

**Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE)
Assessment and Accountability in the Fifty States: Survey 2000**

MONTANA

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State Assessment System (1999-2000 school year)

1. Provide a brief overview and history of the assessment system as the context.

The Montana system is currently undergoing much change, as the state is implementing content and performance standards and revamping statewide assessment. The current assessment system allows the use of different versions of several tests from three testing companies, which limits interpretation of assessment data. A new, more cohesive system should be in place during the academic year 2000-2001.

2. What are the characteristics of the state assessment system, including:

- *Name of Assessment Instrument(s) or Program(s)*

Through spring 2000, the statewide testing rule 10.56.101, ARM is still in effect, under which schools may choose from the following list of standardized, norm-referenced tests approved by the Board of Public Education:

- 1) CTB/McGraw-Hill Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS)
- 2) Riverside Publishing: Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) and the Test of Achievement Proficiency (TAP)
- 3) Harcourt Brace Educational Measurement: Stanford, the Test of Academic Skills (TASK)

Beginning in the school year 2000-2001, a single test will be used. The new assessment has not yet been selected.

- *Grade Levels and Subjects Tested:*

The Board of Public Education requires all accredited Montana schools to report student achievement scores for grades 4, 8, and 11 in reading, language arts, math, science, and social studies to the Office of Public Instruction (OPI). Under the new assessment system, the same grades and subjects will be tested, and the same reporting schedule still applies.

- *Norm or Criterion Referenced:* Norm-referenced. Standards-based tests are the next phase.
- *Matrix or Census Testing:* Census, although not all schools report scores as they are required to do. Participation rates by school range from 100% to as low as 22%, overall participation rates are as follows: 4th grade – 94%, 8th grade - 93%, 11th grade – 86%.
- *Item Types (including proportions if available via Internet or interview) such as: traditional or enhanced multiple choice, performance tasks, open-ended questions, portfolios, essays, etc.* Varies by test.
- *Time of Testing (specific month(s) or testing window) March or April.* Each district sets the exact dates, but they must be within the approved window of time.
- *High School Exit Exam (date of implementation and/or phase-in timeline)* No high school exit examination
- *Other Assessments:* SAT, ACT, AP, NAEP
- *Transitional or Final Assessment System:* Transitional assessment system.

3. *Who designed and produced the assessment(s) used by the state?*

- *State Department of Education*
- *Commercial Testing Organization:* All tests are commercial, see list above
- *State teachers and administrators*
- *Assessment Committee*
- *Other*

If a commercial test was used by the state, were modifications or additions made to the assessment to address state requirements or standards? If so, what did they include?

No modifications were made, although this is a possibility in the future, in order to align a norm-referenced test with state standards.

4. *What are the state requirements for local assessment, including the types of assessments and their use in areas such as reporting and accountability, as well as Title I adequate yearly progress? What grade levels and subjects are tested?*

From Rule 10.55.603: At the local level, because norm-referenced tests are not designed to measure local programs, districts should begin to develop appropriate school and classroom assessment tools to measure the attainment of educational goals and objectives and the level of individual student achievement. Assessment results will be used in instructional planning and in evaluation the effectiveness of educational programs.

5. *Is the state assessment system aligned with the state standards?*

The assessments are not currently aligned with curriculum, however, the Board of Public Education recognizes that the statewide assessment should be aligned with the standards adopted by the Board as important learning for all students.

Are there plans for alignment, and if so, how will the assessment and standards become aligned?

- *Refining standards* Montana is in the process of developing a common set of standards, or framework for all Montana students. The Montana Standards Framework defines the general knowledge of what all students should know, understand, and be able to do in each subject area and sets specific expectations for student learning at three benchmarks along the K-12 continuum. The subjects currently covered by the Standards are reading, mathematics, science, communication arts, health enhancement, technology, and world languages. These benchmarks are at the end of fourth grade, eighth grade, and upon graduation.
- *Revamping assessments:* A new assessment shall be selected for the 2000-2001 academic year, however, it appears that the main impetus in reforming the system was to overcome reporting problems and challenges to interpreting data, not alignment with state standards. However, there is a strong desire in the state to have aligned systems.

