

**I. RACE TO THE TOP APPLICATION ASSURANCES
(CFDA No. 84.395A)**

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| Legal Name of Applicant (Office of the Governor): Office of Governor Brian Schweitzer | Applicant's Mailing Address: P.O. Box 200801 Helena, MT 59620 |
| Employer Identification Number: 81-0302402 | Organizational DUNS: 082348421 |
| State Race to the Top Contact Name: (Single point of contact for communication) Dan Villa | Contact Position and Office: Education Policy Advisor Office of the Governor |
| Contact Telephone: (406) 444-9865 | Contact E-mail Address: dvilla@mt.gov |
| Required Applicant Signatures: | |
| To the best of my knowledge and belief, all of the information and data in this application are true and correct. | |
| I further certify that I have read the application, am fully committed to it, and will support its implementation: | |
| Governor or Authorized Representative of the Governor (Printed Name): Vivian Hammill | Telephone: (406) 444-5506 |
| Signature of Governor or Authorized Representative of the Governor: <i>Vivian U. Hammill, Chief of Staff</i> | Date: 5/28/2010 |
| Chief State School Officer (Printed Name): Denise Juneau | Telephone: 406-444- 6543 5658 |
| Signature of the Chief State School Officer: <i>Denise Juneau</i> | Date: 5/28/2010 |
| President of the State Board of Education (Printed Name): Patty Myers | Telephone: 406-899-0874 |
| Signature of the President of the State Board of Education: <i>Patty Myers</i> | Date: 5/28/2010 |

State Attorney General Certification

I certify that the State's description of, and statements and conclusions concerning, State law, statute, and regulation in its application are complete, accurate, and constitute a reasonable interpretation of State law, statute, and regulation.

(See especially Eligibility Requirement (b), Selection Criteria (B)(1), (D)(1), (E)(1), (F)(2), (F)(3).)

I certify that the State does not have any legal, statutory, or regulatory barriers at the State level to linking data on student achievement (as defined in this notice) or student growth (as defined in this notice) to teachers and principals for the purpose of teacher and principal evaluation.

State Attorney General or Authorized Representative (Printed Name):

Telephone:

STEVE BULLOCK

(406) 444-2026

Signature of the State Attorney General or Authorized Representative:

Date:



May 27, 2010

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

BRIAN SCHWEITZER
GOVERNOR



JOHN BOHLINGER
LT. GOVERNOR

May 28, 2010

Race to the Top
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20202

To Whom It May Concern:

I submit to you Montana's application for Race to the Top funding. As Governor, I recognize this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. The "Montana Plan" allows our frontier state to design and implement innovative reforms for our students, teachers, schools, and communities. You will find national leadership in distance education, dual enrollment, and science and math education. Montana's Superintendent of Public Instruction Denise Juneau and Board of Public Education Chairwoman Patty Myers share my commitment to making these innovative changes.

Montana has already made significant progress toward adopting common standards and assessments, building strong data systems, developing and supporting great teachers and leaders, and turning around our lowest-achieving schools. We look forward to the challenge presented by Race to the Top.

We are well-positioned to maximize the benefit of these dollars to strengthen our economy through strategic investments in education. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,


BRIAN SCHWEITZER
Governor

State of Montana

Race to the Top Phase 2 Application

6/1/2010



“Education is at the heart of strengthening the future for Montana families and their economic vitality. The world is rapidly changing and schools need to be responsive, regardless of where you live. There is a connection between quality education and economic success. The best paying jobs today and in the future require ever-increasing skills and knowledge; we need to help our Montana kids become students for life,” Governor Brian Schweitzer.

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State Attorney General or Authorized Representative (Printed Name):

Telephone:

STEVE BULLOCK

(406) 444-2026

Signature of the State Attorney General or Authorized Representative:

Date:



May 27, 2010



**ACCOUNTABILITY, TRANSPARENCY, REPORTING
AND OTHER ASSURANCES AND CERTIFICATIONS**

Accountability, Transparency and Reporting Assurances

The Governor or his/her authorized representative assures that the State will comply with all of the accountability, transparency, and reporting requirements that apply to the Race to the Top program, including the following:

- For each year of the program, the State will submit a report to the Secretary, at such time and in such manner as the Secretary may require, that describes:
 - the uses of funds within the State;
 - how the State distributed the funds it received;
 - the number of jobs that the Governor estimates were saved or created with the funds;
 - the State's progress in reducing inequities in the distribution of highly qualified teachers, implementing a State longitudinal data system, and developing and implementing valid and reliable assessments for limited English proficient students and students with disabilities; and
 - if applicable, a description of each modernization, renovation, or repair project approved in the State application and funded, including the amounts awarded and project costs (ARRA Division A, Section 14008)

- The State will cooperate with any U.S. Comptroller General evaluation of the uses of funds and the impact of funding on the progress made toward closing achievement gaps (ARRA Division A, Section 14009)

- If the State uses funds for any infrastructure investment, the State will certify that the investment received the full review and vetting required by law and that the chief executive accepts responsibility that the investment is an appropriate use of taxpayer funds. This certification will include a description of the investment, the estimated total cost, and the amount of covered funds to be used. The certification will be posted on the State's website and linked to www.Recovery.gov. A State or local agency may not use funds under the ARRA for infrastructure investment funding unless this certification is made and posted. (ARRA Division A, Section 1511)

- The State will submit reports, within 10 days after the end of each calendar quarter, that contain the information required under section 1512(c) of the ARRA in accordance with any guidance issued by the Office of Management and Budget or the Department. (ARRA Division A, Section 1512(c))

- The State will cooperate with any appropriate Federal Inspector General's examination of records under the program. (ARRA Division A, Section 1515)

Race to the Top
State of Montana Phase 2 Application





Other Assurances and Certifications

The Governor or his/her authorized representative assures or certifies the following:

- The State will comply with all applicable assurances in OMB Standard Forms 424B (Assurances for Non-Construction Programs) and to the extent consistent with the State's application, OMB Standard Form 424D (Assurances for Construction Programs), including the assurances relating to the legal authority to apply for assistance; access to records; conflict of interest; merit systems; nondiscrimination; Hatch Act provisions; labor standards; flood hazards; historic preservation; protection of human subjects; animal welfare; lead-based paint; Single Audit Act; and the general agreement to comply with all applicable Federal laws, executive orders and regulations.
- With respect to the certification regarding lobbying in Department Form 80-0013, no Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the making or renewal of Federal grants under this program; the State will complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure Form to Report Lobbying," when required (34 C.F.R. Part 82, Appendix B); and the State will require the full certification, as set forth in 34 C.F.R. Part 82, Appendix A, in the award documents for all subawards at all tiers.
- The State will comply with all of the operational and administrative provisions in Title XV and XIV of the ARRA, including Buy American Requirements (ARRA Division A, Section 1605), Wage Rate Requirements (section 1606), and any applicable environmental impact requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1970 (NEPA), as amended, (42 U.S.C. 4371 et seq.) (ARRA Division A, Section 1609). In using ARRA funds for infrastructure investment, recipients will comply with the requirement regarding Preferences for Quick Start Activities (ARRA Division A, Section 1602).
- Any local educational agency (LEA) receiving funding under this program will have on file with the State a set of assurances that meets the requirements of section 442 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1232e).
- Any LEA receiving funding under this program will have on file with the State (through either its Stabilization Fiscal Stabilization Fund application or another U.S. Department of Education Federal grant) a description of how the LEA will comply with the requirements of section 427 of GEPA (20 U.S.C. 1228a). The description must include information on the steps the LEA proposes to take to permit students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries to overcome barriers (including barriers based on gender, race, color, national origin, disability, and age) that impede access to, or participation in, the program.

Race to the Top
State of Montana Phase 2 Application



- The State and other entities will comply with the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR), including the following provisions as applicable: 34 CFR Part 74–Administration of Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Non-Profit Organizations; 34 CFR Part 75–Direct Grant Programs; 34 CFR Part 77– Definitions that Apply to Department Regulations; 34 CFR Part 80– Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments, including the procurement provisions; 34 CFR Part 81– General Education Provisions Act–Enforcement; 34 CFR Part 82– New Restrictions on Lobbying; 34 CFR Part 84–Governmentwide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Financial Assistance); 34 CFR Part 85–Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement).

SIGNATURE BLOCK FOR CERTIFYING OFFICIAL

Governor or Authorized Representative of the Governor (Printed Name):

VIVIAN V. HAMMILL

Signature of Governor or Authorized Representative of the Governor:

Vivian V. Hammill

Date:

5/28/2010



ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

A State must meet the following requirements in order to be eligible to receive funds under this program.

Eligibility Requirement (a)

The State's applications for funding under Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund program must be approved by the Department prior to the State being awarded a Race to the Top grant.

The Department will determine eligibility under this requirement before making a grant award.

Eligibility Requirement (b)

At the time the State submits its application, there are no legal, statutory, or regulatory barriers at the State level to linking data on student achievement (as defined in this notice) or student growth (as defined in this notice) to teachers and principals for the purpose of teacher and principal evaluation.

The certification of the Attorney General addresses this requirement. The applicant may provide explanatory information, if necessary. The Department will determine eligibility under this requirement.

(Enter text here.)



(A) State Success Factors *(125 total points)*

(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEAs' participation in it
(65 points)

The extent to which—

- (i) The State has set forth a comprehensive and coherent reform agenda that clearly articulates its goals for implementing reforms in the four education areas described in the ARRA and improving student outcomes statewide, establishes a clear and credible path to achieving these goals, and is consistent with the specific reform plans that the State has proposed throughout its application; *(5 points)*
- (ii) The participating LEAs (as defined in this notice) are strongly committed to the State's plans and to effective implementation of reform in the four education areas, as evidenced by Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) (as set forth in Appendix D) or other binding agreements between the State and its participating LEAs (as defined in this notice) that include— *(45 points)*
 - (a) Terms and conditions that reflect strong commitment by the participating LEAs (as defined in this notice) to the State's plans;
 - (b) Scope-of-work descriptions that require participating LEAs (as defined in this notice) to implement all or significant portions of the State's Race to the Top plans; and
 - (c) Signatures from as many as possible of the LEA superintendent (or equivalent), the president of the local school board (or equivalent, if applicable), and the local teachers' union leader (if applicable) (one signature of which must be from an authorized LEA representative) demonstrating the extent of leadership support within participating LEAs (as defined in this notice); and
- (iii) The LEAs that are participating in the State's Race to the Top plans (including considerations of the numbers and percentages of participating LEAs, schools, K-12 students, and students in poverty) will translate into broad statewide impact, allowing the State to reach its ambitious yet achievable goals, overall and by student subgroup, for—*(15 points)*
 - (a) Increasing student achievement in (at a minimum) reading/language arts and mathematics, as reported by the NAEP and the assessments required under the ESEA;
 - (b) Decreasing achievement gaps between subgroups in reading/language arts and mathematics, as reported by the NAEP and the assessments required under the ESEA;
 - (c) Increasing high school graduation rates (as defined in this notice); and
 - (d) Increasing college enrollment (as defined in this notice) and increasing the number of students who complete at least a year's worth of college credit that is applicable to a degree within two years of enrollment in an institution of higher education.

In the text box below, the State shall describe its current status in meeting the criterion, as well as projected goals as described in (A)(1)(iii). The narrative or attachments shall also include, at a minimum, the evidence listed below, and how each piece of evidence demonstrates the State's success in meeting the criterion. The narrative and attachments may also include any additional



information the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.

Evidence for (A)(1)(ii):

| | |
|---|----------------------------|
| An example of the State’s standard Participating LEA MOU, and description of variations used, if any. | Appendix A(1)-I |
| The completed summary table indicating which specific portions of the State’s plan each LEA is committed to implementing, and relevant summary statistics (see Summary Table for (A)(1)(ii)(b), below). | Summary table below |
| The completed summary table indicating which LEA leadership signatures have been obtained (see Summary Table for (A)(1)(ii)(c), below). | Summary table below |

Evidence for (A)(1)(iii):

| | |
|---|----------------------------|
| The completed summary table indicating the numbers and percentages of participating LEAs, schools, K-12 students, and students in poverty (see Summary Table for (A)(1)(iii), below). | Summary table below |
| Tables and graphs that show the State’s goals, overall and by subgroup, requested in the criterion, together with the supporting narrative. In addition, describe what the goals would look like were the State not to receive an award under this program. | See narrative |

Evidence for (A)(1)(ii) and (A)(1)(iii):

| | |
|--|-------------------------|
| The completed detailed table, by LEA, that includes the information requested in the criterion (see Detailed Table for (A)(1), below). | Appendix A(1)-II |
|--|-------------------------|

Recommended maximum response length: Ten pages (excluding tables)



"Education is at the heart of strengthening the future for Montana families and their economic vitality. The world is rapidly changing and schools need to be responsive, regardless of where you live in this big state. There is a connection between quality education and economic success. The best paying jobs today and in the future require ever-increasing skills and knowledge; we need to help our Montana kids become students for life." – Governor Brian Schweitzer

Section A(1)(i): Montana’s educators have a vision. From the mountainous west to the prairies of the east, we see a future for Montana’s children where all students have access to excellent teachers, quality schools, and rewarding job opportunities.

It is a future in which schools throughout the state have excellent teachers and high-achieving students with bright horizons. With the support of Montana’s local and state educational agencies, universities, teachers’ associations, and communities, this vision can become a reality. Montana schools will achieve this vision and provide a coherent strategy for instruction by implementing evidence-driven, standards-based education. New balanced assessment and data systems will drive data-based decision-making, forging new paths for Montana’s classrooms. A focus on aligning intellectual achievements with the development of each child’s social, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being will allow our children to realize their full potential. We know that we need to work together; Montana cannot achieve this vision without strong leadership and active community participation. School administrators and teachers must work with state agencies to implement this plan, reaching out to parents and local leaders to determine community needs. Race to the Top funding would facilitate making Montana’s vision a reality for its students. Our state and local educational systems, community leaders and communities, and business leaders and businesses have committed to working together to advance our education reform and innovation plans. Montana knows that in order to grow a future of leaders and innovators, our whole community must support our children.

Montana has a long and noteworthy history of providing for local control of community-based school systems with appropriate guidance, assistance, and direction from the state level, which has resulted in strong student performance results, particularly in the recent past as noted in the statewide results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Our state



has crafted a plan to ensure the students of Montana are ready to be leaders in the growing global society and economy. Our political and business leadership have made implementing reform through new innovations and opportunities for Montana students a priority. We are committed to increasing student achievement and aspiration in Montana’s 418 districts that make up its 309 school systems that serve nearly 143,000 students. This goal is one of the state’s most pressing imperatives for all state and local leaders.

Our state has come together to advance educational reform and innovation through educational methods that nurture the whole child. Montana has embraced the concepts espoused in the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development’s report “The Learning Compact Redefined: A Call to Action, A Report of the Commission on the Whole Child.” This report recognizes the importance of student achievement and longitudinal data tracking, but it also recognizes the importance of each child’s intellectual, social, emotional, physical, and spiritual development. We strive to create environments where each child can develop his or her gifts and realize his or her full potential. Communities across Montana are committed to offering family support and involvement, volunteers, and advocates. Our government and businesses are equally committed to supporting educational reform. Finally, our schools and teachers are dedicated to providing challenging and engaging curriculum, safe learning environments, high-quality educators, evidence-based assessment and instructional practices, and much more. Montana is unquestionably a leader in education.

Our constitution requires a quality education for all Montana citizens and guarantees educational opportunity for all students regardless of their geographical location, economic status, or heritage. Section 1.1 of Article X of the Montana Constitution reads “It is the goal of the people to establish a system of education which will develop the full educational potential of each person. Equality of educational opportunity is guaranteed to each person of the state.” Additionally, Montana is most notable across the country for implementing a constitutional provision that recognizes the rich cultural heritage and vibrant history of American Indians in its educational system. Section 1.2 of Article X goes on to say “The state recognizes the distinct and unique cultural heritage of the American Indians and is committed in its educational goals to the preservation of their cultural integrity.” Montana’s Indian Education for All initiative through the



Office of Public Instruction recognizes that “What is important is that all humans be allowed feeling of integrity and pride connected with who they are and with whom they identify in order to help them develop the self-esteem and self-confidence that will enhance their learning.”

Through Montana’s unique structure of governing public education, we have been able to accomplish meaningful student performance-related results. Montana’s students consistently rank higher than the national average for mathematics, science, and reading scores on NAEP [National Center for Education Statistics 2000-2009]. We have achieved this accomplishment through a productive balance of local control and state level expectations of accountability through rule. The time has come, though, to recognize the current and changing education landscape in Montana, across this country, and around the globe in order to promote innovation, state-leveraged assistance, and reform when and where it fits school systems best. Race to the Top (RTTT) would certainly provide the boost to get these changes off the ground and enhance our efforts in schools and classrooms across our state.

To meet our education goals, Montana is requesting \$75,000,000 in funding from Race to the Top to be divided evenly between state-level activities and participating Local Education Agencies (LEAs) identified within this application. The innovation, assistance, and reform elements of our plan include sweeping and aggressive objectives that we are certain are achievable only with the assistance of RTTT funding.

There is widespread commitment to education reform and innovations among leaders of state government beginning with the Governor’s Office, OPI, the Montana Board of Public Education, and Montana Board of Regents. LEAs through their administrative leadership and Boards of Trustees, teachers through their state and local unions, and state-level organizations have all shown their support of the shared vision of progressing public education to the next level and beyond. The state is committed to working as one community to move the needle of what we do and how we do it in public education to serve the future of today’s students.

Through the Montana Race to the Top plan, an agenda has been laid out that would prepare students for all skills necessary for success: academic, social, behavioral, and emotional. The state believes that educators are invested in helping all students succeed. By supporting educators through professional development, providing schools and administrators with data and



assessment tools, and reaching out to communities, Montana's innovative plan for reform provides a comprehensive system for improving outcomes for Montana's students.

Montana's Response to Intervention (RTI) program integrates assessment and intervention within a multi-level prevention system to maximize student achievement in a timely responsive manner and to reduce behavior problems. Utilizing RTI structures and principles, we will implement each reform statewide in partnership with LEAs, building upon the success of this program and the support it has received across Montana. RTI works to identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes, monitor student progress, provide evidence-based interventions and adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student's responsiveness to those interventions. It is imperative that these resources are used to integrate RTI and RTTT reform and innovations across the state in order to ensure that meaningful interventions take place where and when they are necessary to maximize the local resources and time constraints in serving Montana public school students.

Montana is setting a high bar for student achievement based on curriculum standards. For the past twelve years, the Montana Board of Public Education (BPE) has worked to develop the Montana content standards. Charting a successful path to reform and innovation, Montana adopted strong statewide standards in mathematics and communications arts that reflect our values of excellence and high achievement. These standards already meet or exceed the Common Core Standards for both Career and College Ready and K-12 English/Language Arts and Mathematics Standards.

Last year, Governor Brian Schweitzer and Superintendent Denise Juneau signed a Memo of Understanding to ensure Montana's participation in the national development of Common Core Standards. In this effort, Montana has collaborated with 51 other states and territories and instructional leaders from around the country to develop national common core standards in Mathematics and English Language Arts. Montana's Board of Public Education is committed to the Secretary's vision of implementing internationally benchmarked standards in our public school system.

Montana has also been an active participant in the RTTT Assessment Program, which will be critical in measuring our progress as these national standards are implemented in



Montana. It is essential to have assessment tools to analyze data and make informed decisions about student needs. From Montana's perspective, an effective skills-based reading, math, or written expression program should include the following kinds of assessment: screening, benchmark, progress monitoring, diagnostic, outcome, and informal. These measures will help hold Montana schools to the standards for quality education supported by state and local education plans.

Montana is a leader in data-based decision making. Effective schools use a team approach to make data-based decisions for individual students to increase student achievement. Montana's education reform and innovation plan includes a data system that will allow for the tracking of student assessment data over time, eventually tying this data to each student's teacher. This data will be available for teachers and leaders to use as they deem appropriate in their setting.

Montana's vision for a system of support schools and districts will be based on their individual needs as determined by a multifaceted, data-driven process. A five-stage process using 16 areas of support will be considered that will allow for school and district specific response for support. This system will rely on data to formulate an assistance model. In order to ensure that data is accessible to those who need it, Montana will set up a K-12 Education Data Warehouse to promote P-20 data linkages.

Montana provides quality educators and encourages high quality professional development. The success of Montana's education reform and innovation plan is dependent on effective teachers. Skilled teachers have the knowledge and ability to deliberately plan instruction and select appropriate materials that align with Montana State Standards. They make informed decisions based on research findings and have comprehensive knowledge and understanding to increase the likelihood their instruction will lead to improvements in student achievement. To develop and retain effective teachers and principals, schools must offer professional training and implement a clear system of evaluation.

The Montana Board of Public Education has already established the Chapter 55 Review Task Force and has asked this group to provide a recommendation to the State Superintendent on a research-based teacher evaluation system. This recommendation will provide a clear direction



that all school systems in Montana may use to ensure more than a minimum of consistency and expectation in the performance of those who lead and teach in our schools.

Exploring innovation in licensing teachers, while maintaining high expectations, is important to Montana education leadership. Montana will examine a licensure system that could be tiered in nature where initial teacher candidates could be screened into their appropriate preparation programs, each of which would have multiple paths to initial licensure, and novice teachers could then work towards an end goal of full professional level licensure.

Under Montana's plan, professional development needs should be evaluated for effectiveness and training should be provided at each phase of implementation. Teacher and administrator preparation should reflect the needs of Montana schools and lay the groundwork for successful implementation of Montana's RTTT plan.

Montana creates an environment to turn around low-performing schools. Montana's education reform plan strives to balance our tradition of local control with the state's need to assist and direct schools and districts that are persistently low-achieving. The Montana Public Board of Education will work with all stakeholders to determine when and where intervention is necessary.

In a large and sparsely populated state like Montana, distance learning and dual enrollment can play a huge role across the state to provide greater access to opportunity for all students. Two thirds of the public school students attend 10 percent of the schools in the state. The remaining one third of Montana's public school students are located in very rural to frontier locations in 90 percent of our schools. Using technology to provide access is a clear solution for these students. With a comprehensive vision to address Montana's educational needs, the state is well-prepared to utilize Race to the Top funding. Montana has concrete plans to implement new standards and assessments, incorporate new data systems, enhance professional development, and enable all schools to achieve our standards of excellence and achievement. Montana is ready and eager to take whatever steps necessary to improve the quality of education for all of our students.



Section A(1)(ii): The State of Montana has crafted a strong, compelling agenda for success in education and Montana’s LEAs have committed their full support for the plan. A vast majority (82%) of Montana’s LEAs have filed MOUs. The participating LEAs cover 86% of Montana’s schools, 94% of Montana’s K-12 students, and 92% of Montana’s students living in poverty. These MOUs represent the full diversity of Montana’s schools: from the largest school district to the smallest, the urban to the frontier schools, the most affluent communities in Montana to those that are struggling. Montana’s school districts vary widely from one another in size and demographics, but despite their diversity they have come together to support the state’s agenda for education reform.

Montana’s superintendents, teachers unions and school boards have demonstrated their solid commitment to implementing significant education reforms throughout the state. All of the MOUs filed by Montana LEAs are signed by an LEA Superintendent or authorized representative, a Chairperson of the local Board of Trustees, and, where applicable, the Local Teacher’s Union Leader or President. These signatures demonstrate the extent of leadership support for Montana’s plan within each participating LEA.

