

**Montana Board of Public Education  
Early Literacy Advisory Council  
Zoom**

**October 24, 2023 | 10:00AM-12:00PM**

*Advisory Council meetings are open to the public electronically. For those wishing to give virtual public comment, please contact [bpe@mt.gov](mailto:bpe@mt.gov) to request the zoom link for the meeting. A virtual option is also available on the Montana Board of Public Education [Youtube](#).*

**10:00AM**      **Welcome and Agenda Review**  
*McCall Flynn and Caitlin Jensen*

**10:05AM**      **October 13, 2023 Minutes**  
*McCall Flynn*

**10:10AM**      **Discuss and Review Screening Tools Crosswalk**  
*Caitlin Jensen*

**10:50AM**      **Discuss and Review Draft Rule**  
*McCall Flynn and Caitlin Jensen*

- Evaluation Methodology
- Jumpstart Program
- Approved Screening Tools
- Methodology Matrix

**11:30AM**      **Discuss and Review Report**  
*McCall Flynn*

**11:45AM**      **Next steps?**  
*McCall Flynn*

- Panel presentation to the Board of Public Education - Nov. 15-17, Missoula
- Begin working on Early Childhood Standards in Chapter 63
- Consider folks for home-based program

**11:50AM**      **Public Comment**  
*This time will be provided for public comment. For those wishing to give virtual public comment, please contact [bpe@mt.gov](mailto:bpe@mt.gov) to request the Zoom link for the meeting. Members of the public who have joined virtually on Zoom may “raise their hand” at the appropriate time to participate after being recognized.*

**12:00PM**      **Adjourn**



AN ACT ESTABLISHING EARLY LITERACY TARGETED INTERVENTIONS; PROVIDING LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS, PURPOSE, AND INTENT; PROVIDING DEFINITIONS; ESTABLISHING PARAMETERS AND FUNDING FOR THREE VOLUNTARY EARLY LITERACY TARGETED INTERVENTION PROGRAMS; ESTABLISHING DUTIES OF THE BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION AND THE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION IN ADMINISTERING THE PROGRAMS; ESTABLISHING REPORTING REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATING SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND THE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION; PROVIDING AN APPROPRIATION; AMENDING SECTIONS 20-5-101, 20-7-117, AND 20-9-311, MCA; AND PROVIDING EFFECTIVE DATES.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

**Section 1. Findings -- purpose -- legislative intent.** (1) The legislature finds that the ability to read at or above grade level is essential for educational success. The legislature also finds that too many Montana children are not reading proficient at the end of 3rd grade.

(2) The purposes of this bill are to:

- (a) provide parents with voluntary early literacy interventions for their children;
- (b) increase the number of children who are reading proficient at the end of 3rd grade and in so doing help those children develop their full educational potential pursuant to Article X, section 1(1), of the Montana constitution; and
- (c) foster a strong economic return for the state on early literacy investment through enhancing Montana's skilled workforce and decreasing future reliance on social programs and the criminal justice system.

(3) The legislature intends that the board of public education, the office of public instruction, and the boards of trustees of school districts collaborate to implement [sections 1 through 4] and achieve the purposes under subsection (2).

(4) The legislature further intends that the board of public education, the office of public instruction, and the boards of trustees of school districts collaborate on an ongoing basis to gather, analyze, and make available outcome data and continually refine the interventions to increase the efficacy and efficiency of each intervention.

**Section 2. Definitions.** As used in [sections 1 through 4], unless the context clearly indicates otherwise, the following definitions apply:

(1) "Early literacy targeted intervention" or "intervention" means, as further described in [section 3], any of the following:

- (a) a classroom-based program;
- (b) a home-based program; or
- (c) a jumpstart program.

(2) "Eligible child" means a child who is determined through the evaluation methodology selected by the board of public education pursuant to [section 3] to be below a trajectory leading to reading proficiency at the end of 3rd grade.

(3) "Evaluation methodology" means a research-based methodology, instrument, or assessment selected by the board of public education to determine, based on a child's age or grade level, whether the child is above, at, or below a developmental trajectory leading to reading proficiency on completion of 3rd grade.

(4) "Trustees" means the board of trustees of an elementary or K-12 school district.

**Section 3. Early literacy targeted interventions.** (1) The trustees of a school district may provide eligible children with any of the interventions described in this section. [Sections 1 through 4] may not be construed to limit the duty or authority of trustees to provide educational opportunities described elsewhere in this title.

(2) The board of public education shall determine an evaluation methodology to determine, based on a child's age or grade level, whether the child is above, at, or below a developmental trajectory leading to reading proficiency on completion of 3rd grade. The evaluation must be:

- (a) developmentally appropriate;

(b) research-based;

(c) cost-effective; and

(d) if possible, aligned with formative assessments that inform instruction in the classroom-based program and the jumpstart program.

(3) The superintendent of public instruction shall provide school districts with access to and technical support for the evaluation methodology, instrument, or assessment determined by the board of public education.

(4) A child may not be evaluated for the purposes of [sections 1 through 4] unless requested by the child's parent or guardian. The trustees may administer the evaluation methodology in April, May, or June to a child who will be 4 years of age or older on or before the following September 10 and who has not yet entered 3rd grade. A child who is evaluated to be below trajectory for 3rd-grade reading proficiency for the child's age or grade level is an eligible child for the subsequent school year.

(5) (a) For an eligible child who is 4 years of age or older on or before September 10 of the year in which the child is to participate in the program and who is not entering and who has not completed kindergarten, the trustees may offer a classroom-based program, which may be a half-time or full-time program. A full-time program must allow a parent or guardian to enroll the child half-time.

(b) The classroom-based program must align with developmentally appropriate early education learning standards as determined by the board of public education. The standards must include a requirement for ongoing evaluation of student progress used to tailor instruction to specific student needs.

(6) (a) For an eligible child who is 4 years of age or older on or before September 10 of the year in which the child is to participate in the program and who has not yet completed 2nd grade, the trustees may offer a home-based program.

(b) The home-based program must be selected by the board of public education and must:

(i) be operated by a nonprofit entity;

(ii) be research-based and proven effective at developing early literacy skills in populations at risk of not being reading proficient at the end of 3rd grade;

(iii) foster parental engagement; and

(iv) have a cost of no more than \$1,000 a year for each child.

(c) The superintendent of public instruction shall provide school districts with access to and technical support for the home-based early literacy program.

(7) (a) For an eligible child who is 5 years of age or older on or before September 10 of the year in which the child is to participate in the program and who has not yet completed 3rd grade, the trustees may offer a jumpstart program.

