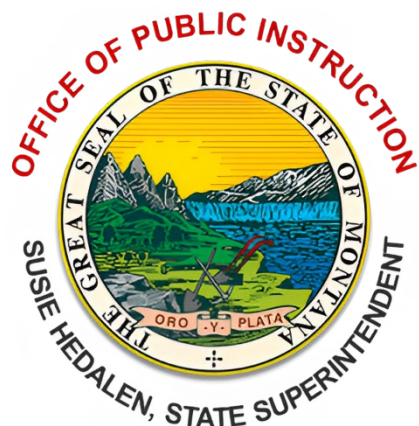


Montana

Office of Public Instruction

MontCAS Test Security Manual

Policies and Procedures for Data Integrity and Test Security within the
Montana Comprehensive Assessment System (MontCAS) Program



All accredited schools must annually administer the statewide assessments approved by the Montana Board of Public Education and follow the test administration protocols according to the standardized procedures published by the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI). These policies and procedures provide documentation of the test security and protection measures used by the OPI to safeguard its statewide assessments under the obligations of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The "MontCAS Test Security Manual" describes the policies and procedures required for test security in the state of Montana. These requirements fall under the authority of both state and federal laws and regulations which are defined further throughout this manual.



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Purpose

The purpose of this document is to explain the Montana Office of Public Instruction's (OPI) policies and procedures for data integrity and test security under the Montana Comprehensive Assessment System (MontCAS) program. Readers are encouraged to supplement this guidance with the [MontCAS Policies and Procedures for Participation in Statewide Assessments](#), [English Learner Guidance for School Districts](#), and the [Alternate Assessment Eligibility Guidelines](#). The assessment-specific Test Administrator Manual, [Montana's Three Tiers of Accessibility](#), the assessment-specific Usability, Accessibility, and Accommodation Guidelines (UAAG) or Accessibility Guide, and the assessment-specific Test Coordinators Manual are also required policies before delivering statewide assessments to Montana enrolled students under the authority of Montana Code Annotated (MCA) §20-2-121(12), and Administrative Rules for Montana (ARM) 10.55.603, ARM 10.56. Although the OPI specifies the following policies and guidelines, all possible testing situations cannot feasibly be addressed, so the OPI provides general guidance on test security throughout the six chapters in this manual.

Chapter 1: Overview

The OPI supports teaching and learning in Montana's accredited schools through the MontCAS Program, which includes a suite of required statewide assessments aligned with Montana's academic content standards. Chapter 1 provides the context for Montana's academic content standards, student academic achievement standards, and each statewide assessment.

Montana is a member-state to several collaborative[s]/consortium[s] that permit the OPI to deliver its [six statewide assessments](#) to all students that are enrolled in public and accredited non-public schools. As a member-state, the OPI is also bound to the overall test security procedures and rules defined by the collaborative[s], consortium[s], and testing delivery contractors. In addition to these policies, this MontCAS Test Security Manual, the OPI's general test administration, test accessibility, test security, reporting/data use, and test training procedures are defined in [ARM Chapter 56](#).

Federal Requirements



Purpose: The purpose of this section is to provide the reader with information about the federal requirements to administer the MontCAS assessments in Montana accredited schools.

In 2015, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was reauthorized as Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which subsequently initiated the federal requirement for new peer review guidelines for State Education Agencies (SEAs). Under ESEA-ESSA Sections 1111(a)(4) and 1111(b)(2)(B)(iii)-(iv) and 34 CFR § 200.2(b)(4) and (5) and (d), the U.S. Department of Education (the Department) has an obligation to conduct peer review on the technical quality of State Education Agency (SEA) assessment systems implemented under ESEA-ESSA Section 1111(b)(2) [[Peer Review Guidance, 2018](#)].

Federal law for statewide assessments stem from the Title I, Part A requirements under ESEA-ESSA and ARM Chapter 56 for mathematics (math), reading/language arts (ELA), science, and English language proficiency (ELP) for identified English Learners (ELs) in specific grade-levels. The state rules also require the same statewide assessments for private schools seeking accreditation (see [ARM 10.56.101](#)). A key purpose of ESEA-ESSA's Title I provision is to promote educational excellence and equity so that all students master the knowledge and skills by the time they graduate high school. The ESEA-ESSA requires that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and statewide academic assessments.



During the 2017-2018 school year, the OPI was audited under the Federal Office of Management and Budget [Compliance Supplement](#) for Title I Grants to Local Education Agencies (LEAs or school districts) for Assessment System Security (see p. 1089). The compliance requirements are:

“SEAs, in consultation with LEAs, are required to establish and maintain an assessment system that is valid, reliable, and consistent with relevant professional and technical standards. Within their assessment system, SEAs must have policies and procedures to maintain test security and ensure that LEAs implement those policies and procedures (Title I, Section 1111(b)(2)(B)(iii) of the ESEA (20 USC 6311(b)(2)(B)(iii))).”

The ESEA-ESSA requires that SEAs must establish and maintain an assessment system that is valid, reliable, and consistent with the relevant professional and technical standards (Title I (84.010)). Test Security is defined under the Peer Review Guidelines (2018) as the SEA “has implemented and documented an appropriate set of policies and procedures to prevent test irregularities and ensure the integrity of test results through Prevention, Detection, Investigation, Remediation (PDIR)”- [pg. 43].

As part of the research phase of designing the policies and procedures, the OPI reviewed the [2011 Key Policy Letter](#) from the Department, conducted best practice research from other states and used the guidance on audits and risk analyses to implement complete test security and data quality procedures. Further, the OPI used research from the [2013 Technical Issues in Large Scale Assessment group under the Council of Chief State School Officer's \(CCSSO\) state test security guidebook](#) to establish many of its procedures.

In the OPI's research into best practices for test security, the relevant critical elements from the Peer Review Guidelines (2018) to establish the OPI's PDIR policies and procedures included the policies for including all students in assessments (1.4), test administration (2.3), monitoring test administration (2.4), test security (2.5), and monitoring test administration for special population students (5.4).

State Requirements



Purpose: The purpose of this section is to provide the reader with information about the state requirements to administer the statewide assessments in Montana's accredited schools.

In the state of Montana, assessment is defined as the “means of gathering, organizing, and evaluating information about student learning in order to monitor and measure student attainment of a specific set of content standards, and the effectiveness of the instructional program” (ARM [10.55.602](#)). School districts must assess the progress of all students toward achieving content standards and content-specific grade-level learning progressions in each program area. The district must use assessment results, including state-level achievement information obtained by administration of assessments pursuant to ARM [10.56.101](#) to examine the educational program and measure its effectiveness.

The Montana Board of Public Education (the Board) adopts rules for state-level assessment ([ARM Chapter 56](#)) in the public schools and those private schools seeking accreditation. Through ARM Chapter 56, OPI is charged, under the authority of the Board, with providing schools with information and technical assistance for compliance with the student assessment rules ([§20-3-106, MCA](#)).

Since the 2020-2021 school year, the test security policies and procedures have been fully operationalized. The OPI's procedures allow monitoring and verification that school districts had implemented test security measures, for example, by reviewing documentation and interviewing officials and school administrators and teachers, as necessary.



Test Security Purpose



Purpose: The purpose of the statewide assessments can be broken into some of its varied use[s], need[s], and purpose[s]. This section presents these varied uses and provides the reader with an understanding of the importance of test security and data integrity to support these needs.

The primary goal of test security is to protect the integrity of the assessment and to ensure that results are accurate and meaningful.

Statewide testing is intended to measure student attainment of grade-level content knowledge and progress on state content standards over time and help Montana monitor and address these educational needs (ESEA-ESSA Section 1111(b)). These achievement results inform educators and help the decision-making process to improve instruction and supports for students.

Student achievement test data, test scores, and interpretations are used for many intended purposes.

“The Board of Public Education recognizes that the primary purpose of assessment is to serve learning. An assessment system that includes multiple measures and is aligned to state content and program delivery standards will provide an integrated approach to inform student learning, progression, growth, and proficiency. An assessment system is structured to continuously improve teaching and learning and to inform education policy.”

—[ARM 10.56.101\(2\)](#)

Accountability is intended to help the public understand individual school performances on these achievement indicators and to measure inequities across schools, so all students have equitable opportunities to access high-quality education (ESEA-ESSA Section 1111(c)). The statewide assessments have a role within the OPI’s federal and state accountability process and play an important role in advancing educational equity. Student achievement data is used in the annual meaningful differentiation process and for school identification to direct resources and supports to ensure all students have opportunities to access high-quality education. The accountability work is intended to improve the educational outcomes for every student across the state.

Reporting is intended to provide timely and transparent information to the public and families on these achievement indicators and to support education information processes at the local and state levels (ESEA-ESSA Section 1111(h)). The data from these assessments is also used to help various stakeholder groups, and the public in general, understand academic performance in relation to the state’s adopted content standards. Score information helps families, teachers, and principals understand and address the specific academic needs of students in relation to the standards. The achievement results, in combination with other data, are helpful to create a stronger and more equitable education system for all learners and help direct resources where they are most needed.

BOTTOM LINE:

**If test results are used to make important decisions,
then they should be as accurate as possible to direct the right instruction.**



Where does Test Security and Data Integrity happen?

It happens everywhere test materials are handled and/or available and anywhere data (or results) are handled and/or available. It occurs at every phase of the testing cycle, before, during, after, and throughout testing.

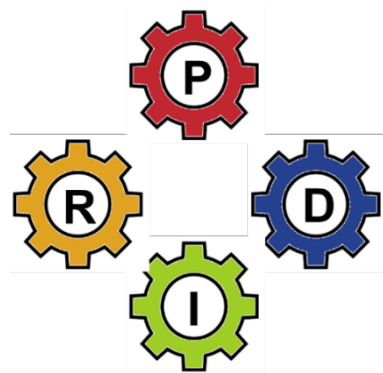
Who is Responsible for Test Security?

Everyone who works with the statewide assessments, communicates test results, and/or receives testing information is responsible for test security. This includes:

- Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) staff;
- Authorized Representatives (or School System Superintendents);
- System Test Coordinators (STCs);
- Building Coordinators and/or School Principals;
- Test Administrators (or Educators);
- Technology Coordinators;
- Certified and non-certified public-school supporting staff; and
- Students, parents, and the community at large.

For these reasons, the test security guidelines have been developed by the OPI to be used by all persons involved with handling assessment materials to maintain the integrity and fidelity of the intended use[s] and purpose[s] of statewide assessments under ESEA-ESSA. All persons responsible for test administration including handling or supporting assessments must be aware of the significant value to stakeholders (e.g., students, parents/guardians, teachers, school leaders, and others) statewide assessments have.

Figure 1. Prevention, Detection, Investigation, and Remediation (PDIR) process for Test Security



The MontCAS Test Security Manual focuses on four main PDIR integrity themes:

Prevention – following best practices for the test integrity and security aspects of the design, development, operation, and administration of statewide assessments to prevent incidents from occurring. This includes the manuals for test administration, accessibility, security, reporting/data use, and training/certification requirements. Usually all “pre-process” actions.

Detection – monitoring, reporting, and working with the OPI when incidents are found.

Inspection/Investigation – Guidelines for the OPI and local school districts working together to investigate or inspect incidents.

Resolution/Remediation – working together to investigate incidents and/or resolve issues to ensure valid results for all students.

If a testing incident arises that is not addressed in this manual, apply the following guideline:

No student taking a statewide assessment should have access to any form of assistance or material that could provide an unfair advantage.