- *Adding components to assessments*

What is the timeline for completion of the alignment?

Starting in the school year 1998-99, the content and performance standards supersede model learner goals. School districts have until the end of 2003-2004 to align their curricula to the statewide content and performance standards.

6. What is the state's approach for ensuring alignment and what evidence of that alignment is provided?

None at the moment, due to transitional nature of system.

7. How is the data included in the state assessment system used?

- *Student Grade Promotion/Retention, Graduation, Diploma Certification.* Data is not used for these purposes
- *Teacher, School and/or District accountability.* Assessment data is used for accountability purposes to a limited extent; it is used for Title I accountability and also has impact on local community, but there is no formal directive from state.
- *Program Evaluation (Identify federal, state programs)* Title I evaluation
- *Identification of students for programs like Title I, state CompEd, Bilingual, etc.* Not used for this purpose
- *Instructional guidance to local administrators and/or teachers* This is the stated purpose of the assessments by the state.
- *School improvement (e.g., preparing a school improvement plan)* Yes, assessments should be used for this purpose.

8. Are there changes planned for the state assessment system (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline? Are there implications for the state reporting or accountability systems (Title I or in general)?

The Board of Education acknowledges the problems of multiple assessments that are not necessarily aligned with curriculum. Hence, on November 18, 1999, the Board of Public Education revisited the preliminary decisions that were considered in their September meeting. As a results of the input and discussions that took place in the time between the meetings, the Board determined that the statewide assessment would:

- Change from a choice of tests from 3 publishing companies to a single test.
- Change beginning in school year 2000-2001
- The test will continue to be administered in the spring
- Continue to test Grades 4, 8, and 11
- Continue to test in 5 subject areas: Reading, Math, Science, Social Studies, Communication Arts
- A Request for Proposal (RFP) (released early 2000) incorporates the Board's changes in the rule, criteria for selecting a test, and purpose for testing.
- The timeline for award of the RFP is March of 2000, for purchase of the tests and scoring and reporting services to meet this rule, beginning with school year 2000-2001, using funds appropriated by the legislature for this purpose.

9. *What have been the major issues and challenges in the area of state assessment? Explain.*

Several challenges face the Montana assessment system, particularly regarding the interpretation and use of test data. These challenges generally stem from the fact that the state authorizes the use of several different tests which are not necessarily aligned with curriculum. The limitations of the test data include:

- Different districts choose different tests for local reasons
- Districts are using several versions of the approved tests. This may include the most recent version, prior versions, or a shortened survey.
- The test used might not be aligned with local curriculum and standards.
- Some schools reported scores for special education and limited English proficient students while others did not.

In addition, Montana has faced some resistance to the development of standards and assessments. Montana schools have generally been high-performing; Montana students have done well on NAEP, and on the ACT test, which has a high participation rate in Montana. The restructuring of state assessment and accountability systems gives some Montana citizens and officials the impression that it does not take into account the existing results. They question why they should start over when what they have been doing has been effective.

Inclusion Policies for Assessment

1. *What exclusions are made in the current state assessment for students with disabilities? LEP? Who makes the decision about exclusion of a particular child? Does the state collect data or in other ways monitor the number and types of students excluded? Does that vary by test?*

From rule 10.56.101 (ARM): Students with disabilities or limited English proficiency (LEP) shall participate in the regular assessment, unless it is determined that the student's attainment of educational goals cannot be adequately measured with the regular district assessment. For students with disabilities, the Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams have the authority to specify accommodations to be provided, for participation by the student in the regular district assessment. When an IEP team determines that an accommodation for a student's disability would still not allow for adequate measurement of the student's attainment of educational goals, the IEP team may waive participation in the district norm-referenced test by providing an alternative form of testing that is appropriate to determine the student's attainment of education goals and objectives.