Further, all LEAs filing MOUs have committed to every element of Montana’s plan, which guarantees that the four assurances identified in the RTTT application will be pursued by each LEA that has signed on. Participating LEAs will be held accountable for any RTTT resources received and will work with the state to ensure that Montana’s education plan is implemented effectively.

Section A(1)(iii): Montana’s LEAs have demonstrated their full support of Montana’s education plan and their willingness to work with the state to implement this shared vision. The state will partner with LEAs to determine the specific needs of each individually community and to respond accordingly. This partnership will significantly enhance the state’s ability to implement reform and to achieve the ambitious goals outlined in Montana’s education agenda, and it will lead to higher student performance and increased graduation rates.

Montana will work with schools and LEAs to implement reforms that will increase student achievement in reading and math on the NAEP and CRT assessments. These reforms



include the adoption of the Common Core Standards, which will raise the bar for student achievement across the state. These standards have been developed in collaboration with teachers, school administrators and experts, and are designed to ensure students are adequately prepared for higher education and rewarding careers. Participating LEA's adoption of these standards will give Montana schools common goals to work towards, and will ultimately result in statewide achievement on NAEP and the ESEA-mandated CRT tests.

Another example is the implementation of the Achievement in Montana (AIM) data collection system, which will enable Montana to better identify early indicators in student progress. Through our MontCAS assessment, formative assessment, and NAEP data, disaggregated data can be analyzed to help us identify students in need of assistance, prepare curricular assistance, and offer credit recovery options. Each participating LEA will utilize these diagnostic tools to focus attention on students in need, helping groups of students with unique challenges to meet the high standards that Montana has set. By intervening as early as possible, Montana will advance students' progress toward content area benchmarks and further close the achievement gap.

Montana's partnership with LEAs across the state will also facilitate broad implementation of RTI, which will enable the state to determine when intervention is necessary and act to prevent students from dropping out of school.

Furthermore, Montana will collaborate with LEAs to implement college and career readiness programs to improve graduation rates and college attendance. The Montana Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education has been awarded a Lumina Making Opportunity Affordable Productivity Grant with primary focus on two-year postsecondary and college completion increases. Within this collaborative effort, K-12 will work with this initiative to enhance equity, availability, and utilization of resources. An increased utilization of dual enrollment courses, clarified and improved vertical and horizontal developmental studies, combined with postsecondary improved delivery will enhance Montana's college enrollment and retention populations.

Participating LEAs will also be provided with resources to expand the Big Sky Pathways program, a Career and Technical Awareness Education program that is identifying courses and



availability for sixteen career cluster fields. Big Sky Pathways represent a recommended sequence of courses based on a student's personal interests and career goals. Students are able to select courses at their high school, a local community college, or distance education that will enable them to begin a postsecondary program with credit. By connecting coursework with students' long-term goals, this program increases students' engagement in school and their motivation to achieve.

Another important program that will benefit from local and state coordination is the Montana Digital Academy, which was established to start an online learning environment for all Montana school aged students. The Montana Digital Academy helps to level the education opportunity playing field for students in our most rural and frontier communities while assisting those schools and districts to address declining fiscal capacity. Montana's education plan would enable participating LEAs to opt into the program if they feel it is necessary and useful. Rather than taking a top-down approach to addressing high-risk students and low-performing schools, this approach enables LEAs to determine how best to utilize the resources made available to them through RTTT funding.



Summary Table for (A)(1)(ii)(b)

| Elements of State Reform Plans | Number of LEAs Participating (#) | Percentage of Total Participating LEAs (%) |
|---|---|---|
| B. Standards and Assessments | | |
| (B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments | 343 | 100% |
| C. Data Systems to Support Instruction | | |
| (C)(3) Using data to improve instruction: | | |
| (i) Use of local instructional improvement systems | 343 | 100% |
| (ii) Professional development on use of data | 343 | 100% |
| (iii) Availability and accessibility of data to researchers | 343 | 100% |
| D. Great Teachers and Leaders | | |
| (D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance: | | |
| (i) Measure student growth | 343 | 100% |
| (ii) Design and implement evaluation systems | 343 | 100% |
| (iii) Conduct annual evaluations | 343 | 100% |
| (iv)(a) Use evaluations to inform professional development | 343 | 100% |
| (iv)(b) Use evaluations to inform compensation, promotion and retention | 343 | 100% |
| (iv)(c) Use evaluations to inform tenure and/or full certification | 343 | 100% |
| (iv)(d) Use evaluations to inform removal | 343 | 100% |
| (D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals: | | |
| (i) High-poverty and/or high-minority schools | 343 | 100% |
| (ii) Hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas | 343 | 100% |
| (D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals: | | |
| (i) Quality professional development | 343 | 100% |
| (ii) Measure effectiveness of professional development | 343 | 100% |
| E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools | | |
| (E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools | 343 | 100% |

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| Summary Table for (A)(1)(ii)(c) | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Signatures acquired from participating LEAs | | | |
| Number of Participating LEAs with applicable signatures | Number of Signatures Obtained (#) | Number of Signatures Applicable (#) | Percentage (%) (obtained/applicable) |
| LEA Superintendent or Authorized Representative | 343 | 343 | 100% |
| Chairperson of Local Board of Trustees | 343 | 343 | 100% |
| Local Teacher's Union Leader or President | 256 | 256 | 100% |
| 86 of the 342 participating LEAs do not have a teacher union or association | | | |

| Summary Table for (A)(1)(iii) | | | |
|---|-----------------------|---------------|--|
| Signatures acquired from participating LEAs | | | |
| Number of Participating LEAs with applicable signatures | Participating LEAs(#) | Statewide (#) | Percentage of Total Statewide (%) (Participating LEAs/Statewide) |
| LEAs | 343 | 418 | 82% |
| Schools | 710 | 825 | 86% |
| K-12 Students | 133,764 | 142,151 | 94% |
| Students in poverty | 51,967 | 56,698 | 92% |



(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up and sustain proposed plans (30 points)

The extent to which the State has a high-quality overall plan to—

- (i) Ensure that it has the capacity required to implement its proposed plans by— (20 points)
 - (a) Providing strong leadership and dedicated teams to implement the statewide education reform plans the State has proposed;
 - (b) Supporting participating LEAs (as defined in this notice) in successfully implementing the education reform plans the State has proposed, through such activities as identifying promising practices, evaluating these practices' effectiveness, ceasing ineffective practices, widely disseminating and replicating the effective practices statewide, holding participating LEAs (as defined in this notice) accountable for progress and performance, and intervening where necessary;
 - (c) Providing effective and efficient operations and processes for implementing its Race to the Top grant in such areas as grant administration and oversight, budget reporting and monitoring, performance measure tracking and reporting, and fund disbursement;
 - (d) Using the funds for this grant, as described in the State's budget and accompanying budget narrative, to accomplish the State's plans and meet its targets, including where feasible, by coordinating, reallocating, or repurposing education funds from other Federal, State, and local sources so that they align with the State's Race to the Top goals; and
 - (e) Using the fiscal, political, and human capital resources of the State to continue, after the period of funding has ended, those reforms funded under the grant for which there is evidence of success; and

- (ii) Use support from a broad group of stakeholders to better implement its plans, as evidenced by the strength of the statements or actions of support from— (10 points)
 - (a) The State's teachers and principals, which include the State's teachers' unions or statewide teacher associations; and
 - (b) Other critical stakeholders, such as the State's legislative leadership; charter school authorizers and State charter school membership associations (if applicable); other State and local leaders (e.g., business, community, civil rights, and education association leaders); Tribal schools; parent, student, and community organizations (e.g., parent-teacher associations, nonprofit organizations, local education foundations, and community-based organizations); and institutions of higher education.

In the text box below, the State shall describe its current status in meeting the criterion. The narrative or attachments shall also include, at a minimum, the evidence listed below, and how each piece of evidence demonstrates the State's success in meeting the criterion. The narrative and attachments may also include any additional information the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers. The State's response to (A)(2)(i)(d) will be addressed in the budget section (Section VIII of the application). Attachments, such as letters of support or commitment, should



be summarized in the text box below and organized with a summary table in the Appendix. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.

Evidence for (A)(2)(i)(d):

| | |
|---|---|
| The State’s budget, as completed in Section VIII of the application. The narrative that accompanies and explains the budget and how it connects to the State’s plan, as completed in Section VIII of the application. | Addendum A(2)-I Addendum A(2)-II |
|---|---|

Evidence for (A)(2)(ii):

| | |
|---|----------------------|
| A summary in the narrative of the statements or actions and inclusion of key statements or actions in the Appendix. | See narrative |
|---|----------------------|

Recommended maximum response length: Five pages (excluding budget and budget narrative)

Section A(2)(i): Montana has successfully implemented Response to Intervention (RTI) in 111 schools across the state to improve achievement in literacy and mathematics. Montana has broadened RTI, originally designed for special education, into a comprehensive model for whole school improvement. RTI methods will be integrated into the implementation of the RTTT reforms and innovations, described throughout this application. The Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) is committed to providing optimal learning conditions that support academic achievement for all students. The RTI program creates a multi-tiered support system that supports local school principals as instructional leaders, the use of data to guide instruction, appropriate intervention and practice, parental involvement, and other research-based practices. The lessons we have learned about collaborative teaming, fidelity of implementation, community and family involvement, and strong leadership through our experience thus far with RTI will inform the administration of the RTTT reforms. The structures we have built with the RSAs coupled with the RTI framework will ensure that we achieve our goals and sustain these meaningful reforms beyond the four-year term of this grant.

As described in Section A(1)(i) of this grant application, we believe that educators are responsible for the development of the whole child. In these reforms we strive to breakdown the borders within compartmentalized education. In addition to improved student outcomes one of



the outcomes for educators who have been part of the Montana RTI Pilot Project is a renewed and deeper understanding and appreciation for each other. The time and space created by building collaborative teams at the school level allows educators to meet and troubleshoot issues as they arise concerning assessment processes, data collection, and analysis in a broader contextual framework so that instruction and interventions can be adapted to meet student needs.

At the school level, these collaborative teams exist as grade-level, subject area (communications arts and mathematics) and data teams. These collaborative teams conduct assessments and interventions, and provide these assessments to their school leadership, to Regional Service Area (RSAs), and finally to OPI where new instructional tools, professional development, and additional supports are designed and distributed. Within this structure a continuous cycle of assessments and adaptations drive student success with locally inspired reforms. Standards are set by the Montana Board of Public Education (BPE), and OPI provides the centralized support necessary to ensure the RSAs meet common benchmarks for student success.

Upon taking office in January of 2009, Superintendent Denise Juneau began the development of the Strategic Direction Action Plan. To administer and assess this plan she created Strategic Direction Teams that match the four assurances of RTTT. These teams will be engaged in oversight of the administration of RTTT ensuring adherence to a common vision and goal: improving student achievement and success. The current Strategic Direction Teams are: P-20 and Achievement, Analyzing and Using Data, and Turnaround Schools, each detailed below. One additional team will be created, the Great Teachers and Leaders Strategic Direction Team, to oversee reforms associated with section D of this application.

The OPI P-20 and Achievement Strategic Direction Team is a strategic initiative effort that affects many projects and units within OPI and its interaction with external agencies, entities, and organizations. The plan is to reduce barriers to the smooth transition of Montana students into the K-12 system; help them navigate elementary, middle, and high school careers; and assist in the transition to college or career. Through the plan, OPI will support quality education, promote success, and collaborate with our education partners and Montana families. **Appendix A(2)-I** describes a detailed timeline of goals and actions to date. Upon award of



RTTT funds this team will oversee reform agenda items for Standards and Assessments and the alignment of these standards with college and career readiness standards.

The Analyzing and Using Data Strategic Direction Team improves teaching and learning in Montana by guiding the data management initiatives and priorities of the agency, focusing on making accurate, reliable, valid and timely information available, and emphasizing research and analysis to improve decision-making. Detailed goals of this team are outlined in **Appendix A(2)-II**, with the timeline and specific activities to be set as our partnership with the SAS Institute develops as described in Section C of this grant application.

The Turnaround Schools Strategic Direction Team identifies targeted schools and develops intervention plans that will result in persistently low-performing schools better able to increase student achievement and examines internal OPI programs and activities related to student achievement in order to recommend programmatic realignments resulting in strategic interventions with targeted schools. The action plan for this team is included in **Appendix A(2)-III**. This strategic team will oversee the reform agenda items detailed in Section C(2) and administer the alignment of the School Improvement Grant (SIG) project with RTTT and the additional school improvement needs.

The Great Teachers and Leaders Strategic Team will utilize the existing RSAs to implement cohesive and directed professional development opportunities that support a rollout of each of the reforms and innovations described in this grant. In 2005 Montana began to develop RSAs to facilitate a partnership for regional professional development to improve student achievement. In development and planning since 1999, the RSAs build on the success of the special education Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) already in place. This model works well in Montana; it overcomes the challenges and limitations presented by the geographic size and frontier nature of Montana providing effective and efficient delivery of these high-quality professional development opportunities for educators in every corner of the state. A detailed description of this plan is included in Section D(5) of this grant application.

Montana has a uniquely diverse student population located in rural, urban and suburban populations requiring special responses and methods for educational reform. The successful implementation of Race to the Top support and practices will rely on a framework that considers



the disparate needs of Montana students. Gov. Brian Schweitzer and Supt. Denise Juneau are firmly committed to innovative, comprehensive education reform. The Governor has demonstrated this same commitment by maintaining funding for education as resources available for state services have decreased during the economic downturn. Montana's leaders recognize that a quality education is the most critical component of a successful future for all Montanans.

All current funding, including SI, Longitudinal Data System Grants, and Title I funding complement the stated goals of this application. Each of these funding elements is a vital for comprehensive reform and stronger schools. Montana will build on the successes of RTI, utilizing its principles and methods to integrate every area of reform in this proposal in one cohesive program designed to improve classroom outcomes and student achievement and success across the state.

This setting is ideal for Race to the Top funding. The existing structure and emphasis on education reform will endure after the federal funds have been spent. Through myriad state programs and initiatives, we have created the building blocks for comprehensive education reform that will improve opportunities for Montana students well into the future.

Section A(2)(ii): Montana has received overwhelming support for the Race to the Top application. Stakeholders — including state and local education agencies, labor unions, parent-teacher associations, rural education associations, school administrators, Indian education associations, teachers associations, banks, industry representatives, economic developers, and private business partners — have all made significant investment in Montana's public schools. These entities will be fully leveraged to maintain the reforms implemented as part of Race to the Top.

Existing financial resources will be brought to bear in order to scale up and implement the proposals contained herein as well. Federal resources like the Early Learning Council grant, SIG, Workforce Investment Act, College Access Challenge grants will all support the reform of Montana's Race to the Top application. State resources and FTE will be utilized to implement the plans most specifically for those agencies under the direction of Governor Schweitzer. OPI has already started the process to align its resource to the agenda to RTTT across the entire



agency as is evidenced through Superintendent Juneau’s Strategic Directions as described above in (A)(2)(i). Finally, as the ultimate sign of support and commitment to excellence, the consultant hired to write the Montana Race to the Top grant was paid for with private sector donations from Barrick Gold of North America, DA Davidson Companies, Glacier Bank Corporation, and the Montana Economic Developers Association. These private partners have and will continue to invest in Montana’s progressive agenda of education reforms.

This broad support is indicative of the progressive education policies in our state. Montana’s dedication to education has resulted in critical relationships across business and government sectors. Student support extends beyond teachers to include businesses, state and federal agencies, and associations concerned about our students’ and economic success.

Montana is pleased to submit letters from these stakeholders across the state. These partners are deeply committed to Montana’s vision for education reform. These letters of support come from:

- Montana Board of Public Education
- Montana Advisory Council on Indian Education
- Montana Association of School Business Officials
- Montana Association of Family and Consumer Sciences Educators
- Montana Ambassadors
- Montana Economic Developer’s Association
- Montana Association of Family and Consumer Sciences
- Montana Council of Teachers of Mathematics
- Montana Indian Education Association
- Montana Library Association
- Montana Parent Teacher Association
- Montana School Board Association
- Montana Science Teachers Association
- Montana Small Schools Alliance
- Montana State Reading Council
- Montana State University – College of Education



- School Administrators of Montana
- Montana Education Association – Montana Federation of Teachers
- University of Montana – College of Education
- Karla Geda, Elementary Principal

Full copies of these letters of support can be found in **Appendix A(2)-IV**.

The Montana State Constitution has a strong mandate for quality education, outlining in Article X the state’s responsibility to establish a system of education which will develop the full education potential of each person and to provide a basic system of free, quality public elementary and secondary schools.

Governor Schweitzer understands and embraces education as a necessity for lifelong economic success. With the assistance of the state legislature, Montana has, for the first time, defined “quality education”. Further, Governor Schweitzer has proposed and the legislature has passed historic legislation implementing necessary education reform. The new definitions, impacts and funding formulas resulting from this reform are discussed further in Section F of this grant application



(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps
(30 points)

The extent to which the State has demonstrated its ability to—

- (i) Make progress over the past several years in each of the four education reform areas, and used its ARRA and other Federal and State funding to pursue such reforms; *(5 points)*
- (ii) Improve student outcomes overall and by student subgroup since at least 2003, and explain the connections between the data and the actions that have contributed to — *(25 points)*
 - (a) Increasing student achievement in reading/language arts and mathematics, both on the NAEP and on the assessments required under the ESEA;
 - (b) Decreasing achievement gaps between subgroups in reading/language arts and mathematics, both on the NAEP and on the assessments required under the ESEA; and
 - (c) Increasing high school graduation rates.

In the text box below, the State shall describe its current status in meeting the criterion. The narrative or attachments shall also include, at a minimum, the evidence listed below, and how each piece of evidence demonstrates the State’s success in meeting the criterion. The narrative and attachments may also include any additional information the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.

Evidence for (A)(3)(ii):

| | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| <p>NAEP and ESEA results since at least 2003. Include in the Appendix all the data requested in the criterion as a resource for peer reviewers for each year in which a test was given or data was collected. Note that this data will be used for reference only and can be in raw format. In the narrative, provide the analysis of this data and any tables or graphs that best support the narrative.</p> | <p>Appendix A(3)</p> |
|---|-----------------------------|

Recommended maximum response length: Six pages

Section A(3)(i): Montana has already made significant progress toward the four assurance areas laid out in Race to the Top. Montana initiatives clearly set the state apart as an innovator in standards and assessments, data systems, great teachers and leaders, and the ability to turn around Montana’s lowest-achieving schools. Montana has funded and implemented the



Achievement in Montana (AIM) and E-Grants systems, has further provided state resources, and is currently developing the Staffing Data System which, once implemented, will provide the backbone for the linkage of teacher and principal evaluation with student performance.. An alternative teacher licensure protocol is among the initiatives that we propose to enhance the skills of our teachers and leaders. Montana has also taken a very broad approach to turning around its lowest-achieving schools by collaborating with Montana’s teachers’ union, MEA-MFT, and addressing some of Montana schools’ unique challenges through the School Improvement Grant process. These state initiatives, in combination with Montana’s unique holistic approach to educating the whole child, have enabled Montana students to thrive and have laid the groundwork for further education reforms. This educational landscape will enable Montana to use Race to the Top resources efficiently and effectively.

Standards and assessments

- **Common Core Standards:** Montana has been fully engaged in the Common Core State Standards Initiative led by the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). OPI has conducted state-level alignment processes and has found that the present accreditation standards meet or exceed both the Career and College Readiness and K-12 English/Language Arts and Mathematics Standards. Montana is committed to the Department of Education’s (Department) direction of implementing internationally benchmarked standards and committed to participating in the RTTT Assessment Program through the SMARTER/Balanced consortium.
- **Criterion Referenced Test:** Montana has implemented Criterion Referenced Test (CRT) and CRT-Alternate in grades 3-8 and 10 in Reading and Math as well as for grades 4, 8, and 10 in Science. These tests fulfill the requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The Reading and Math CRT tests have been fully approved while Science test approval is pending.
- **Assessment Evaluations:** Montana hosts annual assessment conferences featuring nationally recognized speakers. These conferences address a variety of issues including:



assessment administration, effective utilization of data, and educator partnerships with OPI.

Data systems

- **AIM:** The Achievement in Montana (AIM) program is a centralized collection point for student information and a useful tool for categorization developed by the state. AIM is intended to streamline the reporting of student-related data from LEAs to the SEA including enrollment and demographic data, eligibility for state and federal programs, registration for statewide assessments, and special education planning and reporting.

The AIM data collection system will link to a State Longitudinal Data System (LDS) beginning with the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) Early Childhood Advisory Council (MECAC) data through postsecondary education and the Montana University System (MUS) BANNER data system and Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) Workforce Services Division data that will identify early success and failure indicators in student progress. Through the Montana Comprehensive Assessment System (MontCAS) assessment data is provided by individual student and can be analyzed to identify struggling students, prepare curricular assistance, and recommend credit recovery options. Early intervention through this process will ensure students make progress toward content area benchmarks.

- **E-Grants:** All LEAs in Montana utilize E-Grants, an electronic grant application process which supports the allocation of funds through payment accountability, reporting to the grantor and grant closeout for both state and federal grants. The E-Grants process informs LEAs of grant opportunities and streamlines the application process to ensure resources are directed to areas of need.

Great teachers and leaders

- In 2007, Governor Schweitzer proposed and the Montana Legislature appropriated \$350,000 per cohort to OCHE for the Quality Educator Loan Assistance Program. This funding will provide loan repayment assistance to educators in order to move highly effective teachers and leaders into high need content areas and/or high need geographic areas.



- The BPE has asked the Chapter 55 Review Task Force, the committee tasked with revising and updating the state’s accreditation standards, to provide a recommendation to the State Superintendent on a researched-based teacher evaluation system. Once adopted by the BPE, this recommendation will provide clear direction to all schools in Montana of the are performance expectations for those who teach and lead our schools.

Turning around low-achieving schools

- **Indian Education for All:** A new report by Education Northwest identifies Montana as a regional leader in education policies especially regarding our groundbreaking constitutional requirement of Indian Education for All. Montana has implemented a statewide Indian Education program to address the cultural issues inherent in Montana’s educational system. This constitutional requirement was funded in 2005 for the first time since the 1972 Montana Constitution
- **School Improvement Grants:** Montana is committed to improving the performance of persistently low-achieving schools utilizing the transformation model for school turnaround as identified by the Department. OPI has partnered with communities to apply for SIG as part of Montana’s Schools of Promise initiative which will allow OPI to provide direct services to schools that do not have the local capacity to provide the higher level of services needed for significant academic growth.
- **Full-time kindergarten:** A key tool in addressing achievement gaps is the development of early education for at-risk groups. In 2007, Governor Brian Schweitzer, OPI, MEA-MFT, and the Legislature made early childhood education an absolute policy priority and began funding full-time kindergarten. This program is proven to reduce achievement gaps and have long-term positive benefits for lifelong learning.
- **Investing in literacy improvement:** OPI is collaborating with a local non-profit organization, the Hopa Mountain Foundation, towards a common goal of improving literacy. OPI has already purchased 5,400 high-quality books for young children in low-income families a purchase that will be matched by Hopa Mountain in 2010.
- **Dual enrollment courses:** Montana is one of seven states to receive Lumina Foundation “Making Opportunity Affordable” grant, now called College!Now, to implement a



“productivity” agenda. A major component of the grant is to increase access to dual enrollment courses encompassing “Running Start”, concurrent enrollment, early college and early college high school coursework. Dual enrollment courses create low-cost, high impact college access for Montanans of all ages from high school to displaced incumbent workers.

