



Montana Science Assessment Assessment Profile Last Reviewed: June 2025

Assessment Profile for the Montana Science Assessment

Why:

Montana Science Assessment (MSA) is the general science assessment for academic statewide achievement reporting in Grades 5 and 8. The MSA is aligned to the Montana Content Standards in Science (2016). It is used to provide state, district, school, and individual student achievement information on the state-adopted content standards in science. It is used by the state to provide a consistent picture of student performance and proficiency across Montana's public schools and private schools seeking accreditation. It is an important measure for understanding comparisons between schools, over time, and for gaining understanding of equity in educational services.

State Requirement:

- "Science assessments shall be aligned to Montana content standards for science and administered in grades 5, 8, and 11."

Source: [ARM 10.56.102\(3\)\(b\)](#)

Federal Requirement:

- "In the case of science, be administered not less than one time during— (aa) grades 3 through 5; (bb) grades 6 through 9; and (cc) grades 10 through 12."

Source: [ESEA Section 1111\(b\)\(2\)\(B\)\(v\)\(II\)](#)

What:

Student performance within Montana's accountability system will use results from this assessment for grades 5 and 8 to calculate the K–8 Science Technology Engineering Mathematics (STEM) indicator.

Who:

Montana belongs to a state-led science Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) item collaborative along with 11 other states: Connecticut, Hawaii, Idaho, Indiana, New Hampshire, Oregon, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

This assessment is required in all public schools and accredited private schools. Annually, approximately 22,000 Montana students are assessed across 635 schools with the MSA.

All district System Test Coordinators (STCs) will be assigned a district user role in Cambium's TIDE portal. The STC is responsible for creating all other user roles within the district. A newly created user will receive an email from the TIDE system with a link and first-time log-in credentials. Prior to being able to administer or access either the interim or MSA assessments, each individual user must complete the 20-minute Test Administrator Certification course in the Cambium portal.

The OPI uploads students into TIDE once a month from September through March using the data as it is entered into the local student data system (Infinite Campus/PowerSchool). Daily uploads will be conducted for the duration of the assessment window. To ensure that student accommodations are available, IEP's must be entered in the local data system. If a student moves out of district, the district should ensure that the student is end-dated at said district, in order to allow the student to enroll in another school system within the state and participate in the statewide required assessment.

When:

This Montana Science assessment has a twelve-week test window that starts in March each year. This 2025-2026 school year it is open from March 2 to May 22, 2026.

Average Testing Times	
Science	1–2 hours
Total	2 hours

Where:

The test is administered online via the [Cambium Testing Portal](#) and is adaptive.

Cost:

The Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) contracts directly with Cambium Assessment for design, development, and test delivery services for the interim and general science assessment. Annually, these costs are approximately \$50 per student.

Score Reports: Accessing, Downloading & Providing To Families

Students and teachers receive their results ten days after the last student in the district who is eligible to test completes and submits their test, or ten days after the assessment window closes, whichever comes first. District, school, class, and individual student reports are all available in the Reporting System within the Cambium portal.

Districts are responsible for downloading individual student score reports, printing them, and providing them to parents alongside an accompanying parent letter with resources no later than Parent-Teacher Conferences in the fall. With the reduced turn-around time for student reports, districts are encouraged to wait until after the summative testing window has closed before printing individual student reports. Districts are also encouraged to provide the reports to parents prior to the end of the school year.

For official state reporting purposes, the OPI receives the raw results file in early July each year and typically releases the official results to the public in mid-September.

Where Do I Find More Information or Ask Additional Questions?

Questions about this assessment should be directed to the OPI Assessment Help Desk at 1.844.867.2569, or e-mail us at OPIAssessmentHelpDesk@mt.gov. You can explore additional resources and materials for this assessment at the [OPI Statewide Testing Page](#).