For students with limited English proficiency who have been identified by a team of educators as limited English proficiency (LEP), those teams have the authority to specify accommodations to be provided, for participation by the student in the regular district assessments. When the team of educators determines that an accommodation for an LEP student who has had fewer than three years of instruction in English would still not allow for adequate measurement of the student's attainment of educational goals, the team of educators may waive participation in the district test by providing an alternative form of testing that is appropriate to determine the student's attainment of educational goals and objectives.

2. What accommodations and/or modifications are made on the current state assessment for students with disabilities? LEP?

Accommodation allows the student to demonstrate competence in subject matter so that test results accurately reflect the student's achievement level rather than reflecting the student's limited English language development or impaired sensory or manual skills, except where those skills are the factors which the test purports to measure. Accommodation for testing purposes is defined as modifications similar to those used to support and accommodate the student in the instructional setting.

Accommodations include (not exhaustive):

- Timing/Scheduling: Flexible schedule; extend the time allotted to complete the test; administer the test in several sessions, specify duration; time of day change.
- Setting: Administer the test individually in a separate location, administer the test to a small group in a separate location, provide special lighting or acoustics, provide adaptive or special furniture.
- Presentation: Braille edition or large-type edition, prompts available on tape, increase spacing between items or reduce items per page or line, reading passages with one complete sentence per line, multi-choice answers to follow question down bubbles to right (?), omit questions which cannot be revised, prorate credit, teacher helps student understand prompt, computer reads paper to student. Presentation of test directions may altered, for example, they may be read, signed, underlined, simplified, or clarified. Assistive Devices/Support may be used, such as magnification devices, templates to reduce visible print, auditory amplification devices, tape to secure paper, audio taped administration of sections, or use of a scribe.
- Response: Use of word processor; student tapes for later verbatim transcription; typewriter; communication device; alternative response such as oral, sign, typed, pointing; Braille; larger

diameter or special grip pencil, copy assistance between drafts; slant board or wedge; tape recorder, calculator; abacus; arithmetic tables; spelling dictionary; spell check.

Out-of-level testing is also permitted in Montana; schools are advised to consult the test publisher's manuals for guidance on out-of-level testing.

3. Does the state provide assessments in languages other than English? If so, describe. In what grades and subjects?

No, Montana does not offer assessments in other languages.

4. Does the state provide alternative assessments for students with disabilities? If so, describe. For which students and in which subjects and at what ages?

Consistent with requirements for assessments given during the 2000-2001 school year, additional guidance will be provided to assist districts in meeting reporting requirements for alternate assessments.

The basic forms that alternate assessments take are as follows:

A. Skill demonstration of performance on content area standards. This direct method of measuring progress toward meeting standards utilizes sampling and teacher observation to judge a student's progress using the levels of proficiency in the Montana Performance Standards. This method relies primarily on the teacher's judgement of the skill development (novice, nearing proficiency, proficiency, or advanced) relative to the performance indicator.

B. Standardized measures: utilizing the statewide or districtwide assessment, but modifying the assessment to such a degree that norm-referenced results are invalidated.

C. Individually designed assessments tailored to the student which measures the student's progress on skills identified in his/her IEP.

5. Does the state have a goal for the inclusion of students with disabilities and/or LEP students on the statewide tests? Does the state use any strategies to encourage the inclusion of students with disabilities? LEP students?

The state does have the goal of inclusion of students with disabilities and LEP students on statewide tests. During the school year 1998-99 districts were required to: provide separate reporting of scores for students with disabilities participating in the regular assessment and report the number of students in alternative assessments. Beginning with the school year 2000-2001: the state or districts must develop guidelines for participation of children with disabilities in alternate assessments, and the state and district must report the performance of children with disabilities on alternate assessments, if statistically sound and results are not identifiable with individual children.

6. Are changes planned in the for the inclusion of SWD and LEP students in the state assessment system (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline? Are there implications for the state reporting or accountability systems (Title I or in general)?

No, the state inclusion rules were revised three years ago and no changes are anticipated.

Performance Standards

1. How many and what performance levels has the state established for its assessments?

Novice: students beginning to attain the prerequisite knowledge and skills fundamental for that subject matter.

