



December 14, 2020

Changes to the ESSA Accountability System through an Addendum to the 2019-2020 Waivers and a limited Waiver for Targeted Support and Improvement Identification

Dear Partners in Education,

On March 30, 2020, Montana OPI received a waiver from the U.S. Department of Education (USED) for specific assessment and accountability requirements for the 2019-2020 school year. The OPI applied for the waiver due to extraordinary circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting school closures. The waiver cancelled assessments in the 2019–2020 school year, suspended the accountability system, and removed specific elements related to assessments and accountability on the report card ([see the 2019-2020 waiver for details](#)).

The waiving of these requirements, as well as the continued implications of COVID-19, have impacted how Montana has been able to implement its Consolidated State Plan under ESSA in the 2020-2021 school year. Thus, the Department has created a streamlined process, the COVID-19 Addendum, to account for one-year changes (e.g., changes to how the State will hold schools accountable for the 2020-2021 school year) and two specific long-term changes: (1) shifting forward timelines by one year for identifying schools and (2) shifting forward timelines by one year for meeting measurements of interim progress (MIPs) and long-term goals due to COVID-19.

The COVID-19 Addendum is important as it seeks to provide school districts with an extension of the COVID-19 Accountability waivers and relief from the impact of COVID-19 on the accountability system for the 2020-2021 school year. Given that Montana can not adequately calculate an academic growth measurement, defined by comparing two consecutive years of a student's normalized assessment scores, or some of the measures of Montana's fifth flexible indicator for School Quality and Student Success (SQSS), it cannot meet the requirement to differentiate all public schools based on all five required indicators. Thus, Montana is proposing to shift the identification process forward one year to 2022-2023. See the [Montana Addendum Template here](#).

Because the waiver addendum does not apply to the annual requirement to identify Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) schools, which are schools with one or more consistently underperforming subgroups for three consecutive years, Montana is also seeking a specific TSI waiver. See the [TSI waiver letter here](#). Montana has sought these changes to provide relief and support to schools as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Montana will continue to advocate for school communities and students. These proposed changes do not

preclude Montana from submitting amendments or additional waivers to gain greater flexibility in the future. Please note that the Montana OPI is currently applying to the USED for an assessment waiver for 2020-2021 statewide testing.

Through the Addendum and the TSI Waiver, Montana proposes to address the following components of the accountability system:

- Shifts forward timelines by one year to 2022-2023 for identifying CSI and ATSI schools because the growth indicator and the Student Quality or Student Success (SQSS) indicator cannot be calculated in 2020-2021.
- Shift exit criteria for CSI and ATSI schools to be in 2022-2023 based on data from the 2021-2022 school year.
- Shifts forward timelines by one year for measuring long-term goals and measurements of interim progress.
- Waive annual requirement to identify TSI schools in 2020-2021 for consistently underperforming subgroups.

Therefore, the Montana OPI is seeking public comment on this addendum and the TSI waiver. Please visit the [Public Comment Website](#) for detailed information. Any comments on this addendum or waiver should be directed to essainput@mt.gov.

Below is a **Timeline** outlining the addendum process with stakeholder involvement:

Date	Milestone	Details
December 14, 2020	Start public comment	Email to stakeholders and information posted on the OPI webpage with links to the accountability addendum, waiver letter and FAQ. Survey for public comment posted.
January, 2021	Consult Governor	
January 7, 2021	Webinar 1 for public input	You must register to join the meeting. Click here to register in advance for Webinar 1.
January 14, 2021	Webinar 2 for public input	You must register to join the meeting. Click here to register in advance for Webinar 2.
January 15, 2021	Board of Public Education	Presentation and discussion with the Montana Board of Public Education
January 15, 2021	Survey closes	
January 19, 2021	Education Advocates	Introductory discussion with Education Advocates
January 21, 2021	Webinar 3 for summary of comment.	You must register to join the meeting. Click here to register in advance for Webinar 3.
February 1, 2021	Submission	Final Draft prepared and submitted to the USED

Please send feedback, input and questions to ESSAinput@mt.gov

Putting Montana Students First **A⁺**