

3/20/24

Dear Parent/Guardian:

St. Ignatius School District #28 is participating in the Montana Aligned to Standards Through-Year (MAST) Summative Form B Pilot Program through the Montana Office of Public Instruction. Students in Grades 3-8 will take Math and English Language Arts (ELA) assessments in 1 administration window—April 15–May 10, 2024.

**What is the purpose of the MAST pilot?**

The Montana OPI in partnership with New Meridian is working to develop an improved assessment system that will accurately reflect the needs of our students, teachers, and administrators while providing useful flexibility in terms of test administration. The vision of the MAST Pilot is to implement “through year” assessments across the state that will replace the traditional end-of-year state summative assessments and satisfy federal testing requirements. This year, districts that elected to participate in the MAST pilot participated in either a through-year model, testing multiple times throughout the year, or in a summative format, referred to as Form B.

**The ultimate goal with the “through year” model is to support the formative instructional process that is closer to the local decisions required to support teaching and learning needs.** Rather than a single end-of-year assessment, the test will be broken up over the course of the academic year. The “Through-Year Assessment” design benefits students, teachers, parents, and administrators by providing actionable data throughout the school year.

**The MAST pilot is a staged, multi-year-year pilot, leading toward statewide operational field test administration of through-year assessments in 2024/2025 for all 67,750 Montana students in grades 3-8.**

This ambitious initiative will be supported by multiple funding sources, including a private grant that is supporting various phases of development.

The federal Competitive Grants for State Assessments (CGSA) funds awarded to the OPI will put key delivery mechanisms in place, build educator capacity, and accelerate the timeline toward statewide implementation.

All the MAST pilot explorations and pursuits will be lawful.

**Per the Federal Double-Testing Waiver obtained August 10, 2023, districts participating in the MAST Pilot Program Form B will not be required to take the Smarter Balanced Assessment in math and English Language Arts (ELA) for grades 3-8. Students in grades 5 and 8 will still be required to take the Montana Science Assessment (MSA).**

**Details about the 2023-2024 pilot:**

- **Participants:** 3-8 Grades Math and ELA
- **MAST Form B Administration:** 1 administration window

- **Total Estimated Testing Time:** 2-3 hours for ELA and 2.5-3.5 hours for Math
- **Technology:** Computer-based test delivery via secure site
- **Reports:** Student response reports will be available for teachers and districts after administration. Individual student reports will provide results from each testlet and will be accessible via the Kite Parent Portal.

**Here are some things to note about the MAST test:**

- Your child's grades will not be impacted by their scores on the testlets.
- Your child's privacy will be protected. State and federal laws, such as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), ensure these data remain confidential.
- Students with Individual Educational Plans (IEPs), Section 504 plans, or English Learner plans will be assessed based on individual student needs, consistent with all state and federal laws and regulations.

**Learn More:**

To learn more about this initiative follow this link to the Montana OPI webpage <https://opi.mt.gov/Leadership/Assessment-Accountability/Montana-Alternative-Student-Testing-Pilot-Program>. New Meridian is a non-profit organization that creates high-quality, innovative assessment solutions that focus on the skills that matter most for success in school and in life. You can learn more about New Meridian here.

We appreciate your partnership in helping St. Ignatius School District #28 participate in this important pilot and supporting your child to do his/her best.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions you may have about MAST. Questions can be directed to Richard Martin or Kassandra Bowers at 406-745-3811.

Sincerely,

Shawn Hendrickson  
Chantell Moore