



Assessment Profile for the DLM Alternate Assessment for Science

Why:

DLM alternate assessments are called testlets because they are short. Most science testlets have three to nine items. Together, the items increase the instructional relevance of the assessments and provide a better estimate of a student's knowledge, skills, and understandings of the Essential Elements that can be achieved by a single item. In 2014, development of a science assessment began in two phases, following the DLM model. Phase I included a 2016 spring operational assessment based on the alternate science content standards at three levels of complexity in three grade bands. Phase II, which is in progress, includes the development of a learning map model for science. Additionally, several professional development products supporting science instruction were developed and more area in progress.

The science Essential Elements are specific statements of knowledge and skills and are linked to each state's grade-level science standards identified in the National Research Council's Framework for K-12 Science Education. These Essential Elements include science and engineering practices. The science Essential Elements are described in grade-band performance expectations by the end of each grade band instead of standards for each grade level like ELA and mathematics.

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:

The DLM Alternate Assessment System provides accessibility by design and is guided by the core beliefs that all students should have access to challenging grade-level content and that test administrators must adhere to the highest levels of integrity in providing instruction and in administering assessments based on challenging content.

Students eligible to participate in alternate assessments make up approximately 1% of the total student population. The decision to move a special education student to an alternate assessment has significant implications for the path that a student will take in their K–12 school career. It means the student is not able to participate in the general education curriculum even when provided with accommodation. A student who participates in alternate assessment requires a modified curriculum. See [Eligibility Guidelines for MontCAS Alternate Assessments](#) document.

Student performance within Montana's accountability system will use results from this alternate assessment for K–8 and high school to calculate academic achievement and growth over time in the science content area.



Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) Alternate Assessment Profile Last Reviewed: July 2025

Who:

Montana is one of eight states who participate in an *Instructionally Embedded Model* assessment through the DLM Consortium. These states include:

- | | |
|-------------|-----------------|
| 1. Arkansas | 5. Missouri |
| 2. Delaware | 6. Montana |
| 3. Iowa | 7. North Dakota |
| 4. Kansas | 8. Tennessee |

Through historical data, Montana has had on average approximately 830 students across 261 schools who are assessed using an alternate assessment. This assessment is required in all public schools and accredited private schools annually. All district System Test Coordinators (STCs) referred to Test Administrators or Assessment Coordinators in the DLM Manual, are uploaded by the OPI beginning in the summer of 2025, after joining the DLM Alternate Assessment. There are four participant roles that have been defined by the states using the DLM alternate assessment. These titles are utilized throughout assessment administration manuals and training resources and include Test Administrators, Assessment Coordinators, Data Managers, and Technology Personnel (note that one person may fill multiple roles dependent upon the district-level decision).

Individuals who plan to administer the test or have access to the testing materials will be required to complete training modules and it is imperative to ensure that all preparation steps are taken to ensure a smooth testing experience occurs for the administrator and the student. Some of the key duties that the assessment coordinator is responsible for include the following:

- Ensure students are enrolled in the correct grade and rostered to the correct test administrator.
 - Note: If a student was enrolled at the wrong grade and the grade is corrected after the student started testing, the student will have to begin testing again at the new grade. All previously completed testlets may no longer be available.
- Oversee the assessment process, including managing staff and educator roles and responsibilities.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive training plan.
- Develop a schedule for assessment implementation.
- Monitor and support assessment preparations and administration.
- Use the extracts and reports to monitor testing progress.
- Develop a communication plan with parents or guardians as well as staff.

Required training for test administrators, as well as other roles, is accessed from the Training tab in Educator Portal. Other supplemental resources are provided for the test administrators on each state's DLM website. These are in the form of short helplet videos, e.g., Completing the First Contact Survey and PNP Profile. Professional development modules are available to help with instructional support and are in both self-directed and facilitated formats. Further support and information on these processes can be found in the Montana Assessment Coordinator Manual for 2025 - 2026, and can be accessed by clicking [here](#).



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When:

This alternate assessment will occur in a through-year model that is instructionally embedded. The administration windows for the SY25/26 begin in the spring window on February 2, 2026 through May 15, 2026.

Average Testing Times:

Subject: Science, 5-15 Minutes/Testlet

Note: These times do not include administration preparation time for the assessments. Preparation may include gathering materials, preparing for the writing testlets, ensuring student enrollment accuracy, etc.

Where:

The Dynamic learning maps (DLM) Alternate Assessment Systems assess what students with the most significant cognitive disabilities know and can do in grades 5, 8, and 11 for science content. The DLM Alternate Assessment System provides accessibility by design and is guided by the core beliefs that all students should have access to challenging grade-level content and that test administrators must adhere to the highest levels of integrity in providing instruction and administering assessments based on this challenging content. The Kite Suite was designed for the delivery of large-scale assessments and tailored to meet the needs of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The DLM alternate assessments are delivered through the Kite Student Portal which provides customized and secure experiences for students and educators. The [Kite Educator Portal](#) is utilized for student management and ensuring that students are able to accurately be rostered and participate in the DLM alternate assessment.

Cost:

The cost for the Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) Science assessment is approximately \$60/student.

Where Do I Find More Information or Ask Additional Questions?

The [Assessment Coordinator Manual](#) is going to be the most comprehensive document that can help guide you in the delivery of the assessment as well as other resources such as mapping, nodules, Essential Elements, etc. This document is maintained by DLM, and updates are made as needed and will be reflected with the most recent review dates on the document. Additionally, you can reach out to the DLM Service Desk toll-free at **1.855.277.9751** or the support desk at DLM-support@ku.edu.

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

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 on the [DLM Alternate Science Assessment](#) page of the OPI website.