

MT-PEC Issue Spotlight

MT-PEC Response to the OPI Proposed Montana ESSA State Plan Highlights

UPDATED - August 24, 2017



Long-Term Goals and Academic Achievement:

Schools being expected to reduce the number of students that are not proficient as determined by our state exams by 4 percent each year through the 2022-2023 school year is unattainable, particularly for several student subgroups.

Tables for Language Arts (Chart A), Math (Chart B), and Graduation Rates (Chart C) demonstrate an inappropriate expectation of high rates of growth for English Learners, Children with Disabilities, and American Indian students.

Simple 4 percent growth over the period illustrated in the tables would be 24 percentage points. Obviously, some sort of graduated algorithm is being used, but not shared and so cannot be reviewed, since the largest percentage target is 22.2 percent for English Learners in both Language Arts and Math and for White students the expected growth over the time period is only 12.1 percent for Language Arts, 10.2 percent for Math, and a mere 3.7 percent for Graduation Rate.

In a recent interview with the original bill sponsor, Senator Lamar Alexander (R) Tenn., provided by Education Week, the Senator is quoted to have said “The heart of the entire law ... was that it’s the state’s decision to set goals, to decide what ‘ambitious’ means, to make decisions to help schools

that aren’t performing well.” We strongly agree with the Senator and maintain that the OPI is not compelled to set unattainable goals for Montana schools, particularly student subgroups that have proven to improve at a much slower rate than their counterparts. The opposite should occur, in that these groups should have a reasonable expectation of a slower improvement rate. Special attention needs also to be paid to high performing schools and schools with small student populations.

As was originally brought forward by the Montana ESSA Stakeholders group, the public “report cards” for individual schools should be the difference between school performance and statewide goals in a manner other than strict numerical comparisons. The proposed “have met”, “not met”, or “exceeded” statewide goals on the surface appear to do that, but we feel it is imperative that this goal not be lost in the work that will need to be done to meet this and all expectations of ESSA implementation.

Local districts having flexibility to add additional data on school strengths that show student success is encouraging to see as part of the MT ESSA Plan. The details for how this occurs will be important as well.

CHART A

English Language Arts Achievement Goals Over Six Years

Subgroups	Language Arts: Baseline Data (2016)	Language Arts: Year 1 (2017)	Language Arts: Year 2 (2018)	Language Arts: Year 3 (2019)	Language Arts: Year 4 (2020)	Language Arts: Year 5 (2021)	Language Arts: Year 6 (2022)
White	55.1%	56.9%	58.6%	60.3%	61.8%	63.4%	64.8%
All Students	50.1%	52.1%	54.0%	55.8%	57.6%	59.3%	60.9%
Economically Disadvantaged	37.1%	39.6%	42.0%	44.4%	46.6%	48.7%	50.8%
American Indian	23.7%	26.7%	29.7%	32.5%	35.2%	37.8%	40.3%
Children with Disabilities	16.1%	19.5%	22.7%	25.8%	28.8%	31.6%	34.3%
English Learners	8.3%	11.9%	15.5%	18.8%	22.1%	25.2%	28.2%

Year to Year Gains								
Subgroups	Language Arts: Baseline Data (2016)	Language Arts: Year 1 (2017)	Language Arts: Year 2 (2018)	Language Arts: Year 3 (2019)	Language Arts: Year 4 (2020)	Language Arts: Year 5 (2021)	Language Arts: Year 6 (2022)	6 Year Gain
English Learners	8.3%	11.9%	15.5%	18.8%	22.1%	25.2%	28.2%	19.9%
Year to Year Gain		3.6%	3.6%	3.3%	3.3%	3.1%	3.0%	
Children with Disabilities	16.1%	19.5%	22.7%	25.8%	28.8%	31.6%	34.3%	18.2%
Year to Year Gain		3.4%	3.2%	3.1%	3.0%	2.8%	2.7%	
American Indian	23.7%	26.7%	29.7%	32.5%	35.2%	37.8%	40.3%	16.6%
Year to Year Gain		3.0%	3.0%	2.8%	2.7%	2.6%	2.5%	
Economically Disadvantaged	37.1%	39.6%	42.0%	44.4%	46.6%	48.7%	50.8%	13.7%
Year to Year Gain		2.5%	2.4%	2.4%	2.2%	2.1%	2.1%	
All Students	50.1%	52.1%	54.0%	55.8%	57.6%	59.3%	60.9%	10.8%
Year to Year Gain		2.0%	1.9%	1.8%	1.8%	1.7%	1.6%	
White	55.1%	56.9%	58.6%	60.3%	61.8%	63.4%	64.8%	9.7%
Year to Year Gain		1.8%	1.7%	1.7%	1.5%	1.6%	1.4%	