(b) The jumpstart program must:

(i) take place during the time between the end of one school calendar year and the start of the next school calendar year, as determined by the trustees, preceding a child's entry into kindergarten, 1st grade, 2nd grade, or 3rd grade;

(ii) be at least 4 weeks in duration and provide at least 120 instructional hours;

(iii) be aligned to a framework determined by the board of public education;

(iv) be designed in a manner to increase the likelihood of a child being evaluated at the end of the ensuing school year to be at or above a trajectory leading to reading proficiency at the end of 3rd grade.

**Section 4. Early literacy targeted interventions -- funding -- reporting.** (1) An eligible child participating in a classroom-based program pursuant to [section 3(5)] must be included in enrollment counts for the purpose of ANB calculations in the manner described in 20-9-311.

(2) The superintendent of public instruction shall pay for the costs for an eligible child participating in a home-based program pursuant to [section 3(6)] from funds appropriated for this purpose. The cost for each child may not exceed \$1,000 a year. If the annual appropriation for this program is not sufficient to fully fund all eligible children participating in the home-based program, the superintendent shall limit participation on a first-come, first-served basis.

(3) An eligible child participating in a jumpstart program pursuant to [section 3(7)] must be counted as quarter-time enrollment for the purpose of ANB calculations pursuant to 20-9-311.

(4) Trustees offering an early literacy targeted intervention shall closely monitor the program and report annually to the superintendent of public instruction on the efficacy of the program no later than July 15. The superintendent shall collaborate with trustees in maximizing the efficiency of fulfilling this reporting requirement. The report must include anonymized information on student progress, including the student's

performance on:

- (a) the evaluation methodology that led to eligibility for the program;
- (b) any formative assessments administered;
- (c) if administered, the evaluation methodology at the end of the school year in which intervention

was provided; and

- (d) any statewide reading assessments administered in grades 4 through 6.

- (5) Pursuant to 20-7-104, the superintendent of public instruction shall monitor early literacy

targeted interventions and gather data to evaluate the efficacy of the interventions while protecting the privacy rights of students and families. The superintendent shall report, in accordance with 5-11-210, to the education interim committee and the education interim budget committee no later than September 1 annually. The report must contain a comparison analysis by intervention type, including no intervention, and must include:

- (a) the number of participating and nonparticipating children and districts;
- (b) longitudinal data displaying the proficiency level of participating and nonparticipating children at

each grade level following participation in an intervention;

- (c) at a time when the data is available, long-term outcome data for participants and

nonparticipants, including but not limited to:

- (i) assessment data in 8th grade and high school;
- (ii) high school graduation rates; and
- (iii) postsecondary participation rates; and
- (d) a list of schools offering one or more targeted interventions and a list of the matched

comparable nonparticipating schools that on the most recent 4th grade statewide reading assessment:

- (i) had 75% or more of its students score at proficient or above; or
- (ii) improved the percentage of students scoring at proficient or above by 10 or more percentage

points.

**Section 5.** Section 20-5-101, MCA, is amended to read:

**"20-5-101. Admittance of child to school.** (1) The trustees shall assign and admit a child to a school in the district when the child is:

(a) 5 years of age or older on or before September 10 of the year in which the child is to enroll but is not yet 19 years of age;

(b) a resident of the district; and

(c) otherwise qualified under the provisions of this title to be admitted to the school.

(2) The trustees of a district may assign and admit any nonresident child to a school in the district under the tuition provisions of this title.

(3) (a) The trustees may at their discretion assign and admit a child to a school in the district who is under 5 years of age or an adult who is 19 years of age or older if there are exceptional circumstances that merit waiving the age provision of this section. The trustees may also admit an individual who has graduated from high school but is not yet 19 years of age even though no special circumstances exist for waiver of the age provision of this section.

(b) As used in this subsection, "exceptional circumstances" means any of the following:

(i) the child is being admitted into a preschool program established by the trustees pursuant to 20-7-117;

(ii) the child is determined by the trustees to be ready for kindergarten and the child's parents have requested early entry into the district's regular 1-year kindergarten program;

(iii) the child is being admitted into an early literacy targeted intervention classroom or jumpstart program pursuant to [sections 1 through 4]; or

(iv) the adult is 19 years of age or older and in the trustees' determination would benefit from educational programs offered by a school of the district.

(c) The admittance of an individual under this subsection (3) does not in and of itself impact the ANB calculations governed by 20-9-311.

(4) The trustees shall assign and admit a child who is homeless, as defined in the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act (Public Law 100-77), to a school in the district regardless of residence. The trustees may not require an out-of-district attendance agreement or tuition for a homeless child.

(5) The trustees shall assign and admit a child whose parent or guardian is being relocated to Montana under military orders to a school in the district and allow the child to preliminarily enroll in classes and apply for programs offered by the district prior to arrival and establishing residency.

(6) Except for the provisions of subsection (4), tuition for a nonresident child must be paid in accordance with the tuition provisions of this title.

(7) The trustees' assignment of a child meeting the qualifications of subsection (1) to a school in the district outside of the adopted school boundaries applicable to the child is subject to the district's grievance policy. Upon completion of procedures set forth in the district's grievance policy, the trustees' decision regarding the assignment is final."

**Section 6.** Section 20-7-117, MCA, is amended to read:

**"20-7-117. Kindergarten and preschool programs.** (1) The trustees of an elementary district shall establish or make available a kindergarten program capable of accommodating, at a minimum, all the children in the district who will be 5 years old on or before September 10 of the school year for which the program is to be conducted or who have been admitted through the exceptional circumstances provision under 20-5-101 by the board of trustees. The kindergarten program, which the trustees may designate as either a half-time or full-time program, must be an integral part of the elementary school and must be financed and governed accordingly, provided that to be eligible for inclusion in the calculation of ANB pursuant to 20-9-311, a child must have reached 5 years of age on or before September 10 of the school year covered by the calculation or have been admitted to the district's kindergarten program by the board of trustees through the exceptional circumstances provision under 20-5-101. A kindergarten program must meet the minimum aggregate hour requirements established in 20-1-301. A kindergarten program that is designated as a full-time program must allow a parent, guardian, or other person who is responsible for the enrollment of a child in school, as provided in 20-5-102, to enroll the child half-time.

(2) The trustees of an elementary school district may establish and operate a free preschool program for children between the ages of 3 and 5 years. When preschool programs are established, they must be an integral part of the elementary school and must be governed accordingly. Financing of preschool programs may not be supported by money available from state equalization aid.

(3) As used in this title, the following definitions apply:

(a) "Kindergarten program" means a half-time or full-time 1-year program immediately preceding a child's entry into 1st grade with curriculum and instruction selected by the board of trustees and aligned to the



content standards established by the board of public education.