Nearing Proficiency: Students with partial mastery of the prerequisite knowledge and skills fundamental for that subject matter.

Proficient: Students demonstrating competency over the subject matter including subject matter knowledge, the application of such knowledge to real world situations, and the analytical skills appropriate to the subject matter.

Advanced: Students achieving a superior mastery of the subject matter.

These categories are not yet fully operational, and will be phased in with new assessments.

2. Has the state set acceptable levels or targets for schools, districts or the state on tests, drop-out rates or other measures (e.g. 70% of students in Maryland pass the MSPAP)?

Probe on Schenk and Carlson categories below:

- *Target level*
- *Percentage of students expected to attain target level*
- *Time period in which to attain level*
- *Annual increase required*

Still operationalizing and phasing in performance standards

3. How are these performance standards calculated? What data are included in the calculations, and at what proportions (e.g. assessment results 60%, dropout and attendance rates 40%). How are the calculations made? What is the final unit of analysis for reporting school and district achievement levels (e.g. performance index, grade, category)?

Still operationalizing and phasing in performance standards, however, Montana does anticipate the inclusion of measures other than assessments, such as dropout rate.

4. Are all students, schools and districts included in these performance calculations? If not, who is excluded?

Still operationalizing and phasing in performance standards

5. Are changes planned for the state performance standards (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline? Are there implications for the state reporting or accountability systems (Title I or in general)?

Still operationalizing and phasing in performance standards

6. *What proportion of schools and/or districts fail to meet acceptable levels on performance targets?*

Not applicable.

Reporting Performance Data

1. *Describe the characteristics of the state performance data reporting system (by whom, what data, who is the audience) for each of the following levels:*

- *Student reports* With the new assessment system, there will be one standardized individual student report. Currently, the provision of student reports is variable.

- *School reports*

Rule 10.56.101 ARM requires all accredited Montana schools to report norm-referenced test score results for students in grades 4,8, and 11 in reading, language arts, math, science, and social studies (the Annual Fall Report). With four exceptions, the accredited schools complied with the student assessment rule for the 1996-97 school year. Two schools tested at other times, and two schools did not test. Eight schools did not test in the areas of science and social studies.

Each school report includes information on how students in the fourth, eighth, and eleventh grades performed on reading, language arts, math, science, and social studies. The information is aggregated by state total, totals for different school size categories, and by individual schools within each district and county. The school reports list: the grade level taking the test, the test administered, the number of students reported in the February enrollment count, the number of students taking each test, the average Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE), the percentage of students at each proficiency level within each subject area. In addition, schools should be able to explain at a local level the circumstances that led to low participation on assessments, if such was the case.

- *District reports*

There is no guidance from the state on what district reports should contain or the manner in which they should be distributed; however, most districts put out an annual report that contains information from the state report. Some districts are creative with distribution of reports: one distributes reports at the local grocery store.

- *State reports*

In 1998, Montana produced its first Statewide Education Profile. The profile includes an overview of the state's educational system with information concerning: education levels of the population, program offerings, enrollment data, NAEP scores, graduation rates, attendance rates, accreditation rates, student services, finance data, personnel data including staff ratios, student involvement in learning indicators, background characteristics of students, assessments results by school size, proficiency levels of students statewide and compared to the nation.

- *Title I reports:* The state does not produce additional Title I reports.

2. *How are the data distributed? When during the year (month or time period after assessment)? To whom (students, teachers, parents, the media, the community)?*

The scores for tests administered in the spring are annually reported to the Office of Public Instruction in the following fall. These scores are compiled into a statewide summary that is available on the internet.

As noted above, districts may disseminate data in the manner they find most effective for their community.

3. *At what level(s) are data disaggregated (state, district and school levels)? For what groups are disaggregated data reported (see Internet sites for state, district and school level report cards)?*

Check on the following categories required by federal regulation:

- *Gender*
- *Race* Graduation rates and enrollment statistics disaggregated at the state level
- *LEP status* Enrollment statistics disaggregated at the state level
- *Migrant Status* Enrollment statistics disaggregated at the state level
- *SWD* Enrollment statistics disaggregated at the state level
- *SES* Enrollment statistics disaggregated at the state level

Montana does not disaggregate assessments at this point, this is anticipated for subsequent years.

