

# The OPI Monthly Summary: July 2020

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# Office of the Superintendent

## Updates in Montana Education

With the new school year just around the corner, the OPI hopes that you are getting to enjoy some time off this summer! Below are some important updates from the OPI:

- Reopening Montana Schools Guidance and additional information can be found [HERE](#).
- You can find COVID-19 demographic information [HERE](#) to track infection rates by county and by age groups for monitoring your local situation.
- The U.S. Department of Education has Rural Tech Project grants available for rural high schools. You can find more information [HERE](#).
- Due to the interest in statewide Zoom meetings with the OPI, we will be formalizing standing, monthly Zoom meetings with local superintendents on the first Tuesday of each month from 9:30-10:00am beginning in September. More will come on that in August.
- At the request of the OPI, the Governor has allocated \$10 million from the state Coronavirus Relief Fund to support pupil transportation. Applications and funding will come directly from the Governor's office.
- State Disaster and Emergency Services have sent PPE to your county DES offices with the request that it go to schools. Please contact your county DES office to procure PPE.
- Please ensure that your district [contact information](#) is up to date with the OPI and update your [subscription preferences](#).
- The OPI is continuing to pursue state and federal waivers to support flexibility for you this coming school year. As your school doors open, the OPI is here to serve you and we will continue to keep you updated.

As the OPI strives to provide high-quality customer service to the field, this last spring leadership decided that a reorganization of the educational services and programs was fundamental to the OPI's continued success. As a result, the agency has completed a reorganization, creating three new departments while moving away from the previous division structure. This new structure allows the agency to group programs and services targeting students, schools, and educators.

The first newly created department is the Student Support Services Department, encompassing special education, early learning, coordinated school health programs, school nutrition, and traffic education. A Senior Manager for Student Support Services is currently being recruited.

The second department is the School Innovation and Improvement Department being led by Dr. Julie Murgel. This department leads Montana's ESSA state plan, federal title programs, comprehensive and targeted school support, American Indian achievement, Indian Education for All, tribal relations, accreditation, and licensure.



The third department is the Teaching and Learning Department under the leadership of Colet Bartow. This department houses curriculum and instruction; career, technical, and adult education; assessment; and professional learning.

Tracy Moseman has been hired in the newly created Chief Program Officer position to support the internal functions and processes within the agency to streamline communication, enhance cross-agency program collaboration, and integrate initiatives to support the technical assistance provided to local districts.

Services under finance and data and technology remain under the same structure with Ken Bailey leading school finance services and Michael Sweeney leading data and technology for the OPI.

#### Superintendent's Office July Zoom Events

- Board of Land Commissioners
- Council of Chief State School Officers COVID-19 meetings
- Board of Public Education
- State Administration and Veterans Affairs Committee
- Montana Advisory Council on Indian Education
- Education Northwest Board Meeting
- Legislative Interim Committees
- Career and Technical Student Organizations Board Meeting
- Montana Academy of Pediatrics Meeting
- Montana School Safety Advisory Council Meeting

Follow the Office of Public Instruction on social media:    
For more information, contact [Dylan Klapmeier](#), 406-444-3559.

## Assessment

### Smarter Balanced

The OPI is encouraging the use of [Interims](#) as benchmark assessments for schools this fall to drive personalized instruction for each student. Districts are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the guidance prepared by CCSSO in the [Restart & Recovery: Assessment Considerations for Fall 2020](#) 20-page primer for administering interims this fall. Formative strategies include the new [Tools for Teachers](#) webpage where teacher-created resources are housed and are linked to the content standards that are assessed by each interim.

### English Learner Exit Criteria

The OPI has received approval from the U.S. Department of Education as of July 10, 2020 to implement Montana's new English Learner (EL) proficiency criteria. The new criteria requires students to achieve an overall composite score of 4.7, rather than a 5.0, on the state's English language proficiency assessment (ELP) also known as the "WIDA ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment". In order to be considered proficient in English and to exit EL status, students must reach at a minimum score of 4.7. The individual domain (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) proficiency requirements have been removed. Additionally, Montana defined proficiency for the Alternate ACCESS assessment for students with significant cognitive disabilities as reaching at a minimum a "P2" achievement level. For more guidance on the identification of ELs and state guidance, visit the [Montana WIDA Website](#).