Student Eligibility and Participation Policies

Statewide assessments must be administered in all public and accredited private schools on an annual basis in accordance with state and federal laws and regulations ([ARM 10.56.102\(2-4\)](#)). These guidelines were designed to be valid and accessible for use by all students, including students with disabilities and English learners (ELs). All students, including students with disabilities and ELs, are required by federal and state law to take part in the OPI's statewide assessments with or without accommodations.

Generally, if a student can receive instruction, then they are also able to participate in statewide assessments. All students are expected to take part in statewide assessments in one of three ways:

1. Participate in the general education assessments without accommodations.
2. Participate in the general education assessments with accommodations.
3. Participate in [Alternate Assessments](#) when the participation criteria are met.

More information on accessibility and accommodations is presented in [Chapter 2: Test Accessibility Plan and Policies](#). The school district must consult the OPI's [AIM Collection Schedule](#) to reference important test registration information that supports students with participation in each statewide assessment as required by the student's educational plan. This needs-based approach ensures that each student is granted a fair and equal opportunity to participate and access the statewide assessment educational service as provided to their peers.

Participation is necessary to ensure the data are representative and reflective of Montana's student population. When participation rates fall below the state and federal requirements, bias can be introduced into the estimates of student knowledge, skills, and/or abilities, thus reducing the overall confidence the OPI has in the data. Inferences regarding student achievement are strengthened to better the quality of the data. Strong participation rates ensure accurate, valid, and reliable test scores that students, parents, educators, school leaders, school boards, legislators, researchers, and the public can use for informing programs and local decision-making efforts.

The school district must adhere to the collection dates published in the AIM Data Collection Schedule and the [OPI Published Test Windows](#). There are about 10 collections specifically used to support accountability and reporting requirements under the [Montana ESSA State Plan](#). The OPI expects that school districts provide the participation opportunity for statewide assessments for all students in the grades tested throughout the OPI's published test windows ([34 CFR 200.2\(b\)\(9\)](#)).

Any behavior, including non-participation, that threatens the validity of the test score is considered test fraud.

For accountability and reporting purposes, the OPI will determine student eligibility using the testing snapshots published for each collection for students with primary enrollments. Newly enrolled students must be afforded the opportunity to demonstrate grade-level content knowledge on the statewide assessments throughout the published testing windows.

The ESEA-ESSA requires that school districts follow these participation rules:

- Schools must have 95 percent student participation in the statewide assessments either overall for all students or for any student subgroup consisting of 10 or more students.
- Students with the most significant cognitive disabilities may take the alternate assessment based on alternative achievement standards, but the percentage of students that a state may assess with the alternate cannot exceed 1.0 percent of all students in the grades assessed for each content area.
- Students may only be exempted from testing under certain, limited conditions. In these rare and unique instances, a student may be unable to participate in any part of the assessment due to a significant and documented medical reason.



- Students who meet participation requirements and who do not test are typically assigned a score of “Novice” and designated as a non-participant for accountability purposes unless it is for approved medical reasons.
- Medical exemptions do not count negatively towards a school district within the federal participation calculation.
- Non-participation reasons must be reported to the OPI by the System Test Coordinator (STC) using the MontCAS Application (see [MontCAS Application User Guide](#) for step-by-step instructions for reporting non-participation).

For more information on participation and non-participation rules, see the [MontCAS Policies and Procedures for Participation in Statewide Assessments](#).

Figure 2 shows a hypothetical diverse Montana K–12 student population. Students must be included in the statewide assessments to the fullest extent possible as all students are entitled to receive educational benefits and services to ensure equal access to education.

Figure 2. Hypothetical Montana K–12 Student Population



Participation Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What are the participation requirements this year?

A: The participation requirement to administer statewide assessments is required under federal and state law.

Q: What is the schoolwide participation threshold?

A: Schools are required to annually measure the achievement of not less than 95 percent of all students and students in each subgroup on its annual statewide assessments under ESEA-ESSA Section 1111(b)(2)(B)(v)(I).

Q: How do I report non-participation due to a significant medical reason?

A: Non-participation due to [medical exemptions](#) [see pages 11–14] must be reported to the OPI within the MontCAS Application.

Q: What are the accountability expectations for this school year?

A: All accountability and school identification requirements under ESEA-ESSA Section 1111 are in effect. This means that data from this school year will be used within the accountability process for annual meaningful differentiation of schools.



Chapter 2: Elements of Prevention for Test Security

The prevention policies are organized into user access, roles, and responsibilities, building assessment teams, test administration, test accessibility, test security, reporting/data use, and test training procedures. Chapter 2 discusses the elements of preventing test security and data integrity infractions. This chapter is divided into subchapters, each describing an important element of prevention for test security and data integrity.

- [MontCAS Authorized User Access](#)
- [MontCAS Roles and Responsibilities](#)
- [Build an Assessment Team](#)
- [Test Administration Policies](#)
- [Accessibility and Accommodations Policies](#)
- [Statewide Assessment Overview](#)
- [Test Security Policies](#)
- [Data Use Policies](#)
- [Test Training Policies](#)

The OPI, in consultation with LEAs, maintains an assessment system that is valid, reliable, and consistent with relevant professional and technical standards through the OPI's policies and procedures for [Test Administration Plan](#), [Test Accessibility Plan](#), [Test Security Plan](#), [Reporting/Data Use Plan](#), and [Test Training Plan](#).

MontCAS Authorized User Access



Purpose: The purpose of this section is to provide the reader with the expectations for safeguarding student information and ensuring all forms of student data and assessment materials remain secure.

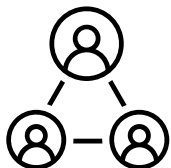
Montana is a local control state, meaning that school district trustees have a responsibility to implement the state's policies and procedures within the school district (§20-3-323, MCA). The MontCAS Program has a specific authorized user roles policy to protect student confidentiality. The OPI recommends that only “school officials” have credentials for accessing restricted-use online test delivery systems (TDS). School official means any employee, including teacher, that the school or district has determined to have a “legitimate educational interest” in the personally identifiable information from an education record of a student. School officials may also include third party contractors, consultants, volunteers, service providers, or other party with whom the school or district has outsourced institutional services or functions for which the school or district would otherwise use employees under the school official exception in [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#).

The [MontCAS Data Privacy by User Role and Responsibility Policy](#) explains these roles, rules of thumb, and recommendations for locally assigning school officials for these important assessment responsibilities. Only authorized users are permitted to access and manage accounts in the test delivery systems. These education partners [or stakeholders] have responsibilities locally to ensure that the assessment system is valid, reliable, and consistent with the relevant and professional technical standards. Locally, districts must appoint individuals to serve in these various roles, but how this is determined or whether persons assume multiple roles in the system is at the local discretion since each Montana school district is unique.

It is critical the OPI protects the security of its online portals through requiring the annual verification of the System Test Coordinator and management of user accounts. Annually, the school districts must review and refresh user accounts as required to limit access to these secure, restricted-use online systems to only authorized personnel.



Building An Assessment Team



Purpose: The purpose of this section is to provide the reader with an understanding of the importance of defining roles at each school and building an assessment team to share the responsibility of statewide testing.

Everyone who works with the statewide assessments, communicates test results, and/or receives testing information is responsible for test security. School districts, school staff, and students are critical partners in ensuring test security policies and procedures are followed. All these roles and the OPI must work in partnership to ensure that data are collaboratively collected, maintained and reported. Every stakeholder should be aware of the common “dos and don’ts” during statewide testing defined in [MontCAS Ethical Testing Behavior Guidance](#). This document is organized by each component of the testing cycle and all MontCAS roles should be familiar with these concepts. School systems must make sure the following roles are familiar with the expectations for testing within the test cycle; before, during, after, and throughout.

Authorized Representative Roles and Responsibilities

This person is designated to conduct – with respect to Federal – or State-supported education programs – any audit or evaluation, or any compliance or enforcement activity in connection with Federal legal requirements that relate to these programs (see [34 CFR §99.3](#)). Authorized Representatives appoint the System Test Coordinator as the single point of contact for all assessment-related matters and testing alerts within the school system. At the district level, the Authorized Representative (i.e., System Superintendent) is required to complete [the electronic assurance for data privacy](#) and STC designation within Infinite Campus each year. The [Authorized Representative and Building Coordinator Roles and Responsibilities for Test Security](#) outlines responsibilities the school and district level roles must be aware of for proper test security.

CONTROL: The OPI will annually monitor the Infinite Campus STC Screen Report for every school system and provide technical assistance as needed.

System Test Coordinator Role

Since the early 2000s, the System Test Coordinator is a role that has been used at the OPI. This person is assigned by the Authorized Representative within [Infinite Campus](#). 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 statewide test information) and ensuring staff are trained and certified to administer statewide assessments. The [STC Roles and Responsibilities for Test Security](#) outlines responsibilities the school and district level roles must be aware of for proper test security.

CONTROL: The OPI will annually monitor the MontCAS Application – Test Security Agreement and Required Records Screen for every school system and provide technical assistance as needed.

Building Coordinator Role

This person is typically assigned by the Authorized Representative and/or System Test Coordinator as a licensed non-instructional person such as principals, vice principals, or counselors. This person coordinates statewide assessments in the school building. All staff with statewide assessment portals will be required to sign an electronic Test Security Agreement (TSA) (referred to as a Non-Disclosure Agreement [NDA] in some portals) to gain access to the online test administration and reporting sites. The [Authorized Representative and Building Coordinator Roles and Responsibilities for Test Security](#) outline responsibilities the school and district level roles must be aware of for proper test security.



CONTROL: LEAs will annually monitor the [TDS portals](#) for electronic test security and non-disclosure agreements for every user and contact the OPI for technical assistance as needed.

Test Administrator Role

This person is typically assigned by the System Test Coordinator and/or Building Coordinator 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. The [TA Roles and Responsibilities for Test Security](#) outlines responsibilities the school and district level roles must be aware of for proper test security.

CONTROL: Educators will annually complete electronic test security and non-disclosure agreements for every portal and complete the training/certification requirements before administering any assessments.

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 requirement setup and requirements have been completed before testing.

Supporting Staff Roles

All staff within the district who may assist with statewide assessments (e.g., storing ACT materials, sending score reports home, and scribes) will sign the [MontCAS Test Security Agreement for Supporting Roles](#). The test security agreement should be electronically signed prior to the opening of the statewide assessment test windows.

Test Administration Plan and Policies



Purpose: The purpose of this section is to provide the reader with guidance to make sure that statewide assessments are given within each school consistently in a standardized fashion in order to be valid, reliable, comparable, and fair for the purposes for which the assessments are used.

The OPI has implemented policies and procedures for the standardized test administration. As part of the test delivery process, the OPI has established and communicated to educators regularly and consistently regarding the standardized procedures for test administration, test accessibility, test security, and training of these assessments, including administration with or without accommodations. Having a role in test administration requires the responsibility to safeguard the instrument and to uphold the integrity of these tests. These assessments have many uses and purposes for a wide-ranging audience, thus all persons involved with test administration must ensure the information gleaned from these tools is accurate and meaningful for the many purposes it serves. Without trust in the data, the assessments cannot be used as intended, which is to fairly evaluate the educational equities within and across schools.

The OPI, school districts, school personnel and students are critical partners in ensuring test security. With all these players working together, the OPI has defined continuously improving processes, procedures and controls, and established quality assurance and control measures to ensure the integrity of the data we publish.



All test administration practices are subject to this ultimate question:

Q: Will the test administration lead to student results that accurately reflect a valid and reliable measure of what each student knows and is able to do compared to Montana's Content Standards?

Test security must be maintained to give an equal opportunity for all students to demonstrate what they have learned and to ensure that their test scores are valid. Proper test administration will lead to student results that accurately reflect what each student knows and is able to do compared to Montana's content standards.