(b) "Preschool program" means a half-time or full-time program to prepare children for entry into kindergarten and governed by standards adopted by the board of public education."

**Section 7.** Section 20-9-311, MCA, is amended to read:

**"20-9-311. Calculation of average number belonging (ANB) -- 3-year averaging.** (1) Average number belonging (ANB) must be computed for each budget unit as follows:

(a) compute an average enrollment by adding a count of regularly enrolled pupils who were enrolled as of the first Monday in October of the prior school fiscal year to a count of regularly enrolled pupils on the first Monday in February of the prior school fiscal year or the next school day if those dates do not fall on a school day, and divide the sum by two; and

(b) multiply the average enrollment calculated in subsection (1)(a) by the sum of 180 and the approved pupil-instruction-related days for the current school fiscal year and divide by 180.

(2) For the purpose of calculating ANB under subsection (1), up to 7 approved pupil-instruction-related days may be included in the calculation.

(3) When a school district has approval to operate less than the minimum aggregate hours under 20-9-806, the total ANB must be calculated in accordance with the provisions of 20-9-805.

(4) (a) Except as provided in subsection (4)(d), for the purpose of calculating ANB, enrollment in an education program:

(i) from 180 to 359 aggregate hours of pupil instruction per school year is counted as one-quarter-time enrollment;

(ii) from 360 to 539 aggregate hours of pupil instruction per school year is counted as half-time enrollment;

(iii) from 540 to 719 aggregate hours of pupil instruction per school year is counted as three-quarter-time enrollment; and

(iv) 720 or more aggregate hours of pupil instruction per school year is counted as full-time enrollment.

(b) Except as provided in subsection (4)(d), enrollment in a program intended to provide fewer than

180 aggregate hours of pupil instruction per school year may not be included for purposes of ANB.

(c) Enrollment in a self-paced program or course may be converted to an hourly equivalent based on the hours necessary and appropriate to provide the course within a regular classroom schedule.

(d) A school district may include in its calculation of ANB a pupil who is enrolled in a program providing fewer than the required aggregate hours of pupil instruction required under subsection (4)(a) or (4)(b) if the pupil has demonstrated proficiency in the content ordinarily covered by the instruction as determined by the school board using district assessments. The ANB of a pupil under this subsection (4)(d) must be converted to an hourly equivalent based on the hours of instruction ordinarily provided for the content over which the student has demonstrated proficiency.

(e) (i) Except as provided in subsection (4)(e)(ii), a pupil in kindergarten through grade 12 who is concurrently enrolled in more than one public school, program, or district may not be counted as more than one full-time pupil for ANB purposes.

(ii) A pupil who participates in a jumpstart program under [sections 1 through 4] may be counted as up to 1 1/4 enrollment for ANB purposes. A district shall add one-quarter enrollment for a pupil who participated in an early literacy jumpstart program to the pupil's regular enrollment count under this subsection (4) in both the October and February enrollment counts following the student's participation in the jumpstart program.

(5) For a district that is transitioning from a half-time to a full-time kindergarten program, the state superintendent shall count kindergarten enrollment in the previous year as full-time enrollment for the purpose of calculating ANB for the elementary programs offering full-time kindergarten in the current year. For the purposes of calculating the 3-year ANB, the superintendent of public instruction shall count the kindergarten enrollment as one-half enrollment and then add the additional kindergarten ANB to the 3-year average ANB for districts offering full-time kindergarten.

(6) When a pupil has been absent, with or without excuse, for more than 10 consecutive school days, the pupil may not be included in the enrollment count used in the calculation of the ANB unless the pupil resumes attendance prior to the day of the enrollment count.

(7) (a) The enrollment of preschool pupils, as provided in 20-7-117, may not be included in the ANB calculations.

(b) Except as provided in subsection (7)(c), a pupil who has reached 19 years of age by September 10 of the school year may not be included in the ANB calculations.

(c) A pupil with disabilities who is over 19 years of age and has not yet reached 21 years of age by September 10 of the school year and who is receiving special education services from a school district pursuant to 20-7-411(4)(a) may be included in the ANB calculations if:

- (i) the student has not graduated;
- (ii) the student is eligible for special education services and is likely to be eligible for adult services for individuals with developmental disabilities due to the significance of the student's disability; and
- (iii) the student's individualized education program has identified transition goals that focus on preparation for living and working in the community following high school graduation since age 16 or the student's disability has increased in significance after age 16.

(d) A school district providing special education services pursuant to subsection (7)(c) is encouraged to collaborate with agencies and programs that serve adults with developmental disabilities in meeting the goals of a student's transition plan.

(8) The average number belonging of the regularly enrolled pupils for the public schools of a district must be based on the aggregate of all the regularly enrolled pupils attending the schools of the district, except that:

- (a) the ANB is calculated as a separate budget unit when:
  - (i) a school of the district is located more than 20 miles beyond the incorporated limits of a city or town located in the district and at least 20 miles from any other school of the district, the number of regularly enrolled pupils of the school must be calculated as a separate budget unit for ANB purposes and the district must receive a basic entitlement for the school calculated separately from the other schools of the district;
  - (ii) a school of the district is located more than 20 miles from any other school of the district and incorporated territory is not involved in the district, the number of regularly enrolled pupils of the school must be calculated separately for ANB purposes and the district must receive a basic entitlement for the school calculated separately from the other schools of the district;
  - (iii) the superintendent of public instruction approves an application not to aggregate when conditions exist affecting transportation, such as poor roads, mountains, rivers, or other obstacles to travel, or

when any other condition exists that would result in an unusual hardship to the pupils of the school if they were transported to another school, the number of regularly enrolled pupils of the school must be calculated separately for ANB purposes and the district must receive a basic entitlement for the school calculated separately from the other schools of the district; or

(iv) two or more districts consolidate or annex under the provisions of 20-6-422 or 20-6-423, the ANB and the basic entitlements of the component districts must be calculated separately for a period of 3 years following the consolidation or annexation. Each district shall retain a percentage of its basic entitlement for 3 additional years as follows:

- (A) 75% of the basic entitlement for the fourth year;
- (B) 50% of the basic entitlement for the fifth year; and
- (C) 25% of the basic entitlement for the sixth year.

(b) when a junior high school has been approved and accredited as a junior high school, all of the regularly enrolled pupils of the junior high school must be considered as high school district pupils for ANB purposes;

(c) when a middle school has been approved and accredited, all pupils below the 7th grade must be considered elementary school pupils for ANB purposes and the 7th and 8th grade pupils must be considered high school pupils for ANB purposes; or

(d) when a school has been designated as nonaccredited by the board of public education because of failure to meet the board of public education's assurance and performance standards, the regularly enrolled pupils attending the nonaccredited school are not eligible for average number belonging calculation purposes, nor will an average number belonging for the nonaccredited school be used in determining the BASE funding program for the district.

