

December 2023 Assessment Bulletin



This bulletin communication is tailored to System Test Coordinators (STCs) with a lens for providing the current news, testing alerts, and changes to statewide assessments.

Use these hyperlinks to navigate to each section of the bulletin:

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- [Assessment Updates](#)
- [Training Opportunities](#)
- [Requirements – Federal and State](#)
- [OPI Assessment Unit Contact Information](#)

2023-2024 OPI Test Windows

| | ACCESS for ELLs | Multi-State Alternate | Alternate Science | Science | Smarter Balanced | ACT with Writing | MAST |
|---|------------------------------------|---|------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| Required Subjects | English Language Proficiency (ELP) | Math and ELA | Science | Science | Math and ELA | Math, ELA, and Science | Math and ELA |
| Student Group | English Learners | SwSCDs | SwSCDs | General | General | General | General |
| Grades Tested | Grades K–12 | Grades 3–8, 11 | Grades 5, 8, 11 | Grades 5, 8 | Grades 3–8 | Grade 11 | Grades 3–8 |
| Window Period | 12 weeks | 7 weeks | 7 weeks | 12 weeks | 12 weeks | 6 weeks Tues/Wed/Thurs | 5 windows 3 weeks each |
| Anticipated* SY2023-24 Test Windows | December 4 – February 23 | March 11 – April 26 | March 11 – April 26 | March 4 – May 24 | March 4 – May 24 | Window 1: March 26 – April 5 | October 23- November 10 |
| | | | | | | Window 2: April 9–19 | November 27- December 15 |
| | | | | | | | January 29- February 16 |
| Window 3: April 23–May 3 | March 11- April 5 | April 15- May 10 | | | | | |
| Updated by the Office of Public Instruction on June 15, 2023. | | Putting Montana Students First A⁺ | | | | Note: Dates and information listed in this schedule are subject to change at any time or without notice. | |

Note: SwSCDs is an acronym for student with significant cognitive disabilities and ‘SY’ is the abbreviation for school year. The OPI will publish any changes to the test windows on the [Published Test Windows](#). The asterisk (*) is used to signify these dates are subject to change based on new information or changed policies.

Timely Tasks for State Assessments

The checklists below help guide the System Test Coordinator (STC) in ensuring tasks related to state assessments are completed in a timely manner.

MontCAS (Montana Comprehensive Assessment System)

This section pertains to general and test security tasks under the umbrella of the MontCAS program not specific to any one of the state assessments.

- ✓ New System Test Coordinators should contact the OPI Assessment Unit to ensure proper access to assessment portals. Confirmation from the district's Authorized Representative will be required prior to providing access to student level data in the assessment portals. Contact the OPI Assessment Unit at OPIAssessmentHelpDesk@mt.gov or at 844.867.2569 for assistance.
- ✓ STCs affirm test security requirements (Test Security Agreement and Required Records Tracking) in the secure access [MontCAS Application](#).
 - **Deadline: January 5, 2024, or before the first assessment is administered within the district.**

Timely Task Resources

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| MontCAS Test Security Collection Schedule | This schedule includes required and timely tasks and collections specific to state assessments. |
| MontCAS Application User Guide | This user guide walks STCs through the tasks within the application. |

For links to MontCAS general and test security resources, visit the [MontCAS page](#) of the OPI State Testing website.

Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA)

The SBA is the general math and reading/language arts assessment for academic achievement reporting in Grades 3 through 8.

- ✓ STCs create a new password for TIDE and review users to ensure student privacy.

Timely Task Resources

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| TIDE Maintenance Quick Guide | This guide walks STCs through the steps to review district accounts in the Montana Testing Portal. |
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For links to Smarter Balanced general resources, visit the [Smarter Balanced page](#) of the OPI State Testing website.

Montana Alternative Student Testing (MAST) Pilot

The MAST Pilot is the general math and reading/language arts assessment for the through-year assessment pilot program. It is administered at Grades 3-8 for schools registered for the pilot.