- **Using technology to reach all Montana students:** Montana’s OPI has expanded the use of videoconferencing. This tool increases the ability to effectively communicate across the expansive geography of Montana and can assist the most isolated rural schools. These activities have demonstrated an opportunity for cost savings, improving operational efficiency, and for providing direct and timely technical assistance and resources. Geography will not prevent educators and administrators in Montana’s furthest corners from consulting with distant advisors.
- **STEM Education:** Montana is working to prepare the state’s future workforce by implementing effective STEM education programs at all academic levels, career stages and ages. The *Governor and First Lady’s Science and Math Initiative* is encouraging Montana’s youth to discover opportunities to learn about STEM in K-12 schools and higher education, become aware of career opportunities, and explore Montana’s resource-rich surroundings, including wind and solar and other renewable energy opportunities. Further, the Governor is proposing the construction of wind and/or solar panels on each high school in Montana and will be proposing appropriate curriculum through the BPE process of content standard revision.

Working as a partner of the STEM Education Coalition, Montana will strive to ensure that the U.S. remains the economic and technological leader in the global marketplace of the 21st century.

- **Online Learning:** The Montana Digital Academy (MTDA) was established to start an online learning environment for all Montana school-aged students. The funding for this project will end at the conclusion of the 2011 academic year with 35-40 courses having been developed and delivered. The College!Now Online program will provide online learning through dual enrollment and college level coursework. Together these programs



enhance statewide citizen access to opportunities that allows frontier communities to provide equal learning options with their more urbanized counterparts including credit recovery for the growing number of at-risk high school students.

Section A(3)(ii): Montana's holistic approach to education has proven very effective, yielding impressive results on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and the ESEA-required Criterion Reference Test (CRT). Montana's strong test scores demonstrate the state's notable success in raising achievement and closing gaps between subgroups. The following is an overview of Montana's student achievement in the core subjects of reading and mathematics. Please see **Appendix A(3)-I** for this raw data and **Appendix A(3)-II** for graphic displays and explanations of the NAEP scores.

A(3)(ii)(a): Administered by the U.S. Department of Education, the National Assessment of Educational Progress, also called "The Nation's Report Card," details the continued achievement of Montana students. Montana's statewide average NAEP scores have been steadily rising since 2003, and Montana consistently scores higher than the national average in both reading and math. In 2009, Montana's NAEP math scores were in the top 20 percent nationwide, with only two states scoring higher in math. Montana eighth graders scored better than students in all but two other states (MN and MA) and Montana fourth graders scored better than students in all but four other states (MN, VT, NH, and MA). Math scores have increased dramatically among some of the state's fourth and eighth-grade students in the last two years. The reading skills of Montana students also continue to outpace the nation. The NAEP Report shows that the Montana eighth-grade average score ranked among the highest five state average scores, along with nine other states and the Montana fourth-grade average score also ranked among the five highest state average scores along with 14 other states.

Montana's scores on the statewide Criterion Reference Test (CRT) further highlight the state's success in improving student achievement. Montana's average CRT scores have increased over the past three years in Grade 4 reading and Grade 8 math and reading tests. This data is detailed in **Appendix A(3)-III**.



A(3)(ii)(b): Montana's test scores also demonstrate Montana's success in closing performance gaps. This year Montana schools were recognized by the Department's Education Trust for increasing student achievement in reading and math for both American Indian and White students over the past six years. Scores for American Indians have increased at a higher rate than they have for all American Indian students nationwide. In particular, Grade 4 American Indian scores have improved significantly since 2003.

Montana's achievements in closing performance gaps are not limited to American Indians, however. Hispanic Montana students are also narrowing the achievement gap. Montana's Grade 4 reading samples are significantly higher than for Hispanic students nationwide, and math scores are significantly higher in both grades than the national Hispanic student average. Furthermore, reading scores for students with disabilities are on par with the national average in Grade 4 and significantly higher than the national average in Grade 8.

Montana was also one of six states recognized for achieving significant progress for low-income students. Reading scores for students in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) are significantly higher in both grades than the national average, indicating Montana is closing the achievement gap afflicting students with limited resources at home. Math scores for Montana NSLP students are also consistently higher than the national average. Montana's disparities in test scores between low-income and higher-income students are among the smallest in the nation. This latest report by the Education Trust is further evidence that Montana is making strides in narrowing gaps in achievement on standardized tests while increasing the progress of individual student groups.

Montana's high student achievement rates reflect the success of our unique educational philosophy of educating the whole child. Rather than focusing solely on academic achievement, Montana schools aim to cultivate each child's physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual development. We strive to foster places of learning that encourage and celebrate every aspect of students learning. Our students have thrived in this environment and have demonstrated outstanding competence and capability. Nevertheless, Montana will continue to raise the bar for our students and expect excellence and high achievement. Race to the Top resources will enhance Montana's momentum and enable the state to implement its successful strategies on a



broad scale to further improve student achievement and narrow performance gaps.

A(3)(ii)(c): Another indication of the success of Montana’s education programs is a steady increase in high school graduation rates. The Class of 2008 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Graduation Rate overall was an impressive 82.6%.

Montana has successfully implemented several strategies to increase high school graduation rates. First, it has implemented its RTI at the secondary school level. This program is having a positive impact on current and future high school dropout rates because it has enhanced student’s success and improved the motivation to continue in school. The state has also applied the “whole child” education model to secondary schools. This model is providing a more engaging and comprehensive secondary education and is promoting academic achievement.

Montana is doing everything in its power to help struggling students earn their high school diplomas. The state is engaging in ongoing efforts to expand access to alternatives to traditional high schools, and we are promoting increased access to distance learning and dual enrollment opportunities.

Furthermore, Montana schools are investing in college and career readiness standards to better prepare students for post-secondary opportunities. Montana’s Big Sky Pathways program reorganizes education around programs of study that prepares students for today’s global economy. Big Sky Pathways represent a recommended sequence of courses based on a student’s personal interests and career goals, increasing students’ engagement in school and their motivation to achieve.

The Montana Career Information System (MCIS) is a tool for career exploration and planning. MCIS emphasizes career planning through self-assessment, career information, portfolio-building, and secondary and postsecondary planning. It plays an important role in the development, implementation, and ultimate success of Big Sky Pathways. Using the resources of MCIS, Montana students will be able to create their own Big Sky Pathway MAP (Montana Achievement Plan).

The success of these efforts is evidenced by data that shows high school graduation rates climbing across the state. Montana is encouraged by this data and is committed to improving and

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maintaining these programs to ensure that all Montana students finish their secondary education and transition successfully into college and career.



(B) Standards and Assessments (70 total points)

(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards
(40 points)

The extent to which the State has demonstrated its commitment to adopting a common set of high-quality standards, evidenced by (as set forth in Appendix B)—

- (i) The State's participation in a consortium of States that— (20 points)
 - (a) Is working toward jointly developing and adopting a common set of K-12 standards (as defined in this notice) that are supported by evidence that they are internationally benchmarked and build toward college and career readiness by the time of high school graduation; and
 - (b) Includes a significant number of States; and
- (ii) — (20 points)
 - (a) For Phase 1 applications, the State's high-quality plan demonstrating its commitment to and progress toward adopting a common set of K-12 standards (as defined in this notice) by August 2, 2010, or, at a minimum, by a later date in 2010 specified by the State, and to implementing the standards thereafter in a well-planned way; or
 - (b) For Phase 2 applications, the State's adoption of a common set of K-12 standards (as defined in this notice) by August 2, 2010, or, at a minimum, by a later date in 2010 specified by the State in a high-quality plan toward which the State has made significant progress, and its commitment to implementing the standards thereafter in a well-planned way.

In the text box below, the State shall describe its current status in meeting the criterion. The narrative or attachments shall also include, at a minimum, the evidence listed below, and how each piece of evidence demonstrates the State's success in meeting the criterion. The narrative and attachments may also include any additional information the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.



Evidence for (B)(1)(i):

| | |
|--|---|
| A copy of the Memorandum of Agreement, executed by the State, showing that it is part of a standards consortium. | See Appendix (B)(1)-I |
| A copy of the final standards or, if the standards are not yet final, a copy of the draft standards and anticipated date for completing the standards. | See Appendix B(1)-II and B(1)-III |
| Documentation that the standards are or will be internationally benchmarked and that, when well-implemented, will help to ensure that students are prepared for college and careers. | See Appendix B(1)-IV |
| The number of States participating in the standards consortium and the list of these States. | Governors and state commissioners of education from 48 states, two territories and the District of Columbia have been involved. |

Evidence for (B)(1)(ii):

| | |
|--|-------------------------|
| For Phase 2 applicants: Evidence that the State has adopted the standards. Or, if the State has not yet adopted the standards, a description of the legal process in the State for adopting standards and the State’s plan, current progress, and timeframe for adoption. | Appendix B(1)-VI |
|--|-------------------------|

Recommended maximum response length: Two pages

Section B(1)(i): Montana LEAs, policy-makers, and education stakeholders have reached across our state, to establish a high bar for student achievement founded in strong curriculum standards. Since 1989, the BPE has pursued an administrative agenda to develop the Montana accreditation and content standards. In May 2009 Governor Schweitzer and Superintendent Juneau signed a Memo of Understanding (Appendix B(1)-I) committing Montana’s participation in the development of Common Core standards joining 51 other states and territories in partnership with the Council of Chief State School Officers, the National Governors Association, Achieve, ACT, and the College Board. Additionally, Montana revised and adopted its own content standards and performance descriptors in Mathematics in September 2009 and in Communication Arts in January 2010.

Montana has committed to performing an alignment study, conducted by a third party in



partnership with OPI, of the proposed standards with the existing Montana standards. Following the alignment study and outreach to Montana educators and stakeholders, OPI will make an adoption recommendation to the BPE. This national project will result in adoption of a common set of internationally benchmarked standards which are tied to college and career-readiness.

Section B(1)(ii): A 1992 District Court decision reaffirmed Section 9.3 of Article X of the Montana Constitution respective to the rule-making authority of the BPE stating, “The Board of Public Education, pursuant to Article X, section 9(3), of the Montana Constitution, is vested with constitutional rulemaking authority. This provision is self-executing and independent of any power that is delegated to the Board by the Legislature.” Further, the decision implies that any attempt to interfere or conflict with this rule making authority by the Legislature is in violation of the separation of powers doctrine of Article III of the Montana Constitution. Following these legal guidelines, the Montana BPE has pursued the development of common curriculum standards since 1998. The administrative rulemaking history is detailed in **Appendix B(1)-V**.

As the State pursues the adoption of the national Common Core standards, the Office of Public Instruction (OPI) will follow the timeline in **Appendix B(1)-VI** through the legal process.



(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments
(10 points)

The extent to which the State has demonstrated its commitment to improving the quality of its assessments, evidenced by (as set forth in Appendix B) the State’s participation in a consortium of States that—

- (i) Is working toward jointly developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments (as defined in this notice) aligned with the consortium’s common set of K-12 standards (as defined in this notice); and
- (ii) Includes a significant number of States.

In the text box below, the State shall describe its current status in meeting the criterion. The narrative or attachments shall also include, at a minimum, the evidence listed below, and how each piece of evidence demonstrates the State’s success in meeting the criterion. The narrative and attachments may also include any additional information the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.

Evidence for (B)(2):

| | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| <p>A copy of the Memorandum of Agreement, executed by the State, showing that it is part of a consortium that intends to develop high-quality assessments (as defined in this notice) aligned with the consortium’s common set of K-12 standards; or documentation that the State’s consortium has applied, or intends to apply, for a grant through the separate Race to the Top Assessment Program (to be described in a subsequent notice); or other evidence of the State’s plan to develop and adopt common, high-quality assessments (as defined in this notice).</p> | <p>Appendix B(2)-II</p> |
| <p>The number of States participating in the assessment consortium and the list of these States.</p> | <p>Appendix B(2)-III</p> |

Recommended maximum response length: One page



Section B(2)(i): The BPE in partnership with Governor Brian Schweitzer and Superintendent Denise Juneau have committed to standards-based education with common assessments utilized by every district to inform instruction and pedagogy. According to ARM 10.55.603 (**Appendix B(2)-I**), the assessment of all students shall be used to examine the educational program and measure its effectiveness based on content and performance standards put forth by the BPE.

Our continual pursuit of increased validity and reliability in our state assessment mechanisms has lead Montana into entering into two multi-state assessment consortia so that we may work with other states, pursue economies of scale in the development and design of assessment tools, and increase the accountability of our schools. Montana belongs is the Summative Multi-state Assessment Resources for Teachers and Educational Researchers (SMARTER-Balanced).

Section B(2)(ii): A copy of the Memorandum of understanding can be found in **Appendix B(2)-II**. The SMARTER-Balanced Consortium has 33 member states. A list of these states is found in **Appendix B(2)-III**.

Montana looks forward to the collaboration and research innovation possibilities afforded by this broad multi-state consortium. We will seek broad collaboration through our statewide reform program (detailed in Section B(3)) so as to implement and integrate these assessment tools into classrooms for the benefit of students.



(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments
(20 points)

The extent to which the State, in collaboration with its participating LEAs (as defined in this notice), has a high-quality plan for supporting a statewide transition to and implementation of internationally benchmarked K-12 standards that build toward college and career readiness by the time of high school graduation, and high-quality assessments (as defined in this notice) tied to these standards. State or LEA activities might, for example, include: developing a rollout plan for the standards together with all of their supporting components; in cooperation with the State's institutions of higher education, aligning high school exit criteria and college entrance requirements with the new standards and assessments; developing or acquiring, disseminating, and implementing high-quality instructional materials and assessments (including, for example, formative and interim assessments (both as defined in this notice)); developing or acquiring and delivering high-quality professional development to support the transition to new standards and assessments; and engaging in other strategies that translate the standards and information from assessments into classroom practice for all students, including high-need students (as defined in this notice).

The State shall provide its plan for this criterion in the text box below. The plan should include, at a minimum, the goals, activities, timelines, and responsible parties (see Reform Plan Criteria elements in Application Instructions or Section XII, Application Requirements (e), for further detail). Any supporting evidence the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers must be described and, where relevant, included in the Appendix. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.

Recommended maximum response length: Eight pages

Section B(3): Historically, educators and administrators have used large-scale summative assessments to evaluate students at or near completion of a course of study. Montana continues the transition to the RTI model of school improvement and integrates formative assessments into instructional practices. Funding from Race to the Top will ensure that our and the Department's mutual goals for reform in the areas of standards and assessments can be implemented statewide moving all classrooms toward more dynamic systems of assessments that enable educators to adapt pedagogy and instructive strategy. We are proud to have set a high bar for our students and we are eager to take our schools to the next level with adaptive classroom environments that use ongoing achievement data to nurture student growth. Through the established structure of our RSAs, OPI will roll out a statewide RTI reform agenda incorporating directed professional development, collaborative leadership teams, and best practice tools to ensure successful



standards and assessments implementation. For our schools to establish accountability for student outcomes it is critical we evaluate and document fidelity of implementation, one of the eight essential components of RTI. Internationally benchmarked K-12 standards are a necessity to ensure this fidelity of implementation. Partnerships between these RSAs and teacher preparation programs will assist educators at the local level learn innovative teaching methods to meet the new internationally benchmarked standards ensuring a smooth rollout of standards with comprehensive local community involvement.

Standards Rollout

Montana has already begun the transition to standards-based education by adopting statewide standards in mathematics and communications arts long before joining the National Governors Association (NGA) Center and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) in the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI) with 51 other states and territories. Montana's process has been inclusive and transparent. **Appendix B(1)-I** details the legal process that the state has followed to develop common standards. **Appendix B(1)-II** goes further to set a timeline for adoption of the Common Core Standards. As the BPE pursues these legal timelines, OPI will create a development and implementation plan utilizing the "Visions for Montana Mathematics and Communications Arts" as guiding principles.

Overview of the Vision for Montana Mathematics

Mathematics teaching needs to be flexible enough to deliver rigorous material that is relevant to the changing academic and economic reality facing students now and in the future.

The first effort to develop and formalize state-level academic content standards were carried out by K-12 educators and largely dependent on intuition and experience. Standards revision processes have evolved into data-driven processes as technology has matured enabling more accountability and performance tracking. Data collected through standardized assessments are used to measure Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), which has played a significant role in the state's summative assessment programming. The 2008-2009 Montana Mathematics Content Standards Revision Team worked to develop a clear, concise document that plainly illustrates



what is expected of the proficient mathematics student at the end of grades 4, 8, and 12.

The Revision Team and OPI referred to the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics *Principles and Standards for School Mathematics* and relied specifically on their five learning processes that complement and enhance the learning of mathematical content: connections, communication, representation, problem-solving, and reasoning. Additionally, the National Council has identified five research-based building blocks for mathematical proficiency: conceptual understanding, procedural fluency, strategic competence, adaptive reasoning, and productive disposition. An established state framework for all standard curriculum standards is the blueprint for further development of key components, such as Essential Learning Expectations, Performance Rubrics, and Curriculum. The content standards framework contains:

- K-12 content standards
- Rationale for each content standard
- Benchmarks at the end of grade 4, end of grade 8, and upon graduation
- Performance descriptors at the levels of novice, nearing proficiency, proficient, and advanced

Performance in mathematics is measured both by accuracy and conceptual understanding with RTI providing an effective rubric for evaluation and assessments based on observation that cannot be captured in standardized summative assessments. Students know how to recognize a problem, choose appropriate procedures, seek solutions with persistence, and judge their results. Students know the how and why of each mathematical calculation tool and when it should be used. Finally, the study of mathematics must be approached in a way that allows students both to appreciate the value of mathematical competency and to believe they can achieve it themselves.

Montana is fully engaged in the Common Core Standards process and committed to achieving the high standards set both by consortia as well as the standards we have set within our own borders. Montana strives to integrate the following Principles of Montana Mathematics into local classroom instruction as well as into the Common Core Standards nationally:

- All students can successfully learn mathematics. Adopting this view requires teachers to hold high expectations for all their students and to create mathematical experiences that enable success for all.



- Mathematical processes are fundamental companions to content. The five processes described earlier are essential to creating an environment where students can acquire, apply, and make meaning of mathematics.
- Mathematics is a human endeavor with scientific, social, and cultural relevance. Relevant context creates an opportunity for student ownership of the study of mathematics. The Montana Constitution pursuant to Section 1.2 of Article X (**Appendix B(3)-I**) and MCA 20-1-501 (**Appendix B(3)-II**) call for mathematics instruction that incorporates the distinct and unique cultural heritage of Montana American Indians.
- Technology is integral to learning mathematics. Today’s students are fluent in the language of digital media and technology. Montana educators must maximize technology’s potential for enhancing mathematics learning.
- Mathematics education is for the future, not just for today. Today’s students are preparing for jobs that do not yet exist, using technologies that are yet to be invented, to solve problems yet to be identified. Mathematics must be viewed not only through the lens of past experience, but also through a lens that will steer our students through the 21st century.

Overview of the Vision for Montana Communication Arts

The BPE has developed a framework for Communication Arts Content Standards. It is a binding and legal set of agreements, rationales, and rules that provides the foundation for standard-based communication arts education in Montana. As outlined in the “Vision for Montana Mathematics”, this framework is the blueprint for further development of key components, such as Essential Learning Expectations, Performance Rubrics, and Curriculum. The content standards framework contains:

- K-12 content standards
- Rationale for each content standard
- Benchmarks at the end of grade 4, end of grade 8, and upon graduation
- Performance descriptors at the levels of novice, nearing proficiency, proficient, and advanced



Educators have worked together in a similar fashion to the process for developing the mathematics standards to develop the communications arts standards. These principles will guide each step as Montana engages in the development and implementation of the Common Core Standards.

- The Communication Arts Standards are foundational to college and career readiness and success. Mastery of language skills in the broadest sense opens the door to understanding our past, our current condition, and our future. The Communication Arts offer us tools for thinking, communicating, learning, experiencing, exploring, remembering, collaborating, imagining, and fully participating in life. Mastery in Communication Arts is essential to school, careers, and a rich life.
- Communication Arts are developmental and recursive. Most students come to school with emerging literacy skills. The Communication Arts Standards are designed to acknowledge those emergent skills and introduce more sophisticated strategies and increasingly complex materials, gradually building students' independence and confidence as communicators. The same skills that appear in this standards document as part of the expectations in the primary grades will appear as part of graduation expectations. The increasing levels of sophistication in the higher grades may very well come in depth, independence, or complexity of materials rather than in distinctly different skills or strategies.
- Communication Arts are interdependent. While the Communication Arts Standards address discrete skills, strategies, and tasks in five distinct areas of communication (speaking and listening, reading, writing, media, and literature), it is important for parents, teachers, and students to understand that the strands of Communication Arts are deeply intertwined. None of the strands should be viewed in isolation as each depends on the other for successful mastery. Communication requires more than the discrete skills of any one of the Communication Arts strands; it requires the dynamic interaction of all strands working together to create meaning.
- Communication Arts are interdisciplinary. Learning is dependent on one or more of the Communication Arts Standards as all subject areas in school integrate Communications



Arts to enhance the strategies and skills that students use to successfully master the content of those subjects. Essentially all teachers are teachers of Communication Arts; all students are perpetually engaged in practicing the skills of the Communication Arts. Likewise, the materials used in the Communication Arts classroom will explore the topics of all other curricular areas. It is important for students to recognize that the skills and strategies of Communication Arts must be applied in all classes and beyond the school walls in daily life.

- Communication Arts are evolving. 21st century technologies used in our daily lives and the changing nature of communication make the Communication Arts Standards even more important as a major part of our curriculum. Skills that were once acquired through the experiences of daily life must now be explicitly addressed in our classrooms. Rather than reinforcing the rules of formal standard written and spoken English, the English of our students' daily lives often offers alternative spellings, new rules of grammar, and shortcuts in punctuation or capitalization. Critically, the Communication Arts must address the safe, ethical, and responsible use of communication if our democratic ideals are to be preserved.

Overview of the Vision for Montana Curriculum Standards

The CCSSI is focusing the majority of the Common Core Standards development on mathematics and communications arts standards. Please note that we believe Montana has surpassed these two curricular areas through adopting common standards in science and technology in 2006 and 2008 respectively. Montana's summative assessment, Montana Comprehensive Assessment System Criterion Referenced Test or CRT, measures performance in these disciplines. Our agenda for reform includes developing formative assessment strategies embedded within the RTI framework enhancing the teaching of these standards in the classroom.

RTI weaves the Montana vision of whole-child development and growth with data-driven processes, providing an excellent framework for successful standards rollout and sustained assessments and research-driven reform.



Goals: Standards and Assessments Reform Criteria

The BPE and OPI are fully engaged in the development of the Common Core Standards through the CCSSI. Montana has been concurrently working to develop standards that meet the high bar set by our Constitution, statute, and administrative rules. The Montana Constitution pursuant to Section 1.2 of Article X (**Appendix B(3)-I**) and MCA 20-1-501 (**Appendix B(3)-II**) requires that the implementation of these standards must incorporate the distinct and unique cultural heritage of Montana American Indians. We are the only state in the union to have such a mandate and believe it is a vital part of our education system. RTI's specific emphasis on community collaboration provides a useful framework for reform that allows LEAs to incorporate and respect this unique cultural heritage into standards and assessment. The Montana educational community will adhere to this mandate as we work to adopt the following goals of this reform and according to the timeline outlined in **Appendix B(3)-III**:

- Conduct an alignment study to align state standards with the Common Core Standards, with mathematics and communication arts to take priority.
- Achieve at minimum an 85 percent alignment with the Common Core Standards in mathematics and communications arts.
- Engage broad stakeholder involvement in the BPE adoption of the Common Core Standards.
- Implement new standards and the Common Core Standards in conjunction with new balanced assessments, understanding that educators need the tools to both impart learning and measure success in their students in one comprehensive system of instruction.
- Integrate P-20 policies to ensure college and career readiness begins at the earliest levels of education with the Montana University System, Governor's Office, DPHHS, and DLI.