### Montana Science Assessments

Montana science and special educators participated in multiple content development activities in June and July. Thirty-nine seats were filled in four separate item writing and item review activities for the MSA and AMSA. Science interims (available September 14), updated practice tests (available September 8), and online professional learning resources (available August 6) continue to be developed. Plans are underway for additional development activities in 2021; educators interested in participating in development activities can complete the [2021 Science Content Development Team application](#).

### ACT with Writing

The "Schedule of Events" for voluntary Fall Testing has been posted on the [Montana ACT State and District website](#). Schools must register August 3-28 through "Manage Participation" in Pearson Access Next. Student rosters are being rolled over from spring 2020, but schools can adjust enrollments during that same window. Accommodations approvals from 2020 have been retained, but schools must adjust students' testing dates in TAA. ACT Q&A sessions are scheduled for August 5 and 12, 3:30 p.m. MT. No online testing will be available for fall. ACT's new Online Score Reporting will be available to schools, as this function is transitioned out of Pearson Access Next.

For more information, contact the OPI Assessment Help Desk at 1.844.867.2569 or [OPIAssessmentHelpDesk@mt.gov](mailto:OPIAssessmentHelpDesk@mt.gov).

## Career and Technical Education

### Director's Corner

While our CTE programs have been diligently working to find ways for delivering career and technical content, employability skills, and work-based learning for blended delivery this summer, our CTE Specialists have also been busy. Below are some of the highlights of their work:

- Developing a free HUB course for CTE teachers on rethinking the delivery of CTE programs in a virtual world.
- Providing technical assistance to schools through various online formats.
- Online summer meetings and professional learning opportunities moved to online platforms.
- The OPI is currently researching virtual conference platforms for the upcoming Fall Institute and CTSO events.
- Adult Education has also secured agreements to allow HiSET testing to have an online testing option, opening more opportunities for our providers across Montana.

For more information, contact [Shannon Boswell](mailto:Shannon.Boswell@opi.mt.gov), 406-444-4451.

## Content Standards and Professional Learning

### Remote Learning Resources and Professional Learning

Visit the [OPI Online Learning Resources](http://opi.mt.gov/online-learning-resources) webpage for newly updated resources to support teaching and learning in remote and online learning environments.

Contact [OPICSI@mt.gov](mailto:OPICSI@mt.gov) with any questions.

### Content Standards Revision – Public Hearings Scheduled for September 2

The Board of Public Education will be holding hearings for public comment on Career and Technical Education, Computer Science, Library Media and Information Literacy, Social Studies, and Technology Integration Standards on September 2, beginning at 10:00 a.m. Official notice of the hearings will be published in the [Montana Administrative Register](http://legis.mt.gov/montana-administrative-register) on August 7. Drafts of the standards recommendations begin on page 315 of the [BPE agenda packet](http://opi.mt.gov/bpe-agenda-packet) for July 16.

For any questions about the hearings, please contact [Kris Stockton](mailto:Kris.Stockton@opi.mt.gov), Administrative Assistant, Board of Public Education.

### Zoom Meeting Information

Topic: Content Standards Revisions Public Hearings

Time: Sep 2, 2020 10:00 AM Mountain Time (US and Canada)

<https://mt-gov.zoom.us/j/93162327751?pwd=WFRSQzhLK044S2J1OVJLUThQUVFsUT09>

Meeting ID: 931 6232 7751

Password: 838190

Dial by Telephone

+1 646 558 8656 or +1 406 444 9999

Contact [Colet Bartow](#) with any questions.

## Professional Learning Info for School Leaders

Schools are encouraged to be Renewal Unit Providers as the bulk of educator professional learning occurs in the school setting. Schools are also able to issue renewal unit certificates for professional learning that occurred external to the school environment if the organization that provided the professional learning is not an existing renewal unit provider AND if the professional learning opportunity meets the Administrative Rules of Montana related to Professional Development.

Visit the [OPI Administrators Professional Learning](#) webpage for more information.