MAST Test Window #2: November 27 – December 15, 2023

- ✓ Schedule testing at the district level to complete all the testlets in the corresponding testing window.
 - **Deadline: December 15, 2023**
- ✓ Call the OPI Assessment Help Desk (844-867-2569) to have students manually enrolled or exited if the information was not reflected in the weekly state enrollment update.
 - **REMINDER: Do not share student data (e.g., name, SSID, date of birth) in emails or on voicemail messages.**

MAST Timely Task Resources

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| Test Administration Manual Kite Educator Portal Manual Kite Student Portal Manual | These comprehensive guides provide all the essential information needed to prepare for the upcoming testing windows. These manuals include an assessment overview, guidelines for test security, details on student tools and accommodations, and other pertinent information. |
| MAST Accommodations & Accessibility Crosswalk Document | This document will provide guidance on how to translate Smarter Balanced accommodations into MAST PNPs (Personal Needs Profile). |
| Parent Letter Template | This letter template can be edited by schools/districts and delivered to families in a timely manner before testing windows open. |
| OPI MAST Webpage | This webpage provides an overview of the MAST Assessment. Participating MAST schools can find useful information and links here. |
| Monthly OPI Compass | This link provides access to all monthly OPI Compass publications. The MAST portion of the OPI Compass will provide updates, upcoming tasks, and alerts for MAST participating |

For links to MAST general resources, visit the [MAST page](#) of the OPI State Testing website.

Montana Science Assessment (MSA)

The MSA is the general science assessment for academic achievement reporting in Grades 5 and 8.

- ✓ STCs create a new password for TIDE and review users to ensure student privacy.

MSA Timely Task Resources

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| TIDE Maintenance Quick Guide | This guide walks STCs through the steps to review district accounts in the Montana Testing Portal. |
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For links to MSA general resources, visit the [MSA page](#) of the OPI State Testing website.

ACT with Writing

The ACT with Writing is the general math, reading/language arts, and science assessment for academic achievement reporting in Grade 11.

- ✓ Request accommodations and/or supports for students through the Test Accessibly and Accommodations System (TAA).
 - **Deadline: February 2, 2024**
- ✓ Select test dates in PearsonAccess^{next}.
 - **Deadline: December 6, 2023**

ACT Timely Task Resources

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| TAA User Guide | This guide will assist users in creating an account in and using the TAA System to request accommodations. |
| PearsonAccess Next User Guide | This guide walks users through the process to select school ACT with Writing test dates. |

For links to ACT general and test security resources, visit the [ACT page](#) of the OPI State Testing website.

ACCESS for ELLs Assessment (ACCESS)

The ACCESS is the English Language Proficiency assessment for academic achievement reporting for English Learners (ELs) in Grades K through 12.

ACCESS for ELLs testing window is open from December 3, 2023, through February 23, 2024.

- ✓ Ensure Test Administrators complete the required training in the WIDA Secure Portal prior to administering the ACCESS for ELLs.
- ✓ Review your district's list of students in the WIDA AMS. If there are students missing, or if there are students in the portal who should not be, contact the OPI Assessment Help Desk at 844-867-2569 to have this corrected (do not leave student information such as name or SSID on a voicemail message or in an email).

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| WIDA AMS (Assessment Management System) | This portal is where student and test management is completed. |
| WIDA Secure Portal | This is the portal in which all required training modules are housed. |

For links to ACCESS general and test security resources, visit the [ACCESS page](#) of the OPI State Testing website.

Multi State Alternate Assessment (MSAA)

The MSAA is the alternate math and reading/language arts assessment for academic achievement reporting in Grades 3 through 8 and 11 for students with significant cognitive disabilities.

- ✓ The MSAA testing portal is currently closed and will reopen in late spring for districts to manage students in preparation for testing. General resources are available on the [MSAA States website](#).

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| MSAA States website | This site provides resources to schools and districts prior to the testing portal for the MSAA opening. It includes Test Administrator Manuals, as well as sample items and resources for families. |
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For links to MSAA general and test security resources, visit the [MSAA page](#) of the OPI State Testing website.

Alternate Montana Science Assessment (AMSA)

The AMSA is the alternate science assessment for academic achievement reporting in Grades 5, 8, and 11 for students with significant cognitive disabilities.