CHART B

Math Achievement Goals Over Six Years							
Subgroups	Math Baseline Data (2016)	Math Year 1 (2017)	Math Year 2 (2018)	Math Year 3 (2019)	Math Year 4 (2020)	Math Year 5 (2021)	Math Year 6 (2022)
White	46.6%	48.7%	50.8%	52.7%	54.6%	56.4%	58.2%
All Students	41.8%	41.8%	46.3%	48.5%	50.5%	52.5%	54.4%
Economically Disadvantaged	29.8%	32.6%	35.3%	37.9%	40.3%	42.7%	45.0%
American Indian	17.8%	21.1%	24.3%	27.3%	30.2%	33.0%	35.7%
Children with Disabilities	14.9%	18.3%	21.6%	24.7%	27.7%	30.6%	33.4%
English Learners	8.6%	12.2%	15.7%	19.1%	22.4%	25.5%	28.4%

Year to Year Gains								
Subgroups	Math: Baseline Data (2016)	Math: Year 1 (2017)	Math: Year 2 (2018)	Math: Year 3 (2019)	Math: Year 4 (2020)	Math: Year 5 (2021)	Math: Year 6 (2022)	6 Year Gain
English Learners	8.6%	12.2%	15.7%	19.1%	22.4%	25.5%	28.4%	19.8%
Year to Year Gain		3.6%	3.5%	3.4%	3.3%	3.1%	2.9%	
Children with Disabilities	14.9%	18.3%	21.6%	24.7%	27.7%	30.6%	33.4%	18.5%
Year to Year Gain		3.4%	3.3%	3.1%	3.0%	2.9%	2.8%	
American Indian	17.8%	21.1%	24.3%	27.3%	30.2%	33.0%	35.7%	17.9%
Year to Year Gain		3.3%	3.2%	3.0%	2.9%	2.8%	2.7%	
Economically Disadvantaged	29.8%	32.6%	35.3%	37.9%	40.3%	42.7%	45.0%	15.2%
Year to Year Gain		2.8%	2.7%	2.6%	2.4%	2.4%	2.3%	
All Students	41.8%	41.8%	46.3%	48.5%	50.5%	52.5%	54.4%	12.6%
Year to Year Gain		0.0%	4.5%	2.2%	2.0%	2.0%	1.9%	
White	46.6%	48.7%	50.8%	52.7%	54.6%	56.4%	58.2%	11.6%
Year to Year Gain		2.1%	2.1%	1.9%	1.9%	1.8%	1.8%	

Update - Long-Term Goals

The original tables shared by MT-PEC have been revised to a more reasonable level in terms of outcomes in almost every case. Although there continues to be an expectation that high risk learners improve at a faster rate than their peers it should be noted, unlike most other states that have already submitted, the proposed long-term goals for these students start at a level appropriate to their group and culminates after six years after less than four percent actual improvement targets at a level far lower than other groups of students. In contrast, several states have adopted an NCLB approach that has the same target for all students regardless of where they start in comparison to one another.

The algorithm used to set the long-term goals over time considers factors such as prior year performance, use of normalized z scores rather than raw scale scores, group size, and a comparison to an annual average performance level.

