

Testing opt-out/refusal guide for: [Montana](#)

The following is a quick-reference guide for information on opting out or refusing tests in a specific state. We thank our supporters for assisting us in collecting these necessary details to encourage test refusals nationwide. If the reader feels that the information on this form is incomplete or inaccurate, please email unitedoptoutnational@gmail.com with additional details or corrections. Feel free to download and use this form as you see fit.

Form completed by [UOO Admin \(LM\)](#)

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LIST OF ASSESSMENTS

Please include, in addition to the main state test, all interim assessments, benchmarks, field tests, and other inventories (for example, DIBELS, MAP, or the Fountas and Pinnell BAS).

Montana uses the **Montana Comprehensive Assessment System**, known as **MontCAS**: given to students in grades 3-8, and 10th grade.

Montana also administers the **Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)** to test reading, language arts, math, science, and social studies in 4th and 8th graders, and the **Iowa Test of Educational Development (ITED)** to 11th graders.

Per the Montana Department of Education website:

Montana uses a balanced range of assessments to promote learning for all students. Montana's Criterion-Referenced Test Alternate Assessment (CRT-Alternate) is designed to measure the progress of students with severe cognitive disabilities. All students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) take the Montana English Language Proficiency Assessment (MontCAS ELP), which measures progress in English language acquisition. Montana is also a leader in ensuring that Native American students are offered a quality education.

Montana participates annually in the **National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)**, known as the Nation's Report Card, where a sampling of students (from grades 4, 8, and/or 12) are tested in several content areas as part of a nationally representative assessment of student performance.

Snapshot of Testing:

MONTCAS: Montana Comprehensive Assessment System

Required Statewide Testing

CRT: Criterion-Referenced Test: General education population
CRT-ALTERNATE: Students who are significantly cognitively delayed
Subjects Tested for CRT/CRT Alt:
Reading and Math: Grades 3-8 and 10
Science: Grades 4, 8, and 10
English Language Proficiency Test

ACT Plus Writing

2013-14 Statewide assessment schedule

December 4, 2013 - January 29, 2014: ELP Assessment Window
February 24 - March 25, 2014: CRT-Alternate, Grades 3-8 and 10, Reading and Math; Grades 4, 8, and 10, Science.
March 3 -25, 2014: CRT, Grades 3-8 and 10, Reading and Math; Grades 4, 8, and 10, Science
April 23-May 7, 2014: ACT Plus Writing for Public School Students in Grade 11
April 23, 2014: Initial test day
May 7, 2014: Makeup test day
April 23-May 7, 2014: Accommodated testing window

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Detail here important rules or regulations about assessments. For instance, specific graduation and promotion requirements, entrance requirements for special programs, and/or proportions of final grades. These should be understood before an opt-out or refusal is considered.

Per the Test Administrators Manual:

Any student enrolled on the count date (March 13, 2012) in the Montana state student information system (AIM), but for whom there is no Answer Booklet (Test Booklet for Grade 3) returned to Measured Progress, will be assigned a scaled score of 200 (novice) which will be included in the school's average and will be considered a nonparticipant in AYP calculations.

<http://opi.mt.gov/PDF/assessment/crt/ta/12MT-CRT-Test-Admin-Manual.pdf>

PROCEDURES FOR OPT-OUT/REFUSAL

This section includes information on specific laws, statutes, and procedures, including loopholes, exceptions, alternatives, and potential consequences.

No specific opt out or refusal provision can be found for general students. Montana expects all children to be tested, but is vague as to the consequences for not completing all tests. Official exemptions appear to be very limited. However, you may first attempt to see if your child qualifies. If they do not, then you may have to test the limits of refusal for the various tests.

URGENCY FOR OPT-OUT/REFUSAL

This section includes current issues and policies specific to this state, namely school budget issues, influence of outside groups, elections, and other issues affecting children. Please explain why opting out of high-stakes testing is important to saving public education in this state.

HST:

- Is not scientifically-based and fails to follow the U.S. Government's own data on learning.
- Fosters test driven education that is not meeting the individual/intellectual needs of students.
- Presents a racial and economic bias that is beneficial to white middle/upper class students and detrimental to second language students, impoverished students, and students of color.
- Is in opposition to the corrective action in gaps in opportunity and resources sanctioned by the Fiscal Fairness Act.
- Supports complicity of corporate interests rather than democracy based on public concerns.
- Fosters coercion over cooperation with regards to federal funding for public education.
- Promotes a culture of lying, cheating, and exploitation within the school community.
- Has used the achievement gap to foster a “de facto” segregation that has resulted in separate and unequal education for minorities.