4. *Does trend data exist from the state assessments (example: Texas State Assessment data is available from “1996-97 on”)?*

Trend data has been difficult to compile given the variety of tests that are used in Montana. However, they attempt to compile four years of student distribution in stanines.

5. *How are the results of students with disabilities and limited English proficiency reported? Are they included in the aggregate scores reported to the public, or disaggregated by group?*

Currently, Montana does not disaggregate scores of students with disabilities or limited English proficiency. Testing of these populations has been sporadic, as has reporting from the local level. (As noted in a memo from the Montana Special Education Director, Title I Director, and Assessment Director: “Another misconception is that students with disabilities are automatically excluded from testing. NOT TRUE!”)

6. *What are the state’s requirements for the use of data in school and district improvement planning?*

Not a formal requirement, but this is one of the objectives of the state’s assessment program.

7. *Are changes planned for performance reporting (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline? Are there implications for the accountability system (Title I or in general)?*

Beginning in 2000-01 school year, Montana will begin disaggregating assessment results for Title I purposes in all the categories that are required by federal legislation. These changes are being implemented as a part of a plan to make Montana's assessment system more unified and aligned with federal requirements.

Until all requirements are in place in the spring of 2001, districts are encouraged to request their scoring services to provide disaggregated data for as many of the listed categories as possible to being the process of analyzing and understanding the impact of their data.

8. *What have been the major issues and challenges in the area of performance standards and reporting? Explain.*

Protecting the privacy of students in small schools is a concern for Montana. Montana has 80 one-teacher schools, some have as few as 3 students, which places the school in an awkward position with regard to reporting. Consequently, the release of test scores for any school with five or fewer students in a grade has been aggregated into size category totals. This involves more than 100 of Montana's smallest schools. The aggregated totals are still very small, but do provide useful information.

State Accountability System (1999-2000 school year)

1. *Provide a brief overview and history of the accountability system as the context.*

The Montana accountability system is based on school accreditation. The Montana Board of Public Education establishes standards for the accreditation of elementary and secondary schools. Montana's accreditation standards establish the foundation for a system of quality education for all Montana children, and determine eligibility for state equalization funding.

2. *What are the characteristics of the state accountability system?*

Probe on:

- *Who is held accountable (students, schools, districts)?*
- *For what are they held accountable (adequate yearly progress, student achievement, processes, multiple non-cognitive indicators, etc)?*
- *Using what criteria (state assessments, local assessments, both state and local criteria)?*
- *To what targets or performance levels?*
- *With what consequences (promotion or graduation, program improvement, additional planning, state takeover, rewards, assistance, etc.)?*

Organize the response into the following subsections:

- *Student Accountability/Rewards and Sanctions* No student accountability policy (inappropriate given the variety of testing).
- *School Accountability/Rewards and Sanctions* Montana's accountability is essentially a system of school accreditation. The accreditation standards include required courses to be offered, expectations for what students should know and be able to do, student assessment rules, the certification requirements and duties of teachers and administrative staff, class size

and teacher load restrictions, library and guidance counselor ratios, professional staff development requirements, and means for promoting a positive school climate. The accreditation information is analyzed by OPI, and the superintendent of public instruction recommends the accreditation status of each school. Schools meeting the accreditation standards are given regular accreditation status. Those not meeting some accreditation receive accreditation “with advice” or “with deficiency.” Schools with a second year of “advice” or “deficiency” status are required to submit a plan for improvement to OPI.

- *District Accountability/Rewards and Sanctions* No district accountability policy

3. *What methods of measuring progress are used in the state accountability system?*

- *Relative growth*
- *Absolute target*
- *Narrowing the Gap between high and low achievers*
- *Other*

Not applicable: the accreditation system does not require the establishment of academic targets.