Overview of Reform Agenda Design and Development

We propose a reform agenda that builds on our existing structure of professional development programming as Montana moves into a more comprehensive system of formative, interim, and benchmark assessments built into the RTI Framework that support the development and well-being of the whole child. Montana's rural landscape necessitates the use of technology



for online learning and regionalized professional development initiatives. The Montana Mathematics Content Standards and Performance Descriptors and Communication Arts Content Standards are not about mandating curriculum or recommending specific courses in Montana's schools. Instead they are about preparing students to work and live successfully in a society that is increasingly technical, global, and multicultural. The BPE has set high expectations for the performance of Montana students at all levels, and the reform and innovation agenda that we will pursue utilizing Race to the Top resources will provide educators with the adaptive and flexible tools they need locally to meet the high standards set for the whole state. The goal of this reform is an effective statewide teaching force equipped with assessment tools that can inform instruction to improve student achievement and meet internationally benchmarked standards with the ultimate goal of preparing today's students for tomorrow's universities and careers.

Implementation Activities: Professional Development

The RTI framework for professional development is detailed in section D(5)(i) of this grant application. The new standards and assessments will be built into this framework and implemented by the RSAs with central direction provided by OPI. The best practice teaching cycle outlined by the RTI Framework is:

- Concept instruction (teach, model, practice)
- Assessing for learning
- Differentiating instruction based upon assessment data

This cycle is ongoing so that teaching is supported and student learning is maximized. Professional development (PD) needs will be evaluated and training will be provided at each phase of implementation including problem-solving, data-based decision making and using assessment tools and processes.

OPI will create a Professional Development Content Design (PCDC) Team comprised of STEM faculty, English and Communication Arts faculty, K-12 educators, and RSA representatives to develop a blended PD model detailed in **Appendix B(3)-IV** utilizing the existing RSA infrastructure including face-to-face, online learning systems, and teleconference-based delivery systems. The goal of this model is to increase educators' knowledge and skills in



implementation of standards-based educational practices. The regional model emphasizes each LEA's differences, leadership teams for local support, and "best practices" pedagogy. Evidence of "best practices" will be displayed through adherence to the newly aligned standards and the integration of formative assessments as a tool in the classroom.

The chart in **Appendix B(3)-V** details the three levels of training that educators will receive designed specifically for statewide rollout of new common standards. These levels of training have been successfully employed for Montana communications arts and math standards; they are currently being implemented for our new science curriculum standards and will be integrated into the RTI-centered implementation of the newly aligned common core standards and assessment tools.

It is important to provide on-demand assistance to the leadership teams, the staff members, and the administration due to the geographic distribution of the districts in the region,. We will utilize a learning management system for asynchronous learning and support tools such as OPI webinar programming. We will further utilize synchronous learning and support tools and desktop video conferencing and messaging for immediate Q&A tools. The leadership team will be trained on these tools and Acceptable Use Policies will be adapted to allow staff and students to include these tools in the teaching/learning environment based on a common set of best practices modeling.

Implementation Activities: Instructional Materials

OPI will develop units and lessons based on the electronic learning environment (ELE) and model curriculum for STEM, Indian Education for All, and English and communications arts following the current state process that has been developed by the OPI Indian Education Division staff and the Accreditation Division Curriculum Specialists. Following the plan outlined in Figure 1 of this section, OPI will involve stakeholders in the developed ELE, model curriculum, and exemplary units and lessons to assist in the implementation of standards. This team will also develop interim formative and summative assessments that teachers may download and use in the classroom. These assessments will be aligned with the Common Core Standards designed by Montana educators and piloted in Montana classrooms.



Implementation Activities: Assessment

Montana has already developed a comprehensive system for summative assessments, the CRT and CRT-Alternative. These are administered in grades 3 through 8 and 10, and are implemented in a consistent and standardized manner ensuring maximum reliability and validity. Montana students have scored very well on the NAEP in comparison to other states as detailed in Section A(3) of this grant application. RTI pilot projects across the state have given Montana valuable experience in the classroom, testing new formative assessment tools that can be scaled up and enhanced by lessons learned as part of our involvement in the SMARTER-Balanced assessment consortia. Race to the Top funding will provide OPI with the resources necessary to unite these efforts with assessment initiatives described below into the MontCAS. MontCAS is currently providing support to districts and leadership teams who will work to align current efforts and recent experience with the new statewide RTI rollout of Race to the Top reforms for Montana. Common assessment tools will then be readily available for use by teachers in the classroom. These tools will be incorporated into the new centralized professional development and rollout of common standards as one cohesive reform package.

OPI initiated an annual statewide assessment conference in 2006 and its Assessment Office continues to bring important assessment issues to the attention of the state, LEAs and Montana educators. OPI is aware that the CRT and CRT-Alternative are only a piece of comprehensive and balanced assessment system that should impact instruction during learning, provide trend data for policy development, and inform data-based decision-making.

In addition to the assessment structure imbedded in RTI and currently being piloted in 111 schools, two current programs support robust implementation of formative assessments. The first is an online class called “Formative Assessment for Montana Educators” (FAME) which is part of a program called *MontCAS Presents*. Open to all Montana educators, participants are paired with another educator and a learning community for discussions of the presentations, readings, and reflection questions. The second program is an online formative writing assessment pilot.

Professional development and formative assessments are essential for students to improve and achieve educational success in all content areas. Writing skills need to be practiced and



improved and students need immediate feedback to grow. Even the most experienced writing teachers are unable to provide continuous and immediate feedback to students for all their writing. OPI investigated online writing programs that can provide immediate feedback to the student writers as well as PD and tools for the teachers. OPI contracted with four companies for pilot testing of the programs to provide these programs to nine volunteer LEAs and approximately 500 students in grades 5-9 for AY 09-10. These companies and their programs were:

- Vantage Learning: *My Access*
- NCS Pearson: *WriteToLearn*
- Houghton-Mifflin/Harcourt/Riverside: *Criterion*
- CTB/McGraw Hill: *Writing RoadMap*

Each program has professional development, tools for students and teachers, and immediate embedded feedback. The ongoing PD is online within the programs, by webinar, and onsite. Visits to several of the schools in April gave OPI an opportunity to see students and teachers interacting with the programs and with each other. One teacher described the experience as “collaboration among teachers, students, and the program—they all complement and enhance each other—and students are writing more and better—look at all their active topic sentences.”

Montana also recently completed a pilot test under a General Supervision Enhancement Grant in grades 7 and 8 in reading and math using an adaptive online program. The results are being analyzed and depending upon the recommendations of the Technical Advisory Committee an implementation plan may be developed within the RTI Framework established in the Montana Plan for Reform.

OPI is deeply involved in ensuring not only the development of effective assessment tools but also the design of workable assessment tools that help inform instruction without providing additional barriers in the classroom. Montana has partnered with New Hampshire and Nimble Tools to study the implementation of accommodations online. In 2008, Dr. Mike Russell of Boston College presented the Nimble Tools online accommodations program at the Montana Assessment Conference. Montana is currently participating in another grant with Dr. Russell, Minnesota, and Nimble Tools to support an effort to standardize the packaging of test items for



interoperability so that they can be efficiently ported, consistently interpreted, and accurately presented across systems. This interoperability provides the means of converting paper and pencil formatted items to computer and online formats. OPI will conduct a statewide needs assessment of computer capacity to ensure students and educators have access to the assessment tools under development.

Montana's award of the Race to the Top resources will assist educators using these programs to collaborate on a list of essential attributes for an online writing assessment program and present them to the BPE in the summer of 2010 as a first step in establishing a statewide formative assessment tool. Race to the Top will enable us to continue these programs and expand the breadth and depth of their application in the classroom according to our RTI Framework.



(C)Data Systems to Support Instruction (47 total points)

(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system
(24 points – 2 points per America COMPETES element)

The extent to which the State has a statewide longitudinal data system that includes all of the America COMPETES Act elements (as defined in this notice).

In the text box below, the State shall describe which elements of the America COMPETES Act (as defined in this notice) are currently included in its statewide longitudinal data system.

Evidence:

| | |
|---|----------------|
| Documentation for each of the America COMPETES Act elements (as defined in this notice) that is included in the State’s statewide longitudinal data system. | Table 1 |
|---|----------------|

Recommended maximum response length: Two pages

Table 1: Montana’s Fulfillment of the America COMPETES Act Data Elements

| Data Element | Status | Progress |
|--|-------------------------------|--|
| 1 - A unique statewide student identifier that does not permit a student to be individually identified by users of the system | Complete | |
| 2 - Student-level enrollment, demographic, and program participation information | Complete | |
| 3 - Student-level information about the points at which students exit, transfer in, transfer out, drop out, or complete P-16 education programs | Complete | |
| 4 - The capacity to communicate with higher education data systems | Complete September 2011 | Detailed tasks and timeline included below |
| 5 - A State data audit system assessing data quality, validity, and reliability | Complete | |
| 6 - Yearly test records of individual students with respect to assessments under section 1111(b) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 | Complete | |
| 7 - Information on students not tested by | Complete | |



| | | |
|--|-------------------------|--|
| grade and subject | | |
| 8 - A teacher identifier system with the ability to match teachers to students | Complete September 2011 | Detailed tasks and timeline included below |
| 9 - Student-level transcript information, including information on courses completed and grades earned | Complete September 2011 | Detailed tasks and timeline included below |
| 10 - Student-level college readiness test scores | Complete September 2011 | Detailed tasks and timeline included below |
| 11 - Information regarding the extent to which students transition successfully from secondary school to postsecondary education, including whether students enroll in remedial coursework | | Detailed tasks and timeline are included in the plans for Indicators (c)(11) and (c)(12) |
| 12 - Information determined necessary to address alignment and adequate preparation for success in postsecondary education | | No new data needs have been identified yet, but may be identified in policy discussions |

Data Element #4: The capacity to communicate with higher education data systems

All campuses of the Montana University System (MUS) have the capacity to store the K-12 statewide student ID (SSID) in their postsecondary enrollment systems (Banner), therefore, basic capacity currently exists for K-12 education data systems to communicate with the higher education data systems. However, policies are not in place to require school districts to include the K-12 statewide student identifier on the high school transcript. The Board of Public Education (BPE) has designated a Task Force to review Chapter 55 of the Montana School Accreditation Standards (**Appendix C(1)-I**), which the BPE adopts through the state's administrative rulemaking process. The definition of a permanent Student Record falls within the purview of the Task Force. The Chapter 55 Task Force appointed by the BPE will prepare and present a recommendation to the Superintendent of Public Instruction who will then consider a recommendation to the BPE to adopt an administrative rule requiring all school districts to include the K-12 statewide student identifier in the student's permanent record and on the student's official transcript. The process for adoption of the proposed rule can be completed by September 30, 2011.



Table 2: Timeline for Data Element #4

| Milestones | Complete |
|---|----------------|
| All campuses of the Montana University System (MUS) have the ability to store the K-12 statewide student ID (SSID) in their postsecondary enrollment systems (Banner) | March 2010 |
| OPI uses its monthly electronic newsletter to urge high schools to include a student's SSID on the high school transcript | On-going |
| OPI recommends to the BPE task force that the BPE adopt an administrative rule requiring all school districts to include the K-12 statewide student identifier in the student's permanent record and on the student's official transcript | November 2010 |
| Extract entering Montana high school students' records from MUS data system (along with SSIDs) and match to K-12 unit-record level data | December 2010 |
| Produce 2010 Montana High School Follow-up Report. The 2010 follow-up report will be posted at http://mus.edu/data/HS_follow-up.asp | February 2011 |
| Board of Public Education completes rulemaking process for requiring all school districts to include the K-12 statewide student identifier in the student's permanent record and on the student's official transcript | September 2011 |

Data Element #8: A teacher identifier system with the ability to match teachers to students

OPI has been actively working since September 2009 on major enhancements to data collections relative to school staffing. OPI currently assigns a unique "folio number" to an educator when the educator applies for a license to teach in Montana in addition to the license numbers for specialists who are employed by school districts but do not hold an educator license. Examples of these specialists include speech pathologists, physical and occupational therapists, and school nurses. These folio/license numbers have met the state's needs to date for a teacher identifier because the folio/license numbers are reported by school districts along with personnel assignments to the SEA each fall. OPI has been able to link personnel assignments with the educator licensure database to determine if schools are meeting the accreditation standards and to respond to reporting requirements for highly qualified teachers.

Recently the state has identified the need for a school staff identifier, which will be applied to all school employees both licensed and unlicensed. The state is in the design phase for instituting the school staff identifier and plans to assign these identifiers before the beginning of the 2011-2012 school year.



Table 3: Timeline for Data Element #8

| Milestones | Complete |
|---|----------------|
| As part of its School Staffing Project, the OPI reviews options for assignment of a school staff identifier to all school staff and determines a process and timeline for assigning the identifiers to school personnel | September 2010 |
| During the 2010-2011 school year, school staff identifiers will be assigned to all school employees in 427 public school districts and in private accredited schools. | June 30, 2011 |
| Reporting of personnel assignments by LEAs will include the school staff identifier | September 2011 |

Data Element #9: Student-level transcript information, including information on courses completed and grades earned

In conjunction with the MUS, OPI has developed a high-level plan for collecting and storing statewide student transcript information at the completion of each grade level. Race to the Top resources will advance this plan and align with our proposed implementation timeline. The fiscal implications are presented in the budget narrative.

The state will need to develop an interim solution to collect high school transcript data from LEAs in order to meet the September 30, 2011 timeline. The major portion of this work will be to procure a collection tool for schools to export data from their existing systems into the state transcript service.

Table 4: Timeline for Data Element #9

| Milestones | Complete |
|--|----------------|
| OPI receives Race to the Top funds | December 2010 |
| OPI issues an RFP for a transcript service to receive student transcript information on graduating seniors | December 2010 |
| OPI contracts with a vendor for the transcript service | May 2011 |
| Develop and conduct training for LEAs | August 2011 |
| Deliver data to the repository for students who graduated in 2011 | September 2011 |



Data Element #10: Student-level college readiness test scores

The state’s student information system, AIM, has the capacity to store student test scores; however, the state does not require students to participate in ACT, SAT, or other assessments of college readiness. The state receives student-level data from the college testing services but the data does not include the statewide student identifiers.

Table 5: Timeline for Data Element #10

| Milestones | Complete |
|--|----------------|
| Research options for a contract with the college testing services to include the statewide student identifier on the college readiness tests | July 2010 |
| Receive Race to the Top funding | December 2010 |
| Collect the SSID on student tests in the 2011-2012 school year | September 2011 |

Data Element #11: Information regarding the extent to which students transition successfully from secondary school to postsecondary education, including whether students enroll in remedial coursework

The status, timeline, and budget for this data element is the same as described for Indicators (c)(11) and (c)(12) (**Appendix C(1)-II**). OPI plans to pursue a contract with the National Student Clearinghouse to obtain information on students who enroll in postsecondary institutions and whether these students enroll in remedial coursework at the postsecondary level. OPI is also able to obtain more detailed data on students who enroll in the MUS due to the strategic planning the Montana Board of Regents conducts for enrollment and curriculum planning.

Data Element #12: Information determined necessary to address alignment and adequate preparation for success in postsecondary education

Three initiatives in particular are likely to identify data that is needed to address alignment issues and the adequacy of preparation for success in postsecondary education:

- 1) The state has launched a review of the Montana School Accreditation standards, in ARM Chapter 55 (**Appendix C(1)-I**). The review includes state requirements for graduation.



-
- 2) The OPI, BPE and MUS are working with the legislative interim committee on Education and Local Government to develop K-20 Shared Policy Goals with the Montana legislature. This process includes the designation of performance measurements.
 - 3) Montana has committed to aligning state standards with the Common Core Standards and Assessments, as detailed in Section B of this grant application.



(C)(2) Accessing and using State data
(5 points)

The extent to which the State has a high-quality plan to ensure that data from the State's statewide longitudinal data system are accessible to, and used to inform and engage, as appropriate, key stakeholders (*e.g.*, parents, students, teachers, principals, LEA leaders, community members, unions, researchers, and policymakers); and that the data support decision-makers in the continuous improvement of efforts in such areas as policy, instruction, operations, management, resource allocation, and overall effectiveness.

The State shall provide its detailed plan for this criterion in the text box below. The plan should include, at a minimum, the goals, activities, timelines, and responsible parties (see Application Instructions or Section XII, Application Requirements (e), for further detail). Any supporting evidence the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers must be described and, where relevant, included in the Appendix. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.

Recommended maximum response length: Two pages

Section C(2): Montana is united in effort to improve the use of data to drive policy decisions, improve public services, and invest in what works. The Office of Public Instruction (OPI) is driven by its strategic priority to “provide current and accurate educational information to the state, school districts and communities to promote data-driven policy decisions and assist in improving teaching and learning.” The Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE), the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS), and the Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) are all also enhancing their ability to implement data-based decision making especially now in a time of scarcity. Interagency discussions reinforce that the "capacity to communicate" is about much more than technological solutions and must be supported by shared policies, procedures, and agreements. The state's plans for education data systems include a strong focus on an interagency data governance structures which successfully link data across information systems. The ultimate goal is to build secure information systems to improve outcomes for Montanans while protecting the privacy of our citizens.

OPI, OCHE, DPHHS, and DLI, have developed a plan to establish a P-20 longitudinal data system including the policy and technological foundations for the system. Montana will use data to inform and engage decision-makers by:



- Establishing data linkages among state agency partners to connect early childhood data with K-12 and postsecondary education systems with workforce services data complements
- Creating an electronic student transcript repository for K-12 education
- Creating a data governance structure for P-20
- Implementing business intelligence and web reporting tools for users of P-20 data
- Developing a system of P-20 performance measurement and reporting

Each of the partners in this grant has invested substantial resources in the development of information systems to meet their programmatic needs. In addition to the system developments described above for K-12, a brief description follows of the data system developments underway for the other state agency partners.

The Montana University System (MUS) maintains a student unit record-level, longitudinal data warehouse. The warehouse contains enrollment, course information, and graduation data of students enrolled in postsecondary education in Montana. This rich set of data includes student demographics, assessment outcomes, course grades and instructors, as well as the ability to track transfers between MUS institutions and cohorts of students over time. OCHE maintains the warehouse and supplies the campuses with reporting and analysis tools. The Montana Board of Regents utilizes this information system to assess critical performance indicators and key measures within its strategic plan. The warehouse contains data from 2001 forward and is supported by two full-time FTE. The MUS has also developed a data sharing agreement with DLI that enables the agencies to track the workforce outcomes of MUS graduates. A Memorandum of Understanding with DLI has been in place since 2007 and provides the MUS with access to historical and current Unemployment Insurance (UI) wage records. Because of this linkage with UI data, the MUS has been able to analyze the percentage of graduates that find employment in Montana, the level of wages they command, and the industries employing them.

The DPHHS is taking measured steps to move safety net eligibility programs from mainframe legacy systems to web-based, rules-engine models. The new Combined Healthcare Initiative and Montana Eligibility System (CHIMES) encompass information systems for



Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). The CHIMES-Medicaid web-based system was successfully implemented in October 2009. The design phase for CHIMES-SNAP and CHIMES-TANF is underway with implementation slated for October 2011. The three programs will be independent but linked for end-users through enterprise architecture, service-oriented rules-governed data sharing, and a common client index. Web portals will ease interfaces and access with partner agencies. The Childcare Under the Big Sky (CCUBS) Early Childhood web-based system has interfaces with TANF and Child Protective Services (CAPS) which manages eligibility and payments for child care services, contract and payments with providers for many contract types, and child care licensing data. The CCUBS system tracks all children who are affiliated with receiving scholarships for child care and can reference families as well. Children can also be linked to provider types and locations.

DLI utilizes MontanaWorks, an Oracle-based database. The system contains employer, job, and job seeker information. MontanaWorks also includes Workforce Investment Act (WIA) training, Trade Assistance Act (TAA) training, American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) training and numerous other state and federal training programs. State apprenticeship data will be added to MontanaWorks soon. Montana's Unemployment Insurance (UI) system is an Oracle platform with attached imaging and workflow capabilities. UI information provides wage data which can be identified by occupation and industry thus making this data useful for linking educational and workforce skills training to wage and benefit outcomes over a worker's lifetime.

These state partnerships will allow for an entirely new mechanism for policy development in Montana driven by data-informed decision making processes and one that focuses on the whole child, family, educators, employees, and employers. Through a better use of the data the state may more efficiently and effectively utilize resources to improve student achievement and meet policy objectives across the board.



(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction

(18 points)

The extent to which the State, in collaboration with its participating LEAs (as defined in this notice), has a high-quality plan to—

(i) Increase the acquisition, adoption, and use of local instructional improvement systems (as defined in this notice) that provide teachers, principals, and administrators with the information and resources they need to inform and improve their instructional practices, decision-making, and overall effectiveness;

(ii) Support participating LEAs (as defined in this notice) and schools that are using instructional improvement systems (as defined in this notice) in providing effective professional development to teachers, principals and administrators on how to use these systems and the resulting data to support continuous instructional improvement; and

(iii) Make the data from instructional improvement systems (as defined in this notice), together with statewide longitudinal data system data, available and accessible to researchers so that they have detailed information with which to evaluate the effectiveness of instructional materials, strategies, and approaches for educating different types of students (*e.g.*, students with disabilities, English language learners, students whose achievement is well below or above grade level).

The State shall provide its detailed plan for this criterion in the text box below. The plan should include, at a minimum, the goals, activities, timelines, and responsible parties (see Reform Plan Criteria elements in Application Instructions or Section XII, Application Requirements (e), for further detail). Any supporting evidence the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers must be described and, where relevant, included in the Appendix. For attachments included in the Appendix, note the location where the attachment can be found.

Recommended maximum response length: Five pages

Section C(3)(i): Montana’s student information system, AIM, has matured into a reliable, comprehensive data collection system for student information. OPI implemented AIM in AY 06-07. OPI assigns each student a unique statewide student identifier at the first point of contact with the public school system. The identifier does not permit a student to be individually identified by users of the system. OPI then collects student-level enrollment, demographic, and program participation information. Student-level information about exit, transfer in, transfer out, drop out, or completion of P-12 educational programs is maintained in AIM. The Montana Board of Regents of has adopted a policy requiring all Montana high school transcripts sent to the MUS



include the K-12 statewide student ID. OPI stores the yearly test records of individual students with respect to assessments and information on students not tested by grade and subject within the production data system and also has a basic data audit system assessing data quality, validity, and reliability within the AIM system. Montana's schools have readily embraced the concept of this system and use it at the LEA and SEA level for reliable reporting. We do recognize that much can be done to improve and standardize our data acquisition, adoption, and use of instructional improvement systems so that instructional practices are selected capitalizing on the best available information. Montana has initiated a partnership with the SAS Institute and is fully invested in partnering with SAS to upgrade, enhance and strengthen the use of data from the ground up so that student achievement in the classroom drives policy development in Helena.