(9) The district shall provide the superintendent of public instruction with semiannual reports of school attendance, absence, and enrollment for regularly enrolled students, using a format determined by the superintendent.

(10) (a) Except as provided in subsections (10)(b) and (10)(c), enrollment in a basic education program provided by the district through any combination of onsite or offsite instruction may be included for ANB purposes only if the pupil is offered access to the complete range of educational services for the basic

education program required by the accreditation standards adopted by the board of public education.

(b) Access to school programs and services for a student placed by the trustees in a private program for special education may be limited to the programs and services specified in an approved individual education plan supervised by the district.

(c) Access to school programs and services for a student who is incarcerated in a facility, other than a youth detention center, may be limited to the programs and services provided by the district at district expense under an agreement with the incarcerating facility.

(d) This subsection (10) may not be construed to require a school district to offer access to activities governed by an organization having jurisdiction over interscholastic activities, contests, and tournaments to a pupil who is not otherwise eligible under the rules of the organization.

(11) A district may include only, for ANB purposes, an enrolled pupil who is otherwise eligible under this title and who is:

(a) a resident of the district or a nonresident student admitted by trustees under a student attendance agreement and who is attending a school of the district;

(b) unable to attend school due to a medical reason certified by a medical doctor and receiving individualized educational services supervised by the district, at district expense, at a home or facility that does not offer an educational program;

(c) unable to attend school due to the student's incarceration in a facility, other than a youth detention center, and who is receiving individualized educational services supervised by the district, at district expense, at a home or facility that does not offer an educational program;

(d) receiving special education and related services, other than day treatment, under a placement by the trustees at a private nonsectarian school or private program if the pupil's services are provided at the district's expense under an approved individual education plan supervised by the district;

(e) participating in the running start program at district expense under 20-9-706;

(f) receiving educational services, provided by the district, using appropriately licensed district staff at a private residential program or private residential facility licensed by the department of public health and human services;

(g) enrolled in an educational program or course provided at district expense using electronic or

offsite delivery methods, including but not limited to tutoring, distance learning programs, online programs, and technology delivered learning programs, while attending a school of the district or any other nonsectarian offsite instructional setting with the approval of the trustees of the district. The pupil shall:

- (i) meet the residency requirements for that district as provided in 1-1-215;
- (ii) live in the district and must be eligible for educational services under the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act or under 29 U.S.C. 794; or
- (iii) attend school in the district under a mandatory attendance agreement as provided in 20-5-321.
- (h) a resident of the district attending the Montana youth challenge program or a Montana job corps program under an interlocal agreement with the district under 20-9-707.

(12) A district shall, for ANB purposes, calculate the enrollment of an eligible Montana youth challenge program participant as half-time enrollment.

(13) (a) A district may, for ANB purposes, include in the October and February enrollment counts an individual who is otherwise eligible under this title and who during the prior school year:

- (i) resided in the district;
  - (ii) was not enrolled in the district or was not enrolled full time; and
  - (iii) completed an extracurricular activity with a duration of at least 6 weeks.
- (b) (i) Except as provided in subsection (13)(b)(ii), each completed extracurricular activity under subsection (13)(a) may be counted as one-sixteenth enrollment for the individual, but under this subsection (13) the individual may not be counted as more than one full-time enrollment for ANB purposes.

(ii) Each completed extracurricular activity lasting longer than 18 weeks may be counted as one-eighth enrollment.

(c) For the purposes of this section, "extracurricular activity" means:

- (i) a sport or activity sanctioned by an organization having jurisdiction over interscholastic activities, contests, and tournaments;
- (ii) an approved career and technical student organization, pursuant to 20-7-306; or
- (iii) a school theater production.

(14) (a) For an elementary or high school district that has been in existence for 3 years or more, the district's maximum general fund budget and BASE budget for the ensuing school fiscal year must be calculated

using the current year ANB for all budget units or the 3-year average ANB for all budget units, whichever generates the greatest maximum general fund budget.

(b) For a K-12 district that has been in existence for 3 years or more, the district's maximum general fund budget and BASE budget for the ensuing school fiscal year must be calculated separately for the elementary and high school programs pursuant to subsection (14)(a) and then combined.

(15) The term "3-year ANB" means an average ANB over the most recent 3-year period, calculated by:

(a) adding the ANB for the budget unit for the ensuing school fiscal year to the ANB for each of the previous 2 school fiscal years; and

(b) dividing the sum calculated under subsection (15)(a) by three."

**Section 8. Appropriation.** (1) There is appropriated \$1.5 million from the state general fund to the office of public instruction for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2024.

(2) The money must be used for the per-student costs of the home-based early literacy program pursuant to [sections 1 through 4].

(3) The legislature intends that the appropriation in this section be considered part of the ongoing base for the next legislative session.

**Section 9. Transition.** (1) The board of public education, the office of public instruction, and the boards of trustees of school districts shall collaborate and prepare for the full implementation of [sections 1 through 4] in the school year beginning July 1, 2024. The legislature intends that the evaluation methodology be available for administration in the spring of 2024 to determine child eligibility.

(2) The legislature intends that school districts operating multiyear kindergarten programs in the school year beginning July 1, 2023, plan for the transition to early literacy targeted intervention programs under [sections 1 through 4] for the school year beginning July 1, 2024.

**Section 10. Codification instruction.** [Sections 1 through 4] are intended to be codified as an integral part of Title 20, chapter 7, and the provisions of Title 20, chapter 7, apply to [sections 1 through 4]

**Section 11. Effective dates.** (1) Except as provided in subsection (2), [this act] is effective July 1, 2023.

(2) [Sections 5 through 7] are effective July 1, 2024.

- END -



**Montana Board of Public Education**  
**Early Literacy Advisory Council**  
**Room 157, Montana State Capitol, Helena, MT**  
**October 13, 2023 | 10:00AM-3:30PM**

**10:00AM Welcome and Agenda Review**

*McCall Flynn and Caitlin Jensen*

McCall opened the meeting at 10:05AM and thanked the Early Literacy Advisory Council members for attending the meeting. McCall went over some housekeeping items and turned it over to Caitlin to make introductions, summarize the agenda, and gather feedback before further discussion.