School Accountability

The tables below are proposed to illustrate the point systems that have been created to show school accountability and student success indicators. Certainly, in the first chart are the four federally required indicators which must be ‘substantially weighted’ over the fifth indicator.

Our primary concern is how the proficiency marker will be set, the growth model that will used, the expectations of EL students considering Long Term Goals and Academic Achievement discussion.

1-4 Federally Required Indicators (65 points):		
Accountability Indicators	K-8	High school
1. Academic Achievement: proficiency on statewide mathematics and ELA assessments	25 points	30 points
2. Academic Growth	30 points	N/A
3. English Learner Progress: applied to all schools with ten or more English Learners	10 points	10 points
4. Graduation Rate Four-year adjusted cohort	N/A	25 points

5th Indicator for Montana Flexibility (35 points):		
5. Student Engagement and School Climate Indicator	K-8	High school
Satisfactory attendance	20 points	15 points
College and Career Ready Percentage of students determined to be college and/or career ready, met by students meeting one or more of the following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College-ready benchmark on ACT composite or... • Concentrator in a Career and Technical Education pathway, or • Completion (with passing grade) of a dual enrollment course, AP or IB 	N/A	15 points
STEM Education: Proficiency on statewide science assessment	10 points	N/A
School Quality Survey: Program quality indicators for improving school climate, reducing behavior issues and increasing engagement	5 points	5 points

School Support:

We are pleased that the OPI will be identifying schools for school support after three years. We do have a concern regarding the possible publishing of the ranking of schools to determine the bottom five.

Key Initiatives to Support School Conditions:

We are satisfied with the OPI encouraging a whole-child philosophy and identifying the listed key initiatives that OPI will continue to utilize:

- [The Montana Behavioral Initiative](#)
- [Bully-Free Montana Tool Kit](#)
- [Mental Health Awareness & Suicide Prevention](#)
- [School Safety and Emergency Operations Planning](#)
- [School-based Child Nutrition Programs](#)
- [Educator, Support Staff, and Administrator Training](#)

Positive Transitions:

We are particularly pleased to see Early Childhood to Kindergarten below in the four major transitions in life:

- Early Childhood Kindergarten
- Elementary to Middle School
- Middle School to High School
- High School to college, career, and community

Supporting Effective Teaching:

As noted in other sections of our comments, the details of how the OPI will provide:

“Support on recruiting, developing, and retaining effective teachers through training, technical assistance, and capacity-building efforts that promote continuous professional growth of every Montana teacher” will be important when considering the implementation of the bulleted items below:

- Improving instruction will increase student achievement
- Pathways for teacher leadership will include a “Grow Our Own” model involving induction from the university system to mentorship at the district level which ensures sustainability

- National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS or NBC) Certification
(NBC professional development continuum graphic)



- Partnerships with higher education and community leaders will be prioritized for recruiting and retaining high quality educators in, especially in Montana’s rural schools
- Montana will use a Tiered System of Support for Educators

After School Programs/21st Century Learning Centers:

With Title IV funding for this programming in serious jeopardy at the federal level from both the White House and Congress, it may be wise to have a ‘Plan B’ in mind.

Serving All Montana Students:

One last time, the details of how the OPI will implement its commitment ‘to serving all Montana students and removing barriers to educational opportunities for at-risk students at all grade levels’ is our greater concern. A recommended consideration: rephrase the statement ‘All means all in Montana’ to ‘All means every student in Montana’. This has proven to have a more individualized approach to including all students.

School Accountability - *Update*

Currently a group of Montana educators are being sought to help set proficiency levels for the ACT rather than strictly take the work some someone else.

