



## ESSA Update

April 28, 2020

Dear Partners in Education,

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:

- On Monday, March 30, the OPI received the official letter granting the waiver for 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.
- 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.

- [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, 10:00 to 11:00am.

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