor's Office, and other state agencies visit this [LINK](#).
- For updates related to COVID-19 visit this [LINK](#).
- Be sure to sign up for the OPI's newsletters at this [LINK](#).
- The Governor released a [directive](#) on April 22 with provisions for a phased reopening of Montana. This directive rescinds the school closure directive and schools are no longer required to operate under the distance learning plans that they submitted to the Governor, nor do schools have to submit new plans. Schools can reopen on May 7 and may continue providing distance learning or a mixed-delivery model per [MCA 20-7-118](#) or declare local emergency school closures per [MCA 20-9-806](#). This new directive essentially returns education back to local control by districts. Districts should continue to consult with their local health authorities in decision-making as well as the additional guidelines in the Governor's directive. Schools should also make every effort to stick to their established academic calendar.
- The OPI submitted Montana's application for federal CARES Act funding on April 24<sup>th</sup>. We will contact districts when the funds can be accessed through E-Grants and also provide additional information about the use of these funds.
- The Montana University System released [guidance](#) for seniors applying for their colleges this year and in 2021 with additional criteria that can be used in place of ACT or SAT scores, however, ACT and SAT scores can still be used and are encouraged.
- A timeline of OPI actions related to COVID-19 can be viewed at this [LINK](#) and a timeline of the Governor's orders can be found at this [LINK](#).
- **Don't forget!** 2021 Montana Teacher of the Year nominations are due by May 15<sup>th</sup> and can be found at this [LINK](#).
- Summer math and reading resources for families can be found [HERE](#).
- The OPI and the family of Jordana Hubble invite all K-8 students to participate in a bus safety digital poster contest! The purpose is to recognize the issues surrounding school bus safety and to honor Jordana as she recovers from injuries sustained due to a driver failing to yield to a stopped school bus. Learn more [HERE](#).

Follow the Office of Public Instruction on social media:



For more information, contact [Dylan Klapmeier](#), 406-444-3559.

## Assessment

### Smarter Balanced

The [Digital Library](#) will retire on May 28 and be replaced by [Tools For Teachers](#), which will go live on June 16 for all current user roles in the TIDE portal.

Guidance for the remote use of interim assessments can be found in the new [Interims: Remote Teaching and Learning](#) website, alongside the [state guidance](#) document for administering interims remotely.

Cambium Assessment, Inc. has partnered with [ExploreLearning](#) to help support schools seeking remote teaching and learning resources, which are free for schools to use.

### Multi-State Alternative Assessment (MSAA)

The [OPI COVID-19 Special Education](#) webpage provides guidance, resources, and tools to assist districts, IEP teams and families as they work together to provide the most appropriate services in light of unique circumstances for students, schools, and communities. The testing vendor, Cognia is also offering free resources to educators on their [COVID-19](#) webpage.

### Fall ACT Testing

This year's juniors, for whom spring 2020 ACT testing was canceled, will have free, voluntary opportunities to take the ACT on October 6 and October 20, 2020 with accommodated testing windows also opening on those dates. Rosters from spring 2020 will roll over, so schools will need to "Manage Participation" and "Confirm Enrollments" in August via [Pearson Access Next](#). Previous approvals of accommodations will stand, and additional requests can be submitted over the summer; watch for an updated "Schedule of Events" on the [Montana ACT](#) site.

### Science Assessment

The development of the comprehensive assessment system for science continues. MSA and AMSA item development remains on track, with educator item-writing and content approval meetings scheduled for June and October, and independent field tests planned for spring 2021. ACT Science standard setting will be held in July 2020, as previously scheduled.

Educators interested in participating in these activities are encouraged to fill out the [Educator Interests and Opportunities form](#).

For more information, contact [OPI Assessment Help Desk](#), 1-844-867-2569.

## Content Standards and Instruction

### Online Learning Resources and Remote Learning Sessions

As we work to bring remote learning to our students during the COVID-19 pandemic, we know you want the opportunity to connect with other Montana educators to network, share resources, and ask questions.

Beginning Monday, March 23rd, the OPI began hosting remote learning sharing sessions using Zoom. There are multiple subject areas and grade levels to help accommodate K-12 educators and administrators. More than 2000 participants have shared their great ideas over the past five weeks!

#### [Session Schedule and Online Learning Resources](#)

Contact [OPICSI@mt.gov](mailto:OPICSI@mt.gov) with any questions, suggest a topic, or volunteer to share your expertise.

### OPI Learning Opportunities Portal

Visit the [Learning Opportunities Portal website](#) to find out about classes, workshops, and courses. The Portal is just one of the ways the OPI informs educators about upcoming professional learning opportunities in our state. We are updating with any cancellations or postponements as we are made aware of these changes.

Contact [Carli Cockrell](#) with any questions or to let us know about changes to your events.

