

January 2024 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:

- [Assessment Specific Timely Tasks](#)
- [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
							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.

- ✓ 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. Failure to complete these activities by the deadline will result in a testing incident filed on the district's behalf.**

Timely Task Resources

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.

- ✓ Ensure test settings are entered correctly in TIDE. Supports and accommodations should reflect those listed in student IEP/504 Plans.
- ✓ Review all TIDE user roles: delete user accounts for staff no longer employed by the district and add any new staff who will need access to the Montana Testing Portal.
- ✓ To access testing materials, users who will be administering interim and/or summative tests must complete the 20-minute Test Administrator Certification Course within the Montana Testing Portal.

Timely Task Resources

Usability, Accessibility, and Accommodations Guidelines	This guide describes the universal tools, designated supports, and accommodations available for the Smarter Balanced assessment.
TIDE Maintenance Quick Guide	This guide walks STCs through the steps to review district accounts in the Montana Testing Portal.

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 #3: January 29 – February 16, 2024

- ✓ Schedule and monitor testing at the district level to complete all the testlets in the corresponding testing window.
 - **Deadline: February 16, 2024.**
- ✓ 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

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 Score Report Letter Guidance	This School Score Report Dissemination Guidance document will help support districts in sharing student score reports to parents/guardians while in extended field testing.
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.

- ✓ Ensure test settings are entered correctly in TIDE. Supports and accommodations should reflect those listed in student IEP/504 Plans.
- ✓ Review all TIDE user roles: delete user accounts for staff no longer employed by the district and add any new staff who will need access to the Montana Testing Portal.
- ✓ To access testing materials, users who will be administering interim and/or summative tests must complete the 20-minute Test Administrator Certification Course within the Montana Testing Portal.

MSA Timely Task Resources

Usability, Accessibility, and Accommodations Guidelines	This guide describes the universal tools, designated supports, and accommodations available for the Smarter Balanced assessment.
TIDE Maintenance Quick Guide	This guide walks STCs through the steps to review district accounts in the Montana Testing Portal.

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**
- ✓ After January 19, review student lists in PearsonAccess^{next} to ensure all students are in the testing portal.
 - **Deadline: February 9, 2024**
- ✓ If testing in Window 1: between January 1 and March 13, 2024, complete Site Readiness and Mock Administration.
- ✓ Starting February 19, create and assign students to test sessions.

ACT Timely Task Resources

TAA User Guide	This guide will assist users in creating an account in and using the TAA System to request accommodations.
PearsonAccess Next User Guidev	This guide walks users through the processes for reviewing student lists, site readiness, and mock administration.

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).
- ✓ Review 2022-2023 ACCESS for ELLs score reports to ensure all EL students who received a score of 4.7 or higher must be exited from EL status in AIM/Infinite Campus and will not take the ACCESS for ELLs assessment this year.

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.
Reporting System	Individual Student Reports can be downloaded from this system.

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](#).

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.
-------------------------------------	---

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.

- ✓ 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.
- ✓ Ensure test settings are entered correctly in TIDE. Supports and accommodations should reflect those listed in student IEP/504 Plans.
- ✓ Review all TIDE user roles: delete user accounts for staff no longer employed by the district and add any new staff who will need access to the Montana Testing Portal.
- ✓ To access testing materials, users who will be administering interim and/or summative tests must complete the Alternate Montana Science Assessment Test Administrator Certification Course within the Montana Testing Portal.

AMSA Timely Task Resources

TIDE Maintenance Quick Guide	This guide walks STCs through the steps to review district accounts in the Montana Testing Portal.
--	--

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 School Coordinator complete the following preassessment tasks within the [NAEP AMS: Notify Parents/Guardians and Support Assessment Activities](#).
 - **Deadline: Before Assessment Day**
- ✓ Designated NAEP Onsite Technology Coordinator complete the following preassessment task within the [NAEP AMS: Schedule Assessment Planning Meeting \(APM\) and Technology Logistics](#).
 - **Deadline: Before Assessment Planning Meeting (APM) in January**

NAEP Timely Task Resources:

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.
Introduction to Completing Tasks in the Assessment Management System (AMS) for the On-site Technology Coordinator	This document provides detailed information about each of the preassessment tasks for the Onsite Technology Coordinator.
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

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.**

- **January 10, 2024** [\[Register\]](#)
 - **Learning Lab: Properly applying the Early Stopping Rule in MSA and AMSA.**



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)?

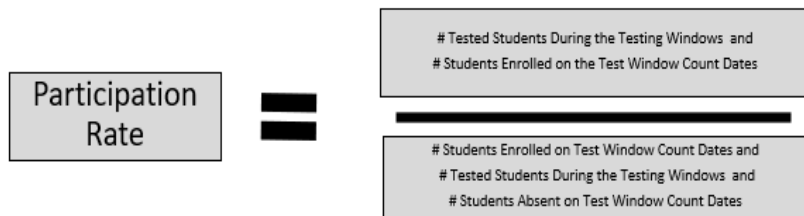
- Any instances where it was unsafe for a student to participate in the state assessment for medical reasons must be reported to the OPI using the “Medical Exemption” policy as defined within the [MontCAS Policies and Procedures for Participation in State Assessments](#).

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

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

	<p>students feel more comfortable in the testing environment. TAs follow and administer the tests in accordance with the assessment-specific Test Administration Manuals.</p> <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.
Technology Coordinator Role:	<p>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.</p>
Staff in Supporting Roles	<p>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.</p>

OPI Assessment Unit Contact Information

Assessment Team

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

Cedar Rose

State Assessment Director
Cedar.Rose@mt.gov



Marcy Fortner

Assessment Specialist
MFortner@mt.gov



Tressa Graveley

Assessment Specialist
tressa.graveley@mt.gov



Dylan Conway

Assessment Specialist
Dylan.Conway2@mt.gov



Erin de Graw

Assessment Specialist
Erin.deGraw@mt.gov



Shantel Niederstadt

NAEP State Coordinator
SNiederstadt@mt.gov



Additional Contacts

Tools for Teachers State Leads

Stephanie Swigart
Stephanie.Swigart@mt.gov

EL Support Specialist – Interim

Serena Wright
Serena.Wright@mt.gov

Accessibility Support Specialist

Mercee Cislo
Mercee.Cislo@mt.gov

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

The OPI is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to people with disabilities. If you need a reasonable accommodation, require an alternate format, or have questions concerning accessibility, contact the OPI ADA Coordinator, 406-444-3161, opiada@mt.gov, or call 711 for assistance.

Nondiscrimination statement

The Office of Public Instruction does not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, marital status, religion, creed, pregnancy, childbirth, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, political beliefs, genetic information, military service or veteran's status, culture, social origin or condition, ancestry, or age in its programs and activities. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding nondiscrimination policies:

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

For further information on notice of nondiscrimination, call 1-800-421-3481 or visit <http://wdcrobcolp01.ed.gov/CFAPPS/OCR/contactus.cfm> for the address and phone number of the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) that serves your area.