SAS is a good partner because their key business drivers align with the system of ongoing assessments and data collection integrated in RTI-based approach to school reform. These three key drivers are data integration, analytics and reporting. These data systems and processes are developed and will be aligned with RTI implementation in the schools so the data gathered by the new and improved AIM system leads adaptive instructional practice in the classroom to maximize student achievement. We anticipate and are anxious to continue working with the SAS Institute creating policy, performance and accountability tools through their EVASS system specially designed for Montana with:

- Individual student trajectories that allow for more customized, proactive planning for students so they can reach their goals or the goals established by policymakers
- Value-added measures that ascertain whether educational entities are accelerating or impeding student progress

The comprehensive data integration environment that SAS can provide will facilitate the interagency data project detailed in Section C(2) of this grant application. In addition to Montana's longitudinal P-20 data integration objectives, the SAS capabilities will enable us to integrate this data laterally across state agencies. Montana and SAS will develop and implement a statewide plan to accomplish each goal identified by the state as part of the essential technical process:



- Accumulation of clean, accurate student data regardless of student migration and attrition,
- Combination of data silos across organizations,
- Elimination of add-on data access and connectivity products,
- Data integrity and reliability and
- Automation and simplification of common data access tasks.

Section C(3)(ii): Input from teachers, leaders and other educators will be obtained and utilized by this statewide effort to dramatically enhance the quality and utilization of our AIM data system. A group of K-12 statewide education associations meet monthly in Helena. The Education Forum includes representatives from MEA-MFT, the Montana School Boards Association, School Administrators of Montana, Montana Rural Education Association, AA School Districts, Montana Small Schools Alliance, Montana School Business Officials, and the Montana Indian Education Association. OPI briefed the Ed Forum on this project twice in the fall of 2009. A number of the members of Ed Forum were also present at the Board of Education, a joint meeting of the BPE and Board of Regents and chaired by the Governor, meeting in November for the P-20 longitudinal data system grant agenda item.

A K-12 educator advisory group known as the SAGE (School Advisory Group on Education) that is already in place will continue its advisory role for the purposes of this project in order to ensure the ongoing involvement of diverse stakeholders. SAGE is comprised of 11 members representing schools of various sizes, geography, and approaches to student information systems. This group will help define the web reporting tools for users of P-20 data and in assessing local needs for additional training and integration of the new system into professional development and classroom activities.

Montana recognizes that many of the key barriers to data system reforms are attitudinal, structural, and political, rather than purely technical. The state is committed to maintaining stakeholder support for the project and we initiated efforts to break down historical practices that would impede reform. For example OPI began to use AIM to report enrollment numbers for the school finance office at OPI. Previously, aggregate enrollment numbers were reported from the



finance offices of schools to the OPI finance office. These numbers did not always match AIM. The decision to use AIM student level enrollment meant that those numbers would be consistent and accurate, a necessary initial step to improving the integrity and reliability of our student data and a necessary step to standardizing the collection and reporting of student information. This also improves the security of student information as it is being housed in a system that is constantly monitored for privacy and student security.

The plan for utilizing and expanding the use of AIM with the SAS Institute continues by determining how to collect and report teacher information relative to student performance. AIM has the capacity to perform this function and SAS will provide consultation on the best implementation of this reform component.

Montana mandated the use of the special education component to AIM this year so that Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) can be submitted and tracked online. This enhances data access to teachers and leaders and additional resources to improve instruction for students in special education programs. IEP tracking and documentation presents a workload for staff at schools signifying less time spent with students. This transition will directly increase learning time.

Training and support efforts

OPI will contract with the SAS Institute to help adapt and develop the training plan and provide technical assistance to users. OPI AIM staff, in conjunction with Infinite Campus, offers Montana Edition trainings for school district faculty and staff. Utilizing Race to the Top funds, these trainings will be aligned with RTI principles and implemented utilizing the RTI framework and RSA structure to ensure educators have proper support regardless of their geographical location. These trainings are now divided into three tracks: 1) Regional trainings, 2) Refresher Core trainings conducted via WebEx (both live and recorded) and, 3) Value-Added trainings. All trainings are offered at no cost to district users.

School districts typically send either the AIM System Administrator or Infinite Campus District Contact to one of the regional trainings or view the online recorded session. Other district staff may participate in the online refresher core trainings. Montana Edition Value Added



trainings are offered to districts that want to use or learn more about the functionality of additional tools.

Regional Trainings

Regional trainings focus on new policies and procedures specific to the upcoming academic year, and reinforce the initial Montana Edition trainings. They are structured for users who have previous experience AIM. These trainings are conducted statewide in the fall. A recorded version of the training is also available. 160 people received instruction during the AY10 regional trainings.

Refresher Core Trainings

Refresher core trainings provide a general overview of basic functionality, including navigation, census, and state reporting within the AIM system (a condensed version of the original Montana Edition trainings). These trainings are recommended for new AIM users.

Value-Added Trainings

The Montana Edition value-added trainings provide specific instructions about using the additional tools in the system (that are not required for state reporting). Topics for these trainings include calendar administration, scheduling, ad hoc reporting, behavior, enrollment, grading, custom tabs, standards setup, instruction reports, attendance, immunizations, photo import/export, programs, records transfer, portal, student locator, staff tracking, and user notices.

Live online WebEx trainings (refresher core and value-added trainings) begin August 31st and run through October. Self-paced pre-recorded WebEx sessions are available after August 31st and are accessible throughout the year. Courses are offered at multiple times, and there is no commitment to take additional courses.

Infinite Campus schools received trainings from Infinite Campus directly without any OPI staff accompanying them. 43 systems were using Infinite Campus directly for their Student Information System in AY10.



Special Ed IEP training

Over 900 of the total 1200 special education teachers were trained in the use of the AIM SPED component during the previous academic year. Next year all new special ed teachers will receive training and OPI will conduct follow up/refreshers training for current teachers and will develop the capability to post on line training and do webinar training.

Section C(3)(iii): In addition to the data integration and analytics capabilities that SAS is bringing to Montana, we anticipate development and implementation of a plan that allows for quality reporting mechanisms that ensure the data is accessible and utilized by researchers and education professionals to adapt instructional methods and test effectiveness as judged by student achievement. We will ensure that it informs education practice in classrooms and will look to the SAS Institute to provide guidance and planning so that the new AIM longitudinal data warehouse:

- Makes compliance reporting accurate and straightforward
- Includes provisions for users without significant statistical skills to access and explore the data they need to make critical decisions
- Quickly integrates new data and provides access to pre-written summative and predictive reports and queries for users
- Requires minimal software overhead for end users
- Enables access for multiple kinds of users, including analysts, educators and policymakers



(D) Great Teachers and Leaders (138 total points)

(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals
(21 points)

The extent to which the State has—

- (i) Legal, statutory, or regulatory provisions that allow alternative routes to certification (as defined in this notice) for teachers and principals, particularly routes that allow for providers in addition to institutions of higher education:
- (ii) Alternative routes to certification (as defined in this notice) that are in use; and
- (iii) A process for monitoring, evaluating, and identifying areas of teacher and principal shortage and for preparing teachers and principals to fill these areas of shortage.

In the text box below, the State shall describe its current status in meeting the criterion. The narrative or attachments shall also include, at a minimum, the evidence listed below, and how each piece of evidence demonstrates the State's success in meeting the criterion. The narrative and attachments may also include any additional information the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.

Evidence for (D)(1)(i), regarding alternative routes to certification for both teachers and principals:

| | |
|---|------------------------|
| A description of the State's applicable laws, statutes, regulations, or other relevant legal documents, including information on the elements of the State's alternative routes (as described in the alternative route to certification definition in this notice). | Appendix D(1)-I |
|---|------------------------|



Evidence for (D)(1)(ii), regarding alternative routes to certification for both teachers and principals:

| | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| <p>A list of the alternative certification programs operating in the State under the State's alternative routes to certification (as defined in this notice), and for each:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The elements of the program (as described in the alternative routes to certification definition in this notice). • The number of teachers and principals that successfully completed each program in the previous academic year. • The total number of teachers and principals certified statewide in the previous academic year. | <p>See narrative</p> |
|---|-----------------------------|

Recommended maximum response length: Two pages

Section D(1)(i): The BPE and OPI set high standards for teacher and administrator certification. Defined under Administrative Rule of Montana (ARM) 10.57.201 (**Appendix D(1)-I**), it is the responsibility of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to issue a license to an individual who submits acceptable evidence of completion of an accredited professional educator program.

Alternative routes to teacher certification are described in ARM, Chapter 57. Montana is a National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) partner state; therefore, the standards are the same whether the program is considered traditional or alternative. ARM 10.57.424 (**Appendix D(1)-II**) allows the Superintendent of Public Instruction to issue an alternative license (the Class 5) which is valid for a three-year term. An applicant must submit a plan of professional intent that leads to a regular license within the three-year timeframe. Through these rules, OPI also encourages and supports National Board Certification, described in D(1)(ii) as well as the Northern Plains Transition to Teaching (NPTT) program.

At this time, Montana does not have an alternative route to administrative certification. A task force is currently reviewing ARM Chapter 55 Accreditation Standards (**Appendix D(1)-III and Appendix D(1)-IV**) to revise the rules for these alternative routes for administrators and principals respectively. This task force includes education association membership, leadership



of boards of trustees, administrators, teachers, and parents. Throughout the coming months, this group will provide development and implementation recommendations on alternative routes of certification for both teachers and administrators.

Section D(1)(ii): Montana actively supports alternative routes to certification despite low interest. We maintain our commitment to our established standards but understand the need for additional alternative routes to licensure.

NPTT is a high-quality, compact distance-learning program that has been a successful alternative route to certification that provides a rigorous, well-designed path to teacher certification designed to meet the needs of career professionals who are interested in transitioning into the teaching profession seamlessly from prior careers. To enroll in NPTT, students must:

- Have earned at least a baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited institution in one of Montana State University's Teachable Subject Areas with a minimum grade point average of 2.5
- Have a proven career track record of five years or more
- Have demonstrated capacity and willingness to engage in serious, concentrated study and preparation in order to move rapidly through this demanding, highly concentrated course of study

The NPTT is a two-year (three years for an M. Ed.) course of study with the following components:

- Twenty-four credits offered online in a condensed format using an electronic learning environment scheduled with the mid-career professional in mind
- Licensure in Montana, Wyoming, and South Dakota (other states on a case-by-case basis)
- A non-traditional internship, in which the student obtains at least a half-time or greater contract, salaried teaching position, in lieu of the classic student teaching

Over the last two years, the NPTT has received 254 applications. 109 (43 percent) received full acceptance into the program. Nine percent earned conditional acceptance, however, most conditional candidates do not ultimately choose to complete the coursework necessary to gain



full entrance into this competitive program. Fifty-three teachers successfully completed the NPTT program in AY 08-09. Thirty-one are now teaching in Montana classrooms.

ARM 10.57.201(2)(C) (**Appendix D(1)-I**) provides an additional alternative path to certification via National Board Certification (NBC), and OPI, in partnership with MEA-MFT provides incentives and support to educators who wish to pursue NBC. This process is an extensive series of performance-based assessments that includes teaching portfolios, student work samples as well as video and analyses of the teacher's classroom teaching and student learning. This collection of materials is compiled over the course of a regular school year and is submitted in the spring. In Montana, 174 candidates have started the NBC process since 1997. There are currently 88 NBC Teachers in the state, and roughly 50 percent of those who start complete this rigorous program. Montana is committed to increasing the numbers and distribution of National Board Certified teachers across this state and the resources provided by the Race to the Top will enable the state to increase those supports.

OPI also provides for a Class 5 Alternative license per ARM 10.57.424 (**Appendix D(1)-II**). This license is valid for three years while a mid-career professional completes an OPI-approved plan of study to earn regular teacher certification. The Class 5 Alternative license is most typically used when a candidate holds a bachelor's degree in an endorsable subject area but still needs to complete an accredited teacher preparation program. The Class 5 provides an opportunity for professionals to bring their experience back into the classroom after completing training in curriculum and instruction, and these teachers enhance and broaden the knowledgebase of our entire teaching force. In **Appendix D(1)-V**, a table details Montana's commitment to the five essential elements of alternative paths to teacher certification as defined by this notice.

Section D(1)(iii): In 2007, the Montana Legislature responded to the critical teacher and principal shortage by passing MCA 20-4-502-506 (**Appendix D(1)-VI**) implementing the Quality Educator Loan Assistance Program requiring the BPE to identify specific LEAs and licensure or endorsement areas impacted by Critical Quality Educator Shortages. Additional details on Montana's plan to provide teacher equity are discussed in Section D(3) of this grant



application. To meet this statutory requirement and monitor, evaluate, and identify areas of need, OPI conducts a yearly survey of Montana's LEAs.

OPI has developed a rubric for scoring the needs Critical Quality Educator Shortage areas based on rural isolation, economic disadvantage, and low student achievement. These three factors are weighted to set a threshold for identifying impacted schools. Montana is looking forward to enhancing this data-driven process through the assessment and data systems initiatives funded by Race to the Top resources. A summary of this scoring rubric can be found in **Appendix D(1)-VII**.

Each fall, schools report to OPI regarding the challenges facing schools in filling vacancies for teachers, specialists, administrators, and licensed professionals. This data is submitted on the Personnel Recruitment and Retention Report. OPI relies primarily on information submitted by schools through this report to determine the critical shortage areas for licensure and endorsement, but there are two additional sources that inform these needs as well, the Emergency Authorization and Misassignment reports. The Emergency Authorizations report is compiled by the OPI Educator Licensure unit. It lists the number of emergency authorizations approved during the school year by endorsement area. In accordance with MCA 20-4-111 (**Appendix D(1)-VIII**), a school district may apply to OPI for an emergency authorization of employment to hire a non-licensed individual as an instructor when the district is unable to find a licensed educator to fill the position. The source of personnel assignment data is the Annual Data Collection submitted by school districts and special education cooperatives to OPI. The teacher certification fields listed in **Appendix D(1)-IX** represent curriculum areas of critical shortage in Montana as produced by the criteria described above. Emergency licensure data demonstrates that 90 percent of the licensure occurrences between 2004 and 2009 occurred in the fields identified in this table.

OPI combines the geographical needs with the areas of instruction lacking qualified candidates to determine candidate eligibility for student loan reimbursement. The data on emergency authorizations issued since 2004 (**Appendix D(1)-X**) validates the critical quality educator shortage areas that are listed in this report. Of the 79 emergency authorizations issued for school fiscal years 2004 through 2009, 71 (90 percent) were to individuals who taught in one



of the 10 critical shortage areas listed above. The personnel assignment information reported by school districts for AY 08-09 through the Annual Data Collection (ADC) also validates the selection of these 10 education fields.

In addition to the state's Quality Educator Loan program, existing teacher and administrator preparation programs need to be contextualized and aligned with OPI's tracking system to meet the needs of local districts facing shortages as well as culturally and linguistically diverse learners. Additionally, higher education needs to be more engaged in meeting the needs of "hard to fill" vacancies in rural schools. OPI and MUS have formed a partnership that is developing ways for teacher and administrator preparation programs to implement new strategies to address those two critical areas. If teacher and administrator preparation programs address the needs of our Native American learners and our rural shortages, we can demonstrate our ability to close the achievement gap in our state.

As a reflection of our commitment to STEM education, our higher education institutions are collaborating through the Montana Math and Science Teacher Initiative to identify teacher shortages in the area of math and science in Montana and to create strategies to address existing shortages. The initiative is also examining teacher professional development to increase skills of math and science teachers. This project is detailed in Section D(5) of this grant application.

Montana State University (MSU) has a diversity initiative, the Indian Leadership and Development program (ILEAD), that has resulted in the licensure of approximately 70 Native American school leaders to better serve the needs of students from schools on or near reservations in Montana and to directly address the achievement gap of these students. This initiative has increased Native American school leadership more than six-fold in five years.

Through the resources provided by RTTT we will be able to realign the teacher and administrator training programs with the Critical Quality Educator Shortage needs identified by LEAs through the OPI data collection processes. Additional innovations and reforms that support teacher equity and effectiveness to these programs are underway at each of our public universities, as detailed in Section D(3) of this grant application, and we are proud to showcase this partnership and alignment of P-20 educational policies and supports.



(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance
(58 points)

The extent to which the State, in collaboration with its participating LEAs (as defined in this notice), has a high-quality plan and ambitious yet achievable annual targets to ensure that participating LEAs (as defined in this notice)—

- (i) Establish clear approaches to measuring student growth (as defined in this notice) and measure it for each individual student; (5 points)
- (ii) Design and implement rigorous, transparent, and fair evaluation systems for teachers and principals that
 - (a) Differentiate effectiveness using multiple rating categories that take into account data on student growth (as defined in this notice) as a significant factor, and
 - (b) Are designed and developed with teacher and principal involvement; (15 points)
- (iii) Conduct annual evaluations of teachers and principals that include timely and constructive feedback; as part of such evaluations, provide teachers and principals with data on student growth for their students, classes, and schools; (10 points) and
- (iv) Use these evaluations, at a minimum, to inform decisions regarding— (28 points)
 - (a) Developing teachers and principals, including by providing relevant coaching, induction support, and/or professional development;
 - (b) Compensating, promoting, and retaining teachers and principals, including by providing opportunities for highly effective teachers and principals (both as defined in this notice) to obtain additional compensation and be given additional responsibilities;
 - (c) Whether to grant tenure and/or full certification (where applicable) to teachers and principals using rigorous standards and streamlined, transparent, and fair procedures; and
 - (d) Removing ineffective tenured and untenured teachers and principals after they have had ample opportunities to improve, and ensuring that such decisions are made using rigorous standards and streamlined, transparent, and fair procedures.

The State shall provide its detailed plan for this criterion in the text box below. The plan should include, at a minimum, the goals, activities, timelines, and responsible parties (see Reform Plan Criteria elements in Application Instructions or Section XII, Application Requirements (e), for further detail). Any supporting evidence the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers must be described and, where relevant, included in the Appendix. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.

Race to the Top

State of Montana Phase 2 Application



| Performance Measures | | Actual Baseline (Current school year or | End of SY 2010- 2011 | End of SY 2011- 2012 | End of SY 2012- 2013 | End of SY 2013- 2014 | End of SY 2013- 2014 |
|---|--|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Notes: Data should be reported in a manner consistent with the definitions contained in this application package in Section II. Qualifying evaluation systems are those that meet the criteria described in (D)(2)(ii). | | Data: | | | | | |
| Criteria | General goals to be provided at time of application: | Baseline data and annual targets | | | | | |
| (D)(2)(i) | Percentage of participating LEAs that measure student growth (as defined in this notice). | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| (D)(2)(ii) | Percentage of participating LEAs with qualifying evaluation systems for teachers. | 0 | 0 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| (D)(2)(ii) | Percentage of participating LEAs with qualifying evaluation systems for principals. | 0 | 0 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| (D)(2)(iv) | Percentage of participating LEAs with qualifying evaluation systems that are used to inform: | | | | | | |
| (D)(2)(iv)(a) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing teachers and principals. | 0 | 0 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| (D)(2)(iv)(b) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting teachers and principals. | 0 | 0 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| (D)(2)(iv)(b) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retaining effective teachers and principals. | 0 | 0 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| (D)(2)(iv)(c) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Granting tenure and/or full certification (where applicable) to teachers and principals. | 0 | 0 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| (D)(2)(iv)(d) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removing ineffective tenured and untenured teachers and principals. | 0 | 0 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| General data to be provided at time of application: | | | | | | | |
| Total number of participating LEAs. | | 418 | | | | | |
| Total number of principals in participating LEAs. | | 479.90 FTE | | | | | |

Race to the Top

State of Montana Phase 2 Application



| | | |
|---|---|--|
| Total number of teachers in participating LEAs. | 9,659. 45 FTE | |
| [Optional: Enter text here to clarify or explain any of the data] | | |
| Criterion | Data to be requested of grantees in the future: | |
| (D)(2)(ii) | Number of teachers and principals in participating LEAs with qualifying evaluation systems. | |
| (D)(2)(iii) | Number of teachers and principals in participating LEAs with qualifying evaluation systems who were evaluated as effective or better in the prior academic year. | |
| (D)(2)(iii) | Number of teachers and principals in participating LEAs with qualifying evaluation systems who were evaluated as ineffective in the prior academic year. | |
| (D)(2)(iv)(b) | Number of teachers and principals in participating LEAs with qualifying evaluation systems whose evaluations were used to inform compensation decisions in the prior academic year. | |
| (D)(2)(iv)(b) | Number of teachers and principals in participating LEAs with qualifying evaluation systems who were evaluated as effective or better and were retained in the prior academic year. | |
| (D)(2)(iv)(c) | Number of teachers in participating LEAs with qualifying evaluation systems who were eligible for tenure in the prior academic year. | |
| (D)(2)(iv)(c) | Number of teachers in participating LEAs with qualifying evaluation systems whose evaluations were used to inform tenure decisions in the prior academic year. | |



| | |
|---------------|--|
| (D)(2)(iv)(d) | Number of teachers and principals in participating LEAs who were removed for being ineffective in the prior academic year. |
|---------------|--|

Recommended maximum response length: Ten pages

Section D(2)(i): Currently, Montana utilizes our Criterion Reference Test (CRT) as summative assessment data source for student achievement and growth. Through the use of this data we are able to compare schools across the state to determine the efficacy of our education programs. the Race to the Top Assessment Program, the new assessment strategies detailed in Section B, Achievement in Montana (AIM), and our partnership with the SAS Institute, Montana is ready to integrate more reliable assessment tools in the classroom that will inform and direct instruction, determine professional development needs, and assess areas where schools need additional support and intervention. These assessments are being designed with the needs of the student as the central factor; we believe highly effective teachers are integral to student growth and success.

As a student moves through the Montana education system, it is our goal to be able to track her progress, evaluate the support systems that fed that growth, and address the programs and methods that enhanced and/or hindered her success. Our partnership with SAS will provide the meaningful tools to track student progress over time and go on to project their efficacy into the future at key markers in their K-12 education experience. Through RTTT, Montana will be able to better define student achievement, and LEAs, teachers, and administrators will have the tools they need to ensure their students meet benchmarked standards of achievement as set by the Montana Board of Public Education (BPE).

Section D(2)(ii): BPE has established through administrative rule, ARM 10.55.701(5) (**Appendix D(2)-I**) requirements that local boards of trustees have written policies and procedures for regular and periodic evaluation of all regularly employed administrative, supervisory, and teaching personnel. The 2010 Montana Annual Data Collection, which occurs in the fall, will contain a survey that will give OPI a baseline of where we are in Montana



relating to teacher and principal evaluation systems. It will be the first survey to gather information on evaluation systems used in our LEAs and its components are founded in the requirements agreed to in Montana's agreement to receive SFSF Phase II funding.

BPE has already assembled a Task Force of thirty stakeholders (**Appendix D(2)-II**) that have been instructed by the Board and the State Superintendent to conduct a thorough review of school accreditation, Chapter 55 in ARM (**Appendix D(1)-I**). There are three goals for this review that will improve teacher and principal evaluation systems across the state:

- Establish a minimum level of standards to which the local board of trustees must ensure alignment regarding teacher, principal, administrative leadership evaluation
- Establish a system of accountability to assure that LEAs meet the minimum standards relative to evaluation
- Develop professional development and technical assistance to LEAs working to improve their evaluation systems

For schools that are not aligned to the minimum standards for evaluation established by the rule review process, they will be able to utilize model evaluation tools developed as part of our School Improvement Grant (SIG) program and parallel development initiatives underway by the School Administrators of Montana, MEA-MFT, and OPI. These reforms are detailed in Section E(2) of this grant application, and our new system of data collection detailed in Section C(3) will inform the design and implementation of these new evaluation tools. Local control is an essential element of sustainability and stakeholder investment in wholesale reform measures. OPI will develop these tools and support LEAs as they strive to meet standards; however, it will be up to the LEA, including administrators, teachers, and boards of trustees to determine the optimal evaluation criteria to meet and exceed state standards. In the new evaluation tools, student growth will be measured in terms of whole child development and success, and achievement will be one of many factors that influence compensation and promotion.

