Elsie Amtzen, Superintendent
PO Box 202501
Helena, MT 59620-2501
406-444-3680
www.opi.mt.gov

OFFICE OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
STATE OF MONTANA

Putting Montana Students First A⁺

OPI FAQ – Early Literacy Targeted Interventions

During the 68ᵗʰ Legislative session in 2023, the legislature passed HB 352, providing for early literacy interventions for eligible students. Please refer to the Montana Code Annotated (MCA) Title 20, Chapter 7, Part 18 for specific language on implementing an early literacy-targeted intervention program. This frequently asked questions (FAQ) document provides general Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) guidance for districts interested in establishing any of the early literacy intervention programs. Find more information on OPI's website. Note, that this is a living document that will continue to evolve with guidance and questions from the field.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

Does my district have to offer all three early literacy-targeted intervention programs?
- *Each district may decide what programs they offer.*

How does the district decide which students are eligible for programming?
- Each district determines eligibility cut scores utilizing the approved evaluation methodology. The Board of Public Education Early Literacy Advisory Council created a list of approved methodology tools that can be found on the *OPI Early Literacy Targeted Interventions Homepage*.

If students meet the district's eligibility determination, are they eligible for all programs?
- *Yes*

What data needs to be collected for programming and by when?
- *Guidance on specific data collection questions and format will be on the OPI Early Literacy Targeted Interventions Homepage.* Per 20-7-1804, MCA,Trustees offering an early literacy targeted intervention shall closely monitor the program and report annually to the superintendent of public instruction on the efficacy of the program no later than July 15. This report must include anonymized information on student progress, including the student's performance on: the evaluation methodology for the program, any formative assessments administered, the evaluation methodology used at end of school year if administered, any statewide reading assessment data grade 4 through 6. The OPI will provide a submission tool for this annual reporting requirement and will be available for participating districts.

Can my district still use exceptional circumstances for preschool programming?

- Trustees may, at their discretion, assign and admit a child to a school in the district who is under 5 years of age. Please refer to the 20-5-101, MCA for more information.

PREPARING TO LAUNCH A CLASSROOM-BASED PROGRAM IN SY 2024-2025?

When do students need to be screened to be eligible for classroom-based interventions?
- *Trustees may administer the evaluation methodology in April, May, or June to a child who will be 4 years of age or older on or before September 10 and has not yet entered third grade.*

Can districts use other literacy-based screeners in addition to the yearly screener?
- *Yes. The yearly screener is the data that is reported to OPI.*

Can new students to a district be screened?
- *Yes, new students have the same opportunity for the administration of the evaluation methodology.*

Is there a specific date by which districts need to determine their specific cut scores for eligibility?
- *The specific cut scores and eligibility are determined by the district. Districts may assess students in April, May, and June, and allow time to plan for implementation.*

Does eligibility follow a student from district to district? For example, can an eligible student in one district participate in a jumpstart program in a neighboring district?
- *Eligibility is determined by each district.*

How can districts demonstrate that parents have consented to their child being screened for these programs?
- *Districts determine the mechanism for how parents request this evaluation for district records. The Office of Public Instruction has provided sample template letters for both consent and eligibility on the Early Literacy Targeted Interventions Homepage.*

Do students on an existing IEP need to be assessed using an approved screener?
- *Yes*

Can the classroom-based program be 2 or 3 days per week?
- *The schedule must meet the contact hours requirement of 720 hours for full-time and 360 hours for part-time.*

This bill allows eligible 4-year-old students to be permitted to attend the classroom-based program. While only those eligible students would count toward ANB, can districts allow other students to attend this program?
- *Only eligible students count toward district ANB. Per 20-7-117, MCA, preschool programming is determined by the board of trustees.*

What should programming look like for classroom-based programming?
- *Instruction for classroom-based programming should follow the Title 10 Chapter 63 Early Childhood Education Standards, (revised by the BPE in March 2024, see report). Programming should specifically follow the English Language Arts and Literacy*

Content Standards for Early Literacy Targeted Intervention Programs. The program must be an integral part of the elementary school and must be governed accordingly

Who is qualified to teach classroom-based programming?
- *[Title 10, Chapter 63, section 104](#), [(revised by the BPE in March 2024, see report)](#), states who is qualified to teach this specific programming. It states: (b) While teachers with an early childhood (P-3) endorsement are encouraged, teachers with either an early childhood (P-3) endorsement or an elementary (K-8) endorsement shall be considered to be appropriately licensed, endorsed, and assigned to teach early literacy targeted interventions implemented through the classroom-based program for 4-year-olds and summer jumpstart program preceding kindergarten.*

Is there an enrollment cap for classroom-based programming?
- *[Title 10, Chapter 63, Section 107 -](#) Class Size explains specifications for this programming:(1) There must be one appropriately licensed and endorsed teacher for ten students, with an early childhood paraprofessional for any additional students over ten, for up to no more than 18 total students in a classroom with two adults. The school district must assign qualified human resources that comply with all fingerprint and background check requirements when exceeding maximum class sizes at a rate of 1 ½ hours per day, per student overload. An overload of five students per classroom is considered excessive.*

PREPARING FOR A JUMPSTART PROGRAM IN SUMMER OF 2024?

Can a summer jumpstart program begin in June 2024 and count the ANB? (HB 352 is effective July 1, 2024)
- *Schools could have a jumpstart program begin in June, or after the completion of the school year. To count those students for the additional quarter ANB enrollment count, however, the jumpstart program under HB 352 must include the following on or after July 1, 2024. Specifically, the jumpstart program duration requirements in § [20-7-1803(7)(b)(ii), MCA](#), (i.e., 4 weeks and 120 hours) must occur on or after July 1, and be completed before the school calendar year in 2024, even if the program begins in June.*

Can a summer jumpstart program begin in June in future years and count for the ANB?
- *Yes.*

When do districts determine if a child is no longer eligible for an Early Literacy Intervention Program?
- *Students are assessed yearly. Eligibility is determined in April, May, and June of each year.*

Does participating in these intervention programs prohibit the district from retaining students in kindergarten, or delaying entry into school based on age or parent preference?
- *The classroom-based intervention program is for eligible four-year-olds (on or before September 10) who are not entering kindergarten and who have not completed kindergarten. The jumpstart program is for eligible children who are five years old or*

older (on or before September 10) and have not yet completed third grade. Refer to §
[*20-7-117, MCA*](#) *for specifics on kindergarten and preschool programs.*

PREPARING FOR A HOME-BASED PROGRAM?

The home-based intervention program is designed to foster parental engagement and develop early literacy skills in students at risk of not being proficient in reading by the end of 3rd grade. The OPI is currently in the process of requesting proposals from vendors to run this program. More information will be available soon.

Do students have to be enrolled in the school as a regular student to participate in home-based programming?
- *Early Literacy literacy-targeted intervention programs are intended for students who are determined eligible at the district level.*

How will districts know how many spots they will have available for the home-based learning program?
- *The home-based learning program availability is on a first-come, first-served basis. The OPI will notify districts of the submission format and timeline for available spots.*