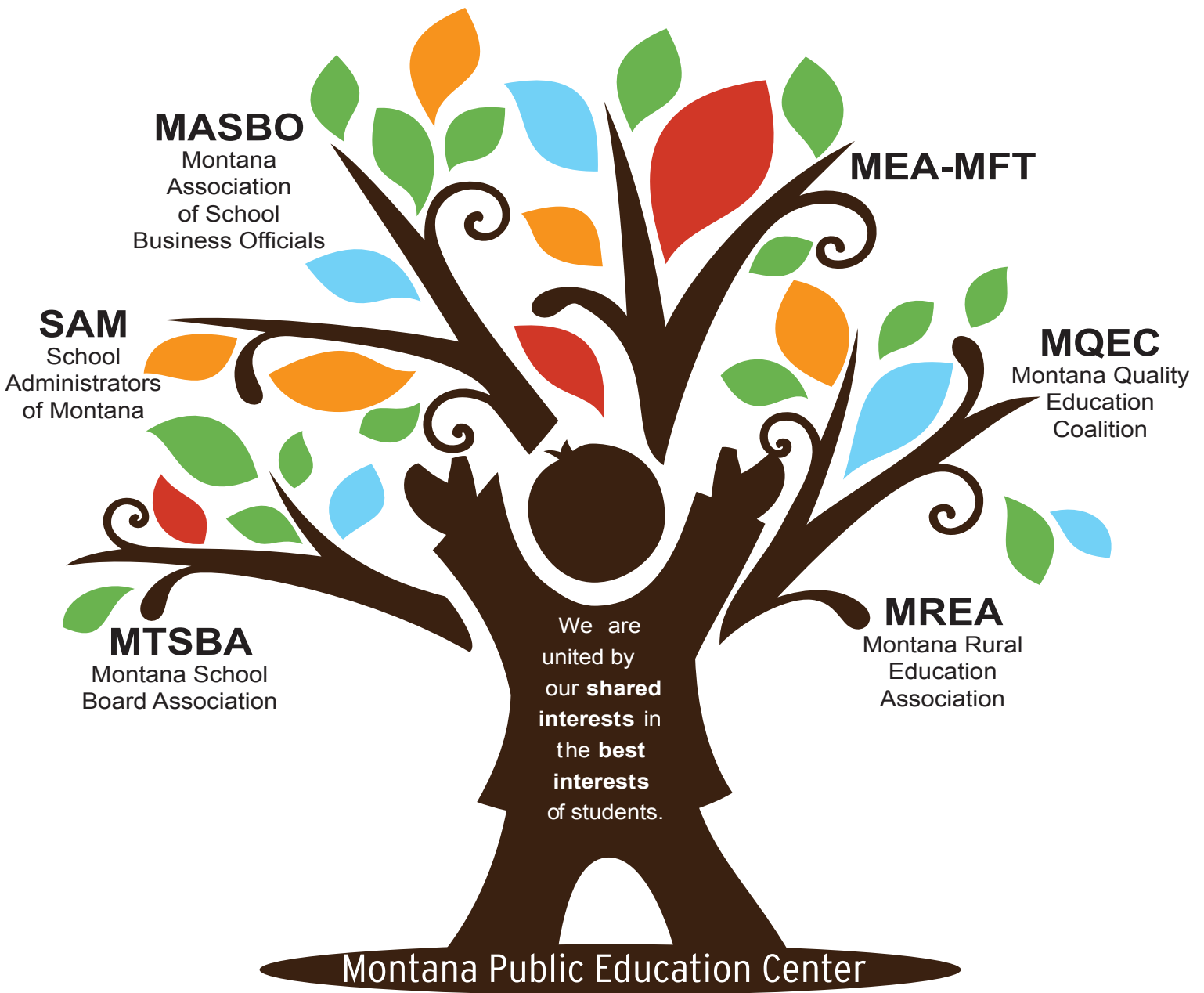
Plan Development Process - *Update*

Over time it has become clear that the OPI has been willing to not only ask for input from the field but to also take a great deal of the feedback into account and revise the Proposed MT ESSA Statewide Plan.

Comment on Plan Submission - *Update*

MT-PEC supports the content of plan to be submitted following the Governor’s review, and we stand in support of the Montana ESSA Plan through the process of USED Peer Review and to approval.

Once submitted this is the Montana plan and we will resist any attempt of regulating agencies to alter the plan in ways that will weaken it’s intent to serve the students of Montana.



Learn more at www.mt-pec.org