Each assessment under the MontCAS Program has its own Test Administrator Manual (or TAM) and its own testing window. The testing windows provide ample opportunity to complete testing while keeping test items secure. The majority of the MontCAS assessments are untimed but do come with suggested testing schedules for planning and practical purposes such as planning around bell schedules or lunch.

As described in the [Six Things Stakeholders Should Know About Participation and Testing in Montana](#), the average child will spend 4–6 hours total, or less than one percent of instructional time, on the statewide assessments. All other assessments administered to students are determined at the school district and building level. For example, students in grades 4–12 are required to have a minimum of 1,080 hours of instruction. In the instance of state required testing, the average grade 5 student is estimated to spend 15-30 minutes per testlet taking the MAST assessment (5-8 testlets per testing window) and to spend 1.5 hours taking the Montana Science Assessment. Schools should refer to the Test Administrator Manual for guidance on scheduling and any time restrictions.

OPI Published Test Windows



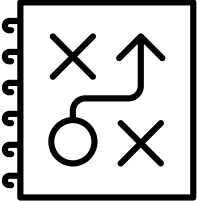
Purpose: The purpose of this section is to provide the reader with the expectations for administering the statewide assessments in accordance with the published test windows and suggested testing schedules.

Standardized Testing Environment

School districts must designate area[s] for the test administration that provide an environment that minimizes distractions and disruptions for students (e.g., classroom, computer lab, library, etc.). The Building Coordinator is encouraged to designate areas that are as similar to the classroom experience as possible so it is familiar and comfortable for students to demonstrate what they know and can do in relation to the State's content standards. Standardized testing procedures are in place to prevent a student or group of students from having an unfair advantage among peers in the school, state and nation.

❶ Coaching is a testing irregularity that gives an unfair advantage to a student or group of students. ❶



Examples of COACHING	Include but are not limited to:
	• Providing answers to students, • Changing student responses, • Suggesting students change their responses, • Influencing student responses to test questions by offering hints, clues, cues, facial expressions, nods, voice inflections or any other manner of assistance that could impact a student's answers, and/or • Not following the explicit directions for accommodations that are listed in the accommodation manual.

Prohibited Materials

Students are not permitted to access any electronic devices used for communication, capturing images of the test or testing room, or data storage (e.g., smartphones, smart watches, cell phones, book readers, electronic tablets, pagers, cameras, non-approved calculators, music players, voice recorders, etc.) that can disrupt the testing environment, and/or be used to compromise the security and confidentiality of the test. At a minimum, these devices must be powered off and always stored away from the students' work area during a test session. These devices cannot be used as a substitute for a calculator. Specific calculator policies are covered in the assessment-specific Test Administrator Manuals particular to each assessment.

Students should not have any prohibited devices near them during testing. Students should be informed of this policy in advance and strongly encouraged to leave such items out of the testing room. Failure to comply with this policy may result in score invalidations for individual students or groups of students depending on the degree the security, reliability, or validity of the assessment has been compromised. If a student does access any of these devices during testing, it will constitute prohibited behavior and the student's test results in that content area may be invalidated. More information on student behaviors prohibited during testing can be found in the [Student Prohibited Behavior](#).

The System Test Coordinators ensure all authorized staff are trained and have completed the standardized testing procedure trainings and readings for each assessment they will administer to prevent testing incidents. To help schools avoid misadministrations, follow the [Test Administration Plan](#). It provides some expectations for Building Coordinators to use with their local assessment teams for all persons involved with testing, including proctors, scribes, and Test Administrators. The STC must affirm completion of the [Test Administration Plan](#) on behalf of the school system via the [MontCAS Application > Records Tracking](#) dropdown items.

In this manual, information about the OPI's required testing plans [i.e., [test administration](#), [test accessibility](#), [test security](#), [data use](#), and [test training](#)] are presented. For each plan, the school district should be aware that the plans should be maintained annually in accordance with local school district policies or at the preference of the STC for a period of at least three school years. For each plan, the STC must affirm completion on behalf of the school system in the [MontCAS Application > Records Tracking](#) screen. The OPI can request evidence of plans at any time throughout the school year for monitoring purposes, including the [LEA Federal Grants Monitoring - Common Compliance Areas](#)

Testing plans should be kept by the district for a period of at least three school years.



Table 1. Test Administration Frequently Asked Questions

Testing Plan	Test Administration Frequently Asked Questions
 Plan 1 - Test Administration Plan The primary goal of test administration is to ensure the school system administers statewide assessments consistently and with fidelity. (update: 6/2020) The System Test Coordinator (STC) is required to have the Test Administration Plan on record annually to ensure the school system administers statewide assessments consistently and with fidelity. For the required activities below, formulate the school system evidence used, along with the specific steps taken to ensure these tasks are accomplished on an annual basis. In the description, be specific about the local implementation of these policies and procedures. 10 Activities: Test Administration Plan Item 1.1) Test Administration Manual (TAM): ☐ Read the assessment-specific test administration manual (TAM) based on the assessment-specific testing portal and create a plan with educators who will administer statewide assessments on how to follow the instructions exactly per the published guidelines and to read the scripts verbatim during test delivery to ensure each administration is conducted in a standardized and consistent manner throughout each classroom and the state of Montana as a whole (see Standardized Test Administration Guidelines). Item 1.2) Assessment Dates and Timing: ☐ Create a plan to ensure all schools place assessments on the school calendar during the OPI published test windows and that each statewide assessment is scheduled with enough time to permit students to have multiple testing opportunities throughout the window in the event of student absences and to encourage breaks as needed by the learner. Item 1.3) Testing Location: ☐ Create a plan to identify appropriate testing locations where the environment is conducive for test taking (e.g., comfortable, appropriate lighting, and quiet) and to allow students the ability to focus and fully demonstrate their knowledge and skills related to grade-level content standards. Item 1.4) Build an Assessment Team: ☐ Create a plan to have school leaders identify school staff who can assist with testing and communicate about roles (e.g., who is authorized, who knows how to do this, who can help with, and who is available when before, during, and after testing) and that each staff member knows what assessments are required by state and federal law (e.g., Legislative and Executive Code and Administrative Rules for Montana Chapter 60). Item 1.5) A/R Role: ☐ Create a plan to have the A/R review the applicable "Rights and Responsibilities Letter" and affirm their compliance with test security as indicated in the Infinite Campus system - Assessment Screen for Test Security and Student Privacy Assurance collection. Item 1.6) STC Role: ☐ Create a plan to have the STC review the applicable "Rights and Responsibilities Letter" and affirm their compliance with test security as defined in the annual MontCAS Application - Test Security Assessment and Training Plan collection (update: 10/16/2020). Item 1.7) BC Role: ☐ Create a plan to have the BC review the applicable "Rights and Responsibilities Letter" and complete the annual test security agreement process within each online test delivery system before accessing the system and have the STC provide a copy of the district's local test security agreement-non-disclosure records and/or other documents assuring the OPI of the local test security procedures (as required) through the demonstration of evidence for the Site Monitoring - Common Compliance Audit. Item 1.8) TA Role: ☐ Create a plan to have the TA review the applicable "Rights and Responsibilities Letter" and complete the annual test security agreement process within each online test delivery system before accessing the system and have the STC provide a copy of the district's local test security agreement-non-disclosure records and/or other documents assuring the OPI of the local test security procedures (as required) through the demonstration of evidence for the Site Monitoring - Common Compliance Audit. Item 1.9) Parent Participation Notice: ☐ Create a plan to notify parents/guardians about the importance of assessments including: (a) the purpose; (b) the source of the requirement; (c) when the information about student performance is provided to teachers and parents; (d) how teachers, principals, and district officials use the information about student performance; and (e) how parents can use that information to help their child before testing takes place (e.g., ARL 10-10-1000 and ARL 10-10-1000). Item 1.10) Handling Parent Refusals: ☐ Create a plan to ensure parents are aware of the importance of statewide assessments and what participation policies are possible as in the state of Montana there is no "opt out" law, and state law requires all students in public and accredited non-public schools to participate in statewide testing (See: Testing Participation and Refusal Policies and Procedures in Montana). The Test Administration Plan should be maintained annually in accordance with your local school district policies or the preference of the STC. Plans should be archived for a period of at least three school years as the OPI can request evidence of plans at any time throughout the school year for up to three years. If you have questions, contact the OPI Assessment Unit at 844-887-2589 or OPIAssessment@opi.mt.gov.	Q: What are the statewide assessments? A: In this section, the reader can access details about each statewide assessment that the OPI has selected to fulfill the state and federal requirements for annual assessments that measure student proficiency and progress on the OPI's academic content standards. Q: What is the MontCAS Test Administration Plan? A: This is a required activity for each school to complete prior to test administration. The STC is required, through the MontCAS Application > Required Records Tracking, to have the Test Administration Plan on record to ensure the school system administers statewide assessments consistently and with fidelity. Q: How can I prevent testing incidents? A: Not all incidents can be prevented, but below are tips to make them less likely: Make sure all five testing plans are in place in each school. Designate time before the test session for students to use the bathroom. Instruct students at the beginning of the session to remain quiet for the duration of the session. Unless it is an emergency, don't allow a student to leave the testing room unattended. Q: What happens if something unexpected occurs? A: In the event a student suffers from an unforeseeable circumstance immediately before or during testing, follow the Unforeseeable Circumstance Resource and contact the OPI Assessment Unit with any questions.

The [MontCAS Policies and Procedures for Participation in Statewide Assessments](#), [Alternate Assessment Eligibility Guidelines](#), and the [English Learner Guidance for School Districts](#) are the manuals that explain the participation policies and procedures for how the OPI includes users, registers schools, and uploads students into the various online test delivery systems for each of the statewide assessments presented in this section.

Montana's six statewide assessments are delivered to students via online solutions. The OPI contracts with test delivery contractors to deliver these assessments to Montana students. School districts manage educator training, roster preparation, student delivery, and achievement reporting through these various [test delivery system portals](#). Each assessment is managed independently from one another as the assessments themselves have different purposes and measurement intentions. System Test Coordinators should ensure all persons with a responsibility to support statewide assessments follow the state and district policies for managing local users and permissions to access these test delivery portals. In this section, a description of the purpose and use for each statewide assessment is presented to the reader.

See the [MontCAS Statewide Assessment Overview](#) document for the complete list of current, statewide assessments, their purpose, subjects and grades assessed, the testing window for the current school year, and other information.



WIDA ACCESS

The WIDA ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS are the [ELP Assessment](#)s for academic state achievement reporting in Grades K–12, and the statewide assessment for ELs based on the results of the WIDA Screener or WIDA Alt Screener using the OPI’s published guidance for test administration and test security. In addition to the ELP assessment, the World Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) is the contractor who supports the OPI with providing identification and professional learning services to school districts to comply with obligations for ELs under ESEA-ESSA and the Office of Civil Rights (OCR). The WIDA ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS are designed to measure speaking, listening, reading, and writing on the OPI’s English language development standards (2011). The WIDA ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS are used to provide state, district, school, and individual student achievement information on the state-adopted content standards in English Proficiency. Montana’s accountability system uses results from the WIDA ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS for schools with ten or more ELs to calculate the “ESSA EL Progress” indicator (see [English Learner Guidance for School Districts](#)). For more information on this assessment, read the [MontCAS Policies and Procedures for Participation in Statewide Assessments](#) and visit the [WIDA ACCESS page](#) on the OPI website.