Council members present: Anne Penn Cox; Norah Barney; Laurie Barron; Colette Getten; Christine Lux; Tammy Elser; Karen Filipovich; Doug Rossberg; Stephanie Olson; Nicole Simonsen; Doug Reisig; Danielle Thompson; Marie Judisch; Council members absent: Rhea Christensen; Lance Melton Guests: Dr. Allison Wilson, Associate Professor and Director of the Institute of Early Childhood Education, University of Montana; Megan Roth, Early Literacy TOSA, Bozeman School District; Dr. Rob Watson, Executive Director, School Administrators of Montana

**10:10AM October 6, 2023 Minutes**

*McCall Flynn*

McCall reviewed the minutes from the October 6, 2023 meeting. No revisions were made.

**10:15AM Review Parking Lot Questions**

*Advisory Council Discussion*

Caitlin reviewed the questions and comments listed in the parking lot. The group discussed how some of the concerns will be bored out in the implementation phase. There were questions as to whether parents in a district that choose not to do the home-based program will be able to request the services and if homeschool children would be able to participate in these programs. McCall and Caitlin provided information pertaining to the questions, and signaled that they would get more information for those they did not have an answer to at this time.

**10:30AM Discuss Evaluation Methodology**

*Caitlin Jensen*

- Review survey data – 4yo vs. K-3
- Determine additional criteria
- Determine approved evaluation methodology screening tools

Caitlin reviewed last meeting's discussion, pertaining to the evaluation methodology, consensus on definitions, and discussion of the crosswalk criteria. Christine Lux reviewed the survey results for the Council and noted that school districts are using a lot of different tools already, and that those tools that were identified by the survey have been included in the crosswalk. Danielle Thompson and Anne Penn Cox shared a screening methodology they are piloting in Livingston Public Schools to assess language skills. They also discussed in detail the characteristics that are being assessed by the various screeners.

Caitlin turned it over to Dr. Allison Wilson to discuss the sections of the crosswalk and explain how it was created and organized. The Council discussed the importance of predictive validity and setting boundaries for tool validity. The Council then discussed whether to use a traditional vs. universal screener, based on additional information they received from the survey. Dr. Wilson noted that some of the tools on the list evaluate factors other than literacy and language, and that not all tools assess literacy as well as other factors. The Council determined the need to maintain local control and not limit options for school districts.

**11:30AM Review Draft Rule – Evaluation Methodology**

*McCall Flynn*

McCall reviewed the draft rule pertaining to the evaluation methodology. The Council determined it made the most sense to separate the methodologies for 4-year-olds and each grade level (K-3). The Council discussed additional revisions to make the draft rule even clearer. The Council discussed the list of approved screening tools, and directed McCall and Caitlin to create a draft list based off alignment of the skills and screening tools.

**1:00PM          Discuss Jumpstart Program Framework**

*Advisory Council Discussion*

- How are your districts currently offering summer school?
- What would a jumpstart program look like in your community?

The Council discussed the details required under HB 352 for the Jumpstart program. Meghan Roth shared the work they were doing in Bozeman School District and how other school districts might shift their instruction in the summer months to meet the intent of the bill. The Council discussed potential issues with staffing these programs and how to best pivot their existing programs, while continuing to focus on areas of need for all students.

**2:00PM          Review Draft Rule – Jumpstart Program**

*McCall Flynn*

McCall reviewed the draft rule pertaining to the jumpstart program. The Council suggested adding language to align the instruction to Montana Content Standards for English, Language, Arts, and Literacy and Early Learning Standards.

**2:30PM          Discuss Guidance Document/Report**

*McCall Flynn and Caitlin Jensen*

McCall shared that they will be compiling a report that encompasses the work that the Council has done to make decisions and provide recommendations. Caitlin asked the Council if there are any components that needed to be included that currently weren't, but no suggestions were offered.

**3:00PM          Next steps?**

*McCall Flynn*

- Next Meeting Date: October 24 – 10am-12pm, Zoom?
- Finalize evaluation methodology and jumpstart program recommendations
- Review Draft Report

McCall discussed the next meeting date with the Council, and they determined that October 24 from 10am-12pm would be enough time to finalize their recommendations on the evaluation methodology, jumpstart program, and report. Additionally, they discussed next steps for reviewing the Montana Early Childhood Standards in Chapter 63.

**3:15PM          Public Comment**

Dr. Watson, SAM, thanked the Council for their work and shared that the magnitude of their decisions on early literacy will span across the entire state of Montana. He encouraged the Council to provide enough flexibility to support the diversity of our school districts, while maintaining the intent of the legislation.

**3:30PM          Adjourn**

McCall thanked the council members for their work and adjourned the meeting at 2:52PM.

**ARM Title 10.54.901. Evaluation methodology for early literacy targeted intervention.**

(1) The local board of trustees shall adopt and ensure use of an evaluation methodology to identify, enroll, and admit children to early literacy targeted interventions. The evaluation methodology used must be overseen by and include application of professional judgment of qualified employees. The evaluation methodology may be administered in April, May, or June, and must assess at least one of the following literacy skills:

- (a) For four-year-olds:
  - i. Oral Language;
  - ii. Phonological Awareness;
  - iii. Alphabet Knowledge;
- (b) Prior to Kindergarten:
  - i. Oral Language
  - ii. Phonological Awareness;
  - iii. Alphabet Knowledge;
- (c) Prior to First grade:
  - i. Phoneme Awareness;
  - ii. Developmental Spelling;
  - iii. Listening Comprehension;
  - iv. Vocabulary (expressive or receptive);
  - v. Word Reading (nonsense or real);
  - vi. Reading Composite;
- (d) Prior to Second grade:
  - i. Word Reading (nonsense or real);
  - ii. Developmental Spelling;
  - iii. Connected Text Reading Fluency;
  - iv. Connected Text Accuracy;
  - v. Listening Comprehension;
  - vi. Vocabulary (expressive or receptive);
  - vii. Reading Composite;
- (e) Prior to Third grade:
  - i. Word Reading (nonsense or real);
  - ii. Developmental Spelling;
  - iii. Connected Text Reading Fluency;
  - iv. Connected Text Accuracy;
  - v. Reading Comprehension;
  - vi. Vocabulary (expressive or receptive);
  - vii. Reading Composite;

(2) A list of the approved Evaluation Methodology Screening Tools must be made publicly available by the Board of Public Education and must be reviewed in odd years to ensure continuous adherence to developmentally appropriate and research-based screening tool requirements.

(3) A local board of trustees adopting and using one of the approved Evaluation Methodology Screening Tools shall be construed to have complied with this rule.

(a) Use of one of the approved Evaluation Methodology Screening Tools shall not, however, be required, provided that the district's adopted evaluation methodology screening tool conforms to the requirements of (1) of this rule.

(4) For the purposes of this rule, "evaluation methodology" means an age-appropriate research-based methodology, instrument, or assessment selected by the board of public education to determine, based on a child's age or grade level, whether the child is above, at, or below a developmental trajectory leading to reading proficiency on completion of 3rd grade.