Section D(2)(iii): Timelines and minimum standards for annual teacher and principal evaluation will be established as part of the review of Chapter 55 in the ARM. We are invested in creating evaluation tools that are transparent, reliable, and serve to inform instruction and



drive student success. In order to achieve these goals, these tools must be implemented consistently so that all stakeholders can rely on the data garnered.

Section D(2)(iv): Within the Response to Intervention (RTI) framework, new reforms specifically in educator evaluation and related training programs will seek to fulfill four of the eight fixed essential components of RTI: evidence-based curriculum and instruction, ongoing assessment, data-based decision-making, and ongoing training and professional development. This new model will give our educators the proper resources and support to effectively meet students at their specific educational needs, enlarging and stocking educator toolboxes with innovative instructional approaches that will drive student achievement and success of the whole child.

Evidence-based curriculum and instruction: To increase the opportunity for students served at all levels of a multi-tiered model that fits within the RTI process framework, instruction and interventions delivered to students should be supported by evidence of their effectiveness obtained from previous research and ongoing local evaluations. During this evaluation process, it is critical that at the local level:

- The procedures for the intervention are clearly articulated
- A process is in place to ensure that procedures are followed
- The correct measures are used to evaluate outcomes that result from the intervention delivery
- An appropriate means of comparing student progress both with and without the intervention is in place

Local districts will have access to data systems that will allow them to determine for themselves processes for accountability and fidelity to their project implementation efforts. OPI will provide guidance and assistance to those districts through the Support System Process.

Ongoing assessment: An effective skills-based reading, math or written expression program should include the following kinds of assessment: screening, benchmark, progress monitoring, diagnostic, outcome, and informal. As we work with LEAs to implement reforms, Montana remains a local control state. Districts will maintain a level of autonomy that we believe



is necessary to ensure the ownership of reform measures and sustainability of new standards. This autonomy also conforms to Section 8 Article X of the Montana Constitution which states, “The supervision and control of schools in each school district shall be vested in a board of trustees to be elected as provided by law.” With this model in mind, we have successfully implemented RTI-based reforms in 111 schools across the state. The utilization of these classroom assessments as a teacher evaluation tool will ultimately be the decision of local leadership; however, OPI and BPE are committed to providing best practice recommendation and regionalized support to districts as they reform their evaluation methods and benchmarks. Within our RTI framework, these new models will focus on the diagnostic, progress-monitoring, and outcome assessments as tools for evaluation to inform teacher instruction strategies in the classroom.

Data-based decision making: This principle is central to every reform that we seek to implement, both through the Race to the Top and state-level directed initiatives. As we follow this problem-solving model at the state level, we expect it to drive reforms at the local level centered on data and research. The following problem-solving model in Figure 1 is integral to educator evaluation and development, and we plan to integrate it into preparing our high quality educators and supporting them as they adapt their instruction to the needs of their students.

Figure 1: Data-driven problem solving model applied to teacher evaluation and intervention

| Step | Process | Example |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Problem Identification | Interim assessment shows students are not meeting expectations |
| 2 | Problem Analysis | Collaborative team works with teacher to identify cause of low performance and determine if problem is acute or systemic |
| 3 | Intervention Plan and Implementation | Identify possible intervention(s): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign an instructional coach/mentor • Provide professional development opportunities • Connect to or establish a professional learning community |



| | | |
|---|--------------------|--|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review materials being used • Review pedagogy being used. |
| 4 | Outcome Evaluation | Coordinate systematic and frequent student progress monitoring to determine if intervention needs to be maintained, adjusted, or concluded |

Professional development: As described above, OPI is ready to make the transition from a menu-based professional development rubric to one that is driven by our state’s transition to RTI-centered schools and classrooms. This process will be driven by the new licensure process described in D(4)(ii) and the Regional Service Area (RSA) professional development provider system under the central direction of OPI and detailed in D(5).

As OPI develops these best practice evaluation and professional growth models for use in our LEAs, we will look to principles like those espoused by Charlotte Danielson in *Enhancing Professional Practice: a Framework for Teaching*, and adapt similar recommendations for the needs of Montana schools and classrooms, as described in the tables below. The tools will also incorporate new data systems and assessment strategies as detailed in this grant application and implemented using Montana’s unique RSA approach and RTI philosophy. By setting common high standards for achievement and providing the support needed at the local level, we believe that we can achieve fidelity of implementation across our geographically and economically vast state.

While we have not developed these best practice evaluation tools, the essential components for which we will strive are detailed below in Figure 2 for teacher evaluation and growth planning.

Figure 2: Essential Components of Teacher Evaluation

| Element of Practice | Description |
|--------------------------|---|
| Planning and Preparation | Selecting instructional goals, designing coherent instruction, demonstrating knowledge of content and pedagogy, demonstrating knowledge of students |
| Classroom Environment | Managing classroom procedures and student behavior, creating an environment to support |



| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| | learning, and organizing physical space |
| Instruction | Engaging students in learning, demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness, communicating clearly and accurately, and using questions and discussion techniques |
| Professional Responsibilities | Communicating with family, developing a student record system, growing and developing professionally, and reflecting on professional practice |
| Student Growth | Measuring, showing, and reflecting student improvement as well as aligning formative and summative assessment data to teacher goals for individual student learning |

A Teacher Professional Growth Plan is a natural result of the evaluation process, where the teacher and administrator determine goals and areas needing improvement, including timelines and improvement measures. If additional professional development is necessary, the teacher and administrator will work to identify appropriate opportunities with feedback measures to ensure professional development was successful in improving classroom effectiveness and student success. To complete the evaluation process, districts will determine appropriate teacher commendation, compensation, and transparent performance ratings through collective bargaining.

The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC), sponsored by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) has developed evaluation standards for principals that will direct the reform process in Montana. The essential components of principal evaluation are detailed in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Essential Components of Principal Evaluation

| Element of Practice | Description |
|---|---|
| School Vision | Developing, articulating, implementing, and stewarding a vision of learning. The effort is shared and supported by stakeholders |
| School Culture/Curriculum and Instruction | Creating and maintaining a school culture that promotes successful student learning and staff professional growth. It also includes development and implementation of quality |

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| | curriculum, instructional techniques and assessment tools that are aligned to learning standards |
| Teacher Evaluation | Improving instructional practice through purposeful observation and quality evaluation that leads to focused and sustained professional development |
| School Management | Includes all aspects of leading a school organizationally and, operationally, as well as being a wise steward of resources to assure the school is run efficiently, effectively, and safely |
| Community Partnership | Building a collaborative environment that involves families, community members, and school staff. Positive and productive relationships should be evident. A community's diverse cultural, social, and intellectual resources should be promoted |

A Principal Professional Growth Plan could also be a natural outcome of the evaluation process, where the principal identifies goals and areas needing improvement as well as professional development opportunities or other means to achieving these goals. It will be up to LEAs to establish compensation and promotion mechanisms that appropriately reward principal effectiveness and leadership.

In Montana, we are proud of our local schools and the opportunities we have been able to historically provide our children across the state. Surviving Montana's harsh winters, both Native Americans and homesteaders quickly learned that success in the wilderness and on the prairie requires both cooperation and competition, working hand in hand. As our schools have faced uncertain futures with funding cuts, decreasing enrollments, and an increasingly demanding economy requiring more skills from new graduates, we have buckled down as a state and maintained our excellent school system. Through partnerships among local boards of trustees, administration, and teachers, we have worked together to develop innovative policies and pedagogies that work in Montana. It is our belief that centralized teacher and principal evaluation systems that tie teacher and principal compensation directly to student achievement scores are antithetical to the values central to our state and our education system.

As we work to implement our already successful RTI-based innovations across the state,



teacher cooperation, community ownership, and school-wide collaboration are essential to our success. Merit systems based largely on assessment scores change the educational dynamic in the classroom. Rather than encouraging teachers to develop the whole child and promote learning and leadership, these pay structures reward a financial motivation based on test scores that may or may not objectively measure student achievement. In Montana, we have faith and trust in our teachers, and we rely on their firsthand experience with students in the classroom to drive innovations and reform. Teachers and principals spend so much time with our most valuable resource, our children. Real learning and growth should motivate these educators, and financial incentives are inappropriate in a public education setting that strives to provide opportunities to all our students, as mandated by the Montana Constitution as a basic right.

Right now, our LEAs maintain a high level of control in determining the proper means to achieve state standards, and as evidenced by our NAEP performance as discussed in Section A of this grant application, local control is working. Montana schools do not currently utilize merit pay structures based on student achievement, and yet our students are achieving. We believe the resources provided by RTTT will be best spent in the classroom and on high quality professional development that help our educators become more effective for their students, rather than on new bureaucratic structures built to monitor and motivate these educators with financial bonuses and monetary rewards. With RTTT resources, Montana will strive to evaluate current methods, expand those that are working, and adapt or eliminate those that are not. OPI will work to provide LEAs with best practice models on teacher and principal evaluation, and we will also provide LEAs with better tools to track teacher effectiveness and student achievement. Through this state-local partnership, we will build upon our current successes, broaden those successes more equitably across the state, and maintain the pride and local ownership of our communities have in their own schools and students.



(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals

(25 points)

The extent to which the State, in collaboration with its participating LEAs (as defined in this notice), has a high-quality plan and ambitious yet achievable annual targets to—

(i) Ensure the equitable distribution of teachers and principals by developing a plan, informed by reviews of prior actions and data, to ensure that students in high-poverty and/or high-minority schools (both as defined in this notice) have equitable access to highly effective teachers and principals (both as defined in this notice) and are not served by ineffective teachers and principals at higher rates than other students; *(15 points)* and

(ii) Increase the number and percentage of effective teachers (as defined in this notice) teaching hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas including mathematics, science, and special education; teaching in language instruction educational programs (as defined under Title III of the ESEA); and teaching in other areas as identified by the State or LEA. *(10 points)*

Plans for (i) and (ii) may include, but are not limited to, the implementation of incentives and strategies in such areas as recruitment, compensation, teaching and learning environments, professional development, and human resources practices and processes.

The State shall provide its detailed plan for this criterion in the text box below. The plan should include, at a minimum, the goals, activities, timelines, and responsible parties (see Reform Plan Criteria elements in Application Instructions or Section XII, Application Requirements (e), for further detail). In the text box below, the State shall describe its current status in meeting the criterion. The narrative or attachments shall also include, at a minimum, the evidence listed below, and how each piece of evidence demonstrates the State’s success in meeting the criterion. The narrative and attachments may also include any additional information the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.

Evidence for (D)(3)(i):

| | |
|--|-------------------------|
| Definitions of high-minority and low-minority schools as defined by the State for the purposes of the State’s Teacher Equity Plan. | Appendix D(3)-IV |
|--|-------------------------|

Recommended maximum response length: Three pages

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| Performance Measures for (D)(3)(i) | Actual Baseline Data: (Current school) | End of SY 2010-2011 | End of SY 2011-2012 | End of SY 2012-2013 | End of SY 2013-2014 |
|--|--|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>Note: All information below is requested for Participating LEAs.</i> | | | | | |
| General goals to be provided at time of application: | Baseline data and annual targets | | | | |
| Percentage of teachers in schools that are high-poverty, high-minority, or both (as defined in this notice) who are highly effective (as defined in this notice). | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Percentage of teachers in schools that are low-poverty, low-minority, or both (as defined in this notice) who are highly effective (as defined in this notice). | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Percentage of teachers in schools that are high-poverty, high-minority, or both (as defined in this notice) who are ineffective. | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Percentage of teachers in schools that are low-poverty, low-minority, or both (as defined in this notice) who are ineffective. | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Percentage of principals leading schools that are high-poverty, high-minority, or both (as defined in this notice) who are highly effective (as defined in this notice). | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Percentage of principals leading schools that are low-poverty, low-minority, or both (as defined in this notice) who are highly effective (as defined in this notice). | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Percentage of principals leading schools that are high-poverty, high-minority, or both (as defined in this notice) who are ineffective. | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Percentage of principals leading schools that are low-poverty, low-minority, or both (as defined in this notice) who are ineffective. | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |

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[Optional: Enter text here to clarify or explain any of the data] There is no system currently in place to accurately and consistently measure teacher effectiveness. There is no intention to implement a rule that determines the effectiveness of teachers and principals from the state level in the requirements for LEAs teacher and principal evaluations. The state will propose minimum evaluation criteria for all LEAs be adopted by the BPE recognizing the constitutional requirement for local control allows for additions to the minimums outlined in administrative rule.

General data to be provided at time of application:

Total number of schools that are high-poverty, high-minority, or both (as defined in this notice).

Total number of schools that are low-poverty, low-minority, or both (as defined in this notice).

Total number of teachers in schools that are high-poverty, high-minority, or both (as defined in this notice).

Total number of teachers in schools that are low-poverty, low-minority, or both (as defined in this notice).

Total number of principals leading schools that are high-poverty, high-minority, or both (as defined in this notice).

Total number of principals leading schools that are low-poverty, low-minority, or both (as defined in this notice).

[Optional: Enter text here to clarify or explain any of the data]

Data to be requested of grantees in the future:

Number of teachers and principals in schools that are high-poverty, high-minority, or both (as defined in this notice) who were evaluated as highly effective (as defined in this notice) in the prior academic year.

Number of teachers and principals in schools that are low-poverty, low-minority, or both (as defined in this notice) who were evaluated as highly effective (as defined in this notice) in the prior academic year.

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| | |
|--|--|
| Number of teachers and principals in schools that are high-poverty, high-minority, or both (as defined in this notice) who were evaluated as ineffective in the prior academic year. | |
| Number of teachers and principals in schools that are low-poverty, low-minority, or both (as defined in this notice) who were evaluated as ineffective in the prior academic year. | |

| Performance Measures for (D)(3)(ii) | Actual Baseline (Current Data: | End of SY 2010- 2011 | End of SY 2011- 2012 | End of SY 2012- 2013 | End of SY 2013- 2014 |
|--|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>Note: All information below is requested for Participating LEAs.</i> | | | | | |
| General goals to be provided at time of application: | Baseline data and annual targets | | | | |
| Percentage of mathematics teachers who were evaluated as effective or better. | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Percentage of science teachers who were evaluated as effective or better. | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Percentage of special education teachers who were evaluated as effective or better. | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Percentage of teachers in language instruction educational programs who were evaluated as effective or better. | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| [Optional: Enter text here to clarify or explain any of the data] There is no system currently in place to accurately and consistently measure teacher effectiveness. There is no intention to implement a rule that determines the effectiveness of teachers and principals from the state level in the requirements for LEAs teacher and principal evaluations. The state will propose minimum evaluation criteria for all LEAs be adopted by the BPE recognizing the constitutional requirement for local control allows for additions to the minimums outlined in administrative rule. | | | | | |
| General data to be provided at time of application: | | | | | |
| Total number of mathematics teachers. | | | | | |
| Total number of science teachers. | | | | | |



| | |
|---|--|
| Total number of special education teachers. | |
| Total number of teachers in language instruction educational programs. | |
| Data to be requested of grantees in the future: | |
| Number of mathematics teachers in participating LEAs who were evaluated as effective or better in the prior academic year. | |
| Number of science teachers in participating LEAs who were evaluated as effective or better in the prior academic year. | |
| Number of special education teachers in participating LEAs who were evaluated as effective or better in the prior academic year. | |
| Number of teachers in language instruction educational programs in participating LEAs who were evaluated as effective or better in the prior academic year. | |

Section D(3)(i): Montana’s constitution mandates that "It is the goal of the people to establish a system of education which will develop the full educational potential of each person. Equality of educational opportunity is guaranteed to each person of the state." (Montana Constitution Section 1 of Article X).

Section 1 continues: "The state recognizes the distinct and unique cultural heritage of the American Indians and is committed in its educational goals to the preservation of their cultural integrity." These provisions of the Constitution of the State of Montana comprise the foundation of the Montana Equity Plan and provide an essential directive that drives policy to ensure equitable access to quality educators.

OPI tracks the distribution of Highly Qualified Teachers (HQT) which continues to develop strategies to ensure that all Montana teachers in core academic content areas meet the definition of “highly qualified.” This information is located in **Appendix D(3)-1 and D(3)-II**. Student achievement among our high-poverty student population remains a significant concern as the vast majority of districts who consistently do not meet AYP are high-poverty and the overwhelming majority of the students in these districts are American Indians. For definitions of “equitable teacher distribution” and “experienced,” please see **Appendix D(3)-III**. For definitions of “high-minority” and “low-minority” schools, please see **Appendix D(3)-IV**.



Montana is taking the following steps to ensure that poor and minority children are not taught at higher rates than other children by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers:

1. Identify those schools and districts that serve the largest numbers or the highest percentages of Montana's high-needs, high-poverty, and minority children particularly American Indians
2. Collect data on the numbers and percentages of teachers who are experienced and inexperienced teaching core academic subjects in these schools and districts;
3. Target technical assistance, guidance and monitoring of identified schools that have inexperienced teachers of core academic subjects with the most intensive assistance, guidance and monitoring focused on schools not meeting the AYP or HQT goals.

OPI will measure, evaluate and publicly report the progress toward meeting equitable distribution of highly qualified teachers and commits to:

1. Consult with high-need and high-poverty schools and districts identified as not meeting AYP and HQT goals to discuss and direct efforts to increase recruitment and retention efforts of highly qualified and experienced teachers.
2. OPI will survey schools to identify successful methods, initiatives and strategies to attract experienced and effective teachers to teach in Montana's high-need, high-poverty schools and districts.
3. Monitor progress through biannual meetings with targeted districts on recruiting and retaining experienced and effective teachers.
4. Promote effective recruitment and retention methods statewide.

Montana's data system permits us to identify high poverty districts and schools as well as districts and schools with significant concentrations of American Indians that are falling short of our HQT goal (**Appendix D(3)-IV**). We focus on these districts and schools as well as those not making AYP in reviewing the data.

Section D(3)(ii): The OPI team will work intensively with MUS and the applicable schools and districts through the School Support Team to package these programs in a way that



best meets the needs of the schools, districts and their teachers. These programs include technical assistance, school support teams, teaching internships, mentorships, regional professional development opportunities, and teacher sharing.

Technical assistance

OPI will provide this support to schools and districts in developing the improvement plan as detailed in Section E(2) of this grant application that includes integration with the Teacher Equity Plan.

School Support Teams

Whether or not the district or school is designated for corrective action or restructuring, School Support Teams (SST) will be assigned to districts and schools that have inequitable proportions of teachers who are not highly qualified, teaching out-of-field, or inexperienced. The SST will conduct a comprehensive on-site review based on the hybrid model promoted by the CCSSO in 2006 and these results will be used by the OPI rapid response team in working with schools and districts in developing improvement plans for meeting the HQT goal.

Internships

The teaching internship program is a three-party arrangement by and between the teacher, district, and an accredited teacher education program. If a district is unable to fill a position it is permitted to assign a teacher on staff to teach an out-of-field core academic subject class on the condition that the teacher enrolls in a Montana institution of higher education's accredited teacher education program in the appropriate subject area. The intern is given a three-year timeline to complete the necessary coursework for an additional endorsement thus meeting the HQT definition. While teaching in the program the intern is supervised by the school principal and an HQT in that core academic subject. OPI provides guidance and technical assistance to the teachers, district personnel, and higher education faculty during the three-year internship.

MSU-Bozeman is currently forming partnerships with two tribal colleges and two community colleges to offer “2+2+2” models of teacher and administrator preparation. This will



allow students to remain in their communities and participate in a preparation program with limited residency at the MSU-Bozeman campus. The purpose of this partnership is to recruit more teacher and administrative candidates and to specifically recruit more Native American candidates addressing issues of equity, closing the achievement gap, and working with diverse populations.

Through an enhanced clinical experience, candidates will strengthen high-poverty and high-minority schools. Resources are needed to provide incentives to teacher preparation candidates to participate in clinical experiences in high-needs schools including but not limited to living stipends, internet access charges, and travel allowances. The outcome would determine if the high-needs school clinical experience can better equip teacher candidates with the skills needed to work in diverse settings and to be effective in closing the achievement gap.

Mentorships

The Mentorship Institute cosponsored by OPI and various partners provides support to beginning teachers as well as embedded professional development opportunities to aid participating schools and districts identify strategies to reach the 100 percent HQT goal. MSU has proposed a teacher mentoring project where early career teachers and administrators continue to be supported by the campus for the first year of practice thereby increasing and improving the clinical experience. Resources from the RTTT funds will be used to support mentors and mentorships and to create incentives for teachers and administrators to participate in a mentoring relationship. Additional resources are needed to train mentors. MSU proposes a pilot principal mentoring program specifically designed for those in high-needs schools. The pilot would use the PALs model developed by the National Association of Elementary Principals. This additional support would focus on the turnaround schools' strategies supported by the state and detailed in Section E(2) of this application. Teacher mentoring would provide training for mentors that would lead to the state-recognized "Special Competency" designation of licensure. The focus on teacher mentoring would be in areas of turnaround strategies and improving math and science competencies. Data directly linking the mentoring efforts with student achievement is the proposed evidence of success in closing the achievement gap.



Regional Professional Development: Through the structures described in Section D(5) of this grant application, content-specific professional development for teachers not meeting the HQT definition will be provided through the RSAs. MUS will also develop stronger linkages with small, rural schools that are served by county superintendents for professional development needs which link higher education and schools in mutual learning. This collaboration improves student learning in K-12 schools, the ability of teachers to link theory with practice, and further helps create a seamless system of professional preparation and professional development.

Regional Teacher Sharing: OPI will encourage sharing the services of properly licensed, endorsed and experienced teachers among schools with hard-to-fill positions in core academic subjects. OPI is working with the Montana Association of School Superintendents, MEA-MFT, School Administrators of Montana, Montana School Boards Association, Montana Small Schools Alliance, and Tribal Education Departments and Councils to expand a regional system to equitably distribute HQTs to teach in core academic subjects. Regional HQT "circuit riders" will be able to teach core academic subject classes in two or more school districts.

The Montana Math and Science Teacher Initiative (MMSTI), discussed in greater detail in Section D(5) of this grant application, is a program that is currently seeking to meet the state's dedication to STEM education, workforce development, and teacher effectiveness and equity across the state. Collectively the RTTT assessment project, new data systems, and implementation of high quality professional development opportunities will ensure that a partnership between Montana elementary, secondary and post-secondary education will enhance student success in core curriculum areas.



(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs
(14 points)

The extent to which the State has a high-quality plan and ambitious yet achievable annual targets to—

(i) Link student achievement and student growth (both as defined in this notice) data to the students’ teachers and principals, to link this information to the in-State programs where those teachers and principals were prepared for credentialing, and to publicly report the data for each credentialing program in the State; and

(ii) Expand preparation and credentialing options and programs that are successful at producing effective teachers and principals (both as defined in this notice).