ELP Test Training and Certification Requirement

The STCs and TAs must complete the appropriate test administration and certification course[s] in the [WIDA Secure Portal](#) once every two years. System Test Coordinators are responsible for ensuring that Test Administrators have completed the annual required trainings and certifications for the screening tests that they will administer, including training courses for scoring student responses. In addition to the formal training and certification requirements, STCs must understand how to use [WIDA AMS](#) to manage user and student profiles, edit test sessions, and retrieve score reports. STCs also manage professional learning accounts in the WIDA Secure Portal for any educators wishing to participate in courses. At a minimum, the System Test Coordinator must complete the WIDA Screener test administrator training and certification course in the [WIDA Secure Portal](#) and the Online WIDA ACCESS test administrator training and certification course every two years. The training course takes approximately one hour to complete. The WIDA Secure Portal houses all training courses and user guides for WIDA AMS. WIDA also provides a [screening and placement guide](#) and a [WIDA ACCESS checklist](#) to help districts plan their testing activities.

ELP Test Security Requirement

Educators logging into the [WIDA Secure Portal](#) after July 1 will be prompted to agree to the “[Non-Disclosure and User Agreement](#)” (NDUA). Educators will not be able to view secure materials and resources without first agreeing to the NDUA. For technical assistance regarding the “how-to,” contact WIDA Training and Resources at 1-866-876-7735 or e-mail at help@wida.us or the WIDA Assessment Management Site at 1-855-787-9615 or email at WIDA@datarecognitioncorp.com. For technical assistance regarding policies and procedures for the ELP assessment, contact the OPI Assessment Help Desk at 1-844-867-2569 or e-mail opiassessmenthelpdesk@mt.gov.

Quick Links to Test Delivery Portals:

- **Portal Link:** [Assessment Management System \(AMS\)](#)
- **Website Link:** [Training and Resources](#)

Table 1. WIDA ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS Resources

			
WIDA ACCESS Assessment Profile	WIDA Consortium Map	WIDA Training Resources	WIDA ACCESS Testing Time Facts



Montana Aligned to Standards Through-Year Assessment

This assessment opportunity is required for all students in Grades 3–8 (unless the child is eligible for the alternate) using the OPI’s published guidance for test administration and test security. The Montana Aligned to Standards Through-Year (MAST) assessment is the general math and ELA assessment for academic state achievement reporting in Grades 3–8. The MAST is aligned with the Montana Content Standards (2011) in Math and ELA. It is used to provide state, district, school, and individual student achievement information on the state-adopted content standards in math and ELA. Student performance within Montana’s accountability system will use results from this assessment for K–8 schools to calculate academic achievement and growth over time. For more information on this assessment, read the [MontCAS Policies and Procedures for Participation in Statewide Assessments](#) and visit the [MAST page](#) on the OPI website.

MAST Test Training and Certification Requirement

At a minimum, STCs and TAs are strongly encouraged to watch a series of short training videos prior to testing. These videos are located in the Kite Educator Portal HELP tab and are designed to assist various roles in administering MAST testlets. The MAST Test Administration Manual (TAM) is located on the [MAST Portal](#) under the “Standards and Manuals” section.

MAST Test Security Requirement

After August 1, current and new users are required to sign the electronic Security Agreement in the KITE Educator Portal. For technical assistance regarding the “how-to,” contact the Kite Support Desk at 1-855-277-9752 or e-mail at kite-support@ku.edu. For technical assistance regarding policies and procedures for the MAST assessment, contact the OPI Assessment Help Desk at 1-844-867-2569 or e-mail opiassessmenthelpdesk@mt.gov.

Quick Links to Test Delivery Portals:

- Portal Link: [Kite Educator Portal](#)
- Website Link: [New Meridian MAST Program Portal](#)

Table 2. Montana Aligned to Standard Through-Year Resources

		
MAST Assessment Profile	MAST Training Resources	MAST Testing Time Facts



DLM Alternate ELA/Math Assessment

This assessment is available to only students with significant cognitive disabilities in Grades 3–8 and 11 using the OPI’s published guidance for test administration and test security. The DLM Alternative ELA/Math Assessment (DLM ELA/math) is the ELA and math alternate assessment for students with significant cognitive disabilities provided in place of the MAST test in Grades 3–8 and the ACT with Writing test in grade 11. The DLM ELA/math uses [Essential Elements](#) linked to ELA and math Montana Content Standards (2011).. Students eligible for the alternate assessment will be included within Montana’s accountability system for K–8 schools under the MAST achievement categories and for high schools under the ACT achievement category. For more information on this assessment, read the [MontCAS Policies and Procedures for Participation in Statewide Assessments](#) and visit the [DLM ELA/math Page](#) of the OPI website.

DLM ELA/Math Test Training and Certification Requirement

At a minimum, for the DLM ELA/Math Test Administrators must complete the annual training requirements within the Kite Portal due to the one-on-one nature of administering the assessment. Test Administrators are responsible for completing the Training Modules housed in the portal and made available a month prior to the opening of the fall testing window. New Test Administrators are responsible for completing each of the four facilitated or self-paced modules with a post-test score of 80% or higher before access to the test and testing materials will be available. The average time to complete the four modules is two hours. Returning Test Administrators must complete an annual abbreviated training taking an average of one-to-one hour and 15 minutes to complete.

DLM ELA/Math Test Security Requirement

All users must read and agree to the security agreement in the Educator Portal. It expires each year during the first week of August and must be renewed annually. Test administrators must deliver the DLM assessments with integrity and maintain the security of testlets. Educators will not be able to move forward in the Educator Portal until they agree to the security agreement.

Quick Links to Test Delivery Portals:

- Portal Link: [Kite Educator Portal](#)
- Website Link: [DLM Montana](#)

Table 3. MSAA Resources

		
DLM ELA/math Assessment Profile	DLM ELA/math Training Resources	DLM ELA/math Testing Time Facts



Montana Science Assessment

This assessment opportunity is required of all students in Grades 5 and 8 (unless the child is eligible for the alternate) using the OPI's published guidance for test administration and test security. The Montana Science Assessment (MSA) is the general science assessment for academic state achievement reporting in Grades 5 and 8. The MSA is aligned with the Montana Content Standards (2016) in science. The MSA is used to provide state, district, school, and individual student achievement information on the state-adopted content standards in science. Student performance within Montana's accountability system will use results from the MSA for K–8 schools to calculate the STEM indicator. For more information on this assessment, read the [MontCAS Policies and Procedures for Participation in Statewide Assessments](#) and visit the [MSA Page](#) of the OPI website.

MSA Test Training and Certification Requirement

At a minimum, STCs and TAs are required to complete the 20-minute Test Administration Certification Course that is located under the "Preparing for Testing" section under the tile labeled "Test Administration Certification" within the [Montana Testing Portal](#). Completion of the Test Administration Certification Course is an annual requirement. The MSA Test Administration Manual (TAM) is located on the [Montana Testing Portal](#) under the "Resources" section.

MSA Test Security Requirement

After August 21, current and new users are required to sign the electronic TSA. This is the same Test Administration Module used for the AMSA. For technical assistance regarding the "how-to" contact the Cambium Help Desk at 1-877-365-7915 or e-mail at mthelpdesk@cambiumassessment.com. For technical assistance regarding policies and procedures for the MSA, contact the OPI Assessment Help Desk at 1-844-867-2569 or e-mail opiassessmenthelpdesk@mt.gov.

Quick Links to Test Delivery Portals:

- Portal Links: [Montana Testing Portal](#)
- Website Link: [Montana Science Assessment](#)

Table 4. MSA Resources

			
MSA Assessment Profile	MSA Consortium Map	MSA Training Resources	MSA Testing Time Facts



DLM Alternate Montana Science Assessment

The DLM Alternate Science Assessment (DLM Science) is the alternate science assessment for academic state achievement reporting in Grades 5, 8, and 11 for students with significant cognitive disabilities. The DLM Science is designed to measure the alternate academic achievement standards aligned with Montana's Content Standards (2016) in science. The DLM Science is the alternate version provided in place of the Montana Science Assessment for students in Grades 5 and 8 and the ACT with Writing for students in Grade 11. The DLM Science is used to provide state, district, school, and individual student achievement information on the state-adopted content standards in science. Student performance within Montana's accountability system will use results from the DLM Science for K–12 schools to calculate the STEM indicator. For more information on this assessment, read the [MontCAS Policies and Procedures for Participation in Statewide Assessments](#) and visit the [DLM Science Page](#) of the OPI website.

DLM Science Test Training and Certification Requirement

At a minimum, for the DLM ELA/Math Test Administrators must complete the annual training requirements within the Kite Portal due to the one-on-one nature of administering the assessment. Test Administrators are responsible for completing the Training Modules housed in the portal and made available a month prior to the opening of the fall testing window. New Test Administrators are responsible for completing each of the four facilitated or self-paced modules with a post-test score of 80% or higher before access to the test and testing materials will be available. The average time to complete the four modules is two hours. Returning Test Administrators must complete an annual abbreviated training taking an average of one-to-one hour and 15 minutes to complete. **Note:** this is the same training as the DLM ELA/Math assessment and completion of the DLM training fulfills requirements for ELA, math, and science administration.

DLM Science Test Security Requirement

All users must read and agree to the security agreement in the Educator Portal. It expires each year during the first week of August and must be renewed annually. Test administrators must deliver the DLM assessments with integrity and maintain the security of testlets. Educators will not be able to move forward in the Educator Portal until they agree to the security agreement.

Quick Links to Test Delivery Portals:

- Portal Link: [Kite Educator Portal](#)
- Website Link: [DLM Montana](#)

Table 5. AMSA Resources



[DLM Science
Assessment Profile](#)



[DLM Science
Training Resources](#)



[DLM Science
Testing Time Facts](#)



ACT with Writing

This assessment opportunity is required of all students in Grade 11 (unless the child is eligible for the alternate) using the OPI's published guidance for test administration and test security. The ACT with Writing is the required general math, reading/language arts, and science assessment for academic achievement reporting in Grade 11. It is used to provide state, district, school, and individual student achievement information on the state-adopted content standards in mathematics, ELA, and science. Student performance within Montana's accountability system will use results from this assessment for schools with Grades 9–12 to calculate academic achievement. For more information on this assessment, read the [MontCAS Policies and Procedures for Participation in Statewide Assessments](#) and visit the [ACT with Writing page](#) on the OPI website.

ACT Test Training and Certification Requirement

The STC or appointed ACT Test Coordinator will conduct a local training session for all testing staff before the test is administered. The session is required and used to discuss policy, address procedural and logistical issues, and ensure everyone has a common understanding of what is to take place on test day. The Training Session must be conducted annually, and before administration of the test. The training session, on average, takes between 60 to 90 minutes. The training requirements are found in the [ACT State and District Test Coordinator Information Manual](#). Additional training resources are available on the [Montana ACT State and District website](#) under "Step 4: Preparation". The Test Coordinator role has overall responsibility for coordinating test operations, assigning and training staff, and preparing facilities.

ACT Test Security Requirement

The OPI's data use, privacy, and security requirements originated from the Department's [Privacy Technical Assistance Center](#). The Department recommends these practices so states and districts can safeguard student information when using college admission exams to fulfill the required testing, accountability, and reporting provisions of ESEA-ESSA. The guidance covers how districts will meet obligations under FERPA, the [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\)](#), and the [Protection for Pupil Rights Amendment \(PPRA\)](#). The OPI adheres to the Department's [Technical Assistance on Student Privacy for State and Local Education Agencies When Administering College Admissions Examinations document](#) with its implementation of the ACT with Writing. Test Coordinators (TC) and proctors are required to complete the [ACT Terms and Conditions](#) before testing. For technical assistance regarding the "how-to," contact the ACT Customer Care at 800-553-6244 or 319-337-1270. You can use the [Email Form](#) to send questions or visit the [State ACT Testing and District Testing](#). For technical assistance regarding policies and procedures for the ACT with Writing, contact the OPI Assessment Help Desk at 1-844-867-2569 or e-mail opiassessmenthelpdesk@mt.gov.