Contact OPI Professional Learning Coordinator [Carli Cockrell](#) with any questions.

## OPI Learning Opportunities Portal

Visit the [Learning Opportunities Portal website](#) to find out about classes, workshops, and courses. The Portal is just one of the ways the OPI informs educators about upcoming professional learning opportunities in our state. We are updating with any cancellations or postponements as we are made aware of these changes.

Contact [Carli Cockrell](#) with any questions or to let us know about changes to your events.

### Learning Hub

If you haven't already, [check out](#) what more than 16,000 Montana educators have experienced! The Hub team is always adding and updating our self-paced and facilitated courses. Please check the [Learning Hub homepage](#) for a complete [listing](#) and [catalog](#).

Take a look at these courses to help support your interests and planning for the upcoming school year and the exciting potential for online, remote or blended learning integration!

- [Introduction to Online Course Design](#) - introduction to the basics of online learning and design (1 renewal unit)
- [Digital Accessibility Fundamentals](#) - tutorial on how to make digital content accessible to all learners (1 renewal unit)

- [More than Making the Grade: An Introduction to Standards-based Grading](#) - an overview and introduction to the planning process (2 renewal units) *Part 2 is coming soon!*
- [UDL: Digital Tools and Digital Learning](#) - covers the basic principle of universal design for learning, practical strategies, and tools for all grade levels (2 renewal units)
- [Digital Citizenship](#) - learn to foster students' safe, ethical, and responsible uses of technology (2 renewal units)
- [Tech-ify Your Classroom! The Basics of K-5 Technology Integration](#) - covers the basics of meaningful, effective technology integration in grades K-5 (4 renewal units)
- Platform-specific courses: [Google Suite for Beginners](#) (6 renewal units), [Google Suite Advanced](#) (20 renewal units), [Student-Created Digital Learning Portfolios](#) - SeeSaw (15 renewal units)

We are working on more courses to support online learning and will announce those as they are launched. Stay tuned!

Contact [OPILearningHub@mt.gov](mailto:OPILearningHub@mt.gov) with any questions.

## Applicants Needed – Montana Rural Teaching Project

The [Montana Rural Teaching Project](#) (MRTP) is a state and federal grant-funded initiative designed to prepare teachers for Montana's rural and high needs schools. MRTP provides a *monthly living wage stipend* to participants as they complete their [Master of Arts in Teaching \(MAT\)](#) at Montana State University. The MAT is designed as an intensive one-year, online graduate program for preparation in Elementary or Secondary Education (endorsements in English, Science, Math, and Social Studies).

If you have a bachelor's degree and dream of becoming a teacher, Montana Rural Teaching Project MAT program makes this dream a reality. Applications for the 2021 cohort are due October 1, 2020. Contact [Jayne Downey](#), MRTP Grant Coordinator, with any questions.

## Federal Programs

### Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Updates

#### Montana Consolidated State ESSA Plan Amendment

The U.S. Department of Education announced on July 10th that the Montana Office of Public Instruction received federal approval to the Montana Consolidated Plan under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to update English Learner proficiency and exit criteria to align with more rigorous academic English language proficiency expectations.

Montana is a minimally funded Title III state with a unique population of English Learners (ELs). English Learners consist of 2 percent of the total student body population in Montana. Of the total 2 percent English Learner student population, American Indian languages have the highest number at 61 percent, with German and Spanish largely making up the rest.

Montana amended its exit procedures for English Learners; a student must achieve a composite score of 4.7 instead of 5.0, on the State's English Language Proficiency (ELP) assessment, the WIDA ACCESS, to be considered proficient in English and to exit English Learner status. Additionally, Montana defined proficiency as an achievement level "P2" on the State's alternate ELP assessment for English learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities who take the alternate ELP assessment aligned to alternate ELP achievement standards. The English language proficiency amendment will take effect in the 2020-21 school year.

Prior to submitting the proposed amendment to the U.S. Department of Education for review and approval, the OPI convened stakeholders to review the exit criteria for Montana English Learners. The OPI selected participants from a diverse group of Montana stakeholders, including school administrators, school Title coordinators, English Learner specialists, Mathematics and English Language Arts teachers, cultural experts (i.e., persons with heritage language expertise with immigrant, indigenous and colony students), and parents. The OPI also consulted with the Governor on the amendment, afforded the opportunity for public comment on the amendment, and considered such comments.