### Learning Hub

If you haven't already, [check out](#) what more than 12,000 Montana educators have experienced! Our Hub team is always adding and updating our self-paced and facilitated courses. Please check the [Learning Hub homepage](#) for a complete [listing](#) and [catalog](#).

Contact [OPILearningHub@mt.gov](mailto:OPILearningHub@mt.gov) with any questions.

## Federal Programs

### Private School Participation in Federal Programs Trainings

This spring, the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) will be hosting a series of trainings on Private School Participation in Federal Programs. These professional development opportunities are meant to assist public and private/non-public schools in navigating the confusing rules and regulations that were developed to ensure equitable services in Title I, II, III, and IV, and the rules that govern each grant. The presentations will cover developing, implementing, and evaluating effective federal programs, how to calculate equitable share dollar amounts, using the Egrants system, setting up consultation meetings, and finalizing equitable share agreements. These workshops are open to all public and participating private/non-public schools, and districts that do have participating private schools are strongly encouraged to invite those entities to the trainings. Title I and II equitable share set-aside funds can be used to offset the travel costs of the sessions. These opportunities can also be used as one of the consultation meetings required under Title I, Part A, and renewal credits will be offered.

For further information, please contact Jack O'Connor, Private School Ombudsman, Montana Office of Public Instruction at 406-444-3083 or [joconnor2@mt.gov](mailto:joconnor2@mt.gov). **Due to travel restrictions, all sessions will be held virtually using Zoom. The dates and start times will not change, but the length of the training will be shortened to "as needed". The start time will be 9:00 AM.**

Session 1-May 12, 2020; 9:00 AM

Session 2-May 13, 2020; 9:00 AM

Session 3-May 19, 2020; 9:00 AM

Session 4-May 20, 2020; 9:00 AM

Session 5-May 21, 2020; 9:00 AM

**Districts must RSVP at least one week before each workshop with the name of the district, the names of the private/non-public school(s) that will be attending, the email addresses of those individuals who will be at the training, and which session the public and non-public school will be viewing. Individual training is limited to 40 persons. If a session fills up, districts and non-public schools will be asked to attend another training. Registrations will be taken on a first-come, first-served basis. The OPI will then contact each attendee with the proper Zoom meeting link. Contact Sheri Harlow at 406-444-5660 or [SHarlow@mt.gov](mailto:SHarlow@mt.gov) to register.**

## Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Updates

### Waiver Update

As you may be aware, several waivers related to assessment, accountability, reporting, and financial flexibility have been requested and approved on behalf of our schools in Montana to best meet the needs of students and educators during the COVID-19 national emergency:

1. On Monday, March 30, the OPI received the official letter granting the waiver for the following requirements:
  - a. Assessment Requirements in section 1111(b)(2) for the school year 2019-2020.
  - b. 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.
  - c. Report card provisions related to assessments and accountability in section 1111(h) based on data from the 2019-2020 school year.
  
2. On Wednesday, April 8, the OPI received approval for the Fiscal Flexibility waiver which provides flexibility in the use of funds and other requirements covered under ESEA including the Title I, Parts A–D, Title II, Title III, Part A, Title IV, Parts A–B, and Title V programs. The new flexibilities, authorized under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, allow schools to repurpose existing K-12 education funds for technology infrastructure and teacher training on distance learning, among other flexibilities to move resources to areas of highest need during the national emergency.

### Seeking Public Comment

The OPI is conducting an extensive Public Comment Process to fully understand the implications of these waivers to all stakeholders. Since the federal waiver process was simplified and expedited to support states, it is possible some statutory and regulatory requirements were not fully requested. This will also allow an opportunity to learn if any additional waivers are warranted. Please visit the [OPI Public Comment Page](#) at the following link for resources and detailed information on the waivers, FAQs, and a Public Comment Survey.

### Comprehensive School and Improvement (CSI) Waiver Support

The Comprehensive School Support team is working to help schools identified as CSI to think strategically about funding flexibilities to best meet the needs of students and educators during the COVID-19 national emergency. Importantly, we want to ensure existing Title I, Support and Improvement funding is expended in a timely fashion while utilizing new flexibilities and relief funding, authorized under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. A letter, outlining the technical assistance, was sent to CSI school superintendents, principals, and clerks on April 15<sup>th</sup>. A follow-up webinar was held on April 20<sup>th</sup> to review the information outlined in the letter. Please reach out to your designated OPI contact for more information to assist as needed.

### **Targeted School and Improvement (TSI) Waiver Support**

A letter will be arriving via email on April 27<sup>th</sup> to superintendents, principals and clerks for schools identified as TSI that applied and have an approved Formula Grant. The letter will outline recommended steps for schools to expend grant funding in a timely fashion while utilizing new flexibilities and relief funding, authorized under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The letter will also contain the link for a follow-up webinar on Wednesday, April 29, 2020, from 10:00 to 11:00am.