**ARM Title 10.54.902. Jumpstart program framework for early literacy targeted intervention.**

(1) The local board of trustees may offer a jumpstart program to support early literacy targeted intervention based on evaluation methodology identified in 10.54.901 as aligned to the Montana Early Learning Standards and the Montana Content Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy.

(2) The jumpstart program must be overseen by and include application of professional judgment of qualified employees and must be designed in a manner to increase the likelihood of a child being evaluated at the end of the ensuing school year to be at or above a trajectory leading to reading proficiency at the end of 3rd grade.

(3) For the purposes of this rule, "jumpstart program" means a program that is at least 4 weeks in duration and provides at least 120 instructional hours and takes place during the time between the end of one school calendar year and the start of the next school calendar year, as determined by the trustees, preceding a child's entry into Kindergarten, First grade, Second grade, or Third grade.

**Evaluation Methodology Screening Tools**

(1) For four-year-olds:

(a) Acadence Reading PreK (PELI -- Preschool Early Literacy Indicators)

*Screens for: Oral Language, Phonological Awareness (inclusive of phoneme awareness), Alphabet Knowledge*

(b) Assessment of Story Comprehension (ASC)

*Screens for: Oral Language*

(c) Early Bird

*Screens for: Oral Language, Phonological Awareness (inclusive of phoneme awareness), Alphabet Knowledge*

(d) Get Ready To Read! Revised

*Screens for: Oral Language, Alphabet Knowledge*

(e) Language Screen (OxEd)

*Screens for: Oral Language*

(f) MyIGDIS

*Screens for: Oral Language, Phonological Awareness (inclusive of phoneme awareness), Alphabet Knowledge*

(g) Star Early Literacy

*Screens for: Oral Language, Phonological Awareness (inclusive of phoneme awareness), Alphabet Knowledge*

(h) Test of Preschool Early Literacy (TOPEL)

*Screens for: Oral Language, Phonological Awareness (inclusive of phoneme awareness), Alphabet Knowledge*

(i) Quick Interactive Language Screener (QUILS)

*Oral language*

(2) Prior to Kindergarten through third grade:

(a) Acadence Reading (formerly DIBELS NEXT)

*Screens for:*

(b) AimsWeb Plus

*Screens for:*

(c) Core Phonics Survey

*Screens for:*

(d) DIBELS 8th

*Screens for:*

(e) EasyCBM

*Screens for:*

(f) FastBridge

*Screens for:*

\*The Board will create procedures to provide a list of approved tools

\*\*The Board will review the list of approved screening tools in January 2025 and then take action in March 2025, and in each subsequent odd year

# **Montana Early Literacy Advisory Council**

## **Recommendations to the Montana Board of Public Education**

**November 15-17, 2023**

## Introduction and Summary

Education leaders across several states have taken steps to implement early childhood education services, such as options for public preschool, expansion of Head Start, and early intervention and family support services. Years of research on a variety of programs and models demonstrate clear evidence about the positive, long-term impacts quality early education services can provide for children. Comprehensive early education services that include a focus on literacy are one of the best ways to set children up for success in school and life. Children’s brains are rapidly developing in their first five years of life, which is why exposure to quality early learning is critical. Literacy gaps appear in children well before they enter kindergarten, yet 1 in 3 kids will enter school without those skills. Reading proficiency by the end of third grade is a crucial marker in a child’s educational development and is a predictor of later life outcomes.

In 2023, Representative Brad Barker, HD 58, sponsored [HB 352](#) to provide targeted interventions to support 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading proficiency. The bill established duties of the Board of Public Education to identify an evaluation methodology to determine whether the child is above, at, or below a developmental trajectory leading to reading proficiency on completion of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. The Board of Public Education must also choose a home-based early literacy program, and design a framework for jumpstart programs for early literacy interventions in schools. The bill was signed by the Governor on May 18, 2023 and went into effect July 1, 2023.

The Board of Public Education created the Montana Early Literacy Advisory Council (ELAC) on September 14, 2023 to provide recommendations to the Board on the requirements in HB 352 to provide targeted interventions to support 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading proficiency. In September 2023, the Council conducted their first meeting. Members of the Council are as follows:

<b>Dr. Anne Penn Cox</b>	Elementary School Principal, Livingston Public Schools
<b>Dr. Norah Barney</b>	Special Education and Curriculum Director, Anaconda Public Schools
<b>Dr. Laurie Barron</b>	Superintendent, Evergreen School District
<b>Nicole Simonsen</b>	Superintendent, Culbertson Public Schools
<b>Colette Getten</b>	Transitional Kindergarten Teacher, Great Falls Public Schools
<b>Dr. Danielle Thompson</b>	Consultant, The Transformative Reading Teacher Group
<b>Dr. Christine Lux</b>	Professor of Early Childhood Education, Montana State University
<b>Dr. Tammy Elser</b>	Faculty, Salish Kootenai College
<b>Karen Filipovich</b>	Executive Director, Montana Head Start Association
<b>Doug Rossberg</b>	Title 1 Instructional Coach, Missoula County Public Schools
<b>Stephanie Olson</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> grade teacher, Great Falls Public Schools
<b>Rhea Christensen</b>	Kindergarten teacher, Lambert Public Schools
<b>Doug Reisig</b>	Executive Director, Montana Quality Education Coalition
<b>Lance Melton</b>	Executive Director, Montana School Boards Association
<b>Marie Judisch</b>	Senior Manager of Teaching and Learning, Office of Public Instruction

McCall Flynn, Executive Director of the Montana Board of Public Education and Caitlin Jensen, Executive Director of Zero to Five Montana facilitated the Council meetings and discussions.

The Council met three times over the course of one month and followed the scope of work, as determined by the Board of Public Education:

- ❖ Identify 3rd grade reading proficiency level.
- ❖ Review previous exceptional circumstances statute language for reference.
- ❖ Recommend an evaluation methodology which will be used to determine whether a child is at, above, or below a developmental trajectory leading to reading proficiency at the completion of third grade.
- ❖ Identify a framework for the jumpstart program.
- ❖ Recommend a home-based early literacy program.
- ❖ Review Title 10, Chapter 63 – Early Childhood Education Standards to ensure they align and complement Section 3.

## **Background**

Access to early childhood education is varied across the state, and Montana is currently one of four states without a public preschool option (NIEER, 2022). Historically, two high quality preschool programs have been piloted in the state, including the federally funded Montana Preschool Development grant which built early education capacity across school districts, Head Start programs, as well our educator preparation program in institutions of higher education (i.e., the P-3 endorsement and preschool standards). The Montana STARS Preschool pilot program launched in 2017 and supported 18 additional programs across the state in a variety of settings including school districts, Head Start, and high-quality early care and education facilities.