The stakeholder group updated English Language Acquisition and Language Enhancement entrance and exit procedures criteria for Montana's ELs that meet the federal statutory requirement for assessments used in the statewide accountability system and Peer Review as mandated by the U.S. Department of Education. Additionally, the group worked to ensure the exit criteria are realistic for the unique ELs of Montana and based on the most current research. In order to meet these requirements, the committee reviewed historical World-class Instructional Design and Assessment and content area performance data from Smarter Balanced Assessments and ACT.

### **Comprehensive Support and Improvement Update**

The 2020-2021 school year marks the third year of Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI). On Monday, March 30, OPI received a waiver from the U.S. Department of Education (USED) for specific assessment and accountability requirements for this school year. The OPI applied for the waiver due to extraordinary circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting school closures. The waivers canceled requirements to administer the statewide assessments, suspended accountability system for the 2019-2020 year, removed certain elements from the ESSA report card, and provided financial flexibility to schools and districts.

As a result of the waiver, any school that is identified for comprehensive and targeted support and improvement in the 2019–2020 school year will maintain that identification status and continue to receive supports and interventions in the 2020–2021 school year. Due to the



suspension of Spring 2020 testing, schools will not receive accountability ratings for the 2019–20 school year, which was year three of data collection by which CSI schools would need to meet exit criteria. Consequently, the OPI is gathering public comment and considering the need of an addendum to the Montana Consolidated State Plan under ESSA related to this issue, to address using the data collection of 2020-2021 as the year three of data by which CSI schools would be measured to meet exit criteria and ensuring that we have the option to extend a fourth year in 2021-2022 for support and intervention while schools exit criteria is reviewed and determinations complete.

Rather than a Fall onsite meeting, we will be hosting a series of live/recorded webinars addressing the topics below from June-August. During these 1-2-hour sessions, the OPI staff are working together with school leaders to ensure all districts are moving forward with goals aligned from their Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA), GAP analysis, and other data, creating sustainable practices, and ultimately exiting comprehensive status. This year each school is required to complete an application in the e-grants system that synthesizes the CNA and gap analysis, outlines the improvement plan with progress monitoring steps, and aligns the budget to the improvement plan. The district and school leaders will set the budget and determine the use of section 1003 funds for any activity that it determines (and the OPI agrees) will help a school identified for CSI have improved student outcomes within the school. During the sessions, the following topics will be addressed:

- June 17<sup>th</sup>, 10am-1 hour-Entrance and exit criteria for Comprehensive status
- July 1, 10 am- 2 hour- Analyze the Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) trend data and identify the GAPS
- July 29<sup>th</sup>, 10am- 1 hour-Review the Continuous Improvement Plan (CSIP)
- August 5<sup>th</sup>, 10 am- 1-hour- New e-Grant questions in Title I School Support
  - Budget alignment
  - Evidenced-based interventions defined by ESSA
  - External Partners (Instructional consultants)

The OPI just went through a request for purchase (RFP) process to conduct the rigorous reviews of external partners. This list was made available during the first CSI webinar in June. There are some additions to the list to help meet the needs of the districts. Based on identified areas of growth and CSIP goals, schools may opt to keep their current Instructional Consultant (IC), use an IC for more or less days, select a new IC, or opt not to use one at all.

### **Targeted Support and Improvement Update**

Using the process for annual meaningful differentiation, schools are identified for targeted support and improvement (TSI) on an annual basis. TSI means that a school has any student

group performing in the lowest 5% of all Montana schools. The list of [Targeted Schools](#) is posted publicly on the OPI's website as required under ESSA. Schools identified for targeted support and improvement work in partnership with the district to conduct a Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) of instructional components and develop a Continuous School Improvement Plan (CSIP) focused on academic goals and underperforming student groups.

