

Insert School Letter Head Here

[Insert Date]

Dear Parent/Guardian:

[Insert School] is participating in the *Montana Alternative Student Testing (MAST) Pilot Program* through the Montana Office of Public Instruction. Students in **Grades 5 and Grades 7** will take Math and English Language Arts (ELA) assessments on [Insert Dates/Over the Period of Date Range]

### **What is the purpose of the MAST pilot?**

The Montana OPI in partnership with New Meridian© is working to develop an improved assessment system that will accurately reflect the needs of our students, teachers, and administrators while providing useful flexibility in terms of test administration. The vision of the MAST Pilot is to implement “through year” assessments across the state that can eventually replace the traditional end-of-year state summative assessments and to satisfy federal 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 actionable data at the beginning of the school year and by providing a meaningful model of student growth over the academic school year (i.e., with-in year so teachers can act as opposed to between years).

**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.
- As such, all federal requirements will remain in effect until the alternative model can be operationalized and scaled up for all school districts.

### **Details about the 2022-2023 pilot:**

- **Participants:** 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Math and ELA
- **Administrations:** 4 administration windows throughout the year
- **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 on [Insert TIME and Method].

**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.

**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 partnership in helping [Insert School] participate in this important 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]