Although previous investments were supported by families, school districts, and community partners, funding has dwindled and only a fraction of children have access to early education services, including high-risk children who currently qualify for services such as eligibility-based Head Start and special education preschool. Currently, families have limited access to early education options across the state. As we have learned from other states, investments today will have lasting impacts on educational outcomes, as well as lasting gains for our state's economy.

The following outline key early childhood education programs and educator workforce supports in Montana, intended to further define the existing system:

- ❖ **Head Start** is a federally funded, comprehensive program with early education, health, and family support components. This federal-to-local program has a 20% community funding match and there are currently 6 Tribal Head Start grantees and 13 community-based grantees across Montana (Office of Head Start, 2021). Categorical eligibility is utilized to support enrollment based on family income (e.g., a family of four must make under \$27,750), disability, military status, foster care, and families experiencing homelessness (Benefits.gov, 2022). In 2021, Head Start programs in Montana served 1,084 3-year-olds, 1,528 4-year-olds, and 159 children ages 5 and up. There are an estimated 6,349 children ages 3-5 who would be eligible for Head Start (Montana Kids Count, 2020). Yet, 43% of these young children are not able to access Head Start.
- ❖ **Special Education Preschool** is partially federally funded in Montana and is available to support young children with developmental delays or disabilities. Providing special



education preschool or services to young children with special needs is required by federal law (Part B/IDEA). Montana’s special education preschools operate primarily out of the school districts, and some partner with Head Start programs to coordinate services. In 2021, 1% of 3-year-olds and 2% of 4-year-olds were enrolled in special education in Montana (National Institute for Early Education Research, 2022).

- ❖ **Private Early Care and Education (ECE)** is how most Montana families can access school readiness support. However, most of Montana is considered a childcare desert – only 44% of the 3 estimated demand can be met by the current capacity (Montana Department of Labor and Industry, 2021). In Montana, 60% of 3- and 4-year-olds are not enrolled in any kind of early childhood education program (Kids Count Montana, 2020). An option to expand quality, public early education would help to address the gap in program access for families who are eligible for Head Start, but may not have access in their community, as well as families who rely on developmentally appropriate ECE to participate in the workforce.
- ❖ **The Early Childhood Education Workforce** includes providers and educators who can develop and deliver quality, age-appropriate curriculum to help children enter school ready to learn. Early childhood education programs “need a workforce that is responsible for creating ‘meaningful bonds with the children in their care, and their interactions, behaviors, and teaching practices all influence children’s development, as well as their later school readiness’” (Weisenfeld et al., 2022). The federal preschool development grant created a professional development pathway for early care and education professionals to obtain a P-3 endorsement. Through a scholarship program funded by the grant, 1,273 early care and education providers had a verified early childhood or related degree and/or a P-3 endorsement in 2022 (Montana Early Childhood Project, 2022). The Montana Office of Public Instruction reported in 2021 that there are 187 preschools through 3rd grade (P3) endorsed teachers working in Montana public school settings. In 2020, there were 119 P3 endorsed teachers working in our public schools; in 2019, there were 76. P3 teacher and educator preparation continues to be a priority among Montana’s Institutions of Higher Education, despite a reduction in funding available to support scholarships.
- ❖ **Statewide Early Education Collaboratives** support cross-sector partnership and increase coordination among sectors. Established efforts currently exist to elevate the early care and education workforce and foster community and state policy partnerships. These include the Early Childhood Higher Education Consortium, the Montana Early Learning Alliance, the Institute for Early Childhood Education, and the Tribal Colleges and Universities Head Start Partnership Program.

## **Scope of Work**

### **Understanding 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading Proficiency**

The legislature found that the ability to read at or above grade level is essential for educational success. The legislature also found that too many Montana children are not reading proficient at the end of 3rd grade. The purpose of HB 352 bill is to:

- ❖ provide parents with voluntary early literacy interventions for their children;

- ❖ increase the number of children who are reading proficient at the end of 3rd grade and in doing so, help children develop their full educational potential pursuant to Article X, section 1(1), of the Montana constitution; and
- ❖ foster a strong economic return for the state on early literacy investment through enhancing Montana's skilled workforce and decreasing future reliance on social programs and the criminal justice system.

In 2023, the intent of proficiency and proficiency-based education has been incorporated in both statute and administrative rule:

In [20-7-1601](#), MCA, the following definitions apply:

- ❖ "**Proficiency**" means a measure of competence that is demonstrated through application in a performance assessment.
- ❖ "**Proficiency-based learning**" means an education system in which student progress is based on a student's demonstration of competence rather than on the basis of seat time or the age or grade level of the student.

In ARM [10.55.602](#), the following definitions apply:

- ❖ "**Personalized learning**" means to: develop individualized pathways for career and postsecondary educational opportunities that honor individual interests, passions, strengths, needs, and culture; support the student through the development of relationships among teachers, family, peers, the business community, postsecondary education officials, public entities, and other community stakeholders; embed community-based, experiential, online, and work-based learning opportunities; and foster a learning environment that incorporates both face-to-face and virtual connections.
- ❖ "**Proficiency-based learning**" means systems of instruction, assessment, and academic reporting that are based on students demonstrating that they have learned the knowledge and skills as outlined in the state content standards.
- ❖ "**Proficient**" means that a student demonstrated a level of knowledge and skills that are expected to be learned signaling that a student is well prepared to progress on the learning continuum aligned to the content standards, learning progressions, and necessary readiness skills.

It's clear in both statute and administrative rule that the use and benchmarks for "proficiency" are set by the local board of trustees. The Council recognized the importance of maintaining this flexibility.

### **Exceptional Circumstances in Montana**

For over 40 years (1979), school districts have had the authority to enroll children with exceptional circumstances in an early kindergarten program. The law allows a school board to gain ANB funding for children under the age of 5 who are enrolled in kindergarten when there are exceptional circumstances, in the discretion of the board of trustees, that merit waiving the lower age limit for ANB.

The practice of enrolling and admitting children below the age of 5 is not unprecedented. There are districts who have been successfully doing so for years and there are a growing number of children under the age of 5 being served under exceptional circumstances and claimed for ANB by Montana’s public schools:

ANB	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
ANB >5	42	54	61	61	64	98	268	309	280	300	556	854	1,125	1,269

The Montana School Boards Association is working to provide guidance (Policy 3100) to school districts as they continue to provide enhanced educational opportunities in 2023-2024 for students under the age of 5 when either individual exceptional circumstances exist and/or when Community-Based exceptional circumstances are present, and the transition to the new early literacy intervention programs, as provided for in HB 352.

