



ESSA

June 10, 2020

Dear Partners in Education,

The OPI is conducting an extensive [Public Comment Process](#) to fully understand the implications on the following four federal waivers:

- 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.
- 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.

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.

<https://sites.google.com/a/opiconnect.org/2020-montana-waivers/>

NEW: In addition, the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) is seeking public comment on a waiver to the United States Department of Education that will allow the OPI to waive the 15% carryover limitation carryover in ESEA section 1127 (b) more than once every three years with respect to FY 2018 Title I-A funds. This waiver will allow districts to use excess carryover funds to improve academic achievement for affected student groups.

Thursday, July 2: Implications for 2020 Waivers: Lend Your Voice #6

<https://mt-gov.zoom.us/j/517311509>

Meeting ID: 517 311 509

Comprehensive Support and Improvement

The 2020-2021 school year marks the third year of Comprehensive Support and Improvement

(CSI). On Monday, March 30, OPI received a waiver from the U.S. Department of Education (USED) for specific assessment and accountability requirements for this school year. The OPI applied for the waiver due to extraordinary circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting school closures. The waivers canceled requirements to administer the statewide assessments, suspended accountability system for the 2019-2020 year, removed certain elements from the ESSA report card, and provided financial flexibility to schools and districts.

As a result of the waiver, any school that is identified for comprehensive and targeted support and improvement in the 2019–2020 school year will maintain that identification status and continue to receive supports and interventions in the 2020–2021 school year. Due to the suspension of Spring 2020 testing, schools will not receive accountability ratings for the 2019–20 school year, which was year three of data collection by which CSI schools would need to meet exit criteria. Consequently, the OPI is gathering public comment and considering the need of a waiver related to this issue, to address using the data collection of 2020-2021 as the year three of data by which CSI schools would be measured to meet exit criteria and ensuring that we have the option to extend a fourth year in 2021-2022 for support and intervention while schools exit criteria is reviewed and determinations complete.

Rather than a Fall onsite meeting, we will be hosting a series of live/recorded webinars addressing the topics below from June-August. During these 1-2-hour sessions, we will work together to ensure all districts are moving forward with goals aligned from their CNA, GAP analysis, and other data, creating sustainable practices, and ultimately exiting comprehensive status. This year each school is required to complete an application in the e-grants system that synthesizes the CNA and gap analysis, outlines the improvement plan with progress monitoring steps, and aligns the budget to the improvement plan. The district and school leaders will set the budget and determine the use of section 1003 funds for any activity that it determines (and the OPI agrees) will help a school identified for CSI have improved student outcomes within the school. During the sessions, we will walk through the process with you:

- June 17th, 10am-1 hour-Entrance and exit criteria for Comprehensive status
- July 1, 10 am- 2 hour- Analyze the Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) trend data
 - Identify the GAPS (are they the same or different?)
- July 29th, 10am- 1 hour-Review the Continuous Improvement Plan (CSIP) and make adjustments
- August 5th, 10 am- 1-hour- New e-Grant questions in Title I School Support
 - Budget alignment
 - Evidenced-based interventions defined by ESSA
 - External Partners (Instructional consultants)

The OPI just went through a request for purchase (RFP) process to conduct the rigorous reviews of external partners. This list will be made available on or before our first webinar in June. There are some additions to the list to help meet the needs of the districts. Based on your identified areas of growth and your CSIP goals, schools may opt to keep their current Instructional Consultant (IC), use an IC for more or less days, select a new IC, or opt not to use one at all.

Targeted Support and Improvement

Using the process for annual meaningful differentiation, schools are identified for targeted support and improvement (TSI) on an annual basis. TSI means that a school has any student group performing in the lowest 5% of all Montana schools. The list of [Targeted Schools](#) is posted publicly on the OPI's website as required under ESSA. Schools identified for targeted support and improvement work in partnership with the district to conduct a Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) of instructional components and develop a Continuous School Improvement Plan (CSIP) focused on academic goals and underperforming student groups.

We are sending out a pre-recorded webinar via email next week to outline components regarding the TSI status; such as, entrance and exit criteria. We will also be offering a competitive grant opportunity at the start of the 2020-21 school year for TSI schools along with technical assistance from the OPI. In addition, this year and going forward external partners will be available for TSI schools. An option for schools will be able to use their funding to hire an instructional consultant that can specifically address the student group that needs improvement.

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