



MEASURING STUDENT LEARNING IN 2021: What will be Different in Montana?

Since COVID-19 first led to sudden school closures in 2020, families have stepped up in unprecedented ways to support learning at home as students began learning remotely. Teachers and leaders have worked hard to put plans in place to ensure students are safe, offering students across Montana different learning models—remote, hybrid and in-person, with some school districts transitioning between them as circumstances demanded. But the unprecedented changes in learning have impacted students in many ways, from their relationships with peers and social emotional growth to academics.

This year, it is more important than ever to measure student learning to understand the impact that COVID-19 and different learning models have had on students. This is especially important for families, who need objective information about how well their child learned grade-level skills so they can better support learning at home. To measure learning, students will take the state tests this spring. While they are only one of many ways to measure student learning, families, schools and leaders need the objective and actionable information the state test provides to identify any learning gaps to best support students and fully recover from the pandemic.

How will State Tests be Different in 2021?

Knowing that the pandemic has deeply affected students, teachers and schools, the state tests will be different than in the past. The results will be used for learning purposes only in 2021. As of March 2021, the following changes have been made:

- **To reduce stress for teachers and students in an already challenging year, the results from the state tests will not be used to rate schools or districts as they have in the past.**
- **Districts have a longer window for students to take the test. This will allow teachers additional time to cover content and for schools to test students in smaller groups with social distancing. Districts will be required to complete the test by May 28th.**
- **The tests will be shorter. The exact length will depend on the grade and subject, but on average the tests will be about 45-60 minutes shorter than before.**
- **While students will be required to take the test in-person, many districts will have plans to test students learning remotely separately from classmates learning in person. Schools may use staggered schedules or test in areas outside the classroom, such as gyms or cafeterias, to allow for more social distance.**