4. *Are all students included in calculating the measures of progress? If not, who is excluded (probe on inclusion of SWD and LEP students)?*

Not applicable

5. *How do the general state accountability system and the system of accountability for Title I schools compare? Are they the same, or different? How?*

The state accountability system is an accreditation system which is distinct from the Title I process.

6. *Are subgroup performance results used as an indicator in the calculation of state accountability measures? If so, how? To identify schools or districts in need of improvement? For recognition and rewards?*

Not applicable

7. *Are charter and/or non-public schools included in the accountability system? If so, how?*

Non-public schools may request accreditation.

8. *Are changes planned for the state accountability system (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline?*

The Board of Public Education has not entertained any changes any formal way other than to begin a process to revise the accreditation standards. No system of consequences or rewards based on student performance is being considered as part of that right now.

9. *What have been the major issues and challenges in the area of accountability? Explain.*

No particular challenges were noted.

Identifying and Assisting Low Performing Schools and Districts

1. *How are schools and districts identified as low performing? Using what criteria? Do the identification processes and/or criteria differ for Title I and non-Title I schools?*

All identification of low performing schools is done through the Title I system; the state has no other method of identifying schools and districts that are low performing. For more information, please refer to the subsequent section on Title I.

2. *Does the district or the state decide whether a school is low performing? If the district is involved in the process, how much discretion do they have?*

Not applicable.

3. *What types of assistance are provided to these schools and districts by the state?*

- *Evaluation and Planning*
- *Financial*
- *Expert Assistance*

Not applicable.

4. *Who provides the state assistance?*

- *School/district support teams*
- *Regional centers*
- *Distinguished educators*
- *SDE staff*
- *Other – Explain*

Not applicable.

5. *Does support to Title I and all low performing schools and districts differ? Is support generally provided for all schools and districts, or are services specifically designed to help those that are low performing?*

Title I support to low performing schools and districts is the only system of support.

6. *Has the state established a set of criteria and/or a process for getting schools and districts out of low performing status? If so, what do they include?*

Not applicable.

7. *Once a school or district is identified as low performing, what types of plans must it prepare? Who are they submitted to once completed? How do they differ from other planning documents?*

Not applicable.

8. *Are changes planned for the state system of identifying and assisting low performing schools or districts (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline?*

No changes are anticipated.

Title I and Adequate Yearly Progress

1. *What criteria are included in the definition of adequate yearly progress for schools and districts under Title I?*

- *What measures are used (relationship between cognitive/non-cognitive data)?*
- *What targets have been established?*
- *Are local assessment systems included as criteria? If so, does the state provide guidance? Monitor their use?*
- *Is subgroup performance included in the criteria?*

The determination of adequate yearly progress is based on normed assessment data. Given that Montana permits a range of tests to be administered, the data could come from one of several assessments. Schools and districts may submit additional local data if they want to appeal the state's decision that they are not making adequate progress. Subgroup performance is not included in the criteria.

2. *What are the definitions of adequate yearly progress for the following:*

- *Title I schools and non-Title I schools*
- *Targeted vs. schoolwide programs, charter, non-public and small schools*
- *Districts*

Are these transitional or final definitions? If transitional, when will the final definitions be in place and what criteria and processes will they include?

The definition currently in use is one that resulted from a federal integrated review. Montana is in the process of developing a working definition of adequate yearly process; details are not available at the moment (3/00).

The current process for identifying schools that are not making adequate yearly progress is a two stage process: First, those schools whose average NCE is below 45.2 in reading or math are identified. Next, those schools are notified and given the opportunity to submit additional assessment results that would show that the school is performing adequately. However, not many schools are conducting assessments that would back up their claims of adequate progress, so essentially, the first stage identifies all schools that are not making adequate yearly progress. If 50% of schools in a district are identified as not making adequate yearly progress, then the district is identified as not making adequate yearly progress.

This is a transitional definition. Montana is in the process of determining how to better address this issue.

3. *What is the process for identifying those schools and districts that are not making adequate yearly progress under Title I? Does the district or the state make this determination for schools? If the districts plays a role, does the state provide guidance on local criteria?*

See above.