Quick Links to Test Delivery Portals:

- Portal Link: [PearsonAccess^{Next}](#)
- Website Link: [State ACT Testing and District Testing](#)

Table 6. ACT with Writing Resources

			
ACT Assessment Profile	ACT Consortium Map	ACT Training Resources	ACT Testing Time Facts



Complaint Protocol

Under the OPI's policies and procedures for test security, Test Administrators and other trained school staff are not permitted to actively view, review, or analyze any secure state test items. However, there are occasional instances where educators need to share concerns and comments with the OPI about the test materials, items, or policies under the MontCAS Program.

In these rare instances, educators can submit in writing to the OPI a complaint about the test materials, items, or policies using the secure [MontCAS Complaint Protocol](#). The name and address of the person submitting the complaint, along with a description of the complaint and suggested resolution being sought, are required elements for the complaint to be reviewed. If the complaint is about a test question, special care must be taken by the person submitting the complaint because the security of test questions not released to the public must be protected. Unauthorized release of secure test questions is a serious offense. To protect the security of test questions, the individual submitting a written complaint about a test question should describe the specific complaint in a manner that does not reveal the content of the test question itself.

Test Accessibility Plan and Policies



Purpose: The purpose of this section is to provide the reader guidance to maintain student inclusion to the fullest extent practicable and to ensure that every student has equal opportunity to participate in assessments and are NOT denied the opportunity.

On an annual basis, online test delivery systems must be properly configured to reflect students' test settings needs for tools, supports, and/or accommodations as required in the educational plan before administering statewide assessments. There are three types of student test settings and these need to be turned on locally at the district-level for a student to have access to them during testing.

- **Universal Tools** - available to all students who can benefit from such.
- **Designated Supports** - can be turned on as determined by the student's educational team and do not require an IEP or 504.
- **Accommodations** - can only be turned on if a student has an educational plan (e.g., IEP/504).

For more information on accessibility and student needs, read the [Montana's Three Tiers of Accessibility Manual](#).



Table 9. Test Accessibility Frequently Asked Questions

Testing Plan	Test Accessibility Frequently Asked Questions
 Plan 2 - Test Accessibility Plan The primary goal of test accessibility is to maintain student inclusion to the fullest extent practicable and ensure that every student has equal opportunities to participate in assessments (version 3/2022) The System Test Coordinator (STC) is required to have the Test Accessibility Plan on record to maintain student inclusion to the fullest extent practicable. For the required student letter, template the school system endorses and use, along with the specific steps taken to ensure these tasks are accomplished on an annual basis. In this description, be specific about the local implementation of these policies and procedures. 15 Activities: Test Accessibility Plan ☐ Item 2.1 Maintaining State Records: Read the CAS User Guide, STC Guide, and create a plan to ensure students are properly identified in Montana's state student examination system (i.e., Achievement in Montana (AIM)/Interim Composite) and included in statewide assessments to the fullest extent possible, every year for each student (per 34 CFR 200.303(b)(2), 34 CFR 200.303(b)(3), and 34 CFR 200.303(b)(4)). ☐ Item 2.2 Test Setting Collection: Read the AIM User Collection Schedule, create a plan to follow the special population test setting collection requirements for students with IEPs in the "AIM IEP Statewide Editor" and the "AIM IGAEL Test Setting Module" and ensure that all areas of the district for identifying accommodations and/or supports for students in the test delivery system (e.g., Schedule of Events for the ACT with Writing). ☐ Item 2.3 Testing Opportunities: Read the Montana Test Accessibility and, for every student enrolled in the school system with a primary enrollment, create a plan describing how the student is expected to take part in statewide assessments in one of three ways: (1) without accommodations, (2) with accommodations, or (3) in the Classroom Assessment (AIM 10.58, 10.64 and 34 CFR 200.303(b)(1)). ☐ Item 2.4 Three-Tiered Approach: Create a plan to ensure that accessibility features that are made available within the test settings for each statewide assessment meeting as closely as possible to real classroom experiences/conditions where the student is familiar with the supports and accommodations provided. ☐ Item 2.5 Educational Plan Meetings: Create a plan to have a formal meeting to discuss the process for ensuring participation and the appropriate use of accommodations for students with disabilities (34 CFR 200.303(b)(2)) and English learners (34 CFR 200.303(b)(4)) during the testing environment. Ensure that the plan does not deny a student the opportunity to participate in the assessment, or any of its benefits from participation in the assessment that are afforded to students without disabilities or English learner status. ☐ Item 2.6 Usability, Accessibility, Accommodation Guidelines (UAAAG): Read the assessment-specific UAAAG based on each assessment-specific testing period and create a plan with educators who will administer statewide assessments on how to follow the published guidelines to ensure student success in a way that does not reduce learning opportunities or provide the student an unfair advantage. ☐ Item 2.7 Time to Prepare: Create a plan to ensure the appropriate use of accessibility features provided in statewide assessments are used in classroom instruction and local assessments throughout the school year or at least 3 months before using statewide assessments. ☐ Item 2.8 Accessibility for General Students: Create a plan to address the accessibility features needed for all general education students (i.e., students who do not have a documented disability or are not classified as English learners) and to communicate with parents/guardians about the planned arrangements for their child including awareness of the conditions under which the child will participate in the statewide assessment in accordance with the Montana Test Accessibility and English Learner Guidelines for School Districts. ☐ Item 2.9 Accessibility for English Learners: Create a plan to address the accessibility features needed for English learners (ELA) (i.e., students who have a documented language of origin that has influenced their academic English development and who have been screened for proficiency using a state-approved language assessment) and to communicate with parents/guardians about the planned arrangements for their child including awareness of the conditions under which the child will participate in the statewide assessment in accordance with the Montana Test Accessibility and English Learner Guidelines for School Districts. ☐ Item 2.10 EL Exemption Rule: Create a plan to follow the standardized entrance and exit requirements for ELs as published in the English Learner Guidelines for School Districts. In the event of a new EL, establish for each 12-month period a 12-month period for the opportunity for exemption from administration of the OPI's English language arts (ELA) assessment for a one-year period (see 34 CFR 200.303(b)(3)). ☐ Item 2.11 Accessibility for Students with Disabilities: Create a plan to address the accessibility features needed for students with documented disabilities (i.e., students who are eligible to receive special education services through IDEA or Section 504) and to communicate with parents/guardians about the planned arrangements for their child including awareness of the conditions under which the child will participate in the statewide assessment in accordance with the Montana Test Accessibility and Alternate Assessment Eligibility Guidelines. ☐ Item 2.12 State 1% Percent Cap: Should the school district exceed 1 percent of its assessed students in any subject create a plan to follow the Montana Test Accessibility and Alternate Assessment Eligibility Guidelines and submit to the OPI the need for these students with significant cognitive disabilities (SWSCDs) to participate in the Alternate Assessment based on Alternate Achievement Standards (AA-AAS). ☐ Item 2.13 Test Facility and Comfort: Create a plan to ensure staff understand that accessibility features are (1) familiar to the student, (2) have been used in the classroom, and that (3) students are comfortable using the tools in the test delivery system. ☐ Item 2.14 Test Delivery System Configuration: Create a plan to verify that (1) test settings are accurate and up-to-date and (2) enabled before administering statewide assessments, and to assign the role to school staff to review and verify the student demographics and test settings per the student's need are set in the online test delivery system. ☐ Item 2.15 Non-Routine Accommodation Process: It is important that school districts use the assessment-specific UAAAG from each statewide assessment program as any use of accommodations that violates the integrity of the assessment (i.e., fairness, consistency, validity, reliability, comparability, and accuracy) can result in score invalidation. In the event a non-routine accommodation is needed, create a plan to make the request to the OPI through the MontCAS Application - Non-Routine Request Process (see MontCAS User Guide for Step-by-Step Instructions at least 2 weeks prior to planned use of the accommodation). The Test Accessibility Plan should be maintained annually in accordance with your local school district policies or the preference of the STC. Plans should be reviewed for a period of at least three school years as the OPI can request evidence of plans at any time throughout the school year for up to four years. If you have questions, contact the OPI Assessment Unit at 844-867-2569 or OPIAssessment@mtopi.gov.	Q: What is a need-based approach? A: The IEP Statewide Assessment Editor collects information from the IEP to support meaningful participation in assessments. The hierarchy of the cascade includes six components; the (1) participation decision (2) assessment, (3) content area, (4) reason for accessibility support, (5) the supports and accommodations that meet the reasons, and (6) a notes section for documentation of accessibility support specifics or documentation of non-routine accommodations. Q: What is the MontCAS Test Accessibility Plan? A: This is a required activity for each school to complete prior to test administration. The System Test Coordinator is required to have the Test Accessibility Plan on record to maintain student inclusion to the fullest extent practicable. Q: What are EDUCATE (IC) "Ad Hocs"? A: During the 2021-2022 school year, the OPI released State Published Ad Hocs including the "SPED Statewide Assessment Accommodations" available to assist schools with their EDUCATE (IC) and test delivery reporting needs. The "SPED Statewide Assessment Accommodations" shows currently enrolled special education students that have an active IEP indicating statewide assessments marked with accommodations. The IEP Statewide Editor has an editor to provide additional support for IEP teams in implementing an individualized, need-based approach to selecting accommodations and supports for statewide assessments.

Test Security Plan and Policies



Purpose: The purpose of this section is to provide the reader guidance intended to protect the integrity and confidentiality of statewide assessments to yield valid and reliable results.

Standardized testing procedures are in place to prevent a student or group of students from having an unfair advantage among peers in the school, state, and nation. This section addresses the types of testing incidents and severity of each. The OPI recognizes three levels of testing incidents: Level I, Level II, and Level III. Incidents Levels I–III are behaviors prohibited either because they give a student an unfair advantage or because they compromise the secure administration of the MontCAS assessments. Whether intentional or by accident, failure to comply with security rules, either by staff or students, constitutes a test security incident. Typically, as the test incident increases from Level I to Level III, the degree of severity of threat the incident has to the interpretations for test scores increases. All incidents are evaluated for the threat to the reliability, validity, and comparability impacts before the OPI makes a determination.



What is a Test Incident?

Table 10 illustrates examples of the possible violations of test security. Scenarios for OPI actions are also depicted in this Table. All test incidents must be reported to the OPI for evaluation before a decision will be determined. This section is for explanatory purposes only, and the OPI reserves the right to evaluate testing incidents on a case-by-case basis, as it not possible for the OPI to possibly cover all situations or circumstances that may occur before, during, or after test administrations. Rather, this table is intended for informational and training purposes to prevent incidents from arising in the first place.

Whether intentional or unintentional in nature, any behavior that threatens the validity of the test score is considered test fraud.

Table 10. Description of the Incident and Examples

Test Incident Level	Description of the Incident and Examples
Level I	This includes many different activities, not necessarily cheating, but anything unusual that happened during testing. The event is considered routine, but the standards of test administration were not observed. It has a low impact on the individual or group of students who are testing and has a low risk of potentially affecting student performance on the test, test security, or test validity. Examples: Student(s) leave the test room without authorization or student(s) making distracting gestures/sounds or talking during the test session that creates a disruption in the test session for other students.
Level II	This includes many different activities; however, it is more serious than a Level I incident and the standards of test administration were not observed. The difference between Level I and Level II is usually defined in perception of the degree, intent, and/or effect of the misconduct. It may impact the performance of a student or group of students who are testing and may potentially affect student performance on the test or interpretation of those scores. (Typically, does not have statewide or nationwide implications). Examples: Administrator left instructional related materials on the walls or desks in testing environment or administrator allowed inappropriate designated supports and/or accommodations during test window.
Level III	This is a narrow set of activities; it is the most serious level as it describes the act of breaking or failing to observe the standards of test administration. The difference between Level II and Level III is defined in perception of the intent and/or effect of the misconduct. It may compromise the integrity of an assessment, typically by exposing secure test materials. The implications of Level III can affect all students participating in the assessment statewide and nationwide. Examples: Administrator or coordinator modified a student's response or records, or an adult or student posted item(s) or test materials on social media, a website, or any other form of media.