Additionally, data collection of student's private information cannot be guaranteed security or that it will not be abused in some way by third party entities.

As Common Core is implemented, the number of tests and test-centric activities will increase dramatically. Low/poor test scores, which are likely to occur with more frequency with Common Core, will be used to fire teachers, replace human interaction with the internet /technology driven activities (even in elementary schools), and close community public schools and replace them with for-profit charter schools.

SAMPLE LANGUAGE TO INCLUDE IN OPT-OUT/REFUSAL

This section includes sample phrases or language relevant to specific procedures in this state and/or a complete sample opt-out/refusal letter.

Dear _____:

I am writing on behalf of _____ to opt him/her out of the (test name). He/she is neither permitted to take the exam during mandated testing days nor during designated make-up sessions. Additionally, I am requesting that the school make accommodations for meaningful alternative activities or assignments that will continue to promote his/her academic and intellectual growth. My child will not be in attendance if academically viable alternatives are not available. Furthermore, I must be guaranteed in writing that whatever option is taken, either alternative assignments or absence, my child will not face any negative consequences to, for example, course grades, social or behavioral evaluations, workload, promotion, or future classroom assignments.

Strict adherence to state and federal high-stakes standardized testing, including the extensive classroom preparation that occurs prior to test administration, prevents my child from receiving a well-rounded and engaging educational experience. Until focus on testable skills diminishes to a reasonable extent, I will continue to withhold my child from participation in the testing program, and I ask that you honor that decision.

I do apologize in advance for the inconvenience or scrutiny that this decision may cause the administration, the school, and staff.

Sincerely,

RESOURCES AND ORGANIZATIONS

This section lists resources and organizations helpful in this state in the form of names, links, email contact information, or otherwise. This is an opportunity to build a grassroots base in this state.

While not a full supporter, the current Superintendent of Public Instruction has voiced opposition to NCLB and its various requirements on numerous occasions.

Denise Juneau, the current Montana Superintendent of Public Instruction, said during a recent debate that she would not allow charter schools to operate in Montana if re-elected. Her comments came during a debate with her opponent, Republican Sandy Welch, on September 25. "Charter schools take away control from local school boards,

they put education into the hands of out-of-state corporations,” Juneau charged. “They are failing across this country.”

Per October 12, 2012 Media Trackers:

<http://mediatrackers.org/montana/2012/10/10/denise-juneau-says-no-to-charter-schools-in-montana>

For information on latest policies and strategies, please review Montana’s Office of Public Instruction:

opi.mt.gov

Graduation requirements:

<http://www.mtrules.org/gateway/ruleno.asp?RN=10%2E55%2E905>

STATE SPECIFIC WATCH-LIST

This final section contains a list of names, organizations, or other entities to track or otherwise know by name when scanning local media. These are individuals and organizations that potentially undermine public education in this state and can include entities from outside the state that are influencing local affairs.

Jeff Laszloff: Montana’s Family Foundation. This group was one of the sponsors of a 2 day conference, “School Choice in America’s Great Northwest” which pushed for expansion of charters, vouchers, and test based evaluations.

Former State Senator Joe Balyeat: State Director of Americans for Prosperity – Montana. <http://americansforprosperity.org/montana/legislativealerts/education-reform-school-choice-would-benefit-all-montanans/#ixzz2Xit1LQfY>

Recovery.mt.gov

“Reforming and Training for the 21st century will help put Montanans to work earning a better wage. Governor Schweitzer is committed to improving educational opportunities for all Montanans – working to expand dual credits, distance learning, and creating a virtual academy among other advances in Montana's education system.”

Pro-Reform Media

<http://choicemedia.tv/category/states/mt/>

Choice Media is a non-profit education news service, devoted to covering all facets of K-12 education quality and reform. Our mission is to expose America's high-cost, low-performing schools, while highlighting successes where they occur and pointing the way to a more hopeful tomorrow.

Founded by veteran television host and documentary filmmaker Bob Bowdon, ChoiceMedia.TV is the nation's online hub for education news. We select the most pertinent headlines from coast-to-coast, provide real-time analysis of developing stories and meet with those making waves in the education world.

ADDITIONAL OR MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

Anything else we should know about education reform in your state?

Montana is a conservative state with most organized resistance focused on Common Core and coming from those who object to federal intervention in local education. Organized opposition to education reform efforts and high stakes testing appears to be very limited at this time.