The State shall provide its detailed plan for this criterion in the text box below. The plan should include, at a minimum, the goals, activities, timelines, and responsible parties (see Reform Plan Criteria elements in Application Instructions or Section XII, Application Requirements (e), for further detail). Any supporting evidence the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers must be described and, where relevant, included in the Appendix. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.

| (D)(4) - Performance Measures | school year | Actual Data: Baseline (Current | End of SY 2010-2011 | End of SY 2011-2012 | End of SY 2012-2013 | End of SY 2013-2014 |
|--|---|---|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| General goals to be provided at time of application: | Baseline data and annual targets | | | | | |
| Percentage of teacher preparation programs in the State for which the public can access data on the achievement and growth (as defined in this notice) of the graduates’ students. | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Percentage of principal preparation programs in the State for which the public can access data on the achievement and growth (as defined in this notice) of the graduates’ students. | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |

Race to the Top

State of Montana Phase 2 Application



[Optional: Enter text here to clarify or explain any of the data] There is no system currently in place to accurately and consistently measure achievement and growth of students. OPI has been funded with state dollars and is currently developing staffing module system which will have the capacity to link such data.

General data to be provided at time of application:

| | | |
|--|------------------|--|
| Total number of teacher credentialing programs in the State. | 9 | |
| Total number of principal credentialing programs in the State. | 3 | |
| Total number of teachers in the State. | 10,475.51 FTE | |
| Total number of principals in the State. | 526.16 FTE | |

[Optional: Enter text here to clarify or explain any of the data]

Data to be requested of grantees in the future:

| | |
|--|--|
| Number of teacher credentialing programs in the State for which the information (as described in the criterion) is publicly reported. | |
| Number of teachers prepared by each credentialing program in the State for which the information (as described in the criterion) is publicly reported. | |
| Number of principal credentialing programs in the State for which the information (as described in the criterion) is publicly reported. | |
| Number of principals prepared by each credentialing program in the State for which the information (as described in the criterion) is publicly reported. | |



| | |
|--|--|
| Number of teachers in the State whose data are aggregated to produce publicly available reports on the State’s credentialing programs. | |
| Number of principals in the State whose data are aggregated to produce publicly available reports on the State’s credentialing programs. | |

Recommended maximum response length: One page

Section D(4)(i): As described in Sections B and C in this application, Montana is eager and ready to utilize Race to the Top funding to reform and enhance our data-collection capabilities to better inform our new formative assessment systems at the classroom level. Montana is a leader in the RTI model by applying what was once a purely special education rubric to whole school improvement efforts and curriculum-based student achievement. New reforms, specifically in educator preparation programs, will seek to fulfill four of the eight fixed essential components of RTI: evidence-based curriculum and instruction, ongoing assessment, data-based decision making, ongoing training and professional development. Current educators follow a formulaic path to licensure with menu-driven options provided for ongoing development and training. The new model will centralize and direct training to a set standard with training driven by needs identified by LEAs in the classroom. This new model will give our educators the proper resources and support to more effectively meet students at their specific educational level and enhance the skills of educators to implement new and innovative instructional approaches that will drive student achievement and success of the whole child. These principles will drive the development of teacher evaluation and training reforms and are detailed in Section D(2) of this application. These goals will also be integrated into the professional development and training timelines detailed in Section D(5) with teacher licensure programs held responsible for pre-service educator training and the RSAs, as directed by OPI, responsible for in-service educator transitions to the new model.

OPI has received \$400,000 to create a staffing data-base which will encompass: degree completion and level; education history including institution and duration; certification information; years of service; teaching history including courses taught, when, and where;



current and historical salary information; and bargaining unit information. This will serve as the basis for gathering and disseminating additional information including evaluation instruments as developed in line with the BPE and LEAs as described in Section C of this grant.

Section D(4)(ii): Montana educators have access to rigorous continuing education opportunities that enhance their effectiveness in the classroom and increase the rates of success for their students. However, we know there is much yet to be done. OPI has already begun collaborating with the MUS to align the Professional Educator Preparation Program Standards (PEPPS) within the accreditation standards adopted by administrated rule specifically in curriculum and assessment (**Appendix D(4)-I**). Race to the Top funding will provide Montana with essential resources to boost our human capital development into the 21st century by centralizing our standards for “highly effective” educators and sustaining this standards growth for years to come with strategic training and planning.

Montana stands ready to develop a new, research-driven tiered licensure system similar to what has been recommended by the CCSSO in their March 2010 white paper on the education workforce. This system would direct initial educator candidates screened into appropriate preparation programs and all programs would have multiple paths to initial licensure. We believe this framework fits in well within our overarching commitment to RTI principles in every school in the state, and it is supported by our institutions of higher education. These funds will enable us partner with these universities by aligning new licensure initiatives with BPE rules. Novice teachers will then engage early in their careers in clinical experiences similar to a residency in which they are supported in a robust professional learning community through a well-defined induction process. Novice teachers can expect full professional level licensure with regular job-embedded growth opportunities through an expanded network of influence added to their existing professional learning community. Professionally licensed educators may also have, the opportunity of earning an expert level and advanced certification. These specially licensed educators will serve their peers as mentors, instructional coaches, content specialists, or possibly professional association leaders. Compensation and promotion would be woven into this model beginning at the novice level in line with Montana’s Collective Bargaining Act. The process will



be guided by the mandatory state-level standards.

To enhance teacher effectiveness in gathering data, assessments, and adapting instruction to meet student needs, the University of Montana is piloting a project that integrates *Chalk and Wire*, a comprehensive assessment system, into teacher training and ongoing professional development opportunities. *Chalk and Wire* is a large relational database which inputs data from BANNER, Excel, Access, Blackboard, Moodle, and so called “e-portfolios” within the system. It also contains a survey tool that will gather additional data. This information can then be analyzed using a variety of tools from simple descriptive statistics to more sophisticated analyses like cluster analysis, correlations, inter-rator reliability, and more. It is also an “e-portfolio” program that can be used by administrators to gather assessment data and by students to demonstrate their content knowledge in addition to other uses.

As this project develops in conjunction with the implementation of our Race to the Top innovation and reform agenda, we will integrate other key features as requirements in statewide teacher accreditation revisions. Our goal is to integrate every Race to the Top reform assurance into preparation program innovations including but not limited to data-driven instruction as well as formative and summative assessment strategies. Under our proposal new teachers will be better prepared to use data to adapt effective instruction to identified goals of student performance, measure growth, and adhere to internationally benchmarked standards.



(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals

(20 points)

The extent to which the State, in collaboration with its participating LEAs (as defined in this notice), has a high-quality plan for its participating LEAs (as defined in this notice) to—

(i) Provide effective, data-informed professional development, coaching, induction, and common planning and collaboration time to teachers and principals that are, where appropriate, ongoing and job-embedded. Such support might focus on, for example, gathering, analyzing, and using data; designing instructional strategies for improvement; differentiating instruction; creating school environments supportive of data-informed decisions; designing instruction to meet the specific needs of high need students (as defined in this notice); and aligning systems and removing barriers to effective implementation of practices designed to improve student learning outcomes; and

(ii) Measure, evaluate, and continuously improve the effectiveness of those supports in order to improve student achievement (as defined in this notice).

The State shall provide its detailed plan for this criterion in the text box below. The plan should include, at a minimum, the goals, activities, timelines, and responsible parties (see Reform Plan Criteria elements in Application Instructions or Section XII, Application Requirements (e), for further detail). Any supporting evidence the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers must be described and, where relevant, included in the Appendix. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.

Recommended maximum response length: Five pages

Section D(5)(i): Highly effective educators have the knowledge and ability to deliberately plan instruction and select appropriate materials that align with standards set by the Montana Board of Public Education (BPE). They make informed decisions based on research findings and student achievement data to increase the efficacy of their instruction methods, and they have a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the following:

- Aligned Common Core standards in mathematics and communications arts
- Additional state standards in other subject areas that exceed standards set nationally
- Evidence-based best practices in instruction similar to those that are based on National Science Foundation recommendations, National Council of Teachers of Math (NCTM) lessons and basal-based instruction



- Purposeful use of best practice screening, benchmarking, diagnostic, progress monitoring and outcome (summative) assessment tools

Within Montana's systemic across-the-board Response to Intervention (RTI) framework, skilled educators select and administer ongoing skill assessments that identify the instructional needs of all students. The best practice teaching cycle is: concept instruction, assessing for learning, and differentiating instruction based upon assessment data. When this cycle is ongoing, teaching is supported and student learning and achievement is optimized. As the OPI works with LEAs to roll out the Montana Plan, professional development needs will be evaluated and provided to ensure fidelity of implementation of every program within Montana's reform agenda.

Montana has seen great success in implementing RTI in 111 pilot schools in the reading curriculum. Currently we are developing components that will allow for a mathematics RTI rollout statewide, broader inclusion in this program will be facilitated by the funding from Race to the Top. As these standards are developed and aligned, Montana will implement RTI practices across disciplines so that these successful methods can boost student achievement across the board.

Since LEAs are already familiar with the four phases of RTI implementation developed by the reading model, an implementation plan following the same model will assist all LEAs to implement a broader RTI model with fidelity. Absolutely integral to the success of this reform is comprehensive pre-service teacher training and ongoing professional development supported by our teacher training programs and the OPI's professional development to ensure the sustainability of our reforms. The RTI training model is a three-phased system with specific benchmarks and development processes. A matrix that details these benchmarks is included in **Appendix D(5)-I**, including goals, activities, responsible parties and timelines.

Responding to the Science and Mathematics Teacher Imperative mandate of spring 2008, and as evidence of Montana's commitment to high quality STEM education that gives students opportunities to be successful leaders in the 21st Century economy, a statewide steering committee was created to formulate plans to increase the quality, quantity, and diversity of math and science teachers in Montana. In an unprecedented move, Montana galvanized a team



comprised of Supt. Denise Juneau, Commissioner of Higher Education Sheila Stearns, President George Dennison of the University of Montana, President Waded Cruzado of Montana State University, Provost Royce Engstrom of the University of Montana, four deans (two of education, two of arts and sciences), curriculum specialists in science and math, and executive directors of the teachers' union, school boards association, school administrators association, and rural education. Together they formed the Montana Math and Science Teacher Initiative (MMSTI), identified a program coordinator, and to date have convened six meetings dedicated to creating and implementing a strategic plan.

Terming it a "road map," the steering committee created a strategic plan and focused upon selected initiatives. The plan includes a timeline, communication plan to expand stakeholders, systematic data collection process, a coaching model, mentoring/induction, and a professional development pilot.

Serving as an alignment tool, the plan has already fostered important alignment among P-12 and post-secondary units in unprecedented conversations about math and science curriculum concerns. Where state standards are under development and in anticipation of the Common Core initiative for Race to the Top, state curriculum specialists have engaged university professors in shoulder-to-shoulder work with teacher teams. Where universities have placement tests for mathematics, teachers and professors are analyzing their content to examine levels of preparation. And where technology impacts teaching pedagogy, groups of educators from community colleges, universities, and high schools are exploring their use in math and science classrooms. It is expected this plan will lead to enhanced funding, ongoing communication, and, ultimately, improved transitions from high school to post-secondary settings, where colleges of education are already working more closely than ever before with colleges of arts and sciences to recruit high-achieving students early into the profession of science and mathematics education.

One key pilot project showing promising results in Montana is the creation of Missoula County-wide Science and Mathematics Academies. Led by one teacher of upper-division science and math from each area high school (six public schools and two private schools), along with faculty in science and math from both the community college and university, these academies are formulating professional development for all teachers of math and science in



Montana's second-largest city, working closely with the OPI for support and national linkages. Focused on articulating and refining curriculum transitions from high school into post-secondary settings while enhancing pedagogy, the academies are built upon a foundation of collaborative learning.

Section D(5)(ii): As we implement RTI across the state, professional development needs are a key component to making these innovations and reforms a success. We currently utilize a survey tool to measure, evaluate and continuously improve the effectiveness of RTI implementation in the 111 pilot schools. This survey tool is included in **Appendix D(5)-II**. Using RTTT resources, we plan to integrate this survey tool into our new data collection capabilities under development in partnership with the SAS Institute.



(E) Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

(50 total points)

(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs

(10 points)

The extent to which the State has the legal, statutory, or regulatory authority to intervene directly in the State’s persistently lowest-achieving schools (as defined in this notice) and in LEAs that are in improvement or corrective action status.

In the text box below, the State shall describe its current status in meeting the criterion. The narrative or attachments shall also include, at a minimum, the evidence listed below, and how each piece of evidence demonstrates the State’s success in meeting the criterion. The narrative and attachments may also include any additional information the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.

Evidence for (E)(1):

| | |
|---|------------------------|
| A description of the State’s applicable laws, statutes, regulations, or other relevant legal documents. | Appendix E(1)-I |
|---|------------------------|

Recommended maximum response length: One page

Section E(1): Article X, Section 8 of the Montana Constitution provides that the “supervision and control of schools in each school district shall be vested in a board of trustees to be elected as provided by law.” Ingrained in the Constitutional design of school management and operations are the strong values of local control and autonomy. Contrarily, the Montana Constitution also provides for a strong central authority vested in the independently elected executive office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, with Article VI, Section 4(5) stating that this position “shall have such duties as are provided by law.” The constitution continues to read in Article X, Section 9 that the BPE shall “exercise general supervision over the public school system.” Statutory and case law has resulted in a structural partnership between LEAs and the SEA wherein high standards are set at the state level while policy and administration is implemented by the LEAs at the local level according to their own locally elected leadership.

OPI has statutory authority to intervene in specific areas of local school operations. These statutes are outlined in MCA 20.3.106. **(Appendix E(1)-I).**



Additionally, OPI will seek broader authority to intervene in persistently low-achieving schools via administrative rule change with the BPE. This process will be developed through the Chapter 55 review process already in progress. The applicable section of Chapter 55 is included in **Appendix E(1)-II**. The stakeholders engaged in this process are committed to maintaining a balance between local control and state-level authority while recognizing the need to increase student performance in those areas which require additional state assistance. Temporary and selective interventions will enable OPI to return control to local leaders after school improvement goals have been achieved.



(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools

(40 points)

The extent to which the State has a high-quality plan and ambitious yet achievable annual targets to—

(i) Identify the persistently lowest-achieving schools (as defined in this notice) and, at its discretion, any non-Title I eligible secondary schools that would be considered persistently lowest-achieving schools (as defined in this notice) if they were eligible to receive Title I funds; and *(5 points)*

(ii) Support its LEAs in turning around these schools by implementing one of the four school intervention models (as described in Appendix C): turnaround model, restart model, school closure, or transformation model (provided that an LEA with more than nine persistently lowest-achieving schools may not use the transformation model for more than 50 percent of its schools). *(35 points)*

The State shall provide its detailed plan for this criterion in the text box below. The plan should include, at a minimum, the goals, activities, timelines, and responsible parties (see Reform Plan Criteria elements in Application Instructions or Section XII, Application Requirements (e), for further detail). In the text box below, the State shall describe its current status in meeting the criterion. The narrative or attachments shall also include, at a minimum, the evidence listed below, and how each piece of evidence demonstrates the State’s success in meeting the criterion. The narrative and attachments may also include any additional information the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.

Evidence for (E)(2) (please fill in table below):

| | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| <p>The State’s historic performance on school turnaround, as evidenced by the total number of persistently lowest-achieving schools (as defined in this notice) that States or LEAs attempted to turn around in the last five years, the approach used, and the results and lessons learned to date.</p> | <p>Appendix E(2)-I</p> |
|--|-------------------------------|



| (E)(2) - Performance Measures | Baseline | Actual Data: SY 2010- | End of SY 2011- | End of SY 2012- | End of SY 2013- |
|---|----------|--------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| The number of schools for which one of the four school intervention models (described in Appendix C) will be initiated each year. | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 |

Recommended maximum response length: Eight pages

Section E(2)(i): Montana defines Persistently Lowest Achieving Schools as “any Title I school in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring that rank in the lowest five percent of schools based on the percentage of students scoring At or Above Proficiency in Reading and Math using three years of assessment data.” The steps outlined in **Appendix E(2)-I** describe the process utilized to produce the list of Persistently Lowest Achieving Schools.

Tier I: Lowest-achieving five percent of Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring, obtained by:

- Ranking the Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring from highest to lowest based on academic achievement of the “all students” groups
- Applying lack of progress to the rank order list
- Counting up from the bottom of the list
- Adding Title I high schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring that have had a graduation rate less than 60 percent over a number of years (to the extent not already included)

Tier II: There are no secondary schools that are eligible for, but do not receive, Title I funds.

Tier III: Montana examined the use of the flexibility to identify newly eligible schools as Tier I, II, or III and discovered that no additional schools could be added to Montana’s lists for purposes of using school improvement funds under section 1003(g) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).



Montana has developed a comprehensive plan to turn around the Persistently Lowest Achieving Schools classified as Tier I schools. Since the Tier II and Tier III classifications do not identify additional groups of schools that need support from OPI, Montana has established a supplemental plan to the SIG project to provide additional layers of support to schools that are struggling to meet state standards.

Section E(2)(ii): After extensive outreach from OPI four of the five LEAs eligible for the Department's SIG grant have indicated their interest in participating in the three-year grant: Frazer, Pryor, Lodge Grass, and Lame Deer. See **Appendix E(2)-II** for a detailed plan and timeline of how Montana will dramatically improve student achievement over the next three years utilizing the transformational School Improvement model. The steps within this plan reflect our commitment to the eight essential elements of RTI and maintain continuity with the assurances of the RTTT, most notably data-informed decision-making, balanced assessments that inform instruction, high-quality teachers and principals, and broad community support that ensures the success and sustainability of new reforms and innovations.

The BPE has convened a Chapter 55 Review Task Force. This Task Force will address the issues relative to accrediting Montana's schools. The BPE and Superintendent of Public Instruction has directed this 30-member group representing a broad array of stakeholders to look at models that will protect classroom integrity, allow LEAs the flexibility to work in a manner that fits their individual needs and strengths, and hold all parties accountable for ensuring performance based education is available to all students.

An accreditation process will be developed around a hybrid model promoted by the CCSSO in 2006. This model will be integrated into the school accreditation process so predetermined data points are used to establish the level and areas that LEAs assistance.

Figure 1 represents the five stages of determining the level of need for support that could be used in the accreditation/support identification process.



Figure 1: Determining level of support

| Stage | Actions |
|-------|--|
| 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial determination of level and area of need based on prioritized data points |
| 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of Other Considerations through desk audit and data analysis • Decision Point |
| 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine need for on-site visit • If warranted, establish pre on-site visit activities, conduct on-site data gathering, analyze on-site visit data, and evaluate on-site process |
| 4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set priorities for assistance • Formulate district plan |
| 5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress reports on completion of timeline targets • Quantitative measurement of progress • Feedback on progress • Decision point |

At Stage 1, the areas of support will be determined by OPI and the leadership of the LEA upon an analysis of the data. Our partnership with the SAS Institute, as described in Section C of this grant application, will enable us to better identify areas of need and track the success of state interventions and supports as they are implemented. The following details those areas being proposed to the Chapter 55 Review Task Force for consideration, and Figure 2 details the levels of support that OPI may provide.

Areas of assistance available from OPI:

- District/School program planning and implementation
- Leadership support
- Better access to and use of data
- Curriculum support
- Instructional support
- Technology support
- Professional development support and opportunities
- Building capacity at the district-level and school-level
- Student performance
- Certified staff evaluation
- Assessment and accountability
- School culture and climate
- Budgeting and allocation of resources
- Engaging parents and the community
- Meeting accreditation standards
- Safe Schools



Figure 2: Levels of Support

| Level | Need | Action |
|--------------|----------------------------------|--|
| 1 | None to low | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data analysis workshop • Review and report |
| 2 | Low to moderate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted regional professional development • Train the trainer for district personnel |
| 3 | Moderate to high | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State district support team • Regional service area assistance |
| 4 | High to intensive | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-site State district support team • Direct and sustain mentoring |
| 5 | Intensive to urgent intervention | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary alternative governance required |



(F) General (55 total points)

(F)(1) Making education funding a priority
 (10 points)

The extent to which—

- (i) The percentage of the total revenues available to the State (as defined in this notice) that were used to support elementary, secondary, and public higher education for FY 2009 was greater than or equal to the percentage of the total revenues available to the State (as defined in this notice) that were used to support elementary, secondary, and public higher education for FY 2008; and
- (ii) The State’s policies lead to equitable funding (a) between high-need LEAs (as defined in this notice) and other LEAs, and (b) within LEAs, between high-poverty schools (as defined in this notice) and other schools.

In the text box below, the State shall describe its current status in meeting the criterion. The narrative or attachments shall also include, at a minimum, the evidence listed below, and how each piece of evidence demonstrates the State’s success in meeting the criterion. The narrative and attachments may also include any additional information the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.

Evidence for (F)(1)(i):

| | |
|---|------------------------|
| Financial data to show whether and to what extent expenditures, as a percentage of the total revenues available to the State (as defined in this notice), increased, decreased, or remained the same. | Appendix F(1)-I |
|---|------------------------|

Evidence for (F)(1)(ii):

| | |
|---|----------------------|
| Any supporting evidence the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers. | See narrative |
|---|----------------------|

Recommended maximum response length: Three pages

Section F(1)(i): Governor Schweitzer and Superintendent Juneau have worked to ensure Montana makes education funding the top priority. This commitment and dedication has increased the percentage of general fund expenditures for both public K-12 education and higher education between FY 2008 and FY 2009 from 42% to 46%. Please see **Appendix F(1)-I** for a detailed breakdown. It is also important to note that resident post-secondary education tuition



rates were frozen through the College Affordability Plan (CAP) implemented by the MUS.

In FY 2008 Montana's state budget totaled \$3,598,856,366, of which \$2,069,045,000 was available for general fund expenditures including education. Roughly \$685 million, or 33.1%, was allocated to K-12 education. Over \$177 million, or 8.6% of available funding, went to public higher education. Together public education amounted to 41.7% of total general fund expenditures.

In FY 2009 the state budget was \$4,123,155,446. This particular year the amount available for general fund expenditures decreased to \$1,859,974,000. Montana upheld its commitment to education despite the decrease in available general fund dollars compared to the previous fiscal year. In FY 2009 K-12 public education funding increased to 35.2% of general fund expenditures to over \$655 million. Higher education spending totaled over \$192 million or 10.3%.

45.6% of the total revenues available to the state in FY 2009 for general fund expenditures was used to strengthen public K-12 and higher education—a nearly 4% increase from the previous fiscal year. This increase underscores the state's dedication to quality education. Montana has protected and promoted public schools throughout the state despite declining revenues.

Section F(1)(ii): Montana has designed a funding formula to extend beyond equitable funding for all districts and provide the resources necessary for high-need and high-poverty districts to flourish.

