

OPI FAQ-Early 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 targeted intervention programs. Find more information on the OPI's website. [HB 338](#) passed during the 2025 Montana legislative session. This bill broadens the scope as it explicitly adds numeracy to the interventions, enabling support for both reading and math skills. HB 338 removes the language that screenings may occur in April, May, or June, allowing for greater flexibility in determining the timing of evaluations.

General Questions

Does my district have to offer all three early targeted intervention programs?

- Each district may decide which programs they offer.

How does the district decide which students are eligible for programming?

- Each district determines cut scores for eligibility utilizing the approved evaluation methodologies ([literacy](#) and [numeracy](#)).

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

- Yes, but they must still adhere to the age and grade level requirements established by the legislation. Eligible students must have an eligibility record entered into Infinite Campus (**only one eligibility record is required per school year**). You may enter two eligibility records if the student qualified for literacy and numeracy.

What data needs to be collected for programming and by when?

- Please consult the [Early Targeted Intervention Data Collection Schedule](#)
- Annual Reports will be due on July 15 following each year of implementation of an early targeted intervention program. OPI will provide a submission tool for this reporting. Per [20-7-1804, MCA](#), districts shall closely monitor their programs and the report must include the following:
 - anonymized information on student progress
 - evaluation methodology used for the program
 - formative assessments administered,
 - the evaluation methodology used at the end of the school year
 - and statewide reading assessment data grades 4-6Guidance on specific data questions and the format for submission will be on the OPI Early Targeted Interventions Homepage

Can my district still use exceptional circumstances for PK 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.

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 [parent consent](#) and [student eligibility](#).

Do students on an existing IEP need to be assessed to be determined eligible?

- Yes

Is there a specific date by which districts need to determine their specific cut scores for eligibility?

- No, districts will need to plan their own timeline.

Does eligibility follow a student from district to district? For example, can an eligible student in one district participate in a classroom-based program in another district?

- Eligibility is determined by each district.

Preparing to launch a classroom-based program?

When do students need to be screened to be eligible for the classroom-based program?

- Trustees may administer the evaluation methodology any time of the year.

Do districts need to screen students in literacy and numeracy?

- While it is not mandatory for districts to screen students in both literacy and numeracy, doing so increases the likelihood of those students becoming eligible.

Will I need to have eligible students for literacy in one classroom and my eligible students for numeracy in another?

- No, all eligible students (numeracy and literacy) can be placed in the same classroom

Can new students to a district be screened?

- Yes, new students have the same opportunity for the administration of the evaluation methodology.

Can the classroom-based program take place 2 or 3 days per week?

- The schedule must meet the instructional hours requirement of 720 hours for full-time and 360 hours for part-time.

This legislation allows for 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 align to the [Title 10 Chapter 63 Early Childhood Education Standards](#), (effective in April 2024), Programming should specifically follow the English Language Arts and Literacy as well as Mathematics Content Standards for Early Targeted Intervention Programs. The program must be an integral part of the elementary school and must be governed accordingly.

Is there a specific curriculum we should use?

- Districts may choose the programs. Programs and resources should support the standards, be evidence-based and be developmentally appropriate.

Who is qualified to teach the classroom-based program?

- [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, for up to no more than 18 total students in a classroom with two adults. (2)With classrooms exceeding 10 students, an early childhood paraprofessional is required at a rate of one hour per day, per student overload up to 16 students. At 16 to 18 students, a minimum of one appropriately licensed and endorsed teacher and one early childhood paraprofessional is required. (3) School districts are encouraged to exceed these standards for classrooms exceeding 10 students with additional staffing beyond the requirements in (2).

Does participating in a classroom-based program 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. Refer to § [20-7-117, MCA](#) for specifics on kindergarten and preschool programs.

Preparing for a summer Jumpstart program?

Can a summer jumpstart program begin in June and count for the ANB?

- Yes

When do districts determine if a child is no longer eligible for a summer Jumpstart Program?

- Students are assessed yearly. 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.

What are the duration requirements for the Jumpstart program?

- The jumpstart program duration requirements in § [20-7-1803\(7\)\(b\)\(ii\), MCA](#), (i.e., 4 weeks and 120 hours).

Preparing for a home-based program?

The home-based intervention program is technology-based, designed to foster parental engagement and develop early literacy and numeracy skills in students at risk of not being proficient in reading and math by the end of 3rd grade. The OPI and BPE have completed the request for proposal (RFP) process and have selected Waterford as the provider of the home-based intervention program.

Do students have to be enrolled in the school as regular students to participate in home-based programming?

- No, but students must be assessed and deemed eligible at the district level.

How do I enroll eligible students from my district into this program?

- Students are enrolled in the home-based program through Infinite Campus. Eligible students must have an eligibility record for the current school year and be enrolled in a home-based calendar.

Is there a formal procedure for obtaining parental consent for eligible students participating in the home-based program?

- No, but we advise schools/districts to use our [home-based eligibility and parent consent letter](#) for eligible students.

How many licenses are available for the home-based program?

- There are 1,500 licenses available each school year for the home-based program.

What if a student doesn't have a computer and/or internet access at home?

- Waterford can provide eligible students with a computer and/or internet access.

How does funding work for the home-based program?

- The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall pay for the costs for an eligible child participating in a home-based program pursuant to [section 3(6)] from funds appropriated for this purpose.

What content will eligible students have access to?

- Eligible students will have access to literacy and numeracy content in the Waterford platform.

What if my district doesn't want to use Waterford for a home-based program?

- Districts always have the choice in what programs they purchase to support their students' learning. If they use another program, though, it won't count as participation in this home-based program because they must use the program selected by the BPE, and the BPE and OPI selected Waterford through an RFP process.

How long will students have access to the home-based program?

- Eligible students will have access to the program through July 31st.