What does secure mean?

The OPI requires that the statewide test questions/items remain secure at all times. To maintain the security of the statewide assessments, only authorized persons are permitted to use the test questions and stimulus passages. All test questions, as well as stimulus passages and performance tasks, are to be regarded as secure instruments and are for the sole purpose of statewide testing to yield academic achievement results for state reporting and accountability. Testing personnel should not reproduce, discuss, or in any way release, share or distribute the test questions. **Note:** Any other use of these materials may constitute a security breach.

Test Administrators must be trained to maintain test security while secure materials are in their possession during testing. Test booklets and answer documents should not be left unattended at any time and should be stored in a secure location such as a locked file cabinet when not in use. Test Administrators and students should only have access to secure testing websites and materials at the time of testing. All test booklets and answer documents must be returned to the test delivery contractor on time. Students should not have access to technology that may be used to record, print, or otherwise expose test questions or stimuli to other students or outside sources at any time while test materials are present.

Late or missing booklets constitute a security breach and may result in score invalidations of student results for schools and/or school systems.

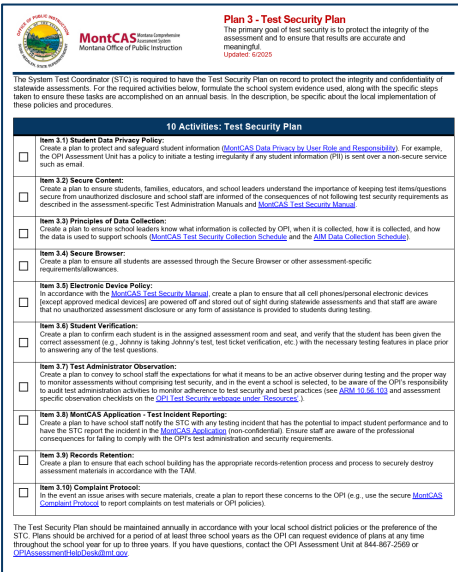
To ensure that trends in achievement results can be calculated across years to provide longitudinal data, a certain number of test questions must be repeated from year to year. If any secure test questions are made public, the validity of the test may be compromised because students may know the questions and answers in advance of taking the assessment. If the reliability or validity of a test is compromised, the test scores of individual students or entire classes may be invalidated, and disciplinary actions may be taken. **Note:** Questions and stimulus passages released by the OPI with official reports, on the OPI website or in practice and training tests are not considered secure test materials. Secure items are in the operational pool and are actively used for student testing for state accountability and reporting purposes within the state of Montana and/or another state.

Processing Testing Incident

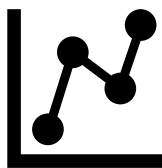
Starting in 2019, the OPI launched the Test Incident Tracking System to follow issues through to resolution. For all statewide assessments with the exception of the ACT with Writing, the OPI makes determinations for self-reported testing incidents from school districts. The [Test Incident Decision Tree](#) shows the sources of information on test security that the OPI has access to. From these sources, the OPI uses the decision tree shown to evaluate and make a determination on the testing incident.



Table 11. Test Security Frequently Asked Questions

Testing Plan	Test Security Frequently Asked Questions
	Q: What is the MontCAS Test Security Plan? A: The STC is required to have the Test Security Plan on record to protect the integrity and confidentiality of statewide assessments. Q: What are some examples of testing incidents? A: More information on examples of testing incidents can be found in the What is A Test Incident Resource and in Key to Testing Incident Examples. Q: What are some strategies to avoid test security breaches? A: Read the Test Administrator Checklist - Avoiding Test Security Breaches. Even if a security breach seems unintentional, it is important that the situation is reported so that procedures and policies can be clarified and updated, ensuring that everyone understands how to maintain test security. Q: What is Cheating? A: Cheating is a general term that can include educator or student misconduct, or any intentional behavior that contributes to creating false estimates of student academic ability. The behavior is perpetrated to gain an unfair or dishonest advantage for the person or institution at the expense of falsifying a student's or a group of students' real ability measures. For information on the OPI's policies and procedures for cheating, read the OPI Cheating and Academic Dishonesty Policy.

Data Use Testing Policies



Purpose: The purpose of this section is to provide the reader guidance intended to ensure that all schools are able to use the assessment results in accordance with the various needs and purpose[s] under ESEA-ESSA for addressing specific academic needs and continuous improvement processes within the school system.

The [OPI publishes guidance](#), provides technical assistance, and provides 'just-in-time' training to support school districts with the responsibilities for notification of individual student reports to families, teachers, and school leaders as soon as practicable after each test administration. On an individual level, these assessment data can provide information on the strengths or academic needs that each child has related to the state content standards. Information gleaned from these data helps pinpoint areas where educators most need to accelerate learning opportunities for students.

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.



Table 12. Reporting and Data Use Frequently Asked Questions

Testing Plan	Data Use Frequently Asked Questions
 Plan 4 – Data Use Plan The primary goal of data use is to ensure results can help the school system address specific needs and continuous improvement processes. The System Test Coordinator (STC) is required to have the Data Use Plan on record to ensure results can help the school system address specific needs and continuous improvement processes. For the required activities below, simulate the school system evidence used, along with the specific steps taken to ensure these tasks are accomplished on an annual basis. In the description, be specific about the total implementation of these policies and procedures. 10 Activities: Data Use Plan Item 4.1.1.1 Content Assessment: Create a plan to address the state Coordinator (Montana State Board of Education) for content assessment under the following program under the 2020 Montana Standards. Item 4.1.1.2 ACCESS for ELLs Individual Student Reports (ISRs) Grades K-12: Create a plan to: • Notify Parental/Families of the student's level of English proficiency from the ACCESS for ELLs assessment regarding how such level was assessed and the status of the achievement as soon as practicable after the administration including information regarding student achievement on the academic assessments to help parents, teachers, and principals understand and address the specific academic needs of the individual student (LII, 10.55.109). • Exit students receiving proficiency from ACCESS for ELLs and re-designate them as "Formerly ELL." • Download the ACCESS for ELLs ISRs, school, and district score reports, and • Place the ISR in the student's cumulative file per LII, 10.55.109. Item 4.1.1.3 Statewide Science Assessment (SSA) Grades 3-8 and 11: Create a plan to: • Notify Parental/Families as soon as practicable after the administration with information regarding student achievement on the academic assessments to help parents, teachers, and principals understand and address the specific academic needs of the individual student (LII, 10.55.109). • Download the SSA ISRs, school, and district score reports, and • Place the ISR in the student's cumulative file per LII, 10.55.109. Item 4.1.1.4 Statewide Science Assessment (SSA) ISRs Grades 3-8 and 11: Create a plan to: • Notify Parental/Families as soon as practicable after the administration with information regarding student achievement on the academic assessments to help parents, teachers, and principals understand and address the specific academic needs of the individual student (LII, 10.55.109). • Download the SSA ISRs, school, and district score reports, and • Place the ISR in the student's cumulative file per LII, 10.55.109. Item 4.1.1.5 Montana Science Assessment (MSA) ISRs Grades 3-8 and 11: Create a plan to: • Notify Parental/Families as soon as practicable after the administration with information regarding student achievement on the academic assessments to help parents, teachers, and principals understand and address the specific academic needs of the individual student (LII, 10.55.109). • Download the MSA ISRs, school, and district score reports, and • Place the ISR in the student's cumulative file per LII, 10.55.109. Item 4.1.1.6 Writing Skills Assessment (WSA) ISRs Grades 3-8 and 11: Create a plan to: • Notify Parental/Families as soon as practicable after the administration with information regarding student achievement on the academic assessments to help parents, teachers, and principals understand and address the specific academic needs of the individual student (LII, 10.55.109). • Download the WSA ISRs, school, and district score reports, and • Place the ISR in the student's cumulative file per LII, 10.55.109. Item 4.1.1.7 Math Writing Skills Assessment (MWSA) ISRs Grades 3-8 and 11: Create a plan to: • Notify Parental/Families as soon as practicable after the administration with information regarding student achievement on the academic assessments to help parents, teachers, and principals understand and address the specific academic needs of the individual student (LII, 10.55.109). • Download the MWSA ISRs, school, and district score reports, and • Place the ISR in the student's cumulative file per LII, 10.55.109. Item 4.1.1.8 State Reporting: Continuous Improvement: Create a plan to release the local report cards from the Montana State Board of Education and ensure the school system has measured the achievement of at least 90 percent of all students, 50 percent of students in the children with disabilities subgroup, and 100% of EL students who are enrolled in grades for which the assessment(s) is required (LII, 10.55.109). Item 4.1.1.9 MontCAS Application Test Incidents and Non-Participation Reporting: Create a plan (please applicable to communicate with stakeholders the monitoring procedures used by the school system for previous testing year's incidents, non-participation, irregularities, appeals, errors, and/or non-routine accommodations). The Data Use Plan should be maintained annually in accordance with your local school district policies or the preference of the STC. Plans should be submitted for a period of at least three school years as the OPI can request evidence of plans at any time throughout the school year for up to three years. If you have questions, contact us at 404.467.2568 or opi@montanapublicinstruction.gov.	Q: What is the MontCAS Data Use Plan? A: This is a required activity for each school to complete prior to test administration. The STC is required through the MontCAS Application > Required Records Tracking to affirm the school system has a Data Use Plan on record to ensure results can help the school system address specific needs and continuous improvement processes. Q: Will the OPI send home individual student reports (ISRs)? A: No. It is the district's responsibility to download individual student reports (ISRs) and make them available to parents/families as well as to place them into the student's cumulative file. For more information on score report requirements, see assessment specific information accessed via the Required Statewide Assessments webpage. Q: What is the student's cumulative file? A: Under ARM 10.55.109, state rules require that each school shall keep, in secure storage, a permanent file of students' records, that shall include the level of achievement (e.g., standardized achievement tests). Q: Does the OPI have any resources to help communicate results and assessment information to families? A: Yes. Family resources and sample letters can be found on the Parent Corner Page.

Training Plan and Policies



Purpose: The purpose of this section is to provide the reader guidance intended to ensure that all schools have a plan in place to make sure that all personnel involved in assessments know how to administer the assessments with fidelity.

The OPI requires Test Administrators (or TAs) to receive training on test administration, test accessibility, test security, and data use in advance of testing to maintain the validity and reliability of the statewide assessments. It is important to note that most testing incidents can be prevented by maintaining standardized testing procedures as described in this manual. All test administration materials, policies, and guidelines should be reviewed before any tests are administered. Tests must be administered in strict accordance with the instructions and policies contained in these materials. To help schools avoid misadministrations, follow the [MontCAS Test Training Plan](#). It provides some expectations for Building Coordinators to use with their local assessment teams for all persons involved with testing, including proctors, scribes, and Test Administrators.

The OPI requires Test Administrators to complete the required trainings and review all manuals specific to the assessment before administering statewide assessments to students. Test Administrators must become familiar with the administration steps ahead of testing day, so they are comfortable with the process and flow of the test. The Test Administration Manuals for the statewide assessments can be found on the test delivery portals linked in the [Statewide Assessment Overview](#) document.