For more information, contact [julie.murgel@mt.gov](mailto:julie.murgel@mt.gov), 406-444-3174

## **Finance**

### **Upcoming School Election Deadlines**

- Saturday, April 25th through Sunday, May 3rd: Absentee/Mail Ballot Counting Notice
- Monday, April 27th: Close of Regular Voter Registration (2020 Election Only)
- Tuesday, April 26th: Start of Late Registration (2020 Election Only)
- Monday, May 4th (at noon): Deadline for Absentee Ballot Requests
- Monday, May 4th (noon to 5 pm): Late Registration Closed
- Tuesday, May 5th: Election Day
- Monday, May 11th (after 3 pm): First Day to Count Provisional Ballots
- By Friday, May 29th (within 25 days of the election): Trustees Canvas and Issue Certificates of Election and Deadline for Organizational Meeting
- Monday, June 1st: Deadline to Request County Conduct School Elections for the Following Year

Ballot Interference Prevention Act: If you have not read the guidance on the Ballot Interference Prevention Act, it may be found [HERE](#). School districts are responsible for ensuring that the proper procedures are followed.

For more information, [Nicole Thuotte](#), Financial Specialist, 406-444-4524

### **Second Semester Transportation Claims**

By May 24 school districts must have second-semester bus route reimbursement claims (TR6) and individual contract reimbursement claims (TR5) electronically entered and submitted to the Pupil Transportation Program.

School districts will claim the actual transportation days of operation up to the point of school closure (March 15, 2020) and from that point on, school districts will claim the originally planned school days obtained from the school calendars submitted to the OPI through TEAMS. Districts will receive payments based on the information off of TR1's and TR4's that

were submitted before the closure of schools (and as if the district were still open and operational). Changes or new TR1's or TR4's may not be entered.

During this global health crisis and the recommendation for social distancing, drivers may have been unable to renew their first aid, CPR, MEC's and CDL's. If school districts show expired drivers, and a decrease in payments on bus route TR6 claims, please contact Donell Rosenthal.

By June 1 county superintendents must review and electronically approve all second-semester bus route reimbursement claims (TR6) and individual contract reimbursement claims (TR5) that have been electronically entered and submitted by districts to the Pupil Transportation Program. Districts must send a paper copy of their claims signed by the board chair. During the closure period, the state will pay the second-semester payment as if the district were still open and operating a full transportation program. The OPI encourages counties to also provide the budgeted payments for the closure period to school districts in line with 20-10-146, MCA, and with what the state is paying to keep the districts budgets whole.

Please contact [Donell Rosenthal](#), Director of Pupil Transportation, 406-444-3024 if you have questions or need assistance with entering your claims.

## Upcoming Finance Webinars:

The school finance division is hosting some important webinars coming up.

1. Updated Chart of Accounts review – the division is close to posting a DRAFT version on the website for comment and review so one webinar will be focused on discussing the updates and collecting feedback and concerns.
2. Bonds – the division will discuss the financial basics of bond issues including how to ensure the district has properly budgeted for bonds.
3. State Major Maintenance Aid – the division will discuss the first payment coming out in May, any changes to look for in the next fiscal year, and other basics.

The times and dates will be posted on the About School Finance webpage located [HERE](#) as well as information relating to the login for these webinars. Again, these will be recorded and posted later for those who are unable to attend live.

Questions or comments can be sent to [Kara Flath](#), School Finance Administrator, 406-444-3249.

# Health Enhancement and Safety

## School Nutrition

Schools participating in OPI School Nutrition Programs have options for feeding students during unanticipated school closures and when re-opening. Schools are not required to provide meal service during school closures. Programs should [contact your regional specialist](#) directly for school nutrition questions and concerns.

### Schools Remain Closed

1. Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) – all children 18 and under can eat for free. Must sign up with OPI.
2. National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) – must provide distance learning, grab and go meals are allowed, and must claim and reimbursed for meals based on eligibility status of individual students.

### Schools Re-open

1. Transition back to the NSLP and SBP – grab and go meals are allowed, must claim and will be reimbursed for meals based on eligibility status of individual students.

### Mixed Delivery Model

1. If the school building is open, operate the NSLP and SBP for students attending school onsite – must claim and will be reimbursed for meals based on eligibility status of individual students. Schools can operate the SFSP for distance learning students in a non-congregate delivery method – all children 18 and under can eat for free.
  - o If a school chooses to operate NSLP and SFSP at the same time, they would need to follow the appropriate meal pattern and keep separate production records and claims documentation for each program they opt to participate in.