**Evaluation Methodology**

“**Evaluation methodology**” means a research-based methodology, instrument, or assessment selected by the Board of Public Education to determine, based on a child's age or grade level, whether the child is above, at, or below a developmental trajectory leading to reading proficiency on completion of 3rd grade.

The Board of Public Education shall determine an evaluation methodology to determine, based on a child's age or grade level, whether the child is above, at, or below a developmental trajectory leading to reading proficiency on completion of 3rd grade. The evaluation must be:

- ❖ developmentally appropriate;
- ❖ research-based;
- ❖ cost-effective; and
- ❖ if possible, aligned with formative assessments that inform instruction in the classroom-based program and the jumpstart program.

A child may not be evaluated for the early literacy programs unless requested by the child's parent or guardian. The trustees may administer the evaluation methodology in April, May, or June to a child who will be 4 years of age or older on or before the following September 10 and who has not yet entered 3rd grade. A child who is evaluated to be below trajectory for 3rd-grade reading proficiency for the child's age or grade level is an eligible child for the subsequent school year.

**Survey Results**

The Council released a survey to request information and data on the screening tools that school districts were already using. Below is a summary of this data:

The Council received responses from 42 respondents, representing 34 towns (both small and large districts, including Indian country). Of those respondents, 23 indicated that they’ve enrolled 4-year-olds in their district as far back as 2010 and as recently as this year, including part time, half time, full time, and summer programs.

The names of these programs vary widely:

- ❖ Early Kindergarten, Early Entry Kindergarten, Early Kindergarten Readiness, Transitional Kindergarten, Kindergarten
- ❖ Preschool, Running Start, Jump Start
- ❖ Summer School, Story Hour, Early Literacy Instruction

19 respondents reported they did not participate in a Montana Preschool Development Grant or STARS Preschool Program opportunity, while 18 respondents did.

The survey found that the use of early childhood assessments varies, with teachers primarily administering the assessments, while other personnel, such as special education staff, speech language pathologists, and school psychologists may also administer the assessments.

Additionally, the training and cost of the assessments varied, as well as the inclusion of a literacy component.

### **Shared Definitions**

The Council reviewed the following screening definitions to determine which screening tools they would include on the recommended list of “approved screening tools”:

**Traditional Screening:** A brief assessment procedure designed to identify children who may need more intensive diagnosis or evaluation from local early intervention, early childhood special education, health, mental health, or other related service providers.

- ❖ *Answers the question:* Does this child need further evaluation?
- ❖ *Screening Tool Examples:* The Ages and Stages Questionnaires, The Denver-II, DIAL-3, Early Screening Inventory, Revised Developmental Screening Inventory, Parent’s Evaluation of Developmental Status.

**Universal Screening:** Universal screening is the process of gathering academic and social-emotional behavior data. The universal screener is a brief and easy to administer procedure designed to identify children who should receive more intensive intervention or support in particular content areas. Of note, many universal screeners also serve the dual purpose of program planning and/or progress monitoring.

- ❖ *Answers the question(s):* Does this child need additional instruction? Is this child responding to intervention?
- ❖ *Screening Tool Examples:* Individual Growth and Development Indicators, Preschool Early Literacy Indicators, Acadence Reading, STAR Early Literacy, FastBridge

In reviewing these definitions, the Council determined use of a universal screening definition to select tools with a literacy focus.

### **Appendices – Draft Rule Explain Rationale**

#### **Jumpstart Program**

For an eligible child who is 5 years of age or older on or before September 10 of the year in which the child is to participate in the program and who has not yet completed 3rd grade, the trustees may offer a jumpstart program.

The jumpstart program must:

- ❖ take place during the time between the end of one school calendar year and the start of the next school calendar year, as determined by the trustees, preceding a child's entry into kindergarten, 1st grade, 2nd grade, or 3rd grade;
- ❖ be at least 4 weeks in duration and provide at least 120 instructional hours;
- ❖ be aligned to a framework determined by the Board of Public Education; and
- ❖ be designed in a manner to increase the likelihood of a child being evaluated at the end of the ensuing school year to be at or above a trajectory leading to reading proficiency at the end of 3rd grade.

## Appendices – Draft Rule

### Explain Rationale

#### **Home-Based Early Literacy Program**

For an eligible child who is 4 years of age or older on or before September 10 of the year in which the child is to participate in the program and who has not yet completed 2nd grade, the trustees may offer a home-based program.

The home-based program must be selected by the Board of Public Education and must:

- ❖ be operated by a nonprofit entity;
- ❖ be research-based and proven effective at developing early literacy skills in populations at risk of not being reading proficient at the end of 3rd grade;
- ❖ foster parental engagement; and
- ❖ have a cost of no more than \$1,000 a year for each child.

Given that the Superintendent of Public Instruction shall pay for the costs for an eligible child participating in a home-based program and that funds appropriated for these purposes are directed to the Office of Public Instruction, the Office of Public Instruction will take the lead on the required Request for Proposal (RFP) process pertaining to the selection of the home-based program.

The Council will have an opportunity to weigh in on the draft RFP, and then 1-2 members will participate on the RFP Review Committee that will review applications and provide a recommendation to the Board of Public Education.

#### **Early Childhood Education Standards**

HB 352 created new definitions under 20-7-117, MCA, to clarify allowable operation of Kindergarten and Preschool programs.

- ❖ "**Kindergarten program**" means a half-time or full-time 1-year program immediately preceding a child's entry into 1st grade with curriculum and instruction selected by the board of trustees and aligned to the content standards established by the Board of Public Education.
- ❖ "**Preschool program**" means a half-time or full-time program to prepare children for entry into kindergarten and governed by standards adopted by the Board of Public Education.

Given these new definitions, the **Council has started** reviewing Title 10, Chapter 63 – Early Childhood Education Standards to ensure they continue to be reliable and accurate, based on the new legislation. Recommended rule revisions will be presented to the Board of Public Education at their January meeting and included in this report.

## **Conclusion**

As required in HB 352, The Board of Public Education, the Office of Public Instruction, and the boards of trustees of school districts shall collaborate and prepare for the full implementation of early literacy programs in the school year beginning July 1, 2024. The legislature intends that the evaluation methodology be available for administration in the Spring of 2024 to determine child eligibility.

The Montana Early Literacy Advisory Council would like to thank the Board of Public Education for the opportunity to participate in this work. The information and recommendations provided in this document are well researched and have proven to be highly successful in other states. By approving these recommendations, more students in Montana will receive early literacy targeted interventions, which will in turn support their pathway to proficiency.

## **Appendices**

**Draft Rule**

**List of approved screening tools**