



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

December 23, 2024

The Honorable Elsie Arntzen
Superintendent of Public Instruction
Montana Office of Public Instruction
P.O. Box 202501
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Superintendent Arntzen:

I am writing in response to Montana's request to the U.S. Department of Education (Department) to amend its approved consolidated State plan under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). Montana first submitted its request on May 31, 2024, and submitted a revised version on October 2, 2024.

I have determined that the amendment requests meet ESEA requirements; accordingly, I am approving Montana's amended State plan. A summary of Montana's amendment is enclosed. This letter, as well as Montana's revised ESEA consolidated State plan, will be posted on the Department's website. Any further requests to amend Montana's ESEA consolidated State plan must be submitted to the Department for review and approval.

Please be aware that approval of this amendment is not a determination that all the information and data included in the amended State plan comply with Federal civil rights requirements, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. It is Montana's responsibility to comply with these civil rights requirements.

Thank you for the work Montana has invested in its consolidated State plan under the ESEA. If you need any assistance regarding its implementation, please contact the Office of School Support and Accountability at: OESE.TitleI-a@ed.gov

Sincerely,

Adam Schott

Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary
Delegated the Authority to Perform the
Functions and Duties of the Assistant Secretary
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education

Enclosure

cc: Julie Murgel, OPI Chief Operating Officer

400 MARYLAND AVE., SW, WASHINGTON, DC 20202

<http://www.ed.gov/>

The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

Amendment to the Montana Consolidated State Plan

The following is a summary of Montana’s amendment request. Please refer to the Department’s website <https://www.ed.gov/laws-and-policy/laws-preschool-grade-12-education/esea/esea-consolidated-state-plans> for Montana’s consolidated State plan.

Title I, Part A: Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies

- *Academic Standards and Assessments*
Montana replaced references to the Smarter Balanced assessment with its new assessment, Montana Aligned to Standards Through-Year (MAST) assessment. Per the conditions outlined in a letter from the Department (https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/2023/08/MT_fieldTestResponse2023_for-posting.pdf), Montana is required to submit this assessment for Department peer review by December 1, 2025.
- *Other Academic Indicator*
For the 2024-2025 school year only, Montana will utilize a “skip-year growth” metric and will measure growth between performance on the 2022-2023 Smarter Balanced assessment and the 2024-2025 MAST assessment. Montana will use the same model, using z-scores for the 2022-2023 Smarter Balanced scores and the MAST scores for the 2024-2025 school years. To calculate the number of points earned on the indicator, each student’s growth score is summed to calculate the overall total growth for each school or student group. The sums are placed on a z-score distribution, which is then used to assign zero to 15 points for math and reading/language arts each, for a total of 30 points. After the 2024-2025 school year, Montana will return to the methodology as described in its currently approved State plan (i.e., growth between two consecutive years).
- *System of Annual Meaningful Differentiation*
Montana clarified that schools that participated in the MAST field test were not included in 2023-2024 accountability (i.e., accountability determinations based on performance in the 2023-2024 school year), consistent with its approved field test waiver. Performance on the MAST assessment in the 2024-2025 school year will be used for accountability determinations in fall 2025, including school identification, consistent with Montana’s approved State plan.
- *Annual Measurement of Achievement*
Montana will define a participant on the statewide assessments as any student who completes the minimum number of test items to calculate a valid summative score and will include all participants in the Academic Achievement indicator (partial attendance requirement notwithstanding) for all schools and student groups that meet the State’s minimum number of students requirement (n-size). The Academic Achievement indicator is calculated by taking the numerator (number of students scoring proficient or advanced) divided by the denominator (the participation count or 95 percent of all enrolled students, whichever is greater).