## Traffic Education

Governor Bullock has announced that schools can reopen on May 7th returning local control to districts. As districts plan to resume face to face traffic education instruction, including behind the wheel instruction and administration of the CDTP the OPI encourages the traffic education community to follow local, state, and national measures to remain safe and help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Visit the OPI's [Driver Education](#) website for up to date guidance for traffic education programs or to access resources to support and enhance instruction. For more information, contact Tara Ferriter-Smith at [tferriter@mt.gov](mailto:tferriter@mt.gov) or Patti Borneman at [pborneman@mt.gov](mailto:pborneman@mt.gov).

## Licensure

### Provisional Licenses and 3<sup>rd</sup> Internships Expiring 6/30/2020

Educators holding a Class 5, a Class 5A license or a third-year internship that has an expiration date of 6/30/20 have been emailed and advised of an expiration extension request being taken to the Board of Public Education (BPE). In May, OPI is taking a request to the BPE to grant a one-year expiration extension due to the unavoidable disruption the COVID-19 has created. These educators will receive a follow-up email upon the conclusion of the BPE meeting advising them of the Board's decision. If the extension request is approved, the certification expiration date will be adjusted for these educators and updated licenses will be mailed.

### Renewals – Don't Delay

To date this year, there has been a very low number of educators that have renewed their licenses. Please remind your educators to check the expiration date of their license, and if it is expiring this year, encourage them to submit their online renewal as soon as possible. All professional development and or college courses applicable to license renewal must be earned during the validity period of the license, i.e. July 1, 2015 through August 31, 2020. There is a multitude of free, online, quality professional development resources available at the [OPI Learning Hub](#). Click [here](#) to renew or find additional renewal resources.

### Considering Employing a Foreign National?

If you are considering employing a foreign national, here are the steps for your applicant to follow:

- Applicant applies [online](#)  
A Virtual Private Network (VPN) is needed to access the licensure system while overseas. They may Google VPN and find information explaining the network as well as finding numerous VPN's to select from.
- **The applicant chooses a foreign evaluation credentialing agency and submits their foreign transcripts to them for evaluation.** The National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES) is a trusted organization with a multitude of agencies that provide this evaluation service. OPI accepts evaluations that are completed by any agency that has been vetted by NACES; others may be rejected.
  - The role of the foreign credential evaluation agency is to determine the equivalency of the candidate's foreign educator preparation program to a US educator preparation program. The agency provides the results of their evaluation in their Summary section. **This information is what Licensure relies on for determining qualification and endorsement area.**

- The applicant must submit the following documents:
  - Completed evaluation of foreign transcripts through a NACES agency. **NOTE:**
    - The applicant must have completed 6-semester credits through an accredited institution with US equivalency within the past five years. If they have not done so, successful completion of the required Praxis is needed to qualify for any type of license.
  - Notary page
  - Fingerprint Criminal History Background Check (to Department of Justice)
  - Fingerprint Supplement to OPI
  - Required Praxis results. **NOTE:** If they have completed 6-semester credits through an accredited institution with US equivalency within the past five years and meet all other license criteria, they may receive the one-year 5A license. The 5A allows Praxis to be completed during the one-year time frame of their 5A license.
  - Original completion certificate for An Introduction to Indian Education for All in Montana
- The applicant will need a TIN or SSN.

A reminder that helpful information may be found on our [Licensure](#) home page. Also, important resources, licensure forms, etc., are in the Useful Resources tab. For more information, contact Kristine Thatcher at [ktthatcher2@mt.gov](mailto:ktthatcher2@mt.gov) or 406-444-2580.

## Student Support Services

### Special Education Updates

On Wednesday, April 22, 2020 Governor Bullock issued a [Directive](#) which in part provides guidance for the phased reopening of Montana. The current public school building closure and required remote learning will continue through May 6, 2020. The Directive then gives local school boards the discretion to return to in-classroom teaching delivery beginning May 7, 2020, giving local control over decisions regarding school closure. “The State recognizes that if a school reopens for in-person instruction, reopening will require the district to make adjustments and create plans, policies and procedures. Schools that plan to reopen should consult the reopening guidelines provided in Appendix A.” (April 22, 2020 Directive, page 6).

Additionally, if schools plan to reopen the Directive states they should also consider the following:

- *Implementing an alternative educational delivery model that includes a mix of in-person and remote learning.*
- *Providing focused individual education, especially for at-risk students.*
- *How to reconnect and meet the educational needs of students who fall behind in a remote learning environment.*
- *The Importance of maintaining the connection between students, teachers, and parents.*

- *The important role that schools play in the health of students, families and communities.*
- *Graduation environments that can meet the social distancing requirements.*  
(April 22, 2020 Directive, page 6)

[Additional information](#) for special education services delivery

Contact [Jenifer Cline](#), Student Support Services Director, 406-444-4426

**-END-**