4. *What are the criteria and processes for identifying schools and districts in need of improvement under Title I? What plans must be prepared? How can a school or district get out of Program Improvement? Does the district or the state make this determination for schools?*

The Office of Public Instruction Title I staff identifies schools for improvement based on the data for all students. Subsequently, the district must conduct an additional step known as the local annual review for Title I. In this local annual review, additional options may be considered:

- In targeted assistance schools, district may elect to use results for Title I students only (or may use results for all students); must use results for all students in schoolwide programs, and
- The scores of students who had not been enrolled in one particular school of the district for the entire school year may be excluded in determinations of improvement status for that school.

Schools in need of improvement are those with average scores in stanines 1-4 (below 45.2 NCEs or below 41st percentile) for two consecutive years. This corresponds to proficiency level Novice, and Nearing Proficiency level.

Each school identified as needing improvement must:

- Develop or revise a school plan in consultation with parents, the local education agency and its school support team, in ways that have the greatest likelihood of improving the performance of participating children in meeting the state's criteria for accountability.
- Submit the newly developed or revised plan to the LEA for approval (the LEA submits the school plan to the state agency for review only); and
- Implement the changes in the school plan during the first year immediately following identification. Each school identified must, as part of its school plan, improve the skills of its staff by providing effective professional development activities.

A school must:

- Devote to professional development activities, over two consecutive years, an amount equivalent to at least 10% of funds received by the school under Title I, Part A, during one fiscal year; or
- Otherwise demonstrate that the school is effectively carrying out professional development activities.

LEAs in need of improvement

- Each LEA identified for improvement shall, in consultation with schools, parents, and education experts, revise its ESEA Local Consolidated Plan in ways that have the greatest likelihood of improving the performance of its Title I schools in meeting the state's criteria for accountability. Such revision shall include determining why the LEA's plan failed to bring about increased achievement, and may include reviewing the LEA's plan in the context of strategies developed by the LEA in a Goals 2000 plan, if any.

The LEA must

- Publicize and disseminate to parents, teachers, and other staff, students, the community and administrators, including principals, the results of the annual review of all schools in individual school performance profiles; and
- Provide the results of the annual review to schools, so they can continually refine the program of instruction.

5. *What types of assistance are provided to those in need of improvement under Title I?*

- *Evaluation and Planning*
- *Financial:* The financial assistance is that Montana sets aside \$200,000 to provide for two full time specialists who work with schools on their improvement processes; funds also used at the school level for release time, substitutes and travel for professional development opportunities. Funds may also used for speakers and consultants.
- *Expert Assistance:* Assistance throughout all phases of school improvement plan – developing the plan, implementing, and evaluating progress.

6. *Who provides the assistance?*

- *School/district support teams* Yes
- *Regional centers* No, Montana does not have regional centers
- *Distinguished educators* Yes
- *SDE staff* Title I Improvement Specialists
- *Other – Explain* Metnet Internet Resources, phone consultation, on-site visits

7. *Have waivers played a role in this process?*

Very little.

8. *Are there future plans for the state system for schools or districts receiving Title I funding (proposed or enacted and to be implemented) or for the definition of adequate yearly progress? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline?*

Montana recently sent out an RFP for a new state assessment. Part of the RFP includes a request for assistance on how the state could use the testing company's assessment to develop a sound definition of AYP. Montana plans on working with testing organizations to ensure alignment between the selected assessment and an operationalized definition of AYP.

The first administration of the new test would be spring 2001. The description of AYP should be submitted to the Department of Education July 1 2000.

Also part of this RFP are requests for more detailed development of proficiency levels and of the determination of standards-referenced capacity of the test.

9. *Is there alignment between Title I and non-Title I systems for adequate yearly progress?*

At the moment there is only one system – that of Title I – for the identification of schools and systems that are not making adequate yearly progress.

10. What have been the major issues and challenges in the area of Title I? Explain.

Title I does not establish education policy in Montana, in some cases it is perceived as the tail wagging the dog; Montana is a heavy local control state, and many people are satisfied with the quality of the schools and see little need to change the assessment system just to meet Title I requirements.

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Title I

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