At the end of June, a letter was emailed to TSI schools that included a pre-recorded webinar which outlined components regarding the TSI status; such as, entrance and exit criteria. The OPI will also be offering a competitive grant opportunity at the start of the 2020-21 school year for TSI schools along with technical assistance. In addition, this year and going forward external partners will be available for TSI schools. An option for schools will be able to use their funding to hire an instructional consultant that can specifically address the student group that needs improvement.

### **Public Comment Process**

The OPI conducted an extensive [Public Comment Process](#) to fully understand the implications on the following four federal waivers:

- Assessment requirements in section 1111(b)(2) for the school year 2019-2020.
- Accountability and school identification requirements in sections 1111(c)(4) and 1111(d)(2)(C)-(D) that are based on data from the 2019-2020 school year.
- Report card provisions related to assessments and accountability in section 1111(h) based on data from the 2019-2020 school year.
- Fiscal Flexibility waiver which provides flexibility in the use of funds and other requirements covered under ESEA including the Title I, Parts A–D, Title II, Title III, Part A, Title IV, Parts A–B, and Title V programs.

Since the federal waiver process was simplified and expedited to support states, we needed an opportunity to learn if any additional waivers were warranted. The public comment closes on July 17 and a summary report will be shared by September 1, 2020. Once the report is complete it will be determined if an addendum or amendment to the Montana Consolidated State Plan under ESSA is needed to address the impact of the federal waivers on the accountability system moving forward.

### **Additional Waiver for 15% Carryover Limitation**

In addition, the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) sought public comment on a waiver to the United States Department of Education that would allow the OPI to waive the 15% carryover limitation carryover in ESEA section 1127 (b) more than once every three years with respect to FY 2018 Title I-A funds. This waiver would allow nine school districts to use excess carryover funds to improve academic achievement for affected student groups. The nine districts did not meet the 15% carryover requirement under Section 1127 (b) for a second

consecutive year (SY18-19). The OPI granted a waiver for each district for SY17-18. Due to issues surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic and lack of resources/loss of funds, the OPI believes that it is in the best interests of the nine districts to be allowed to use these funds to improve student academic success.

For more information, contact [Julie Murgel](#), 406-444-3174.

## Professional Development Opportunities for Staff Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness

The OPI's Education of Homeless Children and Youth Program will be offering the following webinars in August for any school personnel who have an interest in learning more about the unique needs of students experiencing homelessness. These webinars are recommended for homeless liaisons, school counselors, school secretaries/registrars, or other staff that may interact with students and families experiencing homelessness.

**August 6<sup>th</sup>, 2-3pm**

### **Serving Native Students Experiencing Homelessness**

Presenters:

Nikki Hannon - Director, Parent Community Outreach Program: *āisspoōmmoōtsiiyō•p* "we help each other" FIT program, Browning Public Schools

Elizabeth Springfield – Old Chief, Homeless Liaison, Hardin Public Schools

**August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2-3pm**

### **McKinney-Vento 101: Requirements for School Districts**

Presenter: Heather Denny, State Coordinator for Homeless Education, OPI

For more information, contact [Heather Denny](#), 406-444-2036.

## Health Enhancement and Safety

### School Safety Professional Development Grants

The OPI is currently accepting applications for [HB 601](#) School Safety Professional Development Grants. For this round of awards, the Montana Legislature has provided a total of \$100,000 for the OPI to award to Montana schools. Schools who did not receive an award for the 2019-2020 school year can apply for grants of \$1000 to \$10,000 to conduct school safety professional development during the 2020-2021 school year. Details on this grant are available on the [HB 601 School Safety Professional Development Grant web page](#) where applications can also be submitted. Grants for allowable activities will be funded in the order in which they are received until funds are exhausted. For more information, contact [Tammy Lysons](#), 406-444-0829.

## School Nutrition

Current USDA guidance requires schools to return to the School Nutrition Programs in Fall 2020 (National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program). Schools must return to counting and claiming meals by free, reduced, and paid categories (unless operating CEP).