- ✓ STCs create a new password for TIDE and review users to ensure student privacy.
- ✓ Ensure the alternate assessment flag is checked and the IEP is locked in AIM/Infinite Campus for all students qualifying for the alternate assessment to ensure they are correctly uploaded to the Montana Testing Portal.

AMSA Timely Task Resources

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| TIDE Maintenance Quick Guide | This guide walks STCs through the steps to review district accounts in the Montana Testing Portal. |
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For links to AMSA general and test security resources, visit the [AMSA page](#) of the OPI State Testing website.

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

The NAEP assessment is administered ONLY in selected schools and students in mathematics and reading in Grades 4 and 8. Participation is required under the Every Student Succeeds Act for any district receiving Title 1 funding.

- ✓ Designated NAEP School Coordinator complete the following preassessment tasks within the [NAEP AMS](#): *Schedule Assessment Planning Meeting (APM), Provide Student Information, Assessment logistics, and Manage Questionnaires.*
 - **Deadline: Before Assessment Planning Meeting (APM) in January**
- ✓ Designated NAEP Onsite Technology Coordinator complete the following preassessment task within the [NAEP AMS](#): *Technology Logistics.*
 - **Deadline: Before Assessment Planning Meeting (APM) in January**

NAEP Timely Task Resources:

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| Introduction to Completing Tasks in the Assessment Management System (AMS) for the School Coordinator | This document provides detailed information about each of the preassessment tasks. |
| Technical Requirements Fact Sheet | This fact sheet contains information for the onsite technology coordinators responsible for managing technology requirements for the NAEP assessment. |
| Technology Team Responsibilities Guide | This guide provides the steps necessary to connect NAEP-provided devices to the school's Wi-Fi for the assessment. |

For links to NAEP general resources, visit the [NAEP page](#) of the OPI State Testing website.

Assessment Updates

Test Security Update

New this year, the System Test Coordinator (STC) will no longer be designated within the OPI TEAMS Collection. The STC will be reported within Infinite Campus. The deadline to make this official designation is December 15, 2023. For additional information or questions, reach out to the OPI AIM Unit at 877.424.6681 or [submit a help desk ticket](#).

Alternate ACCESS for ELLs Update

The redesigned Alternate ACCESS for ELLs is launching for the 2023–24 WIDA testing year. Explore the [WIDA Alternate ACCESS Updates](#) webpage to learn about what's new, when things are happening, and more.

Training Opportunities

Training Opportunities for the 2023-2024 school year are included below. System Test Coordinators can place these on calendars and save the date.



OPI Assessment Monthly Webinar

During the 2023-2024 school year, the OPI Assessment Team will offer a Monthly Focused Webinar from August 2023 through May 2024. The focused webinar is designed to support educational practitioners such as district and school-level personnel involved in local state assessment and local data-driven decision-making actions and/or continuous improvement processes. New for the 2023-2024 school year, the monthly webinar will include a 15-minute “Learning Lab” in which presenters will walk attendees step-by-step through a key timely task.

A total of 10 webinars will be offered as published in the [MontCAS Monthly Webinar Schedule](#). **Attendees are eligible for 1-hour of renewal.**

- **December 13, 2023: Accessibility** [\[Register\]](#)
 - **Learning Lab: Uploading Accommodations into TIDE with a Spreadsheet**



STC Workshop Series

The OPI Assessment Unit hosted the third annual STC Workshop Series in 12 sessions over three days in October. The workshop was presented to provide each Montana school district System Test Coordinator (STC) with the opportunity to learn the “how-to’s” for assessment related responsibilities.

If you missed the live sessions, recorded versions of each session are posted on the [STC Workshop Series website](#). In addition to the recorded sessions, the presentation slides, resource lists, and frequently asked questions are also posted on the site.



STC Hub Course

During the 2023-2024 school year, the OPI Assessment Team will offer a STC Course on the Teacher Learning Hub. Watch for more information, including how to register, on the OPI State Assessment [“Stay Informed” web page](#) under the “Professional Development” tab.

Federal and State Requirements

What are the requirements for accountability this year ESEA-ESSA Section 1111(c)?