The System Test Coordinator can use the OPI's policies on [test administration](#), [test accessibility](#), [test security](#), [data use](#), and [test training](#) to identify critical partners and to build an assessment team within the school district to support annual statewide assessments. Training for all persons involved with testing, including proctors, scribes, and Test Administrators includes:

- [MontCAS Test Security Manual](#);
- [TA Roles and Responsibilities for Test Security](#);
- [MontCAS Policies and Procedures for Participation in Statewide Assessments](#);
 - [English Learner Guidance for School Districts](#) [where applicable].
 - [Alternate Assessment Eligibility Guidelines](#) [where applicable].
- Assessment-Specific Test Administration Training/Certification Modules.
- Assessment-Specific Test Administration Manuals.
- [Montana's Three Tiers of Accessibility Manual](#); and
- Assessment-specific Usability, Accessibility and Accommodation Guidelines (UAAG).

Who May Administer Tests?

Since 2013, all statewide assessments must be administered to students by Montana licensed professionals who have been trained, are familiar with standardized testing procedures, and since 2019, are employed by the school system.

Table 13. Who Can Administer Statewide Assessments

Non-Certified School Educator	
- May administer - Must complete trainings - Must be employed by district	Montana non-certified educator may administer the test only if they are employed by the School System, have received all the necessary training, and have an approved exemption from the OPI. Submit the Exemption to Administer Form .
Montana Licensed Substitute Teacher	
- May administer - Must complete trainings - Must be employed by district	Montana licensed substitute teachers may administer the test only if they are employed by the School System, have received all the necessary training, and have an approved exemption from the OPI. Submit the Exemption to Administer Form .
Student Teacher	
- May assist - Must complete all trainings - Under direct supervision of licensed educator	Student teachers may administer the assessment if they are under the direct supervision of the licensed educator.
Paraprofessional	
- May assist - Must complete all trainings - Under direct supervision of licensed educator	Paraprofessionals may assist with the administration when they are under the direct supervision of a licensed educator employed by the School System and if they have received all the necessary training.
Parent and/or Community Member	
May NOT assist OR observe	Parents/Community Members may not assist with or observe the administration of any MontCAS assessments.
Note: Direct supervision means within sight and hearing of the licensed educator. To discuss special staffing circumstances, please contact the OPI Assessment Unit at 844-867-2569 or OPIAssessmentHelpDesk@mt.gov .	



Should a school not meet the OPI policy for having an eligible Test Administrator, the school district should use the [Exemption to Administer Form](#). This form is intended to provide information to the OPI to minimize conflict and ensure tests are properly delivered to students in a standardized fashion to yield fair, comparable, reliable, and valid test scores. All Test Administrators must complete the appropriate training/certification plans to preserve the integrity of the assessments. The information submitted in this form will be used by the OPI to provide the school district with technical assistance to permit exceptions to test administration given unusual cases while maintaining the OPI's standards for data integrity and test security.

Table 14. Test Training Plan Frequently Asked Questions

Testing Plan	Test Training Frequently Asked Questions
 Plan 8 – Test Training Plan The primary goal of test training is to ensure the school system has a plan for proper training/certification for school personnel that assist with statewide assessments. Updated: 8/2025 The System Test Coordinator (STC) is required to have the Test Training Plan on record to ensure the school system has a plan in place for proper training in statewide assessments for any school personnel that may assist with assessments. For the required activities below, formulate the school system evidence used, along with the specific steps taken to ensure these tasks are accomplished on an annual basis. In the description, be specific about the local implementation of these policies and procedures. 11 Activities: Test Training Plan ☐ Item 5.1) Before, During, and After MontCAS Policies and Procedure Trainings: Create a plan to ensure schools have clear expectations on how to give the tests by following the assessment-specific Test Administrator Manuals, Test Coordinators Manuals, all MontCAS policies, and procedure for statewide assessments. ☐ Item 5.2) Test Administrator Identification: Create a plan to identify Test Administrators who are employed by the school system (see ADM 10.56.100(2)) and are licensed educators (MontCAS Test Security Manual) that will proctor statewide assessments. Note: In the event these criteria cannot be met, there is a plan to submit to the OPI an Exemption to Administer Request. ☐ Item 5.3) ACCESS for ELLs Training and Certification Requirements: Create a plan to have the STC provide a copy of the ACCESS for ELLs Training Log and/or other documents confirming credentials and annual training of Test Administrators to the OPI as required through the demonstration of evidence for the Title Monitoring - Common Compliance Areas. ☐ Item 5.4) Montana Aligned Standards Through-Year (MAST) Training and Certification Requirements: Create a plan to have the STC provide a copy of the KITE Training Log and/or other documents confirming credentials and annual training of Test Administrators to the OPI as required through the demonstration of evidence for the Title Monitoring - Common Compliance Areas. ☐ Item 5.5) Montana Science Assessment (MSA) Training and Certification Requirements: Create a plan to have the STC provide a copy of the TDE Training Log and/or other documents confirming credentials and annual training of Test Administrators to the OPI as required through the demonstration of evidence for the Title Monitoring - Common Compliance Areas. ☐ Item 5.6) DLM Alternate ELA, Math, and Science Training and Certification Requirements: Create a plan to have the STC provide a copy of the DLM Training Log for each content area and/or other documents confirming credentials and annual training of Test Administrators to the OPI as required through the demonstration of evidence for the Title Monitoring - Common Compliance Areas. ☐ Item 5.7) ACT Training and Certification Requirements: Create a plan to have the STC provide a copy of the ACT Training Log and/or other documents confirming credentials and annual training of Test Administrators to the OPI as required through the demonstration of evidence for the Title Monitoring - Common Compliance Areas. ☐ Item 5.8) OPI Assessment Unit Monthly Newsletter: Create a plan to have the STC distribute the OPI Assessment Bulletin to any school staff who must be aware of these tasks and responsibilities in order to prepare for statewide assessments. ☐ Item 5.9) OPI Assessment Unit MontCAS Focused Support Videos: Create a plan to have the STC share with any school staff who support them with planning, preparing, and delivering statewide assessments where to locate recorded videos created by the OPI Assessment Unit. ☐ Item 5.10) STC Workshop Series: Create a plan to have the STC complete the necessary training through the STC Workshop Series. ☐ Item 5.11) Assessment Wrap: Create a plan to have the STC complete the "STC Debrief Feedback Survey" in order to provide the OPI with feedback and to obtain renewal units. The Test Training Plan should be maintained annually in accordance with your local school district policies or the preference of the STC. Plans should be archived for a period of at least three school years as the OPI can request evidence of plans at any time throughout the school year for up to three years. If you have questions, contact us at 866-867-2548 or OPIAssessmentHelp@opi.mt.gov.	Q: What is the MontCAS Test Training Plan? A: This is a required activity for each school to complete prior to test administration. The STC is required to have a Test Training Plan on record to ensure the school system has a plan in place for proper training in statewide assessments for any school personnel that may assist with assessments. Q: What resources are available to record training completions? A: Many of the test delivery portals make available printed certificates and reports that can be presented to the System Test Coordinator to demonstrate completion of required activities. In addition to this, the OPI encourages the STC to document training using the MontCAS Test Administration Training Log. Q: What is the communication or “chain of custody” for training and information? A: To keep individuals well informed regarding testing security policies and procedures, the OPI recommends the following Communication Protocol Workflow. This protocol serves the purpose of connecting all individuals involved in testing with a deliberate communication channel intended to provide the highest degree of documentation within the school system and response between parties. Q: How do I stay informed with the statewide testing alerts and critical updates? A: The OPI Assessment Unit releases information monthly via the Assessment Bulletin newsletter, focused support videos, and Office Hours. System Test Coordinators can subscribe to the Assessment Bulletin, view focused support videos, and attend Office Hours from this “Stay Informed” link.

Monthly Newsletter

The OPI Assessment Bulletin is specifically designed for System Test Coordinators, subscribers, and any school personnel with a responsibility to administer statewide assessments. It is carefully crafted each month by the OPI Assessment Unit to provide timely access to key test administration responsibilities and actionable content within each of the program checklists. Also included in each issue are references to the state and federal requirements, resources to support professional learning, and testing alerts and updates. School districts are encouraged to share the Assessment Bulletin with any school staff who must be aware of these tasks and responsibilities to prepare for statewide assessments.



MontCAS Focused Support Videos

The Assessment Unit offers a series of pre-recorded videos designed to support educational practitioners such as district and school-level personnel involved in local assessment and accountability determinations, local data-driven decision-making actions, and/or continuous improvement processes. The videos, which run from just a few minutes, to an hour are posted on the [OPI's Staying Informed: Page](#). The purpose of these videos is to ensure that school districts have clear guidance on planning and preparation needs for administering statewide assessments. They can also be viewed on the [OPI Assessment Unit Focused Support Videos Playlist](#) on the [Montana OPI Assessment YouTube Channel](#).

STC Workshop Series

Since 2021, the [STC Workshop Series](#) is an annual event hosted in the fall of each school year. It is designed to help STCs with preparing their district's testing plans on [test administration](#), [test accessibility](#), [test security](#), [data use](#), and [test training](#) over 3-days. The purpose of the workshop is to provide each System Test Coordinator with the opportunity to learn the "how-tos" for each of the assessment related components and learn step-by-step processes to accomplish various STC activities. The sessions are virtual and tailored to the best practices for score reporting, user roles and responsibilities, accessing systems and creating teams, establishing critical partners and preparing testing plans, student inclusion and meaningful participation, student supports and accommodations, assessment setup and test delivery system preparation across all assessments, local monitoring, MontCAS Application basics, and balanced assessment systems. These fundamentals are important to ensure the successful administration of the statewide assessments on an annual basis.

Chapter 3: Elements of Detection for Test Security

Chapter 3 details the reporting requirements for test security and the state quality assurance analyses conducted for student achievement data. The focus of this chapter is on procedures for monitoring and detecting testing irregularities and maintaining the integrity of the MontCAS assessments. Two important responsibilities for districts and schools are:

- Have local plans for monitoring the integrity of the assessment before, during, and after all test administrations.
- Contact the OPI immediately if an incident is suspected.

Below are some detection activities to help reduce test administration errors and facilitate a standardized administration of each assessment:

- Conduct site observations,
- Be present and monitor during all phases of the testing cycle,
- Complete self-reports, and
- Contact the OPI immediately if an incident is suspected.

OPI Site Observations and Local Monitoring Checklists

In accordance with the [Peer Review Guidance \(2018\)](#), the OPI monitors the administration of its statewide assessments to ensure that standardized test administration procedures are implemented with fidelity across districts and schools. This desk and site monitoring includes, but is not limited to, monitoring test administration in school districts to ensure that appropriate assessments, with or without accommodations, are selected for all students, with or without disabilities, and ELs so that they are appropriately included in assessments and receive accommodations that are consistent with the State's policies for accommodations. It is the joint responsibility of the OPI and the school district to monitor testing practices and follow these test security guidelines to promote fair, approved, and standardized practices.

Assessment Monitoring

The following procedures can be used by the State and school districts to ensure fair, comparable, consistent, reliable, and valid high-quality assessments. It is the district's responsibility to monitor testing



practices and resolve testing irregularities in a good faith partnership with the OPI. Districts that discover testing irregularities should immediately report them to the OPI [see [MontCAS Application Reporting](#)]. If reported quickly, the district may be able to resolve the incidents with no action taken, and in some rare cases, avoid adverse consequences such as group-level score invalidations. These checklists can be used by OPI staff and districts to ensure test administration activities are conducted in a standardized and consistent manner.

