



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

April 22, 2022

The Honorable Elsie Arntzen
Superintendent of Public Instruction
Montana Office of Public Instruction
P.O. Box 202501
Helena, MT 59620-2501

Dear Superintendent Arntzen:

I am writing in response to Montana's request on March 21, 2022, to the U.S. Department of Education (Department) to amend its approved consolidated State plan under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), using the COVID-19 State Plan Addendum (Addendum). Montana requested these amendments to account for short-term changes to its system of annual meaningful differentiation school year 2021-2022 due to extraordinary circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic and in response to the waivers the Department granted Montana from the accountability requirements of the ESEA for the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years and the assessment requirements for the 2019-2020 school year.

Specifically, Montana requested the amendments to:

- Shift forward long-term goals for academic achievement, graduation rate, and progress in achieving English language proficiency by two years.
- Identify schools for targeted support an improvement due to consistently underperforming subgroups (TSI) using data from the 2018-2019, 2020-2021, and 2021-2022 school years.
- Omit the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years when determining whether the school has met the statewide exit criteria for comprehensive support and improvement (CSI) and additional targeted support and improvement (ATSI) schools.
- For CSI schools identified in fall 2022, revise the exit criteria for fall 2023 to require that a school (1) no longer be in the bottom 5 percent of Title I schools and (2) meet the academic growth goals in the school's improvement plan (CSIP) for one year (rather than three consecutive years).
- For ATSI schools identified in fall 2022, revise the exit criteria for fall 2023 to require that (1) all subgroups in the school perform at a level higher than the lowest-performing 5 percent of Title I schools and (2) the school meet the academic growth goals set in the school's CSIP for one year (rather than two consecutive years).

I am approving Montana's short-term changes to its ESEA consolidated State plan. This letter and Montana's approved Addendum for the 2021-2022 school year will be posted on the Department's website along with the currently approved version of Montana's ESEA consolidated State plan (available at: <https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-formula-grants/school-support-and-accountability/essa-consolidated-state-plans/>). Because I am approving changes through the Addendum

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that are not limited to the 2021-2022 school year (i.e., shifted long-term goals and measurements of interim progress, shifted school identification timeline, and modified exit criteria), the State must submit an updated ESEA consolidated State plan that incorporates those approved changes at a later date.

Please be aware that approval of this amendment to Montana’s consolidated State plan is not a determination that all the information and data included in the amended State plan comply with Federal civil rights requirements, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. It is Montana’s responsibility to comply with these civil rights requirements.

I know that you are doing all in your power to support your districts and schools to ensure the health and well-being of students and educators. Thank you for your dedication to this effort. If you have any questions, please contact my staff at OESE.TitleI-a@ed.gov.

Sincerely,

/s/

James F. Lane, Ed.D.
Senior Advisor, Office of the Secretary
Delegated the Authority to Perform the
Functions and Duties of the Assistant Secretary
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education

cc: Dr. Julie Murgel, MT OPI Chief Operating Officer