- All accountability and school identification requirements are in effect.
- Data from this year’s state assessments will be used within the OPI’s accountability process for annual meaningful differentiation of schools.
- **Participant** = must have **(1)** a valid score and be **(2)** assigned a proficiency level (see 34 CFR 200.2(a)(b)(1)(i)). All students, including students with disabilities are required by state and federal law to take part in the OPI’s state assessments with or without accommodations. All students are expected to take part in state assessments in one of three ways:
 - Participate in the general education assessments without accommodations.
 - Participate in the general education assessments with accommodations.
 - Participate in [Alternate Assessments](#) when the participation criteria are met.
- To see a list of schools who were previously identified for targeted and comprehensive status, visit the [OPI’s ESSA Information and Documents Page](#). The federal accountability process for school identification using the 2021-2022 state assessment data is planned to commence this Fall.

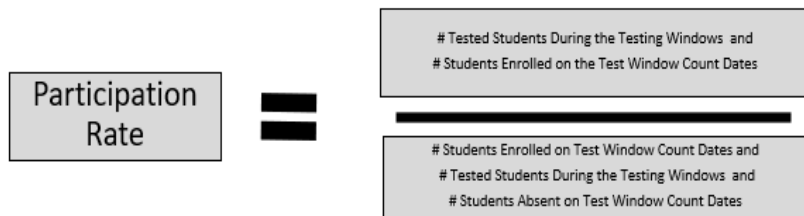
What are the requirements for reporting this year ESEA-ESSA Section 1111(h)?

- Any instances where it was unsafe for a student to participate in the state assessment for medical reasons must be reported to the OPI using the “Medical Exemption” policy as defined within the [MontCAS Policies and Procedures for Participation in State Assessments](#).

What does participation and non-participation mean for state assessments?

Participation is necessary to ensure the data are representative and reflective of the population. When participation rates fall below the state and federal requirements, bias can be introduced into the student knowledge, skill, and ability estimates, thus reducing the overall confidence we have in the data and ultimately interfering with the inferences that can be made about student achievement.

- In Montana, there is no “opt out” law, and both state law and accreditation rules require all students in public and accredited non-public schools to participate in state testing.
- The OPI recognizes there are circumstances beyond the control of the school that may result in non-participation. In those rare cases, the district must report the reason for non-participation to the OPI using the [MontCAS Application](#).
- The figure on participation below is used to show how the calculation is made for participation rates for a school which is displayed on the [Montana ESSA Report Card](#) and within the accountability differentiation process.
 - Per the OPI’s policies and federal reporting, only students with “medical exemptions” can be removed from the denominator, meaning all other instances of non-participation (or absence) impact the school’s participation rate.
 - The state factors the requirement for 95 percent student participation in mathematics and reading/language arts assessments into the statewide accountability system. Students who meet participation requirements and who do not test are assigned a score of “Novice” and designated as a non-participant for accountability purposes (see [ESSA State Plan](#), [MontCAS Policies and Procedures for Participation in State Assessments](#), and [Six Things Stakeholders Should Know about Participation and Testing in Montana](#)).



Eligible Student Population = All students enrolled during the testing window whether or not they were present for the full academic year except students who did not participate in the assessments due to significant medical emergencies (34 CFR 200.2(a)(b)(1)(i)).

Non-Participant = Did not participate. This is a student who was expected to test but did not for whatever reason and their non-participation status will count negatively against the school's participation rate (e.g., parent refusal).

Reporting Requirement: Montana school districts are required to provide parents/guardians with individual student reports in a timely manner. To understand and address the specific academic needs of students, it is required under state and federal law to provide individual student interpretive, descriptive, and diagnostic reports regarding achievement. This allows families, teachers, and other school leaders to address individual student needs regarding student proficiency and progress as soon as is practicable after the assessment is given. Family resources and sample letters can be found on the [Parent Corner page](#)

Federal Requirement: provide timely individual student reports to parents, teachers, and principals and include the results on local report cards ([ESSA Section 1111](#)).

