

Insert School Letter Head Here

[Insert Date]

Dear Parent/Guardian:

[Insert School] is participating in the *Montana Alternative Student Testing (MAST) expanded Pilot Program* through the Montana Office of Public Instruction. Students in Grades 3-8 will take Math and English Language Arts (ELA) assessments during the 2023-2024 school year with testing windows in October, November, January, March and April. Our district is fully participating in grades 3-8 and will not be double-testing your students by also requiring your child to that the Smarter Balanced Assessment beginning in March. The MAST assessment model will be Montana's new assessment system for all students beginning with the 2024-2025 school year providing more frequent and meaningful data informing the teacher, your child and you on your child's learning in Math and English Language Arts.

What is the purpose of the MAST pilot?

The vision of the MAST Pilot is to implement "through year" assessments across the state that replace the traditional end-of-year state summative assessments, reduce the amount of testing of your child, provide more usable information that will impact instruction for your child, and to satisfy federal and state testing requirements.

The ultimate goal with the "through year" model is to support the formative instructional process that is closer to the local decisions required to support teaching and learning needs. Rather than a single end-of-year assessment, the test will be broken up over the course of the academic year. The "Through-Year Assessment" design benefits students, teachers, parents, and administrators by providing valuable learning data throughout the school year and by providing a important and useful student growth over the academic school year (i.e., with-in year so teachers can act as opposed to between years). The strength of this new method of assessment is the ability to personalize the sequence of assessments right down to the classroom so students are tested on what they have learned.

The MAST pilot is a staged, three-year pilot, adding two grades per year and leading toward statewide operational administration of through-year assessments in 2025-26 for all 67,750 Montana students in grades 3-8.

- This ambitious initiative will be supported by multiple funding sources, including a private grant that is supporting the first phase of development;
- The federal Competitive Grants for State Assessments (CGSA) funds awarded to the OPI will put key delivery mechanisms in place, build educator capacity, and accelerate the timeline toward statewide implementation.
- All the MAST pilot explorations and pursuits will be lawful.
- Montana has requested a double-testing waiver from the federal government and the OPI has been diligent with help from our testing partner, Montana's Congressional Delegation, us and many others

on the importance of increasing more student instructional time in the classroom and reduce time to meaningful assessment.

Details about the 2023-2024 expanded pilot:

- **Participants:** Grades 3-8: Math and ELA
- **Administrations:** 5 administration windows throughout the year with the final test window being a performance assessment.
- **Total Estimated Testing Time:** 10-15 minutes per testlet, 40 minutes per administration window for one subject
- **Technology:** Computer-based test delivery via secure site
- **Reports:** Raw score reports will be available for teachers and districts after administration. Individual student reports will give results from this test and will be sent home to parents within two weeks from the close of the test administration window.

Here are some things to note about the MAST test:

- Your child's grades will not be impacted by their scores on the testlets.
- Your child's privacy will be protected. State and federal laws, such as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), ensure these data remain confidential.
- Students with Individual Educational Plans (IEPs), Section 504 plans, or English Learner plans will be assessed based on individual student needs, consistent with all state and federal laws and regulations.
- Assessment accommodations are provided for students.

Learn More:

To learn more about this initiative follow this [link](#) to the Montana OPI webpage. You can also learn more about New Meridian [here](#). New Meridian is a non-profit organization that creates high-quality, innovative assessment solutions that focus on the skills that matter most for success in school and in life.

We appreciate your positive support in helping [\[Insert School\]](#) participate in this important expanded pilot and supporting your child to do his/her best.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions you may have about MAST. Questions can be directed to [\[School Contact\]](#) at [\[Contact Information\]](#).

Sincerely,

[\[Principal's Name\]](#)