[Nutrition flexibilities are available for School Year 2020-2021](#). The five nation-wide waivers allow for:

- Grab and go meals for remote students
- Multiple meals to be sent home for multiple days for remote students
- Parents to pick meals up for remote students
- Meals to be delivered to remote students
- High schools to opt out of Offer versus Serve meal service

If you would like to participate in any of the School Year 2020-2021 waivers, please complete the [School Nutrition Back-To-School Flexibilities Survey](#). You only need to complete the sections of the survey that are applicable to the waivers you are requesting. You can fill out the survey more than once if you need to change which waivers you need for School Year 2020-2021.

For more information, contact your regional [School Nutrition Specialist](#).

## Traffic Education

### Traffic Education Year-End Reimbursement

We are currently processing the annual submission of TE06 Year-End Reports for the 2019-2020 school year and will send information to traffic education administrators soon with the per-student reimbursement amount. Reimbursement payments will be made in August. Contact [Patti Borneman](#) for more information.

### Montana DRIVE Advanced Driving Workshops

Attend a Montana DRIVE One-Day Summer Workshop in Lewistown! The season started June 15 and ends August 12. Teachers can earn up to 9 renewal units or one college credit through MSU-Northern. School bus drivers can earn 9 hours toward their required 15 hours of annual training. We still have a few spaces available in our adult classes so sign up today. Workshops cost \$335 and are open to all drivers. Visit <http://montanadrive.mt.gov> to view the latest workshop calendar of openings and registration details.

## American Indian Education

### Unpacking the Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians Webinar Series

SAVE THE DATES! FALL 2020

Wednesdays 4:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.

September 9, 23, 30 | October 14, 28 | November 4

Unpacking the Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians Webinar Series

The Office of Public Instruction Indian Education for All Unit would like to invite educators and administrators to join us Fall 2020 for a FREE 6 session live webinar series facilitated by Indian Education for All instructional coaches that will explore the Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians. Participants are encouraged to attend all six sessions and will:

- Gain familiarity with each of the Essential Understandings
- Explore practical classroom integration of IEFA
- Engage in meaningful live discussions
- Build community and share resources
- \*Earn renewal units (2 per session or 12 for all 6 sessions)

Wednesdays 4:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Sept 9, 23, 30

Oct 14, 28

Nov 4

[Register today!](#)

\*registration is required to earn OPI renewal units

For registration questions please contact [Jennifer Stadum](#), OPI Indian Education for All Specialist.

### Remote PD Opportunities

The Indian Education For All staff is always ready to deliver remote professional development to your school staff and leadership. They can tailor the event to meet your needs and interests. If you are interested, please contact [Zach Hawkins](#) or [Mike Jetty](#).

### American Indian Student Achievement Report

The AISA unit at OPI is working on a research study to accompany the 2019-20 American Indian Student Achievement Gap Report. This report is due to be presented to the Montana Legislature in September as part of Montana Code Annotated 20-9-330. This is the accounting mechanism of the funding that is provided to school districts for the purpose of closing the educational achievement gap that exists between American Indian students and non-Indian students. Several districts have been identified to participate in this research project.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this research study is to gather insight from all stakeholders that play a role in American Indian education, to identify variables that contribute to the American Indian student achievement gap. Finding these variables and narrowing the focus will help guide policy and action from the State to the classroom to streamline and focus the scope of work that will improve the trajectories of American Indian student proficiency in reading and math achievement, graduation rates, and drop-out rates.

**Question:** **What are the barriers in American Indian student education that contribute to gaps in overall American Indian student achievement? Is there a difference in those barriers from off-reservation American Indian students and on-reservation American Indian students?**

**Methods:** This study will use a mixed-methods approach using qualitative and quantitative data to generate factors affecting student achievement of American Indian students. We will first use a focus group methodology to gather qualitative data that will be coded and analyzed to determine common themes that emerge from participants. These themes will be used to develop a focused survey and interview questions that will allow us to gather quantitative data on causal variables that feed the themes. All data will then be triangulated to produce focus recommendations for all stakeholders involved in the effort at increasing American Indian student achievement.

Several districts have been identified for the focus groups both on and off-reservation. If you would like to participate or have questions regarding this study please contact Lona Running Wolf, Director of American Indian Student Achievement at [lona.runningwolf@mt.gov](mailto:lona.runningwolf@mt.gov).

**-END-**