1. [WIDA ACCESS Checklist](#)
2. [DLM Science Checklist](#)
3. [MAST Checklist](#)
4. [MSA Checklist](#)
5. [DLM ELA/math Checklist](#)
6. [ACT with Writing Checklist](#)

During testing, STCs should be available to answer questions and resolve issues. Monitoring schools during a test administration will help confirm that procedures are being followed, and it can minimize the risk of error. Building Coordinators (e.g., Principals) play a critical role in this effort, ensuring that each Test Administrator is actively monitoring their room and that all testing personnel are adhering to the proper procedures.

Site Visits

It is the OPI's responsibility to observe test administration activities in schools to ensure that the statewide assessments are conducted in a standardized and consistent manner throughout Montana. The OPI organizes monitoring during test windows as both a learning experience, where department staff can learn more about the testing process, and as a monitoring requirement to ensure appropriate testing practices in schools. The OPI annually selects schools as part of its targeted and random methodology to observe. Targeted schools have had previous testing incidents or show unusual results from previous testing years, whereas the random list is a sample of schools with no prior incidents to ensure representative observations based on region, school size, assessment, etc.

The OPI staff conducting these observations will be referred to throughout this protocol as "OPI Observers." The OPI Observers conduct site observations in schools each testing window. The OPI Observers follow procedures developed by the OPI to ensure the security and confidentiality of statewide assessments and that all testing personnel are adhering to proper procedures. A school can be monitored during a test administration if they were selected for 1) Targeted Assessment Monitoring or 2) Random Assessment Monitoring ([SEA School Selection Protocol](#)).

CONTROL: The OPI will observe test administrations and complete the assessment checklist to submit as evidence of compliance for the federal and state test security rules.

Observer Allowable Actions

These observations are essential to confirm the OPI's quality control activities and ensure that MontCAS data are of the highest quality possible. OPI Observers will be "observing from a distance" to ensure Test Administrators can conduct the assessment with little to no interruption in their standardized administration procedures. TAs should be able to complete the tasks with minimal disruption while taking little or no notice of the OPI Observer. The OPI Observer will unobtrusively observe students taking the assessment ([OPI Observer Protocol](#)).

Federal Programs Monitoring - Common Compliance Areas

In order to receive federal Title monies, one responsibility school districts have is to complete the assurances within the [OPI's E-Grants System](#). The E-Grants System is a web-enabled system for PK-12 education in the State of Montana. The system supports the grant application from the allocation of funds and application for funding, through payment accountability, reporting to the grantor, and grant close-out. The Common Assurances apply to all programs administered by the Department. Each legal entity (LEA) that participates in one or more of the programs listed in the Common Assurances for Federal Programs must complete and return the application to the OPI prior to the award of funds.



As of the 2019–2020 school year, sections CC-H through CC-K for statewide assessment were added to the [Federal Programs Common Compliance Monitoring](#). To ensure school districts meet the requirements under ESEA/ESSA Section 1111(b)(2) for implementing comparable, fair, valid and reliable assessment systems, the LEA must demonstrate compliance in [test administration](#), [test accessibility](#), [test security](#), [data use](#), and [test training](#) with items CC-H through CC-K. These requirements ensure statewide assessments are administered in a consistent and standardized way to measure student proficiency and progress on the State's challenging academic standards over time and to address educational needs.

Table 16. Federal Programs Monitoring Toolkit for Common Compliance Areas in Statewide Assessments

CC-H Requirements: Student Participation in Statewide Assessments	
☒	Submit the LEA's " Test Administration Plan " describing the steps taken to ensure these tasks are accomplished on an annual basis.
☒	Submit the LEA's " Test Accessibility Plan " describing the steps taken to ensure these tasks are accomplished on an annual basis to maintain student inclusion to the fullest extent and ensure participation rates are at or above 95% as required under ESEA-ESSA.
CC-I Requirements: Data Integrity and Reliability of Statewide Assessments.	
☒	Submit the LEA's " Test Security Plan " describing the steps taken to ensure these tasks are accomplished on an annual basis to protect the integrity and confidentiality of statewide assessments to ensure these achievement measures are valid, reliable, fair, and comparable.
CC-J Requirements: Communicate Information with Parents and the Public	
☒	Submit the LEA's " Data Use Plan " describing the steps taken to ensure these tasks are accomplished on an annual basis.
CC-K Requirements: Ensure Completed Training and Awareness of Standardized Protocols	
☒	Submit the LEA's " Test Training Plan " describing the standardized procedures to ensure appropriate staff receive necessary training to administer assessments and know how to administer assessments (including, as necessary, alternate assessments), and to make use of appropriate accommodations during assessment for all students with disabilities.

CONTROL: The OPI will annually evaluate the evidence submitted by school districts who are selected for the OPI's title monitoring process for these federal program expectations under sections CC-H through CC-K.

MontCAS Application Reporting

The [MontCAS Application](#) is a restricted-use website that contains information on the summative end-of-year statewide assessments. The MontCAS Application is intended for use by STCs. The MontCAS Application allows STCs to annually supply the OPI with school system information pertaining to the integrity of the assessment and provide assurance of the assessment results through standardized and secure assessment conditions. As of the 2020-2021 school year, test security agreements at all levels moved to electronic platforms as described in the [User Roles section](#). The [Roles and Responsibilities Letters](#) outline the responsibilities the school and district level user must be aware of for proper test security.

For more information, see the [MontCAS Application User Guide](#) for step-by-step instructions for completing the required STC tasks. For all of these activities, school districts are required to adhere to the state data collection schedule described in the [MontCAS Test Security Collection Schedule](#).



While the guidance provides instruction for school staff to work within the school district to report any possible issues, there may be circumstances in which these incidents must be reported directly to OPI. The OPI website has a tip line where test security concerns can be reported anonymously in addition to the Confidential TIR.

Confidential Test Incident Report

Except for confidential reports, any witness of student or staff actions that violate test security must be reported immediately to the STC to be submitted to the OPI via the MontCAS Application. The OPI's [Confidential Test Incident Report \(TIR\)](#) is intended for use by students, parents, staff, and community members to share concerns directly with the OPI without going through the System Test Coordinator or district.

Any person may submit a [Confidential Test Incident Report \(TIR\)](#) to the OPI.

***ATTENTION** - It is a testing irregularity to send student information over a non-secure service such as email. The OPI does not consider even encrypted emails to be secure for sensitive information such as student names and identifying details. Schools are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the [OPI Student Records Confidentiality Policy](#) and follow this guidance to maintain student confidentiality at all times.

Chapter 4: Elements of Inspection for Test Security

Chapter 4 provides information on the elements of follow-up investigations. The focus of this chapter is on procedures for follow-up investigations at the local or state level to maintain the integrity of the MontCAS assessments. Two important considerations for districts and schools are:

- Should this be handled at the local level?
- Is there enough evidence to support disciplinary action?
- Should this be elevated to the OPI?

Self-Investigation

Following a reported incident, or complaint, the OPI may determine that questions still remain regarding the security, validity, or authenticity of the test administration, and require the STC (or designee) to complete a self-investigation and file a self-report with the OPI. The STC should evaluate the circumstances when notified of these occurrences and determine whether any student or adult testing personnel bears responsibility for what occurred. If the district determines that no error was committed by a student or an adult, the district should include all evidence of the school's conclusion of the incidents in the self-investigation report. The more thorough the self-investigation and self-report, the more likely the OPI and the school can come to some determination on the severity of the incident and identify the appropriate remediation. Here are a few activities to help streamline the self-investigation process for reported incidents:

- Be responsive and timely with information as delays may negatively impact student test scores,
- Provide strategic guides and expectations for elucidating information (e.g., forms, timelines, etc.),
- Determine the level of evidence needed to substantiate further inquiry,
- Be a critical consumer of facts,
- Be conservative when interpreting data forensics,
- Use multiple lines of evidence to build rationales,
- Maintain comprehensive records,
- Determine roles of building and retaining documentation, and
- When further inquiry is warranted, respect privacy and professionalism.



Data Forensics

The OPI has contracted with measurement experts to analyze the statewide assessment data using threat-detecting statistics. These analyses look for unusual patterns in the data that may or may not reflect violations of the testing policies or indicate instances of test fraud. For example, one common data forensic test is to look at “Answer Changes”. This flag can pinpoint how many answers were changed on a test, and flag high rates of wrong-to-right answer changes. In instances there are unusual test taking phenomena observed, the OPI will contact the school district to understand these behaviors more deeply.

Independent Investigation

Following a reported incident, or complaint, the OPI may determine that an investigation of widespread testing anomalies, or one that is highly suggestive of inappropriate behavior by educators, students, or others, is warranted. The OPI will follow its Test Incident Decision Tree (see Figure 6) and follow the Chapter 56 Test Security Process to elevate warranted cases to the Board.

Chapter 5: Elements of Resolution for Test Security

Chapter 5 describes the recommendations for resolving test security incidents. The focus of this chapter is on procedures for resolution or remediation to maintain the integrity of the statewide assessments. Remediation of testing irregularities can differ based on the severity of a confirmed allegation or misadministration. There are limited options for the OPI to resolve these irregularities after the testing window is over, but the goal of the OPI is to ensure valid test scores, and for all students to have an equal opportunity to show their knowledge, skills, and abilities through their engagement with the test. It is important to remember that many test irregularities can be corrected if they are detected and attended to during the test administration window.

- Evaluate the OPI’s Test Security Protocols
- Conduct a Needs Assessment for OPI
- Determine if any escalation is warranted
- Identify the steps to take to rectify the situation for all parties
- Create an Action Plan

Chapter 6: Consequences for Non-Compliance

This is the final chapter of the manual that explains the likely consequences for school districts for non-compliance to these test security requirements. This section is specific to the consequences that the OPI and school districts can take should instances of non-compliance arise.

For routine non-compliance matters relating to failure to meet reporting requirements or repeat test incidents, the OPI may remove test administration user accounts and permissions from all testing portals and further require school districts to demonstrate proof of local adherence to standardized testing guidelines and staff certification and training. Failure to satisfy the evidence under [Federal Grants Monitoring - Common Compliance Areas](#) may also result in a hold of allocations. Under the OPI’s policies and procedures for test security, failure to comply with the test security policies may result in one or more of the following penalties:

- a. invalidating test scores for an individual student or for groups of students;
- b. placing a school on a monitoring list for future test administrations;
- c. prohibiting specific personnel from administering a test in the future;
- d. requiring a re-training plan for a school or district; and/or
- e. Per ARM 10.56.103(4), failure to comply with the test administration and security requirements may result in the OPI making a recommendation for consequences to the Board of Public Education for further action.

For more information on these sanctions, see the [OPI Allowable Actions in the MontCAS Application for Testing Incidents](#).



References

For a comprehensive list of references and sources, please visit the [MontCAS Test Security Portal Reference](#) page.

1. [2013 - TILSA Test Security Guidebook for States](#)
2. [Key Policy Letters](#)
3. [Michigan Department of Education \(2019\). Assessment Integrity Guide](#)
4. [Nebraska Student-Centered Assessment System \(NSCAS\) \(2018\). Summative Assessment Security Manual](#)
5. [Ultimate Guide to Protecting Assessments with Data Forensics](#)
6. [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#)
7. [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\)](#)
8. [Protection for Pupil Rights Amendment \(PPRA\)](#)

Glossary

For assessment defined terms, visit the [MontCAS Test Security Training Portal](#).

Appendix

For assessment resources and descriptions of links, visit the [MontCAS Test Security Training Portal](#).

Questions

Direct any questions or uncertainties that were not answered by these materials or by the local System Test Coordinator to the OPI Assessment Help Desk.

OPI Assessment Help Desk
Department of Teaching and Learning
Montana Office of Public Instruction
Phone: 1-844-867-2569
Website: opi.mt.gov
Email: OPIAssessmentHelpDesk@mt.gov