Five years ago the Montana legislature devised a funding system grounded on the principles of quality education as outlined in MCA 20-9-309 (**Appendix F(1)-II**). The resulting legislation enumerated the "educationally relevant factors" which governs the state funding system. These educationally relevant factors include:

- The number of students in a district
- The needs of isolated schools with low population density
- The needs of urban schools with high population density
- The needs of students with special needs



- The needs of American Indian students
- The ability of schools to recruit and retain qualified educators and other personnel

The formula includes all of these factors and promotes successful schools across the state. The formula includes seven elements, each highlighting Montana’s concern for the success of all schools and every student across the state. For a listing of school funding formula statutes, please see **Appendix F(1)-III through F(1)-VII**. These elements include but are not limited to:

- **Basic Entitlement** is a fixed amount given to schools regardless of size of the districts. The funding level increases with each educational level. Basic entitlement consists of both direct state aid and a guaranteed tax base, the latter of which provides aid from the General Fund for those school districts with mill levy values lower than the state average.
- **Per-ANB (Average Number Belonging) Entitlement** is funding based on the aggregated enrollment of each district. Similar to a “per student” funding mechanism, per-ANB also accounts for other factors, such as student attendance. Schools may use the current year ANB or a three year average ANB, whichever generates the greatest maximum general fund budget. For the legal calculation of ANB, please see **Appendix F(1)-III**.
- **Special Education Allowable Cost Funding** is allocated in three ways: two block grants for districts based on ANB, reimbursement for disproportionate costs to districts, and an additional administrative/ travel costs payment to cooperatives.
- **Indian Education for All Payment-** Montana is the only state in the nation with a constitutional obligation to preserve the “distinct and unique culture heritage of the American Indians.” Native Americans greatly shaped Montana’s rich history, and all K-12 students learn about the cultures, traditions, and histories of the state’s tribes. Each district receives an Indian Education for All payment (**Appendix F(1)-IV**) to ensure this essential part of Montana’s story continues.
- **Quality Educator Payment-** Each of Montana’s school districts and special education cooperatives receives a payment of \$3,042 for each full-time equivalent licensed educator and for other licensed professionals employed by the school district. (**Appendix F(1)-V**). This payment addresses the core component of a quality education system, teachers, by



providing a reliable funding source to recruit and retain quality educators. Both high-need and high-poverty districts can use this funding to secure the teachers and licensed professionals necessary to educate and empower students and foster great academic growth. Entirely funded by the state, the quality educator payment does not rely on the property tax revenue of a given district, which is extremely beneficial to high-poverty areas where property tax values are lower than the state average.

- **At-Risk Payment-** This funding aims to address the needs of at-risk students across the state and is distributed in the same manner as Title I monies (**Appendix F(1)-VI**). Thus, this at-risk payment will have a powerful impact on high-poverty school districts and further serve to close the achievement gaps plaguing those students living in poverty or individuals with greater needs.
- **American Indian Achievement Gap Payment-** For years, a wide educational achievement gap existed between the state's American Indian students and their non-American Indian peers. Many of Montana's American Indian families face cultural and socioeconomic challenges not experienced by non-Indian residents. The state has given careful consideration to the needs of the Native American student population, and in an effort to help begin to close achievement gaps, allocates \$200 for each American Indian student enrolled in a given school district (**Appendix F(1)-VII**). Many of Montana's *Schools of Promise* have high American Indian student enrollment. The American Indian Achievement Gap payment provides some of the additional funds necessary to strengthen these schools and help students realize their full potential.

The remaining funding components included in the formula greatly expand the resources available to Montana's schools based upon the educationally relevant factors. Each is indicative of the state's careful consideration of the difficulties facing LEAs as well as the unique challenges faced in Indian Country. These components are critical to addressing the unique challenges faced by high-need and high-poverty districts.

While many of these funding changes were implemented during the 2005 legislative session, Montana has continued its commitment to strengthening public school systems. During the 2007 session the legislature appropriated \$92.4 million in new, ongoing funding for



education in Montana. This new funding included inflationary funding increases to the basic entitlement and per-ANB entitlement, a 51% increase in the quality educator payment along with an expansion of the professionals considered quality educators, additional funding for Indian Education for All, the establishment of a Quality Educator Loan Assistance Program meant to move highly effective teachers into high demand content or geographic areas and, most importantly, the funding of Full-time Kindergarten.

The most high impact program in supporting high-need and high-poverty school districts is the establishment of the Quality Educator Loan Assistance program as described in Section D(3) of this application. This program offers direct repayment of loans for up to four years for educators employed in schools impacted by quality educator shortages. This program assists target schools, especially high-need and high-poverty schools alleviate problems recruiting and retaining quality educators.

Montana has continued its commitment to providing a quality education throughout the state by funding high-impact, targeted, and proven education programs. We will be a leader in education throughout the nation by continuing to prioritize education funding.



(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools (40 points)

The extent to which—

(i) The State has a charter school law that does not prohibit or effectively inhibit increasing the number of high-performing charter schools (as defined in this notice) in the State, measured (as set forth in Appendix B) by the percentage of total schools in the State that are allowed to be charter schools or otherwise restrict student enrollment in charter schools;

(ii) The State has laws, statutes, regulations, or guidelines regarding how charter school authorizers approve, monitor, hold accountable, reauthorize, and close charter schools; in particular, whether authorizers require that student achievement (as defined in this notice) be one significant factor, among others, in authorization or renewal; encourage charter schools that serve student populations that are similar to local district student populations, especially relative to high-need students (as defined in this notice); and have closed or not renewed ineffective charter schools;

(iii) The State's charter schools receive (as set forth in Appendix B) equitable funding compared to traditional public schools, and a commensurate share of local, State, and Federal revenues; The State provides charter schools with funding for facilities (for leasing facilities, purchasing facilities, or making tenant improvements), assistance with facilities acquisition, access to public facilities, the ability to share in bonds and mill levies, or other supports; and the extent to which the State does not impose any facility-related requirements on charter schools that are stricter than those applied to traditional public schools; and

(iv) The State enables LEAs to operate innovative, autonomous public schools (as defined in this notice) other than charter schools.

In the text box below, the State shall describe its current status in meeting the criterion. The narrative or attachments shall also include, at a minimum, the evidence listed below, and how each piece of evidence demonstrates the State's success in meeting the criterion. The narrative and attachments may also include any additional information the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.



Evidence for (F)(2)(i):

| | |
|---|------------------------|
| A description of the State’s applicable laws, statutes, regulations, or other relevant legal documents. | Appendix F(2)-I |
| The number of charter schools allowed under State law and the percentage this represents of the total number of schools in the State. | See narrative |
| The number and types of charter schools currently operating in the State. | 0 |

Evidence for (F)(2)(ii):

| | |
|--|----------------------|
| A description of the State’s approach to charter school accountability and authorization, and a description of the State’s applicable laws, statutes, regulations, or other relevant legal documents. | See narrative |
| For each of the last five years: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of charter school applications made in the State. • The number of charter school applications approved. • The number of charter school applications denied and reasons for the denials (academic, financial, low enrollment, other). • The number of charter schools closed (including charter schools that were not reauthorized to operate) | 0 |

Evidence for (F)(2)(iii):

| | |
|---|----------------------|
| A description of the State’s applicable statutes, regulations, or other relevant legal documents. | See narrative |
| A description of the State’s approach to charter school funding, the amount of funding passed through to charter schools per student, and how those amounts compare with traditional public school per-student funding allocations. | See narrative |



Evidence for (F)(2)(iv):

| | |
|---|----------------------|
| A description of the State’s applicable statutes, regulations, or other relevant legal documents. | See narrative |
| A description of the statewide facilities supports provided to charter schools, if any. | See narrative |

Evidence for (F)(2)(v):

| | |
|--|----------------------|
| A description of how the State enables LEAs to operate innovative, autonomous public schools (as defined in this notice) other than charter schools. | See narrative |
|--|----------------------|

Recommended maximum response length: Six pages

Section F(2)(i): The Montana Board of Public Education (BPE) adopts all standards of accreditation for public schools, upon the recommendation of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Standards of accreditation have the force of law. In 1989, according to this process, the State Superintendent recommended a standard for the establishment of charter schools. This standard was adopted by BPE.

Accordingly, any school district may apply to BPE through the Superintendent of Public Instruction to create a charter school that meets or exceeds the requirements of the Montana school accreditation standards. Montana charter schools are required to have school district governance and control as well as unrestricted student access. Additionally, charter schools must comply with all health, safety and teacher licensure laws as required by state law. These schools must create a plan for the consideration of input by community members and staff as to the formation and implementation of the charter school. An approved charter school may be discontinued at any time. Please see **Appendix F(2)-I** Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) 10.55.604.

In the twelve years since the effective date of the Rule, there have been no requests to the BPE to approve any charter schools. Despite over a decade of freedom to establish charter schools, Montana families have found sufficient flexibility and quality within existing public schools. Further, the rural nature of Montana, in many cases, precludes sufficient student enrollment as to form additional schools.

Section F(2)(ii)-(iv): As the fourth largest state in the nation, Montana ranks 45th in total population. According to the 2000 Census, there are roughly six Montanans for every square



mile and which roughly translates to less than 1 public school student per square mile and the smallest ratio of students per school district in the nation.

Only six percent of Montana’s schools have a total enrollment over 500 students. More than half of schools (54 percent) across the state enroll fewer than 100 students. The largest school district in the state, Billings Public School, serves approximately 15,500 students. One of Montana’s 56 counties currently has a total of only 133 enrolled K-12 public school students and has a total area of 3,348 square miles. In recognition of varied school size and the resulting differences in need Montana has been mindful in developing education policies attuned to our diversity – geographic, racial, or socioeconomic.

Flexibility within the existing system is not the only reason Montanan’s have not established charter schools. The state’s “frontier” status make it challenging for many communities or the state to support existing public schools let alone the duplication of infrastructure a charter school would mean in Montana’s small cities and towns.

Montana firmly supports innovative education policies that empowers students and strengthens communities. Montana embraces diversity and revels in the strengths drawn from such a broad array of students and school sizes. Seven Indian reservations representing twelve distinct tribes lie within the borders of this state. The culture and tradition of these tribes have shaped Montana into the state that exists today. However, while culturally rich, many of these tribes experience disproportionately high poverty rates when compared to non-Indian Montanan communities. Their school-aged children often perform behind their white peers.

Montana’s Indian students need far more than a modification of the existing school structure with a new label. Montana has a plan to revive turnaround schools and provide a superior education for all students. The School Improvement Grant (SIG) plan, detailed in Section E(2), will transform Montana’s education system and exceed expectations. This success will come from the state’s clear realization that each student, not just those struggling with poverty, and all schools, not just those struggling to meet certain standards, need innovative reform and new policies and procedures. These policies should focus on empowering communities, schools and teachers. Students need support that extends well beyond the walls of a school and includes the active participation of all adults in the community as role models and



mentors. More importantly, Montana’s students need school teachers and leaders focused on ensuring our kids are healthy, knowledgeable, motivated, and engaged.

Section F(2)(v): Montana Accreditation Standards provide for LEAs to operate innovative, autonomous public schools through the performance-based accreditation process established in ARM 10.55.606 (**Appendix F(2)-II**). Performance-based accreditation gives a school district the option of obtaining, for one or more of its schools, accreditation through a process that involves self-evaluation, peer-review and on-site visitations.

After engaging in a sustained school improvement effort, a school district, on behalf of one or more of its schools, may apply to the Superintendent of Public Instruction for performance-based accreditation. The BPE makes the final decision on whether a school is accredited through the performance-based accreditation process. The school improvement process shall incorporate the following six steps or their equivalent:

- (a) development of a student/community profile;
- (b) development of a school mission and goals that reflect a locally derived philosophy of education;
- (c) identification of desired learner results based on the content and performance standards;
- (d) analysis of instructional and organizational effectiveness;
- (e) development and implementation of a school improvement plan; and
- (f) monitoring through self-assessment and visits by peers or teams.

This method allows a school to meet accreditation standards by linking student and LEA performance to demonstrate that it provides a quality education. The school improvement plan serves as a basis for assessment of school effectiveness and an impetus for mobilizing improvement efforts.



(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions

(5 points)

The extent to which the State, in addition to information provided under other State Reform Conditions Criteria, has created, through law, regulation, or policy, other conditions favorable to education reform or innovation that have increased student achievement or graduation rates, narrowed achievement gaps, or resulted in other important outcomes.

In the text box below, the State shall describe its current status in meeting the criterion. The narrative or attachments shall also include, at a minimum, the evidence listed below, and how each piece of evidence demonstrates the State's success in meeting the criterion. The narrative and attachments may also include any additional information the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.

Evidence for (F)(3):

| | |
|---|--|
| A description of the State's other applicable key education laws, statutes, regulations, or relevant legal documents. | |
|---|--|

Recommended maximum response length: Two pages

Section F(3): Montana is firmly committed to innovation and reform throughout our education system. These reforms are the impetus for improvement and the foundation for strengthening every learning opportunity across the state. Three particular reforms in Montana highlight our dedication to increasing student achievement, decreasing achievement gaps and making Montana an example of quality education for the entire nation.

The Five-Year Comprehensive Education Plan

The Five-Year Comprehensive Education Plan (5YCEP) was adopted by the BPE in November 2000, establishing the goal that all school districts develop, implement, evaluate and revise a single five-year comprehensive education plan to ensure continuous education improvement for all students and schools. **(Appendix F(3)-I)** The plan is partly based on the Education Northwest Sustainable School Improvement Model. This seven-step continuous model empowers stakeholders to identify areas of improvement, collect all applicable data and set strategic, data-centered goals that meet the particular needs of each school. Professional



development is integrated into the process, as teams of stakeholders identify the effective instructional practices that influence each goal. Every plan implemented is closely monitored and adjusted, as incoming data continues to shape the process. Evaluations and open dialogue assess each completed plan, and the lessons learned improve each year's plan.

The state is confident that this ongoing strategic planning will encourage the progress of local school curriculum to BPE standards, emphasize professional development and allow all schools to assess students' progress in meeting content and performance standards. Moreover, this entire process highlights the state's community-focused, data driven policies to promote success in every school across the state.

Best Beginnings/"Stars to Quality" Programs

DPHHS has implemented two key programs to ensure high quality pre-school programs to Montana's youngest learners. The Best Beginnings/"Stars to Quality" Programs will rank participating daycare and preschool providers, provide incentives for improvement and professional development to participants, and disseminate general information to parents, family caretakers, and others to facilitate best practices in early learning and child social and emotional development. These programs will also act as the conduit for Montana's Early Learning Council.

Full-time Kindergarten

One of the state's most significant education policy reforms in recent history is the establishment of full-time kindergarten. Three years ago the Montana Legislature passed House Bill 2, providing funding for Montana's public schools to offer a full-time program in compliance with Montana.

Studies have shown that children enrolled in full-time kindergarten demonstrate greater progress in reading, math and general learning skills, significant gains in social and emotional development, reduced behavioral problems and higher scores on achievement tests. The positive outcomes of full-time kindergarten are even greater for at-risk and disadvantaged students. Recent research indicates that full-time kindergarten will help close achievement gaps for low-



income and minority students.

The benefits of the program do not end when the student completes kindergarten. Longitudinal studies clearly indicate that full-time kindergarten students are more likely to complete high school and college, have higher monthly earnings at age 27 and were more likely to own a home. These same students were less likely to receive social services or be arrested. Full-time kindergarten not only promotes academic success, it provides a solid foundation for a successful citizenship

College!Now

Montana is one of seven states to receive funding through the Lumina Foundation for Education to improve the productivity of the post-secondary system. This includes implementing strategies for low-cost, high quality dual enrollment opportunities for college access by high school students and common developmental education access across all Montana 2-year campuses. College!Now is Montana's way of meeting President Obama's challenge of producing an additional 65,000 credentialed adults in Montana by 2020. Further, College!Now and the National Governor's Association have partnered to sponsor a statewide adult credentialing conference with employee and industry partners in August 2010 (**Appendix F(3)-III**).



Priority 1: Absolute Priority -- Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

To meet this priority, the State's application must comprehensively and coherently address all of the four education reform areas specified in the ARRA as well as the State Success Factors Criteria in order to demonstrate that the State and its participating LEAs are taking a systemic approach to education reform. The State must demonstrate in its application sufficient LEA participation and commitment to successfully implement and achieve the goals in its plans; and it must describe how the State, in collaboration with its participating LEAs, will use Race to the Top and other funds to increase student achievement, decrease the achievement gaps across student subgroups, and increase the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers.

The absolute priority cuts across the entire application and should not be addressed separately. It is assessed, after the proposal has been fully reviewed and evaluated, to ensure that the application has met the priority.

Priority 2: Competitive Preference Priority -- Emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). (15 points, all or nothing)

To meet this priority, the State's application must have a high-quality plan to address the need to

- (i) offer a rigorous course of study in mathematics, the sciences, technology, and engineering;
- (ii) cooperate with industry experts, museums, universities, research centers, or other STEM-capable community partners to prepare and assist teachers in integrating STEM content across grades and disciplines, in promoting effective and relevant instruction, and in offering applied learning opportunities for students; and (iii) prepare more students for advanced study and careers in the sciences, technology, engineering, and mathematics, including by addressing the needs of underrepresented groups and of women and girls in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

The competitive preference priority will be evaluated in the context of the State's entire application. Therefore, a State that is responding to this priority should address it throughout the application, as appropriate, and provide a summary of its approach to addressing the priority in the text box below. The reviewers will assess the priority as part of their review of a State's application and determine whether it has been met.

Recommended maximum response length, if any: One page



Montana Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Renewable Energy Plan

Governor Brian Schweitzer has articulated a strong commitment to STEM education through the Governor and First Lady's Math and Science Initiative, which has embarked on an extensive outreach and media campaign to inspire the next generation of scientists, technicians, engineers, and innovators. The impetus for the Math and Science Initiative was the Governor's vision for Montana as a leader in new energy development as well preparing a skilled workforce to meet the demands of a new energy economy.

Over the last five years the Governor's Office, the Montana Board of Public Education (BPE) and the Office of Public Instruction (OPI) have demonstrated a commitment to STEM by revising the science, technology, and mathematics content standards to reflect student learning targets that are academic, rigorous, clear, and measurable. Montana's plan to meet this Competitive Preference Priority will focus on integrating renewable energy into standards-based curriculum, partnering with industry experts, universities, and research centers, and preparing students for advanced study and careers in the emerging green energy fields. Montana selected a renewable energy focus to STEM education based on the following factors:

- Renewable energy is a model for a comprehensive STEM education. The focus is not just about learning the math or science behind how energy works, but learning about new technologies that have been engineered to help solve our energy problems.
- Renewable energy education will provide learning environments that are student-centered and inquiry and problem-based to spark a student's lifelong interest in STEM. Students will learn that by pursuing STEM careers, they can have a powerful impact on future generations and their communities.
- This plan provides opportunities that start in K-8 for teachers and students and lead toward STEM pathway choices in high school and on to STEM careers, including a career as a STEM educator.

Montana will integrate this commitment to STEM and renewable energy through a comprehensive package of education programs: Big Sky Pathways, Southwest Montana Science Partnership, Wind for Schools, A World In Motion, NEWSLATE, Survey of Enacted Curriculum, and the Montana Math and Science Teacher Initiative.



Big Sky Pathways is a program designed with the Montana University System and the State Department of Labor. This program is based upon the Career Clusters national work and provides students with a plan of study that allows them to be exposed to all sectors of employment that are high skill, high wage, and high demand. In Montana, most high demand and high wage jobs are in the emerging energy sector. Big Sky Pathways is expanding the links with secondary and post secondary educators to ensure that all plans of study are aligned vertically in terms of curriculum, technology, resources, and professional development.

The **Southwest Montana Science Partnership** among Montana Tech, Montana State University, the Montana Educational Consortium, Region V Professional Development Service Area (WM-CSPD), and Education Northwest provides a blended learning model of professional development for sixty third through sixth grade teachers, primarily from rural schools in southwest Montana. Using the expertise of STEM and education faculty, this program developed environmental project-based units aligned with Montana standards.

Both an online learning community and face-to-face workshops were used to provide content and professional development in STEM pedagogy to teachers. This facilitated community structure enables an ongoing professional and social connection between teachers, scientists, and faculty. The model can be scaled up and implemented across the state to create renewable energy project-based units using STEM faculty in the same fashion and the same components of teacher support.

Wind for Schools began in 2007 when Montana was one of five states selected by the Department of Energy to launch this program. The program established a Wind Applications Center at Montana State University-Bozeman to provide technical assistance to participating host schools (K-12) and installed a 1.8 kW Skystream 3.7™ wind turbine in four Montana communities. A partnership with the National Energy Education Development Project (NEED), a leading provider of energy education programs, distributed wind energy curriculum and materials to schools throughout the state. This program educates future leaders on the role of wind energy in creating a secure energy future, while preparing young people to meet this challenge.

Wind for Schools allows industry experts and universities to prepare and assist teachers



in integrating STEM content, specifically wind energy, across grades and disciplines. It also prepares and assists teachers in offering applied learning. This program will also prepare more students for advanced study and careers by creating awareness about an emerging local industry—one that offers exciting career opportunities in rural Montana.

The Office of Public Instruction will review the National Energy Education Development materials' alignment to the Montana content standards to ensuring that a rigorous course of study in mathematics, sciences, technology, and engineering is part of the standards-based curriculum.

A World In Motion[®] (AWIM) is a series of hands-on physical science curriculum units developed by the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE) Foundation. The newest AWIM activity introduces middle school students to the development and use of fuel cells as students build a fuel cell-powered toy car. Montana participated in a national pilot when the fuel cell activity was in development, and a professor from the University of Montana (UM) School of Education is currently researching how best to implement this curriculum in rural schools. Over 100 Montana teachers have ordered materials from the SAE Foundation, but there are not currently any teachers using the fuel cell curriculum.

Montana aims to increase the number of teachers trained to teach the Fuel Cell Challenge, thereby supporting the plan's component to offer rigorous and engaging coursework. It allows industry experts to assist teachers in integrating STEM content and offering applied learning opportunities. Finally, the activities will prepare and inspire more students for advanced study and careers by showing a direct link between classroom learning and a career of tomorrow.

NEWSLATE is the ARRA-funded state technology initiative striving to improve student academic achievement through the effective use of technology, to improve technology literacy of teachers and students, and to improve the capacity of teachers to effectively and efficiently integrate technology into their curriculum and instruction. Participating teachers were assessed to determine their skill level with technology and integration, and a blended model of face-to-face and online professional development was targeted toward their identified needs. Feedback from this process indicated that teachers would like additional help integrating technology into specific lessons and units and Montana's plan proposes to replicate the blended model used in the NEWSLATE with a focus on integrating technology and renewable energy education.



OPTIC, an observation protocol tool, can help gather classroom data on ways renewable energy content is delivered. This tool will improve understanding of best practices for integrating technology into renewable energy education. Ultimately, the use of technology will better engage and interest students in STEM fields.

Survey of Enacted Curriculum (SEC) was developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) to collect and report data on current instructional practices and content being taught in classrooms. SEC is currently used by districts to inform standards-based instruction and curricular decisions, professional development, and school improvement efforts. The data is examined through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) of school educators and leads to professional growth and improved instruction. As the professional learning communities (PLCs) implement renewable energy academic materials, they can use the SEC to improve instructional practices and check for alignment to math and science content standards.

Montana Math and Science Teacher Initiative (MMSTI) was established in the fall of 2008 with the mission of improving the recruitment, training, placement, and retention of highly effective mathematics and science teachers who are committed to promoting excellence and equity in student outcomes. The initiative consists of a partnership among OPI, MUS, UM, MSU, Salish-Kootenai College (SKC), MEA-MFT, and the School Administrators of Montana (SAM). To date, the initiative has established a learning assistant model at UM, partnered with state agencies to establish statewide systematic data collection, and developed a professional development academy to establish P-20 partnerships in science and mathematics.

MMSTI is currently working to engage new and existing business and industry, such as biotechnology. MMSTI has started work connecting teachers and students with internships to increase their understanding and application of STEM in the classroom.

In Montana, all of our education policies focus on the intersection of schools, teachers, communities, and students. Our approach to STEM reflects our keen understanding of the importance of a diversity of partnerships across sections and is yet another innovative step to strengthening schools and preparing our students for 21st century opportunities.