State Requirement: statewide assessment public results must include a clear statement of the purpose, subject areas assessed, description of proficiency levels, and the percentage of students who participated in the assessments ([ARM 10.56.105\(2\)](#) and [§20-7-104, MCA](#)). School districts must also place individual student reports in the student's cumulative file per [ARM 10.55.909](#).

OPI's Recommended Roles and Responsibilities

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| Authorized Representative Role: | The individual designated to comply and/or enforce activities in connection with federal legal requirements (see 34 CFR §99.3). Authorized Representatives appoint STCs as the single point of contact for all assessment-related matters and testing alerts within the school system. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authorized Representatives must confirm STC designation within Infinite Campus each year. Check the OPI AIM Unit webpage for data collection deadlines and guidance. |
| System Test Coordinator Role: | This role serves as the data steward for managing local users within the restricted web-based TDS portals used to deliver each test. This role also serves as the local liaison for all standardized testing procedures (i.e., proctoring, safeguarding, securing, and reporting state test information) and ensuring staff are trained and certified to administer state assessments. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> STCs must sign the electronic test security agreement and the testing plan assurances in the MontCAS Application by the dates specified in the "MontCAS Test Security Collection Schedule". |
| Building Coordinator Role: | Assigned by the AR and/or STC and is typically a licensed non-instructional person such as principals, vice principals, counselors, or other staff members. This person coordinates state assessments in the school building. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All staff with TIDE Testing Portal accounts will be required to sign an electronic TSA. All staff with WIDA accounts, ACT accounts, and MSAA accounts will also be required to sign an electronic TSA or non-disclosure agreement (NDA) to gain access to the online test administration and reporting sites. |
| Test Administrator Role: | This person is assigned by the STC and/or BC and is a licensed educator such as a classroom teacher. The OPI further recommends that the Test Administrator is familiar to the students, so students feel more comfortable in the testing environment. TAs follow and administer the tests in accordance with the assessment-specific Test Administration Manuals. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All staff with TIDE Testing Portal accounts will be required to sign an electronic TSA. All staff with WIDA accounts, ACT accounts, and MSAA accounts will also be required to sign an electronic TSA or non-disclosure agreement (NDA) to gain access to the online test administration and reporting sites. |

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| Technology Coordinator Role: | This person ensures the secure browser is installed properly to administer the online assessments via the test delivery systems and that all system setup and requirements have been completed before testing. More information about these roles can be found in the MontCAS Test Security Manual . |
| Staff in Supporting Roles | All staff within the district who may assist with state assessments (e.g., storing ACT materials, sending score reports home, and scribes) will sign the MontCAS Test Security Agreement for Supporting Roles . The TSA should be electronically signed prior to the opening of the state assessment test windows. |

OPI Assessment Unit Contact Information Assessment Team

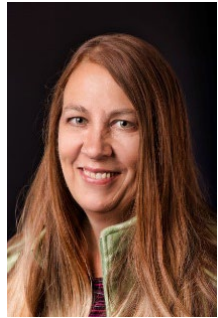
Teaching and Learning Department ● Phone: 844-867-2569 ● Email: OPIAssessmentHelpDesk@mt.gov

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OPI Assessment Unit Mission Statement

1. **Mentor** schools through the local roles and responsibilities related to administering state assessments in compliance with federal and state law.
2. **Foster** critical partnerships with stakeholders to build strong local assessment and data practices.
3. **Measure** student participation, proficiency, and progress on state content standards over time and help monitor and address educational needs for all learners.
4. **Provide** meaningful, timely, accurate, understandable, and transparent information to the public and families on achievement indicators and to support education information processes at the local and state level.
5. **Help** the public understand performance on achievement indicators and inequities across schools, so all students have equitable opportunities to access high-quality education.
6. **Advance** teaching and learning through the implementation of balanced systems and continuous improvement processes.
7. **Offer** high-quality technical assistance and professional learning to support test administration and implementation of equitable balanced assessment systems.
8. **Pursue** excellence using the highest professional and technical standards for evidence-based practices and data-driven decision-making.

Accommodation statement for publications

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Human Resource Manager
406-444-2673
OPIpersonnel@mt.gov

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